

5. Ernst Jünger's War Diary, 1914-1918: Writing the War

5.1 Introduction

Whilst at the Front, between late 1914 and August 1918, Ernst Jünger kept a diary in which he wrote down his experiences and observations and which, when subsequently edited, formed the basis of *In Stahlgewittern*.¹ It is a remarkable document of the War as lived and fought by an independently minded young officer attempting to record scrupulously the events and images surrounding him. For a diary, it is often curiously impersonal in tone and the sixteen notebooks which it comprises attempt both to record the deadly environment of war with a pseudo-scientific precision and to track Jünger's personal search for status and recognition through heroic achievement. Just below its surface there lurks the trauma of exposure to mechanised and routinised death which is mostly repressed but which, in rare flashes of lucidity, comes to the surface in passages that reveal an acute awareness of the absurdity of four years spent fighting for the Kaiser.

Jünger used the diaries to support two different public *personae*. On the one hand, he used them to guarantee the authenticity of his war books.² But, faced with the increased critical interest in his work after 1945, Jünger adamantly refused to allow access to them. Indeed, of the many Germanists who enquired, only Ulrich Böhme seems to have been granted access, and then only briefly with the result that his comments are, in part, misleading.³ By acting thus, Jünger was attempting to retain control over the way in which his War experiences were subsequently narrated and thereby to reinforce his position as

¹ I shall henceforth refer to this diary as the *Kriegstagebuch* or *Ktb*.

² Cf. Kunicki, pp. 31-33. Although Kunicki traces at some length Jünger's use of these notebooks as a device in his subsequent publications, his other comments on the *Kriegstagebuch* are limited by their necessarily speculative nature.

³ Cf. Böhme, p. 9. Böhme wrongly states that there are 14 books and gives the impression that a substantial part of the *Kriegstagebuch* is composed of 'Notizen unmittelbar vor, während und nach den Kampfhandlungen in abgehackten Satzbrocken und Stichworten hastig hingeworfen'. This is in fact the case *only* for a couple of sides of notes made during the Michael Offensive of March 1918. Böhme's description corresponds, in fact, with Jünger's own description of his diary texts in the Preface to *In Stahlgewittern*,₃ (cf. Chapter 11.4.2, p. 254).

war hero, authoritative narrator and ultimate interpreter of his original narratives. But on the other hand, Jünger used his diaries in his attempts to remodel himself since 1945 as an essentially literary, rather than a military or political figure. Jünger's major move in this change of status was the transferral, in 1995, of the bulk of his literary papers to the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach and thus into the pantheon of academic *Literaturwissenschaft*. This almost unprecedented creation of a literary *Vorlaß* was a conscious attempt on Jünger's part to mark himself as a subject worthy of literary research rather than political dispute which meant, in turn, that his concern to become a literary monument displaced his concern to retain sole control of the narration of remote events.

Although the diary forms the basis of *In Stahlgewittern*, it is much more than a manuscript version of Jünger's book — not least because it was written very soon after the events it relates and thus has a quite different historical and biographical perspective from that of the Jünger who was writing in the aftermath of survival, defeat and revolution. It is for this reason that I shall concentrate on the *Kriegstagebuch* in this chapter, while briefly examining the redactional process in Chapter 6.4 (p. 155 below). The diary delivers much hitherto unknown biographical material. But because this thesis is more concerned with locating Jünger's *œuvre* within the cultural crisis of classical modernity than with (re-)writing Jünger's biography, I shall begin by examining the cultural role of the diary before analysing Jünger's attempts to reassert the autonomy of the modern subject and reinstate the authority of the modern, totalising and theorising world-view. At the same time, I shall pay particular attention to the gaps and crises in Jünger's text, especially to the disruptions to his otherwise poised prose. In this way, I shall show how Jünger's text traces the crisis of the classical modern subject under the pressure of technological warfare.

5.2 The Diary and Modernity at War

Before examining Jünger's *Kriegstagebuch* in detail it will be useful to consider how the diary form fits into the issues I outlined in Chapter 3. Although the diary is necessarily a very heterogenous form, varying enormously between individuals, we can, nevertheless

locate it with our model of classical modernity. In the introduction to his study of diary fiction, Andrew Hassam (1993) has summed up as follows the traditional privileged, cultural values invested in diary writing:

The diary has come to encompass the leading term in a number of cultural oppositions: conscience/ideology; private/public; sincerity/convention; the individual/the mob; immediacy/artificiality; spontaneity/repression; formlessness/artifice; empiricism/theory; truth/dogma. The diary in Western culture has developed from the historical chronicle, through private *aide-memoire*, to the *journal intime* and the dream diary of psychoanalytic self-discovery. Written in private for the diarist's eyes alone, the diary has accumulated in its development a range of specific cultural values centred on the concept of a unique and essentially rational human subject.⁴

As I showed in Chapter 3.2.1, the idea of a unified and rational subject is one of the pillars of classical modernity and the classical diarist is helped to become a unified subject via his diary, a closed form of discourse available only to its writer who is simultaneously its reader. But because writing and language necessarily belong to the public domain the diarist cannot use a totally private sign system. Thus, not only does the diary make use of a public language, but the extent to which it records and reacts to public events sets it within those discourses with which cultures register and judge the world. Furthermore, because the written information about the world is intended for storage and retrieval within the dominant system of knowledge we can go further than Hasssam and link diary writing to another pillar of classical modernity, namely the construction of theoretical and epistemological systems which put the world at the disposal of instrumental rationality. Or, in other words, diary writing both confirms the writing self and the written world. As such, it was much encouraged by the educated bourgeois milieu from which Jünger emerged and, indeed, this was precisely the task which Jünger expected to accomplish by writing at the front.

But Jünger's diary is not an ordinary private diary — i.e. one which records daily life and its accompanying thoughts — it is a *war* diary. The very first page of the first volume bears the title “Kriegstagebuch” and the narrative begins not with basic training

⁴ Andrew Hassam, *Writing and Reality: A Study of Modern British Diary Fiction* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1993), p. 8.

but with the recruits leaving the depot for the front.⁵ Thereafter Jünger's focus remains very much with the events that he personally experienced at the front as if he were trying to create a narrative enclave that will remain intact and coherent whilst recording its author in action. Or, to put it slightly differently, Jünger's diary is a disciplined attempt to establish a sense of mastery over the events and people surrounding him by recording them in narrative. Accordingly, Jünger's diary thus tends towards a more open and public mode of diary writing.⁶ Indeed, he vigorously attempts to exclude *Innerlichkeit* and record without scruple the events and sights around him, thus making his diary something like the experimental notebook of a distanced and observing subject.

However, the diary form is peculiarly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of modernity for it can very easily track the fragmentation of the subject — into writer and reader, into actor and spectator. Moreover, written at regular intervals, the diary can reflect diverse moods as well as the conflicting ideological and social allegiances which form personality and discourse. Indeed, as Wuthenow (1990) argues, the diary is in fact eminently suited to record the fragmentation of the subject and loss of totality: 'in [der Tagebuchform] hat das Vorläufige und Unabgeschlossene, die Raschheit und Bedrohlichkeit punktueller Wirklichkeitserfassung ein sozusagen literarisches Äquivalent erhalten, das dem Verlust von Kontinuität und früher vielleicht noch denkbarer Totalität entspricht'.⁷ Consequently, the diary, especially one written in such extreme circumstances as Jünger's, will also

⁵ This is the case in all versions of *In Stahlgewittern* except *In Stahlgewittern₁*, which frames the war narrative with a short passage summing up the time between mobilisation and Jünger's deployment with the Füsilier Regiment 73 to the Champagne front at Bazancourt.

⁶ There are a number of aspects within Jünger's diary which would suggest that it was not written purely for personal use. First, he sometimes finds it necessary to explain terms he uses which would be self-explanatory to anyone having served at the front. In *Ktb 1*, for example, he explains what a 'Granatloch' is (16 January 1915) and in *Ktb 4* he explains what 'Schrappellminen' are (13 February 1916). But Jünger also concludes his assessment of the tactical importance of the mines for the reinforcing the defensive lines thus: 'Wer ein modernes Gefecht mitgemacht hat [my emphasis – JK], weiß wie wichtig das ist, denn der Marsch ins Gefecht ist fast immer eben so verlustreich wie das Gefecht selbst (*Ktb 3*, 10 January 1916).' In other words, he assumes a reader who has gone through the same experiences. Jünger's diary is thus addressed at different times to those at home and to those who are fighting, or who, in the future, will look back on the battles they will have fought.

⁷ Ralph-Rainer Wuthenow, *Europäische Tagebücher: Eigenart, Form, Entwicklung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), p. 15.

contain traces of the struggle to uphold the integrity of the subject and his modern world-view.

Consider the poem which Jünger included at the beginning of Vol. 4:

Meiner Mutter zugeignet

1. Mein Tagebuch. Was auf die weißen
Seiten
Mit krauser Schrift ich kritzeln
werde
Noch ruht's im dunklen Schoß
der Zeiten
Ein kleines Schicksal auf der
großen Erde.

2. Noch tobt der Kampf. Nur Todes-
not und Grauen,
Stahlhärte gegen blutige [sic]
Schmerzen
Wirst du in diesen Blättern
schauen,
Und stille Hoffnung wunder
Menschenherzen.

3. Doch still davon. Ich kann
es wohl ertragen,
Mich reizt die wilde Schönheit
der Gefahr.
Hier wirst Du lesen wie
ich mich geschlagen
Und wenn ich fiel, daß
es in Ehren war.

Douchy, den 26. I. 16

Jünger⁸

Although this document is dedicated, in an unusual outburst of sentimentality, to his mother, Jünger's concern is essentially with himself. Aware of his vulnerability and insignificance, recording the horrific world around him, and armouring himself against pain, Jünger appears to be using his diary as an instrument that will re-centre both the human and himself — in part by anchoring him within a system of 'Ehren', a legitimated, if ultimately vague, set of certainties. Moreover, this poem encapsulates the tensions between the recording self exposed passively to horror and the acting self eager to see

⁸ This poem is also cited in full in Noack, p. 14.

itself celebrated in narrative, even if it is only that of a diary. Furthermore, because the 'Du' of the poem can, despite its dedication to his mother, be just as much Jünger as anyone else, it is as if, in his diary writing, Jünger wishes to confirm his sense of selfhood by narrating these stories about himself in a suitable narrative. The very self-consciousness of this act is, however, an implicit admission of the very grave threat to his self.

The War intensified the complex imperative of diary writing. The integrity of the individual was threatened by the anonymity of the mass armies, by his degradation to *matériel* and by the casual lethality of the front where artillery, gas and snipers dealt impersonal death. Furthermore, the very intensity of full-scale battle was such that the individual was threatened by sensory overload — so much was happening simultaneously that any coherent model of what was happening risked disintegration as the subject struggled to register events, to obey orders and to follow his instincts of self-preservation. In this context, then, the act of writing a diary reinforced both the sense of self, and the sense that the world can be properly registered and understood in so far as it can be transformed into writing. As a diary poised on the brink of the abyss of modernity, written on active service on the Western Front, Jünger's diary is bound to bring the tensions and fragmentations which modernity was inflicting upon itself to the surface and, at the same time, to attempt to repress them. The *Kriegstagebuch* reveals the depth of the tension between Jünger's internalised, classically modern assumptions about the world and the cataclysmic experience of their dialectic turn against themselves in the War.

5.3 Confirming the Self

5.3.1 The Heroic Project and the Autonomous Active Subject

In October 1915 Jünger wrote that he had joined the Army 'um Abenteuer zu erleben. (Traurig aber wahr!)' (*Ktb* 3, 6 October 1915). Hans-Harald Müller has argued of *In Stahlgewittern* that it is a 'Rechenschaftsbericht' about Jünger's intention to experience the War within the heroic framework of such epic narratives as Homer's *Iliad*, and for Gerhard

Loose, it is the figure of the adventurer which unifies Jünger's creative work.⁹ Both figures encapsulate the modern ideal of the free and independent individual and it is in these terms that Jünger depicts himself in an attempt to secure a (precarious) independence from the bourgeois world of his parents, from the iron cage of the Army and from the ambivalence and chaos of the war itself.

Like many, Jünger went to war under the illusion that he would find some form of self-realisation through personal and heroic combat. Instead, his first experience of the enemy was a sudden artillery attack on a rear position — anonymous, shocking, lethal. Sent to the front itself shortly thereafter, Jünger records his disappointment at not seeing any enemy soldiers: 'Leider sehen wir hier keinen Franzmann, sonst könnten wir auch civil knallen' (*Ktb* 1, 4 January 1915). As compensation, he and a comrade attempted to engage the enemy personally by sniping. His first real experience of battle (Les Épargés) was chaotic: as a private soldier he was at the beck and call of officers who themselves scarcely knew what was happening and Jünger did little more than spend 48 hours running between various positions in hilly woodland before being wounded in the leg by shrapnel. The *Kriegstagebuch* conceals nothing of this but rather attempts to produce an account which locates Jünger very much at its centre and somehow in charge of the situation.

The extended period of static, positional warfare in the Monchy/Douchy area for much of 1915 and 1916 was the antithesis of what Jünger's heroic expectations, being, despite the risks from snipers and shrapnel, essentially boring. So Jünger developed a number of imaginative strategies for translating his existence as a front-line officer into heroic and adventurous terms. One consisted in establishing a personal rival with whom to fight after the fashion of the heroes of the *Iliad*: 'Nachher hatten wir ein förmliches Duell mit einem tollkühnen Engländer. [...] Der Engländer war wirklich ein kaltblutiger Bursche, von unseren Kugeln umzischt, zielte er ruhig und machte noch wahre Meisterschüsse' (*Ktb*

⁹ *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller*, pp. 224-27; cf. Loose, p. 34: 'Sich dem Kriege zu verschreiben und sich dennoch über ihn zu erheben, das war das Anliegen. Es ist der abenteuerliche Versuch,

4, 8 April 1915). This incident shows Jünger almost returning to the heroic principle of single combat governed by the formal roles of the duel. Despite the anonymous distance created by no-man's land and intense rifle fire, Jünger is concerned to turn this enemy soldier into a personal rival of equal status. It is a strategy which aims to overcome the modern conditions of battle which otherwise predominate in this section.¹⁰

So direct an encounter was not possible for most of the time, much to the chagrin of Jünger who wanted 'so handgreifliche Berührung mit dem Feinde' (*Ktb* 3, 29 October 1915). Consequently, he resorted to another strategy, the deployment of the platoon's mortars in order to re-establish himself as a responsible and acting subject capable of asserting himself in the face of huge enemy firepower which otherwise threatened to reduce him to passivity.

A third possibility of escape from the lethal desolation of the front was offered by small scale patrols in no-man's land. On one occasion, he relates how a former school friend, Schwarze, visits him and regales him with stories about adventurous patrols and how he agreed to accompany Schwarze on the next, noting: 'Ein paar schöne Patrouillen würden mit zu meinen besten Kriegserinnerungen gehören' (*Ktb* 3, 21 October 1915). Once again, we see Jünger's concern about his place in a narrative system. As listener to Schwarze's tales of heroism in action he is the passive recipient of a narrative which celebrates another. And what Schwarze narrates is, in part, precisely what Jünger desired from the war — successful, celebrated, narrated individual action. Furthermore, we see Jünger searching for memories. He posits a remembering future and casts himself as a future narrator who, too, will be able to define himself by drawing on his memories of the past. This, too, represents both an attempt to secure the integrity and continuity of the self,

überlegenes Subjekt des Geschehens zu sein und zu bleiben' (p. 34). Loose was not, however, in a position to provide detailed analysis of exactly how precarious this undertaking was.

¹⁰ Exactly the same strategy of constructing a personal rival is used by Jünger in his account of his clash with an Anglo-Indian fighting patrol in summer 1917. As in *In Stahlgewittern* ('Gegen Inder'), Jünger creates a personal enemy out of the Anglo-Indian officer.

especially given the dangers of his immediate environment, and an attempt to control the future as well as the past.

As a consequence of Jünger's concern to narrate himself as heroic and adventurous subject, the *Kriegstagebuch*, like *In Stahlgewittern*, tends to narrate at length those incidents which most conformed to Jünger's model. Thus, *Ktb 2* attempts to cast the best possible light on the decidedly unheroic experience of the battle of Les Éperges. In *Ktb 4* he narrates the first few reconnaissance patrols in which he was involved — none of which were particularly glorious since in almost all cases, they involved a few hours stumbling and crawling around in no-man's land followed by headlong flight under fire.

Jünger was also concerned to record his involvement in the major battles of the War as well as the daily routine and activity in the trenches and it is at these junctures that the tensions between his heroic expectations and the reality of industrialised combat are most apparent. Even before his regiment was deployed to Guillemont, Jünger found himself obliged to define a new type of passive heroism: 'Stilles Heldentum im Ausharren, in Erwartung des Gegners trotz furchtbaren Feuers' (*Ktb 5*, 25 June 1916).¹¹ Even later, Jünger's dream of heroic action had not been fully extinguished. His account of his involvement in the repulse of the British offensive at Cambrai is entitled 'Ehrentag der siebten Kompanie' (*Ktb 12*, 1 December 1917). Before the *Michael* Offensive in March 1918 he wrote: 'Hoffentlich werden wir nicht als erste Welle und Grabenkämpfer eingesetzt, sondern bekommen auch mal etwas vom Kampf im freien Gelände zu sehen' (*Ktb 13*, 9 January 1918). In other words, he was still obsessed with the traditional image of open and honourable battle and must have believed that Ludendorff's offensive would

¹¹ Cf. *Siebzig verweht II*, entry of 14 June 1972, p. 86: 'Jede Kultur ist auf Handarbeit angewiesen und geht zugrunde mit ihr. In dieser Beleuchtung hat auch Guillemont für mich mit den Jahrzehnten einen anderen Sinn gewonnen — als Abschied des Kriegers von der homerischen Welt'; also, entry of 29 August 1978, p. 398; and again, entry of 3 September 1980, p. 637.

work.¹² Maybe it was for this reason that he made the brief jottings to be found at the back of *Ktb* 13 which appear to record almost live Jünger's involvement in the attack.

One further strategy that Jünger attempted was to leave the infantry for the fledgling Air Force. He first applied for a transfer in April 1916, during the Monchy/Douchy period (cf. *Ktb* 4, 5 April 1916) and again in July 1917, this time noting: 'Hoffentlich werde ich zur Fliegertruppe versetzt. Da kann man ja zeigen, was Kaltblütigkeit ist und braucht nicht die Kastanien für andere Leute aus dem Feuer zu ziehen' (*Ktb* 11, 12 July 1917). By joining the Air Force, Jünger imagined that he would be better able to fulfil his heroic dreams of self-realisation and escape from the tedium of the trenches and the arbitrary orders of his superiors: indeed, he was so pleased with the results of the relevant medical examination that he copied them directly into his diary (*Ktb* 11, 17 July 1917). He was clearly disappointed that his application was turned down and frustrated at having to remain in the infantry and put up with the decidedly unheroic conditions at the front (*Ktb* 12, 4 September 1917).¹³

Finally, Jünger was always ready to criticise and exclude others and so build up his self-image by implying he is not as others are: by delivering comments on the failures and weakness of others in the unit around him he could compensate for his own doubts and weaknesses. If anything, these strategies reveal, through their frequency and variety, the opposite of what they hope to overcome — namely the constant and very real threat to Jünger's heroic self.

5.3.2 Times of Writing: The Dominant Present, the faint Past, the absent Future

I have argued that in the *Kriegstagebuch* Jünger tries to see himself through the eyes of a future reader and narrator. But the future of the *Kriegstagebuch* is mostly a hidden future

¹² Cf. *Gärten und Straßen*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, II, pp. 25-221, entry of 5 June 1940, p. 154: 'Man kann jetzt vorgehen, wie es 1918 unser Traumbild war'; also, *Siebzig verweht II*, entry of 4 March 1972, p. 66.

¹³ Cf. *Siebzig verweht I*, entry of 31 July 1965, p. 104: 'Zwei Mal meldete ich mich zu den Fliegern, einmal, weil ich mich mit dem Oberst verkracht hatte, das zweite Mal honoris causa, als der Untergang des Reiches sich abzeichnete'.

since although Jünger posits himself as future reader, he refrains from imagining a real future from which he will be able to look back. Only very rarely does he speculate about peace or life after the war and he scarcely ever allows himself to reflect on what the future within the war might bring. The reason for the absent future is obvious: to speculate on the future is to speculate on one's chances of survival in a lethal environment where living and dying are decided arbitrarily and the chances of survival are slim. Thus, the war is made into a permanent state in Jünger's diary, a constant against which his own life is played out in a present without a future.

By the same token, Jünger's *Kriegstagebuch* ought to have no past, or at least no part that exists outside of the War. But because the diary is an unstable form interference from Jünger's personal past is only to be expected. Thus, in the first few years, references to his involvement with the French Foreign Legion abound — and then fade away. Moreover, because he had joined a Hanoverian regiment, he was bound to meet figures from his past and when he did so, his reaction to many of them indicates that he was far from pleased to see them again. A certain Gumpel who Jünger knew from Hamelin (where he was at school 1913-14) seems to have presented Jünger with a particularly difficult situation and is narrated at extraordinary length (*Ktb* 8, 24 October 1916, etc.), even if the exact nature of Jünger's relationship with Gumpel remains unclear. Indeed, when on 9 December 1916 Jünger discovers that Gumpel has died (*Ktb* 9, 9 December 1916), he is actually pleased. The significant fact here is that Jünger is unable to preserve the integrity of his narrative about the War because his real, biographical past keeps intruding on his account of it as a hermetically sealed space of self-realisation in time and space. Although the War was intended to purge the imperfections of the past and engender a heroic Ernst Jünger compatible with the vision created through reading heroic and escapist literature, memories and faces from the past continued to intrude and had to be excised from *In Stahlgewittern* by editorial work.

The personal past is certainly a disruptive influence in the creation of the scientific account of the memories of the First World War. But for the most part, Jünger's narratives concentrate either on the present or the immediate past. It would seem from changes in ink and handwriting that during static periods of service he made entries almost every day, mostly in the evenings. Writing became part of the routine. However, his accounts of periods when the action intensified were often written up several days later and the entries, which are provided with different dates, show all the signs of forming one continuous text written more or less in one sitting. The regularity of writing, the discipline required but also its personal nature elevated the diary to an act of personal confirmation. This is most emphatically the case when the diary more or less records the "present", when the entries refer to events that "are happening" or have "just happened". During the Somme bombardments Jünger sometimes made several entries a day, sometimes almost hourly (cf. *Ktb* 6, 24 August 1916), producing a writing anchored in the present, one that draws on the artificial, measured units of public time to structure and give duration to an experience which would otherwise be marked by atemporal terror. The location of the writing in a particular time, read from a watch, allows Jünger to maintain his experimental, recording pose, so that his reflexive writing, i.e. writing about the act of writing, by drawing particular attention to the active subject writing in the present, is a gesture of self-confirmation, a reassuring ritual that anchors the observing subject in the text if not in a world under fire.

5.4 Confirming the Wor(l)d

5.4.1 The writing self — actor and observer

The act of writing, in particular the act of writing under combat stress, combines two *topoi* of classical modernity: the individual acting in the world, and the individual observing and recording the world. So far, I have concentrated on Jünger's attempts to cast himself in the role of the heroic, autonomous individual acting amid the chaos of the First World War.

But now, I shall examine how Jünger establishes the frameworks of authority and knowledge within which he can interpret and register the world.

Although Jünger wrote his diary with a personal project in mind, his personal perspective was too limited to record completely even the limited environment of his own platoon or company. Consequently, he had to draw on the narratives of others in order to fill the gaps in his own knowledge, and his diary contains many pieces of strategic/tactical gossip and a few items of personal gossip or anecdotes concerning other people. But the news media are conspicuous by their almost complete absence. His avoidance of issues of grand strategy and principle is at best a self-defence mechanism, avoiding difficult questions as to the meaning and purpose of it all, questions which Jünger would postpone answering until the 1920s.

Because Jünger is most concerned to read his environment on a local scale, he is constantly interpreting the tactical situation. He reflects on the intentions behind the enemy artillery; he attempts to decode the movements of units or regimental orders, such as those blocking leave; and he is constantly trying to make his environment readable and calculable, to research it and, metaphorically at least, to make it available and mobilise it. This way of “reading” the local environment is characteristic of the “scientific” approach to modernity with its concern to produce a complete account of a coherent, carefully bordered area, ignoring “bigger” issues. In this sense, too, Jünger’s notebooks can be described as akin to experimental records.

5.4.2 Authority

Notwithstanding Jünger’s drive for autonomy and desire to read and record the world for himself, he was obliged to conform to the rigid structures of the Army. Whilst this helped at times to relieve the burden of heavy casualties and questions about the sense of it all, Jünger’s *Kriegstagebuch* reveals him to have been less than a model subordinate. He had frequent brushes with authority — many of which have been eliminated from *In Stahlgewittern*. The first has been included in the published version — an NCO stole his

rifle whilst he was asleep and as punishment he was put on sentry duty armed only with a pick-axe. Jünger had a lucky escape from the ruthless disciplinary machinery of the Army which, had he been formally reported, would, he notes, have cost him between 6 months and 10 years behind bars. Possibly as a result, Jünger depicts himself as an officer who was disinclined to invoke the formal disciplinary apparatus when dealing with his own platoon or company. A second incident is related in the entry of 2 October 1915: he overslept and appeared on parade wrongly attired, which resulted in a 'kolossale Zigarre vom Komp-Führer' (*Ktb* 3, 2 October 1915). The independently minded Jünger thoroughly resented the authority of his superiors with their verbal violence and the Army's obsession with such disciplinary details as correctness of attire. One final episode encapsulates the conflict between military authority — which Jünger, when it came to the crunch, never doubted — and his own dreams of autonomy:

Gestern bekam ich von Oppen [Regimental CO – JK] wegen irgend einer Kleinigkeit eine Riesenzigarre, das stählt die Kriegslust keineswegs. Wenn ich über die grüne Wiese vor mir auf das zerschossene la Baraque sehe, dann muß auch ich, einst so kriegslustiger [sic] mir die Frage vorlegen: *Wann hat dieser Scheißkrieg ein Ende?* [my emphasis – JK] Was hätte man in dieser Zeit nicht alles sehen und genießen können. Welcher Genuß muß es zum Beispiel sein, eine holländische Landschaft bei sinkender Sonne zu durchwandern. Wandern! Frei wie der Falk herumstreifen ohne lästigen Zwang und Fessel. Noch ist kein Ende abzusehn. Die Sache wird höllisch monoton (*Ktb* 11, 24 May 1917).¹⁴

Significantly, it is the disciplinary authority of the Army which weighs most heavily on Jünger in this passage, reduces the heroic possibilities of the War to 'hellish monotony' and makes him explicitly question its purpose. Caught within the iron cage of the regiment, the State and the War, Jünger here is confronted with his own status as *junior* officer, as *matériel* in a War become pointless and as object of processes beyond his control. Only imagination and writing with their nonconformist desires can provide a way out.

¹⁴ Compare Jünger's fulsome praise for his regiment and former commanding officer in a little known article: 'Zur Erinnerung an unseren Oberst von Oppen', *Monatsschrift vom ehemaligen Füsilier-Regiment* 73, 1 (1921), Nr 3, pp. 19-20. Cf. also *Siebzig verweht II*, entry of 22 June 1972, pp. 91-92.

5.4.3 The Iron Cross

Jünger had joined the Army with the project of creating a heroic narrative about himself and needed his heroism to be externally validated. This would take the form of medals, or so he thought, for despite being highly decorated, his fame as a war hero and dashing storm troop leader depends far more on *In Stahlgewittern* than on his *Pour le Mérite*. However, for the Jünger of 1914-18, the pursuit of an Iron Cross was paramount despite being told in January 1915 by a comrade about the deceit and hypocrisy involved in their distribution (*Ktb* 1, 6 January 1915). Paradoxically, he was disillusioned still further by actually being awarded one when, by his standards at least, he had done nothing sufficiently heroic, commenting: 'Zwar habe ich nichts offensichtliches vollbracht, das meinen Mut beweisen konnte, aber wenn auch nicht das ganze Draufgängertum der ersten Zeit da ist, an Kaltblütigkeit und Wagemut habe ich doch wohl eher gewonnen und hoffentlich gibt sich bald die Gelegenheit zu zeigen, daß ich würdig bin, das schwarz-weiße Band zu tragen' (*Ktb* 4, 20 April 1916).

Jünger also felt disappointed and cheated by being passed over for promotion. During 1917 and 1918 Jünger, together with other junior infantry officers, felt increasingly sidelined by the practice of appointing company commanders on the basis of rank and seniority rather than front-line experience. This led to many bitter remarks in his diary, indicating that conventional authority was by no means always a reliable or adequate form of support.

5.4.4 The Reich — Ideology and Loyalty

If the immediate authority of Jünger's superiors did not impress him, the same is even more true of his attitude to the Wilhelmine state — which is only mentioned as such when Jünger, rather pompously, notes how he had criticised comrades for wasting huge sums of public money by accidentally shooting off red Very lights and thus prompting *Sperrfeuer* (*Ktb* 5, 24 June 1916). And where, in 1915, the Kaiser's birthday took on particular

importance, being a calendar point from civilian life, in 1916 it was more an excuse for excessive drinking.

Of course, Jünger's diary does involve fragments of patriotic phraseology — scarcely surprising, given his environment. At times, such phrases seem to give a sense of reassurance, when, for example, he visited the regimental cemetery in Douchy and noted down the pathetic verses on the memorial (*Ktb* 3, 24 October 1915). By the end of the War such sentiments have disappeared from the *Kriegstagebuch*. There are doubtless many reasons for this growing indifference to official state ideology. Foremost among them was Jünger's participation in the intoxication of August 1914 and the empty promise it seemed to hold of radical social change. In a bitter and disillusioned passage Jünger wrote of 1914: 'Vorm Kriege dachte ich wie mancher: nieder, zerschlagt das alte Gebäude, das neue wird auf jeden Fall besser' (*Ktb* 3, 1 December 1915). Compare this to his comments on the achievements of the *Michael* Offensive: 'Doch Lob und dreimal Lob dem deutschen Soldaten. Wer sonst hätte unter solchen Verhältnissen wie wir einer Welt von Feinden standgehalten?' (*Ktb* 13, 21 March 1918). Jünger's allegiance had never been to the political conservatives' *status quo ante bellum* — by 1918 his concern was with his like-minded comrades and not with the monarchy, a concern which was to culminate in his 'soldierly nationalism' of the mid- to late-1920s. His conservatism was thus concerned much more with classical modernity as such rather than the forms of state and society.

5.4.5 History

Jünger's diary does not link the events narrated with any larger scheme. Indeed, history, like the future, is much more notable by its absence than its presence and, like the future, it disrupts the 'experimental' nature of Jünger's notebook narratives by positing a scheme of things external to the War. The past is encountered mainly in 1915, and then in the form of memorials and narratives from the Franco-Prussian War. In one passage, Jünger is struck by the memorials to the dead of a previous War and, when the troops stroll over the border,

he notes the representative states of the respective posts: 'Der deutsche Grenzpfahl stand noch, der französische lag zerschlagen am Boden' (*Ktb* 1, 12 April 1915).

Elsewhere, history intrudes only to show how different things might have been. As Jünger also narrates in *In Stahlgewittern*, he found a number of bound volumes of the illustrated supplement to the French *Petit Journal* from the time of the Fashoda Crisis and simply remarks: 'Da diese Nummern grade zur Zeit der Faschoda-Affaire geschrieben waren, kamen wir Deutschen noch ziemlich glimpflich darin weg' (*Ktb* 7, 1 September 1916). Although history, when it does find its way into the *Kriegstagebuch*, functions either as a weak tool of ideological consolidation or political critique, it as yet serves no integrative function in holding Jünger's textual world together.

5.4.6 Intertexts — Cultural Reference Points

Jünger often uses literary texts and other received cultural monuments as reference points within the chaos of battle as part of a work of aestheticisation that is aimed at disarming the horror and shock of the situations in which he finds himself. He describes, for instance, the position in the Champagne region in terms of a romanticising and historicising aestheticism which attempts to transform experience into an image that is part of an established cultural structure. On the one hand this can quite simply be seen as an appeal to cultural authority, but on the other it is an attempt to reintegrate the shocking and disruptive experience of the War, partially at least, into a cultural system and thus to tame its radically decentring and fragmenting effects. So, for instance, Jünger turns one sentry position into a painting: 'ein unheimliches Stimmungsbild à la Böcklin.¹⁵ Vollmond, zerschossenes Gemauer, ein Gewirr niedergestürzter Erlen, im Wasser ein zerfallender Kahn, das rauschende Wasser'. Moreover, the scene is also said to resemble 'ein mittellalterliches Bild der Vernichtung' (*Ktb* 1, 30 January 1915).

¹⁵ Cf. *Annäherungen*, p. 15-16. Here, Jünger discusses Böcklin's pictures *Der Abenteurer* and *Die Toteninsel*.

provide models of heroic action and as such also play an exemplary role and reinforce his personal project. In that sense they also start to play another role — that of escapism. And thus Jünger read extensively in the latter part of the war — and even started to describe his surroundings in intertextual terms, comparing his accommodation in Regniéville to 'die Hütte Roberts des Schiffsjungen auf seiner Kubanischen Insel' (*Ktb* 12, 6 September 1917) and attributing to Flanders 'eine Behäbigkeit à la Dickens' (*Ktb* 12, 19 October 1917). As in his school days, literature starts to provide the possibility of escape from modernity's iron cage but in so doing disrupts the closed space of his 'scientific', 'experimental' notebooks.

5.4.7 Officer Status and Modernity's Obsession with Control

A quite different possibility for ordering the world was provided not by the individual reading but by the individual acting to create order, rather than to create epic narrative. Although bitter and sceptical towards his own superiors, Jünger clearly enjoyed the status and potential of the junior infantry officer, especially once he had a company of his own. It is only in those situations where he becomes aware of his sense of responsibility within a hierarchical system of authority that Jünger's sense of allegiance to his superiors and thus to the Wilhelmine system manifests itself within his diary. Thus when in December 1915 a cease-fire suddenly broke out between the 73rd Fusiliers and their British opponents, Jünger felt himself obliged to conform to his duties as a Prussian officer despite the sympathy he felt for his soldiers' feelings (*Ktb* 3, 12 December 1915).

However, it also becomes apparent that the positive experiences that Jünger drew from his position as an officer are related much more to his personal project than to the satisfaction gained from serving the Kaiser. When he reflects on, or rather rejoices over, the success of his action against the Indian unit in summer 1917 he writes:

So haben wir mit 20 Mann über hundert Mann erfolgreich bekämpft, trotzdem wir Anweisung hatten, uns bei überlegener Annäherung zurückzuziehen. Ich muß sagen, ohne mich selbst loben zu wollen, daß ich das nur erreicht habe durch Überlegenheit über die Situation, eiserne Einwirkung auf die Leute und durch Vorangehen beim Ansprung auf den Feind (*Ktb* 11, 13 June 1917).

Indeed, writing the subsequent patrol to recover a missing LMG he approaches an extraordinary self-apotheosis: 'In solchen Momenten Führer sein mit klarem Kopfe, heißt der Gottähnlichkeit nahe sein. Wenige sind auserlesen' (*Ktb* 11, 19 June 1917). The experience of responsibility, authority and almost conditionless respect (real or imagined) was the closest Jünger came to realising absolute personal autonomy and control over the world. And yet the fragility of this ecstatic self realisation is revealed in the very same text, for, as Jünger is obliged to conclude, the patrol was 'wieder heillose Verwirrung' (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, the chances of self-realisation through imposition of personal authority were fundamentally limited by the conditions of warfare on the Western Front. Thus as a junior officer in Flanders in late July 1917 Jünger was confronted with an almost complete lack of command and control — inexperienced commanders were unable even to pass their orders forward or to receive information promptly from their subordinate units:

Es ist eine Schweinerei mit solcher Befehlsübermittlung [Läufer], aber was soll man verlangen von einem Komp.-Führer, der noch kein Inf. Gefecht mitgemacht hat? Ich werde jetzt natürlich versuchen, mich nach vorn durchzuschlagen, eine verdammte Aufgabe, wenn man noch nicht mal weiß wohin (*Ktb* 11, 29 July 1917).

The platoon commanders were unable even to recognise the line they were meant to be defending:

Was nun eigentlich beim Angriffsfalle zu tun ist, ist mir nicht ganz klar. Die Comp. liegt gruppenweise im Gelände verkleckst. Stollen gibt es des Grundwassers wegen nicht. Zwar wird hier vom Besetzen einer Stellung, des sog. Südriegels gesprochen, aber diese Pißrinne wird selbst ein Optimist kaum als Graben bezeichnen können (*Ktb* 11, 27 July 1917).

In other words the modern project of recognising, organising and recording a coherent environment was fully unrealisable under the conditions of modern warfare. Without a line and the clarity of perception it implies, without command and control and the knowledge and possibility of action implied in the intelligent information process that is battle leadership, Jünger's modern world was faced with yet another crisis.¹⁷

¹⁷ Cf. Leed, p. 102: 'The line was the clearest representation of the uncompromising defensive posture. It was the most perfect representation of boundaries, the outer limit of one's territory.'

Later, in March 1918, Jünger's involvement in the *Michael* Offensive which finally promised to provide the occasion for heroic, mobile infantry action becomes as much a struggle with himself as with the enemy. For what Jünger writes as happening to himself was the release of aggressive instincts which threatened to overwhelm the rational, recording subject and submerge it in a collective *Blutrausch*. After confronting an English officer who holds out a picture of his wife and children, Jünger writes: 'Ich freue mich jetzt doch, daß ich meine irrsinnige Wut bezwang und an ihm vorüberschritt' (*Ktb* 13, 21 March 1918). Nevertheless, he records that: 'Auch ich wurde von einem unwiderstehlichen Angriffsdrang gepackt und rannte den Engländern frontal an' (*ibid.*). Consequently, his recording ability fails and various times are reduced to comments such as: 'Wir müssen eine Zeit lang kreuz und quer durch die Trichter gerannt sein und auf verschiedene Ziele geschossen haben [...]' (*ibid.*). The struggle with elemental fear also threatens the capacity of the subject to record itself in language: 'In solchen Augenblicken wird einem so merkwürdig fade zu Mute, kurz man kann es schlecht in Worte fassen' (*Ktb* 13, 22 March 1918)

Thus the possibilities offered by mastery over men and material were fundamentally compromised by the actual conditions at the Front. Modernisation may have allowed states to mobilise unprecedented masses of troops and munitions but in so doing it reduced even front-line officers to effective powerlessness. Jünger may have rejoiced in the moments of command and leadership it offered nevertheless, but he had to struggle as much with himself as with the disintegration of modern epistemology where industrialised fire power had been brought to bear.

5.5 Disruptions

5.5.1 Disillusions

One of the most striking features of Jünger's *Kriegstagebuch* is the extent to which he, despite his heroic project and patriotic upbringing, confesses his despair and disillusion at the course of the War. These confessional passages were edited out for *In Stahlgewittern*₁

as they did not conform to the image Jünger was attempting to make of himself or the memory of the War he was trying to create. If Jünger has been vilified for glorifying war in *In Stahlgewittern* it is because critics were only too ready to believe what he published about himself. I shall now examine a number of these passages in detail.

Very soon in 1915, after an extended period of sentry duty and trench digging in the cold and wet, Jünger realised that this was not the life he had been looking for. Significantly, he directly compares the experience of disillusion to that of 1913, implicitly confirming that Jünger joined the German Army with the same intentions as the Foreign Legion: 'Ich bekomme, wie damals in Algerien ganz andere Ideale. Ein solides Studentenleben mit Lehnstuhl und weichem Bett und einem kleinen Freundeskreise ohne Verbindungeselein, schöne Ausflüge und gute Bücher. Und eine Käfersammlung' (*Ktb* 1, 8 January 1915). Another striking aspect of this entry is the desire to return to the safety of the life of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, a conflict between youthful rebellion and the bonds of upbringing that characterises his *Kriegstagebuch*.

An extended passage from 1 December 1915 (*Ktb* 3) reveals a wide spectrum of anger and grief at the progress of the War. He is disconsolate at the devastation wreaked upon Northern France:¹⁸

An der Front die Dörfer zerstört, die Bäume zerschossen, die Brunnen verfallen, die Felder aufgewühlt und hoch überwuchert. Hier im besetztem Land ein Volk gezwungen zu einer Lebensweise, die es nie kannte, gezwungen das graue Brot des Krieges hinunterzuwerfen und gezwungen, Kinder zu gebären, die vielleicht später nicht in dies Land der Heiterkeit hineinpassen werden.

He feels that the War has hemmed him in to an unacceptable degree with the front as an unpassable boundary, a boundary constituted by 'ein Strom von Blut, von Blut vielleicht unnütz vergossen, um Millionen Mütter in Gram und Elend zu stürzen'. And finally he is

¹⁸ Cf. *Nachlaß* in the DLA, 'A:Jünger: Verschiedenes/Autobiographisches' is a diary account of Jünger's visit to France in 1908 as part of a school exchange which marks the beginning of his acquaintance with France. Quoted in detail in Noack, pp. 16-7. Cf. also *Siebzig verweht V*, entry of 16 July 1992, p. 75: 'So habe ich schon vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg einige Wochen im Umkreis der Aisne verbracht — und zwar, was damals noch ungewöhnlich war, als Austauschschüler nahe Saint-Quentin'.

grieved by the endless killing which seems no longer to have any purpose and that any promise of renewal the War once had has now been extinguished:

Lange schon bin ich im Krieg, schon manchen sah ich fallen, der wert war zu leben. Was soll das Morden und immer wieder morden? Ich fürchte, es wird zuviel vernichtet und es bleiben zu wenig, um wieder aufzubauen. [...] Der Krieg hat in mir doch die Sehnsucht nach den Segnungen des Friedens geweckt.

Jünger recovers his cool composure by drawing his disruptive discourse to an abrupt halt. In a passage written after the burial of a large number of comrades and friends whose coffins had been lined up ceremonially in the church at Douchy Jünger confesses to near despair at the absurdity of it all, asking 'Wozu, wozu – – –'. But again he manages to recover through the ubiquitous phrase 'Und doch...' concluding that such sacrifice teaches ideals again, especially 'die volle Hingabe an ein Ideal bis zum grausigen Schlachtentode' (*Ktb* 6, 3 July 1916).¹⁹

After the pivotal experience of the battle of the Somme, there is a definite change of tone in Jünger's reflections on the War. A certain hardness sets in, upon which even he comments. His indifference grows, both towards himself and to others, which often takes the form of bitter resignation and nihilistic excess. On hearing of a peace offer on 12 December 1916, he declares: 'Mir persönlich ist Frieden oder nicht ziemlich gleich, einesteils erhoffe ich noch manches vom Krieg, anderenteils muß ich auch sagen, daß ich bald dem Sturmvogel gleich in sonnige Weiten fliegen möchte und die weite Welt in ganzer Pracht auf mich wirken lassen möchte' (*Ktb* 9).

And by July 1917, Jünger has adopted the position of a vitalistic and amoral *carpe diem* mentality which attempts to live purely for the moment, excluding thoughts of the future and indifferent to his own death: 'Man muß sein Leben so toll und verschoben, so lustig und gefährvoll, so exzentrisch und abwechslungsreich wie möglich einrichten, dann hat man Genuß daran. Dahinter immer das angenehm kitzelnde Gefühl, daß man Morgen in einem Riesengefecht "durchgedreht" wird' (*Ktb* 11, 1 July 1917).

¹⁹ Cf. also *Ktb* 4, 11 March 1916 where Jünger records 'krause Gedanken' contrasting his fantasies of African escape with the realities of the trenches.

In late 1918, Jünger's disillusion takes on yet another form — further criticism of the Army authorities, and particularly their narratives about the actions he was involved in (cf. Chapter 11.5.1, p. 257 below). The War reduced him to slave labour, exposed him to the destruction of culture, slaughtered his friends and displayed a sublime indifference to his own epic project. The traces of his anger, grief and bitterness are much clearer in the *Kriegstagebuch* than the published texts.

5.5.2 Kultur vs. Krieg

As we have seen, one of the fundamental tensions in Jünger's *Kriegstagebuch* is between his hostility to conventional civilisation and his desire for escape on the one hand and his despair and horror at the actual way the war actually turned out to be. This particularly takes the form of conflicting attitudes towards traditional cultural products and social values. In Monchy in 1915 Jünger was fascinated by the collapse of civilisation, commenting on the resurgence of wild plants in the ruined village (*Ktb* 3, 28 December 1915).

However, Jünger was also clearly distressed at times by the destruction wrought upon civilisation in the combat zone. At Combles his gaze is fixed on the rapidity and suddenness of the destruction brought about by even the meagre English advance on the Somme. And in a quiet moment in rest positions behind the front line he discovers the abandoned house of a collector of books and china and regrets having to abandon such treasures to their fate (*Ktb* 7, 1 September 1916).

In 1916 Jünger attempted to depict the War experience in a positive light by reverting to a traditionalist *Kulturkritik* of the type articulated by the Youth Movement amongst others: 'Man weiß aber wohl nicht, ob man vielleicht später an dies rauhe Leben unter Männern nicht mit einem Gefühl zurückdenken wird: Ja damals war das Leben zwar rau, aber einem festen Zweck geweiht und sorgenfrei. [...] Alles ist einfach und natürlich'. He goes on to state that such an existence is infinitely preferable to patronising big-city 'stinkige Kneipen' in the company of 'schlampigen Frauenzimmern' (*Ktb* 6, 27

July 1916). Of particular note here is the contrast between an existence which is 'einem festen Zweck geweiht' and where 'Alles ist einfach und natürlich' and Jünger's description of the *Großstadt* as a place of licence and decadence. It is a particularly inappropriate contrast — for the War was far from being simple, let alone natural, and Jünger himself was not disinclined to drink frequently to excess and seek the company of 'schlampigen Frauenzimmern', and we have seen how Jünger was less than totally committed to the cause of the German state. Therefore, his comments represent a fragment of the ideological baggage which Jünger had inherited from his youth shoved so incongruously into the text that it merely serves to emphasise further the contradictions brought out by the War.

Related to this comment, but far more understandable, are Jünger's efforts to keep the radical effects of the War at bay by structuring it according to civilised motifs. Thus in those periods of routine duty, Jünger's diary entries tend to divide the day into 'morgens', 'nachmittags' and 'abends', making routine into a conventional rhythm marked by no essential temporal difference from the world of school and family. Even such domestic traditions as afternoon coffee are made important in the *Kriegstagebuch* and Jünger frequently notes with pride that he and his fellow officers were not disturbed by enemy artillery during their coffee break. And yet another strategy was to turn the areas where he was stationed into locations of touristic interest. He diligently visited Douai, Valenciennes and Cambrai. In the aftermath of his Paschendaele experience, Jünger, again rather incongruously, noted: 'Ich merkte mir Flandern für eine Friedensfußtour vor, genau wie Prény und die Mosellandschaft im Frühjahr 1915' (*Ktb* 12, 2 August 1917). For all the talk of the *Landsknecht* in *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* and other essays, Jünger's anarchic disregard for civilisation was tempered with a yearning for a stable and simple world.

5.5.3 Nature as Sphere out of Time

As we saw in Chapter 4, Jünger had developed a keen interest in beetles and in a neo-romantic experience of nature before the War. During the War, this interest came to assume a special importance as nature provided an alternative rhythm to the ruthless

machinery of the Army. Deployed to the Mosel valley prior to the battle of Les Épargés, Jünger recorded seeing an adder: 'Plötzlich sah ich eine dunkelbraune Schlange, die ich gleich als Kreuzotter erkannte. Ich schlug nach ihr, leider verschwand sie zu schnell. Dies war die erste Kreuzotter, die ich wirklich deutlich als solche sah' (*Ktb* 1, 18 April 1915). In this scene the snake becomes symbolic of a completely different order of time — it disrupts the time scale Jünger constructs for his narrative, a time scale which encompasses the time spent at the front and which attempts to exclude other times. Instead the snake is representative not only of a different order of perception — Jünger only wishes to order it into a harmonious whole rather than deploy it as a weapon or for profit — and of a personal time scale which again disrupts the attempt to construct a recording purely of the war.

Jünger enthusiastically pursued beetle collecting during the war. Indeed, he kept a systematic diary of his finds in the Douchy/Monchy area.²⁰ Entomology carried out in the face of artillery was of particular significance to Jünger. It is a singularly individual passion and its pursuit allowed him to re-centre himself as a modern subject, autonomous and seeking scientific knowledge of the world. That being the case, then the following case serves to illustrate more dramatically still the weakness of Jünger's position in his struggle with the artillery:

Um ½9 stand ich auf, um meine gestern gesammelten Käfer zu präparieren. Ich hatte grade einen schönen Splintkäfer unter der Lupe, als der erste Krach erscholl. Der schöne Käfer entfiel meiner Hand, mit einigen Sätzen war ich im Keller, wo die Hausbewohner schon mit erstaunlicher Geschwindigkeit gelaufen waren. Nun ging es los [...] (*Ktb* 4, 4 February 1916).

Here, the shelling — and it is the first extremely heavy shelling to which Jünger was exposed and which he had to wait out — reverses the feeling of superiority created by the pursuit of the *subtile Jagd*, as he would later term it. The incident has thoroughly

²⁰ This forms the 16th volume of the *Kriegstagebuch* in Marbach and is bound in the same fashion as the other notebooks and as such obviously forms part of the War Diary rather than a separate entomological project. The diary bears the title *Fauna coleopterologica douchyensis* and contains a systematic log of Jünger's 143 beetle discoveries between 29 January and 27 July 1916. Cf. also *Gärten und Straßen*, entry of 1 June 1939, pp. 54: 'Sodann der rote Phymatodes, purpurfilzig, den

emblematic and symbolic character — that Jünger should emphasise the fact that he had the beetle in his hand and was examining it under a magnifying glass is important. Jünger describes himself more or less out of time, in a pose and act alien to the contingent necessities and demands of the War, occupied with himself and his object, placed therefore as the modern observer of the world when the modern world violently irrupts in the form of a British artillery attack. The effect of the artillery is to eliminate suddenly Jünger's commanding position as examining subject and to reduce him to an object of technical violence and thus to passivity and expectation.

Elsewhere, Jünger demonstrates a different attitude to the natural world, emphasising its fecundity in contrast to the man-made lethality all around it (*Ktb* 5, 30 June 1916). The natural world suggests to Jünger the timelessness of Man before the Fall — and the Fall is the move into the realm of work and technology, or in other words, into that realm of which modernity at war is the culmination:

Auf dem Rückweg ging ich durch die verwilderten Gärten um Liller Tor, ich kam unter einigen Kirschbäumen vorbei, die mit Früchten beladen waren. Ich aß und kam mir vor wie in den sagenhaften Tropenstrichen, wo dem Menschen Früchte ohne Arbeit reihen. (*Ktb* 6, 13 July 1916)

Nature presents a radical alternative to the modernity of the trenches, which simultaneously suggests a place of refuge and heightens Jünger's sense of his own exposure to the radically temporal and contingent world of technological warfare. Although Jünger set out to study the world systematically whilst at war, the notes in the diary on nature in fact disrupt the closed and subjective narrative time and space he was attempting to create to fulfil his epic project.

5.5.4 Gaps — Missing texts...

If Nature disrupts the temporal sphere created both by modernity and Jünger's attempt at creating a closed time and space, then certain events destroy, rather than merely disrupt, the narrative imperative. Within the *Kriegstagebuch* there are a number of very obvious

ich bisher nur einmal, 1915 bei Saint-Léger in Frankreich, traf'; also *Siebzig verweht III*, entry of 21 May 1985, p. 514: 'Damals, als wir in Douchy lagen, habe ich sogar präpariert'.

gaps in the narrative — characterised by excision, deletion or refusal to narrate. The shock, or shame, of events and situations is such that the power of diary narrative to tame them appears to have been eliminated and with it, the narratives themselves.

The first striking example of the elimination of a text occurs during the entry of 1 December 1915, part of a period of leave at Quéant: pages 93-96 of *Ktb 3* have been cut out. Of course, there is no way of telling when this very physical excision took place as it could just have well have happened in the 1990s as in 1915, which limits the room for speculation as to why Jünger should have undertaken such a piece of narrative surgery. Assuming he did remove the section during the War then a certain act of symbolic psychological correction and forgetting does suggest itself as a possible explanation. It is indicative of a desire to forget by erasing the sign.

This particular incident is most likely linked to an entry that follows immediately, in which Jünger writes: 'Nachher passierte mir in Schlingsbuch ein Abenteuer, das so komisch und seltsam ist, daß ich es gar nicht beschreiben will' (8 December 1915). A stated refusal to narrate rather than a passing over in silence is peculiar and a further indication of the semi-schizoid nature of Jünger's text as a whole, a withholding of information from himself as reader whilst not quite fully retreating from his self-imposed duty to record. Further information about this incident comes in the entry of the following day, written very obliquely and in French:

C'est un aventure
quand-même

n'aura-t-il pas de
danger?? l'invasion

encore une fois?! 9.12.15 le petit enfant

No 84! No 84! No 84!

„tu es fort!“ „Combien de fois as-tu marché?“ „Je voudrais avoir ton devenir“

Das Licht in der Cigaren
kiste!

La peur d'maladie. [sic]

It would therefore seem that Jünger had visited a brothel, hardly an infrequent occurrence in any war and was subsequently worried about having contracted some form of STD — not for the last time in the First World War.²¹ What we are seeing is a clash between his received bourgeois values and the practice of the front (or the big city, it should also be noted) on the one hand and his desire to narrate on the other. Jünger displaces the narrative into French and the epic into the obscure.

Further on in *Ktb* 3 there is another striking gap. Nearly two sides of text have been crossed out so thoroughly that text underneath is no longer legible (28 December 1915). Next to the text Jünger has sketched a death's head and captioned it 'Momento'. All that we can gather is that what he had experienced was a 'furchtbares Schrecken'. Jünger then had a narrow escape from a hail of shrapnel: 'Doch was war das gegen die eben gehabten Schrecken? Un jeu d'enfant'. Without forensic work, we cannot know what happened — but more interesting for our purposes is not the missing biographical detail, but the act of deletion itself. It is hard to imagine what horrific experience caused Jünger to censor himself so violently — elsewhere in the diary, he is able to confront and record the most shocking scenes of mutilation, slaughter and decomposition. One can only surmise that this mutilation of text is indicative of a moment of critical instability in Jünger's psyche, betokening the strength and depths of the pressures Jünger was under, bursting once more the illusion of distance created by the discipline of writing.

5.6 Conclusion

Jünger's war diary can be read as a classically modern project, intended to create a closed narrative time and space, and function as a quasi-scientific document relating the epic project of a heroic, autonomous subject. But again and again it reveals the signs of the strains brought on by exposure to the realities of modernity's dark side unleashed on the Western Front. The intrusions of personal past, of fragments of history, the repression of

²¹ Cf. *Ktb* 8, 4 November 1916; *Ktb* 9, 18 January 1917; *Ktb* 11, 10 July 1917 also, *Annäherungen*, pp. 137-43.

the future, the radical otherness of nature all serve to disrupt the integrity of the textual space. The writing subject is forced to record the crisis of the heroic subject, disappointing the imagined narrator of the future. The controlling subject is disempowered by the overwhelming force of mass firepower, the disintegration of command and control and the anonymity of random death. Knowledge of the world is striven for, but frequently denied. The comfort of bourgeois civilisation is used to structure the day and provide stability — its destruction both a source of regret and a cause for celebration. The text is addressed to its own writer, in the present and in the future, to fellow fighters and to those on the home front. Jünger's *Kriegstagebuch* is thus a multi-faceted, fragmented document of a subject under severe strain, a pre-eminent document, therefore, of the crisis of classical modernity. It is a document full of flaws, fissures and a powerful deconstructive energy which would continue to inhabit all of Jünger's war books as his conservative imagination strove to re-establish precisely those assumptions which the War had put under so much pressure. I shall begin my analysis of his published texts with his first, *In Stahlgewittern* (1920).