

**TRANSFORMATION AND CATHARSIS:
PARALLEL EXPERIENCES OF GERMAN NATIONALISM DURING THE FIRST
WORLD WAR**

by

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This paper examines the complexities of German Nationalism during the Great War by employing a micro-level comparative analysis of the intellectual biographies of two superficially antithetical writers, Ernst Jünger and Hermann Hesse. It begins with a methodological overview, followed by a general sketch of the historical context, before examining and defining each man's ideas about Nationalism in isolation, concluding with a direct comparative analysis. This study demonstrates that Jünger and Hesse's ideas, far from being antithetical, actually ran parallel to each other. It illustrates that both men viewed Nationalism as the driving force for individual internal transformations, which, in aggregate, were a vehicle for external societal transformation. The evolution of this common definition of Nationalism and its societal role mirrored the overarching emotional dynamics of World War I, particularly the profound need to find catharsis and meaning in the years immediately after the armistice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VII
1.0 INTRODUCTION—SHADOWS OVER THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.....	1
2.0 GERMAN NATIONALISM: PERCEPTION AND REALITY, 1914-1923.....	11
2.1 SPONTANEOUS MOBILIZATION AND THE ‘SPIRIT OF 1914’, 1914-1915	12
2.2 DEFENSIVE PATRIOTISM AND THE ONSET OF DISILLUSIONMENT, 1916-1917.....	16
2.3 DEFEAT, THE DOLCHSTOSS AND THE CULT OF THE FALLEN, 1918-1923	20
3.0 THE CHRONICLER OF DESTRUCTION: ERNST JÜNGER AND INTERNAL NATIONALISM	27
3.1 NEGATIVE NATIONALISM: MOBILIZATION, ADVENTURE-SEEKING, AND KRIEGSERLEBNIS, 1913-1918	29
3.2 POST-WAR REFLECTIONS: POSITIVE NATIONAL IDENTITY DEFINITION, 1918-1924.....	38
4.0 RESOLVING AMBIVALENCE: HERMANN HESSE’S COMPETING IDENTITIES	46

4.1	INTERNATIONALIST SENTIMENTS AND NATIONAL LOYALTIES, 1914-1915.....	47
4.2	DISILLUSIONMENT AND TRANSCENDENCE, 1916-1919	53
5.0	PARALLEL EXPERIENCES: NATIONAL IDENTITY, EMOTIONAL DYNAMICS, AND THE TRANSFORMATIONAL MENTALITY	63
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	69

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In May 2012 I was in Berlin for three weeks doing research for this project, when a friend of mine who was studying abroad in Freiburg for the semester came to visit me for a weekend with two of his friends from Ireland. On the first night of his visit, the four of us found ourselves at a table in a small dive bar (beers for one Euro!) at three o'clock in the morning, conversing tiredly in English. In the midst of this conversation, a heavily intoxicated, middle-aged Bavarian man staggered over to us and promptly sat himself down at our table. It turns out that his mother was an English teacher, and he relished the opportunity to converse in it with some native speakers. While we were all going around the table with similar short introductions, one of the Irishmen spoke for a bit of his love for his country and concluded with a brief apology, remarking "I'm sorry; I'm a bit of a patriot." Upon hearing this, the Bavarian immediately shook his head and said to us "we don't have that here."

I have thought of this anecdote many times in the course of writing this thesis because it seemed to embody so many of the central themes of the project, both implicit and explicit: the immense shifts in German national identity conception over the course of the twentieth century, with the broader implication of Nationalism's near-infinite pliability; the lack of popular understanding of this pliability; the continuing legacy of the World Wars; the centrality of communal identities to personal identity—the list goes on. But above all, it confirmed for me in a

first-hand, experiential way, the continuing importance of Nationalism, and how imperative a broader historical understanding of this phenomenon remains to this day—reaffirming the core motivation for this study.

On that note, I now turn to those who made this study possible in the first place. I must state emphatically that—as anyone who has ever worked on a scholarly work of any length knows—I could not have completed this project alone, and I’d like to offer my humble thanks to all of those who made the completion of this thesis possible.

First, I must begin by thanking all of those on my committee, both official and ‘unofficial’ members. I could not have asked for a more knowledgeable, insightful, and altogether better thesis advisor than Dr. Gregor Thum. Dr. Thum took over as advisor for this project after it was already a year in the making and was instrumental in helping me focus my research and my arguments, as well as honing my writing ability. As he remarked in one of our meetings, “you know me, I always have something to say”, and for that I could not be more grateful; without his consistent, honest—but always constructive—criticisms I could not have completed this project. I had the pleasure of taking four classes with Dr. Leslie Hammond over the course of my undergraduate career, and through it all she has had to endure hearing almost my total excess of thoughts on Nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, the importance of the Great War, Imperial Germany, and a host of other topics. Without her seminars and numerous insights, this project would have mired in a host of methodological and conceptual problems, my writing ability would likely have stagnated, and I would have been deprived of the opportunity to participate in some of the most interesting and illuminating discussions of my undergraduate studies. I cannot thank her enough. If I were to try to thank Dr. Tony Novosel for everything he has done for me, this preface would likely run longer than my actual analysis. I hope it will

suffice to say that the opportunity to be the UTA for his class on World War I was one of the highlights of my undergraduate academic experience, and that as an academic advisor and mentor there are no words to describe Tony other than as a brilliant saint. I must of course also extend my deepest thanks to Dr. Donna Harsch of Carnegie Mellon University for volunteering her time to be the outside faculty member of my committee. Finally, I must thank Dr. Arpad von Klimó, who served as my ‘unofficial’ thesis advisor for the first year of this project. It was for Dr. Klimó’s classes on Modern Germany and Nationalism that I first composed the paper that served as the basis for this thesis, and it was his classes which first introduced me to Nationalism’s complexity in earnest. Further, his recommendation and communications on my behalf enabled me to make my research trip to Berlin, and it was the independent study I did with Dr. Klimó that introduced me to much of the literature that was essential for the completion of this thesis. I extend to him my absolute deepest thanks; this project would not have happened without him.

I must also thank the History department generally—both fellow students and faculty—for the many hours of insightful conversations on such a wide variety of topics garnered both inside and outside of classes. More specifically, I want to thank all of those involved in the AJ Schneider Study Abroad Scholarship, which funded my research trip to Berlin.

I would be seriously remiss if I did not thank the University Honors College which, in addition to providing the opportunity for the BPhil in the first place, awarded me three Brackenridge Research Fellowships, providing funding for my research and enabling me to spend the entirety of the summer of 2012 working on this project. Furthermore, the Brackenridge community was a repository of fellow intellectually-minded undergraduates whose depth and breadth of knowledge was both astounding and served to widen and deepen my own knowledge,

not just those pertaining to my own research interests but myriad other topics as well. Their pointed questions and criticisms have proved invaluable.

There are a few other individuals who deserve mention. I extend my gratitude to Ms. Laura Caton in the German Department for proof-reading my translations, as well as her continued interest in the project itself. In addition to her practical help, she offered an empathetic ear many a time over the past year. Deep thanks go to Dr. Jörg Echternkamp of the Militärgeschichtliche Forschungsamt, Potsdam, for taking the time to meet with me during my trip to Germany. His insights were crucial to the conceptual aspects of this study. I would also like to thank my roommates—Brandon Baun, Pat Bewick, Ron Gathagan, and Ian McGlory—for the many moments of welcome distraction, invaluable for keeping my sanity throughout this whole project, but also for their friendship. Many thanks are extended to Zach Zafris; he has not only become an invaluable friend over the past year, but was also the one who first introduced and encouraged me to pursue taking over for him as a UTA, the experience of which not only expanded my knowledge, but introduced me to the essential aspect of scholarship outside of research.

Finally, I extend my sincerest and most heartfelt thanks to my parents, Todd and Ann Marie Hershey, for their continuous love and support not just over the past four years, but throughout my entire life. Without them I would not be here in any sense, and there are no words to express how thankful I am to them for everything that they've given and done for me. The best I can do is to dedicate this thesis to them: I love both of you.

Of course, as absolutely invaluable as all of those mentioned above have been, I bear complete responsibility for any errors and deficiencies which may remain in this study: they are mine, and mine alone.

I had a professor once, who liked to tell his students that there were only ten plots in all of fiction. Well I'm here to tell you he was wrong. There is only one: *who am I*.

—Miss Ritter, *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012)

War is always, in a basic sense, a process of [identity] 'deconstruction'.

—Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War* (2002)

1.0 INTRODUCTION—SHADOWS OVER THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The First World War is one of the key breaking points in western history. Eric Hobsbawm, for example, postulated that World War I was a dual watershed, both the beginning of the western ‘descent into barbarism’ and the point of division between the long nineteenth century and the short twentieth.¹ Nationalism was an inherent aspect of World War I, and the hypothesis that nationalist fervor and sentiment came to be one of the primary causes of the war’s outbreak, ferocity, and duration is one that enjoys wide support.²

However, while Nationalism was present in all combatant nations, the relationship between the First World War and Nationalism is of even greater (and possibly greatest) importance in Germany, due to the conception of that relationship. The notion of a German *Sonderweg*, or ‘Special Path’, “maybe the most prominent variant of secular historical narratives,” whereby the Germans somehow deviated from the acceptable ‘norms of Westernness’, is strong evidence of a perception that Germany and German Nationalism were

¹ Eric Hobsbawm. “Barbarism; A User’s Guide” (Address to Amnesty International, 1994), 4-5; See also Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage, 1989), and Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage, 1994.).

² There are a vast number of sources dealing with this topic, but for the primary literature consulted in regard to this paper, see Volker R. Berghahn, *Europe in the Era of Two World Wars: From Militarism and Genocide to Civil Society* (New York: Princeton UP, 2006): 15-25, 33-57; Marc Ferro, *The Great War: 1914-1918* (New York: Routledge, 1973): 10-20; Hobsbawm, *The Age Of Empire*, 302-327; Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000): 113-158; Samuel R. Williamson Jr, “The Origins of the War”, in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, ed. Hew Strachan (New York: Oxford UP, 1998): 13.

intrinsically jingoistic, expansionist, and aggressive.³ Gary Sheffield, for example, has the audacity to go so far as to postulate that Germany and German Nationalism represented a complete antithesis of the Western democratic ideals of the Entente, rendering the First World War an ideological struggle between democracy and autocracy.⁴ And while the *Sonderweg* thesis has largely fallen out of favor, it continues to largely define the debate about German history and has left a largely unfilled gulf in the historiography, particularly regarding the continuities of that history.⁵ These historiographical concerns, coupled with the dynamic shifts and variety of experiences and perceptions of Nationalism, beg a number of important questions about the relationship between the Great War and German Nationalism that warrant new historical investigation.

Fundamentally, this study asks the question “What was German Nationalism during the First World War? How was it understood and how was it experienced?” But such a query has a number of ontological, definitional, and methodological implications, whose elucidation is an essential pre-requisite for this analysis. Nationalism is notoriously difficult to define,⁶ with some going so far as to try and avoid a phenomenological definition altogether. Ernest Gellner contended in *Nations and Nationalism*, for example, that “[i]t is probably best to approach this

³ Ulrich Herbert, “Europe in High Modernity”, *Journal of Modern European History* 5:1 (2007): 6-7.

⁴ See Gary Sheffield, “The Origins of World War One.” *BBC History*. Last updated March 8, 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/origins_01.shtml; Gary Sheffield, “This War Was No Accident” *The Guardian*, November 7, 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/08/first-world-war-causes-deliberate-accident>. There is not sufficient space here to go into the mass of problems with Sheffield’s thesis in adequate detail. Briefly, it should be noted that Russia, the most autocratic state in Europe at the time, was a member of the ‘Democratic’ Entente. Furthermore, it should also be noted that these ‘western ideals’ 1) were not adhered in practice as strongly as they were in theory and 2) that these were very loosely defined, but can be assumed to encompass mostly nineteenth-century liberal Enlightenment values such as democratic government, natural rights, etc.

⁵ Helmut Walser Smith, “When the *Sonderweg* Debate Left Us”, in *Imperial Germany Revisited: Continuing Debates and New Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011): 21-36.

⁶ The literature on this topic is a vast one, but for a very concise overview of this literature see “What is Nationalism?” First accessed January 12, 2011, <http://www.nationalismproject.org/what.htm>

problem [of definitional difficulty] by using [nationalism and nation] without attempting too much in the way of formal definition, and looking at what culture does.”⁷ This is valid in terms of prioritization (so one avoids becoming permanently bogged down in the theoretical at the expense of the concrete), but is also supremely problematic in that it leaves definition of these terms at the mercy of the reader. The key issue with this is that there are strong (often negative) connotations attached to the term Nationalism which can lead to misunderstanding and misperception;⁸ there are in fact two definitional layers—one colloquial, one academic⁹—which need to be separated in order to gain true clarity of analysis.

When Nationalism and its related terms are discussed in the colloquial vernacular, a fundamental distinction between Nationalism and Patriotism is posited which is one of the primary sources of Nationalism’s negative connotations. Nationalism is often seen as a form of bastardized Patriotism—Patriotism taken ‘too far’, or the result of an added hateful or jingoistic element to an otherwise loving, natural and positive impulse. Looked at from the opposite angle, Patriotism can be viewed as ‘accepted Nationalism’; Nationalism stripped to its most broadly admissible and tolerable core.

⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983): 6-7.

⁸ Benedict Anderson, for example, writes in his introduction to *Imagined Communities* that “[m]y point of departure is that nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it *in view of that word’s multiple significations*, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artifacts of a particular kind.” Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2nd Ed., 2006): 4, emphasis added. Pieter Judson provides a more specific example in his ‘Note on Language Use’ which precedes his analysis of nationalist activists on the language frontiers of Imperial Austria: “Writing about multilingual regions in a way that does not privilege a nationalist frame of reference requires considerable agility on the part of the historian.... I refer to place names in the two (and occasionally three) languages spoken by their inhabitants. Although this practice may seem cumbersome to some readers, it helps challenge *normative assumptions that presume that places and people have authentic national identities*.” Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers in Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006): xiii; emphasis added.

⁹ On this point, I am indebted to the advice and insight of Dr. Jörg Echternkamp of the Militärgeschichtliche Forschungsamt, Potsdam, who first articulated this distinction to me during a discussion in May 2012. The following analysis of this colloquial/academic distinction follows from that discussion.

However, both colloquially defined Nationalism and Patriotism are housed within the academic definition of Nationalism. The definition of Nationalism itself, however, first requires a definition of the root term: nation. Benedict Anderson provides one of the best and most broadly applicable answers in his seminal study on Nationalism, *Imagined Communities*—on which the definitional and ontological foundation of this study is built—defining the nation as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”¹⁰ This definition implies, fundamentally, that Nationalism is an extremely modular phenomenon,¹¹ and this malleability sits at the root of this study’s guiding question.

All communities are intrinsically made up of individuals, all of whom have some form of relationship with, and understanding of, that community, national or otherwise. However, there is a paradox in the sense that the community, an aggregation of unique individuals (in this case the nation) who all experience and understand that community subjectively and individually, is conceived of as an *object*. This objectification does not just apply to adherents of a ‘nationalist mental framework’¹²—assuming the existence of the nation as an entity with a distinct will, purpose and/or tradition—but also to historians. Nationalism is treated as a distinct historical phenomenon, analogous to ‘imperialism’, ‘capitalism’, ‘war’, ‘agriculture’, or ‘exploration’.¹³

¹⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6. Anderson goes on to clarify and define each element of his definition: the nation is imagined because no one member will ever know even half of the nation’s other members personally; limited, as no nationalist conceives of all of humanity as belonging to his nation; sovereign, due to the idea’s root in the Enlightenment ideal of the sovereign state; and lastly as a community because the nation is conceived as a broad horizontal fraternity.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹² For a concise explanation/examination of Nationalism as an interpretive schema, see Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*, 256-257.

¹³ The important shared characteristic amongst these phenomena is that all can be studied across both time and space; one can study the history and rise of capitalism or the emergence of agriculture in the same way that one can study the history of Nationalism. One can compare English capitalism to American capitalism to Japanese capitalism, or compare agriculture in the fifth century to agriculture in the sixteenth in the same way one can compare German vs. Vietnamese Nationalism, or Nationalism in the nineteenth vs. the twenty-first century.

What emerges from this paradox is a subject/object dichotomy which sits at the heart of the definition of Nationalism: the nation is the object, while the citizens of the nation are the subjects *perceiving* that object. This gives rise to a dual definition of Nationalism following along this partition—one macro and one micro. The macro denotation refers to Nationalism as a historical phenomenon, capital-N Nationalism, analogous to all of the other historical phenomena listed above. The micro denotation of nationalism—notice here that the use of a lower-case-n versus a capital-N is intentional—refers to the subjective perceptions of the citizenry of their relationship to the nation. In this sense, there are as many nationalisms as there are members of the national imagined community. In essence, little-n nationalism denotes a single relationship—or perhaps rather a single perception of the relationship—between subject and object, citizen and nation. Capital-N Nationalism, by contrast, can be thought of as the aggregation of these individual, subjective relationships; the over-riding trends in the nationalisms. Consequently, the term ‘nationalist’ denotes only an individual who perceives his relationship with the nation in positive terms; a person for whom the citizen-nation relationship has a positive connotation.

These definitions, however, raise a serious methodological concern, as it is impossible (not to mention impractical, if the possibility existed) to analyze each member of a given nation’s subjective perception of his nation and his unique experience with Nationalism. This issue can be resolved, however, through the use of intellectual field theory. Historian Fritz Ringer, building on the foundation of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, defines an intellectual field in the following way:

An intellectual field at a given time and a place is made up of agents taking up various intellectual positions. Yet the field is not an aggregate of isolated elements; it is a configuration or a network of relationships. The elements in the field are not only related to each other in determinate ways; each also has a specific ‘weight’ or authority, so that

the field is a distribution of power as well. The field's constituents may be individuals; or they may be small groups, 'schools' or even academic disciplines.... [O]ne can imagine field-like relationships within subfields that in turn occupy particular regions within the broader intellectual field.¹⁴

Starting with this organizational frame, one identifies the major regions of the field, the actors that make it up, and their weights, and then, by analyzing each actor and group in comparison to the others, illustrates the cleavages and continuities within the field. In addition, the intellectual field methodology also addresses, and largely solves, another major methodological issue stemming from the division between the social and cultural history of World War I by tacitly acknowledging that "[t]hose who lived through the war did not experience it as an amorphous collection of individuals, independent of political institutions or social affiliations",¹⁵ but as members of social, political, cultural, religious, gender, and generational groups, whilst still retaining the focus on the individual's subjective experience and understanding.

Starting with this definitional and methodological base, it becomes clear that Great War German Nationalism can be best understood as an intellectual field: a distribution of the conceptions and definitions of the nation, of various weights. This then prompts the question as to its regions/subfields. The French historians Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker provide an insightful, if somewhat problematic, starting point, breaking German Nationalism down into three overarching categories: "the militants of the Pan-German League...the German People as a whole, and Germany's intellectual, political and military elites."¹⁶ However, to try

¹⁴ Fritz Ringer, *Fields of Knowledge: French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 4-5.

¹⁵ Roger Chickering, "The Enduring Charm of the Great War: Some Reflections on Methodological Issues", in *Imperial Germany Revisited: Continuing Debates and New Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011): 209.

¹⁶ Rouzeau and Becker, 14-18, 148. The problem with this trichotomy is that these groups cannot necessarily be as cleanly separated as Rouzeau and Becker seem to imply. While a clear division can be, and is, drawn between socio-political, intellectual and military elites and non-elite Germans, 'the German people as a whole' is too broad a category to have any type of analytic value unless it is further broken down, whether geographically,

and construct a full intellectual field for even one of these three sub-categories is still far too broad; this is a study of intentionally limited scope seeking to examine Nationalism (or perhaps rather nationalism) on the micro, individual level. Thus, this study focuses only on the intellectual—specifically literary—elites for two reasons. The first is practical: one can only examine the nationalism of those who wrote about and discussed it, hence authors are ideal. The second and even more important reason, however, is that Nationalism is not an inherently logical phenomenon.

As Anderson states in his introduction to *Imagined Communities*, “one tends unconsciously to hypostasize the existence of Nationalism-with-a-big-N (rather as one might Age-with-a-capital-A) and then classify ‘it’ as *an* ideology.”¹⁷ He goes on to rightly point out that “it would...make things easier if one treated [Nationalism] as if it belonged with ‘kinship’ and ‘religion’, rather than with ‘liberalism’ or fascism””; to, in effect, remove the intellectual connotations—as well as the assumption of a logical consistency—from the term.¹⁸ What he subtly points to with this statement is something more explicitly stated on the preceding page: “[t]o understand [Nationalism and nation-ness] properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound *emotional legitimacy*.”¹⁹ Nationalism’s emotionality has the important implication that it is not intrinsically understood in articulate, concrete terms. In Europe at least, it was the intellectual elites that were most central in the concrete shaping of

generationally, economically, etc. Furthermore, ‘Pan-German militants’ contain members from both the elite and non-elite groups, which make it a somewhat suspect category as part of Rouzeau and Becker’s triumvirate.

¹⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 5. Emphasis original. One will note that Anderson, despite disparaging such a notion, actually makes the same identification of Nationalism’s macro denotation as a historical phenomenon, which served as the basis for the use of capital versus lower-case N Nationalism in this study.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 4. Emphasis added.

Nationalism in the nineteenth century²⁰—who gave specific, readily comprehensible meaning(s) to this emotional phenomenon—and thus their nationalisms are immanently imbued with a much greater weight vis-à-vis the rest of the field.

Looking within this subfield of intellectuals' nationalisms, the subdivisions are those of what Roger Chickering terms "communities of experience"—collectives which structured the way the war was perceived, experienced, and interpreted.²¹ In fact, the largest of these was actually the nation itself, which united "Germans as Germans" (a clear parallel of Rouzeau and Becker's category of 'the German People as a whole'), and Nationalism—in a continuation of the trend from the previous half-century or so²²—that provided the "official" interpretation of the war. Finally, within this broader experiential community, the most basic division was that between frontline and home front, although there were further divisions along class, generation, religion, and gender lines.²³

Given these myriad concerns, how then to proceed in answering the questions put forth at the beginning of this study? In seeking to gain some more capacious insights into German Nationalism, it is clear that within the region of literary elites, it is vital to cover both front and home front in a way that captures both the uniqueness of the individuals' conceptions while also knowing those understandings were accepted in a broader way, i.e. 'weighed heavily' within the region. Subsequently, this study's scope has been intentionally limited to a detailed, micro-level

²⁰ Ibid., 71.

²¹ Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* 2nd Edition (New York: Cambridge UP, 2004): 130. He states that "Class, gender, generation, and confession all combined to structure basic communities of experience in wartime Germany. These communities provided the frames of collective identity, as well as several different cultural vocabularies for making sense of the war. The common experience of combat defined one such community at the front, while the homefront played host to several others. These were nurtured in routine encounters among people who faced common problems, shared common lifestyles, lived in the same neighborhoods, and knew one another personally."

²² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 83-111.

²³ Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 130-131.

comparative analysis of two of Germany's leading twentieth century authors—Ernst Jünger and Hermann Hesse—between 1914 and 1924, and traces the evolution of their conceptions of nationalism—their intellectual biographies—alongside their more traditional, experiential biographies.

No two writers appear more antithetical. Jünger was a young, nationalistic, frontline soldier who returned from the war claiming an even greater faith in the nation and nationalism in 1924 than in 1914. He enjoyed considerable success in Germany almost from the moment his first printed work appeared in 1920,²⁴ and his ideas resonated strongly with his community of experience, which doubled as his intended audience: former *Frontsoldaten* that had survived the trenches of the western front.²⁵ Hesse's experience was nearly the exact opposite. He was a middle-aged established author who spent the duration of the war behind the lines speaking to an almost entirely different experiential community—other established authors, professors, artists, intellectuals and 'cultured' persons—and, as early as September 1914, expressed criticism of the *Kriegspsychose* ('War Psychosis') coming from Germany, as well as the rest of western Europe.

Analysis of the writings, actions, and ideas of Jünger and Hesse illustrates that these two men—with superficially contradictory views and occupying entirely separate sub-fields—in actuality not only shared a number of important commonalities, but ultimately came to utilize Nationalism in the same way. They indicate that German Nationalism during the First World War chiefly reflected not political shifts and tensions, but the emotional dynamics of the war, principally the near-universal need for catharsis after 1918, which both men embodied in ideas of individual and societal transformation. They offer the modern reader an empathetic glimpse from

²⁴ Modris Eksteins, "Memory and the Great War" in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, ed. Hew Strachan (New York: Oxford UP, 1998): 310.

²⁵ Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979): 60.

the micro-level into the long shadows—both the phenomenological and the historical—cast over the twentieth century, as two men were forced into a moment of profound external and existential crisis and confronted the fundamental question of identity: who am I?

2.0 GERMAN NATIONALISM: PERCEPTION AND REALITY, 1914-1923

It is essential to first situate the intellectual biographies of Jünger and Hesse within the larger historical context because, of course, neither man experienced the war and its Nationalism in a vacuum. It is therefore necessary to first sketch, broadly, the overarching trends in German Nationalism during the war. This is not a singular outline however; it is crucial to discern both the subjective perceptions of the historical actors *and* the objective historical reality if one is to gain a holistic understanding.²⁶ Further, this sketch is by no means comprehensive: echoing Isabel Hull, “I do not offer (yet another) narrative of the war”²⁷ but instead will focus on the *Wendepunkte*—the ‘points of inflection’—that defined the central dynamics of the Germans’ experiences with Nationalism during this period, along with the narratives of those experiences: the ‘Sprit of 1914’, the onset of disillusionment, and the creation of the ‘Cult of the Dead’ and the *Dolchstoß*, the ‘stab-in-the-back’.

²⁶ This point is articulated concisely by John Horne and Alan Kramer: “How contemporaries understood events through collective beliefs and cultural constructions is vital. Yet reconstructing what happened cannot rely solely on this. It is also indispensable to establish who did what to whom, and on what scale. The analysis of subjectivity is central to historical inquiry, but that does not make historical inquiry a purely subjective affair for the historian.” John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001): 4.

²⁷ Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005): 197.

2.1 SPONTANEOUS MOBILIZATION AND THE ‘SPIRIT OF 1914’, 1914-1915

The July crisis and the outbreak of the war in early August did produce a spread of nationalist enthusiasm throughout Europe, which Germany did see its share of.²⁸ As Eric Hobsbawm described, “[i]t is quite undeniable that the outbreak of war in 1914 produced genuine, if sometimes shortlived, outbursts of mass patriotism in the main belligerent countries.”²⁹ This is perhaps best exemplified in the socialist response to the war which produced what Kaiser Wilhelm II declared as the *Burgfrieden*, or ‘Fortress Peace’ (more literally ‘Party Truce’) in Germany, when the Social Democratic Party (SPD) unexpectedly voted in favor of war bonds in the Reichstag.³⁰ This was a manifestation of the larger trend that Barbara Tuchman, in her Pulitzer Prize winning analysis of the July Crisis, noted, wherein “Nationhood” swept aside the deterrents which were thought to make war an impossibility.³¹ The Second Socialist International for example, which was supposed to unite Europe’s workers across national lines, dissolved into its national components as each nation readied for war:³² “[n]ational defense transcended any feeling of solidarity across borders.”³³

But it is important to note that these outbursts had deep roots. First, education prior to the war, along with the re-emergent interest in sports and the domination of the press, was geared

²⁸ See Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

²⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage, 1987): 161.

³⁰ For a concise description, see Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2010): 6.

³¹ Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1962): 310-311.

³² For a concise summary of the Second International’s actions and response to the July Crisis, see Marc Ferro, *The Great War: 1914-1918* (New York: Routledge, 1973): 38-43; For an excellent history of the Second International, see James Joll, *The Second International, 1889-1914* (New York: Praeger, 1956).

³³ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000): 96.

towards producing strong feelings of “national faith”.³⁴ And Germany was unique in that the army (another socializing institution) “was both the instrument of reactionary repression *and* the quintessence of national integration, [which] helped produce the Kaiserreich’s characteristic political culture, in which the military as a symbol and real institution played a central role.”³⁵ Second, the actual manifestations of this initial nationalistic outpouring were similarly embedded in norms of the pre-war world. As Jeffrey Verhey describes in his analysis of the ‘Spirit of 1914’, the crowds expressed their enthusiasm in ways that were deeply pre-conditioned in the years prior to 1914 and drew upon a pre-formed “repertoire of collective action”: “[t]he patriotic displays of August 1914—the cheering, singing, marching, and speechmaking—drew upon the repertoire of conventions associated with patriotic display, with student marching, or with public festival.”³⁶

Additionally, the goal of these rituals was the same as that of military service: “to turn peasants and working-class citizens into ‘Germans’”.³⁷ Nevertheless, these practices should not be seen as manifestations of the national political culture: smaller subgroups within Germany had their own political cultures, complete with their own repertoires of collective action.³⁸ Moreover, at least among pre-university age youths, widespread exposure to war-exalting, expansionist nationalism and militarism came only with the actual outbreak of the war, not with pre-war imperialism:³⁹ only then was that enthusiasm concretely defined—or the attempt made, at the very least—in jingoistic terms.

³⁴ Ferro, *The Great War*, 12-17.

³⁵ Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 103. Emphasis original.

³⁶ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 24.

³⁷ Ibid., 25.

³⁸ Ibid. The example he uses is, once again the socialists, who had their own special rituals and days of commemoration, such as May Day.

³⁹ Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 5.

These insights point to the largest and most important perception/reality distinction: war enthusiasm was by no means a universal phenomenon, nor was it experienced in a uniform way. There were important divisions along generational, class, and geographic lines: those marching and singing in the nationalist parades were not a representation of a cross-section of the German populace, but were mostly educated, urban, middle-class youths.⁴⁰ Fundamentally, the idea of an all-embracing war enthusiasm during the so-called ‘August Days’ *is a myth*,⁴¹ built on the interpretation of the urban crowds by the conservative press.⁴² As Benjamin Ziemann describes in his study of the war experience in Bavaria, the vast majority of working class Bavarians responded with despondency to the outbreak of war, and in rural areas the war was largely greeted with a mixture of anxiety, fear and depression.⁴³ This was the result of several factors, the most important being the fact that “nationalistic explanations of the war and negative conceptions of the ‘enemy’ were thin on the ground in rural areas”:

There were no indications that such conceptual models prevailed in any rural community [in Bavaria] at any point during the July crisis or the outbreak of the war. People lacked positive expectations of the nation state that could be related to the war. In rural Bavaria, the engineering of the Wilhelmine Imperial cult succeeded in matching the importance of regional loyalties and the cult surrounding the Wittelsbachs only in the Rhenish Palatinate and in Protestant areas of Franconia.⁴⁴

What was unique about the patriotic displays of 1914 was their spontaneity.⁴⁵ More generally, as Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker observe, “the beginning of the war was rapid and unexpected, and its speed was a determining factor in the way the groundwork

⁴⁰ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 31.

⁴¹ Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany, 1914-1923* (New York: Berg, 2007): 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴³ Ziemann, *War Experiences*, 17-19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁵ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 31. He states that “[a]lthough the organized patriotic festival was an everyday event, spontaneous ovations were quite rare.”

was laid for support of war.” They then make the important point that although war enthusiasm was weak outside of the major urban centers and likely did not express the majority’s view, those crowds “were the advance guard of a widespread popular support for the war based on resignation, acceptance, sometimes despondency, and later a growing resolve.”⁴⁶ This vanguard experienced, somewhat prematurely, the same “emotional dynamic”—patriotic displays which often came ‘in spite of themselves’ from ‘something’ or ‘somewhere’ within—that gripped Europe more broadly: “We can imagine this same emotional dynamic on a larger scale: what emerged forcefully, between late July and in early August 1914, in the hearts of millions of Europeans, sometimes unconsciously and involuntarily, was *national sentiment*. Patriotic *feeling* prevailed.”⁴⁷

It is this strong emotional component that comprises the second unique aspect of the war enthusiasm of 1914 and answers the central question put forth by Rouzeau and Becker as to how this initial investment survived the realization that the war imagined in the decades prior to 1914 was, in fact, an “imaginary” war.⁴⁸ And there is strong evidence that it did survive: voluntary enlistment, spurred largely by atrocity stories that strengthened the defensive interpretive framework, continued even in countries—such as Germany—with universal conscription, and even after reports from the front would have disproved the central notions of the ‘imaginary’ war, e.g. that the war would be short, fought in the style of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹

On the whole then, what emerges is a qualified war enthusiasm, defined spontaneously in an emotional—i.e. a non-rational—way and varying according to region, age, and class. While not universal, at the very least there was a modicum of unity on the level of political and

⁴⁶ Rouzeau and Becker, 14-18, 94-95.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 96. Emphasis added.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 94-104. For a full explication of the idea of ‘imaginary war’, see Ferro, *The Great War*, 29-37.

intellectual elites and certain segments of the broader populace in Germany, but not unity that was defined—or even necessarily understood—in a rational way. There was a perception, or perhaps rather an emotionally-salient belief, that Germany had been attacked, which created a patriotic meaning for the war, as Roger Chickering summarizes:

Countless documents of the summer of 1914—speeches, newspaper articles, letters, and diary entries, as well as photographs—spoke to a spontaneous and overpowering sense of national unity, a unanimity of views about the origins and meaning of the conflict that was beginning. This consensus was, to be sure, inchoate and vaguely formulated; it nonetheless framed the public understanding of the war, and in some circles it proved remarkably durable.⁵⁰

One could almost as easily say that, quite simply, national unity was *felt*.

2.2 DEFENSIVE PATRIOTISM AND THE ONSET OF DISILLUSIONMENT, 1916-1917

The second pivotal moment is a more prolonged one, and represents a profound intensification and expansion of the war effort wherein the war ‘grew total’. As Chickering describes, “1916 was a pivotal year”:

The land battles of 1916 were the most monstrous ever fought. New military leaders came to power in Germany, and they did aspire to achieve total mobilization of society’s resources and energies. The measures that they inaugurated to achieve this end brought the brutal reorganization of the economy for the purposes of making war. Then, at the close of the year, the German leadership decided upon a course of military action that expanded the scope of war to include all of the world’s major powers.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* 2nd Edition (New York: Cambridge UP, 2004): 14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

It was above all the ‘great battles’ of 1916 and 1917—Verdun, the Somme, Passchendaele—that took the greatest mental toll on the soldiers themselves, and it is during this period that, at least in Bavaria, soldier’s letters first began portending that revolution might follow the war.⁵²

At the same time, according to Chickering, the frontline soldiers’ experiences with *Materialschlacht* linked the vast majority of soldiers, about eighty percent of the 13,123,011 Germans who served in the army from 1914-1918, in a common experience wherein they endured, first-hand, the paralysis imposed by new military technology on mass armies, and thus pioneered a new form of material warfare.⁵³ However, once again, such a capacious assessment must be qualified. As Ziemann elucidates, many Bavarian soldiers suffered from profound and acute homesickness, and, in direct antithesis to Chickering’s generalization, he asserts that, in fact, “camaraderie diminished over the course of the war”, at least amongst rural Bavarian soldiers. Overall, the combination of these factors undermined the possibility of soldiers holding an aggressive nationalistic comprehension of their experiences: “these factors left little room for an interpretation of self geared towards the symbols of a militaristic identity, such as comradeship, heroism or the cult of the warrior.”⁵⁴ It is very telling that *Feldpostbriefe* (‘Front Letters’) expounding the nationalistic elation of the war’s early months “did not survive the campaigns of 1916, nor did the sentiments that had inspired [them].”⁵⁵

Furthermore, the state of the home-front worsened considerably during these middle years. First and foremost, as the war continued and casualties mounted, the war ‘came home’ physically manifested in the soldiers, particularly wounded ones. These men were perpetual

⁵² Ziemann, *War Experiences*, 92.

⁵³ Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 95.

⁵⁴ Ziemann, *War Experiences*, 121.

⁵⁵ Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 101.

reminders of war in distant lands, and contrasted quite starkly when they mixed with the more enthusiastic or anxious young men on their way to the front. As Chickering describes with almost brutal succinctness, “[t]he war was about dying,” and by this point in the war casualties were such that mourning and the extreme emotional trauma that it concretely manifested became increasingly widespread. In addition, “[t]he war was also about injury” and these wounded soldiers served as perpetual, grim, and above all, visceral reminders of the often harsh reality at the front.⁵⁶

Moreover, by this time the effects of the British blockade were beginning to be felt in earnest, their negative effects compounded by the intensely harsh winter weather, which culminated in the so-called ‘Turnip Winter’ of 1916-1917.⁵⁷ This had the important psychological effect of eroding the illusion of unity created in the summer of 1914. In particular, intensely antagonistic perceptions between urban and rural Germans began to take root as a result of the food shortage. Those living in cities were almost completely dependent on rural producers for their food and, as a result of both shortages and inflation, a near universal (inaccurate) perception was created that farmers were exploiting the misery in the cities for financial gain, while they themselves were eating heartily.⁵⁸

Even more corrosive to the patriotic symbolism of 1914 was the fact that food became a public concern as a result of the war, since the massive increase in government involvement in the economy compounded these problems for both urban and rural dwellers. As Chickering describes, these problems of providing German citizens with the basic necessities of life roughly

⁵⁶ Ibid., 99-100.

⁵⁷ For a succinct summary of the Turnip Winter and its effects on the German home front, see Ibid., 138-144.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 142.

created a new illusion of unity on the home front, but arrayed against the government and its intrusive bureaucracy:

The state was the public arbiter of hunger. It was also the symbol of the problem.... Although much of the criticism of public officialdom was unfair, bureaucratic imperiousness and incompetence were convenient, omnipresent targets of popular frustration and anger. The situation was fraught with tension, for the public administration of hunger also forced unhappy people to congregate in circumstances calculated to make them more unhappy.⁵⁹

Despite all of this, Rouzeau and Becker contend quite adamantly that the idea that support for the war in the belligerent states eroded in any meaningful way during 1914-1918 is utterly false.⁶⁰ The intense emotional experience of patriotism at the war's outset crystallized in an interpretive framework that "largely withstood the enormous casualties and the immense sacrifices demanded not only of the troops but, increasingly, of the civilian populations." In aggregate, instances of disillusionment "are outweighed by instances of support, and support *maintained*."⁶¹ This is a direct result of the constitution of that interpretive framework:

Though they never ceased to aspire to peace, the majority of the soldiers in all armies, like the majority of people on the home fronts, wished first and foremost *not to lose the war*. The two hopes were not contradictory. *Defensive patriotism*—defense of the soil and defense of their loved ones—structured the way they thought about the war right to the end. *This was true of German soldiers too*, for though they were occupying forces far beyond their national borders, they stubbornly insisted on thinking of their trench positions, especially in France, in traditional defensive terms as a 'watch on the Rhine'.... In most of the armies (except Russia), the immense suffering the soldiers endured never rid them of the view that each of them had a *duty*.⁶²

Finally, it is important to note that Rouzeau and Becker make no claim that the intensity of that emotional investment remained static from beginning to end, nor that it was identical in

⁵⁹ Ibid., 143-144.

⁶⁰ Rouzeau and Becker, 14-18, 108. They state that it is "completely erroneous to imagine that the consensus of support for the war eroded in any significant way in the belligerent countries during the conflict."

⁶¹ Ibid., 100. Emphasis original.

⁶² Ibid., 107. Emphasis added.

all nations and national-subgroups.⁶³ Instead, their analysis, coupled with the observations and qualifications above, suggest a muted dynamism in regards to nationalist sentiment by 1917. The schemas forged in 1914 remained intact perhaps directly as a result of the fact that they were primarily defensive, not aggressive. Nevertheless, that framework was coming under increasing strain as the costs—both human and material—of the war continued to mount and realistic prospects for a German victory began to fade.

2.3 DEFEAT, THE DOLCHSTOSS AND THE CULT OF THE FALLEN, 1918-1923

Following Russia's exit from the war after the Bolshevik Revolution, the German Supreme Command attempted one final mass offensive in the spring of 1918 as a last gamble to win the war. But, as David Blackbourn summarizes, this followed a similar pattern to Germany's earlier offensives (and novel tactical and operative innovations) but ultimately with more dire consequences:

Like the advance of August-September 1914 and the first months of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 it was initially successful. But Germany never had the numerical superiority it would have needed in the west... [and by] June the offensive petered out, in July the Allies counterattacked, and on 8 August they broke through the German lines. This last throw of the dice had cost 800,000 German casualties. The Supreme Command now recognized that the war was lost, and in a brazen turn-about

⁶³ Ibid., 105. They go on to make an important historiographical point: "[H]istorians have always emphasized the discontinuities rather than the continuities, at the risk of making the duration of the conflict and the scale of the sacrifices incomprehensible, and we should avoid that mistake."

insisted that there was no alternative but to appeal for peace on Woodrow Wilson's terms.⁶⁴

It is at this point, when Germany was finally defeated, that disillusionment set in earnest. These sentiments were concretely incarnated in two primary forms: the *Dolchstoss* myth—the contention brought forth after the war by the Supreme Command that “the German armies had not lost the war...[but had] remained in the field, valiant and in good order, until the homefront collapsed in the fall of 1918 amid a bitter harvest of subversion and agitation by pacifists, socialists, slackers and Jews”;⁶⁵ and the cult of the fallen—the idealization of those killed in the war as heroic martyrs to the national cause. Once again however, these sentiments, along with both of their primary manifestations, had deep roots.

The shallowest of these roots was actually the myth of the ‘Spirit of 1914’ itself. This was because the very contents of that myth “framed the war in terms that could only nourish disillusionment.” It was founded on the idea of a universal German exertion, which intrinsically implied equal sharing of both the war's hardships and rewards. Consequently, once that spirit and that unity were shown to be a ghost—an illusion—it took on “the aura of an elusive fantasy, a painful reminder of the idealism that had reigned in the first hour”: “the expectations that it raised became the object of growing popular discontent.”⁶⁶

This was central, as the themes of the ‘Spirit of 1914’ made up one of the two central roots which enabled the *Dolchstoss* myth to take hold: “The [*Dolchstoss*] myth also spoke to the themes that had informed the ‘spirit of 1914,’ insofar as the collapse of the great community of national resolve could be traced now to the machinations of elements who had never really

⁶⁴ David Blackbourn, *History of Germany, 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century* 2nd Edition (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003): 369.

⁶⁵ Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 187.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

belonged to it.”⁶⁷ The second root was the antagonisms between the frontline and the home front (to the extent they existed⁶⁸): the inter-theater tensions, the undeniable (and un-denied) exhaustion of those at home, and the complex link between the frontline troops’ performance in battle and the productivity of the home front.⁶⁹ As Blackbourn summarizes, “[s]oldiers had long muttered about the ‘treason’ of the home front, and the later ‘stab in the back’ legend was well established by the summer of 1918.”⁷⁰

However, as Chickering notes, “[t]he reasons for the...*vitality* of the legend must be sought...in the unsettled politics of memory during the Weimar era,”⁷¹ the most crucial aspect of which being the creation of the myth and perception of the ungrateful home front, which seemed to validate the *Dolchstoß* interpretation. As Richard Bessel describes, there was an element of truth to this myth, at least as it applied to officers: “[m]any officers found the defeat and return to the Fatherland humiliating and traumatic; officers frequently were subjected to indignities...during the weeks which followed the armistice.” But this should not be extrapolated to characterize the homecoming experience of the entire German army, at the very least because these indignities were often inflicted by the soldiers themselves;⁷² conflicts within the army between the officers and the soldiers were fairly ubiquitous in the Bavarian army for example.⁷³ Generally speaking, it appears that image of the home front’s unappreciative reception of the

⁶⁷ Ibid., 187-188.

⁶⁸ Ziemann’s study of the experience of the war in Bavaria raises questions as to how universal the division and antithesis between the frontline and home front was during the war, as he argues that in fact there was an important shared experience between front and home, at least for the rural population. At a minimum, it serves to qualify the above contentions about the front/home front antagonism. See Ziemann, *War Experiences*.

⁶⁹ Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 188.

⁷⁰ Blackbourn, *History of Germany*, 369.

⁷¹ Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 188. Emphasis added.

⁷² Richard Bessel, “The Great War in German Memory: The Soldiers of the First World War, Demobilization, and Weimar Political Culture,” *German History* 6:1 (1988): 20-21.

⁷³ Ziemann, *War Experiences*, 29-71.

returning soldiers was not only inaccurate, but almost the exact opposite of what actually took place.⁷⁴

How, then, did this image come about? The main Weimar roots of the myth are twofold. The first pertains directly to the consequences of the German army's disintegration in 1918. By May 1918, only about four million of the roughly seven million men in the German army were on the western front, which shrunk to only about two-and-half out of a rough total of six million by October. Subsequently, "only a minority of the German veterans of the First World War still in uniform in November 1918 experienced the sort of military demobilization which involved marching back home from the trenches at the war's end."⁷⁵ This had important consequences for the framing of perceptions:

[I]t was not necessarily the home front which had failed to do its duty to the heroes returning from the war; many of the heroes had behaved in ways rather removed from conventional ideas of the heroic. People back home, no doubt stirred by a mixture of *patriotic feeling* (which remained for most an acceptable public emotion) and *guilt* at having enjoyed the comparative safety of the Reich while the soldiers were being killed in their hundreds of thousands at the front, made the required public displays of gratitude. The difficulty lay in the soldiers' response. That is to say, it is not so much that the civilians had failed to give the returning soldiers a heroes' welcome, but that a large proportion of the heroes had failed to show up.⁷⁶

It is this combination of guilt and patriotism that points to the second root of the *Dolchstoss* myth's salience, as well as to the importance of the cult of the dead: the intense emotional needs imposed by the war. This emotional cocktail pertained not just to those on the homefront, but also to many of the soldiers themselves; the myths of mistreatment and the explanation for that mistreatment offered by the *Dolchstoss* provided an interpretation to frame

⁷⁴ Bessel, "Great War in German Memory", 22.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 27. Emphasis added.

the memory of the war and its aftermath in such a way that the guilt was at least partially alleviated:

This image [of the mistreated, unemployed veteran]—with its clear outlines of good and evil and its idealization of the front soldier—was altogether easier to accept and to present in the public/political spheres than an often messy reality would have been. How, for example, could a former soldier admit publicly, in, say, 1930 that he really had not spent much time at the front, that during the last months before the Armistice he had done everything possible to avoid being sent back into combat, that he *already was in Germany when peace broke out, that he deserted* in order to get home as quickly as possible, and then had had an easy time finding a job...? The ambivalent nature of people's lives does not provide a very solid base upon which to build a public identity or a clear-cut political commitment. Better to accept the myths, rather than ambivalent, contradictory and hard-digest reality, which structured popular memory and popular politics.⁷⁷

In this sense, it is clear that the “strength of this political message lay not in that it was based upon what people believed so much as in what people, increasingly, *wanted to believe*.”⁷⁸ Its success derived from the emotional necessities of the Weimar years.

It is these personal, emotional needs that are in fact the central element of the cult of the dead. While it did have a strong political character framed to support a conservative—i.e. nationalistic—interpretation of the war, as well as justify and legitimate right-wing policies throughout the interwar years,⁷⁹ it was first and foremost rooted in the intense bereavement of the years after the conflict. War memorials for example—produced in great abundance in the years following the war⁸⁰—contained an intense ritual significance as places where people could mourn the dead and be seen mourning them, but this has been “obscured by their political

⁷⁷ Ibid., 32-33. Emphasis original.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 29. Emphasis original.

⁷⁹ See George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford UP, 1990): 70-106.

⁸⁰ For excellent exegeses on war memorials, see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1995): 78-116; Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002): 285-326.

symbolism which, now that the moment of mourning has long passed, is all that we can see.”⁸¹

As Jay Winter describes in his seminal work on the construction of memory, it was only after the initial moments of bereavement had passed that these monuments—and the larger cult of the dead which they represented—took on a principally political character:

War memorials marked the spot where communities were reunited, where the dead were symbolically brought home, and where separations of war, both temporary and eternal, were expressed, ritualized, and in time, accepted.

That act was located specifically in time and space. Once the moment of initial bereavement had passed, once the widows had remarried, once the orphans had grown up and moved away, once the mission of veterans to ensure that the scourge of war would not return had faded or collapsed, then the meaning of war memorials was bound to change.

They could have had no fixed meaning, immutable over time. Like many other public objects, they manifest what physicists...call a ‘half-life’, a trajectory of decomposition, a passage from active to inert. *Their initial charge was related to the needs of a huge population of bereaved people.* Their grief was expressed in many ways, but in time, for the majority, the wounds began to close, and life went on. When that happened, after years or decades, then the objects invested with meaning related to loss of life in wartime become something else. Other meanings *derived from other needs* or events may be attached to them, or no meaning at all.⁸²

It is in fact the external context—most importantly the emotional context—that altered this final element of the nationalist dynamic in the period surrounding the war; the political context did not assume primacy until the later Weimar years when the initial emotional necessities of mourning had faded, transformed, or been co-opted

On the whole then, the nationalist dynamic during the First World War was a nuanced and relatively subdued one prior to the latter half of 1918. The expressions of nationalism, along with the actual sentiments themselves, were rooted firmly in the pre-war world, rendering the spontaneous mobilization novel not so much for the feelings and ideas it actually expressed so

⁸¹ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 93.

⁸² Ibid., 98. Emphasis added.

much as for the speed, depth, and manner in which those sentiments penetrated throughout Germany, and the rest of Europe. Further, while a sense of disillusionment did begin to set in as early as 1915 and was palpable by the end of the Turnip Winter, overall, that emotional nationalist framework, molded and solidified in August of 1914, remained largely intact; it was not until Germany's abrupt defeat that those sentiments sank in in earnest. Finally, the emergence and success of the *Dolchstoß* myth and the cult of the dead were rooted in the intense emotional needs imposed by Germany's defeat and immense losses in the war, and reflect similarly deep roots. German nationalism—in both its manifestations and sentiments—therefore remained roughly static from 1914-1918.

3.0 THE CHRONICLER OF DESTRUCTION: ERNST JÜNGER AND INTERNAL NATIONALISM

In his review of Ernst Jünger's recently-published war diary, Benjamin Ziemann describes Jünger as "the most important protagonist of soldier's nationalism, who emphatically welcomed the *Materialschlachten* of the First World War," before going on to intimate the essential conceptual pre-requisite necessary for understanding Jünger's nationalism during the war: "[in his diary] Jünger reveals himself *not as an ideologist*, but rather as an *extremely precise chronicler of destruction*."⁸³ Jünger the political thinker did not emerge until the latter half of the 1920's with his contributions to the conservative revolutionary movement:⁸⁴ his conception of nationalism during World War I is temporally separate from—and, more importantly, prior to—his expounded ideas from the latter Weimar years. Consequently, if one is to gain the insight(s) Jünger can offer into the experience, construction, and conception of German Nationalism during the Great War, recognizing this distinction is of paramount importance.

Jünger's primary work discussing this period—as well as his most famous—is his memoir of his experiences at the front, *In Stahlgewittern*, 'The Storm of Steel'. First published in

⁸³ Benjamin Ziemann, review of *Ernst Jünger, Kriegstagebuch*, edited by Helmuth Kiesel, *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol 294, 2012. Emphasis added.

⁸⁴ See Richard Wolin, introduction to Ernst Jünger's "Total Mobilization", in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* ed. by Richard Wolin (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993): 119-121, as well as for a concise summary of the distinction between traditional and revolutionary conservatives in Weimar Germany. For an overview of Jünger's later ideological and political works, see Thomas Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany: Into the Abyss, 1914-1945* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996): 75-114. Importantly, Nevin's cited chapter 'Weimar Polemics' begins with 1925.

1920, *Storm of Steel* is considered “a masterly narrative...[of] the soldier’s soldier”, taken almost directly from Jünger’s war diaries, and lacking (comparatively) in the philosophical reflections of some of his later writings about the war.⁸⁵ This makes the early editions of *Storm of Steel*—published in 8 different versions between 1922 and 1952⁸⁶—the most genuine account of Jünger’s emotional appraisal of the war, aside from his actual war diary; evaluation of his published writings is exceedingly difficult as a result of his constant revision of his work.⁸⁷ As Thomas Nevin points out in his biography of Jünger, “Jünger’s memory became more vivid by the iterations of its exercise in writing.”⁸⁸

As a result, this study relies primarily on the first English translation of *Storm of Steel*, taken from the first revision from 1924—simultaneously considered the first truly “literary” edition, as well as the most “vigorously, even aggressively, Nationalist version”⁸⁹—in conjunction with Jünger’s newly-available war diary. This is for two reasons, one practical, the other methodological. First, Jünger’s *Kriegstagebuch* was only published in 2010, and a copy was unable to be procured until this study was already nearing completion; time constraints did not allow for a full analysis of Jünger’s war diary, hence its use chiefly as a supplement. Secondly, and more importantly, because Jünger’s diary was only published recently, it had no effect on his weight within the intellectual field at any point during his lifetime, certainly not during or after the war.⁹⁰ It was *Storm of Steel* that brought Jünger to fame and thus acted as a public articulator of nationalist ideas, not his *Kriegstagebuch*. His war diary is innately important

⁸⁵ Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany*, 39-40.

⁸⁶ Allan Mitchell, *The Devil’s Captain: Ernst Jünger in Nazi Paris, 1941-1944* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011): 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁸⁸ Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany*, 40.

⁸⁹ Michael Hoffman, introduction to *Storm of Steel* by Ernst Jünger (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), xiii.

⁹⁰ ‘Weight’ in the context of this paper is not something that can be quantified in a particularly concrete way. The rough measure used here is ‘popularity’, as Jünger’s books garnered him literary success from the start of his writing career. The same is true for Hesse, later in this analysis.

insofar as it is a description of and direct reaction to the experience of the war. *Storm of Steel*, by contrast, serves this descriptive function as well—albeit from a less immediate distance and with a slight miasma of memory—but has the additional importance of this directly communicative aspect.

Taken together, these sources illustrate that the evolution of Jünger's nationalism is that from a negative to a positive conception—the journey from a 'chronicler of destruction', largely free from abstract reflections, to a revolutionary conservative political thinker. Fundamentally however, this evolution—a transitory period in Jünger's life—reflects the primacy of practical emotional concerns, correlating with the larger, aggregate emotional dynamic of the front experience.

3.1 NEGATIVE NATIONALISM: MOBILIZATION, ADVENTURE-SEEKING, AND KRIEGSERLEBNIS, 1913-1918

Jünger joined the German Army in the late summer/early fall and was trained in the reserve battalion of Hanover's 73rd Regiment between October and December 1914 before being dispatched to France on 27 December,⁹¹ months after the initial enthusiasm of the 'August Days' had waned. He gave little contemporary discussion to his motivations however. The first entry

⁹¹ Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany*, 43.

from his published war diary is from 30 December, en route to the front,⁹² and *In Stahlgewittern*, like his war diary, also begins with his arrival in France. However, from the outset of his memoir he attempted to make the depth of his nationalist convictions blatantly and abundantly evident, beginning with a description of his experience of the spontaneous mobilization and the ‘Spirit of 1914’:

We had left lecture-room, class-room, and bench... [and] had been welded by a few weeks’ training into one corporate mass inspired by the enthusiasm of one thought...to carry forward the German ideals of ’70. We had grown up in a material age, and in each one of us there was the yearning for great experience.... We had set out in a rain of flowers to seek the death of heroes. The war was our dream of greatness, power, and glory.... There is no lovelier death in the world...anything rather than stay at home, anything to make one with the rest.⁹³

Given Jünger’s middle-class background and the fact that he was not conscripted but was a *Kriegsfreiwilliger* (‘War Volunteer’) this description may well be accurate,⁹⁴ as was the case for many others. Further, it is critical to note the importance of the volunteer/draftee distinction. *Kriegsfreiwillige* had a deep history as nationalist poets and early crafters of the cult of the dead, dating back to the eighteenth century,⁹⁵ and Jünger noted early on in *Storm of Steel* that “[t]he common soldier could not easily swallow the fact that we were volunteers. He took it to be a sort of bumptiousness on our part. I often encountered this notion during the war”⁹⁶—an indirect indication of his lack of the concerned, apathetic resolve with which most people greeted the declaration of war. Moreover, it is important to note that throughout his entire description of the ‘Spirit of 1914’, Jünger implies his primary community of experience through his extensive use

⁹² Ernst Jünger, *Kriegstagebuch, 1914-1918*, ed. Helmuth Kiesel (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2010): 7.

⁹³ Ernst Jünger, *The Storm of Steel: From the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front*, trans. Basil Creighton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1929): 1.

⁹⁴ Again, the only group that can be said to have experienced genuine war ‘enthusiasm’ was urban, middle-class, educated youths—a group which included Jünger. See Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

⁹⁵ George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford UP, 1990): 15-34.

⁹⁶ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 8.

of ‘we’—young, educated (and therefore presumably middle-class) *Frontsoldaten*—as well as his feeling that he could speak authoritatively on their behalf. At the very least, it is clear that Jünger *wanted* his *Kriegserlebnis* (‘first-hand, lived war experience’) to be perceived as mirroring the common experience with Nationalism as it was remembered in 1924, after both the cult of the dead and the myth of the *Dolchstoß* were already established.

Contrasting (at least superficially) with his professed nationalistic enthusiasm, however, is the fact that Jünger ran away from home and joined the French Foreign Legion the year before the war’s outbreak, at the age of 16.⁹⁷ This was the most prominent example of the adventurousness that was a central feature of the young Jünger’s personality throughout his adolescence.⁹⁸ He described this episode and his mindset at that time in his interviews with Julien Hervier in 1986:

Before the outbreak of World War I, I was planning to go to Africa. At that time, I was already something of what is known as a *non-conformiste*. That was why I had gone to join the Foreign Legion, but I was not really visualizing a war. Rather, I was thinking about adventures in Africa. I had read a lot of travel books about Africa: Stanley, *the Dark Continent*, works of that sort.... But it all turned out very differently.⁹⁹

Jünger’s experience in the Legion had in fact been the opposite of exciting: Jünger had hoped to experience adventures in Africa’s jungles, but instead ended up largely confined within the Legion’s quarters in Oran, from which he escaped, was captured and served ten days in jail. His release from the Legion was only secured after considerable effort on his behalf by his father.¹⁰⁰ Now the outbreak of war meant that the conflict could substitute for adventures on the Dark Continent.

⁹⁷ For a chronological recounting of Jünger’s time in the French Foreign Legion, see Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany*, 30-35.

⁹⁸ See *Ibid.*, 9-37.

⁹⁹ Julien Hervier, *The Details of Time: Conversations with Ernst Jünger* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1986): 16-17.

¹⁰⁰ Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany*, 33-35.

While this does not negate or inherently disprove Jünger's professed patriotic motivations for his enlistment, it offers two important qualifications. First, it elucidates that Jünger sought adventure for its own sake, as opposed to intrinsically seeking *mortem pro patria*, as he would later imply after the war. Secondly, and even more importantly, it demonstrates a lack of jingoism, hatred and aggression in Jünger's conception of nationalism preceding the outbreak of war, implicit in the fact that 1) Jünger had deliberately joined the French armed forces (and thus obviously did not see this as at odds with his German identity) and 2) he clearly intimated his feeling that the draftees' perceptions of volunteers' bellicosity were inaccurate.

This hostility-dearth continued throughout the duration of the conflict, evidenced early on in his descriptions of occupied France. His third diary entry, from New Year's Day 1915, while stating that "[t]he atmosphere was jolly" upon the troops first arrival at the front, expressed no joy at the destruction of the town, which is described from a largely detached standpoint as consisting of "destroyed houses, blasted bridges" where "[m]any houses stand abandoned with open doors and windows" and "everywhere stand rusted reaping machines."¹⁰¹ These were the sights as he arrived at the Bazancourt train station, where "[t]he breath of war passed by us with its peculiar horror";¹⁰² subtle indications of the coupling of excitement for the adventure of the war experience with the mild-anxiety of the now un-imaginary war and a lack of nationalistic animosity.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Jünger, *Kriegstagebuch*, 7.

¹⁰² Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 1.

¹⁰³ It is also important to note that this is in keeping with the larger trends surrounding the spontaneous mobilization. As Rouzeau and Becker point out, this mobilization occurred largely *after* the reality of the front was already apparent to those at home, and that those enlisting were often those with 'things to lose'; those from mid-upper level social strata. See Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000): 94-104.

Moreover, Jünger's expression of his sympathy for the inhabitants of occupied France, in direct contradiction to analysis by some earlier scholars,¹⁰⁴ further illustrates his absence of malicious nationalism and a largely empathetic mindset. Reflecting on his diary entry from 29 November 1915, Jünger stated that,

The inhabitants were under strict discipline. Trespasses and transgressions were speedily visited...with fines or imprisonment. Much as I am the disciple of the logical gospel of force, I was disgusted by the painful exaggerations of it I witnessed in those days, such as the compulsion of all inhabitants, women included, to salute officers. Such regulations are pointless, degrading, and injurious. Such was our method, however, all throughout the war. Punctilious over trifles, undecided in the face of severest injuries from within.¹⁰⁵

While Jünger still adhered, at least intellectually, to the logic of military necessity pervasive throughout the Imperial Germany Army and the officer corps in particular¹⁰⁶ (notice that assumption of 'severest injuries from within' implies the existence of a pernicious resistance movement, something disproved by modern scholarship¹⁰⁷), in practical terms he was empathetic to the populace forced to endure the occupation, which largely precluded any feelings of nationalistic (as well as militaristic) chauvinism. Moreover, this absence of hostility extended to the English as well. Recounting an instance of live-and-let-live from 11 December, 1915 wherein Jünger met with an English officer to discuss a sniper's killing of one of his men,¹⁰⁸ he stated that "[w]e said a good deal to each other in the course of the interview in a fashion that can only

¹⁰⁴ For example, Wilhelm Schwarz, in his 1975 analysis, stated that Jünger's "unreserved glorification of war and his lack of any humane feelings for the innocent victims of war are...somewhat shocking to the modern reader." Wilhelm Schwarz, *War and the Mind of Germany* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1975): 31. Schwarz is but a single example of the larger controversy that surrounds Jünger, which is concisely detailed by Nevin in his introduction to Jünger's biography. See Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany*, 1-7.

¹⁰⁵ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 50.

¹⁰⁶ See Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005).

¹⁰⁷ See John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001).

¹⁰⁸ For a full recounting of the incident, see Jünger, *Kriegstagebuch*, 64-67.

be described as sportsmanlike, and would gladly have made some exchange of presents in memory of the occasion.”¹⁰⁹

In fact, perhaps the sole instance in which Jünger appears to tread even somewhat close to a bellicose nationalism occurs with an extension of this empathy to his fellow soldiers who felt such hatred. When one of his men was shot through the head by the English as he shoveled dirt over the top of the trench, Jünger recounted the reaction of his men, and, while clearly empathetic, was conspicuously critical of their inability to understand the impersonality of the war: “[The dead man’s] comrades lay in wait a long while...to take vengeance. They sobbed with rage. *It is remarkable how little they grasp the war as an objective thing.* They seem to regard the Englishmen who fired the fatal shot as a personal enemy. I can understand it.”¹¹⁰ Even this modicum of empathy with hateful nationalism may bear a touch of the personal however. In his diary, Jünger described the deceased as “a nice man, married and father of four children”,¹¹¹ an indication that this empathy may be based more on personal knowledge of the fallen and his connection with the other men, as opposed to a more abstract understanding of nationalist antipathy.

Furthermore, Jünger’s *Kriegstagebuch* demonstrates that this empathy was not a purely abstract exercise which occurred only during his post-war reflections, but took on a markedly emotional nature during the war. His diary entry from 1 December 1915—just under one year into Jünger’s war experience—expressed sentiments in a similar vein in painfully specific terms. It is worth quoting at length:

One looks out the window and becomes sad when one sees what has become of Northern France. How different it was five years ago. Where does the cozy culture of the

¹⁰⁹ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 52.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 48-49. Emphasis added.

¹¹¹ Jünger, *Kriegstagebuch*, 61.

enjoyment of life remain...? This red wine and this round, flaked white bread and the delicious ragouts of Northern French kitchens, where do they remain? This vespertine community of Maries, of priests and other notables? This existence built upon the joyous affirmation of life? Gone! Gone! And possibly never to return. At the front, the villages are destroyed, the trees shot down, the wells fallen into disrepair, the fields churned up and overgrown. Here in occupied territory, a people have been forced into a way of life that they've never known....

And I won't be able to make the trip to Paris and Versailles, won't be able to be happy in the land of wine and joy because between me and you stands a wall, flows a stream of blood, of blood possibly shed futilely, in order to make millions of mothers collapse in grief and misery.

I've been at war a long time, I've seen many fall who were worthy of living. What should be made of this murdering and murdering again? I fear too much has been annihilated and too little remains to rebuild. Before the war I thought like everyone else: down, demolish the old buildings, the new one will be better in any case. But now—it seems to me—the culture and everything great is slowly being strangled by the war. The war has awakened in me the heartfelt-yearning for the blessings of peace.

But enough of armchair philosophy! In a few days we should receive new rifles, which is a telling sign. One day in our new position will be called: alarm! Back into battle, it'll do us good.¹¹²

This entry illustrates a number of essential components of Jünger's *Kriegserlebnis* as well as essential insights for understanding his nationalism during the war.

In addition to empathy (which appears much closer to a decidedly *attached* sympathy, along with displaying more than a dollop of respect and admiration for the French people and their culture), three additional elements stand out. First, Jünger displays an intense emotionality directly at odds with the notably detached and objective style of his later writings. Further, this emotionality is exceptionally personal; his lamentations relate not just vicariously to those under occupation, but also to the memories, opportunities, and experiences that the war was taking from Jünger himself.

This is directly related to the second element: the perceived perpetuity and irrevocability of the Great War. Jünger repeatedly bemoaned his fears that what was good in the pre-war world might be irretrievable after the war, all the more so because the war is 'slowly strangling Europe'

¹¹² Ibid., 62-63.

in what felt like a near-endless process—to the point that he repudiated his pre-war ideas of war as a positive transformative experience as early as December 1915. This is then driven home in an indirect—but no less poignant—manner when Jünger returns his attention to the practical matters at hand: the impending receipt of new rifles, signaling a return to battle in the front lines, necessitated the cessation of his more remote emotional and philosophical reflections.

Finally, Jünger intimates that his pre-war conception of the role of the war (and possibly by extension nationalism) was ‘the same as everyone else’—that of an inherently positive transformative experience—but his *Kriegserlebnis* had robbed that conception of its validity. Clearly, concrete practical concerns dominated to the point that it appears by the end of 1915 Jünger’s national identity was largely paused in this deconstructed state.

To be sure, Jünger’s diary also voiced his more militaristic and bloodthirsty aims for his experience. He stated in his entry from 3 September 1916—during the battle of the Somme—for example, that while “I have now experienced much in this great war...[but] the purpose of my war experience...has not been fulfilled”: to fight “man against man, which is something different than this eternal artillery war.”¹¹³ However, this “war lust” remained periodically tempered, as, for example, when Jünger, “sitting in a green meadow” at the end of May 1917 asked himself “when will this shitty war end?” and exclaimed in an affecting metaphor that “Spring must come sometime!”¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, Jünger endured. By the end of the war, he was a Lieutenant in the shock troops, had been wounded fourteen times (by his own count¹¹⁵), and had received not only the Iron Cross First Class, but also the Pour le Mérite, Germany’s highest military decoration.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹¹⁵ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 314.

¹¹⁶ Hervier, *Details of Time*, 136. See also Jünger, *Storm of Steel*; Jünger, *Kriegstagebuch*. For a biographical overview of Jünger’s war experience, including decorations, see Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany*, 39-74.

Ultimately, there are two central elements that emerge from this analysis of Jünger's *Kriegserlebnis* which offer crucial insights into German nationalism during this period. The first is the total absence of jingoism in Jünger's Nationalism, even where Jünger relishes the periods of excitement generated during the war and while granting that his experience of the 'Spirit of 1914' and the spontaneous mobilization were likely accurate (although this assessment is based on largely circumstantial evidence). This negative definition of national identity—defined by a 'lack of'—is in fact the only conception of nationalism Jünger seems to have held during 1914-1918. Both his diary and the majority of *Storm of Steel* illustrate the persistent prevalence of pragmatic concerns which limited abstract reflection during the war. The war had deconstructed his national identity—the pre-war definition was now null and thus it was definition-less—and these practical issues precluded any reconstruction of that identity until after the armistice.

This negative conception is inherently related to the second element, which is ultimately more important as it is the principal component in Jünger's construction of a concrete—i.e. positive—definition of nationalism in the years following the war: immense emotional trauma based on a deeply empathetic mindset, itself rooted in a strong proclivity for observation and a deep hunger for experience.¹¹⁷ While Jünger's *Kriegserlebnis* was not one of disillusionment, it was one of mammoth emotional intensity, as Jünger salvaged personal triumph out of Germany's national defeat.

¹¹⁷ For a more detailed over view of the early development of these qualities in Jünger, see Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany*, 9-37.

3.2 POST-WAR REFLECTIONS: POSITIVE NATIONAL IDENTITY DEFINITION, 1918-1924

It was not until after the war that Jünger articulated his conception of nationalism in positive terms, found in the limited number of abstract reflections in the 1924 edition of *In Stahlgewittern*. Jünger mentions in a footnote that the aim of the book “is to deal with the experience of the war purely” since he discussed its psychology in *War as Inner Experience*,¹¹⁸ which subsequently implied that the philosophical and psychological reflections he included in that edition were so central as to necessitate their inclusion in a purely descriptive work.

As illustrated above, Jünger began his memoir with a brief recounting of his experience and interpretation of the ‘Spirit of 1914’, and this attempt to frame his account in popularly accepted nationalist terms persists throughout the book. In fact, at the conclusion of his memoir Jünger’s nationalistic faith in Germany is proclaimed to actually have been *strengthened* by his experience during the war, at least according to this recounting. His final lines of *Storm of Steel* profess to the reader his nationalistic faith in a timeless and eternal Germany, already with an eye on the future:

In spite of this [fever] it was not long before we were in excellent form for another winter campaign. This was deferred for a while; and we soon had to take part in other battles than we ever dreamed.

Now these too are over, and already we see once more in the dim light of the future the tumult of fresh ones. We—by this I mean those youth of this land who are capable of enthusiasm for an ideal—will not shirk from them. We stand in the memory of the dead who are holy to us and *we believe ourselves entrusted with the true and spiritual welfare of our people*. We stand for what will be and what has been. Though force without and barbarity within conglomerate in somber clouds, yet so long as the blade of a

¹¹⁸ Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 22.

sword will strike a spark in the night it may be said: Germany lives and Germany shall never go under!”¹¹⁹

Jünger quite blatantly attempted to portray his wartime nationalism as constant and unvarying, in contrast (and contradiction) to his actual war diary. Importantly, this narrative directly correlates with Richard Bessel’s analysis and description of the mindset and emotional needs of the recently demobilized *Frontsoldaten*,¹²⁰ as Jünger glossed over his deconstructed national identity during the Great War.

This contradiction is not the central element of Jünger’s concluding reflections on the war’s meaning however. That element—alluded to in the passage above—is his avowed belief of the Front Generation’s transformation into the guardians of the ‘spiritual welfare’ of the German people, and points to the chief components of Jünger’s positive definition of German identity:

To-day we cannot understand the martyrs who threw themselves into the arena in a transport that lifted them even before their deaths *beyond humanity*.... *Their faith no longer exercises a compelling force*. When once it is no longer possible to understand how a man gives his life for his country—and the time will come—*then all is over with that faith also*, and the idea of the fatherland is dead.... For all these great and solemn ideas bloom from a *feeling* that dwells in the blood and cannot be forced. *In the cold light of reason everything alike is a matter of expedience and sinks to the paltry and mean*. It was our luck to live in the invisible rays of a *feeling* that filled the heart, and of this inestimable treasure we can never be deprived.¹²¹

Three things stand out, all of which, as their intimate proximity indicates, are innately related.

The first is, quite simply, the attack on rationalism and nihilism of the kind that would later be articulated in Eric Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*.¹²² Jünger made

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 318-319. Emphasis added.

¹²⁰ Richard Bessel, “The Great War in German Memory: The Soldiers of the First World War, Demobilization, and Weimar Political Culture,” *German History* 6:1 (1988).

¹²¹ Ibid., 317. Emphasis added.

¹²² The parallels between Jünger and Remarque’s protagonist Paul Bäumer are striking: both were 19-year-old students who joined the army during the initial wave of enthusiasm around the outset of the war, and spent years at the front where they lived through the inescapable monotony of bombardments, gas attacks, night patrols, mass offensives and death. Both were wounded multiple times and still continued to serve until the end of the war

clear in a single concise sentence that such a conception of the war offered no meaning—no explanation—and therefore appeared to him as petty and irrelevant. It was an unviable framework through which to interpret the war because it offered no inherent value for his experience of the war’s destruction and immense sacrifices it had imposed.

The second is the prominent use of religious diction. Implicit in these final ruminations is the fact that nationalism functioned as a form of central, internal belief along lines at least comparable to those of religion. Nationalism was a faith (a word used explicitly and recurrently) that could grant meaning to the world in general and the war in particular. But Jünger’s religious nationalism—and religiosity in general—was of a unique color. He does not fit cleanly within either of the two main religious trends surrounding the war—the ecumenical ‘sacred nation’ that united the fractious masses behind a wartime jingoistic faith,¹²³ nor the post-war increase in mourning-related religiosity and spiritualism.¹²⁴

Superficially at any rate, Jünger appears to fit within the former group, for whom “[b]elief in God and patriotism were usually inseparable; and though this may not mean that everyone was a believer...it is clear that spiritual values and their related vocabulary...sustained people and their ideas about the war, their beliefs that they were taking part in a *true crusade*.”¹²⁵

(although the fictional Bäumer is killed in October of 1918 while Jünger was only severely wounded). The central difference is that Remarque’s book treads much closer to the message one gleans from the more emotive passages of Jünger’s diary, emphasizing the horror, atrocity and pointlessness of the war, and ultimately painting nihilistic apathy as the primary emotional experience of the *Frontsoldaten* who become unwilling prisoners of the war. See Eric Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (New York: Random House, 1929).

¹²³ Rouzeau and Becker, 14-18, 113-115.

¹²⁴ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1995): 54-77. The religious trend alluded to here, and described in more detail by the cited chapter from Winter, is the increase in interest in mediums and spiritualism as a means to communicate with the dead, and an increase in more ‘traditional’ religiosity.

¹²⁵ Rouzeau and Becker, 14-18, 115. Emphasis added.

It is this idea of a crusade, wherein “chosen peoples” were now at war with each other,¹²⁶ that sets Jünger’s nationalism apart. The nation was clearly sacred for Jünger by 1924, but that did not, for him, imply a religious imperative to destroy other nations. While his idea of ‘Total Mobilization’ (the title of one of Jünger’s essays which would later become the *The Worker*¹²⁷) and the militaristic necessity of an autocratic state that could stand above the polarized, internecine political system associated with the Weimar Republic¹²⁸ would seem to detract from this notion of Jünger’s religiosity as atypical, it is important to note that 1) that idea was not developed during the war, but was, according to Martin Travers’ analysis of Conservative Revolutionary literature, “articulated through an almost impersonal distance from the immediacy of the events described”¹²⁹ and 2) is concerned with war in-and-of itself more so than with a specific enemy nation.¹³⁰

Jünger’s nationalistic religiosity was more of a synthesis of the two larger religious trends. On the one hand it reflected the faith and belief in the sanctity of the nation, whilst simultaneously fulfilling a need to find meaning and, above all, catharsis in its destruction. For Jünger, it appeared it was better to live with the belief that all of those who perished and suffered through the war’s innumerable horrors died and suffered for some great ideal, some great nation, Germany, than to founder in the cold harshness of nihilism and believe that their lives and deaths held no meaning at all.

The final element is the most important, as it is the culmination of the previous two: the internal manifestation of nationalism. As elucidated above, both Jünger’s war diary, *In*

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Wolin, introduction, 124.

¹²⁸ Travers, *Critics of Modernity*, 97-98.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 101.

¹³⁰ See Jünger, “Total Mobilization”.

Stahlgewittern, and even ‘Total Mobilization’ lack any form of hostility towards enemy nations. Jünger held a great deal of respect for both the French and the British, and—this being the essential point—saw them as having *an equally legitimate right* to this internal sense of national pride; of the manifestation of the socio-cultural and intrinsically communal and fraternal phenomenon of Nationalism¹³¹ as an *internal feeling*, but never to the point of blindness or antagonism. In this sense, it is clear that Jünger’s community of experience was perceived as a much more capacious one, as it was not limited to the German nation, but was applicable to—and intended for—all frontline soldiers in all the belligerent nations; a template for Nationalism’s proper sphere:

It has always been my ideal in war to eliminate all feelings of hatred and to treat my enemy as an enemy only in battle and to honour him as a man according to his courage. It is exactly in this that I have found many kindred souls among British officers. It depends, of course, *on not letting oneself be blinded by an excessive national feeling*, as the case generally is between the French and the Germans. *The consciousness of the importance of one’s own nation ought to reside as a matter of course and unobtrusively in everybody, just as an unconditional sense of honour does in a gentleman.*¹³²

Importantly, Jünger’s framework was unique in that it was not only non-aggressive, but also *non-defensive*: this nationalism template was instead primarily sporting and internationally fraternal.

Finally, this begs the broader question as to the *construction* of this internal conception of national identity. In this regard, the first essential point to note is again that Jünger’s internal nationalism overtly fulfills an *emotional* need, i.e. catharsis, unsurprising given the emotional intensity of Jünger’s *Kriegserlebnis*. At this point the issue of chronology—the second point—becomes crucial. Despite Jünger’s professed experience of having been carried into the First World War on a wave of nationalist feeling, he did not reconstruct his national identity during

¹³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* 2nd Edition (New York: Verso, 2006): 5-7.

¹³² Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 52. Emphasis added.

the conflict: his positive conception of nationalism was not articulated until *after* the armistice.

Both of these elements were forthrightly stated in Jünger's elderly reflections on his younger self:

I would never say that I was completely wrong. Quite the opposite: a man has to be capable of respecting his own history. I genuinely like that young man, even though I feel very removed from him. During World War I, I reacted a lot more passionately, as did everyone else, in France and England too. All young men are prey to violent emotions. Why should anyone back away from it now at any price? Today it would be dreadful to insist that that enthusiasm led to nothing. I'm perfectly aware of it, but I would still like to pat those young men on the back.

I became a nationalist purely under French influence, especially by reading Barrès right after World War I. Barrès was truly enthralling. He was the one who said "I am not national, I am a nationalist." I instantly made those sentiments my own. Actually, what they did was to reactivate a great historical orientation—namely, the influence of the French Revolution on the German situation. The wars of liberation were made possible only by the phenomenon of Napoleon.¹³³

In summation, the evolution of Jünger's nationalism appears to be an example of the process implied in coupling Rouzeau and Becker's dictum with the analysis of Eric Leed (discussed below): a process of identity deconstruction during the war, necessitating a process of reconstruction afterwards. But it is also clear that while the internal manifestation was unique, the vehicle—Nationalism—was not freely chosen: it was optimal because it was both deeply pre-conditioned prior to the war (as it was for the majority of Europeans) and popularly acceptable afterwards. Further, from a more pragmatic perspective, this post-war acceptability had other potential benefits for the young author by creating the possibility of an international readership, which *Storm of Steel* garnered by 1929.¹³⁴

As Leed asserts, war is an inherently disruptive and abnormal event which only a minority of any given society can understand in any truly vicarious way, and one which innately

¹³³ Hervier, *Details of Time*, 15.

¹³⁴ Once again, this is the year the first English-language edition of *In Stahlgewittern* was published.

produced an identity discontinuity *even before* any consideration of emotional trauma; the reestablishment of identity continuity became the central psychological project of most (if not all) combat veterans returning from the trenches,¹³⁵ and Jünger was no exception. Thus it becomes clear that Thomas Nevin's characterization of Jünger as a detached and emotionally cold individual whose "distancing even from himself is not only a capacity; it is a disposition which suggests his great difficulty in establishing any deep emotional relationships with anyone"¹³⁶ only holds true for the Jünger that emerged from the inferno of the First World War.

Spurred by a restless adventurousness coupled with the 'Spirit of 1914', Jünger plunged headlong into World War I, coming face to face with the war's brutality in a physical, psychological, cultural, and emotional sense. Throughout the war years, Jünger displayed a marked lack of nationalist hostility and an abundance of empathy, while the practical burdens of the Great War precluded any deeper overt reflection on—and therefore reconstruction of—his national identity. It was only in the years following the war that Jünger articulated his form of internal nationalism which could (at least partially) fill that emotional void. As Robert Wohl intimates in his summary of Jünger's ideas, these nationalistic sentiments illustrated a need for a dual catharsis, on both a national and individual level:

[T]he lessons the war had to teach *could be learned even better in defeat than in victory*. For in the depths of his despair the German soldier had...come to know and worship the nation. He had come to realize the *I* was nothing and that the *we*...was everything.... No one had died in vain. *The English, French, and Germans had all been working toward...a new mode of life.*¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1979): 1-12.

¹³⁶ Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany*, 3.

¹³⁷ Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979): 59-60. Emphasis added

By transforming themselves internally into guardians of the national spirit, the *Frontsoldaten* of all nations could become the ‘new men’ to rebuild Europe as a collection of collectivistic, gentlemanly nation states; an inherently cathartic reconstruction of national identity.

4.0 RESOLVING AMBIVALENCE: HERMANN HESSE'S COMPETING IDENTITIES

Hermann Hesse's experience of the war was in many ways the polar opposite of Jünger's. Hesse was thirty-seven years old and had already achieved a moderate degree of literary success by the outbreak of hostilities. Not only did he see none of the 'action' of the war firsthand, but spent the war as a German citizen in a foreign, neutral country, living in Bern, Switzerland.¹³⁸ When hostilities broke out in the August 1914, Hesse's political views were ambiguous, as he was largely uninterested in politics prior to its start.¹³⁹ This ambiguity was in fact masking a profound sense of ambivalence,¹⁴⁰ and the intellectual biography of Hesse's war experience is the story of resolving this ambivalence—the competition between his nationalism on the one hand, and his internationalism and pacifism on the other.

¹³⁸ For a concise biography of Hesse's life, see Theodore Ziolkowski, introduction to *Soul of the Age: Selected Letters of Hermann Hesse, 1891-1962* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991): vii-xx. For a more detailed biography of Hesse, see Joseph Mileck, *Hermann Hesse: Life and Art* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978).

¹³⁹ George Field, *Hermann Hesse* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970): 41. Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 68.

¹⁴⁰ Other Hesse scholars have characterized Hesse's reaction to the outbreak of war in the same way. See Mileck, *Herman Hesse*, 65-127; Ziolkowski, introduction, xiii; Lewis Tuskin, *Understanding Hermann Hesse: The Man, His Myth, His Metaphor* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998): 73-74.

4.1 INTERNATIONALIST SENTIMENTS AND NATIONAL LOYALTIES, 1914-1915

With the outbreak of hostilities, there was a profound ‘mobilization of morale’, as newspapers, intellectuals, and artists rallied in defense of German *Kultur*,¹⁴¹ alongside more official government measures—one of the most prominent being censorship—in the attempt to frame the war in defensive terms and therefore mobilize the populace psychologically and emotionally.¹⁴² In this regard Hesse was unique in that he was, from the outset, critical of this nationalistic outpouring.

Beginning with his first essay on the subject, “O Friends, Not These Tones!”—written in September 1914 and published two months later—Hesse responded directly to the jingoistic nature of the cultural mobilization. In Hesse’s view, the danger of Nationalism was exactly such a mobilization: it was destroying culture and art by fueling feelings of hatred and resentment among people of different nationalities. As he stated in his essay, “A lovely Japanese fairy tale, a good French novel...must now be passed over in silence...because a few Japanese ships are attacking [the German colony] Tsingtao.” Further, this cultural destruction was being carried out by “neutrals”—“all those who as scientists, teachers, artists, and men of letters are engaged in the labors of peace and humanity”—who “participate in the great events by carrying the war into their studies and writing bloodthirsty war songs or rabid articles fomenting hatred among

¹⁴¹ Perhaps the most prominent example of this trend is Thomas Mann, who wrote a number of essays on the topic during the war, contrasting German *Kultur* with western ‘civilization’. He collected his thoughts on the subject in his book *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, published in 1918. See Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, 1918, trans. Walter D. Morris (Reprint, New York: Ungar Publishing Co., 1983).

¹⁴² Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* 2nd Edition (New York: Cambridge UP, 2004): 46-50, 132-134.

nations.”¹⁴³ Hesse is particularly hostile to academics and artists whose convictions changed at the outset of the war; those who hopped onto the nationalist bandwagon, riding on the perceived wave of nationalist rapture and abandoned their convictions once they became inconvenient: “all those others who were more or less consciously at work on the supranational edifice of human culture and have now suddenly decided to carry the war into the realm of the spirit—what they are doing is wrong and grotesquely unreasonable.”¹⁴⁴

Hesse wanted to hold academics, artists and men of letters to a higher standard than the common soldier whose “mental laziness” he excused.¹⁴⁵ As Hesse saw it, their role should be to promote an idealistic, peaceful European society, not the perpetuation of traditional national animosities. Those who were intellectually superior must be above common emotion: “it becomes incumbent to preserve an area of peace, to strike bridges, to look for ways, but not to lash out (with our pens!) and still further demolish the foundations of Europe’s future.”¹⁴⁶

Such sentiments would seem to point toward a very overt internationalist leaning. However, Hesse very deliberately framed his essay with patriotic proclamations. In the opening paragraph, he stated “I am a German, my sympathies and aspirations belong to Germany” before proceeding to his critiques.¹⁴⁷ He completed this nationalistic frame at the conclusion of those initial criticisms, in an attempt to portray his national loyalty as an essential qualifier to his commentary: “These words, it goes without saying, are not directed against patriotic sentiment or love of country. I am the last man to foreswear my country at a time like this, nor would it occur

¹⁴³ Hermann Hesse, “O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!” in *If the War Goes on... Reflections on War and Politics*, 1949. Trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: The Noonday Press, 1971): 10.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

to me to deter a soldier from doing his duty. Since shooting is the order of the day, let there be shooting.”¹⁴⁸

Moreover, these nationalistic proclamations do not appear to be merely pragmatic tools to avert criticism, but opinions that Hesse genuinely held. First and foremost, Hesse attempted to join the German army twice—once at the German consulate in Bern, once in Stuttgart—but was rejected due to his poor eyesight and family issues surrounding his schizophrenic wife.¹⁴⁹ Second, an examination of Hesse’s private correspondence illustrates that he harbored an even greater degree of nationalism in private than his first public essay let on. In a letter to his father from 9 September 1914, he not only displays a genuine emotional loyalty and attachment to Germany, but also a strong degree of cultural hostility towards both England and Russia:

If one could only foresee the course of the war and its outcome! The alliances and vested interests are so entangled that nothing seems certain; all of Europe will have to suffer the consequences, except perhaps for England, which is watching closely in the hope of making a profit. Although I love many English people dearly and respect others highly, I think that, morally speaking, they’re in a downright miserable predicament as a people. But it’s consoling to see so many well-intentioned Englishmen speaking out against these despicable policies. In the meantime, half of Germany is bleeding to death, and France is being ruined; the English certainly won’t pay any damages. Since things are so desperate, one can only hope for news of a rebellion breaking out in India, or some terrible misfortune befalling the English fleet. If that were to happen, and if Austria can somehow keep going, then Germany could play the leading role at the peace negotiations, and in that case there would be some hope for life and culture in the immediate future. Otherwise, England would end up on top, and Europe would then be in the hands of those moneybags and illiterate Russians, and if we wanted to safeguard our most sacred values, we would have to initiate a kind of secret cult. But, personally, I have a lot of faith in Germany, and even if the other dreams never come true, this enormous upheaval will eventually prove beneficial for us, in spite of the victims. A stronger Russia and a seriously weakened France would be terrible news for everybody. It is awful to think that this big war will probably victimize those who least deserve that fate. I like both the Russians and the English, and feel close to them as a people, but have political and cultural reasons for hoping they don’t grow more powerful.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹⁴⁹ Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 68-70.

¹⁵⁰ Hermann Hesse, *Soul of the Age: Selected Letters of Hermann Hesse, 1891-1962* ed. by Theodore Ziolkowski, trans. by Mark Harman (New York: The Noonday Press, 1992): 70-71.

Ironically, it appears that Hesse not only was unique for his early criticism, but also for going beyond the resigned acceptance with which most Europeans greeted the outbreak of war, privately feeling that which he publicly decried against: a culturally chauvinistic German nationalism, with at least a modicum of hostility. Hesse's letter appears as something of a structural foil of "O Friends, Not These Tones!" wherein he framed his nationalistic critiques of England and Russia with internationalist professions of his love and respect for them, a subtle indication of the depth of this ambivalence.

These conflicting sentiments do appear to have been resolved by Hesse to some extent—at least intellectually—early in the war, most clearly demonstrated in his description of Goethe, his ideal intellectual man: "Goethe was never wanting as a patriot...*but his devotion to humanity meant more to him than his devotion to the German people*, which he knew and loved better than anyone else."¹⁵¹ Hesse appeared to see himself (or at least wanted to see himself) in the same way that he described Goethe, as "a citizen and patriot of the international world of thought," membership in which did not mean the abandonment of the German nation.¹⁵² Nationalism merely occupied a lower rung on the intellectual and identity hierarchy, as he clarified to a musical friend in a letter from 26 December 1914: "[e]ven though I feel very German, I have always considered nationalism an elementary form of education, an introductory course in ideal humanity. I have never relished the thought of nationalism as a goal in itself."¹⁵³

At the same time however, Hesse was acutely aware of the ambivalence of his attitudes and the competitive nature of his loyalties, evidenced in a letter to a friend from 10 November 1914:

¹⁵¹ Hesse, "O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!", 13. Emphasis added.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Hesse, *Soul of the Age*, 74.

The war has put me in a somewhat awkward position. Although I feel that I'm on Germany's side and can understand the all-consuming nationalistic fervor that has taken hold there, I'm not a completely enthusiastic participant in this development. I live abroad, and thus at some remove from the origins of the acute psychosis; I cannot quite get over what happened to Belgium; my family origins have shaped my outlook, and my own experience has become so cosmopolitan that I would seem somewhat suspect in the eyes of a pure patriot.... [E]ver since my childhood, I have regarded Switzerland as my second homeland, although only the German part. I also feel like traveling and getting to know the literatures of foreign countries. Germany now sees little point in behaving decently and exercising restraint; war calls for a severe state of psychosis or even mania. I fail to see anything delightful or splendid in this war, and don't anticipate a rosy future afterward. As soon as the war is over, we shall have to become better friends with England and France than we were in prewar days; I feel that will prove indispensable in the future, and would have come about more easily without the war. Now we shall have to pay for the miserable policies of France, the envy of the English, and our own political mistakes; Austria, Belgium, and France are also bleeding. There is no point trying to identify the 'guilty' party; each side needs to believe that it is in the right. The whole thing is just a pathetic scrap about values that are far from clear cut. The war has created a wonderful spirit of unity and self-sacrifice in Germany, but the same applies to the enemy. It's easy enough for those of us who have stayed at home to say that a war which has created that sort of atmosphere is worthwhile. But those who are rotting in the woods, those whose cities, villages, fields, and aspirations have been ravaged and destroyed do not agree, and I cannot think about the war without hearing those voices.¹⁵⁴

In addition to illustrating the ambivalent conflict between Hesse's communal identities, this letter also provides two important insights into the source of that ambivalence. First, it is clear that at least one of the chief roots was Hesse's feeling of holding an *inadequate amount* of nationalism—certainly not enough to insulate him from criticism—as opposed to a *differing definition* of it. This is particularly ironic in that the second noteworthy element is Hesse's use of the word “enemy”: a concise embodiment of his common nationalistic prejudices—which appears very much in line with the very kind of nationalism he felt himself to lack—that Germany would be forced “to pay for the miserable policies of France” and “the envy of the English”.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 73.

Despite this contradiction, Hesse proved to be quite perceptive. He was subject to a rather ignorant and misinformed criticism from ultra-nationalists—based mostly on taking private remarks out of context—starting in the fall of 1915.¹⁵⁵ This came after he had authored a decidedly chauvinistic introduction for a battlefront pamphlet titled ‘To Victory’, published on 14 March 1915, where Hesse seemed to align himself even more with the more official nationalistic line—a clear illustration of the baselessness of the criticisms he faced: “We no longer want to be that poor ideal Germany that had many poets and thinkers but no money and no power and no voice in world affairs. We intend to be part of the action in the future.”¹⁵⁶

He did appear to back away from this more jingoistic position rather quickly however. In two open letters from 23 October and 1 November 1915—written in response to this misinterpretive criticism—Hesse largely returned to the position he had taken in “O Friends, Not These Tones!” He explained the source of their misunderstanding in an attempt to clarify his position; defended himself against the charge of “draft dodging”, pointing out that “I did try to enlist in the late summer of 1914” and upon his rejection had been working in an official, government-sanctioned capacity to aid German POWs; and even invited his critics to spend a week with him in Bern “so they can examine our work in a neutral country, especially our labor of love on behalf of the prisoners.”¹⁵⁷

This work with prisoners was in many ways a concrete manifestation of Hesse’s ambivalent nationalism. As Lewis Tuskin summarizes, “Hesse’s activities...proved his German loyalties—as he understood them—and took the form of sympathy for the common soldier.” However, as Tuskin goes on to point out these “were universal, humanitarian efforts to remind

¹⁵⁵ Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 73-75.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 72, footnote 15.

¹⁵⁷ Hesse, *Soul of the Age*, 81-84.

those same German soldiers that there was a higher life and higher meaning beyond battlefield and fatherland.”¹⁵⁸

4.2 DISILLUSIONMENT AND TRANSCENDENCE, 1916-1919

These ambivalent sentiments persisted until late 1915/early 1916, when a number of personal crises, coupled with the continuation and intensification of the war, produced a profound sense of disillusionment in Hesse. His tireless labors for the POWs, as well as the attacks from the nationalist press continued. In addition, Hesse was attacked by pacifists almost as vehemently as he was from the nationalists, this time for his lack of faith in their organized effort’s realistic possibilities for ending the war.¹⁵⁹ Then, early in 1916, Hesse’s father died, while at the same time his wife’s schizophrenia worsened, eventually culminating in her institutionalization. This combination of pressures eventually led Hesse to revert into a life of isolation and solitude, and eventually to begin psychoanalytic treatments with Dr. Josef Lang, a young Jungian disciple, which continued into 1917.¹⁶⁰

Hesse discussed this increasing introversion in a letter to an old friend from 18 May 1916, which demonstrates that his internal ambivalence was becoming increasingly untenable:

I too may be approaching a crisis...[b]ut these physical ailments are not very significant, since most of them are merely symptoms of an inner malaise, a process of dissolution, which has been going on inside me for years, and has now reached a stage where it will

¹⁵⁸ Tuskin, *Understanding Hermann Hesse*, 73.

¹⁵⁹ Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 75-77.

¹⁶⁰ Ziolkowski, introduction, xv-xvi

erupt, and a solution has to be found, otherwise it would be pointless continuing. I have no idea where this path is heading—it will either lead back to the ‘world’ or make me even more isolated and withdrawn. At the moment, I feel that my once lively instincts and thought processes are shriveling; something new is germinating, it’s still indistinct, and I feel greater anxiety than joy. The painful pressures exerted by that awful war have actually quickened this growth.¹⁶¹

Hesse felt that the onset of this disillusionment and internal crisis was not spontaneous, but was 1) the culmination of a process years in the making which 2) was firmly rooted in—or was at the very least accelerated and intensified by—the cultural, emotional and psychological crisis of the First World War. Perhaps most important is the subtle indication that Hesse had begun to divorce himself from his previous feelings of German-ness; the war was no longer ‘ours’, but was instead ‘that awful war’—some malevolent external force to which Hesse felt no personal connection. To this end, it is clear that by the conclusion of 1916 Hesse’s patience for the vociferous nationalists in Germany had begun to wane. He stated in a letter from Christmas Day 1916, for example, that “[t]hose ranting barbarians we have to listen to nowadays allege that our prewar lives were absolutely sybaritic and emotionally vapid, whereas now we are again faced with real life and genuine emotions. How stupid and deceitful!”¹⁶²

This ‘inner malaise’ and increasing disgust and despondency towards the external world continued throughout 1917. Hesse wrote to the Austrian man of letters Felix Braun on 7 June that “[t]he war has put me in an awful situation, which is fraught with inner turmoil, a situation I can neither describe nor turn into literature.” Further, his retreat into introversion had intensified: “Although the war has changed the way I—and indeed everybody else—relate to the world, it

¹⁶¹ Hesse, *Soul of the Age*, 84-85.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 85.

hasn't made a political animal out of me. Quite the opposite. I see the line dividing the inner and outer worlds even more clearly than usual, and am interested solely in the former."¹⁶³

In August, Hesse published an essay titled "To a Cabinet Minister" in which he openly criticized the 'official' nationalism of the Imperial German government, but without the nationalistic adornments of his earlier writings from the first two years of the war:

Reduced to the essentials, [the minister's speech] said roughly what government officials have been saying in their speeches for a long time: that... 'we' long for nothing so fervently as peace, as a new understanding among nations and fruitful collaboration in building the future, that we wish neither to enrich ourselves nor to satisfy homicidal lusts—but that the 'time for negotiations' is not yet at hand and that for the present there is therefore no alternative but to go on bravely waging war. Just about every minister of any of the belligerent nations might have made such a speech....

Your speech shows a profound feeling of concern and responsibility for your people, its army, and its honor. But it shows no feeling for mankind. And, to put it bluntly, it implies hundreds of thousands more human sacrifices.¹⁶⁴

Once more, and this time publicly, Hesse implied his detachment from Germany—"your people, its army, and its honor"—but had now reversed himself from his previous sentiment from September 1914 that 'since shooting is the order of the day, let there be shooting' and directly asserted that jingoistic speeches were simply encouraging the continuance of mass murder. Hesse's national identity, rather than being deconstructed (offering the possibility for reconstruction and redefinition), was instead becoming *devalued* as Hesse's initial definition of nationalism remained unaltered.

This devaluation—and the recanting of his earlier nationalistic sentiments—continued throughout 1917 and 1918, while at the same time his focus continued to shift from macroscopic

¹⁶³ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶⁴ Hermann Hesse, "To a Cabinet Minister", in *If the War Goes on... Reflections on War and Politics*, 1949. Trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: The Noonday Press, 1971): 15-16.

concerns of the ‘outer’ world to the microscopic concerns of the inner individual.¹⁶⁵ This, perhaps unsurprisingly, coincided with an expansion and increase in value of his internationalist identity, as he described in a short letter to Romain Rolland from 4 August: “I have failed in my attempt to introduce love into political matters. I don’t consider ‘Europe’ an ideal. While people continue killing one another, under European leadership, I remain suspicious of all such divisions between human beings. *I don’t believe in Europe, but rather in humanity.*”¹⁶⁶

Further emblematic of this shift is his adoption of a pseudonym—Emil Sinclair—beginning in 1917. This moniker insulated Hesse against further criticism, but also guaranteed that his newly-evolving message would be read in a less biased manner, since “[h]is name had become a liability.”¹⁶⁷ Given this fact, his new pseudonym would allow Hesse to maintain—or at least better maintain—his weight within the intellectual field of German Nationalism.

A short dystopian story published under this pseudonym from late 1917, “If the War Goes on Another Two Years”, wherein Sinclair (also the first-person protagonist of the story) quite literally separates his soul from his earthly body only to return to a 1920 where the war is still continuing, appears to be a final transitional piece as Hesse edged ever closer to resolving his identity ambivalence. His description of this dystopia is both overtly biting and startlingly prophetic, elucidating the contradictions of official justifications for the war, but also foreshadowing the even more total nature of 1939-1945:

Great progress had been made towards equality. In Europe at least...all countries looked the same.... Since the introduction of bombing from free balloons, which automatically dropped their bombs on the civilian population from an altitude of fifty to sixty thousand feet, national boundaries, though closely guarded as ever, had become rather illusory. The dispersion of these bombs, dropped at random from the sky, was so great that the balloon

¹⁶⁵ Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 77-81. This shift can also be found quite clearly in Hesse’s self-chosen collection of essays from World War I: Hesse, *If the War Goes On*, 9-131.

¹⁶⁶ Hesse, *Soul of the Age*, 90. Emphasis added.

¹⁶⁷ Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 88.

commands were quite content if their explosive showers had spared their own country—how many had landed on neutral or even allied territory had become a matter of indifference.

This was the only real progress the art of warfare had made; here at last the character of this war had found a clear expression. The world was divided into two parties which were trying to destroy each other because they both wanted the same thing, the liberation of the oppressed, the abolition of violence, and the establishment of a lasting peace. On both sides there was a strong sentiment against any peace that might not last forever—if eternal peace was not to be had, both parties were resolutely committed to eternal war.¹⁶⁸

This astounding sense of hypocrisy now had clearly become brutally apparent to Hesse, and his recognition of it appears to be the final step in the repudiation of his earlier notion and (admittedly loose) alignment with the official nationalist ideology. As the story progresses, Sinclair is found to be out for a walk without permission, lacking identification papers, has leather shoes which are forbidden for civilians (and are subsequently confiscated) and is informed that he is not even allowed to die without the permission of the state: he would have to purchase a “demise card” for 4,000 gulden. The story concludes with Sinclair again abandoning his earthly body and wandering off to another spiritual world.¹⁶⁹

This resolution via a focus on the personal inner spirit—vaguely formulated in “If the War Goes on Another Two Years”—was finally articulated in a more concrete form late in 1917 in Hesse’s one major literary work from this period (also initially published under his Emil Sinclair pseudonym), the short novel *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair’s Youth*, written in a few frenzied weeks in the fall of 1917 and later published in 1919.¹⁷⁰ While the majority of *Demian* does not deal overtly with the war, it conveyed—in a subtle, literary fashion—what

¹⁶⁸ Hermann Hesse, “If the War Goes on Another Two Years”, in *If the War Goes on... Reflections on War and Politics*, 1949. Trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: The Noonday Press, 1971): 21.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-28.

¹⁷⁰ What follows is a very short analysis with an intentionally narrow focus on *Demian*’s relation to Hesse’s communal identity conception(s). For more holistic and literary analyses of *Demian*, see Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 88-100; Tuskin, *Understanding Hermann Hesse*, 84-97.

Hesse saw as the optimal means for positive societal transformation: personal, individuated transcendence.¹⁷¹ The conclusion of *Demian*, when the protagonist—again, Emil Sinclair—is sent to the front, concisely articulated both the direct relationship between Hesse’s conception of personal transcendence and the Great War, but also Hesse’s ultimate conclusion about wartime nationalism. Consequently, it is worth quoting at length:

All men seemed to have become brothers—overnight. They talked of ‘the fatherland’ and of ‘honor’, but what lay behind it was their own fate whose unveiled face they had now all beheld for one brief moment. Young men left their barracks, were packed onto trains, and on many faces I saw a sign—not ours—but a beautiful, dignified sign nonetheless that meant love and death. I, too, was embraced by people whom I had never seen before and I understood this gesture and responded to it. Intoxication made them do it, not a hankering after their destiny. But this intoxication was sacred, for it was the result of their all having thrown that brief, terribly disquieting glance into the eyes of their fate.

It was nearly winter when I was sent to the front. Despite the excitement of being under fire for the first time, in the beginning everything disappointed me. At one time *I had given much thought to why men were so rarely capable of living for an ideal. Now I saw that many, no, all men were capable of dying for one.* Yet it could not be a personal, a freely chosen ideal; *it had to be mutually accepted.*

As time went on though I realized I had underestimated these men. However much mutual service and danger made a uniform mass of them, I still saw many approach the will of fate with great dignity. Many, very many, not only during the attack but at every moment of the day, wore in their eyes the remote, resolute, somewhat possessed look which knows nothing of aims and signified complete surrender to the incredible. Whatever they might think or believe, they were ready, *they were the clay of which the future could be shaped.* The more single-mindedly the world concentrated on war and heroism, on honor and other old ideas, the more remote and improbable any whisper of genuine humanity sounded—that was all just surface, in the same way that the question of the war’s external and political objectives remained superficial. *Deep down, underneath, something was taking shape. Something akin to a new humanity.* For I could see many men—and many died beside me—who had begun to feel acutely that hatred and rage, slaughter and annihilation were not bound up with these objectives. No, these objectives and aims were completely fortuitous. The most primitive, even the wildest feelings were not directed at the enemy; their bloody task was merely an irradiation of the soul, of the soul divided within itself, which filled men with the lust to rage and kill, annihilate and die *so that they might be born anew.*¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Tuskin, *Understanding Hermann Hesse*, 92.

¹⁷² Hermann Hesse, *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair’s Youth*, 1919, trans. By Michael Roloff and Michael Lebeck (Reprint, New York: Harper Perennial, 1965): 141-142. Emphasis Added.

Hesse had redefined Nationalism: it was no longer an identity, but a vehicle to internal transformation—a striking parallel with Jünger. For all of its horror, the war—facilitated by the belligerence and hatred of jingoists—was an opportunity for spiritual rebirth: the birth of a ‘new humanity’ which would no longer be co-opted by the divisive, violent, and selfish concerns that had dominated men in the pre-war world. In this way, Hesse was able to unite his previously competing identities without constructing (or reconstructing) an alternate conception of nationalism, but through a re-appropriation of nationalism in such a way that it could now serve positive ends, as he defined them. Most importantly, Hesse’s idea of nationalism as a transformational vehicle—given his profound disillusionment—clearly fulfills the same cathartic needs as Jünger’s post-war conception of internal nationalism: a parallel in both form *and* function.

It remains something of an irony that despite this newfound resolution, Hesse’s conception of the German nation remained static throughout the war and always seemed to follow the chauvinists’ conception. In an essay titled “The Reich” from December 1918, for example, Hesse utilized one of the most common nationalist tropes—that of “a modular, ‘continuous’ awakening from a chronologically gauged, A.D. –style slumber” for “a guaranteed return to an aboriginal essence [of the nation]”¹⁷³—not just in his characterization German unification,¹⁷⁴ but in his own call for Germany’s spiritual transformation:

[The Reich] cannot return to childhood.... But it can take the path which an individual must take when his life has led him into error and deep torment. It can recollect its past,

¹⁷³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2nd Ed., 2006): 195.

¹⁷⁴ Hermann Hesse, “The Reich”, in *If the War Goes on... Reflections on War and Politics*, 1949. Trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: The Noonday Press, 1971): 69. He stated that “[t]he voices that had clamored for unification had never fallen silent. A great and powerful statesman made his appearance...and unified the country, the branches of the people joined hands and established a great Reich. The poor country of dreamers, thinkers, and musicians had awakened.”

its origin and childhood, its greatness, its glory and its defeat, and through this recollection find the strength which is inherent in it and can never be lost. As the pious say, it must 'look within.' And deep within itself it will find intact its own innermost being which will not try to evade its destiny but embrace it and, building on what is best and most essential in itself, make a fresh start,

If this happens and if this hard-pressed nation willingly and honestly travels the path of destiny, *something of what was will be reborn.*¹⁷⁵

Once again, the parallels with Jünger (particularly the conclusion to the 1924 edition of *Storm of Steel*)—the inherent and immutable strength of the German nation, the need for internal spiritual transformation and transcendence—are compellingly prominent.

Hesse continued to write and expand on his ideas of the need for personal transcendence and transformation in a number of short essays, stories, and articles throughout 1918 and 1919, but never fundamentally redefined them.¹⁷⁶ His last major work from this period was the short story, first published anonymously in 1919, "Zarathustra's Return: A Word to German Youth", wherein Nietzsche's preacher of the *Übermensch* ('Overman')¹⁷⁷ returned to Germany to guide youth from the folly of belligerent nationalism and toward his ideas of inner transcendence. As he stated in the preface to the first signed edition, "[t]here was once a German spirit, a German courage, a German manhood that did not express themselves in the uproar of the herd or in mass enthusiasm"; Nietzsche was the last embodiment of this spirit who "became an anti-patriot and an anti-German." Hesse's goal was, simply enough, "to remind the young German intellectuals of that man...and in doing so turn their minds away from the herd outcry...to a few simple facts

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 72. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁶ See Hesse, *If the War Goes On*, 43-127.

¹⁷⁷ Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch* was a conception of an 'Overman' or 'Superman'—a person who had transcended beyond common humanity—that would become the new ideal for humanity to strive for and thus avoid falling into nihilism because 'God is dead'. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. 1885. Trans. by Adrian Del Caro (New York: Cambridge UP, 2006).

and experiences of the soul.”¹⁷⁸ By 1919, Hesse no longer sought to speak to his own personal community of experience but, ironically enough, to Jünger’s. His choice to directly allude to the Nietzschean *Übermensch* was very deliberate—copies of *Also sprach Zarathustra* had been distributed to around 150,000 German soldiers¹⁷⁹ and thus he attempted to communicate not only through a popular and familiar figure, but also one who’s original message was one of transformation and transcendence—and once more, there is a marked parallel with Jünger: Hesse’s ‘new men’ not only filled the same need (catharsis) and utilized the same vehicle (internal spiritual transformation) but were actually *exactly the same as Jünger’s*—the educated youths who had emerged intact from the human furnace of World War I.

Hesse’s wartime experience with Nationalism was one of communal identity competition and resolution. Almost from the moment of the war’s outbreak, Hesse felt himself a man apart as his German loyalties vied in a fierce internal conflict with his more idealistic, cosmopolitan, and pacifistic ideas. Over the course of the war however, Hesse never reconstructed his German identity nor really even examined his definition of it and essentially allowed the loudest and most prominent chauvinistic voices in Germany to define it for him. Instead, he resolved his identity conflict in a more round-about way by first devaluing his nationalism vis-à-vis his cosmopolitan humanitarianism, then co-opting that nationalism as a transformative means to internationalist and humanitarian ends to ultimately achieve a sense of catharsis about the war. The finality of this cathartic resolution is in fact a final conspicuous parallel with Jünger. Hesse’s foreword to the first edition of his ‘reflections on war and politics’—published immediately after the Second

¹⁷⁸ Hermann Hesse, “Zarathustra’s Return: A Word to German Youth”, in *If the War Goes on... Reflections on War and Politics*, 1949. Trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: The Noonday Press, 1971): 86.

¹⁷⁹ Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990*, (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992): 135.

World War in 1946—makes no mention of Hesse's initial ambivalence nor the chauvinistic nature of his nationalism during 1914-1915.¹⁸⁰ It appears that Hesse, rather than recall and recognize the difference between the man he was in 1914 and the man he was from 1916 on, preferred to forget that painful ambivalence, as it could serve no constructive emotional purpose for him after his internationalism and humanism had triumphed in his internal identity struggle.

¹⁸⁰ Hermann Hesse, "Foreword to the 1946 Edition", in *If the War Goes on... Reflections on War and Politics*, 1949. Trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: The Noonday Press, 1971): 3-7. His opening paragraph: "Compiling this book has not been a happy task for the author. It has not awakened pleasant memories or recalled welcome images. On the contrary, every single article reminded me painfully of times of suffering, struggle, and loneliness, times in which I was beset by enmity and incomprehension and bitterly cut off from pleasurable ideals and pleasant habits. In order to alleviate these ugly shadows, which have only deepened in recent years, with a note of beauty and light, I have recalled the one beautiful and enduring thing that came to me through those struggles and torments, by dedicating this book to a noble and beloved friend. I have forgotten much of what happened in those depressing days in 1914 when the first of these articles was written, but not the day on which a note from Romain Rolland brought me...a sympathetic reaction—the only one I received at the time—to my article. I now had a like-minded companion, one who like myself was alert to the bloody absurdity of the war and the war psychosis and rebelled against it.... We remained friends until his death. The geographical distance between us as well as the divergence of cultures and habits of thought in which we had grown to manhood made it impossible for me to become his disciple or to learn much from him in political matters. But that was not essential. I had come to politics very late, when I was almost forty, jolted awake by the gruesome reality of the war and profoundly horrified at the ease with which my colleagues and friends had enlisted in the service of Moloch. Already a few friends had turned away from me and I had incurred the first of those attacks, threats, and insults which in so-called heroic times conformists never fail to heap upon a man who walks alone. It was by no means certain whether I would come through or be destroyed by the conflict that transformed my hitherto rather happy and undeservedly successful life into a hell. In that situation it was a great thing, a joy and a salvation, to learn that in France, in the 'enemy' camp, there was a man whose conscience would not let him keep silent or participate in the prevailing orgies of hatred and morbid nationalism. Neither during the war not afterward did I actually discuss politics with Rolland; yet I doubt that I could have lived through those years without the warmth of his friendship. How then could I fail to think of him now?"

5.0 PARALLEL EXPERIENCES: NATIONAL IDENTITY, EMOTIONAL DYNAMICS, AND THE TRANSFORMATIONAL MENTALITY

Fitting these intellectual biographies within the context of World War I illustrates quite clearly that Jünger and Hesse's experiences of and ideas about nationalism are parallel, and the adjective parallel is of particular significance. Despite having thoroughly different experiences of the First World War, Jünger and Hesse ran parallel not just in the more obvious sense of simultaneous temporal occurrence,¹⁸¹ but in both an ideational and functional sense: both co-opted nationalism in an attempt to find catharsis and meaning in a conflict which wrought death and destruction on such an unprecedented scale. The difference between their views of nationalism—and what increasingly appears as the primary dichotomy between the two—is not whether nationalism was part of that catharsis but the normative ends it was to serve. Jünger found catharsis in his view of the nation as the positive entity that would subsume the individualistic concerns of its members once they came to know it through the experience of such an intense national exertion, i.e. the war; Hesse found meaning in the destruction of the war

¹⁸¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2nd Ed., 2006): 22-26. Anderson discusses the new ability to 'think' the nation through the rise of 'homogeneous empty time', wherein the conception of a society becomes strong enough that one recognizes that (to borrow from Anderson's example of a man (A) with a wife (B) and a mistress (C) who in turn has a lover (D)) even if persons A and D never meet, they can be seen as connected by being members of the same community, and acting within that community *at the same time*. Time can be thought of as a horizontal plane wherein the members of these communities' individual timelines run parallel to each other, and that horizontal plane is what constitutes the community, i.e. the nation, in dimension of time.

wrought *by* nationalism as a means to create a more unified human and European destiny, undivided by nationalist preoccupations, once the folly of such divisions had been so violently demonstrated. But both came to view the First World War as both a beginning and an end: the birth pains of a new Europe. In many ways it is completely understandable why each co-opted nationalism in the ways that they did.

Jünger experienced, first-hand, the mechanized apocalypse that was the First World War. The fact that 1) he advocated nationalism as something internal and natural which 2) was not belligerent or xenophobic or even inherently violent in nature is a testament to its serving some higher purpose than German war aims. Furthermore, the political conclusions he drew from his war experiences in the Weimar years reflect that first-hand experience of the first truly mechanized total war¹⁸² where he saw the true power of nations, like America, who were totally mobilized, and the failure of nations, like Germany, which could not live up to that new task.¹⁸³

But again, the chronology of this development is essential. While apparently holding a transformational view of war prior to 1914, Jünger's sense of communal—and likely also personal—identity was deconstructed relatively quickly and persisted in that state until at least 1918; it was only after the war that it was reconstructed with his ideal of internal nationalism, and only then that he fully embraced the idea of war as a positive transformative experience.

Further, this conception of nationalism did appear to endure throughout the Weimar years. Perhaps what is most instructive to Jünger's true feelings about nationalism is the fact that he deleted the strong nationalist ending from the third edition of *Storm of Steel*, published in

¹⁸² Stephen Badsey, "The Western Front and the Birth of Total War". *BBC History*. Last modified March 8, 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/total_war_01.shtml

¹⁸³ Ernst Jünger "Total Mobilization", in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* ed. by Richard Wolin (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993): 119-139.

1934, because Nationalism had become de-facto property of the NSDAP.¹⁸⁴ The Nazi nationalist ideal was no longer the naturalized internal experience advocated by Jünger, and it seems it was important to distance his own nationalistic ideas from those of the Nazis who were attempting to co-opt him.¹⁸⁵

Hesse's wartime writings provide the counter point, in the more musical sense, to Jünger. Instead of dealing with physical destruction by shells and bullets, he witnessed the cultural destruction of artists, academics, and intellectuals who forsook their beliefs to feed the nationalist leviathan that was (in Hesse's view) destroying Europe. In addition, he had the time for reflection during the war—not afforded to Jünger—that, when coupled with the (second-hand) knowledge of Europe's physical destruction and the (first-hand) knowledge of the intellectual and cultural destruction, enabled him to muse on and find some higher intellectual meaning in such thorough Armageddon.

Further, perhaps the most striking difference between Hesse and Jünger is Hesse's roundabout identity evolution. Possibly as a result of not seeing combat, none of Hesse's communal identities—national or otherwise—appear to have been deconstructed or re-defined. Rather, Hesse manipulated the value of those identities while holding their definitions constant, decreasing his appraisal of his German identity before re-appropriating it to fulfill his emotional needs.

As this comparative analysis demonstrates, both Jünger and Hesse's ideational evolutions mirror the larger emotional dynamics of the conflict. But these dynamics varied by experiential community—*Frontsoldaten*, particularly *Kriegsfreiwillige*, on the one hand, established artists

¹⁸⁴ Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany: Into the Abyss, 1914-1945* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996): 62.

¹⁸⁵ For Jünger's concise reflections on Nazism, see Julien Hervier, *The Details of Time: Conversations with Ernst Jünger* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1986): 71-75.

and intellectuals on the other—and this largely accounts for the differing chronologies. While Jünger follows the *Frontsoldaten* dynamic almost to a T, Hesse's disillusionment once again put him in a form of proto-vanguard as he experienced somewhat prematurely what the rest of the German nation experienced in earnest after the war was lost. This appears to be the result, however, of the onset of personal crises—the death of his father, the constant attacks from both right and left, his wife's increasing (literal) psychosis—more-so than as a result of the fortunes of the war.

In a more phenomenological sense, this illustrates the importance of—and need for—a more overt focus on the inherent emotionality of Nationalism. While Nationalism's emotional nature was identified more than thirty years ago, discussions of that emotionality are often subtle and somewhat back-handed: it is rare to see it discussed in a blatant and completely clear way. As this study illustrates, myriad important new insights can be gleaned by this broader shift in focus in addition to the more limited ones elucidated here.

Finally, this study intimates a last, larger phenomenological insight, with the imperative qualification that it is extremely tentative. How Jünger and Hesse—utilizing totally differing processes and experiencing the war in completely different ways—reached almost the exact same empirical conclusion about Nationalism while having it fulfill the same function by the same method is something of a quandary, as it does not appear that they ever communicated, either directly or indirectly.¹⁸⁶ Thus, in closing, I would like to offer a speculative and

¹⁸⁶ This is, admittedly, a point of some speculation, but at no point in the research for this project did I find any evidence for any type of personal connection between the two men, either in this period or a later one. It seems logical that if they did have had some type of contact—whether personally or ideationally—it would have come later, once Jünger had become an established author, probably no earlier than the mid-1920's.

preliminary answer to this question by proposing a ‘structure’, for lack of a better, preceding the *tabula rasa* of identity¹⁸⁷: a transformational mentality.

It was Jünger—perhaps by benefit of his much longer life—that seemed to subtly intimate this mentality and its characteristics, when asked about his prognosis for the future in 1986:

[Today] there are fewer and fewer Christians. They are greatly concerned with all the grave material dangers we are now threatened with; whereas, above all, they ought to nourish a great hope. In the hymns of the good era, this is expressed marvelously.... Those were still Christians who lived their faith in the full metaphysical sense of the word. That mentality is extremely rare today. People are cut off from transcendence, transcendence is vanishing. But if someone somehow still preserves this relationship to transcendence, he is ‘ultimately’ safe from fear. He can have the feeling of participation, he can tell himself that horrible things are happening, but that behind them a great light is dawning.¹⁸⁸

Jünger subtly implies that this vanishing mentality was a product of the long nineteenth century—an era filled towards its conclusion, at least amongst sections of the intellectual and artistic classes, with a combination of positivism, anxiety, and hope (even for war) as humanity was continually ‘improving’, or at least maintained the potential to¹⁸⁹—and that people had now lost faith in transcendent ideas and the cathartic value they offer.

If one takes this as a baseline, it seems that such a mentality was a more basic faith in the potential for human change that *preceded* the filling of the modular empty vessel of identity—the writing of definitions on the identity *tabula rasa*—and, perhaps most importantly, one that both Jünger and Hesse *had readily available* by virtue of their educations and literary inclinations.

¹⁸⁷ The malleability of nationalism (and really all communal identity) is not a new contention, and is perhaps best articulated by Benedict Anderson in his masterwork on the subject. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, specifically pp. 4-5.

¹⁸⁸ Hervier, *Details of Time*, 134.

¹⁸⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage, 1987): 219-276; Volker R. Berghahn, *Europe in the Era of Two World Wars: From Militarism and Genocide to Civil Society* (New York: Princeton UP, 2006): 1-32. See also Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, 1989, (Reprint, New York: Mariner Books, 2000).

This would subsequently explain the intense similarity of their conceptions of nationalism, despite their immensely different war experiences, identity evolutions, and normative outlooks, especially the fact that both of their conceptions of nationalism were universal, not uniquely tailored solely for Germany.

In this regard, it is also essential to note that Jünger and Hesse—in contrast to other intellectual personalities such as the Mann brothers—in fact tell the modern reader relatively little about the intellectual field of *German* Nationalism. Both ultimately conceived of Nationalism, perhaps paradoxically, in *international* terms which were applicable across borders. Consequently, they participate in the intellectual field of German Nationalism in a somewhat peripheral way by virtue of their nationality as opposed to their conceptions of nationalism, which in fact render them members of a more capacious intellectual field, encompassing at least the rest of Western Europe.

Phenomenological speculation aside, it is clear that emotional—more so than political, social, or cultural—dynamics were the primary determinants of both Jünger and Hesse's nationalisms. The evolution of those conceptions reflects those dynamics, along with the intensity of the Great War's emotional trauma, as well as demonstrating that the abstract conception of nationalism appeared to function in an echo Jay Winter's point about the initial purpose of Great War memorials: it was only *after the war*—after the most intense period of mourning had passed and emotional trauma was less visceral—that nationalism took on a principally political character. German Nationalism offered a deeply-rooted and socially acceptable mechanism to vent these intense emotions, generated during what would prove to be only a precursor to true total war.

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