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Game Playing, Re-entry and Withdrawal: Patterns of Societal Interaction in *Billard um halbzehn* and *Fürsorgliche Belagerung*

by Gertrud Bauer Pickar

Böll's novel of the late 50's *Billard um halbzehn* and his novel of the late 70's *Fürsorgliche Belagerung* invite comparison, not only because of the similarities which unite these two novels published two decades apart, but also because of the differences which the comparison reveals. The differences are all the more striking because of the overt similarities between the two works. Both novels depict family dynasties, both encompass three generations, both present a strictly confined geographic area and both take place in a dramatically limited fictional present, in which reminiscences provide insight into events and situations from the past, which permit the present to be more readily understood and evaluated. The external temporal framework, carefully constructed and observed in *Billard*, is restricted to one day, September 6, 1958, the eightieth birthday of the eldest member of the Fählmel family; in the case of *Belagerung* it constitutes a relatively confined, but less frequently defined period of some two days, following the election of Fritz Tolm to the presidency of an association of industrial and business leaders.¹

In both novels the present is in a state of flux, times are troubled, and the nature of the future is questioned. The past and the present are shown in continuing and continued interaction, and the fictional present is used by the chief protagonists to evaluate the decisions and actions of past years. The two works also focus indirectly on the ramifications of both the past and the present for the future and direct their concern to that future. Despite the extended deliberations concerning the past, the thematic focus remains that of the future — the future for the third generation of the family specifically, as well as that for the nation as a whole. At the conclusion of the novels, its nature and the role the young generation will play remain in doubt.

In both novels, great care is taken to present the contrast between the life styles of the different generations. The differences are depicted as reflecting the differing personalities of the specific individuals, the changing social and economic status of the family itself, and the impact of the times and conditions which confront them. Perhaps most significant is the nature of the response of the various generations to the challenges and the exigencies of its day, in their similarities and in their differences.

Despite the variations in lifestyle and personality between the generations of the two families, the family structure in both works is close and meaningful to all its members. Family members in both novels also sense a degree of estrangement from the society about them; their behavior and their concerns separate them from the majority of their contemporaries, and frequently they experience a sense of alienation from society as a whole, even when they are forced to deal with it in a relatively intensive manner. As a result, both families seem marked by a spectator stance, one which is emphasized by the extended billiard-playing-imagery of the earlier novel, and continues, though without such an internalized literary device, in the later novel, as well. In both cases, the spectator stance neither provides protection from the outside world nor prohibits the "real world" from reaching out and affecting dramatically and even drastically their individual lives. However, it is the differences in the attitudes toward society and the possibility

of meaningful interaction with the contemporary world presented in these novels, which are significant, differences which are all the more striking because of the similarities between these two dynasty novels. The contrast is worthy of study and further investigation, especially since it indicates a clear shift in authorial direction and views concerning today's society and the possibility of an individual's affecting positively the external world. This study focuses on the changes in the attitude of the protagonists to life and socio-political involvement and examines the position which becomes dominant in each of the novels.

Although *Billard um halbzehn*, as the title indicates, is a novel about billiards and people who play billiards, its concern with people who play games — not just at the sporting table but in and with life itself — is far more important. The novel explores their preoccupation with game-playing, the varying forms it exhibits, and the consequences of such a life-style.² For the participants, game-playing serves as a means for escaping ugly realities, averting unpleasant confrontations and avoiding direct involvement with the socio-political arena of contemporary life and even as a surrogate for life itself. In the course of the novel this mode of existence is challenged and ultimately rejected by its key participants.

The phenomenon of *Spiel* makes its first appearance in the Fählmel family with Heinrich, the would-be founder of the Fählmel dynasty, who views and treats life as a game, to be played and won.³ This attitude is evidenced initially in the thoughts and behavior which characterize Heinrich when he arrives in the city. The word *Spiel* is used repeatedly to describe his activities—he intended, for example, to invite his mother only “wenn das Spiel lief,” since her early appearance might not fit “in dieses Spiel.”⁴ The ‘game’ soon became the dominant force in his life and held him in its grip: “Das Spiel ließ mich nicht mehr los” (110). As a consequence of this fixation with “das große Spiel” (110), Heinrich sensed a certain loss of contact with reality and was even relieved on occasion to discover “Spuren von Wirklichkeit... in diesem Spiel, das ich ablaufen ließ” (99). Heinrich was not oblivious to the dangers inherent in his choice. Indeed, he came to recognize its potential supremacy over him and experienced moments of fear: “Ich hatte Angst vor dem großen Spiel, das aus dem Papier steigen, mich überwältigen würde; ich hatte das Spiel gespielt, aber ...” (111) and he noted: “ich war nicht mehr Herr des Spiels” (121). Rather than playing a game with life, he had suddenly become the object of his game — “er fingen, hinter seiner eigenen Legende herzulaufen, die Liturgie nahm ihn gefangen” (155).

Although Heinrich is tempted at one point to break off his game and to participate in life in a more immediate manner: “ich... wäre am liebsten mit einer von ihnen tanzen gegangen, hätte mit ihr ... im herbstlich duftenden Gras gelegen — die Quittung zerissen, das große Spiel abgebrochen —” (109f.), he retained his original orientation: “ich wollte das Spiel zu Ende spielen” and maintained his stance: “ich spielte weiter” (110). He continued to do so even after the deaths of his infant daughter, his son Otto and his daughter-in-law Edith and after his wife's commitment to an asylum. His life-long persistent preoccupation is confirmed in his late acknowledgement: “ich liebte das Spiel” (109) and in his wife's silent admonishment: “weine nicht, Alter, du hast das Spiel gewollt” (167).

It is characteristic of Heinrich's personality and his lifestyle that his game is often expressed in terms of dance. The “kokette Kurve, die das rechte Hosenbein beschrieb” when he walked, both indicates this affinity and serves as an identifying leitmotif. Indeed *Spiel* and *Tanz* are frequently equated in passages dealing with him: Heinrich referred to the program he planned to execute upon his arrival in the town as “eine komplizierte Tanzfigur,” and frequently described himself, and his role, as well as those about him in terms of dance. His life itself was to be a *Tanzfigur* in which he was “Solotänzer und Ballettmeister in einer Person,” for whom

“Komparsen und Kulissen, kostenlos zur Verfügung [stehen]” (78). Thus he perceived himself entering Cafe Kroner among waiters who moved “mit abgezirkelten Bewegungen” and projected for the scene a complete ballet, a “Kellnerballett, durch das ich als Solist jetzt mit leichten Schritten hindurchging” (83). He reiterates this view of himself as a soloist in several subsequent passages (89, 116, etc.) and on one occasion, namely the celebration of the completion of one of his buildings, he performs a solo dance (183). Appropriately after his arrival in the town, he planned to attend a ball and to choose his life’s partner there. He had arrived “bereit, den Tanz zu beginnen” (80).

Related to Heinrich’s “gamesmanship” is also his laughter, a secret, inner laughter which he carried within himself “wie eine Feder” (132), which gave his step its elastic quality (168). It was the source of vitality, of energy, of endurance in the face of competition, opposition and adversity and reflected the ironic distance he sought to maintain in the daily process of life amid his fellow men.⁵ The laughter, however, did not spring from an inner happiness or a love of life, and the security which the laughter projected proved to be deceptive.⁶ Heinrich himself came to realize that his laughter was an insufficient defense against reality: “Ich kann es [lachen] nicht mehr, ich habe es verlernt und hab doch geglaubt, es wäre eine Waffe; es war keine, war nur eine kleine Täuschung” (102). In the course of time Heinrich slowly lost his ironic distance to himself and to life: “er fing plötzlich an, sich ernst zu nehmen” (154), and his inner laughter ceased to be an effective armor in the face of personal loss and the worsening socio-political conditions. Heinrich drew in ever increasing quantity upon this source of inner energy and stability; he employed it when on his mental journeys into memory and dream which might otherwise have been too painful.⁷ As times grew harder, Heinrich needed and took “großzügige Rationen” (122). As the strain intensified, the supply proved insufficient: “ich hatte mich jahrelang von meinem Lachen ernährt, aber diese Nahrung fiel aus” (180). Johanna, too, observed: “sie haben Vaters heimliches Lachen getötet, die Feder ist gesprungen,” explaining: “für diesen Druck war sie nicht geschaffen” (148).

One of the most ambiguous forms of game-playing in *Billard um halbzehn* is practiced by Johanna.⁸ As Heinrich’s wife, she attempted to live life as a game, too: “ich hatte mir vorgenommen, nie zu vergessen, daß alles nur Spiel war” (138), and she supported her husband’s social front and his game of pretense. Later, “in den Jahren, wo die höhere Gewalt herrschte,” she took refuge in half-simulated insanity, accepting asylum life as a means of survival “in einer Welt, wo eine Handbewegung dich das Leben kosten kann” (143). Choosing to live “in der inneren Emigration” (166), as she herself referred to it, she continued half-feigning and half-living her schizoid existence within its protective walls. During her husband’s visits to the asylum, they indulged in a special game of their own, a “let’s pretend,” in which they rolled back the years and relived special moments of their past as a fictional present.

The theme of game-playing continues with their son Robert, and although its manifestation is strikingly different, the relationship between the family members is maintained here, too. Thus, the fascination which the manipulation of numbers, weights, and tensions holds for Robert is prefigured in the description of Heinrich’s play with life. Reviewing his motivations, he comments: “nicht um des Geldes, des Ruhmes, nicht um der Frauen willen hatte ich die Algebra der Zukunft in Formeln gefaßt, hatte Z, Y und Z⁹ in Größen verwandelt, die sichtbar wurden, in Bauernhöfen, Bankkonten, Macht...” (113).¹⁰ This reference to algebra and to algebraic elements gains new significance in his son’s life, which was also dominated by game-playing. In Robert’s case, however, it was a cold, cerebral game, rooted in the speculative field of mathematics and manifested in its application, determined and controlled by his personal will and intent.¹¹

The lifestyle which was to become characteristic for him was evident already early in life when as a boy, for example, Robert chose not to accompany his father on his trips or to social gatherings, preferring to spend his time in his father's atelier, where he simply sat, "zeichnete, spielte mit Formeln" (169). He derived his pleasure from the abstract science of mathematics, and even in a natural setting, his thoughts turned to mathematics, and he entered a world of pure geometric figures in which "das winterlich klare Geäst sphärischer Linien" of his mental occupation contrasted with "die uralten Bäume in vollem Grün" outside his window (50f.).

Characteristically, Robert also saw geometric figures and algebraic formulas in the world about him and rendered his impressions of that world in such terms. Chickens scratching in the yard created "ungenau geometrische Figuren in den Dreck" (60f.) and the red sparks from the shipyard "zeichneten Figuren ins Grau" (49). Robert translated his impressions of people similarly into geometric terms and subsequently identified and even perceived them in that manner. His mind habitually registered and retained images of individuals in terms of their movements, specific, recognizable characteristic gestures, which could be expressed in geometric terms.¹² He spoke of the personal cardiograms with which he identified various individuals,¹³ and he stored his memories of individuals as geometric figures, formulas, and abstracted gestures — "Seine Erinnerung hatte sich nie an Worte und Bilder gehalten, nur an Bewegungen" (41).

Throughout his life Robert applied his knowledge of mathematics and dynamics in the sports and games he played, and he pursued and mastered these activities with a skill and cool precision which reflected his mental processes. He delighted in the perfect workings and total predictability of the mathematical and physical laws which he found manifested in them and discovered that the balls, both in *Schlagball*, which he played as a *Gymnasium* student, and in billiards, which he played in exile and then throughout his adult life, reacted to the same laws and could be predicted and controlled through mathematical calculations.¹⁴ For Robert, billiards was neither a game of recreation nor the *Gesellschaftspiel* it was for his father.¹⁵ Rather it presented a vehicle for mental exercise and personal contemplation. The fascination the game held for him lay in the precision and predictability of the movements of the balls and in the fact that he could create with his billiard cue "immer neue Figuren ... aus zwei Quadratmetern" (68), "neue Figuren tauchten wie Zeichen auf... Vierecke, Rechtecke, Rhomben in vielfacher Zahl" (70). Following the course of the red and white balls, he was conscious of the forces at work:

die wirbelnden Linien waren alle an Winkel gebunden, unterlagen geometrischen Gesetzen und der Physik, die Energie des Stoßes, die er durch die Queue dem Ball mitteilte und ein wenig Reibungsenergie; alles nur Maß; es prägte sich dem Gehirn ein; Impulse, die sich zu Figuren Umprägen ließen (40).

Beyond that, the game offered him a surrogate existence and represented a stability, an unchanging constant truth — "wahr waren nur die drei Billardkugeln" (37), the innocent and childlike Hugo noted.

Robert applied the same skills in calculation, which were so effective in his games, in his activities during the war as a demolition expert and after the war in freeing the city of rubble and ruins to facilitate reconstruction.¹⁶ Even here the association with 'game' remains. It is present not only in Robert's conversation with the American officer¹⁷ and his admission to him that mathematics was for him always "ein reines Vergnügen," but also in Schrella's remark concerning his friend's zeal for demolition work: "Dynamit? Ein herrliches Zeug zum Spielen" (293).¹⁸ Calculations also form the basis of Robert's profession — he opened a bureau as a consultant in

statics, rather than emulating his father by embarking upon a career in architecture. "...für die schöpferische Seite der Architektur hat er sich nie interessiert, nur für Formeln" (211). Joseph says of his father.

Robert's immersion in the world of mathematics extended into his manner of dealing with the world, as well. He used it as a means of keeping his emotions in control, both when recalling the past and for living in the present, in a manner reminiscent of his father's use of his ironic laughter. For Robert, thus, "Erinnerung wurde nicht Gefühl, blieb Formel, rann nicht in Seligkeit oder Trauer auseinander ..." (245). He dealt with his reactions to the cruelties and injustices in the world about him in a similar manner.¹⁹ Even in the course of the day depicted in the novel, Robert reflected upon his art of converting all experiences into formulas and affirmed this procedure: "Es ist nicht gut, Formeln aus ihrer Erstarrung zu lösen, Geheimnisse in Worte zu fassen, Erinnerungen in Gefühle umzusetzen..." (250).

Like his father, who had once sought to pattern his life according to chosen formulas,²⁰ Robert, too, lived according to rigid programs.²¹ His inflexible daily schedule is indicated in part already in the title, and even his mannerism appeared to be cast into set patterns. His secretary, the first in the text to identify Robert with 'formula,' noted how he reduced even civilities to their common denominator: "alle Höflichkeit war in dieser Stimme auf die Formel reduziert" (7).

Robert's adult life, like that of his father's, is governed by game, and he, too, consciously plays at living his life in the world in which he finds himself. When he returned from exile, pardoned by the authorities in exchange for a pledge of good behavior, he rejected his youthful involvement in the resistance movement and complied with the order of the day, but this very compliance became, at least as perceived by his mother, itself a game: "die Welt ist böse, es gibt so wenig reine Herzen; auch Robert spielt mit aufrecht tut er's, ungebeugt, deutsch..." (164).²²

Schrella, Robert's boyhood friend and his brother-in-law, is like Johanna an 'emigrant,' although he chose to spend his self-imposed exile in foreign lands. He also is tangentially involved in a form of game-playing, although in his case, it is a flight to the classroom, to paradigms of grammar. He plays with the realities of today and yesterday in conjugations of German verbs, employing what he calls "das Xylophon der Sprache" (189). Much as Robert used the billiard balls, Schrella used the grammar sentences in his classroom as a starting point for reminiscences and conjectures:

ich lebe, ich lebte, ich habe gelebt, ich hatte gelebt, ich werde leben.
Werde ich leben? Er hatte nie begriffen, daß es Menschen gab, die sich
über der Grammatik langweilen konnten. Er wird umgebracht, er
wurde umgebracht; er ist umgebracht worden, er wird umgebracht
werden; wer wird ihn umbringen? (243)

Except for his brief appearance on the day depicted in the novel, Schrella maintained a stance of aloofness and of separation from his homeland and his former associates. He is a "loner" without family, wife or children. His only contact with Robert, and, through him, with his only blood relatives, his sister's children, is limited to an occasional exchange of postcards, on which his message is expressed in the tersest manner.²³ Shunning any form of involvement, he has chosen to remain uncommitted in his personal life, as in the political arena.²⁴

The third generation portrayed in the novel, is also associated with *Spiel*. Joseph, at the threshold of manhood, is identified with a kind of game, which like his father's is based upon mathematical calculations. In his case, however, it is a game with death, and his calculations are tested in a life and death situation, ostensibly under his control: he drives full speed toward a

highway barricade and, having calculated the speed and braking distances, applies his brakes at the last possible moment to avoid a fatal collision. When his fiancée Marianne objects, he responds: "Ach, Gott, ... es ist ja nur ein Spiel" (213).

Marianne's emphatic response — "Es ist ein schreckliches Spiel" (114) — reflects her own rejection of game as a way of life²⁵ and her own negative experiences as a child. (Following the instructions of their deranged mother in what Marianne and her brother thought was simply a 'game' resulted in her brother's death and nearly cost her life, as well.)

Although also disillusioned with the games people play in life, Joseph's sister Ruth chose compliance with the exigencies and pretenses of life. Possessing a keen eye for reality, she learned to keep her knowledge silent, as a means both of survival and of reducing the impact of painful truths.²⁶ Her decision to maintain such a facade as a means of maintaining a life of convenience is a conscious one and allies her with the other members of her family who choose to play a game with life. Thus she maintained the pretence of ignorance and acceptance in polite conversation with the teacher Herr Krott, at the parties at the Gretz home, and within her own family: "Wir wollen weiter Vater und Tochter spielen; genau abgezirkelt, wie ein Turniertanz" (254), she states in words reminiscent of her grandfather's own in earlier years.

The decisive shift in the life styles of several members of the Fählmel family is associated with a dramatic change in the behavior of Johanna — her departure from the asylum and her attempted assassination of a highly placed government officer. Several passages near the close of the novel focus on Johanna's thoughts and her decision to leave the asylum and to enter the arena of life itself: "ich bin bereit, mit dem Tod in der Handtasche ins Leben zurückzukehren" (261), she insists with a seemingly paradoxical statement characteristic of her thinking. Her move toward active participation, symbolized by the revolver with which she plans to commit an act of violence to ensure a safer world for her grandchildren, marks the turning point in the novel and in the lives of the other characters, as well.²⁷

Although the other family members had no prior knowledge of her decision or her intent, a change in their attitudes and behavior occurs at a corresponding point of time. For each of them the change implies a rejection of the previous life style of 'game-playing' and reflects a decision to enter a life of active participation, thereby drastically altering the pattern of their existence.²⁸

Heinrich, reviewing his life on this day which was to end with the celebration of his eightieth birthday, reconsiders his attempt to "play at life" and to maintain an ironic distance to its realities. Though his exclamation: "mein Gott, war kein Spielchen erlaubt, mußten die Goliathe so humorlos sein" (119f.), expresses a lament, in which a touch of defiance is still evident, he recognizes both the senselessness of his position and the inadequacy of ironic distance and ultimately rejects the way of life they reflect. Reiterating this view (in part with identical words which emphasize the significance of his realization) and closing with a condemnation of the way of life he had chosen, Heinrich proclaims his conclusion, "daß Ironie nicht ausreichte und nie ausreichen würde, daß sie nur Narkotikum für Privilegierte war," and announces unequivocally: "ich hätte tun müssen" (103). This endorsement of active and responsible participation in the actual world marks the conclusion to his assessment of his life. He begins to put his new perspective and choice into practice and breaks the thread of his game: he declines to receive the congratulatory wishes of the butcher Gretz (an identifiable *Büffel*) and cancels his daily breakfast ritual at the Hotel Kroner.²⁹ His final act in the novel, handing the dome of the pastry abbey to his son Robert, to which the final line of the text is devoted, indicates not only his knowledge, understanding and approval of Robert's wartime deed, but also reestablishes his relationship with his son. Beyond its familial implications, however, it symbolizes his support of an active role in life³⁰ and his moral indictment of the life of 'game' he himself had led.

For Robert, the shift appears to be effected by the arrival of Schrella.³¹ Thus the game of billiards which they play together itself already indicates the shift which was occurring within Robert's life. The game appeared to have lost its function, or rather its purpose was disavowed. Even to the observing hotelboy, Hugo, the rhythm of the rolling balls seem strangely out of joint, the figures less precise. Both Robert and Schrella seem to sense the futility of continuing the game, and Robert asks Hugo to put up the sticks. (The request carries with it a sense of finality, which appears to extend beyond that specific game.) He then presents Hugo with legal papers and poses the question of his legal adoption. At that moment they hear the sound of a small explosive — it is Johanna who has shot and injured a cabinet minister. With the disruption of the billiard game and the adoption of Hugo, Robert, too, moves toward an active and responsible role in the world.³² The significance of these acts is emphasized by the decision not to attend the forthcoming rededication of the abbey which had figured so prominently in the play-acting of their own pasts, a decision which he and his father had reached, separately but simultaneously earlier in the day.³³

The question of game-playing or involvement remains undecided in the case of the two young Fähmels,³⁴ just as it does in the case of the question, overtly raised in the text, whether they would choose the life of the *Biiffel* or the *Lämmer*.³⁵ (There is also no indication whether Marianne, who had never espoused game-playing and is identifiable with the *Lämmer*, would progress toward an active involvement in the external world.)

Of the adult, positive figures in the novel, only Schrella does not reject his game-playing nor recognize the need for involvement in the affairs of the world, preferring to remain alone, on the periphery of life, and apparently determined to continue his exile.³⁶ It is, however, just in the scene between Schrella and his counter figure Nettlinger (Robert's only other contemporary to appear in the novel) that Böll's message in *Billard* is most clearly evident — the need for political or social involvement. Nettlinger, the typical *Biiffel*, has achieved a position of prominence and power in the political structure of their world, a position he owes in part to the absence, and silence, of others, like Robert and Schrella, who chose to distance themselves from their contemporary society and after the war assiduously avoided all political involvement. Through their inactivity, they left the rule to others and indirectly delegated that sphere of activity to Nettlinger and to those of his ilk. Theirs thus becomes a complicity through omission in the successful career of Nettlinger and those he represents. Schrella, by his inactivity, and Nettlinger, by his success, both serve to point up the need for total commitment to life and emphasize the significance of the decisions made by the three members of the Fähmel family in the course of the day encompassed by the novel. The rejection of game-playing which characterizes Marianne's attitude toward life and which is ultimately recognized and in turn endorsed by Heinrich, Johanna, and Robert constitutes the dominant theme of *Billard um halbzehn*.

In *Belagerung*, the question of the nature of an individual's commitment to life and his involvement in the society of his day is again a thematic concern, but the answer Böll provides in this later novel appears to be a different one. The solution ostensibly advocated by *Billard* — active participation — rather than receiving an endorsement is itself scrutinized and evaluated and its ramifications pursued. Active involvement in political protest is ultimately revealed as an easy, but not desirable response, and the skepticism toward the possibility of change through political process, expressed earlier in *Billard*, is maintained. While the needs are restated in terms of the 1980's, and if anything are intensified, the protagonists themselves present a pattern of withdrawal from socio-political concerns. No satisfactory answers to the issues of the day are provided — the questions and fears remain unanswered.

The altered mood in the Germany depicted in the two novels is reflected in their tone, and finds expression in the portrayal of Fritz Tolm and his life. The oldest member of the Tolm family, he serves in many ways as the barometer of his times, and the similarities and striking contrasts between the two novels can be traced in his life and in his thoughts.

Rather than being marked by an inner laughter, a leitmotif in *Billard*, which characterized Heinrich, Tolm's counterpart in that novel, Tolm appears riddled by anxiety and sadness, the emotions which dominate the entire novel. An awareness of *Trauer*, which is mentioned only once in *Billard*,³⁷ reoccurs frequently in the thoughts of the protagonists in *Belagerung* and marks Tolm's characterizations of his contemporaries. Tolm, noting the similarities between the eyes of his wife Käthe and his son Rolf, comments on "diese Dimension poetischer Trauer" which both share.³⁸ In her case it was "flüchtig getarnt von einer Leichtfertigkeit, hinter der sich Verzweiflung verbarg" (116); the sorrow in his son's eyes — a "undurchsichtige, von merkwürdigen Trauer umschattete Dimension in seine Augen, ... die undurchdringlich blieb" became intensified when he played with his son. Tolm watched Rolf gaze at the child "mit einer so fremden kühlen Zärtlichkeit und Trauer," (59) and referred to his "zärtlich, traurig verhangenen Blick" (59). The presence of *Trauer* as a leitmotif reflects a deep-seated concern with the contemporary world and with the apparent futility of efforts to solve its problems.

Where in *Billard* the individuals sought their defense in an internal mechanism, choosing laughter as a shield against the unpleasant realities of the external world, *Belagerung* presents a situation which mandates external protection. Not a form of inner resistance, but concrete security measures are perceived as necessary and are both proscribed and obeyed. These measures, however, prove in the eighties no more effective against the inroads of reality, this time in the form of feared terrorist activity, than was in the fifties the inner laughter against the intrusion of external realities. Both prove equally insufficient in their day and ineffective as personal defenses.

The shift from inner laughter to external security also reflects a shift in the self-perceptions of the protagonists in the two novels. Where the Fähmels were depicted as relatively sure of themselves and perceived as masters of their fate, the Tolms are forced to recognize their own helplessness.³⁹ Thus, although the Fähmels experienced a period of surveillance in the aftermath of their son's disappearance and felt "spied upon" by their son Otto, that condition was recognized by them as one of the aspects of life under National Socialism which they had to endure during that 'unnatural' time; in the 'normal' world reflected in *Belagerung*, no individual can be responsible for his own security, and security surveillance for prominent citizens, like the Tolms, is accepted as a matter of course in the Federal Republic. As a result, the Tolms find themselves caught in a web of security which complicates even the simplest of activities, prohibits a life of normalcy, inhibits their enjoyment of even the simplest of pleasures, and eliminates any semblance of privacy. Indeed, they have become prisoners of their own security needs. The precautions themselves appear symbolic of the society in which the Tolms live which threatens to control and alter their lives — whether it be the press coverage of their private lives or the energy needs which necessitate expanded mining which threatens to destroy villages — and their home. The hopelessness of resistance is shown in their pathetic attempts to outwit their auidal surveillance. Ironically, Käthe's misguided attempt to hold a private conversation 'in private' with her husband by leaning outside the window and whispering under an umbrella unwittingly provides the security agents the intelligence information⁴⁰ needed to locate the terrorist Heinrich Bewerloh, an action which ended with his violent death.

Not only is everyone and everything consciously and meticulously scrutinized by the chief of

security as a matter of course⁴¹ but the climate of suspicion fostered by the continuing preoccupation with security is so insidious that fear and suspicion intrude on Tolm's private ruminations. Trusted companions and servants, family members, members of the security force itself, and even a duck on a pond or an owl flying at dusk all come under suspicion⁴² and are almost involuntarily reviewed as a potential threat by him. Even his private reflections are clouded by such thoughts — as a result he can no longer be secure within himself, a fact he, too, comes to realize.⁴³

With Tolm, the motif of game-playing, so dominant in *Billard um halbzehn*, reoccurs, although its manifestations are strikingly different, not only in comparison to those of the earlier novel, but also in contrast with the generations it depicts. The motif surfaces immediately in the opening pages of the novel, as Tolm, just elected president, demonstrates his sovereignty in dealing with the obligatory interviews, and admits: "Es hatte Spaß gemacht, Geschichtliches, sogar Kunstgeschichtliches einzuflechten..." (11).⁴⁴ He clearly enjoys being able to follow his own thoughts, while ostensibly being engrossed in the interview: "Was er da sagte, improvisierte, lief fast automatisch ab, wurde in Serien abgerufen, erlaubte ihm, an anderes zu denken..." (12). He also enjoys both the words *Spaß* and *Spiel* in conjunction with this facility, noting: "Diese Zweibahnigkeit, die man vielleicht auch medienbedingte Schizophrenie hätte nennen können, fing an, ihm Spaß zu machen" (14) and referring to it as a "amüsant [es] und anstrengend [es] Spiel der Doppelbahnigkeit" (21). He speaks of his new position as "eine Rolle, von der niemand erwartet hatte, daß er sie so gut spielen würde..." (15).⁴⁵ His success with this game, however, is limited, since his triumph lies in overcoming his fear, which is then replaced by sorrow.

Rather than an active player and strategist as was Heinrich Fähmel, Tolm seemed to succeed most frequently through passivity.⁴⁶ He fell into a position of power and importance, into fame and fortune more by being at the right place at the right time than by any conscious decision on his part — by not-doing, rather than by doing.⁴⁷ He thus summarizes his career as "Eine kleine Zeitung geerbt, eine Lizenz bekommen, Papier, sogar die Journalisten mit dazu. Und gewachsen... ein Schließchen gekauft, Präsident geworden..." (297). Although there is self-irony in his description of his impact on the newspaper — which "mir unter den Händen gestorben ist — und wuchert" (295) — it appears indicative of the course of his life. Thus he appears more surprised than anyone to find himself elected president, and never seems totally sure why or how.⁴⁸

The role Tolm has chosen to follow in life provides further contrast to the dominant stance in *Billard*. For Tolm, the head of a major and liberal newspaper and now president of an important organization, carries not only economic and political responsibility but also potential power, that might well be used to induce change. In neither position, however, does he demonstrate leadership or institute policy. Rather he remains essentially passive, leaving managerial and editorial decisions to others and accepting the role of president as that of a figurehead, never showing himself either capable, or interested in the position or its potential and treating it rather as a game in his own thoughts.

When he suggests he had been not only successful, but also "tüchtig," it is his wife who restores the perspective for him, and for the reader, by commenting: " 'Eickelhof hast du weggeben, ohne einen Finger zu rühren, Tolmshoven hast du schon aufgegeben — du kannst keinem deiner Söhne auch nur den kleinsten Posten im Blättchen verschaffen, deine Tochter ist unglücklich...,' " adding " 'Du zitterst vor Bleibl, hast Angst vor Zummerling, ach Tolm, lieber Fritz' " (297). Her assessment is born out by the events of the novel. As a result of his last success,

his election. Tolm has, indeed, a right to privacy, freedom of movement, of unencumbered contact with his wife, their children and their grandchildren, and safety not only for himself but also for them. Their private lives come under such scrutiny that intelligence sources have already calculated that his daughter's pregnancy must be the result of an infidelity, even before he himself learned of her pregnancy. Tolm is no longer able to function adequately as head of the family, to provide for his family's security or privacy. He and his family have become not only potential targets for terrorists but also a focal point for national attention. They are thus subjected to the prying eyes and minds of the entire outside world and are fair game for the news media.⁴⁹

Tolm's realization "mir ist es nicht gelungen, das System zu täuschen, das System hat mich getäuscht" (350) is reminiscent of Heinrich's realization. Like Heinrich, Tolm also recognizes the failure of his life: "Ich habe nie Mut gehabt, nicht einmal den geringen Mut, der dazu gehört hätte, das Instrument, das ich nunmal hatte, das Blättchen, nicht zum Scheißblättchen werden zu lassen," and admitting the temptation to which he had succumbed: "Natürlich hat mich das Geld gelockt" (349). Käthe's comment: "Du könntest sogar von Zeitungen etwas verstehen, aber du hast dich ja nie für Zeitungen interessiert" (344), however, implies that his disinterest in his work and his indifference toward what he might be able to achieve were more significant factors in his career than the temptation of wealth.

Surprising in terms in *Billard* is Tolm's attitude toward his life. Rather than condemning his failure to utilize his opportunities for political and social change, Tolm questions his original choice of career and wonders if he, and his family, might not have been better off if he had become an art curator, had pursued his own avocation — his interest in Madonnas.⁵⁰ (At one point of the novel, Tolm even forgoes his official responsibilities to visit an exhibit of Madonnas, even in the face of his wife's concern.⁵¹ The pursuit of his interest in art, ironically, is one that the chief of security still hopes Tolm will be able to pursue: "der sollte sich irgendeinem kunstgeschichtlichen Hobby zuwenden: Madonnen möglicherweise oder Niederländern" (315).⁵²

In line with this thinking is his decision to give up the newspaper. Having concluded: "'Es hat keinen Sinn mehr, den Namen und damit den Schein der Liberalität herzugeben,'" (350) he chooses not to become active in the paper but rather to withdraw from it entirely. Although it is only one of several steps he takes to disassociate himself from his public life,⁵³ its implications are far reaching and it indicates a conscious retreat from public life and from involvement in the mainstream of German socio-political life.

Tolm's wife Käthe resembles in many ways her prototype Johanna⁵⁴ and her marriage with Tolm, marked as it is by tenderness and mutual respect, seems to echo that of the elder Fähmels in *Billard*.⁵⁵ Käthe is warm, understanding, compliant to a specific degree to the needs and desires of her husband, and sensitive and amenable to, though not always enthusiastic about the required social amenities. Like Johanna she supported her husband's social front and his game of pretense⁵⁶ and here, too, there is a hint of 'game-playing'⁵⁷ — but one which is reminiscent of a little girl's game of make-believe: "wenn Stizungen oder gar Tagungen waren, verzog sie sich immer, spielte nur kurz am Nachmittag bei Tee und Kaffee die Hausfrau." (19). She executed her social responsibilities, however, with a grace and aplomb that served him well — Käthe "bot Selbstgebackenes an, ... machte alles nett, sehr liebenswürdig, so, daß es nicht nach Pflicht aussah, plauderte mit den Herren, kümmerte sich um die Sekretärinnen, die sie offenbar wirklich mochten" (19). She was even skilled in dealing with difficult questions — "[v]ergab sich nichts und ließ sich nichts Spitzzüngiges bieten" (19). Her charm and warmth never appeared matronly, rather she maintained despite her age a certain naivety and childlike quality, whether it be a weakness in mathematics (not only was she apparently oblivious to monetary concerns,

she never found an early sign of suspected bisexuality (or even a penchant for wearing her hair in curls).

The shift in attitude toward political activism which Käthe, like Tolm, exhibits represents a difference from the portrayal of Johanna, whom she otherwise so resembles. Where Johanna left her asylum with a gun in her purse and during the parade attempted to shoot a cabinet minister, Käthe becomes increasingly apolitical. Although Käthe is emotionally supportive of the concerns and wishes of the younger generation for a different world, and in the past had been on occasion even financially supportive of their efforts, she does not endorse them herself.⁵⁸ (Bleibl even questions whether she really understood to what purposes the money she so freely provided her son was intended.) Rather Käthe views the possible results of political activism in terms of their ramifications on both a personal⁵⁹ and a practical level⁶⁰ and thus finds both the violent activities of the terrorists and the non-violent protests of her son's group unacceptable. Her position is clear: "Man kann nicht mit dem Tod anderer für das Leben demonstrieren" (351). Thus, rather than affirming an activist stance, she consciously attempts to dissuade her son from his planned demonstration.⁶¹ Despite her understanding, however feminine and limited, of the problems of the day, she can perceive no means of changing the conditions of the world in which she, her children, and her grandchildren live.

The middle generation in *Belagerung*, which includes both *Überwachte* (those who are perceived as being a potential threat to the state and its citizenry) and *Bewachte* (those being protected by the state), presents the greatest diversity of lifestyles and provides yet further contrast to the earlier novel. Although, chronologically viewed, this generation is a generation later than the middle generation of *Billard*,⁶² Robert Fähmel and Schrella seem to prefigure the lives and attitudes of Tolm's children and their friends.

Robert with his activities in the underground resistance movement foreshadows the anti-establishment behavior of Rolf and Herbert Tolm and Heinrich Bewerloh and the modes they employ to express their dissatisfaction with prevailing societal and political conditions. And, as if to underline the affinity, all three share Robert's fascination for numbers and his skill in calculation — and all three used or contemplated using these skills in demonstrations of varying degrees of violence.

Rolf had earlier been involved in political demonstrations, throwing stones and setting cars on fire. Like Robert, who had similarly been involved in an 'underground conspiracy,' Rolf had incurred the displeasure of the state and experienced the wrath of the police and the political establishment. Robert had fled to Holland, living there 'underground'; Rolf, having acquired as a result both a police record and subsequently an *Arbeitsverbot*, fled to the country. Just as Robert, having been 'pardoned' in exchange for a promise of 'good behavior' appeared to accommodate himself to the society in power, Rolf, having forsworn any further overt anti-establishment activities, now leads a "peaceful existence" in compliance with the rules, if not the spirit of the day.⁶³ However, although both subsequently pursued a life which was 'legal,' certain essential differences can be noted. Where Robert seemed to accept and, for all outward appearances, lived and succeeded in the lifestyle prescribed by his day, Rolf chose to be a 'social drop-out.' He sought a simple life, structured according to his perceptions and criteria,⁶⁴ one which is unconventional and marks him as an 'outsider.' His was a social exile, which like Schrella's self-imposed exile earlier, represents a conscious separation from,⁶⁵ and even a flight from the social and economic mainstream, its aspirations and structures. It is, however, a decision he has not yet accepted as permanent. Thus, as he considers his new life and the pleasure and feeling of *Geborgenheit* it offers him, he feels he should want to leave: "jetzt sollte,

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müßte er aus Hubreichchen was wollen – und wollte nicht weg.“ Doubts as to the appropriateness of his life remain: “Sollte, wollte er den Rest seines Lebens in Hubreichchen verbringen, die Lust am Planen und Rechnen auf den Garten, auf Holzverwertung, Ernte und Spiel beschränken — ?” (242).

As with Robert, Rolf's abilities and his potentialities are stressed. He is referred to as “der Kronprinz” of the Tolm dynasty; he could have become a bank director “auseigener Kraft, ohne Papas Hilfe, ... wenn er nicht Autos angezündet und Steine geworfen hätte” (240); and the security chief Holzpuke commends him as a “wichtiger Analytiker der Szene” (254). The loss of such talent to mainstream Germany is also noted — in Bleibl's words it constitutes: “Eine Verschwendung von Intelligenz, planerischer, abstrakter, hochtheoretischer Begabung, die mit genausoviel, nicht zuviel Phantasie gemischt war” (317f.).

Through the portrayal of Rolf, his thoughts and his lifestyle, the plight of the disillusioned of his generation, and its consequences, are most clearly articulated.⁶⁶ It is Rolf who directly addresses the problem of this generation and raises the question as to the ramifications of the way of life he and others of his generation had chosen, not just for the individuals themselves, but also for Germany: “...lassen Sie diese Hunderttausende junge Frauen und Männer und deren Kinder aufmarschieren, wenn auch nur vor Ihrem geistigen Auge, und fragen Sie sich, ob deren Ausbildung, deren mögliche Intelligenz, deren Kraft und Herrlichkeit nur dazu da sein soll, überwacht zu werden” (310). Although he assures Holzpuke: “wir haben nichts zu verbergen, nicht einmal unsere Gedanken. Wir *denken* nicht einmal an Gewalt irgendeiner Art” (306), a warning is clearly inherent in his earlier remark to Holzpuke: “... denken Sie daran, was aus Menschen werden kann, die ihren Beruf nicht ausüben dürfen — wir können nicht ewig Tomaten züchten” (253).

To a lesser extent, his brother Herbert, “der als Spinner verschrien war” (19), who lived in an apartment in a building owned by his parents and was apparently supported by them, is also a member of this ‘lost generation.’ He and his group, which appears to be associated with a form of liberal Christianity, are also anti-establishment in sentiment and action. In their case, their planned “AAA (Anti-Auto-Aktion)” (254), for which Herbert had calculated an exact schedule (351), is not executed, a decision which is due in large part to Käthe's disapproval and to her withdrawal of financial support. Herbert's position and his role remain essentially undefined. Käthe remarks, “an ihm bleibt mir vieles rätselhaft” and, by questioning the advisability of having sent him away to school, she implies that external factors rather than the family affected his development (298). For Holzpuke, Herbert remains a security concern: “Dem Sohn Herbert traute er nicht ganz: diese AAA ... konnte böser werden, als der Junge ahnte” (254).

The terrorist, Heinrich Bewerloh, also shows a strong resemblance to Robert. His room with its books, its carefully ordered “Lineale, Mäppchen, Schreibmaterial”, as well as a crucifix and a Madonna by Raffael, could have been Robert's. Their similarity is also underlined by Bewerloh's reputation as “der beste Ballistiker” (238) when he served with the artillery and most recently by the assumption that he was the mastermind behind the “Tortengeschichte”: “Dahinter konnte nur Bewerloh gesteckt haben, von dem es ja immer wieder hieß, ‘er rechnet und rechnet und rechnet’ ” (123). Indeed, the motivation for Robert's actions, which Schrella had furnished — “ich verstehe deine Leidenschaft gut. Haß auf die Welt” (293) — could work as well as an explanation for the terrorist behavior that Bewerloh and his associates exhibited. The enjoyment of destruction which Robert felt and the dynamite which Schrella had described as “ein herrliches Zeug zum Spielen” gain new significance in *Belagerung* through the dramatic death of the terrorist Bewerloh, who had so rigged the dynamite strapped on his body that

compliance. Picking Game Playing, Reentry and Withdrawal Patterns on Society Inter-
life, but also inflicting injury or death to those near him.⁶⁷

The personal exile of Schrella, and that of Johanna, can also be seen as a prototype for the behavior of the drop-outs from society presented in *Belagerung*, although here it is fused with an almost romantic Rousseauian stance⁶⁸ and appears in a positive light. Rolf and his family live without sanction of marriage, but with the endorsement of the village priest,⁶⁹ in a small farm community, eking out a modest existence on the fringes of the contemporary eco-political scene and achieving almost the aura of an idyll. Initially treated with distrust and skepticism by the villagers, Rolf's family slowly found acceptance: "Schon wurde Rolf in Fragen der Gemüse-zucht, Katharina in Erziehungsfragen zu Rate gezogen" (58). Rolf even contemplates becoming an informal financial advisor to the villagers.

This pattern of retreat from the troubled cities and from active participation in mainstream German society can be found among others of their generation, as well. Thus their friend Heinrich Schmergen ultimately leaves Germany, prepared to spend the rest of his life doing menial work, if necessary, in a foreign country (410). Rolf's sister Sabine, though her future is uncertain, considers a move to Paris (388) and contemplates earning her living by handwork. Similarly their neighbor Erna Breuer, after gaining the acceptance of her family, plans to stay in the country and to create a new life there with her new husband and child. Significant in these cases is the fact that their flight, their "emigration," unlike Schrella's, which appears rather as a poor substitute for an active life and as a means of avoiding involvement in contemporary German society, is presented as a positive choice, one which enables them to live a more authentic existence and one which apparently results in personal happiness and tranquility.

An integral aspect of their withdrawal from mainstream Germany is their disengagement or their disinterest in political involvement at home or abroad. Rolf and his associates no longer contemplate any form of interaction with the forces of society; Schmergen rejects the idea of going to Cuba, and Sabine, an essentially emotional being who follows her heart, appears oblivious to the socio-political world. Her separation from Fischer and his world of profit and success, of materialism and exploitation, is not motivated by social concerns or accompanied by any increased social conscience, just by a feeling of personal relief.⁷⁰ Veronica, the only woman who has been politically active, seems to have done so more out of love (first for Rolf and then for Bewerloh), than because of any political commitment of her own. Labeled and sought as a member of the terrorist group, she herself appears disillusioned with their activities. Her disillusionment and fear are again not based on any changed political views but rather arise from maternal instincts toward her son, a quality which allows her to become for Böll a positive figure. Thus Veronica ultimately returns her son to Germany and to his father with the warning that the boy needs psychological counseling (404)⁷¹ — a concern which subsequent events bear out. She herself, after apparently leaving on a terrorist mission, as her rigged bicycle would indicate, turns herself in, but only after having demonstrated the ineffectualness of any security attempt to thwart terrorist acts.⁷²

Katharina, Rolf's companion and the mother of his second child Holger II, points up the difference in the attitudes and behavior of the generations. Though she, like her father, is an admitted communist, she has no intention of becoming actively involved in society, and informs Tolm: "... es ist auch falsch, irreführend und viel zu romantisch, wenn du mich in die zwanziger Jahre zurücksetzen willst: ich gehöre nicht dahin, gehöre nicht zu den Ks, die du gekannt hast..." (177). Her role is solely that of nurturing, her sphere of influence is limited to her family, to those who enter the doors of her home, and to the neighbors in her village.⁷³

Only the terrorists are politically engaged, and it is clear that, for Tolm, and for Böll, their actions place them beyond the fringe of acceptable political or human behavior, and no attempt is made in the text to provide insight into their thought processes or motivations. The option of responsible political behavior and the opportunity for affecting change in society are not presented as viable options in the novel.

The second generation in *Belagerung* presents a very fragmented image — Tolm himself identifies seven distinct groupings: the groups he identifies with his son Herbert, his son-in-law Fischer, and his son Rolf, and the apathetic, the addicted, the decadent, and, of course, the terrorists (348). Not only is the last group incomprehensible for Tolm, who thinks of them as children of another planet, another world (54), but indeed the entire new generation is puzzling to him: “Das blieb ihm rätselhaft, wie sich das so hatte entwickeln können, wo sie doch alle, alle — Rolf und Katharina und Veronica und sogar dieser Bewerloh — noch vor zehn Jahren wirklich religiös, fast kirchlich gewesen waren...” (54). While Tolm recognizes a bond of familiarity: “Und doch wurde ihm nicht der Tee, den er bei ihnen trank, fremd ...; sie waren doch seine Kinder und irdisch waren doch Tee, Brot, Suppe und Äpfel,” his children remain alien to him, and he even senses in himself a certain fear which stemmed from “diese überirdische Fremdheit in ihren Gedanken und Werken. Kälte wars nicht — Fremdheit, aus der heraus natürlich einer plötzlich schießen oder Granaten werfen konnte...” (54f.). Nowhere is the generation gap more clearly revealed in Böll’s *oeuvre* than here.

Yet Tolm’s decision to disassociate himself from the paper and from his public role⁷⁴ is essentially in line with the attitudes and decisions of his own children and reinforces from yet another perspective the disillusionment with society which marks the lives of Herbert, Rolf, and Veronica. The appropriateness of Tolm’s decision is affirmed by his son Rolf, who, reflecting over his father’s life, concludes: “Am besten hätte der Vater sich wohl auf Kinderhände und Kunstgeschichte beschränkt, nicht das Blättchen und schon gar nicht das Schloß” (238f.)⁷⁵ His comments raise the issue of the validity of Tolm’s initial choice and even imply that the goals had been inappropriate. Thus Tolm’s decision now appears, not unlike Heinrich Fähmel’s, to be a rejection of a life of pretense and false appearances, an expression of disdain for the false world of public attention and adoration, monetary success and social prestige and to mark a return to simplicity, familial intimacy and warmth.

In its nature and its ramifications, Tolm’s conclusion that he should have chosen not the public arena, but the private world of aesthetic appreciation, that he never should have pursued the career of newspaper publisher but rather should have become a museum director or an art historian contrasts sharply with the call for social involvement at the end of *Billard*. Tolm’s decision is clearly antithetic to Heinrich Fähmel’s decision and to the thrust of the earlier novel. In the world of *Belagerung*, however, it represents a reaffirmation of Tolm’s more authentic self, and his withdrawal becomes a return to the traditional values of home and hearth.

It is appropriate to the mood of the two works, that the closing scene of *Billard* combines a family celebration with an articulation of the family members’ intention to embark upon more active roles in the contemporary world and that *Belagerung* ends with a private, unpublicized funeral⁷⁶ and the decision to return to the private sphere. Tolm’s attendance at Bewerloh’s funeral, rather than at the state burial of a colleague, although it is a conscious political act, signifies the end of his career as president of the association, a choice Tolm makes consciously and willingly. It is, in effect, the beginning of his retirement and marks a move toward greater social isolation. The bleakness of the scene and the news of the burning of their estate and the flight of their daughter with which Fritz and Käthe Tolm are confronted is lightened only by his

laughter, initiated by his wife's untraditional response to that news. It is a laughter which underscores their bond and expresses his relief that the threat of terrorism has been lifted. The fear which he supposedly had lost in the opening page has finally been dispelled; peace has been restored to the family, if not to the world.

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- 1 For the significance of time in *Billard*, cf. Robert C. Conard, *Heinrich Böll* (Boston: Twayne Books, 1981), 130f.

Concerning the time span of *Belagerung*, cf. *Materiellen zur Interpretation von Heinrich Bölls "Fürsorgliche Belagerung"* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1981), p. 25: "Der Roman umfaßt einen Zeitraum von drei Tagen...." In the novel itself, the shortness of the time span is emphasized repeatedly, as for example, in Käthe's remarks (352: "Willst du wirklich ins Museum, heute, einen Tag nach der Wahl"), in her thoughts (373: "der Tag der großen Veränderungen..."), and in Beibl's confession to Tolm (374: "Präsident für einen Tag").

The events reported in the novel, however, seem difficult to compress within such a two or three day period: the novel begins in the late afternoon shortly after Tolm's election and encompasses the fatal conversation under the umbrella, the subsequent tracking down of Bewerloh and his death, the return of the child, the appearance of news pictures of Bewerloh's death, Veronika's surrender, the burning of the Tolm home, and the funeral of Bewerloh.

- 2 In the two rather substantial discussions of this novel, (Therese Poser, "Heinrich Böll: *Billard um halbzehn. Möglichkeiten des modernen deutschen Romans*, ed. Rolf Geisler, 3rd ed. Frankfurt am Main: Moritz Diesterweg, 1968, pp. 232-255; Klaus Jeziorkowski, *Rhythmus und Figur* Bad Homburg: Gehlen, 1968), the role of 'game' has been treated, but in both cases it is associated primarily with the phenomenon of time.
- 3 His identification of "Spiel" is substantiated by the frequency with which that word occurs in association with Heinrich, a feature noted by Jeziorkowski, pp. 195ff.
- 4 *Billard um halbzehn* (Köln, Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1959), p. 90. Subsequent page references to this edition will be indicated in the text.
- 5 Speaking of his participation in the men's glee club, Heinrich commented to himself:

sie würden meinem Lachen nicht anmerken, daß ich nicht darüber lachte, sondern über sie ... ich lachte mein Lachen, hier oben am Fenster und wußte immer noch nicht, war es Haß oder Verachtung? Nur eines wußte ich: es war nicht nur Freude (97).

His sense of distance from them is also clear in his answer to his own question as to why he came to the city: "Ich glaube, ich wollte nur über sie lachen, wollte ihnen am Ende zurufen: es war doch nicht ernst" (276).

- 6 Johanna, who had earlier discovered in Heinrich "das Lachen, tief drinnen verborgen," was the first to notice, and to question this source of resilience: "er trug das heimliche Lachen in sich wie eine Feder; war er ihre Beute oder sie die seine?" (132).
- 7 Heinrich überquerte die Ozeane Vergangenheit und Gegenwart und drang, durch Einsamkeit vorm Versinken gesichert, tief in die eisige Kälte der Zukunft, hatte als eiserne Ration sein Lachen mit ... (117).
- 8 Jeziorkowski also discusses Johanna's game-playing and notes the frequency of the word *Spiel* in relationship to her. However, here, as with Heinrich and Robert, he treats *Spiel* as primarily a manipulation of time.
- 9 Ironically it is just these letters 'x,y,z' which reveal Robert's role in the destruction of the abbey (Cf. 217) and precipitate Joseph's career dilemma — architect and builder, statician and mathematical consultant, or even demolition expert — all three professions established in his family and based on the same knowledge and on analysis of the potentials of 'xyz' and their relationships.

- 10 Heinrich occasionally also noted geometric patterns in the world about him: waiters moved from table to table in a circle, playing Regentry and Withdrawal Patterns on societal Inter in einem bestimmten Winkel zum Salzfaß" (83). However, the manner of perceiving the world in geometric or mathematical terms is primarily identified with Robert and serves to characterize his manner of perception. Jeziorkowski errs when he seeks to identify this technique with Böll's narrative style in the novel *per se*, associating it with the other "billiard-game structures" in the work. There is a distinct difference in Böll's presentation of reality as seen by Robert and that, for example, of his mother, his children, and Schrella.
- 11 Johanna, who spoke of the "heimliches Lachen" which nourished Heinrich, noted a similar secret quality and sustenance in Robert — "der sich immer von Geheimnissen nährte" (133). His internal sources of energy, however, were not accompanied by external gaiety or apparent conviviality. The flair which Heinrich exhibited in his game of life with his coquettish gait, his appreciative eye for a pretty girl or an attractive hat, and his conviviality, are noticeably missing in his son — "Robert war immer klug und kühl und nie ironisch" (103f.). Heinrich recalls. Instead of the glee clubs and the music of dances or jiggs which punctuated Heinrich's life, Robert's music is provided by the cold tones of thudding billiard balls, "Musik ohne Melodie" (79), a monotonous music he equates once with a Gregorian chant (240) and whose coldness even his father noted (112).

- 12 He records and recalls repeatedly his father's gait — "die kokette Kurve": his mother's typical hand gesture — "eine demütige Figur": his brother Otto's marching feet tapping out "Feindschaft, Feindschaft": the manner in which his mother and his daughter brushed hair from their foreheads. He himself admits:

Erinnerungen an Menschen und Ereignisse waren immer mit Erinnerungen an Bewegungen verknüpft gewesen, die mir als Figur im Gedächtnis geblieben war... Nicht wie Ferdi ausgesehen hatte, sondern wie er ein Streichholz anzündete, wie er den Kopf leicht hob, ...Schrellas Stirnfalten, die Bewegung seiner Schultern, Vaters Gang, Mutters Gebärden, Großmutter's Handbewegungen ... (62ff.).

Recalling his escape and the pain he had suffered, Robert describes his condition as a "Zustand der Besinnungslosigkeit, in dem Bewegungen, Farben, Geräusche aus tausend Erinnerungen sich ineinander verfangen, übereinander lagerten," concluding, "bunte Chiffren von wechselnder Farbe, wechselnden Gefälle, wechselnder Richtung, wurden vom Schmerz aus mir herausgeschleudert" (65).

- 13 Erinnerungen an Bewegungen setzten sich in Linien um, die sich zu Figuren fügten; grüne, schwarze, rote Figuren waren wie Kardiogramme, die Rhythmen einer bestimmten Person darstellten ... (65).
- 14 With a touch of arrogance Robert noted that the others "...wußten nicht, daß es Formeln gab, die man anwenden, Waagen, auf denen man Bälle wiegen konnte. Nur ein bißchen Physik, ein bißchen Mathematik und Übung" (42).
- 15 Only in Holland, where Robert had found refuge and where he frequently returned for brief visits, was his playing billiards associated with an atmosphere of sociability and conviviality.
- 16 "Sprengen ist nur die Umkehrung der Statik," he stated in his explanation to the American officer (175).
- 17 Robert's subsequent comment — "Vielleicht war es nur ein Spaß, ein Spiel" — evoked the response: "Komische Späße, komische Spiele treibt ihr hier" (175).

The motivation behind Robert's destruction of the abbey is a complex one, in which his intellectual fascination with mass and energy and the pleasure and satisfaction with which he viewed the operation of the laws of physics and mathematics joined with his personal conscience, his own sense of justice, and his desire to avenge the innocent. That he was awarded a military honor for knowingly following his

- 18 Interestingly enough, both Heinrich and Robert employ the word *Spiel* in reference to the abbey, which assumes such central importance for the Fählmel family, and the novel. For Heinrich, the competition for the winning design for the abbey was “das große Los,” “das erste große Spiel” of his life. Years later, Robert, as mentioned above, also used the word *Spiel* in reference to its destruction.

- 19 Thus Schrella, observing Robert's reaction to the death of a comrade and compatriot, noted:

[Robert] kam nicht über Ferdis Tod hinweg, ließ seine Rachege-danken zu Formeln gefrieren, als sehr leichtes Gepäck trug er sie im Hirn, genaue Formeln, trug sie durch Feldwebel — und Offiziersquartiere, sechs Jahre lange, ohne zu lachen (241).

- 20 Heinrich, too, referred to the “strengen Liturgie meines Tageslaufs” (121) and associates his assumed behavioral pattern with *Formel*: “ ‘ großzügig, aber nicht verschwenderisch’ aufzutreten; das hatte ich irgendwo gelesen und für eine gute Formel befunden” (88). Recalling his successful career, Heinrich says of himself: “Ich ... las die Algebra der Zukunft aus meinen Formeln, die sich zu Figuren auflösten” (90).

Formel is associated, as well, with Robert's brother Otto, and in that manifestation is totally negative. Robert, thinking of his brother, notes:

... hinter dieser breiten, blassen Stirn war die Macht in ihrer einfachsten Formel wirksam ... sogar in diesem Hirn war Macht schon Formel geworden, ... vollzog sich automatisch...” (148f.).

- 21 A comparison of Heinrich's and Robert's daily schedules, however, reveals that Heinrich's was far less severe, and less mechanical. Heinrich's self-commentary evidences one difference: “Er hatte die Ordnung immer geliebt und nie gehalten” (76) and the reader may be tempted to add that Robert had always consistently maintained order, but never loved it.

Heinrich's daily ritual was part of his game with life — as the following passage indicates:

Um fünf ... machte [ich] meinen planmäßigsten Feierabendspaziergang ... ging jeden Tag vier Kilometer, eine Stunde lang, immer den gleichen Weg um die gleiche Zeit: sie sollten mich sehen, sollten mich immer um die gleiche Zeit und den gleichen Ort sehen (111f.).

In Robert's case, ritual seemed to replace living. His preoccupation with game, as well as the differences in this context with his father, are also clearly evident in the vocabulary associated with the figures. (Cf. Jeziorkowski, pp. 195ff.)

- 22 On another occasion, as well, reference is made to the extent and external success of Robert's playing-the-game, as the question is posed.

... gab es wirklich einmal den Hauptmann, der Robert Fählmel hieß, dersich im Kasinojargon so gut auskannte, Gepflogenheiten so präzise exerzierte, pflichtgemäß die Frau des rangältesten Offiziers zum Tanz aufforderte, mit knapper Stimme Toaste auszubringen verstand; auf die Ehre unseres geliebten deutschen Volkes: Sekt, Ordonnanz (250).

- 23 It is characteristic, as Jeziorkowski points out, that Chapter 9, which presents Schrella's trip through the city, is the only chapter, “das eine memorierende Figur völlig ohne Partner darstellt.” Jeziorkowski, p. 130.

- 24 Cf. Conard, pp. 135ff., and Hans Joachim Bernhard, *Die Romane Heinrich Bölls* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1973), pp. 210ff.

- 25 Of all the characters presented in any breadth, Marianne is the only one to disavow game-playing from the outset, and her consistently positive portrayal adds support to the novel's thematic concern with the rejection of game as a way of life.
- 26 Though she could not be persuaded by her brother into believing that the bodies they watched being taken from the bombed buildings were sick people being dispatched to the hospitals, Ruth pretended to accept his explanation. Similarly, though she had witnessed the teacher's theft of the children's lunches, she, terrorized, did not denounce him, but rather played along with his accusations. She perceived her grandmother's insanity as a lie, but made no attempt to understand the motivation behind the pretense, or its nature: "Ihre Verrücktheit ist Lüge, Trauer hinter dicken Mauern, ich kenne das, betrinke mich auch oft daran und schwimme in Lüge dahin" (252), she admits, yet almost stubbornly insists: "ich will Großmutter nicht verstehen, ich will nicht..." (254). (She is similarly aware of her father's culpability in the abbey's destruction, but maintains a silence of near indifference.)
- 27 Cf. Conard, pp. 138f., for discussion of Johanna's act.
- There is no precedent for Johanna's action, except for one incident years earlier at a reception during the period of hard times. On that occasion she had broken the pattern of pretense, apparently unable to maintain her assumed attitude in the face the external realities and in a sudden outburst had hurled insults upon the Kaiser's name.
- 28 For variant interpretations of the conclusion of the novel, cf. Bernhard, pp. 215ff. and Conard, pp. 140f.
- 29 "Es ist der Tag und die Stunde, falschen Nachbarschaftsgefühlen zu entsagen." Heinrich announces, a decision with which Robert agrees (303).
- Earlier in the day the celebration scheduled for Hotel Kroner had been moved to his atelier, much to the dismay of the hotel staff (284f.)
- 30 This gesture, — Heinrich's silent act of handing his son the cupula of the pastry abbey at the reception — rather than an act of forgiveness (Cf. Poser, p. 246), is a sign of recognition and esteem.
- 31 Cf. Conard, p. 131.
- 32 In addition, ambiguity surrounds the false calculations for a n important government construction project. When Leonore relayed Schrit's urgent message to him, Robert appeared neither surprised nor concerned, an attitude which raises the question whether he might not already have taken another conscious step toward political activism.
- 33 " 'Ich werde nicht zur Einweihung kommen', dachte Robert, 'weil ich nicht versöhnt bin, nicht versöhnt mit den Kräften, die Ferdis Tod verschuldeten, und nicht mit denen, die Ediths Tod verschuldeten und Sankt Severin schonten ...' " (248).
- " 'Ich werde nicht kommen, ehrwürdiger Vater', dachte der Alte, 'denn ich würde hier stehen nur als ein Denkmal meiner selbst, nicht als der, der ich bin: ein alter Mann, der seiner Sekretärin heute morgen den Auftrag gab, sein Denkmal zu bespuken ... ich bin nicht versöhnt mit meinem Sohn Otto, der nicht mehr mein Sohn war, sondern nur die Hülle meines Sohnes; und mit Gebäuden ... kann ich keine Versöhnung feiern' " (248).
- 34 Heinrich wonders, "was wirst du tun, Joseph, wenn du dreißig bist? Wirst du deines Vaters Büro für statische Berechnungen übernehmen: bauen oder zerstören? Formeln sind wirksamer als Mörtel" (249), and Schrella, noting that Joseph, "des Mörtelgeruchs überdrüssig, sucht die Formel für die Zukunft anderswo als im geflickten Gemäuer von Sankt Anton," poses the question to Robert: "Wirst du ihm die Formel geben können?" (293)
- 35 Although the future of the young Fähmels is undetermined — Schrella even comments to Robert, "...du weißt noch nicht, was Joseph und Ruth einmal werden ... nicht einmal bei Kindern von Edith und dir bist du sicher" (228) —, one might assume that Joseph with Marianne's guidance will not partake of the

sacrament. University of Dayton Review, Vol. 17, No. 2 [1985], Art. 11 their rejection of game-playing as a way of life. On the other hand, there are indications that Ruth has chosen the role of accommodation and accepted a life of game-playing, a choice which seems to guarantee success in the society depicted in the novel.

- 36 Schrella, in explaining his decision to leave Germany again, comments: "ich glaube eher, daß ich hier nicht leben könnte, weil ich immer vollkommen unpolitisch war und es noch bin" (227). Yet he cites as a basis for his concern for Germany's future, not the nature of those who were attending the political banquets in the hotel, but rather the absence of those who would present the counter force to those *Büffel*. Ironically he fails to judge his own departure from that perspective.
- 37 The word occurs in *Billard* in reference to Johanna, when Ruth, reflecting about her grandmother and her assumed insanity, notes: "Ihre Verrücktheit ist Lüge, Trauer hinter dicken Mauern" (252).
- 38 *Fürsorgliche Belagerung* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1979), p. 116. Subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.
- 39 Where the vitality of Heinrich is inherent to his portrayal, Tolm's frailty is emphasized. Cf. pp. 114f.
Cf. Marcel Reich-Ranicki's description of Tolm: "... ein alter und gebrechlicher Mann, dem das Gehen schwerfällt, der sich ohne Hilfe seines Dieners nicht recht an- oder ausziehen kann, und er befürchtet, er werde demnächst auf einen Rollstuhl angewiesen sein..." Reich-Ranicki, *Entgegnung* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1981), p. 138.
- 40 The information was apparent trivia — Heinrich's keen sense of style in selecting shoes for women and fact that he used to help Veronika select her shoes (342f.).
- 41 Others are also pulled into the web with at least temporarily disastrous results. Thus a neighbor's illicit relationship is discovered, leading to an unwanted scandal, an unwanted divorce and an only partially wanted marriage.
Böll himself addressed this subject: "Das sind Menschen, die weder als Terroristen gelten, noch so prominent sind, daß sie bewacht werden müssen, sondern die einfach dadurch, daß sie Nachbarn, Verwandte, Bekannte, Freunde einer dieser Gruppen sind, in das Sicherheitsnetz reingeraten und in ihrem Privatleben gefährdet werden." He refers to such individuals as "sicherheitsgeschädigt," as opposed to those who, like the elder Tolms, are "in ihrer Sicherheit gefährdet" and those who, like Rolf, Veronica and Herbert Brewer, are perceived as "sicherheitsgefährdend." *Materialien*, p. 30.
Böll has had personal experience with surveillance, since both he and one of his sons have been under such scrutiny as potential harborers of "terrorists." Cf. Christine Gabriele Hoffmann, *Heinrich Böll* (Hamburg: Cecile Dressler Verlag, 1977), pp. 121ff., p. 145.
Concerning Böll's personal, and controversial involvement in the issue of attitudes toward and press treatment of terrorists, cf. Frank Grützbach, ed., *Freies Geleit für Ulrike Meinhof. Ein Artikel und seine Folgen* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972).
- 42 Fritz Tolm's reference to a possible threat from a flying bird, "die Bombe per Vogelflug," recalls Johanna's description of the schrapnel which caused Edith's death in *Billard*, a connection which is emphasized by the repetition of the phrase "Wildgänse rauschen durch die Nacht" (164) which was a leitmotif in that earlier novel.
- 43 Thus Tolm notes: "... ich bilde mir schon lange nicht mehr ein, daß es Sicherheit gibt, innere oder äußere, auch keine Sicherheit in meinem Innern" (164).

Böll openly admits his interest in this theme: "Ich wollte die Gefangenschaft der Überwachten, zu denen einer seiner Söhne gehört, und zu den Bewachten, zu denen er selber gehört, die Übergänge

zwischen Überwacht und Gehwacht darstellen, weil ich das wirklich für eines der wichtigsten, aktuellsten Phänomene und Probleme unserer Gegenwart halte" *Materialien*, p. 16.

The irony in the fact that all such security measures proved worthless cannot escape the reader — not only did Veronica slip through despite all precautions and despite the information and analysis provided by Rolf, but her son Holger I under the closest surveillance was still able to set fire to the Tolm residence.

44 He had made good use of this same glibness in earlier days as well: "Er hatte wieder in die nur scheinbar improvisierte Eleganz zurückgefunden, die ihm vor mehr als vierzig Jahren im Oberseminar bei Truckler so nützlich gewesen war; die er später bei zahlreichen Redaktionskonferenzen hatte anwenden können..." (12).

45 In an interview, Böll described Tolm as "ein schwacher Mensch, der wirtschaftlich sehr stark ist ... von dieser Sorte, ... die einfach in eine Situation hineinwachsen, wachsen im wörtlichen Sinn, auch im Sinn von wirtschaftlichem Wachstum, und in eine Rolle gedrängt werden. Für mich ist das Interessante an dieser Figur, daß er die Rolle fast widerwillig übernimmt, aber er übernimmt sie.

Er spielt sie brillant — er weiß aber auch, daß er sie spielt —, und das finde ich das Reizvolle an dieser Kapitalistenfigur, er spielt sie brillant zur Überraschung derjenigen, die ihn gewählt haben." *Materialien*, p. 15.

46 This pattern seems to have characterized every aspect of his life. A war injury was serious enough to remove him from the front to a hospital in Dresden, where he found Käthe. His spotless political record during the Nazi years, which similarly seems more the result of chance than a conscious decision, had guaranteed him the right to publish the paper after the war, an opportunity which in turn became the keystone of his subsequent success. His record was as "unheimlich" for him, as it was "unbegreiflich" for the English officials (117), and, while reaffirming that he had not been a Nazi, he wonders if it were not merely a matter of chance: "Direkten Druck hatte er nie gespürt, and wußte bis heute nicht, ob und wie weit er diesem Druck nachgegeben hätte" (117).

47 His one decisive action seems to have been during the service, when he told his men to run as soon as they saw the Russian troops, a command which was never reported to his superiors, much to his relief at the time (115f.).

48 One must admit that the reader also has no clue as to the reason for his selection (with the possible exception of the insight provided by Bleibl's thoughts [315f.]). The vagueness surrounding the nature of the "association" (the term used in the English translation, *The Safety Net* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982]), Tolm's past role in that organization, and the reason for his selection as its president is never clarified and may be seen as a weakness of the novel. Cf. Reich-Ranicki (p. 139):

Kann man sich vorstellen, daß es einem solchen Mann gelungen ist, eine außerordentliche Karriere zu machen und ein "Lizenz-Napoleon ohne Armee" zu werden? Ja, man kann es sich vorstellen, nur muß er dann über andere hervorragende Fähigkeiten verfügen, er muß wohl ein glänzender Organisator sein, ein tüchtiger Kaufmann, ein harter und raffinierter Unternehmer. Indes ist auch davor bei Bölls wehleidig meditierendem Tolm nichts zu merken.

This issue, however, is not thematically essential to the novel itself.

49 Böll's concern with the nature and impact of the news media was a central theme of his earlier novel *Die verlorene Ehe der Katherine Blum oder: Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann* (1974) and was foreshadowed by *Ende einer Dienstfahrt* (1966) and *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (1971).

50 Ironically when Schrella reviews Robert's life and speculates about Joseph's future, he mentions the hobby of collecting Madonnas in a manner which indicates its negative connotation for him: "Du

Similarly, Hans Schnier in *Ansichten eines Clowns* decries the pseudo-Christianity of his rival and mentions in this context the latter's collection of Madonnas, a feature he uses to condemn Marie's husband. (This feature gains in significance when the closeness of the two works in Böll's thinking is considered. Cf. *Materialien*, pp. 51f. and 70f.)

- 51 He simply responds: "ich kann mir ja die hundertzwanzig Madonnen nicht herkommen lassen, und sehen will ich sie" (352).
- 52 Thus Bleibl noted: "Tolm mußte das Blättchen jetzt aufgeben, die letzten Illusionen mußten ihm genommen werden. Tolm hatte nun wirklich alle Zügel, auch seine eigenen, schleifen lassen..." (315). His view that Tolm could nevertheless be useful as a figurehead president (316), however, is condescending and tends to support Tolm's negative view of himself.
- The thought that Tolm might also be a "Märtyrer-Figur, jemand, von dem man weiß, er ist eine Art Lockvogel oder ein Opfer, jemand, der abgeschossen werden kann von den Terroristen" (Cf. *Materialien*, p. 14) may be implied, but is not directly addressed in the text.
- 53 Tolm attends Bewerloh's burial, rather than the state funeral of his former colleague, with full knowledge that his presence at the burial of a terrorist would no doubt precipitate his recall as president, a view which Bleibl articulates: "Du weißt, das wird dich den Kopf kosten ..." (373) and which Tolm acknowledges (373, 380).
- 54 Even their descriptions are remarkably similar — thus the reference to her as "diese liebe, alte Frau, die immer hübscher geworden war, immer würdiger im Alter" and "die einzige von all den 'Vorstandsmitgliedsweibern', ... — die wirklich Figur machte, Geschmack hatte und Würde" — would have applied as well to Johanna, although Käthe came from the simplest of homes, Johanna from the most socially respected.
- 55 Robert Stauffer notes that the Tolms bear "Züge von Philemon und Baucis" and refers to them as "sehr sympathische entwickelte Gegenbilder etwa zu einem Zeitungsaren wie Axel Springer," *Materialien*, p. 25. Similarly Reich-Ranicki (p. 141) used the phrase "Böllsch[es] Philemon-und Baucis-Paar."
- 56 Cf. the similar attitude toward their husbands' medals, *Billard*, p. 139, *Belagerung*, p. 413.
- 57 Käthe and Fritz' private scenes, like the one under the umbrella, in their unabashed sentimentality, their degree of personal intimacy, and their revelation of the private sphere which was the core of their common existence, are reminiscent, as well, of the game which Johanna and Heinrich indulged in during his visits to the asylum.
- 58 Her motivations, she notes, are not a concern with public opinion — "Nein, nicht der Skandal — das blinde Verstricktwerden in Aktionen, deren Folgen keiner überschaut, ist das Schlimme" (351f.).
- 59 Her concerns are clearly articulated in her conversation with Tolm in which she relates her success in dissuading Herbert from his plans: "Ich habe ihnen klargemacht, wieviel Ohnmachtsanfälle, Nervenzusammenbrüche, Herzinfarkte das hätte geben können, wie viele Tote — die Krankenwagen blockiert und so weiter und so weiter" (351). Her repetition of her concerns later in the same conversation seems to indicate she speaks here with Böll's own conviction: "... ich habe ihnen das eindringlich vorgeführt, was alles passieren könnte, wenn die Innenstadt plötzlich und für lange blockiert wäre: es hätte Tote gegeben, psychische Schocks mit langwierigen Störungen, Prügeleien" (351).
- Similarly, speaking of Rolf's political activism, she emphasizes the absence of victims: "Schließlich hat Rolf nur ein paar Autos angezündet, in denen garantiert keiner drin saß" (352).
- 60 There is also a tinge of cynicism in her comment: "Und die, dies [sic] treffen soll, trifft es ja nicht: die haben ihre Hubschrauber irgendwo auf einem Hof oder auf dem Dach stehen" (351f).

Pickar: Game Playing, Re-entry and Withdrawal: Patterns on Societal Inter

- 61 The contrast between the attitudes voiced in *Belagerung* and those toward a similar demonstration presented in *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (1971) is striking. In the earlier novel, the sympathies of the ostensible narrator, as well as the protagonist Leni Pfeiffer, are clearly with the demonstration which her son and the Turkish garbage workers undertake. Cf. *Materialien*, p. 64.
- 62 The chronology and the experiences of Tolm indicate he is a contemporary of Robert's, and his children are of the generation of Joseph, Ruth and Marianne.
- 63 Rolf and his family are nevertheless still among the *Überwachte*. The degree of their "innocence" in terms of political involvement bothers Holzpucke, despite Rolf's assurances, his attempts to clarify his position, and his willingness to help the police, which he explains as motivated solely by his desire to protect human life (306).
- 64 In this context, the word *Ritus*, identified with the structured lives of Heinrich and Robert in *Billard*, reoccurs. Rolf describes his evening trip for milk to the neighbors with his son as a "Feierabendritus" (218) and "der abschließende Tagesritus" and makes reference to the "Ritualisierung ihres Lebens" (220).
- 65 Rolf's use of the name Holger for both of his sons is a sign of his conscious disassociation from the dominant society of his day. Böll himself stated, "... die Tatsache, daß er seinen Sohn Holger nennt, nach dem Tod von Holger Meins, macht ihn innerhalb der Gesellschaftsschicht, zu der er von Geburt gehört, zum Unberührbaren" and refers to that as "eines der wichtigsten Themen des Buches." *Materialien*, p. 17.
- 66 Cf. Böll: "... ich glaube, daß er [Rolf] die Situation, seine eigene und die seines Vaters, und die Situation der Gesellschaft, in der er lebt, viel besser überschaut als sein Vater." *Materialien*, p. 16.
- 67 Even in his death, the element of game is unmistakable. Bewerloh with his rigged dynamite, indeed, played a game with death not for amusement, as had Joseph earlier, but as part of his international terrorist activities.
- 68 The description of their simple life, brimming with warmth and love, is clearly idyllic, and their enjoyment of simple foods evokes memories of the life of the *Lämmer* in *Billard*.
- It is an environment in which everyone blossoms. Rolf notes the change in Sabine, who begins to glow with good health and happiness. She is clearly captivated by the rural bliss, announcing: "Dann bleibe ich hier, versorge den Ofen, mache das Essen und denke an unsere Zwölf-Zimmer-Villa bei Malaga, die immer leer steht— ..." (312).
- 69 The figure of the pastor seems to be modeled on Robert's and Schrella's friend Enders (*Billard*, p. 295).
- 70 Sabine's affinity to *Gruppenbild's* Leni Pfeiffer is unmistakable. Thus she is described as "fromm" and "kirchlich", a "schüchterne Schöneit, fast schon Madonna" (256), and as having "eine überraschend kindliche Art" (262). Her personal charm and aura of innocence and beauty is so great, that even the wife of her lover finds her sympathetic and her husband's indiscretion understandable. Furthermore, her attraction and involvement with a policeman are as incomprehensible to others as were Leni's attitudes and relationships to a Russian prisoner-of-war and a *Gastarbeiter*; all three are representatives of groups considered "untouchables" by members of her "class."
- For a mythologized view of Sabine and the role love-triangles play in the novel, cf. *Materialien*, pp. 71ff.
- 71 With her recognition that her son needs love, not just psychological treatment — i.e., needs healing with a loving family — hope is present for him and for all the injured of his generation.
- 72 This behavior, the teasing clues she sends by phone and the game she plays with her own return, marks Veronica as another game-player.
- 73 The situation with all three women is totally in accord with the image of women in Böll's works, where women do not need to be intelligent, just loving, warm, understanding, giving, and, of course, attractive.

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It is an inescapable fact that the more privacy comes understandable, if not justifiable, even though it remains incomprehensible to her more 'old-fashioned' mother. Similarly, this image of women allows Veronica to become a sympathetic figure, since her actions are motivated by her attraction to Bewerloh and by her maternal instincts toward Holger I, and because the desire to protect her son ultimately triumphs.

- 74 The decision to give up the publishing business is not the first evidence of such thinking. Earlier Tolm had thought of selling their estate (298) and of buying a simpler, less ostentatious dwelling in a quiet setting, far from the threats of civilization. The decision is one with which Käthe agrees, as her response indicates: "Es soll schöne alte Pfarrhäuser geben, die könnte man ein bißchen umbauen und modernisieren" (298).
- 75 The text continues: "Das war ein paar Kragenweiten zu anspruchsvoll, zu feierlich — da konnte er doch nicht einfach mehr weggehen, ein Kind an der Hand, durch Felder und Wälder ... da konnte Käthe nur noch mit Mühe selbst kochen, nicht mehr einmachen ..." (239).
- 76 In both cases there is interest in privacy, though both the reasons and the success are strikingly different. The Fähmels chose to enjoy their celebration within the sanctity of the family and that choice reflected their new rejection of a life of gamesmanship. Furthermore, their wishes were respected and they were indeed spared all newspaper coverage. The Tolms' desire for privacy, on the other hand, stems from fear and the need for security, and here, too, their attempts prove ineffectual — they do not escape detection and are photographed by a member of the press as they leave the graveside.