THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE:
REFLECTIONS OF LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN’S TRACTATUS IN THE PROSE OF
INGEBORG BACHMANN

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on examining the influence of Wittgenstein’s language theory, as presented in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, upon Bachmann’s prose. It will present an examination of her essays and her shorter prose, concentrating mainly on four stories found in the collection *Das dreißigste Jahr*, since they illustrate the parallels between Wittgenstein’s philosophy and Bachmann’s prose well and have received less attention than her novels. The chapters focus respectively on their understanding of “das Mystische” as that which cannot be truly spoken about, the problem of language in regard to the communication of “das Mystische,” and Bachmann’s concept of Utopia, as influenced by Wittgenstein and Robert Musil, in which she depicts Utopia as the arrival of a new language, as well as the process of attaining it. The thesis concludes with an analysis of “Ein Wildermuth,” in which all of these aspects are significantly present.
To my Family
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INTRODUCTION

“Worüber man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen” (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, published in 1921). These words conclude the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, published in 1921. This book, read some thirty years later by the Austrian author Ingeborg Bachmann, strongly influenced her writings. Wittgenstein’s philosophy of the limits of language had a profound impact on Bachmann, giving words to her own struggle with language. This thesis will focus on examining the influence of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* upon Bachmann by examining her essays and her shorter prose, concentrating mainly on four stories found in the collection *Das dreißigste Jahr*, since they illustrate the parallels between Wittgenstein’s philosophy and Bachmann’s prose well and have received less attention than her novels.

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein lived during the first half of the twentieth century. Classified as a member of the logical positivistic line of thought, he himself had his own frustrations with philosophy. The *Tractatus* is his first significant published work on the problem of language. He attempts to illustrate that language, especially in the context of philosophy, cannot solve the problems of life or understand what lies outside of the world defined by language, as language is a construct of this world, and conversely language constructs the world. Still, his interest in what he terms “das Mystische” (*Tractatus*, 6.522), a realm outside of the world as limited by language, is pervasive in his work. His conclusion of the *Tractatus*, cited above, is that the mystical is constrained to silence, as language cannot express it.

Bachmann herself, also an Austrian, studied philosophy during her university years, earning a doctorate with a dissertation on Martin Heidegger. During this time she was strongly influenced by Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, singling it out as “‘the most important’ of her
‘intellectual encounters,’ since it ‘traced the problems of philosophy back to the problems of language’” (Achberger 59). Like Wittgenstein, she struggled with the limits of language in regard to expressing the experience of the mystical. Finding that this language would be forever limiting, she hoped for a new day to come when a new language would abolish the current border between these two realms. This utopian concept was also influenced by Wittgenstein, as well as by Robert Musil’s concept of the “anderen Zustand.”

Her essay “Ludwig Wittgenstein--Zu einem Kapitel der jüngsten Philosophiegeschichte” and her radio play “Sagbares und Unsagbares – Die Philosophie Ludwig Wittgensteins” show her conscious reflection upon Wittgenstein’s theories, and here she interprets his language theory. In further essays such as “Literatur als Utopie” and “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar” she reflects upon the idea of Utopia and the mystical realm, and explores the struggle of humanity to cross the border between the realm of this world of language and the mystical realm beyond.

Wittgenstein’s influence upon her works can also be perceived throughout the collection of stories entitled Das dreißigste Jahr. In the following chapters I have attempted to display the parallels between her fiction and Wittgenstein’s philosophy by examining the title work “Das dreißigste Jahr” as well as her stories “Undine Geht,” “Alles,” and “Ein Wildermuth.” Wittgenstein’s influence can be seen in the plots of the stories themselves, as well as through various motifs Bachmann implemented in her works. These motifs as well as the struggles of her characters parallel Wittgenstein’s theories, as will be shown through detailed analysis.

The first chapter will examine how Wittgenstein and Bachmann understood “das Mystische.” Wittgenstein’s understanding of the mystical is explained fairly clearly in his Tractatus, which is reflected in Bachmann’s fictional motifs and narrative techniques. Chapter
One will briefly look at the concept of mysticism in the early German mystics Hildegard von Bingen and Meister Eckhart, comparing and contrasting this religious mysticism with the mysticism of Bachmann and Wittgenstein. Following a more detailed explanation of Wittgenstein’s understanding of the mystical will be an in-depth analysis of the motifs in Bachmann’s works that illustrate the nature of the mystical realm.

Chapter Two continues explaining the problem of language in regard to the mystical. It will elucidate Wittgenstein’s theory of language as an insurmountable “border” between the two realms, especially its limits upon philosophical discourse. These limits then have significant ramifications on philosophy’s ability to solve the meaningful problems of life, which Wittgenstein questioned, claiming that philosophy would never be able to do so (6.52). From Bachmann’s essays we will see her agreement with and understanding of his frustration, then continue to show how she depicted this border and philosophical problem in her fictional works. Especially emphasized will be her narrative “Undine geht,” as well as her understanding of the role of literature in pointing toward the mystical realm. Finally, her use of language itself will be examined to show how she attempted to stretch language beyond its limits.

In frustration with this language, both Wittgenstein and Bachmann hoped for a utopian age, when a new language would come and the divide between the realms would be abolished. Chapter Three briefly reviews the history of the utopian ideal and how it was destroyed during the twentieth century. The arrival of the new utopian ideal will be shown through Wittgenstein’s and Robert Musil’s concepts of Utopia, both of which influenced Bachmann. Their influence on her utopian concept will be shown by examining her essays. Her fictional depictions of Utopia will then be explored. Concluding this chapter will be an analysis of her use of language in certain passages to depict this utopian state.
In conclusion we shall see how mysticism, the problem of language, and the concept of Utopia inform her narrative “Ein Wildermuth,” observing how these ideas influence every aspect of the main character. With this analysis the thesis will be concluded by briefly and concretely observing the reflections of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s language theory in Ingeborg Bachmann’s prose.
CHAPTER ONE: “DAS MYSTISCHE” AS UNDERSTOOD BY WITTGENSTEIN AND BACHMANN

“Mysticism” is not a new idea to society. Throughout history one can see the preoccupation of different cultures and religions with accessing and experiencing a realm outside of our own. This chapter will briefly examine the two early German mystics, then delve into Wittgenstein’s interpretation of the mystical as stated in his *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, and finally view how Bachmann portrayed the mystical in her prose by using various motifs to characterize the mystical realm.

The beginning of the mystical movement within the European Christian church can be marked with the writings of Hildegard von Bingen, one of the most notable mystics in German history, who served as a nun during the 12th century. Inspired by visions she claimed to receive from God, she began her writing late in life. Her work centered on presenting a “wholistic cosmology” (Uhlein 15) which means she thought highly of “wholeness, of the complex interweavings of the human, the cosmic, and the divine in a many-splendored and deep oneness” (15). Her entire person engaged the faith on many levels, emphasizing the revelation of God through his creation, as he is the “author of all creation” (qtd. in Uhlein 104). Thus nature plays a significant role in her writings, which see it and its enjoyment of as good. They portray God as good and loving, and participating in “its own co-creation” (17); thus nature and mankind become creators in their own right as well.

Most notably, God was not solely confined to the structures and practices of religion, but also experienced through these visions and insights into scripture and nature. The faith was not solely based upon study and knowledge, but rather upon mystical insights that cannot be explained but are accepted as valid revelations about the faith. For instance, music recaptured the
joy and delight of heaven, serving as a “sonorous vehicle of spiritual grace of moral clarity” (qtd. in Holsinger 101), communicating the meaning of the faith effectively without words. In fact one could say that it communicated the faith effectively because it had no words.

The mystic tradition was continued most notably by Meister Eckhart, a well-known mystic in the 14th century, who would later be excommunicated due to supposed heretical beliefs. He is credited as “being the father of German idealism” (Blakney, xiii). It was not necessarily Eckhart's theological beliefs that would have him later excommunicated as a heretic; rather it was his ability of “stamping them with the vivid pattern of his own deep religious experience. He had discovered the truths contained in them within his own soul” (xxvii). God was ultimately a personal experience between the individual and the divine, indeed the individual’s experience of the divine within him- or herself.

Eckhart emphasized the “the divine immanence, and indeed he needed no proof for the indwelling spirit whose existence he had himself so deeply and fully experienced” (Clark, 19). As for Hildegard the experience of God was most significant, but Eckhart emphasized the participation of the human soul. The concept of the human soul is crucial in understanding Eckhart’s concept of God. In each human existed a “Fünklein […] that part or faculty of the soul in which, or by means of which, the mystical union of the soul with God takes place” (Clark 20). This spark is concealed in the self, and is the “germ of eternal life and the seed of God, the point of divine grace from which man may derive his worth and hope” (Blakney xxi). The indwelling of God in man in this mystical way needs no proof, rather was known simply through experience. God exists within man, not solely outside of man as a divine omnipotent force. It was a very personal experience of the divine.
This spark also enables the personal unity between God and man and exists as “high above all that is purely human and personal as heaven is high above earth” (xxi). It brings humanity to the higher plane on which God dwells, rising from that which is simply human. Humanity, then, has the opportunity to experience a distinct realm on the same plane as the divine within the world but apart from its mortal character.

These general ideas are also reflected in Wittgenstein’s and Bachmann’s understanding of the mystical realm, but without the religious bent. God did not play an important part in Wittgenstein’s early understanding of the mystical, as expressed in his *Tractatus*. He states: “Wie die Welt ist, ist für das Höhere vollkommen gleichgültig. Gott offenbart sich nicht in der Welt” (6.432). Wittgenstein held that this world could not understand or experience God, as the divine did not reveal itself in this world, but rather remained outside of it and out of contact. This stands in contrast to Eckhart, who held that the divine was immanent to humanity, igniting the spark within man that enabled the mystical experience. Wittgenstein’s concept of the mystical however is in no way attached to a higher being or power. In his understanding, if there is a higher power, it is indifferent to the “how” of the world and does not interfere with the world as it is.

The world, according to Wittgenstein, is “durch die Tatsachen bestimmt und dadurch, daß es alle Tatsachen sind” (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 1.11). Also defined as the “Gesamtheit der Tatsachen” (1.1), the world is understood to be all which humanity has created from facts. Such aspects of society as religion, sciences, and language fall into this category. These things comprise the world and humanity’s experience of it.

However, for Wittgenstein, as for the early mystics, that which truly has worth lies beyond this world. Wittgenstein phrases it thus: “Wenn es einen Wert gibt, der Wert hat, so muß
er außerhalb alles Geschehens und So-Seins liegen. Denn alles Geschehen und So-Sein ist zufällig. […] Es muß außerhalb der Welt liegen” (6.41). That which truly has worth lies beyond this world, as everything in the world is coincidental and unreliable. What is most valid and truthful is the continual experience of that which lies outside of the world. For the early Christian mystics this meant the intimate personal experience of God, for Wittgenstein it signified the experience of that which lies beyond the boundaries of language and human conventions.

Wittgenstein understood the mystical this way: “Es gibt allerdings Unaussprechliches. Dies zeigt sich, es ist das Mystische” (6.522). Whereas Hildegard and Eckhart saw the mystical revealed via a divine experience, Wittgenstein saw it as that which is simply revealed and cannot be spoken about. It makes itself manifest, however, it cannot be described within the confines of language, since what is essential to the mystical is its inability to be described. Also critical to Wittgenstein’s understanding of the mystical is the sense of being “outside” of our world, in that an element of human experience is not confined to religious or societal forms and defined by and within language. This is similar to the early mystics’ emphasis on the personal experience of the divine, rather than only obedience to the observances and practices of the church.

Wittgenstein does not specify how this manifestation occurs. He does conclude, however, that the mystical is consigned to silence, by ending his Tractatus with “Worüber man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen” (7). Because the mystical cannot be expressed in words, man will never be able to talk about it. This creates a boundary between the two realms of the world and the mystical, since all that is communicated through language is from the world, but that which truly has value, the mystical, remains unexpressed and unspoken.

Despite this linguistic boundary, Bachmann still attempted to express this mystical realm through her writings. In Chapter Three the struggle with the boundary itself will be discussed;
here we will examine her works to gain a clearer perspective on how she perceived the mystical through the influence of Wittgenstein and how this ideal is manifested in her writings.

Bachmann’s story “Das dreißigste Jahr” depicts a person struggling to understand himself in the context of his world as he approaches his thirtieth birthday. As he goes through this anguish-filled process, he continually interacts with someone by the name of “Moll.” This character is particularly interesting because Bachmann uses it to represent many common aspects of this world that are in conflict with the other realm.

Moll is not just one person, but the name represents a multitude of people, as seen in passages such as: “Wie überall mischen sich Halbfreunde unter die Freunde, und dein Freund Moll erträgt deinen Freund Moll nicht, und sie beide sind unnachsichtig gegen deinen dritten Freund Moll” (84). “Moll” serves as a representative of everyday interactions between all different types of people throughout the main character’s journey, while “die Welt eines jeden voll von den Molls ist” (106). Bachmann subsumes all these different people under one name to emphasize the common agreement among these “types” to live by structures of this world defined by language and convention. This common unity among humans to uphold these structures increases the difficulty of those on the search for the mystical, such as our protagonist.

Moll acts in several different capacities. He is portrayed as a career man who “bezieht die höchsten Honorare, eilt von Kongreß zu Kongreß” (104). He has become important in the academic world, which is not positive for the narrator: “Moll, noch immer der Jüngsten einer, aalglatt, meinungslos Meinungen vertretend, Moll auf der Butterseite, Moll mit Verachtung für unsichere Existenzen, selbst der unsichersten eine…” (104). There is no genuineness to Moll’s interaction with his trade; solely his appearance as an academic is what matters. The opinions he holds are held to procure the good opinion of those in higher position in order to accelerate his
career, rather than held out of personal conviction. The narrator’s disdain for such behavior mirrors the sentiments of Bachmann and Wittgenstein. The mystical is genuine and unaffected, void of status and hypocrisy as it lies outside of this realm. Moll’s world in contrast is uncertain and insecure, as it has been built upon the illusion that language is the ultimate reality. However Moll still ignores the mystical realm and utilizes the conventions of the world to accelerate himself in it for personal gain.

This character Moll is later met in a different capacity, this time as a “Kunstrichter,” a judge of art. For a judge of art, however, he has no appreciation for it, as the narrator explains:

Moll der die Sprache verloren hat und dafür mit zweitausend Pfauenfedern aus anderen Sprachen paradiert. Moll der Romane nicht mehr lesen kann, Moll, für den das Gedicht keine Zukunft hat, Moll, der für die Kastration der Musik eintritt und der die Malerei der Leinwand entfremden will. (106)

Moll has no regard for art, and appears to be entirely disconnected from it, if not destroying it. He is completely bound to the systems of the world, leaving no room for creativity or expression. Art, however, is one way in which the mystical can be expressed in the world, since music and visual art do not require words, and literature struggles with the language to portray the realm beyond. As we shall see later in this chapter, and will explore more thoroughly in Chapter Three, art is the mediator between this world and the mystical, since it can be free from conventions of this world. However, here we can see how the world does not value this aspect of art, but rather values it for its social function, such as by parading one’s vast vocabulary or devaluing poetry by saying it has no future.

Moll’s behavior drives the protagonist to the brink. He cannot avoid all these representations of Moll or suppress them, because “welchen Sinn hat es, dieser Hydra Moll ein Haupt abzuschlagen, wenn ihr an Stelle eines jeden wieder zehn neue nachwachsen!” (107). They are everywhere, propagating their opinions and way of life. He is desperate to get away
from them, declaring “Moll wird an allen Ecken und Enden auftauchen, immer wieder. Abstand, oder ich morde! Haltet Abstand von mir!”(107). The Molls are inhibiting the thirty-year-old’s journey. Their constant actions and strivings are a threat to his existence, and he threatens to kill them if they do not stay away. The pursuit of careers, the disconnection from art, and the consumption by the petty details of life, all of which Moll here represents, demonstrate how Bachmann perceived the activities of the world around her, which is comprised of Wittgenstein’s “Tatsachen” and created by humans. Her character’s vehement reaction towards them depicts the desire to leave this realm for another one far removed.

This longing for another realm is again depicted at the end of “Ein Wildermuth,” another story in the collection. Wildermuth, a judge, has sought hard for truth through law and order. However, due to complications in a trial, he wishes to leave the world that he knows so well:

Ich will ja meine Robe und mein Barett ablegen, mich hinlocken an jede Stelle der Welt, mich hinlegen auf Gras und Asphalt und die Welt abhören, abtasten, abklopfen, auf wühlen, mich in sie verbeißen und mit ihr übereinstimmen dann, und endlich lang und ganz-. (181)

He wants to give up the pursuit of this world, the striving after his career, to experience the world with his senses and soul. This is a step towards the mystical, the denial of this world’s pursuits, desires, and conventions, wishing to commune solely with the external products of the earth. To quote again from Wittgenstein, “Nicht wie die Welt ist, ist das Mystische, sondern daß sie ist.” (6.44). Thus, the “how” of law no longer holds value for the judge; rather he must answer this question for himself by removing himself from it and experiencing that which he sees as removed from society. He has begun to experience a realm apart from his normal life.

Through the protagonists of “Das dreißigste Jahr” and “Ein Wildermuth,” we have seen how Bachmann’s characters interact with this world in the light of striving for unity with the other realm. Their mutual frustration with the worldly conventions enhance their longing for
mystical unity. Bachmann also, however, strove to depict the mystical itself in her works by using the motifs of silence, femininity, and nature, and especially those of water and darkness. The following will provide an in-depth analysis of these motifs that Bachmann utilizes to illustrate the nature of the mystical realm.

According to Karen Achberger, Bachmann was particularly fascinated by Wittgenstein’s conclusion (Achberger 60) that “Worüber man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen” (7). Throughout her works, one sees a subtle theme of the mystical element of silence and its power in human relationships.

One of the most pronounced depictions of silence in Bachmann’s writings is found in her story “Undine geht.” The story is told by Undine, a water being and well-known folkloric figure, who has spent a considerable amount of time on the land interacting with the people, particularly with the men, all of whom she calls “Hans,” again subsuming many people under one name to emphasize their sacrifice of personal identity to a social role. However, in this narrative she has formed a complaint against these men, against their language and their ways, and wishes to return to her realm, a watery “Nicht Ort” (Nawab 85). According to Achberger:

One can read the story as the sketching out of Bachmann’s ideas about those two opposing realms: on the one side, the firm world of law, authority, and language; on the other, the fluid world of vitality and sensuality, a parallel universe of the ineffable, indefinable, uncontainable. (Achberger 85)

Whereas Moll can be understood as representing the features of this world, Undine and her watery realm represent the mystical world of the uncontainable and indescribable.

Her watery realm plays an important role because it is a realm without language. According to Nawab: “So wird […] Sprachlosigkeit als ein zentrales Merkmal des Wassers erkennbar” (Nawab 73). Undine has no language in her water realm. The language of men has hurt and confused her, and she finds refuge in the silence of her world. When she returns to her
home she announces: “Ich werde nie wiederkommen, nie wieder Ja sagen und Du und Ja. Alle diese Worte wird es nicht mehr geben”(Bachmann 183). By escaping the world of men and language to find refuge in silence, she also loses the language she has learned on land. The language of mankind cannot dwell in the realm of the mystical. The mystical, then, is silent in its essence.

The power and importance of silence is also shown in the relationships between Bachmann’s characters, where silence is seen as a more powerful means of communication than language, and also as an agent of separation.

Bachmann’s narrative “Alles” is the story of a married couple and their son. Told from the father’s perspective, the tale tells of his struggles, wishes, and thoughts when it comes to his wife and the upbringing of their son. When their son dies tragically, the father describes their grief. Because they had not had a good relationship before their son’s death, they have trouble communicating in this moment of pain. The father thinks: “Ich denke nicht mehr, sondern möchte aufstehen, über den dunklen Gang hinübergehen und, ohne ein Wort sagen zu müssen, Hanna erreichen” (142). Their pain has reached a place where language cannot go. He is left with no way of communicating this deep loss, even to the point where he cannot think, as thinking would still require language. With this loss of thought, he has begun to close himself off to this world and longs for the other realm, signified by “den dunklen Gang,” where words are not needed. Only in this other place would he be able to reach her.

However, at the same time, her silence denotes their separation, as they still are in the world, where language is necessary for communication. He laments, “Diese Entfernung, messbar mit Schweigen, wie soll sie je abnehmen?”(142). Her silence signifies a separation from him, just as Undine’s return to her silent world signifies a separation from the world of man. He
cannot fathom how this distance will disappear, knowing the silence to be impenetrable and stronger than language and other creations of humanity. As much as he desires to enter the other realm, he knows that the mystical it cannot exist in this realm, unable to join itself with elements created by man. As he cannot separate himself from these elements, his wife’s silence separates her from her husband more so than words would.

However if both parties enter the realm of silence together, silence signifies the depth of a relationship, a depth that is beyond words. In “Ein Wildermuth,” the protagonist is comparing his current verbose wife Gerda with a love from his past, named Wanda, with whom he interacted in silence. He says, “Gerda mit ihrer Blumensprache--wie will sie aufkommen gegen dieses Schweigen von damals! Könnte man diese Sprache bloß austilgen, ihr abgewöhnen, mit der sie mich so entfernt von sich” (174). Here his relationship with his wife, whom he does love, does not compare with the intense silence he experienced with Wanda. He describes Wanda as belonging to a broader stereotype of female “ein Geschlecht von dunkelhaarigen blassen Frauen mit trübem großem Blick, […] fast ohne Sprache, Gefangene fast ihrer Sprachlosigkeit, zu dem ich mich bekenne und nie bekennen kann” (172). Her silence was one of the strongest attributes that drew him to her. One can also see here how he is divided between the two realms, that of the mystical and this world, because, despite his desire for unity, he cannot fully commit himself to Wanda. No matter how strong this desire is, his commitment to the conventions of this world prevent him from doing so.

The relationship with Wanda was too intense to express with words and had to be consigned to silence, again mirroring Wittgenstein’s claim that “Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen” (7). Thus their relationship reflects the capacity of the mystical to express and contain that which cannot be expressed or contained. His current wife’s
constant speech now separates them; he wishes for the same depth and intensity in a relationship that he had with Wanda in silence.

Nature also plays a key role in Bachmann’s expression the mystical, as it did with Hildegard von Bingen. However, whereas Hildegard saw nature as the manifestation of God, Bachman depicts it as that which is outside of the influence of humanity. In Bachmann’s story “Alles” the father desires more than the typical conventions of this world for his son, which includes language. On a walk through the woods with his son, nature speaks to the father. He explains, saying:

Ja, sonntags wanderte ich mit ihm durch den Wienerwald, und wenn wir an ein Wasser kamen, sagte es in mir: Lehr ihn die Wassersprache! Es ging über Steine. Über Wurzeln. Lehr ihn die Steinsprache! Wurzle ihn neu ein! Die Blätter fielen, denn es war wieder Herbst. Lehr ihn die Blättersprache! (Bachmann 129)

The mystical here is calling out to him, to teach his son the language of nature outside of the realm of human language. The father laments at the end that he does not know any of these languages, and has to teach his son language as constructed by humanity. However, Bachmann has shown the influence of nature over mankind to awaken in man the desire for another language, another way of being; the mystical manifests itself through nature, calling the father out to the other realm.

The clearest example of nature representing the mystical is seen through the parallels Bachmann places between the mystical and water. “Undine Geht” shows the clearest example of water as a motif for the mystical. For example, when the man finally speaks to Undine in a way she can understand, she tells him:

Wenn dir nichts mehr einfiel zu deinem Leben, dann hast du ganz wahr geredet, aber auch nur dann. Dann sind alle Wasser über die Ufer getreten, die Flüsse haben sich erhoben, die Seerosen sind gleich hundertweise erblüht und ertrunken, und das Meer war ein machtvoller Seufzer, es schlug, schlug und rannte und rollte gegen die Erde an, daß seine Lefzen trieften von weißem Schaume. (188)
Here the water reacts strongly to the man speaking truly and genuinely, which apparently differs from his usual conduct. The water comes onto the land, the rivers rise, lilies bloom and drown, and the ocean rolls, as they react to his progression towards them. It has been called by his genuineness and honesty, which are mystical characteristics. Thus when humanity is the most genuine and honest, then the mystical can begin to creep into its awareness and world.

Undine explains that the water is an “Element, in dem niemand sich ein Nest baut [...] Nirgendwo sein, nirgendwo bleiben” (183). There is no definition of this realm, just as the mystical realm has no true definition or limit. It is impossible to settle in Undine’s world. It is a place of motion and being, unlike the world man has created, which is filled with regulations and rules.

Undine expresses her love for the water: “seine dichte Durchsichtigkeit, das Grün im Wasser und die sprachlosen Geschöpfe (und so sprachlos bin auch ich bald!) mein Haar unter ihnen, in ihm, dem gerechten Wasser, dem gleichgültigen Spiegel, der es mir verbietet, euch anders zu sehen” (183). The transience, color, and speechlessness of the water comforts Undine in its familiarity, for she is immersed in this world. As stated, an important aspect of the mystical realm, according to Wittgenstein and Bachmann, is its inability to be expressed, that is, language does not exist there. So also does language cease to exist in Undine’s world. The water is fair and neutral, there are no comparisons, everyone is reflected in it the same and loses his or her identity. Thus the mystical realm is also not limited to certain people. The water also prohibits Undine from viewing humans as differentiated; they lose their identity when viewed from the water. Likewise, in the mystical realm, humans lose their individuality and identity, which are constructions of language and convention.
Bachman also uses darkness to illustrate the obscurity of the mystical realm. For instance, as Undine is retreating into her watery world, she says: “Die Welt ist schon finster, und ich kann die Muschelkette nicht anlegen. Keine Lichtung wird sein” (191). This watery world is also dark, no light exists underwater. This absence of light signifies how the underwater world cannot be seen or analyzed, as we can analyze things with the presence of light in this world. It is not a place of analysis, but rather a place of mystery, obscurity, and loss of individuality.

This darkness, although obstructing analysis, can also be a place of creation. In Das Buch Franza, Martin is traveling on his way to find his sister Franza. The train he is on goes through a tunnel on his journey. As this is happening he describes a piece of paper in his possession:

Das Papier aber will durch den Tunnel und eh es einfährt (aber da ist es schon eingefahren!), eh es, da ist es noch unbedeckt mit Worten, und wenn es herauskommt, ist es bedeckt und beziffert und eingeteilt, die Worte formieren sich, und mitgebracht aus der Finsternis der Durchfahrt (bei nur blauer Lampe) rollen die Einbildungen und Nachbildungen, die Wahnbildungen und Wahrbildung ans Licht, rollen heraus aus einem Kopf, kommen über einen Mund, der von ihnen spricht. (Das Buch Franza 10)

Upon entering the tunnel, there is no writing on the paper, however on exiting the tunnel, it is covered with words, which now make sense in the light. This speaks to how the mystical facilitates creativity and makes sense out of the ordinary world through art. It is only after spending time in this world of obscurity that one can bring clarity and sense to words. Here “Einbildungen und Nachbildungen, die Wahnbildungen und Wahrbildungen” are seen in light outside of the dark tunnel, and can be explained and understood. However, they are only understood as they emerge from the obscure realm, for Bachman then states through Martin: “Denn die Tatsachen, die die Welt ausmachen--sie brauchen das Nichttatsächliche, um von ihm aus erkannt zu werden” (11). Only by the contact with the mystical realm does this world begin to make sense, because the experience of the mystical realm, in a sense, holds the world of facts
together from its outside perspective. Through this dark mystical experience can true meaning be brought to the world.

The mystical realm plays an important part in the understanding of this world for both Wittgenstein and Bachmann. Mysticism has had a significant place in religious thought, as shown by the works of Hildegard von Bingen and Eckhart, where it emphasized the personal experience of God. Wittgenstein and Bachmann also saw mysticism as something that could be experienced, but they considered it apart from any religious connotation. Wittgenstein claimed that God has no influence in the world of facts; only the ineffable mystical realm that simply reveals itself has value. Unfortunately, because one cannot express the mystical, it has to remain in silence. Bachmann views the mystical in the same manner, but she attempted to depict this other realm by using various motifs in her writings that characterize elements of this realm, namely silence, water, and darkness. Silence and darkness reveal the inexpressible and obscure qualities of the mystical. It is indefinable and inexpressible with words, and is thus a place without comparison and restrictions, fluid and free like water. There are no social conventions; every person has the same value and worth, and their individual identities are obscured. In its obscurity, things are clarified and can be brought back out into the light, as portrayed in Das Buch Franza. By use of literary language and images, Bachmann has given us a rough yet thorough idea of “das Mystische” of which Wittgenstein spoke. However, even though she was able to communicate the idea of the mystical, as based on the theories of Wittgenstein, the problem remained of how to actually access this other realm through literary language.
CHAPTER TWO: THE BOUNDARIES OF LANGUAGE

Both Wittgenstein and Bachmann struggled with the process of explaining and bringing the mystical into this realm, finding, as articulated by Wittgenstein, that “Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt” (5.6). As seen in the previous chapter, the mystical is distinct from the world, and thus is nearly impossible to express within the confines of this realm. Bachmann and Wittgenstein found language itself to be the main obstacle of this expression, forming a nearly insurmountable boundary between this world and the mystical.

To reiterate from the previous chapter, Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* defines “world” as the “Gesamtheit der Tatsachen” (1.1), the summation of facts. Bachmann interpreted this in light of the philosophy of Bertrand Russell, as she explains in her essay “Ludwig Wittgenstein – Zu einem Kapitel der jüngsten Philosophiegeschichte”: “Wittgenstein geht von der Grundthese Bertrand Russells aus, wonach die Welt sich aus voneinander völlig unabhängigen Tatsachen zusammensetzt” (287). All of these facts, all of which are independent of each other, have been placed together to form the world. Language itself has been formed by this gathering of facts, as well as becoming a tool that continues to define and constitute the facts. Thus, because language is a product of as well as the tool for this world, language can only answer questions concerning facts, such as questions in the sciences.

This forms a boundary between this world and the mystical. As language is formed from the summation of facts, it cannot talk meaningfully about that which is beyond this world. Bachmann explains: “Über die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen hinaus, in die sie [die Welt] zerfällt, ist sie nichts” (“Ludwig Wittgenstein – Zu einem Kapitel der jüngsten Philosophiegeschichte” 287). Although within and among the facts language can be of use, and is of highest importance in maintaining the existence and coherency of the facts, the world dissolves when the facts are
taken away, such as when discussion turns towards what is mystical, and language proves useless. Then language has reached its limit, being unable to bridge the gap between this world of facts and the mystical world of ineffability.

This limit means that language can never talk about that which is not of this world. However, humanity continually attempts to discover, explore, and solve the problems of this other realm using the tools of logic and language. This proved frustrating for Wittgenstein, who held that philosophical logic would never be able to solve the problems of philosophy, claiming that philosophy creates its own problems and is tautological in nature. He states: “Die Sätze der Logik sind Tautologien (6.1) Die Sätze der Logik sagen also nichts (sie sind die analytischen Sätze.” (6.11) Logic has a tautological nature, and thus it fails to answer the true questions which matter.

Wittgenstein continues with this logic, claiming, as interpreted by Steuzger, “daß die Sätze der Logik, die keine Bilder sind, leere Sätze sind. […] das heißt, formale Sprache ist ohne Sinn, also buchstäblich sinnlos, ohne Inhalt” (Steuzger, 83). Logic, when it deals with subjects that are not composed of facts, such as the metaphysical, is empty and without content. Because logic is a product of the “Gesamtheit der Tatsachen,” it can only answer questions concerning this world, not the other realm. Herman Weber clarifies further, stating:

“Etwas ‘Höheres’, einen ‘Sinn der Welt’ kann die Logik also nicht erfolgern oder beweisen. Sie ist als ‘Spiegelbild der Welt’ (T 6.13) deren Grenze und Bedingung, wenn ‘Welt’ als ‘Gesamtheit der Tatsachen’ (T 1.1) aufgefaßt wird, wird aber ihrerseits dann auch durch die ‘Welt’ begrenzt und deren – vom ‘höheren’ Standpunkt aus gesehen – ‘Sinnlosigkeit’: ‘Die Logik erfüllt die Welt; die Grenzen der Welt sind auch ihre Grenzen” (T 5.61) Ist sie einerseits Garant ‘sinnvoller’ Sätze, die dem logischen-empiristischen Sinnkriterium genügen (also ‘wahr’ bzw. ‘falsch’ sein können, verifizierbar bzw. falsifizierbar), so sagt sie andererseits nicht über den ‘Sinn der Welt’ als ganzer. (Weber 22)
Logic cannot prove that there is something “higher” or a sense to this world, it only acts as a mirror of the world, reflecting solely what this world offers. It can hold logical positions, but only within the realm of empirical sciences. It is also limited just as the world is limited and is senseless when it tries to hold a “higher” position. It cannot say anything about the “meaning of the world,” and thus it is unable to speak about the mystical realm, and when it attempts to do so, its results are useless and nonsensical.

This had significant consequences for Wittgenstein, as he proposed that only the mystical was truly valuable, and thus not being able to speak about it meant one was not able to speak of that which had value. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Wittgenstein proposed that “Der Sinn der Welt muß außerhalb ihrer liegen. In der Welt ist alles, wie es ist, und geschieht alles, wie es geschieht: es gibt in ihr keinen Wert – und wenn es ihn gäbe, so hätte er keinen Wert” (6.41). Thus nothing within the world can have value in Wittgenstein’s understanding of the world, which includes language and all that it discusses. This explains his despair in proposition 6.52: “Wir fühlen, daß, selbst wenn alle möglichen wissenschaftlichen Fragen beantwortet sind, unsere Lebensprobleme noch gar nicht berührt sind. Freilich bleibt dann eben keine Frage mehr; und eben dies ist die Antwort.” Even after all the possible and potential questions have been answered, meaning the philosophical questions about life discussed in our language, the true problems of life have not even been touched, as all that has value lies outside of the reach of language. The discussion has been in vain and void. The answer, however, according to Wittgenstein, comes when there are no more questions left. This place of obscurity and vagueness are where the problems of life can truly meet their answers, outside of the realm of logic and language.
It was this constant desire to go beyond the boundaries that Bachmann shared with Wittgenstein. Achberger notes: “Bachmann saw Wittgenstein’s philosophical confrontation with the limits of language as corresponding to her own confrontation with the limits of linguistic expression as a poet. (She found herself always bumping up against the limits of language.)” (Achberger 60). Continually Bachmann felt the confines of the limits of language. The issues that she wrote about, such as the subtle oppression of women or the search for truth, appeal to something that lies beyond the world, such as perfection or harmony. Her writing is filled with a passion to clearly portray that which lies beyond, or to view the world from this higher point of view. However language limited her ability to write clearly about these themes, as the language itself is bound to this world and cannot speak truly about the mystical.

The inability of language to engage the realm outside of our own drove Bachmann to find other means of engaging the mystical realm. She found philosophy “incapable of answering any of the questions she really cared about” (Achberger 59). Language, and especially philosophy, was incapable of answering existential inquiries into life, because language is bound to the same rules as the world, which is stated by Bachman thus: “von der Welt als der Gesamtheit aller Tatsachen machen wir uns Bilder, die wiederum den Tatsachen zuzurechnen sind” (Bachmann, “Ludwig Wittgenstein- Zu einem Kapitel der jüngsten Philosophiegeschichte,” 292). The facts of the world form language. Language in turn informs the facts and within themselves they can answer questions about each other. Although pictures and ideas are formed, they are ultimately rooted in facts and thus are bound to the world after all. Ultimately, according to Bachmann:

Because of language’s limits, we have to remain on this side of the boundaries. Bachmann held that humanity is aware of this limit, understanding itself as part of the boundary as well. Thus questions involving what lies outside of our world of facts cannot be answered using the means humanity has created, as both language and humanity are subject to the same limit. Ultimately, Bachman reached the conclusion that language and philosophy would not adequately answer her questions about “das Mystische.”

However, she did see art as a legitimate way to bring the mystical into our world. Her dissertation, an attack on Heidegger’s philosophy, reached the conclusion that:

“... Heidegger’s philosophy cannot legitimately make any claims to truth and that it is art alone, and not philosophical discourse, which can speak truly about the world and give expression to the basic human experiences addressed by existentialism--experiences she describes as ‘somehow really alive in us and urgently seeking expression.’” (Achberger 58)

Ultimately, for Bachmann, it was not philosophy that held the answer; rather art would give expression to the mystical yearnings inherent in basic human experiences. Art can cross the border between this realm and the mystical realm, between what can be said and that which cannot. Bachmann, in the concluding paragraph of her dissertation, elucidates this point, saying:

“’The need for expression of this other [emotional] domain of reality, which eludes fixation by a systematizing existential philosophy, is met however to an incomparably greater degree by art with its multiple possibilities’” (qtd. in Achberger 59). Because language is constrained to this world and philosophy, in particular, systematizes all with which it comes in contact, it cannot communicate the mystical, as the mystical cannot be systematized. However, art, with its endless potential options, can serve this purpose well. Art forms such as painting, sculpture, and music are not constrained to the rules of language and of this world. Although they can be systemized
in academic study, their true nature is not bound to formal language. Therefore, according to Bachmann, art can communicate the other realm more fully and completely.

For instance, music is an important form of art for conveying the mystical, as it is completely free from the boundaries of language:

“Music’s most salient quality for her was that it lies beyond the will to name, beyond the rationality that is founded on mastery and dominance. Only when we are at a loss for words, when words fail and we can think of nothing more to say, can the two worlds (language and art/ music) meet in a moment of truth.” (Achberger 89)

Music is free from the bounds of language, and especially from logic, and thus it can express the inner state without language, portraying human experience and emotion without words. Where words have failed, music can communicate. It can depict the mystical without conforming the other realm to the boundaries of language, but yet is still perceived by the senses of mankind.

Bachmann also viewed literature as an important art form for communicating the mystical. She saw that it was “the function of the poet and of art to build bridges across these limits into a utopia of possibility” (Achberger 60), holding that it was possible for literature to bridge the gap between the two worlds. In fact she concluded her dissertation with a poem by the French poet Baudelaire with the intent to demonstrate how this poem, unlike Heidegger’s existentialist philosophy, could truly answer the questions that metaphysics brought but could never truly answer.

Bachmann describes the function of the author to give language a new “Gangart,” a new gait and way of moving within and beyond this world. In her essay “Fragen und Scheinfragen” she describes the role of the author in greater detail:

Wir meinen, wir kennen sie doch alle, die Sprache, wir gehen doch mit ihr um; nur der Schriftsteller nicht, er kann nicht mit ihr umgehen. Sie erschreckt ihn, ist ihm nicht selbstverständlich, sie ist ja auch vor der Literatur da, bewegt und in einem Prozeß, zum Gebrauch bestimmt, von dem er keinen Gebrauch machen kann. […] er muß im Rahmen
Here she notes the universal quality of language, in that all humans deal with it. However, she claims that authors cannot deal with language, it scares them because they do not fully understand it. Bachmann says that the author must make it alive again within its limits, to give it movement, as if it had never moved before. This can be seen in art forms such as poetry, where the words are constructed in ways foreign to normal and formal speech. In a way it redeems the language, especially during this post-Nazi era, as will be elaborated on in the following chapter, and it is also a way to stretch the language beyond its borders in hopes of relating the mystical realm to the world. The author then is not restricted by the language, rather she works at freeing it from its self-imposed constraints.

In this attempt to communicate through literature she found herself constantly colliding with the borders of language, a frustration she shared with Wittgenstein. She depicts this struggle, saying, “Denn bei allem, was wir tun, denken und fühlen, möchten wir manchmal bis zum Äußersten gehen. Der Wunsch wird in uns wach, die Grenzen zu überschreiten, die uns gesetzt sind” (Bachmann, “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar,” 301). Through her works she attempts to go to this furthest point, which requires transforming language from a boundary into a bridge. Through her poetry and prose, she constantly strives to depict the world as it had not yet been portrayed, in a sense transporting the mystical into this world through the art of literature. Achberger notes that “much of her work can be seen as an attempt to reach beyond the limits of language and to allow the ineffable that Wittgenstein termed ‘the mystical’ to manifest itself through poetic language” (Achberger 6). Through her writing, she strove to use language to cross the boundary between the two realms, thereby providing the reader an outlet into the
mystical realm, which in turn would reveal tendencies so ingrained in society that they are
normally left unperceived, such as the oppression of women through language or seemingly
normal behaviors, as seen in her Todesarten. By trespassing into the other realm, these subtle yet
violent tendencies can be seen from this new perspective by stepping outside of society, and of
the world, in order to see and experience that which seems more true.

Throughout her prose, one can see her attempts at bridging the gap between the two
realms through the depictions in her stories and, as will be demonstrated at the end of the
chapter, through the style of her language itself. Her narrative “Undine Geht” is a prime example
of this longing to cross the borders. Undine, a mystical water-being, desires to enter the world of
man, leaving her watery world. In the previous chapter we saw how this watery world represents
the mystical realm. When she enters the world of man, she breaks through the “nasse Grenze”
(Bachmann 183), a clearly depicted boundary between her mystical realm and the world.
Bachmann has placed an actual boundary between the two worlds here in the narrative, which
completely separates and divides the two worlds. By going through this border Undine enters the
world of man and its language; however there she finds no expression and must return to her
realm. Bachmann has here shown how the mystical is limited within the world and its language
and cannot survive. Undine ultimately returns to her world, leaving men to their language and
logic, which depicts how utterly without the mystical humanity is.

In “Alles,” Bachmann again portrays Wittgenstein’s theory of how language limits
humans, demonstrating its incapability and restrictiveness. Here a father wishes to teach his son
the “language” of nature. The water, leaves, and stones cry out to the father, pleading to him to
teach his son their language. As seen in the previous chapter, the mystical is very intricately
connected with nature, as nature is not created by mankind, but rather exists independently. The
father, who has close contact with the mystical realm, can hear its plea and deeply desires to communicate the language of nature to his son. However, he is ultimately disappointed in his own ineptitude to communicate those languages. He laments “da ich kein Wort aus solchen Sprachen kannte oder fand, nur meine Sprache hatte und nicht über deren Grenzen gelangen konnte, trug ich ihn stumm die Wege hinauf und hinunter und wieder heim, wo er lernte, Sätze zu bilden, und in die Falle ging” (129). Here the father has run against the borders of language. He is unable to communicate the language of nature to his son, because it lies beyond the realm of language, despite his desire to do so. He is limited to his own language, despite his communion with the mystical, and cannot communicate these mystical languages to his son. He thus remains silent through the rest of his walk with this son, reflecting Wittgenstein’s idea that that which cannot be talked about must be constrained to silence (7). Throughout the rest of the story, the father remains incommunicative with his son, while his son learns the language of the world, inhibiting him from experiencing the mystical and cutting him off from a relationship with his father. The boundary of language has thus also severed the relationship between the father and son.

Another example of this severity in a relationship is the character of Hans in “Undine Geht.” Hans, the name Undine uses to call all men, is the one whom she meets whenever she enters the world. Frustrated with her interactions with him, she is most frustrated by his hiding the truth behind his adept use of the language. According to Hermann Dorowin: “Die Sprache mißbrauchen die Hänse zum Verdecken der Wahrheit, ihre Redesarten sollen die Leere füllen, ’Damit euch nichts fehlt, damit die Welt rund ist’” (Dorowin, 5). Their use of the language covers and distorts all that lies beyond its boundaries. It does not deal with that which truly matters and is used for ill intent. It exercises power over humanity, in that it keeps people within
the boundaries of the world, manipulating their view of the truth, and it is used only to fill the silent void which contains the mystical, rather than helping them cross into the ineffable realm.

Both Wittgenstein and Bachmann found language to often hinder a search for truth or an attempt to bridge the two realms. The constraining nature of language especially influences the ability of language to solve problems concerning the metaphysical. This pertains especially to the branch of study which is meant to analyze and understand that which lies beyond; namely philosophy. They both, despite their affiliations with this branch of study, found philosophy an insufficient means to answer the problems of life. Achberger notes that one of the reasons Wittgenstein resonated so strongly with Bachmann is that “his work […] ‘traced the problems of philosophy back to the problems of language’” (Achberger 59). The roots of philosophical problems do not lie in the strength of an argument or in reason, rather the problem stems from the reliance of philosophy on language and logic to answer its questions. Language is a useless tool to solve these problems, for it is just as constrained to the world as the problems that philosophy attempts to solve.

This phenomenon of logic being empty and useless is reflected in Bachmann’s “Undine Geht.” Undine, having learned the language of humanity, has conversed effectively with Hans on issues of this world, but something is still left lacking. Regarding their conversations, she says: “Denn ich habe die feine Politik verstanden, eure Ideen, eure Gesinnungen, Meinungen, die habe ich sehr wohl verstanden und noch etwas mehr. Eben darum verstand ich nicht” (Bachmann 186). Here the mystical being Undine has engaged the minds of men, discussing their ideas, theories, politics, and so forth; yet she, comprehending the totality of facts, and “noch etwas mehr,” still claims not to truly understand. Here we can note Undine’s comprehension of something that lies beyond the world, a mystical realm, which the men are not engaging in their
theories and ideas. It is not because she does not understand their world, but because she understands there is more to existence than their “meaningless” theories and ideas that are formed by their logic and language.

Undine, even after receiving the logical conclusions from men, spoken about in their language, still feels the problems of life are unanswered. This reflects Wittgenstein’s aforementioned proposition 6.52: “Wir fühlen, daß, selbst wenn alle möglichen wissenschaftlichen Fragen beantwortet sind, unsere Lebensprobleme noch gar nicht berührt sind. Freilich bleibt dann eben keine Frage mehr; und eben dies ist die Antwort.” Even after all the possible and potential questions have been answered--it can be assumed he means the questions discussed in our language (such as those discussed by philosophy)--the true problems of life have not even been touched; the discussion has been in vain and void. The answer, however, according to Wittgenstein, comes when there are no more questions left.

This concept is echoed again in Bachmann’s work through the voice of Undine, who when explaining her existence in her underwater world, states: “Es gibt keine Fragen in meinem Leben” (Bachmann 183). Because there is no language in her world, there are no questions. This lack of a language and therefore the lack of questions and philosophical discussion is a strong characteristic of Undine’s mystical realm. Here, where there is no language, lie the answers to the “Lebensprobleme” which Wittgenstein proposes philosophy cannot answer.

Bachmann held that, although philosophy cannot answer these questions, answers can be found or at least experienced through the arts. This is illustrated in “Undine geht,” when the water calls out to the world of men with its “Schmerzton, den Ruf von weither, die geisterhafte Musik. Komm! Komm! Nur einmal komm!” (Bachmann 184). It is this music from Undine’s watery domain, which here symbolizes a realm outside of our own, that draws the men to the
water in the quiet of the night (184). Only then is the mystical world truly understood by mankind. The two realms are briefly united by the music exuding from the water world. Art alone has breached the boundary between the two realms, as it encroaches uninvited upon the world of men, heard once the noise of the world has ended with the day. In the end it is rejected and Hans continues his existence in this world, only disturbed by this “geisterhafte Musik.”

However, as Undine returns to the water, one more call is sent out to men for them to understand and answer. It is a call to come to the mystical realm and dwell there. Here we note how Bachman uses the most lyrical form of language to illustrate the musical plea from this mystical being:

Beinahe verstummt,
beinahe noch
den Ruf
hörrend.

Komm. (192)

This last plea for understanding and unity has been best formed through the most musical of literary forms, poetry. One can imagine that the music will still encroach upon the world of men, beseeching them to come just once to the mystical domain, leaving their world, and uniting with Undine and her watery world. Ultimately, when language has failed, men can still follow the call of the music, even if they do not understand it with their logic and reason.

The language itself in her story “Undine geht” reflects the struggle this mystical being has with language, showing how she is trying to stretch the language to describe herself, yet failing. At the beginning of the narrative she states:

ich werde nie wiederkommen, nie wieder Ja sagen und Du und Ja. All diese Worte wird es nicht mehr geben, und ich sage euch vielleicht, warum. Denn ihr kennt doch die Fragen, und sie beginnen alle mit “Warum?” Es gibt keine Fragen
in meinem Leben. Ich liebe das Wasser, seine dichte Durchsichtigkeit, das Grün im Wasser und die sprachlosen Geschöpfe [...] mein Haar unter ihnen, in ihm, dem gerechten Wasser, dem gleichgültigen Spiegel, der es mir verbietet, euch anders zu sehen. Die nasse Grenze zwischen mir und mir… (183)

The text reads like a flowing stream of consciousness, her thoughts being spoken as she thinks them. The language reflects the nature of her mystical realm, flowing in and out of itself without any apparent goal. She appears also to have a certain hesitancy, as if she is not comfortable in the language. This is indicated by her repetition of words such as “Ja,” “Warum” and “Wasser,” almost as if she is not certain she said it correctly the first time. She begins speaking about her desire to never return, continuing to talk about her realm, and coming to speak about the boundary between her realm and the world. Although this follows a sequence of ideas, it lacks a certain logical progression, indicating she does not hold to typical human logical patterns, but rather speaks out of an experience outside language and its forms. This lends a broken rhythm to the language and lack of a clear structure or rhythm to which a normal speaker would be accustomed, rather the sentences are broken up into various clauses and fragments. She is not comfortable with this human language, as she is a mystical being from another realm and language belongs to the world of men.

Additionally Bachmann uses alliteration to emphasize the contradiction of “dichte Durchsichtigkeit.” It seems logically impossible to have a thick transparency, but this logical impossibility is exactly what characterizes the mystical realm, since logic does not exist there. This logical impossibility also emphasizes its obscurity, where beings are “gleichgültig” and “sprachlos.” As seen in the previous chapter, the mystical realm is an equalizer, where no one person is greater than another, and individuals lose their sense of individuality and identity. Also the adjective “sprachlos” again emphasizes how language does not exist here in this realm, as language belongs to the world of humanity. In Undine’s watery world beings simply do not
speak, for language is useless and questions are already answered. By using these simple tools of alliteration, contradiction, and descriptive adjectives, Bachmann has successfully transformed the language to give the reader a glimpse of the nature of the mystical realm.

Another instance of Bachmann pushing the boundaries of language appears in a passage from “Alles” quoted earlier. It is the father’s description of his walk with his son, when nature calls out to him to teach his son its language. For the sake of clarity, I will cite the passage again:

Ja, sonntags wanderte ich mit ihm durch den Wienerwald, und wenn wir an ein Wasser kamen, sagte es in mir: Lehr ihn die Wassersprache! Es ging über Steine. Über Wurzeln. Lehr ihn die Steinsprache! Wurzle ihn neu ein! Die Blätter fielen, denn es war wieder Herbst. Lehr ihn die Blättersprache!
Aber da ich kein Wort aus solchen Sprachen kannte oder fand, nur meine Sprache hatte und nicht über deren Grenzen gelangen konnte, trug ich ihn stumm die Wege hinauf und hinunter und wieder heim.
(Bachmann, “Alles,” 129)

What is most interesting in this passage is the change of sentence structure from his description of the walk, to his quotation of the elements of nature, and finally to his struggle with the human language. When he is describing the “normal” world, the language follows normal sentence structure and logical narrative progression. However, where nature is quoted, the language suddenly turns into imperatives and fragments, bringing a sense of urgency. Nature is impelling him to teach his son this language, pressing against the borders, knowing the need for humanity to learn nature’s language. It is almost as if nature is pushing against the border by using these strong commands and phrases to break through it. Again there is no sense of logical progression, only a flowing sense of urgency and need for communication. However, as soon as the father turns his attention back to the world and his son, he realizes he is still constrained to the rules of language and continues his narrative within these logical bounds. Thus Bachmann has depicted here a difference between the mystical realm and the world by the variation of sentence structure.
One can see how bound Bachmann felt by her own language. Wittgenstein’s theory of the borders of language resonated strongly with her own struggle. They shared a common frustration, especially with the limiting and harmful nature of philosophy as it attempted to solve the problems of life; problems which are all rooted in the realm outside of their world, not in this world of facts. Language, as bound to this world, proves incapable of solving the problems, being tautological in nature. It often obscures the truth, prohibiting a true experience of the mystical realm. Bachmann, however, saw that language could still be used as a means of bridging this gap through art. For instance, poetry uses language in its various forms and possibilities to portray the mystical, while her prose describes that which lies beyond. However, the worlds were never completely reconciled for Bachmann, and the tension still remained despite all efforts. For both her and Wittgenstein, the only hope to resolve the tension lay in the utopian concept of a new language, which they sought after and hoped for.
CHAPTER THREE: REFLECTIONS OF UTOPIA IN INGEBORG BACHMANN’S PROSE

The borders of language, as we have seen, had an enormous effect on Wittgenstein and Bachmanns’ perception of the world. As she wrote, “Innerhalb der Grenzen aber haben wir den Blick gerichtet auf das Vollkommene, das Unmögliche, Unerreichbare, sei es der Liebe, der Freiheit oder jeder reinen Größe” (Bachmann, “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar,” 301). With this vision of the perfect and unreachable before her, she ardently hopes for a new language. She acknowledges this Utopian vision, while granting that it would most likely not be realized. Still, her literature and essays are filled with the hope of the arrival of a Utopian language, wherein everything could be communicated. This chapter will attempt to outline the foundations of Utopian thought, showing its destruction by the Nazi regime. It will then continue to outline Bachmann’s struggle with destroyed language, and discuss the influence of Wittgenstein and Musil in her thought. The chapter will conclude by tracing her Utopian vision through her literary works, and showing how “Bachmann’s Identität ist die andauernde Suche nach einer anderen Sprache” (Jurgensen 11).

Many of the first recorded ideas of Utopia appear in the Old Testament. The prophets whose books appear in the Hebrew Bible expected God to come and restore his kingdom upon earth. This manifested itself in many ways; for instance, Amos desired “a well-ordered society, animated by the spirit of justice and fair play” (Hertzler 13). He desired the redemption of pagan society, into a people of justice and righteousness. In the same light Hosea’s Utopian vision centers on Divine love, which would “follow after His socially, politically and religiously corrupt people [until they] permit Him to minister to them through the agency of His love” (Hertzler 18). This ministry of love would bring about a change in the people, which would
ultimately result in the change of the pagan society. As one traces through the prophets, despite their differences, they all wait expectantly for the hand of God to redeem society.

Although the biblical accounts are some of the first written records of the utopian ideal, Plato is more widely recognized as “the first to picture a perfect future” (Hertzler 7) and often regarded as the “father of idealism in philosophy, in politics, and in literature” (Hertzler 99). In his “Republic” he depicts a

state free from the corruption of extreme license and the dangers of tyranny, and embodying in its laws and institutions the principle of fundamental unity of the moral individual with the socialized state. [...] an ideal republic in which future mankind was to blissfully abide. (Hertzler 100)

Again here we see the desire to transform society into a place where men can exist in peace and safety, the key similarity with the biblical prophets being the need to change society from its current irreparable state. In fact the idea of Utopia can often be summarized as a destruction of the current society to rebuild a new one, leaving the question “how we would live and what kind of a world we would live in if we could do just that” (Levitas 1). However, Plato differs from the biblical prophets, in that he acknowledged that this world would most likely never be realized, saying it “exists in our reasoning, since it is no where on earth, at least, as I imagine” (qtd. in Hertzler 100). Utopia was an improbable idea—the word means “no place,” after all—, although it was hoped for.

The most significant contributor to the Utopian ideal is Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*, published in 1516. His vision is that of a “perfect communistic commonwealth” (Hertzler 127). Written as a satire, *Utopia* subtly yet boldly depicts the evils of the day, which often resulted from the possession of property and the greed which made the rich richer and the poor poorer. “More’s happy land is based, not upon desire, but upon the disdain of desire” (Hertzler 135). He presents a different model than Plato, in which he sees the root of societies’ evils in the desires of
man, and thus in his ideal world, there is no money, and everyone shares their property. It is a clearly designed society in which, as in the writings of his predecessors, he identified the social evils of the day, and presented his unrealizable hope of the best society possible.

The Utopian idea appears again and again throughout literature, as people longed for the perfect society. However, after the Second World War, the idea of Utopia seemed further off than ever. The Anti-Utopian idea sprang up after the war, as people began to give up even the hope of an ideal society. Joanna Jablkowska, in her book *Literatur ohne Hoffnung*, deals with the metamorphosis of the Utopian idea. She says: “die Ordnung, die im 16.-19. Jahrhundert ein Wunschtraum war, weil sie dem Bürger soziale und nicht nur soziale Sicherheit gab, ist im 20. Jahrhundert zu einer Horrorvision geworden” (46). The order for which the government and people had been struggling during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries turned into a terrible monster when it found its fulfillment in the Third Reich. The National Socialists began to realize their ordered and Utopian society, resulting in the death and destruction of the Second World War. The ideal society had failed completely, bringing not peace and security, but years of turmoil and a stain on history. This rise and fall of fascistic governments, most notably the rise of the Nazi empire, destroyed the hope of ever creating an ideal society. Hope was given up and “dem Gelächter preisgegeben” (Jablokowska 48).

In addition to the destruction of the hope of an ideal society, one of the more destructive elements of the Nazi Regime, for writers, was the destruction of the language. On a smaller scale, the use and context of certain words and phrases by the Third Reich have rendered them unusable. Words such as “Endlösung,” and “Gleichschaltung” will never quite be free from their context within the Nazi government, the former having denoted the death of millions and the latter indicating the consolidation of the former government into the Third Reich. On a larger
scale, the German language was the one used to execute the National Socialistic agenda; it was with this language that the orders had been given for destruction. Within all forms of media, including literature, it was only the material approved by the Nazis that received publication during this time. Thus publicly the language had been used for propaganda or to propagate ideas approved by the Third Reich, never to express a counter opinion or give reign to free expression. The language had been in the hands of the Nazis long enough to leave an indelible mark, a mark that did not dissolve with the end of the Third Reich. The German language, as with the rest of Europe, had to be re-built.

The destruction of the language had a strong influence on Bachman. Her poem “Wie soll ich mich nennen?” depicts her acute awareness of this destruction:

Wann begann die Schuld ihren Reigen,  
mit dem ich von Samen zu Samen schwamm?

Aber in mir singt noch ein Beginnen  
-oder ein Enden – und wehrt meiner Flucht,  
ich will dem Pfeil dieser Schuld entrinnen,  
der mich in Sandkorn und Wildente sucht.
(qtd. in Jurgensen 10)

Manfred Jurgensen, in his analysis of the poem, attributes her guilt and her desire to escape its arrow to National Socialism:

Die Schuld der Sprache, von der hier die Rede ist, schließt den konkreten Bezug auf nationalsozialistische Sprachmanipulationen des Deutschen ein. Auch die Österreicherin Ingeborg Bachmann weiß sich einem sprachlichen Erbe zugehörig, das die Bezeichnung natürlicher Schönheit in den Ausdruck einer schrecklichen Schuld verwandelte: das Wort Buchenwald ist bis heute ein Symptom für den moralischen Bankrott der deutschen Sprache geblieben. (Jurgensen 10)

Bachman felt herself to be the inheritor of a destroyed and manipulated language. The Nazis had left the German language in moral bankruptcy. For the artist this posed a difficult problem: how does one write in a bankrupt language?
Thus, as Bachmann formed her vision of Utopia, a crucial element was not the hope for a new society, but rather the hope for a new language, unblemished by human wrongdoing. At the same time she viewed literature as a means of slowly achieving this Utopia. Her vision was influenced indirectly by Wittgenstein’s philosophy, and more directly by Robert Musil, who saw Utopia as not a place, but rather a direction.

We have seen in the past two chapters that language functions as part of this world, composed of its facts, and is thus able to speak truly only about those facts. It therefore obstructs “das Mystische” as termed by Wittgenstein. Thus an essential aspect of Bachmann’s utopian vision is the freedom from words […] It is only in transcending the customary limits of our faulty language […] that we can glimpse a new language, one imaginative enough for us to speak the truth about ourselves. (Achberger 89)

With freedom from language one can finally experience the other realm, going beyond the boundaries of language, against which both Bachmann and Wittgenstein constantly collided. Language, especially the language of philosophy, limits the expression of the common experience of humanity of something that lies outside of this world. The analysis of this experience is typically undertaken by philosophers, with little success. Bachmann and Wittgenstein both strove to point “beyond the limitations of philosophers” (Lennox 245). Philosophers were missing the point in their search to solve life’s questions through philosophy; the problem was not such that it could be solved or understood through man’s logic. In fact Wittgenstein in the conclusion of his Tractatus states:

Meine Sätze erläutern dadurch, daß sie der, welcher mich versteht, am Ende als unsinnig erkennt, wenn er durch sie – auf ihnen -- über sie hinaustiegen ist. (Er muß sozusagen die Leiter wegwerfen, nachdem er auf ihr hinaufgestiegen ist.) (T, 6.54)
Wittgenstein here acknowledges his own attempt to discover the mystical through logic as only a means to an end. His arguments themselves must be thrown away once one has reached a place of understanding, climbing beyond the logic, and entering a point of understanding in which one does not need them any more.

This journey towards something else continued to weave itself throughout Wittgenstein’s later writings. In fact, as recorded by Sara Lennox, Wittgenstein suggested in the introduction to his *Philosophische Bemerkungen* that the spirit of his work “ist ein anderer als der des großen Stromes der europäischen und amerikanischen Zivilisation, in dem wir alle stehen,” and he prefaced the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* with an epigraph from Nestroy: “Überhaupt hat der Fortschritt das an sich, daß er viel größer ausschaut, als er wirklich ist (PU, p. viii) […]” (Lennox 254)

Wittgenstein wanted to signify something greater than the civilization of the day, similar to Plato and More, although his ideal wasn’t in the formation of another society, it was the call to a different way of thinking, a call away from the facts of the world to experience the mystical. He had a vision of where society could be heading, going against the great tides of progression and improvement, but rather searching for an answer to the questions which philosophy had failed to answer.

It was this desire to break out from the limits of language that inspired Bachmann’s Utopian vision:

what Bachmann understands as Wittgenstein’s particular kind of mysticism, his “Einbruchstellen des sich Zeigenden, des mystisch oder glaubend Erfahrbaren…, das auf unser Tun und Lassen wirkt” (IV, 124) seems very close to what she has described (or shown) elsewhere in her work as the utopian, a vision of an almost-not-yet-imaginable, different way of being in the world. (Lennox 253f)

This world, inspired by Wittgenstein, is a different place, where the violence of this world does not exist. It can be seen occasionally, as it has broken through the boundaries of language through various spiritual or existential experiences, albeit briefly, influencing our lives. In
Bachmann’s vision of Utopia, these occasionally experienced elements of the mystical would become the norm. It would be a completely different way of existing, not merely a new formation of society. This vision, inspired by Wittgenstein, offered “the hope and the possibility that the ever-present war of the *Todesarten* might cease” (Lennox 254).

Bachmann’s Utopian vision was also greatly influenced by Musil. His concept of Utopia was divided into three more definitive ideas of the Utopia, that of “induktiven Gesinnung oder des gegebenen sozialen Zustands,” the “Utopie des anderen Lebens [in Liebe]” and the “Utopie des reinen ‘anderen Zustands’” (Weber 56). The Utopia of inductive attitude or the given social situation deals with the opposition between an inductive way of thought and a deductive way of thought. Deduction begins with a premise, such as God or morality, and from there deduces how we should behave. Induction however relies on our experience and scientific observation, and from there decides how we should proceed. The open-ended nature of this way of thought lends itself to an Utopian state, or non-place, as it knows neither where we are going nor where we have come from, only what we ought to do next. The Utopia of the “anderen Lebens in Liebe” deals with the love between two people, when reality is suspended and their entire attention and energy is focused on the other. This temporary suspension frees the lovers from the constraints of the world, including language, thus resulting in an unsustainable Utopian state.

The idea of the “andere Zustand” was the most significant to Bachmann. She struggled to find a way to mediate between the two realms, as seen in her literary works, as recorded by Lennox:

> Despite the few moments of utopian harmony in the *Todesarten* [...] Bachmann also can scarcely imagine a mediation between the far-reaching critique of the later work and what she sometimes termed, borrowing Musil’s words, “der andere Zustand,” a world where it would be altogether different. (Lennox 255)
This “other condition” is comparable with Wittgenstein’s “Mystische,” since they both have an element of viewing the world from outside the world. The “andere Zustand” is when the difference between the viewer and the viewed is removed. Things are viewed for no purpose, they are seen for themselves. In a way it is a place of being. In this place the harm of the world, with its judgments and laws, would disappear, as would the rigidity of language. It is not a vision of societal change, such as the ideals of Plato and More, but rather a hope for a new realm and way of being.

To a great extent, this understanding of Utopia was not a place, but rather a process of seeing the world differently through a process of thought. It is important to Musil’s and Bachmann’s understanding of Utopia to understand it as:

Prozeß und nicht als Ziel, an dessen Stelle die “Richtbilder” treten, über die Ingeborg Bachmann sagt: “Musils Richtbilder… wollen uns zu nichts verführen, nur herausführen aus einem schablonenhaften und konventionellen Denken”. (IV, 28) […]

Utopia is therefore neither a society that would come, nor the changing of society now, but rather the journey to understanding things anew, for seeing new possibilities of the world. This journey takes place in thought, especially as expressed through art. The goal of this form of Utopia stands in stark opposition to that of Plato and More, as it seeks no result or culmination. Rather it is a continuing search that results in new understandings. This leads into further probing. The Utopian here is realized through this endless search for renewal. If this search were ever ended, Utopia would end with it.

A key component to Bachmann’s concept of Utopia is her “andauernde Suche nach einer anderen Sprache” (Jurgensen 11). As with Musil’s idea of searching for new possibilities, she sought for a language other than her own or any that the world would offer. Only with a new
language could Musil’s “anderen Zustand” and Wittgenstein’s “Mystische” be understood, experienced, and truly communicated. It was this language that would cross the boundary between the two worlds.

However, this did not negate the current language’s importance. Language itself was “Utopie und Erlösung” (Jurgensen 14) as a Utopian process of continual revelation and discovering, with the vain hope of a time to come. By stretching language to its limits, one could hope to cross the boundary, revealing new aspects of “das Mystische” and experiencing the “andere Zustand.” By stretching and playing with the language, one could have brief glimpses of what language could be.

Literature, then, plays a crucial role in Bachmann’s understanding of the Utopian. As Achberger writes of Bachmann: “Literature as Utopia is moving toward--and never attaining--a language we can only sense, a language which can transcend the usual limits of what she termed ‘the faulty language’ […] which is all we have” (Achberger 63). Bachmann writes that by using this faulty language in the form of literature, it becomes a

tausendfacher und mehreretausendjähriger Verstoß gegen die schlechte Sprache – denn das Leben hat nur eine Schlechte Sprache- und die ihm darum ein Utopia der Sprache gegenübergesetzt, diese Literatur also, wie eng sie sich auch an die Zeit und ihre schlechte Sprache halten mag, ist zu rühmen wegen ihres verzweiflungsvollen Unterwegsseins zu dieser Sprache und nur darum ein Ruhm und eine Hoffnung der Menschen. (Bachmann, “Literatur als Utopie,” 346)

In a sense, she is using the language itself to attack its current state. By using it this way, she presents the ideal of another language, even while recognizing it is a desperate attempt to use this language to point to another. By doing this she hopes to create a hope in her readers that a time will come when language will be able to communicate properly.

By using this language, in the form of literature, Bachmann makes readers aware “of lack, both in the work and in our world” (Achberger 63). By making ourselves aware of the lack,
we desire its presence so much more, striving to fill it through literature. Humanity has begun to fill the “unbeschriebene Blatt, auf dem das noch Hinzuzugewinnende auch eingetragen scheint” (Bachmann, “Literatur als Utopie,” 337). By writing, we are searching for the ultimate culmination of our purpose, by filling out the page we search for Utopia. The written word is the “immer Erhoffte, das Erwünschte […] ein nach vorn geöffnetes Reich von unbekannten Grenzen” (Bachmann 337). The page does not end, and the writer is always searching to go past the boundaries of language, although rarely succeeding. In this way the author is stretching the boundaries of language, finding out where he can go, embarking upon the Utopian journey that points beyond itself and towards another realm.

Also importantly, by committing this process to the page, and struggling with the word as an art form, the writer leaves it for posterity. The writer writes not only for her own age, but for the time to come. Accordingly, the readers are always searching the works of old. Bachman describes this process:

An jedem großen Werk, sei es nun der “Don Quijote” oder die “Divina Commedia”, ist für uns etwas verblüht, verwittert, es gibt einen Mangel, den wir selbst beheben dadurch, daß wir ihm heute eine Chance geben, es lesen und morgen lesen wollen – einen Mangel, der so groß ist, daß er uns antreibt, mit der Literatur als einer Utopie zu verfahren. (Bachmann, Literatur als Utopie, 337)

There is a lack of something in the old literature, which we therefore wish to discover and work through. We give the work a chance in this new time, reading it continually in order to find what the authors were struggling to express. By finding this point of absence in the literature, where the author failed in his attempt to communicate, we can move through it, thereby continuing in the process of Utopia, the lack propelling us further upon the search.

Literature’s ability to be preserved and its engaging aspect inspired Bachmann to continue writing. Achberger explains further:
The utopian quality of literature is not that it fits a literary movement or period but that it remains “unclosed”, that it has the force of all times pressing against it, that it is open to interaction with readers in all times. It resists being pigeonholed and entombed [...] it moves toward a new language or “utopia of language.” (Achberger 63)

This puts an important burden upon the writer. From Musil, Bachmann “gained her understanding of Utopia not as goal, but as direction; taking a Utopian direction was for Bachmann the decisive function of literature and the ethical responsibility of the writer” (Achberger 64). The writer then, according to Bachmann, becomes the mediator between this world and the “andere Zustand” as well as being the agent of moving literature towards Utopia. The writer “erhofft sie [Literatur] und gibt diese Hoffnung nie auf” (Bachmann, “Literatur als Utopie,” 334). It is a constant effort, which the writer is incapable of abandoning. His hope for a new language, for a new way to exist, inspires him to continue writing, even if it is tantamount to a “Todesurteil” (334). His duty to the language and the cause cannot be abandoned. He both controls and is controlled by the written word. According to Jurgensen: “Das Bachmannsche Reich beheimatet sich in einer neuen Sprache, die den Mordversuch an der Wirklichkeit richten wird. Allein das heilige Wort kann der Dichterin Erlösung aus einer Welt der ‘Gaunersprache’ bringen” (Jurgensen 14). By searching for the new language, the author seeks freedom from this world, destroying the old and bringing us to the new.

Achberger notes:

Writers, in their constant reaching for this language, are utopian beings. And literature offers us a fragmentary glimpse, in a line or a scene, of that language which governs our imagination, which we struggle to imitate, and in which we can comprehend ourselves and glimpse the possibility of peace. (Achberger 63)

Writers themselves, in their search for another language, become Utopian beings themselves, finding that literature offers a quick glimpse of what they are searching for. In this glimpse we see the “possibility of peace,” namely the chance that humans could live without violence,
deception, or disagreement. This possibility drives them on the search for new possibilities to heal the current of the world.

Bachmann especially hoped for reconciliation between men and women. The tension between the two genders is frequently seen throughout her works, most clearly in her last novels *Malina* and *Der Fall Franza*, where women suffer tremendously at the hands of men. In her search for Utopia, Bachmann envisioned this difference disappearing. In fact, next to her search for a new language, this reconciliation plays the second most significant role in her concept of Utopia. She gathered much of the inspiration again from Musil:

Die Anlehnung der Autorin an Musil stellt einen Versuch dar, dessen Utopiekonzept zu und auf die von ihr thematisierten Problembereiche anzuwenden, nämliche auf den latenten Faschismus in zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen, auf das Verhältnis von Frauen und Männern zueinander und auf die weibliche Identitätssuche. (Thau 116)

The search for Utopia thus incorporated the idea of the reconciliation of the genders with each other, destroying the boundaries between them. This would also further the cause of finding the female identity. For, although women continually receive more rights in western society, there still remains a lack of a female identity.

However it is doubtful whether Bachmann would claim that the oppression comes directly from men; rather it comes more from the situation of the language. As Jurgensen writes, “Sie weiß, daß Mann und Frau gleichermaßen Opfer einer ihnen auferlegten Sprache sind” (Jurgensen 14). It is the language that keeps men and women captive to this world. They both are victims of the same language, unable to subjugate it. Thus women will remain subjugated to men via the language until the new language arrives.
Throughout her writings, especially her later prose works, one can observe Bachmann’s straining after this new world and the new language. In her collection of six stories, entitled *Das dreißigste Jahr*, each story has a very particular sense of searching, as noted by Achberger:

In all the stories in this collection, there is a yearning for renewal, for another order, for salvation and truth […]. These clashes between utopian vision and real limitations are moments of break-through and breakdown, moments of truth in what have otherwise been lives of illusion […]. The protagonists, like the readers, have expanded their awareness and understanding of human existence, have glimpsed the impossible while still firmly grounded in the limits of their realities. They have, in Bachmann’s words, expanded their possibilities “in the interplay of the impossible with the possible.” Her central figures in this collection are jolted into new awareness. In the cracks and absences of their shaken lives, they are given a glimpse of a new reality, together with the knowledge that it is unattainable. (Achberger 75)

One of the clearest examples of a character on a search is the nameless main character in the title story “Das dreißigste Jahr.” In this story he is “jolted into awareness” by the impending arrival of his thirtieth birthday. He, like the other characters in this series, is searching for something beyond the limitations of the world, having been made aware of the impossible during different stages of his life. Through the narrative the reader encounters life with the narrator, seeing his frustrations with the world around him, joining him in his constant search.

One of his key frustrations is, not surprisingly, with language. “In der Erzählung *das dreißigste Jahr* prägt Ingeborg Bachman den Ausdruck ‘Gaunersprache.’ Man wird der Bemühung Bachmanns um eine eigene, neue, ‘andere’ Sprache nicht gerecht werden, ohne dieses Gegenpols eingedenk zu bleiben” (Jurgensen 13). “Gaunersprache” is typically defined as the language of the underground, a common slang language used by small time crooks. Here however Bachmann is expanding its meaning to encompass all of human language. It is against the common, banal language that the main character is fighting. This language proves to be the stumbling block for the Utopian progression.
This can be seen in the protagonist’s interactions with “Moll,” the main character who seems to represent the people surrounding him, with whom he is frustrated. Moll is once characterized as “Moll, der die Sprache verloren hat und dafür mit zweitausend Pfauenfedern aus anderen Sprachen paradiert. Moll, der Romane nicht mehr lesen kann, Moll für den das Gedicht keine Zukunft hat” (Bachmann, “Das dreißigste Jahr,” 106). Here the main character puts Moll in a negative light, because Moll has lost his language. He also puts no value on literature or poetry. He is entrenched in the “Gaunersprache,” integrated into banal stages, not striving to find a new language at all, but rather manipulating the surrounding environment for his own good. Moll supplies the antipole to the Utopian state.

It is this holding onto the world which hinders the coming of a new age. As the narrator states:


Any progress that could be made is hindered by the disreputability always in existence in spite of efforts to reform. This shame is then in turn held by the endurance of words. With these words thus tainted, there will never be any progress. Thus, only with a new language will a new world emerge.

One can witness in this story how Bachmann stretches this language, in the hope of communicating a new language. In the following passage, the narrator communicates the desire for a new order, while using the language itself to convey the impact of a new language:

> Wenn der neue Status geschaffen ist
> Wenn die Nachfolge in keinem Geist mehr angetreten wird
> Wenn endlich endlich kommt
> Dann
Dann spring noch einmal auf und reiß die alte schimpfliche Ordnung ein. Dann sei anders, damit die Welt sich verändert, damit sie die Richtung ändert, endlich! Dann, tritt du sie an!
(Bachmann, “Das dreißigste Jahr,” 98)

Concerning content, here is a clear example of a character expressing Bachmann’s Utopian ideals. It will come when every thing is swept away, including the old order and old ways of thinking. Then, will the world finally change.

One can also notice in the passage how Bachmann uses the language to create a vision of a coming one. She creates a sense of longing and urgency by repeatedly using “wenn.” With the repetition of “endlich” this longing is ironized with the juxtaposition of the word against itself. The reader senses how long this wait has been, understanding more clearly the need for the world to change. Then, by leaving “dann” to occupy its own line, she creates a pause in the text, and it is almost as if the change of the world happens there in the literary silence, in a single word. The next line, which also begins in “dann,” brings a mood of movement, indicated by such words as “spring” and “einreißen.” A new language would, in a way, bring this sort of movement to life, a new sense of joy. The need for the world to change is again emphasized by using words based on the root “anders” three times and the importance of such a change is accented by the exclamation points. Bachmann here has used the language, stretching it and molding it, to create the imagery and feeling she envisions a new language would have.

In her story “Ein Wildermuth,” Bachmann depicts a man, by the name of Wildermuth, on his search for absolute truth. As the story comes to a conclusion, Wildermuth has still not found this elusive truth, despite his efforts:

Here Wildermuth laments the difficulty of ever reaching an ultimate truth, of reaching the Utopian state he is searching for. Every time he gets closer, the truth eludes him. He has experienced the journey of which Bachmann and Musil speak, and discovered that it is only attainable if one does not try to possess it. Utopia is not found, it is experienced in the journey to find it.

The passage in itself has a rhythmic quality. The first repetition of “weiter” twice emphasizes the expanse this journey covers, and the introduction of the word “wieder,” which has a similar metrical structure, emphasizes how this journey changes yet keeps a steady rhythm. The alliteration enhances this rhythm, while keeping the language poetical. The rhythm is kept in the next series of short prepositional phrases, using the prepositions zu, an, and über, which emphasizes how many places this journey passes through, and thus how many places, times and situations the traveler will have to traverse. The steady pace, however, indicates the regularity and predictability of the changes that will come as one abandons the societal norms and comes to terms with the more general and all-inclusive attitudes which come with this new state of mind. Although it is always a different place, such as a new piece of art or new book, new possibilities are always to be found. Bachmann concludes the sentence, beginning the next with a hypothetical situation, placing similar subjunctive clauses right after one another. If only this truth were attainable, had mass, a way of holding onto it, Wildermuth could be content. By placing this hope in the subjunctive, she has effectively communicated Wildermuth’s wish that this illusive truth could be reached once one stopped reaching for it. The sentence concludes with a “wenn” clause, this time however placing an emphasis on non-action, by using the word “nicht” twice, and an expression of being content with a more general way of experiencing reality, which accurately describes the utopian journey.
The hope of a new language, of the arrival of a Utopia, thus holds a great deal of significance for Bachmann. Her visions of Utopia differ from her literary predecessors’, such as the biblical prophets and Thomas More. They envisioned a new order, an actual society, which would come and establish a better form of government and a new way of life. This hope, however, was destroyed with the coming of fascist governments, whose Utopian elements proved to be disastrous, thus discrediting and disabling the Utopian concept. Most notably, the Third Reich left a great stain on the German language, which acutely affected the authors, as they struggled to use a faulty language. Bachmann, in her formulation of a solution to the problem, drew her inspiration from Wittgenstein and Musil. From Wittgenstein she drew the desire to break free from the constraints of language, searching for a new language that would break the borders that the current language held fast to. Musil gave her the concept of the “andere Zustand,” a place where language would not have an influence on perception, and more importantly, inspiring her to view Utopia not as a place, but rather as a journey. Literature, then, plays an important role in this journey, especially when one reviews the authors of old to find the limits of language that they had found, thus bringing the journey even further. The works still remain active, even after the authors are gone. Authors, then, in a way, became Utopian themselves, being the mediator between the two realms, bringing a vision of what language could be. Bachmann hoped that bringing a new language to the world, and with it a new order, would bring reconciliation between men and women, because she viewed language as one of the chief causes of the divide between the two. Her longing for Utopia can be seen in her works, as we have seen. Her works still speak to this Utopian ideal, as she seeks to bring the new order into the world, or at least to communicate the vision through her writing, even as she knew her hope for a new order was in vain, saying:
CONCLUSION: “DAS MYSTISCHE,” LANGUAGE BOUNDARIES, AND UTOPIA AS PORTRAYED IN BACHMANN’S “EIN WILDERMUTH.”

Of the four stories that make up the collection Das dreißigste Jahr, “Ein Wildermuth” is the most straightforward in narrative style. The plot of “Ein Wildermuth” is relatively simple, in contrast to the more complicated and abstract themes of the other three narratives. The judge Wildermuth is confronted with what he perceives as an “open and shut” case. The case has an interesting challenge, however. The defendant, who is accused of killing his father, is also named Wildermuth. The defendant had confessed his crime at the police station; however, on second thought he cannot remember any longer what really happened that night, and whether he indeed killed his father. The case is prolonged, becoming more intricate in all the details that the court must canvass in order to solve the case. As the proceedings continue, it comes to a point where the final verdict hangs on a button from a jacket left at the crime scene, which they call in a button expert to examine. For Herr Wildermuth, the case has proceeded in a ridiculous fashion, and he breaks out in a loud cry during the trial.

At this point in the narrative Bachmann begins another section of the story, this time told from the perspective of Herr Wildermuth. We learn about his childhood, during which his father enforced the search for absolute truth upon his children. This search for truth continued throughout Wildermuth’s college years and into his career. The reader learns about his wife Gerda, who cares little for truth, yet has an enigmatic glow and verbose ways that bewitch himself and his friends. He also describes an affair he had with a waitress while he was still engaged to Gerda, the implications of which will be explored below. And throughout the narrative he interjects his current opinions about and his frustrations with this life-long search.
“Ein Wildermuth” ends with Herr Wildermuth's resignation from his search for truth through logic and law, yet continuing his search through the experience of the mystical.

This story speaks to many of the themes that have been presented in the previous three chapters. In this story we have several key examples of the mystical, the problem of language, and Utopia. In order to conclude this thesis we will examine how Bachmann portrayed these three elements in “Ein Wildermuth.”

The most prevalent motifs in Bachmann’s works that relate to “das Mystische” are nature and silence. These are especially important to “Ein Wildermuth.” Nature, since it is outside the constructs of human society is used in this story to symbolize the mystical, the realm apart from the world, indicates how the character experiences this other realm. Although rarely described, nature is significant to understanding Wildermuth’s final resignation. The majority of the story shows the process of Wildermuth’s thoughts, seldom taking time to describe the environment in which he finds himself. As he narrates his journey through life, especially his passionate search for truth and how it has eluded him, he reaches a point of resignation. “Ich bin dieser Spiele und dieser Sprache müde” (176), he says, indicating he no longer wishes to pursue the affairs of this world and its logic. To illustrate this exasperation, he reveals “Ich will ja meine Robe und mein Barett ablegen, mich hinhocken an jede Stelle der Welt, mich hinlegen auf Gras und Asphalt und die Welt abhören, abtasten, abklopfen, aufwühlen, mich in sie verbeißen und mit ihr übereinstimmen” (181). This resignation from the world of logic, signified by the taking off of his judge’s robe and cap, surrenders itself to the reality of nature and the entering into the “anderen Zustand” absent of the world’s language and logic, experiencing the surroundings without an end goal in sight and losing a sense of individuality. It is a strong image of letting the world fall away to enter another realm apart from logic and reason. This reflects Wittgenstein’s
understanding of the mystical: “Nicht wie die Welt ist, ist das Mystische, sondern daß sie ist” (6.44). He no longer wants to examine the “how” of this world through his occupation and quest for truth, but rather wishes to experience “being” in nature, as seen by his wishing to listen, feel, and ultimately to come to complete harmony and concordance with this other realm. The mystical lies beyond this world (6.41), thus he first transcends the world created by man into the mystical world, represented by nature, leaving the “how” of the world behind.

Silence—communication beyond language—is illustrated through Wildermuth’s affair with the waitress in another town, whom he visits occasionally while on business. The defining aspect of this relationship is their lack of communication via language. They only say “das Notwendigste” (174), that which must be said for basic communication. They consummated their love in harmonious silence: “Ich habe mit diesem bleichen geduldigen Körper Wandas so übereingestimmt, so die Liebe vollzogen, daß jedes Wort sie gestört hätte und kein Wort, das sie nicht gestört hätte, zu finden war” (174). In this silence they find all they need, signified by the reuse of the word “übereinstimmen,” the same harmonious unity as Wildermuth found in nature. Here this harmonious unity is characterized by silence, reflecting Wittgenstein’s proposition: “Es gibt allerdings Unaussprechliches. Dies zeigt sich, es ist das Mystische” (6.522). As the mystical exists outside of language, communicating verbally with one another would just destroy that which they have created, as it would bring them back into the world of preconceived notions and utilitarian attitudes. Their love is unspeakable, thus aligning itself with the ineffable characteristic of the mystical.

With Wanda, Wildermuth experiences the mystical realm, where all exists in quiet harmony. However, with his wife Gerda, language hinders their relationship. “Gerda mit ihrer Blumensprache – wie will sie aufkommen gegen dieses Schweigen von damals! Könnte man
these Sprache bloß austilgen, ihr abgewöhnen, mit der sie mich so entfernt von sich.” (174)
Language has prevented them from experiencing the unity that he had experienced with Wanda. He believes that if this language were simply removed, the distance between them would be removed as well. However, as long as that language remains, their relationship will be obstructed.

Language is what separates Wildermuth from sharing the same unity with his wife that he had experienced with the waitress Wanda. Gerda’s “Blumensprache” (174) has prevented this unity, intruding upon the mystical silence that could have been theirs. Her romantic jibber-jabber--“Liebster, ich bin so froh, Hab mich lieb. Tu deiner Geliebten nicht weh. Hast du mich auch wirklich noch lieb?” (174)--has served as a veil to cover that which Wildermuth supposes she really feels: “Was will sie verschleiern mit ihrer Sprache, welchen Mangel wettmachen und warum will sie mich auch so reden machen?” (174). This serves as a concrete example of language constraining and limiting human experience. Her frequent use of language confuses and inhibits Wildermuth rather than bringing them together in true unity, since her talk is merely tautological, mirroring Wittgenstein’s claim about logic: “Die Sätze der Logik sind Tautologien (6.1). Die Sätze der Logik sagen also nichts” (6.11). Although Gerda is talking, because language is rooted in the structure and logic of the world, she ultimately says nothing of meaning. Instead of pointing toward actual experience, her language points experience in the direction of cliché.

Wildermuth’s shout in the midst of a trial also signifies the limitations of language. Frustrated with the contradicting truths being offered, and even more so by the fact that the entire trial hangs on the analysis of a devoted button expert, he shouts out in frustration. In his words:

Ich konnte plötzlich über einen Knopf nicht hinwegkommen und nicht über einen Mann, der auch ein Wildermuth ist und ein Recht darauf hätte, daß nicht nur die
Wahrheit ans Licht kommt, die wir brauchen können. […] Ich kann mich nicht abfinden damit, daß die eine Wahrheit genügt, die ans Licht kommen kann, und daß die andere Wahrheit nicht daherkommt, nicht angeschossen kommt, nicht aufzuckt wie ein Blitz. (Bachmann, “Ein Wildermuth,” 180)

Bachmann here, and throughout the story, shows how logic fails to answer life’s fundamental questions, in this case the question of truth. By using man’s logic and language, the search for truth in the court trial has only increased in difficulty and obscurity.

The intense analysis of the button has only proved to make the truth more obscure, even though up to this point Wildermuth has relied on such scientific and logical information to arrive at truth. Now it only conceals that which could be genuinely true, that which would appear like lightning and, presumably, solve the case. He is maddened by the superficiality of it all; that it is failing to answer the questions of truth, paralleling Wittgenstein’s proposition that we feel “selbst wenn alle möglichen wissenschaftlichen Fragen beantwortet sind, unsere Lebensprobleme noch gar nicht berührt sind” (6.52). This inability of logic to solve the problem before him, in addition to his arising awareness of the limits of logic, drives him to the brink of desperation.

As a result, he breaks out into a public “Schrei,” which can be translated both as “shouting out” or “scream.” According to the witnesses at the trial, he did shout out something about truth, however, the only thing they agree on was that “truth” was among the words he shouted out; other than that there is no unity among the witnesses. However, what is most important is their conclusion: “Fest steht der Schrei” (155). This reflects how language has proved insufficient for Wildermuth to express his deep frustration. In the midst of a trial, where certainly verbosity is the norm, his only means of communicating is to completely leave language and “schreien.” To communicate such intense emotion he resorts to an intense primal urge to yell, rather than using humanity’s sophisticated construction of language, since it has no vocabulary or means of communicating such severity. Language is what has frustrated
Wildermuth ultimately, because its ability to discover truth is finite. Thus the only means left to him to express this frustration is abandoning language itself, screaming out against its borders.

It is this scream that signifies a change in Wildermuth. His everlasting pursuit of truth through justice and logic comes to a halt. However, his search for truth does not come to an end. Bachmann ends the narrative with a longing sigh from Wildermuth:

Ich will ja meine Robe und mein Barett ablegen, mich hinhocken an jede Stelle der Welt, mich hinlegen auf Gras und Asphalt und die Welt abhören, abtasten, abklopfen, auf wühlen, mich in sie verbeißen und mit ihr übereinstimmen dann, unendlich lang und ganz -
Bis mir die Wahrheit wird über das Gras und den Regen und über uns:
Ein Stummes Innewerden, zum Schreien nötigend und zum Aufschrei über alle Wahrheiten.
Wahrheit, von der keiner träumt, die keiner will. (181)

We have already seen how this desire of Wildermuth’s correlates with a desire to experience and understand the mystical realm. It also signifies a continuing journey towards truth and ultimate understanding, reflecting the idea discussed in chapter four, namely Bachmann’s concept of Utopia.

Wildermuth, from childhood, was always on a search for truth: “um die Wahrheit geht es mir, schon lange, schon immer” (155). However, he always envisioned it as an end goal, as though one day he would arrive there. This story, however, in many ways could be seen as his coming to grips with the truth that his search is futile, acknowledged by his final scream. The truth upon which he relied so strongly, namely the strength of logic and language, proved to be tautological and insufficient, as the trial that should have easily been solved was not solved by logic or information.

This is a concrete example of Wittgenstein’s portrayal of language, as a product of the world, as a ladder: “Meine Sätze erläutern dadurch, daß sie der, welcher mich versteht, am Ende als unsinnig erkennt, wenn er durch sie--auf ihnen--über sie hinausgestiegen ist. (Er muß
sozusagen die Leiter wegwerfen, nachdem er auf ihr hinaufgestiegen ist)” (6.54). Wildermuth had attempted to climb this ladder of logic in order to reach the ultimate goal of absolute truth. However, what he realizes is that this logic must be thrown away to continue the process. The ladder provides no destination, it can be climbed up endlessly without ever reaching a form of truth. Only by throwing the ladder away could one reach the mystical realm and continue the process of Utopia.

It is for this reason that he desires to end the search for truth through logic, and simply lie in the grass, as mentioned before, letting it slowly take him over until there is a complete agreement and harmony between him and this realm. Thus he has not given up his hope for truth, rather he has just changed the direction his journey, throwing away the logical ladder. Now he searches for Utopia through contact with the mystical. As he has experienced the borders of this world, he has found that the truth does not lie within them. Now he searches, as he can, outside of these borders by his resting in nature and in silence.

This was his second experience with the mystical, the most pronounced being his relationship with Wanda, which was discussed earlier. This relationship, characterized by silence, held great meaning for Wildermuth. He describes how they interacted as they approached her house: “Als wir ihr Zimmer erreicht hatten, war ich fast bewußtlos. Ich hätte keinen Schritt mehr gehen können. Ich erkannte meinen Körper nicht wieder und begriff ihn einziges Mal” (Bachmann 174). This description mirrors Musil’s “andere Zustand.” This “other condition” is a state of being in which one views the world from an outside perspective, essentially when the difference between the viewer and the viewed is removed. One, in a sense, suspends reality to look at it objectively, in the process of which one also loses one’s individuality. Here the word “bewußtlos” implies a loss of self-awareness and consciousness
about his surrounding world, rather than a state of unconsciousness. He then stops, not being able to continue, his awareness suspended beyond himself. Next he states that he no longer recognizes his body, yet for the first time he understands it. What seems to be a contradiction in terms makes sense when seen in the light of this “anderen Zustand.” He is no longer connected with his body, that is, the difference between the viewer and the viewed has been removed. He sees the situation from another perspective, and this perspective brings him an understanding of himself that he has never had. In this moment he has reached a utopian state, which is part of the process of realizing Utopia.

In “Ein Wildermuth” one can clearly see the struggle of man between this realm and the one to come, strengthened by the presence of language, and his deep desire to reach a point of Utopia where one can truly access the mystical. Bachmann has used nature and silence to illustrate how the mystical lies beyond man-created society and language. Wildermuth’s desire to resign himself to nature and the importance of his silent relationship with Wanda all communicate the power and significance of this other realm. Language, as a product of this realm, is then shown to limit man’s approach to the other realm. Gerda’s romantic cooing, as sincere as it may be, does not strengthen the relationship; it prevents it from reaching true intimacy, as language itself stems from the world and guides the relationship towards clichés, rather than guiding the relationship towards truth. At the trial, the logical activity of the proceedings and the increase in information does not bring the trial closer to the truth; rather it obscures the truth, hindering the process from coming to an end. It is this incompetence that prompts Wildermuth to yell out in frustration, exasperated with this futile search for truth. This, however, does not end his search, for he gives up logic and language and desire to unite himself with the mystical, as signified by his desire to lie in nature and the deep meaning his relationship
with Wanda still carries. Thus Bachmann’s character ends with the same conclusion as Wittgenstein, namely that logic is insufficient in the search for truth, as it is bound to the limits of language. Ultimately one must relinquish the world and its limiting language and consign oneself to the mystical silence which ended Wittgenstein’s Tractatus, that all which is meaningful must be constrained to silence, because “Worüber man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen” (7).
Bibliography


