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The Symbolic Use of Color in Heinrich Böll's *Billard um halbzehn*

Gertrud Bauer Pickar

The central role of the billiard table and the game played upon it within Böll's novel has significant ramifications, among them the initiation of a color system, which is subsequently employed consistently throughout the novel. In the course of the text, the reader's attention is focused repeatedly upon the billiard table and upon the red and white balls rolling over its green surface. Indeed, the words "weiß über grün, rot über grün, rot-weiß über grün" serve as a refrain which becomes one of the key leitmotifs in the work. They establish as well a trio of colors which prove to be of continuing importance and which, together with additional colors, assume symbolic dimensions in the novel.¹

The color green, projected into a primary position among the colors in the novel by the felt upon which the red and white billiard balls roll, is the first to be discussed. Of all the colors which achieve symbolic significance within the work or which re-occur in the text as motifs, green is perhaps the most significant; not surprisingly, it is also the color which appears most frequently in the text by name.

The image of the green rectangle arising from its prime association with the billiard table is recalled throughout the novel in references to a number of green areas more or less defined as quadrangles. The glass door of the Hotel Kroner is described as "innen mit grüner Seide bespannt,"² and in its restaurant waiters dressed in green walk over green carpet runners, past tables with green table cloths. The menus similarly are covered in green leather, and food and drink are served from green trays. Green quadrangles appear in other situations as well. Mention is made of a table "mit dem grünen Filz" in the abbey, and the wooden bench in the Kilb roof garden is green. The roof garden itself, the park visible from the upper stories of the Kilb residence, the ball park, the grounds of the asylum, and the fields near the demolished bridge, though less defined, serve as extended projections of the billiard table. Expanded versions of that table surface, they, too, function as playing fields for different games which in turn are related to the "game of life."

The presentation of green as the setting for the activities of life is supported by the traditional deployment of green as the color of the natural world, an identification which is also maintained in the novel. Besides the parks and gardens mentioned above, there are numerous references to the green of trees and that of meadows, in whose unmown grass love is consummated. The color green is also attributed to the river, and the bridge which crosses it throws a green shadow, one which connotes

both comfort and safety and which contrasts sharply with the gray shadow of the churches noted elsewhere.

The innocence and positive naturalness of the outdoor settings are incorporated into the references to green salads. In the Schrella home, Edith prepared a salad, which together with white potatoes comprised a meal of pure green and white; at the Trischler's, Heinrich and Johanna ate, as their first meal as man and wife, one which featured a "Salat, der so grün war" (p. 160). When Marianne's mother confronts her in the kitchen of her foster parents, Marianne is cleaning lettuce, (a chore she enjoyed, for she took pleasure in handling leaves "so grün und sauber" [p. 226]), and the association reaffirms her own innocence. (In contrast the lengthy passage devoted to the meal which Nettlinger consumes includes the line "golden schimmerte . . . der Räucherlachs zwischen dem frischen Grün der Salatblätter" [p. 200], a description in which the lettuce assumes an almost sacrificial role—as innocence about to be ravished by the gluttonous *Büffel* Nettlinger.)

White, the second color in *Billard um halbzehn* to be examined here, retains its traditional association and is primarily employed to represent innocence and purity. A positive color, it is identified with the lambs and with "das weiße Sakrament" which marks commitment to their way of life. White appears thus in the context of individuals characterized as lambs. For example, when Johanna flees from her parents' garden parties, she finds refuge at the white table on the roof garden and frequently sits reading at that table, and when Hugo is described during one of Robert's billiard games, he is depicted leaning against the white door panel.

Milk, white in its pristine state, is served at the Trischlers and stands in clear contrast to the red and white wines enjoyed at carefully tended temperatures in the Fähmel home. (The beverages are used in both cases to indicate the "moral" fabric of the household, an appraisal which is maintained in further color references and meal descriptions as well.³) White, however, is a vulnerable color and is easily adulterated. The milk which the false *Schafpriesterin* drinks, for example, appears gray in the crystal carafe, an unmistakable indication of her fraudulence. Similarly the white smock worn by Frau Gretz is defiled by her labors in the butcher shop, and in the printing shop across from the Fähmel office, black print is forced upon white paper: "immer noch stampften die Druckereimaschinen, druckten unerbitterlich Erbauliches auf weißes Papier" (pp. 9f.).

In the course of the novel, references also occur to white clouds and snow-white bed linen hanging on outdoor lines. Although these have no symbolic significance, the white cloth which cloaks the cake in the final scene might well be linked to the secondary association of white with death which occurs within the work. The phrase "weiß wie Schnee wuchs der Tod" (p. 114) is used in the description of the infant Johanna's death, and the coffins of Heinrich's other children were specifically noted as being white (p. 17).⁴ It is in this context that Heinrich's initial reaction to the object carried in the atelier and covered with white linen assumes greater significance—"brachten sie eine Leiche? War das, was da spitz wie ein Stock das weiße Tuch

straffte, die Nase; vorsichtig trugen sie es, als wäre der Leichnam ein kostbarer" (p. 304). The identification proves to have an inner significance: for Heinrich, the abbey and all the dreams of grandeur it represented were indeed dead, and reduced to the dimensions of a fancy cake.

Red, the third in the color trio, follows established lines, and is associated with violence, danger, blood and a brutal way of life. Within the specific context of this novel it is the color of the *Büffel*, and consequently bears an essentially negative connotation. It is, incidentally, the first of the colors to appear in the text. The small card Robert Fähmel had left with his secretary Leonore with the telephone numbers for contact in an emergency is printed in red, just as in his youth his execution notice, posted after his escape, had been edged in red.⁵

The red drops of blood dripping from the slaughtered boar in front of the butcher shop—"frisches Wildschweinblut tropfte dunkelrot auf den Asphalt" (p. 91)—repeat in color and shape the image of the red balls of the billiard game, and serve as a key leitmotif in the novel. Blood is constantly in evidence within the butcher shop—"Blut mußte sichtbar sein" (p. 91), the narrator notes, a comment which seems to present a motto of the *Büffel* in general. The image recurs in the blood-red seal with which Heinrich Fähmel seals his architectural drawings for the competition, and is emphasized by the phrase "die blutroten Wunden der Siegel" (p. 99). In addition, the frequently cited Kilb coat of arms displays a lamb emitting a stream of blood.

The color red is associated with death, not just through the bleeding boar but also through the blood spot which stained the greenish curtains and marked the death of Fähmel's uncle Marsil. It is most vividly presented in the description of the death of the elder Fähmel's small daughter: "Scharlach blühte . . . und weiß wie Schnee wuchs der Tod, wuchs wie Schimmel unter dem blühenden Rot, fraß sich durch, durch and brach schwarz aus den Nasenlöchern" (p. 114).

The relationship between red and the *Büffel* mentioned above is maintained throughout the novel and descriptions of the *Büffel* include specific mention of the color red. Their faces, for example, are characterized by that color: Nettlinger appeared "mit leicht gerötetem Gesicht" (p. 15) and angered, "lief er rot an" (p. 34); the confidant of the Archbishop "rannte mit knallrotem Gesicht" (p. 108); and the Wirt is described "mit rotem Gesicht" (p. 182). Note is also made of Gretz' "rotes Gesicht" and of his wife's "rosige Hände" (p. 91) and her "rosige Arme" (p. 287). The depiction of *Büffel* as "rotweingesichtiger Zigarrenraucher, Fleischfresser" (p. 124) and the reference to their "wulstigen Rotweintrinkerlippen" (p. 142) make the red wine, which Jochen brings to the room where Johanna sat with her parents and which is served at their garden parties from which she distanced herself, equally suspect. The link with sin or evil established with the phrase—"Laster, die wie Scharlach blühten" (p. 21) is repeated in the novel. The pinkish-red hat worn by the veiled woman who throws a kiss to a passing *Rittmeister* from the hotel balcony (p. 78) (the location alone indicates questionable morals in the framework of the work) implies impropriety, and the moral character of the "zarte Frauengesichter unter resedafar-

bigem Schleier" who ride to the opera in happy anticipation of "La Traviata" (p. 121) is similarly impugned by their millinery choice. Heinrich himself specifically rejects this color as a possibility for Johanna, stating emphatically: "ich würde ihr verbieten, resedafarbene Kleider zu tragen" (p. 117).⁶

The combination of red and white, evident in the emergency card and execution notices, is presented most distinctly in Heinrich Fähmel's *Paprikakäse*. This breakfast food, which he employed to supply a special, personal quality to his morning ritual and which he describes once as "diese merkwürdige, rötlich-weiße Schmiere" (p. 87), is a special blend of these two colors. The same color combination is also linked to the Kilb motto, adopted in turn by the Fähmels, which hangs in the office on a wallplaque, in which the words "Voll ist ihre Rechte von Geschenken" appear "weiß auf Mahagoni gemalt" (p. 21). The most explicit example of the color combination, however, is provided by the red-and-white checkered table cloths repeatedly described at the restaurant in Denklingen. Sitting there after a visit with his mother, Robert's memories are awakened by the sight of the red and white squares, and he recalls an earlier occasion when, captured after the demolition of the abbey, he had sat there during the interrogation by an American officer. The cigarettes and the iron cross, which the two young men exchanged, has passed over the cloth. The joining of these two colors symbolizes the confrontation with life in this world of the *Büffel*—or its effect upon an individual. (The frequent blushes and the repeated references to Robert's facial scar, his pale face "mit der roten Narbe über dem Nasenbein" [p. 23], present, though less defined, the same fusion of colors and may be viewed as yet further examples.)

A fourth color, black, is directly related to the three discussed above. Böll's description of the game in one passage—"weiß rollte sie über grün, schlug in wildem Zickzack vom schwarzen Rand zum schwarzen Rand" (p. 74)—not only identifies black as the color of the frame around the billiard table but also establishes it as the color representing the boundaries of life and their finality. This identification is maintained throughout the novel, where black is the color repeatedly associated with births, deaths and funerals and with other solemn or decisive moments in the family's history. Though often simply presented through the accepted formal attire deemed appropriate for the situation, the use of black is underscored by its appearance on other significant occasions. Heinrich, for example, had initially entered the city wearing a black artist's hat and a black suit; he wears the same clothing again both when he delivers his architectural drawing to the Kilb office and when he awaits the results of the competition in the monastery. When Robert is employed as a demolition expert after the war, he marks the city map with black chalk to indicate the buildings and structures yet to be removed. Marianne's mother arrives in a black limousine when she seeks to reclaim the child she had once sought to destroy. Johanna's decisive walk back into life takes place on the black path which leads from her room in the asylum, past the chapel, to the greenhouse, where she acquires a small revolver; her purse, too, is black, as is the gun she carries hidden within it: "mein Lippenstift ist von der schwarzen Faust voll Rache zerquetscht worden" (p.

266). Appropriately when Joseph is playing his high speed game with death on the highway spur, the warning signs display a large black skull and crossbones or simply the word *Tod* in large black letters. Later when Schrella is wandering through the city he had once known well, seeking traces of people and places now gone and recalling the past years, he, too, comes upon these same signs: "Schilder mit gekreuztem Schultergebein, riesige Totenschädel, schwarz auf weiß . . . Schilder mit *Tod Tod*" (p. 239).⁷

The negative quality of black appears essentially in only two contexts—in combination with blood—"Keilerblut war hart und schwarz geworden" (p. 251) or "schwarz verkrustet, lag der Keiler auf der Treppe" (p. 287) (itself a leitmotif in the novel), and in relation to the Church. There are black crosses in Robert Fähhel's map of the city to indicate the churches, and the churches themselves, especially St. Severin (with the reoccurring aliterative motif of the shadow of St. Severin) are constantly presented in the gray of moral ambiguity—they are associated with coolness, darkness and shadow, all negative values in Böll's world view.

The evocative quality of black is quite different when it appears in contact with the "purer" colors—white and green. The combination of all three, found in the billiard game cited above, is initially presented by young Heinrich Fähhel who enters the city dressed in formal black, but carrying a green case for his drawing tools. The first image shown of him is the reflection of his black hair and black clothing in the green-cloth backed glass pane on the door of the Cafe Kroner. His immediate environment, there in the Café, is also dominated by those three colors—the green decor of the establishment is highlighted by white carnations, and the waiters are clad in green aprons, black vests and white shirts and ties. Schrella, when first introduced, is also dressed in green, white and black, and Heinrich, also, associates Johanna with these same three colors: "Sie hatte schwarze Haare, war blaß . . . grün würde ihr gut stehen" (p. 117). On the occasion of the abbey dedication, Johanna indeed wears a green velvet dress with a white collar and black hat, a description she repeats with slight variation on the same page, as she recalls her appearance there "mit meinem grünen Kleid, den dunklen Augen und dem schneeweißen Kragen" (p. 138). Similarly Marianne is a brunette, whose dark hair is frequently noted, as is the green sweater she wears. Although Heinrich observes that green is also becoming to Ruth and she wears a green hat, she is also portrayed in a rose-red sweater, clearly leaving the question as to her ultimate allegiance (*Lamm* or *Büffel*) undecided.⁸

The color configuration red, black and white (the German flag, incidentally, was black-white-red during many of the years spanned in the novel), though less frequent, occurs occasionally within the text—Heinrich's white and red cheese is spread on black bread, representative of his public image, and in the depiction of Gretz' butcher shop, the symbol for life in a *Büffel*-dominated society, the three colors are presented together: "der weiße Kittel von Frau Gretz . . . rosige Arme . . . weißes Papier . . . schwarz verkrustet . . . der Keiler . . . Gretzens rotes Gesicht . . ." (p. 287). The colors appear as well in the account of the death of Fähhel's daughter cited

above. Even the abbey displays in muted tones of light, dark and red the same coloration: “dunkel die Kirche, hell die Wirtschaftsgebäude, rot das Dach des Pilgerhauses, bunt die Fenster des Refektoriums” (p. 286). In such cases, the absence of green and the presence of red implies an essentially (and I believe intentionally) negative judgment.

Besides the red-green-white color scheme supplemented by black, which is initiated by the billiard game, the novel exhibits symbolic use of purple, gold and silver, as well. Purple, occurring also as lavender or violet, represents the mundane world. It appears first in reference to the routine of business mailings with the violet postage stamp Leonore affixes to some mail and reappears as the color of a bank note—the green, then blue bills which Nettlinger employs in his bribery attempt of the doorman are followed by the culminating offer of a violet one, a clear link of the color with the corruptive sphere of money.

Purple is also linked to the physical exertions of the *Büffel* and with ultimate physical deterioration. On one occasion Johanna, referring to the suitors she hoped to avoid as “Wölfe” and recognizing them as already tainted, visualized them as older men who at sixty would have tell-tale “violette Adern in ihrer Haut” (p. 163). Sport activities undertaken not in fun but in dead seriousness also brought out “ekelhafte violette Blitze in die Beinhaut und Wangenhaut” (p. 132) in her brothers, who though young were already dedicated *Büffel*.

The identification of purple with the transient nature of the temporal world is indicated several times. The color is suggested by the cheap perfume, the “Lavendel” of the innkeepers’ daughters (p. 80), and the routine of casual flirtations and seductions which are meaningless even before they are consummated. The lobsters awaiting selection (and destruction) as gourmet offerings in cramped cases are also purple (p. 91), and on one occasion, in a passing notation to late asters—“die violetten, eben erblühten Asten” (p. 170), the color purple is related to autumn, the season of decline. (The association is strengthened by a reference earlier in the same sentence to a cemetery entrance.) The color of the pile of “violetter, scharf gebrannter Ziegel”⁹ at the abbey’s building site (p. 245), which Robert notes while recalling the events leading up to his destruction of that monument, implies as well the temporal nature of that institution and its alliance with the world of the *Büffel*. The association with the *Büffel* is also underscored in the mention of the Hindenburg monument and its wreaths “mit goldenen Schleifen, schwarzen und violetten” (p. 152).

The primary deployment of the color purple, however, pertains to the hotel (which functions in the novel as a miniature portrait of the world itself) and its services, underscoring its affiliations with the materialistic and secular world of the *Büffel*, that of the flesh and its comforts. Its corruptive, negative qualities are clearly exposed in the description of the purple hue cast over the hotel dining room:

. . . selbst die weichgekochten Eier sahen in dieser Beleuchtung lasterhaft aus, biedere Hausfrauengesichter wirkten in diesem Licht verworfen; Kellner, befrachtet, mit einverstandenen Augen, sahen aus wie Beelzebubs . . .

Wein war nicht Wein, Brot nicht Brot, alles wurde zum Ingredienz geheimnisvoller Laster ausgeleuchtet; hier wurde zelebriert; und der Name der Gottheit durfte nicht genannt, nur gedacht werden (p. 41).

Hugo's identification with white, on the other hand, is so strong that although he by necessity wears the purple livery of the hotel, he is not tainted by the contact. His paleness is repeatedly noted, and the one time his whiteness is affected, it is a green hue (still a positive color), which the purple casts upon his face.¹⁰

Only once is Johanna linked to the color purple. On the single occasion when she employed personal privilege on behalf of Robert and went to the *Regierungspräsident* to secure clemency for her son (a decision she later regretted and condemned), she chose to wear purple. Years later, recalling the incident, she even refers to the colors of the clothing she wore: "mein graues Kostüm . . . den violetten Schleier am grauen Hut, schwarze Schürschuhe" (p. 142). The inclusion of purple in her dress that day clearly projects a value judgment on her part, as well.

The colors of silver and gold share the ambiguity of those precious metals and unlike purple appear in both positive and negative roles. In conjunction with the natural products of the world—silvery onions, willow leaves, waterdrops on a lettuce leaf, the glistening Rhine or a wreath of raindrops on Edith's brow—the color appears as a sign of purity and carries a positive connotation. (The reference to Schrella's hair—blond with a silver shimmer and to the silver hair of the older Fähmel couple, fall in this category, too.) On the other hand, the association of silver with patrician prosperity (through the silver in the home of the Fähmels and in the hotels) has a different function and constitutes a subtle, but repeated connection between the high living standard in that home and the tainted atmosphere of the mundane world.¹¹ The impression of such an affiliation is strengthened, and the negative quality of silver is made evident in the description of the "beklemmende Mahlzeiten" consumed in Otto's presence: "Fleisch, mit Silbermessern geschnitten, Soße, mit Silberlöffeln genommen; Mutter starr wie ein Kaninchen vor der Schlange" (p. 169). Silver appears also as a manifestation of ostentatious wealth in conjunction with the hotel: "dunkle Anzüge, helle Kleider, viel Silber, Kerzenschein, Musik; zum Hummercocktail Mozart, zum Fleischgang Wagner, zum Nachtisch Hot" (p. 268), and its alliance with power is apparent in the scene in which Nettlinger spoons his soup from a silver bowl and eats from a silver platter. Above all, silver is evocative of the corruption of wealth;—for this, the one reference to the "dreißig Silberlinge" (p. 38) suffices.

Gold similarly possesses a questionable innate quality. The Fähmels' dream of their golden anniversary, but while the ultimate celebration of the occasion appears as a positive moment in the novel, the dream of a personal dynasty and external successes is questioned in the course of the day by both Heinrich and Johanna, and the ultimate celebration includes a rejection of Heinrich's life program. The moral implications of elegant living raised by the dining room silver in the Fähmel home are present as well in the "goldumränderte Glückwunschkarte" (p. 304) which marks

the end of Heinrich's successful career and in the lovely, elegant and inviting white porcelain with a gold rim which initially represented his enticement into that career. Gold is also associated with his professional life in another passage where he speaks of "unbekannter Boden, in dem Goldstücke vergraben lagen, herauszuholen von jedem, der sich nur ein wenig mit Strategie beschäftigen würde" (p. 110). The parallel with the coins of treachery is inherent, too, in the words, "Zeit war plötzlich eine Macht, wurde mißachtet, verstrich ungenutzt, während ich Stümpern und Heuchlern die Geschicklichkeit meiner Hände und die Mathematik meines Gehirns für ein paar Goldstücke überließ" (pp. 110f.) The suspicion as to the deceptive nature of gold is furthered when the same combination of white with gold bands occurs in connection with Nettlinger. (His gold watchband and ring and white cuffs are specifically noted during the description of the meal he consumes).

The seduction of materialism hidden behind such apparent elegance and grace is subsequently emphasized by the negative associations of that color in massive quantities—Marianne's Nazi father wore "eine braune Uniform mit viel Gold daran, eine Art Schwert am Gürtel, das silbern glänzte"—(p. 224); the wreaths at the Hindenburg monument are adorned with golden ribbons as well as purple and black ones; and the ugly woman in the hotel whom no one wished to face, appears as the embodiment of wealth, and crass materialism "mit goldenen Zähnen, goldenem Haar, in goldenen Schuhen" (p. 24); she is described later again as "in goldfarbene Kleider gekleidet mit goldfarbenen Schuhen, Mütze und Muff aus Löwenfell" (p. 55). Gold is the color of rewards, the accolades of the world—"die goldene Marsilius-Plakette, die nur für besonders hohe kulturelle Verdienste verliehen wird" (p. 269) which the boxers sport—and of its temptations—the bribes offered like apples: "goldene Taschenuhren in rotsamtenen Etuis" (p. 122). With perhaps intentional ambiguity Böll also has Johanna think of the gun in her purse as gold and as "Lösegeld" (p. 265).

Thus the four colors whose initial frame of reference is supplied by the billiard game—the red and the white of the balls, the green of the felt and the black of the table's sides—are supplemented by three additional ones—purple, gold and silver.¹² In the course of the novel, the connotative values attributed to them become clear and they develop symbolic significance. The action of the white and red balls rolling and careening on the green billiard table, their movement on the two square meters of felt contained by the black frame by which they are bounded, is reflected in the action of the novel and is in turn maximized by the use of color. The movements and the reactions of the lambs and the buffalo are presented on the various playing fields of life, and the elements of innocence and purity and those of violence and brutality are shown in their patterns of existence and of interaction, as well as in confrontation and reaction to the natural limitations of life and the turning point of private destinies. The white associated with the innocent *Lämmer* and the red of the violent *Büffel* serve to characterize and define both individuals and their way of life and moments and elements in the world about them. Similarly, purple represents the materialistic world of the flesh and the more ambiguous silver and gold

stand for the richness and riches of life, all too often identified with success in the world of the *Büffel*. Color in *Billard um halb zehn*, consequently contributes in substantial fashion to the work's thematic development and constitutes a key stylistic device in the novel.

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NOTES

1. Critical literature has made note of the use of color in other works of Böll, particularly that of red and green in *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* (for example, H. M. Waidson, "Die Romane und Erzählungen Heinrich Bölls," in *Der Schriftsteller Heinrich Böll*, Werner Lengning, ed., [Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1968], pp. 39f.) and red and white in *Im Tal der donnernden Hufe* (Curt Hohoff, "Die roten Fliesen im 'Tal der donnernden Hufe'," in *In Sachen Böll: Ansichten und Einsichten*, Marcel Reich-Ranicki, ed., 3rd ed., [Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970], pp. 251ff.) and red, reddish-yellow, and green in *Wo warst du Adam* (James Henderson Reid, *Heinrich Böll: Withdrawal and Re-Emergence* [London: Oswald Wolff, 1973], p. 35). Attention has been called repeatedly to the recurring image of the red and white balls rolling over the green table in *Billard um halbzehn* as well, but there has been as yet no study of the color system found in this work and of its implications and its significance for the novel.
2. *Billard um halbzehn* (Köln, Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1959), pp. 83, 284. Subsequent citations in the text refer to this edition.
3. Considering the role beverages seem to play, it should be no surprise that although Schrella sips a Martini with Nettle, he is shown drinking green limeade during his reconnoitering of the city.
4. The association of white with death is also overt in the reference to "die tödliche Blässe" of Johanna's face as she prepares to leave the isolation of her asylum. In that passage her appearance is twice more identified "mit tödlicher Weiße" and with "Totenblässe" (pp. 262f.).
5. It was also a red line which Heinrich had drawn on the city map in deliberately planning his professional and personal career of success in the world of the *Büffel*. The last appearance of such lines is the urgent letter which Schrit sent in an envelope diagonally marked in red to inform Robert that Kander's calculations were totally inaccurate.
6. Although "resedafarbig" is usually associated with yellow, greenish-yellow, greyish or whitish green, colloquial use of the word in Germany includes its identification as a redish color, perhaps because garden varieties of the mignonette plant produce a greenish-yellow blossom heavily overcast by a rust-red. The textual context in which the word appears in *Billard* implies, as well, Böll's use of the color as a negative, and hence redish one, and while realizing the circular reasoning implicit in this argument, I believe Böll's otherwise consistent use of color justifies this position.
7. The paper back edition shows a slight variation to this passage: "Schilder mit gekreuztem Schultergebein, riesige Totenschädel, weiß auf schwarz . . . Schilder mit *Tod Tod*" (München, Zürich: Droemersch Verlaganstalt Th. Knaur Nachf., 1963, p. 186). While it corrects the inconsistency found in comparison with an earlier passage in both editions which refers to the signs as white on black ("... drei Meter hohe Schilder verkündeten, was hinter ihnen lauerte: *Tod*; gekreuztes Schultergebein, ums Zehnfache drohend vergrößerte Totenschädel, grellweiß auf schwarz gemalt" [Knaur, p. 145; Kiepenheuer & Witsch, p. 207]), it remains unreconciled with the striking image of the crossbones appearing to Marianne like black spiders. "... was wie eine schwarze Spinne ausgesehen hatte, klärte sich zu gekreuztem

Schultergebein, was wie ein merkwürdiger Knopf ausgesehen hatte, wurde zum Totenschädel" [Knaur, p. 151; Kiepenheuer & Witsch, p. 215]).

8. Schrella's comment later that one can't even be sure of the daughter of Robert and Edith substantiates this view.

A few other positive figures are identified simply with white and black: Schrella's father wears the white shirt of a waiter and black patent leather shoes, and Edith's household occupations include stirring starch, waxing her father's black shoes and cleaning his white collars.

The intentional identification of specific colors with individuals is indicated briefly in a passage which describes Robert's thoughts: "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" (p. 65).

9. These words, incidentally, are identical with those used in the description of the lobsters just cited, which, too, were "violett wie scharf gebrannte Ziegel" (p. 91).
10. The text reads, "... der blasse Junge lehnte an der Tür wie eine Statue, der violette Samt der Uniform ließ seine Gesichtshaut fast grün erscheinen" (p. 53).
11. This position is substantiated by the clearly drawn contrast described later between the dining in his home and the "natural," and "purer" meals at both the Schrellas and Trischlers.
12. Use of other colors is relatively undefined. Only the appearance of blue and yellow, colors which often occur in descriptions of scenes depicting an economically active and bustling Germany may have been intentional—perhaps to indicate "das blaue Wunder" of restoration Germany.