

3. Modernity, Modernisation, Modernism and the First World War

3.1 Introduction

As we have seen, research on Jünger has consistently neglected to read his First World War texts from a perspective that takes appropriate account of theories of modernity as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Now, whilst such theories have been the subject of complex and continuing debate amongst philosophers, social theorists and other critics for at least 150 years, it is nonetheless possible to extract certain core elements in order to produce the working definitions around which I will construct the arguments used in this thesis. Accordingly, I shall divide the theoretical and historical material into five main sections: first, I shall examine key aspects of what I shall term classical modernity; second, I shall give a brief account of the process of industrialisation and economic modernisation in Germany; third, I shall show how the cultural phenomenon known as modernism was a heterogenous set of responses to the dynamics involved in modernisation and modernity itself; fourth, I shall investigate how the First World War appeared first to offer a resolution to a cultural crisis brought about by these dynamics only to produce a radically ‘anti-modern’ experience; and finally, I shall discuss how a number of modernist artists and intellectuals responded to the extreme experience of the War, pointing out parallels with Ernst Jünger’s early work.

3.2 Classical Modernity — Ego, Instrumental Rationality and Totalising Theory

The relationships between the processes of socio-economic and cultural modernisation are so complex that it is impossible to define a neat base/superstructure or cause/effect relationship between them.¹ Thus, although the historical process which culminated in the

¹ Cf. Karl Marx, *Die deutsche Ideologie* in *Werke, Schriften*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Lieber and Peter Furth, 6 vols (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1971), II: *Frühe Schriften*, pp. 5-655. Marx argues here that ideas and culture are produced by society in a manner linked directly to their material conditions, and become ideology when they conceal their material origins, most particularly in the form of Young Hegelian Idealism. The idea is developed in the Preface to the *Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (1857), VI:

cultural phenomenon that I term ‘classical modernity’ was a pre-requisite of socio-economic modernisation, a direct causal relationship should not be assumed. In my account of classical modernity, I shall focus on three areas.

3.2.1 The Individual Subject

First, the individual subject is privileged. Renaissance humanism pursued ‘a spirit of freedom that provided justification for man’s claim of rational autonomy, allowing him to see himself involved in nature and history and capable of making them his realm’.² Through its rejection of the primacy of clerical mediation via the sacraments, the Reformation emphasised the individual’s relationship with God. Descartes’s famous dictum *cogito ergo sum* took this process one step further, ensuring that the Cartesian God plays, to use a worn metaphor, second fiddle to the Cartesian ego. The Enlightenment further privileged the individual subject by inventing, for instance, the notion of human rights and Kant declared that ‘Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen’.³ At the heart of modernity is a centred, rational, monadic ego claiming subjective autonomy.

3.2.2 Instrumental Rationality

Second, and closely linked to the (re)-emergence of the individual subject, is a re-assessment of the role of rationality in the Renaissance and Enlightenment, a process which was to culminate in the positivism of, for example, Auguste Comte and Ernst Haeckel. Whilst an emphasis on rationality *per se* was nothing new, the form of rational epistemology pioneered by Francis Bacon’s *Novum Organum* (1620) which advocated the

Ökonomische Schriften III, pp. 837-42. Marx places particular emphasis on the economic ‘Produktionsverhältnisse’ as a determining factor in cultural production. For a pertinent critique of Marx and the subsequent simplifications of a ‘vulgar’ Marxism, cf. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 73-85.

² Nicola Abbagnano, ‘Humanism’, trans. by Nino Langiuilli, in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Paul Edwards and others, 8 vols (London and New York: Macmillan, 1967), IV, pp. 69-72 (p. 70).

aggressive interrogation of Nature in experiments and the induction of useful scientific laws can be seen as a turn to a specifically *instrumental* rationality in what is maybe *the* modern move, for it involves centring Man as the supreme subject who seeks knowledge from and power over Nature and thereby emancipates himself from Nature through reason, scientific inquiry and systematisation. Instrumental rationality and the scientific method attempted to make the world predictable and, more specifically, calculable and this in turn depended on a coherent system of signification and representation by means of which the world could be observed, recorded, mapped, analysed and fitted into mathematical models.

3.2.3 Totalising Meta-Narrative

Third, classical modernity seeks and produces total, coherent world views. The medieval divine order which modernity slowly replaced had been a total order, where cognitive gaps were irrelevant in the face of a transcendent God. Decentre God and replace him with Man, or, indeed, declare him dead, and the gaps inherent in human cognition and understanding of the world assume a new importance because they threaten Man's primacy, placing a question-mark over the process of human domination over the world that is modernity. Because of this, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1991) argues that modernity is consequently engaged in a constant struggle to eliminate the *lacunae* in its world view (which he terms ambivalence and chaos) and to impose ordering structures instead:

The typically modern practice, the substance of modern politics, of modern intellect, of modern life, is the effort to exterminate ambivalence: an effort to define precisely — and to suppress or eliminate everything that could not or would not be precisely defined. Modern practice is not aimed at the conquest of foreign lands, but at the filling of the blank spots in the *compleat mappa mundi*. It is the modern practice, not nature, that truly suffers no void.⁴

God had previously served as the ultimate, and total, guarantor of both cosmic coherence and the meaning of human existence. Modernity, as a replacement for the transcendent, divine order, needed to fill the gaps left by displacing God and its method of choice was

³ Immanuel Kant, 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?', in *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Wilhelm Weischedel, 6 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), VI: *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie und Pädagogik*, pp. 53-61 (p. 53).

⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 7-8.

the creation of totalising meta-narratives both to fill gaps of cognition and meaning and to 'légitimer ses règles de jeu'.⁵ With the acceleration of historical change which accompanied modernisation, this imperative became all the more pressing and one result was the emergence of new, totalising philosophies of History such as Kant's or Hegel's.⁶ But, given that human philosophy is also subject to human critique, these meta-narratives were unstable and competing with each other. Thus, Bauman argues, the divine totality is replaced by a shifting variety of different constructs, each claiming absolute validity: 'the *foci imaginarii* [Rorty's term – JK] of absolute truth, humanity as such, order, certainty, harmony, the end of history. Like all horizons they can never be reached' (p. 10).

To summarise, then, 'classical modernity' is composed of three crucial elements: a privileging of the individual subject, the deployment of instrumental rationality and the construction of totalising meta-narratives. It is, as Deconstruction would have it, 'logocentric' in its assumptions about a fundamental coherence between self, sign and world. By describing modernity in such a way, and deliberately not attributing a Left or liberal agenda to classical modernity, I am, within the field of Jünger research, siding with historians such as Rohkrämer against Herf, and, more generally, with sociologists such as Bauman against Habermas.⁷

⁵ Cf. Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979), p. 7: 'C'est alors qu[e la science] tient sur son propre statut un discours de légitimation, qui s'est appelé philosophie. Quand ce métadiscours recourt explicitement à tel ou tel grand récit, comme la dialectique de l'Esprit, l'herméneutique du sens, l'émancipation du sujet raisonnable ou travailleur, le développement de la richesse, on décide d'appeler "moderne" la science qui s'y réfère pour se légitimer'. According to Lyotard, the period beginning with the Enlightenment saw the emergence of new meta-narratives to legitimate the new (Newtonian) science (p. 52), positing either 'un héros de la connaissance' or 'un héros de la liberté' (p. 53) as their subjects.

I am *not* referring to Hayden White's notion of metahistory which is White's term for defining the poetic refiguration of historical and narrative assumptions. Cf. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1975).

⁶ Immanuel Kant, 'Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in Weltbürgerlicher Absicht' in *Werke*, VI, pp. 33-50; cf. also John E. Grumley, *History and Totality: Radical Historicism from Hegel to Foucault* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 1.

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Moderne — ein unvollendetes Projekt', in *Kleine Politische Schriften (I-IV)* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp. 444-64. Habermas declares post-modernism to be essentially conservative (p. 444), a neo-conservative move against the subversive nature of avant-garde art (p. 449) which overlooks the connections between social fragmentation and capitalist rationalisation and consumption (p. 451). He argues that society should learn from the failings of

3.3 *Modernisation*

The theoretical achievements of classical modernity can be deemed to have laid the ground for the rapid shifts in material practice which can be termed modernisation. At the heart of this process is the Industrial Revolution, i.e. the prolonged movement from a slow-moving agrarian economy to a dynamic industrial economy, or to what could also be termed economic modernity. Whilst in Great Britain this change took place over an extended period of time, beginning in the Eighteenth Century, and was closely linked to the economic and political liberalism of the Adam Smith school, in Germany, industrialisation took place at an unprecedented pace in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century and was not accompanied by liberal ideology or the development of parliamentary government, a fact not lost on the advocates of the *Sonderweg* in German historiography. Hans-Ulrich Wehler (1973) locates the origins of the German Industrial Revolution in the transformation of the agricultural system in the early Nineteenth Century. This ended formal feudal ties and led to an enormous increase in productivity which, in turn, led to ‘population growth, increased consumption, capital accumulation, urbanisation and increased migration’ (p. 13).⁸ The 1850s in Germany saw massive growth in the iron, coal and rail industries; the 1860s saw the emergence of an advanced banking system with a pioneering interest in finance capital and the development of a system of advanced technical education. And the years 1866-73 saw further radical industrial expansion. But, according to Wehler, the most profound transformations did not come until the period 1873-95, with, however, one crucial difference. Where the early period of industrialisation had seen occasional slumps, now huge growth was interrupted by profound crisis and economic depression. The new *Reich* was hit hard by the world economic crisis of 1873-79, but despite a slight recovery between 1879 and 1882, the markets continued to be

modernity (p. 460) especially by linking modernist art to non-capitalist forms of modernisation (p. 462) rather than abandon it altogether.

⁸ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire 1871-1918*, trans. by Kim Traynor (Leamington Spa, Hamburg and New York: Berg, 1985), p. 13. First published 1973.

depressed until 1886; they recovered again until 1890, fell again and experienced substantial growth only after 1895 (pp. 32-35). This chronic instability helped make the experience of modernisation particularly stressful, as the vicissitudes of the market and a deep instability inherent in modernisation were revealed.

Volker Berghahn (1994), drawing on Max Weber's rationalisation thesis, also identified shifts in industrial practice in the last part of the Nineteenth Century which involved the increasing dominance of large enterprises — a trend that was closely linked to the emergence of cartels in an attempt to control markets and so ensure profit. These larger enterprises were characterised by an intensification of the division of labour, increased mechanisation of production, culminating in the American practices of Fordism and Taylorism, an increased bureaucratisation of the work force, and the emergence of a management structure that went far beyond the old owner-boss power structures.⁹ The new industries grew and flourished, in other words, because of their systematic application of instrumental rationality to their methods of production, distribution and marketing.

3.4 *The Discontents of Modernity*

3.4.1 *The Iron Cage, Fragmentation, Anomie*

Faith in classical modernity had become well established in the intellectual elites of Western Europe by the end of the Nineteenth Century, especially amongst the rapidly growing scientific and engineering community. There was a world in which moral, rational and autonomous Man was central, capable of apprehending it objectively and of manipulating it in his own interests by means of rationally applied science and technology. However, the dynamics involved in modernisation and the constant re-assessment of modernity's meta-narratives actually began to produce an increasing sense of instability — in economic and social terms, and, more crucially, they began to turn against their own foundational assumptions.

⁹ Volker Berghahn, *Imperial Germany, 1871-1914: Economy, Society, Culture and Politics* (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1994).

We have seen how modernisation and industrialisation in Germany involved economic instability with sharp periods of stagnation and growth. More significantly, however, the process involved an extraordinarily rapid series of changes to the world as actually experienced by its inhabitants with the result that it came to appear to many to be highly unstable and threatening. For Marx and Engels (1848), the revolutionary change brought about by industrialisation was a result of the unstable dynamics of bourgeois capitalism: ‘Die Bourgeoisie kann nicht existieren, ohne die Produktionsinstrumente, also die Produktionsverhältnisse, also sämtliche gesellschaftliche Verhältnisse fortwährend zu revolutionieren [...] Alles Ständische und Stehende verdampft, alles Heilige wird entweiht’.¹⁰ Baudelaire (1863) assessed the aesthetic value of painting by the degree to which it blended eternal aesthetic values *and* observation of contemporary society, i.e. what he calls modernity and which he defines as ‘le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent’ and which, moreover, he states is an element ‘dont les métamorphoses sont si fréquentes’, subject in other words to constant flux and fragmentation.¹¹ Moreover, many of the changes wrought by industrialisation and technological innovation produced a radical sense of acceleration which some intellectuals would find exhilarating, while others found it disorientating.¹² And David Frisby (1985) has shown how Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin were all concerned with ‘the discontinuous experience of time, space and causality as transitory, fleeting and fortuitous or arbitrary’.¹³ The sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies published *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887) in what was — partly at least — a conservative expression of nostalgia for what seemed to be a less threatening, more stable and familiar social order.

¹⁰ Karl Marx, ‘Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei’, in *Werke, Schriften*, III: *Frühe Schriften II*, pp. 813-58 (p. 821). First published 1848.

¹¹ Charles Baudelaire, ‘Le Peintre de la vie moderne’, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Claude Pichois, 2 vols (Gallimard: Paris, 1976), II pp. 683-724 (p. 695). First published 1863.

¹² Cf. Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1980), pp. 210-11. Cf. also Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983).

In other words, modernity, whilst it strove towards totality, actually involved a radical sense of fragmentation. Bauman argues that whilst early modern scholars could still hope to be polymaths, the explosion in knowledge which accompanied scientific and technological development on the one hand and the emergence of complex, industrial, and urban forms of society on the other, threatened the individual human being with an information overload which, paradoxically, both expands the world and contracts it. As a result, reality is experienced as fragments of information, and, moreover, theorised fragmentarily. For Bauman, this fragmentary world view is merely a kind of intellectual division of labour, a strategy for reducing the world to manageable parts before reassembling it. He argues that this strategy is fatally flawed since ‘contingency is discovered at the place where many fragmentary works of determination meet, clash and intertangle’ (p. 13), thereby undermining the meta-narrative project which seeks to unite them. Furthermore, it is clear that the revolutionary dynamism involved in modernity and modernisation tears apart those totalising certainties which secular, scientific rationality continuously posits and reposit — it continually undermines established orders of belief and practice in order to substitute new certainties, which are in turn open to critique and revision. It is this extraordinary degree of paradoxical tension between fragment and totality which characterises the modern or, as Marshall Berman (1983) more vividly put it, the modern is ‘a unity of disunity: it pours us into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish’.¹⁴

The processes of rationalisation also brought about a paradoxical shift in the place of the individual subject which became increasingly problematic. Émile Durkheim (1898) traced a correlation between modernisation and suicide which he attributed to disruptions of society’s mechanisms for regulating the individual’s emotional economy: ‘L’état de

¹³ David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), p. 4.

¹⁴ Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 15.

dérèglement ou d'*anomie* est donc encore renforcé par ce fait que les passions sont moins disciplinées au moment même où elles auraient besoin d'une plus forte discipline' (p. 281).¹⁵ Max Weber (1904) argued that modernisation was the result of a transferral of Puritan ascetics to the material world of capitalist production:

Nur wie "ein dünner Mantel, den man jederzeit abwerfen könnte" sollte nach Baxters [a Puritan writer – JK] Ansicht die Sorge um die äußeren Güter um die Schultern seiner Heiligen liegen. Aber aus dem Mantel ließ das Verhängnis ein stahlhartes Gehäuse werden. Indem die Askese die Welt umzubauen und in der Welt sich auszuwirken unternahm, gewannen die äußeren Güter dieser Welt zunehmende und schließlich unentrinnbare Macht über den Menschen, wie niemals zuvor in der Geschichte.¹⁶

Weber argues further that 'für die "letzten Menschen" dieser Kulturentwicklung das Wort zur Wahrheit werden: "Fachmensen ohne Geist, Genußmensen ohne Herz: dies Nichts bildet sich ein, eine nie vorher erreichte Stufe des Menschentums erstiegen zu haben." —' (p. 204). Whatever the merits of Weber's much debated thesis about Puritanism and capitalism, it is clear that he was diagnosing a society whose culture he considered to be in crisis precisely because the individual was now subject to the instrumentalising, rationalising forces inherent in modernity itself. Finally, Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) summed up the consequences of human domination over Nature as follows: 'Nicht bloß mit der Entfremdung der Menschen von den beherrschten Objekten wird für die Herrschaft bezahlt: mit der Versachlichung des Geistes wurden die Beziehungen der Menschen selbst verhext, auch die jedes einzelnen zu sich'.¹⁷

3.4.2 Modernism and Classical Modernity's Deconstructive Turn

Whilst *anomie*, the 'iron cage' and disorientating acceleration and social disruption affected substantial sections of the population in the West, classical modernity itself was beginning to run into crisis amongst certain sections of the intellectual élites where it had originated. The dynamic of self-critique, which had previously been the engine of constant

¹⁵ Émile Durkheim, *Le Suicide: Étude de Sociologie* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1930), p. 15.

¹⁶ Max Weber, *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* in *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 7 vols (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1920), I: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I*, pp. 17-206, pp. 203-04. Facsimile reprinted 1988.

renewal, now became a source of even more radical instability as the results of scientific and scholarly enquiry tended to draw into question the assumptions on which classical modernity was founded.

Where was it that the three key characteristics of classical modernity began to unravel? First, the unified subject of classical, humanistic modernity, that moral, rational being, was profoundly problematised by the discovery of the power of unconscious desires that were in conflict with the moral imperatives of civilisation. Christopher Butler (1994) summarises the impact of Nietzsche and Freud as follows:

The reason, or conscience, upon which traditional moral theory had so much relied, comes to be seen, under the influence of thinkers such as Nietzsche and Freud, as the inherently unreliable arbiter of a 'system of relations between various passions and desires', many of which may even be unconscious or repressed. As the realisation grew that the arguments of reason (and of authority) are inherently likely to camouflage disreputable motives, self-distrust and scepticism became widespread.¹⁸

The impact of Darwin on Western consciousness relativised the anthropocentric assumptions which had increasingly governed Western thought since the Renaissance and further undermined the religious and Enlightenment view of Man as the privileged centre of Creation.

Second, the basic assumptions behind classical modern science started to become obsolete when physicists began to question the solid Copernican-Cartesian-Newtonian world-picture, whose mathematical predictability was the foundation of the positivistic world view. Once Einstein, Heisenberg, Mach and Schrödinger began their explorations of relativity, quantum mechanics and sub-atomic physics, the solidly familiar world dissolved into unfamiliar fluctuating energies and unstable particles, and humanly organised time lost the reliability provided by the clock to become another elastic dimension in the space-time continuum posited by Einstein.

¹⁷ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947), p. 21. First published 1944.

¹⁸ Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 90-91.

Third, philosophers developed a new understanding of language, whose power to name, describe and control the world — a classically modern assumption — was shaken by a sense of profound rupture between *logos* and world. Nietzsche, Saussure and the later Wittgenstein made plain the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified, sign and referent and started to invert the relationship between speaker and language. For George Steiner (1989), this break is crucial and defines what he terms ‘modernity’: ‘It is this break of the covenant between word and world which constitutes one of the very few revolutions in spirit in Western history and which defines modernity itself’.¹⁹

Fourth, to complete the problems for totalising theory opened by the new science and the new linguistics, Historicism, with its roots in the Enlightenment,²⁰ posed new questions about absolute values. With its tendency to portray ‘alle Erscheinungen des menschlichen Lebens wesentlich als Geschichte und damit als zeitbedingt und veränderlich’,²¹ Historicism placed a further question mark over the validity of all totalising theories, including historical meta-narratives, such that by the end of the 19th Century historians too were losing faith in all metaphysical constants.²²

For those intellectuals attentive to such developments, modern scholarship had produced a new, disturbing sense of an unstable self in an unstable world which gave rise to an increasing scepticism about the pre-existing, consensually legitimised, aesthetic, ethical and cultural norms, both of classical modernity and the still forceful remnants of the pre-modern. In his 1917 lecture on Kandinsky, Hugo Ball, citing Nietzsche and others, summed this mood up powerfully:

¹⁹ George Steiner, *Real Presences* (London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1989), p. 93.

²⁰ Cf. Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1975).

²¹ Reinhard Wittram, *Das Interesse an der Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), p. 58. Cited in Reill, p. 274.

²² Cf. Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, CO: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), p. 111: ‘What saved both Ranke and Humboldt from subjectivism was their firm belief that the objects of our understanding in their radical diversity still reflect the will of God and represent aspects of a many-sided reality. By the end of the century, this faith in an underlying reality was shaken’.

Gott ist tot. Eine Welt brach zusammen. Ich bin Dynamit. Die Weltgeschichte bricht in zwei Teile. Es gibt eine Zeit vor mir. Und eine Zeit nach mir. Religion, Wissenschaft, Moral — Phänomene, die aus Angstzuständen primitiver Völker entstanden sind. Eine Zeit bricht zusammen. Eine tausendjährige Kultur bricht zusammen. Es gibt keine Pfeile und Stützen, keine Fundamente mehr, die nicht zersprengt worden wären. [...] Die Prinzipien der Logik, des Zentrums, Einheit und Vernunft wurden als Postulate einer herrschsüchtigen Theologie durchschaut [...] Die Welt zeigte sich als ein blindes Über- und Gegeneinander entfesselter Kräfte. Der Mensch verlor sein himmlisches Gesicht, wurde Materie, Konglomerat, Tier, Wahnsinnsprodukt abrupt und unzulänglich zuckender Gedanken. Der Mensch verlor seine Sonderstellung, die ihm die Vernunft gewahrt hatte. [...] Die Titanen standen auf und zerbrachen die Himmelsburgen. [...] Die Welt wurde monströs, unheimlich, das Vernunfts- und Konventionsverhältnis, der Maßstab schwand [...] Die Elektronenlehre brachte ein seltsames Vibrieren in alle Flächen, Linien und Formen. Die Gegenstände änderten ihre Gestalt, ihr Gewicht, ihr Gegen- und Übereinander [...] Die Dimensionen wuchsen, die Grenzen fielen. Letzte beherrschende Prinzipien gegenüber der Willkür der Natur blieben der individuelle Geschmack, Takt und Logos des Individuums [...] Und als ein weiteres Element traf zerstörend, bedrohend, mit dem verzweifelten Suchen nach einer Neuordnung der in Trümmer gegangenen Welt zusammen: die Massenkultur der modernen Großstadt. [...] Komplektisch drängten die Gedanken und Wahrnehmungen auf die Gehirne ein, symphonisch die Gefühle. Maschinen entstanden und traten anstelle der Individuen [...] Turbinen, Kesselhäuser, Eisenhämmer, Elektrizität ließen Kraftfelder und Geister entstehen [...] neue Schlachten, Untergänge und Himmelfahrten, neue Feste, Himmel und Höllen. Eine Welt abstrakter Dämonen verschlang die Einzeläußerung, verzehrte die individuellen Gesichter in turmhohen Masken, verschlang den Privatausdruck, raubte den Namen der Einzeldinge, zerstörte das Ich und schwenkte Meere von ineinandergestürzten Gefühlen gegeneinander.²³

Ball belonged to the cultural and intellectual avant-gardes within which the cultural crisis of classical modernity was experienced before the Great War and their literary and artistic responses can be subsumed, following Butler, under the notion of ‘early modernism’. A good working definition of modernism is offered by Richard Sheppard (1993) in his essay on ‘The Problematics of European Modernism’ which attempts a synthetic approach to its polyvalent subject by linking it specifically to the traumas of modernisation. Modernism, Sheppard writes, was:

²³ Hugo Ball, ‘Kandinsky: Vortrag gehalten in der Galerie Dada (Zürich, 7. April 1917)’, in *Der Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit: Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. by Hans Burkhard Schlichting (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 41-43.

[...] a heterogeneous range of responses to a global process of modernisation by a generation which had internalised a set of assumptions in conflict with the values inherent in that process, and which, as a result, experienced modernisation as a cultural cataclysm [...] But modernism was more than just a reflex, it also involved an active attempt to understand and pictorialize the complexities of that process. More importantly still, modernism, in its extreme forms, involved the prophetic urge to investigate the long-term implications of these complexities — both for the individual and for society in general.²⁴

Given the continued hegemony of classical modernity outside the avant-gardes, many early Modernists turned to radical aesthetic practices in order to voice a keenly felt withdrawal from social consensus, official culture and the assumptions of an earlier generation. Deprived of the previous certainties embodied in academic art, the bourgeois realist novel and tonal music, avant-garde artists were forced to seek legitimacy in new grounds, in the subjective and abstract, in forms that both reflected and shaped the crisis of the modern world view, as in the case, for example, in the works of Wassily Kandinsky and Igor Stravinsky.²⁵

The crisis of faith in language is famously and emblematically illustrated in Hofmannsthal's fictional letter (1902) from Lord Chandos to, significantly, Francis Bacon, in which he recounts the failure of his project to write an *Apophthegmata*, a kind of totalising anthology of wisdom.²⁶ When considering that aborted project, he writes: 'Mir erschien damals in einer Art von andauernder Trunkenheit das ganze Dasein als eine große Einheit' (p. 47), indicative of the modern, totalising mentality. But, thanks to various traumatic experiences, he finds that on closer examination his rational, harmonic, anthropocentric world-view falls to pieces, and this finds its most radical expression in his professed inability to write coherently. His self-diagnosis is telling: 'Mein Fall ist, in Kürze, dieser: Es ist mir völlig die Fähigkeit abhanden gekommen, über irgend etwas

²⁴ Richard Sheppard, 'The Problematics of European Modernism', in *Theorizing Modernism: Essays in Critical Theory*, ed. by Steve Giles (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 7-8.

²⁵ Cf. Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London, etc.: Bantam Press, 1989), pp. 10-54 on the first performance of *Le Sacre du printemps* in 1913 in Paris.

²⁶ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Ein Brief', in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Rudolf Hirsch and others (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1975-), XXXI: *Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe*, ed. by Ellen Ritter (1991), pp. 45-55.

zusammenhängend zu denken oder zu sprechen' (p. 48). The experience of fragmentation is central to this crisis: 'Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen' (p. 49). All that is left to Chandos, shocked by the fragmentation of the Baconian and modern world, are moments of epiphanic transcendence, of insight into the nature of the world, that are at once moments of what Steiner might call real presence and a flight out of time into a sphere of experience that further resists incorporation into language.

For most people, the intellectual and cultural problems besetting classical modernity remained marginal during the latter years of the Wilhelmine Empire. Outside the avant-garde, critiques of modernity came from reactionary *Kulturkritiker* such as Julius Langbehn and Paul Lagarde, or irrationalist philosophers such as Ludwig Klages.²⁷ Others turned to racialism or nostalgic *Agrarromantik*. Among middle-class youth, the idealism of the Youth Movement proved astonishingly popular with its emphasis on the authenticity of youth and a renewed relationship with Nature and *Heimat* in order to overcome the strangeness and fragmentation of modernity.²⁸ And permeating intellectual life was the dreadful sense of *ennui* and discontent with the social status quo, a phenomenon that Roland Stromberg (1982) has termed the 'estrangement of the intellectuals'.²⁹

3.5 Intellectuals and the Coming of War

Wolfgang Mommsen (1981) has elucidated the mentality which allowed Germany, and other countries to slip so easily into the Great War. In a paper on 'The Topos of Inevitable

²⁷ Cf. Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

²⁸ Cf. Wohl, p. 47: 'The great appeal of the Youth Movement was that it gave them [middle class youth] the opportunity to flee from the unpleasant realities and insoluble dilemmas of Wilhelmine Germany into a knightly and rural world of youth where they could dream, untroubled, of social renewal; cf. also Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (1962) (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1984). Laqueur is highly critical of the Romantic excesses of the movement which he sees as an aberration from 'common sense'; George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966). In his chapter on the Youth Movement (pp. 171-89), Mosse argues that it was profoundly steeped in *völkisch* ideology in an unfair attempt to pin an exaggerated responsibility for the later barbarous crimes of Nazism on these naive youths.

War', he describes how a number of factors combined to make the War seem inevitable and thus negate any serious attempt at peaceful resolution of diplomatic conflicts.³⁰ The policies of aggressive armament and imperialist expansion encouraged a tendency towards the use of war as a diplomatic tool (p. 24). Right-wing groups such as the *Alldeutscher Verband* and the *Wehrverein* positively embraced the notion of war as a tool of foreign policy (p. 28). Political conservatives saw war as a means of displacing democratising tendencies in favour of old-fashioned notions of charismatic leadership (p. 26). Broad sections of the population, whilst not sharing this enthusiasm for war, became increasingly convinced that it could not be avoided. And above all, many intellectuals saw war as a way to resolve the tensions of modernisation, to overcome their own sense of isolation from the 'Volk' and to overcome what they saw as a decadent culture produced by modernisation:

In partial contradiction to the attitude of the broad masses, who overwhelmingly abhorred the prospect of an impending war, the idea that the war would represent a health-cure for the satiated bourgeois culture, obsessed with the materialistic rat-race, gained a good deal of support. Such ideas regarding the revitalising effect of a war on German society were current largely in conservative circles, but also among sizeable sections of the intelligentsia (p. 25).

I shall now briefly examine how some modernist artists and intellectuals shared this desire for war and then how they welcomed the coming of war in August 1914.

3.5.1 Yearning for War

3.5.1.1 Georg Heym

The second Morocco crisis of 1911 was indicative of the extent to which war was either welcomed or had come to be seen as inevitable. Indeed, one of Georg Heym's most famous poems, 'Der Krieg I', was written just after that crisis which had taken Germany and France to the brink of war and its last two stanzas are worth examining:³¹

²⁹ Roland Stromberg, *Redemption by War: The Intellectuals and 1914* (Lawrence, KA: Regents Press of Kansas, 1982), p. 15.

³⁰ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'The Topos of Inevitable War in Germany in the Decade before 1914', trans. by Jane Williams, in *Germany in the Age of Total War: Essays in Honour of Francis Carsten*, ed. by Volker Berghahn and Martin Kitchen, (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 23-45.

³¹ For an account of the genesis of this poem, an analysis of its reception, and especially of its relationship to the Morocco Crisis, together with a representative documentation of contemporary sources see: Günter Dammann, Karl Ludwig Schneider and Joachim Schnöberl, *Georg Heyms*

Eine große Stadt versank in gelbem Rauch,
 Warf sich lautlos in des Abgrunds Bauch.
 Aber riesig über glühnden Trümmern steht
 Der in wilde Himmel dreimal seine Fackel dreht,

Über sturmzerfetzter Wolken Widerschein,
 In des toten Dunkels kalte Wüstenein,
 Daß er mit dem Brande weit die Nacht verdorr,
 Pech und Feuer träufet auf Gomorrh.³²

Despite its evocation of ghastly slaughter, this poem ends with an essentially positive vision of the destruction of the 'große Stadt', the epitome of modernity, which is here equated with the Biblical city of Gomorra, destroyed by Yahweh for its sins. Thus, in the place of the 'decadent' city of modernity, the primeval violence of war is visualised as a vitalistic outburst that overcomes a dead culture. Heym was acutely affected by what he saw as the tedium of modern culture, a rationalised, disenchanting and alienated world, bound by social formalities that had lost their significance. Indeed, his diaries explicitly evince a romantic desire for war or revolution as an aesthetically charged alternative to the tedium of as life as a member of the Wilhelmine bourgeoisie. Already on 30 May 1907 we can read:

Auch ich kann sagen: Gäß'es nur Krieg, gesund wär' ich. Ein Tag ist wie der andere. Keine großen Freuden, keine großen Schmerzen [...] Ich habe eben wieder mein Tagebuch durchlesen. Alle Tage fast das gleiche. Nur ab und zu eine kurze Freude, sonst alles grau in grau.³³

This theme continues in Heym's diaries in, for example, the entries of 17 June 1910, 6 July 1910, 15 September 1911, and 9 October 1911.³⁴ Although Heym was somewhat idiosyncratic, his attitude was certainly symptomatic of that current of feeling which saw war as an opportunity to break out of the iron cage of modernity.

Gedicht "Der Krieg": Handschriften und Dokumente. Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte und zur Rezeption (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1978).

³² Georg Heym, 'Der Krieg I', in *Dichtungen und Schriften*, 4 vols, ed. by Karl Ludwig Schneider (Hamburg and Munich: Heinrich Ellermann, 1964), I, pp. 346-47.

³³ *Dichtungen und Schriften*, III, p. 89.

³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 135, 138, 164 and 169 respectively.

3.5.1.2 *Ernst Stadler*

Similar feelings are present in Ernst Stadler's 'Der Aufbruch' of December 1913,³⁵ the poem that concludes the first section of the collection of the same name.³⁶ Here, the desire for the renewal of a life and culture become decadent and bankrupt can be found in the rediscovered integration of Angelus Silesius' mystical formula 'Mensch, werde wesentlich!' ('Der Spruch', p. 120) and then again in the poem 'Resurrectio' with its vision that 'Nun wird die Erde neu' (p. 136). But 'Der Aufbruch' concretises this call for renewal by specifically identifying the exhilaration of (pre-modern) warfare as the agent of renewal and fullness:

Ich war in Reihen eingeschient, die in den Morgen stießen, Feuer über Helm und Bügel,
Vorwärts, in Blick und Blut die Schlacht, mit vorgehaltne[m] Zügel.
Vielleicht würden uns am Abend Siegesmärsche umstreichen,
Vielleicht lägen wir irgendwo ausgestreckt unter Leichen.
Aber vor dem Erraffen und vor dem Versinken
Würden unsre Augen sich an Welt und Sonne satt und glühend trinken.

Here, the poet sees warfare within the frame of a renewing vitalism in which the experience of warfare itself is of prime importance, in which victory is irrelevant, and in which the individual's intensity of aesthetic experience rescues him from the decadence, boredom and lack of clarity against which the other poems in the collection also protest.

3.5.1.3 *Ernst Wilhelm Lotz*

Another expressionist poet, who was demonstrably influenced by Stadler, Ernst Wilhelm Lotz, gave voice to a similar desire for affective renewal in his poem 'Aufbruch der Jugend' in which revolutionary action overthrows the established old order.³⁷ Here, Youth taking to the streets is compared specifically to 'Truppenkolonnen, unruhig nach Ruf der Alarme, Wenn hoch und unerwartet der Tag überm Osten blaut' (p. 67) along with their banners flying in the wind. Although the emphasis of Lotz's poem is more on a scenario of

³⁵ Ernst Stadler, 'Der Aufbruch', in *Dichtungen, Schriften, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. by Klaus Hurlbusch and Karl Ludwig Schneider (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1983), p. 139.

³⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 119-85. *Der Aufbruch* was first published in December 1913.

³⁷ Ernst Wilhelm Lotz, 'Aufbruch der Jugend', in *Gedichte, Prosa, Briefe*, ed. by Jürgen von Esenwein (Munich: Text + Kritik, 1994), pp. 67-68. The poem was first published in the collection *Wolkenüberflagt* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1917). Von Esenwein does not, however, give a date for the poem's composition.

urban revolution than Stadler's with its horses and trumpets, they both evoke specifically pre-modern images of warfare imbibed from literary sources, to voice a profound discontent with modernity and to develop a radically alternative vision, whose price, however, is death. Their image of war was, moreover, utterly inappropriate to the modern age.

3.5.2 Welcoming the War

The strength of feeling invested in war as the means of overcoming the cultural crisis of modernity became clear in August 1914.³⁸ The *Burgfrieden* created the illusion that the War had reunited the nation behind the throne and banished the severe social strains accompanying modernisation.³⁹ The War was greeted with popular acclaim and many young men rushed to volunteer — especially those who had been associated with the middle-class youth protest movements, Ernst Jünger among them. The so-called *Ideen von 1914* embodied a sense of renewal and authenticity and faith in a swift victory, and were taken up by intellectuals of all persuasions right across Europe with very few exceptions.⁴⁰ Even the anarchist Erich Mühsam was not immune from the enthusiasm of August 1914 as his diary entry of 3-4 August 1914 shows: 'Und es ist Krieg. Alles Fürchterliche ist entfesselt. [...] Und — ich [...] erfüllt von dem glühend heißen Wunsch, daß "wir" uns vor ihnen retten!' Then, on 11 August 1914, he writes: 'Aber eines muß zugegeben werden. Die Zuversicht der Deutschen, ihre gläubige, starke Anteilnahme ist erschütternd, aber großartig. Es ist jetzt *eine seelische Einheit* [my emphasis] vorhanden, die ich einmal für große Kulturdinge erhoffe'.⁴¹

³⁸ Klaus Vondung has pointed out the extent to which the outbreak of war in 1914 was given an apocalyptic interpretation. Cf. Klaus Vondung, 'Geschichte als Weltgericht', in *Kriegserlebnis: Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen*, ed. by Klaus Vondung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 1980), pp. 62-84.

³⁹ Cf. Thomas Raithel, *Das "Wunder" der inneren Einheit: Studien zur deutschen und französischen Öffentlichkeit bei Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1996).

⁴⁰ Cf. Roland N. Stromberg, 'Intellectuals and the Coming of War in 1914', *Journal of European Studies*, 3 (1973), pp. 109-22 for a more detailed, pan-European account of the extent to which intellectuals welcomed the renewal, adventure and reintegration they saw promised by the war.

⁴¹ Erich Mühsam, *Tagebücher (1910-1924)*, ed. by Chris Hirte (Munich: dtv, 1995), pp. 101 and 109.

3.5.2.1 *Otto Dix*

The painter Otto Dix, best known as a proponent of *Neue Sachlichkeit* during the Weimar Republic and widely considered to be an anti-war painter, likewise welcomed the onslaught of war. Under the influence of Nietzsche, he saw it as an occasion for creative renewal, a feeling that finds its most potent expression in the painting *Selbstbildnis als Mars* (1915). Here, according to Matthias Eberle ‘fragmentation and metamorphosis, movement and rotation are the central principles’ as the false certainties of a decadent, hypocritical culture fall apart at the edges of the painting and creative energy is unleashed in the figure of the soldier and the Zarathustrian dancing star.⁴² By merging the *Pickelhaube* with an ancient Greek helmet, Dix linked the vitalising power of his artilleryman to the supposed cultural fecundity of ancient Greece, translated both the Heraclitian doctrine that ‘War is the father of all, king of all’⁴³ and the Nietzschean doctrine of the Eternal Return into visual terms and set up the subject as authoritative centre of the coming action.

3.5.2.2 *Rainer Maria Rilke*

Rilke penned ‘Fünf Gesänge’ in August 1914,⁴⁴ drawing on Heym’s image of the towering figure of a resurrected War God, who here functions as a returning transcendent authority — ‘Endlich ein Gott’ (p. 87) — to reconfigure the peaceful world where God had been deemed dead. In these poems, which Rilke repudiated shortly after writing them, the power of war to overcome individual alienation by reintegration into a collective whole is made very clear:

⁴² Matthias Eberle, *World War I and the Weimar Artists: Dix, Grosz, Beckmann, Schlemmer*, trans. by John Gabriel (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 30.

⁴³ Quoted in Jonathan Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 102. Barnes gives the Diels-Kranz fragment number as B 53.

⁴⁴ Rainer Maria Rilke, ‘Fünf Gesänge: August 1914’, in *Werke: Kommentierte Ausgabe in vier Bänden*, ed. by Manfred Engel, Ulrich Fülleborn, Horst Nalewski and August Stahl, 4 vols (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1996), II: *Gedichte 1910 bis 1926*, pp. 106-11.

[...] Und wir? Glühen in Eines zusammen,
 in ein neues Geschöpf, das er [the war god – JK] tödlich belebt.
 So auch bin ich nicht mehr; aus dem gemeinsamen Herzen
 schlägt das meine den Schlag, und der gemeinsame Mund
 bricht den meinigen auf (p. 108).

Rilke continues the theme of overcoming the individual in the fourth *Gesang*, where renewal is located quite specifically in glorious warfare:

Rühmend: denn immer wars rühmlich,
 nicht in der Vorsicht einzelner Sorge zu sein, sondern in einem
 wagenden Geiste, sondern in herrlich
 gefühlter Gefahr, heilig gemeinsam. Gleich hoch
 steht das Leben im Feld in den zahllosen Männern, und mitten im jedem
 tritt ein gefürsteter Tod auf den erkühntesten Platz (p. 109).

In other words, Rilke, that most pacific of men, envisages the War that had just broken out in terms of a pre-modern, communal heroism in which the alienated, displaced and fragmented individuals of modernity are reintegrated into a pre-modern community of glorious death, reunited in the heroism of princely courage. There is no doubt that the form of warfare envisaged by Rilke in these poems, as in the cases of Stadler and Lotz, is that of the pre-modern, unmechanised open field of battle.

3.5.2.3 *Thomas Mann*

Thomas Mann was equally vociferous among the supporters of the War. His essay 'Gedanken im Kriege' draws on the *Kultur-Zivilisation* dichotomy, popular amongst the bourgeois critics of modernity, according to which *Zivilisation* was equated with rationality, Enlightenment, and inauthentic, alienated modernity, while *Kultur* was equated with authentic, rooted, pre-Enlightenment, irrational and vital culture. Germany's *Kultur*, it was argued, was threatened by *Zivilisation*, but according to Mann, the War had rescued *Kultur*:⁴⁵

Wie die Herzen der Dichter sogleich in Flammen standen, als jetzt Krieg wurde!
 [...] Nun sangen sie wie im Wettstreit den Krieg, frohlockend, mit tief
 aufquellendem Jauchzen [...] Aber wenn nicht Politiker, so sind sie [die Dichter]
 doch stets etwas anderes: sie sind Moralisten. Denn Politik ist eine Sache der
 Vernunft, der Demokratie und der Zivilisation; Moral aber eine solche der Kultur
 und der Seele (pp. 191-92).

⁴⁵ Thomas Mann, 'Gedanken im Kriege' (1914), in *Essays*, ed. by Hermann Kurzke and Stephan Stachorski, 6 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993), II: *Frühlingssturm*, pp. 188-205.

Wir hatten an den Krieg nicht geglaubt, unsere politische Einsicht hatte nicht ausgereicht, die Notwendigkeit der europäischen Katastrophe zu erkennen. Als sittliche Wesen aber — ja, als solche hatten wir die Heimsuchung kommen sehen, mehr noch: auf irgendeine Weise ersehnt; hatten im tiefsten Herzen gefühlt, daß es so mit der Welt, mit unserer Welt nicht mehr weitergehe. [...] Wimmelte sie [die Friedenswelt] nicht von dem Ungeziefer des Geistes wie von Maden? Gor und stank sie nicht von den Zersetzungsstoffen der Zivilisation? [...] Wie hätte der Künstler, der Soldat im Künstler nicht Gott loben sollen für den Zusammenbruch einer Friedenswelt, die er so satt, so überaus satt hatte! (pp. 192-93).

Just as with Heym, the need for rejuvenation, renewed authenticity, and overcoming the alleged traumas of modernity through war are plain to see. Above all, however, the need for renewal is posited as an aesthetic need: it is the artist who is said to be in supreme need of liberation from the threatening, deadening shackles of classical modernity and, once again, war is seen as the agent of this renewal.

3.6 The Paradoxical Modernity of the First World War

Whilst these intellectuals and artists yearned for and then welcomed war, their image of war was profoundly misplaced, for the War turned out to be an unprecedentedly modern phenomenon inasmuch as it was driven by rationalisation and the full force of industrialised economies. The naive, literary enthusiasm of the initial wave of German war volunteers, mainly students and *Gymnasiasten*, was swept away by the machine-guns of the first battle of Langemarck.⁴⁶ They had encountered a war whose nature none of them had foreseen and I would like to draw attention to five key aspects of that war.

First, *all* the above visions of warfare were informed by the notion of decisive battle which had dominated Western European military thinking in the wake of the Napoleonic wars and had subsequently been theorised by Jomini and Clausewitz. Its precepts were confirmed in the popular imagination by the easy victories of the Prussian forces in the Wars of German Unification. But as Brian Bond (1996) has pointed out, a more appropriate model for European strategists should have been the American Civil War

⁴⁶ Cf. Bernd Hüppauf, 'Schlachtenmythen und die Konstruktion des "Neuen Menschen"', in *Keiner fühlt sich hier als Mensch: Erlebnisse und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs*, ed. by Gerhard Hirschfeld and Gerd Krumeich (Essen: Klartext, 1993), pp. 43-84. Hüppauf gives a detailed account of how 'Langemarck' was subsequently transformed into an event of near mythic significance for the Right; cf. also Wohl, p. 48.

in which industrial might and superior manpower resources had prevailed over the *élan* of the Confederate generals in an extended war of attrition. Industrialisation, Bond argues, eliminated decisive battle as such.⁴⁷

Second, in the Great War Europe would experienced for the first time the application of modern industrial and technological practices to warfare. Indeed, the military historian John Terraine (1992) has gone so far as to term it ‘the greatest *First Industrial Revolution* war’⁴⁸ and Guy Hartcup (1988) has described the extent to which scientific research was organised by the state in both Britain and Germany with the aim of producing military innovations and advantages, often in the unglamorous fields of chemistry and engineering.⁴⁹ For Terraine, ‘with the submarine and the aeroplane, the tank perfectly illustrates the strides of technology during the war’ (p. 246). To these could be added barbed wire, hand-grenades, sub-machine guns, trench mortars, poison gas, range finders for the artillery, military radio and the ubiquitous deployment of increasing numbers of machine-guns, a weapon which John Keegan (1976) sees as emblematic of the industrialisation of the act of killing itself.⁵⁰

Third, social change was accelerated as the static class structure of the Prussian military caste was broken by the mass armies put into the field.⁵¹ Hindenburg took

⁴⁷ Brian Bond, *The Pursuit of Victory: From Napoleon to Saddam Hussein* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 5-6; cf. also p. 100: ‘The most insidious error in pre-war emphasis on the offensive was that it would produce ‘decisive’ success on the battlefield which would promptly end the war in a ‘decisive’ victory.

⁴⁸ John Terraine, *White Heat: The New Warfare 1914-1918* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992), p. 6.

⁴⁹ Guy Hartcup, *The War of Invention: Scientific Developments 1914-1918* (London and Washington: Brassey’s Defence Publishers, 1988).

⁵⁰ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (London: Pimlico, 1991), p. 230. First published 1976.

⁵¹ Cf. Wehler, pp. 159-61. Wehler describes how in 1913 the War Minister, von Heeringen, rejected Ludendorff’s (himself of middle-class origin) request for three extra army corps on the grounds that this would mean admitting “democratically” inclined members of the bourgeoisie. This anti-modern reasoning may have cost Germany a quick victory at the Battle of Marne. Cf. also Timothy T. Lupfer, *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War* (Fort Leavenworth, KA: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1981). Lupfer highlights the influence of Ludendorff in the period 1916-17 in which a thorough reorganisation of the army command and tactics was carried out, a procedure which further undermined the established Prussian *Junker* mentality.

Weberian-style rationalisation one step further and seized more or less efficient control of national production and distribution in an attempt to keep the armies fed and armed.⁵²

Fourth, the effects of military technology rendered the individual subject powerless. In his account of the battle of the Somme, which extends to a more general analysis of the conditions of the Western Front, Keegan puts particular emphasis on the transformation of the battlefield that had been brought about by the new technology and the scale of its deployment. He describes the impact on ordinary soldiers and officers as follows:

For what almost all the soldiers of the First World War and many of the Second, even from the victor armies, testify to is their sense of littleness, almost of nothingness, of their abandonment in a physical wilderness, dominated by vast impersonal forces, from which even such normalities as the passage of time had been eliminated. The dimensions of the battlefield, completely depopulated of civilians and extending far beyond the boundaries of the individual's perception, the events supervening upon it — endless artillery bombardments, sudden and shattering powerful aerial bombings, mass irruptions of armoured vehicles — reduced his subjective role, objectively vital though it was, to that of a mere victim (p. 322).

Eric Leed (1979) builds on Keegan's insights in his seminal investigation of the sociology and psycho-history of the First World War.⁵³ According to Leed, for the individual soldier, the war was characterised by 'an experience of radical discontinuity on every level of consciousness' (p. 3), a 'disintegration of identity' (p. 4), a permanent transgression of normal boundaries between life/death, man/animal, man/machine (p. 19). Trench warfare meant that 'the retirement of the combatant into the soil produced a landscape suffused with ambivalence' (p. 20). Indeed, the experience 'offered numerous occasions for the shattering of distinctions that were central to orderly thought, communicable experience, and normal human relations' (p. 21). And the nature of combat meant that 'modern battle

⁵² Volker Berghahn, *Modern Germany: Society, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 47. Berghahn describes how the Hindenburg Programme kept munitions production going, but at the cost of ruining the rest of the economy, whose pre-war growth had been export led. Likewise, inflation spiralled and the refusal to impose direct taxation led to fiscal reliance on war bonds and a legacy of financial chaos in the post-War era; cf. also Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 35-40 and pp. 76-82.

⁵³ Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

is the fragmentation of spatial and temporal unities. It is the creation of a system with no center and no periphery in which men, both attackers and defenders are lost' (p. 104).

Finally, the extremity of the War experience and the extent and intensity of the destruction which could be wrought using modern techniques meant that classical modernity's meta-narratives came under further, crushing pressure. As Cora Stephan has put it: 'Der Große Krieg wirkte als Zivilisationsbruch, wie man ihn sich tiefer nicht vorstellen kann. Er brach mit dem Vorhergehenden, er zerstörte die Kontinuität, er veränderte die Wirklichkeit'.⁵⁴ *A fortiori*, it dislocated the remnants of pre-modern culture even more radically as, for example, when the Christianity of Wilfred Owen⁵⁵ or Paul Tillich underwent a profound crisis.⁵⁶

An appreciation of the above factors is indispensable for an understanding of Ernst Jünger's earliest work. In the First World War, the inner tensions and contradictions of modernity, having started to reveal themselves before the War, were fully exposed as the emancipatory impulse of instrumental reason took a dialectical turn towards destruction and death, resulting in the emergence of a radical absurdity — or as Bauman would have put it, of ambivalence and chaos. Indeed, each of the three elements that I have identified as crucial to classical modernity underwent severe strain: the individual was rendered powerless, rational epistemology was overwhelmed by the shocking, unfamiliar intensity of the war experience, and totalising meta-narratives became meaningless in the face of

⁵⁴ Cora Stephan, 'Der Große Krieg und das kurze Jahrhundert', in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit: Bilder des Ersten Weltkrieges*, ed. by Rainer Rother (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum/Ars Nicolai, 1994), pp. 25-35 (p. 29).

⁵⁵ Cf. Wilfred Owen, *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. by C. Day Lewis (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' (p. 44), 'Soldier's Dream' (p. 84) and 'Le Christianisme' (p. 83) all bear witness to the extent to which received beliefs were thrown into crisis by the experience of a war that appeared to deny all that the Church of England had represented in terms of complacent, reassuring, legitimising belief. An early poem of Owen's, '1914' (p. 129) shows that whilst Owen was not caught up in wild enthusiasm for the War, he too initially saw it as part of a process of renewal: 'But now, for us, wild Winter, and the need/ Of sowings for new Spring, and blood for seed'.

⁵⁶ Tillich wrote of his war experience in general: 'Das vierjährige Erleben des Krieges riß den Abgrund für mich und meine Generation so auf, daß er sich nie mehr schließen konnte'. Cited from *Auf der Grenze* (1936), in Heinz Zahrnt, *Die Sache mit Gott: Die protestantische Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Piper, 1966), p. 384.

such experience which could thus be termed ‘anti-modern’. The result was an intensification of the experience of cultural crisis which so many European artists and intellectuals had known before the War, regardless of ‘victory’ or ‘defeat’.

3.7 Early Weimar — Political and Cultural Turmoil

In Germany, however, it would be no exaggeration to say that the chaotic aftermath of the First World War deepened the fissures inherent in the project of modernisation itself. Indeed, Detlev Peukert (1987) has suggested that the problems of the Weimar Republic can be located in precisely that (problematic) economic modernity which I have already discussed. If the late 19th Century saw what Peukert terms the ‘Schwellenzeit der klassischen Moderne’, during which the traumas of modernisation were more or less held at bay by rising prosperity, then the Weimar Republic, attempting political reform at a time of economic crisis found itself in an extremely precarious position — what Peukert (using different terminology from myself) calls the crisis of classical modernity:

Mit dem Krieg geriet jedoch die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung in die Stagnations- und Krisenphasen. Zugleich kam mit der Revolution die Chance, vieles, was schon zuvor erdacht worden war, zu praktizieren, was schon erprobt worden war, nun auf breiter Front einzuführen. Die Gesellschaft und Kultur der Weimarer Republik standen in bestürzender Gleichzeitigkeit vor der Aufgabe der massenhaften Durchsetzung und der krisenbedingten Infragestellung des sozialen Wandels. Die klassische Moderne erlebte ihre Krisenjahre.⁵⁷

Whilst the Weimar Republic suffered from substantial and sustained structural difficulties, the immediate impact of defeat was immense and acutely felt across Germany. Whilst the Military High Command around Ludendorff resorted quite consciously to the *Dolchstoßlegende*⁵⁸ and the left-wing of the working-class turned initially to the *Räte-Bewegung* and to hopes of radical social and political change, many middle-class artists and writers, and most particularly those who, like Ernst Jünger, had served as subalterns at

⁵⁷ Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik: Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), p. 91.

⁵⁸ Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, p. 59. The *Dolchstoßlegende* was further facilitated by the fact that on 11 November 1918, the German armies were still fighting abroad and could march home intact, giving rise to the utterly false notion that they were ‘Im Felde unbesiegt’. Chickering terms the myth ‘a shameless exercise in evasion’ (1998, p. 191). The German armies *had* been ‘decisively’ defeated by the Allied offensives of the summer, cf. Bond, pp. 115-17.

the Front, were left in a state of great disorientation and confusion.⁵⁹ For all veterans, the return to civilian society was traumatic, since as Eric Leed has shown: ‘the learning experience of war [...] equips the individual with a kind of knowledge that could be called “disjunctive” rather than “integrative”. What men learned in the war set them irrevocably apart from those others who stood outside of it’ (p. 74).

For many, the optimism which was at the heart of classical modernity had been rendered senseless by the trench experience, and the rigid certainties of the social and political structures of the Wilhelmine Reich within which they had grown up and loved to hate were severely damaged by the experience of defeat and revolutionary upheaval, especially when the German Revolution proved a sham.

The initial stages of the German Revolution took place at a quite astonishing pace, as the radical reforms agreed to in October 1918 gave way to the Kiel Mutiny, the abdication of the Kaiser, the establishment of Ebert as Chancellor of a SPD/USPD Cabinet by the Berlin Soviets, and the Munich Soviet Republic under Eisner and Toller. Nevertheless, Ebert’s reformist socialism led him to promote parliamentary government to the detriment of the *Räte-Bewegung* and to assert his authority over the radical Left by suppressing the uprisings in Berlin in January and March 1919 and in Munich in May 1919 by using the right-wing *Freikorps*.⁶⁰ This willingness to compromise with the unreconstructed leadership of the *Reichswehr* combined with a social policy that avoided fundamental reform of the ownership of the means of production and failed to purge the judiciary and bureaucracy, meant that the German Revolution was partial and flawed. Indeed, Peukert has argued (p. 49) that the lack of a positive foundational mythic act,⁶¹

⁵⁹ Cf. Richard Bessel, ‘The Great War in German Memory: The Soldiers of the First World War, Demobilization and Weimar Political Culture’, *German History* 6 (1988), pp. 20-34. Bessel also shows how officers tended to exaggerate the extent of their supposed humiliation as time progressed within the Weimar Republic such that it became ‘an important element of the political vocabulary of the Weimar years, especially on the Right’ (p. 22); cf. also, Wohl, p. 54.

⁶⁰ Cf. Nigel Jones, *Hitler’s Heralds: The Story of the Freikorps 1918-1923* (London: John Murray, 1987).

⁶¹ Cf. Oswald Spengler, *Preußentum und Sozialismus* (Munich: Beck, 1920). Spengler bemoans the lack of great deeds and gestures in the German Revolution. Looking back he writes scornfully ‘Wie

there having been no Bastille or Battleship Potemkin, hindered the evolution of any deep-seated loyalty to the Republic. But for the Right, the Treaty of Versailles was a negative foundational mythic act, for it allowed them to identify the Republic with defeat, humiliation and the betrayal of everything they believed they had fought for, thus engendering a bitter resentment which was intensified by their own deep sense of cultural dislocation.

3.8 Some Responses to War and Cultural Crisis

Having shown how the War involved a radical destruction of the foundational assumptions of classical modernity, I now want to examine briefly a number of exemplary responses both to the experience of the War and to the problem of finding an adequate source of meaning. I begin with Lotz, August Stramm and Franz Marc, all of whom were killed in action. With Lotz we can trace the process of enthusiasm, disillusion and, ultimately, stoic resignation. With Stramm we can see a profound ambiguity in his responses to the trauma of the war, but, more importantly we can trace the disruptive effects of war on his use of language. With Marc we can follow his struggle to find a metaphysical framework to interpret his experiences. Then I shall discuss Fritz von Unruh, paying particular attention to his novel *Opfergang* (1919), and show how, despite its ostensibly pacifist credentials, it bears witness to a profoundly ambiguous response to the War. After a brief look at Freud's reassessment of human nature in an attempt to re-anchor modernity in coherent theory, I conclude by looking at three figures who all turned to varying degrees to pre-established certainties, namely Hugo Ball, who turned to ultra-ascetic Catholicism, Otto Dix, who turned to the Old Masters, and Johannes R. Becher, who turned to Marxism-Leninism.⁶²

flach, wie flau, wie wenig überzeugt war das alles!' (p. 10). For him, unsurprisingly, the German 'socialist' revolution was the *Aufbruch* of 1914.

⁶² On intellectuals' turn to extremism, cf. Norbert Bolz, *Auszug aus der entzauberten Welt: Philosophischer Extremismus zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1989). Bolz examines in detail the turn to extreme solutions to the cultural crisis, looking at Bloch, Lukács, Benjamin, Heidegger, Schmitt, Jünger (pp. 161-69) and Benn.

3.8.1 Ernst Wilhelm Lotz

In many respects, Lotz's reactions to the outbreak of war were typical. His pre-war enthusiasm for decisive action was embodied in his poem 'Aufbruch der Jugend', but his letters from the Front, from the outbreak of war till his death in action on 26 September 1914, trace the destruction of that pre-war enthusiasm until he reaches a state of what might be described as stoic resolution to fight on despite the horrors all around him.

When war broke out, Lotz was enthusiastic about the potential for reunification that it brought, writing to his wife Henny:

Und auf allen Gesichtern sieht man eine große leuchtende Begeisterung, es gibt keine Unterschiede mehr zwischen Socialdemokraten, Elsässern und Patrioten, überhaupt keine Hurrah-Patrioten, nur freudig-ernste Verteidiger des Vaterlandes. Das Wort "Vaterland" ist mir in diesen Tagen bedeutend geworden [...] Geliebte Henny, es gibt wirklich ein Vaterland trotz der Skepsis einiger Intellektueller [...] Das Vaterland ist auch die unsichtbar schwebende Wohnung der Nation; süße Henny, ich bin Dichter und, wirklich, ich kann sie auch sehen, jetzt, da man sie niederzureißen versucht (pp. 192-93, letter of 6 August 1914).

For Lotz then, the outbreak of War enabled him, the alienated intellectual, to overcome the difficult social and cultural problems inherent in modernisation and provided a secure basis for decisive action. He even went so far as to describe his own 'maßlose Begeisterung' (p. 194, letter to Meidner of 7 August 1914). However, as we shall see with Stramm, too, this enthusiasm disappeared entirely after his first experience of battle. Although Lotz referred to the battle of Mühlhausen as 'der Rühmestag meines Regimentes und meines Soldatentums' (p. 195, letter to his wife of 16 August 1914), he went on to describe war in the very same letter as 'ein märchenhafter Irrsinn'. Moreover, although this campaign in the Vosges mountains took place long before the slaughter at Verdun and on the Somme, the deadly impact of artillery and machine-guns, combined with extraordinarily difficult terrain, led to heavy casualties at close quarters. Consequently, the unifying effect of war via intoxicated enthusiasm was rapidly replaced by a desire for peace:

Schöne Henny, behalte mich lieb, ich habe ein umsorgtes Heim verdient, wenn ich nach Hause komme. Ich werde wundervolle Dinge schreiben, voll Frieden und Kultur. Ich habe alle Sensationen des Krieges satt, die einen unmenschlichen Rohling entzücken können. Bei dem Wort Krieg sehe ich nur Unerquickliches, zerplatze Bäuche, wimmernde Verwundete, weinende Kinder vor brennenden Häusern und brutale Kanonenschläge, die ganze Kolonnen zerfleischen (p. 196, letter to his wife of 16 August 1914).

In his final letters, Lotz adopted a tone of what Jünger might have described as 'heroic Realism', of human defiance of the horrors of war, of resolution in the face of death. Just five days later, he wrote: 'Liebe Henny, in diesen Tagen ist mir der Krieg ein Greuel geworden. Aber ich tue meine Pflicht; die Truppen sind jetzt siegessicher und haben Grund dazu' (p. 198, letter of 21 August 1914), and shortly afterwards: 'Wir hier vorne haben alle Hurrahbegeisterung verloren, aber keineswegs den Mut. Im Gegenteil, unser Mut ist ernst und eisern, wir gehen an den Feind heran und siegen, es koste, was es wolle' (p. 200, letter to his wife of 25 August 1914). This resolute, stoic doggedness, which entails both resignation and defiance, is typical of one sort of reaction to the War and is particularly pronounced in Jünger's accounts of the later periods of the War.

3.8.2 August Stramm: Language, Self and War

Before the War broke out, August Stramm was employed as a civil servant in the German Postal Service and served part-time as an officer of the Reserve Army. As *Beamter* and *Offizier*, Stramm was a member of the two central pillars of the Wilhelmine state and might have seemed to be one of those temperaments least likely to experience the contemporary world as in any way difficult. However, by 1914 he was writing challenging, avant-garde poetry for Herwarth Walden's expressionist journal *Der Sturm*. Patrick Bridgwater (1979) argues that Stramm's radical poetics derive from a possible encounter with Fritz Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (1901), from his reading of Hans Vaihinger's *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* (1911), and certainly from his knowledge of Nietzsche's sceptical accounts of the relationship between language and world. Moreover, Bridgwater (1979) argues, Stramm was also influenced by Marinetti's *Technical Manifesto of Futurism* (1909) and probably also by Kandinsky's *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*

(1911).⁶³ If this is so, then Stramm was fully immersed in the modernist problematics of language even before the War.

If Stramm's initial explorations of radical linguistic innovation in the poems published before the outbreak of the First World War were already indicative of the extent to which his position as official, reserve officer and fundamentally conservative member of the bourgeoisie was implicitly under threat, then the War represented a catastrophic confrontation with the anti-modern. Richard Sheppard (1990) has described how Stramm's poetry was generated by the confrontation between a conservative, classically modern mind faced with experiences which dissolved its unifying assumptions.⁶⁴ Stramm's belief that the universe was ordered and unified, that love could bring about unity, that he was in control of his poetry, that his poetry could reflect the world, and that he himself was a civilised being were radically subverted by his experience of battle. Moreover, Sheppard argues that Stramm's world came apart in his language. He 'made increasing use of a language which, by overemphasising or diminishing the syntactical elements which make for a sense of causal and syntagmatic connectedness, deconstructed that sense' (p. 225). He also argues that Stramm's use of language bears witness to 'a highly conservative imagination refusing to give up and yet being forced, in the face of shatteringly contradictory experience, to give up its profoundest assumptions about language' (p. 228). Whilst we must remember that writing war poetry did not of itself lead to formal crisis and the polyvalence of meaning that affected Stramm and that the form of his work develops out of his pre-war experimentation, his poetry is indeed symptomatic of a crisis of writing and values experienced at its most intense.⁶⁵

⁶³ Cf. Patrick Bridgwater, 'The Sources of Stramm's Originality', in *August Stramm: Kritische Essays und unveröffentlichtes Quellenmaterial aus dem Nachlaß des Dichters*, ed. by J. D. Adler and J. J. White (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1979), pp. 31-46.

⁶⁴ Richard Sheppard, 'The Poetry of August Stramm: A Suitable Case for Deconstruction', in *New Ways in Germanistik*, ed. by Richard Sheppard (Oxford, Munich and New York: Berg, 1990), pp. 211-42.

⁶⁵ One might compare English War Poetry. Wilfred Owen, for example, experienced much the same intensity of violence and dislocation of values, but formal innovation in his work takes the relatively conservative form of half-rhymes. English poetic Modernism in the pre-War period was much less

Consider, for example, the poem 'Schrei':⁶⁶

Tage sargen
 Welten gräbern
 Nächte ragen
 Blute bäumen
 Wehe raumen alle Räume
 Würgen
 Schwingen
 Und
 Zerschwingen
 Schwingen
 Würgen
 Und
 Zerwürgen
 Stürmen
 Strömen
 Wirbeln
 Ballen
 Knäueln
 Wehe Wehe
 Wehe
 Wehen
 Nichtall.

Unfortunately, there is not space enough to do justice to Stramm's poetry, but a number of issues do become very apparent. First, in the initial part of the poem, syntax is not destroyed. Second, the absence of punctuation and the interchangeability of nouns and verbs means that the syntax is allowed an unprecedented degree of flexibility in which sentences overlap, preventing any one, stable meaning. Third, the neologisms 'sargen' and 'gräbern', whilst highly suggestive, do not render language more precise — despite Stramm's protestations that such constructions *do* carry unambiguous meaning (letter to Walden of 11 June 1914)⁶⁷ — because their interpretation is so open. Fourth, in the middle of the poem, the word 'Und', whilst seeming to connect syntactic units, in fact does not, because by this stage of the poem it is even less clear which words are linked to which, and thus the connectedness and order implicit in the linking unit are in fact absent. And fifth, a

experimental in terms of form than that of Germany or Italy. Cf. Hans Ulrich Seeber, 'Modernization, Violence and Modern Poetry: Comments on Wilfred Owen, August Stramm and Lascelles Abercrombie', in *Intimate Enemies: English and German Literary Reactions to the Great War 1914-1918*, edited by Franz Karl Stanzel and Martin Löschnigg (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1993), pp. 121-36. Cf. also Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁶⁶ August Stramm, *Das Werk*, ed. by René Radrizzani (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1963), p. 89.

certain metaphoric condensation ('Ballen', 'Knäueln') towards the end, a potential move back to solidity and certainty, turns out to refer to pains that disperse ('Wehe Wehe/Wehen') ultimately into the paradoxical neologism 'Nichtall'. Jeremy Adler (1995) has argued that this poem comes from Stramm's last productive phase on the Eastern Front, a phase which saw an intensification of combat as Stramm's battalion moved inexorably forward and which, Adler argues, sees a concomitant increase in Stramm's despair.⁶⁸ Here, that despair is represented formally in the collapse of grammar into 'Nichtall' and lexically in neologisms of cosmic death.

Likewise, Stramm's letters testify to the crisis of faith that he underwent at the Front. In his letters both to Walden and to his wife,⁶⁹ the conservative Stramm is torn between emotional extremes of despair and elation, revealing a personality riven by the contradictions of the war experience. Thus, he finds that he is at the peak of his creativity, composing the drama *Geschehen* in one evening (pp. 44-45, letter to Walden, 22 January 1915) and that his poetry is like 'eine Mission vom Weltgeist' (p. 64, letter to Walden, 23 March 1915). And even shortly before his death he writes 'Ich glaube *doch* an meinen Sieg' (p. 80, letter to Walden of 30 June 1915), referring to the triumph of his poetic practice. Nevertheless, the dominant counterpoint is a feeling of linguistic crisis which sets in after his first battle:

⁶⁷ August Stramm, *Briefe an Nell und Herwarth Walden*, ed. by Michael Trabitzsch (Berlin: Edition Sirene, 1988), pp. 14-16.

⁶⁸ Jeremy Adler, "'Kämpfen, Wirren, Stürmen": Bemerkungen zu Stramm's Biographie im Kriege und zur Entstehung seiner Werke', in *August Stramm: Beiträge zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung*, ed. by Lothar Jordan (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1995), pp. 7-44 (p. 12).

⁶⁹ August Stramm, 'Fünfundzwanzig Briefe an seine Frau', ed. by Lothar Jordan, in Adler and White, pp. 128-52.

[...] Was soll ich sagen? Es ist so unendlich viel Tod in mir Tod und Tod. In mir weints und außen bin ich hart und roh [...] Es ist alles so widersprüchlich ich finde nicht durch das Rätsel. [...] Ich kann überhaupt nicht mehr lesen Es ist so viel Wunder um mich Wunder ringsum ich kann überhaupt nicht mehr lesen und denken Das Wort schon stockt mir vor Grauen [...] Wo sind Worte für das Erleben. Stümper elendige. Ich dichte nicht mehr, alles ist Gedicht umher (pp. 24-25, letter to Walden of 6 October 1914).⁷⁰

Stramm also explicitly links his sense of poetic crisis to a sense that the ego is being decentred and problematised, both through his awareness that mechanical destruction simultaneously strengthens *and* subjugates the individual (pp. 41-42, letter to Walden of 12 January 1915), and through the shocking discovery of his own unconscious. Stramm's letter to Walden of 25 February 1915 is crucial because it displays the link between a sense of dissolving self and a poetic crisis:

Ich bin nicht ich nicht Person. Ich fühle mich All! [sic] All! Ich bin bewußt des Unbewußten! Lache wer vernünftig ist. [...] Ich fühle All! Ich fühle mich! Ich fühle Meuch. [sic] Sprache zum Teufel Sprache ist Ich. Sprache ist Meuch. All ist All. Nicht Sinn, nicht Verstand, Nicht Sehen. Tasten hören! Empfinden! Empfinden! Welch himmlisches Wort. Wo sind Worte für die Worte. Ich bin trunken. Ich habe keine Worte nur Lallen. [...] Um fünf Uhr ist Antreten. Wir marschieren. Das Bewußte siegt (p. 57).

Whilst Stramm feels bound by the 'Lügenhaftigkeit unserer Sprache' (p. 59, letter to Walden, 7/8 March 1915), he does find an intoxicated sense of certainty in the War itself. But whilst he is shocked at his own callousness (pp. 138-39, letter to his wife, 5 March 1915) in ordering his company to bring back a French soldier dead or alive, the letter I have just cited indicates how action *did* provide an intense certainty. Indeed, Stramm's later letters almost revel in action, enabling him to declare how strong he feels: 'Eine Welt kann auf mich stürzen und ich schaffe eine Neue' he wrote to Walden on 28 March 1915 (p. 66). It is a strength that finds sustenance from the notion that 'Wir sind deutsche Soldaten' (p. 66). Yet precisely because this strength is highly problematic, his letter to his wife of 12 April 1915 contrasts it with a feeling of a great 'Weh' (pp. 142-43). Given this feeling of 'Weh', it is surprising, then, that his letters from the Eastern Front, where he took part in the German advances across the Carpathians and into Russia, have an

⁷⁰ Sic. This letter is characterised by a lack of punctuation and conventional syntax, further emphasising the connection between psychological trauma and Stramm's crisis of confidence in

almost Jüngerian tone. Stramm had already characterised himself as a ‘Landsknecht’ (p. 56, letter to Walden, 25 February 1915), and his account of his Company stealing a French wagon (p. 141, letter to his wife, 21 March 1915) is reminiscent of the escapades in no-man’s land recounted in *In Stahlgewittern*, especially in the later editions. This dimension culminated in his disparaging remarks about the Austrians (p. 144, letter to his wife, 28 April 1915) and his account of his Battalion’s success at Ostrow with its undisguised triumphalism all of which is reminiscent of parts of *In Stahlgewittern*. Later still he wrote to his wife: ‘Es war alles so groß und entsetzlich! beides Ich kann jetzt noch nichts sagen! Ich bin jedenfalls unverletzt wunderbar! Wunderbar!’ (p. 150, letter of 5 June 1915).

Stramm, then, underwent a crisis of self, language and world-view during the First World War which manifested itself both in a confusing poetic polyvalence which resists straightforwardly integrative readings, and in an awareness of a multi-dimensional personality, decentred by modern warfare, struggling to find a legitimate voice and authenticity in writing. Now, although Stramm’s poetry is strikingly different from Jünger’s war works, I would argue that at the level of the problematics with which they both had to engage, a remarkable similarity obtains. Stramm tends towards a Jüngerian celebration of *Frontsoldatentum*; Jünger is forced to confront the world of the anti-modern with all its dislocations; and Jünger, albeit much less obviously than Stramm, has to deal with the inadequacy of language to represent his experience.

3.8.3 Franz Marc

Like Stramm, Franz Marc was a recognised member of the avant-garde serving in the German Army. He had made his name, along with Kandinsky, as a leading member of the *Blauer Reiter* group of artists in Munich and then saw active service from the outbreak of war until his death in action on 4 March 1916 during the German advance on Verdun. But, unlike Stramm and Jünger, Marc was in the artillery which, despite the dangers of counter-battery fire, did not expose him to the same intensity of lethal experience as a front-line

linguistic representation.

infantryman. This may well account for the fact that his letters home are generally much more coherent than Stramm's: although at times anguished, they remain composed, reflective and even homely.⁷¹

To a large extent, Marc's reactions to the War derive from his pre-1914 reactions to modernity since the 'Aufzeichnungen' appended to Cassirer's edition of his letters from the field are dated as 'vermutlich 1911-12' (p. 121). Here, he describes abstract art as an attempt to free art from its (classically modern) anthropocentrism:

Die Kunst ist metaphysisch, wird es sein; sie kann es erst heute sein. Die Kunst wird sich von Menschenzwecken und Menschenwollen befreien. Wir werden nicht mehr den Wald oder das Pferd malen, wie sie uns gefallen oder scheinen, sondern wie *sie wirklich sind*, wie sich der Wald oder das Pferd selbst fühlen, ihr absolutes Wesen, das hinter dem Schein lebt, den wir nur sehen; es wird uns soweit gelingen, als es uns gelingt, die traditionelle "Logik" von Jahrtausenden beim künstlerischen Schaffen zu überwinden (p. 123).

Furthermore, Marc writes, modern science and technology will be revealed as 'unwesentlich' and the realm of art and *Geist* will necessarily reassert itself because of 'unsre erschütterten Herzen' (p. 125). Marc's dating of modernity as 'die Logik von Jahrtausenden' prefigures Heidegger's dating of the West's forgetting of Being to Socrates and indeed, for the pre-war Marc, modernity as a whole represented a dangerous move away from the spiritual, essential realm of *Geist*. Consequently, following Kandinsky's theoretical lead, it is in Marc's view the task of modern abstract art to begin the process of renewal away from the trivial and 'plebeian' nature of modernity (p. 125), and of contemporary art in particular.

It is in this context, then, that Marc's letters from the Front and essays on the War should be read, since his attempts to come to terms with the War draw on vocabulary and beliefs which had been established before the War. Although, as an intellectual, he was concerned to integrate the War into his view of the world, in an early letter to his wife he comments on the difficulty of doing so: 'Ich denke so viel über diesen Krieg nach und komme zu keinem Resultat; wahrscheinlich, weil die "Ereignisse" mir den Horizont

⁷¹ Franz Marc, *Briefe, Aufzeichnungen und Aphorismen*, 2 vols (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1920). All the letters cited in the following analysis are to his wife and are taken from Volume I.

versperren. Man kommt nicht über die “Aktion” hinweg, um den Geist der Dinge zu sehen’ (p. 8, letter of 12 September 1914). As an artilleryman on the Lorraine front, Marc enjoyed extensive periods in which he saw little or no action, and although his letters often discuss novels and the avant-garde art scene, comment on the strategic situation and ask for news from home, he constantly returns to the question of the meaning of the War. His response to the War is multi-layered. On a personal level he declares initially that he has no regrets about joining up (p. 32, letter of 24 December 1914),⁷² but then, nearly one year later, he writes that: ‘Der Krieg hat sich längst selber überdauert und ist sinnlos geworden, auch die Opfer, die er fordert, sind sinnlos geworden’ (p. 88, letter of 1 December 1915), a feeling that is accompanied, paradoxically, both by an increased desire to return home and by an increased desire for decisive action on the Western Front to conclude the War.

Marc’s more personal reaction to the War was accompanied by a deep-seated, and classically modern, desire to master the experience by integrating it into an explanatory whole. Thus, in an essay published in 1915 entitled ‘Das geheime Europa’, Marc argues that the War is being fought out of a profound desire for purification and renewal:⁷³

Der Krieg geht um mehr. Europa ist krank am alten Erbübel und will gesund werden, darum will es den furchtbaren Blutgang. Wir, die draußen im Felde stehen, fühlen am tiefsten, daß diese grauenvollen Monate nicht nur — psychologisch geredet — eine politische Kräfteverschiebung bedeuten werden, sondern — geistig gesehen — ein tiefes völkergemeinschaftliches Blutopfer darstellen, das alle um eines gemeinsamen Zieles willen bringen. Selbst der gemeine Soldat draußen ist mit allem politischen Geschrei nicht zu überreden [...] Er würgt den Gegner, aber er haßt ihn nicht (pp. 630-31).

Marc then attempts to deal with the murderous nature of the War by positing the emergence of ‘Der europäische Gedanke’ (p. 632), declaring that ‘dieser Großkrieg ist ein europäischer Bürgerkrieg, ein Krieg gegen den inneren unsichtbaren Feind des europäischen Geistes’ (p. 633), an enemy he then defines as ‘die Dummheit und Dumpfheit, das ewig Stumpfe’ (p. 633). For Marc then, the War, despite its external

⁷² This letter also describes the War as ‘die größte Typusveränderung, die wir bis jetzt erlebt haben’ (p. 32). The vocabulary of ‘Typus’ prefigures Jünger’s metaphysics of ‘Typus’ and ‘Gestalt’ in *Der Arbeiter* (1932) and subsequently in *Typus, Name, Gestalt* (1963).

⁷³ Franz Marc, ‘Das geheime Europa’, in *Das Forum*, 1 (1914-15), pp. 630-36.

political motivation, is an inner struggle for a renewal that is to take place at the level of *Geist* and is envisaged aesthetically as a victory over a *Spießbürgertum* which is characterised by those values which mark the modern age as a whole.

If anything, the prolongation of hostilities pushed Marc towards an increasingly spiritual interpretation of the War, largely because of the physical absurdity of the positional warfare on the Western Front which, for him, consisted largely of occasional artillery exchanges with French batteries. Thus, ever more insistently Marc tries to account for the War in a spiritual-mystical way. By projecting all notions of value into a *Jenseits*, Marc can dispense with the need to deal rationally with the absurdity of the War itself. Accordingly, whilst at the end of 1914 Marc refers to the ‘tieferer Wille’ behind the interests of the states involved (p. 31, letter of 23 December) — an almost Hegelian appeal to the *Weltgeist* — and whilst in April 1915 he again argues that the War was willed by Europe for its own purification (p. 46, letter of 6 April), by May the emphasis has changed noticeably. After reading a biography of David Livingstone, Marc, impressed by the missionary’s extraordinary commitment, writes: ‘Man muß sich gänzlich opfern [...] Der Geist kann unbedingt auch ohne Körper leben’ (p. 58, letter of 18 May). The letters of the following months saw an increased incidence of religious vocabulary. Death is merely ‘Segen und Erlösung’ and the War is ‘Fegefeuer’ (p. 62, letter of 23 June), and Marc argues that ‘Wir sind wirklich *alle* schuld an diesem Krieg’ (p. 64, letter of 21 July 1915). Finally, in February 1916, Marc sees the War as a necessary punishment (p. 105, letter of 2 February) for what he had earlier described — pre-figuring Spengler’s *Preußentum und Sozialismus* — as Germany’s betrayal of *Geist* by becoming *kaufmännisch* (p. 68, letter of 12 September 1915).

Before the War, as we have seen, Marc thought that the role of art consisted in the renewal of *Geist*, and although this notion persisted into the War, it became linked much more closely to the death of God experience. In 1915 he wrote:

Wir haben Himmel und Hölle entvölkert, bilderstürmerisch, — aber auf Erden, in unserem Blut, leben dieselben Kräfte fort, für die wir jene klassischen Symbole schufen! Die Kunst wird immer wieder in eine neue Welt von Symbolen münden; man wird mit dem Leben und dem Rätsel: Mensch so leicht nicht fertig (p. 74, letter of 5-6 October 1915).

And in 1916 he again emphasised the mission of art to proclaim the truth of ‘today’ and not that of the past or of the future. His aphorisms of early 1915 also proclaimed the duty of art to create its own traditions and not to dwell in the beliefs of the past (p. 127). Whilst Marc’s religious vocabulary of purgatory and redemption seems to carry more than purely metaphorical connotations, his reflections on art are uttered within a thoroughly Nietzschean frame of reference: ‘Die kommende Kunst wird die Formwerdung unserer wissenschaftlichen Überzeugung sein; sie ist unsere Religion, unser Schwerpunkt, unsere Wahrheit. Sie ist tief und schwer genug, um die größte Formgestaltung, Formumgestaltung zu bringen, die die Welt erlebt hat’ (Aphorism 35, p. 128). He was, however, not prepared to follow Nietzsche wholeheartedly for he remained convinced of the *Geistigkeit* of science and never lost his belief that behind the world ‘ein Dahinter, eine größere Einheit’ was to be found and which might, once discovered, provide humanity with ‘das dritte Gesicht’ (Aphorism 45, p. 129). Or, in other words, despite radical doubts, Marc remained fundamentally a believer in a metaphysical order. Indeed, under the pressure of the War, this belief became ever more insistent and extreme, pushing him towards a radically Gnostic position which is concerned solely with decay and renewal in an incorporeal spiritual realm. Like Jünger’s, Marc’s reaction to the War is far from coherent,⁷⁴ drawing as it does on competing Nietzschean, Christian and mystical discourses. Like Jünger, Marc was attempting to reintegrate his experience into a totalising meta-narrative — but as with Jünger, that attempt proved to be inherently unstable and contradictory.

⁷⁴ At one point, he seems aggressively to reassert his attachment to Christian belief. Writing about Hauptmann’s novel *Emmanuel Quint*, he states: ‘Alles ist rein in diesem Buche; es kennt kein *à peu près*, kein Ungefähr und keine Konzession [...] meine Seele ist zu aufrichtig und klar, um Dilettantismus mit dem Christentum und meinem Gewissen zu treiben. Für mich gibt es nur die eine Erlösung und Erneuerung: wenigstens jedes Ungefähr, jede Konzession nach gleichviel Seite aus meinem Werk zu bannen’ (p. 87, letter of 1 December 1915). The urge for clarity, for a totalising vision is striking, in contrast to the actual ambiguity of his attitude to Christian belief in this letter.

3.8.4 Fritz von Unruh

Born into an aristocratic, military family and brought up as a cadet with the Royal Princes at Plön, Fritz von Unruh, even more than Stramm, emerged from the very heart of the Wilhelmine establishment. Much of the (limited) secondary literature emphasises, however, his nascent discontent with the rigidity and narrow-mindedness of his military surroundings, first as a cadet and then as a cavalry officer.⁷⁵ Despite the exaggeration which these accounts often involve, it does seem that Unruh was of a temperament that felt ill at ease within the Prussian officer caste and he left the army in 1911.

His play *Offiziere* (1911) deals with a group of officers who, for various reasons, feel confined and oppressed by barrack life.⁷⁶ They welcome the outbreak of the Herero uprising in German South-West Africa as an opportunity for renewal and authenticity — a belief that is revealed to be misplaced as the military system remains dominant. Yet the hero, Lt. Ernst von Schlichting, takes a vital decision on his own against the orders of his superiors, and by so doing resolves a critical military situation, his pseudo-Nietzschean decisionism and *élan* triumphing, despite his death, over the rigid Prussian military code. In the words of Gudrun Theil: ‘Der Kolonialkrieg wird daher zum Symbol für das ganz Neue, dessen Bewältigung die eigene titanische Kraft und den Einsatz des eigenen Herzens erfordert’.⁷⁷ Whilst von Unruh was far from being an outright militarist, it is clear that he associated a much needed sense of renewal with an authentically pursued war, much as

⁷⁵ Cf. W.F. Mainland, ‘Fritz von Unruh’ in *German Men of Letters*, ed. by Alex Natan and Brian Keith-Smith, 6 vols (London: Oswald Wolff, 1961-72), III: *Twelve Literary Essays* (1964), pp. 153-75. Mainland is keen to see Von Unruh as a convinced pacifist from the day he was born. Similar feelings dominate Alvin Kronacher’s *Fritz von Unruh: A Monograph* (New York: Rudolf Schick, 1946), whose hagiography extends to Albert Einstein’s introduction which concludes: ‘Fritz von Unruh is in truth an inspiring model for all mankind.’ Likewise, the collection of excerpts from Unruh’s work and sycophantic essays edited by Friedrich Rasche, *Fritz von Unruh: Rebell und Verkünder. Der Dichter und sein Werk* (Hanover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1960) contains little more than praise for Unruh’s alleged prophetic and visionary gifts. It is an exercise in hagiography that occasionally makes the *Jünger-Jünger* seem restrained.

For a much more substantial and scholarly analysis of Unruh’s work, cf. Dieter Kasang, *Wilhelmismus und Expressionismus: Das Frühwerk Fritz von Unruhs 1904-1921* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1980).

⁷⁶ Fritz von Unruh, *Offiziere*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Hanns Martin Elster and others, 20 vols (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1970-), II: *Dramen I* (1987), pp. 431-635.

Heym, Lotz and Stadler had done. Moreover, his next drama, *Louis Ferdinand Prinz von Preußen* (1913),⁷⁸ banned from performance until after the War, focused on a similar act of deliverance from paralysing inauthenticity. Von Unruh's neo-Kleistian Louis Ferdinand is so appalled by the abject collaboration of the Prussian monarchy with the Napoleonic authorities that when they fail to act, he takes action on his own and is killed at the battle of Saalfeld, his disobedience ultimately forcing the King to act. Mainland, relying excessively on the myth of the purely pacifist von Unruh, maintains that the play was banned because it was 'an unseasonable warning against military ambition' (p. 156). But Manfred Durzak's comments are much more convincing within the cultural context that I have been outlining: 'Wird in *Offiziere* einer Revitalisierung des preußischen Militärsystems das Wort geredet, so erstrebt [von Unruh] hier [*Louis Ferdinand*] offensichtlich eine Erneuerung der preußischen Monarchie und damit im weitesten Sinn des preußischen Gesellschaftsytems. In beiden Fällen erscheint der Krieg als das Vehikel einer möglichen Erneuerung'.⁷⁹

In this light, it is not surprising that von Unruh should have rejoined the Army at the outbreak of war. But, as with Lotz and Stramm and as we shall see with Jünger, his initial war enthusiasm was soon dampened by real experience of combat. In his autobiographical essay *Quo vadis* (1931),⁸⁰ Unruh reports how, very early on in the War, he was involved in a fire-fight which left him unconscious and apparently dead. He was then allegedly plundered and stripped by the opposing French forces, who left him to wake up naked on the corpse of a French soldier (pp. 128-29).⁸¹ According to Durzak (p. 572),

⁷⁷ Gudrun Thiel, 'Fritz von Unruhs *Offiziere*: Ein südwestafrikanisches Drama?', *Acta Germanica*, 15 (1982), pp. 53-61 (p. 60).

⁷⁸ *Sämtliche Werke*, II, pp. 161-313.

⁷⁹ Manfred Durzak, 'Nachgeholter Expressionismus? Zur Vollendung Fritz von Unruhs Dramen-Trilogie *Ein Geschlecht*', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, 18 (1974), pp. 559-605 (p. 570).

⁸⁰ *Sämtliche Werke*, XVII (1979), pp. 123-34.

⁸¹ A very different account is given by the regimental history. Cf. Herman Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen, *Geschichte des Thüringischen Ulanen-Regiments Nr. 6 von 1813 bis 1919. Bearbeitet von Hermann Freiherr von Gaertringen Major a. D. s. Zt. Rittmeister und Eskadronschef im*

this shocking experience led him to write the dramatic ‘anti-war’ poem *Vor der Entscheidung* (1914).⁸² In 1916, von Unruh was a forward staff officer,⁸³ involved in the slaughter of the Verdun offensive, out of which emerged the novel *Opfergang*.⁸⁴ Originally entitled *Verdun*,⁸⁵ this was written at the behest of the Army High Command, who wished to portray the offensive in a favourable light (Kasang, p. 259-60), but the Army censors decided not to allow publication to proceed because of worries about the effects on the home front (Kasang, pp. 262-63).⁸⁶ When Unruh finally published the story as *Opfergang* in 1919, he had substantially revised it to produce a work which he believed conformed more to his new-found pacifist ideology, much as he would revise his early biography to suppress his loyalty to the Wilhelmine establishment and his once-held faith in the renewing power of War.⁸⁷

Opfergang is a piece of narrative prose, but constructed very much as a drama since it is broken down into individual, emblematic scenes. The characters, whilst given names, play a symbolic role and are frequently referred to as ‘Der Freiwillige’, ‘Der

Regiment (Berlin: Wilhelm Kolk, 1930), p. 43. In this version, Unruh is said to have spent the night ‘auf einer Fichte im Wald, da sich feindliche Kavallerie und Infanterie noch im Gelände herumtrieben’ and to have been in action again the next day. The regimental history also reproduces a number of Unruh’s pathos-ridden patriotic poems, none of which figure in the collected works to date. This book, incidentally, does not figure in Kasang’s otherwise comprehensive bibliography.

Paul Tillich underwent a similar experience at Verdun: ‘Als ich erwachte, sagt ich mir: “Das ist das Ende der idealistischen Seite meines Denkens!” In dieser Stunde begriff ich, daß der Idealismus zerbrochen war’. Cited in Zahrnt, p. 384.

⁸² *Vor der Entscheidung* (Berlin: Erich Reiß, 1919). The poem should have been re-published in the *Sämtliche Werke*, I, but this volume has yet to appear.

Kasang shows how *Vor der Entscheidung* was, in fact, one of the ‘wichtigsten Dokumente einer national-religiösen deutschen Prokriegsliteratur’ (p. 221).

⁸³ Von Unruh was seconded to the 18th Army Corps from 29 August 1914 and served as ‘Ordonnanzoffizier’. Cf. Hermann Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen, *Stammliste der Offiziere und Fähnriche, der Reserveoffiziere, der Sanitätsoffiziere, der Veterinäroffiziere und der Zahlmeister des Thüringischen Ulanen-Regiments Nr. 6 von 1813-1919* (Berlin: Wilhelm Kolk, 1929), Entry no. 429, p. 131.

⁸⁴ *Sämtliche Werke*, XVII (1979), pp. 7-118.

⁸⁵ There is a copy of *Verdun* in the form of a printer’s proof dated 15 August 1916 in Unruh’s *Nachlaß* at the DLA (A:Unruh, Prosa, Opfergang/Verdun, Mapped 1).

⁸⁶ According to Ina Götz the book was banned for its pacifist sentiments. Cf. Ina Götz, *Tradition und Utopie in den Dramen Fritz von Unruhs* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1975), p. 63. Kasang, however, shows the Army censors full of praise for Unruh’s artistic talents (p. 263).

⁸⁷ Cf. Kasang (pp. 265-79) for an brief interpretation of the original *Verdun*.

Trommler', 'Der Kellner' or 'Der Hauptmann' and their stylised speech is far removed from any mimetic rendition of the coarseness of real soldiers. They seem, rather, to represent various ideas about the War whose interaction is explored in the course of the novel. Indeed, its language, 'bereits den geballten parataktischen Duktus der expressionistischen Prosa vorwegnehmend',⁸⁸ whose short sentences are characterised by a tendency to reverse normal word order and whose vocabulary is full of neologisms, is indicative of von Unruh's move away from conventional narrative into an exploration of various ideas.

Opfergang wears its pacifist and anti-militarist credentials on its sleeve. The main characters, part of a company of soldiers moving forward to, and then taking part in, the initial phases of the assault on Verdun, constantly ask 'Wozu?' as they are faced with slaughter around them and forced to confront the possibility of their own imminent death. The teacher, Clemens, is the main vehicle through which such sentiments are voiced, stating: 'Es ist ja ein Wahnsinn' (p. 12), seeing artillery moving into position as huge monsters (p. 20), asking awkward questions of the Hauptmann (p. 52), and even contemplating mutiny (pp. 74-75). The waiter goes mad. Even the Hauptmann expresses deep, gnawing doubts about the entire War in his diary. The drummer's opposition is expressed through his indifference to military form and his pursuit of female flesh. Von Unruh implicitly blames the German High Command for the slaughter at Verdun — various generals in incidental scenes appear as callous and uncaring. They expect the impossible of their men; refuse to provide reinforcements; and blame each other for the degeneration of the offensive — which had been expected to provide 'decisive victory' — into the slaughter of attritional warfare in a ruined landscape. This anti-militarist "message" is overwhelmingly what the secondary literature has tended to see in *Opfergang*, appropriating von Unruh's post-War reassessment of his own positions without subjecting the work to closer critical scrutiny. Nevertheless, the surface pacifism of

⁸⁸ Durzak, p. 572.

Opfergang overlays the same militarist vitalism that Durzak would detect in *Offiziere* and *Louis Ferdinand* and that had characterised *Verdun*.

Let us now examine the implicit vestiges of this militarist vitalism in *Opfergang* which takes two main forms. First, the consciously expressed oppositional stances the characters use in order to affirm their identities are progressively modulated into individual and essentially decisionistic affirmations of the War. Consider Hauptmann Werner's strange address to his coat, which seems to function as a symbol of the fusion of subject and Volk:

Weich alles jetzt, was sich noch vor unsere Sonne stellt! Volk will vor, will Wahrheit! Nicht mehr den Stock! Wir lieben Dich, nicht mehr unter dem Zwange: Du sollst! Wir vergöttern Dich! Brich Tore auf! [...] Auf daß Deine Kraft aufblühe in Völkern, wollen wir sterben. Gib uns Wahrheit! Rede nicht weiter von leichten Triumphen und unverwelklichem Lorbeer! Reiß Deinen Mantel auf, daß wir das Blut aller Wunden sehen! Mächtiger als der Frühling gären Säfte in Deinem Volk; schüttelte den Frost ab, ehe Naturgewalten ihn sprengen! [...] Fühle es, daß Frühling in Dir jauchzt! Zieh uns, die wir einen Meter vor dem Gipfel stehen, nicht in den Staub vergangener Jahrhunderte. Wir wollen aller Höhen Freiheit jetzt genießen! (p. 42).

Thus, Werner sees the War not only as an opportunity for a form of willed mystical unity with the *Volk*, comparable to the Conservative Revolution's creation of a collective subject (cf. pp. 249 and 251 below) he also sees it as an occasion for renewal of the *Volk* as a whole, a renewal that is compared with the primal forces of Spring. Then again, Clemens maintains a seemingly pacifist attitude to the War as the company takes up positions in the front line trenches, declaring that the Prussian notion of duty is 'Der Krebs am Herzen des Volkes' and that out of resistance to the demands of *Pflicht* he envisages the emergence of a mighty 'Kraftgeschlecht' (p. 54), akin to Ernst Jünger's visions of a new subject (cf. pp. 256 and 269 below). By acting in tune with the vital forces of Nature, Clemens implies that mankind will be lifted into a new realm of authenticity that will transcend the purely destructive modernity of the enslaving Verdun experience.

Second, the narrator describes unconscious changes which take place in the characters once the fighting has begun, referring to the assault in terms of cathexis: 'Gedanken, Gefühle, setzten aus. Wilde Todesangst wandelte alle Leiber in rasende

Instinkte der Selbsterhaltung. Einziger Trieb zwang ihre Leiber vor und riß sie vorwärts' (p. 86). Consequently, the previously pacifist Clemens becomes a ruthless killer; the previously militant Volunteer appeals to Nature for forgiveness for the violation done to the woods; the drummer ruthlessly strangles a French sniper who had killed his friend Hillbrand; and the Vikar, the Company second-in-command who had previously expressed reservations to the Captain (p. 74), is now flushed with the triumph of early success. The transformation of Clemens becomes even more dramatic as the battle grinds to a standstill in the ruins of Beaumont. Initially Clemens had reacted with seeming despair: 'Menschen! Menschen! Bestien sind wir!' (p. 92), but as the fighting progresses he is possessed by a desire for liberation through death which is tempered by a feeling of liberation through the conditions of the fighting itself:

Hauptmann, verbrennen wir alles! Vor Kreaturen, die nur an ihre Brötchen zum Frühstück denken? Vor Spielern und Gecken weicht nicht der Geist! Er ringt sich von Stunde zu Stunden aus seiner Umklammerung! Wo sind sie, die uns Barrieren bauten? Ich sehe sie nicht! Tod hält sie uns fern. Was hinten an Ketten lag, geht hier frei und ahnungstrunken unter Brüdern. Was hinten auf Thronen saß, sitzt jetzt bleich und bebend an Telephonen und lauert auf uns. Wir sind die Entscheidung. Unser ist die Tat! Niemand wird unser Herz wieder fangen! In uns lebt Jugend! Hinter uns Greise! (p. 106).

For a supposed pacifist, this celebration of a *Frontgemeinschaft*, shorn of the Wilhelmine legacy of *Verdun* and transformed into a violent revolutionary force for renewal surpasses even Jünger at his most virulent. Its significance is intensified because it comes from the character who had previously been used by von Unruh as his principal mouthpiece for pacifist sentiments. Clemens is transformed by von Unruh into a company commander whose heroic defence 'auf verlorenen Posten' radically prefigures Jünger's self-depictions and indeed, he meets his death only when he appears to betray the spirit of the Earth, crying 'Wir wollen Feuer in die Erde schleudern' (p. 118). Moreover, such an appeal to the Earth had long been a prerogative of right-wing *Kulturkritik* with its primitivistic *Blut und Boden* mythology.

Opfergang, therefore, is much more complex in its exploration of the War than might initially appear to be the case, and its radical turn towards a militant

Frontgemeinschaft combined with a powerful Nature mysticism is the obverse of von Unruh's horror at the shocking slaughter at Verdun. Thus, as with the early Jünger, von Unruh's response to the War in this work is ambivalent and contradictory: he is incapable of resolving the problems thrown up by the anti-modernity of the Verdun experience.⁸⁹

3.8.5 Hugo Ball

From the time of his unfinished dissertation on Nietzsche (1909-10), Hugo Ball had been struggling to re-establish authentic artistic practice in the midst of an acutely perceived cultural crisis. His experiments as an expressionist *Dramaturg* notwithstanding, Ball tried (vainly) to join up like so many others in 1914, only to suffer an acute sense of shock and distress at the reality of the Front (which he witnessed as a civilian), whence he returned in November 1914 before emigrating to Switzerland in mid-1915. His pre-war responses to cultural crisis had initially taken the form of an extreme irrationalism, derived from Nietzsche, which he believed would overcome the stagnation of bourgeois culture, and in Switzerland he became involved with the irrationalism of Dada and its anarchic celebration of civilisation's self-destruction and its rejection of all ultimate values.

However, Ball became increasingly ill at ease within Dada's intellectual and political anarchy. In his lecture on Kandinsky from April 1917 (cf. p. 53 above), Ball, citing Nietzsche *in extenso*, gave perhaps the most succinct and powerful expression of the cultural crisis of classical modernity. As part of his search for a resolution to this deeply felt crisis, Ball indicates in this lecture that he is beginning to turn away from both his irrationalist and anarchist instincts towards a quest for a new spiritual harmony such as had been prophesied in Kandinsky's pre-war theoretical writings. These ultimately involved a conservative vision of art which sought to redeem modernity by assimilating irrational and unpredictable elements into an overarching and harmonic spiritual structure. Ball was to take this conservative impulse much further in mid-1920 when he rejoined the Catholic

⁸⁹ Cf. Kasang, p. 264: 'Aus dieser [Unruhs] Kriegserfahrung entstand denn auch nicht ein Werk, das, wie mehrfach geschehen, mit Henri Barbusse's Antikriegsroman *Le Feu* (1916) zu vergleichen wäre,

Church, whose authority provided him with a coherent world-view, thus pre-empting Jünger by 76 years.⁹⁰ His flight out of time⁹¹ was an attempt to deal with the traumas of modernity by seeking refuge in the eternal, where modernity is irrelevant.⁹²

3.8.6 Freud

As early as 1915, Freud began to look again at the relationship between war, instinct and culture. He suggested in 'Zeitgemäßes über Krieg und Tod' that war temporarily reverses the sublimation of the instincts into the morality of culture and civilised behaviour: it is akin to sleep, inasmuch as it allows 'base' instincts to resurface.⁹³ He then goes on to argue that modernity's relationship to Death has been hitherto one of denial, but that mass death has forced modernity to re-evaluate itself:

Es ist evident, daß der Krieg diese konventionelle Behandlung des Todes hinwegwerfen muß. Der Tod läßt sich nicht mehr verleugnen; man muß an ihn glauben. Die Menschen sterben wirklich [...] Das Leben ist freilich wieder interessant geworden, es hat seinen vollen Inhalt wieder bekommen (p. 344).

Not only does Freud find the War revitalising and 'interesting', he inverts the liberal, optimistic estimation of human nature propounded by thinkers in the classically modern tradition of the Enlightenment by identifying a vicious death instinct in man. This instinct allegedly complements the creative power of Eros and he deduces its existence from the Mosaic injunction 'Thou shalt not kill', the very emphasis on which 'macht uns sicher, daß wir von einer unendlich langen Generationsreihe von Mördern abstammen, denen die Mordlust, wie vielleicht noch uns selbst, im Blute lag' (p. 350). Freud's reaction to the War, developed later in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920) and *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1929-30), was to break even more decisively from classical modernity in order to recast

sondern eher eine Vorstufe zu Ernst Jüngers Kriegsbuch *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922) darstellt'.

⁹⁰ Jünger formally converted to Catholicism on 26 September 1996 in Wilflingen. Cf. Paul Noack, *Ernst Jünger: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Alexander Fest, 1998), p. 321.

⁹¹ *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* was the title of Ball's autobiographical diary of 1927.

⁹² My brief comments on Hugo Ball's biography are indebted to Philip Mann, *Hugo Ball: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1987).

⁹³ Sigmund Freud, 'Zeitgemäßes über Krieg und Tod', in *Gesammelte Werke: chronologisch geordnet*, ed. by Anna Freud and others, 18 vols (London: Imago, 1942-50), X: *Werke aus den Jahren 1913-1917* (1946), pp. 324-55.

his model of human nature. Despite the very significant differences between Freud and Jünger, the similarity between the depiction of the life of ‘Cavemen’ in ‘Zeitgemäβes über Krieg und Tod’ (pp. 345-50) and the evocation of the *Steppenmensch* in *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922) is striking. They both represent attempts to come to terms with the War by re-positing a fundamental human nature around which a total, theoretically coherent world-view can be constructed in a manner which retains the modern emphasis on totalising meta-narrative even as it sacrifices the rational, civilised ego.

3.8.7 Johannes R. Becher

Although the expressionist poet and dramatist Johannes R. Becher was not involved in any fighting during the First World War — and an East German biographer claimed that he was immune to any of the infectious enthusiasm of August 1914⁹⁴ — he was clearly deeply affected by the events of the War and its aftermath. Indeed, these exacerbated an already highly unstable personality — Becher had attempted suicide in 1910 and his writing revealed a highly-strung, ecstatic sensitivity characterised by what Haase termed ‘eine religiös empfundene Aufbruchstimmung’ (p. 24). Haase, as a good DDR biographer, was obliged to see Becher’s mental instability as a consequence of his unconscious perception of the crisis of Imperialism and Late Capitalism and so characterised his biography as a journey culminating in the revelation of the historical necessity of Marxism-Leninism. If we ignore the Stalinist vocabulary, it is clear that what happened to Becher was another version of the modernist experience in which the pressures of modernisation processes unravelled assumptions internalised from classical modernity and so forced him to look for another totalising meta-narrative.

Under the pressure of the War, Becher turned to a pacifist politics that led him to join the *Spartakus-Bund* and then the KPD in late 1918. Yet at the same time he continued to write poetry in an ecstatic-apocalyptic vein and descended into depression and drug-

⁹⁴ Horst Haase, *Johannes R. Becher: Leben und Werk* (East Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1981), p. 33.

addiction,⁹⁵ ending the War in a psychiatric hospital and even talking of a conventional career in the Foreign Office.⁹⁶ The potential of the German Revolution to bring about radical, total and clarifying change was greeted with enthusiasm by Becher, even though this can be inferred only indirectly from his letters of early 1919. But when he wrote on 13 April 1919: ‘Bin sehr glücklich und froh, einem Leben des Irrtums und der Verzweiflung endgültig entronnen zu sein. —’ (p. 80, to Harry Graf Kessler), it is clear that he had found the sort of totalising clarity for which he was looking. But, because Becher seemed at this stage to require an instant and total solution, the failure of the German Revolution to bring about such qualitative change caused him to become drastically depressed and to look for other strategies of redemption. Already by October 1919, Becher had stated his opposition to political Expressionism and announced his search for ‘eine intensive erfüllte Klassik’ (p. 82, letter to Katharina Kippenberg of 30 October 1919). Commenting on three hitherto unpublished letters to Lu Märten of early 1920,⁹⁷ Richard Sheppard writes that ‘With hindsight, it is clear that Becher was prone to depressive mood swings during this period, in which moments of intense creativity, verging on mystical ecstasy, alternated with long periods of desperation’ (p. 2). This desperation about the situation in Germany issued in a typically modernist crisis. To begin with, Becher was alarmed by the experience of the decentring and dissolution of his hitherto centred ego and on 7 March 1920 he wrote to Märten:

Aber ich ich [sic] bin so zerrissen und so bestanzt von tausend Nöten und Anfechtungen, daß ich nichts von meiner Vergangenheit weiß; ich stehe wieder im Beginn [...] Aber Genossin, ich fühle mich so unterirdisch, daß die Sprache so gar kein Ausdruck ist [...] (p. 242).

⁹⁵ Cf. Jens-Fietje Dwers, ‘Ein ungeliebter Ehrenbürger: Johannes R. Becher in Jena. Mit Dokumenten seiner Klinikaufenthalte’, *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, 39 (1995), pp. 87-110.

⁹⁶ Johannes R. Becher, *Briefe 1909-1958*, ed. by Rolf Harder, Sabine Wolf and Brigitte Zessin, 2 vols (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1993), I, pp. 72-73 (to Heinrich F. S. Bachmair).

⁹⁷ Richard Sheppard, ‘Three Unpublished Letters from Johannes R. Becher to Lu Märten’, in *Essays in Memory of Michael Parkinson and Janine Dakyns*, ed. by Christopher Smith, Norwich Papers IV (Norwich: UEA, 1996), pp. 236-43.

Then, on 26 March 1920 he wrote to Katharina Kippenberg: ‘Ich bin voll von Widersprüchen’ and spoke of his yearning for ‘afrikanische Brunst und Glut’, of overcoming the modern in primitivist vitality.⁹⁸ Moreover, he was also afflicted at the same time by a creative crisis involving a growing lack of faith in written language and so, on 2 May 1920, in a letter of near ecstatic intensity, he wrote to Katharina Kippenberg: ‘Ich spüre einen grenzenlosen Durst nach Musik, und oft möchte ich ungeduldig vergehn im Ekel vor dem Wort. Klänge! Klänge! Reihen, Sätze: Du brauchst nicht mehr zu denken [...] dies Angedeutete noch zu afrikanischer Hitze und Brunst gesteigert: Das wird meine Prosa’ (p. 87). The difficulties of the relationship between art, language and the world were elucidated more fully in September 1920: ‘[...] das Kunstwerk [ist] eine Vergewaltigung, eine Vereinfachung [...], Kunst kann niemals Leben sein, das Lebendige ist zu unfassbar, zu labil, zu flüssig und zu gleitend’ (p. 97, letter to Fritz Neumark of 9 September 1920), and this line of thought culminated in a utopian desire in the same month to write a ‘poetische Symphonie’ (p. 99, letter to Katharina Kippenberg of 17 September 1920). In other words, Becher was experiencing at first hand that modernist problematic in which everything — language, self and world — threatens to dissolve into an overwhelming disorder. For Becher, even religion and the Bible were an option in this period,⁹⁹ and his emphasis on the perceived solidity of Cologne Cathedral in contrast to the lack of clarity in German life forms a striking image of his search for a resolution, which also, it seems, had involved him reading Nietzsche, Spengler (!), Jaspers and Pannwitz (p. 86, letter to Heinrich F. S. Bachmair of 19 April 1920).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Becher, pp. 83-4 (to Katharina Kippenberg).

⁹⁹ Cf. letters to Ludwig Meidner of 9 July 1920 (pp. 91-93) and of 21 January 1921 (pp. 100-01).

¹⁰⁰ Harder suggests in an endnote (pp. 558-59) that the books to which Becher is referring in this letter are: Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* (Berlin: 1918), Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauung* (Berlin: 1919), Oswald Spengler, *Preußentum und Sozialismus*, Rudolf Pannwitz, *Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur* (Nuremberg, 1917) and *Die deutsche Lehre* (Nuremberg, 1919). If this selection is accurate, then the process of Becher’s conversion to Marxism is by no-means as historically necessary as Haase makes out and is more the result of a predisposition to the politics of the Left combined with a tendency to extremism, which could have easily tipped the other way.

Haase describes with enthusiasm Becher's encounter with the writings of Maxim Gorky in 1922 which provided a seemingly coherent account of the fate of the individual in late Capitalist society and thus of Becher's own disorientation. This led him to read Lenin and then Marx and Engels which Haase says provided 'wissenschaftlich begründete Antworten auf bedrängende Fragen' (p. 54). Certainly, the change in tone of his letters from 1922 onwards is striking, and Becher writes to his fiancée Eva Herrmann with the zeal of the convert to Historical Materialism. Equipped with the long-term historical perspective that he had lacked in 1918, Becher was able to project the Communist utopia into the future, and account for both his past disorientation and the general disorder of the present. The clarity of vision that he had acquired was expressed succinctly in a letter of 8 April 1923:

Hier [in dem Geistigen – JK] gibt es für Menschen wie unsereins, die wir immer wieder als bürgerliche Klassenobjekte handeln müssen, die feinsten und raffiniertesten Belügungen, man muß schon durch allerlei metaphysische und religiöse Abwässer durchgetrieben sein, um zu erkennen, daß dort der Schlüsselpunkt nicht zu finden ist. Im entscheidenden Moment scheitern all diese Erlösungsversuche, wie an einer Wand, an der organisierten Macht der Herrschenden [...] Das Leben wird dadurch [his Communist engagement – JK] zwar auf der einen Seite trockener, auf der anderen aber um so reicher (pp. 116-17, letter to Eva Herrmann).

Indeed, Becher is at great pains to distance himself from his self-destructive past and his life in the café milieu of his expressionist days, and to show how his writing problems have been resolved by the dictates of the party: 'Das Caféhaus ist vorbei [...] Ich habe zu funktionieren, so ist z.B. das Lenin-Gedicht im Auftrag innerhalb einer knappen halben Stunde geschrieben' (p. 122, letter to Eva Herrman of 28/29 January 1924).

In many respects, Becher's development in the period 1918-23 show striking parallels to Jünger's. Like Becher, Jünger was pulled in a number of different directions by the competing discourses of early Weimar — which led to a disturbing sense of fragmentation. Like Becher, Jünger had difficulty casting his experience in adequate language. Like Becher, Jünger experienced political disappointment — the abysmal failure of Hitler's 1923 *Putsch* — which then issued in a more definite and systematic political

commitment as a New Nationalist journalist. For both, such commitment was a further attempt to contain the problems experienced by the conservative imagination.¹⁰¹

3.8.8 Otto Dix

Like Jünger, Otto Dix proved to be a capable and enthusiastic soldier: he was promoted to *Unteroffizier* and awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class and the Friedrich-August-Medaille.¹⁰²

Like Jünger, Dix kept a war diary in the form of a sketch book in which he recorded impressions from the Front and in which the Nietzschean vision of the world as an amoral cycle of death and renewal was dominant. Dix recorded man as beast, man as victim of a technological world, but above all man as brute life-form. War appeared to the initially enthusiastic Dix as a catalyst which renewed a vital human force that had been concealed by civilisation, bringing new life to a moribund culture. Indeed, war was for Dix another aspect of Nature, as it was in other ways for Freud and Jünger, and he wrote in his diary: ‘Auch den Krieg muß man als Naturerscheinung betrachten’ (cited in Beck, p. 13). Dix’s war-time work, his snatching of ‘transient moments from the overwhelming flux of war’ (Eberle, p. 37), has been compared to the sketched impressions that compose the narrative fragments of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*¹⁰³ in a style that Schubert terms ‘Kubofuturismus’ (p. 187).

Indeed, it was Dix’s experience of the early Weimar Republic, with its very modern instability, corruption and urban dynamism that started to change the focus of his vitalist world-view. Thus, in his painting of the early Weimar period that primal life-force, earlier seen as martial, is attached instead to the prostitute, the criminal, the aged, the

¹⁰¹ For a more detailed account of Becher’s turn to Communism, cf. Jens-Fietje Dwars, “‘Ich habe zu funktionieren ...’ Der Wandel Johannes R. Bechers vom expressionistischen Caféhaus-Dichters zum Vorsitzenden des ‘Bundes Proletarisch-Revolutionärer Schriftsteller’”, in *Intellektuelle in der Weimarer Republik*, ed. by Wolfgang Bialas and Georg G. Iggers (Frankfurt am Main, etc.: Peter Lang, 1996). Further, Dwars, *Abgrund des Widerspruchs: Das Leben des Johannes R. Becher* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1998).

¹⁰² Rainer Beck, ‘Krieg’, in *Otto Dix 1891-1969*, ed. by Rainer Beck, (Munich: Stuck-Jugendverein e.V., 1985), pp. 11-58; Dietrich Schubert, ‘Otto Dix zeichnet im Ersten Weltkrieg’, in *Kultur und Krieg: Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. by Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 179-93.

diseased and the decomposing. It is this change of focus that informs Dix's etching series 'Krieg' (1923-24), for here his gaze fixes on the radically a-human life force of the plants and maggots that flourish around the human dead, upon whom he focused in detail for the first time, whereas Jünger had already shown a horrified fascination with the fragility of the body in modern war. This shift meant that Dix's Nietzschean view of the War lost any human hope and focus. Whilst Jünger moved in the direction of a nationalist glorification of technology that had no place in *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Dix, in a move akin to Hugo Ball's conversion to Roman Catholicism, appears to have sought greater stability and certainty by adopting the painterly techniques and iconography of the Old Masters. Thus, his *Kriegstriptychon* (1929-32) and the melancholic *Flandern* (1934-36) involve another strategy for dealing with the supremely modern experience of the War. But Dix's reworking of Christian iconography lacks the figure of a redeemer in the trenches while paradoxically calling out for salvation and escape from the bitter Nietzschean cycle depicted in 'Krieg'.

Dix's painting, therefore, in the variety of approaches to the War which it adopted, characterised another version of the crisis ridden encounter with modernity that beset those returning from the front to the ambiguities of the Weimar Republic. And it is in precisely in this respect that Dix's responses echo those of Jünger — the reaction to the War modulates in response to the subsequent shifts of history.

3.9 Conclusion

What we have seen, then, is how logocentric classical modernity, already under pressure from the strains of modernisation and its own dynamics, had its fundamental assumptions torn apart on the Western Front. The power of artillery, gas and machine guns did for the participants, and especially for the intellectuals among them, precisely what Deconstruction would do to the New Criticism from the comfort of the ivory towers of

¹⁰³ Cf. Eberle, pp. 33-7 and Eva Karcher, *Otto Dix, 1891-1969: His Life and Works*, trans. by Doris Linda Jones and Jeremy Gaines (Cologne: Benedikt, 1988), pp. 39-42.

Paris and Yale: it suspended '[the] assumed correspondence between mind, meaning and the concept of method which claims to unite them'.¹⁰⁴ Most intellectuals responded by using various strategies to re-centre the individual and re-cast totalising meta-narratives, some more successfully than others. But even when these strategies seemed to work, we have also seen how they could be profoundly ambivalent and unstable, full of contradictions whose effects are profoundly subversive, deconstructing precisely that classical modern world their conservative imaginations were struggling so hard to re-build.

This, then, is the historical and theoretical context within which I wish to read Ernst Jünger's war texts, a broader and more problematic context than the context in which Jünger research has tended to place him. Consequently, in the next chapter, I shall show how Jünger's personal background was steeped in classical modern assumptions which were then exposed to some of the fiercest battles on the Western Front with the result that we can expect to find in his texts traces of the same instability and deconstructive dynamic we have been exploring here as his conservative imagination likewise attempted to re-assemble the fragments of classical modernity.

¹⁰⁴ Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 3. Revised edition, first published 1982.