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THE IMAGE OF A POST-WAR WOMAN IN THE WORKS OF HEINRICH BÖLL

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Abstract. This article examines the issue of highlighting the image of a post-war woman in the novels and short stories of the German writer, Nobel Prize winner in Literature Heinrich Böll. The short story of the writer "Christmas Not Just Once a Year" is analyzed as an example.

Keywords. German literature, world literature of the XX century, war, personality transformation, female image, external influence, Henry Böll.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается вопрос освещения образа послевоенной женщины в романах и новеллах немецкого писателя, лауреата Нобелевской премии по литературе Генриха Бёлля. В качестве примера анализируется рассказ писателя "Не только под Рождество".

Ключевые слова. Немецкая литература, мировая литература XX века, война, трансформация личности, женский образ, внешнее влияние, Генрих Бёлль.

Heinrich Böll's short story "Christmas Not Just Once a Year" ("Nicht nur zur Weihnachtszeit") was written 12 years after the outbreak of World War II, precisely in the post-war period of German society. This story answers the question of how the lives of ordinary inhabitants of Germany have changed after this war, how they live and what they live for. This is a satiric and sad story about how in one family a wonderful holiday became a daily occurrence, and fun became a harsh family duty. How in difficult times people try to preserve the past and the old traditions, and how it does not always work out.

Böll's narrative becomes increasingly absurd as the story develops. Written while Germany was in the early stages of its postwar reconstruction, and during a time when it had yet to fully acknowledge its role in [World War II](#) or in the Holocaust According to J. H. Reid, writing in *Heinrich Böll: A German for His Time*, in a 1954 essay Böll laments the fact that in one particular class of forty German students, not one had heard of the Holocaust, "Christmas Not Just Once a Year" addresses the theme of historical amnesia¹. Just as the family refuses to accept the fact that things are no longer "like the good old days" of prewar Germany and that Aunt Milla could not become healthy until the family acknowledges this basic fact, Böll believed that Germany would remain stunted if it did not directly address its Nazi past and come to terms with its role in the war².

The main female character of the story is an aged woman named Milla. And she had one problem in the post-war period- Aunt Milla loved to decorate the Christmas tree. The Second World War deprived her of this occupation for several years. But after the war, my aunt broke up in earnest. Something has clicked in her old head, and Christmas must not stop from now on. A short and very funny story about how a seemingly innocent weakness can destroy the peace and health of an ordinary family. That Christmas brings joy also because it happens only once a year.

In the course of the story, financial problems and problems related to the crisis in Germany make it difficult for Aunt Millie's once well-to-do family to celebrate Christmas. The author tries to answer the question of whether it is easy to preserve the old way of life, traditions and values in the new time. And in the course of the story, we get the answer- not easily.

In our opinion, the female image in this story, i.e. Aunt Milla, embodies a kind of constant that tries to keep everything as before, as in good and rich times. But this is actually impossible.

And now let's consider the question of transforming the image of Aunt Milla, the main character of this story. She is the prototype of many middle-aged and mostly middle-aged women in post-war Germany. Such women, as before, tried to resist all the negative consequences of the war and the post-war crisis by preserving the old, familiar way of life: for example, to celebrate holidays as before.

So, Heinrich Bell applies in this story the classic scheme of personality transformation in the post-war period. Here, the main factor in the changes, the driving force of the behavior of the heroes is not the war or the post-war period, but the changed value system in society, to be even clearer, it is the process of change - the emergence of a new system of valuable, modified system.



Table 1. Process of main characters transformation in Heinrich Böll's novels

As can be seen from the table, three main factors affect the formation of a new personality at once. This person is not someone who was before the war, or during the war. The modified personality is now trying to adapt to a changed society.

However, such a transformation does not happen with Auntie Milla. Aunt Milla is a symbolic prototype of the collective denial of reality in German society. Immediately after the war (1946), Aunt Milla, the central figure of the narrator's family, is captivated by the obsessive compulsion that Christmas be celebrated not only in its old form, exactly as it was before 1939, but every single day of the year. "The destruction of the city is completely forgotten by this preoccupation with the destroyed cult of Christmas. Aunt Milla, the 'heroine' of the satire, has completely lost the basic religious significance of Christmas." What, at first glance, seems to be an odd fixation or better, the whimsical caprice of an aging lady, reveals itself as the psychotic behavior pattern of an entire society in the throes of mental imbalance. Aunt Milla is a caricature of the conventional Catholic who is oblivious of the essential content of Christianity and concentrates instead on rituals and traditions to which the average person can no longer meaningfully relate, but which are nevertheless kept alive and supported by the clergy for an appropriate remuneration. Böll's struggle against institutionalized religion is extended to cover the fundamental conceptions of man's freedom and spontaneity as well. In his works *The Clown* and *My Sad Face* the members of the institution face a similar dilemma, namely, that the essence of their cause is in danger of being lost and eventually replaced by ritual and decorous veneer. In "Not only at Christmastime" Böll goes one step further by attacking the nucleus of society itself: the family, whose members are no longer guided by spontaneous love but rather by ceremonious and compulsive "get-togethers."

In conclusion, we can say that the female image of Aunt Milla is, on the one hand, a symbol of human vitality in any situation, and on the other hand, his desire to abandon complex, bad in the fifth sense of the word events of the recent past. This is a story about how people want to save themselves and their face in any crisis situations.

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