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Madness and Memory: Personal, Cultural, and Literary Memory in Bachmann's *Franza*

In her attempt to escape the abuse of her psychiatrist husband, Franza Ranner first retreats to her childhood home, then to Egypt, as if the passage back through personal memory (passing from adult to child) and then through cultural memory (from modern to premodern) could help treat her madness, which modern psychiatry, a brutal and patriarchal institution, is unable to do.

At the same time, the book itself is a passage in literary memory to Musil's *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Bachmann picks up the theme of madness and the motif of a brother-sister journey from Musil, but realigns the roles. Franza is at once Ulrich, Agathe, and Clarisse, a woman without qualities who needs a leave of absence from her life and recruits her brother Martin to abet her. In *Das Buch Franza*, however, the ironic distance which in Musil is an intellectual strength becomes a social debility, a symptom of madness. It is the distance from herself that has been induced by her accommodation of the prevailing intellectual culture of Vienna.

In a sort of daring self-analysis, Franza embraces her madness as a possible escape from its social causes and retreats in memory, not on the analyst's couch, but in actual space and time, trying to recover some sort of sanity, some pre-madness, a point in time before the lies began to engulf her. (A humorous and touching parallel is Martin's attempt to use the concepts of his profession--geology--to find analogies that might help him understand Franza.) She is ultimately unable to escape the "madness of normality" (Arno Gruen) even through immersion in her own madness.