



## The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum

*Heinrich Böll, Leila Vennewitz (Translator)*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

# The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum

*Heinrich Böll , Leila Vennewitz (Translator)*

**The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum** Heinrich Böll , Leila Vennewitz (Translator)

In an era in which journalists will stop at nothing to break a story, Heinrich Böll's The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum has taken on heightened relevance.

A young woman's association with a hunted man makes her the target of a journalist determined to grab headlines by portraying her as an evil woman. As the attacks on her escalate and she becomes the victim of anonymous threats, Katharina sees only one way out of her nightmare.

Turning the mystery genre on its head, the novel begins with the confession of a crime, drawing the reader into a web of sensationalism, character assassination, and the unavoidable eruption of violence.

## The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum Details

Date : Published June 1st 1994 by Penguin Classics (first published January 1974)

ISBN : 9780140187281

Author : Heinrich Böll , Leila Vennewitz (Translator)

Format : Paperback 140 pages

Genre : Fiction, European Literature, German Literature, Classics, Cultural, Germany

 [Download The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum Heinrich Böll , Leila Vennewitz (Translator)**

---

## From Reader Review The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum for online ebook

### Ema says

The voice of this novel was something new to me: it is written in the form of a report, apparently reserved and unbiased, which presents the slow but effective process of Katharina Blum's public humiliation by police and press.

It all begins with a murder (I'm not sure this may be considered a spoiler, because it comes in the first pages of the novel):

*On Sunday evening at almost the same hour (to be precise, at about 7:04 P.M.) she rings the front door bell at the home of Walter Moeding, Crime Commissioner, who is at that moment engaged, for professional rather than private reasons, in disguising himself as a sheikh, and she declares to the startled Moeding that at about 12:15 noon that day she shot and killed Werner Tötges, reporter, in her apartment, and would the Commissioner kindly give instructions for her front door to be broken down and the reporter to be "removed"; for her part, she has spent the hours between 12:15 noon and 7:00 P.M. roaming around town in search of a remorse that she has failed to find.*

It is an excerpt that speaks for the whole narration: its writer sticks to the facts, using a detached, informative tone, but underneath the dry language there is a lot of humor, the opinions are stated between the lines and the reader is left to his/her own devices to issue a conclusion.

Katharina, an intelligent and hard-working girl who comes from a disjointed family, is brought in the spotlight after her brief association with a man considered a bank robber. In the course of four days, her meticulously rebuilt life is shattered to pieces by police interrogations and defamatory articles in The News. With police, every detail of her life must be accounted for, petty secrets are brought up to light, her intimacy and honor are trampled.

The press makes everything appear in a different light, distorts the statements and facts, issues far-fetched suppositions, with no concern for the individual whose life they are destroying. Not only Katharina, but also those who stand by her are subjected to vilification in the newspaper. The reporters are not the solely responsible for this - there are also the influential people who stand in the shadow, deciding who must be protected and who must be thrown to the wolves.

There is no end to this kind of story, though. One isolated act of justice, condemned by law as it is, won't change a thing - press resembles the mythological Hydra: for each head cut off it grows two more, just as poisonous and deadly. The freedom of the press is a two sided blade.

---

### Sidharth Vardhan says

*"Mama I'm in Love with the criminal."*

- **Britney Spear** Katherina Blum

It seems people find a certain kind of enjoyment in seeing each other's lives going to ruins. We love to get hold of dirt on whosoever, we can, maybe it serves as a kind of moral victory for our own boring selves, plus it is a good source of entertainment. And news agencies exploit this tendency by providing us scapegoats. The only time it is a problem for us is when it is our own life being reduced to pieces. Kind of like in Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*.

Katherina Blum probably didn't even enjoy this scape-goating by media. She was the most puritan, pious soul you can imagine outside a nun's dress. Until she fell in love with a criminal and go all Bella Swan for him after a single dance. And irresponsible journalism did the rest. I think the dull narrative, the narrator is actually apologetic for the mention of blood, suits the book given that Böll is writing against sensationalism.

---

## **Orsodimondo says**

### **DEL COME LA VIOLENZA PUÒ SVILUPPARSI E DOVE PUÒ PORTARE**

Heinrich Böll conosceva personalmente Ulrike Meinhof e scrisse un saggio su di lei; ospitò a casa sua Solženycyn subito dopo l'espulsione dall'URSS; criticò la guerra fredda, la corsa agli armamenti, il modo come la stampa di destra affrontava il terrorismo, e la politica repressiva del governo tedesco.

Tutto questo scatenò una campagna di stampa contro di lui, fu tacciato di comunismo, in Germania all'epoca accusa gravissima (non solo in Germania e non solo all'epoca) e di amicizia coi terroristi.

Sbatti il mostro in prima pagina, si potrebbe dire.

**Angela Winkler è Katharina Blum nel film del 1975, di Volker Schlöndorff e Margarethe von Trotta.**

**Dietro di lei, l'immancabile Mario Adorf.**

Appare evidente che *L'onore perduto di Katharina Blum* (dal quale fu tratto un film non all'altezza del romanzo, con la regia firmata a quattro mani da Volker Schlöndorff e Margarethe von Trotta) è ispirato da questi fatti, è la risposta in letteratura di Böll alla stampa di destra (il quotidiano *Bild Zeitung* del gruppo Springer).

Essendo un grande scrittore, ne è venuto fuori un grande libro: molto lontano dalle opere dei suoi esordi che ho letto di recente, è un racconto lungo, o romanzo breve, graffiante, caustico, divertente per l'ironia tagliente che Böll dispiega largamente.

**L'altro protagonista maschile del film, Jürgen Prochnow, anni prima che il film "Das Boot" lo facesse sbarcare a Hollywood, dove si specializzò nel ruolo del cattivo (appena entrava in scena si sapeva come sarebbe andato a finire il film, il ruolo del bad guy era immediatamente chiaro).**

Un narratore fittizio confronta la versione ufficiale dei fatti, ma manipolata dalla stampa (il "Giornale"), con i retroscena del caso.

E' una contro cronaca retrospettiva costruita intorno all'interrogatorio di Katharina nell'ufficio di polizia. La responsabilità di chi si serve delle parole come strumento di oppression, è trasfigurata nelle formule

burocratiche degli inquirenti, nei luoghi comuni grossolani e mistificanti di certa stampa, a cui si contrappone l'ipersensibilità filologica di Katharina.

La donna risponde con un atto di violenza alla violenza diffamatoria della stampa e delle istituzioni, e dopo aver riscattato il suo *onore perduto*, si costituisce.

E' un gesto clamoroso, che certo non la farà entrare nella storia, ma, ahilei, nella cronaca per pochi brutti giorni, doppiamente vittima.

Il titolo originale è "L'onore perduto di Katharina Blum", in Italia il film uscì come "Il caso Katharina Blum": evidentemente l'onore perduto fu considerato un deterrente per gli spettatori.

*Lui voleva fare bum-bum, no?, e io ho fatto bum-bum.*

## Quando lo Stato fa sul serio.

**Mb says**

## Petra X says

Irresponsible journalism turns a maid into a murderer. Shock! Horror! It would have been much better written by a 'source' from the National Enquirer. As it is Heinrich Boll is too dry and literary and all the shock and horror is sucked out of it leaving just a competently-written, slightly disturbing story.

•Karen• says

This is an astonishing little novella. The most striking contrast to the Flanagan *The Unknown Terrorist* which treats the same subject of a woman exposed to the savagery of the media after it turns out that the man she spent the night with is a wanted criminal, is the tone. Flanagan wrote a competent thriller, but Böll uses the reports of the state prosecution, the police and Katharina's defence lawyers to create a dry, meticulous, straight narrative of the events of four days. But despite this sober intent, there are many ironic little asides, comments both on this undertaking of transcribing events into printed words, which is what is actually being exposed as fraudulent and highly questionable when undertaken by the print media, and on the events and

people involved themselves. Katharina herself is also a remarkable creation: she is loyal and truthful and virtuous, and the act of murder seems to liberate her. She looks forward to living a life much closer in essence to that of her lover, now that both are in prison. She looks forward to their coming out of prison, also roughly at the same time, when they will both still be young enough to start over. The person who seems to be destroyed by events is the lawyer who was Katharina's employer and who also undertook her defence. The newspaper that is pilloried here still distorts and misconstrues and misrepresents. I wonder if the readership is a little less guileless now?

---

### Xαρ? Z. says

#### The Lost honor of Katharina Blum

The lost honor of Katharina Blum is a great book. Heinrich Böll did something absolutely brilliant with it. He was absolutely brilliant with his sarcasm and his bravery and he was in full control of this from beginning to end. He gave me this feeling, that he knew what he was doing, he knew what he wanted to state with his book and he executed it perfectly. I think of him as a highly intelligent human being, i loved how smartly and smoothly he interrupted the flow of the writing but it never felt doing so. The writing was amazing, truly raw and honest and occasionally funny but still discreet and elegant. There is also a movie, i am going to watch it for sure. 5/5 <3

---

### MTK says

Αν το διαβ?σεις, δε θα ξαναδιαβ?σεις ποτ? εφημερ?δα ? θα ξαναδε?ς ειδ?σεις με τον ?διο τρ?πο.

---

### Xanthi says

Η παραπληροφ?ρηση του Τ?που και πως οδηγε? στη β?α. Ευχ?ριστο βιβλ?ο που διαβ?ζετε απνευστ?.

---

### Matt says

The day I write this review, coincides with two events: Five years ago, on 3/3/2009 the Historical Archive of the City of Cologne collapsed, two people died and many historical treasures kept in the building are believed to be destroyed forever:

Today is also *Rosenmontag*, the highlight of the German carnival season and Cologne being one of the carnival hot spots in Germany:

So, why am I telling you this?

First of all, Heinrich Böll was born in Cologne and lived there or nearby his whole life. After his death the descendants decided to transfer almost his entire literary remains to the Historical Archive in Cologne, the manuscripts, letters, sources, etc. Most likely all of these are now lost. Whether or not the manuscript of this novel has been destroyed I cannot say. It has been a great loss in any case. Secondly, I don't think Mr. Böll cared for the carnival business at all. But the story of the book takes place in a few days just before Rosenmontag. So you could say I read the book at the time the story unfolds, only 40 years later.

The blurb of this book is very accurate and aptly put, so I don't want to add anything here. The prose is detached and there's no real narrator. It reads more like a journal of some kind. It's strange, but interesting strange. Part of it contains some more or less hidden black humor while other parts seem like they have been written in great anger, with a fist in his pocket, so to speak. The relationship between the tabloid press (especially the newspaper called BILD and the Springer publishing firm to which this paper belongs) and the author wasn't a very good one, to put it mildly. After the usual disclaimer about fictitious events and characters we find the following revealing statement:

Should in the description of certain journalistic practices similarities with the practices of the BILD-Zeitung be revealed, these similarities are not intended or accidental, but inevitable.

I don't want to go into more detail here. Suffice to say that Springer refused to publish bestseller lists in his magazines for as long as KATARINA BLUM was on them. Childish behavior? You bet, but in the years that started in 1968 with the APO (extra-parliamentary opposition) and culminated in the so called German Autumn in 1977, the nerves (on both sides) were pretty raw.

So, I guess, this is a rather political book. And it is (or better was back then) largely misunderstood. People actually believed it contains calls for violence. Nothing could be further from the truth, and the subtitle to this book "How violence develops and where can it lead" may give a small hint to this.

---

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

## K.D. Absolutely says

My first book by the 1972 Nobel Prize for Literature, **Heinrich Böll** (1917-1985). I am extremely impressed.

This tells the story of a 22-y/o household help and a divorcee, **Katharina Blum** who at the start of the 4-day Carnival asks her employer for a leave. On the first day, she goes to her friend's party and there meets a mysterious man **Ludwig Gotten** and falls in love with him. They spend a night in Katharina's apartment and early in the morning Ludwig leaves. Later in the morning, police authorities arrest Katharina allegedly for conniving with a bank robber. The leading newspaper picks up the story and what follows is a media circus. Then towards the end are the two twists: the real identity of Ludwig and what Katharina does to the invasive reporter, **Warner Totges** who has caused the death of her mother.

This strongly illustrates the negative effects of sensationalizing news especially when it is bordering to being untrue. The book's fictional paper, *The News* or *Die Zeitung* does it so badly. For example, when Katharina's

mother, **Mrs. Blum** was interviewed by Totges regarding her daughter Katharina, full of sadness, Mrs. Blum lamented " *Why did it have to end like this, why did it have to come to this?*" Totges translated this in the paper: *It was bound to come to this, it was bound to come to end like this.*" Totges accounted for the slight change in Mrs. Blum's statement by saying that as a reporter he was used to "helping simple people to express themselves more clearly."

My goodness. We know what happened to Sgt. Rolando Mendoza during the hijacking that happened last year in Luneta. The media played a big role in the outcome of that sad event.

The book is thin. The writing is plain but Boll knows how to make the story suspenseful thereby making his readers continuously leafing through the pages. He is not too much on describing his settings (something that I enjoy) and tends to concentrate on the events and the people whose lives are interwoven by a particular event. He does not propose a solution to issues. Rather, he presents the facts and let his readers seek for the solution.

The narration is also first person plural (similar to Jeffrey Eugenides' *The Virgin Suicides* making the readers fell the sad situation that Katharina Blum is experiencing. Making the readers feel like reading just newspaper events that happen on our daily lives. Making us the readers like participants in the novel. Very clever. I thought that Eugenides originated this idea. Now I know better.

I have to read more Boll books.

## Steven Godin says

Insightful and believable if somewhat confusing look at the media frenzy surrounding a criminal on the run and a young woman who becomes involved with him. It's 1974 and pretty hardworking German Katharina Blum is caught like a rabbit in the headlights when accused of helping wanted criminal Ludwig Gotten evade police capture from a building already under surveillance by law enforcement. Once the tabloids get their dirty little operations going they start an intrusive and nasty smear campaign of hate where she is portrayed by a leading newspaper as a whore, communist and atheist, while a reporter may or may not have been partly responsible for the death of Katharina's mother after trying to get an interview from the hospital she was staying, Katharina though would go on to have the last laugh with chilling results. Heinrich Böll writes with icy and unemotional conviction that not wholly makes you feel any sympathy as fact and fiction blur, and the twisting of events can seem deceitful. Using a step by step police interrogation style that both works but also creates a problem as it's not always easy to follow the timelines presented to the reader. Winner of the Nobel Prize in 1972, what Böll has done well here also is creating a paranoid and edgy Germany at a time of political unrest and terrorism that takes any investigation as a wider spectrum of trouble.

## Parastoo Ashtian says

????????? ?? ?????? ?? ??????? ?? ?????? ???????.

?? ??? ????

---

### **Parthiban Sekar says**

Her life was not exposed to outside world till now, except to the intrusions of a certain gentleman-visitor; but, interrogated and shammed, it became the indispensable headline of NEWS! Camera flashes broke into frenzy before her main-door creaked. Blank-calls started invading her empty nights. Slander didn't leave her family and her friends alone either. Looking for an escape from these press-matters, she thrusted herself into the limelight that sensationalised her, to bring it to a closure.

In an unbiased tone all the events are reported with utmost clarity, avoiding any sort of judgement but not leaving any essential questions, and the evil insinuations from NEWS are exorcised by the reliable facts. Her character, which was distorted by the media, is sincerely reconstructed and left to the observation of readers. But, little do we can do anything about her wretched fate.

This is that first book I read of Heinrich Böll. There is something strangely amusing about his stories which always keep me on the lookout for his books, rare as they are to be found from any sources I can avail. Fortunately I got this used copy and I couldn't wait to get acquainted to Miss Blum. Though the plot is of a serious nature, the brilliant narration accompanied by witty remarks makes this story all the more intriguing!

---

### **Ahmad Sharabiani says**

338. The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum, Heinrich Böll

The story deals with the sensationalism of tabloid news and the political climate of panic over Red Army Faction terrorism in the 1970s Federal Republic of Germany. The main character, Katharina Blum, is an innocent housekeeper whose life is ruined by an invasive tabloid reporter and a police investigation when the man with whom she has just fallen in love turns out to be wanted by the police because of a bank robbery.

????? ?????? ?????: ???? ? ??? ??? ????? ??? 1985 ??????

????? ?????? - ????? ? ???? ?????? ????? - ?????? ??? ?????: ??? ??? ???? ???: ??????

????? ?????? ??? ???? ?????? ?????? ??? 1357? ??? ??? ??? 1363? ??: ?????? ?????? ??????

????? ?????? ?????? «?????? ?» ? ?????? ???? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ???.

????? ?????? ??? ?????? ?????? ??? ???? ??? ???? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ??? ?????? «??????

??» ??? ???? ??? ???? ???? ?????? ??? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ??? ?????? ??? ?????? ?? ?????? ??

????? ??? ???? ??? ?????? ??? ???? «????? ? ???? ??? ?????? ?????? ???» ?? ?????? ?????? ? ??? «????? ? ??

????? ???» ?????? ?? ?????? ??? ???? ??? ?????? ?????? ??? ??. ??????

---

### **Lisa says**

Does "freedom of speech" include the right to exploit individuals and to distort evidence to serve a populist paper's financial profit as well as its wealthy, ultra-conservative, bigoted patrons' agenda?

I first read Katharina Blum's story in school, and my memory of it was vague, concerned mostly with the question whether or not it was understandable that she fell in love with a criminal, helped him escape and then committed a murder after being the victim of atrociously untruthful and sensationalist press coverage in a news outlet quite similar to Daily Mail or Fox News.

Rereading the short novel today, labelled a "pamphlet" by the author himself, I have a different, more nuanced impression. What I conceived as a cold, detached narrative now seems a perfectly valid method to show what an objective report of a string of incidents might look like, - avoiding expletives, sexual voyeurism, random interpretation, misquoting and speculation. It is a direct response, stylistically speaking, to the press coverage that destroyed Katharina's life, just because IT COULD.

It contains an open political message, a warning. Without justifying violence in any way, it highlights the hatred which erupts out of frustration and despair when a person is exposed to public shaming. It shows the danger of corrupt people in powerful positions colluding with newspapers under their control to deliberately plant false information in the public consciousness.

The most powerful scene in the story shows Katharina paralysed by the evil lies about herself in the populist paper she is reading. A kind friend collects several articles in objective, fair newspapers to show her the contrast to the big front pages and photographs that torture her. Katharina shrugs off those truthful articles.

"Doesn't matter what the other papers write, everybody reads this one", she says, displaying the paradox of human nature, claiming to want information while actually asking for voyeuristic entertainment that endangers truth rather than uncovering it.

Katharina Blum's story is almost more relevant today, when objective news outlets are openly threatened by extreme populists in powerful positions around the world, and when unethical, power hungry politicians shout "fake news" whenever a journalist reports evidence that goes against their personal agenda. They act like wolves dressed up as sheep, pointing at the sheepish crowds and yelling "Wolf!" at them, thus deflecting attention from the true predators.

In the end, nobody knows whom to trust, anything is possible, and journalism is discredited and irrevocably damaged. And that in turn puts both democracy and individual human rights in danger.

We need to learn again the difference between journalistic bullying with a biased political agenda and independent reporting of facts.

We need to discover again that the flashiest headlines and most compromising pictures and scandalous details are not the most valid information.

We need to respect the privacy of individuals and separate abuse from reportage.

We need to think about the long term effects of journalism without ethical rules - for its own sake.

When female sexuality is exploited and demonised to cover up assault and abuse of power, individual human lives are destroyed. That is the message of the story, not whether or not Katharina was justified to commit murder. She wasn't. She never thought she was. But she was driven to the point of not caring about that anymore.

Our shared human responsibility is not to deliver a platform for vile defamation, not to encourage bullying

and threatening behaviour, and to support press coverage that remains objective, fair, fact-based and truthful - and relevant.

I hope they still read Katharina Blum in schools nowadays.

---

### **Patryx says**

La reputazione di una giovane donna viene infangata dagli articoli di un giornale scandalistico, più interessato alla tiratura che alla ricostruzione veritiera dei fatti; poco importa, ai fini delle questioni sollevate dall'autore, se Katharina Blum sia effettivamente colpevole del crimine di cui è accusata: è possibile alterare i fatti in nome della libertà di stampa? Si, rispondono alcuni perché l'uso arbitrario che se ne può fare è bilanciato dalla possibilità di accusare di diffamazione chi ne abusa; non è questa però l'opinione di Heinrich Böll perché le ferite inferte dalla *macchina del fango* non si possono sanare con la stessa facilità con cui sono provocate. La riflessione che attraversa l'intero romanzo riguarda in generale anche la manipolazione dell'opinione pubblica operata da certa stampa che invece di mirare all'oggettività si fa strumento del potere per operare vendette ed eliminare avversari.

**Una delle scene più drammatiche del romanzo: il giornalista Werner Tötges, eludendo il personale medico, avvicina in ospedale la madre di Katharina Blum per intervistarla (*Il caso Katharina Blum, regia di Volker Schlöndorff e Margarethe von Trotta, 1975*).**

L'aspetto più interessante del romanzo è lo stile giornalistico adottato, come se l'autore stesse ricostruendo l'intera inchiesta che ha visto protagonista Katharina Blum: riferisce le fonti (fittizie ovviamente dato che si tratta di un'opera di fantasia), separa le opinioni dalle ricostruzioni, descrive i testimoni facendo decidere al lettore della loro affidabilità, evita i toni sensazionalistici e le descrizioni voyeuristiche; in poche parole utilizza la corretta impostazione metodologica che il giornalista del suo romanzo ignora esplicitamente. L'onore perduto di Katharina Blum è stato pubblicato nel 1974 ma le questioni che esso solleva sono molto attuali perché gli effetti della manipolazione delle informazioni e la scarsa attenzione riservata all'affidabilità delle fonti si ritrovano quotidianamente nella maggioranza delle notizie poste sui social.

---

### **Khaterah says**

???? ??????? ?? ?????? ?? ?????? ?? ????? ??????????? ?? ?????? ?? ??? ?????? ??????? ? ?????? ??  
?????? ?????? ?? ?? ?????? ?? ??????????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? ?? «????? ?? ?? ?????? ??  
?????? ?????» ?? ???? ??? ?????? ?????? ??? ?? ??? ??????. ??? ?????? ?????? ?? ?? ?????? ??? ?????? ??  
????? ?? ??? ?????? ?? ??????. ??? ?? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? ? ??? ?????? ?????? ??  
????????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????! ?????? ?????? ??? ?????? ??? ?? ?????? ?????? ?? ?? ?????? ??  
? ??? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? ??? ?????? ?? ??? ?????? ?? ?????? ??  
????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? ??? ?????? ?? ??? ?????? ?? ?????? ?? ?????? ??  
????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?? ?????? ?? ?????? ?? ?????? ?? ?????? ??

????? ???? ???? ??????? ???? ???? ??????? ?? ?? ?????? ???? ???? ?????? ?????? ?????? ???? ?? ???  
?????? ?????? ?? ??? ?????? ?? ?????? ??????.

????? ???? says

**Edward says**

*Introduction, by Kurt Andersen  
Translator's Acknowledgment*

## --The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum