

9. *Sturm* — Re-Writing the War (3), Beyond Modernity

9.1 Introduction

In April 1923 Ernst Jünger published the story *Sturm* in serialised form in the conservative daily newspaper, the *Hannoverscher Kurier*.¹ He is subsequently said to have “forgotten” the text, and it was only rediscovered by Hans-Peter Des Coudres in 1960 who reprinted it in a limited bibliophile edition in 1963, the text later being included in the *Sämtliche Werke*.² Whilst Des Coudres recognised that the story is very different from *In Stahlgewittern*₁ and *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*₁ on the one hand and *Das Wäldchen 125*₁ (1925), *Feuer und Blut*₁ (1925) and the political journalism (1923-28) which followed it on the other, he insisted that: ‘Es gibt keine bessere Porträtskizze des jungen Autors, als er sie im letzten Abschnitt des zweiten Kapitels unserer Erzählung von seiner Titelfigur gegeben hat. So sah er sich damals’.³ Plard (1968) and Schwilk (1981) also emphasised the autobiographical aspects of the protagonist,⁴ but, as Hans-Harald Müller has highlighted, ‘Jüngers und Sturms Biographie [weisen] nur marginale Berührungspunkte [auf]’.⁵

A second interpretative approach to *Sturm* was that taken by Karl-Heinz Bohrer, who, misreading those elements of the story which hark back to a certain literary *Décadence*, sees it as giving: ‘kaum verhüllte autobiographische Mitteilungen über spezifische Bindungen seiner Anfänge an eine intellektuell-dandystische *Bohème*, die er in

¹ Cf. Mühleisen, *Bibliographie der Werke Ernst Jüngers*, p. 102, Entry no. 0284. I quote here from *Sämtliche Werke*, XV (1979): *Dritte Abteilung. Erzählende Schriften I. Erzählungen*, pp. 9-74.

² On its rediscovery by Hans-Peter Des Coudres, cf. Plard (1968). A detailed comparison of the 1923 version with the republished version reveals only minor differences of orthography and punctuation, and one very minor correction — the author of the *Gastrosophie* is corrected from Pückler, who wrote no such book, to Vaerst, who did (cf. *Sturm*, p. 38).

³ ‘Nachwort’, Ernst Jünger, *Sturm* (Olten: Georg Rentsch, 1963), p. 99.

⁴ Heimo Schwilk, ‘Ernst Jüngers frühe Erzählung *Sturm*: Eine kritische Analyse vor historisch-biographischem Hintergrund’ (unpublished *Wissenschaftliche Zulassungsarbeit*, University of Tübingen, 1981).

⁵ *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller*, p. 262. Furthermore, there is no direct correlation between an incident in the *Kriegstagebuch* and the events narrated in the story.

den anderen Büchern verschwiege' (pp. 128-29).⁶ Bohrer then elevates Jünger's alleged roots in *décadent* literature to: 'ein Schlüssel zu Jüngers geistiger Disposition überhaupt' (p. 130), and, once again reading too superficially, claims that Jünger's depiction of his war experience did not essentially differ from his dilettantish juvenile reading (p. 132). In his attempt to integrate Jünger neatly into a predefined set of aesthetic categories, Bohrer takes Jünger's rhetorics of war at face value and thus complicitly smoothes over the fundamental crisis of classical modernity which is inscribed in Jünger's early texts and which produces the contradictions and fissure within them — and which can be detected even without recourse to the *Kriegstagebuch*. In so doing, Bohrer thus also tends to smooth over and devalue the important differences embodied in *Sturm*.

In this chapter I shall explore in detail the nature of these differences and link them to what is, in effect, a tentative step away from those crisis-ridden assumptions to which Jünger's conservative imagination had clung and which had generated the fissures we have seen in his previous texts. Rather than wrestle with monumental history or a tangle of theory and meta-narrative, Jünger, in *Sturm*, embarks instead on a subtle exploration of the dissolution of classical modernity's claims to apodictic knowledge and certainty. Proceeding from the experience of the War, *Sturm* addresses a much broader series of issues inherent in the state of modernity in 1923. In so doing, the text consciously prises open the classically modern cultural assumptions which had underlain Jünger's world view and does not attempt to retreat to closed positions in the face of the war experience. On this basis, I shall approach *Sturm* in an entirely new way and argue that crucial aspects of the story point towards a consciousness and an aesthetic practice that could be described (somewhat daringly) as proto-post-modern.

⁶ Cf. Jünger's somewhat obscure remark in *Kirchhorster Blätter*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, III, pp. 295-401, entry of 27 February 1945, p. 376: 'Kurz nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg hat [Huysmanns *Là-Bas*] einen gewissen Einfluß auf mich geübt, rief die Tendenz zu einem expressionistischen Katholizismus wach, die dann überdeckt wurde'; cf. also *Siebzig verweht IV*, entry of 28 June 1987, p. 171: 'Huysmanns hat diese Kathedrale [von Chartres] als Vorbild für alle anderen gesetzt: "La" Cathédrale. Das Werk hat in mir nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg eine flüchtige, vielleicht auch in der Erbanlage begründete Neigung für den Katholizismus erweckt'.

Post-modern(ism) is admittedly an inflated and ill-defined concept which has already undergone substantial shifts in meaning.⁷ Its meaning is still a matter of controversy and the (tentative) application of it to an early work by Jünger can only help ensure it stays that way. Nevertheless, a few features which are generally accepted as quintessentially post-modern can be detected in *Sturm*. Post-modernism is said to be characterised by plurality,⁸ by ‘epistemological and ontological doubt’⁹ and a lack of centre such that ‘the Postmodernists have accepted chaos and live in fact in a certain intimacy with it’.¹⁰ It involves a ‘crisis of legitimation’¹¹ so that its texts are provisional and self-reflexive, dependent on modernity whilst subverting it.¹² It questions binary oppositions and blurs borders, between art and life as well as between genres and discourses, and between literature and history.¹³ It is aware of the paradoxes it embodies but does not try to resolve them in any form of closure and tends instead towards irony.¹⁴ It is ‘a questioning of commonly accepted values of our culture (closure, teleology, and subjectivity)¹⁵ [i.e. what I have called classical modernity and what Welsch refers to as ‘neuzeitlich’].¹⁶

⁷ Cf. Michael Köhler, “‘Postmodernismus’: Ein begriffsgeschichtlicher Überblick’, *Amerikastudien*, 22 (1977), pp. 8-18; Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1987), pp. 9-43; Hans Bertens, ‘The Postmodern *Weltanschauung* and its Relation with Modernism: An Introductory Survey’, in *Approaching Postmodernism*, ed. by Douwe Fokkema and Hans Bertens (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1986), pp. 9-51.

⁸ Cf. Welsch, pp. 16-7: ‘Postmodernes liegt dort vor, wo ein grundsätzlicher Pluralismus von Sprachen, Modellen, Verfahrensweisen praktiziert wird’.

⁹ Bertens, p. 14.

¹⁰ Bertens (paraphrasing Ihab Hassan), p. 28.

¹¹ Bertens (summarising Jean-François Lyotard and Jürgen Habermas), p. 31.

¹² Cf. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), esp. p. 6.

¹³ Hutcheon, pp. 9-11.

¹⁴ Hutcheon, p. 40-2.

¹⁵ Hutcheon, p. 42. Cf. also Dick Hebdige, ‘Postmodernism and “The Other Side”’, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. by John Storey (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp. 383-97. Hebdige describes the ‘three negations’ of post-modernism as ‘against totalisation’, ‘against teleology’ and ‘against utopia’.

¹⁶ Welsch, p. 6.

Within the space available, I cannot hope to do full justice either to the debates on post-modernism or to the density of signification within *Sturm*. Instead, I shall divide the story into a number of thematic areas in order to show how each is related to those aspects of post-modernism identified above. I shall begin with the narrative form, which is unusually experimental for Jünger, before looking at the way in which the text deals with the problems of textuality, representation and narratability. This will lead to the way it examines the crisis of modern epistemology, then to the way it investigates the crisis of the modern self, and thence to the crisis of classical modernity itself. I shall conclude by showing how the text depicts and criticises attempts at flight from present time and how it implicitly accepts a neo-Heraclitean (and post-modern) sense of flux and instability only to retreat from that sense into the death of the fictional protagonist in a way which prefigures Jünger's own self-mutilating turn from literary to political writing.

9.2 Form

In contrast to Jünger's other early texts, *Sturm* is a fictional and highly reflexive text. An apparently omniscient narrator relates the last days of a group of four infantry officers in a front-line company before the English Somme offensive of 1916. Although the authoritative realist narrator was an important manifestation of the classically modern need to order the world, Jünger's move from essayistic and autobiographical writing to avowed fiction in fact constitutes a step, albeit a small one, away from that need.

The story is divided into eight chapters:

1. The scene is set. Lt. Sturm has to deal with a suicide in his platoon and reflects on the War.
2. The characters are introduced. Döhring, Hugershoff and Sturm are all platoon commanders in a front-line regiment who share a strong literary interest.¹⁷

¹⁷ Hugershoff is said to know 'die erotische Literatur von dem Kamasutra und Petronius bis zu Beardsley' (p. 20). In *Annäherungen*, Jünger refers to someone known as 'Der Scheich' who was likewise a trench connoisseur of erotica (p. 140). A Hugershoff is also named in *Ktb 3*, 14 October 1915. On 3 March 1916 (*Ktb 4*), Jünger learnt that he had received a chest wound. Another reference

3. Sturm's character is elaborated, especially the conflict between his literary and military sides.
4. Sturm reads a text on the dandy-like character Tronck to the other characters.
5. The front line is subjected to an artillery barrage. The characters are joined by Lt. Horn, a *Landsknecht*-like pioneer officer with little or no interest in literature who narrates his experiences of underground warfare.
6. Sturm reads his text on the dissolute veteran Fähnrich Kiel.
7. Sturm reads his text on the failed writer and veteran Falk.
8. The Somme offensive begins; the position is attacked by British infantry; Sturm refuses to surrender and dies defending his position.

This spare narrative provides a framework on which to hang a complex and subtle exploration of much bigger cultural issues. This exploration has two major aspects. First, Jünger's narrator provides extensive conventional descriptions of the characters and their surroundings and combines these with his own set of analytical and essayistic inserts. Second, by making Sturm a writer whose texts are read out and thus constitute a very substantial part of the novel, Jünger builds another narrative level into the text which lies beyond the modern, omniscient narrator. A further encapsulated narrative is introduced in the anecdote narrated by Sturm's own fictional protagonist Falk. This integration of successive levels of reflection and narration allows a multi-dimensional, multi-perspectival view which works against the supposedly authoritative narrator and so takes the text far beyond the classically modern, neo-realist premises on which it appears to be based. This proto-post-modernist narrative structure with its multiplicity of narrative positions is the exact opposite of the autobiographical monologue *In Stahlgewittern* and the strenuous meta-narrative and theoretical efforts of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*. Thus, the very

point might have been Lt. Tebbe, said to have been 'ein begabter Maler' (*Siebzig verweht III*, entry of 2 December 1985, p. 581).

form of the text implies that in this work Jünger is questioning the cultural imperatives which had so far determined his literary production.

9.3 Textuality and Narratability

This conclusion is strengthened by a closer examination of the way in which texts are described and used within *Sturm* — by the authoritative narrative voice, by Sturm and by the characters he describes. Through this admixture of voices the novel comments on the issues of mimesis, the novel, the media, ideology and intertextuality in a way which tends strongly towards the proto-post-modern.

The narrator describes Sturm's literary goal as follows: 'Er schrieb zur Zeit an einer Reihe von Novellen, in denen er versuchte, die letzte Form des Menschen in ihren feinsten Ausstrahlungen auf lichtempfindliches Papier zu bringen' (p. 31). Leaving the Nietzschean reference to the last Man to one side, I want to draw attention to the metaphor of photographic paper. Modernity's need to map reality reached an early culmination in the photographic process which promised exact reproduction through a photochemical transferral of the signified to the signifier. That the technical process did not deliver such neutral objectivity is not at issue here. The important thing is that Sturm's metaphorical aim corresponds precisely to modernity's cartographic desire and is thus metonymic of classical modernity itself in its pre-Saussurian model of signification.

The process of exposing this goal as illusory begins in *Sturm* in the very next sentence where the narrator writes: 'Gern hätte er seine Kräfte in einen Roman versammelt, doch schien ihm das bei diesem Hexenkessel von Erscheinungen noch zu früh' (p. 31). In other words, the modern cartographic project has already collapsed, for the narrator, under the pressure of multiplication of sensory phenomena involved in modern warfare. The narrator tells us that, as compensation, Sturm 'hatte sich entschlossen, eine Reihe von Typen zu entwickeln, jede aus ihrem eigenen Zentrum, heraus', (p. 31), thereby falling back on the equally modern notion of the self-sufficient, centred individual. But as

we shall see, Sturm's characters lack precisely this centre and so implicitly put a question-mark over one of the major projects of modernity: the creation of the monadic ego.

The self-reflexive concern with textuality, writing and literature is further emphasised by various events in the novel. Whilst reading 'Tronck', Sturm pauses to make notes on his manuscript and to ask his listeners for their critical opinions (p. 37). In so doing, Sturm admits a provisionality in his texts which is incompatible with the claims to the static precision of the photographic and with the notion of a closed and final text. This preliminaryity is further confirmed by the disruption of his reading by enemy artillery and by Sturm's incineration of his manuscripts to provide light at the end of the story. A further indication of Sturm's rejection of a pseudo-photographic method of writing is his approval of Baudelaire's critique of those artists who paint according to a precise pattern calculated in advance (p. 37). In other words, he is here turning to a neo-Romantic view of inspired artistic practice which contradicts the photographic programme he was earlier said to have espoused.

This Romantic view of literary practice becomes, however, the object of bitter satire in Sturm's description of Falk's failure as a writer. Sturm describes Falk's conception of the poet and writer thus:

Und über allen als Sonne, unbeweglich stand der Dichter, der Künstler, schleuderte Strahlen gegen das Geschehen und ließ es in gewollter Bahn um seine Achse schwingen. Er war ein Begnadeter, ein bewußt in den großen Stromkreis Geschlossener, ein Auge Gottes. Einen schlug Haß, den anderen Liebe zu Boden, einer tötete ein altes Weib, ohne zu wissen, warum; im Dichter fanden alle und alles Erlösung und Verständnis. Er war das große Bewußtsein der Menschheit. Eine elektrische Entladung über der Wüste der Herzen. In ihm kristallisierte sich seine Zeit, fand Persönliches ewigen Wert. Er war die in grellen Schaum zerbrechende Spitze einer dunklen Woge, die im Meere der Unendlichkeit glitt. --
-- Von solchen Gedanken ließ Falk sich gerne treiben (pp. 60-61).

The irony is unmistakable since Falk's concept of the artist, with its distorted reference to Dostoevsky (one of the writers he is said to admire, p. 60), is so exaggerated and grotesque as to be unbelievable. It is no surprise that Falk is said to fail 'an der Form' (p. 61). Consequently, the ironic description of Falk can be read as a rejection of a neo-Romantic conception of the artist-saviour. Besides exploring the nature of his own and Sturm's texts,

Jünger also examines *en passant* the status of literature itself in an increasingly mediated and technical age via the figure of Falk, who believes that literature is imperilled for two main reasons. First, his own old-fashioned view of literature as redemption has already been displaced by avant-garde radicalism: ‘Er wußte, daß Auge Blitz, nicht Spiegel, Auftreten Angriff, Sprache Vergewaltigung sein muß, um Menschen zu beeindrucken’ (p. 59). Second, literature is implicitly absent in a world where modern media and technology are said to have reduced culture to a play of surface signifiers without depth:

Selbst Louis XIV. war nur verkitscht oder verfilmt noch lebendig. Für einen Casanova hätten höchstens die Gerichtsspalten der Zeitungen noch Raum geboten.

Es gab keine Natur, keine Kunst, keine große Linie, selbst keinen Stil mehr [...]. Seit dem Auftauchen der Maschine war alles von sausenden Schwungrädern zur Fläche geschliffen. Wie eine rasende Pest hatte die Mechanisierung des Menschen Europa zur Wüste gewandelt; morgen würden im fernsten Kongodorfe über die Leinwand zitternde Filme die Werte festsetzen [...].

Alles Grübeln, Drängen nach Erkenntnis war Durchbruch durch die Komposition der Welt, lächerlicher Versuch, in eine Tiefe zu dringen, deren Oberfläche vielleicht gerade der Sinn (pp. 62-63).

These three extracts encapsulate a complex mixture of conservative *Kulturkritik* on the one hand and an astute diagnosis of the cultural power of the media as global producers of ideology on the other.¹⁸ Whilst Jünger does not revel in the abolition of depth by the mass media as some post-modernists were to do,¹⁹ in *Sturm* he does not advocate developing strategies to recover this depth in the way that so many high modernists and members of the historical avant-gardes had done and were still doing. In other words, Jünger, through *Sturm*, through Falk, is already pessimistically diagnosing what has been considered, not uncontroversially, to be one of key aspects of post-modern culture — the elimination of depth through the production of medially simulated hyperrealities.²⁰

¹⁸ Kiel’s repeated, and repetitive, sexual encounters are also described in media terms: his conversations with the women concerned are described as a ‘Roman’ (p. 56) and the evenings thus spent are said to resemble ‘ein kitschiger, oft gesehener Film’ (p. 57). By analogy therefore, media products are implicitly reduced to the level of the trivial and superficial.

¹⁹ E.g. the critics Leslie Fielder and Susan Sontag in the 1960s (cf. Bertens, p. 14-18).

²⁰ Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1981).

Sturm's proto-post-modernism continues via its multi-layered, intertextual aesthetic. Despite his misinterpretation, Bohrer was right to point out how Jünger borrows style and motifs from the *fin-de-siècle* and Decadent tradition with its dandy-esque heroes.²¹ But Jünger is not indebted to this tradition to the extent Bohrer maintains for *Sturm* samples only a few superficial aspects from Decadent writing,²² and, moreover, distributes them within his narrative polysemy and its various layers of distancing irony. His citation thus tends not towards deference and integration but, rather, borders on parody²³ — such as when the wit Döhring, commenting on *Sturm*'s extremely eclectic and “aesthetic” selection of books remarks dryly that: ‘Wer die Bücher hier sieht, die du in letzter Zeit bevorzugst, könnte dich für einen Koch, einen Edelsteinhändler oder einen modernen Parfümeur halten’ (p. 38).

Such ‘wahllose Belesenheit’ (p. 18), actually a parodic exaggeration of Decadent over-cultivation, is connected to what *Sturm* considers to be a fundamental change in literary practice. Faced with impending catastrophe, he argues, ‘ist der Mensch wie ein Geizhals, der vorm Tode noch einmal seine Schätze durchwühlt. Ich glaube, daß gerade unsere Literatur wieder diese Sucht nach dem Vielfachen spiegeln wird. Es ist die Flucht des Künstlers aus einer heroischen Zeit’ (p. 39). Here, *Sturm* seems to be saying that in the face of the resistance of the world to representation literature will become radically intertextual by citing the texts of by-gone ages and consciously by-passing the supposed creativity and originality of the Author. In other words, modern culture has, for *Sturm*,

²¹ Also cf. Prümm, I, p. 179.

²² For a fuller account of Decadent literature, cf. John. R. Reed, *Decadent Style* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985); Wolfdietrich Rasch, *Die literarische Décadence um 1900* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986); Jean de Palacio, *Figures et Formes de la Décadence* (Paris: Séguier, 1994). From Rasch's affirmation of Mallarmé's claim that decadent literature is characterised by a ‘Bejahung all dessen, was “chute”, Sturz und Fall und Untergang ist, die Erfahrung der Welt aus dem, was in ihr verfällt —’ (p. 7), and the thematic overviews he and Palacio give, it is clear that the common ground between the *fin-de-siècle* and *Sturm* is limited.

²³ Cf. Hutcheon, p. 26: ‘The collective weight of parodic practice suggests a redefinition of parody as repetition with critical distance at the very heart of similarity.’ Reed suggests that Decadent literature tends to subvert received forms and to turn to self-parody (p. 10) and Palacio argues that: ‘une poétique de décadence substitue la confusion à la clarté, brise les cloisons étanches, compromet les frontières’ (p. 16). In this sense, Decadence is already post-modern and *Sturm* can be read as a radicalisation of it.

turned to the intertextual. The cultural recycling which this involves means a rejection of both the photographic and the neo-Romantic models of literary practice, a process which, in due course, would come to be described as post-modern. The self-conscious and unheroic nature of this process makes this practice almost the exact opposite of Jünger's own previous intertextual borrowings which had been a conservative attempt to shore up a beleaguered classical modern position. Thus, the novel is about more than the 'Unmöglichkeit, einen Roman über den Krieg zu schreiben', it is fundamentally about the near impossibility of writing a *modern* novel at all.²⁴

9.4 The Crisis of Modern Knowledge

The practice of modern knowledge, already undermined in *Sturm* by the critical depiction of literary representation, is also the subject of explicit commentary and analysis. Sturm not only intended his texts to resemble photographs, he was also a doctoral student in biology at the University of Heidelberg, working on a thesis entitled 'Über die Vermehrung der Amöbe proteus durch künstliche Teilung' (p. 26). In other words, not only mapping but actively intervening in the natural world to simulate and control the reproductive processes of single-celled animals, he was professionally embedded in precisely that scientific epistemology and instrumental rationality which was most characteristic of classical modernity, but which at the same time had reached the point where its Copernican-Cartesian-Newtonian world view was breaking down (cf. Chapter 3.4.2, p. 52 above). Sturm's scientific background also surfaces when he provides a neurological account of the process of alcoholic intoxication as the result of the 'Erschlaffung der Hemmungselemente der Ganglien' (p. 53).

However, it soon becomes clear that modern, sober, scientific knowledge is seen in *Sturm* to be inadequate, at least on its own. More so than the one-cell, and thus apparently atomic, amoeba which actually has a complex structure which permits artificial asexual reproduction, the human self is shown in two important ways to resist reduction to a single

²⁴ *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller*, p. 265.

monadic structure. First, Sturm's analysis of 'Rausch' represents scientific certainty — but that knowledge is in fact knowledge of what Sturm himself depicts as a radically decentred experience of the ego and the dissolution of *ratio*. The process of analysis is thus placed in a paradoxical relationship to its subject/object. Second, Sturm maintains that although alcohol reduces inhibitions it does not reveal a more 'real' personality since 'das eigentliche Wesen eines Menschen ist etwas, von dem man sich ebensowenig wie von dem Ding an sich eine Vorstellung machen kann' (p. 53). The simple centred ego of classical modernity is thus shown to be unstable and fluctuating, occupying multiple positions simultaneously such that it is ultimately impossible to locate, either for Kantian Idealism or Positivistic natural science.

Like scientific knowledge, the accumulated knowledge stored in printed books is also exposed to radical critique. Following a sudden heavy bombardment, Sturm experiences a 'Vision': 'Er stand elegant gekleidet in einer großen Buchhandlung seiner Vaterstadt. [...] Das Wissen und die Kunst aller Länder und aller Zeiten waren hier auf engstem Raume gedrängt' (p. 45). This bookshop is thus no ordinary bookshop but rather holds the encyclopaedic cartography of knowledge that was, from Diderot on, a major aspect of modernity in its attempt to organise knowledge and make it available in a meaningful totality. The emblematic nature of this bookshop is further suggested by the imaginary conversation Sturm has with the shop's owner: 'Die Rede griff ineinander wie die Teile einer präzisierten Maschine [...] Das allerschönste war, daß sie eigentlich keinen Zweck hatte, daß sie nur bewegt wurde aus der Freude heraus, in einem ganz klaren Elemente Meister zu sein' (p. 46).²⁵ Both the mechanical simile and the pleasure in the mastery of knowledge indicate that the bookshop is another metonym of modernity. More specifically still, Sturm takes pleasure in the ability of the *ratio* to order everything into a

²⁵ Cf. p. 23. Here the narrator refers to Sturm's liking for 'das Klare und Bestimmte' of the fortifications of his home town, in which it is said of a tower that '[er wuchs] aus dem erstarrten Meere wechselnder Stilformen [...] allein als feste und geschlossene Einheit empor'. The trench is said to be fundamentally identical. That the clarity of line in the trench breaks down rapidly under the

(modern) universal meaningful system that contrasts with the (post-modern) eclectic knowledge in the random books on the shelves of his bunker: 'Wie wurde in solchen Stunden das Kleinste bedeutungsvoll. Wohin auch der Blick fallen möchte, der Geist verknüpfte jedes Ding durch schöne und besondere Gedanken mit sich' (p. 46). Within the imaginary bookshop, the connection between 'Geist' and 'Ding' is still intact so that the ego is still centred in the world — so that it functions as the logocentric idyll of the conservative imagination. But this link between mind and world was said to have been severed during the bombardment and because this is the precise context out of which Sturm's 'vision' has arisen, the bombardment exposes it as at best a fond but illusory memory. Thus, rather than exercising a self-indulgent aestheticism (Plard, p. 608), Jünger once again foregrounds a crucial aspect of modernity only to subvert it, a typical post-modernist practice.²⁶

Connected with this same bombardment is a further shift in the practice and experience of knowledge. As we have seen before, one impact of technological warfare is to overwhelm the registering capability of the human mind. In this case, it is the ear in particular which is no longer able to identify discrete events: 'Eine Kette von Einschlägen toste hintereinander her, so schnell, daß das Bewußtsein sie in eine einzige, furchtbare Erscheinung verschmolz' (p. 39). Over and above this, Sturm's perception of the events around him is of such a nature that his reason seems to be disconnected from his sensory organs:

Der Einschlag war von einer Stärke, die über die Skala des Gehörs hinausgriff, Sturm nahm die niederstürzende Fontäne nur noch mit den Augen wahr [...]. Ganz deutlich sah er dieses Muster mit jener Schärfe der Beobachtung, die sich in solchen Augenblicken auf die nebensächlichsten Dinge richtet (p. 40).

In other words, mechanised warfare turns the individual into a piece of technical apparatus deprived of analytical capacities. Thus, whilst events in the world can be registered, they

pressure of industrialised warfare in the form of the artillery bombardment soon reveals this aesthetic pretence to be false.

²⁶ Hutcheon, p. 43.

can no longer be known and ordered by a brain which is otherwise aware only of the fragmentation of its own thought processes, such that: ‘zuweilen wurde ein geradezu lächerlich zusammenhangloses Gedankenbruchstück an die Oberfläche gerissen’ (p. 41). Because reason is in such a disturbed relationship to the objective world, even when the bombardment is over, time is said to have woven a ‘feine Schleier zwischen ihn und die Dinge’ (p. 45). The result is a subtle but radical critique in *Sturm* of classical modernity’s epistemology and a conscious affirmation by the narrator of the deconstructive break between mind, language and world.

9.5 The Crisis of the Modern Intellectual Individual

The sense of disorientation given by those letters of Jünger’s I examined in Chapter 3 is carried over into *Sturm*. Hans-Harald Müller has drawn attention to the parallels between the split personalities of the author Ernst Jünger and his protagonist Sturm,²⁷ both of whom are torn between the military and the literary, the mess and the café, the microscope and the telescopic sight. This schizoid situation assumes striking literary form in the exotic collections of both rifles and books on Sturm’s shelves (pp. 21-22). Similarly, the narrator emphasises the contrast between the characters’ ‘Urwüchsigkeit’ and ‘Dekadenz’ (p. 18), shows Sturm as both cold-blooded sniper and bohemian (pp. 24-25), and describes his relationship to action and writing thus: ‘Viel lieber hätte er sich entweder als einen Mann der reinen Tat gesehen, der sich des Hirnes nur als Mittel bediente, oder als einen Denkenden, dem die Außenwelt lediglich als ein zu Betrachtendes von Bedeutung war’ (p. 31). Nevertheless, Sturm appears to be able to cope in both worlds, for he lives out the paradox of writing and fighting well, much as he had previously combined the literary and scientific worlds, even though he and his literary circle remain outsiders within the military structures by virtue of their literary and artistic pursuits. This alienation is made even

²⁷ *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller*, pp. 258-73. Of Sturm’s admiration for Lt. Horn, Müller writes: ‘In dieser Problemkonstellation ist Jüngers Identitätskonflikt der Nachkriegsjahre zwischen Urwüchsigkeit und Décadence, zwischen einer nicht wiederholbaren vita activa des Soldaten und einer die Realität der Erlebnisse verflüchtigenden vita contemplativa exakt wiederzuerkennen’ (p. 268).

clearer through the figure of Lt. Horn, a quintessential anti-intellectual man of action who remarks to Sturm: 'Über das Ding an sich habe ich mir bislang kein Kopfzerbrechen gemacht' (p. 54). Unshackled by a shaken Kantian heritage, and not having internalised the cultural assumptions of classical modernity, he can accept without question the (anything but noumenal) conditions of modern warfare, exemplified on the one hand by his role as a pioneer officer in underground clashes in the tunnel systems beneath the front line on the other and by his sheer a-rational vitality. To this, Sturm replies: 'Es ist ein deutsches Nationallaster, so eifrig hinter den Dingen zu suchen, daß die Dinge selbst dabei ihre Realität verlieren. Heute sind uns Männer wertvoller, die ihre Handgranaten über sechzig Meter hinauszwerfen verstehen' (p. 54), and so makes it clear that the German philosophical heritage, which had once played a crucial part in classical modernity, is actually a burden in a modern world where depth and noumena have ceased to exist. Sturm does not revel in paradox as the Dadaists had done, but neither does he seek to eliminate it and regain a lost unity.

A more subtle approach to the crisis of humanistic education is represented by Sturm's character Tronck who is described on his 'gewohnten Gang über die Straßen der Großstadt' (p. 34). He is: 'der Hingabe an feinste Stimmungen gewöhnt' (p. 35), and dressed with a restrained, but nevertheless provocative elegance which distinguishes him from the urban masses. Outwardly, he thus appears to be a classical dandy as described by Baudelaire: 'Le dandysme n'est même pas, comme beaucoup de personnes peu réfléchies paraissent le croire, un goût immodéré de la toilette et de l'élégance matérielle. Ces choses ne sont pour le parfait dandy qu'un symbole de la supériorité aristocratique de son esprit'.²⁸ But Sturm's text is such that although Tronck is a dandy in his choice of tailoring, because he does not interact at all with the scene around him, we cannot tell if he indulges in 'eine sehr bewußte Selbstinszenierung beim öffentlichen Auftreten'²⁹ or in a

²⁸ Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Dandy', in *Œuvres Complètes*, II, pp. 709-12, (p. 710).

²⁹ Rasch, pp. 53-54.

‘[Selbst]stilisierung zur öffentlichen Person’, two further key characteristics of the dandy.³⁰

Indeed, Tronck can be read as representing both less and more than the conventional dandy. According to Baudelaire, the Dandy: ‘apparaît surtout aux époques transitoires où la démocratie n’est pas encore toute-puissante, où l’aristocratie n’est que partiellement chancelante et avilie’, and his behaviour is said to have a ‘caractère d’opposition et de révolte’.³¹ The dandy as such is thus characteristic of the dislocations caused by modernisation. More so Tronck, for he is implicitly located within precisely that *Bildung* which Sturm, and Jünger, both blame for their own sense of dislocation. Two details allow this conclusion. First, Sturm links the paradoxical situation of his circle with that of his character Tronck: ‘Und das, was wir hier auf diesem kümmerlichen Boden erstreben — freie Entfaltung der Persönlichkeit inmitten der straffsten Verbindung, die man sich denken kann — möchte ich in dem Menschen Tronck zu abgerundetem Ausdruck bringen’ (p. 38). The correspondence with the goal of 19th Century Humanistic *Bildung*, itself introduced by Humboldt as part of Prussia’s modernisation programme, is striking.³² Second, Sturm tells his listeners that: ‘es [ist] mir noch nicht klar [...], ob ich das Individuum Tronck im Käfig einer Boheme oder einer Beamtschaft spielen lasse’ (p. 37). Despite his irresolution, the very fact that Tronck *could* be a *Beamter*, part of the elite produced by the *Gymnasien* and Universities, relativises his dandyistic exterior through his location in the incompatible world of administration and Idealist education. Once again, Jünger has sampled intertextually only to subvert ironically both the Dandy and *Bildung*, and with them pretensions to autonomy and authority.

³⁰ Wilfried Ihrig, *Literarische Avantgarde und Dandysmus: Eine Studie zur Prosa von Carl Einstein bis Oswald Wiener* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988), p. 29.

³¹ Baudelaire, p. 711.

³² Cf. Manfred Landfester, *Humanismus und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), esp. p. 32: ‘Was diese Bildung vor allem erfolgreich machte: sie setzte auf die Entfaltung des Individuums. Entfaltung des Individuums: das bedeutete Erziehung zur Selbständigkeit, zur Selbsttätigkeit und zur Selbstverantwortlichkeit’.

Falk is an exaggerated embodiment of the problems encountered by the modern intellectual. His inability to write and his inability to function according to social norms are the result of a pathological reflexivity that keeps him from action. In particular, Falk is in irreconcilable internal conflict about his own individuation. Whilst he dreams of the infinite in the poetic, '[es war ihm] Erleichterung, das Dichterische als Unbegrenzt, überall Lebendiges zu erfassen' (p. 61), at other times: 'empörte sich das Individuum in ihm gegen dieses wollüstige-willenlose Zerfließen ins Kosmische' (p. 61). Striving after universal insight, he only encounters 'die Wut vor der Begrenzung' (p. 64). Whilst he seeks ever new sexual partners, he is said to be searching for 'das ewig Eine' (p. 65). Indeed, his obsessive sexuality is said to have its origin in 'der rastlose Anspruch des Geistes, das Verschlingen von Werten, ohne gesättigt zu werden, die verbissene Wut, in der Vielheit der Dinge zu zerfließen' (p. 63), a paradoxical and fatally flawed combination of the (modern) desire to know the world in its entirety and the (anti-modern) experience of the dissolution of the knowing subject.

The text suggests that Falk's paralysing reflexivity is related to a specific incident which brought the shocking realisation of the Otherness of his own unconscious and thus of the fundamental disunity of his own personality. He tells a woman he meets about his experience of a battle in which he was wounded but fought on until he lost consciousness — what exactly he did in the intoxication of blood loss he cannot remember (p. 70). Convalescing, he tells her, he felt 'eine gewisse Angst, ein Gefühl, unbewußt ganz unermessliche Gewalten zu bergen' and that consequently 'alle nationalen und heroischen Ideale, die mir bisher die treibenden Kräfte schienen, im Leidenschaftlichen verzichtet waren wie Wassertropfen auf glühenden Eisenplatten' (p. 70).

The violent encounter with the unconscious is thus seen to be sufficient to dismantle the modern notion of the self for the intellectual together with all the meta-narratives that modernity had constructed to order and map the world. In this sense, *Sturm*

prefigures later post-modern critiques.³³ Unlike Sturm, Falk is unable to live his paradox, but although he is kept at a distance, embedded deeper in the narrative than the chief protagonist, his presence is sufficient to highlight the vulnerability and provisionality of Sturm's position.

9.6 Absurdity and the Collapse of Meta-Narratives

This vulnerability is illustrated by the fate of the soldier who shot himself in the latrines. Reflecting on the suicide, Sturm considers the role of meta-narratives in anchoring the individual within a world that makes sense: 'Lenkten nicht Fixsterne seine Bahn, Ehre und Vaterland, oder war sein Leib nicht gehärtet durch die Lust am Kampfe wie durch ein Schuppenhemd, so trieb er als Molluske, als zuckendes Nervengeflecht im Hagel aus Feuer und Stahl' (pp. 14-15). Sturm implies that in the absence of ideology or *Landknechtstum*, the individual will all too often be overwhelmed by the War.

This analysis would seem to leave Sturm and his circle in a very vulnerable position. As we have seen, they can scarcely be considered *Landsknechte* and they do not share the conventional 'Fixsterne' named above — 'Ehre' is reduced to not wishing to appear a coward in front of one's comrades (p. 42); 'Vaterland' too is not, for the cosmopolitan intellectuals in Sturm's bunker, an absolute value. Sturm says: 'Wir hatten vor dem Kriege doch alle drei eine Weltanschauung, die irgendwie über das Nationale hinausgriff. Lasen in den Kaffeehäusern nicht nur die deutschen Zeitungen und hatten die Grenzen des Landes nicht nur im örtlichen Sinne überschritten' (pp. 37-38). And the narrator, describing Sturm's motivations, writes: 'Das Vaterland? Gewiß, auch Sturm hatte sich dem Rausche von 1914 nicht entziehen können, doch erst, nachdem sein Geist von der Idee des Vaterlandes abstrahiert, ahnte er die treibende Kraft in ihrer vollen Wucht' (p. 26).

³³ Compare Hutcheon, pp. 11-12: 'As Foucault and others have suggested, linked to this contesting of the unified and coherent subject is a more general questioning of *any* totalizing or homogenizing system. Provisionality and heterogeneity contaminated any neat attempts at unifying coherence [...]'.

Thus, instead of received notions of Fatherland and Honour, let alone God,³⁴ Sturm has recourse to historical abstraction. Considering that this is in turn the product of *Bildung* and in particular of 19th Century Idealist and Historicist thought — and thus of classical modernity — it is thus not surprising that this abstraction should prove to be highly problematic. Sturm even grants his circle a privileged position, centred in History, as opposed to the exile writers: ‘Auch wir versuchen, unsere Zeit zu überblicken, doch stehen wir im Zentrum, sie an der Peripherie. Wir haben uns eingeordnet in die Bewegung eines großen, notwendigen Geschehens [...]’ (p. 38).

Sturm would thus appear to have constructed a coherent and credible position. However, a closer examination of this position reveals two major problems. First, developing such a position is dependent on intellectual clarity. But the narrator declares, playing with a metaphor from *Zarathustra*, that the circumstances experienced in the War are the result of the intellect turning against itself: ‘Denn der Intellekt hatte sich überspitzt, er sprang als paradoxer Seiltänzer zwischen unüberbrückbaren Gegensätzen hin und her’ (p. 25). Second, the War is seen as a return of the Other of reason, an Other paradoxically named ‘jene unfassbare Weltvernunft’ (p. 25), a very un-Hegelian madness. The formulation of a rational theoretical or meta-narrative account of the War is thus shown to be fundamentally impossible given the circumstances which make such a formulation so urgent. Consequently, Jünger also attempts to revive the thesis of renewal through regression from *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* and writes: ‘Hier gebar ein neues Geschlecht eine neue Auffassung der Welt, in dem es durch ein uraltes Erlebnis schritt’ (p. 27) but in so doing completes the disintegration of Sturm’s attempts to construct an adequate meta-narrative.

³⁴ In his analysis of modernity, Sturm refers to the ‘Erfindung der Moral’ (p. 15). His indirect citation of Nietzsche’s central postulation that morality is a human invention and the result of social practice (what Foucault and others would term discourse) means that for Sturm God is dead since if he were not morality could not be said to have been invented. Furthermore, confronted with the body of the suicide victim, Sturm detects ‘den Hauch von Sinnlosigkeit, der sich über einer Leiche wölbt’ (p. 14), which suggests an absence of any sense of transcendence.

To compound the effective deconstruction of meta-narrative in *Sturm*, Jünger formulates Sturm's meditation on the physical vulnerability of the individual on the industrial battlefield thus:

Wozu alles Prächtige, dessen man sich erfreute, wenn es so in die eisige Versenkung schoß, wenn es sinnlos im Abgrund zersplitterte wie ein geschliffener Kelch? Gewiß, diese Zerstörung war keine Ausnahme im großen kosmischen Schwung. Krieg war wie Sturm, Hagel und Blitz, er stampfte ins Leben, achtlos wohin. [...] Aber war das ein Trost für den Einzelnen? Der lebte nur einmal im Licht, und wenn er verging, dann erlosch mit ihm auch das Bild seiner Welt. — — — (p. 48).

Two aspects are of note here. First, the text clearly states that theory disintegrates under the pressure of fear. Second, with the death of the individual 'das Bild *seiner* Welt' is said to die too — in other words, there is *no* shared, universal theory. This realisation ties in closely with Sturm's conclusion to his friends: 'Im Grunde erlebt jeder seinen eigenen Krieg. Daß ihn ein Börries von Münchhausen oder ein Löns, der hier im Regiment fiel,³⁵ anders durchschreiten als ein Lotz oder ein Trakl, versteht sich von selbst' (p. 31). The articulation of this exemplarily post-modernist pluralism not only completes the annihilation of meta-narrative, it also implies a relativisation of his own writing, undermining in retrospect the claims of *In Stahlgewittern*₁ to monumental status or of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*₁ to theorise the War.

Earlier in the text, the narrator cites from Sturm's diary where he had attempted an analysis of the intensity of the war and the concomitant loss of sense for the individual. In a quasi-sociological account reminiscent of Durkheim and Weber, Sturm analyses the relationship between the individual and the modern state, crossing the border between fiction and non-fiction — and in so doing prefigures another aspect of post-modern poetics. Sturm argues that the complexity of the division of labour in modernity has made the individual overly dependent on the state and that this dependence is what has caused the ferocity of modern warfare. The individual loses significance within the complex organisational structures of modernity (pp. 15-16). Thus, recognising technology's

³⁵ Löns, like Jünger, served in the 73rd Füsilier Regiment.

decentring of the individual, Sturm concludes: ‘Bei diesem Zusammenprall werden nicht mehr wie zur Zeit der blanken Waffe die Fähigkeiten des Einzelnen, sondern die der großen Organismen gegeneinander abgewogen. Produktion, Stand der Technik, Chemie, Schulwesen und Eisenbahnnetze [...]’ (p. 16). For Sturm, the suicide was an act of protest ‘gegen die Sklavenhalterei des modernen Staates’ (p. 16) and the resulting state of *anomie*. However, here too it is clear that modern warfare is but yet another chiffre for modernity, especially as a similar feeling of absurdity is said to haunt industrialised cities far from the front-line:

Es war im Grunde wohl dasselbe Gefühl von Sinnlosigkeit, das aus den kahlen Häuserblöcken von Fabrikstädten zuweilen in traurige Hirne sprang, jenes Gefühl, mit dem die Masse die Seele erdrückt. Und wie man dort eilig zum Zentrum schritt, um zwischen Cafés, Spiegeln und Lichtern das Gewölk der Gedanken zu splintern, so suchte man hier in Gesprächen, im Trunke und auf seltsamen Abwegen des Hirnes sich selbst zu entfliehen (p. 17).

In other words, the War and modernity itself are seen to have destroyed those cultural certainties out of which they themselves arose to leave a radical sense of absence and absurdity, post-theological, post-national, almost post-historical. Nowhere does the text offer a credible sense of redemption for modernity. For *Sturm*, the individual is left to confront this situation on his own in a world bereft of any eschatological hope whatsoever, and this confrontation all too often gives way to attempts at flight and a search for new strategies.

9.7 Alternatives

Sturm is thus concerned to examine a variety of alternative strategies to modern epistemology and meta-narrative which might offer some ways out of the personal crisis of the modern intellectual. These strategies comprise two major areas which I shall examine in turn — first, those which, one way or another, remain within modernity; and second, those which tend towards the post-modern.

9.7.1 Modern Alternatives

Those strategies which remain indebted to modernity are summed up by the narrator in his comment about Sturm: ‘Das eigentlich Fesselnde an ihm war wohl, daß er in ganz

ungewöhnlichem Maße vom Geschehen der Zeit abstrahieren konnte. So gab er den Freunden durch seinen Verkehr das, was sie unbewußt im Trunke, in ihren literarischen und erotischen Gesprächen suchten: die Flucht aus der Zeit' (p. 20). Sturm's writing in its abstraction is thus equivalent to modernity's creation of meta-narrative and we have already seen the failure of such attempts which remain fragile and provisional at best in the story.

A second attempt to counter the crisis of modernity was represented by the Expressionist movement in pictorial art, represented in *Sturm* by Hugershoff, a 'reiner Kolorist' (p. 19) who places emphasis on 'die Ekstase'. The connection to such painters as Kandinsky and Marc is obvious. Sturm too had tried his hand at a piece of modernist art in the bunker:

In Mannshöhe wies ein unvollendeter Tierfries Mammute und Elentiere im Stile der Höhlenmenschen von Crô-Magnon auf, die Sturm während der langen Regenzeit des vorigen Herbstes mit der für nachtleuchtende Grabenschilder bestimmten Phosphorfarbe gemalt und die Hugershoff durch das Bildnis einer ungefügen Venus von Willendorf vervollständigt hatte (p. 22).

However, like his writing, his mural remains incomplete. And, like modern literature, his mural is intertextual, citing archaeological finds. Its contesting of notions of originality is intensified by Hugershoff's contribution. Not only are the primitivist certainties, ironically echoing as they do much of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*' caveman fury, undermined by the very modern material in which they are painted, but Sturm takes a step into post-modern eclecticism by hanging a copy of a painting by the 17th Century Dutch landscape painter Hobbema in his bunker (p. 22) — thereby emphasising the preliminary and transience of modes of artistic production. Modernist painting is thus not seen to offer a convincing resolution but is instead, in typical post-modern fashion, subverted and ironised.

The other side to the search for a 'Flucht aus der Zeit' is intoxication. Instead of the positive approach searching for new positions to offer new certainties, intoxication offers a negative resolution by eliminating the suffering subject entirely, an approach

which, because it accepts the crisis, paradoxically leaves the assumptions of modernity intact. It is precisely in pursuit of this goal of extinguishing the ego and silencing knowledge that Sturm's characters Falk and Kiel develop a dependency on erotic and alcoholic intoxication, transgressing dominant codes of behaviour and thus leading a shadowy, decentred existence on the edges of bourgeois society. When Sturm's narrator writes of Falk: 'Manchmal wünschte er ein ganz einfaches Tier zu sein, eine Pflanze, Leben schlechthin, noch nicht im mindesten verzweigt' (p. 63), the link to Gottfried Benn's a-rational vitalism in his poem 'Gesänge' (1913) is obvious.³⁶

O daß wir unsere Urahnen wären.
Ein Klümpchen Schleim in einem warmen Moor.
Leben und Tod, Befruchten und Gebären
glitte aus unseren stummen Säften vor.³⁷

However, Falk's attempts to realise this goal are shown to be problematic. Although his exaggerated promiscuity is said to be 'der einzige Ausweg, auf dem er sich zu entrinnen hoffte' (p. 61), his sexuality does not deliver any sense of resolution. For him, as for Kiel (p. 56), each evening is essentially identical. Indeed, for Falk orgasm only seems to heighten further his sense of dissolution and alienation: 'Es war der ganze Genuß und die ganze Qual in eine Sekunde zusammengedrängt' (p. 64). Thus the vitalistic pursuit of 'das Triebhafte' (p. 57) and 'das Tierische' (p. 65) cannot be of durable consequence. Its oversimplification of the human condition makes it a flawed, closed system and thus insufficient.

³⁶ Cf. *Annäherungen*, pp. 365-66. here, Jünger recalls his encounter with literary Expressionism after the War: 'Als ich nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg zur Vorschriftenkommission kommandiert war, begann ich mich mit der neuesten Literatur zu beschäftigen. Dem war in den Lazaretten und während der Konvalenz ein Lesesturm vorausgegangen, der vor allem den Klassikern und Romantikern gegolten hatte und die nicht ohne Wirkung geblieben war. [...] [Friedrich Georg] wies mich auf die Expressionisten hin, vor allem auf Trakl, dem ich durchaus treu geblieben bin. Damals in Berlin fiel mir auch eine Novelle von Gottfried Benn in die Hand, "Gehirne" [...] Daß hier "etwas los war", spürte ich an den Gedichten, besonders an Versen, die sich dem Ungesonderten näherten [...]'. Jünger then goes on to quote the first two strophes of 'Gesänge'.

³⁷ Gottfried Benn, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Gerhard Schuster, 5 vols (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), I: *Gedichte I*, p. 23.

Having described Falk's promiscuity, Sturm shows him in an old red-light district pub, where: 'das Mittelalter [sich] verfangen [hatte] und [...] im Zeitlosen ruhte' (p. 65).

Here Falk finds pleasure in extinguishing reason with alcohol:

Die Herzen sprangen gegen die Rippen wie rote Raubtiere gegen Käfiggitter und stießen immer stärkere, immer heißere Blutwellen durch die Gehirne, diese Gehirne, die sonst so kalt und blutarm im Verständlichen hingen. [...] Das Ungeteilte, der Ursprung, wurde lebendig und schrie nach Entladung, nach einfacher und wilder Tat. Das war ein schönes, kräftiges Gefühl, ein Sichwiederfinden aus dem qualvollen Unsinn der Vernunft (pp. 66-67).

However, the intuition of a primal unity which Falk is said to experience whilst under the influence is compromised by Sturm's own physiological account of the effect of alcohol on the central nervous system. Once again the text as a whole thus refuses to take a stable position and relativises the potential of alcohol to produce a satisfactory resolution. None of the strategies, positive or negative, which retain a conservative dependence on modernity to offer closure and resolution is shown to offer any lasting promise.

9.7.2 Post-modern Alternatives

By contrast, the second group of approaches actually departs from some of the fundamental preconditions of modernity. The text's complex and multilayered dialogue with itself about the various positions taken by characters and narrators involves a turn by Jünger to the heteroglossia of the complex novel form away from the monologue of *In Stahlgewittern*₁ and the attempts at meta-narrative and theory undertaken in *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*₁. The dialogistic form of the novel is echoed directly — first by the literary group in the bunker, and second by the conversation between Falk and the woman he meets on the tram. In turning to dialogue and heterogeneity *Sturm* is moving away from the static, mapping monologue of the modern intellectual individual with his concern to produce homogeneity in a unified, coherent, logocentric world-view. It is precisely because Sturm finds within dialogue a place for difference, preliminaryity and for coming to terms with the dissolution of the cultural practices of modernity that, for all his problems, he is not infected by that radical nihilism which resulted for many intellectuals faced with the collapse of those certainties with which they had grown up.

The place of difference and prelinarity in *Sturm* finds maybe its best expression in the metaphors associated with water, flux and deserts which pervade the text at all narrative levels.³⁸ In *Sturm*, warfare produces ‘Nächte der Wüste’ (p. 25); Jünger’s generation is referred to as a ‘Welle im Meer’ (p. 25); his bunker is a ‘Kulturinsel’ in a ‘drohender Wüstenei’ (p. 33); decadent excess is ‘wie ein Feuerwerk über nächtlichen Gewässern’ (p. 33); Döhring cites the story of Sinbad’s crew landing on a giant tortoise believing it was land only for it to sink beneath them (pp. 33-34); Kiel, like Jünger’s depiction of himself in Lille in *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, stares into ‘das schmutzige Gewässer des Flusses’ (p. 55); Kiel understands ‘das Unbehagen als Wellental des Rausches’ and feels ‘heftigen Wunsch, den Überfluß seiner Kraft auszuschütten in irgendein Gefäß, ihre geschwellte Welle an irgendeinem Weib zu zerschellen’ (p. 56); Falk recalls ‘ein Dorf, in dem ein seltsames, hastiges Leben flutete’ (p. 69); under bombardment the bunker ‘bebte wie ein Schiff im Orkan’ (p. 71); and in this context even the standard military metaphor of a ‘Sturmwelle’ (p. 49) shifts in significance. Deserts with their shifting sands and the constant flux of the oceans together with the flow of water are, metaphorically, unmappable spaces and times. Thus borders dissolve and fixed points lose their meaning. Stable identities and reliable representation are impossible.

Furthermore, the ocean can also be seen, metaphorically, to be without ground, and indeed *Sturm* complains of ‘den Drang, sich in das Wesen der Welt zu bohren, die er niemals ergründen konnte’ (p. 45). In other words, these metaphors carry with them a departure from the positivist imperatives of classical modernity with which Jünger, and *Sturm*, had struggled during and after the First World War. The departure is away from certain cognitive categories and representation, away from metaphysics and meta-narrative, away from measuring reason to a world of prelinarity and difference — or, in other words, a leap outside the assumptions of the conservative imagination. Thus the narrator

³⁸ Cf. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 44: ‘Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is’.

writes of the War that: ‘wer in seinem Einfluß nur das Rohe, Barbarische erkannte, schälte genau mit der gleichen ideologischen Willkür ein einziges Attribut aus einem riesenhaften Komplex, wie der, der nur das Patriotisch-Heroische an ihm sah’ (p. 27). And for Falk too, the experience of the war dissolves into narrative differences: ‘Die einen suchten das Getane zu heiligen, die anderen zu entschuldigen, die dritten verdamnten es, allen also schien nicht ihre Empfindung, sondern das, was sie später darüber gedacht und hingelegt, das Wesentliche. Was sie erzählten, hatten sie gar nicht erlebt, es stammte – – – [sic]’ (p. 71).

9.8 Conclusion

We have thus seen how *Sturm* is a novel bathed in an entirely unexpected form of proto-post-modernism which very nearly comes to fruition, opening up cultural assumptions, swimming on the metaphorical waters over the abyss. Whilst the novel is not quite able to be playfully self-ironic, occasionally slips into conservative rhetoric or loses its way in the contradictions of modernity, it nevertheless exercises a deep-seated critique of modernity, its epistemology, its anthropology, its practices of representation. By taking individual aspects of classical modernity, which function as metonymic signifiers thereof, and elaborating their deficits, *Sturm*’s narrator is effectively deconstructing the signified, modernity itself. Through its accounts of the media, of intertextuality, its multi-perspectival narrative structure and its turn to difference and preliminarity, *Sturm* also elaborates an implicit post-modernism.

But whilst *Sturm* and Jünger were both able to keep their heads above water within this nascent post-modern text, we have also seen just how problematic this survival was, even here. Jünger’s conservative imagination was not able to complete the leap out of the cultural imperatives of modernity to the *carpe diem* mentality of post-modernism and consigns his protagonist to the oblivion of death through which Jünger attempts, in the words of Hans-Harald Müller: ‘sich von dem ausweglosen Konflikt zwischen Krieger und

Schriftsteller, zwischen ‘aktiver’ und ‘kontemplativer’ Natur zu befreien’.³⁹ *Sturm* is ultimately about much more than the split personality of the early Ernst Jünger, it is about the crisis of classical modernity and the tragic impossibility of a turn to post-modernism in 1923 Weimar Germany. It is in this context that Jünger made one final attempt to re-ground language — in his last article for the *Militärwochenblatt*, which as we shall see, again foundered spectacularly on the contradictions of the post-War conservative imagination.

³⁹ *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller*, p. 273.