

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Wolfgang Borchert: A Representative of "Trümmerliteratur"?

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This investigation examines whether Wolfgang Borchert's short stories are representative of "Trümmerliteratur". By "Trümmerliteratur" I am referring to that short period in 20th Century German Literature which was manifested by the causes and effects of World War II (1945-1947). Borchert's biographical data, the events leading to the emergence of "Trümmerliteratur" and a definition for and discussion of this literary phenomenon, and an analysis of four of Borchert's "Kurzgeschichten", "Die Hundebume", "Vier Soldaten", "Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar", and "Er hatte auch viel Ärger mit den Kriegen", are presented. Investigation includes as well an extensive bibliography.

Wolfgang Borchert: A Representative of "Trümmerliteratur"?

by

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Introduction

Associated with every type of literature is a writer whose works best exemplify its particular style and subject matter. When considering "Trümmerliteratur", one author's works dominate the foreground. This investigation will deal with the question whether Wolfgang Borchert's works can best be described as "Trümmerliteratur". Before examining Borchert's contribution and what "Trümmerliteratur" entails, we have to look at how this literary phenomenon has been treated by various literary historians.

While researching Borchert's life and works, I noticed a lack of any in-depth study of "Trümmerliteratur". Except for a relatively short piece by Heinrich Böll who defended its existence and significance, its *raison d'être*, as it were, other texts of Post-World War II German literature allow little space for a discussion of "Trümmerliteratur", mentioning it in passing on the way from "die Stunde Null" to the formation of the "Gruppe 47" and beyond. While most do not deny its existence,) they seem to regard "Trümmerliteratur" as only a transitional phase and as inconsequential to the ensuing development of Post-War German literature. Although my intention here is not to provide a more intensive study of "Trümmerliteratur", I

would like to point out how some texts have dealt with it in order to show the difficulty in accumulating information about and formulating a clear definition of this particular type of literature.

I have chosen to cite the following four specific texts because of the literary (Durzak), historical (Hermand et al), social (Berg et al), and a particular genre ("Kurzgeschichte", Marx) contexts in which Post-World War II German literature is discussed. Needless to say, there are other sources which comprise this same theme. However, these cited texts exemplify a cross-cut of studies in Post-War German literature and demonstrate the usual way in which such texts deal with "Trümmerliteratur".

In a two volume text, Nachkriegsliteratur in Westdeutschland, which deals with "Nachkriegsliteratur" in general, Jost Hermand et al present a historical overview of the literature emerging between 1945 and 1949. Such terms as "Tendenzliteratur" (Band II, p. 44), "Reportageliteratur" (Band I, p. 36), and "engagierte Literatur" (Band II, p. 41) appear, conveying a somewhat negative attitude towards "Trümmerliteratur". Discussion of it, however, is not extensive and is usually included as a by-line to a specific author, such as Hans-Werner Richter, Carl Zuckmayer or Alfred Andersch. The nature of the various collected and edited articles in these two

volumes allows only a brief overview of the literary aspect due to reference to the parallel historical process. In one of the selections entitled "Kontinuität engagierter Literatur vor und nach 1945. Zum Werk Walter Kolbenhoffs" by Marita Müller, I was able, nevertheless, to determine a cut-off date for "Trümmerliteratur" as 1947 (with the founding of the "Gruppe 47"). As a co-founder of the group Kolbenhoff was one who wanted to leave "Trümmerliteratur" behind and forge ahead. As Müller sums up the group's common sentiment: "Als es jedoch im Gefolge der politischen Klimaveränderung zu einer literarischen Tendenzwende gegen die Trümmerliteratur, den Kahlschlag-Realismus und 'gutgemeinte Winkelutopien' kam, schloß sich der Kreis." (Band II, p. 47).

In her text, Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte, Leonie Marx presents a well-organized overview of the German "Kurzgeschichte" from its earliest beginnings to its fully-fledged evolution as a writing style after 1945. Indeed, she provides also succinctly the basic themes and style of the German "Kurzgeschichte" belonging to, in her words, "(...) die Phase der Trümmerliteratur" (pp. 140-141). These elements outlined by Marx can be applied to poetry or other genres of this literature as well. Again, Marx is concerned here only with the German "Kurzgeschichte"; and although she mentions "Trümmerliteratur" in this context,

the literature itself remains as a sub-theme in the discussion of the "Kurzgeschichte", its origins, structure, and to what extent it had been influenced by the American and British short story and by such American authors as Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Another collection of studies, Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur: Ausgangspositionen und aktuelle Entwicklungen, selected and edited by Manfred Durzak, concentrates primarily on the literature after 1950 and its development in the FRG, the GDR, Switzerland, and Austria. The text begins with three articles arranged in chronological order from "die Stunde Null" to the demise of the "Gruppe 47".

In the first Heinrich Vormweg writes indirectly about "Trümmerliteratur", and the events necessitating its themes and language. He points out also: "Um die Literatur des folgenden Jahrzehnts und dieser Gegenwart verstehen zu können, ist es gewiß unerlässlich, die Literatur der ersten fünfzehn Jahre nach dem Zusammenbruch des Hitler-Regimes zu kennen" (p. 29). Basically, he is concerned with abating the idea that a "Stunde Null" existed for German literature, but, at the same time, refers to the literature appearing immediately after 1945 as a phase lacking in aesthetic and literary value.

The succeeding articles by Herbert Lehnert and Rudolf

Walter Leonhardt, respectively, concentrate on the "Gruppe 47" and its impact on German literature after 1947.

In Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur von 1918 zur Gegenwart Jan Berg et al offer a broad overview of German literature from 1918 onward; indeed, a colossal undertaking. In connection with the literary styles and themes of this century the coinciding social implications are also stressed. With regards to "Trümmerliteratur" new terminology appears, i.e. "Bestandsaufnahmeliteratur". As with other terminology referring to "Trümmerliteratur" this relatively new expression reinforces the stigma carried by this type of literature, and the "Gruppe 47"'s attempts to exclude itself from it (p. 595). Since this text, as others are, is extremely comprehensive in its presentation of the diverse literary movements of this century, it lacks an intensive study of "Trümmerliteratur".

Two questions continued to arise in my mind as I researched "Trümmerliteratur", such as how the ensuing development of German literature would have appeared without the influence of "Trümmerliteratur", and, if "Trümmerliteratur" is regarded by many literary historians as only a "phase" rather than an important literary phenomenon, why then did its existence contribute to the formation of German literature? In each text such speculation did not arise, unfortunately. It seems, in fact, that the authors have

clung unconsciously to the belief that "Trümmerliteratur" is something to shy away from. Wulf Koepke sums up the reaction to "Trümmerliteratur" during the post-war years: "(...) Trümmerliteratur became to be regarded as a deplorable although understandable episode, to be forgotten and left behind the sooner the better." And although he points out a renewed interest in post-war history, allowing one to "(...) go beyond cliches and political assertions (...)" when considering "Trümmerliteratur", the fact remains that this literature retains yet its stigma ("German Writers...", p. 50).

Koepke does not clarify why "Trümmerliteratur" bears a stigma, but one can surmise that the stain was borne of the themes and style associated with "Trümmerliteratur" and the historical and personal memories it evokes. Despite attempts to ignore it or to dismiss it simply as a "phase", one cannot understand the development of German literature after 1945 without it. This very fact allows the consideration of "Trümmerliteratur" as an important literary phenomenon that deserves a more complete study. Later, I will attempt to define in detail "Trümmerliteratur" based on information gleaned from a combination of sources.

In Memoriam Wolfgang Borchert

Und für uns die vielen, die nicht klagen
die stumm wie Fische sind im Leid,
für jene, die sie ohne Kreuz begraben
und ohne Sarg und Totenkleid,

kommt manchmal einer, der mit seiner Stimme
den ganzen Totenchor beschwört
und der die Sühne eintreibt für das
Schlimme,
das man getan und überhört;

der Worte spricht, die scharf wie Scherben
und schartig und verletzend sind.
Auf daß wir nicht vergessen, wie wir Erben,
von grauenvollem Nachlaß sind.

Karl Ludwig Schneider
1948

Chapter I: Biographical Context

It is believed that a writer derives his/her work from life experiences and finds in the written word an outlet for innermost feelings and thoughts perhaps too painful or difficult to express orally. Indeed, rarely is a writer able to create a work solely from his/her imagination without some influence from outside surroundings. Wolfgang Borchert is no exception. In order to understand his style of writing and the context of his stories, it is essential first to look at the various stimuli which compelled Borchert to write.

Born in Hamburg on May 20, 1921, Borchert's earliest leanings towards writing may have been a result of his parents' occupations, the elder Borchert a schoolteacher and the mother a Heimatschriftstellerin whose articles were published in various home-related publications. Borchert himself at the age of 17 had written for the Hamburger Anzeiger. In 1938 he left the Gymnasium to work as an apprentice in a bookshop and to receive private instruction in drama. In 1940 he passed his acting exams and procured a job at the Landesbühne Osthannover, remaining there from March of 1940 to June of 1941.

His acting career was abruptly interrupted by his

being drafted into military service at 20. After a brief training period in Weimar-Lützendorf he was sent directly to the Russian Front, where he proved himself an unwilling soldier. It was there that he had his first bout with jaundice, signifying the start of a long and futile struggle with this illness. At the same time, he received a gunshot wound to his hand during guard duty and was admitted to a military hospital for treatment. Shortly, thereafter, he was arrested on suspicion of having inflicted the wound himself. He spent three months in jail while the matter was being investigated and, although his letters denouncing the Nazi regime offered further proof to implicate him, was then acquitted because of his age.

Due to his obvious inability to serve as a soldier, Borchert was transferred to a theater at the Front where he parodied the Reichsminister of Propaganda (Goebbels) and made political jokes. These indiscretions resulted in his renewed arrest and a nine month period in prison. Released in 1944 he was sent again to the Front, this time in southwestern Germany (Mileck, p. 233).

In 1945 Borchert surrendered to the French. While being transported to a prison camp, he escaped and promptly set out, on foot, for Hamburg, where he arrived in a state of very poor health. There he tried to re-establish himself in an acting career by performing in a cabaret and

the Hamburger Schauspielhaus. From late 1945 to his death he was almost entirely bedridden. Attempts to curtail his illness proved futile.

In the spring of 1946 he was admitted to St. Elisabeth hospital in Hamburg, but was sent home again, because medically there was nothing else that could be done for him. During this time he wrote 24 prose works. His earlier poems were published as well under the title "Laterne, Nacht und Sterne".

In the early part of 1947 Borchert wrote the radio play "Draußen vor der Tür", a piece he was never to hear or see performed. As a last resort to overcome his illness he entered a sanatorium in Switzerland. Borchert died on November 20, 1947 in the Clara-Spital sanatorium in Basel, one day before "Draußen vor der Tür" premiered on stage in Hamburg (Budde, intro.). A relatively short biography of a life literally fraught with detrimental circumstances and an unfortunate outcome.

Significant here is the time-span in which Borchert wrote. Between 1940 and 1945 he composed 29 poems and, after 1945 to his death in 1947, 58 prose works and one drama. Rather a small amount of work if compared to other writers. However, this span of time in connection with the corresponding historical events attested to be heavily influential on the themes and style found in Borchert's

works and, considering his mental and physical condition during and after the war, a strong impetus for him to have produced so much in so little time. He knew that for him time was running out. Hence, Borchert wrote like someone racing against Time and Death (Böll, "Die Stimme...", p. 16), feverishly recording only situations and incidents with which he was familiar, such as imprisonment, the Russian Front, and particularly what he had found in Hamburg after returning home (Koepke, "German Writers...", p. 55).

Stephen Spender creates a most fitting simile by comparing Borchert's life to that of a man borne and bred in a prison cell. For him there is no outside world; only his own experiences exist (p. v). Understandably then, Borchert appears as a nihilist. He had also called himself a nihilist. If one were to look up the dictionary meaning of nihilism, it could be presented as follows: "(Nihilism is) the systematic denial of experience and rejection of all value or meaning attributed to it" (American Heritage, p. 477). However, Borchert's nihilism does not quite fit into this definition, because his is a "creative nihilism" in that he believes that there is still a chance for humankind to save itself (Spaethling, p. 188). Despite all that humans have already done to themselves, i.e. created war, hate, and violence, Borchert's works display a belief

that we can learn from these manifestations and expound upon this knowledge. This belief in humans' ability to save themselves thus undermines the basic premise of nihilism. Such knowledge should show us what is to be done to avoid future human suffering without completely destroying previous values. It seems to me, then, that for Borchert nihilism should be used like a tool to help in laying the groundwork for humans' future actions. The problem lies, however, with the question whether we have learned sufficiently to tap our own human effort, or whether we have been impressed enough by our own manifestations, to want to call forth our human effort to avoid war, hate, and violence.

Borchert offers eloquently a possible solution with which humans can go about saving themselves in his story "Dann Gibt Es Nur Eins!":

"(...) Du. Mutter in der Normandie und Mutter in der Ukraine, du, Mutter in Frisko und London, du, am Hoangho und am Mississippi, du, Mutter in Neapel und Hamburg und Kairo und Oslo--Mütter in allen Erdteilen, Mütter in der Welt, wenn sie morgen befehlen, ihr sollt Kinder gebären, Krankenschwestern für Kriegslazarette und neue Soldaten für neue Schlachten, Mütter in

der Welt, dann gibt es nur eins: Sagt NEIN!

Mütter, sagt NEIN!" (Das Gesamtwerk, p. 320)

Borchert's nihilistic tendency, though reflected strongly, does not totally negate the possibility that life is not worthwhile. Fear of repetition of past events and a conscious need to warn future generations abound in Borchert's work. However, at the same time he reflects a persistent courage, vacillating between dream and reality, to create the illusion that life is still worth living (Spender, p. vii).

There is a determination in Borchert's work to carry on in spite of everything. At first glance, his work appears extremely pessimistic, perhaps usual for a self-proclaimed nihilist. But, with the sense of guarded hope he is able to appeal to those who can relate to the world he presents, eg. people of the same generation (Koepke, "German Writers...", p. 61), and, simultaneously, provide for those who cannot, i.e. the ensuing generations, a realistic but not entirely negative view of humankind. Borchert tried to become an active part of life again after the war but could not find the inner strength to do this. Although he himself could not follow his own "teachings", so to speak, the impression that Borchert would have done so is reflected through his writing and his obvious concern for human beings (Gsteiger, p. 114).

While Borchert's works are not meant to be autobiographical or documentary, they do, however, record well the political and social mood evident immediately after the Second World War (Koepeke, "German Writers...", p. 55). Borchert had already published poetry and stories before writing "Draußen vor der Tür"; but, it was not until its broadcast on February 13, 1947, that his role as spokesperson for the "lost generation" was manifested (Mileck, p. 234). He himself had participated in the war as a soldier and, like many others, found his home in ruins after the war. He typified the fears, guilt, and anger smoldering among those belonging to the war generation. What better spokesperson to represent them than one of their own? The themes in his work, then, do not merely express his own personal experiences and the suffering wrought by them, but also epitomize those of a generation who no longer wanted to or could no longer remain silent.

The major part of Borchert's stories and poems, including his one drama, contain elements related to the war or its aftermath. One can find in his play "Draußen vor der Tür" a complete spectrum of issues which concerned the "lost generation": the plight of the returning soldier, the loss of home or homeland, the problem of guilt vis-à-vis actual participation in the war, the uncertainty towards the future, questions judging the validity of life,

and, ultimately, the anger and frustration over the lack of a solution to such problems and the inadequate answers to their questions.

Borchert subtitled his play as "ein Stück, das kein Theater spielen und kein Publikum sehen will" (Das Gesamtwerk, p. 99), and criticized his own work as only a "Plakat", meaning the play was relevant just to the times and would not be absorbed by the general public as a lasting literary piece (Koepke, "German Writers...", p. 54). Evidently, Borchert had not realized the depth to which he had touched what was ailing the "lost generation" and had basically prophesied what would ail future generations. The instant success of his play was overwhelming and made him famous overnight; it became symbolic for all (Francke et al, p. 43).

Although Borchert's play by its very nature, i.e. its disjointed scenes and personification of an inanimate object (die Elbe) or abstraction (der Andere), is a dream, it is steeped in harsh reality. The main character, Beckmann, wanders homeless through a mere shadow of his former world, looking for a reason to go on living. At every turn he finds something which further negates the validity of life: there is his wife who had forgotten him and, meanwhile, has found another, "der Oberst" who will not relieve Beckmann of his guilt over the deaths of his

comrades by taking the responsibility for those deaths, a stranger who lives in his parents' former home, the latter having committed suicide in an attempt to denazify themselves and, the God in whom no one believes any longer and who cannot help Beckmann or anyone else.

At the same time, however, Beckmann encounters those who try to convince him that, in spite of everything, life is still worth living: "die Elbe" which refuses to let him drown, "das Mädchen" who takes pity on Beckmann and retrieves him from the shores of the Elbe river and, "der Andere" who says "Yes" whenever Beckmann says "No". Despite his meanderings in search of answers to unbearable questions, Beckmann is caught up in a vicious circle. Instead of a development towards an eventual resolution, his dissonance and despair are merely compounded until the end where not even "der Andere" (der Jasager) or God can offer solace,:

"Wo bist du jetzt, Jasager? Jetzt antworte mir! Jetzt brauche ich dich, Antworter! Wo bist du denn? Du bist ja plötzlich nicht mehr da! Wo bist du, Antworter, wo bist du, der mir den Tod nicht gönnte! Wo ist denn der alte Mann, der sich Gott nennt? Warum redet er denn nicht! Gebt doch Antwort! Warum schweigt ihr denn? Warum?

Gibt denn keiner Antwort?

Gibt keiner Antwort???

Gibt denn keiner, keiner Antwort???" (Das Gesamtwerk, p. 165)

thus, Beckmann's questions remain unanswered and become fainter and fainter (Francke et al, p. 46).

As in his other work the style of writing is simple, unadorned, and uncomplicated. Monosyllabic words and extremely short sentences typify Borchert's style of writing (Schulmeister, p. 277). Additionally, his works are non-dramatic in that the stories start somewhere and have an open end (Koepke, "German Writers...", p. 56), where questions remain unanswered, as in "Draußen vor der Tür", or where perhaps the reader must take it upon him/herself to foresee or determine the outcome, as in "Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch".

In this story an old man helps a small boy (Jürgen) leave his younger brother behind who had died when their house was bombed and assures Jürgen that the rats slept nights and would not disturb his dead brother. Thus, the old man relieves the boy of his duty to stay and defend the dead brother against the rats. The offer of a pet rabbit on the old man's part signifies a ray of hope which the boy could not find among the ruins (Das Gesamtwerk, pp. 216-219).

Borchert was not interested in literary forms or style, but rather in presenting the meaning of life (Freydank, p. 98). Since Borchert concentrated on voicing plainly the common despair and, simultaneously, projecting concern for the future by way of warning the coming generations, he did not develop his work stylistically into a greater form (Brustmeier, p. 4). In fact, Borchert states his reason for this in his story "Das ist unser Manifest":

"Wer macht für uns ein lilanes Geschrei?
Eine lilane Erlösung? Wir brauchen keine
Stilleben mehr. Unser Leben ist laut. Wir
brauchen keine Dichter mit guter Grammatik.
Zu guter Grammatik fehlt uns Geduld. Wir
brauchen die mit dem heißen heiser
geschluchzten Gefühl. Die zu Baum Baum und
zu Weib Weib sagen und ja sagen und nein
sagen: laut und deutlich und dreifach und
ohne Konjunktiv." (Das Gesamtwerk p. 310)

Even this uncomplicated and straightforward statement reflects the simplicity that abounds in Borchert's work.

Indeed, the subject matter, i.e. the war and its aftermath, and the need to warn, so possessed Borchert that he had no time to consider problems of form (Herd, p. 295). Nevertheless, his style contributed to the development of the German "Kurzgeschichte", whose form will be outlined in

more detail later.

It is ironic, though, that Borchert became the impetus for the German "Kurzgeschichte"; for initially Borchert had shied away from prose.

Having been strongly influenced by the works of Rilke, poetry was for Borchert the ideal form of expression (Schulmeister, p. 271). Fearing that prose would undermine his preference for writing poetry, it was not until after the war that he turned to prose (Mileck, p. 233). I would believe that writing prose was necessitated by Borchert's urgency to write quickly without worrying about the particular structure that poetry demands.

Borchert's prose style in content und structure varies little. As mentioned earlier, the world in which he wrote was limited. Therefore, there is really no development with respect to his maturity as a writer. The themes remain the same. The same message is stressed over and over. Even the form and style remain the same. Despite this apparent lack of stylistic development, Borchert's fear of prose dissipated as his work progressed. His consciousness and security in writing prose, then, are what change or develop (Koepke, "In Sachen...", pp. 71-72), resulting in different degrees of emotional involvement (Spaethling, p. 188).

Consider, for example, the differences between the

short stories "Generation ohne Abschied" (written 1945-1946) and "Dann gibt es nur eins!" (written shortly before his death in 1947).

In the former, the mood is almost subdued, unemotional, as if Borchert feared protesting too loudly would defeat his intention to present simply the case of the "lost generation". Though quietly stated, the reader can discern the despair and loss of direction felt by the war generation that Borchert wants to convey:

"Wir sind die Generation ohne Bindung und ohne Tiefe. Unsere Tiefe ist Abgrund. Wir sind die Generation ohne Glück, ohne Heimat und ohne Abschied." (Das Gesamtwerk, p. 59)

Borchert does not try to impress the reader with flamboyant language, but rather presents in understandable terms the way things are. The repetition of "ohne Abschied", "ohne Bleiben", "ohne Heimkehr", and "wir begegnen uns" (a meeting of people with similar situations and experiences) stresses further the "lost generation"'s special circumstance and the state of limbo in which it finds itself. However, at the end of the story Borchert reflects the belief that the situation will not last indefinitely, conveying to the reader that despite this generation's current condition and past experiences, it knows where it is headed and will get there in spite of everything:

"Wir sind die Generation ohne Abschied, aber wir wissen, daß alle Ankunft uns gehört."

(Das Gesamtwerk, p. 61)

In this story Borchert concentrates primarily on relating the common sentiment among the "lost generation"

In the latter story the mood is decidedly different. Again, the language is unadorned and the point stated simply:

"Du. Mann an der Maschine (...). Wenn sie dir morgen befehlen, du sollst keine Wasserrohre (...) mehr machen-- sondern Stahlhelme (...), dann gibt nur eins: Sag NEIN!" (Das Gesamtwerk, p. 318)

Unlike the first story, however, this one is emotionally charged. Borchert speaks directly (using "du") to the reader demandingly, stressing his point with an abundance of exclamation marks and capitalized words. All told Borchert uses the order "Sag NEIN!" fourteen times; each time the "nein" is capitalized and accompanied by an exclamation mark. Notice that the title itself is a command.

In comparison to the other story it seems Borchert has found that prose can be used to pry open the reader's eyes to see what he/she should do to avoid future catastrophes. By listing a multi-faceted cross-cut of humanity he appeals

desperately to people in every occupation, eg. "Forscher", "Dichter", "Pfarrer", "Pilot", etc., and from all walks of life:

"Mann auf dem Dorf und Mann in der Stadt
(...). Mütter in der Normandie (...) in
Neapel und Hamburg und Kairo und Oslo--
Mütter in allen Erdteilen, (...)" (Das
Gesamtwerk, p. 320)

and leaves no one out. This time the story is for everyone and not just the war generation. As if he suspects that just telling the reader what to do will not suffice, Borchert drives his point home by including what might happen if the reader does not heed his warning:

"Denn wenn ihr nicht NEIN sagt, wenn IHR
nicht nein sagt, Mütter,

dann:

dann:

(...) der letzte Mensch (...) und seine
furchtbare Klage: WARUM? wird ungehört in
der Steppe verrinnen, durch die geborstenen
Ruinen wehen, versickern im Schutt der
Kirchen, (...), letzter Tierschrei des
letzten Tieres Mensch- (...)." (Das
Gesamtwerk, pp. 320-321)

The words seem to tumble over each other, creating a bleak

picture and projecting a realistic possibility for further catastrophic events, until the end where Borchert says simply: "(...) wenn ihr nicht NEIN sagt." (Das Gesamtwerk, p. 321). In a sense, he has handed the responsibility to the reader to finish the story, whether negatively or positively. Borchert has done his duty; now, it is up to the reader to decide how the story should end.

These two stories give us an insight into Borchert's consciousness. Wulf Koepke sums up this development: "Er (Borchert) bemüht sich, Programme zu formulieren und Beispiele zu zeigen-- nicht einfach ein Lebensgefühl auszusprechen." ("In Sachen...", p. 72).

Because Borchert died young and, consequently, was able to produce only a relatively small amount of work, there was little chance given him for intellectual experience, growth, and transformation (Spaethling, p. 189) in his writing. In fact, despite its overwhelming public success, even Borchert's play was later denounced as being "immature" (Koepke, "German Writers...", p. 54).

Borchert's work stands enclosed in the world in which he grew up and saw destroyed; his vision is entirely confined within these limits (Spender, p. ix). During his most impressionable years he had to witness a catastrophe so devastating and, to the following generations, so unbelievable in its scope without ever having the benefit

of living long enough to experience the reconstruction of Germany after World War II. For him there was no past, since most of it was engulfed by the war, and no future, because he died a few years short of post-war Germany's recovery.

Borchert's early death excluded him from two political events in the late forties which had an impact on the attitudes and direction of the ensuing development of Post-War German literature, i.e. the currency reform of 1948 which resulted in the "Wirtschaftswunder", and the official establishment of two separate German states in 1949. Writers, such as Heinrich Böll and Luise Rinser, who had experienced these two significant events were able to turn to rediscovering "the artistic value of literary form" and witness at the same time the emergence of two types of German literature based on fundamentally different ideologies (McClelland and Scher, pp. 155-156).

Indeed, Borchert did not have the opportunity, as other writers of his generation had, to extricate himself from the impact of the war in order to even consider other literary forms or themes. One can only speculate as to how his work might have evolved. Might he have been caught indefinitely in this time-warp, unable to leave the war and its effects behind, or might he have followed the course set by the "Gruppe 47"? As to his role as spokesperson for

the "lost generation", one could wonder whether his living longer might have undermined this role through the eventual acquisition of experiences after 1947 and beyond. As it were, his death at such a young age was, in a poetic sense, necessary to establish him for all time as the true representative of Germany's war generation. Had he lived longer, Borchert might have been disillusioned by the continued assault on ourselves, eg. the Korean War 1950-1953, the creation of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Vietnam War 1959-1972, etc. Who knows what he would think of modern-day Germany, considering the fact that he feared the re-establishment of the old power structure of generals, industrialists, and officials. Progress for him meant only progress towards more perfect destruction (Koepke, "German Writers...", p. 59), and the state of today's world might in fact be the realization of Borchert's worst nightmare.

In light of the fact that Borchert's prose works are encapsulated within the years between 1945 and 1947 and that he himself did not live beyond 1947 to be influenced by future literary developments, Borchert would then indeed be a representative of "Trümmerliteratur". But, in order to ascertain how his prose works exemplify this type of literature, it is essential first to examine the period leading to the emergence of "Trümmerliteratur", and then

present a definition for and a discussion of the phenomenon of "Trümmerliteratur".

Weihnachten 1945

Die Männer sind elend, die Männer sind matt,
 sie sehen die Trümmer und weinen,
 sie wandern von Steinen zu Steinen,
 dann kommen sie endlich zur grossen Stadt.

Die Stadt, die ist groß, und die Not, die ist groß,
 der Winter, der hat sie gefangen,
 er hält sie mit Zangen, mit Zangen,
 und die Herzen sind leer, und die Herzen sind bloß.

Und der Friede ist wo? Und das Lichtchen ist wo?
 Das Lichtchen des Stalls mit dem Kinde?
 Sie frieren im Winde, im Winde,
 denn sie haben kein Licht, und sie haben kein Stroh.

Da stecken sie's an, das winzige Licht,
 und haben den Frieden im Traume,
 und träumen vom Baume, vom Baume,
 doch der Ochs und der Esel, den haben sie nicht.

Und wie sie so träumen, die armen Drei,
 drei Könige ohne die Krone,
 da rührt sich's beim ewigen Throne,
 da kommen der Ochs und der Esel herbei,

da lächelt das Kind, da funkelt der Stall,
 da wandern die Tiere, die Tiere,
 der Tiger erscheint mit dem Stiere,
 und von den Vögeln kommt lieblicher Hall,

sie fliegen zum Baum in der Mitte des Stalls,
 und endlich ist Friede auf Erden,
 und zum Frieden strömen die Herden
 vom Grunde des Meers und vom Ende des Alls.

Die Weihnacht ist da, und das Christkind ist da,
 und jedermann wünschte dem Jahre:
 zur Grube zur Grube es fahre,
 daß niemals geschehe, was heute geschah.

Wolfgang Weyrauch

Chapter II: Pre-"Trümmerliteratur" and "Trümmerliteratur"

May, 1933. Book-burning, Berlin University. Student proclamation: "(Every book is to be burned) which acts subversively on our future or strikes at the root of German thought, the German home and the driving forces of our people" (Schirer, p. 241).

With this proclamation books labeled as "artfremd" or "entartet" (Vogt, p. 132), by such already well-established authors as Thomas Mann, E.M. Remarque, Gide, and Proust, were condemned to the fires. And under the watchful and approving eye of Joseph Goebbels German culture was put into a "Nazi strait jacket". At the same time, Goebbels announced, paradoxically, that the elimination of culture which he believed undermined Nazi thought allowed the soul of the German to express itself once again and that the flames (from the book-burnings) not only illuminated the final end of an old era, but that they also lit up the new (Schirer, p. 241).

In September of 1933 a Reich Chamber of Culture (Reichskulturkammer) was set up under Goebbel's direction. Its primary purpose aimed at "gathering together the creative artists of all cultural spheres into a unified organization under the leadership of the Reich". In other words, the Third Reich acted as supreme determinant of the

lines of progress, mental and spiritual, and as leader and organizer of the professions (Ibid, p. 241).

All artists faced mandatory membership in their respective Chamber. Refusal to follow the guidelines required by the Reich Chamber of Culture concerning accepted Nazi ideology resulted in expulsion from that Chamber and, ultimately, artistic death (Vogt, p.132). Not only did this signify the limitations imposed upon artists to produce anti- or non-national-socialistic work, it could also exclude an artist from practicing his/her profession (outside the respective Chamber) and, thus, deprive the artist of a livelihood. More severe consequences included deportation, arrest for treason, and death. In short, culture was to serve solely propaganda purposes (Schirer, p. 242).

Despite the political upheaval incurred by World War I, the literary world in Germany remained seemingly intact and normal. Such writers as Hofmannsthal and George continued to be read and heralded (Muschg, p. 19). Such was not the case for literature after 1933. Due to its highly political nature, the cultural sphere of literature fared worse in the 1930's than other artistic disciplines. 1933 denoted the end of the old traditionalists and ushered in a radical change in the literary world (Ibid, p. 13). All literary work after 1933 had to be submitted to the

Propaganda Ministry for approval before publication. This severely affected the development of German literature. Writers who chose to denounce the Nazi regime were forced into exile in other countries or silenced into an internal exile within their own country - their spontaneous literary activity stifled by (Nazi) ideological control (McClelland, p. 152).

Much debate and criticism exist regarding the works produced both by those who had written while in exile (äussere Emigranten) and by those who had written from within the Third Reich (innere Emigranten). Interestingly enough, I noticed that this criticism had not originated from sources outside these two types of writers but rather sprang from the writers themselves. Both groups questioned the other's work as to literary worth and debated who had had the most adverse conditions under which to write.

Perhaps the most well-known author among the "äussere Emigranten", which included Bertolt Brecht (1933, "Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder"),¹ Anna Seghers (1933, "Das siebte Kreuz"), Carl Zuckmayer (1938, "Des Teufels General"), and Franz Werfel (1938, "Das Lied von Bernadette"), was Thomas Mann. Emigrating to America in 1933 and never returning to Germany, he was very critical of the "innere Emigranten".

1 (year of emigration, example of work written in exile)

Mann viewed any literary work written between 1933 and 1945 as worthless and shameful. He stressed the fact that those of the "innere Emigranten" could never imagine the emotional upheaval faced by the "äussere Emigranten"; yet, he was not willing to return to Germany to lead it out of its literary abyss after the war, nor help with the spiritual reconstruction of its people (Demetz, p. 48). Others accused the "innere Emigranten" of being "false" heroes (Kesten, p. 114) in that they attempted to continue to write despite the suffocating restraints placed upon them.

In response to this criticism, the "innere Emigranten" questioned the perspective of authors writing from without towards the war and Nazi ideology. In their opinion it was all well and good for the "äussere Emigranten" to have denounced publicly the regime from far away, but had they been really in touch with the situation at home? As Alfred Döblin (though one of the "äussere Emigranten") put it: "Die Schriftsteller im Exil suchen sich mit der Inlandssituation und der gefährlichen Macht auseinanderzusetzen. Sie wollen in ihrer alten Linie verbleiben, aber ob sie wollen oder nicht; die aktuelle Situation verliert sie" (p. 28).

Frank Thieß, one among the "innere Emigranten" including Erich Kästner ("Georg und die Zwischenfälle",

1938)², Werner Bergengruen ("Am Himmel wie auf Erden", 1940), Ernst Jünger ("Auf den Marmorklippen", 1939), Elisabeth Langgässer ("Der Gang durch das Ried", 1936), and Luise Rinser ("Die gläsernen Ringe", 1940), argued that by staying in Germany he received a more intense and first-hand experience than those who had fled. In addition, it had been much more difficult to retain one's personality inside the Third Reich than as a mere observer from without (Demetz, pp. 47-48). Some of the "innere Emigranten" attempted to express free thought through "carefully chosen quotations, symbolic narratives, significant omissions, and innumerable other means" (Schütz, p. 13). Unfortunately, those writers who did manage to continue publishing works during the Nazi era had to write in parables which most of their readers could not understand (Dornberg, p. 188).

When the war ended, some exiled authors returned, others remained abroad (Th. Mann for one). For some who had chosen to stay in Germany during 1933-1945 the chance to produce works from under the aegis of Nazi control never materialized, since they had been deported to concentration

² (example of work written within the Third Reich, year written); It must be noted as well that the group of "innere Emigranten" consisted of two types of writers within itself, those who vocally and directly denounced the existing regime and those who remained silent and attempted to voice their dissent through opaque allusions to the political situation.

camps for their anti-national-socialistic writings and/or religious convictions and had died there before Germany's defeat. Others had fallen in battle; their writings lost with them. Those who had survived the twelve years of Nazi rule now had the opportunity to publish freely what had been considered previously as "unacceptable". In fact, there was a common hope that at the war's end a new literature would appear; it was not only hoped but expected (Trommler, "Nachkriegsliteratur...", p. 168). But much to the dismay of the emerging "young" authors and the literature-hungry populace, the drawers, expected to have been filled with new works by the "innere Emigranten", stood empty (Wehdeking, Der Nullpunkt, p. 136). Seemingly, a literary vacuum, brought on by the suppression of free thought and spontaneous creativity between 1933 and 1945, existed instead. Despite the few anti- or non-Nazi works which survived the Third Reich, the question arose as to whether the continuity in German literature had actually been disrupted.

In 1945 Germany lay in physical and spiritual ruin. The Third Reich which was to last a thousand years had at last fallen apart, bringing not only its leaders down but its faithful followers as well. Immediately after Germany's capitulation a period of economic, social, and political limbo set in, a period which historians refer to

as "die Stunde Null".

For literary historians it has been much more difficult to ascertain whether "die Stunde Null" also applied to German literature. Some agree that compared with the literary void evident during the Third Reich, i.e. nothing but propaganda accepted and produced, "die Stunde Null" of 1945 did signify the end of the literary vacuum and the beginning of a new literary era. Heinrich Böll set "die Stunde Null" in the year 1933 with the advent of the Third Reich and the beginning of literary suppression (Born and Mathey, p. 53). Heinrich Vormweg maintained that no "Stunde Null" had existed, for literature had offered an inscape to those writers trapped within the stifling confines of Nazi control. Within this refuge these writers could feel untouchable and removed from the degenerate political system. In other words, there had been more than just propaganda produced under Hitler (pp. 204-205). Still yet another theory suggests two "Stunde Null"; one for the writers and publishers on May 8, 1945 (Germany's capitulation), and one for the public after June 20, 1948 (Währungsreform) (Wehdeking, "...Lost Generation?", p. 148). A more recent study entertains the idea that not only did a "Stunde Null" not exist, but also that there had been no efforts made to rid the German language of its national-socialistic tendencies. This study deals,

however, with the literary situation in post-war Austria (Scheichl). I must mention here that although the post-World War II developments vis-à-vis literature, politics, etc. in all German-speaking countries are undoubtedly important, consideration of each would be too broad for my purposes. As Borchert was born in Hamburg, I must limit the discussion of literary developments to the Federal Republic. For the "young" authors of 1945, "die Stunde Null" was definitely a real concept (Widmer, p. 8).

The "Kriegsgefangenen", writing from within American prisoner-of-war camps and including Hans-Werner Richter, Gustav Rene Hocke, Alfred Andersch, Walter Kolbenhoff, comprised some of the "young" authors, meaning most had been born between 1905 and 1915 and had grown to adulthood during Hitler's reign (Wehdeking, Der Nullpunkt, p. 136), who would attempt to fashion a completely new literature after 1947. These authors dismissed the works of the "innere Emigranten" and, initially, those of the "äussere Emigranten", because for them a new literary beginning was important and necessary to come to terms with what had just happened, to start afresh as if they had had no predecessors (McClelland, p. 152). In light of what they had experienced during the war, these writers could not reinstate and develop the style of the old traditionalists who had written before 1933. Yet, neither could they

follow the way of the "innere Emigranten". They wanted to get away from the "Propagandasprache" so prominent in the Third Reich and the "Sklavensprache" of the "innere Emigranten", i.e. "Das Wort mußte seinen Sinn bekommen, die Sprache wieder ursprünglich und frei von allen Verschnökelungen werden" (Richter, "Bruchstücke...", p. 135).

While imprisoned Andersch and Richter conceived the idea of printing a German-language newspaper. The newspaper, Der Ruf, was allowed to appear in 1945 and 1946. Through editorials in Der Ruf the "Kriegsgefangenen" voiced loudly themes dealing with anti-nazism, pacifism, interpretations of democracy (Dornberg, p. 189), and the spiritual condition of the "junge Generation".

In one particular article entitled "Warum schweigt die junge Generation?" Richter considered first the general sentiment among those of the "junge Generation" as to their inability to express themselves about the recent catastrophe: "(...) diese Generation schweigt, aber sie schweigt nicht, weil sie etwa zu ratlos wäre, sie schweigt nicht, weil sie nichts zu sagen hätte oder die Wörter nicht fände, die notwendig wären, um das zu sagen, was gesagt werden muß. Sie schweigt aus dem sicheren Gefühl heraus, daß die Diskrepanz zwischen der bedrohten menschlichen Existenz und der geruhsamen Problematik jener älteren

Generation, (...) zu groß ist, um überbrückbar zu sein (p. 3). Later in the same article, although it was not stated as such but merely implied, he considered the difficulty which faced the "junge Generation", at that time, as writers: "Sie schweigt, weil sie mit den Begriffen und Problemen, die heute an sie herangetragen werden, nichts anzufangen weiß; sie schweigt, weil sie die Diskrepanz zwischen dem geschriebenen Wort und dem erlebten Leben zu stark empfindet" (Ibid, p. 33).

Richter was the first to address the problem of the "junge Generation" publicly. After being repatriated, he and Andersch sought and received permission to resume publication of Der Ruf along the same lines as the American version. But, Der Ruf proved too outspoken, albeit anti-fascist and democratic, for U.S. military authorities and was banned in 1947 (McClelland, p. 153). Richter, then, attempted to create a purely literary publication, but as he assembled potential contributors to it, the military government turned down a license for it (Demetz, p. 49). Those who had planned to contribute to this new publication met, nevertheless, informally in 1947 and at Richter's encouragement, to listen to and to criticize each other's manuscripts and to decide, in a way, the fate of German literature.

At first, this collection of writers had been split

into two poles: a majority wanted to leave the past behind and a minority wanted to continue with the present type of literature ("Trümmerliteratur") which was true and real and without literary adornments. However, the latter worked against the "young" authors' wish to develop a new literature. For the majority this "engagierte Literatur" should help to overcome the past and build a better future, not dominate it (Richter, "Bruchstücke...", pp. 136-137). Thus, the "Gruppe 47" was established, a significant *mélange* which was to influence and shape German literature (McClelland, p. 153)

The early members of the "Gruppe 47" had referred to an "engagierte Literatur" and believed it best to leave "it" behind. What had they meant by "engagierte Literatur"? Since the "Gruppe 47" had acknowledged the fact that some sort of literature had existed before 1947, had Hans-Werner Richter been a bit premature then in writing in 1946 that the "junge Generation" was keeping silent? In what state did one find German literature between 1945 and 1947?

In order to gain an accurate and clear picture of the literary situation immediately following World War II and up to the formation of the "Gruppe 47", I believe it best to concentrate as much as possible on reviews, interpretations, and criticisms written during or

relatively near the period in question. Time allows for much discussion and speculation, and, perhaps, the facts become distorted thereby, the initial "gut" reactions, particularly of those who were directly involved in or affected by the literary situation then, faded. Writing in 1955, just ten years later, Hans Wolffheim had made note already of the effects of Time: "Wenden wir den Blick zurück auf das Jahr 1945. Unser Gedächtnis ist zwar kurz und wird unter den restaurativen Ambitionen der Zeit immer kürzer: jedoch, wie war es, wie stand es damals?" (p. 2).

As mentioned earlier, after the Third Reich's collapse drawers brimming over with unpublished works were expected to appear, writers expected "vom Himmel (zu) fallen und überall im deutschen Landen einen Geist, eine neue Wahrheit, eine neue Schönheit (zu) zelebrieren" (Wolffheim, p. 2). What appeared instead has come to be known, among such other labels as "Reportageliteratur", "engagierte Literatur", "Bestandsaufnahmeliteratur", "Kahlschlagliteratur", and "Nullpunktliteratur", and which I regard collectively as "Trümmerliteratur".

Indeed, "Trümmerliteratur" grew more out of necessity than out of the intentions on the part of new and established authors of wanting to create an innovative trend in literature. Owing to the nature of "Trümmerliteratur", authors appear as "Wanderprediger",

issuing warning, solace, and understanding to a spiritually defeated public. Whether literature by such "Wanderprediger" could survive as artistic expression remained to be seen (Ibid, p.3). For this reason it has been debated as to whether "Trümmerliteratur" designates a literary era or whether it signifies merely a "phase", a transition to a "true" beginning in Post-War German literature. In any event, it is hardly possible to read a discussion of German "Nachkriegsliteratur" which avoids completely mentioning in some way, though usually very indirectly, "Trümmerliteratur".

What, then, is "Trümmerliteratur"? What caused it to exist in the first place? Had the authors writing between 1945 and 1947 a purpose in writing in a way which literary historians would later scorn on the basis of literary value and, to all intents and purposes, ignore? And, finally, what predominant themes and stylistic elements does one associate with "Trümmerliteratur"? I mentioned earlier that if asked to state an example for "Trümmerliteratur" the name Wolfgang Borchert would most probably come to mind. However, it must be noted here that he had not been the only writer to produce works between 1945 and 1947. In the works written during this time and shortly afterwards by Böll, Weyrauch, Plievier, Rinser, Kasack, Zuckmayer, to name just a few, one can detect elements of

"Trümmerliteratur" as well. Although it is primarily of the works by the "young" authors, "Trümmerliteratur" includes some works by previously established writers of both the "äussere Emigranten" and the "innere Emigranten". How Wolfgang Borchert differs from these authors was indicated earlier in this investigation.

After twelve years of Nazi rule and an unremitting barrage of propaganda and lies, the German populace sought to rebuild a life based on truth. Although only a few had enthusiastically welcomed war, most had, nevertheless, believed in their homeland, had believed in honor, loyalty, valor, and obedience to it. They had become, however, disillusioned, and such ideals that had been once held in high esteem had been so perverted by the Third Reich to the point where the Germans now regarded them with cynicism (Proske, p. 794). This disillusionment and cynicism were also felt by the "young" authors. For them reality and truth would become high priorities in their writing.

The first dilemma facing authors after 1945 evolved around the problem of deciding where to begin, i.e. whether they should continue with literature from where it left off in 1933 or whether they should consciously "create" a totally new literature. For most who wrote "Trümmerliteratur" there was indeed no opportunity to reflect on what to write nor how to write it. What they

had experienced during the war and in its aftermath essentially would compel them to write as they wished. Their experiences were too deeply ingrained to simply ignore them (Ibid, p. 792). Thus, restoring literature to that which it had been would prove impossible. The world had changed too much; they had changed too much (Döblin, p. 33). As Hans-Werner Richter had said, the "young" authors saw a great discrepancy between the written word and their experiences. Their immediate task, then, was to bridge this gap and attempt to bring into agreement reality and humanity (Braem, p. 146) and come to terms with the recent past through writing.

The first flux of publications after the war's end concentrated solely on discussion and criticism of the recent catastrophe and Germany's initial post-war condition. In newspapers, periodicals, brochures, and books the historical, political, psychological, and moral causes and consequences were investigated. There seemed to be no chance for a meaningful and artistic literature to emerge to allay the overwhelming need to report facts and actualities (Holthusen, p. 138).

Although a few turned to surrealism and the fantastic, the main stream of "young" authors approached pure realism (Andersch, p. 25). Relating their ordeal served not only their own purpose of coming to terms with the recent past,

but they believed they had a duty to their readers to present life as it was without any indication of it being otherwise: "Wer die Tiefe so kennengelernt hat wie wir, wird mit aller Entschiedenheit danach trachten müssen, seine Erfahrungen auszumünzen, um leidenschaftlich daran teilzunehmen, diese Welt dort, wo sie gebessert werden kann, bessern zu helfen" (Lange, p. 223).

They had seen the atrocities of war and had seen the ruins (Trümmer) attributed to them, as had many others. What set these authors apart from the average victim was the fact that they had seen it all through their eyes as potential writers. And through these eyes they could truthfully account reality and use them as a tool ("ein gutes Auge gehört zum Handwerkszeug des Schriftstellers") to point out both the positive and negative aspects and look beyond the surface appearance (Böll, "Bekenntnis...", pp. 340-341). This special "sight" combined with their direct participation in the war and post-war difficulties embody the essence of "Trümmerliteratur". The best definition for "Trümmerliteratur" has been provided by Heinrich Böll: "Wir schrieben also vom Krieg, von der Heimkehr und dem, was wir im Krieg gesehen hatten und bei der Heimkehr vorfanden: von Trümmern; das ergab drei Schlagwörter, die der jungen Literatur angehängt wurden: Kriegs-, Heimkehrer-, und Trümmerliteratur. Die

Bezeichnungen als solche sind berechtigt: es war Krieg gewesen, sechs Jahre lang, wir kehrten heim aus diesem Krieg, wir fanden Trümmer und schrieben darüber " (Ibid, p. 339).

Taking into account once again the wide-spread catastrophic repercussions wrought by the war, there was essentially little doubt as to with what themes authors would concern themselves. All, who had come from actual battle, from the ruins which prevailed in the cities, from prisoner-of-war camps, or from concentration camps, one sentiment reigned among them: they had to write, above all else, about their ordeal (Bender, p. 337).

As Böll had written, the authors of "Trümmerliteratur" wrote about the war and the post-war condition in Germany. These two areas, however, constitute more specific themes, namely National Socialism, the Resistance, the persecution of the Jews, war crimes and imprisonment, problems of the returning soldier, reparations for the past, as well as the problem of social outsiders (soziales Aussenseitertum) and ideological conflicts (Wippermann, p. 107). Perhaps the only writer to deal with nearly all of these themes simultaneously was Wolfgang Borchert in his drama "Draußen vor der Tür". Nevertheless, all writers of "Trümmerliteratur" share common ground in that their works contain some element related to the war and/or its

aftermath. How these writers treat these themes, stylistically, is yet another matter.

Perhaps the earliest stylistic example of "Trümmerliteratur" is a poem by Günther Eich written in April/May of 1945. Entitled "Inventur" it gives an idea not only of the private and social mood in Germany at that time, but provides as well a preview of the simple writing style which would come to dominate "Trümmerliteratur" (Zürcher, "Welche...", pp. 320-321).:

"Dies ist meine Mütze,
 dies ist mein Mantel,
 Hier mein Rasierzeug
 im Beutel aus Leinen.
 Konservenbüchse:
 Mein Teller, mein Becher,
 ich hab in das Weißblech
 den Namen geritzt
 (...)
 Dies ist mein Notizbuch,
 dies ist meine Zeltbahn,
 dies ist meine Handtuch
 dies ist mein Zwirn."

Eich's poem typifies, in addition, the inability of many writers to avoid recording their experiences like reporters. Many could not find the right words to express

themselves and, as a result, wrote hastily, superficially, obsessed with a particular subject (Bender, p. 377). Hence, a "Reportage" -style prevailed (Schonauer, "Sie kämpften...", p. 189). Letters, diaries kept while imprisoned, factual accounts of the war, of the horrors of the concentration camps, and of Germany's post-war condition make up the bulk of "Trümmerliteratur". This "Reportage"-style may have prevailed, but it did not avert two important developments within "Trümmerliteratur", i.e. the emergence of the "Kurzgeschichte" as the favored form of prose, and writers' conscious attempts to present life and the individual's existential plight. These two developments would not only influence "Trümmerliteratur" but would continue to influence future literature (Bingel, p. 378). Since these two developments make up the substance of "Trümmerliteratur", I would like to outline both before basing Borchert's stories on this type of literature.

Bringing out six elements which constitute a German "Kurzgeschichte" in his dissertation Brustmeier shows how the "Kurzgeschichte"'s structure and style differ from the predominant "Reportage"-style associated with "Trümmerliteratur":

1. Begins somewhere, leads to a turning point, either negatively or positively, ending written as

though it predetermined the beginning;

2. open-ended, no solution or resolution;

3. has a beginning and an ending which have a tense body between them;

4. thematic content develops the tenseness between the ending and the beginning, which must without exception become the dominant and recurring theme;

5. has a foreground and a background plot, one must read between the lines;

and, 6. style is similar to "Reportage" and is fond of understatement. (pp. 9-10)

In addition to the structural aspects, however, there are several stylistic attributes intrinsic to the "Kurzgeschichte" of "Trümmerliteratur". Most characteristic is the terse way of narration, the use of words and ideas sparingly, the avoidance of complicated sentence patterns, and the frequent application of colloquialisms (Marx, p. 141). The structure of the "Kurzgeschichte" served the writers' purpose well, for it proved difficult for them to formulate even one page of prose. Finding the words to express themselves complicated matters further. What impeded them was the fundamental factor of writing: language (Widmer, p. 10).

During the Third Reich the German language had been so perverted through propaganda that even such simple words as

"Blut", "Volk", and "Vaterland" had lost their true meanings. For example, the word "völkisch" had at one time simply meant "national". But its continued application as a reference to the Nazi ideology of a pure Aryan race rendered it to mean "racial" with anti-semitic overtones (Stein, p. 30). Therefore, writers could not bring themselves to use such words without being aware of the implications behind them. They had to, then, literally clean up and revive the language (Dornberg, p. 189).

Only slowly and cautiously could the writers expand their vocabulary and consider using words that had lost their previous meanings. Through this, it was hoped that these words would eventually regain their pre-Nazi sense. Despite this hope, however, many words have not yet shaken off their offensive connotation even after more than forty years, and present-day Germans still find themselves incapable of using certain words comfortably or with any regularity. Wolfdietrich Schnurre described succinctly the state of the German language after its debauchery by the Third Reich: "Nicht einmal war die Sprache mehr zu gebrauchen; die Nazijahre und die Kriegsjahre hatten sie unrein gemacht. Sie mußte erst mühsam wieder Wort für Wort abgeklopft werden. Jedem Und, jedem Adjektiv gegenüber war Vorsicht geboten. Die neue Sprache, die so entstand, war nicht schön. Sie wirkte keuchend und kahl" (Widmer, p.

11).

In order to restore the language, they had to basically start from the beginning with only a limited vocabulary. This "Kahlschlag" -approach, though the term was not coined until 1949 by Weyrauch, not only divulged the writers' distrust in the language, it reinforced as well their earnestness to display reality and the truth and their unwillingness to revert back to an artistic language in literature (Ibid, p. 11). As Weyrauch once explained: "Die Dichtung der zukünftigen Deutschland darf nichts mit dem 'Gemüt', nichts mit dem 'Blümlein', mit 'Weiberlieb', mit dem von 'Feigenblättern verdeckter Mystiken', mit 'Rosenstrauch', und 'Nachtigall' und mit 'all dem übrigen Schunde aus dem lumpigen Kunstarsenal' zu tun haben." In short, for the "Kahlschlägler" there was no literary model, no tradition, no ethical restraints in writing (Haase, p. 173).

Besides the linguistic style of the "Kurzgeschichte" distinctive for "Trümmerliteratur", the existential element reigns as the primary mode in presenting the tribulations of the times and the "young" writers' view of life. The main catalyst behind this was their wish to focus on the individual, i.e. "ihr Ziel ist nicht Weltdeutung, sondern Existenzerhellung" (Bark, p. 49).

Existentialism in a few words is an ideological

concept which supports the ethical belief that it is the individual's freedom and responsibility to exist. The operative word here is "freedom". And it was through the "Kurzgeschichte" that writers felt not only less limited in expressing themselves, but it also allowed them to deal with the individual's plight and, in fact, direct their attention to advocating this existential outlook. The open quality of the "Kurzgeschichte" and their existential perspective aligned well with the "young" authors' perception of life and fulfilled their expectations, considering their experiences, in writing. Already in 1945 Alfred Andersch recognized: "(...) die Tugenden des szenisch dargebotenen, umgangsprachlichen Dialogs, der jeden Erzähler-Kommentar ausschließt. Indirekte Characterzeichnung, "understatement", Montage und betontes Aussparen von Gefühl und Reflexion kennzeichnen einen Realismus, den die Kriegsgefangenen (bzw. "jungen") Schriftsteller als befreiend und tendenzlos empfinden" (Wehdeking, Der Nullpunkt, p. 138).

No wonder, then, that the main character in a "Kurzgeschichte" of "Trümmerliteratur" is essentially an "einsamer Sprecher" who conducts a monologue or who dominates the foreground throughout (Braem, p. 147). This lone speaker is caught in a single moment. This focus on a moment's occurrence complies with the main character's

and, indirectly, the author's inability to reconcile the individual's existence with the greater whole of humanity. This manner of narration compelled authors to attempt to relate their subjective experiences with more distance. The discord between objectivity and subjectivity makes up the dual-basis for the "Kurzgeschichte". It tells simply objective facts but at the same time, through the writer's perception of the situation, the word-choice and omissions, a subjective reality and truth can be found between the lines, a special inner meaning hidden behind the words. Since the inner meaning is not stated in black and white, it requires the reader to take an active part in the reading process in order for him/her to perceive any underlying intimations (Bark, p. 49).

The structural elements in the "Kurzgeschichte" of "Trümmerliteratur", the linguistic style, and the existential aspect clearly designated a break from tradition and the emergence of a new writing form. They stress as well the writers' concern more with presenting a slice of life rather than attempting to analyze the meaning of the world as a whole (Ibid, p. 48).

The American and British short story strongly influenced the German "Kurzgeschichte". At first, however, the short story had met with controversy from German critics because it was found to be very superficial. Its

reception turned for the better after 1945, and the "young" authors realized they could identify to a certain degree with stories by the American and British "lost generation" (Hemingway, Wolfe, Mansfield, and others). Hemingway, for example, wrote stories based on his experiences of World War I. Furthermore, the style of the "imported" (my quotes) short story with its way of portraying human tragedy and displaying a perspective conducive to affecting the reader appealed greatly to the German "young" authors (Marx, pp. 123-124). The development of the "Kurzgeschichte" and its repeated use by the "young" authors offered them a critical outlet and compensated for their difficulty in composing long and complicated pieces of prose.

A good concise example of the German "Kurzgeschichte" between 1945 and 1947 is a story by Wolfdietrich Schnurre entitled "Auf der Flucht" (1945), which, incidently, had originally been entitled "Das Brot". The following are some excerpts from it:

"Das (Kind) schrie dauernd, denn es hatte Hunger. Auch die Frau hatte Hunger (...) Der Mann hatte auch Hunger. Sie wußten nicht, wohin sie wollten; sie wußten nur, sie konnten in ihrer Heimat nicht bleiben, sie war zerstört.

(...) 'Ich hol was zu essen', sagte der Mann.

'Woher', fragte sie.

'Laß mich nur machen, sagte er.

Dann ging er.

(...) In dem Haus war es kahl. Die Schublade war aus dem Tisch gerissen und lag auf der Erde. Die Töpfe waren zerschlagen; auch die Fenster. Auf der Ofenbank lag ein Tuch. In das Tuch war ein halbes Brot eingebunden; es war hart.

Der Mann nahm es und ging (...)

Ein Gewitter hing in der Luft (...)

Blitze zerrissen den Himmel. Es goß (...)

Da begriff er: Frau hin, Frau her; er hatte die jetzt: entweder es sich auflösen zu lassen oder es selber zu essen (...) Hunger, dachte es in ihm, Hunger. Und: Brot, dachte es, Brot.

Da tat er's (...) Er lief noch einmal drei Stunden; die Rastpausen eingerechnet (...)

Sie lächelte. 'Schön, daß du da bist.' (...)

(...) 'Du siehst elend aus', sagte die Frau.

'Versuch, ein bißchen zu schlafen.' (...)

Als er aufwachte, hatte die Frau sich auch hingelegt; sie sah in den Himmel (...)

(...) 'Was ist', fragte der Mann.

Die Frau rührte sich nicht. 'Es ist tot', sagte sie.

Der Mann fuhr auf. 'Tot?' sagte er; 'tot-?!'

'Es ist gestorben, während du schliefst', sagte die Frau.

'Warum hast du mich nicht geweckt?'

'Warum sollte ich dich wecken?' fragte die Frau."

(Man sollte dagegen sein- Geschichten, pp. 47-54)

In this story one can discern the various stylistic elements associated with the "Kurzgeschichte" of "Trümmerliteratur". The story begins abruptly, and one can almost foresee its outcome. The wife's question at the end leaves the reader dangling and with a sense of hopelessness. The language is simple; it describes exactly what the husband does and reflects somewhat the horror of his action. Behind the story's façade, however, one detects a human crisis when the husband must make a split-second decision to choose between eating the bread or losing it entirely to the storm. In this instant, he is reduced to his most basic and, so to speak, animal instincts to survive. A mere piece of bread, but something which decides the fate of a human life. Despite the terseness and brevity of the story, Schnurre managed to capture not only the trouble of the times but considered as well the individual's existential dilemma.

Taking into account these two developments of "Trümmerliteratur", i.e. the "Kurzgeschichte" and the

conscious effort to analyze the existential condition of the times (instead of merely reporting facts or imitating the traditionalists) in literature, it seems then erroneous to conclude that "Trümmerliteratur" was solely a "forced" manifestation. Granted, the "Reportage"-style overshadows these two developments, but despite its predominance the evolution of the German "Kurzgeschichte", in particular, managed to become the ideal form of writing between 1945 and 1947 and continued to be used and improved upon after 1947.

I have set the year as the end of "Trümmerliteratur", because the "Gruppe 47" as an extremely influential literary circle had decided, for the most part, to leave "Trümmerliteratur" behind and forge ahead. Though the themes of "Trümmerliteratur" were no longer popular after 1952, its form remained.

As to its importance in literary history, Heinrich Böll supported "Trümmerliteratur" in that it helps us to remember "daß der Mensch nicht nur existiert, um verwaltet zu werden- und daß die Zerstörungen in unserer Welt nicht nur äusserer Art sind und nicht so geringfügiger Natur, daß man sich anmaßen kann, sie in wenigen Jahren zu heilen" ("Bekenntnis...", p. 343). In this sense "Trümmerliteratur" has contributed more to humankind's awareness of its vulnerability and ephemeral state than to

providing literature with innovative ideas.

But, as Wolffheim said, all literature is documentary in that problems of the times can be found in it (p. 4). Böll noted too that the writers of "Trümmerliteratur" had not been the only ones to dwell on war and its aftermath: "Der Name Homer ist der gesamten abendländischen Bildungswelt unverdächtig: Homer ist der Stammvater europäischer Epik, aber Homer erzählt vom Trojanischen Krieg, von der Zerstörung Trojas und von der Heimkehr des Odysseus-- Kriegs-. Trümmer- und Heimkehrerliteratur--, wir haben keinen Grund, uns dieser Bezeichnung zu schämen ("Bekenntnis...". p. 343). In light of this, "Trümmerliteratur" should not be ignored on the basis of what critics view as its overriding "Reportage"- style or lack of aesthetic quality. Besides the advent of the "Gruppe 47" as a determinator for the end of "Trümmerliteratur", Wolfgang Borchert's death in 1947 had already represented its decline.

How Wolfgang Borchert's "Kurzgeschichten" fit into the category of "Trümmerliteratur" will be discussed in the next chapter. I intend to present and analyze in detail four specific stories, namely "Er hatte auch viel Ärger mit den Kriegen", "Die Hundebblume", "Vier Soldaten", and "Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar". I have chosen not to deal with "Draußen vor der Tür" in any depth, because, although it

does contain elements with respects to "Trümmerliteratur", it is essentially a drama. In addition, I wish to concentrate on stories which have not been already extensively researched and analyzed with the intention of supporting the idea that all of Borchert's stories represent "Trümmerliteratur".

(...)

Unser Manifest ist die Liebe.
 Wir wollen die Steine in den Städten lieben,
 unsere Steine,
 die die Sonne noch wärmt, wieder wärmt nach
 der Schlacht -
 Und wir wollen den großen Uuh-Wind wieder
 lieben, unseren Wind, der immer noch singt
 in den Wäldern.
 Und der auch die gestürzten Balken besingt -

Und die gelbwarmen Fenster mit den
 Rilkegedichten dahinter -
 Und die rattigen Keller mit den
 lilagehungerten Kindern darin -
 Und die Hütten aus Pappe und Holz, in denen
 die Menschen noch
 essen, unsere Menschen, und noch schlafen.
 Und manchmal noch singen.
 Und manchmal und manchmal noch lachen -
 Denn das ist Deutschland.
 Und das wollen wir lieben, wir, mit
 verrostetem Helm und verlorenem Herzen hier
 auf der Welt.
 Doch, doch: Wir wollen in dieser wahn-
 witzigen Welt noch wieder, immer wieder
 lieben!

"Das ist unser Manifest"

Wolfgang Borchert

Chapter III: Analysis of Four "Kurgeschichten"

In order to present an adequate analysis, I would like to treat each story separately. Before doing so, I will provide an appropriate category of each which is based on an analysis by Stefan H. Kaszynski. In his dissertation Kaszynski categorizes Borchert's stories into three main types, namely "Kriegsgeschichten", "Heimkehrergeschichten", "Antikriegsgeschichten", and two sub-types, "Gefängnisgeschichten" and "Kindheits- und Milieugeschichten". I will then give a brief synopsis of the respective story, discuss the elements of "Trümmerliteratur" in it, and examine the story's style and structure.³ In conclusion I consider all four stories together and discuss the role of existentialism.

"Die Hundebblume"

The setting for "Die Hundebblume" allows the story to fit easily into Kaszynski's "Gefängnisgeschichten" category (p. 132). In it a man with only the number 432 as identification sits in prison. He describes life as a prisoner and points out how reality becomes difficult to

³ All passages taken from the Rowohlt 1985 edition of Wolfgang Borchert's Das Gesamtwerk.

discern when one is alone. One day the doors open, and the prisoners are led out into the yard to begin a daily routine of walking in a circle. During one of these walks "Nummer 432" spies a dandelion. He attempts to pick it by gradually working his way over to the spot where the dandelion is growing. Just as he is about to reach it, the man in front of him drops dead. The following day a new prisoner takes the dead man's place. Over the course of time "Nummer 432" gets close enough to the dandelion. His intention still unnoticed, he plucks the weed and carries it back to his cell. Once in his possession, he guards the dandelion almost reverently, clutching it even in sleep.

The predominant theme of "Trümmerliteratur" in this story is based on the experiences of the speaker during war-time. Through his descriptions the reader gets the feeling of what it is like being alone, separated from others, and can sense how such an environment may breed fear and the feeling of losing touch with reality, as indicated by the speaker's monologue with himself. There is only one reference to actual war: "(...) - wenn man monatelang kampflös genießt- (...)" (p. 28), which could mean that the speaker is in a prisoner-of-war camp. However, I am inclined to interpret the setting as being in a prison for dissenters against the State. The speaker's obvious scorn towards the prison guards and their

representation of the Third Reich make up the underlying sub-theme.

Where "Nummer 432" and the other prisoners stand for those opposing the existing regime, the guards exemplify National Socialism:

"Man hätte jeden einzelnen von ihnen (den Wächtern) so wie er war als Standbild benutzen können mit der Aufschrift: L'Etat c'est moi." (p. 35)

Their loyalty to and pride in the uniform and their position, i.e. to the State, also become evident:

"Einige (die Wächter) mochten zwanzig und mehr Jahre diesen Kläfferdienst ausüben, (...) viel weniger die eitlen Luftballons in Uniform." (pp. 35-36)

"Nummer 432"'s personal animosity towards the guards and his dissent against the State are shown by depicting the guards as dogs (Wachthunde):

"Aber da bellten die blauen Uniformen los (...), denn ihre Münder waren im Laufe der Jahre bei vielen tausend Patienten eher schnauzenähnlich geworden." (pp. 33-35)

Through his portrayal of the guards "Nummer 432" lowers them to mere animals, inhuman and loyal to their master. His opinion remains mute, however, and known only to himself and to the reader but is never openly revealed to

those instigating it.

A mutual dislike for the guards is expressed verbally by "Nummer 432"'s second "Vordermann", "der Theologe".:

"(...) - jedesmal machte er (der Theologe) eine durchaus ehrlich wirkende Verbeugung und sagte so innig-höflich und gut gemeint: Gesegnetes Fest, Herr Wachtmeister!" (p. 36)

This is not to say that the protagonist is afraid to do the same. His second "Vordermann"'s initiative covers up the protagonist's intention of reaching the dandelion, which seems more important to him at the moment than openly conveying his contempt for the guards and, therefore, for the State.

"Die Tür ging hinter mir zu." (p. 25) With this statement main character, "Nummer 432", begins to relate life in a prison cell. At first, it seems as if he is talking to himself, which highlights the loneliness in the cell. He expresses fear of being alone with himself:

"(...), zusammen eingesperrt hat man mich mit diesem Wesen, vor dem ich am meisten Angst habe: Mit mir selbst." (p. 25)

and illustrates how reality becomes harder to hang on to when one has been alone for so long:

"Aber ich verlor in der langen Zeit den Zusammenhang mit allem, mit dem Leben, mit der Welt

(...) Ich fühlte, wie ich langsam leer lief von der wirklichen Welt und voll wurde von mir selbst." (p. 27)

When the doors open, leading to a daily walk about the prison yard and a brief feeling of freedom, "Nummer 432"'s narration shifts from a private biographical to an instructive account for the reader. The reader can sense the elation experienced by "Nummer 432" at this unexpected change in his lifestyle. The sudden moment of freedom, nevertheless, quickly becomes tedious, and "Nummer 432"'s exhilaration wanes:

"Und immer im Kreis- im Rhythmus ihrer Holzpantoffeln, unbeholfen eingeschüchtert und doch für eine halbe Stunde froher als sonst. (...) Und dann kommt der Tag, wo der Rundgang im Kreis eine Qual wird (...)" (pp. 27-28)

His concentration shifts to his "Vordermann", "die Perücke" and, consequently, his account of prison life becomes second in importance to the description of this man. "Nummer 432" formulates an opinion about "die Perücke" and comes to the conclusion that this man is lifeless and afraid to turn around and face him. Perhaps because "die Perücke" limits his field of vision and forces "Nummer 432" indirectly to follow is the reason why "Nummer 432" hates his "Vordermann" so much, which is really

unfounded. Actually, there is not much else to do than direct all of his attention to hating "die Perücke". His hate reaches a highpoint when he admits to having thought about drastic measures regarding his "Vordermann":

"Ich hätte die Perücke doch umbringen sollen. Einmal heizte sie mir so ein, daß mein Blut an zu kochen fing." (p. 32)

The readers understand through this explanation that they could someday find themselves in the same predicament and might possibly react in the same way.

"Nummer 432"'s loathing for "die Perücke", the loneliness and fear, the monotony of the daily walk, and the hopelessness of his situation all intensify his preoccupation with the meaningless existence in the jail cell and lead to the moment when he spies the dandelion:

"Auf der Suche nach Lebendigem, Buntem, lief mein Auge ohne große Hoffnung eigentlich und zufällig über die paar Hälmchen hin, (...), - und da entdeckte ich unter ihnen einen unscheinbaren gelben Punkt, eine Miniaturgeisha auf einer großen Wiese. (...) Ich erkannte eine Blume, (...) - eine kleine gelbe Hundebblume." (pp. 32-33)

The finding of the dandelion, albeit a weed, signifies a positive turning point in "Nummer 432"'s life. While it does not mean that he will be saved from his predicament,

it does offer, however, a ray of hope in the otherwise miserable existence in the jail (Ulshöfer, p. 39):

"Die Sehnsucht, etwas Lebendiges in der Zelle zu haben, wurde so mächtig in mir, daß die Blume, die schüchterne kleine Hundebblume, für mich bald den Wert eines Menschen, einer heimlichen Geliebten bekam: Ich konnte nicht mehr ohne sie leben- da oben zwischen den toten Wänden!" (p. 33)

The dandelion and the desire to have it for himself become then the focal point of the story.

"Nummer 432"'s first effort to reach the dandelion is foiled by "die Perücke"'s sudden death. His new "Vordermann", "der Theologe", presents momentarily some complications as regards a further attempt. "Der Theologe"'s subtle gibes at the guards briefly distract "Nummer 432" from the dandelion:

"(...), und seine Verrücktheit strahlte so stark aus und nahm mich in Anspruch, daß ich meine neue Geliebte, meine Hundebblume, beinahe vergaß." (p. 36)

Still, this distraction works in favor "Nummer 432"'s intention to pick the dandelion. "Der Theologe"'s negative attitude openly and freely directed at the guards offers a cover-up for "Nummer 432", and in the end "Nummer 432" is thankful to this new man. Where "die Perücke" had received

his hate, "der Theologe" gains his respect:

"Ich liebte ihn beinahe- ja, ich betete, er möchte nicht plötzlich tot umsinken wie die Perücke oder verrückt werden und anfangen, feige Verbeugungen zu machen." (p. 37)

Once the dandelion is in his possession, "Nummer 432"'s whole perspective changes. He becomes part of the living again and more than just a number (Pichl, p. 367), despite the wretched conditions of the prison:

"Da öffnet sich in ihm etwas und ergießt sich wie Licht in den engen Raum, etwas, von dem er bisher nie gewußt hat: Eine Zärtlichkeit, eine Anlehnung und Wärme ohnegleichen erfüllt ihn zu der Blume und füllt ihn ganz aus." (p. 38)

The story ends with his falling asleep, the dandelion in his hands. For the reader there is no resolution. It is not known what happens to "Nummer 432". Does he remain imprisoned? Does he die? For him the acquisition of the dandelion staves off loneliness and fear, because it not only offers him a bit of life in an otherwise stoic existence but suggests very strongly as well hope for the end of his plight. For the present he has realized his goal, and this sustains him. He is at peace.

"Vier Soldaten"

In "Vier Soldaten", categorized as a "Kriegsgeschichte" (Kaszynski, p. 44), four soldiers huddle together in an unspecified location in the Balkans. The four do not speak much, but when they do the conversation shies away completely from their predicament. The youngest is the only one who openly shows his fear. At one point, the oil lamp they have goes out, and they are left in the dark. The story ends grotesquely with the four soldiers laughing and talking of mundane things, while holding tightly to their guns.

As in "Die Hundebblume" the themes related to "Trümmerliteratur" in this story are hidden by various symbols and allusions. In comparison to the previous story, however, the references to the war are much more pronounced. The title itself is the most obvious indicator and suggests a prelude to what the story entails. More subtle signs appear as instruments usually associated with war, such as "Granaten", "Gewehr", "Soldaten", and "Tod". War is without a doubt the predominant theme in this story; however, a sub-theme plays an even more important role in showing the graveness of the soldiers' situation and in establishing the mood of the story.

Both Kaszynski and Jacobs regard "oben" and "unten" as

indicators of two types of Chaos, namely war (oben) and the stoic manner of the soldiers (unten) despite the tumult above them (Kaszynski, cf. pp. 48-49 and Jacobs, cf. p. 161). While I agree with "oben" symbolizing war, I believe the notion of being "buried alive" depicts more accurately what "unten" denotes.

The impression of being "buried alive" establishes a strong undercurrent beneath the surface content and is symbolically stressed over and over. The soldiers' very location communicates the sensation that they are underground: (my underlinings)

"Und über ihnen brüllten Granaten (...) Nur wenn das Eisen oben schrie (...) Und oben kreischte ein wütender Tod (...) Und sie sahen die Balken über sich an. Da brüllt das Eisen über ihnen (...)." (p. 171)

Physical symbols support even more the concept of being in the earth, in a grave, such as "Regenwürmer", "die Kälte", and "die blauroten Lippen" (pp. 171-172).

In the first part of the story the soldiers' "grave" is not yet complete. Although it gives off a meager light, an oil lamp burns and illuminates the soldiers' faces and betrays what they feel, though they do not admit it out loud. The oil lamp represents a last remnant of life, or it means, as long as it burns, that Death will keep its

distance. The turning point of the story dictates exactly what the oil lamp stands for.

In the course of passing the lamp over to one of the other soldiers the youngest accidentally lets it slip out of his hand, and the lamp goes out:

"Aber da fiel ihm das Licht aus der Hand. Und erlosch. Und erlosch." (p. 172)

The repetition of "erlosch" emphasizes the terrible finality of the incidence. Once the lamp is out, the soldiers are left in total darkness, making their "grave" complete. The grave motif appears more explicitly in two other stories, "An diesem Dienstag" and "Die Kegelbahn". Here, the word "Grab" (or "Grube") signifies as well the fate of soldiers in war.

Although the grave motif is very strong in this story, the soldiers remain apparently unaffected by it. They still associate their shivering with the cold, instead of with fear or the inevitability of death. As they have done from the beginning, they avoid mentioning the war above them by talking about turnip fields, radishes, and the cold. These banalities hide the horrifying aspects of their situation, namely war, fear, hunger, and, ultimately, death. The story ends with the soldiers holding tightly to their weapons and laughing themselves, so to speak, to death:

"Und sie hielten sich fest an den gehaßten Gewehren.
Und lachten. Lachten sich über das dunkle dunkle
Tal." (p. 172)

"Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar"

Kaszynski categorizes the next story, "Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar" as an "Antikriegsgeschichte". In it four people sit together at a table in a train station: "der Soldat", "der Brothändler", "der Buchmann" (ein Mann, der ein Buch liest), and "das Mädchen". They are all drinking coffee. "Der Brothändler" complains about the coffee, although he is on his fifth cup. "Das Mädchen" replies nonchalantly that it does not matter if the coffee is terrible; she only needs it to take some tablets. She wants to commit suicide. The three men look at her. "Der Buchmann" finds it nice that she says it so honestly. The others disagree and begin to argue about what the girl has disclosed. Quite suddenly, though, the conversation goes off on a tangent, and the girl is forgotten. While the three men are arguing, she disappears. They suddenly notice her absence, but turn back to their coffee, the girl already a hazy memory.

Of the four stories analyzed this one proved the most difficult. It contains three themes of "Trümmerliteratur":

the problem of social outsiders (soziales Aussenseitertum), war, and National Socialism. While war and National Socialism need no separate introductions, I would like to discuss briefly the term "soziales Aussenseitertum" before considering this theme further.

The expression "soziales Aussenseitertum" encompasses a vast spectrum of sociological and psychological facets as regards group classifications (politicians, artists, family, displaced persons, etc.), types of social outsiders, causes for and effects of this phenomenon, and the degree to which an individual is alienated from a particular group or, in general, from society as a whole (the most extreme case resulting in suicide). For my immediate purposes I have formulated a definition for "soziales Aussenseitertum" derived from three sources (Buchkremer, Neubert, Wippermann).

An individual is considered a social outsider when he/she is no longer able, involuntarily or voluntarily, to adhere to the rules and norms widely accepted by society. The more an individual revolves around his/her own interests and the less he/she maintains active interaction with the other members of society, the more indistinct the social role of this individual becomes. The literary "Aussenseiter" possesses the same characteristics as mentioned already, but, in addition, as a recurring

leitmotif symbolizes and personifies the individual's existential dilemma. A well-known example is Camus' *L'Etranger*. Based on this definition I have designated the four characters in this story as social outsiders and will deal with this theme first.

The setting for the story takes place in a train station, a place one usually associates with transit. But, a train station is often located on the outskirts of a city. Instead of indicating that the four characters are in the process of going somewhere, the train station gives the reader the impression that they are in limbo, of being out of touch with each other and the rest of society. Even Borchert's initial description of the train station lends the whole setting an air of suspended animation:

"Sie hingen auf den Stühlen. Über die Tische waren sie gehängt. Hingehängt von einer fürchterlichen Müdigkeit. (...) Höchstens mal einen Zug. Und in einem Wartesaal. Und da hingen sie dann hingehängt über Stühle und Tische. Sie hingen in ihren Kleidern und in ihrer Haut, (...) Sie waren Gespenster und hatten sich mit dieser Haut kostümiert und spielten eine Zeitlang Mensch. (...) Vom Leben hingehängt zum Gespött ihres eigenen Gehirns und zur Qual ihrer Herzen." (p. 195)

"Das Mädchen" stands on the outermost periphery of society and, for that matter, of life. She wants, no, she must kill herself and concedes this as if it were a totally normal thing to do:

"Und sie sagte das wie: Ich fahr mit dem Elf-Uhr-Zug." (p. 196)

She does not seem to want or expect any reaction to her blithe statement. For all we know she might be completely without friends or family and views suicide as the only escape from a life that has become meaningless, as indefinable as the coffee she drinks. Her condition is so extreme that she cannot re-establish herself as a part of society. The indifference shown by the others merely aggravates the gravity of her dilemma. She does not seek reassurance from the others, and they, in turn, cannot understand her problem because of their own personal plights.

To a lesser degree "der Brothändler", too, seems incapable of reintegrating himself into society as an altruistic person. He laments the shortage in his bread order:

"Ich sollte heut nacht hier fünftausend Brote kriegen. Zweihundert sind nur gekommen. (...)

Und jetzt muß ich rechnen." (p. 197)

His concern, however, lies not with the probability that

many people will go without bread and, consequently, will have nothing to eat, but rather with the inconvenience of having to divide what he has. For him bread is bread and not so much sustenance for human beings. As "der Buchmann" points out, "der Brothändler" regards dividing the bread in much the same way as a soldier with ammunition:

"Sie rechnen mit Kindern und Broten." (...) Wer weiß, ob Sie nicht auch mit Munition rechnen. Pro Kopf dreißig Schuß. (...) Na, und jetzt sind es Brote, mein Gott, jetzt sind es zufällig Brote."
(p. 199)

"Der Brothändler"'s reaction to this proves that he does not see the difference between bread and ammunition and that "der Buchmann" is correct in his summation:

"Ohne mein Brot könnten Sie Ihre Bücher gar nicht lesen, (...)! Und ohne Munition gehts auch nicht, (...)! (pp. 199-200)

Somewhere "der Brothändler" has lost contact with humanity, and this is shown in the way he conducts his business.

This is not to say that "der Buchmann" has his own life in order. He strikes me as an intellectual, deduced from his book reading and philosophical explanations for everything, who considers the parley with the others a game which he must win. In a sense, he judges himself on a higher intellectual plane than the others and cannot relate

to them because each represents too much the average person. He scrutinizes everything that is said so closely that he cannot accept anything at face value or acknowledge human frailty:

"Sie sind mir zu materialistisch, sagte er (der Buchmann) betrübt. Sie kommen aus dem Krieg nach Hause, um auf dem Balkon Kaffee zu trinken. Und Sie, Sie handeln mit Brot. Sie rechnen mit Kindern und Broten. Mein Gott, wer garantiert mir, ob Sie das auseinanderhalten. (...) Sie (die beiden) sind mir einfach zu materialistisch, mehr ist es nicht, einfach zu materialistisch." (p. 199)

The retorts from both the soldier and the bread handler attempt to put the book-man in his place. But, within himself he believes he has kept the upper hand,:

"Und sie lächelten höflich über ihren Streit rüber. Und jeder war ein Mann von Welt. Und der Buchmann war heimlich für sich der Sieger. Und darüber wollte er lächeln." (p. 200)

making him appear even more removed from the others.

Although "der Soldat" differs slightly from the others in that he has a specific destination, his place in society is questionable as well. He becomes a participant in the argument over the girl's announcement and states she is crazy and would have to be killed:

indirectly alluded to by the shortage of bread. "Der Brothändler" realizes he has not received the amount of bread he had originally ordered. The shortage totals 4800 loaves, in other words only 200 loaves available to 5000 families. The missing amount suggests not only that he has to decide now who gets what, but reveals the seriousness of the post-war situation in Germany as well (Bräutigam, cf. pp. 393-394).

After the war almost everything was rationed, food included. The 5000 loaves of bread in the story represent the limited allotment of food available. When the shortage occurs, there is that much less at "der Brothändler"'s disposal to meet the needs of 5000 families, implying most will go hungry. Borchert himself was a victim of the food shortage. The lack of vital nourishment aggravated his physical state already weakened by jaundice, and perhaps had he had access to a better diet, he might have been able to overcome this illness.

The subject of food rationing after the war appears also in "Das Brot". In this story a wife discovers her husband has secretly eaten an extra slice of bread, leaving them each with one less portion. Borchert never explains the significance of this, because most of his readers were well aware of its implication. Such a small thing, but one

which brought home the grave situation of the post-war years.

A third theme, National Socialism, emerges when "der Soldat" voices his opinion about the girl, i.e. that she is crazy and would have to be killed. This declaration follows the same train of thought as an ideal of Hitler's. Hitler was obsessed with the notion of a "pure" Aryan race, which entailed eliminating the "undesirable" elements of society (Rauschning, p. 36). Among other groups the mentally disturbed fit into this category of "undesirables".

The allusion to Hitler crops up also in the discussion about Nero. The soldier's harsh judgment of the girl provokes the bread handler into accusing the soldier of being two-faced:

"Macht ein Gesicht wie Pfingsten und redet vom Totschlagen." (p. 198)

To which the book-man replies that it is typically human to harbor two extreme emotions:

"Das ist Dualismus, verstehen Sie? Typischer Dualismus. Wir haben alle ein Stück Jesus und Nero in uns, verstehen Sie." (p. 198)

A theory developed in 1946 by Max Piccard conveys the idea that Hitler merely expressed openly and applied concretely what most people dared only to believe secretly.

That Hitler occupied the highest position of authority and exercised complete control simply contributed to his ability to make his vision near reality. A "lesser" individual, such as the soldier, would have been condemned for his deed, had he carried out what he thought should be. Hitler's position buffeted him from any opinion to the contrary. The description of Nero fits Hitler's circumstance perfectly:

"Nero war einer wie Sie und ich auch. Nur daß er nicht bestraft wurde für das, was er tat. Und das wußte er. So tat er eben alles, was ein Mensch tun kann. Wenn er Briefträger oder Tischler gewesen wäre, hätte man ihn aufgehängt. Aber er war zufällig Kaiser und tat das, was ihm einfiel. Alles, was Menschen so einfällt. Das ist der ganze Nero." (p. 198)

Hitler, like Nero, was never punished, not only because he ruled dictatorially, but also because he escaped retribution through suicide (Stein, p. 84).

Although the problem revolving around the girl's imminent suicide and the lack of interest on the part of the three men stands in the foreground, the leitmotif symbolized by the "Kaffee" embodies the purpose of the story. The four characters' alienation from each other and society merely underscores and confirms how life has

become: senseless and indefinable.

The first sign for this turns up in the bread handler's assessment of the coffee:

"Ekelhaft, dieser Kaffee (...) Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar. (...) Kalt schmeckt er erst recht nicht. Tolles Getränk (irony). Wenn er heiß ist, dann geht's grad. Aber undefinierbar. Un-de-fi-nier-bar!" (p. 196)

Here, the coffee's distasteful quality is mentioned shortly before the girl states she must take her life:

"Ich will da nur meine Tabletten mit nehmen, mit dem Kaffee, (...) Kopfschmerzen habe ich nicht. Ich muß mir das Leben nehmen." (p. 196)

Throughout the story the bread handler declares time and time again that the coffee is "undefinierbar". Besides the bread handler's frequently expressed opinion of the coffee, the idea that life has become pointless is stressed further by the coffee's location in the story. The coffee remains connected in some way with the unpleasant facets of life: first, with the girl's suicide (pp. 196, 200), then with the bread shortage (p. 197), and with the sinister side of human nature (p. 198), until it comes to the point where the book-man and the bread handler compare it explicitly to life itself:

"Dann trank er (der Buchmann) im Stehen die Taase

leer. Und die andern zwei tranken auch. Undefinierbar, sagte der Brothändler und schüttelte sich. Wie das Leben, antwortete der Mann mit dem Buch und verbeugte sich freundlich zu ihm. Und der Brothändler verbeugte sich freundlich zurück." (p. 200)

The banter about the coffee and the conversation unrelated to the original problem, i.e. the suicide, reaches a turning point when "der Buchmann" suddenly notices the girl's absence. During the conversation the three men have completely forgot about the girl. They all then realize that she is gone, the fourth chair is no longer occupied, and the coffee cup is empty. As quietly as the girl had disappeared, so has life run out for her:

"Und die Tasse, die Tasse war leer. (...) Und die Tasse. Leer. Ganz leise, unauffällig leer geworden." (p. 200)

The three men become abruptly animated, questioning what her real problem was. But, they soon forget the girl again. The story ends with the three men still hanging in limbo and drinking the indefinable coffee.

"Er hatte auch viel Ärger mit den Kriegen"

Like the last story "Er hatte auch viel Ärger mit den

Kriegen" has been categorized as an "Antikriegsgeschichte" (Kaszynski, p. 129). A woman (Helene) comes into the city every three years to visit her brother (Hermann) and to make sure that he is still living. However, Helene is not concerned just with her brother's health. She seeks reassurance that the man we assume is her husband will return from the war. Hermann is completely sure that the husband will indeed return. Still, Helene harbors doubts and tries to express her fears to her brother. Hermann, who is a street-cleaner, worries only about the condition of the streets when soldiers do return. He has seen two wars in his 37 years as a civil servant and bemoans the state of his district during the last and present wars. Helene is given little chance to say anything and leaves her brother, still uncertain about her husband's fate.

The war theme appears in this story first in the form of words or images used to evoke the picture of war in general: (my underlinings)

"das violette Gebrüll der Kanonen" (p. 219)

"das Metall der schlanken Gewehre" (p. 220)

"Mündungsfeuer" (p. 220)

"die ergrauten Kasernen" (p. 220)

"(...) die Lichtmasten, die soldatisch korrekten,
(...) (p. 220)

"in Uniform" (p. 221)

"(...), daß ein Vermißter mitn mal wieder da ist.
Wenn der Krieg längst vorbei ist, (...)" (p. 223)

"die Soldaten" (p. 225)

then, surfaces as allusions specifically to World War II,
usually in conjunction with the First World War:

"(...), die noch einen Gashusten haben vom vorigen
Krieg." (...) Ich hab auch n Berg Ärger mit den
Kriegen gehabt. Damals mit dem. Und mit diesem
erst. (...) Und jetzt kommen sie wieder, die
Jungs, wo es vorbei ist. (...) Diese elenden
Kriege. (...) Herr Lorenz hat sie (die Uniform)
schon siebenunddreißig Jahre. Und zwei Kriege."
(pp. 220-225)

The frequent mention of Hermann's uniform hints at an
underlying loyalty to the State, or rather to two States:
the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. Two parallel sub-
themes, National Socialism and social outsider, make up the
hidden basis for the story and are represented by Hermann.

A tell-tale sign for National Socialism is Hermann's
pride in having been employed for 37 years by the "Staat",
not the "Stadt":

"Umsonst haben sie mich nicht siebenunddreißig
Jahre im Staatsdienst behalten." (p. 223)

And although he complains about the war(s), which seems an

attempt at convincing his sister he sympathizes with her, this criticism is never directed at the effects of war, with respects to destruction and human suffering, but rather at the condition of the streets when the war(s) is(was) over. After the first war Hermann had too much to do:

"Die ganzen Jahre das doppelte Revier. (...) Und dann lagen die Straßen so voll. Wenn sie rausmachten von den Kasernen zum Bahnhof, die Jungens, dann konnten wir hinterher drei Tage lang fegen." (p. 224)

and now after the recent war too little.:

"Und jetzt kommen sie wieder, die Jungs, (...) Und jetzt sammeln sie alles auf, was sie bloß sehen. (...) Jetzt liegt bald nichts mehr auf der Straße." (p. 224)

Hermann's problem has in effect little to do with how clean or dirty the streets are. Between the two wars he has gone from too much work to too little work. The present war has set Hermann's position in the scheme of things askew. On the one hand, his usefulness as a street-cleaner is now in question. What can a street-cleaner do if the streets are already spotless, especially one who has known no other profession for 37 years? On the other hand, the State no longer exists, implying Hermann's duty and

loyalty to it have come to an end. Essentially, he has nothing left. Coupled with the fact that he cannot relate to his own sister's dilemma because his own situation is unstable, there are a few passages which impart the idea that Hermann stands outside society: (my underlinings)

"Eigentlich bleibt von Herrn Lorenz nicht mehr viel übrig in Uniform. Er ist ganz aufgelöst darin. Sie hat ihn verschluckt mit ihrem satten Beamtenviolett. (...) Das ist Herr Lorenz von der Straßenreinigung abends im violetten Hauseingang."
(pp. 221-222)

At first glance it is difficult to determine which topic- Hermann's complaints about the wars or Helene's search for reassurance- dominates the foreground. Since Helene is given little opportunity to communicate her fears to her brother, Hermann's grievances emerge as a quasi-monologue. Hermann's account about the streets nearly overshadows any opinions Helene manages to offer. Hermann's over-bearing demeanor and self-indulgence tend to leave the reader more sympathetic towards the sister.

The disparity between them initially commands the reader's attention. However, with a closer look the reader can perceive something more significant than anything either character might say, something which gives an air of foreboding throughout. It is the progression towards

death which supplies the story with its underlying mood.

As in "Vier Soldaten" the contingency of death appears almost immediately in the first few sentences and controls the mood of the story for its duration. In "Vier Soldaten" the grave motif represents the inevitability of the soldiers' fate; here, the color violet symbolizes Hermann's metaphorical demise as an active participant in society and the husband's actual destiny.

When the story begins the city is shrouded in a violet dusk, which touches everything. Later, just before Hermann and Helene enter the story, the gradual development towards night/death begins:

"Und von all dem wird der Abend immer violetter."

(p. 221)

Hermann stands in the doorway, completely cloaked in violet:

"Das ist Herr Lorenz von der Straßenreinigung
abends im violetten Hauseingang." (p. 222)

Helene stands beside him, and they are both surrounded and consumed by the violet:

"Nun stehn sie da beide im violetten Torwegmaul."

(p. 222)

While the violet dusk means literally the progression towards night and symbolically towards death, it has a two-fold purpose. First, it signifies that despite Hermann's

positive attitude towards the husband's fate, his reassurances cannot dispel the effect of the violet and, thus, seem futile. Secondly, the violet aura around Helene emphasizes the hopeless outcome of her dilemma. Both ideas are intensified even further by the occurrence of the second step towards night/death:

"Die beiden stehn lang im Torweg. Der Abend wird noch violetter. Der Abend wird langsam Nacht." (p. 223)

When Helene takes her leave, her plight is still not resolved:

"Draußen geht eine ältere Frau durch die Vorstadt. Das wär was, (wenn er wiederkommt), sagte sie manchmal." (p. 225)

The final step towards night/death coincides with this moment as well:

"Die Nacht ist zu violett. Alles verschluckt sie. Und die ältere Frau trägt Schwarz." (p. 225)

The inevitable has completed its course, and the reader knows, albeit Helene remains unaware, that the husband will not return.

Unlike the previous stories, this one has no turning point. In fact, it is evident from the beginning that there can be no positive or negative turning point. Dusk always results in night; a natural fact no one can control.

Borchert's use of the violet dusk merely intensifies the readers' foreboding. They know all along the violet dusk's significance.

"Existentialism"

Earlier in this investigation I discussed the advent of existentialism as the foremost approach applied by the "young" writers in presenting the times and their view of life. The structure of the "Kurzgeschichte" enabled these "young" writers to freely express themselves and, simultaneously, to consider the individual's plight as they envisioned it. As a result, this existential element evolved as an essential factor for the "Kurzgeschichte" of "Trümmerliteratur".

To reiterate and explain a bit further what existentialism involves, I would like to quote from a definition taken from a study on "Existenzphilosophie":

"Wir verstehen unter Existentialismus zunächst die allgemeine Überzeugung, daß der einzelne Mensch die Fähigkeit besitze, sich selbst in seinem innersten Wesen charakteristisch zu einem besondern Dasein zu machen, das wohlunterschieden ist vom Dasein der anderen Dinge und Wesen." (Bense, p. 2)

While the four selected stories do not always resemble each

other exactly in themes and structure, they do, however, share common ground in that they all contain elements of "Trümmerliteratur" and this existential aspect.

"Nummer 432" in "Die Hundebblume" teeters on the edge of reality. The reader finds him not only physically imprisoned but also metaphorically trapped within the monotony of the daily routine, loneliness, and fear. When the doors open, he enjoys a short-lived feeling of freedom. But this, too, palls quickly, and his concentration shifts to his "Vordermann", "die Perücke" to the point where he actually hates him. His hatred of this man seems as pointless as the meaningless existence he leads in his cell. Then, he spies a dandelion.

It is this small flower (weed) which provides "Nummer 432" with a reason to remain within the bounds of reality. It serves as a catalyst for him to find within himself the will to strive for something and, therefore, to endure.

Despairing though Helene's situation in "Er hatte..." may appear, she has something to cling to as well. It is not so much what Hermann says that will allow Helene to continue believing her husband will come back, but rather what she does not know. In other words, as long as she has no concrete evidence, i.e. official notice, the husband's remains, etc., Helene can make herself hang on to this pipe-dream.

The closing paragraph of "Er hatte...", it seems to me, indicates Borchert's wish to provide this support for Helene. He could have concluded the story simply with Helene's last words,:

"Aber manchmal sagt sie noch: Das war was. Das war was." (p. 226)

emphasizing the hopelessness of continuing to expect the husband's return. But, Borchert did not end it this way. Instead, he added on an extra paragraph, which could have been an afterthought:

"In einem fremden Land gibt es ein Dorf. Es hat einen Acker. An einer Stelle ist die Erde etwas höher als anderswo. Ungefähr einen Meter achtzig lang und einen halben Meter breit. Aber die Schwester von Herrn Lorenz kennt das Land nicht. Das Dorf nicht. Den Acker nicht. Das ist gut."
(p. 226)

This concluding paragraph announces and finalizes the husband's fate. For Helene, however, it stresses that as long as she remains in the dark about the details of her husband's fate, life still has some meaning for her.

"Vier Soldaten" differs from the aforementioned stories in that the existential element revolves not just around one or two individuals. Again, Borchert paints a very bleak picture. Death surrounds the four soldiers;

their fate manifested by the grave motif. What they talk about, though, implies that none has really thought about dying. Their conversation bypasses the present situation and reaches into future concerns:

"Meine Güte. Hier braucht im Frühling aber nicht gepflügt zu werden." (p. 171)

Between them they believe there is something beyond their plight:

"Aber zum Beispiel, wie findet ihr Radieschen? Die ganze Ewigkeit Radieschen?" (p. 171)

What is perhaps comforting for them is that none of them has to face the outcome alone, should it result in death. Unconsciously, they support each other by not referring to what is going on above them. A cognitive link between them reveals itself in a remark made by one soldier to himself: (my underlinings)

"Und der in der Ecke dachte: Keiner ist unter uns, keiner, der nicht zittert." (p. 172)

To which another replies out loud:

"Der Zigarretendreher aber sagte: Ja, man zittert den ganzen Tag." (p. 172)

The four soldiers together share the same terrible fate and yet, concurrently, have each other to help themselves to cope and endure despite everything.

This is what typifies Borchert's stories. Borchert

gives his characters something to hold on to in the face of adversity while he conveys to the reader that the situation is hopeless. He offers, at least, a lifeline. Whether the characters grasp it or not is their own responsibility. An example where the characters have shirked this responsibility and, for one reason or another, are incapable of accepting that lifeline can be found in "Der Kaffee ist undefinierbar".

While the three men argue, the girl slips away unnoticed. Though they make comments about her wish to commit suicide, the girl is, to intents and purposes, forgotten. In fact, it seems her declaration is not taken seriously, and she is simply passed off as "eine Verrückte". Subsequently, the conversation becomes concentrated on the grievances of the three men.

The only one who does seem to show the slightest interest in the girl is "der Buchmann". Initially, he takes her side against criticism of the other two:

"Wieso, sagte der mit dem Buch, sie sagt doch nur, was sie denkt. Das ist doch nicht komisch. Das ist doch sehr schön sogar. Ich finde das sehr schön." (p. 197)

However, this flicker of interest is quickly diverted by the ensuing complaints voiced by both "der Soldat" and "der Brothändler", and "der Buchmann" is caught up in his own

concern of proving he occupies a higher intellectual position than the other two.

Despite the total preoccupation with the conversation, "der Buchmann" is, interestingly enough, the first to notice the girl's disappearance:

"Aber da riß er den Mund auf zu einem furchtbar Schrei. (...) Der Buchbesitzer starrte auf den vierten Stuhl, wo das Mädchen gesessen hat. Der Stuhl war leer." (p. 200)

He shows a bit of remorse for not having paid more attention to the girl,:

"Vielleicht war sie einsam? Sie war sicher zu einsam?" (p. 200)

while the soldier maintains she was crazy, and the bread handler remarks that she could not have been lonely because he and the others had been there the whole time:

"Sie war verrückt, sagte der Soldat fröhlich, sie war verrückt, sag ich doch immer. (...) Einsam, schimpfte der Brothändler los, wieso denn einsam? Wir warn doch hier. Wir warn doch die ganze Zeit hier." (pp. 200-201)

The realization that the girl has disappeared (and has probably committed suicide) comes too late. Since none had paid enough attention to her problem in the first place, even the girl's presence becomes quickly a fading memory.

The circumstances surrounding her suicide no longer demand further consideration.

I believe Borchert intended the girl's impending suicide to act as a basis for the others to establish contact with one another and, thereby, alleviate the meaningless existence they lead. Collectively, they could have sympathized with her and helped her in retracting her decision. Their inability to affect this is rooted in the problem that they themselves were experiencing their own existential dilemmas. Where at the beginning each had the responsibility to himself, and to the others, to react with concern to the girl's plight, by the end each has evaded this responsibility and now bears part of the blame for her suicide (Klarmann, cf. "universal existential guilt", p. 119).

Borchert did not allow his characters in this story to react in a constructive way. His reason for doing this was, perhaps, to call the reader's attention to the human defect of being self-centered and, at the same time, illustrate how some people were incapable of coming to terms with life after the war.

I have tried through these four relatively unknown stories to show that the themes and structure and style found in Borchert's "Kurzgeschichten" agree with the literary elements associated with "Trümmerliteratur" as outlined in this investigation. Given the facts that Borchert's work is enclosed within the years between 1945 and 1947, that he did not live long enough to develop his writing further or to be influenced by literary, political, social, or economic changes after 1947, and that even his lesser known stories reflect adequately the phenomenon of "Trümmerliteratur", I believe it safe to say that Borchert's prose work are representative of "Trümmerliteratur".

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