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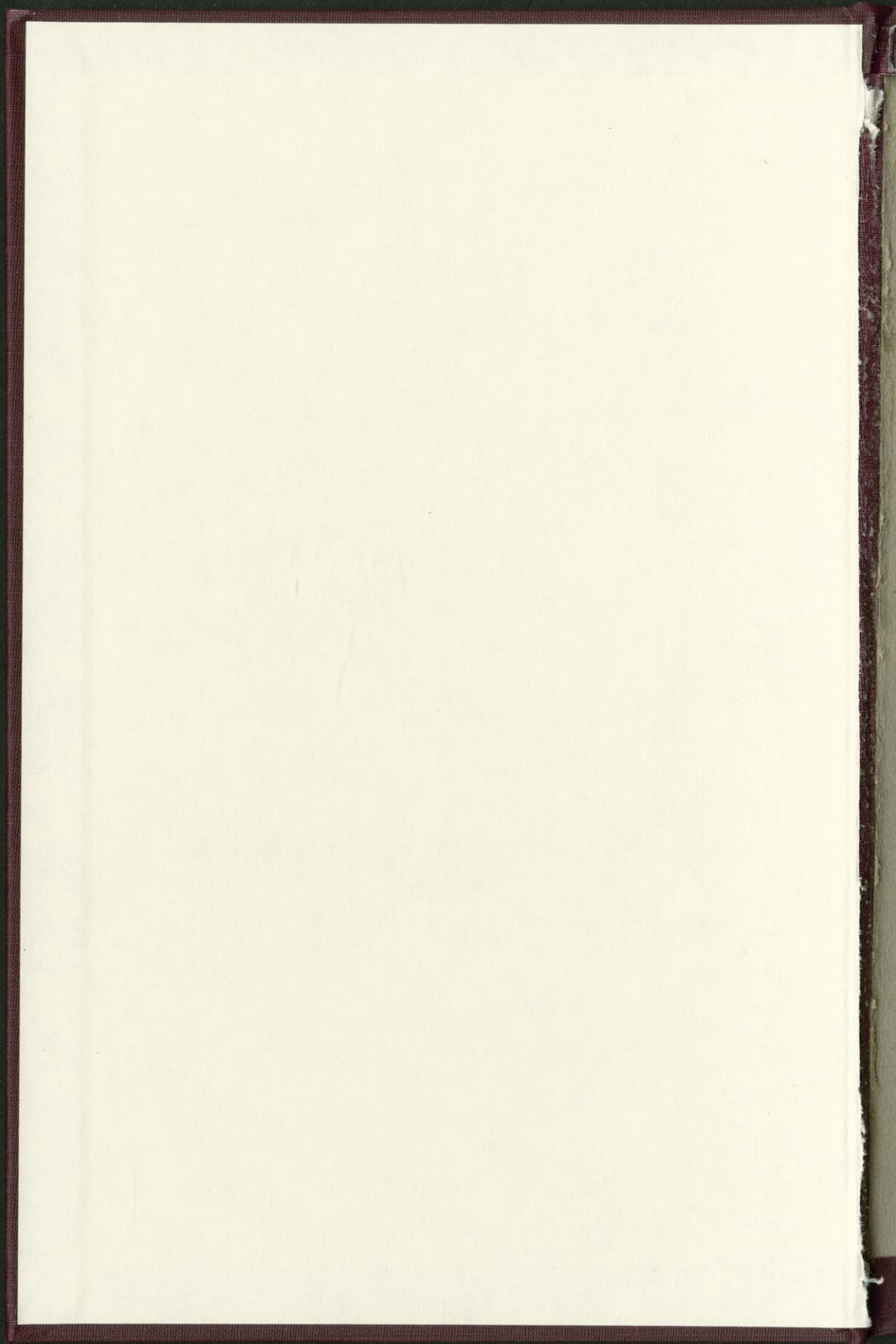
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1914/1939
German Reflections
of the
Two World Wars

Edited by
Reinhold Grimm
and
Jost Hermand



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Preface

While many celebrated, more or less nostalgically, the 200th anniversary of the onset of the French Revolution in 1789, a real, if at first silent and subdued, revolutionary change was going on in Central and Eastern Europe. And even though it may reveal itself, in the long run, as a kind of restoration as well, the experiences which brought it about and which it entailed will never be forgotten, nor can its effects and results ever be annulled.

We for our part, equally unaware of the historical development at hand, felt that another anniversary—and a dual one to boot—was of comparable noteworthiness and importance. In 1989, after all, seventy-five years had elapsed since the outbreak of World War I in 1914, and fifty years, already half a century, had passed since the outbreak of World War II in 1939. What, we decided to ask, were the reactions of German writers, artists, and intellectuals at large to those two momentous events? Or, more precisely: What reflections might have been aroused by the First and the Second World Wars, respectively, if experienced by the same person, or mirrored in the same genre or art form? A comparative diachronic approach of this kind, so we surmised, ought to be especially illuminating.

The collection of nine essays assembled in the present volume, constituting the revised and, in most cases, enlarged versions of the papers read at the Twentieth Wisconsin Workshop, will, we hope, confirm our initial assumption. The authors are Marcus Bullock (UW-Milwaukee), Reinhold Grimm (then, UW-Madison; now, University of California at Riverside), Jost Hermand (UW-Madison), Hans Peter Herrmann (Universität Freiburg, Germany), Paul Michael Lützeler (Washington University), Karl-Heinz Schoeps (University of Illinois at Urbana), Marc Silberman (UW-Madison), Hans Rudolf Vaget (Smith College), and, as usual, a Student Collective (UW-Madison). The topics they broach address the lives and works of single writers such as Gottfried Benn, Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Jünger, and Thomas Mann, as well as entire artistic forms or media and specific groups of people involved. The latter include the cinema and the graphic arts, both bourgeois and socialist women writers, and, last but not least, the “mandarins” of *Germanistik*. The discussion of the concept of a United Europe—an idea that emerged naturally, as it were, after each of those devastating wars—lent itself as a logical and, indeed, highly topical conclusion. Needless to say, it would have been easy to add further pertinent names (that of the author of *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Arc de Triomphe*, Erich Maria Remarque, comes most readily to mind) and even to include additional genres (as, for instance, the theater);

but our selection should prove—and has in fact proved during the workshop debates—to be sufficiently representative nonetheless.

The Twentieth Wisconsin Workshop, held in Madison from 29 September to 1 October 1989, itself evidently marks an anniversary of sorts. To express, at this juncture, our sincere gratitude to all the institutions and organizations that have supported us over the years, both in terms of the conferences as such and of the publication of their proceedings, seems therefore to be only fitting. In particular, we are grateful to the Max Kade Foundation, the Goethe Institute, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, and the Austrian Institute; our most heartfelt thanks, however, are once again due to the Vilas Trust Fund of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

1914/1939

The Steadfast Tin Soldier: Thomas Mann in World Wars I and II

HANS RUDOLF VAGET

It was the outbreak of war in August 1914 that catapulted Thomas Mann into the role of political writer and pamphleteer—a role which he assumed eagerly, almost deliriously, but one for which, even at age thirty-nine, he was lamentably ill-prepared. During the following four decades of his life, in Germany, Switzerland, and America, he produced a large body of political writing that must be considered essential in any assessment of his role as both public figure and novelist. Much of this writing is immediately concerned with the two great wars of his lifetime. It could even be argued that all of Mann's political utterances were occasioned by war in that they tend to be concerned with the origins and the consequences of armed conflict in Europe. In light of this overriding, almost overwhelming, presence in his life of two great wars, we may find it especially fitting that—in a letter written in the year of his death and attempting to summarize his long life—he likened himself to the Steadfast Tin Soldier. “Fundamentally,” he asserted, “it is the symbol of my life.”¹

Hans Christian Andersen's toy soldier, it will be recalled, is steadfast on account of the fabulous endurance of his loving heart. What might have prompted Thomas Mann to point to this fairy tale hero as the symbol of his life? Was it the soldierly devotion to discipline and order that he both practiced and extolled as a writer? To be sure, these qualities prove to be the undoing of Gustav von Aschenbach in *Death in Venice*, but they remained characteristic of Mann's own life and they account, to a considerable degree, for his extraordinary productivity. Or was it simply the combativeness of his nature that surfaced with the outbreak of war in 1914, and accompanied him all the way through his struggle against German fascism and the polemics of the McCarthy era and the bitter quarrels in postwar Germany? Or was it primarily the simple virtue of steadfastness? Already with Aschenbach the maxim had been “Durchhalten,” and it remained Mann's own, carrying him victoriously through the trials of exile and through his own, highly personalized war against Hitler and Nazi Germany. But perhaps it was something altogether different that constituted Thomas Mann's affinity to the Steadfast Tin Soldier—an awareness that, as an artist and a spinner of tales, he served essentially as a kind of toy. It might even have been a secret suspicion that there was a certain tinniness to his role as the artist-soldier. He did occasionally make deprecating remarks about his activities as a political preacher,

and he did insist that the artist's fundamental drive was playfulness, not virtuousness. "The political moralizings of an artist," he wrote in 1952, "have undeniably something comic about them. Moreover, his propaganda for humanitarian ideals must inevitably bring him closer than close to the platitudinous. Such has been my experience."² It is not unthinkable, finally, that Mann identified with Andersen's Steadfast Soldier because he knew he possessed the same loving heart, the same undying love that carried Andersen's hero through the accidents of his turbulent life. But if this is the case, what, or who, we have to wonder, might have been the object of Mann's undying love?

The last section of *The Magic Mountain* bears the title "The Thunderbolt." It describes the rude awakening of the hero from a way of life that can only be described as self-absorbed, irresponsible, and, above all, nonpolitical. Unlike Hans Castorp in *The Magic Mountain*, who is sent to his death on the mired fields of Flanders, Mann lived through the war contemplating the meaning of this earth-shattering event, which was taking quite a different course from what he had expected. As a result, he submitted himself to a painful learning process that proved all the more painful in that it led him to question not only the political wisdom of his fatherland but also the very culture that he so fervently aspired to represent and to epitomize. It is in this reluctant but unavoidable and necessary turn against the very foundations of his existence as a German writer that the hidden drama and, ultimately, the tragedy of Thomas Mann's life may be found. Hans Castorp dies with Schubert's song "Der Lindenbaum" on his lips. Castorp's author was to make it his business to warn, with ever increasing urgency, against the deadly lure of the *Lindenbaum* and all that it stood for: the romantic ideal of a nonpolitical life dedicated to *Bildung* and music. To Mann, the *Lindenbaum* had become an emblem whose imprint could be seen everywhere in German culture and politics. It also marked his own work up to and through the Great War. Soon thereafter, however, he began to look beyond the *Lindenbaum*, trying to find a new political habitat in the troubled democracy of the Weimar Republic. Whether he ever felt completely at home in Weimar Germany remains an open question, but there can be no doubt that his political engagement was aimed at making his new political habitat more livable, and at defending it against its numerous enemies on the Left and especially on the Right.

Mann's political writings constitute the most controversial part of his work. Notwithstanding their moral seriousness and rhetorical brilliance, they pose a number of specific problems that cluster around two larger questions: What common thread, if any, runs through Mann's widely differing, even contradictory, political utterances? And in what sense are these "political" writings? With respect to the latter question, a clear majority view has evolved since the end of World War II. It holds that, in the last analysis, Mann always remained what he purported to be at the outset of his career as a political writer: a "nonpolitical man" lacking both the knowledge and the critical tools to be a credible, responsible analyst of contemporary events. This point was made in Mann's own lifetime

by Erich Heller and Max Rychner; among the more recent proponents of this view are Ernst Keller, Hans Mayer, Walter Boehlich, Joachim Fest, and Hermann Kurzke.³

How, we may wonder, can one question the motives of Mann's active, widely appreciated opposition—appreciated at least in this country—to Hitler and National Socialism? Or his seriousness as an advocate of a socially responsible democracy? The doubters are quick to point out that Mann's lifelong indebtedness to Schopenhauer, whose philosophy considers the world an illusion, rendered him incapable of grasping the true operating forces of the real world. Others point to Mann's incurable narcissism, his "raging passion for your own self,"⁴ as his brother, Heinrich Mann, put it so viciously if accurately. Such passionate narcissism is thought to account for his tendency to seek in everything merely a reflection of his own problematic self. It prevented him, as Heinrich charged, from "ever grasping the true seriousness of other peoples' lives."⁵ Other critics dismiss Thomas Mann's political writings as too narrowly class-oriented. Firmly rooted, so the argument goes, in the liberal tradition of the 19th-century bourgeoisie, Mann was blind, if not inimical, to the interests of the working class and, thus, to the crucial historical forces of the modern world.⁶ Perhaps the most common observation, one initially made by Mann himself, reminds us that he was first of all a playful fabulist dedicated to irony and balance and so apt, in the political realm, to lean to the opposite side when the boat threatens to keel over. Such a man is unlikely to hold firm, unalterable convictions of any political persuasion.

There is some truth in all of these observations, but they do not, either individually or collectively, tell the whole truth. Granted, Mann was no historian or political theorist. As a politically active writer, however, the force of his argument rests primarily not on the precision of his analytical tools or on the rigor of his analysis, but on his moral integrity and good sense. In the situation in which he found himself, relatively simple virtues were required: the courage to speak the truth as well as the willingness to fight evil and to sacrifice personal advantages for a higher common good. In the great political crises of Germany in this century, it mattered little whether Mann was a narcissist, or a Schopenhauerian, or whatever other clever reduction one wishes to cite; what mattered was his understanding of the forces threatening Germany from within, and his courage to oppose them.

It seems to me that the minority position concerning Mann's political writing—a position represented by Alfred Andersch, Kurt Sontheimer, T. J. Reed, Lothar Pikulik, and others—is, on the whole, more persuasive. In this view, Mann's political texts constitute a body of writing that is to be counted among the most compelling articulations in German literature of the writer's moral and political responsibility—not so much despite, but rather because of the arduousness and delay of Mann's political education. In this review of Mann's writings on World War I and II, I shall refrain from relating his views to some higher level of

psychology and philosophy; instead, I shall read them simply as political commentary in the context of their time.

I

Like most of his contemporaries, Mann was surprised by the First World War, and like most German writers, professors, politicians, and ordinary citizens, he was swept up by a wave of patriotism that today strikes us as indignantly assertive and aggressive. A few days after the outbreak of hostilities, he wrote to Heinrich, who, as he well knew, could not share his enthusiasm: "I still feel as if I'm dreaming—and yet I suppose I should be ashamed that I did not think it possible and didn't see the catastrophe was bound to come."⁸ Ashamed of his utter innocence, he cleared his voice, as it were, to declare in firm, solemn, and unambiguous terms that the German declaration of war was amply justified; that he identified with the German cause; and that he thanked God for "the collapse of a peace of which he was tired, utterly tired."⁹ He did so in a strident article, "Gedanken im Kriege," and in a historical study entitled "Frederick the Great and the Grand Coalition,"¹⁰ and the subtitle of the latter—"For This Day and Hour"—signaled the author's intention to comment on the present war through his heroic portrait of Frederick. Other articles written in the same spirit followed.¹¹ These early wartime pieces were dwarfed, however, by Mann's *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*,¹² a passionately argued but monstrous 500-page book with which he established himself, for a while at least, as the most articulate spokesman of German conservatism. The *Reflections* were undertaken in response to Romain Rolland's criticism of Mann's "Gedanken im Kriege"¹³ and to Heinrich Mann's 1915 essay on Emile Zola,¹⁴ a thinly disguised, sharp polemic against his younger brother and the latter's complicity with the reactionary forces of Imperial Germany. By the time he completed the book in 1918, it had grown into an extravagant defense of himself, of Germany's right to be herself, and of what he then took to be the specifically German ideal of a culture unsullied by the political. In practical terms this meant, as it did for his spiritual guide Friedrich Nietzsche, a rejection of parliamentary democracy and of the growing dominance of politics, since the French Revolution, over social and cultural life. Mann clung to these positions even as history was proving him wrong, and history, 1918, meant the Great War—an event he had been following with increasing disappointment and mounting anxiety.

Mann's views on the war as expressed in his *Reflections* are essentially amplifications of his "Thoughts of Wartime" and his study of Frederick the Great. His starting point, and the linchpin of his argument, is Nietzsche's distinction between culture and civilization.¹⁵ By identifying Germany with *Kultur* and the western democracies with *Zivilisation*, he introduced a crucial element of chauvinism into the Nietzschean typology. This strategy is continued in Mann's *Reflections*, where he pits himself against a phantom enemy whom he dubs

Zivilisationsliterat. This phantom resembles in part Romain Rolland, and in part the revolutionary-sounding German expressionists. But above all it resembles Heinrich Mann. Having drawn the ideological battlelines in this fashion, Thomas Mann attacks Heinrich with a certain logic: he and all like-minded liberals are un-German and have betrayed their country in its hour of need.

The cultural chauvinism of Mann's wartime writings is palpable, obvious, and indisputable. Less readily recognized are their concrete political implications. Thus, Mann would invoke and glorify the example of Frederick the Great, who invaded Saxony and thereby started the Seven Years' War. There can be no doubt that this was meant, and understood, as a justification of the German invasion of Belgium in 1914 and of German aggression in principle, thereby providing ideological ammunition for the German government and the General Staff. Sadly, Mann seems to have had no qualms about siding with the generals. Holding forth on the affinity between art and warfare, and on the soldier in every artist, he explicitly defended German militarism and the kind of state it had created, arguing that militarism was to be viewed as the expression of a specifically German morality which was conservative and somehow soldierly. Nor did he show any qualms in dismissing international law by invoking the allegedly threatened right of Germany to exist and by citing German accomplishments and German might. Even racism rears its ugly head in Mann's wartime articles when he contrasts the German fighting men—"the bravest people on earth"—with the "hordes of the wilderness," and when he suggests that "the Kirghiz, Japanese, Gurka, and Hottentots" fighting on the side of the allies represented an insult to the Germans, whose great men had done so much for the liberation and refinement of mankind.¹⁶ It makes for sobering reading, even today, to see that the lofty ideals of *Bildung* and *Kultur* can coexist so smugly, on the same page, even in the same sentence, with so much prejudice and ignorance.

It is tempting to dismiss Mann's chauvinism of 1914 as a passing phase, as his way of paying tribute to the general epidemic of war fever. But the problem reaches deeper, to his understanding of history, and thus touches the very fabric of his writing. Reading his wartime articles is like watching a mind entrapped in a few obsessive thought-patterns, beating noisily against the same walls that all but blind his outlook. There is, first of all, Mann's obsession with historical parallels, such as that between the Germany of 1914 and the Prussia of 1756, or between the Seven Years' War and the First World War. Closely related to this parallel-mongering is his typically belletristic tendency to personalize political conflict, as he did with his famous dictum: "Germany today is Frederick the Great. It is his battle that we have to wage again and to win."¹⁷ Rather than "personalize" perhaps I should say "mythologize," or even "mystify." What else but a mystification is his assertion that war is to be accepted as one of the elemental forces of life, along with art, religion, and sex? The same historical perspective underlies his idea of an eternal, unchanging essence of the German character, of *Deutschtum*. Ultimately, he argues, the present war was being fought

over the question of whether Germany would be permitted to realize her metaphysical essence. Just what may be meant by this is perhaps suggested by Mann's astonishing assertion that in war all of Germany's virtue and beauty will be manifest.¹⁸ We need look no further to realize that Mann operates with a woefully deficient concept of history. In the last analysis, he discounts historical changes as deceptive surface phenomena. His idea of history, at least at this particular juncture, seems to lack the category of development; ideological entities such as *Deutschum* or *der Westen*, rather than political interests or economic needs, shape the course of history.

With the exception of his piece on Frederick the Great, Mann's wartime articles were excluded from his collected works and have never been translated into English. To Mann scholarship, they are somewhat of an embarrassment. Long after "the day and the hour" for which they were written, they still sound so distressing that several attempts have been made to interpret them psychologically, so as to soften the damage they have done to Mann's reputation. Erich Heller, for instance, suggests that Mann's wartime articles were the result of a religious crisis¹⁹—a conjecture that has found little credence. A more plausible theory proposes that Mann's articles were fueled by a nagging creative crisis which reached its height in 1913 and threw him into a depressed, almost suicidal mood.²⁰ There is some evidence to support this theory, most notably the rhetoric of rebirth that runs through his initial reactions to the war. Very much in this vein, his articles celebrate the "purification" and "liberation," through war, of the whole German nation and of the German poets with whom he felt united in the desire to serve his country.

But when all is said, when all excuses have been considered, I find it impossible not to agree with T. J. Reed's sober verdict that Mann's articles of 1914 mark "the low point of his career as a critical intellectual."²¹ Indeed, from there on, things could only improve. Mann had taken the plunge into the political arena: he joined the shouting and posturing, inexperienced and ill-informed as he was. It would not be long, however, before he began to find a more secure footing on the slippery ground on which he was treading. A first if almost imperceptible indication may be seen in his changing assessment of the war itself.

Initially, in "Gedanken im Kriege," war was greeted as a great visitation by Fate and as an opportunity for Germany to reassert her own special culture. Although war was suddenly there, like a thunderclap out of the blue, it was seen as a more or less regular occurrence, a repetition of earlier fateful visitations. In essence, things were expected to return to previous conditions, except that Germany would emerge rejuvenated and vindicated, and commanding a greatly increased respect from the other nations. What is missing from this view of war is an understanding of the current political and historical context. A year and a half into the war, Mann realized that he had erred. "In all probability," he observed in a letter to Paul Amann, "this war constitutes an all-encompassing revolution that will surpass even the revolution of 1789."²² Such a view is

echoed in his *Reflections*, where he speaks of an "earth-shaking event comparable only to the most powerful revolutions, to breakthroughs and breakdowns in world history."²³ Clearly, this view implies a complete break with the past and a new beginning. And indeed, emphasizing his pessimism, he now believed that democracy was inevitable in Germany, although he still considered it alien to the German character and destructive to German *Kultur*. This perspective on war as revolution did not prevail, however. In the later parts of the book, he reverts to a modified version of his initial position, according to which the postwar era will simply be an improvement upon the past; here a revolutionary transformation of political conditions in Germany is not part of this vision. Instead he interprets the war as an attempt, though by inappropriate means, to "renew our world and souls."²⁴ At another point he speculates "that the sides flaying one another are not basically factions, but working together under God's will, in brotherly pain, for the renewal of the world and the soul."²⁵

These are as yet minimal modifications in Mann's political views, but they confirm the fact that by entering the political arena, even as an emphatically non-political writer, he had embarked on a process of self-discovery and a search for a more realistic view of Germany. One lasting effect the war had on Mann was the heightening of his awareness that the German character was of a "tantalizingly problematical nature." At the very close of "Gedanken im Kriege," he predicted that, after the war, Germany's enemies would feel compelled to recognize this intriguing character of the Germans and, as he put it, "to study us."²⁶ As it turned out, however, it was Mann himself who felt compelled to examine the German character more closely and ever more critically, and it is very much to his credit that he did so. His *Reflections* represent a first massive attempt at giving a comprehensive account of it. The book is highly apologetic and self-congratulatory, politically naive, and morally questionable. But it also represents the beginning of an irreversible process that resulted in a growing political awareness and a growing moral commitment.

One major question about Mann's wartime articles of 1914 remains. I can only pose it here; to answer it would require a separate study. To put it simply: Is the outbreak of Mann's chauvinism in 1914 to be viewed as consistent or inconsistent with his earlier development? It seems to me that there is evidence on both sides of the issue. To come to grips with it, one would have to include a consideration, on the one hand, of Mann's youthful articles of 1895-96 for the volkish journal *Das Zwanzigste Jahrhundert* as well as his novel *Royal Highness*, and, on the other hand, *Buddenbrooks* and *Death in Venice*.

II

It is a long way, historically and geographically, but, above all, ideologically, from Mann's "Gedanken im Kriege" to the speeches and articles he wrote in America during World War II. The so-called "Great War" always remained to

him a terrible war, a period of great personal and political anguish, and the irrevocable end of an epoch in which he had grown up and for which he maintained a good deal of affection and esteem. World War II, on the other hand, was the "good war"—a war that simply had to be fought and had to be won. It afforded him satisfaction to be enlisted on the "right" side, the winning side, and when he looked back at the years of his antifascist struggle, he thought that, all things considered, it was a "good" time. Hitler, he observed, "had the great merit of producing a simplification of emotions, of calling forth a wholly unequivocal No, a clear and deadly hatred. The years of struggle against him had been morally a good era."²⁷

In the United States, to which he came in 1938 and of which he became a citizen in 1944, the general public was unaware of his dark record as a political writer. To most Americans, Thomas Mann was "a good German," an exemplary antifascist and a most highly regarded spokesman for the German exiles. It did not take long, however, for his past to catch up with him even in America. Beginning in 1938, a number of polemics appeared by such diverse figures as James T. Farrell, the novelist, Louis Araquistain, the Spanish exile politician, Henri Peyre, the Yale French Professor, and Jacques Barzun, the Columbia historian.²⁸ All referred to Mann's forgotten wartime writings and wondered aloud just how qualified an advocate of democracy, and how credible an opponent of Nazi Germany, Thomas Mann could really be. Mann was stung by such criticism, especially by Henri Peyre's suggestion that he was lobbying for a "soft peace" with Germany. In response to Peyre, Mann wrote an article, "In My Defense";²⁹ but, in a sense, most if not all of his articles and addresses from that period were written in his defense. In them, he admitted, though reluctantly, that he had been wrong in 1914; that which he now termed "my extravagance in 1914" was based on ignorance, naiveté, and "Weltfremdheit."

It is precisely this realization that lies at the heart of the matter in *Doktor Faustus*. On one level of the narrative, this novel unfolds the grim record of the last two years of World War II, including the liberation of the deathcamps. On another level, through the figure of the narrator, Serenus Zeitblom, Mann undertakes a self-critical reckoning with his own war fever of 1914 and with the whole syndrome of the special nonpolitical nature of German *Kultur*. *Doktor Faustus* thus offers a bifocal perspective on the two wars and suggests a connection with respect to the mentality behind both. Mann's last major novel aspires to be at once fictional historiography and political confession, and, as such, it may rightly be regarded as both the summary and the summit of Mann's entire work.

As during the years 1914–1918, Mann was an impassioned commentator on the issues and course of the Second World War. Unlike then, however, his vantage point was now outside Germany, and he spoke not in defense but in condemnation of his native country. He foresaw the war and began to talk about it long before its outbreak, notably in his open letter to Bonn University of 1937, in *The Coming Victory of Democracy*, with which he traveled across the United States

on his 1938 lecture tour, and in *This Peace*, written after the appeasement of Hitler at Munich in August 1938.³⁰ The German attack on Poland called forth another pamphlet, *This War*,³¹ a companion to *This Peace*. But his most sustained comments on the war came in the form of fifty-eight radio broadcasts to Germany, which cover the entire period from October 1940 to the end of the war in 1945.³² Mann wrote them at the request of the BBC; they represent his contribution to the British war effort, for which he showed a growing admiration. Mann made similar contributions, in word and in deed, to the American war effort as well. The one contribution of which he claimed he was most proud was the military service in the US Army of two of his sons, Klaus and Golo. In the last phase of the war, Mann wrote three remarkable pieces: an unsparing essay entitled "The End," written in February of 1945;³³ an equally unsparing radio message concerning the implications of the death and concentration camps, broadcast on the day of Germany's unconditional surrender;³⁴ and, finally, "Germany and the Germans," his annual address at the Library of Congress, given just two weeks after the German capitulation.³⁵

This list is far from complete. As might be expected, the war figured in almost all of Mann's private and public utterances, in the countless articles and speeches of that period, and, of course, in his letters and diaries. There is no need here to be exhaustive, since Mann's comments are drawn from a relatively small number of basic points which he amplified time and again, adjusting them to the occasion of his speeches or to the purpose of his articles. It seems to me that we may distinguish among seven such basic points; all are linked to the same fundamental conviction that National Socialism means war.

The first public expression of this conviction may be found in his famous open letter of 1937 to the Dean of Bonn university, when he, at last, decided openly to oppose Nazism from his exile in Switzerland. In that letter, Mann warned a largely disbelieving global audience that the meaning and purpose of the present regime in Germany could only be this: to get the German people ready for war and to turn them into "an instrument of war, infinitely compliant, without a single critical thought, driven by a blind and fanatical ignorance."³⁶ He was equally categorical in a radio address of January 1942, reminding his former compatriots that this war started not in 1939 but in 1933 with the ascent of Adolf Hitler to power and the cancellation of basic human rights in Germany.³⁷ Understandable as this fixation on Nazism may be in a man who was an exile from Germany, it also accounts for the obvious Eurocentricity of his outlook and his relative lack of interest in the Pacific war. What, then, are the seven main points of his writings on World War II?

1. *The issues of the war.* Mann was clearly aware of the economic motives for Germany's eastward expansion towards the oilfields of Romania and Russia, but, on the whole, he seems to have attached little importance to the economic factor. He mentions it rarely, preferring to define the issues in historical, ideological, and moral terms.

In his articles and addresses, the ideological battlelines are drawn, broadly speaking, between fascism and a socially reformed democracy. More specifically, he believed that this war would decide the fate of two mutually exclusive models for the future of Europe: the fascist concept of *Großbraumherrschaft*, i.e., a Europe divided into a few large "living spaces" based on the idea of sovereignty for a few and slavery for all other peoples; and the liberal concept of a confederation, or commonwealth, of European states that Mann defined as a "new and creative synthesis of freedom and reciprocal responsibility." Such an association of states would require from all states some sacrifices in terms of sovereignty, but in return it would offer the security and prosperity "which only a real community can provide."³⁸ We shall see how Mann's vision of a postwar Europe harks back to this concept.

2. *The special character of World War II.* Although the war appeared to be waged by Germany for territorial gains in Europe, Mann understood from the beginning that its implications transcended such traditional motivation for armed conflict. Given the radical evil of Nazi ideology, with its "hatred and contempt for humanity," what was at stake was no less than the survival of civilization itself. In order to awaken a largely isolationist America, Mann characterized the war in Europe as a "global civil war," and painted Hitler not as an ordinary enemy but as "the enemy of mankind."³⁹

Although Mann was aware of the persecution of the Jewish community in Germany, he did not derive the special character of World War II from the racial policy of the Nazi regime. But as soon as news about the extermination camps became available, he spoke out about them. For instance, in his radio message of 27 September 1942,⁴⁰ and at a mass rally in San Francisco on 18 June 1943,⁴¹ Mann predicted, quite accurately, that the death camps would forever be viewed as *the monument of the Third Reich*.⁴²

3. *The crucial role of the United States.* When Mann came to these shores, he saw to his dismay and despair that American public opinion was predominantly isolationist. The country was in no mood to get involved in the troubles and hostilities of Europe. Consequently, at most of his countless speaking engagements during his first three years in America, he argued against the traditional American isolationism and the "America first" mood, and sought to alert his audiences to the German threat to world civilization. As might be expected, Pearl Harbor came as a relief to him. As soon as Hitler declared war on the United States, Mann was certain of what he had been saying for some time—that Germany's fate was sealed. In an address at Santa Monica a week after Pearl Harbor, he confidently predicted final victory. At the same time, for tactical reasons, he somewhat redefined the basic issue of the war. Now it was the English-speaking nations defending the Bill of Rights against Germany and Japan and their mixture of volkish romanticism, feudalism, and technological sophistication.⁴³

Mann's perception of America's role in the war is inseparable from his

admiration for President Roosevelt. He knew him personally from two stays in the White House, in 1935 and 1941, and he idolized him. To Mann, the "born and destined antagonist" of Hitler was FDR, rather than Stalin or Churchill. Thus, when Hitler's fate was finally decided, and Germany surrendered, Mann noted in his diary: "No doubt to whom this victory is owed: Roosevelt."⁴⁴ I do not wish to imply that Mann ignored the heroic struggle of the Soviet Union, England, France, and the smaller European nations. He repeatedly paid tribute to them. But Mann had long been a hero-worshiper, and this characteristic tendency obviously colored his perception of Roosevelt and of the course of the war.

4. *The roots of the war.* Convinced as he was that this war was brought upon the world by Nazism, Mann's attempts to understand its ultimate cause became a search for the roots of National Socialism. He firmly believed—and he was more outspoken about it than any other German exile—that Nazism had deep roots in German history. He sought to uncover them in nationalism, in racism, and in Romanticism—the same Romanticism he had defended during the first war as uniquely German. Ill-equipped to probe into the social, political, and economic causes of the war, he focused on psychological factors, on slippery concepts such as *Deutschtum*—the German character—and the German psyche. The resulting theory of National Socialism could at best be only partial. Mann, however, defended his psychohistorical perspective as being singularly appropriate to the tortured history of the Germans.

Although Mann traced the roots of Nazism back to Romanticism—and, in *Doktor Faustus*, even to Luther and the Middle Ages—he never equated *Deutschtum* with Nazism, as Robert Vansittart in England and Rex Stout in this country were inclined to do. He was especially affirmative about the existence of another, suppressed, Germany inside the Reich, when he learned of the courageous opposition to the Nazi Regime of Hans and Inge Scholl and their friends at the University of Munich. It prompted him to assert with greater confidence than usual that the theory according to which one could not distinguish between the German people and Nazism was untenable.⁴⁵ For the most part, however, he found Lord Vansittart's theory that there was only one Germany, and that its present ugly face was authentic, rather persuasive. Eventually, he settled for a compromise that allowed him to believe that Nazism was deeply rooted in German history, without being identical with the German character and mentality. Leaning on a modified version of the Jekyll-and-Hyde model for Germany,⁴⁶ he argued that the good and the evil Germany were, in fact, the same, though not completely. Mann never managed to explain convincingly the nature of the alternative tradition in Germany. What fascinated him primarily was the transition from good to evil. Germany, he came to believe, was ill; some toxic agent, as with an infectious disease, had poisoned its once healthy and beautiful body. *Doktor Faustus* may be read as a grand narrative amplification of this richly suggestive metaphor.

Within the German exile community, Mann stood alone with such views.

They alienated him from most of his colleagues, who persuaded themselves that Germany was Hitler's first victim and that the good Germany was merely suppressed. His views on the origins of Nazism alienated him especially from Bertolt Brecht, and thus contributed to the failure of a projected German government in exile whose President Mann was intended to become.⁴⁷

5. *War aims.* Given Mann's views of the origins of the war, the supreme goal of fighting it could only be this: to cure Germany once and for all of the disease of Nazism. All other ills besetting the European states could be taken care of by these states themselves once Nazism was eradicated. This meant that Nazism—and, unfortunately, as he usually but not always added, Germany—had to be militarily defeated. Unconditional surrender, the Allies' goal only since the conference at Casablanca in January 1943, had been Mann's goal all along. Thus he defended and advocated the allied bombing raids as necessary to bring Germany to her knees, and as retribution for German atrocities. Mann insisted that Nazi rule in Europe had to be eliminated "at any price and by any means."⁴⁸ Anything and everything would be preferable to National Socialism.⁴⁹

Mann could be remarkably unsentimental when he spoke about the eventual "cleanup" of Germany. It would not be sufficient to "burn out" the Nazi pestilence; the purification of the social body must extend to those people "who have used Nazism as an instrument to satisfy their greed for power and possessions, and who must never again be in a position to make Germany the scourge of mankind."⁵⁰ He wished and hoped for massive punishment, although he realized that it was impossible to execute a million people without imitating the Nazis. "But," he added in his diary, "it is about a million people that would have to be weeded out. In my opinion, people like Haushofer, Johst, Vesper are to be counted among them."⁵¹

It should be obvious, then, that Mann was no advocate of a "soft peace" with Germany, though this view was occasionally imputed to him. On the contrary, he very much wanted Germany to be punished, and agreed in advance to whatever punitive measures the allied powers would see fit to take. This separated him even more sharply from the other members of the Free Germany Committee, especially Brecht, who penned a wicked poem to which he gave the baroque title "Upon the Nobel Prize Winner Thomas Mann Authorizing the Americans and British to Punish the German People Ten Full Years for the Crimes of the Hitler Regime."⁵² To Mann, the insistence of the other exiles on territorial integrity as the requirement for a "strong democracy in Germany" was "nothing but a patriotic effort to shield Germany from the consequences of her crimes," as he pointedly wrote to Brecht.⁵³ In an unpublished letter to his American friend Agnes E. Meyer, he elaborated:

Es gibt unter den deutschen Links-Sozialisten eine Art von patriotischer Mode, darauf zu bestehen, daß Deutschland "nichts geschehen darf." Das ist gar nicht mein Gefühl. Nach allem, was geschehen, werde ich mir über *nichts* die Haare raufen, was die Alliierten mit Deutschland anfangen, wenn es endlich bezwungen ist. Natürlich ist zu wünschen, daß nicht irreparable, die Zukunft belastende Torheiten begangen

werden. Aber rein moralisch und pädagogisch gesehen, können zunächst einmal der Fall und die Buße garnicht tief genug sein nach dem lästerlichen Übermut, der wüsten Superioritätsraserei und Gewaltphantasterei, die dieses Volk sich rauschvoll geleistet hat.⁵⁴

It seems that there came a point in Mann's thinking about the war at which his moral instincts superseded his sense of the practical. He would insist that the elimination of the Nazi regime and the liberation of Germany were not sufficient. What was needed was a complete reversal of Germany's fateful course, a conversion—something akin to the Christian notion of attrition. He called it *Reinigung*—"a purification of their social body"—and he clearly meant it in both the physical and spiritual senses of the word.⁵⁵ This brings me to the question of guilt—the most hotly debated issue in the immediate postwar years.

6. *Guilt and responsibility.* Mann believed the German people as a whole to be guilty because of their failure to recognize the true character of National Socialism, but he rejected the idea of the collective guilt of each and every German. He left no doubt, however, that he held certain classes and cliques more responsible than others. He singled out two such groups: one, "the guilt-laden power combination of Junkers, army officers, and industrialists,"⁵⁶ the other, the intellectuals. Mann was especially scornful of the intellectuals' failure to act in the face of a fascism which he judged to be "fatal to the honor of the German spirit."⁵⁷

On the whole, however, Mann preferred to speak of responsibility rather than guilt. Although he always believed that France and England bore part of the responsibility for allowing Nazism in Germany to rise, he was first of all concerned with Germany and the purification of the German people. He addressed this question repeatedly in his radio messages and articles from the last months of the war. In order for Germany to be accepted again as a member of the international community, the Germans had to acknowledge, fully and unreservedly, the horrible crimes that were committed in the name of Germany, especially the Holocaust, the extent of which was yet to be made public and common knowledge. There could be no atonement for Germany's crimes, he told them; but, Protestant moralist that he was at heart, he demanded acknowledgment of Germany's sins, as well as horror, shame, and repentance.⁵⁸ Such chastising, it seems to me, could only come from someone who still believed in the possibility of eventual grace, a prospect kept open even in the rather apocalyptic-minded *Doktor Faustus*.⁵⁹

7. *The future of Germany.* Much of the despair in Mann's political writings of the 1930s and 1940s derived from his conviction that European fascism, which had been bound for war from the start, was a fundamentally fraudulent ideology.⁶⁰ War, he argued, was "nothing but a cowardly escape from the problems of peace."⁶¹ Hence his prediction, made as early as 1932, that National Socialism would be a limited episode in German history, an anachronistic interlude, after which Germany and Europe would return to the overriding historical tasks at hand: to reform and strengthen democracy, and to work towards an integra-

tion of the European states by relinquishing some measure of national sovereignty.⁶² Naturally, he did not expect Germany to be able to begin this task immediately after the war. On the contrary, he rather expected "a long quarantine of precaution and supervision" during which "honour and equality of rights" would remain suspended for some time.⁶³ To be a German, he predicted, would not be a pleasant or easy thing.

Perhaps the most radical, and certainly the most painful, prediction Thomas Mann made about the consequences of Nazism and World War II concerned Germany as a cultural entity. From German minds had originated crimes against humanity on such an unprecedented scale that, henceforth, *alles Deutschtum* would be affected and rendered questionable. This, of course, included himself and his work. So disturbing was this realization to him that he incorporated it in his articles and radio messages towards the end of the war, as well as in *Doktor Faustus*.⁶⁴ It also made it impossible for him to savor the "victory" over Hitler and the Third Reich. Indeed, no trace of triumph is to be found in Mann's diary and letters of May 1945, just relief. On May 7, when the news of the German capitulation reached the American West Coast, he wrote in his diary: "It is not exactly euphoria that I am feeling."⁶⁵ The enormity of Germany's catastrophe and shame had cast a pall over the victory that he had so confidently predicted, and that he now felt too anguished and melancholy to savor.

As for the future of the German state, Mann urged a complete renunciation of political power at least for some time. "Power is not everything," he wrote consolingly in his radio message of 10 May 1945, "it is not even the main thing. And German greatness was never a matter of power. It was once German, and may be German again, to win respect and admiration from power by the human contribution, by the power of the sovereign spirit."⁶⁶ In the spirit of this almost Wagnerian renunciation of power, Mann voiced no objection to the dismemberment of Germany after the war. On the contrary, he defended the relevant decisions of the Big Three at the conference of Yalta as appropriate and amply justified. He had, after all, predicted and wished for something similar when, already in 1938, he advocated the transformation of the German Reich into a confederation in order to reduce its political weight and redeem it from the curse of power. Such a solution, he wrote in *This War*, "will be perhaps the fairest arrangement, and the one most adapted to the multifarious qualities of the German genius, if the German association of states were incorporated into a European association . . ."⁶⁷

All that happened in and to Germany after the war remained well within the parameters of Mann's remarkably prescient vision of 1938. He found the decisions of the Allies at Yalta and Potsdam quite in order, and no objection was heard from him to the establishment of the Oder-Neiße line as Germany's new eastern border, or against the division of both Germany and Berlin into four occupation zones. At the same time, however, he never wavered in his belief that German culture represented a unity founded in the German language and in German literature. This unity of German culture, for which Mann symboli-

cally invoked the names of Goethe and Schiller, would serve as a kind of safeguard for the eventual political unification. The present division, Mann predicted, "must and will end one day. To me it has no validity already now. I recognize no zones."⁶⁸ This was spoken in 1949, a few months before the foundation of the two separate German states.

III

In conclusion, I want to address, at least briefly, the question of consistency. How are we to make sense of the striking shift of outlook between Mann's writings from the First and the Second World War; from defender of Germany to accuser and implacable opponent; from chauvinist to internationalist; from foe to friend of democracy? Is there a common theme that allows us to see his stances of 1914 and 1939 as manifestations of one and the same underlying concern?

I believe that there is such a theme, and that it emerges when we recall that critical juncture in Mann's development which led to his surprising and—to many Germans—disappointing declaration of support for the new, fragile Weimar Republic in his famous address "Von deutscher Republik" on 15 October 1922.⁶⁹ It would, therefore, be quite misleading to date Mann's conversion to democratic ideals from his expatriation in 1936, or from his contact with American political culture. They originate in that painful period in which, reluctantly and with difficulty, he bid adieu to the world of the *Lindenbaum*. This occurred during the long aftermath of his *Reflections* and the final stages of work on *The Magic Mountain*, a period punctuated by the founding of the Weimar Republic, by several aborted revolutions, and by unprecedented political and economic turmoil. During those four years, from 1918 to 1922, Mann was groping in the dark, without a firm footing on a constantly shifting ground.

Various factors have been cited to shed light on Mann's republican conversion, but none appear to be as compelling as the assassination of Walther Rathenau on 24 June 1922—an event that shook Thomas Mann—and his reading of Ernst Troeltsch, the historian. Mann found in Troeltsch a new, intellectually and emotionally satisfying interpretation of German history. Germany, he now was made to see, had long-standing pre-romantic ties to the West which were rooted in the common European heritage of the Enlightenment. Troeltsch's posthumously published lecture, "Naturrecht und Humanität in der Weltpolitik," of which Mann wrote an enthusiastic review in 1923,⁷⁰ proved to be a true eye-opener, as T. J. Reed has demonstrated.⁷¹ It provided him with the historical and philosophical underpinnings of his new republicanism and allowed him to embrace democracy without ceasing to feel conservative. Mann now confessed that he had been dwelling "in the magic mountain of romantic aestheticism" for too long and that it was time to learn some lessons from the war. The German defeat, he argued, would prove truly dishonorable—*würdelos*—only "if it were not capable of educating us."⁷²

Mann for one was ready to learn. In the process, he acquired a new intellec-

tual-political physiognomy. It showed some of the familiar wrinkles and furrows, to be sure, but it also enabled him to put a good face upon the new political reality in Germany. His new outlook was anchored in two newfound convictions. First, he now realized that "every intellectual position is latently political"⁷³—a complete reversal of his position during the war. And second, he now acknowledged that the Romanticism he had defended so ardently when he still spoke as the "non-political" man had degenerated in Germany to a state of a disease that needed to be controlled and overcome. The conclusion he drew from these insights proved to be epochal for him: *Deutschtum*—"Germanness"—is not to be confused with the nonpolitical culture of Romanticism; there once was another, saner, Germany, humane, rational, Europeanized. Henceforth, his allegiance was to that older but potentially more progressive Germany.

When Mann arrived in New York on 21 February 1938, he declared in an interview: "Where I am, there is Germany."⁷⁴ Incredible and presumptuous as this may sound, it was not without inner logic. He had stated that much in his letter to the university at Bonn in his reference to the Nazi leaders: "They have the incredible effrontery to confuse themselves with Germany! When, after all, perhaps the moment is not far off when it will be of supreme importance to the German people not to be confused with them."⁷⁵ It appears as though he had resolved, together with his decision openly to oppose the Third Reich, to wrest the very idea of Germany from the Nazis; to be the true representative of that Germany; and to preserve it, in his literary work, through the dark years of the Nazi regime. Characteristically—and revealingly—he projected this historical mission onto the Goethe figure of his novel *Lotte in Weimar*, thereby legitimizing it and linking his opposition to Germany to a noble tradition of German self-critique: "They do not like me—so be it, I like them neither, we are quits. . . . They think they are Germany—but I am. Let the rest perish root and branch, it will survive in me."⁷⁶

Thus we begin to see the continuity in Mann's political thought. He saw himself as representing Germany, as the embodiment, as it were, of true *Deutschtum*, and he considered it his task not only to represent but to defend it against real and imaginary enemies. In 1914, he acted as the self-appointed defender of Germany's right to exist—as her Lohengrin, as it were. In 1937, and during World War II, he felt called upon to act as the *Repräsentant* and defender of Germany against the Nazis, who were corrupting and defiling everything German. Obviously, Mann's Germany of 1914 was not identical with the Germany he espoused as a universally respected exile, but his role and the claim to "representativeness" remained essentially the same. The cultural and historical entity he had in mind when he spoke his famous words, "Where I am, there is Germany," was closer to the Germany he had discovered in the crisis of 1922–23. He remained loyal to that idea of Germany as a country destined by geography and history to act as mediator between East and West, yet deeply rooted in the political culture and traditions of the West. He was as loyal to this Europeanized and "civilized"

Germany during World War II as he was proud in 1914 of the nonpolitical German *Kultur* devoted to music and *Bildung*. With such loyalty to a higher, though changing, idea of Germany in mind, it was not entirely surprising of Mann, in 1950, to concede that he had always been, and needed to be, patriotic.⁷⁷ And, indeed, it was that love for Germany—for his idea of Germany—that fueled his political engagement and that inspired him, like Andersen's Steadfast Soldier, until the end.

A final thought on the tenuous relationship between Mann's political stances in World War I and II. It is tempting to regard his chauvinistic phase, triggered as it was by the unexpected outbreak of the war, as a regrettable and embarrassing but temporary aberration of a novice. But such a short-circuited argumentation would run counter to the historical and biographical authenticity of all of Mann's political writing. One cannot have the democratic, antifascist Thomas Mann without the chauvinist and reactionary. Not only Germany was a Jekyll and a Hyde: Mann, too, shared this double existence.

It is possible, however, to see a functional link between the two sides of Mann. There is evidence enough to suggest that Mann would not, and could not, have become the early warner and uncompromising opponent of National Socialism had he not, previously, been so close to some of its thinking. As much as we may want to resist it intellectually and emotionally, it is an inescapable fact, I am afraid, that Mann's writings during World War I have their place in the prehistory of German fascism. And one may further speculate that the early chauvinistic phase—"die irrend zu überwinden war"—served as the necessary precondition for Mann's subsequent political conversion. It seems to have sensitized him to both the lure and the danger of certain fascist ideas, and thus to have immunized him against them. Mann's role in World War II could probably not be appreciated fully—neither in its political import nor in its psychological drama—without an understanding of that darker fold that was his role in World War I.

Notes

- 1 *Letters of Thomas Mann 1889-1955*, ed. and trans. by Richard and Clara Winston, intro. Richard Winston (New York, 1971), 677, letter to Agnes E. Meyer, 9 Feb. 1955.
- 2 "The Artist and Society," *The Listener* 47.1214 (5 June 1952): 912; Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke in 13 Bänden*, ed. Hans Bürgin (Frankfurt, 1960; 2d. ed. 1974) 10:396.
- 3 Cf. Erich Heller, *The Ironic German: A Study of Thomas Mann* (Boston and Toronto, 1958); Max Rychner, "Thomas Mann und die Politik," in his *Aufsätze zur Literatur* (Zurich, 1966), 251-304; Ernst Keller, *Der unpolitische Deutsche: Eine Studie zu den "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen"* (Bern and Munich, 1965); Hans Mayer, "Zur politischen Entwicklung eines Unpolitischen," in his *Thomas Mann* (Frankfurt, 1980), 348-69; Walter Boehlich, "Zu spät zu wenig: Thomas Mann und die Politik," Heinz Ludwig Arnold (ed.), *Thomas Mann: Sonderband*

- "Text und Kritik" (Munich, 1976), 45–60; Hermann Kurzke, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Irrationalität: Thomas Mann und der Konservatismus* (Würzburg, 1980); idem, "Dichtung und Politik im Werk Thomas Manns 1944–1955," *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 16 (1983): 153–69, 225–43; Joachim Fest, *Die unwissenden Magier: Über Thomas und Heinrich Mann* (Berlin, 1985).
- 4 See Heinrich Mann's letter (which he decided not to send) of 5 Jan. 1918, in *Briefwechsel 1900–1949*, ed. Hans Wysling (Frankfurt, 1984), 141. (My translation.)
 - 5 Ibid.; cf. Nigel Hamilton, *The Brothers Mann* (New Haven, 1979), 183ff.
 - 6 See Boehlich, n. 3 above.
 - 7 Cf. Alfred Andersch, "Thomas Mann als Politiker," *Texte und Zeichen* 1 (1955): 85–100; Kurt Sontheimer, *Thomas Mann und die Deutschen* (Munich, 1961); idem, "Die Emanzipation aus der Sphäre des Unpolitischen," in *Thomas Mann und München*. Fünf Vorträge von R. Baumgart et al. (Frankfurt, 1989), 51–77; T. J. Reed, *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition* (Oxford, 1974); idem, "The Writer as Historian of His Time," *The Modern Language Review* 71 (1976): 82–96; Lothar Pikulik, "Die Politisierung des Ästheten im 1. Weltkrieg," in *Thomas Mann 1875–1975: Vorträge in München—Zürich—Lübeck*, ed. Beatrix Bludau et al. (Frankfurt, 1977), 61–74.
 - 8 Letter to Heinrich Mann, 7 August 1914; *Letters*, 69.
 - 9 *GW* 13:527–45; the essay has never appeared in an English translation. Cf. Hamilton, 161ff.
 - 10 See Thomas Mann, *Three Essays*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York, 1919), 143–215.
 - 11 Cf. Thomas Mann, *Aufsätze, Reden, Essays*, 2 (1914–18), ed. Harry Matter (Berlin and Weimar, 1983): 97ff.
 - 12 Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, trans. and intro. Walter D. Morris (New York, 1983).
 - 13 See Romain Rolland, *Above the Battle*, trans. C. K. Ogden (Chicago/London, 1916) 113ff.
 - 14 Heinrich Mann, *Essays* (Hamburg, 1960), 154–240; cf. Hamilton, 168ff.
 - 15 "Kultur contra Zivilisation. —Die Höhepunkte der Kultur und der Zivilisation liegen auseinander: man soll sich über den abgründlichen Antagonismus von Kultur und Zivilisation nicht irreführen lassen. . . . Zivilisation will etwas anderes, als Kultur will: vielleicht etwas Umgekehrtes. . . ." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich, 1966) 3:837 ("Aus dem Nachlaß der achtziger Jahre").
 - 16 "An die Redaktion des 'Svenska Dagbladet,' Stockholm"; *GW* 13:551.
 - 17 "Gedanken im Kriege"; *GW* 13:533f. Cf. Winfried Hellmann, *Das Geschichtsdenken des frühen Thomas Mann* (Tübingen, 1972), 63–84.
 - 18 "Gedanken im Kriege"; *GW* 13:539.
 - 19 Erich Heller, *Thomas Mann: The Ironic German* (Cleveland/New York, 1961), 116.
 - 20 Cf. Pikulik (See no. 7, above) and Hans Wysling, "Zur Einführung," *Briefwechsel 1900–1949*, cii–lx.
 - 21 Reed, 179.
 - 22 Letter to Paul Amann, 25 Feb. 1916; Thomas Mann, *Briefe an Paul Amann*, ed. Herbert Wegener (Lübeck, 1959), 39.
 - 23 *Reflections*, 155.
 - 24 Ibid., 241.
 - 25 Ibid., 359.
 - 26 "Gedanken im Kriege"; *GW* 13:544 f.
 - 27 Thomas Mann, *The Story of a Novel: The Genesis of "Doctor Faustus"*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York, 1961), 163.
 - 28 See James T. Farrell, "Mann's Manifesto Against Fascism," *New York Herald Tribune*, 23 Dec. 1938: 8; Louis Araquistain, "Good Germans?" *The Times Literary Supplement*, 21 August 1943: 403; Henry Peyre, "Thomas Mann and the Germans," *Atlantic Monthly* 174 (July 1944): 26; Jacques Barzun, "Thomas Mann as Critic, or the Strayed Novelist," *Nation* 167 (3 July 1948): 20–21.
 - 29 *Atlantic Monthly* 174 (Oct. 1944): 100–102.
 - 30 "I Accuse the Hitler Regime," *Nation* 144 (3 June, 1937): 259–61; *The Coming Victory of Democracy*, trans. Agnes E. Meyer (New York, 1938); *This Peace*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York, 1938). These texts have been included in Thomas Mann, *Order of the Day: Political Essays and Speeches of Two Decades* (New York, 1942).
 - 31 *This War*, trans. Eric Sutton (New York, 1940).

- 32 *Listen, Germany!* Twenty-Five Radio Messages to the German People Over BBC (New York, 1943). For the complete set of messages (in German) see *GW* 11:983-1123; 13:738-47.
- 33 *The Free World* (March 1945): 15-18.
- 34 "Address to the German People," *Nation* 160 (1945): 535.
- 35 "Germany and the Germans," *Yale Review* 35 (Dec. 1945): 223-41.
- 36 *Order of the Day*, 111.
- 37 *Listen, Germany!*, 70.
- 38 *Order of the Day*, 213-17.
- 39 See Mann's address, "The Enemy of Mankind," before the American Committee for Christian German Refugees, 3 April 1939; *GW* 13:645-55; *Listen, Germany!*, 71.
- 40 *GW* 11:1050-53.
- 41 "The Fall of the European Jewry"; *GW* 13:494-98.
- 42 "Deutsche Hörer!"; *GW* 11:1106-08.
- 43 "Ansprache nach Amerikas Eintritt in den Krieg"; *GW* 13:714-16.
- 44 7 May 1945; Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1944-1946*, ed. Inge Jens (Frankfurt, 1986), 201.
- 45 "Deutsche Hörer!" 26 June 1943; *GW* 11:1075-77.
- 46 Cf. my "Kaisersaschern als geistige Lebensform: Zur Konzeption der deutschen Geschichte in Thomas Manns 'Doktor Faustus'," *Der deutsche Roman und seine historischen und politischen Bedingungen*, ed. Wolfgang Paulsen (Berlin, Munich, 1977), 201-35.
- 47 Cf. Herbert Lehnert, "Bert Brecht und Thomas Mann im Streit über Deutschland," in *Deutsche Exilliteratur seit 1933. Bd. I: Kalifornien*, ed. John M. Spalek and Joseph Strelka (Bern/Munich, 1976), 62-88; Hamilton, 327f.; James K. Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht in America* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 263-70. See also Joachim Radkau, *Die deutsche Emigration in den USA: Ihr Einfluß auf die amerikanische Europapolitik 1933-1945* (Düsseldorf, 1971), 112-25.
- 48 "Deutsche Hörer!" 28 March 1944; *GW* 11:1096-99.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 29 Nov. 1942; *GW* 11:1058-60.
- 50 *Listen, Germany!*, June 1942, 97.
- 51 *Tagebücher 1944-1946*, 5 May 1945, 199.
- 52 Cf. Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht in America*, 270.
- 53 *Letters*, 431 (letter to Bertolt Brecht, 10 Dec. 1943).
- 54 9 August 1943 (for permission to quote unpublished material I am indebted to Golo Mann).
- 55 *Listen, Germany!*, May 1942, 97.
- 56 *Letters*, 430 (letter to Bertolt Brecht, 10 Dec. 1943).
- 57 *Leiden an Deutschland*; *GW* 12:694ff.
- 58 "Deutsche Hörer!" 14 Jan. 1945; *GW* 11:1106-08.
- 59 Cf. my "Amazing Grace: Thomas Mann, Adorno, and the Faust Myth," in *Our Faust? Roots and Ramifications of a Modern German Myth*, ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Madison and London, 1987), 168-89.
- 60 *Order of the Day*, x.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 139.
- 62 "Bekenntnis zum Sozialismus"; *GW* 12:678-84.
- 63 *Listen, Germany!*, May 1942, 96f.
- 64 "Die Lager"; *GW* 12:951-53; *Doctor Faustus*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York, 1948), 481.
- 65 *Tagebücher 1944-1946*, 7 May 1945, 200.
- 66 *GW* 11:1121-23; cf. also "The End" (above, n. 33).
- 67 *Order of the Day*, 226f.
- 68 "Ansprache im Goethejahr 1949"; *GW* 11:488.
- 69 "Von deutscher Republik"; *GW* 11:811-52; *Order of the Day*, 3-45.
- 70 *GW* 12:627-29.
- 71 Reed, *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition*, 289ff.
- 72 *GW* 12:629.
- 73 "Die Stellung Freuds in der modernen Geistesgeschichte"; *GW* 10:267; *Past Masters and Other Papers*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York, 1933), 181.
- 74 "Mann Finds U.S. Sole Peace Hope," *The New York Times*, 22 Feb. 1938, 8.
- 75 *Order of the Day*, 110.
- 76 *The Beloved Returns: Lotte in Weimar*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York, 1940), 330f.
- 77 "Meine Zeit"; *GW* 11:323; "The Years of My Life," *Harper's* 201 (Oct. 1950): 250-64.

Brussels 1916: Gottfried Benn's *Urerlebnis*

REINHOLD GRIMM

At the still point of the turning world.

T. S. Eliot

On 15 December 1955, little more than six and a half months before he died, the nearly seventy-year-old poet and essayist Gottfried Benn, anticipating what was to be his last New Year's Eve, drafted a short autobiographical prose piece which he laconically titled "1956." It was published in his slim summary collection *Über mich selbst* of the same year, a volume that perhaps came out, judging from the express addition of the dates 1886 and 1956, only posthumously.

Benn's retrospective vignette evokes "drei Sylvester-Nächte" [*sic*] and "ihre geschichtliche Silhouette, ihr menschliches Geschehen": namely, those of 1900, 1914, and 1944.¹ On that first memorable night, Benn says, the very fact that a new century was beginning was felt by a boundlessly optimistic Western world to be a sensation. Everyone stayed up, he remembers; everyone celebrated, awaiting something extraordinary, indeed "eine Art Anbruch des Paradieses innen und außen."² All over Europe, festive people, like the rhapsodist Richard Dehmel whom Benn admired, raised their glasses "Schlag Mitternacht . . . zu einem grenzenlosen Glückauf ins neue Jahrhundert."³ It was, Benn muses, a great event.⁴

The other two New Year's Eves he remembers were different. Benn, who had served as a medical officer in the German Army since the outbreak of World War I, spent the last night of 1914 in Brussels in occupied Belgium. "Wir waren in einer glänzenden eleganten Stadt, einer Hauptstadt," he proudly reports:

In der berühmten wunderbaren weißen Kathedrale fand die Mitternachtsmesse statt. Das Land war katholisch, der Dom war überfüllt, die meisten mußten stehen, wir fremden Soldaten standen in Uniform zwischen ihnen, und alles gehörte in dieser Nacht zusammen.⁵

Nothing catholic, in whatever sense, graced or hallowed Benn's third memorable "Sylvesternacht [*sic*]," that of 1944; nor was there anything famous or wonderful about the building in the small—then Prussian, now Polish—town of Landsberg an der Warthe where he spent it, a soldier and medical officer again. "Es war eine Kaserne," Benn declares bluntly, continuing:

Ein schneereicher Dezember war gewesen, ungewöhnliche Kälte herrschte seit Wochen, Frost—und wir hatten nichts zu heizen. Wir hatten 100 Gramm Streichmett-

wurst als Sonderzulage erhalten . . . Am Morgen war ein schwerer Angriff auf Berlin gewesen, und man fragte sich, ob die Wohnung noch stünde und was von den wenigen Bekannten, die dort lebten, übriggeblieben war.⁶

No celebration whatsoever, not even the faint reflections of a past splendor; instead, shortages of food and of fuel, air raids, and the haunting question of bare survival. What a bleak and somber New Year's Eve! And yet, Benn recalled it as vividly as those earlier ones; it was engraved in his mind no less indelibly all the same.

That a poet should cherish fond memories of his childhood is quite understandable. But why did Benn think so frequently and, indeed, fondly of his days in Brussels and Landsberg? For, to be sure, the passages just quoted are in no way exceptional, "1956" being anything but an isolated text. Benn referred constantly, both in his writings and in his letters, to the brilliant Belgian capital under German occupation where he had resided for almost three years, and to the forlorn provincial town "jenseits der Oder-Neiße-Linie" where he had lived for at least fourteen months. Naturally, the experiences of the thirty-year-old predominate over those of the man in his fifties. As to their intensity, however, they doubtless equal each other.

Let me adduce a few examples—first, of the former, then, of the latter—in order to illustrate this dual nostalgia. As early as 1921, in his "Epilog," Benn virtually wallowed in his recollections of Brussels;⁸ as late as 1946 and 1954, respectively, he reminisced in a similar if more restrained manner. Compare: "Am 8.9. habe ich Dich gefeiert in meinen Gedanken! Vor 31 Jahren war ich in Brüssel an dem Tag" (to his daughter Nele, in a letter dated 11 November 1946).⁹ And: "Ostern 1916—da sass ich in Brüssel in jenem Haus u. schrieb 'Den Geburtstag,' so überlagern sich die Zeiten u. Schichten, berühren u. trennen sich u verlaufen alle ins Imaginäre" (to his friend F. W. Oelze, in a letter dated 23 May 1954).¹⁰ In between, in the 1920s and 1930s, we find testimonies that are even more telling. The Dutch journalist and translator Nico Rost, for instance, speaking of a visit he paid to Benn in Berlin, relates the following:

Als sich . . . herausstellte, daß ich Brüssel gut kannte, und . . . ihn fragte, wo er dort gewohnt habe, glitt zum ersten Mal ein Lächeln über sein Gesicht. Darauf sagte er sehr ernst: "Sie waren das Leben, diese Jahre—sie werden nicht wiederkommen."¹¹

Moreover, not only did Benn assure Oelze, who, likewise serving in the German Army during the Second World War, had been transferred to Belgium in 1942, "Sie werden bald in Brüssel sehr glücklich sein," but the poet also gave his friend detailed instructions concerning streets, restaurants, and cafés. In fact, he offered him the old 1914 edition of a Brussel's "Baedeker" he still owned. Describing the house where he had dwelt, and affectionately listing some of the so-called "Rönn-Novellen" he had written there, Benn asked Oelze, in all seriousness, to recite what he termed the poetic "oath" (*Schwur*) of his erstwhile elated

existence, which Benn himself had summed up—his glowing letter is too long to be quoted—in so lapidary and truly suggestive a formula as “Hochblüte.”¹²

In another letter to Oelze, dated 1 January 1939, the poet exclaimed:

Oh, diese Zeiten der Entstehung und des Selbsterlebnisses früher, diese wunderbaren Vergessenheiten, Ahnungen, Quellen, Auflockerungen von Brüssel 1916 und den Jahren nach dem Krieg in der Bellealliancestr. hier.¹³

Of course, the street in question was located in Benn's beloved Berlin, a name he expressly placed alongside that of Brussels in an earlier letter containing an equally passionate outburst, and addressed (from Hanover where he was stationed during the mid-1930s) to Ellinor Büller-Klinkowström:

Die Vorstellung, hier etwa rauszukönnen, etwa den Frühling, der anfängt, für mich allein, tief in mir, geistig noch einmal erleben zu können wie jenen Brüsseler Frühling u. einige andre Wendepunkte in Berlin, ist unaussprechbar erregend . . .¹⁴

Yet even while Benn, in his aforementioned letter to Oelze of 1942, enthusiastically praised and recommended Brussels and, above all, “die Frühlingswogen dieser abwechslungsreichen Stadt,” he came to admit nonetheless: “Wenn ich mich frage, ob ich [Brüssel] noch einmal wiedersehen möchte—ich glaube: nein!”¹⁵ The poet yearned for this city and yet shied away from it. Although he had experienced certain states of euphoria elsewhere, in the Berlin of the Weimar Republic, he must have been firmly convinced that the bliss and elation of his Belgian years would never be accorded him again in his life. Brussels and what it stood for, it seemed to Benn, was something unique, singular, incomparable which could not be repeated.

He turned out to be wrong pretty soon. Referring to the autumn of 1943 and that small town “im Osten, im Warthegau,”¹⁶ the poet confessed:

Als die Angriffe auf Berlin immer schwerer wurden, wurde meine Dienststelle nach Landsberg . . . evakuiert, ich nahm meine Frau mit, verschaffte ihr eine Stelle als Tippdame, wir wohnten in einer herrlichen Kaserne [!] hoch über der Stadt, bekamen Essen,—wie ich das im letzten Abschnitt des “[Roman des] Phänotyp” geschildert habe, zu tun war nichts mehr, ich hatte so viel Zeit wie nie in meinem Leben, las, schrieb,—eigentlich waren diese anderthalb Jahre die ruhigste und glücklichste Zeit meines Lebens.¹⁷

Benn's confession is all the more revealing since the addressee of this letter was none other than Carl Sternheim's widow Thea, one of the closest and most lasting acquaintances the poet had made while in Brussels, and, furthermore, since he also recalled in the selfsame letter of 12 August 1949 precisely his Belgian experience, stating that some of its impressions had accompanied him “durch das ganze Leben.”¹⁸ Nor is, I hasten to add, his letter to Thea Sternheim the sole evidence of the impact and importance of those one and a half years—or, more correctly, fourteen months—in the barracks of Landsberg an der Warthe. Unmistakably, in a letter penned on 7 November 1945, the poet had already confided in Oelze:

Jene 1 1/2 Jahre in Landsberg waren wohl das Glück: zwei Zimmer in der Kaserne, draussen kleine Häuser u. Wege in die Felder, die wir abends gingen, ein Frieden, den ich nie kannte [!]—ein so bescheidenes Leben u. es war das Glück . . .¹⁹

Indeed, Benn's Belgian and Prussian experiences proved to be comparable. Even though that belated happiness was clearly also due to the loving care of his (second) wife, the similarities are striking. There can be no doubt that Brussels and Landsberg, the personal bliss and creative elation of both 1914–17 and 1943–44, appeared or existed side by side with each other in the poet's memory, just as they did when he composed his three-fold New Year's vignette toward the end of 1955.

Still, their most explicit as well as momentous evocations occur, on the one hand, in Benn's "Epilog und Lyrisches Ich" (included in his volume *Gesammelte Prosa* of 1928) and, on the other, in his autobiography *Doppelleben* of 1950. In addition, we have to consult the text alluded to in Benn's letter to Thea Sternheim, i.e. the "last section"—as he surprisingly calls it, and to which I shall return—of his "Roman des Phänotyp" (included in his volume *Der Ptolemäer* of 1949).

Benn's *locus classicus* concerning Brussels, based on his "Epilog" of 1921, reads as follows:

[Ich] lebte in der Etappe einen guten Tag, war lange in Brüssel, wo Sternheim, [Otto] Flake, [Carl] Einstein, [Wilhelm] Hausenstein ihre Tage verbrachten . . . Ich war Arzt an einem Prostituiertenkrankenhaus, ein ganz isolierter Posten, lebte in einem konfiszierten Haus, elf Zimmer, allein mit meinem Burschen, hatte wenig Dienst, durfte in Zivil gehen, war mit nichts behaftet, hing an keinem, verstand die Sprache kaum; strich durch die Straßen, fremdes Volk; eigentümlicher Frühling, drei Monate ganz ohne Vergleich, was war die Kanonade von der Yser, ohne die kein Tag verging, das Leben schwang in einer Sphäre von Schweigen und Verlorenheit, ich lebte am Rande, wo das Dasein fällt und das Ich beginnt. Ich denke oft an diese Wochen zurück; sie waren das Leben, sie werden nicht wiederkommen, alles andere war Bruch.

The nostalgic writer, in point of fact, went so far as to insert the categorical statement: ". . . was ich an Literatur verfaßte, schrieb ich, mit Ausnahme der 'Morgue,' die 1912 bei A. R. Meyer erschien, im Frühjahr 1916 in Brüssel."²⁰

Benn's parallel remarks on Landsberg as contained in his *Doppelleben* are spread out over two chapters. Without any introduction, he immediately takes up the title of the first one, "Block II, Zimmer 66," explaining:

Dies war die Bezeichnung des Quartiers, das mir für eine Reihe von Monaten angewiesen war. Die Kaserne lag hoch, burgartig überragte sie die Stadt. Montsalvat, sagte ein Oberleutnant, der offenbar Opern gehört hatte, und in der Tat, unnahbar war sie zum mindesten den Schritten von Müßiggängern: 137 Stufen mußte man steigen, wenn man von der Bahnhofstraße endlich an den Fuß des Hügels gelangt war.

Also comparing these quarters to "eine Art Wüstenfort," Benn observes, both provocatively and pensively: "Nichts Träumerischeres als eine Kaserne!" And

curtly—though, significantly enough, with a fleeting reminiscence of Belgium—he summarizes:

Es ist das fünfte Kriegsjahr, und hier ist eine völlig abgeschlossene Welt, eine Art Beguinage [sic], die Kommandorufe sind etwas Äußerliches, innerhalb ist alles sehr gedämpft und still.

He goes on to ponder the town and its atmosphere ("ein besonders weiches, aurorenhaftes Licht") as well as its inhabitants and its surroundings, then contemplates the barracks once more:

Um den Exerzierschuppen die Wohnblöcke: Träume. . . . Das Wirkliche ist in die Ferne gerückt. . . . Die Blöcke werden durchflutet von den Wellen Eingezogener. . . . immer neue Wogen von Männern, neue Wogen von Blut, bestimmt, nach einigen Schüssen und Handgriffen in Richtung sogenannter Feinde in den östlichen Steppen zu verrinnen.²¹

Benn's concluding words are again reminiscent of his relations of Brussels in that they briefly enumerate some of the works he created. "In dieser Kaserne schrieb ich," the author states, "*Roman des Phänotyp*, viele Teile aus *Ausdruckswelt*, darunter *Pallas* und aus den *Statischen Gedichten*, z.B. *Ach, das ferne Land*, *September*, *Dann—Statische Gedichte* u.a."²²

The second autobiographical chapter which is relevant here is entitled "Literarisches," subtitled "Absolute Prosa," and devoted, not in part but in its entirety, to aesthetic and stylistic considerations. Yet let me overlook this for the time being, and quote instead from that allegedly "last section" of Benn's "*Roman des Phänotyp*." It bears the heading "Zusammenfassung," and its opening paragraph runs as follows:

Das Vorstehende sind die Eindrücke, Erinnerungen und Taten des Phänotyps während eines Vierteljahres, vom 20.3.1944—20.6.1944 [sic],—ein Zeitraum, der genügt, um sein Verhalten zu beschreiben. Er wohnte in einer östlichen Kaserne, bekam Truppenverpflegung, wöchentlich zwei Kommißbrote, hinlänglich Aufstrich, zweimal täglich eine Schüssel voll Suppe oder Kohlgericht, er war also wohl versorgt, sein Zimmer ging auf einen Exerzierplatz, auf dem die Allgemeinheit ihre Ideen betrieb.

I trust it will have been noticed that the core of Benn's—alias the "phenotype's"—World War II experience in Landsberg comprises exactly three months, as does that of Benn's alias Rönne's World War I experience in Brussels; also, just as the plain medical officer (*Oberarzt*) of 1914/17 mentions the battles in Flanders, so, too, does the ranking one (*Oberstarzt*) of 1943/44 bring in the Allied invasion of France: "Und in der Normandie begann die große Schlacht . . ."²³

In fact, didn't the military surgeon Diesterweg—in Benn's "Novelle" of the same name of 1918 which, although composed after his release to Berlin, still breathes his isolated existence in Brussels—experience the very same encirclement by raging battles, either near or distant, and the very same vanishing of wave after wave of men and blood? Not only the respective situations but even

the vocables employed to portray them resemble each other. Here is what Benn, in his then typically expressionist language, had to tell about this additional alter ego of his:

Standort von Diesterweg. Kanonen schlagen um sein Haus. . . . Knaben und Alternde ziehn mit Gesängen in die Schlacht. Sie glänzen, daß es an ihnen läge, daß sie es trügen, Schicksal oder Fluch. Doch hinter ihnen rauschen die Maschinen, da brüllen Erze, töcheln die Zylinder, himmäht sich die erhabene Menschheit selbst.²⁴

Or as Benn phrased it in 1944: "Zwei Sorten [of newly inducted soldiers on their way to the front] unterscheiden sich: die Sechzehnjährigen . . . und die Alten, die Fünfzig- bis Sechzigjährigen . . . Eine Kapelle, die man nicht sieht, führt vorneweg, spielt Märsche, flotte Rhythmen . . ."²⁵

However, whereas such early Bennian mouthpieces as Diesterweg and Rönne (and also Olf and Pameelen, for that matter) suffer and often break down, the "phenotype" holds himself aloof and produces "art," emulating—according to Gottfried Benn at least—the august example of Goethe during the Napoleonic Wars. In the "Gespräche" *Drei alte Männer*, another work of Benn's published in 1949, one of these old men blithely informs the young man, their interlocutor and opponent:

Goethe sitzt in Weimar und dichtet die Iphigenie, draußen tobt die Schlacht von Jena und Auerstädt [sic], sie irritiert ihn, doch er schreibt weiter, Abwegiges, aber Bleibendes, das Parzenlied.²⁶

Needless to say, what Benn had in mind was Hegel finishing his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, not Goethe completing his *Iphigenie*. But Benn's amusing mix-up cannot in the least diminish the complementary proof here supplied; rather, it illustrates and even corroborates our previous findings.

What kind of art, we ask, does the "phenotype" create in his splendid isolation? The answer is provided by the second chapter from Benn's *Doppelleben* I singled out. For we are told there in no uncertain terms:

Der Roman des Phänotyp . . . ist reichlich unverständlich, ganz besonders dadurch, daß ich ihn als Roman bezeichne. Eine Folge von sachlich und psychologisch nicht verbundenen Suiten [seventeen altogether, plus a summary and an appendix]—jeder mit einer Überschrift versehene Abschnitt steht für sich. Wenn diese Arbeit ein Problem bietet, ist es das Problem der absoluten Prosa. Einer Prosa außerhalb von Raum und Zeit, ins Imaginäre gebaut, ins Momentane, Flächige gelegt, ihr Gegenspiel ist Psychologie und Evolution.

Having briefly elaborated on this "theme" of an absolute prose, and pointed to André Gide's *Paludes* and Carl Einstein's *Bebuquin* as the lone precursors of his paradoxical novel, Benn continues:

Betrachten wir nun mein Arbeit. Der Roman ist—ich bitte den jetzt folgenden Ausdruck zu beachten—*orangenförmig* gebaut. Eine Orange besteht aus zahlreichen Sektoren,

den einzelnen Fruchtteilen, den Schnitten, alle gleich, alle nebeneinander, gleichwertig, die eine Schnitte enthält vielleicht einige Kerne mehr, die andere weniger, aber sie alle tendieren nicht in die Weite, in den Raum, sie tendieren in die Mitte, nach der weißen zähen Wurzel, die wir beim Auseinandernehmen aus der Frucht entfernen. Diese zähe Wurzel ist der Phänotyp, der Existentielle, nichts wie er, nur er, einen weiteren Zusammenhang der Teile gibt es nicht.

The eloquent autobiographer and literary critic of himself concludes:

Also der Existentielle ist da, in unserem Fall in einer Kaserne, lebt dahin, denkt dahin, spaltet sich in Gedanken und inneren Beobachtungen auf, sammelt sich aber zugleich zu Ausdrucksversuchen, zu Schöpfungstaten.

And Benn reiterates, after discussing and quoting several textual examples: "Für das Ganze beachte man nochmals: *orangenförmig—Orangestil*."²⁷

The dominant image of being encircled by, yet standing aloof from, a vast battlefield (whether figurative or real) and the description of both the circular structure and the idea of the nascent work were combined by Benn in a series of letters he sent to Oelze between the beginning of March and the end of May, 1944. Concerning his situation, we learn:

. . . ich komme mir vor wie in einem Fesselballon, die Berührung mit der Erde ist sehr flüchtig u. nur noch artefiziell [*sic*]. Dieser Fesselballon ist hier besonders deutlich, da die Kaserne hochliegt, über dem Warthe- u. Netzegau schwebt u. ich sie kaum noch verlasse, wochenlang nicht.²⁸

Shortly afterwards, Benn confirmed but also slightly varied this comparison. "Ja," he repeated, "es ist ein Fesselballon," adding "oder eine Klausur." And in regard to his growing novel, with its "amazing" (*verblüffend*) name, he reported:

Es ist natürlich kein Roman in irgendeinem schon bekannten Sinne. Es hat mit Liebe garnichts zu tun. Es ist ein Roman nach Innen, der Roman der tatsächlichen inneren Schichten in uns, aber dies nicht analysiert, sondern ausgedrückt, real vorhanden, wobei natürlich Inhalt u. Form schon wieder identisch ist, ja das ist eigentlich das ganze Problem: dass es Inhalt nicht giebt, nur Ausdruck u. Form, bzw. nur Inhalt als Ausdruck u. Form. Aber . . . es ist in keiner Weise theoretisch, vielmehr von äusserster Realistik, nämlich seelischer Tatsächlichkeit: nur so kann der heutige Typ, eben der Phänotyp, sein u sich ausdrücken.

The poet was even bold enough to forecast grave consequences, indeed changes affecting the genre as a whole, for he went on:

Ich brauche Ihnen nicht zu erwähnen, dass, wenn auch nur der leiseste Eindruck des von mir Gemeinten in einigen zur Erkenntnis wird, eine gewisse Unterlagenentziehung für Vorhergehendes eintreten müsste, dann giebt es keine psychologischen Romane usw mehr.

Likewise, Benn emphasized the brevity of his work ("Das ganze Ding wird nicht lang, vielleicht loo Seiten . . .") and further proceeded to draw up a list—albeit

an arbitrary and incomplete one—of its “kurze Abschnitte.” With the inclusion of the headings left out by him, this table of contents of the “Roman des Phänotyp” reads in proper order:

- (1) “Der Stundengott,” (2) “Gestützt auf Pascal,” (3) “Ambivalenz,” (4) “Statische Metaphysik,” (5) “Die Verneinung,” (6) “Blicke,” (7) “Dialektik,” (8) “Bedenken gegen Nietzsche,” (9) “Völliger Gegensatz zu Schifferkreisen,” (10) “Summarisches Überblicken,” (11) “Geographische Details,” (12) “Der Stadtpark,” (13) “Die Geschichte,” (14) “Libellen,” (15) “Pilger, Bettler, Affenscharen,” (16) “Bordeaux,” (17) “Blöcke,” plus “Zusammenfassung” and “Studien zur Zeitgeschichte des Phänotyps.”

Summarily labeled as a “buntes Allerlei” by their author, these headings, Benn had advised his friend, “werden Sie amüsieren”; then, turning serious and technical again, he admonished Oelze:

Bedenken Sie: eine Art Roman (ohne Handlung) und vor allem ohne tragende Figur, er geht ja davon aus, dass es Individuelle [*sic*] Züge nicht mehr giebt, warum also durch *Gestalten* etwas ausdrücken, wenn gerade die Gestalt abhanden gekommen ist? Das ist die technische Schwierigkeit. Das Hilfsmittel dagegen ist der neue Begriff: *Existentiell*, den ich gross herausstelle. Sie sehen: höchst problematisch alles, eine Bezirksbombe [*sic*] an Abwegigkeiten u. Excentric!²⁹

Finally, in the last letter of this instructive series, Benn frankly conceded that his revolutionary novel would, in all likelihood, remain a fragment. “Dieser Phänotyp,” he had realized, “wird doch wohl nur ein ‘Landsberger Fragment’ ” (which was of course to become, with the addition of the year of origin, the subtitle of the finished product). Nevertheless, Benn insisted on the essentially circular, both centrifugal and centripetal, structure of his work. Its “Anlage,” he wrote, is

ein Fächer, radial strahlen die einzelnen Ansätze aus, keine Bewegung; ein Held, der sich wenig bewegt, ein Roman im Sitzen; stellen Sie sich eine Torte vor, die Stücke gehn alle nach Innen zusammen u. gleichen sich im Teig u sind mit den gleichen Früchten belegt. Chronologie u. Psychologie sind ja eben das, was ich auszuschalten suche.

Despite his insistence, however, the innovator was unable to suppress certain qualms that disturbed him. “Schwierig alles u. vermutlich sinnlos u. das Ganze bleibt outsider,” he ended his letter,³⁰ betraying a skepticism which seems to belie not only his bold generic predictions but also his own creative confidence.

Surprisingly—or, perhaps, not so surprisingly, after all—Benn turned out to be right as well as wrong this time. But before we move on, we had better pause for a moment, and try to infer and formulate a couple of things. First and foremost, it ought to be obvious that those three months in Brussels during the spring of 1916, allegedly beyond compare, constituted not just a decisive “transformation”³¹ but rather an existential *Urerlebnis* of sorts, which then repeated

itself, indeed intensified, in Landsberg during the spring and early summer of 1944, when it also crystallized into its ultimate literary form. Second, and no less obviously, Benn's two-fold "archetypal experience" consisted of the simultaneity and juxtaposition, indeed absolute opposition, of art and artistic conception and production, on the one hand, and the phenomenon of a worldwide war, viewed as the most tempestuous manifestation of the turbulent process of history, on the other. With the latter encircling, as it were, the secluded sphere of the former, there is hardly a better and more natural image for this Bennian experience, with its combination of utter tranquillity and devastating uproar, than that of the eye of the hurricane, or the eye of the typhoon. For such an "eye" is, as any dictionary will readily instruct us, "an area like a hole in the center of a tropical cyclone marked by only light winds or complete calm with no precipitation."³² Nor are such images alien to works contemporaneous with the "Roman des Phänotyp," that paradox of a novel *tout court*, not only of a historical novel; for instance, none other than Ernst Jünger, who happened to experience similar conditions in the German Army of World War II, spoke repeatedly and—clearly—metaphorically, of the "unberührte Stille" obtaining in the spared and sheltered "Zentrum des Zyklons."³³

As already indicated, the manifold echoes and, specifically, literary repercussions of Benn's *Urerlebnis* of 1916³⁴ can be felt and traced—although they never arrive at the meteorological imagery which appears to be so fitting—throughout his subsequent career as a poet, essayist, and paradoxical narrator. Both present themselves, in near endless variations and parallels that yet are basically the same, on a personal and biographical, psychological and even physiological level, as well as geographically and chronologically, politically and technologically, globally and, indeed, cosmically. Scores of examples of this universal concentricity, this centripetal or centrifugal and, as often as not, cyclical circularity could be adduced. Thus, from the 1920s onward, and again after 1945, the writer and physician Gottfried Benn perceived and portrayed almost every apartment or doctor's office of his, and almost every café or tavern he used to frequent, as a kind of encircled center. The very titles of pertinent prose pieces such as "Mein Name ist Monroe" (with its candid assertion, "Ich . . . bin Isolationist"),³⁵ or "Der Radardenker" (with its laconic statement, "Sie sitzen hier in Ihrem Stuhl und draußen beginnt der Angriff auf die Tropen"),³⁶ or, in particular, "Der Ptolemäer" (with its dual if seemingly contradictory formula, "Ptolemäische Erde und langsam drehende Himmel" and "das Geschäft und die Halluzinationen")³⁷ ought to be sufficient. As for the subtitle of this last piece, "Berliner Novelle, 1947," it further sharpens the overall dualism, sensed so keenly by Benn, of a realm "draußen" and one "hier" (or "drinnen") in that it points to the ever tighter confinement and ever more isolated centricity ensuing from the insular situation of postwar Berlin. Twice, in his letters of 1945/46, an identical and wholly appropriate image emerges, cryptic at first sight albeit plainly decipherable: to wit, that of a "wüstenumdröhte Stille," or "tibetanische Einöde," and that of a place where the author lives "wie ein Trappist, schweigend u. wüstenum-

dröhnt."³⁸ In no way, though, were any aggravating circumstances of either a hot or a cold war necessary in order to rekindle Benn's fundamental experience, and to make him express it anew. Previous and equally characteristic texts that might be listed include, apart from poetry, "Alexanderzüge mittels Wallungen" (1924) and, most tellingly once more, "Weinhaus Wolf" (composed in 1936); as a matter of fact, the confessional essay "Urgesicht" of 1928 sketched a peacetime German capital where, warlike all the same, Benn's "Wohnung *über allem* schwebte"—high above the preceding and surrounding turmoil of history, that is, just like his figurative Landsberg "blimp" of 1944.³⁹

It is true, Benn's avowed "Dualismus des Innen u. Aussen,"⁴⁰ his "komplette Doppelexistenz"⁴¹ which even jelled into the title of his final account, *Doppelleben*, always boils down to the contrasting notions of spirit and life. But their relation, too, is constantly being grasped and depicted by him in a circular and cyclical manner. "Wer den Reigen kennt, geht ins Labor," he decreed categorically around 1940;⁴² indeed he had posited as early as 1918, if only hypothetically: "Wenn man aber lehrte, den Reigen sehen und das Leben formend überwinden . . .?"⁴³ "Zyklen," as a verse of 1925 has it, "Kreisen der Reigen . . ."⁴⁴ And what are these circulating cycles other than the "sinnwidriger Umfluß der Historie" Benn denounced,⁴⁵ its "sinnloses Peripherieren,"⁴⁶ or, in terms of his unforgettable *Urerlebnis* in Brussels, "der Kriegshistorie zirkuläres manisch-depressives Irresein"?⁴⁷ The selfsame "große Konstanz von Benns Grundüberzeugungen" (thus Beda Allemann)⁴⁸ permeates the complement and counterpart of what Benn summarily called "Zyklizismus":⁴⁹ namely, the realm of art. "Kunst," according to him, is a "zentraler und primärer Impuls";⁵⁰ the poet is, in the most literal and emphatic sense of the word, "egozentrisch";⁵¹ his, without fail, is an existence "voll reiner Zentralität."⁵² As Hanspeter Brode has shown,⁵³ such peripheral as well as central, circular as well as cyclical "Strukturzüge Bennschen Denkens"—of which Georges Poulet's ambitious volume *Les métamorphoses du cercle*⁵⁴ seems to have been totally unaware—extend from Benn's adaptation of Oswald Spengler's "Kulturkreislehre" right down to the details of a "Gehirnbeschreibung" that is so thoroughly dominated by the opposition of brain stem and cerebral cortex, or "Großhirnmantel." And yet, all this began, no question about it, in the Belgian capital of 1916. It was there that the concentric "Auslöschen aller ideologischen Spannungen bis auf die eine" of "Kunst und Geschichte,"⁵⁵ which was to pervade the entire Bennian oeuvre, originated and first came to the fore.⁵⁶ Even Benn's most palpable Brussels encounter with history and reality (the execution of a British nurse he was required to witness, and which he described, in retrospect, under the heading "Wie Miss Cavell erschossen wurde") was relegated by him to the periphery, revealing, once again, the senselessness and absurdity of the historical process.⁵⁷ For, after having performed his duties as medical officer, he calmly retreated to the eye of the hurricane, so to speak: he was convinced, as he put it as late as 1951, "dass überall Mitte ist, auch heute, wo Produktion, dichterische, entsteht."⁵⁸

To iterate, then: Benn's near obsessive perception of a universal concentricity found its most appropriate literary concretization in the structure and theme of his "Roman des Phänotyp." Not only have the relics of old-fashioned storytelling he still retained in his Belgian "novellas" (a fictional protagonist of sorts, a rudimentary plot, a third-person narrative) disappeared altogether, but their motific remnants, too, have vanished for good. With regard to these typical "Rönne" motifs, both of suffering and of trying to come to grips with the world and society, the author of *Doppelleben* wrote:

Geist und Leben sind bei mir zwei völlig getrennte Welten . . . und ich befinde mich außergewöhnlich wohl dabei, jedenfalls viel wohler als in früheren Lebensperioden, in denen ich diese innere Technik noch nicht besaß, als ich noch im lebensüblichen Sinne: litt.⁵⁹

Concerning, on the other hand, the structural and even poetological differences between the earlier and the late prose of Benn, a fleeting glance at a much-debated theory that dates from the mid-1950s might be in order. What I have in mind is, needless to say, Käte Hamburger's book *Die Logik der Dichtung*.⁶⁰ Indeed, must not its dichotomy of "mimetic" and "existential" genres be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Benn's semi-narrative "Rönne-Novellen" and his non-narrative "Roman des Phänotyp," all the more so since their author himself, as we have seen, defined the latter work not only as the epitome of "absolute prose," but also as the most consummate expression of the "existential one"? He characterized its style (or "Suprastil," as he proudly termed it) thus:

In jedem Satz: Alles. Dies Princip der *absoluten Prosa*, in der kein Satz im Zusammenhang mit psychologischen und erlebnismässigen Herkunftsaussagen mehr steht, war das Princip, das mir wahrhaft erschien. In jedem Satz: Alles. Solche Sätze sind nicht zu *verstehen*, sie enthalten nur sich selbst. Ich vermute, dass die zukünftige Prosa etwas von dieser nackten Absolutheit enthalten wird.⁶¹

Clearly, Benn did overcome the scruples that had beset him about the meaningfulness and perfection of his "Roman des Phänotyp." "[Er] scheint mir ja doch," he even proclaimed at long last, "das seltsamste u stellenweise gelungenste Stück von allen zu sein."⁶² While continuing to admit that this piece of writing was a strange, curious, truly exorbitant product, Benn nonetheless felt that it was (in part, at least) also his most exemplary, most accomplished work.

Yet there is no need here to enter into a detailed discussion of his theory and practice of such self-contained sentences, whether in his "Landsberger Fragment"⁶³ or elsewhere; remarks and investigations pertaining to both, either pedestrian⁶⁴ or pretentious,⁶⁵ are easily available. Nor do we have to discuss in depth Benn's erstwhile suspicions according to which his "Roman des Phänotyp" might be doomed to be and remain an "outsider"—although, as noted before, he proved to be right as well as wrong in that respect. Namely, Benn was undoubtedly wrong insofar as his paradoxical novel can pride itself on a whole

series of semi- to non-narrative forerunners comparable, in a way, to the precursory position and function of his "Rönne-Novellen." Paralleling, but also reaching back beyond, the two experimental avant-garde texts by Einstein and Gide he liked to cite, those related if somewhat motley prose works include Valéry's fragmentary *Monsieur Teste* (written, at intervals, since the mid-1890s) and Rilke's *Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* of 1910, along with Huysmans's *A rebours* of 1884 and even Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde* of 1799 and Xavier de Maistre's *Voyage autour de ma chambre* of 1794.⁶⁶ Conversely, however, the skeptical author of the "Roman des Phänotyp," when contemplating its outsiderness, was indisputably right insofar as his supposed innovation failed to engender any successors, to found any genuine tradition; the sole attempt at consciously emulating its theme and style, Hans Egon Holthusen's *Das Schiff: Aufzeichnungen eines Passagiers* of 1956,⁶⁷ turned out to be a piteous miscarriage, for all the high hopes Benn had entertained,⁶⁸ and the sole experiment that can be said to have come fairly close to the Bennian project structurally, Marc Saporta's *Composition no I* of 1962,⁶⁹ reveals itself as an excessive, inconsistent, and, in effect, quite trivial outgrowth of the French *nouveau roman*, without any knowledge whatsoever of Benn's intentions and/or achievements.⁷⁰ In short, Benn's regained confidence in the exemplariness of his "Roman des Phänotyp" for future literary endeavors was by no means justifiable.

But these are merely a few brief asides in conclusion. What I have tried to expound, and even hope to have demonstrated in a large measure, is the overwhelming importance of Benn's *Urerlebnis* in Brussels, as well as the formative influence it exerted upon his entire thought and work: a process culminating in his strikingly similar experience in Landsberg an der Warthe when he succeeded in transforming it, once and for all, to his "Roman des Phänotyp." Of course, an interpretation of this controversial novel would require a sizable disquisition of its own.⁷¹ One thing ought to be clear, however: Gottfried Benn's overall emblem—unbeknownst to the poet himself, yet summing up his whole life and worldview—is indeed the existential eye in the midst of the hurricane of history. Twice, during the two World Wars, it was prompted and took shape, almost explicitly, in his biography as well as in his work.⁷²

Notes

1 Gottfried Benn, *Prosa und Autobiographie in der Fassung der Erstdrucke*, with an Introduction, ed. Bruno Hillebrand (Frankfurt, 1984), 489f. Hereafter cited as *PA*.

2 *Ibid.*, 489.

3 Letter to Karl Klammer; see Reinhold Grimm, "Liliencron, Dehmel, George: Seven Unpublished Letters to Karl Klammer," *German Life and Letters*, N.S. 14 (1961): 170–74; here, 172.

- 4 Cf. *PA*, 489.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Cf. *ibid.*, 251f.
- 9 Gottfried Benn, *Ausgewählte Briefe*, with an Afterword by Max Rychner (Wiesbaden, 1957), 105.
- 10 Gottfried Benn, *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1950–1956*, with an Afterword by Harald Steinhagen (Wiesbaden/Munich, 1980), 205. Here, as in similar cases, I refrain from normalizing Benn's peculiar spelling.
- 11 Nico Rost, "Meine Begegnungen mit Gottfried Benn," in Gottfried Benn, *Den Traum alleine tragen: Neue Texte, Briefe, Dokumente*, ed. Paul Raabe and Max Niedermayer (Wiesbaden, 1966), 39–60; here, 46.
- 12 Gottfried Benn, *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1932–1945*, Foreword by F. W. Oelze, ed. Harald Steinhagen und Jürgen Schröder (Wiesbaden/Munich, 1977), 310f. (letter of 11 April 1942).
- 13 *Ibid.*, 211.
- 14 See Max Niedermayer, "Gottfried Benns Briefe aus Hannover an Ellinor Büller-Klinkowström," in *Den Traum alleine tragen*, 156–201; here, 191 (letter of 6 February 1937).
- 15 *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1932–1945*, 312.
- 16 *PA*, 489.
- 17 *Ausgewählte Briefe*, 169; as to the "Abschnitt" Benn mentions, cf. n. 23, below.
- 18 See *Ausgewählte Briefe*, 173; also, compare Gottfried Benn, *Autobiographische und vermischte Schriften*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff (Wiesbaden, 1961), 301: "Im Ersten Weltkrieg und schon Jahre vorher wohnten Sternheims in Belgien. Im Winter 1917 luden sie mich auf ihre Besitzung La Hulpe bei Brüssel ein, ich stand damals als Arzt bei der deutschen Besatzungsarmee. Auf diese Weise lernte ich den ungewöhnlichen, waldumgebenen, reichen Herrnsitz und seine Bewohner kennen, er lag in dem Ort Groenendal, der in unserem Roman sehr lebendig wird. Seitdem blieben wir in Verbindung . . ." (from Benn's review [1952] of Thea Sternheim's book *Sackgassen*).
- 19 Gottfried Benn, *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1945–1949*, ed. Harald Steinhagen und Jürgen Schröder (Wiesbaden, 1979), 6f.
- 20 *PA*, 269; cf. also 251.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 430ff.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 445.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 178f.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 71.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 431.
- 26 Gottfried Benn, *Prosa und Szenen*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff (Wiesbaden, 1958), 408.
- 27 *PA*, 446ff.
- 28 *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1932–1945*, 354 (letter of 6 March 1944).
- 29 *Ibid.*, 360f. (letter of 3 May 1944); for the "Roman des Phänotyp," compare *PA*, 149–191.
- 30 *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1932–1945*, 364 (letter of 31 May 1944).
- 31 Thus F. W. Oelze, "Erinnerungen an Gottfried Benn," *ibid.*, 7–23; here, 12. The same concept of a profound *Wandlung* is reiterated by Bruno Hillebrand, in his *Benn* (Frankfurt, 1986), 108.
- 32 *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass., 1983), 442.
- 33 See Ernst Jünger, *Strahlungen* (Tübingen, 3rd ed., 1949), 516. For more details, compare my "Innere Emigration als Lebensform," in *Exil und innere Emigration*, ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Frankfurt, 1972), 31–73; here, 71f. A rather superficial comparison of Benn's and Jünger's attitudes during this time has recently been provided by Wolfgang Paul, "Ernst Jünger und Gottfried Benn: Schriftsteller im 2. Weltkrieg," *Neue Deutsche Hefte* 32 (1985): 85–102.
- 34 For (mostly brief and cursory) biographical accounts of Benn's years in Brussels, see Friedrich Wilhelm Wodtke, *Gottfried Benn* (Stuttgart, 1962), 20–29, and Hans Egon Holthausen, *Gottfried Benn: Leben, Werk, Widerspruch 1886–1922* (Stuttgart, 1986), 209–25; also, compare the catalogue *Gottfried Benn 1886–1956* (Marbach, 1986), 60–74, and Rainer Rumold, *Gottfried Benn und der Expressionismus: Provokation des Lesers; absolute Dichtung* (Königstein, 1982), *passim*. The "annähernd vergleichbare Situation" Benn found in Landsberg is emphasized by Walter Lennig, *Gottfried Benn in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek, 1962). He concludes: "Hier atmete er auf, sammelte sich endlich ganz und setzte an zu einer der großen Produktionsperioden

seines Lebens, ebenbürtig nicht nur der zu Brüssel, sondern weit über sie hinausführend in die endgültige Meisterschaft, in die Erfüllung"; cf. 57 and 128.

- 35 Gottfried Benn, *Essays, Reden, Vorträge*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff (Wiesbaden, 1959), 401.
- 36 *PA*, 238.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 233f.; compare also *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1945-1949*, 105, where the latter phrase is in fact labeled as "Formel für meine Existenz" (letter of 27 December 1947).
- 38 See *ibid.*, 10 (letter of 16 December 1945) and *Den Traum alleine tragen*, 107 (letter to Pamela Regnier-Wedekind of 7 March 1946). As to Steinhagen and Schröder's questionable explanation of "wüstenumdröhnt," cf. *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1945-1949*, 287.
- 39 Compare *PA*, 111 (my emphasis). The single pertinent insight arrived at in the one brief investigation devoted to the "Roman des Phänotyp" (a contribution, by the way, which is both incomplete and unsatisfactory) concerns precisely the Bennian image of the "Fesselballon" as "das bezeichnende Bild des Unberührtseins durch die Geschichte"; otherwise, however, Benn's telling structural imagery is shrugged off as "bekannt" though "undurchschaubar." Cf. Hugh Ridley, "Botschaften aus dem 'untergangsgeweihten' Dritten Reich: Zur Entstehungs- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von Benns 'Roman des Phänotyp,'" *Text + Kritik* 44 (1985) (Gottfried Benn, 2d rev. ed.): 75-89; here, 77, 76, respectively. Even less pertinent, despite their intriguing titles, are Angelika Manyoni's *Consistency of Phenotype: A Study of Gottfried Benn's Views on Lyric Poetry* (Bern/Frankfurt/New York, 1983) and Ferruccio Masini's chapter "Poesia come circolo magico," in his *Gottfried Benn e il mito del nichilismo* (Padova, 1968).
- 40 See *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1932-1945*, 246 (letter of 27 September 1940); explicitly, this dualism is defined as that of the "geschichtliche Welt" and the "einsamer, innerer Rausch."
- 41 See *Ausgewählte Briefe*, 69 (letter to Erich Pfeiffer-Belli of 30 April 1936); this time, the contrast is that of everyday (exterior) life and (interior) thought and artistic endeavor, analogous to the one already cited, of "das Geschäft und die Halluzinationen."
- 42 *Essays, Reden, Vorträge*, 389.
- 43 *PA*, 82f.
- 44 Gottfried Benn, *Gedichte*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff (Wiesbaden, 1960), 86.
- 45 *PA*, 332.
- 46 *Autobiographische und vermischte Schriften*, 258.
- 47 *Essays, Reden, Vorträge*, 11.
- 48 See Beda Allemann, *Gottfried Benn: Das Problem der Geschichte* (Pfullingen, 1963), 21.
- 49 *Essays, Reden, Vorträge*, 500.
- 50 See *ibid.*, 561.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 546.
- 52 See *Den Traum alleine tragen*, 142 (letter to Käthe von Porada of 3 September 1933).
- 53 For the following, see Hanspeter Brode, "Studien zu Gottfried Benn I. Mythologie, Naturwissenschaft und Geschichtsphilosophie: Café- und Inselmotive, Gehirnbeschreibung und Kulturkreislehre bei Benn," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 46 (1972): 714-63.
- 54 Georges Poulet, *Les métamorphoses du cercle* (Paris, 1961).
- 55 *Essays, Reden, Vorträge*, 293.
- 56 In his aforementioned article, which doubtless constitutes the best and most thorough investigation of Benn's "Kreis- und Zentralvorstellungen," Brode states: "Die antinomischen Begriffe geschichtlicher und tiefer Mensch, Geist und Leben usw. stehen . . . nicht in polarem Gegensatzverhältnis zueinander, sondern sind sich wie Zentrum und Peripherie zugeordnet." Wrongly, however, he claims that the poet conceived of his ego as "exzentrisch" in Brussels. Brode clings to Benn's phrase "am Rande" while ignoring the word "Sphäre," a concept to which he ascribes so much weightiness elsewhere. On the other hand, Brode tends to overemphasize the Bennian description of the human brain within those concentric notions and images; for instance, he writes: "Sosehr auch jedem d[ies]er . . . Motive Eigenständigkeit zugebilligt werden muß, im Hintergrund steht immer Benns Gehirnbeschreibung." But precisely the latter took shape only around 1930, in essays such as "Der Aufbau der Persönlichkeit" and "Zur Problematik des Dichterischen." Biographically and/or historically speaking, Benn's all-important eye of the hurricane began to form in Brussels in the spring of 1916. I do admit, though, that his critic is right when he stresses the occasional emergence of ambiguities and even contradictions in Benn's usage of the figurative

- as well as conceptual interplay between center and periphery. Justly, Brode notes in conclusion: "In Benns Texten verschränken sich Bild und Abstraktion in einer Weise, die es nicht zuläßt, von einem System zu sprechen. Nicht die logische Schlüssigkeit streng rationaler Denkopoperationen waltet, sondern ein assoziativ ausschwingendes Reflektieren in weitgespannten Bildfeldern." Cf. esp. 714, 727, and 762.
- 57 Granted, Benn made some concessions and also differentiated historical reality; cf. *Autobiographische und vermischte Schriften*, 201: "Das große Phänomen des historischen Prozesses, sowohl als Ganzes tief und widersinnig wie im einzelnen tragisch und absurd . . ."
 - 58 *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1950-1956*, 102 (letter of 23 March 1951).
 - 59 *PA*, 454.
 - 60 Käte Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung*, 2d. rev. ed. (Stuttgart, 1968); the book was first published in 1957, one year after Benn's death.
 - 61 *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1945-1949*, 194f. (letter of 30 March 1949).
 - 62 See *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1950-1956*, 228 (letter of 16 November 1954).
 - 63 An additional chapter of the "Roman des Phänotyp" was edited posthumously by Harald Steinhagen; cf. Gottfried Benn, "Texte aus dem Nachlaß (1933-55)," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schiller-gesellschaft* 13 (1969): 98-114; here, 99ff.
 - 64 Compare, for instance, Karl Migner, *Theorie des modernen Romans: Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart, 1970), 140 et passim.
 - 65 See above all Bodo Bleinagel, *Absolute Prosa: Ihre Konzeption und Realisierung bei Gottfried Benn* (Bonn, 1969).
 - 66 For more details and further works that might qualify, see my "Romane des Phänotyp," *Akzente* 9 (1962): 463-79 (also included in my volume *Strukturen: Essays zur deutschen Literatur* [Göttingen, 1963] 74-94). Interestingly, Benn expressly rejected in this context—apart from his general dislike of Rilke—both Schlegel and Valéry. Cf. *Autobiographische und vermischte Schriften*, 278f.; *Briefe an F. W. Oelze 1932-1945*, 69 (letter of 9 September 1935); *Den Traum alleine tragen*, 129 (letter to Käthe von Porada of 26 July 1933). A recent attempt at situating Benn's "Roman des Phänotyp" historically is Margret Eifler's slim monograph *Die subjektivistische Romanform seit ihren Anfängen in der Frühromantik: Ihre Existenzialität und Anti-Narrativik am Beispiel von Rilke, Benn und Handke* (Tübingen, 1985).
 - 67 Hans Egon Holthusen, *Das Schiff: Aufzeichnungen eines Passagiers* (München, 1956). Basically, what this book presents is a love story—with death in the background—that unfolds on an ocean liner during the crossing of the Atlantic from New York to Southampton. It is, in many ways, the very opposite of what Benn had in mind, or put down in writing, even though Holthusen's stylistic imitations are almost slavish in some instances; see, in particular, 294 ("Einerseits die Verklärung des Fleisches, andererseits seine Verketzerung," etc.) and compare *PA*, 152f.
 - 68 In a letter to Holthusen dated 5 May 1956, Benn referred to "die fabellose Romansache, die Sie unter den Händen haben. Wird sicher äußerst faszinierend werden"; cf. *Ausgewählte Briefe*, 313.
 - 69 Marc Saporta, *Composition no I* (Paris, 1962).
 - 70 For a critical assessment, see my "Marc Saporta oder der Roman als Kartenspiel," *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 14 (1965): 1172-84 (also published in an English version in *Contemporary Literature* 19 [1978]: 280-99).
 - 71 For those aspects which are relevant in our context, see my companion piece entitled "The Eye of the Hurricane: Gottfried Benn's Paradox of a Historical Novel," forthcoming.
 - 72 Compare also the interesting speech of Max Rychner, *Moderne Dichter als Gegner der Geschichte* (Munich, 1963). On the one hand, Rychner seems to view the Bennian vision of "die Geschichte" too much as a linear "Strom," even though he bases his interpretation on lines such as "Was sagt ihr zu dem Wogen der Geschichte, / ist wo ein Reich, das nicht zum Abgrund kreist"; on the other hand, he provides an excellent discussion of the similarity of Benn's and Valéry's attitudes toward the phenomenon of history (my emphasis). Cf. esp. 6ff. and 13ff.; Benn's lines are from his oratorio "Das Unaufhörliche."

“Und als der Krieg im vierten Lenz . . .”: Brecht and the Two World Wars

KARL-HEINZ SCHOEPS

Much if not most of Bertolt Brecht's work deals with war or topics related to war, such as class struggle and the rise and nature of fascism. In the investigation following, I shall consider some aspects of what amounts to a central theme in Brecht's life and work, relying mainly on Brecht's own writings and words. Naturally, we have to begin with World War I, which began when Brecht was a sixteen-year-old.

World War I

Bold. Loyal. Unbending. Proud. Upright.
King of Immanuel Kant's country.
Fighting hard to preserve the noblest treasure:
Peace. Thus: fighter and soldier for peace.
He defied the world and preserved peace for the nation.—
And—he bore it most heavily.

After peace proved nothing but decline,
He was the first
To call to arms the brave German people
Consecrated, clattering, the old swords at the altar—
War, born—and bearer—of greatness
He bore most heavily.

The author of this panegyric poem entitled “Der Kaiser,” and composed to celebrate Kaiser Wilhelm II's first wartime birthday, was a young Augsburg high school student who published it under his pen name Berthold Eugen on 27 January 1915 in his hometown newspaper *Augsburger Neueste Nachrichten*.¹ It was by no means Bertolt Brecht's only outburst of national fervor, which he, at that time, shared with countless frenzied German compatriots. Young Brecht published a number of such patriotic pieces, most of them in the early months of World War I and in the *München-Augsburger Abendzeitung* under the heading “Augsburger Kriegsbriefe”—war letters from Augsburg. He sang the praises of German battalions marching “with firm, calm steps” (“mit festem, ruhigem Tritt”) into “the great war” (229). Initially the war, at least in the eyes of Berthold Eugen, enjoyed the unanimous support of all Augsburgers: “Everywhere in our beloved

Augsburg people are hard and happily at work for the fatherland. Everywhere, from the cathedral to the Ulrich's Church united in *one* thought" (14 Aug. 1914, 231). Brecht and a friend of his did their share of patriotic duty by spending a night on top of the Augsburger Perlachturm looking out for hostile planes. Reporting this event in an article in the *Augsburger Neueste Nachrichten* of 8 August 1914, signed only as "from a pupil at the Augsburg middle school," Brecht encouraged the youth of Augsburg to go and do likewise: "In conclusion I would like to ask all young people and pupils who read this: Wouldn't you like to stand guard on the tower as we did for the fatherland?" (226). Despite the news of heavy losses, Berthold Eugen felt "the wings of a great era in the air above our heads," especially when he heard of "the great heroic deeds of our armies in distant lands" (4 Sept. 1914, 241). The sixteen-year-old Brecht recorded how the citizens of Augsburg watched in silence and horror when the wounded and crippled soldiers were unloaded from trains, but, despite all hardships, he felt proud at "being allowed to live in this time which . . . purifies people and gives them inner strength" (237). After all, these were "German men, German heroes in fighting and suffering" (239). He appealed to his readers "to be strong and grow stronger with higher goals" (239). He expected more men to be wounded and to die, but, in his view, "sacrifices have to be made, even if they should be very bloody. . . . Great sacrifices must be made to reach great goals. And those great goals we Germans want are simply: to preserve our honor, to preserve our freedom, to preserve our very identity" (239f.). Songs such as "Die Wacht am Rhein," "the eternal hymn of Germanhood, to be sung as long as there is a drop of German blood left" (243), or "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles," sung by hundreds of people to commemorate the German victory in the battle of Sedan on 2 September 1870, sent patriotic shivers down young Brecht's spine. The poem "Der belgische Acker," published in *Der Erzähler* (the literary supplement of the local newspaper *Augsburger Neueste Nachrichten*) on 21 July 1915, rivals some *Blut-und-Boden* poems in its praise of the German soldier-peasants striding across the freshly conquered Belgian soil, guns at the ready, tilling and sowing:

When spring oozes forth from the sea
 Stride across acres and roads in swarming procession
 German soldiers across farmyards and meadows and fields
 With waving harrows and burrowing ploughs
 Crushing and breaking
 The emerging clods
 Throwing with full
 Fists, hot yet and swollen from the gun barrel,
 Life-giving seedcorns across the bridal soil.²

Young Brecht's patriotism, however, did not last very long. He underwent a gradual process of disillusionment, fueled by letters he received from his close

friend Caspar Neher, serving as a soldier at the front, and reflected in such poems as "Moderne Legende" or "Karsamstaglegende." As Hertha Ramthun has pointed out in her annotations to Brecht's *Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß*, his war poetry came to an end at the beginning of 1916.³ The change is best documented in Brecht's well-known essay on the topic taken from his favorite poet Horace, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori," which was assigned to his class in the school year 1915/16. Rather than express his desire to die a hero's death for the fatherland, as was expected of him, he branded this slogan as "purposeful propaganda": "Only empty heads can go that far in their vanity and talk about death as being an easy jump through the dark gate."⁴ Because Brecht dared to challenge the authority of the school and the state, his essay would have led to his expulsion from school—had it not been for the intercession of Romuald Sauer, a Benedictine priest and substitute French teacher at his school. This is also one of the first examples of a Brechtian counter-version to accepted models of writing—according to Otto Ludwig, essays on this topic were to have taken a certain prescribed form.⁵

Brecht's antiwar stance culminated in the "Legende vom toten Soldaten," a verse that was later to earn him a prominent place on the Nazis' blacklist. It was written in 1918 when, according to Brecht, "the imperial General Ludendorff, for the last time, combed through Germany, from the [river] Maas to the [river] Memel, from the [river] Etsch to the [Baltic] Belt, in search of human material for his great offensive. Seventeen- and fifty-year-old men were put in uniform and herded to the front. The term *kv*, meaning *kriegsverwendungsfähig* ["fit to go to war"] again frightened millions of families. People said: 'they even dig out the dead for service in war' " (GW 19:422).⁶ In this poem, a soldier is dug out from the cemetery, declared *kv* by the doctor, and—"als der Krieg im vierten Lenz" ("when war's fourth spring arrived")—dragged to the front in order to die a "hero's death" all over again. The stench of his decay is drowned in incense, his muddy shroud is painted over with the imperial colors black, white, and red, and his miserable appearance is shielded from the public by officials in coattails, thus indicating the complicity of the church, the military, and the state in the imperialistic war effort.⁷

Brecht's personal experience with war duty was limited to a stint in the local military hospital in Augsburg, where he served in ward D, for venereal diseases from 1 October 1918 to 9 January 1919.⁸ His own description of how he had to care for the mutilated soldiers from the front (which he later gave to Serge Tretyakov) is misleading but nevertheless widely circulated.⁹ While "working" in this special ward, he even dedicated a poem "to the gentlemen of ward D": "O how strongly burned the flames of your love / when you were young and full of fire . . ."¹⁰ Unlike his brother Walter, who, in July of 1918, volunteered for the Augsburg-based 3rd Bavarian regiment, then suffering heavy losses in the battle of Verdun,¹¹ Bertolt Brecht made every attempt to avoid military duty—with the active support of his otherwise quite patriotic father. Since medical

students were usually drafted as medics rather than fighting men, Brecht switched from literature to medicine while at the University of Munich. As he wrote to Caspar Neher on 11 May 1918: "Gunner or Medic? I'd rather collect feet and such things than lose any."¹² According to eyewitnesses, Brecht must have been an incredibly sloppy soldier. He wore his uniform like a costume, with yellow civilian shoes, no military belt (hands in his pockets to hold up his pants), often a pullover instead of a jacket, and mostly without a cap.¹³ Occasionally, he even sent his parents' maid to the hospital in order to substitute for him.¹⁴

When communist revolutions broke out in many parts of Germany after the lost war, Brecht showed little interest in them. In Munich, military barracks were stormed and ransacked, the main station was occupied by revolutionary soldiers, and a new Bavarian government of a council of workers and soldiers under Kurt Eisner was formed on 7 November of 1918. On the evening of the following day, workers and peasants elected Ernst Niekisch, the editor of the *Schwäbische Volkszeitung*, chairman of the Augsburg council of workers and soldiers. For a short period of time, Brecht, representing the military hospital, was a member of this body, albeit not a very active one. Although Eisner had decreed that men born in 1898 and 1899 were not to be dismissed, Brecht managed to be discharged from the army on 9 January 1919. He was, however, a politically interested observer; he attended leftist political meetings and was a member of the USPD, the Independent Socialist Party, for a short time. Brecht even composed a poem about a soldier in the Red Army, i.e., the revolutionary Red Army of the council-republic of Bavaria, "Gesang des Soldaten der roten Armee"; it was written in 1919, first published in 1925 in the journal *Das Kunstblatt*,¹⁵ and again in 1927 in the "First Lesson" of his *Hauspostille*. This poem, though, is a rather unflattering portrait of the revolution, depicting the sufferings of the red soldier fighting for a freedom that "never came":

And with our body hard from rain
And with our heart all scarred by ice
And with our bloodstained empty hands we
Come grinning into your paradise.¹⁶

After Kurt Eisner was murdered on 21 February 1919, Brecht joined the parade of mourners. But he was more interested in trying to make money, since his girlfriend Paula Banholzer ("Bie") was expecting his child.¹⁷ The play that was to earn him the badly needed money¹⁸ was *Spartakus*, later renamed *Trommeln in der Nacht* at Martha Feuchtwanger's suggestion. Despite the play's revolutionary title, the revolution takes a back seat to the personal happiness of Kragler, the main character. Kragler returns from war to find his girlfriend Anna pregnant with the war profiteer Murk's child, but he takes her back and goes with her into "the great wide bed" instead of fighting for the revolution in the streets. In early May 1919, when the revolutionary government in Munich was crushed by reactionary forces which included his brother Walter (who participated in the

battle for Munich in the ranks of the Freikorps Epp¹⁹, Brecht was busily penning his hedonistic play *Baal*. In 1920, Brecht summarized his impressions of the defeated Germany after World War I in a poem "Deutschland, Du Blondes Bleiches":

Germany, you blond pale creature
With wild clouds and a gentle brow
What happened in your silent skies?
You have become the carrion pit of Europe.

Vultures over you!
Beasts tear your good body
The dying smear you with your filth
And their water
Wets your fields. Fields!

How gentle your rivers once
Now poisoned by purple anilin.
With their bare teeth children root
Your cereals up, they're
Hungry.

For the disillusioned young Brecht, the answer to Germany's problems was America:

Oh carrion land, misery hole!
Shame strangles the remembrance of you
And in the young men whom
You have not ruined
America awakens.²⁰

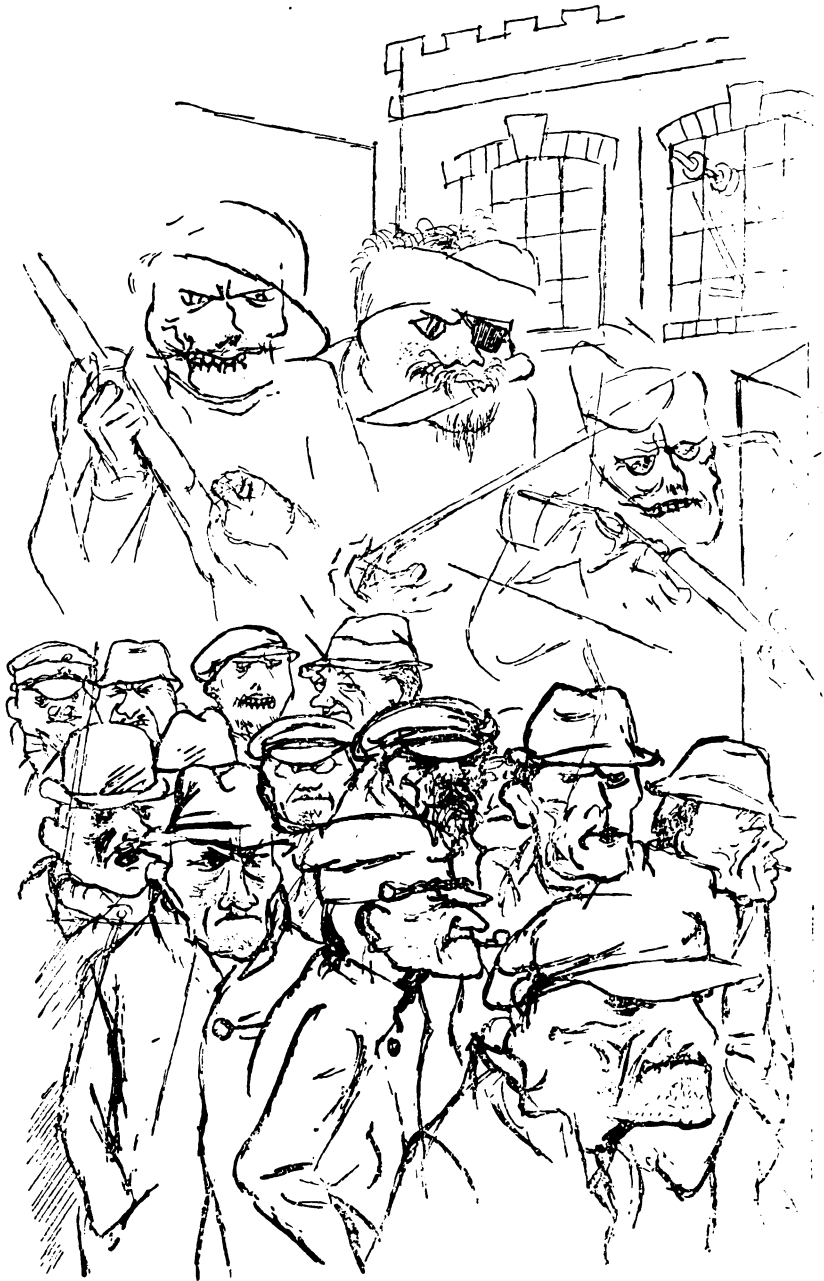
After his conversion to Marxism at the end of the 1920s, Brecht began work in a genre that assumed great significance in his later work: political literature for children. In 1932, he published a series of didactic poems for children with illustrations by George Grosz under the title *Die drei Soldaten* (in *Versuche*, vol. 6 as "Versuch" no. 14). These fourteen poems tell the story of three soldiers from World War I who missed the end of the war and now turn their guns on their own people in the invisible guises of "Hunger," "Accident," and "Cough" (GW 8:342).²¹ They have recognized that they were exploited in a war that was fought for the benefit of the rich: "When the fourth year came / They realized / That it was a war of the rich / And that the rich conducted war only / So that they could become richer" (GW 8:341). Instead of fighting the external enemy, the three soldiers decide to fight the internal one: the shooting war of World War I is to be turned into class struggle, since the deaths from poverty, exploitation, and disease claimed more victims than World War I. But the three allegorical soldiers do not turn their guns on the rich, who are the cause of such misery, but on the poor for tolerating it. Brecht wanted the poems to be read aloud to



1. From poem no. 1: "The Three Soldiers and a Cannon."



2. From poem no. 2: "The Three Soldiers and the Church." A soldier tempts a hungry baker's boy to eat one of the rolls destined for the rich, but the boy refuses because as a good Christian he doesn't take what belongs to someone else.



3. From poem no. 7: "The Three Soldiers and Medicine." Hungry and sick workers are being attacked by soldiers before the closed gates of a factory.



4. From poem no. 13: “The Three Soldiers and Class War.”



5. From poem no. 14: "The Three Soldiers in the City of Moscow." The soldiers are led to their execution.

children so that they could ask questions about them. From this time on, the connection between external war and internal class struggle was to be the basis of all of Brecht's works dealing with war. While the play *Mann ist Mann* (1924-26) merely shows the conversion of a simple dockworker into a human fighting machine, the poems of *Die drei Soldaten* identify capitalism as the cause of wars. Structurally, this children's book points to some of Brecht's later works that use the combination of pictures and words very effectively, e.g., *Die Kriegsfibel* ("The War Primer") and his *Arbeitsjournal*.

World War II

Brecht experienced the outbreak of World War II in Lidingö in Sweden, where he had moved in May 1939 from his exile under the "thatched roof" of his house in Skovsbostrand; after Hitler's moves into Czechoslovakia and Austria, a further sojourn in Denmark had become too dangerous for him. On 1 September 1939, the day World War II began with Hitler's invasion of Poland, Brecht listened intently to both German and British radio broadcasts. The airwaves from Germany were filled with Hitler's words and military marching music "to set the mood for dying," as Brecht noted in his *Arbeitsjournal* on that day.²² Those from England gave instructions for the evacuation of three million people from the city of London. Brecht was convinced that the Western powers would not actively engage in war with Hitler, and that they would quickly sign a peace agreement with him after his victory over Poland. When the Hitler-Stalin pact, signed on 23 August 1939, sent shock waves through the world, especially the communist camp, Brecht defended Stalin by pointing to the likelihood of Western inaction in case Hitler attacked the Soviet Union. As Brecht saw it, the pact allowed Stalin to buy time to prepare for the inevitable war against fascism. He conceded, however, that the Soviet Union now "carried the terrible stigma of aiding fascism, the wildest part of capitalism and the one most hostile toward workers" (*AJ*, 62, 9 Sept. 1939). In his opinion, the Soviet Union simply had no other choice since it was unprepared for war and unable to count on support from the West although it would now pay the terrible price "of leaving the proletariat of the world without guiding words [*Losungen*], hopes, and assistance" (*AJ*, 62). As historians have pointed out, Brecht's arguments were not entirely without merit, if we consider the concessions the West made to Hitler at Munich without consulting the Soviet Union, as well as Western inaction in the face of Hitler's aggression against Czechoslovakia and Austria. Since Hitler also conducted negotiations with Britain at the same time he negotiated with Stalin, Stalin feared an agreement of the capitalist world at Moscow's expense.²³

Brecht was, of course, not surprised when World War II broke out in 1939. For him, war was certain when Hitler came to power in 1933. In his opinion, the year 1939 was the logical extension of 1933. The internal war of fascist aggression that began in 1933 turned into an external one in 1939, as he pointed

out in an essay entitled "The Other Germany" (written in 1943): "Hitler ravaged his own country before he ravaged other countries; and the plight of Poland, Greece, or Norway is scarcely worse than that of Germany. He made prisoners of war in his own country; he kept whole armies in concentration camps. In 1939 these armies numbered 200,000—more Germans than the Russians took at Stalingrad. These 200,000 do not comprise the whole of the other Germany. They are only one detachment of its forces" (*GW* 20:283f.).²⁴ Brecht sincerely believed that the German people were the first victims of Nazi aggression (see *GW* 20:282); like other nations, the German nation had to be duped by propaganda and kept down by the police and the military: "The truth is that they [the Nazis] have defeated the Germans as they have defeated the Czechoslovakians or the French. They have subjugated the German people with police power and propaganda just as they have subjugated foreign peoples with military might and false promises" (*GW* 20:283). Besides police and propaganda, an army of secret agents was needed to control the German people: "Germany, our home land [*Heimat*], has turned into a nation of 2 million spies and 80 million spied upon" (*GW* 20:248). As history has shown, Brecht's high opinion of the German people was based more on the wishful thinking of a German Marxist in Western exile than on reality.

After World War II had started, he took great pains to explain why the war that the German people supposedly did not support was so well fought. For example, he discounted the valor and bravery of individual German soldiers when he claimed that technology, rather than men, was responsible for the German fighting power: "The regime . . . left the conduct of the war to technology, not to individual bravery. The soldiers were placed on vehicles, the vehicles were launched against the enemy at such a speed that no soldier dared to jump off. Others were stuffed into planes and dropped into the middle of the enemy where they had no alternative but to fight in order to save their own skins" (*GW* 20:274).²⁵ In a speech from around 1936, Brecht had already attempted to answer the question as to why so many Germans supported Hitler's policies. People followed Hitler, Brecht maintained, because they could identify with his analysis of Germany's miserable condition, both politically and economically. By 1936, according to Brecht, most people realized that Hitler's solution to reduce unemployment meant preparation for war. To them, however, this seemed the only solution to social problems, rather than a fundamental change in the basic social system (see *GW* 20:219–22).

In Brecht's view, capitalism inevitably leads to war, and socialism, to peace. His careful formulation in this speech may have been due to his precarious situation in Scandinavian exile, where he was not allowed to be politically active, or—more likely—he simply had no answer for the original question and drowned it in verbal obfuscation. To face the truth might have been too devastating. Yet his hope was that increasing deprivation would force an anti-Hitler reaction in Germany. As he confessed in his article on "The Other Germany": "The exile's

trade is: hoping" (GW 20:284). When there was no uprising, even after ten years of Nazi rule and four years of war, he did express his irritation about the "fact that there has been no quick reaction to the privations and defeats of Nazi Germany" (GW 20:288). But to "those philosophers of history who in foolish and demagogical resortment cry that the German people are by nature bellicose, that their desire to conquer is only equaled by their willingness to obey" (GW 20:285), Brecht replied that the German people "had to put up with the war because they put up with a system [i.e., capitalism] that demands—among other things—wars. To complain that the German people allow their government to wage a frightful war of aggression is actually to complain that the German people do not make a social revolution" (GW 20:285f.). In his opinion, a social revolution "on a giant scale" was necessary, since the capitalists would never relinquish control peacefully, as was illustrated, for example, by the French capitalists in 1940, when "they were so afraid of their own people" that they "thought the German bayonets necessary to the preservation of their property" (GW 20:286). According to Brecht, the failure to change the social order after World War I and the failure of the people "to occupy the key positions in the national economy" (GW 20:288) led to Nazism, the extreme form of capitalism, and, hence, to war. However, Brecht rejected the idea of forced reeducation of the German people after their defeat in World War II—which appeared inevitable in 1943: "The idea of forcibly educating a whole people is absurd. What the German people have not learned when this war is over from bloody defeats, bombings, impoverishment, and from the bestialities of their leaders inside and outside Germany, they will never learn from history books" (GW 20:289). He believed, perhaps somewhat naively, in the ability of people to learn for themselves what it takes to prevent wars: "Peoples can only educate themselves; and they will establish popular government, not when they grasp it with their minds but when they grasp it with their hands" (GW 20:289).

While in Scandinavia, Brecht by and large adhered to guidelines for enemy aliens and refrained from political activity, with the exception of a few texts he wrote under an assumed name to hide his identity. For example, he criticized the appeasing, profit-oriented behavior of Denmark and Sweden toward Nazi Germany in two satirical one-act comedies entitled *Dansen* and *Was kostet das Eisen*, which he wrote under the pen name John Kent. In a knock-about style reminiscent of Chaplin films, Brecht satirized Denmark's shortsighted "peaceful neutrality" and Sweden's willingness to do business with Hitler. When Stalin took advantage of the pact with Hitler's Germany and attempted to occupy Finland in the winter of 1940, his failures drew derogatory comments on Russian ineptness. Brecht came to Stalin's defense with a satirical article entitled "Det finska undred" ("The Finnish Miracle") which appeared in 1940 in the Swedish journal *Ungdomens röst* under the pseudonym Sherwood Paw. In this article, Sherwood Paw claims, for example, that the Russians were forced by gun-wielding

commissars to sing the "International" at all times—unthinkable, of course, in a democratic country like Finland. He also blames the Russian failures on the lack of democracy in the Soviet Union: those Russian troops that were successful must therefore have come from areas in the Soviet Union that had more democracy (*GW* 20:11*-15*).

On 21 July 1941, Brecht arrived in the United States after a strenuous sea-voyage from Vladivostock to San Pedro, California. He was, as always, careful never to comment on the affairs of his host country in public. He was active, however, in the movement "Freies Deutschland," which was formed in 1943 by German exiles in the United States in response to the formation of the "Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland" on 12–13 July 1943, in the Soviet Union by a group of German emigrés and POWs. This "Soviet" committee was severely criticized by the Hearst press, although, as Brecht wrote in his *Arbeitsjournal* on 20 July 1943,²⁵ it desired no more than Paul Tillich, the well-known German theologian in American exile, might demand (*AJ*, 591)—and as he in fact did when, in 1944, he became the president of the "Council for a Democratic Germany," after the failure to form a "Free Germany Committee" in the United States in 1943.

On the evening of 1 August 1943, a number of prominent German exiles, among them Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Bruno Frank, Ludwig Marcuse, Hans Reichenbach, and Bertolt Brecht, had convened in Berthold Viertel's house in Hollywood to draft and sign the following declaration: "Now that the allied victory draws near, the undersigned writers, scholars, and artists of German descent deem it their duty to issue the following public declaration: We welcome the appeal of the German prisoners of war and German exiles in the Soviet Union to the German people to force unconditional surrender on their oppressors and to fight for a strong democracy in Germany. We, too, deem it necessary to make a marked distinction between the Hitler regime and its associates and the German people. We are convinced that without a strong German democracy a permanent world peace will be impossible" (*AJ*, 597). Apparently, Thomas Mann was hesitant to mention the Soviet Union, but he was prodded into reluctant agreement by Bruno Frank. A day later, however, Thomas Mann withdrew his signature (so did Bruno Frank), because he now saw it as a stab in the back of the Western allies. For his part, he claimed that the Germans deserved a collective punishment—just as the Hearst press and Lord Vansittard were demanding (Hemingway even suggested sterilizing all Germans, a remark that caused Brecht to doubt that Hemingway had a brain).²⁶ Brecht was furious and, in an entry in his *Arbeitsjournal* of 2 August 1943, he gave free rein to his animosity: "The collective wretchedness of these 'carriers of culture' (*Kulturträger*) stunned even me for a moment. The foul stench of the Frankfurt Parliament still has a stupefying influence. They agree with Goebbels's remark that Hitler and the German people are one when the Hearst press adopts it. They object to the German subservience to Goebbels while at the same time they themselves are subservient

to Hearst. . . . Such a nation must be chastized (*gezüchtigt werden*)! Anyway, for a moment I even considered how the 'German people' could justify, not only tolerating the crimes of Hitler but also the novels of Mr. Mann, the latter without 20 to 30 SS divisions over them" (*AJ*, 599).

There is no question that Brecht was unfair to Thomas Mann, yet the dislike was mutual. Brecht's vicious attacks on Thomas Mann continued when it came to his attention that Mann apparently complained about "leftists like Brecht" who—on orders from Moscow, as Mann claimed—wanted him, Thomas Mann, to sign declarations that one must make a difference between Hitler and the German people. "This reptile," Brecht wrote in his *Arbeitsjournal* on 9 September 1943, "cannot imagine that some people can do anything for Germany (and against Hitler) and that some people, completely on their own, let's say out of conviction, can see anything else in Germany beyond a well-paying readership. It is remarkable how perfidious the Manns—his wife is also very active—are in making such allegations which—as they well know—can do great harm" (*AJ*, 621). For Brecht, Thomas Mann represented the entire class of conservative bourgeois intellectuals who did nothing to prevent the rise of fascism and who now demanded the collective punishment of the German people. In his anger, Brecht even lowered Mann to the level of Nazi brutality: "When Thomas Mann said last Sunday, reclining comfortably with his hands in his lap: 'well, half a million must be eliminated in Germany,' it sounded completely bestial. The stand-up collar ['Stehkragen'] spoke. . . . This was the resentment of an animal" (*AJ*, 602, 9 Aug. 1943).

In 1944, Brecht summarized these anti-Mann entries from his *Arbeitsjournal* in a vituperative anti-Mann poem entitled "Als der Nobelpreisträger Thomas Mann den Amerikanern und Engländern das Recht zusprach, das deutsche Volk für die Verbrechen des Hitlerregimes zehn Jahre lang zu züchtigen" (*GW* 10:871–73). However, as Günter Hartung, Herbert Lehnert, and Ehrhard Bahr have pointed out, Thomas Mann's position was more complex, and more agreement existed between Brecht and Mann than is apparent in Brecht's abovequoted private pronouncements on Thomas Mann.²⁷ In his letter to Thomas Mann of 1 December 1943, for example, Brecht showed that he was also capable of a more moderate tone in dealing with him. This letter was written in view of the forthcoming constitution of the "Council for a Democratic Germany" in the hopes that Thomas Mann would play a leading role in it (he didn't). Brecht appealed to the common interests of all German exiles in seeing Hitler defeated and the democratic anti-Hitler forces within Germany strengthened. But he also expressed his concern that Thomas Mann's reluctance to acknowledge those anti-Hitler forces within Germany could increase American doubts about the existence of such forces, on whose victory the future of Germany and Europe depended.²⁸ In his reply of 10 December 1943, Thomas Mann pointed to a speech he had given at Columbia University in New York City, in which he did talk about the collective guilt of all Germans but also spoke up against the equation of all Germans with Nazism. As he stressed in his speech, it was not the German people that

should be destroyed and sterilized, but "the guilt-ridden powerful combination of the 'Junkers,' the military, and big industry who were responsible for two world wars."²⁹

Brecht, of course, followed the war's progress with great interest. In a poem entitled "An die deutschen Soldaten im Osten" (*GW* 10:838-43), written in 1941-42 after the German invasion of the Soviet Union had stalled in the Russian winter before Moscow in December of 1941,³⁰ Brecht assumes the role of a German soldier who, like Schweyk, is trapped in the Russian snowfields. This soldier belatedly recognizes that all who followed "the bloodstained fool who did not know that the road to Moscow is long, very long, too long" face certain death (Manheim/Willetts, 376f.). After the battle of Stalingrad, the Russian recapture of Smolensk, the collapse of the German front in Italy, and the German retreat in Russia, Brecht expected a quick end of the war: "He [Hitler] can fall any day" (*AJ*, 600, 7 Aug. 1943). When this did not occur, Brecht again had difficulties explaining why the German soldiers still kept on fighting. He blamed the lack of organizational support for the oppressed classes, which left the lone individual to look out for signs that would indicate a breakup of the organizational structures of the ruling class: "Only with the dissolutions of the new units into which he is pressed (local sections of the workers front, fighting units at the front) can he begin to form units more suitable for his interests, and which can take over a more general function beyond the class struggle" (*AJ*, 604, 10 Aug. 1943). However, this ideological smoke screen was no real explanation. The poem "Im sechsten Jahr" (1944) showed that he really had no answer:

Under the sullied banner of the beast
 Defending its prey
 Our young sons fight like lions.
 From their uninhabitable homesites
 Bombers rise to attack.
 From their burning cities
 Hordes of tanks still drive to the North Cape.
 The peasants of the Champagne
 Hear the heavy boots of the conquerors
 Whose parents lie under the rubble of our cities.
 (*GW* 10:882)

Brecht was concerned that even the socialists in Hitler's army were being blamed for the terrible crimes committed at the eastern front, but he was convinced that the German workers would help to rebuild those areas they helped to destroy once the war was over (*AJ*, 604, 10 Aug. 1943). Brecht, like all other exiles, wished nothing more than the speedy defeat of the Nazis: "In this war, all Germans in exile are unanimously for the defeat of Germany. They regret each victory of German arms, and they welcome each failure" (*GW* 20:282). He noted with satisfaction the military defeats of Nazi Germany and the increasing number of German prisoners of war in the United States, although he found

little encouragement in reading about their pro-Nazi sentiments (*AJ*, 588, 18 July 1943). But since he differentiated between the Nazis and the German people, his rejoicing at German defeats was tempered by the thought of his countrymen's sufferings. He realized that each German defeat would cost the lives of thousands of German soldiers, but so would a German victory. He knew that the unavoidable defeat of Germany would bring unthinkable misery to his country, but a German victory would plunge the whole world into such misery (*GW* 20:282). Nevertheless, it pained him to read about the destruction of German cities and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of German civilians: "My heart stops beating when I read about the air raids on Berlin. Since they are not connected with military operations, one does not see an end of the war but an end to Germany" (*AJ*, 612, 29 Aug. 1943). After the raid on Hamburg, where the Allies experimented with new methods to incinerate the greatest number of civilians from the air, a technique perfected in the raid on Dresden in February 1945, he wrote in his *Arbeitsjournal*: "Hamburg is being wiped out. The column of smoke rising over it is twice as high as the highest German mountain, 6000 meters. The bomber crews need oxygen masks. For the past 72 hours there has been a raid every 12 hours" (*AJ*, 594, 26 July 1943). How would Augsburg fare? In a poem entitled "Rückkehr," written in 1943, he envisioned his return to his native city after the fires:

My native city, however shall I find her?
Following the swarms of bombers
I come home.
Well, where is she? Where the colossal
Mountains of smoke stand.
That thing there amongst the fires
Is her.

My native city, how will she receive me?
Before me go the bombers. Deadly swarms
Announce my homecoming to you. Conflagrations
Precede your son.

(Manheim and Willett, 392)

Brecht's theory of the nature and origin of wars in capitalist societies as described above also forms the basis for his literary works dealing with war in general and World War II in particular, works such as *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*, *Das Verhör des Lukullus*, *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, *Die Gesichte der Simone Machard*, and numerous poems, notably *Die Kriegsfibel*.³¹

Brecht started working on *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* on 27 September 1939, the day Warsaw capitulated and 120,000 Polish soldiers were marched into German captivity.³² Yet, rather than dealing with the immediate events of the war in progress, Brecht took a more general look at the nature of wars in a capitalist society in an attempt to transfer his theories on wars to the stage. By choosing

historical subjects in order to comment on present events, Brecht hoped that the audience would "discover the actuality itself and therefore feel it more strongly and deeply."³³ As Brecht claimed in 1949—and this claim has been repeated in virtually every interpretation of *Mutter Courage*—the production of the play should show "that the big profits in war are not made by the little people. That war is a continuation of business by different means which renders human virtues deadly, even for those who possess them. That no sacrifices are too great to fight against war" (GW 17:1138). The question is to what extent Brecht succeeded in portraying his view of capitalist wars in *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*. Brecht's claim concerning Mother Courage squares with his theoretical remarks on the origins of war (capitalism causes wars), but not with the text of the play. True, all of Mother Courage's children perish because of their virtues, while she herself is engaged in business deals, but the text does not show big capitalists making big profits. Mother Courage is a "Kleinkapitalist," and it seems that she really has no other choice but to continue her business; for her, it is a question of survival. The play is a Niobe tragedy although Brecht rejected this interpretation which, in his view, went back to the reviews of the first performance of his play in Zurich on 19 April 1941 (see GW 4:1439). But the term "Niobe" was never used by the reviewers of the Zurich premiere.³⁴ It originated with Brecht himself, who applied the term at least twice to his play. In a note for an early version of the play, he called her "a Finnish Niobe,"³⁵ and in his *Arbeitsjournal* he talked about a "Niobe plot" (AJ 214, 12 Dec. 1940). In addition, we also recall that a Mother Courage-like figure in *Der Brotladen* ("The Breadstore," 1929) is called Niobe Queck. It is true that Brecht made some changes for the memorable Berlin production of 1949 in order to underline the business nature of his main character, but that still does not change the main impact the play has on audiences who see Mother Courage as a victim and not as a victimizer. Mother Courage does not have (and cannot have) any great insights into the circumstances that cause wars. She only knows that the common people are always the victims, whether wars are lost or won (see GW 4:1379). When her daughter Katrin is wounded by marauding soldiers, Mother Courage even curses the war. But when Friedrich Wolf suggested that the play should end with this outcry, Brecht replied that it is more realistic to let Mother Courage go back to business and praise her source of income. Brecht hoped that by seeing that Mother Courage does not learn anything from her experience the audience might learn (see GW 17:1146f.) But what is it that Brecht wants the audience to learn from watching his play? That wars are caused by capitalism, and that Mother Courage is a contemptible war profiteer? To do that an audience needs political preconditioning and a belief in Brecht's theoretical pronouncements in his notes to *Mutter Courage* to the effect that war is a continuation of business by other means, and therefore necessary for the survival of capitalism (see, for example, GW 17:1149). Brecht shows this much better in his *Dreigroschenroman* (1933–34) or his *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar* (1938–39). In *Mutter Courage*, this message

can at best be deduced indirectly from Mother Courage's statement that it is always the common people who pay the bill, no matter which party wins (*GW* 4:1379), and, by analogy, that it is always the rich who make the profits, no matter who wins.

Brecht himself grew increasingly skeptical as to whether his intended message came across to the audience. Even after five years and many performances of *Mutter Courage*, as well as several changes in the text, Brecht was not sure whether the audience would understand his message; he wrote in 1954: "I would like to know how many people watching my play *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* understand the play's warning today" (*GW* 17:1149).

In *Das Verhör des Lukullus*, the common people are given a chance to sit in judgment on the deeds—or, rather, misdeeds—of the ruling classes and their wars. Brecht condemns the Roman general "who, in the last century before our time, invaded Asia with his legions to subjugate several empires" (*GW* 17:1151), just as Hitler had done at the time when Brecht wrote his radio play in 1939. When Brecht and Paul Dessau used this play for an opera in 1949, they ran into opposition from narrow-minded East German functionaries for two main reasons: the charge of formalism and the charge that the opera constituted a condemnation of all wars. Since the Soviet Union had just won a war of defense against a ruthless aggressor, the East German authorities could not allow their just war to be included in Brecht's condemnation of all wars. Brecht agreed to make some changes to clarify the difference between wars of aggression—which he condemned—and wars of defense—which he conceded. In the trial before the people's court, for example, the king of the country that is being invaded is asked how he would command the respect of posterity. He points to his fiery call for a vigorous defense, and the court rises in deference (*GW* 17:1155). Another change clarified the difference between the leaders of Rome and the people of Rome, just as Brecht consistently differentiated between Hitler and the German people. When Lucullus is sent to conquer Asia in the name of Rome, it is pointed out that he is doing it not for "the mason, the baker, the weaver, and the farmer" (i.e., the ordinary people of Rome), but in the name of "the silver firms, the slave traders, and the banks" (i.e., the capitalists: *GW* 17:1155). Yet the common people of Rome do share some responsibility for Rome's aggression—as Brecht makes clear in another change—since they allowed themselves to be misused, followed orders, and did not help the victims of aggression (*GW* 17:1156). Brecht and Dessau, however, rejected the charge of formalism, and the "musical drama" (*GW* 17:1156), under the new title *Die Verurteilung des Lukullus*, disappeared from the stage.

In *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* and *Die Verurteilung des Lukullus*, Brecht had resorted to historical topics in order to illustrate his theories on the origins of war. With *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, he returned to the immediate political present after the decisive battle of Stalingrad in 1943. *Schweyk* is the tale of a common man who has already survived the First World War (in Hašek's famous

novel) and who is now trying to do the same in the Second World War (in Brecht's play). This, however, proves to be much more difficult; at the end of the play, we are not sure whether Schweyk has succeeded or not. In this play, Brecht also introduced the ruling class in the figures of Hitler, Goering, and Himmler, all "larger-than-life," as well as Goebbels, who is "smaller-than-life"—thereby mocking the monumentalism of Nazi mentality. In a prologue and in interludes "in higher regions," Hitler wants to know from his henchmen whether the common man in Europe is willing to follow him in his grandiose plans to conquer and to restructure the world. They all assure him that the common man is enthusiastic, especially when "aided" by the Gestapo and the S.S. However, Schweyk and the other customers in Anna Kopecka's bar "The Goblet," in Prague, think otherwise. They just want to survive—Schweyk's friend Baloun even at the price of collaboration with the Nazis. It is in fact due to Baloun's selfish and uncontrolled gluttony that Schweyk is drafted and sent to the Russian front "to defend Europe against Bolshevism."

The juxtaposition of Hitler and his men "in higher regions" and the common people in "The Goblet" is by no means a simplistic contradiction between rulers and ruled. There is no united front of the oppressed against the oppressors. Instead, there is a dialectical relationship between the power-hungry Hitler and the food-hungry Baloun in their selfish pursuits—neither can succeed without the other.³⁶ The disaster occurred not only because of the oppressive and criminal acts from above, but also because there were too many Balouns who were willing to "sell their bodies and souls to the devil" in order to satisfy their personal pleasures. Yet the play also has its optimistic side. Schweyk discovers the cracks in the system and skillfully plays on the rivalry between several factions in the Nazi machine (e.g., Gestapo man Brettschneider versus SS man Bullinger). He even commits an outright act of sabotage when he confuses a simple German soldier to such an extent that this man sends a railroad car with machine guns to Brecht's native Bavaria and a car with harvest equipment to Stalingrad, with Brecht commenting that maybe by the time the cars arrive at their new destinations they might need machine guns in Bavaria and harvest equipment in Stalingrad (*GW* 5:1957). Humor is supplemented with hope throughout the play, particularly in the leitmotiv "Song of the Moldau": "That which is great will not remain great, and that which is small will not remain small. / The night has twelve hours, then follows the day" (*GW* 5:1994).

Resistance, or, more precisely put, the lack of it, is the dominating topic in Brecht's second Saint Joan play (the first was *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*, 1929–31): namely, *Die Gesichte der Simone Machard*, which Brecht wrote together with Lion Feuchtwanger in Californian exile between 1941 and 1943. Much of the background material for this play was supplied by Feuchtwanger and, it seems likely, Otto Katz. Feuchtwanger barely managed to escape from the French internment camp in Les Milles near Aix-en-Provence in 1940, to record his experiences in *The Devil in France* (New York, 1941, translated

by Elisabeth Abbott from the German original *Unholdes Frankreich*, published in November 1941), a book which Brecht greatly admired, as he noted on 24 December 1941 in his *Arbeitsjournal*. Otto Katz, son of a wealthy Jewish textile manufacturer from Prague and an acquaintance of Brecht's, spent his exile years in Mexico and the United States, where he made the FBI list as a "dangerous bolshevist" who organized red cells among producers and actors in Hollywood³⁷ and published—under the pen name André Simone—a book on the fall of France entitled *J'Accuse! The Men Who Betrayed France*. This book, which made the bestseller list after it appeared in New York City in 1940, holds the two hundred families controlling France's wealth responsible for the swift collapse of France, because they feared their own proletariat more than the German fascists.

The main character in the play, Simone, is a servant girl in the hostelry of Henri Soupeau in the town of Saint-Martin. The action takes place in June 1940, when France is near defeat. In her dreams, Simone sees herself as a latter-day Saint Joan, with the mission to do everything in her power to sabotage the German advance. While her employer pays lip service to resistance, he is more interested in saving his property, even if this means collaboration with the enemy. For Brecht, Soupeau's attitude was typical of the rich Frenchmen who feared their own people more than the Germans: they preferred defeat by Hitler to the destruction of their property. This fear, however, seems greatly exaggerated, since Simone is the only active resistance fighter in the play—encouraged by "voices" that come from her communist brother at the front.³⁸ The other employees at the hostelry do nothing to support her acts of defiance. The play is intended to stir the audience to resistance and change by showing them the disastrous inaction of the majority of the characters. By the time it reached the public in 1956 (first publication in *Sinn und Form* 8. 5-6) and 1957 (first performance in Frankfurt), however, the play seemed more like a realistic portrait of paralysis in the face of fascism that applied both to Germany and France, rather than a justification of the hopes of exiled Marxists who expected the workers to rise against fascism.

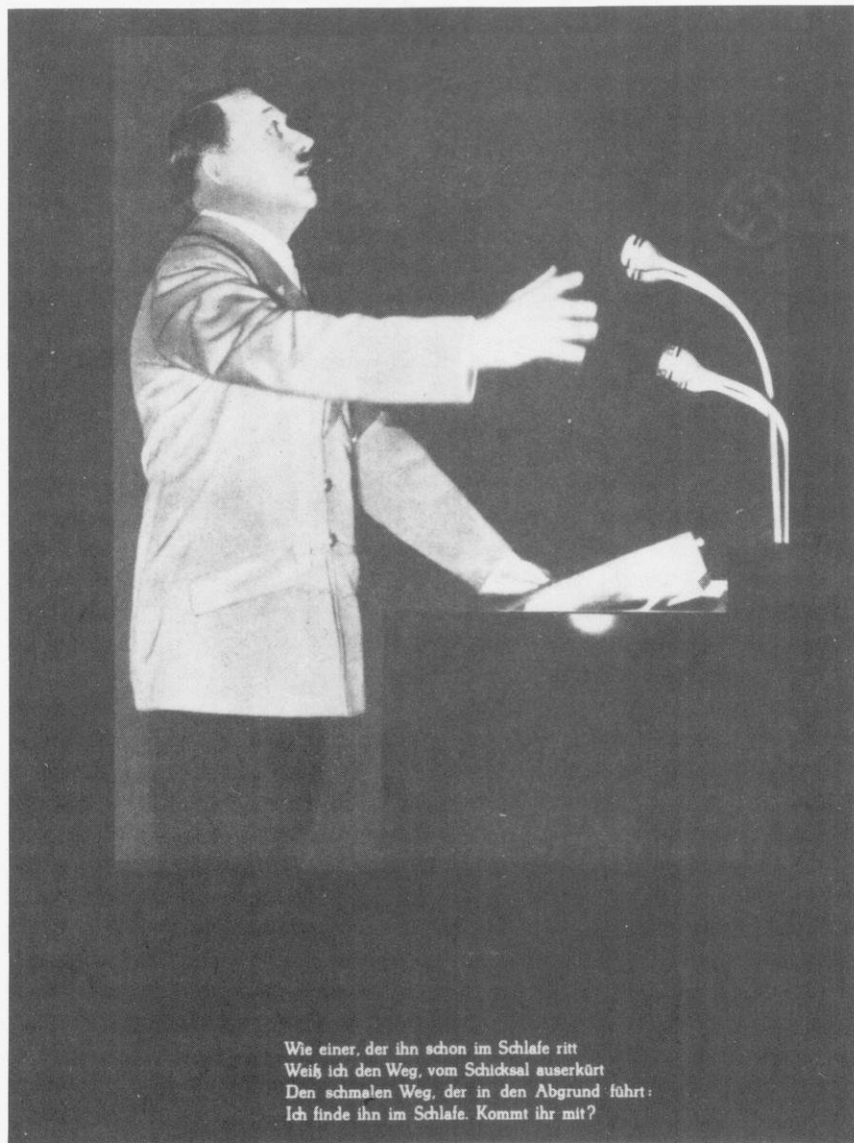
The sharp distinction Brecht made in his theoretical writings between the Nazi regime and the people seems blurred in his plays. In the plays, there is not only collaboration between capitalists of all colors ("Reich und reich gesellt sich gern"), but, ironically, also a kind of collusion between the rulers and the ruled. Through inaction the ruled support the rulers, against their own interests.

During his years in exile, Brecht collected pictures and newspaper clippings about war and politics from a variety of papers and journals. He grouped these materials around certain themes, added four-line stanzas of poetry to each picture, thus creating a montage work reminiscent of baroque emblems,³⁹ John Heartfield's photomontages, and his own *Arbeitsjournal*. This *Kriegsfibel* (edited in 1955 by Ruth Berlau)⁴⁰ consists of a total of sixty-nine "Fotogramme" or "Fotoepigramme," as Brecht called them.⁴¹ A number of these epigrams were also used by Paul Dessau to form part of the text for his choral work entitled *Deutsches Miserere*. In subject matter, the *Kriegsfibel* is also related to that

"Deutsche Kriegsfiabel" which constitutes the first part of Brecht's *Svendborger Gedichte* (written before World War II), but not in form, since most of the poems in "Deutsche Kriegsfiabel" are neither epigrams nor rhymed. According to Ursula Heukenkamp, the poems of "Deutsche Kriegsfiabel" are also more didactic in nature.⁴² They were intended as a warning of the impending war and expressed Brecht's hope that the people would not cooperate. In one of the poems, for example, Brecht addresses a general, telling him that although his tanks and planes are strong there is one problem: they need drivers and pilots. But the greatest problem for the general is, according to Brecht, that man can think (see *GW* 9:638). Unfortunately, Brecht's hope that there would not be any drivers and pilots was shattered by the time he wrote the epigrams for the *Kriegsfiabel*.

The *Kriegsfiabel* is Brecht's version of an illustrated history of World War II with commentary from a Marxist perspective, beginning with Hitler's ascent to power, his preparation for war (rearmament and testing his arms in the Spanish Civil War), the beginning and the expansion of the war, the German defeat, and the warning against a recurrence of war and fascism. The commentaries in the form of epigrams are intended as instructions on how to "read" pictures, since, according to Brecht, pictures alone mean nothing. As Karl Korsch, the first reader of the *Kriegsfiabel*, wrote to Brecht on 25 February 1945, "the reader is the best there is on this war."⁴³

Starting with a programmatic quatrain and a picture of Hitler speaking while in a visionary trance, Brecht's poetic chronicle "describes the small path that leads to destruction" (*GW* 10:1035) in relative chronological order. The last picture again shows Hitler in typical pose, mouth wide open, with Brecht's epigram cautioning the reader: "That there almost ruled the world / The peoples mastered it. But / I hope you will not rejoice: / The womb is fertile still from which that crawled" (*GW* 10:1048). The last line also echoes the last line of Brecht's play *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*. As other works, the *Kriegsfiabel* demonstrates once again Brecht's view that the people in whose name the war was conducted were victims of fascism, too, deserving his empathy. Picture 61 shows a group of defeated and weary German soldiers, and the caption reads: "Regard our sons, deaf and blood-spattered / Cut loose from the frozen tank: / Oh, even the wolf baring his teeth needs / A place to hide! Warm them, they are freezing" (*GW* 10:1046). Yet, at the same time, the fifty-seventh fotogramme left no doubt that the defeat came not in 1945 but in 1939 (or even 1933), when the Germans, instead of changing the social structure of society, followed orders and dutifully donned their steel helmets. The picture shows a number of German helmets in a puddle of water, and the epigram reads: "Regard these hats of the vanquished! And / Not when they were knocked off our heads at last / Was the bitter hour of our defeat. / It came when we obediently put them on" (*GW* 10:1045). It is interesting to note that Brecht deliberately chose the first person plural ("we, us") when he talked of the German soldiers. This grammatical structure indicates that he felt he was a part of them despite all their misdeeds, and



Wie einer, der ihn schon im Schlafe ritt
Weiß ich den Weg, vom Schicksal auserkürt
Den schmalen Weg, der in den Abgrund führt:
Ich finde ihn im Schlafe. Kommt ihr mit?

6. *Kriegsfibel*, the first fotoepigramme.



HITLER: April 20, 1939

Das da hätt einmal fast die Welt regiert.
Die Völker wurden seiner Herr. Jedoch.
Ich wollte, daß ihr nicht schon triumphiert.
Der Schoß ist fruchtbar noch, aus dem das koch.

7. *Kriegsfibel*, the last fotoepigramme.



The face of the German Army in Russia now appears frozen, dumb, exhausted of will or pride. These were once crack troops, the terror of the world of 1940 and 1941 but the farther they get

into Russia, the less they liked the cold and the ample room to die in. However, as the Russian advance westward, the warmer it feels and the more delightful the prospect

Seht unsre Söhne, taub und blutbefleckt
Vom eingefrorenen Tank hier losgeschnallt:
Ach selbst der Wolf braucht, der die Zähne bleckt
Ein Schlupfloch! Wärmt sie, es ist ihnen kalt.



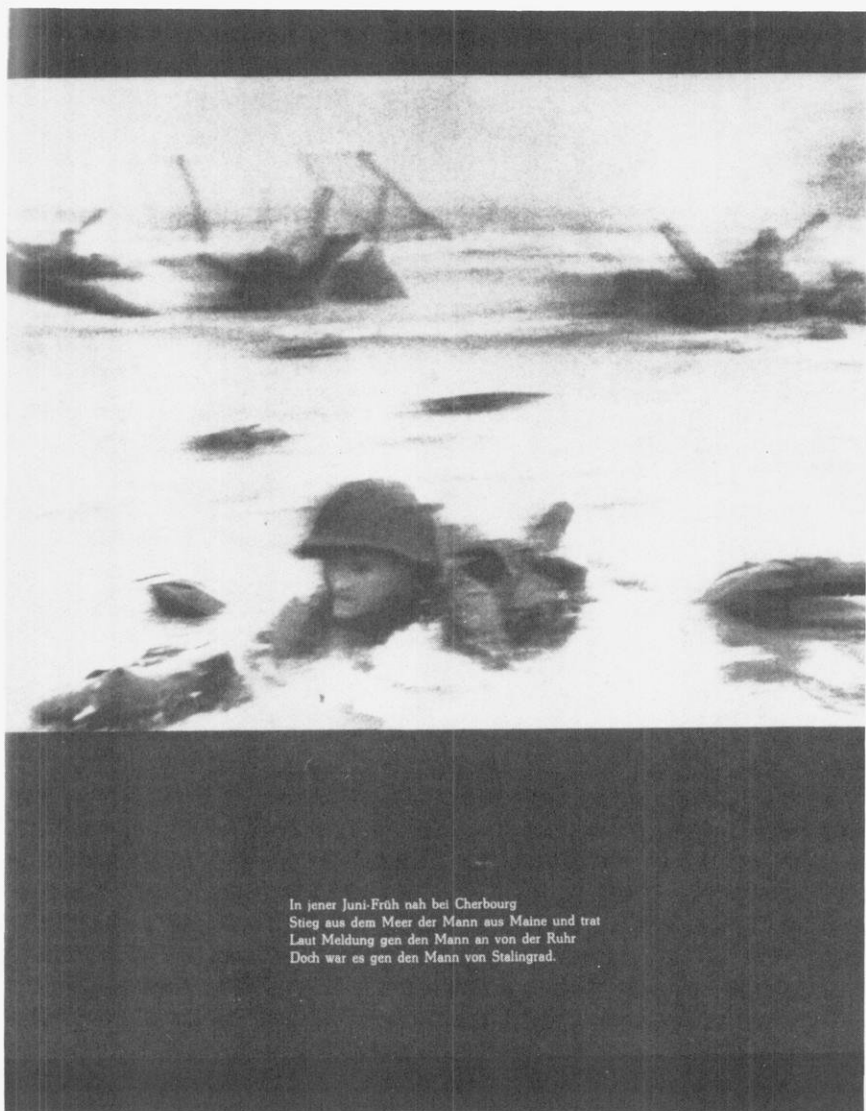
Seht diese Hüte von Besiegten! Und
Nicht als man sie vom Kopf uns schlug zuletzt
War unsrer bittern Niederlage Stund.
Sie war, als wir sie folgsam aufgesetzt.



German assault troops, here emerging from beneath railroad cars to attack the Albert Canal line, were young, tough and disciplined. In all, there were 240 divisions of them. But

despite the world's idea that the conquest was merely by planes and tanks, it actually depended on the old-fashioned tactic of a superior mass of firepower at the decisive point.

Nach einem Feind seh ich euch Ausschau halten
Bevor ihr absprangt in die Panzerschlacht:
War's der Franzos, dem eure Blicke galten?
War's euer Hauptmann nur, der euch bewacht?



In jener Juni-Früh nah bei Cherbourg
Stieg aus dem Meer der Mann aus Maine und trat
Laut Meldung gen den Mann an von der Ruhr
Doch war es gen den Mann von Stalingrad.

11. *Kriegsfibel*, fotoepigramme 53.

that he felt a responsibility toward them. Contrary to Nazi propaganda, the Nazi regime and its war did not end class struggle as Brecht claimed in his quatrain accompanying a picture of German soldiers on the lookout under railroad carriages: “I see you on the lookout for the enemy / Before you jump into the tank battle: / Was it the French you were looking for? / Or was it only your captain, who was guarding you?” (GW 10:1036). Other pictures and epigrams also allude to the common capitalistic interests the Western powers shared with the Nazis, and to their war resulting from the clash of similar expansionist imperialist interests. These interests were essentially directed against the Soviet Union, as the 53rd picture and epigram make clear, recalling D-Day (6 June 1944): “On that early morning in June near Cherbourg / The man from Maine emerged from the sea / To fight against the man from the Ruhr, they said / Yet, in reality, it was against the man from Stalingrad” (GW 10:1045).

The language of the *Kriegsfibel* is straightforward and devoid of economic or political jargon. In its artful simplicity, it is a counter-version to the bombastic style of the language of the Third Reich, the “lingua tertii imperii.”⁴⁴ About 1955, the time of the imminent West German rearmament, Brecht also had plans for a “Friedensfibel” as a dialectical counterpart to the *Kriegsfibel*. His premature death in 1956, however, prevented him from realizing these plans.

Return

After his return to Berlin in 1948, Brecht was shocked by the destruction he saw. Walking through the ruins of the former capital of the German Reich from his temporary lodgings in the remnants of the once proud Hotel Adlon, he wrote in his *Arbeitsjournal* on 27 October 1948: “Berlin, an etching by Churchill after an idea of Hitler. Berlin, a heap of rubble near Potsdam. Heavy cargo planes of the airlift roar over the totally deserted and destroyed streets” (AJ, 852). But what shocked him more than the city’s ruins were the ruined people (“Ruinenmenschen,” GW 20:311). He implored his countrymen to avoid new wars and to rebuild their country in, for example, the poem “An meine Landsleute,” written in 1949:

You who survive in cities that have died
Now show some mercy to yourselves at last.
Don’t march, poor things, to war as in the past
As if past wars left you unsatisfied.
I beg you—mercy for yourselves at last.

You men, reach for the spade and not the knife.
You’d sit in safety under roofs today
Had you not used the knife to make your way
And under roofs one leads a better life.
I beg you, take the spade and not the knife.⁴⁵

In Brecht's view, "there will be wars as long as only one man profits from them."⁴⁶ Hitler had been defeated, but not the German bourgeoisie which, after the lost war, tried to distance itself from Hitler and to isolate national socialism as a "certain exaggeration," as Brecht wrote in his *Arbeitsjournal* (*AJ*, 828, 13 April 1948). In fact, Brecht was convinced that Hitler conducted the war in the interest of the German bourgeoisie in order for it to remain in power (*AJ*, 820, 1 March 1948; *AJ*, 830, 20 April 1948). In this, Hitler obviously did not succeed, but at least the western part of Germany was saved for the bourgeois class through the invasion of Western armies (*AJ*, 831, 20 April 1948). According to Brecht, the Western allies delayed opening the second front, long desired by Stalin, until the USSR threatened to occupy the whole of Germany. It was Brecht's great fear that a new world war was imminent, resulting from the development of new and "unconventional" weaponry and from Western expansionist and revisionist "roll-back" policies. He demanded a huge publicity campaign to warn people of the dangers of war stemming from American atom bombs (*GW* 20:349f.) He fought against the "Paris Agreements," which stipulated the rearmament of the western part of Germany, with declarations and lists of 176,203 protest signatures (most of them from GDR intellectuals)⁴⁷ that he handed over to the World Council of Peace on 13 February 1955, the tenth anniversary of the bombing of Dresden: "On the tenth anniversary of these atrocities, we present a document here in Dresden that is intended as a warning of wars more horrible than those in the past, wars that will not be conducted with conventional bombs anymore, as the Americans say. The declaration is as follows: 'We do not recognize the Paris Agreements which were made by the Adenauer government for the whole of Germany. We do not want Germany to be a member of a war alliance, for a third world war would make Germany uninhabitable' " (*GW* 20:342). On 4 July 1954, he even wrote a letter to the West German Bundestag, protesting against the introduction of the draft: "When I was a young man, there was a draft in Germany, a war was begun and lost. The draft was abolished. But as a man I experienced the reintroduction of the draft, and a second war was begun, a much larger one than the first. Germany lost it again and more thoroughly, and the draft was abolished again. . . . Now, on the threshold of old age, I hear that the draft will be introduced for a third time. . . . Do you really want to take the first step, the first step into war? If so, then we will all take the last step into nothingness together" (*GW* 20:348f.). Brecht expressed his opposition to the introduction of the draft "in both parts of Germany" and suggested a plebiscite on this question in all of Germany (*GW* 20:349). Needless to say, the Bundestag never answered, and there was no plebiscite against the draft—it might have carried.

Protest against West German rearmament under the umbrella of Western allies and exposition of the ideological reasons behind it also formed the basis for Brecht's last and least-known play, his adaptation of George Farquhar's restoration comedy *The Recruiting Officer*, published under the new title *Pauken und*

Trompeten (1955). George Farquhar (1677–1707) served as a recruiter for Marlborough's armies stationed in the Netherlands to fight in the Spanish War of Succession. Brecht changed time and focus from the Spanish War of Succession to the American struggle for independence from Britain. This shift allowed him to focus on the efforts of the bourgeois class to use the lower classes, including imports from German lands, to maintain a corrupt system against a progressive and revolutionary cause—then and now.

Brecht felt that he and his fellow artists and writers had a special responsibility in the struggle for peace. He appealed to them to do everything in their power to preserve the total freedom of books, theaters, the arts, music, and film, with one exception: publication of works glorifying war, presenting it as inevitable, or inciting hatred among peoples was to be forbidden. He was determined to prevent Germany from becoming the staging ground for yet another war: "The great Carthage conducted three wars. It was still powerful after the first, still inhabitable after the second. But after the third it was no more to be found" (*GW* 19:496).

Notes

- 1 Quoted from Werner Frisch and K. W. Obermeier, *Brecht in Augsburg* (Frankfurt, 1976), 258. Page numbers in the text refer to this edition. The translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
- 2 Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke in 20 Bänden* (Frankfurt, 1967) 8:10. This edition is referred to as *GW* in the text. The translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
- 3 Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke in 20 Bänden, Supplementband IV. Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß* 2, ed. Herta Ramthun (Frankfurt, 1982), 35*.
- 4 Frisch and Obermeier, 86.
- 5 See Otto Ludwig, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori: Bertold [sic] Brechts Antikriegsaufsatz aus dem Jahre 1916," in *Literatur im Kontext: Festschrift für Helmut Schrey zum 65. Geburtstag am 6. I. 1985*, ed. Renate Haas and Christine Klein-Braley (Sankt Anton, 1985), 146–55.
- 6 It is interesting to note that Brecht wrote the text quoted in a preface to poems he had selected for a recital around 1940, a time of another German mobilization for total war; see *GW* 19:422; 5*.
- 7 This poem also caused a delay in publication of the *Hauspostille*, announced by Kiepenheuer for 1922. But when a conservative stockholder objected vigorously to "The Legend of the Dead Soldier," Brecht had to look for a new publisher. It took another five years before the *Hauspostille* appeared in 1927 at Propyläen Verlag. However, this edition was preceded by a very limited private edition of 25 copies called *Taschenpostille* in 1926. See Klaus Schuhmann, *Der Lyriker Bertolt Brecht* (Munich, 1971), 165.
- 8 Werner Mittenzwei, *Das Leben des Bertolt Brecht* (Frankfurt, 1987), 78.
- 9 See, for example, Frederic Ewen, *Bertolt Brecht* (New York, 1967), 61.
- 10 Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke in 20 Bänden, Supplementband III. Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß* 1, ed. Herta Ramthun (Frankfurt, 1982), 40.
- 11 Mittenzwei, 76.
- 12 Bertolt Brecht, *Briefe* (Frankfurt, 1981), ed. Günter Glaeser, 39.
- 13 According to Heinz Hagg in Frisch/Obermeier, 140.
- 14 Frisch/Obermeier, 141.
- 15 April 1925, 101; see also Schuhmann, 269.

- 16 See Ralph Manheim and John Willett, eds., *Bertolt Brecht's Poems 1913–1956* (London/New York, 1987), 23. The term "Eis" in the second line might be a reference to Kurt Eisner. After 1927, Brecht refused to give his permission for further publication of this poem, ostensibly because people assumed the poem was about the Soviet Red Army. Why Brecht permitted publication of this poem in 1927 in the first place is hard to understand, since by that time he was a committed Marxist. Klaus Schuhmann takes great pains to assure his readers that this poem, "which could raise doubts about the poet and politician Brecht," was written by a poet who stood firmly at the side of the proletariat, and had just published the "Ballade vom Stahlhelm" (written in 1926, first published in 1927 in a special edition of the satirical journal *Der Knüppel*, no. 4, June 1927). In this ballad, Brecht lent his literary support to Ernst Thälmann, who, at the 11th party congress of the KPD in Essen from 2–7 March 1927, had severely criticized the rightwing Stahlhelm organization; see Schuhmann, 266, and Edgar Marsch, *Brecht-Kommentar zum lyrischen Werk* (Munich, 1974), 179. Originally, the *Hauspostille* version of 1922 also contained a ballad on Rosa Luxemburg ("Ballade von der roten Rosa"), who was brutally murdered by right-wing soldiers in 1919, but, according to Edgar Marsch, this poem has been lost (Marsch, 115) with the exception of a few lines Brecht's friend Hans Otto Münsterer remembered: "The red flags of the revolution / Have been removed long ago from the roofs / Red Rosa / swam as the only one liberated" (see Schuhmann, 75).
- 17 Brecht's oldest son Frank (named after Brecht's idol Frank Wedekind), who was later killed in Russia as a German soldier in World War II.
- 18 As Brecht told Feuchtwanger, he had written the play for the sole purpose of making money; see Frisch and Obermeier, 152–54.
- 19 Frisch and Obermeier, 172.
- 20 Manheim and Willett, 57; *GW* 8:68.
- 21 These three soldiers are obviously related to the three soldiers named George, John, and Freddy in "Lied der drei Soldaten," written in 1924–25 for the *Hauspostille* (published in *Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß* 1:166), and John, Jim, and George in the famous "Kanonen-Song" in the *Dreigroschenoper* (*GW* 2:419), except that those three soldiers all perish in the war.
- 22 Bertolt Brecht, *Arbeitsjournal*, ed. Werner Hecht (Frankfurt, 1973) 2:57. Hereafter cited in the text as *AJ*. All translations mine.
- 23 See, for example, Herman Mau and Helmut Krausnick, *German History 1933–45* (London, 1961), 100–101, and Karl-Dietrich Bracher, *Die deutsche Diktatur*, 6th ed. (Frankfurt, 1979), 344–45.
- 24 The translation is by Eric Bentley; it was not published until 1966 in the journal *Progressive Labor* (New York) 5.3 (March–April 1966); the original German text seems to have been lost (see *GW* 20:15*).
- 25 See also his poem "Was sind Tanks?": "The prison cells / Full of prisoners / Are put on wheels / Called tanks, and / Launched at the enemy" (*Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß* 1, 258; written between 1928 and 1932).
- 26 See Mittenzwei, 142.
- 27 For more details on the relationship to Thomas Mann, see Günter Hartung, "Bertolt Brecht und Thomas Mann: Über Alternativen in Kunst und Politik," *Weimarer Beiträge* (1966): 407–35; Herbert Lehnert, "Bert Brecht und Thomas Mann im Streit über Deutschland," in *Deutsche Exilliteratur seit 1933, Bd. 1: Kalifornien, Teil 1*, ed. John M. Spalek and Joseph Strelka (Munich and Bern, 1976), 62–88; Ehrhard Bahr, "Der Mythos vom 'anderen' Deutschland in der Kontroverse zwischen Bertolt Brecht und Thomas Mann," in *Deutsche Literatur in der Weltliteratur: Kulturation statt politischer Nation?* Ed. Franz Norbert Mennemeier and Conrad Wiedemann (Tübingen, 1986), 240–45.
- 28 Brecht, *Briefe*, 484–86 (letter no. 477).
- 29 Thomas Mann, *Briefe 1937–1947*, ed. Erika Mann (Frankfurt, 1963), 340.
- 30 See Marsch, *Brecht-Kommentar*, 317f.
- 31 Other works in which war plays a significant role include *A Man Is a Man* (British Colonial Wars in India), *The Horatians and the Curiatians* (a lesson in war strategy), *The Rifles of Señora Carrar* (the Civil War in Spain in 1936–39), *The Decline of the Egotist Johann Fatzer* (World War I), *The Days of the Commune* (Civil War in France in 1871), and the two novels *The Business Deals of Mr. Julius Caesar* and *Threepenny Novel* (both illustrations of war as continuation of business by other means).

- 32 Mittenzwei, 672.
- 33 Annotations to the opera *Das Verhör des Lukullus*; *GW* 17:1151.
- 34 See Jan Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch Theater* (Stuttgart, 1980), 188.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 See Herbert Knust, "Brechts braver Soldat Schweyk," in *PMLA* (1973): 219-29.
- 37 See Ronald Seth, *The Executioners: The Story of Smersh* (New York, 1968), 102.
- 38 As Brecht noted: "Ihr Bruder war der einzige"—a sentence heavily underlined in unpublished archival material; cf. BBA 1192/250. Presumably, Brecht wanted to indicate with this sentence that the communists were the only force to resist German and French fascism.
- 39 See Reinhold Grimm, "Marxistische Emblematis: Zu Bertolt Brechts 'Kriegsfibel'," in Sybille Penkert, ed., *Emblem und Emblematisrezeption: Vergleichende Studien zur Wirkungsgeschichte vom 16. bis 20. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, 1978), 502-42; Christian Wagenknecht, "Marxistische Epigrammatik: Zu Bertolt Brechts 'Kriegsfibel'," *ibid.*, 543-59; Christiane Bohnert, *Brechts Lyrik im Kontext: Zyklen und Exil* (Königstein, 1982), 235-85; Jan Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch Lyrik* (Stuttgart, 1984), 204-16. Grimm's article first appeared in Renate von Heydebrand and K. G. Just, eds., *Wissenschaft als Dialog: Studien zur Literatur und Kunst seit der Jahrhundertwende* (Stuttgart, 1969), 351-79, 518-24.
- 40 Published by Eulenspiegel Verlag Berlin, 1955, 3rd. ed. 1977.
- 41 An additional 21 quatrains belonging to the *Kriegsfibel* material but not published in Ruth Berlau's edition were printed in *Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß* 2, 379-82 without pictures. However, the pictures are described in Herta Ramthun's annotations on 26*-28*. The entire *Kriegsfibel*, with pictures and annotations as well as additional epigrams and pictures, can be found in Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, eds. Werner Hecht et al., 12 (Frankfurt, 1988): 128-283, 409-36.
- 42 Ursula Heukenkamp, "Den Krieg von unten ansehen: Über das Bild des zweiten Weltkrieges in Bertolt Brechts *Kriegsfibel*," *Weimarer Beiträge* 31 (1985): 1294-312.
- 43 Brecht, *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* 12:424.
- 44 Heukenkamp, 1304. The term "Lingua Tertii Imperii" (LTI) is taken from Victor Klemperer's book *LTI* (Halle, 1957).
- 45 Manheim and Willett, 417; *GW* 10:965. The original German text has "Kelle" (trowel), not "Spaten" (spade)—which is a much better metaphor for reconstruction.
- 46 "Krieg wird solange sein, solange auch nur ein Mensch noch am Krieg verdient," BBA 508/33; quoted from Ernst Schumacher, "Brecht und der Frieden," in *Brecht 83: Brecht und Marxismus*, ed. Brecht-Zentrum der DDR (Berlin, 1983), 318.
- 47 Schumacher, 326.

Fallen Altars Are Occupied by Demons: The Disenchantment of Ernst Jünger

MARCUS BULLOCK

The First World War could not have come at a better time for Ernst Jünger. He was an *Oberprimaner*, and had been an appalling student, but, as he tells it in "Kriegsausbruch 1914,"¹ the special arrangements for volunteers entering the army so reduced the standards that even he was able to pass his *Abitur*. That was by no means the only appeal, however. His desperate craving for adventure and escape from orderly bourgeois life had already in the previous year caused him to run away from home to join the Foreign Legion in Africa. His father had brought him back again, but this conflict appeared to be the perfect opportunity to realize all his fantasies. Battle would offer both the thrill of exposure to the chaotic perils of death and destruction and the reassuring sense that his parents could not but approve. It turned out that his combination of enthusiastic courage and cool intelligence made him an excellent frontline soldier. He became the leader of a *Stoßtrupp* with the rank of lieutenant. Although he was wounded repeatedly, he made a full recovery and emerged from the war as a hero with many medals. He was the youngest officer in the 1914–18 period to receive the *Pour le mérite*.

The Second World War was very different. He was deeply estranged from the policies of the Nazi regime and since 1933 had settled into a life of rural "inner emigration" with his wife and two sons. Nonetheless, when he returned to the army with the rank of captain in the mobilization of August 1939, he was determined to fulfill the role of witness to the coming events. His book *Gärten und Straßen*, which begins with the completion of his novel *Auf den Marmorklippen* in April of that year, describes the winter spent in defensive positions on the Rhine, and then the spring invasion and defeat of France. On this occasion, his unit advanced well behind the battlefield. In the spring of 1941, he was stationed in Paris with the General Staff of the German occupation, but with rather vague duties. It is clear that the army regarded him as a writer in uniform, not as a soldier. He spent his time listening, observing, and recording his impressions in his diaries. He met most of the outstanding figures in Paris, especially the collaborationist upper crust, and enjoyed the access to all the intriguing aspects of the city his position opened up to him. Until the Allied invasion of France, this period was interrupted only by a visit to observe the Eastern Front between November 1942 and January 1943 arranged for him by the Wehrmacht.

He was well placed to follow exactly what this war was like, and became

acutely aware that his conception of warfare from the experiences of 1914–18 was no longer adequate. During the 1920s, he had developed the affirmation of conflict and endurance into a general prescription for intensified experience in the forms of life. This now began to give way under the new kinds of shock to which the spectacle of this reality subjected him. In his diary entry of October 1943, he notes:

Obwohl ich in diesem zweiten Weltkrieg zum größten Teil von den Kulissen des Komforts umgeben bin, lebe ich doch in größerer Gefährdung als während der Sommer- oder Flandernschlacht. Auch scheint mir, daß unter hundert alten Kriegeren kaum einer den neuen Schrecken standhält, die sich erheben, wenn man aus der heroischen in die Dämonensphäre tritt.²

The danger to which he refers is obviously not a statistical matter of how likely it is that he might be killed. It is a question of how the strain and tension of a situation affects one's inner composure and one's ability to respond dependably to the demands made by events. In the First World War, the danger to his existence took the form of physical peril. In the Second, the threat is to the world of his convictions. His view of human nature, of mankind's destiny, his own place as a witness to that destiny, all these are called into question. The immediacy of this threat results from its tight connection to the source from which he had previously managed to derive strength and conviction for his ideas. His thinking was formed in warfare, and developed through attitudes to the peace which had much in common with those forces which were now proving demonic. The vulnerability he discovers here reflects the questionable character of his past condition at least as much as it reveals the demonic quality in this new state of affairs.

Those who emerge as survivors from a war and write as witnesses to it are in a peculiar situation. We do not know how many potential witnesses, how many men of talent and insight are swallowed up by that war before their voices are heard. In war, as indeed in peace, there is much irrationality and injustice about the process which selects a generation of witnesses to represent their age. The difference is that in war this peculiar process can scarcely be camouflaged by the veils of ideology as an appropriate part of the meaning to be portrayed. Those who have fallen in battle at one's side evade all the powers of rationalization by which distinctions are sustained among the living. Theirs is an equivocal position which makes it hard to give them a defining function, a fixed place where they are kept from disturbing those who have survived them. Jünger himself observed of these dead in the First World War: "Sie sind doch Wesen und keine Sachen, und man überrascht sich immer bei einem verstohlenen Seitenblick, durch den man sich vergewissern möchte, ob sie auch wirklich ganz still auf ihren Plätzen liegen und keine Bewegung machen" (1:423).

The silence which encloses a soldier's fallen comrades settles no accounts. Their situation is neither present nor absent, but irrevocably interrupted. It can be given neither closure nor meaning. This is not like a social class of the excluded

against whose very background an alternative dignity and distinction derives its clarity. To have survived a battle is a very dangerous privilege. There is no permanent principle of identity which sustains that difference through the next battle; little more than the principle of uncertainty delays the moment when one will join that majority, the silent and incomprehensible dead. The proximity of one's own death under these conditions also complicates one's position in speaking for the living as one of their number. One is far away from the stable existence of civilian order. One has grown alien to that world, but there can still be no kinship with the fallen. A writer like Jünger knows he cannot speak for the dead, but he dare not neglect to name them as is their due.

This consciousness of the dead becomes a distance separating one from those who do not share it. It separates one from the regular business of life and the world in which a traditional order is formed and propagated. It would be difficult to find anyone from Jünger's generation who did not consider the unprecedented intensity of battlefield carnage to have raised the First World War as a great rupture of division between the 19th century and our own. The shock of events produced by modern powers silenced the old discourse, and the chaos of isolation left in the wake of that collapse marks the vanishing of a historical age. The position of isolation, and the difficult task of constructing an alternative weave of human relations to replace what has been withered to nothing by this conflagration, defines what was new for that generation. The writing which emerged from their catastrophe shows a variety of directions taken as they return from their shattered moment along the fissure of that great dividing line. Each of the major currents that struggled to find the remedy appropriate for this common situation of crisis sets a different ideological course. Considered ethically and examined critically in the light of a rational analysis of history, these separate directions are far from equal. Yet, in the aspect of failure to create a real community of human relations from which none is free, each continues to reflect the common moment of origin. This failure—which I take to be an inability to confront the reality of isolation as the necessary beginning of a new order of meaning, a new order of freedom, and a new order of community—afflicts both the defensible and the indefensible here.

These various attempts all seem to make the related error of returning to elements of precisely that domain to which their situation denies them the kind of access they would need to sustain them fully. This is true of efforts to restore the rationality of the past, as well as its irrationality. I want to quote three passages, one from Jünger and two others from very well-known and representative figures, in order to draw lines of comparison. Each gives a response to the idea of the dead from among whose ranks the writer has returned only by chance. Each looks to a history, or a picture of the world, which will give the knowledge he has of these dead a meaning that is lacking until restored by the account they give. One of them looks back to the liberal progressive tradition of a natural community between subjects freed from the tutelage of an archaic hierarchy, the others

look back to the murky solidarity imposed by the consolidated imperialist state. But first I conclude the passage by Jünger on the dead cited above:

Man fühlt sich geneigt, den schweigenden menschenähnlichen Bewohnern dieses Ortes, die so ganz unbekannten Gesetzen unterworfen sind, verborgene und tückische Absichten zuzuschreiben, und man ist gar nicht sicher, ob sie sie nicht auch auszuführen imstande sind. Man würde sich über nichts wundern, was auch immer hier geschehen könnte. Es sind nicht die lautesten Stunden, in denen das Grauen über das Schlachtfeld geht.

The second describes how battle has transformed the perspective of a class of eighteen-year-olds regarding their schoolteacher and all the figures of authority who had convinced them that it was their sacred duty to give themselves over to this carnage:

Doch der erste Tote, den wir sahen, zertrümmerte diese Überzeugung. Wir mußten erkennen, daß unser Alter ehrlicher war als ihres; sie hatten uns nur die Phrase und die Geschicklichkeit voraus. Das erste Trommelfeuer zeigte uns diesen Irrtum, und unter ihm stürzte die Weltanschauung zusammen, die sie uns gelehrt hatten.

Während sie noch schrieben und redeten, sahen wir Lazarette und Sterbende;—während sie den Dienst am Staat als das Größte bezeichneten, wußten wir bereits, daß die Todesangst größer ist. Wir wurden darum keine Meuterer, keine Deserteure, keine Feiglinge . . . aber wir unterschieden jetzt, wir hatten mit einem Male sehen gelernt. Und wir sahen, daß nichts von ihrer Welt übrigblieb. Wir waren plötzlich auf furchtbare Weise allein;—und wir mußten allein damit fertig werden.

The third leaps forward into a myth yet more distant and yet more blindly rhetorical than that which preceded the war:

Mögen Jahrtausende vergehen, so wird man nie von Heldentum reden und sagen dürfen, ohne des deutschen Heeres des Weltkrieges zu gedenken. Dann wird aus dem Schleier der Vergangenheit heraus die eiserne Front des grauen Stahlhelms sichtbar werden, nicht wankend und nicht weichend, ein Mahnmal der Unsterblichkeit.

The first of these is from Ernst Jünger's book *Das Wäldchen 125*, the second from Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*,³ and the third from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.⁴

The last two clearly form a simple opposition. Hitler's strategy is to restore the monumentality of war as such. His metonymic use of the single helmet, an imperturbable steel object, for all the vulnerable men who stood and fell at the front, creates a new temporality for the German soldier's existence. The past of the World War returns from its obscurity because of the singular and indivisible rhetorical sphere in which it now participates. Out of a welter of concrete events, a single term emerges—*Heldentum*—which can be spoken for thousands of years. This existence is inseparable from the new historical age it has defined. The obscurity which might have been a nightmare of slaughter beyond comprehension is explicitly named and ended by the firm, clear lines of the form it will

take as a monument to immortality. The grayness itself is transformed from the vagueness of a time lost in the veil of the past to the identity of that which the past cannot veil, the heroism of *die Feldgrauen*, the closed ranks of the German Army. In this backward-turned prophetic view from thousands of years in the future, the shattered time of a disaster and the fragmentary wreckage of individual extinctions are welded together again as the foundation for a new history.

Remarque's construction is exactly the opposite. He turns the authoritarian idea of a totalized, singular historical being upside down. Though he speaks for a "we," it is the we who are already separate from the very idea of a consolidated state and its mythology. Theirs is not that existence which apparently hangs in the balance and necessitates the war. His characters are unassuming individuals, without power within the old structure. They are common soldiers, not officers. They were not part of the old order, but had allowed themselves to be drawn into its illusions. The old order was a self-imposed tutelage which the war had rendered impossible to sustain. The loneliness they experience is the isolation within which a process of enlightenment occurs. The false parental authority of the state gives way to a beginning of emancipation. Unlike the officer class, they do not take their identity from the powers the state bestows on them. Therefore they must seek an identity as individuals, as bearers of rights on which the state must not encroach. In the final disenchantment with the war, Remarque writes: "Gibt es keinen Frieden, dann gibt es Revolution" (185).

The political position from which he is writing is certainly very much more rational than the one he is writing against. If it had prevailed, our history would certainly be very different and unimaginably better than it turned out to be. Nevertheless, its rationality is also closely limited by its ideological features. *Im Westen nichts Neues* is a fictional narrative. It attempts to make a meaningful order out of the war by specific forms of literary representation. Remarque's characters are built up according to established techniques of fictional development. The narrator's point of view is used to shape an image of human nature in a consistent and deliberate way. What results is a general position capable of coordinating a political consensus, and arising from a political consensus. One can call it plausible, indeed desirable. Its purpose was, at least in part, to combat the effect of such writings as Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and it therefore competes with other efforts to draw broad conclusions about the essence of human societies and the relations between them. What events have shown, nevertheless, is that the passage from shock to enlightenment may be an effective narrative motif, but concrete history knows no such simple or natural route.

Das Wäldchen 125, *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Mein Kampf* all appeared in the period between 1925 and 1930. During these years, the relative sparsity of writing on the war in its immediate aftermath gave way to a flood of titles. The war had become a burning issue in the struggle for power. The initial silence, on the other hand, reflected the extreme difficulty the men returning home had encountered in dealing with the events as an experience in itself. Walter Ben-

jamin refers to this in the opening comments of his essay "Der Erzähler" when he observes that men returned from the front "verstummt . . . nicht reicher—ärmer an mitteilbarer Erfahrung."⁵ Ernst Jünger's early success as an author came because he was one of the very few not affected by that initial reluctance to speak. He found his voice by appropriating the war as a personal adventure. During the late 1920s, however, Jünger also took his position within that political debate. He became identified as one of the leading literary figures on the same political wing as Adolf Hitler. Jünger wrote for, and edited, several militarist periodicals, and he also developed a vision of civilian industrial society based on values derived from heroic military discipline which he defined as "heroischer Realismus." These were expressed in the essays *Die totale Mobilmachung* and *Der Arbeiter*, appearing in 1930 and 1932 respectively.

In later reflection, Jünger referred to *Der Arbeiter* as that work in which the pendulum of his thought had swung to its extreme point of collectivism (3:191). There can be no doubt that it represents a very vivid attempt at defining the character of its times, and met with approval from the kind of quarters one might expect. Paul de Man, for example, described it in a wartime newspaper commentary as a "highly remarkable work of sociology."⁶ Martin Heidegger discussed it in his essay "Zur Seinsfrage" as a work which, although pseudo-philosophical in its construction, nevertheless contained important observations on the extent to which industrial power could reorganize human sensibility to acknowledge considerations of technical effectiveness alone. While *Der Arbeiter* also looks like a blueprint for a fascist society, it should not be forgotten that Jünger clearly and decisively dissociated himself from the Nazi movement when Hitler took power in 1933. The full significance of this text is therefore a complex issue, but it grows out of Jünger's perspective on the First World War in a way which reveals his writing on the Second World War to be something more than the expression of his antifascist snobbery.

Der Arbeiter attempts to extrapolate an image of social organization from the qualities required of a soldier under the conditions of warfare. The book projects an image of industrial technology with agonistic purposes similar to a war pursued more for its own sake than to further some extraneous political end. Machines are not of "economic" importance in his view, but "cultic." They are not of interest for the commodities they can produce, but rather for the changes they produce in the men who work with them. The "Arbeiter" was a new kind of man, just as the soldier who went through four years of heavy shelling, gas bombardment, and machine gun fire in a cratered landscape of trenches and barbed wire also emerged as a quite different type from any that had been seen before. This cultic mechanization of society and its citizens was the collective expression of a power in which process and purpose were one and the same. It was to be distinguished above all from the application of labor to achieve the values of comfort and security which had apparently motivated the bourgeois economic order of the 19th century.

To understand what values do in fact underly Jünger's thinking one needs to examine the full shape of his progress through these issues. The resemblance of his technological dystopia in *Der Arbeiter* to the Nazi state is obviously highly significant, but that is not sufficient to demonstrate that his thinking was then or at any time colored by Nazi criteria of value. It is also inadequate to look at his rejection of Nazism in the events up to and including the Second World War as the sole basis for revising positions he seemed to be taking in that work and in *Die totale Mobilmachung*. When he looks back at *Der Arbeiter* as the extreme point of "collectivism" in his views, he draws attention to the process of developing ideas originally formed on an individual basis into a general picture of human life. The procedure of extrapolating from his own experience as a *Frontsoldat* to an image of social organization has turned out to be much more problematic than he anticipated when he embarked on his "sociological" would-be "philosophical" projects. The reason for this lies in the very particular quality of his experience in the First War, and his unwillingness to relinquish the perceptions which he retained from that time.

The passage quoted from *Das Wäldchen* 125 contrasts with those from both Remarque and Hitler in the mode and degree of generalization to which it aspires. Jünger writes of impressions which arise in the mood of *Grauen*. The precise quality of this mood is more important to him than any conclusive assertion one might try to derive about man outside the setting of frontline combat, about the relations between members of society, or the quality of decisions to be undertaken as this society unfolds its identity through history. The rhetoric here sustains the purely subjective character of representation: "Man überrascht sich . . . bei einem verstohlenen Seitenblick . . . Man fühlt sich geneigt . . . Man würde sich über nichts wundern . . ." (169). It is of course not true to say this rhetoric is politically neutral, but it acquires its political content by default. The context of an ideological struggle determined by attitudes to the war, the terms of the Versailles Treaty, and the possibility of a militarist solution to the current difficulties in German society inevitably gave any mention of the war a political impact. At the same time, it can scarcely be maintained that these somewhat eccentric confessions to irrational speculation about the dead are designed to support a political or propagandistic purpose.

It is clear to any reader, and was clear to Jünger himself, that his manner of assimilating the shocks of warfare is highly reminiscent of the aesthetic individualism characteristic of much late 19th-century writing, especially in France. Karl Heinz Bohrer's book *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens* pursues this line of criticism as a justification of Jünger's literary praxis and refusal to turn his work more explicitly towards the struggle against fascist politics. The cultivation of an individual sensibility, and the justification of this as an end in itself define the ideologies of aestheticism and *l'art pour l'art*. The relation of this position to the broader domain of social and political history are the subject of familiar arguments in general debate.

Both the presence and the paucity of political elements here can be seen in terms of that debate, but the logic of Jünger's position is still clearly incomplete. One distorts the trajectory of his writing by attaching it too closely to this one context, and by fixing *Das Wäldchen 125* too rigidly in the history of Germany during the later 1920s. While this particular work was part of the sudden rush of writing which included *Mein Kampf* and *Im Westen nichts Neues*, it was not Jünger's own first word on the war. His first book, *In Stahlgewittern*, appeared in 1920. It recounts his years at the front from December 1914 to the day he was awarded the *Pour le mérite* on 22 September 1918, and is drawn explicitly from the journal he kept during those years in the trenches. He is concerned only with the facts and impressions he witnesses directly. The larger setting in which he is fighting is a minor and diminishing concern. There is no hostility towards the "enemy"; he appreciates his opponents' soldierly qualities just as he takes pride in his own and those of his comrades. He is, indeed, quite uninterested in anything outside the grand spectacle this war becomes. The phrase that Thomas Mann applies to himself with such heavy irony could describe Jünger much more literally. His writing at this period really does express the "Ansichten eines Unpolitischen."

Unlike Mann, he has no sense of different states and opposing cultures engaged in a life-and-death conflict for their historical existence. The countries behind the lines are far away, the opposing soldiers are close to one another. They share vastly more between them along this narrow world of craters and rubble from the Swiss border to the sea than either side does with the bourgeois domain of their fatherlands. As Jünger likes to say, they are all sons of war. During the first weeks, he describes how his fellow soldiers are already beginning to sense the mockery in the idea of a connection between their world and some civilian "nation" to which they are supposed to belong. They notice the shattered remains of a French border market near their position and find a melancholy amusement in walking past it in a stroll "nach Deutschland" (1:26).

Even this flimsy consciousness of a homeland behind the lines gives way as the war progresses. In the spring of 1915, after his first serious wound, Jünger is sent back to recover near Heidelberg. The sight of blooming cherry trees gives him a sudden sentimental *Heimatgefühl*, and he notes: "Gute und ernste Gedanken kamen mir in den Sinn, und ich ahnte zum ersten Male, daß dieser Krieg mehr als ein großes Abenteuer bedeutete" (1:39). This is the first time he has such a thought; in any serious sense, it is also the last time during this war. As he and his comrades become more profoundly transformed by the alchemy of battle and its storms of steel, the ability to identify with anything beyond the titanic struggle itself disappears. The idea that life offers anything higher than the great adventure of this agonistic meeting between the sons of war also disappears.

Jünger's next book, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, which appeared in 1922, attempts to give an expanded picture of this outlook and manner of experiencing combat. It stresses the autonomy of war as a supreme modality of life. War is

"aller Dinge Vater" (7:11); it is "das Lied vom Leben, das sich selbst verschlingt. Leben heißt töten" (7:42). There is no sense that this high flowering of being should serve another purpose. Describing the mood before an attack, Jünger writes: "Gewiß, es ist vielleicht schade um uns. Vielleicht opfern wir uns auch für etwas Unwesentliches. Aber *unseren* Wert kann uns keiner nehmen. Nicht *wofür* wir kämpfen ist das Wesentliche, sondern *wie* wir kämpfen" (7:74). By this concept, he urges a new order of value which gathers up all participants in the war and overcomes all distinctions, including that between the fallen and the survivor. Not only does this dimension of meaning preserve the dead, it also cancels out the vulnerability of the living. "Nicht einer ist umsonst gefallen" (7:50), Jünger writes, because, as "Frontsoldaten des Erdballs," all are joined in creating this new medium of being. "Nicht nur unser Vater ist der Krieg, auch unser Sohn. Wir haben ihn erzeugt, und er uns" (7:12). This medium of being unites opponents and negates the separate purposes which lie outside the battle itself in the realm of national interests or political partisanship:

Der Kampf ist nicht nur eine Vernichtung, sondern auch die männliche Form der Zeugung, und so kämpft nicht einmal der umsonst, welcher für Irrtümer ficht. Die Feinde von heute und morgen: sie sind in den Erscheinungen der Zukunft verbunden, das ist ihr gemeinsames Werk. Und es tut wohl, sich im Kreise jener harten europäischen Sittlichkeit zu fühlen . . . (7:50)

Even this naming of Europe as one particular part of the *Erdball* is in no way meant to be exclusive. When Jünger fights opposite African troops in the French lines, or Indian units with the British, he is concerned only with those soldierly virtues which the war has bequeathed to all its sons, whatever their race or color. There is thus no ground here in which nationalist or racist politics can take root. Indeed, one can already see precisely where the split between Jünger and the National Socialist forces will take place.

The *Sittlichkeit* of combat is what constitutes it as a real form of life and power. For *Töten* to equal *Leben* it has to observe the limits demanded by war in its fulfillment as a purpose. Hatreds between cultures and nations, the deliberate assault on the unarmed and the helpless, the use of technological means to obliterate a race, all these are matters of murder and arise only where there is a lack of that manly "Sittlichkeit . . . , die über das Geschrei und die Weichheit der Massen hinweg sich immer schärfer in ihren Ideen bestärkt" (7:50). The use of fear and hatred in political mobilization of a population, which will later be the prime stock-in-trade of fascist propaganda, can only be contemplated by men who draw on such demeaning passions out of failed courage and flaccidness of spirit. The mendacity of this shrieking discourse stands in contrast to the language of warfare to which Jünger aspires:

Das ist die erhabene Sprache der Macht, die uns schöner und berauschender klingt als alles zuvor, eine Sprache, die ihre eigenen Wertungen und ihre eigene Tiefe besitzt. Und daß diese Sprache nur von wenigen verstanden wird, das macht sie vornehm,

und es ist gewiß, daß nur die Besten, das heißt die Mutigsten, sich in ihr werden verständigen können. (7:50-51)

By 1933, Jünger had determined beyond any doubt that the political regime of National Socialism neither spoke nor understood his language. It was not until the eve of 1943 that he had to concede this corruption had perverted war itself into the discourse of hatred. While on his visit to the Eastern Front as an observer, he witnessed obscenities of degradation visited on the local people, and heard rumors of yet worse abominations, including the mass-murders of Jews with poison gas. Those who have fallen now signify a quite different relation between the living and the dead. The misery Jünger sees is inflicted by the armed on the unarmed. The merciless perpetrate their slaughter on the helpless, because the division between them and their victims is the only form in which brutality can compensate for the impossibility of true *Vornehmheit*. The condition which drives the lust for death that he sees from this time on, corresponds to what Elias Canetti describes in *Masse und Macht* as the obsession of the survivor. In this war, the dead are required as a sign to demarcate a substitute distinction for the living. The survivors in this murder do not possess a concept of nobility and know of no value which might connect the living and the dead. The dead are the demonstration that all who oppose the fascist nation are nothing, and this demonstration is required, because no other means can show that the empty machinery of destruction, which triumphs over them, is indeed something. Jünger is well aware how uncontrollable the enactment of this difference must be. He observes in his *Kaukasische Aufzeichnungen*:

Wenn man . . . die Ziffern ahnt, in denen die Meintat in den Schinderhütten sich vollzieht, eröffnet sich die Aussicht auf eine Potenzierung des Leidens, vor der man die Arme sinken läßt. Ein Ekel ergreift mich dann vor den Uniformen, den Schulterstücken, den Orden, den Waffen, deren Glanz ich so geliebt habe. Das alte Rittertum ist tot; die Kriege werden von Technikern geführt. Der Mensch hat also jenen Stand erreicht, den Dostojewski im "Raskolnikow" beschrieben hat. Da sieht er seinesgleichen als Ungeziefer an. Gerade davor muß er sich hüten, wenn er nicht in die Insektensphäre hineingeraten will. Es gilt ja von ihm und seinen Opfern das alte, ungeheure: "Das bist Du." (2:470)

Jünger's writing on the First World War shows no interest in the fact that Germany was defeated. Participation in the great adventure united all things that the war touched in an equality beyond victory and defeat, death or survival. The perspective on the Second World War lets the distinction between victory and defeat disappear in a different way. The spirit of murder prevails over another life only at the price of degrading its own. Where one form of war was the song of life devouring itself, this was the evil silence engulfing life in darkness. It is the evil which attempts to preserve itself by driving others across the line into mortality. As we noted in the passage from *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler ties the promise of victory to the promise of immortality. There is a mythical delusion

here far more dangerous than Jünger's almost whimsical fantasy about the hidden laws which govern the dead. It becomes the mad obsession of the survivor who transfigures destruction of another into preservation of oneself.

Even during the First World War, Jünger shows a clear sense of the fetishism implicit in purposeful destruction. The scorched earth order of the Somme retreat shows him the dangerous intoxication in the idea that obliterating the goods of the enemy equals multiplying one's own; in addition, he sees the economic consciousness of modern times at work in the further delusion that this not only increases what one has, but also what one is. In *Stahlgewittern* records scenes where soldiers set about destroying everything that made a French village they had occupied a setting for human life, and indicates how profoundly alien this aspect of warfare is to him:

Die Bilder erinnerten, wie gesagt, an ein Tollhaus und riefen eine ähnliche, halb komische, halb widrige Wirkung hervor. Sie waren auch, wie man sogleich bemerkte, der Manneszucht abträglich. Zum ersten Male sah ich hier die planmäßige Zerstörung, der ich später im Leben noch bis zum Überdruß begegnen sollte; sie ist unheilvoll mit dem ökonomischen Denken unserer Epoche verknüpft, bringt auch dem Zerstörer mehr Schaden als Nutzen und dem Soldaten keine Ehre ein. (1:136)

There is a very important distinction here separating Jünger from the madness of fascist destruction, just as there is between Remarque's contempt for the madness of war altogether and Jünger's heroic love of war as adventure. At the same time, there is no basis on which to "save" Jünger's position as bearing in any way towards a rational view of human life, human society, and human interests. From the perspective of such rationality, it is undoubtedly to be considered a madness also.

Within the twofold concept of heroic individual experience and cosmic life which are both expressed together in warfare, the move towards political engagement for Jünger has to be understood as a double vertical displacement of those elements *Erlebnis* and *Leben*. From the level of *Leben*, it is a descent into concrete collective human action as a visible expression of that circulation of hidden or apocalyptic forces. It moves *Leben* from cosmic time to historical time. *Erlebnis* is moved in the opposite direction. Its shift is exponential, a move upwards from the time of the individual heartbeat to the larger rhythm of historical time. It rises from the adventurous moment to the field of history, where this is also understood as the site of adventure. *Weltkrieg* understood as adventure stands in a relation to *Weltall*, which is not material but *geistig* in nature. Its emblem is not the political map in which material advantages are gained by states among themselves, or parties and regimes in the control of states. It is signified by the unification of the planet itself in the single reality of a global enterprise.

The planetary thinking indicated in the image of Jünger's *Frontsoldaten des Erdballs* in the First World War, and developed in the *Erdvergeistigung* of global technology by the "Arbeiter," also undergoes a transformation during the Sec-

ond World War as a central theme in *Der Friede*. What he argues in that text is that the metaphysical, or cosmic, community, which in the 1914–18 conflict was to have been created by the war itself, must now be achieved in the peace through the spiritual regeneration of a universal authority vested in the church. The First War, as both father and child of all those who fought it, was the sign of a cosmic familial unity. The global community described in *Der Friede* would be anything but a pragmatic cooperation of economic purposes as envisaged by rational internationalism. It would be a conjoining of spiritual forces to overcome the nihilism of material criteria and the attendant wasteland of isolation this had brought. *Der Friede* also stands in extreme contrast to the writing from the First War, because its elaborately mystified abstractions have lost all contact with the concrete level of actual experience.

Both the rationalist politics of the Left and the mythic distortions of the Right are, in Jünger's view, connected by this "Nihilismus," and the effect of the former in its parliamentary regime was to bring about the conditions under which the latter, in the shape of Adolf Hitler's party, could take hold. As Jünger wrote in a famous aphorism from his 1934 collection *Blätter und Steine*: "Die verfallenen Altäre sind von Dämonen bewohnt" (12:507). It was the likes of Erich Maria Remarque who had overturned the altars at which the ancient heroic spirit of tradition had been celebrated, and where the blood of those united by such values had been offered in sacrifice. The desperate efforts to overcome that very loneliness of modern emancipation which Remarque names as the burden of his generation had ultimately to end in an invitation to whatever hideous beings would recreate this point of gathering among the people by manifesting their own lust for blood as a substitute for the old sacrifices. And it was this which perverted the Second War.

The hypertrophy of politics in the totalitarian state means the complete domination of the public sphere by the spirit of murder, and the style of war conducted by such powers is degraded in the same way. It no longer has a place for *Manneszucht*. Because the fundamental nihilism at work in all the purposes gathered together in this conflict can never promise that the curse of isolation will be truly lifted, the only passion on all sides is hatred and destruction of the enemy. One will be alone anyway, so one can hope only for triumph and mastery in this loneliness. The final stage of this emerges in the face of military defeat. Jünger observes that even those for whom there will be no alternative but suicide use their last moments of power to shoot hostages or liquidate their prisoners. The only remaining distinction is the order in which people are cast into oblivion. Therefore each person who goes before one into that darkness gives one a flicker of satisfaction. In the last days of the war, Jünger speculates on the possibility that Hitler might resort to chemical weapons. "Ich sah ein," he notes, "daß er dabei auf alle Fälle profitieren mußte, denn er hatte einen Grad des Nihilismus erreicht, der ihn außerhalb der Parteien stellte—für ihn war jeder Tote, gleichviel auf welcher Seite, ein Gewinn" (3:387).

The power of technology has changed its meaning here. In the First World War, the destructive capacity of weapons, including poison gas, was simply part of the great drama of *Leben* which expressed itself as *Töten*. But here there is no *Erlebnis*. There is nothing. In *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, Jünger wrote: "Wir wollen zeigen, was in uns steckt, dann haben wir, wenn wir fallen, wirklich ausgelebt" (7:74). But if there is nothing in us, our dying can show nothing. The destructive power of our weapons has no meaning other than the capacity to impose that nihilistic distinction on us which lies between the survivor and the dead, between murderer and victim. The survivor has no life to "live out" because he has desecrated life itself in his own existence. The only distinction rests on whom one outlives—a purely numerical matter of quantity and order, in keeping with the economic spirit. Therefore the place of the *Arbeiter* is no longer that of a new and more powerful position mediating *Erlebnis* and *Leben* as it had appeared in 1932. Without some other element of human tradition which is able to link individual life with the larger time of cosmic life, there is no possibility of technology fulfilling itself in that function.

Whereas the First World War was the song of life devouring itself, what Jünger hears in the Second World War is the sound of history amputating its own limbs. This is not only true of the German side, but of all sides—the Soviet Union and the Western Allies included. The destructiveness of technology in this setting is directed against every value which might constitute a human historical time outside the criteria of economics and technological progress. The destruction of Cologne by Allied air attack in 1942 already indicates the "Amerikanismus, der durch die Niederlegung der alten Städte weiter gefördert wird" (2:373). In *Der Arbeiter*, Jünger had sounded ready to welcome the *Werkstättenlandschaft* where the last traces of a traditional human comfort were to be obliterated from the earth. Now, faced with the loss of an old and familiar kind of world as the cities in which he had grown up were ground into rubble, he regrets this alien future: "An Stelle unserer alten Wiegen werden wir Städte haben, wie sie der Ingenieur ersinnt" (II; 409). In 1943, he comments: "In diesem Jahr verlor ich nicht nur den Vater, sondern auch die Vaterstadt" (3:180).

The visit to the Eastern Front shortly before the encirclement at Stalingrad, which he describes in *Kaukasische Aufzeichnungen*, also confirmed his sense that this loss of a human world as a heroic site for experience had come about directly through the influence of technology. The quality of an individual existence which he had excluded when he wrote *Der Arbeiter* remains essential to Jünger's image of heroism and *Erlebnis* after all. In contradiction of what he had written in 1932, it was not the soldier who had projected his qualities from the stage of warfare into the general domain of human striving; the process was precisely the reverse of that. The soldier had taken on the qualities and function of the technician, and any image of *heroischer Realismus* Jünger had once expected from the *Arbeiter* turns out to be miserably lacking:

Wie Tschitschikow in den "Toten Seelen" bei den Gutsbesitzern, fahre ich hier bei den Generalen herum und beobachte auch deren Verwandlung zum Arbeiter. Die Hoffnung, daß dieser Schicht sullanische oder auch nur napoleonische Erscheinungen entwachsen könnten, muß man aufgeben. Sie sind Spezialisten auf dem Gebiet der Befehlstechnik und, wie der nächste beste an der Maschine, ersetzbar und auswechselbar. (2:454)

Later on Jünger hears that film made during the last stages of the battle for Stalingrad had been captured by the Russians and passed on for its propaganda effect to be shown in Swedish cinemas. Another officer remarks that the Germans should have burned the film before it fell into enemy hands, but even this seems pointless to Jünger now—"doch wozu?" he wonders: "Es sind Mitteilungen von Arbeitern an Arbeiter" (3:276). There is no real difference between the two sides which makes the keeping of such secrets meaningful. This results in a grotesque parody of the planetary image of warfare with which Jünger had expanded the mystical meaning of the 1914-18 conflict. In the earlier case, distinct nations with independent histories found a common life along the borders where they joined battle. Now, as political and economic competitors, they have lost the individual character which enabled them to meet at their frontiers and express their existence in the medium of warfare. Their power rests on the same principles of organization to exploit the same technical capabilities. They are not distinguished by true national identities, but simply divided by the competitive compulsion to achieve sole possession of that one domain.

Jünger is intrigued by his own response to the news of the American landings in North Africa. He has no interest any longer in a perspective which identifies one side as his "point of view" in the unfolding story. This, too, shows the change in the quality of war. "Die Art der Anteilnahme, die ich in mir der zeitgenössischen Geschichte gegenüber beobachte, ist die eines Menschen, der sich weniger in einen Weltkrieg als in einen Weltbürgerkrieg verwickelt weiß. Bin deshalb in ganz andere Konflikte als in jene der kämpfenden Nationalstaaten verstrickt" (2:413).

The event which fixes the final turning point and closure in his long drawn-out struggle to form a position on war beyond the mystical or ecstatic affirmation of adventure is not a catastrophe on the political, military, or national plane. It is a new personal relation with the death that war brings. This is not an image of his own death, but that of his firstborn son, Ernstl. The tragedy is stained with all the colors of those ugly times, for it began with a betrayal. A Nazi informer among Ernstl's schoolmates told the Gestapo that Ernstl had declared it would be in Germany's best interest to hang Adolf Hitler. He was immediately arrested. Jünger used all his influence to save him by getting him released into military service. Ernstl was sent to the Italian Front, where he was killed on 29 November 1944, although no word reached his family until 11 January 1945. Only through this bereavement does Jünger find a point of communion with those to whom

the war has created a common sphere of existence. On 14 January he writes in his journal: "Wir traten nun auch in die wahre, die einzige Gemeinde dieses Krieges ein, in seine geheime Bruderschaft" (3:360).

His thought in placing this loss in a framework of meaning is not to see Ernstl as a victim of the political enemy which set the machinery of death in motion, nor of the military enemy which fired the bullet that killed him. It is another sort of sign entirely for which Jünger is searching here. He wants to read it as an indication of mysterious forces gathered up and revealed in an individual destiny. "Was hat es denn zu bedeuten, daß es ihn in demselben Jahre den Händen der Tyrannis zu entreißen gelang?" Jünger asks. "Das stand unter so günstigen Zeichen; alle guten Kräfte wirkten wie in geheimer Verschwörung dazu mit" (3:360-61). For him, moments which decide between life and death are utterances of the destiny which unites all beings and separates them from things. In each decision, there is a truth spoken about a particular life. Therefore Jünger concludes: "Doch sollte er vielleicht vor seinem Tode erst dieses Zeugnis geben und sich bewähren in der eigentlichen Sache, der nur so wenige gewachsen sind" (3:361).

The same sense of fate accompanied him during his own youth on the front line. He mentions an incident in which he paused to exchange a few words with an acquaintance while making his way back to his position after an attack, and thus providentially avoided a shell which landed on the road just ahead of him. "Derartiges sieht man nicht als Zufall an" (1:123), he comments. This is reflected also in the aphorism where he states: "Niemand stirbt vor der Erfüllung seiner Aufgabe; viele aber überleben sie" (12:508). The domain of fate is tied here to individual realities. It takes cognizance of the personal value we place in showing "was in uns steckt," as though our will and the purpose of *Leben* run together in that respect. At the same time, it is evident that there is another aspect of our will, the desire to survive without regard to our "Aufgabe" or the hidden cosmic dimension. A contrast with the entirely unmetaphorical finality of death is essential for its meaning here. Both the brutal will of the survivor in destruction and the rational will for peace and justice are contradicted in the revelation which comes about through this third will to demonstrate "die eigentliche Sache." The meaning of death in the latter is therefore symbolic rather than metaphoric or figural.

The "Wofür" by which propaganda glorifies battle and death cannot aspire to the demanding altitude of this symbolic meaning. As the passage from *Mein Kampf* illustrated, the mythos of the imperialist state is the basis of a metaphorical relation. The soldier becomes a figure for the state, the state figuratively transfers its longevity to the soldier. There is no clearer example of this than the charming but nonetheless despicable poem of the First World War by Rupert Brooke which begins: "If I should die, think only this of me / That there's some corner of a foreign field / That is forever England."⁷ The promise of being forever, even

if it is only being England, is closely equivalent to the heroic immortality Hitler promises all those who die in *Feldgrau*. "Wie man kämpft," by contrast, is the basis of a symbolic relation. The meaning one acquires in this way is not in the power of the administrative state to confer, nor that of any public entity governed by the will to survive regardless of its "Aufgabe." This adds to the horror Jünger feels in the official formulation that his son has died "für den Führer" (3:362).

The isolation that Remarque's generation learned in the presence of violent and unpredictable death underlies all the subsequent history through which it passed. For the hopes of a rational perspective, this could be resolved by a reshaping of society to overcome class inequities, to transform economic relations, and thereby to usher in a new order of human relations. The rhetorical transformation of Germany into a communion of trope and figure was Hitler's alternative. His rhetoric proved also, of course, to be a magic formula to conjure up real political power. It is important for us to understand that Jünger's association with that movement was not because he ascribed any value to the image of political power. It was more of an exploratory journey to test the public meaning National Socialism produced by rhetorical power for the possibility that its collective reality might also contain symbolic power. The stages in which Jünger examines and approaches that view, and subsequently rejects it, are clearly evidenced in his texts.

This gives us precisely the correct interpretation when we see him endeavoring to adapt and conform to the requirements of a political mythology in *Das Wäldchen* 125. There is one passage which incorporates an instance of just that figure of national life which detracts from *Leben* as a cosmic idea and applies it within a political context as a metaphor of survival: "Hinter uns, im Osten, liegt die Heimat, deren Wille zum Leben in unserem Willen zum Sterben verkörpert ist" (1:313). In his first book, recalling the death of a young Englishman, Jünger had written: "Der Staat, der uns die Verantwortung abnimmt, kann uns nicht von der Trauer befreien; wir müssen sie austragen. Sie reicht tief in die Träume hinab" (1:252). There, he still maintained that those aspects of existence which lie outside, and prior to, the public sphere and its history cannot be absorbed into larger domains of purpose, or made part of a political totality.

The rewriting which comes after the break with Hitler's politics is even more significant. The two versions of *Das abenteuerliche Herz*, the first from 1929, the second from 1938, illustrate this in subtle detail. The first version contains the discussion of the vital forces Jünger can perceive in the urban masses, and the powers which political figures can conjure up among them. It also repeatedly indicates the sense that work in nationalist politics is the medium of a meaningful community. All that is gone in the second version. The word *Deutschland* scarcely occurs in the form that it did before. It is evident that, from now on, this heart has abandoned the illusion that there can be any adventures which are not lonely ones. What Jünger's experiences in Hitler's war add to this knowledge is the quality

of a loneliness which is not adventurous. That is to say, he begins to discover what life can be for someone who is bound to the realm of worldly events by human commitments.

The brotherhood of the bereaved into which Jünger enters at the death of his son is a community joined by the negative medium of loss. The common consciousness shared here is only the perception of the dark distances between persons. This is not a sudden discovery which came only in the shock of bereavement. It grows steadily with Jünger's awareness of all the abominations of the Second World War. And through this awareness, he is able to see that aspect he had discounted in the First:

Im Ersten Krieg war ich allein und frei; durch diesen zweiten gehe ich mit allen Lieben und mit aller Habe hindurch. Doch träumte ich zuweilen im Ersten Weltkrieg von diesem zweiten; ähnlich wie während des Vormarsches durch Frankreich 1940 mich weniger die Bilder der Gegenwart erschreckten als die Vorschau auf künftige Vernichtungswelten, die ich im menschenleeren Raum erriet. (3:180-81)

The sense of a world emptied of human presence comes to him when the noise, motion, and spectacle of warfare is stilled. It was at such moments previously that he would be surprised by eccentric speculations on the secret life of the dead. The demonic displacement of human existence is connected with the absence of personal danger. Jünger's perils in the First War had been his alibi, but now a full consciousness of crimes visited on humankind and the human condition itself cannot be kept at bay. As he noted in *Das Wäldchen* 125: "Es sind nicht die lautesten Stunden, in denen das Grauen über das Schlachtfeld geht."

Under the demonic threat of a world without *Vornehmheit* and *Manneszucht* and between the "Kulissen des Komforts" which isolate him from his own adventurous past, Jünger discovers this new and more fearful vulnerability which drains meaning from his existence. The higher dimension of life, to which his personal courage could be understood as a sacrifice, and his survival as a symbolic gift of fate in return, has been extinguished from his world. The quiet, the comfort, and the security of his position during the occupation of Paris became a receptive situation in which the deep poverty afflicting his knowledge of life emerges with full effect. Deprived of dramatic substitutes for a rational basis in human experience, his thoughts begin to turn towards the dead as the possessors of a fuller reality. In 1942, Jünger notes the recurring melancholy to which he has become subject, and writes: "Mir wurde die ungeheure Entfernung unter uns Menschen deutlich, wie man sie gerade an den nächsten und liebsten ermessen kann. Wir sind wie Sterne durch endlose Tiefen einander fern. Doch wird das nach dem Tode anders sein. Das ist das Schöne am Tode, daß er mit dem körperlichen Licht auch diese Entfernung löscht" (2:307). He goes on in the subsequent entry: "Was ich am Menschen liebe, das ist sein Wesen jenseits des Todes und die Gemeinsamkeit mit ihm" (2:309).

In his essay "Über den affirmativen Begriff der Kultur" from 1937, Herbert Marcuse responds at some length to Jünger's *Die totale Mobilmachung* and *Der Arbeiter*. Aware of the enormous attractive power which conceptions of fulfilled totality in human experience have exerted in the political domain, Marcuse attacks Jünger for the hollowness of the rhetoric these works contain. "Was Ernst Jünger noch als die Rettung der 'Totalität unseres Lebens,' als Schaffung einer heroischen Arbeitswelt und dergleichen bezeichnet, enthüllt sich im Verlauf immer deutlicher als die Umformung des gesamten Daseins im Dienst der stärksten ökonomischen Interessen."⁸ This is undoubtedly correct. And the same thing is true of the earlier work, where the symbolic moment of personal danger is made to displace all concern with the very forces which have left no other basis for individual experience intact. Marcuse has no hesitation in condemning both for the same fault. "Wie der idealistische Kult der Innerlichkeit," he observes, "so dient der heroische Kult des Staates einer in ihren Grundlagen identischen Ordnung des gesellschaftlichen Daseins. Das Individuum wird ihr jetzt völlig geopfert" (97).

The dismal comfort with which Jünger finds himself surrounded during the Second World War offers him neither a stage for the inner drama of his individuality nor anything for which to make a more explicit sacrifice of it. Therefore he begins to write in his Parisian diary about "die Last der Individualität" (2:307). He begins to crave the dissolution of experience itself. He expands this idea in the diary entry where he comments on that comfort and on the virtual impossibility of withstanding the terrors of meaninglessness "wenn man aus der heroischen in die Dämonensphäre tritt" (3:169); he concludes by quoting a line from the Bible about the fate of the just: "Gott prüft sie wie reines Gold im Ofen und nimmt sie an wie ein völliges Opfer." This development is a withdrawal from lived life and an abandonment of the world to its enemies, in just such a manner as Marcuse found in the work of the early 1930s. But it is certainly no greater a withdrawal than the two phases in which Jünger affirms heroic experience and sacrifice. It is, on the contrary, a withdrawal which at least begins to recognize itself as such.

In retrospect, it reorganizes the reading of Jünger's earlier work along a quite different line. The modalities of symbol and metaphor are revealed as illusion. What remains is the melancholy of the allegorist. Jünger spent most of the Second World War in Paris as a *flâneur*. He cruised the streets, looking for impressions and rare books to add to his collection. And like Baudelaire, that great *flâneur* from one hundred years before, he explores allegory as the only mode of language left to experience in a world drained of meaning. Allegory, as Walter Benjamin noted, is the function of language which holds fragments of a world for contemplation in full consciousness of its irredeemable mortality. What Benjamin writes about Baudelaire in the 19th century can be applied to Jünger in the 20th: "Die Erfahrung der Allegorie, die an den Trümmern festhält, ist eigentlich die der ewigen Vergängnis."⁹

There is peculiar distance between the vitality of language as manifested under more favorable conditions and the distanced, even dehumanized, representation in which such impressions are captured. "Das ursprüngliche Interesse an der Allegorie ist nicht sprachlich sondern optisch," Benjamin writes, and then he quotes a line from Baudelaire: "Les images, ma grande, ma primitive passion" (5.1:422). This derealizing, or aestheticizing, will to appropriate the world around him as pure image is no less a theme in Jünger's thinking. In *Gärten und Straßen*, the account of his march through France in the campaign of 1940, he writes of "ein seltsames Gefühl, wie Trunkenheit. Ich bin mit Bildern angefüllt wie ein Gefäß, das überläuft. Sie fließen an mir herab" (2:174). Later on he adds: "Das Absolutum kam auch darin zum Ausdruck, daß zum ersten Mal im Leben mein Hunger nach Bildern gesättigt war. Ja mehr als das—ich hatte mehr gesehen, als ich wollte . . ."

The primary argument in Benjamin's study of experience in Baudelaire's Paris is the effect of the economic system built around the mass-produced object of exchange. The fascinating power such articles have in the market place, the *Einführung* on the consumer's part which informs their lifeless presence with the capacity to compete with, and predominate over, the realm of living existence are pursued as the elusive secret of ideology in the modern industrial economy. In Jünger, one sees a different aspect of this ideology. Jünger is not hypnotized by a fetishism of the commodity, but he is drawn into another function which operates within this society and manifests the same phantasmagorical degradation of experience as that which rules over the consumer. The lure of "adventure" lies closer to the desires of youthful energy, yet still has everything in common with that which gives the deathly cast to commodity relations—what Benjamin calls the "sex-appeal des Anorganischen."¹⁰

Marcuse sees no fundamental contradiction in these roles from the point of view of an irrational society. It lies within the necessities of such a society to obliterate any sense of an interest which might compete with its own rationale. He defines the message of *Der Arbeiter* in this formulation: "Hatte die Kultur früher den Glücksanspruch im realen Schein zur Ruhe gebracht, soll sie jetzt das Individuum lehren, daß es eine Glücksforderung für sich überhaupt nicht stellen darf" (97). It is the final position in the logic of affirmative culture, since it justifies social misery by making it indispensable to social value itself:

Man hat sich daran gewöhnt, die ganze Sphäre der materiellen Reproduktion als wesensmäßig mit dem Makel des Elends, der Härte und Ungerechtigkeit behaftet zu sehen, auf jeden dagegen protestierenden Anspruch zu verzichten oder ihn zu unterdrücken. Schon der Ansatz der ganzen traditionellen Kulturphilosophie: die Abhebung der Kultur von der Zivilisation und vom materiellen Lebensprozeß, beruht auf der verewigenden Anerkennung jenes geschichtlichen Verhältnisses. Es wird metaphysisch entschuldigt durch jene Kulturtheorie, daß man das Leben "bis zu einem gewissen Grade ertöten" müsse, um zu "Gütern mit Eigenwerten zu kommen." (97; quotes from Heinrich Rickert's *Lebenswerte und Kulturwerte*).

Nevertheless, as Jünger's response to the destruction of the Somme retreat shows, the non-heroic impulses behind the demands for heroic obedience or sacrifice may not always be concealed. It is inevitable that a man like Jünger, who makes such rigorous demands for a metaphysical justification in what he does, should eventually feel where this fails. The Second World War brought him the sobering discovery that there was no transcending meaning which appears as a *Gut mit Eigenwert* in the place of sacrifice. It is only a loss without restitution.

The act of killing off one aspect of life ceases to carry with it the compensatory gift of appropriating another. The image of the hunt, for example, undergoes a profound change as a symbol and figure of speech. Prior to the Second World War, it was a major motif in Jünger's representations of both battle and the labor of the artist. Karl Prümm's penetrating book *Die Literatur des Soldatischen Nationalismus der 20er Jahre* draws this out as a central element in Jünger's writing: "Das Bild der Jagd, bereits in den frühen Kriegstagebüchern zentrale Metapher zur Erfassung der Kampfsituation, . . . gilt Jünger als die beste Umschreibung für die Kunst."¹¹ Yet that motif disappears under the impact of the Second World War. In its place, the *subtile Jagd* of Jünger's insect-collecting becomes an indication of his withdrawal from the more crudely destructive relation to the animal world. His book on insect-collecting, *Subtile Jagden* of 1967, recounts the change: "Die Aussicht, ein mächtiges Tier in eine Fleischmasse zu verwandeln, war mir zuwider—und die Stärke des Widerwillens erstaunte mich, wenn ich an die Jugend zurückdachte" (10:64). The new subtlety and reticence here parallels the hunt for images and for bizarre analogies in the later writing, which is so heavily shifted towards allegory and distance. There can be no restoration of that monumentality of tradition by which sacrifice takes on heroic significance in the collective domain. The fallen altars remain sites of the demonic sphere.

The last word on this transformation of warfare belongs, perhaps, not to Jünger but to the man with whom he had such a surprising friendship, Alfred Andersch. In the same campaign in Italy which ended Ernstl's life, Andersch took the step which even *Im Westen nichts Neues* refused to contemplate as fitting for a soldier. He deserted. Andersch's account of the decision and the act of his desertion, *Die Kirschen der Freiheit*, is a war book of a new kind. It shows a far deeper liberation from the remnants of the 19th century than anything by the previous generation. While Jünger's own first post-1945 book, *Heliopolis*, was an arcane allegory steeped in nostalgic longing for a past of symbolic presence, Andersch establishes an emancipation from all mythos. What he describes as his "Wildnisgefühl" is a disenchantment of nature and solitude which seems to have remained beyond Jünger's grasp. The "Wildnis" purged of all mythic presence, whether demonic or heroic, allows the moment of decision to emerge as an opening into enlightenment. It is entirely separate from that reentry into an archaic sphere by the representative heroic act envisaged in the *Dezisionismus* of Jünger's generation. That these two men should have recognized the value in one another's work

as they did, suggests a line of connection between one and the other. The moment of isolation is that in which Jünger's search for his freedom loses its way before the dangers to which he no longer feels equal. That is also the moment when Alfred Andersch takes his decisive step forward into the light.

Notes

- 1 Ernst Jünger, *Sämtliche Werke* 1 (Stuttgart, 1978): 543. All subsequent quotations from Jünger's work are from this edition (vols. 1-18, 1978-83). The first volume contains the three books based directly on his World War I diaries.
- 2 *Sämtliche Werke* 3:169. All the books presenting material from Jünger's diaries of the World War II period (April 1939 to December 1948) are included in vols. 2 and 3. It has been pointed out that many of the thoughts which occur in these journals can also be identified in the novel *Auf den Marmorklippen*, final work on which is mentioned in the opening pages of the first journal, *Gärten und Straßen*. I have restricted myself to the commentary in the journals because his remarks there are always set in the context of actual events. Similar observations taken from the fictional work, where they take the form of speculations in a metaphysical parable, present separate problems of interpretation. Subsequent quotations are identified by volume and page number in my text.
- 3 Erich Maria Remarque, *Im Westen nichts Neues* (Cologne/Berlin, 1964), 13f.
- 4 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich, n.d.).
- 5 *Gesammelte Werke* 2.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt, 1977), 439.
- 6 In the article "Literatuur en sociologie" written for *Het Vlaamsche Land*, 27-28 September 1942. Reprinted in *Paul de Man: Wartime Journalism, 1939-43*, ed. Werner Hammacher, Neil Hertz, and Thomas Keenan (Lincoln/London, 1988), 332.
- 7 From "The Soldier," *The Poetical Works of Rupert Brooke*, ed. George Keynes (London, 1946), 23.
- 8 *Kultur und Gesellschaft* 1 (Frankfurt, 1965): 97. First printed in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 6:3.
- 9 From the *Passagen-Werk*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* 5.1:439.
- 10 "Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts," in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminationen*, ed. Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt, 1980), 176.
- 11 Karl Prümm, *Die Literatur des Soldatischen Nationalismus der 20er Jahre (1918-33)* 3.1-2, ed. Helmut Kreuzer (Kronberg, 1974), 296.

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Heroic Delusions: German Artists in the Service of Imperialism

JOST HERMAND

Contrary to a naive viewpoint voiced with some frequency, not all earlier wars were necessarily evil. Indeed, the only people likely to think so are those individuals, social groups, or entire nations that have already made it, who are already “on top”—and who therefore find it easy to dispense with progressive, militant ideals. For alongside the rapine war of conquest, the military putsch, violent colonization, or even the final battle for world control, history also records thoroughly justified wars of defense, wars of liberation, and revolutionary transformations. The *bellum iustum* takes place just as surely as the *bellum iniustum*. And it follows that not all art in the service of war or revolution has necessarily been evil, insofar as it was informed by the telos of defense, liberation, or progressive change and did not simply serve to legitimate warfare aiming at expansion, power, and hegemony. When surveying examples from the past two hundred years, we need not confine ourselves to such noble instances as the U.S. War of Independence, the First French Republic’s defense against the invading coalition armies, the struggle of the Paris Commune of 1871, the Mexican Revolution, Russia’s Red October, or the Spanish Civil War. The pictures produced by their artists—painters such as David, Leutze, Courbet, Rivera, Deineka, and Picasso—express the spirit of true solidarity, genuine commitment, authentic heroism. But even in Germany’s less glorious history, there are examples enough: the War of Liberation of 1813–15, for instance, or the 1848 Revolution—both replete with progressive hopes and heroic deeds. Although these two conflicts failed to fulfill the yearning for a new German Empire based on the principles of “unity and justice and freedom,” they did—in the pictures of a Caspar David Friedrich and Adolph Menzel, the two most important German painters of the 19th century—bring forth works that fully measure up to the best work of the aforementioned artists.¹

Matters are quite different for the years 1870–71, when the universal longing for a new German Empire was finally fulfilled, but in a distorted way. Neither a national war of liberation nor a revolution led to this empire, which resulted instead from a clever chess move on the part of Bismarck. The war against France, which he first provoked and then used to forge the individual German states into a new German Empire, unleashed enormous enthusiasm, but this popular sentiment was far less noble than in 1813 or 1848. Unity was brought about, not by

the people but instead by the "strongman from above," as Bismarck was called. This sort of coup was far more difficult to transpose into noble pictures than either the 1848 attempt at a revolutionary transformation or the 1813 "war of semi-insurrection."² For what aspect of the Franco-German War of 1870–71 could possibly be transfigured? The superiority of the Prussian needle guns? General Roon's organizational talent, Moltke's battle plans, the Bismarckian blood-and-iron outlook, the theatrical posing of individual kings and dukes? Granted, these very themes were taken up in the following years by such popular artists as Anton von Werner, Theodor Rocholl, and other so-called battle and panorama painters. They provided those "stirring" genre paintings in the style of bourgeois realism featuring German soldiers enthusiastically raising their swords at the sight of their commanders and ruling dynasts, tossing their caps into the air,³ taking up comfortable quarters in French palaces after their hard-won victories, and so on—pictures which, as reproductions, made their way into German civil service offices, bourgeois parlors, and schoolbooks.

But such blatant themes were too base, too vulgar for the more demanding "serious" painters of this era. Elated by German victory over France and the founding of a new empire, they also tended toward the bellicose and heroic in their outlook, but they were more likely to express it in mythological exaggerations: in struggles among centaurs, battles with Amazons, and rides of apocalyptic horsemen.⁴ This is attested by all those scenes of bloodshed and triumph in the paintings of Feuerbach, Trübner, or Böcklin, which abound with acts of violence and the use of power. They take as their pictorial subject not Kaiser Wilhelm, nor Moltke, nor Bismarck, but rather some sort of mythic conqueror or creatures of fable, thus making a completely timeless impression, even while—viewed objectively—demonstrating the same "might makes right" standpoint so typical of the 1870s. Even Bismarck's harsh critic Nietzsche was, as we know, in such a fundamental agreement with this quest for power as to dream of a "German rebirth" through the spirit of war.⁵ Very few artists of the era felt really repelled by this neo-German arrogance—what is perhaps the most persuasive example of such a critique is to be found in the works of Menzel. As early as 1866, he saw nothing heroic in the Battle of Sadowa (or Königgrätz) and confined himself to portraying the misery of the dying and wounded.⁶ In 1870–71, he still refused to be swept along by Germany's universal intoxication with victory. The subject of the only picture he made during this war is the arrival of a prisoner transport in Berlin,⁷ and the work's unfinished condition actually heightens its gripping quality. Here, we see on one side a Prussian militiaman with planted bayonet, carrying out his duty with routine composure, while on the other side two hulking figures lurch out of the door of the railroad car, their half washed-out, half sketched-in outlines making them look like monsters or even corpses.

The decades just previous to World War I, on the other hand, were quite different, both ideologically and aesthetically. The years between the mid-1870s and 1890 constitute a period when Bismarck shifted to peaceful diplomacy, and

the new empire was, moreover, experiencing a protracted economic depression.⁸ During these years, a strong national consciousness did hold sway in Germany, but imperialist desires for annexation were not yet being advanced from the top. That came about only after Wilhelm II's accession to power, Bismarck's subsequent dismissal, and the onset of an economic boom that by 1914 had propelled Germany to the status of the world's second-strongest industrial power. All these developments had artistic as well as political consequences. Whereas the art scene had been largely dominated by the tension between historical-affirmative and naturalistic-oppositional tendencies, a whole new constellation formed during the early 1890s. Naturalism as well as renaissance-revivalist historicism moved perceptibly to the background after 1895, making way for a wide range of artistic isms. Both of these fundamental currents continued, but four new movements emerged alongside them: a secessionism of impressionistic-symbolistic observance, a volkish opposition marked by neo-romantic and regionalistic tendencies, a conspicuous monumentalism, and, finally, an art nouveau tending toward the decorative. As in many periods of economic upswing, what crystallized around 1900 was a distinct pluralism, if not an outright postmodernism *avant la lettre*. This occurred at a time when oppositional elements were losing strength and the Social Democrats—under the sway of “revisionism,” and aiming to get a larger piece of the national pie—were increasingly willing to relinquish their confrontational stance toward the “empire”; indeed they even began to support the expansion of the German naval fleet and overseas imperialism. As a result, the new complexity of competing styles in the arts was ultimately based on a growing consensus on many ideological questions. Almost all of these turn-of-the-century currents or isms claimed for Germany a higher, superior culture, called for greater recognition throughout the world, and demanded a “place in the sun” or even a leading role on the world stage for Germany.

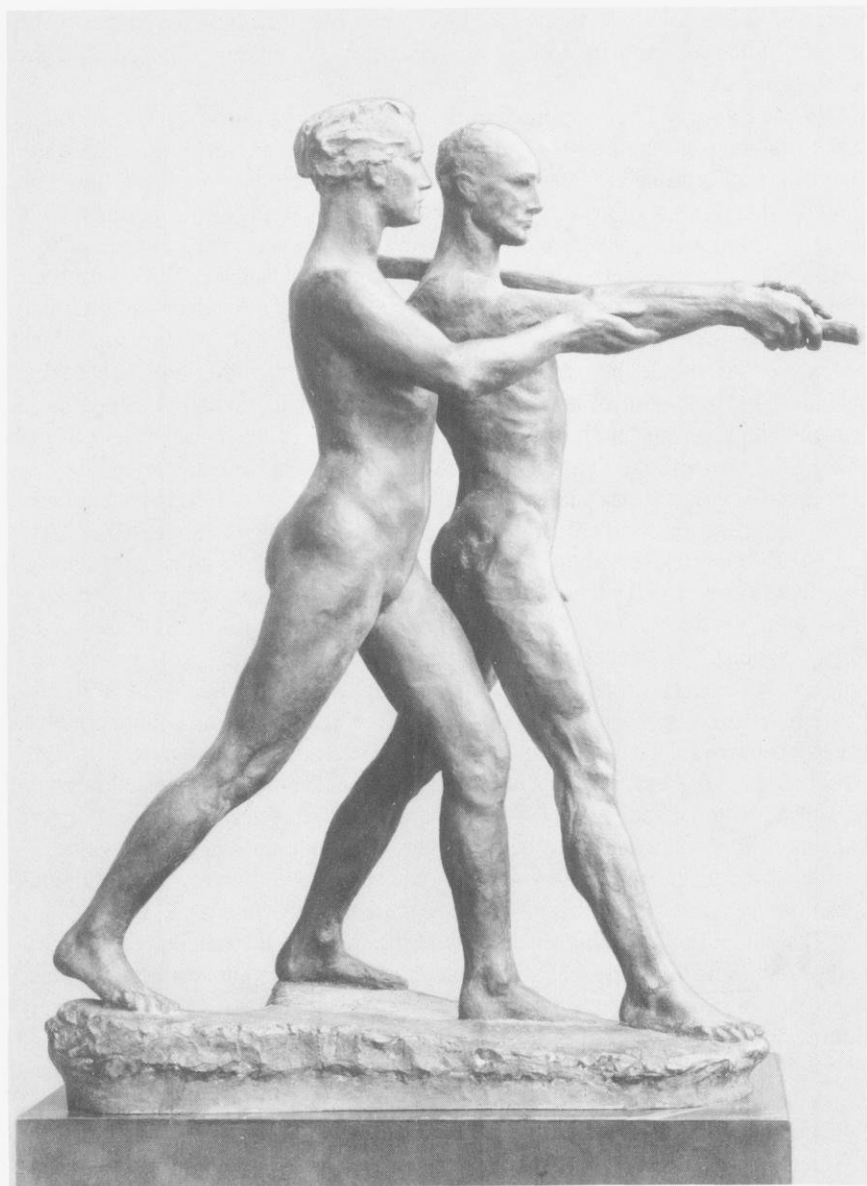
This imperial stance was obviously expressed most forthrightly in official Wilhelminian art, which Kaiser Wilhelm II himself sought to guide with his drawing *Nations of Europe, Defend Your Most Sacred Values!* (fig. 1). Here the archangel Michael, the patron saint of the German empire, calls upon allegorical representatives of the white race to take up arms against the “yellow peril.” Wilhelminian imperialism appears here in the classicizing drapery of the Christian West, although a different style is favored by representatives of the volkish opposition, whose expansionistic impulses were often even stronger than those of either the Kaiser or the Junkers and industrial magnates who backed him. More typical are pictures of the primeval “territorial conquest” by the Germanic tribes—in pictures of athletic Siegfrieds, Theodoric types, or other “wide-ranging blonde beasts of the barbarian migration era.”⁹ Only the more demanding, “serious” artists of the Wilhelminian era proved to be exceptions in that they sought to express their national pride and rising sense of self-importance in images evoking a higher sphere: the visionary, the heroic, a knightly elect pursuing the holy grail.¹⁰ Yet here, too, there were still plenty of Siegfried, Hermann, and even



1. *Nations of Europe, Defend Your Most Sacred Values!* After an idea by Emperor Wilhelm II, drawing, ca. 1895. Archive of the author.

Bismarck figures; in contrast to the “realism” of the 1870s and 1880s, however, they revealed a clear tendency toward idealism and the sublime.

Still, it would be shortsighted to interpret some of the best-known “knightly” figures—works such as *Victor* (1900) by Ottilie Roederstein; *Warrior and Genius* (1905) by Georg Kolbe (fig. 2); *St George* (1906) by Hugo Lederer; *Siegfried* (1909) by Hermann Hahn; *Swordsman* (1911) by Ernst Barlach; and *Sword Vigil* (1912) by Fidus—as no more than propagandistic support for Wilhelminian imperialism. Almost all of these figures stand sword in hand, but they do so in a fight against some vague “dark powers,” rather than against any clearly recognizable enemy. Here, we see no “yellow peril,” no Chinese Boxer rebels, no Black African Hereros or other “subhumans.” What is being expressed in such works is actually a perverted longing for something higher, more dignified. These knightly figures appeared in the midst of an era marked by Germany’s rapid industrialization, commercialization, and urbanization, when the anti-values of an egoistic capitalism, materialism, and unconstrained liberalism began to take root—and those who lacked any substantial defense against this process could only cling to the time-worn values of chivalry and idealism. A similar process was at work in many works dating from 1913, when, shortly before the onset of World War I, the Germans celebrated the centennial of the Wars of Liberation and the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig. This is especially true for *1813: The Students of Jena March Off*, painted in 1913 by Ferdinand Hodler for the main auditorium of the University of Jena. While Hodler’s work harkens back unmistakably to the national-democratic enthusiasm of the Wars of Liberation, Franz Metzner’s



2. *Warrior and Genius*. Sculpture by Georg Kolbe, 1905. Courtesy of the Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

contemporaneous warrior figures at the Leipzig Monument to the Battle of the Nations, with their colossal archaizing, seem more like clumsy botched attempts at the same spirit.

When Kaiser Wilhelm subsequently declared war against Russia and France in the first days of August 1914, he was convinced that all Germans—regardless of existing splits along the lines of party, class, and ideology—would follow him unquestioningly. And he was by no means mistaken. With few exceptions, even academics and artists hastened to add their voices to the broad chorus of war enthusiasm, although they simultaneously gave themselves a lot of credit for their liberalism and their highly individualistic views. They joined in—as they had already done under Bismarck—motivated not by any primitive jingoism, which struck them as vulgar, but rather by the feeling that surely this war would wipe out bourgeois philistinism and the rank commercialism it entailed. Since these academics and artists, with their exalted idealism, had been spokesmen of national greatness and the German cultural mission as far back as the late 1890s, the outbreak of hostilities suddenly made their values seem even more sublime, more significant, more ideal. In hundreds of publications that appeared in 1914 and 1915, knightliness and the new heroism were thematized almost constantly. Two works of 1915, Werner Sombart's *Pedlars and Heroes* and Max Scheler's *The Genius of War and the German War*, sound the call for a "crusade of the spirit" against "the materialistic civilizations of the West," i.e., France and England, where—befitting these "centers of capitalist contagion"—a disgraceful "externalization" of everything valuable into the liberalistic and commercial has already occurred.¹¹ In these two countries, we read again and again, war itself is regarded as business, whereas in Germany—despite certain inroads of the same capitalistic-materialistic mentality—a profound turn to the ideal, higher, and heroic transpired in August 1914. As the "guarantor of mankind's intangible values," Germany was justified in challenging all other nations with her pseudo-religious missionary claim of a "spiritual ascent" into the transcendental.¹²

The extent to which this eruption of belligerence was experienced as an ascent into the spiritual and idealistic, and even into the outright aesthetic-sublime, is perhaps best documented by a passage from a letter by a relatively unlikely author, one who was by no means Hohenzollern-minded or volkish-oriented. On 27 August 1914, Arnold Zweig wrote to a woman friend that he was deeply impressed by the manner in which the outbreak of war had changed "a nation of egoistic merchants and patriotic-political phrasemongers into a great, hardworking German people." "The fat bourgeois, our antagonist," he continued, "is suddenly learning to fall into line, to sacrifice, to feel genuinely—he's losing his moral ugliness, he's becoming beautiful!" And Zweig admitted that he, too, was absolutely overwhelmed by the "deeply bonding power of 'cultural community'," which had heretofore existed only in tentative, preliminary stages. "Greater Germany is back again," Zweig exulted, "the clear, enormously ingenious coldness of Kantian intuition and the fire of Beethoven's allegretti and scherzi have returned in the German military high command; the solid supporting order of

'Romanesque'-German facades and the calm, silent graver tool of Holbein drawings is manifest in the rhythms of organizational life of those back on the home-front; and above everything hangs the fearless proximity of death (and of the devil's terror) in Dürer's great print. The knight rides on."¹³

And like Zweig, other authors, painters, and composers were eager during these weeks and months to swear fealty to a newly conceived image of the hero, the knight, the representative of idealism—as if this war were concerned, not with the murderous deployment of cannons, tanks, and gas canisters, but rather with the chivalric vanquishing of some untutored boors. In countless writings of the early World War I period, there are constant attacks on those subaltern types that Nietzsche had scathingly dismissed as "far too populous" and the "most common of all"; in chapter 20 of his *Birth of Tragedy* (1872), written under the impression of the Franco-German War, Nietzsche had contrasted this lower order of humans to Albrecht Dürer's *Knight between Death and the Devil*, a figure he valorized as an uplifting symbol "in the isolation and enervation" of bourgeois-liberal life.¹⁴ Indeed, many of Nietzsche's followers who were gathered around Julius Langbehn, the journal *Kunstwart*, or the "Dürer League" had already given this knight a German-Faustian twist during the 1890s, thus contributing to his growing valorization and nationalization.¹⁵

It should therefore come as no surprise that at the beginning of World War I many painters and art critics influenced by Nietzsche and Langbehn felt inspired to invoke a resurrection of knightliness from the spirit of old Germanhood. Among the leading critics, this was especially true of Karl Scheffler, who in September 1914 heralded the war as a true "blessing," since it would surely lead to a "powerful regeneration of German idealism."¹⁶ Wherever one looked, he wrote in the journal *Kunst und Künstler*, one could see the "Luther-German, the Schiller-German, the Bismarck-German" rising up again and with knightly valor swearing allegiance to the battle against "non-spiritual materialism."¹⁷ Scheffler was so swept away by war enthusiasm that he predicted both a new idealism and the rebirth of a "unified great German art" from this uprising. "Finally," he triumphed, art would no longer be dominated by a "hodgepodge of currents," for a "new, comprehensive national art style" would arise from "the depths of the strength of the people."¹⁸

Yet all this was more easily said than done, even for those who entirely agreed with such invocations of a German spirit and style arising from knightly values—whether out of blindness, opportunism, or true belief. Whence should new images of the knight suddenly be derived in a historical situation that was unmistakably dominated by highly technologized war machinery? And for what ideals should these knights be summoned to action? Were the proclamations of a German "cultural mission" concrete enough to be translated into clearly recognizable symbols? Or wouldn't any such attempt reveal the underlying hollowness of this exalted idealistic yearning?

To make a long story short: between 1914 and 1918 many artists did express the spirit of bellicosity in their pictures, but a new unified German art never came

into being. And how could it have been otherwise in the midst of a capitalistic-liberal society based on competition, which lacked both the future-oriented telos and the solidarity necessary for any such unity? Moreover, the war itself failed to take the course the idealists had hoped for at the beginning. Instead of great heroic deeds, conquests, or victories in battle, the war rapidly bogged down into a crippling, murderous trench warfare providing little evidence of heroic traits. Knights and heroes were, therefore, far less common in German war painting than one might have expected after all these proclamations. The economic underpinnings at the basis of art, furthermore, remained ultimately unchanged. The German artistic production of World War I consisted largely of works by individual artists who were linked to certain galleries or circles of purchasers. Feeling obligated to existing stylistic expectations, they typically painted only a few war pictures for a brief period; once circumstances had changed, they returned to traditional themes and motifs.

Such knights and heroes were represented most abundantly in the works of painters linked with the volkish opposition, regionalism, neo-German monumentalism, national life reform, and other currents making up so-called progressive reaction:¹⁹ i.e., they were from the lower, not the upper, rungs of the prevailing art establishment. Beginning in 1914, their pictures were peopled with Langbehnian peasant knights, Nietzschean condottieri, or fearsome Nibelungen warriors. Fritz Boehle's *St. George* (1915) shows such a knight on a thickset plow horse, who evidently has just invaded enemy territory and is uttering a prayer of thanks for the first newly won victory (fig. 3). In Ivo Saliger's *War Companions* (1917), another knight joins this same battle accompanied by the grim reaper (fig. 4). The woodcut *German Victory* (1918) by Fidus features naked spirit-warriors who are portrayed as liberating fair maidens under the power of bearded demons or forest goblins (fig. 5)—and so on and so forth.²⁰

Virtually the same ideological tenor prevails among all those painters commissioned to create posters urging the extension of war credits, or to illustrate hold-on-to-the-end slogans; alongside the dominant image of the knight or the military commander, i.e., Hindenburg and Ludendorff, these poster artists also favored the image of the good comrade, especially in the form of the courageous, trustworthy, steel-helmeted soldier. Since the ruling class offered the highest rewards for this approach—both financially and in terms of prestige—its adherents were legion. Among them were such painters as Otto Engelhardt-Kyffhäuser, Walter Hoeck, Carl Fahringer, Heinrich Hönisch, Ernst Vollbehrr, Ferdinand Spiegel, Ludwig Dettmann, etc., who turned out countless paintings, posters, graphics, and billboards depicting immediate frontline action: marching soldiers, steadfast guards, storm troops clambering out of the trenches, corporals or officers shouting commands—in short, all those “iron men in the service of the fatherland,” as it was later put by the Nazis.²¹ What dominates in these pictures is a mood of composure, quiet, and utmost resolve. This is captured in a style of painting that focuses solely on portraying the action in its utmost simplicity.



3. St. George. Woodcut by Fritz Boehle, 1915. Reproduced from *The First World War in Pictures*, ed. Joseph Daracott (New York, 1974), p. 3.



4. *War Companions*. Drawing by Ivo Saliger, 1917. Reproduced from Wilm Burghardt, *Kunst und Krieg* (Dresden, 1942), p. 4.



5. *German Victory*. By Fidus, 1918. Archive of the author.

The only artists of this ilk who embodied a somewhat higher aim were Albin Egger-Lienz and Fritz Erler. Egger-Lienz, whose art originated from Tyrolean regionalism, became known during the war principally for his picture *The Nameless Ones* (1914). Influenced by the style of Ferdinand Hodler, he attempted here to give the advancing German troops an archaic, heroic quality. Fritz Erler, on the other hand, aimed at valorizing simplicity, especially in the depiction of individual steel-helmeted soldiers, although he did not shrink from portraying Nordic-looking *Führer* and officer figures of a type that later reappeared in Nazi painting.²²

But enough of that. It will come as no great surprise that lesser talents—whether from the regionalistic, spiritual-idealistic, or nationalistic camps—placed themselves unambiguously in the service of war propaganda. In times of so-called national crisis, such people always tend to rally around “the fatherland, the precious” (to cite Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell*). But what about the other, the “better” artists of the era? How did they respond to the call to behave purely idealistically from now on, to act only as cultural missionaries, only as “true Germans”? In order to clarify this issue, let us consider examples from at least two of the best-known currents within this sphere: impressionism and expressionism.

Up until the outbreak of war, the impressionists had comported themselves as secessionists. Given their emphatically apolitical outlook and aestheticizing tendency to keep to themselves, the impressionists might have been expected to react to the events of August 1914 by an even farther retreat into the sphere of artistic autonomy, if not into total silence. In fact, the opposite was the case. During the first months of the war, even such exclusive journals as *Kunst und Künstler* or *Kriegszeit*, edited by the champions of impressionism Karl Scheffler and Paul Cassirer, respectively, had no qualms about proclaiming their loyalty to the Hohenzollerns and even demanding an unambiguously national course for art.²³ Whereas *Kunst und Künstler* was limited almost entirely to printing lithographs and drawings of war events by impressionists such as Max Liebermann, Max Slevogt, Hans Meid, Waldemar Rösler, Walter Klemm, Fritz Rhein, and Max Beckmann, *Kriegszeit* featured leading representatives of impressionism alongside such symbolist artists as August Gaul and Ernst Barlach. The pictures turned out by Barlach at the beginning of the war are particularly embarrassing. One of his illustrations, for example, was inspired by Kaiser Wilhelm’s well-known slogan, “Now we’ll give them a good thrashing,” and he gave one of his swordsmen the unfortunate title “The Holy War.”²⁴ But Liebermann’s pictures, too, leave nothing to the imagination in terms of primitive affirmation—especially his lithographs on Wilhelm’s slogans, *I No Longer Recognize Any Parties, I Recognize Only Germans*, and *Now We’ll Give Them a Good Thrashing* (fig. 6).²⁵

The same holds true for almost all expressionists at the beginning of the war,²⁶ even though here a sense of war intoxication tends to predominate over the purely affirmative. Thus Lyonel Feininger compared the outbreak of war to



6. *Now We'll Give Them a Good Threshing*. Lithograph by Max Liebermann, 1914. Reproduced from the journal *Kriegszeit* (1914), p. 6.

a liberating “earthquake.”²⁷ Franz Marc asserted that artillery combat had something “mystical, mythical” for him.²⁸ Karl Schmidt-Rottluff declared that the war finally enabled him “to create the strongest possible” art by “sweeping away” everything from the past.²⁹ Others lauded the war as a “steel bath” and a “healing process,” or enthused over the “wonderfully splendid roar of the battle.”³⁰ Even Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, whose *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* and *Bathing Soldiers*, both dating from 1915, are often held up as antiwar documents today, was actually rather ambivalent toward the war at its beginning. And the young Otto Dix, who in 1911 had sought to glorify the merciless intensity of life by

creating a wild bust of Nietzsche painted green, experienced action at the front as a release and an awakening. In 1915, Dix created a picture of himself entitled *Self-Portrait as Mars* in order to demonstrate his allegiance to the unleashed, militant, Dionysian, and destructive.³¹

Let us sum up a first set of preliminary results. In the years 1914–15, almost all German painters—led by conviction, blindness, or opportunism—initially experienced the war as a cultural-missionary task, as the expression of feelings of volkish superiority, or as an intensification of the Dionysian intoxication with life. Correspondingly, they sought to give these feelings of the knightly, heroic, volkish-sublime, spiritual-idealistic, or mythological the most dignified, exalted, or wildly heightened expression possible—if we ignore for the moment the purely affirmative art propaganda or the arts and crafts of these years that tended toward kitsch.³² And in doing so, they made use of the most diverse styles and ideologies: i.e., they by no means evinced solidarity and, indeed, made no effort to develop a unified style, let alone a new German art. Instead, they simply continued painting and drawing in manners that matched their prewar outlooks on life or their artistic concepts of style.

The same is true—*nota bene*—of all those artistic protests against World War I that began in 1915–16 and gained momentum in 1917 when this war finally showed its true, murderous, imperialistic face, and when the heroics, ecstasy, and faith in a German cultural mission gradually faded. But even these critical responses remained largely individual actions; they did not coalesce into a common will, a new solidarity, much less into a revolution—especially since even the Social Democratic Party continued to back the war effort and calmly watched as Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the leaders of its left wing, were imprisoned due to antiwar activities. It was becoming ever clearer that this war was being fought primarily for the coal and ore deposits in Belgium and France, the grain belt in the Ukraine and the Baltic states, as well as for new colonies in Africa. Once the imperialist aims of this war could no longer be overlooked, most artists—with the exception of the volkish school and a few incorrigible spiritual idealists such as Fidus—ceased painting war pictures. Indeed, pictures with an outspoken critical stance toward the war began to be painted in Germany starting in 1916–17. This is attested by several illustrations in the journal *Bildermann*, as, for instance, a lithograph by Barlach in which Jesus and one of his disciples stand before a military cemetery with a pained, accusing gesture, or Heinrich Zille's *The Iron Cross*, in which one of the poorest of the poor, a working-class woman with four children living in a basement room, gazes with a gloomy and resigned expression at the death notice of her husband that has just arrived, along with his posthumously awarded medal.³³ An even sharper critique is expressed in a few drawings by George Grosz that sought to portray the hail of grenades at Verdun, the battlefields strewn with corpses, or the misery of prisoners. He was initially unable to place these drawings anywhere.³⁴

Such efforts were certainly well-intentioned; but, in their painful despera-

tion, they revealed only that there was no effective resistance in Germany, let alone any antiwar movement capable of transforming the struggle on the front into a civil war, as was to occur in Russia. These pictures express misery, despair, horror, but not the desire for revolution. It comes as no surprise, then, that the war ended so ignominiously in Germany. There was a brief revolution in November 1918, but it was based solely on the universal exhaustion with war, not on the will to bring about a thoroughgoing change in society. Granted, the Hohenzollerns were forced to abdicate; otherwise, however, things remained largely the same. Friedrich Ebert engineered a compromise not just with the military, but also with the war profiteers within heavy industry, and all leftist putsch attempts—the Spartacus uprising in Berlin and the Red Republic in Munich—were bloodily crushed with the help of right-wing *Freikorps* militias.

Given these social circumstances, how could any art offering a positive presentation of such themes as change, revolt, or revolution—militant action with the aim of a better state—possibly be expected to emerge? Burdened by the painful memory of their ideological deviation at the outset of World War I, most painters had absolutely no desire to thematize a new struggle again. And those who did so anyway acted with the bitter courage of despair, as is shown by the *Battle on the Barricades* (1920) by Dix, and *The Internationale* (1923) by Grosz. The figures in these paintings appear to continue the struggle with scant hope of victory, with only a defiant awareness of their own impending martyrdom. The few really significant antiwar pictures of the immediate postwar years are the woodcuts and lithographs created by Käthe Kollwitz between 1919 and 1924. But what they, too, bespeak is largely the misery of the survivors, especially of the mothers, rather than courage. Earlier on, Kollwitz had created truly gripping images of justified rebellion and warfare in her series on the *Weavers' Uprising* (1897) and *The Peasants' War* (1903); but now, overwhelmed by the experience of World War I, she could rise only to the pacifistic appeal *No More Wars!* (1924), which since that time has become one of the best-known antiwar slogans.

The same can be said of virtually all the antiwar pictures created during the 1920s. Either they express the feeling of mute despair and the proximity of death, like the *Memorial* (1929) created by Ernst Barlach for Magdeburg, or they show the misery of the countless crippled veterans with their crutches, prostheses, and hideously maimed faces, as in the pictures of Otto Dix, George Grosz, Otto Griebel, and Karl Hubbuch. It was probably Dix who pursued this direction the farthest. With his pictures *The Trench* (1923) and his triptych *War* (1929–32), he sought to top, by way of horror, everything that antiwar painting had ever produced. We see here cratered landscapes somewhere near Langemarck, on the Somme, and at Verdun—with corpses torn up, trampled, skewered, or riddled by machine-gun fire, their splintered skulls alive with worms and already half-rotten. With “hard facts” like these, Dix aimed at teaching his viewers a lesson, even at giving them a shock they would never forget for the rest of their lives.

But pictures of this sort were generally rejected by the majority of liberals

and conservatives—and then, of course, by the growing number of National Socialists. These sectors of society did not want to be robbed of the uplifting memory of their “heroic years.” In the 1920s, therefore, both a liberal modernist such as Julius Meier-Graefe and the veteran legions of front soldiers agitated for the immediate removal of such pictures from churches and public museums. Their image of the German soldier continued to be that of the knight or the comrade; indeed it grew even more heroic with the passage of time. On a higher level, they tended to favor either the “tragic-heroic” interpretation of Dürer’s *Knight between Death and the Devil* as set forth by Ernst Bertram in his 1918 book on Nietzsche,³⁵ or else the quiet grandeur of Fritz Erler’s figures, which Fritz von Ostini had hailed in 1921 as dominating images of a coming era in which the heroic deeds of the World War would be regarded as something “sacred and invigorating.”³⁶ “Confused by the storms of senselessly stirred-up hatred and blinded by our current misery,” he declared, “many no longer want to see the enormity of the deeds we have accomplished; yet these give us a right to confidence—despite everything!”³⁷

And Ostini was sadly correct with statements like this. The antiwar pictures of a Dix or a Grosz, or the photomontages created between 1930 and 1932 by John Heartfield that warned of a new war by attacking Hindenburg as Hitler’s forerunner and Hitler himself as the continuation of Wilhelm II, were less effective with the general populace than the pictures of a Fritz Erler, the Ludendorff portraits of a Wolf Willrich, the anti-Semitic propaganda pictures of a Franz Stassen (fig. 7), the front soldiers and SA pictures of an Elk Eber, or, indeed, Nazi propaganda in general. Ultimately, this party chose to offer something “ideal,” something “hopeful,” something “positive” which in times of so-called national crises can always be relied upon to stir the majority of people far more deeply than criticism, sarcasm, or shock. And therefore the same thing happened in 1930–32 as in 1914–15: invoking a depraved idealism, the champions of a German mission once again took command of the broad masses’ yearning for something higher. Moreover, they benefited from the widespread discontent with capitalism and its recurrent crises, felt so acutely after 1929. Most of all, they filled in what Ernst Bloch termed the “hollow spaces of feeling,” left empty by the liberals and leftists, with images of a heroic struggle for a “better” life that could only be brought about by a new, a third Reich.

Thus things turned out in 1933 as they had to. The Nazis acceded to power without notable opposition. No general strike broke out, no demonstrations were called, not a shot was fired. And when the Nazis removed from public view all the works that depicted the war critically, virtually no one protested. Not just *The Trench* by Dix, but also other antiwar pictures by Grosz or Kollwitz were dropped from sight or destroyed.³⁸ Even Barlach’s *Memorial*, the figures of which Alfred Rosenberg had scorned as a “small, half-idiotic-looking jumble of undefinable racial types with Soviet helmets,”³⁹ had to be removed from Magdeburg Cathedral. In their place, pictures and statues with an emphatically



7. Illustration by Franz Stassen, for the title page of the journal *Ostara* (1922), no. 7.



8. *Hildebrand Defeats Odoaker's Son*. By Arthur Kampf, 1938. Reproduced from Hans Friedrich Blunck, *Deutsche Heldensagen* (Berlin, 1938), p. 8.

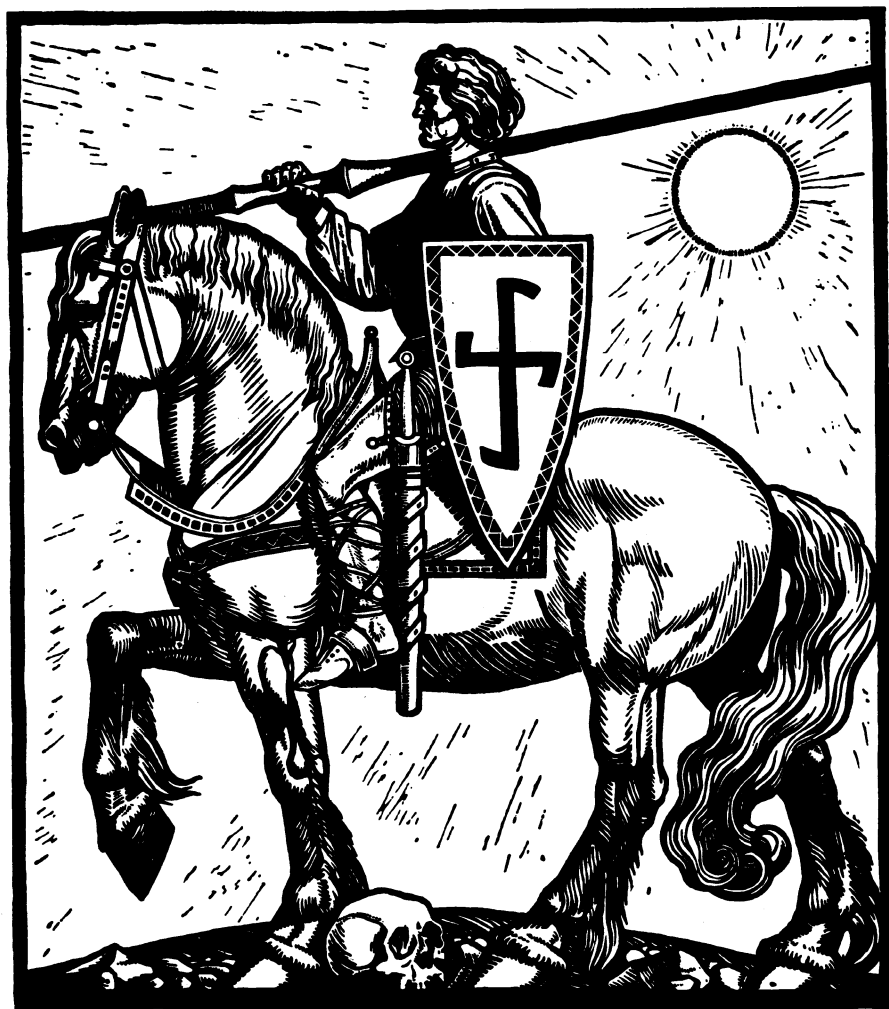
positive content were hung or displayed everywhere, manifesting the will to a national swing to the heroic (fig. 8). In the first years of the Nazi Reich, these were mostly pictures or statues directly linked with the German-volkish line in the figurative arts of World War I or the early Weimar Republic. Indeed they were partly by the self-same artists, who scarcely needed to modify their outlook or their style after 1933. This was particularly true of such painters as Fritz Erler and Wolf Willrich, whereas the Expressionists—who had already repudiated their

original war idealism by 1916–17 and continued to do so in the Weimar years—found less favor in the eyes of the new dictators and were quickly branded by them as “degenerate.”⁴⁰

At the center of this new-old painting, which derived largely from the realm of the older regional art or national monumentalism, there stood clearly and unambiguously the cult of the new Führer, the new knight between death and the devil. This is documented not only by Hubert Lanzinger's famous *Hitler*, whom he portrayed in 1935 as a knight in armor, but also by an abundance of other Nazi pictures in which Hitler is transformed into a Nordic, superhuman, or even divinely gifted savior of the German people, chosen by providence to lead the German people out of the darkness and into light, out of foreign cultural domination to volkish self-awareness, from penury to riches.⁴¹ But other high dignitaries of the Third Reich were also elevated by the Nazi artists into the elect of a knightly order, or the order of the grail, so as to give the new state, as Alfred Rosenberg asserted, the appearance of a German-national “civic order.”⁴² To this end, so-called castles of the order (“Ordensburgen”) were constructed, where the young elite of the new Reich was to be educated in a knightly outlook. A plain pictorial equivalent is constituted by the woodcut *Knight* (1935) by Georg Slyterman von Langeweyde, which clearly derives from Dürer as well as from Boehle; here, the new ideal of knighthood is broadened beyond the heroic into the realm of the peasant and the mercenary (fig. 9).

In their attempts at valorizing the “new spirit,” as they termed it, others among these “idealistic”-minded painters from the beginnings of the Third Reich reached back, not just to the image of the knightly but also to the Germanic and Prussian, in order to place the new state firmly within the bellicose line of German history. Along with pictures of Hermann the Cheruscan, Frederick “the Great,” Bismarck, and Hindenburg, many battle pictures were painted during these years in which war was portrayed as the “essential and determining principle of history,” and used to justify the Nazis' own arms buildup.⁴³ This is documented by the numerous pictures painted after 1933, not just of frontline action in World War I, but also of the other “great” wars of the German past. Thus Werner Peiner created the designs for the tapestries hung in the marble gallery of the New Reich Chancellery, which displayed eight military victories, from the *Battle of the Teutoburg Forest* up to the *Tank Battle of Cambrai*, as milestones of German history.⁴⁴ With much the same inspiration, but more directly related to the present, Wilhelm Sauter created his triptych *Heroes' Shrine* in 1936 for the exhibition “Heroic Art” in Munich. In this piece, he drew an unmistakable parallel between the fallen and wounded soldiers of World War I and those of the early SA battalions, and, moreover, gave the entire work the legend “Never forget them—they gave their best for Germany.”⁴⁵

In these paintings, the German essence is simply equated with the essence of the military in general. In fact, war is the highest and ultimate justification of the Nordic spirit: i.e., war appears as a function of social Darwinism and



**Sieg oder Unisieg ruht in Gottes Hand! Der Ehre
sind wir selber Herr und König!**

9. *Knight*. Woodcut by Georg Slyterman von Langeweyde, 1935. Reproduced from Werner Rittich, *Deutsche Kunst der Gegenwart* (Breslau, 1943), p. 9.

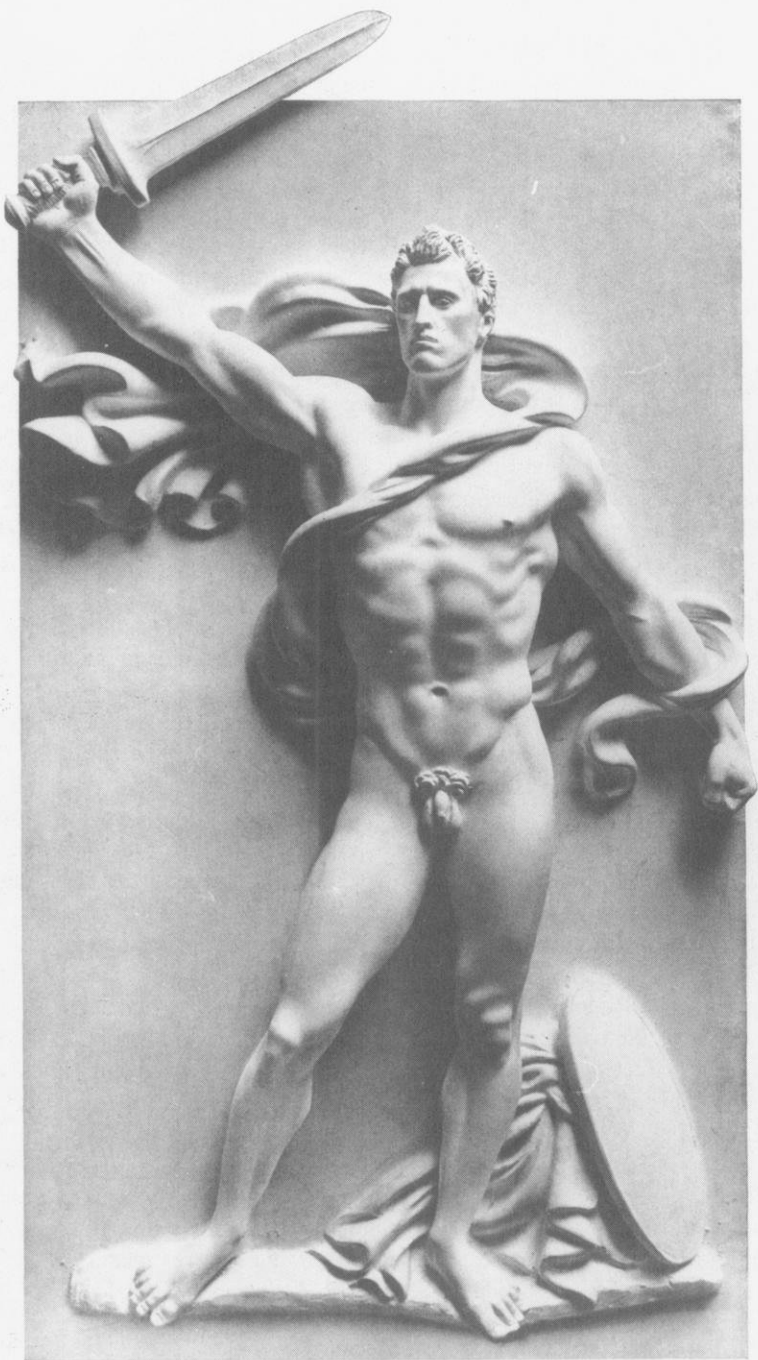
therefore lacks any utopian quality. Surrounded by such pictures, it became increasingly difficult for the thoughtful ones among those blinded or seduced by the Nazis to see anything positive or ideal in their depiction of the military, anything leading to a "better life." Hence, when Hitler began World War II with the invasion of Poland, the war enthusiasm was far less pronounced than in the first

weeks of August 1914. Many artists as well as intellectuals had been entirely willing to fall into line behind Hitler as long as they had perceived him as someone leading them out of the morass of egotistical materialism to new heights of spiritual culture. Now, however, when the masks were suddenly stripped away, and the true face of Hitler's naked imperialism and claim to world domination was revealed, their relationship to National Socialism became more distanced. They continued to fulfill their duty—in part out of traditional obedience to authority, in part out of fear of the ever-tightening controls—but their sincere desire to make their own contribution to the advancement of the German people grew noticeably weaker.

The works of the pictorial artists who placed themselves in the service of World War II—which Hitler pompously described as the War of Liberation of Greater Germany⁴⁶—were far less idealistic than those of World War I. Scenes of “knighthood” are almost completely lacking after 1939, and are easily seen through anywhere they do appear. Wilhelm Dohme, for instance, gave his imperialistically-intended picture cycle for Braunschweig Cathedral, which he called the *Procession of the Germans to the East*, an overblown heroic quality. Ferdinand Staeger, in his picture *Defense Against Asian Invaders* (1943), also clad his warriors in knightly garb. Those among the sculptors who dared to tackle the heroic, or the knightly, clearly favored the antique classicizing tradition. Arno Breker, Georg Kolbe, Josef Thorak, and Richard Scheibe usually armed their naked athletes with a sword and attempted to elevate them into the heroic by giving them titles such as *The Avenger*, *Preparedness*, and *Comradeship* (fig. 10).⁴⁷

But all these remained exceptions. After 1939, typical Nazi art dealing with battlefield themes tended to dispense with such idealizations, generally giving preference to the sort of scenes and pictures that were typical in war reporting, war films, and newsreels—indeed they can hardly be distinguished from them.⁴⁸ This is documented by the near innumerable paintings and graphic works produced during these years by Elk Eber, Paul Mathias Padua, Franz Eichhorst, Wolf Willrich, Georg Siebert, Wilhelm Sauter, Conrad Hommel, Georg Ehlig, Richard Rudolf, Rudolf Hausknecht, and others.⁴⁹ Here, we repeatedly encounter—alongside famous generals, fighter pilots, submarine commanders—those brave steel-helmeted men staring their destiny in the eye, fulfilling their duty without complaint, i.e., marching on, fighting on, dying on, as their leaders command. The only positive values portrayed in these pictures are loyalty, fulfillment of duty, and comradeship, which must be maintained even under the worst conditions. These pictures almost never depict inspiring heroism or knightly resolve; instead, they tend toward the tough, the unrelenting, and the stolid, portraying the war as a force of destiny that renders mere words meaningless. That is especially true of works produced after 1942–43, when the initial wave of *Blitzkrieg* victories yielded to a stagnating war for positions, followed by the first hints of defeat.

In this respect, these pictures can be compared with the equally gloomy bat-



10. *The Awakening of the Warrior*. Sculpture by Arno Breker, 1942. Reproduced from the journal *Kunst im Dritten Reich* (1942), p. 10.

tlefield scenes of the years 1917–19. In both cases, it is apparent that the last glimmer of hope for a victorious outcome is gradually fading away. In other respects, however, the art of the two periods diverges. For instance, between 1939 and 1945 there was no possibility of directly or indirectly criticizing the war command the way it had been possible in Germany between 1917 and 1919. But even among artists in exile during these years, only a few paintings or graphic works were created that could be termed critical of the war.⁵⁰ Indeed, even after the war, there were scarcely any pictorial works that referred back critically to the war which had just come to an end. This time, almost everyone who had remained in Germany felt somehow implicated, and therefore preferred to keep silent about the immediate past. The few works that were created generally struck a tone of lament. Most artists made use of Christian images and symbols; in fact, they had no scruples about equating the passion of Christ with their own sufferings. Otto Dix, for example, painted more than ten *ecce homo* figures referring to himself or the passion of Germany. Others, such as Gerhard Marcks, went back to the imagery of Barlach in an effort to absolve their guilt. But this is a broad field, and one that cannot be delved into here.⁵¹

For the purposes of the present discussion, the salient feature is that every hope for change, the very will to struggle, even a possible social transformation was suffocated by the catastrophic end of World War II in Germany. The prevailing mood was one of disengagement, nonconformism, pacifism, even political apathy; as a consequence, concepts such as change, struggle, heroism, revolution took on a purely negative character. Slogans like “Count me out!” or “Never again!” became common currency among artists and intellectuals, luring them into a passivity which made it relatively easy for the new rulers to restore the old order in the Western Trizonesia and then to carry out the remilitarization of the new Federal Republic of Germany, without any noticeable opposition taking shape. And when it finally did arise in the course of the Ban-the-Bomb campaign in 1957–58, it was already too late.

Translated by J. D. Steakley

Notes

- 1 Cf. my essays “Das offene Geheimnis: Caspar David Friedrichs nationale Trauerarbeit,” in my *Sieben Arten an Deutschland zu leiden* (Frankfurt, 1979), 1–42; “Dashed Hopes: On the Painting of the Wars of Liberation,” in *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of George L. Mosse*, ed. Seymour Drescher, David Sabeian, and Allan Sharlin (New Brunswick, 1982), 216–38; and the pertinent passages of my Menzel biography (Reinbek, 1986), 44–50.
- 2 On this point, cf. Marx and Engels, *Über Kunst und Literatur*, ed. Manfred Kliem (Frankfurt, 1968) 2:471.

- 3 Cf. Adolf Steinitzer, *Der Krieg in Bildern* (Munich, 1912), 26f. and plates nos. 79ff.
- 4 Cf. Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand, *Deutsche Kunst und Kultur von der Gründerzeit bis zum Expressionismus 2* (Berlin, 1965): 156–71.
- 5 Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vorwort an Richard Wagner" (1871), in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (Stuttgart, 1945), 197.
- 6 Hermand, *Menzel*, 77ff.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 82.
- 8 Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871–1918* (Göttingen, 1973), 41ff.
- 9 Cf. Jost Hermand, "The Agrarian Ideology: Fascism as Utopia and Hypocrisy," *The University of Dayton Review* 12 (Spring, 1976): 93–98 and *Der alte Traum vom neuen Reich: Völkische Utopien und Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1988), 47–84.
- 10 Cf. my essay "Gralsmotive um die Jahrhundertwende," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 36 (1962): 521–43.
- 11 Cf. Hermand, *Der alte Traum vom neuen Reich*, 94f.
- 12 Cf. Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand, *Deutsche Kunst und Kultur von der Gründerzeit bis zum Expressionismus 4* (Berlin, 1967): 24ff.
- 13 Arnold Zweig to Helene Weyl (27 August 1914), Arnold-Zweig-Archiv, Berlin.
- 14 Cf. Hans Schwerte, *Faust und das Faustische: Ein Kapitel deutscher Ideologie* (Stuttgart, 1962), 246.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 266.
- 16 Karl Scheffler, "Der Krieg," *Kunst und Künstler* 13 (1914–15): 2.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Karl Scheffler, "Kunstgespräche im Kriege," *Kunst und Künstler* 13 (1914/15): 111.
- 19 Cf. the chapter "Der Gedankenkreis der Fortschrittlichen Reaktion," in Hamann/Hermand 4:23–202.
- 20 Cf. my essay, "Meister Fidus: Vom Jugendstilhippie zum Germanenschwärmer," in my *Der Schein des schönen Lebens: Studien zur Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt, 1972); also Janos Frecot, Johann Friedrich Geist, and Diethart Kerbs, *Fidus 1868–1948: Zur Praxis ästhetischer Fluchtbewegungen* (Munich, 1972), 168f.
- 21 Wilhelm Westecker, *Krieg und Kunst: Das Erlebnis des Weltkrieges und der Großdeutsche Freiheitskampf* (Vienna, 1940), 14.
- 22 Cf. Fritz von Ostini, *Fritz Erler* (Bielefeld/Leipzig, 1921), 127–46.
- 23 Cf. Marion F. Deshmukh, "German Impressionist Painters and World War I," *Art History* 4 (March 1981): 66–79.
- 24 Cf. Victor H. Miesel, "Paul Cassirer's 'Kriegszeit' and 'Bildermann' and Some German Expressionist Reactions to World War I," *Michigan Germanic Studies* 2 (Fall 1976): 149–68.
- 25 *Ibid.*, fig. 1 and 2.
- 26 Cf. Ida Katherine Rigby, *An alle Künstler! War—Revolution—Weimar: German Expressionist Prints, Drawings, Posters, and Periodicals from the Robert Gore Rifkind Foundation* (San Diego, 1983), 6–25.
- 27 Quoted in Eberhard Ruhmer, *Lyonel Feininger: Zeichnungen, Aquarelle, Graphik* (Munich, 1961), 18.
- 28 In *Der Sturm* 7.1 (1916): 2.
- 29 Quoted in Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1974), 7.
- 30 Max Beckmann, *Briefe im Kriege* (Munich/Zurich, 1984), 18.
- 31 Matthias Eberle, *World War I and the Weimar Artists* (New Haven, 1985), 22ff.
- 32 Cf. the exhibition catalogue *Ein Krieg wird ausgestellt* of the Historisches Museum, Frankfurt (Frankfurt, 1976), 80ff.
- 33 *Der Bildermann*, July 26 and October 20, 1916.
- 34 Cf. George Grosz, *Leben und Werk*, ed. Uwe M. Schneede (Stuttgart, 1975), 30ff.
- 35 Cf. Schwerte, *Faust und das Faustische*, 269ff.
- 36 Ostini, *Fritz Erler*, 134.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 135.
- 38 Cf. Dietrich Schubert, *Otto Dix* (Reinbek, 1980), 66.
- 39 Quoted in *Ernst Barlach*, ed. Manfred Schneckenburger (Cologne, 1975), 61.
- 40 Cf. my essay "Bewährte Tümllichkeiten: Der völkisch-nazistische Traum einer ewig-deutschen Kunst," in *Die deutsche Literatur im Dritten Reich: Themen—Traditionen—Wirkungen*, ed. Horst Denkler and Karl Prümm (Stuttgart, 1971), 102ff.

- 41 Cf. Hermand, *Der alte Traum vom neuen Reich*, 280ff.
- 42 Ibid., 288.
- 43 Klaus Wolbert, "Programmatische Malerei," in *Kunst im 3. Reich: Dokumente der Unterwerfung*, ed. Georg Bussmann (Frankfurt, 1974), 130.
- 44 Illustrations *ibid.*, 134ff.
- 45 Ibid., 138f.
- 46 Cf. Hermand, *Der alte Traum vom neuen Reich*, 315ff.
- 47 Ibid., 277ff. and 324ff.
- 48 Cf. Hermann Hinkel, *Zur Funktion des Bildes im deutschen Faschismus: Bildbeispiele—Analysen—Didaktische Vorschläge* (Gießen, 1975), 67–86.
- 49 Cf., among others, Wilhelm Westecker, *Krieg und Kunst: Das Erlebnis des Ersten Weltkrieges und des Großdeutschen Freiheitskrieges* (Vienna, 1940); Wilm Burghardt, *Kunst und Krieg* (Dresden, 1942); *Kunst im 3. Reich*, ed. Georg Bussmann (Frankfurt, 1974), 130ff.; Reinhard Müller-Mehlis, *Die Kunst im Dritten Reich* (Munich, 1976), 58ff.; *German War Art: 1939–1945*, ed. William P. Yenne (New York, 1983).
- 50 Cf. *Kunst im Exil in Großbritannien: 1939–1945* (Berlin, 1986), 67ff.
- 51 Cf. Jutta Held, *Kunst und Kunstpolitik in Deutschland: 1945–49* (Berlin, 1981), 8–43; Jost Hermand, *Kultur im Wiederaufbau: Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945–1965* (Munich, 1986), 116–26.

Shooting Wars: German Cinema and the Two World Wars

MARC SILBERMAN

Qui desiderat pacem praeparet bellum.

Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* III

In an episode of Edgar Reitz's 1984 television series *Heimat*, Anton Simon, the son of the family patriarch, is somewhere on the Russian Front filming the execution of partisans as a member of a propaganda company. We see images of a camera cross-cut with the soldiers' machine guns, both aimed at and shooting their common target, the partisans. The company commander seems more concerned with proper camera angles and framing the shots than with the shooting that means death to these partisans. He tells his assistant Anton:

Wir erreichen, daß das Kriegsgeschehen sich mit einer größeren Gewalt in die Seelen der Menschen einprägt, als es die Kraft der eigenen Augen vermag . . .¹

This officer's conviction that filmed images can be more powerful than the reality they represent concurs with what has become a long tradition in motion picture entertainment. The birth of the cinema at the end of the 19th century was accompanied almost from the outset by attempts on the part of citizens' groups and governmental agencies to control and contain the corrupting influence of images on youth, women, proletarians, and other so-called vulnerable members of society. More recently, the issue of violence in television programming has led to numerous empirical studies since the early 1960s on the psychological impact of images, but without reaching conclusive results. Most recently, the domestic pornography debate points to the ongoing nature of this controversy about seeing and looking. There is, however, no measurable evidence that movies have the impact ascribed to them. Nonetheless, there is an understanding that they somehow shape attitudes and expectations in a profound way. This is the subject I want to address in the context of the German war film.

If the propaganda company officer's view is correct about the potential power of images to produce meanings that displace one's own experience, then we ought to be concerned with how they interpret reality and thereby constitute memory for us. This, however, is neither a simple nor a straightforward task, for it implicates not only the history of moving pictures but also crucial theoretical issues of representation. Film as an aesthetic object and as a market commodity is a site where many forces intersect to determine its role, its function, and its impact. Needless to say, I am not in a position to undertake a global analysis here. What

I would like to do, however, is present a brief summary of the history of war images in the German cinema, while focusing on some narrative strategies for dealing with the war thematic in a small number of films. I am not interested in definitive readings of the war film genre or in establishing unassailable categories for grouping them.² Rather, I want to demonstrate how specific films mediate between a particularly devastating human experience and its public comprehension.

First of all, one finds images of the two World Wars not only in the cinema but in all aspects of popular culture. Every form of entertainment and communication was touched by the wars and the changes in social relations they brought about—news journalism, radio broadcast, fiction and nonfiction writing, songs, and magazines. To this extent, war imagery is an enormous terrain for cultural analysis, even if, on the other hand, films directly concerned with war comprise a relatively small ratio of the totality of film productions, especially during war-time itself. This is true, by the way—and I speak here not only of the German cinema—for reasons which have to do less with the film industry than with the more general political and social effects of protracted armed conflict. Specifically, war films produced during wartime are rarely able to address adequately two fundamental public issues: the morality of killing and the political complexities of armed aggression.

Second, one can distinguish between those war films produced during a war—aimed at binding together antagonistic social forces in a unified political discourse in support of military victory—and historical war films produced after the devastation of war, and often suffused with nostalgia for the fictional unity projected in those earlier films. Third, it is possible to differentiate the various war film narratives: combat, espionage, occupation, resistance, prison camps, and the home front are the most familiar sub-types. Moreover, war films cross almost every other major genre, including the adventure film, the historical film, comedy and slapstick, the bio-pic, and the romance, among others. It seems that war is an all-purpose dramatic device that can be used in narratives to motivate any human emotion. Indeed, we might consider the war film generally to be the 20th-century version of the mythic contest in which powerful aspects of popular culture and political discourse come together. In a perilous world divided between masters and slaves, or between good and evil, the clash represented by war can be a regenerative act that sanctifies aggression, or it can be a warning about its destructiveness. Even in postwar films critical of war, this fundamental pattern is usually duplicated, albeit with reversed roles.

Fascination with war images reaches back to the very origins of the cinema. Oskar Messter produced in 1896 a short film called *Rückkehr der Truppen von der Frühjahrsparade*; Georges Méliè's first reels included in 1896 *Le régiment* and *Libération des territoriaux* and in 1897 *Grandes manoeuvres*; in England, William Paul distributed in 1899 a feature under the title *Reproductions of Some Incidents of the Boer War*.³ More importantly, the technological advances which made possible the projection of moving images parallel the development of those

weapons which transformed the nature of modern warfare between 1895 and 1912: smokeless gunpowder, the smallbore magazine rifle and other refinements of the machine gun, the Krupp prototype of the "Bertha" gun which became the mobile tank, the submarine, poison gas, and the airplane. The technology of nitrate chemistry had the greatest direct impact on both fields of cinema and armaments, as it was essential for film stock and for new explosives. Sociologist Paul Virilio has pointed to another fundamental intersection of war and cinema at this time. He argues that World War I was the first mediatized conflict in history. With rapid and long-distance firing arms, war no longer consisted of body-to-body physical confrontation; rather, enemy armies took up positions at great distance from each another and conducted combat with the aid of telescopes, aerial photography, aviation observation, and sound detection. In short, both the cinema and war, to some extent for mutual ends, were expanding the function of the eye and the role of visual perception, the very condition that Reitz's propaganda officer observed at the Russian Front.⁴

There are some astonishing parallels in the expectations and reactions of the film industry to the onset of war in 1914 and 1939. In both cases, it was seen as an effective means for salvaging a crisis-ridden film industry: in 1914, by providing a captive domestic market that had previously been dominated by French and Danish film distributors; in 1939, by opening up occupied territories to exclusive distribution of German productions. In effect, both wars gave the industry a decisive push in its consolidation through government censorship and sponsorship under the guise of providing information and forming public opinion. Similarly, in 1914 as well as in 1939, war films and documentaries were aimed at preparing the public for the war effort; for example, by encouraging enlistment in the military services and by explaining the needs for fuel conservation and food rationing. Needless to say, the perspective conveyed apologetic patriotism and unconditional optimism.

At the start of World War I in August 1914, the German High Command forbade cameras on the battlefield and allowed shooting only of wagon trains, marching troops, and soldiers' portraits. Within twenty days of the onset of combat, however, this policy changed, and Oskar Messter, who had become a member of the Press Department of the General Staff, began filming frontline newsreels as early as October 1914. His widely circulated newsreel "Messter-Woche" included during the entire war segments called "Dokumente zum Krieg," shot by official military cameramen, and showing scenes of German heroism and of destruction caused by enemy armies.⁵ Other producers filled the gap opened by film import restrictions and by the real public need for information with documentaries and feature films about the war.⁶ By 1915, the private sector of cinema production and distribution was regulated entirely by the government, but it was clear that Germany could not compete with the Allies' propaganda films distributed to neutral countries. Thus, in 1917, General Ludendorff established, first, the government-financed Bild- und Filmamt (BUFA) and, later, the Universum Film-

AG (Ufa) to produce newsreels, propaganda films, instructional films, and feature films for troop entertainment. With that came actual military camera units under ranked officers for the first time, an organizational form which was reinstituted during World War II.⁷ Many actors and directors who were to become well-known in the 1920s cooperated with war film production. For instance, Paul Wegener, Emil Jannings, Conrad Veidt, and Werner Krauß starred in Richard Oswald's 1917 drama *Seeschlacht*; Paul Leni directed a film about a military doctor, *Das Tagebuch des Dr. Hart*, in 1918; and Wieland and Helmut Herzfelde worked together with George Grosz on propaganda films for domestic and foreign consumption.⁸ Toward the end of the war, however, interest in war films diminished, and production tended more and more to "feldgrauer Filmkitsch," dramas about wounded soldiers and romances about soldiers on leave. Nonetheless, after Germany's defeat, her film industry was in an advantageous position to compete in the international market, with its production capabilities having expanded under the mantle of the war economy. In addition, through government intervention and sponsorship, motion pictures had become culturally respectable and autonomous, a status they had never before achieved in Germany.

War films were considered poor box office after armed hostilities ended, and it took another ten years before the Great War once again became a popular topical issue for feature-length entertainment films. Echoes of the war were to be found only in dramatic films which focused on postwar misery, as in G. W. Pabst's 1925 *Die freudlose Gasse*, with images of people waiting in front of food shops. A number of compilation films, often using newsreel combat footage shot by the government Bild- und Filmamt, were also produced, including Kurt Bernhardt's 1924 *Namenlose Helden/Krieg*, the 1926 *Für Vaterland*, paying tribute to the war dead, and Leo Laska's monumental two-part Ufa film *Der Weltkrieg* (1927-28). Such films were assembled with the conscious pedagogical intent of showing young people the sufferings caused by war. Other films reconstructed historical battles, such as Manfred Noa's 1925 *Die versunkene Flotte* and, one year later, Louis Ralph's *Unsere Emden* and Carl Boese's *Der Seekadett*. Characteristic for such films was the shift from the heroic perspective of the wartime releases to critical demythicizing which sought an objective presentation rather than nationalistic coloring. In 1927, the first postwar German pacifist film was produced by Karl Grune, *Am Rande der Welt*. Influenced by Soviet productions, Grune indicts war through a story about a disrupted family far removed from the front but victimized nonetheless by violence and destruction. Others followed, including Joe May's 1928 *Heimkehr* about a POW returning from Siberia, and Michael Dubson's 1929 *Giftgas*, a science fiction horror film about a corrupt chemical firm that intends to rule the world with its new patent for a poison gas.

By the early 1930s, there existed a leftist public sphere in Germany which could support a socially critical commercial cinema and provide the outstanding actors and technicians needed for successful political films from the left. Germany joined the American and other European cinemas in making important contribu-

tions to the tragic, pacifist film.⁹ G. W. Pabst's 1930 *Westfront 1918* (adapted from Ernst Johanssen's novel *Vier von der Infanterie*) and Victor Trivas' 1931 *Niemandsland* (based on an idea of Leonhard Frank) transform the war narrative into the story of a debacle and a mistake. Pabst's film is the first cinematic representation of technological war where mechanical killing is portrayed like the children's game of erasing stickmen. This is not the mythical contest of good and evil in the name of national righteousness but the battle of a Machiavellian machine engineered in the name of power politics and economic greed. From the grunts' perspective in the trenches, there is no courage and heroism but only the senseless squandering of young lives without recompense. Pabst transposes the trope of the young soldier who loses his innocence and grows to manhood in the struggle for a better, more humane world into the cynical pessimism of a betrayed generation. The solidarity of the front which elides class, political, and regional differences becomes here the solidarity of the trenches where German and French privates have more in common than a soldier and an officer from the same country. Similarly, the unity of the home front with the fighting front is transposed into the common suffering and skepticism about the war's goals. Pabst's striking visual images of combat, coupled with his careful editing, produce a widely celebrated "realism," but the war sequences are, in fact, highly conventionalized, that is, abstract and general, not unlike those of heroic war films and newsreel combat footage.

Both Pabst's and Trivas' pacifist films were criticized because they did not go far enough in explaining the causes of war.¹⁰ Leaving aside the question as to whether the rhetoric of the realist narrative film allows for analyzing or explaining the causes of war, I would suggest that the films' achievements and limitations lie elsewhere. *Westfront 1918* and *Niemandsland* are powerful antiwar films because they succeed in subverting the traditional war film narrative by reversing all of its conventions. But because it is constructed as a reversal, the critique moves on the territory defined by the premises of that which it seeks to criticize. A counterexample will demonstrate the point. In 1934, Hans Zöberlein released what seems to be an explicit response to Pabst's film. *Stoßtrupp 1917* is equally relentless in showing how war is hell, but it has no pacifist tenor. The horrors of trench warfare, also shown from the ordinary soldier's point of view, are portrayed as the battle for an abstract sort of Germanness. Needless to say, the film was well-received by Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry.¹¹ The onset of the National Socialist State quickly ended the brief interlude of antiwar and pacifist films from Germany. In the course of the 1930s, more moderate, apologetic war films dominated the screen. These included the crude Great War films with their ideology of the military blood fraternity (Louis Ralph, *Heldentum und Todeskampf unserer Emden*, 1934; Karl Ritter's *Urlaub auf Ehrenwort*, 1937, and *Pour le mérite*, 1938), celebratory documentaries about military life (*Deutschlands Heer* and *Heer im Werden*, both 1937, and *Die deutsche Kriegsmarine*, 1939) as well as films about Prussian military history.¹²

If we return for a moment to the officer in Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* who maintained that the images he was shooting at the Russian front were more powerful than what people actually saw, then we are right at the center of the National Socialist cinema program. Yet the situation is more complicated than it might appear, for cinematic images are never "simply shot," but are rather the product of a much larger system in the circulation of information and entertainment. Between 1933 and 1942, Goebbels was able to consolidate the crisis-prone film industry into a state-owned and -controlled holding company to coordinate better cinema production and distribution with the artistic and political goals of National Socialism. During the 1930s, his Propaganda Ministry managed the best studio park and technical facilities in all of Europe, enabling Germany to compete with the most advanced developments in color technology and three-dimensionality. Indeed, the Nazi cinema remained one of the strongest European producers through the onset of war in 1939, with an average of 80 feature-length films per year, as well as documentaries, shorts, and newsreels.¹³ In sum, the film industry was a priority interest for Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, one of the most highly scrutinized and carefully controlled branches of an administered culture, and thus subject to intervention at every step. When the war began, the film industry was prepared to do its part, and its implementation parallels closely what we have already seen during the First World War. Public access to war imagery was centered on newsreels which were responsible for presenting documentary material on preparations and combat. The four independent weekly newsreel companies were consolidated into one organization, "Die deutsche Wochenschau," within weeks after the war began. The quantity of distributed newsreels increased enormously, rising from about 500 copies per week before the war to 2400 copies by 1943; moreover, newsreel length was extended from 10 minutes per installment to 20-30 minutes, and the expanded coverage was devoted almost exclusively to war-related images. Cinema spectators supported these initiatives; indeed, they went to the movies as much for the features as for the newsreels, especially during the early years of the war.

Documentary features also focused on war-related events. The best-known among them (Fritz Hippler's *Feldzug in Polen*, 1940; Hans Bertram's *Feuertaufe*, 1940, and *Sieg im Westen*, 1941) consist to a large part of newsreel material pasted together with a commentary. Interestingly, *Sieg im Westen* also includes Allied newsreel footage from captured enemy films to heighten the authenticity effect. Clearly, the lessons in dramaturgy and editing which Leni Riefenstahl had practiced in her documentaries from the 1930s were applied here. Image and music are combined to aestheticize the battle sequences. Opulent visuals show beautiful smoke pyramids from exploding bombs, airplanes like flies swarming in the sky, fluffy clouds above burning cities, attacks that look like stormy weather. Such documentary films, moreover, are structured like musical compositions with a polyphonic treatment of visual leitmotifs and an emphasis on the suggestive rather than the informative content of the images.¹⁴

Similar footage also found its way into fictional war films to ensure the authenticity of the fiction. Other props for verisimilitude included dates, references to real people, and maps; however, the lack of real specificity and the constant interference of anachronisms belie their reality effect. Favorite heroes for celebrating military heroism and courage in fiction films were marines and air force cadets, possibly because their stories provide an opportunity for brilliant photography. The protagonists are most likely to be young, average-looking soldiers, friendly and attractive but short on ideas and emotions. Hans Bertram's *Kampfgeschwader Lützow* (1941), Karl Ritter's *Stukas* (1941), and Günther Rittau's *U-Boote westwärts* (1942), all include documentary combat footage, some of it so terrifying that it would seem to undermine the intended positive propaganda effect. Besides the reality effect, such disquieting imagery placed in relief against the primary action of romance and adventure might have been meant to "inoculate" the public against future traumas. In this connection, it should be noted that depictions of death and dying are almost totally excluded from these films. War is represented as an engagement whose righteousness would negate death's blow. In addition, the combat film rarely offers any rationale for German involvement in the war or a serious treatment of the enemy. Ideological and moral superiority is assumed, although the films endlessly act and reenact precisely that superiority as if to guarantee its truthfulness. For these heroes, war is not a cataclysm but an opportunity for growth and continuity. Important personal bonds are cemented, idealism is heightened, and values like honor, cooperation, sacrifice, and duty are reinforced and rewarded. The fictitious heroes, engaged in seemingly historical events, present qualities considered typically German in plots constructed around conventional motifs such as farewells, air raid alarms, and shared cigarettes and photographs.

Similar structures dominate the noncombat fictional war films, those about leaves from the battle lines (e.g., Jürgen von Alten's *Sechs Tage Heimaturlaub* or Volker Collande's *Zwei in einer großen Stadt*, both 1941) or about the home front (e.g., Eduard von Borsody's *Wunschkonzert*, 1940, or Rolf Hansen's *Die große Liebe*, 1942). Here the reality of war recedes to a memory or, at most, to the sound of air raid sirens (without bombs) or to a discussion about the lack of real coffee beans. On the home front, everyone, including the children, is participating cheerfully in innocuous but heartwarming activities to support the war effort. Scholars have variously divided up the approximately 1100 feature-length films produced during the twelve years of the Third Reich, but most agree that about 90 percent of these films can be classified as entertainment features, while only about 10 percent are manifest propaganda films.¹⁵ *Wunschkonzert* was the first fiction film to combine a comic entertainment format successfully with documentary combat footage and an overt propaganda message, including images of Hitler and Nazi symbols (a practice that had been avoided up to then). A politico-musical with a love story set against the backdrop of war mobilization, its enormous popularity can be attributed to the contemporary subject matter with which

the whole population was familiar. Moreover, as one of the relatively few films commissioned directly by the Propaganda Ministry (there were only 96 such films produced in the Third Reich), it marked an important step in the consolidation of propaganda motifs with mass entertainment values, here in the form of war as amusement.

The film is neither visually nor structurally innovative. The presentation is theatrical, emphasizing the primacy of plot over spectacle and the abstract over the concrete. Like most fascist film narratives, its fundamental structural principle conveys a sense of completeness, stability, and immobility. The "Wunschkonzert" of the title refers to an actual radio series which every Sunday played soldiers' favorites requested from the front or from those on leave; hence, it embodied both an effective tool for bridging the spatial gap between home and front and a kind of national, secular substitute for the church congregation. Because of the film's structural commitment to showing a representative cross section of German society, the plot becomes a rather complicated affair. Essentially, however, it is a story of "boy meets girl" and of the various obstacles they encounter before they can finally unite in harmony and marriage. Here, the usual intrigues—including a second suitor, retarding moments, and inopportune reversals—are augmented by the necessities of war, a theme constantly foregrounded by visual images and through the radio request concert. Interspersed with this romantic drama are a number of subplots: the antics of common soldiers playing off the purity of noble love in a more burlesque register, the tragic death of one of the soldiers in order to underscore the menacing backdrop to the private love story, and, finally, ample documentary and newsreel-type footage from the 1936 Olympic ceremonies, the bombings of German fighters in Spain, the Polish offensive in 1939, and naval and ground fighting during the war.

The narrative core aims at linking the love relationship between the protagonists to the more general framework of a society mobilizing for war and enumerating the limitations to which such a love relationship must accommodate under these conditions. The clear message to the (male) spectator implies that private happiness is no longer simply a personal choice. Moments of happiness or love with a woman are finite (limited to the time on leave), whereas war is the real test for devotion and trust. The female spectator witnesses the tension between the experience of love and its renunciation for the greater public cause. She watches how the heroine disciplines her emotions and aligns femininity with patriotic nationalism. In this respect, the heroine's image is generally consistent with that of women in war films and, specifically, with the National Socialist ideal: she is passively inspirational, supplying the pretext for gentlemen soldiers to be fighting in the war. Moreover, she must retain her love for the absent male, but the love must not become so excessive that it could unbalance the partner's commitment to the war. The love relationship has a higher meaning in binding the soldier to family, to Germany, and to victory over the enemy. This confirmation of desire and its simultaneous denial describes the partners' internalized role model, which

finds true strength not through isolation but through acceptance of their place in a restricted collective.

If the war romance stylizes all sexual relations into the loving pair or married couple despite the ruptures of mobilization, then it projects all social relations into the petty bourgeois image of a harmonious network in which true strength comes from accepting one's place in a hierarchy of intersecting and complementary groups. Thus, the fascist discourse encompasses at one and the same time the clear separation of gender roles into waiting women and fighting men and the unification of the entire *Volk* as a collective of equals transcending class, age, profession, region (signified by dialect differences in the film), and gender. *Wunschkonzert* articulates this discourse on three levels: in the projection of a fascist past through popular myth associated with the Olympic Games and the Legion Condor, in the radio concert and music generally, as the acoustic bridge which harmonizes conflicts and private needs with the public interest, and in a series of images of everyday life which chronicle fascism as a social equalizer. The projection of an organic civilization condenses, finally, all the contradictions of modernity into the solidarity of the *Volk*. By the end of 1942, with the Stalingrad stalemate, there was a clear shift from such topical war films to more purely escapist fare. War adventure films completed in 1942 like Karl Ritter's *Besatzung Dora* or the documentary feature *Der 5. Juni* were never released, because the military situation, and with it the lines of battle, had changed too radically in the meantime. Yet the values found in a film like *Wunschkonzert* were simply displaced into other narratives which offered fewer or more camouflaged possibilities of comparison with the ever harsher realities of the war economy.

Germany's unconditional surrender in May 1945 marked the end of the monopolistic, centralized film industry. Not only was the infrastructure largely destroyed—studios, technical facilities, cinemas in most urban centers—but the Allies who occupied Germany were also determined to prevent the revival of such a strong film industry for their own reasons. The recovery and reorganization of the German cinema and its film industry in the immediate postwar years might be seen in retrospect as prototypical for the complicated, problematic relation of rupture and continuity which determined all social structures after the war. Not only did the film industry inherit the dubious legacy of the Third Reich's popularization of the cinema as the most important form of mass influence, with the capacity to reach an audience larger than that of any print medium, but it also faced a public whose taste had been conditioned by the entertainment priorities of a fascist regime. Hence, the diverse interests of the occupation powers themselves defined the possibilities and limitations for the development of the postwar German cinema, rather than autonomous decisions on the part of the Germans. In the Western Zones, where print media were considered the primary instruments for information, dissemination, and reeducation, the film industry was reorganized largely under American direction for entertainment purposes and according to

the economic priorities of the Hollywood studios and their marketing needs. In the Soviet Zone, the cinema, along with schools, was regarded as the preferential means for mass reeducation. Consequently, the Soviet authorities rapidly implemented measures to put a film industry back on its feet.¹⁶

By Spring 1946, the first short films and newsreels were released in the Soviet Zone by the newly organized DEFA film company, and feature films soon followed. The enthusiasm and good will of those committed to a program of antifascist humanism and to the process of ideological clarification could not disguise the fact that the majority had worked for Ufa during the Third Reich; yet, despite this fact, or perhaps because of it, there was general agreement that the "new German film" could *not* simply continue the old Ufa style. What emerged was an impressive body of films sometimes characterized as DEFA's antifascist classic period. Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (1946) and *Rotation* (1948) and Kurt Maetzig's *Ehe im Schatten* (1947) and *Die Buntkarierten* (1949) are only a few of the films which treat the conditions before, during, and after the war. Typical for the many antifascist films produced in the East are two dominant narrative strategies: a broad historical panorama to show the roots of fascism, often constructed around a family as metaphor for the social division between left and right ideologies; or an everyday issue in the life of those subjected to racist and political oppression which reveals the corrupt nature of the fascist government. In both cases, the war as such is portrayed as the symptom of a much deeper disjunction in German social life.

Staudte's *Rotation* (1948) is a particularly successful example of the first strategy and at the same time signals more than any other DEFA film of this early period an attempt at revitalizing the tradition of Weimar cinema. The plot takes up the question of personal responsibility in the context of the ordinary citizen whose political passivity leads to complicity. The story follows over a twenty-year period the fate of a well-meaning, sympathetic, and industrious worker who finds himself implicated in the crimes of the fascist regime because he had closed his eyes to the events around him. The film treats, in other words, a subject with which the large majority of Germans, who were neither fanatic Nazis nor members of the resistance, could identify. Using conventions of the realist narrative, *Rotation* projects a resolution that negotiates the anxiety resulting from the accusation of passive guilt, in order to articulate a position potentially invested with positive emotions. Staudte's vehicle for rewriting history is the petty bourgeois family constellation, a unit of social relations understood to be situated at the margins of major events, but representing in a microcosm historically typical behavior patterns which transcend individual destinies. He aims at exposing the moral ambiguity and antisocial attitudes that result from values centered on individual security, and were then exploited by the fascist regime. Alternating between private and public scenes, the film's dramaturgy proceeds by contrasts which show the impact of political or social changes on family behavior.

For our purposes, the last third of the film is most pertinent, showing how the family disintegrates under the pressure of war and of Nazi attempts to subordinate it to political domination. The brother-in-law, engaged in resistance activities, and representing the nagging conscience of political responsibility, changes places in the family's emotional economy with the fanatical Nazi son who had previously justified the father's personal compromises necessary for a stable family life. The reversal is underscored by the juxtaposition of a series of scenes alternating between the son's Hitler Youth training and the parents' hesitant cooperation with the brother-in-law's conspiratorial activities. The son comes more and more under the sway of Nazi ideology, so that his identification with the family (and his father) diminishes to the same extent as his idolization of a young officer grows. Meanwhile, the resistance fighter's reentry into the family circle immediately after a bomb damages their home triggers the denouement, for his presence forces the parents to reconsider the distinction between family duty and social responsibility. The denouement ensues when, in the name of idealism, the son betrays his parent's collaboration to the Gestapo. He becomes the witness that informs on his parents. The consequences for the family are devastating: the father faces execution, the mother is killed in the final bombing of Berlin, the son is estranged from his father and is taken a prisoner of war, and the brother-in-law, the family's social conscience, is murdered by the Gestapo.

The family narrative is embedded in a flashback which marks it as a retrospective explanation filtered through the father's memory. Not unlike a conversion narrative, the film proposes that this "new man," who has lived the death of the "old man," now has the authority to tell us the truth of his past and to invite us, the spectators, to learn his lesson. The flashback structure offers a pedagogical and polemical model for motivating the process of self-reflection. It situates the spectator at the moment of rupture, "quoting" details from the last desperate days of street fighting in Berlin, in order to emphasize the cynical and deceptive nature of the fascist leaders. In the film's epilogue, Staudte shows the son's difficult and embarrassed reconciliation with the father. This recourse to a generational solution for the problem of complicity—the children can atone for the parents' mistakes—shifts the responsibility for the past into the present and onto the younger generation, a strategy that surfaced in many war films produced by DEFA in the late 1940s and, in fact, a dominant motif in films from both East and West Germany concerned with accounting for the Nazi past. It is an imaginary solution for the difficult undertaking of sustaining the notion of victimization while effacing the guilt or complicity in order to gain a measure of dignity in the present. Moreover, the epilogue offers the spectator a positive identification in the guise of the prodigal son. In this case, the double fact that the father actually cooperated with the underground resistance—rather atypical behavior for the large majority of Germans who tended to be active, if reluctant, participants in the war—and that the son denounced the father to the Gestapo augments the pathos

of reconciliation. It responds to the wish that anyone could have resisted the regime, while obscuring the reality that almost no one did.

A film like Konrad Wolf's 1968 DEFA feature *Ich war neunzehn* indicates the strength of the antifascist war film in the GDR as well as the changes it underwent. Also a retrospective reconstruction of the end of the war, its tone and the nature of the questions the narrative poses are nonetheless very different from those in Staudte's *Rotation*. Like many other GDR directors of the "second" generation, that is, of those who began their careers after the war, Wolf during the 1950s had filmed conversion narratives in the mode of antifascist realism, including the internationally acclaimed *Lissy* (1956) and *Sterne* (1959).¹⁷ *Ich war neunzehn*, however, was a departure both for its autobiographical content and for its lyrical diary form. A young Red Army soldier—German by birth, but whose leftist parents emigrated with their young children to the Soviet Union—returns to Germany in 1944. Unlike Staudte's prodigal son, this German son comes home with the triumphant Soviet Army as a conqueror in his defeated homeland, triggering a process of self-questioning. Yet the film's laconic form constructs a protagonist who resembles a picaro caught in episodic events, rather than a positive hero seeking self-knowledge. Moreover, the narrative conceives of the war not in a mythic dimension of good and bad, nor of resistance and fascism, but as an existential problem for this young man. The basic conflict arises from his inability as a "returnee" (*Heimkehrer*) to recognize, not only rationally but also emotionally and empirically, that Germany is his home. Hence, time and again the Soviet soldier born in Germany reacts shyly and only involuntarily to the question of whether he is German. The film is an elaboration of Wolf's own diaries from the last days of the war, and it opposes the historical directness of the combat film, augmented by archival footage, with the subjectivity of memory derived from the journal-like presentation of the off-screen narrator's voice.

Unlike many war films that try to integrate documentary footage into the illusion of authenticity, Wolf's film marks a break in the conventions of narrative perspective. The shots of battles and ravaged landscapes, a long excerpt from a Soviet documentary about the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in which a camp guard quietly and with amazing self-complacency talks about how the death apparatus functioned, and a staged conversation between two SS-officers in the Spandau fortress cannot possibly be explained as part of the otherwise consistently foregrounded subjective point of view of the young soldier. Yet the very breaks intensify the uniqueness of the horror that is shown here and that guarantees the distancing effect on the part of the protagonist as well as of the spectator. That the Sachsenhausen footage is, furthermore, twice interrupted by short shots of the soldier under a shower creates a striking image associated with the camps that heightens his feeling of ambivalence toward the Germans and his sensitivity toward the question of self-identity as a German. There are other aspects of the narration which stress textual enunciation and thereby invite discursive activity

on the spectator's part. Images and thematic motifs concerning nature and a particular German feeling for it permeate the narrative to produce resonances of an inherited tradition which once again is linked to the protagonist's basic identity conflict. Similarly, the film music, consisting of quotes from familiar German compositions, weaves a thread of correspondences. Wolf achieves an extraordinary textual density which invites the spectator to share in the main character's coming-to-consciousness, so that the spectator's own sensitivity might in turn lead to self-reflection. Here, the film's lyrical construction aims less at telling a story, or even interpreting events, than at presenting situations and encounters. It is the spectator's responsibility to find explanations for the contradictions or uncertainties with which the experience of the war has burdened postwar Germany.

In a certain sense, Wolf's film marks a high point and a temporary end point for the GDR antifascist war film. On the one hand, television programming has increasingly preempted the task of presenting and interpreting historical events. Egon Günther's two World War I adaptations, *Junge Frau von 1914* (1970) and *Erziehung vor Verdun* (1973) were, for example, both commissioned by television. On the other hand, despite a few isolated antifascist films produced during the 1970s—e.g., Ralf Kirsten's *Der verlorene Engel* (1971), about the artist Ernst Barlach's difficulties with the Nazis, or Frank Beyer's adaptation of Jurek Becker's concentration camp novel *Jakob der Lügner* (1974)—there was a definite turn to contemporary and topical issues in the cinema. The shift in cultural policies which accompanied the changes in Party and government leadership in 1971 brought with it a lively interest in the conflict potential of everyday people in everyday situations of what has been referred to since then as "real existing socialism." After this decade-long pause, however, several directors have returned to the antifascist genre, using the formal practices and open-ended narrative structures devised during the 1970s. Ulrich Weiss's *Dein unbekannter Bruder* (1981), Frank Beyer's adaptation of the Hermann Kant novel *Der Aufenthalt* (1983), and Michael Kann's *Stielke, Heinz, 15* (1987) are examples of films that try to address in the 1980s the psychosocial dimension of complicity or resistance, neither demonizing nor heroizing those who were involved on either side of the war.

While in the Soviet Zone and, later, in the GDR the government-cultivated film industry was a main factor in reconstituting the public sphere with a commitment to antifascist thematics that represented a conscious break with Ufa traditions, the conditions and intentions in the Western Zones were oriented from the outset more toward commercial and entertainment values that had characterized the fascist film industry and the conventional spectator habits it had nurtured. Inconsistent and artificial plots organized for easy comprehension, exaggerated and awkward emotions, and stereotypical characters in novelistic conflicts moving among theatrical sets dominated the cinematic fare emerging from West German studios in the 1950s. Most typical and most successful was the *Heimatfilm*, a specifically German genre whose calculated apoliticalness promised escape from history through timelessness and the familiar. As we have seen in the GDR

context, the World War II film implies, in one way or another, at least the problem of guilt or the question of responsibility and of widespread political passivity during the Third Reich, issues that a cinema dedicated to entertainment and escapism could hardly raise. This may explain to a certain extent why it took almost a decade for the film industry to produce its first war films. In addition, during the immediate postwar years, the Western Allies' policies of denazification and demilitarization, coupled with the Nuremberg Trial controversy concerning the collective guilt shared by all Germans for the atrocities committed in the name of National Socialism, inhibited public discussion in any form about the war. Constituted under the shock of Nazi crimes, the West German state was grateful to align itself with the Western powers under the sign of Cold-War anticommunism and to focus its energies on economic reconstruction rather than to engage in a time-consuming and potentially factious discussion about the past. Thus, the political quietism which characterizes the 1950s restoration in West Germany found its counterpart in the cinema in a highly developed rhetoric of avoidance. After 1948, when the brief wave of rubble films with their contemporary thematics had subsided, topical issues and the context of National Socialism disappeared almost completely from the cinema until the war film genre was revived.

The timing of the war film's reappearance in West German cinemas was not entirely accidental. Critics have recognized the political function which the release of a mass of war films had at a time when Germany's remilitarization was on the agenda of the Western alliance.¹⁸ The escalation of the Cold War after NATO was established in 1949, and after the Korean War erupted in 1950, called for a military alliance with German participation and with the understanding that it would have to contribute to the European defense effort. The majority of West Germans greeted this as a signal of trust, yet many were not prepared for the rearmament process so soon after their devastating war experience. The first war films released in West Germany were not German productions at all. Among the rush of foreign releases introduced after the 1948 currency reform were many British and American war features.¹⁹ Indeed, between 1948 and 1959, American war films accounted for over 50 percent of those screened in West German cinemas, while Austrian and German productions together made up about 40 percent of the total. In particular, an American feature like Henry Hathaway's Rommel film *The Desert Fox* (1951), depicting the German commander of the Africa Corps as a courageous and fair officer who clashes with political leaders, was a powerful model for rehabilitating the German military and for reintroducing to the public the idea of war as cinema entertainment. As early as 1952, the first indigenous war films appeared, but these were exclusively historical barrack farces.²⁰ Within a year, the events of the Second World War became the subject of a series of ostensible documentaries, including actual newsreel footage from battles and daily life.²¹ Not until 1954, however, did the Austrian production of Helmut Käutner's remarkable *Die letzte Brücke* initiate a first wave of

feature-length films about the war by West German directors. The story about a German doctor in Yugoslavia who, when confronted with atrocities committed by German soldiers, collaborates with the partisans, strikes an uneasy balance between the motif of innocent Germans as victims and the issue of resistance as betrayal.

With few exceptions, the West German (and Austrian) war films can be divided into two categories: those about more or less conscious forms of resistance to the political manipulation of the Nazis by idealistic officers or exploited soldiers, and those about heroic or sentimental adventures using the war as a pretext or backdrop.²² Among the early productions, the first type dominated. *Morgengrauen* (Victor Tourjansky, 1954), *Unternehmen Edelweiß* (Heinz Paul, 1954), *Des Teufels General* (Helmut Käutner, 1955), and *Kinder, Mütter und ein General* (produced in West Germany by the American Laslo Benedek, 1955), all share a view of the common soldier as a simple human being with ties to home, to family, and to children. He is the innocent dupe who does his best to keep out of politics and who, if at all, resists the Nazis through carefully contrived acts of sabotage which will not endanger the comrades on the battle front. Others focus on the officers. *Canaris* (Alfred Weidenmann, 1954), *Verrat an Deutschland* (Veit Harlan, 1955), *Es geschah am 20. Juli* (G. W. Pabst, 1955) aim at differentiating the bad SS from the (relatively) good Wehrmacht with its non-Nazi officers who engaged in "brave" moments of resistance. The most successful of all these was Paul May's *08/15* (1954), the first part of a trilogy based on an equally popular novel by Hans Helmut Kirst, in which a few sadistic military men personify the evil of the authoritarian Nazi system and its abuses of the honest soldiers. Such efforts to rehabilitate the millions of Germans who had found themselves to be willing accomplices in the national debacle rely on an image of war as a dehumanizing and fateful event. The eagerness to construct this image around the conventionally rigid oppositions of good and bad, and to avoid any suggestion that many of these victims in fact identified with the goals of the cinematic bullies, confirmed for the spectators an imaginary relation to the past which exonerates feelings of guilt and responsibility.

West German war films produced during the 1950s were basically second-rate American copies. Like their counterparts, they exploit all the complications and intrigues of war: bigotry and corruption, incompetence and cowardice, divisiveness between the ranks, between civilians and soldiers, and between Nazis and ordinary citizens. As the representation of tensions within these groups expands, the nature of the enemy changes and individual fates with their personal morality and integrity come to the fore. Heroes emerge who are defined by the traditional values of apoliticalness, honesty, courage, loyalty, and self-sacrifice, and their heroism triumphs when they discover how their good will has been cynically manipulated by the evil Nazi leaders.

The strength of this model can still be found in a film produced as late as 1981, Wolfgang Petersen's adaptation of Lothar-Günther Buchheim's novel *Das*

Boot. It takes up the topos of the endangered submarine crew in a long tradition that harks back to the World War I feature *Fernfahrt von U-35* (1917) and the later *Morgenrot* (Gustav Ucicky, 1933). More interesting than the technically refined shooting of the sea combat scenes is the narrative conceit it develops of the submarine as a protected, enclosed space separated from the chaos outside. Like the bomber cockpit, the tank, or the trench, space itself imposes an internal order that intensifies human alliances and social or political divisions. In addition, the anonymity otherwise so typical for the grand scale of combat films is here undercut by the restricted, temporary shelter of the underwater vessel. A kind of communal life develops, based on a family structure including father, big brother, and dependent son figures with their mutual concern, affection, and rivalries. In this masculinized environment, the submarine as machine attains its real symbolic dimension as the Other, a signifier for the otherwise absent woman. Both mother, who protects and needs protecting, and lover, who wants to be seduced and controlled, the submarine becomes a projecting mirror for libidinal energy and anxieties that have little to do with the political or social issues of war. This mixture of war drama with a barely camouflaged domestic conflict also surfaced in the many combat films released during the 1950s. Revenge fantasies directed toward the fathers' generation held responsible for the war, and anxious dramas about powerless sons victimized by contingencies beyond their control, describe carefully submerged narratives, for example, in such different films as Frank Wisbar's *Hunde, wollt ihr ewig leben?* (1959), Bernhard Wicki's *Die Brücke* (1959), and Harold Philipp's *Strafbataillon 999* (1960).²³

During the 1960s, a young generation of film makers appeared in West Germany with the energy and commitment to build an alternative cinema opposed to the defunct commercial film industry. Twenty-six directors gathered their demands in a manifesto and published them at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 1962 under the battle cry "Papa's Kino ist tot!"²⁴ The sentimental image of a family struggle in which the sons are requesting the fathers to give them a piece of the pie undoubtedly resonates with the pathology of the postwar German family, but the patricidal myth also anticipates the trajectory that would be taken in the war films later produced by the New German Cinema. Among the remarkable first successes of this New Wave movement were features that explicitly addressed the Nazi past and its impact on the present, films like Jean-Marie Straub's adaptation of Heinrich Böll's novel *Billiard um halb zehn* under the title *Nicht ver-söhnt* (1965) and Alexander Kluge's *Abschied von gestern* (1966) or *Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: ratlos* (1968). The films are family reconstructions aimed at revealing the psychosocial blockage on the part of West Germans to face their recent past. Both directors use unconventional modes of narration, so that the spectator is denied the comfortable position allowed by the illusionistic and melodramatic formulas which had dominated all attempts at dealing with the Nazi past up to this point. After this strong beginning, however, the New German Cinema abandoned the recent past to focus on more personal or contemporary

issues of everyday life in the Federal Republic. To a certain extent, one could explain this reticence with the generational innocence of a group that had not personally experienced the discontinuities of the Second World War. Also, the social upheavals that characterized the post-68 years possessed their own dynamic which also sought cinematic exposure.

Only later, in the second half of the 1970s in conjunction with political retrenchment and the exhaustion of the student movement, did New German Cinema directors once again turn to the Nazi past; yet, significantly, many of the films did not focus their attention primarily on the war or specific images of war but on its impact within family relations that followed.²⁵ Edgar Reitz's *Stunde Null* (1976), Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979), and Marianne Rosenbaum's *Peppermint Frieden* (1983), for example, reveal the oppressive atmosphere of the postwar years as a direct result of the parents' inability to convey acceptable values to the next generation because of their own repressed feelings about the Third Reich. The autobiographical nature of these narratives is duplicated in the perspective as well, for the point of view is most likely to be that of a child or young adult. This, in fact, seems to be one of the most popular narrative structures for New German Cinema war films. Volker Schlöndorff's *Die Blechtrommel* (1979) adopts from its literary antecedent a three-year-old dwarf as the filter through which the fascist years are conveyed. Peter Lilienthal's *David* (1979), Helma Sanders-Brahms' *Deutschland bleiche Mutter* (1979), and Michael Hoffmann and Harry Reymon's *Regentropfen* (1980), all assume the perspective of a child as innocent victim who sees the violence of the war years while helplessly observing the events as an outsider. This intensely subjective view shifts the terrain of the war film from the presentation of armed aggression to an examination of the psychological dimension of war on an individual's fate. Looking at the past becomes a means of finding one's own place in relation to it, and of gaining insight into identity crises of the present. As in the GDR, this shift may be accounted for by the growing role of television in portraying the broad historical panoramas of war, as has been the case in recent years with Edgar Reitz's 15½-hour *Heimat* epic (1984), Eberhard Fechner's 4½-hour reconstruction of the Majdanek trial *Der Prozeß* (1984), Henric L. Würmeling's 9-hour series *Die Deutschen im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (1985), and Egon Monk's 7½-hour family drama *Die Bertinis* (1988). The length of these television productions says nothing about their quality, but it does indicate that the West German public has finally acquired the patience to look at its own history.

A different strategy, and one that I find more radical in its historicization of the war, has been undertaken by directors like Hans-Jürgen Syberberg (*Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland*, 1977), Harun Farocki (*Zwischen zwei Kriegen*, 1978), and Alexander Kluge (*Die Patrioten*, 1979). Seeking unconventional modes of expression derived from the experimental and avantgarde traditions, they construct films that eschew narrative logic and visual pleasure for dense intertextual

montages. These film essays on German history consist of documentary sequences, improvisations, interviews, historical references, and fictional scenes accompanied by written titles, voice-over commentaries, and musical quotes. The formal heterogeneity and structural fragmentation removes history and the experience of war from the domain of causality, and the relation of the parts no longer depends on the mimetic nature of representation. These directors also aim at subverting the status of the image as an autonomous reflection of reality in order to reanimate the relation between production and reception as an active process in the spectator's imagination. Such an approach undermines conceptual certainties, but it reveals in turn a richness of associations and correspondences that create their own web of memory. Breaking down spectator absorption, defying consumerist attitudes toward the cinema, undermining the domestication of human imagination: these are the terms of a discursive cinema that no longer seeks to substitute filmed images of combat for the reality of war. Rather, it challenges the spectator to enter the dialogic structure of a film in order to produce one's own experience of history.

I have tried to give an overview of the historical continuum of war images in cinematic representation. In conclusion, I would like to return briefly to the propaganda unit shooting a shooting scene on the Russian Front in *Heimat*. The company commander's belief in the power of images over one's own experience articulates a crucial issue concerning the way in which memory is constructed. Furthermore, it expresses the centrality that cinema images have assumed in this process of construction since World War I. Memory has been described as selective forgetting, and the cinema's function in the public circulation of images makes it a primary agent in deciding what is forgotten. By filtering and preserving particular images pertaining to the past, it produces a reality out of the traces of this past. The past, however, is not available in an unproblematic way for inspection and analysis. It is constantly reworked and resignified in a historical present. The cinema, then, brings the public into an imaginary relation to its present by making the now invisible past visible: that is, by constructing a way of seeing. This relationship between seeing and its grounding in representation is an ideological practice. As such, the cinema partakes of power struggles, it contributes to a definition of the place where changes in the perception of the past operate, and it possibly contests these changes. Reitz's propaganda company commander is right in his understanding of the image's power over that of the eye. Yet he would be wrong to assume that his project of shooting the war ends after the partisans have been shot. For, despite the strong tendency to regard the camera as a window on reality and the visible as true, there is more in the cinematic images than meets the eye. As we have seen, war images construct themselves both within filmic texts and in social contexts by working on the imaginary relation of the spectator to the real. By this measure, verisimilitude and mimesis are not the primary indicators for validity or knowledge about war, but rather the

coherency of a specific imaginary construct in the filmic text. For that reason, war imagery in the German cinema offers a privileged field of study for society's discourse about itself.

Notes

- 1 "Our achievement is to impress war events on peoples' souls with more force than the power of their own eyes is capable . . ." Cf. Edgar Reitz and Peter Steinbach, *Heimat: Eine deutsche Chronik* (Nördlingen, 1985), 279. Anton Kaes discusses this episode in the context of the television series' more general concern with the history of media technology. Cf. his *Deutschlandbilder: Die Wiederkehr der Geschichte als Film* (Munich, 1987), 192-93 (the English translation is *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge/London, 1989), 181.
- 2 There are many general studies on war in the cinema, most of them historical catalogues containing plot summaries of films treating war. The majority concern German films only tangentially, if at all, but are mentioned here nonetheless to indicate the breadth of interest in the topic. A very general but not too exacting introduction is provided by Manuela Gheorghiu-Cernat, *Arms and the Film* (Bucharest, 1983), trans. Florin Ionescu and Ecaterina Grundbock. A better researched but outdated volume is Lino Lionello Ghirardini, *Il cinema e la guerra* (Parma, 1965). Norman Kagan, *The War Film* (New York, 1974) is intended as a popular survey. On war films about World War I, sometimes with reference to the German situation, cf. Kevin Brownlow, *The War, the West and the Wilderness* (New York, 1978), 3-219; Michael T. Isenberg, *War on Film: The American Cinema and World War I, 1914-1941* (Rutherford/Madison/Teaneck, 1981); Craig W. Campbell, *Reel America and World War I: A Comprehensive Filmography and History of Motion Pictures in the United States, 1914-1920* (Jefferson/London, 1985); and Larry Wayne Ward, *The Motion Picture Goes to War: The U.S. Government Film Effort during World War I* (Ann Arbor, 1985). On France, cf. Joseph Daniel, *Guerre et cinéma: Grandes illusions et petits soldats 1895-1971* (Paris, 1972) and François Garçon, *De Blum à Pétain: Cinéma et société française (1936-1944)* (Paris, 1984). On England, cf. Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It* (Oxford/New York, 1986). A general presentation of Hollywood films produced during World War II is provided by Roger Manvell, *Films and the Second World War* (Cranbury, N.J., 1974). More specialized studies include Kathryn Kane, *Visions of War: Hollywood Combat Films of World War II* (Ann Arbor, 1982); Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (New York, 1986); Allen L. Woll, *The Hollywood Musical Goes to War* (Chicago, 1983); Bernard F. Dick, *The Star-Spangled Screen: The American World War II Film* (Lexington, 1985); Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York and London, 1987). Two provocative recent studies not exclusively about war films are Dana Polan, *History, Narrative, and the American Cinema, 1940-1950* (New York, 1986) and Michael Renov, *Hollywood's Wartime Woman: Representation and Ideology* (Ann Arbor/London, 1988).
- 3 For a brief survey of the earliest war shorts, cf. Manuela Gheorghiu-Cernat, 57-64.
- 4 Paul Virilio, *Guerre et cinéma I. Logistique de la perception* (Paris, 1984), 22.
- 5 Brownlow, 84. A list of titles for the first Messter-Woche war newsreel can be found in Hilmar Hoffmann, "Und die Fahne führt uns in die Ewigkeit": *Propaganda im NS-Film* (Frankfurt, 1988), 132-33. Siegfried Kracauer relates how Messter staged propaganda films early in the war in which costumed British troops surrendered to victorious Germans! Cf. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, 1947), 23.
- 6 Early features include such titles as *Addressat: Vermißt gemeldet* (Emil Albes, 1914), *Das Vaterland ruft* (Walter Turszinky, 1915), *Der Krieg versöhnt* (Ludwig Trautmann, 1915), the adventure films *Feinde ringsum* (1914) and *Der Spion* (Heinz Karl Heiland, 1916), and documentaries such as *Deutsche Frauen* (1914), *War Scenes from Germany* (1915), *Germany and Its Armies of Today*,

- (1916), and *War on Three Fronts* (1917), the last three distributed in the United States. Cf. Gheorghiu-Cernat, 87–88 and Craig W. Campbell, 56. Most of the film material shot during the war, having found its way into the Reichsfilmarchiv established during the Weimar Republic, was lost during bombing raids at the end of World War II. For details, cf. Hans Barkhausen, *Filmpropaganda für Deutschland im Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hildesheim/Zurich/New York, 1982) esp. 5.
- 7 For the complicated background to the intrigues and politics in the establishment of BUFA and Ufa, cf. Barkhausen.
 - 8 Barkhausen, 110f.
 - 9 The most famous pacifist film of the 1930s is Lewis Milestone's 1930 *All Quiet on the Western Front* (an adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's 1928 novel). Others include Anthony Asquith's *Tell England* (1931), Howard Hawks's *Road to Glory* (1936), James Whale's *The Road Back* (1937, also based on a Remarque story), and Jean Renoir's *La grande illusion* (1937).
 - 10 Cf. Kracauer, 234 and, for a more recent critique, *Deutsche Spielfilme von den Anfängen bis 1933: Ein Filmführer*, ed. Günther Dahlke and Günter Karl (Berlin, 1988), 222.
 - 11 On *Stoßtrupp* 1917, cf. Francis Courtade and Pierre Cadars, *Geschichte des Films im Dritten Reich*, trans. Florian Hopf (Munich/Vienna, 1975), 120–22.
 - 12 On military documentaries of the 1930s, cf. Hoffmann.
 - 13 The central sources for the administrative and economic history of the film industry in the Third Reich are Wolfgang Becker, *Film und Herrschaft: Organisationsprinzipien und Organisationsstrukturen der nationalsozialistischen Filmpropaganda* (Berlin, 1973) and its companion volume by Jürgen Spiker, *Film und Kapital: Der Weg der deutschen Filmwirtschaft zum nationalsozialistischen Einheitskonzern* (Berlin, 1975), esp. Part B. Other important sources include Courtade and Cadars, 7–37; Klaus-Jürgen Maiwald, *Filmzensur im NS-Staat* (Dortmund, 1983); and Boguslav Drewniak, *Der deutsche Film 1938–1945* (Düsseldorf, 1987). Important collections of documents include Joseph Wulf, *Theater und Film im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation* (Gütersloh, 1964) and *Der Film im 3. Reich: Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Gerd Albrecht (Karlsruhe, 1979). English treatments of this material can be found in M. S. Phillips, "The Nazi Control of the German Film Industry," *Journal of European Studies* 1.1 (March 1971): 37–68; Julian Petley, *Capital and Culture: German Cinema 1933–45* (London, 1979), 47–94; and David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema 1933–1945* (Oxford, 1983), part I.
 - 14 Kracauer's lengthy essay on Nazi propaganda films includes several sequence analyses of Hippler's and Bertram's documentary features. Cf. "Supplement: Propaganda and the Nazi War Film," in Kracauer, 275–331. (Note: Kracauer refers to Hippler's film as *Feuertaufe*.) For further details, cf. also Hoffmann, 205–16.
 - 15 The most comprehensive categorization was undertaken by Gerd Albrecht, *Nationalsozialistische Filmpolitik: Eine soziologische Untersuchung über die Spielfilme des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart, 1969).
 - 16 For general background on the Allied occupation policies and their implementation, cf. Walter Laqueur, *Germany Today: A Personal Report* (Boston, 1984); Alfred Grosser, *Deutschland Bilanz: Geschichte Deutschlands seit 1945* (Munich, 4th ed., 1972); and Bernt Engelmann, *Wir hab'n ja den Kopf noch fest auf dem Hals: Die Deutschen zwischen Stunde Null und Wirtschaftswunder* (Cologne, 1987). On the situation in the cinema sector in general, cf. Peter Pleyer, *Deutscher Nachkriegsfilm 1946–1948* (Münster, 1965); for the Soviet Occupied Zone, cf. *Auf neuen Wegen: 5 Jahre fortschrittlichen deutschen Films* (Berlin, 1951); "Der DEFA-Spielfilm nach der Zerschlagung Hitlerdeutschlands von 1946–1949," in *Zwanzig Jahre DEFA-Spielfilm*, ed. Heinz Baumert and Hermann Herlinghaus (Berlin, 1968); and Albert Wilkening, *Geschichte der DEFA von 1945–1950* (Potsdam, 1981). For a brief account in English, cf. Mira Liehm and Antonin Liehm, *The Most Important Art: East European Film after 1945* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1977), 76–83. The latter is based on Heinz Kersten's report published under the title *Das Filmwesen in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands* (Bonn/Berlin, 1963). On the hardheaded policies of the American film industry concerning distribution of its films for profit in postwar Germany, cf. Thomas H. Guback, *The Internal Film Industry: Western Europe and America since 1945* (Bloomington/London, 1969), 128–31.
 - 17 For a presentation of the director Konrad Wolf, cf. my forthcoming article in *New German Critique*, "Remembering History: The Filmmaker Konrad Wolf." Other cinematic conversion narratives include *Betrogen bis zum jüngsten Tag* (Kurt Jung-Alsen, 1956, adapted from Franz

- Fühmann's novella "Kameraden"), *Sie nannten ihn Amigo* (Heiner Carow, 1959), *Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt* (Joachim Kunert, 1964, based on Dieter Noll's novel), and Egon Günther's adaptation of Johannes R. Becher's World War I autobiographical novel *Abschied* (1968). Adaptation of literary texts is particularly characteristic for the antifascist war films from the GDR, which is undoubtedly related to the high regard in which this literature was held there. For a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses in the GDR's antifascist literature, cf. my article "Writing What—for Whom? 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' in GDR Literature," *German Studies Review* 10 (1987): 527–38.
- 18 Cf. Klaus Kreimeier, "Remilitarisierung," in *Kino und Filmindustrie in der BRD: Ideologieproduktion und Klassenwirklichkeit nach 1945* (Kronberg, 1973), 108–29 and Wilfried von Bredow, "Filmpropaganda für Wehrbereitschaft: Kriegsfilm in der Bundesrepublik," in *Film und Gesellschaft in Deutschland: Dokumente und Materialien*, ed. Wilfried von Bredow and Rolf Zurek (Hamburg, 1975), 316–26.
 - 19 One of the first such films was Zoltan Korda's 1939 British war film *Four Feathers*, which played in Germany for the first time in 1950. American features followed quickly, including such popular ones as *The Halls of Montezuma* (Lewis Milestone, 1951, under the German title *Okinawa*), *From Here to Eternity* (Fred Zinnemann, 1953, under the German title *Verdammt in alle Ewigkeit*), and *The Caine Mutiny* (Edward Dmytryk, 1954, under the German title, *Die Caine war ihr Schicksal*). Stories about the Pacific War (Allan Dwan's 1949 *The Sands of Iwo Jima*, released in 1952 under the German title *Todeskommando*) and even about the Korean War (Marc Robson's 1954 *The Bridges of Toko-Ri*) also belong among these foreign imports. On the role of American war films distributed in West Germany during the early 1950s, cf. Walther Schmieding, *Kunst oder Kasse: Der Ärger mit dem deutschen Film* (Hamburg, 1961), 35–54; Kreimeier, 113–16; and Manfred Barthel, *So war es wirklich: Der deutsche Nachkriegsfilm* (Munich/Berlin, 1986), 204–06. For a catalogue of war films projected in West Germany, cf. *30 Jahre danach: Auseinandersetzung mit Nationalsozialismus im Film 1945 bis 1975*, ed. Heiko R. Blum and Ulrich Zetter (Cologne, 1975).
 - 20 They include Geza von Bolvary's *Fritz und Friederike* (1952), Johannes Alexander Hübler-Kahle's *Mikosch rückt ein* (1952), and Georg Jacoby's later *Drei Tage Mittelarrest* (1955).
 - 21 These documentary compilation films include *Beiderseits der Rollbahn* (Jonas and Stegemann, 1952), *Das war unser Rommel* (Wiganko, 1953), *Bis fünf Minuten nach zwölf* (Gerhard Grindel, 1953), and *So war der deutsche Landser* (Albert Baumeister, 1955).
 - 22 Reinhold E. Thiel presents in brief format a more complex typology in "Acht Typen des Kriegsfilms," *Filmkritik* 11 (1961): 514–19.
 - 23 Gerhard Bliersbach gives a convincing psychoanalytic reading of an earlier Wisbar war film in "Ödipus im Seekrieg: 'Haie und kleine Fische,'" in his *So grün war die Heide: Der deutsche Nachkriegsfilm in neuer Sicht* (Weinheim/Basel, 1985), 87–95.
 - 24 On the beginnings of the Young German Film and the Oberhausen Manifesto, cf. Krischan Koch, *Die Bedeutung des "Oberhausener Manifestes" für die Filmentwicklung in der BRD* (Frankfurt/Bern/New York, 1985); Jan Dawson, "A Labyrinth of Subsidies: The Origins of New German Cinema," *Sight & Sound* 50/51 (Winter 1980/81): 14–20; and Eric Rentschler, "Critical Junctions since Oberhausen: West German Film in the Course of Time," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 2 (Spring 1980): 141–56. For the most up-to-date general overview of the New German Cinema's development, cf. Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Brunswick, 1989).
 - 25 For more detailed analyses of the recent German past in New German films, cf. Hans Günther Pflaum, *Deutschland im Film: Themenschwerpunkte des Spielfilms in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Munich, 1985), espec. 63–85, and Kaes' close readings of five paradigmatic films in *Deutschlandbilder* and *From Hitler to Heimat*, respectively.

Women's Literary Production in the Two World Wars

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In our analysis of women's literary production in the two World Wars, we will focus specifically on the relationship between feminist ideologies, women's changing role in the public sphere, and the demands placed on women by the state. The current association of feminism with pacifism does not hold true for women's writing during these wars, the vast majority of which was strongly affirmative. Because of its envelopment in its time, affirmative literature tends to lose its impact on readers and is quickly forgotten as the conditions which produced it change. The following study will reassess this literature in order to analyze the interaction of ideologies with history across a broad spectrum of writings. Our primary focus on affirmative literature necessitates an archeological methodology: we have focused on literature written in Germany, and have included several little-known writers in an attempt to investigate the ideology of the time. We conceive of this project as an introduction to an as yet relatively under-researched field.

Although feminist studies have been actively engaged in unearthing the writings of women who have been excluded from the traditional canon, the writings of women during the important war eras have been neglected, possibly because so much of women's literary production at that time was nationalistic, imperialistic, and strongly entrenched in traditional gender roles. This literature offers little to those feminists who claim a separate sphere, unsullied by the values of "male" culture. Yet it is precisely this aspect which ought to lend this literature its interest and its relevance to feminist research. By focusing on affirmative literature and its interaction with the milieu which helped shape it, we hope to explore the hidden narrative of women's literature—hidden, that is, by traditional androcentric approaches to literary history—in a manner which expands, enriches, and deepens the historical understanding of women's literary tradition.

We have divided our study into three major sections. The first is a historical overview of the women's movements and women's role in the public sphere up to World War I. This is necessary not only for understanding women writers' response during the war, but also for analyzing the extent to which the opening of the public sphere for women on some levels was accompanied by closure at other levels. The second section addresses the changed character of women's participation in the public sphere during World War I and the effect that this opening of the public sphere had on literature written by women. The third section,

treating World War II, will analyze the ways in which the official ideological closure of the public sphere affected women's literary production.

I

Both the bourgeois and the socialist women's movements active during World War I grew out of the sociopolitical developments of the 19th century. The industrial revolution in Germany shaped and separated two classes of women, each with its own special concerns. The rapid development of industry drew large numbers of women into the industrial work force, thereby creating a new social stratum: proletarian women. At the same time, technological developments freed bourgeois women from some of their household tasks, allowing them to focus more intently on their concerns in the public sphere.

The Bund deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF) was founded in 1894 as an umbrella organization in response to the lack of centrality in the Allgemeiner deutscher Frauenbund (ADF). The ADF was a development of the 1848 revolution but, under the guidance of president Luise Otto-Peters, had pursued a lukewarm practical agenda which had not inspired organizations at the local level to join. From its inception, the BDF was designed as a loose association for all women's organizations oriented toward the "common good" (*Gemeinnutz*). It was a full four years before the BDF adopted a resolution stating that this organization supported the economic, legal, spiritual, and physical advancement of women. The conscious decision not to impose a well-defined political agenda on its member organizations enabled rival organizations to unit under one banner. While this provided the advantage of unity, it also resulted in internal struggles for control.¹

In the pre-World War I era, the BDF went through two phases: increasing radicalization until 1908, followed by a pendulum swing to the right. Minna Cauer, Anita Augspurg, and Lida Gustava Heymann were part of a small, vocal, politically-active minority within the organization. Although the BDF as a whole had joined the Internationaler Frauenbund in 1897, national issues were always of primary concern. The radicals, on the other hand, through their international connections with the more progressive movements in England and the United States, brought the BDF to examine radical ideas such as democratic suffrage for both sexes, the deregulation of prostitution, the relaxation of moral codes, pacifism, and cooperation between all women regardless of class and national affiliations. These ideas seemed radical indeed to a movement which for so long had concentrated primarily on education and social work. The radicals' influence on the BDF prompted a counteroffensive on the part of the moderate and right wings of the BDF which resulted in the ouster of the radicals in 1910. At this point, Gertrud Bäumer assumed the presidency. Under Bäumer, the BDF allied itself increasingly with the right in order to maintain unity and prevent the withdrawal of such large member organizations as the Deutsch-Evangelischer Frauenbund. Such attention to membership allowed the BDF to grow from a relatively small organiza-

tion with 70,000 members in 1901 to a lobbying force of 250,000 women by 1914.² This was the political configuration of the bourgeois women's movement at the outbreak of World War I.

Just as the bourgeois women's movement arose from the industrial revolution, so, too, did the socialist women's movement. As increasing numbers of women were drawn into the industrial work force, it became imperative to address the needs of this new social force. Without funds for higher education or time to devote to social work, these women's concerns did not match those of the bourgeois women's movement. Indeed, where bourgeois feminist theory located the "Frauenfrage"—the question of women's emancipation—within prevailing capitalist structures, thereby stressing the need for reform, socialist feminist theory took its cue from the work of August Bebel and Friedrich Engels and analyzed woman's oppression as a by-product of capitalist relations of production, thereby stressing revolution. In *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879), Bebel analyzed the double character of women's oppression as both "gender-slavery" (*Geschlechtssklaverei*) and "wage-slavery" (*Lohnsklaverei*), and called for women's independent struggle within socialist principles. For Bebel, as for Engels, women's emancipation could be achieved only with the overthrow of capitalism; or, to use the terminology of the time, the resolution of the *Frauenfrage* was dependent on the resolution of the *soziale Frage* ("social question").³

Up to the turn of the century, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) was the only party to address the concerns of proletarian women. As of 1890, women were admitted to the party. The first Union Congress resolved to recruit both sexes within the union movement, and the Erfurt Platform of 1891 called for full political equality for women, as well as for female suffrage. However, proletarian antifeminism, in combination with women's different situation within the party and the work force, brought about the need for the formation of a special women's organization which would function in concert with the SPD. In 1891, *Die Arbeiterin*, a newspaper for women, was founded; in 1892, it was renamed *Die Gleichheit* and put under the control of Clara Zetkin.⁴

From the 1890s to 1908, Zetkin was the prime mover in socialist feminism. Her views on the *Frauenfrage* shifted from a purely economic focus, which subsumed women's issues under class revolution, to a focus which included a demand for civil rights within the capitalist system—as long as it still existed. She incorporated some of the liberal goals of the bourgeois women's movement (while maintaining a sharp separation between it and the socialist women's movement) in the realization that proletarian women would need some of these civil gains if they were to be viable fighters in the revolution. As radical feminists in the bourgeois movement began to make many of the same demands for reform which Zetkin had incorporated into the socialist-feminist program, and as the SPD leadership itself began to drift toward conciliatory rather than revolutionary politics, Zetkin agitated increasingly for a purely radical socialist women's movement.

Other socialist feminists such as Lily Braun advocated more cooperation with

bourgeois feminists, especially with the radicals who began to shape that movement around the turn of the century. Yet, until shortly before World War I, their voices were little heard. Under the guidance of Clara Zetkin, the socialist women's movement had achieved a unity of a different sort than that of the bourgeois BDF. Whereas the BDF had been primarily concerned with compromising its viewpoint in order to attract the largest number of member organizations, the socialist women's movement under Zetkin was primarily concerned with unifying its members around an uncompromising agenda. Although Zetkin's agenda was not always representative of mass sentiment, organizing drives by the SPD met with great success: in 1901, only 30,000 women were party members; by 1914, however, their ranks had grown to 320,000.⁵ This was 70,000 more women than belonged to the BDF. Zetkin's radical agenda and the SPD's rapidly growing female membership represent the political configuration of the socialist women's movement on the eve of World War I.

The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 would drastically change this situation in the socialist party. Although pledged in theory to international solidarity with all proletarians around the world, the majority of the party quickly gave up its internationalism with the outbreak of the war. The SPD, the majority party in the Reichstag, approved the war loans, thereby shocking the party radicals—including Clara Zetkin. Prominent radical socialist women such as Zetkin, Luise Zietz, and Käthe Duncker were jailed, barred from publicly expressing their opinions, harassed, and censored by the authorities. The socialist women's movement remained international during the early stages of the war, but this was due only to the agitation of these few prominent radical-socialist women. The *Burgfrieden*, the call to all Germans to place their common nationality above any social differences in a united front against the external enemies, had strengthened the role of the reformists within the party. The Reichskonferenz der Opposition, called by the reformists of the SPD on 1 January 1917 to enable them to seize all power within the party, would formalize the party's divided stance into an official split. The party split into three wings: the MSPD, the Sozialistische Arbeitergemeinschaft (later, the USPD), and the Gruppe Internationale or Spartakusbund (later, the KPD).

Long before they officially came to power, the reformist socialist women's agenda differed very little from the bourgeois agenda. In 1916, most unions had already canceled their subscriptions to Zetkin's radical *Die Gleichheit* and replaced them with the reformist *Sozialistische Monatshefte*. Rather than attempting to analyze the war, improve the situation of working women, or even promote female suffrage, the reformists and their publications reproached any woman who was not working in the service of the fatherland. The women's movement addressed suffrage only marginally (despite its prominence as a much-discussed national issue) and concentrated on the "feminine" domains of family and social work reform instead. Although the unions offered symbolic protest against the repeal of hard-won protection laws for working women, their efforts were not successful,

and, represented by the MSPD, proletarian women experienced losses rather than political gains. This decline in an already difficult situation led to uprisings by women and children throughout the war; however, without a large organization behind them, these protests also failed. Thus both the bourgeois and the socialist women's movements excluded the radicals in their ranks. Combined with the nationalistic sentiment of both movements, this created a surprisingly monolithic, conservative view of women's ideal public role in the war by the very groups who claimed to represent women's most progressive emancipatory demands. The conservative configuration of both the bourgeois and the socialist women's movements is crucial to an understanding of women's opportunities in the changed public sphere, including the literary sphere, of wartime Germany.

The outbreak of war forces radical changes in the public sphere. Resources, both human and industrial, must be drastically reallocated. Industry must shift from peacetime production of consumer goods to the manufacturing of war materials. Men leave their jobs and their families in service to their nation, and it is left to women to fill the void in the public sphere—also in service to their nation. Hence, when the state scrambled to form a war front, women shouldered a good portion of the responsibilities of the home front. Yet it is already evident in the terminology of "war front" and "home front" that the mobilization of women (especially bourgeois women) out of the home and into the public sphere, while creating opportunities and responsibilities previously denied to women, simultaneously perpetuated sexual stereotypes. When women moved to fill the spaces newly opened to them in the public sphere, the status and authority which had been accorded to the men in those positions during peace time had already been shifted from the "home front" to the "war front."

In the initial phase of women's mobilization, the bourgeois women's movement drew upon its tradition of social work as women's rightful place in the public sphere, relieving the state of this function. Under Gertrud Bäumer and Hedwig Heyl, the BDF established the Nationaler Frauendienst in August 1914. Working in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior in Berlin, this organization established the pattern of social work which would dominate feminist activities during the war. Moderates controlling the BDF hoped in this manner to *earn* citizenship (and the vote), in the belief that women had not yet shown themselves worthy of this privilege. Proletarian women, on the other hand, who did not have the leisure or the financial security to serve their nation with volunteer work, endured terrible financial hardships. The reallocation of industry's resources often required temporary shutdowns, leaving many working women unemployed. As late as 1916, as many as 10 percent of proletarian women were jobless.⁶ Those women who were employed were not much better off: throughout the war (as before and after), women earned between 44 and 48 percent of men's "family wage," regardless of whether they were the sole wage earner in their families.⁷ Furthermore, the hard-won protection laws for employed women were repealed in 1916 to increase war-time productivity. The prevalent conception that

war opened the job market to women to whom it had previously been closed—that is to say: to bourgeois women—is also false. In 1916, the BDF and the state cooperated in forming the *Frauenarbeitzentrale* in an attempt at mobilizing as many women as possible in the reorganized economy. Its organizational effort was aimed primarily at students and housewives, but met with little success. Some students volunteered to work during vacations only; few housewives responded to the drive. Most bourgeois women were simply not interested in access to jobs in manufacturing.

We have tried to illustrate that women's economic opportunities in the public sphere during wartime were not as advantageous as popular perceptions of history lead some to believe. One can detect from the above analysis a pattern of openings of the public sphere which are inextricably intertwined with their own closures: the radical impulses in the women's movements were shut down in response to growing nationalism and the resultant war; socioeconomic opportunities were exploitative and short-lived.

II

... war must be understood as a gendering activity, one that ritually marks the gender of all members of a society, whether or not they are combatants. The implications of war for women and men are, then, linked in symbolic as well as social and economic systems. During total war, the discourse of militarism, with its stress on "masculine" qualities, permeates the whole fabric of society, touching both women and men. In doing so, it draws upon preexisting definitions of gender at the same time that it restructures gender relations.⁸

With the outbreak of the war and the creation of the *Nationaler Frauendienst*, the BDF became not only a clearinghouse for the organization of social work, but also a propaganda organ for the state. Women's voice was functionalized in the public sphere in a way that had always been denied to women: as an important organ for shaping social relations. Women quickly began writing war-oriented literature across all traditional genre distinctions. These writings focused intensely on the meaning of the war for German society and on the roles each German—male and female—was to play within the war effort. Yet, at the same time that women's literary production became an important and officially-valued tool in shaping social consciousness, their writings were subject to the kind of ideological closure prevalent in the public sphere.

If one considers that the goal of the bourgeois women's movement was integration into the existing society, it is not surprising to see a vehement insistence on the state definition of women's war-time role in their literature. In closing ranks against the foreign enemy, the "German Woman" had achieved new social importance. As caregiver, mother, lover, and worker, the "German Woman" represented the symbolic continuity of the social fabric. Gender roles were re-

valued but not reevaluated. The paradigm of male dominance and female submission remained intact, yet women's increased importance within the public sphere during wartime served at once to exalt and redefine women's role.

Within women's literary production, the responses to the restructuring process of World War I can be divided up into various groups, the largest of which was the literature affirming this process. This affirmative literature is further separated into two categories: literature with a propagandistic/appellative tone, and literature which reeducates the *Volk*. A second grouping encompasses those writings in which, as a result of biographical or ideological influences on the writer which predate the war, a certain tension exists that results in the undermining of the author's affirmative potential. The final group is comprised of women who, as a result of previous convictions, adopt an oppositional stance to the war and its new identities.

Affirmative literature revolves around the homogenization of gender and national identities to a clearly identifiable and ethically superior unity in the face of the foreign threat; there is a strong censure and denial of differences among women, differences among men, and non-gender-based differences among Germans. Generally, this revaluing of preexisting gender roles addresses the war directly and is aimed at redrawing the demarcation lines between differently gendered and nationalized subjects. The claim of universal homogeneity is, for example, clearly evident in the very title of Gertrud Bäumer's 1914 essay "Wir Frauen," which appeals to German women to join the war effort of the BDF.⁹ Certain fictional works also manifest this appellative character, with its emphasis on formation of the uniform, unambiguous categories "German Woman" and "German Man." Some works of this type were not organized (as literature conventionally is) around an author, but rather around this gendered theme. A collaborative effort by Helene Christaller, Agnes Harder, Sophie von Sell, and Auguste Supper is tellingly titled: *Stille Opfer: Den deutschen Frauen und Jungfrauen in großer Zeit*.¹⁰ This collection of short stories centers around the glory of women's sacrifices during wartime, constructing not only a performative definition of "German Woman," but a comparative definition as well, especially insofar as women are repeatedly defined in contrast to men, and "German Woman" is unambiguously differentiated from women of other nations.

Another aspect of this appellative pro-war literature is its explicit treatment of the war as reeducation from any number of false paths such as materialism, intellectualism, aestheticism, selfish love, idealism, and pacifism to the correct doctrine of nationalism. Friede Kraze's *Erfüllungen: Ein Stück von heut für morgen*¹¹ battles both materialism and intellectualism. The family Stahl, wealthy and content, considers its home to be the "Haus der Erfüllung" until their son, soldier Rainer Stahl, convinces his reticent father of the greater fulfillment in fighting and dying for the German *Volk*. Father Stahl is initially blinded by materialism, but Rainer's mortal injury in battle completes the reeducation: as

he lies dying, the father proclaims: "Ich lerne um. Ich lerne um." As the national anthem is sung and a red flag is burned, Rainer dies, "hell jubelnd," screaming: "Erfüllungen, Vater, Erfüllungen!"¹²

Thea von Harbou's war novellas provide an example of the combination of exaggerated gender stereotypes, reeducation, and nationalism. In the foreword to *Der Krieg und die Frauen*,¹³ she argues that philosophers and idealists are mistaken if they believe that humanity is beyond war. The novella *Drei Tage Frist* is the literary counterpart to this foreword, setting up both a calculated contrast between the philosophical-pacifist belief in humanity and the belief in fatherland and *Volk* and the awakening of a woman to the value of "German womanhood." Brigitte, cool and calm to a fault because of the intellectualism and philosophical idealism inherited from her father, is incapable of love, hate, or of comprehending her officer husband's deep-seated devotion to the German *Volk*. Her reeducation is achieved by an immersion in the war enthusiasm of the masses. Her new-found inspiration takes on a sexual dimension: cheeks flushed and eyes sparkling from a budding passion for *Volk* and husband, she refutes her father's belief in philosophy and humanity, declaring that *Volk*, and not humanity, is what counts.

Lily Braun's appellative 1915 essay, "Die Frauen und der Krieg," also serves as a paradigmatic example of wholly affirmative literature which relies on this re-delineation of gender and nationality as a purification and conversion process for German society. Although for most of her life Braun was a committed socialist-feminist, this commitment had turned to renunciation and bitterness by 1914. Her earlier confidence in social movements is transformed to a glorification of the purification power of war as a force greater than civilization. Braun applauds the war as a homogenizing agent which eliminates decadent gender ambiguities. She states:

Der Krieg vernichtete fast mit einem Schlage bei den dt. Männern all jene Effeminisierungserscheinungen. . . . Die im gleichen grauen Rock über die Grenze zogen, waren wieder Männer, nichts als Männer, von dem einen ursprünglichen, primitiven Geschlechtsgefühl durchglutet und zusammengehalten: Schützen—die Scholle verteidigen—kämpfen.

Und mit dem gleichen Schlage zerstörte der Krieg die männischen . . . Gelüste und Ehrfürchte der Frauen, ihren sentimentalenen Pazifismus, ihren törichten Traum von der Schwesterschaft aller Menschen weiblichen Geschlechts.¹⁴

Braun's renunciation of women's internationalism and pacificism is clear: purity and "progress" come only with strictly genderized German militarism. The powerful correction for social degeneracy (or better: de-gender-acy) provided by nationalism and war will, in her opinion, allow a new generation of leaders to be born, phoenix-like, from the ashes of war's destruction. This would prove to be a sadly prophetic vision, the culmination of which Braun could hardly have foreseen.

A second category of women's literary production is comprised of works which were informed by traditions such as Christian morality (traditionally a

feminine domain) and bourgeois humanism, along with nationalism. The addition of these traditions to pro-war literature proved difficult to reconcile. Ideological tensions developed between militaristic nationalism and Christian doctrine, or between humanism, with its value-laden ethical structure, and the undifferentiated death of the Great War. Helene Christaller's 1918 novel, *Fürchte dich nicht*,¹⁵ for example, although clearly aspiring to unreserved national affirmation, does not, and cannot, convincingly achieve this end because of its religious element and insistence on humanism. A young bourgeois girl, forced to work in a munitions factory to support her family after her father's death at the front, reaches within the course of the novel an irreconcilable state of conflict between her role in the production of death weapons and the religious and humanistic imperative to respect human life. The resolution offered by Christaller is the love of the protagonist for an angelic blind girl. This earthly—and, incidentally, strongly sexual—love symbolizes her love for God and her faith in His will. The protagonist's submission to God through love, rather than through Christian doctrine, may clear her conscience; nonetheless, the text's depiction of lesbianism as the conduit to religious purity and ideological reconciliation transgresses the borders of those very ideologies it means to reconcile.

Unable to overcome their experience in German society, a few authors remained skeptical of the nation's ideological reevaluation of "German Woman." This experiential basis led some women, such as Franziska Gräfin zu Reventlow, to doubt the possibility of integration into German society on terms which would be acceptable to them. Franziska Gräfin zu Reventlow is perhaps a paradigmatic example of a woman whose biography prevented her from greeting the new nation with applause. A woman fallen from her class, worshiped as sexual earth mother by, among others, Stefan George and Ludwig Klages, an impoverished mother of an illegitimate child, writer and translator, she approached the war in a manner radically different from that of her bourgeois contemporaries. In a collection of stories published in 1917 entitled *Das Logierhaus zur schwankenden Weltkugel und andere Novellen*,¹⁶ only the story "Wir Spionen" mentions the war directly—and yet, throughout all the novellas, there runs a similar theme: namely, the creation or destruction of collective identities, which can only be understood in light of the context of war and the clear national and sexual definition of identity which it demanded. In all the stories, heterogeneous individuals are forced together by circumstances beyond their control and then, in their group formations, are confronted with a homogenizing identity. In "Wir Spionen," the group retains its heterogeneity at the price of greater social acceptance. Their desire to retain their internationalism is fulfilled only at the cost of social censure, but their desire remains primary nonetheless.

Some women, of course, did write purely oppositional literature inspired by their ideological convictions. Although relatively few women were able to achieve this, their texts are among the more remarkable from the World War I era. Writing in a state of conflict, their works reveal a greater complexity than that of affir-

mative literature. They approach the discourse of the period through various rhetorical strategies. Hedwig Dohm, one of the better-known female authors of German literature, was led by her long-standing Christian convictions to be very critical of the war and its national divisions. She saw the war as contrary to the internationalism and ethics which she had valued throughout her life. Dohm's solitary publication during World War I, entitled *Der Mißbrauch des Todes*, and subtitled *Senile Impressionen*, is a strongly pacifist indictment of the war, predicated on a belief in human progress, in enlightenment, and in a Christian telos. Using clever rhetorical strategies to lend her text credence in its repudiation of both national and militaristic ideologies, Dohm structures her text firmly within the accepted gender paradigm. Her critique is framed as an epistolary exchange between a young, foolish female student, whose purely emotional conflict with the war is about to drive her to hysteria, and a rational, well-educated male instructor. In this way, Dohm attempts to overcome the disadvantage of female authorship by infusing her pen with male authority, objectivity, and learning. The main body of the text, devoted to the master's response to his pupil, attacks war for its degradation of humanity on individualistic, historical, and religious grounds. Dohm combines all of these elements to call, not for a revolution of society, but for a "Revolutionierung der Geister,"¹⁷ a revolutionization of the spirit and intellect.

In contrast to Dohm, Clara Zetkin was never content to call merely for a spiritual revolution. Through the course of the war, Zetkin was exposed to great obstacles which severely limited her voice. Unwilling to give in to what she viewed as an imperialistic war run solely for the benefit of the bourgeoisie, she called an international antiwar conference in Berne without the permission of the party. This breach of the *Burgfrieden*, combined with her role in authoring and distributing the antiwar "Bernese Manifesto," resulted in her arrest in Germany. Zetkin was removed from power at *Die Gleichheit* in June 1917, and the socialist women's movement was then officially headed by the reformist Marie Juchacz. In November 1914, Clara Zetkin had published "To the Socialist Women of all Countries," an article whose style, content, and history characterize the works of this woman during wartime. Originally published in the *Berner Tagewacht* in order to reach a wider international audience, Zetkin had tried to publish it in *Die Gleichheit*, but it, like so much of what she wrote during this period, was censored. Although she addresses this open letter to "Comrades! Sisters!" there is no hint of the essentialist definition of women found in someone like Bäumer. Zetkin implores: "From everywhere we stretch our sisterly hands across streams of blood and piles of ruins, united in the old realization and the unshakable determination: we must break through to Socialism."¹⁸ She recognizes that women "have only limited political rights . . . but are not without social power." And she calls on them to use their power with "family and friends," as well as on the "broad public," to use all "means of oratory and writing" against the "roaring

chauvinistic stream." She ends, as she did in other articles, by calling upon all socialists to wage war against the war.

While oppositional voices did exist during World War I, they were by and large marginalized within the literary sphere. Proletarian women remained without resources or time to write, functioning in the public sphere as a mere work force. Leftist socialist-feminists or pacifists such as Zetkin and Dohm had little influence against the majority opinion. The bourgeois women's movement remained affirmative throughout the war. This affirmative stance characterizes the majority of women's literary production during World War I as well. It reflects the fact that, even as the bourgeois women's role became more prominent within the public sphere, it became increasingly insulated within traditional categories and boundaries as the factors of continuity, integration, and closure came into play in an intensified fashion during wartime. Women writing affirmative literature drew on prevailing conceptions of women as guardians of the social fabric in their capacity as educators and social workers, glorifying women as tenders of the home front and as servants to the nation and the fighting man. Full integration into society would require that the adoption of gender stereotypes be infused with a new urgency: the "German Woman" was seen as key to winning the battle to keep a strong home front and thus to winning the war. In this way, women's entry into the public sphere was predicated on ideological closure: alternative roles were at odds with the set tasks of women on the home front.

III

Based not only on racist but also on biologicistic sexist precepts, Nazi ideology called for the return of women to their "primary" and "natural" roles as mothers, and for the departure of women from the public spheres of waged labor and politics in which women had increasingly participated during the Weimar Republic. It is not surprising, given the historical context of World War II, that such an ideology, which demanded the full retreat of women from the public sphere, could not be fully and practically implemented simply because war itself simultaneously drains men from the workplace and places increased demands on production.¹⁹

Although Nazi ideology held that men were to be the sole wage earners in the family, their efforts to restrict the wage work of married women was only partially successful. Economic conditions forced many women to work, and employers were reluctant to replace female workers with more costly male counterparts. Although in direct conflict with ideology, practical considerations required a turnabout in Nazi policy: during the war, many women were no longer required to leave the workplace, but were instead mandated to work outside the home and to help in the country's effort toward war-time production. The core of Nazi ideology regarding women—namely, that motherhood was the essence of women-

hood—was instituted in an equally contradictory fashion. Relaxed standards for divorce and the promotion of illegitimate births were not acceptable within the framework of bourgeois morals. In addition, the importance of youth organizations usurped the power of the family, which led to an increase of mothers of older children entering the work force. In general, Nazi policies designed to further their ideology regarding women failed when confronted with the socio-economic realities of their other policies: most women had no more than two children, and there were more women in the work force in 1939 than had been at any time previously.²⁰

National Socialist ideology in Germany on the subject of the role of women clearly intended to exclude women from the public sphere, yet some women vehemently embraced this ideology as their true liberation. Although women were excluded from holding positions in the National Socialist party, within the framework of the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM) and the *NS-Frauenschaft* women such as Elsbeth Zander could have enough latitude of movement to work out Nazi policy on women in regard to specific issues, and to mobilize other women. Until she was deposed in 1933, Zander experienced exactly that which many women considered desirable in Nazi ideology: a feminine “*Lebensraum*,” which promised a sphere of existence apart from the world of the male with all its unrest, competition, and economic and political insecurity.²¹ Unfortunately, women’s independent sphere was only of a highly conditional nature. Those women who, like Zander, exhibited too much independence were often excluded from positions of social power.

It is clear that the ideology of the National Socialist party, which called for the virtual exclusion of women from the public sphere, was only partially implemented under Nazi fascism. Economic conditions, social values, and even other facets of Nazi ideology often came in conflict with the Nazis’ ideals of womanhood. There was no forum for women to set their own agendas, nor was there a forum for organized political resistance. The role of the woman in the private sphere also diminished under National Socialism, despite the emphasis on motherhood because of the growing importance of children in the public-political sphere, as well as the diminished importance of the family in state ideology.

This ideological—if not always practical—expulsion of women from the public sphere marks the greatest change in women’s literary production between the two wars. Whereas women’s voice had taken on new importance in the public sphere with the outbreak of World War I, in World War II women’s voice was devalued. There was a significant drop in the amount of women’s literary production in Germany in World War II as compared to World War I. Furthermore, women’s ideological exclusion from the political realm is evident in their writings. Although women’s literature reflected ideological changes in German society, it no longer manifested the overtly political engagement—affirmative, ambivalent, or critical—characteristic of the World War I writings. Moreover, because the

literary voice is a public voice, many women had difficulty reconciling their roles as women and authors.

Ina Seidel, an especially prolific author whose works span the two wars, dealt at length with this difficulty. She had enjoyed a great amount of success, experiencing constant new printings of her works throughout the Weimar and Nazi eras. In all her works, Seidel experiments with various roles for women. As she internalized more fully the essentialist definition of woman promoted by the Nazis, a conflict arose. It centered on the question of how she might reconcile the passive ideal of woman with her reality as a culturally active and productive woman. A 1941 essay entitled "Frau und Wort" illustrates how Seidel was only tenuously able to negotiate this conflict and create a position from which she as woman could write. In a discussion of the artist's identity, she designates the body as primarily gendered either male or female. The artist's body is an exception to this, and is specially gifted to be able to draw upon its opposite gender: the male body requires the conceptive potential of the female (*weibliche Empfänglichkeit*) as the female body requires the rigid male form (*strenger männlicher Formwille*) in order to give birth to the word. Perhaps fearing that this description may be read as a hermaphroditic identity, Seidel moves quickly away and ends the essay invoking the Goethean *Mütter* as the source of all creative potential.²²

Few women were able to overcome this tension without an already well-developed literary presence. Thea von Harbou, an acclaimed screenwriter and prolific author before the rise of the Nazis, was able to overcome the tension between her gender and her activities in the public sphere, but perhaps only because she supported Nazi politics. The plot of her *Aufblühender Lotos*²³ supports India's struggle against the English colonialists, and for this reason could be read as a critique of the Nazi regime. Yet the novel's operative principle is calculated affirmation. The character of sister Else, a German nurse helping the Indians, is consistently written as the incarnation of German ethical superiority over the English: an English colonialist states that Else supports the Indians because she sees their struggle from a German, not an English, point of view; Else herself constantly identifies callousness toward, and slaughter of, Indians as a specifically English-colonialist form of barbarism and enlists a saying from her homeland to reproach the murderers: "In Germany, we have the saying: The wound of the murdered begins to bleed when the murderer is nearby."²⁴ By attributing brutal repression, racism, and slaughter to the English and contrasting this with a wholly positive German character, Harbou's novel maneuvers within a variant of the "big lie" principle by naming atrocities and at once relativizing their application to Germany in that she imputes them to the English, who are, after all, Germany's enemy in the war.

Most women writers, however, moved away from the overtly political and instead turned to genres and styles which had preceded the Nazi system but were in no way at conflict with it. The women also attempted to reconcile the conflict

between their gender and their literary ambitions by retreating to genres or styles considered more suitable for women, such as children's literature or religious mysticism. Agnes Miegel's *Heimatliteratur*, in portraying the eternal unchanging homeland, promoted both the *Blut-und-Boden* values and the maternal glorification of Nazi ideology. Josefa Berens-Totenohl, whose books are provocatively titled *Einer Sippe Gesicht*²⁵ or *Heimaterde*,²⁶ was not occupied with examining and explaining Nazi ideology but with assuming it as the basis for her *Heimat*-and children's literature.

A third segment of the literary sphere typifies not only women's writing but writing in the Nazi state in general, since authors of both sexes experienced a reduction in their artistic freedom. Whereas during World War I it was possible for women to continue writing about a plethora of subjects unrelated to the war, World War II brought most of these options to a close. During the First World War, authors were actively engaged in the attempt to unearth women's literary traditions. Ida Boy-Ed, for example, wrote a glorifying biography of Charlotte von Stein as the great woman behind the great man,²⁷ and Dora Duncker's *George Sand: Ein Buch der Leidenschaft*²⁸ praised Sand's genius and passion, despite the fact that she was a French woman, and despite the fact that she left her husband and children to pursue her literary talents. In World War II, this search for a female tradition is replaced, as in the case of Ina Seidel's introduction to *Deutsche Frauen*,²⁹ by the search for those women who promoted the feminine imperative of supporting the masculine sphere through their various maternal roles: mother of great men, mother of the nation. In the book *Dienende Herzen*,³⁰ Seidel, working under the guidance of Hans Grosser, edits the letters of women working in the army information service, in order to portray the great serving hearts of so many loyal German women. Gertrud Bäumer takes up this theme of great men and little women in *Eine Woche im Mai*,³¹ a novel focusing on the importance of *Heimat* for Goethe, in which Charlotte von Stein plays a role.

Quite often, women writers turned away from their previous literary interests altogether. Berta Eckstein-Diener, also known as Helen Diner or Sir Galahad, and famous for her turn-of-the-century work *Mothers and Amazons*, turned in World War II to an examination of the cultural history of silk.³² Anna Elisabet Weirauch, a writer who continued to produce and publish throughout the Nazi era, underwent a radical shift in literary themes, which perhaps attests to the ideological force of the homogeneous identity offered to women by the Nazis. In her first novel, *The Scorpion*,³³ she relates the story of a young girl trying to come to terms with her lesbianism. The novel's themes of purpose, belonging, and motherhood are continued in the sequel, *The Outcast*,³⁴ in which the main character resolves all these conflicts by building a house as a space for an alternative family structure. The novel ends as she, still identified as a lesbian, achieves a sense of happiness and belonging within society. In her 1940 novel *The Great Violinist*,³⁵ Weirauch leaves behind all lesbian themes and relates the

tale of a talented young woman who learns to subordinate herself to her husband, the superior violinist, and put aside her career in order to have a baby.

In keeping with Hitler's call in *Mein Kampf* to write the histories of the all-male great German heroes, the historical novel swelled in importance. At the same time, the form of the historical novel also allowed a space from which those authors in inner emigration could write. Authors like Erika Mitterer were able to criticize the Nazi system through the use of historical forms. In her novels *Der Fürst der Welt*³⁶ and *Die Seherin*,³⁷ Mitterer portrays society in a state of decline into barbarism. *Die Seherin*, the story of Cassandra in the fallen city of Troy, illustrates the limitations of such a tactic. Although Cassandra criticizes the war and proclaims desertion and defection in her developing love for Agamemnon, complexity and intricacy of the language and plot undermine any overt critique of the Nazi government. Other Christian humanists such as Gertrud von le Fort also used the historical novel as a forum for suggesting dissent.³⁸

Ricarda Huch is perhaps the clearest example of the complexities of inner emigration. A long-standing opponent of anti-Semitism, she withdrew from the Prussian Academy of the Arts in 1933, citing the mistreatment of Jews, Nazi centralization, and the silencing of dissent as factors in her decision. Because of her prominence, the Nazis courted her throughout their regime, allowing her liberties surely denied to others: she received literary prizes, an honorary doctorate from the University of Jena in 1944, and in the 1930s was able to publish two volumes of her *Deutsche Geschichte*, a work which detailed the fate of Jews in Europe.³⁹ A third volume, however, and other works such as the novel *Der falsche Großvater*, which satirized racist genealogy, were denied publication rights in the 1940s.⁴⁰ Politically moderate-to-conservative, Huch's dissent stemmed from humanist convictions and criticized one-sided nationalism more than nationalism itself. Indeed, at the German Writers' Congress in 1946, she declared her agreement with Luther's "für meine Deutschen bin ich geboren, und ihnen diene ich auch."⁴¹

It is impossible to evaluate women's literary production in Germany during the two World Wars without understanding women's general position in the public sphere at the outset of each war, as well as the effect of war on this position. We have examined the development of the bourgeois and socialist women's movements in relationship to war under the assumption that these organizations represent the most progressive interests of women which were viable in the public sphere. The shift of each movement to the right before and during World War I, as well as the exclusion of the radicals from each movement, illustrates the nationalistic and essentialist views which predominated among both sexes in German society. The advent of each war and the resultant depletion of men from the public sphere of the home front created openings for women which were not available in peacetime. Nonetheless, these openings remained strictly gendered. Rather, traditional gender roles were adjusted to accommodate women's inroads

into the public sphere as an extension of their "feminine" qualities of service and sacrifice. This social and ideological constellation had great impact on women's literary production. Denied the luxury of criticizing a society in which they enjoyed full citizenship, many women, especially bourgeois women, sought integration into the public sphere instead. In the literary sphere, this translated into a predominance of fanatically affirmative literature, with a special emphasis on the revaluation of women's social function at the price of foregoing a re-evaluation of disadvantageous gender stereotypes. Thus, the war-time openings in the public sphere were predicated on their own closure. In this sense, war constituted not a break with the past, but its exaggeration. During World War II, Nazi ideology foreclosed even a war-time entrance of women into the public sphere, except when fundamentally contradicted by the socio-economic necessities of war. Again, this ideological closure is reflected in women's literary production. To be a culturally-productive woman was a contradiction for those women who still sought social integration, but such women were silenced.

Women's literature has often been criticized and/or forgotten because of its "lesser quality," its "triviality." What has generally not been criticized but has certainly been forgotten are the assumptions behind this judgment. The academy tends to value great "representative" works which reflect or criticize their society. Especially provocative are those works whose artistic genius rejects social limitations and transcends everyday life, or mere "journalism," to reach a fuller, deeper, perhaps even timeless insight. Yet the artistic transcendence evidenced by these works is necessarily defined in terms of what it transcends: the ability to take one's social self-evidence for granted. It is precisely this prerequisite for artistic transcendence that women's literature of the two World Wars could not assume, but was still fighting to achieve. If the different conditions of women's literary production are taken into account, even the most rabidly nationalistic affirmative literature cannot be simply condemned and discarded, but must be examined ever more fully for its own hidden narrative.

Notes

- 1 A more detailed discussion of the development of the bourgeois women's movement can be found in Richard J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933* (London, 1976); Ute Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt, 1986); A. Hackett, *The Politics of Feminism in Wilhelmine Germany* (Michigan, 1976) and Florence Herve, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Cologne, 1983).
- 2 Renate Wurms, "Kein einzig Volk von Schwestern: Frauenbewegung 1890-1914," in *Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, 41.
- 3 A more detailed discussion of the socialist women's movement can be found in Richard J. Evans, *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism and Pacifism in Europe 1870-1945* (Sussex, 1987);

- Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*; and Jean H. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917* (Princeton, 1979).
- 4 See Karin Bauer, *Clara Zetkin und die proletarische Frauenbewegung* (Berlin, 1978).
- 5 Wurms, 41.
- 6 Renate Wurms, "'Krieg dem Kriege'—'Dienst am Vaterland': Frauenbewegung im ersten Weltkrieg," in *Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, 85.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 8 Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al., ed., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, 1987), 4.
- 9 Gertrud Bäumer, *Weit hinter den Schützengräben* (Jena, 1916).
- 10 Helene Christaller, Agnes Harder, Sophie von Sell, and Auguste Supper, *Stille Opfer: Den deutschen Frauen und Jungfrauen in großer Zeit* (Hagen, 1915).
- 11 Friede Kraze, *Erfüllungen: Ein Stück von heute für morgen* (Stuttgart, 1915).
- 12 *Ibid.*, 74ff.
- 13 Thea von Harbou, *Der Krieg und die Frauen* (Stuttgart, 1914).
- 14 Lily Braun, "Die Frauen und der Krieg," *Zwischen Krieg und Frieden* 17 (Leipzig, 1915): 11.
- 15 Helene Christaller, *Fürchte dich nicht* (Gotha, 1918).
- 16 Franziska Gräfin zu Reventlow, *Gesammelte Werke in einem Bande* (Munich, 1925).
- 17 Hedwig Dohm, *Der Mißbrauch des Todes: Senile Impressionen* (Berlin, 1915), 22.
- 18 Clara Zetkin, *Selected Writings*, ed. Philip Foner (New York, 1984), 115.
- 19 For a detailed discussion of the contradictions between Nazi ideology concerning women and women's actual situation between 1933 and 1945, see Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, and Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (New York, 1987).
- 20 See Frevert, 210-24.
- 21 See Koonz, 107.
- 22 Ina Seidel, *Frau und Wort* (Stuttgart, 1965), 17.
- 23 Thea von Harbou, *Aufblühender Lotos* (Berlin, 1941).
- 24 See *ibid.*, 167ff.
- 25 Josefa Berens-Totenohl, *Einer Sippe Gesicht* (Jena, 1941).
- 26 Josefa Berens-Totenohl, *Heimaterde* (Jena, 1944).
- 27 Ida Boy-Ed, *Das Martyrium der Charlotte von Stein* (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1918).
- 28 Dora Duncker, *George Sand: Ein Buch der Leidenschaft* (Berlin, 1916).
- 29 Ina Seidel, *Deutsche Frauen: Bildnisse und Lebensbeschreibungen* (Berlin, 1939).
- 30 Ina Seidel and Hans Grosser, *Dienende Herzen: Kriegsbriege von Nachrichtenhelferinnen des Heeres* (Berlin, 1942).
- 31 Gertrud Bäumer, *Eine Woche im Mai* (Tübingen, 1944).
- 32 Helen Diner [Berta Eckstein-Diener], *Seide: Eine kleine Kulturgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1940).
- 33 Anna Elisabet Weirauch, *The Scorpion* (New York, 1975).
- 34 Anna Elisabet Weirauch, *The Outcast* (New York, 1975).
- 35 Anna Elisabet Weirauch, *The Great Violinist* (Berlin, 1940).
- 36 Erika Mitterer, *Der Fürst der Welt* (Hamburg, 1940).
- 37 Erika Mitterer, *Die Seherin: Eine Erzählung* (Hamburg, 1953).
- 38 See, for example, Gertrud von le Fort, *Das Gericht des Meeres: Erzählung* (Leipzig, 1943).
- 39 Bernd Balzer, "'Ricarda Huch—der Freiheitsbegriff einer 'Konservativen' '" in Hans-Werner Peter, ed., *Ricarda Huch: Studien zu ihrem Leben und Werk 2* (Brunswick, 1988): 94-95.
- 40 Helene Baumgarten, *Ricarda Huch: Von ihrem Leben und Schaffen* (Cologne, 1968), 199.
- 41 See Balzer, 96.

German Professors and the Two World Wars

HANS PETER HERRMANN

For George Mosse

I

In August 1914, when German youth voluntarily and enthusiastically rushed like lemmings to the battlefield of Langemarck to be slaughtered for the fatherland, their professors did not want to stand idly by. Hastening to their lecterns, they set about explaining the meaning of events to the German bourgeoisie. Just a few weeks after the outbreak of hostilities, a lecture series commenced in Berlin which featured prominent scholars who, summoning up all the authority of their disciplines, sought to guide the Berlin populace through the onrush of events. Among them were Ulrich von Willamowitz-Möllandorf, Hans Dellbrück, Otto von Giercke, Adolf von Harnack, Wilhelm Kahl, Alois Riehl, and others—professors of history, philosophy, law, medicine, and theology. Among them was also one professor of German, Gustav Roethe. He addressed the theme “We Germans and the War.” The overall lecture series was unified under the solemn heading “German Speeches in Time of Hardship.” Individual speeches within the series were rushed into print and distributed to the book trade, and by November they had appeared as a book. Two further volumes would be issued the following year.¹

One month later, Gustav Roethe held an additional lecture entitled “On Germanness and Culture.” The literary scholar Albert Köster, rector at the University of Leipzig, took the occasion of the beginning of the academic term for an address entitled “War and the University” and, like Roethe, immediately brought it out in printed form.² In November, the cultural philosopher and Goethe scholar Georg Simmel spoke in Straßburg on “Germany’s Inner Transformation”; he, too, saw his speech into print shortly afterwards, under the revealing title *The War and Spiritual Decisions*.³

Such professorial perorations took place in many cities; often, they were celebrated as national ceremonies. In Leipzig, the 82-year-old philosopher Wilhelm Wundt spoke in the city’s largest assembly hall to thousands of listeners, after the proper mood had been set by a prelude of Bach organ music.⁴ The professors had an attentive, even worshipful, audience; the nation needed spiritual advice, and the academic elite was only too happy to play the role of national guide and leader.

Of course, those who had already been public figures before the war—academics such as Friedrich Meinecke and Ernst Troeltsch—also spoke and wrote

on this theme.⁵ But the striking thing is how widespread this spiritual mobilization was. It has been reckoned that of the 69 German professors of history, some 43 lectured and wrote on the war effort; of 36 economists, fully 21; and of 178 philosophers and theologians, no fewer than 48.⁶ Thus far, no cliometrician has shown interest in the professors of German. Their percentage is likely to be considerably smaller, but they made their own contribution to the war effort nonetheless. I will focus, therefore, especially on this hitherto neglected subgroup.⁷

During the year 1914, a torrent of professorial speeches and publications swept across the country. By the beginning of December, 1,400 separate publications with war-related titles had appeared, for an average of twelve books or pamphlets a day.⁸ The outbreak of war thus brought about a tremendous upsurge not just in the armaments industry but also in the book trade. Among the writers who contributed to this boom, the percentage of professors was notable.

Those who did not stride to the lectern or take up pen were at least willing to place their names on one of the manifestoes with which professors now appeared before the public.⁹ This, too, was new in Germany. As early as mid-August 1914, professors such as Ernst Haeckel and Rudolf Eucken published a sharply worded statement against the entry of England into the war.¹⁰ They were supported by a joint "Declaration of German University Professors" signed by an additional 29 scholars.¹¹ Protests and counterprotests by additional professors followed, and on September 1, the historians in Bonn signed yet another manifesto.¹² At the beginning of October 1914, the famous "Appeal to the World of Culture" appeared, signed not just by 37 prominent artists and writers, but also by 56 university professors.¹³ In mid-October a "Declaration of the [!] University Professors of the German Reich" appeared, signed by 3,016 professors.¹⁴ Mobilization on such a grand scale has never occurred since then; it would also have been unthinkable prior to that time.

Declarations of this kind were not a German peculiarity. On October 21, for instance, around 500 professors in England, especially Oxford dons, spoke out against their German colleagues. By the end of the year, fifteen French universities had taken a collective stand against the declaration of the German universities.¹⁵ Contemporaries were already calling this public hue and cry a "War of the Intellectuals," or "War of the Minds."¹⁶ By participating, those who stayed behind were making a verbal contribution to the war effort on the home front.

This intellectual mobilization was by no means restricted to the professors. Artists and writers were equally involved in it.¹⁷ While the professors may have been only one group among others in this band of authorial warriors, they were a striking one. The readiness of German professors to contribute their share to national defense was demonstrated not just by public speeches, writings, and manifestoes. Their own scholarly work, too, was oriented towards the war and its themes. Linguists wrote about "Soldiery in the German Vocabulary," or "German War and the German Language";¹⁸ folklorists wrote about "The German Soldiers' Song on the Field" or "German War Songs and Patriotic

Poetry.”¹⁹ Medievalists wrote about “The Bellicose Culture of the Heathen Germanic Barbarians,”²⁰ literary historians, about “The Present War and Dramatic Literature.”²¹ And this political-military event even affected literary periodization. As early as 1915, Oskar Walzel coined the epochal designation “German Prewar Literature.”²² Entire journal issues were devoted to the war theme; especially in 1915, there was a tremendous upsurge of pertinent articles.²³

To be sure, most of the journals that focused on the war had already established a close connection between academia and the educated class. Scholarly journals in the narrower sense did not participate in this turn toward war issues. “The” German professorate remained focused on supposedly pure knowledge in its scholarship. But many individuals took the war as an occasion for rethinking their own relationship toward the nation, as well as that of their discipline to national values, and they demonstrated this publicly. Scarcely any German professors voiced pacifistic views during World War I;²⁴ among the professors of German, I have found not one who, if he made public statements at all, failed to speak out *for* the war.

I do not want to pursue the development of war writings by German professors in detail. Suffice it to say that the broad, universal war enthusiasm of the first year, which was quickly dubbed the “ideas of 1914,”²⁵ suffocated in the horrors of trench warfare and the fears and hardships of the following years. Articles and manifestoes came to concentrate on far more special topics: on the discussion of war aims, on the one hand, and on constitutional issues, on the other.²⁶ These debates were carried on principally by historians, while professors of German were scarcely involved. They tended to feel more responsible for the common good of the nation, but it was only toward the end of the Weimar Republic that they again connected this with the theme of war.

What motivated the German professors to make such a massive and unequivocal contribution to the German entry into war? Since the 1960s, this question has been researched with considerable breadth and great intensity.²⁷ The most compelling attempt at an explanation of this phenomenon takes as its starting point the fundamentally imperialistic outlook that had shaped the intellectual climate of Wilhelminian Germany.²⁸ This school argues that the leadership elite in prewar Germany was not only deeply imbued with nationalism and conservatism, but was also largely under the sway of imperialistic thinking, which had a tremendous influence on Germany’s entry into World War I. It is only since the publication of *Germany’s Aims in the First World War*, by Fritz Fischer (1961; English trans., 1967), that this perspective has succeeded in overcoming powerful resistance and gained widespread acceptance.

Prior to 1914, the German professorate was socially and ideologically a very homogeneous group: thoroughly loyal, on a spectrum from patriotic to chauvinistic in outlook. Even the liberal wing generally favored a policy of German strength, while the conservative wing was wide open to social Darwinistic views and a

racist admiration for everything Teutonic. Through their writings and the climate they helped create at the universities, German professors had made an "active contribution to the spread of a militaristic ideology among the bourgeoisie" long before World War I.²⁹ After the outbreak of war, such militaristic and imperialistic slogans and ideas appear even more vividly in their speeches, writings, and manifestoes. Just compare one of the great hymns to war that introduces a scholarly article on literature:

For a number of months now . . . there has been only one thing in our souls . . . and that is war. War determines our thinking and feeling, our outlook and will. Our enthusiasm, our rejoicing, our sorrows, and our pain breathe war. The forges of our factories hiss war.³⁰

The German war effort is expressly declared to be a life goal not susceptible to rational explanation: "We would fight for Germany even if we acted directly contrary to the supposed meaning of history in doing so."³¹

Or compare Konrad Burdach declaring the present war to be a step toward the "world empire of the German spirit";³² compare Alfred Götze, who interprets the war of weapons as the war of languages, i.e., "the war of German against French and English," and who places former attempts at language purification in the service of a militant linguistic imperialism:

From Dunkirk to Warsaw, German is spoken today. . . . Flanders and Brabant have every reason to recall their ancient Germanic heritage. . . . The splendid thing about this war is the way it also reveals to us our own strength on the level of language.³³

Even Eugen Kühnemann, who before the war had spent two and a half years in the United States in order to promote the German cause, writes—in a book aimed at increasing international understanding—that although Germany "never intended to dominate the world," in the meantime

the hour has come in which the German idea aims at penetrating the world. . . . Even America is beginning to become German at the very moment it swings its arm back to deal it the death blow.³⁴

Imperialist slogans at every step, even unbeknownst to the writers themselves.

Pan-Germanism is evident in most of these war pamphlets; at times, it turns into open racism. From the very beginning of the war, there appeared constant references to the "Russian hordes" in the East, "slaughtering" women and children. This was by no means an invention of the Nazis, in whose propaganda the Slavs figured so prominently, but was a recurring article of racist invective against the East. With the same contempt, pamphleteers attacked the war enemies in the West, "who ally themselves with the Russians and Serbs and offer the world the shameful spectacle of turning Mongols and Negroes loose on the white race."³⁵

This was the tone of the authoritative "Appeal to the World of Culture" dated 5 October 1914. It comes therefore as no surprise that the 92 artists and pro-

fessors represented in this document repudiated any foreign reproach of German "barbarism" while joyfully embracing the charge of "militarism": "Without German militarism, German culture would long since have been expunged from the face of the earth. . . . The German army and the German people are one."³⁶ Indeed, the declarations of the approval of the war and the "ideas of 1914" by German professors can be interpreted as the outbreak of a collective, militaristically colored, often racially based, cultural imperialism.

Research in the history of ideas has done much to expose the roots of this nationalistic thought within German idealism, in Romanticism, and in the subsequent history of the 19th century.³⁷ And the social sciences have traced how economic and social developments in Germany after 1871 led to a retreat of liberal thinking. In the course of advancing industrialization between 1870 and 1914, it was especially the academically educated bourgeoisie which grew insecure; it underwent a tangible loss of material and social privileges that had previously shaped its situation and its self-confidence.³⁸

Foremost among the causes of the imperialist character of the "ideas of 1914" are national-conservative traditions, heightened by Germany's special role as a "belated nation," industrialization and the crisis of liberalism during the late Wilhelminian period, and, finally, the bourgeoisie's loss of any social function during the same era. In self-defense, the German educated bourgeoisie embraced the "ideas of 1914" to go on the offensive against the repercussions of modern industrial society, demands of the working class, democratization of political life, and growing pluralism in the cultural and ideological spheres.

In my opinion, one should not trivialize the imperialistic character of all the statements by professors concerning World War I. It would be wrong to close our eyes to the aggressive and militant concepts that are apparent in these utterances, yet which hardly correspond to the image of a university elite committed to objective scholarly research. But I also believe that it is not enough to attack this nationalism and imperialism as the inevitable outcome of German history, and to explain it in terms of intellectual and social theory. It would be easy to cite hundreds of passages documenting the imperialistic outlook of the German professorate, but that would fail to do justice to the texts in which these passages appeared. Many of the passages quoted above reveal their imperialist intention only if taken out of context—and, sometimes, only when we open up the original sentences.

When, for instance, Konrad Burdach enthused about the "World Empire of the German Spirit" that the war and the anticipated victory were supposed to bring closer, he added the following relative clause: ". . . which Schiller prophesied in his poem greeting the dawn of the 19th century."³⁹ An imperialistic image of Schiller? Or did Burdach mean only the intellectual world citizenry of German idealism? A few sentences earlier, he had exhorted the German troops: "May the *furor teutonicus* sweep across the globe irresistibly!" In 1914, this

was no doubt an unambiguous appeal to an aggressive war of offense. But then the sentence continues:

For this *furor teutonicus* contains at the same time the most delicate and noble, the purest and highest that we have: the German soul, German idealism, the German world mission.⁴⁰

How can one respond to such a sentence? We may be tempted to dismiss it as arrant nonsense. But that cannot be done, because sentences of this kind appear so frequently. One can also read the words in question as a self-delusion by claiming that Burdach is deadly serious when talking about the *furor teutonicus* and the "German world mission," and that his reference to the German soul and German idealism is sheer ideology. But, on the other hand, one might also conceive of *furor teutonicus* as a pure metaphor, i.e., one might suppose that Burdach was actually thinking of spirit and soul only, and used this aggressive vocabulary by mistake. Neither interpretation is fully satisfactory, since both simplify the meaning of such sentences. For Burdach did imagine something delicate, noble, pure, and high contained in the murderous war events, or growing out of them in a glorious and joyous way. It is only we who are struck speechless in the face of such contradictions.

I think one should grant these professors full credence when they use such big words. While I don't believe that they named their experience accurately, I do think that they meant what they said, and that anyone who wants to grasp the contradictions in which they entangled themselves should take them in this light.⁴¹

One further example:

The ultimate meaning and goal of this war is much higher than one is accustomed to, because we are waging it not just for self-protection, for our place in the world, for our existence; we are simultaneously waging this war for the highest moral goods, which belong not just to us alone but to the entire world.⁴²

This is the same formula as in Burdach. Whenever one of these rhetorically accomplished professors wrote a differentiated and thoughtful text, his arguments, at central as well as peripheral points, led to statements like this. Sometimes, the contradiction is already evident on the title page: *The War and Spiritual Decisions*,⁴³ or *The German Soul . . . as an Unconquerable Power*,⁴⁴ a sentiment whose inappropriateness becomes fully apparent only in connection with the place and date of publication—Berlin, 1916. "War and Spirit," "Power and Soul," "War and Culture," "The World Empire of the German Spirit": what is the meaning of such oxymora?

I should like to begin to approach in a roundabout way the experiences that are expressed in such formulations by investigating a few further topoi in the war writings of German professors. Many of these speeches begin by describing the first days of mobilization as an experience of a profound and solemn joy.

There are many apparent reasons for such feelings, though I will not deal with them here. It is not striking that the beginning of the war was experienced by German professors as a liberation of powers and a fulfillment of national dreams. What is striking is the emotional and intellectual fervor with which they interpreted these experiences and sought to come to terms with them.

The writings by historians produced during World War I emphasize that the first days of mobilization were felt to be the end of party squabbling and the elimination of class differences. In contemporaneous writings by literary historians which I have examined, the outbreak of the war is always interpreted as a much more general "unification of the nation." Albert Köster, for instance, talked about a supposedly "overriding desire of the people" leading to the national war, in contrast to earlier, mercenary wars, which were only conducted actively by individuals, while the nation endured them passively.⁴⁵ That the particular interests of certain individuals had to yield to the common interest of the nation took on a moral quality for Köster, and became "the ethos of war." This moral interpretation was followed by a religious one: such a people's war deserved to be called a "Holy War." That in turn was justified by the joyous dissolving of individual interests into the common good:

Just as a truly pious person humbly lets his own will merge with the world will, so, too, in the great national uprising . . . the particular will of each patriot merges completely with the general national will. . . . Such a struggle is truly hallowed.⁴⁶

This means, conversely, that what reigns during peacetime is the personal will and egotism of the individual. This isolation of individuals was regarded negatively, as a source of suffering. The state of war was thus considered a positive condition, one in which the solitary will of the individual is sublated and blended into the trans-subjective whole of the "general national will." The difference between these conditions was expressed in lofty language: "high moral community," "consecration," or "a feeling closely akin to the religious."⁴⁷

Georg Simmel expressed himself similarly. Peacetime for him was a time when individuals were separated in an unnatural "mechanistic" manner. During peace, the "unifying connection between individuals and the whole" could occur only in a negative way, i.e., under the conditions of the "division of labor." War alone, Simmel proclaimed, would restore individuals to their original connectedness. In place of mediated, fragmented conditions, war would recreate an immediate unity between the individuals and the whole of the nation.⁴⁸

The point is easily recognized in statements like these. They all refer to the fragmentation, isolation, and alienation of people in modern bourgeois society. They welcome the sublation of all forms of reification through the experience of national community in World War I. The authors describe it with tentative formulations, but with great inner emphasis, for which no philosophical, ethical, or religious vocabulary is too high-flown. Could it be that, in their very emphasis, these writers are expressing a *justified* consciousness, addressing not peripheral,

but rather fundamental issues of modern society, in which we live under conditions of bourgeois capitalist alienation? Would it, therefore, be false to assume that the truth of these texts is revealed especially in their contradictions—the truth of social and individual needs regarded by the writers as urgent but heretofore unfulfillable?

All of the manifestoes and many of the speeches written at the beginning of the war took issue with the weighty accusations voiced abroad, which culminated in the charges of German “militarism” and “cultural barbarism.” Both imputations were rejected by the writers. In doing so, they repeatedly made use of one striking topos: the construction of a special cultural mission of the German army:

Our militarism is, in form and content, truly an embodiment of German morality. Our army is now fighting for Germany's freedom and thereby for all [!] the values of peace and morality, not just in Germany.⁴⁹

In the West, this argument was understood as a confirmation of just that charge of militarism and cultural imperialism which the Germans had tried to refute. And today's readers also experience statements of this sort as especially foolish and embarrassing. But, even in this context, lurking in the background is the concept, suggested above, of a necessary and meaningful merger of the individual into a greater and more valuable whole, i.e., the integration of bourgeois society's fragmented and isolated individuals in the honorable community of the army.

By offering such an interpretation, I do not mean to imply that the intoxicated enthusiasm for the army in many of these professorial texts, their unrealistic linkage of saber-rattling and idealistic pathos is any less appalling. On the contrary, I would like to caution against underestimating this appalling enthusiasm about the miracle of the German army. The militarism of the German professors—and this is my thesis—also drew its stubborn incorrigibility from a vision of the masses⁵⁰ organized in the German army leaving for the front, and thereby overcoming the fear of fragmentation, stress of competition, and experience of alienation so prevalent in the everyday life of the prewar era: “All are ruled by One Spirit, One Anger, One Will, One Confidence.”⁵¹

A second, related topos among the professorial statements is this: the notion of a “German culture” that needed to be defended against Western civilization, a culture that would put an end to the miserable conditions of the prewar period. The conceptual pair “culture vs. civilization” designates one of the most frequently invoked basic patterns of thought of the conservative-nationalist cultural critique from the late 19th century up to fascism. I cannot go into the more general aspects of this paradigm, useful as this might be for the understanding of these texts.⁵² Instead, I would like to follow only that trail which struck me when examining the other topoi of these war speeches by German professors.

The striking thing about the schema “German culture” versus “Western civilization” is that its usage was no longer restricted to characterizing the relations of Germany to France, a context that had become steeped in tradition and,

perhaps, even had a certain limited rationale; instead, the superiority of German culture was being touted more especially vis-à-vis England, which figured in all the German writings at the beginning of World War I as *the* archenemy. But the conventional elements of the schema "Germanness" versus "Frenchness"—feeling and inwardness versus rationality, idealism versus enlightenment—could not be employed against England. The schema was therefore modified, and the English—"the Romans of modern times"—were turned into the embodiment of "national and political egotism of a world power," of "brutal force and hunger for dominion," denying the modest and honest Germans any chance for self-fulfillment: "The war, started by England, is for them a business that they carry out—as always—with deceit, lies, and money."⁵³ Germany, on the other hand, was waging war for cultural values, and it was especially emphasized that Germany was not motivated by egotism, greed, and competitiveness.

Viewed in this way, the war against England was interpreted as a morally justified, even necessary, fight for a noncapitalist culture. And once again, the texts imply that the professors who thought along such lines were deriving the energy and the stubbornness of their concepts of war and culture from the notion that in this war Germany was charged with the task of fighting for the possibility of a better, non-capitalistic culture and society.⁵⁴

Elsewhere, the same front line being drawn here against England was drawn to distance Germany from its own prewar condition. There, too, all the hardships and shortcomings under which people had suffered were seen as elements of a social and cultural decline, and interpreted in the framework of a critique of capitalism. This was expressed most strongly by Georg Simmel, who had coined the term "mammonism" in the first years of the Second Reich⁵⁵ in order to describe—beyond the mere idolatry of money—the advances of an all-inclusive materialism in intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, and political matters. Simmel interpreted all of contemporary culture, i.e., prewar culture, in terms of a comprehensive concept of alienation:

Alienation ruled in prewar culture, because in everything—in the social as well as the spiritual realm—the means became an end in itself, and because individual cultural phenomena became independent, following their own partial laws instead of the meaning of the whole.⁵⁶

Professors did not customarily speak so forthrightly and with such apparent similarity to the analysis of alienation offered by the young Marx; when need be, they tended to quote Rousseau.⁵⁷ Such thoughts and feelings are to be found in detailed abundance in all the professorial war manifestoes, where they describe the fragmented state of society and culture of the Bismarck years, the unrestrained growth of subjectivity and the increasingly radical forms of competition of everyone against everyone, the increasing materialism that was leading to a dissolution of organic social networks, the growing isolation of cultural values. And against that background, war always has the aim of creating a better, healthier, more organic culture, and of replacing the dubious prewar society by a "new

man" unscathed by the ills of modernity. How all this would take place, and how this other culture, this new spirit and new man produced by warfare would look—concerning this, nothing is to be found in those writing. But as vague as the outlines of this future were, the conviction of its necessity was firm.

The *religious* component of the war enthusiasm of 1914 has been noted: war as *salvation*. I would like to argue that its *social* component was even more important: war as social protest, war as *revolution*.

In view of the foregoing, it should be evident that the justification of war by German professors at the beginning of World War I can be understood only by interpreting it as a special form of critique of capitalism. There were good reasons for such a collective critique of capitalism within the Wilhelminian bourgeoisie. Industrialization was belated in Germany. Gaining momentum in the 1860s, it began to affect the social structure profoundly in the 1870s. In the course of the economic depression at the close of the 19th century, the wealth and social privileges of the established bourgeoisie came under fire. Moreover, around and after 1900, it became ever more evident how little the semifeudal political structures and the older Prussian elites of Wilhelminian Germany were capable of adapting to the new conditions of industrial society. The ills of modernity, as it would be put today, became increasingly evident.

On the one hand, the educated bourgeoisie was definitely affected by these ills; on the other hand, however—in contrast to the proletariat and segments of the lower-middle classes—it was a beneficiary of the overall development. Its contradictory position led to a growing sensitivity to the ills and destruction these developments brought about on the surface and in the depths of society, while at the same time preventing the educated bourgeoisie from developing any real alternative outside the national and militaristic thought-patterns of the ruling class.

This critical sensitivity was heightened, and directed toward fundamentals, by those literary and philosophical traditions that prevailed at German universities following the defeat of liberalism in the year 1848. Unlike its counterparts in France and England, the German educated bourgeoisie lived and thought not within the heritage of the European Enlightenment and the French Revolution, but in the tradition of the Counter-Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the "ideas of 1813."

The tradition of national-conservative, organological, and anti-rationalistic concepts arose not out of the clear blue; it originated instead from a conscious clash with the consequences of the early industrial development in Germany: i.e., with the dissolution of the old feudal social network, the destruction of nature, the rise of the proletariat. For, ultimately, it was a German idealist poet grounded in the philosophy of history, and living in the era between Rousseau and Marx, who, in his letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, came up with an analysis of modern alienated culture as one torn by its emphasis on means and ends and the competitive business spirit. That this analysis of alienation was quoted again and again around 1900, then, makes perfect sense.⁵⁸

To sum up, the German educated bourgeoisie, politically as well as literar-

ily, was part of a tradition critical of civilization; this tradition shaped its perception of reality, and very quickly gave its own critical experiences a radical and fervent tone that became noticeable in the writings of German professors about World War I.

II

With the defeat of Germany in World War I, the war writings of German professors came to an end for the moment. Edited in 1918 by the literary historian Philipp Witkop, the volume *War Letters of Fallen Students* enjoyed tremendous success in the early years of the Weimar Republic and can be regarded as the provisional conclusion, at least as far as scholars of German literature are concerned.⁵⁹ This volume obviously satisfied the needs of wide circles of the educated bourgeoisie, those who, in individualized sadness, enjoyed the personal, thoroughly patriotic letters of fallen students while disregarding the warning they contained. Witkop's preface also contributed to the popularity of this work by, on the one hand, striking a conciliatory tone while, on the other, recalling the joyous days of mobilization of August 1914 and interpreting the concrete experience of dying in an impersonal war of mass killing as an "exemplary fulfillment of duty" and a meaningful "death for the fatherland" in "sanctified outlook."⁶⁰

Witkop and his readership were unable to extract any lessons from the experiences of war and the German collapse. They clung to the postulate of individualized, idealistic giving of meaning as an answer to the catastrophic defeat, and they held fast to a nationalism temporarily subdued but unbroken. The consequences of this attitude are well known. The overwhelming majority of the German bourgeoisie found no access to the social forms, political tasks, and intellectual foundations of the Weimar Republic, thereby preparing the ground for fascism.

The topic of war was excluded from public debate for the time being. It resurfaced in writings of German professors only toward the end of the Weimar Republic. But a critical or pacifistic treatment of the war, as exemplified in literature by the works of Kurt Tucholsky, was not to be expected from the German professors even now. I, in any case, have not succeeded in locating any such statements by literary scholars.

Professors did not begin to write about the war again until the onset of the Great Depression, a time when national and nationalistic forces regained ground in politics, just at the time when in literature the novels of the front generation were beginning to deal intensively with the reality of World War I. As early as 1929, an expanded edition of Witkop's *War Letters* appeared.⁶¹ In 1929-30, Alfred Baeumler held two speeches in an academic setting that turned World War I into the central event and turning point of German history since the Reformation. In 1931, Herbert Cysarz published a book on *Poetic Transformations of*

the German Image of War from 1910 to 1930.⁶² Between these two philosophically somewhat strained books, which were oriented on Nietzsche's critique of civilization and his mythicizing of the deed, the voice of an ordinary professor of literature was also heard. In 1930, the young Benno von Wiese turned to the new topic of war in literature and reported very objectively about the novels of Remarque, Renn, von der Vring, Glaeser, and Arnold Zweig.⁶³

This was to become a topic frequently treated by professors of literature. The growing literary production concerning World War I receives continuous and more or less intensive scholarly treatment between 1930 and 1945. The new regime of 1933, whose precursors had already joined the debate about the war, continued to heat up the discussion while also changing its tone. In 1934, Hermann Pongs published the most thorough treatment of the poetic literature about World War I to date and for years to come: *War as National Destiny in German Literature*.⁶⁴ Pongs's study first appeared in the journal *Literature and Nationhood*, formerly *Euphorion*, which had steered clear of all national enthusiasm at the beginning of World War I but which, with its programmatic name change in 1934, was placed in the service of the new Reich.

Important developments within the professorate can once again be traced in the journals. In 1935 and, especially, in 1936, the *Journal for German Education*, which had published Wiese's first article in 1930, devoted several of its issues to the topic "War in School Instruction." In 1938, *Literature and Nationhood* also offered four lengthy treatments of war literature written by two well-known professors, a university instructor, and a dissertator.⁶⁵ Germany under its new rulers was already well underway towards war, and the literary historians did not want to stand aloof during these preparations.

The outbreak of war in 1939 was, however, reflected in the writings of German professors in a way very different from that in 1914.⁶⁶ Not only did it lack the breadth and, in a certain way, the spontaneous war enthusiasm of August 1914; the very function of the theme of war, wherever it surfaced in these writings and speeches, was also different now. In 1914, many professors had considered their speeches and writings an act of political self-representation. It was a step with which they wanted to demonstrate that they were willing to do their part in the struggles of the nation. It was the step with which they took a political stand.

In 1939, everything was different. Long before the outbreak of war, the National Socialists had seen to it that many professors had already given their support to the political changes in Germany. To the extent that such statements of support were promulgated by literary historians, they tended to be less about the theme of war than about the theme of race. Anyone from among the professors of German literature who openly supported the National Socialists after 1933—and, as we know, this was not a small number—did so especially and most strongly by merging into the wave of blood- and race-based literary scholarship.⁶⁷

I cannot go into these paradigms at any length here; nor can I go into the general social Darwinistic concepts of struggle and war that shaped the racial

thought of the National Socialists and that, as has been proved, studded the terminology of German linguistics and literary scholarship with an abundance of metaphors of war and extermination.⁶⁸

Obviously, in the realm of such universal militarization, the real war had again to be glorified. Since the production of literature about World War I, especially by volkish authors, had reached such staggering proportions by 1939, it provided literary historians with a welcome opportunity to carry out truly solid scholarship while at the same time heralding a heroic image of the German man as soldier and of volkish ideology in general. That was carried out in thematic investigations, in the usual educational aids in the form of study guides for school-room instruction in German literature, and, especially, in the form of surveys of "contemporary" literature. The term "contemporary literature" was taken to mean the volkish literature of the Weimar Republic and of the years after 1933. The literature on World War I (and also, shortly thereafter, on the beginnings of World War II) often made up a large part of these studies, if not indeed the largest.

In their ideological direction, these treatments were situated between two extremes. On the one hand, an almost harmless-sounding, idealist-nationalistic tone still existed; it was struck above all by the representatives of the prewar generation, which again came to the fore in order to get reinvolved.⁶⁹ On the other hand, there was the aggressiveness of authors whose main agenda was racism. In their writings, the traditional but increasingly valorized virtues of soldiery, the "ethos of comradeship and community," culminated in an exemplary "devotion to the organic order of the nation" and a "new biological, racial thought," which provided the foundation for the "war literature of the National Socialist movement."⁷⁰ Texts of this sort placed scholarship unconditionally in the service of the political system and helped strengthen the will of the populace to hold out.

The same intention was behind the many studies on the concept of the tragic, which appeared already before the war and even more so after 1939. They, too, are a clear manifestation of the typical contradictions faced by bourgeois elites under National Socialism. On the one hand, literary historians could deal with their own sufferings under fascism by dealing with the literary and philosophical ramifications of the tragic. By dealing seriously with a topic like this in their publications, totally objectively and totally without risk, they might perhaps fail to win the favor of the party, but they also did not arouse the displeasure of the local party official on the university level. On the other hand, they could suddenly speak of the tragic very concretely in these studies. For instance, at the end of an article dealing with the history of the tragic from the German heroic epic up to the literature on World War I, Gerhard Fricke praises "the tragic-heroic orientation of our nation," which especially "today" (i.e., in 1941, shortly before the beginning of the attack on the Soviet Union) still upholds the conviction that "only he is ready for victory who is also ready for doom."⁷¹

It was therefore consistent that in 1943—after Stalingrad, when many Germans were realistically hoping only for a speedy end to the dying on the front and the bombardments at home—Fricke used the occasion of a speech on Schiller to call, in the face of the “hardship and danger of this most enormous struggle,” for “unconditional devotion to the idea entrusted to us,” i.e., to die for “Volk und Reich” in the name of Schiller’s classical concept of tragedy.⁷²

It was only a small step from sentences like this to the most overt partisanship for the National Socialist war of aggression. This step was actually taken by professors of German literature when they jointly produced a five-volume anthology entitled *On Germanness in Language and Literature*, a project which they expressly termed “the war effort of *Germanistik*.” One year after the defeat of France, i.e., shortly before the invasion of the Soviet Union, the humanities were also supposed to make their contribution to the construction of a new order in Europe. “We are not concerned with any single issues, but with the fall of a declining and sick condition and the creation of a new and healthy one, the fall of the old and the rise of a new Europe,” proclaimed Franz Koch, one of the three editors, in a preface that begins with the sentence: “Total war, as we are experiencing it, is not just a military but also a spiritual struggle of enormous proportions.”⁷³

Forty-three renowned scholars joined in this “war effort.” Only a few of those who were called upon avoided participation: Friedrich Beißner, Max Kommerell, and Walter Rehm.⁷⁴ Not all who contributed were convinced National Socialists, and not all the contributions used the officially desired volkish-racist vocabulary. But Koch’s plan clearly went beyond the immediate propaganda effect; he wanted to assemble all the central argumentational paradigms of his discipline under the banner of Nazism. What could be more appropriate than to ask all the linguists and literary historians in the field of German to do what had long been their favorite activity: to reflect on “What is our Germanness, and what does it mean spiritually and emotionally to be a German?”⁷⁵ And where could such thinking be more easily compelled than at the place where German studies had long carried out such a national self-examination: namely, in the collective effort on behalf of the war?

Professors of German were clearly prepared to do so. In the very first volume, a linguistic essay assigns the German mother tongue the following programmatic task: “to secure German victory and to fulfill it by assuring a global position for the German spirit.”⁷⁶ And in the last volume, an article on literary history begins equally programatically:

Through the National Socialist revolution and the war, the German nation has not only reclaimed its position as a coequal among the European nations, but it can also begin now to reorder the entire continent.⁷⁷

It would be easy to point out further instances of this attitude in great numbers. I think, however, that we can already see clearly enough, at this point, that the

national imperialism with which German professors affirmed World War I continued seamlessly, albeit on a more intensive level, in the *fascist* imperialism which they supported in World War II.

Of course, these German professors also felt private reservations about the war, muted horror about its outbreak, and growing despair about its course. In public, however, they did not speak out. Any possibility of doing so had been lost in the years around 1933. It should also be mentioned, and not just marginally, that this same discipline of German studies, and with some of the same professors involved, invoked a similar rhetoric after 1945, after the end of the world wars, in order to participate in another, less bloody war—this was the Cold War against the enemies of culture in the East, against communism.

But what about the *other* topic which came up in the treatment of the professorial manifestoes on World War I, which we deciphered as a trace of social critique and as actual suffering under the ills of industrial society, thus creating a dubious continuity from German idealism, German-mindedness, and Wilhelminian professorial imperialism to fascism? Is this critique also detectable in the fascist texts on war?

The answer is difficult. There is scarcely a single fascist war text which, whenever it presents an argument rather than simply an axiom, does not deal with the dubiousness of civilization, with the political and social fragmentation of prewar Europe, with the unemployment and party squabbles of the Weimar Republic. But, often enough, such references sound rather perfunctory, are reduced to mere formulas like the one about "the declining and sick condition of the old Europe" or the "national hardships" of the 1920s.

The texts from the early years of National Socialism, such as the 1934 monograph by Hermann Pongs already mentioned, *War as National Destiny*, have, however, more to offer in this respect. This book, despite all its overt partisanship and mad mixing of Goebbels quotations with George poetry, cannot be dismissed as a mere propaganda tract; rather, it is a highly personal treatment of the war and its literary transformation that deserves to be taken seriously. At the base of Pongs's study is a logical interpretation of history turning on the phenomenon of alienation under capitalism. While Pongs does not use the word "alienation," the phenomenon itself is described in detail.⁷⁸ Machines, factories, and the concentration of masses in the big cities are the undoing of modernity, making the individual rootless and driving the worker to class-hatred. In the course of this development, the individual is separated from other human beings, is torn out of the original, organic communities in which he was previously rooted, losing any link to himself, to the image of his self, to the image of what man originally was and actually ought to be.

On the front lines in World War I, all those victims of modernity—both the proletarian and the bourgeois, according to Pongs—experienced the lifting of this alienation. The community of comrades recreated the bond with others: valor in the face of death restored to men a positive self-image, the figure of the "leader"

structured the small affinity group and linked it hierarchically with larger social entities, and the connection with the national mission placed each individual into a living whole. These are thoughts with which we have already become individually acquainted as the "ideas of 1914." Pongs sets them into a framework in which the structures of "tribe and nation" become the quintessence of original, unalienated community, in which a dialectic of nature and spirit derived from Schiller guarantees a historical plurality and dynamics, and in which the dichotomy of *Volk* and *Führer* perpetuates the contrast of "nature" versus "spirit" in the social sphere. Against this theoretical background, Pongs goes on to interpret the literature of World War I with considerable scholarly knowledge and sophistication, though with a clear ideological perspective, to be sure.

Like many of the more ambitious fascist texts written in the early years of the Third Reich, e.g., the presidential address by Martin Heidegger of 1933, Pongs's book conveys the overall impression of a strangely disturbing mixture of thoughtful systematics and sheer nonsense, of serious thought and bizarre twisting of reality, and of credible experience with paranoid wishful thinking. We today are probably in no great danger of being tricked by the *quid pro quo* of such texts, but we are in no position, I think, simply to dismiss them.

But what is the point of looking for traces of critical social experiences in these nationalistic, protofascist, and fascist professorial tracts? In principle, they offer no new insights. Writing on the intellectual precursors of this volkish worldview, i.e., the Romantic opposition at the beginning of the 19th century, Georg Lukács already emphasized "that they occasionally uncovered the contradictions of capitalist society rather intelligently . . . but were incapable of grasping its essence."⁷⁹ Leftist research on fascism has followed this insight, especially its second part. It has proved how little these authors understood, but it has not considered of what such critiques of capitalism may be constituted.

Indeed, on the basis of texts German professors wrote about war, it is as easy as it is necessary to demonstrate that they interpreted their own experiences falsely and that their major concepts, such as *Volk* and "community," were at most products of wishful thinking, i.e., ideological constructs with which, intellectually and politically, they only perpetuated and strengthened the very condition of alienation they were battling. By employing an ideological critique of this sort, their attitude toward war can be described and politically classified, but it still cannot be understood any better.

But even within non-Marxist research, there is scarcely any study that does not point to the negative experiences of the educated bourgeois elite with the social reality of late Wilhelminianism and the Weimar Republic. This is virtually a commonplace and has by now almost become a truism. The problems hidden in it no longer seem interesting and are ultimately covered up by using the term "critique of modernity" instead of "critique of capitalism." By doing so, non-Marxist research is able to describe how the German professors opposed historical progress, industrialization, and pluralism while clinging to traditional political con-

ceptions and intellectual values of the Wilhelminian period. Even here, the authors are only reproached for their failures, and these failures are made understandable in view of the historical circumstances. The shortcomings are described as a product of the obstinacy with which a powerful segment of society, i.e., the German "mandarins," tried to resist the threatened loss of their material, social, and cultural privileges.

I think that the unreflected concept of progress that lies at the basis of such notions of modernism is no longer tenable. It blocks our insight into important motivations of those who proved unable to deal with the contradictions of historical progress. But it also has to be corrected for its own sake.

Industrialization under capitalist conditions, unstoppable since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, has not only yielded the fruits of a greater democratization and a pluralization of our public life, resisted by the conservative elites in Germany, but it has also cut a broad trail of unacceptable devastation, one which has horrified even members of the conservative bourgeoisie. We must take seriously their right to this sense of horror.

It is not the case, however, that we can see in them potential allies for our own efforts to counter such damages in our time. For any such proximity, their anticapitalism is too regressive, their perspective too skewed, and their remedies unacceptable anyway. We are not sure, furthermore, that, beyond the historical justice which we must accord them, their regressive anticapitalism might not again change into militarism and imperialism today. We can only deal with this phenomenon, however, if we know its true history and prehistory, and if we take its motives seriously even at points where we consider its perspective narrow-minded and its consequences catastrophic.

Translated by Jost Hermand and James Steakley

Notes

- 1 *Deutsche Reden in schwerer Zeit, gehalten von den Professoren der Universität Berlin*, 3 vols., ed. Zentralstelle für Volkswohlfahrt und Verein für volkstümliche Kurse von Berliner Hochschullehrern (Berlin, 1914—); Gustav Roethe, *Wir Deutsche und der Krieg: Rede am 3. September 1914, Deutsche Reden in schwerer Zeit*, facs. 1 (Berlin, 1914).
- 2 Gustav Roethe, *Von deutscher Art und Kultur* (Berlin, 1915); Albert Köster, *Der Krieg und die Universität: Rede, bei Antritt des Rektorats am 31. Oktober 1914 gehalten* (Leipzig, 1914).
- 3 Georg Simmel, *Der Krieg und die geistigen Entscheidungen: Reden und Aufsätze* (Munich/Leipzig, 1917).
- 4 According to E. Borkowsky, *Unser heiliger Krieg* (1914), vol. 1, 100; quoted in Klaus Schwabe, "Zur politischen Haltung der deutschen Professoren im ersten Weltkrieg," *Historische Zeitschrift* 193 (1961): 604.

- 5 For titles, cf. Klaus Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral: Die deutschen Hochschullehrer und die politischen Grundfragen des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen/Zurich/Frankfurt, 1969).
- 6 *Ibid.*, 290.
- 7 In the second part of this essay, I cite, among other things, texts from the period between 1933 and 1945 in which well-known colleagues who are still alive today espoused fascist positions. In the discussion period following the lecture in which I first presented these ideas, there was a heated exchange of comments. I would therefore like to emphasize that I was talking not about the private motivations of these authors but about their publications. These were written for the public sphere and had an effect on the public. In my opinion, they therefore are still quotable and interpretable as they were published. It would be an entirely different and extremely complex task to examine the private biographies that lay behind such texts, to seek to understand the role that personal conviction, voluntary accommodation, and coerced concession may have played in the position assumed by any particular author at work under fascism.
- 8 According to *Hinrichs Halbjahrskatalog*, as cited by Friedrich Panzer, *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht* (1915): 115.
- 9 For the most important of these texts, cf. *Aufrufe und Reden deutscher Professoren im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Klaus Böhme (Stuttgart, 1975). For further texts, see *Der Krieg der Geister: Eine Auslese deutscher und ausländischer Stimmen zum Weltkrieg 1914*, ed. Hermann Kellermann (Weimar, 1915).
- 10 *Ibid.*, 27f.
- 11 "Erklärung deutscher Universitätslehrer vom 7. September 1914 über die Niederlegung englischer Auszeichnungen"; *ibid.*, 28f.
- 12 Böhme, 50f.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 47ff. For the list of signatories, cf. Kellermann, 66–68.
- 14 Böhme, 13, 49f.
- 15 Kellermann, 36–44, 88–90. These declarations had their predecessors and evoked similar reactions; cf. *ibid.*, chap. 2: "Der Krieg der Gelehrten und der Aufruf an die Kulturwelt," 27–113 et passim.
- 16 "Der Krieg der Intellektuellen 1914," chapter title in *Der Völkerkrieg: Eine Chronik der Ereignisse seit dem 1. Juli 1914*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 1915), 312; *Der Krieg der Geister*, title of the book by Kellermann; see n. 9 above.
- 17 The "Aufruf an die Kulturwelt" was signed by, among others, Wilhelm von Bode, Alois Brandl, Franz von Defregger, Richard Dehmel, Ludwig Fulda, Max Halbe, Gerhart Hauptmann, Carl Hauptmann, Max Klinger, Max Liebermann, Max Reinhardt, Franz von Stuck, Hermann Sudermann, Hans Thoma; the dispute between Gerhart Hauptmann and Romain Rolland is well known. On the broader topic, cf. *Kriegserlebnis: Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen*, ed. Klaus Vondung (Göttingen, 1980); for reference to the beginning of the war, cf. Klaus Vondung, *Die Apokalypse in Deutschland* (Munich, 1988) and Klaus-Peter Philippi, *Volk des Zorns: Studien zur "Poetischen Mobilmachung" in der deutschen Literatur am Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges, ihren Voraussetzungen und Implikationen* (Munich, 1977).
- 18 Karl Bergmann, "Kriegerisches im deutschen Wortschatz," *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht* (1915): 98–113; Alfred Götze, "Deutscher Krieg und deutsche Sprache," *Wissenschaftliches Beiheft der Zeitschrift des deutschen Sprachvereins*, series 5, fascs. 38–40 (1918): 268–82.
- 19 John Meier, "Das deutsche Soldatenlied im Felde," *Mein Heimatland: Badische Blätter für Volkskunde* (1915): 61–74; Richard Weißenfels, *Deutsche Kriegslieder und vaterländische Dichtung* (Göttingen, 1915).
- 20 Gustav Neckel, "Die kriegerische Kultur der heidnischen Germanen," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 7 (1915–19): 17–44.
- 21 Robert Petsch, "Der gegenwärtige Krieg und die dramatische Literatur," *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht* (1915): 11–33, 449.
- 22 *Ibid.*; Friedrich Panzer reviewed several volumes of "Kriegsliteratur."
- 23 For a striking example, cf. *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht* (1915), ed. Friedrich Panzer and Walter Hofstaetter.
- 24 On the exceptions, cf. Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral*, 33.
- 25 Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, "Die Ideen von 1914" (published at the beginning of 1916), in his *Deutscher Geist und Westeuropa* (Tübingen, 1925).

- 26 For the most comprehensive discussion of this topic, cf. Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral*.
- 27 For pertinent recent literature, cf. the bibliography by Böhme, *Aufrufe und Reden* and the footnotes to various articles in the anthology *Kriegserlebnis*, ed. Vondung.
- 28 Cf. esp. Klaus Böhme in his comprehensive "Einleitung," *ibid.*, 3–45, where he follows the lead of Hans-Ulrich Wehler.
- 29 Böhme, 8.
- 30 Johann Georg Sprengel, "Maupassants und Liliencrons Kriegsdichtung," *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht* (1915): 486.
- 31 Georg Simmel, "Deutschlands innere Wandlung," in his *Der Krieg*, 21f.
- 32 Konrad Burdach, "Über deutsche Erziehung," *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht* (1914): 678.
- 33 Alfred Götze, "Deutscher Krieg und deutsche Sprache," *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur* (1915): 146, 156f. The essay was frequently reprinted; cf. n. 18 above.
- 34 Eugen Kühnemann, *Deutschland und Amerika: Briefe an einen deutsch-amerikanischen Freund* (Munich, 1917), 114f.
- 35 Böhme, *Aufrufe und Reden*, 48.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Apart from the works by Schwabe and Vondung mentioned above, cf. Hermann Lübbe, *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte*, vol. 4: *Die philosophischen Ideen von 1914* (Basel/Stuttgart, 1963).
- 38 Cf. Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich: 1871–1918* (Göttingen, 1973); and *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum: Zur Sozialgeschichte seiner Ideen* (Göttingen, 1976).
- 39 Burdach, "Erziehung."
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 For a similar hermeneutic approach that does not seek to dismiss the nationalism of such texts and their authors as sheer ideology, but instead takes them seriously and interrogates their nationalistic impulses (albeit with great differences in intellectual goals and methods), cf. George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York, 1975); Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien* (Frankfurt, 1977); and Vondung, *Apokalypse*.
- 42 Köster, *Der Krieg und die Universität*, 24.
- 43 Simmel, *Der Krieg*.
- 44 Alfred Biese, *Die deutsche Seele im Spiegel deutscher Dichtung als unbesiegbare Macht* (Berlin, 1916).
- 45 Köster, 8.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 8, 24.
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 Simmel, *Der Krieg*, 10f.
- 49 Friedrich Panzer, "Kriegsliteratur," *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht* (1915): 117; "Erklärung der Hochschullehrer des deutschen Reiches," in *Aufrufe und Reden*, ed. Böhme, 49. One might also recall Burdach's combination of *furor teutonicus* and "German soul."
- 50 Cf. Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, esp. vol. 2.
- 51 Köster, 22.
- 52 For a detailed treatment, cf. Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand, *Stilkunst um 1900* (Berlin, 1967), 109–30. From the wealth of possible examples, let me point to only one especially vivid one: Friedrich Panzer refers on the one hand to Thomas Mann's "Gedanken im Kriege," *Neue Rundschau*, 1914 (now in Mann's *Gesammelte Werke* 13 [1974]: 527f.): "Ich habe diesen Begriff der Zivilisation, der unseren Feinden vorschwebt, und seinen Gegensatz nirgends mit feineren Gedanken erläutert und tiefer ergriffen gefunden als in einem Aufsatz von Thomas Mann," and he added the footnote: "Nach den bekannten Mitteilungen Ludwig Ganghofers aus dem Hauptquartier hat unser Kaiser sich kürzlich gesprächsweise über den berührten Gegensatz mit derselben Einsicht geäußert." Cf. Friedrich Panzer, "Die Kriegsliteratur," *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht* (1915): 117.
- 53 Roethe, *Von deutscher Art*, 15f.
- 54 This viewpoint appears in the hotly debated book by Johann Plenge, *Der Krieg und die Volkswirtschaft* (Münster, 1915). See Schwabe, 42ff. et passim.

- 55 Simmel, *Der Krieg*, 14.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Roethe, *Von deutscher Art*, 6f.
- 58 Cf. Hamann and Hermand, *Stilkunst um 1900*, 123.
- 59 Philipp Witkop, *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten* (Leipzig/Berlin, 1918). The first edition of this book had already appeared in 1916 under the title *Kriegsbriefe deutscher Studenten*.
- 60 Ibid., iii.
- 61 Philipp Witkop, *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten: In Verbindung mit den Deutschen Unterrichts-Ministerien herausgegeben* (Munich, 1929); the last printing of this book (150,000 copies in all) appeared in 1933.
- 62 Alfred Baeumler, "Der Sinn des großen Krieges," in his *Männerbund und Wissenschaft* (Berlin, 1934), 1-29. Herbert Cysarz, *Zur Geistesgeschichte des Weltkrieges: Die dichterischen Wandlungen des deutschen Kriegsbildes 1910-1930* (Halle, 1931).
- 63 Benno von Wiese, "Das Bild des Krieges in der deutschen Literatur der Gegenwart," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Bildung* (1930): 8-15.
- 64 Hermann Pongs, *Krieg als Volksschicksal im deutschen Schrifttum: Ein Beitrag zur Literaturgeschichte der Gegenwart* (expanded printing from the journal *Dichtung und Volkstum* 35 [Stuttgart, 1934]).
- 65 Hermann Pongs, Kurt Wais, Günther Lutz, Till Kalkschmidt.
- 66 Cf. the most recent treatment by Klaus Schwabe, which deals especially with the historians among the university professors: "Deutsche Hochschullehrer und Hitlers Krieg (1936-1940)," in *Die deutschen Eliten und der Weg in den Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Martin Broszat and Klaus Schwabe (Munich, 1989), 291-333.
- 67 On the broad complex, see Wilhelm Vosskamp, "Kontinuität und Diskontinuität: Zur deutschen Literaturwissenschaft im Dritten Reich," in *Wissenschaft im Dritten Reich*, ed. Peter Lundgreen (Frankfurt, 1985).
- 68 Wendula Dahle, *Der Einsatz einer Wissenschaft: Eine sprachinhaltliche Analyse militärischer Terminologie in der Germanistik 1933-1945* (Bonn, 1969).
- 69 This appears as early as 1936 in Karl Bergmann, "Völkisches Gedankengut im deutschen Sprichwort," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Bildung* (1936): 363-73. Götz, too, was heard from again; cf. Alfred Götz, "Deutscher Krieg und deutsche Sprache: Rede zur Grimm-Feier der Universität Gießen, gehalten am 11.3.1940," *Nachrichten der Gießener Hochschulgesellschaft* 14 (1941).
- 70 Fritz Martini, "Verfall und Neuordnung in der deutschen Dichtung seit dem 19. Jahrhundert," in *Von deutscher Art in Sprache und Dichtung*, ed. on behalf of the Germanistische Fachgruppe by Gerhard Fricke, Franz Koch, and Clemens Lugowski, 4 (1941): 402, 405, 409.
- 71 Gerhard Fricke, "Erfahrung und Gestaltung des Tragischen in deutscher Art und Dichtung," in Fricke et al., 5 (1941): 93.
- 72 Gerhard Fricke, *Schiller und die geschichtliche Welt = Straßburger Universitätsreden*, facs. 5 (Straßburg, 1943), 35; also in his *Studien und Interpretationen: Ausgewählte Schriften zur deutschen Dichtung* (Frankfurt, 1956), reprinted unchanged, apart from the deletion of two paragraphs with clear political references, and with an incorrect date (1942) instead of the correct 30 January 1943.
- 73 Fricke et al., 1:v.
- 74 Cf. *Klassiker in finsternen Zeiten 1933-1945: Eine Ausstellung des deutschen Literaturarchivs im Schiller-Nationalmuseum Marbach am Neckar*, ed. Bernhard Zeller (Marbach, 1981) 1:261ff.
- 75 Koch, "Vorwort," in Fricke et al., 1:vi.
- 76 Leo Weisgerber, "Die deutsche Sprache im Aufbau des deutschen Volkslebens," in Fricke et al., 1:41.
- 77 Heinz Otto Burger, "Die deutsche Sendung im Bekenntnis der Dichter," in Fricke et al., 5:305.
- 78 Hermann Pongs, *Krieg als Volksschicksal*, 6f. et passim.
- 79 Georg Lukács, *Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1952), 60. Quoted in the superb essay by Alexander von Bormann, "Vom Traum zur Tat: Über völkische Literatur," in *Deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Wolfgang Rothe (Stuttgart, 1974), 309.

After Two World Wars: German and Austrian Authors on the Idea of Europe

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Wherever global economic developments are being discussed these days, the topic of Western European integration is mentioned. "1992" has become somewhat of an incantation to which the leaders in the fields of industry and politics react like fairy-tale figures to the spells of white and black magic: it is a cause for enthusiasm and vitalization in some areas, while it brings about depression and panic in others. Only one area of society seems to remain untouched by the effects of the "1992" formula: artists, writers, and cultural critics remain silent. The single European market is a logical step in the direction of economic integration as envisaged in 1957 by the founding fathers of the European Community. Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide de Gasperi, as well as their advisors Jean Monnet and Walter Hallstein, laid the foundation for a future duty-free zone in Western Europe. The topic of European culture, however, was not mentioned in the treaty of Rome, nor did it play any significant role when the plans for 1992 were worked out in Brussels. The cultural discussion on Europe—especially on Central Europe—as started by authors like Milan Kundera¹ and György Konrád² has little to do with the aspirations of the EC Commission; this is true also of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's essayistic book *Ach Europa*.³ which shows the scintillating cultural variety of Europe as it still exists in the countries on the continent's periphery. The economic targets of the European Community and the cultural debates on Europe run along parallel lines, and it would be difficult to bring them together or to harmonize them.

The waters that separate the royal infants of Europe's two realms of economy and culture have always run deep, as can be learned from the debates on Europe after the two World Wars, a discussion in which representatives from basically all segments of society participated.⁴ It is my interest here, then, to examine the essayistic contributions of German-speaking authors to this debate.

I

The European states were not only the initiators but also the losers of the First World War. Under the hypnotic spell of an extreme nationalism, they destroyed each other and reduced themselves to second-rate powers. Prior to 1914, most European authors had not been any more farsighted than the heads of govern-

ments. Gabriele d'Annunzio in Italy, Maurice Barrès in France, Gerhart Hauptmann and Thomas Mann in Germany, as well as Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Robert Musil in Austria, were already winning the war in their essays and poems before the battles had really started.⁵ Only a few writers predicted a major catastrophe and cultural decline. Among them were the French novelist Romain Rolland, the German authors Hermann Hesse and Heinrich Mann, and the Austrian critic Karl Kraus. As early as 1914, Hermann Hesse reminded his chauvinistic colleagues that the "overcoming of the war should be our most noble aim, since it is the ultimate consequence of Christian occidental ethics." The duty of an author, he continued, should not be to "shake the foundation of Europe's future even more by participating in the war with the writer's pen," but to find ways to international understanding. Hesse saw Goethe as a prime example of the ideal combination of European cosmopolitanism and German patriotism.⁶ It was in the spirit of Goethe that Annette Kolb, the "Romantic German," in 1915 attacked the reciprocal "defamation" and "instigation" of the writers in countries that were at war with each other.⁷

Hesse and Kolb pleaded for peace at a moment when the European national states were still world powers. By 1916, their supremacy was already faltering. Heinrich Mann was one of the first authors to recognize the shift of influence on the international scene. He demanded a peace treaty between the Western European countries, primarily because he was afraid of the "Asian" world power Russia and its future dominance in Europe. Full of anti-Russian sentiments, he warned his fellow West Europeans: "We may be flooded . . . , we are still standing in the Thermopylae." That is, the Western Europeans are compared to the Spartans under Leonidas who, in a deadly battle in the year 480 B.C., prevented the "Asian" Persians, lead by Xerxes, from conquering Greece. Heinrich Mann cautioned the disunited Europeans of "Slavic cruelty" and "Asian chaos" that would await them in case of a Russian victory. He combined his negative warnings with a positive appeal for European unity. As early as 1916, Heinrich Mann hoped for a utopian Europe without borders, and the historic example he gave to support his vision was the Roman Empire. Once the interior European borders were eliminated, he argued, another "Roman peace," comparable to the one under Caesar Augustus, would make the continent flourish.⁸

The themes of a Roman past and heritage and a possible Asian future were also dominant in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's 1917 reflections on the "European Idea,"⁹ notes that were influenced by statements made by his friend Rudolf Borchardt.¹⁰ Hofmannsthal's enthusiasm for the war had long since given way to a despair about the self-destruction of the continent. He experienced the collapse of cultural European unity as a "distressing occurrence," and he called to mind Latinity, Christianity, Renaissance, Humanism, and German Classicism as culminations of a cultural European "joint guarantee" (*Gemeinbürgschaft*). In order to prevent the decline and collapse of European culture, one would have to go back to these roots and revitalize the origins of these traditions. According to

Hofmannsthal, the continental decadence had started when the mechanical thinking in categories of "balance of power" had replaced these "joint guarantees." It is obvious that Hofmannsthal was echoing ideas expressed for the first time in Novalis' speech "Christianity or Europe." Like Heinrich Mann, he envisioned a future united Europe in which "balance of power" would play no role. The models he quoted for his European utopia were multilingual and multicultural countries like Switzerland and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Like Heinrich Mann, Hofmannsthal believed in an old Asian-European antagonism, but he differed radically from Mann in his attitude toward Asian culture. In the eyes of Hofmannsthal—again, the influence of early German Romanticism cannot be overlooked—Asia did not mean "chaos" but "order," not "barbarism" but "paradise," not "inferiority" but "superiority." Europeans, with their "individualism, mechanism, and business-mindedness," could only learn from the genuine "human relations" in Asia. Asia seemed to be free from the major "European stigma," which Hofmannsthal defined as being "in search of the means instead of the aim of being." Hofmannsthal and Heinrich Mann were talking about different subjects when they referred to Asia: while Mann was thinking of the Russian superpower, Hofmannsthal had the old cultures of China and India in mind.

The breakdown of European hegemony was experienced as an extraordinary shock. The awareness of a possible end to its culture contributed to the prevalent fatalism. In 1918, the mood of the intellectuals in Germany was adequately formulated in the title of Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, and this book became the number one philosophical bestseller of the early 1920s. A number of other authors such as René Schickele, Rudolf Pannwitz, Otto Flake, and Kasimir Edschmid¹¹ tried to counter the pessimism of the time with more optimistic outlooks on Europe. The most prominent and extremely successful contribution was the book *Pan-Europa* (1923) by the Austrian count Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi. He propagated the utopia of a United States of Europe in order to guarantee the continent's status of a world power in the concert of ascending nations like the United States, the Soviet Union, and Japan. Coudenhove-Kalergi founded the *Paneuropa* movement, which had numerous supporters during the decade between 1923 and 1933. Among them were prominent authors like Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Maximilian Harden, and Kurt Hiller. But unlike Coudenhove-Kalergi, who was primarily interested in the economic and political aspects of European integration, most authors continued to debate the cultural aspects of Europe's past and future.

During the immediate postwar months, "Asia" as a symbol of difference and otherness continued to haunt the fantasies of the intellectuals. Hermann Hesse found the "tired European mind reeling back to its Asian mother," and—like Heinrich Mann—he described "the Asiatic" in negative terms such as "chaotic, barbarous, dangerous, and amoral." A turn to Asia would mean "the collapse of Europe." In 1914, Hesse had been hoping for a European cultural rejuvenation in the spirit of Goethe, but these expectations turned out to be illusions. In

his outlook on Europe of 1919, Dostoevsky had ousted Goethe. According to Hesse, "Asian occultism" is the "ideal" of the Russians as described in Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80). To Hesse's mind, "half of Europe's East"—by which he means the newly created Soviet Union—"is *en route* to chaos." Like many Central and West European authors, Hesse was shocked by the Russian October Revolution. Since the rest of Europe was tired and decadent, and wanted to be "reshaped and reborn," it would, Hesse stated, go through a phase of Karamazovian chaos. He was convinced of the "decline of the spiritual Europe."¹²

When Hesse composed his variation on the Spenglerian theme, writers in France, Germany, and Austria encouraged each other to find new paths to international understanding and reconciliation. Full of idealistic hopes in the socialist idea of international brotherhood, the French author Henri Barbusse addressed an appeal to European writers a few months after the war had ended. He founded the organization "Clarté" and a periodical with the same name. Both were created with the intention of contributing to European understanding and world peace. Hofmannsthal responded spontaneously and positively to Barbusse's appeal.¹³ Three years later, he had another "Look at the Spiritual Condition of Europe"¹⁴ and he diagnosed "the worst cultural crisis Europe has gone through since the 16th century." Hofmannsthal compared the existing situation to that of the Reformation period and attributed a religious nature to both crises. Like Hesse and many other cultural critics, he made the assumption that Dostoevsky was the "spiritual leader" of the European youth. As far as influence and impact is concerned, no other contemporary author or thinker could be compared to Dostoevsky. While Hesse, in a resigned mood, had thrust aside Goethe for the time being, Hofmannsthal called for a revival of the Goethean mind. He called Goethe a "spiritual force of the first order," a personality who was not just an author but "a sage, a magician, and a true leader who satisfies our religious needs." Hofmannsthal referred to the new books on Goethe by the Frenchman Henri Lichtenberger and the Italian Benedetto Croce as indicators of a new Goethe renaissance in Europe. From Hofmannsthal's point of view, Goethe represented Europe with its combination of Christianity and antiquity, while Dostoevsky stood for a Russia where the Asian influences had prevented this synthesis. "Goethe's spiritual attitude," Hofmannsthal wrote, "is to defend oneself against affliction with the weapons of wise analysis and wise renunciation, while Dostoevsky's whole existence seems to cry for suffering and for exposure to suffering." Hofmannsthal shared the negative cliché of Russian culture with Hermann Hesse and Heinrich Mann.

Like Hofmannsthal, Heinrich Mann reacted positively to Henri Barbusse's open letter. In his answer, he declared that the "growth of goodness in the world will depend on the cooperation between France and Germany." Mann's positive reaction to Barbusse's gesture of friendship signaled the beginning of the difficult dialogue between the two countries after the war. Years before politicians

like Briand and Stresemann worked toward German-French reconciliation, these two authors had started to lay the foundations for bridges that, in the long run, turned out to be stable and reliable.

German-French cooperation was also the topic of Stefan Zweig's 1923 book on Romain Rolland.¹⁵ Rolland had discovered the unity of European culture long before it was threatened in 1914. During the war, he had fought for peace as an exile in Switzerland. Zweig called him the incarnation of the "European conscience" due to his exemplary behavior during the war period and because of his novel *Jean-Christophe*, which he had published between 1904 and 1912. Hardly any other literary work of the period demonstrates the desire for Franco-German understanding as clearly as does this book.

Heinrich Mann's two essays "Europa: Reich über den Reichen" and "Coopération économique seulement?" appeared in *Die Neue Rundschau* (Berlin) and in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (Paris) in 1923.¹⁶ The editors of both journals, Rudolf Kayser and Jacques Rivière, were striving toward an improvement of German-French relations, and Kayser demonstrated an expressly positive attitude in matters regarding a future integration of the continent. Heinrich Mann pleaded for European unification and showed that this aim could be reached only if France and Germany built an alliance that would not be limited to the economic sector but would encompass all areas, including cultural relations. Once Germany and France had become firm allies, the other European countries would join automatically. Heinrich Mann's striving for European unity was—as in 1916—influenced to a large degree by his fear of other world powers. Unlike Hesse and Hofmannsthal, he was afraid not only of the "Asian" Soviet Union but also of the "Anglo-Saxon Empires": i.e., the United States and Great Britain. His concept of an integrated continental Europe without the Soviet Union and Great Britain was similar to the one developed by Coudenhove-Kalergi. This was not surprising, since both men had been discussing the project for quite some time. But contrary to Coudenhove-Kalergi, Heinrich Mann did not want to build Europe together with the existing economic and political institutions. While Coudenhove-Kalergi could be called a realistic utopian thinker, Heinrich Mann was hopelessly idealistic. He did not want to cooperate with any of the existing powers, be they capitalism, the Communist Party, the workers' unions, the aristocracy, or the Vatican. Instead, he dreamt of a new European religion and a new European church that would mark the beginning of a new European man and a new European age. "We Europeans," he argued in 1923 in *Die Neue Rundschau*, "have to found our own church." He was calling upon Europe's critical intelligentsia to become the founding members of this church. Its creed would be the belief in the European spirit as god, and its gospel would preach the rejuvenation of the continent. Mann made the point that this idea was being shared by intellectuals in France as well, and he quoted from Pierre Drieu la Rochelle's book *Mesure de la France*,¹⁷ which had appeared the year before. Heinrich Mann admitted that this author had been a supporter of the war and an extreme nationalist. But the fact

that Drieu la Rochelle was now pleading for European unification and for the foundation of a European church was enough to make him an ally of Mann, at least for the time being. (Later on, when Mann played a leading role in the anti-fascist Popular Front, Drieu la Rochelle became a fascist and a collaborator of German National Socialism.) The church father Heinrich Mann turned out to be a dogmatic and fanatic fundamentalist of the European belief. One does not trust one's eyes when he, an enthusiastic supporter of European enlightenment and of the achievements of the French Revolution, the admirer of Voltaire and Zola, makes statements like the following:

In our church, everything will depend on our unshakable belief. The belief is Europe, and the gospel, its unity. Both must be firm as a rock. No criticism of this belief can be permitted; this is asking much of critical minds. We must be like conspirators and monks. If our obedience were not enlightened it would have to be blind. . . . Ours is the belief, the word, and the name.

The message of this essay could be summarized in one sentence: Europe is our god and Heinrich Mann is its prophet. 1923 was the most critical year of the postwar period. The French had occupied the Ruhr district, and inflation was totally out of control. In this situation of despair and turbulence, all kinds of strange prophets offered radical solutions with new beliefs and new religions, founded new churches and communes.¹⁸ Heinrich Mann was only one among many.

The end of 1923 represented the end of the postwar period. In 1924, the French gave up the occupation of the Ruhr district, and the German monetary system underwent a reform that ended inflation. The ensuing five years between 1924 and 1929 have been called the "roaring" or the "golden" Twenties. In this phase of relative economic stability, the utopia of a united Europe was discussed in more sober terms than immediately after the war. Coudenhove-Kalergi was able to attract thousands of followers into his Pan-European Union and to get leading politicians interested in his vision. In 1924, Heinrich Mann supported him with his article "VSE" (i.e., Vereinigte Staaten von Europa).¹⁹ Other authors, like Willy Haas²⁰ and Thomas Mann, joined in the plea for Franco-German rapprochement. In 1926, Thomas Mann was invited to France by leading French intellectuals. He reported about this visit in his article "Pariser Rechenschaft."²¹ Franco-German cooperation was well under way, and the beginnings of a Western European economic integration were in sight, when the Depression of 1929 and Hitler's victory in 1933 put a temporary end to these encouraging developments.

II

In the 1930s and during World War II, most of the intellectuals who had dealt with the European issue turned to other topics. Thomas and Heinrich Mann as well as Klaus Mann and Fritz von Unruh were exceptions among the exiled

authors. They used their writings on Europe as weapons in the fight against the National Socialist ideology.²² When Hitler himself suddenly discovered the idea of Europe as a tool in his fight against the Soviet Union and the United States, he expected those authors who had remained in Germany to support him in his propaganda efforts.²³ However, nearly all European-oriented writers had emigrated, the members of the inner emigration did not want to participate in this dishonest campaign, and the authors among Hitler's followers could not switch gears from German chauvinism to European cosmopolitanism as quickly as Goebbels expected them to. The only author of some prominence in National Socialist circles who came up with a contribution that might have satisfied the Ministry of Propaganda was Hans Friedrich Blunck, the former President of the Reichsschrifttumskammer. He published an article during the summer of 1944; by that time, however, this ideological support was no longer of any real use in Hitler's war efforts.²⁴

The first German writer to plead for a peaceful European unification after World War II was Ernst Jünger. His treatise *Der Friede*,²⁵ written in 1944, and published immediately after the war had ended, came as a surprise to many a reader who had known Jünger as an author with decidedly militarist and nationalist leanings. Jünger's mutation from the bard of battles to a disciple of the Prince of Peace was not completely successful, although he did everything to make his conversion appear credible. He belonged to those few writers who tried at all costs to make sense of the senselessness and inhumanity of World War II. He talked about the "great treasure of sacrifices" that has to be understood as "the basis for the new edifice of the world." Jünger could be accused of a falsification of history when he glorified the war in terms like the following: "Even in the most distant times, it will always be remembered as a great spectacle when they set out in all countries to fight the deadly battles at the borders, in the oceans, and in the air." The most immense absurdity of this century was transfigured by Jünger into a heroic drama of classical dimensions, as if Homeric warriors were starting a single combat.

It was, however, not this sort of subsequent ideological justification of Hitler's war that spurred the discussion of Jünger's text, but rather the ideas of European unification he had formulated in it. Jünger proceeded on the assumption that, globally speaking, new empires and transnational associations were in the making. Nationalism, he believed, had been consumed by the flame of war; in Europe, the time for unification had finally arrived. "The longing for this unity," Jünger believed, "is older than Charlemagne's crown, yet it was never as burning as it is now." He referred to Switzerland, the United States of America, and the Soviet Union as models for a United States of Europe. Jünger admitted that both the United States and the Soviet Union would influence European politics during the postwar years. Yet he was sure that the continent would become neither American nor Russian. The force of historical gravity and the vast treasure of European heritage would prevent Europe from falling prey to these world powers. Jünger put special emphasis on German-French cooperation, and his hope was

that England would transfer its balance-of-power thinking from the European to the global level. He was convinced that the British would realize that their future lay in Europe, not in their disintegrating Commonwealth of Nations. The major advantage of a united Europe would be, not only the preservation of the endangered world power status but also the resurgence of the European regions. To Jünger's mind, the regions were older than the nations: while most nations possessed artificially drafted borders, the regions had, so to speak, organically grown. He predicted: "As soon as the competition among the national states has vanished, the Alsations can live either as Germans or as French, without being forced into one life-style or the other, but, above all, they will be able to live as Alsations. The new order will mean the regaining of freedom in the regions, the districts, and the towns."

Although these ideas fell short of originality, they were new in the writings of Jünger. Other authors had already said similar things after 1918 at a time when Jünger maintained a position of blind militaristic and nationalistic enthusiasm. Had Jünger and his admirers become supporters of a peaceful European unification process during the 1920s, there might have been a chance to prevent Hitler and his movement from gaining power. It is after the First World War, not just after the Second, that Jünger should have published insights like these: "The nations can follow two roads. One road leads to hate and revenge, and it is certain that on that road the combat will soon start all over again, more fiercely than ever before, and this battle will end in general destruction. The right way, however, leads to cooperation: the forces that consumed each other in deadly fights must cooperate to create the new order and the new life."

Jünger's followers were totally surprised when they heard their master express an admiration for the Catholic Church, and when he introduced himself as a newborn Christian. Europe, Jünger argued, needs the Church for its unification, since it "is the strongest of the old ties that have outlasted the times of national division." The fight against nihilism and for peace would be possible only with the help of the Church. The antimetaphysical and technocratic author of *Der Arbeiter* of 1932 now maintained that the purely technically-oriented politicians should not be entrusted with the roles of leaders. Jünger's point was that "Human beings have to strengthen themselves metaphysically in proportion to the degree that the technical world is developing." The leading figure in the new European house would no longer be "the worker" but "the theologian." Theology would become the most important scholarly discipline, the mother discipline of all other subfields in the realm of knowledge; the best hearts, the finest intellects, the most sophisticated and truly universal minds would be attracted by theology. It is self-evident that the theologians in a United Europe would work toward a reunification of all Christian churches.

The Catholic Church and the Christian religion in general stood in high esteem after World War II. This was documented in the 1948 lectures on Europe by Frank Thieß and Werner Bergengruen.²⁶ Thieß admired the Church for having preserved and cultivated the classical heritage of Greece and Rome over the cen-

turies with nobility and inner firmness. According to him, antiquity reached the level of profundity in occidental culture through the Church. Bergengruen saw it the same way when he wrote: "Antiquity culminates in the Church, no institution but the Church has introduced it to our culture." Antiquity and Christianity were seen as the "heritage in which the painfully divided European nations have always seen their common bondage." Like Jünger, Thieß refused the National Socialist concept of the "New Europe," but both expressed this refusal only after Hitler's defeat. Hitler's plan to make Germany dominate over all other European nations, Thieß argued, was a contradiction in itself, since a league of nations can only be realized on the principles of equality and parity. In a manner similar to the contribution of Hofmannsthal, Zweig, Hesse, and Heinrich Mann thirty years earlier, Thieß and Bergengruen confirmed Europe's "spiritual unity," a unity that in years to come would automatically lead to economic integration and political unification. Customs policies and state treaties would not be able to bring about a united Europe unless a feeling of a common culture among all Europeans existed. Bergengruen was conveying the same message when he wrote: "If we do not achieve a revival of the occidental way of thinking, and if we do not continue to be aware of its foundations, nothing will come of the unification process. European unity must be vital and organic, not mechanical, opportunistic, fueled merely by hopes of prosperity." Both authors turned out to be students of Novalis, who had expressed similar ideas 150 years earlier. And it is, typically, with a Novalis quote from "Christianity and Europe" that Bergengruen ended his lecture: "Be patient, it will, it must come, the holy time of eternal peace."

To a certain degree, as late as 1948, Thieß and Bergengruen had not yet freed themselves from the isolation of their "inner emigration" status during the war. They dreamt themselves back to Romanticism, the Middle Ages, and antiquity but had no part in the explosive intellectual life of the postwar generation. Furthermore, they totally ignored the holocaust and acted as if there had been no qualitative difference between the First and the Second World War. Words like "Jews," "concentration camps," or "gas chambers" are not mentioned in the Europe essays of Jünger, Thieß, and Bergengruen, although Jünger made at least some references to the murder of "entire races" that will remain "the disgrace of the whole century." With their essays, Thieß and Bergengruen contributed more to the prevailing mass-psychological repression of the events of the Third Reich, rather than to the improvement of inter-European relations. As far as the European cultural scene in general was concerned, they were simply out of touch. This becomes obvious when one compares their lectures with Klaus Mann's essay "Europe's Search for a New Credo,"²⁷ written only a couple of months later.

From the outset of his observations, Mann refers to the present as a world of "gas chambers," as "a nightmarish world of Auschwitz." Unlike Thieß and Bergengruen, he is informed about the intellectual debates going on in Europe, and compares the contributions made by authors like Julien Benda, T. S. Eliot, Malraux, Sartre, Cocteau, Aldous Huxley, Jaspers, Camus, and Bertrand Russell.

The essay starts out with the observation that "they are a baffled, insecure group, these European intellectuals, divided and torn." Klaus Mann makes it clear that he is not going to rehash old claims about the European cultural heritage. "The real intellectual," he asserts, "takes nothing for granted. He questions everything. His main characteristic is an infinite *curiosity*." Mann realizes that the bewildered and disoriented European youth is looking for leadership and consolation, for new ideals and hopes, but he himself is not going to offer these. He is not willing to advertise prescriptions against European anxiety and despair. Because of their one-sidedness, he feels uncomfortable in the community of Marxists, of pious Christians, of existentialists, and of believers in science. He realizes that the European culture has been shaken to its very foundations, and that it would be impossible to cure it with monistic ideologies. As early as 1927, the young Klaus Mann had published a book on Europe.²⁸ In it, he had tried to define Europe's course between American capitalism and Soviet communism as a third way that should avoid the extremes and dangers of both the Western and the Eastern systems. Two decades later, in the Cold War situation, Klaus Mann realizes that it has become difficult to maintain this position, which he would still like to defend. He writes: "As East and West face each another threateningly, the battle of ideas claims and absorbs the finest European minds. Detachment, wisdom, and objectivity are considered high treason." As a European, Mann is desperate. he sees the continent endangered by "the two great anti-spiritual powers," by "American money und Russian fanaticism," which leave no room "for intellectual integrity or independence." Neither does he want to become a member of pro-Soviet intellectual circles nor would he like to join the chorus of "shrill hysterical voices" of "fanatical red-baiters." Klaus Mann quotes a Swedish student who expresses his own opinion:

We're licked, we're through. Why not admit it at last? . . . We are compelled to take sides and, by doing so, to betray everything we should defend and cherish. . . . A new movement should be launched by European intellectuals, the movement of despair, the rebellion of the hopeless ones. Instead of trying to appease the powers that be, instead of vindicating the machinations of greedy bankers or the outrages of tyrannical bureaucrats, we ought to go on record with our protest, with an unequivocal expression of our bitterness, our horror. Things have reached a point where only the most dramatic, most radical gesture has a chance to be noticed, to awake the conscience of the blinded, hypnotized masses. I'd like to see hundreds, thousands of intellectuals follow the examples of Virginia Woolf, Ernst Toller, Stefan Zweig, Jan Masaryk. A suicide wave among the world's most distinguished, most celebrated minds would shock the peoples out of their lethargy, would make them realize the extreme gravity of the ordeal man has brought upon himself by his folly and selfishness. . . . Let's resign ourselves to absolute despondency. It's the only sincere attitude, and the only one that can be of any help."

Klaus Mann felt crushed between the dominating ideologies of the time. In his hopelessness, he opted for suicide shortly after he had written this essay on

Europe. "Europe's Search for a New Credo" was Klaus Mann's legacy; it signified the end of the discussion on Europe by German authors for quite some time. The Holocaust with its incomprehensible inhumanity, as well as the division of Germany, of Europe, and of the world into East and West, were the reasons that authors could no longer continue to reflect on Europe in the usual manner. The old proofs of occidental unity, with their ritual incantations of the Greek, Roman, Medieval, Humanistic, and Goethean spirit, had become empty prayer-wheel formulas. Klaus Mann showed that the ideology of the European mind had lost its utopian power and did not offer any help in the postwar situation.

III

The losers are the good Europeans. Looking back at two hundred years of military conflicts between Germany and its neighbors, especially France, one discovers a pattern: while chauvinistic ideologies were used to lead countries into war, the utopia of European unity was instrumentalized by the losing power to recover from defeat. When national self-respect was in question, or even lost, the European honor and the European "joint guarantee"—as Hofmannsthal called it—was rediscovered. The idea of a common European cultural heritage was used as a net to save the fallen angels of nationalistic superciliousness. This was the case between 1799 and 1814, when the authors of the oppressed German states used their essays on Europe in their fight against Napoleon; the situation was similar in 1814 when, after Napoleon's defeat, Saint-Simon and Thierry²⁹ published their vision of a restructured united Europe in which the humiliated Grande Nation would be a respected member; it happened in 1872 when Victor Hugo, after France had been beaten by Germany, demanded the founding of a United States of Europe;³⁰ the pattern showed up again when German and Austrian authors propagated the idea of European cooperation and unity after the two World Wars; and even today, the most fervent advocates of European joint guarantee—with Milan Kundera and György Konrád—come from countries that feel they were the real losers of the Second World War. Kundera's and Konrád's contributions have revitalized the discussion about a European commonwealth. In times of deep national troubles, in years of severe national crises, authors have always rediscovered the history they share, the common culture they live in, and the utopia of political European unity as a goal worth striving for. Utopias describe conditions that have never existed in the past but might become realities in the future. This is also the case with the utopia of a United States of Europe as envisioned by German and Austrian authors from Heinrich Mann and Hugo von Hofmannsthal to Stefan Zweig and Ernst Jünger. Their ideas were too vague to be used as blueprints for any political action; as an expression of opposition against nationalist ideologies, however, they have been a step in the right direction of a more open, more cosmopolitan way of thinking.

These authors were obsessed with the idea of unity and universality, which

is typical of modernist thinking. This type of discussion is not, however, being continued. The new ideas on Europe expressed by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Peter Schneider,³¹ and others go in a different, a postmodernist direction that could be characterized as follows: Instead of an addiction to generalizations, a weakness for the particular; instead of a preference for abstract concepts, an affinity to concrete projects; instead of opening up perspectives of totality, a view on local and regional matters; instead of monistic or dogmatic explanations, a multitude of interpretations; instead of pleas for unification, an interest in diversification; instead of an obsession with unity, the support of pluralistic life-styles; and instead of glorifying the heroic deeds of the past, an interest in the here-and-now of everyday life. Europe is opening up, and so is the discussion on Europe.

Notes

- 1 Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *The New York Review of Books* 31.7 (12 April 1984): 33–38.
- 2 György Konrád, *Antipolitics: An Essay*. Translated from the Hungarian by Richard E. Allen (San Diego, 1984).
- 3 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Ach Europa!* (Frankfurt, 1987). The English translation by Martin Chalmers appeared under the title *Europe, Europe: Forays into a Continent* (New York, 1989).
- 4 Rolf Hellmut Foerster, *Europa: Geschichte einer politischen Idee* (Munich, 1967); Ernst Friedländer, *Wie Europa begann: Die geistigen und politischen Wurzeln der europäischen Einigung* (Cologne, 1968); Friedrich Heer, *Europa: Mutter der Revolutionen* (Stuttgart, 1964); Paul Michael Lützeler, ed., *Europa: Analysen und Visionen der Romantiker* (Frankfurt, 1982); Carl H. Pegg, *Evolution of the European Idea 1914–1932* (Chapel Hill, 1983); Denis de Rougemont, *Europa: Vom Mythos zur Wirklichkeit* (Munich, 1962); and Werner Weidenfeld, ed., *Die Identität Europas* (Munich, 1985).
- 5 Thomas Anz, Joseph Vogl, eds., *Die Dichter und der Krieg: Deutsche Lyrik 1914–1918* (Munich, 1982).
- 6 Hermann Hesse, "'Oh Freunde, nicht diese Töne!'," in his *Betrachtungen* (Frankfurt, 1982), 414–16.
- 7 Annette Kolb, "Die Internationale Rundschau und der Krieg," in her *Briefe einer Deutsch-Französin* (Berlin, 1916), 132–60.
- 8 Heinrich Mann, "Der Europäer," in his *Essays* (Berlin, 1956) 2:55–61.
- 9 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Die Idee Europa: Notizen zu einer Rede," in his *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben: Prosa III* (Frankfurt, 1952), 369–83.
- 10 Rudolf Borchardt, "Gedanken über Schicksal und Aussicht des europäischen Begriffs am Ende des Weltkriegs," in his *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden: Prosa V* (Stuttgart, 1979), 325–34.
- 11 René Schickele, *Überwindung der Grenze: Essays zur deutsch-französischen Verständigung*, ed. Adrien Finck (Kehl/Strasbourg/Basel, 1987); Rudolf Pannwitz, *Europa* (Munich, 1920); Otto Flake, *Zum guten Europäer* (Darmstadt, Berlin, Neuwied, 1959); Kasimir Edschmid, "Aufruf an die revolutionäre französische geistige Jugend," in his *Frühe Schriften* (Neuwied/Berlin, 1970).
- 12 Hermann Hesse, "Die Brüder Karamasow oder Der Untergang Europas: Einfälle bei der Lektüre Dostojewskis," in his *Schriften zur Literatur 2* (Frankfurt, 1972), 320–37.
- 13 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "An Henri Barbusse, Alexandre Mercereau und ihre Freunde," in his *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben: Prosa III*, 436–40; Heinrich Mann, "An Henri Barbusse und seine Freunde," in his *Essays* 2:262.

- 14 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Blick auf den geistigen Zustand Europas," in his *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben: Prosa IV* (Frankfurt, 1955), 75–80.
- 15 Stefan Zweig, *Romain Rolland: Der Mann und das Werk* (Frankfurt, 1923).
- 16 Heinrich Mann, "Coopération économique seulement?," *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 10.119 (1923): 248–53; Heinrich Mann, "Europa: Reich über den Reichen," *Die Neue Rundschau* 34.2 (1923): 577–602. For a more detailed look at Heinrich Mann's position on European matters, compare my article "Heinrich Mann 1923: Die Europa-Idee zwischen Pragmatik und Religionsersatz," *Heinrich Mann Jahrbuch* (1989).
- 17 Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, *Mesure de la France* (Paris, 1922).
- 18 Ulrich Linse, *Barfüßige Propheten: Erlöser der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin, 1983).
- 19 Heinrich Mann, "VSE," in his *Essays* 2:275–85.
- 20 Willy Haas, "Deutschland-Frankreich," in his *Das Spiel mit dem Feuer* (Berlin, 1923), 73–89.
- 21 Thomas Mann, "Pariser Rechenschaft," in his *Über mich selbst: Autobiographische Schriften* (Frankfurt, 1983), 265–354.
- 22 Thomas Mann, "Achtung, Europa!" in his *An die gesittete Welt: Politische Schriften und Reden im Exil* (Frankfurt, 1983), 185–210; Heinrich Mann, "Der deutsche Europäer," in his *Essays* (Berlin, 1962), 3:546–55; Klaus Mann, "Die Jugend und Paneuropa," in his *Auf der Suche nach einem Weg: Aufsätze* (Berlin, 1931) 59–92; Fritz von Unruh, "Europa erwache!," in his *Mächtig seid ihr nicht in Waffen: Reden* (Nuremberg, 1957), 98–115. See my article "Heinrich Manns Europa-Ideen im Exil," in *Heinrich Mann—Sein Werk im Exil*, ed. Helmut Koopmann and Peter-Paul Schneider (Lübeck, 1985), 79–92.
- 23 Compare the National Socialist publication *Europa: Kontinent der Jugend. Festliche Veröffentlichung zur Begründung des Europäischen Jugendverbandes in Wien 1942*. Im Auftrage des Reichsleiters Baldur von Schirach herausgegeben von Gebietsführer Günter Kaufmann (Wien/Leipzig, 1942).
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- 25 Ernst Jünger, "Der Friede," in his *Sämtliche Werke 7: Betrachtungen zur Zeit: Essays Werke* 7 (Stuttgart, 1980).
- 26 Frank Thieß, "Europa als politisches Problem," in his *Vulkanische Zeit: Vorträge, Reden, Aufsätze* (Neustadt, 1948), 87–104; Werner Bergengruen, "Über abendländische Universalität," in his *Mündlich gesprochen* (Zurich, 1963), 331–48.
- 27 Klaus Mann, "Europe's Search for a New Credo," *Tomorrow* 8.10 (June 1949): 5–11. His sister Erika translated the essay freely into German: "Die Heimsuchung des europäischen Geistes," in Klaus Mann, *Heute und Morgen: Schriften zur Zeit*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin (Munich, 1969), 317–38. All citations will be from the English original.
- 28 Klaus Mann, *Heute und Morgen: Zur Situation des jungen geistigen Europas* (Hamburg, 1927).
- 29 Claude Henry de Saint-Simon und Augustin Thierry, *Von dem Wiederaufbau der europäischen Staaten-Gesellschaft*. Trans. from the French by F. Bernhard (Tübingen, 1815); also in *Europäische Annalen* (1815) 1:377–92; 2:58–68, 88–96.
- 30 Victor Hugo, "L'avenir de l'Europe," in his *Actes et Paroles III: Depuis l'Exil 1870–1885* (Paris, 1940), 182–84.
- 31 Peter Schneider, "Plädoyer für eine Kultur des Zweifels," in *Ein Traum von Europa: Literaturmagazin* 22, ed. Hans Christoph Buch (Reinbek, 1988), 14–24.

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