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"Gewalt gegen Gerechtigkeit" : reality and morality in Heinrich Böll's Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Michelle Elizabeth Manicke for the Master of Arts
in German presented July 15, 1988.

Title: "Gewalt gegen Gerechtigkeit": Reality and Morality in
Heinrich Böll's Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum.

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Heinrich Böll is West Germany's most controversial author of the post-war period, and Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum is probably his most widely contested work. Readers and literary critics alike have generally misunderstood or only partially understood Böll's purpose in writing this *Erzählung*. Many have discounted it as the author's personal revenge against press and police for their mutual attacks on his honor. Others have panned it for its "poor German" and its lack of realism. Such reviews tend to examine only selected formal and thematic aspects of Katharina Blum. In order to fully

comprehend any of Böll's works, however, one must adopt a synthetic approach; i.e., one must scrutinize and synthesize all major factors which influenced the composition of the narrative. The author's own background and philosophy, the socio-political realities of the Federal Republic of Germany, and the influence of literary tradition are key elements in the interpretation of Katharina Blum.

In this thesis, I have gathered material from a variety of primary and secondary sources, which reflect the wide range of opinion on Böll's work. In an effort to discover the author's intended message, I have analyzed the viewpoints of literary critics in comparison with his own statements and experiences. I have also attempted to show that biographical, psychological, political, philosophical, religious and literary factors are inseparable in any complete interpretation of Katharina Blum. In this sense, Böll is truly unique among authors: Where most authors' works reveal the imprint of one or two prominent predecessors or contemporaries, with Böll there are so many influences which are so tightly interwoven, one often cannot distinguish among them.

Having explored the text from all angles, I have found it to be more than a mere reflection of West German society during the early seventies. The events and institutions portrayed in Katharina Blum certainly bear a striking resemblance to those found in the Federal Republic at that time. Yet Böll goes beyond simple replication: He caricatures the negative relationship between the administrators and the administered, thereby offering us his own interpretation of social injustice. He shows his readers the opposite of his ideal in order to awaken them to the need for reform, and because he believes in mankind, he never leaves them without hope for the future.

"GEWALT GEGEN GERECHTIGKEIT":
REALITY AND MORALITY IN
HEINRICH BÖLL'S DIE VERLORENE EHRE DER KATHARINA BLUM

by
MICHELLE ELIZABETH MANICKE

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
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1988

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...und wer mit Worten umgeht, wie es jeder tut, der eine Zeitungsnachricht verfaßt oder eine Gedichtzeile zu Papier bringt, sollte wissen, daß er Welten in Bewegung setzt, gespaltene Wesen losläßt: was den einen trösten mag, kann den anderen zu Tode verletzen.

- Heinrich Böll,
"Die Sprache als Hort der Freiheit."
Speech on 24 January 1959, on the
occasion of Böll's acceptance of the
Eduard von der Heydt Award in
Wuppertal.

INTRODUCTION

On 16 July 1985, West Germany bade farewell to its most honored post-war author, Heinrich Böll. Sadly, Böll's unique, humanistic style of social criticism may have died with him. Hailed in both East and West as "the conscience of the German nation,"¹ Böll was a controversial figure who drew both praise and condemnation from literary scholars and politicians. He was at heart an idealist, whose vision of greatness for his country was tempered by the brutal realities of the existing society. Yet because he included scathing attacks on social organizations and institutions in his works, much confusion has been created regarding his motives, merit, and influence in both literary and political circles.

In contrast to other modern authors, Heinrich Böll actually practiced what he "preached." He was politically active in helping to promote his ideal of a "Christian democratic" Germany. Subscribing to the adage that "the pen is mightier than the sword," Böll made his work his weapon in the struggle against the growing power of the "surveillance state." His goal was to awaken his readers to the dangers posed by the unrestrained powers of the alliance *Staat-Armee-Kirche*. While he achieved a degree of success in this respect, his literary attacks also unleashed a wave of protest among his opponents, the supporters of West Germany's oppressive institutions. In the wake of the resulting outcry, Böll saw his good name and his dream dragged through the dirt.

Three years after his death, Heinrich Böll remains one of the most controversial authors of the post-war period. There are still many questions which must be answered with regard to his literary and political intentions, the literary value of his works, and

¹"Wie gut ist Heinrich Böll?," Der Spiegel 22 July 1985: 132.

the actual effect of the latter on the general public. He has frequently been misunderstood by those who have failed to examine his works as a reflection of himself and of West German society; it is impossible to understand the one without the others.

Böll's unique contribution to German literature lies in his special brand of humanistic social criticism and in his realistic writing style. As Carl Zuckmayer writes, "Er hat dem Volke aufs Maul geschaut...."² While Böll was not a Marxist, he did employ Marx's description of capitalist society to criticize the fact that capitalist societies define a man's value solely in terms of his possessions. Böll's use of Marxist theory has caused some socialist literary critics to claim him as their own.³ Yet it is incorrect to assign him to this camp, for he was at times equally critical of socialist societies. It would probably be more accurate, considering the influence of his Catholic background, to count him among the ranks of the "Christian Socialists" - i.e., those who espouse the egalitarian teachings of Jesus.⁴ The emotional "human" quality in Böll's belief system has even led some scholars to question whether his writing is truly political.⁵ To say that it is not, however, is to assume that an idealist cannot make a valuable political statement. The success of Böll's works and the extent of his personal commitment to various social causes offer evidence to

²Carl Zuckmayer, "Gerechtigkeit durch Liebe," In Sachen Böll. Ansichten und Aussichten, ed. Marcel Reich-Ranicki (Köln [Cologne]: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1968) 69.

³See, for example, Hans Joachim Bernhard, "Bewahrung des Humanen," Neue deutsche Literatur 12.33 (Dec. 1985): 77ff. Several times Bernhard implies that Böll has closer ties with socialist states than with the Federal Republic.

⁴Among others, see Gerhard Kothy et al., "Heinrich Böll - Eine biographische Skizze," Heinrich Böll. Eine Einführung in das Werk in Einzelinterpretationen, ed. Hanno Beth, 2nd ed. (Königstein: Scriptor, 1980) 14. See also Heinrich Böll, "Deutsche Meisterschaft," Text + Kritik 33 (January 1972): 2.

⁵Christoph Burgauner, "Ansichten eines Unpolitischen? Gesinnung und Entwicklung Heinrich Bölls," Zu Heinrich Böll, ed. Anna Maria dell' Agli (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1984) 117-29.

the contrary. As Christoph Burgauner states, "Politik ohne Idealismus ist für Böll...nicht nur leer und dumm, sondern auch böse."⁶

Böll's political involvement peaked toward the end of his life, from the late 1960's to the early 1980's. Indeed, his activity in the public sector seemed to increase as he grew in literary stature. At this point, it must be emphasized that Böll himself did not seek this position of literary and political prominence; rather, it was thrust upon him by his readers and fellow writers. An extremely modest man, Böll was genuinely surprised when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1972, and he is reported to have exclaimed, "Was - ich und nicht Grass?" Somewhat reluctantly, he accepted the challenge of being placed in the limelight as the duty of an author in society.⁷ Böll's personal experiences as well as general trends in West German society are developed as major themes in his works. Because politics and social institutions are the dominant influence here, it is important to study the dialectical relationship between Böll's "Weltanschauung", the outside world, and his writing.

This relationship is especially evident in Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum. To some extent, Böll's *Erzählung* may be regarded as a "reflection" of reality in West German society, for it portrays many institutions which actually existed in the Federal Republic during the early seventies. The author absorbed the events of these years and formed his own opinions of them. He later shared his insights through his writings; thus, his work became a subjective window on his society. Katharina Blum is therefore much more than a simple depiction of events and institutions; Böll goes beyond this and develops

⁶Burgauner, 128.

⁷See, for example, Keith Bullivant, "Heinrich Böll - A Tribute," German Life and Letters 39.3 (April 1986): 245-51. The quote "Was - ich und nicht Grass?" is also found here.

his own interpretation of the "unbewohnbare Gesellschaft." His work is at the same time a warning and a mandate for social change.

Here we see the unique side of Heinrich Böll: he hopes for a better future, for which he is willing to place himself at great personal risk. There are two parts to his world: the administrators and those who are administered. Böll writes in defense of the individual's right to preserve his identity in the face of the establishment's attempt to depersonalize his existence. While impersonal bureaucracy as portrayed by Böll often takes the form of cultural institutions or the church, these are, nonetheless, political entities.⁸

Conservative literary historians often refuse to deal with "contemporary" authors such as Böll, because they believe that a writer can only be fully appreciated and comprehended in retrospect; he must pass the "test of time." There may be an element of truth in this contention as it relates to Böll, for his novels and short stories frequently have been misinterpreted and misunderstood. Literary critics from the aesthetic school have generally condemned his books because of their realistic, political overtones and colloquial language. Such scholars are unswerving in their opinion that literature must be seen as a form of art which exists apart from the society in which it is created.⁹

To some degree, I have already hinted at the synthetic theory which will guide my research and writing. Essentially, I agree with René Wellek and Austin Warren that recent literature is worthy of serious study. There are certainly risks of misinterpretation inherent in any analysis of literature in a social context; it is impossible for a literary historical

⁸James Henderson Reid, Heinrich Böll: Withdrawal and Re-Emergence (London: Oswald Wolff, 1973) 17.

⁹Böll's difficulties with traditional literary critics are described in many articles, among others in: "Wie gut ist Heinrich Böll?," 138; Bernhard, "Bewahrung," 77; and in Rudolf Augstein, "Der unheilige Narr," Der Spiegel 22 July 1985: 138-39.

approach to be completely objective.¹⁰ As stated above, conservative scholars feel it is the task of future researchers to judge the works of today. This attitude is detrimental to both the present generation and posterity, especially where political commentators like Böll are concerned. The refusal to evaluate present authors critically denies us the chance to learn from them, and it may also deprive later critics of the opportunity to study the interaction between a particular author and his society.

My method will differ from Wellek and Warren's in one important respect, however: I will stress the connection between literature and society, rather than focusing entirely on intrinsic interpretation. Thus, my evaluative technique will fall somewhere between the method advocated by Wellek and Warren and the one employed by Marxist literary critics. The flaw in the latter approach is its propensity to view literary production in capitalist societies as being solely determined by economic factors.¹¹ This technique would preclude the possibility of measuring the effect of social or biographical forces on Böll's writing, and it is precisely with regard to these that his exceptional qualities are most evident! His attempts to come to terms with specific elements of society are obvious in his work; by contrast, other authors tend to cloak political influences in metaphors and symbols. Many of the institutions found in his novels are replicas of those in the Federal Republic. For example, one can be fairly certain that "die ZEITUNG" in Katharina Blum is meant to represent the "BILD-Zeitung," even though Böll offers an ironic disclaimer to the contrary in the epigram to his *Erzählung*.

My thesis will consist of a brief summary of Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, seven chapters and a conclusion. In Chapter I, I will attempt to shed some light on Heinrich Böll and his background, for I believe such knowledge is key to understanding

¹⁰For a discussion of literary criticism in a social context, see Chapter 9 of René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1956) 82-98.

¹¹Wellek and Warren, 94ff.

his work. Chapter II will consist of an examination of the social realities of the Federal Republic in the late sixties and early seventies; the actual events and institutions will then be compared with Böll's image of "die unbewohnbare Gesellschaft" as presented in Katharina Blum, in order to ascertain the degree to which the *Erzählung* can be termed a reflection of West German society. Chapter III will focus on the more abstract philosophical aspects of Böll's narrative, as seen at both a personal level and in a social context: namely, "Gewalt," "Ehre," "Würde," and "Gerechtigkeit." Chapter IV will assess Katharina Blum within a traditional literary context to see whether it is a "Zeitroman" or whether it has universal appeal. In Chapter V, I will analyze the form and content of the *Erzählung*, in an effort to determine whether the relationship which exists between them lends support to the argument that Böll's work reflects social reality. Chapter VI will consider the differences between the book and film versions of Katharina Blum. In Chapter VII, I will discuss the reception of Böll's work in West Germany and in the United States, in order to determine whether the author's message was understood as intended. The Conclusion will contain some summary observations on Heinrich Böll and his *Erzählung* based on my findings.

In the course of my research over the past few months, I have formed certain opinions about my chosen topic. I have truly enjoyed working on this project, for I have come to appreciate Heinrich Böll as both author and person in a new way. The fact that he actually lived according to his ideals has made a great impression on me, since political activism above and beyond the call to write critically about society seems to be foreign to most authors.

Following the enactment of the Emergency Laws ("Notstandsgesetze") in 1968, Böll changed from a passive bystander to an active participant in the fight to reform society. His hope for a better, more "human" world is therefore reflected most clearly in his later works, which - despite his brutal account of the ongoing struggle between society and the individual - never end on a completely hopeless note. In Katharina Blum, Böll shows us

many dimensions of this battle for freedom and justice, and in my analysis I hope to show that this *Erzählung* is of value to all readers for its social criticism and statement of hope, but especially to the scholar for its unique style and content.

SUMMARY OF
DIE VERLORENE EHRE DER KATHARINA BLUM

Heinrich Böll's Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum is the story of an attractive 27-year old woman who falls into the clutches of West Germany's sensationalist press, and is driven to commit a desperate act of violence in an attempt to restore her lost honor, or personal integrity. The heroine possesses two virtues which traditionally have been held in high regard on German soil, but which are fatal in today's society: loyalty and pride. These two character traits occasion the demise of the young woman's honor at the public as well as the private level.

On Wednesday, 20 February 1974, the eve of "Weiberfastnacht," Katharina leaves her apartment, "um an einem privaten Tanzvergnügen teilzunehmen."¹² At the party she meets Ludwig Götten, with whom she dances the evening away, "ausschließlich und innig" (22). For Katharina it is "love at first sight." She allows Götten to escort her home, and ends up sleeping with him that very night.

The next morning, Police Commissioner Beizmenne and eight heavily-armed policemen force their way into Katharina's apartment. They are bitterly disappointed to find out that Götten, a wanted "Bundeswehr" deserter, has escaped. Katharina, who is contentedly leaning on the kitchen counter drinking her morning coffee, arouses instant suspicion. The police believe she is part of an underground conspiracy. Although the law states a person is to be considered innocent until proved guilty, Katharina is treated like a criminal right from the start. This denial of her constitutional rights coincides with the beginning of her humiliation.

¹²Heinrich Böll, Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum oder: Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann (Köln [Cologne]: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1974) 11. Hereafter, page numbers are found in the text: ().

The embarrassing questions posed to Katharina during her deposition gradually erode the honor of the respectable housekeeper. The huge, screaming headlines of the ZEITUNG finish the job of depersonalizing her and of grinding her good name into the dust. Böll's narrator informs the reader that Press and Police have cooperated in an effort to "make an example" of Katharina Blum. She becomes a pawn in the game of status quo maintenance, where importance is attached to profitable and efficient business dealings, and the individual is of little consequence.

In order to sate the public's lust for sensationalism, the ZEITUNG journalists tear statements about Katharina, her family and her friends out of their original context and change them into outright lies. The powerful participants in the State-Police-Press conspiracy suffer no personal difficulties, but those who try to defend Katharina, e.g. the Blornas, are condemned to personal and social ruin along with her.

Katharina refuses to tell the officials much about her private life. Although her own rights have already been compromised, she refuses to betray the confidence of others. She even refuses to identify the cowardly Sträubleder as her "gentleman visitor" ("Herrenbesuch", p. 73-74), although she could have saved herself much punishment and humiliation by doing so. Katharina felt that to admit "die ziemlich kitschige Angelegenheit" (86) with Sträubleder would have been more embarrassing than to let everyone believe her visitor was Ludwig. She prefers to rescue her honor above her skin!

Toward the end of the story, we see how a completely "normal" person, abandoned by society, breaks down as a result of the libelous attacks on her character. Katharina is prepared to use any means at her disposal in a desperate attempt to regain her own lost honor and to restore social justice. She offers the unscrupulous reporter Tötges an exclusive interview, for she would like to know what "dieser Mensch, der [ihr] Leben zerstört hat" (184) looks like. Of course, the journalist cannot pass up such a unique opportunity. He appears punctually at Katharina's door. This time, however, it is Tötges

life that is destroyed - with Katharina's pistol! The arrogant reporter makes sexual advances toward Katharina, as she herself later tells Blorna:

...und er kam mir nach und sagte: "Was guckst du mich denn so entgeistert an, mein Blümelein - ich schlage vor, daß wir jetzt erst einmal bumsen. Nun, inzwischen war ich bei meiner Handtasche, und er ging mir an die Kledage, und ich dachte: "Bumsen, meinetwegen," und ich hab die Pistole rausgenommen und sofort auf ihn geschossen (185).

Katharina has "avenged" herself, and afterward she wanders the streets of the city for hours, but she feels neither regret nor sorrow at the murder of Tötges. Finally, she knocks on Moeding's door - (one of the few nice police officers) - and informs him of her bloody deed. She tells him her only wish is to be in the jail, where her "lieber Ludwig" is already incarcerated. Life as she has known it is now over for her. She can only hope for a new life in the future, when she and her lover will be released from prison. Perhaps then she will be able to rebuild the honor she has lost in the eyes of society.

CHAPTER I:

HEINRICH BÖLL:

"DER GUTE MENSCH VON KÖLN"¹³

Heinrich Böll was born into a lower middle class family in Cologne on December 21, 1917, a stroke of fate which determined his intellectual and spiritual development. Böll himself later remarked that his family and the philosophical traditions of his hometown were the most important factors in his early socialization.¹⁴ Indeed, he cherished the lessons of his early years throughout his entire life: His entire oeuvre testifies to his untiring commitment to justice and social improvement, values which were formed in childhood.

From his family's position between bourgeoisie and working class, young Heinrich experienced first-hand the injustices of the class system. Until the economic crisis of 1928/1929, the Böll family owned a house in the suburb of Raderberg, in "einer Gegend, in der die soziologische Zusammensetzung vom ungelerten Arbeiter bis hin zum Professor oder Kaufmann reicht."¹⁵ Viktor and Maria Böll were hit hard by the rampant inflation of those years, an experience which served to sharpen their criticism of the existing social order. Because the Böll household was an open one, Heinrich was exposed at a young age to frequent political discussions. As liberal, pious Catholics the Bölls also believed in the

¹³I coined this phrase myself, but I discovered it later in several newspaper and magazine articles written after Böll's death.

¹⁴Kothy et al., 14.

¹⁵Friedhelm Kicherer, Heinrich Böll: Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum. Analysen und Interpretationen mit didaktisch-methodischen Hinweisen zur Unterrichtsgestaltung, 2nd ed. (Höllfeld: Beyer, 1985) 9.

egalitarian teachings of Jesus; unlike many bourgeois parents, they therefore did not forbid their son to play with "die Roten" in the neighborhood.¹⁶ Thus, it was from his parents that the boy learned to evaluate social relationships critically, while at the same time maintaining a profound and abiding love for his fellow men.

Between 1928 and 1937, Heinrich attended the Kaiser-Wilhelm Gymnasium in Cologne, but failed to understand why his playmates, "die Roten" and "die nicht besseren Katholischen," were not able to go with him.¹⁷ During these years of economic misery and political strife, he began to feel "Sympathie für diejenigen, die wenn sie 'Arbeit' und 'Brot' an die Wände schreiben, irgendwo in der Welt, es wirklich so meinen: Arbeit und Brot...."¹⁸ While many saw the solution to the turmoil in the rise of Hitlerism, the Böll family actively resisted this trend. Böll later wrote:

Ich habe es meinen Eltern nie vergessen, daß in unserer Wohnung 1933 und 1934 illegale Treffen von katholischen Jugendverbänden stattfanden und ich das miterleben durfte...."¹⁹

In 1932, Heinrich himself joined a Catholic youth group, but left it as soon as its leaders began to keep step with the National Socialist drummers. At 15, he watched as the Nazis marched into Cologne for the first time, and despite his young age, he recognized the serious consequences of Hitler's coup d'état. As long as he was able, he resisted the pressure to participate in organizations affiliated with the government, but in 1938 and 1939 he was finally called to serve in the "Reichsarbeitsdienst." His assignment was field and drainage work²⁰ - a process Böll later used in Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum

¹⁶Heinrich Böll, "Raderberg, Raderthal," Heinrich Böll. Aufsätze, Kritiken, Reden (Cologne: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1967) 184, cited in Kicherer, 9.

¹⁷Böll, "Raderberg," 184, cited in Kicherer, 9.

¹⁸Heinrich Böll, "In der Bundesrepublik leben?," Heinrich Böll. Aufsätze, Kritiken, Reden, 130, cited in Kicherer, 9.

¹⁹Heinrich Böll/Christian Linder, Drei Tage im März. Ein Gespräch (Köln [Cologne]: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1975) 35ff, quoted in Kicherer, 10.

²⁰Kothy et al., 5.

to describe the tedious task of gathering and assimilating the fragmented reports about Katharina.

Finally, Böll was drafted into the army, where he served from 1939-1945. During this period, he was wounded several times, and he learned to fake illnesses and falsify papers in order to obtain leaves of absence. After the war he recalled: "Hätte ich an die deutsche Kollektivschuld geglaubt, ich wäre desertiert und hätte einen Weg in die Emigration gefunden." Instead, he spent the final months of the war in an American P.O.W. camp in Belgium.²¹

Böll had known since age 17 that he wanted to be a writer, but not until the post-war years was he able to express his experiences and feelings in words. Between 1945 and 1947, he published approximately sixty *Novellen* in various magazines. His first anti-war novel, Wo warst du, Adam?, appeared in 1949. He received the coveted prize of the "Gruppe 47" in 1951 for "Die schwarzen Schafe," his humorous tale of the tragic life of the "little man." Other topics treated in his early works were: "Krieg," "Heimkehr" and "Trümmer."²² Above all, he heaped criticism on the "Trinity" of "Staat-Armee-Kirche." He continued to meditate upon and write about the failure of the Germans to come to grips with their past well into the sixties - perhaps even into the early seventies. His Nobel Prize-winning Gruppenbild mit Dame (1971) contains some of these early themes.

As the war years receded, however, Böll did not allow his writings to stagnate by simply continuing to harp on the same old subjects. He kept his message fresh and up-to-date by focusing on current issues and events: the "Wirtschaftswunder" and its consequences, West German rearmament, terrorism and the growth of the "police state," the power of the press versus the rights of the individual citizen, and political corruption.

²¹Kothy et al., 6.

²²Kicherer, 13.

By the late sixties, Böll's voice had been heard and respected throughout the world by both friend and foe, and he was thrust evermore into the socio-political arena of the Federal Republic. The enactment of the "Notstandsgesetze," the activism of the "Außerparlamentarische Organisation," a group consisting primarily of liberal students and environmental activists, and the demonstrations on both sides of the Atlantic against the war in Vietnam convinced Böll that it was his duty as an author to set an active example for his fellow citizens: Böll believed that ever since the war, writers have had and would continue to have considerable effect on the course of German politics, especially among Roman Catholics.²³ As a consequence, he campaigned against the Emergency Laws of 1968; signed a petition supporting the students after the killing of Rudi Dutschke; and protested the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and their treatment of dissident intellectuals, especially Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

Yet Böll chose not to align himself with a political party until Willy Brandt appeared on the scene, for up until then he felt there had been no true leftist party in West Germany. The Communist Party of Germany (KPD) had been prohibited, and the Social Democratic Party had been "nationalliberal" and "eine Partei der Mitte." After being elected president of PEN in 1971, Böll became even more involved in liberal political causes. Accordingly, he also came increasingly under fire from both Left and Right for his controversial views. The article in Spiegel magazine in which he defended Ulrike Meinhof's right to a fair trial and attacked the muckraking of the Bild-Zeitung unleashed a wave of criticism against Böll, and, ironically, led to the very practices he had condemned being used against him. The reactionary press libelously accused members of Böll's family of being terrorist sympathizers and supporters. Böll's house and that of his son were searched by police in an attempt to discover a link between the Bölls and the Baader-Meinhof Group.

²³Reid, Withdrawal, 11.

Ernst Fischer declares: "Man kann nicht leichten Herzens, nicht ohne Bedenklichkeit Christ sein oder Marxist, Angehöriger einer auf Ideen, Werten, Zielsetzungen beruhenden Gemeinschaft."²⁴ As both Christian and Socialist, Böll had two crosses to bear, yet despite being misunderstood and mistreated, he never lost sight of his mission in life. Throughout the seventies and early eighties, in spite of his deteriorating health, Böll remained a committed "Christian Socialist" who loved and believed in mankind and continued to hope that he could touch others with his vision of a more just world. As late as 1983, one can see photographs of a haggard and pale Böll sitting amongst anti-missile demonstrators in Mutlangen. Only a week prior to his death, he granted a lengthy interview in which he expressed his concern about political developments in West Germany from the era of Konrad Adenauer up to the present. One of Böll's deepest regrets was the failure of Adenauer's administration to follow the course prescribed by the "Ahleener Programm," which foresaw the development of a Christian Socialist West Germany.²⁵

In summary, we can conclude with James H. Reid that Böll's early stance of passive resistance and pure individualism gave way to a search for a more militant counterculture, or alternative society.²⁶ Böll's moral foundations - namely, his religious faith and the attitudes acquired in the family circle and in his liberal homeland - and his personal experiences during the war and post-war years form the basis for his political convictions. The brand of socialism he advocates is based on compassion for all members of society, not on political theory and authoritarian power structure, as are the socialist systems of the Eastern bloc.

²⁴Ernst Fischer, "Engagement und Gewissen," In Sachen Böll, 210.

²⁵See Heinrich Böll/Margarete Limberg, "Es stirbt täglich Freiheit weg," Heinrich Böll - zu seinem Tode. Ausgewählte Nachrufe und das letzte Interview (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1985) 23. See also Böll, "Deutsche Meisterschaft," 1-2.

²⁶Reid, Withdrawal, 25.

Heinrich Böll, "der gute Mensch von Köln," did not live to see his dream become a reality. In an age in which people live on the brink of nuclear apocalypse and seek their identity in material wealth, Böll's voice will be sorely missed. As his colleague, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, put it:

Es ist traurig, daß er nicht mehr da ist. In einem Land, das keine Märchen mehr erträgt, war der arme Heinrich der letzte seinesgleichen. Niemand wird seinen Platz einnehmen.²⁷

CATHOLICISM AND BÖLL

Roman Catholics in West Germany today, asserts Heinz Hengst, run the gamut from traditional orthodoxy to declared atheism.²⁸ Böll believes that the disillusionment of many church members is a direct result of the Church's tendency to subjugate its own interests to the whims of powerful worldly institutions. In West Germany, where the CDU is practically synonymous with church leadership,²⁹ "die doppelte Moral der Kirche" is all too apparent: "öffentliche Moral" now takes precedence over "Barmherzigkeit."³⁰ According to Böll, "Mitleid" has become "eine lebensgefährliche Emotion."³¹ He believes that the Church has neglected the needs of the majority in its avaricious pursuit of money and power.

Catholics in the Rhineland typically distance themselves from official church policies, and Heinrich Böll was one of the more vocal dissidents among them.³² His

²⁷Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Der arme Heinrich," Der Spiegel 22 July 1985: 138.

²⁸Norbert Greinacher, "Der Glaube wird anders," Was glauben die Deutschen? (München [Munich]: n.p., 1968) 126. Cited in Heinz Hengst, "Die Frage nach der 'Diagonale zwischen Gesetz und Barmherzigkeit.' Zur Rolle des Katholizismus im Erzählwerk Bölls," Text + Kritik 33 (January 1972): 23.

²⁹Heinrich Böll, Heinrich Böll. Werke., vol. 3: Essayistische Schriften und Reden, (Köln [Cologne]: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1977) 15, cited in Klaus Schröter, Heinrich Böll in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1982) 111.

³⁰Hengst, 26.

³¹Burgauner, 120.

³²The special characteristics of Rhineland Catholicism are discussed in Werner Ross' essay, "Ein Rheinländer," In Sachen Böll, 16ff.

Christian education as a youth had armed him with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures from which to launch his attack on "die Austauschbarkeit der Kirche gegen jede beliebige weltliche Institution."³³ The heart of the official catechism, which all young Catholics must learn, is this:

Wozu sind wir auf Erden? Um Gott zu dienen, lieben und in den Himmel zu kommen.³⁴

But this explanation did not completely satisfy Böll, who wished to incorporate society into the above schema. He believed that mankind could attain some measure of "Erfüllung in Diesseits," of "soziale Gerechtigkeit," through the assimilation of Christian principles into the secular realm. In order to achieve this goal, Böll felt it imperative that members of society adopt the concept of "neighborly love." His faith in mankind is unswerving:

Ich glaube an Christus,...und ich glaube, daß 800 Millionen Christen auf dieser Erde das Antlitz dieser Erde verändern könnten, und ich empfehle es der Nachdenklichkeit und der Vorstellungskraft der Zeitgenossen, sich eine Welt vorzustellen, in der es Christus nicht gegeben hätte.³⁵

The other key Biblical lesson which guides Böll's work is the "Sermon on the Mount." He was outraged that the Church had turned a deaf ear on Jesus' words of duty and hope for all. In Billard um Halbzehn, Böll shows us that the Catholic Church as a whole has chosen to follow the "Sakrament des Büffels."³⁶ "Good shepherds" are the exception among priests and often meet with the distrust of their flocks, who have been brainwashed by "die Büffel." Böll's character Enders in Billard is a case in point:

Enders würde die Lämmer weiden, aber man gibt ihm nur Böcke; er ist verdächtig, weil er die Bergpredigt so oft zum Gegenstand seiner Predigten macht; vielleicht wird man eines Tages entdecken, daß sie ein Einschiesel ist,

³³Hengst, 25.

³⁴Hengst, 27.

³⁵Quoted in Rudolf Augstein, "Der Katholik," In Sachen Böll, 101.

³⁶For a more thorough discussion of Böll's "Büffel-Lämmer" schema, see the section of this paper titled "DAS HUMANE," pp. 96ff.

und wird sie streichen...Da predigt er über die Köpfe der Bauern, die Köpfe der Schulkinder hinweg; sie hassen ihn nicht, verstehen ihn einfach nicht, verehren ihn sogar auf ihre Weise wie einen liebenswürdigen Narren; sagt er ihnen wirklich, daß alle Menschen Brüder sind? Sie wissen es besser und denken wohl heimlich: "Ist er nicht doch ein Kommunist?"³⁷

Following the teachings of both Jesus and Marx, Böll believes the church

...befindet sich nicht im ausschließlichen Besitz der Gläubigen und der wahrhaft Frommen. Sie gehört durch ihre Geschichte auch der Gemeinschaft, nämlich dem Volk. Jedes seiner Glieder hat Anspruch auf Zugehörigkeit, auch wenn es nach der ersten niemals die zweite Kommunion empfängt.³⁸

Furthermore, Böll claims "der gläubige und der ungläubige Mensch [stehen] dem Mysterium gleich nahe, weil auch der Unglaube nur Verkleidung eines unverlierbaren Glaubens ist."³⁹

Heinz Hengst describes the role of those who have participated in the "Sakrament des Lammes": This group "ist erkennbar daran, daß sie sich allen Konformitätstendenzen verweigert und deshalb zum Leiden verurteilt ist."⁴⁰ Due to the significance Böll attaches to "Nächstenliebe," it seems appropriate to explain its importance in the context of Holy Communion. In the eyes of the Church, anyone who receives the body and blood of the Lord without first having been reconciled to loved ones and enemies alike mocks the very purpose of the Resurrection. Communion is therefore a horizontal (communicant-communicant) as well as vertical (communicant-God) relationship, as symbolized by the cross. Böll agreed with this position in theory, and he was quick to point out how often the buffaloes have been allowed to trample on its sanctity in actual practice. Michael Eben

³⁷Heinrich Böll, Billard um halbzehn, 4th ed. (Cologne: Kiepenhauer und Witsch, 1960) 206, quoted in Hengst, 29.

³⁸Klaus Harprecht, "Seine katholische Landschaft," In Sachen Böll, 113.

³⁹Karl August Horst, Die deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart (München [Munich]: n.p., 1957) 137, quoted in Wilhelm Grothmann, "Die Rolle der Religion im Menschenbild Heinrich Bölls," German Quarterly 44 (1971): 196.

⁴⁰Hengst, 29.

believes that Katharina Blum's refusal of her captors' offer of bread and cheese is symbolic in this regard; she has no desire to partake of the "Sakrament des Büffels."⁴¹

Böll had two objectives in criticizing the development of Catholicism in post-war Germany. He hoped to provoke the Church hierarchy into making needed reforms, and he hoped to prod apathetic church members into recognizing the fact that their needs were not being met. His last work to deal overtly with the failings of the Church was Ansichten eines Clowns; thereafter, it is a secondary topic, and it is only the "outsiders" who desire a "Neuorientierung sowohl der Kirche als der Gesellschaft."⁴²

Katharina Blum has been mistreated by various branches of Church and State, yet she does not consciously wish for reform of any social institutions. She is the typical lethargic "Bundesbürger" who has resigned herself to the "senselessness" of bucking the system: Only in the end is she driven to "fight fire with fire" in her struggle against the buffaloes. It is important to note the fact that Böll has endowed his seemingly innocent heroine with negative characteristics. Equally significant is the presence of sympathetic traits among some of the buffaloes. Moeding, for instance, is "nett" to Katharina (189), and even Beizmenne displays a fatherly attitude toward her at one point (35). Thus, one must conclude that Böll's picture of society is not completely dualistic; rather, it reflects his own Christian belief that man exists simultaneously in his goodness and badness.⁴³

Early in Katharina's hearing, we learn that she has left the church in which she was raised, but only later do we begin to suspect what her reasons may have been. The shocking lies told to the ZEITUNG by the priest from Gemmelsbroich illustrate Böll's opinion that the Church today is more concerned with maintaining secular decorum than

⁴¹Michael C. Eben, "Heinrich Böll: the Aesthetic of Bread - the Communion of the Meal," Orbis Litterarum 37 (1982): 265.

⁴²Hengst, 32.

⁴³For a more detailed discussion of the absence of dualism in Böll's work, see Linda Hill, "The Avoidance of Dualism in Heinrich Böll's Novels," The Germanic Review 56.4 (1981): 151-56.

with having mercy on the unfortunate. In his view, Church and ZEITUNG have broken the Eighth Commandment by bearing false witness against Katharina. Böll once declared: "Keins der zehn Gebote halte ich für so aktuell wie das achte."⁴⁴ He extended the meaning of the Commandment to include "derogatory" labels such as "Emigrant," "Katholik" and "Mörder." He claimed these expressions constituted false witness because they did not describe the whole person.⁴⁵ The ZEITUNG's use of words such as "Räuberliebchen" and "Mörderbraut," and the minister's use of the word "Kommunist" fall into Böll's tabu category.

There have been a few attempts to equate Katharina with Böll himself on the basis of parallel personality traits and events in the lives of character and author. While there are some similarities, there are also many important differences which seem to refute the equation. First of all, it is only mentioned in passing that Katharina Blum is a Catholic, who left the "kath. Kirche" at age 19. Böll did not leave the Church officially until much later in his life, and he still considered himself a part of "the body of Christ." Katharina has left the Church and no longer practices her religion, nor does she consciously think about its role in her life. After shooting Tötges, Katharina wanders the streets and in her search for a peaceful atmosphere, she enters two churches. She does not, however, find comfort there, nor does she regret having broken the Fifth Commandment by killing Tötges. Yet despite her rejection of religious institutions, she lives according to the principle of helping her neighbors, a principle which Böll feels the Church has forgotten. Günter Pakendorf offers the following examples of Katharina's exemplary, "fast urchristliche Güte": Katharina sends her mother DM 150 every month, she makes sure her father's grave is kept up, she occasionally sends her brother small sums of money, and she

⁴⁴Heinrich Böll, "Die zehn Gebote heute: Das 8. Gebot," Spuren der Zeitgenossenschaft. Literarische Schriften (Munich: DTV, 1980) 140.

⁴⁵Böll, "Die zehn Gebote," 143-44.

displays unswerving devotion toward all of her employers.⁴⁶ In this sense, Wilhelm Grothmann's assessment of the character Katharina in Böll's *Erzählung* "Im Tal der donnernden Hufe" also applies to Katharina Blum: "Die Halb-Atheistin Katharina ist in ihrer natürlichen Sensibilität und Scheu eine bessere Lehrmeisterin als die Kirche."⁴⁷

In Böll's later years, the schism between himself and the official Church grew ever deeper. In 1976, he officially left the Church, but he remained nonetheless a faithful Christian to the very end. He later explained his religious position as follows: "...ich fühle mich dem Körper noch zugehörig...Das sollen sich die Theologen mal angucken, den Unterschied zwischen Körper und Körperschaft."⁴⁸ Like Katharina, he structured his life around the principle of serving others; however, unlike her, he remained aware of the inextricable connection between his religious beliefs and his way of life, and he continued to fight for a more "human" world. "Nächstenliebe, Friedensliebe, Mitmenschlichkeit" are for Böll

...unausweichliche Vorbedingungen für einen christlichen Alltag und damit für eine rehumanisierte Existenz, für die teils zurückzuerobernde, teils weiter auszudehnende "Bewohnbarkeit der Welt" im Sinne einer Aufwertung des bisher zu falscher Demut verurteilten Menschen.⁴⁹

"RHEINISCHE SOZIALKRITIK"

Heinrich Böll's novels and short stories are almost always set in his native Rhineland, but this "Heimatliteratur" is read with great interest all over the world.⁵⁰

⁴⁶Günter Pakendorf, "Die verlorene Ehre der kleinen Leute. Ideologie und Figur bei Heinrich Böll," *Acta Germanica* 15 (1982): 124-25.

⁴⁷Grothmann, 192.

⁴⁸Heinrich Böll/Werner Koch, "Köln gibt's schon, aber es ist ein Traum," in: *Merian. Köln* 32.12 (1979): 140, quoted in Schröter, 112-13.

⁴⁹Wolfgang Grothe, "Biblische Bezüge im Werk Heinrich Bölls," *Studia Neophilologica* 45.2 (1973): 321.

⁵⁰Ross, "Ein Rheinländer," 13.

"(N)ur der Kölner ist ein ganz richtiger Rheinländer," asserts Werner Ross; in this city, "(d)ie Macht wird nicht ernst genommen, aber eben deswegen geduldet."⁵¹ With his sharp-tongued wit and his compassion for the underdog, Böll embodies the "rheinische Seele" of his heterogeneous homeland by carrying on the long-standing tradition of Rhenish social criticism. In doing so, he follows in the footsteps of such prominent writers as Friedrich von Spee, Ludwig Börne, Heinrich Heine and Karl Marx. Spee and Marx are particularly relevant in analyzing the local roots of Böll's style of criticism, a unique blend of his predecessors' philosophical views.

Although separated by more than three centuries, the writings of Spee and Böll show distinct thematic parallels which are grounded in similar personal experiences. Friedrich von Spee (1591-1635) was a teacher at the Jesuit schools in Paderborn and Cologne, but he did not officially belong to the clerical establishment. His interpretation of the scriptures and of justice led him to speak out against the persecution of "witches," a political stance which clashed with the accepted church doctrine of his day. His denunciation of the rampant witch hunts endangered his own career and social standing. Twice he was temporarily suspended from his teaching duties, and he was transferred once as a disciplinary measure.⁵²

Spee's Cautio Criminalis is especially interesting for us in relation to Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, for here Spee relates his psychological observations regarding public opinion. Manfred Windfuhr summarizes the content of this work:

Er spricht vom "pestilenzischen Gifft" der Denunziation und stellt dar, wie Gerüchte manipuliert, verbreitet und schließlich anstelle von nichtvorhandenen Sachindizien zur Basis von Todesurteilen gemacht wurden. Es kommt zu Massenhysterien, die von den Verantwortlichen bewußt ausgenutzt und als Mittel der Herrschaftsausübung eingesetzt werden.⁵³ (emphasis added)

⁵¹Ross, "Ein Rheinländer," 17.

⁵²Manfred Windfuhr, Die unzulängliche Gesellschaft. Rheinische Sozialkritik von Spee bis Böll (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1981) 16.

⁵³Windfuhr, 17.

Spee goes on to tell how vicious rumors may bring about the conviction of an innocent person. In his *Erzählung*, Böll also hurls criticism at "die Verantwortlichen," who, in this case, encourage "die Hetzerei" of investigative journalism. By punishing non-conformists and by declaring themselves the moral voice of the masses, the organs of the political status quo exert tremendous psychological power over the subjects of their empire in an effort to keep them "in their place."

Böll concurred with Karl Marx that the oppressed position of the masses was not their rightful place in society. The central ideas expressed in the Sermon on the Mount - which have never ceased to fascinate even the most adamantly atheistic socialist - shine through in the works of both men. In this passage from Matthew, Jesus outlines the duties of the citizens of the Kingdom to the world and describes the rewards which those who follow his teachings shall eventually reap. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"; the idealists Böll and Marx seem to ask: "Why not begin here and now?!" They seek to open the eyes of the masses to their plight and to show them a way out of their undeserved dependency and alienation. Both men believe in the power of language as a medium for proclaiming their message of hope to the world. Beyond these points of agreement, however, the pathways of the two diverge: Marx thinks the Communist Party is the road to success; Böll, who has witnessed the brutal realities of Marxism-Leninism in practice, knows better. As long as men strive for power at the expense of others there can be no system in which all are equal before the law. That is why Böll feels that the Christian principle of neighborly love must be incorporated into socialist doctrine.⁵⁴

According to Windfuhr, Spee, Marx and Böll were not "outsiders" in their respective Rhineland societies. All were born into families with some financial security and social influence, and all were well-educated, circumstances which provided each man

⁵⁴Windfuhr, 28-41.

with insight into the socio-political problems of his age. Their background effectively precludes personal motives as the reason underlying their criticism of society's shortcomings. Manfred Windfuhr claims: "Sie reagieren im Interesse einer Gesamtgesellschaft."⁵⁵ He explains that their purpose is twofold: to plead the case of the "little people" and to make the ruling elite aware of its own prejudices and of the damage that has been wrought.⁵⁶ In this regard, it is important to note the fact that Spee's strategy differed from that of Böll and Marx. The fact that Spee wrote his treatise on "Hexenverfolgungen" in Latin ensured that his direct assault on the system would remain virtually unknown to the very masses he was defending. Marx and Böll not only wrote in the accepted vernacular of their times, they also took their critical arguments directly to the people in an effort to form a united front against the oppressive establishment. Unfortunately for Böll, his message has reached primarily only liberal intellectuals.

Spee, Marx and Böll have made impressive use of the only weapon at their disposal, the logical argument, but it has so far proved insufficient to crumble the foundation of the ruling classes, which avail themselves of both verbal and physical "Gewalt." As soon as a threat to the existing order is perceived, the State sets Press and Police into action, for those in power know that fear will often quell aggressive behavior. - Heinrich Böll's Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum clearly echoes the reality of the individual's struggle against the impenetrable alliances of an unjust society.

⁵⁵Windfuhr, 37.

⁵⁶Windfuhr, 37.

CHAPTER II:
THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC
IN THE LATE SIXTIES AND EARLY SEVENTIES

In this section, I will analyze events which took place in the Federal Republic during the late sixties and early seventies and which provide the background for the plot of Heinrich Böll's Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum. The Federal Republic during these years was a land dominated by the materialistic philosophy which had launched the "Wirtschaftswunder." Yet, at the same time, it was also threatened by the growing radicalism of a minority of anarchists who sought to overthrow what they viewed as an unjust, impersonal system of government. The heroine of Katharina Blum is a product of this society, who gets caught between its two opposing forces. She is a true child of the *Wirtschaftswunder*,⁵⁷ who accidentally falls into the world of political intrigue through an impulsive affair with a suspected criminal.

The late sixties were the era of the "Große Koalition" in Bonn. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) aligned itself with the more conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU) to run the government, leaving only the tiny Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP) in the opposition. Heinrich Böll reacted angrily to SPD Party Chief Herbert Wehner's decision to make the SPD a "middle-of-the-road" party. At that time, Böll believed it was senseless to become involved in party politics because there was no leftist party; thus, there was no real means of voicing dissent.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Heinrich Böll, "Zehn Jahre später. Nachwort zur Neuausgabe Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum," Die Fähigkeit zu trauern. Schriften und Reden 1983-1985 (Bornheim-Merten: Lamuv, 1986) 33.

⁵⁸Rainer Nägele, Heinrich Böll: Einführung in das Werk und in die Forschung (Frankfurt a.M.: Athenäum Fischer, 1976) 37.

The increasing power of the West German State and the oppressive methods employed by its "henchmen" - Police, Press and Church - brought about the "Geburtsstunde der APO." During a demonstration against the visiting Shah of Iran on 2 June 1967 in Berlin, the police intervened with inordinate force, and Benno Ohnesorg, a "Germanistik" student, was fatally wounded by Chief Commissioner Karl-Heinz Karras. Ohnesorg's death and Karras' subsequent acquittal incited the previously fragmented anti-authoritarian groups to unite as the "Außerparlamentarische Opposition" (APO). These events, says Heinrich Böll, signaled "der Anfang der Gewalt" in West Germany.⁵⁹

The "high points" of APO's activity occurred in early 1968 and included "sit-ins" at the Springer Building in Berlin and interference with the delivery of the Bild-Zeitung in several cities. This attack on Axel Springer and his newspaper was primarily due to the belief among APO members that Bild's smear campaign against the student movement was responsible for the assassination of its dynamic leader, Rudi Dutschke. On the heels of this tragic event, Böll signed a petition supporting the students in their cause.⁶⁰ The author's convictions also led him to speak out on behalf of APO and of "Wehrdienstverweigerer." Based on Böll's own attempts to avoid active duty during the war years and on his expression of sympathy with young men who refuse to serve in the military⁶¹, we can conclude that the character Ludwig Götten, a wanted "Bundeswehordeserteur," probably enjoys the author's hearty approval.

Within a few months of Dutschke's death, however, the APO movement fell apart. Its disintegration was mainly due to the inability of its intellectual organizers to convince the

⁵⁹Heinrich Böll, "Schriftsteller und Bürger dieses Landes," Television interview with Wiltrud Mannfeld, ZDF, 18 December 1977, Heinrich Böll: Werke, vol. 1: Interviews 1961-1978 (Köln [Cologne]: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1979) 724.

⁶⁰Reid, Withdrawal, 12.

⁶¹Böll faked illness and falsified papers in order to obtain military leave. See Kothy et al., 6. Böll expresses his sympathy with draft evaders in "Deutsche Meisterschaft," 3: "...und ich möchte hier öffentlich erklären, daß jeder junge Deutsche, der den Wehrdienst verweigert, meine volle Sympathie hat."

working classes to participate in anti-government demonstrations. Another factor which contributed to APO's demise was the election of Social Democrat Willy Brandt as Chancellor in 1969. Brandt ushered in a new era of SPD/FDP leadership in Bonn and threw the CDU/CSU coalition into the opposition.

In 1971, Willy Brandt became the first politician for whom Böll publicly declared his support.⁶² The friendship which grew up between these two men was no doubt grounded in their deeply-rooted humanitarian values and in their mutual belief that "Politik wird mit Worten gemacht...."⁶³ Brandt shares Böll's view of the author's duty to society, as proven by the following excerpt from an address made to the Verband Deutscher Schriftsteller in 1970:

Gute Politik braucht die Literatur als sprachliches Korrektiv. Je enger der Kontakt zwischen Literatur und Politik, um so besser ist das Sprachbewußtsein. Besseres Sprachbewußtsein bedeutet mehr Aufgeschlossenheit für die Demokratie...Es gehört zu meinem Verständnis von Demokratie, daß die Kluft zwischen Volk und Behörde - auch zwischen Bürger und Parlament - durch genaue Sprache überbrückt wird. Bürokratendeutsch als Obrigkeits- und Untertanensprache hat uns geschädigt und zu gestelztem Jargon verführt.⁶⁴

Thus, Brandt and Böll both practice a form of politics based on the spoken and the written word. Unfortunately for Böll, the new SPD government under Brandt reneged on its promised reforms. Jack Zipes writes that "political repression" and "an atmosphere of fear and hysteria mark[ed] the spirit of the 1970s."⁶⁵

⁶²Reid, 13-14.

⁶³Harry Pross, "Bürger Böll," In Sachen Böll, 189, cited in Hanno Beth, "Trauer zu dritt und mehreren," Text + Kritik 33 (January 1972): 14.

⁶⁴Willy Brandt, "Braucht die Politik den Schriftsteller?," Einigkeit der Einzelgänger. Dokumentation des ersten Schriftstellerkongresses des Verbandes deutscher Schriftsteller, ed. Dieter Lattmann (München [Munich]: n.p., 1971) 14-15, quoted in Beth, "Trauer," 13-14.

⁶⁵Jack Zipes, "The Political Dimensions of The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum," New German Critique 12 (1977): 75.

"ÜBT EINE BILD-SCHLAGZEILE KEINE GEWALT AUS?"

In mir streiten sich
 Die Begeisterung über den blühenden Apfelbaum
 Und das Entsetzen über die Reden des Anstreichers.
 Aber nur das zweite
 Drängt mich zum Schreibtisch.⁶⁶

So wrote Bertolt Brecht in 1939 from the security of Swedish exile. Like Brecht, Böll sees the forces of good and evil at work in the world, and it is only his horror at "die Schriften des Verlegers" which drives him to arm himself with pen and paper. Böll feels strongly that no time is a "schlechte Zeit für Prosa," if there is a need to defend the rights and the dignity of human beings. In writing Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum he acted on behalf of all citizens of the FRG whose lives had been destroyed by Bild's "Schlagetotzeilen."⁶⁷ Bild's manipulative powers pose as great a threat to democracy as do the weapons of an oppressive police state, claims Böll:

Es ist doch nachgerade unfassbar, wenn man hierzulande unter Gewalt nur die Gewalt von Bomben und Maschinenpistolen versteht. Übt eine Bild-Schlagzeile keine Gewalt aus? Welche? Was wird da angerichtet in den Köpfen, im Bewußtsein, am Aggressionspotential dieser elf Millionen Süchtigen, die der politisch gefährlichsten aller Süchte, der Bild-Sucht unterworfen sind? Und welche Gewalt haben die rund vier Milliarden DM ausgeübt, die im Jahre 1971 für Zeitungsinserate ausgegeben worden sind? Natürlich nicht die geringste. Ich weiß, es ist Mode geworden, die Springer-Presse einfach für indiskutabel zu halten. Ich mag mir diesen intellektuellen Luxus nicht leisten.⁶⁸

Böll's purpose in writing Katharina Blum was to expose questionable practices employed by the boulevard press and its "partners in crime": the State, the Police and, to a lesser extent, the Church.

⁶⁶Bertolt Brecht, "Schlechte Zeit für Lyrik," Bertolt Brecht, Gedichte 1934-1941. Vol. 5 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1964) 105.

⁶⁷The play on the word "Schlagzeile" is borrowed from Rudolf Augstein, "Lieber Spiegelleser!," Der Spiegel 29 July 1974: 3.

⁶⁸Heinrich Böll, "Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar," Heinrich Böll, Werke, vol. 2: Essayistische Schriften und Reden, 577.

On 10 January, 1972, West Germany's popular news-weekly Der Spiegel published Heinrich Böll's infamous article "Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?" Here Böll puts his reputation and his career on the line in defending the right of anarchist Ulrike Meinhof to be considered innocent until proved guilty and her right to a fair trial. Because the Bild-Zeitung has, in effect, already passed judgment on her, Böll holds it for unlikely that she will receive an impartial hearing. He cites a Bild-headline from 23 December 1971, which implicates the Baader-Meinhof Group in the murder of a policeman, although there is no conclusive evidence to support such an accusation.⁶⁹

Bild's type of reporting, claims an indignant Böll, "ist nackter Faschismus. Verhetzung, Lüge, Dreck."⁷⁰ Two years later, he lets Hubert Blorna do his cursing for him: "Dieser Dreck, dieser verfluchte Dreck" (114), he screams, outraged by the ZEITUNG's lies.⁷¹ Furthermore, the reaction of Press and Police was not commensurate with the threat posed by Baader-Meinhof, which by that time had shrunk to six members! Böll underscores the unequal odds of the anarchists' war on society: six anarchists against sixty million West German citizens.⁷² Zipes agrees with Böll's assessment of power relations: "Indeed, the reaction of the state and its police force has been out of proportion to the real threat by terrorists who are small in number and distrusted by the Left itself."⁷³ Böll's anger over the escalation of force and the mounting injustice of media reports leads him to propose his own solution to the problem:

Ulrike Meinhof will möglicherweise keine Gnade, wahrscheinlich erwartet sie von dieser Gesellschaft kein Recht. Trotzdem sollte man ihr freies Geleit bieten, einen

⁶⁹Heinrich Böll, "Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?," Der Spiegel 10 January 1972: 54-57.

⁷⁰Böll, "Will Ulrike...?," 55.

⁷¹Cited in "Bölls 'ZEITUNG'-Story: Jetzt bumst's," Der Spiegel 29 July 1974: 72.

⁷²Böll, "Will Ulrike...?," 55.

⁷³Zipes, 76.

öffentlichen Prozeß, und man sollte auch Herrn Springer öffentlich den Prozeß machen, wegen Volksverhetzung.⁷⁴

Ten days following Böll's attack on Bild, Professor Peter Brückner of Hannover was suspended from his university post "weil er Angehörigen der Baader-Meinhof-Gruppe Unterschlupf gewährt haben sollte." The media's false accusations against Brückner also cost him his respected reputation in the community, as he himself later related:

Ich sah mich bald einer Situation gegenüber, die mich zum Opfer abstempelte, dem allgemeine Verachtung zuteil wurde. Ich wurde gleichsam umklammert. Es entstand eine Scheinrealität um mich herum. Je nachdem, wann und in welchen Zeitungen Berichte über mich erschienen, setzte bei Tag und bei Nacht eine Flut von anonymen Telefonanrufen ein. Es gab viele Drohbriefe. Auf der Straße wandten sich viele von mir ab. Ich sah mich plötzlich betroffen, belastet, diffamiert und fragte mich: Bin ich's, oder bin ich's nicht? Das Problem der Isolierung traf mich unvermittelt. Es entstand eine Publicity, die nicht Folge von Verdienst oder Verbrechen war. Im Herbst 1972 entdeckte ich in einer Sonntagszeitung mein Konterfei unter einem Artikel mit der Schlagzeile: Im Bett macht Ulrike ihre Männer munter. Es wurde eine neue Person B. produziert, wobei sich ein Image herausbildete, das dem Selbstverständnis des Opfers nicht mehr entsprach. - Durch die Negativ-Publicity war ich zur Unperson geworden, gleichsam einem Zustand der persönlichen Entfeinerlichung ausgesetzt. Die soziale Distanz gegenüber dem, der zur öffentlichen Unperson geworden ist, wächst. Jedes Treffen - auch mit Freunden und Leuten aus der eigenen politischen Gruppe - wird zur Veranstaltung. Dadurch schwindet die Chance, unbefangen miteinander umgehen zu können.⁷⁵

The case of Professor Brückner provided Böll with a realistic model for Katharina Blum, as the author himself admitted to an interviewer:

Und was ich damit darstellen wollte, ist eigentlich das, was im Zusammenhang mit der Baader-Meinhof-Auseinandersetzung die schreckliche Rolle des Professor Brückner war, eines Menschen, der in Berührung gekommen ist mit den Baader-Meinhof-Leuten, der sie beherbergt hat, der eigentlich etwas Selbstverständliches getan hat, und auf eine Weise zerstört worden ist in seiner psychischen Situation... da kommt der Einstieg in diese Problematik: Nicht direkt die Gruppe, sondern alle die Leute, die fast wie Aussätzige behandelt worden sind.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Böll, "Will Ulrike...?," 57.

⁷⁵Quoted by Hubert Höring, "Betroffen - belastet - diffamiert," letter, Der Spiegel, 19 August 1974: 7.

⁷⁶Dieter Zilligen, "Interview Heinrich Böll," Bücherjournal, NDR Program III, 13 October 1974, quoted in Hanno Beth, "Rufmord und Mord: die publizistische Dimension der Gewalt. Zu Heinrich Bölls Erzählung Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum," Heinrich Böll: Eine Einführung in das Werk in Einzelinterpretationen, ed. H. Beth, 2nd ed. (Königstein: Scriptor, 1980) 72.

Indeed, Katharina and the Blornas undergo many of the same experiences as Brückner, as a result of the defamatory campaigns against them. Intellectuals and liberals - or those suspected of belonging to these groups - are the declared enemy of the right-wing press, as we shall discover shortly.

Following publication of his plea on behalf of Ulrike Meinhof, Böll found himself the object of Springer's smear tactics. He was accused of being a Baader-Meinhof sympathizer and conspirator, Bild compared him with Joseph Goebbels and the SED-agitator Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler⁷⁷, and Quick printed his name above a photograph of four men who had been murdered in Cologne.⁷⁸ On 7 June 1972, Quick wrote: "Die Bölls sind gefährlicher als Baader-Meinhof." On the day that Andreas Baader was taken into custody, heavily armed police stormed Böll's country-house, and two of his guests had to provide proof of their identity.⁷⁹

One of Böll's sons, Raimund, had a similar encounter with the authorities. In February 1974, Bild ran a story stating that Raimund Böll's house had been searched by police - a day before the event actually took place!⁸⁰ It seems he and his wife once had entertained a member of the Baader-Meinhof Group. Unbeknownst to them, the woman apparently had taken their passports, which later turned up in a police raid on a terrorist hide-out. (Of course, as an artist, Raimund Böll instantly aroused the suspicions of conservative elements in both press and government!) Four days later, Bild printed a follow-up story about Raimund, reiterating his alleged Baader-Meinhof connections, while at the same time maligning his personal and professional integrity.⁸¹ In all, Heinrich Böll

⁷⁷"Bölls 'ZEITUNG'-Story," 72.

⁷⁸Heinrich Böll, "Rufschädigung ist eine ansteckende Krankheit," interview with Klaus Bresser, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 4 October 1977, cited in Heinrich Böll. Werke, vol. 1: Interviews, 696.

⁷⁹"Bölls 'ZEITUNG'-Story," 72.

⁸⁰Heinrich Böll, "Die Verfilmung der Katharina Blum," discussion with Viktor Böll, 22 October 1976, quoted in Heinrich Böll. Werke, vol. 1: Interviews, 666.

⁸¹"Bölls 'ZEITUNG'-Story," 73.

and his sons had their houses searched a total of five times between 1974 and 1977. Heinrich Böll later told an interviewer he possessed concrete evidence that police and press had worked together in the attacks on him and his family.⁸²

Many critics have claimed that Katharina Blum is Böll's personal revenge for the events that befell him and his family in the spring of 1972. To lend credibility to their position, they frequently quote a statement Böll once made to a Swiss reporter upon being asked whether his own experiences with press and police would ever find their way into a novel:

Nein. Allerdings könnte es sein, daß das eine oder andere in verwandelter Form zur *Rache* verwendet wird. Auch ein Schriftsteller möchte sich gelegentlich mal rächen.⁸³ (emphasis in original)

To say that Böll wrote Katharina Blum solely to retaliate against Springer and the police is too simple an explanation for such a complex work.⁸⁴ Personal revenge played but a secondary role in the writing of this *Erzählung*. Böll later stated explicitly that his story had very little to do with Ulrike Meinhof or his own experiences.⁸⁵

For several weeks after Spiegel's printing of "Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?," Böll waged a running battle with his critics. Diether Posser, "Minister für Bundesangelegenheiten in Nordrhein-Westfalen," accused Böll of failing to understand the legal meaning of "Gnade" and "freies Geleit." Böll admitted that he was not familiar with the legal definitions of these terms, but stressed that he, as an author, understood their deeper, more existential significance. In the ensuing weeks, Böll also came to verbal

⁸²Böll, "Rufschädigung," 700.

⁸³Markus M. Ronner, "Man kann nicht sehr weit gehen... - Gespräch mit Heinrich Böll," Die Weltwoche 9 February 1972, quoted in Beth, "Rufmord," 72.

⁸⁴Dorothee Sölle, "Heinrich Böll und die Eskalation der Gewalt," Merkur 28.9 (1974): 887.

⁸⁵Böll/Linder, 68ff., cited in Pakendorf, 123.

blows with Hans Habe, a writer for Springer's Welt am Sonntag. Habe reproached Böll - who was the international president of PEN at that time - with representing Meinhof's freedom while ignoring the rights of Vladimir Bukowski, a dissident Soviet author.⁸⁶

Habe's insinuation that Böll only defends "Leftists" is easy to refute, if one looks at Böll's record as a whole: He has fought for the release of those oppressed by leftist governments, including Solzhenitsyn, and on a trip to the Soviet Union, he surprisingly defended the Bild-Zeitung's practices as "unsere Angelegenheit"⁸⁷; in other words, he told Soviet journalists to "butt out"! On the whole, we can conclude that Böll takes the side of the victim, no matter whether the attack comes from Left or Right. But first and foremost, despite his social criticism, he remains true to his country.

Finally, on 9 February 1972, Böll declared he would grant German publications no more interviews on the subject of Ulrike Meinhof. In spite of the personal difficulties he and his family experienced, Böll was not completely unhappy with the backlash created by his article, for he had succeeded in reaching the public with his arguments. He was, however, shocked over the "Gnadenlosigkeit der Gesellschaft" which his "Demaskierung des Scheinchristentums" had unveiled.⁸⁸

Böll's fiery exchange with conservative media critics during the early seventies was the exception rather than the rule. It resulted from a burning desire to make himself understood more clearly by the public. Generally, whenever criticism is leveled at him, Böll prefers to "turn the other cheek," as he himself phrases it: "Ich lese nicht jeden Dreck über mich."⁸⁹ He maintains that the arguments of his opponents are stupid and refuses to

⁸⁶Hans Mathias Kepplinger, Michael Hachenberg, Hermann Frühauf, "Struktur und Funktion eines publizistischen Konfliktes. Die Auseinandersetzung um Heinrich Bölls Artikel 'Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?'," Zu Heinrich Böll, 155-56.

⁸⁷Heinrich Böll, "Die Bundesrepublik heute: Ideale Demokratie oder Polizeistaat?," panel discussion with Hans Maier, Alfred Grosser and Philippe Ravoire, Paris, 21 March 1978, cited in Heinrich Böll. Werke, vol. 1: Interviews, 734.

⁸⁸Burgauner, 121.

⁸⁹Böll, "Rufschädigung," 697.

be drawn into defending himself. He is much more concerned with the plight of others, especially those who have been denied a public voice. While the humiliating incidents surrounding the character assassination of Professor Brückner certainly provided fuel for Böll's story, it is important to note that Katharina comes from a lower-class background - i.e., from the group which has the least chance of defending itself against oppressive social institutions.

WALLRAFF "IM BILDE"

Kommt jemand in den Himmel, und auf der Erde leuchtet ein rotes Licht auf. Fragt er Petrus, und der erklärt: "Da hat eben ein Mann gelogen." Kurz darauf leuchtet ein grünes Licht auf, und Petrus erklärt ihm, "jetzt hat eine Frau gelogen." Plötzlich ist die Erde in ein riesiges, flimmerndes helles Lichteermeer getaucht, der ganze Himmel wie mit einem Feuerwerk überzogen. Sagt Petrus: "Auf der Erde wird eben die BILD-Zeitung angedruckt."⁹⁰

Heinrich Böll was well acquainted with the destruction that a contrived newspaper article can work in the lives of the helpless, for he attentively followed the work of Günter Wallraff, a former Bild-reporter. In fact, Böll actively encouraged Wallraff in his efforts to raze the deceptively harmless "facade" of Springer's publications. In his "Brief an einen jungen Nichtkatholiken" [i.e., Wallraff], Böll comments sarcastically on the publisher's power and sphere of influence:

Der literarische Haus-Esel einer deutschen Wochenzeitung [i.e., Axel Springer] übt weitaus mehr Macht aus als der Durchschnittspolitiker, und der Haus-Esel übt sie grinsend und im Vollgefühl aus, er gleicht den Politikern nur in einem Punkt; er wird weinerlich und sentimental, er wird "privat," wenn ihm einer mal auf die Finger schaut oder gar klopft. Mein Gott, das ist vielleicht ein sauberes Geschäft! Als ob's ein Kunststück wäre, über Deutsche Macht auszuüben: wo sie Macht spüren, kann man ihrer Anbetung sicher sein, und manches großes Verlegerherz lacht erleichtert, wenn der Haus-Esel Gnade walten läßt.⁹¹

⁹⁰Günter Wallraff, Der Aufmacher. Der Mann, der bei Bild Hans Esser war, rev. ed. (Köln [Cologne]: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1982) 201.

⁹¹Heinrich Böll, "Brief an einen jungen Nichtkatholiken," Heinrich Böll: Werke, vol. 2: Essayistische Schriften und Reden, 217.

In 1977, Wallraff infiltrated the ranks of Springer's Hannover press corps under the alias "Hans Esser." He worked for Bild four months - long enough to learn the inner workings of its mechanism and to watch dozens of innocent people fall prey to unsavory journalistic practices. Bild-editors do not need to tell reporters to falsify information; the "piece-work" system promotes such "creative" journalism. Freelance writers are paid according to the number of lines published. Because they cannot afford to write a story that will not be printed, they do everything possible to give their stories "einen möglichst saftigen, originellen Aspekt."⁹²

Admittedly, Wallraff himself is no saint; he sometimes uses the arts of deception and disguise to gain access to a good story, yet compassion for his fellows prevents him from "inventing" scandals in order to sell more papers or gain a promotion for himself. Reinhold Neven DuMont explains Wallraff's guiding philosophy: "Jeder Mensch hat eine schützenswerte Sphäre intimen Lebens und Erlebens, in die kein maskierter Journalist sollte einbrechen dürfen."⁹³ As soon as the bigwigs at Bild became aware of "Esser's" true identity, they began to invade Wallraff's own private sphere, launching a verbal attack on him for his infiltration of Bild-territory. Der Spiegel points out the irony of the Springer campaign against Walraff:

Eben jene Methoden, die Wallraff von Kritikern angelastet werden, gehören - ironischerweise - zum Repertoire der BILD-Redaktion, die sich nun besonders heftig über den Eindringling empört: Wie Springer-Reporter zuweilen als Krankenpfleger, Kellner oder Kondolierende auftreten, um sich ungehindert in die Privatsphäre ihrer Opfer einschleichen zu können, exakt so verbirgt Wallraff seit mehr als zehn Jahren immer wieder seine persönliche Identität - freilich nicht, um seine persönliche, sondern um gesellschaftliche "Geheimbereiche" auszuleuchten, wie Heinrich Böll es nennt.⁹⁴

⁹²Wallraff, Aufmacher, 194.

⁹³Quoted in Wallraff, Aufmacher, 224.

⁹⁴Wallraff, 224.

Like Böll, Wallraff had to suffer for his outspokenness, but again like Böll, he seems to have regretted nothing. Bild-reporters pestered his family and his neighbors for details about his "sordid past." He also found himself party to a lawsuit involving the Springer Verlag, which sought to have the name of the Bild-Zeitung removed from Wallraff's works. The "Bundesgerichtshof" eventually decided against Springer, and lifted the previously imposed censorship.⁹⁵ Despite numerous setbacks, Wallraff did not give up his fight for the rights of individuals. After leaving Bild, he went to work in Berlin, the bastion of the Springer empire, where he continued his fight against the injustices of the yellow press. Heinrich Böll realized the danger Walraff faced in Berlin, where Axel Springer controls 90% of the press. Böll illustrates the situation in a critique of Wallraff's 13 unerwünschte Reportagen:

Man mag im Ausland gelegentlich denken, das Phänomen Axel Springer werde von Studenten und Intellektuellen in der Bundesrepublik in seiner Gefährlichkeit übertrieben. Dabei vergißt man leicht, daß Herrn Springers Lieblingswirkungs-feld Berlin ist; daß seine Zeitungen, die in der Bundesrepublik unter anderen laufen, in Berlin die öffentliche Meinung bilden und fast ausschließlich beherrschen. Die demagogisierte Berliner Bevölkerung, mit der...Walraff auf lebensgefährliche Art konfrontiert ist, ist das Ergebnis Springerscher Manipulation.⁹⁶

Whenever possible, Wallraff makes sure the other side gets a chance to tell its story.

Wallraff wrote several books about his career as a journalist. In his Bild-exposé, Der Aufmacher, he reveals "(t)he truth behind 'Bild' reports," as a chapter from another of his books is titled. With the proceeds from sales of Der Aufmacher, he has founded an organization for Bild's victims; its rallying cry: "Wenn Bild lügt - kämpft dagegen!"⁹⁷ In Der Aufmacher, Wallraff relates how Axel Springer's lie factory molds public opinion in the Federal Republic:

⁹⁵Frank J. Heinemann, "Der verbotene Blick in die Küche," Aufmacher, 260ff.

⁹⁶Heinrich Böll, "Günter Wallraffs unerwünschte Reportagen," Heinrich Böll. Werke, vol. 2: Essayistische Schriften und Reden, 490.

⁹⁷Wallraff, Aufmacher, 10 and 273.

Für die Leser liegt eine wesentliche Funktion der BILD-Zeitung darin, daß sie signalisiert, welche Dinge, welche Ereignisse und welche Meinungen für den jeweiligen Tag von Bedeutung sind. In diesem Sinne schafft die BILD-Zeitung öffentliche Meinung, beeinflußt sie die öffentliche Meinung, liefert sie die Stereotypen des Gesprächs und der Diskussion für Millionen von Menschen!⁹⁸

What is remarkable about the above explanation is the fact that it is condensed from one of Springer's own analyses of the BILD-Zeitung!

In a chapter from his book Neue Reportagen, Untersuchungen und Lehrbeispiele, Wallraff relates three stories as reported by Bild and then proceeds to demonstrate that "the facts" in each case are a pack of lies: "It turns out that Bild not only manipulates but invents news to propagate its own way of thinking."⁹⁹ Here are the facts according to Walraff: Each "victim" comes from a lower-middle class or working class background. Each is therefore virtually powerless against blows inflicted by the Springer giant. In two incidents, the "victims" were tricked into posing for photographs, which were later printed above humiliating captions. As a result of an article about "the boss for a day" who could not handle the pressure, one man is now the butt of his co-workers' jokes. Due to a story portraying him as shiftless and lazy, a fourteen-year-old boy has lost several jobs, and his family's business has suffered. The third victim, a woman who walked out on her husband and four small children, was degraded to the level of scum in the eyes of all society, without being given a chance to tell her version of the events. She also lost two jobs as a direct result of negative publicity, and her Turkish lover was threatened with deportation.

Wallraff set out to uncover the truth behind each of the three articles. He gave the victims a chance to express their thoughts and feelings.¹⁰⁰ Needless to say, their versions were much different from Bild's:

⁹⁸Wallraff, Aufmacher, 61.

⁹⁹Günter Wallraff, "The Truth behind 'Bild' reports," Wallraff: The Undesirable Journalist, trans. Steve Gooch and Paul Knight (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1979) 118.

¹⁰⁰Wallraff, "The Truth," 118-34.

Die Wahrheit liegt bei BILD oftmals weder in noch zwischen den Zeilen, sie liegt mehr unter den Zeilen, jedenfalls unter den gedruckten. Gedruckt wird, was die Auflage steigert - und wenn es auch die Wahrheit ist. Nicht gedruckt wird, was den Verkauf nicht fördert.¹⁰¹

The money-hungry reporters who work in "Axel Caesar Springer's political mixing studio" are only too eager to comply with the notion that it is perfectly all right to "make an example" of a few "little people" in order to keep the others under control. Wallraff reads about Springer's strategy in a prominent reporter's file: "One of our objectives must be to launch a strong attack on any attempts either at home or abroad to extend worker participation...."¹⁰² In the spirit of this pronouncement, Bild's "lazy" youthful victim was to prove to the masses that all apprentices are capable of demonstrating for their rights, but cannot muster the energy to do an honest day's work. The Bild-journalist assigned to the story told a colleague: "We're going to make him the laziest boy in Germany."¹⁰³ Of course, the "heartless mother who sinned so wickedly against one of Bild's most sacred beliefs ('All is well with the German family - the German family is a real family')" must pay most heavily for her sins.¹⁰⁴

Wallraff writes in a sarcastic tone reminiscent of Voltaire that West Germans live "in der schönsten aller Gesellschaften, es gibt keine bessere," but "wenn..doch mal irgendwas schief geht, hilft BILD."¹⁰⁵ He sums up the philosophy of Bild's editors in the words of an internal source:

"By its authority Bild does for the reader the job of ordering, sifting and evaluating events which are typical of the modern world: he can leave it to us."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹Wallraff, Aufmacher, 157.

¹⁰²Wallraff, "The Truth," 120.

¹⁰³Wallraff, "The Truth," 131.

¹⁰⁴Wallraff, "The Truth," 121.

¹⁰⁵Wallraff, Aufmacher, 75.

¹⁰⁶Wallraff, "The Truth," 127.

The reassuring phrase "he can leave it to us" sounds much like the fictional ZEITUNG's declaration: "DIE ZEITUNG BLEIBT WIE IMMER AM BALL!" (49)

West Germany's Bild and Heinrich Böll's ZEITUNG have designated themselves the "moral watchdogs" of their respective societies. Both publications have declared war on "kleinbürgerliche Anarchisten," whom they perceive as a threat to the status quo. The ZEITUNG's very first headline labels Katharina "Räuberliebchen," thus setting the tone of future articles. From that moment on, ZEITUNG journalists and readers "will entertain no doubts about her guilt...". In order to emphasize just how rampant the fear of terrorism and liberal reform was in his country during the early seventies, Böll called his paper simply "die ZEITUNG." Philip Payne explains that

Böll achieves an effect of rare irony" in inventing this name for the paper; it points an accusing finger at the only *Boulevardzeitung*, which is distributed through the Federal Republic and yet, as a generic term, it reminds other newspapers of responsibilities they have not always properly fulfilled.¹⁰⁷

The casualties of Axel Springer's war on liberalism have but a miniscule chance of recovering damages and restoring their lost honor. Sadly, those who wield the power in a given society generally control the channels of justice. Springer and his henchmen know they have little to fear in picking on the "little guy," for a court battle would hurt him far more than it would them: In the first place, an individual could never win; in the second place, his financial burden would be considerably greater. Indeed, it is apparent that "all are not equal before the law" - especially when the law is in the hands of the wealthy Springer-Verlag! Eckart Spoo, Chairman of the DJU (German Union of Journalists) during the early seventies, describes what happens to those who have been condemned by Springer:

Whoever gets caught up in the wheels of Springer's justice - guilt and innocence do not matter in this people's court - must expect to lose his good name and even

¹⁰⁷Philip Payne, "Heinrich Böll versus Axel Springer: Some Observations on Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum," New German Studies 6 (1978): 47.

his livelihood. He will find the shame difficult to live down among ten million Bild-reading fellow citizens.¹⁰⁸

The experiences of Peter Brückner and of the three people interviewed by Wallraff bear out the truth of Spoo's testimony. The Bild-Zeitung "operates like the medieval witch-hunts."¹⁰⁹ Heinrich Böll, in the tradition of his fellow Rhinelander, Friedrich von Spee, seeks to awaken the general population to the injustice of the system in the hope of preventing innocent people from being burned at the stake.¹¹⁰ In the figure of Katharina Blum, he shows West Germans how easy it is for an innocent person to fall into the machinery of the political system, where she is publicly chewed up and spat out. "It could happen to any one of us," the author seems to be saying. His avowed goal is to incite his readers to take decisive action against the powerful alliance of Press and Police. At the very least, "der Anwalt des kleinen Mannes" hopes to make his client wary of this formidable foe. While Böll may have achieved the limited success of instilling a skeptical attitude in some Bild-readers, the sales figures for 1979 indicate an actual increase in readership: 4,929,800 as compared to 4,677,000 in 1974.¹¹¹

Here a word of caution: Wallraff and Böll both presume to speak for the "Arbeiter" and "Kleinbürger," but do they really? The above sales figures seem to belie the effect of the authors' good intentions. Studies have shown that the lower social strata make up the largest portion of Bild's readership. Why would these people continue to read a newspaper which does not address their needs and desires? Because they do not know any better? That seems a dangerous generalization to make! If one makes the assumption that the lower classes are content with their lot simply because they are ignorant of their own

¹⁰⁸Quoted in Wallraff, "The Truth," 133-34.

¹⁰⁹Wallraff, "The Truth," 129.

¹¹⁰The third section of Chapter I, "RHEINISCHE SOZIALKRITIK," contains a comparison of Böll and Spee.

¹¹¹See Tatsachen über Deutschland. Ein Handbuch in Bildern, Texten und Zahlen, 3rd ed. (München: Wilhelm Goldmann, 1981) 289; and Anette Petersen, Die Rezeption von Bölls Katharina Blum in den Massenmedien der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (München [Munich]: Wilhelm Fink, 1980) 61.

oppressed state, is it reasonable to expect them to educate themselves in their spare time? Böll and Wallraff sincerely wish to help these "poor souls," but their messages are aimed more at the intellectual, liberal bourgeois community - a struggling minority in West German society.

CHAPTER III:
THE PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSIONS OF KATHARINA BLUM:
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL "GEWALT"¹¹²

In Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, Heinrich Böll illustrates how *Gewalt* comes into being and where it may lead. He shows us the escalation of both the psychological and the physical sides of this phenomenon. *Gewalt* has been defined as "die Ursache für den Unterschied zwischen dem Potentiellen und dem Aktuellen."¹¹³ As such, it serves either to spur its victim into rebellion or to cripple his capacity for action. According to Norwegian researcher Johan Galtung, *Gewalt* may exist at the personal level or within the structure of the social system, and both varieties may cause extensive damage. The latter type "äußert sich in ungleichen Machtverhältnissen und folglich in ungleichen Lebenschancen."¹¹⁴

The reader of Katharina Blum encounters *Gewalt* in many different forms. The destructive psychological force of the ZEITUNG's headlines and the murder of Tötges are only the most obvious occurrences. Sträubleder and his cronies employ a type of *Gewalt* in attempting to sway Blorna to their point of view. Because he resists, he must face the consequences of personal and professional ruin. A frustrated Blorna later punches a former friend who has just insulted his honor. Tötges' verbal abuse of Katharina turns

¹¹²Because the German "Gewalt" has no direct equivalent in English, I have left it in the original. The English translation of Böll's *Erzählung* is titled The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum or: How Violence Can Develop and Where it Can Lead. The word "violence" does not take into account the psychological aspects of *Gewalt*, however. The term has also been translated as "force" or "power," neither of which includes all connotations of the original. In addition, *Gewalt* also carries the connotation of "rape" (German *Vergewaltigung*).

¹¹³Kicherer, 98.

¹¹⁴Kicherer, 98..

sexual as soon as he gets her alone. No longer content with destroying her reputation in the public eye, he tries to complete her degradation at the private level.¹¹⁵ Beizmenne's behavior toward Katharina provides yet another example of a public figure invading an individual's intimate sphere. Böll's message seems to be: *Gewalt* feeds upon itself.

Werner Tötges and his fellow reporters at the ZEITUNG have violated the code of ethics for their profession, as Böll believes Bild-journalists have also done. Among the "Grundsätze des Deutschen Presserates" we find the following relevant excerpts:

1) Achtung vor der Wahrheit und wahrhaftige Unterrichtung der Öffentlichkeit sind oberstes Gebot der Presse...4) Bei der Beschaffung von Nachrichten, Informationsmaterial und Bildern dürfen keine unlauteren Methoden angewandt werden.. 6) Die Verantwortung der Presse gegenüber der Öffentlichkeit gebietet, daß redaktionelle Veröffentlichungen nicht durch private oder geschäftliche Interessen Dritter beeinflußt werden...7) Die Presse achtet das Privatleben und die Intimsphäre des Menschen...8) Es widerspricht journalistischem Anstand, unbegründete Beschuldigungen, insbesondere ehrverletzender Natur, zu veröffentlichen...12) Die Berichterstattung über schwebende Ermittlungs- und Gerichtsverfahren muß frei von Vorurteilen erfolgen. Die Presse vermeidet deshalb, vor Beginn und während der Dauer eines solchen Verfahrens in Darstellung und Überschrift jede einseitige oder präjudizierende Stellungnahme. Ein Verdächtiger darf vor einem gerichtlichen Urteil nicht als Schuldiger hingestellt werden...¹¹⁶

The ZEITUNG has obviously broken the first rule of the above code of conduct by presenting rumors and falsified reports as the truth. Precept number 2 is ignored by Tötges, who disguises himself as a painter and forces his way into the hospital room where Katharina's mother is recovering from an operation. The cruelty of his insensitive action is intensified by the fact that the ZEITUNG depicts Katharina as the guilty party in her mother's premature death. Sträubleder's business partner in the ZEITUNG's editing bureau violates the sixth principle in directing his subordinates: "Sofort S. [Sträubleder] ganz raus, aber B. [Blorna] ganz rein" (134). This move seals Blorna's fate as a

¹¹⁵The connection between violence in general and sexual violence is discussed in the section of this paper called "DAS HUMANE," pp. 96ff. Tötges' sexual advances are examined as a corollary to his verbal abuse of Katharina in the next subchapter, "DIE WÜRDE DES MENSCHEN IST UNANTASTBAR...," pp. 45ff.

¹¹⁶"Die Grundsätze des deutschen Presserates," Frankfurter Rundschau 302 (29 December 1973): VI, cited in Kicherer, 99.

"Rufmord" victim. Katharina's private life and intimate sphere have been invaded in violation of rule 8. Perhaps most importantly, her right to be considered innocent until proved guilty is denied almost from the very beginning. The ZEITUNG's first headline on the case labels her "Räuberliebchen." The verdict has already been handed down by the editors, and they will not reduce the sentence.

No doubt: *Gewalt* breeds more *Gewalt*. Böll shows us unequivocally "wohin sie führen kann": Murder is the ultimate violent act, the culmination of the escalation of *Gewalt* , but it is not a solution to the problem. Friedhelm Kicherer explains "die dialektische Einheit der Gewalt" as portrayed in Katharina Blum:

Daß die von Katharina an dem ihr zugänglichen Repräsentanten von Zeitung und Sonntagszeitung, Werner Tötges, ausgeübte direkte oder personale Gewalt als eine Folge der von ihr erlittenen strukturellen Gewalt zu verstehen ist, scheint mir unzweifelhaft zu sein: aus dem in publizistischer Dimension vorgetragenen Rufmord erklärt sich, der ihm folgende Mord, einer wäre ohne den anderen unbegreiflich....¹¹⁷

"DIE WÜRDE DES MENSCHEN IST UNANTASTBAR..."

Any analysis of Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum should include an examination of "Ehre." Is it really possible for a person to "lose" her honor? Or can one's honor merely be injured? There are clearly two ways of perceiving honor: through the eyes of the individual and from the standpoint of society. Here we are dealing with the gap between private and public morality. Katharina's "lost honor" refers mainly to the loss of her "gesellschaftliches Ansehen"¹¹⁸; her personal honor, or "Würde," is merely wounded, not lost. At this juncture, it also seems appropriate to bring in the concept of "Rufmord." How was Katharina's reputation damaged and by whom? Is her experience in this regard unique - i.e., "zeit- und ortgebunden" - or is it potentially "universal"? - i.e., a more

¹¹⁷Kicherer, 102.

¹¹⁸Pakendorf, 124.

common experience that readers living outside the Federal Republic and in different times will relate to.

In "Ein feste Burg," Martin Luther wrote that were the world full of devils who took away our "Leib / Gut, Ehr, Kind und Weib," they would have "kein Gewinn... / Das Reich muß uns doch bleiben." Luther apparently believed that a person could be robbed of her honor, but philosophized that a Christian need not fear such a loss, for "Ehr" was but a worldly and therefore transitory quality. He regarded honor as a moral value defined by and inflicted upon the individual by society. But for Böll's Katharina, who has turned away from the church where she found no refuge and has embraced the material culture of the "Wirtschaftswunder," "Ehre" is one of her most important "possessions."

In a world dominated by secular principles, then, we must define this elusive word in terms comprehensible to the majority of people. Wahrig defines "Ehre" as follows: "Achtung, Anerkennung, Ruf, Ansehen."¹¹⁹ The Oxford English Dictionary is in agreement with this general definition: "Honor" is termed "high respect, esteem or reverence."¹²⁰ These are attributes which are bestowed upon the individual by society. As such, they serve to describe his image in the eyes of others, not his view of himself. The concept of honor only becomes internalized when a person realizes her own status in the opinion of her fellow human beings. Once she is aware that she possesses a certain reputation, it becomes possible for her to lose it. If, however, she is oblivious to public opinion, "Ehre" is of little consequence.

Popular opinion was an insignificant matter to Heinrich Böll, who was willing to fight for the rights of the underdog at any personal cost - even at the expense of his own "Ehre." Böll was a dedicated Christian who truly lived his faith: Chief among his moral

¹¹⁹Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch, 1980 ed., 1007.

¹²⁰The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, 1981 ed., 367.

values was service to the least of his brothers.¹²¹ Because he lived according to different standards than most men, he was often misunderstood by his contemporaries. In his article "Trauer zu dritt und mehreren," Hanno Beth weighs the reproachful rhetoric of three prominent West German critics against Heinrich Böll's own professed convictions. Fritz Raddatz, Günter Gaus and Marcel Reich-Ranicki have chastized Böll for his failure to play a more active role in political developments. Apparently, they felt it was not enough that, beginning in the early seventies, Böll campaigned on behalf of more social improvement causes than any other author of his generation; they desired that he pledge his allegiance to a specific ideology or party.¹²² What they did not realize was that Böll had his own idealistic agenda - one which did not conform completely to the ideas of any particular group.

Heinrich Böll witnessed the Nazi power seizure and the subsequent mass-scale destruction of human life first-hand. He therefore knows what happens when practically everyone keeps in step with social trends - when people become "Mitläufer." That is why he defiantly "marches to a different drummer." He himself has oftentimes declared that he is a "misfit": "Ich fühle mich generell fremd in dieser Welt. Das ist ein bei Autoren sehr verbreitetes Gefühl."¹²³ In January 1972, just before his troubles began with press and police, Böll stated:

Ausnahme zu sein oder gewesen zu sein, das ist ein Luxus, den ich mir geleistet habe. Ich schäme mich seiner nicht, sehe aber auch keinen Grund, mich seiner zu rühmen, da mir kein Preis dafür abverlangt worden ist.¹²⁴

He does not want to be known as "Deutschlands Heinrich":

Ich will kein Image haben und keins sein, und die, die einsaus mir machen,

¹²¹See Matt. 25.31-46 (RSV = Revised Standard Version).

¹²²Beth, "Trauer," 10-18.

¹²³Böll, "Rufschädigung," 699.

¹²⁴Böll, "Deutsche Meisterschaft," 4.

sollen es selbst verantworten. Deutschland braucht keine Präzeptoren, deren hat es genug gehabt, es braucht kritische Bürger, die nicht immer und unbedingt Autoren sein müssen. Was Autoren sind: auch Bürger, möglicherweise artikulierte, sonst nichts. Ich bin gegen Helden-Verehrung, Denkmäler, Images und Ikonen.¹²⁵

Instead of reaping honor for himself, Böll chooses to work toward the realization of the ideal society he envisions, which is to be created by fusing selected elements of Socialist and Christian doctrine. Indeed, he despaired that the members of each of these two schools of thought regarded the interests of the other side as being diametrically opposed to their own.¹²⁶ Thus, the values of existing society came into inevitable conflict with Böll's personal beliefs.

The Oxford English Dictionary contains yet another entry for "honor" which pertains only to women: "Honor" is here defined as "chastity, purity, a virtue of the highest consideration; reputation for this virtue, good name."¹²⁷ In this sense, Katharina does indeed lose her honor! Where she used to be known for her prudishness, - hence her nickname, "die Nonne," she is now viewed as a hypocritical whore who uses men to improve her material well-being. In Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum Böll attempts to show his readers what occurs when public and private morals clash. The charges levelled against Katharina "reveal sex bias, class discrimination and political hysteria."¹²⁸ Because society's code of conduct for women is much stricter than for men, and because the penalties for violating the rules are also much stiffer, Böll created a female protagonist to illustrate his point. In order to emphasize that nobody is immune to the "ansteckende Krankheit" of "Rufschädigung," Böll has made Katharina a contemptible conformist, who

¹²⁵Heinrich Böll, "Der liberale Labberdreck stammt nicht von mir. Heinrich Böll antwortet Hilde Domin," Frankfurter Rundschau 20 August 1971: 12, quoted in Beth, "Trauer," 11.

¹²⁶Böll/Limberg, "Es stirbt täglich Freiheit weg," 23. See also Böll, "Deutsche Meisterschaft," 1-2.

¹²⁷Oxford English Dictionary, 367.

¹²⁸Charlotte Ghurye, "Katharina Blum - Symbol of Woman's Social Degradation," The Writer and Society: Studies in the Fiction of Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976) 67.

personifies the spirit of her materialistic society until her "weakness" - i.e., her humanness - causes her to commit two unforgivable "sins": 1) She spontaneously falls in love with a wanted man; 2) She sleeps with him on the night of their first meeting. If Böll had selected a male hero and a female "bandit," the man would have suffered some loss of "Ehre," but there probably would have been no sexual stigma attached to attacks on his character. It is, after all, "to be expected" that men will have one-night-stands with women of ill-repute. For Katharina, however, the results of her infraction are devastating: Her reputation suffers a 180 degree reversal from "Nonne" to "Räuberliebchen."

The victim's female gender serves yet another purpose for Böll, whose stated goal is to show "wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann." Through Katharina he demonstrates the connection between violent behavior and sexual aggression. Charlotte Ghurye cites historical evidence dating back thousands of years, which supports the link between male aggression and sexual assault. She counters Friedrich Torberg's argument that a reporter would never proposition an interviewee for fear of his losing his job on the grounds that it does not take the irrational side of human nature into consideration. There is indeed something criminal about Tötges' lies, and he seems to take a perverse delight in propagating them; therefore, his sexual advances follow.¹²⁹

In order to elicit the reader's sympathy, Böll has given Katharina a lower-class background, which labels her "easy prey" to the men she encounters. Ghurye asserts this is proven by Beizmenne's cruel question and Tötges' proposition, in which both men address Katharina with the all-too-familiar "du." In fact, Beizmenne insinuates that Katharina has made her fortune in prostitution (43). With the exception of Moeding, the other officials also treat her "as a shrewd and lewd seductress who makes capital out of her charms." Several factors reinforce this image: Böll's heroine is an attractive woman in her

¹²⁹Ghurye, 68.

late twenties, she is divorced and she lives alone. She is never described in detail, however, all we see is her effect on men.¹³⁰

Through no fault of her own, Katharina Blum is the object of men's desires. Officer Hach probably would have enjoyed doing "die so grob definierte Tätigkeit" (26) with her. Sträubleder - arrogant and insensitive toward all women, his wife included - exhibits particularly obnoxious behavior in his attempts to seduce Katharina. Only Bloma and Götten respect and care about her as a human being. Ghurye claims that Götten is the antithesis of Sträubleder in this respect: After his arrest, Götten immediately tries to clear his beloved of complicity in his escape. Ironically, it is the rebel against the establishment who turns out to be the true gentleman!¹³¹ The representatives of press, police and the professional world have no time for chivalrous frivolities which get in the way of business dealings:

In the last analysis, it is the professional ambition of men and their drive for personal success and recognition that degrade woman and destroy her honor.¹³²

The shooting of Tötges has generally been interpreted as Katharina's attempt to avenge and/or restore her lost honor. Yet the question remains: How successful was her effort in this regard? Ghurye says of Katharina: "Taking vengeance for her lost honor restores her emotional equilibrium."¹³³ However, the emotional stability of a person who has just murdered someone and feels neither regret nor guilt seems questionable. She has either become completely desensitized and unforgiving, or else she is in shock. There is little doubt that Tötges' sexual advances - Katharina claims he goes for her clothing (185) - were the final impetus which drove her to pull the trigger. According to Hartmut

¹³⁰Ghurye, 67-68.

¹³¹Ghurye discusses Katharina's predicament with regard to "the men in her life" on pp. 68-74.

¹³²Ghurye 75-76.

¹³³Ghurye, 76.

Laufhütte, "Wäre Tötges nur als Vertreter der ZEITUNG, nicht auch als aufdringlicher Schürzenjäger gekommen, wäre er nicht erschossen worden."¹³⁴ Günter Pakendorf notes that this theory is confirmed at a linguistic level, namely when Katharina says: "Er wollte bumsen, und ich habe gebumst oder?" (121)¹³⁵ The pistol as phallic symbol, an image Böll has used in other works, serves to reinforce the idea that, in the final analysis, male sexual aggression triggered the shooting.¹³⁶ Even though Katharina planned enough ahead to get Konrad Beiter's gun, the killing was, nonetheless, primarily a spontaneous crime of passion. Böll himself has remarked that the reporter's "Ahnungslosigkeit" may have been the reason behind Katharina's "Griff zum Revolver."¹³⁷

Katharina succeeds in eliminating her immediate adversary, but her real enemy, the oppressive social structure, remains unscathed. In fact, her treacherous deed lends additional ammunition to the other side's campaign against her. Moray McGowan agrees that "[t]he abuse Böll attacks remains unrectified by Katharina's counter-violence, indeed is likely to feed on it."¹³⁸ Since "honor" is essentially a "public" virtue which is defined through the eyes of others, we must conclude that the murder of Tötges does not reinstate Katharina's lost honor in social terms.

Actually, Katharina is seeking revenge for her personal "Ehre," her "geistig-moralische Integrität"¹³⁹ or "Würde," and in this she enjoys some success. By definition, "Würde" can only be measured at an individual level. According to Wahrig, it consists of

¹³⁴Hartmut Laufhütte, "Leistungsvermögen und Grenzen eines Erzählmodells: Über Heinrich Bölls Erzählung *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*," Beiträge zu den Fortbildungskursen des Goethe-Instituts für ausländische Deutschlehrer an Schulen und Hochschulen, (N.p.: n.p., 1975): 308, quoted in Pakendorf, 127.

¹³⁵Pakendorf, 127.

¹³⁶Pakendorf, 127.

¹³⁷Böll, "Zehn Jahre später," 35.

¹³⁸Moray McGowan, "Pale Mother, Pale Daughter? Some Reflections on Böll's Leni Gruyten and Katharina Blum," German Life and Letters 37.3 (April 1984): 226.

¹³⁹Beth, "Rufmord," 84.

"Achtung gebietendes, ruhiges, überlegenes Verhalten."¹⁴⁰ Thus, it may lead to an honorable reputation. Yet "Würde" is more than this: "Würde" also lends man a sense of his own worth; it separates him from the rest of the animal kingdom. The Oxford English Dictionary's first entry under "dignity" supports this statement. "Dignity" is taken to mean "worth,"¹⁴¹ and "worth" is a subjective value which every individual is capable of judging for himself.

The "Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland" guarantees: "Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar. Sie zu achten und zu schützen ist Verpflichtung aller staatlichen Gewalt."¹⁴² Katharina's personal dignity has not just been "touched" - it has been mangled! Early in her deposition, she ventures to ask if the state cannot protect her from the ZEITUNG's libelous attacks on her character, but she is told in no uncertain terms not to trouble herself about such matters (81-82). From that moment on, it is clear to her that she will have to defend her own "Würde." After her public reputation has been tarnished, Katharina "vollzieht im Privatraum symbolisch, was in der Öffentlichkeit bereits geschehen ist: den Verlust des eigenen Ansehens."¹⁴³ The public has invaded Katharina's private space through libelous newspaper articles, obscene phone calls and letters, and the personal questions posed by the police officials. In a fit of rage and frustration over her own helplessness, she spatters the immaculate walls of her apartment with all sorts of messy substances (106-107). Yet while Katharina's actions illustrate her feelings of disgust and despair, we later see that she has not lost the sense of her own worth.

¹⁴⁰Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch, col. 4226.

¹⁴¹Oxford English Dictionary, 726.

¹⁴²Federal Republic of Germany, Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, art. 1, sec. 1.

¹⁴³Pakendorf, 128.

Heinrich Böll believed that the "Grundgesetz" was, in theory, the best constitution a country could possibly bestow upon itself in the twentieth century.¹⁴⁴ However, he also recognized the gap between the constitution as document and the constitution as reality.¹⁴⁵ In the Federal Republic of the late sixties and early seventies, all were not equal before the law. The state did not protect the basic rights of Ulrike Meinhof or Andreas Baader. It also made no attempt to thwart the Bild-Zeitung's libelous articles about innocent people, as evidenced by Günter Wallraff's reports. Böll claims that Bild has also violated Article 14, Paragraph 2 of the "Grundgesetz"¹⁴⁶: "Eigentum verpflichtet. Sein Gebrauch soll zugleich dem Wohle der Allgemeinheit dienen." Did the Springer publishing house use its property (i.e., its newspapers) to promote the general well-being of the West German citizenry? Böll's response is a resounding "No!" He feels that Bonn and Springer are equally guilty of using their power to supersede the constitution, for Bild is "fast schon das regierungsamtliche Blatt."¹⁴⁷ Reinhold Neven DuMont adds Article 18 to the list of the Springer Verlag's constitutional infractions¹⁴⁸:

Wer die Freiheit der Meinungsäußerung insbesondere die Pressefreiheit...zum Kampf gegen die freiheitlich demokratische Grundordnung mißbraucht, verwirkt diese Grundrechte.

A large portion of the West German public, traditionally predisposed toward unquestioning acceptance of authority, has been lulled into an apathetic state and is largely unaware of any threat to the "Grundgesetz":

Daß nicht nur Verdächtige, daß auch Kriminelle ein Recht auf die Unantastbarkeit ihrer Menschenwürde haben, daß sie ihnen sogar gewährt werden muß, wenn sie selbst sie verletzt und verhöhnt haben, ist wohl zu selbstverständlich, als daß man es Bild-Lesern zumuten könnte...Elf Millionen Bundesbürger schlürfen täglich

¹⁴⁴Böll, "Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar," 575.

¹⁴⁵Heinrich Böll, "Schriftsteller und Bürger dieses Landes," 703.

¹⁴⁶Böll, "Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar," 580.

¹⁴⁷Böll, "Zehn Jahre später," 38.

¹⁴⁸In Wallraff, Aufmacher, 227-28.

den Polit-Porno-Zynismus von Bild ein. Helmut Schmidt soll einmal gesagt haben, wer sich gegen Springer verwende, begehe politisch Selbstmord. Nehmen wir die Last dieses Zitats von Helmut Schmidt und schreiben wir es irgendeinem Politiker zu, so könnte sich ein Bundestagshamlet heute fragen: Mord am Grundgesetz oder Selbstmord, das ist hier die Frage.¹⁴⁹ (emphasis in original)

"GERECHTIGKEIT DER ERDEN HAT DICH, O HERR GETÖTET":

THE ALLIANCE OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

AGAINST THE INDIVIDUAL

The words quoted in the above title are from the hymn which the oppressed villagers defiantly sing to their masters in Heinrich Böll's *Erzählung* "Die Waage der Baleks." The justice of this earth, Böll tells us, belongs to those in power: All are not equal before the law. In Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum he shows us the condemnation of the meek and the acquittal of the mighty. Guilt or innocence plays but a minor role in society's verdict; a person's fate is determined by her social status.

Hans-Rudolf Müller-Schwefe describes the individual's position in West German society as seen through Böll's eyes:

Der Mensch wird durch seine Umwelt daran gehindert, wesentlich zu werden:
die Herren und Waren verhindern ihn.¹⁵⁰

Paradoxically, "die kleinen Leute" are victimized by the very social structure which they themselves embody and support. Negative heroes of modern literature, writes Martin Krumbholz, "leiden an den gesellschaftlichen Mängeln, die sie selbst mitverkörpern...".¹⁵¹ Katharina Blum is in many ways representative of the typical West German "Kleinbürger." She is a personification of the Wirtschaftswunder, "ein fleißiges,

¹⁴⁹Böll, "Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar," 575-77.

¹⁵⁰Hans Rudolf Müller-Schwefe, Sprachgrenzen. Das sogenannte Obszöne, Blasphemische und Revolutionäre bei Günter Grass und Heinrich Böll (München [Munich]: J. Pfeiffer: 1978) 143.

¹⁵¹Martin Krumbholz, Ironie im zeitgenössischen Ich-Roman (Munich: Fink, 1980) 103.

ordentliches...Mädchen," who has worked her way up the social ladder. She is extremely frugal, performs her work efficiently and conscientiously, and enjoys a reputation for her honesty and chaste behavior.¹⁵² One critic calls Katharina "eine säkularisierte Nonne,"¹⁵³ but Günter Pakendorf claims she is only "scheinbar prüde und nonnenhaft," for she "verbringt ohne Bedenken eine Liebesnacht mit einem Mann, den sie kurz zuvor erst kennengelernt hat"; her behavior is better described by the old-fashioned word "keusch."¹⁵⁴

"Die Herren" have devised a Machiavellian scheme for maintaining the status quo. Because they control the capital, they also control the flow of goods and services which their "Diener" need for survival. They have bought their way to political power as well, and have secured their position by building up an impressive army. From this strategic vantage point they have managed to capture the loyalty of the Church. All the while, "die Herren," or as Böll called them, "die Büffel," remain safely hidden behind the facade of huge impersonal institutions which are impervious to individual acts of protest.

Böll recognizes the tangled web of deception described above as the "Trinity" which rules his world: *Staat-Armee-Kirche*.¹⁵⁵ His childhood spent among the ranks of the lower-middle class and his subsequent climb to literary and social prominence enable him to understand the workings of the Trinity's machinery and its effects on the citizens of the Federal Republic, who are, in effect also "Waren" - i.e., products of society. Continuing in age-old German tradition, West Germans have internalized "the power of their state and become legislators of their own fear."¹⁵⁶ Respect for authority has become

¹⁵²Pakendorf, 125.

¹⁵³Müller-Schwefe, 147.

¹⁵⁴Pakendorf, 124.

¹⁵⁵Reid, Withdrawal, 17-18. Also in Müller-Schwefe, 149.

¹⁵⁶Zipes, 83.

so ingrained that few stop to ask whether the institutions in power are good or bad. Since he knows the extremes to which such attitudes may lead, Böll feels it is his duty to expose the injustices of the system, and language is the weapon he aims at the perpetrators of evil.¹⁵⁷

Critic Jack Zipes claims that neither Böll's narrative nor Volker Schlöndorff's film of Katharina Blum is successful in uncovering the way in which West Germans passively absorb the mythical inevitability and eternity of the existing order.¹⁵⁸ While there may be some truth in this statement as regards the film, the same cannot be said of the original *Erzählung*. Zipes apparently does not view Katharina as a representative of the typical "Bundesbürger," which she exemplifies. In tracing Katharina's development from complacent conformity to increased political awareness, Böll is attempting to awaken his readers to the potential danger of their own propensity to be "Mitläufer." Conformity does not guarantee security: Katharina's right to a fair trial is denied and her reputation is destroyed. It will be extremely difficult for her to live a "normal" life ever again.

The Trinity makes its ominous presence felt in Katharina Blum, albeit in a more complex form than in any of Böll's previous works. Here it may be compared with a hungry octopus which spreads its numerous tentacles in all directions in an effort to envelop its victims. Böll's *Erzählung* clearly demonstrates the collusion between the State and its organs, Press and Police. The latter two entities fulfill the function of "Armee" in the original Trinity-format, as evidenced by their use of "Gewalt." Less obvious, but no less important here, is the role of the Church in aiding and abetting the destruction of the "Lämmer" it is supposed to protect and nurture.

¹⁵⁷Heinrich Böll discusses the power of language and the responsibility of authors in his speech, "Die Sprache als Hort der Freiheit," Der Schriftsteller Heinrich Böll. Ein biographisch-bibliographischer Abriß, ed. Werner Lengning, 4th ed., (München [Munich]: DTV, 1973) 16-20.

¹⁵⁸Zipes, 83.

Böll thinks that the Church has become corrupt in its striving for power and money. In his view, progressive theologians have strayed too far from the real needs of their flocks.¹⁵⁹ In an attempt to alert clergymen to the error of their ways, Böll directs his sharpest criticism at their hypocritical practices. He advocates that religious leaders return to the fundamental scripture lessons, especially the Second and the Eighth Commandments. He argues as follows: If we would but love our neighbors as Jesus intended, it would be possible to realize an egalitarian society, in which all truly would be equal before the law. He sincerely believes that his dream could be fulfilled through the unification of Christian and Socialist teachings.

As mentioned previously, Böll several times voiced his frustration over the animosity between the disciples of these two philosophies, for he failed to understand why one must necessarily exclude the other. It is true that the rulers of the world have misused the tenets of Christianity in order to fortify their own position of strength and to justify their oppression of others. - Even Martin Luther interpreted the Fourth Commandment to include absolute compliance with and submission to the will of one's earthly masters! - Yet Böll is convinced it does not have to be this way. He believes that West Germans missed a golden opportunity to create their own neutral socialist state following World War II:

Das Versäumnis nach 1945 bestand darin, daß die Christen sich standhaft und bis zum Stadium "Schaum vor dem Mund" vor dem Sozialismus gefürchtet und ihn als himmelschreiendes Abschreckungsmittel verketzert haben.¹⁶⁰

With regard to the search for a more "inhabitable" world, "Träume" are not "Schäume" for Böll, who places great faith in mankind's capacity for positive change. He notes that social improvements have always been the work of minorities who tested the merits of the established system and found it unworthy of continued support. All authority must be questioned in this manner, emphasizes Böll, and if it does not withstand criticism,

¹⁵⁹Reid, 18-19.

¹⁶⁰Böll, "Deutsche Meisterschaft," 1.

it must be resisted and, eventually, replaced.¹⁶¹ Carl Zuckmayer praises Böll's social and literary activism in the cause of social justice:

"Sein Werk, in seinen besten und nobelsten Produktionen, ist ein Gebet um Liebe und Recht. Oder Gerechtigkeit durch Liebe."¹⁶²

¹⁶¹Böll, "Deutsche Meisterschaft," 2.

¹⁶²Carl Zuckmayer, "Gerechtigkeit durch Liebe," In Sachen Böll, 69.

CHAPTER IV:

KATHARINA BLUM IN LITERARY TRADITION

While Heinrich Böll's work as a whole is unique, one recognizes in it themes and literary devices which hint at the influence of other authors. Indeed, his study of *Germanistik*, his extensive translation of British and American writers, and his lengthy sojourn in Ireland during the mid-fifties brought him into contact with many diverse talents, and he has borrowed liberally from their rich store of ideas. The list of writers who have influenced Böll in one way or another is practically endless. It is noteworthy, however, that there is no single author who has left an overwhelming impression on Böll's use of language and choice of subject matter. (With regard to Katharina Blum, Heinrich von Kleist perhaps comes closest to fulfilling this function in both categories, as will be discussed below.) Instead, Böll tends to incorporate selected formal and thematic items into his own schema. The result is a unique blending of traditional, universal styles and motifs set against the backdrop of the present-day Rhineland.

"SPRACHE UND SOZIALKRITIK"

In his "Interview mit mir selbst," Böll identifies the two authors who have had the greatest impact on his writing style: Heinrich von Kleist and Johann Peter Hebel. From one he claims to have learned patience, from the other, impatience with language.¹⁶³ Comparing the representative works mentioned by Böll, Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas and

¹⁶³Heinrich Böll, "Interview mit mir selbst," quoted in Mensch, Gesellschaft, Kirche bei Heinrich Böll, ed. Albrecht Beckel (Osnabrück: A. Fromm, 1966) 7-8.

Hebel's Kannitverstaan, we can conclude that he meant Kleist when he referred to "impatience."

It is precisely this impatience with language which dominates many levels of Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum. Klaus Schröter points out that the structure of Böll's *Erzählung* follows Kleist's Die Marquise von O. In both works, the incident which determines the plot is related at the beginning: in Marquise, it requires seven lines; in Katharina Blum, fifteen.¹⁶⁴ In addition to the structure, Böll has also borrowed a couple of key words from Kleist's "old-fashioned" vocabulary: "innig" and "zärtlich" are words Katharina uses to express her feelings for Ludwig Götten. These are also the words Kleist's narrator uses to describe the Marquise's relationship with her late husband.¹⁶⁵

Böll is impatient with the destructive power of the boulevard press' conjured headlines. His narrator frequently grows restless in the face of the "Stockungen" and "Stauungen," which characterize his type of reporting. At certain times in the *Erzählung*, the *Berichterstatter's* emotions manage to break through the restrictions of bureaucratic style, allowing the reader a glimpse into his true character.¹⁶⁶ Katharina displays considerable impatience with the insensitive, modern language of the officials, who, in recording her testimony, attempt to change some words. Along with Katharina, the reader recognizes the different connotations which are produced in substituting "nett" for "gütig" or "Zärtlichkeiten" for "Zudringlichkeiten" (39-40). Through the "Artikulationshilfe" provided by reporter Werner Tötges, a master of "word-twisting," we see the damage that results when "Sprache" becomes separated from "Gewissen."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴Schröter, 109.

¹⁶⁵Heinrich von Kleist, Die Marquise von O., vol. 2 of Heinrich Von Kleist. Sämtliche Werke und Briefe (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970) 104.

¹⁶⁶See, for example, pp. 43, 53, 133-34 and 181 of Katharina Blum.

¹⁶⁷Böll, "Die Sprache als Hort der Freiheit," 18.

Böll once referred to "(d)ie Sprache als Hort der Freiheit," but, at the same time, he maintained that language is only capable of fulfilling this purpose when it is used in a responsible manner. For this reason, he is quick to retaliate against the society which allows language to become a means of oppression. A previous section of this paper has already examined Manfred Windfuhr's comparison of Böll's and Spee's special brands of Rhenish social criticism. Still other critics have called Böll a follower of Karl Kraus,¹⁶⁸ an early twentieth century Austrian writer who criticized the social institutions of imperial Vienna. Böll and Kraus treat different localities in different eras, yet there are striking parallels in the way they approach their subject matter. In order to capture their audience's attention, the two authors make extensive use of satire. Both men seem to have inherited Charles Dickens' sharp eye for detail,¹⁶⁹ as well as his penchant for satirical names and his ability to arouse the lethargic reader through ironic exaggeration.

Like Böll, Kraus attacks the upper echelons of the existing social structure. One of the institutions he caricatures for its subservience to political power mongers is the Viennese press. In Die letzten Tage der Menschheit, Kraus depicts the same type of language manipulation and "inventive" journalism which characterize the methods of "die ZEITUNG" in Katharina Blum. In several of his street scenes, Kraus shows us how reporters on the beat "reinterpret" reality to fit the image their powerful masters wish to project. Perhaps the author's most biting commentary on "investigative reporting" may be observed in Act I, Scene 14, where three reporters interview a famous actress who has just returned from Moscow. The actress, Elfriede Ritter, shares her impressions of her journey with the journalists, who then proceed to give her "Artikulationshilfe" by "rephrasing" her

¹⁶⁸See, for example Klaus Jeziorkowski, "Die Syntax des Humanen," Zeitkritische Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts. Die Gesellschaft in der Kritik der deutschen Literatur (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1975) 313; and Eberhard Scheiffele, "Kritische Sprachanalyse in Heinrich Bölls Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum," Basis 9 (1979): 169.

¹⁶⁹Heinrich Böll, "Bekanntnis zur Trümmerliteratur," Heinrich Böll. Erzählungen, Hörspiele, Aufsätze. (Köln [Cologne]: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1961) 340-41.

views as well as her words! Truth is sacrificed at the altar of Vienna's political propaganda machine, as seen in the examples of "twisted" language found below:

ELFRIEDE RITTER: ...[I]ch kann Ihnen beim besten Willen, meine Herren, nichts anderes sagen, als daß es sehr sehr interessant war, daß mir gar nichts geschehen ist, na was denn noch, daß die Rückfahrt zwar langwierig, aber nicht im mindesten beschwerlich war und (*schalkhaft*) daß ich mich freue, wieder in meinem lieben Wien zu sein.

HALBERSTAM: Intressant - also eine langwierige Fahrt, also sie gibt zu -

FEIGL: Beschwerlich hat sie gesagt -

FÜCHSL: Warten Sie, die Einleitung hab ich in der Redaktion geschrieben - Moment - (*schreibend*) Aus den Qualen der russischen Gefangenschaft erlöst, am Ziele der langwierigen und beschwerlichen Fahrt endlich angelangt, weinte die Künstlerin Freudentränen bei dem Bewußtsein, wieder in ihrer geliebten Wienerstadt zu sein - (underscoring supplied)¹⁷⁰

The similarity between the practices of Kraus' journalists and the tactics employed by Werner Tötges in interviewing Katharina's critically ill mother is unmistakable.

Both Kraus and Böll reveal the establishment's attempt to control public opinion through manipulation of language. Each approaches the problem from a different angle, however. Kraus shows us the capitulation of a cowardly upper-class citizen to the principles of her materialistic society: Ritter's interest in telling the truth vanishes as soon as the reporters threaten her with "Rufmord" and the loss of her career. Böll, on the other hand, illustrates the direct result of "Rufmord" - the destruction of a lower-class citizen's identity by the media. He also depicts her courageous, albeit isolated and futile struggle against the blatant lies of "die ZEITUNG." Friedrich Torberg has compared Böll's and Kraus' attacks on the yellow press and has concluded that Kraus' criticism is justified, since the Viennese press actually did abuse its power during World War I. Böll's attack on Bild, however, is in his view, inappropriate.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰Karl Kraus, Die letzten Tage der Menschheit. Tragödie in fünf Akten mit Vorspiel und Epilog, 2nd ed. (München [Munich]: Kösel, 1957) 132-33.

¹⁷¹Friedrich Torberg, "Katharina Blum. Jetzt böllert's," Der Spiegel 26 August 1974: 104.

"EHRE UND RACHE"

Honor and revenge, two themes found in Katharina Blum, have recurred as leitmotifs throughout the entire history of German literature. Walther von der Vogelweide addresses many of the issues which concern Böll in his poem "Ich saz ûf eime steine."

Here Walther ponders the question

wie man driu dinc erwurbe,
der keines niht verdurbe.
diu zwei sint êre und varnde guot.... (emphasis added)

Yet he finds no satisfactory answer, for his society suffers under the same power structure as Böll's:

untriuwe ist in der sâze,
gewalt vert ûf der strâze:
frîde unde reht sind sêre wunt.

Böll could not have said it better himself.

Moray McGowan compares the plot of Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum with the legendary Nibelungenlied, thereby stressing the timelessness of Böll's subject matter. While she admits that "Böll probably did not consciously draw on the Nibelungenlied at all," there are nonetheless noteworthy parallels. Götten is the mysterious stranger who "arrives at Frau Woltersheim's party like Siegfried arriving at King Gunther's court." Katharina, who is described as "fast prûde" in her relationships with men, immediately loses her heart to Götten. In this sense, she is much like Kriemhild,

...who falls for Siegfried despite her previous resolve to stay clear of love, knowing "wie liebe mit leide ze jungest lônem kan" (Nibelungenlied, i, 17) - which proves true for Katharina, too.¹⁷²

The theme of revenge also runs through both stories: "Kriemhild's revenge on Hagen is echoed in Katharina's murder of Tötges, who has ruined her reputation and effectively

¹⁷²McGowan, 224.

murdered her mother."¹⁷³ Kriemhild feels she must avenge her own honor as well as her dead husband's by disposing of the treacherous Hagen.

The very title "Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum" suggests that Böll's work in somehow related to Friedrich von Schiller's Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre.¹⁷⁴ The protagonist of Schiller's *Erzählung*, Christian Wolf, becomes a game poacher of necessity. Three times he is betrayed by a jealous rival suitor, who catches him red-handed. Each time, the sentence is increased and the contempt of society grows worse. The absence of compassion and the brutal punishment inflicted on Wolf cause him to become hardened against his fellow men. He sees himself as "ein Schlachtopfer der Gesetzte"¹⁷⁵ and seeks revenge against the society which has victimized him.

Like Katharina, Wolf murders the man who he feels has destroyed his life. But in contrast to Böll's heroine, Wolf feels remorse at his deed. Katharina is prepared to face the consequences of killing her nemesis, and she confesses her deed to Moeding almost immediately. She wishes to be in prison with her "dear Ludwig." Schiller's hero, however, has no one on his side, and he knows that only the gallows await him if he confesses. His desire for companionship leads him to join a band of outlaws. He later regrets his string of crimes and expresses a sincere wish to atone for them by serving in the army, but the powerful prince to whom he directs his plea has no intention of granting him a pardon. - The ruling institutions remain heartless and insensitive to the plight of the individual. This is why Katharina and Wolf are driven to become "Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre."

¹⁷³McGowan, 225.

¹⁷⁴The connection between the two works has been noted by Kicherer and Schröter, among others.

¹⁷⁵Friedrich von Schiller, Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre, vol. 5 of Friedrich Schiller, Sämtliche Werke, eds. Gerhard Fricken and Herbert G. Göpfert, 4th ed. (München [Munich]: Carl Hanser, 1967) 18.

Friedhelm Kicherer emphasizes the difference between the classical and the modern depictions of society in literature. The classical period was characterized by a striving for harmony; thus, Schiller's hero rues his misdeeds and reconciles himself with society, even though the system is equally to blame for his downfall. By contrast, Böll's Katharina cannot come to terms with the brutal realities of a society which tolerates the destructive power of the sensationalist press: "Ihr Verhältnis zur Gesellschaft bleibt ein gebrochenes, weil sie von ihr zerbrochen wurde."¹⁷⁶

Böll's tale of lost honor, revenge and social injustice also displays distinct parallels to Heinrich von Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas.¹⁷⁷ Katharina and Kohlhaas are both "rechtschaffene Menschen"¹⁷⁸ who are treated unjustly by the authorities, an experience which leads them to take the law into their own hands. Katharina has a small circle of supporters, but she acts alone in killing Tötges. Kohlhaas, on the other hand, succeeds in gathering an impressive number of loyal followers, who assist him in his war on society. Because his real enemy, "der Junker Wenzel," is out of reach, Kohlhaas and his men terrorize the countryside and the cities surrounding the nobleman's hiding place, in an attempt to gain "freies Geleit" for Kohlhaas' case.

The vengeful deeds of Katharina and Kohlhaas have a resounding impact on their respective societies, and in the end, both characters are prepared to face the consequences. We know that Kohlhaas is successful in procuring the support of the general populace, for the narrator tells us he enjoyed the support of the people.¹⁷⁹ Though we do not know the public's reaction to Katharina's shooting of Tötges, it is to be suspected that ZEITUNG-readers will passively accept the thinking of their guardian newspaper.

¹⁷⁶Kicherer, 27.

¹⁷⁷These parallels have been noted by Kicherer and Schröter, among others.

¹⁷⁸Kicherer, 26.

¹⁷⁹Heinrich von Kleist, Michael Kohlhaas, vol. 2 of Heinrich von Kleist. Sämtliche Werke und Briefe (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970) 52-53.

Kleist rewards his tragic character with some measure of true justice - a victory in defeat: Kohlhaas gets his horses back and has the satisfaction of knowing that his enemy will be punished, but, at the same time, he must pay for his own heinous crimes against society. Katharina Blum, on the other hand, is much like her creator, Heinrich Böll, in that her battle against social injustice appears to be generally misunderstood by the masses. Nevertheless, both author and heroine manage to maintain their hope for a better future. The successful marketing of Katharina Blum as both book and film and the recent popularity of E.L. Doctorow's Ragtime, a work based largely on Michael Kohlhaas, testify to the continued relevance of the themes of honor and revenge in our modern world.

KATHARINA BLUM

AS A CONTINUATION OF BÖLL'S WORK

The events, institutions and persons portrayed in Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum confront the reader with a reflection of contemporary West German society, but the underlying themes are timeless. Although the setting has changed, the *Erzählung* represents a continuation of Böll's ongoing criticism of social structures which do not serve the needs of the people:

The origins of violence and the violation of human rights have been a major concern of Heinrich Böll's writing from the beginning of his career.¹⁸⁰

In several of his previous works one encounters solitary figures who lash out against the "große Ordnung" in frustration, yet as with Katharina, their "kleine Anarchie" remains sterile.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰Zipes, 77.

¹⁸¹The designations "große Ordnung" and "kleine Anarchie" stem from Rainer Nägele's article "Heinrich Böll. Die große Ordnung und die kleine Anarchie," Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich, Deutsche Autoren in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit, ed. Hans Wagener (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1974) 183-204.

Rainer Nägele argues that the majority of the time Böll's characters practice forms of inner protest; even where their resistance is directed outwardly, it remains primarily symbolic.¹⁸² When Katharina Blum smears the walls of her apartment, the protest is a private one, witnessed by only Else and Konrad Beiter. When she steals a ZEITUNG, the effect is miniscule: Her action may have cost the newspaper a few Pfennig. Thus, we can conclude that these two acts of protest have no direct impact on the "große Ordnung" of society.

Linda Hill notes that "(m)any of Böll's sympathetic characters break laws or act violently."¹⁸³ Their acts of protest are usually committed on behalf of the author's own convictions. The Gruhls in Ende einer Dienstfahrt set fire to a *Bundeswehr* jeep. In Gruppenbild mit Dame, the garbage collectors deliberately cause a traffic jam in order to block Leni's eviction. Perhaps most important in relation to the heroine of Katharina Blum is the character Johanna Fähmel in Billard um halbzehn. Johanna "shoots a prominent politician, in whom she sees 'der Mörder meines Enkels'; she calls her deed "nicht Tyrannenmord, sondern Anständigenmord," yet she does not succeed in killing her victim. Katharina Blum is the first and only one of Böll's sympathetic characters to actually kill someone.¹⁸⁴

Many critics have interpreted Tötges' murder as Heinrich Böll's revenge on Axel Springer. Still others recognize the many dimensions of social protest present in Katharina's act, yet they believe Böll actually sanctioned the shooting. The fact that Tötges is such a callous personality no doubt contributes to this viewpoint. The author's avowed purpose, however, is to show the reader where violence can lead, a task in which he

¹⁸²Nägele, "Die große Ordnung," 197.

¹⁸³Hill, 154.

¹⁸⁴Hill, 154-55.

succeeds. Examining the aftereffects of the shooting on Katharina's circle of friends, we see "that killing leads to no good":

Up to Katharina's retelling of the murder, the last tenth of the novel is devoted to the misery of the Blornas and Else Woltersheim. Although the ZEITUNG pillories her friends before the murder, the intensive campaign against the Blornas takes place afterward. They come close to financial ruin, and their marriage is threatened by the slanders of the ZEITUNG, their own bickering and Blorna's unrequited love for Katharina.¹⁸⁵

Thus, we can conclude with Nägele that

...selbst da, wo sie [die Auflehnung gegen die Ordnung] sich nach außen richtet, bleibt sie eher symbolische...Aktion. Das gilt für den Schuß der alten Frau Fähmel in Billard um halbzehn, für die Jeepverbrennung in Ende einer Dienstfahrt wie für die Aktionen des Leni-Komitees in Gruppenbild.¹⁸⁶

Nägele's argument may be extrapolated to include Katharina's shooting of Tötges, which also remains largely symbolic. Despite the public outcry generated by the murder, Katharina's deed will have no lasting effect on the society which has deprived her of her rights and her honor.

¹⁸⁵Hill, 154-55.

¹⁸⁶Nägele, "Die große Ordnung," 197.

CHAPTER V:
FORM AND CONTENT
AS A REFLECTION OF REALITY AND MORALITY

The controversial, emotionally charged political ideas which form the core of Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum have tended to draw the attention of readers and critics alike away from the work's formal features. Failure to consider Heinrich Böll's literary technique frequently has resulted in false or incomplete interpretations of his intended message. Böll has painstakingly and deliberately chosen the structure and style of Katharina Blum in order to enhance the connection between fiction and reality at many levels. Formal devices are thus an integral part of this *Novelle*, and an analysis of them is central to any attempt to interpret the social relevance of the text.

GENRE

It seems appropriate to begin the discussion of form and content by examining the concept of genre, for this provides the framework which houses the other technical components of Katharina Blum. Assigning this work to a literary family is not an easy task, as evidenced by the varying references found in secondary literature: "Roman," "Erzählung," "Novelle," and, ironically, "politisches Pamphlet." Katharina Blum cannot be termed a novel in the true sense, since the characters are not fully developed, and there is only one true "roter Faden." Böll himself called his work an *Erzählung*, but this genre assignment is not precise enough for our purposes here.

The ironic designation "politisches Pamphlet" stems from the author himself. In 1984, he claimed he would have forgotten long ago that he had ever written Katharina

Blum, had he not been continually misunderstood by both political Right and Left.¹⁸⁷ He was also irritated by attempts to compare this work with his Nobel Prize winning

Gruppenbild mit Dame

on the basis of superficial similarities (the main character in both works is a female and the compositional technique of both depends on research and gathering details to explain the main characters).¹⁸⁸

Böll argued that the purposes of the two works are entirely different, and that their corresponding artistic forms are for this reason also inherently dissimilar. Gruppenbild, emphasized Böll, "ist ein Roman"; on the other hand, Katharina Blum is

...ein Pamphlet in Form einer Reportage, oder wie man's nennen soll, die einen ganz anderen Anspruch hat. Das ist doch eine legitime Ausdrucksform, die man mögen mag oder nicht, aber es ist doch ein politisches Pamphlet.¹⁸⁹

It is important to keep in mind that Böll entitled his work "Erzählung", that he once called it a "Kriminalgeschichte" and another time a "Liebesgeschichte mit dem Handlungskern eines Groschenheftes." It seems that the multifaceted structure and content of Katharina Blum makes categorizing it an elusive task even for the author! On the basis of Böll's testimony and the differing opinions among critics, it seems safe to conclude that his narrative will not fit neatly into one traditional, clearly-defined genre construct. Thus, the task at hand is to examine Böll's "Erzählung" according to the specifications of the literary family to which it most nearly conforms.

The reader likely will have noted an earlier reference to Katharina Blum as a *Novelle*, for this is the genre whose criteria it comes closest to fulfilling. Charlotte Ghurye contends that Böll's *Erzählung* is in the tradition of 19th century *Novellen* by authors such as Kleist, Brentano and Storm. Like many heroines of the last century, Katharina

¹⁸⁷Böll, "Zehn Jahre später," 31.

¹⁸⁸Margit M. Sinka, "Heinrich Böll's Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum a *Novelle* or How a Genre Concept Develops and Where It Can Lead," Colloquia Germanica 14.2 (1981): 158.

¹⁸⁹Manfred Durzak Gespräche über den Roman (Stuttgart: Suhrkamp, 1976) 150, quoted in Sinka, 159.

experiences some loss of honor due to her alleged sexual promiscuity.¹⁹⁰ Yet Böll's *Novelle* is more complex than its predecessors. Society's sexual double-standard is but one aspect of Katharina Blum. Böll not only shows his readers Katharina's tragic fate, he also focuses on the forces which bring about her social demise. The greater complexity of his narrative may perhaps be explained by the increasingly complex social relations of our twentieth century. Here we should also keep in mind Merker/Stammler's definition of the *Novelle* as changeable according to time and place: "Struktur und Organismus der *Novelle* [sind] je nach Völkern und Zeitaltern verschieden."¹⁹¹

It matters not that Böll's narrative departs from the traditional generic norm, for "die Kongruenz zwischen Theorie und Praxis ist nie vollständig erreichbar"¹⁹²; indeed, sometimes the individual work's very aberration may allow the critic to better understand its nature. Margit Sinka presents strong arguments for treating Katharina Blum as a twentieth century version of the *Novelle*. This genre, she claims, confronts the reader with an element of tension and the need to resolve it. Sinka enumerates the traditional components of the *Novelle*: "Rahmen, deutliche Silhouette, Falke, Wendepunkt, eine sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheit etc." These elements, she admits, are also present in other literary forms, and so she qualifies her definition as follows: The components "tend to occur together - if not all of the time, then most of the time" and they are delicately balanced with each other.¹⁹³ Merker/Stammler adds a characterization of the "typical" *Novellen*-protagonist to Sinka's list:

¹⁹⁰Ghurye, 64-65.

¹⁹¹Paul Merker and Wolfgang Stammler, Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte, eds. Werner Kohlschmidt and Wolfgang Mohr, 2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1966) 685. Wellek and Warren agree that genres do not remain fixed; see pp. 216ff.

¹⁹²Hans Robert Jauß, "Theorie der Gattungen und Literatur des Mittelalters," Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur. Gesammelte Aufsätze 1956-76 (Munich: Fink, 1977) 343, cited in Sinka, 160.

¹⁹³Sinka outlines the traditional *Novellen*-components on pp. 161-63.

...nicht selten ergibt sich ein Zusammenhang zwischen dem Geschehnis [i.e., "der sich ereigneten unerhörten Begebenheit"] und der besonderen Artung eines Menschen [eines Helden]...Held im aktiven Sinn ist er freilich häufig nicht. Er handelt zwar, aber für das allgemeine Erlebnis ist auffälliger, daß er von den Ereignissen mitgerissen wird.¹⁹⁴

In Katharina Blum there is obviously tension, which the narrator seeks to alleviate through interpretation. Of what does this tension consist? Böll insists that his purpose in writing is not to launch an attack on the persecutors of the Baader-Meinhof group or on yellow journalism, but rather to trace how "Gewalt" comes into being and where it may lead. Katharina's struggle to maintain her personal dignity while being verbally abused by the media constitutes the *Novelle's* intrinsic element of conflict and an attempt at its resolution. Böll's narrative also fits Sinka's model in the sense that it highlights the specific problem of "Rufmord" as it affects one person's life. Due to her very "averageness," Katharina and her experiences serve as a symbol of life in West Germany.¹⁹⁵

Böll begins his tale with the "sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheit" which summarizes Katharina's experience. In doing so, he "complies with *Novelle* expectations of explicating an event that has already occurred."¹⁹⁶ We have already noted the similarity between the beginning of Katharina Blum and of Kleist's Die Marquise von O.¹⁹⁷ It is important to remember that the extraordinary event in a *Novelle* often appears logical and illogical at the same time; it only becomes "unheard of" through explication. As Sinka observes, the fact that Katharina's presence at a carnival party eventually leads her to commit murder is, at the outset, unusual, but it only becomes shocking in the course of the narrator's revelations about the heroine's personality. Katharina has conformed to all of

¹⁹⁴Merker/Stammler, vol. 2, 686.

¹⁹⁵Sinka, 163.

¹⁹⁶Sinka, 163.

¹⁹⁷See the section of this paper titled "SPRACHE UND SOZIALKRITIK," p. 68.

society's expectations, yet she cannot accept its judgment about Götten. Because of her spontaneity and her unconditional love, "Katharina must inevitably come into conflict with society."¹⁹⁸ Commensurate with the conditions associated with the traditional *Novelle*, Böll's narrator relates how Katharina is gradually driven to her limits, yet does not explain all details of the affair. Although Böll shows us step-by-step how this innocent young woman becomes a political person, he does not erase "the enigma of the irrational love that caused her conflict with society."¹⁹⁹

With regard to one of the *Novellen*-components, "Wendepunkt, Katharina Blum does not follow the rules. "No matter how much he tries...Böll's narrator is unable to locate the Wendepunkt," i.e., the point at which violence ensues that causes the maligned individual to retaliate: He finds it impossible to determine just when Katharina decides to murder Tötges.²⁰⁰ Because some key puzzles are left unsolved, there is no complete relaxation of tension, as expected in a *Novelle*; while the reader may experience some catharsis when Katharina shoots, he is likely to feel frustrated by the lack of a definitive "happy end,"

"And frustration is certainly not a reaction associated with a *Novelle* reading. The *Novelle* does illuminate a problem, but in the end, it leads the reader to reflect, to ponder. It causes scrutiny - not frustration, not failure."²⁰¹

Another place at which Böll's work departs from the generic model is in the use of irony and metaphor to express the idea that form and unity are impossible. The narrator describes the tedious process of seeking unity as one of "Troddenlegung" and "Konduktion" and warns repeatedly of "Stockungen," "Stauungen," "Versandungen" and

¹⁹⁸Sinka, 164-65.

¹⁹⁹Sinka, 165.

²⁰⁰Sinka, 167.

²⁰¹Sinka, 168.

"mißglückte Konduktionen" (10-11).²⁰² The "echte Novellenfrage" of how matters will end is treated ironically:

After Blorna has gathered all his facts (though he doesn't know that he may be barred from being the defense attorney), the narrator wailingly asks: "Was soll daraus werden, wie soll das enden?"²⁰³

Böll's irony is thus not to be found in the event itself, as is the case in most *Novellen*, but in the event's lack of interpretability, which extends to other areas of the work as well.

Katharina Blum certainly conforms to the general prescription for *Novellen*-heroes as described by Merker/Stammler. Katharina's previous conditioning teaches her to accept passively the machinations of oppressive institutions, an attitude which makes her particularly vulnerable to the ZEITUNG's campaign against her. She does not become a "hero" in the active sense of the word until the end of the story, when the reader becomes familiar with the circumstances under which she shot Tötges. Even then, one can say that Katharina is actually pulled along by the flow of events: She has no control over the behavior of Police and Press, which collaborate to rob her of her honor and destroy the image she has so carefully cultivated.

While Katharina Blum contains many components on the traditional *Novelle* checklist, according to Sinka, they have not been "blended into the requisite unified mixture that constitutes a *Novelle*."²⁰⁴ The narrator's interpretative endeavors result in no real conclusions, a buildup of tension ensues, and formlessness is justified. These three aspects of Böll's narrative certainly do not coincide with the normal construct of the *Novelle*, yet it is nonetheless clear that this genre is an extremely useful tool with which to critically evaluate Katharina Blum and to shed new light on authorial intentions.²⁰⁵

²⁰²Sinka, 169-70.

²⁰³Sinka, 170.

²⁰⁴Sinka, 171.

²⁰⁵Sinka, 171.

SATIRE AND IRONY

Politically motivated authors have long used satire and irony as vehicles for carrying their message of social criticism to the public, and Heinrich Böll is no exception to the rule. Curiously, though, in this age of social criticism, Böll stands virtually alone as a true satirist among contemporary authors.²⁰⁶ He writes in the tradition of Jean Paul and Jonathan Swift. As a Christian who believed strongly in loving his neighbor, Böll found it difficult to condone satire of a purely mocking, derisive nature (such as Wilhelm Busch's), and he lamented the fact that precisely this inhumane brand of criticism was more familiar and therefore more palatable to German audiences. Böll also realized that prejudices would likely prevent readers from comprehending the full meaning of his work. Because of his beliefs, Böll originally chose to adopt Jean Paul's style of humor; for Jean Paul, writes Böll, there exist "'keine einzelne Torheit, keine Toren, sondern nur Torheit und eine tolle Welt.'" Although Böll considers Swift's satires to be cutting and malicious, he simultaneously hails Swift as being compassionate toward his fellow man.²⁰⁷

Karl Korn describes a satirist as a secret moralist with a sharp eye for detail, such as Charles Dickens had.²⁰⁸ Heinrich Böll fits Korn's model to a "T." In his early years as a writer, the idealist Böll held to Jean Paul's less abrasive style of social criticism. From the late sixties on, however, he began to express himself in "handfesten Ohrfeigen"²⁰⁹; as Böll became more and more politically engaged, his writing took on increasingly Swiftian characteristics.²¹⁰ Katharina Blum is the culmination of a variety of political experiences

²⁰⁶Karl Korn, "Das Salz der Satire," Der Schriftsteller Heinrich Böll, 65.

²⁰⁷Erhard Friedrichsmeyer, "Heinrich Bölls Selbstverständnis als Satiriker," Colloquia Germanica 18.3 (1985): 203.

²⁰⁸Korn, 65.

²⁰⁹Friedrichsmeyer, 207.

²¹⁰Klaus Jeziorkowski, "Heinrich Böll als politischer Autor," University of Dayton Review 11.2 (1974): 45.

on the part of the author. The biting irony and exaggeration present in this work show us exactly where the "Gewalt" of powerful institutions had led Heinrich Böll by the early seventies. Dorothee Sölle claims one can see the escalation of social *Gewalt* reflected in the increasingly more prevalent anarchistic components of Böll's works.²¹¹

The Merker/Stammler Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte states that "satire" is "eine gattungsübergreifende Literaturform, die durch Aggressivität, protreptische Intention und verzerrende Darstellungsart gekennzeichnet ist." As a literary device, satire possesses three main qualities: 1) It is "ein Angriff auf etwas Aktuelles, Nichtfiktives, Erkennbares"; 2) "Der Angriff soll privat motivierter Feindseligkeit nicht entspringen," rather it "soll helfen, eine Norm oder eine Idee durchzusetzen"; 3) It should have "Indirektheit," which may be "notwendig" ("weil ein direkter Zugriff prinzipiell nicht möglich ist"), "erzwungen" ("weil das Objekt durch Macht, Gesetz oder Sitte vor einem direkten Angriff geschützt ist") or it may be "bloß taktisch (der besseren Wirkung wegen gewählt)." Furthermore, the satire is especially suited for uncovering and disclosing hidden weaknesses, misdeeds and hypocrisy: In its pure form, satire confronts "Sein" and "Schein," not "Sein" and "Sollen."²¹² Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum clearly fits the above criteria. Böll's work constitutes an aggressive caricature of "Sein" and "Schein" in West German society. The author attacks recognizable institutions in an attempt to alert his countrymen to the threat posed to individuals' rights; he is not primarily motivated by personal revenge, as we have seen. Böll does go a step beyond the traditional bounds of satire, however: He not only shows his readers the "Sein" and "Schein" of their world, he also hints at the "Sollen" - at what could and should be. Korn characterizes the satirical elements of Böll's works as

²¹¹Sölle, 886.

²¹²Merker/Stammler, vol. 3, 603.

...forciert realistisch, die Ironie dosiert, die Absicht geschickt verkleidet. Böll trifft wie absichtslos schlimme Konstruktionsfehler unserer technisch organisierten verwalteten Welt. Indem er groteske Mißbildungen zeichnet, trägt er zur Einsicht bei.²¹³

Here it seems appropriate to differentiate between "satire" and "irony." According to the Merker/Stammler Lexikon, "irony" is more subtle than satire because it involves a play on something that is not actually said. Parody, an exaggerated imitation, is said to be one type of irony.²¹⁴ The language of the ZEITUNG certainly parodies that of the Bild-Zeitung. In several passages, the narrator stops to poke fun at social institutions and events, such as the police's "bugging" techniques and Le Boche's "one-minute piece of art." - The attitude conveyed is one of "Wirtschaft über alles." Throughout the *Erzählung*, the *Berichterstatter*'s ironic commentary allows the reader to feel he is "in the know"; he has seen the "Sein" behind the "Schein."

Böll himself once defined satire as follows: "Einen Grundgedanken konsequent übertreiben, bis es nicht mehr geht, dann haben Sie eine Satire." In this sense, asserts Eberhard Scheiffele, Katharina Blum is a satire:

Der Grundgedanke: die Dinge liegen so im argen, daß ein unschuldiger, ganz "normaler" Mensch zum Verbrechen getrieben wird; konsequente Übertreibung: die Lage ist so trostlos, daß "es nicht mehr geht". Katharina schießt.²¹⁵

In his *Erzählung* Böll confronts the West German public with a mirror image caricaturing its ugliest traits. He expects his readers to recognize themselves and elements of their society as being present in Katharina's experience. Scheiffele claims, quite properly, that Böll has succeeded in producing the desired response in the reader:

Der Leser bezieht das Werk unmittelbar auf die gesellschaftliche und politische Wirklichkeit, in der er lebt, und wird so zur Kritik veranlaßt. Auch zur Selbstkritik. Er meint nämlich bei der Lektüre, daß er ja oft selbst so denkt und spricht

²¹³Korn, 66.

²¹⁴Merker/Stammler, vol. 1, 756-757.

²¹⁵Scheiffele, 180. The Böll quotation originally appeared in Heinrich Böll, "Schreiben und Lesen," Einmischung erwünscht (Köln [Cologne]: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1977) 86.

wie der Bundesbürger in der Erzählung.²¹⁶

The evidence of Böll's success may be seen in the controversial nature of the "pro" and "con" debates which surfaced shortly after publication. Such disputes were not confined to the realm of the popular media; Katharina Blum's pedantic and stylistic merits and flaws have also been hotly contested by Germanists.

Critic Philip Payne, for example, finds the satirical elements in this work undesirable and claims that they do not belong there; "they belong rather in a satire!"²¹⁷ [emphasis added] Payne points to the symbolic names Böll has given the persons in the story as an attempt to satirize character types in society, yet he has to concede that "[t]he satirical ring to these names disappears...as they become familiar to the reader."²¹⁸ Similarly, he argues that Katharina's act of defacing her apartment with viscous substances is not in keeping with her commitment to the material security and sense of well-being her dwelling affords her.²¹⁹ Perhaps there is some truth in this analysis, but Payne's argument is weakened by his assumption that Katharina should behave rationally under pressure. Payne also presents the murder of Tötges as being "almost pure satire." He then states boldly: "When Katharina takes out the pistol it is not Tötges who stands before her but Springer and it is Böll who fires the shots."²²⁰ This statement should not stand unchallenged, for we have already seen that revenge was not Böll's purpose in writing Katharina Blum!

²¹⁶Scheiffele, 181.

²¹⁷Payne, 51.

²¹⁸Payne, 51.

²¹⁹Payne, 51.

²²⁰Payne, 52.

"SPRACHE UND GEWALT"

Titel, Untertitel, Motto, diese drei scheinbaren Kleinigkeiten sind wichtige Bestandteile der Erzählung. Sie gehören dazu. Ohne sie ist die pamphletistische Tendenz - und das ist fürwahr eine Tendenz-Erzählung! - nicht verständlich. Wer sich mit dieser Erzählung beschäftigt, sollte sich zunächst mit diesen drei vorgetzten Elementen beschäftigen, sie sind schon fast eine Interpretation.²²¹

Heinrich Böll wrote the above commentary ten years after the original printing of Katharina Blum. He did so partially in order to reproach those critics who had labeled his *Erzählung* a "Terroristen-Roman" and to prevent others from misinterpreting the work. The three elements named in the above quotation are indeed integral parts of Böll's narrative, as shall be discussed below.

The title "Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum" gives one a clue as to what will take place in the story he's about to read. It also provokes curiosity as to Katharina's identity and why she comes to lose her honor. The subtitle "Wie Gewalt entsteht und wohin sie führen kann" informs us of the author's creative intentions: He will show us the origins of "Gewalt" and where it can lead under a given set of circumstances. The subtitle's juxtaposition with the title allows us to conjecture that Katharina's loss of honor is accomplished through some force beyond her control. The "motto," which reads as follows,

Personen und Handlung dieser Erzählung sind frei erfunden. Sollten sich bei der Schilderung gewisser journalistischer Praktiken Ähnlichkeiten mit den Praktiken der "Bild"-Zeitung ergeben haben, so sind diese Ähnlichkeiten weder beabsichtigt noch zufällig, sondern unvermeidlich. (8)

hints that Katharina will somehow become involved with the boulevard press. The fact that Bild is mentioned in this context indicates that the author will undertake to scrutinize reality. Thus, before a person even begins reading the actual narrative, she has a good idea as to what will unfold in the plot.

²²¹Böll, "Zehn Jahre später," 36.

The written and spoken language used by the narrator, the characters and the ZEITUNG in Katharina Blum highlight Böll's central theme: "Gewalt der Sprache in der Gesellschaft." In this sense, Böll is a follower of Karl Kraus, who Herbert Marcuse believes has shown "wie eine 'innere' Untersuchung des Sprechens und des Schreibens ein ganzes moralisches und politisches System bloßstellen kann."²²² Hans Rudolf Müller-Schwefe holds that Böll's "Sprache dient der Wahrheit, indem sie die Unwahrheit aufbricht."²²³ Since the literary figures in this work are representative of all walks of life, it will be useful to examine their language in order to see to what extent Böll uses it to parody and criticize the social realities of the Federal Republic.²²⁴

Böll set himself a difficult task when he chose to reject narrative description and to rely instead on colloquial language as the means for conveying his criticism of hidden prejudices, aggressions and authoritarian values in a supposedly open and pluralistic society.²²⁵ Especially striking is the vulgar language employed at all levels of the social spectrum, as Scheiffele points out, "Das Wort 'ficken' ist dem Hauptkriminalkommissar Beizmann [sic!] ebenso geläufig (18) wie das Wort 'bumsen' dem Journalisten Tötges (120)." Scheiffele also notes, "Diese Leute sind auch wenig zimperlich, wenn sie über wirtschaftliche Verhältnisse und Interessen sprechen."²²⁶ People in positions of authority have no inclination to be kind to others; they are interested solely in making money and in settling the Blum-Götten case in the most expeditious manner. In exaggerating the contemptible nature of those in power through their "unverblümete, unbewohnbare

²²²Herbert Marcuse, Der eindimensionale Mensch (Neuwied-Berlin: n.p., 1970), quoted in Scheiffele, 169.

²²³Müller-Schwefe, 150.

²²⁴Scheiffele, 170.

²²⁵Scheiffele., 171.

²²⁶Scheiffele, 172.

Sprache,"²²⁷ Böll shows us a reflection of the "unbewohnbare Gesellschaft" they have created.

In contrast to the slang of everyday life, the language of the sensationalist ZEITUNG often is quite poetic and sophisticated. The careful reader will sense the exaggeration immediately and will note that "simple people" have been given "Artikulationshilfe" by the reporters.²²⁸ Scheiffele posits the ZEITUNG's quotation of Katharina's ex-husband, Brettloh, as a classic example:

"Einen Porsche hätte ich dir wohl nie bieten können, nur ein bescheidenes Glück, wie es ein redlicher Arbeitsmann zu bieten hat, der der Gewerkschaft mißtraut. Ach Katharina" (56). Der "einfache Mann" spricht natürlich nicht so.²²⁹
(emphasis added)

Tötges disguises himself as a painter in order to gain access to the hospital room where Katharina's critically ill mother lies recovering from major surgery. He barges into the room and proceeds to "interview" the poor woman, who is only capable of muttering: "Warum mußte das so enden? Warum mußte das so kommen?" (140-41). Tötges rephrases her statement to read: "So mußte es kommen, so mußte es enden" (54). One wonders why the reporter even bothered to go to the hospital. - He could have written the article at his desk! - Yet it is not merely the "einfache Menschen" who have received "Artikulationshilfe."²³⁰ - Dr. Blorna's words are also reformulated by Tötges, so that his originally rather objective assessment of Katharina as "kühl" and "klug" (47) takes on negative overtones; the ZEITUNG presents her as "eiskalt und berechnend" (48).

In addition to twisting the responses of those interviewed beyond recognition, the ZEITUNG comes up with its own libelous statements regarding Katharina and her

²²⁷The term "unverblümt" stems from Scheiffele, 172. "Unbewohnbar" is Böll's own adjective, which appears many times in his Frankfurter Vorlesungen.

²²⁸Scheiffele, 174.

²²⁹Scheiffele, 174.

²³⁰Scheiffele, 174.

supporters. It appears that the editors wish to help the "simple reader" in forming a personal opinion of Katharina and a political opinion of her case. As a prime example of such "guidance" Scheiffele cites the article which insinuates that Trude Blorna ("die rote Trude") is a Communist sympathizer and the headline which labels Katharina "Räuberliebchen." This headline colors the reader's image of Katharina from the very beginning, for as Scheiffele observes, the word "Liebchen" has "...in diesem Wortzusammenhang, anders als das sachlichere 'Geliebte', einen Beigeschmack der Bedeutung 'Dirne.'"²³¹

It may seem incredible that the majority of people would read a "rag" such as the ZEITUNG and actually believe what they see in print. Yet one must be careful of judging too hastily; even "respectable" newspapers have a political slant, which may or may not become evident until one turns to the editorial pages. It is probably reasonable to say that most of us do believe what we read in our papers - perhaps more than we should - since it is our only way of remaining "informed." We must remember that freedom of the press does not necessarily guarantee that the "truth" will always be presented.

In the case we are examining, the ZEITUNG has chosen to cater to the prejudices of a large percentage of the West German population, which lie hidden behind a facade of "democratic" tolerance. Typical of such biases are:

...das tiefeingewurzelte Mißtrauen gegenüber den Intellektuellen, die Verteufelung kritischer Fortschrittlichkeit als Subversion von Links, das Verlangen nach einfachen Lösungen, nach schärferem Durchgreifen der Behörden und der Polizei.²³²

For instance, Brettloh is referred to as a "redlicher Arbeitsmann" who distrusts the union. The implication is that the worker who trusts the union is "unredlich," and that the union does not represent the true interests of the working class. The provocative caption

²³¹Scheiffele, 174-75.

²³²Scheiffele, 175.

underneath the photo of the Blornas' fancy sportscar is apt to produce its intended resentful response in the "average" ZEITUNG-reader²³³: "Wann wird der rote Anwalt auf den Wagen des kleinen Mannes umsteigen müssen? (109)" The ZEITUNG strengthens its credibility, and thereby its potential for influence, by claiming to be "der Anwalt des 'kleinen Mannes.'"

Interestingly enough, the language of the victims does not differ greatly from that of the victimizers. Scheiffele claims that, with the exception of Trude, none of the characters are "intellectuals." Trude is the only one who is aware of the social and political causes underlying the difficulties experienced by herself, her husband and Katharina in both the public and private sectors. She recognizes Blorna's humorously pathetic decision to rig up "Molotov Cocktails" as "spontan-kleinbürgerlich-romantischer Anarchismus."²³⁴

Although the victims generally converse in much the same manner as their persecutors, Böll sets some of them apart by their sensitivity for language. Katharina, maintains Scheiffele, possesses "ein *Gespür* für richtigen oder schiefen Wortgebrauch." In giving her deposition, she insists upon the words "gütig" instead of "nett" and "Zudringlichkeiten" rather than "Zärtlichkeiten." For her it is a matter of principle, not of stylistics, for as Scheiffele observes, she herself uses the word "nett" at two other points in the narrative - but only where she considers it appropriate.²³⁵ In her insistence on accuracy in the wording of her testimony, Katharina represents the viewpoint of the author, for whom every word has a precise meaning. The other two women in the story, Trude Blorna and Else Woltersheim, also are very aware of the subtleties of language. The use of the word "Herrenbesuch" rather than "Männerbesuch" immediately tips Trude off as to the

²³³Scheiffele 175-76.

²³⁴Scheiffele 177.

²³⁵Scheiffele, 177.

identity of Katharina's mysterious visitor. During her deposition, Else comments on Katharina's "Zerstörung und auch Verstörtheit."²³⁶

Scheiffele cautions, one must remember that most of the time Katharina expresses herself in exactly the same crude, colloquial terms as the others. He then poses the key question: "Wie kommt es, daß Katharina nur in bestimmten Fällen sprachlich sensibel ist?" The answer probably lies in the fact that Böll does not intend to illustrate Katharina's psychological development; rather, he wishes to use her to document the socio-political climate of the Federal Republic of Germany in the late sixties and early seventies. For this reason, she must be depicted as a contented conformist, and this must also be reflected in her manner of speaking.²³⁷ Böll once described her as follows:

Eine Angestellte, die sich absolut konformistisch verhält, eine Person, die mir eigentlich unsympathisch sein müßte. Sie ist vollkommen angepaßt, bis zur schicken Eigentumswohnung. Unverklärter, durchschnittlicher als sie kann sich keine verhalten.²³⁸

Some critics have poked fun at the "poor German" in Böll's story, while others defend it as being intentionally and artistically ungrammatical. At first glance, the prevailing use of slang at all levels of the social ladder may seem to be a sign of an open society, but this is not the case. Böll's

"große Kunstfertigkeit" erweist sich nun darin, daß aus dem Zusammenhang der Geschichte klar wird: dieses kameradschaftliche, kumpelhafte oder betuliche Sprechen täuscht Offenheit und Gleichheit nur vor.²³⁹

The use of the word "Herrenbesuch" instead of "Männerbesuch" to describe a man from "offensichtlich besseren Kreisen" proves this point. When Katharina's behavior does not conform to the values of society, it is labeled "affig," "humorlos" and "altmodisch."

²³⁶Scheiffele, 177.

²³⁷Scheiffele, 179.

²³⁸Heinrich Böll, "Zeitmosaik," Die Zeit 21 May 1976: 48, quoted in Scheiffele, 177-78.

²³⁹Scheiffele, 181.

People who do not fit in are degraded with pejorative labels such as "Nutte," "Verbrecher," and "Kommunist." Diminutive forms such as "Nüttchen" and "unser rötliches Katharinen" serve to humiliate still further, and imply that the person in question is not to be taken seriously. They also reveal the speaker's feeling of superiority.²⁴⁰

Through the report of the narrator, Böll criticizes the colloquial language of his characters. Scheiffele believes that most critics have misinterpreted the linguistic role of the narrator, who frequently follows up his assurances of impartiality with expressly biased discourses. While it is true that Böll has taken great pains to parody the cold, impersonal language of the legal system, Scheiffele points out that most of these precisely formulated passages refer to something of relatively little importance. The police officials, for example, wish to give the appearance of fair play where they can "afford" to do so, but in the case of important matters, they do not follow these rules: "Protokolle werden an die ZEITUNG weitergegeben (54), Telefonleitungen 'angezapft' (86ff.) ." ²⁴¹ (emphasis added)

Whenever more weighty items are presented for consideration, the author does not simply leave critical evaluation of language to the reader. Scheiffele avers that Böll influences his audience "durch seine vorgeblich äußerst sachliche, tatsächlich äußerst subjektive 'Berichterstattung,'" ²⁴² so that it seems that insight into the true circumstances of the case is gained through the narrator's factual disclosures.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

The mode of narrative transmission and the structure employed by Böll in Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum serve two distinct purposes: They underscore the

²⁴⁰Scheiffele, 182.

²⁴¹Scheiffele, 184.

²⁴²Scheiffele, 184.

reality of the events being portrayed and lend them a sense of immediacy. Steve Giles claims two types of narrative transmission are combined "in a particularly intriguing and challenging manner" in Katharina Blum: the diegetic and the mimetic. Giles defines these terms as the methods of "telling" and "showing," respectively.²⁴³ The storyline is composed primarily of mimetic elements, which, at first glance, seem devoid of narrative presence. Böll presents us here with a "Bericht" - a "factual" account of events, "whose authenticity and objectivity are beyond question." Accordingly, much of the text consists of documents and depositions: "the *Vernehmungsprotokolle*, extracts from the ZEITUNG, diary entries..." and "quotations from witnesses." Yet, continues Giles, the narrator frequently "interrupts his 'report' to draw the reader's attention to his views on art and his methods of narrative presentation." Manfred Durzak posits these interjections as proof of the *Berichtstatter's* omniscience,²⁴⁴ but Giles contends that this assertion is "unwarranted" and succeeds in proving his point, as we shall see below.

The narrator of Katharina Blum typically relates information pertaining to the behavior of characters through external as opposed to internal perspective. Giles makes the distinction as follows:

(Internal perspective gives the reader direct access to a figure's mental processes, whereas external perspective is indicated by words of estrangement that emphasize the hypothetical nature of the narrator's judgements.²⁴⁵

According to Giles, the former technique is characterized by verbs which directly reveal thoughts and feelings, while the latter employs expressions such as "perhaps," "apparently" and "as if." Because the *Berichtstatter* in Katharina Blum uses mainly the

²⁴³Steve Giles, "Narrative Transmission in Böll's Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum," Modern Languages 65 (1984): 157.

²⁴⁴Durzak, "Entfaltung oder Reduktion des Erzählers? Vom Verf. des Gruppenbildes zum *Berichtstatter* der Katharina Blum," Böll: Untersuchungen zum Werk, ed. Manfred Jurgensen (Bern: Francke, 1975) 50.

²⁴⁵Giles, 158.

subjunctive or hypothetical form, one must conclude that he is not blessed with authorial omniscience. The narrator is, however, very well-informed about the events and personalities involved in the case. Durzak offers a plausible explanation as to why this is so:

Offenbar ist er als Person in der Umgebung des Rechtsanwaltes Blorna und des Staatsanwaltes Hach zu suchen, die ihn ja mit den wesentlichsten Materialien versorgen. Möglicherweise ist er selbst Jurist oder ein juristisch gebildeter Journalist, was freilich die Paradoxie mit einschließen würde, daß er gerade den Journalismus, wenn auch nicht als Institution, so doch in einigen seiner Vertreter attackiert und damit zumindest eine sehr kritische Haltung gegenüber dem Journalismus dokumentiert.²⁴⁶

Even on the few occasions when the narrator appears to be directly relaying a character's thoughts and emotions his style fits in with the convention of the *Bericht* : "(S)everal times, for instance, the narrator gives an account of Blorna's thoughts , but of course Blorna is one of the *Bericht* 's main sources."²⁴⁷ Indirect quotes sometimes make it difficult to ascertain whether we are reading the narrator's views or those of a character. Due to apparent shifts in the *Berichtstatter* 's style, which draw attention to and expose Böll's literary devices, Giles assigns the narrator to the Formalist school.²⁴⁸

Durzak maintains that the *Berichtstatter* functions merely as a "mask" for the "real" storyteller, Böll.²⁴⁹ While it may be true that Böll influences the storyteller from behind the scenes, this does not necessarily mean that he identifies with the narrator or with any of the characters in Katharina Blum. Martin Krumbholz asserts that while authors often act as if they were the narrator, "every reader knows" that they are not. Even where a writer shows solidarity with his hero, the critic continues, this is not a valid "Maßstab der Interpretation," due to the fact that there exist several levels of communication between

²⁴⁶Durzak, 49.

²⁴⁷Giles, 158.

²⁴⁸Giles, 159.

²⁴⁹Durzak, 51.

reader, narrator and author, in all cases both fictional and real.²⁵⁰ Durzak believes that the identification of narrator with author weakens the effect of the latter's "politisch-pamphletistische Absicht."²⁵¹ However, the political controversy generated by the publication of Katharina Blum offers evidence to refute this contention.

Chapter 2 of Katharina Blum is devoted to the narrator's analogy between a drainage and canal system and the gathering of "the various pools of information he has located." Philip Payne thinks the description of this process is meant as a warning to the reader not to become "uncritically involved" in the report.²⁵² In Chapter 41, the *Berichterstatter* continues the comparison, referring to elements that disrupt the flow, or rather, the chronological progression of events. Giles asserts that Böll's rejection of "den linearen Handlungsablauf" produces "a text epic rather than dramatic, potentially radical rather than artlessly bourgeois."²⁵³

The narrator's apologies for his own journalistic shortcomings and his indignation over the ZEITUNG's article about Tötges' murder are proof of his honesty and goodwill.²⁵⁴ Böll's correspondent stands in stark contrast to the ZEITUNG journalists, who do the reader's thinking for him! While the ZEITUNG reporters fabricate vicious stories, the narrator "is concerned with facts and their legitimate interpretation":

He, unlike the others, observes the strictest code of press ethics and preserves the highest regard for privacy; he is not concerned with the number of copies his newspaper sells, but with the truth....²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰Krumbholz, 13ff.

²⁵¹Durzak, 51.

²⁵²Payne, 46.

²⁵³Giles, 159.

²⁵⁴Werner Janssen, Der Rhythmus des Humanen bei Heinrich Böll (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1985) 171.

²⁵⁵Payne, 46-47.

The *Berichterstatter* is never unscrupulous, but he is not able to maintain his neutrality throughout the report; he is too appalled by the atrocities of Press and Police. In fact, "what he says provides the measure of [the ZEITUNG's] deviance from the facts."²⁵⁶

Böll's *Berichterstatter* does not judge or condemn the persons in his report; he only gets involved at a superficial level.²⁵⁷ The narrator also takes great pains "to emphasize the radical distance that separates the writing practices typical of the ZEITUNG from his own as *Berichterstatter*."²⁵⁸ This becomes clear in his rejection of "unnötige Spannungen" and of sensationalist presentations. Jack Zipes hails Böll's narrator for his "great integrity as a researcher," which Zipes feels is best demonstrated by the latter's attempt to explain his method of reporting.²⁵⁹ His technique allows the reader to participate in the process of interpreting data. Giles is of the opinion that Katharina Blum is an interrogative text, which

poses questions instead of imposing solutions, and tends to employ alienating devices in order to counter any temptation on the reader's part to identify with the fictional world being presented to him.²⁶⁰

In true Brechtian fashion, the reader is compelled to draw his own conclusions about contradictory statements and events in the text.

The manner in which time and space are organized in a work is vital in determining its genre and whether the author's message is to be interpreted as an isolated case or a universal theme. Böll once stated in an interview "that his favorite literary form was the short story," perhaps because it contains all elements of time: "Ewigkeit, Augenblick, Jahrhundert."²⁶¹ For Böll, past, present and future are linked in an historical continuum,

²⁵⁶Payne, 47.

²⁵⁷Janssen, 171.

²⁵⁸Giles, 160.

²⁵⁹Zipes, 79.

²⁶⁰Giles, 162.

²⁶¹Bienek, 140, cited in James Henderson Reid, "Time in the Works of Heinrich Böll," Modern Language Review 62 (1967): 476.

and he seeks to convey this message to his countrymen. He feels strongly that the Germans dare not forget the atrocities committed under Nazi rule and that they must recognize the injustices of contemporary society, so that they may help secure a better future for all. Böll's later writings deal almost exclusively with the present-day of their date of publication, for he came to realize that the gulf between present and past can only be bridged momentarily.²⁶² The ramifications of current actions and attitudes were of greater importance because they could still be altered to ensure a more positive outcome in the future. "Timelessness" is, in fact, escapist, for it means we are merely repeating the past. Ironically, though, it is just such a timeless, negatively-structured society that Böll caricatures - the polar opposite of his ideal - in order to make us aware of its inherent injustices.

It seems logical to conclude that Böll chooses to concentrate his literary portraits in the present in order to maximize their impact on modern day readers. He once declared that art is not eternal, rather it is created "von Zeitgenossen für Zeitgenossen"²⁶³; therefore, it is risky to surmise that any of his works is not, at some level, fundamentally "zeit- und ortgebunden." The events depicted thus carry great relevance and familiarity for the average person of today, and their inextricable connection to the past is created subtly, "by means of flash-back, interior monologue, or reminiscences."²⁶⁴

The time-frame encompassed by the actual plots of Böll's novels and short stories ranges from several hours to several days. James Reid holds that such compact organization of time is common in the works of many twentieth century writers, including James Joyce (Ulysses) and Virginia Woolf (Mrs. Dalloway).²⁶⁵ The reader is compelled

²⁶²Reid, "Time," 477-478.

²⁶³Heinrich Böll, "Mögen Sie Picasso?," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 21 October 1961, quoted in Reid, "Time," 481.

²⁶⁴Reid, "Time," 478.

²⁶⁵Reid, "Time," 482.

to experience the plot as a moment in time rather than as a chronological sequence.²⁶⁶ Katharina Blum conforms to this compact structure; the period of time from Katharina's ill-fated encounter with Ludwig at the *Faschingsparty* to her shooting of Tötges spans only four days. We are informed at the beginning of the story of the facts of the case: Katharina has committed murder. By revealing the "What," Böll forces the reader to concentrate on the "How" and the "Why": How and why does a seemingly normal, innocent person come to commit such a violent crime? In reconstructing the developments of the few days in question, Böll's *Berichterstatter* makes use of flash-backs. The narrator deliberately calls attention to his montage technique through the recurring "drainage" analogy and by his ironic apologies for the fact that his report sometimes "flows" forward in a smooth, chronological progression. Such leitmotifs

have a "spatializing" effect: each occurrence reminds the reader of all the previous occurrences and the story becomes present in his mind all in the one moment.²⁶⁷

NAME SYMBOLISM

Sie sind sehr wichtig für mich, die Namen, weil sie einfach eine ungeheuere - nennen wir es pathetisch-poetische Qualität für mich haben, die Namen, Vornamen und die Nachnamen sind sehr wichtig, und deshalb erfinde ich sie.²⁶⁸

The major characters in Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum have names which contain hidden meanings or associations. Heinrich Böll has carefully chosen each name so as to reveal something about its owner. The word associations hidden therein are designed to evoke - consciously or unconsciously - feelings of either sympathy or aversion on the

²⁶⁶"Spatial Form in Modern Literature," Criticism. The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment, eds. Mark Schorer, Josefine Miles, Gordon McKenzie, rev. ed. (New York: n.p., 1958) 381, cited in Reid, "Time," 483.

²⁶⁷Erich Heller, Thomas Mann. Der ironische Deutsche (Frankfurt a.M.: n.p., 1959) 66, cited in Reid, "Time," 484.

²⁶⁸Werner Koch, "Ein paar Stichworte. Personen und Situationen. Ein Gespräch mit Heinrich Böll," Der Schriftsteller Heinrich Böll, 101-102, cited in Reid, "Böll's Names," 575.

part of the reader.²⁶⁹ Böll also uses alliteration in names to suggest a special relationship between certain figures.²⁷⁰

The heroine's first name, "Katharina," means "pure one" in Greek, and the surname "Blum" obviously means "flower." She is therefore, "the pure flower," and the image created is one of beauty, innocence, frailty and helplessness:

Eine reine, lautere, natürliche und hilflose Person, zart wie eine Blume, die durch unsachgemäße, aggressive Behandlung durch die Ermittlungsbehörden, durch die ZEITUNG Schaden nehmen muß.²⁷¹

The reader is thus inclined to feel compassion and affection toward Katharina from the very beginning.²⁷²

Katharina's beloved, Ludwig Götten, is elevated to the level of a godly being through association with the adjective "göttlich." Indeed, Katharina appears to regard him as such, and this interpretation is reinforced by her use of Biblical language in describing him to Else Woltersheim: "(E)r war es eben, der da kommen soll...." This passage should be compared with Luke 7.19²⁷³, where John sends two disciples to Jesus to ask: "Bist du es, der da kommen soll, oder sollen wir eines andern warten?"

The name of the ZEITUNG-reporter, "Tötges," contains a double-barreled meaning. On the one hand, it foreshadows his impending death. He is to be viewed as "der Todgeweihte," who brings death upon himself. On the other hand, one is reminded of the verb "töten," evocative of "seine todbringende Art" in both the literal and the figurative senses. By barging into the hospital room of Katharina's critically ill mother, Tötges may

²⁶⁹Kicherer, 78.

²⁷⁰Koch, 576. See also James H. Reid, "Böll's Names," Modern Language Review 69 (1974): 575ff.

²⁷¹Kicherer, 78.

²⁷²Kicherer, 78.

²⁷³Kicherer, 79.

have hastened her premature death. His role in the character assassination of Katharina and those who support her is also implied.²⁷⁴

"Sträubleder" brings to mind the reflexive verb "sich sträuben," which aptly describes this character's behavior with regard to Katharina and the ZEITUNG. "Sich sträuben" can be interpreted here as "Nicht-in-die-Schlagzeilen-kommen-wollen." Sträubleder is clearly out to save his own skin and refuses to help Katharina²⁷⁵, of whom he claims: "...sie läßt sich einfach nicht helfen....." (125) The latter half of his name, "Leder," strengthens the image of insensitivity and toughness, thus, it stands in striking contrast to "Blum." The other man who has been rejected by Katharina and now wishes to take revenge is her ex-husband, "Brettloh," whose name is equally indicative of insensitivity.

Katharina's godmother, Else Woltersheim, has been given a last name which produces positive impressions in the mind of the reader: "Heimat, Geborgenheit, Zuneigung, Verständnis, Zuflucht."²⁷⁶ Katharina goes to her in times of need, for she knows she will find a source of comfort and refuge. For example, as soon as Katharina begins receiving obscene calls in the middle of the night, she flees to the safety of Else's apartment (102). By contrast, the name of the town where Katharina grew up, "Gemmelsbroich," evokes negative images through association with the words "gammelig" and "Bräuche"; the implication is that the traditions of the town are hopelessly outdated. For Katharina it is not a haven, but rather a place from which she flees.

The police officials who depose Katharina possess extremely harsh-sounding names, with the exception of Moeding, who was kind to her. Inspector Beizmenne is the most obvious example. His name harbors the verb "beizen" - "to corrode" - which

²⁷⁴Kicherer, 79.

²⁷⁵Kicherer, 80.

²⁷⁶Kicherer, 79.

accurately describes his abrasive personality and the changes his behavior works upon Katharina.²⁷⁷ The narrator suggests that Katharina's bitterness, humiliation and rage began with the cruel, crudely formulated question Beizmenne supposedly asked her about Ludwig: "Hat er dich denn gefickt?" (25) "Menne" hints at the word "Mann,"²⁷⁸ and this underscores his negative relationship with Katharina, who seems to suffer nothing but trouble at the hands of men. Beizmenne's colleagues, District Attorney Hach and Officers Zündach and Peltzer, have also been negatively tinged by the "Zischlaute" and hard "ach-Laute" in their names.²⁷⁹ Lüding, argues one critic, has been "similarly compromised," for his "name-stem would come in the dictionary between entries for 'Luder' and 'Lues!'"²⁸⁰ One wonders whether Böll adapted the names "Hach" and "Schöner" (Tötges' replacement, who is also murdered) from the names of two victims of terrorism named by the Bild-Zeitung as victims of Baader-Meinhof. In his Spiegel-article "Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?", Böll mentions that Bild erroneously printed Georg von Rauch's name as "Hauch," which is quite similar to "Hach." A policeman shot by terrorists in the early seventies was called "Schoner," which sounds much like the fictional "Schöner."

Böll frequently uses alliteration and assonance to tie certain characters together. James H. Reid has examined the onomastic qualities of character names in Böll's Ende einer Dienstfahrt and concluded that the author consciously created these names so as to strengthen the link between certain characters in the mind of the reader.²⁸¹ Applying Reid's method of analysis to Katharina Blum, we can be sure that the repetition of "bl" in

²⁷⁷Kicherer, 80.

²⁷⁸Kicherer, 80.

²⁷⁹Kicherer, 80.

²⁸⁰Payne, 51.

²⁸¹Reid, "Böll's Names," 575ff.

the names Blum, Blorna and Sträubleder implies a more than coincidental connection. Blum and the Blornas are allies of sorts in the fight against police and press. Sträubleder is closely linked to Blum by his former "Herrenbesuche" and by the role he plays in her destruction. The Blornas were friends and business associates of Sträubleder's in the past, but in return for their unswerving loyalty to Katharina, they too are destined for financial and social ruin at his command. The syllabic break between "b" and "l" in his name could be symbolic of his social break with Blum and the Blornas. The reader of Katharina Blum should note the fact that Böll's own name also contains these two letters, and like "Blum," "Böll" has but four letters. Here a word of caution must be inserted: While Böll and Katharina Blum share many attributes, there are key differences in their personalities and lifestyles which rule out any attempt to equate them.

A particularly interesting linkage is found in the names "Tötges" and "Götten," which are bound together by the sounds "g," "t," "ö" and "e." Both of these characters play a decisive role in Katharina's development, despite the fact that their activity takes place "outside" of the actual plot. Very little information is provided about them, except as concerns their relationships to Katharina. Neither is ever quoted directly, with the possible exception of Tötges' newspaper articles. Each is quoted indirectly only once, and both times it is by Katharina. It is she who lovingly tells Else the content of her telephone conversation with the man she loves, and she who calmly relates to Blorna the details of her short-lived "interview" with the man she despises.

It is important to recognize Böll's strategic use of first and last names at various junctures in the story. In the judicial record and in the ZEITUNG, Katharina is usually referred to by the impersonal form "die Blum." Among her supporters she is known simply as "Katharina"; one can therefore surmise that the narrator is positively disposed toward her, since he also uses her first name. With the exception of Ludwig, the men are generally called by their last names, e.g. Sträubleder, Beizmenne, Tötges, Blorna. By

contrast, a more personal feeling is created by the almost exclusive use of first names in reference to the other main women characters, Trude and Else. The name "Trude" means "witch," and the term "rote Trude" was often used in connection with supposed witches in the Middle Ages. It may be that Böll consciously chose this name in order to draw a parallel between the persecution of innocent women then and now.

It seems clear from the above discussion that Böll's names are more than mere "Schall und Rauch." Their hidden associations help create images in the mind of the reader, thus adding to his store of knowledge about the characters and their relationships.²⁸² Böll himself openly acknowledged that his nomenclature was one means of influencing his readers when he declared:

Ein Roman...ist ein Versteck, in dem man zwei, drei Worte verstecken kann, von denen man hofft, daß der Leser sie findet.²⁸³

"DAS HUMANE"

Perhaps the most unique quality present in Heinrich Böll's works is what he himself called "die Ästhetik des Humanen," the ongoing search for "eine bewohnbare Sprache in einem bewohnbaren Land," which is reflected in the author's obsession with language. For Böll, "das Wort steht 'am Anfang'"; it possesses "Schöpferkraft."²⁸⁴ One critic writes that "das Humane" is most evident in Böll's "depiction of the price the individual has had to pay for the establishment of a modern society."²⁸⁵ Klaus Jeziorkowski claims that this quality is present in Böll's polemic essays, as well as in his novels and short stories. At the heart of all of Böll's work lies his criticism of modern

²⁸²Kicherer, 81.

²⁸³Bieneck, 143, quoted in Reid, "Böll's Names," 583.

²⁸⁴Günter Wirth, "Assoziation im Zeichen der Bergpredigt," Essayistische Studien über religiöse und gesellschaftliche Motive im Prosawerk des Dichters (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1967) 124.

²⁸⁵Keith Bullivant, "Heinrich Böll - A Tribute," German Life and Letters 39.3 (April 1986): 246.

society. Jeziorkowski draws attention to Böll's own view of the relationship between fiction and reality:

Ein Autor nimmt nicht Wirklichkeit, er hat sie, schafft sie, und die komplizierte Dämonie auch eines vergleichsweise realistischen Romans besteht darin, daß es ganz und gar unwichtig ist, was an Wirklichem in ihn hineingeraten, in ihm verarbeitet, zusammengesetzt, verwandelt sein mag. Wichtig ist, was aus ihm an geschaffener Wirklichkeit herauskommt und wirksam wird.²⁸⁶ (emphasis added)

Jeziorkowski continues by saying that Böll has never - with the possible exception of Katharina Blum - sought his narrative reality in the sensational and dramatic.²⁸⁷

As "der Anwalt des kleinen Mannes,"²⁸⁸ Böll is concerned with depicting the realities of everyday life in society. He accomplishes his task by presenting the reader with characters who embody familiar social values and behaviors. Why then, the skeptic may ask, has he given us such an exaggerated figure as Katharina? Surely her behavior in killing Tötges is not realistic for such a "normal" person. This viewpoint assumes, however, that people behave rationally under pressure. Extensive psychological studies of the causes of aggression have proven otherwise. According to Edwin I. Megargee,

...there is reason to believe the dynamics underlying an extremely assaultive offense such as a homicide may be quite different from the dynamics found in milder aggressive behavior. In case after case the extremely assaultive offender proves to be a rather passive person with no previous history of aggression.²⁸⁹ (emphasis added)

Katharina Blum fits Megargee's model precisely. Böll's portrayal of individuals in society is therefore fully in keeping with realistic circumstances.

²⁸⁶Heinrich Böll, Essay Nr. 7, Frankfurter Vorlesungen (Köln [Cologne], Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1966) 44ff., quoted in Klaus Jeziorkowski, "Heinrich Böll. Die Syntax des Humanen," Zeitkritische Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts. Die Gesellschaft in der Kritik der deutschen Literatur (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1975) 303.

²⁸⁷Jeziorkowski, "Syntax," 303.

²⁸⁸Heinrich Vormweg, "Heinrich Böll ist tot. Ein Nachruf," Ausgewählte Nachrufe, 14-16.

²⁸⁹Edwin I. Megargee, "Undercontrolled and Overcontrolled Personality Types in Extreme Antisocial Aggression," The Dynamics of Aggression, eds. E. Megargee and Jack E. Hokanson (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) 110.

Böll in no way condones the reality he has illustrated in Katharina Blum; on the contrary, he has painstakingly created the plot and characters in order to show us exactly the opposite of his ideal. The values of this fictional world are increasing prosperity and anonymity, which bring about a growing need for security. Inevitably, these characteristics display great similarity to the present-day Federal Republic of Germany. By confronting West Germans with the negative aspects of life in their country, with "die Unbewohnbarkeit der Gesellschaft, Böll hopes to awaken his countrymen to the imminent need for change - the need to strive for "eine bewohnbare Sprache in einem bewohnbaren Land."

In one of his first novels, Billard um halbzehn (1959), Böll divides his characters into two groups: "Büffel" and "Lämmer." Many critics have termed Böll's fictional world "dualistic," but this is not entirely true. "The buffaloes are not so much evil as not good enough," claims Linda Hill.²⁹⁰ Many of them possess redeeming qualities, such as friendliness. As mentioned previously, Beizmenne at one point adopts a "fatherly" attitude toward Katharina (35). Here it is also important to note that not all members of Böll's fictional establishment are buffaloes:

The tricky Beizmenne in Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum is accompanied by the compassionate police officers Moeding and Pletzer. There are even foils for the ZEITUNG: the policewoman Renate Zündach brings Katharina fifteen objective stories, including a charitable one from the "Umschau."²⁹¹

By the same token, Böll offers his readers "problematic examples of goodness."²⁹² His heroes are often endowed with human failings - witness Katharina Blum's subservient and conformist tendencies. Hill writes that "the most common weakness of Böll's sympathetic

²⁹⁰Hill, 152.

²⁹¹Hill, 153.

²⁹²Hill, 151.

characters is a tendency to withdraw into themselves." Katharina's lonely lifestyle before meeting Götten certainly fits this description.²⁹³

In his early years as a writer, Böll simply illustrated social tendencies without suggesting they might be changeable. The individual was predestined at birth to join either the group of the buffaloes or the lambs. With Ansichten eines Clowns (1963), however, his view of historical constellations seems to have changed. His criticism became more pronouncedly aggressive, and his historical analysis was characterized by a belief in the possibility of and need for alleviating the human condition through fundamental structural change.²⁹⁴

Böll's buffaloes are "dickfellige Opportunisten und Pragmatiker" who use the lambs' human weaknesses to their own advantage. They are identifiable by their "Kraft und Charakterlosigkeit."²⁹⁵ The buffalo-motif, writes Günter Wirth, is not new: Kleist used it in Hermannsschlacht and Leon Feuchtwanger used it in Erfolg.²⁹⁶ All of Böll's main characters are sensitive, vulnerable lambs.²⁹⁷ The image of the lamb as victim reminds one of Christ, the "Lamb of God," and of his victimization at the hands of men. Although the two groups are not so sharply delineated in Katharina Blum as they are in Billard, they are nonetheless present. The buffaloes are represented by Police - commonly referred to as "Bullen"!²⁹⁸ -, Press and Politicians, while the lambs include Katharina and her small circle of supporters. The buffaloes are mainly interested in profitable business dealings and in solving expeditiously the case of Götten, no matter what the cost in human

²⁹³Hill, 154.

²⁹⁴Jeziorkowski, "Syntax," 309-10.

²⁹⁵Burgauner, 128.

²⁹⁶Wirth, "Assoziation," 131-32.

²⁹⁷Pakendorf, 118.

²⁹⁸Wirth claims that Böll offers a fitting description of a "buffalo" in reference to a police official in the early *Erzählung* "Mein trauriges Gesicht": "Er war ernst wie ein Büffel, der seit Jahrzehnten nichts anderes gefressen hat als die Pflicht." Quoted in Wirth, "Assoziation," 103.

terms. There are very few lambs in the world Böll has created, for to be helpful and sympathetic to one's fellows means to be abused oneself. Blorna is a case in point: In assisting Katharina, Blorna loses his social status and his honor. In the case of Katharina's murder of Tötges, Böll shows us the volatility of the situation created by the oppressive tactics of the buffaloes.

Despite the fact that Katharina is driven to the desperate act of shooting the man who represents the malicious ZEITUNG, the story does not end on a completely hopeless note. Walter Janssen sums up Katharina's perspective on the situation as follows:

Dennoch klammert sie sich an einem winzigen Strohalm fest: irgendwann wird auch diese Zeit vorbei sein und wird es in der Zweisamkeit mit dem Geliebten ein neues Leben geben können.²⁹⁹

"Liebe" and "Treue," two virtues which Katharina possesses in abundance, ironically occasion her fall from grace in society. One is reminded of Bertolt Brecht's repeated warning that virtues are deadly in a world such as ours. For example, the cook in Mutter Courage interrupts the "Salomon-Lied" to tell us: "Alle Tugenden sind nämlich gefährlich auf dieser Welt...."³⁰⁰

Böll seems to concur with Brecht's opinion that people would treat each other better if the structure of society were more conducive to neighborly behavior. However, Böll's strong Christian convictions lead him to a somewhat different solution than the one proposed by Brecht. Brecht believed that mankind is by nature "good." Humans only become "bad" because society's laws force them to do so. Social structure must therefore be changed, and Brecht struggled long and hard to find the best way of realizing this goal. He feels that revolutionary changes can only take root if they are instituted by a majority, yet he reluctantly admits that "heroes" may be necessary in leading the way at the outset. Böll, on the other hand, sees people in both their "goodness" and "badness"

²⁹⁹Janssen, 164.

³⁰⁰Bertolt Brecht, Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder, 36th ed. (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1981) 93.

simultaneously. He does not negate the system, but rather, what his fellow citizens have made it. In fact, he actually praises the *Grundgesetz* as being the best constitution a country could possibly bestow on itself in the twentieth century. As shown by his own active political and literary engagement, he believes that the individual can and must make a difference, if the environment is to remain socially inhabitable. Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum represents but one more attempt on Böll's part to awaken his readers to the dangers inherent in their moral state. As one writer puts it:

...(G)overnment is closely linked with morality in individual men, for the well-being of a country depends ultimately not on the form of its government but on the moral condition of each one of its people.³⁰¹

Böll uses the *Berichterstatter* as a messenger for relaying his own rejection of the buffaloes' values, which are pointedly over- or underplayed in a caricature of the impersonal society. Most of the time, the narrator makes a great effort to report objectively and in the formal style of a legal document. Here, Katharina's identity is reduced to a formula such as "defendant," "murderess" or "die Blum." At other times, however, his compassion and understanding for Katharina manage to break through the impersonal barrier of "Kanzleisprache" (bureaucratic jargon), which is usually in parenthetical Subjunctive I.³⁰² Yet because the storyteller cloaks his comments in ironic metaphors, thereby distancing himself from the events, the reader may be only subconsciously aware of the emotions being expressed. Werner Janssen cites the narrator's description of the dead Tötges as an example of the ironic distance between what is said and what is perceived. He explains that the *Berichterstatter*

...spielt das ganze Geschehen bewußt herunter und macht aus der blutigen Szene

³⁰¹Kathleen Williams, Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1967) 117.

³⁰²Janssen, 166.

ein Schauspiel, bei dem ihm "Farbeffekte" ins Auge stechen und sich Vergleichsmöglichkeiten mit "Malerei" und "Bühnenbild" anbieten. Die Fakten figurieren gleichsam in einer Fastnachtgroteske.³⁰³

The narrator's portrayal of the reporter's death stands in stark contrast to the ZEITUNG's account of the same event.³⁰⁴

Böll's storyteller is so incensed by the newspaper's claim that Tötges was a victim of his profession that he feels it is his duty to speak out against such journalistic practices. He condemns the presumptuousness of the ZEITUNG, which makes Tötges' death seem more important than the death of any other person:

Ziemlich merkwürdig verhielt sich die ZEITUNG, nachdem die beiden Morde an ihren Journalisten bekannt wurden. Irrsinnige Aufregung! Schlagzeilen. Titelblätter. Sonderausgaben. Todesanzeigen überdimensionalen Ausmaßes. Als ob - wenn schon auf der Welt geschossen wird - der Mord an einem Journalisten etwas Besonderes wäre, wichtiger etwa als der Mord an einem Bankdirektor, - angestellten oder -räuber. (16)

This is truly an exceptional passage; in general, the *Berichterstatter* keeps to his "unbewohnbare Protokollsprache" and does not directly judge or condemn. For instance, he later relates the death of the reporter Schönner in "official" style - that is, only in connection with the factual "Who," "Where" and "When."³⁰⁵

In Katharina Blum the presence of "Ordnung," traditionally regarded as a virtue by Germans, is underscored by "orderly" syntax. Janssen notices that after order has been restored in Katharina's room, the syntax of the narrator's report also stabilizes. Thereafter, parallel structure predominates. The obsessive need to maintain the facade of orderliness effectively precludes any understanding of human suffering and any consideration for others. This discrepancy between the "Erwartungsbild der Massen" and the "Ausnahmeerscheinung des einzelnen" is the reason that the others do not understand

³⁰³Janssen, 168.

³⁰⁴Janssen, 169.

³⁰⁵Janssen, 170-71.

Katharina or her way of speaking. Because Katharina's language is emotional and therefore lacking in "Ordnung," one can say the "(d)ie Blumsche Sprache steht innerhalb des Berichtes für sich, als Fremdkörper." The best example of her speech is found at the end of the story, when the narrator has her tell in her own words how she came to shoot Tötges. There is definitely nothing logical or orderly about this testimony! It is characterized by its tempo, dynamics, interruptions and repetitions - all of which serve to heighten the suspense for the reader.³⁰⁶

"Das Humane" in Heinrich Böll's work is most recognizable in the interconnection of language and reality. Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum represents a continuation of the author's never-ending search for "eine bewohnbare Sprache in einem bewohnbaren Land."³⁰⁷ Böll shows us the opposite of his ideal. The "Lamm-Büffel" schema has been carried over into the realm of language. Dorothee Sölle declares:

Der Widerstand der Katharina Blum gegen ihre Umgebung ist immer auch ein sprachlicher Widerstand; die verlorene Ehre ist zugleich auch die verlorene Sprache, in der man es nur "ficken" nennen kann, in der ein Wort wie "gütig" nicht vorkommen darf, sondern behördlicherseits durch "sehr nett" oder "gutmütig" ersetzt werden soll. Dem Verlust an Ehre für das Individuum entspricht der Verlust an Sprache für die Gesellschaft.³⁰⁸ (emphasis added)

³⁰⁶Janssen, 173ff.

³⁰⁷Heinrich Böll, Frankfurter Vorlesungen (München [Munich]: DTV, 1968) 14, quoted in Janssen, 12 and 15.

³⁰⁸Sölle, 885.

CHAPTER VI:
THE FILMING OF KATHARINA BLUM

Bertolt Brecht once declared that film producers take the "political bite" out of literary works in order to make them marketable. Not many have challenged this thesis over the years; however, Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum offers an exceptional reply to Brecht's critique. It was Heinrich Böll's own suggestion to make a film out of his *Erzählung*. He deliberately chose Volker Schlöndorff, a director who "is to German cinema what Böll is to German literature"³⁰⁹: an engaged, socially responsible publicist. Böll knew that the filming of Katharina Blum would require many changes, but he was willing to sacrifice literary accuracy in order to reach a broader cross-section of the public with his message.

In a conversation with his father in 1976, Heinrich Böll explains the differences between the book and the film versions of Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum:

Ganz klar ist im Vergleich Buch zu Film das Pamphletistische, Politische, Aktuelle im Film stark, und stärker als im Buch. Das kann man nicht trennen von der Zeit, in der der Film entstanden ist. Ich finde auch, man darf Literatur nie herausnehmen aus der historischen Plazierung.³¹⁰

The film, he continues, represents an abridgment of the problem and of the story in order to get its point across. A book can be read over and over again, he reasons, and "(i)m Buch kann man viel mehr ausdrücken in einer viel kürzeren Zeit." Thus, Böll allowed extensive alteration of his *Erzählung* for the screen, "weil [er] die Aktualität des Stoffes der

³⁰⁹David Head, "'Der Autor muß respektiert werden.' Schlöndorff/Trotta's Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum and Brecht's Critique of Film Adaptation," German Life and Letters 32 (1978/79): 255.

³¹⁰Heinrich Böll, "Die Verfilmung der Katharina Blum," Heinrich Böll. Werke, vol. 1: Interviews, 669.

literarischen Gerechtigkeit vorzog."³¹¹ Although current political issues are presented more forcefully in the movie, this does not necessarily mean that the film offers a more accurate reflection of reality than the original narrative. The two media appear to be on an equal footing in this regard. Sometimes real events unfold as obviously as in the film; at other times, socio-political problems are veiled behind bureaucratic jargon and conspiracies, as is the case in the book version.

Since there is no narrator in the film, Böll's flashback technique is discarded in favor of "einfache Chronologie," in which institutions and events portray themselves. Viktor Böll notes that the film "bringt Dinge als Tatsachen, die in der Erzählung halt 'Tratsch' sind." For example, where the book leaves some doubt as to who actually poses the question "Hat er dich denn gefickt?," the film shows us unequivocally that Beizmenne, not Hach, is the culprit. The murder scene has also been changed. In the *Erzählung*, Katharina appears somewhat surprised by Tötges' behavior and by her own impulsive reaction in shooting him. In the film, however, she actually lies in wait for "dieser Mensch, der [ihr] Leben zerstört hat."³¹²

The book version ends with Katharina recounting the events which preceded and followed the killing of Tötges. By contrast, the film gives the final say to the press. In a crowd scene at Tötges' funeral, the editor of the ZEITUNG defends freedom of the press, but his words are, ironically, Böll's:

Die Schüsse, die Werner Tötges tödlich getroffen haben, haben nicht nur ihn getroffen. Sie galten der Pressefreiheit, einem der kostbarsten Güter unserer jungen Demokratie. Und durch die Schüsse sind wir, die wir trauernd und entsetzt stehen, nicht nur betroffen, sonder getroffen. Wer spürt nicht die Wunde, wer spürt nicht den Schmerz, der weit übers Persönliche hinausgeht. Wer spürt nicht den Atem des Terrors und die Wildheit der Anarchie, wer spürt nicht die Gewalt, mit der hier an der freiheitlichdemokratischen Grundordnung gerüttelt wurde, die uns allen so am Herzen liegt. Hier wurden scheinbar private Motivationen zum politischen Attentat, und wieder einmal gilt: Wehret den Anfängen.

³¹¹Böll, "Die Verfilmung," 670ff.

³¹²Böll, "Die Verfilmung," 670-71.

Seid wachsam, denn mit der Pressefreiheit steht und fällt alles. Wohlstand, sozialer Fortschritt, Demokratie, Pluralismus, Meinungsvielfalt, und wer die ZEITUNG angreift, greift uns alle an.³¹³

Since the viewer has been led to identify with Katharina, he will most likely adopt a cynical attitude toward this pronouncement from the "enemy camp." Indeed, he has been alerted to the dangers that can be created by too much freedom of the press concentrated in the hands of irresponsible, money-hungry journalists. The connection between the ZEITUNG and the Bild-Zeitung does not escape him. Because he has just witnessed the destructive effects of sensational reporting on the life of an innocent person, he is apt to agree with Helmut Schmidt's appraisal of West Germany's most popular newspaper: "Wer sich mit der Bild-Zeitung anlegt, ist ein toter Mann."³¹⁴

The same caption which opens Böll's *Erzählung* closes the movie, but the wording has been changed slightly. Even the editors of Bild apparently recognized the connection between the ZEITUNG in Katharina Blum and their newspaper, for the legal department of the Springer organization would not allow the specific reference to their newspaper found in the book version! The film version reads:

Personen und Handlung sind frei erfunden. Ähnlichkeiten mit gewissen journalistischen Praktiken sind weder beabsichtigt noch zufällig, sondern unvermeidlich.³¹⁵

Ironically, shortly after its general release, Katharina Blum was in second place on the Bild-Zeitung's list of best films!

In his capacity as advisor to Director Schlöndorff, Heinrich Böll gave advice on casting (Angela Winkler as Katharina, Mario Adorf as Beizmenne) and described characters not fully developed in the book version.³¹⁶ He also approved changes which were

³¹³Quoted in Head, 261.

³¹⁴Quoted in Head, 262.

³¹⁵Quoted in Head, 262.

³¹⁶Head, 256.

designed to make the entangling alliances of the Government, Big Business and the Church more visible. Böll did this because he was aware of the danger that the viewer might otherwise see only individual persons rather than the system. The entirely new monastery scene in the film is intended to show the secret relationship between the Church and employers' organizations. We also see the reporters at work and are party to their dealings with the police. Finally, in contrast to the book, we are given a glimpse into the workings of the marketplace, which dominates the entire society in the film. Tötges thinks he is doing Katharina a favor by paying her for her story, but this "totale Vermarktung ihres Problems" is actually one of her main reasons for shooting him!³¹⁷

The popular film adaptation of Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum helped make the story a familiar one in virtually every West German household. In an age dominated by "adventure" movies of a purely "entertaining" nature, it is refreshing to find a film which meets the criteria for "mass appeal" while, at the same time, remaining true to the social function of art: to increase the audience's awareness of how society operates and of the individual's role within the system. In this sense, claims Head, Schlöndorff's Katharina Blum challenges Brecht's theory that "...capital must always triumph over art when literature becomes the raw material of the commercial cinema." The only exception Brecht made was the occasional elitist "Kunstfilm," which had little attraction for "ungebildete Zuschauer" and consequently was not expected to yield great box-office returns. When the controversial film first appeared in 1975, cinema owners regarded it as a "Kunstfilm" and were reluctant to show it. As soon as they realized it could draw crowds despite - or perhaps because of - its political and social commentary, they welcomed Katharina Blum into their theaters.³¹⁸

³¹⁷Böll, "Die Verfilmung," 668ff.

³¹⁸Head, 253.

CHAPTER VII: THE RECEPTION OF KATHARINA BLUM

The dialectical relationship between Heinrich Böll's fictional account of a young woman's defamation at the hands of social institutions and the existing realities in the Federal Republic does not become clear until one examines the receptional history of Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum. On the basis of the number of copies sold and the widespread attention given this *Erzählung* immediately following its publication in 1974, one may conclude that it possessed great relevance for the West German populace. It remains, however, to determine the type of influence Katharina Blum has had on the public. - Has Böll created a timeless masterpiece of universal applicability, or is the work "zeit- und ortgebunden"? In order to assess the full impact of the author's message, it will be necessary to consider the effects of the filmed and dramatized versions of the story, in addition to the book version. Although the following analysis will focus primarily on reception in the FRG, the results of studies in the United States will also be mentioned as part of the attempt to establish the relevance of Böll's themes elsewhere.

THE WEST GERMAN REVIEWS

Anette Petersen has conducted an extensive comparison of positive, neutral and negative reviews of Katharina Blum in an effort to seek out the prevailing attitude in the West German press toward this most provocative story. Unfortunately, an examination of this medium alone reveals little or nothing about the critical views of the "average reader,"

but it will have to suffice, since "gedrucktes, kritisch-wertendes Material der 'sprachlosen Mehrheit' liegt nicht vor."³¹⁹

The above method of study may also be defended on the basis of evidence that the mass media do indeed help in shaping public opinion. By means of indirect analysis, then, we can conjecture that editorial articles about Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum will influence newspaper readers, especially those familiar with the work. It follows logically that the newspaper with the largest circulation possesses the greatest potential for manipulating attitudes.

Before looking at Petersen's study we must first distinguish between public opinion and publicized opinion. Friedhelm Kicherer feels that the stated influence of press, radio and television must be qualified. He cites research which indicates "daß die Massenmedien den stärksten meinungsbildenden Einfluß ausüben, wo am wenigsten Engagement besteht, im Bereich der sogenannten nichtverankerten Werte." The reader is thus equipped with his own psychological defense against manipulation, and the process of absorbing written material is a selective one. Only where the subject matter is of little consequence at the personal level does it have much chance of being assimilated into an individual's value system. One of the areas in which values tend to be most flexible is in regard to opinions about other people.³²⁰

The experience of Dr. Peter Brückner provides a case in point. Following a series of articles about him in the boulevard press, Brückner received a swarm of threatening and libelous notes and phone calls and was publicly shunned on the street. Katharina Blum's plight distinctly parallels the experience of Brückner; thus, we can conclude that the

³¹⁹Kicherer, 118. The positive and negative opinions expressed in many letters to the editor of Spiegel during the weeks after publication of Katharina Blum seem to parallel the opinions of literary critics.

³²⁰Kicherer, 111ff.

obscene phone calls and letters she receives as a result of malicious articles in the ZEITUNG reflect social reality.

Petersen explores the content of two articles which represent the positive and negative poles of opinion, respectively: 1) Wolfram Schütte, "Notstand, Widerstand, Selbstrettung," Frankfurter Rundschau, 10 August 1974; 2) Hans Habe, "Requiem auf Heinrich Böll," Welt am Sonntag, 18 August 1974. These two critics comment on both author and work, but each has a different focus and different motivation in writing. Schütte tends to be sympathetic toward Böll, who he claims is vulnerable because he gets involved politically. Yet Schütte mentions this only in passing; his primary attention is devoted to a philosophical interpretation of Katharina Blum. At a fundamental level, he sees Böll's *Erzählung* as a justified attack on "Revolverjournalismus" in West Germany - "das ist die Gefahr, welche die Würde des Menschen zerstören kann."³²¹ Admittedly, Schütte belongs to the "respectable," intellectual press, whose circulation is far surpassed by its more sensational counterpart. Therefore, he has a vested interest in welcoming any attempt to discredit the competition. On the other hand, Schütte's argument is lent credibility by the fact that it echoes the sentiments expressed in many scholarly journals.

In contrast to Schütte's article, Hans Habe's immediately launches into a vengeful attack on Böll as both person and author. Habe claims that Böll made a mistake in defending "die Baader-Meinhof-Bande," but would not admit it; instead, Böll has chosen to avenge himself by writing Katharina Blum. Habe follows Schütte in that he next turns his attention to the plot, but here any similarity ends. Habe's analysis is colored from the outset by his own background and prejudices. As a conservative, second-rate author writing for one of the Springer concern's "Blätter," Habe feels compelled to defend the methods of "yellow" journalists. He has nothing negative to say about his "brother,"

³²¹Petersen, 22ff.

Tötges, referring to him simply as "Reporter" and "Opfer." He actually portrays Katharina as the guilty party! Finally, Habe expresses his disapproval of the language in Böll's *Erzählung*. He calls it "ungrammatisch," complains that Böll repeats himself too much, and condemns the use of colloquial language, especially the play on the word "bumsen."³²²

Unfortunately, it is one-sided arguments such as Habe's which enjoy the greatest dissemination due to sheer number of newspapers sold. Petersen counted the total number of lines devoted to Katharina Blum in a sampling of positive, neutral and negative reviews. She then multiplied the number of lines by the circulation of each medium and added the sums, which provided her with the total number of lines published. This figure gave her a basis on which to compare the relative potential influence of each grouping. Interestingly enough, the positively disposed articles tended to be lengthier than either the neutral or the negative, since they discussed many different angles of the work. The length of the positive critiques was, however, not enough to dispel the power of sheer numbers of copies sold. The negative articles which consisted mainly of the popular "scandal sheets," won hands down; in fact, they had almost twice as many total lines in print as the positive and neutral reviews combined!³²³

With the exception of Friedrich Torberg's parody of Katharina Blum in Der Spiegel, the greatest potential sphere of influence belongs to the Springer Verlag, publisher of the Bild-Zeitung. The aforementioned critique by Hans Habe was the second-largest of this group.³²⁴ It goes almost without saying that Axel Springer and his colleagues had good reason to pan Böll's narrative for its satiric exposé of questionable journalistic practices. Despite or perhaps because of Böll's ironic denial that the fictional ZEITUNG

³²²Petersen, 30ff.

³²³Petersen, 59ff.

³²⁴Petersen, 59ff.

was an imitation to the *Bild-Zeitung*, Springer & Co. took umbrage at the implicit accusations of injustice found in *Katharina Blum*. Ironically, they employed many of the same defamatory tactics Böll deplored in an attempt to turn public opinion against him and his *Erzählung*. For instance, *Katharina Blum* is called a "Büchlein," which hints that it is not to be taken seriously. Katharina's personality and situation are said to be psychologically unrealistic and therefore not suitable material for good literature.³²⁵ Böll himself is reproached with being unfamiliar with the customs of journalists and the language of the boulevardpress. A former *Bild*-reporter refutes this charge, however, telling Günter Wallraff:

Schau dir den BILD-Zeitungs-reporter in der *Katharina Blum* genau an. Der hat seine Rolle bei echten BILD-Journalisten abgesehen.³²⁶

Springer appeared to pose a tangible threat to Böll's *Ehre* - i.e., his "soziales Ansehen" - solely on the basis of the daily sales of the *Bild-Zeitung* alone: 4,677,600 copies. Böll was certainly aware of this statistic; in fact, because newspapers are often shared, he estimated *Bild*'s actual readership much higher - at approximately ten million people per day, or almost one-sixth of the total population of the Federal Republic.³²⁷ Hence, Katharina speaks for Böll when she exclaims, "Alle Leute, die ich kenne, lesen die ZEITUNG!" (84) The analogy between *Bild* and ZEITUNG is "unvermeidlich."

Although Böll had to absorb some fallout from the "Springer-Schmierkampagne," the negative effects were short-lived and victory was his in the end. The reason may lie partially in the answer to a question which Petersen neglected to pose: How many *Bild*-readers actually bother to read book reviews? It seems not even the power of the largest publishing house in Europe could cast a shadow on the general respect accorded Heinrich

³²⁵Kicherer, 119.

³²⁶Wallraff, *Aufmacher*, 14.

³²⁷Petersen, 29.

Böll, West Germany's moral giant, by both friend and foe. Böll's sudden death in July 1985 called forth words of regret and praise from both right- and left-wing politicians. Even many of those Böll had attacked with his pen had to recognize that here was a man who truly had lived according to the Christian philosophy "love your neighbor as yourself."

The film Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum was just as controversial as the original *Erzählung*, but it did not receive as many negative reviews in West Germany. The positive and negative critiques alike seemed to deal with the change in focus between book and film. Most critics agreed that the power of the police eclipses that of the press in the film version. Böll's *Erzählung* was also adapted for the theater, but it achieved no real success in this form. Theater critics tended to discuss mainly the technical problems of staging the production rather than engaging in social commentary or critiquing its aesthetic merit.³²⁸

Overall, the book version produced the strongest response among reviewers, the film was in second place, and the play came in last. While the majority of articles dealing with Katharina Blum were neutral, such objective reports also had the smallest circulation, appearing almost exclusively in local newspapers. The negative reviews stemmed mostly from Springer's boulevard press corps, which chose to either counterattack Böll and his narrative or ignore them, rather than defending itself.³²⁹

According to Petersen, even the positive critiques question the credibility and stylistic legitimacy of Katharina Blum.³³⁰ What Petersen fails to mention, however, is that a lack of realism in Böll's material and language does not necessarily invalidate the literary and social value of his work. Katharina Blum is fiction. As such, it lays no claim

³²⁸Petersen, 79ff.

³²⁹Petersen, 82ff.

³³⁰Petersen, 83.

to purely realistic content and style. Böll has obviously exaggerated the circumstances and personalities involved in his tale as a means of conveying ideas about society.

THE AMERICAN REVIEWS

Heinrich Böll's novels and short stories have always met with mixed reviews in the United States, and Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum was no exception. Mark Rectanus has conducted a comparative study of representative American reviews of the English translation of Böll's *Erzählung*, of Schlöndorff/Trotta's film adaptation and of an American TV movie based on the original *Erzählung*. In his article, Rectanus sets out to determine whether Katharina Blum's social significance can be understood in a cross-cultural context, where the reader is not likely to be familiar with the text's historical background.³³¹

According to Rectanus, two of the earliest reviews set the tone for Katharina Blum's American reception. The first critic termed the *Erzählung* a "pop novel," and indicated that "there is more action and less psychological interpretation in Katharina than is usual with Böll."³³² The second critic called it a "headline novel," and compared it with Judith Rossner's Looking for Mr. Goodbar, an action story which draws its material from newspapers. The latter reviewer discusses "both works in the context of women who are exploited in different ways by their respective societies."³³³

Rectanus also analyzes the cover illustration and marketing techniques of the English translation as a means of promoting a specific image for Katharina Blum. The American book version portrays Katharina as a *femme fatale* positioned in the middle of

³³¹Mark Rectanus, "The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum: The Reception of a German Bestseller in the USA," German Quarterly 59 (1986): 253.

³³²Herbert Lottmann, "Heinrich Böll: Star Author With a Controversial Book," Publisher's Weekly, 21 October, 1974: 30, quoted in Rectanus, 254-55.

³³³Rectanus, 254ff.

the cover, with Beizmenne on one side and Götten on the other. A Ferris wheel, indicative of "Karneval," is seen in the background. Rectanus concludes that McGraw-Hill's edition

presents very specific visual cues, some of which are more subliminal, but all of which attempt to attract the reader's attention by conveying a sense of romance, mystery and passion.³³⁴

The American public has received its greatest exposure to Böll's tale in the form of "non-book formats and media." For instance, Redbook, a women's magazine, printed a condensed version of Katharina Blum in October 1975, thereby expanding the potential readership by 4.5 million. "Even if only 10% of all Redbook readers ultimately read the condensation," writes Rectanus, "this readership probably dwarfed that of the combined hardcover and paperback editions." While we have no way of gauging the reaction of Redbook readers, it is important to note that the magazine intentionally marketed Böll's story as a romance novel, as "[a] novel of passion by a Nobel Prize winner."³³⁵

Vincent Canby reviewed Schlöndorff/Trotta's film of Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum for the New York Times, stating that he found it ineffective because it was too pedantic. However, the critic also admitted his own ignorance regarding the history of the West German press. Indeed, his opinions appear to be rooted in the experiences of World War II: He refers to "Germany" (without differentiation) and mentions Baader-Meinhof and Auschwitz in the same sentence! Rectanus offers a fitting commentary on Canby's outdated perceptions:

There is a sense of cultural chauvinism in this and similar reviews that take "Germany" (without differentiation) to task for its "yellow press," and which simultaneously regard modern West German society as some sort of extra-terrestrial encounter of the third kind.³³⁶

³³⁴Rectanus, 256.

³³⁵Redbook, October 1975, cover, cited in Rectanus, 260ff.

³³⁶Rectanus, 262.

In January 1984, CBS aired a television movie based on Katharina Blum, thus providing the largest potential audience yet for Böll's tale of power and injustice. The film, which starred Marlo Thomas and Kris Kristofferson, was renamed "The Lost Honor of Kathryn Beck," and its focus shifted to a plea for protection of witnesses' rights - of late, a more popular topic of debate in America than character assassination. Böll's portrayal is, asserts Rectanus, more complex than the television version, for Katharina Blum's victimization

is a result of perceptions and behavioral patterns that are woven into the social fabric. Simply according her more rights as a witness would not eliminate the damage done in the press.³³⁷

As was the case in the Federal Republic, the message of Katharina Blum has been misinterpreted by American audiences, but for different reasons. A large section of the West German public, familiar with the historical background of Böll's *Erzählung*, perceived it as the author's own political propaganda or personal revenge. Because they became mired in politics, they were unable to appreciate the compassion and the subtleties of language which are interspersed throughout the narrative. While a few American reviewers have stated that Böll's work "reflects German society as a whole," Rectanus asserts that none of them "attempts to relate Katharina Blum to an analysis of political, social or economic institutions, or to the role of the media in the Federal Republic."³³⁸ Due to historical ignorance, American readers have tended to dismiss the conflicts arising in Katharina Blum as

"typically German," as universal human failings or as human characteristics divorced from any concrete circumstances which are socially, economically, politically or culturally rooted.³³⁹

³³⁷Rectanus, 263.

³³⁸Rectanus, 259.

³³⁹Rectanus, 264.

Böll's *Erzählung* has been marketed for its "superficial" qualities: as a detective novel or as a love story. Only the television production of "Kathryn Beck" attempts any analogy between West German and American power constellations, but as was noted previously, the focus has been adjusted to deal with a more timely issue in American politics.³⁴⁰ Perhaps the most amazing thing about the reception of Katharina Blum in the United States is the fact that the American public appeared not to recognize the destructive capabilities of its own press - and this on the heels of "Watergate"! Clearly, Americans have no newspaper that compares with Bild for lack of scruples and magnitude of sales, but even the "respectable" press frequently holds the power of life or death over the career and personal life of many a public person.

³⁴⁰Rectanus, 264.

CONCLUSION:
HIS TIME...FOR ALL TIME

The plots and characters in Heinrich Böll's works reflect events and social trends present in the Federal Republic at the time of writing. Yet the moral messages and human problems found in every *Erzählung* and novel are timeless. Böll's declared purpose as an author was to awaken the hearts and minds of his fellow citizens; indeed, his works can perhaps only be comprehended in their entirety by people who have lived through or have studied the time period portrayed. However, many of Böll's moral themes can be observed in literature of and about the past, and such universal ideas will continue to hold meaning for future generations.

Böll unveils the flaws of a specific society. In doing so, he makes a statement about the weaknesses of all modern societies - capitalist or socialist, democratic or totalitarian, Judeo-Christian or atheist. No matter what their background or nationality, many readers will recognize elements of their country's social structure in Böll's writings. Thus, the underlying moral themes help explain the author's popularity abroad.

As with Franz Kafka, there are two parts to Böll's world: the oppressors and the oppressed, or the buffaloes and the lambs. Yet in contrast to Kafka, Böll possesses an abiding faith in the ability of his fellow man to exact change; therefore, his works never end on a completely hopeless note. His *Erzählungen* and novels comprise an attempt to show both sides the error of their ways, but, in the final analysis, he always takes the side of the "little people." In the spirit of "The Sermon on the Mount," Böll fights for the rights of the individual, who must live in constant fear of "the powers that be." He believes there is no such thing as "einfache Menschen." According to Böll, this term, as used by society at

large, simply means "Leute, die nicht viel Geld haben."³⁴¹ Because they have no money, they have no power and often can be rendered harmless by the verbal reassurances of their Machiavellian captors, who claim to represent the interests of these "einfache Menschen." Time after time, this compassionate author shows us that denial of freedom always begins with suppression of freedom of speech.³⁴² In Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, he carries his argument one step further and illustrates how "Gewalt der Sprache" can lead to "Gewalt der Waffe." The buffaloes who control the forces of both psychological (verbal) and physical oppression present a seemingly invincible obstacle to petty-bourgeois nonconformists like Katharina.

In many senses, Katharina Blum is a product of her specific society: She embodies the material values and the way of life propagated by the *Wirtschaftswunder* mentality. Yet Böll has also given her a considerable number of more traditional, more universal character traits with which people everywhere may identify. She is a gentle, honorable, self-sacrificing young woman, who desires to preserve her privacy.

The reader feels sympathy with her helplessness in the face of the ZEITUNG's relentless attacks on her honor (both personal and public), one of the few "possessions" she managed to carry up the social ladder from her proletarian background. Despite their compassion for Katharina, however, many readers fail to understand how she could commit such a violent crime as murder. The reader, sitting in his comfortable armchair in front of the fireplace, is able to distance himself from the experiences of the character whenever they become unpleasant, and to sit in judgment on the latter's actions. Schiller elaborates on the reader's attitude in his introduction to Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre:

Wir sehen den Unglücklichen, der doch in eben der Stunde, wo er die Tat beging,

³⁴¹Heinrich Böll/Heinrich Vormweg, "Wie sollen wir denn überhaupt leben?," In: Weil die Stadt so fremd geworden ist. Gespräche (Bornheim-Merten: Lamuv, 1985) 8.

³⁴²Böll, "Die Sprache als Hort der Freiheit," 302.

so wie in der, wo er dafür büßet, Mensch war wie wir, für ein Geschöpf fremder Gattung an, dessen Blut anders umläuft als das unsrige, dessen Willen anderen Regeln gehorcht als der unsrige; seine Schicksale rühren uns wenig, denn Rührung gründet sich ja nur auf ein dunkles Bewußtsein ähnlicher Gefahr, und wir sind weit entfernt, eine solche Ähnlichkeit auch nur zu träumen.³⁴³

Thus, as readers we tend to disengage ourselves when we become uncomfortable or when we personally cannot relate to the hero's actions. In Katharina's case, many of us will refuse to view her killing of Tötges as realistic behavior. Yet as was noted earlier in this paper, acts of murder are, in reality, often committed by the people who seem the least likely candidates.³⁴⁴

Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum carries forth the age-old struggle of the individual against the injustices of society. It is essentially the same battle witnessed in Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre and in Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas, only set against the backdrop of the Federal Republic of Germany in the early seventies. Some have accused Böll of not remaining true to reality in his *Erzählung*. Here we must remember that he is writing fiction, as he himself stated: "Ein Autor nimmt nicht Wirklichkeit, er hat sie, schafft sie."³⁴⁵ Böll explained his own view of reality and his purpose in writing as follows:

Das Wirkliche liegt immer ein wenig weiter als das Aktuelle: um einen fliegenden Vogel zu treffen, muß man vor ihn schießen. Aus dem Aktuellen das Wirkliche zu erkennen, dazu müssen wir unsere Vorstellungskraft in Bewegung setzen, eine Kraft, die uns befähigt, uns ein Bild zu machen. Das Aktuelle ist der Schlüssel zum Wirklichen. Jene, die das Aktuelle für das Wirkliche halten, sind oft sehr weit davon entfernt, das Wirkliche zu erkennen...Das Wirkliche *ist* phantastisch - aber man muß wissen, daß unsere menschliche Phantasie sich immer innerhalb des Wirklichen bewegt.³⁴⁶ (underscoring supplied)

³⁴³Schiller, 14.

³⁴⁴See the argument of Edwin I. Megargee, presented on p. 97 of this paper.

³⁴⁵See footnote 286.

³⁴⁶Fischer, 206.

In short, Böll feels it is his duty as an author to show his readers the concrete reality ("das Sein"), which is hidden behind the facade of the surface reality ("der Schein"). To accomplish this task, an author's work "muß zu weit gehen, um herauszufinden, wie weit man gehen kann."³⁴⁷ Klaus Jeziorkowski agrees with Böll that reality is frequently fantastic.³⁴⁸ Ernst Fischer declares that Böll does indeed portray reality; most people simply do not want to see it.³⁴⁹ This is why Katharina Blum has been widely misinterpreted as the author's personal accounting with the Springer press.

Katharina Blum may not be Böll's best work from an aesthetic standpoint, but it certainly is his best known. Despite not being fully understood, the *Erzählung* had a substantial impact on the public in West Germany and in the United States, as we saw in an earlier section. Heinrich Böll is a household name in West Germany, and one can wager that Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum is almost as well known. Not long ago, Die Zeit parodied the title in a headline: "Die verlorene Ehre des Uwe Barschel."

Since the end of World War II, West German society influenced Böll's development as a writer, but he has also exercised considerable influence on its course.³⁵⁰ Indeed, Böll has often been called his country's ambassador to the world, despite the fact that his views are not always popular.³⁵¹ Hanno Beth believes the reason Böll's work is so controversial lies in the fact that it is taken seriously.³⁵² As the most dramatic of Böll's attempts to come to terms with social injustice, Katharina Blum

³⁴⁷Heinrich Böll: Freies Geleit für Ulrike Meinhof. Ein Artikel und seine Folgen, ed. Franz Grützbach (Köln [Cologne]: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1972, quoted in Klaus Jeziorkowski, "Heinrich Böll als politischer Autor," University of Dayton Review 11.2 (1974): 45.

³⁴⁸Jeziorkowski "Böll als politischer Autor," 43.

³⁴⁹Fischer, 205.

³⁵⁰Hanno Beth, "Einleitung," vii.

³⁵¹Eduard Goldstücker, "Botschafter Böll," Reich-Ranicki, 321.

³⁵²Beth, "Einleitung," vii.

...created a sensation, and although this didn't bring the personal attacks upon Böll to an end, they appear to have touched the conscience of a lot of people and to have aroused a new awareness of what was beginning to look like a well-organized conservative campaign against civil and intellectual freedom under the guise of concern for State Security. This marked the beginning of the turning of the tide. By 1978, the nationally circulated Stern magazine had, in effect, joined Böll's side and was printing articles on the danger of the new security techniques to civil liberties.³⁵³

As we have seen, Böll suffered for his outspokenness in seeking a fair trial for Ulrike Meinhof and in writing Katharina Blum, but he did not regret his actions. In fact, he reproached himself because his *Erzählung* was "fast zu harmlos"!³⁵⁴

Heinrich Böll "wollte die Welt schreibend bewältigen,"³⁵⁵ but did not entirely succeed. Nevertheless, he has left behind a legacy of polemic and fictional writings which are capable of reminding readers of their humanity and of teaching them to search for hidden reality. He has posed the questions; it is up to us to answer them.³⁵⁶ Böll's authority and popularity among politicians, colleagues and readers alike is due to his sense of justice and compassion for his fellow man. His moral values are reflected in a unique manner in the modern settings of his works, a quality he termed "die Ästhetik des Humanen." It is for this that he will be remembered: His ongoing search for "eine bewohnbare Sprache in einem bewohnbaren Land."³⁵⁷ Though Böll is gone now, the search will go on. As his friend and colleague, Siegfried Lenz, eulogized:

Heinrich Böll, der Schriftsteller, der in seinem Werk lediglich seine Zeit darstellen wollte und damit für alle Zeiten schrieb, wird nicht in Vergessenheit geraten.³⁵⁸

³⁵³Gordon Craig, The Germans (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982) 223.

³⁵⁴Böll, "Zehn Jahre später," 32.

³⁵⁵Kothy et al., 30.

³⁵⁶Augstein, "Lieber Spiegelleser!," 3.

³⁵⁷Böll, Frankfurter Vorlesungen, 87, quoted in Bernhard, 82.

³⁵⁸Siegfried Lenz, "Der große Kumpel," Der Spiegel 22 July 1985: 138.

While Böll was able to gain a large following of readers throughout the world, it seems that most have interpreted his complex works at a very simplistic level. Following his death in July 1985, Der Spiegel wrote:

Seine Literatur war stets mehr eine für Leser als für Literaten...Sein immenser Publikumserfolg hing auch mit seiner Leichtverständlichkeit zusammen.³⁵⁹

Christoph Burgauner disagrees with this evaluation, however, claiming that Böll has been misunderstood simply "weil Deutschland seinen Böll haben wollte"³⁶⁰ - i.e., because Germans enjoy putting their authors on a pedestal. The problem was that Böll did not want to be up there! Even though he proclaimed "das Ende der Bescheidenheit" on behalf of his fellow authors, he was an exceptionally modest man, "ein guter Mensch," who could not remain indifferent to the problems of humanity. These very qualities, asserts Hans Magnus Enzensberger, have damaged Böll's literary reputation.³⁶¹

Heinrich Böll, "der gute Mensch von Köln," fought for the rights of oppressed people everywhere, even though he himself was not "of this world." Like the early Christians, he was convinced that the system should serve the people, not vice versa. One is reminded of the parable of Jesus in the wheatfield instructing the Pharisees as to why his followers should be allowed to pluck grapes on the Sabbath: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."³⁶² Extending this lesson of service to the interpersonal level, Böll believed that people should serve each other, rather than oppressing others in the hope of increasing their own wealth. - It is no wonder he felt out of place in the modern world! - Böll was called to serve mankind, and he did so until the very end of his life.

³⁵⁹"Wie gut ist Heinrich Böll?," 138.

³⁶⁰Burgauner, 128.

³⁶¹Enzensberger, 138.

³⁶²Mark 2.27, RSV.

His œuvre and the many friends he helped over the years testify to his undying commitment to a better future for all. He has left us with a legacy of hope.

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