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”FORTEM FORTUNA ADJUVAT” – UPHOLDING IDEAS AND IDEALS ON THE
WESTERN FRONT 1914-1918
- THE CASE OF ERNST JÜNGER’S WAR DIARY

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The current study analyses the ideas and ideals of Ernst Jünger (1895-1998) in his original war diary from the First World War (1914-1918). The more general aim is to shed light on the intellectual history of the soldiers on the Western Front through a case study, not by generalising, but by interpreting diary writing as an activity that supports an individual's intellectual survival. Jünger's original diaries were chosen as the case, as they have been subject to relatively little research this far, despite the general attention Jünger and his novel version of the diary *In Stahlgewittern* ([*In*] *Storms of Steel*) have received.

The research questions of the current study can be separated to three interlinked groups. The first group of research questions asks what kind of ideas of war, of being a soldier and of leadership are present in Jünger's writing, what kind of ideals relate to them and how do they change along the years. The term 'ideas' refers here to the way of understanding certain concepts and notions central in the diary, such as war, duty or masculinity. The term 'ideals', in turn refers here to things that are appreciated or found worth striving for.

The second set of research questions deals with the dynamic of Jünger's writing in relation to his ideas and ideals. How does Jünger express his ideas and ideals by writing? How does he interpret his surrounding realities of trench warfare in terms of his dominant ideas and ideals and how does he react in his diary to the challenges that these realities pose to his thinking? How do continuity and omissions serve maintaining his ideas and ideals as well as his positive attitude towards war?

The last set of research questions asks how the dynamics of Jünger's writing can be understood in the context of the First World War and what kind of wider implications does the analysis offer. How do his ideas and ideals correspond with their more widely shared contemporary counterparts? Further, how does interpreting diary writing as an activity supporting intellectual survival contribute to understanding wider phenomena, such as the complexity of the constitution of combat motivation in the First World War? The term 'intellectual survival' refers to the necessity of upholding sustainable understandings of the surrounding reality in order to survive under adverse conditions.

The most important primary source of the current study is Jünger's original war diary that was published as a complete edition in 2010. The analysis is complemented with his wartime letters to his family. All Jünger's letters that have survived were published in 2014 with a selection of answer letters. As the letters support the conclusions made on the basis of the diary, they are not analysed extensively but used to shed light on central points of analysis on the diary.

The material was approached with traditional historical methodology of critical reading of the sources in relation to their relevant contexts. On a practical level, the analysis was completed in three main phases. First, the relevant diary entries were coded to the different idea and ideal groups that presented themselves, after which the material was analysed in relation to how Jünger dealt with them in writing. Last, the analysis was detached from Jünger's actual writing and his diary writing was

conceptualised as an activity serving his intellectual survival, and attention was paid to how this interpretation sheds light on wider phenomena, such as the coping and the combat motivation of soldiers of the First World War.

The analysis resulted in recognising that initially Jünger understood war as an adventure. Moreover, his initial idea of warfare was one of direct engagement with the enemy, supported by contemporary emphasis on offensive tactics and similar ideas present in literature. Jünger's idea of an ideal soldier furthermore corresponded to a significant extent with the contemporary military masculine ideals, central features of which were courage and self-control.

Jünger adapted his ideas and ideals in his writing during the time of the war. He served as an officer from late 1915 onwards and consequently a new ideal of leadership emerged. This ideal corresponded with his earlier ideals of courage and self-control, and aspiring to be a skilful and courageous leader provided Jünger with a chance to fulfil many of his initial ideals and to a significant extent interpret the life of a front officer in terms similar to those of his initial search for adventure.

Further, Jünger's writing was characterised by continuity on multiple levels, as he constantly interpreted the surrounding realities according to his ideas and ideals. Dismissing, omitting or censoring thoughts that did not correspond with his dominant ideas and ideals was also typical of his diary. These traits revealed that Jünger actively reacted to the challenges the surrounding realities of trench warfare posed to his thinking. When this central feature of Jünger's writing was analysed as a phenomenon of intellectual survival, wider implications of this study suggested themselves. Jünger's writing exemplified both how writing could support coping in the First World War and how ideas, ideals and combat motivation are interlinked.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The study at hand focuses on how ideas and ideals evident in the original war diary of Ernst Jünger from the time of the First World War are maintained in writing and what this process entails. The analysis here asks how an individual soldier was able to uphold his positive understanding of war in writing despite all adversities he faced and how this kind of process of intellectual survival helps us understand aspects of combat motivation and coping on the Western Front. I will first present the rationale of the study at hand along the research questions in chapter 1.1., and continue by introducing young Ernst Jünger and the primary sources in chapter 1.2. In chapter 1.3., the existing literature on the original diary will be presented, and a few remarks will be made on the more general Jünger literature.

1.1. POSITIONING THE CURRENT STUDY

Cheering crowds, hundreds of thousands of volunteers enlisting to a purifying, supposedly short war that will solve the growing tension between the great powers of Europe. A blue-eyed enthusiasm for the war to end all wars. Instead, men stuck for years in trenches under the crushing powers of industrialised warfare creating destruction on a scale never witnessed before. A fall from dreams to disillusionment in a war of attrition no one had ever imagined.

With a variety of different emphases, this is the popular image of the First World War transmitted through movies, novels and other media. Even termed the seminal catastrophe of the 20th century¹, the war has been understood as one of the key reasons for much of the political and military upheaval Europe went through after it. Although to some extent overshadowed by the Second World War, ‘the Great War’ still captures the attention of the historians, as well as the general audience. This is especially true now when the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the conflict is commemorated internationally.

I can frankly admit that my initial curiosity toward the topic was very much affected by the popular image of the war. I journeyed from the kindling article of the political scientists Jorg

¹ George F. Kennan, cited for example in Schwilk 2014, 9.

Kustermans and Erik Ringmar about the relationship between boredom and war² to the general question of what made the contemporaries in 1914 believe that outbreak of war could be a positive development. After the almost random encounter with the published original war diary³ of Ernst Jünger (1895-1998), I decided to opt for this material instead of digging into German newspapers, as I had at one point planned to do. In the end, I found myself still looking at ideas, ideals and disillusionment, but in a way I did not expect at all. The study at hand does deal with ideas and ideals and how they can or cannot be maintained, but instead of studying public opinion, I am interested in the complexity of one individual's thinking and how it manifests in writing. In addition to the diary material I use the recently published wartime letters⁴ of Jünger in order to shed more light on some points of my analysis.

The diarist of this study, Ernst Jünger, was a disputed character in Germany throughout the 20th century. From a decorated infantry officer of the First World War, a national revolutionary writer who nevertheless rejected the National Socialist Party's attempts to get him involved and a nonconformist officer of the Wehrmacht during the Second World War he turned into a politicised literary character of the post-war Germany. Although, as the historian Elliot Neaman who has studied Jünger's literature notes, "[m]easured solely in terms of circulation, Jünger is a minor writer, whose books are published in the tens, not in the hundreds of thousands like Grass, Enzensberger or Lenz",⁵ Jünger has remained a much discussed writer. Moreover, his writings on war more often than not come up in the First World War literature.

With his 102 years Jünger also gained a unique position as a witness and chronicler of the 20th century. As his centrality as an author has diminished in Germany after the first post-war decades, it remains to be seen if Jünger will gain a lasting role in German – and international – literature. The popularity or influence of his work is nonetheless just one aspect of his legacy: a major part of his heritage is his diaries that he wrote ever since the First World War. It has been argued that even if his books would not be read in the coming years, his other writings will be of interest to historians.⁶

The significance of this kind of a heritage should not be underestimated, and it seems that it is not. After Jünger's war diary of the years 1914-1918 was published in 2010, they gained attention it the

² Kustermans & Ringmar 2011.

³ Jünger, Ernst: *Kriegstagebuch 1914-1918*, hrsg. Kiesel, Helmuth. Klett-Cotta: Stuttgart, 2010.

⁴ Jünger, Ernst: *Feldpostbriefe an die Familie 1915-1918*, hrsg. Schwilk, Heimo. Klett-Cotta: Stuttgart, 2014.

⁵ Neaman 1993, 118.

⁶ Cf. Neaman 1999, 64-65 citing Stefan Breuer and Michael Krüger.

German media.⁷ Historians also commented on the importance of the occasion. In his review in the *Historische Zeitschrift*, the historian Benjamin Ziemann praises the diary for a unique precision and richness of detail,⁸ and on H-Soz-u-Kult, a historians' forum of Humboldt University of Berlin, Christoph Nübel even named Jünger's diary in 2011 as "the undoubtedly most significant" new release.⁹ Despite this recognition, to my knowledge no history studies have yet been published using the edited diary.

Nevertheless, Jünger's writings in general have already been found by historians and especially by researchers studying the First World War. The different versions of *In Stahlgewittern* ([*In*] *Storms of Steel*) seem to be most often quoted, but also Jünger's other post-war writings such as *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (*Battle as Inner Experience*), have been used.¹⁰ The problem with the studies that use Jünger's novel as one source among many is sometimes an aura of accepting his published, rewritten diary as directly reflecting the reality of the war.¹¹ Partly this could be justified, and the fact that the researchers who wrote before 1995 had no access to the original diary makes this phenomenon understandable. The emphasis on *In Stahlgewittern* calls nevertheless for studying the original diary in more detail in order to start building a more accurate picture of Jünger's representations of the First World War.

For my study, the later significance of Jünger and the interest shown towards him as an author are nevertheless significant only to the extent of recognising the position Jünger has gained as a historical and literary character. As my title suggests, the study at hand is not primarily a Jünger research. I am interested in the intellectual history of the soldiers of the First World War in the sense in which the historian Markku Hyrkkänen understands intellectual history – aiming at understanding the way things were understood in a particular time.¹² Having said this, and still focusing on the war diary of just one man, the dilemma of the relationship of the particular and individual to the general and shared arises. What can this kind of a material tell us? I will discuss this further below, in chapters 2.2. and 4.3. The

⁷ For a few examples see articles in *Süddeutsche.de* and *taz.de* as well as a review in *Die Berliner Literaturkritik*. Kister, Kurt: 'Die Notwendigkeit des Wahnsinns', [<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/ernst-juenger-tagebuecher-die-notwendigkeit-des-wahnsinns-1.1003346>] Accessed 29.4.2014; Magenau, Jörg: 'Bum, bum, huiuiui, Bautz. Ernst Jüngers Kriegstagebücher', [<http://www.taz.de/!58598/>] Accessed 29.4.2014; Mommert, Wilfried: "'Abenteuer'": Jüngers Kriegstagebuch', [<http://www.berlinerliteraturkritik.de/detailseite/artikel/abenteuer-krieg-ernst-juengers-tagebuch-1914-18.html>] Accessed 29.4.2014.

⁸ Ziemann 2012, 558.

⁹ "Die zweifellos bedeutendste Neuerscheinung ist das 'Kriegstagebuch 1914-1918' von Ernst Jünger [...]." Nübel 2011.

¹⁰ See for example: Leed 1979, Mosse 1990 and Ferguson 1998.

¹¹ See for example Ferguson 1998, 341-342.

¹² Markku Hyrkkänen sees intellectual history as aiming at understanding the way people understood things in a particular time. Hyrkkänen 2002, 24 and *passim*.

position of my study on a more general level can be exemplified by a question: although a Finnish proverb tells us that war does not need an individual man¹³ what would war be without the individuals? The relationship between the individual and general is omnipresent in humanities, and this study necessarily deals with that relationship.

Still, my research on Ernst Jünger's diary focuses on his individual perspective on war and how he interprets it in writing. I will not aim at explaining the general mindset of the German soldiers in the First World War, but instead at understanding how one individual soldier's thinking unfolds in writing. The study is set as a pure case study but – as always – the experiences of an individual may shed light on wider contexts, ideas and worldviews and vice versa. The more general context of the time is mirrored in many of the notions apparent in Jünger's writing, and they are a central part of my analysis.

Ernst Jünger fits the stereotypical description of an enthusiastic 1914 volunteer almost perfectly. Despite his unrealistic initial expectations for the war, his diary is not a story of an ever-deepening disillusionment, let alone sullen resignation. His reader is compelled to ask how he actually manages to maintain his relatively positive attitude towards the war despite all the frustrations, losses and violence he faces during the almost four years of writing at war. This is the dilemma I am focusing on in my thesis. Put in more general terms, Jünger's diary writing is interpreted here as an activity supporting a young man's intellectual survival under adverse conditions and in a context that harshly challenges his initial ideas and ideals.

This topic is approached with the help of three main groups of research questions. First of all, it is necessary to look into what kind of ideas and ideals are visible in Jünger's diary writing that support his positive attitude towards the war. The scope of this study is limited, and consequently I have narrowed down the focus to Jünger's ideas and ideals relating directly to war: What kind of ideas of war, of being a soldier and of leadership are present in Jünger's writing? What kind of ideals relate to them? What kind of change and continuity can be observed in them during the almost four years of writing at war? The term 'ideas' refers here to the way of understanding certain concepts and notions central in the diary, such as war, duty or masculinity. I will apply the term in somewhat flexible manner, but it always refers to Jünger's prevailing notion of an issue. The term 'ideals', on the other hand, is a word that Jünger himself uses from time to time, and it refers here to things that he appreciates or finds worth striving for. I do in addition use the adjective 'ideal' in such formulations as "ideal soldier", and with

¹³ *"Ei sota yhtä miestä kaippaa."*

those phrases I refer to notions of something regarded worth valuing. It combines ideas and ideals and makes visible how these two concepts are actually interlinked.

My second set of research questions deals with the dynamic of Jünger's writing in relation to his ideas and ideals. In addition to the contents of his writing, its form and omissions become important. How does Jünger express his ideas and ideals by writing? How does he interpret his surrounding reality in terms of his dominant ideas and ideals, and how does he react in his diary to the challenges that these realities pose to his thinking? There is continuity in Jünger's writing on multiple levels: in the contents and forms of writing, of action recorded in the diary along with continuity in re-conceptualisations and interpretations of the surrounding reality that manifest in writing. How does this continuity serve maintaining his ideas and ideals and his positive attitude towards war? Dismissals and omissions are also an important aspect of his writing. How does Jünger actively use silences and self-censorship in his diary, and what does it reveal?

Jünger's diary is a very rich material, and the aim of this study is not to make an exhaustive analysis of it. Some previous research exists on the original diary, and that research covers parts of the issues that are left out. I will present the existing literature in the last subsection of this introductory chapter. Nevertheless, one important aspect of Jünger's diary writing will be left out of discussion for other reasons. I will not extensively discuss the style of Jünger's writing, as that would take the analysis to the field of literary studies, which is not my specialisation. Although useful insights can be made with that kind of methodology,¹⁴ it would shift the focus away from my aim of understanding an aspect of the intellectual history of First World War, which is how writing as an activity may support an individual soldier's survival. Despite this, I will not fully ignore the more stylistic issues in Jünger's writing, as this side is a crucial part of any text, and as the two first sets of research questions focus on Jünger's writing.

These questions are nevertheless not answered in isolation from the last question dealing with the historical context. The last set of research question is the widest: how can the dynamics of Jünger's writing be explained – or rather understood – in the context of the First World War, and what kind of wider implications does the analysis offer? This aspect of the current research makes visible how Jünger's ideas and ideals correspond with their more widely shared contemporary counterparts. How are contemporary, more widely shared ideas and ideals related to military masculinity and warfare reflected in Jünger's writing? I will also argue that Jünger's diary writing can actually be seen as an

¹⁴ See King, 1999.

activity supporting his intellectual survival. With this term I refer to the necessity of upholding sustainable understandings of the surrounding reality in order to survive under adverse conditions. How does interpreting diary writing as an activity supporting intellectual survival contribute to understanding the complexity of the constitution of combat motivation in the First World War?

I think it is necessary to clarify my own position towards my research, especially as my initial interest for this topic stemmed from an outright questioning of the mindset in which war can be welcomed. In many ways, I stand as a total outsider in relation to my subject. I live in a different time, represent a different gender and have no personal experience of the military. These are differences that affect my understanding of the world, and I will aim at using them to my benefit as they help me to question my subject and see the difference between Jünger's world and my interpretative perspective.

Moreover, and most importantly, I have basically an opposite position to young Jünger's welcoming of war, as I cannot see war as a positive course of action under any circumstances. I question the general acceptance of war just like Diana Francis, who works in the field of conflict transformation, does. She asks in an essay in the *Peace Review*: "What, then, allows war to be represented as normal and indeed glorious, and to be accepted as such by the majority of people in almost all societies, so escaping any fundamental scrutiny as an institution?"¹⁵ This kind of questioning of war is the core of my interest towards the topic at hand. Nevertheless, in my research I do not attempt to make any normative claims, and in this sense I am despite my master programme perhaps more a student of history than a student of peace research. I aim at understanding how one individual's thinking manifests in writing, not evaluating it. Because of this focus, I see my personal bias not as a fundamental problem for my research, but a part of my perspective as a researcher, which I need to be aware of in order to avoid distorting interpretations.

After this overview of the starting points of the current research, I will approach my topic in a thematic manner. The introduction will proceed with presenting young Ernst Jünger with the help of some central biographical information on him that is necessary for understanding the following analysis. In the same subchapter (1.2.) I will present my primary sources. Jünger's war diary is presented in more detail, along with a brief discussion of his wartime letters and how the two materials relate to each other. Then, I will review the literature on Jünger's diary and make some notes on the wider Jünger literature (1.3.). In the second main chapter I will present the other central literature used in this study, focusing especially on research on the experiences of the soldiers of the First World War

¹⁵ Francis 2013, 234.

(2.1.). I will also discuss a few theoretical issues related to diary as a form of writing and present my methodology (2.2.).

The third and fourth main chapters comprise my analysis on Jünger's diary. Chapter three deals with Jünger's initial ideas and ideals, and how he maintains them in his writing. Here the continuities in his writing, as well as omissions, are analysed. Chapter four presents the arising ideals of leadership that become evident in Jünger's writing during the war, and how he adapts his leadership ideal to his own thinking and also himself adapts to the new ideal. In the fourth chapter, the notion of diary writing as an activity supporting intellectual survival is also discussed. Finally, chapter five concludes the study with a summary of the central findings and with some consideration of the wider implications of the analysis. A few suggestions for possible further research are also presented.

In order to distinguish clearly between primary sources and research literature, further down Jünger's diary is referred to simply with his surname, the date of the diary entry and the page number of the published diary (for example: Jünger 2.4.1917, 224-223). When I refer to the editorial notes of Helmuth Kiesel, who is a professor of new German literature in Heidelberg, I refer to it as Kiesel 2010. I use a similar logic with Jünger's published letters. When I refer to the author Heimo Schwilk's introduction or notes, I reference it as Schwilk 2014¹⁶, and the letters themselves I reference in the following exemplary form: Jünger to Friedrich Georg Jünger 17.2.1918, 112. My citations are typed as they are in the published sources, which in case of the diary entries means without any corrections but with notes in square brackets when words or letters are either unreadable or crossed out by Jünger. My own additions I have distinguished with my initials N.N. in order to avoid confusion.

1.2. YOUNG ERNST JÜNGER AND THE ORIGINAL WAR DIARY

Ernst Jünger was born in Heidelberg in 1895 as the first child of an apothecary and a farmer's daughter. The parents Ernst Georg Jünger and Karoline Lampl were not yet married, but the child was against the custom in such cases registered with his father's name, Jünger,¹⁷ signifying a steady relationship between the young couple. The young bourgeois family soon moved to Hanover where young Ernst

¹⁶ In the bibliography these sources are listed only in primary sources, as I use the editorial notes rather sporadically.

¹⁷ Kiesel 2007, 30.

begun his challenging school career imprinted by at least ten changes of schools and a constant struggle for being accepted to the next grade.¹⁸

As the later life and career of Jünger show, his problems at school did not stem from lack of talent but more from his tendency to daydreaming and his trouble with the school system that was fundamentally hostile to such children. The frustrations he faced during his school time contributed to Jünger's love of reading – especially adventure books.¹⁹ With his three years younger brother Friedrich Georg (Fritz), he loved to play outside, and some years after the family had moved to Rehburg in 1907, the two teenage brothers also joined the local branch of the youth organisation *Wandervogel* (Bird of Passage).²⁰ The organisation was one influential part of the wider German youth movement of the time and applied a principle of youth leading youth. The activities included hiking trips in the countryside as well as evenings spent together around a fire singing and chatting.²¹

Among these influences of his childhood and teenage years of constrained existence at school on one hand and the realms of imagination set free by literature and the trips to nature on the other, Ernst Jünger started to dream about a more authentic life elsewhere. Especially Africa intrigued him as a place where a different life might still be possible, and his reading to the colonial novels added up to his interest.²² During the summer of 1913 these dreams started to evolve into an actual plan. Allegedly, Jünger even tried to accustom himself to the hot African climate by spending hours in his father's greenhouse,²³ and in October he took the money meant to cover his expenses at school and fled to France in order to join the Foreign Legion. He was recruited in Verdun and headed over Marseille towards Algeria.²⁴

Instead of an adventurous life he had dreamt of, Jünger faced the military drill at the training camp of Sidi-Bel-Abbès, and with another German conscript decided to flee. Nevertheless, also this attempt to reach freedom failed, and Jünger was arrested with his companion.²⁵ Thanks to the intervention of his father, the adventure of the eighteen-year-old did not turn into five years of disillusioned service in the French colony, but the young man managed to slip out of the disappointing situation. Ernst Georg Jünger managed to get his son relieved from the legion through legal and

¹⁸ Kiesel 2007, 41.

¹⁹ Kiesel 2007, 42-43, 49 & Schwilk 2007, 51-52.

²⁰ Kiesel 2007, 44-46.

²¹ Donson 2010, 34-35.

²² Kiesel 2007, 49.

²³ Kiesel 2007, 50.

²⁴ Schwilk 2007, 81-82.

²⁵ Kiesel 2007, 50-51.

diplomatic means, as according to the just renewed legislation he was considered under-aged to sign up for military service.²⁶ Jünger returned home and made a gentlemen's agreement with his father: he promised to finish his school, after which the two of them would travel to Kilimanjaro.²⁷ Apparently Jünger tried to hold on to this agreement, but the outbreak of war in August 1914 offered him an unexpected exit from school.

In a later account on the happenings of August 1914, Jünger stated that he decided to volunteer immediately after hearing the news of the mobilisation.²⁸ When he was conscripted into the *Füsilier-Regiment 73* in Hanover, he was offered the possibility to take the final school exams as a so-called *Notabitur* (emergency final exams), a complication he had reportedly totally forgotten in his hurry to enlist.²⁹ To his benefit, the exam was not too strict, and after registering as a student of the University of Heidelberg, Jünger was "free of all sorrows",³⁰ a formulation that implies that he felt even in hindsight that his life had been unsatisfying. Jünger started the basic training in early October in Hanover, and after the Christmas Jünger spent at home, the regiment's marching orders were issued on 27th of December.

When Jünger left to the front, he went with a small notebook with him. From the very beginning, he used it as a diary and sometimes wrote other notes at the back of the book. He sketched a cupboard for his growing beetle collection and made notes about the infantry's organisation for marches but did not use his other diary booklets in this way as a rule.³¹ All in all, he filled fifteen smallish booklets of varying format with his entries from the last December days of 1914 to early September 1918, in the published edition filling up over 430 pages. In addition to reading, Jünger had started writing poems as an adolescent,³² as well as kept a diary at least during a student exchange in France.³³ Thus, writing as such was not new to him, and already in 1910 he identified himself as a character with literary tendencies.³⁴ His diary keeping throughout the war nevertheless had a more regular nature than his earlier leisure writing.

²⁶ Schwilk 2007, 83-85.

²⁷ Kiesel 2007, 53.

²⁸ Jünger's account from 1934 is cited in some length in Kiesel 2007, 87-89.

²⁹ Jünger 1934 cited in Kiesel 2007, 90.

³⁰ "Nachdem ich mich noch in die Matrikel der Heidelberger Universität hatte einschreiben lassen, war ich alle Sorgen los." Jünger 1934 cited in Kiesel 2007, 89-90.

³¹ Jünger [1915], 22-27. Booklets 8, 13 and 14B have notes at the end, in 8 and 14B lists of books and in 13 notes on the battles on 20.-21.3.1918 near Noreuil.

³² See for example Kiesel 2007, 42-43 and 47-48, as well as Schwilk 2007, 51-52 and 63.

³³ Schwilk 2007, 61.

³⁴ Kiesel 2007, 48.

Jünger wrote almost every day. He usually described the events on the same day, but as he rarely makes any comments on his own writing habits, it is sometimes impossible to ascertain this, especially without the benefit of drawing conclusions from changes in his handwriting. Twice a significant delay can be ascertained. Jünger recorded events afterwards in a military hospital after getting wounded for the first time,³⁵ as well as after his last time being wounded. He lost his last notebook somewhere during the events of his last fight and rewrote the last 25 days of his war experience,³⁶ other entries in the published diary are originals.

Sometimes Jünger's notes measure just a few lines, but especially when something he considered interesting or exiting happened, he dedicates page after page for describing the events. Daily happenings on the front take most space in his writing, and he describes both the harsh realities of the trench warfare, as well as the drunken evenings in the bases with frankness and eye for detail. He tends to minutely describe wounded and dead soldiers and the destruction around him but rarely pays such attention to the living, although the social relations both in and outside the trenches are constantly present in his writing.

The primary source of this study is indeed a war diary in the very sense of the word.³⁷ It is a *war* diary, as Jünger as a rule does not write on holidays³⁸ or during all his recoveries at home after getting wounded. He also rarely mentions his family or their life at home in the diary. Then again Jünger's booklets are a war *diary*, as Jünger keeps to the happenings around him and rarely reports anything he did not experience himself. Schwilk notes, for example, that Jünger leaves commentary of the wider political and even strategic developments of the war outside his focus.³⁹ Although identifying exclusive traits of diary writing is extremely challenging, as the late literary scholar Ralph-Rainer Wuthenow has observed,⁴⁰ the individual perspective and regular writing typical of many diaries⁴¹ are central traits of Jünger's writing during the war. He has his own interests guiding his writing and pays much attention to even small events that relate to him.

Jünger's mostly uncensored way of writing creates the illusion that he was writing without any audience in mind, but as a field post stamp on the last page of the ninth booklet⁴² imply, he sometimes

³⁵ Jünger 24.4.-25.4.1915 (booklet 2).

³⁶ Jünger 16.-26.8.1918 [29.8.-10.9.1918] (booklet 14B).

³⁷ Compare with King's perspective on the same observation. King 1999, 126-127.

³⁸ There are two exceptions to this rule. See Jünger 13.8.1916 & 20.8.1916, 164 & 6.10.1917, 323-324.

³⁹ Schwilk 2007, 121.

⁴⁰ Wuthenow 1990, 11.

⁴¹ Cf. Wuthenow, 1990, 1.

⁴² Jünger after the entry of 22.3.1917, 229.

sent his full diary booklets home, probably to be kept for him along with his other war memorabilia that he sent home.⁴³ In addition, John King notes in his dissertation on Jünger's early works, that the original diary implies a sense of an audience, as Jünger sometimes, for example, explains terms that for the front soldiers would have been self-evident.⁴⁴ On the basis of these observations, King concludes that Jünger's diary is an example of a more public form of diary writing.⁴⁵ He notes that Jünger "vigorously attempts to exclude *Innerlichkeit* [subjectivity, introspection] and record without scruple the events and sights around him, thus making the diary something like the experimental notebook of a distanced and observing subject."⁴⁶ His conclusion corresponds with Jünger's documentary tendencies,⁴⁷ but as King also notes, Jünger's attempt to master his writing subject is not fully successful, and it breaks into several perspectives.⁴⁸

The tendencies of Jünger's writing that hint towards a conscious sense of a public are nevertheless only one aspect of his diary writing. This is exemplified in comparison to his wartime letters that are not analysed extensively in this study, but which are used to emphasise some points of analysis further. The full correspondence has not survived, but the published letters comprise of almost a hundred small pages of letters, including selected answers from his family members. In his letters Jünger wrote often rather openly to both his parents and his brother Fritz about his experiences on the front,⁴⁹ and the letters echo to a significant extent his diary writing. A detailed comparison of the two materials has not been undertaken for the purposes of this study, but sometimes Jünger's accounts on same events in his diary and in his letters for example to his parents are altered, as if not to worry the family members too much.⁵⁰ This observation shows that even though Jünger's writing betrays a sense of an audience, he saw a difference between his diary and his letters,⁵¹ and wrote accordingly.

In this sense Jünger's diary can be seen as a private sphere of writing, despite King's correct observations on the more public appearances of Jünger's writing. Although Jünger was aware that his parents might read his diary and must have written keeping that in mind, his diary writing is not

⁴³ See for example: Jünger to his parents 3.6.1916, 82; 27.4.1917, 99; 18.6.1917, 102.

⁴⁴ King 1999, 127. See especially his footnote 6.

⁴⁵ King 1999, 127.

⁴⁶ King 1999, 127.

⁴⁷ See for example how Jünger documents the setting of his first patrol. Jünger 20.6.1916, 119.

⁴⁸ King 1999, 127-128.

⁴⁹ See for example Jünger to his parents [early January 1915], 27-28; 6.3.1917, 94-95; Jünger to Friedrich Georg Jünger 8.10.1915, 57-58.

⁵⁰ Compare for example Jünger's notes 31.7.-5.8.1917, 295-305 with his letter to his parents on 5.8.1917, 103-105.

⁵¹ See also Jünger 2.5.1917, 256. In this entry Jünger comments on his realistic manner of writing the diary in comparison to a letter he wrote that day.

identical to his letters, and thus his editing and self-censorship in the diary is not simply a response to an audience. Jünger's self-censorship is especially evident in the gaps he leaves around his sexual affairs and on some occasions when parts of the text have been blackened unreadable.⁵² This kind of self-censoring underlines the nature of Jünger's diary writing as an interpretation of his war experiences instead of a direct representation of them.

The primary sources of this study are very rich in both volume and content, and thus I was compelled to leave out of discussion many fruitful aspects that could have been analysed in detail, and would even have contributed to a more detailed understanding of Jünger's writing. For example, the importance he placed on appearances and dignity evident in his relationship with other officer cadets when he was in training is a feature left mostly out of discussion.⁵³ The sheer number of different perspectives and implications in the diary leads to a lot of nuances being left outside the analysis, and for these omissions I bear full responsibility. I have aimed at a fair account of Jünger's writing within the boundaries and scope of the current study. Despite the necessity of limiting the aspects of the diary that could be included, not to even mention the letters, the richness of the material is primarily a benefit. The diary combined with the letters, enables an analysis that rests primarily on reoccurring features of Jünger's writing complemented with significant singular episodes.

1.3. EXISTING LITERATURE ON THE ORIGINAL DIARY

The notebook with which Ernst Jünger left to the front was to become the first one of the fifteen war diary booklets in which he noted his experiences, observations and thoughts throughout his time on the Western Front. Jünger kept his original war diary from the public until 1995 when he left his papers to the Marbach literary archive. They were transcribed in full by the Germanist José António C. Santos for his dissertation, and later Helmuth Kiesel edited the transcription that was published in 2010. According to Kiesel's editorial notes, the originals were cited only once by an outsider and once by Jünger himself before he left them to the archive.⁵⁴ Because the original diary was unavailable for such a long time, both Jünger researchers and historians have resorted to the different versions of the *In Stahlgewittern* and other Jünger's later writings when discussing Jünger and the First World War.

⁵² See for example Jünger 8.12.1915, 64 & 28.12.1915, 71.

⁵³ Cf. Jünger to his parents 5.7.1915, 50-52.

⁵⁴ Kiesel 2010, 466.

On the original war diary of Ernst Jünger from 1914-1918, there exists very little research until today. It has been used in four⁵⁵ doctoral dissertations and additionally in one journal article⁵⁶ with a rather specific focus on the documentary value of Jünger's early work. Two of the four dissertations cannot be used here to a large extent because of language barriers. Arnout Arens' dissertation in the subject of political history written in Dutch focuses on the conservative revolutionary ideology in Jünger's diary and aims at a historical-political analysis.⁵⁷ José António C. Santos' dissertation is written in Portuguese and has not been published. His approach is mostly literary with a focus on "the evolutionary forms of representation of the author's war experiences along the literarization process of *In Stahlgewittern*".⁵⁸ The inability to make use of these dissertations is nevertheless not a great handicap, as the foci of the two analyses seem to depart from the core questions here.

Instead, the dissertation of the Germanist John King offers useful insights for the work at hand. King concentrates on what he terms "the crisis of the conservative imagination" in Jünger's early work and traces the contradictions and breaks also in Jünger's original war diary.⁵⁹ He analyses Jünger's diary as a text that shows how the pressures of technological warfare challenge Jünger's attempts to uphold a classical modern subjectivity with a rational, centred image of the individual subject and a coherent worldview.⁶⁰ King analyses various tendencies in Jünger's diary: attempts to confirm his self by for example building a heroic narrative; how different time perspectives are present or absent, how knowledge and authority are constructed, and importantly how the text is disrupted.⁶¹

Many of King's observations correspond with mine, although his analysis has a literary-cultural focus. He uses the crisis of modernist ideals in the First World War as a framework for his explanation, which is a useful way to approach Jünger's writing. The ideals Jünger actively struggles to uphold in his diary are very much rooted in the modernist patterns of thinking, and King directly addresses issues that are relevant for the current research, such as Jünger's initial search for adventure. King's main focus is nevertheless in the text as a literary construction, and although my research, too, necessarily focuses on Jünger's writing, I tie my research more into the historical contexts of the First World War.

⁵⁵ It is of course impossible to claim that this number covers all dissertations written on this topic. Nevertheless it adds two dissertations to the two Kiesel mentions in his editorial notes to the diary. See Kiesel 2010, 466.

⁵⁶ Festjens & Martens 2013.

⁵⁷ Arens 2007.

⁵⁸ Santos 2008, 2.

⁵⁹ King 1999, for example 125.

⁶⁰ King 1999, 125 and 44-46.

⁶¹ King 1999, chapter 5.

The other fully accessible dissertation discusses Jünger's original diary only to a limited extent. Oliver Demant's study⁶² in German focuses on modernity and Jünger's early literary work but departs from King's approach by building his analysis around the individual and collective perspectives evident in Jünger's work. Nevertheless, he analyses the original diary only to the extent that is necessary as a background for his further discussion of *In Stahlgewittern*. The above-mentioned journal article written by Thijs Festjens and Gunther Martens is also of limited use. Festjens and Martens argue that the early works of Jünger have more documentary value than the critics of his stylised and self-censored literary works have admitted.⁶³ They focus on the acoustic experiences of the war and compare the original diary and the early works of Jünger with each other in order to pinpoint the documentary qualities of the novels.

The body of literature on Ernst Jünger is such that it defies all oversight, as Demant also notes.⁶⁴ King's bibliography on his Jünger website lists over 1200 items of secondary literature until 1999, and new volumes have been steadily published ever since.⁶⁵ Among the wide literature, there are three rather recent biographies, two of which have significant value for the current research. Jörg Magenau, who has written the most recent of the three biographies, is a journalist and free author. His collective biography of the brothers Ernst and Friedrich Georg Jünger, *Brüder unterm Sternenzelt (Brothers under the Canopy of Stars)*, although elegantly written, mixes the timelines of the brothers' lives and is a delight to read but loses most of its academic value as it is written fully without references.⁶⁶

*Ernst Jünger, die Biographie (Ernst Jünger, the Biography)*⁶⁷ is written by Helmuth Kiesel, the editor of the published war diary. The author of *Ernst Jünger, ein Jahrhundertleben (Ernst Jünger, a Life of a Century)*⁶⁸ is Heimo Schwilk, a journalist and author who knew Jünger personally. The biography by Kiesel is not as rich on details as Schwilk's, but takes a wider perspective on the literary and cultural contexts of Jünger's life and writing. Schwilk writes in a more narrative and detailed style, and especially on the First World War he has a strong military historical perspective. Both rely heavily on Jünger's literary works as sources, but Schwilk refers to them in a clearer way. Kiesel, unfortunately, obscures his references unnecessarily by referring just to the volumes of Jünger's

⁶² Demant 2008.

⁶³ Festjens & Martens 2013, 30-31.

⁶⁴ Demant 2008, 13.

⁶⁵ See the bibliography in John King's website 'Ernst Jünger in Cyberspace'. [www.juenger.org] Accessed 26.4.2014. For publications after 1999 Google Scholar searches on Jünger give dozens of results.

⁶⁶ Magenau 2012.

⁶⁷ Kiesel, 2007.

⁶⁸ Schwilk, 2007.

complete works⁶⁹ instead of making explicit, which book he is referring to.⁷⁰ Despite the need of a critical reading to the biographies, both Kiesel and Schwilk nevertheless have valuable insights, and their books are of great use to the study at hand.

Even the research on Jünger's literature offers valuable additional insights to the original diary. Although I do not rely much on these studies, I deem it relevant to mention a couple of them and bring up a few implications of the predominance of Jünger's *In Stahlgewittern* in existing research. From the numerous volumes presenting Jünger's literary work, I have consulted Martin Meyer's *Ernst Jünger*,⁷¹ which is a monograph discussing Jünger's works from the perspective of literary studies, along with Thomas Nevin's *Ernst Jünger and Germany - Into the Abyss 1914-1945*⁷² that is an exploration of Jünger's early production in its historical context.

Meyer's treating of Jünger's novel *In Stahlgewittern* is insightful, but he calls the book outright Jünger's "first diary".⁷³ This labelling is not discussed in any way, and although it from the literary perspective might be applicable⁷⁴, it is an interpretation that seems to confuse even some historians. For example Ferguson treats *In Stahlgewittern* as a more or less direct reflection of the front realities.⁷⁵ Nevin on the other hand treats Jünger's debut as a novel, although he despite – or perhaps because of – the time of publishing his study does not use the original diary.⁷⁶

What complicates even further using *In Stahlgewittern* as a source, especially in historical studies, is the fact that Jünger did not contend to write his diary into a novel, but kept rewriting the book throughout his life, finally ending up with seven different versions of the novel.⁷⁷ Eva Dempewolf's dissertation in political studies analyses the differences between the versions and their relationship to the political context of their publication.⁷⁸ The historian Marjatta Hietala, whose dissertation focuses on how the new nationalism (*neue Nationalismus*) that arose in Germany during and after the war is manifests in Jünger's early work, has also paid important attention to the ways in

⁶⁹ He uses the 22-volume collection *Sämtliche Werke* published by Klett-Cotta.

⁷⁰ Kiesel 2007, 673.

⁷¹ Meyer 1990.

⁷² Nevin 1996.

⁷³ "Das erste Tagebuch – 'In Stahlgewittern'" Meyer 1990, 21.

⁷⁴ Compare with Wuthenow's notion on published diaries as a distinct form of diary writing. He refers explicitly also to Jünger's diary. Wuthenow 1990, 8.

⁷⁵ Ferguson 1998, 341.

⁷⁶ Nevin 1996, 39.

⁷⁷ See Knebel 1991 for a comprised but detailed discussion on the different versions.

⁷⁸ Dempewolf 1992.

which Jünger's writings can be positioned in their context.⁷⁹ The differences between the versions of *In Stahlgewittern* have often not been taken into account by historians who have used the English translation of the book.⁸⁰

Analysing Jünger's original war diary will not smoothen out the problematic nature of Jünger's later writings as sources for historical research. The research questions here are formulated in order to shed light on the way an individual soldier responded to the challenging realities of the First World War. Although this study at the same time does provide some insight into the roots of Jünger's later interpretations of war that through all the editions of *In Stahlgewittern* remained fundamentally positive,⁸¹ this aspect of the study remains secondary. The political aspects of Jünger's war diary that for example Arens analyses⁸² are not of great significance for this study either, as I treat Jünger's diary writing not as a medium of communication with others but instead as an activity, adapting the ideas of the literary scholar Philippe Lejeune⁸³. This view is presented in the following chapter, after discussing the relevant First World War studies.

⁷⁹ Hietala 1975.

⁸⁰ See for example Ferguson 1998, Mosse 1990, Leed 1979, Fussell [1975].

⁸¹ Dempewolf 1992, chapter 2.4.

⁸² Arens 2007.

⁸³ Lejeune 2009, 31.

2. LITERATURE AND METHODS

In addition to the literature on Ernst Jünger's original war diaries and other writings, this study makes use of the wider body of First World War research. The historical studies on the war have gone through a notable change of focus since the 1970's. From the traditional top-down military history perspectives on for example the military leaders' strategic and tactical decisions and how they were realised, researchers have turned their attention to different phenomena. Such tendencies in historical research as cultural history, along with debates about experiences and mentalities, have started to influence the field significantly, and bottom-up approaches have gained in relevance. Especially the experiences of the regular soldiers have received increasing attention.⁸⁴ The current study is primarily framed in this tradition of the new history of warfare. Along presenting in the following chapter 2.1. the most relevant studies for the analysis of Jünger's diaries, I will also position my study in relation to their insights. Further, in chapter 2.2. I will briefly discuss diary as a form of writing, after which I will present the methods of the current study.

2.1. INSIGHTS INTO INTERPRETING AND REPRESENTING WAR

The role of the soldiers of the First World War has in the dominating interpretation – that up to significant degree is an adequate one – been seen as that of the war as a tragedy and the soldiers as victims⁸⁵. Edward Madigan, a historian at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, cites Ivar Campbell's, who was a subaltern in the British army, description of his men under shellfire. Campbell's words clearly illustrate the victim's role of the soldiers:

[... Y]ou perceived the wide, rather frightened, piteous wonder in their eyes, the patient look turned towards you, not, 'What the blankety, blankety hell is this?' but 'Is this quite fair? We cannot move, we are little animals. Is it quite necessary to make such infernally large explosive shells to kill such infernally small and feeble animals as ourselves?'⁸⁶

⁸⁴ See for example Kramer 2008, 410.

⁸⁵ Compare with Smith's criticism of this metanarrative of tragedy. Smith 2007, 7-8.

⁸⁶ Ivar Campbell cited in Madigan 2013, 86.

Huddling in fear under artillery fire and waiting for the direct hit that ends it all was an inescapable part of the trench warfare on the Western Front, and the position of utter helplessness the soldiers ended up cannot be ignored.

The soldiers were nevertheless not defenceless against the adversities they faced. Madigan's article that was cited focuses on British soldier's understandings of combatant courage, resilience and their use of humour in formulating and holding on to these ideas, and his observations underline that the men in the trenches had their ways of "re-imagining" courage.⁸⁷ His observations reflect also some tendencies in Jünger's diary, although the aspect of humour is not discussed in detail in the current study. The ways the soldiers understood their position and surrounding realities, and how they re-imagined, re-interpreted and re-conceptualised them is nevertheless a central issue for the study at hand, and it has been of interest to other researchers, as well.

Among the first studies that took up this kind of perspective were Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*⁸⁸ and Eric Leed's *No Man's Land*⁸⁹. Fussell, a cultural and literary historian who passed away in 2012, accomplished a significant task of analysing a large body of British literature on the First World War and showing how the trench realities were expressed in written form: through memory, conventions and mythology.⁹⁰ This kind of interest into the process of turning war experience into writing is central to the current research also, but instead of taking the text as a whole as the centrepiece, my aim is to trace manifestations of ideas and ideals in writing. The historian Eric Leed's research comes closer to my perspective, as he explicitly claims not to be aiming at an analysis of literature but instead of "the cultural repertoires of meaning drawn upon by participants [of the First World War] to define felt alterations in themselves."⁹¹

Leed's perspective underlines the overwhelming realities of the warfare in the First World War, and although he consequently sees the soldiers as victims of war, he nevertheless underlines their power in attaching meaning to their principally incomprehensible world.⁹² His insight is central, as it makes visible the soldiers' ability to deal with their experiences and shows that their understandings of the surrounding realities were formulated using existing cultural material. In other words, Leed's study

⁸⁷ Madigan 2013, 97 & passim.

⁸⁸ Fussell 2000 [1975].

⁸⁹ Leed 1979.

⁹⁰ Fussell also uses Remarque and Jünger as points of comparison from German literature. Fussell 2000 [1975], for example 44-45, 77, 196-197 & 232.

⁹¹ Leed 1979, ix.

⁹² Leed 1979, x & passim.

can be seen as pointing out ways how soldiers used cultural and intellectual tools in trying to interpret their experiences, a notion that is central for the conclusions of the current research, as well.

More practical aspects of the soldier's dealing with the realities of trench warfare have also been addressed in academic research. The sociologist Tony Ashworth highlights the importance of communication in the Western Front between both adversaries and different weapon groups. In his analysis of a system of "live and let live", he emphasises the multiple ways in which the soldiers were actually able to influence their surrounding realities in significant ways although they were principally expected to obey orders without further question.⁹³ His analysis has been criticised by the military historian Hew Strachan to be overdrawn,⁹⁴ and his categorisation of elite and non-elite units is indeed somewhat insensitive towards the complex nature of the organisation of troops on Western Front and the constant change they went through.⁹⁵ Despite this, Ashworth's study highlights importantly that the soldiers were actually able to influence their surroundings and their duties, also in more subtle means than outright challenging of the military apparatus.⁹⁶

In addition to research implying that soldiers in the First World War were more capable of assuming power over their interpretations of the realities of war on top of being able to influence those realities, a revisionist perspective arguing that men took pleasure in killing has been raised. Niall Ferguson, currently a professor of history at Harvard University, brings up this perspective in his *Pity of War* arguing that men fought not only spurred by military coercion and rewards that often had a significant influence on them but also by a willingness to kill.⁹⁷ His last argument is tied together with an analysis of how the Freudian idea of a death instinct is apparent in soldiers' testimonies,⁹⁸ and he underlines that killing and at the same time taking the risk of being killed was a central feature of the war.⁹⁹ Jünger's writing echoes the latter aspect of the war experience.¹⁰⁰ Ferguson states that many

⁹³ Ashworth 1980.

⁹⁴ Strachan 2006, 213.

⁹⁵ See Ashworth 1980, 22 and 193. Compare with Meteling 2008, 25 & passim. Ashworth also distinguishes rather rigidly between quiet and active sectors of the front, although this conceptualisation pays attention to important differences in the front realities. Ashworth 1980, 15-18.

⁹⁶ This kind of action existed as well, although its significance has been relativised. See Watson 2008, 38-43. For forms of action breaking the military norm of endurance in the German army see Lipp 2003, 139-147.

⁹⁷ Ferguson 1998, chapter 12.

⁹⁸ Ferguson 1998, 357-359.

⁹⁹ Ferguson 1998, 364.

¹⁰⁰ See Jünger 20.4.1916, 121.

soldiers found killing pleasurable,¹⁰¹ but his argument is not elaborated much further and, as it is balanced with other perspectives, it is not as straightforward as that of the historian Joanna Bourke.

Bourke's *An Intimate History of Killing* is an outspoken effort to bring "killing back to military history",¹⁰² a task that is certainly worth the effort, because war is often depicted in terms of abstract military plans or general aims of campaigns, circumventing the actions of destruction constitutive of warfare.¹⁰³ Bourke accomplishes the task she sets herself in an eloquent way by studying testimonies from the First and the Second World War and the Vietnam War. She nevertheless focuses so exclusively on the accounts of killing and taking pleasure in killing that her research ends up giving a one-eyed account of soldier's position at war. Bourke has nevertheless significant insights in the soldiers' expectations of war that were created by literature and other cultural institutions, as well as training,¹⁰⁴ and her study has triggered further research. Edgar Jones, whose field is the history of medicine and psychiatry, concluded that active combat actually did not prevent shell shock in the First World War, as was claimed by several military psychiatrist throughout the 20th century whose views Bourke cites.¹⁰⁵

The psychology of the front soldiers is of interest for the purposes of the current study, too, but the focus on the manifestations of ideas and ideals in writing positions these discussions as a side note. Nevertheless, psychological coping was a real challenge for the soldiers of the First World War. Jünger's diary writing emphasises his successful adapting to the realities of war, and thus the insights of the historian Alexander Watson, who has paid attention to the psychological coping mechanisms of the front soldiers are important for the argumentation of this study. In his 2006 article on the topic and his later monograph *Enduring the Great War*, Watson concludes that holding to an overly positive evaluation of one's chances of survival was crucial for the mental coping of the soldiers on the Western Front.¹⁰⁶ Ferguson had made similar observations earlier, but not taken the analysis further.¹⁰⁷ Especially interesting in relation to the following analysis is Watson's insight that it was "often better

¹⁰¹ Ferguson 1998, 363-364.

¹⁰² Bourke 2000, 2.

¹⁰³ For one example of this kind of presentation see how the First World War is treated in a Finnish world history book. Hovi 2006, 770-779 & 784-785.

¹⁰⁴ Bourke 2000, see especially chapters 1 & 3. For an another perspective on the role of training see also Strachan 2006.

¹⁰⁵ Jones 2006, 245. Bourke 2000, 248-249.

¹⁰⁶ Watson 2006 & 2008, chapter 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ferguson 1998, 364.

to reinterpret unpleasant experiences positively than to attempt to repress them”,¹⁰⁸ as exactly this kind of reaction is often visible in Jünger’s writing.

To what extent were the accounts of those soldiers who described their war experience in terms of taking pleasure in killing affected by this kind of positive interpreting in order to cope? This is a question that should be posed also to Bourke’s sources which are interpretations of war experience and not equivalents of the actual experience. They are of course different from those representations that depict the soldiers’ as victims, but they are representations nonetheless. The historian Leonard Smith, who has studied the French First World War soldier’s published war testimonies, underlines the myriad of interpretative possibilities that offer themselves for especially those soldiers who write with the benefits of hindsight.¹⁰⁹

Smith’s study pinpoints a central insight on experience which “‘as it happens,’ in the sense of a succession of nows is intrinsically incompatible with narrative.”¹¹⁰ This observation has been elaborated in the field of narrative research for a considerable time,¹¹¹ and, if taken to its very basics, lies also at the bottom of the rationale of the current study. Narrative (for the current purpose loosely defined as any written account that has an observable structure), even when based on personal experience, is always a representation of this experience. I do not aim to explore the experience of Jünger as such, and that is why I do not venture into the debates on experience as a field of historical inquiry. Instead, I attempt to identify his central ideas and ideals in his writing and study the way he handles them in his diary – a perspective that deals with representations of his experiences and thoughts. I am thus dealing with interpretations evident in writing.

These interpretations are nevertheless not formulated in a vacuum, most importantly because the experiences that they relate to do not take place in a void. In the trenches of the Western Front, that is, in the most immediate context of this study, the social, cultural and physical realities influenced the soldiers’ interpretations of their experiences. For understanding better the realities of the trench warfare, the already presented studies of Ashworth¹¹² and Madigan¹¹³ have been of use. These studies pay attention to the British soldiers. For understanding their German counterparts, Anne Lipp’s published dissertation on the discourses at the front through field newspapers and war propaganda

¹⁰⁸ Watson 2006, 253.

¹⁰⁹ Smith 2007.

¹¹⁰ Smith 2007, 20.

¹¹¹ Cf. what is noted for example in Gubrium and Holstein 1998, 163.

¹¹² Ashworth 1980.

¹¹³ Madigan 2013.

within the German army provides insight into the widely circulated language and imagery of the war.¹¹⁴ Her analysis dichotomises between the official rhetoric and the soldiers' experiences, as well as between the officer corps and the regular soldiers, and pays attention to the important social divisions present in the German army.¹¹⁵ She pays special attention also to the discrepancies between the expectations of the high command and the starkly different realities at the front.¹¹⁶

The influence of the social divisions was nevertheless not straightforward, although benefits, which the officer corps was entitled to, were often regarded unfair.¹¹⁷ Alexander Watson has questioned the more simplistic interpretation that the dominating feeling between officers and men was one of suspicion and disdain. He has in addition to the psychological coping strategies on the Western Front studied other factors that influenced the remarkable endurance of the German and British armies at the time. He underlines that the front officers had in general better relations with their men than the staff officers who were subject to the shared contempt of basically all front soldiers regardless of rank.¹¹⁸

In addition to the social realities on the front, cultural heritage was important for the soldiers' interpretations of their realities. Fussell¹¹⁹ and Leed¹²⁰ pioneered this kind of approaches in their already presented works, but as the current research to a great extent focuses on ideals, the late cultural historian George Mosse's work has provided insightful analyses of the prevalent contemporary understandings of the soldiers' role at war. His monograph *Fallen Soldiers* traces the influential reinterpretation of death at war as a glorious, utmost sacrifice for a fundamentally national cause that appeared in the wake of the establishment of modern citizen armies.¹²¹ This widely shared notion started to evolve during the French Revolution along with the more respectable social status of soldiers in general.¹²² The German notion of the death at war was moulded by the Napoleonic wars, along with influential images of warfare that were present in much national literature and communicated also to

¹¹⁴ Lipp 2003.

¹¹⁵ Lipp 2003, see for example 53-54 & 113-125.

¹¹⁶ Lipp 2003, 99-105.

¹¹⁷ Lipp 2003, 116-117 & Watson 2008, 127-129

¹¹⁸ Watson 2008, 133-135.

¹¹⁹ Fussell [1975].

¹²⁰ Leed 1979.

¹²¹ Mosse 1990, chapter 2. See especially 32-33.

¹²² Mosse 1990, 18-19.

the youth of the early 20th century.¹²³ These images saw war as a test of manhood, and the soldier as free from the everyday sorrows of civilian life.¹²⁴

Mosse has also traced the roots of the military masculine ideal prevalent at the time of the First World War to partly same origins. He has paid special attention to the wartime masculine ideals in both an article and a monograph.¹²⁵ In his analysis, Mosse has identified three especially important components of the military masculine ideal: courage, sacrifice and camaraderie.¹²⁶ When the war was seen as a test of manliness, these ideals were the central yardsticks with which the worth and masculinity of a soldier could be measured. These cultural perspectives on the image the contemporaries harboured of the men in military service are crucial for understanding the initially very positive notions of the war among the urban, upper class youth¹²⁷. Similar thoughts are apparent in Jünger's war diary, too, and as was discussed earlier, the influence of dreams evoked partly by literature were important in triggering his flight to the Foreign Legion.

Summing up, the research on the soldiers of the First World War contributes to understanding the complexity of the front realities, in addition to underlining the significance of the soldiers' interpretations of these realities. Even when dealing with just one aspect of such a multifaceted and broad topic, forming a complete picture is challenging within the boundaries of one study. Nevertheless, within the body of the First World War literature the studies on the soldiers' experiences and their representations complement each other. Making use of these different perspectives and combining them with some insights from modern military sociology¹²⁸ provides fruitful ground for the study at hand.

My approach on Jünger's war diary is especially inspired by the insights of Leed's¹²⁹, Mosse's¹³⁰ and to an extent also Smith's¹³¹, although the methods used will not include narrative analysis per se.

¹²³ Donson 2010, 49-50. Donson notes that although adventure literature and German national poets with their military subject matter were popular among youth these genres competed against fairytales that were also loved and did not proliferate military ideals.

¹²⁴ Mosse 1990, 25-28, 63-65 & 70-73.

¹²⁵ Mosse 1996b & 1996a.

¹²⁶ Mosse 1996a, 108.

¹²⁷ Jeffrey Verhey has studied the myth of the spirit of 1914 in Germany and underlines that there was no overarching enthusiasm for the war, but it was an interpretation especially cultivated by conservative political forces in the country. Nevertheless, even real enthusiasm was apparent, especially in larger cities. Verhey 2000, for his observations on the youth see especially 31-32.

¹²⁸ For the purposes of this study I will use the work of Juhani Sinivuo on the group dynamics, combat morale and performance of soldiers. Sinivuo 2011.

¹²⁹ Leed 1979.

¹³⁰ Mosse 1990, 1996a & 1996b.

¹³¹ Smith 2007.

The most important insight of these researchers for my perspective is that the analysis of interpretations and representations yields results that help in understanding more concrete historical phenomena and especially historical actors. In other words, analysing people's ideas may help in understanding their actions. Markku Hyrkkänen has deemed this relationship between thinking and action important. He sees the two in an inseparable relationship with the observed or experienced context in which the thinking and action take place.¹³² This basic dynamic informs my understanding of Jünger's writing, according to which writing is basically a manifestation of thinking, although does not equal thinking. In the following presentation of my methods I will discuss the framing of my study further.

2.2. METHODS AND APPROACH OF THE ANALYSIS

Jünger's later novel versions of his diary have received notable attention, and it is not surprising that the publishing of the original war diary was also noted in the academic community.¹³³ The diaries of the First World War have in general received increasing attention in the recent times, especially with the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the conflict increasing the general interest toward the war.¹³⁴ Diaries are in major role in the web platform *Europeana 1914-1918*, a collaboration initiated by the University of Oxford aiming to collect First World War material from different parts of the world online, accessible to everyone.¹³⁵ A similar project focusing exclusively on British units' army diaries is going on in cooperation of the British National Archives, the Imperial War Museums and the Zooniverse web community.¹³⁶ A growing interest towards diaries in academia can also be observed. The existing research has often focused on the diaries of famous persons, but also more general perspectives have been taken up.¹³⁷ In the following, I will discuss how the diary medium is understood in this study and present the methodology of the study.

¹³² Hyrkkänen 2002, 24 & 41.

¹³³ See for example Ziemann 2012 & Nübel 2011.

¹³⁴ For a few examples from the news media see Staas 2014, 38 & Breitenstein: 'Der Gesang der Geister über den Gräben.' [<http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/feuilleton/uebersicht/der-gesang-der-geister-ueber-den-graeben-1.18184864>] Accessed 26.4.2014.

¹³⁵ 'Europeana 1914-1918.' [<http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/about>] Accessed 26.4.2014.

¹³⁶ The National Archives, Imperial War Museums & Zooniverse: 'About Operaton War Diary.' [<http://www.operationwardiary.org/#/about>] Accessed 26.4.2014.

¹³⁷ For a compact presentation of central European research on diaries, see Vatka 2005, 33-37.

In his already mentioned research on European diaries Ralph-Rainer Wuthenow notes that the genre is not easy to define because the forms of diary writing have been so manifold.¹³⁸ He nevertheless distinguished between several genres: early diaries, the *journal intime*, artist diaries, diaries as autobiographic material, political diaries and diaries as literary works.¹³⁹ He pays also special attention to the diary as a medium suitable for self-reflection.¹⁴⁰ A central insight of Wuthenow's is that diary is a form of writing that especially strongly reflects the passing impressions of the writer's life and experienced reality.¹⁴¹ These impressions are especially present in diaries that have not been edited afterwards, and the variety of feelings and atmospheres captured in Jünger's war diaries embodies this kind of momentarily aspect of diary writing.

The interpretation of Jünger's diary keeping as a private sphere of writing was discussed along presenting the diary as the primary source of the current study. This interpretation is a central one, as it informs the way I regard Jünger's writing. The question, why Jünger wrote, nevertheless remains open. Along Wuthenow, Miia Vatka, who has studied the Finnish diary literature, discusses the multiple purposes of writing a diary. Vatka found several central purposes in her diary material: recording events, keeping up routine, inventorying central events in life, understanding oneself and the world, self-education or self-improvement, therapy and practicing writing.¹⁴² Interestingly, although hardly surprisingly taking into account the long timeframe in which Jünger wrote, traces of all these functions of a diary can be seen in Jünger's writing, although recording can be seen as the dominating mode of his writing, like King does¹⁴³.

Jünger himself regarded documenting as a central aspect of his diary writing in an interview in 1966:

Fast jeder Soldat führte damals ein Tagebuch. Bei mir kam vielleicht ein Trieb zum Dokumentarischen hinzu, aber nur in Bezug auf die Fixierung des eigenen Erlebnisses. Ich konnte ja auch fallen – das war sogar wahrscheinlicher. Da denkt man nicht an Literatur.¹⁴⁴

He emphasises that keeping a diary on the front was a common activity, and sees documenting primarily as a way to fix one's own experience in writing. If Jünger's later account is accepted as

¹³⁸ Wuthenow 1990, 11.

¹³⁹ Wuthenow 1990.

¹⁴⁰ Wuthenow 1990, 60-69.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Wuthenow 1990, 15.

¹⁴² Vatka 2005, subchapters beginning on pages 77, 84, 90, 95, 98, 102 & 112.

¹⁴³ King 1999, 127.

¹⁴⁴ Jünger in an interview with Heinz Ludwig Arnold. Cited in: 'Ernst Jünger. "Stendhal war mein Meister".'
[<http://www.zeit.de/2010/44/Juenger>] Accessed 26.4.2014.

reflecting his motives for writing accurately, his primary motivation to write would have been to retain his experiences in written form even after falling that he felt was a probable fate for him. This kind of recording can be seen as one of the central motivations for diary writing in general,¹⁴⁵ and in that sense Jünger's diary was not exceptional.

The process of recording characterises Jünger's writing quite well, as was concluded earlier in relation to King's observations. Recording is nevertheless not a straightforward process. It does not simply constitute of experiencing and recording the lived experience afterwards on the pages of a diary. First of all, the relationship between recording and experience is reciprocal in the sense that writing may influence how lived experiences are regarded. Wuthenow points out that the awaiting act of writing may influence the way in which the diarist sees and understands the events in his or her life.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the recorded experience is not an imprint of experience, but an interpretation, and even more importantly, a selection. Eeva Jokinen has studied the diaries of three Finnish women and what kind of knowledge they generate from the perspective of women's studies.¹⁴⁷ In her article she notes that every single day is limitless in the sense that one could write about it endlessly – and still no one does that in a diary. She further notes that the selection process that diarists go through happens mostly without particular effort.¹⁴⁸

This effortlessness might be misleading, as paying attention to selection of the contents of a diary results in enhanced knowledge of the diarists presuppositions and patterns of thinking. This is a conclusion that Jokinen also implies to in her analysis of the themes and contexts of the diaries she has studied.¹⁴⁹ For example in Jünger's diary the selection of the events that are written down and the space granted to each of them reveal preferences. In addition, the way the selected topics are treated is important. Such things as selection of words and how an issue is treated and evaluated in a diary are equally revealing as the contents as such. These aspects are also part of the selection process included in writing, and, importantly, selecting does not need to be conscious in order to be significant. On the contrary: casual, regular writing without explicit commentary on a theme or on the process of writing may reveal the fundamental stance the diarist has to his or her topics.

¹⁴⁵ Wuthenow 1990, 26.

¹⁴⁶ Wuthenow 1990, 11.

¹⁴⁷ Jokinen 2004. Although her material is significantly different to mine as to the time of their generation (they derive from the 1960's, 1980's and 1990's) and the contexts, Jokinen's approach offers important insight to the way in which diaries can be approached.

¹⁴⁸ Jokinen 2004, 118.

¹⁴⁹ I use the word 'implies', as Jokinen does not stop to elaborate on the more general nature of the knowledge her analysis of the diaries' themes and contexts yields. Cf. Jokinen 2004, 125-128.

In the current study, analysing Jünger's ideas and ideals is mostly done on the level of content and contexts in a similar way to how Jokinen approaches the diaries in her article. She pays attention to the contents of the diaries she studies and reflects on both the immediate lived contexts of the recorded events¹⁵⁰ along with the more abstract, wider contexts of the society and culture.¹⁵¹ I focus on how Jünger treats the themes of warfare, of being a soldier and of leadership in his diary and see, what kind of understanding of these issues his writing reveals. This part of the study concentrates on recognising Jünger's central ideas. I also pay attention to how Jünger's writing records the relationship between his actual, lived context and his ideas in the way he interprets his experiences in writing and how he maintains his previous notions by writing. Similar approach is taken to his ideals related to being a soldier and an officer, as well as the preferred forms of warfare. Here the wider cultural contexts with the shared ideals are especially important to the analysis.

When I started my work with Jünger's diary, my approach was very different. Refining the aim of this research proceeded hermeneutically. When I first encountered the diary, my interest was triggered because Jünger's running away to the Foreign Legion and his positive approach towards the war seemed to exemplify the idea of the bored young men searching for meaningful agency in war that I had encountered in Kustermans and Ringmar's essay.¹⁵² With my initial questioning of the reasons behind a positive attitude towards war I read the diaries for the first time and marked the entries that seemed to be of interest for this wide perspective. As the diary proved to be a viable material for a master thesis, I sketched my first research plan with the information I had by then with research questions revolving around Jünger's motivation.

This focus interested me because Jünger's initial enthusiasm towards the war combined with his willingness to keep on fighting with a remarkably positive account of his experiences in his diary despite being wounded several times was for me difficult to grasp. Studying Jünger's motivation would have nevertheless required a much more psychological perspective than was possible with my current knowledge as a student of history, and while I reread the diaries, I also started to reform my research questions. After considering completing a narrative analysis on the longer accounts Jünger's diary includes, I realised that using that approach I would lose many aspects and nuances that are too characteristic of the diary in order to be ignored. Thus finally, after reconsidering my approach and

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Jokinen 2004, 126.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Jokinen 2004, 127.

¹⁵² Kustermans & Ringmar 2011.

going back to the diaries, I ended up with the current research questions regarding Jünger's ideas and ideals.

At this point I coded the entries that were of significance for the final approach. The coding was not made as a strict mechanical process, but more as a side product of an interpretative and critical reading of the diaries. As I had already during my first reading marked interesting entries, the final selection was not completed at once but had developed along refining the focus of the research. Finally, I typed the material that in my interpretation¹⁵³ dealt with Jünger's ideas and ideals and relied primarily on that material while writing my analysis in order to not stray too much from the focus. Thus the way in which the material was coded and selected was part of the process of refining the research questions.

Along the process of typing the selected entries, I labelled them according to their contents with characteristics of Jünger's ideas and ideals they represented. I retained the chronological order of the entries, as I wanted to see what kind of change happened in Jünger's writing as the years passed, and thus did not group them beyond the labelling. Already during this rough interpretative work that primarily yielded the answers to the research question of what the ideas and ideals evident in Jünger's diary were, I set out analysing how he dealt with them in his diary. In the end I did not in strict terms use narrative analysis as a method, and my analysis rests primarily on a traditional historical method of critical reading of the primary sources and interpreting them in relation to their relevant contexts. Reading into the literature of narrative analysis nevertheless sensitised me towards the structures and forms of writing, and these insights supported me in my analysis of the dynamics of Jünger's ideas and ideals in his writing, although I do not extensively make use of that methodology.

How the current study is set up was not shaped by the primary sources only. My interest towards the ideas and ideals of Jünger was influenced by Markku Hyrkkänen's already mentioned ideas of the relationship between thinking, action and the seen or experienced context.¹⁵⁴ My initial interest towards the current topic stemmed from the questioning of how so many people in 1914 could regard the war as a positive thing and volunteer in significant numbers, and I was thus asking what kind of thinking was behind the actions of the volunteers. Hyrkkänen notes that action is never transparent in the sense that the underlying thought could be deduced from it; for that we need to interpret the evidence that

¹⁵³ Coffey & Atkinson have illustratively pointed out how coding and interpretation go hand in hand, and this insight was relevant also to how I approached my analysis. Coffey & Atkinson 1996, 30.

¹⁵⁴ Hyrkkänen 2002, 24 & 41.

accompanies the action.¹⁵⁵ My analysis on Jünger's ideas and ideals in his diary is one way of doing this kind of an interpretation of traces of thought on the basis of existing evidence.

Although I refrain from taking the analysis out of the realm of writing and exclude the actual relationship between Jünger's thinking evident in his diary and his actions, I do step out of the contents and contexts of the diary into analysing the more general implications of the analysis of Jünger's diary writing. In that analysis I make use of the insights of the First World War literature I have consulted, as well as the notion of diary writing as not only as a text, but an activity. This notion comes from Philippe Lejeune, who has specialised on autobiographical literature. In his study on modern diaries, he notes that writing a diary is actually a way of life,¹⁵⁶ a notion that echoes Wuthenow's observation of the reciprocal nature of experiencing and recording in the sense of diary writing potentially influencing the way a life is lived.¹⁵⁷ The text that is produced can in Lejeune's interpretation be seen as a by-product of the activity of diary writing.¹⁵⁸

In my research I see Jünger's diary as an activity in which he processes his experiences and thoughts. This interpretation does not stem from his writing or his later view on his diary as a record of his experiences, but instead from observations made while analysing his diary. The following analysis will demonstrate that Jünger actively interprets his surrounding realities in his diary in relation to his ideas and ideals. Even if the primary focus of his regular entries would be documenting the lived experience, this documenting is not neutral but reveals traces of ideas and ideals. They, in turn, can be identified and interpreted in relation to the relevant contexts. Through this interpretation the ways in which Jünger's ideas and ideals are on one hand maintained in their original forms and on the other hand adapted to the realities become evident. Tracing this relationship between Jünger's writing and the surrounding realities throughout the diary lies at the core of my analysis.

Jünger's wartime letters are tied to the analysis as an additional source. They were not analysed as systematically as the diary and instead provide complementing material to some central points of analysis. The letters support my interpretation of Jünger's diary, and thus I found it possible to use them in this way. Although an extensive analysis of the two materials together might prove fruitful for further studies, especially if the full preserved correspondence with all available answers to Jünger's

¹⁵⁵ Hyrkkänen 2002, 27.

¹⁵⁶ Lejeune 2009, 31.

¹⁵⁷ Wuthenow 1990, 11.

¹⁵⁸ Lejeune 2009, 31.

letters would be taken into account, the published collection with just a selection of answers from Jünger's family was an important additional material for the current study.

Before commencing to the actual analysis, a brief note on the relationship between the individual and general is necessary. The aim of this research is not to make a biographical study of Jünger in the First World War but instead study his ideas and ideals in relation to the context of the war. The focus is on one individual, but Jünger's case reveals how the more general, contemporary notions had an influence on his interpretations of his experiences. This study can be seen as a case study of the ideas and ideals that existed in the trenches of the Western Front. Generalising the findings of just one case would nevertheless be impossible, which is why this aspect of the current study primarily helps us understand Jünger's individual case. Along the analysis of Jünger's ideas and ideals, an interpretation of diary writing as an activity that serves the individual's intellectual survival under adverse conditions suggests itself. This interpretation is more widely applicable and could be tested elsewhere, and thus digging into a single case can be seen worthwhile even outside the aim of studying Jünger's writing for its own sake.

3. WRITING IDEAS AND IDEALS IN THE TRENCHES

Ernst Jünger's decision to flee to the Foreign Legion indicates two things: a dream of a different life and a will to realise this dream. Consequently, even his later, 1934 account of his enlisting to the army in 1914 conveys a feeling of relief: now he was free of all sorrows.¹⁵⁹ These sorrows – the tedious school, the bourgeois world that probably seemed pale and narrow against stories about adventurous, free life in Africa – might seem petty in contrast to the reality of the trench warfare on the Western Front, but Jünger retained a relatively positive image of the war in his diary. In chapter 3.1. I will first introduce the initial ideas and ideals Jünger's diary writing reveals: What were his ideas of warfare and being a soldier like? What kinds of ideals he attaches to these central ideas? Then, I will further address the question of how Jünger upholds these initial ideas and ideals in his writing. How does he deal with the challenges the realities of the warfare on the Western Front pose to his initial ideas and ideals? This is the topic of the chapters 3.2. and 3.3., the former dealing with continuities in Jünger's writing and the latter with dismissals, omissions and self-censorship.

3.1. INTRODUCING INITIAL IDEAS AND IDEALS

Ernst Jünger begins his diary on the way to the front on 30th of December 1914. From the very beginning he writes in a way that reveals his positive attitude towards the war. As becomes evident later in this chapter, he goes to war in search of adventure,¹⁶⁰ supported by contemporary images of war and military masculine ideals that informed his expectations. His early understandings of the war are not always outspoken but can be traced throughout his first two diary booklets spanning the time frame from late December 1914 to late April 1915. In this subchapter, a picture of Jünger's initial ideas is built up in an analysis of his early diary writing.

During his first week of war he writes every day. He longs for action and his wish to see the French in order to have a chance to shoot is soon granted. When he is sitting and smoking with his comrade Priepke, they believe to see a Frenchman on the field. They shoot for some time, but give up in fear of retaliation. The diary entrance continues:

¹⁵⁹ Kiesel 2007, 90.

¹⁶⁰ See also King 1999, 129; Kiesel 2007, 117.

Ich bin sehr neugierig wie sich eine Shrapnellbeschießung ausmacht. Im allgemeinen ist mir der Krieg schrecklicher vorgekommen, wie er wirklich ist. Der Anblick der von Granaten zerrissenen hat mich vollkommen kalt gelassen, ebenso die ganze Knallerei, trotz | dem ich einige Male die Kugeln sehr nah habe singen hören. Im allgemeinen sind mir die Kälte und die Nässe in unser Erdlöchern das unangenehmste.¹⁶¹

From the very beginning Jünger shows a keen interest towards the phenomena of the war: the different types of artillery fire such as the shrapnel mentioned above, how their duty is organised, as well as the wounded and the dead, whose state he often documents with detail.¹⁶² At this early point he claims that the war is not as bad as he had thought, and his remark that the wet and the cold are the worst part of the war, combined with his eagerness to shoot the French, affirms the impression that he has a generally positive attitude towards being a soldier.

He also underlines his own courage, when he asserts his indifference towards the wounded and the life threat. Schwilk writes that Jünger's underlining his lacking sense of danger recurs as if compulsive,¹⁶³ and indeed, Jünger's commentary on his own cool-headedness is a frequent trait of his writing, and sometimes it does sound somewhat self-assuring.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, Jünger keeps on commenting on his own actions throughout the diary and after the two first diary booklets his writing becomes more honest in the sense that he includes more ambivalent thoughts, too. In the first diary booklet Jünger's writing nevertheless omits almost fully commenting on his actual thoughts on the constant dying around him and he instead focuses either on the factual or on general soldier complaints such as lost post or the dull food.¹⁶⁵

Although the young volunteer claims that the horrors of war do not impress him, the tiring duty and the bad conditions in the trenches take their toll. After one week at the frontline in the winter weather and with too little sleep he has a sudden moment of disillusionment:

Am Tage hatten wir wieder Grabenwache, Gottseidank werden wir heute abgelöst. 60 Stunden ohne Schlaf in Nässe und Kälte sind endlos. Ich bekomme, wie damals in Algerien ganz and[Rest der Zeile unlesbar, vermutlich: ere]¹⁶⁶ Ideale. Ein solides Studentenleben mit Lehnstuhl und

¹⁶¹ Jünger 4.1.1915, 9-10.

¹⁶² See for example Jünger's entries from 1.2.1915, 8.1.1915, 25.4.1915, pages 8, 12, 33-34. This is a continuing trait of Jünger's writing, although the most detailed accounts become less frequent as time passes. Taking into account the fact that soldiers in the trenches died constantly in most violent ways, this trend is not surprising. Jünger's aestheticising of the war has also been discussed in the research literature. See for example Dempewolf 1992, 84-92 and Meyer 1990, 25-30. See also Kiesel's note on the issue. Kiesel 2010, 547

¹⁶³ Schwilk 2007, 99.

¹⁶⁴ Jünger, 24.4.1915, 29.

¹⁶⁵ Jünger 6.1.1915 and 14.1.1915, 11 and 13.

¹⁶⁶ If not stated otherwise, all the corrections in the citations are from Santos' transcription used in the published version of the diaries.

weichem Bett und einem kleinen Freundeskreise ohne Verbindungeseleien, schöne Ausflüge und gute Bücher. Und eine Käfersammlung. Vorher muß ich irgendwie nach Afrika reisen, nur um zu sehen, dass man auch darin nur Phantastereien nachgejagt hat.¹⁶⁷

The entry suggests that Jünger left for the war in a misplaced search for adventure. He remembers his flight to the Foreign Legion and is reminded of his disappointing experience there. Once again his search for a different life seems to have failed. He did not look for wet, cold, tiredness, work and passive trench warfare nor the need of being ironically curious towards when and how severely the unavoidable rheumatism¹⁶⁸ manifests itself. But what did he actually look for? Despite their vagueness, Jünger's "totally other ideals" reveal something important about his understanding of his situation.

A steady student life with all its comforts appears here both as an antithesis to the ideals that Jünger was seeking when he first left to the front and as a wish to get away from the discomforts of the front life. In the light of Jünger's miserable school time experiences, the wish is all the more significant, despite the fact that as a university student he would have had more freedom than as a schoolboy. Against the backdrop of Jünger's youthful dreams culminating in a flight to Africa, one can state that in volunteering he was still after a different – that is to say more free and authentic – life and adventure.¹⁶⁹

With his dreams Jünger was not alone among his contemporaries. Leed argues that the confined identities of the modern society led to a longing for a liberation that had already manifested in the German youth movement¹⁷⁰, a part of which Jünger had been as a member of the *Wandervogel*. Mosse poses similar arguments and shows that interpreting war as liberation in Germany had longer roots. He traces it back to the volunteers in the Napoleonic wars in Germany and even further back to Schiller's *Reiterlied (Cavalry Song, 1797)* that glorifies the freedom of the solitary soldier contrasted against the everyday burdens of the rest of the society.¹⁷¹ Considering the importance of Schiller in school curricula of German literature and the popularity of his war poems among the youth,¹⁷² it is not

¹⁶⁷ Jünger 8.1.1915, 11-12.

¹⁶⁸ Jünger 4.1.1915, 10.

¹⁶⁹ See also Kiesel 2007, 50 and Schwilk 2007, 82, who in addition suggests on the basis of Jünger's later novel *Afrikanische Spiele (African Games)* a self-destructive motivation for his escape from home. His argument is nevertheless based just on an episode in the novel in which a sort of a guardian character warns the protagonist that the gun that he bought is faulty and that he should be careful. As I do not find sufficient support for Jünger's self-destructiveness in the diaries, I will leave this line of argument out of my analysis.

¹⁷⁰ Leed 1979, 58 and further.

¹⁷¹ Mosse 1990, 25-27.

¹⁷² Donson 2010, 45.

surprising that Jünger cites the *Reiterlied* later in his diaries,¹⁷³ especially as the poem mirrors Jünger's individualism and the importance he puts on his indifference towards death – in the poem that is what liberates the soldier.¹⁷⁴

Mosse underlines that also a fear of boredom typical of the bourgeois youth arose from what they saw as the static nature of the contemporary society.¹⁷⁵ For understanding Jünger, the notion of boredom is central. Kustermans and Ringmar have suggested a strong tendency among young men of the early 20th century bourgeois society to dream of war as a chance to restore a meaningful agency to their lives.¹⁷⁶ Jünger fits their analysis almost perfectly: a bourgeois young man bored at school and constrained by it, with books and hiking trips substituting for assuming an independent role in his own life, let alone for having a way of life that would correspond with his ideals. Furthermore, the reality of the trench warfare is disappointing for him, just as Kustermans and Ringmar among other researchers argue that it was for many young men.¹⁷⁷ In his moment of disillusionment, Jünger's flight from the bourgeois society to the war turns into a dream of going back, with the delights of travel, good books and a beetle collection and, importantly, without fooling around in student associations (*Verbindungseseleien*).¹⁷⁸

Jünger realises that he has searched for fantasies. The front life with the heavy work in building and maintaining the trenches, standing guard with just little sleep and the general life conditions do not correspond to the image of warfare he had cultivated. He acknowledges this, and is ready to go and see, if his dreams of Africa would fall into the same category of illusions. Nevertheless, instead of continuing on the topic, Jünger breaks his musings and directs his attention elsewhere. This time his abrupt change of topic is due to passing time¹⁷⁹ when his narrative jumps into describing how their part of the trench got under shrapnel fire earlier that day. He notes: "*Es machte mir Spaß zu beobachten, wie*

¹⁷³ Jünger 7.2.1917, 213.

¹⁷⁴ Schiller [1797], 137-138.

¹⁷⁵ Mosse 1990, 56.

¹⁷⁶ Kustermans & Ringmar 2011, 1777.

¹⁷⁷ Kustermans & Ringmar 2011, 1786. We will nevertheless see that Jünger's understanding of the war did not collapse into an "ironic tale of the absurd", as the authors' interpretation terms the result of the disappointing reality. See for example also Mosse 1990, 73.

¹⁷⁸ Jünger had bad experiences of the typically drunken pub nights of his school time, as he and his fellows had even ended in trouble with the police. See Kiesel 2007, 48, as well as notes on the issue in Kiesel 2010, 475 and 525.

¹⁷⁹ Jünger starts the note by stating "*Gottseidank werden wir heute abgelöst*" and ends it with "*Am Abend wurden wir Gottseidank abgelöst*" (emphasis added). This change of tense signifies that the beginning of the entry is most likely written before relieving the unit and that it was finished afterwards, when already in reserve.

*die Dinger in der Luft krepiereten. Trotzdem der Graben offensichtlich beschossen wurde, kam mir kein Gefühl der Gefahr hoch.*¹⁸⁰

Jünger's initial disillusionment does not change much in the contents of his writing, although for some time his diary entries get as a rule shorter, and he leaves frequent gaps in his journal, which gives an impression of both getting used to the soldier life and of finding the routine less worth writing about. After just two and half months on the front Jünger gets commanded to a course for officer aspirants to Recouvrance, during which he writes only two entries. The latter reveals something central of his mindset:

Heute mal'nen kleinen Rückblick machen. Beim Garnisondienst und hinter der Front sehne ich mich nach kaum 7 Wochen, so seltsam es klingt, [dem, gestrichen] nach dem Schützengraben, aber besonders nach ein bischen Gefahr zurück. Unsre Leute haben nun den berühmten Sturm hinter sich, von meiner Komp. ist fast 1/3 verloren gegangen.¹⁸¹

Despite his earlier denial of having felt the danger, he misses it now when he is leading a peculiar life (*ein seltsames Leben*)¹⁸² behind the frontlines under an arbitrary rule of the superiors and with heavy drinking in the evenings. His choice of words when writing that his company now has a famous fight¹⁸³ behind them betrays envy, and in a typical way he refrains from commenting the heavy losses in any way. This reveals appreciation of the active duty before serving the military apparatus behind the lines, as well as a willingness to ignore the actual consequences of the fighting, in this case the death of a third of his company.¹⁸⁴ At this point Jünger has no first hand experience of direct engagement with the enemy, and he is strongly idealising it and the trench life in comparison to the unsatisfactory existence behind the lines.

The ideal of direct engagement with the enemy follows him after his return to the company. As they are moved behind the lines to Flanders for rest and reserves, Jünger wonders if they are going to make a decisive move from there: "*Vielleicht machen | wir von hier einen Durchbruch? Alles steht vor einem Rätsel.*"¹⁸⁵ The question shows his anticipation of action, along with the common soldiers' lack of oversight about their own situation – the regiment is only sent back to reserve behind the front almost three weeks later. The anticipation and wish to engage in an actual battle grows when they

¹⁸⁰ Jünger 8.1.1915, 12.

¹⁸¹ Jünger 18.3.1915, 16.

¹⁸² Jünger 18.3.1915, 16.

¹⁸³ Defending against the French at Perthes-Tahure. See note in Kiesel 2010, 478 and Schwilk 2007, 100.

¹⁸⁴ He of course does not escape knowing about what the others had gone through, as after his return Jünger notes: "*Priepke lebt noch, sie haben aber furchtbare Dinge erlebt.*" Jünger 22.3.1915, 17.

¹⁸⁵ Jünger 25.3.1915, 17.

march from Prény to the direction of Verdun: “*Wir sollen hier wahrscheinlich einen Angriff gegen | die Höhen vor Verdun unterstützen; hoffentlich kommt es soweit.*“¹⁸⁶

These Jünger’s initial ideas of warfare correspond with the contemporary military and civilian obsession with offensive tactics. This traditional image of war as a moving battle was cultivated to some extent in all nations participating in the war.¹⁸⁷ These images as offence as the best defence were embraced by the military apparatus and accompanied by an emphasis on close fighting in training. This focus had the purpose of enabling men to overcome their peacetime restrictions and kill, and Strachan argues that it lead to a discrepancy between the image of warfare instilled to the soldiers by training and the actual conditions of modern warfare.¹⁸⁸ Supported by literature, this idealised image of fighting man to man was interpreted as a peak of the war experience men were looking for and accompanied with traditional understandings of fighting in chivalric terms.¹⁸⁹

From early on, Jünger’s writing reveals that his notion of the ideal war corresponded with these images. He saw war in terms of active duty, preferably with direct engagement with the enemy. His first experience of an offensive is narrated afterwards into his second diary booklet,¹⁹⁰ and not surprisingly, Jünger commits page after page to describing the movements of the company in the forest near Les Esparges. His writing once again underlines his cool-headedness as he notes that he decided to light his pipe when his company got under the light field artillery fire of the enemy and adds that he would have kept his good spirits (*Humor*) even without the gesture.¹⁹¹ His writing gives an impression that he finds the action fascinating: together with a like-minded fellow they conclude that they have a special pleasure (*besonderes Vergnügen*) to be able to participate in such an open attack in the trench war,¹⁹² a statement confirming the idealisation of open battle.

As some of the already cited entries show, Jünger’s image of warfare is closely tied to his image of an ideal soldier. The constantly resurfacing appreciation of cool-headedness and nerve is apparent from his very first encounter with enemy fire. On his first day in a reserve camp grenades kill nine men and Jünger notes that everyone just laughs where they stand under the fire, although all sink their heads. His writing underlines the courageous attitude of the men, and he already knows how to

¹⁸⁶ Jünger 23.4.1915, 20.

¹⁸⁷ See for example Evera 1984, 59-61.

¹⁸⁸ Strachan 2006, 217.

¹⁸⁹ Bourke 2000, 52-53 and 58-59.

¹⁹⁰ Kiesel’s description of the second booklet presents the suggestion on the basis of different handwriting that the booklet was started in the dressing station and finished in a hospital in Heidelberg. See Kiesel 2010, 483.

¹⁹¹ Jünger 24.4.1915, 29.

¹⁹² Jünger 25.4.1915, 36.

appreciate the irony of war as he notes a shield “funnily hanging” above the place where the men were hit showing the direction to *Granatecke* (Grenade Corner).¹⁹³ The appreciation of a thick-skinned attitude is also evident when Jünger notes on his second day at the front that he did not let grenades disturb his sleep.¹⁹⁴

The core of Jünger’s image of an ideal soldier is courage which he clearly and unashamedly associates with himself. After about a month at the front, Jünger falls asleep on duty, and as a punishment has to stand guard for three hours armed only with an axe. When a non-commissioned officer takes him to the post, they are fired at. The officer disappears somewhere, and Jünger describes how close the bullets flew around him. He retorts: “*Meinetwegen | hätten sie mich auch direkt in den franz. Posten setzen können, mich ärgerte nur der gemeine Kerl, der äußerte: Wenn ihm was passiert ist es ihm recht.*”¹⁹⁵ His brave attitude towards his punishment is contrasted against the actions of others: the non-commissioned officer’s taking cover and the mean comrade’s words, as well as with a couple of other men whom Jünger observes making “a caricature of a patrol”¹⁹⁶ which ends with one of the three men being shot. Jünger suspects that the two returned men did not even try to search for their comrade, even as they were sent to do so, and states his low opinion of the men in sharp terms: “*Vor Angst schissen die beiden Feiglinge, die ihren Kameraden liegen lassen hatten, sich fast die Hose voll: Sie mußten wieder zurück, behaupteten aber, ihn nicht finden zu können, wahrscheinlich sind sie im nächsten Gebüsch liegen geblieben.*”¹⁹⁷

This episode can be seen embodying several central features of a more general understanding of masculine virtues, and it shows that Jünger’s soldierly ideals were rooted in more widely shared notions. First of all, it exemplifies the appreciation of courage and cold-bloodedness in face of danger, a central ideal rooted in the chivalric and aristocratic ideals of earlier centuries that were upheld among other things by the tradition of duelling.¹⁹⁸ Second, the incident shows an appreciation of a sense of duty – Jünger accepts his punishment without complaint. A ‘manly’ attitude towards ones responsibilities and a sense of justice were an important part of the prevalent masculine ideal of the

¹⁹³ “*Oben hing lustig ein Schild: ‘Zur Granatecke.’*” Jünger 2.1.1915, 8. This kind of soldier humour as well as the ironic and humorous style is very typical of him. For a few examples see Jünger 14.4.1915, 19; 14.4.1917, 234; 16.5.1917, 256. Humour was a central tool of the soldiers at the front to deal with the challenging conditions. See Madigan 2013, especially 91-94.

¹⁹⁴ Jünger 3.1.1915, 9.

¹⁹⁵ Jünger 31.1.1915, 15.

¹⁹⁶ “*Nach 2 Stunden schlichen 3 Kerls karikaturenmäßig nach vorn als Patrouille.*” Jünger 31.1.1915, 15.

¹⁹⁷ Jünger 31.1.1915, 15.

¹⁹⁸ Mosse 1996a, 18-19.

time, strengthened by the values of the bourgeois society.¹⁹⁹ The historian Andrew Donson has emphasised that the prevailing masculine ideal in Germany before the First World War was one of “self-control and fatherhood”²⁰⁰ and the solemnity that characterised it was certainly an important part of the contemporary masculinity. Donson argues that this ideal was in stark contrast with the more energetic and aggressive masculinity promoted by adventure literature²⁰¹ that partly appealed strongly to the young men of the time.²⁰² The contrast might actually have added to the appeal of the latter kind of masculinity in the eyes of some young men.

This emphasis on self-control also has an influence on the more military masculine ideals, as it entailed an ability to bear consequences and even pain without flinching. Mosse argues that a Christian ideal of self-sacrifice was incorporated into the military masculine ideal that starting from the French Revolution and continuing throughout the 19th century became a basis of the standard understanding of what a man had to be like. He argues that the citizen armies built up during that time made the military masculine ideal a norm in a way that the earlier centuries had not witnessed.²⁰³ During the French revolution the professional soldiers started to be regarded as honourable citizens instead of a bunch of criminals and outcasts for the first time in history.²⁰⁴ In the German region, the Franco-Prussian War with its nationalistic cause gave a clear-cut form for the ideal of a soldier in service of the nation. Death in battle for the fatherland was consequently deemed as the most honourable service to his country a man could do,²⁰⁵ and thus it is not surprising to find echoes of these sentiments in Jünger’s writing as well.

Finally, Jünger’s writing shows his appreciation of loyalty evident in his contempt towards the soldiers who left their fellow behind. The importance of the camaraderie of the trench fighters is a central issue in much of the literature of the First World War, and consequently Strachan argues that its importance has sometimes been even exaggerated in military theory.²⁰⁶ Apart from the discussion about the meaning of the primary group for the morale of fighting troops, the loyalty of men towards each

¹⁹⁹ Mosse 1996a, 21.

²⁰⁰ Donson 2010, 50.

²⁰¹ Donson 2010, 51.

²⁰² Kustermans & Ringmar 2011, 1782-1783.

²⁰³ Mosse 1996a, 51.

²⁰⁴ Mosse 1990, 17-18.

²⁰⁵ Mosse 1996a, 52-53; see also Mosse 1990, *passim*.

²⁰⁶ Strachan 2006, 212-214.

other was a key part of the masculine ideal evident in the trenches,²⁰⁷ a trait that was influenced by the reliance on others under life threat.²⁰⁸

Jünger's understandings of war as an open battle with direct engagement with the enemy and his ideals of courage and soldierly masculinity include a lot of aspects that have not been discussed yet. Despite the profound nature of his disappointment with his early experiences at war, he does not abandon his initial ideals, and the ways in which he maintains them will be discussed below. Along the way, more examples of these basic ideals will be presented and their different nuances become more visible.

3.2. UPHOLDING THE IDEAS AND IDEALS

On his first morning back at the frontline after being wounded at Les Esparges Jünger himself acknowledges a change in his thinking as he dismisses his earlier search for adventure: „*Heut, wo ich wieder zum ersten Mal im Schützengraben erwache, fällt mir ein, daß ich vor einem Jahr [zum, gestrichen] in das | Heer eintrat, um Abenteuer zu erleben. (Traurig aber wahr!)*“²⁰⁹ Significantly, he does not present an alternative interpretation of his role in the war for himself. The initial interests have not disappeared and Jünger in a very illustrative way continues to write about his “interesting” morning duty with a description of an exchange of shots with a couple of Englishmen. The language Jünger uses is still coloured with his previous attitudes. He describes the shooting as a duel (*Duell*) and fun (*Scherz*) and is disappointed, as they do not kill anyone.²¹⁰ He acknowledges that his original ideas about war are not viable but continues his writing in the same manner as before.

Indeed, a remarkable feature in Jünger's war diary is how he manages to keep up his relatively positive tone towards the war despite the stark contrast between his initial expectations and the realities he faced, including all the difficulties he experiences during his three and half years on the front. There are two central features in his writing that support his positive interpretation of the war. One is

²⁰⁷ Mosse 1996b, 168-169.

²⁰⁸ See for example Ashworth 1980, 155-156.

²⁰⁹ Jünger 6.10.1915, 47.

²¹⁰ „*Heut Vormittag, als ich Grabendienst hatte war es sehr interessant. Von einer Schießscharte aus beobachteten wir in der Sappe vor uns zwei Engländer, die [...] herüberschossen, [...] Wir holten eine Zielfernrohrbüchse und schossen ein paarmal herüber. Die Engländer nahmen das Duell Auf[...] Der Scherz dauerte ungefähr zwei Stunden.*“ Jünger 6.10.1915, 47.

continuity on multiple levels, as first of all, despite the disappointment in his search for adventure and the arising requirements of being in charge after being promoted, there is no fundamental change in his writing. Second, he is also able to stay true to many of his original ideals, such as the appreciation of courage already apparent in his first two diary booklets, and last and perhaps most importantly his conceptualisations of his war experience and his interpretations of the surrounding realities remain strikingly similar throughout the years. These issues are discussed in the following analysis. The other central feature in Jünger's writing is dismissal, which is the topic of the next subchapter.

Starting from the beginning of the third diary booklet and his returning to the front as a junior officer cadet (*Fähnrich*), Jünger resumes almost daily writing. The only remarkable change in the contents of his diary is what regards his new status with its benefits, such as taking a walk when his platoon is digging trenches, and socialising with the officers in the officer casino.²¹¹ The duty in the frontline still bores him after a while, and he is eager to participate in fighting patrols in search of diversion.²¹² His interests remain generally similar, too: he focuses on the happenings in the trenches and discusses patrols, fights and other special events in significant length.²¹³

The continuity of the contents is accompanied by the relatively constant style of Jünger's writing in his more regular entries. King has observed that there are many overlapping and coexisting focuses and perspectives that appear in Jünger's writing, and even contradicting sentiments are evident.²¹⁴ Following Wuthenow's ideas, this can be seen as a typical feature of diary keeping that is often a form of writing that reflects very directly the quickly changing impressions of the experienced reality.²¹⁵ The variation in Jünger's diary reveals of course important dynamics in how his thinking evolves, but continuity is a much stronger tendency in his writing than the changes in focus, perspectives or tones. For example, his tendency to observe and record follows him throughout the diary, as well as his ironic sense of humour.²¹⁶

In addition to these continuities in the form of Jünger's writing, his diary reveals several ideas that follow him along the years. First of all, Jünger's image of himself as a brave and practical soldier that emerges already in his early entries does not waver, although, as will be shown later, it is

²¹¹ See for example Jünger 12.10.1915 and 14.10.1915, 49.

²¹² See Jünger 29.10.1915, 57; 9.11.1915, 59 and 20.12.1915, 67.

²¹³ See especially Jünger 20.6.1916, 119-121; 22.6.1916, 122-125; 27.6.1916, 134-139; 28.7.1916, 159-161; 24.8.1916, 167-170; 12.11.1916, 199-202; 28.4.1917, 244-249; 13.4.1917, 262-265; 29.7.1917, 286-289; 31.7.1917, 295-301; 23.9.1917, 317-322; 1.7.1917, 344-352; 21.3.1918 & 22.3.1918, 375-395; 25.7.1918, 414-417; 25.8.1918, 423-430.

²¹⁴ King 1999, see especially 135-144.

²¹⁵ Cf. Wuthenow 1990, 15.

²¹⁶ On recording see King 1999, 136-135.

sometimes put to a test. For example, his ability to keep his peace and even sleep even under the heaviest fire is a feature he frequently comments on.²¹⁷ As Schwilk and King have likewise noted,²¹⁸ Jünger's diary reveals that he was not a model subaltern, which was partly a result of his independence, as well as his self-image as a hero in making. One very illustrative example of this is his reaction to harsh criticism he got because of too officer-like clothing when he was still a *Fähnrich*:

Ich verfiel meinem Temperament gemäß von einem heiterem Phlegma in kopfhängerisches Phlegma, richtete mich aber bald durch den Entschluß auf, meine Heldenbrust gegen künftige Angriffe von Vorgesetzten mit einer dreifachen Schicht von Gleichgültigkeit zu panzern. Klei mich im Morsch! sagt der Hamburger.²¹⁹

His comment on his own temperament as phlegmatic is very typical of him and his appreciation of his own reported indifference towards adversities recurs often in different contexts.²²⁰ Although his writing sometimes shows signs of hubris,²²¹ he at the same time counters it with certain realism in his evaluations of himself. When he was decorated with the Iron Cross, second class, he was happy but noted:

Zwar habe ich nichts offensichtliches vollbracht, das meinen Mut beweisen konnte, aber wenn auch nicht das ganze Draufgängertum der ersten Zeit da ist, an Kaltblütigkeit und Wagemut habe ich doch wohl eher gewonnen und hoffentlich gibt sich bald die Gelegenheit zu zeigen, daß ich würdig bin, das schwatzweiße Band zu tragen.²²²

His entry reveals that he evaluates himself - and others, as well - by his own standards that do not necessarily rely on the official standards of the German army, although he clearly finds the Iron Cross worth valuing.²²³ In compensation for his loss of some of his original enthusiasm he thinks he has gained in cool-headedness and daring, features that correspond with his image of an ideal soldier.

His self-image as a courageous and apt soldier is not just his own imagination as Jünger was in the end one of the eleven infantry officers serving as company leaders who were decorated with the

²¹⁷ See for example Jünger 24.4.1915, 32; 27.6.1916, 135; 15.4.1917, 235. As an exception to the rule see for example 14.7.1916, 153.

²¹⁸ Schwilk 2007, 100 & 108-109; King 1999, 136.

²¹⁹ Jünger 26.10.1915, 56.

²²⁰ Jünger for example: indifference towards death: 8.10.1915, 48 & 25.2.1916, 90; laid-back attitude towards the threat of the enemy's advances: 28.4.1917, 247; not on him living in a thick-skinned manner above ground despite recurring heavy shelling: 19.10.1917, 325-326.

²²¹ See for example Jünger 19.6.1917, 271.

²²² Jünger 20.4.1916, 101.

²²³ Jünger's valuing of the Iron Cross is in a curious contradiction with the inflation it had suffered even in his own eyes. In his letter to his parents in early 1915 he notes: "In der Front wird es wohl noch manches zu tun geben, der letzte Schuss scheint noch lange nicht gefallen sein, und das Eiserne Kreuz steht auch noch aus, trotzdem fast jeder Trainkutscher eins hat." Jünger to his parents 15.3.1915, 40. Compare also with Mosse's observations on the trivialisation of the Iron Cross in the wider German society. Mosse 1990, 127.

highest German order of merit, Pour le Mérite in the whole German army.²²⁴ The division's commander, major general (*Generalmajor*) von Busse underlined Jünger's courage as a leader when he proposed the young lieutenant as a recipient of this distinction.²²⁵ Jünger's actions recorded in the diary also show his willingness and ability to live up to his ideals, which is another continuous feature of his writing. For example, Jünger writes about several occasions when he volunteers for patrols and storms, or simply *ex tempore* joins others who are going on a patrol.²²⁶ On one occasion when officers and deputy officers are asked to participate in a storm he outspokenly states his appreciation of courage as a reason to volunteer: „*Ich habe mich, meinem Grundsatz getreu, dass der Mut die einzige Tugend des Mannes ist, gemeldet.*“²²⁷

Jünger is also keen to prove his abilities, and he does not lose opportunities for waging war even when it does not involve an opportunity to engage directly with the enemy. He describes occasions of shooting at incautious Englishmen,²²⁸ as well as takes pride in the thought of causing trouble for possible attackers with elaborate underground constructions he has planned for their section.²²⁹ A few weeks after the Somme offensive has become to a halt, a neighbouring platoon gets under fire, and he commands a mortar to fire in order to support them. His writing shows the satisfaction he gets from being able to assume an active role: „*Ich freute mich der Gelegenheit, da Ltn. Wetje in übergroßer Ängstlichkeit jede Schießerei zu vermeiden sucht. So saß er wegen dicker Luft in seinem Unterstand und ich Prefferte nach Herzenlust.*“²³⁰ Contrasting his own courage with the weakness of others smacks of showing off, which admittedly is also a part of his repertoire of proving his courage,²³¹ but in the context of Jünger's other notions the real importance of action to him becomes visible.

Assuming an active role is thus not just bravado. In the light of the citations above it can be said that acting accordingly to his ideals is a crucial part of Jünger's self-image in his diary. Recording action that corresponds with his ideals is also a way for him to focus on the opportunities the war offers, instead of the disappointments he faces. Ashworth, who has written on the trench warfare from the perspective of sociology, sees many practical possibilities for the soldiers to act even under the restricted and bureaucratized conditions of trench warfare and argues that researchers have to pay

²²⁴ Kiesel 2007, 127.

²²⁵ Kiesel 2007, 126-127.

²²⁶ Jünger volunteering: 24.4.1915, 31; 9.11.1915, 59; 20.12.1915, 67; joining others: 13.6.1917, 262; 25.7.1918, 415.

²²⁷ Jünger 25.2.1916, 89.

²²⁸ Jünger 6.3.1917, 221-222 and 16.3.1917, 226.

²²⁹ Jünger 7.7.1916, 150.

²³⁰ Jünger 26.7.1916, 157-158.

²³¹ See for example Jünger 26.1.1916, 81 and 21.3.1916, 94.

attention to these chances.²³² Jünger's writing echoes many of his observations²³³ and even remarks on feeling reassured in a situation when he feels in control of his surroundings.²³⁴ The way in which Jünger pays attention to those aspects of the war that enable him to take control and act, as well as fulfil his ideals, can thus be seen supporting his adapting to the front realities and his coping with them.

Still another continuous feature of Jünger's writing is his holding on to his initial obsession with direct engagement with the enemy. The frustration caused by not being able to experience this kind of fighting until relatively late²³⁵ could have lowered his spirits, but actually the anticipation of the climax of his war experiences sustains his interest towards the war. By looking forward to the still-to-be-experienced greatest battle, Jünger actually feeds his motivation to stick to the war, although in comparison to these ideas of warfare the everyday trench life is sometimes tedious.²³⁶ His boredom is balanced by a pure enjoyment of the war. Looking back to his recent past on his 21st birthday Jünger notes that he can celebrate with no regrets and declares:

Mir macht das Kriegesleben jetzt grade den richtigen Spaß, das ständige Spiel mit dem Leben als Einsatz hat einen hohen Reiz, wenn die allgemeine Lebensführung dabei einigermaßen gün | stig ist. Ich halte für meine Person noch ein Jahr durch, wenn es darauf ankommt. Kommt ein Gefecht, desto besser. Man lebt, man erlebt, man gelangt zu Ruhm und Ehren das alles nur um den Einsatz eines armseligen Lebens. Ich habe wie bei Kriegsbeginn noch immer die Meinung von Mir, als erster²³⁷ des Zuges an den Feind zu kommen. So wollen wir in Gemütsruhe abwarten, was uns der Krieg im 22ten Lebensjahr bringen wird.²³⁸

The ways Jünger conceptualises his experiences reveal much about his ideas and ideals, and there are significant continuities in the way he writes about the war. In the citation above, Jünger describes it as a game with just one poor life as a stake, and regards the benefits worth it: he gets to experience a lot, as well as gain fame and honour in the process. He also sees himself as the first of his platoon to engage the enemy if they were to go to a battle. Jünger's positive expectations from the war in addition to his notions of courage support his later decision to adamantly refuse his father's suggestion to apply

²³² Ashworth 1980, 14-15 and passim.

²³³ See for example Jünger on fear of retaliation 4.1.1915, 9-10; on retaliating 5.10.1915, 46-47; on an improvised truce 12.12.1915, 65-66; on friction between the infantry and the artillery 8.2.1916, 87; on patterned answering to enemy fire 24.6.1916, 127. Compare with Ashworth 1980.

²³⁴ "Übrigens merke ich, daß mein persönliches Gefühl der Sicherheit durch diese Sache [die heftigen Artilleriekämpfe am Anfang der Somme-Offensive. N.N.] gestärkt war. Man kennt die Stellung, alles interessiert einen, man hat den Kopf immer voll, da bleibt zum Angsthaben zu wenig Zeit." Jünger 29.6.1916, 143.

²³⁵ Dating Jünger's first battle with direct engagement with the enemy is a matter of interpretation, as one could of course count his first patrols as such. Nevertheless, speaking in terms of major offensives with actual contact with the enemy, his first battle takes place in December 1917 by Moeuvres near Cambrai. See Jünger 1.12.1917, 344-352.

²³⁶ Jünger 29.10.1915, 57.

²³⁷ Compare also with Jünger 21.3.1918, 378 & 25.8.1918, 426.

²³⁸ Jünger 29.3.1916, 95-96.

for a safer post as an adjutant.²³⁹ The delay of experiencing the coveted battle man to man has also a more practical protective side: more than once he by chance escapes a battle that could have cost his life, as it did for many of his comrades.²⁴⁰

Jünger upholds these images of war in spite of his own experience in his first battle at Les Esparges. The traumatic effects of the battle are omitted from the entries in which he described the battle and his getting wounded; although he describes the horrid state of some of the wounded heading towards the dressing station just like he does, he omits commenting on any of his thoughts or feelings.²⁴¹ The discouraging effects of this first personal exposure to physical trauma become evident only later, when he finishes his second diary booklet with the words on his arrival back to Germany, to Heidelberg: *“Als ich inmitten der Heidelberger Blütenpracht aus dem Zuge gehoben wurde, dachte ich nicht, daß | ich je wieder in den Krieg hinausmüßte.”*²⁴²

Instead of following the tone of a wounded deputy officer who claimed to Jünger that the worst thing with his wound was that he would not be able to rejoin the fight,²⁴³ he thinks that he does not *have to* go back. Against the background of Jünger’s volunteering and his eagerness to experience an actual fight, this final statement presents a degree of disillusionment.²⁴⁴ On the first anniversary of the battle Jünger notes: *„Heut vor einem Jahr war der Tag meiner Verwundung. Ich sehe noch wie wir | in das verhängnisvolle Waldstück vorgingen, uns entgegen kamen blutende, zerfetzte Menschen. Aber noch einmal möchte ich trotz alldem ran an den Feind, koste es was es wolle.“*²⁴⁵ He actively discards the horrendous images of the bleeding, ripped up soldiers and repeats his wish to face the enemy directly.

²³⁹ *“Papa schrieb vom Suchen einer Adjutantur [...]. Ganz abgesehen davon, das[s] dies ein Posten für Etappenschweine, Kavalleristen und andere Kriegsteilnehmer hinter der Front ist, würde mir ein Posten dieser Art geradezu entsetzlich sein, denn man ist doch nur besserer Kammerdiener und Jasager. [...] Außerdem muß ich mal wieder ordentlich Pulver riechen, ohne das bin ich nicht zufrieden.“* Jünger to his parents 15.2.1917. Kiesel argues that Jünger’s fear of a venereal infection that haunts him from late November 1916 until the next summer contributes to his indifference towards life threat and influences his decision. See Kiesel 2010, 535. Although Jünger’s entry on 7.2.1917, 213 supports his argument, Kiesel forgets to take into account Jünger’s general attitude even before the fear of disease appears.

²⁴⁰ Of course the real risks can only be evaluated statistically, and statistics can be applied only in a very suggestive manner on individuals. Nevertheless, as Watson has also noted, luck influenced significantly the coping of the soldiers, as even a single traumatic event could have significant influence. Watson 2008, 35.

²⁴¹ Jünger 25.4.1915, 37.

²⁴² Jünger 26.4.1915, 39. When writing about the first day under the heavy artillery fire of the Somme offensive, Jünger also notes on how he has reacted to the air pressure of explosives ever since the battle at Les Esparges and reveals that the first fight had left its mark on him: *“Ein Krach der Tote wecken könnte. Dann ein gewaltiger Luftdruck, ein Explosionsdruck, von dem man ein merkwürdiges dumpfes Gefühl in der Nase bekommt und gegen den ich seit der Schlacht bei Les Esparges besonders nervös bin.”* Jünger 23.6.1916, 126.

²⁴³ Jünger 26.4.1915, 38.

²⁴⁴ It also hints to a lingering belief that the war could be over quickly. Compare with Jünger 25.3.1915, 17.

²⁴⁵ Jünger 25.4.1916, 102.

A similar episode happens after Jünger gets wounded for the second time, this time by a stray shrapnel shot, in reserve just after being relieved from their position at Somme in Guillemont. In an officer hospital in St. Quentin he hears that his battalion has been destroyed or taken as prisoners in an English offensive. Jünger writes:

Wenn ich an den Verlust so mancher guten Kameraden denke, wird mir doch etwas Wehmütig. Wie durch | ein Wunder hat mich dieser Zufallstreffer [vor, gestrichen] solchem Schicksal entrissen und doch, so seltsam es klingen mag, hätte ich doch gern das Los der Kameraden geteilt und auch über mich den eisernen Würfel des Krieges rollen lassen.²⁴⁶

In a very mild tone he expresses his sadness for his comrades and then recognises the luck he had with his light wound taking him away from the front. Nonetheless, he still wishes to have been given the chance to put his life at stake, too. These lines are another example of conceptualising the war as a gamble, a game. Jünger recognises that his hope to have shared the fate of his comrades might sound strange, but he maintains his image of himself and the war. These kinds of features in his writing combined with the corresponding action Jünger records start to turn his rather vague initial dreams of adventure into much more solid ideas of war and soldierly action. Partly these ideas remain peculiarly unfitting for the context of the industrialised trench warfare.

Exactly this tension between his ideas and the reality becomes visible when he continues his entry with familiar dreams of a fight man to man:

Ich habe schon viel erlebt in diesem größten Kriege, doch das Ziel meiner Kriegserlebnisse, den Ansturm und Zusammenprall der Infanterie ist mir bis jetzt noch | nicht vergönnt gewesen. Den Feind aufs Korn nehmen, ihm gegenüberstehen Mann gegen Mann, das ist etwas anderes als dieser ewige Artilleriekrieg. Darum die Wunde heilen lassen und dann wieder hinaus, noch haben meine Nerven nicht genug!²⁴⁷

Illustratively he describes the artillery war as never-ending and contrasts it with the much more desirable direct engagement with the enemy. Nevertheless, Jünger is able to re-conceptualise the everyday war trench war in more suitable terms, too. Soon after the Somme-offensive had begun with heavy artillery fire on their trenches, Jünger describes how a man in another platoon had fallen and notes on the heroism of the men anticipating an attack under heavy fire: “*Stilles Heldentum im Ausharren, in Erwartung des Gegners trotz furchtbaren Feuers.*”²⁴⁸ Madigan has traced the British understandings of combatant courage during the First World War and noted that the troops put great

²⁴⁶ Jünger 4.9.1916, 185.

²⁴⁷ Jünger 4.9.1916, 185.

²⁴⁸ Jünger 25.6.1916, 129.

importance into the ability to “stick to a hateful task”, to endure the artillery fire repeatedly depriving them of all real possibilities to act.²⁴⁹ Although Madigan’s research focuses on the uses of humour in the way the men expressed their notions of courage, he also shows a more serious appreciation of the endurance as genuinely heroic.²⁵⁰ Jünger’s phrase “*stilles Heldentum*” (silent heroism) mirrors the latter kind of appreciation of the ability to endure.

Translating the fallen man’s death with his skull smashed in a heavy shell explosion²⁵¹ into heroism is a very direct re-conceptualisation of death at war, and Jünger repeats this feat elsewhere. After eight days of constant heavy artillery and gas attacks on their trenches at the beginning of the Somme offensive, Jünger’s appreciation of the endurance of the regiment has deepened. He notes on the appreciation of their lieutenant-colonel (*Oberstleutnant*), who had noted that the men had been even too courageous, hence the heavy losses that Jünger describes. He also tells the story of *Fähnrich* Parl who went to the frontline despite a wounded foot and “paid for his courage with his death”.²⁵² Despite all the losses, he believes that the regiment will stand, come what may.²⁵³ Two days later at the funeral of several fallen officers and men, Jünger says he felt strange (*eigentümlich*) standing at the grave of Parl.²⁵⁴ He muses on the suddenness of death and remembers how enthusiastic the man had been when he first came to the front,²⁵⁵ a feature Jünger must have recognised as familiar.

In a strikingly emotional manner Jünger continues to lament the death and even asks what use it is, but he immediately finds an interpretation that meets the demands of the context:

Ja, da kommen traurige Gedanken, wenn man auf solchen Sarg starrt, den schon die Fliegen umspielen. Wozu, wozu - - - Und doch, der heroische, großartige Eindruck, den dieser unendliche Zug des Todes ausübt, erhebt und stärkt uns Überlebende. So fremd es klingt, hier lernt man wieder Ideale kennen, die volle Hingabe an ein Ideal bis zum grausigem Schlachtentode.²⁵⁶

He sees the death of others strengthening those left behind and finds, once again noting on the peculiarity of the thought, that at war one recovers ideals and a commitment to them until a gruesome death. Jünger’s only hint towards what these ideals might be is his wording “heroic, grand impression” and his writing definitely echoes the more general contemporary re-conceptualisations of death at war.

²⁴⁹ Madigan 2013, see especially 90-94.

²⁵⁰ Madigan 2013, 95-96.

²⁵¹ Jünger 25.6.1916, 129.

²⁵² “[D]er muntere, kleine Parl, der [Buchstaben gestrichen, unlesbar] mit zerschundenem Fuß trotz ärztlichen Protestes in Stellung ging und jetzt seine Tapferkeit mit dem Tode bezahlt hat.“ Jünger 1.7.1916, 147.

²⁵³ Jünger 1.7.1916, 147.

²⁵⁴ Jünger 3.7.1916, 149.

²⁵⁵ Jünger 3.7.1916, 149.

²⁵⁶ Jünger 3.7.1916, 149.

Mosse has studied the construction of the myths surrounding the fallen soldiers of the First World War and shown how the German myth was partly promoted as an answer to the generally deteriorating morale after the frontlines in the west had come to a halt. He claims that the myth could not influence the soldiers,²⁵⁷ but at least Jünger seems to have taken the official rhetoric of a heroic death in self-sacrifice to his own, as he regards the sudden death as the fate of the soldier.²⁵⁸

What makes it easier for Jünger to maintain these kinds of images of death at war is that he can see even his own death in similar terms. In a curious episode from the same time in which Jünger runs literally through gas and shell fire apparently in order to get in touch with his superiors,²⁵⁹ he has a moment of doubt, that he nevertheless turns into embracing the chance of dying a heroic death:

Du bist doch eigentlich ein ganz schlechter Kerl, wenn Du nur nicht zur Belohnung hier ordentlich einen verpaßt kriegst.
Doch der nächste Gedanke: Ach was, man weiter vor, einen besseren Tod | findet man in 100 Jahren nicht wieder.²⁶⁰

This view of the death at war as glorious is in turn easier to uphold, as Jünger is able to see the actual fighting, too, in heroic terms.

As was already mentioned at the beginning of this subchapter, another important re-conceptualisation in Jünger's writing is describing fighting as duels. The idea seems very out of place in the setting of the modern mass warfare, but it was actually a central image in the contemporary German masculine ideals, as duelling did not become obsolete earlier than well after the First World War.²⁶¹ Consequently, it is not surprising to find Jünger writing appreciatively about a bold Englishman with whom they reportedly had a "formal duel" and who cold-bloodedly aimed and shot despite the best efforts of Jünger and his men to outmatch him.²⁶² Jünger, who during the war tried several times to get transferred to the air force, also uses the image of a duel in describing an air battle between two German and an English plane.²⁶³

Patrols are another central form of fighting providing Jünger with chances to prove his courage. The way he writes about patrols reveals how much he appreciated the action and suspense they offered.

²⁵⁷ Mosse 1990, 73.

²⁵⁸ He notes on two fallen soldiers that had just been promoted and died before getting to know it. Jünger names this soldier's fate, *Soldatenlos*. Jünger 1.7.1916, 147 & 3.7.1916, 149.

²⁵⁹ The tactical use of his epic run remains vague, but the result is that he has a short discussion with his superiors and is ordered to return to his men. See Jünger 27.6.1916, 135-137.

²⁶⁰ Jünger 27.6.1916, 136.

²⁶¹ Mosse 1996a, 21-22.

²⁶² "Nachher hatten wir ein förmliches Duell mit einem tollkühnen Engländer." Jünger 8.4.1916, 97.

²⁶³ Jünger 13.2.1916, 88.

His first proper patrol is described in some length, and the entry is once again built cunningly so that he does not reveal any twists of the affair beforehand. Jünger also switches from his regular past tense to the present tense, underlining the excitement, and seeing the possibility of gaining the Iron Cross first class in a bold attack on the English.²⁶⁴ While recounting how they realised that they had strayed from their planned route, Jünger noted on the simultaneous identification with the hunter and the pray: “*Dies war ein Moment höchster Aufregung. In solchen Augenblicken geht der Atem stoßweise, Alle Sinne sind aufs Höchste gespannt, man fühlt gleicherweise das Fiber des Waidmanns und die Aufregung des Wildes.*”²⁶⁵ This kind of excitement is shared by the men waiting in the trenches:

Nach c. 20 Minuten klomm ich mit demolierter Hose über unsern Draht und sprang von unsern Leuten freudig begrüßt in den Graben. Wohlgemut und Bartels waren schon da, nach einer viertel Stunde erschien auch Birkner. Die Leute erzählten, daß sie das Handgemenge sehr gut gehört hätten und mit Handgranaten | schon zur Unterstützung bereit gestanden hätten. [...] Die Teilnehmer meinten alle, daß wäre mal eine schöne Patr. gewesen.²⁶⁶

Although the patrol ran anything but smoothly, ending in a headlong flight under machine gun and rifle fire, the men felt it had been a nice patrol. The joy the men share in their excitement captures the spirit of adventure that Mosse notes is hard to pinpoint in the soldiers notions of the war.²⁶⁷ Jünger does not see their patrol as a duty and even less as work, but more as a venture for obtaining a prisoner and gaining honour – combining a search for adventure to his soldierly ideals. Jünger’s entry on the patrol exemplifies that what Mosse notes on Jünger’s later writings adequately describes his original diary, too, as “Jünger certainly saw the First World War both as an adventure and as a test of manliness.”²⁶⁸ The men who had volunteered to go with him shared at least Jünger’s appreciation of the action, implying that Jünger’s ideas, although sometimes extreme, were not exceptional.

A similar episode happens later, when Jünger recounts his “most interesting war experience thus far”²⁶⁹. Jünger and his platoon are manning an outpost of the *Siegfriedstellung* near Bellenglise, when they notice between 60 to 100 enemy soldiers close by. The situation turns into a fight between the 20 men in Jünger’s command and the much stronger enemy troops, but the Germans manage to force the men of the Indian regiment to retreat.²⁷⁰ This time Jünger also manages to make prisoners, and accordingly the whole affair causes sensation both among the troops who welcome them back deeply

²⁶⁴ Jünger 20.6.1916, 120.

²⁶⁵ Jünger 20.6.1916, 121. Ferguson has also noted on this aspect of fighting. Ferguson 1998, 364.

²⁶⁶ Jünger 28.7.1916, 160.

²⁶⁷ Mosse 1996b, 170.

²⁶⁸ Mosse 1996a, 113-114.

²⁶⁹ “*Heut Morgen hatte ich wohl das interessanteste Kriegserlebnis, das ich bislang gehabt habe.*” Jünger 13.6.1917, 262.

²⁷⁰ Jünger 13.6.1917, 262-265.

impressed²⁷¹ and among the higher command.²⁷² In the following days the area is fought over several times, not always as successfully for the Germans, and although Jünger does not feel good about his last patrol to the site, he calls his earlier experiences adventures: “*Nachts befand ich mich wieder mit Schulz an diesem unheimlichem Stück Erde, an dem ich schon so manches Abenteuer in diesen Paar Tagen erlebt hatte.*”²⁷³

One of the most striking episodes of Jünger pronouncing his ideals is how he writes about his regiment’s tour to Somme. He describes the horrid conditions and the even for the experienced front soldiers exceptionally heavy and constant artillery fire candidly, and the effects of all that on the men manifest themselves in Jünger’s writing about their collective reactions.²⁷⁴ On the front, his platoon is set in a row of huge grenade holes with no proper connection to neighbouring platoons, surrounded by decomposing bodies and their smell. It is no surprise that Jünger’s later writings have triggered Ferguson to describe him as “an almost psychopathically brave officer”²⁷⁵ as – although Ferguson’s expression is rather strong – Jünger’s ability to find something glorious even about his experience at Somme after getting under the enemy fire is indeed astounding:

Jetzt Trommelfeuer auch bei uns. Die Schüsse liegen meist etwas hinter dem Graben. Ein Lärm, daß man kein Wort durchrufen kann. Bautz! Ein eigener Schuß im Graben. Grüne Leuchtkugel hoch. Splitter pfeifen, aber alle Leute stehen wie die Bomben da ist es Lust Soldat zu sein, wenn man in der Hohlwegartigen Mulde Stahlhelm an Stahlhelm sieht und ein aufgepflanztes Seitengewehr neben dem andern blinkt. Verständigung | zur Artillerie machten wir nur mit Leuchtkugeln. Und wie funkte unsere Artillerie!²⁷⁶

Even under the most adverse conditions Jünger is capable of finding his heroic ideals at least partly fulfilled: the readiness of the soldiers in waiting, steel helmet next to other with bayonets blinking, incorporates the fighting spirit he appreciated.

All in all, Jünger manages to both live up to his ideals during the war, as well as uphold them in his writing. In this way, even under adverse conditions, he was able to find his own satisfaction in the situation and see it from a rather positive angle. Jünger’s ability to stick to the positive interpretations of the war is complemented by his choices of what he writes in his diary. In the following subchapter, the way he actively omits perspectives and ideas from his entries is analysed.

²⁷¹ Jünger 13.6.1917, 265.

²⁷² Jünger 14.6.1917, 265.

²⁷³ Jünger 21.6.1917, 272.

²⁷⁴ Jünger see especially 24.8.1916, 167-170 & 25.8.1916, 171.

²⁷⁵ Ferguson 1998, 341.

²⁷⁶ Jünger 25.8.1916, 171.

3.3. DISMISSALS, DENIALS, SILENCES

In addition to actively asserting his own ideals, Jünger's writing shows another way of dealing with the challenges the context of the war poses to his thinking: dismissal. His apparently uncensored way of writing and its richness in details, including even the most unpleasant ones, easily disguises the fact that Jünger does censor himself and silence thought patterns that deviate from the general attitude he is upholding. Although the omissions do not always necessarily result from a conscious decision, they signify interpretation. Anne Rothe, a Germanist who has studied the narrative silences in Willy Schumann's autobiography from the time of his childhood in Nazi Germany, emphasises that the decisions to leave out certain issues have clear function in narratives.²⁷⁷

In Jünger's case, dealing with ideas that emerge in his writing in contradiction to his prevalent notions serves his ability to maintain a positive attitude towards the war. In the following analysis, I will demonstrate this by analysing how Jünger reacts to his doubts arising in regard to the war. Central question is what kind of strategies Jünger uses for doing away with thoughts that contradict his initial ideas and ideals. First, Jünger's more subtle ways of omitting incompatible ideas by refocusing his writing or dismissing disturbing thoughts are discussed, followed by an analysis of his outright self-censorship. Finally, I will discuss the importance of maintaining a viable interpretation of the surrounding reality on the Western Front briefly, as I will elaborate on it in chapter 4.3.

Jünger's first outburst of disillusionment on the 8th January 1915 shows that from very early on he is capable of changing topic when unpleasant thoughts start to emerge in his writing. Instead of continuing to lament his miserable situation and crushed dreams of a different life, he refocuses on what is interesting in the war around him when he returns to his writing.²⁷⁸ Another similar episode occurs a few months after his return to the front, in early December 1915. He is serving as the head of the guard in the village of Quéant and has time to sit by the fire and think. He writes about how one looks out of the window and feels sad when seeing what has become of Northern France and asks where the cosy culture of enjoying life has gone: the lovely food and the evening societies of the notables.²⁷⁹ His answer is that they are gone:

Vorbei! Vorbei, um vielleicht nie wieder zu kehren. An der Front die Dörfer zerstört, die Bäume zerschossen, die Brunnen verfallen, die Felder aufgewühlt und hoch überwuchert. Hier im besetztem Land [das, gestrichen] ein Volk gezwungen zu einer Lebensweise, die es nie kannte,

²⁷⁷ Rothe 2009, 2-3.

²⁷⁸ See again Jünger 8.1.1915, 11-12.

²⁷⁹ Jünger 1.12.1915, 62.

gezwungen das graue Brot | des Krieges hinunterzuwürgen und gezwungen, Kinder zu gebären, die vielleicht nicht in dies Land der Heiterkeit hineinpassen werden.²⁸⁰

Jünger laments the consequences of the war on both the land and the people: villages, trees, wells and fields, all life sustaining, are destroyed and the people are forced to change their lifestyle. In addition to encountering the destruction caused by the war and the oppressing effect of the occupation he fears that he will not be able to travel in France after the war is over and enjoy the wine and joy as he had dreamt.²⁸¹ He sees that there is a stream of blood between him and the French, and he asks if it is blood spilt in vain and just causing grief and suffering to millions of mothers.²⁸² He continues to ask what is the use of all the murdering that is going on:

Lange schon bin ich im Krieg, schon manchen sah ich fallen, der wert war zu leben. Was soll dies Morden und immer wieder morden? Ich fürchte, es wird zuviel vernichtet und es bleiben zu wenig, [ein Wort gestrichen, unlesbar] um wieder aufzubauen. Vorm Kriege dachte ich wie mancher: nieder, zerschlagt das alte Gebäude, das neue wird auf jeden Fall besser. Aber nun – es scheint mir, das Kultur und alles Große langsam vom Kriege erstickt wird. Der Krieg har in mir doch die Sehnsucht nach den Segnungen des Friedens | geweckt. –²⁸³

Jünger's previous hopes of destroying the old building take on new proportions. What does this metaphor entail? In the light of his striving away from his regular life first to the Foreign Legion and then in search of adventure to the war suggests an explanation of his entry referring to a hope to change the old order of his own life. Now he nevertheless begins to suspect that the war will slowly suffocate everything that is great and he admits to longing for the blessings of peace.

Jünger's metaphor of destroying the old building echoes more widely shared sentiments, as Leed's analysis of the language used in the testimonies of the outbreak of the war suggests. Peacetime life appeared as paralysing to many contemporaries,²⁸⁴ an observation that Kustermans and Ringmar have also made.²⁸⁵ Jünger's entry acknowledges his hopes that the war would relieve him from his old burdens, but now the everyday society that he had left behind is seen as something worthy.

Jünger's choice of words, when he asks what the use of all the murdering time and again is, is significant in this regard. In his entry he suddenly writes about the war using the concepts of peacetime society. As several researchers have noted, killing under everyday conditions was and is a severe crime,

²⁸⁰ Jünger 1.12.1915, 62.

²⁸¹ Jünger 1.12.1915, 62.

²⁸² Jünger 1.12.1915, 62.

²⁸³ Jünger 1.12.1915, 62-63

²⁸⁴ Leed 1979, 55.

²⁸⁵ Kustermans & Ringmar 2011, 1781-1782 & 1784-1785.

but killing at war is an exception and the regular norms of society do not count.²⁸⁶ The way Jünger writes about the consequences of war and how he thinks about them in his entry is distinctly different from his constant interest towards war as such and his regular embracing of it as a stage on which he can prove his courage and abilities as a soldier. In his guardhouse musings he evokes the image of everyday life at peace and finds it worthy of longing – an idea in striking contrast with how he breaks his own train of thoughts by reminding himself of his usual approach to the war:

Doch genug der Wachtstubenphilosophie! In einigen Tagen sollen wir neue Gewehre bekommen, das ist ein verdächtiges Zeichen. Eines Tages in unsrer alten Stellung wird's heißen: Alarm! Es geht ins Gefecht, das wird wieder mal gut tun.²⁸⁷

Sharply, Jünger snaps himself out of his musings and dismisses them as guardhouse philosophy. He changes his mode of writing and comes back to his everyday reality by remarking on the new guns they should soon get – a reason to anticipate something to happen. He welcomes the thought of being alarmed and going into battle as it would do good, an evaluation contradicting his own words on longing for peace. He again sticks to his positive image of battle in spite of his unsatisfactory, and to a degree traumatic, experience at Les Esparges. It seems that he suddenly applies a different logic altogether: the inner logic of warfare.²⁸⁸

This logic can be seen working in several ways. There was of course the military apparatus that dictated the setting, which the soldiers had to settle into. With German universal conscription, this was a logic that every male citizen had to accept – or otherwise face both the legal and social sanctions, also during peacetime.²⁸⁹ Since the beginning of the war this apparatus created a world of its own with all the physical settings and social realities needed for sustaining trench warfare. This world was not totally cut off from the civilian world but nevertheless significantly different: it entailed a partial eradication of social hierarchies that was apparent within the ranks²⁹⁰ and simplified and unified the variety of choices available for the men in the trenches.²⁹¹ The most significant difference between life at peace and at war is nevertheless the prevalent attitude towards human and material destruction.

²⁸⁶ See for example: Francis 2013, 234; Strachan 2006, 217; Bourke 2000, 1 and for a more complex analysis of the discontinuities and liminalities inherent in experiencing war see Leed 1979, chapter 1.

²⁸⁷ Jünger 1.12.1915, 63.

²⁸⁸ It was delightful to find Leed, too, writing about war's own logic, as the realisation of the inner logic of warfare apparent in Jünger's writing had followed me from early on. Leed writes about the incomprehensible and uncontrollable nature of war requiring another mode of thinking. See Leed 1979, 36. Here the idea of the inner logic of warfare is applied in a somewhat different manner.

²⁸⁹ Stachelbeck 2013, 107.

²⁹⁰ See for example Jünger to his parents 12.7.1915, 52.

²⁹¹ Cf. Leed's observations on the relief people expressed for the liberation from the choices of civilian life. Leed 1979, 55.

At war, destruction is a contradictory issue. Destroying the enemy is an aim in itself but at the same time losses on one's own side are not wished for. Nevertheless, they can be seen as a necessary evil, just as Jünger sometimes does: "*Was fällt, das fällt, das ist preußisch.*"²⁹² Considered from a peacetime perspective, what is normal in the trench warfare cannot be accepted, and this requires the soldiers to rethink the whole logic of their existence. This rethinking could be painful, even for a soldier as willing to embrace warfare as Jünger. He wrote to his brother Fritz in January 1918:

[... G]egen Abend wurde mir etwas absonderlich – absürbelich – zu Mut, ich glaube gar, daß mich das Heimweh anfaßte. Es gibt Stunden, die ganz und gar verlassen sind; dazu kommt noch der wüste Durchgangsbetrieb, der auf den Etappen-Bahnhöfen herrscht. Das sind Mühlen, in denen das Menschliche zerschroten wird. Ich habe gefunden, daß es in solchen Fällen kein wirksameres Heilmittel gibt als einen langen Schlaf in einem guten Bett. Im Graben, unter den alten Kameraden, wird das dann gleich besser, bis es an einem einsamen Abend doch wiederkommt.²⁹³

The letter shows Jünger's ability to acknowledge the feelings he goes through. His conceptualisation of the train stations behind the lines – that is, the transition from civilian life to war – as something that destroys all that is human is a very rare image in his writing. Nevertheless, Jünger treats his muted feelings and thoughts as an ailment and resorts to the well-tested cure of a long sleep. Among his comrades the troubled feeling vanishes and although Jünger admits that it will return, he is willing to settle back into the inner logic of warfare that dominates his writing without further questions.

Looking away from the real effects of warfare, a choice that Jünger makes in his dismissal of his guardhouse thoughts, is also evident later in different contexts. The way Jünger re-conceptualises death at war was already discussed above but his ability to maintain these conceptualisations is supported in indirect ways. He often refuses to comment on losses or is content to add some generalising comment on death at war.²⁹⁴ On one hand, death rather understandably becomes a banality in the trenches and thus writing about delicious fried potatoes directly after describing the fate of a couple of soldiers who were killed on the same day becomes perfectly possible without any apologies.²⁹⁵ On the other hand, Jünger sometimes comments on his own hardening attitude towards death and mutilation.²⁹⁶

This hardened attitude does not always help him. Several times Jünger faces the consequences of war in a way that does not fit the image of death at war that he cultivates. In early 1916, he visits his

²⁹² Jünger 29.4.1916, 142.

²⁹³ Jünger to Friedrich Georg Jünger 7.1.1918, 110.

²⁹⁴ For a few examples of no commentary see Jünger 19.2.1916, 89; 30.8.1916, 179-180; 21.12.1916, 210 and 14.4.1917, 235. For generalizing comments see for example Jünger 28.4.1916, 140; 9.4.1917, 231 and 9.5.1917, 255.

²⁹⁵ Jünger 11.4.1917, 233.

²⁹⁶ See for example Jünger 7.11.1916, 198; 12.7.1917, 277 & 31.10.1917, 336-337.

military servant who had been wounded a little earlier and notes that it is sad that with the wound on his neck he could only communicate with signs. The man points at another patient whom Jünger knows and who has lost an arm. Jünger comments: „*Der arme Kerl war dem Weinen nahe. ‚Es ist doch hart, ein Krüppel zu sein,‘ meinte er. In einer an | deren Ecke lag der Koch von der 8. Comp., ihm fehlte das Bein.*“²⁹⁷ Jünger does not himself use the word cripple but instead cites the wounded man and refuses to write anything about his own thoughts as he describes the wounded. He nevertheless concludes bluntly: „*Ich war froh, als ich aus dem Elend wieder herauswar.*“²⁹⁸ and omits any further comment on his thoughts about the suffering he is glad to get away from.

Jünger faces another similar experience after his third time being wounded. He describes the other patients in the operating room with detail and as a result of the deterring effect of watching a head operation and a rotten leg wound being painfully cleaned he decides not to hasten his recovery as much as the previous time.²⁹⁹ He faces the real physical risks of warfare other than death: next time he could be crippled for life or need to go through much worse pain than this time with his relatively light wound. His decision to avoid risks by taking his time in recovering is nevertheless short lived. As his wound is not bad enough to send him back to Germany to recover, he changes his mind in order to strive to return to his regiment as soon as possible.³⁰⁰ He is willing to forget what he was reminded of in the operation room, especially when he does not have the opportunity to go home.

One further example of how Jünger deals with the gruesomeness of war when addresses it in his diary takes place when the company he is leading to be deployed in the German *Michaeloffensive* in March 1918 takes a direct hit that reduces his company of 150 men to 63.³⁰¹ He describes the horrid view that meets his eyes, and admits that even he had to take his time to gather his nerves in order to be able to deal with the situation:

Ich will nicht verheimlichen, daß auch ich zunächst vollkommen genug hatte. Ich sprang in den benachbarten Graben und fand dort einen kleinen Teil der Komp. vor. Dort ermannte ich mich wieder [...] und ging selbst an | die Stelle des Unglücks. Einige stießen noch immer die furchtbaren, markerschütternden Schreie aus, einige kamen auf mich zugekrochen und winselten ‚Herr Leutnant.‘ [...] ³⁰²

²⁹⁷ Jünger 1.1.1916, 72.

²⁹⁸ Jünger 1.1.1916, 72.

²⁹⁹ Jünger 15.11.1916, 202.

³⁰⁰ Jünger 25.11.1916, 205.

³⁰¹ Jünger 19.-20.3.1918, 373-374.

³⁰² Jünger 19.3.1918, 373.

Although Jünger does not shy from describing the scene or admitting his own feeling of faintness (*Ohnmacht*), which he tries to fight with swearing,³⁰³ the way in which the sudden, extremely destructive hit is termed an accident is marked. The uncontrollable nature of the event makes it impossible for Jünger to accept getting hit by shellfire as a constitutive phenomenon of warfare, and when he describes his return to the place on the following day, he still calls it “the site of the accident”.³⁰⁴ Watson has noted that sceneries caused by artillery fire could be utterly traumatic to survivors because of the enormous firepower, especially if the victims were their friends.³⁰⁵ Jünger’s writing bears witness to this, as he regards the same number of casualties in battle as regular fare several times,³⁰⁶ but now he clearly cannot accept what has happened to his company.

As the above cited entries show, it would be incorrect to state that Jünger is systematic in his omissions or that he leaves out all negative experiences in his writing. From the third diary booklet onwards he becomes more willing and perhaps more capable of admitting his more unpleasant thoughts. For example, in early 1916 after being relieved from the front he acknowledges danger to himself first indirectly by writing about his worry for his possessions, as his billet is located close to a pioneer troops’ material camp, always heavily targeted.³⁰⁷ On the next day when they indeed experience a heavy bombing of the village Monchy-au-Bois, he nevertheless openly describes the fearful anticipation of a direct hit when he and the civilians of the house huddle in the cellar:

Nun ging es los. ssst-bum! ssst-bum! ssst-bum! bum! bum! | Es war nervenerregend. Einige Schüsse kamen scharf ans Haus, oder schlugen haarscharf darüber weg. Wird die nächste die dünne Wand durchschlagen und uns zu Brei zerschmettern? ssst-bums! Ach! Ein dicker Musiker schreit nach jedem Schuß auf.³⁰⁸

Jünger also admits freely that he has had enough of bombings and decides to look for a better cellar in case of further fire.³⁰⁹ Taking action in order to be better prepared seems to be a way for him of dealing with the stress caused by a life-threatening situation in which there is nothing to be done.

In general Jünger tends to brush away the threat to his own life with a short comment on a close call or with his ironic soldier humour,³¹⁰ as was typical of the British soldiers on the Western Front,

³⁰³ Jünger 19.3.1918, 373.

³⁰⁴ “*Ich brachte also die | Reste der Komp. unter und begab mich sofort an die Unglücksstelle von vergangener Nacht.*” Jünger 20.3.1918, 374.

³⁰⁵ Watson 2008, 28.

³⁰⁶ Compare for example with Jünger 4.9.1916, 185, when he notes on the fate of his whole battalion that had either been killed or taken captive.

³⁰⁷ Jünger 3.2.1916, 85.

³⁰⁸ Jünger 4.2.1916, 85.

³⁰⁹ Jünger 4.2.1916, 85 and 86.

too.³¹¹ Nevertheless, it is not always easy: one of the most striking self-censored entries in his diary is one and a half pages of text and perhaps a drawing erased and blackened unreadable in the middle of the entry of 28th of December 1915.³¹² On the left side of the blackened areas are two drawings, first a black cross within a square, then a small circle with what looks like a six within it and last a skull within a black square under which the exclamation “memento!” is written.³¹³ After the blackened area the entry continues:

Als ich von diesem furchtbaren Schrecken noch zitternd, nach dem Unterstand von Pook und Plak³¹⁴ zustrebte, platzte bei der Kirche ein ganz schwe | res Shrapnell, das einen Pionier bis zur Unkenntlichkeit auseinanderriß und [aus, gestrichen] eine Salve von Splintern durch die Weißbuchenhecke schleuderte, an der ich eben langging. Doch was war das gegen den eben gehabt Schrecken? Un jeu d'enfant!³¹⁵

These lines imply that what Jünger has censored is a close call – but what made the experience so shocking that Jünger describes it as a terrible scare and censors it is impossible to tell. As King, too, notes, this gap is in stark contrast with Jünger's ability to describe extreme scenes without any trouble elsewhere in his diary.³¹⁶ It is also impossible to ascertain when the censorship took place.³¹⁷

King concludes: “One can only surmise that this mutilation of text is indicative of a moment of critical instability in Jünger's psyche, betokening the strength and depths of the pressures Jünger was under, bursting once more the illusion of distance created by the discipline of writing.”³¹⁸ His conclusion is important, as the censorship certainly creates a crack in Jünger's narrative. The break nevertheless implies that in the text there was something that Jünger did not see fit to be included in the narrative at the moment of censoring. If the censorship took place during the war, the text might have betrayed thoughts that Jünger considered to be against the self-image he wanted to cultivate. The diaries provide evidence for these kinds of reasons behind self-censorship from March 1918.

³¹⁰ See for example Jünger 5.10.1915, 46; 17.12.1915, 67; 26.6.1916, 134; 6.7.1916, 149 & 14.4.1917, 234.

³¹¹ Madigan 2013, 92-93.

³¹² Kiesel notes that the drawing might have been a skull, but as Jünger was profound in his censoring, nothing certain can be asserted about the possible contents of the pages. See Kiesel 2010, 499-500.

³¹³ Jünger 28.12.1915, 71.

³¹⁴ According to Kiesel's note the names are not certainly readable. Kiesel 2010, 500. *Leutnant* Pook is nevertheless mentioned again several times. See for example Jünger's 8.2.1916, 88.

³¹⁵ Jünger 28.12.1915, 71-72.

³¹⁶ King 1999, 152.

³¹⁷ King discusses this difficulty in the context of another of Jünger's self-censorships. See King 1999, 151.

³¹⁸ King 1999, 152.

Jünger has censored parts of two successive entries from the time before the large German ‘Michaeloffensive’ in which his regiment took part on the front between Bullecourt and Noreuil.³¹⁹ This time Jünger has written another text over the parts of the original writing he wished to cover up and this time most of the original text as well as the second covering text remained readable. The first censored lines read: “*Vielleicht ist bald ein Tod im Ansprung gegen den Feind noch nicht das Schlechteste. (La chute des ch., la gorge, les [ein unlesbares, mit e endendes Wort])*“³²⁰ He has tried to erase the evidence on his thoughts about a possible death in battle, here portrayed not as simply glorious and honourable but accompanied with the words in French (the fall of falls, the maw) calling forth images of an end that swallows the individual up instead of perpetuating his existence in glory.

The following entry a week later begins in Jünger’s regular style, as he describes their march to Brunemont where they await for being deployed closer to the front and sent into the battle.³²¹ What he has censored are a few comments on his thoughts:

Diesmal gehe ich eigentlich mit dem Gefühl größter Wurstigkeit in den Kampf, gewissermaßen unbeteiligt an meinem eigenen Leben und Tod.
Wenn ich abfahren müsste, tut mir das Scheiden nur von 2 Dingen weh: Familie und Natur.³²²

He claims to be indifferent towards his own death, but continues that because of his family and the nature parting from this world would be painful. From the words he has written over these lines it becomes evident that Jünger considers admitting the pain as a private issue and moreover that it would have been better to remain silent:

Das geht aber niemand anders etwas an. Deshalb wird es hier überkleistert. Amico pectus, hosti frontem. O si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses
Quatsch Quatsch Mist Unsinn erledigt Beati possidentes Aut ommnia aut | nihil. Capito? Si Signore“³²³.

If the censorship of 1915 has reasons similar to its 1918 counterparts, it could be about wanting to erase traces of the idea of dying an insignificant death or of admitting the pain that thinking about one’s own death causes. This is mere speculation, though. What can be said is that Jünger’s writing over the latter censored lines shows strong contempt towards his own words that he labels as nonsense.

³¹⁹ Kiesel 2010, 571.

³²⁰ Jünger 11.3.1918, 369.

³²¹ Jünger 18.3.1918, 369-370.

³²² Jünger 18.3.1918, 370. The page break that is in the original diaries has not been marked to the censored text, but is probably somewhere between the last few words, as in the text that is written over it is marked before the last four words.

³²³ Jünger 18.3.1918, 370-371.

Moreover, he asserts that all or nothing is what he has to be after – all or nothing referring perhaps to finally experiencing the great battle he has been imagining so often.

The silences, omissions and censored parts reveal as much of Jünger's thinking as his clear reconceptualisations and explicit statements. Paying attention to them is important, as the more evident features undermine the more subtle ways of interpreting reality in writing, and focusing on content is of course much easier and more obvious. Despite their more implicit nature, omissions are an active part of writing and thus the evidence Jünger's silences provide is important. It clearly indicates that the diary is a filtered interpretation of the experiences it recounts and not a direct representation of them.

Moreover, Jünger's silences mostly support the ideas and ideals that his more overt forms of writing show. Although Jünger's struggle for controlling his experience and transforming it into a coherent narrative by writing is not always successful, as we have seen in this analysis and as King has also argued,³²⁴ it is nevertheless remarkably successful, taking into account in how stark a contrast to the realities of trench warfare Jünger's original ideals were. Thus it is no wonder that Jünger's struggle over his ideals in his experienced reality is evident in his diary, too.

The issue of coping under the conditions of industrialised warfare is central here. A core claim of Leed's research on combat and identity in the First World War is that the scale of the shelling and the limited ability of the soldiers to act challenged soldiers' ability to process their surrounding realities to the extreme. "The war experience is an ultimate confirmation of the power of men to ascribe meaning and pattern to a world, even when that world seemed to resist all patterning", Leed writes and captures something very central.³²⁵ The sheer scale of the destruction created by modern industrial warfare challenged the front soldiers' ability to cope. Watson has studied the beneficial effect of maintaining an overly positive image of the war and he argues that it was an efficient coping mechanism.³²⁶ These kinds of interpretations emphasise the need of the soldiers to somehow process the war. The inability to somehow interpret the surrounding chaos and life-threat in a meaningful way would have threatened their mental coping.

Moreover, despite the possibility to make sense of the world of trench warfare in terms of the inner logic of warfare, that logic was to a significant extent incompatible with the prevalent norms of peacetime society. Even if some of the soldiers and other contemporaries found the civilian life

³²⁴ King 1999, 152-153 and passim in chapter 5.

³²⁵ Leed 1979, x.

³²⁶ Watson, 2006.

undesirable, as Leed along with Kustermans and Ringmar have argued,³²⁷ it had been the world in which they had learnt to operate. War was another state, and thus challenged the existing logic of their regular life and the basis of their previous existence. The ability to explain war in some acceptable terms to oneself is a central issue for soldiers, and military sociologists have observed that ideologies and notions of a battle's righteousness and proportionality affect the combat morale of troops.³²⁸

This was equally true for the German soldiers on the Western Front, as Lipp's analysis on the notions of endurance in the German army implies. She argues that enduring was the only concept through which the soldiers who had survived heavy battles could attach meaning to their experiences of death and suffering.³²⁹ The challenges warfare on the Western Front posed to the soldiers were indeed fundamental, and thus the way in which soldiers interpreted their surrounding realities was of great importance. With regard to Jünger's diaries, this insight underlines the significance of his ability to keep to the more positive conceptualisations of war and to control his more critical and darker thoughts. By writing in this way, he enables himself to translate his experiences into a language that supports a more positive interpretation of his surrounding reality. This in turn serves his ability to cope with both the setbacks in regard to his initial ideas of warfare and the unavoidable shocks and stresses of the reality of the war. In short, Jünger's mode of writing is such that it clearly serves his survival throughout the years.

³²⁷ Leed 1979, 55 & Kustermans & Ringmar 2011, 1781-1782 & 1784-1785.

³²⁸ Sinivuo 2011, 35-38.

³²⁹ Lipp 2003, 139.

4. ADAPTING IDEAS AND IDEALS FOR SURVIVAL

As has been shown this far, Jünger holds on to his initial ideas and ideals and affirms them in his writing both directly and indirectly, but it would be misleading to claim that this would represent the full dynamic of his writing. On the front his ideals evolve. In response to the surrounding realities and his place within the military apparatus, leadership and duty emerge as important yardsticks. This chapter explores how these new ideals manifest themselves and how Jünger adapts them and to them in his writing. Chapter 4.1. addresses the question what was his developing leadership ideal like. In chapter 4.2. I answer the question how Jünger's leadership ideal relates to his earlier ideas and ideals of war and being a soldier. Finally, in chapter 4.3. the wider implications of this study are discussed. How does a more general view on Jünger's diary writing enhance our understanding of the individual soldier on the Western Front? The core of this discussion is arguing for an understanding of Jünger's writing as an activity supporting his intellectual survival.

4.1. IDENTIFYING ARISING IDEALS OF LEADERSHIP

When Jünger returns to the front after recovering from his first wound, the change in his status to a *Fähnrich* is visible immediately. On their way to the regiment to Douchy³³⁰ he is in charge of a reserve platoon, and he needs to use his military leadership skills, as they get under enemy artillery fire. Jünger admits that the reunion with the grenades was not pleasant but despite reportedly not having his nerves in full control makes use of his previous experience in finding cover.³³¹ Nevertheless, the fire does not cease, and he considers it wiser for the platoon to move on. Jünger ensures that he makes a show for his men: „*Als das Schießen kein Ende nahm, zündete ich mir, allen sichtbar, stehend eine Cigarette an und befahl, bis zu einer Hecke vorzugehen und dort mit geringem Abstand Deckung zu nehmen.*“³³²

Despite his own fear, Jünger makes sure that his men see that he can still take the situation easy by lighting a cigarette standing. This assuring comes a little too late and one of the reservists breaks out of the line. Jünger reacts quickly according to his new status as a platoon leader:

³³⁰ Douchy-lès-Ayette, about 15 kilometer south from Arras. See note in Kiesel 2010, 487.

³³¹ Jünger 25.9.1915, 42.

³³² Jünger 25.9.1915, 42.

Er lief und lief, ohne auf meine Befehle zu hören. Ich rannte hinter ihm her und drohte zu schießen, bis sich der Kerl besann, und in die Linie zurückkehrte. Dann ging ich an der Linie entlang und redete mit den Leuten. Ich ließ | nach der Mitte sammeln und hielt noch eine Standpauke über den Mangel an Aufmerksamkeit beim Schwärmen im Allgemeinen und über den Kerl in Besonderen.³³³

Jünger, who later writes that at that time he would have preferred to participate in the war as a simple infantryman only responsible for himself,³³⁴ appears to be able to embrace his new duties quickly. His own action satisfies him and his comment on his men's reactions reveal that the gratification is derived from being an example: „Dies war das erste Mal, daß ich einen Zug im Feuer kommandierte und ich merkte den Leuten auch an, daß mein Benehmen ihnen imponiert hatte.“³³⁵

In comparison to his earlier more self-centred search for action his writing reveals now a new perspective on the war in fulfilling duties and being an exemplary leader. The question how these new ideals of leadership and duty apparent in the episode just cited manifest themselves is in the focus of this subchapter. First I will discuss Jünger's sense of duty – or rather lack of it – in relation to the nation and the military apparatus, after which I will address the emergence of his leadership ideal. Subsequently, I will analyse the core features of the ideal, including courage and appreciation of military skill, and finally demonstrate that a highly individualistic leadership ideal develops in Jünger's diary.

The military apparatus is one of the most important settings in which Jünger interprets the realities of the Western Front. In comparison to his youthful dreams and ideals that inform his interpretations of this reality from within his own individuality and his personal experiences, this setting is a markedly outside influence on him. As the military apparatus is the frame in which Jünger writes, it is important to highlight some key features it entails. First, the German army – just like any of the armies engaged in the First World War – was a strictly hierarchical structure. This hierarchy was set up along the lines of social divisions, and social status was inseparable from military status in the German army throughout the war.³³⁶ This was true even at the end of the war, although the requirements for the officer candidates were gradually dropped and changed significantly as the heavy losses in the officer corps forced the armies to adapt.³³⁷ Jünger, who belonged to the upper middle-class

³³³ Jünger 25.9.1915, 43.

³³⁴ Jünger 1978 [1920], 39-40.

³³⁵ Jünger 25.9.1915, 43.

³³⁶ Watson 2008, 115-116.

³³⁷ Watson 2008, 120-121; Meteling 2008, 30-31.

and to the fraction of society with a secondary education,³³⁸ was a likely candidate for an officer career, and accordingly was regarded as one of the “better elements” by his officer early on.³³⁹

In accordance with his social background, in his letters to his parents before being promoted Jünger constantly writes about desiring a better military status and reports on his chances for a promotion.³⁴⁰ Interestingly, his own later words on having wished to remain a simple soldier contradict strongly his letter stating that his promotion lifts him finally above the worst mediocrity.³⁴¹ Being promoted signified not only power gained by status and actual position of command,³⁴² but also better benefits, as the officer corps was a privileged group throughout the war with generally better pay, rations and quarters, as well as better chances to be promoted or get leave.³⁴³ These benefits are frequently visible in Jünger’s writing, too,³⁴⁴ and his writing shows that he knew how to appreciate them.

Significantly, the officers were also a group with responsibilities and not just a privileged stratum with no real function. Especially in the German army the junior officers’ importance increased with time, as the high casualty rates among officers led to de facto promotions through lower officer ranks being assigned also to posts previously held only by their superiors, for example as company commanders.³⁴⁵ In addition to the demands on the officers in tactical leadership, they also had to be able to take responsibility for their men’s wellbeing,³⁴⁶ a task that required them often to negotiate between the demands of the higher command and the realities of the front. This was by all means not always easily accomplished, as the German higher command tended to refuse to accept the possibility that the troops would not work as part of the military machine without limit.³⁴⁷

³³⁸ Donson 2010, 22-23. Only seven percent of the male children had the means to continue full-time schooling after the age of fourteen and Jünger belonged to the less than two percent who completed an *Abitur*, the final exam required for university admission.

³³⁹ Jünger 6.1.1915, 11.

³⁴⁰ For example Jünger to his parents 6.2.1915, 33; 3.4.1915, 42; 29.6.1915, 48-49; 30.6.1915, 50.

³⁴¹ “*Ich kann Euch die freudige Mitteilung machen, daß ich zum Unteroffizier befördert bin. [...] Na, endlich ist die größte Gemeinheit überwunden; meine Röcke wandern zum Schneider und kommen goldbetreßt zurück.*” Jünger to his parents [8.8.1915], 54.

³⁴² Watson 2008, 110.

³⁴³ Watson 2008, 124.

³⁴⁴ For further examples see Jünger 25.12.1915, 69; 11.3.1916, 92; 9.6.1916, 113; 25.12.1916, 211; 26.5.1917, 259-260; 14.8.1917, 306; 14.2.1918, 367.

³⁴⁵ Watson 2008, 130-132. This is what happened to Jünger and many of his fellow *Leutnants*, who were assigned as company leaders. See for example Jünger 19.5.1917, 257; 30.5.1917, 260; 1.6.1917, 261; 5.12.1917, 352-353. See 611-> for proper references.

³⁴⁶ Watson 2008, 122-123.

³⁴⁷ See Lipp’s analysis of the language of the German higher command, as well as her illustrative example of how the communication malfunctioned between a Bavarian infantry regiment and its higher command. Lipp 2003, 93-96 & 99-105.

For the officers duty and leadership thus went hand in hand, and in a sense they can be seen as synonyms. An officer was a leader by default and his duty was to show example and leadership towards his men: the ideal officer as described in contemporary German military instructions was devoted to his duty and made full use of his person in order to influence his men.³⁴⁸ Consequently, it is somewhat artificial to separate conceptually between duty and leadership in discussing Jünger's diaries, but as his focus is much more on a leadership ideal as such without any explicit reference to duty, it seems sensible to discuss the two separately. In the following duty will refer to a sense of obligation and responsibility towards the military organisation, the German *Kaiserreich*, or the nation, while leadership is understood more in terms of Jünger's individual ideals that of course are influenced by his social and cultural setting.

A curious and important feature in Jünger's diary is the lack of outspoken nationalism.³⁴⁹ His comments reveal sporadically and often indirectly some sense of national pride: for example, he from time to time pays attention to a memorial on the war dead of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 or other national symbol³⁵⁰ or rejoices in the German successes.³⁵¹ Combined with his very individual point of view this absence of national ethos in his diary is in stark contrast with his later conceptualisations of the war in strongly nationalistic terms.³⁵² The only clear remarks on his relationship to the *Kaiserreich* are two incidents when he remarks on the cost of ordering barrage in vain³⁵³ and when he cites the *Kaiser's* lauding of his regiment at the beginning of his sixth diary booklet.³⁵⁴ As is demonstrated above and as Kiesel notes, Jünger did not go to the war with a nationalistic ethos: more personal issues spurred him.³⁵⁵ In that sense it is not surprising to find him remaining mostly silent about his relation to the nation in his diary.

It is nevertheless clear that Jünger has a sense of duty instilled in him through the military apparatus. After a two-month additional officer-training period in Croisilles in 1916 he remarks:

³⁴⁸ *Field Service Regulations (Felddienst Ordnung, 1908) of the German Army. 1908.* [1909], 1-2. A military instruction booklet that Jünger was urgently asking his parents to send him on 4.3. & 6.3.1915, 36-37.

³⁴⁹ See also King 1999, 138-139.

³⁵⁰ Jünger 27.1.1915, 14; 24.9.1915, 42; 24.10.1915, 56; 13.5.1916, 104; 25.9.1917, 322. See also Jünger to his parents 29.1.1915, 31.

³⁵¹ Jünger 24.4.1915, 28; 25.8.1916, 171; 21.3.1918, 376 & 386.

³⁵² See Jünger's notes at the end of his diary written between November 1918 and spring 1919 (Kiesel 2010, 594.): Jünger [not dated], 432-434. Also Lunn 2005, 725-726 and 734.

³⁵³ Jünger 25.6.1916, 131 & 26.8.1916, 172.

³⁵⁴ Jünger [not dated], 146. This citation relates to the battle at Perthes, in which Jünger did not participate as he was commanded to the officer aspirant course. See Kiesel 2010, 515. Jünger also writes about *Kaiser's* thanks to his parents. Jünger to his parents 6.3. & 9.3.1915, 37-38.

³⁵⁵ Kiesel 2010, 597.

Wenn ich ein Facit ziehe, hat der Kursus für mich einige nicht zu unterschätzende Vorteile gehabt. Ich habe reiten gelernt, etwas in Taktik aufgefaßt und eine Ahnung bekommen, welche allgemeine Anschauungen ein Offizier eigentlich haben soll.³⁵⁶

Although these kinds of general considerations of what an officer must be are more often than not hidden by Jünger's emphasis on his individual perspective, they do underlie his more personal ideals for an officer. In this way Jünger's sense of duty and his ideals of leadership are interlinked.

The leadership ideal that he adheres to at the front suggests itself to Jünger already in officer training in Döberitz near Berlin after recovering from his first wound. He criticises the self-important officers' sons to his parents and states his contempt towards those who might not live up to their words in clear terms.³⁵⁷ He realises that the challenge of leading men under the threat of death requires great courage and notices that he enjoys it: "*Das Militärische beginnt, mir Spaß zu machen, ich fange an zu begreifen, was für ein Teufelskerl man sein muß, um Hunderte in den Tod zu führen.*"³⁵⁸ Although he just criticised those who boast, in his typical way he underlines his own capability as he continues by commenting on the other's reactions to himself: "*Außerdem merken doch alle, daß sie einen alten Krieger vor sich haben, der auch kommandieren kann.*"³⁵⁹ Apparently Jünger regarded his abilities worth the statement.

For Jünger, the ability to lead his men through the most intense fire is also a source of gratification on the front. On an incident when he has to find new quarters to his staff and lead them there during a heavy shelling of the village of Fresnoy near Vimy where they are located, he notes:

Ich [...] mußte auf unser Haus zurennen, wo ein Kirchturmhoher Einschlag den anderen ablöste und zwischendurch die 30,5 cm mit riesenbreiter, rotbrauner Wolke auseinander krachten. Man sah richtig, wie die Häuser | vom Erdboden verschwanden, bald stürzte hier ein Giebel, bald fiel dort eine Wand ein, oder die Sparrengerüste flogen durch die Luft, um die Dächer der Benachbarten Häuser abzumähen. Es war ein grandioses, aber nicht ungefährliches Schauspiel. Rechts und links vom Dorf wanden sich Infanteristen durch die verschiedenartigsten Einschläge nach vorn. Welche Lust eine Truppe durch solches Gelände zu führen. Da zeigt sich der wahre Soldat.³⁶⁰

Jünger's "real soldier" is again characterised as one able to act in spite of danger, and he evaluates also others in these terms. He remarks on one of his fellow *Leutnants*:

³⁵⁶ Jünger 16.6.1916, 118.

³⁵⁷ Jünger to his parents 5.7.1915, 51.

³⁵⁸ Jünger to his parents 5.7.1915, 51-52.

³⁵⁹ Jünger to his parents 5.7.1915, 52.

³⁶⁰ Jünger 28.4.1917, 248.

Boje, mit dem ich in diesen Tagen wieder | stark gesumpft habe, ist heute als Komp.-Chef abgesägt, und Zugführer in der 7. Comp. geworden. Man mag von Boje halten, was man will, er ist fähig mit größter Ruhe eine Komp. im Gefecht zu führen und darauf kommt es doch jetzt schließlich an.³⁶¹

Although he strongly associates this kind of cool-headedness with himself, it is a trait he respects in others, as well.

Generally, Jünger appreciates interesting and challenging positions, with the prospect of having a chance to prove his own abilities, and during his time in Fresnoy, where he is positioned as a reconnaissance officer, he is actually bored, although he admits that his life is also comfortable.³⁶² His appreciation of the practical skills and holding one's nerve in a tight situation is evident in several instances, and incorporated in the character of the experienced, "old" front soldier. For example, on one of the patrols following Jünger's initial success against the Indian troops he notes approvingly: "*Nur die alten Krieger saßen wieder, die Knarre in der Hand, am Waldrand und laurten.*"³⁶³ A shared sense of pride derived from experience is visible also in a chance meeting with a familiar non-commissioned officer in Flanders. They share the opinion of their position that it is not suited for the inexperienced: "*Wir drückten uns die Hand und stellten fest, daß dies eine Ecke nur für ganz alte, im Pulverdampf ergraute Krieger wäre.*"³⁶⁴

Jünger's appreciation of skill before status echoes the widely shared contempt towards the staff officers at the backlines. Watson argues that the 'officer hate' that manifested in the German army during the war was not a general suspicion toward the officer corps as a whole but rather a mistrust between the active front soldiers – including their officers – and the staff officers.³⁶⁵ This mistrust and contempt derived to a large extent from the markedly lesser danger the staff officers were exposed to in comparison to the troops and officers at the front.³⁶⁶ Jünger shared these sentiments in his diary when he writes on a planned storm with heavy artillery preparation near Douchy:

Bezeichnend ist, daß dieses Unternehmen nur von Offizieren geleitet wird, die hinten sitzen. Also sind wir Frontschweine hier vorn gut genug, um uns zusammenschießen zu lassen, geht in

³⁶¹ Jünger 19.5.1917, 257.

³⁶² "Das Leben scheint ganz gemütlich zu sein, da Alles sich eigentlich von selbst regelt und ich nur auf die Allgemeine Ordnung und das Zusammenwirken achten muß." Jünger 15.4.1917, 235. Compare with boredom: „Bis jetzt habe ich noch nichts zu Tun gehabt.“ Jünger 17.4.1917, 236 and 19.4.1917, 238: „Trank abends solo aus langer Weile eine Pulle Sekt und legte mich ziemlich betüpt zu Bett.“

³⁶³ Jünger 19.6.1917, 271.

³⁶⁴ Jünger 28.7.1917, 288.

³⁶⁵ Watson 2008, 134-135.

³⁶⁶ Cf. Watson 2008, 135 and Lipp 2003, 119-120.

unserm Abschnitt mal eine Sache vor sich, wo das [Eiserne Kreuz, erste Klasse N.N.] zu holen ist, dann sind andere Herrschaften an der Reihe.³⁶⁷

Even later on he sees it as a typical feature of the army that the front soldiers get to do the dirty work while others get the thanks.³⁶⁸

Jünger harbours similar contempt towards those officers who shirk their duty and avoid danger: *“Immer dasselbe Bild: ,große Verminderung der Chargierten während einer Gefechtshandlung.“*³⁶⁹

His criticism is especially strong against the higher command the members of which he often regards as undesirable intruders in the frontline. He describes a peaceful position in the *Siegfriedstellung* near Bellenglise as a “real convalescent home for old warriors”³⁷⁰ but adds, that there is a backside as the visits of the superiors are more frequent:

Ein böses Übel weisen derartige unbeschossene Stellungen ja auf, das ist der häufige besuch von Vorgesetzten, die ja dann bekanntlich alles besser wissen. Ach wenn sie doch nur so häufig nach Guillemont und anderen schönen Stellungen gekommen wären.³⁷¹

The point of his criticism lies in the observation that the senior officers have not the experience of the front soldiers but still act as if they knew everything better.

Jünger’s leadership ideal is thus one of practical experience and of demonstrated courage and nerve. For much of his time on the front he does not underline the special importance of the officers and puts more weight on the general courage of the soldiers as a group. During his officer career he nevertheless learns to see, how men trust their officers to be in control of any situation and turn to them to look for help and guidance in difficult situations:

Es ist übrigens ergreifend, wie sich die Leute in solchen Lagen an den Offizier klammern. Das ist eigentlich einer der schönsten Augenblicke, dieses gläubige Vertrauen des Mannes auf die Überlegenheit des Offiziers über die Lage. ‚Herr Leutnant, wo sollen wir hin?‘ ‚Herr Leutnant, zu Hilfe.‘ ‚Herr Leutnant, ich bin verwundet.‘ ‚Wo ist Leutnant Jünger.‘ In solchen Momenten Führer sein mit klarem Kopfe, heißt der Gottähnlichkeit nahe sein. Wenige sind auserlesen.³⁷²

Jünger notes on the pleasure he takes in leading in rather strong terms: he feels god-like and chosen. Although the citation is one of the places in Jünger’s diary in which his ego seems to swell out of proportion, it is also a clear sign that he actually appreciated his position as a leader. It also implies the

³⁶⁷ Jünger 25.7.1916, 156.

³⁶⁸ Compare with the following: „Na, die Etappe weiß es in diesem Kriege ja immer besser als der Frontsoldat, der kann den Mist ausbaden, die Lorbeeren weden schon andre erleben. Schluß!“ Jünger 21.7.1918, 410.

³⁶⁹ Jünger 18.4.1917, 237.

³⁷⁰ „Es ist wirklich eine ideale Stellung, so ein richtiges Erholungsheim für alte Krieger.“ Jünger 20.5.1917, 257.

³⁷¹ Jünger 20.5.1917, 257.

³⁷² Jünger 19.6.1917, 271.

importance of the relationship of the officer and his men, making visible the interaction between the ranks, in addition to the omnipresent hierarchy and command chain.³⁷³

Towards the end of Jünger's diary his view on the role of the officers nevertheless increasingly emphasises the importance of the individual officer. In his last diary booklet written in a hospital in Escaudoeuvres after his last battle, he places most worth on the individual: „*Ich versuchte, meine Komp. etwas in Ordnung zu bringen und begann mit dem Ausbilden einer Stoßgruppe, Nach meiner Alten Erfahrung, daß Kriegserfolge | nur vom Einzelnen errungen werden, alle Anderen nur Material und Feuerkraft vorstellen.*“³⁷⁴ The same attitude is re-emphasised a little later as he describes his last battle and describe how he met a company with its officers, or rather – as he notes – vice versa: “*In einem Hohlweg am Westrande Favreuil stieß ich endlich auf die 5. Komp. mit Lt. Schläger und Höhle mann (oder umgekehrt, denn an diesem Tage machte ich wieder vielfältig die Beobachtung, daß das moderne Gefecht nur durch den Offizier gemacht wird, nur wo ein Offizier steht, wird man auch Mannschaften im Kampfe finden).*”³⁷⁵ In his final account Jünger sees the individual officer as the crucial element in the war and regards everyone else as supporting material.

Jünger, who initially expressed a will to find an adventure in war but who had to dismiss it as a fantasy, ends up as a front officer taking pride in his courage and ability to command even under the heaviest fire. His final, highly individualistic leadership ideal develops from its earlier, milder forms that rather emphasise the courage and the cool-headedness of the leader in addition to his influence on the group. This kind of more imposing leadership ideal is slightly surprising, especially what comes to the terms in which it is put. It contradicts strongly Jünger's lamenting of the infantry's role as expendable cannon fodder that becomes frequent towards the end of his diary.³⁷⁶ Nevertheless, as will be shown in the following analysis, Jünger's leadership ideal is rooted in his other ideas and ideals about war, and his initial individualistic ethos for going to war actually serves the development of the last, more extreme forms of the leadership ideal. In short, for Jünger, the action as a courageous leader becomes a new form of adventure.

³⁷³ Watson 2008 has relevant discussions on the relationship between the officers and the rank and file. See especially 108-114.

³⁷⁴ Jünger 29.8.1918, 421. In the last diary booklet he describes his experiences between the 1.8.-22.8.1918 in a single entry with no separate dates. This citation refers to a period after the 16.8.1918.

³⁷⁵ Jünger 25.[Probably 29.]8.1918, 425. Regarding the correction to the date see Jünger's note on 29.8.1918, 420 and Kiesel 2010, 586. From the 23.8.1918 onwards he has separated the entries of the last diary booklet with dates.

³⁷⁶ See for example Jünger 21.7.1918, 410; 23.7.1918, 412; 27.7.1918, 418.

4.2. ADAPTING THE NEW IDEALS – ADAPTING TO THE NEW IDEALS

Jünger's entries on his experiences in command imply that assuming the role of a leader fits his ideas and ideals quite well: he finds pleasure in showing his courage and actively waging war. The way he evaluates the leadership at the front mirrors his image of an ideal soldier and also incorporates his ideas of what war should be like. In this sense there is a strong continuity between Jünger's initial ideals and the arising ideals of leadership. In the following, I will analyse this continuity that manifests among other things in his adaptation of courage for the purposes of leadership and his rather constant self-image. I will also draw significant parallels between Jünger's initial search for adventure and his later aspirations to fulfil his leadership ideal.

One of the most central ideals apparent already in Jünger's early writing is courage. During his officer career, he several times considers how honourable a task is in regard to how challenging and dangerous it is,³⁷⁷ and initially deems also the post of a reconnaissance officer as undesirable:

Mir wurde mitgeteilt, daß ich in den bevorstehenden Kämpfen einen Spähtrupp zu führen hätte. [...] Mir liegt ein solcher Posten nicht besonders, ich feure lieber in gefährvollen Augenblicken eine Truppe durch zurschautragen persönlichen Mutes zum Kampfe an. Aber es ist eine Auszeichnung, und mein Vorträger Gipkens, hat sich in den Septemberkämpfen das E.K.I durch diesen Posten erworben.³⁷⁸

He underlines that he would prefer to lead men to battle by showing his own courage, but comforts himself with the thought that he might have a chance to be decorated with the Iron Cross, first class, and later with a captain's (*Hauptmann*) opinion that the task is „very honourable“³⁷⁹. This emphasis on honour acquired through proving his courage is central for Jünger's self esteem as an active front officer – and as courage for him was a core feature of an ideal soldier, there is a straightforward link between the two ideals.

For Jünger, proving his courage was of utmost important for his self-image as a cool-headed and apt soldier, but also for maintaining his exemplary role as a leader. Sinivuo refers to modern studies that have shown that a well-trained military unit may be able to function efficiently even without a leader. He nevertheless emphasises that good leadership is crucial for the unit cohesion and thus the

³⁷⁷ *“Ich habe den ehrenvollsten Auftrag für übermorgen, ich muß nämlich mit meinem Zuge den Ausgang von Guillemont halten.“* Jünger 23.8.1916, 166 & *“Ich hätte natürlich viel lieber selbst vorn aufgeklärt, als hinten reitenden Briefträger gespielt.“* Jünger 26.10.1917, 330.

³⁷⁸ Jünger 26.10.1916, 192.

³⁷⁹ *“Brixen meinte noch, ich hätte einen sehr ehrenvollen Posten erhalten.“* Jünger 28.10.1916, 193.

unit's ability to act.³⁸⁰ Watson argues in relation to the First World War that the officer's capability in battle had a great influence on the troops' ability to act and control their emotions under life-threat and that the contemporaries appreciated it.³⁸¹ Jünger describes exactly such an event of putting his personal courage into use in order to encourage his men when he is leading them back from their position at Guillemont in Somme, and they get into a shrapnel shelling:

Ein Shrapnell schlug keine zwei Meter neben mir und grade dieses war ein Blindgänger. Der Dreck überschüttete mich. Hier war eine Mustergelegenheit, den einfluß des Offiziers auf die Leute geltend zu machen. Ich holte den Füs. Peper, der sich in ein Granatloch geworfen hatte, heraus, schnauzte uns entgegenkommende Kerls an, schrie nach hinten, hielt Leute zurück und brachte die Sache wirklich in Ordnung. Durch ein Wunder kam mein Zug heil nach Combles | herein, während alle anderen Verluste hatten.³⁸²

He manages to get his platoon under control and against all odds they have no losses on the way.

The ideals of courage Jünger was holding to were thus actually perfectly compatible with the tasks of a front officer. What comes to his search for active fighting and his image of himself as the first one to storm the enemy lines, Jünger's position as an officer provided chances for fulfilling them to an extent, as well. As already discussed earlier, as an officer Jünger has the opportunity to assume an active role, and in leading patrols and storms he has even more opportunities to engage with the enemy. The developing infantry tactics of the German army that especially from the 1916 onwards had started to emphasise flexibility in both defence and offensive tactics³⁸³ actually supported Jünger's aspirations. He was commanded for a course on leading a storm-troop in July 1916³⁸⁴ and among other operations led a storm of an English post in the summer 1918. Jünger was nevertheless not dazzled by his position as a leader of the storm, as he criticised heavily the tactical uselessness of the whole enterprise.³⁸⁵

Jünger's individual leadership style also developed in accord with his initial ideals, as two separate incidents illustrate especially well. In Flanders in summer 1917, he is commanded to lead his company to strengthen the defence of a threatened position near Langemark and energised by his commander's praise³⁸⁶ he commands the company to advance:

Als das Feuer etwas nachgelassen hatte, gab ich Befehl zum Antreten. Kaum war ich etwas herausgekommen und vielleicht 20 m vorgesprungen, als eine schwere Granate höchstens 10 M |

³⁸⁰ Sinivuo 2011, 118-119.

³⁸¹ Watson 2008, 110-111.

³⁸² Jünger 27.8.1916, 175.

³⁸³ Meteling 2008, 38-39.

³⁸⁴ Jünger 31.7.1916, 162.

³⁸⁵ Jünger 22.7.1918, 410-412. See also the following entry.

³⁸⁶ „*Endlich mal jemand, der einen frischen Eindruck macht, ' bekam ich noch als Zuckerpille auf den Weg.*“ Jünger 29.7.1917, 287.

neben mir einhaute [...]. Ich merkte aber, daß weiter vor das Feuer gar nicht mehr so schlimm war.

Als ich 200 m vorgekommen war, sah ich mich um. Kein Mensch hinter mir. Das ärgerte mich ungeheuer.³⁸⁷

He is the only one who manages to advance through the fire, a situation frustrating him but in perfect accordance with his self-image – even though he does not appreciate it in his account of the situation. Finally, five men manage to follow him and he is able to take at least them with him to the front, his sense of duty implicit in his words.³⁸⁸

Another incident showing how Jünger appreciated action and how he incorporated it to his leadership happened during his last battle in Favreuil near Bapaume, when he tries to call for volunteers to find a route for the company to advance, but as just two men present themselves, he leaves alone.³⁸⁹ On his tour he runs into another company, and considers the orders they have:

Hptm. v. Weyhe hatte angeordnet, daß 5. und 8. Komp. in vorderer, 6 in zweiter und 7. in dritter Linie stürmen sollten. Daß dies nicht eingehalten werden konnte, war mir schon aus dem Grunde klar, weil ich von der 6. und 8. nur einzelne Leute gesehen hatte. Ich beschloß also, ohne mich lange um Staffellungen zu bekümmern, in alter Frische 'ran zu gehen.³⁹⁰

Partly for practical reasons, as some of the companies consisted momentarily of just a few men, Jünger decides to take the lead in “old briskness” heedless of the commands they have. As the three quotations above show, with his approach towards leadership Jünger has a chance to live up to his ideals of courage as well as of direct engagement with the enemy. Even if not in the way he expected, in leadership he actually finds the adventure he was looking for when he left to the front.

Jünger's appreciation of the individual leader and his abilities echo notions significant in the German army at the time of his last diary entries. The historian Wencke Meteling notes in her article on the German and French regiments on the Western Front, that although the emphasis on the aristocratic and person-centred officer ideal started to wane and was with time updated by a more practical and functional ideal, the heroic image of the front officers was retained.³⁹¹ She argues that this was a result

³⁸⁷ Jünger 29.7.1917, 287.

³⁸⁸ „Endlich sprangen 2 Mann aus der Staub- und Feuerwand heraus. Dann wieder einer, dann noch 2. Diese 5 Mann liefen hinter einen kleinen Erdwall und blie | ben dort liegen. Alles Rufen und Pfeifen nützte nichts. Die kostbare Zeit verging. Etwas mußte ich doch mit vorbekommen. Ich lief im Feuer zurück und zwang die 5 Kerls mitzukommen.“ Jünger 29.7.1917, 287.

³⁸⁹ Jünger 25.8.1918, 425.

³⁹⁰ Jünger 25.8.1918, 425-426.

³⁹¹ Meteling 2008, 40-41 & 43.

of the German Third Supreme Command emphasising efficiency and technology,³⁹² but Strachan has on the other hand observed that the morale of the troops was also regarded crucial by the Hindenburg-Ludendorff command. The individual's determination was also emphasised. This emphasis on the abilities of the individuals was visible for example in the training of the troops for the 1918 offensives. The responsibility for it rested on the shoulders of the individual officers who were also to be leading the troops in battle.³⁹³ Strachan argues that the lack of uniform tactics was an important reason for this,³⁹⁴ but it also corresponds with the more general appreciation of the worth of the individual leader.³⁹⁵ The more general context thus also supported Jünger's aspirations to an extent.

Jünger's successful action as a front officer and thus his ability to stick to his ideals was supported by more concrete and personal reasons, too. His acceptance of the inner logic of warfare and his continuous interest towards the war supported his ability to act. He also had several successes as an officer, such as the fight with the Indian troops as well as a storm of an English trench in Moeuvres near Cambrai resulting in his company making more than a hundred prisoners.³⁹⁶ He also faced relatively few incidents that were so overwhelming that they broke his ability to interpret them according to his ideals. In other words, luck was on his side. Jünger also gained the appreciation of both his men and his superiors, as is evident throughout the diaries.³⁹⁷ With these kinds of supporting elements in his war experience, Jünger's leadership ideal, as well as his positive image of warfare, become more understandable.

Of course, the realities of the trench warfare were such that it would have been very unlikely that Jünger, who went to the war in search of a different life in addition to adventure, would not have been disappointed. His search for an independent, free life somewhere far away recurs in his war diaries even later on. On a spring evening in 1916, he sits at his desk as usual and strays into dreams:

Die Frühlingssonne weckt jetzt Knospen und Blüten an allen Wegrändern und dazu manch krause Gedanken. Hier steht viel junges Blut, dem Tode geweiht schon heut oder morgen. Und weit hinten winkt das | Leben mit tausend Freuden, mit tausend Genüssen. Wie mögen jetzt in den Straßen der Großstädte tausend strahlende Lichter die Frühlingsnacht zu freudigen Festen beleuchten.

³⁹² Meteling 2008, 41.

³⁹³ Strachan 2006, 220.

³⁹⁴ Strachan 2006, 220.

³⁹⁵ Cf. Watson 2008, 108-109.

³⁹⁶ Jünger 1.12.1917, 344-352.

³⁹⁷ See for example Jünger on the appreciation of his men 4.6.1918, 399 & 18.6.1918, 404 and his superiors 23.10.1916, 188-189; 22.12.1916, 210-211; 27.12.1916, 211; 2.1.1917, 212; 17.1.1918, 363. See also Jünger to his parents 5.8.1917 on the respect of his men.

Und weiter, viel weiter hinten leuchtet das blaue Meer, blenden weiße Segel, starren rote Felsklippen. Da lässt sich im Schoße des Orients träumen im weißem Häuschen unter schlanken Palmen, den Blick aufs blaue Meer.³⁹⁸

His thoughts stray from the war into all the possibilities of the life outside the world of the trenches and he continues his dreams of the orient with dreams of Africa: of someone resting in the shadow while black people work in the tobacco and cocoa fields.³⁹⁹ His dreams of another life are still there, and they on this occasion take the form of a very leisurely moment in the sun, while others work. Jünger nevertheless, in a familiar way, counters his own dreams by noting that the war has its own attraction:

Jedenfalls, sollten wir den Krieg überleben, werden diese stille Unterstandsstunden in der Erinnerung gar manchen Tag voll Schmutz und Arbeit aufwiegen. Es hat einen stillen Reiz, wo jeder Tag sein Opfer fordert, ruhig weiterzuleben. Manchmal komme ich mir vor wie der Verbrecher, der unterm Galgen noch den Schaum vom Bier pustet, weil er seiner Gesundheit nicht zuträglich ist. –⁴⁰⁰

Here, his image of the war is once again significant. On one hand he focuses on the allure of living under the constant awareness of death hovering at one's elbow, but on the other hand, he pointedly sees dirt and work as a crucial part of the war. At first glance this notion of the war as dreary work is counterintuitive in the sense that one would expect the constant dying and the horrors of war to be the side of the war that would most plague a soldier. Nevertheless, regarding death and pain as irrelevant was a crucial part of Jünger's ideals of courage, and moreover, his dreams of a free life made the drudgery inherent in trench warfare certainly even less tolerable.

Nevertheless, also in this sense Jünger was lucky, as he was promoted. The officer corps with their benefits and different duties was in a much better position than their men and had significantly more power over their own situation than the regular soldiers, for example through a better dugouts and a chance to choose one.⁴⁰¹ Jünger thus enjoyed to an extent the benefit of being his own master and especially in the position of a company leader he felt he was the ruler of his realm.⁴⁰² Jünger did not find in the trenches the equal of the coveted free life in Africa, but resigned to the actuality of the war: he wrote to his brother in summer 1917 that they just have to bear it, although they are far from their dreamlands.⁴⁰³ Nonetheless, he did find a life that was significantly different from his school time, and

³⁹⁸ Jünger 11.3.1916, 92.

³⁹⁹ Jünger 11.3.1916, 92.

⁴⁰⁰ Jünger 11.3.1916, 93.

⁴⁰¹ Lipp 2003, 116 & 119-120.

⁴⁰² "So bin ich wieder für drei Wochen Hergott im Kleinen." Jünger to his parents 24.2.1917.

⁴⁰³ "Es freut mich, daß du an ferne Länder denkst. Damit hat es aber noch lange Zeit, und wer weiß, ob solche Einblicke uns je zuteilt werden. Der Brand flackert höher, und alles hat sich so fest ineinander verbissen, daß keiner vom anderen sich

as an officer he also to an extent had a chance to take his life into his own hands in command of his troops and in search of active fighting.

Jünger did find the war even outside heroic action worth experiencing. Not much after his above cited dreams of far flung places he writes that he would like to go on a leave, but wonders, if he will not later miss the rough trench-life among men:

Man weiß aber nicht, ob man vielleicht später an dies rauhe Leben unter Männern nicht mit einem Gefühl zurückdenken wird: Ja damals war das Leben zwar rau, aber einem festem Zweck geweiht und sorgenfrei. Der Krieg hat ja auch seine friedlichen Stimmungen. So heute | abend, wo aus einem Unterstand Töne einer Okarina weich in die milde Luft fließen und kaum ein Gewehrschuß die Feierabendstimmung stört. An die Grabenwand gelehnt, die Pfeife im Munde, träumt hier einer von irgend etwas, dot sitzt eine Gruppe auf dem Postenstande und plaudert über dies und jenes. Alles ist einfach und natürlich.⁴⁰⁴

He emphasises that everything in the trenches is simple and natural, and he continues by contrasting their purposeful existence to the wild life with drinking and women that one could have led in the big cities.⁴⁰⁵ His words ring with surprising conservatism, which nevertheless derives most likely from his earlier unpleasant experiences of wild nights with his school comrades,⁴⁰⁶ as otherwise Jünger's diary shows no scruples about drinking with his fellow officers as long as he keeps himself out of trouble.⁴⁰⁷ In striking contradiction with his previous image of a peaceful life and the welcoming feasts he imagines in the cities instead of the despicable drunkenness that is now depicted in his diary.⁴⁰⁸ The emphasis on the natural life among men echoes his initial dreams of getting away from school and the bourgeois life and interestingly ignores the strict military hierarchies and the pomp he sometimes even ridiculed.⁴⁰⁹

The importance of a shared, clear purpose (*fester Zweck*) is central in Jünger's description of trench life, and something that Jünger sees himself missing later on. Seeing the life in the trenches as purposeful is a very interesting notion in Jünger's writing, as his words imply a longing for meaningful agency that he fears losing after the war. The way in which Jünger describes the life at the front as free of sorrows (*sorgenfrei*) moreover resembles his initial image of warfare as a desirable liberation from the burdens of his previous life. As has already been mentioned, some contemporaries viewed the

mehr trennen kann. Deshalb müssen wir fern von jenen Wunderländern hier aushalten." Jünger to Friedrich Georg 8.6.1917, 101.

⁴⁰⁴ Jünger 27.7.1916, 158.

⁴⁰⁵ Jünger 27.7.1916, 158.

⁴⁰⁶ See Kiesel 2007, 48, as well as notes on the issue in Kiesel 2010, 475 and 525.

⁴⁰⁷ See for example 15.-26.1.1916, 81; 2.-6.11.1916, 196-197; 18.1.1917, 212; 17.8.1917, 308; 27.1.1918, 364.

⁴⁰⁸ Jünger 11.3.1916, 92.

⁴⁰⁹ See for example Jünger to his parents 29.10.1915.

modern society as an entity having no clear directions,⁴¹⁰ and Jünger's appreciation of the simplicity of life at the front accompanied with the appreciation of the sense of meaningful agency contains traces of these notions. His entry also echoes similar hopes of restoring agency that other contemporary young men harboured before the war⁴¹¹.

Moreover, Jünger underlines here the exclusively masculine nature of the trench community. At the time of the First World War even the regular civilian society was much consisted of societies that were for men only,⁴¹² and in that sense the military community was not in such a sharp contrast to the peacetime society. Thus it is no wonder that Jünger sees the trench community as simple and natural. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the masculinity of the community also underlines the absence of women from the world of trench warfare. Jünger's attitude towards women was not fundamentally hostile, as he mostly writes about his hostesses in neutral or even positive terms⁴¹³ and even admits that visiting a certain Maguerite cheered him up.⁴¹⁴ After his last battle he nevertheless does remark on the unpleasantness of the female presence:

Jedesmal, wenn man verwundet in ein Lazarett kommt, fällt man in die Hände der Schwestern. Im Allgemeinen empfinde ich den Wechsel vom männlichen zum weiblichen Wesen unangenehm. An der Front, wo man nur | von Männern umgeben ist, hat Alles Tun einen zielbewußten, zweckmäßigen Charakter ohne Phrasen und Getu, so daß (wenigstens mir geht es so) man das weibliche Wesen als unangenehmen Gegensatz empfindet.⁴¹⁵

Although he is ready to make an exception for the catholic sisters, whose serenity pleases him,⁴¹⁶ Jünger sees the female society as an unpleasant counterpart to the uncomplicated life among men. After almost for years of holding to ideals of military masculinity, it is hardly surprising that Jünger's sentiments turned towards this kind of conclusion.

Mosse has noted that underlining the obviously masculine nature of the military in the context of the Napoleonic wars in Germany had staged the men as the protectors of society with an ideal moral posture of courage, strength and control.⁴¹⁷ Jünger's writing echoes these sentiments, although in Jünger's diary fulfilling these masculine ideals is presented as a very individualistic project. In his aspiration to fulfil his leadership ideal by proving his courage and military prowess he finds

⁴¹⁰ Leed 1979, 55-56.

⁴¹¹ Kustermans & Ringmar 2011, 1781-1782.

⁴¹² See for example Mosse 1996b, 168.

⁴¹³ Jünger 28.10.1916, 193; 22.12.1916, 211 & 10.7.1917, 276.

⁴¹⁴ Jünger 23.7.1917, 281.

⁴¹⁵ Jünger 10.8.1918, 431.

⁴¹⁶ Jünger 10.8.1918, 431.

⁴¹⁷ Mosse 1990, 26-27.

satisfaction, and in multiple ways is able to find fulfilment to his initial ideals. His position as a front officer and his arising leadership ideals did not significantly challenge his understandings of what was worthy of a soldier. Even less did they challenge his notion of warfare and this was despite the realities of the trench warfare that sometimes posed serious obstacles to his aspiration to engage directly with the enemy.

The way in which Jünger was able to hold on to and maintain his ideals in his writing is a remarkable phenomenon that contradicts the recurring accounts of the soldiers' as mere victims of war at the Western Front.⁴¹⁸ His diaries also evidence that the utter disillusionment typically featured in the popular image of the First World War⁴¹⁹ was not shared by everyone. Instead, Jünger's writing reveals another side of the war experience – that of survival, action and adapted ideals. The significance of recognising this phenomenon that is already apparent in some of the literature on the war experience of the First World War is the focus of the following sub-chapter, and some more generally applicable findings of the current research are also discussed.

4.3. WRITING FOR INTELLECTUAL SURVIVAL

As has been shown in the analysis of this study thus far, the ability of an individual soldier of the First World War to re-conceptualise his war experience in terms suitable to his own ideas and ideals was sometimes remarkable. Jünger's case illustrates both the need and the ability of an individual under adverse conditions to assume power over their own understandings and interpretations of reality. The existence of the need, in Jünger's case, has been shown in the analysis of the instances when he reacted to arising thoughts that contradicted and challenged his prevalent patterns of thought. These challenging thoughts were sometimes even so disturbing that they had to be censored outright. The ability to control one's thoughts, on the other hand, has been demonstrated by examples of how Jünger interpreted situations he faced in the war and recorded action that corresponded with his prevailing ideas and ideals. In this sub-section the implications of Jünger's case will be discussed in relation to

⁴¹⁸ See for example Smith's criticism of this view. Smith 2007, 7-8.

⁴¹⁹ Compare for example with the image of war in Delbert Mann's 1979 classic movie *All Quiet on the Western Front* based on Erich Maria Remarque's novel. Mann 1979. Although the movie does depict different aspects of the front experience, it is nonetheless a classical story of the illusions of the society turning into disillusionment in the trenches.

wider phenomena, such as combat morale and motivation, and the notion that Jünger's writing served his intellectual survival will be presented.

Writing in general is a very suitable medium for assuming power over one's thinking, as it orders the boundlessly unfolding thoughts and impressions inhabiting an individual's mind into a structured, often linear and rationally ordered whole. This happens partly through the rules of language as such, but also in response to different conventions of writing.⁴²⁰ As Vatka has shown, diaries may have different purposes⁴²¹ and the purpose defines the conventions of writing to an extent,⁴²² and in Jünger's case documenting can be seen as his dominating mode of writing. Nevertheless, not only the text in itself or its form is important. Lejeune argues, that diary is primarily an activity instead of a text and sees the process of diary keeping (whatever it is like in an individual case) as a way of life. For him the text that is produced is a by-product.⁴²³ As these arguments exemplify, both the form and the contents of a diary are a product of a process with multiple influences at work, making interpreting any diary a complicated task.

Even if the analysis of a diary could be done on multiple levels and in many different ways, the focus of this study on one individual's response in his diary to the challenges posed by war to his ideas and ideals is fruitful. Jünger's case contributes to understanding the complexity of the question why men fought⁴²⁴ in the First World War despite all the circumstances that made it a feat that seems sometimes inhuman. I emphasise the need to understand the question because finding satisfying, more widely applicable answers to it is challenging. It is actually impossible to draw them from one man's diary, as I agree with Watson that generalising is impractical even on the basis of letters and diaries of a hundred soldiers.⁴²⁵ Nonetheless, taking an individual to the focus and thus shedding light on an aspect of the question is also relevant. The recent discussions about the experiences of the soldiers of the First World War have been going on for decades and more contributions have been constantly made across the international academic community,⁴²⁶ but instead of having covered already everything, they

⁴²⁰ These claims are not made strictly in relation to the postmodernist language theories. Nevertheless, I regard the insights of these theories significant, as they – among other things – pay attention to the restrictions language in itself sets on what is possible to write. Especially relevant this becomes nevertheless through the social context. For example Tosh 2006, 194-196 emphasises the importance of context and discourse for historical research instead of embracing the post-modern theories of language.

⁴²¹ Vatka 2005, 75-77.

⁴²² Vatka 2005, 77-119.

⁴²³ Lejeune 2009, 31 & 153.

⁴²⁴ Both Ferguson and Watson pose this question in their works. Ferguson 1998, 339 & Watson 2008, 44.

⁴²⁵ Watson 2008, 7-8.

⁴²⁶ Please see chapter 2.1. for the more detailed discussion of the literature.

inspire a feeling that many fruitful perspectives are still left unexplored, like the one chosen for this study.

This study deals with – put in one way – the power of personal written accounts in dealing with adverse conditions that challenge an individual’s original ideas and ideals. This is especially interesting in the context of the First World War that has so often been regarded as a conflict into which nations and individuals drew with high ideals but were faced with harshly sobering realities.⁴²⁷ Thus looking at an individual case helps us to see what kind of intellectual tools there were available in order to deal with this challenge. In this case these tools are applied in writing, but as written accounts are a significant part of the evidence we have for historians to use, it is all the more important to pay attention to how thinking unfolds in writing.

The soldiers’ interpretations of the First World War have been of great interest to researchers in the more recent history of warfare. How the reality of the war was understood had a significant influence on the soldiers, as Leed has observed. His emphasis on the soldiers’ ability to ascribe meaning to their surroundings is imprinted with a strong sense of their fragmented and threatened existence,⁴²⁸ resulting in his conclusions being interpreted by Watson as a claim of the soldier’s not being able to process their reality.⁴²⁹ Watson himself argues that men were able to interpret their surroundings in an overly positive light in order to cope. Some of the manifestations of this phenomenon were very tangible, such as holding to amulets or rituals that were believed to provide protection in battle.⁴³⁰ What is nevertheless common for both Leed and Watson is that they underline the importance of paying attention to how the soldiers interpreted their realities and this is exactly the underlying logic of the analysis of this study.

Smith echoes this argument by emphasising the ability of the soldiers to “impose some form of empowering order on the chaos around them.”⁴³¹ It was certainly not an easy task, but as Watson fittingly states, for the soldiers it did not seem as distorting the reality: “[... H]istorians suffer from their own professional ethos, which encourages them to view the horrors [of the Western Front] as

⁴²⁷ For example Verhey and Smith have observed this phenomenon. Verhey deals with the myth of the ‘Spirit of 1914’ in Germany by analysing how this myth was built and used for political purposes. Verhey 2000. Smith notes on the metanarrative of the First World War as tragedy and points towards the interpretations of the soldiers as victims of a fate they could not control. Smith 2007, 8.

⁴²⁸ Leed 1979, 123-138 and passim.

⁴²⁹ Watson 2006, 248.

⁴³⁰ Watson 2006, see especially his analysis on soldiers’ rituals 259-261. Compare also with Madigan’s observations on using humour in support of resilience. Madigan 2013.

⁴³¹ Smith 2007, 11.

objectively as possible. Soldiers, whose occupational demands were quite different, were far less keen to perceive their surroundings objectively.⁴³² This freedom – or rather this need – to interpret the surrounding realities in a beneficial light was according to Watson’s study a psychological response to the conditions at the front.⁴³³

Following this line of thought, Jünger’s case implies that diary writing could support coping at war. This sustaining side of Jünger’s writing is especially evident in the way he deals with thoughts that might have shaken his interpretation of the surrounding realities, but the way he sticks to his ideas and ideals is also important, as it provided him with a sense of comprehension and continuity. This protected him for most of the time against the sense of life at war being absurd, which according to Kustermans and Ringmar was a widely shared experience.⁴³⁴ As has been argued above, the way Jünger deals with the challenges posed to his understandings is throughout an active, although not necessarily fully conscious process. Recognising the active nature of asserting one’s ideas and ideals by writing resonates with Lejeune’s argument about diary writing primarily as an activity. He underlines that the result of this activity is not necessarily obvious,⁴³⁵ and this open-ended nature of the diary is visible in Jünger’s writing with all its inconsistencies, but despite this his writing often reacts to the surrounding realities.⁴³⁶ In this way, Jünger’s diary writing is an activity in interaction with the realities of the war, and as those realities challenged his ideas and ideals, his writing consequently often deals with these challenges.

As Wuthenow has demonstrated, the diary form often merges different motives, such as learning to know oneself, preserving memories or defending and even controlling oneself. He underlines that this combining of various motives makes the diary a medium through which existence in general may become more bearable.⁴³⁷ This kind of understanding of diary writing as an activity supporting individual’s coping is central to the study at hand. When combined with the idea of the intellectual tools, the use of which has been observed throughout this study, these two ideas can be understood as parts of a single phenomenon: intellectual survival through writing. The term ‘intellectual survival’ has been used in very different meanings elsewhere,⁴³⁸ but presenting them is not important for understanding the phenomenon at hand. The way I use the term here refers to the necessity of

⁴³² Watson 2006, 261.

⁴³³ Cf. Watson 2006, 247-249 and *passim*.

⁴³⁴ Kustermans & Ringmar 2011, 1786.

⁴³⁵ Lejeune 2009, 31.

⁴³⁶ Cf. the analysis above as well as King 1999, 125-129.

⁴³⁷ Wuthenow 1990, 26.

⁴³⁸ For two very different examples see Plesu 1995 and Bell et al. 1998.

upholding sustainable understandings of the surrounding reality in order to survive under adverse conditions.

Understanding Jünger's writing as an activity supporting his intellectual survival is an interpretation of his diary that is not apparent in his own writing. He does not often comment on his diary keeping, and even when he does, he does not reflect on his purpose of writing.⁴³⁹ Thus in one sense, this interpretation is based on a counterfactual argument. The alternative to Jünger's upholding his ideas and ideals and his resultant positive attitude towards the war is some sort of a hypothetical diary bearing witness to a deep disillusionment and loss of sense of coherence that could have resulted from his initial disappointments. Instead of ending up in this kind of destructive writing, Jünger's real diary exemplifies a very successful interpretation of his war experience – successful referring here to the inner coherence of his interpretation instead of any evaluation of it.

Jünger manages to find fulfilment to several of his initial aspirations through the interpretations he formulates in his writing. This can without any resorting to counterfactual arguments⁴⁴⁰ be seen as a process that supports his positive attitude toward the war. With this attitude, Jünger was well equipped to face the adversities his war experience included, as it was accompanied by his ability to re-conceptualise unpleasant things into more suitable terms. Even if Jünger's writing has features of a "heroic project" as King terms it,⁴⁴¹ his diary is also a survival story of ideas and ideals.

Concluding with this survival of ideas and ideals would nevertheless be insufficient, as the study at hand also points towards other phenomena. Smith argues on the basis of his research on a French infantry division that the soldiers regarded their situation in terms of costs and benefits and consequently stopped fighting when they no longer saw a point in it.⁴⁴² As he himself notes, he has been criticised for over-emphasising rationality and calculation,⁴⁴³ but there remains also the possibility of understanding the costs and benefits in wider terms than just purely in those of material or physical threats and rewards. Admittedly, the material aspects of the front life were of utmost importance to the

⁴³⁹ See Jünger commenting on his realistic way of writing in his diary in contrast to a letter he sent to a relative of a dead man 11.5.1917, 256 and on the necessity of withholding tactical details 8.3.1918, 368. The diaries do contain some of Jünger's notes on the process of writing *In Stahlgewittern*, but as the function of the diary as the basis of the novel is not evident in his other entries and as the idea of writing the novel apparently came from his father when he was recovering from his last wounds, this material is now left out of the discussion. See Kiesel 2007, 139.

⁴⁴⁰ By saying this I do not mean to discredit counterfactuals, as I agree with Allan Megill, a professor of history at the University of Virginia, that it is actually a crucial part of any historical research. Cf. Megill 2007, 154-155.

⁴⁴¹ King 1999, 129-133.

⁴⁴² Smith 2007, 10-11 referring to his own 1994 study *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I*.

⁴⁴³ Smith 2007, 11.

soldiers,⁴⁴⁴ but when the challenges the war posed on the combatants on intellectual and spiritual levels are considered, the bargaining between costs and benefits also shows itself in a different light. If rational action is understood as actions based on the basis of empirically justifiable arguments, bargaining with the intellectual or spiritual costs and benefits of warfare can be regarded as a process that does not entirely rely on rationality. Jünger's writing suggests that he did not regard the costs and benefits of the war in rational terms. For instance, in his enthusiasm to participate in active fighting, he was for most of the time not concerned with his physical safety but with heroism and experiencing something great.

In this sense the dynamic of intellectual survival in Jünger's writing can, in addition to shedding light on the complexity of the question why men fought, also be seen as part of the answer. Jünger was capable of understanding the war in terms that satisfied him at least on the level of his writing and made it possible for him to regard the war in positive terms in his later published writings, as well.⁴⁴⁵ In Jünger's case the way his positive interpretations of the war affected his willingness to fight is often explicit, as many of the examples used in the analysis above show. Of course, the way in which a person's willingness to do something turns into real action is not always a straightforward process, but as Jünger's military success shows, what he wrote and how he acted were clearly connected.

Military sociologists and also soldiers in their accounts of fighting have often noted that in actual battle soldiers have no chance to consider the wider implications of their actions. Sinivuo refers to several studies which have concluded that in fighting the world view of the soldier is limited to his or her own platoon or company and that although ideologies might be strong factors in motivating soldiers to join the army or actually go to war, they do not play a significant role under life threat.⁴⁴⁶ It is indeed crucial to make a difference between what the actual thoughts of a soldier are at a given moment and how he or she formulates them into coherent wholes that are in a way or another also expressed to others. The difference is crucial in order to avoid hasty conclusions that ideas have no influence on the soldiers because they do not play a significant role in actual battle.

The influence of ideas can be seen through the notion of combat morale. It can be roughly defined as the collective willingness of soldiers to accomplish the tasks at hand despite hardships,⁴⁴⁷ and researchers have identified three dimensions that constitute its central aspects. On a macro level

⁴⁴⁴ For example Ferguson pays attention to the importance of even small benefits to the soldiers. Ferguson 1998, 350- 357. See also Lipp 2003, 106-113.

⁴⁴⁵ Dempewolf 1992, 93 & the whole chapter 2.4.

⁴⁴⁶ Sinivuo 2011, 44.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Sinivuo 2011, 9-10.

combat morale is about commitment to the military organisation and its tasks and goals. On meso level combat morale entails commitment to the immediate group, such as the own platoon or company, and last but equally significantly on micro level it is about self-confidence.⁴⁴⁸ In Jünger's case some of the most central components of his morale would have been his commitment to the German army and the goals of the high command, his relationship with his platoon and company and his notion of his own capabilities and his trust in them.

When one considers how these aspects of combat morale can be further analysed, it becomes clear that ideas and ideals have a great influence on it. Regarding for example the macro level, soldiers' notion of the army and its role for their society and how they understand the goals of the war is necessarily constructed on the basis of such things as values, ideologies and social norms. These kinds of shared notions are reinforced and adapted or rejected on the individual level, and as Jünger's case shows, individuals are able to mould their understanding of reality so that it fits their thinking. In this way, ideas have a significant role in the constitution of combat morale.

Although the thoughts of a soldier in battle might not stray far from the immediate survival, researchers have noted that combat morale is actually the basis of the will and motivation to fight, that is, of combat motivation in action.⁴⁴⁹ Thus, it is possible to argue that studying the immediate thoughts and experiences of soldiers in battle has to be understood as an altogether different project from understanding the way they outside the moment of life danger reconstruct their ideas about their relationship to war. Through the latter kind of analysis the individual soldier's thinking can be understood better. Moreover, as was already argued, this kind of approach makes visible the way in which thinking influences action, and how ideas lie at the foundation of combat morale. The current analysis of Jünger's ideas and ideals exemplifies exactly this kind of approach.

Even if grasping the way how a thought and writing process actually turns in to action is beyond the scope of this research, the dynamic of Jünger's diary writing reveals the connection between thinking and action. It also shows how he reacted when his presuppositions were challenged. "Jünger's war diaries constitute without doubt the best and most honest proof of the enormous difficulties to which the individual is exposed when he wants to keep whole his idea of moral values and his conception of truth in a world where truth and morality have lost the very possibility of being perceived and identified," Hannah Arendt has noted on Jünger's war diaries from the time of the Second World

⁴⁴⁸ Sinivuo 2011, 11.

⁴⁴⁹ Sinivuo 2011, 10.

War.⁴⁵⁰ What Arendt observes here, could also be termed intellectual survival. Even if Jünger's diary of 1914-1918 might not call forth such eloquent praise, the struggle Arendt describes is very much present in it, although with different emphases. Like her, I see Jünger's diaries as an example of a phenomenon that can certainly also be observed elsewhere. These wider suggestions of this study will be discussed briefly in the conclusions below.

⁴⁵⁰ Hannah Arendt cited in Nevin 1996, 3.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this study I have tackled the problematic of upholding a positive image of war under conditions that do not at the first glance correspond at all with the ideas and ideals on which the image is built. Ernst Jünger's war diary with its regular entries has proved a fruitful source for this kind of study and his responses to the challenges posed to his ideas and ideals by the trench warfare appeared to be much less straightforward than I anticipated. His interpretations and re-conceptualisations of the realities of the Western Front were also both more constant and more complicated than my first encounter with the diary had suggested.

The questions about what kind of ideas and ideals are visible in Jünger's diary writing that support his positive attitude towards the war, and what kind of change and continuity can be observed in them yielded clear answers. His initial expectations were expressed in his diary as a search for adventure that was informed with contemporary military masculine ideals and the traditional image of warfare as open battle with direct engagement with the enemy. Jünger appreciated courage and active fighting from early on and held on to these ideals through the almost four years' time span covered in the diary. During that time a significant new ideal of leadership manifested itself in his writing. Jünger served as an officer for most of his time on the front, and his leadership ideal developed in a direction that corresponded with his initial ideas and ideals. In the leadership position Jünger was actually despite his initial disappointments able to fulfil many of his original aspirations: proving his own courage and affirming to himself that he is an apt if not even an ideal soldier.

The question how Jünger deals with his ideas and ideals by writing, and how he responds to the challenges that his surrounding realities pose to them produced basically a threefold answer. First of all Jünger maintained his ideas and ideals by interpreting the surrounding realities in accordance to them in his diary and by re-conceptualising even surprisingly challenging situations in corresponding terms. He also committed more space for recording action that corresponded with his initial ideas and ideals. His writing had features of strong continuity on the level of both form and content, and his notions of an ideal soldier and of warfare were rather constant.

Second, the diary contained significant dismissals and omissions that revealed how deeply Jünger's thinking was challenged by the surrounding realities. The omissions also pinned down the nature of the diary as a representation instead of a trace of authentic experience: they revealed how Jünger reacted when he included something in his diary that did not correspond with his ideas and

ideals. Focusing on something else, refusing to comment and self-censorship were ways in which Jünger controlled the contents of his diary.

Finally, Jünger adapted to the realities of trench warfare and made use of possibilities offered for fulfilling his personal aspirations. Moreover, he adapted the arising ideas and ideals so that they corresponded with the initial ones. This kind of dynamic was especially evident in relation to the leadership ideal, and Jünger explicitly expressed satisfaction in fulfilling its requirements. The ideal was expressed in terms that showed clear parallels to his earlier emphasis on courage and echoed his rather individualistic understanding of his position in the war with a lack of outspoken nationalism.

Along this analysis, the dynamics of Jünger's writing were explained in the context of the First World War in relation to contemporary notions of masculinity and warfare, as well as to relevant features of the trench warfare and the German army. The clear similarities between the contemporary, more widely shared ideas and Jünger's writing imply that he was not an exceptional case what comes to the foundations of his ideas and ideals, although he certainly belonged to a group of front soldiers who cultivated an extremely positive attitude towards the war. The interplay between Jünger's writing and its context is what helps in understanding his ideas and ideals. His interpretations of the surrounding realities are at the first glance and from a detached perspective often strikingly unfitting. They are nevertheless deeply rooted in his personal as well as the more general social and military contexts.

In the final part of the analysis, Jünger's diary writing was conceptualised as an activity supporting his intellectual survival. This interpretation has a twofold basis. First, it rests on the results of studies about the experiences of soldiers who fought in the First World War that have observed how important the interpretations of the surrounding reality were for coping. Second, this conceptualisation interprets the diary medium as not only a text but also as an activity and a process in which thoughts and experiences can be processed. Although the idea of diary writing as an activity that serves intellectual survival as such is not derived directly from Jünger's writing, the conceptualisation arose from the analysis of the dynamics of upholding ideas and ideals in his diary.

This perspective on Jünger's diary has also wider implications, as it exemplifies how an individual may actively process his or her ideas and ideals under adverse conditions. Taken back to Jünger's case, this processing actually had an influence on his willingness to wage war despite the often seemingly unrewarding situations he faced. This in turn embodies the way in which ideas affect combat morale. Combat morale is according to military sociology the basis of combat motivation in

active fighting and thus there is a link between ideas and action in the context of warfare, as well. The analysis of Jünger's diary sheds light first of all on the dynamics of writing itself, but implies also how complicated the relationship between writing, thinking and action is.

From the point of view of historical research, the study at hand adds to the discussion of how the soldiers of the First World War interpreted their reality. Writing can be seen as an efficient way to assume power over one's thoughts and offering a possibility to create representations of reality that make overwhelming experiences manageable. This representational function of writing is apparent in Jünger's diary, and the analysis of it implied that individual representations of reality are not isolated, imaginary worlds but instead are influenced by more widely shared notion. They also have actual consequences for the individual. Moreover, writing offers a possibility to communicate these representations to others even over time and space, and by communication the individual interpretations may become significant for wider audiences.

Jünger's later writings about the First World War have gained this kind of significance, although what his interpretations actually convey has been an issue of debate. This study paid attention to the ambiguous origins of Jünger's later interpretations of the war and the conclusions underline that already the original diary in itself is a significantly filtered representation of the realities of the war. Hence special caution is required when using *In Stahlgewittern*, for instance, as a source for historical research. The cross-references Jünger's original diary offers make it possible to interrogate the later publications and compare their perspectives in a fruitful manner, just as King has done in literary studies,⁴⁵¹ but this analysis could be also undertaken from a more historical perspective.

Furthermore, researching the Jünger's correspondence in more detail is certainly a task worth to be accomplished. Its contents were mainly similar to the diary and for the purposes of this study the letters provided mostly affirmation to the general conclusions made on the basis of the diary, as well as additional arguments to some points of analysis. Nonetheless, the letters do offer insight into the relationships between the members of the Jünger family. Especially reading the complete correspondence to the extent the letters are preserved could prove fruitful, as the reactions from home to an enthusiastic soldier's accounts might offer interesting perspectives on the differences of the two mindsets.

Interpreting the original war diary along Jünger's writings from the perspective of historical research is just one possibility for further study. The diary has significant source value also outside the

⁴⁵¹ King 1999.

focus on Jünger or his literary career. His diary could and should be treated as any war diary, and as it is rich in both volume and detail, it would offer material for other valuable perspectives, too. In order to mention one of the most clear-cut examples, Jünger's original diary includes multiple entries on his relationship with the civilian population. He writes both on his relationship with his billet hosts and his sexual affairs during the war, and the diary would offer insight to the relationship between the front soldiers and the civilians.

Another interesting line of enquiry would be focusing on the perspective of the active front officers. This perspective is already present in this study, but as the officers have not received as much attention in the literature of the First World War as the regular soldiers,⁴⁵² this aspect could be explored further. Especially interesting is the debate about the role social inequalities and other discrepancies played in the relationships both between the different weapon groups and between the officer corps and the regular soldiers that was to a limited extent already addressed in the current analysis.

These perspectives presented themselves during the process of writing this thesis. The focus on one individual's responses in writing to challenged ideas and ideals is in some regards limited but it also proved fruitful. The responses could be observed and analysed in a manner that made visible both the individual dynamics of intellectual survival, in addition to how the historical, cultural and societal influences on the writer help understand this process. Observing the way an individual affirms and upholds his or her way of thinking by writing is of course intriguing in itself, as it challenges the reader to try and identify the dynamics of someone else's thinking and offers a different perspective. Widening the perspective is one of the significant contributions historical research in general can make to societal debates.

In addition, this study reminds us once again about the power of ideas and ideals. The influence of shared notions on how people act and understand their world can be observed anywhere in our everyday lives. This study takes this understanding to the individual level and alerts us to notice how an individual is capable of making use of ideas and ideals in order to support his or her actions. For example, Jünger gradually re-explains his position on the Western Front to himself after already admitting that his search for adventure was no longer a valid reason for him to be at the front. This process does not happen easily or by itself but there is an active process involved that requires taking power over one's interpretations of reality.

⁴⁵² Meteling 2008, 43.

Thus observing intellectual survival in an individual's writing shows that through this active process there are a lot of possibilities for us to mould our thinking and our view of the reality. Although this ability may serve our intellectual survival in a positive way, it is not an innocent phenomenon. Especially observed in the context of Jünger's diary, re-interpreting the reality entailed ignoring the consequences of war or re-conceptualising them in a neutralising manner. This phenomenon can be observed even in contemporary societies. Without passing judgment on the past, I wish to point out in the light of the conclusions of this study that it is important to observe how war is understood in our current societies, as interpreting war as an inevitable or even a positive phenomenon contributes to perpetuating it.

In this sense the results of this study can also be discussed from the point of view of peace research, and the insights that have been made can be exploited elsewhere. Similar phenomena can certainly be observed in other contexts as well, and even the more normative perspectives of peace research could be applied. For this kind of approach studying contemporary debates and societies would be relevant, as it is important to ask what kind of images of warfare we nurture. Kustermans and Ringmar for example draw interesting parallels between the bored youth before the world wars and the youth of the 21st century,⁴⁵³ and these kinds of comparisons are relevant, although one needs to be very cautious with the conclusions drawn. Even if the usefulness of doing detailed comparison between contemporary tendencies and the past can be questioned, researching the contemporary ideas and ideals informing our attitudes towards warfare would definitely yield interesting results.

The current study on Jünger's war diary, though, was limited on analysing the historical. My perspective on his writing was both temporarily and ideologically detached, and thus taking a critical stance towards the topic was to a significant extent inherent in my position as a researcher. Nevertheless, I wanted Jünger's interpretations and representations of his reality to be heard. I do question his motto "*fortem fortuna adjuvat*"⁴⁵⁴ and the attitude it entails. Especially Jünger's military masculine ideals and his embracing of war as a means to personal development seem to me to entail very destructive elements. The analysis I completed nonetheless revealed that despite the domination of this kind of welcoming of war in his diary, Jünger's writing also included other nuances. There was ambiguity in his attitude towards the war and he needed to respond to it in his diary. In my introduction I claimed to be interested in the complexity of how one individual's thinking manifests in writing, and

⁴⁵³ Kustermans & Ringmar 2011, 1788-1790.

⁴⁵⁴ Latin for "luck favours the strong". Jünger 20.6.1917, 272; 15.8.1917, 308 & 25.10.1917, 330.

the analysis I completed proved to be a worthwhile exercise also in that regard – in addition to the other results it yielded.

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