

11. Further Revisions: War and Modernism, 1923-25.

11.1 Introduction

At the end of Chapter 9, I showed how the death of Jünger's protagonist Lt. Sturm was emblematic of Jünger's proto-post-modern failure to dispense with the need for closure, completeness and coherence provided by metaphysics and meta-narrative. And in the last chapter we saw how language again failed the conservative imagination. His subsequent work involved further attempts to recuperate that absent meaning which would enable him to deal with the traumatic legacy of the War. It is on this continuing struggle that I wish to concentrate on in this chapter.

Between 1923 and 1925 Jünger produced two new books: *Das Wäldchen 125₁*, a reworked version of his diaries dealing with the summer of 1918 and *Feuer und Blut₁*, a reworked version of his involvement in the Ludendorff Offensive of March 1918.¹ He produced a new edition of *In Stahlgewittern* and began to write for the extreme right-wing press. It is his concomitant proximity to National Socialism which ensures that Jünger remains a controversial figure.

This controversy has generated a substantial amount of research into Jünger's role as a political journalist and author of politicised war books — in biographies, literary studies, and as source material in a multitude of historical, political and sociological investigations of the Weimar Right. Most (e.g. Loose, Schwarz, Bastian, Prümm) concentrate primarily on the *political* content of Jünger's writing in this period. Loose, however, points out that: 'Die publizistische Tätigkeit bietet ein buntes Bild. Der Versuch einer systematischen Darstellung der sich darin spiegelnden ideologischen Entwicklung und politischen Unternehmen stößt daher auf Widersprüche, zum mindesten aber auf

¹ *Das Wäldchen 125₁* refers to *Das Wäldchen 125: Eine Chronik aus den Grabenkämpfen 1918* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1925).

Feuer und Blut₁ refers to *Feuer und Blut: Ein kleiner Ausschnitt aus einer großen Schlacht* (Magdeburg: Stahlhelm Verlag, 1925).

Unklarheiten' (p. 352). Although this insight implies continuing instability in Jünger's work, Loose does not go investigate it further.

Roger Woods (1982) has provided the most comprehensive and detailed account of Jünger's political involvement to date. Like other writers, Woods concentrates on the political dimension and suggests that the instabilities during Jünger's political phase derive primarily from the internal political dynamics of the groups with which he was associated: '[the] problems of new nationalism help to explain why Jünger shifts his ground with such regularity when proclaiming his nationalist commitment' (p. 295). Woods also identifies two other crucial features of Jünger's political engagement. First, he identifies Jünger's need for commitment as a response to a 'problem of disorientation' (p. 147) and as a response to the 'cultural decadence of a society and the personal decadence of the over-refined individual whose existence lacks all purpose and meaning' (p. 208). Second, Woods identifies an unstable relationship between uncertainty and commitment in Jünger's writing (p. 177). Nevertheless, Woods does not link this nationalism specifically with the deeper-seated cultural crisis generated by modernity as a whole or identify in detail the fault-lines within Jünger's texts.

In an article which both summarises much of Jünger's journalism and delivers an original new analysis, Segeberg (1993) shows how Jünger's 'wahrnehmungsästhetischen Radikalisierung mit der Dynamisierung seiner politischen Entwicklung — bei genauerem Hinsehen — sehr viel dichter als vielfach angenommen verknüpft ist'.² In particular, Segeberg emphasises how Jünger's work in this period is characterised by the emergence of a 'nationalistische Medientheorie' (p. 335). However, Segeberg does not have the space to examine early texts individually and he is primarily concerned with the later Weimar texts, and *Der Arbeiter* in particular.

² Harro Segeberg, 'Revolutionärer Nationalismus: Ernst Jünger während der Weimarer Republik', in *Dichter und ihre Nation*, ed. by Helmut Scheuer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp. 327-42 (p. 328).

Strangely, the most recent and substantial, account of Jünger's political phase, the 1995 study by Bruno W. Reimann and Renate Haßel fails to mention Woods's or Segeberg's work³ — a lacuna which indicates that their work is characterised not so much by a desire to understand as by what Ulrich Fröschle has termed the 'Gestus der Entlarvung'.⁴ Affronted by what they see as an increasing acceptance of Jünger, the authors are engaged on a self-assigned and one-dimensional mission to discredit him through an extensive commentary of his journalism. Their conception of the political seems to be unconsciously based on Carl Schmitt's 'friend-foe principle' because they lack any sense of the fissures in Jünger's work and declare instead that 'Jüngers schriftstellerische Produktion in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik ist *fast ausschließlich* [my emphasis – JK] politischer Natur' (p. 1) and that Jünger presents 'ein ganz außerordentlich reduziertes und intellektuell simples Weltbild' (p. 18), thereby constructing a conveniently unified opponent. Consequently, they fail to see that Jünger's most political writing is profoundly fissured as a result of his continuing attempts to resolve the absurd character of the War by imposing closure and coherence. Indeed, recent research has shown the extent to which the 'Conservative Revolution', amongst whose numbers Jünger is invariably counted, involved a complex and contradictory set of politico-cultural responses to modernity in general and the First World War in particular as Woods (1996) has clearly shown.⁵ I shall now examine this research briefly before examining two articles by Jünger, his revision of *In Stahlgewittern*, and his two new books in order to bring this persistent instability into sharper relief.

³ Bruno W. Reimann and Renate Haßel, *Ein Ernst Jünger- Brevier: Jüngers politische Publizistik 1920 bis 1933. Analyse und Dokumentation* (Marburg: BdWi-Verlag, 1995).

⁴ Ulrich Fröschle, "Die Front der Unzerstörten" und der "Pazifismus", *Zuckmayer-Jahrbuch*, 2 (1999), pp. 307-60, (p. 309).

⁵ Cf. Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), esp. p. 14: 'In psychological and political terms [...], Conservative Revolutionary writings on the First World War were shot through with ambiguity. They reveal minds racked with doubts about whether the vast sacrifices had been in any way meaningful, and they show an awareness, not only of community but also of division and isolation, not only of comradeship but of antagonism. This deep-seated ambiguity helps to mark off the Conservative Revolution from other movements of the Right'.

11.2 'Conservative Revolution' and Modernism

Research into the 'Conservative Revolution' has long suffered from the same polarisation as work on Jünger, with apologists like Armin Mohler (1949) seeking to absolve the Weimar radical Right of its guilt by association with the NSDAP,⁶ and scholars like Kurt Sontheimer (1962) arguing for areas of overlap between them and the Nazis.⁷ The result has been, as Siefertle (1995) has put it, 'eine Kritik im Handgemenge' and only recently has historical research felt able to approach the subject 'von außerhalb der alten Bürgerkriegsgräben [...] und sie [die konservative Revolution] als ein rein historisches Phänomen anzusehen, das es nicht primär zu bekämpfen, sondern zu begreifen gilt'.⁸

Nevertheless, understanding the 'Conservative Revolution' has actually proved difficult for two main reasons. First, it is so unclear what the term actually means that Breuer (1995) concluded that it is 'ein unhaltbarer Begriff, der mehr Verwirrung als Klarheit stiftet'.⁹ Second, the writings of the Conservative Revolutionaries are often of such a nature that they resist systematisation. Nevertheless, a certain number of generalisations can be made. Bullivant has suggested that the Conservative Revolution was united by a 'basic attitude',¹⁰ which rejected the heritage of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution; eschewed traditional conservatism; was not part of the NSDAP; was characterised by intellectuality on the one hand and a cult of unreason on the other; and

⁶ The 1950 book was a published version of Mohler's 1949 dissertation. He produced a second edition in 1972 and a third in 1989, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932: Ein Handbuch* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989) which is encyclopaedic in its scope.

⁷ Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik: Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933* (Munich: dtv, 1994). First published 1962.

⁸ Rolf Peter Siefertle, *Die konservative Revolution: Fünf biographische Skizzen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), p. 21.

⁹ Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution*, 2nd Edition (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), p. 181.

¹⁰ Keith Bullivant, 'The Conservative Revolution', in *The Weimar Dilemma: Intellectuals in the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Anthony Phelan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 47-70 (p. 52).

was concerned with a search for authenticity, synthesis and wholeness centring on *Volk* and nation which thus became a new, supra-personal subject.¹¹

Herf, unlike Bullivant, sets the 'Conservative Revolution' within the profound changes brought about by modernisation and characterises it as 'reactionary modernism'. By this, he means the incorporation of 'modern technology into the cultural system of modern German nationalism, without diminishing the latter's romantic and irrational aspects' (p. 2). There are, however, four main problems with Herf's analysis. First, he claims that 'it is paradoxical to reject the Enlightenment and embrace technology at the same time' (p. 3) and thus makes the fundamental mistake of confusing instrumental rationality, upon which technology was dependent, with political liberalism. Second, by attributing the catastrophe of the Third Reich to a lack of Enlightenment (p. 10) combined with an excess of Romanticism (pp. 14-15), he neglects the specific historical and political circumstances of the Nazi seizure of power. Third, he ignores the complexity of modernism's responses to cultural crisis and reduces modernism to an exaggerated subjectivity (p. 12). Fourth, because Herf does not accept that the discourses of classical modernity were in any way threatened either by accelerating modernisation or, more particularly, by the experience of the War, it is not surprising that his reading of Jünger's work from the 1920s should reduce it to an aestheticised, irrationalist embrace of technology and so suppresses its complexities and contradictions.¹²

Sieferle's approach is more fruitful since he argues that the 'Conservative Revolution' involved 'der Versuch einer revolutionären Überwindung der Technikkritik' (p. 25), or as Herzinger (1994) argued: it 'stellte den Versuch der Überbietung des Modernisierungsprozesses dar'.¹³ In other words, the 'Conservative Revolution' involved

¹¹ Compare Jünger's celebration of the collective subject of the *symposium* (cf. p. 115 above).

¹² Cf. also my summary of Rohkrämer's critique (p. 27 above).

¹³ Richard Herzinger, 'Feldzeichen des Nichts: Die Gewaltphilosophie der Konservativen Revolution und der Chiasmus der deutschen Übermoderne', in *Jahrbuch für Literatur in Deutschland*, 1: *Gewalt, Faszination und Furcht*, ed. by Franke Meyer (Leipzig: Gosan, 1994), pp. 72-95 (pp. 74-75).

the attempt to come to terms with the War by embracing the destruction of that central tenet of cultural modernity, liberal humanism, and by embracing the agent of its destruction — technological modernity — and by positing the Nation as a supra-personal subject adequate to the realities of the modern world and by turning to the idea of revolutionary political action to realise this vision — creating what Herzinger aptly termed ‘einen deutschen antiwestlichen Übermodernismus’ (p. 86). Or, as Wohl put it, referring to the powerful sense of generational identity felt by the alienated intellectuals amongst the veterans: ‘[the notion of generation] was the favoured collectivism of young intellectuals who had lost faith in traditional solutions and who sought to preserve what was best in the past by a flight into the future’ (p. 83). According to Wohl, their utopian desires took the form of a continued desire for revolutionary renewal:

Brought up in a crepuscular atmosphere of cultural crisis, subjected while still young to the ordeal of the war, witnesses during the immediate postwar years to a wave of revolution that swept away centuries-old empires and shook to its foundations every European institution, intellectuals born in the last two decades of the nineteenth century could not divest themselves of the feeling that the apocalypse had only been postponed and that any restoration of the postwar era would be temporary (pp. 225-26)

On this understanding, the ‘Conservative Revolution’ was an attempt to re-ground modernity in a closed and coherent meta-system and so to resolve the complexities and conflicts of the early twentieth Century — in particular those experienced by a generation of intellectuals whose formative experience had been War, defeat and political chaos. They were conservative precisely because of this attempt to re-ground modernity in a closed, coherent system with a unified, if now collective subject. This explanation allows us to understand a salient feature of the texts produced by the ‘Conservative Revolutionaries’. While they stridently call for revolutionary renewal, their very stridency is an attempt to conceal the persistence of the sense of crisis and alienation which they were seeking to overcome. Breuer describes this situation thus: ‘Das präpotente Gehabe, das die Texte der Konservativen Revolution heute so schwer erträglich macht, war natürlich in vieler Hinsicht nur eine Fassade, hinter der sich eine völlig andersgeartete “Grundbefindlichkeit”

verbarg, die Heidegger zum Existential erhoben hat: Angst' (p. 44). In other words, the 'Conservative Revolution' was one specific reaction to the crisis of classical modernity.

It is Jünger's place within this overall situation between 1923 and 1926 that I shall now trace. We have already identified the deep-seated tensions involved in his strategies of monumental historicisation (*In Stahlgewittern*), theorisation (*Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*), technocratic functionalisation (the articles in the *Militärwochenblatt*) and proto-post-modernism (*Sturm*). Given the research already carried out on the political content of his work in this period, I shall concentrate on the tensions generated by his attempts to invest the War with meaning through new strategies centring on renewal through action and the affirmation of a new, supra-personal subject.

11.3 'Revolution und Idee' and Zoology

Having published *Sturm* in April 1923, Jünger remained in the *Reichswehr* until the end of August and subsequently matriculated at the University of Leipzig where he began to study zoology and philosophy.¹⁴ Among the lectures he attended at Leipzig were those given by the 'internationally renowned biologist turned metaphysician' Hans Driesch,¹⁵ whose vitalist doctrines certainly influenced parts of Jünger's world-view in the 1920s.

1923 also saw the beginnings of Jünger's political journalism, initially under the influence of the then fledgling NSDAP. In *Strahlungen*, Jünger recalls encountering Hitler's power as an orator at a meeting in Munich¹⁶ and it is probable that this experience inspired him to write his first explicitly political article, 'Revolution und Idee' which

¹⁴ Heimo Schwilk reproduces the cover of Jünger's *Kollegien-Buch* and a list of the first lectures he attended — ranging from mineralogy to plant morphology (p. 96).

¹⁵ Nevin, p. 82. Jünger also became friends with the philosophy lecturer Hugo Fischer. Cf. Bernhard Gajek, 'Magister-Nigromontan-Schwarzenberg: Ernst Jünger und Hugo Fischer', *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 71 (1997), pp. 479-500.

¹⁶ Ernst Jünger, *Die Hütte im Weinberg. Jahre der Okkupation*, entry of 29 March, 1946. Of Hitler's speech Jünger wrote in retrospect: 'Es war keine Rede, es war ein Elementarereignis, in das ich geraten war' (p. 610). Further comments on his relationship to Hitler are to be found in the entry of 2 April 1946 (pp. 614-16). In the entry of 28 March 1946 (pp. 605-08), he recalls visiting Ludendorff in 1923 and his disappointment at the general's paranoid obsession with Freemasons. He goes on to describe the swift disappointment which characterised his involvement with Roßbach's illegal *Freikorps*, the Saxon branch of which he ran for one month until he lost patience with the petty

appeared on 23 September in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, shortly before the failed November *putsch*. Jünger argues that because the Revolution of 1918 was not driven by an ‘Idea’, it was a failed and shabby revolution, ‘nichts anderes als eine Meuterei auf einem kämpfenden Schiff’. According to Jünger, the German Revolution failed to overcome the cultural crisis he explicitly identifies at the start of the article, and the lack of an ‘Idea’ was directly responsible for the chaos and disunity of the Republic. The ‘Idea’ then functions as a transcendent meta-narrative that would generate revolutionary renewal and closure and coherence — what Hans-Harald Müller has described as ‘an utterly idealistic line of argument which can also be found — with quite different premises — in left-wing radical activism’.¹⁷ Jünger concludes by prescribing the *völkisch* ‘Idea’ as the one needed for genuine revolution, and he does so in language that explicitly privileges action over writing.

Die echte Revolution hat noch gar nicht stattgefunden. Sie marschiert unaufhaltsam voran. Sie ist keine Reaktion sondern eine wirkliche Revolution mit all ihren Kennzeichen und Äußerungen, ihre Idee ist die völkische, zu bisher nicht gekannter Schärfe geschliffen, ihr Banner das Hakenkreuz, ihre Ausdrucksform die Konzentration des Willens in einem einzigen Punkt — die Diktatur! *Sie wird ersetzen das Wort durch die Tat, die Tinte durch das Blut, die Phrase durch das Opfer, die Feder durch das Schwert* [my emphasis – JK].¹⁸

This violent rejection of literature and language is the response of Jünger’s conservative imagination to the very literary transgressions of *Sturm* with its near rejection of closure and completeness and the renewed failure of language in ‘Ausbildungsvorschrift’ and would be a central tenet of Jünger’s programme over the coming years.

criminals and terrorists he was entrusted with. Cf. entry of 7 May 1945 (pp. 426-33) on Goebbels. Also, *Siebzig verweht II*, entry of 29 May 1977, pp. 312-13.

¹⁷ Hans-Harald Müller, ‘Politics and the War Novel: the Political Conception and Reception of Novels about the First World War’, transl. by Richard Dove and Stephen Lamb, in *German Writers and Politics, 1918-1939*, ed. by Richard Dove and Stephen Lamb (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 103-20, (pp. 108-09).

¹⁸ ‘Revolution und Idee’, *Völkischer Beobachter*, 23/24 September 1923, *Unterhaltungsbeilage*, p. 1.

11.4 'Ludendorff' and *In Stahlgewittern*₃

11.4.1 'Ludendorff'

Jünger continued his studies and hoped to take his doctorate in the following year.¹⁹ He also wrote one article, 'Ludendorff',²⁰ a paean to the general and failed putschist; re-wrote *In Stahlgewittern*; and produced *Das Wäldchen 125*₁. In the article, he draws on vitalist and *völkisch* doctrines and claims that Ludendorff symbolises 'das Recht eines großen Volkes zur Herrschaft und zum Leben, ein Recht, das nicht in Büchern und Dokumenten, sondern in den Herzen derer geschrieben steht, die dafür zu sterben entschlossen sind'. Here, he deepens his rejection of writing with its unnerving resistance to closure and instead turns to the absolute assurance of commitment. This move is complemented by his privileging of 'hot blood' over 'cold reason', of 'Glauben' over 'Logik', and of 'Märtyrer' over 'Advokaten', and it is in this article that religious language begins to play a significant role in his writing. Given that the fundamental role of modernity's meta-narratives was to occupy the void created by the displacement of revelation by reason, and of God by science and History, the use of religious language implicitly seeks a return to pre-modern certainties which remain, however, unrecoverable for Jünger at this stage.²¹

11.4.2 Rewriting the First Rewriting: *In Stahlgewittern*₃

Jünger's redactional work that issued in the substantially changed third version of *In Stahlgewittern* involved a conscious attempt to overcome the trauma of the War through two central 'Conservative Revolution' tropes — revolutionary renewal through action and the creation of a supra-personal subject. Jünger's appeal to action means that he is forced to downgrade literature. For him, the other of literature is 'Tat' and in the preface he claims that 'Tat' is embodied by the writing of the *Kriegstagebuch*. Thus, he describes himself re-reading his diaries which were said to be still encrusted with mud and to possess

¹⁹ Letter to his grandmother, 1 July 1924. Extract reproduced in Schwilk, p. 100.

²⁰ 'Ludendorff', *Das Deutsche Tageblatt*, 9 April 1924, p. 2.

²¹ In the *Kriegstagebuch*, by contrast, Jünger expresses considerable disdain for the padres attached to his unit. Cf., for example, *Ktb* 7, 29 August 1916.

dark stains ‘von denen ich nicht mehr wußte, war es Blut oder Wein’ (p. XII),²² and he reinforces the impression of absolute immediacy attributed to the diary by implying that the fragmented staccato notes made during the *Michael* offensive were typical of his writing practice in the diary as a whole (p. XIII). Having set up his diary as ‘Tat’, Jünger describes *In Stahlgewittern*,³ as ‘Literatur’. However, the literary is accorded second place in this binary pair because his portrayal of the front-line soldier has its own specific agenda: ‘Kurz, es galt, die Tat des Frontsoldaten darzustellen als einen Brennpunkt, der Kräfte sammelt und Wirkungen von sich stößt’ (p. XIII). Now, the focus on the future (‘Wirkungen’) means that literature is considered to be little more than a medium through which two sets of action will be connected: the action of the War, and the action of redemptive revolutionary transformation. The reduction of the literary to a medium for revolutionary action focused on the nationalist ‘Idea’ is emphasised still further on the final page of the preface in language drawn directly from ‘Revolution und Idee’:

Wir brauchen für die kommenden Zeiten ein eisernes, rücksichtsloses Geschlecht. Wir werden wieder die Feder durch das Schwert, die Tinte durch das Blut, das Wort durch die Tat, die Empfindsamkeit durch das Opfer ersetzen — wir müssen es, sonst treten uns andere in den Dreck. [...] Uns aber leite über alles Niederträchtige hinweg unsere große, klare und verbindende Idee: das Vaterland in seinem weitesten Sinne gefaßt (p. XIV).

Given which, Kunicki is right to interpret Jünger’s political commitment as resulting not from a desire to instrumentalise the War to political ends, but rather: ‘daß er im Bereich der politischen Zielsetzung (nationale Diktatur, militaristischer Autoritärstaat) nach jenen Möglichkeiten suchte, die einen Sinngebungsprozeß des Kriegeserlebnisses garantierten und somit die ungeheuren Spannungen des Autors und des Menschen Jünger zur Entladung brachten’ (p. 88).

This hope of redeeming the War experience by pointing forward to future action was, however, fundamentally flawed for three reasons. First, Jünger did not elucidate any real plan for concrete action (and nor would he); second, the supposedly ‘clear’ Idea of the Fatherland is in fact utterly vague (‘in seinem weitesten Sinne gefaßt’); and third, he

²² The notebooks at the DLA in fact show no sign of such staining.

introduces new instabilities into his text. Although substantial detailed work on Jünger's revisions of his text has already been carried out (Kunicki, Knebel, Dempewolf), I want to draw attention to one crucial tension, namely that between the position of the narrator and his supposed supra-personal subject. In *In Stahlgewittern*₃, Jünger creates two collective subjects. First, in his assessment of the Battle of the Somme at the end of the chapter 'Guillemont', he expands his commentary to emphasise explicitly the modernity of the battlefield and, in particular, to emphasise the emergence of a New Man, developing an image from *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* and the *Militärwochenblatt* articles — the physiognomic constant of the steel-helmeted soldier: 'Und es schien, als ob in dieser von ihm selbst geschaffenen Landschaft auch der Mensch ein anderer geworden wäre, geheimnisvoller, härter und rücksichtsloser als sonst in einer Schlacht. [...] Von dieser Schlacht an trug der deutsche Soldat den Stahlhelm und in seine Züge meißelte sich jener starre Ausdruck einer aufs allerletzte überspannten Energie' (p. 99). Second, describing the moments before the start of the March 1918 offensive, Jünger shifts his emphasis away from his regiment (as in the 1920 version) to a sense of community with the destiny of the Nation:

Der Endkampf, der letzte Anlauf schien gekommen. Hier wurde das Schicksal von Völkern zum eisernen Austrag gebracht, es ging um den Besitz der Welt. Ich war mir, wenn auch nur mit dem Gefühl, der Bedeutung der Stunde bewußt, und ich glaube, daß jeder damals das Persönliche sich auflösen fühlte vor der Wucht der historischen Verantwortung, die sich auf ihn heruntersenkte (pp. 226-27).

But at the same time as it proclaims these mass subjects, the third edition is also characterised by more frequent reference to its legitimating source — the personal narrative of the *Kriegstagebuch* — and by a greater emphasis on the personal achievements of the narrator in comparison with the two earlier versions. The shift of focus onto the accomplishments of the narrator, both as writer and as active subject, entail a return of the claims of the *ego* to autonomy and thus subvert the text's claims elsewhere to bear witness to the emergence of a collective subject.

11.5 Rewriting Summer 1918: *Das Wäldchen 125₁*

Jünger's concern with the redemptive promise of future action must have played a decisive role in the production of *Das Wäldchen 125₁*, which appeared in October 1924,²³ since the book involved a substantial rewriting of its subject matter, the events of July 1918, when his weakened company faced continued Allied advances in northern France. While *In Stahlgewittern₁* covers this material in the eleven pages of 'Englische Vorstöße', *Das Wäldchen 125₁* is 254 pages long. Furthermore, while 'Englische Vorstöße' remained broadly consistent in tone and content with the *Kriegstagebuch* original, *Das Wäldchen 125₁* altered not only the sequence of events but also the whole atmosphere of the events described. I shall now examine the considerable redactional work that Jünger undertook. First, I shall show the extent of his re-working of events and mood by comparing the two texts; then I shall analyse Jünger's troubled relationship with modernity in his book as he attempts to regain a sense of closure, certainty and completeness, and I shall highlight the contradictions and fragmentations which ensue.

11.5.1 Revising the summer of 1918

11.5.1.1 *The Kriegstagebuch*

Although the differences between 'Englische Vorstöße' and *Das Wäldchen 125₁* are striking enough in themselves, the extent of Jünger's re-working becomes apparent only when *Das Wäldchen 125₁* is compared with the *Kriegstagebuch* itself. Compared with earlier sections of the diary, the late months it chronicles are characterised by an almost nihilistic resignation on the one hand combined with scathing criticism of the conduct of the War on the other.

Jünger's sense of resignation and indifference takes several forms. We find a cynicism — such as when he notes that his company could not possibly take high casualties, not so much out of tactical or even humanitarian considerations, but because it has already been decimated: 'soviel könnte ich ja auf keinem Fall verlieren, weil ich

garnicht soviel habe' (28 June 1918). The same cynicism comes through in his almost self-destructive curiosity about how rifle grenades function: 'Als ich eine Gewehrgranate zerlegte und mit einem Nagel auf den Zündsatz schlug, flog die Zündkapsel auseinander und riß mir recht häßlich den linken Zeigefinger auf' (6 July 1918).²⁴ Or again, when referring to an action involving the intensive use of hand-grenades, he writes casually: 'Ich beteiligte mich etwas an der Werferei' (21 July 1918). Similarly, his enthusiasm for fighting seems to have dimmed considerably: following the successful assault on a British occupied section of trench he writes: '[wir waren nicht] auf weiteren Kampf erpicht [...]' and then refers to the incident as a 'Scherz' (22 July 1918) — not long afterwards, he nonchalantly took part in a trench assault armed with just a single hand-grenade (26 July 1918). Finally, in the entry of 29 July 1918, he refers to the enemy troops as 'brothers' in two passages in which a sense of identity based on common experience is foregrounded: 'wir pausierten und schossen auf die Brüder' and 'es waren sehr unangenehme Viertelstunden, besonders da man auch noch aufpassen mußte, ob der Bruder umtrieb'. In other words, by mid-1918 Jünger was continuing to fight not so much out of enthusiasm for the War or loyalty to the Reich, but because to cease fighting would have been unthinkable, just as it was for the millions of other men who fought on until the armistice.

Jünger's sense of identity with the front-line enemy troops is directly linked to those deeply embittered passages in which he criticises the tactical incompetence and vanity of divisional and regimental commanders that had led to unnecessary casualties among his own men. He criticises the confusion caused by conflicting orders, as on 19 July when he writes: 'Daß eine solche verworrene Befehlerei auf die Leute günstig wirkt, dürfte man kaum behaupten'. He criticises senior officers' tactical sense, as on 22 July when he writes: 'Wir Frontoffiziere, die die Lage kannten, hielten sowohl die Artl-Vorbereitung, als auch das Nehmen und Besetzen des tief in der Mulde liegenden und von überall

²³ Although it officially appeared in 1925, Mühleisen states that the first printing was delivered in October 1924 (*Bibliographie der Werke Ernst Jüngers*, p. 29).

einzusehenden Grabenstückes für Blödsinn, mußten aber den Befehl ausführen'. His resentment culminates in the following passage:

Am grünem Tisch ließe sich die Einnahme eines Grabenstückes gut befehlen, in der blutigen Realität des Krieges rächt sich solche Knochelei an bemalten Karten. Mal heraus ihr Herren zur Orientierung nach vorn, wenn Euch auch mal ein Brisanzwindlein um die Nasenlöcher pfeift, andere Leute sind das seit 4 Jahren gewöhnt (22 July 1918).

His criticism of the vanity of the regimental commanders who had ordered the assault on the trench section (described according to two points on tactical maps — K and Z₁) is expressed in his comments after reading the official report in the *Divisionsnachrichtenblatt*: 'Na, damit ist die Sache klar. Damit schöne Worte nach hinten gemeldet werden können, wurden die Knochen von 7 Füsiliere geopfert; dabei ist die völlige taktische Wertlosigkeit der Position durch meine und andere Meldungen zur Genüge bekannt' (23 July 1918).

In other words, there is little in the *Kriegstagebuch* of July 1918 which indicates that this material would be transformed into Jünger's most ideologically saturated war narrative.

11.5.1.2 *Das Wäldchen 125₁*

In the Preface to *Das Wäldchen 125₁*, where he explains his choice of July 1918 as subject matter, Jünger gives a brief, if somewhat disingenuous, account of his redactional work. First, the relative lack of action is said to favour the interpretative approach involved in a work 'die über den Einzelfall ins Allgemeine greifen will' (p. xi). Second, by mid-1918 what he now describes as 'die Rasse der Gräben' is said to have adapted to the new conditions (p. xi). He then elaborates on the redactional work undertaken on the diary material whose pages he describes as 'gefüllt mit knappen Aufzeichnungen, die zum Teil nur persönliches Interesse besaßen und aus der Erinnerung ergänzt werden mußten' (pp. xi-xii), noting at the same time that he had changed 'die zeitliche Reihenfolge' (p. xi). The key changes Jünger made to the order and nature of events are summarised in Appendix 1.

²⁴ Cf. also *Annäherungen*, p. 169.

While producing the book text, Jünger made six important changes. First, he concentrated the action of *Das Wäldchen 125₁* into July; second, he eliminated much of the confusing and fraught action in late July; third, he inserted fictional incidents (sniping and parading) and activity “typical” of the front (riding and sunbathing); fourth, the copse is held doggedly until the end of the *Das Wäldchen 125₁*, transforming it into a symbolic locus of heroic struggle (pp. 228-9); fifth, his unit, now transformed into a *Stoßtrupp*, is involved in fighting within the copse; sixth, pseudo-diary elements with overtly political content are added (Jünger’s imagined “speech” and “draft letter”). All these changes can be explained by Jünger’s political motivation. By giving the text an intensity and typicality which would have been absent had Jünger adhered strictly to the order of events as recorded in his diary, he was able to make this period seem more representative of the War as a whole. By investing the copse with a symbolic aura, he increased the political potential of the book. By increasing the tactical importance of his involvement in the fighting, he made himself a more fitting subject of this renewed attempt at monumental history.

To complement this re-ordering, Jünger reworked his interpretation and, again somewhat disingenuously, he admits to having mixed in anachronistic elements: ‘Es stellte sich bei dieser Arbeit heraus, daß ich nicht mehr imstande war, die Eindrücke der Nachkriegszeit von denen des Krieges scharf zu trennen. Manche Betrachtungen hätten damals noch nicht in dieser Form zum Ausdruck gebracht werden können, sie sind absichtlich zurückdatiert, denn erst jetzt wird die Bedeutung vieler Dinge klarer [...]’ (p. xi). Thus, Jünger himself made it clear that *Das Wäldchen 125₁* is much more a work of significant *post*-War interpretation whose eye was as much on Weimar as it was on the Front than a war diary in any real sense.

The interpretative work in *Das Wäldchen 125₁* is spread throughout the text in two main forms: individual comments and paragraphs on the one hand and more or less self-contained mini-essays on the other. Despite his claims in the Preface that such an

approach, blending interpretation with diary material, would allow him to deal with his subject 'in ungezwungener Weise' (p. xii), the result actually makes for heavy and confusing reading as conflicting elements intertwine and repeat themselves. Whatever, the following passage summarises his programme:

Dem Sinn zu geben, was eine auf niederer Stufe stehende Anschauung als Widersinn und Äußerung menschlicher Unvollkommenheit betrachten mag, ist eine heilige Pflicht gegenüber den Gefallenen wie gegenüber den Werdenden, die fortbauen sollen an einem Werk, in dem sie das Gewachsene und die innere Einheit erkennen müssen, um mit wirklicher Überzeugung daran gehen zu können. [...] Sie werden ihr Erbe mit Stolz antreten können, wenn der wunderbare und ewige Kern dieser Zeit, das unbedingt Deutsche, die Nebel alltäglicher Gemeinheit überdauert haben wird (pp. x-xi).

The 'Conservative Revolution' concerns that I have identified are again plain to see here. Jünger is searching for an adequate and coherent meta-narrative that would serve as a basis for a quasi-religious monumental history that would commemorate and do justice to the fallen and so overcome the lingering sense of ambivalence and chaos that adhered to his memory of the war. Furthermore, as in *In Stahlgewittern*₃, the action of the War is linked specifically with future action through the supra-individual subject ('das unbedingt Deutsche') which is said to be characterised by closure and unity.

11.5.2 Conflicting Attitudes to Instrumental Rationality

But, as with Jünger's other texts on the War, *Das Wäldchen 125*₁ is actually characterised by a highly unstable plurality of interpretative elements, all of which involve different approaches to the process of reorientation. The most striking fissure concerns his attitude to the instrumental rationality which had made industrial warfare possible. As ever, the text makes clear that Jünger had few illusions about the crucial role played by the application of industrial techniques to warfare and he dedicates a mini-essay to the subject (pp. 115-21). He again emphasises the central role of technical apparatus on the battlefield and on this basis draws a number of conclusions and makes a number of speculations concerning tactics and strategy in a manner reminiscent of his *Militärwochenblatt* articles.

This concern with the modernity of warfare leads Jünger to adopt positions in his text which are undimmed in their enthusiasm for the practices of instrumental rationality

despite the fact that in ‘Ludendorff’ he had started to privilege passion and belief over reason. Thus, he begins the book by referring to those passages of the *Kriegstagebuch* written hastily under fire as ‘unleserlich wie die Wellenlinie eines Seismographen, der ein Erdbeben verzeichnet’ (p. 1),²⁵ thereby positioning himself as an impartial, scientific observer and even as a technical instrument. In his mini-essay he re-iterates the classical modern project of achieving dominance over the environment, implicitly celebrating the very instrumentality of technology:

Sie [die Maschine] ist ein Ausdruck des menschlichen Willens zur Herrschaft über die Materie. Ihr Entwicklungsgang ist der Gradmesser der tatsächlichen Macht, die er über die Dinge besitzt. Das Zauberhafte dieses Entwicklungsganges ist, daß bei ihm die Überlegenheit des Verstandes sich sofort im Tatsächlichen offenbart. Wir erleben es jeden Tag in allen Zweigen unserer Industrie, daß ein neues Wunderwerk dieser in Stahl gegossenen Intelligenz alles bisherige mit einem Schlage verdrängt (pp. 121-22).

He then goes on to revive the metaphor from *In Stahlgewittern*_{1,3} of the army as a machine or ‘ein Instrument’ (p. 122) and develops a clearly instrumental attitude towards training, treating the individual soldier very much in terms of his function within the military machine: ‘Hier eine Massenausbildung im alten Sinne anzuwenden, hieße ein Präzisionsinstrument mit Schmirgel [sic] putzen zu wollen’ (p. 122). He also declares that the future forms of warfare he is exploring would be possible only ‘wenn wir zu einer raffinierten Qualitätsarbeit am Menschen übergehen’ (p. 89), again reducing the individual soldier to a decentred machine part.

Jünger states his belief that this instrumental work on human material should be entrusted to research psychologists since the investigation of the psychological factors which influence the behaviour of men in battle is ‘eine wichtige Aufgabe der modernen Psychologie. Hier liegen Gesetzmäßigkeiten vor, die erforscht werden müssen’ (p. 165). His discussion of the nature of these factors is strikingly scientific since they are said to resemble chemical reactions (p. 166) and the methods to be used are to be derived from

²⁵ Referring to the attacks on him after the Second World War, Jünger noted in the foreword to *Strahlungen*: ‘Nach dem Erdbeben schlägt man auf die Seismographen ein’ (*Sämtliche Werke*, II, p. 13).

zoology (p. 166). Having established his principles, Jünger argues that the knowledge derived can then be applied to produce ‘sehr einfache Mittel, die zum Handwerkszeug des Führers werden müssen’ (p. 165). The parallels with rationalised research and development procedures are striking, the more so because Jünger is contemplating the complete extinction of the individual’s claims to individuality. In effect, he is contemplating once more the total technicist system he had imagined in ‘Die Ausbildungsvorschrift für die Infanterie’, only this time extended to include that *Innerlichkeit* which in his *Militärwochenblatt* article was the one element which had resisted incorporation into the imagined technical system.

Jünger’s most concrete speculations about the instrumental use of both technology and psychology concern cinema as a means of social manipulation. His premises are that ‘der Film ist eine Machtfrage und als solche zu werten [...] Der Film als machiavellistisches Mittel ist wegen seiner größeren Anschaulichkeit und Zugänglichkeit selbst dem der Presse überlegen’ (p. 194) and that the dramatic effects of cinema should be augmented in the service of propaganda by ‘angewandte Massenpsychologie und eine Art von katholischer Festesfreudigkeit’ (p. 195).

In other words, *Das Wäldchen 125₁* involves a significant amount of technicist and scientific thought derived directly from that more general commitment to classical modernity he had inherited from father, school and university studies as well as from his realisation that instrumental rationality was a central factor of that technological modernity with which he was attempting to come to terms.

But, even while Jünger appears to celebrate the effectiveness of instrumental rationality, he interweaves elements of reactionary *Kulturkritik* into the same text, articulated with the same tone of authority, which actively reject the instrumental approach and list the perceived deficiencies of rationalist epistemology. The central paradox of ‘reactionary modernism’ lies here rather than in the rejection of a liberal political agenda, and this paradox is particularly acute in *Das Wäldchen 125₁* precisely because these

elements co-exist in apparent isolation from one another and so involve a powerful deconstructive tension.

Jünger's critique of instrumental rationality involves three main elements. First, he directly contradicts his espousal of psychology and propaganda as tools for instrumental intervention in society by turning instead to a world-view based on an irrationalist and organicist vitalism. Thus, when he claims that the roots of leadership 'liegen im Gefühl und nicht im Willen, im Blute, und nicht im Gehirn, aus ihr spricht die Rasse und nicht das Individuum' (p. 29), he is contradicting his suggestion that applied psychology should be a tool for the officer. When he argues that 'Die Reklame ist nicht das Ausdrucksmittel der sittlichen Idee' (p. 31), he is contradicting his proposal that film can be a most effective propaganda tool. When he claims that enthusiasm for war among young men occurs spontaneously and organically: 'Eine Jugend, die ihre Nation in der Schlacht würdig vertreten soll, ist durch keine Methode zu schaffen, sie wächst aus der Urkraft des Volkes hervor' (p. 142), he is explicitly rejecting the possibility of instrumental intervention in society. And when he claims that wars are won by feeling and not by reason: 'Kriege werden — was man auch sagen möge — durch das Gefühl gewonnen und nicht durch den Verstand' (p. 30) and that victory or defeat depend not on tactics or the deployment of sufficiently advanced technology but on 'dem stärkeren und gefühlteren Willen zur Macht' (p. 30), he is directly contradicting his sober analysis of the contingent realities of military modernity.

Second, Jünger suggests that instrumental rationality undermines closure and unity and that its totalities no longer carry sufficient meaning. Here again, he is directly contradicting his call for psychological analysis of the emotional processes of a soldier in combat by identifying such analysis as a pernicious attack on the monadic self: 'Etwa die Gefühle und Gedanken eines angreifenden Menschen zu zergliedern, statt sie als unzertrennliche Einheit zu erfassen, das hieße ein heldisches Wesen zu einer Art von Raskolnikow zu kastrieren' (p. 189). He also states that propaganda work should avoid

rational argumentation because the dynamics of reason work to undermine certainty rather than to establish it: ‘Den Verstand in solchen Fragen anrufen, heißt den ersten Schritt zur Zerfetzung tun [...]’ (p. 31). Jünger continues this comment and posits belief as the counterpoint to reason ‘[...] nur der Glaube hat alles Mächtige geschaffen, was je entstand. Für einen guten Beweis finden sich Advokaten genug, aber keine Märtyrer’ (p. 31). In other words, Jünger is strongly suggesting that reason is incapable of providing a sufficient sense of meaning.

Third, Jünger posits an area of experience which he denotes ‘das Seelische’ and which, he claims, was inaccessible to the instrumental approach of Naturalism (p. 160), thereby identifying what he sees as further deficiencies of modern epistemology as represented by Zola’s Naturalism, the most extreme literary manifestation of nineteenth-century Positivism. Contrasting Zola with Löns, Jünger claims that Naturalism’s failure to depict the countryside and its peasant inhabitants adequately ‘deutet auf Kräfte, die tief und unangreifbar unter der Oberfläche ruhen. Hier ist eine der Grenzen, an denen dem Intellekt ein Halt geboten wird [...]’ (p. 160).²⁶

His response in *Das Wäldchen 125₁* to what he identifies as the insufficiencies of classical modernity is to postulate alternative systems that would restore closure, unity and sufficiency of meaning and to this end he uses two strategies — a turn to the *völkisch* ideology of *Blut und Boden*, and a more determined turn to the commitment of faith, each of which I shall now examine in turn.

11.5.2.1 Attempting to restore Closure

Blut und Boden ideology is introduced into the text through the substantial mini-essay which Jünger devotes to Hermann Löns and his works (pp. 151-60). He claims to find unity in Löns and his writing: ‘Hier finden wir keine Zersplitterung, sondern

²⁶ Such depth is also said to be revealed by the War: ‘Überall bringt uns dieser Krieg mit dem Wunderbaren in Berührung, wir ahnen treibende, dem Bewußtsein entzogene Kräfte, einen großen Willen, und neigen dazu, uns ihm hinzugeben. Vielleicht gewinnen wir auf diesem Wege jene innere Sicherheit wieder, den Instinkt meinestwegen [...]’ (p. 137). The emphasis is on an irrational epistemology.

Zusammenfassung [...]’ (p. 156). Löns’s writing is said to show the unity provided by the forces of blood and soil, illustrating ‘welche verbindende Macht die Scholle besitzt’ (p. 151) and Jünger states categorically: ‘Keiner kann den magischen Kreisen entrinnen, mit denen Blut und Erde ihn umziehen’ (p. 155), delving deeper into irrationalism in his attempt to produce closure. Furthermore, Jünger believes that through reading Löns’ account of early morning hunting on the Lüneburg Heath he can discern a meaningful natural order behind all conflict: ‘doch einer höheren Verbindung unterworfen, einer kosmischen, unter aller Bewegung ruhenden Macht, um die zu dieser, vom Dampf der Erde berauschten Stunde jedes Wesen zu wissen scheint’ (p. 158). In other words, Jünger implies that through Löns and his non-literary writing, he can intuit a vitalist metaphysics that would provide that missing totality which modern science cannot.

But by dwelling uncritically on Löns, Jünger becomes overly dependent on the world view of an author who is famous for his stubborn hostility to any forms of modernisation. This has the effect of highlighting the tension between the organicist, vitalist and irrationalist world view that Jünger offers here as an alternative to classical modernity and the radically technological reality of the Western Front. Furthermore, as we shall see, the pagan spirituality which accompanies this vitalism contrasts starkly with the strongly Catholic language which Jünger also used.²⁷

We saw how in ‘Ludendorff’ Jünger had begun to contrast religious values with rational values and to privilege the former. Throughout *Das Wäldchen 125*, Jünger uses an aggressively religious language which articulates a deeply felt desire for the inaccessible certainties of pre-modern totalities, namely faith’s access to the divine and, more specifically, to Christianity’s doctrine of redemption. Indeed, the eponymous copse is made into the symbolic equivalent of the site of Christ’s crucifixion so that it ‘sich mit

²⁷ It is his account of Löns’s description of hunting that stands out in its discrepancy: ‘So zwischen Blumen und Gräsern den Leib an die Erde zu pressen, scheint uns eine heidnische Lust, ein pantheistischer Rausch [...]’ (p. 158). And target of the hunter’s rifle is given a sacrificial dimension utterly at odds with notions of martyrdom: ‘sie wird zum Blutopfer, das man einer unsichtbaren männlichen Gottheit bringt’ (p. 158).

seinen zerschlagenen Stangen wie ein Golgotha von dem in der untergehenden Sonne glühenden Westhimmel abzeichnet' (p. 231). But, rather than derive a truly religious experience from the War, Jünger tends instead to appropriate religious language to articulate what we have already seen as his 'Idee' — secular nationalism as a faith which gives meaning to the War.

Consequently, Jünger turns the War into an experience that will miraculously overcome the socio-political disunity of Germany. Looking back to 1914, he describes the outbreak of War as a moment of revelation²⁸ and salvation²⁹ which was said to have been shared by the entire nation without exception (p. 134), and as a moment to be contemplated in a state of devotion: 'Wirklich, wer an jene Stunden nicht mit einem Gefühl der Dankbarkeit und einer religiösen Erschütterung zurückdenkt, der ist kein deutscher Mann' (p. 134). The outbreak of War is said to have made all Germans 'zu Teilen einer furchtbaren und einheitlichen Kraft' (p. vii) and the experience is said to have been 'eine Lösung der Parteiungen und Zersplitterungen, die jeden befriedigte' (p. vii). Furthermore, Jünger extends the War's potential to the future, stating that after a due process of 'Verinnerlichung der Kriegserfahrung [...] werden alle formalen Ärgernisse mit einem Schlage verschwunden sein' (p. 135). Thus, the War is said to have been a means of revealing the nation to the nation and its redemptive message to have shown how to overcome fragmentation and alienation.

That such miraculous unity consisted of totally wishful thinking is, of course, obvious. So, in another passage, Jünger posits instead a sense of unconditional unity and certainty in medieval Catholicism in his draft "letter to Fritz" which he contrasts with their own, classically modern background and thus with its implied fragmentation:

²⁸ 'Damals hatten wir Gelegenheit, die wirkliche und höchste Gleichheit zu erleben, die über alle Ungleichheiten des Besitzes und der Stellung hinweg als ein mystisches Erlebnis in den Massen [...]' (p. 134).

²⁹ The experience is said to have brought 'die Erlösung von einem Leben ohne tiefere Ziele' (p. 153).

Die alles andere ausschließende Überzeugung, der glühende Fanatismus ist es, der uns fehlt, jene innerliche Geschlossenheit, die uns heute das Mittelalter schon wieder mit anderen Augen als mit denen der Aufklärung erscheinen läßt, und die selbst uns in einer evangelischen Landschaft atheistisch erzogene Menschen mit einer noch uneingestanden Sehnsucht nach der katholischen Kirche erfüllt (p. 185).

But in this “letter”, Jünger goes much further than to merely envy the unrecoverable unity of medieval Catholicism — he also envies its apparatus for repressing disunity. When he declares that the patriotism left over from the Wilhelmine era should be ‘verschlungen’ by a ‘dämonisch aus allen Schichten aufflodernden Glauben an Volk und Vaterland’ and that ‘jeder anders Fühlende muß mit dem Brandmal des Ketzers behaftet und ausgerottet werden’ (p. 185), his appropriation of the language of Inquisition and heresy ominously prefigures Nazi and Stalinist practices.³⁰ Indeed, Jünger’s wish to destroy those who endanger his idealised sense of unity parallels what Zygmunt Baumann sees as modernity’s tendency to eliminate everything whose otherness denies the unity of its world view (cf. Chapter 3.2.3, p. 45 above).

But for all his pseudo-Catholic language, Jünger remains in a sense a Protestant in his search for meaning. First, harking back to a sort of pseudo-Lutheranism, he implies that faith alone can justify the War. Faith that the War is a predetermined necessity is thus said to provide an adequate sense of meaning:

Diese Anlagen aber sind religiöser Natur, und das äußere Symbol, nach dem sie von innen heraus drängt, ist das Opfer. Daher ist es eine religiöse Fragestellung, die in dem Soldaten wach wird, der vor einer in Schutt gelegten Stadt oder vor der verstümmelten Leiche eines Kameraden steht. [...] Er sagt entweder, daß das sinnlos ist, oder daß es sein muß, und durch dieses Gefühl der inneren Notwendigkeit wird seine Haltung bestimmt (p. 143).

Second, his allegiance is more to the faith of nationalism than to its Church, the national state. For the proponents of the ‘Conservative Revolution’, the failures of the Wilhelmine Reich were responsible for defeat and the Weimar Republic was anathema. The goal of their Reformation and one of their key articles of faith was that of a German state based on a unity of blood:

Wir hängen nicht an seiner Form [the state's – JK], schon aus dem Grunde nicht, weil das Volk immer noch weit über seine geographischen Grenzen greift. Die Gliederung aller Deutschen in das große Hundertmillionenreich der Zukunft, das ist ein Ziel, für das es sich wohl zu sterben und jeden Widerstand niederzuschlagen lohnt (p. 186).

This is Jünger at his most virulent in his search for unity and meaning, but his virulence lacks real conviction since it merely masquerades as religious faith and is nowhere able to achieve a sense of the divine that could provide a genuine theodicy of the War. The unity it parades is a fantasy of the sort that is possible only in a system of political conflict and disunity. Indeed, its nationalist particularism is at odds with the universalism of the Catholic Church so that ultimately, the rhetorical excess is just another decisionistic attempt at overcoming Jünger's continuing sense of absurdity.

11.5.3 The Attempt to create a New Synthesis in a New Subject: The *Frontkämpfer*

Competing with pseudo-religious nationalism and Lönisian *Blut und Boden* fantasies is a completely different strategy of recuperation, concerned to overcome one specific aspect of the cultural crisis of modernity, namely the decentring of the subject by technology. Jünger states categorically that the humanist distinction between Man and machine is no longer valid and that only older generations, unaccustomed to the omnipresence of machines could now posit them as irrevocably other:

So spricht die Generation, die den höheren Menschen noch für verpflichtet hielt, die Maschine als etwas dem Geiste Feindliches innerlich abzulehnen. Aber was kümmert eine solche Fragestellung uns, das kommende Geschlecht? [...] die Maschine ist ganz und gar unser Geschöpf (p. 126).

Elaborating on the image of the steel-helmeted soldier from *In Stahlgewittern*₃ and of the 'Zukunftskämpfer' from 'Technik', Jünger states that over the course of the War a new type of soldier emerged who specifically embodied a non-decentred relationship to technology:

³⁰ Significantly, much of the Inquisition's activity involved the attempted suppression of the Reformation — that first European move against tradition and established legitimacy and which thus itself was at the beginnings of classical modernity.

Denn im Laufe der letzten vier Jahre hat sich ein Kampftyp herausgebildet, wie man ihn vorher nicht einmal ahnen konnte. Zu Beginn des Krieges, zur Zeit der großen Bewegungen, der äußeren und inneren Verschwendung, war dieser Unterschied gegen früher noch gar nicht wahrnehmbar, er trat erst ein, als der Geist der Maschine auch von den Schlachtfeldern Mitteleuropas Besitz ergriff, und der große Flieger, der Mann im Tank und der technisch geschulte Stoßtruppführer erschienen. Da schoß man einer neuen Zeit und einem neuen Menschenschlag einen brüllenden Salut, ließ Blut in breiten Strömen fließen und hundert Städte in Rauch aufgehen (p. 3).

By eliminating the old humanist distinction between Man and machine, Jünger was able to imagine that modern warfare did not involve the decentring of the individual by technology, but rather that technology itself was a constituent part of a new quasi-cyborg subject. Thus, he writes that the new race of warriors belong to 'ein Geschlecht mit eisernem Nervensystem' (pp. 6-7), an aeroplane is referred to as 'diese kostbare Einheit aus Maschine und Mensch' (p. 8), and the *Stoßtruppen* are characterised by 'ein maschinenhaftes Zusammenarbeiten von Waffe und Mensch' (p. 242).

In their combination of commitment to their cause and technical expertise, this new race is said to blend instrumental rationality *and* passion.³¹ They thus represent a synthesis which would appear to represent an imaginary instance in which the two opposing aspects of his interpretation of the War could be sublated and the subject re-centred.

His final step with this 'new race' is to make it into the new subject of history, casting it as the collective subject of that future action upon which Jünger pinned his hopes for a redemption of the War. In the following passage, which refers to a supposed visit to an airfield,³² Jünger attributes a new and leading role to such men as the pilots he visits:

[...] ich halte den Typ dieser Männer für fähig, von nun an und durch diesen Krieg in Bewegung gesetzt, im Europa von morgen in Krieg und Frieden eine führende Rolle zu spielen [...] Und auch so viel ist mir klar, daß dieses Neue zu Methoden greifen wird, die den politischen, sozialen und moralischen Anschauungen, die wir aus der letzten Hälfte des vorigen Jahrhunderts mit herübergebracht haben, fremdartig und vielleicht barbarisch erscheinen werden (p. 77).

³¹ 'Die Steigerung des Kampfes darf sich nicht in der Muskulatur ausrasen, sondern sie muß kaltblütig auf Präzisionsmaschinen übertragen werden. Dazu ist eine Rasse nötig, die ein eisiges Hirn über glühendem Herzen trägt' (p. 80).

³² He does not refer to such a visit in the *Kriegstagebuch*.

In other words, Jünger would appear to have achieved his goal of interpreting the War, doing justice to the Fallen and providing a goal for the future, recuperating meaning and closure in a manner adequate to the technological realities of the War experience. However, the very structure of the *Das Wäldchen 125₁* means that we cannot consider his synthesis to be the result of any coherent form of textual logic as it is intertwined with utterly contradictory positions and thus remains in a state of extreme, unresolved tension. Ultimately, then, *Das Wäldchen 125₁*, despite the huge redactional effort it involved, remained trapped in a confusing polyvocality struggling, and failing, to re-ground modernity for the conservative imagination.

11.6 Rewriting March 1918: *Feuer und Blut*₁

Despite spending the period between February and April at the German marine biological station in Naples, Jünger left university without completing his degree, but did manage to publish yet another War book, *Feuer und Blut*₁. In this book, Jünger pursues the same basic strategy as in *Das Wäldchen 125₁* and *In Stahlgewittern*₃ in that he attempts to provide meaning to the War by linking it to future action to be carried out by a supra-personal subject adequate to the technical realities of modernised warfare. In so doing, Jünger returns to his diary account of his involvement in Ludendorff's offensive of March 1918 albeit, unlike *Das Wäldchen 125₁*, without significant changes to the sequence of events of either *In Stahlgewittern* (cf. the chapter 'Die große Schlacht') or the *Kriegstagebuch*.

11.6.1 The New Man, Technology and the Nation

Once again, Jünger signals his intention to bring new interpretation to bear on his raw material and thus he distinguishes between factual experience and what he terms 'Das Wesentliche' which he defines as 'das, was inzwischen auf diesem objektiven Boden als eine ganz bestimmte geistige Haltung und Richtung sich entwickelt hat, und vom Erlebnis — wie ich hoffe, mit Notwendigkeit — als eine neue Seite herausgefaltet wird' (p. 7). Furthermore, he states that in his book 'nicht von vergangenen Dingen, sondern von zukünftigen die Rede ist' (p. 7) pointing to the future as the source of meaning.

Still in pursuit of meaning, Jünger continues to work on his supra-personal subject. Having once again highlighted the alienating nature of the *Materialschlacht* (p. 25), he states that the evolution of new tactics, particularly the deployment of flexible assault groups, the *Stoßtrupps*, represented a re-centring of the subject with regard to technology: 'Ich möchte darin vielmehr eine neue Besinnung des Menschen der Materie gegenüber sehen, einen tastenden Versuch der seelischen Kraft, die Gewalt über die Maschine zu erobern' (p. 30). Furthermore, the narrator suggests that with the Offensive he and his comrades felt a 'geheime Freude [...] daß wir fähig sind, aus dem Chaos heraus dem Kriege wieder ein scharfes Gesicht zu verleihen' (p. 70), re-imposing order on the chaotic contingency of the battlefield. Although this strategy echoes the unified, centred, monadic self of classical modernity, it is clear that Jünger is reinforcing his postulation that the War represented the end of humanist individualism when he states that 1916 witnessed 'den Zusammenbruch eines hoffnungslos verlorenen Zeitalters' (p. 29) and that a New Man evolved to be a new subject:

Es entsteht ein neuer Mensch, den man heute schon ahnen kann. Nicht zum ersten Male deutet sich ein neuer Lebenswille und ein neuer Schlag zuerst im Kriege an. Mächtig sieht man ihn aufwachsen, den Herrn des Materials und den Herrn seiner selbst, der aus einem Zauberlehrling zum Meister geworden ist (pp. 31-32).

He repeats his assertion from *Das Wäldchen 125₁* that the New Man blends brains and blood, rationality and irrational passion and is thus in a position to overcome the alienation and absurdity of the classical modern response to the War.³³

What *Feuer und Blut₁* does that *Das Wäldchen 125₁* does not is to bind this imagined sense of unity with technology much more closely with a sense of unity with the nation and with that vitalist metaphysics he had previously turned to. Confronted with the huge logistical operation that preceded the offensive, Jünger's narrator reflects:

³³ For a more general account of the supposed 'New Man' of the First World War, cf. Hüppauf, 'Schlachtenmythen'.

Im Verstande ist es tausendfältig und verwirrend, aber im Gefühl ist es eins. [...] Hier ist alles zusammengefasst, was wir haben, vorstellen und sind, hier zieht der moderne Mensch in seiner eigensten Form zur Schlacht. Hier verkörpert sich das beste Blut in der Jugend und das letzte Maß der Intelligenz im technischen Arsenal, und beide sind unsichtbar vereint durch die Idee, so wie die Seele Körper und Geist vereint (pp. 68-69).

In other words, the nation's war effort is said not only to correspond with the demands of modern practice but also to combine irrational passion and instrumental rationality, all held together by the 'Idee' which now fulfils the role of a transcendent meta-narrative. Furthermore, the narrator claims that the technical world which emerged in the War is said to be 'doch mit den großen, lebendigen Kraftströmen im Tiefsten verbunden' (p. 29), a point underlined symbolically in the text by the emergence of new life in the spring landscape through which the narrator strolls.

When demonstrating the troops' unity with the nation and thus with the supra-personal subject, Jünger turns the unprecedented artillery barrage which preceded the infantry assault into a conceit for the unity of nation, self and industrial weaponry, much magnified when compared to the 1924 rewriting in *In Stahlgewittern*₃:

Und vor uns, als unsere stärkste Waffe und als Symbol unserer Macht steht die turmhohe Wand aus Feuer und Stahl. Sie ist unser Ebenbild in diesem Augenblick: Ein Ganzes, und doch aus glühenden Atomen zusammengesetzt. Ihr heißer, brüllender Atem schreit nach uns, und sie lockt uns, uns mit ihr zu verbinden zur Einheit von Werkzeug und Arm (pp. 127-28).

At such moments, Jünger claims, one can feel a reassuring sense of unity with History and, more particularly, with Fate, another incarnation of an irrational meta-historical instance guaranteeing totality and meaning. Fate is said to be in harmony with the changes taking place in the War (p. 32), Fate moves forward the columns of men and munitions heading to the front (p. 65), and moreover, Fate is said to relieve the soldiers of any need to interpret their deeds, or indeed, to take responsibility for them:

Wir brauchen über unsere Pflichten nicht zu grübeln, für uns und aus uns denkt das Schicksal selbst. [...] in dem unbekümmerten Mut des Kriegers spricht sich eine tiefe, unbewußte Weisheit aus, hier redet das Leben selbst, und der Urgrund des roten Blutes zaubert seine bunten Bilder hervor (p. 48).

In other words, then, Jünger would appear finally to have accomplished his 'Conservative Revolution' project in *Feuer und Blut*₁, by establishing a system that

guarantees coherence and unity and accommodates instrumental rationality whilst allowing access to irrational metaphysics in order to contain and order the experience. The reactionary modernist synthesis and the project of the 'Conservative Revolution' to restructure the cultural assumptions of classical modernity appear to have succeeded.

11.6.2 Rimbaud and the Dangers of Aesthetics

However, the success of *Feuer und Blut*, is thrown into question precisely by its more aesthetic qualities. We have already seen how Jünger has used literary devices, albeit rather crudely, to underline his points about unity and Life. But Jünger goes much further in his turn to aesthetic categories. The War is said to irrupt like an 'antikes Drama' into 'dieses Zeitalter der kleinen bürgerlichen Interessen, des Geldes und der spezialisierten Existenz' (p. 17). He proclaims his desire for a truly modern architecture instead of the historicising facades of the Wilhelmine era (p. 41). Like Georg Heym yearning for War to overcome the tedium of the Wilhelmine everyday, Jünger imputes an immediate dramatic quality to the War which he equates with an overcoming of the aesthetic inadequacies of nineteenth-century drama:

Hier [im Krieg] gibt es keine Unterrocksaffären, keine Tragik unzufriedener Männer und unverständener Frauen, die sich dramatisch ausbacken läßt. Hier gibt es nur die Tragik und das Drama selbst mit seinen Erhebungen und Abstürzen. [...] Hier kann man verstehen, daß das größte Gedicht aller Zeiten den Kampf zweier Völker behandelt [...] Hier, wo die Leiden dunkler, aber auch die Lüste brennender und wilder sind, während des Tanzes über dem Abgrunde, werden andere Fragestellungen wach. Hier lernt man das Blut schätzen und den Intellekt verachten, wenn man der Feuerprobe gewachsen ist (p. 50).

If his rejection of nineteenth-century drama is implicitly avant-garde in nature, his celebration of the 'nüchterne Klarheit' of technology, 'die für jeden, der schon den ehernen Atem unserer Zeit verspürt, berauscher ist als jedes Gedicht' (p. 21), explicitly echoes Marinetti's *Technical Manifesto of Futurism* (1909). Likewise, his new subject takes aesthetic pleasure in machinery: 'Erst unsere Generation beginnt sich mit der Maschine zu versöhnen, und in ihr nicht nur das Nützliche, sondern auch das Schöne zu sehen' (p. 66), and this aesthetic pleasure is said to be a key factor in the unity achieved at the offensive (p. 67) and thus in overcoming 'jener grauen, fürchterlichen Welt des Utilitarismus heraus

und aus jener Landschaft von Manchester, deren Kohlendunst alle Werte verschleiert, und die den Menschen mit teuflischer Folgerichtigkeit bis in die Hölle der Materialschlacht getrieben hat' (p. 66). But when Jünger's Futurist aesthetics extend to celebrate the dynamism of the metropolis (p. 67) which had been anathema to such authors as Hermann Löns whom he had lionised in *Das Wäldchen 125₁*, it becomes clear that the intertextual borrowing from the avant-garde is, once more, a source of conflict and instability.

The instability introduced by intertextuality is magnified by Jünger's enthusiasm for Arthur Rimbaud which, at a most incongruous juncture, interrupts a description of a wild pre-offensive drinking session:³⁴

Heute müßten wir jenes göttliche Gedicht vom trunkenen Schiff von Arthur Rimbaud, der ein Kerl von unserem Schläge war, am Tische haben, um es laut zu lesen, und die große Bewegung zu verehren, die sich mit rasendem Schwung in einer glühenden und fabelhaften Landschaft erschöpft. [...] Ja, die Landschaften dieses jungen Galliers schillern von einem unerhörten Glanz, sie sind von einem vom Leben trunkenen Gehirne geschaut. [...] Aber sind die Landschaften, die uns erwarten, nicht noch unmöglicher und fabelhafter? (p. 52)

Now, Jünger cited Baudelaire as a *poète maudit* in *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis₁*,³⁵ one of his most chaotic and incoherent books, and it is thus no co-incidence that the presence of Rimbaud should introduce a deconstructive energy into the text, the more so because at this stage Jünger had adopted an explicitly anti-literary strategy in his writing. The figure of Rimbaud signals the return of precisely that cultivation and sense of difference which Jünger had posited as literature, or the other of revolutionary action, and which he had stated in that he intended to eliminate.

Rimbaud disrupts *Feuer und Blut₁* for two main reasons. First, as a French Symbolist poet — and Jünger forces himself clumsily to apologise for referring to the

³⁴ Cf. *Annäherungen*, p. 185: 'Rimbaud hatte ich um diese Zeit [nach Ende des Weltkrieges] entdeckt und war besessen von ihm. Noch heute halte ich ihn für einen der Kirchenväter der Moderne und kann mir vorstellen, wie die Begegnung mit ihm Verlaine aus den Angeln hob'. Cf. also *Das erste Pariser Tagebuch*, entry of 18 January 1942, p. 292: 'Dort [im Hotel George V] Speidel, Sieburg, Grüniger und Röhrich, mit dem ich mich gleich nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg in Hannover über Rimbaud und ähnliches unterhielt'. Further, *Kaukasische Aufzeichnungen*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, II, pp. 407-92, entry of 10 February 1943, p. 489.

³⁵ Cf. Paul Verlaine, *Les Poètes Maudits* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1888). Verlaine lists Rimbaud among their number, along with Tristan Corbière, Stéphane Mallarmé, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Villiers De L'Isle-Adam and Pauvre Lelian.

enemy, unwittingly drawing further attention to the break in the otherwise heady textual flow — he functions as a symbol of intellectuality incongruous with what is meant to be a rowdy, drunken gathering of *Landsknechten*. Second, the nature of Rimbaud's life and work deconstructs the tenor and content of Jünger's book, as I shall now show.

Rimbaud must have appealed to Jünger as an anarchic adventurer who lived a turbulent and unsettled life, his Abyssinian gunrunning outclassing Jünger's escapades with the *Wandervögel* and the Foreign Legion. As such a free spirit, he was emblematic of that strong drive for individual subjective autonomy that had characterised Jünger's early years as well as the *Kriegstagebuch*. But in *Feuer und Blut*₁, Jünger is attempting to transfer responsibility to a supra-personal subject, the Nation — and the reference to Rimbaud is the route via which his own claims to autonomy return.

Rimbaud was also emblematic of a search for a new totality beyond the failing cultural and epistemological practices of classical modernity. In the first of his two famous *Lettres du Voyant* (1871), Rimbaud stated his poetic agenda: 'Je veux être poète, et je travaille à me rendre *voyant*: vous ne comprendrez pas de tout, et je ne saurais presque vous expliquer. Il s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de *tous les sens*', an agenda which is strikingly reminiscent of Jünger's own pursuit of epiphany through intoxication in the early 1920s (Cf. Chapter 4.4.3, p. 114 above).³⁶ Furthermore, like Jünger, Rimbaud was aware of the way in which signifiers always revealed themselves as different from their signified and thus Rimbaud dreamt that 'le temps d'un langage universel viendra!' and that '[...] Cette langue sera de l'âme pour l'âme, résumant tout, parfums, sons, couleurs, de la pensée accrochant la pensée et tirant'.³⁷ But Rimbaud's failure to achieve such an absolute prefigures Jünger's and the reference to him thus unwittingly points to the failure of *Feuer und Blut*₁ to inscribe itself into a closed and

³⁶ Arthur Rimbaud, letter to Georges Izambard of 13 May 1871, in *Œuvres de Rimbaud*, ed. by Suzanne Bernard and André Guyaux (Paris: Bordas, 1991), pp. 345-46.

³⁷ Letter to Paul Demeny of 15 May 1871, pp. 346-52, (p. 349). Rimbaud's poem 'Voyelles' (p. 110) can be read as an experiment in attaining such a language. An implicit echo of this project is Jünger's essay 'Lob der Vokale' which appeared in the collection *Blätter und Steine* (1934).

coherent system. More significantly still, Rimbaud was that poet who famously proclaimed modernity's deconstructive knowledge that its monadic self was an illusion when he declared that 'Je est un autre' (pp. 345 and 347).

Further discordant elements enter the text of *Feuer und Blut*, through the actual poem Jünger refers to, Rimbaud's best known, 'Le bateau ivre'.³⁸ The poet, symbolised by the boat, is set free of his conventional existence, symbolised by the cargo of wheat and cotton, and embarks on a fantastic voyage through the entire range of human experience represented by all the different forms of water he encounters, a fiercely subjective adventure, albeit tightly bound into classical alexandrines. But at the end of this search for experience and illumination, the poet makes two key assertions: first, that he is unable to shape the waves of the sea and is thus decentred and disempowered; and second, that after its wild adventure he remains dislocated and alienated from conventional, bourgeois society and its certainties:

Je ne puis plus, baigné de vos langueurs, ô lames,
Enlever leurs sillages aux porteurs de cotons,
Ni traverser l'orgueil des drapeaux et des flammes,
Ni nager sous les yeux horribles des pontons.

Consequently, when Jünger suggests that the battlescape of the Western Front was incomparably more fantastic than that explored by the drunken boat (pp. 52-53), the implication is that he too would remain unable to resolve the conflicts between autonomy and authority, closure and the trauma of battle. By referring to Rimbaud's poem, then, Jünger is introducing a dangerous instability into *Feuer und Blut*, which disrupts the rhapsodic, retrospective attempt to transform 21 March 1918 into the symbol of the individual's unity with the supra-personal subject of the Nation, a symbol which would prefigure future revolution and renewal. Through Rimbaud failure, alienation, subjectivity

³⁸ *Œuvres de Rimbaud*, pp. 128-31. Cf. *Siebzig verweht II*, entry of 6 May 1979, p. 478. Referring to a visit by two fellow officers during his time as a *Reichswehr* officer in Hanover, Jünger writes: 'Ich las ihnen "Das trunkene Schiff" von Rimbaud vor, ein Gedicht, das mich damals ungemein beschäftigte, fast eine Wende herbeiführte'. Jünger does not, however, elaborate on what this 'Wende' might have been — other than in the entry of 17 September 1978 (p. 420), he noted that 'Claudel wird durch die Lektüre Rimbauds rekonvertiert'.

and the ambiguity of writing return and deconstruct once more Jünger's strategy for overcoming the War.

11.7 Conclusions

With his focus once more on the conservative imagination's agenda of closure, completeness and coherence, Jünger's texts from 1923-25 are again characterised by failure and fissure as the process of re-orientation and recuperation of meaning are repeatedly compromised by the instabilities of modernity. His focus on redemptive action is strangely literary, located in an imaginary sphere. In *In Stahlgewittern*³, he proposes unity with the Nation, but foregrounds himself and his own writing. In *Das Wäldchen 125*¹, he remains unable to resolve the tension between the interwoven strands of instrumental rationality, *Kulturkritik*, *Blut und Boden* and pseudo-religion, even in the figure of the *Frontsoldat*. And in *Feuer und Blut*¹, his ecstatic union with History, life, the nation and Fate is exposed as a one-sided imaginary ideal by the otherness of the drunken boat. Jünger remains unable to resolve modernity's cultural crisis within a modern framework, even the re-worked framework provided by the 'Conservative Revolution' and the resulting instability thus remains the crucial feature of Jünger's writing despite the excesses of his political rhetoric, excesses which have distracted critics for so long, just as they were intended to.