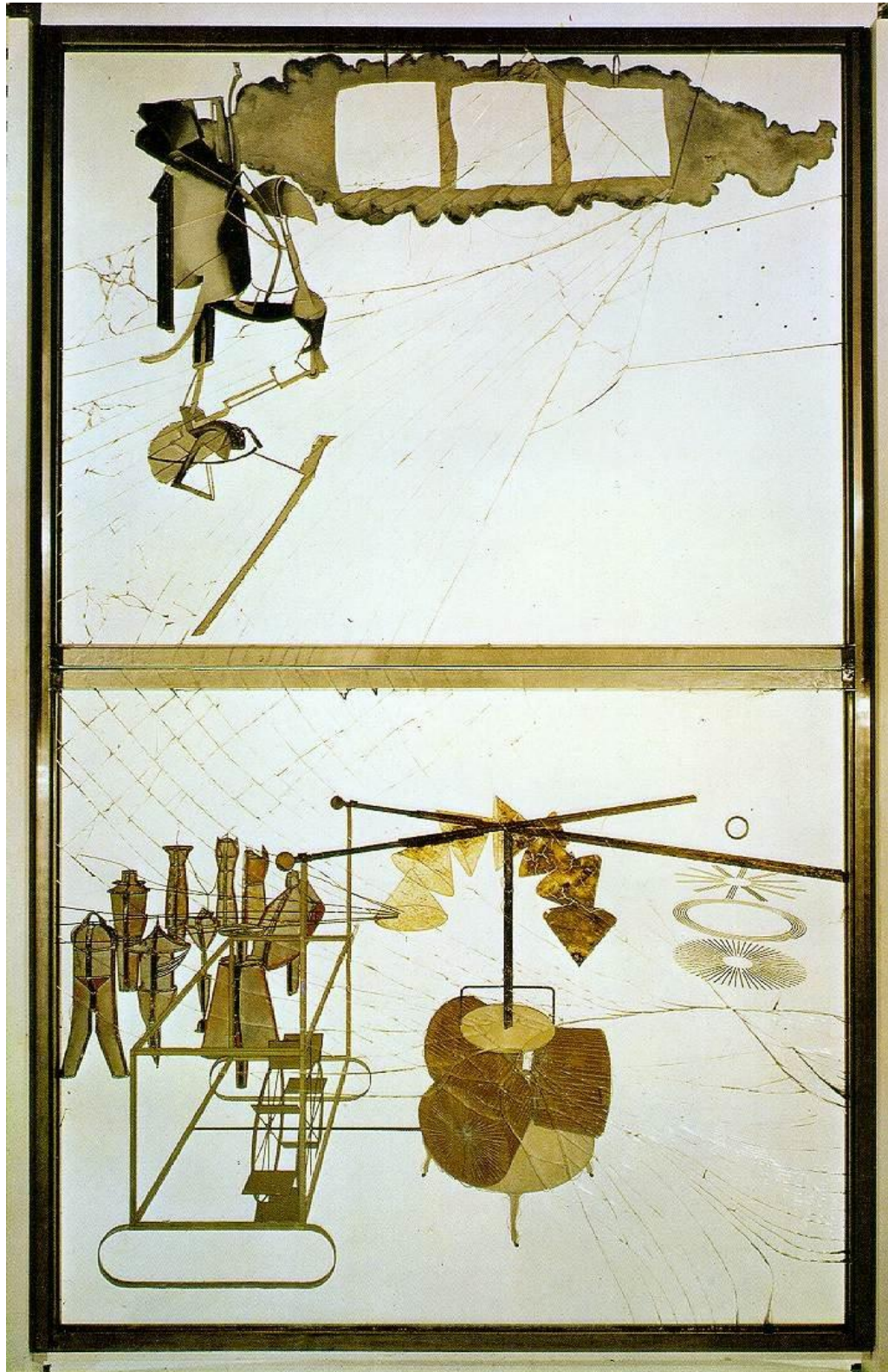


HAMLETMACHINE GLOSSARY BY LINE NUMBER

Hamletmachine – a reference to Marcel Duchamp's *Bachelor-Machine* also known as *The Large Glass* or *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1923)



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The title is also a reference to William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (more on that later) and Andy Warhol, who said "I want to be a machine" (more on that later as well.) Also, if it strikes your fancy: H.M. = Heiner Müller. The author said he carefully disseminated that view, which seems to indicate that he didn't intend such a meaning while he wrote it, but constructed the idea after composing the piece.

- I. **FAMILY SCRAPBOOK** – a book with blank pages used for the mounting and preserving of pictures, clippings, or other mementos.
The German word is *Familienalbum*, which looks, to American eyes like "Family Album," though the word scrap is certainly evocative of the action later in the piece where Hamlet distributes his father's flesh.
2. **the ruins of Europe** – reference to Antonin Artaud, of whom Müller said in 1977, "Read on the ruins of Europe, his texts will be classic." From Müller's article *Rotwelsch*.
4. **goose-step** – Called in German the *Stechschritt*, the goose-step is a special form of the equal step, which is usually demonstrated in solemn military parades and passes in review of closed units. The marching troops swing their legs from a vertical leg to a nearly horizontally-extending one, bringing it down with a loud simultaneous stepping noise and continuing the cycle in unison. It emerged from Prussian drilling regulation during the early 19th century. Excellent *Slate* article by Mark Scheffler on the goose-step, chronicling its emerged use in North Korea under Kim Jong-il at: <http://www.slate.com/id/2077384/>
5. **bawl** – to cry or wail lustily.
7. **hue and cry** – any public clamor, protest, or alarm.
8. **alms** – pity; merciful charity; something, like money or food, given freely to the poor.
9. **populace** – all the inhabitants of a place; population.
HE WAS A MAN HE TOOK THEM ALL FOR ALL – reference to *Hamlet* (I.ii.187-88.) Hamlet speaking to Horatio about his father: "A [He] was a man, take him for all in all: / I shall not look upon his like again.
This phrase seems also to reference Alexandre Dumas père's *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (*The Three Musketeers*) (1844), which made popular the phrase "All for one and one for all."
The phrase in both *Hamlet* and *Musketeers* has been inverted, though: "he took them all for all" seems to be saying "he took (swindled) everyone for all they were worth."
13. **dispense** – to deal out; distribute. Hamlet distributes his father's flesh "among the bums around me."

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Here seems an appropriate spot to mention the Isis/Osiris myth from ancient Egyptian tradition. The myth described Osiris as having been killed by his brother Seth who wanted Osiris's throne. Osiris body was torn apart by his murderer/brother into pieces and distributed all over Egypt. The pieces of Osiris were collected by his wife, the goddess Isis and Osiris was subsequently resurrected. Osiris and Isis then gave birth to Horus. As such, since Horus was born after Osiris's resurrection, Horus became thought of as representing new beginnings. This combination, Osiris-Horus, was therefore a life-death-rebirth deity, and thus associated with the new harvest each year. *Hamletmachine*, though not rooted in the Isis/Osiris mythological tradition specifically, is obsessed with ideas of rebirth, regeneration and sacrifice (as is *Hamlet*.)

procreator – father. The connotation here is clearly sexual.

14. **FLESH LIKES TO KEEP THE COMPANY OF FLESH** – possible Biblical reference to Genesis 2:23 “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” This also seems to recall Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* (1964), a performance art piece where Schneemann moved onstage embodying feminine desire and pleasure with various materials, including raw fish, raw meat, chicken, sausages, wet paint and paper scraps.
16. **lip-smacking** – does Hamlet mean kissing or eating? Both definitions make a sort of sense.
20. **putrefaction** – decomposition of organic matter, especially protein, by micro-organisms, resulting in production of foul-smelling matter.
22. **AH THE WHOLE GLOBE FOR A REAL SORROW** – possible reference to *King Richard III* (V.iv.7 & 13) King Richard: A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse! This might also be a reference to *Hamlet* (I.v.96-7) Hamlet, speaking to the ghost, says: “Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat / In this distracted globe. Remember thee?” The Globe is also Shakespeare's theatre and therefore, an apt metaphor for both the world and the geographical home of the western theatrical canon. With this interpretation, Müller may be saying he would trade all of western theatre for a real sorrow.
23. **PRINCE-KILLING KING** – Richard III again.
25. **OH MY PEOPLE WHAT HAVE I DONE UNTO THEE** – Biblical reference to Micah 6:3-4. Micah speaks the words of the Lord unto the Israelites: “O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me. / For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.”

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This Biblical line is also used as a sort of chorus in T.S. Eliot's poem *Ash-Wednesday*. This is the beginning of Section V of the poem:

*If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
The Word without a word, the Word within
The world and for the world;
And the light shone in darkness and
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
About the centre of the silent Word.*

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

The piece continues from there. It is definitely worth examining. Müller's writing style has obviously been influenced heavily by Eliot's (though he claims his influences are few.)

27. **HUNCHBACK** – Richard III, thought to have been deformed from birth.
28. **CLOWN NUMBER TWO** – There are no clowns in *King Richard III*. This is perhaps a reference to the second clown (gravedigger) from Act V of *Hamlet*, but that would seem to jump ahead too far in *Hamlet*'s plot. Dennis Redmond says this is a reference to German philosopher Ernst Bloch (1885-1977) Bloch was deeply influenced by art (Mahler and expressionism), by his friendship with Lukacs and Brecht, and by Marxism and Nazism (from which he had to flee in 1933). Bloch's work focuses on the concept that in a utopian human world where oppression and exploitation is banned a truly ideological revolutionary force will always exist. Bloch's work became very influential in the course of the student protest movements in 1968 and in liberation theology. Bloch was the son of an assimilated Jewish railway-employee. When the Nazis came to power, they had to flee, first into Switzerland, then to Austria, France, Czechoslovakia, and finally the USA. Bloch returned to the GDR in 1949 and got a chair for philosophy in Leipzig. When the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, he did not return to the GDR, but went to Tübingen in West Germany, where he received an honorary chair in Philosophy. He died in Tübingen. But if Bloch is Clown number two, then who is clown number one?

SPRING OF COMMUNISM – reference to the Prague Spring, a period of political liberalization in Czechoslovakia starting January 5, 1968 when Alexander Dubček came to power, and running until August 20 of that year when the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies (except for Romania) invaded the country.

On the night of August 20-21, 1968, Eastern Bloc armies from five Warsaw Pact countries invaded the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. During the invasion, Soviet tanks ranging in numbers from 5,000 to 7,000 occupied the streets. They were followed by a large number of Warsaw Pact troops ranging from 200,000 to 600,000. 72 Czechs and Slovaks were killed (19 of those in Slovakia) and

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hundreds were wounded. Alexander Dubček called upon his people not to resist. He was arrested and taken to Moscow, along with several of his colleagues. The occupation was followed by a wave of emigration, unseen before and stopped shortly after (estimate: 70,000 immediately, 300,000 in total), typically of highly qualified people. Western countries allowed these people to stay and work without complications.

The term Prague Spring was coined by Western media after the event became known worldwide, and was eventually adopted in Czechoslovakia itself. It made reference to the Springtime of Peoples, a lyrical title given to the Revolutions of 1848.

30. **SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THIS AGE OF HOPE** – reference to *Hamlet* (I.iv.90) Marcellus, who is chasing Hamlet’s father’s ghost: “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.”
31. **LET’S DELVE IN EARTH AND BLOW HER AT THE MOON** – reference to *Hamlet* (III.iv.210-1) Hamlet speaking to his mother about Rosencrantz & Guildenstern and their machinations: “But I will delve one yard below their mines / And blow them at the moon.”
33. **ghost who made me** – Hamlet’s father is now a ghost. Hamlet subverts the line here making it sound as though he was fathered by a ghost.

ax still in his skull – possible reference to Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Преступление и Наказание* (*Crime and Punishment*) (1866), in which the hero, Raskolnikov, murders a pawnbroker and her sister with an axe to their skulls.

This might also be a reference to the assassination of Leon Trotsky by a Stalinist agent Ramón Mercader, who drove an ice axe into Trotsky’s skull.

35. **I would my mother had one less** – he means “one less hole” (i.e. vagina.)
41. **sponger** – a person who habitually borrows or lives at the expense of others; parasite.
This is a possible reference to Samuel Beckett’s *Fin de Partie* (*Endgame*) (1957). The plot centers around Hamm, an aged master, who is blind and can’t stand up, and his servant Clov, who can’t sit down. They exist in a tiny house by the sea, although the dialogue suggests that there is no exterior left—no sea, no sun and no clouds. The two characters, mutually dependent, have been fighting for years and continue to do so as the play progresses. Clov always wants to leave but never seems to be able to do so. Also present are Hamm’s very old parents Nagg and Nell, who live in garbage bins.
Though the word sponger isn’t used in Beckett’s translation, the old couple are referred to by Hamm as “guzzlers.”
The name Hamm is itself a possible reference to Hamlet.

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44. **All the cocks have been butchered** – the spirit in *Hamlet* leaves as the cock crows and the morning comes. Horatio: “It lifted up its head and did address / Itself to motion like as it would speak. / But even then the morning cock crew loud, / And at the sound it shrunk in haste away / And vanished from our sight” (I.ii.216-20.)
46. **SHALL I / AS IS THE CUSTOM STICK A PIECE OF IRON INTO THE NEAREST FLESH OR SECOND BEST** – reference to *Hamlet* (III.iv.31-2) Hamlet having just stabbed Polonius, speaks to the corpse: “Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell. / I took thee for thy better.”
64. **Denmark is a prison** – reference to *Hamlet* (II.ii.239-51):
Hamlet. What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to prison hither?
Guildenstern. Prison, my lord?
Hamlet. Denmark’s a prison.
Rosencrantz. Then is the world one.
Hamlet. A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o’th’worst.
Rosencrantz. We think not so, my lord.
Hamlet. Why, then ’tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.
In German, *Gefängnis*, which Weber translates “prison,” Dennis Redmond translates as “Concentration camp.”

wall – The Berlin Wall, which was constructed starting on August 13, 1961 and dismantled in the weeks following November 9, 1989.

68. **WASH THE MURDER OFF YOUR FACE MY PRINCE / AND OFFER THE NEW DENMARK YOUR GLAD EYE** – reference to *Hamlet* (I.ii.68-9.) Gertrude: “Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off / And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.” In *Hamlet*, when Gertrude says “Denmark” she means the new king, Hamlet’s father’s murderer.
This is also a reference to *Macbeth* (II.ii.59-67.) After killing King Duncan, Macbeth’s hands are covered in blood:
Macbeth. Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.
Lady Macbeth. My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white. I hear a knocking
At the south entry:—retire we to our chamber.
A little water clears us of this deed:
How easy is it then!

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71. **virgin mother** – a Biblical allusion to Mary, the mother of Christ. Mary’s perpetual virginity is a point of contention within Christianity, with the Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox churches defending her perpetual virginity and the majority of protestant faiths finding no evidence for such a claim.
76. **dust** – Biblical reference from Genesis 3:19. After Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, God says to Adam, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”
80. **fruit of your womb** – child
Though the phrase is now in wide use in English, it has Biblical origins. Reference Luke 1:41-2 Mary, Christ’s mother, stays with her cousin Elisabeth while she is pregnant with Christ and Elisabeth is pregnant with John (later called ‘The Baptist’) “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: / And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”
- go to your wedding, whore** – though Hamlet is speaking to his mother here, the text would seem to mirror *Hamlet* (III.i.138-41) where Hamlet speaks to Ophelia “Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go.”
82. **latrine** – a public toilet in a military area.
- II. **THE EUROPE OF WOMEN** – possible allusion to Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*, but doubtless a reference to a continent with a decimated male population, such as Europe was especially after World War I.
- S.D. **Enormous room** – reference to e.e. cummings’ memoir *The Enormous Room* (1922). The book is a chronicle of cummings’ imprisonment during World War I. *The Enormous Room* itself refers to the large room where cummings slept aside thirty or so prisoners. It also serves as an allegory for cummings’ mind and the memories of the prison such that when he describes the many residents of his shared cell, they still live in the “enormous room” of his mind.
85. **The one the river didn’t keep** – Ophelia here refers to herself as having drowned. In *Hamlet*, Ophelia commits suicide (IV.vii). In *Hamletmachine*, Ophelia has returned from death. She follows “the one the river didn’t keep” with other images of female suicide.
This image also recalls German Marxist Rosa Luxemburg who was assassinated in January of 1919 by German nationalist militia forces. Luxemburg was battered to death with rifle butts and her body was thrown into the river. It washed up six months later.

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86. **The woman dangling from the rope** – recalls Ulrike Meinhof (1934-1976), the German revolutionary and left-wing militant. In 1970, increasingly frustrated with ordinary means of struggle employed by the left-wing, or lack of the same, she helped Andreas Baader to escape from prison and then took part in bank robberies and bombings of industrial sites and American military bases. The group was quickly dubbed the “Baader-Meinhof Gang” by the German press. Meinhof wrote many of the tracts and manifestos that the group produced, including the concept of the urban guerrilla, decrying what she called the exploitation of the common man and the imperialism of the capitalist system.

Captured in 1972, she was, during “preliminary hearings,” sentenced to 8 years imprisonment. While on a trial that would have given her life imprisonment, she was found dead in her cell on May 9, 1976, hanging from the ceiling. The German government claimed she had hanged herself, a claim that was supported by a governmental inquiry panel. Many people, including members of the Red Army Faction have always held that she was killed (and possibly raped) by representatives of the German authorities.

Müller has said he envisioned Ophelia as an incarnation of Meinhof.

88. **SNOW** – cocaine. This is another of Ophelia’s suicide images.

The woman with her head in the gas stove – recalls Sylvia Plath (1932-1963), the American novelist and poet, who gassed herself in her kitchen in February of 1963.

89. **Yesterday I stopped killing myself** – it is perhaps important to note here that Müller’s wife Inge killed herself in 1966.
90. **I smash the tools of my captivity, the chair the table the bed** – possible reference to *Hamlet* (III.i.152-3). Ophelia speaking about Hamlet: “O, what a noble mind is here o’erthrown! / The courtier’s soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, tongue, sword.”
92. **battlefield that was my home** – any land in Europe in WWI. All of Europe, and especially the Eastern bloc is the site of a battlefield. Anywhere a home is built, it is built on land stained with blood. This recalls Walter Benjamin:
- Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.*

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95. **on the bed on the table on the chair on the ground** – Ophelia repeats the tools of her captivity from line 90.

97. **I wrench the clock that was my heart out of my breast** – possible allusion to the destruction of clocks during the French Revolution in Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* also known as *On the Concept of History*. The following is thesis fifteen:

The awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode is characteristic of the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action. The great revolution introduced a new calendar. The initial day of a calendar serves as a historical time-lapse camera. And, basically, it is the same day that keeps recurring in the guise of holidays, which are days of remembrance. Thus the calendars do not measure time as clocks do; they are monuments of a historical consciousness of which not the slightest trace has been apparent in Europe in the past hundred years. In the July revolution an incident occurred which showed this consciousness still alive. On the first evening of fighting it turned out that the clocks in towers were being fired on simultaneously and independently from several places in Paris. An eye-witness, who may have owed his insight to the rhyme, wrote as follows:

Qui le croirait! on dit,
qu'irrités contre l'heure
De nouveaux Josués
au pied de chaque tour,
Tiraient sur les cadrans
pour arrêter le jour.

Who would have believed it!
we are told that new Joshuas
at the foot of every tower,
as though irritated with
time itself, fired at the dials
in order to stop the day.

100. **Do you want to eat my heart, Hamlet? / I want to be a woman** – possible reference to *Much Ado About Nothing* (IV.i.301-23):

Benedick. Is Claudio thine enemy?

Beatrice. Is a not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O that I were a man! What, bear here in hand until they come to take hands, and then with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour—O God that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place.

Benedick. Here me, Beatrice—

Beatrice. Talk with a man out at a window! A proper saying!

Benedick. Nay, but Beatrice—

Beatrice. Sweet Hero! She is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone.

Benedick. Beat—

Beatrice. Princes and counties! Surely a princely testimony, a goodly count, Count Comfect, a sweet gallant surely! O that I were a man for his sake, or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into curtsies, valour into compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too: he is now as

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valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

III. **SCHERZO** – a name given to a piece of music or a movement from a larger piece such as a symphony. It represents a lighter and quicker movement and is almost always the second or third movement in the piece. The word means “joke” in Italian.

S.D. **lectern** – a stand with a slanted top, used to hold a book, speech, manuscript, etc., at the proper height for a reader or speaker.

the dead women tear the clothes off his body – possible allusion to Euripides’ *Bakkhai*, where a city of women, driven mad by the god Dionysus, rip the body of the king, Pentheus, apart with their bare hands. In the *Bakkhai*, one of the women who kills Pentheus is his mother, Agaue, who presents her son’s head as a trophy to her father.

An angel, his face at the back of his head – reference to Walter Benjamin’s angel of history, described in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* also known as *On the Concept of History*. The following is the ninth of these theses:

A Klee painting named Angelus Novus shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

In a very fun parallel, Theodor Adorno, who was very familiar with the work of both Walter Benjamin and Paul Klee, referred to Klee’s *Angeles Novus* as “the machine angel.”

In addition to the above reference to Benjamin’s angel of history, this is an allusion to the Roman god Janus, representing doorways as well as the theatrical form. Janus looks both forward and behind.

madonna – the Virgin Mary, again. The singer and actress Madonna did not hit widespread popularity until her 1984 hit single “Like a Virgin.”

breast cancer – possible reference to *Macbeth* (I.v.40-54). Lady Macbeth invokes evil spirits to aid her in the Murder of King Duncan:

*Come, you Spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full*

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*Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
Stop up th'access and passage to remorse;
That no compunctious visitings of Nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th'effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring ministers,
Wherever in your slightest substances
You wait on Nature's mischief! Come, thick Night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, 'Hold, hold!'*

Müller is possibly comparing the Virgin Mary (the church) to Lady Macbeth. Her breasts, symbols of maternity, become symbols of disease.

IV. **PEST IN BUDA** – in German the word translated “Pest” literally translates as “Plague.” This is a reference to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

The Hungarian Revolution was a spontaneous nationwide revolt against the Neo-Stalinist government of Hungary and its Soviet-imposed policies, lasting from October 23 until November 10, 1956. It began as a student demonstration which attracted thousands as it marched through central Budapest to the Parliament building. A student delegation entering the Radio Building attempting to broadcast their demands was detained. When the delegation's release was demanded by the demonstrators outside, they were fired upon by the State Security Police (ÁVH) from within the building. The news spread quickly and disorder and violence erupted throughout the capital.

The revolt spread quickly across Hungary, and the government fell. Thousands organized into militias, battling the ÁVH and Soviet troops. Pro-Soviet communists and ÁVH members were often executed or imprisoned, as former prisoners were released and armed. Impromptu councils wrested municipal control from the communist party, and demanded political changes. The new government formally disbanded the ÁVH, declared its intention to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and pledged to re-establish free elections. By the end of October, fighting had almost stopped and a sense of normality began to return.

After announcing a willingness to negotiate a withdrawal of Soviet forces, the Soviet Political Bureau changed its mind and moved to quash the revolution. On November 4, a large Soviet force invaded Budapest, killing thousands of civilians. Organized resistance ceased by November 10, and mass arrests began. An estimated 200,000 Hungarians fled as refugees. By January 1957 the new Soviet-installed government had suppressed all public opposition.

Public discussion about this revolution was suppressed in Hungary for over 30 years, but since the thaw of the 1980s it has been a subject of intense study and debate. In Hungary October 23 is now a national holiday.

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103. **October** – the month for revolutions. Most important to *Hamletmachine* is the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 (discussed above), but October also recalls Lenin’s Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917.

The October Revolution, also known as the Bolshevik Revolution or the November Revolution, was the second phase of the Russian Revolution of 1917, the first having been instigated by the events around the February Revolution. The October Revolution was led by Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks, Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and anarchists. It is the first Marxist communist revolution of the twentieth century.

104. **A BAD COLD HE HAD OF IT JUST THE WORST TIME / JUST THE WORST TIME OF THE YEAR FOR A REVOLUTION** – reference to T.S. Eliot’s “The Journey of the Magi” (1930.) The following is the poem in its entirety. The whole of it seems to be evocative and helpful to Müller’s text:

*'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For the journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.*

*Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins,
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory*

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*All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death,
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.*

106. **Cement in bloom** – a reference to the blossoming of culture in the cement cities of the Eastern bloc.

This is also an obvious reference to Müller’s own play *Zement* (Cement) (1974).

slum – a thickly populated, run-down, squalid part of a city, inhabited by poor people.

107. **Doctor Zhivago** – reference to Boris Pasternak’s novel *Доктор Живаго* (*Doctor Zhivago*) completed in 1956 and made into a film by David Lean in 1965. The novel is named after its protagonist, Yuri Zhivago, a medical doctor and poet. It should be noted that the word *zhivago*, by no coincidence, is also the Russian word for “life.” The novel tells the story of a man torn between two women, set primarily against the backdrop of the Russian Revolution of 1917. A large theme of the book is how the mysticism of things and idealism is destroyed by both the Bolsheviks and the white army. Yuri must witness cannibalism, dismemberment, and other horrors suffered by the innocent civilian population during the turmoil. Even the love of his life, Lara, is taken from him. He ponders on how the war can turn the whole world senseless, and make a previously reasonable group of people destroy each other with no regard for life. His journey through Russia has an epic feeling because of his traveling through a world which is in such striking contrast to himself, relatively uncorrupted by the violence, and to his desire to find a place away from it all, which drives him across the arctic Siberia of Russia, and eventually back down to Moscow.

108. **For his wolves** – In Pasternak’s novel *Zhivago* listens to wolves howling in the moonlight as he composes poetry and Lara sleeps next to him. The wolves, though, are a metaphor for the White Army in Russia, who opposed the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution.

110. **AND TORE APART A PEASANT** – Recalling the “cement in bloom” from line 104, Müller references his own play *Zement* (Cement) (1974), in which the line “butchered a peasant” is spoken by a Russian officer (in the White Army: see

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- “For his wolves” line 108) and former landowner who is about to be executed. Müller is playing a circular game in this sequence of lines.
111. **I’m not Hamlet** – possible allusion to T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” The following sequence (lines 111-9), with its references to Hamlet and Polonius seems particularly important:
- No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.*
124. **razed** – torn down; demolished; leveled to the ground.
126. **auditory canals** – ears.
141. **mufti** – civilian clothes, in contrast with military or other uniforms, or as worn by a person who usually wears a uniform.
(Possibly) unrelated to this definition, the title of *مفتي عام* (Grand Mufti) refers to the highest official of religious law in a Sunni Muslim country.
159. **turret** – a domelike, sometimes heavily-armored structure, usually revolving horizontally, within which guns are mounted, as on a fortification, ship, or aircraft.
165. **spittoon** – a receptacle for spit (usually in a public place.)
166. **data bank** – a fund of information on a particular subject or group of related subjects, usually stored in and used via a computer system.
171. **prompter** – in theatre, a person who is offstage and follows a play in progress from the book, repeating missed cues and supplying actors with forgotten lines.
172. **house** – in theatre, the section of the theatre where the patrons are seated.
174. **Nausea** – reference to the novel *La Nausée (Nausea)* (1938) by Jean-Paul Sartre, widely considered one of the canonical works of existentialism.
The plot of *La Nausée* centers around 30-year-old Antoine Roquentin, who, fresh from several years of travel, settles in the French seaport town of Bouville to finish his research on the life of an 18th-century political figure. But during the winter of 1932 a “sweetish sickness” he calls nausea increasingly impinges on almost everything he does or enjoys—his research project, the company of “The

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Self-Taught Man” who is reading all the books in the library alphabetically, a pleasant physical relationship with a café owner named Françoise, his memories of Anny, an English girl he once loved, even his own hands and the beauty of nature. Over time, his disgust towards existence forces him into near-insanity, self-hatred, and finally a revelation into the nature of his being. Antoine is facing the troublesomely provisional and limited nature of existence itself; he embodies Sartre’s theories of existential angst, and he searches anxiously for meaning in all the things that had filled and fulfilled his life up to that point.

In *Hamletmachine*, the word “Nausea” is used throughout lines 174-85, almost as punctuation, but evocative of the use of the word “Selah” in the Biblical psalms. For an example of this, Psalm 46:

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the
mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains
shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.
There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the
holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and
that right early.
The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the
earth melted.
The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.
Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in
the earth.
He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow,
and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.
Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I
will be exalted in the earth.
The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

175. **prefabricated** – manufactured in standard sizes to be shipped and assembled elsewhere.

babble – inarticulate or imperfect speech; foolish, meaningless, or incoherent speech; prattle; a murmuring sound or a confusion of sounds. The word recalls the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel from Genesis 11:1-9:

*And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.
And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a
plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.
And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them
thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for
morter. [sic]
And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may
reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered
abroad upon the face of the whole earth.*

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And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.
And the LORD said, Behold, the people [is] one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.
Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.
So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.
Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

176. **GEMÜTLICHKEIT** – (gem-jut-liχ-kalt) comfort, coziness, snugness, an atmosphere of comfort, peace, and acceptance.

177. **give us this day our daily murder** – Biblical reference to what is commonly known as “The Lord’s Prayer.” It can be found in Matthew 6:9-13:
Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

thine is nothingness – see above. This is a corruption of The Lord’s Prayer: “thine is the kingdom, and the power...”

183. **mugs** – faces.

185. **chariot armed with scythes** – the scythed chariot was a modified war chariot thought to have been invented by Ajatashatru, the King of Magadha (in what is now Northern India) in c. 475 BCE. He used this chariots against the Licchavis. A scythed chariot was a war chariot with a blade (or blades) mounted on both ends of the axle. The blades extended horizontally on the sides of the chariot. This is perhaps an allusion to book eight of *The Nine Books of the Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus*, translated by Oliver Elton (NY: Norroena Society, 1905.) In this oral history, the Norse god Odin abandons the aged and blind Danish prince Harald, who rides in a chariot armed with scythes. Odin, disguised as Harald’s charioteer slays Harald with his own club (an echo, perhaps, of the ax-murders already present in *Hamletmachine*.) In any case, a chariot armed with scythes is an ancient image; the Old Testament Bible refers to an Asian king using scythed chariots against the Israelites. “And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon” (Judges 4:13)

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Refer also to Shakespeare's Sonnet XXII for more imagery of the grim reaper and clocks:

*When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard,
Then of thy beauty do I question make,
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
And die as fast as they see others grow;
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.*

punchline – the climactic phrase or sentence in a joke, speech, advertisement, or humorous story that produces the desired effect.

189. **knuckleduster** – brass knuckles: a band of metal with four holes that fits over the upper fingers and that is gripped when a fist is made, used for increasing the effect of a blow with the fist.
194. **Coca Cola** – the world's most popular soft drink. The Coca-Cola Company's headquarters are located in Atlanta, Georgia, where the drink was first concocted around 1886. Coca-Cola has widely become synonymous with American Imperialism, the spread of Capitalism, and consumerism in general.
195. **A kingdom / For a murderer** – reference to Macbeth. See line 197.
197. **MACBETH** – *Macbeth* is among the most popular of William Shakespeare's tragedies. The play is seen as an archetypal tale of the dangers of the lust for power and betrayal of friends. In the play, Macbeth, the Thane of Glamis, is told he will become king by three witches. To this end, Macbeth murders the king and frames two innocent men for the deed, becoming king himself. He also murders his best friend Banquo and many others besides.
- Actors and other theatre people often consider it to be bad luck to mention Macbeth by name while inside a theatre, and usually refer to it superstitiously as the Scottish Play. To say the name of the play inside a theatre is believed to doom the production to failure, and perhaps cause physical injury or worse to cast members.
198. **THE KING HAD OFFERED HIS THIRD MISTRESS TO ME** – possible reference, still, to *Macbeth*. In Act I, King Duncan names Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor. Duncan has two sons: Malcolm, the Prince of Cumberland; and Donalbain. Macbeth is third in line for the Scottish throne. (This interpretation seems rather weak.)

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200. **EVERY MOLE ON HER HIPS** – reference to Vladimir Nabokov’s novel *Lolita* (1955.) The protagonist of the novel, Humbert Humbert, recognizes the pre-pubescent Lolita by the “chocolate-brown” mole on her side.
201. **RASKOLNIKOV CLOSE TO THE / HEART UNDER THE ONLY COAT THE AX FOR / THE / ONLY SKULL OF THE PAWNBROKER** – referring again to Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Преступление и Наказание (Crime and Punishment)* (1866.) These quotations are from a translation by Constance Garnett. From chapter VI, paragraph 57:
Drawing a breath, pressing his hand against his throbbing heart, and once more feeling for the axe and setting it straight, he began softly and cautiously ascending the stairs, listening every minute. But the stairs, too, were quite deserted; all the doors were shut; he met no one.
From chapter VII, paragraph 13:
He unbuttoned his coat and freed the axe from the noose, but did not yet take it out altogether, simply holding it in his right hand under the coat. His hands were fearfully weak, he felt them every moment growing more numb and more wooden. He was afraid he would let the axe slip and fall.... A sudden giddiness came over him.
211. **Photograph of the author** – Müller literally means a photograph of himself. Within the play itself, he foregrounds the constructed nature of the play. It might also be appropriate here to add photographs of the director and producer.
217. **entrails** – the intestines; the internal parts of anything (i.e. the entrails of a machine.)
220. **lesions** – any localized, abnormal structural changes in the body; infected or diseased patches of skin. The word now is come to be closely linked with AIDS, which *Hamletmachine* predates.
221. **I want to be a machine** – allusion to Andy Warhol (1928-1987), the American artist and filmmaker. He said in 1963, “The reason I’m painting this way is because I want to be a machine. Whatever I do, and do machine-like, is because it is what I want to do.”
- S.D. **MARX** – Karl Marx (1818-1883) was an immensely influential German philosopher, a political economist, and a socialist revolutionary. While Marx addressed a wide range of issues, he is most famous for his analysis of history in terms of class struggles, summed up in the opening line of the introduction to the *Communist Manifesto*: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” Marx is also the author of *Das Capital*.
- LENIN** – Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) was a Russian socialist politician, the main leader of the October Revolution and the first head of Soviet Russia. Lenin was the author of several theoretical works in philosophy such as Materialism and Empiriocriticism which became fundamental in Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

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MAO – Mao Tse-Tung (1893-1976) was a Chinese Marxist military and political leader, who led the Communist Party of China to victory in the Chinese Civil War, leading to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China on October 1, 1949 in Beijing. Mao pursued the ideal of a strong, prosperous and socially egalitarian China, endeavoring to build a modern, industrialized, socialist nation.

223. **THE MAIN POINT IS TO OVERTHROW ALL EXISTING CONDITIONS...** – from Karl Mark’s introduction to *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law* (1844):

War on the German conditions! By all means! They are below the level of history, beneath any criticism, but they are still an object of criticism like the criminal who is below the level of humanity but still an object for the executioner. In the struggle against those conditions criticism is no passion of the head, it is the head of passion. It is not a lance, it is a weapon. Its object is its enemy, which it wants not to refute but to exterminate. For the spirit of those conditions is refuted. In themselves they are not objects worthy of thought, but phenomena which are as despicable as they are despised Criticism does not need to make things clear to itself as regards this subject-matter, for it has already dealt with it. Criticism appears no longer as an end in itself, but only as a means. Its essential sentiment is indignation, its essential activity is denunciation.

This document in its entirety should be reviewed before mounting a production of *Hamletmachine*. An internet version is available in English translation at <http://csf.colorado.edu/psn/marx/Archive/1844-DFJ/law.htm>. Though Weber suggests that English language productions use longer sections from this passage, I’m not sure why he thinks that would inform the text further.

225. **HAMLET THE DANE** – reference to *Hamlet* (V.i.247-51):

*What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wand’ring stars and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane.*

MAGGOT’S FODDER – referencing *Hamlet* Act V again. Scene i, lines 1-209, ruminate on death and the ends of man. From (V.i.201-9):

*Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam, and why of that loam whereto he is converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?
Imperious Caesar, dead and turn’d to clay
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
O that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall t’expel the winter’s flaw.*

Hamlet refers to maggots specifically twice. At II.ii.181-2, Hamlet talks to Polonius, attempting to confound him and says “For if the sun breed maggots in a

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dead dog, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter?” Later, after Hamlet kills Polonius, he has the following exchange with King Claudius:

King. Now Hamlet, where’s Polonius?

Hamlet. At supper.

King. At supper? Where?

Hamlet. Not where he eats, but where a is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e’en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service—two dishes but to one table. That’s the end.

King. Alas, alas.

Hamlet. A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

King. What dost thou mean by this?

Hamlet. Nothing but to show you how a king may go through the guts of a beggar.

230. **THIRD COCK’S CROW** – Biblical reference to the betrayal of Christ by Peter found in the gospels Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and John 18. This is from verse Matthew 26:75, “And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”

S.D. **Ice Age** – probable reference to Tankred Dorst’s 1973 play *Eiszeit (Ice Age)*. The fictional play is based on a period in the life of the Norwegian poet Knut Hamsun. Following the end of the Second World War, the ninety-year-old writer is living in a Norwegian old people’s home awaiting his trial for collaboration. A young partisan plots to murder Hamsun, however, an intense relationship develops between them.

V. **FIERCELY ENDURING MILLENIUMS IN THE FEARFUL ARMOR** – in the original German this piece of text is *WILDHARREND / IN DER FURCHTBAREN RÜSTUNG / JAHRTAUSENDE*. Weber omits Müller’s slashes (more literally translated, the series of words would be “FIERCELY ENDURING / IN THE FEARFUL ARMOR / MILLENNIUMS”).

This piece of text is a direct quote from a fragmentary verse by the German Romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) entitled *Shakespeare [sic]*.

In any case, the preceding stage direction has the actor who has renounced the playing of Hamlet stepping into the armor of the ghost. The title of Act V, then, refers directly to Hamlet’s stasis and location for the rest of the play.

235. **Electra** – In Greek mythology, Electra was daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Her story is dramatized in plays by Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Electra orchestrates the allegedly just killing of her mother through her brother Orestes. In *Hamletmachine* she represents female revenge.

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236. **heart of darkness** – reference to Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899.) This highly symbolic story follows Charlie Marlow, as he recounts his adventure to a group of men, onboard a ship anchored in the Thames Estuary, at dusk and continuing into the evening. It details an incident earlier in Marlow’s life when he, an Englishman, takes a foreign assignment as a ferry boat captain on what readers can assume is the Congo River in the Congo Free State, a private colony of King Leopold II. Though his job is to transport ivory downriver, Marlow quickly develops an intense interest in investigating Kurtz, an ivory procurement agent in the employment of the government. Kurtz’s reputation extends throughout the region.

sun of torture – from Jean-Paul Sartre’s preface to *La Damnes de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*) by Frantz Fanon (1961):

*It is not right, my fellow-countrymen, you who know very well all the crimes committed in our name, it’s not at all right that you do not breathe a word about them to anyone, not even to your own soul, for fear of having to stand in judgment on yourself. I am willing to believe that at the beginning you did not realize what was happening; later, you doubted whether such things could be true; but now you know, and still you hold your tongues. Eight years of silence; what degradation! And your silence is all of no avail; today, **the blinding sun of torture is at its zenith**; it lights up the whole country. Under that merciless glare, there is not a laugh that does not ring false, not a face that is not painted to hide fear or anger, not a single action that does not betray our disgust, and our complicity. It is enough today for two French people to meet together for there to be a dead man between them. One dead man did I say? In other days France was the name of a country. We should take care that in 1961 it does not become the name of a nervous disease. Will we recover? Yes. For violence, like Achilles’ lance, can heal the wounds that it has inflicted. Today, we are bound hand and foot, humiliated and sick with fear; we cannot fall lower... Thus the day of magicians and fetishes will end; you will have to fight, or rot in concentration camps. This is the end of the dialectic; you condemn this war but do not yet dare to declare yourselves to be on the side of the Algerian fighters; never fear, you can count on the settlers and the hired soldiers; they’ll make you take the plunge. Then, perhaps, when your back is to the wall, you will let loose at last that new violence which is raised up in you by old, oft-repeated crimes. But, as they say, that’s another story: the history of mankind. The time is drawing near, I am sure, when we will join the ranks of those who make it.*