

A “Me experience of you”

Hamletmachine

I read the *Hamletmachine* in German and English, I reread Shakespeare's Hamlet story, of which I saw a fantastic dance performance in Helsingør, Denmark with the stage extending from the walls of the story's castle. I also started to read the comments to the *Hamletmachine*, the problems of staging it and found myself more and more sucked into the dreary analyses and yesterday's difficulties of a play and its outfall, which is basically 'zum Kotzen' (to rack and vomit). This could be common to the Hamlet story, in which everybody dies in the end, not peacefully, but violent by poison and sword, or in suicide. And Müller writes, while his photograph is torn to pieces: "I force open my sealed flesh. I want to dwell in my veins, in the marrow of my bones, in the maze of my skull. I retreat into my entrails. I take my seat in my shit, in my blood. Somewhere bodies are torn apart so I can dwell in my shit. Somewhere bodies are opened so I can be alone with my blood. My thoughts are lesions in my brain. My brain is a scare. I want to be a machine, arms for grabbing, legs to walk on, no pain, no thoughts."

Qualifying the *Hamletmachine* is done before, seeking to interpret its meaning, its message, its political viewpoint, its form by comparing it to other plays. Words like 'avantgardismus', 'irrationalismus', 'Absage an den Marxismus', 'hybriden Anarchismus' are used to capture the extravagance of the *Hamletmachine*.

Words of wisdom cannot be expected from me in this exchange of stereotypes. It reminds me to my student years in Amsterdam. The long discussions about Marxism, the socialist state, the historical necessity of certain processes and my fear of being considered as a philosopher: "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" (Marx's 11th thesis on Ludwig Feuerbach). And that was exactly the subject of my Masters: theory and practices of change.

Not willing to make it a priority to struggle through the different positions in the interpretation of the Hamlet Machine, I fall back to the existential position between men and men, men and women, women and women. Quoting from memory R.D. Laing, *The politics of experience and the bird of paradise* (1967): I see you, you see me. I am a your-experience of me and you are a me-experience of you. I cannot experience your experience. You cannot experience my experience. We are both invisible men. All men are invisible to one another. Experience is man's invisibility to man.

Müller saw at a certain moment in his life Shakespeare's Hamlet and expressed his experience in a play, the Hamlet Machine. Ines Ortner saw at a certain moment in her life the text of the Hamlet Machine, and wants to express her experience in a play by designing costumes and directing the actors to express

her experience. I listened to her, she is my experience of her, but I don't know, I cannot 'feel', 'understand', 'be part of' her experience. By directing the play, she wants the audience to have a I experience of her, so she designs beautiful costumes expressing her interpretation of the agony of Hamlet and Ophelia. For that she chooses the Hamlet Machine, I have no clue why. Will she give me an experience that leads me into interpretations of her work, a me experience of her, through her work? Does she want to shock me and the audience with beautiful costumes in a play with a gory text without, in the end, roses blooming on the rubble left after the destruction of?

Asking her about the why of the Hamlet Machine she answers: I don't want to convey a political message but costumes, music, movement and rhythm have to have a critical message, and all should express and enforce the text. This answer is applicable to all plays and not specific the play at hand. Further questioning about the link Ines wants to create between the original text of Shakespeare, Müller's experience and his interpretation of Shakespeare's Hamlet and his expression of this experience in the Hamlet Machine text, and Ines' search for expressing her experience in this line of interpretations, is answered fiercely with: Ophelia is the example of a strong fighting woman, but not surviving.

With that she makes Ophelia the centre person on the stage, who declares as Electra her choice for bareness with the words: "I choke between my tights the world I gave birth to. I bury it in my womb. Down with the happiness of submission. Long live hate and contempt, rebellion and death".

~ by Drs. Gustaaf Tasseron