

Fantasies of Friendship: Ernst Jünger and the German Right's Search for
Community in Modernity

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Spring 2014

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Abstract

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This dissertation argues that ideas and experiences of friendship were central to the thinking of German radical conservatives in the twentieth century, from the pre-WWI years to the emergence, beginning in the 1970s, of the New Right.

I approach this issue by examining the role of friendship in the circle around the writer Ernst Jünger (1895-1998). Like many in his generation, Jünger's youthful alienation from a "cold" bourgeois society was felt via a contrast to the intimacy of personal friendship. A WWI soldier, Jünger penned memoirs of the trenches that revealed similar desires for mutual understanding, glorifying wartime comradeship as a bond deeper than words and a return to the "tacit accord" that supposedly marked traditional communities. After 1933, Jünger turned from a right-wing opponent of democracy into a voice of "spiritual resistance" to the Nazi regime. For Jünger and other non-Nazi Germans, friendship was a crucial space of candid communication and nonconformity to the norms of the Third Reich. Jünger's writings from these years also issued coded signals to sympathetic readers to keep alive conservative values for a post-Nazi future. After WWII, Jünger became one of Germany's most controversial figures, a critic of modernity who was at the center of a friendship network that joined the veterans and heirs of Weimar's radical right into a counterculture opposed to what they believed was the decadence of German life. In Jünger's later works, he portrayed friendship as the last true site of community, an idea that shaped the elitist attitudes of new members of the German right.

I use published texts and letters alongside new archival material to make two broad contributions. First, by investigating friendship among twentieth-century German radical conservatives, I bring to light the important work that friendship has done for those facing quintessentially modern problems like alienation and social fragmentation. I argue that the work of friendship for figures like Ernst Jünger has primarily been the provision of needs for affirmation, communication, and mutual understanding. Recognizing these needs helps us see that anxieties about being understood, longings for fellowship, and concerns for the quality of interpersonal relationships have often underlain radical conservatism's explicit ideas about, say, the virtues of "organic" community or the perils of democratic leveling. I show how these needs and anxieties were closely bound up with the radical conservative

critique of modernity, including its elitism, ultra-nationalism, and disdain for mass society and mass culture. It is through friendship, I argue, that German radical conservatives have understood the shortcomings of modern life and envisioned ways to overcome or cope with modernity.

My second contribution is methodological. The study of friendship, I argue, can uncover emotional needs and intimate states of mind that are otherwise difficult for the historian to bring to light. Examining friendship among twentieth-century radical conservatives provides fundamental insights into motives, helping us understand why certain emotional demands were felt at certain moments in German history, and how these emotions in turn drove the decision for particular ideological positions. Asking these questions of the German radical right offers a fresh angle on a group usually dealt with through a reductive focus on cultural pathologies and formal ideology. Taking Ernst Jünger and his many friends and interlocutors as a case study, I provide a rich biographical historicization of German radical conservative thinking as it developed over multiple stages throughout the twentieth century. Stressing recurring needs for communication and mutual understanding, I locate new motives for radical conservative ideas.

To Erin and Augie

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Acknowledgments

It is surely one of the blessings of our democratic age that writers no longer need preface their work with servile bows to princes and bishops, and can instead direct their gratitude to where it most belongs. This dissertation would not exist in the form it does—indeed, may not exist at all—if it were not for the generosity and criticism of friends and colleagues. Together they provided me with invaluable support at every stage of the dissertation, and with the fellowship of dark humor about the graduate school experience. It is appropriate that a dissertation on friendship begin by acknowledging those friends to whom the profoundest debts are owed.

First and foremost is Ryan Acton, whose encouragement and critical intelligence has done the most to shape this dissertation in countless conversations over the course of nearly four years. My research would not have developed as it has were it not for his constructive criticism. (Ryan's fine cooking also nourished the writer at multiple points in the dissertation's latter stages.) A more diffuse but no less profound debt is owed to Tim Anderson, a true Renaissance man, who many years ago provided a tremendous stimulus to my interest in ideas through equally countless conversations over the chessboard, and who has proven one of my most challenging interlocutors ever since. Nick Barr Clingan, my colleague in modern European intellectual history, has been a fantastic source of insights, support, and advice ever since I met him in our first graduate seminar ten years ago. His absence from Berkeley has been felt these last years. Simon Grote, another magnanimous friend and intellectual historian who left Berkeley too soon, has offered more encouragement along the way than he probably realizes. Ryan, Tim, Nick, and Simon have also been unfailingly generous in their willingness to read my work, for which I am grateful.

At Berkeley, I have benefitted from conversations with an extraordinarily talented group of young historians. At the risk of forgetting others, I feel compelled to mention Joe Bohling, Stephen Gross, Mark Sawchuk, Daniel Immerwahr, Andrew Mamo, Chad Denton, Hannah Murphy, Alexis Peri, Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock, Julian Saltman, Robert Nelson, Nu-anh Tran, Siti Keo, Noah Strote, Ben Wurgaft, and Chris Shaw. Though not a historian, Alvin Henry has also been a great source of advice and support.

It was a great privilege to write this dissertation under the guidance of Martin Jay, whose rigor and ingenuity as an intellectual historian has been a tremendous source of inspiration. I have always admired his charitableness in dealing with figures, like Ernst Jünger, who are far from his sensibility and theoretical commitments. To the extent that I manage to approach Jünger in a way both critical and fair-minded, it is thanks to his example. David Bates—another model of rigor and ingenuity in intellectual history—was helpful in pushing me to think about the problems that friendship addresses in different historical moments, and about how Jünger's own project changed from one stage to the next. He also prompted me to think about the dissertation's structure and framing at a time when I was lost in the weeds. John Connelly has provided me with much sage advice at several points about the academic job market, and about how to make my work speak to other historians.

Many other scholars have provided advice and inspiration along the way. Carl Strikwerda, Norman Saul, and William Keel at the University of Kansas nurtured my early efforts at serious historical work and supported my desire to pursue graduate studies. Elliot Neaman and Thomas Frieese shared their knowledge of Jüngeriana and were marvelous collaborators on a side project which bore additional fruit in this one. Tom Brady encouraged me, years ago, to bring more “grace and verve” into my writing—an offhand

remark that I have tried to take seriously. Members of the BTWH and Der Kreis working groups provided welcome community while this project was being written, as well as many perceptive criticisms. I am also grateful to Tim Anderson and Katharina Heidenfelder for their assistance translating several tricky German passages.

Generous financial support for researching and writing this dissertation was provided by the DAAD, the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, and the history department and Graduate Division here at Berkeley. Mabel Lee, the history department graduate secretary, was a source of wise counsel in a number of tight spots—something I am sure most history graduate students passing through Dwinelle would attest to as well.

I am blessed to have a wonderfully loving and close-knit family, who have never been anything less than supportive of my academic work. My father, Rene Bures, fostered my curiosity and love of knowledge through many thousands of trips to the encyclopedia as I was growing up. To him, and to my mother, Rosalee Bures, I owe whatever work ethic I managed to develop. My brothers, Drew and Kyle, and my sister, Amanda, have been a great source of humor over the years. I am also extremely fortunate to have found the same love and support in my in-laws, Doug, Sue, David, and Cory Archer, who welcomed me into their family. I am especially grateful to Doug for the interest he has shown in my work, and for many stimulating conversations over the years. I thank all of you for your love.

An unpayable debt is owed to my wife and best friend, Erin, who knows why. It is to her, and to our son, Augustus, who together brought the most light into my life as this project was completed, that this dissertation is dedicated.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Friendship, Community, Communication, Modernity

[C]ommunication and dialogue have taken on a new specific weight and urgency in modern times, because subjectivity and inwardness have become at once richer and more intensely developed, and more lonely and entrapped, than they ever were before. In such a context, communication and dialogue become both a desperate need and a primary source of delight... One of the things that can make modern life worth living is the enhanced opportunities it offers us—and sometimes even forces on us—to talk together, to reach and understand each other.

– Marshall Berman¹

The visitor to the *Ernst Jünger Haus* is confronted with a miscellany of the quaint and curious. Situated in Wilflingen, a village of a few hundred souls in the rolling south German countryside, the structure itself is a relic, the old baroque-style residence of the former chief forester to the aristocratic Stauffenberg family, whose own estate is just next door. Ernst Jünger—a prolific radical conservative writer and one of twentieth-century Germany’s most controversial figures—took up residence here in 1951, spending the rest of his life in rustic semi-seclusion as a gentleman-scholar in the eighteenth-century mold. Jünger’s passions are reflected in the many collections on display: seashells, crystals, walking sticks, hour glasses, rare books, fossils and taxidermied reptiles, and, above all, beetles, of which some forty thousand are meticulously catalogued. Less immediately striking, however, are the three dozen or so photographs assembled on a window ledge in the study. The visitor is told that here is the *Friedhof der Freunde*—literally the “cemetery of friends”—now preserved as Jünger left it at his own passing in February 1998. Some of those pictured are famous, many are not. The political theorist Carl Schmitt, with whom Jünger enjoyed a relationship as warm in the decade and a half prior to 1945 as it was rocky in the postwar years, is conspicuous in the center, flanked to the right and left by a host of lesser names and private persons.

This dissertation is an attempt to tell the story of friendship among twentieth-century German radical conservatives like Ernst Jünger. As the image of a private “cemetery of friends” suggests, friendship was of unusual importance to Jünger—a passion, one might say, worthy of enshrinement alongside his interest in books and beetles. Taking Jünger and his circle as a case study, I argue that friendship has in fact been central to the thinking of German radical conservative intellectuals throughout the twentieth century, from the pre-WWI years to the emergence, since the 1970s, of the New Right. To be sure, conservatism in

¹ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Preface to the Penguin Edition (New York: Penguin, 1988), 8-9.

modern Germany—even “radical” conservatism—is a heterogeneous phenomenon. Jünger is representative, however, of a constellation of ideas and impulses that in various combinations define a familiar radical conservative sensibility: irrationalism, nationalism, anti-democratic elitism, palingenesis (renewal through violent destruction), cultural despair, disdain for mass society and mass media, suspicion of technology’s intrusion into human life, and an attraction to the presumed rootedness and shared values of traditional communities. This brand of conservatism is radical, not primarily in the political sense of aiming to overthrow existing governments (though it has sometimes done that too), but in the philosophical sense of seeking a root-and-branch critique of a modern world it hopes may one day be transformed.²

By exploring friendship among twentieth-century radical conservatives, this dissertation tries to bring to light the “work” that friendship does in specific historical contexts. While friendship may in some respects be a universal human experience—we have no trouble, for instance, identifying as such the friendships of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, or Achilles and Patroclus—it also exists in time, cut to the measure of different historical conditions.³ I argue that the work of friendship for figures like Ernst Jünger has primarily been the provision of basic needs for affirmation, communication, and mutual understanding. This seemingly unremarkable point is important to recognize because it helps us see that anxieties about being understood, longings for fellowship, and concerns for the quality of interpersonal relationships have often underlain radical conservatism’s formal ideas about, say, the virtues of “organic” community or the perils of democratic leveling. These needs and anxieties are closely bound up with the radical conservative critique of modern life. For this reason, the work of friendship has also often led to an exclusionary politics based in the rhetorical construction of enemies or strangers who lie outside a circle drawn by common values.

Friendship, I contend, is well-suited to illuminating emotional needs and intimate states of mind that are otherwise difficult for the historian to bring into focus. Examining friendship among twentieth-century radical conservatives thus allows us to ask fundamental questions about motives: Why were certain emotional demands felt at certain moments in German history? What feelings drove the decision for particular ideological positions? How did perceived solutions to existential needs change with the passage of time? Asking these questions of the German radical right offers a fresh angle on a group usually dealt with by relating its ideas and values to broader cultural pathologies. Perhaps the closest to a study of the emotional history of German radical conservatism yet undertaken is Klaus Theweleit’s *Male Fantasies* (1977). A brilliant account of the emotional world of proto-fascist German writers (including Jünger) in the 1920s, *Male Fantasies* explores the exaggerated virility and

² On the Weimar-era “conservative revolution” in which this radical conservative sensibility took shape, see Armin Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland. 1918-1932: Ein Handbuch* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlich Buchgesellschaft, 1989) [First published 1949]; Klemens von Klemperer, *Germany’s New Conservatism: Its History and Dilemma in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993); Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1996), and Jerry Z. Muller, “Carl Schmitt, Hans Freyer, and the Radical Conservative Critique of Liberal Democracy in the Weimar Republic,” *History of Political Thought*, 12.4 (Winter 1991), 695-715.

³ On this point, see Horst Hutter, “The Virtue of Solitude and the Vicissitudes of Friendship,” in *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity*, eds. Preston King and Heather Devere (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), 131-147.

anti-feminine animus among men psychologically deformed by the experience of war and the authoritarianism of school and family life in Wilhelmine Germany. Yet Theweleit considers only published works, examines no individual in depth, and does little to relate his findings to other historical moments.⁴ By looking at the longings and anxieties that characterized the experience of friendship for radical conservatives like Jünger at multiple stages throughout the twentieth century, I attempt a more longitudinal and biographically grounded historicization of their thinking. Stressing recurring needs for communication and mutual understanding, I locate different (if not incompatible) motives for radical conservative ideas.

Those familiar with Ernst Jünger may find this focus on friendship and feeling surprising. Jünger's critics have long denounced him for his insensitivity to suffering and callous indifference to normal human concerns. Born in 1895, Jünger emerged from the First World War one of the most decorated officers in the German Army. His ambitiously literary accounts of the "front experience"—the most famous, *Storm of Steel*, appeared as early as 1920—made him an influential interpreter of the war on the postwar scene. In contrast to writers like Erich Marie Remarque, who openly grieved for the lives it destroyed, Jünger celebrated the experience of modern technological warfare, whose horrors, he claimed, had fashioned a new and hardened warrior-elite. Though never a Nazi, Jünger shared much with Nazi ideology, including a loathing for "liberal" values of peace, comfort, and security. His many journalistic salvos in publications on Weimar's radical right celebrated the dissolution of the old bourgeois order and a coming age of "total mobilization" in explosive language that launched him as a leading voice among that motley group of "conservative revolutionary" intellectuals who helped bring National Socialism to power in 1933.

Jünger spent the Second World War as a staff officer in occupied Paris. His published diaries of these years reflected on the war's catastrophes with the same steely detachment and irrepressible need to aestheticize the violence around him that had marked his writings on the First World War. In one infamous scene, Jünger described the results of a bloody May 1944 bombing attack, which he witnessed from the roof of Paris's Hotel Raphael.

The second time around, at dusk, I held in my hand a glass of burgundy swimming with strawberries. The city with its red towers and domes lay in immense beauty, like a flower overflowed in an act of deadly fertilization. All was spectacle, pure power affirmed and enhanced by pain.⁵

Judging such passages, George Steiner wrote that Jünger suffered from a "grave defect of consciousness," an "incapacity to feel" evident in his ability to behold with equanimity the fiery destruction of a city. Jünger may have come "nearer than any other writer, nearer even than the poets, to forcing language into the mould of total war." Yet reading his works,

⁴ See Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols., trans. Stephan Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

⁵ E. Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 27 May 1944 (Munich: DTV, 2008), 270. All translations throughout are mine unless otherwise noted.

Steiner concluded, “one experiences what Emily Dickinson termed a ‘zero at the bone.’”⁶ Similar indictments—mostly from those on the left—are not hard to find. For Andreas Huyssen, Jünger’s gaze from beyond “the realm of feeling, emotion, [or] pain” corresponded “directly to the fascist fantasy of the invincible armored body, whether it be that of the male, the Party, or the nation.”⁷ As another commentator put it, Jünger’s “aestheticization of reality... loses sight of any social reality. One’s fellow creature (*Mitmensch*) ceases to exist.”⁸

This portrait of an aloof and heartless aesthete clashes with Jünger’s tribute to the importance of friendship. Unsurprisingly, those close to Jünger told a different story at various points throughout his life. In a 1931 letter, the illustrator and writer Alfred Kubin, whose novel *The Other Side* (1908) was much admired by Jünger, professed that he belonged to the “very few for whom my pages are nowadays even readable.”⁹ A few years later, Kubin pronounced Jünger a “venerated friend” and proclaimed them both “Einzelgänger” (mavericks), a term as suggestive of isolation as idiosyncrasy.¹⁰ For Carlo Schmid, a postwar leader of Germany’s Social Democratic Party, the “few hours” he spent with Jünger amounted to nothing short of “a patrimony.”¹¹ In December 1978, Schmid wrote to assure Jünger of “the constancy of my friendship.”¹² Perhaps the most arresting testimonial, however, was offered by the historian and NATO general Hans Speidel. Speaking in 1960 at a ceremony in Wilflingen at which Jünger was made an honorary citizen of the town, Speidel called him “a genius of friendship”¹³

There is surely a strange disparity here: a “genius of friendship” with an “incapacity to feel”? A writer oblivious to social reality who erected a private memorial to lost friends? This disparity is enough to tell us that there is something about this allegedly fascist author that the reductive focus on the ideological content of his works has failed to see. The chapters that follow aim to explore this blind spot. They attempt a critical yet sympathetic reconstruction of the “inner view” of Ernst Jünger’s social life. This is less for the sake of understanding Jünger and his works (though much remains to be done to introduce this complex figure to an Anglophone audience¹⁴) than as an effort to understand as historical phenomena what Raymond Williams famously dubbed those “structures of feeling” peculiar to a time and place. For Williams, such “affective elements of consciousness and relationships” transcend “formally held and systematic beliefs” to unite people in terms of

⁶ George Steiner, “The Zero at the Bone,” *Encounter* 35 (July 1970), 72, 76. The reference is to a poem in which Dickinson describes an encounter with a snake, toward whom she felt no “transport of cordiality.” See *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1960), 459-460.

⁷ Andreas Huyssen, “Fortifying the Heart—Totally Ernst Jünger’s Armored Texts,” *New German Critique* 59 (Spring-Summer 1993), 14-15.

⁸ “Kraftlose Utopie,” *Die Zeit*, 29 December 1989.

⁹ Alfred Kubin to E. Jünger, August 1931, in *Ernst Jünger—Alfred Kubin: Eine Begegnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1975).

¹⁰ Alfred Kubin to E. Jünger, 12 January 1938 and 25 March 1943, in *ibid.*

¹¹ Carlo Schmid to E. Jünger, 23 March 1965, A: Ernst Jünger, Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. [Hereafter DLAM.]

¹² Carlo Schmid to E. Jünger, 17 December 1978 (dated “3. Advent 1978”), A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

¹³ Speidel’s remarks were reported in the *Schwäbische Zeitung*, 29 March 1960.

¹⁴ On the reception of Jünger in the English-speaking world, see Eliah Bures and Elliot Neaman, Introduction to Ernst Jünger, *The Adventurous Heart: Figures and Capriccios*, trans. Thomas Frieze (Candor, NY: Telos, 2012), xiii-iii. First published 1938. This volume was a heavily revised version of a text published under a similar title, *The Adventurous Heart: Sketches by Day and Night*, in 1929. The two volumes will hereafter be referred to as *AH1* (1929 version) and *AH2* (1938 version).

“meanings and values that are actively lived and felt.”¹⁵ Attention to Jünger’s understanding and practice of friendship, I contend, offers a rich case study in the “structures of feeling” of twentieth-century German radical conservatives and their ideological and cultural fellow travelers.

Such a perspective from outside—or perhaps beneath—ideology is badly needed in the study of Germany’s twentieth century. “[The] explanatory hegemony of ideology in modern German history,” Alon Confino noted, “is now... a serious constraint on the historical imagination and on developing new narratives that challenge our usual perceptions.” Rather than a “view of ideology as the organizer and arbiter of motivations,” Confino suggested a “history of sensibilities [that] goes beyond the logic of ideological thinking into those emotions and memories that make human motivations and actions, into those images of the self, collectivity and the past that cannot be reduced to ideology.”¹⁶ Somewhat paradoxically, friendship’s peculiar place in modern society offers insights into such elusive elements of mood, feeling, and attitude. As David Halperin noted, friendship’s lack of clear “social and ideological definition” in modern Western cultures gives it an “indeterminate status... outside the more thoroughly codified social networks formed by kinship and sexual ties.”¹⁷ Inexplicable by reference to ideological or institutional affiliations alone, the freely chosen ties of friendship offer a glimpse at those deeper emotions which accompany thought and action, and which often cut across social and political boundaries.¹⁸

Ernst Jünger witnessed five periods of German history—the Wilhelmine era, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, postwar division, and the now reunified Germany—reflecting on each in his copious writings and enjoying a considerable readership in all but the first. The voluminous correspondence he maintained throughout these long years (approximately fifty thousand letters are extant) suggests, if nothing else, an uncommon need for dialogue and fellowship. The range of Jünger’s friends was also impressive, from leftists like Carlo Schmid and the writer Alfred Andersch to radicals like the “National Bolshevik” theorist Ernst Niekisch and the right-wing firebrand Ernst von Salomon. They also ran the professional gamut. To those already mentioned, one might add: Rudolf Schlichter (painter), Alexander Mitscherlich (psychoanalyst), Ernst Klett (publisher), Friedrich Sieburg (journalist), Albert Hofmann (biochemist), Hugo Fischer (philosopher), Valeriu Marcu (historian), Friedrich Hielscher (religion theorist), and Hans Georg Amsel (entomologist). Dozens more could be named. What “meanings and values... actively lived and felt” joined Jünger to such diverse people?

Answering this question will require us to relate Jünger’s reflections on friendship to the political, cultural, and biographical circumstances in which they were produced. This will entail taking Jünger’s ideas seriously while at the same time seeing them as conditioned by experiences and attitudes more broadly shared. Certainly Jünger did not exemplify all Germans or even all radical conservatives. Yet he may be taken as “representative” insofar as his own social imagination was shaped by widely shared patterns of experience and reflected

¹⁵ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132.

¹⁶ See Confino’s contribution to “History of Emotions,” a forum in *German History* 28, no. 1 (2010), 76.

¹⁷ David M. Halperin, “Heroes and their Pals,” in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 75.

¹⁸ On this point, see *Philosophy’s Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking*, eds. Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011). As Kenaan and Ferber argue, “moods are always already there, operative—in this form or another—in structuring our encounter with the world” (4).

common reactions to that experience.¹⁹ A dreamy and somewhat anxious youth who escaped into adventure tales, Jünger felt the same alienation that affected countless sons of middle-class families in the years before the First World War. Like many, he joined the Wandervögel, a youth movement fueled by longings for spiritual renewal and an attraction to the great outdoors as an antidote to the insipid realities of bourgeois life. (Unlike most, Jünger also made an abortive attempt to escape to Africa via the French Foreign Legion.) When the Great War broke out in August 1914, Jünger, aged nineteen, followed his generation into the ranks in yet another effort to break free. He subsequently experienced the same trials on the Western Front and the same postwar disorientation that led thousands to embrace radical solutions to the crises of the Weimar years.

During the Third Reich, Jünger left his revolutionary nationalist phase behind and joined other non-Nazi conservatives in the so-called “inner emigration,” producing veiled critiques of the Nazis and maintaining close contacts with others likewise privately opposed to the regime. Following the Allied victory in 1945, Jünger shared in the opprobrium of many erstwhile radicals whose earlier works and deeds were deemed complicit in the rise of National Socialism, and whose lingering illiberalism was condemned as a malignant residue of Germany’s recent past. Indeed, Jünger’s post-1945 writings—a continuous stream of essays, novels, and diaries—reveal an author who lost none of his previous skepticism about modern society and remained tone deaf to the democratic achievements of the new Federal Republic. No longer a political radical, Jünger now served as something of a guru and icon to others similarly ill at ease amidst the mass culture and hedonistic consumerism of postwar West Germany—a role he has played most notably, if not exclusively, among elements of the New Right. To examine friendship in Jünger’s life and thought is to ask not only what drew Jünger to others, and others to him, at each stage along the way; it is also to ask about the elective affinities structuring and motivating those groups to which he (often

¹⁹ My approach to Ernst Jünger follows, in this respect, Jerry Z. Muller’s understanding of “representative biography” in his *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). According to Muller, such “representative biography” is concerned less with what is unique to a person than with “the social and cultural contexts which [he or she] shared with those who followed a similar intellectual and political trajectory” (4). My method goes beyond this, however, in adapting Elliot Neaman’s suggestion that the “writer’s ideas have an important value for the historian, the measure of which cannot be taken solely by counting readers or book editions. The writer captures concepts, moods, dispositions, and feelings... [A] written work can arguably become representative of a period because, in some mysterious way, it touches deep chords in a culture’s self-understanding.” See *A Dubious Past: Ernst Jünger and the Politics of Literature after Nazism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 3. I have also been influenced by Dirk Moses’s view of the “representativeness” of writers and intellectuals. As Moses argues, such figures can open a window onto the “political emotions” of larger populations by virtue of the fact that “their identity projects are so elaborately articulated in public language” and consequently “embody the affects and unconscious fantasies” about their group identities “in oblique but sometimes disarmingly candid ways.” “Because of the high level of reflection in their thinking,” Moses argues, “intellectuals are more likely to develop internally consistent and coherent positions, and, consequently, we can ‘read off’ the logic and structure of their political emotions from their writings.” See *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 38. Close attention to Jünger’s ideas about friendship in the context of his life and oeuvre stretches this approach beyond narrowly “political” emotions to encompass a larger, yet related, domain of social feelings. A final source of methodological inspiration is Steven Aschheim’s notion of an “intimate chronicle” that goes beyond published works to include more immediate and less guarded sources like letters and diaries. Together, Aschheim argues, these amount to testimonies “revelatory of the most intimate aspects of the private self responding creatively to the vicissitudes of public experience.” See *Scholem, Arendt, Klemperer: Intimate Chronicles in Turbulent Times* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 3-4.

prominently) belonged. By exploring Jünger's relationships and his ideas about them, we are perforce exploring the links and affiliations at play in his various milieux.

Beyond contributing to the history of German radical conservatism, this dissertation also aims to enrich our view of the nature and function of friendship in modern life. Ernst Jünger was supremely sensitive to the alienation and confusion to which the modern subject has long been thought peculiarly prone. The importance of friendship to Jünger and his circle suggests that friendship has been more crucial than historians recognize to attempts to find orientation and stability in a turbulent modern world. Indeed, the crisis character of much of modern history—the breakdown of traditional bonds, the perceived loss of values, the insecurity created by successive political and economic disasters—may have made friendships more important than ever before. Mark Peel puts it well when he argues that, “[m]ore than family, kin, or faith, friendship was the social glue of modernity... To the extent that the twentieth century exposed more people to both the perils and possibilities of change, it also saw their growing reliance upon friendship.”²⁰

This argument for the productive “work” of modern friendship contrasts with a more skeptical view which holds that friendship is thwarted or diminished under modern conditions. Not coincidentally, this skepticism dates to the same period in which Ernst Jünger came of age. In the years surrounding the First World War a number of historical and philosophical studies were published which argued that the richness of friendship as it existed in the past had become difficult to realize in modern society. Intimate personal friendships, it was claimed, had been replaced by more shallow or ephemeral relationships such as workplace colleagueship, military comradeship, and the sympathetic acquaintanceship that comes from common membership in sports clubs, religious organizations, or political leagues.²¹ A good example of this diagnosis was provided by the sociologist Georg Simmel. The ideal of friendship inherited from antiquity, Simmel wrote in 1908, was based on the “absolute psychological intimacy” of persons in their totality. Making a claim on the “undivided ego,” classical friendship was thus unlikely, if not impossible, in an age marked by anonymity, hyper-individualization, social upheaval, and a flurry of competing interests and aims.

Modern man, possibly, has too much to hide to sustain a friendship in the ancient sense... [The] modern way of feeling tends more heavily toward differentiated friendships, which cover only one side of the personality, without playing into other aspects of it... These differentiated friendships which connect us with one individual in terms of affection, with another in terms of common intellectual aspects, with a third, in terms of religious impulses, and with a fourth, in terms of common experiences—all these friendships present a very peculiar synthesis in regard to questions of discretion, of reciprocal revelation and concealment. They require that the friends do not look into those mutual spheres of interest and feeling which, after

²⁰ Mark Peel, “New Worlds of Friendship: The Early Twentieth Century,” in *Friendship: A History*, ed. Barbara Caine (London and Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2009), 279.

²¹ In addition to the works discussed below, see, for example, Alexander von Gleichen-Russwurm, *Freundschaft, Ein psychologische Forschungsreise* (Stuttgart: J. Hoffmann, 1911); Siegfried Placzek, *Freundschaft und Sexualität* (Bonn: Weber, 1919); and the 1921 dissertation by the sociologist Albert Salomon, “Der Freundschaftskult im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland. Versuch zur Soziologie einer Lebensform,” reprinted in Albert Salomon *Werke*, Vol. 1, eds. Peter Gostmann and Gerhard Wagner (Wiesbad: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008), 81-134.

all, are not included in the relation and which, if touched upon, would make them feel painfully the limits of their mutual understanding.²²

Simmel held out the possibility that the “ultimate roots of the personality” could still be nourished by such friendships. He was nonetheless clear that the “reservations and discretions” that had come to inhabit friendship were not an issue when “less differentiated epochs and persons connect only with a common *total* sphere of life.”²³

A related account of the role of friendship in modern life was published by the cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer in two essays between 1917 and 1921. In what was likely the most sophisticated analysis of friendship published in the German language in the twentieth century,²⁴ Kracauer reflected on contemporary forms of social belonging, drawing a clear line between friendly yet circumscribed relationships, such as those among colleagues and coworkers, and the richness of truly intimate friendships. Like Simmel, Kracauer held that friendship encompassed and developed the whole personality. Modern conditions, however, required that we “fragment [ourselves] in a thousand walks of life.” “Many, all-too-many people,” Kracauer wrote, found their “communication needs” satisfied by such partial relationships.²⁵

But there were also many who felt the urge to bring their entire being into communion with another. Writing in the confusing aftermath of the First World War, Kracauer proposed friendship as a model for those who longed for a shared inner life.

They feel that in us the fragments of an inherited morality, which no longer corresponds to their existence, impels their being. They suffer from this, without knowing where a replacement for these dead, bloodless remains is to be found. Too proud to let themselves be passively stamped like a piece of wax by the various tendencies and colorful demands of the present day, too profound to want to be a mere copy of the outer bewilderment, they seek with all the passion of their souls a new morality that will give their life goal and direction. They strive for a unified constitution of their being, beyond the unsatisfying turmoil into which the individual is cast by our economic and social relations, with their countless contradictions and unresolved conflicts.²⁶

For Kracauer, the work of friendship in a crisis-ridden age was not simply personal, a locus of belonging that served to “unfold” the self. As a “community of shared disposition and

²² Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and ed., Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), 325-326. Horst Hutter provides a similar assessment: “In modern industrial society, whose form of organic solidarity is largely based on a ‘complementary differentiation’ of social roles and subgroups, individuals are constantly thwarted in their search for friendship. The specificity of the patterns of role-requirements, which is a result of the complementarity of roles, prevents diffuse and total relationships. The relationships of the individual are fragmented into many specific parts. He needs to relate to another always only with a part of his personality. Few of these partial relationships ever become total.” Horst Hutter, *Politics as Friendship* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1978), 178.

²³ *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, 326.

²⁴ One reviewer suggested in 1972 that no comparable investigation of friendship had appeared since the early nineteenth century. See Johann Siering, “Review of Siegfried Kracauer: *Über die Freundschaft*,” *Neue Deutsche Hefte* 19, no. 2 (1972), 178-179.

²⁵ Siegfried Kracauer, *Über die Freundschaft*, ed. Karsten Witte (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 24, 46-47.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

ideals comprised of free, independent individuals,” friendship was also a touchstone for thinking about community and relation per se.²⁷ According to Gerhard Richter, friendship functioned for Kracauer as “the primal scene” of a “just politics of community,” balancing identity and non-identity, closeness and distance, in a manner that pointed to an ideal democratic community in which the individual would be neither lonely and alienated nor simply absorbed into some essential collectivity.²⁸ For Kracauer, in other words, reflecting on friendship was a way to talk about the needs and shortcomings of modern social life. Where one’s sense of “connection to the polis fades,” Karsten Witte remarked, “thinking about friendship increases.”²⁹

Theorists like Simmel and Kracauer can help us begin to see how friendship could appear as a *modern* problem, and how thinking about friendship could help address the demands of the present. For Ernst Jünger, one modernist preoccupation especially loomed large in connection to friendship, what we can call the problem of intimate communication. Marshall Berman captures this well when he observes that, in modern times, “subjectivity and inwardness have become at once richer and more intensely developed, and more lonely and entrapped, than they ever were before. In such a context, communication and dialogue become both a desperate need and a primary source of delight.”³⁰ The “specific weight and urgency” of communication that Berman attributes to modernity is one of the central motives—perhaps *the* central motive—in Jünger’s nearly eighty-year career as a writer. It is also the overarching condition within which our exploration of his understanding of friendship will unfold.

Jünger himself provided a succinct statement of this problem and its relationship to friendship on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. In a letter of thanks privately circulated to “friends and readers,” he painted a self-portrait of his life as an author in which he emerges as the quintessential alienated modern thinker. “From the beginning,” Jünger wrote,

the feeling of not being conformable to the prevailing order plagued me, be it determined politically by the monarchy, the republics, or dictatorship, fed economically by homo faber and his offshoots, or theologically de-mystified by clever chaps (*Fuchsgeister*). Thus I always had to swim against a steady stream, usually with reluctance, sometimes also with pleasure.³¹

Noting that he had often felt like “a stranger in one’s own land” and had avoided entering into the polemics surrounding his works, Jünger concluded with a gesture of “self-criticism.” Perfection as a writer, he wrote, was unattainable, for “despite ceaseless efforts the utmost (*das Letzte*) cannot be wrung out of words. They remain echoes.” It was in this sense that the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁸ See Gerhard Richter, “Siegfried Kracauer and the Folds of Friendship,” *The German Quarterly* 70 (Summer 1997), 242-244. Kracauer’s works, Richter suggests, are centrally concerned with the “modern subject... [as] a construct that must be thought as the configuration of its relations” (234). A good example of Kracauer’s concern for relation and subject formation in his overt works of cultural criticism is “The Group as Bearer of Ideas,” in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed., Thomas Y. Levin (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 143-170.

²⁹ Karsten Witte, Afterword to *Über die Freundschaft*, 99.

³⁰ See note 1. Kracauer expresses much the same idea, describing a desire to communicate, not just a part of one’s self, but “traversing threads” that arise from one’s “inner spring.” *Über die Freundschaft*, 20.

³¹ The letter is undated, but was almost certainly composed within weeks of Jünger’s eightieth birthday on March 29, 1975. Mappe 8, D: Friedrich Georg Jünger, DLAM.

“presence” and “participation” of friends and readers had always been essential. Indeed, Jünger blurred the line between personal friends and those unknown yet friendly readers whose affections he also wished to acknowledge. The friend/reader, he proclaimed, “encounters the author in a profundity that words aim for but never reach. Here there is a mutual understanding that I daily experience, but which can only be gingerly touched.”³² Jünger’s manifest graphomania bears witness to his need to find communication through and beyond words.

These sentiments were by no means unique to Ernst Jünger. The problem of an entrapped subjectivity finding avenues of communication and mutual understanding was a common theme in the world in which Jünger received his intellectual formation. Its archetypal formulation was supplied by those early twentieth-century Viennese writers and theorists—Fritz Mauthner, Robert Musil, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, among others—for whom the inadequacy of language to express ultimate values or one’s innermost being had become a burning existential issue. “As soon as we really have something to say,” Mauthner avowed, “we are forced to be silent.”³³ In Hofmannsthal’s influential *Letter of Lord Chandos* (1902), the correspondent confessed to having “lost completely the ability to think or speak of anything coherently,” a special source of “anguish” and “loneliness” given the “iridescent colouring” of his every thought and sensation.³⁴ What was unique to Jünger, however, was his persistence, throughout his long life, in imagining friendship and its variants—comradeship, kinship, spiritual brotherhood—as spaces within which communication remained possible.

Here we also find a key to Jünger’s essential conservatism. Like many (if by no means all) twentieth-century German conservatives, Jünger responded to the modern breakdown of tradition and the erosion of once-stable authorities by embracing supposedly timeless truths and universal conditions.³⁵ Absent the traditional world’s collective domain of experience, any generally valid claim about the nature of human life, Jünger came to believe, required distilling the universal from his own subjective experience; only in this way could communication within a shared horizon of meaning be restored. According to Marcus Bullock, the fruits of Jünger’s quasi-phenomenological approach were the primal realities of

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Quoted in Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein’s Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 131.

³⁴ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “The Letter of Lord Chandos,” trans. Tania and James Stern, in *The Whole Difference: Selected Writings of Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 73-74. For a general treatment of this theme, see Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*, esp. chs. 4-5; and Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Editor’s Introduction” to Martin Buber, *Ecstatic Confessions*, trans. Esther Cameron (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), xiii-xxx.

³⁵ Dirk van Laak notes that, from its roots in Weimar’s conservative revolution, post-1945 German conservatism “split into two major currents: a pragmatic one stressing the importance of institutions and denying the relevance of ideologies, and a Christian current stressing the importance of eternal values against the repercussions of modernity and secularization.” Though Jünger shared a technocratic turn of mind most often associated with postwar “institutionalist” conservatives like Ernst Forsthoff and Arnold Gehlen, he had far more in common with the latter current’s resort to unchanging metaphysical realities. See “From the Conservative Revolution to Technocratic Conservatism,” in *German Ideologies Since 1945: Studies in the Political Thought and Culture of the Bonn Republic*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 148. Elliot Neaman persuasively argues that Jünger’s greatest affinity in his later years was to “spiritual reactionaries” like Botho Strauß and Heiner Müller. As Neaman puts it, such spiritual reactionaries “share a common distaste for the commercial aspects of modernity and deplore the alleged degeneration of European art and literature as a result of globalization.” See *A Dubious Past*, 257-260.

“conflict, struggle, sacrifice, domination, and violence,” inescapable conditions of human life which it was useless to deny. By identifying such anthropological constants, Jünger believed he had found a basis for intimate communication—communication arising, that is, from the depths of one’s inner life—with others who shared his reading of human experience. In Bullock’s view, Jünger’s flair for reading objects and situations as allegories of some deeper reality resulted in “a lonely labor that never reaches into another human presence.” Shared subjectivity, in other words, did not amount to true intersubjectivity. Correct about the nature of Jünger’s aims as a writer, Bullock nonetheless errs in deeming his project a “lonely labor.”³⁶ Though the unhappy realities of Nazi rule would temper his utopian fantasies, Jünger was remarkably successful in finding the fellowship he sought. Grasping upfront Jünger’s need for communication already tells us much about his need for friendship.

Chapter two carries this story from Ernst Jünger’s youth in Wihelmine Germany through the start of his political activism after World War One. Adding Jünger’s adolescent experience to the testimonies of contemporaries, I argue for the need to see the alienation of early twentieth-century German youth as, in part, a longing for friendship and communication. I then turn to Jünger’s wartime experience, drawing on his extensive and virtually unexamined original war diaries to understand both his view at the time of the social world of the trenches and the imperatives governing his later mythologization of that experience. My main concern is to understand the appeal of military comradeship as a model of social renewal throughout the interwar years. I show how Jünger’s turn to comradeship—a relation I take pains to distinguish from friendship—was driven by a need, widely felt among returning veterans, to communicate the meaning of the “front experience.” Comrades who experienced violence together, Jünger came to believe, had forged a bond deeper than words. This tacit understanding was appealing because it united people prior to the need for language, and thus enabled a feeling of mutual comprehension among those who had undergone the difficult-to-describe shocks and traumas of the war. In a flurry of political writings published in the mid-1920s, Jünger proselytized a “new nationalism” that appealed to this sub-linguistic level of mutual understanding. Wartime comradeship, he believed, could become the model for a nation revitalized by collective struggle and return society to the supposed harmony of traditional organic communities.

Jünger’s response to the failure of his nationalist project to mobilize a mass following is the subject of chapter three. Beginning with the first edition of *The Adventurous Heart* (1929), Jünger acknowledged the need to articulate better his visions, embracing a vanguard project that saw literature as an instrument to rally a radical elite capable of liquidating the bourgeois-liberal order. The rarefied communication among a self-styled aristocracy of friends and friendly readers, not military comradeship, would inform his work from this point on. Jünger’s search for a fellowship of militant dissent, I argue, helps bring into focus a form of “idealist” friendship devoted to exalted goals of cultural renewal. Attractive to radical conservative intellectuals across Europe, such idealist friendships shaped the “friend-foe” imagination of the interwar years. My analysis provides the first account of this “friend-

³⁶ Marcus P. Bullock, *The Violent Eye: Ernst Jünger’s Visions and Revisions on the European Right* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 29, 176. I consider Bullock’s account of Jünger’s oeuvre one of the most compelling to have appeared in any language. My disagreement consists in finding practical success where Bullock, writing from a greater biographical remove, finds a “lonely” failure to secure communication and companionship.

foe” constellation, and of the close friendship between Jünger and Carl Schmitt (a far more famous theorist of political enmity), from Jünger’s perspective.

Chapter four continues the story of Jünger’s project through the Nazi years, during which he left political activism behind and entered the inner emigration. Confronted with what he deemed the metaphysical emptiness of National Socialism, Jünger retreated into a private sphere populated by non-Nazi friends who shared his (decidedly unheroic) “spiritual” resistance to Hitler. At the same time, he produced allegorical writings which communicated attitudes of inner opposition to the regime’s scattered critics. In doing so, Jünger adapted his earlier vanguardism to a new end: the cultivation of a spiritual elite which would rescue Western civilization from the “nihilism” of a condition divorced from transcendent values. But Jünger’s continuing reliance on “primal” experiences as a source of eternal verities necessarily limited his role to that of an oracular poet-philosopher, promising to initiate readers into the truth at the heart of reality.

Chapter five concludes by considering Jünger’s post-1945 career, a period in which he came to inhabit a strange position. Lauded by some as an elder statesman of German letters, a figure of Goethe-like eminence, Jünger was despised by others as one of Weimar’s “grave diggers,” a role many feared he was eager to reprise under the new West German republic. Combining accounts of Jünger’s “circle” with depictions of friendships and countersocieties in his postwar works, I show how Jünger both theorized and practiced an influential form of countercultural resistance. Continuing the retreat into private life and reliance on esoteric communication that he perfected under the Third Reich, Jünger served, after 1945, as a model of non-conformity to other radical conservatives in Germany and abroad. Far from orchestrating a return to fascism, Jünger was concerned to find a way of being “at home” in a modern world he thought beyond redemption and from which he felt deeply estranged. Committed to communication despite the limits of language and to cultivating a view of life at odds with the world around him, Jünger’s career, I argue, represents one of the most elaborate and sustained countercultural projects in the twentieth century.

Chapter 2

Imagined Comrades: Rewriting the Great War, 1914-1925

Now, the war, at any rate on the Western Front, was waged by battalions, not by individuals, by bands of men who, if the spirit were right, lived in such intimacy that they became part of one another. The familiar phrase, “a happy Battalion,” has a deep meaning, for it symbolises that fellowship of the trenches which was such a unique and unforgettable experience for all who shared in it, redeeming the sordidness and stupidity of the war by a quickening of the sense of interdependence and sympathy.

– B. H. Liddell Hart

At the front one had no genuine personal contact... I want to tell you something, in a battle like later on at Douaumont you no longer know the other person... One also has no interest in the other; you only see that you do your duty and make it back.

– Anonymous German WWI Veteran³⁷

Ernst Jünger’s problem, the East German dramatist Heiner Müller once observed, was “a problem of his century: before women could be an experience for him, it was war.”³⁸ A similar diagnosis was expressed by J. P. Stern, who saw in Jünger a writer wholly fashioned by the Great War: “[its] atmosphere, its language, the scale of values it imposed upon him, the shock and the numbing of sensibility—all this remain[ed] firmly imprinted on his mind.”³⁹ The notion that Jünger’s sentimental education came amidst the mud and shell fire of the Western Front corresponds, not coincidentally, to the budding author’s own self-image. “War,” he proclaimed in 1922, “has hammered, chiseled, and hardened us into what we are. And so long as life’s whirring wheel spins within us, this war will be the axle around which it spins.”⁴⁰

This chapter challenges the received view (shared by the author himself in the 1920s) that Jünger’s emotional world was decisively shaped by the World War One “front

³⁷ B. H. Liddell Hart, Foreword to *Twelve Days*, by Sidney Rogerson (London: Barker, 1933), viii; Wolf-Rüdiger Osburg, ed., *Hineingeworfen: Der Erste Weltkrieg in den Erinnerungen seiner Teilnehmer* (Berlin: Osburg, 2009), 253.

³⁸ Heiner Müller, *Werke*, vol. 9, *Krieg ohne Schlacht. Leben in Zwei Diktaturen*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 221.

³⁹ J. P. Stern, *Ernst Jünger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 10.

⁴⁰ Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1922), 2.

experience.” Attention to Jünger’s social imagination in the years spanning the war, I claim, reveals persistent longings for mutual understanding and interpersonal connection which the Great War neither created nor altered. Jünger’s outlet for these feelings, before and *during* the war, was elitist friendships with individuals he thought shared his own “adventurous” spirit. Only in the postwar chaos, when Jünger was faced with the need to make sense of his wartime experience and communicate its meaning to others, did comradeship come to seem the essential social experience of the war years. My aim in what follows is to understand why the supposed camaraderie of the trenches was thought to offer solutions to postwar problems, not just among those wannabe warriors and armchair theorists who invoked it, but also among those who, like Jünger, had known the war’s realities at first hand. For Jünger and others, I argue, the tacit understanding shared by men who had gone through the “indescribable” experience of the war proved a seductive model of belonging, a form of community they thought could overcome the fragmentation of postwar German society. Jünger’s appeal to tacitness—and indeed to a kind of taciturn modern man who has no need to mince words, the so-called “strong silent type” *avant la lettre*—should be seen as belonging to the “male fundamentalism” of Jünger’s war writings and nationalist polemics during the Weimar years.⁴¹

So large has the First World War loomed in the critical literature on Ernst Jünger that it is worth observing at the start that Jünger had essentially ceased writing about the conflict by 1929, just as the great boom in war memoirs and trench novels was getting under way.⁴² In a 1966 interview, Jünger reminisced on the process of “coming to terms” with Germany’s defeat in the war: “Our fathers had set us a task—why hadn’t we accomplished it? Then there was the discrepancy between our effort and its outcome. The red world, from which we emerged, was replaced by a gray one. It took ten years before I managed to clear that off my soul.”⁴³ The psychic burden of this transition from the war’s “red” world to the depressingly “gray” postwar years is today not easy for us to imagine. The returning front soldier, Jünger recalled in 1925, was overwhelmed by “inner loneliness” and a feeling of “complete spiritual abandonment.” Accustomed during the war to “doing without everything that makes life worth living for values that are larger and more encompassing than the fate of an individual,” the front soldier came home to a “naked and greedy individualism,” a “display of hunger and cowardice that gave itself a veneer of idealism through the presumptuous title of revolution.” In these conditions, Jünger maintained, the veteran could only feel “sorrow and humiliation” over the demise of the front soldier’s “old way of doing things” (*alten Form*).⁴⁴

These two very different recollections suggest two caveats in relation to Ernst Jünger and the First World War. For one, we should be wary of too readily finding the war’s imprint on every facet of Jünger’s life and works. The trauma of the Great War, he believed, was an experience to be worked through and, if possible, left behind. What’s more, the war’s

⁴¹ See Bernd Weisbrod, “Military Violence and Male Fundamentalism: Ernst Jünger’s Contribution to the Conservative Revolution,” trans. Pamela E. Selwyn, *History Workshop Journal* 49 (2000), 69-94.

⁴² This tide, especially pronounced in Germany and Great Britain, was heralded most famously (and lucratively) by Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), which sold some 2.5 million copies in multiple languages in its first 15 months in print. See Modris Eksteins, “All Quiet on the Western Front and the Fate of a War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 15, no. 2 (April 1980), 345-366.

⁴³ Interview with H. L. Arnold, first published as “Stendhal war mein Meister,” *Die Zeit*, 28 October 2010.

⁴⁴ Jünger, “Revolution und Frontsoldatentum,” *Gewissen*, 31 August 1925, reprinted in *Politische Publizistik*, ed. Sven Olaf Berggötz (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), 57, 60-61.

dispiriting aftermath—the limbless pedestrians, the violent unrest, the palpable absence of anything commensurate with the sacrifices endured—has to be seen as no less an influence on our subject than the war itself. Jünger’s postwar attitudes, in other words, are unintelligible with reference to his war experience alone. My argument in this chapter depends on recognizing this first postwar decade as, in many ways, an aberration in the larger arc of Jünger’s existence, a period of disorientation and groping for solutions to an “inner loneliness” which Jünger was by no means alone in feeling, and which he first learned to overcome through the retrospective discovery of wartime comradeship.

To a degree unmatched by the other Great Powers, Germany’s march to war in August 1914 was sold as a project of national *Vergemeinschaftung*—the making of a unified national community out of a society fractured along regional, religious, and class lines. Solidarity in the face of external enemies, it was thought, would “integrate workers into national life,” “break down the caste mentalities of middle-class Germans,” and “disarm the deference demanded by the country’s elites,” creating an inclusive—and distinctly populist—sense of nationhood summed up in the slogan “peace in the fortress.”⁴⁵ The task Jünger’s generation was handed was not just victory on the field or the assertion of German *Kultur* but the realization thereby of this more nebulous “spirit of 1914.” Though in many ways a manufactured image that did not accord with facts,⁴⁶ the enthusiasm that followed the declaration of war was real enough to remain a powerful memory, a touchstone for a true *Volksgemeinschaft* (“people’s community”) united within and unassailable from without.

The dramatist Carl Zuckmayer, seventeen at the time and on vacation with his family in Holland, recounted the experience of returning to Germany on July 31, 1914. Only days before a brooding youth “filled with tragic *Weltschmerz* and bitterness toward ‘society,’” Zuckmayer recalled how a “tingling current” entered him “with every mile we rode through German territory.”

This new sensation... set up a penetrating warmth in body and soul, a trance-like delight, an almost voluptuous pleasure in shared experience, in being a part of all this. I later felt such states of superillumination and euphoria once or twice more at the front, before moving forward for an attack; otherwise, never again... There was no longer any separation, any distance. Nor was [the war] any longer bad or terrible, since it was happening to all, and I was one among many, interchangeable with any other. The meaning of vicariousness, on which all human society is based, overpowered us all at the time, without reflection, with an almost religious force. It

⁴⁵ Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 38-40. The French notion of a “sacred union” (*Union sacrée*), proclaimed by President Raymond Poincaré in the war’s first days, comes close to this German hope. The “sacred union,” however, stressed less a generalized healing of the social body than a set of specifically political reconciliations – socialists with nationalists, republicans with the army and the Catholic Church – among factions long at loggerheads under the Third Republic. See Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27-29. In Great Britain, an arguably no less fractured polity, the integration was likewise predominantly political. Whereas just months before Britain had been violently divided over the questions of women’s suffrage and Irish Home Rule, by August 1914, George Dangerfield famously observed, “an almost incredible vigor animated and united every one of her warring particles.” See *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 340.

⁴⁶ See Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and the Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

was an anticipation of what was later called, in a much-abused, stale, but highly meaningful word, ‘comradeship.’⁴⁷

Even if, as we shall see, Ernst Jünger was not fired in August 1914 by any such conspicuous sense of national belonging, he soon gravitated, amidst the postwar confusion, to this quasi-phenomenological view of comradeship as among the war’s most precious revelations. The so-called *Frontgemeinschaft*—the *feeling* of community at the front—became a model for healing a fragmented postwar society, a prefiguration of an integrated world transcending all rank and class divisions. Whereas Zuckmayer returned to civilian life and moved steadily to the left, Jünger, like many other veterans, moved to the right.

Representing the Great War

Understanding why Jünger and others were bewitched by the *Frontgemeinschaft* requires understanding the crisis of representation created by the war.⁴⁸ “Few issues were as highly contested in Germany between 1918 and 1933,” Wolfgang Iser observed, “as the question of how to render ‘meaning’ unto a war that had left nearly two million dead and nearly five million wounded and furthermore had left Germany the vanquished opponent charged by the Treaty of Versailles with being the sole culprit for the war’s outbreak and devastation.”⁴⁹ Whereas France or Britain could find sense in the war, however implausibly, by pointing to tangible gains—the repatriation of Alsace-Lorraine, say, or new colonial “mandates” in Africa and the Near East—Germans were necessarily pressed to greater imaginative leaps in any attempt to secure a meaning for the conflict. For some, the gulf between the war’s realities and its postwar issue simply could not be bridged. Under these conditions, the war seemed to be what Remarque famously condemned it as: “a completely meaningless surface of things linked to an abyss of suffering.”⁵⁰ According to this turn of mind, it was the Great War’s seeming futility, its air of having followed a deranged logic beyond human control, in short its absurdity, which made it “the threshold in the crisis of representation of modern warfare.”⁵¹

Even for those who resisted such a view, the specter of absurdity haunted efforts to portray the war. John King, in the most incisive study of Jünger’s war writings yet produced, has shown how the war experience generated a peculiarly crisis-ridden “conservative imagination.” In King’s telling, trench warfare’s very extremity had delivered the *coup de grace* to the reigning assumptions of “classical modernity.” Yet the collapse of these beliefs—the trust in an autonomous self able to know, represent, and control the world, together with a

⁴⁷ Carl Zuckmayer, *A Part of Myself*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 139-143.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the problem of representing traumatic historical events, see *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution,”* ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁴⁹ Wolfgang Iser, *Literature at War, 1914-1940: Representing the “Time of Greatness” in Germany* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 15-16.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Michael Minden, “The First World War and its aftermath in the German novel,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. Graham Bartram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148.

⁵¹ Bernd Hüppauf, “Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation,” *New German Critique* 59 (Spring-Summer 1993), 49. Hüppauf is primarily concerned here with photographic and cinematic, rather than literary, representations of modern war.

faith in totalizing metanarratives—triggered a disorientation that led to attempts by many artists and intellectuals to rebuild these “logocentric” assumptions.⁵² The result was a highly unstable mixture. Inescapably aware that the Great War had been filled with inscrutable events whose place in the grand scheme of things was opaque to the common soldier, and with clear memories of powerlessness and loss of control, many war writers struggled to remain true to their experience while also searching it for evidence on which a satisfyingly closed and coherent picture of the war might still be constructed. These conflicting impulses gave rise to profoundly fissured works, accounts desperate to invest the Great War with meaning (and its combatants with agency) while at the same time betraying deep uncertainties about their ability to do so. In King’s view, the turn to radical right-wing politics was an outgrowth of this crisis mentality, an effort to “re-ground modernity” through new metanarratives, the assertion of the nation as a heroic (if collective) subject, and a revolutionary transformation that would resolve at one blow the perplexities and conflicts of the postwar world. The sense of futility, however, was not easily exorcised; among those, like Jünger, who sought something redemptive in the war’s violence, there nonetheless remained a feeling of “of absurdity and despair that resulted directly from the deeply and critically disturbing experience of war and defeat.”⁵³

Certainly the much-touted *Volksgemeinschaft* had failed to endure. Already in 1915, Max Weber could muse that the war was being prolonged out of fear “of the domestic political consequences that will inevitably set in, given the foolish expectations” that had “run riot” in August 1914.⁵⁴ Even in the front lines the experience of community had remained elusive. As Matthias Schöning argued, the many post-WWI German novels and memoirs which take life at the front as their subject “cling to the ideal of community but are unable to report on its attainment.” Whatever its political thrust, literary depiction of the trenches presupposed an effort at realism, without which any verdict on the war risked falling flat. According to Schöning, the great unifying theme of these war writings was not the experience of community or even the confrontation with the enemy, but rather the “exposure” (*Ausgesetztheit*) of the individual soldier, a dimension of the war experience whose special attention in postwar German literature reflected the “disappointment of expectation by reality.”⁵⁵

The loudest and most effective celebrants of the *Frontgemeinschaft*, however, had no such compunctions about verisimilitude. In a calculated attempt to broaden their political appeal after 1925, the Nazi movement repeatedly invoked the camaraderie supposedly known by German soldiers during the war. Hitler himself “shamelessly invented” a version

⁵² John King, *Writing and Rewriting the First World War: Ernst Jünger and the Crisis of the conservative Imagination, 1914-25* (Dissertation: Oxford University, 1999), 3-5, 16, 280. As King recognizes, these “classical modern” assumptions were already tottering, by 1914, under the combined assault of revolutions in philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and the natural sciences. See pp. 48-56. King’s study has appeared in German as *Wann hat dieser Scheißkrieg ein Ende? Writing and Rewriting the First World War*, trans. Till Kinzel (Schnellroda: Edition Antaios, 2003). All references here and below will be to the original English version: http://www.juenger.org/pdf/THESIS_27_12_1999.pdf.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9, 251-252, 279.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 24. Weber’s essay remained unpublished at the time.

⁵⁵ Matthias Schöning, *Versprengte Gemeinschaft. Kriegsräume und intellektuelle Mobilisierung in Deutschland, 1914-1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 8, 11-12. Schöning suggests that this inability to portray the war’s realization of the “spirit of 1914” prompted many war writers to envision ever more radical means for its fulfillment.

of his wartime service “that allowed him to recount how he... had experienced the comradeship of the *Frontgemeinschaft* and how he had used these experiences to develop his ideas about what form Germany’s future should take.” Puff pieces by Hitler’s former “comrades” were produced and circulated, while other less flattering accounts were discredited or suppressed.⁵⁶ Only as outright fabrication, and only in the hastily limned tracts of the propagandist, could the *Frontgemeinschaft* take retrospective form.

Indeed, there were countless Great War veterans for whom *any* reporting of the war was, ultimately, a hopeless enterprise. Referring to the postwar German scene, Wolfgang Iser noted the “absolute divide... insisted upon by many soldier-poets and their interpreters who deny the possibility of communicating battle experience to those who have not been there.”⁵⁷ As Carl Zuckmayer later put it, the war’s “chaos” simply could not be made “clear in a representation or generalization.”⁵⁸ The trope of incommunicability was voiced outside of Germany, too. “Those who have attempted to convey any real war experience,” Richard Aldington wrote of the trenches in 1926, “must have felt the torturing sense of something incommunicable.”⁵⁹ According to Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, after 1918 there were “two distinct Britains”—those who had fought and those who had not—who “talked such different languages” that soldiers returning from active service “felt like visitors to a foreign country.”⁶⁰ Somewhat paradoxically, this supposed incommunicability was a source of legitimacy for those who, as a matter of fact, had much to communicate. Writing of the moral claims made by the *témoins de guerre* (witnesses of war) in postwar France, Leonard Smith argued that “[i]f one could fully understand the initiation to combat by reading about it, then that experience would no longer be the exclusive realm of combatants themselves, precisely what set them apart forever from their compatriots and gave them a special authority to speak on the war.”⁶¹

⁵⁶ Thomas Weber, *Hitler's First War: Adolf Hitler, the Men of the List Regiment, and the First World War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 273-275, 290-291. As Weber exhaustively documents, “the idea that soldiers [in Hitler’s regiment] were driven primarily by an *esprit de corps* and by ideas of *Kameradschaft* and *Frontgemeinschaft* transcending the entire regiment is mythical at best” (187). The Nazis would attempt all the same after 1933 to realize this vision, creating a “comradeship state” (*Staat der Kameraden*) on the notion, as one veterans’ organization put it, that a bridge could be built from “the experience of the front to state formation.” See Thomas Kühne, *Kameradschaft. Die Soldaten des nationalsozialistischen Krieges und das 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 97.

⁵⁷ Iser, *Literature at War*, 13.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 28.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (New York: Atheneum, 1991), 424.

⁶⁰ Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 3-4. First published 1940. The poet Siegfried Sassoon provides an iconic case of the alienation engendered by the inability to convey the war’s realities to those at home. As Robert Wohl explains, Sassoon, convalescing back in England after duty on the Somme in 1916, was especially grieved when an admired uncle “referred to his military service as ‘a thing well and truly accomplished’ and compared it to an early seventeenth-century water clock.” See his *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 97-99. For an depiction of similar frustrations in an American context, see Ernest Hemingway’s short story “Soldier’s Home,” first collected in *In Our Time* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925).

⁶¹ Leonard V. Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldier's Testimony of the Great War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 45. As Smith elsewhere shrewdly observed, “fraught issues analogous to those of present-day identity politics—such as whether men can write the history of women, or whether scholars of European origin can write the histories of peoples of color—have long been present in writing about war.” See

Walter Benjamin, in the most famous version of this idea that the trench experience defied communication, lamented that the Great War had merely made “apparent” a crisis of far broader significance for modern civilization. “Was it not noticeable at the end of the war,” he wrote in 1936, “that men returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer, but poorer in communicable experience? What ten years later was poured out in the flood of war books was anything but experience that goes from mouth to mouth.”⁶² For Benjamin, the traumas of the war and its aftermath were incompatible with the kind of “experience”—understood as a cumulative process of learning or the integration of discrete events into an intelligible story-like whole—that had hitherto guided human affairs. Whereas the shared horizon of traditional communal life had once allowed proverbs and tales to be presented without explanation in the trust that their wisdom would be clear, the Great War’s discontinuous shocks resisted any readily transmissible meaning or moral.⁶³ The war’s incommunicability, Benjamin seemed to suggest, was an index of the poverty of communicable experience in modern life as a whole.⁶⁴

Although Benjamin found little to celebrate in this turn of events,⁶⁵ this very incommunicability, this felt incapacity to adequately represent the Great War and define its meaning, created opportunities for imagining new forms of belonging and new horizons of shared understanding. Unspoken consensus could be deemed more essential than anything forged by language. In his influential *Community and Society* (1887), the pioneering sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies judged “tacit understanding” (*stillschweigende Einverständnis*) one of the hallmarks of organic communal existence, the source of the “deep feelings and prevailing thoughts” from which language itself took shape. The contents of this “tacit understanding,” Tönnies wrote, “are inexpressible, interminable, and intangible.”⁶⁶ If the Great War generalized a crisis of representation hitherto confined to writers and theorists like Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Fritz Mauthner, who doubted that words could convey the richness of subjective experience, it also threw into relief a relationship in which linguistic mediation was comparatively unimportant. Wartime comradeship, after all, had created its own kind of tacit understanding. “The front-line soldiers of 1914 to 1918,” the English veteran Charles

his “Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory*: Twenty-Five Years Later,” *History and Theory*, 40, no. 2 (May 2001), 248-249.

⁶² Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 84

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 83-86, 89-91. Benjamin’s concern here is for a concept of experience as *Erfahrung*, to be distinguished from the more immediate, pre-reflective and “lived” notion of experience as *Erlebnis*. For more on this distinction, see Martin Jay *Songs of Experience* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), esp. 11, 312-360.

⁶⁴ In fact, to what extent the Great War was the source or merely the symptom of this impoverishment is not easy to make out. On the difficulty in locating the origins and causes of the “crisis of experience” in the works of Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, see Jay, “Is Experience Still in Crisis? Reflections on a Frankfurt School Lament,” in *Essays from the Edge: Parerga & Paralipomena* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 22-35.

⁶⁵ To be sure, in an earlier version of this argument, Benjamin had professed to find a redemptive potential in this “completely new poverty that has descended on mankind.” See Walter Benjamin, “Experience and Poverty” (1933), trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 1927-1934, eds. Michael W. Jennings, et al. (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 731-735. In general, however, it is clear that Benjamin found this “poverty of experience” a deeply troubling development.

⁶⁶ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*, trans. Charles Loomis (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 47-49 [Translation slightly altered]. Tönnies contrasted this tacit agreement on “duties and rights, as well as good and evil,” with the intentionally explicit language of the legal contract (49).

Carrington wrote decades later, “formed a secret society... [A] village-name, an allusion to some detail of trench-routine, a reaction to an anecdote, revealed a man as your comrade, as one who had shared the unforgettable, indescribable experience.” The reality of the “comradeship of the trenches,” Carrington averred, sprang from this shared possession of a “secret that could never be revealed.”⁶⁷ For Ernst Jünger, facing a personal crisis of language and cognition in the postwar years, such implicitness would prove tremendously appealing.

Comradeship and Friendship

England’s educated upper-class in the years prior to 1914 imagined war in a romanticized, neo-feudal diction: to enlist was to “join the colors,” a horse was a “charger,” the army was “the legion,” to be earnestly brave was to be “gallant.” Friendship’s poetic counterpart, according to this system of equivalents, was “comradeship,” implying a translation of civilian bonds into a martial domain. Yet if such elevated language, as Paul Fussell observed, was itself a casualty of the war,⁶⁸ confusion about the relationship between friendship and comradeship has survived. Even the origins of the two words, however, bespeak important differences. The German *Freund* (like the English “friend”) derives from the Indo-European root *fri* (“to love”) and originally carried the sense of “kinsman.”⁶⁹ The German *Kamerad* (like the English “comrade”), by contrast, is far more recent, dating to the 16th-century French *camarade* (literally a “chamber mate”) and suggesting less love than the solidarity of those thrown together, as into a barracks, by conviction or circumstance.⁷⁰ Before turning to Jünger in detail, it will be useful to establish a rough distinction between friendship and comradeship—one more heuristic than prescriptive—that will allow us to draw his relationships into focus.

Modern military sociology has tended to blur the line, collapsing friendship and comradeship into the larger notion of “primary group cohesion.”⁷¹ In an influential 1948 study of the German Army during the Second World War, Morris Janowitz and Edward Shils argued that a soldier’s resilience stemmed not from his fealty to Nazism but from his integration into his unit: common experiences, sympathetic leadership, and the availability of

⁶⁷ Charles Carrington [Charles Edmonds, pseud.], *A Subaltern’s War* (London: Anthony Mott, 1984), 16. Carrington’s memoir was penned in 1919 and first published in 1929; these lines are from his 1984 preface. In “An Essay on Militarism” that appeared as an epilogue to the first edition, Carrington was more specific: “The deeper a spiritual experience goes the more difficult it is to communicate its meaning to another person. Those who have not known passionate love or passionate religion are generally unable to appreciate them and sometimes doubt their existence; but lovers or religious mystics feel for one another. They have an inner life in common. In the same way, though in a lesser degree, soldiers who have fought side by side are conscious of being initiated: they are ‘illuminati.’” See *A Subaltern’s War* (London: Peter Davies, 1929), 193-194.

⁶⁸ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21-22. First published 1975.

⁶⁹ *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel and Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co., 1972), s.v. “Freund/Feind.” The word is already attested in late antiquity in the Gothic *frijond* and can be found in the Old English *freond* and Old High German *friunt*. Interestingly, the Spanish and French words for “friend” (*amigo* and *ami*, respectively) are similarly traceable to the Latin *amare*, “to love.”

⁷⁰ *Duden*, vol. 7, *Das Herkunftswörterbuch* (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut & F. A. Brockhaus, 2007), s.v. “Kamerad.”

⁷¹ For a recent example from the field of military sociology that uses friendship and comradeship interchangeably in discussing social cohesion within combat units, see Anthony King, “The Word of Command: Communication and Cohesion in the Military,” *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 4 (July 2006), esp. 17.

affection and “intimate communication” led soldiers to identify with their squad or platoon and thus to feel “bound by the expectations and demands of its other members.” Freed from the routine ties of domesticity and peace—family, school, work—soldiers came to depend almost entirely on their “military primary group” for “social and psychological sustenance.”⁷² The specific quality of such “cohesion” was captured by Denis Winter in a reflection on the British experience in the First World War.

United by a common jargon, by shared secrets and experiences, by common discomforts and grievances, by deep fears and by common laughter, by shared prejudice against other units and common authority, by sudden violences and long stillnesses... men belonged to platoon or section as to no other aspect of their war life.”⁷³

Faced with sustained fighting, however, the integrity of the unit was easily compromised. As Omer Bartov demonstrated, the Wehrmacht’s losses on the Eastern Front decimated soldiers’ original “primary group,” leaving them with little more than a “sense of existential dependence among those who happened to be together on the line at any given moment.”⁷⁴

Needless to say, not a few of the finer grains of human social life slip through the mesh of such “primary group cohesion.” One distinction was suggested by the American memoirist Tim O’Brien. A Vietnam War draftee, O’Brien wrote of his hatred of boot camp’s “bullyism,” of his loathing for the “boors” who thrived on it, and of his resolve not to be dragged “into compatibility with their kind.” Resistant to the “herd” and its esprit de corps, O’Brien only finally “gave in to soldiering” when he managed to strike up a friendship with a bookish fellow grunt. Together they formed a “coalition” against the army’s “jungle of robots.” “Our private conversations,” O’Brien declared, “were the cornerstone of the resistance, perhaps because talking about basic training in careful, honest words was by itself... evidence that we were not cattle or machines.” Here, friendship of the few stands in contrast to the camaraderie of the many as a way, in O’Brien’s words, to “save our souls” from the leveling effects of enforced cohesion.⁷⁵ A similar distinction was drawn by the German writer Nicolaus Sombart. Coming of age in Hitler’s Third Reich, Sombart recalled

⁷² Morris Janowitz and Edward Shils, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” reprinted in *Military Conflict: Essays in the Institutional Analysis of War and Peace* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1977), 178-182, 216. The peculiar “cohesion” resulting from such mutual dependence among men uprooted from civilian life has often been described as distinctly juvenile. As the military historian Thomas Arnold put it, “the squad, the atomic unit of war... is built around an adolescent comradeship unalloyed by the emotional claims of adulthood: wives, offspring, and the steady, boring peacetime job.” Not for nothing, Arnold suggests, is the term “infantry” derived from the Italian *fanti* (“the boys”). See Thomas F. Arnold, “Children in War,” in *The Reader’s Companion to Military History*, eds. Robert Cowley and Geoffrey Parker (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 85.

⁷³ Denis Winter, *Death’s Men: Soldiers of the Great War*, (New York: Penguin, 1979), 55-56.

⁷⁴ Omer Bartov, *Germany’s War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 20. According to Bartov, this “existential comradeship,” based on the proximity of danger, could even extend beyond “the purely military circle” to include friends and family in the rear also threatened by the Red Army’s advance (21). For Bartov’s full critique of Janowitz and Shils’s idea of “primary group cohesion” and its applicability to the Wehrmacht, see his *Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 29-58.

⁷⁵ Tim O’Brien, *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home* (New York: Dell, 1973), 40-43. My thanks to Sam Clark for bringing this example to my attention. For Clark’s own gloss on this passage, see his “Under the Mountain: Basic Training, Individuality, and Comradeship,” *Res Publica* 19 (February 2013), 67-79.

how comradeship, which played such a large role in Nazi pedagogy, had seemed to him a “terrifying vision” of a “termite-like” world devoid of individual autonomy, while friendship had suggested something “private and wholly related to one’s identity.”⁷⁶

A related (if less invidious) distinction between comradeship and friendship was suggested by the Australian novelist Frederic Manning. In *Her Privates We* (1929), an account of relations among the British “other ranks” during the Battle of the Somme, Manning observed the importance of comradeship’s “tacit understanding” among soldiers who had “shared the same experience.” Yet the book’s hero, a Private Bourne, though generally liked and in possession of “one or two particular chums,” is forced to acknowledge that he does not have anyone in the army he could “call a friend.” “In some ways,” Bourne muses,

good comradeship takes the place of friendship. It is different: it has its own loyalties and affections; and I am not so sure that it does not rise on occasion to an intensity of feeling which friendship never touches... At one moment a particular man may be nothing at all to you, and the next minute you will go through hell for him. No, it is not friendship. The man doesn’t matter so much, it’s a kind of impersonal emotion, a kind of enthusiasm, in the old sense of the word.⁷⁷

Unlike friendship, which “implies rather more stable conditions” and “time to choose” one’s companions, comradeship is a more spontaneous, and less individualized and discriminating, relation. But if comradeship is inferior, Bourne points out, “its opportunity is greater.”⁷⁸

A similar point was made by J. Glenn Gray in what was probably the most searching treatment of the difference between comradeship and friendship produced in the twentieth century. “Though many men never have a friend,” Glenn Gray argued, “comradeship is fortunately within reach of the vast majority. Suffering and danger cannot create friendship, but they make all the difference in comradeship.”⁷⁹ For Glenn Gray, writing from his experience in the Second World War, the “essential difference” between the two bonds—what made them, in the last analysis, not variants but opposites—was comradeship’s “suppression of self-awareness.”

While comradeship wants to break down the walls of the self, friendship seeks to expand these walls and keep them intact. The one relationship is ecstatic, the other is wholly individual... Comrades are content to be what they are and to rest in their

⁷⁶ Nicolaus Sombart, *Jugend in Berlin, 1933-1943* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1984), 196-197. Perhaps the strongest elaboration of this contrast was made by Friedrich Nietzsche, for whom comradeship was reminiscent of the indiscriminate neighbor-love of Judeo-Christian morality; both entailed an excessive concern for others that distracted from the more demanding work of self-perfection. Whereas comradeship’s wellspring was the inner “poverty” that led to flight from oneself, friendship—in the Greek mold, at least—was founded on the shared, and necessarily elitist, pursuit of a lofty ideal. As Nietzsche’s Zarathustra proclaims: “There is comradeship: let there be friendship!” Quoted in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1982), 169. See also Kaufmann’s discussion of Nietzsche’s understanding of friendship in his *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 361-371.

⁷⁷ Frederic Manning, *Her Privates We* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1999), 12, 79-80.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 79-80. As another Great War veteran, the lexicographer Eric Partridge, put it, comradeship is a “generalized sentiment” that only contains “the germ of friendship.” See his “Comradeship, Friendship, and Love,” in *Journey to the Edge of Morning* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 40-42.

⁷⁹ J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 89. First published 1959.

emotional bliss. Friends must always explore and probe each other, in the attempt to make each one complete through drawing out the secrets of another's being... Friends are not satiable, as comrades so often are when danger is past.⁸⁰

Friendship's "heightened awareness of the self," in this understanding, is a function of the endless dialogue that fosters self-discovery, whereas comradeship can be sustained in the silent "bliss" of shared travails. Yet Glenn Gray, like Manning, was by no means disdainful of comradeship. "In most of us," he acknowledged, "there is a genuine longing for community with our human species, and at the same time an awkwardness and helplessness about finding ways to achieve it." The "communal effort" of battle was a very real fulfillment of such longings, a discovery of "some of the mysteries of communal joy in its forbidden depths."⁸¹

What can we take away from this brief excursus? Certainly it is not that the difference between comradeship and friendship is one of intimacy or intensity. As Samuel Hynes remarked of the comradeship of men at war, it "is intense beyond the likelihood of back-home life. A soldier spends virtually all his time, awake and asleep, with his mates."⁸² Rather, it is that this intimacy is of a special sort: it is inclusive and accessible, more purely a product of war's culture and conditions, more a total source, at least in the moment, of social and psychological support. Comradeship bestows identity by subsuming the individual into the group; its form of mutual understanding is more tacit, based on shared "indescribable" experiences and what D. H. Lawrence called the "dark intimacy" of prolonged physical closeness in the presence of danger.⁸³ Friendship, on the other hand, has often been seen in contrast to comradeship as a more selective—even elitist—bond, one that privileges not tacit communication but the difficult work of dialogue and self-expression. Far from eclipsing the individual, friendship has been imagined as a framework for projects of resistance or self-realization. Its conditions are ideally not those of war but peace.⁸⁴

At no point in his long career did Ernst Jünger draw a clear conceptual distinction between comradeship and friendship. Bearing this distinction in mind, however, can help us see how many of the ideas and rhetorical gestures in Jünger's works stemmed from one or the other of these two very different relations. Understanding when Jünger is appealing to what is really friendship or what is really comradeship, despite his occasional tendency to use these terms interchangeably, can also help bring into focus what certain groups in certain contexts found attractive in Jünger's person and writings. This is true not only for Jünger's gravitation to military comradeship during the Weimar years, when he was widely viewed as among the foremost interpreters of the Great War. It is also true for Jünger's position during the Third Reich and the post-1945 period, when his call for elitist friendships of "spiritual

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 44-46, 90.

⁸² Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 9. According to Glenn Gray, comradeship's capacity for genuine intimacy has often caused it to be confused with friendship. "Men who have lived through hard and dangerous experiences together," he notes, "are frequently deceived about their relationship" (89).

⁸³ Lawrence likens the "intimate community" and "intuitional contact" of coal miners to the male comradeship of the trenches. See his essay "Nottingham and the Mining Countryside," in *D. H. Lawrence: Late Essays and Articles*, Vol. 2, ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 285-294.

⁸⁴ As Glenn Gray argues, friendship's "true domain is peace, only peace" (95).

resistance” would resonate with readers who shared his brand of non-conformity.

A Portrait of the Storm Trooper as a Young Man (1895-1914)

Like many modernist writers, Ernst Jünger was drawn to autobiographical experience as an object of literary investigation. Jünger himself described this as a life-long “drive” (*Trieb*) “to keep hold of situations,” a “need” he characterized as “the anchoring (*fixierung*) of one’s own experiences.”⁸⁵ This aspect of his project should be understood as a variation on what Max Saunders dubbed the “autobiografication” of the modernist *Künstlerroman*—of novels, that is, like those of Joyce and Proust, about the artist’s own development. According to Saunders, this combination of fiction and autobiography arose around 1900 out of a mounting sense that the “subject’s experiences are too mobile and keep changing their aspect to be susceptible of definitive understanding.” The incorporation of fictive elements into the telling of one’s own life thus reflected a condition in which “knowledge of the self and its world [were] felt to be dissolving.”⁸⁶ As we shall see, this crisis of cognition—and the attempt to overcome it—defined Jünger’s writings. The result, most evident in his mature works, was the construction of a distinct autobiographical persona through which to examine his experience, an impersonal and unsentimental voice that purported to relay the typical, transpersonal aspects of human consciousness—what has sometimes been called Jünger’s “phenomenology without a subject.”⁸⁷ We will have more to say about this “optic” in the next chapter. For now, let us look at how Jünger’s concern for personal experience yielded reminiscences of the social and emotional world of his youth, including his own *Künstlerroman*, the novel *African Games* (1936), about his 1913 attempt to escape to Africa via the French Foreign Legion.

Jünger’s early memories give an overwhelming impression of alienation and dreaminess. Among his “first metaphysical ideas,” he recalled, was the belief that school was a “sham” invented by adults to fool children, so repellent was the idea that one should spend the day at a desk with notepad and books.⁸⁸ Jünger was, however, a voracious reader almost from the start, his imagination and wanderlust fired by the adventure tales of Karl May, Cervantes, Defoe, Jules Vernes, and *A Thousand and One Nights*.⁸⁹ Unsurprisingly, his sensibility was deeply indebted to his parents. His father was a pharmacist who earned a doctorate under the renowned chemist Viktor Meyer, and who had so prospered by age forty-five that he could retire to a life of private study. Jünger often likened his father’s “rigorously scientific manner” to that of the nihilist Bazarov in Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*.⁹⁰ Yet if Jünger reacted against this positivistic bent, he nonetheless inherited from his father a gift for precise observation, a fascination with nature, and a penchant for apodictic pronouncements. To his mother, a literary woman who took her children on yearly

⁸⁵ See the 1966 interview with H. L. Arnold.

⁸⁶ Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10-11.

⁸⁷ See Neaman, 4.

⁸⁸ “Once,” Jünger wrote, “in seeing other older children with knapsacks walk by, I began to have doubts, but then I immediately thought to myself: ‘They’ve just been sent around, so that I’ll continue believing—they’ll throw their bags away around the next corner.’” See *AH2*, 55.

⁸⁹ See Nevin, 15-20; Helmuth Kiesel, *Ernst Jünger. Die Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2007), 42f.

⁹⁰ Hervier, 31-33.

pilgrimages to Goethe's Weimar, he credited his love of books and ear for language.⁹¹ This mix of the scientific and the poetic yielded an instinctual skepticism toward the adult world's boring routines, an alertness, as Jünger subsequently put it, "to the greatest danger there is, that life becomes for us something ordinary."⁹²

Growing up in and around Hanover, Jünger changed schools no less than ten times; this was due partly to his father's career, but more to his own abysmal record as a student, which forced his parents to seek out new arrangements.⁹³ He consequently learned to feel uprooted while passing through a succession of what Mack Walker called "German home towns," those close-knit communities, with their medieval streets and distinct identities, whose memory, Walker claimed, produced Germans' "ubiquitous yearning for organic wholeness."⁹⁴ Jünger expressed this nostalgia directly, writing that the "tile roofs" and "church towers" of his youth called to mind the Middle Ages, and left him with a "feeling of being very close to the spirit of a time whose reality has forever disappeared."⁹⁵ More than one commentator has found in this rosy medievalism the source of an ideal of plenitudinous meanings and cultural closure that would inform Jünger's thinking throughout his life.⁹⁶

Jünger found the year of his birth—1895, the year Alfred Dreyfus was convicted and Wilhelm Röntgen discovered X-rays—highly symbolic, an inauguration of the political and technological forces that would shape the twentieth century.⁹⁷ But, outwardly at least, his childhood knew none of this future turmoil. Ensconced in the same upper-middle-class comfort that allowed Stefan Zweig to deem the pre-WWI years a "Golden Age of Security,"⁹⁸ Jünger's happiest memories were of playing in the woods with his younger brother, Friedrich Georg, where they collected insects and lived out their own adventures. Inwardly, however, he was often anxious and brooding, nursing a rebelliousness against school, parents, and work.⁹⁹ Jünger was, in other words, true to a familiar fin-de-siècle type: a sensitive and intelligent child who chafed at the confines of his affluent upbringing. It was, he later wrote, that "well-known condition of homelessness amidst a narrow world artificially deformed... through education and bourgeois customs."¹⁰⁰ Jünger's paradoxical attraction to the local and rooted, and his anarchic longing to escape, can be traced to these childhood experiences.

In 1911, Jünger joined the Wandervögel (literally the "migratory birds"), a Boy Scout-like movement of middle-class youth that reacted against the materialism and

⁹¹ See Kiesel (2007), 29-40; and Julien Hervier, *The Details of Time: Conversations with Ernst Jünger*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Marsilio, 1995), 30-34. As Jünger remarked, "Language is virtually the most precious possession that parents can leave their children. No matter how far the spirit of egalitarianism may go, the instant a person starts talking, you promptly know whom you're dealing with" (Hervier, 34).

⁹² Jünger, *Das abenteuerliche Herz: Aufzeichnungen bei Tag und Nacht* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987, 20. First published 1929. Hereafter *AH1*.

⁹³ Kiesel (2007), 41.

⁹⁴ Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648-1817* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 425-427. First published 1971.

⁹⁵ Jünger, *AH1*, 25. Jünger refers here specifically to Hamelin.

⁹⁶ See Ulrich Baron, "Ordnung der Dinge nach ihrem unsichtbaren Rang. Zur Lebenskunst Jüngers," in *Politik, Mythos, Kunst* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 43; and Heimo Schwilk, *Ernst Jünger. Leben und Werk in Bildern und Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), 15.

⁹⁷ Antonio Gnoli and Franco Volpi, *Die Kommenden Titanen. Gespräche*, trans. Peter Weiß (Wien and Leipzig: Karolinger, 2002), 17-18.

⁹⁸ Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (New York: Viking, 1943), 1.

⁹⁹ Kiesel (2007), 42-45; Nevin, 13-14.

¹⁰⁰ Jünger, *AH1*, 44.

pomposity of Wilhelmine Germany. Their stated goal was the autonomy to pursue life “at their own initiative, on their own responsibility, and with deep sincerity.”¹⁰¹ This vague longing for authenticity was expressed in two ways. The first was a flight from the cities into the countryside, where members discovered the rural landscape on arduous week-long hikes. The second was an ideal of youth among itself, physically apart from the adult world. Local troops remained small (generally no more than twenty members), and leaders were in their late teens or early twenties. Of this group identity, Walter Laqueur observed that “[s]hared experiences and adventures welded a more or less accidental group into a disciplined community. There might be a more intimate friendship between two or more members, but the feeling of comradeship and solidarity extended to every member of the group.” Often, Laqueur added, this “feeling of comradeship would persist for decades,” well after members had settled into their adult lives.¹⁰²

Jünger’s first publication was a meditation in verse on the Wandervögel entitled “Our Life”, which appeared in the November 1911 issue of *Hannoverland*, the organization’s regional newsletter. Aesthetically unremarkable, the poem speaks of sunrises, meadows, streams, and camp fires—its stress, in other words, is on the return to nature, not on the camaraderie of youth. Only the title suggested a *group* experience was Jünger’s subject. Two other surviving poems from around the same time leave a slightly more balanced impression, making passing reference to the “always sheltering hand of friends” and to “comrades bound by the old gaiety.”¹⁰³ But on the whole these youthful efforts give no reason to suppose that Jünger was especially enthusiastic about any generalized sense of “comradeship and solidarity” to be found in the movement. If anything, they suggest that the stronger appeal lay in the chance for outdoor adventure.¹⁰⁴ This is not to say that Jünger was unsociable. Photographs from the time show Jünger smirking and posing with other lads in a way that hardly suggests aloofness or introversion.¹⁰⁵ As he wrote later, “the glow of friendship” was one of the delights of youth.¹⁰⁶ Rather, Jünger’s attraction was less to a diffuse notion of comradeship than to more personalized relationships.

Evidence for this can be found in Jünger’s memories of two young men named Werner. In *Approaches* (1970), a combination treatise/memoir on drugs and intoxication, Jünger reflected on social life in the Wandervögel, including their frequent carousing. Writing from the standpoint of old age, he claimed that the “constant exchange of thoughts

¹⁰¹ From the group’s 1913 national convention on the Hohe Meissner. See Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany, 1840-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 411-412. As Holborn notes, the Wandervögel drew most of its membership from urban and Protestant communities.

¹⁰² Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1984), 26, 30. First published 1962. Historians, with some justice, have long placed the Wandervögel in a trajectory culminating in National Socialism. Laqueur notes that the Hitler Youth later claimed the group as an inspiration for their own movement (208).

¹⁰³ Kiesel (2007), 46, 48; Schwilk, 24; Ernst Jünger, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 22 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2003), 683-684. Hereafter *SW*.

¹⁰⁴ Of the Wandervögel, Jünger wrote in 1970: “The ideals were vague, defined more by feelings than facts, and lacking academic, military, or political aims. ‘To be under way’ – wandering romantically, cooking out, sitting around a campfire, singing, camping, sleeping in barns; a good deal was gained by all this, but even more was shed.” See Jünger, *Annäherungen. Drogen und Rausch* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1970), 67.

¹⁰⁵ See the photographs reprinted in Schwilk, 23, 26, 31. Companions were not, however, always forthcoming. As Schwilk noted elsewhere, Jünger found few friends among his classmates in a school in Wunstorf in 1911. See his *Ernst Jünger. Ein Jahrhundertleben* (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 2007), 69.

¹⁰⁶ Jünger, *AH1*, 21.

and opinions” among members had proven “more important” than their mere “romantic wandering.”¹⁰⁷ Jünger admitted being especially drawn to one of his local group’s leaders, a “big, animated, red-blond” fellow called Werner whose pronouncements seemed to possess a shrewdness and confidence that Jünger felt lacking in himself. Jünger wrote that the “role of leader was tailor made for him... His demeanor was at once poised and agreeable, a sign of physical and intellectual superiority... Such natures embody our pipe dreams. Seeing and hearing them, it is as though a part of our self had gotten free and stepped out on stage in front of us.” Meeting Werner again several decades later, however, was disenchanting; ill and worn down by the intervening years, Werner was no longer the assured leader he remembered. “[S]o it is with many, whom we admire in youth,” Jünger wrote. “We saw in them something that was missing in us—often it was only two, three years: a head start into adulthood.”¹⁰⁸

The other youth was Werner Scholem, older brother to the famed scholar of Jewish mysticism Gershom Scholem. In 1975, Jünger contacted Gershom Scholem in Jerusalem to ask whether he was the same Scholem Jünger remembered from his school days in Hanover in 1914. The letter began a warm and respectful exchange that lasted until shortly before Scholem’s death in 1982. As the correspondence made clear, Jünger had in mind not Gershom but Werner Scholem, who later served as a Communist Reichstag deputy in the 1920s and was murdered by the Nazis in 1940. Jünger’s description of Werner was strikingly similar to the Wandervogel leader he had found so appealing a few years earlier. Werner Scholem was, he recalled, “unusually ‘grown-up,’” with an “intelligent physiognomy and a skeptical smile.” As a fellow student in a *Presse*—a private school that prepared weak students for the exit examination known as the *Arbitur*—Jünger found Scholem’s willful disdain for the authority of the teacher particularly memorable. He and Werner, Jünger suggested, had been joined by a certain “understanding” (*Verständnis*) in a relationship of “ironic sympathy.” (Jünger may have had this relationship in mind when he wrote a few years later that “with a genuine affinity... an ironic silence that reveals a spiritual rapport” can be enough to start a friendship.¹⁰⁹) Werner Scholem was, in any event, one of only two students he professed to remember from that school. The relationship left a deep enough mark on Jünger that it prompted him to reach out to Gershom Scholem sixty-one years later!¹¹⁰

These two recollections tell us much about Jünger’s ideas of friendship as an adolescent. His apparent longing for a big brother figure—for someone sophisticated and self-assured, with insight into the nature of things—corresponds closely to the role of friendship in the “youth crisis” of the pre-WWI years. This crisis was largely confined to the middle classes, in which youth—especially boys—were packed off to schools to receive a formal education in highly artificial age-homogenous groups. (Adolescents growing up on farms or in the urban working class, where they learned practical skills and were integrated into their parents’ generationally diverse workplaces, were in a different position.) According

¹⁰⁷ Jünger, *Annäherungen*, 67.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 73, 80-81.

¹⁰⁹ Jünger, *Aladdin’s Problem*, trans., Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Masilio, 1992), 84. First published 1983.

¹¹⁰ “Ernst Jünger, Gershom Scholem—Briefwechsel, 1975-1981,” *Sinn und Form* 61 (May/June 2009), 293-302. See especially Jünger’s letter of 20 April 1975. That Jünger is describing two different Werners is clear from their different physical descriptions, the different years and locations in which their acquaintance was made (Wunstorf/1911 and Hanover/1914), and the fact that Jünger had clearly lost track of Werner Scholem after 1914, while he reports meeting the other Werner again later in life.

to Thomas Nipperdey, these circumstances exposed bourgeois youth early on to the “mobility, diversity and insecurity of roles, [and] increasing reflexivity and emotional detachment” of modern society. To these pressures was added that well-known mix of inhibitions, taboos, and authoritarian attitudes that marked the bourgeois family around 1900. The result was a “sense of loneliness and not being understood,” which found expression in a heightened emotionality and an attraction to romanticized models of feeling and behavior. These psychic strains, Nipperdey observed, also produced an intense devotion to friends within one’s peer group.¹¹¹

In a classic 1925 work on the psychology of adolescence, Eduard Spranger described such youthful friendships as prone to “aesthetic swooning.” “The *subjectivity* of adolescent understanding,” Spranger wrote, “remains strongly bound to one’s own mental frequency (*Seelenrhythmus*): one chooses in the character of the other those idealized traits that one *demands* of him.”¹¹² For Spranger, this tendency toward identification with an idealized image of the other is especially pronounced when the two friends are of unequal ages. Seen from the perspective of the younger friend, “the craving is for a strong, mature spirit... [and] ultimately for a savior from the loneliness of not being understood.”¹¹³ That these terms so closely match Jünger’s own self-analysis is unsurprising. As Nipperdey pointed out, Spranger’s account was less an inquiry into the timeless condition of youth than a description of the German middle class in which he himself came of age.¹¹⁴

Strong adolescent friendships as a reaction to the coldness of bourgeois society are in fact one of the hallmarks of the Belle Epoque. A good example is the bond between the future Frankfurt School collaborators Max Horkheimer and Friedrich Pollock, for whom friendship was conceived in explicit defiance of the commercial and patriarchal values of their parents’ world. Beginning in 1911, the two youths embarked on a contract that “defined friendship as an ‘expression of critical human energy, the creation of solidarity between all human beings.’” As one commentator observed, theirs was an effort “to create a private stronghold from which the battle with reality could be conducted,” complete with a commitment to joint readings of critics of bourgeois society like Ibsen and Zola, and of social revolutionaries like Tolstoy and Kropotkin.¹¹⁵ For Horkheimer and Pollock, friendship would be an “*isle heureuse*” (happy island) in a world defined by egoism and exploitation. The power of this youthful ideal can be seen in Horkheimer’s profession, some forty years later,

¹¹¹ Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1866-1918*, vol. 1, *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (München: C. H. Beck, 1990), 112-118. Nipperdey’s analysis is indebted to Friedrich Tenbruck’s *Jugend und Gesellschaft* (1962). As Nipperdey put it, drawing on Tönnies’s famous distinction between the shared values of traditional community (*Gemeinschaft*) and the self-interested relations of modern society (*Gesellschaft*): “The social world of youth [was] that of *Gesellschaft*, no longer that of *Gemeinschaft*” (117).

¹¹² Eduard Spranger, *Psychologie des Jugendalters* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1925), 93-94. Italics in the original.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 100. Spranger claims this is typical of the relationship of youth to “a true leader.”

¹¹⁴ Nipperdey, 118.

¹¹⁵ Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 42. First Published 1986. As Horkheimer wrote in 1935, friendship too could be polluted by instrumental calculations: “[I]n today’s society, all human relations are distorted, and nothing across the whole gamut of friendship, approval and goodwill is ultimately meant seriously. The only thing which is serious is the competitive struggle within classes and the struggle between classes... Every friendship act is offered not to a person but to his place in society” (107). I am grateful to Nicolaas Barr Clingan for bringing this example to my attention.

that their continuing friendship was “a testament: utopia realized on the smallest scale.”¹¹⁶

No one expressed such attitudes better than the novelist Hermann Hesse, whose early works told tales of lonely and angst-filled boys who find self-knowledge and spiritual insight through relationships with clever and strong-willed friends. These friendships provide a clear counterpoint to an uncomprehending world of parents and schoolmasters. Hesse’s appeal to several generations of German youth (and to American youth of the 1960s) was explained by the German-born historian Henry Pachter, who argued that Hesse compensated for readers’ “loneliness by asserting that he knows of another world, a dream world which belongs to poetic souls only.” In works like *Demian* (1919), Pachter wrote, Hesse “firmly established the students’ solidarity against teachers and parents. We loved him because he understood us.”¹¹⁷ What Pachter failed to mention is that *Demian* enacts this “solidarity” in the form of an elitist friendship—directed, à la Nietzsche, against “the herd”—between a charismatic older student named Max Demian and his confused younger partner.

Jünger’s own Demian figure would be a soldier and itinerant laborer named Karl Rickert, who appeared as the figure Charles Benoit in Jünger’s 1936 novel *African Games*. The book is a thinly fictionalized account of Jünger’s flight, in November 1913, from the boredom of school to a recruitment office in Verdun, where he lied about his age and joined the French Foreign Legion. Jünger’s aim was not martial glory but a posting to Algeria, whence he planned to abscond to a life as an African explorer. Armed with a six-shot revolver and a copy of Henry Stanley’s *Through the Dark Continent*, Jünger did in fact make it to Algeria. Yet further escape proved more difficult; gendarmes easily caught up with the young deserter and hauled him back to camp. Even more embarrassing was his father’s intervention via the German Foreign Office in securing his release. After only a few weeks, Jünger was on a steamship headed home.¹¹⁸ The lesson he took from this affair at the time was summed up in a 1914 poem entitled “The Legionary,” which ends with the lines: “So roughly plucked from sweet flights of fancy, / One thing becomes clear: it’s as awful there as here.”¹¹⁹ The final lines of *African Games* reiterate the point: ultimately, Jünger wrote, “no one can live as he pleases.”¹²⁰

One of the striking features of *African Games* is its unmistakable endorsement of the big-brother friendship we have already seen in Jünger’s relationship to the two Werners. As the story begins, the protagonist, a Jünger stand-in named Herbert Berger, proclaims it “difficult to find a companion” and confesses to a “need for communication... to confide at times in a sharp and keenly understanding mind.”¹²¹ This understanding certainly does not

¹¹⁶ John Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 22-27. [Translation slightly altered.] Abromeit makes clear that Horkheimer had been greatly impressed by “Pollock’s willingness to flout social convention,” and had quickly “revealed to Pollock that he too hated playing the role expected of him, and that beneath the mask lay a miserable young man who desperately needed a friend in whom he could confide his true feelings” (22). Horkheimer and Pollock were aged sixteen and seventeen respectively at the time.

¹¹⁷ Henry Pachter, “On Re-reading Hermann Hesse,” in *Weimar Etudes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 189-192. Pachter, an émigré from Hitler’s Germany, was born in 1907.

¹¹⁸ On this oft-recounted episode, see especially Nevin, 28-35; and Kiesel (2007), 58-63. *African Games* appears remarkably true to the historical events it describes, including its author’s own attitudes. Jünger himself claimed that the novel “was almost a portrait” (Hervier, 30).

¹¹⁹ Jünger, “Der Legionär,” *SW* 22, 686.

¹²⁰ Jünger, *Afrikanische Spiele* (München: DTV, 1987), 170.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 20. Berger openly weighs whether or not to “seek out a comrade” (19), but we should not be confused

come in Berger's encounter with Dr. Goupil, a physician charged with examining new recruits. Goupil cautions the would-be legionnaire that he's read too many adventure tales. "You're still too young to know that you live in a world that cannot be escaped," the sober Goupil warns. "You want to discover extraordinary things, but you'll find nothing [in Africa] but deadly boredom... The colonies are Europe, too."¹²² Events quickly prove Goupil right. Algeria is less magical than expected, and Berger suffers the same humiliating failure as Jünger himself two decades before. What redeems the tale, however, is Berger's friendship with a charismatic fellow adventurer named Charles Benoit. Unlike the rogues and louts who populate the Legion, Benoit is sensitive and well read, with a mystical bent developed through earlier experiments with opium. Their first encounter comes, crucially, in the wake of Goupil's efforts at disenchantment. Older and more experienced, Benoit confirms, without a trace of condescension, that an adventurous life in uncharted lands is still possible. Further conversations disclose a host of insights that dazzle his young sidekick. "Such conversations," Jünger writes, "were immensely encouraging... I really liked Benoit."¹²³

What Berger finds in Benoit—and what Jünger found in Karl Rickert—is a confirmation of longings scoffed at by the Goupils of the world—salvation, in other words, from what Spranger called "the loneliness of not being understood." These are friendship qualities manifestly lacking in Berger's relationship to others in the Legion, whose petty plans, worries, and pleasures only mirror those of the larger society. These are also qualities Jünger would find lacking among his First World War comrades, as his original forty-four-month journal of the trench experience makes plain.

Ernst Jünger's *Scheißkrieg* (1914-1918)

Any discussion of Ernst Jünger and the First World War needs to begin with the right images. His critics, of course, have long condemned him as a glorifier of violence. Walter Benjamin spoke for many in lampooning the "boyish rapture" and "utterly thoughtless obtuseness" of Jünger's "cult of war."¹²⁴ And with good reason: Jünger's 1922 essay *Battle as Inner Experience* affirmed combat as "one of the truly great passions," an "intoxicating orgy" in which "instincts, too long damned up by society and its laws, become once more dominant and holy."¹²⁵ In imagining Jünger in the trenches, however, we need to picture not a hulk but a short and slender twenty-year-old. We ought also picture a soldier largely free from the jingoism of the period. Unlike Carl Zuckmayer, who reported feeling swept up in the nation's destiny, Jünger had a very different memory of the outbreak of war in August 1914, focusing on the subdued reactions of two reservists repairing his family's shed when news of mobilization arrived. If Jünger instantly decided to enlist, it was less out

by Jünger's use of the word "comrade" here. The content of the relationship described, not Jünger's own nomenclature, is the important thing. Jünger often uses "friendship" and "comradeship" interchangeably, which is why I have taken the trouble to tease apart what are in fact two very different relationships.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 73.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹²⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Theories of German Fascism," trans. Jerold Wikoff, *New German Critique* 17 (Spring 1979): 121–22. Another example is Richard Aldington, who called Jünger "certainly an almost unrivalled fanatic in the idolatry of destruction." Quoted in Nevin, 40.

¹²⁵ Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, 3, 95.

of zeal for the Kaiser than because a new opportunity for escape had presented itself.¹²⁶ We should likewise discard any notion that Jünger was unusually callous or blind to the Great War's brutality. As his original diaries show, he fully registered the war's grim realities.¹²⁷ Jünger's entry from 1 December 1915 is representative of the "dark thoughts" to which he was prone.

What's this never-ending murder for? I fear too much is being destroyed and too little remains to build again. Before the war I thought as many did: raze the old edifice, the new will in any case be better. But now—it seems to me that culture and everything grand is slowly being suffocated. War has awoken in me a longing for the blessings of peace.¹²⁸

Jünger was even more forceful in a May 1917 meditation on the war's ruined landscape. "When will this shitty war (*Scheißkrieg*) come to an end?" he asked. "What might one have seen and enjoyed during this time... But still no end in sight."¹²⁹

Jünger's diaries provided the documentary source for a raft of later essays and memoirs. But the diaries themselves are at least as interesting as these literary reworkings. As Helmuth Kiesel observed, they offer an unparalleled glimpse, by virtue of their length, richness of description, and proximity to events, into the conditions of life at the front.¹³⁰ Disenchantment belonged to the experience they record almost from the start. In January 1915, only a week after arriving at the front near Bazancourt, and following some sixty hours without sleep in the cold and damp, Jünger confided that he was "getting, like before in Algeria, quite different ideals." "A solid student's life with an armchair, a soft bed, and a small circle of friends without any social discord (*Verbindungseseleien*)," he wrote, now seemed more appealing than "chasing fantasies."¹³¹ Coming from a soldier recently exposed to boot camp's enforced cohesion, Jünger's preference for the rapport of a few close friends suggests a telling lack of enthusiasm for his new comrades. An entry a few weeks later confirms the point. Jünger reported falling asleep on watch, only to awake to find that this rifle had been stolen by another soldier. As punishment for this disgrace, Jünger was forced to stand watch with a hatchet for several hours while bullets zipped past him. "For all I care," he wrote in a burst of swagger, "they could have gone ahead and set me directly into the French position.

¹²⁶ Jünger, "Kriegsausbruch 1914," *SW* 1, 542-543. First published 1934.

¹²⁷ Helmuth Kiesel argues of Jünger's later war books that what appears to be a voyeur's delight in the display of corpses is better read as an "unsparing analysis" of war in the technological age, in which "nothing is sugarcoated or trivialized, and nothing is suppressed." See his *Ernst Jünger*, 195f.

¹²⁸ Jünger, 1 December 1915 and 17 February 1917, *Kriegstagebuch: 1914–1918* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2010), 62-63, 213. Jünger adds that getting back into the fight will cure him of this "guardhouse philosophy." His size can be judged from the results of a July 1917 physical examination, at which he weighed 63 Kg (139 lbs). *Ibid.*, 278.

¹²⁹ Jünger, 24 May 1917, *Kriegstagebuch: 1914–1918*, 258.

¹³⁰ See Kiesel's afterword to the *Kriegstagebuch*, 596-597. For decades, Jünger shielded these diaries, which together fill sixteen handwritten notebooks, from public scrutiny. Only in 1995, a few years before his death, were they made available to scholars. And only in 2009 was permission to publish received from Jünger's widow.

¹³¹ Jünger, 8 January 1915, *Kriegstagebuch*, 12. *Verbindungseseleien* is apparently a Jünger coinage. Another possible interpretation of this expression is not the "stupidities" (*Eseleien*), such as misunderstandings and disagreements, that come with social bonds, but rather the foolishness of the army's compulsory bonding: thus "bonding nonsense" might better capture Jünger's meaning. In either case, Jünger seems clearly to contrast the harmony of a life among friends with the disharmonious social world in which he found himself.

I was only irritated by the scoundrel who said that if something happens to him, then it's his just desert."¹³² Such was Jünger's esprit de corps in January 1915.

We should be wary, however, of taking the diaries as an unmediated expression of Jünger's thoughts and feelings. These informal journals show Jünger already at pains to portray himself as a heroic and adventurous subject, even as he faithfully records the chaos and powerlessness that frustrate this attempt. Our interest in the war diaries is thus less as a revelation of Jünger's "real" war experience than as a statement of how he initially interpreted aspects of it.¹³³ They provide a view of the social world of the trenches from a time *before the war was lost*, a baseline that can help us understand the motives that governed the rewriting of that experience after 1918.

There is no consensus on how comradeship was experienced and understood by soldiers in the First World War. This is partly because social experience is as different as each individual; but it is also because most of the characterizations we possess are later reflections unavoidably colored by postwar conditions. As the epigraphs to this chapter suggest, veterans' memories ranged from lofty assertions that the "fellowship of the trenches" redeemed "the sordidness and stupidity of the war" to equally absolutist claims that the war prevented any "genuine personal contact." Historians have done little better in sorting out the matter. Eric Leed, for one, argued that the First World War produced a broad sense of comradeship by stripping soldiers of the markers of social status and submitting all to a common condition and fate.¹³⁴ The importance of a "fraternal ethos" was likewise stressed by Alexander Watson, though for Watson this was a source of "security and order" in "the chaotic and dangerous trench environment."¹³⁵ According to Paul Knoch, however, "the feeling and consciousness of comradeship represented more of an exception in the everyday experience of the soldier."¹³⁶ George Mosse, too, was skeptical of memories of comradeship, proclaiming them "perhaps the most seductive part of the Myth of the War Experience." The retrospective transformation of the war into a "meaningful and even sacred event," Mosse argued, depended on a romanticized view of the "little world of the trenches," a view that took life in the unit as a model of community and a site of social

¹³² *Ibid.*, 31 January 1915, p. 15.

¹³³ See John King, *Writing and Rewriting the First World War*, ch. 5. The complicated epistemological status of "experience" has become more generally appreciated in recent decades. For a discussion of this issue in relation to soldiers' testimony from the First World War, see Leonard Smith, *The Embattled Self*, 1-19. While we should be wary of accepting Jünger's diaries as evidence of "how it really was," we also need to take seriously his documentary impulse. As Jünger wrote, in a kind of methodological statement: "A person's degree of objectivity is a measure of his inner worth... Throughout the entire war I have immediately tried to bring my impressions to paper, between leaps, or at the latest on the evening after a day of fighting. It is curious, how quickly impressions become blurred, how easily they take on a different coloration after a few days... I'm no war correspondent, I'm not producing a collection of heroic tales. I don't want to describe how it might have been, but rather how it was." *Kriegstagebuch*, 10 August 1918, p. 432.

¹³⁴ Leed, *No Man's Land*, 24-25. As Leed notes, this feeling of comradeship could extend across the line to one's enemies as well.

¹³⁵ Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 66-67. That comradeship meant both "solace and support" and a "sense of rough equality born of shared experience" is demonstrated in Joe Lunn's study of French colonial troops. See *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999), 98, 109, 111.

¹³⁶ Paul Knoch, "Kriegsalltag," in *Kriegsalltag. Die Rekonstruktion des Kriegsalltags als Aufgabe der historischen Forschung und der Friedenserziehung* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1989), 228-229. Quoted in Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 66.

renewal. Yet as Mosse admitted, “We do not actually know what camaraderie in the trenches meant to the simple soldier in the front lines.”¹³⁷ All of which is to say that Jünger’s dim view of his companions was probably not unusual. That contemporaries both sentimentalized comradeship and dismissed it as rubbish was suggested by a British subaltern, who wrote in 1916 that later generations would not have “such a horror of war as lots of people seem to think... When a soldier can write that the brotherhood of the trenches will be a ‘wistful radiant memory’ now, what shall we be writing twenty years hence!”¹³⁸

Even a cursory glance at Jünger’s war record tells us much about his qualities of mind and character. From a raw recruit in the famed 73rd Hannoverian Fusiliers, Jünger rose through the ranks to become commander of a company of elite “storm troops,” fast-moving assault teams trained to break the stalemate of trench warfare. All accounts agree that Jünger was a respected and fair-minded officer. Courageous and conscientious, he was nevertheless no martinet. By the time he was removed from active rotation in August 1918 after a near-fatal bullet to the chest (revealingly, two of his men died carrying him to safety), Jünger had already been wounded at least nine times and had witnessed some of the war’s fiercest fighting—on the Somme in 1916, at Cambrai in November 1917, and during the Spring Offensive the following March. Recovering back in Germany in September 1918, Jünger received, on the Kaiser’s orders, the *Pour le Mérite*, Germany’s highest military decoration. He was one of only fourteen infantry lieutenants to be thus honored.¹³⁹

Taken as a whole, the diaries suggest that Jünger’s estimation of his fellow soldiers improved over time. In June 1916, Jünger, now a lieutenant, wrote that he was “astonished at the favorable changes among the men in our company. All are strapping, keen, upbeat... To work with such material is a joy.”¹⁴⁰ A month later, he praised this “rough life among men” as at least “dedicated to a steady goal and carefree.” It also had its share of “cozy (*gemütliche*) moments,” as for instance on a summer’s evening when “hardly a shot disturbs the after-hours mood” and soldiers smoke, relax, and talk. Then “everything is simple and natural.”¹⁴¹ Nor was affection lacking. Returning from leave in April 1917, Jünger expressed his happiness to be back among the company’s “old stalwarts” and was clearly grieved to learn of losses in his absence. (In a recurring refrain, he mourned the death of capable soldiers—in this case a Sergeant Bieling, whom Jünger had known since boot camp.)¹⁴² Such commonplaces, however, are as close as the diaries come to a sentimental view of comradeship.

That Jünger in fact felt a degree of alienation from his unit can be seen in his two requests to transfer to the air corps. While the infantry sheltered in the earth like troglodytes,

¹³⁷ George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5-7, 65; and “Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 (1986), 494. Ultimately, Mosse is more concerned with bursting such myths and identifying their noxious effects than with understanding their experiential basis and emotional appeal.

¹³⁸ Letter from 2nd Lieutenant Donald William Alers Hankey, 23 September 1916, in *War Letters of Fallen Englishmen*, ed. Laurence Housman (London: Gollancz, 1930), 122. Another soldier, recalling his arrival in camp, was more blunt: “I shall not forget how my heart dropped in my boots when I saw who were to be my future companions... the majority of these men looked to me to be just about the limit.” See the memoir of Harold George Macklin, <http://www.shalligetoblighty.co.uk/page16.htm> (accessed 19 March 2013).

¹³⁹ More extensive accounts of Jünger’s WWI experience can be found in Schwilk (2007), chs. 4-7; Kiesel (2007), ch. 2; Nevin, ch. 2; and in Gerhard Loose, *Ernst Jünger* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), 21-29.

¹⁴⁰ *Kriegstagebuch*, 21 June 1916, p. 121.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27 July 1916, p. 158.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 9 April 1917, p. 231.

the Homeric spirit of single combat, he believed, was still alive overhead. “There one can show what nerve is,” he wrote in July 1917, “and there’s no need to pull others’ chestnuts out of the fire.”¹⁴³ If he could not be a pilot—Jünger tells us his application was denied “at the request of Division,” thereby condemning him to “more foul-ups with the infantry”—the next best thing was a position of command.¹⁴⁴ In a February 1917 letter home, he rejected the suggestion that he seek duty behind the lines: a job among the “rear-area pigs” (*Etappenschweine*) was fit for “valets” and “yes-men.” Better, Jünger averred, to hold out for a company of his own; then he would “only have two superiors and an interesting, autonomous role, where one can direct something oneself and not have to just carry out the orders of others.”¹⁴⁵ Jünger’s desire for independence and authority was clear in his description of the “utter confusion” of a patrol into no man’s land.

It is... stirring how the men cling to an officer in such circumstances. That is actually one of the loveliest moments, this confident trust of the men in the officer’s command over the situation. “Lieutenant, Sir, where should we go?” “Lieutenant, come help.” “Lieutenant, I’m wounded.” “Where is Lt. Jünger?” To be a leader with a clear head in such moments is to approximate God. Few are chosen (*auserlesen*).¹⁴⁶

Here Jünger’s (desperately asserted?) sense of control compensates for the mission’s failure, and for the fact that his own survival was a stroke of dumb luck.

But despair sometimes got the upper hand. In March 1918, days before the Army’s last-ditch effort to break through the line, Jünger wrote, “This time I go into battle with a feeling of utter indifference, to an extent uninvolved in my own life or death.” Then, in lines crossed out but still legible, he continued:

But that’s no concern to anyone else. So no one speaks of it here. *Amico pectus, hosti frontem. O si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses* rubbish rubbish crap nonsense finished *Beati possidentes Aut omnia aut nihil. Capito? Si Signore*¹⁴⁷

This mix of Italian, schoolboy Latin phrases, and broken German conveys not just isolation and hopelessness in the face of death, but a total failure of comprehension. Jünger’s language is so far from representational mastery that it collapses into macaronic babble. In the same low spirit a few days later, he recorded his opposition to another “senseless” attack and confessed to a “rotted-out” feeling that was “difficult to describe in words.”¹⁴⁸ These moments of apathy and powerlessness, together with his discontents with the infantry and

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12 July 1917, p. 277.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 September 1917, p. 314. Jünger’s first petition to transfer to the air corps was in April 1916, the second in July 1917.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Schwilk (1988), 62. Jünger was clearly unhappy taking orders: one of the curses of unshelled positions, he observes, “is the frequent visiting of superiors, who then naturally know better about everything.” *Kriegstagebuch*, 20 May 1917, p. 257.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 June 1917, p. 270-271. See also King’s gloss on this passage in *Writing and Re-writing the First World War*, 142-143.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18 March 1918, p. 370-371. Jünger’s choice of phrases is doubtless significant, but impossible to reconstruct. They mean, respectively: “Offer friends your breast, enemies your forehead”; “Oh, if you had remained silent, you would have remained a philosopher”; “Blessed are those who possess either all or nothing”; “Do I understand? Yes, sir.”

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 March 1918, p. 388-389.

his elitist self-conception, put expressions of affection and solidarity with his troops into perspective. In the diaries, Jünger's comradely sentiments are very much secondary notes.

More striking throughout the diaries is Jünger's attraction to *seinesgleichen*, to soldiers he thought of as kindred spirits. These relationships are both fewer and of greater existential significance, a source of validation and identity apart from the multitude. Already in early 1915, Jünger recorded a burgeoning friendship with a private named Priepke. Crucially, the two often separated themselves from the crowd: standing guard together, taking "lovely" and "splendid" walks, investigating church towers and exploring local castle ruins. Though split up by circumstance after a few months, Jünger and Priepke crossed paths again in 1917 and quickly caught up through long visits—seven hours in one case. When two weeks later Jünger learned of Priepke's capture, he lamented: "Thus one loses one's war buddies."¹⁴⁹ Jünger found another close early friendship with a soldier named Hugershoff. Entries from October 1915 record "A pleasant conversation with Hugershoff!" and an evening chat in Jünger's bunker, after which he wrote that Hugershoff is "one of those people with whom I get along well." Yet once again the war snatched away his friend: not long thereafter, Jünger reports Hugershoff shot through the chest and recovering somewhere behind the lines.¹⁵⁰

More revealing was Jünger's excited reaction to another soldier's mention of a shared acquaintance. He wrote in November 1915:

There I was yesterday sitting by candlelight in a narrow bunker next to Herbst... when he suddenly dropped the name Walter Giesecke. Giesecke!—Companion of my first great youthful escapades. Back then a bright lad, well read, adventurous, wielded a great pen, wrote verse, was crazy about tropical blazes and jungle nights, in short we fit together as two seldom ever have... Now he's disappeared... Did he fall fighting against our hated enemy? Is he sitting in an English POW camp? Hopefully. Hopefully I hear soon from my friend Giesecke, who perhaps also sometimes thinks of me, because in him there's a nugget that has worth and substance and it would be endlessly sad if his bones now had to turn white on south African sand dunes.¹⁵¹

Jünger expressed similar feelings about a fellow officer named Oskar Kius in a series of entries from July 1917. In one entry, Jünger recorded swimming with Kius, to whom, he added, he had become "very attached." The feeling was apparently mutual: a few days later the two friends traveled together to Le Cateau to apply to join the air corps—a sufficient sign that Jünger felt Kius was of his own stamp. When the requisite physical exam revealed that Kius was only fit for the secondary role of observer, Jünger wrote that they were nonetheless "nourishing the hope that he as observer, I as pilot, would make the ideal married couple (*Ehepaar*)."¹⁵² A final example of Jünger's gravitation to certain personalities can be seen in his reaction to the death of a Lieutenant Brecht. In October 1917, Jünger wrote that Brecht was reported killed, adding: "That left a deep impression on me, since for me Brecht was always a kind of counterpart (*Gegenstück*), a proof of my motto: *Fortem fortuna adjuvat!* (Fortune favors the bold). Plus I've known him for a long time and really liked

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 January 1915, 25 March 1915, 12 April 1915, 15 April 1915, 17 April 1917, 28 April 1917, pp. 13, 17-19, 235-236, 249. As the entry for 26 August 1917 (p. 310) makes clear, Priepke was in fact taken prisoner and later corresponded with Jünger from an English POW camp.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 15 October 1915, 18 October 1915, 3 March 1916, pp. 50-51, 91.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5 November 1915, p. 58.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 12 July 1917, 16 July 1917, 17 July 1917, pp. 277-280.

him.”¹⁵³

With the exception of Kius, who apparently survived the war, loss was the endpoint of all these friendships. It could hardly be otherwise. “[D]espite all its self-presentation as the purveyor of male loyalty,” Sarah Cole observed, the Great War “destroyed friendship.” This “assault on friendship took two forms, as individual friends were killed in the ordinary course of the day, and as the concept of friendship was treated with contempt by a bureaucracy that endlessly and arbitrarily separated friends.”¹⁵⁴ Far more than a generalized esprit de corps, Jünger’s war diaries illustrate the pain of such lost friendships. The sorrow was irrepressible. Writing in October 1917, Jünger recorded helplessly watching the agonizing death of an officer named Zürn, whom he had only recently seen “sitting cheerfully” while on leave back in Hanover, noting, as if to his surprise: “In spite of being almost too hardened, I was sad all the same, especially since I know Zürn from the time I first entered the... company.”¹⁵⁵

The greater the feeling of kinship, the more intense the pain. What the Australian Geoff Hawkins wrote of the unevenness of wartime intimacy captures well the social world of Ernst Jünger’s war diaries. “The camaraderie so much spoke of,” Hawkins declared, “was to a large extent superficial. It was only when like met like, with the magnetic consciousness of true affinity, that there was unguarded confidence and complete understanding between men in the trenches.”¹⁵⁶ How shaken Jünger could be by the loss of soldiers of his own stripe can be seen in his rumination on the burial of an officer cadet named Parl.

Yesterday so young and happy and now in this box. The dear little fellow. When he arrived in Douchy, he was fidgeting with impatience to get in the “trenches.” Even with his infected foot he drug himself up this time to “take part in the extravaganza.” Ridiculed by many and thought not all there, he nonetheless died in the trench the death of a whole man and many, who made his life difficult, aren’t worthy to stand at his grave... Yes, sad thoughts come when you gaze at a coffin like this around which flies are already playing. What for, what for...¹⁵⁷

Jünger’s postwar disorientation and loneliness have to be understood in relation to such wartime feelings of kinship and loss.¹⁵⁸ The next section will explore how Jünger responded to this confusion by searching for some vantage point that would allow the experiences and sacrifices of the war to appear as meaningful and communicable to others. How Jünger interpreted the war in the initial postwar decade depended on the kinds of mutual understanding—the quality essential, in his view, to the establishment of shared and stable meanings—he had come to know in the different relations of friendship and comradeship.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 25 October 1917, p. 330. As the entry from 29 October 1917 (p. 334) confirms, Brecht had indeed been killed.

¹⁵⁴ Sarah Cole, “Modernism, Male Intimacy, and the Great War,” *English Literary History* 68 (2001), 476.

¹⁵⁵ Jünger, *Kriegstagebuch*, 31 October 1917, p. 337.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Sarah Cole, “Modernism, Male Intimacy, and the Great War,” 479. I agree with Cole that such “male intimacy neither banishes nor reduces to homosexuality” (472). In Jünger’s case, however, there is little warrant for a homoerotic reading of his close friendships.

¹⁵⁷ Jünger, *Kriegstagebuch*, 3 July 1916, p. 148.

¹⁵⁸ Jünger should thus be understood as part of a larger trend that Sarah Cole examines with regard to postwar British literature. As Cole writes: “[T]he figure of the bereaved male friend... becomes the war’s representative *par excellence*... post-war disconnection and disillusion will thus be articulated specifically in terms of the creation and loss of powerful male friendships” (470).

Escaping the “private war”: Crisis Years (1919-1923)

Ernst Jünger experienced Germany’s surrender on November 11, 1918, while recovering from his wounds at his family’s home in Rehburg. The coups and counter-coups launched by radicals on the left and right in the early postwar months—the clash between the communist Spartacus League and their Freikorps opponents in Berlin in January 1919 is an especially bloody example—only underscored the insecurity already caused by fuel shortages, hunger, and rampant influenza. This chaos reached directly into the Jünger household. On November 18, their home was searched by armed men under uncertain orders. “What was remarkable about the incident,” Jünger reported, “was that the people hardly seemed to know what they wanted; this was also what made it so unsettling.”¹⁵⁹ Jünger, able to remain in the 100,000-man rump army left by the Versailles Treaty and briefly stationed in postwar Berlin, later wrote of the “continuous state of fever” in which he experienced the capital’s disorder. “During the night,” he reflected, “I would occasionally be startled from sleep by gunfire; there were prisons in the convoluted little quarter where I had rented a room, and attempts were made to liberate prisoners. In some nearby barracks, a court martial was active, each day shooting the looters who had been caught the night before behind a monument.”¹⁶⁰

This outer turmoil mirrored his own confusion. According to Helmuth Kiesel, Germany’s defeat cast Jünger into a “crisis of meaning”: if the old Kaiserreich (to which Jünger was never very devoted anyway) was now gone, and if what replaced it was unpalatable, then what had all the sacrifice been for?¹⁶¹ As Jünger himself put it in 1926:

We have asked about the meaning of our experience [in the war] and have only been able to establish that this meaning must be totally different from the one we believed in at the time. . . . We must believe in a higher meaning. . . . Otherwise the ground on which we stand is pulled from beneath our feet and we tumble in a meaningless, chaotic, random world. Of what help is it that the understanding fastens onto things and seeks to take possession of them, when these things are not anchored in the depths and ordered from the ground up? We *must* believe that everything is meaningfully ordered, lest we be stranded with the masses of the inwardly oppressed, the dispirited, or the do-gooders, or live like suffering animals from day to day.¹⁶²

Jünger’s early postwar writings, together with his correspondence from the time, shed light on the deeper roots of this crisis. At its heart was a threatened loss of coherence and communicability—imprisonment, in other words, in a kaleidoscope of private impressions. This was already clear in Jünger’s 1922 *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, which made plain the

¹⁵⁹ Ernst Jünger to Friedrich Georg Jünger, 18 November 1918, in *Die Schleife: Dokumente zum Weg von Ernst Jünger*, ed. Armin Mohler (Bad Vilbel: Edition Antaios, 2001), 71-72.

¹⁶⁰ Jünger, *AH2*, 26. It is unclear when Jünger experienced these events, though most likely in 1919 or 1920.

¹⁶¹ Kiesel (2007), 140.

¹⁶² Jünger, “Der Wille,” *Standarte*, 6 May 1926, in *Politische Publizistik*, 200-201. Cf. Freud’s famous line, from a 1937 letter to Marie Bonaparte, that the “moment a man questions the meaning and value of life, he is sick, since objectively neither has any existence; by asking this question one is merely admitting to a store of unsatisfied libido to which something else must have happened, a kind of fermentation leading to sadness and depression.” Quoted in Liran Razinsky, *Freud, Psychoanalysis and Death* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 248.

impossibility of adequately conveying the experience of the Great War. The essay purported to redeem the conflict's apparent absurdity by answering the question: "what had really gone on?" Jünger's own introduction, however, was full of misgivings, admitting that "what was felt to the abyss in that frenzied dance can, like every other psychic experience, only be outlined, not described" (*läßt sich... nur umschreiben, nicht beschreiben*). Those who came through the war now faced an age that plunged "from one contradiction into the next. We live in chaos, in a vortex of light and shadow as rarely before."¹⁶³

Jünger's postwar bewilderment, his inability to find a vantage point from which the war and its aftermath made sense, was confessed in candid letters to family. Writing to his parents in March 1920, Jünger described himself as "thoroughly splintered."¹⁶⁴ In August 1922, he wrote to his brother, Friedrich Georg, of his desire to "reach a point from which I can maintain, definitely and without recourse to authorities, that something is solid and reliable (*gut gewachsen*)."¹⁶⁵ And in March 1923, days before his twenty-eighth birthday, Jünger brooded that he was approaching an age at which "lack of clarity needs to be overcome. It would be enough," he declared,

to fuse the will into a few fixed formulae, from which everything else can be derived. That is not easy... Every perception is immediately paralyzed and relativized by an opposing one. The brain is well-nigh a perpetual motion machine that exhausts its energy in a game with weights and counterweights. The simplest facts dazzle in so many lights that every uniform color is lost.

They had been "wrecked through a liberal education," Jünger added, suggesting that "clarity" would not be achieved on such terms.¹⁶⁶ This period of disorientation lasted until at least 1923, when Jünger resigned from the army and published his first overtly political essay. As John King observed, "the Jünger who before 1914 was preoccupied with escape was now preoccupied with an essentially conservative struggle to re-establish an authentic self within a centered framework that would somehow re-anchor that self in a stable, albeit radically changed world." Jünger's works from these years, King convincingly argued, should be understood as a series of "often contradictory and unstable" attempts to locate an epistemological position able to overcome "the crisis of his conservative imagination."¹⁶⁷

This crisis consciousness was by no means restricted to Jünger. Since Nietzsche and Burckhardt in the late nineteenth century, an undercurrent of cultural pessimism and discontent with political conditions had attended German intellectual life.¹⁶⁸ With the First World War this current became a flood. No one better captured this mood than Oswald

¹⁶³ Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1922), 3-4.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Schwilk (1988), 87. The letter is from 3 March 1920.

¹⁶⁵ Jünger to Friedrich Georg Jünger, 27 August 1922, in *Die Schleife*, 84.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Schwilk (1988), 94. The letter is from 25 March 1923. That Friedrich Georg was likewise seized by feelings of instability and dissolution can be seen from his own 1951 memoir, in which he wrote of the postwar years: "To me it sometimes seemed as if I shot along a whirlpool... In this motion the day went by entirely, and nothing but its impression remained." See his *Grüne Zweige. Ein Erinnerungsbuch* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), 191.

¹⁶⁷ John King, 111, 114.

¹⁶⁸ For two classic and still useful surveys of this cultural malaise, see Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969); and Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961).

Spengler, whose bestselling *Decline of the West* (1919) helped to convince interwar Germans—Ernst Jünger included—that they were living through the death throes of a geriatric Western culture. Spengler purported to identify a “metaphysical structure” to human history that located the disorienting present within a lifecycle of civilizations’ rise and fall.¹⁶⁹ “We live in momentous times,” he wrote. “Yet how blind are the human beings over whom this mighty destiny is surging, whirling them in confusion, exalting them, destroying them! Who among them sees and comprehends what is being done to them and around them?”¹⁷⁰ Spengler’s popularity lay in explaining this feeling of disorientation as a symptom of precipitous decline, at the same time as he offered the world-historical framework that rendered the confusion comprehensible and pointed the way to a new birth. A “true sense of crisis,” Hans Sluga observed, always involves more than uncertainty and intimations of ruin; it also “contains an element of anticipation, an expectation of sudden transformation, a cutting loose from the confinements of the past, the sudden appearance of a new world.”¹⁷¹

Ernst Jünger is well placed to help us see the intersection of this pervasive feeling of decay (and possible renewal) with two other more “local” crises: that of traumatized veterans returning from the war, and that of modernist artists no longer confident in their powers of representation. The latter two were, at least potentially, linked. As Eric Leed noted, echoing Walter Benjamin, the war’s “transgression of categories”—its blurring of the boundaries between “life and death, human and machine, and man and animal”—had shattered “distinctions that were central to orderly thought [and] communicable experience.”¹⁷² As a soldier, Jünger might have been instructed by the war alone that language was no longer commensurate with the truths of experience. As a budding writer, however, his sense of this crisis of representation was sharpened by one artist in particular: the Austrian illustrator and writer Alfred Kubin. Jünger first encountered Kubin’s graphic works in 1914 and his novel *The Other Side* (1909) by chance in a field bookshop near Cambrai in 1916. So absorbing was this “nightmare vision of future fates and horrors” that he stayed up all night reading the book. “Long before [Thomas Mann’s] *Magic Mountain*,” Jünger claimed, Kubin’s *The Other Side* saw with the “most sensitive refinement... the slow assault of decay, its subterranean creeping, its corroding inexorability, its shudders, its visions.”¹⁷³

In a 1931 essay, Jünger elaborated on Kubin’s powers as an artist. The “common theme” expressed in modern art’s “bewildering multiplicity of styles,” Jünger declared, was

the demise of a world that man seeks to bear witness to through colors and contours... The phenomenon has postures of the most extreme loneliness, within which the appeal of the threatened individual on the edge of senselessness takes place and raises no more claim to the possibility of communication. This is everywhere the case where one works with abstract means.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Vol. 1, *Form and Actuality*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Knopf, 1946), 3.

¹⁷⁰ Oswald Spengler, *The Hour of Decision*, Vol. 1: *Germany and World-Historical Evolution*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Knopf, 1934), 3. First published 1933.

¹⁷¹ Hans Sluga, *Heidegger’s Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 61.

¹⁷² Eric Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 21.

¹⁷³ Ernst Jünger, “Alfred Kubins Werk. Nachwort zum Briefwechsel,” *SW* 14, 20-24.

¹⁷⁴ Ernst Jünger, “Die Staubdämonen,” *SW* 14, 33.

Here Jünger made a version of the charge Ernst Gombrich laid against Salvador Dalí's surrealism: the modern artist presents the "elusive dream of a private person to which we hold no key."¹⁷⁵ Yet Kubin met this challenge to communication, according to Jünger, through recourse to a "symbolic language of metaphor" (*symbolische Bildersprache*) that "depicted the intrusion of destructive powers... in a symbolic fashion superior to temporal events." Suggesting that the visual and verbal domains had both fallen to a crisis of representation, Jünger wrote that Kubin's work instead "creates out of a deeper zone of direct insight." What the viewer felt, Jünger argued, was "a certain dizziness... grounded in the perception that the familiar order, the structure of our world has been struck in its solidity." This impression corresponded to "the symbolism of the individual objects that are displayed as emblems, like the figures of the zodiac or on a coat of arms—in a language spoken with instinctive certainty. Behind this language is hidden the momentous ability to bring to view events of our time through means not drawn from time's domain." Kubin's work "will continue to exist," Jünger wagered, "as one of those keys, which unlocks more hidden and secret rooms than a historical account... 'Lines, spheres, figures—if only one could read them!' as Büchner's *Wozzek* says."¹⁷⁶

Jünger's mature style would be deeply marked by this non-linguistic "reading" of surface events, whose meaning could be captured through a symbolism that went deeper than mimetic representation. Given Jünger's own *Weltschmerz*, he was also speaking from experience in writing of the "extreme loneliness" of the modern condition to which Kubin's method was a response. In a March 1921 letter to his brother, Friedrich Georg, Jünger described his life in the postwar Reichswehr as that of a "monk" in a "cell"—a recourse to monastic metaphors that would become more pronounced in Jünger's self-description after 1933.¹⁷⁷ In November 1921, he lamented the time an officer was forced to waste on the "trivialities" of the social scene.¹⁷⁸ And a month later, he told of long midnight walks through empty streets and confessed that most days he had to "muster the labors of a deep-sea diver for even the simplest tasks."¹⁷⁹ Jünger's brother, also a veteran and now studying law in Leipzig, was in the same predicament. In a letter announcing that, "crudely put, the times make me sick," Friedrich Georg wrote, "When I came here I hoped to find two or three people with whom I could interact. But, since nothing echoes back, I've given up this hope and live in loneliness."¹⁸⁰ In perhaps the most revealing of these early letters, Jünger

¹⁷⁵ Ernst Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1964), 444.

¹⁷⁶ Jünger, "Die Staubdämonen," 33-34, 38. On the close connection between the crisis of representation in literature and the graphic arts, see George Steiner, "The Retreat from the Word," *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 21-22. As Steiner argues: "It is precisely against such verbal equivalence or concordance that modern art has rebelled. It is because so much eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painting seemed merely to be an illustration of verbal concepts—a picture in the book of language—that post-impressionism broke away from the word" (22). Another likely influence on Jünger in this respect was the French decadent novelist J. K. Huysmans, whose *Against the Grain* (1884) he first read shortly after the First World War. On the interiorization of experience and the idea of purity beyond language in Huysmans, see Richard Terdiman, *The Dialectics of Isolation: Self and Society in the French Novel from the Realists to Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976).

¹⁷⁷ Jünger added: "I awake early in my cell and read my chapter, as befits the monk. The *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, Gracian's *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* make up my pre-breakfast, alongside the biographies of Tacitus and Suetonius. Then we work for eight hours." E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 16 March 1921, in *Die Schleife*, 79.

¹⁷⁸ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 22 November 1921, in *ibid.*, 81.

¹⁷⁹ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 3 December 1921, in *ibid.*, 92-93.

¹⁸⁰ F. G. Jünger to E. Jünger, 17 November 1921, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

made plain his frustrations with his current social circle. Referring to *Decline of the West*, he wrote:

In many things Spengler has truly removed the scales from my eyes. His approach, after a second reading, has also become familiar to me, a sort of intellectual pearl-threading or a melody of the analogical... I live here [in military barracks in Hanover] as a hermit in regard to such things; I can imagine, though, that there are circles among our contemporaries in which these matters are discussed. I explain the decidedly pleasant feeling that seized me as I read this way. The spiritual advance (*geistige Vormarsch*) of the nation takes place on a quite definite line. To everyone who is active there a certain consciousness of it... is conveyed.¹⁸¹

Like his earlier memories of his adolescent soul mate Giesecke, in which he hoped that his lost friend “perhaps also sometimes thinks of me,” here Jünger finds not just affirmation but explicit pleasure in imagining that others elsewhere are sharing his reactions, thinking and feeling as he does. As Benedict Anderson famously argued, such “imagined community”—the *feeling* of common belonging with others one will never meet—is the essence of nationalist self-awareness.¹⁸² This imaginative leap would combine with Jünger’s wartime experience of comradeship to define his “new nationalism” after 1924.

It would be wrong, however, to picture Ernst Jünger in the early 1920s as a loner or misfit. Existential loneliness is fully compatible with a lively social life. Friedrich Georg, for one, wrote bemusedly to his brother that “your many acquaintances sometimes seem to me like a swarm of flies who want to eat you up.”¹⁸³ Jünger’s correspondence in fact shows that he went out of his way to stay in touch with individuals whose quality of mind he admired, “odd fish,” as he put it in one case, “in an age when one actually only comes across sharks and schools of herring.”¹⁸⁴

Yet given Jünger’s evident thirst for companionship, it is at first blush striking that the social dimension of his earliest war writings is so limited. Compared to other classic accounts of the war—one thinks of Henri Barbusse’s *Under Fire* (1916) or Robert Graves’s *Good-Bye to All That* (1929)—Jünger’s most famous memoir, *Storm of Steel* (1920), is an almost solipsistic work that never reports *at length* on a conversation or describes *in detail* another personality.¹⁸⁵ This doubtless has something to do with its origins: the book is a revision of the diaries, and especially in its self-published first edition was more a piece of juvenilia than a polished work of literature.¹⁸⁶ But it also suggests Jünger’s difficulty at the time connecting

¹⁸¹ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 27 August 1922, in *Die Schleife*, 84.

¹⁸² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 15-16.

¹⁸³ F. G. Jünger to E. Jünger, 25 October 1920, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

¹⁸⁴ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 4 March 1920, in *Die Schleife*, 85. In a letter from 6 September 1921, Jünger remarked to his brother on pleasant conversations with someone he called “the good Moor.” “This unfortunate son of an orthodox pastor,” he wrote, “is like some strange game that I can never tire of stalking. Benevolence, brutality, sensuality, and the wiliness of a Tartuffe are so intricately interwoven that one never knows where the lie ends and the truth begins.” See *ibid.*, 88.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Nevin rightly called Jünger’s memoirs “egocentric” (66).

¹⁸⁶ On this process of revision, see Eva Dempewolf, *Blut und Tinte. Eine Interpretation der verschiedenen Fassungen von Ernst Jüngers Kriegstagebüchern vor dem politischen Hintergrund der Jahre 1920 bis 1980* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1992); and Wojciech Kunicki, *Projectionen des Geschichtlichen. Ernst Jüngers Arbeit an den Fassungen von “In*

his subjectivity to that of others. Though dedicated to “my fallen comrades,” *Storm of Steel* is an overwhelmingly personal chronicle in which those comrades play only bit parts.¹⁸⁷ Forced to take his own experiences as a starting point,¹⁸⁸ Jünger never really explores the psyche of others or penetrates the mind of the common grunt. Genuine affection is reserved for soldiers of his own stripe. His remark on the charms of the officer’s mess is representative. “Here an element was alive,” Jünger declared, “that emphasized and yet spiritualized the savageness of the war, one that was found so seldom in the people with whom one laid together in shell holes, a sportsmanlike joy in danger, a knightly urge to stand one’s ground.”¹⁸⁹ As Eva Dempewolf observed of *Storm of Steel*, the term “comrade,” when not directly related to members of this “front elite,” conveys “even in later editions the impression of something pasted on.”¹⁹⁰

Much the same is true of Jünger’s *Battle as Inner Experience* (1922). More a treatise than a memoir, the work tried to make sense of the Great War by taking battle as the revelation of a timeless natural order. In a manner reminiscent of Freud, who saw the war as an eruption of repressed instincts, Jünger wrote that, despite modern man’s enervating comforts, “the animal still sleeps in his soul.” The war represented a recrudescence of the primitive, in which “the mask falls and primal man emerges as naked as ever, the cave dweller in the full unruliness of unleashed impulses.”¹⁹¹ Yet as we have already noted, *Battle as Inner Experience*, while purporting to comprehend the war from a quasi-theoretic vantage point, also openly confessed the impossibility of fully communicating the war experience.¹⁹² Indeed, the text explicitly thematized the problem of communication. In a chapter entitled “Among Ourselves,” Jünger reflected on his “indissoluble” link with his men; his affection for such “fat fishmongers” and “squarely built peat farmers,” however, was tempered by his chagrin at overhearing them talk.

One buzzword follows the other... Their conversation neither develops nor goes too deep, but is rather a tossing back and forth of worn-out coins that have fallen into

Stahlgewittern” (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993). The considerable extent of these revisions means that post-1933 editions should no longer be considered Weimar texts.

¹⁸⁷ Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern: Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers* (Leisnig: Verlag Robert Meier, 1920). Robert Meier was the family gardener, hence the first edition of the book was effectively self-published. It is important to recognize the book’s documentary and monumental tone. Jünger professed his desire to avoid the “idealization” of what had passed, claiming to offer an account of the war “not as it could have been, but as it was.” See Jünger’s foreword to the 1920 edition, *vi-ix*. On the postwar process of memorializing the dead, see especially Mosse’s *Fallen Soldiers*, and Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁸⁸ See Jünger’s entry in *Kriegstagebuch* for 10 August 1918, p. 432.

¹⁸⁹ Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern* (1920), 79.

¹⁹⁰ Dempewolf, *Blut und Tinte*, 64-65. “Already in the earliest editions of his war books,” she noted, Jünger “hardly neglected an opportunity to defame the army as ‘the masses’—defame precisely because this term is always negatively charged” (68).

¹⁹¹ Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, 7. See Freud’s 1915 essay “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death,” in *Civilization, War and Death*, ed. John Rickman (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 1-25.

¹⁹² On this point, see also John King, who characterizes the work as “a polyphony of styles, ideologies and voices... a fragmented, tortured attempt to make sense of a world in which the experience of the war has made that experience incompatible with all previous meta-narratives” (195).

the collection boxes of their brains somewhere in the dugout, on leave, or in the mess hall, and which, like all that is endlessly repeated, have been stamped as truth.¹⁹³

Parliament and the press, Jünger added, operate no differently. Such empty clichés promoted a kind of communicative Balkanization. “Class, race, party, nation, each community is a land in itself, sealed off by ramparts and wired shut. In between desert. Defectors are shot.” Jünger ended the chapter by reporting himself off to visit a friend in a neighboring regiment, commenting that “I always search out someone who corresponds to my temperament.” Once there, the two friends discuss the war through references to Schopenhauer, Kant, Nietzsche, and D’Annunzio.¹⁹⁴ The clear suggestion is that language is unable to carry the deeper meanings Jünger wants it to—or, if it can, then only to an elite few.

The struggle to communicate is at the center of Jünger’s novella *Storm* (“Sturm”), which appeared in serialized form in the *Hannoverscher Kurier* in April 1923. Amazingly, Jünger claimed later to have forgotten the work entirely (it was rediscovered in 1960), explaining that “I had so many personal problems [at the time] that one can understand why I stopped thinking about the novel.”¹⁹⁵ Another way to say this would be that *Storm* represented the nadir of Jünger’s postwar crisis and a line of development in his work that he abandoned soon thereafter.

Set on the Western Front on the eve of the Somme Offensive, the story begins with a suicide, an event which sends a “whiff of absurdity” through the trenches. Jünger took pains at the outset to demythologize the comradeship supposedly created by the war.

These men, whose life together was summed up in the imagination of those back home with words like “comradeship” and “brotherhood of arms,” had left nothing at home of that which filled them out in peacetime... At bottom, this fighting community, this company of life and death, showed the odd ephemerality and sadness of human interaction in particular clarity. Like a race of flees it danced confusedly and was just as quickly scattered by every wind. When grog was unexpectedly brought forward from the kitchen or when a mild evening melted the mood, then all were like brothers and drew even the lonesome into their circle... But when death hung like a storm cloud over the trenches, then each was for himself; he stood alone in the darkness... and had nothing in his breast but boundless loneliness.¹⁹⁶

Language, too, divided the men. Conversation between simple soldiers and their educated superiors, Jünger observed, is like “passing word-coins back and forth, behind which each party sees quite different values... Today, in the egghead military theorist and the mobilized factory worker, two foreign worlds confront one another.”¹⁹⁷ At stake was the loss of a world in which all are “united [by] views sprung from the same soil.” The problem is amplified when, as in the First World War, whole societies are mobilized against one another. Then the “tensions and contradictions” are greater, “the staff officer [stands]

¹⁹³ Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, 81, 85-86. Jünger calls his men “big children” and “egoists” chiefly concerned with comfort and security—in other words, with “happiness in a petite-bourgeois sense” (81, 85).

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 86-92.

¹⁹⁵ Neaman, 26n20; Hervier, 18.

¹⁹⁶ Ernst Jünger, *Sturm* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), 6-9.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

disconnectedly above the masses as a cultivated brain,” and the masses themselves cannot be “filled equally with the full significance of the goal.”¹⁹⁸ The loss of communicability, Jünger suggests, is a measure of the fragmentation of mass society.

Storm dramatized this problem of community and communication on multiple levels. Its protagonist, an Ensign Sturm, is a writer unable to write about the war. (“I live too violently in it,” Sturm declares, “to be able to contemplate it as an artist.”¹⁹⁹) Instead, he reads character sketches to two rather dandyish fellow platoon leaders. The avant-garde discussions of these three friends in fact make up the bulk of the work, their lively debates an escape from feelings of “dread” and “absurdity.”²⁰⁰ The last and longest of these sketches tells the story of a sensitive, yet friendless and deeply alienated veteran named Falk, a man who styles himself a “writer” but is “unable to summon the words.”²⁰¹ Falk’s longing for interpersonal connection is only relieved by a chance encounter with a young lady, from whom he feels an inexplicable degree of “understanding.” Prodded to discuss his war experience, Falk relates an especially bloody episode but struggles to articulate the experience in terms she can comprehend. Ultimately, Falk’s success in this task is unresolved: an English attack interrupts the story and its narrator, Sturm, is killed. One of Sturm’s final acts, however, is to burn his notebook to provide light after their bunker is hit by English artillery, an act that can be read as Jünger’s despairing judgment on the power of words.²⁰²

If *Storm* carries a practical lesson, it is perhaps that one must struggle to communicate regardless of the outcome, and that a friendly ear is the best one can hope for. Yet Sturm’s remark that “at bottom everyone experiences their own private war” captures the novella’s underlying mood of loneliness and entrapment in “inner experience.”²⁰³ It is clear, at any rate, that by the time Jünger left the Reichswehr in August 1923 he had passed through an unsettling crisis of language and cognition. His first foray into political journalism followed a month later. In an exceptionally fuzzy piece published in late September, Jünger excoriated the events of November 1918 for their lack of a determining “idea” and prophesied that Germany’s “true revolution” was yet to come. What was needed, he proclaimed, was a “dictatorship” that would “replace words with deeds, ink with blood, phrases with sacrifice, the pen with the sword.”²⁰⁴ The revolutionary “new nationalism” Jünger developed over the next several years would be based on an abandonment of the modernist problem of language altogether.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27-28. References to “Papa Wrangel” and Blücher make clear that Jünger took the German War of Liberation against Napoleon (1813-1815) as a model of such a common horizon of thought and feeling.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 41. Sturm adds: “Perhaps in five years it will be possible. After all, to contemplation belongs distance” (41). Jünger’s message in *Storm*, which appeared nearly five years after the war’s end, is that the intervening years in fact had *not* made the war easier to write about.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-17.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 72. Elsewhere Jünger writes: “Sensitive, Sturm often felt building within himself the urge to expression, only to have it miscarry through an absence of form” (*um jedesmal an der Form zu scheitern*) (69).

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 79, 82-84. As Hans-Harald Müller put it, “*Storm* is in Jünger’s conception not a novel about the war, but rather about the impossibility of writing a novel about the war.” See *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller. Der Kriegerroman der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche, 1986), 265.

²⁰³ *Storm*, 30.

²⁰⁴ Ernst Jünger, “Revolution und Idee,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, 23/24 September 1923, in *Politische Publizistik*, 33-37.

Jünger's "New Nationalism" (1924-1928)

Ernst Jünger's political activism began in earnest in 1925, shifted gears around 1928, and came to a rapid halt with the Nazi ascension to power in 1933. On the strength of his wartime heroism and growing literary fame—*Storm of Steel* was reissued in increasingly politicized form in 1922 and 1924²⁰⁵—Jünger quickly established himself as one of the most influential members of Weimar's "conservative revolution." This heterogeneous movement was defined more by what it opposed—Bolshevism, materialism, internationalism, parliamentary democracy, the stuffy conservatism of the pre-war years—than by any common political agenda. Comprising journalists, novelists, politicians, and academics, the movement was nonetheless united, with Goethe's Mephistopheles, in the belief that what had come to be deserved to perish. Armin Mohler, a historian and post-1945 defender of the movement, described it as a great "counterforce" to the values and ideas of the French Revolution. For these radicals, the "spirit of 1914" offered an epochal shift away from the individualism, progressivism, and intellectualist philosophies bequeathed by the Enlightenment.²⁰⁶

What an equally masculine *fraternité* had been to Marat, Danton, and Robespierre, manly *Kameradschaft* would be to the new revolution.²⁰⁷ The rhetoric of wartime comradeship drew the social imagination inexorably to images of soldiers' shared hardships, common joys, and collective struggle. As one conservative revolutionary publicist, Helmut Franke, put it, the trenches had shown the way to *real* community and the actualization of true human purpose: "Leader and men, man to man, from first to last ever relying upon each other and closely bound to each other—they can demonstrate their humanity better than all pacifist and international theories of humanity."²⁰⁸ The desire to realize comradeship's now-mythic dimensions in a new political order would inform large swathes of the conservative revolution, but nowhere more so than among those "new nationalists" (or "soldierly nationalists") who drew most directly on the war experience.²⁰⁹ For "new nationalists" like Jünger, claims for what had been discovered through wartime comradeship became one way to spiritualize the conflict, turning battlefield defeat into inner victory.

How little nationalism meant to Jünger during the war can be seen from the original diaries. In August 1918 he denied being the type to "booze it up" on the Kaiser's birthday, adding: "I believed myself above the national standpoint before the war, and I don't stand beneath it today."²¹⁰ Starting in January 1925, however, Jünger began working out an explicitly nationalist position in regular columns for right-wing publications, at first in

²⁰⁵ See Dempewolf, 192-198. Jünger in fact significantly revised the text as late as 1961.

²⁰⁶ Armin Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland. 1918-1932: Ein Handbuch* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlich Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 10-11. [First published 1949.] Mohler was, not coincidentally, Jünger's personal secretary in the 1950s.

²⁰⁷ On the gender connotations of these terms, see Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993); George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

²⁰⁸ Quoted in Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), 28.

²⁰⁹ Mohler, 142-146. Mohler, who stresses the internal heterogeneity of the conservative revolution, identifies several *völkisch*, youth-oriented, and regional movements alongside "soldierly nationalism." For an attempt to place notions of a "new nationalism" at the heart of the conservative revolution, see Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993).

²¹⁰ Ernst Jünger, *Kriegstagebuch*, 10 August 1918, p. 433.

journals affiliated with the largest veterans organization, the Stahlhelm, and later in national revolutionary newspapers like *Arminius*, *Der Vormarsch*, and *Widerstand*. This fervid activity—Jünger would eventually publish over a hundred essays and reviews—brought him into contact with a who's who of Weimar's radical right. These included fellow writers such as Franz Schauwecker, Ernst Niekisch, Ernst von Salomon, Hans Grimm, Ludwig Alwens, Friedrich Hielscher, and Arnolt Bronnen, as well as academics like Martin Heidegger, Carl Schmitt, and Alfred Baeumler.²¹¹ It also brought Jünger to the attention of the National Socialists, who hoped to conscript him for their own movement. Hitler professed to be a fan, and Goebbels proclaimed *In Stahlgewittern* “a war gospel, truly great.” Yet in 1927 Jünger declined the Nazis' offer of a seat in the Reichstag, a decision likely motivated as much by his scorn for parliamentary politics as by his disdain for the Nazis' plebian style and vulgar race theories.²¹² This refusal, together with Jünger's efforts after 1933 to remain unco-opted by the party, are a reminder that, however much these radical conservatives may have done to help sweep the Nazis into power, many were contemptuous of the movement.

The period of what Mohler dubbed Jünger's “naïve nationalism” was defined by calls for a new order that would be “national” (based on love of country), “social” (based on comradeship), “militant” (based on courage), and “authoritative” (based on discipline). These “four principles,” Jünger confessed, were the product of “long and difficult work... attaining clarity about the meaning of what had happened” in the war.²¹³ More important than “a revolution in the form of the state,” however, was “a revolution of the soul,” for which the war provided the “fruitful soil.”²¹⁴ August 1914, Jünger now wrote, brought the return of a “connection that had gone lost,” a “feeling of community in a grand destiny.”²¹⁵ As the source of such a “revolution of the soul,” wartime comradeship would provide the crucial experiential foundation for Jünger's new political commitment.

This abrupt embrace of corporate identity and collective emotion needs to be understood in light of the crisis of language that we have examined thus far. Unable to adequately communicate his war experience, Jünger turned to what Thomas Weitin called “pre-discursive harmony,” a common consciousness so deeply felt that its expression would be superfluous.²¹⁶ “The heart,” Jünger proclaimed in a 1924 memoir, *Copse 125*, “is the real social question.”

What really binds a people will never be anything of a material nature. Only in feeling can I imagine a lasting cement between men... Thus it is in feeling that the building up of a people must have its foundation, and if this foundation is there, the rest

²¹¹ For general accounts of Jünger's Weimar-era political activism, from which I have drawn here and below, see Kiesel (2007), 266-399; Nevin, 75-114; Neaman, 26-46; and Louis Dupeux, “Der ‘Neue Nationalismus’ Ernst Jüngers 1925-1932. Vom heroischen Soldatentum zur politisch-metaphysischen Totalität,” in *Die Großen Jagden des Mythos. Ernst Jünger in Frankreich*, ed. Peter Koslowski (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1996), 15-40.

²¹² As Jünger wrote, “we don't want to hear anything about chemical reactions, blood transfusions, skull forms or Aryan profiles.” See “Das Blut,” *Die Standarte*, 29 April 1926, in *Politische Publizistik*, 193. For more on Jünger and anti-Semitism, see Kiesel (2007), 309-317.

²¹³ Mohler, 457; Jünger, *Feuer und Blut*, “Foreword to Second Edition,” in *Politische Publizistik*, 173.

²¹⁴ Jünger, “Die Revolution,” *Die Standarte*, 18 October 1925, in *Politische Publizistik*, 114.

²¹⁵ Jünger, “Der Krieg als äusseres Erlebnis,” *Die Standarte*, 27 September 1925, 86.

²¹⁶ See his *Notwendige Gewalt. Die Moderne Ernst Jüngers und Heiner Müllers* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 2003), 82-103.

comes of itself... Something like a miracle must be hoped for—a spirit as strong as the divine grace that bound great communities so irresistibly in the Middle Ages.²¹⁷

Jünger's nationalism, in other words, would transform ineffability into a virtue. "We need," he wrote, "the conscious, virile strength that goes without saying... There are things of which a man seldom speaks, things like love and belief, and to these the fatherland must once again belong."²¹⁸ While critics have often traced Jünger's radical politics to proto-fascist works like *Battle as Inner Experience* (1922), which submitted man to an unchanging natural order,²¹⁹ it was in fact not a foregone conclusion that Jünger would resolve his postwar crisis the way he did. With so many competing moments in his early writings—*Storm* (1923), after all, suggested a refusal of resolution and a resigned acceptance of the limits of communication—his literary ambitions might have carried him in quite other directions.²²⁰ Understanding the *motives* behind Jünger's political decision requires us to see the literary and political dimensions of his works as reciprocally illuminating, and to relate both to his postwar bewilderment.²²¹

Unable to count on language to deliver him from the "private war," Jünger opted instead for a silent accord based in "feeling." In a 1926 salvo, he celebrated this pre-linguistic communication as thinking with "the blood."

The blood perceives the affinity (*Verwandtschaft*) of person to person. We live in a too crowded world to be able to sense the fortune that lies in [this] discovery... A handshake exchanged between men, the look in the eye, the tone of the voice, quite independent of the words that this voice speaks... in all the thousand imponderables that we perceive without thinking about we speak with the blood and the blood speaks to us... Beyond all the masks, I and you communicate in a secret language prior to all language... A community in which this feeling is not sensed is, as a community, dead. A people not bound by blood is merely a mass, a physical body.²²²

²¹⁷ Ernst Jünger, *Das Wäldchen 125: Eine Chronik aus den Grabenkämpfen* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1926), 174. This invocation of "feeling" should not be mistaken for an interest in sentimentality or intimate self-revelation. As Jünger wrote with regard to Rousseau, "the *Confessions* nauseate me." E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 27 January 1923, in *Die Schleife*, 92.

²¹⁸ *Das Wäldchen 125*, 132-133.

²¹⁹ See Leo Lowenthal's diagnosis of the fascist imagination: "[M]an must expect a life without meaning unless he obediently accepts as his own what may be called the law of nature. And the social counterpart to the law of natural rhythm is blind discipline." *Literature and the Image of Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 202.

²²⁰ Karl Prümm put it well in noting that "[p]ositions fundamental to soldierly nationalism find in *Sturm* effective counterweights articulated with full sympathy... It becomes clear [here] with what sacrifice of the author's own substance Jünger's political engagement had to be bought." *Die Literatur des Soldatischen Nationalismus der 20er Jahre (1918-1933)* (Kronberg Taunus: Scriptor, 1974), 184-185. John King rightly described *Sturm* as "proto-post-modern" for its resistance to "retreat[ing] to closed positions in the face of the war experience" (217).

²²¹ On this point, see Roger Woods, *Ernst Jünger and the Nature of Political Commitment* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982), 323. Whether the political and the aesthetic can be disentangled in Jünger's works has long been a matter of debate. As the next chapter will make clear, my view is that while the reader may formally separate them—thus deriving aesthetic insights untainted by his radical politics—the two dimensions developed in Jünger's mind in response to the same existential problems and can only be understood historically in relation to one another. For a discussion of this issue, see Neaman, 8-10.

²²² Ernst Jünger, "Das Blut," *Die Standarte*, 29 April 1926, *Politische Publizistik*, 192-193. Jünger added: "The blood does not reveal itself through words. Language is like a net, through whose mesh the richest and most

The war, he avowed, had taught the front soldier “to profess with the blood.”²²³ Indeed, the paradigm of such tacit understanding, Jünger now suggested, was that broad harmony of men in battle that was so marginal to his previous writings—and which he had roundly dismissed in *Sturm* only a few years earlier! In the front lines, Jünger wrote in 1925, “one is educated in a comradeship... [in which] reason (*Verstand*) isn’t decisive, but rather a much more primal and instinctive judgment is in force... Here, where a word is enough to call to memory a long chain of experiences survived together, lifting your glass is enough to find out how it stands with the other fellow.”²²⁴ In another memoir, *Fire and Blood* (1925), Jünger described the “manly community” of the front as one in which “conversation is mostly simple and sparse; we need few words to understand one another.”²²⁵

How closely such unspoken communication was linked in Jünger’s mind to the relations of soldiers was revealed in an essay on the relationship between “blood and intellect” in the creation of a nationalist program. Here Jünger argued that while a company must employ reason tactically in planning an attack, once the battle begins they are governed by a “secret bond independent of the senses,” a common “instinct” that is “not known, but rather felt.” Only through a “fusion” of shrewd calculation with this unspoken accord, he concluded, could a “battle-worthy” nationalism arise.²²⁶ To be sure, moments of “instinct” can already be found in Jünger’s original war diaries. In March 1918, he described a similar sense of his unit’s uncontrolled coordination in the heat of battle.²²⁷ What remained vague and scattered observations at the time, however, had by the mid-1920s become urgent revelations. Jünger now interpreted this “feeling with the blood” as an “intuitiveness that bestows on us the happy sense of deep togetherness.” This collective “fate,” Jünger insisted, “binds the individual to shared meaning.”²²⁸

The appeal of such implicitness among interwar radical conservatives has not been sufficiently recognized. In one form or another, in one idiom or another, these writers and thinkers celebrated the value of—or mourned modernity’s hostility to—self-evidence, unspoken agreement, tacit knowledge, and taken-for-granted beliefs. This was above all the case for writers of the war experience, who fancifully imagined that the harmony of soldiers facing death could be a model for transcending an ideologically riven civilian society. Among the most popular was Ernst von Salomon, who spoke of “that wordless and self-evident fellowship of the front that made dealings among comrades so certain and natural.”²²⁹

colorful quarry escapes before it is hauled out of the deep into the light” (191). On the symbolic power and sometimes poisonous effects of invocations of blood—including the anti-Semitic blood libel charges—see David Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol Between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).

²²³ Ernst Jünger, “Der Frontsoldat und die Wilhelminische Zeit,” *Die Standarte*, 20 September 1925, *Politische Publizistik*, 85.

²²⁴ Ernst Jünger, *Feuer und Blut* (Berlin: Frundsberg, 1929), 54.

²²⁵ Quoted in Schwilk (1988), 51. This taciturn demeanor should be considered another aspect of what Bernd Weisbrod called the “male fundamentalism” of Jünger’s nationalist politics. See his “Military Violence and Male Fundamentalism: Ernst Jünger’s Contribution to the Conservative Revolution,” trans. Pamela E. Selwyn, *History Workshop Journal* 49 (2000), 69-94.

²²⁶ Jünger, “Blut und Intellekt,” *Die Standarte*, 6 December 1925, in *Politische Publizistik*, 152-157.

²²⁷ See the entry for 21 March 1918, p. 380.

²²⁸ Jünger, “Das Blut,” 192-193.

²²⁹ Ernst von Salomon, *Die Stadt* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1932), 196. Born in 1902, Salomon was not a veteran of the Great War but of the postwar turmoil, having joined the Freikorps at war’s end and fought from 1919 to 1921 in Upper Silesia and the Baltic.

Another warrior turned bestselling writer, Werner Beumelburg, praised the war's "soldiers of a new type... soldiers of duty, comradeship, and manliness, who don't waste words" (*die keine Worte macht*).²³⁰ Franz Schauwecker similarly dismissed words as mere "bloodless theory." "These are thoughts without words," Schauwecker wrote in a 1926 memoir. "I think as it were in feelings."²³¹ Josef Goebbels, resentful of the physical handicap that kept him out of the war, mimicked this jargon in his novel *Michael* (1929). Attending a political rally, Goebbels' protagonist marvels as the speaker searches "for words to express something too great to be compressed into anything less than sweeping formulations." The resulting catchphrases (flag, honor, work) point to content more felt than known and arouse spontaneous feelings of comradeship in his audience. "Suddenly those around me were no longer strangers," Goebbels wrote, "but brothers."²³²

The greatest interwar theorist of tacitness was Martin Heidegger, whose *Being and Time* (1927) analyzed forms of prereflective awareness that had been obscured since the Enlightenment by a Cartesian model of detached critical reflection. These included the individual's embeddedness in a historical culture, whose customs and language carry built-in interpretations that shape our experience of the world. The task of the poet, Heidegger wrote in 1935, was to make a people's view of the world visible to itself by articulating this background understanding.²³³ Carl Schmitt, in another version of the same idea, deemed such pre-discursive agreement the hallmark of a truly populist political order. Given this singular will, Schmitt argued in a gloss on Rousseau's *contrat social*, "the laws come into existence *sans discussion*... homogeneity elevated into an identity understands itself completely from itself."²³⁴ The sociologist Hans Freyer likewise took as a model of renewal the shared "horizon" of primeval communal life. In *The State* (1926), Freyer praised that state "whose constitution consists not at all of formal laws, but of unspoken and tacitly followed customs, of the organic interplay of real forces, of simple leadership and willing trust."²³⁵

These examples suffice—certainly more could be adduced—to indicate that the "tacit understanding" Ferdinand Tönnies associated with the self-enclosed totality of *Gemeinschaft* in the 1880s had rocketed in popularity by the 1920s. Whether this longing for self-evidence was fueled in every case by the modernist crisis of representation and the ineffability of the war experience is doubtful. (Of Heidegger, Schmitt, and Freyer, only the latter was a veteran of the trenches.) As Roger Griffin argued, interwar fascism should be

²³⁰ Werner Beumelburg, *Sperrfeuer um Deutschland* (Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling, 1929), 380.

²³¹ Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg* (Berlin: Frundsberg, 1930), 74.

²³² Quoted in Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, Vol. 2, 121-122. On the novel's role in Goebbels' fraudulent posturing as a mangled veteran, see Joachim Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich: Portraits of the Nazi Leadership*, trans. Michael Bullock (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), 87-88.

²³³ See Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 139-203.

²³⁴ Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, "Preface to the Second Edition (1926): On the Contradiction between Parliamentarism and Democracy," trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 14.

²³⁵ Hans Freyer, *Der Staat* (Leipzig: Ernst Wiegandt, 1926), 182-183. See also Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 102. These concerns remained a feature of at least one strand of post-1945 German conservatism. See for instance the 1958 essay "On Culture, Nature, and Naturalness" by Freyer's student, Arnold Gehlen, which reflected on the role of "taken-for-granted assumptions." The piece is excerpted in *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present*, ed. Jerry Z. Muller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 404-407. Of course, a defense of the presumed naturalness of institutions and practices was already a concern of 18th-century conservative thinkers like Edmund Burke and Justus Möser.

seen as a response to a generalized “sense-making crisis” brought on by a host of modern developments that together disrupted “the very psychological foundations of normality and stability, of an existential ‘home.’”²³⁶ But Jünger helps us see how certain aesthetic concerns and wartime experiences could sharpen one’s sense of this crisis and allow comradeship’s pre-discursive harmony to appear in an appealing new light. Given the conservative revolution’s abundance of soldier poets, there is reason to suspect this conjuncture was widely shared.

Jünger’s own view of the virtues of tacitness seems to have been shaped above all by two thinkers. The first was the French writer and anti-Dreyfusard Maurice Barrès, whose “integral nationalism” extolled rootedness in the “spiritual unity” of the nation. In Barrès’ novel *The Appeal to the Soldier* (1900), overcoming alienation and returning to the “national unconsciousness” is accomplished via identification with the masses, whose passions are aroused by “[o]bscure sentiments... words which [they] do not know how to define but by which they recognize one another as brothers.”²³⁷ Writing in 1918 of the community of the trenches, Barrès argued that the war had “bound souls together” and spurred the reconciliation of French Protestants and Catholics. Crucially, the grounds of this reunion lay deeper than dogma: in the war, he declared, “a whole world of new thought or rather of new feeling had been stirred.”²³⁸ As Jünger later claimed, “I became a nationalist purely under French influence, especially by reading Barrès right after World War I.”²³⁹

The second major influence was Oswald Spengler. In *Decline of the West*, Spengler described his method as decision by “the *blood*,” a form of judgment that consisted not in “bare scientific criticism and knowing of data,” but in “*one moment* of illumination.” A nation’s real life, Spengler declared, was similarly a matter of instinctual awareness that defied explanation: “The unwritten, the indescribable, the usual, the felt, the self-evident, so outweigh everything else that—though theorists never see it—the description of a state... cannot give us even the silhouette of that which underlies [its] living actuality.”²⁴⁰ Jünger encountered Spengler, like Barrès, in the depth of his postwar crisis and came to recognize a solution in such sentiments. Writing to his brother in July 1923, Jünger asked him to forward a new edition of Spengler, adding: “Don’t disappoint my decline-hungry heart.”²⁴¹

In this tacit sphere of emotion, everything contradictory and difficult to express in Jünger’s turbulent postwar consciousness could be housed and reconciled. What’s more, such collective feelings created a bridge to others—at least in his imagination. Recall how Jünger’s imagined community with the likeminded grew over time, from the hope in 1915 that his lost friend Giesecke still also thought of him, to his felt connection to unidentified “circles” of Spengler devotees in 1922, to the belief, by 1925, in entire national communities

²³⁶ Roger Griffin, “Fatal Attraction: Why Nazism Appealed to Voters,” in *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, ed. Matthew Feldman (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 76.

²³⁷ Quoted in Robert Soucy, “Barrès and Fascism,” *French Historical Studies* 5.1 (Spring 1967), 83. On Jünger’s debt to Barrès, see Stefanie Arend, “Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk im Fluchtpunkt von Maurice Barrès’ Konzeption des Nationalismus,” in *Ernst Jünger. Politik, Mythos, Kunst*, ed. Lutz Hagestedt (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 25-34; and Karlheinz Weißmann, “Maurice Barrès und der ‘Nationalismus’ im Frühwerk Ernst Jüngers,” in *Magie der Heiterkeit. Ernst Jünger zum Hundertsten*, eds. Günter Figal and Heimo Schwilk (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1995), 133-146.

²³⁸ Maurice Barrès, *The Faith of France: Studies in Spiritual Differences & Unity*, trans Elisabeth Marbury (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 202-203.

²³⁹ Hervier, 15. As Kiesel notes, it is unclear what exactly Jünger had read of Barrès by the early 1920s (152).

²⁴⁰ *Decline of the West*, Vol. 2, 47, 361.

²⁴¹ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 28 July 1923, in D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

sustained by a common feeling “prior to all language.” The fundamental silence of this sense of connectedness was not unique to Jünger. According to Benedict Anderson, even when its content is sayable, the shared consciousness at the heart of nationalism is not in the public sphere’s articulated thoughts, but in private intuition. The quintessential example, Anderson noted, is reading a newspaper, an act “performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion.” This “confidence of community in anonymity,” the trust that unknown others shared his response to the world, would prove central to Jünger’s social imagination long after his nationalism was jettisoned.²⁴²

The experiences underpinning this collective spirit, however, were too unstable to support Jünger’s nationalist project. As we’ve seen, he had clearly known during the war feelings of “deep togetherness,” experiences that led him to believe front soldiers enjoyed a mutual understanding too profound for words. In his postwar writings, these moments appear overwhelmingly in connection to scenes of violence. Already in the 1920 edition of *Storm of Steel*, Jünger recalled landing in a crater with an officer from another regiment during a March 1918 attack. “Common enthusiasm,” he wrote, “brought us so close in those few minutes, that it was as though we had known each other for years. The next leap separated us, and we never saw each other again.”²⁴³ In later editions, Jünger stressed the depersonalizing sensation that preceded the battle: “I was aware, if only emotionally, of the importance of the hour, and I believe everyone at the time felt the individual in them dissolve before the weight of the historical responsibility that descended on them.”²⁴⁴ Elsewhere Jünger remarked how often “just before an attack... I felt this feeling of brotherhood, of an inner bond.”²⁴⁵ In focusing on such moments, Jünger’s vitalist anthropology merely elevated into a political principle an observation made by combatants on the other side too. As Brian Bond noted, English veterans like Edmund Blunden and Guy Chapman also documented the war’s “strange powers of attraction and the abiding sense of merging their individual identity in the corporate spirit of the battalion.”²⁴⁶

But Jünger’s “phenomenological attentiveness” meant that contrary evidence was also carefully recorded.²⁴⁷ Feelings of isolation were as much a part of Jünger’s ruminations on the war as feelings of belonging. In *Storm of Steel*, he recorded the dampening of the “feeling of togetherness” through long night watches and the desire “for something human” in the trench’s “eerie lonesomeness.”²⁴⁸ The sense of community was especially fleeting when confronted with death, destruction, and fear. The war’s wrecked landscape called forth an “alarming feeling of emptiness,” while the sound of exploding shells evoked “an indescribable feeling of loneliness and abandonment.”²⁴⁹ In *Copse 125*, Jünger described the suffocating feel of danger: “Relations with the outside world are cramped up into a tiny

²⁴² *Imagined Community*, 39. See also Weitin, 85.

²⁴³ In *Stahlgenittern* (1920), 148.

²⁴⁴ Jünger, In *Stahlgenittern: Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers* (Berlin: E. G. Mittler & Sohn, 1927), 226-227.

²⁴⁵ *Das Wäldchen* 125, 134

²⁴⁶ Brian Bond, *Survivors of a Kind: Memoirs of the Western Front* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 43. Cf. Klaus Theweleit’s account in *Male Fantasies* of the tension in the “fascist unconscious” between fears of disintegration in battle and longings for fusion with brother-soldiers.

²⁴⁷ See Steffen Martus, *Ernst Jünger* (Stuttgart und Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2001), 1.

²⁴⁸ In *Stahlgenittern* (1920), 17, 21.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 93, 162

space, reaching no further than the hand can extend. Hence each man feels himself in this darkness incredibly alone and defenseless.”²⁵⁰

What’s more, the shift from collective euphoria to isolation—Jünger likens his men at one point to “hermits” in a “nightmarish desert”—was often abrupt. “The ecstasy that animated the men,” he wrote of the aftermath of one attack, “has fully disappeared, and a mood of utter exhaustion and ill-humor takes its place. Each man shambles between the walls of the trench, withdrawn into himself, and every time there is a stoppage or someone is bumped, his ill-humor is vented on the man in front.”²⁵¹ As Jünger’s own works testify, the community and communication sustained by thinking with “the blood” were ephemeral at best. Hannah Arendt explained this deficit well when she observed that “the strong fraternal sentiments collective violence engenders” have often fed hopes for a “new community.” “The hope is an illusion,” Arendt cautioned, “for the simple reason that no human relationship is more transitory than this kind of brotherhood, which can be actualized only under conditions of immediate danger to life and limb.”²⁵²

Why succumb to this illusion?²⁵³ As I have tried to show, Jünger turned to a politics of comradeship out of a set of personal crises and intellectual dilemmas involving communication and representation. That he was comparatively uninterested in this corporate spirit during the war (and should have been better able than Arendt to diagnose the illusion) only strengthens the case for the distorting optic created by these postwar problems. All war memoirs present, as Samuel Hynes put it, a “filtered reality.”²⁵⁴ But that filter is always at least in part the product of a historical moment. What is interesting is less Jünger’s “new nationalism” than the conditions that allowed it to crystallize out of a more complex stock of war experiences.

Jünger’s political vision itself remained woefully inchoate. His ambition in the mid-1920s was to galvanize Weimar’s scattered veterans organizations into a united front, trusting (naively) that proper “feeling” could supply the deficiencies left by disagreements over aims and tactics. Among the ideological bickering on Weimar’s factious political right, the effort was a spectacular failure. How few responded to Jünger’s vision was made clear in late 1927 in a series of frustrated articles bemoaning the “dilution and castration of the war experience” and its conversion into a “well-heated historical memory” by a clubbish spirit

²⁵⁰ *Das Wäldchen* 125, 206-207.

²⁵¹ *ibid.*, 186, 219. Compare the following description of men marching from David Jones’s modernist masterpiece *In Parenthesis* (1937):

Feet plodding in each other’s unseen tread. They said no word but to direct their immediate next coming... Half-minds, far away, divergent, own-thought thinking, tucked away unknown thoughts; feet following file friends, each his own thought-maze alone treading; intricate, twist about, own thoughts, all unknown thoughts, to the next so close following on.

See *In Parenthesis* (New York: New York Review Books, 2003), 37.

²⁵² Hannah Arendt, “On Violence,” in *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1972), 164-166.

Arendt acknowledged the “elementary force” of such experiences, but added that they “have never found an institutional, political expression” (165). This has not done much to end the temptation. A recent example is the conservative media personality Glenn Beck’s “9-12 Project,” whose aim is to restore the “same feeling of togetherness” that horrified Americans felt after the September 11 attacks. See <http://the912-project.com/about/about-the-912-project/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

²⁵³ Arendt was less interested in this question, speculating only that “much of the present glorification of violence is caused by the severe frustration of the faculty of action in the modern world. It is simply true that riots in the ghettos and rebellions on the campuses make ‘people feel they are acting together in a way that they rarely can’” (180).

²⁵⁴ *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 23.

more concerned with parades, anecdotes, military costumes, and beer.²⁵⁵ Jünger wrote to his brother, with only slightly greater candor, that the Stahlhelm (under whose auspices he had written) was “the most decrepit brotherhood and petite-bourgeois society Germany had ever seen.”²⁵⁶ Jünger’s disenchantment had grown so serious by October 1927 that he could write to publicist Ludwig Alwens calling for “a more exclusive bearing.”²⁵⁷ In February 1929, Jünger proclaimed himself again “quite isolated,” despised (happily) by the democratic press and able “to count on a well-meaning lack of comprehension” from its nationalist counterpart.²⁵⁸

Conclusion

Jünger’s failure to derive a political movement from the war experience was not for want of ecumenicalism. In 1925 he began defining the front soldier not by the “accident” of his presence at the front, but rather by a feeling of having been “called” to the experience.²⁵⁹ Unable to find any agreement about the Great War’s meaning among its veterans, Jünger soon broadened the search to include groups beyond the veterans associations whose experience of work and sacrifice might open them to the “spirit of the front.”²⁶⁰ In doing so, he tried to locate a non-military basis for the re-creation, in postwar society, of comradeship’s feeling of community and tacit communication. By 1928, however, invocations of the war experience in Jünger’s works had diminished considerably.²⁶¹ As we will see in the next chapter, his political activity would now consist of further efforts to locate the war’s essential experiences—speed, danger, discipline, struggle—within the texture of modern civilian life. Until the realities of Nazi rule convinced him otherwise, he would continue to welcome this erasure of security and individualism as signaling the end of the bourgeois era and a return, via modern means, to the collective horizon of *Gemeinschaft*.

“[N]o experience,” Leonard Smith observed, “seemed more volatile and fragile, or more fraught with ideological significance, than the experience of fighting the Great War.” To “narrate that experience,” Smith wrote, “was to represent a coherent identity that has had that experience and that can properly discern its meaning.”²⁶² Jünger’s “new nationalism” shows the powerful motives connecting this narration of the war to the need for a community of others who shared that identity and meaning. The next chapter will examine how this fundamental need continued to define Jünger’s life and works. The stress, however,

²⁵⁵ Jünger, “Die Blindgänger des grossen Krieges,” *Der Vormarsch*, December 1927, in *Politische Publizistik*, 377-381. See also, Jünger, “An die Freunde,” *Arminius*, 28 August 1927, in *ibid.*, 359-364. Jünger should be seen as having little interest in the vibrant associational life (including on the right) that observers have linked to the demise of the Weimar Republic. See Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” *World Politics* 49 (1997), 401-429; and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, “Democracy and Associations in the Long Nineteenth Century: Toward a Transnational Perspective,” *The Journal of Modern History* 75 (June 2003), 269-299.

²⁵⁶ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 4 December 1927, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

²⁵⁷ E. Jünger to Ludwig Alwens, 22 October 1927, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

²⁵⁸ E. Jünger to Ludwig Alwens, 2 February 1929, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

²⁵⁹ E. Jünger, “Wesen des Frontsoldatentums,” *Die Standarte*, 6 September 1925, in *Politische Publizistik*, 67, 69. See also, E. Jünger, “Abgrenzung und Verbindung,” *Die Standarte*, 13 September 1925, in *ibid.*, 71, 73.

²⁶⁰ See especially, Jünger, “Die Jugendbewegung der Tat,” *Der Jungdeutsche*, 27 August 1926, in *ibid.*, 246-250.

²⁶¹ According to Hans-Harald Müller, after 1927 the war experience “no longer plays a special role in Jünger’s works.” See *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller*, 288.

²⁶² *The Embattled Self*, 16.

would now be on the necessity of articulation and the exclusivity of communication. The images would shift as well, from a community of “the blood” modeled on the harmony of comradeship to restricted circles of friendship. It is no coincidence that many of Ernst Jünger’s most enduring friendships—with men like Alfred Kubin, Ernst Niekisch, Hugo Fischer, Friedrich Hielscher, and Carl Schmitt—were begun in the wake of this return to language.

Chapter 3

Friends and Enemies: Weimar Radicalism, 1925-1933

Camerado, this is no book,
Who touches this touches a man,
(Is it night? Are we here together alone?)
It is I you hold and who holds you,
I spring from the pages into your arms—decease calls
me forth.

— Walt Whitman

What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much, though.

— J. D. Salinger²⁶³

“For me,” the French fascist writer Pierre Drieu La Rochelle wrote in 1934, “the drama of friendship between men is the whole heart of politics.” What exactly the political significance of male friendship might be, however, proved difficult for Drieu to settle. In a 1927 essay criticizing surrealism’s embrace of Marxism, he argued that the artist’s vision was best nurtured within a circle of men pursuing a “noble” aim free from compromising allegiances. But as he moved into the fascist camp in the 1930s, Drieu came to see the shared idealism of maverick artists as an insufficient basis for fellowship. His play *Le Chef* (1934) elevated ideological commitment over intellectual freedom, and his novel *Gilles* (1939) praised collective struggle as the source of true friendship. Only the experience of risk and sacrifice, he now wrote, made a cause a matter of the heart for each individual and enabled each “to love himself in others, and others in himself.” Yet in his final novels before his suicide in 1945, Drieu gave up on friendship, depicting instead outcasts who failed in their bid for brotherhood. As one scholar put it, “Drieu was led to the conclusion that friendship could only be a transient encounter—confined to the passions of youth and war and devoid of any permanent or transcendent value.”²⁶⁴

The importance of male bonding to interwar radical conservatives like Pierre Drieu La Rochelle has long been recognized. Drieu’s struggle to decide the meaning of friendship,

²⁶³ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 382; J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (New York: Bantam, 1964), 23.

²⁶⁴ Thomas Hines, “The Concept of Friendship in Drieu La Rochelle,” *South Atlantic Bulletin* 44 (January 1979), 19-26.

however, is a reminder that male bonding's putative political content was not obvious or foreordained, but rather ambiguous and open to revision. Even on the right, friendship could cut in different directions. This chapter argues that Ernst Jünger can help us understand how the "drama of friendship" shaped the imagination of interwar radical conservatives. This is especially true for those afflicted with what Fritz Stern called "cultural despair"—that agonized condemnation of the alleged spiritual emptiness of modern life, and the attendant longing for some new faith or wholeness, which combined with extreme nationalism to become a political force on the right after the First World War.²⁶⁵ In chapter two, we saw how Jünger's postwar disorientation—and above all his fear of being trapped in his own head, unable to communicate the most important experiences—led him to envision a utopian "new nationalism" grounded in highly selective memories of the trenches. Military comradeship, he insisted, was a bond deeper than words; as such, it heralded a new collective horizon of sense and purpose, and a return to the "tacit accord" that marked truly organic communities. Jünger's failure to find such comradely harmony in the factious, civilian world of Weimar politics, however, forced him to rethink his approach and reconsider friendship's redemptive potential. Friendship would now serve a more elitist role as the vehicle of a cultural vanguardism—a model he would adhere to even after he left politics behind.

Jünger's reformulation of his political activism brought with it a recommitment to language as a medium of communication. Still sensitive to the limits of public discourse, his appeal to the ineffable would henceforth be balanced by a feel for the power of authorship and the written word. The lack of comprehension he found among his colleagues in the conservative revolution, plus several years' experience of the heated cut and thrust of Weimar politics, taught Jünger to articulate better his visions and left him with a profound consciousness of lines of enmity and alliance. This friend-foe imagination would become part of Jünger's more general attraction to classificatory schemes and systems of order.²⁶⁶ As Elliot Neaman observed of the mature, post-WWII Jünger, "he divided the world into friends and foes, trusting few outside a small circle of esthetes, ex-generals, friendly politicians, and sympathetic literary critics."²⁶⁷ The present chapter examines the first stage in this process of division. Jünger's gifts as a writer and observer, his philosophical awareness and autobiographical self-reflection, can shed light on how friendship circles functioned as embattled positions on Weimar's radical right.

The Sociability of Radical Conservatism

Three approaches have dominated our ideas about the role of friendship and camaraderie in radical conservative movements. We can call these the *collectivist*, *homosocial*, and *associationist* schools. To these we need to add a fourth camp, what we might call the

²⁶⁵ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961).

²⁶⁶ In a 1985 interview, Jünger professed, "I have always had a certain sense of political phenomena, of states, societies, religious communities, to the extent that I am touched by the factor of order." Jünger gave as examples the court of Louis XIV, the British Navy, the Jesuits, and the Prussian army. See Hervier, 69-70. Another good example is Jünger's profound admiration for Linnaean taxonomy. In Marcus Bullock's words, Jünger deemed the Linnaean system the "expression of a transcendent order that brings meaning to all it names." *The Violent Eye*, 83.

²⁶⁷ Neaman, 165.

idealist, which, I argue, better characterizes the sociability of right-wing intellectuals like Jünger. Of course, these approaches are not mutually exclusive options. Rather, they should be seen as ideal types that accentuate one or another aspect of the sociability of interwar radical conservatives. In reality, persons and groups were often driven by a mixture, in various degrees, of the motives associated with these interpretive camps.

Collectivists stress the subordination of selfhood and personal relationships to a collective metasubject—in the case of the radical right, to one’s nation, race, or party. A good example of this approach was provided by the historian George Mosse, who argued that, beginning with the wars of liberation against Napoleon, the mystique of the nation had gradually infiltrated German social life. Unlike the 18th-century cult of friendship associated with poet-humanists like Ludwig Gleim, who celebrated freely chosen networks of autonomous friends as a model of patriotic solidarity, later nationalist movements subsumed the individual and “claim[ed] dominance over personal relationships.” Mosse noted how the word *Bund*, once a mere circle of friends, now “received an ever-more militant cast: a fraternity in the service of national revival.”²⁶⁸ The nation as mediator of relationships was evident around the turn of the twentieth century in the German Youth Movement, in which adolescent friendships were forged through the singing of folk songs and long hikes across the native landscape. A more sinister case could be found in ideologues like Alfred Baeumler, the Nazi professor of “political pedagogy” who hailed the *Männerbund*—the ideologically united band of men—as the basis for a new German society. Only through the nation was true fellowship possible: “There is no friendship without a fatherland,” Baeumler proclaimed, “but no fatherland either without friendship.”²⁶⁹ Mosse’s lament that the nation had become the preeminent object of loyalty and affection was captured by E. M. Forster’s epigram about the difficulty of putting personal relationships above abstract “causes.” “If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend,” Forster quipped, “I hope I should have the guts to betray my country.”²⁷⁰

A similar *collectivist* tack has been taken by mass society theorists such as Hannah Arendt, who view mass movements as a place of refuge for lonely, atomized individuals. “[T]otal loyalty,” Arendt argued, “can be expected only from the completely isolated human being who, without any other social ties to family, friends, comrades, or even mere acquaintances, derives his sense of having a place in the world from his belonging to a

²⁶⁸ George Mosse, “Friendship and Nationhood: About the Promise and Failure of German Nationalism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (1982), 358-360. As Mosse observed, the friend’s appearance, a minor matter in the 18th century, also grew more important in the 19th and 20th centuries, as ethnic physiognomy, physical vigor, and national strength became intertwined in an age of mass political symbols.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 362-363; Harry Oosterhuis, “Male Bonding and Homosexuality in German Nationalism,” in *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany*, eds. Harry Oosterhuis and Hubert Kennedy (New York and London: Haworth Press, 1991), 254-255. In *The Myth of The 20th Century*, the Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg also praised the *Männerbund* as the historical origin and future model of the state. On the role of the *Männerbund* in the work of the Youth Movement’s first historian, Hans Blüher, see George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 176-177, 212-214.

²⁷⁰ E. M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1951), 66. First published 1939. For an investigation of friendship as a locus of “dissident crosscultural collaboration” against nation and empire, see Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006). That betraying a friend and betraying one’s country were by no means contradictory in Forster’s England can be seen in Martin Green, *Children of the Sun: A Narrative of “Decadence” in England after 1918* (Mount Jackson, VA: Axios, 2008).

movement, his membership in the party.”²⁷¹ Longings for the intimacy of a national community, she maintained, sprang from this “lack of normal social relationships.”²⁷² Like Mosse, Arendt saw social life instrumentalized by nationalist groups such as the Pan-German League, which organized rootless people who “wanted to belong at any price.” The Nazis, however, were the true masters at exploiting the psychological power of belonging through the exclusion of unwanted others, using the language of ‘sworn blood brothers’ and ‘sworn comrades’ to weld together everything from elite SS units to the national community as a whole.²⁷³

A brilliant analysis of this corporate spirit was provided by the journalist Sebastian Haffner, who spent time in a Nazi “training camp” for civil servants. Haffner described the camaraderie generated by pranks, the enforced use of the informal *Du* among strangers, and the abandonment of civilized manners in an atmosphere in which “‘Well, you assholes,’ was a friendly form of address.” Despite his reluctance, Haffner admitted it had been “a pleasure” to float in this “great comforting stream of mutual reliance and gruff familiarity.” In “thousands of camps and clubs,” he wrote, the Nazis made this spirit the

normal way of life for an entire nation. And the Germans, with their lack of talent for individual life and happiness, were so dreadfully ready to submit to it, so willing and eager to exchange the delicate, hard-to-reach fruits of freedom for the juicy, swelling, close-at-hand intoxication of general, indiscriminating, vulgar comradeship.²⁷⁴

Like Arendt, Haffner saw the embrace of Nazism as a flight from personal life. The bonds that resulted, however, were ephemeral. “[U]nder a thin coat of rough and hearty camp comradeship,” Haffner confessed, “we all mistrusted one another deeply.” Such thinness appears to have been the norm. “Accounts of the time,” Sheila Fitzpatrick and Alf Lüdtke noted, “suggest that young activists [in organizations like the Hitler Youth] focused more on their relationship with distant leaders and a similarly distant ‘great cause’ than on any relationship with their peers in the movement.”²⁷⁵

The *homosocial* camp shares much with the collectivists but stresses the gendered aspect of male bonding—the sensuous appeal, often shading into homoeroticism, of friendship or comradeship among men. The literature on fascism and gender has certainly inclined to the view that it was “a boy’s ideology.”²⁷⁶ One of the most influential investigations has been Klaus Theweleit’s *Male Fantasies*, which examined the novels and

²⁷¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken, 2004), 429. First published 1951.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 292-293, 421. In the “first helplessness of their new experience,” Arendt argued, the disoriented masses found a home in extreme nationalism, whose stress on mystical “inner” qualities of national character created a feeling of fellowship in “the class-ridden society of the nation-state.” (421).

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 290-291, 492-493, 493n93.

²⁷⁴ Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*, trans. Oliver Pretzel (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002), 258-278, 284-291. Haffner (the nom de plume for Raimund Pretzel) attended the camp in October 1933.

²⁷⁵ Haffner, 272; Sheila Fitzpatrick and Alf Lüdtke, “Energizing the Everyday: On the Breaking and Making of Social Bonds in Nazism and Stalinism,” *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, eds. Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 272. If, as Fitzpatrick and Lüdtke argue, the making of new social bonds under totalitarianism was licensed by efforts to mobilize the masses, then these new bonds were by definition subordinated to a collectivist framework.

²⁷⁶ R. J. B. Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship* (London: Arnold, 1998), 7. Quoted in Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage, 2005), 234.

memoirs penned by German veterans of the right-wing Freikorps in the early 1920s.²⁷⁷ Theweleit described the fascist imagination on display in these works as driven by fear of the feminine—identified with all that is soft and fluid, including the blood and viscera of vulnerable human bodies—and by corresponding fantasies of manly toughness and a machine-like physique that would armor the self against destructive forces. Uniting with other steely men in military formations, Theweleit argued, became one more way to shut out femininity. The band of warriors was also the place where these men learned to see themselves as the *true* nation, and thus understand that the “nation is a community of soldiers.”²⁷⁸ According to Barbara Spackman, Italian fascism was similarly defined by exaggerated virility: a misogynistic masculinity underlay the cultural fantasies that linked the ideology of Mussolini to more literary fascist forebears such as Filippo Marinetti and Gabriele D’Annunzio.²⁷⁹

These analyses of the politics of male bonding under fascism fit a larger paradigm of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick called “male homosocial desire.” Forms of male bonding, Sedgwick argued, have long been central to patriarchal cultures that subordinate or control women. If this “traffic in women” is helped along by emotionally charged male relationships, however, it is also necessarily homophobic, since purely homoerotic bonds would exclude women entirely and subvert the system.²⁸⁰ The interwar radical right fits Sedgwick’s model insofar as a particularly violent male comradeship intent on mastering the feminine was envisioned as the principle for a new nationalist politics. Sedgwick’s argument also explains why this virile politics was so afraid of the homoeroticism (or outright homosexuality) to which, it was thought, homosocial relations might lead. As Heinrich Himmler, head of the über-masculine SS, put it in a 1937 speech, the Nazi cult of male bonding threatened to ruin the SS and the Hitler Youth by turning them into schools of homosexuality. Young men were supposedly so much around other young men that they had no chance to develop feelings for the opposite sex.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ The Freikorps were voluntary paramilitary units that helped suppress communist uprisings after WWI. A large number of their members ended up in the Nazi camp. Theweleit lumps in Ernst Jünger with these Freikorps writers, even though Jünger’s war writings deal exclusively with WWI and he was only briefly involved with the Freikorps.

²⁷⁸ Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, Vol. 2, 79-81, 98. Theweleit’s focus on basic drives like the fear of annihilation and the appeal of collective violence differs from mass psychology theories which stress repressed sexuality or identification with a father-figure leader. In a similar argument, Bernd Weisbrod deemed the “male fundamentalism” of Jünger’s war writings a reaction to the Great War’s traumas. According to Weisbrod, a hard, stoic attitude not only served self-preservation, it also defined the unyielding “new man” who would return from the frontlines to pursue national revival at home. See his “Military Violence and Male Fundamentalism: Ernst Jünger’s Contribution to the Conservative Revolution,” trans. Pamela E. Selwyn, in *History Workshop Journal* 49 (2000), 69-94.

²⁷⁹ Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). Spackman argues (albeit on limited evidence) that “virility is not simply one of many fascist qualities, but rather that the cults of youth, of duty, of sacrifice and heroic virtues, of strength and stamina, of obedience and authority, and of physical strength and sexual potency that characterize fascism are all inflections of that master term, virility” (xii).

²⁸⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). “Our society,” she writes, “could not cease to be homophobic and have its economic and political structures remain unchanged” (4).

²⁸¹ Oosterhuis, “Male Bonding and Homosexuality in German Nationalism,” 255. Though Nazi policies against homosexuals were never uniform, it is significant, as Oosterhuis notes, that they were far more concerned with policing male rather than female homosexuality. On Italian Fascism’s similar crusade against homosexuality, see

A more recent approach to the sociability of interwar radical conservatism has challenged these earlier theories. This *associationist* school sees fascism arising not from the loneliness of mass man or pathologies of male bonding, but from a robust civil society in a context of weak political institutions. Contrary to theorists such as Tocqueville or Robert Putnam, who view civil society as the seedbed of democracy, associationists point out that the skills and habits developed in voluntary associations can also be mobilized for illiberal ends. A good example of this case was made by Sheri Berman, who observed that rapid social change in Germany in the late nineteenth century resulted not in a sea of isolated individuals desperate for belonging, but in a “club mania” (*Vereinsmeierei*) that left Wilhelmine and later Weimar society crisscrossed by a dense network of associations. The German “joiner” became a stereotype, his chauvinism satirized by Kurt Tucholsky and his politics puzzled over by Max Weber. After WWI, Berman argued, gridlock and political fragmentation “drove many citizens looking for succor and support into civil society organizations.”²⁸² The Nazis rose to power not by attracting apolitical people, but by recruiting “bourgeois ‘joiners’... disillusioned with traditional party politics,” whose skills and connections they exploited to win followers and infiltrate existing associations.²⁸³ That a vibrant civil society was also crucial to the rise of fascism outside of Germany has been shown by Dylan Riley. In Italy, Spain, and Romania, Riley argued, an “intense wave of associational growth” in the late nineteenth century did not “strengthen their already existing parliamentary regimes but appears instead to have undermined them.” In the absence of “strong political organizations” uniting elites and non-elites, civil society only intensified social conflict and weakened liberal institutions.²⁸⁴

The problem with the *associationist* approach is that it makes few qualitative distinctions among the kinds of relationships to be found in the spacious category of “civil society.” Indeed, all three camps—collectivist, homosocial, and associationist—cast the sociability of the interwar radical right in terms of generic or generalized ties. What is overlooked, however, is the work done by strong personal relationships. One way to bring these into view is an *idealist* approach that focuses on close friendships, not as tokens of

Lorenzo Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy*, trans. Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

²⁸² Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” 414. “It was weak political institutionalization,” Berman writes, “rather than a weak civil society that was Germany’s main problem during the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras.” Associationism, she concludes, should be seen as “a politically neutral multiplier—neither inherently good nor inherently bad, but rather dependent for its effects on the wider political context” (402, 427).

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 420. Berman is critical of “mass society” theorists like Hannah Arendt. As Berman shows, Arendt was empirically wrong to claim that totalitarian movements found their easiest prey in “the completely unorganized, the typical ‘nonjoiners’ who for individualistic reasons always had refused to recognize social links or obligations” (*Origins of Totalitarianism*, 421). But Arendt was arguably more psychologically acute in recognizing the inner feelings of rootlessness that plagued even people outwardly enmeshed in Weimar’s associational life. Tucholsky’s poem “The Member” (1926), which Berman mentions in passing as evidence of German “club mania,” in fact dwells on the loneliness of the joiner it satirizes, who only finds his identity and self-worth through his belonging to a club.

²⁸⁴ Dylan Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain, and Romania, 1870-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 1-2. See also Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, “Democracy and Associations in the Long Nineteenth Century: Toward a Transnational Perspective,” 269-299. Hoffmann situates Wilhelmine- and Weimar-era German associationism within a broader nineteenth-century transatlantic discourse on the benefits of civil society. But as Hoffmann also notes, “a vibrant associational life could entail antidemocratic effects” (299).

nationalism or “male homosocial desire,” but as the vehicle for exalted goals of cultural or spiritual renewal. Right-wing intellectuals, and above all self-styled elites and non-conformists, were often drawn to an ideal of friendship as the shared pursuit of a shared vision. Pierre Drieu La Rochelle’s flirtation with the fellowship of artists pursuing noble aims is merely one example. The French fascist writer Robert Brasillach proved a steadier devotee of friendship, spending his career engrossed in circles of male friends that brought together politically engaged writers and publishers. While Brasillach’s likely homosexuality doubtless played some role,²⁸⁵ homoeroticism is not enough to explain the strong positive value he accorded friendship. As Paul Mazgaj noted, his esteem for friendship can be traced to the intimate circle of friends he had enjoyed as a student at a Parisian *lycée*, in which, Brasillach later recalled, they “talked about everything, of poetry and God and the nation,” and in which they learned about “the most beautiful of the bonds that ever existed, the bonds of *la jeune amitié*.” Brasillach would try to recapture this atmosphere in the editorial rooms of organs like the right-wing *Revue française*, where “intellectual experiences... were inextricably tied to... strong affective bonds.” The French “young right” that assembled here in the 1930s around intellectuals like Brasillach, Maurice Bardèche, and Jean-Pierre Maxence envisioned their cohort of friends as the spearhead of a “spiritual revolution” against a civilization deformed by commercial and technological values.²⁸⁶

Robert Brasillach’s circle is no isolated case. The British fascist leader Oswald Mosley similarly imagined a fascist front bound together by “friendship between men who hold in common a vast conception and a great ideal. Such friendship... [is] a question of common service to a common cause.”²⁸⁷ The clique around the left-wing Nazi dissident Otto Strasser, who was drummed out of the party in 1930, was likewise joined by ties of friendship in their vision of a truly anti-capitalist National Socialism. Unlike Hitler, who had a remarkable lack of talent for genuine friendship, Strasser’s gift for personal relationships helped him survive years of persecution and exile, while at the same time “dreaming up small, sectarian organizations to propagate his views to tiny audiences of the like-minded.”²⁸⁸ Ironically, Strasser’s belief in friendship founded on shared ideals, rather than submission to the Führer-principle, contributed to his ouster. “A true friendship used to bind me to Hitler,” Strasser later confessed. “Flatterers surrounded him, no one dared to criticize him, but it was my duty to speak to him openly.”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ According to Alice Kaplan, Brasillach’s attraction to fascism was “his way of living out a certain kind of homoerotic longing.” See *The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 7. Drieu, too, inclined toward misogyny and celebrated the strong male active on behalf of the nation. See Sarah Shurts, *Redefining the “Engagé”: Intellectual Identity and the French Extreme Right, 1898-1968* (Diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007), 352-353.

²⁸⁶ Paul Mazgaj, *Imagining Fascism: The Cultural Politics of the French Young Right, 1930-1945* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 67-68, 98-99. [First quote slightly altered.]

²⁸⁷ Oswald Mosley, “Visit to Rome—The ‘immense majesty’ of Fascist peace,” *The Blackshirt* 6, 1 May 1933, p. 1. The quote is from Mosley’s defense of his relationship with Italian fascists.

²⁸⁸ Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 244; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 46, 93. Douglas Reed’s worshipful account of Otto Strasser’s crusade against Hitler stresses the crucial role of circles of friends and supporters in Germany and abroad. See his *Nemesis? The Story of Otto Strasser* (London: J. Cape, 1940), 147. On Strasser’s contacts with the non-conformist French right, see John Hellman, *The Communitarian Third Way: Alexandre Marc and Ordre Nouveau, 1930-2000* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 51ff.

²⁸⁹ Otto Strasser, *Hitler and I*, trans. Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940), 51.

In what follows, Ernst Jünger will serve as a case study of this “idealist” sociability, a form of friendship that should be seen as the predilection of many intellectuals and ideologues on the European radical right. To be sure, Jünger’s writings from the later Weimar years contain a dose of the reflexes and ideas associated with collectivism, homosociality, and even associationism. My contention, however, is that these are not the best, and certainly not the only, frameworks for making sense of his writings and political activism in these years. We misunderstand Jünger’s project—and the projects of people like him—when we reduce complex bodies of work to tag lines about misogyny or the loneliness of mass society.

Magic Keys to an Adventurous Heart

In order to understand this idealist sociability in Jünger’s works we need to consider the first edition of his *The Adventurous Heart*. Published in February 1929 with the subtitle “Sketches by Day and Night,” this slim volume was Jünger’s first foray beyond the war experience and the direct result of his falling-out with the veterans leagues under whose auspices he had previously written. The work was also a revealing statement of what would become Jünger’s lasting views on communication and the author-reader relationship.²⁹⁰ In a hodgepodge of reminiscences and meditations, he fleshed out an aesthetic of “adventurous” interaction with the world, while at the same time damning bourgeois vapidity, positivistic science, and the increased rationalization of life that Max Weber dubbed the “iron cage” of modernity.²⁹¹ The book’s title and style were inspired by the French surrealist Louis Aragon’s *Paris Peasant* (1926), an account, littered with philosophical musings and magical observations, of rambles through Parisian streets.²⁹² Unlike *Storm of Steel*, however, which sold some thirty-six thousand copies by 1930,²⁹³ the first edition of *The Adventurous Heart* fell still-born from the presses. Jünger wryly observed the fact in 1938 in the second, fully revised version of the text.

I am told that for a long while now [those pages] have found their fifteen readers or so per quarter with astonishing regularity. A reception like this brings to mind certain

²⁹⁰ Selections in fact appeared in serialized form in late 1928 in *Der Tag*, part of the nationalist publisher Alfred Hugenberg’s media empire. See Schwilk (2007), 320.

²⁹¹ That Jünger offers an aesthetic reenchantment of the rationalized capitalist world described by Max Weber is the argument of Helmut Kiesel’s *Wissenschaftliche Diagnose und dichterische Vision der Moderne: Max Weber und Ernst Jünger* (Heidelberg: Manutius, 1994).

²⁹² The title appears taken from a passage in which Aragon, writing against “all the dogmatic and realist forces of the world,” summons an army of “adventurous, grave hearts, contemptuous of victory, who search the night for an abyss into which to hurl yourselves.” See Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (Boston: Exact Change, 1994), 67. Walter Benjamin, too, was deeply moved by the volume, finding in it inspiration to begin work on his *Arcades Project*. Benjamin claimed to have been unable to “read more than two or three pages at a time, for my heartbeat became so strong that I was forced to lay the book down.” Quoted in Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 128. For more on Jünger’s debt to the literature of French surrealism and decadence, see my and Elliot Neaman’s introduction to Jünger’s *The Adventurous Heart: Figures and Capriccios*, xiii–lii. The best and most sustained account of this connection remains Karl Heinz Bohrer’s *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens. Die pessimistische Romantik und Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk* (Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser, 1978).

²⁹³ Kiesel (2007), 16.

flowers, like the *Silene noctiflora*, whose calyxes, while open a single hour one single night, are orbited by a tiny company of winged visitors.²⁹⁴

There is irony in this seemingly bitter self-commentary. Whereas Goebbels deemed the book worthless for the German national revolution—it was “just ink, literature,” he sneered²⁹⁵—the volume’s aim was to mobilize just such a “tiny company” of readers in the service of a more literary nationalism.

Jünger chose as an epigraph for *The Adventurous Heart* a line from a 1787 letter that Johann Georg Hamann wrote to Friedrich Jacobi: “The seeds of my every consideration I find in everything around me.” The passage suggests that even the most banal object conceals wonders, which the eye only wants training to discover. Yet the quote’s original context—Hamann is lamenting the insufficient mastery of language that prevents him from fully expressing his meaning—also indicated that Jünger was still plagued by the problem of communicability that was evident in *Storm and Battle as Inner Experience* a half-decade earlier.²⁹⁶ The text itself was more direct. “There are things one sees clearly,” he declared, “but of which little can be said.”²⁹⁷ As before, Jünger presented the failure of communication as a symptom of a fragmented society. “Schools, parties, dogmas,” he wrote in a clear reference to Weimar’s disunity, “may fulfill their role in periods of order, since here the age itself plays the role of an evenly bearing current.” In “chaotic conditions,” however, in which “each person feels duped and betrayed by the times,” this underlying accord disappears. Here “every abstract agreement becomes idle” and “the deceptive character of words emerges.”²⁹⁸

But such chaos, Jünger believed, was also an opportunity to find new foundations. Doing so required what he called the “magic key,” which would enable one to “recognize beneath the words what it is that moves them. Real communities, that is, communities in the essential things, can only be contracted today in such a manner.” In “communities in a state of crisis” (*Notgemeinschaften*), he explained,

there comes to light what human existence still possesses of instinct unbroken by reflection, of images and symbols, of inner currents, of magical currency. Whether the system can be replaced by a person, whether *leadership* (*Führertum*) is still possible, that means: whether a human being is still possible, who commands the magic key to the inner chambers of the hearts of all the others and who, among the hundred thousand postures, convictions, tendencies, dispositions, and creeds, is able to grasp the secret current, the last will, that carries them – that is what comes to light here.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ E. Jünger, *AH2*, 2. It is possible that the 1929 version’s reception was dampened by the fact that Remarque’s bestselling *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which touched off a media firestorm, was published only a month earlier.

²⁹⁵ Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels. Sämtliche Fragmente*, ed. Elke Fröhlich (Munich: Saur, 1987), see April 4, 1929.

²⁹⁶ On Jünger’s debt to Hamann, see Bures and Neaman, Introduction to *AH2*, xlvii–xlix; and Bernhard Gajek, “Ernst Jüngers Hamann Erlebnis,” in *Verwandtschaften, Jünger Studien* 2, eds. Günter Figal and Georg Knapp (2003), 53–73.

²⁹⁷ E. Jünger, *Das abenteuerliche Herz: Aufzeichnungen bei Tag und Nacht* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 118.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 54–55. Italics in original.

What was needed, in other words, was a leader with the rhetorical gifts to capture the soul of a nation and return it to an instinctual harmony beneath its surface disagreements. In the same 1927 letter announcing work on *The Adventurous Heart*, Jünger suggested Maurice Barrès as a model of the *littérateur-cum-politician* able to direct a people. “Power will fall to those,” Jünger wrote, “who know how to mobilize democracy. Of course [the German nationalists] are lacking in literary gifts like Barrès. Hence their connection to the masses will be crude-mechanical and instinctive-barbaric.”³⁰⁰

Jünger’s “magic key” should be understood in light of what George Mosse termed the “nationalization of the masses.” As Mosse demonstrated, the nineteenth-century development of mass politics made possible a political style that promised to embody national consciousness in a single leader and unite the nation through a secular religion of rituals, myths, and symbols. Perfected by interwar fascism, this brand of politics directed its appeal “toward activating men’s emotions, their own subconscious drives.”³⁰¹ The first edition of *The Adventurous Heart* was Jünger’s attempt, by turns theoretical and poetic, to articulate the subjective side of this political style—to explain, that is, the inner workings of the “heart” that is moved beyond reason and the value, in a purportedly rationalist age, of instinctive feelings and unconditional emotional commitments.³⁰² In tracing Jünger’s search for a more lyrical nationalism, however, our interest is not primarily in its theoretical content. Like fascist political thinking generally, his ideas were long on attitude and vivid imagery, and short on system-building and sustained analysis.³⁰³ Rather, our concern is for Jünger’s *Selbstinszenierung* (self-staging), and for what his motives and feelings can tell us about the contemporary social and political imagination.

Jünger began *The Adventurous Heart* in Berlin in October 1927, as his embroilment in nationalist debates gradually convinced him that trench warfare had not revealed the same meanings to all its participants.³⁰⁴ He had arrived in Berlin from Leipzig, new wife and young son in tow, only a few months earlier to join the editorial staff of the nationalist paper *Arminius*. Before that, in 1924 and 1925, Jünger had studied zoology at the University of Leipzig, with a research stay at a marine biology station in Naples. Though impressed by the vitalist biologist Hans Driesch, he was disappointed with the current state of the sciences. Jünger later recalled that he began his studies under the influence of nineteenth-century naturalists like Alfred Brehm, who inspired him with “the richness of their vision.” “I expected a bumper crop of images,” he admitted. “[I]nstead, I was inundated by numbers

³⁰⁰ See note 15.

³⁰¹ See George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), 12. Mosse traced this “nationalization of the masses” back to romanticism and the 1813-1814 Wars of Liberation against Napoleon.

³⁰² The idea of fascism as an aestheticized politics derives, not coincidentally, from Walter Benjamin’s 1930 review of a collection of essays on WWI edited by Jünger. See Benjamin’s “Theories of German Fascism,” trans. Jerold Wikoff, in *New German Critique* 17 (Spring, 1979). As Benjamin argued, the contributors’ glorification of militarily mobilized societies was “nothing other than an uninhibited translation of the principles of *l’art pour l’art* to war itself” (122). For a discussion of the complex juncture of aesthetics and politics, see Martin Jay, “‘The Aesthetic Ideology’ as Ideology: Or What Does It Mean to Aestheticize Politics?” in *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 71-83.

³⁰³ Mosse makes this point well in *The Nationalization of the Masses*, 9.

³⁰⁴ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 6 October 1927, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

and figures.”³⁰⁵ The move to Germany’s political and publishing capital should be viewed as Jünger’s decision to join fully the intellectual scene from which, he believed, the true revolution would arise.³⁰⁶ As an organ that styled itself “the only weekly nationalist paper independent of all parties and groups,” *Arminius* seemed to offer an ideal medium for Jünger’s hope that Weimar’s splintered right-wing forces could be galvanized into a united movement.³⁰⁷

The job proved short-lived, however, for reasons that point to Jünger’s growing frustrations with the nationalist right. Even before arriving in Berlin, his relations with fellow editor Helmut Franke and the paper’s funder, Hermann Ehrhardt, had grown strained over the question of a parliamentary path to power. Jünger’s uncompromising insistence on avoiding party politics—only a military coup would do—forbade any “legal fascism.” “Writing a single verse,” he proclaimed, was “more commendable than representing sixty thousand fools in parliament.”³⁰⁸ Overall, the move to Berlin only solidified Jünger’s suspicion that he was surrounded by “political philistines, unimaginative rowdies, putschists, and sentimental phrasemongers.”³⁰⁹ In one of his last contributions to *Arminius* before the paper folded in September 1927, Jünger likened nationalism to religious faith: belief in the nation, like belief in God—or, as he suggested in a revealing comparison, like divine grace, which brings its recipients “to the same thoughts”—was necessary before dogma could “exercise unifying effect.” Jünger’s answer to doctrinal and tactical quarrels, in other words, was first to get a million hearts beating in unison. The essay, entitled “To Friends,” was in fact an open letter to better elements among *hoi polloi* whom Jünger imagined in need of succor. “[Y]ou are not alone,” he announced, “just like you many are at work, of whose success there can be no doubt.”³¹⁰

Freed to pursue his own vision as a freelance writer in Berlin, Jünger quickly became one of that dynamic city’s glittering personalities, rubbing shoulders not only with prominent nationalists, but also with leftist writers like Bertolt Brecht and the anarchist poet Erich Mühsam.³¹¹ Still in his early thirties, Jünger was viewed, especially by younger Germans, as a visionary and voice of the war generation. He was famous enough to be accosted in public: the photojournalist Edmund Schultz (b. 1901) approached him on the subway and soon belonged to Jünger’s inner circle.³¹² He also attracted aspiring talents. Alexander Mitscherlich (b. 1908), who would go on to fame as a psychoanalyst and co-author of *The Inability to*

³⁰⁵ Hervier, 51-52; Nevin, 82; Schwilk (2007), 273-274. The sentiment is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s line from *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) about “the falsification of the world by numbers.” Jünger had married Gretha von Jeinsen, daughter of an old Hannoverian military family, in August 1925.

³⁰⁶ In Jünger’s own words: “I have decided after a good deal of thought to relocate to Berlin, in order to influence better the course of events.” E. Jünger to L. Alvens, 24 May 1927, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM

³⁰⁷ Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Der konservative Anarchist. Politik und Zeitkritik Ernst Jüngers* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1962), 10.

³⁰⁸ Schwilk (2007), 306-312; Nevin, 97-103. As Jünger put it a few years later, “if we want to drive out the bourgeois, it cannot be done with bourgeois means.” See “Reinheit der Mittel,” *Widerstand*, October 1929, in *Politische Publizistik*, 514-515.

³⁰⁹ E. Jünger, “Der Nationalismus der Tat,” *Arminius*, 21 November 1926, in *Politische Publizistik*, 257.

³¹⁰ E. Jünger, “An die Freunde,” *Arminius*, 28 August 1927, in *ibid.*, 359-364. “Only where the heart is hot enough,” Jünger proclaimed, “will the understanding be fruitful” (360).

³¹¹ See Neaman, 37-38; Kiesel (2007), 321-335.

³¹² E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 9 September 1927, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM. According to Armin Mohler, Schultz’s contribution to conservative revolutionary literature were two collections of photographs which pioneered “the picture book as a fighting instrument.” See Mohler, 279, 458.

Mourn (1967), which described Germans' need to mourn and thus separate from Hitler as a lost libidinal object, likewise became a habitué of the Jünger household. In a 1946 letter to Jünger's wife, Gretha, Mitscherlich recounted how during their first meeting "I opened myself to him without reserve. You are right to suspect that he immediately became for me a 'father figure.'" ³¹³ Gretha herself described their apartment overlooking the Spree as a buzzing salon that gathered in Berlin's "oddest intellectuals." ³¹⁴ As Ernst von Salomon later put it, wherever Jünger went "disciples grouped about the master's feet." ³¹⁵

Viewed objectively, Jünger was, by the late 1920s, at the center of events—one of those "outsiders" turned "insider" who, according to Peter Gay, gave Weimar culture its characteristic mix of experimentation and impending doom. ³¹⁶ Yet in his correspondence from the time, Jünger presented himself as one shouting in the wilderness. Writing in 1927 to the journalist Ludwig Alwens, he described his task as "elaborating and making attractive" a decisive modern type of man. In light of his break with *Arminius*, however, Jünger urged a new approach:

In order to give this new breed a feeling of commonality, we are naturally dependent on means of communication. A large apparatus is for the time being not yet necessary... What is essential for starters are go-betweens and intercessors (*Vermittler und Fürsprecher*). Here a certain cultic insularity would even be appealing. ³¹⁷

In a subsequent letter, Jünger called this new tack a "subterranean labor" of linking scattered "literary islands" into an "archipelago." ³¹⁸ But there is no question Jünger remained fully mobilized. To Friedrich Hielscher, he described himself as "one enclosed within walls, who is nonetheless fully engaged with his own appropriate weapons." ³¹⁹ And in a November 1928 missive in which he complained of "the lack of a real reception of his ideas," Jünger insisted his goal was still "not the artistic, but rather the military mobilization of our values." "The good forces," he added, "are so terribly few and far between!" ³²⁰

The first edition of *The Adventurous Heart* was the product of these frustrations and a

³¹³ Alexander Mitscherlich to Gretha Jünger, 9 May 1946, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

³¹⁴ Gretha von Jeinsen, *Silhouetten. Eigenwillige Betrachtungen* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1955), 96. See also Schwilk (2007), 309.

³¹⁵ Ernst von Salomon, *The Questionnaire*, trans. Constantine Fitzgibbon (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 142.

³¹⁶ Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2001), xiv. First Published 1968. Recognition of Jünger's status extended beyond nationalist circles. As the liberal Jewish writer Leopold Schwarzschild observed, Jünger was the "uncontested intellectual leader of young nationalism" and "the most influential voice to glorify the war experience." Quoted in Neaman, 34, 34n59. According to Ernst von Salomon, Jünger's was the only name that caused "the intellectual upper crust of opponents in every camp to pay attention." See *Der Fragebogen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2003), 245. First published 1951.

³¹⁷ E. Jünger to L. Alwens, 22 October 1927, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. On the cliché of a "new fascist man," see especially George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), ch. 8. As Mosse observed, "devotion to a higher cause was at the center of [fascism's] concept of masculinity" (155). On Jünger's associated with Alwens, see Sven Olaf Berggötz, "Zwei Wege. Ernst Jüngers politischer Diskurs mit Ludwig Alwens," *Les Carnets Ernst Jünger* 6 (2001), 147-165.

³¹⁸ E. Jünger to L. Alwens, 2 December 1928, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

³¹⁹ E. Jünger to F. Hielscher, 10 November 1928, in *Ernst Jünger—Friedrich Hielscher. Briefe, 1927-1985* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005), 84. To the philosopher Alfred Baeumler, Jünger bluntly described his position—at once embattled and isolated—as "in no man's land." E. Jünger to A. Baeumler, 23 January 1929, in *Alfred Baeumler and Ernst Jünger*, eds. Ulrich Fröschle and Thomas Kuzias (Dresden: Thelem, 2008), 148.

³²⁰ E. Jünger to L. Alwens, 23 November 1928, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

renewed attempt to communicate his vision. As we have already seen, Jünger remained committed to the belief that the most important truths elude language. “The inexpressible,” he wrote, “debases itself when it is spoken and made communicable; it is like gold that must be alloyed with copper if it is to be used as currency.”³²¹ Yet the failure of Jünger’s earlier valorization of tacitness had taught him the need to trade in such adulterated coinage. The work’s aim, accordingly, was twofold: first, to describe a heroic modern sensibility (his utopian “new breed”) which could serve as the poetic-political intuition for a transcendent nationalism; and second, to rally the “go-betweens and intercessors” needed to spread this emotional regime to the masses. Exactly how Jünger envisioned his own role in this project remained unstated. Would he assume the mantle of “*leadership*,” or just play John the Baptist to some future figure? Whichever was the case, the volume clearly aspired to provide a philosophical framework for the national revolution.³²²

Appropriately, Jünger began the book with a statement of methods. His “fundamental experience,” he proclaimed, was that “typical of my generation”; as such, his consciousness could “be called upon by everyone in its most valid and unconditional sense.”³²³ In other words, Jünger would find within himself, through an examination of his own attitudes and reactions, the “magic key” to the hearts of his contemporaries. Like his mature work, which has sometimes been painted as a literary version of phenomenology,³²⁴ the 1929 edition of *The Adventurous Heart* posited the exemplary character of its author’s consciousness. The book’s second “sketch” introduced the reader to this approach. “Strange predilections,” he maintained, “are highly significant for the essence of a personality.” As examples, Jünger gave his aversion to osteology, his belief that of all the places in the world “precisely central Africa was and remains the most appealing,” and his hunch, long before he picked up his works, that the name Huysmans identified an author who would be of “great importance” to him. In all these unaccountable “likes and dislikes,” Jünger argued, “our innermost speaks... by setting itself into analogy, and with somnabulistic certainty it senses the degree of kinship that connects us with all the things of the world and defines our inner perspective.”³²⁵

Jünger’s interest in representative experiences and universally accessible meanings led him to pay attention to two domains in particular: youth and modern technology. Crucially, the Great War now receded into the background. This is partly because Jünger, in “speaking

³²¹ Jünger, *AH1*, 18.

³²² As Jünger put it in November 1928, he was unwilling “to renounce political influence.” E. Jünger to L. Alwens, 23 November 1928, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. According to one biographer, Jünger imagined himself in “a similar charismatic role to that of Oswald Spengler.” See Schwilk (2007), 304. For an account of Jünger’s elitist ideal of leadership at this time, see Walter Struve, *Elites Against Democracy: Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), ch. 12. On the philosopher’s temptation to direct politics, which lured philosophers of the stature of Martin Heidegger into the Nazi camp, see Hans Sluga, *Heidegger’s Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

³²³ Jünger, *AH1*, 13-14.

³²⁴ Of the second, 1938 version of *The Adventurous Heart*, J. P. Stern wrote: “The phenomenological method [it develops] aims at presenting the typical, trans-personal aspects of human conduct, mostly in familiar situations. What Jünger’s capriccios record are parts of the phenomenal world... culled and transfixed in moments of intense observation.” See his “Representations of the Self, Singular and Collective, from Kleist to Ernst Jünger,” *Comparative Criticism* 12 (1990), 19. This method of emotionally detached observation and self-observation accounts in part for the oft-noted “coldness” of Jünger’s prose.

³²⁵ Jünger, *AH1*, 14.

to the not yet awakened consciousness of the nation,” had learned to cast a wider net.³²⁶ But the move beyond the war experience was also an outgrowth of Jünger’s hostility to what he considered romantic escapism. Already in 1925, he had inveighed against the impotence of a “romanticism born of exhaustion,” an attitude he later characterized as “searching behind things for what one can only arrive at through the things themselves.”³²⁷ The problem with “romantic protest,” Jünger explained in 1932, is that it

is not granted its own center; it consist solely in projection... In its distance from the temporal present, the location of the romantic zone appears as the past, and indeed as a past colored by a *ressentiment* against current conditions. The distance from the spatial present turns out to be flight from a zone that is fully secured and penetrated by consciousness, and thus the number of romantic landscapes melts away in proportion to the triumph of technology as consciousness’s sharpest means. Yesterday they still lay perhaps ‘far away in Turkey’ or in Spain and Greece... but tomorrow the last blank spots on this wondrous map will have vanished to human longing.

The “adventurous heart,” in Jünger’s conception, is impervious to this loss of romantic spaces because he (or she) “stands at every hour and on every spot in the elemental zone.”³²⁸

As Jünger saw it, the revolutionary cause was best served not by romantic flight into memory of the trenches (or into some other “romantic zone”), but by teaching others to find, within the rationalized “surface” phenomena of modern civilian life, the magical and elemental “depth” he himself had discovered in the war.³²⁹ Harro Segeberg aptly described Jünger’s project as one of “regressive modernisation.” If the shared horizon of traditional life had been lost, what was needed, Jünger believed, was a dialectical motion that would restore the features of organic community via quintessentially modern means.³³⁰ Martin Heidegger, in a no less fitting phrase, characterized Jünger’s approach as “romantic positivism.” The term correctly suggests that what Jünger shared with the romantics—a longing for transcendence and wholeness, a concern for liminal zones and limit experiences—he also sought, not in escape to some land “where pepper grows,” but in the postwar world that confronted him.³³¹ Jünger’s earlier political journalism had already

³²⁶ E. Jünger to L. Alwens, 4 June 1929, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

³²⁷ E. Jünger, “Wesen des Frontsoldatentums,” *Die Standarte*, 6 September 1925, in *Politische Publizistik*, 68; and E. Jünger, “Oberfläche—Tiefe,” *Standarte*, 6 May 1926, in *Politische Publizistik*, 206.

³²⁸ E. Jünger, *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Gestalt* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 53-57. As he put it in the 1938 edition of *The Adventurous Heart*: “Our eyes must retain the power, if only for a moment, to see the works of this earth as if on their first day, that is, in their divine magnificence.” See *AH2*, 59.

³²⁹ E. Jünger, “Oberfläche—Tiefe,” *Standarte*, 6 May 1926, in *ibid.*, 206-207. Compare the more common “romantic anticapitalism” of early twentieth-century figures like Georg Lukács, which critiqued bourgeois civilization from the standpoint of precapitalist cultural values. See Michael Löwy, “Naphta or Settembrini? Lukács and Romantic Anticapitalism,” *New German Critique* No. 42 (Autumn 1987), 17-31.

³³⁰ Harro Segeberg, “Regressive Modernisierung. Kriegererlebnis und Moderne-Kritik in Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk,” in *Wirkendes Wort* 9 (March/April 1989), 95-110. For an account of Jünger’s embrace of technology as a contribution to the development of Nazi ideology, see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), esp. 70-108.

³³¹ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 90, *Zu Ernst Jünger*, ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2004), 79, 90. Herf’s characterization of Jünger as one of Weimar’s “right-wing romantics” (71) is thus accurate only in this qualified sense.

gestured in this direction. “We must enter into the spirit of the metropolis,” he announced in 1926, “into the powers of our time, machines, the masses, the worker. Here lies the potential energy, which is in question for the national epiphany of tomorrow.”³³² The first edition of *The Adventurous Heart* would teach readers to locate this “adventurous” dimension of life in Weimar’s urban and technological landscape.

The memory of youth was central to this didactic labor. Like his Frankfurt School contemporaries, who found utopian promise in memories of childhood happiness, Jünger turned to the rebelliousness and imagination of youth as an antidote to modern ills.

Belief, devotion, daring, the capacity for enthusiasm, affectionate commitment to anything regardless of what it is, in short everything that this time accurately accounts as foolishness—wherever that is detected, even in the narrowest circles, one breathes more easily. With all this is bound up that simple process I call astonishment (*Erstaunen*), that avidity in taking in the world and the great desire to reach for her, like a child seeing a glass ball. When we remember the time of our childhood, of sweeping through field and forrest, where the secret was concealed behind every tree and every hedgerow... we see how much paler the world has become.³³³

The memory of youthful “astonishment,” Jünger seemed to suggest, could cure the adult’s diminished receptivity to the wondrous and unpredictable. As a person grows older, he wrote, “there are fewer pieces of stage scenery, whose back side he doesn’t also know. And the greatest astonishment he experiences is that life is really wretchedly ordinary. The child in him dies ever more.”³³⁴ In one typical scene, Jünger recalled the adolescent joy, familiar to every reader, of learning that school might be cancelled. With this news, “[t]he discovery that life had stepped outside its soberness illuminated its smallest details, and with astonishment we sensed the pleasure that lies in putting on a tie or wishing housemates good morning.”³³⁵

Jünger exemplified this openness to experience in memories of his own attraction to adventure.³³⁶ This meant, first of all, adventure tales, which Jünger had devoured from an early age: classics such as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Don Quixote*, and Grimmshausen’s *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, as well as the bestsellers of his youth, raconteurs like Karl May, Sophie Wörishöffer, and Eugène Sue. These works, Jünger confessed, had offered support to his imagination and reliable relief “against the pull of the commonplace.” Here he found a world filled “with characters and actions, which didn’t turn on the axis of drab expediency and the common good.” Books became, he wrote, “a grand and impregnable wall” against reality.³³⁷

³³² E. Jünger, “Gross-stadt und Land,” *Deutsches Volkstum*, August 1926, in *Politische Publizistik*, 231-233.

³³³ E. Jünger, *AH1*, 20-21.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 38-39. Commentators have long noted Jünger’s fear of boredom. As Leopold Schwarzschild put it, for Jünger the term “bourgeois” had no socioeconomic meaning, but was used only “as the antithesis to the heroic.” See his “Heroismus aus Langeweile,” *Das Tagebuch*, 28 September 1929, cited in Nevin, 111. For an attempt to define a modern form of boredom very close to Jünger’s existential malaise, see Elizabeth Goodstein, *Experience Without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

³³⁶ On the theme of adventure and openness to experience, see Georg Simmel, “The Adventurer,” in *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 18-198. “In the adventure,” Simmel argued, “we abandon ourselves to the world with fewer defenses and reserves than in any other relation” (193).

³³⁷ *AH1*, 32-35.

Given Jünger's dreaminess and diet of adventure tales, it is unsurprising that he harbored fantasies of exploring the African interior. Africa, he wrote, was "the promise of happiness," the location of "a richer and more meaningful life." Though aware of his naiveté in joining the French Foreign Legion, Jünger looked back on this escapade as at least a sign of healthy instincts: "The thirty year old cannot resolve to condemn the impertinence of the sixteen year old... He is delighted much more by an early, instinctive protest against the mechanism of the times." "In an age when instrumentality governs life," Jünger proclaimed, "the hearts of fools are the only thing that is non-instrumental, and the follies of youth the only sign that a feeling still exists for paths different from the main road."³³⁸

Recalling youth's experience of astonishment and adventure was intended to prepare readers to face other domains—and especially the shocks and thrills of modern technological civilization—in the same spirit. If the "iron cage" of heightened efficiency and control is one face of modern technology, the other, Jünger was at pains to show, is an intensified experience of power and speed. It is worth quoting at length from *The Adventurous Heart* to convey a sense of how Jünger set about raising awareness of this modern condition. Like Marx, who celebrated capitalism's ability to melt into air the traditional world's "fixed, fast-frozen relations," Jünger extolled industrial technology's power to liquidate the old.

Yesterday, during a nighttime walk through the far-flung streets in the eastern quarter where I live, a solitary and darkly heroic scene was on display. A barred basement window opened to view a machine room, in which, without the slightest human attention, a monstrous balance wheel whistled its way around an axle. While a warm, oily vapor wafted toward me through the window, the ear was fascinated by the splendid motion of a secured and controlled energy, which quietly, as though on panther's soles, overtook the senses, accompanied by a fine hissing sound, like that which leaps from the black fur of cats, and by the whistling drone of the steal in the air—all of this somewhat soporific and at the same time extremely enticing. And here I sensed again what one feels behind the engine of an airplane, when the hand thrusts forward the throttle and the terrible roar is lifted of a craft about to escape the earth; or when one plunges at night on the express train through the Ruhr's cyclopean landscapes, while the glowing exhaust hoods of the blast furnaces rend the darkness and amidst the frantic movement it seems impossible to the mind that a single atom remains that is not at *work*. It is the cold insatiable fury, a very modern feeling, that already senses in the play of matter the lure of more dangerous games, and which I wish had long been in search of its appropriate symbolism. Because this fury, as the most reliable destroyer of idylls, of old-style landscapes, of cozy geniality (*Gemütlichkeit*) and Biedermeier-ness, will fulfill its task all the more thoroughly, the later it is absorbed and incorporated into a new world of values. Oh, you most steely serpent of knowledge—you, whom we must enchant, if you're not to choke us to death!³³⁹

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 23, 38, 45. Jünger described such instinctive protest as one of the gifts of youth. "It has always amazed me," he wrote, "that young people are often so certain in their rejection of complex phenomena, long before the conclusion of a firmer awareness—but ultimately taste (*Geschmack*) precedes judgment" (143).

³³⁹ *AH1*, 134. A version of this passage was retained in the 1938 edition under the title "The Song of the Machines." The quote is from Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*.

According to Jünger's vitalist reading of technology, enchanting the "steely serpent" of technical know-how required finding the rapturous within its purest expressions.³⁴⁰ Communism, with its productivist bias, was not a true revolt against the instrumentalism of modern society, but rather "its last and most wearisome triumph." To search for solutions on the grounds of society, reason, or matter, Jünger argued, was to limit oneself to "the dead components of life." What was needed instead was the "anarchism" that "decisively abolishes society in oneself." Whoever managed this feat could then "also execute this abolition in society's external parts."³⁴¹

The Adventurous Heart is a prime example of what Albert Camus called "rebel poetry." Epitomized by the surrealists, this style of revolt oscillated "between literature and the will to power, between the irrational and the rational, the desperate dream and ruthless action."³⁴² To be sure, Jünger's mixture of motifs partook of broader interwar enthusiasms: his utopian cult of youth; his obsession with technological dynamism; his reifying mystification of socio-economic forces; his quintessentially fascist blend of nostalgia and hypermodernism; and his decisionistic belief in the value of action and commitment, irrespective of content. In a 1929 letter, Jünger described the essence of his vision as a "physicalist metaphysics and an irrational objectivity." The remark not only sums up the opposing impulses of his political radicalism, but its practical shortcomings as well. Jünger can tell us much about the nationalist's irrational soul; unlike Max Weber's charismatic authority or Carl Schmitt's theory of extralegal decision, however, Jünger's moments of intensified awareness and exceptional insight are never linked back to the institutions and norms of workaday politics. Of course, that such "astonishment" defied routinization was part of its appeal. "[A]t times," Jünger wrote, "a sentence, a sound, a verse, or an image strikes like a pistol shot. These instants, which alone make life worthy of life, do not repeat themselves."³⁴³ As Siegfried Kracauer aptly observed, Jünger's thought "opens up not so much a path into politics as a line of flight leading away from politics."³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ In a 1931 essay "On Danger," Jünger argued that "the increased intrusion of danger into daily life"—evident in traffic fatalities, the ubiquity of police forces, and even the "spirit" of intellectual trends like atomic theory—represented "a new and different return to nature," a condition "simultaneously civilized and barbaric... [in which] we have approached the elemental without having sacrificed the acuity of our consciousness." A "wholly different society," he averred, had "already long since established itself beneath the surface of bourgeois society." See "On Danger," trans. Donald Reneau, *New German Critique* 59 (Spring/Summer 1993), 27, 29-32.

³⁴¹ *AH1*, 141, 150. Jünger was not alone in this modernist fascination with speed. As Enda Duffy observed, early-twentieth-century innovations like the automobile "offered to masses of people that rarest of things: a wholly new experience, the experience of moving at what appeared to be great speeds, and the sensation of controlling that movement. This, literally, was the moment at which individual people were allowed to feel modernity in their bones." See *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 3-4.

³⁴² Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage, 1991), 81.

³⁴³ *AH1*, 40-41. This passage is a good example of how the trench experience continued to inform the first edition of *Das abenteuerlich Herz*. In the immediately preceding lines, Jünger refers back to his experience as a storm trooper, comparing such moments to "how one guesses, in fierce and noble flashes of the eye and in the shifting tension of leaping and holding oneself in place, the inner movement of an enemy."

³⁴⁴ Quoted in Andreas Huyssen, "Fortifying the Heart: Totally Ernst Jünger's Armored Texts," 9.

Mobilizing the Hidden Brotherhood

One of the most powerful aspects of *The Adventurous Heart* is its manner of addressing the readers whose “fundamental experience” Jünger claimed to share. According to Michael Klett, Jünger openly “conspires with the reader, whom he addresses as an isolated individual.”³⁴⁵ Norbert Staub described this as Jünger’s manner of “swearing in the readership through the ego’s essentially magical perception of the world.”³⁴⁶ Yet neither of these formulations capture Jünger’s full understanding of the author-reader relationship. For the first time in the 1929 edition of *The Adventurous Heart*, Jünger turned explicitly to a rhetoric of friendship to meet the problem of communication that had bedeviled his previous writings. The appeal of mutual understanding among close friends that Jünger felt as an adolescent and soldier now returned, following the deflation of his hope that comradeship’s unspoken accord could point the way to political renewal. In friendship, Jünger would find an ideal space of community and communication, despite the remoteness between people produced by the limits of language. The reader, like the friend, Jünger later wrote, “encounters the author in a profundity that words aim for but never reach.”³⁴⁷

Unmediated contact was central to this new conception of friendship. The “gift for entering into conversation with strangers,” Jünger wrote in 1939, is the “sign of the true adventurer.”

When we examine our acquaintances, we will only find a few whose acquaintanceship was not mediated by a third party. People with whom we came into direct contact were usually encountered under unusual circumstances—on a voyage, during a festival, or as a result of an unfortunate accident. . . . [But] the adventurer, who is unsociable, helps himself through his own talent. Authorship, as well, can be considered as a spiritual adventure, to which is related the fact that each author has a number of acquaintances, whom he has won by speaking to them directly.³⁴⁸

The “unsociable” adventurer is neither solipsistic nor antisocial, but rather discriminating and reserved—the opposite of the “relaxed gregariousness” (*Gemütlichkeit*) which Jünger damned for its “narcotic” rather than “stimulating” effect.³⁴⁹ In contrast to such herd togetherness, Jünger littered *The Adventurous Heart* with images of direct outreach to an unknown elite. “One can no longer struggle for Germany in society,” he wrote. “[O]ne must

³⁴⁵ Michael Klett, foreword to *AH1*, 9-10.

³⁴⁶ Norbert Staub, *Wagnis ohne Welt: Ernst Jüngers Schrift Das abenteuerliche Herz und ihr Kontext* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 67. But as Marcus Bullock noted, Jünger’s self-presentation as a messenger of “pure meaning” to “the privileged of the spirit in their isolation” is an “arcane equivocation” that conceals an elitist and retrograde cultural project. See *The Violent Eye*, 184-185.

³⁴⁷ See chapter 1.

³⁴⁸ Jünger, *Strahlungen I*, 4 April 1939 (Munich: DTV, 1988), 25-26. Jünger adds: “In the field of the erotic the direct style also reigns, for instance in simply addressing someone or in asking them to dance. It is an adventurous move when a man in a dark room, say in a theater, reaches out his hand toward an unknown woman. . . . It appears that [such] unmediated acquaintanceship is regarded as a higher form of union. Thus lovers perceive the accident which brought them together as extraordinary. Also, in novels the event leading two strangers to one another is gladly used as an introduction.” Jünger mentions Flaubert’s *Bouvard and Pecouchet* as a literary instance of such “chance friendship” in a letter to Alfred Kubin (23 March 1940).

³⁴⁹ See *AH1*, 130-133. Jünger described *Gemütlichkeit* as an aspect of “German drowsiness,” along with the “sedentariness” and “pitcher-pouring” of German club life.(131).

do it in isolation like a man clearing the jungle with a machete, sustained by the hope that somewhere in the thicket others are similarly at work.” Jünger proclaimed the book a sign to “the Robinsons of our great cities,” evidence, as the discovery of a footprint was to Robinson Crusoe, that the “forsaken reader” was not alone. The “anarchism” needed to negate the status quo within oneself, he insisted, was “today practiced by many, in every camp, stratum, and party, by a brotherhood of enemies, who do not know each other but who each know the *signal*.”³⁵⁰

Jünger intended *The Adventurous Heart* as a rallying cry to these scattered forces. “The task and responsibility of the writer,” he declared, is to make known “*his* voice, which amidst confusion announces a higher unity, or, like a messenger... reassures the heart in its abandonment that communications are still intact.” Recalling the importance of adventure tales to his own youth, Jünger stressed the affirmative function of literature, “the incomparable delight, which only young readers are capable of, in seeing their most private judgments confirmed as valid.” Reading such authors, “[w]e are enclosed in the friendliness of gift-givers. We feel total trust that here we won’t be bilked out of that more lovely image of the world, which we so anxiously preserve in the chambers of our heart. We won’t be ridiculed, as those outside are ridiculed who break with convention.” To readers ensconced in “quiet rooms,” he issued the call: “Greetings, you brothers, out of the night into the happiness of your nightly solitude!”³⁵¹

Jünger presented this author-reader friendship as a microcosm of the relations binding a true national community. Both entail an imagined collective identity grounded in shared commitment to absolute things. Mere material wants, Jünger declared, are too feeble a source of human connection. “There is no community of the dissatisfied,” he wrote. “It is hard to go on adventure with people who only have the coffer in view.” Comparing Karl Marx with Karl Moor, the noble brigand who sacrifices himself for a starving family in Schiller’s *The Robbers* (1781), Jünger sided with Moor’s solution to suffering, which preserved the role of “rank and merit.” Whereas for the socialist suffering “is conditioned by external relations and its overcoming is expected from external forces,” in the tragic world suffering is “an emotional condition (*seelischer Zustand*) of the utmost necessity... It is the hero, who through overcoming and self-overcoming, helps all others by bringing the idea of freedom to light and sacrificing himself for it.”³⁵² One had to “seek the measure of a new regime,” Jünger argued, according to the principles of the tragic world and “the categorical imperative of the heart.” Faced with the “shipwreck” of the old order, Jünger embraced a literary, elite-led mobilization built on those sentiments that he could will to be the feelings of all.³⁵³

Ernst Jünger has generally been taken as a preeminent representative of what Helmut Lethen called the modernist “cool persona,” whose “sharp-eyed gaze” perceives and judges the world from a standpoint free of emotional or moral entanglements.³⁵⁴ More accurate is that Jünger’s optic grew out of a deliberate effort to do away with those affects and moral reflexes he considered vestiges of an outmoded liberal-bourgeois age. As the first edition of *The Adventurous Heart* makes clear, a self-conscious assortment of emotions and normative

³⁵⁰ *AH1*, 94, 142, 153, 156. Italics in original.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 35, 156.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 142-143, 151-152. Cf. Jerrold Siegel’s argument that contemporaries associated Marx with the figure of Karl Moor. See *Marx’s Fate: The Shape of a Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 79ff.

³⁵³ *AH1*, 153.

³⁵⁴ See Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), esp. 147-170.

values still underlay this perspective, despite the outward projection of hardness. “If we too want to sense the trembling of a heart in its finest fibers,” Jünger wrote, “we also demand at the same time that it be triply armored.” What it had to be armored against was a manipulative sentimentality: “The miserable deployment of the insulted and humbled—that is a deployment against everything grand that would never stoop to suffer insult and humiliation. Here everything that lets itself be stomped in the face sneaks up on us, in order to capture a look of shameful consent.” Jünger thought Rousseau the epitome of such sentimentality, in which the “contortions of a base soul” did not warrant the “level of candor with which they’re displayed.”³⁵⁵ *The Adventurous Heart* was meant to depict “the subjective side” of a more heroic vision of the world.³⁵⁶

The impersonal coldness of Jünger’s writing has often been stressed, but there is also an intimate quality—of self-revelation, trust, and obligation—in the first edition of *The Adventurous Heart* that has to be acknowledged in order to understand his project. His armored persona is not self-sufficient but vulnerable to the recognition of the reader-friend—a position Jünger, as a voracious reader, clearly understood. For this dependence, the language of friendship was especially appropriate. “Books,” Jünger wrote, “are our most silent friends. The highest happiness they can grant is allowing us to encounter the artless activity of a unique personality... In the thicket of words, we stumble across the spirit.”³⁵⁷ Jünger repeatedly refers to the reader as “the true friend of books, the reliable and invisible companion of the author.” This companionship of a reader who wishes to share in “a more heartfelt and heroic life” endowed authorship with tremendous authority.³⁵⁸ “In pious times,” Jünger wrote,

a crime more deeply distresses the mind, because it destroys the image of a higher life in the wrongdoer and thereby calls into question this life that is shared by all believers. The writer is capable of doing the same to his friend, who is surrendered defenseless to him because he stands across from him with an open heart. Incidentally, this makes irony, which today colors three-quarters of our books, into a means unworthy of the writer, since it always hits the reader, regardless of who or what its target is.³⁵⁹

The problem with irony is that it teaches the reader that to trust sentiment is to risk being exposed as foolish or naïve. The ironist, Jünger argued, “presents a *feeling*, which the intellect is then supposed to come along and recognize as inauthentic or feigned. It thus, so to speak, sells the heart to the intellect.”³⁶⁰ The danger for the reader is the devaluation of “the inner

³⁵⁵ *AH1*, 148-149.

³⁵⁶ E. Jünger to L. Alwens, 2 February 1929, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. Jünger added that he intended to complement this inner view with a study of modernity’s “objective content”—a promise he fulfilled in essays like “Total Mobilization” (1930) and his book-length *The Worker* (1932).

³⁵⁷ *AH1*, 106. Jünger quotes here from Diderot’s foreword to *Jacques the Fatalist and his Master*: “I will allow my pen to present thoughts in the same order as things offer themselves to me, because this will best illustrate the activity and march of my spirit” (106).

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 143, 147.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 147-148.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.* A similar critique of irony was expressed by the American writer David Foster Wallace in a 1993 interview. Wallace, sometimes dubbed a spokesman for a “new sincerity” in literature, observed that the great thing about irony is that it splits things apart, gets us up above them so we can see the flaws and hypocrisies and duplicities... The problem is that once the rules for art are debunked, and once the

and magical harmony of life.” The “task and responsibility of the author,” in Jünger’s view, is to free the reader from “doubt about the reality of dreams, about the existence of a zone, in which the judgments of a daring and noble life are valid.” In moments of “devout and heroic unison (*Einklang*) with the world,” he declared, “the individual enters into a hidden brotherhood, a higher circle of life.”³⁶¹

We need to recognize this vision of a “hidden brotherhood” as an extension of Jünger’s earlier efforts to imagine a community of the likeminded. What Emerson called man’s “deep instinct... to find himself in another mind” continued to drive Jünger’s writing.³⁶² But whereas in 1925 he had celebrated whole nations joined by a common feeling prior to language, by 1929 his was once again a lonely voice struggling to articulate the foundation that would join his consciousness to others. After 1929, Jünger’s work would develop considerably, growing over the next several decades increasingly apolitical, resigned, and skeptical of modern technology. On matters of communication, companionship, and “spiritual resistance,” however, his later writings would remain footnotes to the first edition of *The Adventurous Heart*.

Friendship and Idealism

Some points of comparison are needed to bring into focus the idealist understanding of friendship that Jünger began to develop in *The Adventurous Heart*. The notion of books as friends, for example, has been explored by the literary critic Wayne Booth. In reaching out to unknown readers, Jünger attempts what Booth calls “the patterning of desires and gratification” through which literature implicitly offers to any reader a metaphorical friendship. Of the several ways books can accomplish this, Booth argues, the most intense is analogous to the virtue friendship of Aristotle, a friendship based not on pleasure or utility, but on common aspirations. In Booth’s terms, Jünger offers “a precise ordering of values, one that is not shared by all readers in advance and that is recognizable as a ‘good’ recommended by the friend implied in the [work] itself.”³⁶³

This shared “good” may be especially effective in forging friendship when it challenges prevailing norms. According to the sociologist Gerald Suttles, friendship requires

unpleasant realities the irony diagnoses are revealed and diagnosed, *then* what do we do? Irony’s useful for debunking illusions, but most illusion-debunking in the U.S. has now been done and redone... All we seem to want to do is keep ridiculing stuff. Postmodern irony and cynicism’s become an end in itself, a measure of hip sophistication and literary savvy. Few artists dare to try to talk about ways of working toward redeeming what’s wrong, because they’ll look sentimental and naïve to all the weary ironists. Irony’s gone from liberating to enslaving.

See *Conversations with David Foster Wallace*, ed. Stephen J. Burn (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 48-49.

³⁶¹ *AHI*, 153, 155.

³⁶² Quoted in George Kateb, *Emerson and Self-Reliance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 4.

³⁶³ Wayne Booth, “‘The Way I Loved George Eliot,’ Friendship with Books as a Neglected Critical Metaphor,” in *The Essential Wayne Booth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 169, 172. As Booth notes, the idea of friendship with books used to be a commonplace: “In the nineteenth century the personification was fashionable; in our time we have replaced the warm metaphor with cooler ones: the work as labyrinthine web, as one more cell-block in the prison house of language, as puzzle, as code, as *écriture* expressing itself, or—at the upper limits of human warmth—as a world to be entered, or an object made to be analyzed or even admired” (157).

the disclosure of the “real self,” which can be achieved by “contrasting one’s own self-presentation with what is conventional or routine.” The kind of public defiance that Jünger presented in *The Adventurous Heart* can assure others of one’s authenticity and announce to sympathetic onlookers one’s suitability for friendship. In this way, Suttles maintains, visible deviance becomes a condition for intimacy, dependability, and an alternate morality among friends.³⁶⁴ The enthusiastic response of many readers to Jünger’s life and works needs to be understood in light of these rhetorical effects.

A more direct influence on Jünger’s understanding of friendship can be found in Friedrich Nietzsche.³⁶⁵ Karl Jaspers, whose assessment of the role played by friendship and loneliness in Nietzsche’s life is still among the best to be found, deemed it a “fundamental fact” that Nietzsche’s “passionate desire to communicate did not prevent his loneliness from increasing throughout his life.”³⁶⁶ According to Jaspers, Nietzsche’s desire to find his “private world. . . in agreement with the world in general” was disappointed through a series of estranged friendships. The first was the loss of the kinship he had known as a young man with Erwin Rohde, occasioned by Rohde’s adaptation to the bourgeois respectability in which Nietzsche could find no place. This was followed in 1876 by Nietzsche’s disengagement from Richard Wagner. Over the next eight years, Jaspers maintained, Nietzsche would “struggle for friendship at the abyss of ultimate forlornness,” three more times offering “his innermost self to another human being” in his encounters with Paul Rée, Lou Salomé, and Herbert von Stein.³⁶⁷ What Nietzsche failed to find in these relationships was philosophical intimacy, someone who might share his conception of the task of man’s

³⁶⁴ Gerald D. Suttles, “Friendship as a Social Institution,” in *Friendship as a Social Institution*, eds. George J. McCall, et al. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2011), 101. First published 1970. “Friends,” Suttles observes, “can swear or become exceptionally pious around one another. Friends can entertain subversive or utopian political ideologies that would be laughed at in public circumstances” (116). For another attempt to apply Suttles’ framework in a historical context, see Dolora Wojciehowski, “Francis Petrarch: First Modern Friend,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 47 (Winter 2005), 273-274.

³⁶⁵ The influence of Nietzsche on Jünger’s thought has long been recognized. The most extensive account is Reinhard Wilczek, *Nihilistische Lektüre des Zeitalters. Ernst Jüngers Nietzsche-Rezeption* (Trier: WVT, 1999). Wilczek provides a far more nuanced picture of Nietzsche’s influence on Jünger than has generally been acknowledged, noting both the different stages of that reception and the Schopenhauerian corrective (evident in pessimism about the technological age and pity for those swallowed up in its catastrophes) which entered Jünger’s works after 1945. For a detailed assessment of the Nietzschean currents in Jünger’s earlier right-wing activism, see especially Roger Woods, *Ernst Jünger and the Nature of Political Commitment*. As John King has suggested, Jünger’s first published work, the 1920 edition of *Storm of Steel*, was already an attempt to write a Nietzschean “monumental history.” See *Writing and Rewriting the First World War*, 6-7, 158-161. In Nietzsche’s *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life* (1874), “monumental history” celebrates past greatness with the aim of inspiring action in the present.

³⁶⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of his Philosophical Activity*, trans. Charles Wallraff and Frederick Schmitz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 58. First published 1936.

³⁶⁷ Jaspers, 58-74. It was likely with such ruptures in mind that Nietzsche wrote in 1882 of what he called “star friendship”: “We were friends and have become estranged. But this was right, and we do not want to conceal and obscure it from ourselves as if we had reason to feel ashamed. We are two ships of which each has its goal and course; our paths may cross and we may celebrate a feast together, as we did—and then the good ships rested so quietly in one harbor and one sunshine that it may have looked as if they had reached their goal and as if they had one goal. But then the almighty force of our tasks drove us apart again and into different seas and sunny zones, and perhaps we shall never see each other again; perhaps we shall meet again but fail to recognize each other: our exposure to different seas and suns has changed us... There is probably a tremendous but invisible stellar orbit in which our very different ways and goals may be *included* as small parts of this path; let us rise up to this thought.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 225-226.

self-overcoming and provide the community of ideals within which individual self-mastery was best pursued.³⁶⁸

Communication and mutual intelligibility were central to Nietzsche's view of friendship. Even among friends like the historian Franz Overbeck, Jaspers argued, "there was no real intimacy in matters that truly concerned Nietzsche," no "understanding of the last impulses of his own *Existenz*." As Nietzsche wrote to Peter Gast in 1888, "I am at times completely beside myself for being unable to say an honest and unconditional word to anybody."³⁶⁹ The act of writing as a search for others who might share his thoughts would seem to be a principal source of Nietzsche's creative energy, a quest suggested by Nietzsche's address to his "*unknown* friends (for as yet I *know* of no friend)" at the end of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887).³⁷⁰ At the root of Nietzsche's loneliness was the belief that genuine communication presupposed people of the same spiritual niveau. "Incommunicability," he wrote in 1886, "is in truth the most terrible of all forms of loneliness. . . . Perfect friendship can exist only *inter pares*. *Inter pares!*" And again in a letter from the same period Nietzsche asks: "Why do I not find among the living those people whose glance reaches out higher than mine and who must see in me one of their kind? I yearn so much for just such people!"³⁷¹

A good example of the Nietzschean strain in Jünger's view of friendship is a eulogy he penned in 1930 but declined to publish. Entitled "To a Lost Friend," the piece was dedicated to "Charles Benoit," Jünger's alias for Karl Rickert, the fellow adventurer he befriended during his sojourn in the French Foreign Legion in 1913. Jünger believed (mistakenly, as it turned out) that Benoit had perished in the intervening years.³⁷² Like *The Adventurous Heart*, Jünger's tribute yearns less for shared convictions—he had little talent for dogmatism—than for a shared spiritual quality he claimed to have known with his "lost friend." Jünger describes their bond as grounded in common values—the sort of joint vision of the good that Aristotle identified as the mark of the highest form of friendship. Benoit, Jünger writes, was one of the "natural sons" of life, a figure whose "innermost unrest" would forever drive him to escape society's cage.³⁷³ The only recognition these adventurers enjoy is with each other.

Your cries are scattered in the voices of the elements, and the hearts of the solitary hear them clearly, like the calls of migratory birds passing at night over great cities. We are bound in the secret brotherhood of those who are forever driven to break

³⁶⁸ As Jaspers argues, "Nietzsche's problem" had become "the impossibility, repeatedly experienced during these years, of an enduring friendship founded on essentials and penetrating to the core" (76).

³⁶⁹ Jaspers, 75, 79. On the importance to Nietzsche of mutual intelligibility among "higher types," see also Ruth Abbey, "Circles, Ladders, and Stars: Nietzsche on Friendship," in *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity*, eds. Preston King and Heather Devere (London and Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 2000), esp. 53-58.

³⁷⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989), 161.

³⁷¹ Quoted in Jaspers, 86.

³⁷² "An einen verschollenen Freund" first appeared in 1972 in volume nine of Jünger's collected works. The decision not to publish suggests that the sentiments contained in the piece lay close to the heart. Asked during a 1989 interview if he found it hard to write about his "feelings," Jünger replied: "On such things I express myself reluctantly." See "Ja, Gut," *Die Zeit*, 8 December 1989.

³⁷³ "An einen verschollenen Freund," 25-27. Cf. Jacques Derrida on friendship and death: "[The] great canonical meditations on friendship (for example Cicero's *De amicitia*, Montaigne's *De l'amitié*, Maurice Blanchot's *L'amitié*) are linked to the experience of mourning, to the moment of loss—that of the friend or of friendship." See "The Politics of Friendship," trans. Gabriel Motzkin, in *The Journal of Philosophy* (1988), 643.

camp—that they recognize each other wherever they happen to meet in the world is merely a sign of the affinity that is grounded beyond the times.”³⁷⁴

Yet there is a silver lining in the premature loss of such rebellious souls. It is sad to discover, Jünger declares, that formerly adventurous companions “have descended into the exchange offices of merchants.” Death, which removed Benoit from the compromising medium of real life, freed him to live on in his ideal essence in the purer realm of memory. Touching on the age-old question of what it is we love in our friends—is it the unique individual or some quality or virtue alive in them?—Jünger praises a “pitiless love that pertains not to the person but to what is indestructible in him.”³⁷⁵ It is on this metaphysical plane that spiritual kinship is found. In a later interview, Jünger described this accord as simply “a question of music, of a certain harmony... The laws of a certain magnetism have to come into play.”³⁷⁶

Another point of comparison for understanding Jünger’s view of friendship is the “circle” assembled around the poet-prophet Stefan George. From the 1890s until his death in 1933, George acted as the leader of an elite group of disciples who styled themselves the vanguard of a German cultural rebirth. This true but “secret Germany” was organized around the belief that an age of mass tastes and commercial values could be regenerated through art and through the artist’s charismatic embodiment of beauty and nobility. George’s style of leadership would have a profound, if somewhat vague, influence on Weimar’s anti-republican right. As the writer Ernst Niekisch remarked of Friedrich Hielscher, a national-revolutionary publicist unaffiliated with the group: “He had assembled a circle of people around him, in whose middle he was enthroned as a prophet. He cultivated distance and made sure to be shrouded in a haze of mystery. The model of Stefan George was unmistakable.”³⁷⁷ Jünger, a generation younger than George, took little notice of the poet. But in many ways Jünger fits well into George’s project. The two shared a romantic vision of the artist as an agent of renewal, a debt to French symbolism, a deep discontent with modern life, a preference for lofty cultural criticism over the mundane realities of public affairs, and a belief that a small assemblage of elites could revolutionize the larger society.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 27-28. As Jünger puts it: “We prefer to track [our lost friends] in our dreams, always roving, always taking flight, always in the light of the sun as it rises over wild landscapes. And who is less able to disappoint us than one who has weighed anchor for all eternity?” (28). The potential danger of this view of friendship was summed up by Gregory Vlastos in a highly critical account of Plato’s view of the value of individuals: “What we are to love in persons is the “image” of the Idea in them... Now since all too few human beings are masterworks of excellence, and not even the best of those we have the chance to love are wholly free of streaks of the ugly, the mean, the commonplace, the ridiculous, if our love for them is to be only for their virtue and beauty, the individual, in the uniqueness and integrity of his or her individuality, will never be the object of our love.” See his *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 31.

³⁷⁶ Hervier, 59. Jünger also likens this magnetism between individuals to Stendhal’s idea of “crystallization,” with which he explained the birth of romantic passion in *On Love* (1822).

³⁷⁷ Ernst Niekisch, *Erinnerungen eines deutschen Revolutionärs, Band I: Gewagtes Leben, 1889-1945* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1974), 126-127. In the words of one biographer, George “contributed to the creation of a psychological, cultural, and even political climate that made the events in Germany leading up to and following 1933 not just imaginable, but also feasible.” See Robert E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and his Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), xvi.

³⁷⁸ A useful overview of the George circle can be found in Michael Winkler, “Master and Disciples: The George Circle,” in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, ed. Jens Rieckmann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), 145-159.

Jünger and George also shared charisma and a certain bearing, what the Austrian writer Jean Améry called their “physiognomic predisposition to spiritual leadership.”³⁷⁹

Stefan George’s conception of friendship as the glue binding his circle of aesthetes also bore an unmistakably Nietzschean stamp. Shortly after Nietzsche’s death in August 1900, George published a poem in which he offered an antidote to the loneliness Nietzsche had suffered. “Banish yourself into a circle drawn by love,” George wrote.³⁸⁰ In other words, only through friendship could the crises of the age be successfully faced. If this solution overlooked Nietzsche’s longing for precisely such connections, it nevertheless evinced the determination of many of Nietzsche’s self-appointed followers not to face these challenges alone. But George’s autocratic insistence on shared ideals eclipsed anything found in Jünger’s biography. Membership in George’s “circle of friends” depended on one’s ability to represent or embody *das Dichterische* (“the poetic”), and remaining in it required subordination to the master’s unquestioned authority.³⁸¹ The exaltation of *das Dichterische* meant a corresponding disregard for the unique individual. Jünger’s consolation that the death of friends allows them to exist more perfectly in memory was elevated into a guiding principle in George’s brief relationship with an aspiring poet named Maximilian Kronberger, whose death at age sixteen freed him to be transformed into a semi-divine symbol of the miracles possible in discipleship. “The reality of the relationship slipped more into the background,” Thomas Karlauf observed, “the more strongly the death of this precocious virtuoso displayed community building value. The world should see ‘Maximin’ just as... [George] saw him; there could be no other reality than that of poetry.”³⁸² As this example makes plain, it would be a mistake to push the Jünger-George comparison too far. Jünger had no formal “circle” and was less inclined to wield total authority over those in his set. The point is to see Jünger’s project as one of a number of contemporary efforts to imagine spiritually aristocratic friendships as a site of resistance to the times.

Perhaps the most revealing difference between Ernst Jünger and Stefan George is the former’s repudiation of homoeroticism. Unlike the spiritualized homosexuality of George,³⁸³ Jünger’s appeal to friendship remained more clearly a matter of the mind and heart. In a candid 1928 letter, Jünger expressed contempt for the sex-tinged infatuations—nudism, body culture, health clubs—currently seducing the younger generation.

To be honest, all this ethical babble, this soft-baked complex of problems, this hungover no-one-understands-me feeling, this pubescent moonlit swooning, this gonad culture transplanted into the mind—it all makes me want to vomit... All these people are of course magnificent chaps when one knocks away the stilts beneath their legs and teaches them that a healthy screw is something more decent and natural than this American comradeliness with its Nordic nudist ethos mixed in...

³⁷⁹ Jean Améry, *Karrieren und Köpfe* (Zürich: Thomas Verlag, 1955), 87.

³⁸⁰ “*Sich bannen in den kreis den liebe schliesst...*” Quoted in Thomas Karlauf, *Stefan George. Die Entdeckung des Charisma* (Munich: Karl Blessing, 2007), 295.

³⁸¹ Unsurprisingly, ruptures were common. As the one-time favorite Max Kommerell noted in 1928, membership “rested on such a complete renunciation of one’s ego that I could find it at most fitting and tolerable for a youth, never for a man.” Quoted in *Ibid.*, 588.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 350. In Karlauf’s words, the poet “could separate himself overnight from people he’d been close to for years, as though they had never meant anything to him” (143).

³⁸³ On George’s understanding of homosexuality as “heroicized love” and a kind of “pedagogical eros,” see Karlauf, 365-395.

This is a company that would like to cobble together a code of ethics out of its sexual and ideological inadequacies.

Jünger contrasted his own agenda with the “nonsense” of a writer like Walter Flex, whose sentimental memoir *The Wanderer Between Two Worlds* (1916) was full of erotic praise for a patriotic friend who had sacrificed himself on the Eastern Front. For Jünger, reading Flex or giggling half naked on the beach with friends belonged to the same 19th-century Romantic rot. As someone who saw in youth “an especially splendid and heady manifestation of life,” Jünger hoped to yoke youthful vitality to a more steely and forward-looking vision.³⁸⁴

Another revealing example of Jünger’s disdain for homoeroticism is his 1929 review of Max René Hesse’s *Partenau*. All but forgotten today, this novel of life in the post-WWI German Army gained considerable attention at the time. The book tells the story of a Lieutenant Partenau, a military genius who suffocates amidst the tedium of the now demobilized Reichswehr. Another reviewer likened Lt. Partenau to a “painter without hands,” and described the work’s central problem as that of a “military *l’art pour l’art*”—that of a visionary, in other words, who is denied the war he needs for creative self-realization.³⁸⁵ Partenau’s only source of appreciation is his friendship with an admiring young officer named Kiebold, for whom he develops erotic feelings. When Kiebold demurs, however, the thwarted Partenau takes his own life. Jünger’s review of the novel dismissed this homoerotic element as just more of the “marzipan, on which certain elements of the youth movement sour their stomachs.”³⁸⁶ But Jünger found in Partenau himself a figure of tragic greatness. In an “age of shopkeepers and burghers,” he declared, such an “adventurous heart” can only escape into “heroic dreaminess.” Jünger’s reading of the friendship with Kiebold, who has “youth’s rich capacity for enthusiasm and astonishment,” is deeply sympathetic. The “secret understanding” of the two friends appears to Partenau as a “lonely echo,” a foretaste of the fulfillment that will be denied him in the larger world. That Partenau pours his full energy into the doomed friendship, Jünger concludes, is a symptom of the fate awaiting the “best blood among us... so long as a path into bolder, freer, and more manly regions has not been broken.”³⁸⁷ Ultimately, Jünger’s rejection of homoeroticism is consistent with the fascist urge to preserve a sphere of allegedly masculine values. For Jünger circa 1929, however, homoeroticism represented not the taint of feminine qualities per se, but rather cul-de-sacs of self-absorption and romantic escapism that distracted from the cultivation of a revolutionary, adventurous spirit. At best, homoeroticism was a consolation prize, the place energies were directed in the absence of a more heroic society.

³⁸⁴ E. Jünger to L. Alwens, 28 January 1928, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. Jünger stressed that this was his “private opinion” and not for public circulation. On the popularity of nudism and *Freikörperkultur* (free body culture) in Germany in the late 1920s, see Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), esp. 30-73. On the infatuation with sports and fit bodies, see Eric Jensen *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁸⁵ Bernard Guillemin, “Tragödie des Strategen,” *Literarische Umschau*, 29 September 1929.

³⁸⁶ E. Jünger, “Partenau,” *Widerstand*, July 1929, in *Politische Publizistik*, 487. In what is likely a veiled reference to Stefan George, Jünger also likens such homoeroticism to “the rotten Greekness, behind which a sort of schoolmaster barricades himself as an ethical bulwark” (487). This is the only reference to George that I have encountered in Jünger’s interwar works.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 488. Victor Klemperer offers a less flattering reading of *Partenau*, describing it as “an extraordinary anticipation of the language and the fundamental attitudes of the Third Reich.” See his *The Language of the Third Reich*, trans. Martin Brady (London: Continuum, 2006), 24.

Jünger's review of *Partenau* is also a reminder that he did not see friendship as a purely private matter or an end in itself, but as the vehicle of a cultural-political project. Indeed, in some ways Jünger's appeal to literature as the medium of a metaphorical friendship with the power to unite the nation was closer to the vision of the Austrian poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who popularized the term "conservative revolution" in a 1927 lecture. What was missing in the German "spiritual space," Hofmannsthal believed, was a unity of tradition, language, and national consciousness. In the "written word," he wrote, a "characteristic connection comes alive across the generations, and we sense a power at work in it that we dare to call the spirit of the nation." But this "highest community," Hofmannsthal declared in yet another Nietzsche-inspired fantasy, was being prepared among the Germans in the "secret consensus" of a disparate band of true "seekers." These seekers would finally realize in German culture "the political comprehension of the spiritual and the spiritual comprehension of the political" that constituted "a real nation." This spiritually whole nation would then bridge the "thousands of fissures" hitherto dividing the German people and create the "valid bonds" through which "life becomes livable."³⁸⁸ If Germans circa 1800 had been preoccupied with the liberation from traditional ties, Hofmannsthal reasoned, his own age faced the opposite predicament: a sense of rootlessness produced by the "vain freedom" from the social bonds that give meaning to human life.³⁸⁹

Exploding Mine: Carl Schmitt

The same diagnosis of nihilistic individualism underlay the most influential conception of the polity as a form of friendship to come out of the Weimar years. In *The Concept of the Political* (1927), Carl Schmitt claimed that the distinction between friends and foes was the essence of political identity and the criterion distinguishing "the political" from other spheres of human activity. Crucially, the enemy in this sense was not simply an economic competitor or a "private adversary whom one hates." "An enemy," Schmitt wrote, "exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy."³⁹⁰ What defines a "collectivity," what makes it an 'us' that must defend itself against the otherness of other groups, can only be decided by its members themselves in concrete situations. "Each participant," Schmitt argued, "is in a position to judge whether the adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence." Moral values or shared culture *may* supply sources of group identity. But it is only

³⁸⁸ See his "The Written Word as the Spiritual Space of the Nation," in *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Idea: Selected Essays and Addresses, 1906-1927*, trans. and ed. David S. Luft (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2011), 157-169. Another version of this cultural-political vanguardism in the service of collective particularity was voiced by the right-wing social theorist Hans Freyer, whose works from the 1920s were "explicitly intended to further the self-awareness of those who shared this sensibility, to help forge a legion (*Hunderttschaft*) that would await the signal to action." See Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 107-108.

³⁸⁹ See Luft's introduction, 20, 30n97. As Luft notes, Hofmannsthal did not intend by the term "conservative revolution" a political upheaval, but rather a longer process of cultural renewal (21).

³⁹⁰ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 28. This translation is based on Schmitt's 1932 revision of the text.

when its members are willing to risk their lives to defend a marker of collective belonging that a group attains *political* status.³⁹¹

For this reason, Schmitt's critics have often accused him of glorifying war.³⁹² Certainly Schmitt spends more time talking about foes than friends. Yet as Andrew Norris argued, the whole scheme presupposes a strong notion of political friendship.³⁹³ "Since the enemy is defined as a threat to those relations of 'friendship' internal to the state," he observed, "it follows that the latter are not entirely a function of the external relation to the enemy." For Schmitt, Norris maintained, war merely reveals political friendship "in its true significance. This should make it plain why Schmitt suggests that a loss of meaning and significance attends the eclipse of the political. Life will lack meaning unless it contains commitments cherished above mere physical existence." For a way of life to confer meaning, in other words, one must prize it above one's own being and be willing to sacrifice oneself in its defense. The real modern conflict, for Schmitt, is thus between the political solidarity that offers "a response to the fragility and futility of human life," and an apolitical individualism that offers only consumption and entertainment.³⁹⁴

Ernst Jünger first read *The Concept of the Political* in October 1930. In a letter to Schmitt, Jünger praised the work in no uncertain terms:

The clearing away of all the empty prattle filling Europe that is delivered in these thirty pages is so irreparable, that one can get down to the business of, to use your terms, determining the concrete friend-enemy relation... You've pulled off a special military-technological invention: a mine, that silently explodes... For my part, I feel myself thoroughly invigorated by this hearty meal. I intend to lead your way some of those readers who today are just as scarce as *books*.³⁹⁵

Jünger's admiration was due to the fact that his own writings had been developing toward such Schmittian themes from the mid-1920s onward.³⁹⁶ In a 1927 essay, Jünger wrote of the

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁹² See, for instance, Richard Wolin, "Carl Schmitt: The Conservative Revolutionary Habitus and the Aesthetics of Horror," *Political Theory* 20, no. 3 (August 1992), 424-447.

³⁹³ Whether the name "friendship" can apply to anything beyond a small group of specific individuals—let alone to an entire polity—is in fact open to question. For a critical discussion, see Iseult Honohan, "Metaphors of Solidarity," in *Political Language and Metaphor: Interpreting and Changing the World*, eds. Terrell Carver and Jernej Pikalo (New York: Routledge, 2008), 75-77; and Heather Devere, "Introduction. The Resurrection of Political Friendship: Making Connections," in *Varieties of Friendship: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Social Relationships*, eds. Bernadette Descharnes, Eric Anton Heuser, Caroline Krüger, and Thomas Loy (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2011), 17-39.

³⁹⁴ Andrew Norris, "Carl Schmitt on Friends, Enemies and the Political," *Telos* 112 (Summer 1998), 74-76, 78-81. On the connection between mortality and meaning in Schmitt, Norris writes: "Just as the individual becomes the person he truly is by transcending his physical life in his solidarity with the community, so too the discrete relations and commitments of his individual life take on their true meaning when they form a whole. Only death confronts life as a whole" (87).

³⁹⁵ E. Jünger to C. Schmitt, 14 October 1930, in *Ernst Jünger—Carl Schmitt. Briefe, 1930-1983*, ed. Helmuth Kiesel (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1999), 7. Jünger was still enthusiastic as late as 1995, when he expressed a preference for Schmitt's friend-foe distinction over Weber's more sober idea of politics as a vocation because the former was "more radical and touched the essence of the political." See Antonio Gnoli and Franco Volpi, eds., *Die Kommenden Titanen. Gespräche*, trans. Peter Weiß (Vienna and Leipzig: Karolinger, 2002), 88.

³⁹⁶ Though he does not make the connection to Schmitt, Thomas Nevin aptly summarizes the Schmittian dimension in Jünger's early political journalism, including Jünger's belief that violent conflict between peoples is

“fine instinct for friends and enemies” necessary in a time when conventional boundaries like class or party no longer supplied reliable clues. The “unerring criterion” demarcating a new national community, he proclaimed, was the “warmth of the heart” that opposed the “icy cold” of liberalism and mechanistic science.³⁹⁷ Ironically, the warrior Jünger says little about the figure of the enemy—even his war writings do not dwell on the foe lurking across no man’s land.³⁹⁸ In contrast to Schmitt, Jünger spills more ink thinking through the relation of friend. Jünger also blurs the line between public and private (a boundary Schmitt was at pains to police), imagining political identity on the basis of personal friendships of the sort he had known with “Charles Benoit.” But the crucial element for both Jünger and Schmitt is the idea of friendship as a shared commitment to something that transcends the individual. Like Schmitt, Jünger was concerned more with the abstract form of this commitment than with its specific content, calling vaguely for “common feeling (*Anteilnahme*), enthusiasm, and a readiness to sacrifice” in the crusade against “cold” egoism and intellection.³⁹⁹

Jünger’s embrace of Schmitt’s friend-foe distinction can also be traced to their shared belief that a meaningful life is one grounded in deep collective convictions. In a 1929 review of Georges Bernanos’s *L’imposture* (1927), Jünger lamented how the breakdown of religious communities had impoverished human relations. With the “destruction of belief,” Jünger argued, the responsibility to “ultimate questions” felt by every serious person had grown more “awkward and vexing,” since this responsibility “now circles around itself, and the questions it tirelessly poses break at the narrow walls of the individual.” The result was isolation, for without the “echo of a highest conviction” heard in common, the boundaries of the self become a prison. A collective “realm of values,” Jünger concluded, was needed

for the social world, whose uniqueness (*letzter Kontrast*) has to be embedded at a level deeper than material things. This holds too for each individual, who is unsettled by the question of the meaning of his existence. All of this belongs to interconnection, to *religio*—he who is in need of more solid and lasting valuations... must share in this, whatever he calls it.⁴⁰⁰

Though Schmitt, a trained jurist, developed the point with greater sophistication, Jünger shared his intuition that a defined legal order or social contract cannot sustain a people as a

always latent and that “peace is conditioned by values one may have to defend by every means.” See Nevin, 88-89. As Jünger put it, with the outbreak of war, “[o]ne suddenly felt oneself joined to the whole... The fatherland, which through glittering displays had threatened to become an official matter, was now a question of life or death that directly seized every person.” See “Der Krieg als äusseres Erlebnis,” *Die Standarte*, 27 September 1925, 86-88.

³⁹⁷ E. Jünger, “Zum Geleit,” *Der Vormarsch*, October 1927, in *Politische Publizistik*, 370. Note that here the emotionally “armored” Jünger flips the charge of “coldness” onto his opponents. It is possible that this piece was indirectly influenced by Schmitt. *Concept of the Political* was published in late 1927, but the text was first delivered as a series of lectures at the Berlin Hochschule für Politik in May 1927. Jünger, immersed in Weimar’s political debates, may have heard of Schmitt’s work at this time.

³⁹⁸ Nevin puts it well in remarking that Jünger “never hated the enemy nor tried to think low of him. He always sought to kill him and expected no less in return, but there was no animus in the attempt” (49). Cf. Schmitt’s definition of political enmity as independent of animosity toward the “morally evil” or “aesthetically ugly.” See *Concept of the Political*, 26-27.

³⁹⁹ “Zum Geleit,” 371.

⁴⁰⁰ E. Jünger, “Die Heilige im Automobil,” *Der Tag*, 14 April 1929, in *Politische Publizistik*, 473-479. Italics mine.

political unity.⁴⁰¹ “To the extent we dissolve our ties into juridical relationships,” Jünger wrote in the 1929 version of *The Adventurous Heart*, “we cut ourselves off from the communities in which we can come decisively to our own aid.”⁴⁰² In a 1937 letter to Alfred Kubin, Jünger characterized this condition as a “relationless contemporaneity—the listless isolation of individuals, who act side by side as though in a row of jail cells.”⁴⁰³

Jünger’s ideal of friendship circa 1930 thus combined a project of elite-led cultural renewal with an impulse to sort the world into friends and foes based on some collective interest or value. But how did Jünger’s actual friendships compare to this ideal? Not coincidentally, Jünger’s relationship with Schmitt is a telling case. Though rocky at times, their friendship appears to have been extraordinarily close, lasting from 1930, when they were introduced through the philosopher Hugo Fischer,⁴⁰⁴ until Schmitt’s death in 1985. Asked in 1995 to name the person with whom he had “felt most in harmony” in the interwar years, Jünger answered: “Carl Schmitt. There can be no doubt about that... We were true friends, and from the moment we first met, we were nearly always in contact.”⁴⁰⁵ It is significant that Jünger, in his October 1930 letter praising *The Concept of the Political*, inducted Schmitt into his imagined circle of elite readers and writers—a circle Jünger already defined, as we’ve seen, in terms of friendship. How quickly their relationship blossomed is indicated by the fact that, when Jünger’s second son was born in 1934, Schmitt stood godfather at the christening.⁴⁰⁶ For his part, Schmitt remarked of Jünger late in life that “[o]ne doesn’t get near him easily. He has his aura. But he is a genuine friend.”⁴⁰⁷ Schmitt is also supposed to have mentioned Jünger on his deathbed, calling him a “trustworthy friend.”⁴⁰⁸

Scholars have never known quite what to make of this friendship. Schmitt’s first biographer, Joseph Bendersky, suggested their relationship “was based on a mutual fascination with each other’s intellect. Jünger was ecstatic over Schmitt’s friend-enemy

⁴⁰¹ Schmitt’s critique of the “legal positivism” of theorists like Hans Kelsen is well known. According to Schmitt, no body of law can avoid grey areas that require sovereign acts of interpretation. The decision in this “state of exception” reveals the true locus of authority and the essential identity of a political community, dividing it (if only implicitly) into “friends” and “foes.” See, for instance, Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 46-47.

⁴⁰² E. Jünger, *Das abenteuerliche Herz* (1929), 129.

⁴⁰³ E. Jünger to A. Kubin, 7 January 1937, in *Ernst Jünger—Alfred Kubin. Eine Begegnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1975), 41. Jünger praised Kubin and the poet Georg Trakl for their ability to portray this “loss of harmony.”

⁴⁰⁴ It seems admiration from afar preceded their first encounter. In an undated letter from late 1929 or early 1930, Fischer wrote to Jünger of Schmitt’s high praise: “You have made a personal conquest! Between us, he [Schmitt] wants you for the Goethe Prize and similar things. . .” Fischer also conceded that Jünger’s prior (and presumably positive) sense of Schmitt “lies in the right direction.” Schmitt learned of Jünger’s address through Fischer and reached out first, writing in mid-July 1930 with an invitation to visit him in his Berlin flat. Their first meeting took place a few weeks later, and a regular flow of books, commentary, and mutual esteem soon followed. See Hugo Fischer to Ernst Jünger, undated, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM; C. Schmitt to E. Jünger, 14 July 1930, and E. Jünger to C. Schmitt, 2 August 1930, in *Ernst Jünger—Carl Schmitt*, 5-6. Born in July 1888, Schmitt was nearly seven years older than Jünger (b. 1895). The temptation to see this as another ‘big brother’ friendship of the sort Jünger was drawn to as an adolescent should probably be resisted: Jünger was thirty-five and a successful writer at the time they first met, and thus hardly an impressionable youth.

⁴⁰⁵ Gnoli and Volpi, *Die Kommenden Titanen*, 51.

⁴⁰⁶ Jünger’s decision in 1932 to relocate to the Steglitz borough in Berlin was likely influenced by the fact that Schmitt lived nearby. See Kiesel (2007), 320.

⁴⁰⁷ Ernst Hüsmert, “Die letzten Jahre von Carl Schmitt,” in *Schmittiana* 1, ed. Piet Tommissen (Brussels: Economische Hogeschool Sint-Aloysius, 1988), 54.

⁴⁰⁸ See Helmuth Kiesel’s afterword to their correspondence, p. 881.

concept and Schmitt found many of Jünger's writings significant because they were manifestations of major transitions taking place in German society and political thought."⁴⁰⁹ Another biographer described them as "two intellectually opposed men who could none the less see in each other's projects interesting perspectives on the historical moment. Jünger seemed to Schmitt different... because there seemed to be something authentically radical and modern about his political vision."⁴¹⁰ Other commentators have found the dissimilarities more vexing. Paul Noack, for one, declared that any talk of a friendship between Jünger and Schmitt is based on "a giant misunderstanding... Judged from their intellectual approach and personal history... they could not have been more distinct."⁴¹¹ Martin Tielke also noted the fundamental differences—Jünger was a "visual person" in search of cosmic meanings and mythic insights, whereas Schmitt was "coolly analytical" and thought in terms of "concrete historical situations"—but insisted that this is what makes the intensity of their friendship "surprising and in need of explanation."⁴¹² For Armin Mohler, on the other hand, this tension was emblematic of a tradition of "male friendship" stretching back to Goethe and Schiller. As Mohler put it, such friendships always involve two intellectually independent "giants" in an "alliance" of affinity and convenience against a common foe—in Jünger and Schmitt's case, against liberalism.⁴¹³

To be sure, Jünger and Schmitt sized up a similar opponent. One of the most revealing parallels was their respective critiques of romanticism. Jünger's rejection of romantic escapism agreed on the whole with Schmitt's dismissal of the feckless "subjective occasionalism" of 19th-century romantics like Novalis and Adam Müller.⁴¹⁴ Indeed, Schmitt was skeptical of any creed that conceived of political society on the basis of subjective experiences, a skepticism echoed in what we have seen was Jünger's driving need throughout the 1920s to connect his private consciousness with that of a larger community.⁴¹⁵ Jünger and Schmitt also shared similar impulses, including a stress on collective identity—what Jünger called "communities in essential things"—and an attraction to the supposed

⁴⁰⁹ Joseph Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 136.

⁴¹⁰ Balakrishnan, *The Enemy*, 133.

⁴¹¹ Paul Noack, "Die Asymmetrie des Symmetrischen. Die Beziehung von Ernst Jünger und Carl Schmitt," in *Vernandschaften*, eds. G. Figal and G. Knapp (Tübingen: Attempto, 2003), 145-146. According to Noack, what originally linked Jünger (a WWI veteran and resolute anti-Nazi) and Schmitt (a civilian who joined the NSDAP in 1933) was primarily shared revulsion at the status quo. But after 1945 their different temperaments—Jünger's hunger for "adventure" and Schmitt's petite-bourgeois longing for security—drove them "gradually so far apart that finally they could only wave to one another, always remembering common enemies" (155).

⁴¹² Martin Tielke, *Der Stille Bürgerkrieg. Ernst Jünger und Carl Schmitt im dritten Reich* (Berlin: Landt, 2007), 10-11.

⁴¹³ Armin Mohler, "Carl Schmitt und Ernst Jünger," *Crítica* 128 (November/December 1991), 297-298. My thanks to Elliot Neaman for bringing this essay to my attention.

⁴¹⁴ "Political romanticism," as Schmitt defined it, involved: 1) invoking the past—the Middle Ages or ancient Greece, for example—as a way to imaginatively negate an undesirable present; 2) using political events as "the occasion for subjective creativity," rather than pursuing the "active alteration of the real world." For Schmitt, this flight into the past and into the "productivity of the creative ego" was no threat to the bourgeois order. See his *Political Romanticism*, trans. Guy Oakes (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986), 159-162. First published 1919.

⁴¹⁵ As John McCormick argues, Schmitt saw the stress on privacy and subjectivity—evident in liberalism, capitalism, and romanticism—as "residue[s] of the inward perspective of Protestantism" that amounted to a "passive retreat from the social world." See "Political Theory and Political Theology: The Second Wave of Carl Schmitt in English," *Political Theory* 26 (December 1998), 832. "An emotion that does not transcend the limits of the subjective," Schmitt wrote in *Political Romanticism*, "cannot be the foundation of a community" (161).

revelatory power of crisis and existential struggle.⁴¹⁶ But at least from Jünger's perspective, their friendship was rooted in something more than resistance to the pernicious effects of individualism. Crucially, Jünger characterized this as a capacity for astonishment. "The endearing thing about Carl Schmitt," he wrote in 1939,

is that, even though he has more than fifty years behind him, he can still be astonished. Most people beginning very early in life only absorb a new fact insofar as it stands in relation to their system or even just their interests. Absent is the delight in the appearance and its multiplicity *an sich*—the Eros, with which the spirit receives like a grain the new impression.⁴¹⁷

Another way to say this is that, according to Jünger, Schmitt had an ability to see things afresh, unbiased by conventional judgments. In a December 1933 letter, Jünger praised Schmitt's work for the standard it provided in the wake of the collapse of the liberal-bourgeois order. "In an essentially amoral world," Jünger wrote, "the discrimination between friend and foe represents a foundational procedure (*Grundverfahren*), with which a shifting succession of concrete conditions can be tackled and dealt with."⁴¹⁸

Circle of the Noble

A brief glimpse at two other life-long friendships Jünger established in these years can help flesh out the friend-ideal he extolled in works like *The Adventurous Heart*. The first was with Friedrich Hielscher (b. 1902), a theorist of religion who would found his own neopagan-pantheistic "free church" in 1933. The two met in early 1927, after the obscure Hielscher published an essay in the nationalist-revolutionary paper *Arminius*, where, as we have seen, Jünger was an increasingly frustrated collaborator. Significantly, their initial contact was unmediated: at the urging of the socialist-turned-nationalist politician August Winnig, Hielscher reached out to the famous author of *Storm of Steel* and was invited to call on Jünger in his home.⁴¹⁹ What led Jünger to take interest in an unknown writer can be gleaned from Hielscher's three-page salvo, which proclaimed the demise of the existing order and insisted that any new birth required "hauling up out of the depth of one's own

⁴¹⁶ In sociological terms, Jünger and Schmitt both conceived of political community in terms of *ethnos* (where membership is based on participation in the specific characteristics that define a culture vis-à-vis other cultures) rather than *demos* (where membership is based on the acceptance of norms and regulations open to everyone). On this distinction in 20th-century radical conservatism, see Göran Dahl, *Radical Conservatism and the Future of Politics* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1999), 91-94. Of course, important differences remained between the two thinkers. Jünger was more concerned than Schmitt with conventional conservative themes such as elitism, the modern degeneration of culture, and nostalgia for lost "organic" communities. After 1945, Jünger also entertained visions of a "world state," an idea Schmitt equated with the loss of "the political." See Balakrishnan, 6; Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 55-57.

⁴¹⁷ E. Jünger, *Strahlungen I*, 17 July 1939, 59.

⁴¹⁸ E. Jünger to C. Schmitt, 13 December 1933, in *Ernst Jünger—Carl Schmitt*, 18-19. That Jünger too strove for dispassionate judgment in a world where established values and ideals had been discredited was clear from his 1934 essay *On Pain*. One's ability to withstand physical pain, Jünger argued, provided a remaining standard, "an elevated point of surveillance" in an age "without binding norms." See *On Pain*, trans. David C. Durst (Candor, NY: Telos, 2008), 2.

⁴¹⁹ Friedrich Hielscher, *Fünfzig Jahre unter Deutschen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1954), 111.

heart the confidence, the faith that [can] support the German future.”⁴²⁰ Jünger quickly recognized in Hielscher’s belief that a new nationalism required an inward turn and a faith-like authority a project cut from the same cloth as his own. Within a few months, he declared Hielscher an “ally” and pronounced him a member of “the circle of the noble.”⁴²¹ Over the next several years, Jünger’s dealings with Hielscher would be intense; as Jünger remarked decades later, the charismatic Hielscher simply “stood out clearly from one’s run-of-the-mill encounters.” In fact, much of the profusion of religious language in Jünger’s works after 1927 is likely traceable this friendship.⁴²² It may have been with Hielscher in mind that Jünger wrote in the 1929 edition of *The Adventurous Heart* that the “comradeship” of those who sense the “divine spark” is “the only thing worth striving for.”⁴²³

From the early 1930s onward, however, the friendship cooled, as Jünger and Hielscher each became aware of the gulf between their respective projects. Hereafter it would be, as Peter Bahn aptly put it, a “friendship at a distance.” Jünger took no interest in Hielscher’s so-called “free church,” and the latter’s penchant for dogmatism left him cold. When Hielscher died in 1990, Jünger only learned of the fact months later.⁴²⁴ But Jünger remained fascinated throughout his life by Hielscher’s personality. In an ambivalent 1939 portrait penned following a visit from Hielscher, Jünger praised his friend’s “theological capacity” and his “incorruptible sense for spiritual rank,” but also noted the manias produced by Hielscher’s combination of an “alert intelligence” with an “odd, in places nearly ludicrous” character.⁴²⁵ “[I]n this age so lacking in original powers,” Jünger wrote in 1943, Hielscher was “one of the friends (*Bekannten*), about whom I’ve thought the most and yet have least come to judgment.”⁴²⁶ But in at least one way, Jünger’s later relationship with Hielscher was emblematic of his practice of friendship more generally. Responding in 1934 to Hielscher’s characterization of his relations to people as akin to those of an “orchid gardener”—a cultivator, that is, of rare and beautiful specimens—Jünger conceded the analogy. “What’s important to me above all,” he wrote, “is knowledge of the daemon of man, and each of my close friends (*näheren Bekannten*) possesses a deepest spot, which I absolutely respect and which is the precondition for the friendship (*Bekanntschaft*).”⁴²⁷

Another good example of a lasting friendship Jünger made in these years is his relationship with Hugo Fischer (b. 1897). The two met in 1925 at the University of Leipzig, where Fischer, a veteran of the Somme and a rising star in the German philosophical firmament, was completing a *Habilitationsschrift* on “Hegel’s Method in its Biographical Necessity.” Fischer belonged, together with the radical conservative social theorist Hans Freyer, to the “Leipzig school” pioneered by psychologist Wilhelm Wundt and historian

⁴²⁰ F. Hielscher, “Innerlichkeit und Staatskunst,” *Arminius*, 28 December 1926, quoted in Peter Bahn, “Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Hielscher: Eine Freundschaft auf Distanz,” *Les Carnet Ernst Jünger* 6 (2001), 132.

⁴²¹ E. Jünger to F. Hielscher, 28 April 1927, in *Ernst Jünger—Friedrich Hielscher*, 43.

⁴²² See Stefan Breuer and Ina Schmidt, “Der Literat und der Theokrat: Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Hielscher,” in *Verwandtschaften. Jünger-Studien*, Vol. 2, eds. Günter Figal and Georg Knapp (2003), 100, 104, 112, 114.

⁴²³ Jünger, *AH1*, 156. In his memoir, Hielscher described the difference between himself and Jünger as akin to, among other things, that between the mystical and the magical. See *Fünfzig Jahre unter Deutschen*, 112, 115.

⁴²⁴ Breuer and Schmidt, 106, 114; Schwilk, 308.

⁴²⁵ Jünger, *Strahlungen I*, 9 August 1939, 62-63.

⁴²⁶ Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 16 October 1943, 170-175.

⁴²⁷ E. Jünger to F. Hielscher, 11 November 1934, in *Ernst Jünger—Friedrich Hielscher*, 143-144. “Daemon,” meaning a vitalist creative principle at work in the life of (exceptional) individuals, is a term of art in German culture that was popularized by Goethe. See Angus Nicholls, *Goethe’s Concept of the Daemonic: After the Ancients* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006).

Karl Lamprecht, who theorized national psyches at work in the movements of culture and society.⁴²⁸ Fischer described his project as the search for a “value-constructive philosophy”—a philosophical system, that is, able to overcome the crises of the present by reorienting the whole gamut of human endeavor.⁴²⁹ In a 1928 letter to the vitalist philosopher Ludwig Klages, Fischer inveighed against the capitalist bourgeoisie’s desolation of man and nature, and melodramatically proclaimed that he would “want to live not an hour longer” if unable fulfill the demand he placed on himself for a “truly creative philosophy.”⁴³⁰ Writing to Jünger a few months later, Fischer made plain his hunger for a radical break. “[W]e are still moving in the same dull, dreary circle,” he moaned. “[A]fter every revival we land again in the same old monotony... The Russians have at least broken the circle, they have acted.”⁴³¹ After 1930, this fascination with the Soviet experiment would lead Fischer and Jünger into the orbit of the “National Bolshevist” thinker Ernst Niekisch. Bohemian insurgents like Fischer and Jünger, however, were interested less in a serious appropriation of Marxism-Leninism than in a search for new—and maximally radical—postures of opposition to the Weimar status quo. Hostile to actual party politics, Fischer was known for walking the streets of Leipzig in slippers and a bathrobe, immersed in thought.⁴³²

Jünger was attracted to Fischer’s intellect from the start. At their first meeting, Fischer introduced him to the works of J. G. Hamann, a figure Jünger later ranked with Schopenhauer and Rimbaud as one of the three great “stimulators” of his own imagination. According to Armin Mohler, it was Fischer who shook Jünger out of his earlier “soldierly nationalism” and spurred him to a larger view of the plight of technological civilization.⁴³³ Above all, Jünger admired Fischer’s skills as a teacher and a conversationalist able to open up new insights. In a 1956 letter, Jünger called him “a powerful brain-masseuse.” It was only half in jest that Jünger bestowed on Fischer the title “Magister” (master teacher) as a tribute to his embodiment of the otherworldliness of the “German professor.”⁴³⁴ The following portrait is from Jünger’s account of a 1935 trip to Norway, which he took with Fischer.

The master lives in a constant spiritual training, in an unbroken meditation, in which I gladly take part. The originality and merits of his thinking... lie chiefly in the intuitive, almost clairvoyant and often lightning-quick determination. His conversation reminds me of Ossian’s panoramas; after walking for a long time

⁴²⁸ Reinhard Blomert, “Lehre im Kränzchen: Die Tradition der Leipziger Schule und ein neues Institut,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19 January 1994; Schwilk, 272; Muller, *The Other God That Failed*, 34-40. On Fischer’s association with Freyer’s Institute of Sociology and the influential conservative revolutionary journal *Die Tat*, see Muller, 149-150.

⁴²⁹ See H. Fischer to L. Klages, 16 May 1927, A: Klages, DLAM. In an enclosed programmatic statement entitled “Die Richtung einer Wertaufbauenden Philosophie,” Fischer presented as a model the philosophy of Hegel, who had responded to “the new historical experience of his age” by taking into view the entire social, political, moral, and spiritual life of the German nation.

⁴³⁰ H. Fischer to L. Klages, 13 February 1928, A: Klages, DLAM. To Fischer’s credit, he made clear his rejection of “anti-Semitic race-babble.”

⁴³¹ H. Fischer to E. Jünger, 26 November 1928, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁴³² See Neaman, 41-42; Schwilk, 272. Jünger later claimed that Niekisch “truly embodied an ethos of resistance.” *Die kommenden Titanen*, 39.

⁴³³ Kiesel (2007), 146; Neaman, 84.

⁴³⁴ *Die kommenden Titanen*, 46-47.

through swirling fog, one suddenly beholds the entrance to caves, basalts, and distant isles in the sea.⁴³⁵

Reading Jünger's correspondence with Fischer, one is struck by the oft-stated longing to get away—to Mediterranean islands, the Harz mountains, the Baltic coast—to hike and talk together. As late as 1973, Jünger expressed the desire to find time for one last “peripatetic conversation.”⁴³⁶ In a different context, Fischer called such engrossing conversations “a human experience and enrichment” amidst otherwise “lackluster society.”⁴³⁷

As we will see again later, there is a sensuous quality to conversation among friends that shines through in Jünger's letters. For the purposes of the present chapter, this sensuousness can help us see how, for interwar radical conservatives like Jünger, male bonding in the “idealist” mode was established less through ideological agreement or indiscriminating comradeship than through the thrill of dialogue and debate among a select group joined by shared values and enthusiasms. Jünger's regard for conversation was already evident in a 1920 letter, in which he remarked on the pleasures of talk during the Great War's “endless night watches.” “I actually believe,” Jünger wrote

that our greatest achievement lies in conversation; unfortunately, unlike literature or painting, it leaves no monument behind. At every moment, the entirety of the elements of an age are penetrated to their finest grains in countless conversations... The world's substance is in a way plucked and processed in the lightest and most airy fashion.⁴³⁸

One anecdote that shows how quickly Jünger could warm to those who shared his fascinations was provided by the entomologist Hans Georg Amsel, who encountered Jünger at a soirée in March 1928. Amsel tried repeatedly to lure Jünger into conversation, but the latter's manner remained “curt and soldierly.” Asked if he had interests beyond his work as a writer, Jünger responded evasively. Only after much pestering did Jünger, a gifted amateur entomologist, admit his passion for insect collecting, upon which Amsel confessed his own identity as a lepidopterist. According to Amsel, the “conversation started to flow” and a decades-long friendship was begun.⁴³⁹

It bears repeating that doctrinal conformity is *not* the hallmark of such “idealist” friendships. In the history of modern politics, there is a divide between, on the one hand,

⁴³⁵ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 29 July 1935, in *Myrdun. Briefe aus Norwegen* (Munich: DTV, 1980), 28. Jünger goes on to compare Fischer to Hamann himself in terms of “the hidden character of the metaphysical man, which nonetheless illuminates at decisive points.” In a gloss on this passage, Bernhard Gajek observed: “Jünger describes here a manner of representation that he himself cultivates: the alogical, subliminal anchoring of thought. Hamann also characterized his style in this way—as a ‘confluence of ideas and perceptions,’ which allows sentences to become ‘a multitude of tiny islands.’” See his “Magister—Nigromontan—Schwarzenberg. Ernst Jünger und Hugo Fischer,” *Revue de littérature comparée* 4 (1997), 491.

⁴³⁶ E. Jünger to H. Fischer, 30 October 1973, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁴³⁷ H. Fischer to E. Jünger, 8 July 1967, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁴³⁸ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 4 March 1920, in *Die Schleife. Dokumente zum Weg Ernst Jünger* (Bad Vilbel: Antaios, 2001), 86-87.

⁴³⁹ Hans Georg Amsel, *Begegnungen mit Ernst Jünger, Erinnerungen anlässlich seines 88. Geburtstages am 29. März 1983* (Waldbrunn bei Karlsruhe: Selbstverlag H. G. Amsel, 1983), DLAM. As Helmuth Kiesel describes Jünger in the 1920s: “In social interaction Jünger appears to have been more reserved and buttoned-up than outgoing and talkative, but precisely for this reason also interesting.” *Ernst Jünger*, 321.

those persons for whom ideology outweighed friendship, and, on the other, people eager to preserve friendships despite political disagreement. The difference is illustrated by the extreme cases of Ayn Rand and Hannah Arendt. Whereas Rand demanded sycophantic acceptance of her ideas and was quick to deny friendship to the noncompliant,⁴⁴⁰ Arendt praised a form of political friendship based on pluralism, civil debate, and shared responsibility for the public realm—a journeyman’s willingness to do “a piece of the road together,” as Mary McCarthy described it.⁴⁴¹ Though lacking Arendt’s republican and pluralist instincts, Jünger inclined toward a similar, if highly elitist, view of friendship as the space of endless argument. “[T]he successful conversation,” he declared in the abovementioned 1920 letter, “presupposes a minor deviation within a more fundamental accord... [T]hat difference illuminates things best which corresponds to the distance between two sets of eyes.”⁴⁴² This point is important because, unlike the charismatic search for disciples that marked his published works from this time, Jünger’s private life shows the willingness to listen and engage in dialogue that is the hallmark of true I-Thou relationships. The same is true of other intellectuals on the interwar radical right. The circle around the French fascist Robert Brasillach again provides a revealing comparison. The friendships Brasillach formed in the early 1930s with other members of the French “young right” arose out of heated café conversations in which it became clear that, despite “points of disagreement,” they shared a sense of mission: as a “select group of like-minded young writers... [they] would reverse the tide of national decline and put their distinctive stamp on the age.”⁴⁴³

A useful way to think about these idealist friendships can be found in Edith Wharton’s description of her relationship with Henry James. “Perhaps it was our common sense of fun that first brought about our understanding,” Wharton wrote. “The real marriage of true minds is for any two people to possess a sense of humor or irony pitched in exactly the same key, so that their joint glances at any subject cross like interarching search-lights.”⁴⁴⁴ Jünger’s relationship to “adventurous” spirits like Carl Schmitt or Hugo Fischer needs to be understood at a similar level—not that of formal ideas, but of deep intuitions and sensibilities pitched in the same key.

The recognition of such kinship, Luca Crescenzi has perceptively noted, is often accompanied in Jünger’s works by a feeling of surprise. It is surprising, because the discovery of others with whom we “have something essential in common” is at the same time a self-discovery, a confrontation with one’s inner nature. It is startling, too, because with the

⁴⁴⁰ See Jennifer Burns’ account of Rand’s relationships in *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. 5, 130-132, 136, 185-188, 239-244. As we have seen, Stefan George also subordinated friendship to ideology. Another example from a similar point on the ideological spectrum is the late nineteenth-century conservative cultural critic Julius Langbehn, who accepted as friends only “exclusive lovers and dumb disciples.” See Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 106-107.

⁴⁴¹ See Arendt’s essay “On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing,” in *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1968), 3-31. We will have more to say about Arendt’s notion of political friendship in chapter 4. McCarthy’s comments is from a December 16, 1968, letter to Arendt. See *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949-1975*, ed. Carol Brightman (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1995), 225.

⁴⁴² See note 177. A good example of Jünger’s lack of dogmatism is his 1926 essay “Der Nationalismus der Tat,” in which he argues that what matters is recognizing other nationalists from the “heart,” and not whether one comes from the Marxist camp or the Prussian Army. *Politischer Publizistik*, 256.

⁴⁴³ Mazgaj, *Imagining Fascism*, 70-71.

⁴⁴⁴ Quoted in Wayne Booth, “The Empire of Irony,” in *The Essential Wayne Booth*, 111-112.

recognition of kinship an otherwise foreign world “suddenly shows an opening... and this opening is the place where the self, so to speak, feels at home.”⁴⁴⁵ Dirges about the loss of human connection—the alleged effect of the cash nexus or the rootlessness of urban-industrial society—are a consistent theme of interwar critiques of modernity, and not just on the radical right. As Peter Fritzsche observed of Germany after World War One, “the crucial questions... did not turn on a formal choice between republicanism or monarchism but rather on the quality of social relations that made up the nation.”⁴⁴⁶ Ernst Jünger’s relationships and writings from the later Weimar years show us how specific friendships among unique individuals—not generic comradeship—could function as a means of de-alienation and an imaginative starting point for revolutionizing the whole of society.

Conclusion

Which comes first, the friend or the enemy? Scholars have tended to a view of interwar radical conservatives as driven by the rhetorical construction of enemies. Historians of fascism especially have stressed their subject’s need for a diabolical foe—understood variously as internal or external, biological-racial or cultural-historical—to whip up passions and mobilize supporters.⁴⁴⁷ No doubt this is true in a great many instances. But the example of Ernst Jünger suggests that the friend-enemy imagination needs to be thought through more carefully on a case-by-case basis, and that friendship, if still an embattled position, could be more important than enmity. Friendship could be the primary term not because it was logically or temporally prior to enmity, but because the friend was closer, the one known and loved, whereas the enemy, whether by processes of self-selection and elective affinity or simply the accident of birth, was often more distant—a fleeting encounter, a poster image, a fairytale.⁴⁴⁸ To be sure, the enemy for Jünger is clear: it is the outdated “bourgeois” spirit—materialism, commercialism, the faith in “progress,” the preference for security and predictability, in short, all that is dull and unadventurous—together with the vulgar pleasures and herd instincts he associated with a democratic age. But the concrete friend who negates this abstract *Zeitgeist* is where his heart is; those who feel and imagine as he does are the ones Jünger really wants to think about.⁴⁴⁹

This would remain the case for the remainder of Jünger’s very long life. The next two chapters will examine how this model of idealist friendship, with its stress on mutual understanding and countercultural communication, influenced the radical conservative imagination in two distinct periods of German history: the Third Reich, during which non-

⁴⁴⁵ Luca Crescenzi, “Die Welt in Auswahl: Verwandtschaften bei Ernst Jünger,” in *Jünger-Studien*, Band 2, eds. G. Figal & G. Knapp (2003), 22, 25-26.

⁴⁴⁶ Peter Fritzsche, “Did Weimar Fail?” *The Journal of Modern History* 68 (September 1996), 630.

⁴⁴⁷ See, for instance, Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 37.

⁴⁴⁸ To be sure, distance did not necessarily diminish hatred. As will be discussed in the next chapter, psychological distance—removing someone from the circle of possible friendship—could be a precondition for persecution.

⁴⁴⁹ Jünger’s experience under the Third Reich would leave him explicitly critical of the construction of an enemy “other.” As he wrote in a 1951 essay: “At the sight of all large fraternal gatherings, the question must be asked: And where is the enemy? For such large fusions are at the same time exclusions—exclusions of a despised third party, who is nonetheless indispensable. Propaganda relies on a situation in which the state enemy, the class enemy, the enemy of the people has been thoroughly beaten down and made almost ridiculous, yet not altogether eliminated.” *The Forest Passage*, trans. Thomas Frieze (Candor, NY: Telos, 2013), 6.

Nazi conservatives undertook acts of opposition or escaped into the so-called “inner emigration,” and postwar West Germany, in whose cultural life old and new members of the radical right played an ambiguous—and often controversial—role. Unchanged in essentials but expressed differently as different circumstances demanded, this idea of friendship would largely shed its revolutionary aspirations and become a matter of passive “spiritual resistance.”

Chapter 4

Little Colonies: Friendship and the Inner Emigration, 1933-1945

In a fashionable Berlin restaurant, some time in the spring 1939, two officers rising from their table took leave from each other with a loud *Auf Wiedersehen*. From a nearby table a dashing S.S. leader also rose, approached the officers, clicked his heels and said: "I should like you to remember, gentleman, that the true German salute is *Heil Hitler*." A pin could have been heard drop when, with every guest and waiter listening, one of the officers screwed his monocle into his eye and replied: "In this country it is customary to say *Auf Wiedersehen* when wishing to see a friend again. I should like to see my comrade again; so I said *Auf Wiedersehen*. But as for you, Sir, I hope never to see you again. Therefore, I beg to take leave of you with a *Heil Hitler*." Saying which he turned on his heel and left the restaurant.

– Heinrich Fraenkel⁴⁵⁰

Shortly before fleeing Nazi Germany in 1939, the journalist Sebastian Haffner wrote of his struggle to preserve his dignity against a regime that demanded the renunciation of friends, lovers, beliefs, habits, and tastes. "[M]aybe hundreds of thousands of such duels," he suggested, "in which an individual tries to defend his integrity and his personal honor against a formidably hostile state, have been fought in Germany during the last six years." Faced with such trials, he recalled the allure of a passage from Stendhal about the need "to hold oneself holy and pure." As Haffner interpreted it, this meant "[t]urn away—retreat into the smallest corner if you have to, if you can only keep it free of the polluted air, so that you can save undamaged the only thing worth saving... your soul." The problem with retreat, however, was that sooner or later one confronted an "event that could not be blocked out by earplugs; maybe the arrest of a close acquaintance or something like that. No childhood reminiscences can shield one from that."⁴⁵¹

In hindsight, Haffner was thankful that his attempt to seclude himself in "the four walls of one's private life" quickly came to naught. Within months of the Nazi seizure of power, he found his "circle of friends" ripped apart, as some embraced the new political reality, while others started down the road that would lead to exile. Haffner was wrong, however, that everyone experienced this ordeal "in total isolation." If life under dictatorship could strain friendship, friends could also be an invaluable source of trust and

⁴⁵⁰ Heinrich Fraenkel, *The German People Versus Hitler* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1940), 205.

⁴⁵¹ Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*, trans. Oliver Pretzel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 3-4, 205, 207.

communication, especially for those who shared Haffner's "determination not to yield."⁴⁵² The theologians Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Eberhard Bethge, whose friendship blossomed through the active resistance that led to Bonhoeffer's execution, are a telling case. In a 1943 letter from Tegel Prison, Bonhoeffer described the intimacy that had developed between them under Nazi rule: "That's the advantage of having spent almost every day and having experienced almost every event and discussed every thought together for eight years. One needs only a second to know about each other."⁴⁵³

My contention in what follows is that Ernst Jünger offers a no less revealing example of the powerful ties of friendship and resistance. This is most clearly true of Jünger's stint in the "inner emigration." The term refers to those writers and intellectuals who opposed Nazism, not by exile or conspiracy, but by refusing to allow the regime's language and fixations to be echoed in their work—if they did not clearly say "no," they at least withheld saying "yes."⁴⁵⁴ In a series of travelogues and nature writings, Jünger retreated into ostensibly apolitical domains, exploring Rhodes, the Norwegian coast, and the Brazilian Amazon. Other works investigated the private inner worlds of dreams, intoxication, and childhood memory. Jünger withdrew in more literal ways too. In December 1933 he abandoned Berlin for the provinces, settling first in Goslar in the Harz, and after 1936 in Überlingen on Lake Constance. But like Sebastian Haffner, Jünger proved unwilling to don the blinders demanded by total escape into the private domain. Many of his works from these years—notably *On the Marble Cliffs* (1939), a mythic representation of Germany's descent into barbarism, and the five-volume *Radiations*, his diaries of the Second World War, published collectively in 1949—bear witness to the unfolding catastrophe, even if they do so in an aestheticized language that kept him out of the hangman's noose. Though sufficiently encoded to elude the censors, these works dramatized inner refusal and celebrated a different order of values—messages, as Jünger saw it, to rally the spiritual elite needed for a post-National Socialist future.

Less well known is that Jünger remained in a comparable position after the Second World War, that of a guru to self-styled "outsiders" who agreed with his assessment that postwar Germany remained a nihilistic and quasi-totalitarian society divorced from transcendent values. Dubbed the "hermit from Wilflingen" for his postwar retreat into Swabian village life,⁴⁵⁵ Jünger's stance, as one observer put it, "became that of a lonely prophet clinging to his post in hopeless times."⁴⁵⁶ In truth, however, Jünger fled neither the world nor human fellowship. He traveled widely, maintained a voluminous correspondence, and played host to a stream of friends, admirers, journalists, and dignitaries.⁴⁵⁷ Our task in the next two chapters is to understand friendship's role in Jünger's evolving project of

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 4-6, 198-200, 206-218

⁴⁵³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Eberhard Bethge, 26 November 1943, in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, trans. Reginald Fuller, et al. (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 145. For the most detailed account of this relationship, see John de Gruchy, *Daring, Trusting Spirit: Bonhoeffer's Friend Eberhard Bethge* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

⁴⁵⁴ On the origins of the term "inner emigration," which came into widespread use after 1945 as part of the apologetics of writers who remained in Nazi Germany, see Stephen Brockmann, "Inner Emigration: The Term and Its Origins in Postwar Debates," in *Flight of Fantasy: New Perspectives on Inner Emigration in German Literature*, eds. Neil Donahue and Doris Kirchner (New York: Berghahn, 2003), 11-26.

⁴⁵⁵ See Neaman, 48, 81.

⁴⁵⁶ Jay Julian Rosellini, *Literary Skinheads? Writing from the Right in Reunified Germany* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2000), 33

⁴⁵⁷ See Kiesel (2007), 590-597.

“spiritual resistance.” As we shall see, a pathos of nonconformism and shared countercultural opposition best explains the bonds and affinities joining Jünger’s circle. It is on this emotional plane, deep below his actual ideas, that Jünger’s appeal to friends and popularity with readers is to be found. I present Jünger as a case study in what friendship could mean to those seeking to resist the twentieth century’s repressive political regimes and “totalitarian” cultural institutions.

Friendship and Totalitarianism

Friendship’s importance to forms of nonconformism and resistance in the face of totalitarian regimes has been poorly understood. Yet friendship is almost by definition crucial to efforts to resist those totalitarian dictatorships which, as Hannah Arendt recognized, use “terror as a means to establish a desert of neighborlessness and loneliness,” whose atomized inhabitants they then seek to mold according to supposed laws of nature or history.⁴⁵⁸ Societies that are to be remade, Arendt saw clearly, have to first be made malleable by demolishing existing ties. Given the nature of totalitarianism, virtually any *unsanctioned* bond—loyalty to social outcasts, solidarity among the persecuted, friendships preserved despite political risks—created independent spaces and issued in acts of passive resistance. For the same reasons, forms of active resistance, too, nearly always had networks of friendship at their heart. In order to understand the nexus of friendship and resistance in Ernst Jünger’s life and works under the Third Reich, we need an initial glimpse at how friendship has functioned in opposition to totalitarian rule.

The best-known example of friendship and resistance to the total state is undoubtedly that retreat into private life whose hazards were recorded by Sebastian Haffner. Disgust with a sham public sphere can imbue the private sphere with greater significance as the place where “real” life is lived. The private existence typically associated with liberal society, Paul Betts has argued, ironically assumes “its most political power and personal value under authoritarian regimes.”⁴⁵⁹ As Heda Kovály recalled of life in Stalinist Czechoslovakia, one’s thoughts “became divided into public and private compartments... During the day, people put in their hours at work and fulfilling their party obligations; then they went home, removed their masks, and began to live for a few hours.”⁴⁶⁰ Günter Gaus coined the term “niche society” to describe this schizophrenic existence. The niche, Gaus wrote in reference to East Germany of the early 1970s, is

the preferred place in which people leave everything—politicians, planners, propagandists, the collective, the great goal, the cultural heritage—behind... and spend time among family and friends watering the flowers, washing the car, playing cards, talking, having parties. And thinking about how, and with whose help, they

⁴⁵⁸ Hannah Arendt, “On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding,” in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954* (New York: Schocken, 1994), 348-349.

⁴⁵⁹ Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3.

⁴⁶⁰ Heda Margolius Kovály, *Under A Cruel Star: A Life in Prague, 1941-1968*, trans. Franci and Helen Epstein (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1997), 165-166.

can find and organize what's lacking, so that the niche becomes even more livable.⁴⁶¹

The difficulty with retreat into one's "niche," however, is that such autonomous spaces remained constantly endangered.⁴⁶² Totalitarianism blurs the boundary between public and private, politicizing ostensibly private domains like recreation, cultural tastes, and choice of companions. As Haffner bluntly observed, one could hardly look away when friends were arrested or forced into exile.

Another example of friendship's importance to resistance efforts arises from totalitarianism's destruction of civil society. As newspapers, churches, clubs, professional organizations, trade unions, and other means of communication and association were brought into line—forcibly "coordinated" (*gleichgeschaltet*), to use the Nazi term—prior personal relationships became the default site of collaborative resistance. Jürgen Wittenstein, a survivor of the White Rose group in Munich, expressed this well in remarking that there was never any formal opposition that one might find out about and "join." Rather, one's association with resistance groups inevitably came "via personal contact and friendship... We were simply a group of close-knit friends who... were committed to similar ideals."⁴⁶³ The Kreisau Circle around Peter Yorck von Wartenburg and Helmuth von Moltke was similarly based on "a loosely connected network of friends, rather than an actual association with a set membership."⁴⁶⁴ The same was true of the links between Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the jurist Hans von Dohnányi, and others in the circle around Hans Oster in the Military Intelligence Office, which was behind the abortive "Generals' Plot" of 1938. Oster especially was crucial in forging cooperation among resisters in different agencies and departments, where bureaucratic rivalries reigned. In the words of one historian, "Oster inspired loyalty and friendship that were keys to most of his efforts."⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶¹ Quoted in Christoph Kleßmann and Georg Wagner, eds., *Das gespaltene Land. Leben in Deutschland 1945-1990* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1993), 41-42. The historian Sheila Fitzpatrick, who conducted archival research in Moscow in 1966, explained friendship's importance in such a "niche society." "You made only a few friends," Fitzpatrick recalled, "as the Soviets themselves did: too wide a circle was seen as dangerous and promiscuity in friendship strongly discouraged. But the friends you had were friends for real, like family... offering unlimited practical as well as spiritual support. The warmth of Russian friendship was a source of perpetual wonder to us, something beyond our experience as well as our expectations." See "A Spy in the Archives," *London Review of Books* 32, no. 23 (2 December 2010). For a recent criticism of the "niche society" framework which focuses on integration and participation in the regime, see Esther von Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses: Control, Compromise, and Participation in the GDR* (New York: Berghahn, 2009), 14-15, 96-97.

⁴⁶² Another problem with the "niche society" is that it often functioned as a safety valve, a place to release frustrations or find what was missing in public life, and thus arguably shored up the regime. See Jonathan Grix, "Recasting Civil Society in East Germany," in *The New Germany in the East: Policy Agendas and Social Developments since Unification*, eds., Chris Flockton, Eva Kolinsky, and Rosalind Pritchard (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 270-271.

⁴⁶³ George Wittenstein, "The White Rose: A Commitment," in *Confront: Resistance in Nazi Germany*, ed. John Michalczyk (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 193. Remarkably, Wittenstein was also simultaneously a member of a second resistance group, the *Freiheitsaktion Bayern* (Bavarian Freedom Campaign), without ever telling either group about the existence of the other.

⁴⁶⁴ Rachel Freudenburg, et al., "'You see it too Simply.' Freya von Moltke Looks Back on the Kreisau Circle," in *Confront*, 131. In a 2002 interview, Helmuth von Moltke's widow, Freya, stressed the importance of friendship based on trust and shared ideals to the Circle's opposition to Nazism: "We really wanted to change Germany and for that you needed to have many friends, of course" (135).

⁴⁶⁵ Paul Bookbinder, "The Nazis Must Go, The Tyrant Must Die—1938," in *Confront*, 87-88. An excellent account of the complex web of relationships connecting members of the anti-Nazi resistance is provided by Sabine Damm, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Resistance*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 104-107.

The converse was also true: if existing bonds of friendship could be mobilized in the service of resistance, efforts to resist could create a spirit of friendship. Numerous studies have shown that totalitarian rule depends on the participation of ordinary people. As Robert Gellately demonstrated, the supposedly all-seeing Gestapo was in fact chronically undermanned, relying heavily on the voluntary denunciations of neighbors and colleagues for the initiation of cases. This unofficial cooperation, rather than direct surveillance, was what allowed the Nazi police state to peer into the private realm and eliminate spaces of nonconformity.⁴⁶⁶ But this also meant that the choice to keep confidences in an environment where criticism of the regime was illegal could be a powerful weapon against totalitarian rule.⁴⁶⁷ Unsurprisingly, the habit of relying on others established strong ties of loyalty. It is striking how often anti-Nazi resisters spoke of their activities as a discovery of friendly solidarity. For the Italian antifascist Ada Gobetti, the resistance meant a return to “friendship—a bond of solidarity, founded not on a community of blood, country, or intellectual tradition, but on a simple human relationship, the feeling of being at one with many.”⁴⁶⁸ Members of the French resistance likewise described their clandestine community in terms of “a mystique of solidarity and camaraderie.” Simone de Beauvoir’s resistance novel *The Blood of Others* (1945) concluded with the death of a young woman shot while participating in the French underground. No longer “alone,” she dies feeling “she existed for something, for someone. The whole earth was a fraternal presence.”⁴⁶⁹

A related connection between friendship and resistance can be found in the small gestures that refused Nazism’s infiltration of personal relationships—saying “Auf Wiedersehen” rather than “Heil Hitler!” when taking leave of a friend, for instance. Maintaining cordial relations toward social outcasts was perhaps the most important act of defiance available to ordinary people on a daily basis. Its significance can be measured by the fact that the Nazis’ implementation of anti-Semitic policies depended on their ability to isolate Jews socially. Though not explicitly criminalized, what the Nazis termed “friendly behavior toward Jews” (*Judenfreundliches Verhalten*)—a “catch-all accusation,” as Gellately explains, for those suspected of violating “the letter or spirit of Nazi anti-Semitism”—was highly risky and could involve as little as having just economic dealings with Jews.⁴⁷⁰ The pain of denying everyday courtesies was enormous. One victim recalled that “[n]eighbors who formerly came to your house, and were neighborly and friendly, all of a sudden

“One thing,” Dramm writes, “cannot be too highly estimated when we are considering the civilian groups of regime opponents. That is the importance of family background and youthful and undergraduate friendships, a feeling of being able to rely on relationships that had grown up over the years.” Moltke, Bonhoeffer, and other resisters like Adam von Trott, she adds, “had to a particular degree a special gift for friendship” (104, 107).

⁴⁶⁶ See Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). As Gellately writes: “It is clear that denunciations from the population were crucial to the functioning of the Gestapo” (135). For other cases of denunciation under totalitarianism, see Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, eds. *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁴⁶⁷ On the climate of fear created by denunciations, see William S. Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945*, rev. ed. (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984), ch. 12. “Given the atmosphere of terror,” Allen writes, “even people who were friends felt that they must betray each other in order to survive” (189).

⁴⁶⁸ Ada Gobetti, *Diario partigiano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 15. Quoted in Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 203.

⁴⁶⁹ James D. Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 49-50.

⁴⁷⁰ See Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*, ch. 6.

refrained from even saying hello to you. They acted as if they didn't know you. I can't say that they were really trying to do something to you, but they were afraid that if they would show you any kind of friendliness that they would have a problem."⁴⁷¹

Despite his conversion to Protestantism, the Jewish-born philologist Victor Klemperer faced similar ostracism. One former friend, the historian Johannes Kühn, broke off contact in 1935 and started writing "Nordic-Germanic" propaganda, only to approach Klemperer after the Nazi defeat a decade later and "greet him as if they had last seen one another only the previous week."⁴⁷² But Klemperer's diaries of the Nazi years also make plain how crucial small gestures of friendship from "Aryans" were to his ability to carry on.⁴⁷³ Other forms of "friendship toward Jews," however, tipped over into overt resistance. The most significant act was doubtless transporting or hiding Jews threatened with deportation. Here, too, existing networks came into play, as the persecuted scrambled to find help from relatives by marriage, friends of friends, friends of relatives, and others along a chain of vouched-for reliability.⁴⁷⁴

Friendships among the persecuted themselves could be just as important to survival. Mally Dienemann, a rabbi's wife, recalled how "[t]hose who remained behind, whose circle got increasingly smaller, closed ranks all the more tightly. Friendship once again became the essence of life."⁴⁷⁵ Similar dynamics brought together those who ran afoul of communist regimes. For Heda Kovály, forced to eke out a marginal existence after her husband was arrested as part of the 1952 Slansky show trials, the "only bright side of our life at that time was that it forged such extraordinary human relationships, friendships of a kind that are rarely possible among free, untroubled people."⁴⁷⁶ As Hannah Arendt pointed out, the strength and intensity of such relationships derives from the "pariah" status of the friends. Mutual compassion among the abused and exploited, she observed, "can breed a kindness and sheer goodness of which human beings are otherwise scarcely capable."⁴⁷⁷ But as Arendt also stressed, the warmth of pariah friendship is born of shared oppression; like military

⁴⁷¹ See the testimony of Josef Stone in *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany*, eds. Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 35-36. Children too were affected. As one Jewish woman remembered of growing up in Nazi Germany: "It didn't take long until one got used to not being allowed to be together with other Germans... I was lonely, and until today... it is hard for me to make friends." See Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 67-68.

⁴⁷² Martin Chalmers, Preface to Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1933-1941*, trans. Martin Chalmers (New York: Random House, 1998), xvii-xviii. In his entry for September 14, 1936, Klemperer wrote of "our terrible abandonment by all friends." On June 20, 1939, he recorded: "Absolute silence on the part of all relatives and friends. Absolute isolation." (190, 302). Another poignant story of abandonment was told by Heda Kovály, who escaped from a Nazi concentration camp in early 1945 and return home to occupied Prague, only to find doors slammed in her face as she searched her old friends for one "whose humanity would prove greater than his fear." See *Under A Cruel Star*, 26-35.

⁴⁷³ The help provided Klemperer and his wife, Martin Chalmers rightly notes, is hard to square with Daniel Goldhagen's claim in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996) that ordinary Germans harbored a deep "eliminationist" hatred of Jews. See Chalmer's Preface, xv-xvi. A snapshot of the kind of support Klemperer received can be found in his *The Language of the Third Reich*, trans. Martin Brady (London: Continuum, 2006), 87-90.

⁴⁷⁴ See Deborah Dwork, "Lamed-Vovniks of Twentieth-Century Europe: Participants in Jewish Child Rescue," *Resistance Against the Third Reich: 1933-1990*, eds. Michael Geyer and John Boyer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 98-99, 113.

⁴⁷⁵ Gellately and Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany*, 68.

⁴⁷⁶ Kovály, *Under A Cruel Star*, 118.

⁴⁷⁷ Hannah Arendt, "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing," in *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 13-16.

comradeship, whose ephemeral feeling of union is dependent on the proximity of danger, the “humanity of the insulted and injured has never yet survived the hour of liberation by so much as a minute.”⁴⁷⁸

A final link between friendship and opposition relates to the platitude that “all politics is local.” One version of this is the way the impossibility of imagining someone as a friend marks them as an ideological enemy. For the Prussian aristocrat Ferdinand Reck-Malleczewen, who perished in Dachau in February 1945, it was a sign of the bottomless rottenness of the Nazis that there was “[n]ot a whole-bodied man in the lot... Not one whom a man might call ‘friend.’” Writing in April 1939, he measured the Nazis’ contemptibility against the nobility of his friend Max Mohr, a fellow writer who shared Reck-Malleczewen’s disdain for mass society. In an image popular among conservative opponents of Nazism (including, as we have seen, Ernst Jünger), Reck-Malleczewen proclaimed that figures like Mohr belonged to an isolated elite—a “little band,” as he put it, “as yet without a flag, as yet everywhere scattered.”⁴⁷⁹ Upton Sinclair expressed the matter similarly in his popular WWII novel *A World to Win* (1946): “You couldn’t be friends with a Nazi,” Sinclair’s protagonist discovers of a former friend turned fascist, since “a Nazi was the enemy of every non-Nazi in the world.”⁴⁸⁰

Another way in which politics becomes local arises from our tendency only to grasp a larger policy or process when it affects those close to you. The Nazi program to sterilize carriers of hereditary illness, Richard Bessel observed, “had at least tacit support from public opinion. It was only when people found members of their own families, friends and colleagues affected by it that they became concerned.”⁴⁸¹ A more sinister statement of this principle was voiced by SS leader Heinrich Himmler in his infamous “Posen Speech” of October 4, 1943, in which he spoke of the need for hardness in the task of murdering the Jewish people. To talk of “exterminating the Jews,” Himmler noted, was a “small matter” and easily agreed to. But once undertaken, he scoffed, “then along they all come, all the 80 million upright Germans, and each one has his decent Jew. They say: all others are swine, but here is a first-class Jew.”⁴⁸² These lines, delivered at a secret meeting of SS officials, show that even Nazi Party members felt the urge to oppose the enactment of anti-Semitic measures when friends and acquaintances—their own “decent” Jews—were harmed. Himmler’s words also make plain why the success of Nazi policies depended on severing Jewish-Gentile friendships. “A major challenge of political anti-Semitism,” Dennis Showalter

⁴⁷⁸ For a recent account of this kind of friendship, see Caroline Moorehead, *A Train in Winter: An Extraordinary Story of Women, Friendship, and Resistance in Occupied France* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011). Though Moorehead doesn’t mention Arendt, her story of the mutual dependence of 230 women sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau as political prisoners in January 1943 makes clear the “pariah” nature of their relationship: “Knowing that the fate of each depended on the others,” Moorehead writes, “all individual egotism seemed to vanish and... stripped back to the bare edge of survival, each rose to behaviour few would have believed themselves capable of. ‘We didn’t stop to ask ourselves whom we liked and whom we didn’t,’ [one inmate] would later say. ‘It wasn’t so much friendship as solidarity. We just made certain we didn’t leave anyone alone’” (213). Of course, the concentration camps could also bring out opposite qualities like betrayal and indifference to the suffering of others born of the need for self-preservation.

⁴⁷⁹ Ferdinand Percyval Reck-Malleczewen, *Diary of a Man in Despair*, trans. Paul Rubens (New York: Collier, 1972), 78-80.

⁴⁸⁰ Upton Sinclair, *A World To Win* (New York: Viking, 1946), 181.

⁴⁸¹ Richard Bessel, *Life in the Third Reich* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 86-87.

⁴⁸² Quoted in Joachim Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich: Portraits of the Nazi Leadership* (New York: Da Capo, 1999), 115.

has argued, “involves overcoming the images of the ‘Jew next door’—the living, breathing acquaintance or associate whose simple existence appears to deny the validity of that negative stereotype, the ‘mythological Jew.’”⁴⁸³

We need to keep this overview of the potential links between friendship and resistance in mind as we consider Ernst Jünger’s position during the Nazi years. Jünger, it must be said upfront, never participated in any *active* resistance to Nazism, despite being close to those who were, including, most famously, members of the failed July 20, 1944, attempt on Hitler’s life. Assassinations, Jünger had concluded by the late 1930s, were counterproductive, tending rather to “strengthen the regimes against which they are directed.”⁴⁸⁴ But if Jünger shied away from outright resistance, his actions and writings from the inner emigration included many, by no means insignificant, forms of nonconformity and noncompliance. For Jünger, no longer enchanted with the prospect of violent transformation, friendship would now be crucial to subtler forms of opposition to the times.

Total Demobilization?

The years 1933 and 1934 mark a fundamental shift in Ernst Jünger’s career. The speed with which the Nazis took control of the institutions of state and society following Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor in January 1933, and the violent murder of their opponents in the so-called “Night of the Long Knives” (from June 30 to July 2, 1934), brought Jünger’s political radicalism to a swift end. Writing in August 1933 to his brother, Friedrich Georg, Jünger described the Nazis’ persecution of his friend, the writer Arnolt Bronnen, and advised that “now as before I hold the greatest reservation to be the right course. One also has to move about differently; sometimes it seems to me that a thousand years already separate us from the liberal rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*).”⁴⁸⁵ Nazi rule would also force Jünger to rethink his worshipful view of technology. As we’ve seen, Jünger’s late Weimar writings celebrated modern technology’s ability to destroy old forms of life and usher in a heroic new consciousness forged in experiences of danger and speed. Starting in the mid-1930s, however, his project became much the opposite. As Virgil Nemoianu put it, Jünger’s writings now combined “nostalgic traditionalism” with “precise and mostly

⁴⁸³ Dennis E. Showalter, *Little Man, What Now? Der Stürmer in the Weimar Republic* (New York: Archon, 1982), 85. As Zygmunt Bauman concludes in his gloss on Himmler’s speech, the Holocaust was not the primarily the product of “hostility emerging from personal face-to-face relationships... *The Holocaust could be accomplished only on the condition of neutralizing the impact of primeval moral drives, of isolating the machinery of murder from the sphere where such drives arise and apply.*” See his *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), 187-188. [Italics in original.]

⁴⁸⁴ “Ein Bruderschaftstrinken mit dem Tod,” *Der Spiegel* (16 August 1982), 161. Jünger added, however, that if Hitler “had been blown up, that would have saved hundreds of thousands of lives, including my son’s.” (Jünger’s son was killed fighting in Italy in November 1944.) In a 1985 interview, Jünger elaborated on this opposition to assassinations. “I was prompted in the course of studying history,” he declared, “to view assassinations as attempts to change the course of history by means that are inappropriate to it, elementary means. That is why the results of most assassinations are the direct opposite of what the conspirators intended... [An example is] the attempt on Lenin’s life: it led to a huge massacre in the educated circles and did more good than harm to Bolshevism. In fact, I have the impression that when the ruling power begins to get shaky, it welcomes such assassination attempts.” See Hervier, 75. It is worth noting that other anti-Nazi resisters also opposed assassination, often on religious grounds. See Peter Hofmann, *German Resistance to Hitler* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 127ff.

⁴⁸⁵ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 13 August 1933, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

unbiased attention to change” in an effort to document modern destructiveness and transmit aspects of our heritage—sights and sounds, flora and fauna, outmoded ways of seeing the world—threatened by the all-consuming maw of progress.⁴⁸⁶ In a 1942 letter, Jünger described this shift as that from his “Old Testament” to “New Testament” writings.⁴⁸⁷ But as with Scripture, this “New Testament” would be less a wholly new departure than a maturation and a ripening of perspective, further construction from a “foundation” he preferred to leave intact.

Jünger’s “Old Testament” included not only the 1929 edition of *The Adventurous Heart* and his memoirs of the First World War, but also paeans to a coming totalitarian age in essays like “Total Mobilization” (1930) and *The Worker* (1932). These latter works are worth considering because their diagnosis of modernity would remain with Jünger for good, even as he went from embracing to opposing the processes they describe. Both texts describe a vision of the planet’s penetration by mechanization and instrumental rationality—a transformation whose “cosmic significance,” he wrote in 1930, was already visible in the Great War’s “battles of matériel.” Both works speak in the same oracular voice, claiming to discern the “hidden impulses” behind surface phenomena and lay bare the “fine threads” moving history’s “marionettes.”⁴⁸⁸ The shorter of the two works, “Total Mobilization” focused on modern warfare’s “unlimited marshalling of potential energies,” a development which, Jünger declared, made World War One “a historical event superior in significance to the French Revolution.” The telos of this process was its extension into “conditions of peace,” and thus the eradication of “anything that is *not* a function of the state.” The day was coming, he predicted, “when all countries with global aspirations must take up the process, in order to sustain the release of new forms of power.”⁴⁸⁹

The book-length *The Worker* endeavored to supply a philosophical foundation for this conversion of society into an ensemble of industrial labors. Channeling Goethe, Jünger described what he called the *Gestalt* of “the worker.” This figure named not a socio-economic class, but rather an all-encompassing generative form operating behind individual appearances. “In the worker,” he later argued, “the active principle unfolds in the attempt to penetrate and dominate the universe in new ways, to reach proximities and distances which no eye has ever seen, to demand forces never before unleashed.”⁴⁹⁰ In the age of the worker,

⁴⁸⁶ Virgil Nemoianu, *Postmodernism and Cultural Identities: Conflicts and Coexistence* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America press, 2010), 285. According to Nemoianu, Jünger represents something of a guidepost for a “renewed” humanism altogether: “He is an important writer when it comes to the struggles and dilemmas that are now as important to the so-called third world as they used to be to some European areas fifty or a hundred years ago... Jünger’s [mature] writings constantly hark back to the pangs and the demise of the premodern world, and in his writings are recorded angry disorientation, impulsive rejections, an outreach toward stable and traditional wisdoms, [and] agonized doubts about rationalist technology” (289, 292-294, 373n5).

⁴⁸⁷ Schwilk, *Ernst Jünger: Leben und Werk in Bildern und Texten* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), 187; See also Schwilk, *Ernst Jünger* (2007), 443.

⁴⁸⁸ E. Jünger, “Total Mobilization,” trans. Joel Golb and Richard Wolin, in *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1933), 123-124. In a 1963 preface to *The Worker*, Jünger described it similarly as “an attempt to arrive at a standpoint, from which events in their multiplicity and contrariness could be not only understood, but also, though dangerous, welcomed.” Jünger, *Der Arbeiter*, 7.

⁴⁸⁹ “Total Mobilization,” 126-127.

⁴⁹⁰ E. Jünger, *Der Waldgang* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1980), 28. In a 1985 interview, Jünger reflected: “*Gestalt*—this is a word Goethe liked to use; it characterizes the effect behind the things, something all encompassing in any case. Thus I talked about the *Gestalt* of the Worker, not as representative of a class or an estate but, rather,

everyone becomes a laborer in the service of efficiency and discipline. Jünger saw this process exemplified in the changing function of physicians. “The secret” of contemporary medicine, he wrote in 1935,

rests in the fact that at bottom it's not about healing. Its concern is for quite other things, above all for the increase of workplace performance. Our technical world is after all no sanatorium. One also has to bear in mind that the division and socialization of the work process no longer requires the whole person—while on the other hand precisely this is both the object and goal of healing.⁴⁹¹

What Jünger found initially so enthralling about such a worker-world was its promise to return society to a collective will grounded in the “elemental” experience of existential struggle. One could recover the supposed unity of pre-capitalist *Gemeinschaft*, he believed, by amping up to a continuous fever pitch processes of technological reorganization already underway.⁴⁹² This new age of “heroic realism,” as Jünger termed it, would be led by a technocratic elite composed of steely visionaries like himself.

The reality of Nazism's “total mobilization” of German society soon burst these fantasies. Already in September 1932, with the Weimar Republic in its death throes, Jünger could write to his brother predicting “a time will come when one licks all ten fingers for the nineteenth century.”⁴⁹³ Gradually abandoning the search for technology's redemptive face after 1933, Jünger grew increasingly skeptical of (if still clearly fascinated by) modernity's Promethean impulses. But if *The Worker* is Jünger's most totalitarian text, it was incompatible with National Socialism. We need to understand this point in order to grasp the reason for his rejection of Nazism. Whereas the Nazis appealed to Völkish populism and enlisted establishment elites, Jünger had in mind a radical liquidation of the bourgeois-liberal order and a dialectical return to the collective consciousness of archaic societies via the wholesale embrace of industrial forces. However reckless or unsavory, this was not the Nazis' project. Tellingly, Jünger's critics at the time detected a whiff of Bolshevism in *The Worker*, suggesting it better theorized the headlong industrialization of Stalin's Five Year Plans.⁴⁹⁴ It is also important to reiterate that Jünger rejected Nazism's vulgar race theories, which he saw as an expression of nineteenth-century positivism. “[O]n the landscape of the worker,” he wrote,

as a new titan, with creative and destructive effects.” Quoted in Neaman, 43n107. On Jünger's understanding of *Gestalt*, see also Kiesel (2007), 388ff.

⁴⁹¹ E. Jünger, *Myrdun. Briefe aus Norwegen* (Munich: DTV, 1980), 41.

⁴⁹² As Marcus Bullock observed, Jünger's “heroism is no longer lost in the fantasy substitutions and fictions of bourgeois desires, but regained in its concrete realism... [Its aim is] a direct redemption of reality.” The foreignness of Jünger's utopian vision, Bullock argues, stems from the fact that it “posits an entire social order by imagining a different form of experience and a completely different mode of desire for it as the basis of community.” Whereas conventional “utopian writing begins with the fantasy of a place well endowed for human ease,” Jünger imagines a utopia of “work” conceived as collective enthusiasm for heroic undertakings pursued “without any interest in the economic necessity or purpose of those projects.” See his “Flight Forward: The World of Ernst Jünger's Worker,” *Utopian Studies* 23/2 (2012), 458-460, 464.

⁴⁹³ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 24 September 1932, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

⁴⁹⁴ Kiesel (2007), 394-397. In fact, the “National Bolshevik” theorist Ernst Niekisch was one of the few to express enthusiasm at the time for Jünger's *The Worker*. See Gnoli and Volpi, 41-42. Niekisch's original review of the book is reprinted in *Ernst Niekisch. Widerstand*, ed. Uwe Saueremann (Krefeld: Sinus, 1982), 157-164. As Kiesel notes, in his 1958 memoir Niekisch suggested that Jünger's accomplishment was to “recast the spiritual content of... Bolshevism into a German manner of thinking and seeing. Without the Russian Revolution the book would have never been possible” (396).

“race and the biological concept of race don’t play any role—the figure of the worker mobilizes all resources without distinction.” As Jünger later put it, National Socialism “lacked metaphysics.”⁴⁹⁵

A no less important gulf between Jünger’s and Hitler’s respective visions has been identified by Marcus Bullock. Crucially, the difference has nothing to do with a rejection of violence. Like Schopenhauer, who found a dynamic, purposeless “Will” at the heart of existence, Jünger saw conflict-driven cycles of creation and destruction as the essence of reality. What Jünger rejected in Nazism, Bullock contends, was instead its “plebiscitary” character, which foreclosed heightened perception through a propaganda fog of ahistorical mythmaking and phony representations. “The keen eye [Jünger] brings to bear in his own observations,” Bullock argues

breaks through the web of surfaces and enters a different realm of apperceptions. This turns against the fascist form of violence, which must always obliterate anyone committed to clarity of the senses. Plebiscitary power requires that the veil of surfaces, the simple reactions of an immediate and unreflected-upon present that can consolidate a mass, should be woven yet more tightly. Fascist violence is only the way that plebiscitary power is enacted under conditions of panic and the extreme flattening of perception that growing chaos produces.⁴⁹⁶

According to Bullock, Jünger too was intoxicated with violence, but as a revelation of primal realities like sacrifice and struggle which it was pointless to deny. The trouble with fascism was that it pursued violence not “in ecstasy, but rather with a desperate, numbing frenzy” driven by its desire for control and its nihilistic transgression of all limits and taboos. The myths and symbols Nazism used to construct the *Volksgemeinschaft* were likewise inadequate to Jünger’s longing for a community of shared experience, generating only “an inwardly hollow outer solidarity.” In short, Jünger reviled National Socialism because it was the worst expression of Western nihilism, offering sham substitutes that stood in the way of true belonging, true language, or a true vision of reality.⁴⁹⁷

Bullock convincingly shows how Jünger’s lifelong project was the recovery of this real totality of life supposedly destroyed by modernity. Starting under the Third Reich, however, Jünger’s efforts would take a less political, more strictly literary turn, as he experimented with styles and philosophical frameworks that he thought could help recover what had been lost with the loss of tradition. Above all, this meant a community of common values and experiences spanning generations; but it also meant a world in which the artist, by linking individual experience to a collective domain of meaning, could speak in universal terms to the human condition. As Bullock points out, the bogus world of Nazi propaganda convinced Jünger that the advent of mass media had fundamentally transformed culture. From a reservoir of meanings produced through the authority of the artist, culture had become “industrialized entertainment,” a shallow sphere of instantaneous judgments and simple messages delivered by bombarding the senses. No longer stewards of tradition,

⁴⁹⁵ Both quotes are from Neaman, 41-42. As noted in previous chapters, Jünger was briefly attracted to Nazism’s revolutionary posture in the mid-1920s but grew disenchanted by the party’s opportunism and willingness to enter parliamentary politics.

⁴⁹⁶ Bullock, *The Violent Eye*, 10-15.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

contemporary artists had fallen into a downward spiral of successive revolts against authority and tradition as such. On Bullock's account, Jünger's project to overcome this nihilistic condition involved a "series of efforts to construct a basis of 'universality' in his experience." In doing so, Jünger endeavored to rebuild "a connection between the concrete world in which the endless multiplicity of events takes place and some consistent meaning that runs through them and brings them together in the singular representative experience that may be shared as a text." The "return to the physical immediacy of the senses" as a source of generally valid pronouncements, Bullock concludes, was Jünger's characteristic response to the loss of "permanence and continuity in the human domain."⁴⁹⁸

We have already seen how the 1929 edition of Jünger's *The Adventurous Heart* posited the exemplary character of its author's consciousness. By searching his own experiences of adventure, shock, and danger, Jünger believed he could identify the "magic key" to the spiritual mobilization of the nation. A good example of how Jünger modified this approach in the early years of the Nazi regime was his essay "On Pain" (1934). While pain was an "unalterable dimension" of life, he observed, "[m]an's relation to pain changes with every significant shift in fundamental belief."⁴⁹⁹ The bourgeois age had sought to banish pain in an environment of comfort and security; the age of the worker, however, was defined by the acceptance of pain. For Jünger, the great source of this transformation was technology, whose ability to objectify life was summed up by the "insensitive and invulnerable eye" of a camera lens. "The photograph stands outside the zone of sensitivity," he declared. "It records the bullet in mid-flight just as easily as it captures a man at the moment an explosion tears him apart." Jünger's own stance was ambivalent: this new spirit, he wrote, was "indubitably cruel," but it was also "awe inspiring" in its power to subjugate man to the demands of machines. "[W]e find ourselves," he concluded,

in a last and indeed quite remarkable phase of nihilism, characterized by the broad expansion of new social orders with corresponding values as yet to be seen... One grasps how an enormous organizational capacity can exist alongside a complete blindness vis-à-vis values, belief without meaning, discipline without legitimacy... [N]ever before have more advantageous circumstances existed for an incantation... to lend meaning to the not inappreciable virtue of ants.

As these lines show, Jünger was not celebrating this pitiless new world so much as hoping its destructive momentum might still issue in a transvaluation of values he could accept.⁵⁰⁰ In a

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 24-28, 33, 36-40. "What immediately strikes one about Jünger's style in general," Bullock observes, "is the extreme concern with concrete and factual material on the one hand, which includes his scientific work as an entomologist as well as the observation of current events in his journals, together with a pronounced and consistent tendency to interpret these facts as evidence of a dimension of life that is more removed and more totally at variance with a generally accepted image of human reality than occurs in almost any other writer's work... By contrast, Franz Kafka, Bertolt Brecht, Emilio Marinetti, James Joyce, and André Breton, in their own entirely different ways, change literary forms to match distortions in the nature of life in modern society... [But] Jünger shows little interest in beginning with anything that is familiar. Instead he emphasizes the alternative his own construction puts forward in its place as the essential foundation of reality. He affirms an unfamiliar nature" (24-25).

⁴⁹⁹ E. Jünger, *On Pain*, 1-2. In an age when "values can no longer hold their ground," Jünger argued, "pain remains the only measure promising a certainty of insights" (47).

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 30-31, 38-39, 45-46. This misreading is worth highlighting. Jünger's *On Pain* has often been taken to advocate a new social order based on the suppression of emotion and the endurance of pain. It is more

letter to Friedrich Georg, he explained that pain's apparent nihilism made it well-suited to illuminate present conditions. "My basic view," Jünger wrote, "is that the age of [Nietzsche's] last man already belongs to history, but that we still stand in a nihilistic zone. A large part of our tasks must thus be solved by nihilistic means."⁵⁰¹

Jünger finished "On Pain" in early 1934 in the medieval town of Goslar am Harz, where he had taken up residence after leaving Nazi-dominated Berlin a few months earlier. He had good reasons for leaving the capital. His home had been searched by the police in April 1933—ostensibly on account of his correspondence with the anarchist Erich Mühsam, though his association with the National Bolshevik Ernst Niekisch may have played a role too—and he had cause to suspect that Goebbels, who had tried several times to recruit Jünger into the Nazi movement, now deemed him an enemy.⁵⁰² Unlike other conservative revolutionary intellectuals who threw in their lot with Hitler after January 1933—including most famously Gottfried Benn, Carl Schmitt, and Martin Heidegger—Jünger distanced himself from the regime. In November 1933, he declined his election to the Nazified German Academy of Literature. Knowing such an act would arouse suspicions, Jünger carefully (if vaguely) described his refusal as a self-imposed sacrifice necessary to preserve the "soldierly character" of his writings on behalf of "German mobilization."⁵⁰³ And in a June 1934 letter to the Nazi paper *Völkischer Beobachter*, he remonstrated with its editors for publishing an excerpt from *The Adventurous Heart* without proper citation, thus giving the impression that he worked directly for the paper. "This is in no way the case," Jünger explained. "My ambition is not to be named in the press as often as possible, but rather that when it comes to my politics not a trace of ambiguity arises."⁵⁰⁴ Privately, too, he made plain his growing contempt for the Nazi regime. "Since by now I can barely stand to hear the word 'German,'" the arch-nationalist Jünger wrote to his brother in March 1934, "I'm in more need than ever of a trip." He proposed as a destination the sparsely populated Adriatic island of Melada, where "one sees and hears nothing unhealthful (*unzuträglich*)," an aside that suggests Jünger was already suffocating under the omnipresence of Nazi cant.⁵⁰⁵

accurate to say that Jünger accepts these as the unalterable tendencies of the times and searches them for a silver lining. An example of this misreading is Leo Strauss, who writes of Jünger's response to the collapse of political authority: "Jünger asserts that in our period all faiths and ideals of earlier times have lost their force and evidence... But there is one standard left: the ability or inability to stand pain, physical pain." See Leo Strauss, "Living Issues of German Postwar Philosophy," trans. Marcus Brainard *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 128. On Jünger's attitude to this new age of the worker (to which he saw the Nazi revolution belonging), see also his "Untergang oder neue Ordnung?" *Deutsches Volkstum*, May 1933, reprinted in *Politische Publizistik*, 650. It remained to be seen, Jünger equivocated, whether "the great cataclysm, in which we have found ourselves for a while now, will go down in history as a downfall or as the start of a new order, a new ascendancy" (650).

⁵⁰¹ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 11 March 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁰² Kiesel (2007), 409-411. According to Jünger, Goebbels later remarked: "We offered Ernst Jünger golden bridges, but he didn't want to cross them." See Hervier, 72. That Jünger felt threatened can also be inferred from the fact that he later often mentioned how *The Völkischer Beobachter*, in its censure against *The Worker*, had noted that with a book like this Jünger was "advancing into the zone where people are shot in the head." See Jünger's letter to Henri Plard, 24 September 1978, printed in *Der Arbeiter*, 315.

⁵⁰³ Schwilk (1988), 143.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 142. These are only two salient examples of Jünger's resistance to Nazi "coordination." Other instances of his refusal to be involved with Nazified organizations and media organs are described in Kiesel (2007), 414-415.

⁵⁰⁵ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 7 March 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM. Remarkably, the word "German" is scratched out and just barely legible in the typed transcription of this letter held at the German Literary Archive

Helmuth Kiesel has described Jünger's posture in the early months of Nazi rule as "passive and observing." Certainly it would be wrong to say that Jünger took up active resistance. "All manner of people have recently appeared at my door," he wrote to a friend in May 1933, "in order to involve me in one or another opposition circle. Naturally I refuse. Our opposition lies not on this side of current events but rather beyond them."⁵⁰⁶ To say that Jünger was "passive," however, is not enough—if his actions were unheroic and did not immediately help others, he still had to take *active* stands to remain uninvolved in the face of the campaign of violence and intimidation that the Nazis unleashed in the first year of their reign. "Almost every aspect of political, social, and associational life was affected," Richard Evans observed of the Nazi program of "coordination," "at every level from the nation to the village."⁵⁰⁷ It is thus more accurate to say Jünger *acted* deliberately to remove himself from the public and political spheres. His war hero fame and financial independence as a writer doubtless smoothed this process of self-extraction, but it was not without risks. In a 1985 interview, Jünger suggested his letter to the *Völkischer Beobachter* was foolhardy. "I wouldn't do it again today," he confessed. "I made myself fairly vulnerable."⁵⁰⁸

Jünger's withdrawal to the provinces and efforts to avoid being co-opted by the Nazi regime were matched by a similar retreat from topical writing after 1933. A good example is his 1934 essay "In Praise of Vowels," which investigated the expressive and connotative qualities found in the sight and sound of vowels.⁵⁰⁹ Another telling case is the novel *African Games* (1936), a meditation on disillusionment in the form of a fictionalized account of his luckless stint in the French Foreign Legion in 1913. Yet even seemingly political works like "On Pain" bore only a superficial resemblance to the preoccupations of National Socialism. Fearful of a repeat of the hunger and misery that afflicted the German homefront during

in Marbach. This was apparently done by the letter's recipient, Friedrich Georg Jünger. Though it's unclear when the transcription was made, it was probably produced after 1936, when Jünger and his brother began entertaining the idea of eventually publishing their correspondence with one another during the Nazi years, which would prove they had always been opponents of the regime. No such volume was ever produced. Helmuth Kiesel argues that the typed copy was made during the post-1945 occupation, when Ernst Jünger was prohibited from publishing and was at pains to establish his reputation as an anti-Nazi. But the fact that "German" is still crossed out—presumably out of fear of another Gestapo house search—suggests the transcription was drawn up during the Third Reich itself. See Kiesel (2007), 542-543. A more amusing example of Jünger's hostility to Nazi "coordination" can be found in a piece of doggerel he composed in May 1933:

In the Third Reich joy does reign,
As Hitler consolidates everything.
One wonders at times cunningly
Will I escape this destiny?
And how after a year
Will the dark condition appear?

See "Gleichschaltung," *SW* 22, 688.

⁵⁰⁶ E. Jünger to L. Alwens, 12 May 1933, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. Jünger continued: "What's exciting about our situation is that we must greet the events themselves, only for us they're not enough."

⁵⁰⁷ Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 381. As already noted, Sebastian Haffner's memoir *Defying Hitler* provides an excellent account of how even individuals ill-disposed to Nazism found themselves pressured and caught up in the movement's transformation of German society.

⁵⁰⁸ Hervier, 73. It is significant in this context that Jünger welcomed the arrival of a second child in March 1934, and thus had even more reason to not jeopardize his family's well-being.

⁵⁰⁹ See Kiesel (2007), 147. The essay was first published in the anthology *Blätter und Steine* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1934). Jünger described the piece as an attempt, in the wake of *The Worker*, to see "if the More cannot be reached more easily by the deeper powers of wizardry." E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 19 January 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

WWI, the Nazis were more concerned with the pedestrian task of keeping the population contented and well-fed than with maximizing the amount of pain Germans could withstand in the heroic task of total mobilization.⁵¹⁰ It is also important to note that the apparent political content of Jünger's writings from the early 1930s is largely illusory. There is, in fact, a political deficit in Jünger's late Weimar writings that prefigured his more obvious depoliticization after 1933. Works like "Total Mobilization" and *The Worker* reflected a turn toward more fanciful and speculative writing—and away from the kind of journalism serviceable to a political movement—that had already begun with the 1929 edition of *The Adventurous Heart*. As Russell Berman noted, Jünger's cultural criticism from these years "is complex, thoughtful, and often trenchant in ways that distinguish it emphatically from Nazi screeds."⁵¹¹ In other words, Jünger's works were political only in the negative sense of refusing to parrot Nazi language and themes.

One measure of Jünger's success in abruptly changing his public perception as a politically engaged writer is the fact that, despite close surveillance, he was not subjected to a second visit by the Gestapo. An internal police document from 1936 noted approvingly that Jünger no longer offered public readings of his works, and that "in recent years [he] has not made political appearances."⁵¹² This was important after the "Night of the Long Knives," during which the Nazi leadership murdered not just dissidents in the Party, but enemies within the broader conservative establishment. How threatened Jünger felt in the wake of the purge is unclear, though it could hardly have escaped his memory that his reprimand to the *Völkischer Beobachter* making it clear he did not share the paper's politics was sent only two weeks earlier. Jünger's correspondence mentions only that the murders were "more brusque (*brüsker*) than I expected."⁵¹³ In a July 8, 1934, missive to Friedrich Georg, however, he appeared to have drawn conclusions from the massacre.

If one witnesses [these] events with a certain feeling of non-involvement, then only like an actor, who in the first acts is still idle and awaits the cue that will also force him into the action... The duty in which one's own powers lie is that of a test—it will indeed be determined who possesses a stronger spirit (*Dämon*) than that of the nation state... It's whispered among my acquaintances that I've gone down a blind alley, have nothing more to say, repeat myself, in short that I'm used up... I've long since given up hope of being in agreement with them. Therefore the time has come to conduct a strict examination of our friends.

"Martyrs are still or once more possible," Jünger added in reference to the recent killings, but "no longer knights."⁵¹⁴

Three lessons were contained in these lines. First, his fascination with violence notwithstanding, the Nazis' liquidation of their opponents led Jünger to abandon hope that something good might still come of the Nazi takeover; no new heroic age, it was clear, was in the offing. Second, Jünger's aim would now be spiritual resistance—proving one's mettle,

⁵¹⁰ See Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York: Holt, 2006). As Aly writes, the Nazi regime was a "racist-totalitarian welfare state" (2), which endeavored to outsource the task of suffering for the Third Reich to subject peoples.

⁵¹¹ Russell Berman, Preface to *On Pain*, viii.

⁵¹² Reprinted in Schwilk (1988), 149.

⁵¹³ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 3 July 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

⁵¹⁴ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 8 July 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

as he put it—against the totalitarian forces set against him. And finally, in this project of spiritual resistance it was crucial to know who was with you and who was not. Knowing which relationships were worth maintaining and which should be allowed to wither meant knowing who your real friends were. It is to this question of friendship and spiritual resistance in Ernst Jünger's experience in the inner emigration that we now turn.

De concordia in claustris

In the same July 1934 letter in which Jünger discussed the “Night of Long Knives,” he made a revealing endorsement. “I would like to recommend reading the church father Cassian,” he wrote to his brother. “He depicts the discipline of the hermits in the Syrian and Egyptian deserts—there are rules here which even today are still appropriate.” Jünger had procured a seventy-nine volume collection of writings by the church fathers in March 1934 and happened initially on the works of Tertullian. But it was the theologian and “Desert Father” St. John Cassian (c. 360-435) to whom Jünger was most drawn. In another letter a few months later, he again stressed Cassian's timeliness as one whose prescriptions were “after fourteen hundred years becoming modern once again.”⁵¹⁵ Jünger would make hardly any mention of Cassian in his published works. Nevertheless, understanding what he found so *timely* about the works of Desert Fathers like Cassian, who pioneered Christian monastic life in the fourth and fifth centuries, is necessary to understanding the far-flung community of spiritual resisters he sought to foster in the inner emigration.

Jünger's attraction to monastic models has been generally overlooked, despite the centrality of monkish postures to his own self-conception.⁵¹⁶ Already in 1921, as an officer in the peacetime German Army, he had taken to describing himself as a “monk” in a “cell.”⁵¹⁷ Enjoying the relative isolation of Goslar, Jünger wrote in March 1934 that he was living in “strict enclosure,” employing the monastic lingo applied to those who take vows of separation from the outside world.⁵¹⁸ Monasticism's appeal stemmed in part from an awareness of the fruits of ascetic self-discipline. Remarking on his visit to a Brazilian Benedictine cloister in 1936, Jünger wrote of the strong impression he received of “the powers one can develop by living according to old and proven systems. There are indeed athletic schools for the spirit.”⁵¹⁹ His interest in the Desert Fathers in particular was sparked

⁵¹⁵ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 7 March 1934, 3 July 1934, and 3 September 1934 D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

⁵¹⁶ An exception is Martin Konitzer, who finds in Jünger a peculiar mixture of the “monk” and “warrior.” See his *Ernst Jünger* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1993), 36, 89-96. Of course, the warrior-monk is a familiar trope, found, perhaps most famously in our day, in the martial artists of the Buddhist Shaolin Monastery in China.

⁵¹⁷ “I awake early in my cell and read my chapter, as befits the monk. The *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, Gracian's *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* make up my pre-breakfast, alongside the biographies of Tacitus and Suetonius. Then we work for eight hours.” E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 16 March 1921, in *Die Schleiße*, 79.

⁵¹⁸ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 7 March 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM. While completing *The Worker* in Berlin a few years earlier, Jünger similarly described his existence as “cellular.” E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 27 November 1931, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

⁵¹⁹ E. Jünger, *Atlantische Fahrt*, *SW* 6, 28 November 1936. In one of his few published references to Cassian, Jünger notes a similar point from Cassian's prescriptions for the establishment of cloisters: “Until one's own flesh has been vanquished, no one can truly wage battle.” *Strahlungen II*, 4 May 1945, 425. Cf. Nietzsche's critique of the ascetic priest in *The Genealogy of Morals*. In Nietzsche's view, priests are weak people who experience power by shepherding the even weaker.

by a letter from Hugo Fischer and by Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, a dramatization of the visions and struggles of the fabled founder of the eremitic tradition, which Jünger reread around 1933, this time "with fresh eyes."⁵²⁰ Figures like Cassian and Anthony resonated because Jünger saw himself under the Third Reich—and indeed, as we shall see, after 1945 as well—in a similar position of hermitlike retreat from a fallen world.

Early Christian monasticism also supplied Jünger with a powerful model for thinking about alliances and affinities able to weather physical distance and irregular contact—what Cassian, in his *Institutes and Conferences*, called the "unity of spirit rather than of place." Cassian described such spiritual brotherhood in a language of friendship borrowed from classical pagan writers such as Cicero and Sallust. The ideal relationship among monks, he wrote, was friendship based on "similarity of virtue" and shared "renunciation of the world." Like Jünger, whose eulogy to the adventurer Charles Benoit praised an immortal kinship grounded in "indestructible" qualities of spirit, Cassian also denied death any power over friends joined by faith and virtue. It is worth stressing this possibility of distance (even unto death) among spiritual brothers in Cassian's account, since pagan writers tended to think of friendship in terms of physical proximity and regular intercourse. In Cassian, Caroline White observed, the "Classical ideal of a shared life is... pointedly abandoned as unnecessary for those of similar aims and beliefs whose friendship is based on the *caritas Christi* [love of Christ]."⁵²¹ For many early Christian writers, epistolary contact, sustaining friendships built on common faith, became the substitute for a physically shared life. The epistles of St. Jerome (c. 347-420) provide some of the most eloquent testimony to a letter's power to undo physical separation. "Now I talk to your letter, embrace it," Jerome wrote from his desert hermitage to companions in the monastic life, "and it talks to me."⁵²²

We need to quote at length from the revised 1938 edition of the *The Adventurous Heart* in order to see how Jünger drew on this pathos of friendship and distance in the inner emigration. As we saw in the last chapter, the 1929 edition extolled literature's capacity to affirm readers' longings for a more heroic existence. Yet the author-reader relationship as a form of "friendship" was distant and, at least on one side, anonymous. The power of the text was its ability to close this distance by addressing readers directly on the basis of their innermost feelings. The 1938 edition continued this project, describing a quasi-monastic community of dispersed spiritual brothers united by their concern for deeper things.

⁵²⁰ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 19 January 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM. Note that the eremitic tradition established by St. Anthony (c. 251-356) is distinguished from the cenobitic (i.e., communal) monastic tradition developed by St. Pachomius (c. 292-348). Freud too was deeply moved by Flaubert's *Temptations*, writing that "it calls up not only the great problems of knowledge, but the real riddles of life, all the conflicts of feelings and impulses; and it confirms the awareness of our perplexity in the mysteriousness that reigns everywhere." Quoted in Paul Vitz, *Sigmund Freud's Christian Unconscious* (New York: Guilford, 1988), 105.

⁵²¹ Caroline White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 177-178. Quotes from St. John Cassian are from *Conference* 16, which treats of friendship. See <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350816.htm> (accessed February 17, 2014). "For with God," Cassian wrote, "the union of character, not of place, joins brethren together in a common dwelling." On the inability of death to end spiritual friendship, St. Augustine writes: "Only he to whom all are dear in Him who cannot be lost, can lose no one that he loves." *The Confessions*, trans Philip Burton (London: Everyman's, 2001), 73.

⁵²² Quoted in Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350-1250* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 60-61. Another example of Christian friendship's transcendence of physical distance is a verbose letter from Paulinus of Nola to Sulpicius Severus. "[I]n dictating it while I think of you and am wholly in you," Paulinus wrote in the 390s, "I speak to you as present despite the long distance" (68).

Crucially, Jünger begins with a meditation on the inadequacy of language. “The inexpressible,” he wrote,

is degraded when it expresses and makes itself communicable... A dreamer, attempting to catch his dreams in the light of dawn, watches them slip away through the mesh of his thoughts...

Among the things that Nigromontanus taught me was the certain existence among us of a select group of men who have long withdrawn from the libraries and from the dust of the public arena, who are at work in the innermost spaces, in the obscurest of Tibets. He spoke of men who sit alone in nocturnal rooms, immobile as the rock through whose hollows that current flashes, which keeps all the mill-wheels and hordes of machines running in the outside world—but here it is liberated from all purpose and captured by hearts, which, as the hot, trembling cradles of all forces and powers, have withdrawn forever from the outer light...

At work? Where are those cloisters of the holy in which souls have won the treasure of grace in wondrous midnight triumphs, where are the hermits’ towers that rise as monuments to higher companionships? And where has the awareness remained that thoughts and feelings are really immortal, that something like a secret double accounting exists, by which all expenditures rematerialize again as income in some very distant place? My only consoling memory in this regard is connected with moments from the war, when the sudden light of an explosion tore from the darkness the lonely figure of a sentinel who must have long been standing there. From these innumerable, dreadful night watches in the blackness, treasures have been accumulated that will only later be consumed.

Belief in these solitary men springs from a longing for a fraternity without name, for a deeper spiritual relationship than is possible between human beings.⁵²³

It is significant that the vignette from which these lines are taken—entitled “solitary sentinels” in the 1938 edition—already appeared in the first edition and was kept in the second, despite the fact that some two-thirds of the original text was scrapped. Jünger’s main alteration was to put ideas he had first expressed in the first-person into the mouth of the fictional character Nigromontanus, a teacher of esoteric wisdom who would make repeated appearances in his later writings.⁵²⁴ Jünger clearly believed this appeal to the companionship of far-flung hermits had retained its force, changed circumstances and his own changed outlook notwithstanding. This “select group” was still at work, storing up treasures of insight and experience that would rescue modern man from nihilism. As with the first edition, Jünger’s aim was to bring this elite to collective consciousness and instill it with solidarity of purpose in the task of spiritual resistance to the times—to provide, in other words, concord among the cloistered.⁵²⁵

⁵²³ *AH2*, 9-10.

⁵²⁴ For a comparison of the two versions of *The Adventurous Heart*, see Claude David, “Ernst Jünger: Das abenteuerliche Herz,” *Studi Germanici*, 21/22 (1983/84), 239–254. On the figure of Nigromontanus, see Bernhard Gajek, “Magister—Nigromontan—Schwarzenberg. Ernst Jünger und Hugo Fischer,” *Revue de littérature comparée* 4 (1997), 479-500.

⁵²⁵ According to McGuire, *De concordia in claustris*, rather than *De amicitia* (“Of friendship”), would have been a better title for John Cassian’s writings on friendship, which are concerned less with intimate relationships than with a “cool” love able to promote collective harmony. See McGuire, 79-80.

Jünger's claim for the deficiency of language also makes clear why the fraternity he sought could only be approximated in the here and now. Any terrestrial community would necessarily take shape through an imperfect medium unable to fully join one subjectivity to another. "This language that I dream of," Jünger wrote in 1930, "must be intelligible, or utterly unintelligible, to the very last of its letters, as an expression of the supreme isolation (*Abgeschlossenheit*) that alone makes us capable of supreme love."⁵²⁶ Such a language, that is to say, must either bridge this isolation through a transparency and intelligibility far in excess of ordinary language, or it must defy comprehension altogether through a wordless mutual understanding. Both express the metaphysical isolation at the heart of Jünger's thought, an isolation on the basis of which the task of communication first begins and the "highest love" becomes possible. As Bullock observed, Jünger's "longing for a realm of authenticity that could also be a dimension of esoteric relatedness, separate from communicable or exoteric language in the conventional and public transmission of meanings, becomes the driving impulse behind a continuous and complex project from this time on."⁵²⁷

One of the remarkable features of Jünger's works from the 1930s onward is his tenacious reaching out to readers, despite the radical separation among people imposed by the limits of language. This was matched, as we shall see, by an openness to new relationships in his private life. Language became, for Jünger, a flawed but necessary medium whose capacity to say the unsayable he would repeatedly test. There is a proto-postmodern element in this obstinate striving for an impossible community. In *The Unavowable Community* (1983), Maurice Blanchot writes in similar terms of Georges Bataille's conception of literary community as a virtual network of unknown friends. "[T]hat communication which does not avow itself," Blanchot explains, "opens up upon another form of community, when a small group of friends, each one singular, and with no forced relationship between them, form it in secret through the silent reading they share, becoming conscious of the exceptional event they are confronted with." For Bataille, the hidden community of Nietzsche readers offers an example of such a sodality incompatible with public discourse. At most, a code word—the name of a revered text, perhaps—can communicate this secret brotherhood among the initiates, who nonetheless remain "in a solitude lived in common."⁵²⁸ Elsewhere, Blanchot stressed the alterity of friends, whose "common strangeness" and "infinite distance" are the basis on which authentic *relation* becomes possible.⁵²⁹

Jünger's isolation was not due to the poverty of language alone; it was also the self-styling of a born outsider. If the 1929 edition of *The Adventurous Heart* was a militant book, the version Jünger published in 1938 struck a more aloof tone. This is partly because overt cultural criticism was largely replaced, in the second edition, by the intense observation of plants, animals, landscapes, behaviors, books, dreams, and even colors, in which

⁵²⁶ E. Jünger, "Sicilian Letter to the Man in the Moon," in *AH2*, 124.

⁵²⁷ Bullock, 185.

⁵²⁸ Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (Barrytown, New York: Station Hill Press, 1988), 20-24. Cf. Jünger's similar claim that "on matters that touch us to the core... we understand the other in a different and decisive sense, through and beyond the agreement in the words." *AH2*, 4.

⁵²⁹ Maurice Blanchot, *Friendship*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 289-292. It is worth highlighting one difference between Jünger and Blanchot. Dedicated to his friend Bataille, Blanchot's meditation on friendship argues that death destroys the very ground of friendship: "This is because with death all that separates, disappears. What separates: what puts authentically in relation, the very abyss of relations in which lies... the agreement of friendly affirmation that is always maintained" (292). As we saw in chapter three, Jünger held that death heightened intimacy by freeing friends to live on in their ideal essence in memory.

contemporary society receded into the background. Jünger's earlier polemic gives way to a solitary and contemplative voice that embodies what he calls *désinvolture*. The term is difficult to translate, combining detachment with artlessness and an air of "godlike superiority." More a character trait than an affectation, *désinvolture* is the self-assured inner direction that frees one from concern for the judgment of the masses.⁵³⁰ The idea has often been compared with Heidegger's notion of *Gelassenheit* ("letting be").⁵³¹ The comparison is apt insofar as Jünger and Heidegger position their respective ideas against attitudes of calculation and willful domination. But whereas *Gelassenheit* names a meditative openness to the mystery of beings, Jünger describes *désinvolture* as a mode of power. "As the irresistible grace of power," he writes, "*désinvolture* is a particular form of serenity—of course, this word needs rehabilitation, like so many others in our language. Serenity is among the most powerful weapons at man's disposal—he wears it as divine armor, in which he can withstand even the terrors of annihilation."⁵³² Jünger's *désinvolture* confronts what is breathtaking, unsettling, even horrifying with the cool composure which, he believed, sharpens the senses and allows phenomena to appear in their true reality and necessity.

Another posture in the 1938 edition that speaks to Jünger's more aloof tone is that of the "lost position." The phrase is reminiscent of no man's land, but Jünger employs it more generally to comment on the isolation of individuals or communities in the midst of encroaching destruction, against which one can only prepare to die as a "sacral witness" to a better system of values. Like *désinvolture*, the "lost position," in which one comes "face-to-face with annihilation," is enmeshed in a violent world Jünger insists must not be denied or sanitized but rather squarely and deliberately met. In a "lost position," he writes,

a sublime sense of enacting something final and definitive can take hold of man... a feeling whose light is essential to every good portrayal of the Last Supper. A similar mood illuminates life in isolated and doomed regions, in the great plagues as well. The plague chronicles of St. Gallen show its signs—an autumnal mixture of sadness and joy, a feeling of spiritual brotherhood and the symbolic nature of the actions. Not to be forgotten in this connection is also the last gathering of the threatened family, as vile blood-hate inflames the city. Here, deep beneath the surface of social contracts, the power of a man's alliances first becomes apparent to him.

"The representative power of the individual can be tremendous," Jünger adds. "[H]istory provides us with examples of how a single honest witness turned a verdict around, though the millions remained silent."⁵³³ While he never says as much, Jünger evidently saw himself in the inner emigration as just such an "honest witness." *Désinvolture* and the sublime perseverance of the "lost position" were attitudes he deemed indispensable to an unflinching view of the Nazi catastrophe. But it is important to recognize that Jünger was not just

⁵³⁰ Jünger gives as an example the "confident command over princely riches... Men can look without envy at gold when it lies in a noble palm... In our own times, wealth elicits a guilty conscience in men, who then try to justify themselves through virtue. In the midst of their affluence, they do not seek to live like wealthy patrons but rather petty bookkeepers." *AH2*, 67.

⁵³¹ See, for instance, Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit. konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger, und Friedrich Georg Jünger, 1920-1960* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007); and Neaman, 90.

⁵³² *AH2*, 67-68. See also David, 247-248.

⁵³³ *AH2*, 69-71.

bearing witness. He was also instructing readers how to see the world in a similar light.⁵³⁴ Implicit in Jünger's "lost position" is the invitation to join him. Ultimately, this call to a brotherhood of spiritual opposition balances the volume's more obvious solitary notes.⁵³⁵

The oppositional qualities of the 1938 edition of *The Adventurous Heart* can be seen in several ways. The first and most obvious are the array of anti-Nazi symbols and gestures scattered throughout the seventy-one "figures and capriccios" (Jünger's subtitle) that make up the text. These are at times quite faint, as when Jünger observes that red in combination with black is especially "malevolent," or that it is "precisely the bad painter"—that is, the failed art student Hitler—who "unites with the mob" in driving beauty from the world "so that the ugly becomes passable." Other pieces, presumably accounts of dreams, suggest the encroachment of terror into everyday life or appear to advance the bolder thesis that "progress" itself is always already implicated in barbarism. Thus, in a piece titled "In the utility rooms," a nameless narrator stumbles through the back rooms and corridors of an elegant café in search of the toilet, encountering "red velvet" and "black cockroaches" along the way. He finds instead a room in which two patrons are being tortured. Making his way back to the dining hall, he now understands that the guests he had assumed were bored are in fact terrified. Perhaps the most arresting of these dream-like scenes is "Violet Endives," in which an opulent gourmet store where humans are found "hanging on the walls like hares in front of a game butcher's shop" is presented as a benchmark of civilization's advance.⁵³⁶ Such subtle digs were the extent of Jünger's overt anti-Nazi "opposition" in 1938.

Jünger's use of language was also at odds with what Victor Klemperer called *lingua tertii imperii*. The language of the Nazis, Klemperer observed, was monotonous and cliché-ridden, its articulation of human experience limited to what one might expect from a "loud and vociferous rabble-rouser." Made de rigueur in public and private life, Nazi language permeated the population "through single words, idioms, and sentence structures which were imposed on them in a million repetitions and taken on board mechanically and unconsciously."⁵³⁷ Jünger's prose offered deliberate (if generally implicit) resistance to this linguistic uniformity in its effort to convey complex subjective experiences that pointed to an elemental order unrelated to the glorification of a racial community.⁵³⁸ Like Baudelaire's "painter of the passing moment," Jünger sought to capture something timeless in the vivid portrayal of transitory objects and scenes.⁵³⁹ One example, an observation made at the Baltic

⁵³⁴ AH2, 76. Friedrich Georg Jünger praised this aspect of the 1938 edition, remarking of one of its vignettes: "It gives the reader a model of how to use his eye and sets him to thinking, since he has to see that here a wide field has been left for his own observations. The pleasure in such a piece also derives from the recognition it provides that the world, for the spiritual person, always remains *terra incognita*. Such acts of exploration increase one's feeling of freedom." F. G. Jünger to E. Jünger, 25 December 1937, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁵³⁵ Cf. Claude David's argument that while the first edition of *The Adventurous Heart* "tried to court adepts," the second edition is the work "of a loner from the depth of a spiritual desert." David, 247.

⁵³⁶ AH2, 5, 46, 54-55, 81. See also, Bures and Neaman, Introduction to AH2, *xlix-l*. A lengthier reading of the second version of *The Adventurous Heart* in the context of the inner emigration, from which I have drawn here, can be found in Kiesel (2007), 451-458.

⁵³⁷ Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich*, trans. Martin Brady (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 9, 14-20, 39. So thoroughly did Nazi language seep into thoughts and feelings, Klemperer noted, that even the regime's victims "conformed to the same models" (10).

⁵³⁸ Among Jünger's occasional oblique references to Nazi babble is the comment that "in the last years I have increasingly lost my taste for certain words combined with *über*." In another context, he refers more generally to the "complete disintegration" of contemporary language. See AH2, 59, 76.

⁵³⁹ See Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London and New York: Phaidon, 2003), 5, 12.

Sea town of Zinnowitz, will suffice to illustrate Jünger's method. Though a full accounting of Jünger's metaphysics is beyond our purpose here, this passage also suggests the deeper realities he claimed to discern beneath the surface of everyday events.

In the dense brush behind the dunes, in the heart of a lush reed belt, I bagged a lucky image during my usual walk: a large leaf from a trembling aspen, in which a circular hole had been broken through. From the edge of this cut-out, a dark green fringe seemed to hang down, which upon closer observation turned out to be composed of a row of tiny caterpillars that had clasped themselves by their jaws onto the leaf pith. A butterfly's eggs must have recently hatched here, and the young brood had spread like wildfire over their feeding ground.

The unusual element in this sight lay in the painless nature of the destruction that it presented. The fringe gave the impression of consisting of dangling fibers of the leaf itself, which seemed not to have lost any of its substance. It was very evident here how the double accounting of life is reconciled; I had to recall the words of consolation that Condés gave to the weeping Mazarin over the six thousand fallen at the Battle of Freiburg: "Pah, a single night in Paris gives life to more people than this whole campaign has cost."

The attitude of this commander, who sees the change taking place behind the burning, has always struck me as a sign of a healthy life that does not shy away from a bloody incision. It is concentrated, with all the classical conciseness that so irritated Chateaubriand, in *Consumption forte*, strong consumption, a phrase that Napoleon occasionally muttered during battles at those idle moments for him when all reserves were on the march, whilst the front withered under the attacks of cavalry squadrons and the fire of advancing artillery, as under a surf of steel and flame. These are words one hates to miss, sparks of soliloquies from furnaces that glow and tremble, as the spirit is distilled from steaming blood into the essence of a new century.

Underlying this language is a kind of faith in a life that knows no empty spaces. At the sight of its fullness, we are allowed to forget the hidden sign of pain separating the two halves of the equation—as the gnawing work of jaws here separates the caterpillars and the leaf.⁵⁴⁰

It is important that Jünger does not deny the pain involved in such acts of creative destruction. Yet unlike Himmler, whose 1943 Posen Speech proclaimed the need to be "heartless" in securing a triumphant German future, Jünger invokes a theodicy distinct from the Nazi project. He does not so much "aestheticize" suffering as insist that our moral revulsion make way for a vantage point from which destruction can be recognized as a necessary and purposeful element in the totality of life. For Jünger, the truly unsettling violence was found, not in the destruction of lives, but in the conceptual thinking that effaced the particular's wondrous concreteness. "Whoever thinks in concepts and not in images," he declared in 1943, "deals as cruelly with language as someone who only sees social categories and not persons."⁵⁴¹

⁵⁴⁰ AH2, 42-43.

⁵⁴¹ E. Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 7 May 1943, 63. Jünger expressed a similar criticism of abstract thinking in 1930, writing that "[l]anguage has taught us to hold things in too much contempt. Great words are like the

Jünger described his own style as a kind of “stereoscopic” vision, which went beyond commonplace understanding to find a magical or esoteric dimension in the object of perception. “It often appears to us,” he wrote in the 1938 edition,

that the purpose of the depths is to generate the surface, that rainbow-colored skin of the world whose sight so intensely moves us. In other moments, this colorful pattern appears to be composed only of signs and letters by which the depths speak to us of their secrets. Consequently, whether we live within or without, we are gripped by the anguish of one who is always turning away from wonderful riches in whichever direction he goes.⁵⁴²

The crystal, “in which the depths and the surfaces are simultaneously clear to the eye,” is in fact one of the master metaphors for Jünger’s manner of reading the world. “It has always been required of an author,” he added, “that things not appear to him in isolation, not impulsively or randomly—the word is bestowed on him that it may be directed to the one and the all.”⁵⁴³

Jünger’s ambition to reveal things in their hidden relations, their enduring and coherent significance, was at the same time an effort to communicate this perspective to readers similarly appalled by Nazism’s metaphysical emptiness. In a December 1937 letter to the sociologist Alfred Weber discussing the revised edition of *The Adventurous Heart*, Jünger made plain his expectation for “the formation of spiritual councils (*geistiger Gremien*), whose number one can imagine will be small enough. In saying this I don’t mean that the nihilistic zone is already behind us. But it does appear to me that certain forces have overcome the zero point (*Nullpunkt*). We move past it either individually or in small bands.”⁵⁴⁴ Directly confronting the nihilism of contemporary Germany, Jünger believed, was an act of community building (however small and diffuse) and a gathering of spiritual capital for a post-National Socialist, even post-nihilistic, future.

Reading in the Inner Emigration

More famous as a resistance text than the *The Adventurous Heart* is a novel Jünger published a year later called *On the Marble Cliffs*. Set in an unidentifiable time and place, the book depicts the intrusion of terror into a peaceful lakeside community. Despite its surreal,

coordinates that we lay over a map. But is not a simple fistful of earth greater than an entire world that lies on the map?” See “Sicilian Letter to the Man in the Moon,” in *AH2*, 122.

⁵⁴² *AH2*, 3-4.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁵⁴⁴ E. Jünger to A. Weber, 14 December 1937, D: Merkur, DLAM. This letter also contains an illuminating description of Jünger’s style: “A language,” he wrote, “that functions as a medium akin to electricity, doesn’t remain on the contours of things but penetrates into their atoms and thus attains that intellectual (*geistige*) identity with the objects, which we only otherwise manage in dreams.” Weber himself had already claimed to find in Jünger’s writing a “deep transparency,” one that enabled “pronouncements on otherwise inaccessible layers of reality.” A. Weber to E. Jünger, 24 November 1937, D: Merkur, DLAM. Jünger’s view of Nazism as a nihilistic *Nullpunkt* that had to be crossed on the way to a postnihilistic world would become influential in post-1945 German culture. The argument was made at length in his essay *Über die Linie* (Across the Line, 1950). For Jünger’s and Alfred Weber’s contributions to this debate, see Stephen Brockmann, *German Literary Culture at the Zero Hour* (Rochester, NY: Camden, 2004), ch. 7.

at times nightmarish, atmosphere, the story is straightforward. Jünger's protagonist and a companion, "Brother Otho," have resigned from a paramilitary gang called the "Mauretanians" and withdrawn to a garden hermitage (*Rautenklause*) on the marble cliffs overlooking the town, where they devote themselves to botany and quiet contemplation. Their irenic plan is shattered, however, by a despotic intruder, the "Chief Ranger," who overcomes various opponents and eventually destroys the community. Among the Chief Ranger's victims are those tortured at a kind of concentration camp called Köppels-Bleek, where prisoners' heads are displayed on poles as a warning to others. *On the Marble Cliffs* appeared in October 1939, just as Jünger was being conscripted into the Wehrmacht and ordered to the Western Front. The work sold well—twenty thousand copies were printed for the German armed forces alone in 1943—despite (or perhaps because of) the potential parallels with contemporary events.⁵⁴⁵ Jünger always denied that the novel depicted Nazi tyranny per se.⁵⁴⁶ In a 1995 interview, he claimed that "for me the political effect was secondary... [I]f I had taken a political position, I would have been lowered to Hitler's level. I was one of his opponents, but no political opponent. I found myself in a different dimension."⁵⁴⁷ There is no question, however, that many of Jünger's readers saw the book as an attack on National Socialism. A front-page review in the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, for example, painted the novel's allegorical form as a slave-language "arising out of vital necessity, because a thing simply cannot be said otherwise than disguised and encoded."⁵⁴⁸ Jünger later maintained that *Kristallnacht*, the November 1938 Nazi pogrom against the Jews, was "at the source of my conception of *On the Marble Cliffs*. I depicted the situation there—in a mythical fashion, of course, but very precisely, and the people who were aimed at certainly felt aimed at."⁵⁴⁹

It is worth noting that *On the Marble Cliffs* dramatizes the forms of resistance we have already seen in the second edition of *The Adventurous Heart*. These include hermitlike retreat from the world, as well as the monastic fellowship suggested by the hero's relationship with "Brother Otho," whose title, used consistently throughout, is more redolent of spiritual than biological kinship. Though "bound by no vow," Jünger writes, they "lived with a certain austerity and in homely garb." These pseudo-monastics become attached, however, to the real deal in the figure of "Father Lampros," a renowned monk from the local cloister who mentors them in the mystical study of nature. All three are concerned with "things which lie beyond speech," and are accordingly sensitive to forms of sublime communication. Jünger

⁵⁴⁵ Indeed, it is not clear why the Nazis allowed the work to be published at all, especially considering that Jünger had already burned his bridges with the regime's cultural czars. Some evidence points to the possibility that Hitler himself shielded the WWI hero Jünger from persecution. On this issue, see Neaman, 113.

⁵⁴⁶ There is no obvious resemblance between the Chief Ranger and any member of the Nazi leadership. Asked in a 1971 interview if the Chief Ranger was Hitler, Jünger answered: "To tell you the truth, I dreamed of a dictator much more powerful, much more demonic... above all I wanted to express the roots of violence itself." Quoted in Neaman, 109n24.

⁵⁴⁷ Gnoli and Volpi, *Die Kommenden Titanen*, 26. In the same interview series, Jünger added: "...my resistance was spiritual and only inward and no resistance in the true sense of the word" (67).

⁵⁴⁸ Quoted in Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Der konservative Anarchist. Politik und Zeitkritik Ernst Jüngers* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1962), 139. The review ran in the January 8, 1941, edition. The political scientist Dolf Sternberger later described the work as a "signal" in the "dark." "It offered strength and worked as a means of comprehension (*Verständigung*) among those who steeled themselves against the threat or temptation of tyranny." Quoted in Kiesel (2007), 474.

⁵⁴⁹ Hervier, 71. Neaman suggests that parts of *On the Marble Cliffs* may have been inspired by a Nazi labor camp located only six miles from Überlingen, where Jünger began the novel in February 1939.

stages an implicit contrast between this trio's rarefied intercourse and the speech of the Chief Ranger's henchmen, an argot that "drew upon the lowest in all languages and was a compound of blood and scum." As chaos descends, these monkish spirits take up a "lost position" in their decision to "resist with spiritual forces alone."⁵⁵⁰ As Jürgen Kron put it, their garden hermitage is "an exemplary space of the inner emigration," insofar as it offers "a vision of humanistic and fulfilled life" that discredits the violent forces without.⁵⁵¹

On the Marble Cliffs also displays Jünger's knack for addressing the unknown reader as a potential confederate. The novel's opening already initiates readers into the story's perspective: "You all know the wild grief that besets us when we remember times of happiness... Sweeter still becomes the memory of our years by moon and sun when their end has been in the abyss of fear."⁵⁵² For readers in the Third Reich, such lines could be read as nostalgia for better times before the Nazi Revolution. The book's lesson—that destruction cannot touch the immutable order of things, "and that its seeming power moves on the surface of life"—was no less timely to Germans after 1939. Jünger's narrator and his companions resist the Chief Ranger's onslaught by denying his forces any sway over their language, their sense of truth, or their inner peace. Despite the catastrophe around them, they master fear through the knowledge that "the best in us [is] inaccessible to the lower powers."⁵⁵³ One sympathetic reviewer summed up Jünger's aim in *On the Marble Cliffs* as an effort to "portray annihilation and, in the midst of its fire, devise the forms by which one can escape and outlive it."⁵⁵⁴

To publish such a book on the heels of *Kristallnacht* and the German invasion of Poland was, if nothing else, an act of moral courage. But neither *On the Marble Cliffs* nor the second edition of *The Adventurous Heart* are polemics against the Nazi state; still less are they calls to active resistance. Jünger had resolved, by January 1937, to "completely avoid political dialogue."⁵⁵⁵ He chose instead a kind of coded writing, an approach likely indebted to the so-called "secret diary" of Samuel Pepys, which Jünger first read in 1935 and was still rereading as late as March 1944.⁵⁵⁶ His own diaries from the Second World War would develop this practice, bestowing code names on key persons: "Kniébolo" (a play on the word "diablo") for Hitler, "Grandgoschier" for Goebbels, "Don Capisco" for Carl Schmitt, "Cellaris" for Ernst Niekisch, "Perpetua" for his wife Gretha, along with a handful of others. Yet even as guides to "spiritual resistance," works like *On the Marble Cliffs* are problematic. While not on a

⁵⁵⁰ E. Jünger, *On the Marble Cliffs*, trans. Stuart Hood (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1947), 7, 43, 59, 69. "[E]veryone will remember," Jünger's narrator muses, "how his mind has labored in regions which he cannot portray, whether it were in dreams or in deep thought... That is where our best work takes place, and so it seemed... that in our struggle speech was still inadequate, and that we must penetrate into the depths of the dream if we were to withstand the threat against us" (69).

⁵⁵¹ Jürgen Kron, *Seismographie der Moderne. Modernität und Postmodernität in Ernst Jüngers Schriften von In Stahlgewittern bis Eumeswil* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 157.

⁵⁵² *On the Marble Cliffs*, 7. According to Thomas Nevin, Jünger embeds references to Vergil, Dante, and Boethius in these lines. See Nevin, 157-158.

⁵⁵³ *On the Marble Cliffs*, 60-61, 65.

⁵⁵⁴ Gerhard Nebel, "Ernst Jünger und die Anarchie," *Monatsschrift für das deutsche Geistesleben* 11 (November 1939), quoted in Schwarz, *Der konservative Anarchist*, 292n17. After 1945, Nebel would become for a time a friend of Jünger's and a defender of his works. See Neaman, 73-74.

⁵⁵⁵ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 7 January 1937, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM. See also, Kiesel (2007), 451.

⁵⁵⁶ See *Myrdun*, 6 July 1935, 8; and *Strahlungen II*, 2 March 1944, 229. In a letter to Friedrich Georg, Jünger "highly recommended" Pepys's diary. E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 26 September 1935, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM. Repeating a popular misconception, Jünger refers to Pepys's journal as a "secret diary" written in a "cipher." The work was in fact not written in secret code at all, but rather in a shorthand popular at the time.

par with Nazi “blood and soil” literature, the novel is still rife with fascist kitsch (including knife-collared dogs and skull-festooned huts) and exhibits a macabre fascination with the spectacle of apocalyptic destruction. As Elliot Neaman has argued, the work betrays a “fascist aesthetic” well within the conceptual horizon of Nazism, its surface themes of resistance aside.⁵⁵⁷ Helmuth Kiesel has similarly decried the novel’s “delight in devastation,” as though renewal could only proceed out of mass conflagration. This fatalism, Kiesel points out, together with the book’s division of humanity into higher and lower types, would hardly have upset the conscience of soldiers who marched to battle with *On the Marble Cliffs* in their knapsacks.⁵⁵⁸

Ernst Jünger was not the only non-Nazi writer under the Third Reich to rely on allegorical or cryptographic writing. An example is the Catholic writer Werner Bergengruen’s novel *The Great Tyrant and the Court* (1935), whose depiction of a Renaissance-era despot was read by many as a veiled critique of Hitler’s Germany. Another conservative writer, Ferdinand Reck-Malleczewen, penned a history of the reign of terror conducted by the Münster Anabaptists in the sixteenth century (*Bockelson: A Tale of Mass Insanity*, 1937), in which the parallels with mass enthusiasm for Hitler were not difficult to draw. But why write such books at all? Amidst all the justified criticism of the inner emigrants—their paltry “resistance,” their sometimes compromised pasts, their post-1945 claims of moral superiority and greater patriotism, their failure to appreciate the suffering of those who fled—there has been too little effort to take seriously the motives of that minority which did not just declare it had always been inwardly virtuous, but which in fact tried to write a literature of opposition.⁵⁵⁹ Whatever else they are, these works were clearly efforts at communication—messages in a bottle awaiting an uncertain reception—whose very existence suggests that purely private resistance could be psychologically unbearable. George Orwell conveys something of this burden in the opening to *1984*, when Winston Smith yields to “the interminable restless monologue that had been running inside his head” and

⁵⁵⁷ Neaman, 104-121. “*The Marble Cliffs*,” Neaman remarks, “thus reveals both the condemnation of the mythology of Nazism and its entrapment in that myth” (120). Cf. Marcus Bullock’s argument that Jünger seeks a mythical dimension of meaning grounded in a desire for historical knowledge, as opposed to the manipulative, ahistorical myth-making of fascism. *The Violent Eye*, 14f.

⁵⁵⁸ Kiesel (2007), 475-481. See also his “Ernst Jüngers *Marmor-Klippen*: ‘Renommier’- und Problem‘buch der 12 Jahre,” *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 14 (1989), 126-164.

⁵⁵⁹ An introduction to the debates surrounding the inner emigration can be found in *Flight of Fantasy: New Perspectives on Inner Emigration in German Literature*, especially the chapters by Stephen Brockmann and Reinhold Grimm. A good example of inner emigrants’ attitudes to those who left Germany is Jünger’s remark that “Thomas Mann just packed up and left. An emigrant cannot understand. He didn’t share the tragedy of his people. How could he hope to find an echo among the people after that?” Quote in Neaman, 106. Of course, those who spent the Nazi years in exile could also be insensitive. Thus Erika Mann’s mocking remark that the inner emigrant writer Ernst Wiechert had become an “obedient boy” after his release from a Nazi camp. “I do not know whether Erika Mann,” Wiechert replied, “if she had just been released from a German camp, would not have become an ‘obedient girl.’” Such failures of understanding were explained by Werner Bergengruen, who suggested that the reliance on coded language had made the anti-fascist works of the inner emigration incomprehensible to those who left Germany. As he wrote in 1947:

It is impossible for anyone who is not familiar with a system of terror and censorship of the National Socialist type [and] who has grown up taking for granted the enjoyment of freedom of speech and of the written word, to understand the technique of allusions and cue words, the technique of indirect but clear expression. It is impossible for such a person to understand the more and more refined art of writing—but also of reading—between the lines.

See Karl-Heinz Schoeps, ed., *Literature and Film in the Third Reich* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), 227-228.

commits his “thoughtcrime” to an illegal diary, even as he finds it hard to imagine a posterity able to understand him.⁵⁶⁰

The need to imagine others sharing forbidden thoughts was demonstrated by Stefan Andres, author of another disguised anti-Nazi novel, *El Greco Paints the Grand Inquisitor* (1936), which invited comparison between the Inquisition and Nazi terror. In a 1937 letter to Ernst Jünger, Andres reached out to his more famous counterpart. Sending along a copy of his own book as an expression of “gratitude” for Jünger’s works, Andres wrote that his letter should be taken as a “sign that your hope is not in vain, when you conceive of your sentences as seeds (*Samenkörner*).”⁵⁶¹ Of course, Jünger did not just envision his writing as the dispersal of seeds; he also welcomed the “unmediated” contact that indicated these seeds had found fertile soil in readers. His reply to Andres was cautious, but unmistakable in its recognition that an ally had been found. Responding to Andres’s portrayal of the problem of art and truth in a tyrannical world, Jünger wrote: “Amidst the general decay in which language finds itself, the reading brought me special pleasure. The work also seems to me timely insofar as you have plainly woven into it some of the more discrete questions which today agitate the mind.”⁵⁶² Jünger concluded by voicing his hope for further contact. Though their correspondence languished until after the war, Jünger and Andres eventually established a harmonious friendship which lasted until the latter’s death in 1970. That the relationship took time to spark should not obscure the wink of mutual understanding that was part of their response to each other’s works during the Nazi years.⁵⁶³

The inner emigration may have been “a lost and forlorn crowd,” whose literary means were restricted to an Aesopian language.⁵⁶⁴ But as Frank Trommler has observed, this was enough to allow inner emigrant writers to create their own private “public” sphere, “a sphere of communication in which careful reading distinguished between participation and exclusion.” According to Trommler, “the reading experience [was] constitutive for the phenomenon of *inner emigration*.” The focus on identifying political or ideological messages beneath the literary camouflage, however, has obstructed study of “the implied and the actual reading”—that is, what it meant to write for anti-Nazi readers under the Third Reich, and what it meant to read such works.⁵⁶⁵ The motives of writers in the inner emigration have generally been seen as the depiction of a “dreamland” that offered escape from a dreary present, or the provision of “moral encouragement” to readers, or the preservation of

⁵⁶⁰ George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Signet, 1950), 9-10.

⁵⁶¹ S. Andres to E. Jünger, 12 August 1937, in *Ernst Jünger—Stefan Andres. Briefe, 1937-1970*, ed. Günther Nicolin (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2007), 7.

⁵⁶² E. Jünger to S. Andres, 28 August 1937, in *ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁶³ Andres’s status as a writer of the inner emigration is complicated by the fact that he quit Germany for Italy in September 1937, in part to protect his half-Jewish wife. Yet Andres continued to publish in Nazi Germany. His need to feel understood by readers back home is suggested by the remarkable fact that he managed to publish, in a 1941 issue of the *Kölnische Zeitung*, a guide, disguised as a dialogue between a historian and a novelist, to the interpretation of historical writing under censorship conditions! See John Klapper, “Stefan Andres’s Publications in the ‘Kracauer Zeitung,’” in *The Text and Its Context*, eds. Nigel Harris and Joanne Sayner (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 131.

⁵⁶⁴ Reinhold Grimm, “In the Thicket of *Inner Emigration*,” in *Flight of Fancy*, 35. “[W]hoever wanted to reach his contemporaries,” Grimm notes, “had at that time, strictly speaking, only two options: either to employ illegal means inside or outside Germany, or to employ the language of subversive servitude (*Sklavensprache*)” (36).

⁵⁶⁵ Frank Trommler, “Targeting the Reader, Entering History: A New Epitaph for the *Inner Emigration*,” in *Flight of Fancy*, 119-120.

cultural or religious values under assault from Nazi barbarism.⁵⁶⁶ No doubt this was often the case. Paying attention to the reader-writer bond, however, suggests a more fundamental motive. Implicit in the solitary act of reading and writing coded books was the belief in a clandestine reading community that got the meaning and shared what National Socialism did not: different political values, to be sure, but also a more complex relationship to language and experience. To puzzle over ambiguous allegorical texts in the expectation of initiation into a critical stance toward the Nazi regime was to have already left the *lingua tertii imperii* far behind.⁵⁶⁷ As Werner Bergengruen later put it, the real message of these anti-Nazi works was “you are not alone, not abandoned, there are many who share your convictions and who stand beside you.”⁵⁶⁸

The case of Ernst Jünger can help us see that this message was not just delivered to readers, but also by writers to themselves. The model of an author-reader friendship that Jünger developed in the 1929 edition of *The Adventurous Heart* as a member of Weimar’s Conservative Revolution, and which he repurposed for the changed circumstances of the inner emigration in the 1938 edition, points to the therapeutic dimension of non-conformist writing under the Third Reich. To be sure, Jünger worried more than most about the existential isolation produced by language’s limited ability to convey intensely subjective experiences. As we’ve seen, the fear of incommunicability drove his writing from the very start. By the 1930s, Jünger had determined that language could, at best, gesture at deeper meanings and provide models to the reader for finding one’s own “relation to the essential things of life.”⁵⁶⁹ Only on this foundation, he believed, and not abstract ideas, social contracts, or market relationships, could real communities be built. What makes Jünger an important case study for non-Nazi writers under the Third Reich is that this view of his task as an author aligns with what Frank Trommler called the “reading community” at the heart of the inner emigration, a community defined by awareness of one’s “participation in an internalized communality” that could not be openly avowed.⁵⁷⁰ What Jünger can help us understand, in other words, is how the desire of inner emigration writers to leave the Third Reich spiritually while remaining in it physically was joined to the need to imagine oneself within a community united by “inner” resistance to Nazism.

Circle of Knights

How did Jünger’s relationships during the years 1933-1945 measure up to the models of oppositional friendship and monastic brotherhood elaborated in his works? As this

⁵⁶⁶ See, for instance, Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe*, 114-116; and Klapper, 123-124.

⁵⁶⁷ Trommler, 120-121. Of Jünger’s *Marble Cliffs*, Trommler writes: “the narrator guides the reader like a novice in a covert community through the book’s overall atmosphere of a mythical *Widerständigkeit*” (120).

⁵⁶⁸ Quoted in Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe*, 116-117. Of course, ambiguity also opened texts to misunderstanding. Bergengruen’s *The Great Tyrant and the Court*, for example, was praised by the *Völkischer Beobachter* as “the *Führer* novel of the Renaissance period.” This remarkable interpretation is partly explained by the fact that Bergengruen, like Jünger, always claimed to be depicting more general problems of power, rather than Hitler or Nazism per se. See Schoeps, 228-231.

⁵⁶⁹ *On Pain*, 14. Jünger writes often of his aversion to reading his own works because it reminds him that “the idea remains forever inaccessible” to language. The value, he declares, is in the “laboring and wrestling on the threshold of words, and not in the developed work.” *Atlantische Fahrt*, *SW* 6, 24 October 1936. See also, *AH2*, 2. On Jünger’s emphatic conception of authorship, see Schwarz, 50-52.

⁵⁷⁰ Trommler, 121.

section will show, Jünger's friendships were crucial to his ability to retreat from the public sphere and keep his distance from the Nazis, while at the same time creating a private counter-sphere relatively untainted by the language and values of the Third Reich. Jünger's refusal of official support—recall his decision in 1934 to turn down his election to the Nazified German Academy of Writers—made reliance on informal networks crucial.

As the reality of Nazi rule gradually became clear, however, Jünger also became increasingly aware of the need to guard admittance to his circle. As early as May 1933, he could observe that “quite a few” of his non-Nazi acquaintances had already been “mobilized” (*eingesetzt*) by the new regime.⁵⁷¹ In January 1934, he remarked of this process of self-adaptation that “many, who otherwise kept their secret well, have shown their true colors upon the slightest hint of danger. Thus one's circle of friends (*Bekanntenskreis*) dwindles on its own; most voluntarily withdraw themselves from your esteem.”⁵⁷² “I'm of the opinion,” Jünger wrote a few months later, “that all acquaintances who've become mixed up [with the Nazis] are to be ignored. It's a matter of a selection process, by which an elite is crystallized.”⁵⁷³ What these comments show is that those with whom Jünger maintained friendly contact after 1933 were persons he found both admirable and in some way out of step with Nazi orthodoxy. Jünger's own sense of the importance of friends needs to be born in mind because he has often, and rightly, been painted as a “maverick” (*Einzelgänger*) by temperament—a term too easily confused with misanthropy or introversion.⁵⁷⁴ While Jünger indeed “fled into a private inner space surrounded by the remnants of elite European culture,” this was not a flight into isolation.⁵⁷⁵

Hitler's ascension to power dispersed the social network Jünger had built up in Leipzig and Berlin between 1925 and 1933. Those who did not make their peace with National Socialism were forced into internal or external exile.⁵⁷⁶ Jünger took the same course in quitting Berlin for Goslar in December 1933. At least initially, this diaspora remained in touch. His correspondence from the early years of Nazi rule testifies to a train of visitors and visits, and to the rumormongering that allowed him to keep tabs on the fate of friends. Such personal contacts were indispensable because Jünger, as an independent writer, had few formal or institutional ties outside of publishing. During a summer 1935 sojourn in Norway, which he spent with Hugo Fischer, Jünger commented on the urgency of decentralized and irregular relationships in an age of totalitarian power. Having just met his hosts, Jünger noted:

We were soon in a marvelous conversation, and it struck me that to the same extent that states become concentrated and tighten their grip on the individual, certain

⁵⁷¹ E. Jünger to L. Alvens, 12 May 1933, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁷² E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 19 January 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM. Stressing the need to make oneself inconspicuous, Jünger added that it was necessary to “unlearn the art of giving people the creeps.”

⁵⁷³ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 5 June 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁷⁴ See, most recently, Allan Mitchell's inexplicable insistence on translating *Einzelgänger* as “loner,” despite correctly recognizing that Jünger “manifestly sought and often enjoyed the company of others,” and that the German word conveys an “independent streak” in Jünger's character that is not captured by the English term. *The Devil's Captain: Ernst Jünger in Nazi Paris, 1941-1944* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2011), 7.

⁵⁷⁵ Neaman, 107.

⁵⁷⁶ “The row of friends and acquaintances,” Jünger recalled in 1967, “now began to thin out. They undertook, like Franke, Paetel, Fischer, Gilbert, Lilienthal, Breitbach, and Marcu, long migrations, from which many never returned. Others moved away without leaving the country—Friedrich Hielscher to Potsdam, Rudolf Schlichter to Rottenburg.” *Subtile Jagden*, quoted in Schwilk (1988), 142.

balancing forces also open up. One is referred back to relations that have been peculiar to man for ages, for instance to the family-unit in a Sicilian sense, to hospitality, asylum, and barter.⁵⁷⁷

This mention of conversation and hospitality points to a pattern that would mark Jünger's social life from his time in Goslar onward. Staying with friends while traveling or hosting guests in his home—Carl Schmitt and Hugo Fischer made repeated visits to Goslar, as did, at least once, Friedrich Hielscher, Ernst Niekisch, and Arnolt Bronnen, among many others—were crucial to the maintenance of friendships despite geographical distance.⁵⁷⁸

Probably Ernst Jünger's most important relationship, during the Nazi years and later, was with his younger brother, Friedrich Georg Jünger. A fellow veteran of the First World War and of Weimar's Conservative Revolution, Friedrich Georg was an accomplished poet and essayist who shared many of his brother's interests and predilections, including a hatred of National Socialism. His 1934 poem "The Poppy," which criticized the delirium of mass adulation, was widely regarded as a none-too-subtle jab at Hitler-worship.⁵⁷⁹ Ernst and Friedrich Georg's blood kinship should not obscure their extraordinarily close lifelong friendship. This can be traced in part to their common intellectual distance from the positivist bent of their father (a chemist) and from the interests of their other siblings. They were not just biological brothers, but brothers in spirit too.⁵⁸⁰ That Friedrich Georg belonged to the coterie of elites his brother sought to cultivate was made clear in a 1934 letter. "Our very substance," Ernst wrote,

is being put to the test. One has to reveal his hand and show who he is. In a condition of lies and an evil presence, a thought becomes dangerous purely by virtue of the fact that it is correct, and minds that possess the true measure serve as mirrors, in which the nothingness of the shadowworld is revealed. A logical thought, a pure meter, a noble deed, even non-participation in what is sordid—today these are things which rise up like menacing weapons... In this sense a poem like "The Poppy" resembles the spot from which [the resister's] enmity becomes visible even to cloudy eyes.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁷ E. Jünger, *Myrdun*, 15 July 1935, p. 12-14.

⁵⁷⁸ Kiesel (2007), 428. As Kiesel notes, Jünger joked to Ernst Niekisch in a March 1937 letter that he had been forced to relocate from Goslar to Überlingen because the "bustle of those traveling through had gradually become too colorful" (*ibid.*).

⁵⁷⁹ See Kiesel (2007), 421-422. The poem was first printed by Ernst Niekisch's publishing company, appropriately named *Widerstand* ("Resistance"). In a letter to Niekisch, Ernst Jünger claimed that the poem's appearance had occasioned a police visit at his brother's house, and that he had warned Friedrich Georg against publishing it. E. Jünger to E. Niekisch, 17 March 1946, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁸⁰ See Danièle Beltran-Vidal, "Ernst und Friedrich Georg Jünger: Im Leben wie im Werk Brüder," *Les Carnets Ernst Jünger* 6 (2001), 167-180. Of Ernst and Friedrich Georg's other brothers, Hans Otto (1905-1976) was a gifted mathematician, and Wolfgang (1908-1975) became a geographer. Their father, Ernst Georg Jünger (1868-1943), joined the NSDAP in March 1932, a decision which at least Wolfgang approved. See Kiesel (2007), 40; and Schwilk (2007), 359-360. It is, of course, easy to see Friedrich Georg as the model for "Brother Otho" in Ernst Jünger's *On the Marble Cliffs*.

⁵⁸¹ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 11 November 1934, D: F. G. Jünger, DLAM.

It is worth noting that Friedrich Georg was also a regular guest in the Jünger home. After 1951, when Jünger settled permanently in the Swabian village of Wilflingen, a room was kept free to accommodate visits from his brother in nearby Überlingen.

A brief glance at Jünger's contact with other members of his now scattered set can convey the anti-Nazi qualities of his friendships under the Third Reich. A good example is his relationship with the philosopher Hugo Fischer—"the master," as Jünger was wont to call him, in reference to Fischer's otherworldly bearing. Despite significant disagreements—Fischer detected an unpleasant whiff of romanticism in Jünger's celebration of the intoxicating energies of the modern metropolis⁵⁸²—he also appreciated Jünger's company as a refuge from the pieties of the Nazi years.⁵⁸³ As Fischer professed in an October 1933 letter, the times spent with Jünger, his wife Gretha, and his brother Friedrich Georg were among his few "untroubled" (*ungetrübt*) memories.⁵⁸⁴ In November 1934, Fischer proposed, perhaps only half seriously, the creation of a "private academy" inspired by August Strindberg's novel *The Cloister* (1898). "The few young people who don't belong to the mob," he wrote, "and who have ears to hear of what has died (*was die Stunde geschlagen hat*), will find their way to us."⁵⁸⁵ According to Fischer, Jünger's works were a necessary instrument in mustering this elite.

I always notice with delight that writings like yours even today burn through the sleaze like a fierce fire. I meet people... who say to me that something of yours, for instance the *Advent[urous] Heart*, has made a powerful impression on them. More such books are needed, which unexpectedly infiltrate the confused din with rallying cries (*Parolen*) that force people to listen up... Everything is softened, loosened, all orientation is gone, and people leap from protest to protest, they vomit up pure, undigested stuff and gorge on everything, because with their sour stomachs they no longer have any ability to discriminate. A regime's opponents become, through this very opposition, its friends. Somewhere they've taken hold of the rope, and suddenly, where they don't even suspect, the seed of demagoguery bears fruit.⁵⁸⁶

Though prone to melodrama, Fischer's correspondence suggests he suffered under the Third Reich.⁵⁸⁷ In 1936, the Reich Propaganda Ministry banned publication of his new book, *Lenin: the Machiavelli of the East*, and Fischer later claimed to have feared arrest. In 1938, he fled with his family to Norway, where he took up a teaching post; two years later he fled again, this time to England.⁵⁸⁸ In one of his last missives before the outbreak of war separated them,

⁵⁸² See Gajek, "Magister—Nigromontan—Schwarzenberg," 489.

⁵⁸³ In a 1933 letter, Fischer parodied the bromides that had helped bring the National Socialists (he called them "National Sexualists") to power—"that Hitler, he must be quite a man... I imagine he's a capable guy... certainly a fellow of nationalist sentiments... he'll get the job done"—and sarcastically announced that he was ready to "adapt myself politically." H. Fischer to E. Jünger, 23 February 1933, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. Ernst Jünger's letters to Fischer from these years have not been preserved.

⁵⁸⁴ H. Fischer to E. Jünger, 1 October 1933, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁸⁵ H. Fischer to E. Jünger, 30 November 1934, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. Strindberg's *Cloister* depicted a utopian male community living in secluded devotion to truth and knowledge.

⁵⁸⁶ H. Fischer to E. Jünger, 17 January 1935, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁸⁷ In a 1936 letter, Fischer excused his failure to visit as a desire to avoid inflicting his "desperate mood" on others. "I would have only been tolerable," he wrote, "if I'd been in a perpetual alcoholic stupor." H. Fischer to E. Jünger, 21 August 1936, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁸⁸ Gajek, 482-484.

Fischer again stressed friendship's function as a counter-sphere. "I often feel the need to talk with you and your brother," he wrote to Jünger from Oslo in January 1939. "Don't we want to construct a little colony?"⁵⁸⁹

Friendship also meant supplying moral and material support to those persecuted by the Nazi state. One friend forced into external exile was the Romanian-Jewish writer Valeriu Marcu (1899-1942), whom Jünger first encountered in Berlin around 1929. A communist who met Lenin in Zurich during World War One, Marcu hated Hitler from the start but gravitated toward Weimar's Conservative Revolution because he thought conservative forces could more effectively check Nazi extremism. His writings included essays in Germany's premier publications—including left-leaning papers like *Die Weltbühne* and *Das Tagebuch*—as well as book-length studies of Machiavelli, Scharnhorst, and Lenin. Marcu also made an important contribution to the history of anti-Semitism, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (1934), which was issued, like many German émigré works, by the Amsterdam publisher Querido, and was eventually translated into multiple languages.⁵⁹⁰ Jünger admired Marcu's intelligence and political judgment, and he was doubtless attracted to the latter's mix of elitism, cultural pessimism, and left- and right-wing radicalism. When the Nazis came to power, Marcu and his wife were forced to flee, first to Nice and thence to New York. Though it's unclear what role he played, Jünger apparently helped recover his friend's extensive library, which had been seized by the Nazis. More significantly, Jünger informed Marcu that he could "count on" him should he "get into trouble as a Jew," and offered to open his home to him if necessary.⁵⁹¹

Marcu's gratitude was effusive. "Without exaggeration," he wrote to Jünger of the trauma of emigration in August 1933, "I felt that you were lying with me in the grave... I will... always be joined to you. My brain will always accompany you, and there is nothing that can be shared that I would not share with you."⁵⁹² Marcu's letters from exile often voiced the wish to see Jünger again and "talk away the night."⁵⁹³ Tellingly, the theme of elitist communication also appeared in their correspondence. Writing in January 1937, Jünger praised Marcu's recent book on Machiavelli—the second of his works to indirectly treat the contemporary problem of exile through the study of historical parallels. "What is remarkable for me," Jünger wrote, "is the intellectual position from which works are possible that use history as a precise tool." Reflecting what we've seen was his concern for literature's ability to establish lines of friendship, Jünger added discreetly: "What enmity is sharpening your

⁵⁸⁹ H. Fischer to E. Jünger, 17 January 1939, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁹⁰ By 1940, Querido had published 141 books by German writers in exile, making it an important "symbol of the cultural resistance against Nazi Germany." Tragically, the press's Jewish founder, Emmanuel Querido, was murdered by the Nazis in Sobibor in 1943. See Jeroen Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance: Dutch Clandestine Literature during the Nazi Occupation* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 28, 40n14.

⁵⁹¹ My account of Marcu is taken from Kiesel (2007), 330, 411, 427-428; Gnoli and Volpi, 48-49; and Andrei Corbea-Hoise, "Valeriu Marcu: Ein Rumäne im literarischen Berlin," *Germanica* 38 (2006), 25-46. Another good example of Jünger's moral and material support for a persecuted friend was Ernst Niekisch, who was imprisoned by the Nazis in March 1937. As Niekisch later recalled, Jünger's behavior after his arrest was "grand." Jünger remained in touch with Niekisch's family, attempted (unsuccessfully) to intervene on his behalf with authorities, and never hid his high regard for Niekisch. See Kiesel (2007), 447-448. Jünger later wrote that he thought often of Niekisch during WWII and discussed him openly at gatherings in Paris in the expectation that Niekisch would be "the future statesman, the one political head, through whom a transformation was still possible." E. Jünger to E. Niekisch, 8 February 1946 and 17 March 1946, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁹² V. Marcu to E. Jünger, 23 August 1933, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. Underlining in original.

⁵⁹³ V. Marcu to E. Jünger, 24 January 1936, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

locutions? And who, on the other hand, is to be spurred on by your conclusions?”⁵⁹⁴ In his reply, Marcu complained of the loneliness of exile and thanked Jünger for understanding his work. “[Your letter] was the most intelligent I’ve received... Ultimately, one is still writing for human beings, and a head (*Kopf*) is worth a million larynxes (*Kehlköpfe*).”⁵⁹⁵ It is likely that Marcu had readers like Jünger in mind when he made the bittersweet observation that the writer-in-exile “has no audience, since the public has stayed at home... [Thus] he can allow himself the luxury of writing for an ideal, that is to say an imaginary community.”⁵⁹⁶ As this exchange shows, the inner and outer emigrants were not always as divided as postwar polemics would suggest.

Jünger proved a similarly reliable friend to the painter Rudolf Schlichter (1890-1955), one of several graphic artists with whom he established ties during his Berlin years.⁵⁹⁷ Schlichter is another case of the ideological fluidity and “uncanny proximities” among avant-garde writers, artists, and political radicals in the late Weimar Republic.⁵⁹⁸ Schlichter came to Berlin in January 1919, joining the Berlin Secession and the German Communist Party; in 1924, he helped found, together with John Heartfield and George Grosz, the “Red Group” of communist artists. A participant, successively, in the Dada, New Objectivity, and Surrealist movements, he would later be denounced by the Nazis and included in the 1937 Munich exhibition of “degenerate artists.” Beginning in the late 1920s, Schlichter’s search for new foundations had brought him back to the Catholic Church and into contact with radical conservatives like Ernst Jünger. But it was their experience as common members of the inner emigration that deepened their friendship. The decisive step came when the Nazis condemned two autobiographical volumes by Schlichter for their “perverse-erotic self-portrayal” and officially questioned his suitability for a “culturally creative profession.” Jünger intervened, albeit unsuccessfully, on Schlichter’s behalf, publicly defending his friend’s artistic integrity and his character as a “German of substance.”⁵⁹⁹ Jünger’s contempt for these proceedings was clear in a June 1935 note, in which he described the letter of support he had sent to the Reich Chamber of Culture as written for a “middling intelligence.”⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁴ E. Jünger to V. Marcu, 19 January 1937, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁵⁹⁵ V. Marcu to E. Jünger, 28 January 1937, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. Marcu signed off the letter “with brotherly greetings.” The larynxes pun was a reference to Marcu’s 1929 essay in *Die Literarische Welt* on Benedetto Croce’s lonely spiritual opposition to Mussolini’s fascism. See “Ein Kopf ist mehr als vierhundert Kehlköpfe, oder Benedetto Croce im Senat,” in *Ein Kopf ist mehr als vierhundert Kehlköpfe: Gesammelte Essays*, ed. Erhard Roy Wiehn (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 2002), 87-94.

⁵⁹⁶ Quoted in Corbea-Hoisie, 34.

⁵⁹⁷ Two other examples are A. Paul Weber, who worked as the house artist for Niekisch’s magazine *Widerstand*, and the Austrian illustrator and novelist Alfred Kubin, who became friends with Jünger via correspondence starting in February 1929, when Jünger sent him a copy of the first edition of *The Adventurous Heart*. See Kiesel (2007), 427, 442-443; and E. Jünger to A. Kubin, 10 February 1929, in *Ernst Jünger—Alfred Kubin. Eine Begegnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1975), 14.

⁵⁹⁸ See Helmuth Lethen, “Unheimliche Nachbarschaften,” *Jahrbuch zur Literatur der Weimarer Zeit* 1 (St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 1995), 76-92.

⁵⁹⁹ Kiesel (2007), 326-327, 430-433, 447-448; Ulrich Fröschle, “Eine Freundschaft im ‘Land der Mitte’—Ernst Jünger und Rudolf Schlichter,” *Les Carnets Ernst Jünger* 3 (1998), 125-139. In 1938, Schlichter’s bohemianism also brought charges of an “un-National Socialist lifestyle,” for which he was briefly imprisoned.

⁶⁰⁰ E. Jünger to R. Schlichter, 25 June 1935, in *Ernst Jünger—Rudolf Schlichter. Briefe, 1935-1955*, ed. Dirk Heiße (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), 15-17. “The task seems to me absurd, like in a topsy-turvy world,” Jünger wrote of the need to vouch for Schlichter to the Nazi authorities, “since it’s actually these people who should have to deliver proof to us that they’re even human beings.”

Like Valeriu Marcu, Rudolf Schlichter survived the pruning back of Jünger's relationships under the Third Reich, becoming another in that scattered archipelago of friends—Schlichter quit Berlin for Rottenburg, near Stuttgart, in 1932—joined in “inner” resistance to Nazi barbarism. Ulrich Fröschle has described their correspondence from the Nazi years as “the reciprocal assurance of comrades in an exposed and unpromising position.”⁶⁰¹ Occasional visits, which also brought together their respective wives, helped further strengthen their relationship and contributed to Jünger's ability to carve out a private non-Nazi sphere.⁶⁰² Like Jünger, Schlichter saw himself as part of an aesthetic elite in rebellion against a stifling and mendacious mass culture, whose conformity had only intensified with the political shifts from monarchy to republic to fascist dictatorship. “The underlings (*Untertanentum*),” he wrote to Jünger in September 1936, “are well represented in every camp. Restoration or revolution, all make use of the same repulsive vocabulary, mixed in the scullery of the little man.”⁶⁰³ Ultimately, Jünger and Schlichter's friendship was based less on any clear ideological agreement than on shared elitism, nonconformism, and a felt need to tough it out in what Jünger called a “lost position.” This would continue after 1945, when both saw the liberal capitalist forces remaking West Germany as just another iteration of the modern mass society they opposed. “The artistic person,” Jünger professed to Schlichter in 1950, “is today a priori the one recognized as an enemy, and indeed under every regime. The form of government doesn't change a thing.”⁶⁰⁴

It is important to note that Ernst Jünger's friendships with Hugo Fischer, Valeriu Marcu, and Rudolf Schlichter were established before 1933, and thus could build on pre-Nazi experiences of trust and intimacy. This was not the case with the new friendships he established under the Third Reich. A good example of these relationships can be found in Jünger's participation in the so-called “George Circle” (*Georgsrunde*), a cénacle of German officers, writers, and civilian officials that met for drink and talk at the Hotel George V in occupied Paris from 1941 to 1944. Jünger became involved with the group after his assignment to the headquarters of the German military command, located in Paris's Hotel Majestic, in June 1941. His unchallenging official duties included censoring mail, but his primary task was serving as an informal cultural attaché, establishing connections between the German occupiers and the Parisian intellectual scene, including collaborators such as Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, Henri Montherlant, and Ferdinand Céline. A regular at the salon of Florence Gould, Jünger was also on friendly terms with an assortment of French writers and artists: Pablo Picasso, Julien Gracq, Jean Cocteau, Paul Léautaud, Sacha Guitry, and Georges Braque, among others. But it was the evening meetings at the Hotel George V which exemplified Jünger's anti-Nazi friendships. The group brought together a number of cultivated men who would later play key roles in the July 20, 1944, attempt on Hitler's life.

⁶⁰¹ Fröschle, 134.

⁶⁰² Conversation was an important draw. “I have a pressing need,” Schlichter wrote in 1937, “to be with you for a few hours in order to chat about all the things that affect us both.” R. Schlichter to E. Jünger, 16 March 1937, in *Ernst Jünger—Rudolf Schlichter. Briefe, 1935-1955*, 97. After 1951, the Jüngers and Schlichters switched from the formal “Sie” to the informal “Du” in their correspondence—one of only a handful of Jünger's friendships to involve the familiar form of address. As Kiesel notes, Jünger also deepened his interest in entomology during the Nazi years as a refuge from politics and “a discursive space beyond questions about ideology (*Gesinnungsfragen*)” (426).

⁶⁰³ R. Schlichter to E. Jünger, 10 September 1936, in *Ernst Jünger—Rudolf Schlichter. Briefe, 1935-1955*, 82. In a June 9, 1935, letter, Schlichter described his life as surrounded by “troglodytes” and the “shuffling idiocy of the mobilized petty bourgeoisie,” which was only made endurable by a “circle of intellectual people.” *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁰⁴ E. Jünger to R. Schlichter, 11 June 1950, in *Ernst Jünger—Rudolf Schlichter. Briefe, 1935-1955*, 243.

Most important were Gen. Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel (after February 1942 the commander of German forces in France), the chief of staff Col. Hans Speidel, the jurist Walter Bargatzky, and Lt. Col. Caesar von Hofacker, who maintained links between the George Circle and conspirators in Leipzig and Berlin. Also included, in discussions if not in the conspiracy, were journalists such as Clemens Podewils, Friedrich Sieburg, Dolf Sternberger, and Gerhard Nebel. As Ulrich Herbert put it, the George Circle was “a relatively homogenous group, whose habitus was shaped by elitist conservatism, German-nationalist patriotism, and a distance to Hitler and the ‘party types’ composed of intellectual scorn, social arrogance, and political enmity.”⁶⁰⁵ Jünger, open about his disapproval of assassination attempts, was also kept in the dark about the precise plans to overthrow Hitler. Nevertheless, Jünger was, Bargatzky later claimed, the “spiritual foundation” of the group.⁶⁰⁶

Jünger survived, as Stülpnagel and Hofacker did not, the fallout from the failed July 20th plot because nothing tied him to the conspiracy. (He spent the day catching insects in the Bois de Boulogne on the outskirts of the 16th arrondissement.) If Jünger was not part of the conspiracy, what then did the George Circle signify for him in the context of the Third Reich? The first thing to recognize is how thoroughly the “Knights of the George Circle,” as they styled themselves, resonated with Jünger’s elitist self-conception and reinforced his belief in a spiritual aristocracy that would lead mankind out of the desert of nihilism. Writing to Friedrich Georg in June 1941, Jünger described his initial sense of the group as a “circle of intelligent officers... The impression I received there confirmed my theory regarding the formation of very small intellectual (*geistiger*) elites in our times.” Jünger specifically mentioned Clemens Podewils and Hans Speidel, both of whom would become intimate friends and remain in close touch with Jünger after the war.⁶⁰⁷ Speidel, a likeminded former WWI infantry lieutenant who earned a doctorate in history in 1925, had in fact requested Jünger’s transfer to the command staff in the hope that the celebrated memoirist would prove a stimulating collaborator whose pen could help document the Wehrmacht’s conflicts with the Nazi Party.⁶⁰⁸

Tellingly, Jünger likened the company he found in Paris to what he had known in his Friedrichstrasse apartment in Berlin over a decade earlier. “It is amazing,” he remarked to his brother in October 1941,

how many of our earlier acquaintances, for instance from our Berlin years, I run into here. You could find, in the Palais Rothschild on the Avenue Foch or in other places, gatherings (*Gremien*) which are still familiar to you from your time on Friedrichstrasse. There a good deal of heartiness is poured out on old and distant

⁶⁰⁵ Quoted in Kiesel (2007), 498.

⁶⁰⁶ More detailed accounts of Jünger’s time in Nazi Paris, from which I have drawn here and below, can be found in Neaman, ch. 4; Kiesel (2007), ch. 6; Schwilk (2007), chs. 15-16; and Mitchell, *The Devil’s Captain*.

⁶⁰⁷ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 12 June 1941, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. Compare Jünger’s enthusiasm for the George Circle with his lament from just six weeks earlier regarding his boredom and “total loneliness” as a regular duty officer: “All my relationships, dealings, conversations do not extend beyond the technical aspect of life, and even from this the increasing sedateness removes me more and more.” E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 1 May 1941, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁶⁰⁸ As Jünger’s diary records, it was another German officer, Horst Grüniger, one of his “talented readers and probably also disciples,” who introduced Jünger to Speidel and Podewils and suggested that Jünger be relieved of regular duty and assigned to the German command staff. Jünger was enchanted by the prospect of remaining in Paris, which he dubbed a “symbol and fortress of inherited heights of life and binding ideas, which nations today are especially lacking.” *Strahlungen I*, 30 May 1941, 245.

friends. Only in retrospect does it become clear to me what massive work in opinion making was accomplished between 1920 and 1930.⁶⁰⁹

In Paris, in other words, Jünger found a welcome echo of the literary, conservative revolutionary high society of the late Weimar years. Joining the army, the poet Gottfried Benn famously remarked of his own disenchantment with Nazism, was the “aristocratic form of emigration.”⁶¹⁰ In soirées like those at the Hotel George V, Jünger found the most aristocratic perch in this dubious corner of the inner emigration.

The George Circle also represented a locus of trust and truthful communication in a world suffused with mutual suspicion and calculated misinformation. The lack of zeal for National Socialism among the command staff in the Hotel Majestic was widely known. As a consequence, its members were surrounded by political enemies—including the SS and the Gestapo, but also emissaries and representatives from the NSDAP, the German Embassy in Paris, and an array of Berlin ministries—whose identities and agendas were not always easily recognized. As Martin Tielke observed, Jünger saw himself in occupied Paris in the midst of an ideological civil war, where the battle lines were difficult to make out and where friends could be revealed as enemies, and enemies as friends.⁶¹¹ The Gestapo, Jünger later maintained, “had assembled a thick dossier on me.”⁶¹² The claim is credible given that the Paris high command was under close surveillance. It is against this atmosphere of mistrust that unvarnished communication among members of the George Circle, whose mutual loyalty was cemented by boisterous evenings in each other’s company, has to be understood.⁶¹³ Perhaps the most revealing case was Jünger’s journey to Russia, from autumn 1942 to early 1943, to sound out German commanders regarding a possible putsch against Hitler. Acting at Stülpnagel’s behest, Jünger was tasked with providing a frank assessment of the conditions and attitudes on the Eastern Front.⁶¹⁴

It was also among members of the George Circle that Jünger first circulated drafts of a treatise that laid out his vision of a unified postwar European order. Titled *The Peace*, the work was begun in January 1942, finished in summer 1943, and secretly passed to another member of the German resistance, Gen. Erwin Rommel, who was reportedly launched into action by Jünger’s ideas.⁶¹⁵ The essay issued a vague indictment of the times, blaming the Second World War on the nihilism of a technological age joined with “the spirit of the

⁶⁰⁹ E. Jünger to F. G. Jünger, 7 October 1941, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁶¹⁰ See Neaman, 93.

⁶¹¹ Tielke, *Der stille Bürgerkrieg*, 56-60. One source of friction concerned the shooting of hostages in reprisal for attacks, which Hitler ordered, but which Wehrmacht headquarters attempted to resist or mitigate. See Tielke, 59; and Kiesel (2007), 499-501. Jünger was charged with compiling a report, which he completed in early 1942, detailing the executions and the Paris command’s dealings with Berlin. See Ernst Jünger, *Zur Geiselfrage. Schilderung der Fälle und ihrer Auswirkungen*, ed. Sven O. Berggötz (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2011).

⁶¹² Gnoli and Volpi, 68.

⁶¹³ The prodigious consumption of alcohol was apparently a regular feature of the group’s gatherings. As Jünger reported to Dolf Sternberger in early 1942: “In the George V we’ve had in the meantime several more illustrious meetings. Did you know that at your last visit we knocked back fourteen bottles of Haut Brion? Recently we increased this record by one.” E. Jünger to D. Sternberger, 13 February 1942, in Detlev Schöttker, “Gefährlich leben! Zum Briefwechsel zwischen Ernst Jünger und Dolf Sternberger,” *Sinn und Form* 4 (2011), 437-447.

⁶¹⁴ Björn Cederberg, “Letzte Gespräche mit Ernst Jünger 1996/97,” *Sinn und Form* 56 (2004), 657. See also Mitchell, ch. 7.

⁶¹⁵ On the role of *The Peace* in the German resistance, see Neaman, 122-125. The work was only first published in 1946.

rabble,” and called for a Christian humanism that would overcome the destructive nationalism of the past. Crucially, the fingerprints of the George Circle all over the text. Despite its sufferings, Jünger wrote, the war “also left seeds of friendship... [T]he best of the peoples came to know each other, for such fateful times ever offer occasion for help. Respect, friendship, and love, too, spin a web of fine threads, which will endure for more than many a treaty between the nations.” In the author’s foreword, Jünger thanked readers who had kept the manuscript secret, and singled out “General von Stülpnagel, that knightly man, under whose protection the essay came about.”⁶¹⁶ Much like both editions of *The Adventurous Heart*, Jünger’s *The Peace* drew on its author’s experience of friendship in imagining, once more, a brotherhood of spiritual aristocrats that could effect his hoped-for rupture with the modern world. Finding a way back to “the divine image,” Jünger wrote, was “a path which only the elite may tread.”⁶¹⁷

Conclusion

In February 1944, Ernst Jünger’s eldest son, the seventeen-year-old Ernstel, was arrested at his boarding school on the North Sea island of Spiekeroog for maligning Hitler and expressing defeatist sentiments. According to a witness, Ernstel had declared that Hitler should be “hanged,” and that he was ready “to pull the rope”—statements which, if accurate, suggest a good deal about the climate of opinion in the Jünger household as Ernstel was growing up. The arrest caused Ernst and his wife Gretha to scramble to secure their son’s release. Navigating the ensuing legal-bureaucratic nightmare demanded, as Martin Tielke aptly put it, the “sixth sense” needed to judge whether each of the many functionaries they encountered was a “friend or enemy.” As Gretha Jünger later wrote, a “look in the eye” could suffice; the Nazis’ secret critics already “recognize themselves upon shaking hands.” Meeting with a sympathetic local official in Wilhelmshaven to discuss the case, Gretha recalled: “We understood each other very quickly—he was one of us.”⁶¹⁸ Tragically, their son had apparently not developed the same keen sense for knowing whom you could trust and when you could speak. For his capital offense, Ernstel received the comparatively merciful sentence of *Frontbewährung*: parole on the condition that the culprit volunteer for hazardous duty in the front lines. But it was only a reprieve. Ernstel Jünger was killed in action in the mountains near Carrara, Italy, on November 29, 1944.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁶ Ernst Jünger, *The Peace*, trans. Stuart Hood (Hinsdale, IL: Henry Regnery, 1948), 7, 51-52. Another example of friendship as a locus of honest communication can be found in the reports Jünger received about the Holocaust from his friend from Weimar days Friedrich Hielscher. As Jünger reported in his diary, Hielscher informed him of the liquidation of the Lodz (then called Litzmannstadt) Ghetto, including the use of gas chambers and crematoria. See *Strahlungen II*, 16 October 1943, 170-175. Jünger also later claimed that Hielscher supplied him with information about the concentration camps, which he obtained by gaining access to Auschwitz under the ruse that he was conducting an ethnographic study. See “Ein Bruderschaftstrinken mit dem Tod,” *Der Spiegel*, August 16, 1982, 157-158. On Hielscher’s own resistance activities, see Breuer and Schmidt, “Der Literat und der Theokrat,” 98.

⁶¹⁷ *The Peace*, 73.

⁶¹⁸ Tielke, 27, 31, 60. In Tielke’s words: “The opponents of the regime made themselves understood tacitly but eloquently” (27). For Gretha Jünger’s account, published under her maiden name, see Gretha von Jeinsen, *Die Palette. Tagebuchblätter und Briefe* (Hamburg: Hans Dulk, 1949), 76-83.

⁶¹⁹ On Ernstel’s arrest and prosecution, see Schwilk, 397-405; and Tielke, 17-84. As Kiesel (2007) notes, Jünger would later wonder if he contributed to his son’s death by speaking so critically of the Nazis at home (529).

Though perhaps exaggerated, Gretha Jünger's claim that the Nazi regime's enemies were forced to communicate through a "sixth sense" for friends and foes—one informed by an array of allusions, verbal and nonverbal cues, and telling silences—is a useful metaphor for the dilemmas faced by the inner emigration as a whole. This is, of course, especially true of those who ventured to publish works implicitly critical of the Third Reich. But it also indicates the need for extraordinary care in defining the space of candid communication in one's private life. In the case of Ernst Jünger, the literary and personal senses of oppositional friendship come together. As we have seen, Jünger's appreciation of the desire for communication and mutual understanding among the Nazis' critics helped him create a (sometimes overlapping) circle of personal friends and friendly readers united in forms of nonconformity to National Socialism. The concluding chapter will examine how Jünger adapted his posture of spiritual resistance once more after 1945, when it became clear to him that the nihilism of technological modernity was not among the Second World War's victims. For the remaining fifty years of his life, Jünger would be one of Germany's most controversial figures, a critic of modernity who was at the center of a friendship network that joined the veterans and heirs of Weimar's radical right into a counterculture opposed to what they believed was the decadence of German life. In Jünger's later works, friendship was portrayed as the last true site of community, an idea that has shaped the elitist attitudes of new members of the German right.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Friendship and Elitist Conservatism After 1945

There is a Remnant there that you know nothing about. They are obscure, unorganized, inarticulate, each one rubbing along as best he can. They need to be encouraged and braced up because when everything has gone completely to the dogs, they are the ones who will come back and build up a new society; and meanwhile, your preaching will reassure them and keep them hanging on.

– Albert Jay Nock

[I]f one says the matter as exactly and uncompromisingly as possible, one may hope through such unyielding efforts to become understandable as well. In the domain of one's own language, it is this very language itself that vouches for human fellowship.

– Theodor Adorno⁶²⁰

Among the more acrimonious debates in Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall was that provoked by the novelist and playwright Botho Strauss, whose essay “Impending Tragedy” (*Anschwellender Bocksgesang*)⁶²¹ was all but guaranteed to create a stir when it appeared in *Der Spiegel* in February 1993. In what quickly became a canonical text for the German New Right,⁶²² Strauss diagnosed a host of ills allegedly besetting the newly reunified nation. Frivolity and egocentrism, he made clear, reigned in this land of televised spectacle and rampant consumerism. Strauss took special aim at the “totalitarianism” of the mass media, whose progressive pieties ensured that everyone now spoke with “the same conformist vocabulary of needs and outrages.” Even the “dignity and wonder” of private, face-to-face conversation, Strauss opined, was mocked by the publicity of the talk show, which differed only slightly from the interrogations of a show trial. Yet while critics latched

⁶²⁰ Albert Jay Nock, “Isaiah’s Job,” in *Free Speech and Plain Language* (New York: William Morrow, 1937), 250; Theodor Adorno, “On the Question ‘What is German?’” in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 213.

⁶²¹ “Bocksgesang,” meaning the song of a ram or billy goat, is a literal translation of the Greek word for tragedy. The title, which has often (if imperfectly) been rendered into English as “Impending Tragedy,” thus suggests both a looming catastrophe and the rising vocal resistance of an animal about to be sacrificed.

⁶²² An expanded version of the essay appeared as the opening chapter in the prominent New Right anthology *Die selbstbewusste Nation*, eds. Heimo Schwilk and Ulrich Schacht (Berlin: Ullstein, 1994).

onto Strauss's more ominous claims—Germans, he suggested, no longer appreciated the “blood sacrifices” necessary to “preserve a people’s moral law against others”—much of his essay was in fact given over to themes of spiritual resistance and the need to supply guidance and confirmation to those “loners” with the courage to “turn away from the mainstream.”⁶²³ Today, when “any conceivable shock” becomes fodder for tomorrow’s broadcast, the “outsider-hero,” Strauss maintained, had to be something other than “the *poète maudit* or the anarchistic rebel” of yesteryear. Amidst the moral decay and empty chatter of contemporary Germany, he concluded, one could expect meaningful communication only in “the garden of friends,” a “*hortus conclusus*, which is only accessible to the few and out of which nothing of value to the masses escapes.”⁶²⁴

Little in this jeremiad of blanket judgments was new, with Strauss channeling a litany of familiar nationalist, neo-romantic, and anti-“culture industry” critiques. Perhaps the most ancient of his injunctions, however, was the call to would-be “outsiders” to reject the wider world and seek exclusive fellowship in their own “enclosed gardens.” As we saw in the last chapter, one influential predecessor to this posture of collective withdrawal can be found in the origins of Christian monasticism. The Desert Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, Thomas Merton observed, fled from the “shipwreck” of the late Roman world into alternate communities where “slavish dependence on accepted, conventional values” might be shed and a more godly path found to “a new man and a new society.”⁶²⁵ Botho Strauss, of course, is hardly alone in feeling the lure of retreat in our own times. What John McClure has called the “neomonastic politics” of theorists like Rudolph Bahro, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri can be seen in precisely this “philosophical valorization of desertion, retreat, and loosely articulated communities of survival and resistance.”⁶²⁶ The neomonastic impulse is nowhere clearer than in MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* (1981), which concludes its bleak assessment of modern individualism with a call to construct “local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.” “We are,” MacIntyre proclaims in a nod to the most famous codifier of communal monastic life, “waiting not for Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict.”⁶²⁷

The argument of this concluding chapter is that Ernst Jünger played this neo-Benedictine role for decades, serving, since the end of the Second World War, as the

⁶²³ “The real thrust of the essay,” Jay Rosellini notes, “involves an appeal to an elite group to preserve true living and thinking for a future age. Strauss leaves no doubt that only a select few deserve admission to this exclusive circle.” Rosellini does not, however, explore this dimension in detail. See *Literary Skinheads? Writing from the Right in Reunified Germany* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2000), 94.

⁶²⁴ Strauss, “Anschwellender Bocksgesang,” *Der Spiegel*, 8 February 1993.

⁶²⁵ Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1960), 3-5. Models for the companionship of cenobitic (i.e., communal) monastic life were often drawn from classical sources, especially the Stoic ideal of friends joined by virtue and the shared pursuit of perfection. See Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 80, 164. Another classical antecedent is the Epicurean ideal of a life among friends free from the burdens of society—an ideal Epicurus reputedly pursued in a literal garden on the outskirts of Athens.

⁶²⁶ John McClure, *Partial Faiths: Postsecular Fiction in the Age of Pynchon and Morrison* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 19-25. According to McClure, these thinkers “share a sense that the conventional political options of modernity are exhausted and its geopolitical order in crisis. And they find precedents for an enabling response to this crisis in the monastic movements of the early Christian era,” a time when “monasteries became sites of refuge, reflection, and social support” (21).

⁶²⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 263.

intellectual lodestar to an assortment of cultural mandarins and elitist conservatives inside and outside of Germany. This influence is clearest in Jünger's attractiveness to "spiritual reactionaries" among the German New Right like Botho Strauss, who mount a defense of *Kultur* against the degradation supposedly wrought by Americanized mass culture.⁶²⁸ Though Jünger remains better known for his earlier activism on behalf of Weimar's "Conservative Revolution," it is the more resigned (if by no means unrelated) cultural criticism of his subsequent works which stirs readers today. Andreas Huyssen has caustically summed up this fascination. Jünger's later writings, Huyssen wrote, are "a jumble of mythic images about nature and technology, Titans and Gods, that appeals to a certain kind of contemporary Germanic mindset which thrives on a frenzy of ecological apocalypse and... depraved philosophies of history."⁶²⁹ Jünger's allure, however, derives as much from his contrarian image itself as from any specific content to be found in what Huyssen deems the "metaphysical mush" of his myth-laden later works.⁶³⁰ Not for nothing was Jünger included, alongside a host of other radicals and cultural pessimists, in the 1985 anthology *I Permit Myself to Revolt*, a veritable handbook of anarchic postures for the would-be rebel edited by the New Right publishers Axel Matthes and Bernd Mattheus.

Yet the text chosen by Matthes and Mattheus—a hymn to the spiritual kinship of shared rebellion⁶³¹—is a reminder that, for all the lonely-sounding themes of resistance and withdrawal in his later works, Jünger was by no means given to fantasies of total isolation. As we will see, Jünger combined non-conformity with a search for spaces of *collective* defiance very much in the spirit of those enclosed gardens invoked by Botho Strauss. Indeed, Jünger, sometimes dubbed the "hermit from Wilflingen" for his post-1945 retreat into the seclusion of Swabian village life,⁶³² was less an advocate of hermetic solitude than a practitioner of those neomonastic "contrast communities" identified by McClure, in which "values and ways of life no longer nurtured in the larger society" might still be observed.⁶³³ In what follows, we will first consider how these themes appeared in Jünger's later works. We will then turn to Jünger's biography in order to explore his friendship circle after 1945 and place this group in the context of a broader radical conservative attraction to counterspheres in the postwar years. The model of countercultural sociability and author-reader "friendship" that Jünger began developing in the 1929 edition of *The Adventurous Heart* would reach full flower after World War Two in what was arguably the most elaborate and sustained "neomonastic" project in the twentieth century.

⁶²⁸ On this right-postmodern wave of spiritual and aesthetic reaction against modernity, see Diedrich Diederichsen, "Spiritual Reactionaries after German Reunification: Syberberg, Foucault, and Others," trans. Peter Chametzky, *October* 62 (Fall 1992), 65-83. For an account of Jünger's uneven influence on the various ideological currents within the German New Right, including his influence on "spiritual reactionaries" like Strauss, see Neaman, pp. 252-67.

⁶²⁹ Andreas Huyssen, "Fortifying the Heart—Totally Ernst Jünger's Armored Texts," 3.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶³¹ The piece was Jünger's "To a Lost Friend" (*An einen verschollenen Freund*), his eulogy to his friend and fellow adventurer Karl Rickert, aka "Charles Benoit," which we discussed in chapter 3.

⁶³² See Neaman, pp. 48, 81.

⁶³³ McClure, pp. 20-21.

The Recovery of Myth

In Jünger's post-1945 writings, myth supplied the most important alternative source of the values and insights around which he attempted to rally an elitist community of spiritual resisters. Whereas the Desert Fathers sought communion through Christ, Jünger's contempt for Enlightenment humanism led him to seek solidarity in such seemingly anti-modern constructions of meaning as astrology, mysticism, and the occult. Yet it was to myth that he turned most often in his later years in his search for a response to the modern age. Like Mircea Eliade and C. G. Jung—whose claims for the superior epistemological status of myth also brought them close to fascism⁶³⁴—Jünger appealed to the anti-rationalism and anti-historicism of myth as a road back to the collective wholeness and transcendent meanings supposedly known by earlier myth-bound societies.⁶³⁵ What Jünger's understanding of myth lacked in originality (or plausibility), it nonetheless made up for in imaginative force. The re-cultivation of myth, Jünger argued, promised eventual salvation from the metaphysical homelessness and social atomization of our current age.

We can start to draw Jünger's understanding of myth into focus by first considering Ernst Cassirer's distinction between modern and pre-modern myth. For the neo-Kantian Cassirer, human beings were, most fundamentally, "symbolic animals," the *creators* of the sign systems or "forms" which organize the representational field of their experience. Pre-modern myth was, accordingly, an early manifestation of this fundamental human capacity, a stage in human cultural development governed by a concrete and holistic symbolization relating man to cosmos and present practice to timeless custom. In what was for Cassirer a wholly salutary process, mankind had gradually replaced myth with the abstract and functional symbolization of theoretical science. After the First World War, however, the vulnerability of this accomplishment had been exposed, as economic insecurity and civil unrest opened the door to race theories, leader worship, and other irrational political mythologies. But this modern myth-making, Cassirer pointed out, was no longer the spontaneous expression of a primitive people; rather, it was a deliberate artifice in the service of instrumental control—it was both *mythos* and *techné*, pre-modern regression and ultra-modern fabrication, at the same time.⁶³⁶

That Ernst Jünger was drawn to such a modern conception of myth as an activist on Weimar's radical right is beyond question. As Hans-Peter Schwarz observed, Jünger's efforts to awaken the imagination to the possibilities unleashed by the "elemental" forces of modern warfare and the "total mobilization" of whole societies resembled nothing so much as the future-oriented political myth-making of Georges Sorel.⁶³⁷ Jünger's later engagement with myth, however, was in many respects the exact opposite, eschewing his earlier celebration of the technological sublime in favor of an attempt to recover pre-modern myth by exploiting

⁶³⁴ On the connection between myth and fascism, see Ellwood, *The Politics of Myth: C. G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

⁶³⁵ The recourse to myth as an antidote to the modern dissolution of community is, of course, as old as the perceived dissolution itself. See Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), esp. chs. 1-2.

⁶³⁶ The fullest statement of Cassirer's view of myth is found in his *Die Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, Vol. 2: *Das mythische Denken* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1925); and *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946). My reading of Cassirer's understanding of myth is indebted to Peter Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. pp. 14-15, 234-237, 306-312.

⁶³⁷ Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Der konservative Anarchist*, 91-93.

humanity's ability to create—and thus also to self-consciously alter—the symbolic meanings governing its collective life.

Already in 1939, Jünger had found in Edgar Allen Poe's "Descent into the Maelstrom" an illustration of the need for collaborative resistance to the perils of a "fully automated" world. Remarking on the conduct of the story's two brothers, "of which the one, blinded by the sight of the terrifying mechanism, surrenders to unconscious reflexes, while the other survives by responding thoughtfully and with feeling," Jünger concluded that "in this figure is included as well the responsibility that begins to fall to an ever-smaller elite."⁶³⁸ By 1945 the lesson was even clearer. The story's theme, he now wrote, was "mastery of the dynamic world," which was only possible from a "central point" not itself in motion.

In this search for the center lie the problematic and the experimental in our literature and in our state of affairs more generally. Let us assume this center were found, from which the earth could be controlled and governed... That would remain a superficial and technical solution, if a new depth did not open up at the same time. New in this sense means: a rediscovery of the lasting and enduring ground within the temporal.⁶³⁹

Only a synoptic view of the whole, Jünger wrote in 1944, could bring to an end "the nightmare that today robs so many of life's joy... the numbing feeling of struggling in meaninglessness, in places where destruction and pure chance rule."⁶⁴⁰ Myth would play a prominent role in Jünger's effort in the postwar years to bring such a perspective into focus. As Peter Koslowski put it, this was no longer the "invention or re-invention" of myth as a means of political mobilization; rather, "the person of the twentieth century re-encounters myth in an effort to work through the shock and the emptiness of history, its absence of meaning."⁶⁴¹

The most succinct account of the importance of this re-encounter appeared in a programmatic statement in the journal *Antaios*, which Jünger edited, together with Mircea Eliade, from 1959 to 1970. Implicitly challenging the equation of freedom with political self-determination, Jünger argued that freedom could only grow through "the recovery of solid, elevated positions," from which facts could be properly "named, ordered, and restrained in their operations." While acknowledging that theology and philosophy also supplied resources, Jünger proposed an expansive conception of myth as especially suited to the task. Understood in this sense, myth was a "power that grounds history and, time and again, breaks through the stream of events." For Jünger, the danger of neglecting myth was clear. Cold War fears of nuclear apocalypse were unmistakable in his reference to the forces that

⁶³⁸ Jünger, *Strahlungen I*, 19 August 1939, 65-66. Jünger's skepticism towards technological modernity was shared by his brother Friedrich Georg, whose critique of technology, *Die Perfektion der Technik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1949), was completed in July 1939. The book appeared in English as *The Failure of Technology* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1956).

⁶³⁹ Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 14 September 1945, 538-540.

⁶⁴⁰ Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 7 March 1944, 232-234. According to Jünger, the "nihilism that resolves everything into chance" was especially pronounced in "modern man's absurd dread of microbes." As Marcus Bullock observed, for Jünger, "the real nightmare is not the strain of horror at cruelty, but blind chance as a chaotic and formless incrustation on the face of things that no longer look to us as the true center of meaning." See Bullock, p. 256.

⁶⁴¹ Peter Koslowski, "Einleitung. Nationalismus—Geschichtsphilosophie—Mythos," in *Die Großen Jagden des Mythos. Ernst Jünger in Frankreich.*, ed. Peter Koslowski (Munich: W. Fink, 1996), 9.

had transformed the earth and the “violent preparations” underway to destroy it altogether. Antaios—the mythical giant whose strength was lost once lifted from the ground—thus offered a mythic symbol of the fate that befalls those who become alienated from mother earth. Yet the extent of the crisis also gave hope of a new—and potentially global—spiritual unity, “a cosmic consciousness, to which the earth as such becomes a home.”⁶⁴²

To be sure, no simple return to mythic consciousness was possible. The entire history of the West since Herodotus, Jünger wrote, had been marked by a historical awareness of the march of time. Its imprint was too deep to be effaced altogether. Myth had not, however, disappeared entirely; like astrology, myth spoke to an ineradicable need for interpretation and orientation, a need which only grew in an increasingly “urban, technical-abstract” world.⁶⁴³ Indeed, state and society still depended on myth, embodied, for instance, in tales of national heroes and the mystique of the *Vaterland*. The problem, Jünger suggested, was that myth had been demoted to the status of bronze in a new iron age, a secondary resource whose improper cultivation resulted in its misuse. Jünger wrote vaguely of the “accumulation” of mythic longings and the misappropriation of mythic power by “pipe dreams” and “the will” in protest against the modern exhaustion of the historical process. The outcome was a “breaking of the dam,” whose political consequence had been “fateful missteps.” Jünger was more explicit about the resulting flood. “It is no accident,” he wrote, “that the models of the defeated powers in the Second World War originated in the Bronze and early Iron Age: the Nordic man, the ancient Roman, and the Japanese Samurai. That they could not win has to do with the basic rule that a myth cannot be restored, that it can erupt into history like a volcano, but cannot create a world climate.”⁶⁴⁴

Though underdeveloped, Jünger hinted here at a conservative variant on the “dialectic of enlightenment.” In Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s celebrated account, reason’s promise to demythologize the world had reverted to myth in the form of instrumental rationality’s unparalleled domination of man and nature.⁶⁴⁵ For Jünger, by contrast, the rationalist insistence on apprehending the world historically as a linear succession of events had robbed myth of its orienting function as a stock of timeless *Urbilder*, which history could only ever repeat in variations. The price, once faith in historical progress was shaken, had been a disastrous eruption of mythic longings fused with modern technological means. What was needed, in Jünger’s view, was neither the banishment of myth nor the attempt to recover a mythic age long since dead, but rather myth’s cultivation as a counter-weight to what Eliade had called the “terror of history,” the unease we feel in confronting events without any transhistorical vantage point from which their meaning can be derived.⁶⁴⁶ Ultimately, Jünger’s defense of myth was perspectivalist; its value was in its

⁶⁴² Jünger, “Antaios—Zeitschrift für eine freie Welt. Ein Programm,” *SW* 14, 167-168.

⁶⁴³ Ernst Jünger, *An der Zeitmauer* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1959), pp. 28-30, 97, 105-107.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99, 102-108, 118.

⁶⁴⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 2002). First published 1947.

⁶⁴⁶ See Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 141-162. A similar stress on perspectival truths, “exemplary precedents,” and a non-linear conception of history can be found in the defense of myth offered by those affiliated with the French New Right think-tank GRECE (*Groupement de recherche et d’études pour la civilisation européenne*). See Michael Torigian, “The Philosophical Foundations of the French New Right,” *Telos* 117 (1999), 23 ff.

ability to regard the world free from the assumptions of historical consciousness.⁶⁴⁷ Myth only seemed less exact when measured by an alien standard. “Where is the greater clarity,” Jünger asked, “in the Troy which lives in Homer’s songs, or in that which is resurrected by the methodologies of the historical spirit?”⁶⁴⁸

These two rather conventional themes—the need for a holistic, non-alienated relationship to the earth and the desire for emancipation from history—came together in Jünger’s frequent reference to Hesiod’s tale of the struggle between the titans and the gods as a framework for comprehending the modern age. According to Hesiod’s *Theogony*, the titans—meaning “strainers,” though the etymology is likely false—had been so named by their father (Uranus) as a reproach for their presumptuousness and lust for power. “Titanism,” in Jünger’s lexicon, stood for a host of quintessentially modern maladies: cleverness and planning, the ceaseless urge to explore and develop, the unremitting effort to dominate nature and extract its energies.⁶⁴⁹ If man in the mythic golden age had supposedly lived in abundance and in harmony with the elements, titanic man stood apart from a world which he sought only to consume.⁶⁵⁰ Perhaps above all, titanism meant the iconoclastic and self-serving denial of alternative values, of anything stabile, organic, ancient, contented, or holy. For Jünger, the great prophet of this Promethean spirit had been Friedrich Nietzsche, whose “philosophizing with a hammer” and proclamation of the death of God perfectly captured modern man’s destructive urges and embrace of profane existence.⁶⁵¹ No less important as a cipher of the age was the 1912 sinking of the Titanic, an event of unparalleled symbolic significance, combining “progress with panic, the highest comfort with destruction, automatism with catastrophe, which takes the form of a traffic accident.” Today, Jünger added, we all “resemble the passenger in a rapidly moving vehicle, which could be called the Titanic, or also the Leviathan.”⁶⁵²

Jünger’s diagnosis of modern titanism was not historical in a linear-progressive sense but rather metahistorical: as a power that reaches “out of nature and the cosmos into history,” the titanic spirit would wax and wane in its timeless struggle with a more holistic perspective. Nietzsche’s claim that “God is dead” was a correct assessment of the times; yet this only meant “that the [current] epoch’s level of insight is insufficient.” Whereas Jünger linked the titans with technology and a historical consciousness that “acts and invents in time,” the gods were associated with “creation out of timelessness” and with the work of art

⁶⁴⁷ Jünger’s position with respect to myth is reminiscent of what Susan Sontag dubbed “religious fellow-travelling,” a nostalgia for the functions and feelings of religion devoid of serious commitment or content. See her “Piety without Content,” in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1966), 249-255.

⁶⁴⁸ Jünger, *Zeitmauer*, p. 112.

⁶⁴⁹ As we’ve already seen, Jünger saw such “titanic” attitudes united in the figure of “the worker.” Jünger wrote in 1951: “In the worker the active principle unfolds in the attempt to penetrate and dominate the universe in new ways, to reach proximities and distances which no eye has ever seen, to demand forces never before unleashed” (*Der Waldgang*, p. 28). Jünger’s theory of “the worker,” most fully elaborated in a 1932 book by that name (*Der Arbeiter*), thus describes not a socio-economic class but the metaphysical essence of modernity, in which “work” (i.e., productivity and efficiency) leaves its stamp on everything.

⁶⁵⁰ Jünger, *Strahlungen I*, 28 November 1939, 83 Compare Martin Heidegger’s attempt, in “The Question Concerning Technology” (1953), to consider the essence of technology from a non-technological framework as a manner of revealing beings, in which things appear solely as a “standing reserve” available for technological manipulation. In Heideggerian terms, one might say that Jünger viewed myth as another way in which human events (as opposed to Heidegger’s “Being”) can reveal themselves.

⁶⁵¹ Jünger, “Philemon and Baucis. Der Tod in der mythischen und in der technischen Welt,” *SW* 12, 460-465; and Jünger, “Gestaltwandel. Eine Prognose auf das 21. Jahrhundert,” *Die Zeit*, 16 July 1993.

⁶⁵² Jünger, *Der Waldgang*, 30-31.

as a vehicle of transcendent meaning.⁶⁵³ A return of the gods would thus signify not the restoration of any particular religious dogma, but rather a triumph over “progress” through a negation of its underlying attitude toward time and nature. By recasting the historical change from tradition to modernity in mythic language as an eternal oscillation between the sacred and the secular, Jünger believed that titanism could not be overcome on its own terms.⁶⁵⁴ As he wrote in another context, borrowing a line from Nietzsche, “The problem of science cannot be perceived on the ground of science... Science has to be seen with the eyes of the artist.”⁶⁵⁵

But like the titanic spirit, what constituted an “age of gods” was no less an interpretive framework. Indeed, in a remark reminiscent of the Kantian Cassirer, Jünger described an awareness of gods as a “representation” (*Vorstellung*), a self-generated construction of experience outside of which no knowledge is possible.⁶⁵⁶ Any attempt to recultivate a mythic outlook would thus necessarily remain aware of itself as myth. Like Jünger’s so-called “stereoscopic” gaze, which went beyond commonplace understanding to find a magical or esoteric “depth” in the object of perception, myth was similarly available to help fill out the flattened perspective of a disenchanted age. This compound vision, Jünger indicated in the 1938 edition of *The Adventurous Heart*, meant going beyond “the representation of sequential events” to include “an evaluation of their timeless significance. In this manner, history becomes transparent.”

A limited number of figures hide behind the plethora of the recurring. History becomes like a garden here, in which the eye sees, for the first time side-by-side, the flowers and fruits that are brought forth in constantly varying climates time and again by the flow of time... As the eye sees through the clearest waters to the amphorae and columns resting on the seabed, so a liberated vision can penetrate to the grounds of time, deep below ebb and flood.⁶⁵⁷

This vantage point, reminiscent of Jung’s archetypes, was, Jünger believed, especially suited to the post-historical condition of global homogeneity that he saw as the end product of titanic man. To be sure, titanism would eventually run aground, brought

⁶⁵³ Jünger, “Gestaltwandel.” Jünger cites here Ruskin’s dictum that “the final task of art is the depiction of the action of the divine in nature.” Elsewhere, Jünger wrote: “we live in times that are unworthy of an artwork.” See *Aladdin’s Problem*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Marsilio, 1992), 24.

⁶⁵⁴ Jünger was thus more consistent than Cassirer, who, as Peter Gordon notes, concluded his defense of secular Enlightenment values in *The Myth of the State* by redescribing it in mythic terms as the eternal struggle between the world-creating Babylonian god Marduk and his dark other, the serpent Tiamat. See *Continental Divide*, 311-312. As he acknowledged, Jünger’s cyclical metaphysics of history was deeply indebted to Oswald Spengler. See Gnoli and Volpi, 50.

⁶⁵⁵ *Aladdin’s Problem*, 35.

⁶⁵⁶ Jünger, “Gestaltwandel.” The full passage reads: “Gods too count among our representations (*Auch Götter zählen zu unserer Vorstellung*). We can approach them, for instance in sacrifices and prayers, but we cannot get behind the curtain on which they appear—there they remain in the *Ding an sich*.” Jünger’s quasi-Kantian language here is likely derived from his lifelong reading of Schopenhauer, rather than from Kant directly.

⁶⁵⁷ Jünger, *AH2*, 117-118.

to ruin by the long-term unsustainability of its basic impulses.⁶⁵⁸ But in the current *posthistoire* world, one could only take stock of the past and “contemplate the stranded objects of history washed up on the shore.”⁶⁵⁹

Understanding Jünger’s attraction to myth helps illuminate his later countercultural circle in two respects. First, as we have seen, Jünger believed that market relations and formal constitutions were an insufficient basis for human society. Like Carl Schmitt in *The Concept of the Political*, Jünger held that a meaningful life is one rooted in collective convictions that transcend the egoism of liberal, consumerist society. The modern “destruction of belief,” he wrote in 1929, had not simply drained life of “metaphysical content.” Embedding the social world in the “tangible” alone had also placed a crippling burden on the now “absolute” individual personality and reduced human relations to “mere juridical matters-of-fact [and] social contracts.” “He who is his own priest,” Jünger declared, “is also his own final authority.”⁶⁶⁰ Along with other twentieth-century celebrants of mythology, Jünger believed myths, as the historical repository of shared symbols and meanings, offered the transcendent authority needed to reground community. The solidarity of friends and friendly readers could establish an oasis of fellowship in the modern wasteland where this recovery of mythic meanings might begin.

A second link between myth and friendship relates to Jünger’s longstanding belief that language was unable to convey fully the timeless order he claimed to adumbrate in his writings. Given the para-philosophical quality of Jünger’s works—even in his most developed essays, ideas are more dramatized and evoked than submitted to the rigor of sustained argument—a receptive audience was indispensable. “[D]espite ceaseless efforts,” Jünger wrote in a private 1975 letter of thanks to “friends and readers,” “the utmost (*das Letzte*) cannot be wrung out of words. They remain echoes.” The friend/reader was the one who “encounters the author in a profundity that words aim for but never reach. Here there is a mutual understanding that I daily experience, but which can only be gingerly touched.”⁶⁶¹ Jünger’s manner of deriving meaning in fact demanded a collaborative project. Marcus Bullock expressed it well in observing that Jünger’s texts forgo the “solidity of a collectively agreed upon domain of reality.” The result of emphasizing his own alternative construction of the world, Bullock argued, is that Jünger “cannot do without the presence of an alternative agreement in its stead.”⁶⁶² Fostering such alternative agreement was at the heart of Jünger’s self-understanding as a writer. “When two sixteen year olds grow impassioned in an attic or on a walk in the woods over an author they have discovered,” he wrote in a passage he later read as part of his acceptance speech for the 1982 Goethe Prize, “then this is more important than the conference of a writers association or the hearings of an academy.”⁶⁶³

⁶⁵⁸ As Jünger put it in a 1989 interview: “I study myth, and there one learns that titanism, in which we at present find ourselves, has always shipwrecked. Nietzsche’s Übermensch has failed. I place my money on artistic man, on the connection to the divine more generally.” See “Ja, gut,” *Die Zeit*, 8 December 1989.

⁶⁵⁹ Neaman, 157-160. On the idea of *posthistoire*, see Lutz Niethammer, *Post-histoire: Ist die Geschichte zu Ende?* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1989).

⁶⁶⁰ Jünger, “Die Heilige im Automobil,” 473-479.

⁶⁶¹ See chapter 1.

⁶⁶² Bullock, *The Violent Eye*, 25.

⁶⁶³ Jünger, *Autor und Autorschaft*, SW 19, 67. On Jünger’s conception of authorship, see Lutz Hagedstedt, “Ambivalenz des Ruhmes. Ernst Jüngers Autorschaft im Zeichen des Goethepreises,” in *Ernst Jünger. Politik–Mythos–Kunst* (Berlin & New York: W. de Gruyter, 2004), 167-179.

Friendship's Garden

In the late 1920s, Jünger had been eager to help usher in a new post-bourgeois order. His 1930 essay "Total Mobilization" had celebrated a return to the unity of *Gemeinschaft* through the extension of martial experiences and values into civilian life. By the late 1950s, however, with his infatuation with technology behind him and the West German economic miracle under way, Jünger saw that any end to the modern "desert" had been indefinitely postponed. Yet he found hope for the eventual arrival of "higher intellectual powers" capable of "reining in the violent motion" of the present from the twelfth-century Calabrian monk Joachim of Fiore, who had prophesized a coming age in which manifestations of the divine would guide human affairs. According to Joachim, this new age of the Spirit would be anticipated "generations in advance" by monastic orders already imbued with the proper frame of mind.⁶⁶⁴ What Jünger sought in the meantime was a similar (if less literally monastic) foreshadowing, a countercultural stand by an elite few against the alleged metaphysical emptiness of modern life.

This dubious appeal to medieval prophecy should be seen in light of the deep link we have already noted between monasticism and resistance in Jünger's imagination. Under the Third Reich, early Christian monks like St. John Cassian had supplied Jünger with a model of dispersed community based on spiritual communion. Monastic withdrawal influenced not only how Jünger imagined his own hermitlike retreat from the fallen world of Nazi Germany, but also his relationship to others—including anonymous readers—similarly marooned in the inner emigration. After 1945, these monkish tendencies would continue, fed by Jünger's frequent (and justified) feeling of being under attack, not only from those on the left who denounced him as a fascist, but from former friends as well.⁶⁶⁵ Self-exile in the Schwäbische Alb did not, however, entail a flight from human fellowship. Jünger carried on a voluminous correspondence, assiduously cultivated new and existing friendships, and played host to those who, like the pilgrims to Carl Schmitt in Plettenberg, came calling for wisdom.⁶⁶⁶

An informal network of friends and sympathetic readers would be the practical form in which Jünger, skeptical of the line-toeing of political parties and writers guilds, would try to realize Joachim's vision of a spiritual vanguard. "Since I cherish complete freedom in intellectual matters," he wrote in 1945, echoing his earlier refusal to join the Nazi-dominated German Academy of Writers, "I don't enter into any commitments."⁶⁶⁷ As before in the 1929 and 1938 editions of *The Adventurous Heart*, Jünger continued to see his own work as an instrument for rallying and guiding this new aristocracy. Opposing the "titanic powers" responsible for the Second World War, he wrote in *The Peace* (1946), meant not allowing the "methods of technical thinking" to "encroach where human happiness, love, and well-being should flourish... That is possible only if men strengthen themselves metaphysically in proportion to the growth of technical science." Finding the way back to "the divine image," however, was "a path which only the elite may tread."⁶⁶⁸ Reining in titanism was an elite labor because no more than an elect band could be expected to resist the tyranny of the

⁶⁶⁴ Jünger, *Zeitmauer*, 312-313.

⁶⁶⁵ See Kiesel (2007), 630-632.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 590-597.

⁶⁶⁷ E. Jünger to H. Grimm, 9 November 1945, A: Grimm, DLAM.

⁶⁶⁸ Jünger, *The Peace*, 67, 73.

masses that Tocqueville foresaw as the danger of a democratic age. “The more massification grows” Jünger argued, “the greater is the value and the spiritual power of those very few who are able to withdraw themselves from it.” That no hope could be expected from the political sphere, which he believed had passed decisively into the hands of mediocrities, was itself characteristic of the present “age of nihilism.”⁶⁶⁹

Within this project of resistance, friendship was a source of confirmation and recognition. In a missive addressed simply “to friends” that appeared in the wake of *The Peace*, Jünger wrote that in the pursuit of these goals “the noble, fearless minds everywhere recognize each other.” “It has been enough for me,” he declared, “that with the best fighters and intellects I got on well (*mich... verstand*).”⁶⁷⁰ Jünger elaborated on this theme in *Over the Line* (1950),⁶⁷¹ a meditation on the prospects for overcoming nihilism that he contributed to a *Festschrift* for Heidegger’s 60th birthday. Here he described friendship as an “oasis” in the modern “desert,” a site of resistance to the colossal power of “the Leviathan,” which lays claim to every facet of subjective interiority. “In such situations,” he argued, “conversation with a trusted friend is not only endlessly consoling, it also restores and confirms the world in its free and just measure. One person suffices as a witness that freedom has not entirely disappeared; but it is precisely *him* we need. Then the strength to resist grows within us.” In the Eros of friendship, Jünger wrote, an “unmonitored space is created.”⁶⁷² The recognition and confirmation of friendship extended, metaphorically, to the author-reader “friendship” as well. “What remains important to me,” Jünger later professed of his task as an author, “is the detached individual, the great lonely figure, who is able to resist in conditions difficult for the spirit.”⁶⁷³

Spiritual resistance and the search for alternative conceptions of the world are recurring themes in Jünger’s oeuvre. But it was in his postwar fiction that Jünger, more talented as an imaginative writer than a theorist, brought this constellation of motifs most clearly to expression as the hallmark of countercultural friendships in the “neomonastic” mold. Recognizable precursors to Botho Strauss’s “garden of friends” can be found in two works in particular: the novella *Aladdin’s Problem* (1983) and the much longer *Eumeswil* (1977), a kind of bible of mature Jüngerian thought, littered with historical, philosophical, and political aperçus, which served as a showcase for his idea of the “anarch.”

⁶⁶⁹ Gnoli and Volpi, *Die kommenden Titanen*, 24, 116. The famous conclusion to Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, Jünger averred, was “a foundational contribution to the analysis of Western decline,” which had left “numerous traces” in his works (78).

⁶⁷⁰ Jünger, “Erster Brief an die Freunde,” 15 July 1946, in D: Friedrich Georg Jünger, DLAM.

⁶⁷¹ The title refers to Jünger’s belief that mankind had to cross the “line” separating the current world of technological nihilism from the coming new age.

⁶⁷² Jünger, *Über die Linie*, SW 7, 273-275.

⁶⁷³ Gnoli and Volpi, 103. In 1951, Jünger presented the individual at odds with society as an urgent problem in contemporary art, one best addressed by the inwardly rebellious figure he called the “forest rebel”: “[I]n art the theme of the beleaguered individual is indeed gaining ground. This naturally emerges in particular in character portrayals, and in their adaptations to the stage and cinema but above all to the novel. Indeed, the perspectives are visibly changing as depictions of an advancing or disintegrating society are replaced by the individual’s conflict with the technical collective and its world. In penetrating the depths of this world, the author himself becomes a forest rebel—because authorship is really only another name for independence.” *The Forest Passage*, 25-26. If Frank Trommler’s account of the “missed dialogue” between readers and writers in 1950s West German literature is accurate, Jünger was atypical in his eagerness to imagine his readers and engage them in a collaborative project about the needs of the present. See “Creating a Cocoon of Public Acquiescence: The Author-Reader Relationship in Postwar German Literature,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of Western Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 301-319.

*Aladdin's Problem*⁶⁷⁴ explores an intriguing scheme: capitalism's ceaseless transformation of the world turns even graveyards into developable real estate; as a result, people will pay for the guarantee of a truly eternal resting place. Set during the Cold War, the story traces the creation of a wildly popular permanent global cemetery in the caverns of Cappadocia in modern Turkey. Along the way, Jünger's protagonist, a self-described nihilist named Friedrich Baroh, discovers a mythic dimension of meaning via a trajectory of life-altering friendships. Originally a cadet in the East German Army, Baroh first befriends a congenial officer, Jagello Müller, whose cultured tastes make him "a godsend" amidst the army's uniformity and suspicion. Of their initial exchange, Jünger writes: "One timidly touches a key and hears something that one scarcely hoped to hear: the sound. This is followed by an—almost imperceptible—smile of collusion."⁶⁷⁵ Their friendship develops through conversations on Russian literature, and the two are posted as attachés to the Berlin embassy. In such a place, Jünger writes, the "word 'friendship' strikes a sour note. As in the old religious seminaries, the officials prefer the comrades to go in threes during breaks rather than in twos."⁶⁷⁶

Despite the friendship, Baroh defects and is soon sullen and lonely in the West. Here he studies advertising and statistics and finds employment in the mortuary firm of a prosperous uncle. Once again, however, Baroh is saved by friendship, this time with a wealthy bohemian named Jersson, whom he meets by accident during a visit to a cemetery. "We exchanged only a few sentences," Jünger writes, "but with a genuine affinity, this often suffices to begin a friendship. It can be a wink, an ironic silence that reveals a spiritual rapport." Baroh quickly finds in Jersson the refined conversation he had known with Jagello, and before long he needs their regular visits "as much as an old Chinese needs opium." The friendship with Jersson, like that with Jagello, is a refuge from spiritually moribund surroundings. Yet with Jersson, Baroh takes a further step toward mastering his own nihilism. The turning point comes when Baroh witnesses a cemetery being plowed under to make way for "roads and gas stations." Disturbed by the thought, the two friends develop plans for a burial site protected from the destructive hand of progress.⁶⁷⁷ This "countermove to the motorworld" becomes a runaway sensation with a worldwide clientele, re-connecting mankind with its universal longing for the sacred and eternal.

Nonetheless, something of Baroh's own yearnings remain unfulfilled by this commercial enterprise. He reflects that "[p]eople feel more and more strongly that pure power and the enjoyment of technology leave them unsatisfied. They miss what used to be angels and what angels gave them." Only with the appearance of a mysterious figure named Phares, who takes Baroh to a surreal garden and teaches him to see the world as an emanation of the divine, does the inner emptiness that stems from living in a culture divorced from meaning finally subside. Phares, Jünger writes, "knows the primal text, of which all human as well as animal languages are merely translations or effusions."⁶⁷⁸ As his

⁶⁷⁴ The title alludes to the problem Aladdin faces of what to do with the magic lamp's fabulous powers. Like Aladdin, Jünger suggests, modern man's powers exceed his ability to use them responsibly: "Aladdin preferred the life of a minor despot. Our lamp is made of uranium. It establishes the same problem: power streaming toward us titanically" (118).

⁶⁷⁵ Jünger, *Aladdin's Problem*, 34.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 80, 84-85. In the figure of the Jewish Jersson, Jünger later admitted, he had tried to capture "certain personality traits" of his late friend Valeriu Marcu, who died in New York in 1942. See Gnoli and Volpi, 49.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 88, 96, 119-120, 123.

name suggests (*phares* means “beacon” in French), he illuminates the Ur-ground linking man to an ordered cosmos.⁶⁷⁹ More a guru than a conventional friend, Phares is an idealization of the friend role, a model of communion on a deeper plane.

Countercultural community was more explicitly thematized in Jünger’s dystopian novel *Eumeswil*. The title names a petty state in a decadent, post-apocalyptic future, an “epigonic world of languishing empires and degenerate city-states” where history has ground to a halt.⁶⁸⁰ In *Eumeswil*, Jünger writes, “values keep growing more and more shallow,” while the “great ideas for which millions got themselves killed” are no longer thought worthy of sacrifice. The distinctions that once divided populations by race, creed, and class have also “largely vanished.” *Eumeswil*, we are told, is an “atomized society,” in which only “the gross pleasures” and “the demands of everyday life” are taken seriously. This philistinism is abetted by thinking’s reduction to “purely quantitative terms” and the “decay of language” into vulgarity and slang.⁶⁸¹ Despite its futuristic setting, it gradually becomes clear that *Eumeswil* is in fact a thinly veiled portrait of what Jünger believed was his own nihilistic, post-historical present.

The story’s hero, Martin Venator, holds a day job as a historian while moonlighting as a night steward for “the Condor,” *Eumeswil*’s tyrannical potentate. Venator is sensitive to the “torment, the anxiety of the historical human being, his tireless labor with imperfect means in an ephemeral world.” As a historian, his interests are “metahistorical... involved in the model, not the urgent issue.” A consummate outsider, Venator styles himself an “anarch,” an inwardly sovereign individual emotionally detached from the society around him. (The anarch, Jünger explains, “has expelled society from himself. He is and remains his own master in all circumstance.”)⁶⁸² Though at odds with his times, Venator is close to a group of other alienated souls centered around three gifted, if intellectually unfashionable, teachers. Crucially, all three have “their direct roots in mythology, which, unlike the psychologists, they have not sterilized and secularized.” Surrounded by smugness and cultural decay, Venator and his companions alone understand the price of disenchantment: “The disempowering of the father endangers the heavens and the great forests; when Aphrodite bids farewell, the ocean goes dim; once Ares is no longer in charge of wars, the shacks of flayers multiply, the sword becomes a slaughterer’s knife.”⁶⁸³

Of these three teachers, Venator is closest to a master historian named Vigo, whose myth-derived method involves a “cross-cutting through the past” in search of “images, not explanations.” The two meet after Vigo delivers a lecture that touches Venator’s own “preoccupations” and “torment.” While others in the audience titter at Vigo’s “antiquated” ideas, Venator feels an instant connection, like a “circuit clos[ing] between two human beings.” “I sensed that [Vigo] understood me,” he muses. “This was the moment that established our friendship.” Estranged from his own family, Venator praises the bonds of

⁶⁷⁹ The name may have been taken from Baudelaire’s poem “Les Phares,” which extols eight artists whose works illuminated the world. Another possible inspiration is the Greek *Pharisaïos*, source of the English “pharisee,” denoting the ancient Jewish sect that “separated themselves” from others by affecting superior holiness. My thanks to Tim Anderson for bringing this latter possibility to my attention.

⁶⁸⁰ Jünger, *Eumeswil*, 341. Pronounced “Ömswil,” the title derives from Eumenes, one of the generals who fought over the remains of Alexander the Great’s empire (11, 86).

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 32, 57, 61, 75, 84, 347.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, 26, 70, 147, 246.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, 37, 84-85

“spiritual kinship” as “stronger than those of blood.”⁶⁸⁴ In his capacity as Vigo’s assistant and friend, he sets about “forming a circle” around the master, keeping an eye open for others “who did not succumb entirely to being up-to-date.” Together they attend evening symposia to discuss scenes from history, or they meet in Vigo’s garden and enjoy a “silent rapport.” As Venator reflects:

He who seeks shall find; nor does Eumeswil lack spiritually homesick people, if only one in a hundred or in a thousand. Three, five, or seven students were enough for an afternoon in the garden... We attempted to keep these things a secret... Nevertheless, the rumors could not be avoided, as always when a few people cut themselves off.

Venator dubs this tiny elite “people of the day after tomorrow and the day before yesterday.” Vigo puts it differently: “Here in Eumeswil the masses are ahistorical, an elite is metahistorical, most people vegetate, a few think.” *Eumeswil* is a complex, sprawling, and richly allusive novel—but one of its central themes is surely the neomonastic call to preserve collaboratively some essence of the past for a better future. Venator’s pose of hyper-individualism actually serves this project well. The anarch’s “inner neutrality” allows him to be “involved wherever and for as long as he likes.”⁶⁸⁵ Fully disinvested from state and society, he can put his energy and attention into truly chosen relationships.

A final, non-fictional attempt to link friendship to the recovery of mythic understanding can be found in Jünger’s essay on the figures of Philemon and Baucis as they appear in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Goethe’s *Faust II*. The piece, which Jünger wrote and circulated privately in 1972, was dedicated to the memory of the Austrian jurist René Marcic and his wife Blanka, friends since the late 1940s who had perished in a plane crash the year before.⁶⁸⁶ Jünger presented the very different fates of Philemon and Baucis in the two versions of the tale as emblematic of the gulf between “death in the mythical and in the technical world.” In Ovid’s account, the elderly couple provides hospitality to two travelers, who reveal themselves as Jupiter and Mercury. Offered a reward, Philemon asks only that he and his wife be permitted to serve the gods and, when they come to die, that they depart from life together. The wish is granted, and after their death an oak and a linden tree, their trunks entwined, grow from the spot of their burial. Ovid, Jünger wrote, was “at home in myth,” which united the “macro- and microcosm on the narrowest field.” The transition to death is thus portrayed as a transformation within a meaningful totality whose deeper “source” is open to view.⁶⁸⁷

For Jünger, the death of Philemon and Baucis in Goethe’s *Faust II* was, by contrast, less a proper death than the mere “banality of dying” in a world from which any meaningful fate has been withdrawn. There the elderly couple fall prey to “the absolute claim of the planning spirit” against “the quiet and contented life in its unassuming form.” Victims of Faust’s insatiable appetite to transform the landscape around him, Goethe’s Philemon and

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 21, 27, 58-59, 161. On the role of “spiritual kinship” in *Eumeswil*, see Crescenzi, “Die Welt im Auswahl,” 27-30.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 36-38, 277, 289.

⁶⁸⁶ Bernhard Gajek, “Ernst Jüngers Essay Philemon und Baucis. Der Tod in der mythischen und in der technischen Welt,” *Titan Technik. Ernst und Friedrich Georg Jünger über das technische Zeitalter*, ed. Friedrich Strack (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 257.

⁶⁸⁷ Jünger, “Philemon and Baucis,” 444, 452, 468.

Baucis are merely collateral damage in the march of progress. Like all such deaths in the technological age—the traffic accident, Jünger suggests, is the representative image—their death smacks of senselessness. Salvaging the shared demise of René and Blanka Marcic from such banality, Jünger concluded, was the task of friendship. By dwelling at length on the two tales and reminding the Marcics’ friends (the essay’s original readership) that the world of “atoms, genes, spiral nebulae, [and] galaxies” is only the abstract mask of “outer nature,” an “invention mistaking itself for a discovery,” Jünger called on the circle of mourners to reinvest their “banal death” with mythic meaning: “If it was suffered by friends such as these, we must confront the event by freeing it from the randomness and deceit of the age.”⁶⁸⁸ Modern science, in other words, certainly had its place, but its interpretive “dictatorship” needed to be broken.⁶⁸⁹ The work of friendship, Jünger seemed to suggest, consisted in elevating a more metaphysically satisfying reading of the world from one’s merely private fancy to the dignity of a *collective* frame of reference. Only in this way could the banality of modern death be redeemed. At least in Jünger’s imagination, the “garden of friends,” real or metaphorical, was a space for the redemptive recovery of mythic meaning.

Countersphere

The retreat into private domains as a refuge from public life should be seen as an ever-ready option in human affairs, more or less appealing depending on the values and exigencies of the historical moment. The civic republicanism of the Renaissance, for example, gave way, in the seventeenth century, to advocacy of the private realm by French freethinkers like Pierre Gassendi, who ran afoul of established intellectual authorities and “took seriously the Epicurean counsel to avoid the business of the world. They conformed to its demands as far as necessary, and found their true pleasure in the company of friends.”⁶⁹⁰ The inward turn during the Third Reich of non-Nazi writers like Ernst Jünger likewise has recognizable precursors in the Wilhelminian and Biedermeier periods, and an intellectual pedigree traceable to Martin Luther, who denied the right to rebel against temporal authority, thereby displacing resistance onto the spiritual plane. “*Inner emigration*,” Reinhold Grimm remarked, “has a long history in German letters.”⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 450, 453, 457, 466-467, 471. See also Marshall Berman’s similar reading of Goethe’s account of Philemon and Baucis in *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*.

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Hans Blumenberg’s argument for the compatibility of myth and enlightenment reason in *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979). Blumenberg defends myth as one of the many responses human beings have devised to deal with the ontological condition he calls “the absolutism of reality,” that is, the potentially paralyzing tendency for reality to confront us in its totality at every moment. According to Blumenberg, mythic stories serve to master reality insofar as they name and order the powers that face us. Myth can thus benefit the rationalist projects of finite humans by accounting for some aspects of reality while rational self-assertion works on others. Unlike Jünger, who claims to reconcile myth and science in an act of imagination or aesthetic perception, Blumenberg defends myth’s capacity to reduce the absolutism of reality for the service it provides to enlightenment ends. For Blumenberg’s response to Jünger’s own acts of mythopoesis, see *Arbeit am Mythos*, 14-15; and Hans Blumenberg, *Der Mann vom Mond. Über Ernst Jünger*, eds. Alexander Schmitz and Marcel Lepper (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 40-41, 94-96.

⁶⁹⁰ Nannerl Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France: The Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 146. See also Lisa Tunick Sarasohn, “Epicureanism and the Creation of a Privatist Ethic in Early Seventeenth-Century France,” in *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquility: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought*, ed. Margaret Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 175-195.

⁶⁹¹ Grimm, “In the Thicket of *Inner Emigration*,” 42.

The creation of private or semi-private spaces proved appealing to many German writers and intellectuals after 1945. One example is the literary organization Group 47. Associated with leftist pioneers of postwar West German literature such as Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll, Group 47 was formed as a forum for literary-political discussion after American occupation authorities, fearing the spread of “nihilistic and nationalistic” views, shut down the popular newspaper *The Call* in spring 1947.⁶⁹² Attendance at the group’s biannual meetings was by invitation only; it was, as one of its founders, Hans Werner Richter, described it, a “private public” to replace the public sphere denied them.⁶⁹³ For radical conservatives tainted by links to National Socialism and unwilling to warm to West Germany’s post-1945 transformations, counterspheres were likewise crucial to the search for interlocutors and influence. A good example is the network of relationships that grew up around the disgraced jurist Carl Schmitt. Institutionally ostracized after 1945, Schmitt was nonetheless widely consulted through informal channels—including invited lectures, countless epistolary exchanges, and long conversations at Schmitt’s home in Plettenberg.⁶⁹⁴ Counterspheres were also deemed necessary as a means of resistance to “Americanization” by those who, like Schmitt and Jünger, refused to submit to denazification or openly recant their earlier works. Media censorship in the occupation zones—what Schmitt damned as the “licensed public sphere”—fanned resentments about the imposition of liberalism and other supposedly foreign values. In response, Constantin Goschler observed, “radical conservatives developed an alternative to the liberal public sphere, primarily in the form of a retreat into the private sphere, where one could cultivate an arcanum amongst like-minded buddies. This practice contributed heavily to a sharp division between public and non-public or semi-public discourses that emerged in Germany shortly after the war and constituted an important element of West German political culture for some time after.”⁶⁹⁵

Of course, leftist critics rightly worried about the lingering influence of interwar radical conservatism. In the works of Jürgen Habermas, for instance, Jünger would repeatedly figure, together with Schmitt, Heidegger, and Arnold Gehlen, as one of the “Four Horsemen” threatening a revival of conservative revolutionary thought.⁶⁹⁶ But this understandable alarm was at odds with the self-conception of radical conservatives, who styled themselves as victims and wallowed in their imagined marginality.⁶⁹⁷ Jünger’s sense of himself on the edge of society was clear in his acceptance speech for the conservative

⁶⁹² Irene Heidelberger Leonhard, *Alfred Andersch. Die ästhetische Position als politisches Gewissen* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1986), 261-262. Cited in Neaman, 97.

⁶⁹³ Hans Werner Richter, *Briefe*, ed. Sabine Cofalla (Munich: Hanser, 1997), 197. Alfred Andersch, another of Group 47’s founders, was one of Jünger’s admirers on the postwar left, praising his critique of technological domination and posture as an anarchic outsider. See Neaman, 96-99.

⁶⁹⁴ See Dirk van Laak, *Gespräche in der Sicherheit des Schweigens. Carl Schmitt in der politischen Geschichte der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Berlin: Akademie, 2002); and Jan-Werner Müller, *A Dangerous Mind: Carl Schmitt in Postwar European Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

⁶⁹⁵ Constantin Goschler, “Radical Conservative Thought in the Intellectual Constellation of the Early Federal Republic,” *Cultural Critique* 69 (Spring 2008), 6-7. West German political culture, Goschler adds, was divided not only ideologically “but also in a structural sense: Under the surface of public intellectual discourse, there has always existed an intellectual underworld” (17).

⁶⁹⁶ Max Pensky, “Jürgen Habermas and the Antinomies of the Intellectual,” in *Habermas: A Critical Reader*, ed. Peter Dews (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 221.

⁶⁹⁷ The best example of this discourse of victimization was Ernst von Salomon’s autobiographical *The Questionnaire* (1951), which used the 131 questions on the Allied denazification form as a springboard for a torrent of self-justifications and angry denunciations of Allied policies in Germany after 1945.

Immermann Prize of the city of Düsseldorf in 1965. “The echo that comes from the outside world,” Jünger proclaimed, “gives the man of leisure the certainty of not standing alone, and not having exerted himself for nothing—it also gives one courage and confidence, and rids one of inner doubts about one’s own work, one’s own task.”⁶⁹⁸ At least some of the cultural influence that figures like Jünger had after 1945 can be traced to the tension between public and private conversations that lay behind this “echo.” Many Germans—perhaps a majority in the early postwar years—bristled at the Allied denazification and reeducation campaigns, and at the pressure to display the guilt and sadness expected by the victors. By refusing to submit and showcasing their bitterness, radical conservatives adopted the seemingly authentic pose of taboo-breaker, openly voicing resentments that countless Germans only dared to say in private. Official recognition was evidence that taboos were also being broken in more silent ways behind the scenes of public life. The result for the writer, Goschler noted in a reference to New Right critics like Botho Strauss, was “a kind of *radical chic* that appeals to some people even today.”⁶⁹⁹

Ernst Jünger is a revealing case study of the emotions and intimate states of mind of these German radical conservatives and their postwar audience for two reasons. The first stems from Jünger’s longstanding belief in the author-reader “friendship” as a form of direct outreach to readers in need of confirmation and spiritual sustenance. As we have seen in previous chapters, he was always intensely concerned that the rebellious attitude of his writings resonated among likeminded readers. But Jünger’s post-1945 works also dramatized precisely that withdrawal from an allegedly conformist public sphere into a freer private (or semi-public) realm which was a hallmark of the radical conservative response to Allied occupation. The *soi-disant* rebels who populate Jünger’s fictional counterspheres find friendship through shared feelings of alienation from what they deem a shallow, media-driven, administered world. In depicting this collective dissent, Jünger evoked fashionable postwar claims, on both the left and right, that life in the liberal capitalist West was also, in its own way, a condition of totalitarian unfreedom. As Jünger saw it, the defeat of Nazism was no zero hour because the “plebiscitary” character of modern life remained unchanged: the individual continued to be subject to “total mobilization” through the manipulative power of mass media, which coordinated society’s energies and wove a veil of illusions that impoverished language and experience.⁷⁰⁰ The posture of spiritual resistance that Jünger struck under the Third Reich was easily adaptable to the postwar order because, in his view, demagoguery and “titanism” were still the order of the day.

Ernst Jünger is also a good case study because of the cosmopolitan reach of his postwar circle. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Jünger, the spiritual aristocrat, was crucial in the creation of a kind of twentieth-century counter-Enlightenment “republic of

⁶⁹⁸ Quoted in Neaman, 216.

⁶⁹⁹ See Goschler, 3-8; Neaman, 48, 161-162. As Neaman notes, Jünger “felt that denazification was a cynical exercise in self-exoneration” (162).

⁷⁰⁰ On Jünger’s critique of “plebiscitary power,” see Bullock, 11-12, 263. In a 1982 interview, Jünger admitted he would rather live “in an age of ripe decay (*Verfallszeit*), say around 1725 in Venice,” and argued that the modern liberal state was a pseudodemocracy where individual freedom was, “in comparison with the Baroque, drastically reduced... Today one cannot say ‘I am a fascist.’ Then you are immediately the lowest of the low. Or you cannot drive on the left side of the street with your automobile. This is a deep encroachment on the individual. Even my father’s generation, my grandfather’s, lived much more freely than today.” Asked whether peasants in East Prussia had also been free, Jünger equivocated by mentioning the possibility of emigration. See “Ein Bruderschaftstrinken mit dem Tod.”

letters”—a long-distance intellectual community that mixed public writings with privately circulated texts, thousands of letters, and formal and informal gatherings. Jünger’s circle would make up an important part of a scattered right-wing community linked by diverse ideological and cultural ties. Like the Enlightenment-era Republic of Letters, Jünger’s connections were both international in scope and formed in opposition to the prevailing system of power, uniting under a banner of friendship radical conservatives, fellow travelers, and assorted cultural mandarins from across Europe and the Americas. In contrast to its eighteenth-century counterpart, however, Jünger’s countersphere mustered little optimism about the march of progress or emancipation through discursive reason. Broadly speaking, its aim was less to transform society into an image of itself than to establish the human ties that would enable them to feel at home in what they deemed a metaphysically barren modern world.⁷⁰¹ As Jünger put it in a 1972 letter, referring to the academy in ancient Alexandria where a society of sages devoted themselves to philosophical study: “The question is whether the substance [of history] isn’t fully consumed, and now only ahistorical, cultureless fellachoid populations spread out. In this case *nomos* and *ethos* are no more. Intellectual and artistic existence can then only be led in an insular or Alexandrian fashion.”⁷⁰²

A vivid account of the sociability of Jünger’s postwar circle was provided by his first secretary, the Swiss historian Armin Mohler (1920-2003). An avid Jünger reader who deserted to Nazi Germany in 1942 in the hope of joining the *Waffen-SS*, Mohler later completed a doctorate in philosophy under Karl Jaspers at the University of Basel, where he wrote a pioneering study of Weimar’s conservative revolution. After serving as Jünger’s private secretary from 1949 to 1953, he became an influential publicist for the postwar New Right, advocating a softer fascism modeled on French Gaullism, which combined organic national community with strong leadership and a cult of heroism. Mohler soon discovered to his disappointment, however, that Jünger was unwilling to reprise his earlier role as a cheerleader for right-wing politics.⁷⁰³ By the mid-1930s, Jünger’s political stance had undergone a decisive shift from activism to attentism—a fatalistic turn that reflected a broader move in 20th-century German intellectual conservatism toward resigned acceptance of modern society. Whereas younger figures like Mohler hoped to revitalize aspects of interwar radical conservatism for postwar politics, Jünger wrote from the cosmic perspective of myth and avoided direct commentary on current events.⁷⁰⁴ Always more a guru than a practical political thinker, Jünger was content to surround himself with refined pleasures and congenial company while contemplating the long cultural winter ahead.

From September 1949 until September 1950, Mohler kept an almost daily log of the goings-on in the Jünger household in Ravensburg. This detailed diary makes plain the

⁷⁰¹ On the role of friendship and the transformative impulse in the Enlightenment republic of letters, see especially Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

⁷⁰² E. Jünger to H. Fischer, 22 February 1972, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. “Fellachoid” (from the Arabic “fellah”—peasant) is taken from Oswald Spengler’s characterization of exhausted cultures as *Fellachentum*. See Kiesel (2007), 637.

⁷⁰³ For an excellent detailed account of Jünger’s postwar circle, from which I have drawn here, see Neaman, *A Dubious Past*, ch. 2. Mohler’s place in this circle is covered on pp. 70-73. Mohler’s influential study, still widely consulted, is *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland, 1918-1932* (1950).

⁷⁰⁴ See Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit. Konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Georg Jünger, 1920-1960* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007). As Jünger’s correspondence shows, he nonetheless followed current events very closely.

qualities of his social life that would shape his “neomonastic” postwar stance. Perhaps the most striking is the feeling of an embattled existence in a world divided between friends and foes. In one revealing anecdote, Jünger expresses something “not exactly pacifist” in private society, only to receive, to his amazement, a letter from grade schoolers asking him clarify his remarks. One could not even say something impolitic under the influence of wine, Jünger concludes, without fear that it find its way to the media.⁷⁰⁵ In another aside, he claims to be happy that his recent novel *Heliopolis* (1949) was selling poorly: “This resistance is fruitful,” he remarks, since a bestseller “would not have been good.”⁷⁰⁶ Sour grapes, perhaps, but the role of prophet despised in his own country also clearly resonated with Jünger’s self-image as an outsider.

Of course, Jünger had reason to feel besieged by enemies and critics. The same winnowing of his acquaintances that had occurred after the Nazi seizure of power occurred after 1945 as well. In several cases, former friends openly declared their distance, an act that may have resulted from a desire to make a personal break with the fascist past for which Jünger could easily be seen as a symbol or, indeed, a partial cause. In 1946, the psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich, who had considered Jünger a “father figure” in the early 1930s, wrote two letters to Jünger and his wife explaining his newfound distaste for Jünger’s elitism and his wish that his erstwhile mentor had taken up more active resistance to Nazism.⁷⁰⁷ (A more public severing of ties occurred in 1968, when Nicolaus Sombart, a former admirer who came into “friendly” contact with Jünger through Carl Schmitt, penned an unsparing denunciation in the leftist *Streit-Zeit-Schrift*.⁷⁰⁸) In a 1946 letter, Jünger described such attacks as driven by conformism and the need to compensate for past sins.

I have the impression that my antagonists want to take revenge against me for the fact that they said “Heil Hilter.” Nothing, however, will take that away. What’s more, they now have the chance to prove that outrages are disagreeable to their natures, and not just when Hitler is committing them. But they will always try to prove their arm and pen where they think there is no danger at all. They are born to coordinate themselves (*sich gleichzuschalten*).⁷⁰⁹

One of the most scathing critiques came not from a former friend but from the émigré writer Peter de Mendelssohn, who penned a long and biting review of Jünger’s World War Two diaries in 1949. Writing in the influential magazine *Der Monat*, de Mendelssohn denounced Jünger as a self-absorbed aesthete, whose diaries are blind to the human suffering of the war and reveal no evidence that his life in occupied Paris had been beset by danger or

⁷⁰⁵ “Vorbemerkung” to Armin Mohler, *Ravensburger Tagebuch. Meine Jahre mit Ernst Jünger* (Vienna and Leipzig: Karolinger, 1999), 10. The source of the leak was apparently Gerhard Nebel, whose indiscretion Jünger was able to forgive because, it is claimed, he “was incapable of sustained enmity toward persons who had once been close to him” (*ibid.*). Cf. Mohler’s reproach at a later point that Jünger could be too excessive “in abandoning earlier friendships” (76).

⁷⁰⁶ *Ravensburger Tagebuch*, 66.

⁷⁰⁷ Kiesel (2007), 537.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 631–632. The characterization of their relationship as “friendly” was by Jünger, who was apparently deeply hurt by the unexpected attack. In a letter to Schmitt, Jünger asked if Sombart (son of the sociologist Werner Sombart) was influenced by the maxim that “kicking Ernst Jünger opens doors” (632).

⁷⁰⁹ E. Jünger to E. Niekisch, 6 April 1946, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

committed to meaningful resistance of any kind.⁷¹⁰ Mohler's diary makes clear that Jünger was fully aware of such criticisms. "[T]he liberal mind," Jünger ruefully remarks, "is helpless when faced with me [and] doesn't know how to digest the nuggets."⁷¹¹ In another passage, he notes the "abstract" nature of the "hatred" directed against him, as though it were simply his position on the ideological spectrum that drove his critics mad.⁷¹²

In the face of criticism, Jünger's postwar circle functioned, in part, as a defensive ring of gatekeepers and apologists that allowed him to keep tabs on detractors, control the supply of information, and manage his public image—all while himself appearing to remain above the fray. "He who comments on himself," Jünger was fond of repeating, "sinks beneath his own level."⁷¹³ Jünger's watchdogs included private secretaries like Armin Mohler, who was followed in later years by other aspiring conservative writers such as the New Right publicist Heimo Schwilk. Sympathetic accounts of Jünger's life and oeuvre were also produced. Gerhard Nebel, whom Jünger had befriended as part of the "George Circle" in Paris's Hotel George V during the war, published a book that treated his works "as a spiritual adventure through which the reader could discover the deepest mythical layers of human existence." An authorized biography was also produced by Karl Paetel, a friend and fellow veteran of Weimar's conservative revolution, who fled Nazi Germany in 1934 and settled in New York.⁷¹⁴ In the francophone world, Jünger's good name was managed by Henri Plard, a professor of German studies at the University of Brussels, who would go on to translate many of his works. After 1945, Jünger frequently asked Plard to "break a lance for him" by responding to his critics. As an essayist, Plard also helped shape Jünger's reputation in France, a task made easier by Jünger's friendly ties to the (generally conservative) French writers he had first met in occupied Paris. These included Julien Gracq, Marcel Jouhandeau, and the French-Azerbaijani writer "Banine" (Umm-el-Banine Assadoulaeff). Members of his international "republic of letters," Jünger's French friends also published flattering tributes, a practice continued in later years by younger members of the French far right such as Alain de Benoist.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹⁰ Peter de Mendelssohn, "Gegenstrahlungen," *Der Monat* 14 (1949), 149-173. De Mendelssohn found Jünger's "sociological imagination" especially distasteful; its celebration of an elitist "knighthood" and disdain for the "rabble," he claimed, were reminiscent of Nazi attacks on the Jews. In the basement of Jünger's conceptual edifice, de Mendelssohn feared, "a small torture chamber is still to be found" (167-168). See also Neaman, 146-149.

⁷¹¹ *Ravensburger Tagebuch*, 49. In a 1960 letter to Mohler discussing revisions to his *Collected Works*, Jünger suggested it was his failure to moralize which vexed his liberal critics. "I am going to leave in all the parts that have been heavily criticized," Jünger wrote, referring specifically to the infamous "burgundy scene" (discussed in chapter 1), in which he sipped wine while taking in the spectacle of bombs falling on Paris. "My task is not to offer an ethical treatise. This is what mixes up my critics. The spirit of the times is reflected with more force in our mistakes and weaknesses, and thus we should avoid retouching if we want to hand down our work in a true form. Synchronism, the presentation of images, thoughts, and acts next to each other without any transition, belongs to our contemporary style: the evening news is proof. The people who sit there watching television while sucking on chocolates are not any better than I was on top of the [Hotel] Majestic, even though they think they are." Quoted in Neaman, 149.

⁷¹² *Ravensburger Tagebuch*, 29. Jünger contrasts his own case with that Carl Schmitt, who was more often hated, he claims, for "personal" reasons.

⁷¹³ This bon mot is from the collection of epigrams that appeared in Jünger's *Blätter und Steine* (1934).

⁷¹⁴ Neaman, 73-76. See also, Gerhard Nebel, *Ernst Jünger. Abenteuer des Geistes* (Wuppertal: Marées, 1949); and Karl O. Paetel, *Ernst Jünger. Die Wandlung eines deutschen Denkers und Patrioten* (New York: Krause 1946).

⁷¹⁵ Neaman, 76-79. As Jouhandeau described it, his friendship with Jünger had a "*je ne sais quoi* of timelessness," a claim justified by Jouhandeau's belief that they were "two exceptional individuals of a quality of spirit so

Another feature of Jünger's postwar social life illuminated by Mohler's Ravensburg diary is its sheer liveliness and warmth. This is an important point because it helps account for the strong feeling of pleasure in countercultural belonging that is evident in Jünger's literary portrayals of friendship. Dour grumbling, after all, makes a poor social glue.⁷¹⁶ We have already noted that Jünger took great pleasure in conversation with people he thought he could see eye to eye with and who stood in some contrary relation to "the herd." To this was added, after 1933, the need for discretion. The practice of caution in conversation that began in the Third Reich, when imprudent remarks could have deadly consequences (as they did for Jünger's son), was carried over into the postwar years, when journalists like Peter de Mendelssohn occasionally knocked at his door to dig for dirt.⁷¹⁷ A common refrain in Jünger's correspondence is the longing for the coziness of a private *Gespräch*—that is, face-to-face talk. Hans Speidel, one of several close friends Jünger retained from his participation in the "George Circle," would write repeatedly to the effect that a "good conversation is long overdue (*längst vonnöten*)" and muse about "how nice it would be if we could speak together."⁷¹⁸ Hardly a marginal figure—Speidel served as commander of NATO land forces in central Europe from 1957 to 1963—he also frequently called for a revival of the "George knighthood" as a "new oasis in our mechanized world."⁷¹⁹

Jünger offered a tribute to such private conversation among friends in a 1956 essay on the French writer Antoine de Rivarol (1753-1801). A royalist and counter-enlightenment polemicist who weathered the early years of the French Revolution, Rivarol was one of Jünger's heroes, a fellow occupant of a "lost position" with whom he clearly identified.⁷²⁰ Conversation, Jünger wrote, was one of the "great means of spiritual contact (*geistigen Fühlungnahme*)" which helped Rivarol make a home for himself in Enlightenment—and later revolutionary—Paris. This was because, in Rivarol's "cultivated society," "mutual understanding had grown so exquisitely refined that it could be triggered through the slightest innuendo, the lightest wing beat or shadow of a word." In lines that reflected Jünger's own experience of friendship, he described the "social climate" of Rivarol's circle as conducive to true interpersonal understanding, "in which conversation, as a direct and

extraordinary" that their friendship stood outside normal social relations. See "Reconnaissance à Ernst Jünger," *Antaios* 6 (1965), 440. For Julien Gracq's own laudation in the same issue, see "L'oeuvre d'Ernst Jünger en France," *Antaios* 6 (1965), 469-472. Elsewhere Gracq wrote: "As for me, since I opened... *On the Marble Cliffs*, I have never ceased to live in his rewarding and stimulating intimacy as you might live among hidden treasures." Quoted in Léon Riegel, "Waiting for the War to Break Out: Jünger, Buzzati and Gracq," in *Literature and War*, ed. David Bevan, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989), 97. Banine's recollections include *Portrait d'Ernst Jünger: Lettres, Textes, et Recontres* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1971). For a glowing assessment by Benoist, see "Ernst Jünger: La figure du travailleur entre les dieux et les titans," *Nouvelle Ecole* 40 (Fall 1983), 13-19.

⁷¹⁶ Recall Jünger's claim from the 1929 edition of *The Adventurous Heart* that "[t]here is no community of the dissatisfied." Quoted in chapter 3.

⁷¹⁷ As de Mendelssohn reported of an interview with Jünger, he was charming overall but could be "erratic" and change topics with "seemingly unfriendly brusqueness" when faced with probing questions. *Gegenstrahlungen*, 150. Of course, it is possible that Jünger sensed de Mendelssohn's intentions and was unwilling to supply bullets for his own assassination.

⁷¹⁸ H. Speidel to E. Jünger, 20 November 1952 and 25 April 1958, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁷¹⁹ H. Speidel to E. Jünger, 29 March 1948, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM. Jünger made his own call for reviving the "George Circle" a week earlier in a letter to Speidel, suggesting that "it would be good, even though we desperately wish another catastrophe can be avoided, to build a little club (*Verein*) just in case." Quoted in Hans Speidel, "Briefe aus Paris und aus dem Kaukasus," in *Freundschaftlich Begegnungen. Festschrift für Ernst Jünger zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Armin Mohler (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1955), 194.

⁷²⁰ Jünger, *AH2*, 69.

unreflecting emanation (*fluidum*), binds and fascinates minds... [H]ere there reigns mutual understanding in what is unsaid; the word is a symbol, that briefly lights up.”⁷²¹ By writing about the importance of tacit understanding to a dissenter like Rivarol, Jünger was also writing about himself. He saw in conversation with cultured and trusted friends like Hans Speidel a similar rapport based on common experiences and values, which allowed much that was said to pass without justification. In the private sphere, in other words, Jünger found the understanding for his position that was missing in the public arena.⁷²²

If not all of Jünger’s friendships were so rarefied, this mixture of intellectual stimulation and deep harmony was nonetheless the essence of friendship in his mind. As Mohler’s diary indicates, he was easily bored by people lacking in “metaphysical substance.” Finding himself at dinner with a factory owner and his wife, Jünger remained “rather stiff and silent.” But “in his own circle,” Mohler reports, he was far more jovial; here “the laughing Jünger was by no means rare.”⁷²³ Nor was Jünger seldom among friends. The overwhelming impression from Mohler’s journal is of a lively, bohemian—and when alcohol was involved, boisterous—social life. Jünger was forever hosting visitors, visiting friends, and attending soirées: either with friends from the “George Circle” (Gerhard Nebel, Hans Speidel, Martin von Katte, Clemens Podewils), or older friends from Weimar’s conservative revolution (Friedrich Hielscher, Carl Schmitt), or publishers (Vittorio Klostermann, Ernst Klett, Günter Neske), or other notables (the Ravensburg clergyman Wolfram Gestrich, the Munich actor Mathias Wieman). Jünger’s brother, Friedrich Georg, who had settled in nearby Überlingen, was another regular.⁷²⁴

It would be a mistake to overstate the harmony within the radical conservative subculture that persisted after 1945. Ruptures and quarrels were common. Within Jünger’s set, both Armin Mohler and Henri Plard would eventually break with their mentor on matters of political judgment.⁷²⁵ Bad blood also entered into Jünger’s relationship with Carl

⁷²¹ Jünger, “Rivarol: Leben und Werk,” *SW* 14, 213-214. The essay appeared as an introduction to a collection of Rivarol’s epigrams which Jünger translated into German. In writing about Rivarol after 1945, Jünger was continuing the strategy of inner emigration writers under the Third Reich, who did not just draw negative parallels between past and present (symbolically linking Nazi Germany to the Spanish Inquisition, for instance) but also tried to make positive contrasts, what Werner Bergengruen called the effort to “establish a counter-image.” See Reinhold Grimm, “In the Thicket of *Inner Emigration*,” 37.

⁷²² Friendship as a space of mutual understanding beyond words was explicitly noted by others in Jünger’s circle. The Swiss biochemist and discoverer of LSD, Albert Hofmann (1906-2008), who would become an intimate friend following several joint experiments with the drug, provided the following account of their friendship: “When I wanted to describe the perplexing alterations of consciousness to Ernst Jünger, no more than two or three words came out, for they sounded so false, so unable to express the experience; they seemed to originate from an infinitely distant world that had become strange... Obviously, Ernst Jünger had the same experience, yet we did not need speech; a glance sufficed for the deepest understanding.” See Albert Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child*, trans. Jonathan Ott (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 145-170. Jünger and Hofmann experimented with LSD twice, in February 1951 and February 1970, under controlled conditions and in the presence of a physician. Of Jünger’s writing, Hofmann added: “Everywhere in his prose the miracle of creation became evident, in the precise description of the surfaces and, in translucence, of the depths; and the uniqueness and the imperishable in every human being was touched upon. No other writer has thus opened my eyes” (146).

⁷²³ *Ravensburger Tagebuch*, 38-39, 45.

⁷²⁴ In an addendum to the *Ravensburger Tagebuch*, Edith Mohler paints a very similar picture (though perhaps less bohemian) of Jünger’s circle after his family’s move to Wilflingen in 1950. See pp. 90-105.

⁷²⁵ Mohler became frustrated with Jünger’s political quietism after WWII and with emendations he made to earlier writings when they were added to his first *Collected Works* in 1960. Plard broke with Jünger after the latter supposedly made a favorable comment about the French collaborator Pierre Laval. See Neaman, 72, 78-79.

Schmitt, perhaps his closest friend during the Nazi years. At issue were resentments arising from their different choices under the Third Reich and their different fates in the West German republic. Jünger, who resisted being coopted by the Nazis, managed to hold onto his status as a famous (if perennially “controversial”) author, while Schmitt, who joined the NSDAP in 1933 and helped create the legal framework for Nazi rule, was banned from public and academic life. In his posthumously published diaries, Schmitt’s bitterness is clear in denunciations of Jünger as a “primadonna” who has “neither insight nor feeling nor understanding for my position as an outlaw.”⁷²⁶ Theoretically, too, Jünger was often distant from other radical conservatives, disagreeing with Schmitt, for instance, over the desirability of a world state, and with Martin Heidegger over the preconditions for overcoming nihilism.⁷²⁷ What really bound these radical conservative and their acolytes after 1945, however, was less common philosophical positions than the fellow-feeling that came with their self-understanding as a renegade elite at odds with the establishment. Jünger expressed this well in a 1981 letter to Schmitt, in which he complained that his “image” after the Second World War had been “created by lecturers and professors, who held their tongues during the Third Reich—that I did not, rankled them all the more. You have to come to terms with this—one’s face remains reserved for friends.”⁷²⁸ Disagreements notwithstanding, it was still among ideological kin and fellow cultural mandarins that figures like Ernst Jünger felt most at home.

Counterpoint

An important context for evaluating the right-wing attraction to counterspheres after 1945 is the radically different project undertaken by Hannah Arendt. Whereas Jünger saw totalitarianism arising from the marriage of “plebiscitary” mass culture to the machine-world’s logic of technological domination, Arendt blamed modern “worldlessness,” her term for the absence of a commonly accessible, inter-subjectively constituted public sphere and public stage. Modern man’s feeling of disconnection from a “world” that lies between people, from a common public reality shared with other human beings, was, for Arendt, the basic political disaster of the modern age.⁷²⁹ If Jünger damned nihilism as an inner poverty, a

⁷²⁶ Carl Schmitt, 6 November 1949 and 15 November 1949, in *Glossarium. Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947-1951*, ed. Eberhard Freiherr von Medem (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1991), 277-278.

⁷²⁷ On Jünger’s theoretical agreements and disagreements with Schmitt, see chapter 3. In Heidegger’s view, Jünger’s talk of overcoming nihilism, in the sense of crossing “over the line,” was too linear and instrumental—a task of reenchantment and self-discovery to be achieved—and thus ill-suited to the proper inhabitation of language and the recovery of the question of Being that Heidegger thought necessary to end nihilism. See Neaman, 176-182.

⁷²⁸ E. Jünger to C. Schmitt, 8 April 1981, *Ernst Jünger—Carl Schmitt. Briefe*, 443. Hugo Fischer expressed a similar sentiment in his correspondence with Jünger. Bemoaning his lack of “friendly” treatment within the philosophical establishment, Fischer declared that contemporary philosophers like Hans-Georg Gadamer and Karl Löwith treated him as an “unwanted interloper” who would drain the already meager funds devoted to culture. According to Fischer, his work was regarded as “too original.” Philosophers like Gadamer and Löwith, he ridiculously proclaimed, were “not competent to judge me.” H. Fischer to E. Jünger, 29 March 1957 and 6 July 1957, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁷²⁹ As Arendt wrote: “To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.” See *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 52. Arendt also uses “the world” in another sense to mean the world of human artifice, the world we

“desert” in the soul, Arendt argued that the modern desert was in fact “the withering away of everything *between us*” that resulted from social atomization and the bourgeois concern for one’s narrow self-interest. It was only in this “desert of neighborlessness and loneliness,” she believed, that the “sandstorms” of totalitarianism were possible.⁷³⁰

For the “demobilized” Ernst Jünger, of course, no hope was to be expected from politics or the public sphere. Writing to Ernst Niekisch in 1950, he explained his mistrust of the media. “Its language,” Jünger claimed, “doesn’t deviate much, in either the East or the West, from what was common during the Third Reich, but remains more or less adroitly and for the most part viciously directed.”⁷³¹ “The less the artistic person has to do with politics, the better,” he added in a 1984 essay. “And indeed under any system.”⁷³² Jünger, in other words, embodied the very urge to take shelter in private existence, inward experience, and esoteric communication that Arendt found endangering genuine political life.⁷³³ In her view, inner emigration, the withdrawal “into the invisibility of thinking and feeling,” was a dangerous, if understandable, temptation. Its lure was felt not just in Nazi Germany, but anywhere “a seemingly unendurable reality” led people to “shift from the world and its public space to an interior life, or else simply to ignore that world in favor of an imaginary world ‘as it ought to be’ or as it once upon a time had been.”⁷³⁴ For Arendt, the retreat into the private sphere was problematic because it did not nourish the public world she thought was necessary as a bulwark against totalitarianism.

What makes Hannah Arendt a revealing counterpoint to the neomonastic, inner emigration instincts of postwar radical conservatives like Ernst Jünger is the importance she accorded forms of friendship in her analysis. In her biography of the Romantic-era German-Jewish salonnière Rahel Varnhagen, Arendt described the hazards of flight into introspection and private tête-à-têtes as a way to avoid an inhospitable outer world.⁷³⁵ What friendship was

have created to provide durability and stability to our lives. It, too, is sacrificed in the modern age to the instrumental rationality and endless expansion of capitalist production. See, *ibid.*, 150-158, 208-212, 256.

⁷³⁰ Hannah Arendt, “On the Nature of Totalitarianism,” in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954* (New York: Schocken, 1994), 348; Hannah Arendt, Epilogue to “Introduction into Politics,” in *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2005), 201-202. According to Arendt, the experience of hyperinflation (1923-24) and large-scale unemployment (especially after 1929) were crucial in transforming the “family man... interested in all public affairs” into “a ‘bourgeois’ concerned only with his own private existence and knowing no civic virtue.” Hannah Arendt, “Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility,” in *Essays in Understanding*, 129. See also *Origins*, 419. On the relationship between worldlessness and totalitarianism in Arendt’s thought, see, Dana Villa, “Totalitarianism, Modernity, and Tradition,” in *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 180-203.

⁷³¹ E. Jünger to E. Niekisch, 3 April 1950, A: Ernst Jünger, DLAM.

⁷³² Jünger, *Autor und Autorschaft*, SW 19, 60.

⁷³³ Arendt, who was familiar with at least some of Jünger’s work, summed up her overall opinion in a letter to Waldemar Gurian. Referring to a recent book on Jünger, Arendt wrote: “I already don’t like him.” Hannah Arendt to Waldemar Gurian, 4 March 1946, Correspondence File, 1938-1976, Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress. Arendt was struck, however, by the defiant quality of Jünger’s WWII diaries, which “offer perhaps the best and most honest evidence of the tremendous difficulties the individual encounters in keeping himself and his standards of truth and morality intact in a world where truth and morality have lost all visible expression.” See “The Aftermath of Nazi Rule,” in *Essays in Understanding*, 260. Though he remarked that Martin Heidegger had spoken to him often of Arendt, Jünger appears to have taken little notice of her work. See Gnoli and Volpi, 28.

⁷³⁴ Hannah Arendt, “On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing,” in *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 19.

⁷³⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). While able to secure “the power and autonomy of the

for Rahel Varnhagen, Arendt would later identify more explicitly with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was, she wrote, the quintessential advocate of friendship conceived “solely as a phenomenon of intimacy, in which friends open their hearts to each other unmolested by the world and its demands.” Such a view, she added, conformed well “to the basic attitude of the modern individual, who in his alienation from the world can truly reveal himself only in privacy and in the intimacy of face-to-face encounters.”⁷³⁶

Such friendships generally go by the name “fraternity” (or sometimes “brotherhood”) in Arendt’s works. Their warmth and compassion offered a substitute for the missing light of public discourse characteristic of what Arendt called “dark times.” “Those who have lived in such times and been formed by them,” she wrote, “have probably always been inclined to despise the world and the public realm, to ignore them as far as possible, or even to overleap them and, as it were, reach behind them... in order to arrive at mutual understandings with their fellow men without regard for the world that lies between them.” The crucial point about the “the special kind of humanity” to be found in such dark times, however, is the apolitical nature of the sentiments involved.⁷³⁷ The darkness of the heart, Arendt wrote, is ultimately mute; it abolishes the need for the dialogue “that talks *to* somebody *about* something that is of interest to both because it *inter-est*, it is between them.”⁷³⁸ Such feelings of fraternity, she argued, evaporate the moment they meet the light of “the common, visible world.”⁷³⁹ The great error of the French Revolution, in her view, was its attempt to transform fraternity into a politically active principle. As a quality of the injured and the oppressed, the warmth of fraternity is not transmissible to others with a different position in the world. A politics of fraternity could thus only give rise to a humanitarian impulse which sought commonness, not in the outer spaces of a public realm shared by all, but in some inner capacity for suffering or compassion common to all mankind. Rather than an antidote to worldlessness, such humanity actually deepened the condition, bringing with it “an atrophy of all the organs with which we respond [to the world].”⁷⁴⁰

If the compassion of fraternity had injected considerable “mischief” into the revolutionary tradition on the left, the radicalism of the right fared no better in Arendt’s analysis. The “tribal nationalism” of the pan-movements (e.g., Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism) that arose in the late nineteenth century betrayed a similar confusion of public and private in their response to modern worldlessness.⁷⁴¹ As Arendt argued in *The Origins of*

soul,” Arendt argued, romantic introspection did so only “at the price of truth... for without reality shared by other human beings, truth loses all meaning” (91).

⁷³⁶ “Lessing,” 12, 24. Cf. Seyla Benhabib’s argument that the line between properly political “civic friendships” and the more private friendships Rahel found in the salons is by no means as clear-cut as Arendt maintained. “The Pariah and Her Shadow: Hannah Arendt’s Biography of Rahel Varnhagen,” *Political Theory* 23 (February 1995), 19-20.

⁷³⁷ “Lessing,” 11-13. The most prominent example of a pariah people in Arendt’s work is, of course, the Jews. It seems likely that her sensitivity to the virtues of worldliness, of shared responsibility for the common interest, was a product of her experience as an émigré, and especially of the “wordly” friendships she formed with intellectuals like Waldemar Gurian, Karl Jaspers, and Mary McCarthy, which were built on passionate debate about public events.

⁷³⁸ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1990), 86-87, 96.

⁷³⁹ “Lessing,” 16.

⁷⁴⁰ “Lessing,” 13-16.

⁷⁴¹ In Arendt’s terms, such “tribal nationalism,” which overflowed and disregarded the state, was distinct from the far greater boundedness by the state to be found in “Western nationalism,” whose paradigm Arendt located

Totalitarianism (1951), the hallmark of such nationalism was the “identification of nationality with one’s own soul... that turned-inward pride that is no longer concerned only with public affairs but pervades every phase of private life until, for example, ‘the private life of each true Pole... is the public life of Polishness.’”⁷⁴² This identification with the imagined intimacy of a national community, was, for Arendt, characteristic of the loneliness of mass man, who sought a “sense of having a place in the world” by dissolving himself into a movement or party.⁷⁴³

According to Arendt, the true peril of the modern condition lay in the fusion of such political (or rather, *anti*-political) instincts to the falsifying logicity of the pseudotheories she called “ideology.” Not worldlessness alone, but rather its conjunction with the ideological insistence on deducing all of historical reality from a handful of supposedly self-evident premises—about, say, a master race or the triumphal march of the proletariat—had created the toxic brew that made totalitarianism possible.⁷⁴⁴ The decisive development that allowed logic to become “productive” in this way was the breakdown of those embodiments of past experience Arendt termed “prejudices,” without whose “unabashed appeal to the authority of ‘they say’” mankind would require the “superhuman alertness” needed to confront experience afresh at every moment. Though hardly unproblematic, prejudices *did* provide standards by which judgments about the world could be made, as well as a common horizon of assumptions through which people could “recognize themselves and their commonality.”⁷⁴⁵ The crisis of the modern world, in Arendt’s view, stemmed from the loosening of culture and politics from the solid foundations of a tradition that had once stabilized and guided the human enterprise.⁷⁴⁶ The loss of the taken-for-granted authority of tradition meant, in Tocqueville’s famous phrase, that “the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future.”⁷⁴⁷ In the resulting obscurity, prejudices too readily ossified into claims to objective certainty and logically demonstrable “truth.” It is was precisely in the crumbling of prejudices which announced “every historical crisis,” Arendt maintained, “that they start to

in France. On this issue, see Ronald Beiner, “Arendt and Nationalism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana Villa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 44–64. As Beiner notes of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: “The work as a whole is directed at showing how modern ideologies disfigure political life, and Arendt is in no doubt that nationalism counts as a full-fledged ideology in her culpable sense” (49).

⁷⁴² *Origins*, 292–293, 299; “Lessing,” 14.

⁷⁴³ *Origins*, 421, 429.

⁷⁴⁴ As Arendt wrote in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: “Racism is the belief that there is a motion inherent in the very idea of race... The movement of history and the logical process of this notion are supposed to correspond to each other, so that whatever happens, happens according to the logic of one ‘idea.’ ... Ideologies always assume that one idea is sufficient to explain everything in the development from the premise, and that no experience can teach anything because everything is comprehended in this consistent process of logical deduction.” *Origins*, 605.

⁷⁴⁵ Hannah Arendt, “Introduction into Politics,” in *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken, 2005), 99–104. Arendt’s defense of the utility of prejudice resembles Hans-Georg Gadamer’s understanding of prejudice as “a judgment that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined.” See *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 271–279.

⁷⁴⁶ “Authority, resting on a foundation in the past as its unshaken cornerstone, gave the world the permanence and durability which human beings need precisely because they are mortals—the most unstable and futile beings we know of. Its loss is tantamount to the loss of the groundwork of the world, which indeed since then has begun to shift, to change and transform itself with ever-increasing rapidity.” See Hannah Arendt, “What is Authority?” in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 95.

⁷⁴⁷ See, for instance, Hannah Arendt, “Socrates,” in *The Promise of Politics*, 38.

become dangerous, and people, who no longer feel protected by them in their thinking, begin to embellish them and turn them into the basis of that sort of perversion of theory that we commonly call 'ideologies' or 'worldviews.'"⁷⁴⁸

For Arendt, the specifically political crisis of modernity was thus twofold, a product both of the worldlessness to be found in the bad ways we had developed to think about our relations with a larger community, and of the bad reasoning we had fallen back on to cope with the collapse of tradition. What was needed to meet the crisis head-on, she believed, were the practices and habits of mind that would enable the formation of judgments in a foundationless world, without either the terrifying logic of ideology or a pious—and, in her view, unrealistic—return to the authority of traditional standards.⁷⁴⁹ What was needed, in other words, was a common sense able to “orient ourselves in a world common to ourselves and others,” one based, not on the supposed unity of a common feeling inherent to all, but on an intersubjectively generated feel for the in-between world threatened in the modern age.⁷⁵⁰

As Arendt understood it, this intersubjective sense of a common world (as opposed to the common sense of a universally shared subjectivity) would accomplish two things. It would help foster the worldliness lacking in the modern condition, and it would allow judgments to be made without recourse to the false objectivity of ideology. “The loss of standards,” Arendt wrote,

which does indeed define the modern world in its facticity and cannot be reversed by any sort of return to the good old days or by some arbitrary promulgation of new standards and values, is therefore a catastrophe in the moral world only if one assumes that people are actually incapable of judging things per se, that their faculty of judgment is inadequate for making original judgments, and that the most we can demand of it is the correct application of familiar rules derived from already existing standards.⁷⁵¹

Arendt's principal model for such “original judgments” was Immanuel Kant's idea of the *sensus communis* involved in aesthetic judgment. For Kant, judgments of taste were neither purely subjective whims,⁷⁵² nor were they universally binding on all subjects. Rather, they

⁷⁴⁸ “Introduction into Politics,” 102, 152.

⁷⁴⁹ For Arendt, the inadequacy of conventionalism was made apparent in the figure of Adolph Eichmann, whose conscience, she observed, had been too readily soothed by “the simple fact that he could see no one... who actually was against the Final Solution.” Eichmann's other fatal flaw, Arendt noted, was “his almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow's point of view.” Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), 47-48, 116. “Taken together,” Sandra Hinchman has argued, “these observations convinced Arendt that what we need to restrain political barbarism is not a set of rules... that we might routinely apply in all our undertakings, but instead a public activity which, when performed, would force us to consider things from the perspective of other people.” Sandra K. Hinchman, “Common Sense and Political Barbarism in the Theory of Hannah Arendt,” *Polity* 17 (Winter 1984), 319.

⁷⁵⁰ “Lessing,” 13; Hannah Arendt, “Understanding and Politics,” in *Essays in Understanding*, 318.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁷⁵² As Arendt noted, such judgments must be liberated from “‘subjective private conditions,’ that is, from the idiosyncrasies which naturally determine the outlook of each individual in his privacy.” Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance,” *Between Past and Future*, 220. That Arendt was already thinking well within the Kantian model of aesthetic judgment in the 1950s can be seen in her appeal to Kant's “reflective judgment” in “Introduction into Politics,” 102-104.

made claim to an *intersubjective validity* based not only on a capacity to think as part of a community (thus putting ourselves into the minds of others), but also on the ability to communicate the grounds for such judgments and persuade others to adopt their conclusions.⁷⁵³ Yet while friendship rarely appeared in Arendt's more famous discussions of Kant's notion of common sense, it was central to her effort in the 1950s to imagine the kinds of relations which might sustain the communication and foster the judgments that would allow such common sense to appear. In contrast to the "worldless" forms of community that we have encountered in Ernst Jünger—the silent harmony of comradeship,⁷⁵⁴ the esoteric messages to elite readers, the private conversations among a select circle of friends—Arendt appealed to a more specifically "political friendship," exemplified, as she saw it, by Socrates and the German Enlightenment philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.

In an essay written in 1954, Arendt identified in Socrates a kind of philosophizing that did not simply oppose truth to opinion (*doxa*), but rather attempted to deliver citizens of the truth inherent in their opinions. In Arendt's view, the Greek polis was political in the deepest sense, a space in which free citizens came together as equals to discuss matters of common concern. "For the Greeks," she argued, "only the constant interchange of talk united the citizens of the polis."⁷⁵⁵ Socrates' life, she notes, was thoroughly public, moving in the marketplace and its sea of opinions. Yet to Socrates and his fellow citizens, the expression and exchange of *doxai* signified not something arbitrary and subjective, but rather the formulation of the particular way in which the world "opens itself to me." If the world opens up differently to each of us, however, its commonness could only reside "in the fact that the same world opens up to everyone."⁷⁵⁶ In interrogating his fellow citizens and eliciting their *doxai*, Socrates was motivated not only by the belief that he had to begin with questions, but also by the conviction that, "just as nobody can know beforehand the other's *doxa*, so nobody can know by himself and without further effort the inherent truth of his own opinion." Socrates' role as a gadfly was thus not to educate Athenians by telling "philosophical truths"; rather, it was to "improve their *doxai*, which constituted the political life in which he too took part."⁷⁵⁷

Arendt draws a sharp distinction between the persuasion inherent in such Socratic midwifery and the "tyranny of truth" to be found in Plato, who, for Arendt, is the classic proponent of a philosophy that attempts to order political life by a pre-political vision of absolute truth.⁷⁵⁸ Socrates' method is, in short, the very opposite of ideological thinking. Arendt likens this sort of dialogue, "which doesn't need a conclusion in order to be

⁷⁵³ The fullest statement of Arendt's understanding of Kantian aesthetic judgment can be found in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). The success of this appropriation has been the focus of considerable dispute. For a skeptical view and a useful survey of the contours of the debate, see especially Andrew Norris, "Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense," *Polity* 29 (Winter 1996), 165-191.

⁷⁵⁴ Recall Arendt's argument regarding military comradeship, quoted in chapter two, that "the strong fraternal sentiments collective violence engenders have misled many good people into the hope that a new community together with a 'new man' will arise out of it. The hope is an illusion for the simple reason that no human relationship is more transitory than this kind of brotherhood, which can be actualized only under conditions of immediate danger to life and limb." See *On Violence*, 164-166.

⁷⁵⁵ "Lessing," 24.

⁷⁵⁶ "Socrates," 14.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

meaningful,” to that most typically found among friends. Conversation among friends, she writes, largely “consists of this kind of talking about something that the friends have in common. By talking about what is between them, it becomes ever more common to them.”⁷⁵⁹ What’s more, it fosters the habits of mind which allow us to understand others. As Arendt writes:

The political element in friendship is that in the truthful dialogue each of the friends can understand the truth inherent in the other’s opinion. More than his friend as a person, one friend understands how and in what specific articulateness the common world appears to the other, who as a person is forever unequal or different. This kind of understanding—seeing the world... from the other fellow’s point of view—is the political kind of insight par excellence.

“Politically speaking,” she concludes, “Socrates tried to make friends out of Athens’ citizenry... [He] seems to have believed that the political function of the philosopher was to help establish this kind of common world, built on the understanding of friendship.”⁷⁶⁰

Arendt’s most sustained treatment of friendship as a political concept, however, appeared in her 1959 address upon accepting the Lessing Prize of the city of Hamburg.⁷⁶¹ “Lessing’s attitude toward the world,” she wrote, “was neither positive nor negative, but radically critical,” sharing with Socrates an instinctive concern for the “*relative* rightness of opinions.”⁷⁶² For Arendt, Lessing’s style of thinking was also decisively *un*-romantic. This was not, she stressed, “an escape from the world into the self” or “an activity pertaining to a closed, integrated, organically grown and cultivated individual.” It was, rather, a mode of action *in the world*, a willingness to take sides “for the world’s sake, understanding and judging everything in terms of its position in the world at any given time.” This mentality, Arendt continued, “can never give rise to a definite worldview which, once adopted, is immune to further experiences in the world because it has hitched itself firmly to one possible perspective.”⁷⁶³ Lessing, she writes, “rejoiced in the very thing that has ever... distressed philosophers: that the truth, as soon as it is uttered, is immediately transformed into one opinion among many.” Coming from a man who, in her view, was “already living in ‘dark times,’” Arendt finds such non-ideological thinking of special significance, adding that “we very much need Lessing to teach us this state of mind.”⁷⁶⁴

Lessing’s fundamental worldliness was expressed in a conception of political friendship that was “sober and cool rather than sentimental,” based not on the “intimately personal,” but on the reference it made to the common world. “Lessing,” she argues, “was concerned solely with humanizing the world by incessant and continual discourse about its affairs and the things in it. He wanted to be the friend of many men, but no man’s brother.”⁷⁶⁵ The subjectivity of such political friendship is “always framed not in terms of the

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 16

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 16, 18.

⁷⁶¹ The address reflected a revision of Arendt’s earlier view of Lessing. See Liliane Weissberg, “Humanity and Its Limits: Hannah Arendt reads Lessing,” in *Practicing Progress: The Promise and Limitations of Enlightenment*, eds., Richard E. Schade and Deiter Sevin (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 187-198.

⁷⁶² “Lessing,” 5, 7. [Italics mine.]

⁷⁶³ “Lessing,” 7-9.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 8, 27, 30.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 25, 30

self but in terms of the relationship of men to their world, in terms of their positions and opinions.” The wisdom of Lessing’s play *Nathan the Wise*, Arendt argues, was its protagonist’s readiness to sacrifice truth to friendship.⁷⁶⁶ Indeed, the great value of Lessing’s view of friendship was its privileging of opinion and unending discourse over the “duty of ‘objectivity’” or a commitment to particular doctrines. “Any doctrine that in principle barred the possibility of friendship between two human beings would have been rejected by his untrammelled and unerring conscience.” “Lessing’s greatness,” Arendt maintains, “does not merely consist in a theoretical insight that there cannot be a single truth within the human world but in his gladness that it did not exist and that, therefore, the unending discourse among men will never cease so long as there are men at all.”⁷⁶⁷ Such an absolute truth in the human realm, were it to exist, would threaten humanity itself, precisely because it would then appear “as though not men in their infinite plurality but man in the singular, one species and its exemplars, were [left] to inhabit the earth.”⁷⁶⁸

Conclusion

Hannah Arendt’s attempt to rehabilitate “political friendship” in the public sphere can help us see the stakes in Ernst Jünger’s project as a writer. As forms of communication and models of sociability, Jünger’s works partook of the apolitical (in the sense of “worldless”) impulses that drove broader movements in German history: romanticism, nationalism, the right-wing celebration of military comradeship, the non-Nazi inner emigration, and the radical conservative attraction to counterspheres after 1945. In chapter two, we saw how Jünger turned to the comradeship of the WWI “front experience” as an answer to the existential crisis he confronted in the immediate postwar years. Confused by the political and social upheavals and worried that his wartime experience could not be adequately explained, Jünger was desperate for a vantage point from which the war made sense and could be communicated to others. Comrades who experienced violence together, he came to believe, had forged a bond deeper than words. This tacit understanding was attractive because it united people prior to the need for language, and thus signaled a return to the taken-for-granted assumptions that supposedly marked truly organic communities. Jünger’s “new nationalism” appealed to this sub-linguistic level of mutual understanding as a bridge between his private sense of the Great War’s meaning and what he believed was the inner life of a nation revitalized by collective struggle.

In chapters three and four, we considered how Jünger responded to the failure of his nationalist project to rally the following he desired. Facing the loss of traditional authority and, after 1933, the “nihilism” of National Socialism, Jünger acknowledged the need to better articulate his visions. Beginning with the 1929 version of *The Adventurous Heart*, he moved beyond the war experience and undertook a quasi-phenomenological project to find something unconditionally valid, some new basis of universality, in his own experience of modern life. But Jünger’s reliance on difficult-to-describe “primal” experiences—speed and danger, shock and astonishment, violence and death—as a source of timeless truths necessarily limited his role to that of a recondite poet-philosopher, promising to initiate

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 26, 29.

⁷⁶⁷ “Lessing,” 15, 24, 27-29. See also, Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 52-54.

⁷⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 31.

readers into the truth at the heart of reality. Terrified of being trapped in his own head, Jünger sought a basis for human fellowship through oracular pronouncements reminiscent of vatic poets like Friedrich Hölderlin and Stefan George.

The problem of communicating his meaning never ceased to plague Jünger's project. As J. P. Stern observed, the vivid scenes of Jünger's mature works often conclude with a return to his own narrative voice, which insists "on drawing some meaning, some validation from it all." This "self-referential" turn, Stern argues, is necessary because Jünger "doesn't trust... his own prose" to convey the intended meaning through its spontaneous resonance with readers' own experience.⁷⁶⁹ Marcus Bullock makes a similar point in noting that Jünger never "identifies himself with human lives through the common bonds of individual needs, interests, and desires."⁷⁷⁰ In Arendt's terms, we might say that Jünger disdains to speak of the in-between world that concerns us all, remaining instead in the darkness of private experience, where he believed true revelation was found. The result was that Jünger was forced, after 1945, to reconcile himself to a circumscribed community of friends and friendly readers, and to what he believed was a mutual understanding rooted in "a profundity that words aim for but never reach." In Arendt's view, by contrast, "primal" experiences were wholly inadequate to the demands of modernity. They were not only too fleeting, they were also far too private and incommunicable to enter public life at all. For Arendt, such experiences approached the "radical subjectivity" she associated with the experience of pain, whose intense privacy resisted being transformed into "a shape fit for public appearance." The subjectivity of a singular experience, she noted, "does not cease to be singular if the same experience is multiplied innumerable times."⁷⁷¹

Is Ernst Jünger's project thus a failure? The question must be answered on two levels. As a personal response to quintessentially modern experiences of alienation and disorientation—feelings Jünger experienced as an adolescent, and which were amplified by the Great War and its aftermath—his authorial path must be judged a success. Marcus Bullock is hardly alone in declaring that Jünger's "magical transformation of things into sources of rapturous symbolic presence is a lonely labor that never reaches into another human presence."⁷⁷² But the important point is that the verdicts issued by critics like Arendt and Bullock—defensible, to be sure, from any standpoint committed to reason, emancipation, democratic solidarity, and material well-being—bear little resemblance to the inner view of Jünger's social life. As we have seen, he never lacked for human fellowship, and apparently died a happy man. Indeed, it is difficult to resist echoing Hans Speidel's judgment that Jünger had "a genius for friendship"—a genius that arose from the depth of his need for communication and mutual understanding. To borrow a line from John Stuart Mill, we might charitably access Jünger's pursuit of community as an "experiment in living" that can enrich our own thinking about the nature of the good life, without any need to take on board those blind spots and failings that brought Jünger closer than he thought to National Socialism. Golo Mann's evaluation of Jünger is instructive in this regard. "[E]ven if we wish he would add to the independence he has shown (from the public and the powers that be) a similar independence from the mistakes of his own past," Mann wrote in a 1960

⁷⁶⁹ J. P. Stern, "Representations of the Self," 22.

⁷⁷⁰ Marcus Bullock, *The Violent Eye*, 176.

⁷⁷¹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50-51, 58. As she elsewhere suggested, "the truly sublime, the truly horrible, or the uncanny" cannot become the object of discourse. Lessing, 25.

⁷⁷² *The Violent Eye*, 176.

essay, “we still count him among those who make our lives a little richer and from whom one can, with caution, also learn.”⁷⁷³

What about Jünger’s ideas? Here a more measured judgment is called for. As an attempt to orient mankind in a post-traditional world and supply the spiritual-metaphysical foundations for a community of shared meaning, his writings succeed, at best, only on the margins. Scholarly interest in his oeuvre is as strong as ever.⁷⁷⁴ But his public communications—Jünger was, after all, a writer—struggle to connect viscerally with most readers. On the question of Jünger’s vision into the essence of things, one either shares the conviction that a master has plumbed the depths of human existence, or one does not. Though works like *Storm of Steel* and *On the Marble Cliffs* stand out as exceptions, Jünger was more a boutique than a bestselling author. His works have always found a modest audience of true enthusiasts—usually, if not exclusively, on the political right.⁷⁷⁵ Barring the seismic shift in the culture to which Jünger looked forward, this situation is unlikely to change any time soon. His works will remain, as Joschka Fischer put it, “a kind of... insider’s tip, surrounded by the aura of intellectual obscenity.”⁷⁷⁶

But there is fascination and influence in this outsider position. Jünger’s failure to sway more readers redounds to his power as a countercultural icon. Like the American libertarian essayist Albert Jay Nock, Jünger takes up the role of the prophet, speaking to an elitist “remnant” that imagines itself able, by force of intellect and character, to resist the fallen culture of a mass age.⁷⁷⁷ As we have already seen, some of Jünger’s readers have found this pathos of exclusivity irresistible. In a 1995 laudation, Botho Strauss was breathless in his praise of Jünger’s unfashionableness. According to Strauss, Jünger’s resistance to the utilitarian language and pedestrian concerns of the “horrid, buzzing majority” had made him a “prototype” of the “subversive-radical” artist able to escape the fetters of his age.⁷⁷⁸ In the expanded version of “Impending Tragedy” that appeared in the 1994 New Right anthology *The Self-Confident Nation*, Strauss elaborated on the “garden of friends” in language that could have been lifted straight out of Jünger’s *Eumeswil*. “The minority,” Strauss proclaimed, “is by far too many! There is only the tiny cluster of scattered individuals... [and] only in the narrowest literary-ecological enclaves, in thought- and feeling-reservations, is survival still possible.”⁷⁷⁹

How widespread these attitudes are among the literati of the New Right is difficult to judge. It is significant that the editors of *The Self-Confident Nation*, Heimo Schwilk and Ulrich

⁷⁷³ Quoted in Helmuth Kiesel, “Ernst Jünger 1895-1995: Eine kritische Würdigung von Leben und Werk,” *Les Carnets* 2 (1997): 11-12. Kiesel adds: “It goes without saying that by ‘learn’ Golo Mann did not mean deriving doctrines and instructions, but rather taking as an object of reflection the historical experience contained in a work.”

⁷⁷⁴ Jünger life and works are today well-represented in seminar rooms and symposia and museums. An example is the German Literary Archive in Marbach, sometimes dubbed “the Pantheon of German Literature,” which staged a massive exhibit of Jüngeriana in November 2010, and which routinely hosts conferences and talks devoted to Jünger.

⁷⁷⁵ Among those on the political left who at one time admired Jünger are the writers Alfred Andersch, Carl Zuckmayer, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Johannes Becher, and Heiner Müller. See Neaman, 96-102.

⁷⁷⁶ Quoted in Schwilk, *Ernst Jünger*, 521.

⁷⁷⁷ See the epigraph to this chapter.

⁷⁷⁸ Strauss, “Refrain einer tieferen Aufklärung,” in *Magie der Heiterkeit. Ernst Jünger zum Hundertsten*, eds. Günter Figal and Heimo Schwilk (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1995), 323-24.

⁷⁷⁹ Strauss, “Anschwellender Bocksgesang,” in *Die selbstbewusste Nation*, 33.

Schacht, drew approving attention to Strauss's lines in their own introduction.⁷⁸⁰ But while some critics have seen Jünger's postwar writings as coded signals to Weimar's unreconstructed radical right,⁷⁸¹ from today's perspective such anxieties are hard to credit. If Richard Herzinger, writing in 1995, could observe a "renaissance" in the conservative critique of modernity and ask rhetorically if everyone was becoming a Jünger clone,⁷⁸² by 2003 Jan-Werner Müller could argue persuasively that the New Right had already decisively failed in its bid for cultural hegemony.⁷⁸³ If Müller is correct that the New Right's star has dwindled, then its adherents should find Jünger's lessons of countercultural withdrawal timely. Indeed, one source of weakness in the New Right's program is its fondness for elitist non-conformity, which clashes with its desire to conquer the public sphere. Schwilk admits as much in his contribution to *The Self-Confident Nation*. Calling for a "self-consciousness" that resists "social consensus" without undertaking the simple "escape of opting out" (*Flucht ins Aussteigertum*), he acknowledges this "can hardly be realized on a mass scale." At the same time, Schwilk channels Carl Schmitt's claim for the importance of commitments that transcend individual existence and bind communities, insisting, with Schmitt, that such collective values aid our "power to resist... The *resisting* of the individual is allied to the *resistance* of the nation."⁷⁸⁴ Schwilk, it seems, is with or against the collective as the rhetorical situation demands.

More important from a historical perspective is that Ernst Jünger's postwar works provide what may be the most elaborate and sustained working out of the neomonastic position in the twentieth century. German intellectuals disgusted with their times are nothing new, but neither is the hope for regeneration through collective retreat. If, as McClure pointed out, this is a "very weak politics," it is also one by no means exclusively identifiable with the political right. "The 'flight into inwardness' and the insistence on a private sphere," the New Left theorist Herbert Marcuse remarked, "may well serve as bulwarks against a society which administers all dimensions of human existence."⁷⁸⁵ Faced with the seemingly global triumph of neoliberal capitalism, the left too may ultimately find such postures tempting. If that is the case, Ernst Jünger's project may prove most valuable in clarifying the possibilities and pitfalls of countercultural friendship and neomonastic retreat.

⁷⁸⁰ See Heimo Schwilk and Ulrich Schacht, Introduction to *Die selbstbewusste Nation*, 14-15.

⁷⁸¹ A good example of this thesis is supplied by Horst Seferens. I agree with Seferens, who argues for the virtual *identity* of fiction and non-fiction in Jünger's postwar writings, that his works aim to "fortify the veterans and heirs of the Conservative Revolution in their elitist ideological self-understanding." I depart from Seferens, however, in interpreting this not as a stealthy political mobilization, but, at least for Jünger, as a more resigned practice of elitist withdrawal and collective resistance. See his *Leute von übermorgen und von vorgestern. Ernst Jüngers Ikonographie der Gegenaufklärung und die deutsche Rechte nach 1945* (Bodenheim: Philo, 1998), 9-10.

⁷⁸² See Herzinger, "Werden wir alle Jünger?" *Kursbuch* 122 (1995), 93-117.

⁷⁸³ See Müller, "From National Identity to National Interest. The Rise (and Fall) of Germany's New Right," in: *German Ideologies since 1945: Studies in the Political Thought and Culture of the Bonn Republic*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 185-205.

⁷⁸⁴ Heimo Schwilk, "Schmerz und Moral. Über das Ethos des Widerstehens," in *Die selbstbewusste Nation*, 401.

⁷⁸⁵ Quoted in McClure, *Partial Faiths*, 22. The lines are from Marcuse's *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1978).

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