

## Function of Symbols in the Setting of the Novel "The Silent Angel" by Heinrich Boll

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### Abstract

The story atmosphere includes the setting, scene components, and all the descriptions the author uses to further advance the plot, events, and introduction of characters. In a good story, none of the words and parts of the story are futile and are used in the direction of the author's purpose for the artistic treatment of events and characters of the story. In the novel "The Silent Angel" by Heinrich Boll, the author uses tools such as dark and negative color like yellow and black, describes the scenes and people with negative words and uses several statues to create a cool and sober atmosphere of war also confusion and discouragement of people and inconvenient events and shows them more tangible and powerful to the reader of the story. Heinrich Boll, using the power of symbols in colors and words, brings the reader fully into the story atmosphere and creates all the emotions in the reader that can be seen and received from the warrior city and its people.

**Keywords:** Setting, Symbol, The Silent Angel, Heinrich Boll

### Introduction

In a good story all words have their own role and make the components of the fiction such as plot, setting, characters and so on. These words represent the whole story which is the result of interaction between the author's internal and external worlds that are under influence of situation and society circumstances. In these paper we study how world war II as an external effect, has affected on a novel and how a skillful writer uses the literary elements to create wonderful scenes for his novel and throw his readers in the real and sensible pictures.

### Literature and war

Literature is the representation of life and life is the representation of literature. Both have interact with each other and make each other. One of the categories that has existed since the beginning of human history and has always been reflected in the literary works as the way an artist contacts with external world, is the war.

Reflection of this category may has first entered the verse and later in the prose; here, novels and short stories. Any territory that is wanted or unwittingly encountered in war is, of course, affected by the consequences. What is usually represented in the War and Resistance Literature in the world is the resistance of the people and the soldiers, escape, fear, destruction, courage, betrayal, loyalty, and all components that combat and resist an invading force (internal or external) in different shapes.

An artist; painter, writer, poet, and so on, tries to showcase a corner of the war events and its consequences. Sometimes artists who portray the war are opposed, some consider it necessary in the face of an attacker's defense. Sometimes the ruling powers do not allow the publication of certain works due to the fear of their weaknesses or what they consider to be against themselves. In most cases, when the artists live in attacked countries, they capture the war with all their might and desire, depicting the bad attributes for the enemy and good attributes for their country army force. Artists occasionally look at from human perspective and equality of people and their companions and their kind, and these artists try to consider their soldiers and of the enemy and all People, are human friends. They know themselves and "enemy" soldiers, two sides of a spectrum, which were plagued by the excesses of politicians. In these stories, author's country forces help the injured enemies, and enemy forces also refuse to shoot at the author's country forces in some scenes. In some wars stories, sometimes artists from an invading country try to portray war from another point of view so that they can more and more sympathize with the people which their army has attacked. They want to show and say that their people are hurt and not guilty despite the invading state and military force (like Germany).

In all cases, the artist can, through using tools and facilities his/her own, look at the own and special point of view, take a look at different aspects of the events. There are many literary and linguistic tools that has always played an important role in literary works and help the author; one of them is symbol.

### **Literature and symbol**

Every word can help the fiction audience to understand the fiction world better. Sometimes happen that authors cannot or do not want to say something directly. In such a circumstances they use symbols; use some words or situations but mean the others. We can see this issue in "fables"; stories which their characters are animals but the society they illustrate is human society. "In the broadest sense a symbol is anything which signifies something; in this sense all words are symbols. In discussing literature, however, the term "symbol" is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself." (Abrams, 1999, p. 311) It seems the works which use symbols or basically they are symbolic, are more challenging for the audience mind.

As we know there are many components in a literary work; novel, that act together to create a lasting and remarkable manuscript. One of them is "setting" which depends on time and place and any tiny things in the novel' atmosphere. It can just be a "setting": "The overall setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs; the setting of a single episode or scene within such a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place.

When applied to a theatrical production, "setting" is synonymous with décor, which is a French term denoting both the scenery and the properties, or movable pieces of furniture, on the stage." (Abrams, 1999, p. 284) or sometimes do generalize it and known as the atmosphere: "Atmosphere is a general term encompassing the elements of setting, tone, feeling and mood." (Lieberman 1968, 10)

As the novel "The Silent Angel" is a work written about world war II, we need to look at to this war and its influences closer.

### **World War II**

On September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939, Germany attacked Poland, thus World War II begun. The Polish Army was completely backward in the modern equipment, and vice versa. France and Britain, who had security pledges with Poland, declare war on Nazi Germany in accordance with their commitments and with a pre-coordinated action. The war extends across Europe, the Pacific, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and North Africa. In this incident, the countries of the world were divided into two groups: the Axis Powers and Allied Powers.

As a result of this massive war, the Allied Powers won, the United Nations was founded, the Soviet Union and the United States became the two superpowers of the world, and the Cold War began between them. It was the widespread war in which more than 100 million people fought. "Hitler's war" is not a bad title for the Second World War. For he was its architect. But, in fact two wars waged quite separately, though more or less simultaneously, made up the struggle. These could be called the German war and the Japanese war." (Young, 1966, p. 5)

Although Germany was under pressure from the economic point of view, "however, this war was undoubtedly a war of ideas. The Germans deliberately fought for National Socialism. Germany's victories did not merely benefit the border changes, but these victories also consolidated the principles and methods of national-socialist action: "The Germans are the superior race, and all other nations must be humiliated and partly destroyed." (Taylor, 1937, p. 18)

The response of the peoples of the occupied lands to the underground resistance occupation. Underground resistance in all occupied countries has continued to spread despite the differences in the geography of countries. The people showed their courage and were waiting to hear their news. "They, listening to the good news, were listening to the Allied radio programs - to Boston, Moscow, and especially the BBC; they provided this news, with promising messages and then practical guidelines, through the publication of the newsletter. And by distributing newspapers that are published somewhat on a regular basis everywhere." (Henri Michel, 1937, p. 56)

### **German literature and world war II**

In 1933, Hitler came to power in Germany and through the brutal attitudes, he hurt all the cultural aspects of the German people and, consequently, the development of literature. During this twelve years period, the period of stagnation,

Germany's connection with the civilized world was cut off, many writers were exiled, a lots of books burned, all literary activities were heavily controlled. Because of the neutrality of Switzerland, many German and Austrian intellectuals went there and continued to migrate to the United States, the Soviet Union, or Latin America. From the beginning of the twenty dedicate in the reaction to the successful Russian revolution and the emergence of communist movement throughout Europe, the writers were divided into two groups that during the war, polarization became more intense and after the war, became the German Literary Index.

"German literature since world war II revolves almost exclusively around the moral catastrophe of Nazism and its frightful heritage, the physical catastrophe of the war." (Friederich, 1965, p: 279) The beginning of the new post-war literature was based on a young group of German prisoners who published a publication called "Der Ruf" between 1945 and 1946. The group became "47" in the future, and during its 27 years of activity, it had an enormous impact on all aspects of the people's culture. The best writers after the war and the winners of the prestigious awards were members of this group; one of them was Heinrich Böll.

In the early post-war years, the situation of literature and culture was disappointing. The group and well-known writers tried to erase the German language from past pollution, focusing on issues such as death, destruction, destroyed cities, and many soldiers who returned to home, created many works and tried to act in the domain of realism.

"The literature that came directly after the end of the war was deeply influenced by the events of the war and attempted to show the sad, burning face of the war. The question of the fault and responsibility of the German people in this war was raised after some time and to this day, this question has not gone away from the German literature, and remains. Post-war literature had three different paths:

Literature of Immigrants who returned to their homeland.

Literature of writers who remained in the German National Socialist era.

Young Generation Literature." (McClelland, 1374, p. 186-190)

### **The Silent Angel and Heinrich Boll**

"Heinrich Böll was born on December 21, 1917 in Cologne. His father was a carpenter. He studied the German literature, and at the beginning of the war between 1939 and 1945, he abandoned studies at various fronts, went for attendance in the war and several times wounded. After the war, he continued to study and published his short stories in literary magazines. His first long story, "Timely Train," was published in 1949. He received the Nobel Prize in 1972 for novels, stories, radio plays and many articles that he wrote. He died in 1985." (Rahnama, 1376, p. 139-140)

Böll has many novels and short stories. Many of them were published when he was alive but some of them like "The Silent Angel" published years after his death. "In the same year [1951], Group 47 awarded Böll his first literary prize for the story "Die schwarzen Schafe" [Black Sheep], a humorous tale of how a family's black sheep makes good in a hostile bourgeois world." (Conrad, 1981, p. 26) Among the writers ... who appeared in the fifties and have usually gained international recognition with the acknowledgment of the 47th group, the greatest success has been achieved both inside and outside Heinrich Böll. ... Since the beginning of the fifties, his collection of short stories and novels has been admired in East and West Germany.

Because of the prolonged presence of Böll in the war, his stories, are full of live scenes, can be deduced from his own experiences. "The Silent Angel" relies on the issues, patterns and symbols that Böll has touched upon and expanded in his later works. One of its most prominent examples is his rising fustigation against post-war Catholic substandard ideas. ... The novel "The Silent Angel" has a key role among all his works. Regardless of what has been said, this novel also includes the characteristic of returning to homeland and the literature of ruins." (Böll, 2014, p. 218)

This novel was written in 1945 but published 1992. It was the second book Böll wrote. The main character of the story is Hans, a German soldier. He fights in the war. If this escape was to be found in war stories in other war novels, the novels that were written from the invading countries point of view, it would be anti-persuasive, but lit seems that the scape in this story is a positive sign. Hans escapes from a battlefield that his country has been an invader, so he fled to avoid killing innocent people, and this is a positive point; his escape is a representation of resistance, a negative resistance.

The numbed soldier Hans Schnitzler returns to Cologne under an alias to deliver a dead soldier's will to the widow, Elisabeth Gompertz. Hans was supposed to be shot as a deserter, but military court stenographer Willy Gompertz switched jackets with him and was killed instead. Hans's love interest is another war widow, pious Regina Unger, whose baby has been killed by German machine-gun fire just days before they meet. Hans also gets caught up in a dangerous web of intrigue involving a struggle over Gompertz's will waged between Elisabeth and the two-faced Professor Fischer. A lawyer, Goethe scholar and editor of a religious journal, Fischer is also a former Nazi Party member not above filching a 15th-century Madonna from a bombed church. He tries to seize Elisabeth' heritage that her husband put for her. In the other hand, Fisher has an ill daughter who Regina sells her blood for her without knowing Regina and Fisher each other.

Reading this novel, it seems to be somehow a symbolic novel. "As tight and reflexive as poems, symbolist novels insinuate their meanings by a concert of elements. Images, allusions, hints, changes of rhythm, and tone in short, all the devices of suggestion support and sometimes carry the principal burden." (Tindall, 1955, p. 68) Studying symbols can help to understand the novel better.

### **Symbolic components:**

#### **1. The Church**

The Most part of the story and description of setting happens in the church. So many elements from the church like candle and bell can be the part of church symbol. Church could be the symbol of religion and calmness. In spite of these meaning, darkness and unpleased color like black and yellow, also ruined place and presence of ill and dead people, all in the church make the church atmosphere the opposite, so, negative. "Böll's moral response to the events of history was shaped in his childhood by devout Catholic parents who reared their children with respect for Christian teachings as embodied in The Sermon on the Mount and Christ's command to love one's neighbor as oneself, but with a critical attitude to the church as an institution." (Conrad, 1981, p. 18-19)

#### **2. Angel statue**

The description of the stone angel statue is a description of the atmosphere of the war: a gentle and painful smile, dark hair and dark faces, a wavy hairless, chalky smile (first, Hans finds a gentle smile on the statue's face, but over again It blows away the dust from the sculpture, the cold and stony face emerges.)

Fischer, who finds the precious Saint Mary's sanctuary in the church's barn and invaluable possessions, is very happy and "for the first time came to the conclusion that the main foundation of religion was the sacredness of Mary, which people brought to it; the sweet and strange praise that he has hate it up to now, for no reason at all ..." (Böll, 1393, p. 125)

The term *angel* literally means "messenger," and it is in this prominent role that angels take part in the Christmas story. Understandably, images of angels have become a familiar symbol of Christmas. Several references throughout the Bible imply that angels have assignments not only to people, but to churches, nations and even. In positive point of view can be said that it is necessary to believe in religion in order to survive and return to religion.

#### **3. Blood**

In Fischer mind, Mary is a cool word and fetus is an unpleasant word that is Mary's companion. Perhaps Dr. Fischer hated the fetus because of his daughter's illness. When Fischer pays money from a bullfighter to someone who has given blood to his daughter, he thinks that money has sweet smell: "A sweet trash which reminded him the concept of a brothel, but at that moment he realized that it is the smell of blood, the blood smell, the very sweet and soft smell of the blood." (Böll, 1393, p. 132)

"Blood as Mephistopheles reminds Faust, "is an altogether singular juice". A substance so vital to human life and so striking in appearance is bound to have many symbolic meanings. From the time of Hippocrates to very recent times, blood was taken as one of the four vital fluids or "humors" whose balance is essential to human health and sanity. Blood, according to Burton, is "a hot, sweet, temperate, red humor". Occasionally in classical poetry "blood" can refer to a person. Christ's blood is the blood of sacrifice, renewing the "blood of the covenant": "This cup [of wine]," he says, "is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Ferber, 1999, p. 29-31)

From above symbolic meaning for blood, in this story we can see, the word "sweet", Fischer hints. Also Mrs. Unger, gives her blood to Fischer daughter and she feel faint; so, one person gives her blood it means her life, so other person gets the blood, gets the life; for surviving and being one, one should sacrifice.

Why is money, which is called "trash" by Fisher, is reminds him the "brothel"? Is he has had many relationships with women? A person who claims is a religious one and preserves the statue of Mary? Blood and money are two categories of politics and war. Fischer is a man who publishes a religious journal and has been a member of the Nazi Party, and also has influential friends in the church. Here one can consider the relationship between political and religious institutions and their relationship with war. Sweet prayer, sweet smell of money and sweet smell of blood symbolize the concepts of religion, power and politics and war.

#### 4. Colors

The atmosphere described in the story is an urban atmosphere in the war. Words that are used to describe the scenes of the story, especially the church, are negative words (yellow and black, dirty and dirty, dirt and debris, unpleasant smell, etc.) and very frequent in this story, especially yellow and black, repetitive, which, along with the above words, helps to create a bloated, undesirable and warlike atmosphere. An example of this war-torn urban conditions can be found here:

"Soiled and dirty glasses, muddy stairs, dark yellow / yellow light / ... The abstract fluid constantly grew larger and blended with mud and slipped the stairs like the floor of the aquarium." (Böll, 1393, p. 10) "Everywhere was filled with layers of plaster and mortar. Filled with pieces of stone, bricks, rubbish and things that come around after every air attack." (Böll, 1393, p. 111) "The unpleasant smell of hot water, onions, and so on." (Böll, 1393, p. 111)

Yellow candle with iron base / black box Aunts / light yellow and wider / Fingers and fingers with broken nails / Uneven and ugly wall / puddle muddy mud / smell and foxy in the corridor / smell Pungent smoke / Soak smoke and soap / Smell of ghastly ash and hazelnut / Smell of spicy sweat, Piss and heat of bed / Smell heavy Moisture / Large wall and yellow / Burned black wall / Yellow and large smoke / yellow / black striped scarves / white and rubber gloves that were bloody and black / water with chlorine and nausea / odorless chapped eyes / grim eyes / cattle Strangers and dirty stones / candles Yellow and curved meadow and NATO / wet dirt and black / yellow notebook / On the way of Mrs Gompertz's home, people were dirty and Bored. Dirty / dirty pots / dirt-stubborn dogs / Mrs. Gompertz's house: Burned and black house, scattered clothes, couched and chairs, piano-ling and mustache-like veins, in the room of Mrs. Gompertz, the statue of Mary, The dress is black / a very large and black statue of Jesus Christ crucified ... "( Böll, 1393: 111)

Yellow and black colors are repeated abundantly and frequently in this story so it can be sparkling: "Yellow is the warmest, most dispersed and burnt color, and hardly can be turned off. Yellow always violates the framework that it contains, just as the sun's rays pass through the sky and show God's power in the other world.

Yellow is eternity, just as gold is an eternity metal. Both are the basis of Christian rituals. ... Catholic priests among these golds and yellows direct the dead to eternal life. All ghost guideers use yellow more often, including Mitra, and also, in many oriental traditions, hell dogs, including dogs Yellow Zand Avesta ... Yellow indicates the decline, aging and proximity of death, and eventually replaces black. .... On the other hand, yellow is in relation to black, because it is antagonistic or complementary. ... In the Chinese symbolism of yellow, it comes out of black." (Chevalier, 1378, p. 450-451)

As can see, this color is also associated with the pastor and the environment in which the elements of theology, namely, the angel, the church and the death, means the conversion of the church to the hospital and the death of the people, as well as the application of these two colors together and in similar scenes, the connective rings which link between war and death. Black symbolism is often described as "cold", "negative", and "inhale" of all colors, and is associated with primitive darkness and primitive darkness.

"Thus, when black is considered at the lowest point in the earth, it is a sign of absolute passivity, a stage of complete death and absolute stagnation ... the black is the color of mourning, the mourning is not at the white but more demanding than that. In the science of discernment and symbols, the black color means sand, indicating its affinity to sterilized soil, which is often overshadowed by yellow, and often substitutes black. Black is a reminder of death, in the mourning quarters and special priests' clothing, in the funeral or in the holy mass of Christians." (Chevalier, 1378, p. 685-693)

As seen, black and yellow have negative meaning and connect to each other and has connected with death and Cristian. The church covered by darkness, black and yellow color, became a place for death.

## 5. Iris

The stone angel, is repeatedly viewed from the beginning of the story and is described in various forms and in different scenes. It has an "Iris" in its hand: "Iris, in the Greek mythology was the godfather of the gods, and especially the messenger of Zeus and Hera. She was also a woman of Hermes. Like Hermes, winged, legs and teats, a winged half-foot on a foot and a bowl, a rainbow-colored dress, and flown in the air. Iris was the symbol of the rainbow, and in the general order of the interface between the earth and the earth, and between the gods and men. .... "(Chevalier, 1378, p. 316/1)

Thus, the Iris, with the divine representation beside the angel, which is a supernatural and divine element, has a strong connection between this war, death and the other world, in such a story which half-dozen episodes happen in the church, connected with the priests and the nuns. The story, as it is seen, begins with the death and a war-torn city, and also the rescue of Hans by the death of Mr. Gompertz instead of him, and finally by the death of Mrs. Gompertz; there is death in beginning and end of the story.

## Conclusion

The story of the "The Silent Angel", based on the aforementioned materials as anti-war stories, can be called an "anti-war novel". All symbolic components; the church, Angel statue, colors, blood and iris are connected to gether in negative way and make a strong negative atmosphere, All of them related to death. The "angel" is an element of superficiality and, of course, a name and an adjective used for women. In this story, Hans, a German runaway soldier and a protagonist, at the beginning, encounter with an angel statue with a cool, chalky smile. Mrs. and Mr. Gompertz, the family of the devotee of this story, die; Mr. Gompertz is dead at the beginning of the story, and Mrs. Gompertz died at the end of the story.

There are also German military who have killed the child of Regina unintentionally. All of these cases are spelled out. Homeland (Germany, Regina is its symbol) like a mother has lost her son (Regina's child is the symbol of all innocent were killed in the war), and Hans, the symbol of the German army, now defeated and dismembered, returns to live with her mother, who is no longer has any child.

The angel bring messages from heaven to universe and establishes the relationship between the earth and the heaven. An angel who now has not a real smile due to the German invasion, has not brought a message to the German people. An angel who has been silent may show that the sky, which is the place of faith, hope and belief of the people, does not do anything for this earth (Germany) and its people because it is either incapacitated (like passive statue) Or has turned back from this land and its people.

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