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**A CONFLICT OF PERCEPTION: MEDICAL ASPECTS OF GERMAN FIRST WORLD WAR
LITERATURE**

**The Presentation of the Medical Professions and
of Medical Conditions in Contemporary and Weimar
Prose Relating to the First World War.**

**by
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**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Stirling.**

June, 1995 *gk*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with any work of this size this thesis could neither have been undertaken, nor completed, without the aid of numerous individuals or institutions.

I like to thank Brian Murdoch for his unceasing patience and invaluable support over many years, whose example, expectations, and expertise have constantly stimulated my own efforts while writing this thesis.

I am equally grateful to Malcolm Read for his academic guidance and continuous encouragement over the past three years.

I also acknowledge the sound scholarly advice I received from Heather Valencia and Mike Mitchell, who may not have realized how valuable their assistance has been.

Furthermore, if it had not been for the practical support of the following individuals it would have been almost impossible to complete this doctoral dissertation in time:

first of all, I would like to thank my sister, Jutta Schmitz, for providing me with a large amount of primary and secondary literary sources as well as visual references which have contributed enormously to the compilation of the thesis; I would also like to thank Hermann Cziurlok, to whom this thesis is dedicated, for his invaluable support.

Secondly, I would like to thank those friends and colleagues in the Department of German who have given me the benefit of their advice and criticism as well as encouragement during the past three years, in particular Caroline Martin, Maggie Sergeant, and Janice Whitelaw.

Thirdly, I would like to mention the staff at the 'Militärarchiv Freiburg' and the 'Militärarchiv Dresden', and here especially Herrn Dr. Tutenberg, and the library staff at the University of Stirling for their kind, practical, and useful assistance.

Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to some very special people without whose courage, determination, and hospitality this thesis could never have been written, especially Ian Findlay, John and Melva Greasley, Lena Maben, Alf Philip, and Franz and Christa Cziurlok.

Special thanks to Bruce Thompson for enabling me to support myself economically while doing research in the first year of my postgraduate career and to Horst Schuh for providing me with some authentic and valuable items relating to Chapter 6.

Finally, I would specifically like to mention Heinz Houben who has been a life-long source of inspiration. Without him this doctoral dissertation would not have been possible and my entire existence would certainly have been less exciting.

ABSTRACT

A Conflict of Perception: Medical Aspects of German First World War Literature

The Presentation of the Medical Professions and of Medical Conditions in Contemporary and Weimar Prose Relating to the First World War

There is a divergence of views in German First World War literature concerning the presentation of medical aspects and nursing experiences. Although all accounts of the war claim implicitly to present the truth about a section of, or even the whole of, the war, be they diaries, letters or war fiction, variations arise due to the individual attitude, perspective and intention of each author.

This thesis examines a range of different types of fictional and non-fictional war literature: diaries, letters, reports, narratives and novels written by or about participants during or after the war, taking due account of the precise relationship to the experience, the intent of the writers and the context of their accounts. Some of these are based on personal experience and provide an immediate impression of the war. Some use personal experience, but not specific historical details, to look at the war in retrospect, conditioned by the (additional) medical knowledge of the late 1920s. Others blend fictional and historical characters and events. Although the standpoint of the individual ordinary soldier and sailor, or officer, predominates in writings of this kind, writings both by and about women and other non-combatants involved in the war have been included. German material is compared with American, British and French accounts wherever possible and practicable.

A preliminary section (chapters 2+3) provides the reader with a detailed and necessary historical overview of the organization of the German Heeres-sanitätswesen between 1914 and 1918, followed by an examination of the discrepancy between the historical experience and perception of the Lazarett in the German literary context.

The second part of the work (chapters 4-6) examines descriptions and perceptions of specific medical aspects of the war from the point of view of those immediately involved in the Verwundetenfürsorge: surgeons and medical practitioners, paramedical orderlies and stretcher-bearers as well as nurses.

The largest part (chapters 7-12) examines the medical effects of the war as perceived in different literary and non-literary contexts, ranging from straightforward wounds, shell-shock and other psychological phenomena, to the effects of poison gas and chemical warfare, venereal diseases, self-inflicted wounds and the medical implications of trench warfare, followed by an analysis of the motif of 'war as disease'.

to
Hermann Cziurlok

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1.

INTRODUCTION

Die Leistungen unseres Feldsanitätswesens werden sich dereinst nach wissenschaftlicher Bearbeitung des gesamten vorliegenden Materials als ein besonderes Ruhmesblatt deutscher Geistesarbeit und Hingabe für einen großen Zweck erweisen und dann hoffentlich dem Wohle der gesamten Menschheit dienstbar gemacht werden.¹

The most formidable problem imposed upon any study of the literature of the First World War is the size and variety of available material. Even if the numbers of soldiers who committed their thoughts to writing (with or without intent to publish) during or after the war is small compared to the millions who participated in the conflict, their works cover all aspects of the conflict from all perspectives. It would go beyond the purpose of this thesis to speculate upon why so many ex-combatants did not record their views, of course, but the attitude that anyone who had not shared the experience of the reality of modern warfare would not be capable of understanding it clearly by looking at it from an ever increasing historical distance undeniably contributed to reticence in some cases. The theme of writing or not writing about the war is actually a topos in war books that have been written, but the urge to forget was doubtless also strong.² Nevertheless, the years between 1927 and 1932 were an enormously fruitful period especially for anti-war literature, whose emergence, ideological implications and point of view of the conflict sharply contrasted with those factual-historical publications sponsored by public institutions which had dominated German war presentation since 1919. This flowering of German First World War literature is the basic material for this study, although

straightforward practical and bibliographical difficulties in obtaining some materials published about seventy years ago have of necessity restricted the scope to a small extent.

The rich literature of this period has given rise, not surprisingly, to a correspondingly large amount of secondary analysis. Much of this has been directed at the background, perspective and standpoint of the individual writers, with a focus on historical, military or political issues. As far as I am aware, no full-scale attempt has yet been made to examine German First World War prose of the Weimar period with regard to the medical aspects of that war: the literary use and presentation of the real and symbolic value of the military hospital; the role and attitudes of the different medical personnel at all levels, from medical practitioners to stretcher-bearers to nurses; medical effects on the combatants on a physical level, such as disease and wounds, or on a psychological level, such as shell-shock and traumata caused by military action or by the privations of life at the front; and, finally, the literary presentation of the 'war as disease' motif.³

It is, of course, true that such a study requires not only a literary approach, but also, in addition to the historical background presupposed by any study of the literature of an historical event, reference to medical details; naturally, the precise medical details of some topics which will be discussed go beyond the scope of this work.

In view of the enormous amount of material available, this study will focus in the main upon the better-known publications, in particular on the most successful anti-war novel ever, Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*, which sold more than a million copies within sixteen months of its publication.⁴ The significance of the work as a

piece of (ageless) anti-war literature is further enhanced by the author's achievement of covering comprehensively almost every aspect of the medical and nursing side of the war. There were, of course, other Weimar war novels which also proved hugely popular and sold very well, yet none managed to come close to, let alone match, the success of Remarque's narrative. Ludwig Renn's autobiographical novel in diary form, *Krieg*, sold 155,000 copies in three years.⁵ Similarly successful was Adrienne Thomas' novel, also in diary form, *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, which sold more than 155,000 copies.⁶ Ernst Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902*, sold 100,000 copies in three years,⁷ while Theodor Plievier's *Des Kaisers Kulis*, just as much a political novel as an historical document about the life of sailors in the Imperial German navy, earned him the epithet 'Remarque of the fleet', and sold the respectable number of 40,000 copies.⁸ Alexander Moritz Frey's autobiographical narrative *Die Pflasterkasten*, taking the point of view of a non-combatant stretcher-bearer at the front, failed to make such a significant impact on the market, selling the comparatively low number of less than 30,000 copies. That was largely due to the late publication of the work.⁹ Similarly adversely affected by the worsening economic and political situation in the final period of the Weimar Republic were the sales figures of the most original narrative of the time, Edlef Köppen's autobiographical novel *Heeresbericht*, which sold only 10,000 copies.¹⁰ It is interesting to note that in the years following the end of the First World War nationalist war fiction, with one or two exceptions, never achieved the same popularity that the anti-war literature enjoyed.¹¹ The advent of the Third Reich saw all these titles, and many more, banned and burned, their authors prosecuted, imprisoned, or

stripped of their citizenship. Authors like Arnold Zweig, who had managed to escape the regime, had their books published abroad, yet could not continue their previous best-selling literary successes.¹² Although most of these works found a considerable amount of interest abroad, and some of them were translated into several foreign languages, as a result of discrimination inside Germany they could not be printed and published there for several decades. When the Nazi regime eventually ended in May 1945 the German people had a much bigger disaster to come to terms with than in November 1918. Lessons needed to be learned from the past twelve years and there was simply no place, nor interest, in a war that had taken place almost three decades ago, the memory of which was already fading. During the years of reconstructing Germany, a great number of publications on the Second World War emerged and only hesitant attempts were made to revitalize interest in the events of the First World War. It is significant that Zweig's novel *Erziehung vor Verdun* was first republished by the Aufbau Verlag Berlin in 1951, the first time that the book was made available again, sixteen years after its first imprint.

More recently, there has been a revival of interest in publications of German First World War prose, particularly in the 1980s, when the Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag in Frankfurt/Main republished many of the better-known, and some lesser-known works in the *Verboten und Verbrannt* series of paperback editions. Other German publishers, in particular Rowohlt in Hamburg, Beck in Munich and Orion Heimreiter in Kiel, soon followed suit. In addition to many of the famous and less well-known works being re-edited and republished, completely novel material and titles, sometimes by previously unknown authors, emerged and have been

added to the long list of German First World War literature. Two examples of the latter are Hermann Lons' war diary,¹³ and Ernst Stadler's diary notes.¹⁴ Interestingly, both of these war diaries cover the first few weeks of the conflict and provide a concise picture of the fighting and the progress of the war in central France, in the former case from the perspective of a volunteer in the front line, the latter taking an artillery officer's point of view. Both authors were killed while the war was still in progress, and it took more than seventy years for their notes to be published.

It will not, unfortunately, be possible to examine in detail the role of medical aspects, and their divergent interpretations and manifestations in Allied war prose to any great extent. However, since France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America experienced a similar pattern of publications of war memoirs simultaneously to those in the Weimar Republic, some of the better-known works will need to be included in this thesis to be compared with German war prose wherever possible and practicable. The examination of poetry, even where its content is relevant to the issues at the heart of the debate in this study, must be severely limited as well. Moreover, the very abundance of war diaries and letters will also necessitate selectivity.

A special problem is presented by examples of German war prose writings which, although written after the war, were not intended for publication by their authors. But since they deal with medical aspects as part of their portrayal of the war, they present a valuable and welcome addition to the volumes examined. Thus I shall include such works as Dominik Richert's *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*, a war novel in diary form, which features the personal experiences of the author,

told strictly chronologically from the beginning of the war in August 1914 until his desertion in July 1918.¹⁵ In addition I shall use material such as the unpublished papers of Dr. Alfred Huhnhauser, whose collected autobiographical writings include a notebook of war memoirs comprising twenty handwritten pages about the first days of the conflict and whose archive of material is kept in the German Department of Stirling University.¹⁶ A further invaluable source of information about military and medical aspects of the war is found in the manuscript diary notes and the Soldbuch of a German corporal who saw battle action both in the eastern and the western theatres of war from the first day of the conflict to the last.¹⁷ While both sources are fortuitous as far as place and time of writing and the points of view propagated by their authors are concerned, each of them is, nevertheless, a fairly typical example of reflecting direct first-hand wartime experience in a more or less orderly written context.

Frauenromane, war prose written by women, offer another special case, and some general comments must be made regarding the attitudes, personal background and different literary contributions of women authors. Some of these they share, of course, with their male associates, others are peculiar to themselves. Women had played a subordinate role in European society prior to the conflict. That was to change during the war, though, when they were increasingly called upon by the belligerent states to support the war effort. One significant aspect of war prose written by women lies in the uniqueness of women's position in the war, which enabled them to put across a woman's point of view of the war much more effectively than could ever have been done by any of their male colleagues. Especially in their roles as auxiliary

nurses, full nurses, and, albeit very rarely indeed, doctors, they inevitably came face to face with the results of the fighting on human beings, and it is therefore not surprising to find women nurses' accounts reflecting these facts; there the focus is predominantly on the effects, impacts, and results of the war on its victims, almost exclusively men. Thus war prose written by women nurses also acknowledges much more effectively the role of women and their contributions to the war effort in regard to the medical and nursing aspects in the war. Most important though, unlike most of the male writers, women writers had an *inside* knowledge of the medical services, both civilian and military, that enabled them to write on the one aspect of the war that was of tremendous significance to any participant. Moreover, it enabled women authors to show that women were victims of the war just as much as were the men. This is evident in, in particular, Adrienne Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat* and two British publications, Helen Zenna Smith's novel *Not so Quiet*,¹⁹ and Vera Brittain's war diaries from 1913 to 1917 which formed the basis for her autobiographical novel *Testament of Youth*²⁰; the original war diaries were published after her death as *Chronicle of Youth*.²⁰ Finally, most of the women nurses' war prose appeared simultaneously with that of their male counterparts, guaranteeing them a fair share of the attention of the audience, but still, and less justifiably, less attention from the critics. While it would be dangerous to generalize over the findings of the examination of war literature written by women nurses it is evident, nevertheless, that most of their accounts not only reflect the ethical and moral changes which happened in the war, but also make positive and negative points about the conflict just as well as do the men's works.

But although there may have been a common basis on which the experience of the combatants and the women participants could have rested, such as their role inside the civilian and military medical services, works such as Henriette Riemann's *Schwester der IV. Armee*² show that there are considerable discrepancies with regard to the presentation and interpretation of both the nature of women's war service and the role of the medical aspects in the war; this is due as much to various external and internal factors of the conflict itself as to the personal circumstances of each individual author.

For all these reasons this thesis can not provide a complete analysis of the presentation of the medical and nursing aspects in contemporary and Weimar prose relating to the First World War, of course. Rather, it aims at examining the role of the medical and nursing aspects and their different interpretation and manifestation in selected but it is hoped representative texts.

Classifying Weimar war prose in its broadest sense according to the time of writing, the location, the personality of the author and his/her personal point of view about the war is a relatively easy undertaking. Examining it under the various literary aspects, on the other hand, is a much more problematic exercise. An even more formidable challenge is the attempt to strike a balance between the readily ascertainable historical facts and the way an individual author went about presenting these in the context of the various forms of prose, be it diaries, letters, narratives, novels, or reports; poems are an extreme case. The permutations of each work in regard to the medical aspects are equally complex. The massive number of publications during the war itself, even when written by those who had first-hand experience of the fighting, or

by observers, either at the front, or at the home front, were almost exclusively of a jingoistic nature, intending to ensure the support of the civilian population for the continuous war effort. Works published after the war, but by those with first-hand experience of it, naturally took a rather different approach to the conflict, but they looked at it from an ever-increasing historical distance.

The diversity of personal experiences and their interpretation, the different points of view on the First World War as a whole, and the discrepancies concerning the medical aspects, in particular, are an indication that the war was made up of the personal experiences of individuals which had manifested themselves in their various literary contributions about the conflict. How accurately these accounts reflected the reality of the war is a matter for conjecture, for many authors of German war prose recollecting their first-hand war experiences afterwards, in the Weimar Republic, did so at a time when an overall picture of the war had already largely become clear. Their writings focussed on events that were between ten to fifteen years past, but they wrote with the benefit of military, and, more important to this study, the benefit of medical hindsight. However valid their claims to show the truth about the war may have been, to a certain extent their works did reflect part of their own personal war experiences; but as honorable as their intentions were to write about 'war as such', these authors were running the risk of distorting the overall picture of the conflict by the unreflective blending of fictional and historical characters and events. In addition, their limited personal perspective in the war, which was essential for their point of view of the conflict as a whole, coupled with their personal intentions and purposes of

writing their accounts at all, increased, rather than diminished the chances of their publications showing too one-sided a picture of the war.

The advantage in comparative terms of genuine diary notes and letters home by participants is obvious. They are authentic and factual documents of the war serving the purpose of recording certain ascertainable and historical events in a concise and yet comprehensive fashion. Very often the impression of a certain event, or incident, is still fresh in the mind of a writer and there is no time for him/her to reflect on it while the notes are taken, either at the time of the incident taking place, or shortly afterwards. They present a real picture of the war with an atmosphere of immediacy about them that can be sensed by the reader, who, at the same time, has the opportunity to take a close, realistic and unimpeded look at the war.²² Novels can lack that sense of immediacy. While diaries and letters look at the war from within, narratives and novels look at it from an ever-increasing historical distance. Narratives and novels are, however, historically accommodated in the war years, and while the extent of fictionality differs considerably in each individual work, they are designed by their authors, who were, of course, aware of the shortfalls of their accounts in these respects, to sound realistic. One thing most of them have in common, for example, is that they are predominantly written in the present tense. While the readers of diary notes and letters looked at the war through the eyes of a genuine living character, novelists relied on fictive central figures to provide their audience with a point of view on the war. Incidentally, most of these central characters are ordinary people with no influence whatsoever over the events in the

conflict. Like a disease, war just happens to them and sees them helpless when confronted with and exposed to all its gruesome and painful aspects.

Personal notes taken in the war formed the basis of some accounts, which the authors were eager to mention in accordance with, and to underline, their intentions to provide a true picture of the conflict. Henriette Riemann's motto in her *Kriegstagebuch*, war diary, *Schwester der IV. Armee* is as follows:

Dieses Buch ist keine Dichtung, es ist Erlebnis.
So ward es zum Denkmal für die, die tapfer
der Sache dienten, ob sie leben oder fielen.
Mein Vaterland, trage deine Wunden, wie jene
sie trugen:
sich selbst treu, ohne Klage und zur Erhebung
bereit. (*Schwester ...*, preface, unpaginated)

which presents it, in effect, as a novelistic account of her own experiences in the war from 1914 to 1915; Adrienne Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, too, is one of the better-known examples of a novel presented in diary form. Strictly chronological and fully supplied with exact dates and names of certain real locations, Thomas succeeded in making the account sound real, as did Ernst Jünger in his autobiographical war account, *In Stahlgewittern*. Based on concise diary notes taken during the war, his personal experiences of the conflict at the western front were published in the early 1920s, at a time when German war prose was generally achieving only marginal successes on the book market. Like all the other authors, Jünger, too, claimed that his accounts presented a true picture of the war. But his literary approach to the war is unique amongst German war writers in the years immediately after the war, and this largely due to his perspective. He volunteered

for war service in 1914 and rose from the ranks to finish the war as one of the most highly decorated German officers. What distinguishes Jünger from all the other authors of the early period is his ability to observe closely and describe in a sober manner what he observed, putting it in the context of the first ever technical war in history. In fact, Jünger's success lies precisely in his unique ability to place the technical dimension of the conflict as a whole into a *literary* context. This approach applies, too, to the medical aspects of the war, regardless of whether the focus is upon wounded soldiers, medical personnel, medical establishments behind the line, or at times when the author himself is wounded.²³

The selectivity of the authors in the later Weimar Republic writing on the First World War was conditioned by several factors, the most important of which was that the war had not finished mentally for them. In their narratives and novels these men relived their war experiences. It must be remembered, of course, that first-hand experience by an author is by no means a guarantee for the authenticity of his/her account. That depends also very much on the selectivity of each individual author, which, again, depends to a not inconsiderable extent on the circumstances of the time of writing, the *Zeitgeist*, plus what remained in their memory several years after the war had finished, and what each author considered worthwhile passing on to the audience. It is only natural that different authors should have made different choices in what they wanted their audience to see; the extent of fictionality in each work to achieve that objective is therefore variable. Vera Brittain's wartime diary notes on her work as a VAD nurse present a particular interesting example in this context. A novelistic account of

her war memories, based on her original war diaries, was first published under the title *Testament of Youth* in 1933. Half a century later the original war diaries were published under the title *Chronicle of Youth*. That raises the interesting question which book (or both) shows the 'real' war?

The most popular technique for approaching the conflict on a literary basis was the creation of a fictive central character from behind which an author could put across a personal point of view of the war. What aspects of the conflict the audience saw depended entirely on the perspective of the hero/heroine, who need not be the same as the author. Because the central figures were intended purely as devices to help the writers realize their intentions of presenting certain images of the war, about which they had first-hand knowledge, or which they utilized to make a point for or against the war, this semi-fictional approach led to tensions between the authors of each novel or narrative and the narrator, the central figure. This is particularly evident in some works where the presentations of the medical aspects, especially those images of the results of the fighting in the various Lazarette, often go well beyond the perspective of the central figures. Most of the later Weimar authors looked at the conflict with their personal experience in mind, but with the additional hindsight of the 1920s and early 1930s; but their central figures, who were often the narrators of the story, had to look at the war from within, limiting not only his/her perspective, but also, for reasons of consistency, their presentations of the fighting and its results on those affected. This technique applies to a limited extent in Arnold Zweig's anti-war novels *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* and *Erziehung vor Verdun*, where the central

characters, who are not the narrators, in fact, are designed by the omniscient author to aid him in presenting as detailed and comprehensive a picture of the First World War as possible, either to make a point about the inhuman nature of the conflict that stretches even to the bureaucratic level, or to strip the war of its heroic myths as far as impressions of the life of the front line soldiers is concerned. Novels such as Ernst Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902*, or Edlef Köppen's *Heeresbericht* offer clearer examples of the technique, but most characteristic for this approach in pacifist Weimar war literature are Erich Maria Remarque's, *Im Westen nichts Neues* and Alexander Moritz Frey's *Die Pflasterkisten*. In the cases of the single narrators of their novels, Paul Baumer and Christian Funk, the predominant perspective is that of the worm's eye view, of the front line soldier in the former, of the non-combatant stretcher-bearer just behind the front, in the latter. Each novel is designed for the reader to observe certain aspects of the war through the eyes of the central character which allow him to make up his own mind about the conflict as a whole. Occasionally the impressions are interrupted by casual comments about the nature of the war by minor characters; these constitute an additional literary device to add to the atmosphere created, and are also meant to assist the reader in the process of reaching a decision about the conflict.

Ludwig Renn's *Krieg*, is conditioned by a double fictionality, in as much as the perspective of the author in the war is not reflected by his central figure, incidentally called Renn but with no further similarities to the author; the author's name is in any case part of the fictionality of the work. Ludwig Renn was the nom-de-plume of Albert Friedrich Vieth von Golßenau who served as a high-ranking staff officer in the war. In

the novel itself, however, he looks at the war from the point of view of a private who never rises beyond the relatively low NCO rank of Vizefeldwebel.²⁴ Like most of the pacifist German war writers Renn utilized the worm's eye view perspective of his central figure to present as immediate and realistic a picture of the brutal, cruel, and filthy nature of the conflict as possible. He deliberately avoided writing about the war from his personal staff officer's perspective behind the line, because *Krieg* presents war as a conflict in which, above all, the low-ranking front line soldiers fight, suffer, and die.²⁵ After the war Renn himself explained what motivated him to write the narrative. He was ordered to keep the war diary of his regiment:

'Was da stand, war ganz richtig, aber alles Wichtige war ausgelassen, wenn es der Führung irgendwie unangenehm war. [...] Damals setzte ich mir vor, einmal die Wahrheit über den Krieg zu schreiben'.²⁶

There is another example of that kind of double fictionality, in '*Not so Quiet*', a British Frauenroman. There the author, Evadne Price, not only hides behind the deliberately hybrid name Helen Zenna Smith (the surname is common, the middle name exotic), but she also creates a fictive character, a woman ambulance-driver who is the narrator of an anti-war novel that is, nevertheless, based on the genuine war diary of an actual ambulance-driver, Winifred Young.²⁷

It is generally possible to distinguish between two very different groups of German war prose emerging in the late 1920s and early 1930s. One is dominated by an overwhelmingly nationalist apologetic, the other by a predominantly pacifist realistic tendency. Both groups, nevertheless, claimed to represent the views of those who had fought in

the war. Both sides also stressed that their accounts showed the reality of the war, 'wie es wirklich gewesen war'. Also common to both modes was the presentation of various images of the war at, or closely behind the front. But while the pacifist works favoured the worm's eye view, the relatively limited perspective of the front line soldier, to make a negative point about the conflict, many nationalist works preferred the bird's eye perspective thereby presenting a distant, more general view of the war. It is remarkable, indeed, that those, comparatively few, works of nationalist war fiction which take the worm's eye view rarely provide any detailed presentations of the nature of the Materialschlacht in the years from 1915 to 1918, the brutality of trench warfare and its physical, psychological and medical implications for those involved. Rather they are success stories, limited either to the presentation of victorious fighting in the early days of the war,²⁸ successful minor military operations during the stalemate that followed the initial stage of movement;²⁹ or they focus on the great German offensive in spring 1918.³⁰ Irrespective of their tendency, though, all these Frontromane necessarily fail to provide an overall picture of the conflict, having to settle for showing particular sections of it instead.

Works of nationalist war fiction are often visually identifiable as such by their use of Gothic typeface. They strive to make sense of the war, claiming that the sacrifice of millions of dead men had not been a senseless and vain affair. Sometimes written by those who had personal experience of the fighting in the front line, but more often by high-ranking soldiers, or by war correspondents, whose experience of the fighting might have been confined to a few hours at a relatively quiet section of the front, they made every effort to perpetuate the

anachronistic notions of war as an heroic adventure for a chosen few, with the spirit of true comradeship and the holy duty towards the homeland forming the ideological basis for motivating millions of young men to volunteer for war. Moreover, they revitalized the antiquated myths of war as a purifying experience, a cure that would end a decadent age and eradicate the corrupt and weak elements from society, ideas which had found their reverberations in publications at the beginning of and also repeatedly during the conflict. They welcomed the effects of the shell fire as a necessary, purifying and historical test for the nation which would eventually lead to the emergence of a new kind of people. The fate of the millions of casualties and fatalities is correspondingly interpreted and shown as an inexorable and worthwhile sacrifice for the survival of the nation, an ideal regarded as paramount and going beyond the personal horizon of the individual combatant.³¹

Although the medical aspects of the war do occur regularly in nationalist war fiction, their role is usually a minor one, even where a work is written by a medical practitioner. The authors, whether or not they have medical knowledge, either keep themselves, and thus their audience, deliberately detached and distant from some, at least, of the medical aspects of the war, or they use eulogistic language to minimize the suffering as quite enduring and tolerable. They tend to generalize and reduce the results of modern warfare by reporting on a number (unknown) of soldiers (unnamed) suffering from wounds (unspecified).

Josef Magnus Wehner's autobiographical *Frontroman Sieben vor Verdun*,³² which provides an impression of a Prussian platoon suffering heavy casualties in an attack on a fortified position defended by a heavy machine-gun is a brief but telling example: 'Einige Leute fallen aus.'

(p.95) Secondly, although Wehner's novel occasionally provides images of maimed, wounded or dead soldiers, it does not contain any impressions of Verbandplatze or Feldlazarette. It would be incorrect, nevertheless, to accuse authors like Wehner of neglecting completely to mention this side of war, since their literary contributions do contain passages concerning the medical aspects of the conflict. But they interpret these aspects entirely differently from realistic anti-war prose by focussing on the military achievements of a group of soldiers as well as the concepts of honour and pride; and they are able, too, to describe them almost casually and without any genuine interest in the results of the fighting or, more importantly, in what they mean to the individual participant:

Da lag auf der Bahre ein bayerischer Gefreiter; er hatte seinen sterbenden Leutnant hereintragen wollen, der draußen auf dem Walle in Maschinengewehrfeuer lag: 'Er soll nicht im Schnee liegen!' Man hatte sie beide, den Bayern und den Preußen, nebeneinander aufgebahrt vor dem Hauptmann. Sie lagen im Sterben, und niemand sprach ein Wort. Man hörte nur zwei Hacken zusammenschlagen, man sah eine Hand an die Mütze fliegen: das war der Oberarzt des Bataillons. Er war schon da und meldete sich bei den Sterbenden zur Stelle. (*Sieben vor Verdun*, p.98)

In addition, if a wound is fatal, the casualties are shown to die heroically:

Der Hauptmann leitete kniend den Sturm. Sie sahen, wie der Offizier einen Schuß in den Unterleib erhielt, wie er sich trotz des strömenden Blutes noch einmal aufrichtete und hell einen Befehl über die Kompanie hinrief. Und dann sahen sie, während der Hauptmann durch den Kopf geschossen hintenüberfiel, einen ... gegen den feindlichen Drahtverhau kriechen, um ihn mit der Schere zu durchschneiden. (*Sieben vor Verdun*, p.85)

or they die in a medical establishment comforted by a number of

comrades-in-arms, by the medical personnel or priests. Finally, if a wound is only slight (and not only then) the wounded soldiers show little desire to undergo medical treatment, preferring to remain with their units instead and keep fighting:

Zur selben Stunde griffen die Deutschen ... erneut an. Eine Gewehrsalve mähte sie nieder. Doch richteten sich Verwundete auf ihren Knien auf und krochen gegen die Verschanzungen.
(*Sieben vor Verdun*, p.162)

Popular, and in line with the romanticized notions of a hero's death, a bullet through the head is seen as painless and quick:

Die Kugeln pffiffen aus einer ... Hecke. Aus der erstarrten Linie sprang ein Leutnant hoch, brach aber sofort tödlich getroffen um. (*Sieben vor Verdun*, p.68)

So, too, is the image of soldiers suffering a sudden death by being blown to pieces by a grenade:

Da schlugen von drüben die ersten Granaten in die deutschen Gräben. Flüchtige, schnell erstickte Schreie, man zählte die ersten Toten. (*Sieben vor Verdun*, p.55)

Far less frequent in the nationalist *Frontromane*, on the other hand, is the presentation of the after-effects of particularly horrible wounds or the loss of a limb (or several) on the individual participant. But these matters, too, were an indissoluble part of the reality of the war which those who claimed to write the truth could simply not afford to ignore entirely. While Weimar nationalist war fiction sometimes accepts that the standards of the military and civilian medical services were steadily declining the longer the war dragged on, its authors refuse to accept the detrimental consequences of that development for

the soldiers and civilians who were relying on doctors, nurses and paramedics alike, for medical assistance. Those works of nationalist war fiction which take account of the subject at all prefer to emphasize repeatedly the achievements of the medical services and medical staff against all odds. They create the impression of a well-managed, well-organized and, above all, orderly medical service unaffected much by shortfalls of basic, yet vital, medical supplies.

Anti-war novels, on the other hand, as a rule printed in Roman, rather than in Fraktur, take, of course, a much more critical approach to the conflict. Kept deliberately subjective, often based on the first-hand experience of the individual author, they aim at exposing the horrors of war, to demythologize it and strip it of any heroic image. Part of the success in achieving that objective is the acknowledgement of the presence of medical aspects and their use as an important literary device to expose the brutality, futility and inhumanity of war in general. That is not to say that anti-war literature does uniformly agree on the interpretation, or even the manifestation, of medical aspects. Sidelined by nationalist war fiction, a variety of images does present itself especially in the pacifist Frontromane, but also in other anti-war narratives and novels. These images range from the great and senseless waste of human life for a few yards of barren soil, to psychological disorders, the loss of limbs, horrible mutilations and terrible wounds of individual participants, unspeakable suffering of victims of chemical warfare and poison gas, to the pains resulting from venereal diseases and the self-infliction of wounds, the long-term effects of which keep haunting the victims long after the war is over. All these images serve only one purpose: to stress the above all brutal,

chaotic and inhuman nature of war and its abhorrent deprivation and devastation for those involved, both on a mental and on a physical level. The danger of this approach, though, is that it is always likely to either focus entirely on, or to overemphasize, the negative conditions, which, undoubtedly, were part of the war experience, to such an extent that they might appear to be providing too one-sided and distorted a picture of the war. Whilst that approach may have served the personal intentions of particular authors well, just like nationalist war fiction, it failed to give an audience without personal experience of the conflict a comprehensive picture of other important aspects of the war.

That the overwhelming number of realistic German Frontromane should look at the war from the Froschperspektive, mainly that of common soldiers, sailors, military non-combatants such as stretcher-bearers, or low-ranking NCO's, is a significant distinction from most nationalist war fiction, which often take a bird's eye view on the war, thereby ignoring the daily hardships of the front line soldiers. Another advantage of the Froschperspektive, apart from providing an impression of life in the war from a common soldier's viewpoint, is that it enabled authors with a certain political interest to emphasize that it was the common soldiers, or sailors, who suffered in the war, rather than the officers or generals. It is not surprising that much criticism was levelled against that point of view, since it limits itself very much to a certain area of the front, instead of providing, perhaps as a background, a more general overview of the war.³³ Alternatively, there are a number of novels which look at the war from the perspective of the home front, notably through the eyes of younger boys or girls.³⁴ Another

significant distinction between the nationalist and the pacifist Weimar Frontromane lies in the interpretation of the concept of comradeship. In the anti-war Frontromane this is rarely linked with heroic behaviour; to the combatants it is, rather, a matter of course. Since it is assumed to be part of the human psyche it prevails even in times of war.³⁶ The lack of enthusiasm amongst the conscripts to fight and die for abstract concepts, the descriptions of horrible mutilations and wounds as a result of the use of modern and highly effective weapons, and the total helplessness of the individual to cope with a war that goes beyond his, or her, personal comprehension and a yearning for peace is explicit or implicit in all these accounts. The immediate effectiveness of the realistic Frontromane lay precisely in their approach to the conditions in the war, enabling former participants amongst their audiences to identify easily with the situations and to find themselves again; nevertheless, variations in the presentation of the medical issues occur more often than might be assumed. The very nature of the medical issues enabled the authors to put across their message on war either bluntly, by concentrating on the pain and suffering as a result of the fighting, or on a more subtle and symbolic level which, although it may be rooted in the past, still makes an impact in the present and for the future.

Whether a pacifist narrative or novel takes a linear or topical approach to the war, it always contains references to the medical aspects. The linear approach is chronological, the passing of time indicated by references to certain historical events, and the medical aspects are embedded in the accounts as they progress; in the topical approach, the medical aspects appear as a specific literary theme in their own right. Selected medical images, such as a Feldlazarett,

medical personnel and Lazarettzüge, all coupled with images of maimed bodies, massive numbers of casualties lying in endlessly long rows waiting to be attended to and impressions of individual soldiers suffering tremendous pains from horrible wounds are effectively used to emphasize the point that war is not about sustaining a clean bullet wound to the head and dying an heroic and painless death, but means, in fact, large numbers of people either being killed or being crippled or maimed for life, in any case being made unable ever to continue leading a normal life again even long after the war is over. There is usually a lack of any chronological markers in these accounts. Typically they begin while the war is going on and finish before it does, to underline the unchanging nature of the war of attrition and the uniformly monotonous routine of the killing and the maiming of thousands of young men with no end in sight. Furthermore, the central characters either sustain severe wounds themselves, crippling them for life, or they die in a medical installation, fall in action, or go mad.

The most striking discrepancy between the nationalist works and the pacifist narratives and novels is, finally, their literary interpretation of the war as a whole in, significantly, medical terms. Characteristic for nationalist war fiction is the view of the conflict as a cure for social ills, while the basic notion of war being as unavoidable as, for example, influenza or typhoid is symptomatic of the pacifist realistic Frontromane. Indeed, some novels go much further than that, making the point that war equals *disease*, thereby effectively rejecting any responsibility for its origins or nature. The presentation of war as a fever, or a virus, seems, at first, an odd option because, unlike a genuine disease which causes great discomfort to those

affected, war initially stimulates those affected by it very much, causing them to join up in a frenzy; in addition, it releases a range of different emotions, with ecstasy and euphoria simply sweeping aside any possible apprehensions or fears as forces that go beyond the control of the individual human being. The brutal and cruel nature of war as well as its lethal effects on the participants emerge only gradually, almost casually, in these novels, but they soon come to dominate the presentation, culminating in the various images of pain and suffering of its victims. Interestingly, some novelists also make use of the short-term/long-term effects of the war on people by utilizing various images of victims who suffer from the implications of the war even long after the conflict is over. However, in spite of their pacifist tendencies these novels and narratives acknowledge that there is, seemingly, no cure for war.³⁶

NOTES

¹ Paul von Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1920), p.136.

² Keith Robbins, in his historical analysis *The First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.150, remarks: 'No man who took part in the First World War ever completely shook off the experience. Individuals struggled to come to terms with what they had seen and heard. For some the only solution was silence. There was no way in which it was possible to communicate with those who had not been through it themselves. [...] It was better to resume an ordinary life as though nothing had happened. For many that was never possible.' See also Bruno Schultze, 'Fiction and Truth: Politics and the War Novel', in *Intimate Enemies*, edd. Martin Löschnigg and Franz Karl Stanzel (Heidelberg: Winter, 1993), pp.297-311.

³ The following selection is only a small sample of some well-known criticisms of Weimar war prose which entirely exclude any analysis of, or comments on the medical and nursing aspects: Michael Gollbach, *Die Wiederkehr des Weltkriegs in der Literatur* (Kronsberg/Ts.: Scriptor, 1978); Hans-Harald Müller, *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986); Erhard Schütz, *Romane der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1986); Werner Welzig, *Der deutsche Roman im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1970). The same applies to Marcel Reich-Ranicki's *Romane von Gestern Heute Gelesen 1918-1933* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1989).

⁴ Erich Maria Remarque, *Im Westen nichts Neues* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1929). Sales figures for the novel quoted from Gollbach, *Wiederkehr*, p.260. The sequel to the novel, *Der Weg zurück* (Berlin: Propyläen,

1931), was less successful, selling a mere 75,000 copies in 1931. Sales figures quoted from Donald Ray Richards, *The German Bestseller in the 20th Century* (Berne: Lang, 1968), p.78.

⁵ Ludwig Renn, *Krieg* (Frankfurt/Main: Societätsdruckerei, 1928). Sales figures quoted from Richards, *German Bestseller*, p.62.

⁶ Adrienne Thomas, *Die Katrin wird Soldat* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1930). Sales figures according to Brian Murdoch, 'Hinter die Kulissen des Krieges sehen: Adrienne Thomas, Evadne Price - and E. M. Remarque', in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 28 (1992), 56-74 (p.73).

⁷ Ernst Glaeser, *Jahrgang 1902* (Berlin: Kiepenheuer, 1928). Sales figures quoted from Richards, *German Bestseller*, p.70.

⁸ Theodor Plievier, *Des Kaisers Kulis* (Berlin: Malik, 1929). Sales figures according to Martin Travers, *German Novels on the First World War and their Ideological Implications, 1918-1933* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982), p.224.

⁹ Alexander Moritz Frey, *Die Pflasterkasten* (Berlin: Kiepenheuer, 1929). Sales figures according to Gollbach, *Wiederkehr*, p.249.

¹⁰ Edlef Koppen, *Heeresbericht* (Berlin: Horen, 1930). Sales figures quoted from Gollbach, *Wiederkehr*, p.112. According to Gollbach, in *Wiederkehr*, p.110, the novel's poor sales figures were due to the flood of works with nationalistic and pro-war attitudes as a counter-reaction to *Im Westen nichts Neues*.

¹¹ Günther Plüschow's, *Der Flieger von Tsingtau* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1916), was by far the most successful of all the pro-war narratives. By 1927 it had sold 610,000 copies. Sales figures quoted from Richards, *German Bestseller*, p.55. Other pro-war accounts, in particular Werner Beumelburg's, *Sperrfeuer um Deutschland* (Oldenburg i.O.: Stalling,

1929), had sold 150,000 copies by 1932, reaching 328,000 copies in 1940. Sales figures quoted from Richards, *German Bestseller*, p.57. His narrative *Die Gruppe Bosemüller* (Oldenburg i.O. and Berlin: Stalling, 1930), had sold 170,000 copies by 1939. Sales figures quoted from Richards, *German Bestseller*, p.61.

¹² Arnold Zweig, *Erziehung vor Verdun* (Amsterdam, 1935). The flowering period of German anti-war literature began with Zweig's first novel, *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1927), which made the author famous.

¹³ Hermann Löns, *Leben ist Sterben, Werden, Verderben*, edd. Karl-Heinz Janßen und Georg Stein (Frankfurt/Main and Berlin: Ullstein, 1988).

¹⁴ Ernst Stadler, *Dichtungen, Schriften, Briefe*, edd. Klaus Hurlebusch and Karl Ludwig Schneider (Munich: Beck, 1983). See also Richard Sheppard, *Ernst Stadler (1883-1914) A German Expressionist Poet at Oxford* (Oxford: Magdalen College, 1994).

¹⁵ Dominik Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*, edd. Angelika Tramitz and Bernd Ulrich (Munich: Knesbeck and Schuler, 1989). For a more detailed analysis of the work see my article, 'The Story of a Last-Minute Deserter - Dominik Richert's First World War Memoirs', in *War And Literature*, 6 (1994), 17-32.

¹⁶ Alfred Huhnhäuser, *Erinnerungen 1914*. Made available to me by Professor George Peden, Department of History, University of Stirling. Dr. Huhnhäuser's memoirs are currently being examined by Caroline Martin, Department of German, University of Stirling.

¹⁷ *Soldbuch* für den Unteroffizier Heinrich Josef Schaffrath. 10.Kompanie 28. Landwehr Infanterie Regiment. Issued Aachen, 4 August 1914. [in possession of the author]

¹⁸ Helen Zenna Smith, *'Not so Quiet'* (London: Hewnes, 1930).

¹⁹ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London: Gollancz, 1933).

²⁰ Vera Brittain, *Chronicle of Youth* (London: Gollancz, 1981) and (London: Collins, 1982).

²¹ Henriette Riemann, *Schwester der IV. Armee* (Berlin: Karl Voegels, 1930).

²² For the purposes of this thesis I have relied mainly on two collections of letters from the First World War, *Der deutsche Soldat - 'Briefe aus dem Weltkrieg'*, ed. Rudolf Hoffmann (Munich: Langen and Müller, 1937), and *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten*, ed. Philipp Witkop (Munich: 5th edn, Müller, 1928).

²³ Ernst Junger, *In Stahlgewittern* (Berlin: Mittler, 1920). According to Richards, in *German Bestseller*, p.84, the work was not as successful as is generally assumed; by 1940 it had sold only 60,000 copies, compared to other best-selling war prose a relatively poor number. Interestingly, though, the 16th imprint (Berlin: Mittler, 1926) reached 125,000 copies. Even less successful were *Feuer und Blut* (Magdeburg, 1925) and *Das Waldchen 125* (Berlin, 1924), since they were merely an extension of *In Stahlgewittern*. It is interesting to look at the discrepancies in the reception of *In Stahlgewittern* which resulted from the adequate impression of the technical dimension of the war. While Welzig, in *Deutscher Roman*, p.153, draws the conclusion that the account, indeed, stresses the technical nature of the war: 'Jüngers Realismus basiert auf sachlicher und technischer Richtigkeit und Genauigkeit.', J. Knight-Bostock, in his examination of German First World War writings, *Some well-known German War Novels 1914-1930* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1931), p.24,

states that 'patriotism and war are, according to Jünger, not matters for the intellect but for the emotions.'

²⁴ Rising through the ranks is, incidentally, a common feature in some anti-war novels, Reisinger, hero of Koppen's *Heeresbericht*, for example, is even promoted to the rank of Leutnant, without affecting the perspective of the central figures.

²⁵ Similarly Welzig, in *Deutscher Roman*, p.160: 'Einen Offizier könnte der unter dem Pseudonym Ludwig Renn schreibende Verfasser diesen Roman nicht erzählen lassen. Für seine sozialen und politischen Anliegen bedarf er des Gefreiten.'

²⁶ 'Über die Voraussetzungen zu meinem Buch *Krieg*', in *Eröffnungen - Schriftsteller über ihr Erstlingswerk*, ed. Gerhard Schneider (East-Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1974), pp.9-25, (p.18). (Originally in *Die Linkskurve*, 1-4 (1929)).

²⁷ The Virago edition of 'Helen Zenna Smith' comments on the name.

²⁸ Gerhard Siegert, *Kriegstagebuch eines Richtkanoniers* (Leipzig: Koehler, 1929) and Rudolf van Wehrt, *Tannenberg* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1934).

²⁹ Beumelburg, *Gruppe Bosemiller*; Franz Franziss, *Wir von der Somme* (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1936)

³⁰ Paul Ettighofer, *Sturm 1918* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1938).

³¹ I refer, in particular, to the works by Werner Beumelburg, *Sperrfeuer um Deutschland*, Paul Ettighofer's, *Sturm 1918*, and Hans Zöberlein, *Der Glaube an Deutschland* (Munich: Eher, 1931).

³² Josef Magnus Wehner, *Sieben vor Verdun* (Hamburg: Deutsche Hausbücherei, 1932). (1st edn Munich: Langen and Müller, 1930).

³³ I refer here, in particular, to Gollbach's criticism, in *Wiederkehr*, p.256, of the dangers of the worm's eye view in German anti-war writings that they provide too emotional, general and simplified a picture of the war at the front, simultaneously neglecting the economic, political and social aspects in Germany. Compare also Ulrich Broich's discussion 'World War I in Semi-Autobiographical Fiction and in Semi-Fictional Autobiography - Robert Graves and Ludwig Renn', in *Intimate Enemies*, pp.313-25, on what he regards as the creation of an alternative to modernist fiction by the war writers.

³⁴ Rudolf Frank, *Der Junge, der seinen Geburtstag vergaß* (Ravensburg: Mayer, 1992). The 1st edn was published under the title *Der Schädel des Negerhäuptlings Makaua* (Berlin and Potsdam: Kiepenheuer and Müller, 1931). See also Glaeser, *Jahrgang 1902*, and Thomas, *Katrin*.

³⁵ Compare Gollbach, *Wiederkehr*, p.54.

³⁶ Herbert Read, in his essay *The Failure of the War Books*, in *A Coat of Many Colours* (London: Routledge, 1946), pp.72-76 (p.74), makes an interesting comment on the effects of pacifist First World War literature, stating that it may have turned some people into conscientious objectors, but that it had not been able to prevent another war, in spite of showing the horrors of war to an extreme degree.

PART I

2.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GERMAN HEERESSANITÄTSSWESEN IN THE OPERATIONSGBIET AND THE ETAPPE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The object of this necessarily historical chapter is to introduce the reader to some important aspects of the organization of the German Heeressanitätswesen during the First World War which are indispensable for the understanding of the topics under discussion of this study. While this chapter cannot, by any means, provide a comprehensive classification and evaluation of the whole of the German medical military vocabulary, it will, nevertheless, try to clarify and classify medical and organizational phrases and terms regarding the Heeressanitätswesen as reflected in the German writings on the First World War.

All over Europe in August 1914 forecasts by self-proclaimed military experts, civilians and soldiers alike, showed that everybody expected the war to be a quick and successful affair which would not last six weeks or go on beyond the end of the year at the latest. The German Heeressanitätswesen was one of the first victims of these attitudes and circumstances, for the reality was that especially at the beginning of the conflict there arose a number of problems with which both the civilian and military authorities were only insufficiently prepared to cope.

To start with, since this war, unlike any other previously, was to affect to some extent almost the entire population in all of the belligerent states, the process of transforming a hitherto largely civilian society into an effective military unit capable of dealing with

the new and unknown challenge of modern war was a painful one and, in the case of Germany, took more than two years to complete. In addition, massive amounts of various supplies for the millions of combatants in the field had to be produced and prepared and transport for all purposes to be organized. As far as the organization of the German Heeressanitätswesen was concerned it is fair to say that the staff attached were confronted with similarly urgent problems, for its designated sphere of service during the First World War was enormous, ranging from the caring for the wounded soldiers at the front to the welfare of the civilians at home:

Die rasche Wiederherstellung verwundeter und erkrankter Soldaten, das Fernhalten der Kriegsseuchen, die ärztliche Fürsorge in der Heimat, in den besetzten Gebieten, die Beschaffung der Sanitätsmittel, die zweckmäßige Benutzung der Eisenbahnen und sonstiger Beförderungsmittel, die Fürsorge für die kriegsbeschädigten Soldaten u.a. fallen in den Aufgabenbereich des Heeressanitätswesens.¹

Be that as it may, although designed to serve, first and foremost, the victims of the war, the German Heeressanitätswesen was, initially, in no condition to fulfil these specific tasks even partially. Besides suffering from a lack of experienced and properly trained staff, such as dentists, pharmacists, surgeons, physiotherapists, nurses and stretcher-bearers, the medical service was also, right from the beginning of the conflict, affected by a considerable shortfall in bandages, drugs, anaesthetics and all kinds of medical instruments necessary to provide an adequate level of care and treatment for the wounded and the sick. Moreover, the indispensable administrative and practical means of organization to fulfil the demands of modern warfare simply did not exist. That was due mainly to the fact that the unified

Germany had never fought a war. The last major conflict on the European continent, the Franco-Prussian War from 1870 to 1871, had taken place almost half a century earlier, its conclusions in both medical and strategic terms were therefore already antiquated. It so happened that it was not until early 1915 that these difficulties really came to the fore and were considered with the amount of attention they merited, although after the first weeks of fighting there was sufficient evidence to assume that this war was of a totally different kind from any other fought hitherto, and one which demanded comprehensive and swift measures to cope with its gruesome reality, visible in the horrible and painful effects and results of the massive number of casualties and fatalities it produced. In spite of the enormous efforts of all the authorities concerned with alleviating the problems of the medical service, though, it remains indisputable that all the problems the German medical service had to cope with in 1914 were to remain with it for the duration of the war, and they became increasingly severe, particularly in the years from 1916 to 1918, when the Allied blockade had succeeded in effectively cutting off Germany from her much-needed overseas supplies.

But in August 1914 there were other, and compared to the ones listed above relatively minor, problems to cope with for the medical service. The war was moving fast, so fast in fact, that neither the logistics nor the members of the Heeres sanitätswesen were able to keep pace with the progress of the German armies in both Belgium and France. The organization of the caring for and transporting of the wounded, as well as the establishing of adequate medical outlets in sufficient numbers to deal with the wounded and the sick, was correspondingly quite inadequate. This fact is reflected in many German accounts, fictional

and non-fictional. Exceedingly revealing, for example, is a conversation in Renn's *Krieg* between the first-person central figure and a stretcher-bearer who was slightly wounded shortly after the invasion of Belgium, and who had adamantly refused to be taken to the nearest medical unit for treatment:

'Weshalb wolltest du eigentlich damals nicht ins Lazarett?' fragte ich. 'Ich weiß doch, wie's bei einem Lazarett auf dem Marsche ist. Da ist es besser bei der Kompanie, wo sich welche um einen kümmern.' (*Krieg*, p.123.)

The following quotation from a letter of a soldier with first-hand experience of sustaining a wound in combat is a fairly typical example of the confusion that reigned on the battlefields in the early days of the conflict, adversely affecting the casualties who had to wait hours, sometimes days, to be attended to: 'Fast zwölf Stunden gelegen', he notes, 'inzwischen von einem Arzt verbunden.'² Similarly revealing as to the fate of the enemy soldiers who suffered just as much as the German troops is the letter by a German military doctor confronted with them:

Die französischen Wunden, alle verjaucht und vereitert, mußten gespalten werden. Tagelang hatten sie neben den Leichen auf den Feldern gelegen, ohne Verband, ohne Hilfe, ohne Wasser, ohne Brot.³

The official bulletins of what was happening on the battlefields after an engagement had finished differ considerably from the letters and the narrative quoted. The following comment from an official report, sponsored by the German Reichstag, and written by the inspector of the German Heeres sanitätswesen between 1927 and 1935, is clearly designed to present the waging of (the) war as an orderly affair and reads like a section from a military manual:

Die Ärzte suchten mit den Sanitätsunteroffizieren und Krankenträgern das Schlachtfeld ab und verbanden dort die Verwundeten, soweit sie sich nicht schon selbst verbunden hatten oder von ihren Kameraden verbunden worden waren. Die Verwundeten hatten sich meist an geschützten Stellen, oft zu Dutzenden, zusammengefunden (Verwundetennester). Besonders in der Dämmerung und während der ersten Nachtstunden war es oft schwierig, die Verwundeten in Getreidefeldern zu finden, zumal diese sich nicht immer meldeten und Laternen nicht verwandt werden durften.⁴

Trying to keep up with the progress of the army was only one complication the men and women attached to the German Heeressanitätswesen encountered in the Indian summer of 1914. The alarmingly high number of sick and wounded soldiers posed another serious problem, and not only for the medical personnel, but also for the country as a whole, as there was a lack of suitable accommodation for them. In order to improve the situation, municipal buildings, schools, and other public buildings were turned into makeshift hospitals; in addition, wounded soldiers were admitted to civilian infirmaries to ease the pressure on the military medical service.⁵ The massive number of victims in the early stages of the war was largely due to two facts. First, there was the military and strategic way of thinking still rooted in the past, when large armies, often inadequately equipped, would meet on a designated field of battle, form into battle order, charge and fight until one side was either comprehensively defeated and forced to withdraw, or both sides were totally exhausted and no longer in any position to resume fighting. The experience of the American Civil War, the first modern war in history, where armies consisting of several tens of thousands of soldiers fought each other with more effective weapons than had ever been used before in a war, leading to correspondingly high numbers of dead and wounded, was

completely ignored by the strategists on both sides for almost the entire duration of the conflict. Anthony Babington, in his analysis of deserters in the British Expeditionary Force, *For the Sake of Example*, notes that ignorant commanders and generals alike, in many cases residing behind the front line, and totally out of touch with the reality in the front line, frequently ordered their troops to charge in the old-fashioned, time-honoured style, over open plains against the most effective and lethal new weapons modern technology and industry had been able to produce.⁶ And secondly, those weapons, such as long-range artillery, light and heavy machine-guns, poison gas, hand grenades and flame throwers, wrought havoc amongst the front line troops. Medical staff suddenly had to cope with injuries and wounds they neither had been expecting, nor were trained, let alone properly equipped for. The wounds sustained by the combatants ranged from gunshots to shrapnel, from stab wounds to burns, with unforeseen medical complications such as gangrene and tetanus regularly ensuing from the lack of vaccines. Maimed bodies, with limbs broken, shattered or missing altogether, became a common sight in the medical establishments of the communication zone. Shell-shock, as yet unknown and undescribed, became a common phenomenon also. In addition, once the war had turned static, diarrhoea, influenza and all kinds of infectious and pyretic diseases, such as 'Trench Fever', spread amongst the entrenched, increasing the risk of the outbreak of even more highly contagious and dangerous diseases, such as cholera and typhus. In addition to these medical problems, staff at the medical establishments had to put up with soldiers who had enough of the war and took either to inflicting wounds onto themselves, or attempting to infect themselves with contagious or venereal diseases. With the war

dragging on and no end in sight, the soldiers became also progressively weakened to the point of utter physical exhaustion due to an inadequate diet.

During the first six weeks of the conflict, however, many soldiers suffered from completely different medical conditions, such as heat stroke and sore feet. Those who could not keep marching with their units had to be taken care of and were gathered at Krankensammelpunkten. These could be anywhere, in a small country cottage as well as in a large municipal building, and were staffed by NCO's and ordinary paramedical orderlies attached to the individual army corps.

When a unit had been involved in an engagement it was desirable for the surgeons at the front to establish a Truppenverbandplatz:

Der Truppenverbandplatz mußte möglichst weit vorn liegen, da für je eine Kompanie nur je eine Krankentrage zur Verfügung stand. Hatten die Krankenträger einen auch nur 2 km weiten Weg mit einem schweren Menschen zwei- bis dreimal gemacht, so waren sie erschöpft. Die Verwundeten wurden zu dem Truppenverbandplatz getragen, der in einem Gehöft oder Haus angelegt war, um die nötigsten operativen Eingriffe vornehmen und die Verwundeten gelegentlich auch nachts über geschützt lagern zu können. Die chirurgischen Eingriffe beschränkten sich auf das Allernötigste, so wurde vorgefallener Darm zurückgebracht, unaufschiebbare Gliedabsetzungen und Unterbindungen vorgenommen und feststellende Verbände angelegt.⁷

The official post-war report on the achievements of the German medical service provided, in the bureaucratically sober and medically euphemistic language of the politicians, senior military and the physicians, an impression of a well-organized, efficient and orderly service that was quite capable of coping with the reality of modern warfare. Unfortunately it created a picture very different from that actually experienced by most of the casualties in the early days of the conflict and which their various written contributions clearly do not

reflect. To take a simple example, hidden behind the euphemistically descriptive phrase Gliedabsetzung, is the reality of a human being having parts of his body amputated. In addition, it implies pain and continued suffering and torture for a victim of the war who had to continue living without an arm, a leg, fingers, or hands.

Viewed from inside a Truppenverbandplatz, from the perspective of those members of the German Heeressanitätswesen who were immediately confronted with the results of modern warfare, things looked, of course, very different. The following is an eyewitness account by a surgeon of what he encountered during the first six weeks of the war:

Es war der 10. September 1914. Regenschauer, von kaltem Herbststurm gepeitscht, ergossen sich über die von Truppen erfüllte Dorfstraße von Sommaisne. 'Der Nachtangriff' hatte das XIII. Armeekorps schwere Verluste gekostet. Wir Truppenärzte hatten alle Hände voll zu tun, und das Gefühl menschlicher Unzulänglichkeit war noch nie so stark in Erscheinung getreten. Die Tragik des Feldarztes ist das Mißverhältnis der Zahlen: Hunderte und aber Hunderte von verwundeten Kameraden kommen in nicht endenwollenden Ketten, in Wagen und auf Tragen, gestützt auf gleichfalls Verwundete, zum Verbandplatz. Die Wiesenraine, Gräben nehmen auf, was geht; in halb zerschossenen oder noch rauchenden Trümmerstätten einstiger Häuser werden die Armen niedergelegt, - und um all diese Hilflosen sind nur wir wenigen Ärzte und das niemals ausreichende Sanitätspersonal besorgt.²

In contrast to the official bulletins, the impression of the medical services created in this account is one of chaos and disorganization.

Communication between the medical establishments and regimental and divisional headquarters in the early days of the war was, at best, insufficient; at worst, it did not exist at all. Maps to be sent to the individual units to which a medical establishment was attached were nowhere to be had, thus doctors were compelled to go the front line and look for their patients themselves, as these were unable to come to them. While the war was still an operation of moving backward and

forward, a wounded soldier would pass through several different medical establishments.

If unable to move and lucky enough to be discovered before sunset he would be picked up by some of his comrades-in-arms who would try to patch him up as best they could, if they could remember their First-Aid lessons, or by stretcher-bearers searching the battlefields for casualties, and then be taken to a Verwundetennest, where he would join other slightly injured combatants who had managed to walk there by themselves. From there he would be taken to the nearest Truppenverbandplatz where he would be attended to by a doctor who would perform the most basic medical duties, if required. After having been attended to and declared fit for transport, the wounded would then be loaded on to an ambulance and taken to a Hauptverbandplatz where he received proper medical attention and where major operations were performed. Responsible for the transport of the wounded soldier was the Krankentransportabteilung which was stationed in the communication zone. It was also responsible for the equipping and staffing of the various Lazarettzüge designed to take the casualties back to civilian infirmaries or the Lazarette in Germany. In order to facilitate their duty, which was particular stressful after a major engagement had taken place, and to guarantee a smooth and swift clearance of the Verbandplätze, the Wundtäfelchen were introduced, indicating the state of the wounded:

Dazu besaßen die Wundtäfelchen zwei abtrennbare rote Randstreifen, so daß ein Täfelchen mit 2 roten Streifen 'nicht transportfähig', mit 1 Streifen 'transportfähig', ohne Streifen 'marschfähig' bezeichnete. Im Jahre 1915 wurden noch Krankentäfelchen zur Erprobung eingeführt. Nach mehrfachen Änderungen wurden sie nunmehr als 'Wund-' oder 'Krankenzettel' bezeichnet. [...] Jeder Kranke und Verwundete, der weitergesandt wurde, sollte einen Zettel

erhalten.⁹

If a soldier was only slightly wounded he would be put on a train and taken straight back to Germany. After having recovered from his wounds he would then be posted to the Ersatztruppenteil of his regiment and, after a final medical examination, returned to his unit at the front.

Fatalities had their dogtags, worn on a metal chain round the neck, removed either by comrades-in-arms or by medical personnel. Their deaths were duly registered. Notifications of the whereabouts of their remains accompanied by their valuables were subsequently sent to their families.

Verbandplatze were often found in the most unlikely locations in the actual front line or just behind it. Many non-literary accounts, but also prose writings and novels, provide their audience with at least some form of information about the different locations of these. If the location was not conducive to the most basic provision of medical treatment and the welfare of the wounded soldiers, the atmosphere *inside* these places was very unpleasant indeed. In particular pacifist authors repeatedly make that point in their accounts:

Unter dem mächtigen Baum brannte eine kleine Laterne. Da verband ein Arzt. Ringsum lagen welche, einer mit aufgerißner Brust, wächsern und tot. Andere stöhnten.¹⁰

Familiar in most pieces of anti-war literature are descriptions of the inside of medical establishments; these range from impressions of disorganization and resignation to images of downright chaotic conditions for both patients and staff. Yet it seems that they mirror

the reality inside the Verbandplatze during the early days quite adequately.

With the war at the western front turning static, though, from about mid-September 1914 onwards, and the illusion of a swift end to the conflict gradually evaporating, a totally new situation arose which made it necessary to reorganize and restructure the organization of the logistics and the Heeressanitätswesen as a whole. Subsequently the entire region that was affected by the war became geographically divided into two different sections: the Operationsgebiet, where the armies were stationed and the actual fighting took place, and the Etappe, where communication and supplies of the armies were organized. For the wounded that meant a tangible improvement in the conditions of care:

Im Stellungskrieg änderte sich der Sanitätsdienst bei der Truppe grundsätzlich. Zunächst wurden noch Truppenverbandplatze in 2 bis 4 km zurückliegenden, einigermaßen erhaltenen Ortschaften ... errichtet. Außerdem wurden bis dicht hinter die Schützengräben der Infanterie an möglichst geschützten ortlichkeiten Gefechtsverbandplatze vorgelegt. [...] Später wurden aus den vorgeschobenen Gefechtsverbandplätzen Sanitätsunterstände, die Truppenverbandplatze wurden Bataillons- und Regiments-Sanitätsunterstände, und in den rückliegenden Orten entstanden wohlausgestattete Ortskrankenstuben, in denen der Krankendienst wie im Frieden ausgeübt wurde.¹¹

The discovery of the importance of minor medical establishments in the line, or close by it, for the Verwundetenfürsorge contributed enormously to their being turned into more comfortable, enduring and solid structures which provided shelter for the wounded more adequately than ever before, although they continued to be rather squalid places where a lack of drugs and medical equipment as well as terrible hygienic and sanitary conditions still left a lot to be desired.¹² Nevertheless, by the summer of 1915 each front line unit (company/platoon) had its own

bullet-proof Sanitätsunterstand, staffed by one NCO and several stretcher-bearers. Initially, these establishments were staffed by an Assistenzarzt but it was decided that the presence of a doctor in the trenches was not particularly desirable because he could not do anything under heavy shelling that could not just as well be done by an experienced and trained NCO. Each bataillon had its own Bataillons-Sanitätsunterstand about half a mile behind the line, designed to provide accommodation for up to forty casualties, manned by an Assistenzarzt, whose responsibilities comprised organizing the care of the wounded, performing minor operations and dressing all kinds of wounds as well as inoculating against tetanus. Soldiers unfit for further transport were kept there until they were on the mend. These places also stored great amounts of medical supplies and food. From about 1915 onwards it was not unusual for the transport of the wounded to take place while the enemy artillery was shelling the communication lines behind the front. To prevent the enemy artillery from causing more harm than it had already done, the wounded were carried in small groups to the next Regiments-Sanitätsunterstand, offering accommodation and shelter for up to one hundred wounded. The next stop for a wounded soldier was the Hauptverbandplatz, situated about six miles behind the line, to avoid it falling prey to artillery shelling, to which he was taken by an ambulance, often defying the incessant shelling of the enemy artillery: '3

Die Hauptverbandplätze sollten den Verwundeten in größerem Maße, als es die Truppenverbandplätze vermochten, ärztliche Hilfe gewähren und für deren Beförderung in die Feldlazarette sorgen. [...] Oft wurden zwei Zelte aufgeschlagen, das eine diente als Verbindzelt, das andere mehr als Operationszelt. Im Verbindzelt wurde gleichzeitig an zwei Tischen gearbeitet, im Operationszelt an einem. Leichtere Verletzungen wurden gleich nebenbei verbunden. Eine ziemlich große

Rolle spielten Einspritzungen von Morphin. [...] Die erste Sorge galt den Schwerverletzten, solchen mit Atemnot, mit Blutungen und Umschnürungen, Bauchverletzten, solchen mit Harnverhaltung. Knochenbrüche mußten ausreichende Schienenverbände erhalten. Schädelöffnungen und größere Operationen wurden besser den ablösenden oder gleichzeitig eingerichteten Feldlazaretten vorbehalten.¹⁴

As long as a soldier was not fit for transport to the nearest Feldlazarett, he was put in a hut where he enjoyed the medical care of the military nurses until he had sufficiently recovered or indeed had died.

Incidentally, according to Lyn Macdonald's excellent analysis of the medical and nursing aspects in the British Expeditionary Force in the First World War, *Roses of No Man's Land*, the medical service of the British forces was organized in a remarkably similar fashion to the German, and was confronted with remarkably similar problems:

Theoretically, the care of the casualties in the field was well-organized. A man who was wounded would make his way, or be carried, to the regimental aid-post, virtually in the line. From there, after his wound had been observed, he would be taken further back to a field dressing station, where he was given an anti-tetanus injection and where, with luck, there would be an ambulance to take him back still further to the casualty clearing station eight or ten miles behind the line. There he would be kept until he was fit to be sent by hospital train to a base hospital, where he would either be treated until he was well enough to return to his unit or to be shipped directly across the channel. It was an admirable scheme and it was no one's fault that it went wrong. It was no one's fault that the casualty clearing stations in commandeered breweries, convents and colleges at a 'safe' distance from the line were well within reach of heavy shells, that they were swamped with more wounded and sick than they could possibly have anticipated or could cope with. It was no one's fault that, although hospitals had been set up in the casinos at Boulougne and Le Touquet, in commandeered buildings in Rouen, in the old first-class waiting room of the ocean terminal at Le Havre, there were not nearly enough of them for the mass of the casualties that had to be cared for.¹⁵

The Hauptverbandplatz was run by a Sanitätskompanie consisting of

the senior surgeon, five, or possibly six Assistenz- or Unterärzte, a pharmacist and, in exceptional circumstances a dentist, one NCO in charge of twelve stretcher-bearers, two dog handlers with one tracker-dog each, to trace the wounded and the the missing soldiers on the battlefields, six stretcher-bearers to accompany the wounded aboard the ambulances, one sergeant, two corporals, thirty stretcher-bearers, two cooks, two NCO's, or privates, administering the matters of the deceased, and one private to pass on dispatches and messages.¹⁶ Three Sanitätskompanien were attached to each army corps, thus there were three Hauptverbandplatze for each corps:

Jedes Armeekorps hat zwölf Feldlazarette, die an geeigneten Stellen hinter der Front eingerichtet werden. Sie müssen an möglichst geschützte Orte gelegt werden und sind darauf eingerichtet, auch wenn die Front vorrückt, dort zu bleiben. [...] Das Feldlazarett wird nach einiger Zeit durch eine Kriegslazarettabteilung abgelöst, die nur aus Personal, Arzt, Sanitätssoldaten und freiwilligen Assistenten besteht. Jedes Armeekorps verfügt über eine solche Abteilung von etwa dreißig Ärzten und der entsprechenden Anzahl übrigen Personals. [...] Das Feldlazarett wird so durch das Vorrücken der Truppen in ein Kriegslazarett verwandelt, oder mit andern Worten: wenn das Feldlazarett mit den Truppen vorrückt, wird sein Platz von der Kriegslazarettabteilung eingenommen.¹⁷

Feld- or Kriegslazarette were established between twenty and twenty-five miles behind the front line:

Die Einrichtung der Feldlazarette war ... je nach den vorgefundenen Unterkunftsräumen sehr verschieden. Am besten eigneten sich Schlösser, große Farmen, Klöster, Schulen, unter Umständen auch Kirchen, während besonders im Osten oft nur kleine Bauernhäuser vorhanden waren, die eine erhebliche Mehrarbeit durch Zerstreung von Personal und Kranken brachten.¹⁸

The strength of staff attached to a Feld- or Kriegslazarett varied considerably during the course of the war. All kinds of specialists were attached: surgeons, neurologists, doctors for ears, nose and throat,

orthopaedists, and others. Their main task comprised the caring for the seriously injured and the sick and the wounded who were passed on from the Hauptverbandplatze. The Feld- or Kriegslazarett was subdivided into several departments and wards, and the soldiers were admitted according to the kind of wounds sustained, to:

- A. Abteilung für Bewußtlose, schwere Kopf-, Bauch- und Brustschüsse,
- B. Abteilung für komplizierte Frakturen oder
- C. Abteilung für Weichteilschüsse ohne Frakturen,
- D. Krankenabteilung, die mit C verbunden sein konnte.¹⁹

In most of the Lazarette:

Abteilungen für physikalische Behandlung ... die neben Wannen- und Brausebadern Kohlensäurebäder, Lichtbäder, Dampfkesselbäder, Dampfduschen, elektrische Bestrahlungen verabfolgten und mit Diathermie behandelten.²⁰

were also at the patients disposal.

All Feld- or Kriegslazarette strove to become self-sustaining entities. They had attached to them several kitchen units, a laundry and food stores. Large quantities of cattle, sheep and hens were kept to top up the daily menu. A tailor, a shoemaker and a joiner's workshop rounded up the perfect picture of these places.²¹

By the beginning of 1917 the organization of the German Heeressanitätswesen had almost been perfected. This had been achieved in spite of the lack of the most basic medical devices and the perpetually changing circumstances in the trenches, which created new logistical problems on an almost daily basis for which rapid solutions had to be devised. Contagious diseases, such as cholera, typhoid fever and malaria increasingly affected the combatants. Initially, the patients were put in the Krankenbaracken in a Feld- or Kriegslazarett, but soon the

scientists advising the military authorities suggested building special Lazarette for patients with contagious diseases. Thus the Seuchenlazarette were established in isolated locations well behind the line, to prevent epidemics from spreading.

A highly embarrassing issue was raised by the creation of the Lazarette für Geschlechtskrankheiten, or Ritterburgen, which were also established in isolated spots somewhere in the countryside, and which were always busy. Officers made up a considerable number of the patients, who, due to their rank and position, were entitled to a number of privileges, such as more frequent leave from the line, accommodation in specially designated hotels, special training courses, etc., and who took every chance to enjoy life to the full.

Once the sick and the wounded were found fit for transport they were passed on, often by train, infrequently by an ambulance, to the different infirmaries in Germany, either denominationally managed or run by the army itself:

Die ganze Etappenlinie entlang sind an geeigneten Punkten Verband-, Verpflegungs- und Erfrischungsstationen eingerichtet, wo Schwestern, Krankenwärter und Ärzte von Wagen zu Wagen gehen, um die Patienten zu untersuchen und diejenigen herauszufinden, die nicht mehr weiter können.²²

After being discharged from the infirmary, and following convalescent leave lasting about a fortnight, to which every patient was entitled, the soldier would undergo a final medical check-up and, if declared k.v.l., fit for duty, would be released to the Ersatztruppenteil which decided about his future area of operation.

Along with the restructuring of the Feldsanitätswesen had gone a change in the emphasis of the services offered by the Feld- and

Kriegslazarette. To meet the medical challenges brought about by the new phenomenon of trench warfare, decisions had been taken to extend the range of services from providing medical assistance and care for the wounded only, which was firmly established and working by now, to include the front line troops as well. To that end, installations for the new standard procedures each soldier was entitled to on a more or less regular basis, such as cleaning, delousing and disinfecting, were established all over the Etappe.

Delousing was a process of cleaning a soldier, his uniform and equipment which, unfortunately, happened rather irregularly. Only when admitted to a Lazarett, or when going on leave, did the ordinary front line soldier have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of this procedure.²³ Having been confined to the trenches for weeks or even months, deprived of any opportunity to clean or wash themselves properly and having grown accustomed to life in mud and unhygienic conditions, it is not surprising that the soldiers did look forward to being bathed and deloused. Not many accounts reflect on these procedures. The mood of the few that do, however, is generally very positive about the matter:

Unser erster Halt in Deutschland war die Station Annaberg. Alles mußte aussteigen, antreten, dann ging es in die Entlausungsanstalt. Diese war so groß wie ein kleines Dorf. Jeden Tag wurden dort tausende von Soldaten von ihren Läusen befreit. Wir kamen dort alle zuerst in einen großen, erwärmten Raum, wo wir uns ausziehen mußten. Alles befand sich im Adamskostüm; die meisten Soldaten waren derart abgemagert, daß sie aussahen wie ein Knochengestell. Doch alle schienen glücklich ... Nun ging es in den Baderaum. Von oben spritzte das warme Wasser in mehr als 200 Strahlen hernieder. Jeder stellte sich unter eine Brause. Wie wohl das tat, als das warme Wasser den Körper herunterrieselte. Seife war genug vorhanden, bald waren wir alle ganz weiß von Seifenschäum. Nun noch einmal unter die Brause, dann ging es in den Ankleideraum. Jeder bekam ein neues Hemd, Unterhosen sowie Strümpfe. Unsere Uniformen waren inzwischen in großen, eisernen Röhren aufgefangen worden, die nun bis zu 90 Grad erhitzt wurden. Die Hitze tötete Lause und Nissen, die sich in den Kleidern befanden. Die Kleider selbst waren arg zerknüllt und

gelblich geworden. [...] Wie wohl uns war, läusefrei zu sein, kann nur der verstehen, der schon von diesem Ungeziefer gequält wurde.²⁴

Other medical standard procedures introduced in the course of 1915 comprised regular inoculations against infectious diseases and a regular medical check-up of the genitals. Some of these procedures, although vital and necessary for a soldier's health, were not very pleasant. Renn, for example, in *Krieg*, states that some of them were, indeed, quite a painful affair:

Eines Tages wurden wir gegen Typhus geimpft. Wir bekamen eine Flüssigkeit unter die Haut gespritzt. Die Krankenträger hatten uns gesagt, daß wir gegen Abend Fieber bekommen würden. [...] Die Stelle, wo ich gestern die Spritze bekommen hatte, schmerzte etwas. [...] Diesen Tag war es in unsrer Kompanie wie in einem Lazarett.²⁵

As the discussion of the discrepancies in the presentation of the medical and nursing aspects arising in Weimar war literature is, predominantly, an examination of the perception and presentation of the medical staff and the service role of medicine in regard to the diseases and wounds which emerged as a result of the conflict, each of the following chapters is designed to take account of these aspects and the way they have been presented by contemporary and Weimar authors.

NOTES

¹ Anton Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht über das Deutsche Heer im Weltkriege 1914/1918*, 3 vols (Berlin: Mittler, 1935), I, (preface) unpaginated.

² Wilhelm Gebert, letter dated 12. August 1914, in *Der deutsche Soldat*, pp.25-27 (p.27).

³ Otto Quietmeyer, letter dated November 1914, in *Der deutsche Soldat*, pp.43-50 (pp.43-44).

⁴ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.80.

⁵ Katrin Lentz, in Adrienne Thomas, *Die Katrin wird Soldat* (Munich: Goldmann, 1988), p.105, reports about a palais near Metz which was turned into a school building, then a theatre, and which will soon be transformed into a Lazarett. Jünger, in *Stahlgewitter*, p.126, sustains a serious wound and finds himself in a secondary school (Gymnasium) in Valenciennes that has been turned into a Kriegslazarett. In *Im Westen*, p.248, Remarque's protagonist, Baumer, is wounded at the front and taken to a Catholic infirmary in Germany.

⁶ Anthony Babington, *For the Sake of Example* (London: Paladin, 1985), p.96; p.140. For an interesting analysis of these aspects of the war see Alan Clarke, *The Donkeys* (London: Hutchinson, 1961). The musical, then film *Oh, what a Lovely War* (England/France, 1964) was, incidentally, based on Clark's acid study of the experience of the British Expeditionary Force at the Western Front in 1915.

⁷ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.80.

⁸ Walter Wiedersheim, 'Arzte und Sanitäter an der Front', in *Was wir vom Weltkrieg nicht wissen*, edd. Walter Jost and Friedrich Felger (Leipzig: 2nd edn, Fikent, 1938), pp.399-412 (p.400).

- ⁹ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.177.
- ¹⁰ Renn, *Krieg*, p.83.
- ¹¹ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, pp.80-81.
- ¹² See Otto Heinebach, *letter dated 18. Juli 1916*, in *Kriegsbriefe*, pp.212-13 (p.212).
- ¹³ Notably Jünger, in *Stahlgewitter*, p.113, remembered and vividly described his ordeal of being put onto a vintage ambulance driven by a ruthless maniac under heavy shelling over bumpy roads. The issue also received some novelistic treatment in Renn's *Krieg*, pp.231-33.
- ¹⁴ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, pp.101-02.
- ¹⁵ Lyn Macdonald, *Roses of No Man's Land* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p.68.
- ¹⁶ For a comprehensive description of the organization of the German Sanitätstruppe in the First World War see Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, pp.97-99.
- ¹⁷ Sven Hedin, *Ein Volk in Waffen* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1915), pp.99-100.
- ¹⁸ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.111.
- ¹⁹ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.112.
- ²⁰ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.128.
- ²¹ For a detailed description of the equipment of a Lazarett see *Das Kriegslazarett D*, (Berlin: Klett, 1916).
- ²² Hedin, *Volk in Waffen*, pp.100-01.
- ²³ Without an Entlassungsschein no soldier, or sailor, was allowed to enter Germany. It seems, however, that exceptions were made occasionally, especially when a soldier was in a hurry to get home:

Es war funfzehn Minuten vor Abgang meines Dampfers. 'Sind sie entlaust?' iragte der Offizier hinter dem Schalfer. 'Nein!' 'Dann

dürfen sie nicht aus Libau heraus.' 'Marine hat keine Lause!' rief ich respektlos. 'Wir haben nur Ratten und Kakerlaken.' Wirklich ließ man mich daraufhin lauten.

Cited from Gustav Hester, *Als Mariner im Krieg*, ed. Joachim Ringelnatz (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1929), p.146.

²⁴ Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, pp.184-85. Similarly Walter Schmidt, letter dated 27. September 1915, in *Kriegsbriefe*, pp.280-81 (p.280).

²⁵ Renn, *Krieg*, pp.164-65. On p.3 of the Soldebuch für den Unteroffizier Heinrich Josef Schafirath there is a list of entrances of various inoculations for the year 1915: Typhus: I. 1. Januar 1915, II. 7. Januar 1915, III. 19. Januar 1915, IV. 29. September 1915, V. 6. Oktober 1915. Cholera: I. 21. Februar 1915, II. 2. März 1915, III. 22. Mai 1915. It also shows that the inoculations against both cholera and typhus were regularly repeated in 1916 and 1917.

3.

THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTION OF THE LAZARETT

Discrepancies in the perception and, consequently, in the presentation, of the Lazarett in German First World War prose are, surprisingly, substantial. This is all the more remarkable as almost all the authors had first-hand experience of the Lazarett themselves, for they had been wounded and admitted to a Lazarett once, or even several times, in the conflict. Even accounts by writers who had first-hand experience of the day-to-day running of a Lazarett, including ambulance-drivers and stretcher-bearers, whose perspective was relatively limited, but who provided the vital link between the trenches and the hinterland, and also paramedics and nurses, differ quite considerably in their presentation of the atmosphere, care, food and treatment, and life in general inside such a medical establishment. It is also very difficult to draw a clear dividing line between nationalist war fiction and anti-war novels and narratives as far as the presentation of the Feldlazarett and the atmosphere inside it is concerned, since both literary modes utilize the same range of topoi, motifs and symbols for the pursuance of their own particular intentions; that is to say, each can interpret a particular detail in a significantly distinct fashion to make a certain point about the war. In fact, most of the German war novels dedicate either entire chapters or paragraphs, or at least some lengthy sections, to the description of a variety of such medical establishments, including the Feld- or Kriegslazarett. It is further worth noting that while some post-war novelists use the picture of the Lazarett as a means to promote pacifism and anti-war sentiments, seeking

to destroy the myths surrounding the place thoroughly, and to combat the overwhelmingly positive perceptions presented to the general public and, indeed, to many combatants as well, there are others, albeit only a few, who do not, or cannot include the issue as a vehicle either to make a point against (the) war and promote pacifist ideas, or to show the effects and results of modern warfare on the soldiers involved. One example of the latter is Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902*. Taking a child's point of view of the war at the home front, the prevailing attitude of the young protagonist is that war is a matter for the adults. References are made to the sight of a Lazarettzug and a wounded soldier being taken to an infirmary, but neither point is elaborated further, nor could it be without damage to the fictionality, although there is an instance of a crash involving a soldier who dies as a result of the (civil) accident.¹

Trying to establish the truth about the reality of life inside a First World War Lazarett in the literary sources at our disposal is difficult. Since the presentation of the Lazarett goes hand in hand with the intention of each individual author to show as little, or as much, of what life inside such medical establishments generally meant for both the patients and the medical personnel, both the perspective of an author, either as patient, a member of staff, or a mere observer, and his/her attitudes towards the war must be taken into account in considering the value of each of their individual literary contributions. Examining pacifist German First World War prose in this context, the perception and presentation of the Lazarett can thus be divided into two different categories. The first promotes an apparently ambivalent view of life inside such medical establishments; that is to say, it blends a variety of positive images of a Lazarett, familiar also

in nationalist war fiction, and somewhat idealized attitudes towards a Lazarett, with images and motifs common to most anti-war novels; the other takes a more down-to-earth, unsentimental approach. These two views may be demonstrated by a closer examination of two major war novels from the later years of the Weimar Republic.

a) The deliberately ambivalent approach: Arnold Zweig's *Erziehung vor Verdun*²

Nowhere else is the deliberately ambivalent approach to the Lazarett found in a more elaborate fashion than in the novels of Arnold Zweig, and of these, *Erziehung vor Verdun* is certainly the most complex example in that respect. Of course, it would be unfair to accuse Zweig of being out of touch with, and trying to distort the reality of life inside a Lazarett. That this is not the case becomes plain as his novels progress; but it is certainly correct to argue that his protagonist in *Erziehung vor Verdun*, the sapper Bertin, is in a state of ignorance, at least at the time the story begins, for his knowledge of what life inside a medical establishments is like stems entirely from rumours spread out by his comrades-in-arms. His initial enthusiasm is, therefore, arguably due to his lack of personal experience and limited perspective. A sapper in the front line, he has never been wounded himself, nor has he ever had a chance, or reason, to visit a Lazarett. That is all part of the plot set by the author. As the story unfolds, Bertin, who is in the middle of an educational process, is to discover that the reality of life inside the Feldlazarett Dannevaux is anything

but a pleasant affair, either for the patients or for the medical personnel involved. Since Zweig's perspective in the novel is that of the omniscient author who remains in the background while the story progresses, it allows him to provide his audience with a variety of images and perceptions of a Lazarett, depending on his intentions at a particular stage in the plot; these can be anything from unequivocally congenial to completely depressing. The following instance is an example of a rumour heard by Bertin:

Ein Lazarett ist natürlich ein Quell der Wonne und eine paradiesische Oase; und wer wollte eine Kelle voll Graupen verachten, die, mit Rindfleischbrocken durchwürzt, kameradschaftlich in ein Kochgeschirr fällt? (*Erziehung ...*, p.242)

Ideas like this appear in the novel repeatedly, but since they never effectively materialize in the course of the story itself, they remain confined to the realm of imagination of the front line soldiers. At this point it is interesting to note the aspect of a Lazarett as a source of food in sufficient quantity and of excellent quality. This image emerges occasionally in other German war novels as well, for example in Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*, where Bäumer, visiting his mortally wounded friend Kemmerich, echoes that myth.³

In *Erziehung vor Verdun*, though, Zweig goes much further than that. The novel is subdivided into nine individual books, the eighth of which is dedicated predominantly to the description of the atmosphere and life inside the Feldlazarett Dannevaux. (pp.254-321) Throughout the book the impression prevails that Dannevaux is a fairly typical example of a German Feldlazarett in the First World War. The images of the various wards, the portrayal of the medical personnel, the operating theatres

and the great number of extra-mural departments attached resemble the descriptions in military manuals and brochures published in the war.⁴ The heading of its first chapter, 'Die selige Insel', (p.254) is significant for, at first sight, it seems to reiterate and support Bertin's, and his comrades'-in-arms positive attitudes and views of a Lazarett. However, it is important to emphasize again Bertin's position in the context of the eighth book. His experience and perception of the Feldlazarett Dannevaux are based not as a patient admitted to a ward but on his personal position as a soldier who repeatedly visits wounded comrades-in-arms, in particular Leutnant Eberhard Kroysing, whose brother Christoph Bertin met shortly before Christoph was killed at Verdun. In addition, Zweig allows the patients to put across their views on the Lazarett in the succeeding chapters of the eighth book, thereby aiding Bertin to obtain eventually a more balanced view of the Lazarett.

With the protagonist himself entering Dannevaux, the audience is given a first indication of life inside a Feldlazarett:

Stöhnen drang durch einen dünnen Nebel von Abwehr, den er um sich legte; Gerüche von Jodoform und Lysol wehten ihn an; als sich eine Schwester mit einem zugedeckten Kubel an ihm vorüberzwängte, machte ihm die plötzliche Nähe von Eiter und verdorbenen Säften nahezu Übelkeit. Durch eine offenstehende Tür blinkten dicke weiße Verbände, eine Reihe Betten, ein hochgebundenes Bein, die Rücken zweier Schwestern. (*Erziehung ...*, p.255)

While this image emerges in many other anti-war novels, too, where it functions as a reminder of the effects of the war of attrition on masses of human beings involved, in this instance it is only the audience who gets a glimpse of the reality of life inside Dannevaux. As far as Bertin himself is concerned, not only is this moment of truth too short an experience to have any substantial impact on him, but he is also

determined not to let that passing impression affect him, or his views on a Lazarett generally, in any way. Indeed, Bertin exhibits a kind of defense mechanism that shows his determination to continue denying the undeniable. But Bertin's resistance to learning is skillfully underlined by Zweig's use of the image of the closed, and thus impenetrable, shell. Bertin remains, literally, impervious to the impressions which are an integral part of the reality of life in Dannevaux:

All das wollte in seiner ganzen schweren Bedeutsamkeit erfaßt und eingeordnet werden; er aber sperrte sich zu wie eine Muschel.
(*Erziehung . . .*, p.255)

That process continues even when he comes face-to-face with the patients, also part of the reality of any medical establishment:

Es roch im Zimmer nach Verbänden und nach Wunden, nach Zigarettentabak und nach Seife. (*Erziehung . . .*, p.256)

In contrast to other pacifist war novels, where the mixture of pungent smells of carbolic, excrement and pus is an inevitable aspect of the atmosphere inside a Lazarett, Bertin's impressions of the atmosphere inside a ward in Dannevaux seem quite pleasant. In this section Zweig deliberately touches on the medical aspects of a Lazarett superficially, only to elaborate that aspect of life inside such a place further later on in the novel. More important, for the time being, is his intention of emphasizing the discrepancy between life at the front and life behind the line. Bertin is, after all, representative for many common front line soldiers for whom trench warfare meant, above all, suffering from the unpalatable effects of the fighting as well as rain and snow, cold and heat, malnutrition and vermin, filth and mud. That a

Lazarett, placed several miles behind the front line and therefore out of the range of the guns, but still in the vicinity, and within reach, of the front, looked like a desirable location to be in to any front line soldier is understandable. Bertin's knowledge of any Lazarett has, as yet, been confined entirely to hearsay and rumours. Since he has hitherto had no first-hand experience of such places, neither as a patient, nor as a visitor, it is not surprising that his preconditioned views, based on his limited perspective of the war, cause him to select aspects of the reality of life inside a Lazarett that perfectly match those views instilled into him by his comrades-in-arms:

Aber warm war es, hell und sauber - paradiesisch und beneidenswert erschien Bertin dies Dasein, und er hätte überlegen können, daß eine Zeit vielleicht verrückt sei, die Qual, Blut und Wunden als Eingangszoll für ein so bescheidenes Wohlsein erhob. Doch kam er nicht auf solche Bemerkungen; viel zu selbstverständlich umlagerte ihn die Kriegswelt mit ihren verrenkten Wertungen.
(*Erziehung* ..., p.256)

It is, of course, impossible to deny these, more pleasant, aspects of life in a Lazarett. But while these all feature prominently in most *Weimar nationalist* war fiction, Zweig makes explicit references to the repulsive medical and military aspects as well. By presenting matters in this way, Zweig keeps the audience aware, even at this stage, of the fact that a Lazarett has, indeed, some negative features to it. However, in this instance his philosophical contemplations do not extend to his protagonist. Author, central figure and reader approach the Lazarett from their own perspective; author and audience with the additional hindsight knowledge of the First World War, while Bertin is experiencing and learning about the war from within. While the audience is allowed a relatively extensive view of the medical aspects of the war, Bertin's

process of education is, at that stage in the novel, still in its infancy.

The next scene is an interesting example of the perception of the Feldlazarett by Bertin. Having been made welcome by both patients and staff alike, he is seen spooning down a bowl of warm soup topped up with tiny pieces of beef and low-quality noodles. This confirms for him his positive perceptions of medical establishments even further and causes him to liken the Lazarett again to a paradisaical island of the blessed. He merrily remarks:

'Ich wußte doch', damit legte Bertin den Löffel in die Schüssel und sah auf, 'hier bin ich auf die Insel der Seligen geraten.'
(*Erziehung ...*, p.259)

His second visit to the Feldlazarett leaves another positive mark on Bertin's mind. Although not a patient, he enjoys some of the benefits only patients are entitled to:

Bertin lag in einer Wanne voll heißen Wassers. [...] Seit neun Monaten hatte er nicht mehr die tiefe Lust solch eines heißen Bades geschmeckt; nur im Bach und sehr selten unter einer Dusche hatte er Gelegenheit gehabt, die alte Haut vom Körper zu reiben. [...] Welch unermessliches Gut stellte eine Wanne voll heißen Wassers dar ... welch köstliche Entspannung schenkte sie, welch gliederlösendes Versinken. (*Erziehung ...*, p.291)

These are novelistic images, and Bertin is a fictitious character, after all; but there is an interesting parallel in a non-literary memoir of a wounded soldier recovering in a Feldlazarett after suffering from an unpleasant medical condition:

Ich bekam plötzlich im Graben einen heftigen Darmkatarrh. [...] Ins Feldlazarett gesteckt. [...] Wieder einmal ein Bett und ein Bad! Nun bin ich acht Tage hier und kann schon wieder etwas aufstehen und in dem herrlichen Garten mich wie ein verzauberter Prinz fühlen.⁵

Von Rohden's perceptions of the Feldlazarett resemble Bertin's impressions almost to the letter, but, unlike Zweig's protagonist, he is a genuine patient in a real Feldlazarett, albeit recovering from a physical illness, not a war wound; but his presentation of a Feldlazarett, the use of the images of the glorious garden reminding him of paradise, and that of the fairy-tale prince, in a non-literary war memoir, are remarkable because they portray a contrast in the reality of life inside a Lazarett that has found its literary reverberation, as a motif, in Zweig's novel as well. These images may have been randomly selected by von Rohden in the literary context of his letter, but they confirm, nevertheless, the popular (mis-) conceptions by soldiers of the Lazarett as a most desirable location. It is further important to note the use of the word Feldlazarett in von Rohden's letter. Although this is a military term, it could refer to both civilian and military infirmaries. During the war the soldiers certainly used the term indiscriminately. Also, its use in novels and narratives sometimes depends on the time of their writing. Those written during the war and shortly after still confuse the civilian and military medical establishments, but later publications stressed the military aspects of the word Feldlazarett to put across their points of view, mainly anti-war and pacifist, and used overwhelmingly militaristic language as an additional means to that end. Finally, it is interesting to note that von Rohden's perceptions of the Feldlazarett are unambiguously positive; but his first-hand experience is only one part of the reality of life inside a Lazarett. Furthermore, the sick patients were generally kept separate from the genuinely wounded, with no chance of access to their wards; besides, von Rohden, personally, was on the mend.

The heading of the second chapter of the eighth book of Zweig's novel, 'Das leidende Fleisch', (p.262) is an indication that the broadening of Bertin's horizon is about to begin in earnest. With the start of the new chapter occurs an important shift of perception. Bertin turns from being just a beneficiary of (unmerited) medical blessings, to an observer of sick and wounded patients. Their point of view adds a different aspect and meaning to the purpose and the picture of life inside a Lazarett and is subsequently spelled out by the use of several literary topoi familiar in pacifist German war prose. One of these is the Verbandwechsel, the changing of the bandages or dressings. In medical terms the changing of dressings is one important aspect of patients' care. Meant to alleviate the suffering of the wounded and accelerate and support the healing process, it is an operation beneficial to those affected. But even if the patients are aware of that, the following statement by one of them on the procedure indicates that, from a sufferer's point of view, it is not at all a pleasant experience:

'Das Schlimmste ist vormittags der Verbandwechsel' ... 'so daliegen und wissen: jetzt wirst du geschunden, und dagegen wächst kein Kraut ...' [...] Seit dem Verbandwechsel, fuhr er fort, wisse er, wie es den Gefolterten im Mittelalter zumute gewesen sei, wenn sie sich sagen mußten: morgen um neun werde ich wieder verhört; und denen, die auf ihre Hinrichtung warteten. Was für eine Qual das sei, einfach stillhalten und mit sich machen lassen zu müssen wie der Säugling in den Windeln; der entsetzliche Schmerz, der Eingriff ins Leben und an die Nieren - das alles sei furchtbar. Es brauche gar nicht mehr der Hinrichtung selbst, des Gehängtwerdens, des Kopfabhackens oder Erschießens ... es genügte schon zum Gegenstand fremder Maßnahmen im Bereich seines eigenen Körpers erniedrigt zu werden. (*Erziehung* ..., p.296f.)

The passage quoted contains several interesting aspects of life inside a Lazarett from a patient's point of view, which provide an interesting connexion between life there and life out at the front. First, there is,

implicitly and explicitly stated, the continuous presence of pain and suffering; secondly, both pain and suffering on the wards have a monotonous regularity to them, just as do the dying and suffering in the trenches; and finally, even the merciful and medically necessary acts, such as the Verbandwechsel are a painful affair for the patients, hence the new image of the Lazarett as a Folterkammer, a torture chamber. Furthermore, there is the patient's complaint about a lack of privacy; both nurses and doctors do ignore it, sometimes of necessity, for they have to work on the most intimate parts of his body to enable him to recover speedily. Trench warfare had a similar impact on personal privacy; the nature of the fighting and its devastating consequences for millions of human beings deprived the troops of feelings of embarrassment and shame almost completely. However, Zweig's indirect presentation of the Verbandwechsel is ambiguous, as he allows the patient to qualify his statements before long:

Aber alles was recht war: man wurde nicht mehr als nötig geschunden, das Essen gab sich Mühe, kräftig zu sein, der Umgangston war munter, aber herzlich, ein bißchen zu christlich für Pahl's Geschmack. Aber besser christlich als altpreußisch. [...] Fünfmal am Tage bekam man zu essen und zum Unterschied von den Gesunden Dinge, die für unsere braven Feldgrauen längst zur Sage geworden waren.
(*Erziehung* ..., p.312)

The section quoted confirms the view that it was the patients, first and foremost, who were entitled to the benefits a Lazarett had to offer. What it leaves unanswered, though, is the question whether or not these benefits are an adequate compensation for the suffering the patients are compelled to endure? Zweig's answer is at best inconclusive since he prefers to turn the attention away from the medical field to political and social issues instead:

Gewiß hat das Lazarett, ganz wie erwartet, den Charakter des Klassenstaates: die Ärzte, Offiziere, Schwestern, die Mannschaftspatienten, und dazwischen die Krankenpfleger, die allmählich herausbekommen, wenn auch viel zu langsam, zu welcher Front sie gehören: nämlich zu den Strammstehern, den Patienten dritter Klasse. (*Erziehung ...*, p.312)

In his post-First World War analysis of the medical aspects in the Allied Forces and the Central Powers, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, which is based, to a certain extent, on personal experience and the examination of literary and non-literary war memoirs of participants, as well as on official health reports and statistics, Magnus Hirschfeld reached a similar conclusion on that very point:

Der militärische Standesunterschied wurde auch im Krankensaal nicht aufgegeben und drückte sich ... in der Heilbehandlung aus. Der gemeine Soldat war auch hier der Gemeine, der Kommiß-, der Massenmensch.⁶

In *Im Westen nichts Neues* Remarque makes the point that Bäumer and his friends have to bribe a reluctant medical orderly with some cigarettes to make him mitigate the pain of their friend Kemmerich with morphine. Kropp's comment: 'Du bedienst wohl nur Offiziere?' is symptomatic for their view of the inequality of medical treatment in the army. (p.22) Baumer makes a reference to a Lazarettinspektor:

In der Heimat waren bei den Reserve- und Festungslazaretten, den Sanitätsdepots und den Hauptsanitätsdepots obere und untere Lazarettverwaltungsbeamten nach den Bestimmungen der Friedenssanitätsordnung tätig, und zwar gehörten zu den Oberbeamten die Lazarettoberinspektoren, -verwaltungsinspektoren und -inspektoren, und zu den Unterbeamten die Zivilkrankenwärter, die Hausdiener, Maschinisten und Heizer.⁷

who turns up in the Catholic infirmary after an incident involving soldiers throwing a bottle at the sisters for refusing to close the

door, thus compelling these men, who are totally disillusioned with religion due to the war, to listen to their hymns and prayers:

Mittags kommt der Lazarettinspektor und ranzt uns an. Er verspricht uns Festung und noch mehr. Nun ist ein Lazarettinspektor, genau wie ein Proviantamtsinspektor, zwar jemand, der einen langen Degen und Achselstücke trägt, aber eigentlich ein Beamter, und er wird darum nicht einmal von einem Rekruten für voll genommen.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.250)

Köppen's *Heeresbericht*, on the other hand, takes a quite different approach and adds an aspect to the discussion that not only appears unexpected, but lacks many of the conventional literary images of a Lazarett utilized by anti-war literature.²⁹ Uniquely in German war prose, the author succeeds in portraying a medical establishment without mentioning anything really medical even once. In that instance the medical aspects are of no concern to him. Instead, he directs the attention of the audience towards the inhumanity displayed by the patients, the medical personnel and even the Catholic priest towards a soldier on a human level, thereby destroying the myth that casualties, no matter who they are and where they come from, are human beings first and foremost who are entitled to, and do, indeed, receive, adequate medical assistance. The scene is set in a typical wartime Feldlazarett to which the Gunner Reisiger, central character of the story, is admitted after having been wounded in an artillery attack. That the Lazarett is run by the Bavarian army may be coincidental; at first sight, and from Reisiger's perspective, the place looks like any German Feldlazarett. Before long, though, the significance of Köppen's choice becomes evident, for Reisiger's hosts' priorities put the rank of a soldier secondary to his origins. Reisiger, presumed Prussian, but Saxon

by birth, experiences discrimination by his fellow patients as well as by the paramedical orderly and the medical practitioner for that very reason. He suffers isolation and negligent medical treatment:

Das ging bis zum Arzt, der bei der Morgensite nie etwas anderes sagte als: 'Na unser Preuße wird ja wohl von selber gesund werden.' Und nicht einmal Jod wurde verordnet. (*Heeresbericht*, p.97)

until, one day, his real roots are coincidentally discovered by the Catholic priest attached to the Lazarett. But although the latter does not openly display the same parochial attitudes as his countrymen, he can hardly conceal them. Worse still, his jingoistic language betrays him as a warmonger of the worst kind:

'Nicht wahr, Kamerad, es geht schon viel besser, man muß nur Geduld haben, in ganz kurzer Zeit dürfen Sie wieder an der Front sein.' [...] 'Erholen Sie sich gut; bald werden wir alle wieder vor dem Feinde stehen, und seien Sie versichert, über ein kurzes haben wir den Sieg errungen.' (*Heeresbericht*, p.98)

From these utterances it is evident that his main concern is not the spiritual comfort, or moral guidance of the wounded, but to see them recover speedily so that they can be sent back to the front and proceed with their unchristian duties.⁹ Reisinger, though, now accepted as equal, since non-Prussian, by the Bavarian soldiers, comes to enjoy all the benefits wounded soldiers are entitled to. This, again, is an ironic turn, for now that he could enjoy unimpededly all the benefits the Lazarett has to offer, Reisinger's endeavours are geared towards gaining an early discharge and returning to his battery as quickly as possible out of a sense of duty.

That Köppen chose the Lazarett, of all places, to show a different kind of brutality and cruelty of the war on a distinctly non-medical

level is, indeed, ironic, since most of the other pacifist writers utilized it as a symbol to make a statement against the war, because, in their view, it was here that the true nature of the war revealed itself.

In *Erziehung vor Verdun*, with his central figure back at the front, and therefore no longer in a position to observe and comment on the everyday reality in the Feldlazarett, Zweig proceeds to provide his audience with a picture of the routine of life inside the Feldlazarett Dannevaux, making extensive use of a variety of motifs and images which other novels make use of occasionally as well, to that end:

Der Vormittagsbetrieb in einem ziemlich ausgedehnten Feldlazarett beansprucht alle Menschen voll, die damit betraut sind, das menschliche Elend zu lindern und die verstümmelten oder vorübergehend lahmgelagten Männer wieder in den Besitz ihrer Kräfte zu bringen. [...] Die manchmal schreckliche Zeremonie des Verbindens mit ihrem Stöhnen, Zähnezusammenbeißen, Fluchen, ihrem Anschnuazen und Gutzureden geht vorüber, das heißt, sie schreitet von Saal zu Saal fort. Schwestern schleppen Kübel mit vereitertem oder sonst unbrauchbar gewordenem Zellstoff hinaus, der verbrannt wird. (*Erziehung* ..., p.318)

The sudden noises, such as the moaning, groaning and yelling of the patients, the images of casualties suffering pain, the nauseating smell of wounds hanging around the wards, and the all-prevailing filth, provide a picture of the Lazarett that is much closer to that reiterated by other anti-war novelists. Again, it is interesting to note the motif of the endless and monotonous regularity of pain and suffering of human beings inside any Lazarett, familiar in other presentations of the war of attrition, which everywhere had a similarly merciless routine to it.

Since, historically, all Lazarette strove to become self-sustaining units and for that purpose kept a variety of domestic or farm animals on their premises, for Zweig that fact is too good an opportunity to be

missed as he concludes his presentation of a Feldlazarett with an almost paradisaical scene:

Auf dem Hof aber gackern, picken, tummeln sich Scharen weißer und hellbrauner Hühner, von krähenden Hähnen angeführt, grunzen Schweine in abgetrennten Koben, hoppeln die langohrigen belgischen Kaninchen, riesig, mit sanften Fellen und Augen. (*Erziehung ...*, p.319)

This image is symbolic for a place - theoretically - at ease with itself.

Symbolic for the misery of the war, however, and another recurrent motif in anti-war literature, are references to the lack of medical supplies, in particular bandages:

Da die Heimat nur noch Papierbinden und statt der Watte Zellstoff, das heißt auch Papier, lieferte.
(*Erziehung ...*, p.312)

While Zweig's description of the effects of the blockade in 1916 is deliberately sarcastic, Bäumer, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, comments on its effects in 1917 from the point of view of a wounded in an infirmary in Germany in a resigned and simple fashion:

Die Verbände sind nicht mehr aus Stoff, sie bestehen nur noch aus Krepp-Papier. Verbandstoff ist zu knapp geworden draußen.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.265)¹⁰

Finally, and to complete his exploration of the Lazarett, Zweig makes use of its significance as a sanctuary in war:

Und gegen die Flieger breitet das Rote Kreuz auf dem Dache und auf der gehißten Flagge schützend sein geweihtes Zeichen aus.¹¹

The image is familiar in many of the war accounts. Historically, all

installations designated in the fashion described by Zweig enjoyed protection under the 'Geneva Convention':

Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field ...

[...]

Chapter II Medical Units and Establishments

[...]

Art. 6 - Mobile medical units [...] and the fixed establishments of the medical service shall be respected and protected by the belligerents.

Art. 7 - The protection to which medical units and establishments are entitled ceases if they are made use of to commit acts harmful to the enemy.

[...]

Chapter VI The Distinctive Emblem

[...]

Art. 18 - As a compliment to Switzerland, the heraldic emblem of the red cross on a white ground, formed by reversing the federal colours, is retained as the emblem and distinctive sign of the medical service of armies.

Art. 19 - With the permission of the competent military authority this emblem shall be shown on flags and armlets [...] as well as on all material and belonging to the medical service.¹²

The 'Geneva Convention' from 22 August 1864 was signed by, amongst others, Baden, Hesse, Prussia, Württemberg, Belgium, France and Great Britain, but not Bavaria,¹³ and there was a revised version in 1906. But even the best intended declarations cannot prevent the unthinkable from happening. In the First World War medical units and establishments were occasionally attacked, bombed and shelled accidentally by both sides. In the next instance, Zweig's use of the image of the Lazarett serves his

intentions to show the random nature of the war. He sets the scene for disaster skillfully. Dannevaux has become a sanctuary not only for the casualties of war, but also for two lovers, nurse Kläre and Leutnant Kroysing, but the Feldlazarett is destroyed in a nocturnal air raid. The irony of the situation is patent. The Red Cross, the symbol of safety, shelter and sanctuary, cannot be spotted in the dark. But Zweig's intentions of showing the true nature of war which kills massive numbers of people indiscriminately, regardless of their achievements, character, or positions, are clear; death in war is a senseless waste of human life. However, the destruction of Dannevaux has more serious implications than that. More than a medical establishment has been destroyed and more than an article of the 'Geneva Convention' breached. Under the rubble of Dannevaux there are buried both justice and humanity, genuine feelings of love between two people, a woman and a man, representative for mankind as a whole. Just at a time when love begins to blossom between two human beings amidst all the destruction and madness of the war the two lovers fall prey to the conflict, each in their own peculiar way, as does mankind as a whole. While nurse Kläre survives the air raid severely shocked, Leutnant Kroysing is killed. His death is a symbolic statement that love has no chance to blossom in wartime, since war makes no distinction between the good or the bad, the just or the unjust, the compassionate or the ruthless people. (p.350)

Zweig's narrative ends, however, on a more positive note, which can also be interpreted as intended by the author to stress again the random nature of war. Through a lucky coincidence Bertin escapes the destruction of the Feldlazarett. Soon afterwards he is transferred to

the relatively quiet and safe Russian front, before anyone can do him any more harm.

b) The realistic approach: Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*

Those authors of pacifist German First World War prose who take a more pragmatic approach to illustrating the atmosphere and life inside a wartime Lazarett do so by providing a number of images, ranging from that of a single casualty, to that of endlessly long rows of stretchers, or beds, occupied by wounded soldiers who wait to be attended to, suffering pain, or dying, or of patients who are being operated on. The bulk of attention is always on showing the effects and results of modern warfare on human beings. Non-literary war memoirs, written in the war and by those with first-hand experience of the results of the fighting, contain certain disturbing aspects of life inside a variety of medical establishments; this shows that they were an inextricable part of the experience of the reality of modern warfare.¹⁴ For the pacifist post-war novelists, such illustrations, regularly connected to the Lazarett, must have seemed a perfect vehicle to put their anti-war message across. Their presentations of the reality of life in the Lazarett, based, perhaps, on their first-hand experience and conveyed by their central characters, are generally full of similarly disturbing impressions. One author taking this approach is Remarque, who has Bäumer, the central character in his novel *Im Westen nichts Neues*, summarize the perception of the role of the Lazarett concisely and neatly: 'Erst das Lazarett zeigt, was der Krieg ist.' (p.260) While this statement sums up the

general attitude towards presenting the Lazarett in most anti-war novels, each individual author's approach varies. However, Remarque's technique of illustrating the atmosphere and the reality of life inside a Lazarett is interesting for several reasons:

First, unlike Zweig's protagonist, Bertin, whose perceptions of the Lazarett centre entirely upon one such place, the Feldlazarett Dannevaux, which he makes representative for all the Feldlazarette anywhere, Remarque's protagonist provides the audience with images and impressions of several different medical establishments. Although, strictly speaking, not all of these are Lazarette, Remarque is an example of those post-war authors who confuse the use of the military term and apply it, for example, to a civilian infirmary, (p.248) they all are, nevertheless, locations where the true nature of the war reveals itself. In the course of the novel Bäumer experiences several different medical establishments maintained by the military. All of these are located in the vicinity of the front, but it is noticeable that he does not attach a specific name to any of them. The indiscriminate use of the term Feldlazarett, (p.19; p.239) is, however, intentional, indicative of the nature of Lazarette in general. There are so many of them and they are all just like any other anywhere along, or just behind, the front line.

Secondly, there is Bäumer's personal perspective of the Lazarett which he shares, to a certain extent, with Bertin. There are scenes in both novels where the protagonists' role is that of the mere observer of life inside a Lazarett. But while Bertin filters his, indisputably positive, perceptions to make them match those based on hearsay, rumours and preconceptions and deliberately refuses to take into account the

other, decidedly unpleasant, aspects of the Lazarett, which Zweig shows to be just as real, Bäumer is much more sensitive:

Im Feldlazarett ist großer Betrieb; es riecht wie immer nach Karbol, Eiter und Schweiß. Man ist aus den Baracken manches gewohnt, aber hier kann einem doch flau werden.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.19)

and his first impression of the atmosphere inside a Feldlazarett , dominated by various repulsive odours, has a depressingly realistic touch to it. Similarly negative and realistic are his detailed descriptions of the sight of his wounded friend, Kemmerich:

Er sieht schrecklich aus, gelb und fahl, im Gesicht sind schon die fremden Linien, die wir so genau kennen, weil wir sie schon hundertmal gesehen haben. Es sind eigentlich keine Linien, es sind mehr Zeichen. Unter der Haut pulsiert kein Leben mehr; es ist bereits herausgedrängt bis an den Rand des Körpers, von innen arbeitet sich der Tod durch, die Augen beherrscht er schon.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.20)

It is interesting to note the presentation of the images of death in this passage. Bäumer links them to those of multiple death in the trenches. To him it is irrelevant whether a soldier dies in the fighting at the front, or, as a result of the fighting, in a medical establishment; in his experience war equals the futile, senseless death of a whole generation:

Da liegt er nun, weshalb nur? Man sollte die ganze Welt an diesem Bette vorbeiführen und sagen: Das ist Franz Kemmerich, neunzehneinhalb Jahre alt, er will nicht sterben. Laßt ihn nicht sterben. (*Im Westen ...*, p.35)

Remarque uses Kemmerich's situation as a vehicle to emphasize not only the futility of the sacrifice and the suffering of an entire generation in the war, but also his anti-war attitudes in general. In this, and the

ensuing scene Kemmerich's situation is shown to be characteristic for the failure of the entire medical service to fulfil its service role during the war. Having had one leg amputated, Kemmerich's condition deteriorates rapidly with no further help available, as new casualties arrive at the Feldlazarett in massive numbers. He is also left to suffer pain, as there is not enough morphine to go round. The medical personnel are compelled to select patients with a better chance of survival than Kemmerich. Finally, while other patients are selected for transport back to Germany, the doctor responsible for the procedure ignores him entirely. That the second scene that sees Bäumer confronted with, but yet again detached from, life inside military medical establishments should occur in the penultimate chapter of the novel is significant. The war is in its final stage, the image that of the lone soldier carrying his wounded friend back to a Sanitätsstation. (pp.281-83) But Bäumer's friend, Kat, is dead on arrival. His death underscores the role of medicine and healing in the war. The wound he sustained is only a small one, almost invisible; yet even if there were no shortages of manpower and medical supplies, nothing could be done to save him. In addition, Kat's death leaves Bäumer as the last survivor of their group.

In contrast to Bertin, whose perspective of the Lazarett never extends beyond that of the observer, Bäumer sustains a bullet wound in the leg, which compels him to experience life inside a Lazarett for himself:

Abends werden wir zur Schlachtbank geholt. Ich erschrecke und überlege rasch, was ich tun soll; denn es ist bekannt, daß die Ärzte in den Feldlazaretten leicht amputieren. Bei dem großen Andrang ist das einfacher als komplizierte Flickereien.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.240)

In this instance the negativism of Bäumer's views of the role of medicine in general, and the Lazarett in particular, is notably evident in the use of the image of the Schlachtbank, the slaughterer's table; the slang term and the - obviously - generalized allegations concerning the working practice of the surgeons in the Feldlazarette are probably conditioned more by his present physical and psychological circumstances than the reality, although they contain a certain, if cruel, logic. The underlying tension in the novel involving the medical aspects between Remarque, whose intention it is to show what the war does to people and the ineffectiveness of the medical service to cope, and Bäumer, whose pain and suffering are shown as a direct consequence of the war, has ceased for the moment. The following - negative - comments of the central figure in the various Lazarett scenes: 'Die Verbände sind verklebt. Wir brüllen wie die Stiere.' (p.251) and, similarly: 'Ich werde operiert und kotze zwei Tage lang.' (p.256) are symptomatic images for the failure of medicine to mitigate the impacts of the war on its victims. On the contrary, the prevailing impression created by these comments is that the pain and suffering caused by the war is actually made worse by those supposed to reduce the force of them. It is also interesting to note the discrepancy of perception between Bertin's positive description and Bäumer's derisory but generalized comment concerning the sustenance in a Lazarett:

Ein verfluchtes Schicksal. Wir haben Mehlsuppe im Magen,
dünnes Lazarettfutter. (*Im Westen ...*, p.243)

which implies that he enjoyed a more comfortable life and better food out at the front. Be that as it may, shortly afterwards Bäumer is taken

to Germany where he arrives in a Catholic infirmary. Full of enthusiasm, he initially - but only initially - reiterates the rumours about these denominationally managed civilian infirmaries:

Wir liegen in einem katholischen Hospital, im gleichen Zimmer. Das ist ein großes Glück, denn die katholischen Häuser sind bekannt für gute Behandlung und gutes Essen. (*Im Westen ...*, p.248)

To Bertin, Dannevaux had symbolized all the positive aspects of life, such as comfortable quarters, adequate sustenance, proper shelter from the most unpleasant conditions in the trenches and relative safety from the effects of the artillery shelling, things he has been deprived of as a result of the war. But in Bäumer's viewpoint any infirmary, or Lazarett, is a place where the true nature of the war reveals itself and where its effects on the human beings involved are visible. One way of putting that message across is to catalogue the results of modern warfare. Medical conditions in the war varied; some of them were direct results of the fighting, such as concussion, burns, gas poisoning, gun shot, shrapnel, stab wounds, etc., caused by external force, while traumatic conditions, amputations, blindness, breathing difficulties, deafness, exhaustion, traumatic conditions and tetanus were directly connected to those results. Moreover, the nature of the war caused a variety of infectious diseases, amongst others cholera, diarrhoea, fever, gangrene, influenza, pestilence, trench fever, 'Trench Foot', typhoid fever, tuberculosis, venereal diseases, too. The nature of some of the novel conditions, mainly psychological illnesses, was such that their effects were often only discovered long after the war was over. Since all these conditions are on display in its wards, a Lazarett can, therefore, according to Remarque, never be a pleasant location. His way

of showing the true nature of the war and its effects on human beings is to have Bäumer recuperate well enough to walk around the infirmary wards:

Im Stockwerk tiefer liegen Bauch- und Rückenmarkschüsse, Kopfschüsse und beiderseitig Amputierte. Rechts im Flügel Kieferschüsse, Gaskranke, Nasen-, Ohren- und Halsschüsse. Links im Flügel Blinde und Lungenschüsse, Beckenschüsse, Gelenkschüsse, Nierenschüsse, Hodenschüsse, Magenschüsse. Man sieht hier erst, wo ein Mensch überall getroffen werden kann.¹⁵

Bäumer's catalogue of gunshot-wounds is just a typological sample of effects of modern warfare on human beings. It is interesting to note the shift from a personal to a medical level in this section, evident in the use of the abstract phrase *Schüsse*. The monotonous regularity of the effects of modern warfare affecting those involved on an unimaginable scale is indicative for the anonymous nature of the war whose results can only be recorded in abstract medical terms. The repetitive nature of the passage, its regular rhythm and the staccato-like style of the description of the bullet wounds are reminiscent of machine-gun fire. The catalogue of shot wounds has no clear logic to it, neither has the war. There is a similar image in Frey's *Die Pflasterkästen*, in which Funk, a non-combatant stretcher-bearer at the front, comments on the sight of the wounded in a *Hauptverbandplatz*.¹⁶

Bäumer's perspective is, of course, confined to the one infirmary and its wards; still, he remains an attentive and sensitive observer and the naive tone of his observations, which he passes straight on to the audience without any further comment, makes them aware of his incapability of understanding the true nature of (this) war; he is, in any case too young to understand, and his presentation is a device of

Remarque's to allow the audience themselves to look at the results of war; this enables them, consequently, to draw their own conclusions about war.

The shift of perspective in the following instances from the relatively narrow one of Bäumer's:

Zwei Leute sterben an Wundstarrkrampf. Die Haut wird fahl, die Glieder erstarren, zuletzt leben - lange - nur noch die Augen. - Bei manchen Verletzten hängt das zerschossene Glied an einem Galgen frei in der Luft; unter die Wunde wird ein Becken gestellt, in das der Eiter tropft. Alle zwei oder drei Stunden wird das Gefäß geleert. Andere Leute liegen im Streckverband, mit schweren, herabziehenden Gewichten am Bett. Ich sehe Darmwunden, die ständig voll Kot sind. Der Schreiber des Arztes zeigt mir Röntgenaufnahmen von völlig zerschmetterten Hüftknochen, Knien und Schultern.¹⁷

to the more generalized comment that appears to come from Remarque is worth noting. What motivated Remarque to write *Im Westen nichts Neues* is precisely what he himself had perceived to have been the destruction of a whole generation of young men; this effect of the war is as obvious on the battlefields and in the trenches as it is in the various Lazarette, and Bäumer - less convincingly as usual - adds a generalizing comment that is clearly authorial:

Und dabei ist dies nur ein einziges Lazarett, nur eine einzige Station - es gibt Hunderttausende in Deutschland, Hunderttausende in Frankreich, Hunderttausende in Rußland.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.260)

It is, in fact, the underlying theme of Remarque's entire novel. But not only does the summarizing effect of the piling up of examples of the multitude of diseases, illnesses and wounds as a result of the war and the deliberate generalization in individual phrases and *expressis verbis*, as in the sections quoted, serve as an image for the power of

destruction of the war of attrition in which an entire generation of young people senselessly perished, commented upon by Bäumer:

Ich bin jung, ich bin zwanzig Jahre alt; aber ich kenne vom Leben nichts anderes als die Verzweiflung, den Tod, die Angst und die Verkettung sinnlosester Oberflächlichkeit mit einem Abgrund des Leidens. Ich sehe, daß Völker gegeneinandergetrieben werden und sich schweigend, unwissend, töricht, gehorsam, unschuldig töten. [...] Und mit mir sehen das alle Menschen meines Alters, hier und drüben, in der ganzen Welt, mit mir erlebt das meine Generation. (*Im Westen ...*, p.260)

but it is also a reference to the international scale of suffering in war. Frey, in *Die Pflasterkästen*, adopts a similar technique.¹⁹

Finally, based on the various examples of the presentation of Lazarette in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, it is safe to say, that Remarque's approach is a deliberately extreme one, that merits, in some instances, the criticism which has been levelled against it.²⁰ Not only is the tone of the various presentations of the Lazarett throughout the novel entirely negative; but so are the author's attitudes towards such places. To Bäumer a Lazarett is a place of suffering and death:

Wir können keine Minute nachts schlafen. In unserem Saal sterben sieben Leute. (*Im Westen ...*, p.242)

The sober language of this statement is an indication of the routine nature of death in war, regardless of the location. It is remarkable, indeed, that of all the wounded taken to a Lazarett in the course of the novel only Bäumer is ever seen to convalesce in the physical sense; but his emotional atrophy, which eventually results in his mental resignation in the face of the enormous monstrosity of the cruelty of modern warfare, commences at the very moment when he comes directly face-to-face with the results of the war of attrition in the Lazarett.

All the other victims of the war either die, (Kemmerich and Kat) or are crippled in such a way that they will never recuperate sufficiently to take part in the war again, (Albert Kropp) nor will they ever be able to live a normal life again. (Josef Hamacher) That the kind of bullet-wounds listed by Remarque have a similar effect on the soldiers, crippling them for the rest of their life, is also significant for the discrepancies in the presentation of the Lazarett in *Im Westen nichts Neues* and other anti-war novels.²⁰ While for Remarque the Lazarett is a stage where the true nature of the war reveals itself and becomes visible, (p.260) Zweig, and with him a number of other pacifist authors, use the image of a Lazarett as a device to stress the perversity of the war. There the Lazarett is a place where soldiers are being nursed until they are fit enough to return to the battlefields to continue fighting. It is interesting to note in this context that any descriptions of any kind of wounds in any great detail are noticeably absent in Zweig's account; in fact, the few wounds which are, almost casually, mentioned in *Erziehung vor Verdun* are of a rather slight nature, acceptable 'Blightys', called Heimatpaß by the troops since those affected would be away from the fighting, which heal quickly and without any further medical complications, although they are a direct result of the war of attrition so despised and rejected by the author. The role of Zweig's Feldlazarett Dannevaux is ambiguous in that it is presented as a place where death is far from being a normal and daily occurrence. Here the victims of the war are cared for properly, but only some of them fail to return to the front due to the destruction of the place in an air raid.

Examining German First World War prose in the context of the divergencies in its presentation of the Lazarett is an exercise that

demonstrates the difficulty of evaluating a common historical experience written with different intentions from a variety of perspectives comprehensively. It further demonstrates that, in their last instance, all these perceptions were part of a personal experience of those who lived through the war. But in spite of the enormous variety of their presentations of the Lazarett there is some common ground, a silent, yet fundamental agreement between all the different authors; and Hirschfeld's conclusion is representative for that:

Das ganze Lazarett aber, mit all seiner erdichteten Romantik und allzu wahren Not war vom Tode überschattet; aus ihm führte der Weg, sei es der gerade oder der Umweg über den wiedergesehenen Schützengraben gewöhnlich zum Heldenfriedhof. Dem Leben gab die große Kriegsfabrik Lazarett nur Menschen wieder, die ihre Gliederstümpfe oder Gesundheitsreste hinter seinen Mauern zurückgelassen hatten.²¹

NOTES

¹ Ernst Glaeser, *Jahrgang 1902* (Kronsberg/Ts.: Athenäum), p.97; p.100; p.162.

² Arnold Zweig, *Erziehung vor Verdun* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1988).

³ Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.33.

⁴ For a good example of such a brochure see *Das Kriegslazarett D.*

⁵ Heinz von Rohden, letter dated 5. Mai 1915, in *Kriegsbriefe*, pp.170-72 (p.171).

⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld/Andreas Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, 2 vols (Leipzig and Vienna: Verlag für Sexualwissenschaften Schneider, 1930), II, p.80.

⁷ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.54.

⁸ Edlef Köppen, *Heeresbericht* (Reinbek/Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992).

⁹ Analysing *Heeresbericht*, Travers, in *German Novels*, p.142, comments that the moral duplicity in war: 'is nowhere better exemplified than in the behaviour of the clergy, who are only too readily prepared to sacrifice the universal message of their religion for the sake of the military propaganda.' The same goes, of course, for the doctors and other representatives of the intelligentsia of the European nations in the war, a point Travers fails to make.

¹⁰ That point is also picked up in the sequel *Der Weg zurück*, when the retreating Germans come face-to-face with a unit of American soldiers:

Plötzlich deutet jemand mit einem unterdrückten Ausruf auf die Verbände unserer Verwundeten. Sie bestehen aus Krepp-Papier und sind mit Bindfäden umschnürt. (*Weg zurück*, p.32f.)

and reaches its culmination a little later in the same scene when an American soldier insists on pieces of gauze being traded for various other goods:

Ein Amerikaner ... will gerne Verbandfetzen mit Blut daran haben, um zu Hause beweisen zu können, daß sie tatsächlich aus Papier gewesen sind. (*Weg zurück*, p.36).

The scene is symbolic for the utter perversion of the war, the results of which on human beings can be traded with in a business-like fashion after it has finished, making a mockery of the suffering.

¹¹ Zweig, *Erziehung*, p.320.

¹² Sir Thomas Barclay, *Law and Usage of War* (London: Constable, 1914), pp.179-84.

¹³ Amos Sheldon, *Political and Legal Remedies for War* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1880), p.316.

¹⁴ See, for example, Ludwig Schäfer, letter dated 23.12.1914, in *Der deutsche Soldat*, pp.110-11.

¹⁵ Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.259.

¹⁶ Alexander Moritz Frey, *Die Pflasterkästen* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1986), p.209.

¹⁷ Remarque, *Im Westen*, pp.259-60. Murdoch, in the afterword of his translation of Remarque's anti-war novel *Im Westen nichts Neues*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (London: Cape, 1994), p.215, points out that although Bäumer and the other soldiers discuss the nature of war and war itself they cannot draw any conclusions because they are too young and inexperienced: 'They lack the background.' Their inability to find an answer is based on their naivety and since they all die it is up to the reader himself to draw a conclusion.

¹⁸ Frey, *Pflasterkästen*, p.214.

¹⁹ There was an abundance of - contemporary - criticism levelled against the work, most of which was political, attacking, in particular, Remarque's explicit statements of the war having destroyed an entire

generation, rather than linguistic. Much of this criticism is difficult to obtain, especially Gottfried Nickel's *Im Westen nichts Neues und sein wahrer Sinn. Eine Betrachtung über den Pazifismus und Antwort an Remarque* (Graz/Leipzig, 1929), and Mynona's (Salomon Friedländer) *Hat Erich Maria Remarque wirklich gelebt?* (Berlin, 1929). Ex-servicemen criticized the book, too. To make their opposition more obvious they put it across in a novelistic style, adopting Remarque's literary techniques and the bestseller's title in some form or another. The best-known of these is probably Franz Arthur Kletmann's *Contra Remarque - Im Westen wohl was Neues* (Berlin: Naumann, 1931). Hans Zöberlein, in his article 'Im Westen nichts Neues. Die Antworten eines Frontsoldaten auf das Buch Remarque's', *Völkischer Beobachter*, 14.8.1929, accuses Remarque of perverting the truth about the war. More recent criticism on the work focuses on the literary and stylistic techniques applied by Remarque. Brian Rowley, in 'Journalism into Fiction. Erich Maria Remarque: *Im Westen nichts Neues*', in *The First World War in Fiction*, ed. Holger Klein (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978), pp.101-11 (p.106), points out that: 'war is not always so brutal and so ignominious as this novel depicts it', while Gollbach, in *Wiederkehr*, p.82, states that the work, although it is illustrative and forcefully written, generalizes too much and exaggerates the scale of destruction. The more recent analysis by Brian Murdoch, in 'Hinter die Kulissen des Krieges sehen - Adrienne Thomas, Evadne Price - and E.M. Remarque', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 28 (1992), 56-74 (p.59), shows that Remarque's technique of writing in black-and-white terms is also evident in some women's (anti-) war novels, and Alan Bance, in 'Sexuality, Gender and the First World War: The Impact of War on Sexual Mores and Sexual

Consciousness in Britain and Germany', in *Intimate Enemies*, pp.405-24 (p.418), notes that: 'Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* evinces an implacable enmity towards the medical profession.'

²⁰ For example in Remarque's *Der Weg zurück*, pp.84-86, the scene in which Hans Troßke has been discharged from a Lazarett after his feet were amputated.

²¹ Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, II, p.80.

PART II

4.

THE NOVELISTIC PORTRAYAL OF MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

The presentation of the medical practitioners in German First World War prose is probably the most complex of all those of medical personnel. Few works fail to mention medical practitioners; in fact, most feature several. There are many different images of medical practitioners in Weimar war fiction, ranging from the sole figure of a surgeon in a Verbandplatz just behind the front line to that of a specialist in a Feld- or Kriegslazarett in the communication zone, or in an infirmary in Germany itself. While the perception of them in each individual account is largely determined by the standpoint of the author him-/herself, and almost all authors had first-hand experience with military doctors in the war themselves, their presentation focuses as much on their outward appearance, as it does on their attitudes towards the war, the way they exercise their duties and their treatment of the sick and the wounded in the various medical establishments. Although, historically, the surgeon was the most important of all the medical practitioners, Weimar war prose does not confine itself to the presentation of surgeons alone. It is noticeable, however, that the Frontromane are much more likely to concentrate on presenting a somewhat stereotypical image of a surgeon more or less assiduously performing his duties in makeshift medical establishments just behind the front line surrounded by masses of casualties, than those taking a different perspective.

Most German war accounts portraying medical practitioners do so in connection with a military rank attached. Hardly ever are the medical

practitioners referred to merely as doctors. This can be very confusing indeed for the reader unfamiliar with the system of military ranking of the medical personnel in the German forces. It is appropriate, therefore, to provide a brief outline of the individual ranks of military doctors seen in German First World War prose.

Fourth year medical students who volunteered for national service prior to the war and who had been trained as ordinary soldiers for six months, were promoted to the rank of Unterarzt, in which they served six more months. Afterwards they returned to university to complete their course of studies. The rank was temporarily abolished at the outbreak of the war and reintroduced in 1936 in the Reichswehr and, subsequently, the Wehrmacht. Feldunterarzt was a rank comparable to that of Feldwebel in the army, especially designated for students of medicine who had joined up as ordinary soldiers in the Sanitätskorps after having successfully completed two clinical semesters of their course of study. They were used mainly for training the medical personnel at home, such as ambulance-drivers, medical orderlies and stretcher-bearers, but could also be deployed in medical establishments right behind the front line. Having served at least six months in a theatre of war, a nominee could be promoted to the rank of Feldhilfsarzt. Militarily, this position was identical to that of the Assistenzarzt, the only difference being the lack of the official final medical qualification of the former. Both ranks enjoyed officer status, the former being comparable to that of the army's Feldwebelleutnant, the latter designed as a fully commissioned position on level with the rank of a Leutnant. A fully qualified practitioner under the age of thirty-five generally served as Oberarzt, equivalent to Oberleutnant. To higher ranks were promoted such

candidates whose Dienstzeit, time served in the army overall, exceeded six years, and civilian doctors of outstanding professional quality and medical reputation older than thirty-five. The ranks open to them included that of the Stabsarzt, equivalent to a Hauptmann, serving in the function of a Regimentsarzt, the Oberstabsarzt, comparable to a Major, whose responsibilities were the care for the health and welfare of the soldiers of an entire division in the field, as well as certain designated ranks with the status of General, such as Generalstabsarzt, Obergeneralarzt, Generalarzt, and Generaloberarzt, who were responsible for the organization of the medical services in the larger combat units, such as army corps and armies.¹

Medical practitioners serving in the armed forces during the war were classified as military non-combatants and, just like any other medical personnel, were protected by the Geneva Convention:

Chapter III. Personnel

[...]

Art. 9 - The personnel exclusively engaged in the collection, transport and treatment of the wounded and the sick, as well as in the administration of medical units and establishments, and the chaplains attached to armies, shall be respected and protected under all circumstances. If they fall into the hands of the enemy, they shall not be treated as prisoners of war.²

Civilian practitioners, appointed to work in the German forces for the duration of the war, of whom some novels take account, remained civilians but were automatically promoted to a nominal military rank:

Für die bereits im Frieden und zu Kriegsbeginn vertraglich verpflichteten, nicht dienstpflchtigen Zivilärzte war Zivilkleidung vorgesehen und eine auf dem linken Oberarm befestigte Binde mit dem roten (Genfer) Kreuz auf weißem Grunde, die von der Militärbehörde, von der die Ärzte angenommen wurden, geliefert und gestempelt und der ein Ausweis über die Person beigegeben wurde. [...] Den

Zivilärzten ... war während der Dauer dieses Vertragsverhältnisses im Kriege allgemein der militärische Rang als Sanitätsoffizier beigelegt.³

For their presentation in German war prose it is very important to remember that their status as military non-combatants did not allow medical practitioners to become actively and directly involved in the fighting.

As the overwhelming majority of writers focus especially on the middle-ranking military doctors whom they were more likely to encounter closely behind the front and in medical establishments of the communication zone, rather than the high-ranking medical personnel who mainly remained attached to regimental or divisional headquarters for the duration of the war and rarely performed any major medical duties, as their positions confined them to dealing with the day-to-day bureaucratic issues and an enormous amount of paperwork, it follows that this chapter will predominantly concentrate on figures of middle-ranking military doctors.

There are, however, a few accounts which include some illustrations of lower-ranking medical practitioners. For instance, Jan, central figure in Rudolf Frank's anti-war novel *Der Junge, der seinen Geburtstag vergaß*, observes a Doktor-Offizier at work. Whether this is a reference particularly to the military rank of Feldarzt, comparable to that of the Feldwebelleutnant, or the officer status of medical practitioners in general, is not clear.⁴ In *Die Pflasterkästen*, Funk comments with derision on students of medicine who are sent back to Germany to complete another part of their training in order to be promoted subsequently:

Der Unteroffizier Bart, der Medizinersäugling, kommt in die Heimat, zur Fortsetzung seiner Studien. Diese Kerle werden jetzt in beschleunigter Karriere Feldunterärzte. Das mag ein feines Material abgeben.⁵

The tone of his comments is indicative of the low reputation of these, often medically incompetent, characters. He also observes a Divisionsarzt checking the medical reports and remarks that the practitioner looks healthy, well-fed and not at all like a soldier. (p.146) He proceeds to accuse him of being out of touch with the reality of the war as encountered by the medical staff at the front and the victims of the war. (p.153) Finally, he reports about a Stabsarzt who commits suicide, because the circumstances of the war do not allow him to indulge in what has become an obsession, the keeping of comprehensive and precise records of his work. Ironically, the war turns his orderly and militarily regimented peace-time way of life completely upside-down. The chaos is too much for him to cope with. (p.61) On the other hand, Jünger, in *In Stahlgewittern*, comments on a Generalarzt visiting a Verbandplatz to inspect the medical personnel. This is a unique example in an account taking the front line soldier's perspective, its tone not at all complimentary to the character in question. While all around him the usual hectic activity is going on and the picture provided is that of masses of wounded streaming in and being attended to, this senior practitioner proceeds with his inspection in the face of the pain and suffering surrounding him, instead of assisting his colleagues in mitigating the effects of the fighting on those involved.⁶

Trying to establish a reasonably comprehensive and sound image of a character as disputed as that of the medical practitioner from solely literary sources is a difficult undertaking, which is made all the more

problematic since German war prose takes account of a wide variety of important issues associated with the image of medical practitioners in general, raising, amongst others, questions as to their position, role and extent of their participation in the conflict itself. It also provides a number of pictures of medical practitioners at work, comprising any possible medical aspect of the war, ranging from the initial medical examination of civilians for their eligibility for military service, to the attending to casualties and examining fatalities. Historically, all these factors, ultimately and inevitably, changed the role of the medical practitioner entirely. In its final consequence that development meant the transformation of what had been an ordinary civilian doctor into one of the most influential and powerful personalities anywhere in the country, determining matters of life and death of many an individual.⁷ Incidentally, at this point Bäumer's social criticism of the change of the role of the practitioners at home in the war and their power in regard to their economically and socially disadvantaged patients is worth noting. His mother has been sick for such a long time with cancer that the health insurance no longer pays for her medical treatment. His father did not dare inquire about the cost of her operation so as not to annoy the doctor who will perform it:

Ja, denke ich bitter, so sind wir, so sind sie, die armen Leute. Sie wagen nicht nach dem Preise zu fragen und sorgen sich eher furchtbar darüber; aber die andern, die es nicht nötig haben, die finden es selbstverständlich, vorher den Preis festzulegen. Bei ihnen wird der Arzt auch nicht unfreundlich sein.⁸

This quotation is as much an example of broad social criticism as it is of the professional attitude of general practitioners in wartime

Germany. It may also be a reflection of Remarque's personal anger - as his mother died - because he himself had first-hand experience of working with medical practitioners in a military hospital during the war, in which he did some clerical work.

Examining the perception and presentation of medical practitioners in pacifist German war prose, two aspects in particular predominate: that of Mitmachen, the initial endorsing and active participation in the war; and that of Mitschuld, the shared responsibility for the disastrous results of the war on the participants by the doctors in the conflict, going directly or indirectly, to a greater or lesser extent, against the Hippocratic oath.

Plievier's *Des Kaisers Kulis*, for example, specifically and avowedly based on personal war experience of the author, provides the reader with a detailed, yet rather extensive illustration of an Oberstabsarzt performing the Musterung, the medical examination of merchant sailors, for service in the Imperial German Navy.⁹ In this instance Plievier's presentation of a medical practitioner defies the general, predominantly pre-war perception of a doctor as an almost omnipotent, omniscient, patriarchal and benevolent figure who is dedicated entirely to his profession and to the well-being of his patients. The image of the well-to-do middle- or upper-class practitioner, who is, incidentally, nationalistically minded and all in favour of waging war, casting his judgement on representatives of the proletariat, who are not at all keen on fighting, for all of them have a fairly broad cosmopolitan horizon, is entirely in line with the overt and blunt political message of this anti-war novel. The characterization of the procedure is negative throughout. Having been pressganged into the naval service, it is the

ultimate insult to the sailors dignity. Herded together like cattle these A. [~~u~~ßerterminlich] G. [~~e~~musterten], civilians in an unscheduled examination, are quickly measured, weighted, and superficially examined:

Wie ein Vieh ließ er sich auf die Dezimalwaage schieben
- wiegen, abmessen, beklopfen. (*Kulis ...*, p.30)

and eventually classified tauglich, fit for duty.

Unlike Plievier's extensive illustration, Köppen's *Heeresbericht* takes a brief, quasi-official view of the Musterung, basing the section on the 'official' medical form.¹⁰ But while Köppen's concern with matters medical ends there, for the time being, Plievier continues his characterization of the procedure with the provision of a closer impression of the Oberstabsarzt. His comments: 'Material, Herr Major! Bestes Material, diese A.G.s!' (p.27) made during the examination are an interesting indication of his inhuman attitudes towards human beings; furthermore, they are an indication of his eagerness and that of many of his kind, to co-operate with the military authorities and deliver whatever is required. Also implied is that he himself, of course, need not worry about the possible consequences of his verdicts on the individual, for the medical examination is as close as he will ever personally be involved in the war. The sailors, on the other hand, are depicted as in no position, economically or socially, to challenge his decisions. This image of helplessness only underlines Plievier's personal view of the powerlessness of the masses towards the ruling classes in 1914 Germany. The novel is intended to support his view of the conflict as being fought by the underprivileged for the benefit of the possessing classes. To him, that is the ultimate obscenity of the

war, and the Oberstabsarzt is part of it. There is a quasi-ironical discrepancy in the outward physical appearance between the doctor and the examined:

Ein schweres Stück Arbeit und der Herr Oberstabsarzt ist kein junger Mann mehr. Eine Herzneurose plagt ihn. Seine Knie zittern; kalter Schweiß steht ihm auf der Stirn. [...] Der Herr Oberstabsarzt muß sich ein Glas Wasser bringen lassen. Er fühlt den harten Puls unter dem Uniformkragen. Wie in Nebeln sieht er die nackten Körper, keine Gesichter, nur Leiber, festes, gesundes Fleisch.
(*Kulis* ..., p.28f.)

who are either well-built boys, or older sailors with athletic and muscular bodies, and who stand in stark contrast to the pathetic image of the medical practitioner representing the old order that is exposed as being nothing but an ailing, infirm and unhealthy political system whose days have passed. The new, young and healthy generation, as yet still paralysed by the social and economic circumstances in Wilhelmine Germany, is waiting to take over, but it is doomed.

In this context, attention must be drawn to those Weimar war novelists who, though less politically explicit in their works than Plievier, also wrote their narratives with the historical and medical hindsight of the decade ensuing the end of the conflict, narratives in which they, too, accuse the propertied class, of which the doctors were, without any doubt, part, of actively participating in the war by willingly co-operating with the military authorities, thereby condoning the war, although they of all people should have known much better than anybody what war means for the men and women involved.

It goes without saying that the medical practitioners, like many other people in similarly dignified and influential positions, such as academics, journalists, scientists, theologians and politicians, should,

indeed, have known better and not have lent their support to the war in the first place. After all, doctors take the oath of Hippocrates to alleviate the suffering of their patients, just as the teachers' conduct must be exemplary, intended to guide their pupils and educate them properly, enabling them to become respectable members of society. Reporters, too, are supposedly bound by journalistic conventions to propagate and write the truth. Unfortunately, it remains indisputable that in the years from 1914 to 1918 all these professional groups failed to adhere to their distinctive codes of practice. National honour, pride and other irrational concepts, such as forced territorial expansion, economic growth and the greatness of the nation, brainwashed the German elite into endorsing the warmongers, just as they had the overwhelming majority of the common people. This point is particularly clear in Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902*, where there is a letter by a front line soldier written to his son, August, - who, incidentally, is said to look up to his father as other people might do to a medizinische Autorität - in which he accuses the generals, the politicians and the businessmen of being warmongers; he proceeds to blame the priests, the teachers, the journalists, and the poets for playing into the hand of the former; finally, he castigates their ineptitude and fear of speaking out against the war." It appears also in other First World War writings, especially those which begin before, or at the start of the war. Examining the case of the medical practitioners in that respect, Hirschfeld reached the following conclusions:

überhaupt stellte das Verhalten vieler patriotischer oder nur dem jeweiligen Regime ergebener Ärzte den Lazarettinsassen ... gegenüber eines der dunkelsten Kapitel der Weltkriegsgeschichte dar. [...] Wie bei der Musterung, so auch beim Gesundheitschreiben der Lazarettpfleglinge war der Arzt nur zu oft an seelenlose

Vorschriften, die ihrerseits in rein militärischen Bedürfnissen begründet waren, gebunden. So hatte der Arzt bei der Musterung einen bestimmten Prozentsatz der Stellungspflichtigen für kriegsverwendungsfähig zu erklären, ein andermal einen ebenfalls im voraus bestimmten Teil seines Krankenbestandes rücksichtslos ins Feld zurückzuschicken. Bei dem Soldatenmangel der Zentralmächte wurden diese Mißstände besonders in den letzten Kriegsjahren chronisch. [...] Und ebenso oft wurden rücksichtslose, weil nur von militärischen Rücksichten diktierte Verordnungen von den zu ihrer Befolgung berufenen Ärzten freudig erfüllt und in der Durchführung noch überboten.¹²

The following, on the other hand, is an example of a post-war account, but by Richert, a soldier who had first-hand experience of the behaviour of doctors in the conflict. The incident cited is indicative of the depressing effects the professional misconduct of the medical practitioners had on the patients:

Ich meldete mich sofort krank, da die Grippe nun stärker auftrat und ich ganz heiser wurde. Vor dem Hause, in dem der Arzt die Untersuchung vornahm, standen so gegen 100 Mann, die sich fast alle wegen Grippe krank gemeldet hatten. Wir Unteroffiziere wurden zuerst untersucht. Eine Untersuchung war es eigentlich nicht. Man wurde gefragt, wo es fehlte. Als ich geantwortet hatte, mußte mir der Sanitätsunteroffizier eine etwa pfenniggroße Pfefferminztablette geben, wobei der Arzt sagte: 'Kochen Sie sich Tee! Der nächste!' Also konnte ich gehen. Kochen Sie sich Tee! Das ist ungefähr dasselbe wie: Stirb oder verreck! Ich wurde innerlich ... wütend.¹³

Post-war novelists such as Remarque, used images of medicine with the intention of putting across their personal, mainly anti-war, message. In a literary context that meant adapting, extending and even exaggerating these images by emphasizing or deducting certain aspects of them suitable to that end:

Wir sind ohne Hoffnung, daß einmal ein Ende sein könnte. Wir denken überhaupt nicht so weit. Man kann einen Schuß bekommen und tot sein; man kann verletzt werden, dann ist das Lazarett die nächste Station. Ist man nicht amputiert, dann fällt man über kurz oder lang einem dieser Stabsärzte in die Hände, die, das Kriegsverdienstkreuz im Knopfloch, einem sagen: 'Wie, das bißchen verkürzte Bein? An der Front brauchen sie nicht zu laufen, wenn sie Mut haben. Der Mann ist

k.v. Wegtreten!''⁴

In that context one image in particular, that of the severely impaired soldier who is obviously unfit for duty being sent back to the front, is familiar:

Kat erzählt eine der Geschichten, die die ganze Front von den Vogesen bis Flandern entlanglaufen, - von dem Stabsarzt, der Namen vorliest auf der Musterung und, wenn der Mann vortritt, ohne aufzusehen, sagt: 'K.V. Wir brauchen Soldaten draußen.' Ein Mann mit Holzbein tritt vor, der Stabsarzt sagt wieder: k.v. - 'Und da', Kat erhebt die Stimme, 'sagt der Mann zu ihm: Ein Holzbein habe ich schon; aber wenn ich jetzt hinausgehe und wenn man mir den Kopf abschießt, dann lasse ich mir einen Holzkopf machen und werde Stabsarzt.' - Wir sind alle tief befriedigt über diese Antwort.¹⁵

As in the first instance, here again, Bäumer's portrayal of the medical practitioners is solely conditioned by hearsay and rumours propagated by his comrades-in-arms, not by his own personal experience; he is not in a position to judge whether or not this story is actually correct. But his initial remark regarding the popularity of such talk is interesting.

A second aspect of the concepts of Mitmachen and Mitschuld involves allusions regarding the more than ambiguous attitudes of medical practitioners towards officers and ordinary soldiers. Since the majority of them enjoyed officer status, it was only natural for the doctors to side with people of the same status. Frey's *Die Pflasterkästen* is full of images of high-ranking officers who have spent a very short spell at the front and are desperate to leave it behind as quickly as possible. Funk, as the person in charge of the regimental medical records, watches these officers faking all kinds of minor and - compared to the state of health of the filthy, ragged, tired and war-weary common soldiers - negligible medical conditions. However, being aware that they can rely

on the amicable cooperation of the Stabsarzt, they get away with what no ordinary soldier would.¹⁶ Zweig, in his *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, provides his audience with a similar image; and although it differs from that of Frey in both style and tone, his customary cynicism is, nevertheless, effective:

Der Oberstabsarzt kam, hörte, maß den Blutdruck; aber da der Kranke ihm keine Fährte zu weisen vermochte, schwiegen die Orakel. Und wenn ein Oberstabsarzt bei einem General Krankheit nicht findet, Müdigkeit aber wahrnimmt, so bedroht er ihn nicht mit drei Tagen Arrest oder schreit ihn an, daß der Kalk von den Wänden rieselt, sondern er erklärt ihn für urlaubsbedürftig im höchsten Maße und verlangt als Sachverwalter des Heeres von ihm, sofort abzureisen.¹⁷

The use of images like these in anti-war novels is, of course, intentional. They illustrate that even in the area of medicine, allegedly there for the benefit of *all* the patients, the war was fought at the expense of the ordinary soldiers, with the practitioners enthusiastically joining in on the side of the exploiters.

While, as a rule, the presentation of medical practitioners in pacifist Weimar war prose is unequivocal when it comes to their collaboration with the warmongers and active participation in the conflict, the extent of their Mitschuld, the question of their personal responsibility, is less clear and remains, by and large, a matter for conjecture. The impression in the various accounts is, nevertheless, that it was quite considerable. But even to that rule there are exceptions, albeit a negligible few, which convey illustrations of practitioners defying these impressions. One of these can be found in Georg von der Vring's novel *Soldat Suhren*.¹⁸ The central figure of the story, Suhren, is a young recruit who has been drafted for military service in 1915. In spite of his having, as yet, had no personal

experience of the fighting in the conflict as such, Suhren is very much opposed to the war and his efforts to escape the tedious routine of garrison duty and military life, if only for a few hours, culminate in an attempt to impair his health deliberately. This is all the more easy for him to accomplish as the garrison doctor is said to be sympathetic to ordinary soldiers in his situation; in fact he more or less openly sides with them:

Der Arzt, ein kleiner lächelnder Jude, gibt jedem einen oder ein paar Tage Schonung oder Innendienst. [...] Der Jude hat volles Verständnis für sie und kennt seine Pappenheimer.
(*Soldat Suhren*, p.271.)

That to Suhren the fact that the doctor is a Jew is relevant enough to mention is interesting. Whether or not the author himself is pro- or anti-jewish is difficult to establish, as he does not elaborate that point any further.¹⁹ It is, of course, true that a great number of Jewish doctors served in the German forces; they had either volunteered for service because they, like the overwhelming majority of the German people, supported the war, or felt that they should offer their services to the country, although they were opposed to the war. But whatever their motivation for service in the war may have been, the Jewish doctors seem to have been looked down at by their colleagues and comrades-in-arms alike, with the peculiar anti-jewish bias that has been present underneath the surface in German society for centuries. This development found no open reverberations, at least on a literary level, as long as the war was going on; and there is no evidence, either, of it emerging in the literature immediately following the end of the war. But by the early 1930s the presence of anti-semitic statements in,

especially nationalist Weimar war fiction, became a matter of course, blaming individual Jewish people, or the Jews as a whole, for having attempted to undermine and weaken the resolve of the German people to bring the conflict to a successful conclusion. Still, these statements sounded relatively harmless compared to those by the national socialists who did not hesitate to put the blame for the lost war *entirely* on the Jews. However, that a pacifist novel should present a Jewish medical practitioner as being sympathetic to soldiers faking medical conditions may make him an honourable figure in the eyes of pacifists; but, on the other hand, and rather unfortunately, the idea not only lends undesired and unwanted credibility to anti-jewish sentiments and extreme right-wing political views, but also distracts the attention from the general view of the medical practitioner as such, to become a distinctly Jewish issue. Historically, the service role of medicine in the First World War was still perceived to be insignificant for the progress of the war, since, by its very nature, medicine could not exercise any influence in that war. That, therefore, all men attached to the medical services, whatever their role, were looked at as some kind of half-baked soldiers is understandable. Examining pacifist German war prose in that respect it seems that anti-jewish attitudes, of which an example here from a different novel by Zweig, (himself Jewish, of course) are not entirely confined to and reflected by Jewish authors alone:

Alles weitere darf man dem diensttuenden Arzt Dr. Lubbersch überlassen, der, um nicht als Jude zu gelten, die Mannschaft scharf und hochstudentisch anpackt.²⁰

In *Die Pflasterkästen*, for example, a front line soldier hearing of the appointment of a Jewish skin specialist to the regiment calls him

Hautjude, and proceeds to comment that the war must be lost when Germany needs to call up the Jews to help win it:

'Woaßt es scho, jetzt habn ma an Hautjuden aus Berlin als Staberl', sagt ihm unterwegs einer. ... 'Er meint, jetzt kann's wirkli nimmer lang weitergehen, wann's a so anfangt. I glaubs glei.'
(*Pflasterkästen*, p.182f.)

In the examples cited the emphasis of the presentation of medical practitioners seems almost irrespective of their occupation. Jewish doctors are shown to have a heart for common soldiers because of their religion, making them acceptable to the audience; the non-Jewish doctors, on the other hand, are specifically shown to be brutal and ruthless. This technique leads to the *Jewish* element becoming quite a separate issue from that of the presentation of the medical practitioner in some works.

Remarque's attempts to provide his audience with as comprehensive and complete an illustration of medical practitioners in the war as possible differ somewhat from the rest of the other accounts. Not only are his attitudes towards medicine and anything attached to it entirely negative; but unique to *Im Westen nichts Neues* is the gradation in the presentation of military - and civilian - doctors, which emerges from a variety of angles, but changing continuously throughout the novel. The image of doctors, all of them are, incidentally, surgeons, develops with Bäumer's irregular encounters with them and is further determined by his personal perspective. That ranges from that of the helpless observer watching friends of his and comrades-in-arms die in several medical establishments, to that of the patient being treated seemingly with total disregard for his personal dignity.

Bäumer's first confrontation with a surgeon occurs in a Feldlazarett on his second visit to the dying Kemmerich. Not prepared to let his friend die without having at least attempted to save his life, he tries to get hold of a doctor. Finding one in the busy place, however, is no easy undertaking for Bäumer. When he eventually catches sight of the white coat of a doctor and grasps it to catch his attention the reaction of the latter is anything but sympathetic:

'Kommen Sie rasch, Franz Kemmerich stirbt sonst.' Er macht sich los und fragt einen dabeistehenden Lazarettgehilfen: 'Was soll das heißen?' Der sagt: 'Bett 26, Oberschenkel amputiert.' Er schnauzt: 'Wie soll ich davon etwas wissen, ich habe heute fünf Beine amputiert', schiebt mich weg, sagt dem Lazarettgehilfen: 'Sehen Sie nach', und rennt zum Operationssaal. (*Im Westen ...*, p.37)

Remarque's setting of the scene inside a Feldlazarett serves three objectives at the same time. First, the image of the Feldlazarett swarming with masses of casualties, some of whom have to be put on the floor, or even outside for a lack of beds and space, reveals the true, totally chaotic nature of the war and its devastating effects on those involved. Secondly, not only is the image of masses of wounded indicative of the chaos of the military side of the war, but it is also symbolic for the utter helplessness of medicine and the medical service in war itself. The surgeon, by himself, is incapable of coping with the circumstances and his strenuous efforts to mitigate the lot of his patients, honourable though they may be, fail to have any significant impact overall; he prefers (or is forced) to take refuge in indifference towards what surrounds him, instead. Presumably he does so in order to protect himself and prevent the ordeals of his patients and the enormity of the tragedy turning him mad. By now it has become obvious that the

chaos of the war affects the medical aspects and with it the medical personnel as well, while the large number of casualties compel the few doctors present to work long hours to save as many lives as possible. That, therefore, most of their patients remain, of necessity, anonymous to them is hardly surprising. It is a fact due entirely to circumstances beyond their control. The surgeon is unable to cope with the uniformly monotonous reality of modern warfare, which causes death, pain and suffering on a grand scale, and that is, after all, the side of things observed by Bäumer. But judged from a medical perspective the attitudes of the surgeon are impeccable, nevertheless; he has no intention of resting or sitting idly by in the face of what goes on around him, but heads straight back to the operating-theatre to perform more life-saving acts. Thirdly, by taking the figures of both Bäumer, an ordinary front line soldier, and the doctor, representative for the role of medicine in war, Remarque underlines the point that those in a role of mitigating the impacts of war are as much its victims as those fighting in the trenches. There is no escape from war for anyone involved.

If this incident seems a first, albeit hesitant, attack on the service role of medicine, in general, and the medical practitioners, in particular, the second scene is entirely negative from beginning to end and much more straightforward in that respect. Having sustained a gunshot wound to one leg, Bäumer is taken to the nearest Feldlazarett. Kemmerich's fate still fresh on his mind and aware that the surgeons there prefer to amputate damaged limbs, rather than patch them up provisionally for lack of time, Bäumer, quite correctly, feels that he, too, is in danger of losing his wounded leg. His pessimistic impressions of the surgeon, the scars of the Mensur²¹ in his face, and the colour

and style of his hair present him as a caricature of a Korpsstudent; his golden glasses, which Bäumer thinks of as widerlich, sickening, are symbolic of the entire personality of the surgeon; the whole presentation of the doctor makes him seem cold, with the glasses emphasizing his inhuman scientific attitude towards his work:

Er ist ein blonder Bursche, höchstens dreißig Jahre alt, mit Schmissen und einer widerlichen goldenen Brille.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.241)

The image of the surgeon provided is clearly a caricature reminiscent of Simplicissimus.²² Remarque, looking at the war with hindsight, might even have used this figure to show what the world might possibly expect from the representatives of the new German race. Compassion and mercy towards the weak and the impaired are entirely missing. Furthermore, the scarred face of the surgeon points to his membership of the Burschenschaft, a students movement promoting a right-wing ideology. Be that as it may, his professional conduct is not above suspicion, although he certainly is aware of and knows what he is doing and his rank must be correspondingly high. He is probably a Stabsarzt, taking into account that the orderlies respect him, albeit reluctantly. But the image of the medical instruments in his hands: 'Die Instrumente blitzen in dem hellen Licht wie böartige Tiere', (p.240) is an interesting one; in his hands the sterile medical instruments turn into dangerous beasts. Whether this impression makes a comment on the surgeons' professional conduct, or just serves to underline further his negative attitudes towards his low-ranking patients, or both, is not entirely clear. Incidentally, in the course of the novel Remarque repeatedly makes use of the motif of the beast, to describe, for example, how the conflict

turned Bäumer and his comrades-in-arms into beasts who, after having had to endure incessant shelling of their fortifications for several days, are no longer in control of their actions; (p.111) the motif eventually culminates in the 'man lower than beast' motif with impressions of the mode of hand-to-hand combat in the trenches. (p.116) Thirdly, and to emphasize that point, as a patient Bäumer cannot help feeling that he is deliberately made to endure intolerable levels of pain. The surgeon keeps poking around in his wound, in the patient's opinion unnecessarily, as a punishment for his precautionary refusal to be anaesthetized. The implications of Bäumer's treatment here indicate a profound change in the perception and the role of the medical practitioner from a benign character to a sadistic torturer that has been brought about by the war.

If the portrayal of the surgeons in the Feldlazarette has already been a gloomy one, the image of their colleagues in Germany is gloomier still. Bäumer is taken back to Germany and admitted to a denominationally maintained Catholic infirmary. The bright ray of hope that marks the beginning of this episode - the good food, the humane and competent medical treatment by the nurses and a general sense of the patients of being treated like human beings again all create an image of the infirmary as a sanctuary a long way away from the war - does not, unfortunately, extend its warmth to the character of the in this case clearly senior surgeon. On the contrary; the war, being his sole provider of a constant stream of guinea-pigs, has enabled him to put some irresponsible and unworkable theories to the test, with no personal risk to himself. A very ambitious man, he approaches simple and unsuspecting patients with flat feet under the pretence of performing a

minor operation to rid them of their condition. Yet not only do these minor medical procedures performed not accomplish the desired results, none of his patients affected has experienced any change for the better, and none of these unfortunate men can actually walk better than before; indeed, it has led to a deterioration in their health, as most of them can only walk with the assistance of crutches; (pp.256-57) however, in a discussion amongst the patients one soldier makes it clear that he wants to be maimed in that way to escape the war. (p.257) Worse still, apart from these experiments, which are a waste of time, anaesthetics, bandages and drugs, otherwise in short supply, are being senselessly wasted when they could be put to better use elsewhere. Bäumer observes that the majority of the hospitalized hardly ever do stand a chance of recovering from their wounds sustained in the fighting, and if they do they are crippled for life. He is, in fact, the only character in the novel to be discharged from a medical establishment fit for duty; those men who might have had a chance of recovering are being maimed for life by the one character they look to for assistance and recovery. To add insult to injury, the career of the senior surgeon remains entirely unaffected by the consequences of his experiments. Remarque's cynical portrayal of the senior surgeon, though, represents the ultimate attack on the incapability of the service role of medicine to cope with the reality of modern warfare and the medical practitioners as war profiteers of a sort, cashing in on the conflict at the expense of the common soldiers who have already fallen victim to the fighting. But presumably for authenticity, immediacy and realism, Remarque is honest enough not to let his creation present too one-sided a picture of the role of medical practitioners in *Im Westen nichts Neues*. But while a

statement like: 'Es mag gute Aerzte geben, und viele sind es.' (p.276) seems contradictory to Remarque's actual depicting of the medical practitioners in the war generally, it is interesting to realize that this comment is as short as it is rare in the course of the novel, and it is duly qualified quickly with another negative statement:

Doch einmal fällt bei den hundert Untersuchungen jeder Soldat einem dieser zahlreichen Heldengreifer in die Finger, die sich bemühen, auf ihrer Liste möglichst viele a.v. und g.v. in k.v. zu verwandeln.²³

That Remarque and other anti-war novelists should charge most medical practitioners with gross misconduct on an ethical and moral level, professional misconduct, and collaboration in the war is not surprising. But rarely, if ever, do they openly accuse practitioners of professional incompetence, although Funk, in *Die Pflasterkästen*, comes closest to doing that in two instances. Firstly, there are the young university graduates whose handling of certain medical conditions betrays their lack of experience and sensitivity; the experienced NCO's deal with fractures and other minor medical complications rather more professionally, causing less pain to the wounded (p.24); and secondly, he observes the obsession of two Stabsärzte with treating abscesses and competing for the best medical treatment of these relatively negligible conditions, rather than taking any interest in the more serious wounds resulting from the fighting.²⁴ (p.26)

Remarque's picture of the surgeons through Bäumer's eyes is important because the book was so widely read. However, some works from different ends of the spectrum present a far more positive picture. Two examples of those are *In Stahlgewittern* and *Krieg*. Common to both

accounts are a variety of images of surgeons performing their duties either in the front line, or in medical establishments in the vicinity of the front, as well as in infirmaries in Germany. Whether the authors' perspective is that of a bystander or a patient, both accounts are likewise full of praise for these men, promoting the view of them as dedicated doctors engaging in almost super-human efforts to save as many casualties from certain death as possible, working exceedingly hard and long hours to mitigate pain and suffering for the patients and very much down-to-earth characters. Jünger was wounded at least fourteen times in the war and his first-person accounts of coming face-to-face with surgeons are all based on the patient's point of view:

Ein abgespannter Arzt stand mitten im Gewühl stöhnender Menschen, verband, machte Einspritzungen und gab mit ruhiger Stimme Ermahnungen. [...] Einmal mitten in der Nacht wachte ich auf und sah den Arzt immer noch beim Schein einer Laterne an der Arbeit.²⁵

Similarly positive are Fritz Jünger's illustrations of the actions of an Assistenzarzt during one of the numberless battles at the western front. Ernst Jünger incorporated his brother's war diary in *In Stahlgewittern*, from which the following quotation has been taken. Risking his own life by ignoring the danger of constant shelling this doctor hastens over plain fields without taking shelter to attend to casualties as quickly as possible:

Der Assistenzarzt Köppen trat atemlos ein. Er war, verfolgt von Granaten, über das Schlachtfeld gelaufen. (*Stahlgewitter*, p.199)

In the final German offensive in the war in March 1918 Jünger is, once again, wounded and passes through several medical establishments. He observes the massive number of casualties, the price of the completed

breakthrough at the front, being attended to by surgeons who work to the point of physical breakdown, performing operations competently and rapidly on both officers and ordinary soldiers alike under distressing circumstances. (pp.282-83)

In *Krieg*, Renn's first-person central figure commends surgeons and their colleagues both in the field and at home in a similarly exuberant fashion. Having been wounded the first time in a failed attack and taken to a Verbandplatz, he enjoys the undivided attention of the two practitioners present, an Oberarzt and a junior doctor, who both treat the patient with the utmost care and respect. The scene is interesting for it is one of the very few in German war prose where a doctor implicitly displays to a patient his disinclinations for (the) war and all it entails for those involved:

'Erzählen Sie noch etwas vom Sturm! War das nicht schrecklich?'
'Nein, es war herrlich, wie die vorstürmten, alle. - Einer ... ist vorgerannt und hingestürzt. Wahrscheinlich ist er tot.' 'Aber das ist doch nicht herrlich!' (*Krieg*, p.223)

Taken back to Germany, the patient's healing process is complicated by serious side-effects of the wound sustained; yet competent, ceaseless and proper medical attention by the civilian doctor and the nursing staff enable him to recover quickly. (pp.231-44) Although throughout the account the central figure generally abstains from casting judgement on either other people and their attitudes towards war and their behaviour in the circumstances encountered, or (the) war in general, the positively realistic tone of his comments concerning surgeons, nursing staff and paramedics in both the medical installations in the field and in Germany, betray his enormous admiration for an apparently dedicated

group of people who are there for the benefit of his health and that of his comrades-in-arms.

But although the presentation of medical practitioners in both accounts is a very positive one, it does not affect their pro- or anti-war attitudes. In Jünger's case, who regards aggression as innate and war as an indelible and visible concomitant of that aggression, the practitioners make no comments about the war but go about their duty seemingly unperturbedly and just like the soldiers; in fact, they are portrayed precisely as front line soldiers, being exposed to and sharing with them the same dangers and deprivations. They are also shown to fulfil their role of serving the victims of the war even under difficult conditions, and become thus part of the pro-war faction. Renn's presentation of the practitioners behind the line is different from Jünger's; his account is, of course, anti-war, and that attitude includes the doctors who, although still treating the victims of the war competently, which results in most of them being returned to the front before long, dare comment on the war in a slightly negative fashion.

It is remarkable that of all the medical practitioners who were called up for service in the German forces in the war few, it seems, ever entertained the idea of reminiscing about their war experiences in greater detail. Thus literary accounts by military doctors who followed the armies in the field during the First World War are few and far between. One reason for that could be the very nature of their profession, which did not leave them enough time for reminiscing and writing; a second reason was the speed with which life in Weimar Germany was returning back to normal and the practitioners, of all the military personnel and by the economic and social standing of their profession,

found it easy to reintegrate quickly into society. On the other hand, contemporary wartime non-literary accounts like diaries, letters and - medical - reports by doctors are available. Unlike all the other members of the medical personnel who were, to a greater or lesser extent, directly confronted with the effects of the fighting on the people involved, the military practitioners not only had to cope with the sight of the effects of the fighting on the combatants, but, more importantly, had to deal with them personally. The responsibility and task of alleviating the impacts of the war for its victims rested almost entirely on the shoulders of these men. The following passage from a letter by a German surgeon, captured while retreating from France at the beginning of September 1914, tries to convey his impressions of the atmosphere inside a Feldlazarett. This is an example by a doctor with first-hand experience to make that point:

Verzweiflung, Leid, Schmerz, Tod, Hunger, Durst, Wahnsinn und dumpfes Brüten - alles kam hier zusammen zu einem grauenhaften Elend. Keine noch so blutige Schlacht kann so furchtbar sein. 600 schwerverwundete deutsche Gefangene. [...] Das Grauen, das mich dort gepackt, wird mich mein Leben nie verlassen. [...] Auf Stroh, auf Mist, auf bloßem Stein, in Lumpen gehüllt lagen sie. In einer Ecke lag ein Sterbender, sein Nachbar hatte den Arm verloren, er hatte den blöden Irrsinn in den funkelnden Augen, brüllte wie ein Tier, schlug den Sterbenden, schlug mich und riß immer wieder den Verband von seinem Stumpf. Und der dritte! Ein Ausbläser hatte ihm das Gesicht weggerissen. Alles weggerissen, wo sonst ein frisches, junges Gesicht mich hätte ansehen sollen. Dort lag einer mit ganz zerschmettertem Oberschenkel ... viele hatten tagelang nicht gegessen, nicht getrunken. [...] Mein Morphinumvorrat war bald zur Neige. Und immer wieder mußte ich spritzen, die Leute damit ruhig zu stellen.²⁶

The letter, besides straightforwardly revealing the emotions of horror and disgust of a man directly confronted with the effects of the fighting on human beings, is an interesting testimony to the total

failure of the German medical service in its designated role right from the beginning of the conflict. It is all the more valid, since its comprehensive and, above all, detailed descriptions of these effects emanate from the first-hand war experience of a doctor. They indicate that war equals chaos in all areas affected by it. Quietmeyer, unusual for a military doctor in his position, is very outspoken and, even more unusually for a man in his position in the German army of 1914, he takes a rather strong view *against* the war. His objections to the slaughter are based on both humanitarian and medical views. References to certain sights of wounded in the Feldlazarett, although a thing of the past, do not seem to have lost any of their immediacy and are still relatively fresh in his mind, tormenting him constantly; it seems that he is driven to the point of utter despair by them.

Another example of a non-literary war memoir by a military doctor, this time relatively well-known, is, finally, Hans Carossa's war diary, which was published as *Rumänisches Tagebuch*.²⁷ The author served in the Landsturm, the reserve corps of the German army. Landsturmpflichtige Ärzte, like Carossa, had no military rank at all and the lower-ranking members of the medical personnel were not obliged to obey their orders. After 1 January 1917, however, these doctors were promoted to the nominal rank of Sanitätsoffizier with the corresponding military duties, privileges and rights.²⁸ Initially, Carossa served in various medical establishments behind the front in northern France; but later mainly in Romania. His diary, which he kept strictly chronologically from 4 October to 15 December 1916, is an account of his work in various Verbandplätze and makeshift Lazarette behind the front line, and it focuses overwhelmingly on the unpleasant conditions under which he and

and the whole of the German Sanitätskorps had to perform their duties. Warfare as such, although necessarily mentioned since unavoidable for a man in Carossa's position, is never referred to in any great detail;²⁹ rather, the difficulties surrounding the establishing of relatively acceptable medical outposts in a territory better suited to accommodate wild animals than human beings are his main concerns. Accompanying military movements such as advance and retreat in difficult mountainous terrain are impressions of the first-hand experience of the inclement cold, incessant rain and incredible masses of snow, which complicate the already less than perfect situation of caring for and transporting the casualties even further. Carossa rarely reveals his true emotions while in action; rather than revealing his personal feelings, his notes indicate that he derives some satisfaction from his role of being confronted with the effects and results of the fighting on other human beings. This ambiguity makes it difficult to establish whether he is in favour of the war or rejects it. In some instances both medical and military incidents are recorded almost at once, others are recorded in retrospect, ranging from a few hours to a few days later. Allowing the reader to take a look behind the scenes of the war, Carossa's diary is full of illustrations of Verbandplätze and Hauptverbandplätze accommodating a great number of casualties waiting to be attended to by medical personnel who struggle to keep up with the pain and suffering going on around them. As *Die Pflasterkästen* and *Die Katrin wird Soldat* show, images like these are all too familiar to post-war pacifist novels and narratives. Also common to the incidents featured is the decidedly sober and neutral tone in which they are recorded, aside from the lengthy, stoical paragraphs of philosophizing about the conflict. These

state that a soldier fighting in war has to try to cope with it and take each day as it comes, as an endurance test of his personal character, culminating in the conclusion that the individual involved can do nothing about war in general.

While they serve to promote the point of view of two medical practitioners involved in the war, these two non-literary war memoirs cannot, of course, be regarded as representative for the medical practitioners in the First World War as a whole. As has been shown, variations in the portrayal of medical practitioners in Weimar war prose arise for a number of different reasons. Firstly, the novels take into account the obvious distinction between civilian and military doctors. Some of them solely focus on either the former, (*Jahrgang 1902*) or the latter; (*Des Kaisers Kulis*) others combine portrayals of the two; (*Im Westen nichts Neues*) in others again, there is a shift from the medical to the religious level; (*Soldat Suhren*; *Die Pflasterkästen*; *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*). Secondly, and interestingly, there is a division concerning the attitudes of the medical practitioners towards the war. Plievier and Remarque and, to a certain extent, Zweig, stress in their works the importance of the social standing of the medical profession of both the civilian and the military practitioners. They accuse them of being openly in favour of waging the war, actively supporting it and of collaboration with the warmongers from the safety of the communication zone or home, thereby painting a very gloomy and negative picture of them. Other authors, however, such as Jünger and Renn, are full of praise for the doctors involved in the modern warfare in the vicinity of, or at the front. Unlike the first group, though, their narratives fall short of providing clear details as to whether

their doctor characters are all in favour of, or opposed to the war. As far as doctor's memoirs are concerned, only one of the two examples examined makes an explicit anti-war point. The other remains silent on the issue. That, finally, none of the works examined deals seriously with the question of the motivation of general practitioners to join up is also interesting. Whether they put on the uniform because they were in favour of waging war, or because they felt they had to, or because they believed that their skills would be needed to mitigate the impacts of the war on those involved, or for other pacifist ideals remains, at best superficially, at worst not at all, answered in all the works examined.

NOTES

- ¹ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, pp.31-38.
- ² Barclay, *Law and Usage*, p.180.
- ³ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.43.
- ⁴ Frank, *Junge*, p.77.
- ⁵ Frey, *Pflasterkästen*, p.62.
- ⁶ Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.30.
- ⁷ Glaeser, *Jahrgang 1902*, p.159.
- ⁸ Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.197. Similarly Glaeser, *Jahrgang 1902*, p.159. This quotation is an example for what Gollbach, in *Wiederkehr*, pp.69-70, calls 'Selbstmitleid der 'einfachen Leute'.' He writes: 'In der Heimat leiden sie Hunger, Not und Krankheit, sind den Launen der Ärzte ausgeliefert. [...] An der Front sind es die einfachen Soldaten, den Schikanen von Vorgesetzten und Ärzten ausgesetzt.' And he concludes: 'Kritik äußert sich nur vereinzelt als Haß auf Erzieher, Vorgesetzte, Ärzte ... gegen die Moral dieser Personen.' This instance also renders incorrect Bostock's comment, in *German War-Novels*, p.7, that writing *Im Westen nichts Neues* Remarque had intentionally ignored: 'all military, strategical, political, social, and religious factors'. Compare also Bance's comments in his analysis, 'Sexuality, Gender', pp.418-19.
- ⁹ Theodor Plievier, *Des Kaisers Kulis* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), p.27.
- ¹⁰ Köppen, *Heeresbericht*, p.14.
- ¹¹ Glaeser, *Jahrgang 1902*, pp.163-64. Compare Renn, *Krieg*, p.344.
- ¹² Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, I, pp.69-72.

¹³ Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.362.

¹⁴ Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.275. The best-known literary version of this idea appears in Bertolt Brecht's *Legende vom toten Soldaten*, in *Werke 1918-1938*, edd. Werner Hecht and others (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), XI, pp.112-15. It was based probably on a painting, 'K.V.', 1916/17, by Georg Grosz, that he had seen. Compare Anton Gill, *A Dance between Flames* (London: Murray, 1993), p.101. See also Patrick Bridgewater, 'Discovering a Post-Heroic War Poetry', in *Intimate Enemies*, pp.43-57 (p.51).

¹⁵ Remarque, *Im Westen*, pp.275-76.

¹⁶ Frey, *Pflasterkästen*, p.217. Gollbach, in his examination of the narrative, in *Wiederkehr*, pp.250-51, which, sadly, comprises just two pages, states that Funk observes the doctors abusing their patients, accusing them of being cowards, and treating them as guinea-pigs.

¹⁷ Arnold Zweig, *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1982), p.230.

¹⁸ Georg von der Vring, *Soldat Suhren* (Leipzig and Zürich: Grethlein, 1928).

¹⁹ In the light of Suhren's explicit comments on the religion of the medical practitioner here, Gollbach's conclusion, in *Wiederkehr*, p.258: 'Von der Vring formuliert eindringlich seine Überzeugung von der Gleichheit und Gleichgültigkeit aller Menschen, Haß ist ihm fremd.' seems inappropriate. More enigmatic, still, in that respect, is Traver's conclusion of the narrative, in *German Novels*, p.195: 'Georg von der Vring's *Soldat Suhren* describes the negative side of war, but comforts the reader by creating scenes of comradeship that look forward to the more self-conscious political equation - Kameradschaft =

Volksgemeinschaft.' These scenes are, of course, familiar in nationalist war fiction.

²⁰ Zweig, *Grischa*, p.343. Welzig, in *Deutscher Roman*, p.162, makes an interesting observation about the medical personnel, their religion and the plot of the story: 'Die Menschen, die um das Leben Grischa's kämpfen sind, mit Ausnahme Babkas, fast alle Juden. Als dieser Kampf negativ ausgeht, sind es wieder ein jüdischer Arzt und eine jüdische Hebamme, die helfend ... eingreifen.' Similarly Heinz Wetzel, in 'War and the Destruction of Principles in Arnold Zweig's: *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* and *Erziehung vor Verdun*', in *The First World War in German Narrative Prose*, edd. Charles N. Genno and Heinz Wetzel (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1980), pp.50-70, although his article emphasizes the judicial, legal, and moral aspects of the plot, rather than the medical side.

²¹ The Mensur is a form of a duel between members of a particularly conservative student association, the Burschenschaft. Fought with either sabre or sword the duels often leave visible marks in form of scars on the faces of the participants, indelible evidence of a Burschenschaftler.

²² The Simplicissimus was a satirical weekly founded in Munich in 1896. Because it was concerned mainly with commenting on politics in Germany the journal stopped publishing during the First World War. The last edition of the Simplicissimus appeared in 1967. For further information see *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, 17th edn, vol.7 (Wiesbaden: F.A.Brockhaus, 1973), p.442.

²³ Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.276. The term a.v. stands for arbeitsverwendungsfähig, fit for work; g.v. means

garnisonsverwendungsfähig, fit for garrison duty; while k.v., kriegsverwendungsfähig, means fit for combat duty.

²⁴ See Gollbach's criticism in *Wiederkehr*, p.250.

²⁵ Junger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.29.

²⁶ Otto Quietmayer, *letter dated November 1914*, in *Der deutsche Soldat*, pp.43-50 (pp.48-49).

²⁷ Hans Carossa, *Rumänisches Tagebuch* (Leipzig: Insel, 1926).

²⁸ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, pp.40-43.

²⁹ Analysing *Rumanisches Tagebuch*, Welzig, in *Deutscher Roman*, p.153, comments correctly: 'Carossa's Realismus ist geprägt durch die von Traumen und Meditationen überspannene Gegenständlichkeit seines Sprechens, sowie durch die Neigung, jede Beobachtung in eine Lebenslehre munden zu lassen. [...] Carossa geht es nicht darum, den Krieg als Kampf realistisch zu schildern.' But while Welzig focuses on what Carossa's *Tagebuch* does not contain, he fails to tell us what it does contain, namely a whole range of medical images familiar in many anti-war narratives and novels and their literary effects on the audience.

5.

AMBULANCE-DRIVERS, MILITARY NURSES, MEDICAL ORDERLIES AND
STRETCHER-BEARERS

In the German armies during the First World War medical auxiliary personnel were generally classified as Sanitätsunterpersonal:

Die Sanitätsmannschaften waren Personen des Soldatenstandes mit den Dienstgraden: Sanitätssoldat, -gefreiter, -unteroffizier, -sergeant, -vizefeldwebel, -feldwebel.'

Members of the Sanitätsunterpersonal served predominantly in medical establishments in the front line and the communication zone. Their tasks ranged from searching for and collecting casualties from the battlefields and in the trenches, to first-aiding and patching up wounds temporarily. They also drove the field ambulances. Since their duties were manifold, it is not surprising to find an abundance of observations by and presentations of Sanitätsunterpersonal in Weimar war prose. But the presentations vary to a certain degree in each individual work, regardless whether the focus is on one paramedic, or a group, or the medical service as a whole, subject to the intentions of each author and the perspective of their central figures.

Indispensable for the comparatively fast and safe transport of the wounded from close behind the line back to the various Feld- or Kriegslazarette in the communication zone were the motorized ambulances, introduced in the German army from 1913 onwards at a rather slow pace, thereby gradually replacing the old horse-drawn versions, regarded as totally inadequate for a properly functioning transport organization. But about a year elapsed before the the real value of the motorized ambulances was fully discovered. Where they had, so far, been widely and

irregularly distributed to individual medical units in order to support, rather than serve as the principal means of transport of the wounded in the particular sectors of both the eastern and the western theatres of war, from now on they were to be organized and run under a completely new structure as the Sanitätskraftwagenabteilung. But they remained an integral part of the Krankentransportabteilung, nevertheless.²

Horse-drawn and motorized ambulances were exclusively driven by soldiers of the lower or lowest ranks of the Sanitätsunterpersonal. As their main concern was the quick and safe transport of the wounded to the nearest medical establishment, rather than the actual provision of medical or nursing assistance, the only qualifications required for an ambulance-driver were the passing of the army's driving test and a quick and rather superficial instruction in First Aid, lasting about a fortnight.³

Ambulance-drivers are the least prominent of all members of the medical personnel featured in Weimar war literature. Most authors, when writing about matters medical, focus predominantly on the nursing staff and doctors. Thus for example Remarque prefers to draw the reader's attention to the Sanitätsgefreite who accompanies a horse-drawn ambulance inoculating the wounded Bäumer and his friend Kropp against tetanus, rather than the driver of the vehicle.⁴ Ambulance-drivers would probably have remained the only unknown quantity of the German medical corps in the First World War, had it not been for one or two Frontromane which mention them. Even so, descriptions of them and how they went about their duties are few and far between in Weimar war literature generally. Furthermore, the few lines dedicated to them by writers taking the patient's point of view are anything but engaged. On the

contrary, the impressions imparted seem to suggest (not necessarily fairly) that if ever there had been totally insensitive and utterly indifferent individuals in the German Heeresanitätswesen, then these were, indeed, the ambulance-drivers. In *In Stahlgewittern* Jünger remarks:

Am Abend wurde ich mit anderen Verwundeten an den Ortsausgang getragen und dort in einen Sanitätswagen geladen. Ohne auf das Geschrei der Insassen zu achten, raste der Fahrer auf der bei Fregicourt-Ferme wie immer unter starkem Feuer liegenden Straße über Trichter und andere Hindernisse hinweg und gab uns endlich an ein Auto weiter, das uns in der Kirche des Dorfes Fins ablieferte.⁵

While Jünger in this particular instance concedes that the unpleasant procedure of transport was a necessary operation to prevent the wounded from possibly sustaining more physical damage, although the ride certainly added to their suffering, the idea being to minimize the external threat of the war, he notes about two years later on, after having been wounded once more, by now apparently resigning himself to the inevitable and unavoidable, that when it came to transporting the wounded nothing had changed at all, least of all the ambulance-drivers' expertise. It should, however, be noted that the drivers, naturally, had a vested interest in staying unhurt and alive for as long as possible themselves. The incidents depicted seem to suggest nevertheless that the medical conditions of the wounded presented far less of a problem for them to endure than the transport back in an ambulance:

Am nächsten Tage setzte die übliche, etappenweise Rückbeförderung ein. Die wüste Autofahrt zum Kriegslazarett stellte eine letzte, harte Probe an die Lebenskraft. (*Stahlgewitter*, p.318)

In this instance Jünger does not explicitly blame the ambulance-driver for his discomfort; possibly he had the generally bad state of the roads in mind, too.

There is a similar image in Renn's *Krieg*. In that particular instance the patient's condition is aggravated severely as the inside of the ambulance is sparsely equipped and freezing cold, the shock absorbers worn, the roads in a terrible state and the style of driving not conducive to making the whole affair an experience anyone would wish to repeat.⁶ The image reflects the ongoing war affecting the medical equipment with severe consequences for the patients.

Military nurses and medical orderlies were military non-combatants, all unarmed, who served primarily in Sanitätskompanien in the field, maintaining and running the Verbandplatz attached to their units and in medical outposts in the fighting zones in both the East and the West as well as in civilian infirmaries in Germany.⁷ Weimar war prose often refers to these paramedics simply as Sanitäter, or (very rarely) as Krankenwärter.⁸ In retrospect it is difficult to establish whether or not the ordinary front line soldier was in any way familiar with the rather complicated and often confused particulars of the medical service of the German army. It is not uncommon for the former to be taken for stretcher-bearers by their comrades-in-arms, particularly in the confusion of the fighting, when, in actual fact, the cry ' Sanitäter!' very often referred to the former, summoned to carry out First Aid duties, just as easily as the Krankenträger, called to stretch off the casualties to the various medical establishments behind the line.⁹ While the stretcher-bearers serving with the individual combat units were responsible only for the collection and the transport of the wounded,

the medical personnel attached to the Sanitätskompanien were trained to function both as First Aiders and stretcher-bearers,¹⁰ a fact also commented on by novels taking the front line soldier's point of view.¹¹

Due to the very nature of the nursing profession and its status as a bastion of women, there were, at the beginning of the war, only a handful of men who had acquired nursing skills by trade. Confronted with a situation that called for decisive and swift action, the desperate efforts to meet the demand for the large number of qualified male nurses required led to the establishment of courses lasting six weeks where the recruits received instruction and training in theoretical and practical nursing techniques. Primarily candidates for the priesthood, as well as junior students of medicine were drafted to fill the large number of vacancies.¹² It would, however, be unwise to conclude that philanthropic, theological and medical inclinations on the part of those thus enlisted, in connection with a basic medical training not exceeding six weeks, were, in any way, an effective answer to the problem of keeping up with the developments of modern warfare or the requirements of the armies in the field. These measures, well-intended though they were, contributed a great deal towards bringing the trained medical orderlies and military nurses into disrepute, although it has to be said in some cases not without justification, with the soldiers who encountered them as patients.

The image of the incompetent medical orderly whose incapability of handling even the simplest of medical conditions and does his wounded comrades-in-arms more harm than good is by no means a rare one in Weimar war accounts. Reflecting on the painful treatment he was subjected to by a medical orderly in a Feldlazarett in March 1918 Jünger remembers:

Viel schmerzhafter als die Verwundungen, die ich nur als dumpfe Schläge empfunden hatte, war übrigens die Behandlung, der mich ein Lazarettgehilfe unterzog, nachdem der Arzt mit seiner Sonde mit einer spielerischen Eleganz durch die beiden Schußkanäle gefahren war. Diese Behandlung bestand in einer kräftigen Rasur der Wundränder am Kopfe, ohne Seife und mit einem stumpfen Messer ausgeführt.¹³

Incompetence on the part of the medical orderly need not necessarily have been the real reason for the painful treatment in this instance, though. The incident described apparently took place in March 1918, at a time when the Allied blockade had virtually succeeded in strangling Germany's supply lines to the point of breakdown; medical equipment was one of the worst affected areas and had been in short supply ever since 1915. That and the incessant fighting which resulted in massive numbers of casualties certainly did not facilitate the conditions under which the medical personnel in their designated locations were going about their duties. The nature of their occupation and position meant a daily confrontation with the effects of the fighting on human beings. Non-literary memoirs of medical auxiliaries with first-hand experience of that part of the reality of the war bear witness to the strain these men found themselves under. They are an indication that the effects of modern warfare on those involved in it, also affected those who tried to mitigate its impacts on the soldiers mentally and physically. The following quotation is from a letter of a medical orderly written in 1914:

Von Mittag 12 Uhr hatte ich wieder einmal Krankenwache. Da hatte ich alle Hände voll zu tun, 14 Mann in einem engen schmutzigen Raum auf Stroh gebettet. [...] Tausend Bitten, unzählige Klagen. Während ich dem einen helfe, ruft schon der andere. [...] Endlich kommt der Morgen.¹⁴

The letter, written under the immediate impact of first-hand experiences of dealing with the victims of the fighting which are, not incidentally, of a repetitively monotonous nature, just like modern warfare itself, shows the discrepancy between an individual's inner motivation to help the unfortunates shattered by the war and his own mental and physical struggle to cope with that reality. Although the medical orderly states that he is no newcomer to nursing wounded and working on wards, his descriptions of the sight and the plight of the casualties, who are the main concerns of his occupation, after all, betray both the scale of brutality of the war itself, as well as the extent of his personal suffering. What he is confronted with is hard to come to terms with. The letter not only reflects a medical orderly's feelings about war closely but also, by focussing on the inside of a medical installation, enables the reader to take a look behind the scenes of war. It is intended to strip the fine-sounding phrases *Heldentum* and *Heldentod* of their pathos and reveals that they mean nothing but devastation, horror and pain and suffering in abundance for those involved. Consequently, by doing his duty, the medical orderly has himself fallen victim to the war.

It seems only natural that being involved with and attending to the massive and apparently endless number of casualties and fatalities on a daily basis should cause most medical personnel to turn indifferent towards the pain and suffering surrounding them.¹⁵ From the point of view of the nursing staff medical provision for the casualties was anything but an easy undertaking, nor was it an enjoyable or pleasant experience, and certainly did not, in any way, correspond with the points of view of a great number of their comrades-in-arms in the trenches.

In sharp contrast to the account cited above stand the literary images of auxiliary medical personnel utilized by authors dealing with the nursing staff from both a patient's and a visitor's point of view. Remarque's negative views on any Lazarett in *Im Westen nichts Neues* have already been noted, but his presentation of the medical personnel attached to these locations is just as jaundiced. Remarque's central figure observes medical staff from different angles, since in the course of the story Bäumer takes on the roles of both patient and visitor at various points; but in all situations the military nurses and orderlies fall short of his expectations. In the following instance they are used to exemplify the change the war brings about in people's attitudes. These find their visible expression in the indifference displayed by a medical orderly towards the condition of the patients and his debatable attitudes towards the patients' possessions. The second scene of the novel is set in a Feldlazarett where a group of soldiers visits a mortally wounded friend of theirs. One of the soldiers, private Müller, is anxious to secure the leather boots of the wounded Kemmerich for himself, since they are of a far better quality than his own. One of Kemmerich's legs has been amputated and it is obvious that even if he recuperated fully from his condition he would never be able to use the boots again. But Kemmerich has not realized his condition and is therefore reluctant to pass on the boots to Müller. All the soldiers are aware that as soon as their wounded comrade-in-arms has passed away the medical orderlies will steal the boots to keep them for themselves, although for a front line soldier they, naturally, represent an invaluable item, more so than for an orderly in a Feldlazarett. But for the time being there is nothing the soldiers can do about it, for they

are reluctant to tell Kemmerich about the true state he is in. Before leaving for the base camp Bäumer and his friends bribe a reluctant orderly with some of their cigarettes to ease Kemmerich's pain with morphine, in short supply in the Lazarett. (pp.22-23) The motif of the inhumanity of the war clearly compromising the attitudes and actions of the very people who were there to mitigate its impacts is further elaborated with the depicting of Kemmerich's death. The application of morphine to soldiers in Kemmerich's position, who are to die soon anyway, is not considered necessary by the medical orderlies, but it is evident from the conversation between Bäumer and the orderly that they are, indeed, allowed to cast their judgement on the eligibility of patients for pain-killers. The morphine, seemingly in short supply, is to be saved for those soldiers who are judged by the medical orderlies to stand a better chance of surviving, thus condemning the Kemmerichs in the Feldlazarett to suffer and die in an agonizingly slow and painful fashion with neither medical nor spiritual comfort at hand. The episode also contains an allusion to the alleged preferential treatment of officers and the deep-seated distrust of the said group of soldiers towards the medical orderlies evident in Kropp's insistence on watching the orderly injecting the morphine:

Kemmerich stöhnt. Er hat Fieber. Wir halten draußen einen Sanitäter an und reden ihm zu, Kemmerich eine Spritze zu geben. Er lehnt ab. 'Wenn wir jedem Morphinum geben wollten, müßten wir Fässer voll haben - ' 'Du bedienst wohl nur Offiziere', sagt Kropp gehässig. Rasch lege ich mich ins Mittel und gebe dem Sanitäter zunächst mal eine Zigarette. Er nimmt sie. Dann frage ich: 'Darfst du denn überhaupt eine machen?' Er ist beleidigt. 'Wenn ihr's nicht glaubt, was fragt ihr mich - ' Ich drücke ihm noch ein paar Zigaretten in die Hand. 'Tu uns den Gefallen - ' 'Na schön', sagt er. Kropp geht mit ihm hinein, er traut ihm nicht und will zusehen. (*Im Westen ...*, p.22f.)

A second incident once more serves to show how much the war had changed the allegedly humane inclinations of the medical personnel. Beds are urgently needed for freshly wounded soldiers and Kemmerich, known to be in a critical state, is being looked at by an orderly, but not for medical reasons to improve his condition, but to check if he is dead already, so that his bed can be used again:

Lazarettgehilfen gehen herum mit Flaschen und Eimern.
Einer kommt heran, wirft Kemmerich einen forschenden Blick zu und entfernt sich wieder. Man sieht, daß er wartet, wahrscheinlich braucht er das Bett. (*Im Westen ...*, p.36)

The derisory tone in which the orderlies' behaviour is described in this passage is indicative of Remarque's bias against anything medical in the war, including the medical personnel. Of course, his judgements are clouded by his own personal objectives, but his description of the orderlies in this instance does no justice to these men. The audience, reading the passage with hindsight, is aware that due to the circumstances prevailing in the Feldlazarett at the time, the orderlies have no other choice in this case but to do what they are doing. They have to adopt to those circumstances, even if they wanted to do otherwise. If that means neglecting the fatally wounded medically, it is a price that has to be paid to save others, less severely wounded soldiers, instead.

The final encounter with the medical orderly is significant for the ensuing emotional and mental development of the central figure. Bäumer's realization that all the horrors of war are on display in the Feldlazarett before his very eyes is based on two images familiar in most anti-war writings and symbolic for the nature of the war of

attrition. First, there is the influx of massive numbers of casualties, unaware that their expectations of adequate humane and medical treatment are unlikely ever to be matched by any of the nursing staff, let alone the doctors, and secondly, the emotional atrophy of the medical personnel who, like the casualties they nurse, have themselves fallen victim to the war; who are unable any longer to show either disgust or horror at the effects of the war on people; and who, in Remarque's depiction of them, seem unable to understand the reason for Bäumer's mourning for a friend. Compelled to experience all the pain, suffering and death on a scale that is beyond human comprehension, their emotional numbness in the face of all that is going on around them is too much to take for Bäumer, who is as much a powerless observer as he is emotionally involved in the whole matter, if only for a relatively short spell of time. That the passage should end on the emotionally charged statement of the medical orderly:

'Eine Operation nach der andern, seit morgens fünf Uhr - doll, sage ich dir, heute allein wieder sechzehn Abgänge - deiner ist der siebzehnte. Zwanzig werden sicher noch voll - '.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.37f.)

is significant because it is more than a confession of helplessness. It is the honest revelation of utter despair instigated by the nature of the war of attrition and its effects and results on the people involved from which emanates Bäumer's own emotional atrophy. That this process should culminate in his final encounter with a medical orderly who examines his wounded friend Kat, only to discover that he is dead, is indicative of the latter's incapability of understanding Bäumer's feelings of pain and sorrow for another soldier; to him Kat is just another of the many fatalities of the war:

Der Sanitäter ist verwundert. 'Ihr seid doch nicht verwandt?'
Nein, wir sind nicht verwandt. Nein, wir sind nicht verwandt. Gehe
ich? Habe ich noch Füße? Ich hebe die Augen, ich lasse sie
herumgehen und drehe mich mit ihnen, einen Kreis, einen Kreis, bis
ich innehalte. Es ist alles wie sonst. Nur der Landwehrmann
Stanislaus Katczinsky ist gestorben. Dann weiß ich nichts mehr.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.285)

From the accounts examined it seems that there were medical
orderlies who either had no choice, or did not hesitate, to volunteer to
share the ordeals of their comrades-in-arms in the trenches. They earned
the respect of these because they shared the experience of enduring the
deprivations of the war and all the ordeals which were part and parcel
of the front line soldiers' existence. Unlike those members of the
medical service who preferred to stay in comfortable and safe quarters
miles behind the front, these medical orderlies are presented in many
narratives and novels as being indefatigable in their efforts to help
the pain and suffering of the casualties in all kinds of dangerous
situations, often doing their duty in spite of the very real dangers to
their own life and at the expense of their health.¹⁶ John Oxenham, in a
wartime narrative, explains:

The Stretcher-Bearer, too, has won rightful recognition. His job
also was first looked upon by the more militant as a soft one and a
refuge for non-fighters. But no man out there would say that now.¹⁷

Right from the outset of the conflict the stretcher-bearer's case was a
special one. Like the doctors and other medical personnel in the armed
forces they enjoyed protection under Article 9 of the Geneva Convention.
Unlike the doctors and administrators of medical units and
establishments, though, because they were in the lines they continually
wore the characteristic armband with the red cross on a white ground to

make them distinguishable to friend and foe.¹⁹ The role of the stretcher-bearers differed from the rest of the medical personnel in that they were, in legal and military terms, not fully attached to the Sanitätskorps, their only duty being the collection and transport of the casualties. Their task dangerously exposed them to their own artillery and that of the other side, and circumstances made them put their life at the mercy of the combatants on the other side of the line virtually every day of the conflict. With the medical care being the responsibility of the fully qualified military nurses, the stretcher-bearers relied on the red cross for protection more than any other member of the Feldsanitätswesen. Stretcher-bearers usually served with combat units, but also in the Sanitätskompanien of the individual regiments and divisions. Classified as military non-combatants they were, by definition, unarmed, save for a bayonet and, in exceptional circumstances, a revolver for self-defence. For the care of the wounded they carried a Labeflasche, a flask, and a First-Aid kit, containing mainly bandages and drugs required to patch up the wounded soldiers on the spot as competently as their training and the existing military conditions allowed. The factual distinctness of the role of the stretcher-bearer is one noticeable aspect common to war prose in general. Here he is usually the one character that stands out from the rest of the medical personnel. Wherever an author, be he German, be he French, or of any other nationality, portrays stretcher-bearers in action, it is almost always done with admiration and praise. Even Remarque paid tribute to them; in *Im Westen nichts Neues* he has Bäumer call these men Tragbahrenhengste. (p.208) The use of the slang term is, at first sight, slightly misleading; it is not meant to be derogatory.

On the contrary, it is to be understood as a mark of respect, with Baumer declaring that the stretcher-bearers know their job and perform their duties well. (p.208) However, the perception of most of the auxiliary medical personnel, and thus their presentation in Weimar war prose, tends to be generally rather negative. Looked at from the point of view of the front line soldier the life of the medical orderlies and military nurses seemed undeniably a rather enjoyable lot. Compared to the combatants, who had to put up with living in vermin-infested, dirty and wet quarters under the soil, exposed to the weather in all seasons and the constant threat of shell fire and an attack, considerably endangering their lives, and suffering from a lack of proper sustenance and a lack of decent equipment, most of the medical personnel enjoyed the benefits of living in the relative safety of medical installations behind the line, and were adequately clad, fed and looked after. Less concerned about the weather, the cold, the soaking rain and the heat, the life of the members of the medical staff must have looked an infinitely better and certainly preferable existence to that in the trenches, and some authors take exception to the situation. But while even the harshest criticism levelled at the medical staff deliberately and carefully excludes the stretcher-bearers, accusations of dodging the war are regularly levelled against medical orderlies and military nurses.¹⁹ Nationalist war fiction, always inclined to emphasize heroism to elaborate on its ideological doctrine of the superiority and the invincibility of the German armies in the war is, not surprisingly, similarly full of appreciation and esteem for the stretcher-bearers:

Auch die Krankenträger leisteten - wie fast immer - in diesen Offensivtagen übermenschliches, wenn sie, bisweilen mehrmals am Tage, im vollen Tageslicht durch den Feuerregen Verwundete nach

rückwärts schafften.²⁰

Many soldiers owe their life to the indefatigable efforts of these dedicated men who saved them from almost certain death while ignoring the risks to their own life. Images of a couple of stretcher-bearers taking casualties to the nearest medical establishment and in particular that of the lone stretcher-bearer figure, unperturbedly carrying a wounded comrade-in-arms through the line of fire back to safety, are familiar to both nationalist war fiction and anti-war novels. A detailed example of the latter emerges in Wehner's *Sieben vor Verdun*, (p.292) while in *Im Westen nichts Neues* Bäumer himself acts in the same role in carrying the wounded Kat back to a Feldlazarett. (pp.281-83) There is an interesting parallel to that image of the presentation of a front line stretcher-bearer, augmented with the peculiar aspect of desertion, in Renn's *Krieg*. The stretcher-bearer Weiß, attached to a front line infantry unit, has gone missing during an attack. His absence had been noticed because the casualties on the battlefield remained unattended after the engagement. (p.80) Returning to his unit at night Weiß is not reported to face court-martial by his company commander as that man has a lot of respect for him. (p.88) Weiß, in order to make good his inexcusable conduct, subsequently risks his life and is severely wounded when he attends to casualties on the battlefield during an attack. (p.130)

The circumstances of the First World War, trench warfare and the new generation of weapons deployed, causing wounds unseen and unthinkable hitherto, had compelled all the belligerent nations to devise a completely new, coherent and effective structure of training their

medical personnel. Driven by the desire to create a medical service capable of functioning competently even under the most demanding circumstances the German army had authorized, as early as September 1914, the establishment of special medical schools to train the Sanitätsunterpersonal adequately. These measures remained under constant revision and were, indeed, adjusted several times during the course of the war. Unfortunately, the stretcher-bearers were not considered sufficiently entitled to receive training in as extensive a manner as those soldiers fully attached to the medical service, although they were generally the first people to come across the casualties and attend to them. This state of affairs was to last for the entire duration of the conflict. However, even the training the regular medical personnel received left a lot to be desired, as the post-war - official - report of the Reichstag reveals:

Die Ausbildung in der Heimat hatte sich gelegentlich als unzureichend erwiesen, deshalb ordnete das Kriegsministerium an, daß nur Ärzte, nicht Sanitätsunterpersonal, über die das ärztliche Fach betreffenden Fragen zu unterrichten hatten. [...] Dem Besuch der Sanitätsschule mußte eine mindestens zweimonatige militärische Ausbildung vorangegangen sein.²¹

The sub-standard level of medical training is one motif familiar to anti-war literature where it is generally used as a negative example in connection with medical personnel and as a criterion of the war per se.

Of the enormous amount of German First World War prose the one novel that is entirely dedicated to the medical personnel in general and the stretcher-bearers in particular, is Frey's *Die Pflasterkästen*: 'Bin Feldsanitätsroman'. The subtitle of the novel indicates its area of special interest. Based loosely on the first-hand war experiences of the

author himself the book propagates the point of view of a non-combatant stretcher-bearer in action, Christian Funk, both in battle and behind the front. The name of the central character was probably chosen deliberately by Frey to indicate the charitable nature of his work, he is very much devoted to it, trying to keep alive the spark of life in the casualties. Unique to the novel is the motif of the motivation of Funk to serve as a military non-combatant:

Funk hat sich zum Krankenträger ausbilden lassen, weil er heimlich geschworen hat, den Irrsinn auf Menschen zu schießen, nicht mitmachen zu wollen. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.44f.)

underlining the anti-war and pacifist tendencies of the narrative as a whole. It must be noted, however, that at the point this statement is made, Funk has only been confronted with disease and sickness, rather than wounds caused by the war. In due course, though, various presentations of the fighting and its impact on those involved move into the focus of attention. In the context of the story these observations serve two purposes at the same time. First, they fully justify, retrospectively, Funk's attitudes and motivation not to join in the meaningless slaughter of fellow human beings, and secondly they force the reader to take a stand against the war in general, since its effects entail nothing but misery, pain and suffering for millions of people:

So liegen viele in Reihen auf Heu, auf Matratzen, mit zerstörten Därmen, zerfetzten Harnblasen, zerhackten Lungen, zerschossenen Röchelhälsen, eisenversehene Schädeln. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.209)

A second aspect, also central to the narrative, is that of the nature of the war, the seemingly endless carnage of thousands of young men that proceeds with no prospect of ever drawing to a close, coupled

with images of the international scale of the suffering. Funk, himself directly involved in the hopeless attempts of mitigating the impact of the fighting on fellow human beings, regardless of their nationality, is particularly affected:

Wie es auf diesem Verbandplatz irgendeines Infanterieregimentes zugeht, so ging es ununterbrochen auf vielen Hunderten anderer deutscher Truppenverbandplätze zu, auf Tausenden unablässig, an allen Fronten des Krieges - nicht mitgezählt die Scharen der Hauptverbandplätze von Sanitätskompanien, der Feldlazarette, der Kriegslazarette, die nebeneinander aufgebaut, allein eine Weltstadt, eine Millionenstadt voll Verstümmelter ergeben hätten. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.214)

Like so many of the anti-war novels, this one, too, ends before the end of the war, with Funk suffering a mental breakdown and being sent back to Germany, hence making the point that this war had been going on for too long. Its implications for human beings are correspondingly negative. This war is being waged to bring the other side to the point of total exhaustion, at huge financial cost and ruthlessly disregarding the loss of human lives, which are senselessly sacrificed to accomplish pointless missions. The motif of attrition of both human material and military hardware is intentional, so is the confrontation of the powerless individual with the results of the fighting. In the novel itself these circumstances are emphasized by a striking lack of any extrinsic markers, i.e. chapters, dates and place names, combined with detailed observations of the conditions of casualties in all kinds of medical establishments along the front, strangely resembling those featured in genuine accounts by real medical personnel. The protagonist, who is a decidedly individualistic character, finds himself in a most advantageous position to describe credibly and realistically what he

encounters. The images used are familiar in other anti-war writings and range from criticism of the inadequate conditions of the German

Feldsanitätswesen:

Es ist immer dasselbe. Keine Behandlungsmöglichkeiten, kein rechtzeitiger Abtransport. Kein Operationssaal, keine ausgekochten Instrumente, kein Chirurg. Verloren. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.197)

and its ineffectiveness to cope with its designated task, overcrowded medical installations, the enormous number of casualties, the indifference towards the patients, of, in particular, the practitioners, and, to a lesser extent, the nursing staff:

In Raumesmitte sind etwa vierzig Mann versammelt, die ärztlicher Behandlung bedürfen: Fingerentzündungen, Furunkel, Rheumatismus, Katarrhe, Verstopfungen, Durchfälle, leichte Verletzungen am Drahtverhau, leichte Prellungen und Streifschüsse. [...] Die Wunden sind bloßgelegt ... die Brustkatarrhischen stehen ohne Wickel und frieren leicht, aber alles muß wie auf den Schlag bereit sein, denn im Augenblick, da der Arzt ins Zimmer tritt, läuft die Behandlung ab ohne eine Sekunde Unterbrechung, gleich dem dahinfegenden Schicksal. [...] Es ist üblich mit etwa vierzig Kranken in einer guten Stunde fertig zu werden. Das sind noch keine zwei Minuten für den Mann. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.23ff.)

unless they are officers:

Es ist immer das gleiche bei den Gutachten über Offiziere, die wegwollen: Nervöse Störungen, reizbares Wesen, schlechter Schlaf, Appetitlosigkeit und so weiter. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.217)

to the lack of medical supplies, bandages, drugs, anaesthetics and all kinds of medical devices and instruments:

Keinen Perubalsam mehr für die zunehmenden Krätzekrankheiten. Keinen reinen Alkohol für Säuberungszwecke, für Desinfektion, kaum mehr Spiritus. Die Papierersatzbinden reißen, wenn man sie in die Hand nimmt. Die Einspritzungen gegen Starrkrampf müssen unterbleiben, sie sollen im Lazarett nachgeholt werden. [...] Die elastischen Binden zum Abschnüren von Schlagaderverletzungen sind alles, nur nicht elastisch; die neuen Rekordspritzen sind aus Behelfsstoffen so

gebaut, daß sie gar nicht, oder mangelhaft funktionieren. Die Zahl der angeforderten Fieberthermometer, der Hohnadeln, der Ampullen, wird um zwei Drittel gekürzt. Das Verlangen nach dreieckigen Tüchern wird ganz gestrichen. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.223)

and the inadequately trained members of the medical service:

Daheim sind sie in einer phantastisch primitiven Weise von einem Unterarzt ausgebildet worden. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.27)

In addition, there are a number of different motifs peculiar to the point of view of a stretcher-bearer, such as the presentation of the experienced medical NCOs who learned nursing by trade and are better suited to deal with some medical conditions more effectively and quickly and who cause less pain to the patients than the inexperienced young military surgeons who were drafted for service straight after graduation:

Der vom dritten Bataillon war Krankenpfleger. ... Beim Dienst auf dem Verbandplatz hat er immer gleich heraus, ob eine Knochenfraktur vorliegt oder nicht, während der dreivierteil Fertigstudierte herummarkst, heruntastet, und des Opfers Unbehagen vergrößert. Auch zu schienen verstehen die alten Feldwebel besser, schneller, schmerzloser als die jungen Doktors. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.24f.)

Some NCOs succeed in treating soldiers with homoeopathic remedies rather than conforming to the orthodox line of schoolbook medicine. (pp.24-25)

The motif is consequently extended, but developed negatively to demonstrate that not every NCO excelled himself in that fashion.

The novel is also designed to destroy the myth about the German army having been a well-disciplined and well-structured entity. The use of the motif of recruits receiving a totally inadequate medical and military training is further enhanced by comments on the lack of military awareness on the part of the stretcher-bearers, who were

instructed at home in a totally inadequate fashion in both areas, causing all kind of problems once they arrived at their first post. Their superiors at the front take note of their weak physical constitution, which renders them totally unsuitable for the severity of their work. Allusions are made to the lot of the many men who were compelled to give up stretcher-bearing, and who died fighting in the trenches. (p.27) A military tone is prevalent in the medical outposts just behind the front line, and even in the Feldlazarett, allegedly sanctuaries from the war, and the incapability of the recruits to salute properly is also noted with dismay by the Stabsärzte. (p.27) So deeply ingrained are the military ceremonies and instincts in especially the surgeons that they insist on them being observed by their inferiors, in spite of the terrible circumstances of war surrounding them.

The motif of the courage of the stretcher-bearers who risk their life to rescue their wounded comrades-in-arms under heavy fire and who spend their days in the immediate vicinity of the front line has already been commented on. To this Frey adds the motif of that courageous act being performed in spite of bad equipment. Being military non-combatants the stretcher-bearers are regarded by their comrades-in-arms and the military authorities alike as half-baked soldiers. They in turn are seen as complaining bitterly about receiving the worst military equipment, not at all suitable for the difficult missions they are supposed to accomplish. (p.36)

The perspective offered by Funk's situation is unique; no other war narrative dwells so extensively on the effects of the war of attrition as this one. It goes without saying that stretcher-bearers and medical staff were just as much affected by its medical implications as the

front line soldiers, particularly in the later stages of the war. A list of casualties showing the losses of Funk's own medical unit for just one month is a poignant reminder to that end. (p.210) It is a motif paralleled in few other works of endless scenes with massive numbers of wounded streaming into the Feldlazarette and Verbandplätze. The enormity of the suffering of the casualties is overwhelming, but the real effect on those who have to deal with them is negligible since all the nursing staff can do is patch up the wounds as best they can with what little medical supplies are still there and sedate those who suffer worst to ease the pain for at least a little while. Funk's response to what is going on around him is utter despair blended with a cynicism which is reminiscent to a certain extent of that of the low-ranking medical figures in *Im Westen nichts Neues*. But while Remarque's characters are shown as doing apparently little or nothing for their patients, another factor contributing to Bäumer's inner numbness, from the point of view of a paramedic like Funk, who is, after all, personally confronted with the results of modern warfare on a daily basis, one could not do little enough for the wounded to mitigate their suffering: 'Je weniger man tut, umso besser. Man konnte kaum wenig genug tun.' (p.197) Funk is eventually overcome by, and yields to the by now familiar emotional atrophy. Yet unlike Bäumer, who looks almost satisfied about his death, Funk is not prepared to let inner numbness overwhelm him as that would prevent him from picking up the pieces of his life after the war and continue with it.

Having been removed from his duties as a stretcher-bearer in the line Funk is promoted to the position of clerk and trusted with keeping

the medical records of the patients. This gives the reader another interesting insight into the war waged on the bureaucratic front:

Zu schreiben gibt es gottlob einmal nichts. Die Vergangenheit ist abgeschlossen, und die Zukunft muß erst neues Unheil schaffen, das registriert, rubriziert und nach zehn Seiten hin gemeldet werden kann. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.98)

Here the effects, the pain and the suffering of a multitude of individuals are reduced to mere figures. The actual recording of the horrors of the war on people is another feature of this novel which is rarely found elsewhere in Weimar war prose. Figures need to be constantly adjusted, amended, even manipulated, to satisfy the requirements of the medical officers behind the line in the relative safety of the communication zone, making the whole point of keeping records look an even more futile and pointless exercise. This is a striking symbol for the dehumanizing nature of the conflict. It is, therefore, not surprising that Funk's removal from the front line, and the consequent switch of perception of the effects and results of the war on those involved, ultimately cause his mental breakdown. (p.153)

Behind each number there lies hidden the tragedy of an individual human being. But the life of the individual soldier counts for nothing, since there is an inexhaustible supply of this cheap commodity. As far as the extent of the individual ordeal goes, these statistics are meaningless, for they do not, in any way, reflect the experiences of those involved. In the atmosphere of utter panic and total disorder during the retreat of the army from France in 1918, all the records are eventually lost. It is a further symbolic event that highlights the pointlessness of the war

and the endeavour to keep its results on files hidden beyond indistinguishable rows of numbers. (p.227)

In contrast to *Die Pflasterkästen* which, sadly, never achieved the literary success it actually merited, stands, incidentally, Ernest Hemingway's narrative *A Farewell to Arms*.²² Loosely based on the author's own First World War experiences as a paramedic during the First World War, this is a wartime love story between a young American volunteer in the Italian ambulance corps in the First World War and a British nurse, Catherine Barkley. The story, told throughout by a first-person narrator, focuses initially on the fighting at the front line, its effects on human beings and the sight of masses of wounded soldiers seen through the eyes of a paramedical officer, all of which, along with his own injuries to the knee by a shell, lead to a rapid disillusionment of the central character with the war. The latter part of the book provides the audience with a sentimental and, at times, melodramatic, perspective of the two lovers trying to escape the war. Having eventually succeeded in reaching the relative safety of Switzerland, the story ends with the premature death of Catherine after having given birth to a child. *A Farewell to Arms*, although it is set in the war, so that the fighting serves both as a stage of and background to the development of the novel, cannot really claim to be a war novel as such. It lacks both the determination and intentionality of the authors of pacifist Weimar war prose to expose the horrors of the war and strip it of its romantic myths. While Hemingway provides some images of what war does to the participants and illustrations of the atmosphere inside medical establishments at the front and in the hinterland, the

switch away from the horrors of war to the mutual affection of a man and a woman is indicative of a love story, rather than an anti-war novel.²³

Most of the Weimar war writings examined in the context of the portrayal of the various groups of the Sanitätsunterpersonal provide a range of different impressions of these individuals. Characteristic for their presentation in almost all the Frontromane are two aspects. On the one hand, there are misgivings about their special status and the privileges they enjoy, on the other, there is a kind of reluctant admiration for some of these men and the acknowledgement that the very nature of their position in the conflict confronted the Sanitätsunterpersonal with the worst excesses of the war without getting involved in the actual fighting. Common to all the Weimar Frontromane, however, is the admiration and praise for the stretcher-bearers, acknowledging that their indefatigable efforts did save thousands of lives in dangerous circumstances.

The special significance of Frey's novel amongst the anti-war Frontromane in the Weimar period is evident in three respects. Firstly, and unique to Weimar war prose, with perhaps the exception of Thomas' Frauenroman *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, there is Frey's choice of a medical auxiliary to make an anti-war point; secondly, in allowing his already pacifist character Funk to make an overtly pacifist point about the war; and finally, in the timing of its publication, when political opinion in Germany became increasingly polarized between the nationalist sections of the community who relied on the military for revenge and those who promoted pacifism wherever and whenever the opportunity arose.

NOTES

¹ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.53.

² Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, pp.144-50. Incidentally, Löns' war diary from August to September 1914, *Leben ist Sterben*, p.23; p.25; p.54, contains references to a strikingly remarkable number of motorized ambulances taking the wounded from the line back to medical installations in the communication zone. This is very unusual, since it is not substantiated by the official report on the Krankentransportwesen of the German army.

³ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, pp.57-60; pp.105-107; pp.144-148.

⁴ Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.239. The tetanus, according to Bäumer, is injected into the sternum; however, to be effective tetanus must be injected intra-muscularly. The method described by Bäumer in this instance is subcutaneous which applies to anti-typhus injections. Compare also Renn, *Krieg*, pp.164-65.

⁵ Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.113.

⁶ Renn, *Krieg*, p.231.

⁷ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.59.

⁸ The term Krankenwärter appears in Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.183; p.186, and Renn, *Krieg*, p.230; p.375; p.378. The term Sanitäter emerges in Beumelburg, *Gruppe Bosemüller*, p.135; p.167. Frank, *Junge*, p.91. Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.26; p.30; p.48; p.152; p.198. Köppen, *Heeresbericht*, pp.94-95. Benedict Kreutz, *Kriegstagebuch*, in *Militärseelsorge im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Hans-Josef Wollasch (Mainz: Grünewald, 1987), pp.3-175 (p.14). Plievier, *Kulis*, p.56; p.267.

Remarque, *Im Westen*, pp.37-38; p.239. Renn, *Krieg*, p.100; p.251; p.366.
Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.108; p.134; p.150; p.180. Thomas, *Katrin*,
pp.190-91. Zweig, *Grischa*, p.311.

⁹ Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.21; p.26. Renn, *Krieg*, pp.107-108; p.158.

Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.108.

¹⁰ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, pp.59-60.

¹¹ Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, pp.316-18. Renn, *Krieg*, p.251. Richert, *Beste
Gelegenheit*, p.110; p.161.

¹² Kreutz, *Kriegstagebuch*, p.28. In his survey 'The German Painters of
the First World War', in *Intimate Enemies*, pp.517-38 (p.531), Patrick
Bridgewater remarks that many famous artists either volunteered for war
service with the medical service, for they were apparently considered
unfit for combat duty (Erich Heckel), this, incidentally, shows the
jaundiced attitudes of the military towards the medical service and its
role in war, or, if they were already famous, were drafted to serve as
medical auxiliaries, regarded as a cushy job. (Max Beckmann) Ironically,
while they probably thought that their position would enable them to
escape the worst of the conflict, these men soon found out that they
were confronted with the horrors of modern warfare more than anybody
else; that their war experience should, therefore, shape them and
influence their work dramatically is not at all surprising. It is
interesting to note Bridgewater's comments on the influence of the First
World War on an artist as renowned as Beckmann: 'While the war nearly
broke Beckmann as a human being, it unquestionably made him as an
artist.'

¹³ Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.282.

¹⁴ Schäfer, *letter*, in *Der deutsche Soldat*, pp.110-11 (p.110).

¹⁵ Compare Gollbach's analysis of the front line soldiers' 'Verdrängen und Vergessen' strategy in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, in *Wiederkehr*, pp.55-57.

¹⁶ Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.161; pp.316-18. Renn, *Krieg*, p.251. Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.251.

¹⁷ John Oxenham, *High Altars* (London: Methuen, 1918), pp.62-63.

¹⁸ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.60.

¹⁹ See, in particular, Henri Barbusse, *Das Feuer*, transl. by L. von Meyenburg (1916) (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1986), p.112.

²⁰ Wilhelm Ziegler, *Verdun* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1936), p.138.

²¹ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.57.

²² Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (London: Grafton, 1977).

²³ There are several German First World War novels which contain love stories, e.g. Adrienne Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*; Arnold Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* and *Erziehung vor Verdun*; and also Ernst Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902*. Skillfully embedded in the stories they provide the authors with an opportunity to make the point that in a war there is no place for love. While Hemingway himself regarded *A Farewell to Arms* as a war book with a love story, some of his critics argued that the novel is, in fact, a love story set in the First World War. In *Hemingway and the Movies*, (Jackson: Mississippi University Press, 1981), pp.40-81, Frank Lawrence analysed the various film versions of *A Farewell to Arms*. Apparently all of them showed the novel as a passionate love story set in the war, to the irritation of Hemingway. Michael Reynolds, in his study *Hemingway's First War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.276, makes the point that although

the novel was based in Italy and on Hemingway's personal war experience there, it was mainly based on his unhappy love affair with a Red Cross nurse. Jochen Pfeifer, in *Der deutsche Kriegerroman 1945-60* (Kronenberg/Ts.: Scriptor, 1981), p.23, argues that the motifs of the 'Frontgemeinschaft' and the 'lost generation' are central to both *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *A Farewell to Arms*. While in the case of the former this is certainly true, in the case of the latter both motifs are only touched upon casually. Pfeifer states further that Remarque was influenced by Hemingway without specifying in which areas and to what extent.

THE VALUE OF WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO FIRST WORLD WAR LITERATURE

In the First World War some men fought and some women nursed the victims of the conflict. That the participants of both sexes drew their own - literary - conclusions about the conflict is, therefore, a matter of course. Those accounts which provide impressions of the medical and nursing aspects in the First World War from the perspective of the women involved are especially relevant for the objectives of this study.

But although they emerged at the same time as the writings of their male counterparts and, as the sales figures of some of the better-known works show, were similarly well-received by the readership, no other section of First World War literature has attracted so little attention from linguistic analysts and literary critics alike as both the non-literary war memoirs and the Weimar narrative prose fiction written by women nurses.¹ This is regrettable for several reasons. Firstly, these accounts put across the women nurses' point of view of the conflict; secondly, since, in their roles as full nurses, auxiliary nurses and, sometimes as medical practitioners, women inevitably came face-to-face with the consequences of the fighting, their literary contributions concern themselves mainly with the presentation of these effects, the impact and the results of the conflict on its victims, predominantly men.² It is not, therefore, possible to classify war literature written by women nurses as strictly 'women's war literature'. Thirdly, accounts by women nurses treat medical matters much more effectively than could ever have been done in works written by most of their male colleagues, for the women involved in the nursing of the

casualties had an inside knowledge of the medical service in wartime and the medical implications of modern warfare that most soldiers did not have, and this enabled them to reflect on the one aspect of the war that was of a tremendous significance to all participants. Finally, besides acknowledging much more effectively the role of women nurses and their contributions to the war effort in Germany and other belligerent nations, war literature written by women nurses is able to make the point that these women were just as much victims of the war as were the men.³

Although their historical role in the civilian and military medical service provided a common - predominantly negative - basis for women to reflect on their war experiences, it is difficult to classify their contributions to Weimar war literature as generally anti-war, although the central characters in the overwhelming number of their narratives and novels take a negative attitude towards the conflict. Just like the men's writings, women's war prose also reveals considerable divergencies in the perception of the medical aspects in the First World War, which hinge as much on various external and internal factors of the conflict itself as on the personal circumstances of each individual author. The scale of these discrepancies in views on the war is most evident in non-literary accounts, such as diaries and letters by women who were actively involved in the medical service during the war, and those who wrote about the conflict in the Weimar Republic. The former could claim that their accounts reflected a greater authenticity and immediacy of specific events, which were recorded in a concise and yet comprehensible fashion, since, very often, there was no time for the writer to reflect on the notes taken either simultaneously to an event occurring or

shortly afterwards; the latter, however, benefited from the historical knowledge and medical hindsight of the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Just as it is possible to classify war accounts written by men according to their attitudes, ideological perspective and point of view of the war into pro- and anti-war, regardless of the nationality of the individual author, so too it is possible to classify the war accounts written by women nurses into similar categories. Nationalist war accounts written by women nurses differ from the men's only in their economic and relatively subdued use of ideological phrases, but not of heroic concepts, as the following quotation from an account of a woman nurse who worked in a German Feldlazarett in France at the time of the German spring offensive in March 1918 demonstrates:

Freilich war er nicht der einzige unter unsern Soldaten, dessen wundersames Heldentum erst nach dem 'Dienstunfähigwerden' zur vollsten Entfaltung kam; still und unbemerkt wurde da mancher heiße Kampf gekämpft, mancher Sieg schmerzvoll errungen, von dem kein Kriegsbericht Meldung gab.⁴

They also lack detailed interpretations and presentations of military achievements but voice, nevertheless, invariably unequivocally partisan views:

Wir wußten ... daß die letzte, schwerste Entscheidung um Bestand oder Untergang unseres Vaterlandes hier im Westen erkämpft würde. [...] Unser zitterndes Herz sah sie aus den Gräben steigen - unsere Brüder, unsere Soldaten - in langen, langen Reihen, zum Sturmangriff. (Feldlazarett ..., p.414)

But just like ex-soldiers', nationalist war accounts by women nurses are equally economic with the presentation of serious medical implications for those they were supposed to cater for. The time-honoured stylistic

technique of failing to particularize about the wounded, seen in works such as Wehner's, is obviously present in these accounts:

Auf die weißen, frisch bezogenen Betten hatte man die grauen, manchmal leise stöhnenden Gestalten niedergelegt, deren Uniformen nicht nur voll Blut und Erde, sondern vielfach auch voll Ungeziefer waren. Also, zunächst einmal all das schmutzige Zeug weg, dann konnte man wenigstens sehen, wo es den einzelnen 'gehascht' hatte. (*Feldlazarett ...*, p.418)

The absence of detailed description of wounds in these accounts is just as remarkable as are other omissions. Anti-war novels by women who served in the medical service are full of detailed descriptions of the sights of casualties who suffer loudly - groaning and shouting - and are generally hard to cope with for their erratic behaviour and wounds, but the presentation of the arrival of many casualties at the Feldlazarett in the section quoted above seems to suggest that the whole process was an orderly and regularly silent affair. All that can be heard from the casualties is an occasional sigh. Incidentally, there is also a remarkable absence of the use of compassionate and sympathetic language concerning the victims of war. Moreover, the use of the euphemistic phrase gehascht by a nurse to describe a shot wound is indicative of her attempts to trivialize the suffering of the victims of war, a technique that is also familiar in many nationalist war accounts by men.

Historically, as far as the majority of the European women was concerned, the outbreak of the First World War did not seem at first likely to bring about any great change in their economic, political and social standing. Not only were everybody's expectations geared towards a short war, but it was also generally assumed that like any other previously it would exclusively be a male affair. Before long, however,

modern warfare revealed its true nature, which, in effect, meant massive numbers of casualties who required medical attention on a scale not anticipated in advance. The women in all the belligerent countries who represented a huge, and until then neglected potential workforce, were by now increasingly turned to and encouraged by the various private relief agencies and respective government organizations to volunteer for war service both in the areas of medicine and manufacturing. The sudden flood of women streaming through the factory gates was a novel phenomenon not entirely to the liking of a society that had regarded and treated them as second-class citizens for a long time.⁵ Nevertheless, in the hour of need they were the only source of help to turn to and, an additional bonus, they were highly motivated. On the other hand, it did not really surprise anyone to find a great number of women volunteering for their - in any case - traditional role of nursing, as soon as the opportunity presented itself.

In the United Kingdom, establishing and organizing the military nursing service, which was of an entirely voluntary nature, had been achieved in the first decade of the 20th century, as a response to the results of the conditions of the wounded in the Crimean and Boer wars. In 1907 the F(irst) A(id) N(ursing) Y(eomanry) was founded by a small number of English upper-class ladies; in 1909 the War Office established the Voluntary Aid Detachments, relying heavily on women recruits to nurse the sick and the wounded.⁶ It soon became common to use the initials VAD as reference to one individual member of these detachments. Since VAD's initially received no pay at all and only very little later on and had, of necessity, to be financially self-sustaining, the women who joined either the F.A.M.Y. or the V.A.D. not only came from an

overwhelmingly upper-class background but were also highly motivated. Although they were uniformed, they did not concern themselves with nursing but with the transport of casualties from behind the front line to the various medical establishments in the communication zone. Due to their background many already had experience with cars, a rarity in those days. They also dedicated much time to keeping their ambulances clean and maintained them mechanically. That throughout the war they jealously and proudly guarded their reputation as an elite group goes without saying.

The other major U.K. nursing organizations were the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service and the Territorial Force Nursing Service. These were professional organizations exclusively recruiting trained nurses. Devised for serving at home rather than abroad, all these organizations extended their services in the war, wherever and whenever required.

In the Central Powers, particularly Germany, employing women as military nurses in the various military establishments, or organizing them in independent nursing service units to endorse the war effort seems not to have been considered initially. But the Freiwillige Krankenpflege, which included women from all walks of life, had been constantly restructured and reorganized during the five decades preceding the First World War, only to be merged with the army's own nursing service at the beginning of the war. Therefore, for the duration of the conflict women, depending on their qualifications, served as full nurses, auxiliary nurses or ancillary staff as an integral part of the German Heeres sanitätsdienst. The voluntary nature of their service was as important an aspect in the German medical service as it was in the

United Kingdom.⁷ With that process gradually and steadily developing it soon became clear that just as waging war was no longer a matter for one part of the population alone, so too, war literature would cease to be exclusively a domain of male authors.

Before discussing selected examples of women nurses' contributions to First World War literature in depth, an at least cursory examination of the presentation of these women in accounts written by men seems necessary. Examining Weimar war fiction in that sense, one will find that women participants do, indeed, feature in most accounts, and also very positively; even non-literary war memoirs are not at all devoid of allusions to women, if sometimes in a different context. The fact that the presentation of nurses in Weimar war prose is overwhelmingly positive does not necessarily suggest that their skills equally matched their image; it is reasonable to assume that, being women, the nurses were simply objects of the many men's carnal desires. In civilian life women were a fact of life per se, because they were there; but the nature of modern warfare was such that it deprived the soldiers of the company of women. There was, consequently, a longing for women, which numerous examples in war literature by men reflect.⁸ They also reflect, to a limited extent, the general view before the conflict about the war being a struggle of men *for* women. The concept of women actively participating in war, if only on a medical level, only came to the fore during the First World War and found its literary reverberations in the Frauenroman of the Weimar Republic.

Of course, due to the circumstances at the time and the nature of the war, the Lazarette, or infirmaries often were the only places for many combatants legitimately and unobtrusively to come into contact

with, meet and talk to women. However, those were by no means normal conditions, the soldiers usually being physically too impaired by the impacts of the war to make any serious advances towards the opposite sex. It is by no means coincidental that this issue was also taken up time and again by the relentlessly elaborate and extremely cunning propaganda on all sides. In Germany (as also in France, Belgium and the U.K.) its worst excesses culminated in pictures and postcards. One of these, labelled Zwei Helden, shows a wounded soldier with a neatly bandaged headwound and a sternly heroic expression on his handsome face, carefully tended by his own private nurse, looking like an archetype standing behind his wheelchair, and cheerfully glancing over the hero's immensely broad shoulders. Accompanying the idyllic scene is a text celebrating the women in a quasi-biblical fashion:

Deutschland, küsse ihnen den Saum ihrer Gewänder; sie sind in den Kriegen deine Engel.⁹

Pictures and postcards featuring this particular, or a similar, motif were widely distributed in Germany and other belligerent states. They served, to a great extent successfully, to deceive both the civilian population at home and the recruits and volunteers about to join the armies in the field about the reality of the war and its effects on the participants, as well as the true state the medical services were in. They also did a lot to augment the popular notion of those at home of slightly wounded soldiers being cared for by beautiful women who, by their very presence, managed to restore the defenders of the homeland to good health. After all, one must not forget that the soldiers in the field depended on the nurses for their personal care and well-being more

than on a bureaucratically organized nursing service. In their white uniforms these young women who were performing all kinds of unpleasant tasks, such as assisting at amputations of limbs in operating theatres, at bandaging sessions and with the cleaning of patients, must have appeared like angels from heaven to the patients. These images of nurses as competent and reliable workers, always cheerful and optimistic, and never scared of the war, as perpetuated by the propaganda, were ridiculed, or at least placed into perspective by many writers, men and women alike, in, and especially after the war. Remarque, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, for example, has Bäumer comment on a nurse in the Lazarettzug which takes him back to Germany as a Folterknecht; (p.244) similarly quasi-critical are his statements about the auxiliary nurses and sisters he and his comrades-in-arms encounter in a Catholic infirmary in Germany:

Manchmal sind es auch Hilfsschwestern vom Roten Kreuz. Sie sind gutmütig, aber mitunter etwas ungeschickt. Beim Umbetten tun sie einem oft weh und sind dann so erschrocken, daß sie einem noch mehr weh tun. Die Nonnen sind zuverlässiger. Sie wissen, wie sie anfassen müssen, aber wir möchten gern, daß sie etwas lustiger wären. Einige allerdings haben Humour, sie sind großartig. Wer würde Schwester Libertine nicht jeden Gefallen tun, dieser wunderbaren Schwester, die in ganzen Flügel Stimmung verbreitet, wenn sie nur von weitem zu sehen ist? Und solche sind noch mehrere da. Wir würden für sie durchs Feuer gehen. (*Im Westen ...*, p.253)

It is interesting to note the variations in Bäumer's criticism levelled at the different members of the nursing staff in the Catholic infirmary. On the one hand, his mild criticism of the auxiliary nurses is directed at their medical incompetence due to their inexperience and lack of skill, not their, undoubtedly positive, attitudes towards their patients; while, on the other, he praises the sisters for their medical

skills. But some of them he charges with lacking the right human approach to their gruesome work. This slightly negative impression is, however, quickly qualified and compensated for with the idealized image of the jolly sister who is also medically competent. The quotation is indicative of the tension between the writer Remarque, whose generally negative attitudes towards the German medical service in the war are evident throughout the novel, and Bäumer, whom he allows, at certain times, to comment slightly differently, as is the case here, so as not to provide too one-sided and unfair an impression of the medical staff as a whole. It must be noted here, however, that this is, in fact, the only (more or less) negative presentation of - female - nursing staff in Remarque's novel; after all, he worked in a hospital in the war, which enabled him to experience for himself the reality on the wards there.¹⁰

Be that as it may, the wartime home-front view of the brave girls doing their job skillfully and generally defying suffering from any mental or physical strain was as incorrect as it was unrealistic.¹¹ Not only was that kind of presentation instrumental in devaluing the real contributions rendered by women during the conflict to a great extent, but these grossly unrealistic notions of nurses were also, in the dire circumstances modern warfare produced, often counterproductive to the everyday reality at these women's workplace, where they attempted to live up to:

The powerful concept of the skilled woman who possessed the unfeminine attributes of knowledge, efficiency and coolness in emotionally trying circumstances.¹²

The euphemism 'emotionally trying circumstances' is inappropriate for what being confronted with the reality of modern warfare meant for the

nurses. The often brutal sights of the effects of the fighting on the participants, as well as personal hardship, such as tediousness, mental and physical strain, anger, fear, frustration, scare and tensions between the nurses and other members of staff made life difficult for these women; the irrational concepts of heroism and glory in war were, however, not part of their working experience in these years.

Although tens of thousands of women volunteered for nursing service in the war in all belligerent states, only a comparatively small number of those actually served as full nurses, auxiliary nurses, ancillary staff or ambulance-drivers; moreover, while American, British and Russian women reflected a great deal on their first-hand war experiences as nurses in a literary context in, and after the conflict, it seems that in Germany only very few ever did. Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat* is the only pacifist novel written by a woman on medical and nursing matters; it has been made available again in recent years. Henriette Riemann's autobiographical account, *Schwester der IV. Armee*, also deals with medical and nursing issues in the First World War but is much more difficult to classify as to its tendency, because of the presentation and, more importantly, the interpretation of the impact of the war on those involved; while Meta Scheele's war memoirs *Frauen im Krieg*, reflecting the first-hand experience of the author nursing casualties during the First World War, which is just as much, if not more important than Thomas' novel, remains unreprinted except in extract.

Incidentally, war accounts written by women give several different reasons which motivated them to join up, ranging from genuine patriotism and simple curiosity (Riemann) to the desire to escape the tight social conventions which severely restricted women's choice, (Scheele) as well

as sexual desires.¹⁹ Non-literary war memoirs by women containing part of their personal war experiences and intended for home consumption were many and it would go beyond the scope of this study to consider these more closely. It is worth recalling here, though, that many participants who kept diaries or wrote letters were, of course, aware of the strict censorship guidelines, which right from the beginning of the conflict, prevented them from depicting in detail most of the aspects of the true nature of their service. Most of the women were also aware that trying to pass on their experiences to those at home would be a futile exercise, since their relatives lacked the actual knowledge of the participants themselves which was essential to understand the nature of the conflict as a whole. Just as writing about the war meant to most soldiers a coming to terms with its monotonous regularity of killing and maiming human beings, as well as their personal ability to cope with the nature of modern warfare and the suffering it caused to so many participants, so, too, for the women it had precisely the same significance.

In line with other anti-war novels, Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat* was written about a decade after the end of the First World War and published in Germany in 1930, with the subtitle 'Ein Roman aus Elsaß-Lothringen'. Incidentally, while the 1988 Goldmann edition no longer features the subtitle, the main title of the novel coincides on the face of it, with the popular wartime notions about women generally 'doing their bit' in the war. In the novel the issue is raised by Katrin herself shortly after she has begun working at the railway mission. Although she considers reporting sick with a cold, Katrin does not,

because she wants to emulate her Kameraden at the front who are exposed to much more serious health risks:

16. September 1914.

[...] Das wäre jetzt so meine Halswehseason, aber das ist keine kleidsame Mode für einen halben Soldaten, der ich doch bin.

(*Katrin* ..., p.139)

In the case of the nurses the reasons for that view are obvious: for the duration of the war they were organized along military guidelines, that is, they served in military medical installations and they also lived in special quarters; secondly, like the soldiers, they wore a uniform; and, finally, although they did not experience any fighting themselves, they, nevertheless, attended to the results of the fighting, the obvious victims of the war. But many soldiers resented such views. One example is provided by Bäumer's comments in *Im Westen nichts Neues*. On his return home for a fortnight's leave, Bäumer has an encounter with a nurse at the railway station who offers him coffee and calls him Kamerad, whereupon he remarks derogatorily:

Eine Rote-Kreuz-Schwester bietet mir etwas zu trinken an. Ich wende mich ab, sie lächelt mich zu albern an, so durchdrungen von ihrer Wichtigkeit: 'Seht nur, ich gebe einem Soldaten Kaffee.' - Sie sagt zu mir 'Kamerad', das hat mir gerade gefehlt. (*Im Westen* ..., p.158)

That the nurse uses the military term Kamerad in this situation is representative of the general attitudes of her colleagues. The nurses regarded their role in the conflict as equal to the soldiers'; just like the men out at the front they were 'doing their bit' on the home-front.

Die Katrin wird Soldat became a bestseller in its own right, and since it, too, took a pacifist view of the conflict, it became unavailable within three years of its first publication, after Hitler's

seizure of power. It is a novel in diary form and contains some autobiographical elements of the author's personal first-hand experience of working as an auxiliary nurse in the war. Loyalty to a particular country is something alien to the heroine of the story, Katrin Lentz, a young Jewish woman of bourgeois background, who works as a catering assistant at the main railway station in Metz and as an auxiliary nurse in a local Lazarett. The geographical situation of her home town, Metz, and the original subtitle of the novel are both indicative of the futility of that notion right from the start. The fact that the man she is engaged to, Lucien Quirin, has a French-sounding name, yet is eager to fight for Germany, and she herself with a German name has a lot of sympathy for the French people whose language she speaks and whom she is generally closer to than some of the soldiers from the distant parts of Germany who pass through Metz on their way to the front, are yet more literary devices which emphasize this point. As a matter of course, the military concept of the enemy has no place in Katrin's thinking either. Throughout her service she is aware that all soldiers are human beings in uniform. (p.133)

Because the novel is written with historical hindsight and yet ends with Katrin's death in the middle of the war, it is difficult for the modern reader to establish precisely (apart from the conclusion) the extent of the fictionality in the work. How much of it is based on the author's personal first-hand experience of the war is also a matter for conjecture. The events are described in a real and realistic sounding fashion, though, and even if they did not precisely happen as described, they present, nevertheless, typical impressions of the war from the point of view of a (woman) nurse whose pre-war pacifist sentiments were

cemented by what she encountered on a daily basis as part of her war service.

The diary notes commence on 27 May 1911 and end on 9 December 1916. That the diary should end more than two years into the war, with no end in sight to it, is a feature common to anti-war novels to make the point that it had been going on for too long. The realism of the diary is further strengthened by a fictive note at the end to justify its - posthumous - publication by a friend. Incidentally, Löns' death is recorded on the last page of his - genuine - war diary by another soldier, and some authors of Weimar war fiction used the literary image of the 'other voice' for reasons of authenticity, and for a deliberate inconclusiveness - Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* is the *locus classicus*.

Providing a woman nurse's point of view of the war, *Die Katrin wird Soldat* also paints a picture of what the conflict looked like viewed from the home front; thus brief sketches of the impacts of the war on the civilian population exposed to air-raids:

10. September 1915.

[...] Das erstmal geben die Zeitungen unsrer Stadt den Besuch feindlicher Flieger zu, teilen uns mit, daß ein Geschwader von sechs Fliegern hier war, daß siebzehn Personen verletzt wurden, darunter mehrere tödlich. (*Katrin ...*, p.205)

and rationing:

Im Mai 1916.

[...] Die Lebensmittel sind knapp und mager, unsere Küche schlecht. Wir essen Margarineaufstrich auf dem Brot und manchmal einen Wurstbelag, der aus Mehl, Grütze und ... auch etwas Fleisch hergestellt ist. Die Kartoffeln ... sind abgezählt, und jede von uns hat Anspruch auf etwa sechs bis sieben Kartoffeln. (*Katrin ...*, p.223f.)

repeatedly interrupt the sequence of medical images which the women involved in nursing were most likely to be confronted with themselves, such as the harrowing sight of casualties in the Lazarettzüge:

25. April 1915.

[...] Ein ganz neu erbauter württembergischer Hilfslazarettzug kam von der Front. Schwere Kopf- und Kieferschüsse, Bauchschüsse, Lungenschüsse wurden hier ausgeladen, kommen in hiesige Lazarette. (*Katrin ...*, p.189)

life on hospital wards, in particular the ward for epidemic diseases:

Anfang September 1916.

[...] Vor einer Woche kam ich das erstemal hierher, während einer Tischwache. Sah die blutleeren Gesichter dieser Seuchezerfressenen. [...] Das Grauen sitzt mir in der Kehle. Entsetzliches glotzt mich an aus dreißig Betten. (*Katrin ...*, p.225)

and the cruel and repetitively monotonous daily routine of life in a Lazarett generally:

Anfang September 1916.

[...] Ich bin Schwester Katharina, und morgen ist großer Verbandtag; dabei werde ich wieder Unteroffizier Ströms eiternden Beinestumpf halten, und wenn Doktor Wiegand die Sonde einführt oder beizt oder Eiter wegnimmt, wird er wieder brüllen, brüllen - oh, niemand, der es nicht gehört hat, ahnt, wie Menschen schreien können. (*Katrin ...*, p.224)

which is indicative of her intention to counter the notion that being wounded to a casualty means being attended to by his personal nurse, not to mention having a bandage with a little red spot on it. Limiting the novel to the relatively narrow perspective of Katrin's, it is Thomas' objective, to evoke a kind of response from the audience supportive of the notion of the heroine that war is a senseless sacrifice of human life on a massive scale and must therefore be rejected. To achieve that objective, the audience must be made to feel like Katrin by looking at

the effects of modern warfare on the participants just as they have to be led past Franz Kemmerich's bed:

22. Februar 1915.

[...] Wenn ein junger, herrlich gewachsener Bursche keine Augen mehr hat - wozu gibt es Watte? Man kann die Augen ausstopfen. Neben ihm wird einer geführt, der besser dran ist; er hat noch Augen. Wer fragt danach, daß sie blicklos stieren, die Sonne nicht mehr sehen? Einer sieht aus, als habe man ihm Augen, Nase, Ohren, Mund in einem Würfelbecher durcheinandergeschüttelt; nichts in seinem Gesicht sitzt da, wo es hingehört - die großen roten Narben natürlich ausgenommen. Auf der ganzen Welt wird sich keine Frau finden, die diesen fast senkrecht im Gesicht stehenden Mund küssen kann. Da tragen sie einen vorbei mit verbundenem Kopf, und er lacht krachend auf, daß es ihn schüttelt. Nicht zu reden von leer schlotternden Ärmeln, grasgrünen Gesichtern, vom Tod abgestempelt. Hohl bellender Husten ist zu hören, keuchend atmen Kranke das bißchen Luft ein, das sie für den kleinen Rest Atmungsfläche, der ihnen geblieben ist, noch brauchen. (*Katrin ...*, p.177)

This passage provides a good example of Katrin's ability to observe closely and describe in detail what she sees, hears and smells during her service. The presentation of the results of modern warfare on human beings are also representative of what is at the heart of her diary: the dehumanizing aspects of war which are visible in the suffering of the casualties. Nobody is in a better position than Katrin herself to counter the propaganda that dying in war means nothing but sustaining a clean shot through the head without further suffering. The reality of a hero's death to Katrin is so negative an event and depressing that nobody in their right mind could really wish to experience it for themselves. That she is informed of the death of an officer with whom she used to exchange letters in the official jingoistic style: 'Er starb wie ein deutscher Held. Möge sie das trösten.' (p.150) is, therefore, somewhat ironic. Her response:

Ich weiß ja gar nichts von Victor Larron, nicht woher er kam, nichts. [...] 'Starb wie ein deutscher Held.' Mein Gott, mein Gott,

alle Kameraden werden abtransportiert - er allein bleibt zurück, allein sterben - ist so unfassbar einsam. ... Und so eine welterschütternde Tragödie katalogisiert man mit 'deutscher Held'. (Katrin ..., p.150)

betrays her bitterness about the cruelty of death in war; it is, at the same time, an overt demythologization of war itself.

Although Katrin is not involved in the fighting directly, due to her position she has become aware of the certain and seemingly inevitable routine of the war of attrition. Similar to Bäumer, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, (p.277) she summarizes the monotonous automatism of modern warfare in three words: 'Truppentransporte, Kanonendonner, Verwundete.' (p.136) While that presentation remains on a more abstract level, the following impressions emphasize the human aspect of that unchanging routine:

19. September 1914. Immer dasselbe doppelseitige Bild: Oben auf dem Bahnsteig ausziehende, singende, nichtsahnende junge Menschen - unten in der Baracke die Zurückgekehrten mit blutleeren Gesichtern, zerschmetterten Gliedern. Die Ausziehenden werden neuerdings mit Musik zur Bahn gebracht, fahren mit Musikbegleitung aus der Halle. Wiederkommen tun sie geräuschlos. Und wir gehen auf Zehenspitzen. Wenn einmal einer sagt: 'Ach, Fräulein, Sie waren damals droben, wie ich ausgerückt bin - gelt, da hab ich anders ausgeschaut -- ' dann fühlt man sich mitschuldig am Elend dieser Menschen. (Katrin ..., p.141)

Katrin's statement raises questions of the Mitmachen and the Mitschuld of the women in the First World War. Some war accounts by women point out that women regarded the war as a liberation from social conventions that had obstructed their taking a more active role in society for centuries. But while it is undeniably true that without the willingness of so many women to serve the First World War could not have been waged economically and militarily for almost five years, it is also correct that

the nurses' contribution to alleviating the impacts of the fighting on human beings was a necessary one and of the utmost importance to the war victims. Ironically, once restored to good health and classified fit for duty, the soldiers were returned to the front. Thus, it is equally justifiable to argue that, unlike any other section of the working population in the First World War, by the very nature of their profession the nurses contributed a great deal to the prolongation of the conflict. That Thomas' novel is the only war account by a woman that makes that point, albeit casually, is remarkable.

Due to the nature of her work Katrin is involved in the conflict both mentally and physically, not least because of her affection for Lucien Quirin, who is fighting at the front; while her initial diary entries seem to confirm that she is capable of coping with the war of attrition and its results on a physical level, although there are some indications of fatigue setting in, (p.169) they take their toll on Katrin's psyche right from the beginning:

4. September 1914.

Ich war in die Baracke gerufen worden zu zwei Verwundeten. Einem Mann hatten sie den Fuß abgeschossen. Man verband den Beinstumpf. Einem anderen hatte ein Granatsplitter die Oberlippe und einige Zähne weggerissen. Die Ärzte untersuchten ihn gerade. Der Beinamputierte stöhnte, ich sah weg, sah den anderen - sah eine blutige Höhle, wo ein Mund war. Fleischfetzen hingen unter der Nase wie Fransen. Vor meinen Augen begann sich alles zu drehen - mir wurde übel, und ich kam gerade noch zur Toilette, wo ich bittere Galle erbrach. Ich sagte niemanden etwas und machte meinen Dienst zu Ende. Aber das Stöhnen ist in mir drin, ich höre es auf Schritt und Tritt. Das kann man nicht herausbrechen. (*Katrin ...*, p.134)

Her comments show that it is in the medical establishments that the gradual process of stripping the war of its myths culminates in the sights of people struck by horrible wounds, the grand-scale suffering

and incurable diseases. Katrin is, therefore, able to conclude on her work at the railway mission when it is closed down:

28. Dezember 1915.

[...] Auf diesen Bahnsteigen habe ich hinter die Kulissen des Krieges gesehen, habe seine gigantische Maschinerie und seine gigantische Grausamkeit bestaunen können. Hier auf diesen Bahnsteigen wohnt seit einundeinhalb Jahren Schrecken und Entsetzen. (*Katrin ...*, p.213)

Her conclusion is reminiscent of Bäumer's comment in *Im Westen nichts Neues*: 'Erst das Lazarett zeigt, was der Krieg ist.' (p.260) Unlike Bäumer, though, whose inner numbness and resignation is brought about by the nature of modern warfare, the war of attrition and the destruction of his entire generation in the trenches, in Katrin's case it is the tragic novelistic feature of the abrupt end of her relationship with Lucien, who is killed at the front, not the nature of her work:

31. August 1915.

[...] Tagsüber bin ich fast ununterbrochen auf der Bahn. Nicht aus Liebe zur Arbeit. Oh nein, ich arbeite, um zu leben, wie ich esse, um zu leben, wenn auch nicht um Geld, so doch um Lohn. Um den Lohn des Nichtmehrdenkenmüssens. (*Katrin ...*, p.202)

that initiates a development that leads to her ageing emotionally, culminating in total despair and utter resignation eventually:

Anfang September 1916.

[...] Ich bin doch erst neunzehn Jahre? Oh, ich trage die Zahl dreifach seit Luciens Tod. (*Katrin ...*, p.225)

In the course of the novel that motif is gradually extended beyond the heroine herself to indicate the senseless destruction of her own generation, regardless of their personal position. But while other pacifist novels, like *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Die Pflasterkästen*, for

example, use a similar literary technique, Thomas augments it with the process of *all* participants, whether they die or survive, ageing both mentally and physically as a result of modern warfare. (pp.227-28)

Having reached the pitch of inner resignation Katrin clearly wants to die; unlike Baumer, who has a spark of life left in him, in spite of witnessing the destruction of his generation by the war, Katrin has not, and dies of pneumonia. Although, in the military sense, her death did, therefore, not qualify her to be classified as a genuine casualty of war, she is a genuine casualty of the conflict, nevertheless. The war itself did affect her like a disease; there is a direct link between her inner numbness and her total resignation, because both are caused by the war, after all. The use of the literary motif of war equalling disease on which the novel concludes, indicates that war is, indeed, a disease causing death just like any fatal disease, and is familiar in the pacifist *Frontromane*, where it presents a recurrent motif.

One of the most interesting, though less well-known Weimar works written by a woman, is Henriette Riemann's autobiographical account *Schwester der IV. Armee*, which is based on diary notes taken by the author during the First World War. Riemann was a fully qualified nurse from Berlin, married with a son, who gave up family life to volunteer for war service in August 1914 for patriotic reasons; her husband, Rolf, was part of the first contingent of troops to see battle action in East Prussia and her brother, Bert, fought in Belgium and France, where he fell. Riemann herself worked in various *Lazarette* and other medical establishments in Ghent/Belgium and Russia from the autumn of 1914 to the spring of 1915. The title of her work is an indication of the author's commitment to the German cause and it is symbolic for her views

of women 'doing their bit' in the war as soldiers of an army, just like the men.

The account is divided into eight sections of different length which are themselves subdivided into several smaller passages. Classified as a Kriegstagebuch, a war diary, the work does, however, provide only two exact dates, opening with an unaddressed letter from the German Red Cross in Berlin, dated 1 October 1914, to inform the addressee that her application for war service has been approved, and a telegram, dated 4 October 1914, providing details for her transfer to Sedan, although proceeding strictly chronologically and with sporadic references to actual battles, and is, in effect, an autobiographical novel in both style and tone. The audience is made to look at the impact of the conflict on those who take part through the eyes of the narrator, a nurse called Emma, who comes face-to-face with the results of the fighting on the wards of various Feld- und Kriegslazarette.

Classifying *Schwester der IV. Armee* according to its tendency as either nationalist war fiction or pacifist war prose is a difficult undertaking, because it does not entirely conform to either pattern. Printed in Gothic typescript, the work appears, at first sight, to be part of the pro-war tendency and contains a range of blunt categorizations of soldiers as suitable or unsuitable Material (p.73) and Menschenmaterial (p.214; p.299) for defending Germany, which are frequently uttered by nurses and medical practitioners in the course of the story, as well as typical nationalist sentiments about the nature of war:

Uns einigte in dieser Nacht, was die Herzen aller Soldaten einigt: das Gefühl, daß dieser Krieg eine Wallfahrt aus der Enge persönlichen Geschickes ist, in ein Geschehen, das über Tod und

Leben ein Gewaltigeres stellt: das Opfer. (*Schwester ...*, p.85)

That the narrative begins in October 1914, at a time when the war had begun to turn static, and ends while the conflict is still going on, sometime in the spring 1915, is, however, characteristic for most pacifist works. So, too, is Emma's description of the nature of the war:

Der Krieg ist ein Haupt mit zwei Gesichtern - das eine das Gesicht der Etappe ... - das andere das Gesicht der Front, derer, die hinausströmen, heil und stark, und wieder zurückkehren mit den Fetzen ihres Lebens. (*Schwester ...*, p.97)

which echoes the points made in Thomas' novel almost to the letter.

Moreover, in spite of her clearly partisan views the narrator does not subscribe to the nationalist concept of 'the enemy'. Her descriptions of most of the soldiers she observes, in particular the German and the French, as Knaben (p.98) and Große Jungen, (p.300) and the Russian as Große, barbarische Kinder, (p.276) are interesting, for they are familiar in Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, Frey's *Die Pflasterkästen* and, of course, in Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*. All these works show that the First World War may have been an affair that affected many peoples, but was, in effect, fought out between the younger generation of all the nations involved:

Millionen und aber Millionen von Menschen, die persönlich nichts, aber auch gar nichts gegeneinander haben, stehen draußen und knallen wie die Irrsinnigen aufeinander los und vernichten einander, und kein einzelner kann erfassen, was er dem anderen tut. (*Schwester ...*, p.132)

Besides presenting the senselessness and madness of the First World War, this statement also implies that, consequently, it was the younger generation who paid the heaviest price in this conflict:

Es sterben viele. Die ganz Jungen, die vorangingen, weil sie jung waren und den Tod nicht geschmeckt haben ... Kanonenfutter. (*Schwester ...*, p.110)

The destruction of an entire generation of people is also a major issue in anti-war writings.

As far as the nature of her service is concerned, Emma's comments on her first fortnight in a Lazarett also strongly resemble those made by the central characters in Frey, Thomas and Remarque:

Vierzehn Tage voll Blut und Wunden, voll von allem, was Kreatur heißt und leidet. (*Schwester ...*, p.97)

who describe war hospitals as places of incredible pain and suffering:

Ein Hotel, das aus einer Herberge für Lebende in eine Herberge für Tote geworden ist. (*Schwester ...*, p.60)

where the demythologization of war takes place:

Tief klaffende Fleischwunden - Fleisch, Gehirn, Blut - - - zerstört, hingegeben, ausgelöscht. (*Schwester ...*, p.199)

and the true nature of war is exposed:

Entsetzliche Verletzungen: Kieferschüsse, Augenschüsse, Verbrennungen. [...] Welch grenzenloses Elend. [...] Jeden Tag amputieren wir Beine und Arme, Arme und Beine. (*Schwester ...*, p.98f.)

The repeated cataloguing of wounds to emphasize the cruelty of modern warfare is a distinctive literary device in pacifist war writings, in particular the Frontromane, but the passages quoted above are the only instances in Riemann's account where this narrative technique is directly connected to the results of the fighting. She mainly utilizes it to make a point about a nurse's daily routine in a Lazarett:

Schwester Emma ist. Sie nimmt und hält und bringt und trägt und tröstet und hilft; sie weiß und kann und wird und soll, sie liebt und rettet, sie ist schön und gut und geduldig, sie ist eine Engelsegestalt mit Engelseigenschaften, oder sie ist ein fühlloses Trugbild mit einem Teufelsherzen. Sie ist alles. Sie wird beschimpft und gelobt, sie wird verflucht und angebetet, sie wird geheiratet und nie vergessen - und immer wieder sind ihre Augen, ihre Lippen, ihre Hände, ihr Lächeln oder die Zorneswolken auf ihrer Stirn von 'himmlischer Beschaffenheit'. (*Schwester ...*, p.189f.)

thereby confirming all those prejudices and views on nurses the propagandists loved to reiterate constantly. Yet, because of her personal first-hand experience of nursing the victims of the war Riemann's approach to defining the real meaning of the role of women in the First World War is, at the same time, much more realistic:

'Schwester Emma!' Ein Name. Ein Tun. Ein Antlitz, ein Herz. - Kein Schicksal. Kein Leben. Ausgelöscht, was man war, darstellte, erreichte oder verlor. Ausgelöscht man selbst. Denn 'Schwester Emma' ist nichts, nur ein Begriff, eine Variation, ein Symbol.
(*Schwester ...*, p.190)

Unlike many works of Weimar nationalist war fiction which refer to the brutal nature of modern warfare only sporadically and from a more general perspective, *Schwester der IV. Armee* takes detailed account of the individual suffering that goes on in a Lazarett. Statements like: 'Zerschossene Hoden, zerschossener Rücken. Ein zertrümmerter Mensch.' (p.79) and:

Diese Knaben gehen hin und sterben, oder sie kehren zurück und sind Krüppel. (*Schwester ...*, p. 98)

are clearly designed to evoke a negative response to war and also stress that the suffering for those victims crippled by the fighting the war would never be over, even though they survived it. Again, this is a point stressed time and again by some of the pacifist authors.

It goes without saying that the nature of her service affected the nurses both mentally and physically, but the constant stream of wounded that needed to be taken care of did not allow the women much time for serious reflection. After some months of nursing in the Lazarett Emma comments:

Alle Ängste, die jetzt tiefverschlossen in mir leben, die ich herunterwürge, wenn sie mich überfallen - Nur die Träume - wenn ich auch dagegen ankämpfen könnte - gegen diese schneidende Angst des Traumes, die mein Gesicht in Tränen badet und mich elend und schwach in das Erwachen wirft wie in einen Abgrund ... Aber ich will nicht daran denken - nicht darüber schreiben. Will nicht, will nicht. [...] Auslöschen. Auslöschen. Und nur sein. Gegenwärtig. Und tun. Tun was man kann. (*Schwester ...*, p.86)

But although this passage evokes memories of Katrin's situation, Emma's apparent despair about the effects the war is having on the combatants and herself does not lead her to succumb to inner numbness or make her consider death as a way out of it. On the contrary:

Wenn ich Tag für Tag diese Jungens sehe mit den Gehirnschüssen, die blöde oder unsinnig in die Arme derjenigen zurückkehren, die sie als blühende Menschen hinausziehen ließen, weiß ich, daß ich hierbleiben muß. (*Schwester ...*, p.124)

However, Emma is aware that nobody who has not experienced for themselves what she has gone through, will ever be able to understand what this war is really like:

Wir werden den Geruch der Wunden und der Toten nicht mehr los. Dieser Geruch, der unten aus den Särgen dringt und in den Zimmern liegt, diesen süßlichen, faden Geruch. [...] Das kann niemand verstehen oder ermessen, der es nicht gehört hat. (*Schwester ...*, p.114)

This theme is also familiar in most pacifist war literature:

Ich glaube, daß sie [civilians] sich darüber wundern, daß ich so

wenig erzähle, daß sie fühlen, was ich fühle: Ich gehöre gar nicht hierher. Es ist so traurig, Menschen wiederzusehen, die man liebt und deren Sprache zu sprechen man verlernt hat. (Schwester ..., p.251)

Emma's feelings are reminiscent of Bäumer's in *Im Westen nichts Neues* who, while on leave, feels that he is unable to communicate with those at home, because he senses that they are incapable of understanding him. He regrets having gone home at all and wants to rejoin his comrades-in-arms at the front who at least feel about the war like he does and understand him as he understands them. (pp.156-87)

Another theme that *Schwester der IV. Armee* brings to the attention of the audience is that of women as sex objects:

Jeder erotisch ausgehungerte Kerl glaubt, daß man eine Art sexueller Bedürfnisanstalt ist! (Schwester ..., p.215)

The term Bedürfnisanstalt, a convenience, is interesting; it is an expression of the arrogance displayed by men towards women and a sign of the vanishing ethical, moral, and social code of behaviour; the exclamation mark is an indicator of the scale of the narrator's indignance, which nationalist war fiction, by and large, ignores. The issue goes hand-in-hand with Emma's generally cynical attitude for the communication zone and her outspoken contempt for those attached:

Ich zog hinaus, um ehrlich zu arbeiten und ein klein wenig von dem gutzumachen, was ich im Laufe meines Lebens verschuldet. Ich traf statt der Front die Etappe. (Schwester ..., p.155)

As soon as she has been appointed to her position a seemingly endless struggle against the bureaucrats begins for Emma:

Während unsere Brüder naß, elend und stumpfsinnig in den Sümpfen liegen und die Granaten ihre Leiber in Stücke reißen, ist diese

Etappe das Bodenloseste, das man erleben kann. [...] Die Männer, die hier im Lazarett arbeiten, Ärzte, Sanitäter und Etappenpersonal ... werden täglich fetter und peinlicher ... die Bäuchlein wachsen. Die guten Leute suchen durch martialisches Benehmen den Krieger zu ersetzen und das 'la guerre c'est comme la guerre' bezieht sich hauptsächlich auf ihr Geschlechtsleben. (Schwester ..., p.144)

It is these Kriegskastraten, (p.214) 'non-combatant eunuchs', whom she and her colleagues have to fight off constantly and whom she accuses of being the real enemy of the front. The use of the medical term Kastraten for the bureaucrats is interesting because it is an indication of the tension in Emma's presentation of the medical aspects of the war and the reality she is personally confronted with. Emma is aware, and resents, that the war has equipped the bureaucrats with real power. Their decisions have a direct impact on her own life and that of the combatants; that the soldiers fighting in the trenches are powerless and, moreover, can quite genuinely be emasculated by a shell or bullet at any time she ignores because Emma is convinced that the real power lies with the men in the trenches, after all. Still, while she quickly learns to keep doctors, patients and paramedical orderlies at bay, the death of her brother Bert in France makes her realize that war is, after all, not about playing games but a matter of life and death, that means pain and suffering for those involved. In his last letter Bert rejects the notion of heroism in war vigorously:

Weißt Du: es gibt gar kein Heldentum! Es ist alles ganz einfach und natürlich. Infanteriefeuer, Artilleriefeuer, Flankenfeuer, Handgranaten, Stürme, etc. p.p. 'Allens lebensgefährlich - aber halb so schlimm!' (Schwester ..., p.242)

but for Emma this statement is in itself proof that true heroism does, indeed, exist in war. (p.242) Katrin eventually breaks under the burden

of the loss of Lucien, but Bert's death makes Emma more determined than ever to help Germany win the war:

Ich will helfen, mich geben, arbeiten. Ich will aushalten wie jeder Soldat. (*Schwester ...*, p.243)

so much so that she volunteers for a secret mission to Russia on which the narrative ends.

Whatever Riemann's objective of writing *Schwester der IV. Armee*, it is interesting to note that any pro-war sentiments are largely confined to the beginning of the work, at a time when the war is still moving, although at a considerably slower pace, and Germany is still buzzing with enthusiasm for waging it, and the end, when Emma is sent on a secret assignment which she thinks could bring the war in the East to a successful conclusion. (p.306) However, since the main part of the work contains a substantial amount of images of horrifying mutilations, the suffering of the victims of the conflict and death as well as a broad range of descriptions of the atmosphere inside various Lazarette which are entirely compatible with the presentation of the medical and nursing establishments in the pacifist Frontrone, the main body of the narrative is unquestionably designed to evoke a negative response to the conflict. Still, throughout the work Emma's attitudes towards the war remain somewhat ambiguously supportive; of course, she occasionally musters some kind of genuine compassion and sympathy for its victims, and the shattered bodies of the young men she nurses and the way most of them perish leave a deep mark on her mind. But in spite of all these gruesome aspects of her work, Emma copes, both mentally and physically, because she sees a clear objective beyond the pain, suffering and dying

that goes on around her, which she considers worthy of any sacrifice; unlike Katrin, whose humanism provides a strong basis for her decisively pacifist attitudes towards war and who is, therefore, unable to make any sense of the mechanical, monotonous and random nature of war which destroys a whole generation of people, the defence of the homeland is sufficient a reason for Emma to justify the carnage of thousands of young men. In that respect, *Schwester der IV. Armee* must be assigned to nationalist war fiction.

Since the First World War involved several countries, the analysis of the accounts reflecting other European and American women's experiences of working in the medical services yields common features with that of German women. The works by most of the British nurses with first-hand experience of the conflict which emerged in the 1920s and the early 1930s were, of course, part of the literary trend of the time, which had first emerged in Weimar Germany as a response to the apologetic writings of generals and staff officers trying to explain the military defeat of Germany in 1918. It had subsequently spread to other European countries. Designed as a warning against a new arms race and, ultimately, a new war, it caught a lot of attention and attracted large audiences, but proved ineffective in the long run against the rising tide of nationalism all over Europe. To highlight that point we may consider, as an excursus the works of Vera Brittain and Helen Zenna Smith in particular.

Vera Brittain, incidentally an exact contemporary of Thomas', came from an upper-class family and was one of the first British women ever to attend university. After leaving Oxford University in 1915 to serve as a V.A.D. in England, Malta and France, Brittain recorded her war

experiences in several diaries. These, comprising the years from 1913 to 1917, were first published some seventy years after the end of the First World War under the title *Chronicle of Youth*. An autobiographical study of the years 1900 to 1925, including, of course, the war years, had been published much earlier, in 1933, entitled *Testament of Youth*. Brittain's accounts provide a view on the war from the perspective of a young female academic who, after a long inner conflict of loyalties, she had fought very hard to be accepted at Oxford, volunteers to 'do her bit' for the war effort as an auxiliary nurse. Throughout *Testament of Youth* impressions of the senseless slaughter of human beings and their sufferings emerge in conjunction with images of masses of casualties flooding the hospital after a 'big push':

On that morning, July 4th, began the immense convoys which came without cessation for about a fortnight, and continued at short intervals for the whole of that sultry month and the first part of August. (*Testament ...*, p.279)

the nauseating smell of wounds:

The wards sweltered beneath their roofs of corrugated iron; the prevailing odours of wounds and stinking streets lingered perpetually in our nostrils. (*Testament ...*, p.279)

and stained dressings and large-scale pain and suffering as a result of the fighting:

After the Somme I had seen men without faces, without eyes, without limbs, men almost disembowelled, men with hideous truncated stumps of bodies. (*Testament ...*, p.339)

Like the fictive character Katrin, Brittain, too, does not break down by coming face-to-face with the results of the fighting:

Although the first dressing at which I assisted - a gangrenous leg wound, slimy and green and scarlet, with the bone laid bare - turned me sick and faint for a moment ... I minded ... the general 'atmosphere of inhumaness' far more than the grotesque mutilations of bodies and limbs and faces. (*Testament ...*, p.211)

But unlike the heroine in Thomas' novel, Brittain does not succumb to feelings of inner numbness or resignation when her boyfriend, Roland Leighton, is killed at the front. Her comments on his death: 'The war kills other things besides physical life.' (p.218) are, however, an indication that it did affect her psychologically to a certain extent. Interestingly, though, her notes show that nursing the casualties helped her a great deal to gradually recover her old resolve and strength. And when she learns of her brother's death later on, she is able to cope with the news much more maturely. With the war progressing and constant exposure to its results on the participants it is possible for Brittain to state that the nature of her profession has enabled her to look behind the scenes of the conflict, strip it of its myths and reject it for what it does to human beings. (p.339) There are occasional references to the medical implications as a result of nursing:

V.A.D.'s aquired puffy hands, chapped faces, chilblains and swollen ankles, but we seldom actually went sick, somehow managing to remain on duty with colds, bilious attacks, neuralgia, septic fingers and incipient influenza. (*Testament ...*, p.210)

but the main emphasis of the account is on the effects of war on its victims.

Like Katrin's diary, Brittain's ends long before the end of the conflict, but for different reasons. While Katrin's notes indicate clearly that she sees no hope for the future, they are largely confined to the present, or the immediate past, describing the day-to-day

occurrences at her place of work, while, at the same time, reflecting her despair of the seemingly endless struggle and the destruction of her generation by the war, from which emanate her yielding to inner numbness and resignation which result in her wanting to die, Brittain's notes end with the end of her war service in 1917. She did not renew her contract with the V.A.D.'s, for the mental and physical strain of nursing had taken its toll on Brittain's health and she took a relatively long time to recover. But her notes show that she had learned to cope with the war and reflect her expectations for the future, which are much more optimistic because of the war and in spite of her personal ordeals the conflict compelled her to endure.

Another relatively well-known and recently reprinted British novel is Helen Zenna Smith's *'Not so Quiet' ... 'Stepdaughters of War'*, the subtitle is indicative of the absence of an adequately defined, genuine and proper role of women in the First World War. They somehow do not seem to belong there and are shown to be, literally, in the wrong place. This is a first-person narrative based on the war diary of Winifred Young, a woman ambulance-driver in the war. Writer and observer remain one and the same throughout the novel, except for the final passage. The war is looked at through the eyes of a young, middle-class woman involved in transporting casualties from the front line to medical installations in the communication zone. Although she is not involved in the fighting as such, the driver deals with its results, an aspect of the conflict that is almost as immediate as the actual fighting itself. The in contrast to nursing more impersonal nature of her work enables the driver to look behind the scenes of the conflict and reject it completely. Like other pacifist narratives this one, too, opens while

the war is already under way and when it finishes the war is still going on. Unlike Weimar war prose by women, *'Not so Quiet'*, like other British women accounts, makes explicit references to the motivation of women to join up, ranging from patriotism to sexual desires - the latter evidence for the antiquated system of ethical and moral values being in the process of collapsing - to breaking out of a social system which had kept back too many women for much too long. (p.135) Before long, the narrator has correctly identified the monotonous routine of the war of attrition and its effects on the participants:

We hate the days following the guns, when they boom without interval. Trainloads of broken human beings: half-mad men pleading to be put out of their misery; torn and bleeding and crazed men. (*'Not so Quiet'*, p.29)

In sharp contrast to the views in the United Kingdom of the brave girls doing their duty, who have no idea what it is like to be involved in the war, the narrator openly admits that she is scared of the war. That her work serves to alleviate the suffering of the casualties is no consolation for her:

I am the type that should have stayed at home, that shrinks from blood and filth. ... I am a coward. [...] I may be helping to alleviate the suffering of wretched men, but common sense rises up and insists that the necessity should never have arisen. (*'Not so Quiet'*, p.89)¹⁴

Although she is confined to her ambulance most of the time and, consequently, only indirectly involved with the caring for and nursing the casualties, the narrator is in a good position to pass on her - limited - impressions in her own area of duty, nevertheless. Her presentation of the medical implications she encounters are correspondingly unpleasant:

Men with faces bleeding through their hasty bandages; men with vacant eyes, and mouth hanging foolishly apart dropping salive and slime; men with minds mercifully gone; men only too sane, eyes horror filled with blood and pain. (*'Not so Quiet'*, p.30)

The presentation of the various medical implications of modern warfare in a long list of sights of casualties accomplishes the narrator's objective of showing the audience the true nature of the conflict without great fuss.

But although such brief glimpses of the state of the patients inside the ambulances repeatedly fill the account, *'Not so Quiet'* is a novel about the women driving the ambulances, their mental attitudes towards and their suffering in the war. The women take care of their vehicles, which involves cleaning, a task described as the foulest and most disgusting of jobs by the narrator, (p.59) mechanical and technical maintainance; they have no fixed working hours, eat an inadequate diet and are maltreated by a discipline-crazy superior. While the narrator consistently gives the impression that the women could cope with all that, there is an underlying feeling of depression, coupled with the realization of constant killing which causes the narrator eventually to despair. The method of describing that process, incidentally, contains allusions to the literary motif of an artificial ageing process affecting the narrator. It is a gradual one, emerging with depressions and culminating in utter hopelessness at the realization that there seems to be no end to the slaughter. This feeling of the inevitability of death in war for herself and her generation simply overwhelms Price's narrator:

If the submarines, the aerial torpedoes, the poison gas, the liquid fire, the long distance guns, the hand grenades, the trench mortars and all the other things injure without killing them, they are sent

back again and again after being patched up until they are killed. It is only a question of time. (*'Not so Quiet'*, p.224)

The literary technique of providing a summary of all the new and most effective weaponry capable of killing masses of people enables the audience to judge for themselves how valid the narrator's statement is. The same goes for the vocabulary of horror used by the novelist. Since she is not in the best position to present the sight of casualties, the driver almost entirely relies on what she hears and smells. Thus the list of sounds she provides ranges from crying, gibbering, screaming, shouting, sobbing, whispering and yelling to coughing, groaning, spewing blood and vomiting. The smells of blood, spew, sweat and urine complete the picture of the unpleasant aspects of the narrator's service.

'Not so Quiet' is an English novel deliberately based on a German novel about a German soldier. Not only does it sound very much like *Im Westen nichts Neues* but, in fact, Murdoch has shown that the novel leans strongly on Remarque in other respects than the title as well, in that it uses a variety of images and motifs, ranging from the artificial ageing of a generation in the war and impressions of wounded soldiers, to the despair and emotional atrophy of Price's narrator who, just like Bäumer and Katrin has no spark of life left in her, consequently culminating in her death at the end of the novel.¹⁵ In contrast, Brittain's novelistic adoption of her genuine war diaries, Katrin's fictive war diary and Riemann's novelistic war account make it difficult to establish a true picture of the First World War and the significance of the role of women nurses involved, because the different literary sources raise questions as to writing about historical events and the recollection of emotions, with Brittain's novelistic adoption of her

war diaries raising further questions as to which one of the two of her accounts shows the real picture of the war? Besides presenting and reflecting on the changes in ethical, moral and social respects during the conflict, which affected the women much more than the men, all of these works, by dealing with the medical and nursing aspects in the war, which, in the case of the women meant being confronted with and reflecting on what the conflict did to those involved, are, to a greater or lesser extent, pacifist in mode and tone. Their conclusions about the First World War are as valid as those of any other pacifist account which emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s in many European countries.¹⁶

Finally, one important aspect repeatedly highlighted in war accounts written by women is the treatment of the Prisoners of War. While some male pacifist authors make occasional references to the attitudes and conduct of women towards enemy soldiers, as, for example, Köppen in *Heeresbericht*, who relies on non-literary wartime sources for his presentation of the issue:

Es ist in letzter Zeit wiederholt vorgekommen, daß die Zivilbevölkerung beim Durchzug von Kriegsgefangenen ein außerordentlich taktloses Benehmen gezeigt hat. Nicht nur haben sich große Scharen von Neugierigen gesammelt, sondern viele Zuschauer - namentlich der weibliche Teil - haben sich auch nicht enthalten, Mitleid mit den Gefangenen durch Weinen, durch Beschenken und durch Hilfeleistung ... zu zeigen. (*Heeresbericht*, p.224)

the proclamation is preceded by a letter written by an aristocratic lady bitterly complaining about the disgraceful and unpatriotic conduct of some German women towards P.O.W.'s, (p.100) others refer casually to the medical implications of captivity, focussing on the sub-standard living

conditions and the inadequate health care of P.o.W's in German P.o.W camps, as for example Bäumer, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*:

Neben unsern Baracken befindet sich das große Russenlager. [...] Sie sind alle ziemlich schwach, denn sie erhalten gerade so viel, daß sie nicht verhungern. [...] Sie haben Ruhr. ... Ihre Rücken, ihre Nacken sind gekrümmt, die Knie geknickt.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.189ff.)

Women's war prose, on the other hand, is less superficial in providing impressions of the human aspect of these victims of the war:

Eskortiert von Militär und vielen Menschen - fünf gefangene Franzosen. Einer davon ist wunderschön, vielleicht zwanzig Jahre, hochgewachsen, schlank, biegsam. Das feine Gesicht ist tiefgebräunt, die dunklen Augen schauen so schmerzlich auf die Verwundeten. [...] Jetzt geht er durch unsere Straßen, eskortiert von Wächtern, ein gefangener Franzose. Und hat den freiesten Gang und die freieste Haltung der Welt. (*Katrin ...*, p.133)

and also much more detailed when dealing with the medical implications of captivity with which, very often, only the nurses, of all the nursing staff, were also confronted. Elsa Brändström, a Swedish Red Cross nurse who worked in P.o.W. camps in Russia, commented in her war memoirs [I cite the German translation]:

[Im] März 1915 kamen die ersten Gefangenentransporte in die noch unfertigen Holzbaracken. [...] Während des Sommers wurde das Lager überfüllt, und im Herbst brach eine Flecktyphus-Epidemie aus, die den ganzen Winter wütete. [...] Arzneimittel, Stroh, Wäsche, Holz, - alles fehlte. [...] Zur Untersuchung strömen Scharen von hochfiebernden Menschen. Die Ärzte gruppieren sie in 'Leichtkranke', die noch einige Tage zu leben haben, und 'Schwerkranke', mit denen es in wenigen Stunden zu Ende geht, sowie in 'Gesunde' mit Nierenentzündung, Tuberkulose, Ruhr, Typhus, Phlegmone und Gangrän, kurzum mit allen Krankheiten bis auf Flecktyphus und Pocken.¹⁷

In spite of the paucity of material in Weimar war prose and in British literary parallels written by women, women's contributions to

First World War literature are significant; First World War prose written by women is factually distinctive from men's accounts because it draws its own conclusions about the war from an entirely women perspective. While it emerged at the same time as war literature written by men, and was similarly divided along ideological lines into nationalist war fiction and realistic pacifist writings, although the nationalist accounts by women seem to restrain themselves when it comes to using military phrases and abstract concepts of the greatness of the country and the just cause everybody is fighting for, women's war literature was generally less well-received than that of the men. It is remarkable that the presentation of women nurses and ancillary staff in the *Frontromane*, no matter the standpoint of the author, is almost overwhelmingly positive. One noteworthy exception is Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*, but even there the presentation of women nurses is not entirely negative, unlike the presentation of other medical staff and everything attached to the medical services during the war. That the presentation of women by the propaganda in all the belligerent nations as a kind of soldier 'doing their bit' for the war effort, only reflected the views of society of women nurses especially, but it did, on the other hand, a great deal of disservice to the women involved in nursing themselves. At the same time it also succeeded in presenting a highly distorted picture of the real issues surrounding women nurses' efforts in the war. War literature by women, by its very perspective promotes the view that the women had served in the war just like the soldiers and should, as of right, be equally regarded as soldiers. Besides their different perspective, war accounts by women present the medical effects, impacts and results of modern warfare in a way that no

Frontoman could. The very nature of their work and their first-hand experiences with the results of the nature of modern warfare enabled these women to look behind the scenes of war, a statement that repeatedly emerges in their accounts, implicitly or explicitly, and strip its of its heroic myths. Their accounts accomplished this effectively, and with similar, if not even more thorough, profoundness than the men's.

NOTES

¹ There is some examination of First World War prose written by women and concerning medical and nursing aspects of the conflict compared with the views of Paul Bäumer in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, by Murdoch, 'Hinter die Kulissen des Krieges sehen', 56-74.

² Alan Bance, in his essay 'Sexuality, Gender and the First World War: The Impact of War on Sexual Mores and Sexual Consciousness in Britain and Germany', in *Intimate Enemies*, pp.405-24 (p.418), makes the following interesting observation: 'The Great War is the great surgical intervention against men, who, precisely as a result of setting out on the ultimate 'macho' adventure, became as passive in the hands of the medics as women traditionally are.'

³ One of the very few more recent studies, Walter Hölbling's 'Cultural Paradigms' and the 'Gendered Eye': World War I in the Works of U.S. and German-Language Women Authors', in *Intimate Enemies*, pp.447-61 (p.447), remarks that: 'the female writers' experience of war that makes it distinct from that of men ... still remains, more often than not, their remoteness from the actual battlefield experience.'

⁴ Gertrud Graßmann, 'Frühjahr 1918 in einem Feldlazarett', in *Was wir vom Weltkrieg nicht wissen*, pp.414-20 (p.417). This is an example that lends support to Walter Hölbling's theory in 'Cultural Paradigms', p.458, that: 'not unexpectedly, only few women in the U.S.A. and in Germany and Austria develop a critical or alternative 'gendered eye' in their works about World War I. For the most part, like the majority of their male colleagues, they follow the lines of respective national rhetoric and perpetuate conventional concepts of glorious warfare and

individual heroism.' Reading this, though, one wonders if Hölbling has ever heard of, let alone read, the works by Adrienne Thomas, *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, or Meta Scheele's *Frauen im Krieg*, on the German, and Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth/Chronicle of Youth*, or Helen Zenna Smith's 'Not so Quiet', on the British side, all of which look at the war from their own, distinctively woman perspective and emphasize the brutal nature of modern warfare with all its devastating consequences for the people involved. Besides providing a woman's point of view of the war, all these works are unambiguously pacifist by nature, rejecting war completely for what it does to people.

⁵ For further reading concerning the economic, military, political and social implications of the mobilization of women for the war effort in the United Kingdom see the investigations by Arthur Marwick, *Women at War* (Glasgow: Fortuna, 1977), and for the literary reverberations of women's contributions to the war effort Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, *Women and Children First* (London: Gollancz, 1978). For Germany see Barbara Guttman, *Weibliche Heimarmee* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studienverlag, 1989), as well as Erich Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen* (Berlin: Mittler, 1919).

⁶ Marwick, *Women*, p.21.

⁷ Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.329.

⁸ I refer here, in particular, to the portrayal of women nurses in the novels of Arnold Zweig, *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* and *Erziehung vor Verdun*. For an interesting analysis of that aspect of the war see the study by Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, 2 vols (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1987).

⁹ Christian Zentner, *Illustrierte Geschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Munich: Südwest Verlag, 1980), p.332.

¹⁰ Gollbach, in *Wiederkehr*, pp.67-68, comments on the presentation of women by Bäumer: 'Das Frauenbild Bäumers ist hochgradig idealisiert. Den Frauen eignet etwas Unantastbares, Hohes, Undurchschaubares [an], eine nicht zu erklärende Wirkung: 'die verwirrenden Dinge, die von den Frauen kommen' (S.89).' And: 'Als Ideale der Reinheit und Verehrung haben sie mit dem grauenhaften Krieg nichts zu tun. Sie passen in die erfahrene Kriegswelt nicht hinein, sondern fungieren als Bestandteil und Verkörperung einer heilen Welt.' If anything, Bäumer's presentation of women in the Catholic infirmary makes it abundantly clear that they were potentially part of the war experience for any soldier just as much as the Fronterlebnis as such. In the instance quoted, Bäumer states explicitly that women could cause the casualties pain. If Gollbach had looked more analytically at the nursing aspects, a domain of women during the war, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, his conclusions on Bäumer's Frauenbild might have been different.

¹¹ For a good example of jingoistic German war prose celebrating women nurses and their achievements see the poem by Kurt von Rohrscheidt, *Schwestern*, in *Mit Herz und Hand fürs Vaterland*, ed. Otto Thissen (Cologne: Bachem, 1915), p.250. For examples of post-war jingoistic war accounts on the Allied side see, for example, Pat Beauchamp, *Fanny went to War* (London: Routledge, 1940). Beauchamp wrote her memoirs at the beginning of the Second World War to encourage women to join up.

¹² Diana Condell and Jean Liddiard, *Working for Victory* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1987), p.22.

¹³ Thomas, *Katrin*, p.185, and Smith, *'Not so Quiet'*, p.135. Hirschfeld's and Gaspar's study, *Sittengeschichte*, I, p.139, confirms the points made by the women novelists: 'Man brauchte die Pflegerin und sah bei den Mißbräuchen ... durch die Finger. Dabei war man sich keineswegs im unklaren darüber, daß ein beträchtlicher Teil der Pflegerinnen durch andere als patriotische und humanitäre Regungen zur Krankenpflege getrieben wurde.' Bance, in his essay 'Sexuality, Gender', p.414, approaches the problem from a different angle: 'Nurses in the field could be, and often were, regarded as sexually lax, and even as prostitutes ... Even if the sexual taint were avoided, and for that matter the frequent charge of a sadistic desire to dominate helpless males, the self-sacrificing stance of the 'Madonna of Pieta' (another stereotype image) was itself ambiguous.'

¹⁴ The same motif appears, incidentally, in R. C. Sherriff's war play *Journey's End* (London: Penguin, 1983), p.57.

¹⁵ Murdoch, 'Hinter die Kulissen sehen', pp.60-62.

¹⁶ The slow process of Vera Brittain's, and the German artist Käthe Kollwitz', changing attitudes towards war and the way it has been reflected in their accounts is at the heart of Hannah Behrend's essay 'Seedcorn must not be ground down': Vera Brittain's and Käthe Kollwitz's Response to the First World War', in *Intimate Enemies*, pp.425-45.

¹⁷ Elsa Brändström, *Amongst Prisoners of War in Russia and Siberia 1914 - 1920*, transl. by Mabel Rickmers (London: Hutchinson, 1929). For this chapter I have cited from the German translation *Unter Kriegsgefangenen in Rußland und Sibirien 1914-1920* (Leipzig, 1920), in Zentner, *Weltkrieg*, p.333.

PART III

7.

SHELL-SHOCK AND OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA

Virtually an enigma to modern medicine at the time, shell-shock and psychological disorders became, before long, the most problematic of all the medical issues in the First World War. The nature of most of the psychological conditions originating in the conflict was such that their symptoms frequently emerged only after the war was over. Regularly in realistic Weimar war prose, as well as in Allied war literature, psychological disorders feature prominently and appear either in the context of describing the short-term effects of the fighting on individual human beings in the line, in general, and the heavy and prolonged artillery shelling, in particular; or use is made of them as literary symbols, focussing on the long-term consequences for their victims for whom the war would never end. It seems that the whole matter was regarded as either too vague, or too unsuitable and implicitly cowardly for public knowledge during the war; wartime literature makes hardly any reference to it.

Being a new phenomenon, dealing with the victims of shell-shock was a real problem, as there were no guidelines in any military or medical manual relating to the matter, nor was there any advice available on how to treat them. Psychology, a relatively infant branch of medical science had never had, as yet, an opportunity to do much research in that area. But the nature of the First World War made it necessary for the individual belligerents to put their scientific communities to work to find solutions to problems caused by it. It is one of the biggest pieces

of irony that research in medicine and other scientific areas, such as engineering and the natural sciences, never blossoms so vigorously and progresses so swiftly and for the benefit of the whole of mankind than during a war. This is especially true for the First World War. While the soldiers were being sacrificed in their hundreds of thousands for illogical and irrational concepts of national honour and pride, territorial expansion and economic interests, mankind made huge steps forward in many scientific areas, although, of course, those who were to benefit from the latest inventions and results of research later on were rarely the ones who, by fighting for what they believed to be right and putting their lives at risk, had made the whole development possible. But even when they were at the receiving end of all those new discoveries and inventions, these soldiers paid too high a price for that privilege.

To add insult to injury, those affected by shell-shock or other psychological phenomena often became ostracized by society and their own comrades-in-arms because they showed no, or very little noticeable symptoms of their psychological condition. What visible symptoms there were not infrequently presented themselves in rather odd forms in the eyes of the outside world. Unlike those soldiers who had sustained actual shot wounds, making them clearly distinguishable as genuine victims of the war, men suffering from psychological conditions were 'wounded without wounds', with nothing to show to the outside world that would have made them easily recognizable as genuine victims of war. It is, therefore, not surprising to find victims of shell-shock often being looked at as cowards, shirkers, and war-dodgers, trying to escape the conflict by taking the apparently easy way out, faking all kinds of

psychological symptoms to that end. As was to become evident with the progression of the war, though, the whole issue was far more complex than that. Looking at the problem with the medical hindsight of the years after the end of the war and the later 20th century, the attitudes towards the shell-shocked appear rather harsh and unjustified. At the time of their emergence, though, they seemed the only logical conclusion, as tens of thousands of soldiers shared the same deprivations at the front for lengthy periods of time, enduring artillery barrages sometimes lasting for more than a week, while the number of those suffering from a mental breakdown, shell-shock, or a genuine war neurosis remained comparatively low.

A look even at a recent medical dictionary reveals the extent of the problem shock and shell-shock presented in those days:

A form of war neurosis which presented one of the major medical problems in the 1914-18 war. The problem of shock, - to the fore in the two world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45 - is still unsolved.'

The paragraph is more a statement of the *problem* of shock and shell-shock than a definition of a medical condition. It clearly indicates that research done in that area even several decades after the end of the First World War has not been able to produce anything conclusive. For the soldiers fighting in the First World War who were genuinely affected by some form of psychological disorder the ordeal must, indeed, have been enormous to endure in military and medical, as well as in personal and social respects.

Things were not made any easier for the patients by the fact that out of the research during the course of the conflict two different schools of thinking emerged, so distinct from each other in their

proposed forms of dealing with psychological disorders and treating the soldiers affected that they seemed to endorse the popular conceptions about victims of shell-shock, rather than to help the sufferers, whatever their individual rate of success.

On the one hand there were the disciplinarians, or moralists, on the other the analysts. Both used their own distinct methods of treatment, both claimed to be more successful than the other and both achieved remarkable results in treating victims of shell-shock. Eric Leed, in his well written examination on psychological disorders in the First World War, *No Man's Land*, comments:

'Moralists' ... were particularly anxious to maintain the distinction between neuroses that had a physical cause in a fall or the explosion of a shell (commotional disorders) and those that had a purely psychic basis (emotional disorders). Only commotional disorders deserved the rights and privileges of disease. Emotional disorders should be dealt with in a disciplinary fashion, for they were rooted in the will of the patient rather than the soma. [...] Disciplinary therapists collapsed any distinction between legitimate neurosis and malingering. The legitimacy of the neurosis was tested in the therapy itself.²

Unfortunately for the victims of shell-shock, a not inconsiderable number of the moralist specialist psychologists who treated them shared the widespread negative public opinion about their patients. Worse still, moral therapy was, by and large, a very painful and unpleasant affair. It was not uncommon for disciplinarians to administer a range of sadistic methods to achieve the desired result, that is the restoration of the *physical* fitness of the individual sufferer to return him to the trenches. It seems that the disciplinary method of treatment generally remained oblivious to the psychological aspects of those conditions:

Pain administered usually by an electrical apparatus, shouted commands, isolation, restricted diet with promise of relief upon

abandonment of the symptom. (*No Man's Land*, p.173)

These inhumane and painful methods of treating victims of war seem to be neither morally justifiable, nor adequate or efficient in terms of modern medicine. Even in a conflict as brutal as the First World War their application must have been considered unmedical and inhumane.³ Taking the supposed moral high ground, and determined by traditional and moral views of duty and honour, disciplinary therapy tried to instil into the patient notions of the noble virtues it valued so highly, such as public duty and the just cause the country was fighting for, which, in the view of its representatives, was worth infinitely more than the life of any individual soldier. Figures for the disciplinary therapy's rate of success were fairly high, but so was the rate of relapses and suicides triggered off as a result of the treatment received.⁴ As disciplinarians tended to treat the causes of war neurosis either as a form of malingering or as symptoms of a biological or genetic disorder in a family ranging back for generations, they removed the whole issue of psychological disorders from the war altogether. That, simultaneously, and worse still, labelled a patient as both morally and socially inferior. But scientific research produced no evidence to support the validity of the moralists' view.⁵ Also, in direct contrast to their theories stood the cases of low- and middle-ranking officers with a good family background whose rate of mental breakdown was generally much higher than that of any other branch within any army. In *Good-bye to All That* Robert Graves, himself from an upper-class background and a low-ranking officer with the British Expeditionary Force in France, passed on his observations about himself and his fellow officers in the line, commenting with hindsight:

Having now been in the trenches for five months, I had passed my prime. For the first three weeks an officer was of little use in the front line; he did not know his way about, had not learned the rules of health and safety, or grown accustomed to recognizing degrees of danger. Between three weeks and four weeks he was at his best, when he happened to have any particular bad shock or a sequence of shocks. Then his usefulness gradually declined as neurasthenia developed. At six months he was still more or less all right; but by nine or ten months, unless he had been given a few weeks rest on a technical course, or in hospital, he usually became a drag on the other company officers. After a year or fifteen months he was often worse than useless.⁶

In sharp contrast to the disciplinary therapy, which ultimately resulted in the mental and physical destruction of a patient, stood the analytic method of treating mental disorders:

Those who used the analytic perspective saw the therapist's role as that of a 'medium' of unconscious conflicts that were represented in the symptom. They operated with a view of the mind as a mechanism of opposed parts that processed - often below the level of consciousness - the needs of the individual and accommodated these needs to the imperatives of reality.⁷

While the moralists regarded their patients as morally inferior and unwilling to fulfil their duty, the analysts discovered that a great number of their patients consisted of men who had volunteered for war service, men who were strongly committed to their country and the war effort and who held all the ethical values of duty and honour the moralists accused them of not possessing. The analytic conclusion of shell-shock was that the symptom was not a conscious expression of the patient but according to Leed 'a sign of conflicts that were unconscious.' (*No Man's Land*, p.177) Having arrived at that conclusion it goes without saying that the analytical method of treating patients of shell-shock and related psychological conditions differed radically from the disciplinary, indeed:

In analytic therapy hypnosis replaced the electrical apparatus. [...] The demand characteristics of hypnosis lay in the assumptions with which it was used: the patient would 'regress' under hypnosis to the event or set of events that precipitated the symptom. The event would be reenacted in the presence of the therapist with all of the affect of its first occurrence. This reenactment would make available to the patient those motives that had become unavailable to him through the repression of the experience. (*No Man's Land*, p.177)

That in the light of that definition the analytic method was regarded as the soft option is hardly surprising. Objections to it were based on the assumption that it was simplifying the equation between event and symptom, thereby totally excluding and ignoring the reality of everyday life in the trenches.⁹

Most Allied and German war accounts consider the heavy and prolonged artillery shelling on soldiers trapped in the trenches as the main cause of war neurosis, while shell-shock is observed and reported to occur in an instant, the cause being an exploding shell close by a soldier. Whether or not the victims were themselves aware of the causes of their condition is, like so many other aspects surrounding the whole matter, not entirely clear, but there is little evidence of it in Allied war literature or German war prose. The question is, however, raised, as one motif amongst a range of others in Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*. In her role as a Red Cross auxiliary nurse working at the railway mission of Metz central station Katrin Lentz one day comes face-to-face with the 'victims of victory' returning from the front. Having had one previous encounter with a victim of mental breakdown, Sepp Faber, a former friend from school days who is fully aware of his condition, (p.160) Katrin draws the conclusion that the men she sees must also be aware of their circumstances:

Darunter waren auch etwa zwanzig Mann mit Nervenschock. Wer so etwas noch nie gesehen hat, glaubt verrückt geworden zu sein oder Fieberphantasien zu sehen. Hüpfend bewegen sich manche vorwärts, andere schütteln sich unaufhörlich; bei einigen ging der Kopf wie der wild gewordene Perpendikel einer Uhr. Und zu allem Überfluß sind diese Ärmsten bei klarem Verstand, wissen über das grausige ihres Zustandes Bescheid. (*Katrin ...*, p.189)

The fictive diary entry is a nice example of the literary technique used by the post-war novelists to present shell-shock and the reaction to it from the point of view of 1914 to 1918, with no medical hindsight involved. That Thomas' opted for the use of the present tense, a second literary device familiar in anti-war literature, serves to convey the immediacy of the horror of the experience to the audience. Katrin's use of images to describe the victims of shell-shock in this instance is also worth noting. To a woman in her position the sight of grown men moving around with no control over their movements is an incredible spectacle. While they seem physically unimpaired, their inability to control their movements coupled with their apparent awareness of their condition, only underlines the inhumanity of the condition and the war itself. The victims themselves have no say in this instance. Faber, the one character suffering from a nervous disorder and introduced to the reader in greater detail elsewhere in the novel, could talk about the war and his personal condition which has, visibly, crippled him for life, yet adamantly refuses to do so.

Almost all pacifist war novelists and psychologists alike argue that war neurosis was a logical and necessary result of the reality of combat as experienced in the First World War. They base their claim on the fact that, unlike any other major conflict before or after, it was largely dominated by the phenomenon of trench warfare, immobile by its very nature:

The most significant variable in the incidence of neurosis was not the character of the soldier but the character of the war. When the war again became a war of movement with the German offensive in March 1918, even though the fighting was intense and exhausting, the incidence of war neurosis dropped dramatically. It was generally recognized that neurosis was germane to trench warfare and the peculiar emotional states that were generated by stable, siege war. It was precisely the immobilization of combat that seemed to be the most basic underlying reality of the neurotic symptoms.⁹

While most of the pacifist Weimar Frontromane seem to reflect the gradual historical development of mental breakdown, war neurosis and shell-shock quite adequately and correctly, the numbers of soldiers affected by them began to rise as soon as the armies on both sides had started to dig themselves in at the end of September 1914, Zweig's *Erziehung vor Verdun* is exceptional in several respects. First, there is his choice of the psychological disorder; secondly, the time of the incident; and, finally, the treatment itself. All these details are important for his setting the scene for the random and indiscriminate destruction of love between a man and a woman by war, the ultimate disaster in the novel. The case he refers to is that of nurse Kläre's husband, Oberstleutnant Schwersenz, whom she left to nurse casualties in the Feldlazarett Dannevaux, after he turned melancholic during the retreat of the German armies from the Marne in August 1914, with which he has been unable to cope. Blaming himself for the retreat, his melancholic state of mind has necessitated his being honourably discharged from his regiment. (p.275) Being nursed by his mother-in-law in Bavaria, he keeps himself physically fit, but is, at the same time, obsessed with trying to find a theoretical alternative to the retreat to prevent a similar failure from happening. Further symptoms of his psychological disorder are his total lack of interest in anything but

spending days on end studying maps and considering strategic and tactical movements; in addition he makes references to his own children as grandchildren. (p.323) The author provides no further explanations as to the behaviour of the ex-soldier, but for all these reasons Kläre seriously ponders leaving her husband for Leutnant Eberhard Kroysing, whom she has fallen in love with.

Non-literary memoirs of the early period of the war show that most of the events involving psychological disorders and their effects on their victims were apparently often loosely based on hearsay and rumours. Nobody quite knew how to handle the issue, or what to make of it. The following diary notes by a German front line officer represent a concise collection of several eyewitness accounts of psychological phenomena of front line soldiers who turned insane under heavy and incessant artillery fire. Apart from betraying a feeling of distinct uneasiness about the effects of shelling on people, the author also reflects on some of the after-effects of the conditions on those affected:

Samstag, d. 17. Oktober [1914].

Soldaten, deren Nerven durch das Gefecht so angespannt werden, daß sie irrsinning werden. Lt. Roeder v. Diersburg in Markkirch. Geschichte von e. französ. Offizier, der in Irrsinn verfiel, als Nachts in dem Dorf, wo er lag, bald hier, bald dort, unsichtbar aus der Dunkelheit geschleudert, die schweren Granaten einschlugen. Ein Unteroffizier, der mitten im Gefecht aus dem Schützengraben heraus- und auf d. Feind zuläuft: er wird natürlich zusammengeschossen. Zeitungsnachrichten von Soldaten, denen stundenlang das Bewußtsein schwindet, nachdem neben ihnen ein Geschoß eingeschlagen hatte. Nachher Nervenstörungen.¹⁰

Reading early non-literary war memoirs, it is necessary to keep in mind that the severity of the shelling at the beginning of trench warfare was comparatively insignificant to what in the ensuing years of

the conflict became increasingly regarded as a 'storm of steel', 'hails of grenades' and 'showers of shells' by those compelled to endure it. These images penetrate both Allied and German war accounts repeatedly, and with the war dragging on and the true picture of the extent of the psychological conditions beginning to emerge more clearly, the Weimar Frontromane made extensive use of them. Those commencing in the middle of the war, particularly those with pacifist tendencies, make repeated references to the psychological aspects of the conflict as yet another front on which the inhumanity of the war revealed itself with all its bizarre and painful results for the victims. Thus, it seems only logical to conclude that the increasing mechanization of warfare, based on the new generation of sophisticated weaponry, was consequently going to result in the emergence of new forms of wounds and psychological illnesses unknown hitherto. To the individual confined to the trenches the constant artillery fire must have contributed considerably to the feeling of utter helplessness and total disillusion with his highly charged and often idealized notions of war. That kind of disillusion by the soldiers who were overwhelmed by the reality of a modern warfare that was beyond their personal control and comprehension found its expression in feeble attempts to explain the inexplicable aspects, if, indeed, they tried at all, of what was going on, in letters home. The tension and the mental exhaustion that was part and parcel of their existence and a result of their experience of the reality of trench warfare is clearly reflected in these accounts:

Aber die Nerven sind durch die Abspannung schlafloser Nächte so empfindlich, daß jede der fürchterlichen Detonationen rein physisch auf die Nerven einwirkt und vielfach Angstzustände hervorrufen kann. Man kann die entsetzten Gesichter nicht vergessen, mit denen manche in unsere Deckung stürzten, weil ihnen die eigene zu unsicher

schien. [...] Stumm und passiv muß die Seele stillehalten der übermäßigen Naturgewalt, die über sie kommt. [...] Man spricht nicht gern von solchen Momenten, weil sie vor der Seele liegen wie eine dunkle Gewalt. [...] Darum verschwinden sie auch so rasch im Unterbewußtsein und nur die Erinnerung an ein dunkles, schreckhaftes Etwas bleibt zurück, die sich aber auch nur mühsam und schmerzhaft vollzieht.¹¹

These letters are also indicative of the intensity of the artillery fire against which there was only one, by no means adequate or really safe protection, the dug-out within the system of trenches. A soldier exposed to a surprise artillery attack or exploding shells rarely had an opportunity to dig himself in. Shell-holes and craters offered some, yet insufficient, protection from grenades and bombs. But although a fortified dug-out was still the safest place in the line, it was by no means indestructible. It could be hit and destroyed or buried under tons of soil moved by the impact of a heavy shell at any time, trapping the occupants inside for good. Dug-outs, which appear as images of shelter in most pieces of war prose, are also presented with an aura of ambiguity. The recurrent motif of a group of soldiers helplessly trapped in their dug-out is augmented by the image of their nervously waiting for hours on end for something to happen:

Das schrecklichste ist das Stillliegen im feindlichen Artilleriefeuer. Nichts kommt dem gleich. Es ist eine furchtbare Anspannung für die Nerven.¹²

Most novels of the First World War offer a wide range of descriptions of psychological disorders and their symptoms in connection with other motifs of trench warfare. Of necessity, the authors had to present these psychological disorders and those characters affected by them, from inside the war, if they did not want to be accused of being

unrealistic by relying too much on the medical hindsight of the ensuing decades. Thus, it is only natural that they should confuse the different medical conditions occasionally, such as mental breakdown, war neurosis and shell-shock in their works. In that context it is interesting to look at the extent of these conditions, their influence on and their presentation in general in First World War literature.

As was the case with the overwhelming number of the combatants actually involved in the war, rarely does a central figure suffer a complete mental breakdown in a Weimar war novel; the authorial intention behind presenting a central figure affected by a form of psychological phenomena usually serves to emphasize the point that madness was, indeed, a way out of the war. In both *Heeresbericht* and *Die Pflasterkasten*, the protagonists do display symptoms of a mental breakdown, thus (if not intentionally) succeeding in getting out of the war; but both men are in real terms quite sane; this becomes clear from their comments. In *Heeresbericht* Reisiger, initially, is keen to join the army and fight and his transition into an opponent of war takes almost four years to complete, a relatively long period for a front line soldier.¹³ That he is declared insane at the point where he declares that war itself is mad is significant because it emphasizes the literary effect intended by the author.¹⁴ Köppen's creation of a realistic character whom he uses, simultaneously, as his own voice to make a negative point about the war, is part of his consistent literary technique of blending fictive or real, semi-official or official, wartime and, to a limited extent post-war, announcements, reports and statistics in the novel; it is a means of enabling both Reisiger and the

audience to reach the same conclusion, namely, that war *is* madness, and needs to be rejected for what it does to people, especially in the face of any attempts from economic, military and political sources to legitimize it as a valid means of behaviour.¹⁵ Funk's case is slightly different, for, as has already been shown, he has been a pacifist all along. Opposed to the war and not willing to kill other people, he is involved in nursing the victims of the fighting. After having served three years in and close behind the line, Funk, like Reisinger, openly declares war a crime; what he has been confronted with on a daily basis has obviously had an effect on his psyche; still, he could probably continue working. But he refuses to continue playing a part in the war and is sent to a mental institution by the regimental practitioner who has taken pity on his long-serving assistant.

Both novels aim, of course, to challenge the reader's judgements about the war and raise the question of who is really mad, those people who, by declaring war madness show that they are not at all insane, or those who declare them insane and continue waging it? That Funk and Reisinger are declared mad when they have reached the conclusion, based on their own experiences in the conflict and its results on human beings, that war itself is madness, although neither really *is* mad, is in itself symbolic for the madness of the war. That Funk's and Reisinger's breakdown occurs while the war is still going on is also significant; it is a stylistic point familiar in anti-war novels generally, demonstrating again that this war had been going on for too long.

In all the other Weimar war novels examined, though, the central figures usually appear as more or less helpless, observers of the

circumstances and the reality of the war. That does not mean, however, that they are entirely immune to being affected by the various symptoms of psychological conditions themselves on certain occasions. Bäumer is no exception to that rule. Taking the ordinary front line soldier's point of view of the war he provides his audience with a range of psychological phenomena as observed by the front line troops, besides describing what he observes and experiences himself in that respect. *In Westen nichts Neues* contains a wide range of literary devices, images and motifs to illustrate all kinds of psychological reactions of human beings exposed to the horrors of the war in great detail. In the process of watching some of the younger soldiers under fire, raw recruits who have had no previous experience of fighting, Bäumer distinguishes between several forms of psychological disorder, for which he provides as comprehensive an answer to their origins, coupled with a description and definition of the conditions, as a soldier in his position possibly can.

In the first instance he has an encounter with a young recruit who reacts to the external threat of the incessant artillery fire, for which garrison life did not and could not adequately prepare him, instinctively and unconsciously. Oblivious to the real threat of the war, and jeopardizing his own life, he simply allows his instincts to take control of his actions. Trying to look for some form of shelter, his reactions are determined by the survival instinct. Once the shelling has ceased, his nerves calm and he recovers quickly. The only visible indication of his anguish is the sudden and uncontrollable movement of his bowels which he feels embarrassed about. But Bäumer, who has learned

to accept and has philosophically resigned himself to the inevitability of the cruel reality of the war, shows some sympathy and understanding:

Neben uns liegt ein verängstigter Rekrut, ein Flachskopf. Er hat das Gesicht in die Hände gepreßt. Sein Helm ist weggepurzelt. Ich fische ihn heran und will ihn auf seinen Schädel stülpen. Er sieht auf, stößt den Helm fort und kriecht wie ein Kind mit dem Kopf unter meinen Arm, dicht an meine Brust. Die schmalen Schultern zucken. [...] Endlich wird es ruhig. [...] Ich setze mich auf und rüttele den Rekruten an der Schulter. 'Vorbei, Kleiner! Ist noch mal gutgegangen.' Er sieht sich verstört um. Ich rede ihm zu: 'Wirst dich schon gewöhnen.' [...] Langsam kommt er zu sich. Plötzlich wird er feuerrot und hat ein verlegenes Aussehen. Vorsichtig langt er mit der Hand nach hinten und sieht mich gequält an. Ich verstehe sofort: Kanonenfieber. ... Aber ich tröste ihn doch: 'Das ist keine Schande; es haben schon ganz andere Leute als du nach ihrem ersten Feuerüberfall die Hosen voll gehabt.' (*Im Westen ...*, p.64f.)

The use of the word Kanonenfieber in Bäumer's description is interesting, for it demonstrates that he regards the incident as a disease, a fever. Bäumer knows that for the apprehensive and inexperienced newcomer to the front it is important to learn to control his emotions and reactions; this, in his view, can only be achieved by exposing a soldier to the guns regularly. Furthermore, Remarque's peculiar blend of a military and a medical term here is intended to insinuate that war, indeed, equals disease. It affects those involved, ruining their health, both physically and mentally. Finally, as the artillery shelling is outwith the individual front line soldier's control, just like fever-generating micro-organisms, it has to be accepted as and treated like a disease.

The next example features another motif familiar in anti-war literature, that of a group of soldiers under shell-fire huddling together in a dug-out somewhere in the long line of trenches. The shelling, which starts during the day, continues throughout the night

and robs the combatants of the sleep necessary to recover from the nervous strain that is part and parcel of everyday front line existence. Both the location and the deprivation of the vital and necessary rest take their toll on the soldiers. The symptoms displayed by them are very different from their comrades-in-arms out in the open. Again, Bäumer witnesses the unexperienced recruits, rather than the older soldiers, the Frontschweine, being more likely to fall victim to a nervous breakdown and panic. This passage, too, contains that peculiar blend of military and medical terms used to describe Bäumer's observations. The incident is carefully chosen by the author to, once again, emphasize the contagious nature and tendency of nervous disorders, an attribute peculiar to diseases like fever which, if not being strictly controlled, can affect a mass of people and get out of control. Unterstandsangst, or dug-out claustrophobia, has exactly all these undesirable aspects about it. The motif of the the young and inexperienced soldiers panicking first is enriched by the image of the experienced soldiers being physically affected by the fear of the dug-out sustaining a direct hit, before long. The symptoms of Unterstandsangst, a tangible form of mental affliction, the feeling of being trapped from which emanates frenzied activity coupled with the use of physical force and violence on part of those affected, are familiar images of soldiers suffering a mental breakdown in both Allied and German Frontromane. Actions are again governed exclusively by the survival instinct which takes over the modes of acting and thinking. Fundamental to those actions is the natural and real desire to leave the war behind as quickly as possible. Compelled to wait for things to happen to them, the recruits opt for frenzied, yet senseless, activity, rather than philosophical passivity. The motif of

soldiers in the line waiting for something to happen to them is also a recurrent one, extensively elaborated in anti-war literature emphasizing the point that war is something that happens to people who have no control over it. The importance of the literary device used in this context lies in the fact that human beings, generally, have no control over their subconsciousness, either. Their desire to escape the unpredictability and enormous cruelty of the war is, therefore, psychologically, understandable.

In the following instance Bäumer's experience and his quality of observing enable him to discover certain distinct symptoms of psychological disorders which cause him to act swiftly and quench a panic in the dug-out, albeit partially:

Wir müssen warten, warten. Mittags passiert das, womit ich schon rechnete. Einer der Rekruten hat einen Anfall. Ich habe ihn schon lange beobachtet, wie er ruhelos die Zähne bewegte und die Fäuste ballte und schloß. Diese gehetzten, herausspringenden Augen kennen wir zur Genüge. In den letzten Stunden ist er nur scheinbar stiller geworden. Er ist in sich zusammengesunken wie ein morscher Baum. Jetzt steht er auf, unauffällig kriecht er durch den Raum, verweilt einen Augenblick und rutscht dann dem Ausgang zu. Ich lege mich herum und frage: 'Wo willst du hin?' 'Ich bin gleich wieder da', sagt er und will an mir vorbei. 'Warte doch noch, das Feuer läßt schon nach.' Er horcht auf, und das Auge wird einen Moment klar. Dann hat es wieder den trüben Glanz wie bei einem tollwütigen Hunde, er schweigt und drängt mich fort. 'Eine Minute, Kamrad', rufe ich. Kat wird aufmerksam. Gerade als der Rekrut mich fortstößt, packt er zu, und wir halten ihn fest. Sofort beginnt er zu toben: 'Laßt mich los, laßt mich raus, ich will hier raus!' Er hört auf nichts und schlägt um sich, der Mund ist naß und sprüht Worte, halbverschluckte, sinnlose Worte. Es ist ein Anfall von Unterstandsangst, er hat das Gefühl, hier zu ersticken, und kennt nur den einen Trieb: hinauszugelangen. (*Im Westen ...*, p.111f.)

The final section of the incident is interesting for two reasons. First, there is a shift from the position of the observer to the wir, the group of soldiers, including Bäumer himself, who begin to show signs

of strain from the artillery barrage; and secondly, although the soldiers' apprehension is mental rather than physical, the symptoms displayed are very much physical. The use of the images of the dug-out as a cauldron incessantly resounding the shell-fire from outside, and thus intensifying the noise, combined with that of the tension inside resembling a sharp knife going up and down the spine underlines the physically painful aspect of fear:

Der Unterstand kracht in allen Fugen unter einem Treffer. [...] Die Wirkung ist aber auch so schlimm genug. Der Rekrut von vorhin tobt schon wieder, und zwei andere schließen sich an. Einer reißt aus und läuft weg. [...] Der erste scheint wirklich verrückt geworden zu sein. Er rennt mit dem Kopf ... gegen die Wand, wenn man ihn losläßt. [...] Wie in einem gewaltig dröhnenden Kessel sitzen wir, auf dem von allen Seiten losgeschlagen wird. Noch eine Nacht. Wir sind jetzt stumpf vor Spannung. Es ist eine tödliche Spannung, die wie ein scharftiges Messer unser Rückenmark entlang kratzt. Die Beine wollen nicht mehr, die Hände zittern, der Körper ist eine dünne Haut über mühsam unterdrücktem Wahnsinn, über einem gleich hemmungslos ausbrechenden Gebrüll ohne Ende. Wir haben kein Fleisch und keine Muskeln mehr, wir können uns nicht mehr ansehen, aus Furcht vor etwas Unberechenbarem. So pressen wir die Lippen aufeinander - es wird vorübergehen - es wird vorübergehen - vielleicht kommen wir durch. (*Im Westen ...*, p.113f.)

The shift of fear from a mental to a physical level, the physical fear of death, is as sudden, yet subtle, as the shift from the sie of the recruits to the wir of the group as a whole. It is further worth noting that Baumer describes the first encounter as Anfall, an attack, of dug-out phobia. The use of the term attack implies the medical nature of the matter; the case is further strengthened by the use of the image of the erratic behaviour of the victims. Having no control over the war, they now have lost control over themselves, just like an epileptic. While Baumer reasons that inexperience and the nature of the war are the main causes of psychological disorders affecting young recruits, nobody

remains unaffected by them, not even the observer himself, albeit for different reasons. In the following passage the image used is that of the impact of a shell close by which shakes the nerves of even the most experienced Frontschwein. Bäumer regards such an occurrence as a genuine shell-shock, which he calls Nervenchoch. The spelling indicates the unfamiliarity, even of the author in 1928, with what in 1917 was still an enigmatic phenomenon to modern warfare, also pointing to the total inadequacy of any language and vocabulary to describe, define, or paraphrase events relating to psychological matters which arose during the First World War:¹⁶

Schweres Feuer liegt über uns. [...] Morgens sind einige Rekruten bereits grün und kotzen. Sie sind noch zu unerfahren. [...] Die Ablösungen gehen hinaus, die Beobachter taumeln herein, mit Schmutz beworfen, zitternd. Einer legt sich schweigend in die Ecke und ißt, der andere, ein Ersatzreservist, schluchzt; er ist zweimal über die Brustwehr geflogen durch den Luftdruck der Explosionen, ohne sich etwas anderes zu holen als einen Nervenchoch. Die Rekruten sehen zu ihm hin. So etwas steckt rasch an, wir müssen aufpassen, schon fangen verschiedene Lippen an zu flattern. Gut ist, daß es Tag wird; vielleicht erfolgt der Angriff vormittags. Das Feuer schwächt nicht ab. (*Im Westen ...*, p.108f.)

The language used by Bäumer in this instance to present an image of a psychological disorder affecting the combatants is indicative of his considerable amount of indifference towards the condition, generally, and the victims, in particular. Since there are no visible physical impairments, a psychological disorder cannot be taken seriously by a front line soldier to whom death has become an integral part of daily life. Those affected by it need to be closely monitored, nevertheless, due to the contagious nature of the condition.

Some accounts make use of the image of an attack relieving the psychological strain and the tension that built up during incessant

shelling. The impression of attacks ensuing long periods of artillery fire created by the authors is one of enforced passivity turning into frantic activity at an instant; attacks served, literally, as a safety valve. While Bäumer and his comrades-in-arms wait anxiously for a chance to retaliate against the other side they are surprised by a large number of rats suddenly descending on their dug-out. It is a welcome diversion for the strained nerves of the entrenched:

Gegen Morgen, als es noch dunkel ist, entsteht Aufregung. Durch den Eingang stürzt ein Schwarm flüchtender Ratten und jagt die Wände hinauf. Die Taschenlampen beleuchten die Verwirrung. Alle schreien und fluchen und schlagen zu. Es ist der Ausbruch der Wut und der Verzweiflung vieler Stunden, der sich entlädt. Die Gesichter sind verzerrt, die Arme schlagen, die Tiere quietschen, es fällt schwer, daß wir aufhören, fast hätte einer den anderen angefallen. Der Ausbruch hat uns erschöpft. Wir liegen und warten wieder.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.111)

The literary technique of piling up short clauses serves to stress the hectic and hysterical state the soldiers are in inside the dug-out. Life has been reduced to the basics, the desire to survive in a hostile environment where everybody is everybody else's enemy is paramount. Once the tension has been released the deadly game of waiting for the next thing to happen continues. The entrenched have no choice but to remain idle. There are similar examples of soldiers' nerves being strained as a result of their inactivity and semi-permanent idleness in the line in Allied war literature. R. C. Sherriff's celebrated war play *Journey's End*, in particular, which focuses on a group of British officers in the line in France in March 1918, makes references to the issue. There Raleigh, a Second-Lieutenant who has just arrived at the front fresh from the military academy, is sent on a mission of life and death to the German trenches by the regimental commander. The colonel justifies his

decision on the basis that Raleigh is a newcomer to the fighting and: 'his nerves are sound.' (p.54) In addition, the play takes into account a variety of other images and motifs concerning psychology in modern war. One of the central characters, Captain Stanhope, a highly decorated company commander, has been in the line for almost three consecutive years. His mental breakdown occurred at the battle of Vimy Ridge, just after he had returned to the front from a two weeks leave. Aware of the mental strain caused by the war and determined not to let it affect him, he has turned alcoholic. Consuming enormous quantities of whisky in little time to quench his fears of sustaining a shot wound or getting killed, he is also aware that he could have opted for what he regards the easy way out of the war, feigning a nervous breakdown. (p.32) While he despises that practice, he finds himself confronted with an officer in his own company, Hibbert, who is determined to get out of the war that way. In a personal confrontation between the two men, in which Hibbert strikes his superior, Stanhope's attitudes concerning desertion - a disgrace - and his resolve to prevent Hibbert from leaving become clear. In the end Hibbert, just like the other soldiers, has to 'stick it', come what may.

Participants in the war paint a similarly dark picture of the constant agony and strain of those confined to life in the trenches. There is, for example, the entry for 18 October 1915, in Edward Tennant's war diary. Unlike the writings of the novelists', the tendency of Tennant's notes is entirely personal, amazingly detailed and the impressions of the experience much more immediate:

Yesterday between 10 and 1 we were subjected to a terrific shell-fire, and as our artillery weren't replying we heard only the awful sound of the approaching high explosives shells, and as they

burst, belching black smoke, the earth shook and a shower of small stones and earth descended on us with an occasional piece of shell that whins like a muffled factory engine and finishes with a thuck as it strikes the top of the trench. I used to think I was fairly impervious to noise, but the crash upon crash, and their accompanying pillar of black smoke simply upset me, as they pitched repeatedly within 30 or 40 yards, and some even nearer. I don't think I showed I was any more frightened than anyone else. Perhaps I wasn't. What made it so racking was that there was nothing to do all the time but sit still waiting for the next, and the next. The strain was awful.¹⁷

In *Im Westen nichts Neues* the fighting that follows the three day long shelling has nothing to do with the noble notions of a conflict fought man-to-man. Bäumer remarks that rules no longer exist. He and his comrades-in-arms will just follow their instincts and allow the beast in man to prevail for some time to take revenge not on human beings but on what they perceive to be death itself in the form of human beings. Such is their mental state that the soldiers are, for the time being, no longer in a position to recognize their opponents as human beings. The dehumanization of war due to mechanization has become total, culminating in the literary motif of human beings turned into beasts:

Aus uns sind gefährliche Tiere geworden. Wir kämpfen nicht, wir verteidigen uns vor der Vernichtung. Wir schleudern die Granaten nicht gegen Menschen, was wissen wir im Augenblick davon, dort hetzt mit Händen und Helmen der Tod hinter uns her, wir können ihm seit drei Tagen zum ersten Male ins Gesicht sehen, wir können uns seit drei Tagen zum ersten Male wehren gegen ihn, wir haben eine wahnsinnige Wut, wir liegen nicht mehr ohnmächtig wartend auf dem Schafott, wir können zerstören und töten, um uns zu retten, um uns zu retten und zu rächen. (*Im Westen ...*, p.116f.)

To conclude the examination of the different versions of psychological disorders in the novel, Bäumer, incidentally, remarks at one point that even feigning is a symptom of a psychological disorder:

Es wird natürlich auch viel simuliert mit solchen Sachen, aber das Simulieren ist ja eigentlich auch schon ein Zeichen.

(*Im Westen ...*, p.273)

The four examples of what he describes as Frontkoller: 'Dieses Gefährliche, Gestaute - wie aus überhitzten Dampfkesseln', (pp.271-72) will also be looked at in detail. Unlike the other forms of psychological disorders featured, which have many aspects of a contagious disease about them, the Frontkoller in the events is either described as an eruption of ill-temper by an individual and confined to one individual only, relatively short-lived and, therefore, not worthy of being likened to a disease, Bäumer describes it as a means of restoring the mental balance that occurs in conjunction with some form of irrational outward behaviour; or it surfaces as a form of irrational behaviour with damaging consequences for the individual soldier affected. All the following examples, but one, incidentally, focus on soldiers who have been in the line for far too long. They are at the end of their tether, both mentally and physically:

The first example lends support to the theory of the complete inadequacy of any language in 1914 and for some time thereafter to describe the range of emotions and feelings about certain events in the war. Bäumer watches the reaction of his friend Kropp after their visit to their mortally wounded friend Kemmerich in a Feldlazarett. Although Kropp has long realized that war is not about heroic deeds and heroic death but about negative things and death in the most terrible forms happening to ordinary people who are in no position to do anything about them, and has long managed to cope with those conclusions, in this instance he has reached mental breaking point:

Plötzlich wirft der kleine Kropp seine Zigarette weg, trampelt wild darauf herum, sieht sich um, mit einem aufgelösten und verstörten

Gesicht, und stammelt: 'Verfluchte Scheiße, diese verfluchte Scheiße.' Wir gehen weiter, eine lange Zeit. Kropp hat sich beruhigt, wir kennen das, es ist der Frontkoller, jeder hat ihn mal. (*Im Westen ...*, p.23f.)

The suddenly banal and indifferent tone of the passage is characteristic for Kropp's state of mind. The use of this literary device here also hints at the everyday occurrence of the condition.

The second incident concerns Unteroffizier Himmelstoß, a newcomer to the front. While feigning and fear go hand in hand here, the episode also deserves closer examination for the use of the motif of military life penetrating the entire existence of an individual human being. After a surprise gas attack, preceded by artillery shelling, Bäumer discovers Himmelstoß hiding in a dug-out while the remnants of the platoon prepare for an all-out counter-attack. He has sustained a scratch wound, yet pretends to have been hit severely. Bäumer's vivid descriptions of his physical expressions are not without humour. To him Himmelstoß' face, which probably shows all the usual symptoms of the strain of the shelling, looks: 'wie verprügelt'; (p.134) he lies motionless but for his lips which tremble frantically; in spite of Bäumer shouting at him to get out he presses himself against the wall and bares his teeth: 'wie ein Koter'; even when Bäumer tries to grab his arm he cannot move, but screeches. (p.135) As a result Bäumer himself now loses control and starts to punch and kick Himmelstoß, simultaneously insulting him. Himmelstoß himself seems to be mentally absent, he even allows Bäumer to push him out of the safe dug-out without resistance. (p.135) Ordered by a Leutnant, who happens to pass by the dug-out on his way forward, to join his unit, Himmelstoß suddenly awakens from his sleep-like, or trance-like, state. The

military instinct is deeply instilled in his personal psychology and he has served a long time after all; now it takes over immediately and he quickly recovers from his Angstkoller. (pp.134-35) There is a similar incident in Barbusse's *Le Feu*. The account is based on the personal war experiences of the author. It is interesting to note that it is one of the few books published in the war which feature shell-shock, or mental breakdown, at all. The scene in question is about a sergeant suffering a mental breakdown in the front line, who is being successfully 'treated' with abusive language by a group of soldiers passing by the hole in which he is hiding.¹⁸

The third occurrence of a Frontkoller in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, has more serious consequences for the soldier concerned. Detering, a farmer in Bäumer's front line unit, who has not been on leave for many months, is overwhelmed by a feeling of extreme homesickness when he returns from the line and sees a blossoming cherry tree by the road side. It reminds him of his own garden and causes him to pack his gear and desert home as soon as the opportunity arises. While Bäumer does sympathize with Detering's emotions and the reasons for his desertion, he blames him for the way he organizes it, which leads to his flight being discovered and his arrest. His fate is sealed, for every soldier knows that the punishment for desertion is death by the firing squad. Bäumer directs his anger and frustration against the inhumane bureaucrats in the communication zone and the military police whose picture of the reality of the war he judges to be distorted and unreal. (pp.270-71)

Finally, there is an example of a soldier behaving irrationally and in doing so not only jeopardizing his own life, but also that of his comrades-in-arms:

Als wir nachher in einigermaßen guter Deckung sind, erzählt einer von den Essenholern, daß ein paar hundert Schritte entfernt ein verwundeter Meldehund liege. 'Wo?' fragt Berger. Der andere beschreibt es ihm. Berger geht los, um das Tier zu holen oder es zu erschließen. Noch vor einem halben Jahr hätte er sich nicht darum gekümmert, sondern wäre vernünftig gewesen. Wir versuchen, ihn zurückzuhalten. Doch als er ernsthaft geht, können wir nur sagen: 'Verrückt!' und ihn laufen lassen. Denn diese Anfälle von Frontkoller werden gefährlich, wenn man den Mann nicht gleich zu Boden werfen und festhalten kann. [...] Er ist tatsächlich verrückt, denn er muß durch die Feuerwand; - aber es ist dieser Blitz, der irgendwo über uns allen lauert, der in ihn eingeschlagen ist und ihn besessen macht. Bei andern ist es so, daß sie zu toben anfangen, daß sie wegrennen, ja einer war da, der sich mit Händen, Füßen und Mund immerfort in die Erde einzugraben versuchte. Es wird natürlich auch viel simuliert mit solchen Sachen, aber das Simulieren ist ja eigentlich auch schon ein Zeichen. Berger, der den Hund erledigen will, wird mit einem Beckenschuß weggeholt, und einer der Leute, die es tun, kriegt sogar dabei noch eine Gewehrkuugel in die Wade. (*Im Westen ...*, p.272f.)

Remarque's presentation and selectivity of examples of psychological disorders through Bäumer in *Im Westen nichts Neues* is, of course, based on his overall intention of showing the destruction of a whole generation by a war that had been going on for too long. The novel begins at a time when those who lived through the conflict had made that point and it is repeatedly stressed in the course of the story. Thus Remarque's use of psychological disorders, which have short-term, rather than long-term, implications for their victims and do, indeed, disappear eventually in a matter of minutes, hours or days, is strictly in line with his original intentions since the novel does not extend beyond the end of the war. What is, however, important to keep in mind reading the work, is the Bäumer/Remarque tension; although both take different

points of view of the war, both make the same objective point about psychological disorders and shell-shock; they are caused by the war, it is, after all, war that does these things to people. Yet, in the sequel *Der Weg zurück*, intended to show the difficulties of ex-soldiers reintegrating into a post-war society that remained largely indifferent to their psychological problems originating in the war, Remarque again makes extensive use of various images of psychological phenomena and their effects on the victims. The squeaking of an electric tram resembles the sound of an approaching shell, (p.100) the central figure is plagued by nightmares and visions of his past fighting in the trenches, (pp.267-70) and the dark phantoms of dead comrades-in-arms disturb his peace of mind. (pp.322-24)

A slightly different aspect of that theme is the utilizing of short incidents in the war, the physical implications of which affect certain characters beyond the war and for the rest of their life on a mental level. *Der Weg zurück*, for example, features Giesecke, a soldier who had been buried alive in a dug-out at Fleury for several hours. His head pressed against the wounded hip of another soldier he was in danger of being suffocated by the intestines emerging from the other's abdomen. Every night he relives that experience:

'Jede Nacht kommt es wieder, ich ersticke dann, und das Zimmer ist voll von schmierigen, weißen Schlangen und Blut.'
(*Weg zurück*, p.172)

A similar motif is, incidentally, used in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's play *Der Schwierige*. Hans Karl, Graf Bühl, was buried in a dug-out by a heavy grenade:

'Das war nur ein Moment, dreißig Sekunden sollen es gewesen

sein, aber nach innen hat das ein anderes Maß. Für mich war es eine ganze Lebenszeit, die ich gelebt hab.'¹⁹

and, as the title of the play indicates, that incident has affected his whole mental balance and life ever since. Only with difficulty can he reintegrate into a post-war society and a time that wanted everybody to forget the war.

Of all the war accounts examined for details of shell-shock and other psychological phenomena, Zweig's novel *Erziehung vor Verdun*, deals with the root of the problem in both literal and psychological terms in a fashion that is second to none. Not only are the descriptions it contains forceful, direct and intimate and complemented by the author's customary cynicism in his detailed observations, but they also reveal such an amount of intimate knowledge of the matter that it is hard to believe they are purely fictional. In the following episode attention is drawn to the fictive character of Hauptmann Niggel, whom Eberhard Kroysing succeeded in having attached to Fort Douaumont to make him sign a confession that he, too, was to blame for Christoph Kroysing's death. The scenario is familiar in many anti-war accounts, the image is that of a single individual in a position under fire confined to a bunker during a period of heavy shell-fire:

Alles das aber geht durch die Seele des Herrn Hauptmanns, während er sich auf seinem Lager hin und her dreht, um den Morgenschlaf nachzuholen. [...] Schlägt ein Geschoß auf die Deckung unterhalb derer du schläfst, so erwachst du - oder auch nicht mehr - vom Krach des Einschlags selbst. Geht es aber in deiner Nähe nieder, fünfzig Meter rechts oder links, so bohrt sich erst noch ein scheußliches Anheulen in deine Seele, und die fünf stockenden Herzschräge, während derer du zu gleicher Zeit noch benommen und schon hellwach das Platzen erwartest - dieser Bruchteil einer Minute frißt deine innerste Lebenskraft an. Genau um dieselbe Zeit schießt sich eine Mörserbatterie ... auf Fort Douaumont ein ... Der erste Schuß fährt etwa dreißig Meter rechts vom Fort in den ... Abhang. Sein Nahen hat Herr Niggel verschlafen, obwohl sein Unterbewußtsein

argwöhnisch auf der Lauer liegt. Ach, er steuert bereits, ohne es zu wissen, in den Zustand, in welchem ihn das Zerstörende anzieht: erstes Zeichen der Zermürbung. [...] An allen Gliedern zitternd, aus allen Poren schwitzend, verharret der Niggel in seinem Bett.
(*Erziehung ...*, p.133f.)

The switch from the fictional character of Hauptmann Niggel to the more intimate level of the du, directly addressing the reader, occurs very smoothly with prophetic undertones accompanying the gradually materializing process of the psychological condition. On a literary level that transformation passes almost unnoticed, precisely as the actual process itself.

The new modes of fighting coupled with the novel phenomenon of trench warfare with all its paraphernalia in the First World War led, without a doubt, to a total transformation of the personality of those directly involved. Even the toughest of all characters could not endure the constant physical and mental strain that was part and parcel of mechanized trench warfare for more than a few months.²⁰ However, the views of both Allied and German Frontromane on that transformation of the personality differ considerably. Some authors, like Hofmannsthal, for example, see it as a long-term condition based on a brief incident. To others, like Graves, Köppen, Sherriff and Zweig, it was a gradual process proceeding in several different stages culminating in a new medical condition diagnosed as war neurosis, while Remarque's two novels state examples to support both views. Rebecca West's *Return of the Soldier* is exceptional, because it does not fit into any of the above categories. Although the narrative is set in the war, the scenery is the English countryside, not the front in France. It describes the case of Captain Chris Baldry who has been diagnosed shell-shocked in a military

hospital in Boulogne in 1916. The source of his condition is only once referred to in the narrative and as concussion; (p.41) whether that was brought about by an exploding shell, or was a result of a long-term process of war neurosis coming to the fore, remains a matter for conjecture. But whatever caused Baldry's mental disorder also led to amnesia, and cut fifteen years off his memory. Having returned home and unable to recognize his wife, Kitty, he woos Margret, a woman friend he went out with fifteen years ago. This leads to problems for the women surrounding him. His amnesia is, however, symptomatic of a much deeper, underlying personal problem: his inability to come to terms with the premature death of his young son. He is eventually cured when he is confronted with a red ball and a blue jersey which belonged to the dead child.²¹

All narratives, however, agree that it was not until a soldier suddenly began to act in a strange fashion that he attracted the attention of his comrades-in-arms and was sent behind the lines to be seen by a specialist. Only rarely are attempts made in German war prose to define psychological phenomena. Renn's *Krieg*, arrives at a remarkably sound explanation:

'Hast du dir schon einmal überlegt, was ein Nervenschock eigentlich ist?' 'Nu, eine Erschütterung.' 'Damit kommst du nicht weiter. Bei jedem Schreck wird irgendein Eindruck vors Bewußtsein gebannt. Man starrt den Eindruck an. Aber der ist gerade unwesentlich. Wer die Geisteskraft hätte, sich bei einem unerwarteten Ereignis frei anzusehen, könnte nicht erschrecken. Du quälst dich mit irgendeiner Vorstellung. Aber die ist ganz gleichgültig. Weshalb du dich höchstens schämen könntest, das ist, daß du dich nicht umsehen willst.'²²

While it is necessary to keep in mind that Renn's novel was written ten years after the war, at a time when research into shell-shock had

somewhat progressed, and looked at the issue with the medical and psychological hindsight of the late 1920s, the explanation it offers is still consistent with the results of research available during the war.

The symptoms of shell-shock were many and varied in their severity from the harmless Knalltrauma as a result of constant exposure to artillery fire or an unexpected noise,²³ to the more serious kind of nervous disorders such as paralysis of limbs, headaches, nightmares, blindness, deafness, mutism, hysteria, amnesia, hallucinations, insomnia and tremors, emerging in most Weimar war accounts. While all these symptoms were of a physical nature their causes were psychological. Generally accepted by the psychologists of the time as a means of self-defence and protection against circumstances beyond their control, the soldiers affected by them often went undiagnosed and untreated for some time. Diagnosing shell-shock remained a problem throughout the war as many of the symptoms listed above were also signs of the more harmless forms of nervous strain or physical exhaustion. Interestingly, until 1917, shell-shock had been considered a genuine war wound by the British army and its victims were eligible for a wound stripe. But faced with an ever increasing number of victims of psychological disorders and the ensuing financial problems with war- and invalidity-pensions,²⁴ the British Army issued the *General Routine Order No. 2384*, instructing all medical personnel to cease using the term shell-shock instantly. At the same time, a range of strict guidelines concerning the treatment of those affected by mental disturbances was issued:

Classification and disposal of officers and other ranks who without any visible wound become non-effective from physical conditions claimed or presumed to have originated from the effects of British

or enemy weapons in action.

- (1) All officers and other ranks who become non-effective in the above category, and whose transfer from their unit or division is unavoidable, will be sent to the Special Hospital set apart for their reception under the order of the Army commander.
- (2) The Regimental Medical Officer, or officer commanding a medical unit, who in the first instance deals with a case which it is necessary to transfer to the Special Hospital, will not record any diagnosis. He will enter on the Field Medical Card or other transfer paper the letters 'NYDW' (Not Yet Diagnosed, Nervous) only, and note any definitely known facts as to the true origin or the previous history of the case ...

[...]

- (5) In no circumstances whatever will the expression 'shell-shock' be used verbally or be recorded in any regimental or other casualty report, or in any other medical document, except in cases classified by the order of the officer commanding the Special Hospital.
- (6) These orders do not apply to cases of gas poisoning, which will be dealt with as heretofore.
- (7) All previous orders and instructions on this subject are cancelled.²⁵

If the desire to escape the war by feigning a psychological disorder was foremost on the mind of the malingerers, the issue had a darker side to it also, as some soldiers, genuinely suffering from shell-shock, went astray in the process. It was common practice in all armies to arrest combatants found walking behind the line and court-martial them for desertion and cowardice; they were usually sentenced to death by firing squad. In *For the Sake of Example*, Babington examined a wide range of various cases of British soldiers sentenced to death for offences they had never committed. Victims of their personal mental disposition, circumstances beyond their control and prejudices prevalent at the time, they had no chance to argue their case properly for a lack of evidence.²⁶ When, long after the end of the conflict, psychological conditions became recognized as genuine medical conditions it was, of

course, too late to rehabilitate those victims properly. In the light of the circumstances prevailing on the Western front in 1917 and with the number of shell-shocked participants rising, the order quoted above must be regarded as a retrograde step.

Faking a psychological disorder to escape the war seems to have been quite a common phenomenon in the armies of the Central Powers, a point that is reiterated in the novels. Bäumer's comment that feigning is a symptom of a psychological disorder has already been mentioned. In contrast to the novelistic portrayal stands Jünger's more factual presentation in *In Stahlgewittern* of a soldier faking a psychological disorder shortly before his unit is due to embark for the front:

Ein anderer versuchte sich wahnsinning zu stellen, um der Schlacht zu entgehen. Nach langem Hin und Her wurde er durch den kräftigen Rippenstoß eines Unteroffiziers wieder vernünftig, und wir konnten einsteigen.' (*Stahlgewitter*, p.227)

Zweig's version in his novel *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* stands, again, in contrast to the factual presentation of Jünger's. Considering the matter from a slightly different angle, his illustration is much more elaborate in style and content. Otto Wild has deserted his regiment at the Russian front, but instead of heading straight home he prefers to live in the forests and swamps of north-west Russia and wait until the war is over. There is a real danger that he might fall into the hands of his ex-comrades-in-arms and be sentenced to death. The only - legitimate - way out of the war left for him seems to be faking a psychological disorder:

Zwar auch in Wilna sich zu verbergen schien ihm möglich, und endlich dämmerte, kurz und mit grimmigem Lächeln auf seinem Gesicht gemeldet, die Möglichkeit, kurzerhand 'verrückt' zu spielen und als Nachzügler oder Nervenkranker, der sein Gedächtnis verloren hat,

plötzlich am hellen Tage, Deutsch und Russisch
durcheinanderstammelnd, einem Polizisten in den Arm zu stolpern
- nicht mehr zu wissen, wie man heiÙe, woher man komme, wer man sei,
und dem Scharfsinn der Ärzte und Lazarethengste aufzugeben, das
Geheimnis dieses neuen Falles von Amnesie aufzulösen. Vielleicht
würden sie ihn mit faradischen Strömen quälen, aber dann konnte man
ja aus Leibeskräften heulen; keinesfalls durfte er als deutscher
Soldat und Deserteur in die Hände seiner Vorgesetzten
zurückfallen. (*Grischa ...*, p.61)

Deliberately chosen by Zweig, the image adds to his impressions of the war as a cruel, painful and lethal affair which was virtually impossible to escape without suffering for a soldier, whatever route he opted for.

The presentation of shell-shock and other psychological phenomena and their effect in realistic Weimar war fiction, in particular the *Frontromane*, is significant. First of all, they were a productive literary device to strip the war of its heroic myth. Secondly, they were a useful means of emphasizing the various impacts of modern warfare on human beings. Where some novelists have their central characters survive and receive a medal, as in *In Stahlgewittern*, or have them killed, as in *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, some chose to stress the idea that war is the ultimate madness and death or shell-shock are equally logical outcomes. Hence they portray their central figures as going mad, ultimately, as in *Heeresbericht* and *Die Pflasterkästen*. Finally, due to their nature, psychological disorders presented a suitable literary means to the authors of realistic war fiction, of demonstrating the after-effects of the war on those who had participated in it, to make the point that for these unfortunate victims the conflict would never end, especially in novels like *Der Weg zurück*.

NOTES

¹ William Thomson, *Black's Medical Dictionary* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1977), p.750.

² Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.170-71.

³ For some historical documentation relating to the methods of treating victims of shell-shock with the disciplinary method known as Kaufmann'sche Methode, that is the application of electrical apparatus, and its effects on the patients, see *Frontalltag im Ersten Weltkrieg*, edd. Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1994), pp.102-09. German First World War prose rarely takes up that point; there are, however some war novels, in particular Zweig's *Grischa*, p.61, which contain allusions to the disciplinary method. In *No Man's Land*, Leed repeatedly refers to Lewis Yealland, the most prominent representative of the disciplinarians in the U.K., and his work *Historical Disorders of Warfare* (London: 1918), which includes descriptions and documentation of the disciplinary treatment administered to victims of psychological disorders.

⁴ Leed, *No Man's Land* , p.174.

⁵ Leed, *No Man's Land* , pp.170-72.

⁶ Robert Graves, *Good-bye to All That* (London: Penguin, 1960), p.143.

⁷ Leed, *No Man's Land*, p.170.

⁸ For an excellently written novel on the two most prominent British representatives of the two different schools of thinking, Dr. Lewis Yealland on the disciplinarian, and Dr. W.H.R. Rivers on the analysts',

side, see Pat Barker, *Regeneration* (London: Penguin, 1992). The novel focuses on the psychological disorders caused by the First World War. Blending fact and fiction, the psychologist - patient relationship of the historical and well-known figures Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves and the above named psychologists takes account of the many different aspects and forms of psychological conditions known at the time.

For a detailed description of methods of treating those conditions in the Central Powers see Hirschfeld's and Gaspar's *Sittengeschichte*, II, pp.64-72.

⁹ Leed, *No Man's Land*, p.181.

¹⁰ Stadler, *Dichtungen*, p.569.

¹¹ v. Rohden, *letter dated 20. Mai 1915*, in *Kriegsbriefe*, pp.172-73 (p.172).

¹² Alfred E. Vaeth, *letter dated 4. November 1914*, in *Kriegsbriefe*, pp.126-27 (p.126). Similarly August Hopp, *letter dated 1. März 1915*, in *Kriegsbriefe*, pp.37-45 (p.43).

¹³ In his analysis of *Heeresbericht* in *German Novels*, p.143, Travers states that Reisinger is not enthusiastic about the war and participates only reluctantly. If that were correct, the whole point of Reisinger's educational process in the war, and, indeed, the whole point the story tries to make, that war is madness and should therefore be rejected, culminating in the hero's mental breakdown, would be illogical, and without a proper foundation.

¹⁴ See Brian Murdoch, 'Documentation and Narrative: Edlef Köppen's 'Heeresbericht' And The Anti-War Novels Of The Weimar Republic', *New German Studies* 15 (1988-1989), 23-47 (p.44). In *Im Westen*, p.251,

reference is made to the Jagdscheinmotif in the person of private Hamacher who was shot in the head. Having been declared mad, his condition is utilized by Remarque to show that going mad was, indeed, one way to get out of the war. The Jagdscheinmotif is a recurrent one in German literature on the Second World War where soldiers who have been declared mad can criticize Adolf Hitler and his regime without fear of sanctions. Another interesting, since genuine, case is that of the British novelist Siegfried Sassoon, famous for throwing his MC into the Mersey and publicly declaring war a crime. He precisely did *not* want to be declared mad, though, because he feared that the claims in his writings would lose their validity. After having spent several weeks at Craiglockhart War Hospital, near Edinburgh, in 1917, Sassoon returned to the front to prove his point.

¹⁵ See Joseph Heller, *Catch 22* (London: Cape, 1962), p.54. Although Heller's novel is set in the Second World War, it is an excellent example of the effects of the presentation of psychological disorders in war literature, nevertheless. The novel is based on the idea that a soldier could apply to be examined for psychological disorders, or mental illness, to get out of the war; but if he applied he was, by definition, not mad.

¹⁶ Robbins, in *First World War*, p.150, makes the point that the language was incapable of describing the horrors of the First World War.

¹⁷ Edward Wyndham Tennant, *Memoirs*, ed. Pamela Glenconner (London and New York: Lane, 1919), p.147.

¹⁸ Barbusse, *Feuer*, p.57.

¹⁹ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Der Schwierige* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1958), p.77.

²⁰ In Ernst Johannsen's, *Vier von der Infanterie* (Hamburg-Bergedorf: Fackelreiter, 1930), pp.86-88, a Leutnant turns mad in the trenches. The origins of his condition are not made clear in the narrative itself. But since it commences in 1918, it can be reasonably assumed that he has been at the front for too long. Although he remains under cover, he is hit by a shell and killed instantly. In this instance Johannsen combines both the logical outcome of war - death - and shell-shock - another possible way out - to stress his point that there was, indeed, no way out of the war for those involved in it at the front. Much is made of the scene in the film *Westfront 1918* of Johannsen's book.

²¹ Rebecca West, *Return of the Soldier* (London: Daily Express Fiction Library, 1918).

²² Renn, *Krieg*, p.328. To demonstrate the problem diagnosing shell-shock presented Leed, in *No Man's Land*, p.172, quotes one example of a soldier whose family had a history of epilepsy: 'It required two years of active service at the front, four wounds, the death of a father and five brothers and, finally, the experience of being buried three times in one day to make his epilepsy overt.'

²³ Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.28.

²⁴ Richard Holmes, in *Firing Line*, p.257, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), makes the point that in March 1939 there were still 120,000 British soldiers who received pensions for primary psychiatric disability.

²⁵ Macdonald, *Roses*, pp.218-19.

²⁶ Babington, *For the Sake*, p.37; pp.72-73.; p.101; p.106; p.146. Holmes, in *Firing Line*, p.256, supports Babington's points: 'It is beyond debate that some of the British soldiers shot for cowardice

during the war were, by today's standards, sick men.' Bance, in 'Sexuality, Gender', p.419, argues that: 'by late 1916 shell-shock was responsible for up to forty per cent of the casualties from heavy fighting zones.' On the basis of his findings he further concluded that shell-shock became much more than a medical problem to the British, severely threatening the attitudes of society about: 'both class and sex constructs.'

POISON GAS AND CHEMICAL WARFARE IN FIRST WORLD WAR PROSE

Poison gas and chemical warfare were phenomena unique to the First World War and their presentation in both German and Allied war literature is relatively diverse and extensive. There are, though, narratives which hardly ever, or never, mention the issue, nor what it meant for those confronted with it. Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902* is such an example. There the war is looked at from the perspective of the home front and through the eyes of a teen-age boy who rarely has the chance of catching a glimpse of casualties, none of them are, incidentally, gas-casualties, being taken to the (civilian) infirmary in his home town. (pp.151-53)

Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, is likewise concerned with demonstrating the effects of the war on the civilian population at home; but as a voluntary auxiliary nurse Katrin, inevitably, comes face-to-face with more of the results of modern warfare on those involved. Her total rejection of war is due to her personal standpoint and to her it does not make any difference at all whether a soldier coughs up his lungs from gas poisoning or tuberculosis. The final outcome - death - is the inevitable consequence for those affected:

Eine Novembarnacht. Und meine erste Nachtwache. Auf einer Tuberkulosebaracke. Ich muß schreiben, obwohl ich immer unterbrochen werde, aber ich muß schreiben, sonst komme ich um vor Angst. Wie sie heiser bellen, es klingt gar nicht menschlich. Und die meisten sind ja auch nicht mehr lange Menschen. (*Katrin ...*, p.225)

Their early death in September 1914 prevented authors like Löns and Stadler from experiencing the effects of chemical warfare and poison gas and from noting them in their diaries. Surprisingly, though, most

accounts focussing on the eastern theatres of war are at best ignorant, at worst totally oblivious, of the issue. Representative of those is Walter Flex's *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten*. Although the author spent the best part of two years fighting in Byelorussia and the Baltic provinces, his account of that experience contains not a single reference to chemical warfare, poison gas, or protective devices.¹ Unlike the situation in Belgium and France, where the war was fought in the trenches, the war in Russia kept moving backward and forward at a relatively fast pace, leaving the combatants no time to establish elaborate trench systems, but historical research has established beyond doubt that poison gas was deployed in Russia as early as 1914.² Even more surprising is that German non-literary war memoirs even to the end of 1915 seem to ignore the whole issue entirely. While the relatively short age of chemical warfare began in the West at Ypres, on 22 April 1915,³ to develop rapidly into an everyday occurrence in the war, it is significant that letters and diaries by participants only begin to reflect this process from about 1916 onwards, in spite of both sides having been affected by poison gas about eight to ten months earlier.⁴ To argue that this phenomenon was due to the novelty of chemical warfare and preventative measures being introduced only in the course of 1915 and 1916 would mean to defy the historical facts. Reference to documents, such as the pay book issued by the German forces in 1914, which contained a section termed *Merkblatt für den Gasschutz*, comprising fourteen paragraphs all concerning chemical warfare and the threat of poison gas, providing instructions on how to handle a respirator, how to behave in emergency situations, how to take precautionary measures against possible poison gas attacks and advice on first-aid procedures,

prove beyond doubt how seriously the issue was taken in advance of Ypres.⁵

During 1916, though, there eventually began to emerge an increasing number of immediate responses to these novel phenomena of modern warfare, especially in non-literary war memoirs, for, in spite of the undoubted effectiveness of poison gas at the western front, a relatively large number of combatants affected by it survived the ordeal more or less unimpaired. It is obvious, of course, that soldiers who have just survived a surprise poison gas attack will be affected in their perception of it while still shaken by the effects of the immediacy of their experience. The following quotation is an example from a letter of a soldier who did:

Zum Schluß feuerten die Franzosen ... Gasgranaten vor unser Loch. Auf einmal steht der Feldwebel auf, es wird ihm schlecht; ein paar weitere stehen auf und fallen um. [...] Ich und die übrigen liegen auf unseren Tornistern. Als wir aufstehen, fallen wir samt und sonders um. [...] Alles schnappte nach Luft. Alles wollte hinaus. [...] Viele hatten nicht mehr die Kraft, sich hinaufzuschwingen. [...] Ein paar kamen schneller wieder zu Kraft und holten die übrigen, die nicht mehr heraufkommen konnten. So wurden alle gerettet. Bei drei oder vier mußte man Belebungsversuche anstellen.⁶

Incidentally, Steiger's irregular use of the past and present tense in his letter is worth noting, for it is unusual for a non-literary war memoir, though common in literary texts. However, the impressions of the effects of poison gas on the combatants it contains are, by and large, familiar in other non-literary war accounts.

Scientists were eager to stress the obvious advantages of poison gas, cheap to produce in massive quantities and most effective in action, but the soldiers attached to the special units who had to handle

the agents, and very soon all the combatants, knew about their real dangers. Robert Graves' war memoirs *Good-bye to All That* contain an account of the first British attempt of releasing poison gas, which the author himself witnessed. His presentation of the matter is fairly comprehensive and is designed to destroy whatever misconceptions there are about chemical warfare in the war. It shows that taking poison gas to an area designated for an attack was a dangerous manoeuvre, which jeopardized the life of all those involved in the affair, as discharging it from large cylinder-shaped bottles proved to be a hazardous business, as too many unreliable factors had to be relied upon. The poison gas would escape, form a thick cloud and begin to drift with the wind. It was essential that the wind kept blowing steadily from the right direction, or else one's own troops would be gassed. Also, it had to blow at a certain pace, 2 m to 5 m per second. If it blew slower, an attack would fail, if it blew faster, the agents would disperse without having any effect at all.⁷ Graves shows that none of these conditions was met so that this early gas attacks had, of necessity, to end in total failure:

Thomas had not overestimated the gas-company's efficiency. The spanners for unscrewing the cocks of the cylinders proved, with two or three exceptions, to be misfits. The gas-men rushed about shouting for the loan of an adjustable spanner. They managed to discharge one or two cylinders; the gas went whistling out, formed a thick cloud a few yards off in No Man's Land, and then gradually spread back into our trenches. The Germans, who had been expecting gas, immediately put on their gas-helmets: semi-rigid ones, better than ours. Bundles of oily cotton waste were strewn along the German parapet and set alight as a barrier to the gas. Then their batteries opened on our lines. The confusion in the front trench must have been horrible; direct hits broke several of the gas-cylinders, the trench filled with gas, the gas-company stampeded.⁸

His personal first-hand experience of the inhumanity of poison gas, which, incidentally, he called euphemistically 'the accessory', led Graves to reject it totally as a weapon of the war. The negative tone of his account also not only betrays his personal contempt for everything surrounding chemical warfare, but, most of all, provides an impression of the chaos the deployment of poison gas created, a literary device common in anti-war literature, to destroy the myth of war being an orderly affair and the absurdity and irony of one's own weapons killing a number of one's own troops without affecting 'the enemy' at all. In spite of Graves' presentation, though, the intrinsically absurd concept of 'friendly fire' in war seems not to have been established in the literature of the First World War.

From Graves' notes and other British war accounts, there can be no doubt about the British soldiers' intuitive awareness that they were, yet again, helplessly exposed to yet another heinous and vile new weapon. The feelings of those who experienced its effects for themselves are best described by Wilfred Owen's celebrated poem *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, which says:

Gas! Gas! Quick boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering like a man in fire or lime. -
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.
If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, -

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.⁹

Incidentally, Owen's poem is a perfect reflection of the *noisy* reception poison gas and the other asphyxiating substances received in First World War literature in general. The Weimar ~~Frontromane~~, but also autobiographical memoirs, letters and diaries of front line soldiers, contain references to repetitive warning cries, like 'Gas! Gas! Gas!', the images of bells, metallic rattles and sirens which stand in stark contrast to the presentation of the silent nature of deploying asphyxiating gases, particular at night, and their noiseless mode of doing damage to their victims.

Zweig, in his novel *Erziehung vor Verdun*, utilized the first deployment of poison gas by the Germans at the Western front to make a similarly negative point about the vicious nature of chemical warfare and the resulting medical implications for the victims:

Im Frühling 15 an der Flandernfront lagen wir den Engländern gegenüber, ganz dicht, und bauten unsere Gasflaschen ein; wir waren die erste Gaskompanie - eine ehrenvolle Sache. Mit großen Eisenflaschen schliefen wir von Februar bis April in niedlicher Nachbarschaft; einmal wurde eine undicht, und da besah ich mir am anderen Morgen den Schaden in Gestalt von fünfundvierzig blauen toten Pionieren. Und als wir auf dem Übungsplatz die Dinger mit dem Dreck das erstemal probeweise sprengten und die Bruchstücke nach Hause schleppten, nahmen sie auch jeden einzelnen ins Jenseits mit, der sich daran vergriffen hatte. Sie gingen langsam ein. [...] Ja, also warteten wir in unseren Gräben voller Wasser auf den günstigen Wind. Immer wieder mußten wir die Flaschen umbauen, denn sie rutschten in den Lehm. Gasmasken gab es damals noch nicht, wir sollten uns gegen das Sauzeug mit etwas Putzwolle vor der Nase schützen. [...] Und dann kam endlich Ostwind, und wir bliesen unser Gas ab, und die Tommys waren nicht mehr neugierig, sondern lagen schön blau und schwarz umher, als wir dann in ihren Stellungen spazierten. [...] In der Radrennbahn von Poelkapelle waren gewiß fünftausend Tote einquartiert, und die Glücklichen, die nur ein bißchen von dem Mist abbekommen hatten und noch japsten und spuckten, die gingen auch ... drauf, ohne alle Förmlichkeiten, aber

langsam, stückchenweise. (*Erziehung ...*, p.274)

Leutnant Eberhard Kroysing's sober language, in particular the references to the asphyxiating substances deployed as Dreck, Sauzeug and Mist, as well as his illustrative and realistic presentation of the painful and fatal consequences for the victims of poison gas, is indicative for the negative reception of any of the new weapons of the war in the novel. However, this section is the only major reference to poison gas and chemical warfare in the entire narrative.

The only German novel, incidentally, that refers to poison gas and its medical implications for those affected in 1915 is Köppen's *Heeresbericht*, although he did set the following scene at the, in historical terms, late stage of September of that year:

'Leute, ihr bekommt heute einen Schutz gegen Gas. Wir werden gleich einmal üben, wie man diesen Schutz anlegt und verwendet. Ich will euch aber erst, soweit euch das interessieren kann, erklären, um was es sich handelt. Ihr habt in den Heeresberichten gelesen, daß der Feind seit einiger Zeit schädliche Gase auf uns losläßt. Er hofft uns mit den Gaswolken zu verwirren. Ich erkläre ausdrücklich: Die sogenannten Gase sind ein läppisches Zeug, das keinem Menschen etwas tun kann. Die Augen tränen oder man bekommt Husten, wenn man in derartige Gaswolken gerät. Das ist alles. Der Feind hat auch bisher mit diesem Unsinn selbstverständlich nichts erreicht. Nur hat er uns gezwungen, daß auch wir jetzt Gas verwenden werden. Das ist nicht ganz so harmlos. Wir halten uns selbstverständlich an die Gesetze des Völkerrechts, das von den Schweinen da drüben oft genug mit Füßen getreten wird, aber wir machen ihnen die Hölle so heiß wie möglich. [...] Unser Gas wird abgeblasen, wenn der Wind zum Feind steht. Glückt das einmal nicht, schlägt der Wind um, dann legen wir in Zukunft bei solchen Gelegenheiten unsern Gasschutz an, damit wir unsere eigenen Wolken nicht in die Visage bekommen.'
(*Heeresbericht*, p.127f.)

The passage is a reflection of the initial views on the ineffectiveness and inferiority of poison gas; the prophylactic measures introduced to combat the threat of poison gas were a heaven-sent opportunity for the

post-war novelists to dwell on and ridicule; this is clearly Köppen's intent, of course. That those dilettante views should be propagated by a doctor, of all characters, is a piece of irony that sheds some light on the extent of the Mitmachen of the practitioners in the war.

Furthermore, it hints at the plight of the medical staff who faced the progressively horrendous results of chemical warfare virtually empty-handed. Why, in this instance, instructing soldiers about how to protect themselves against poison gas is left to the doctor is a matter for conjecture; the implications in the context of the novel are that poison gas equals disease and is therefore a medical problem, rather than a military one. The most interesting aspect of the statement, however, is the allusion to international conventions and treaties outlawing chemical warfare and the deployment of asphyxiating gases, and, of course, their violation by the other side. Historically, the deployment of chemical weapons presented a clear violation of the articles of the 'Hague Convention' of 1899, which is briefly referred to by the practitioner in *Heeresbericht* as Völkerrecht:

Declaration relative to Projectiles Diffusing Deleterious Gases
(1899)

The undersigned, Plenipotentiaries of the Powers represented at the International Peace Conference at The Hague, duly authorized to that effect by their governments, inspired by the sentiments which found expression in the Declaration of St. Petersburg of November 29 [December 11] 1868,

Declare that -

The Contracting Powers agree to abstain from the use of projectiles the object of which is the diffusion of asphyxiating or deleterious gases. The present declaration is only binding on the Contracting Powers in the case of war between two or more of them. It shall cease to be binding from the time when, in a war between the Contracting Powers, one of the belligerents shall be joined by a Non-Contracting Power. 1°

By and large, both German and Allied novelists seem to have been oblivious to conventions, regulations and treaties, though. They are not an issue in any of the many accounts. That is due to several reasons. Firstly, most of the men who fought in the First World War were hardly, or not at all, aware of the existence of any such treaties, due to their economic, educational and social background. Secondly, those who knew about these treaties lacked the comprehensive knowledge regarding their content, even after the war was over. Thirdly, there were those who were simply not interested in treaties signed by politicians in peace time and completely ignored them correspondingly, removing the issue from the military to the political level in the process. Finally, there is the literary point. Pacifist authors, like Köppen, intended to propagate their anti-war point of view; the international conventions and, in that context, especially the violation of these agreements, were a useful means to demonstrate to a largely ignorant audience that the First World War had not been waged according to rules laid down in military manuals or treaties, but had been an affair of total and utter confusion, to which poison gas and a new generation of other modern weapons had tangibly contributed. In that context it is worth comparing the various literary techniques used by Köppen and other pacifist authors of *Weimar Frontromane* with the jingoistic wartime accounts which follow that familiar pattern of reporting battles and trench warfare as orderly affairs with a beginning, a middle and an end. With the deployment of poison gas, however, and other weapons which did kill large numbers of soldiers from a distance, the war had ceased to be an orderly affair. But while some pacifist novelists utilized chemical warfare and its effects as literary devices simply to stress the utter cruelty,

dehumanization, and randomness of killing in war, they failed to hint at the, by now outdated, conventions signed by the belligerents long before the beginning of the First World War, which would have made their positions even more convincing. It is the literary combination of these two issues that make *Heeresbericht*, in particular, stand out amongst all the other German anti-war novels. Poison gas remains, however, only one issue amongst many in Köppen's novel intended to make the audience take a stand against the war.

A great deal of Köppen's discourse on chemical warfare in *Heeresbericht* considers the protective devices and prophylactic measures taken against poison gas in the early stages of the conflict. This his novel has in common with some of the other Weimar Frontromane, which tend to utilize gas masks and respirators, rather than the actual asphyxiating substances themselves, to make a point against the war:

Unser Gasschutz besteht aus einer Mullbinde, die wir mit einer Flüssigkeit tränken. Diese Mullbinde nehmen wir vor den Mund, möglichst so, daß auch die Nasenlöcher bedeckt sind. Dann kann uns nichts geschehen. (*Heeresbericht*, p.128)

With the post-war hindsight of the novelist, the cynicism about the initial protection of the soldiers against poison gas, which was, in effect, quite ineffective seems justified. The impression is that the value of these measures was, if anything, more psychological than anything else. In the next scene there is a switch from the perspective of the doctor's to that of the worm's eye view of the soldiers; this is accompanied by a switch from the sober military and instructive language of the practitioner to the inventive and vivid tone of the soldiers:

Dann sah man sich an. Sehr ulkig. Die Kanoniere, die einen Schnurrbart hatten, sahen noch am manierlichsten aus. [...] Aber die

glattrasierten machten einen dämlichen Eindruck. [...] Aller Augen grinnten. (*Heeresbericht*, p.128)

a stylistic technique much more suitable to underline Köppen's cynical views on the matter:

Im übrigen: Gasangriff? Es gab bereits im Frühjahr Heeresberichte darüber, und man hatte nachher Infanteristen gesprochen, die dabei gewesen waren. Viel Lärm um nichts! Alles Unsinn! Wenn der Feind sich nichts Besseres ausdenkt, kann er ruhig zu Hause bleiben. Mit solchen Kinkerlitzchen imponiert er nicht. Eine echte Granate ist schlimmer als eine stinkende Wolke. Jetzt haben wir außerdem Gasschutz. Was kann uns passieren? (*Heeresbericht*, p.130)

Although its significance as a *literary symbol* to provide an impression of the enormous cruelty of the war cannot be emphasized too much in the Weimar *Frontromane* generally as well as in some of the British war novels, there is a significant degree of disagreement surrounding the gas mask. Gas masks had been introduced in all armies in the course of 1915 and quickly became an indispensable and inseparable part of the soldiers' equipment. They were carried in a rather bulky metal container, strapped over the right shoulder, which made them uncomfortable to carry. Despite the fact that the designs differed quite considerably in size and shape they all followed the basic principle of covering the forehead, mouth and nose, entirely. While the early issues consisted of all kinds of different textiles fitted with a couple of celluloid windows, the later gas masks were highly sophisticated devices made of rubber, fully waterproof and fitted with highly effective carbon filters capable of holding back all harmful chemical substances in the air for several hours. But while some German novelists, including pacifist writers, acknowledge that the gas mask is, on the one hand, the most effective means of protection against poison gas:

Diese ersten Minuten mit der Maske entscheiden über Leben und Tod:
ist sie dicht?''

others, almost simultaneously, detest it as difficult to handle, uncomfortable to wear and dangerous for its bearer. Graves, with his customary cynicism, commented on the introduction of a new type of gas mask in the British army:

We were issued with a new gas-helmet, popularly known as 'the goggle-eyed booger with the tit'. It differed from the previous models. One breathed in through the nose from the inside the helmet and breathed out through a special valve held in the mouth. [...] The only type claimed to be proof against the newest German gas.¹²

For Jünger, whose personal first-hand experience of chemical warfare has been reflected in his autobiographical war memoirs *In Stahlgewittern*, what was an allegedly protectionary device seemed to have been a potentially suicidal weapon:

Ich setzte also die Maske auf, riß sie aber gleich wieder herunter, da ich so schnell gelaufen war, daß ich durch den Einsatz nicht genügend Luft bekommen konnte; auch waren die Augengläser im Nu beschlagen und vollkommen undurchsichtig. Das alles entsprach wenig dem 'Unterricht über Gasangriffe'. (*Stahlgewitter*, p.83f.)

This is a remarkable statement by a soldier whose war accounts in most cases sound reassuringly scientific, factual and historical, and aim at imparting a feeling of the utmost having been done to protect the front line troops against poison gas. The sole conclusion that can be drawn from Jünger's factual account is that the only device devised to protect a soldier during a gas attack was really no guarantee of protection at all. Finally, his verdict on the effectiveness of the gas mask as a protective device corroborates the notion that the war had ceased to be an orderly affair and could no longer be waged by the manual.

For most of the Weimar ~~Frontromane~~ the gas mask is a literary device to make a point against the war, its use not extending beyond the double-edged symbolism of an instrument that could cost lives and save lives all at the same time. But those novels which make that point attempt to present the anguish and fear of soldiers about the effectiveness of their protective devices by lying the emphasis of their presentation much more on the individual human being trying to survive in a wasteland created by forces beyond his influence and against overwhelming odds which the soldier neither fully comprehends nor exercises any control over.

Rarely does a novel make an issue of an accidentally damaged breathing apparatus. In fact there seems to be only one example of that image in the novels, skillfully dramatized by Carl Otto, in his *Im Osten nichts Neues*, to add another aspect to the various dissenting descriptions of the nature of chemical warfare:

Einem Kameraden wird die Gasmaske in dem Moment zerschossen, als er sie aufsetzen will. Auf so etwas vorbereitet, kneift er die Augen fest zu, hält den Atem an und schließt Mund und Nase. Schnell holt er den Ersatzfilter aus der Tasche, preßt diesen in den Mund und atmet dadurch. [...] Das einzig Mögliche: Umschau halten, daß ein anderer gefallen ist, diesem Toten dann die Maske vom Gesicht reißen und dem noch lebenden Kameraden ohne Maske aufsetzen. Hat er aber bei diesem Experiment zwei oder drei Schlucke Gas genommen, dann ist es auch um ihn geschehen. Denn das Gas wirkt so verteufelt, als wenn man Benzin oder Lysol getrunken hat, der einmal genommene Gasschluck ist durch die Luft, die man nachher einatmet, nicht wieder zu verdrängen. [...] Der Fall mit der zerschossenen Gasmaske kommt vielfach vor, das hohe Lied der Kameradschaft wird vielfach verwirklicht, doch auch viele müssen in diesem Fall dann weiter schlucken und den Gastod sterben.¹³

The passage is designed to destroy the illusion of the ignorant reader that the spirit of true comradeship, loudly propagated by nationalist

war fiction and, albeit to a limited extent, endorsed by authors like Remarque, was an effective means of surviving in the trenches.

Reading Weimar war prose, it is surprising to note that many anti-war novels rarely provide an impression of the technical aspects of chemical warfare, that is, the classification of the individual agents, detailed descriptions of their deployment and their effects on their victims. This is regrettable in a military, as well as a literary respect, as it deprives the reader of a very important aspect of the brutal nature of chemical warfare which could have been yet more starkly highlighted by the novelists. What made poison gas the detestation of all soldiers was precisely the way it worked. The smaller the quantity a victim swallowed, the more painful and slow his ordeal; but if he were lucky, depending on the kind of poison gas inhaled, a victim could survive; if a more effective kind of poison gas had been inhaled, though, the soldier was certain to die. In any case, those victims who swallowed any kind of asphyxiating substances in larger quantities died much more quickly, although the suffering was just the same. It is perhaps appropriate to provide a brief but detailed survey of the chemical agents used by almost all the belligerents in the war. Firstly, there were gases and minute particles floating in the air, affecting both the breathing system and the eyes of human beings and animals, and occasionally the skin. And secondly, there were chemical substances which were fired or sprayed onto the soil and which, at making contact, had a painful effect on the skin. They were also capable of penetrating clothes and uniforms. The agents were categorized according to their effect into:

- a) Irritants, affecting eyes, nose and throat, causing breathing

difficulties, headaches, nausea and sickness; the German Blaukreuz, for example, was a shell that contained two-thirds of high explosive and one-third of a container filled with Diphenil-chlorarsenic that was capable of penetrating gas masks unless they were fitted with a special filter. They were used to shell small fortified positions, their big advantage being that they did not have to hit their targets directly. Once the shell had burst the poison gas would be released and spread in thick clouds around the immediate vicinity of the impact. To have any tangible effect, though, an incredible amount of shells had to be fired. Later on in the war especially the Allied forces took to dropping bombs filled with poison gas out of aircrafts. They also invented two new mine throwers, the so-called Livens and Stoke mortars, which were easy to handle, light, and proved very successful in trench warfare. Shells filled with gas were easily distinguishable from the ordinary artillery bullets because of their peculiar sound. This shrill sound was a signal for any soldier in the vicinity of an attack to protect himself by putting on his gas mask.

b) Suffocants, affecting the breathing system and lethal in high concentrations, e.g. the German Grünkreuz; this shell contained liquid Diphosgene, and was used to contaminate terrain and soil of an area where the other side was most likely to attack, to make it impassable. And, finally:

c) Corrosives, which affected the skin, causing painful blisters. They also affected the lungs and the mucous membranes, e.g. the German Gelbkreuz, or 'Mustard Gas', also called Lost or Yperit, as well as Lewisit, classified as a 'defensive' chemical agent to contaminate terrain in such a matter as to make it impassable for the other side.'⁴

Since poison gas was only slightly heavier than air it used to sink slowly to the ground where it remained for days and weeks, even unaffected by heavy rainfall. For some novelists, like Remarque, for example, providing the audience with these mere attributes, qualities, and technicalities of the various asphyxiating substances was, in literary terms, probably not effective enough to illustrate the way they worked, let alone their effects on their victims. In *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Remarque employs the image of a jellyfish, an animal of an eerie appearance to the observer, which moves around in an unusually quiet and sinister manner and is poisonous as well, to make a point about poison gas:

Jetzt schleicht der Schwaden über den Boden und sinkt in alle Vertiefungen. Wie ein weiches, breites Quallentier legt er sich in unseren Trichter, räkelt sich hinein. (*Im Westen ...*, p.72)

In his narrative *Im Osten nichts Neues*, the title of which indicates its dependency on Remarque's famous novel, Carl Otto uses a similar image, that of the snake, which incidentally possesses all the attributes of the jellyfish, as well, to describe the poisonous fumes descending on the troops, copying Remarque in that respect too:

Das Gas ist schwerer als die Luft, es sinkt auf den Boden, es kann wie eine Schlange unter die Bettgestelle kriechen und sich dort festsetzen. Da hat dann mancher danach noch Gas geschluckt, als er gar nicht mehr daran dachte.¹⁵

The use of these particular animal images in novels to describe the nature of chemical warfare is at once repellent and threatening; but since both authors wrote their novels from a decidedly pacifist point of view of the war and intended to achieve a similar reaction from their

audience because of what war does to people, the use of these images ensured that even the less sophisticated readers would understand the real effects and the true nature of poison gas.

Examining the presentation of the effects of chemical warfare on human beings as provided in Weimar war literature some general comments regarding the aspect must be made. Depending on the personal standpoint of the individual author, either pro-, or anti-war, soldiers were correspondingly classified as either heroes or victims of chemical warfare. Thus the selectivity of the individual author, what he wanted the post-war audience at home to see, depended to a large extent on his intentionality towards the issue. When after the end of the war more factual knowledge about chemical weapons became available to the wider public, it was impossible for nationalist war fiction to ignore the enormous number of casualties poison gas had caused. Its representatives had to concede that chemical weapons had cost many lives. However, they could still present their point of view by belittling the nature of these losses as mere: 'Abgänge von Gaskranken',¹⁶ without having to go into detailed descriptions of the effects of poison gas on the soldiers. Characteristic for the views of nationalist war fiction on the victims of poison gas is the way it equates them with victims of a contagious disease. That process must be judged as an attempt to deprecate the enormity of the tragedy. Furthermore, that position is also untenable in medical respect. That no account analysed, regardless of its bias, mentions any serious medical attempt to rescue a victim of poison gas is a clear indication that once contaminated there was virtually nothing that could be medically done to save a contaminated person. In the light of the euphemism quoted it is further worth drawing the attention to the

approach of nationalist war fiction in dealing with casualties. Hardly ever do they focus on individual soldiers suffering from contact with poison gas, or any other devices for that matter. But they tend to generalize losses in human life and provide the audience with an overall picture of the war instead, looking at it from above by taking the bird's eye perspective, thereby, simultaneously, ignoring what was going on on the ground.

In spite of the endeavours of nationalist war fiction and of scientific publications published in the Weimar Republic which tried to play down the different asphyxiating substances and, moreover, belittled their effects on the combatants by confining themselves entirely to the abstract, describing the victims of chemical warfare as mere material that was 'put out of action', 'paralysed' and 'rendered ineffective',¹⁷ it is an indisputable fact that the pacifist Weimar *Frontromane* did not exploit these details at their disposal effectively enough. While some works sometimes present chemical warfare as just another means of crippling and/or killing great numbers of people indiscriminately, others tend to neglect entirely the medical implications of the various chemical agents; in short, pacifist Weimar war literature does not speak with one voice on the issue of the medical implications of poison gas and chemical warfare. In Johannsen's *Vier von der Infanterie*, for example, the subtitle, 'Westfront 1918', indicates that the narrative is about the final stages of the war, which take the logical outcome for anyone involved in the conflict, war means death and that is it, poison gas fulfils all the criteria of a weapon of modern warfare; not only does it kill randomly and rapidly, but also unexpectedly. The scene is

set in a dug-out somewhere in France that has been buried under tons of rubble:

Der Neunzehnjährige, ganz verstört von der Schießerei, die er zum erstenmal erlebt, bewaffnet sich mit einem Spaten und kriecht über Sand und Steine nach oben. Zitternd vor Angst stößt er oben mit dem Spaten die gebliebene kleine Öffnung größer. Eine Gasgranate platzt und drückt Gas durch die Öffnung. Der Mann kriecht zurück, schwankt, hustet und hält sich nur mühsam aufrecht. Wortlos kriecht er auf seinen Platz, legt sich hin und verliert das Bewußtsein. Sie haben in dem Lärm den Gaseinschlag in der Nähe des Eingangs nicht bemerkt und als der Nachbar des Gasvergifteten mit der Taschenlampe zufällig sein Gesicht beleuchtet, wundert er sich über den Ausdruck. [...] 'Mit was für einem Aaszeug von Gas schießt das Schweinepack denn nun wieder! Was soll er sonst haben als Gas. Da oben war Gas.' 'Der Zweite', bemerkt Müller. 'Der hat nicht viel gemerkt, keinen Laut hat er von sich gegeben. Schöner Tod, wenn er so kaputt geht ohne Bewußtsein.' (*Infanterie ...*, p.81f.)

But the illustration of a victim of poison gas suffering a quiet, peaceful, and above all, painless death differs considerably from those agonizing and painful images imparted by other pacifist novelists such as Remarque. His technique of presenting victims of chemical warfare in various degrees in *Im Westen nichts Neues* is interesting and highly unusual in the Weimar Frontromane. There is, for example, the use of the present tense throughout the novel which is intended to impart a sense of authenticity and immediacy of the presentation of each scene and Bäumer's perspective as a soldier in a unit that suffers substantial losses in human lives in repeated gas attacks makes the presentation sound credible and realistic:

Auf einen alten Mann fallen fünf bis zehn Rekruten. Ein überraschender Gasangriff rafft viele weg. Sie sind nicht dazu gelangt, zu ahnen, was ihrer wartete. Einen Unterstand voll finden wir mit blauen Köpfen und schwarzen Lippen. In einem Trichter haben sie die Masken zu früh losgemacht; sie wußten nicht, daß sich das Gas auf dem Grunde am längsten hält; als sie andere ohne Maske oben sahen, rissen sie sie auch ab und schluckten noch genug, um sich die Lungen zu verbrennen. (*Im Westen ...*, p.134)

And secondly, there is the use of the image of massive number of gas casualties lined up in a Feldlazarett on long rows of stretchers, coughing up their scorched lungs bit by bit and suffering a painful and slow death which strives to expose the reality of the war:

Ich kenne die furchtbaren Bilder aus dem Lazarett: Gaskranke, die in tagelangem Würgen die verbrannten Lungen stückweise auskotzen. (*Im Westen ...*, p.72)

But even Remarque is ambiguous about the presentation of the medical implications of chemical warfare on its victims. Having swallowed a small quantity of poison gas which has caused some irritation, without causing any serious harm to his health, the central figure of the novel, Paul Bäumer, states rather casually: 'Ich habe vierzehn Tage Ruhe, weil ich etwas Gas geschluckt habe.' (p.286) That statement, though, runs against the notion that poison gas is simply poison gas and, from his front line soldier perspective exposed to chemical warfare day after day, one kind of poison gas is potentially just as lethal as any other, regardless of its colour or smell; and since it kills indiscriminately it has to be taken very seriously indeed by the front line troops. The incident is also inconsistent with Remarque's views elsewhere that there is generally no escape from poison gas; the fact that he did not utilize any long-term medical implications of chemical warfare on its victims, such as blinding or breathing difficulties for example, in either *Im Westen nichts Neues*, or in the sequel *Der Weg zurück* bears witness to that effect. Incidentally, everybody else in the novel who is contaminated with asphyxiating substances dies an agonizing death and Bäumer, who comes face-to-face with the suffering of victims of poison

gas at the front time and again, provides an impression of what that means for them:

Ihr Zustand ist hoffnungslos, sie würgen sich mit Blutstürzen und Erstickungsanfällen zu Tode. (*Im Westen ...*, p.134)

Bäumer's survival in this instance is necessitated for purely literary reasons, mainly the author's intention of having the novel culminate in the central figure's death about two weeks before the end of the war.

In addition, as far as the literary treatment of the matter in, for example, war memoirs is concerned, there is a significant discrepancy in the sources at our disposal which does not allow us to conclude that all soldiers contaminated by asphyxiating substances at any time in the war were really beyond saving:

Am einem der folgenden Tage wurde unsere Schlucht mit Gasgranaten belegt. Da wir sofort unsere Masken aufsetzten, konnte uns das Gas wenig anhaben. Weiter oben in der Schlucht starben 19 Infanteristen, die schliefen, durch eingeatmetes Gas.
(*Beste Gelegenheit ...*, p.358)

Richert himself had first-hand experience of contamination and his presentation of the matter in his war memoirs is an apt example of what made poison gas the detestation of the front line troops:

Ich ... fühlte beim Atmen das Gas in die Nase bis zum Halse eindringen und stieß es dann mit einem festem Atemstoß wieder hinaus, hielt den Atem an und riß die Gasmaske aus der Büchse, um sie blitzschnell aufzusetzen. Nun fühlte ich, daß doch etwas Gas in die Brust gedrungen sein mußte, denn es fing mich an zu krabbeln, und ich bekam Brechreiz. In Nase und Rachen brannte es derart, daß mir die Augen überliefen. Auch mußte ich husten und hatte Mühe, in der Maske Luft zu bekommen.¹⁰

because it echoes the indiscriminate nature of chemical warfare. On the other hand, it also lends credibility to the claims of the scientists

that poison gas was, in effect, the least inhumane of all the new weapons deployed in the First World War.¹⁹

Of the various accounts examined, it seems that only Ernst Jünger's works echo the technical nature of the First World War adequately. His sober, technical description of the range of new weapons deployed in the conflict includes the chemical agents, which he identifies and classifies according to their colour, smell and effectiveness. But although Jünger takes a more scientific approach to chemical warfare he, too, does acknowledge that poison gas kills people. After all, he was a front line soldier himself with first-hand experience of being immediately exposed to poison gas on more than one occasion. Thus his view of chemical warfare differs necessarily from that of a scientist. The following passage from his *In Stahlgewittern* is characteristic for his factual, unemotional way of describing a poison gas attack and its effects on human beings:

Plötzlich aber trug ein kleiner Windstoß einen süßlichen Zwiebelgeruch heran, zugleich hörte ich im Walde eine Reihe von Stimmen: 'Gas, Gas, Gas!' [...] Wie ich am nächsten Morgen erfuhr, erlitten in diesen Augenblicken in dem Walde, in dessen Unterholz die schweren Phosgenwolken mit Zähigkeit hafteten, eine Menge von Leuten den Vergiftungstod.²⁰

Although the year 1915 saw the beginning of the area of chemical warfare and poison gas both issues seem to have been neglected entirely by the front line troops, as their letters and diaries at our disposal show. In the Weimar *Frontromane* references to chemical warfare, generally, and especially asphyxiating substances, are a standard part of the presentation of war. The presentation of their effects on the troops, though, are only ever present where a novel focuses on the war

at the western front and extends beyond the year 1916; rare, on the other hand, are reverberations in war novels set in the East or with different points of view. The significance of chemical warfare and poison gas in the Weimar Frontromane for the overall provision of a realistic picture of the war is, however, debatable. That is mainly due to the disparate approach of each individual author to the matter and the contrasting interpretations of the effects, that is the medical implications, of poison gas on its victims. Here the verdict must be that they could have made more of the nature of chemical warfare and its short-term/long-term medical implications on the troops. The presentation of the long-term effects of poison gas on its victims is, surprisingly, not a major issue in any war novel, in spite of their disparate views on the significance of chemical warfare in the conflict.

While some of the pacifist Frontromane make the point, implicitly or explicitly, that poison gas precisely is poison and kills people, other presentations, like Jünger's, for example, are much more realistic, because they provide the audience with a range of data, facts and qualities about the chemical agents and do not fall into the trap of simplifying the war by equations. That Jünger's accounts lack any genuine regrets for what poison gas does to people belongs to another chapter. All authors are, nonetheless, united in their universal rejection of poison gas, albeit for different reasons. Some pacifist novelists condemn it for its nature as a weapon that, above all, causes damage to men on a mass scale, others despise it for killing suddenly, randomly and agonizingly; others again, such as Richert denounce it for its painful short-term effects on its victims.

Finally, like no other issue in First World War prose, the idea of chemical warfare and poison gas shows the total and utter ineffectiveness and powerlessness of the medical services to cope with the effects of modern war on its victims, for not one of all the German and British accounts examined for this study contains any description of medical assistance having been rendered, or having been successfully applied to victims of poison gas. It seems that chemical warfare, in that, as well as the *literary* respect, at least, affected all sides equally devastatingly.

NOTES

¹ Walter Flex, *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten* (Munich: Beck, 1921).

² For more information on the use of poison gas at the eastern front see Gertrud Woker, *Der kommende Giftgaskrieg* (Leipzig: B. Oldenburg, 1925), pp.70-72.

³ Hermann Geyer, 'Wie sich der Gaskrieg entwickelte', in *Was wir vom Weltkrieg nicht wissen*, pp.281-99 (pp.283-84), remarks that in August 1914 French troops deployed a kind of tear-gas to obstruct the advance of the German armies with little, or no effect. Paul Fussell, in *Great War and Modern Memory* (London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.10, sets the date for the beginning of chemical warfare on 27 October 1914.

⁴ The collections of letters by soldiers in both Müller's *Der deutsche Soldat*, and Witkop's *Kriegsbriefe*, do not, as late as the end of 1915, contain a single reference to poison gas or primary aspects of chemical warfare.

⁵ *Soldbuch*, Schaffrath, issued August 1914.

⁶ Anton Steiger, letter dated 17. Juli 1916, in *Kriegsbriefe*, pp.237-38 (p.237).

⁷ F. W. Deutsch, *Waffenlehre* (Berlin: Mittler, 1935), pp.194-98.

⁸ Graves, *Good-bye*, p.128. Fussell, in *Great War*, p.207, criticizes *Good-bye to All That* as the 'stagiest' of all the war memoirs and declares it to be a satire: 'built out of anecdotes heavily influenced by the techniques of stage comedy.' The account ought to be read with correspondingly critical caution as to its presentation of war.

⁹ Wilfred Owen, *Poems*, ed. Edmund Blunden (London: Chatto and Windus, 1921), p.66. Fussell, in *Great War*, p.158, comments that English poetry was a pastime many British soldiers of all ranks indulged in at the front and that due to that unique British tradition it would have been impossible for, for example, an American soldier, to write a poem echoing Horace that would be familiar to every British pupil.

¹⁰ Barclay, *Law and Usage of War*, pp.194-95. The 'Declaration of St. Petersburg', [November 29] December 1, 1868, was signed by the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Persia, Portugal, Prussia and North German Confederation, Russia, Sweden and Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and Württemberg. Brazil acceded in 1869.

¹¹ Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.72.

¹² Graves, *Good-bye*, p.164. Incidentally, Graves was unable to wear it, since his nose was broken.

¹³ Carl Otto, *Im Osten nichts Neues* (Zirndorf-Nürnberg: Sanitas, 1929), p.124.

¹⁴ Deutsch, *Waffenlehre*, pp.198-99; also Harris and Paxman, *A Higher Form*, pp.23-24.

¹⁵ Otto, *Im Osten*, p.122.

¹⁶ Beumelburg, *Sperrfeuer*, p.312.

¹⁷ Geyer, 'Gaskrieg', pp.283-84.

¹⁸ Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.308.

¹⁹ Geyer, 'Gaskrieg', pp.283-84.

²⁰ Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.123. Fussell, in *Great War*, p.196, accuses both Jünger and Remarque of invoking: 'overheated figures of nightmares and call upon the whole frenzied machinery of Gothic romance', in their

accounts, instead of: 'reaching toward the cool metaphor of stage plays.' As this study of chemical warfare shows, his criticism of Jünger is unjustified. No other German Weimar writer understood the technical nature of the First World War better than Jünger. As far as the criticism against Remarque is concerned we may quote the author himself from Erich Maria Remarque and Ian Hamilton, 'The End of War? A correspondence between the author of: 'All Quiet on the Western Front' and General Sir Ian Hamilton', in *Life and Letters* 3 (1929), 399-411 (p.405): 'A book on the war is readily exposed to criticism of a political character, but my work should not be so judged, for it was not political, neither pacifist nor militarist, in intention, but human simply. It presents the war as seen within the small compass of the front-line soldier.'

VENEREAL DISEASES

The First World War had a profoundly transforming impact on the entire European social order. Within a spell of only four years the whole ethical system, together with its attendant moral values, in all the belligerent nations was turned upside down for good. Particularly affected by these changes were the attitudes concerning sexual permissiveness with devastating consequences for the soldiers and the civilian population in the occupied territories. Of course, there had been some form of sexual permissiveness before the war; but because it had been pushed underground, it had been exercised only by a hidden few, concealed from the eyes of the public. Before August 1914 prostitution had been the main source of the spreading of venereal diseases. If the sparse, and therefore unreliable statistics on venereal diseases of the four decades preceding the First World War are anything to go by, it seems that between five and ten per cent of the European population were affected by some form of venereal disease.¹ The outbreak of the war facilitated the spreading of the venereal diseases and during the conflict it was impossible to keep them under control effectively. Even the desperate attempts of legalizing prostitution in 1915 succeeded only partially in containing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, this kind of officially tolerated new sexual permissiveness allowed the venereal diseases to spread around continental Europe at an amazing pace bringing pain and suffering to millions of largely unsuspecting victims. The fact that the sex education of broad parts of the population had been criminally neglected before the war, in spite of

repeated medical and scientific warnings, contributed to aggravating that process in the war years further still. And although scientific research in the area of preventing sexually transmitted disease had yielded some encouraging results around the turn of the century, the measures recommended by the medical community, all of them of a prophylactic nature, proved to be either very complicated, expensive, or unpleasant to administer.

Novels which commence before or at the outbreak of the First World War reflect graphically the tremendous wave of enthusiasm that simply swept aside all the antiquated social barriers and conventions dominating pre-war German life, if only for a limited period; none more so than Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902*, (pp.101-10) and Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*. (pp.92-94) The excitement would die down quietly in the ensuing weeks, to turn into indifference later on in the conflict, but it seemed that it had failed to remove the anachronistic code of ethical and moral conventions and the social etiquette symptomatic of the Wilhelmine era. Nevertheless, the factors that were to undermine and destroy these conventions within less than a year were already present. It is indeed ironic that the First World War was fought to preserve the very society, and with it the values it had adhered to for centuries, which it was going to destroy for good.²

The first visible indication that things on the sexual front were changing rapidly was the sharp increase in the number of illegitimate children in 1915.³ At the same time, a less visible concomitant of the changing standards of sexual permissiveness was the rapid spread of venereal diseases in the occupied territories and the belligerent states, to which there are surprisingly few references in Allied and German war

writings. That lack of references is all the more surprising in view of the official statistics on these conditions. They show that venereal diseases were, indeed, a major source of casualties during the war, rendering between ten and fifteen per cent of Allied soldiers, and about eleven per cent of those in the armies of the Central Powers temporarily, or permanently, militarily ineffective.⁴

That venereal diseases are not an issue raised in wartime literature as such, which is mostly jingoistic by nature, is understandable. The image of a soldier dying not heroically from a clean bullet wound, but by suffering from a painful disease in the most intimate regions of his body from the unpleasant effects of sexually transmitted diseases would have been quite incompatible with the circumstances of the time, the mood of the civilian population and the image of the conflict as portrayed and perpetuated by a sophisticated propaganda machine in all belligerent states. That the issue was also unsuitable for post-war nationalist war fiction trying to perpetuate the anachronistic notions of the war having been an orderly and, above all, heroic affair, which only a chosen few soldiers had the courage and stamina to cope with, is also indisputable. The few Weimar nationalist works which contain any reference to venereal diseases reveal a lot about the personal - negative - attitudes of the individual author towards them. There they emerge in connection with political matters, not as the genuinely medical and real military factor which they presented in the war. Franz Arthur Kluetmann, one of the very few nationalist authors who referred to the matter at all, in *Contra Remarque - Im Westen wohl was Neues*, a novel, as the title indicates, written particularly in response to

Remarque's anti-war novel *Im Westen nichts Neues*, may serve as an example here.

In the introduction to his work Kliermann states that pacifism is like a syphilitic disease and accuses all pacifists of being degenerates; (pp.7-9) war, in his view, is a cleansing and purifying experience and therefore the exact opposite of venereal diseases, which he perceives to be catastrophic and ruinous. The fact that for a cleansing and purifying event the First World War produced an immense number of people affected by some form of venereal diseases does not seem to matter a great deal to the author; but perhaps he was not even aware of that. By utilizing the medical image of a virus spreading around and affecting many civilians and the - untried - sailors in Germany's North Sea ports, it is possible for him to equate the 1918 revolution with a disease that has brought nothing but chaos, decay and destruction for Germany. With a deliberate deflection he shows the notion of the Dolchstoßlegende, the stab-in-the-back myth, to have emanated from inside parts of the German forces themselves, in this case the Imperial Navy. Worse still, if logically unconnected, the sailors in question have all been affected by some form of venereal disease:

Ich bin zum Kriegsgefangenenlager Soltau als Lagerkommandant kommandiert. Hier liegen 75000 Gefangene und 5000 deutsche syphiliskranke Matrosen, die dort ausgeheilt werden sollen; durchwegs Ersatzleute von 1918, die Kaserne, Hafen und vielleicht noch das Schiff kennen gelernt hatten, aber sonst zur Untätigkeit verurteilt und durch Müßiggang dem Laster verfallen waren.
(*Contra Remarque - Im Westen wohl ...*, p.172f.)

The negative symbolism of venereal diseases causing decay and pain for the individual affected is deliberately touched upon and consequently transferred to the whole of the German people; implicit in Kliermann's

work is the allusion that the 1918 revolution considerably contributed to the military defeat of Germany, destroyed the Imperium for good and led to the creation of the Weimar Republic. Being, ultimately, the work of a mob of syphilitic sailors, he concludes it must, consequently, be rejected.

While nationalist authors like Klletman used venereal diseases as a symbol to demonstrate the essentially morbid nature of the Weimar Republic, it was rejected by a considerable number of the German people themselves, after all, and as a literary means of attacking their political opponents in the meanest of ways, it is surprising that the later, and generally much more knowledgeable and open-minded anti-war authors shrank away from using venereal diseases extensively to show the dehumanizing nature of the war from a totally different, essentially human and, above all, specifically medical level. Zweig's handling of the matter in *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, is representative of the method in which most authors allude to the burning problem. In the following instance the wartime relationship of nurse Bärbe and Leutnant Winfrid is first reasonably well explained and then almost apologetically used to make some general comments on the moral state of German wartime society:

Da beide nicht sicher waren, das nächste Vierteljahr zu überleben, weil Division Lychow jeden Augenblick an einer Stelle im flandrischen Lehm oder dem tödlich zerhagelten Kalkstaub der Champagne geworfen, Schwester Bärbe aber trotz aller Vorsicht vom Typhus oder einer mißachteten Erkältungskrankheit beiseite geschleudert werden konnte, gaben sie einander, was ihre Jugend sich zu geben vermochte. Sie hofften beide, den Krieg zu überdauern, sahen aber keinen Grund, in der Scheinheiligkeit der Heeresatmosphäre zu ersticken. Bei der überwältigenden Masse von Männern des Heeres stand jede Pflegerin, auch die kümmerlichste, im Brennpunkt der Wünsche von Hunderten; unter der Oberfläche protestantischer Sittsamkeit und preußischer Tugend lebten die Männer und Frauen, wie sie es dem Augenblicke abtrotzten.

(*Grischa ...*, p.106f.)

This technique is most successful in avoiding any reference to the unpleasant medical side-effects of such illicit relationships. Sexual promiscuity, but not sexually transmitted diseases, is an issue in Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, too:

Wir hatten keine Ahnung davon, wir waren völlig verdonnert, als vor vier Tagen unsere Rote-Kreuz-Küche auf dem Bahnhof Knall und Fall geschlossen und wir fristlos entlassen wurden. Man hat zur Mitarbeit leider Damen herangezogen, deren Verhalten uns alle in den Dreck gezogen hat. Besonders bei den Helferinnen der Nachtgruppe scheint man nicht gewußt zu haben, aus welchem Milieu man sie sich herausholte. Nun, unsere Kreise sind nicht besser. Die jungen Damen 'aus Familie' haben ihren Sensationshunger längst befriedigt.
(*Katrin ...*, p.203)

and also emerges in the image of a married nurse, whose husband is at the front, and a sergeant making love in the infirmary. (p.228) It also plays an, albeit minor, role in Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902*. (p.191)

Helen Zenna Smith's '*Not so Quiet*' repeatedly stresses the complete breakdown of morality in the war, and the profound effects that process had on, in particular, the English middle-class women and the establishment. In the narrator's case becoming aware of her sexuality and role as a woman in the vicinity of the front is a gradual process. An officer, about to leave for the front, probably not to return, succeeds in stealing a kiss from her. Casual sexual intercourse with another soldier leads to the loss of her virginity, but she has no regrets. Her sister, who serves as a nurse behind the line, becomes pregnant after having slept with three different men, anyone of whom could be the father. She is desperate not to have the baby as that would be contrary

to the moral standards prevailing at home, where the majority of people are shown to be strangely unaffected by the war.

While these examples from novels represent a major motif displaying the disintegration of the code of behaviour in all European states in the First World War, the venereal diseases are not really an issue there. That fact automatically raises the question as to why the post-war writers omitted, or ignored, the issue so comprehensively? One possible answer is that although most of them wrote their memoirs, narratives and novels with the hindsight of the late 1920s, when an overall picture of the war had already emerged and attitudes regarding sexual permissiveness and venereal diseases had profoundly changed due to the war, they, nonetheless, remained firmly confined to those ethical and moral conventions and social standards of their own upbringing, around the turn of the century; that they intended their accounts to reflect the atmosphere of the war years as genuinely as possible, even in respect to the venereal diseases, is also quite conceivable.

The fact that material on venereal diseases and their effects on their victims is generally sporadic in Weimar war prose makes it necessary to look to a large extent at historical material and medical reports, rather than literary fiction, although several relevant examples from the latter area can be taken into account.⁵

There can be no doubt that the effects of venereal diseases have, at any time, been detrimental to the ability of soldiers to fight. What made them a special medical case in the First World War was the threat they posed to the health of armies consisting, for the first time ever, of millions of combatants. As sexually transmitted diseases initially received, at best, very little attention, at worst, none at all, the

huge number of combatants affected by them considerably contributed to the acceleration and accumulation of the problem until it had reached horrifying dimensions. Hirschfeld's report of the examination of venereal diseases, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, shows that they succeeded in weakening the strength of any army much more effectively than actual fighting. (I, pp.228-31) Infected soldiers on leave, contributing to the spreading of venereal diseases amongst the civilian population at home and also passing them on to their comrades-in-arms in the trenches, presented an additional threat that had to be taken into account.

The reason why nobody considered venereal diseases to be a medical, let alone military, problem at the beginning of the war was due to the fact that in 1914 all expectations were geared to a swift end of the conflict. And as long as the armies kept moving the danger of large scale infection was minimal, indeed. But as soon as the war began to confine the millions of combatants to the trenches, a period that was to last for more than three years, venereal diseases became a serious medical and military problem. By now, the damage was already done, though, and from the autumn of 1914 onwards it was largely the combatants who paid with their health for the lax attitudes of the military authorities, which had been eager to keep the extent of the problem under wraps for as long as they possibly could. While it would be too easy to argue that all the soldiers who contracted a form of venereal disease in the conflict were 'victims of circumstances', we must not lose sight of the circumstances of the time, which compelled both the civilian and military authorities to raise an army sufficient in numbers to accomplish the strategic objectives as set out by its

leaders. It seems that as long as the war lasted anybody who was capable of handling a gun was drafted, regardless of their medical condition. This is particularly true for the second half of the conflict. With the hindsight of the late 1920s, and based on the results of his own medical research in the area, Hirschfeld concluded that some of the problems venereal diseases caused in the war originated, in fact, at home:

Am wenigsten dachte man an die Wichtigkeit einer Verfügung, die die außergenitale Verbreitung der Syphilis verhütet hätte, nämlich an die Fernhaltung luetischer Soldaten von der Armee.
(*Sittengeschichte ...*, I, p.228)

It was mainly due to research in the field of sexually transmitted diseases that had been going on for quite some time that most of the military practitioners in the field knew exactly what they were dealing with when confronted with the various venereal conditions themselves. But while a lot of research had been done concerning prophylactic measures to prevent the spreading of venereal diseases, all of them had been known for some time, after all, and had been classified accordingly during the 19th century, when it came to eradicating them, there were, as yet, no effective remedies available.

Venereal diseases are usually the result of sexual intercourse by one, or several, persons with an already infected individual and, during the incubation period, that is the time from contracting the virus to the emergence of the first symptoms, take on various forms which cause more or less serious physical harm and great pain to the victim. However, as venereal diseases are highly contagious and some of the viruses quite agile and resistant they can also be transmitted by touching the discharge of an infected person, a method quite effectively

and successfully applied by a good number of soldiers who had had enough of the war and were desperate to get away from it, whatever the consequences. Plievier, in *Des Kaisers Kulis*, picks up the image of a sailor opting for the easiest way out of the war. The passage is unusually long for First World War literature in regard to venereal diseases, featuring a sailor aboard a Q-ship about to put to sea to disrupt Allied trade in the Atlantic. All attempts to avoid being dragged into the potentially lethal enterprise, such as absence without leave and military misconduct having failed, he opts for sexual intercourse with a casual prostitute known to be infected, on the advice of a fellow sailor. Known to the crews of several ships as the Gonokokke, a nickname derived from the virus which transmits venereal disease, it is claimed that she transmits them totsicher. The woman lives in a tenement flat in a working-class area in Wilhelmshaven, a major North Sea port of the German Imperial navy. An assistant in a navy canteen, she leads an apparently unobtrusive existence, apart from her sexual services to the sailors in exchange for food. Frequent sexual intercourse has strained her body and led to her being infected with some form of venereal disease. This she capitalizes on. Although she is an older woman and not in the least attractive to look at, the fact that she is a transmitter of venereal disease has worked wonders for her reputation as a casual prostitute. It is obviously in her interest not to receive medical treatment as that would be detrimental to her business. Interestingly, her face remains anonymous throughout the entire episode, indicative for the anonymous nature of the conditions themselves. While her flat is decorated with pictures of the emperor, the ex-commander-in-chief of the Imperial navy, Admiral Tirpitz, and

sailors going down heroically with their vessels, she undermines the very navy she pretends to support with her *Liebesdienste*. For the sailor there follows a night out on the drink because it has been rumoured that 'Schnaps soll die Geschichte schneller vorwärts treiben', (p.179) and within three days his efforts are rewarded with the desired effects.⁶

The aura of anonymity and invisibility that surrounds both venereal diseases and their transmitters in Plievier's novel is intended and must be seen in the context of the novel as a whole. To the sailors pressed into service and unwilling to fight a war they regard as not theirs, but that of the possessing classes, the privileged officers and the nobility, infection with venereal diseases is an easy and, indeed, the only legitimate way out of the war, albeit only temporarily. It is a form of passive resistance that is guaranteed to succeed unlike any other means of active insubordination, which would invariably result in draconian punishment.

Köppen's *Heeresbericht* looks at the issue from a different perspective. Here the source of infection is not a woman, but a soldier. A gunner struck with gonorrhoea is charged with having deliberately indulged in sexual acts with an infected woman. However, in the course of the court martial it turns out that he bought, in fact, some malignant discharge from an already infected gunner of his own battery and proceeded to infect himself.⁷ In the novel the section itself is presented, both in form and style, as the minutes of a court martial, which is due to the position of the central character, Reisiger, who is present taking notes. But the mood and tone of the proceedings are allowed sometimes to border on the ridiculous. The two main characters at the court martial, the chairman of the court, an officer and the

epitome of a well-educated man, familiar with the paragraphs of military law, and the accused, not the brightest individual, whose apparent willingness to answer the charges against him as honestly and plainly as possible, contribute much to the confusion of the scene, are carefully chosen by the novelist to show the total ineffectiveness of the military judiciary to cope with the problem. Furthermore, they show that even the less intelligent soldier in the army could always find a way out of the war, in spite of all the controls and warnings about venereal diseases. Unfortunately, though, both Plievier and Köppen in their presentation of venereal diseases concentrate mainly on their suitability as a relatively easy means for soldiers to escape the war, without providing much detail of the motivation of the individual combatant concerned, and the commercial attitudes of those involved in either offering infection via sexual intercourse or trading infected discharge. While both authors highlight some intimately personal, rigidly military and dispassionately legal aspects surrounding the issue, they deliberately avoid elaborating on the most unpleasant and painful medical effects of such infections entirely. Having made the point that venereal diseases were a relatively safe way out of the war is sufficient for them.

Showing the medical implications of venereal diseases is left to Frey's central character, Christian Funk, in *Die Pflasterkästen*. Although Frey's novel takes up the issue in the same context as Plievier and Köppen, specifically the self-infliction with some form of venereal disease by soldiers as a means to escape the war, due to the perspective of his protagonist as a stretcher-bearer who sees the reality of war, the narrative can dwell extensively on the medical consequences for the individuals concerned.⁹

In the light of the examples examined so far, it is necessary to point out that the reality of the medical aspects surrounding venereal diseases are much more complicated than is feasible to be shown in novels. They certainly go beyond the rather conventional literary image of a sailor deliberately, and somewhat mechanically, infecting himself with venereal diseases to escape the war for a certain spell of time, or the semi-comical presentation of an infected gunner at a court martial.

In the First World War all the known forms of venereal disease surfaced. Gonorrhoea was, by far, the most common and widespread of them. It is an inflammatory disease, which affects especially the mucous membrane of the urethra in the male and that of the vagina in the female, but spreading to other parts of the body, as well. Gonorrhoea is directly contagious from another person already suffering in this manner, usually by sexual intercourse, but occasionally it is conveyed by the discharge on sponges, towels, or clothing. After an incubation period of usually three days a man develops pain and discharge of pus from the urethra. If not treated at that stage there may be an obstruction of the flow of urine. Later complications include arthritis and infection of the eyes. Syphilis is a contagious disease of slow development and proceeding in three different stages. Characteristic for the first stage, about a week after the infection, is the chancre, a hard small lump that may break down to form an ulcer at the site of the entry. The second stage is marked by medical symptoms resembling those of other infectious diseases. The third and final stage affects basically every organ in the body and can lead to severe damage to the nervous system. Chancroid, or soft sore, is a less serious form of venereal disease, causing enlargement of the lymph nodes in the groin

and thickening and sometimes ulceration of the surrounding skin; in some cases there is a general illness with fever.⁹

In spite of comprehensive and effective supervision a soldier could catch any form of venereal disease from having sexual intercourse in a military brothel or, of course, anywhere else. Furthermore, the diseases need not all be necessarily sexually transmitted, but could be self-inflicted, as in the examples already provided. In the war education of the combatants concerning physical cleanliness and personal hygiene coupled with regular medical examinations, as well as the institutionalization of prostitution, became the cornerstones in the continuous effort to keep the threat of venereal diseases at bay. Unfortunately, all these measures, most of them rather embarrassing, aimed exclusively at protecting the common soldiers from contracting any form of venereal disease, while the officer corps remained strangely exempt.

Schwanzparade, 'short-arm inspection', was as apt and concise a definition of the most popular prophylactic exercise in the field as it was poignant. One participant remembered it as a strange kind of procedure taking place in regular intervals and meaning that an entire military unit, consisting of up to several hundred soldiers, was ordered to stand to attention in an open parade ground, or a piece of land designated for the event, more or less accessible to the general public, trousers down, penis in hand, exposed to the inclemency of the weather and occasionally accompanied by the unambiguous observations of the civilian population, their comrades-in-arms, the nurses, and, of course, the medical practitioners:

Am nächsten Morgen war Exerzieren hinter den Schlackenhalde. Danach

war 'Schwanzparade'. [...] Der Stabsarzt wurde grob, wenn einer beim Antreten seine Sache nicht richtig machte. Der Sanitätsunteroffizier schnauzte: 'Vorhaut besser zurück. Es geht doch sonst so gut!' [...] Es wurde auch bei der Visitation wie bei den vielen anderen, die ich mitmachte, kein Mann gefunden, der krank war. Krank wurde ja wohl mancher, aber sie meldeten sich alle rechtzeitig.'¹⁰

The Schwanzparade was as simple a method of checking the soldiers' state of genital health as it was effective. That it was necessary to execute it on more or less regular occasions is an indication that the threat of venereal diseases was indeed widespread and receiving the attention it merited. The intervals for the Schwanzparade in the few Weimar war accounts which mention the procedure range from one week to one month.¹¹ Two invaluable aspects of the Schwanzparade were its simplicity and effectiveness. It could be performed anywhere, at any time and with a great number of soldiers being examined relatively quickly. It goes without saying that the very nature of the procedure was oblivious to the most personal and intimate feelings of the individual; however, in this case the end justified the means, because, due to their constitution, venereal diseases could easily and instantly be spotted, even by less experienced medical practitioners, and dealt with before they could cause any serious damage.

As the source quoted above indicates, a possible infection which was not disclosed by a soldier in time for proper treatment posed a serious dilemma not only for the practitioners and the patients, but also for the military jurisdiction. The dilemma was delicately obvious. Soldiers could easily infect themselves with any form of venereal disease for the simple desire of wanting to escape the fighting at the front and the possible threat of having to die an untimely death for as long a period as it took to deal with the condition. If the judiciary allowed those

soldiers who had deliberately infected themselves to go scot-free, many a soldier would naturally have been tempted to emulate his already infected comrade's-in-arms actions, also to escape the unpleasant experience of war. On the other hand, if the army decided to prosecute those soldiers who had been infected incidentally by illegal, or, indeed, permitted sexual intercourse, they might have refused to disclose the fact that they were infected, as well as the actual source of their infection. Legislation, therefore, aimed at disclosing the source of infection, rather than prosecuting the infected person. The judiciary was only allowed to prosecute those soldiers who concealed the fact that they had been infected.¹²

The efforts to contain and combat the threat of venereal diseases received a welcome boost with the decision to establish military brothels at 'appropriate locations' in the communication zone. They were to be run and supervised by the army's own medical service. There were two different kinds of military brothels, one for officers only, and the other for NCO's and the common soldiers. A code of strict prophylactic measures everybody had to adhere to regulated the course of the day. In the territories occupied by the Germans it was customary to hire prostitutes amongst the civilian population, or press some of those women into service who had stayed after the invasion. But back in Germany prostitution remained a fiercely contested issue. Forced underground there it blossomed, but its illegality caused a great deal of unnecessary pain and suffering for thousands of men and women alike.

Whatever the attitudes towards them, there can be no doubt that the decision to establish brothels in the communication zone literally relieved the tensions that had been accumulating within all the armies

ever since the outbreak of the war and achieved much in limiting the spread of venereal diseases. The measures also succeeded in preventing soldiers from committing acts of indecency towards and rape of women in the hinterland, which, of course, took place, but were vehemently denied, or, where that was not possible, euphemistically paraphrased by nationalist war fiction:

Wenn wirklich der Soldat, der seit Monaten an der Front kämpft, der für Monate keinen Urlaub in Aussicht hat, der vielleicht beim nächsten Einsatz sein Leben hingibt, in übermäßiger Erregtheit der Nerven und Sinne, eine ihm sich bietende Gelegenheit zur Liebe ausnützt, so ist dies alles nur begreiflich. [...] Das kann allerdings nur der verstehen, der Fronterleben und Fronterlebnisse hinter sich hat.¹³

Both German and Allied war literature, written during the war, immediately afterwards, or even a decade or more later, is, however, as embarrassingly economical on providing much information about military brothels as it is on dealing with venereal diseases. Very few novelists make use of the motif of an individual, or groups of soldiers visiting such an establishment, as a means of showing the various problem surrounding sexually transmitted diseases during the conflict. Remarque, characteristically in *Der Weg zurück*, (pp.224-27) which is, strictly speaking not a war novel as such, as it focusses on the period immediately following the end of the war when the fundamental changes in sexual attitudes had already taken place, has his central figure reflect on his first, and seemingly last ever, visit to a brothel.¹⁴ Having joined up straight from school he and most of his peers had never had an opportunity to go out with girls, let alone experience sexual relationships, and were full of juvenile and romantic notions about affection, love and sex. The decision by Remarque's narrator to visit a

brothel in the first place is an imminent offensive. Life expectancy is short, the fate of the individual uncertain, everybody can be dead by tomorrow. He has never been to a brothel before, nor ever made love to a woman. The brothel, about an hour's walk behind the front, is presented as a very busy place, crowded with a huge number of soldiers desperate for a little bit of pleasure before being sent to almost certain death. The customers are compelled to queue for hours, receive some kind of inoculation, pay their dues and are allowed to spend not more than ten minutes with a prostitute. The women are referred to as Kühe, and there is no choice for the soldiers; they have to make do with the women 'available'. The narrator feels nauseated and sickened by the atmosphere of sweat and smell of so many bodies and admits that his reason for being there is curiosity rather than carnal desire or a sexual urge and that he has had enough of it all already. He wants to leave yet is afraid of becoming the laughing stock of his equally immature and sexually inexperienced companions, who apparently know exactly what they want and have no second thoughts about it. Eventually it is his turn to enter the prostitute's room, the atmosphere of which resembles very much that of a dressing station with the smell of disinfectant and sweat dominating. The prostitute, realizing the inexperience of her young customer, a point that is repeatedly stressed in the episode, tries to stimulate him, yet in vain. No sexual intercourse takes place. Instead, the narrator leaves the money on the table and the brothel altogether, totally disillusioned with the reality inside and feeling sorry for the old Armeenatratze, who has to endure hundreds of bodies each day. The sudden awareness of the young man that all the holy ideals of love and romance, as described in many of the books he read, and which he had

held so highly have been brutally destroyed by the war at that moment, is obvious. He pretends to have had a good time, nevertheless, when asked by his peers about his experience. This is as honest an account as it is realistic, because it is full of issues totally incompatible with a man's behaviour at the time. How many youngsters shared that experience is unclear, but there must have been tens of thousands in the German army alone. It remains a fact, nevertheless, that this account is unusual, both in the point of view it takes, and its presentation amongst all the Weimar novels examined. Its symbolic value lies precisely in the showing of the inhuman and negative effects of the war on a generation of male adolescents who were brutally compelled to adapt to new circumstances and challenges which were incompatible with the traditional values of their upbringing in a society that preferred to ignore them, rather than deal with them in an appropriate and reasonable manner.

In *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Bäumer and some of his friends have a brief sexual encounter with three French women offering sex in exchange for food. (pp.146-53) That passage is remarkable, since it is here that Bäumer reveals his innermost private thoughts and views about love and speaks of his desires and emotions. His views seem to represent those of a whole generation which is being destroyed by the war. They have a touch of innocence and romance about them that stands in sharp contrast to the way the reality of war was perceived by those combatants who relied on army brothels for the satisfaction of their carnal desires. The use of the motif of two human beings, a man and a woman, coming together to indulge in the most elementary practice there is, is reminiscent of the image in Zweig's *Erziehung vor Verdun*,¹⁵ but neither novel makes a

reference to the potential risks of sexual intercourse or venereal diseases. Of course, such rendezvous were a highly illegal affair. All soldiers were strictly prohibited from engaging in unsupervised sexual intercourse with women, never mind an enemy alien, save the officially appointed prostitutes in the army brothels. The humanistic approach taken by both novelists in these instances only underlines the difficulty of the younger generation, dragged into the war by forces beyond their control, to adapt to circumstances which went beyond their naive views and the confinements of a sheltered middle-class existence. The experience of the reality of a brothel behind the front was a disgusting and shocking experience for those youngsters and another symbol of war utterly destroying all the holy ideals and values they were brought up to believe in.

Of the hundreds of personal accounts, letters, narratives and novels examined, as might be expected, only a handful make any reference to a brothel from the customers' point of view. As far as personal writings are concerned this is largely due to the recipients, e.g. mothers, girlfriends or close relatives. There was also the authors' fears of becoming ostracized by a society whose attitudes concerning sexual permissiveness were still largely those of the nineteenth century. These references are not pleasant reading by any standards. The image of army brothels in Weimar war literature generally is one of busy places with hundreds of soldiers waiting to be served by just a few women. The supervisors with their sober military manners appear anything but sympathetic characters, the medical staff monotonously issue contraceptive devices and habitually instruct troops about methods to prevent infection with sexually transmittable diseases in a mechanical

manner. The prostitutes are of a generally unattractive appearance and the all-prevailing smell of disinfectants, detergents and contraceptive devices is reminiscent of a Feldlazarett. Regulations regarding time spent with a prostitute and sexual intercourse have to be strictly observed, too. Instead of love the customers receive a mechanical service performed by an indifferent part of the military machine. For all that, the overall atmosphere inside a brothel in those accounts is reminiscent of a factory. The descriptions are symbolic for the massive inhumanity of war. Mechanization of war has resulted in mechanization of love, the continuing process of dehumanization affecting both men and women. But although the war succeeded in penetrating and destroying the most intimate human desires and emotions rather effectively, it seems that it could not prevent the soldier hungry for some kind of love from frequenting an army brothel, in spite of the rather sickening circumstances. However, from the point of view of the customer the gloomy and negative mood of the accounts is understandable. If one assumes that their accounts are, by and large, factually accurate, the resemblance of most of the descriptions concerning the issue supports that line of arguing, that the soldiers were, indeed, justified in feeling that even when it came to satisfying the most natural human desire there is, they were treated anything but humanely; nor were the prostitutes. The following presentation is taken from the account of a soldier who had first-hand customer experience of an army brothel. Apart from being in line with similar reports by other customers, its resemblance to Remarque's fictional account in everything but the extensive personal and philosophical reflections is remarkable:

An anderen Morgen marschierten wir, fünfundzwanzig Mann stark, unter

Führung dreier Unteroffiziere nach dem halbzerschossenen Schlößchen Havremont, in dem das Feldbordell untergebracht war. Es herrschte ein ziemlich lebhafter Verkehr. [...] Im Untergeschoß mußten wir uns einzeln einem Sanitätsunteroffizier präsentieren, der jeden auf Geschlechtskrankheiten untersuchte und ihm ein Tube mit Schutzsalbe aushändigte. [...] Nachdem wir die Anweisung bekommen hatten, daß kein Weib länger als zehn Minuten in Anspruch genommen werden dürfe, mußten wir in einem Zimmer warten, und von Zeit zu Zeit erscholl der Ruf: 'Der Nächste!' Nach dreiviertelstündigem Warten kam die Reihe an mich. 'Zimmer Nummer sechs!' [...] Halb zittrig im Widerstreite der Gefühle klinkte ich die Tür auf. Ein häßlicher Geruch von Sublimat und Patschuli schlug mir entgegen.¹⁶

It is only natural that accounts by medical staff working in army brothels should focus mainly on the medical aspects of their work, which were almost entirely of a prophylactic nature. From the point of view of a medical orderly daily life in an army brothel was one of responsibility for the physical health of both prostitutes and customers, the appliance of prophylactic measures to both, medical supervision and the strict adherence to the comprehensively defined procedures of military sexual intercourse, irrespective of the circumstances. The following section from the memoirs of a medic who worked in a military brothel in the war, clearly reflects in the sober language of the medical staff the routine nature of these procedures:

Jeder Soldat also, der ins Bordell wollte, hatte beim Sanitäter sein Soldbuch vorzuzeigen. Name und Truppenteil wurden in eine Liste eingetragen, damit er seinem Truppenteil gemeldet werden konnte, wenn bei der Bordellinsassin, die er beehrt hatte, in den Tagen darauf eine Erkrankung festgestellt wurde. Das Verfahren war aber auch vorbeugend. Jeder Soldat hatte dem Sanitäter sein Geschlechtsteil zu zeigen, er wurde auf Krankheitserscheinungen untersucht und dann einer Behandlung mit Protargol und Vaseline unterzogen. So vorbereitet ging der Soldat ins Bordell. Kam er zurück hatte er in Gegenwart des Sanitäters zu urinieren, außerdem bekam er eine neue Protargol-Binspritzung.¹⁷

Unlike any other, this account gives an indication of the amount of trouble a soldier had to undergo to indulge in sexual activities. Of

course, all these measures were designed for his own good and health but they must have put off many a soldier from the idea of visiting a brothel altogether. Also, the German military authorities insisted on these complicated bureaucratic measures to be sustained as they expected a lot of so-called Dienstbeschädigungsansprüche, any bodily harm done to a soldier during active service, for which he was to be financially compensated, and which had to be kept to a minimum. Interestingly, damage caused by venereal diseases was not to be compensated for. These reports also aimed at identifying any possible source of venereal disease and take the appropriate steps to protect the civilian population at home.

But however strict the supervision and however meticulous the system of prophylactic procedures, the medical staff in any such establishment were aware that the danger of infection could never entirely be ruled out:

Praktisch lagen die Dinge so, daß etwa der erste Soldat, der nachmittags um 4 Uhr nach Öffnung des Mannschaftsbordells bei einem Bordellmädchen war, geschlechtskrank sein konnte. Dann bestand die Möglichkeit, daß alle weiteren Soldaten, die am selben Nachmittage zu demselben Mädchen gingen, sich ansteckten.¹⁸

Unfortunately, but not unsurprisingly, it seems that no prostitute working in a brothel during the First World War ever wrote an account of her experiences inside such an establishment. This is all the more regrettable as the First World War, more than any other war in modern history, has been examined and looked at by thousands of authors, male and female, from just as many possible perspectives, dealing with any conceivable aspect of it, even considering the war experiences of animals doing military service. It is by no means coincidental that the

few accounts by men which mention the lot of the military prostitutes, unequivocally agree that only a very small number of women offered sexual services to an enormous number of men.

Historically, that fact constituted a grave problem as it facilitated the spreading of venereal diseases considerably. Apart from inoculating soldiers and handing out contraceptive devices, such as condoms, doctors sometimes decided to shut down brothels altogether. Strict guidelines for the recruitment and working conditions of prostitutes were also introduced:

Es wurde in den besetzten Gebieten befohlen, daß jede 'Frauensperson', die die Absicht habe, 'sich der gewerbsmäßigen Unzucht zu widmen', dies nur in bordellartigen Wohngelegenheiten tun dürfe.'²

It goes without saying that these orders did nothing at all to prevent illegal prostitution, and therefore sexually transmitted diseases, from spreading in the occupied territories.

Casual and disorganized prostitution in the communication zone was the most dangerous form of sexual permissiveness there was. Indulging in it was illegal as it enabled venereal diseases to spread not only in the trenches and behind the front line but also in the hinterland and at home where military guidelines could not reach and supervision was virtually impossible to maintain. Johannsen's *Vier von der Infanterie*, while taking these aspects into account, adds another interesting point to the discussion, insinuating that, apart from venereal diseases, there were other social long-term effects of sexual permissiveness for the customer, the prostitute and possible undesired by-products as a result of that kind of illegal love. The following quotation is taken from a

discussion between a young French woman and the Student, one of the four central characters of the story. The woman has just told the Student that sex is impossible because: 'Maschin Kapout' - she is sexually damaged:

'Ein großes Unglück ist das.' 'Das mit der Schießerei?'
'Nein, das andere.' 'Viele Kinder laßt ihr uns hier, was werden unsere Männer sagen, wenn sie heinkommen?' 'Wird die große Nation nicht schlechter durch', sagte er ärgerlich. 'Wer bezahlt, mein Herr?' macht sie die Gebärde des Bezahlens. 'Viele bezahlen mit ihrer Gesundheit, mein Fräulein, und liegen in den Lazaretten.'
(*Infanterie ...*, p.11)

In his *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, Hirschfeld reports that some women living in the occupied territories devastated by the conflict to a great extent, were often forced to prostitute themselves, mainly to feed themselves and their children. In this struggle between different peoples the women were compelled to fight their very own war simply to survive. It is, however, evident from a number of personal accounts, medical examinations and legal reports, which present a very different picture of the reality of war in that respect, that the German soldiers did not and, in fact, were unable to understand the situation of the women who had stayed in the occupied territories. The soldiers looked at the war from their own personal point of view, trying to survive for as long and as best they could, taking with them everything offered to them along the way, including women. The impetus for having sex with the enemy, if ever any were needed, was there in abundance. And compared to the relatively expensive and tedious experience at an army brothel (the army charged RM 3.- for a visit of ten minutes, which constituted one-fifth of the monthly pay of an ordinary soldier), sex could be far more easily had right behind the front for as little as a piece of bread

and without all the troublesome medical procedures in an army brothel. To the author of the following passage, prostitution seemed a massive chain reaction, instigated by hunger, maintained by the desire of the women to survive and fired by their appetite for a little piece of luxury:

Man weiß, wie weh Hunger tut. So verkuppeln sich Judennädchen um Tag zu Tag um ein Stück Brot. [...] Eine Schwester zwang die zweite zum gleichen Erwerbe. Mütter mit einer großen Kinderschar würgte die Not zum Laster. Frierende gaben den Leib der Wollust hin für Kleider, Schuhe und Tand. Wäscherinnen verdienten zu wenig bei ihrem Erwerbe und gaben für ein Stück Seife den Leib.²⁰

Incidentally, it appears from some accounts that while hunger most certainly was the main incentive for women in the occupied territories to engage in prostitution, the absence of marital sexual intercourse was the main stimulant for the women in Germany to prostitute themselves with soldiers. The natural drive for sexual intercourse, prevalent in both sexes at any time, but even more so in wartime when both sexes are deprived of each others company for long periods of time, demanded action, and just like the men in the trenches the women at home tried to remedy this sorry state of their sexual affairs by any means. Sometimes their endeavours caused a great deal of embarrassment; they also revealed the extent of hypocrisy surrounding sexual permissiveness and its potentially disastrous and painful side-effects. The Catholic military chaplain Benedict Kreutz, on a visit to a town in the Rhine province in July 1915, noted in his diary:

Vorgestern erzählte mir Polizei-Antmann Dr. Schlemmer, daß bei einer Nachtpatrouille in einem Vorort hier (ausgeführt durch 100 Mann) nicht ein einziges Haus gefunden wurde, wo nicht wenigstens eine Frau oder Braut, deren Mann im Krieg war, einen Armierungssoldaten als Ersatz bei sich schlafen hatte; wenn's nicht im I. Stock [war], dann war's im II. Dr. Schlemmer hält die

verheirateten Frauen für Verführer im großen Stil hier.²¹

without making any reference to sexually transmitted diseases.

To combat the spreading of venereal diseases at the front, and to prevent soldiers from inflicting themselves with contaminated discharge in order to escape the war for a short spell, some military doctors had initially insisted on treating infected soldiers within their own combat units. That idea was, however, rejected on the basis that other soldiers might be tempted to infect themselves with the malignant discharge of their comrades-in-arms. Subsequently, it was decided to concentrate on, and formally intern, infected soldiers in specially designated Seuchenlazarette, which the ordinary soldiers called Ritterburgen. These were established in isolated spots in the communication zone, their locations known only to the authorities, the members of staff and the patients, for obvious reasons. Here dermatologists and virologists did their best to treat the patients properly. Hirschfeld's examinations of Weimar war literature under that aspect reveal that if the accounts of treating the ordinary soldiers are anything to go by, the whole affair must have been an utterly unpleasant experience for the patients:

Es gehört keine überschwengliche Phantasie dazu, sich eine Vorstellung von der Behandlung gemeiner Soldaten in diesen Ritterburgen zu machen. War doch den Ärzten gewöhnlich kein Mittel zu drastisch, wenn es nur den Heilungsprozeß zu beschleunigen versprach. Dem Patienten wurden, wie Wandt schreibt, 'mit der gefürchteten Spritze die Flötentöne beigebracht. Alltäglich, nach Strich und Faden, so daß er die Engel im Himmel pfeifen hörte.'²²

Having been infected with some form of venereal disease could sometimes prove costly to a soldier, especially when he did not indicate the condition in time for the specialists to remedy it. Naturally some

soldiers kept quiet about their condition deliberately to escape the war, but there were others, for whom such an infection posed a serious social, or even worse, a religious embarrassment. Hoping that the symptoms would eventually disappear and leave the victims unharmed after all, did not materialize and many a soldier's health was ruined for the rest of his life. In his war memoirs Richert passed on what that could mean for a soldier:

Ein guter Kamerad, Unteroffizier Kurz, hatte auch ein Mädchen kennengelernt und sich bis über beide Ohren in sie verliebt. [...] Eines Tages erzählte mir Unteroffizier Kurz freudestrahlend, daß er das Ziel seiner Wünsche erreicht habe. [...] Zwei Tage später fühlte Kurz, daß er geschlechtskrank war. Er schämte sich, sich krank zu melden, und hoffte, daß ihn der Sanitätsoffizier heilen könne. Gerade das Gegenteil trat ein, sein Zustand wurde immer schlechter. Schließlich mußte er sich doch krank melden und kam ins Seuchenlazarett, von den Soldaten 'Ritterburg' genannt. Die Krankheit hatte ihm bereits das Blut verdorben, und zeitlebens hatte er die Folgen zu tragen. (*Beste Gelegenheit ...*, p.278f.)

While Richert reflected on what the negative long-term effects of an infection with venereal diseases meant for his comrade-in-arms, novelists like Remarque utilized these facts for their fiction. In the sequel to *Im Westen nichts Neues*, *Der Weg zurück*, sexually transmitted diseases are presented as a problematical medical matter with unpleasant long-term effects for their victims. Here the value of the character Ludwig Breyer is both literal and symbolic for the difficulties of many ex-soldiers to reintegrate into a post-war German society that wants to forget about the war. In this character there are symbolically united two irreconcilably different worlds, that of the past and that of the present. Breyer is a peer of Paul Bäumer's, both are part of a generation that went to war knowing nothing about life, least of all

venereal diseases, and though he was not killed in the war, it turns out, in the aftermath, that he has fallen victim to it, nevertheless:

'Haben Sie es im Felde bekommen?' fragt der Arzt. Ludwig nickt. 'Warum haben Sie es nicht gleich behandeln lassen?' 'Ich habe nicht gewußt, was es war. Man hat uns früher ja nie etwas von diesen Dingen gesagt. Es kam auch erst viel später und sah harmlos aus. Dann ging es von selbst wieder weg.' (*Weg zurück*, p.282)

Breuer is thus representative for a generation of men for whom the war is still not over yet. He neither is allowed, nor able to forget it, as he has the war, literally, still in his blood.²³

Even though there are only a handful of Weimar writers who make use of venereal diseases in their works, it is worth noting that they still differ in their literary presentation of them as a part of the war and as part of their literary intent. Plievier's *Des Kaisers Kulis* shows that sexually transmitted diseases were a legitimate and suitable means of escaping the war; Köppen's *Heeresbericht* accomplishes the same objective by providing an example of an infection with some malignant discharge. Neither author, however, concerns himself with showing the ensuing short-, medium-, or long-term medical implications on those affected. As a stretcher-bearer Frey's central figure, Christian Funk, comes face-to-face with infected soldiers and while he, too, regards venereal diseases as a suitable means to escape the war, albeit for a relatively short time, his perspective focuses rather on their dangerous and painful short- and medium-term medical implications for their victims.

Remarque differs from his colleagues in both his approach and attitude, for he utilizes distinctly sexually transmitted diseases in a completely different fashion. That they emerge in *Der Weg zurück*, a

novel that focuses mainly on the years *following* the ceasefire is an interesting reflection on the changes concerning sexual permissiveness that did take place in Europe after the war; moreover, the novel is one of the few Weimar works which also take account of the long-term implications of venereal diseases, illustrating how they succeed in stripping their victims of their dignity even long after the conflict itself is over.

NOTES

¹ Lloyd E.B. Wyndham, *A Hundred Years of Medicine* (London: Duckworth, 1968), p.168. Bance, in his essay 'Sexuality, Gender', p.406, states that the sexual climate in the years preceding the war was: 'much more relaxed in Germany than in Britain - as it was in mainland Europe generally.' This factor certainly facilitated the rapid spread of venereal diseases.

² To Bance the effects of the outbreak of the First World War do not seem to have been as clear-cut as that. In 'Sexuality, Gender', p.408, he remarks: 'When the war did break out, its effect was, in two paradoxically different ways, a regressive one: a notion of cleansing, purifying and transfiguration was abroad, contrasting with (at least a perception of) a saturnalia of sexual licence.'

³ Compare Bance's analysis in 'Sexuality, Gender', p.412.

⁴ Holmes, *Firing Line*, pp.95-96.

⁵ Having been unable to obtain some of the works cited in the preceding chapter, I have had to rely for references from these works on Magnus Hirschfeld's and Andreas Gaspar's *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, vols I and II, making the use of cross-references inevitable. These have been noted correspondingly. This also applies, albeit to a very limited extent indeed, to the *literary criticism* relevant to the presentation and effects of venereal diseases in the few novels dealing with them, as there are virtually no references to the problem in any of the major literary analysis concerned; see on the point in question.

⁶ Plievier, *Kulis*, pp.176-84. In 'Sexuality, Gender', p.415, Bance quotes an example from Graves' *Good-bye*, who states explicitly that

venereal diseases saved many young men from being killed in battle. In the few accounts that mention them, venereal diseases overwhelmingly symbolize a way out of the war, if only for a short time.

⁷ Köppen, *Heeresbericht*, pp.230-31.

⁸ Frey, *Die Pflasterkästen*, pp.161-62.

⁹ For further medical reference to venereal diseases see Thomson, *Black's Medical Dictionary*, p.383; p.809; and Peter Wingate, *The Penguin Medical Encyclopedia*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p.93; p.186; pp.407-08.

¹⁰ Cited from Wilhelm Michael, *Infanterist Perhobstler* (Berlin: Rembrandt, undated), unpaginated, in Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, I, p.227. For further literary and photographic references to the Schwanzparade see C. Jaeckel's essay, 'Geschlechtskrankheiten', in *Lehrbuch der Militärhygiene*, edd. A. Waldmann and W. Hoffmann (Berlin: Springer, 1936), pp.574-85, and W. von Drigalski, 'Geschlechtskrankheiten', in *Handbuch der ärztlichen Erfahrungen im Weltkriege 1914-1918*, ed. O. von Schjening, 11 vols (Leipzig: Barth, 1922), VII, pp.585-609.

¹¹ In Plievier's *Kulis*, p.112, the Schwanzparade is a monthly affair. However, this is a novel making the point, nevertheless, that a medical check-up of the genitals took place regularly. Richert, in *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.279, gives an interval of just one week. Compare Bance's comments on the 'short-arm inspection' in 'Sexuality, Gender', pp.412-13. There is a reference to the practice of the 'short-arm inspection' in the British forces in John Brophy and Eric Partridge, *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier 1914 - 1918* (London: Scholaris, 1930), p.161.

¹² Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, I, p.229.

¹³ Klietmann, *Contra Remarque - Im Westen wohl was Neues*, p.15.

¹⁴ It may be worth pointing out here that the central figure in the sequel to *Im Westen nichts Neues*, is not Paul Bäumer, as he is killed in 1918. Murdoch, in 'Hinter die Kulissen sehen', Note 13, p.74, argues, however, that style and background of the sequel's narrator are virtually identical to that of Bäumer's and that he is, therefore, effectively the same narrator.

¹⁵ Zweig, *Erziehung*, pp.334-35.

¹⁶ Hans Otto Hehnel, *Eros im Stacheldraht* (Leipzig and Lindenau: Freidenker Verlag, 1926), p.14, in Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, I, pp.320-21.

¹⁷ M.N., 'R.E.I.K. 'S.M. Bordell Mitau' Erinnerungen eines Landstürmers', *Kulturwille*, 7/8 (1929), p.143, in Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, I, p.322.

¹⁸ M.N., 'R.E.I.K. 'S.M. Bordell Mitau' Erinnerungen', p.143, in Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, I, p.322.

¹⁹ M.N., 'R.E.I.K. a.a.O.', p.142, in Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, I, p.330.

²⁰ Wandt, 'a.a.O.', pp.155-56, in Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, I, p.330.

²¹ Kreutz, *Kriegstagebuch*, p.32.

²² Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, I, p.239. In Brophy and Partridge, *Songs and Slang*, p.162, references are made to special hospitals at the base for soldiers with severe conditions who had inflicted wounds upon themselves - and to the motif in some English writings (A. P. Herbert and A. D. Gristwood).

²³ Compare Ernst Toller's, *Hinkemann*, ed. Wolfgang Frühwald (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1971), which features a similarly symbolic figure of a man for whom the war will never be over since he has been emasculated by a bullet making him unable to cope with life in post-war Germany. Clearly, Toller's choice of the figure of Hinkemann is symbolic for the 'emasculatation' of the whole of the German people in the war and beyond it. Bance, in 'Sexuality, Gender', p.417, comments on the nationalist war writers, especially E. E. Dwinger's diary *Die Armee hinter Stacheldraht* (1929), and their use of this theme in their works: 'to fight back against Germany's un-manning or emasculation, the worst conceivable degradation imposed by its enemies upon the vanquished nation (which has given up its best men for lost): that is to say, the degeneracy which is summed up in the dis-armed and therefore 'feminized' nation.'

SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS

No examination of the medical aspects in Weimar war prose would be complete without reviewing the self-infliction of wounds and their reception by the authors. It has already been noted in the preceding chapter that the majority of Weimar war writers completely fail to discuss, let alone mention, the problems caused by venereal diseases in their accounts. The self-infliction of wounds, in many cases comparable to or even involving venereal diseases, has experienced similar literary neglect. To Junger, for example, it seems unthinkable that both issues should have posed a problem at all, and they are conspicuously absent from his many war accounts. Other authors, like Renn, in *Krieg*, for example, prefer to concentrate on the sober description of fighting and its effects and results on the soldiers involved and also remain strangely oblivious to the issue. Others again, who look at the war from the home front, inevitably confine themselves to a much narrower spectrum, focussing almost exclusively on their own private concerns, thereby neglecting to provide the audience with a view on the more martial aspects of the conflict. However, they manage to deal with the issue at the heart of this chapter in their own peculiar way. Glaeser's *Jahrgang 1902*, which takes a child's point of view of the war and repeatedly states that war is a matter entirely for the adults, is a fine example of how those adults at home react to it, once directly affected. While in public loudly endorsing the government's official position concerning the war effort, when they are about to be drafted for military service themselves, the men, who are, of course, aware of

what war really does to people, try anything to avoid being drafted and are anxious to leave no stone unturned to achieve the desired result.

While the following episode does not strictly refer to the self-infliction of wounds, it is still an indication of the desperation of some civilians to try to remain just that and escape the war altogether, a feeling that was apparently just as popular at home as in the trenches:

In unserer Stadt häuften sich die Musterungen. Die wenigen Männer unter fünfzig, die noch da waren, wurden fast monatlich von einem Stabsarzt im Rathaus untersucht. [...] Sie setzten alles daran, ihn zu bemogeln. Leute, die genug Geld hatten, ließen sich von einer medizinischen Kapazität ernste Krankheiten attestieren, sie wurden plötzlich kurzsichtig, asthmatisch oder bekamen periodische Herzschwächen, ja ein Fabrikant ruhte nicht eher, als bis er auf Grund einiger Tobsuchtsanfälle, in denen er das Mobiliar seines Salons zerschlug, in eine Heilanstalt überführt wurde. [...] Leute, die nicht viel Geld hatten, verfielen auf andere Kniffe. Sie rannten vor der Musterung dreimal im Galopp die Treppe ... hoch, bis ihr Herzschlag seine normale Stetigkeit verlor, sie unterzogen sich methodisch heimlichen Hungerkuren, und als auch dies nicht mehr verding, begannen die Verzweifeltsten unter ihnen, zu stehen. Sie taten alles, daß sie dabei erwischt wurden, denn das Gefängnis schützte sie vorläufig noch vor dem Krieg. (Jahrgang 1902, p.159)

Representative of the attitudes of soldiers with a similar intent is Hauptmann Niggel, a marginal character in Zweig's *Erziehung vor Verdun*; he is seemingly enthusiastic about, and supportive of the war in public and amongst his fellow officer friends, as long as he remains posted in the relative security of the communication zone; but when his unit is posted to Fort Douaumont at the request of Eberhard Kroysing, the brother of the dead Christoph whose death Niggel helped to cover up, his true intentions become evident; he would like to keep out of the war if he could and pulls all kinds of strings to that end. (pp.90-92) So, too, would the hero of Jaroslav Hašek's narrative, translated as *Die*

Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk während des Weltkrieges, who perpetuates that attitude further still. Schwejk, the central figure of this celebrated First World War novel, is the personification of the intrinsically unwilling soldier who has no desire to be dragged deeper into the war than he has been already. 'Better a live coward than a dead hero', is the motto he lives by; using his wit continuously to manipulate his superiors and comrades-in-arms, he succeeds in escaping the worst effects of the war, while all around him friends and foes alike suffer.²

One remarkable aspect, though also understandable, of course, since it is hard to detect, of the self-infliction of actual wounds is that wherever and whenever it occurs in German war literature, it is almost exclusively connected with venereal diseases. Official military statistics on the issue indicate that venereal conditions were indeed the main source of the problem, instrumental in at least half of all the cases:

Eine überaus große Rolle bei den Selbstbeschädigungen spielten auch die ... venerischen Infektionen. Bei den Verhältnissen, die überall hinter der Front, im Etappenraum, herrschten, war es ziemlich leicht, eine Infektion dieser Art zu erwischen, und so machte man denn von dieser Möglichkeit ausgiebig Gebrauch. Allerdings war diese Art der Selbstverstümmelung ... keineswegs ungefährlich. Die Behandlung war im allgemeinen und bei allen Heeren unbarmherzlich und begann nicht selten ... mit einer empfindlichen, vom militärischen Standpunkt aus nicht ganz unberechtigten Strafe wegen Selbstverstümmelung. Doch nützte auch dies wenig und die Bedeutung der zum Selbstschädigungszweck erworbenen Geschlechtskrankheiten nahm im Laufe des Krieges mehr zu als ab.³

There were, of course, many more and different ways for a soldier to cause himself physical harm much more effectively. Unfortunately, that side of the matter has also been strangely neglected by Weimar war literature. What motivated the few writers that did deal with the

self-infliction of wounds in connection with the venereal diseases, rather than the whole range of applied examples of self-inflicted wounds provided by history is a matter for conjecture. Obviously, the venereal diseases were less identifiable as self-inflicted; a second reason being the desire of most of the combatants to avoid the stigma of being branded a coward which was certainly less desirable than that of being a lecher, oblivious to the moral standards of the time. Still, the 'disease' motif is an interesting one, especially in the pacifist novels where war equals disease,⁴ and yet, as this study will show, some pacifist novels also clearly make the point that disease is one way out of the war; there it is regarded as the lesser of the two evils by the characters in question, as is, for example, a jail sentence for the self-infliction of wounds, or, indeed, any other offence.

Military law manuals of the First World War show that all armies took a tough stand on deserters, malingerers, and those who aided their comrades-in-arms to these ends, whatever their motivation or reasons for inflicting wounds. Military legislation on disgraceful conduct, of which the self-infliction of wounds formed a sizeable proportion, covered any conceivable aspect of misconduct as comprehensively as possible. The 1918 edition of the German *Militärstrafgesetzbuch* may serve as an example here:

§81. Wer sich vorsätzlich durch Selbstverstümmelung oder auf andere Weise zur Erfüllung seiner gesetzlichen oder der von ihm übernommenen Verpflichtung zum Dienste untauglich macht oder durch einen anderen untauglich machen läßt, wird mit Gefängnis von einem Jahre bis zu fünf Jahren bestraft; zugleich ist auf Versetzung in die zweite Klasse des Soldatenstandes zu erkennen.

Wird durch die Handlung die Unfähigkeit zu Arbeiten für militärische Zwecke verursacht, so ist die an sich verwirkte Gefängnisstrafe um die Dauer von drei Monaten bis zu einem Jahr zu erhöhen; zugleich ist auf Entfernung aus dem Heer oder der Marine zu erkennen.

Der Versuch ist strafbar.⁵

From these paragraphs it follows that German soldiers who had contracted some form of sexually transmitted disease could not be charged with feigning or malingering. As has been indicated, venereal diseases were widespread, both in the trenches and especially in the communication zone. It was thus anything but difficult for a soldier to obtain some form of a malignant discharge, for example from an already infected comrade, to infect himself subsequently. His chances of going scot-free, even if the true nature of the offence was discovered at a later date, were very good, indeed, the dilemma for the members of the court martial often being the lack of any convincing evidence regarding the accidental, or intentional, circumstances of the cause of the condition. Koppen's *Heeresbericht*, which uses the procedures of the court martialling of a German soldier who is accused of infecting himself with gonorrhoea, thereby rendering himself unfit for duty, has already been referred to in the preceding chapter. In the course of the proceedings it turns out that the gunner Rodnik did buy a quantity of malignant discharge from an already infected soldier and so did several other of his comrades-in-arms. No mention is, incidentally, made of the motivation of the accused; it is left to the audience to suspect that Rodnik had had enough of the war and saw in the means of the infected pus a convenient, certainly effective and legally incontrovertible way out of the war. The facts having been established and the charges maintained, it is significant that the outcome of the trial in this instance is left open by the novelist. This literary technique points to

the difficulties the issue raised for all persons involved, from the accused to the judges.

Frey, in *Die Pflasterkästen* also takes an interest in the matter, albeit from a slightly different angle. There Funk has hearsay knowledge of the court-martialling of soldiers trying to contract a form of venereal disease to escape the war. The case chosen by Frey strongly resembles that of Köppen's, but it is unlikely that the latter plagiarized from the former, although his novel was published a year later, as both authors had first-hand experience of the war themselves. Rather, it is an indication that soldiers being court-martialled for contracting venereal diseases was a fairly typical occurrence in the war. Funk hears, and duly reports, about one private Köbisch who has also infected himself with gonorrhoea. Having been in the line for several weeks without a break he is unlikely to have contracted the condition through sexual intercourse with a prostitute or any other woman. As a result of the court martial it turns out that he had bought some infected pus from a soldier in his unit, who himself had contracted the condition in a brothel while on leave in Germany. Subsequently, several other cases of infection, all emanating from the same source, are discovered. Although they will be dealt with by the judicial system of the army later on, for the time being these soldiers have achieved what they strove for: they are out of the danger zone and have escaped the immediate impact of the war.

Unlike Reisinger, who, due to his position in a combat unit deals with the legal aspects of the self-infliction of wounds directly, Funk looks at the issue from the point of view of the medically educated soldier closely behind the front. He is opposed to the war and certainly

sympathizes with those soldiers who want to escape it, either temporarily, or for good. But his description of the various means of producing certain medical conditions not dissimilar to venereal disease present a chilling account of a part of the reality of the war that many Weimar authors preferred to ignore:

Beliebt ist auch die Erzeugung des Verdachts auf frische Lues. Man gewinnt das Krankheitsbild durch reizende Beeinflussung. Es hat sich von den Lazaretten zur Truppe herumgesprochen, welche Praxis zu bevorzugen ist. Man legt eine Sublimatpastille zwischen Vorhaut und Eichel. Man hat höllische Schmerzen auszuhalten, aber es gibt doch bald eine hübsche Entzündung, die den Truppenarzt schleunigst veranlaßt, diesen des Primäreffekts Verdächtigen ins Hinterland abzuschicken. [...] Man kommt auf alle Fälle von der Front, man gewinnt Zeit. [...] Mit den wirksamen Tabletten wird heimlicher Handel getrieben; wo man sie stehlen, kaufen, aus der Heimat sich schicken lassen kann, da tut man es. (*Pflasterkästen*, p.161f.)

Rather harmless, in contrast, seem the endeavours of V.A.D.'s, women ambulance-drivers attached to the British Red Cross in France, in Helen Zenna Smith's *'Not so Quiet'*. The women, mainly from a middle- or upper-class background, suffer all the hardships experienced by most other war participants: poor living conditions, an insufficient diet, long working hours, almost exclusively at night, and the brutal and random sanctions of their camp commander, an aspect which is reflected in the title of the German translation of the work, *Mrs Biest pfeift*. The reality of the war, visible in the enormous number of casualties who suffer tremendous pain from horrible wounds and who soil the ambulances with blood, faeces and vomit night after night, take their toll on the women's mental and physical state of health. The discrepancy between the reality of the war behind the front line and the picture drawn by the propaganda at home is too substantial to be reconciled by the first person narrator. The use of an abundance of impressions of the

monotonous regularity of human beings suffering in a seemingly endless struggle make the outlook of the novel very pessimistic indeed. Most of the women, although absolutely dedicated to their work, are war-weary after only a few weeks of service and fulfilled by the desire to get a rest at any price. Although it would have been easy for most of the V.A.D.'s to contract a form of venereal disease via sexual intercourse with any number of men, in contrast to their male colleagues, immoral conduct initially still seemed to have posed a considerable barrier for the women to overcome. But there were other ways of escaping the war which were just as effective:

A driver developed a dangerous form of measles the other day and four of her friends crept into her hot flea-bag before it was disinfected, hoping to catch the germs and so get into hospital for a few week's sleep. (*Not so Quiet*, p.136)

Of course, unlike venereal diseases, measles is much more difficult to discover at a relatively early stage. The treatment can be very unpleasant, too, and, in extreme cases, measles can be fatal. While the characters, circumstances and images used by Smith may differ somewhat from those generally utilized by the Weimar novelists, images of a group of highly motivated women living and working dangerously close to the front are remote from Weimar war prose; but the motif of the war being a disease, and disease being a way out of it is one that her novel has in common with some Weimar anti-war fiction.

At this stage it is necessary to make some comments on the motivation of both the real and the fictional characters in German war prose for inflicting wounds on themselves. Although attitudes differ considerably, according to the individual point of view of the author

and his, or her, central figure, the sole motivation for a soldier to harm himself, thus rendering himself unfit for duty, was his overwhelming desire to escape the war and all the dire circumstances surrounding it. Those soldiers who had volunteered right at the beginning of the war, when it was moving fast, and who had shared the initial common belief of a swift end to it remained, it seems, largely unaffected by such notions. That is all the more remarkable as they must have become increasingly disillusioned with the reality of static trench warfare. Rather more likely to harm themselves were those men who had been drafted after the war had already come to a stalemate. Facing a reality of war that did not even remotely resemble the heroic and overwhelmingly optimistic messages spread around by the propaganda at home, these soldiers must be assumed to have been less willing to serve. The disposition amongst these recruits to find as quick and effective a way to escape from the front line, and with it certain death or mutilation, definitely exceeded any desire to die a glorious hero's death for the homeland. Also, for many soldiers the reality of the war meant a constant struggle on several fronts. The narrow trenches, perpetually infested with rats and vermin and constantly exposing their occupants to the inclemency of the weather, coupled with the insufficient sustenance and no relief for weeks, posed as much a threat to their physical well-being as the martial aspects of the conflict, such as surprise attacks, poison gas and incessant artillery shelling. A soldier during the war was eligible for leave only once a year, the duration of which ranged from two to three weeks at the most, but even that was by no means guaranteed as it could be cancelled or withheld at any time. A number of accounts, written with hindsight and a pacifist

message at heart, used these or similar circumstances as a means of explaining the reasons behind the motivation of individual soldiers to cause, often severe, bodily harm to themselves.

Realistic war prose makes use of all these aspects to try, implicitly or explicitly, to win and show some sympathy for those soldiers who regarded the self-infliction of wounds as a last resort to escape the war. That sympathy is entirely missing in Hirschfeld's and Gaspar's post-war investigation of sexual behaviour of both civilians and soldiers in the First World War, though. Having served in the war as a surgeon himself, Hirschfeld compiled files of many of the different medical conditions he himself and others, both doctors and patients, were confronted with in the field, all of which emanated from the soldiers' desire to escape the war. The following quotation, taken from a report by a fellow medical practitioner, is a clear indication of the extent of the risks many soldiers were prepared to take to get out of the war. Sometimes their actions resulted in permanent physical damage, but it is most unlikely that those soldiers intending to harm themselves were not aware of the risks involved. Yet it appears that anything that guaranteed the desired effect would do for them and was consequently tried:

Künstlich erzeugter Leistenbruch, Verätzungen und Entzündungen der Haut, Verbrühung mit nachfolgender Ätzung, künstlich erzeugte Ekzeme, Gelbsucht (durch Pikrinsäure) Augenentzündungen, Verätzungen und Entzündungen des äußeren Gehörganges, der Harnröhre (durch Fremdkörper), naive Vortäuschung von Tripper durch Seifenwasser, absichtliche Übertragung von Trachom und von Tripper, Nierenentzündungen, Harnblasenentzündungen, Erfrierungen, Schwellungen der Gliedmaßen (durch Abschnüren), Einstecken und Versenken von Nadeln in Gliedmaßen, Hämorrhoiden (durch drastische Abfuhrmittel und örtliche Reizmittel). Vereitlung des Heilungsprozesses durch Reizung der kranken Stelle.⁶

Interestingly, the report leaves open the question of the methods of coming by some of the diseases.

Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* adds another, slightly different aspect to the discussion. Using the image of wounded soldiers who have been taken to an infirmary in Germany to be chosen by the senior surgeon to serve as guinea-pigs for his ambivalent and irresponsible medical experiments as a result of which they will, in all probability, never be able to walk straight again, the novelist touches a raw nerve in the German military medical system. The instance is unique in German war prose, be it of a nationalistic or realistic tendency, as it reveals the hitherto inconceivable: an utterly dishonourable attitude of a doctor towards his patients, to further his own reputation at the expense of, and with devastating consequences for the patients' health. However, the situation takes a surprise turn with the victims of medicine giving their consent to the experiments. Their motivation for consenting is revealed in their replies to the repeated warnings from fellow patients who have watched for themselves those guinea-pigs who have already fallen victim to the ruthless practitioner:

'Ach Mensch', sagte der eine von den beiden müde. 'Besser die Füße als der Schädel. Weißt du, was du kriegst, wenn du wieder draußen bist? Sollen sie mit mir machen, was sie wollen, wenn ich bloß wieder nach Hause komme. Besser ein Klumpfuß, als tot.'
(*Im Westen ...*, p.257)

It is interesting to note the fatalistic tone of this paragraph, highlighted in the almost indifferent response of one of the potential victims. The desire to survive the war, no matter what the consequences, is so powerful in these characters that they will gladly embrace anything that will guarantee their staying in the safety of Germany.

Although this instance is, strictly speaking, not entirely compatible with the self-infliction of wounds it exemplifies, nevertheless, the firmness of the motivation of soldiers who have had enough of the war to consent to being permanently mutilated to avoid being dragged into the conflict again. Better still for the guinea-pigs, as their mutilation is the result of a perfectly legal operation performed in a civilian infirmary by a senior surgeon, they will not be court-martialled, either. Throughout the passage the feeling prevails that they are the lucky ones. They will survive the war, their health only relatively slightly impaired.

Another instance which also does not exactly match the definition of inflicting wounds upon oneself, but comes very close to it, too, is also raised by Bäumer; his platoon is ordered to return to the front line, and the transport proceeds at night over damaged roads. There is a danger of some soldiers falling out of the lorries. Bäumer remarks:

Die Straßen sind ausgefahren und voller Löcher. Es darf kein Licht gemacht werden, deshalb rumpeln wir hinein, daß wir fast aus dem Wagen purzeln. Das beunruhigt uns nicht weiter. Was kann schon passieren; ein gebrochener Arm ist besser als ein Loch im Bauch, und mancher wünscht sich geradezu eine solch gute Gelegenheit, nach Hause zu kommen. (*Im Westen ...*, p.55)

His concise and sober statement is representative for the general attitude of the front line troops towards this kind of incident. Just like a pair of mutilated feet, a broken arm or leg is certainly preferable to death, and the desired objective, to get away from the war, if only for a relatively short time, but with a perfect medical excuse, is achieved at relatively little cost to the potential offender.

Again, this instance indicates that the soldiers apparently regarded slight bodily harm the lesser evil to the experience of modern warfare. Bäumer's remark that there are many soldiers who would wish to seize such an opportunity is significant; incidentally, he does not condemn his comrades-in-arms for their thoughts; instead, one cannot help feeling that he would congratulate anyone who succeeds in hurting himself in that way.

Finally, Zweig, in *Erziehung vor Verdun*, deals with the issue in his own cynical way. Again the image he provides, soldiers deliberately consuming decaying horse flesh to make unambiguously plain their desire to escape the war by illness, is unique in realistic war prose and does not exactly correspond with the self-infliction of wounds either, but is a suitable example to demonstrate the range of methods devised by those involved in the conflict to get away from it:

Gefallene Gaule, die mit dickgeschwollenen Bäuchen seit langen herumliegen, werden dort zu Dünger verbrannt, zu Leim, Schmierfett, Leder verarbeitet; ihr Fleisch darf nicht gegessen werden. Aber siehe da, es wird gegessen, denn erstens hält die freundliche Kälte es frisch, und zweitens finden die Schipper eine Fleischvergiftung mit ihren Qualen im Lazarett angenehmer, als dieses Leben.
(*Erziehung ...*, p.251)

In addition to these images, a very small number of realistic German war novels contain miscellaneous examples of two other practices, namely malingering - pretending to be sick, or to produce or protract a disease to escape duty, and feigning - reporting sick when not, and pretending certain symptoms which could not be substantiated by any medical evidence. Babington assumes that these practices may have, ultimately, been a result of some genuine mental disorder of a soldier which accords with Bäumer's view that feigning madness is also a symptom:

It was only too easy for men who had enough of the dangers and discomforts of the front to feign a mental or physical illness, and medical officers in the forward areas had to be constantly on guard against malingerers. For the most part it must have been easy enough for a doctor to recognize these fictitious symptoms without much difficulty. There may have been occasions, however, when a cursory examination at a regimental aid post had failed to reveal some perfectly genuine neuropathic disorder. The terror which can dominate the mind and the extent to which it might affect the thoughts and actions cannot be measured by any outward gauge. It is natural for normal persons to be afraid when under hostile fire. A soldier is expected to subdue his fear, but if he gives way to it under the stresses of the moment it may be a policy of prudence and humanity to remove him temporarily from the atmosphere of danger until he re-asserts his self-control. This was not the practice in the wartime British Army!7

Unfortunately, that practice proved a huge disadvantage for soldiers suffering from a genuine, yet less obvious, medical disorder. These 'borderline cases' remembered with disgust the practice of Medical Officer's classifying them as feigners/malingerers and sending them straight back to the front. Again Babington:

An unfortunate consequence of the vigilance shown by medical officers in the detection of pretended illness was that they came to be regarded with a certain amount of animosity and distrust by a large proportion of the front-line soldiers. [...] Gladden was in the line, he reported sick with diarrhoea and bleeding from the bowels. He was examined by his bataillon medical officer who could not discover the cause of his trouble and graded him as 'medicine and duty', a category for the most trivial complaints. (*For the Sake ...*, p.76)

One of the few examples of a self-confessed feigner/malingerer is Suhren, in von der Vring's *Soldat Suhren*. Suhren is drafted for military service in 1915 but has no desire whatsoever to get involved in the conflict. Right from the beginning of the novel he rejects war as a futile waste of human life yet never says so openly. He adapts to the new circumstances of life in the army as much as he possibly can, but he remains a thinking individual and attentive observer of everything that

goes on around him throughout the book. Fuelled by the desire to shirk the tedious daily routine in the barracks, rather than the fighting at the front for at least some time, he simulates a heart condition swallowing a strong dose of a cardiac stimulant, hoping that the doctor will declare him unfit for duty. This he does with a feeling of great shame, though, which is, perhaps, surprising, as it indicates that he still shares a sense of duty, in spite of his pacifist conviction:

Ich erniedrige mich zum Simulanten, so daß ich vor mir selber Ekel empfinde. [...] Bringe mein Herz mit Antipyrin in ein überheiztes Tempo. Sodann eines Morgens Krankmeldung. [...] Um neun Uhr kommt der Unteroffizier vom Dienst und fährt die Kranken ins Revier. Da gibt es vielleicht ein Dutzend solcher Gesellen wie ich. Sie sehen klapprig aus oder bemühen sich, so auszusehen. Es sind aber auch wirklich Kranke da, diesen geschieht durch uns großes Unrecht, denn sie werden vom Arzt mit den Simulanten über einen Kamm geschoren. (Soldat Suhren, p.27f.)

This little episode not only shows a malingerer managing to escape the rigid system of military life, albeit for a very short spell of time. Surprisingly, it also contains an accusation of himself and all the soldiers in similar positions. Suhren is aware that innocent, and genuinely sick comrades-in-arms of his are going to suffer as a result of his dishonest conduct.

Contrary to Suhren's optimistic account of feigning, facts and figures published after the war showed that ordinary soldiers hardly ever succeeded in simulating a particular medical condition as their experience in the medical sphere was necessarily limited. Lacking the necessary details to be convincing an alleged offender faced a military tribunal which would punish him as a Selbstbeschädiger just as severely, as it did the genuine Selbstverstümmeler, those who had managed to inflict severe wounds on themselves which would render them unfit for

duty for good. According to the severity of the individual offence the list of punishments in the German forces included in every case loss of honour, whereby a soldier was stripped of the coloured national badge decorating the front of his cap, inevitable loss of rank, which meant, in effect, loss of income and status, probably service in specially designated punishment units and, in some cases, even death by the firing squad.⁸ Only in exceptional circumstances were Selbstbeschädiger or Selbstverstümmeler sentenced to Festungshaft as that would have meant a transfer of the offenders to safety. Such a transfer not only would have undermined the spirit of the law, but it would also have encouraged other soldiers to emulate the efforts of their comrades-in-arms. Along with the drastic penalty went the stigmatizing of the soldier of being a coward and the stress on liability towards his comrades-in-arms.

Hirschfeld concludes:

Zur Frage der Simulantenriecherei sei ... bemerkt, daß sie nicht zuletzt darum unberechtigt war, weil es trotz aller gegenteiligen Behauptungen den Anschein hat, daß es im Weltkrieg verhältnismäßig wenige Fälle echter Simulation ... gab. Der Soldat verließ sich selten auf seine Verstellungskünste allein und trug meist kein Bedenken, den Schritt vom bloßen Vorschützen zum mutwilligen Erwerben einer Krankheit, von Simulation zur Selbstverstümmelung oder Selbstbeschädigung zu wagen. Erschien doch, häufiger als gewöhnlich angenommen wird, sogar der Selbstmord als eine willkommene Rettung vor dem Heldentod.⁹

That any soldier should commit suicide to escape the war is a remarkable fact and indicative of what the front line troops had to endure.

Hirschfeld's statement sounds plausible, but it seems not to have been corroborated by any of the Weimar authors; but it is, of course, possible to assume that soldiers who tried to wound themselves accidentally killed themselves in the process.

All the examples cited so far can easily be classified as Selbstbeschädigung, rather than Selbstverstümmelung. While the former allowed the soldier affected to escape the war for a certain period of time, basically for as long as it took the specialists to deal with his particular medical condition, after which he inevitably was compelled to return to the trenches, often with a record of trying to cause grievous bodily harm to himself and others, the latter was a much more painful, serious and yet effective way to escape the war for good. However, to follow that course demanded great courage from a soldier as in almost every single case the consequences were dire. Effectively, once chosen and carried out, Selbstverstümmelung compelled the soldier concerned to continue living with a mutilated body. That effectively prevented him from ever forgetting about the war even when it was over, as for him it was not. Interestingly, while realistic German war prose repeatedly uses images of soldiers whose bodies have been mutilated in action as a literary symbol to emphasize the point that their physical deficiencies served as a constant reminder of the war, it does not use the image of feigners and malingerers in that context at all. That aside, Selbstverstümmelung took many different forms, ranging from the attempt to entice the enemy to hit part of the body by raising hands, arms and even legs over the parapet, to trying to shoot oneself through the extremities. Surprisingly, novels which feature a kind of Selbstverstümmelung suggest that, for the following reasons, it was much more desirable than Selbstbeschädigung. First of all, it was impossible to deny that a soldier in the line could not have been hit by an enemy bullet. Secondly, these kinds of wounds did not accumulate, nor were they excessive in numbers compared to others and, finally, they

presented a genuine kind of wounding; the intent deliberately to bring them about was difficult, even impossible, to prove for a court martial.

However:

It took considerable courage as well as a degree of desperation to shoot off your trigger-finger, to blast a hole in the foot, or even, as occasionally happened, to commit suicide rather than face the ordeal of 'going over the top'. Every soldier knew the consequences. He would be ... nursed under guard, until he was sufficiently recovered to face court martial and the inevitable severe punishment of imprisonment, or even death. The alternative was to run away ... the death sentence was automatic.¹⁰

Selbstverstümmelung, then, was much more difficult to arrange than Selbstbeschädigung. The likelihood of someone spotting the would-be offender in the act of harming himself was considerable, particularly in the trenches where thousands of soldiers were forced to cohabit in crammed quarters and privacy was a commodity in short supply. Also, the likely offender relied heavily on his comrades-in-arms' aid, discretion and, not infrequently, active support to execute his plans. Several indispensable precautions had to be taken beforehand, as well, if a plot was not to blow up, in some cases quite literally, in the soldiers' face. But not only did it require a lot of courage from a soldier to execute his plan, the attempt to inflict wounds on oneself required even more character to account openly for one's intentions. Of all the German war authors only Richert has done that. His personal war memoirs, however, were not written with the intention of making them accessible to the public, and they were not published until the late 1980s. In the following instance he recollects what had driven him, an ordinary soldier, to the point of breakdown. It was a variety of unfortunate circumstances, such as constant exposure to the inclement cold, hunger,

and perpetual harassment by one of the lower ranking superiors for personal animosity:

Da ich ... machtlos war, verleidete es mir noch mehr, und ich nahm mir vor, mich selbst zu verwunden, um von hier wegzukommen. Zu diesem Zwecke band ich ein kleines Brettchen vor die Hand. Das Brettchen sollte die Pulverkörner und den Pulverschleim auffangen, damit der Arzt beim Verbinden nicht sehen sollte, daß der Schuß aus nächster Nahe abgegeben worden war. In einem geeigneten Moment wollte ich die Tat ausführen. Ich lehnte das geladene Gewehr an mein Knie, hielt die Hand mit dem davorgebundenen Brettchen etwa 20 cm vor den Lauf, faßte mit dem rechten Daumen den Abzug, biß die Zähne zusammen und --- schoß doch nicht, da mir im letzten Moment der Mut fehlte.''

Richert's recollections of his attempt to inflict a gunshot wound on himself cover several important aspects about Selbstverstümmelung which enabled possible investigators to turn a mere suspicion of self-infliction of wounds into an indisputable fact. First, there are references to the remnants left behind by the gunpowder and the bullet. These were indelible pieces of evidence which could easily be identified as they left behind black marks around the burned flesh of a wound, classical signs of a bullet fired from close range. A second problem was the fragments of the device used to protect the wound channel from the gunpowder. To prevent any of these from entering the open wound a handkerchief, or alternatively a towel soaked in wine, could be used, instead of a loaf of bread or pieces of wood, as in Richert's case. Finally, there was the damaged limb itself. The standard issue for the German army, the Karabiner K98 (Mauser), was constructed to be fired only with the right hand and the German instructors in the garrisons at home and the base camps in the hinterland made sure it was; consequently every single case of a soldier who had inflicted wounds upon himself by using his own rifle in the fashion described by Richert showed the shot

wounds in the left half of his body.¹² This point is reflected in Egon

Erwin Kisch's war memoirs *Hetzjagd durch die Zeit*:

Drei Selbstverstümmelte wurden zum Divisionsgericht eskortiert, sie klapperten vor Frost und Schmerz, der eine hatte den linken Unterarm zerschmettert, der zweite zwei Finger durchschossen, der dritte die linke Schulter - alle drei bloß mit selbstangelegten, primitiven Bandagen, blutüberströmt. Sie können vor dem Feldgericht nichts in Abrede stellen, denn die Schüsse sind auf der linken (dem eigenen Gewehr erreichbaren) Körperhälfte, die Wundränder zeigen Merkmale der Verbrennung von der Stichflamme und Pulverschleim - typischer Nahschuß. In Serbien war es leichter, man brauchte nur die Hand aus der Deckung zu stecken und schon hatte man einen Schuß von drüben, 'eine ehrenvolle Verwundung'.¹³

For all these reasons the use of one's own rifle to inflict wounds upon oneself was really not advisable. However, some soldiers, who remained undeterred by the complicated precautions, preparations and multiple risks, attempted to shoot themselves anyway. Others, who shyed away from taking these risks were constantly devising other means to accomplish their objective. These were of increasing barbarity and horror. Richert remembers:

Ein Kamerad von mir namens Brüning aus Mühlhausen, Familienvater, dem es auch sehr verleidet war, verlangte von mir, ich solle ihn mit dem Kopf meines Beiles eine Kugel in die Hand schlagen. Er wollte die Hand auf einen Baumstumpf legen.¹⁴

Other examples provided in the various forms of Weimar war literature are similarly intended to demonstrate the inhumanity of the war and what it does to people, or makes people do. Of that there are several examples in realistic Weimar war prose. In *Des Kaisers Kulis*, for instance, Plievier tells of a sailor who has had enough of the war and who, to underline his determination to ignore a direct order of his superior NCO, pins his hand to a table with a knife, rendering himself

immovable and unfit for further duty. (p.276) While Plievier's novel undoubtedly has a political dimension to it, emphasizing the point that a rich man's war was fought by the economically disadvantaged members of the proletariat, in this instance the reasons behind the motivation of the sailor to injure himself are less clear. The impression is that they may be personal, rather than political. Zweig's *Erziehung vor Verdun* is less ambiguous in that respect. In fact, the tenor of his description of the self-infliction of wounds by an ordinary soldier is entirely political. The characters involved in the incident consider Selbstverstümmelung the only possible way out of the injustice of war for an exploited, proletarian soldier, who is compelled by the laws of a bourgeois society to fight in an imperial army for the economic benefit of the well-to-do ruling classes. Moreover, from the point of view of a left-wing revolutionary like Pahl, the figure at the centre of the incident, eager to destroy the present order of society for good, it is a justifiable and legitimate route to take. Pahl is the epitome of a radical left-wing politician with excellent qualities indispensable for any revolutionary character. Anxious to return to Berlin to organize and prepare the workers' revolution, he, together with his friend, Karl Lebehde, has hatched a plan to spike a rusty nail through his big toe. That can be accomplished entirely unobtrusively as both soldiers are in a secluded sector of the front at Verdun and their equipment, in particular their boots, is in a rather ragged and worn state. They can be sure that nobody will regard the incident as anything but genuine. But the execution of the plan develops into a small drama, with Pahl reluctant to hurt himself, considering the possible medical implications of his decision. Finally, he succumbs to the inevitable: 'Unsere Sache,

die Proletariersache, ist ganz andere Opfer wert.' (p.248) Consequently, he has his toe spiked by Lebehde. Several hours later, the toe is now beyond saving, Pahl reports, and is admitted to the Feldlazarett Dannevaux. His pious hope, though, that he will shortly be taken back to Germany does not materialize, as the Feldlazarett is bombed and Pahl killed in the incident.

Statements by Allied war veterans compiled by Holmes show that in their recollections those who had been wounded in the conflict, often welcomed their injuries with relief, particularly when the wounds were slight. The results of his analysis show that a slight wound was much more desirable than a disease and that every casualty hoped that his wound was a so-called 'Blighty' which would enable him to take a longer respite from the war or escape it altogether:

A cushy wound, a blighty business, seems the most desirable thing in the world. [...] 'Lucky bastard' was the comment about a man even seriously but not dangerously wounded.¹⁵

Lyn Macdonald's examination of the attitudes of British soldiers towards a 'Blighty' arrives at a similar conclusion:

'Is it a Blighty?' 'Is it a Blighty?' It was all a matter of luck. When the MO looked particularly harassed, when there was a big 'push' in the offing, when as many beds as possible had to be cleared to make way for the convoys of fresh casualties that would inevitably pour in, there was a very good chance that a man who was on the road to recovery but not yet fit enough to discharge to convalescent camp would make it to Blighty. Blighty. Home. Respite. The blessed relief after months of fighting made it almost worth the pain and discomfort of a wound. Eventually, of course, you would recover. Eventually, they would send you back. But that would be another day. In the meantime ... it didn't do to think about that. There was time enough to think of tomorrow when it came.¹⁶

In the Weimar *Frontromane* the equivalent of a 'Blighty' is commented upon by soldiers in an equally sympathetic fashion. At the start of *Im Westen nichts Neues*, for example, Bäumer reports of one of his comrades-in-arms, Müller, commenting on the thigh shotwound of their friend Kemmerich as a *guten Heimatpaß*. (p.16) For him the war is over. But although Kemmerich's wound is normally not a very serious one, and therefore desirable in the eyes of any soldier, in his particular case it is not a 'Blighty', after all, as numerous medical complications ensue which eventually lead to his untimely death.

On a slightly different note, attention must also be drawn to those narratives and novels which feature soldiers who are equally desperate to escape the war, yet are more afraid of the consequences of harming themselves, and who therefore choose what looked an easier and less painful option to accomplish their objective, to desert. Richert himself was a last-minute deserter, crossing the line in July 1918, at a time when it was clear that Germany would lose the war. His desertion was successful, because he took the 'right' direction, but:

It was extremely difficult for soldiers who went absent from their units to remain at liberty behind the front in France for very long, and it was even harder for them to return to England. The Military Police patrolling the roads, the villages, the towns and the railway stations in the vicinity of the battle areas were constantly checking passes and travel documents.¹⁷

Weimar war literature provides a similar impression of the hinterland; and where it makes references to deserters, none of them succeeds in reaching home. All are caught, remanded in custody and sentenced before long. In nationalist war fiction deserters, feigners and malingerers are branded cowards who do not deserve any mercy for their actions.

Significantly, nationalist war fiction also entirely ignores the personal circumstances of the individual soldier concerned, since their authors wanted each individual to subordinate these to the needs of the homeland. In this context reference must again be made to Klietmann's response to Remarque, *Contra Remarque - Im Westen wohl was Neues*. In the preface of his novel Klietmann accuses Remarque of being a degenerate,

welcher versucht, deutschen Heldengeist zu besudeln, nur weil sein ausgeergeltes Mark und sein mutwillig entnervter Leib, durch eigene Hand zerstört, nicht fassen konnte, was das große Ringen dem deutschen Frontsoldaten gab.

(*Contra Remarque - Im Westen wohl ...*, preface, unpaginated)

who deliberately wounded himself to escape the war. His accusation is, of course, without foundation, as so many of the numerous attacks levelled at Remarque from all sides during the early 1930s. But Klietmann's anger and fury, which his language clearly reflects, are an indication of Remarque's effectiveness as a pacifist First World War novelist.

Anti-war novels, on the other hand, normally take pity on the offender and provide personal reasons for his behaviour; they use the image of deserters to stress the inhumanity of a war that does not take account of the personal circumstances of the individual human being. In *Im Westen nichts Neues*, for example, Detering, a farmer, deserts from his front line unit in the summer of 1918. Desperate to get home in time for the harvest he marches straight back to Germany and is subsequently caught by the Military Police. To his comrades-in-arms left behind his further fate remains unknown. Yet Bäumer, who tries to stop him, expresses sympathy and understanding for Detering's action, simultaneously stressing the pointlessness of the exercise and the

inability of the bureaucrats behind the front to understand the feelings and the motivation of soldiers to desert. (pp.270-71)

In the war desertion was punished severely in all armies; the offender was usually sentenced to death by the firing squad.¹⁸ The German *Militärstrafgesetzbuch* states unceremoniously:

S84. Wer während des Gefechts aus Feigheit die Flucht ergreift und die Kameraden durch Worte oder Zeichen zur Flucht verleitet, wird mit dem Tode bestraft.

S85. Mit Zuchthaus bis zu fünf Jahren wird bestraft, wer aus Feigheit

1. bei dem Vormarsche zum Gefecht, während des Gefechts oder auf dem Rückzuge von seinem Truppenteil heimlich zurückbleibt, von demselben sich wegschleicht oder sich versteckt hält, die Flucht ergreift, seine Waffen oder Munition wegwirft oder im Stiche läßt, oder sein Pferd oder seine Waffen unbrauchbar macht.

2. [...]¹⁹

The bureaucratic and sober language of the military law stands in sharp contrast to the sympathetic tone of Bäumer. His point of view of the individual case raised here naturally differs from that of the judiciary.

It is in the Weimar Frontromane that the self-infliction of wounds is sporadically utilized as a literary device to make a negative statement about the war. The issue is almost entirely left to pacifist writers, of whom only a few decided to utilize it for their intentions. Some of those make the point that the matter was also an issue for the men still to be drafted. (Glaeser) Others, who were prepared to enhance their narratives with impressions of the self-infliction of wounds utilized images of soldiers seriously impairing their physical health, (Richert) whatever the means, stressing at the same time the

extent of the desperation that drove these individuals to the point of harming themselves. In these cases the motivation is shown to be based on their personal condition resulting from the brutally inhuman, seemingly endless and utterly destructive nature of the conflict. Some Frontromane create the impression that the self-infliction of wounds was really just another description for self-infliction with venereal diseases, making a literary division of both matters slightly more complicated; the cases featured range from images of soldiers infecting themselves with contaminated body fluids (*Heeresbericht*) to having sexual intercourse with women known to be infected. (*Des Kaisers Kulis*) But the First World War provided a wide range of different examples of self-inflicted wounds and, consequently, these have found their reflection in some narratives as well, although the impression created by the writers is that they were the exception, rather than the rule. The examples presented in that respect range from the cutting off of fingers and toes, the spiking of hands or legs, and the breaking of arms or legs (*Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben; Erziehung vor Verdun*), to shooting oneself through one's own limbs, or offering the enemy an opportunity to do it by, for example, raising a limb over the trench parapet. (*Hetzjagd durch die Zeit*) They are designed to demonstrate to the audience that no matter what the deformation, no matter what pain results from the self-infliction, nothing can prevent these soldiers from proceeding with their gruesome business. To the bystanders, as well as to the audience, the issue is always presented in a repulsive manner and aims at evoking sympathy for the offenders from both groups. The soldiers immediately confronted feel, indeed, more or less openly, sympathetic for their comrades-in-arms. That is evident in their

personal comments on the issue; in some cases they even assist their comrades-in-arms in their attempts to escape the war. But there are scenes when they refuse pledges for assistance, not because they do not want to get involved and risk severe punishment, but because they feel incapable of inflicting pain on other human beings generally. The short-term/long-term antagonism and its implications, skillfully created by the novelists, is a final important *literary* aspect concerning the presentation of the self-infliction of wounds in Weimar war prose. It is, indeed, a common feature as far as the presentation of both the venereal diseases and the self-infliction of wounds is concerned; while those affected by either the former, or the latter, voluntarily or involuntarily, achieved their desired objective, to get away from the war in the short-term, their chances of being returned to the front before long were increasing with the duration of the war. If, however, their undertakings had had a more damaging and therefore lasting effect, the novelists utilized these characters as evidence for their theory that for some people the war would never finish. Their physical deficiencies would always remind them of that.

But had it not been for the pacifist Weimar Frontromane, the subject of the venereal diseases and the self-infliction of wounds would probably never have emerged as an issue in German First World War literature at all.

NOTES

¹ Bridgewater, in 'German Painters', p.524, providing some information on the military 'career' of the artist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner from 1915 to 1918, states that: 'the very imagination and nervous energy that made him such an outstanding artist also rendered him totally unfit for military service; he was terrified out of his wits. [...] The next three years were spent in and out of sanatoria, suffering from severe psycho-somatic illness; an anorexic wreck, he did not eat properly throughout the war years, for fear of becoming fit enough to become cannon fodder.'

² Jaroslav Hašek, *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk während des Weltkrieges*, trans. by Grete Reiner (Prag: Synek, 1926).

³ Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, II, pp.76-77. Having been unable to obtain some of the works cited from in the preceding chapter, I have relied for references from these works exclusively on Magnus Hirschfeld's and Andreas Gaspar's *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, II, making the use of cross-references inevitable. These have been noted correspondingly.

⁴ See, for example, Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.205; p.277.

⁵ *Militärstrafgesetzbuch*, edd. A. Roman and Carl Rissow (Berlin: Guttentag, 1918), p.323.

⁶ Franz Exner, *Krieg und Kriminalität in Österreich* (place and date of publication unknown), pp.133-34, in Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, II, p.76.

⁷ Babington, *For the Sake*, p.75.

⁸ Compare *Militärstrafgesetzbuch*, pp.323-335. Also Ulrich and Ziemann,

Frontalltag, p.153.

⁹ Hirschfeld and Gaspar, *Sittengeschichte*, II, p.74.

¹⁰ Macdonald, *Roses*, p.220.

¹¹ Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.101. In *Im Westen*, pp.85-95, constant harassment of Tjaden by Unteroffizier Himmelstoß results in an act of insubordination by the former. Tjaden is subsequently sentenced to three days moderate arrest which he regards as a welcome respite from the war. The possible threat of imprisonment in a military fortress leaves him unimpressed, too, as that would remove him from the front line for the rest of the war.

¹² Deutsch, *Waffenlehre*, pp.124-26.

¹³ Egon Erwin Kisch, *Hetzjagd durch die Zeit* (Berlin: Reiss, 1926), p.153. In his essay 'World War I in Semi-Autobiographical Fiction and in Semi-Fictional Autobiography', p.314, Ulrich examines the: 'fictional element in autobiographical writings.' Analysing Graves' *Good-bye to All That*, he quotes two examples of what Graves himself called 'caricature scenes'. One of them features a Scottish soldier who is fed up with the war, longs to return home and puts his hand over the parapet. Having three of his fingers shut off instantly, he joyfully leaves the line, only to be killed by a sniper on his way to base hospital (p.317). This episode emphasizes the random nature of modern warfare and is indicative of Graves' apparent inability to cope with his war experience and put it into proper perspective, both mentally and literally.

¹⁴ Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.106.

¹⁵ Holmes, *Firing Line*, p.183.

¹⁶ Macdonald, *Roses*, p.99.

¹⁷ Babington, *For the Sake*, p.24.

¹⁸ The *Manual of Military Law* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1916), p.390, is unambiguous about the punishment of deserters:

Army Act Part I. Section 12

(1.) Every person subject to military law who commits any of the following offenses, that is to say

(a.) Deserts or attempts to desert His Majesty's service; or

(b.) Persuades, endeavours to persuade, procures or attempts to procure any person subject to military law to desert from His Majesty's service, shall, on conviction by court-martial, if he committed such offence when on active service or under orders for active service, be liable to suffer death.

¹⁹ Romen and Rissow, *Militärstrafgesetzbuch*, p.333.

THE MEDICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRENCH WARFARE

Until they actually suffered from dirt, lousiness, fatigue, terror, disease or wounds, most men enjoyed the last war.'

It is difficult from the sources at our disposal to establish a coherent, meaningful and realistic picture of the various medical implications affecting the soldiers involved in trench warfare from 1914 to 1918. A closer examination of the miscellaneous literary sources shows that non-literary war memoirs as well as the Weimar Frontromane hardly ever reflect any medical implications of trench warfare. It is remarkable, however, to find a huge range of illustrations of the conditions prevailing at the front, which, obviously, presented a health risk for the entrenched. But as far as the presentation of the medical implications of trench warfare is concerned, the nature of non-literary war memoirs as well as the Weimar Frontromane is, as a rule, casuistic, rather than teleological.

Common to the German non-literary war memoirs is their limited perspective. Written by individual low-ranking front line soldiers and officers, the diaries and letters look at the war from within and contain a huge selection of illustrations of what life in the trenches was like, featuring all kinds of complication and deprivation, as well as suffering and want. As these emerge, time and again, in most of the non-literary war memoirs, it is possible to establish quite a comprehensive picture of the medical implications of trench warfare. The Weimar Frontromane, due to their perspective, provide the audience with

similar impressions of trench warfare and are similarly economical with the presentation of its medical implications.

Although references to medical conditions in the few non-literary accounts that do mention them differ depending on the time of writing they are, nevertheless, representative of the experience of the reality of the war for the generation of soldiers who saw battle action. Hermann Löns' diary is an example of the reality of warfare in August 1914 from the perspective of an ordinary front line soldier. The account is a genuine reflection of his own personal first-hand experience of the conflict and his observations provide an impression of the war that was as much conditioned by the authors personal, initially enthusiastic, point of view of it, as it was by his limited personal circumstances in battle. The diary entries, which focus on the conditions during the advance of his regiment through Belgium and into France, reveal an interesting picture of medical conditions affecting the troops in those early days of the conflict. There are repeated references to the great number of wounded from less familiar combat units, an image taken up by most of the post-war pacifist novelists who adopted it for their own objectives to make a negative point about the war, but account has also been taken of the medical implications Löns and his comrades-in-arms were directly affected by, such as heat stroke and sore feet:

Chambry, 10.9.1914.

[...] Ich kann wegen der [Fuß] Blasen nicht weiter. Lastauto nimmt mich auf. (*Leben ist Sterben ...*, p.20)

This is a rare reference in a First World War non-literary account as it features a relatively minor, but nevertheless painful medical condition as a direct result of the war. Most other diaries and letters examined

make no mention of medical implications, unless they derive from an external source, such as bullets, grenades or shells. Löns further notes that many soldiers were similarly affected by the same condition, necessitating the introduction of a medical inspection of the feet, the Fußparade, for reasons of health and hygiene, on a daily basis. (p.19) A second unpleasant concomitant during the weeks of the advance noted by him is the frustration of not having an opportunity to change underwear, uniform, or to get out of the boots. In addition, the diary is full of complaints about the total lack of any form of sanitary equipment. Taking a good look at himself in mid-September 1914 Löns also bitterly complains about a want of opportunities to clean himself properly and remarks with disgust:

Betheny, 15.9.1914.

[...] Wie die Schweine sehen wir an Gesicht, [an] Händen, Zeug und Stiefel[n] von dem Mergel und dem Lehm aus. Seit vier Tagen nicht gewaschen. [...] Ich sehne mich nach Bad, Waschanzug, und dann mit einem guten Mädchen ausgehen und mich an ihrer Sauberkeit freuen. Augen voll Dreck. Nase, Gesicht, Hände voller borkiger Wunden. Ein Schweineleben. (*Leben ist Sterben ...*, p.37f.)

These notes of the conditions and circumstances of the life ordinary front line soldiers led in the early days of the conflict paint a picture of the war that was just as much a fight against dirt, filth and the unpredictable weather, as it was against the soldiers on the other side. This motif is common to all the Frontromanen, regardless of their tendency. But while jingoistic war prose celebrated those existing in these circumstances as heroes, Weimar pacifist accounts with their focus firmly on trench warfare, symbolic for the war of attrition, merely used those conditions as an additional motif to strip the war of its myths of being a clean and glorious affair for those compelled to fighting it out

between themselves. It is remarkable that Löns' comments on his personal hygiene, or rather the lack of it, constantly penetrate his diary from the moment he arrives at the front until his death, which is, incidentally, recorded on the final page by another soldier who remains anonymous but for the two letters O.M. There is an interesting parallel in Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* and Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, both of which end on a similar note, and where the literary image of 'the other voice' has been used to strengthen the authenticity of the novels.²

Löns' war diary is a valuable illustration of how the the pre-war image of the clean soldier of the military manual, as well as the notion of war being a neat and orderly affair, was turned into a mockery by the reality of modern warfare. The depressing tone of the diary entries shows how deeply the circumstances had affected the author's morale. They show war as being, above all, and literally, a dirty business:

Vor Reims, 18.9.1914.

[...] Nun seit gerade acht Tagen nicht mehr gewaschen, keinen Stiefel ausgezogen, nicht gekämmt, keine Wäsche gewechselt. Die Hände von schwarzer Borke bedeckt. Nase voll Dreck innen, Hemd schmierig und schwarz. (*Leben ist Sterben ...*, p.49f.)

The demoralizing impact of the climatic conditions, the scorching heat in the late summer of 1914 followed by the incessant rain at the beginning of autumn are shown to have contributed a great deal to weaken the soldiers' resolve to continue fighting:

Betheny, 16.9.1914.

[...] Regen. [...] Regendach bauen. Gemeiner Regen. Regendach bricht ein. Infanteriefeuer - nee, Platzregen. [...] Wir sehen wie die Schweine aus. (*Leben ist Sterben ...*, p.42)

Consequently, before long Löns writes: 'Ich werde krank weil schon vier Tage nicht aus nassen Kleidern.' (p.50) What exact medical condition he is being affected by Löns does not specify. But considering his personal circumstances at the time, it is reasonable to assume that he was suffering from a febrile condition, perhaps influenza, or even pneumonia.

The lack of food supplies is also an issue in his diary:

Betheny, 15.9.1914.

[...] Ich knufe das saure, schimmelfleckige, klebrige Brod mit Widerwillen runter. [...] Mein Mittag ist ein verschimmeltes Stück Brod und ein Schluck warmes Wasser, dazu der Geruch des Kotes, den ein Mann eben absetzt. (*Leben ist Sterben ...*, p.37f.)

Similar impressions were utilized by some post-war authors and even the medical implications of that kind of life style, in Löns' case dysentery and colics, are familiar to many works of realistic Weimar war prose:

Pontgivart, 24.9.1914.

[...] Muß siebenmal zur Latrine. [...] Muß mich draußen umziehen weil Hemd voll. (*Leben ist Sterben ...*, p.61)

In that context reference must be made to the adopting of the image of soldiers relieving themselves in various post-war Frontromane. Remarque, in *In Westen nichts Neues*, for example, uses the image to show that feelings of embarrassment and shame towards the natural body functions have been completely obliterated by the war, in which worse things happen. While the experienced soldiers opt for individual, open and portable toilets, form a circle, proceed to play cards and remain on the same spot for hours, acknowledging that eating, drinking and relieving themselves are things that are a matter of course, the young recruits, still unexperienced and still full of the military communal attitudes on

the matter, choose the stable and roofed construction of the army toilet where they can enjoy some but not complete privacy. (pp.13-16)

References to the medical implications in connection with the diet the soldiers ate appear much later in the novel. Insufficient sustenance, low in vitamins and high in chemical additives, affects the metabolism of the body. In effect, this means that the body's ability to produce sufficient antibodies to resist infectious diseases is dangerously weakened. In turn, that development can lead to general physical exhaustion, muscular atrophy, pneumonia and serious heart conditions. Examining *Im Westen nichts Neues* in this respect, the comparison of the image of soldiers using toilets in the middle of the war with that in the summer of 1918 is striking. The idyllic picture of the former is full of references to the body's natural functions proceeding as usual; but the 1918 impression has become clouded with misery, with the use of the most prominent of all the medical conditions, diarrhoea, which was widely disseminated in the line. In the following instance the medical condition appears as a symbol of the war of attrition on a different level, with reference to the biblical image of the flesh suffering on the bar:

Wir aber sind mager und ausgehungert. Unser Essen ist so schlecht ... Uns zerrinnt die Ruhr die Därme. Die Latrinenstangen sind stets dicht gehockt voll; - man sollte den Leuten zu Hause diese grauen, gelben, elenden, ergebenen Gesichter hier zeigen, diese verkrümmten Gestalten, denen die Kolik das Blut aus dem Leibe quetscht. (*Im Westen ...*, p.274)

This quotation is indicative of the different perspective of the author and his protagonist. Bäumer is, of course, taking a look at the war from within. His wish for the image he encounters to be shown to the people

in Germany is realized by Remarque, who, writing the novel with hindsight, has thus found a way of showing it to his post-war audience. Plievier's presentation of the workers' toilets in a naval shipyard in *Des Kaisers Kulis*, though, has political, rather than medical implications. The cesspits with a wooden roof offer space for up to fifty men, and although they are rather uncomfortable, use is only approved of at certain times, for reasons of hygiene; but the place has another, less obvious, yet just as important function. It is the one place where sailors and stokers can convene unobtrusively and voice their real sentiments about the war. The frail walls are covered in graffiti with radical political messages, and two bouncers ensure that undesirable characters stay away from certain cabins. (pp.79-80)

It is noteworthy that discrepancies concerning the presentation of medical conditions as a result of trench warfare, when they emerge in the Weimar ~~Frontromane~~, occur strictly along the dividing line of pro- and anti-war literature. To demonstrate that Allied war accounts were also divided along correspondingly ideological lines during, and even after the war, this study makes reference, of necessity, to some examples from a variety of British accounts, reports, narratives and novels, too.

Trench warfare began in earnest in October 1914. If the line of trenches was initially a mixture of shell holes and bomb craters loosely connected by knee-high ditches, with the duration of the war it gradually developed into a highly sophisticated system of bunkers and shelters capable of providing protection against the unpredictable weather conditions, as well as withstanding the effects of most of the constant barrage of artillery fire. Pacifist war prose lacks detailed

descriptions of the construction and sight of trenches; it tends to focus on the atmosphere and living conditions inside the fortifications, instead. In addition, images of the trenches are utilized to demonstrate how deeply the war affected those confined to them, mentally and physically. Bäumer's image of the front as a Käfig, a cage, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, for example, is an interesting one, as it is indicative of how the soldiers have been turned into animals by the nature of trench warfare. Confined by the line of trenches to the front like animals confined to a cage by a set of iron bars, life has been reduced to the most basic principles. Their existence being increasingly dominated by the primeval instincts to ensure the survival of the individual the men are progressively turned into living beings lower than beasts.⁹ (p.103)

Nationalist war fiction and those accounts which prefer to emphasize trench warfare from a military point of view, on the other hand, tend to provide rather comprehensive and meticulous portrayals of the strength and the paraphernalia of the positions, but deliberately exclude any detailed descriptions of the living conditions inside; Jünger's *In Stahlgewittern* is representative for many of those. Having comprehensively described the arrangements and construction of the system of the trenches in his sector of the front, it is striking that he does not take the trouble to deal just as comprehensively with the conditions of life inside them. (pp.39-42) His attitudes towards war are irreconcilable with images of miserable living conditions, apprehension and tension, and pain and suffering, which frequently penetrate pacifist Weimar war prose. Being not prepared to let the most unpleasant circumstances of the conflict shatter his opinion of the just cause of the war, or the ideals of fighting, it is not for Jünger to mention the

enormous number of lice, rats, or other kind of vermin, which made life in the trenches an unbearable affair for their inhabitants. While there is an abundance of images of a range of parasites detrimental to a soldier's health in most *Frontromane*, reading *In Stahlgewittern*, the impression prevails that Jünger and his comrades-in-arms were, indeed, the only living things in the trenches. In all his many war accounts references to the medical implications of trench warfare are likewise few and far between.

There can be no doubt that the extent of the suffering for those in the trenches was unimaginable. To many historians and scientists it remains an enigma why so many people did put up with the horrendous conditions of trench warfare for so long and how they managed to cope with them? Some pacifist novels make references to groups of front line soldiers arguing and reasoning about their presence in the trenches. In most cases these discussions yield no tangible result for those involved and end in simple one-liners, a literary means to emphasize the inexplicable cruelty and senselessness of the conflict. The soldiers were there and that was that. Bäumer's comment is representative for all of these: 'Das Nationalgefühl des Muskoten besteht darin, daß er hier ist.'⁴ Renn, in *Krieg*, takes up the issue as well:

'Ich habe mich schon immer gewundert, daß es die Leute in den Lochern so lange ausgehalten haben', sagte ich. 'Und ich habe mich gewundert, daß niemand einen Ton gesagt hat. Weißt du, dazu gehört schon eine furchtbare Gutmütigkeit, - oder ein entsetzlicher Stumpsinn.'⁵

In *High Altars*, Oxenham offers an alternative answer, neatly summarizing the various implications of trench warfare in the process:

Out there at the front, among the men at all events, life becomes

very definitely objective. The things that appeal to the outer senses are the things that bulk and count, - life, death, food, drink, smokes, shelter, rest, mud - moral and physical, and anything that will divert one's thoughts from, and so palliate somewhat, the general unpleasantness of life. And - the great redemptive that covers a multitude of sins - friendship. (*High Altars*, p.70)

The presentation of trench warfare in non-literary war memoirs and the Weimar Frontromane is conditioned mainly by four motifs from which the medical implications, if they are not explicitly referred to in the literary sources, can be derived. All these motifs are interwoven with each other following the strange logic of war and have been, more or less skillfully, utilized by the writers to facilitate establishing a comprehensive impression of the life the soldiers led in the trenches:

a) Weather Conditions

The weather conditions have always presented a difficult and formidable obstacle to any army. The years from 1914 to 1918 were no exception to that rule. Accounts opening at the beginning of the war, or even earlier, mention the Indian summer in August 1914. German nationalist war fiction, in compliance with its general perspective of the conflict, takes a somewhat detached look at the conditions on the ground:

Die Truppen ... kennen seit drei Wochen nichts als Fechten und Marschieren, Marschieren und Fechten. Unbarmherzig brennt wie damals in Belgien die Sonne auf sie herab. An den Straßenrändern bleiben Marschranke liegen. Mit aufgedunsenen, hochroten und feuchtheißen Gesichtern.⁶

Viewed from the individual front line soldier's perspective exposed to the scorching heat and with no opportunity to quench his likewise scorching thirst, it is a very different story:

Da es nachmittags sehr heiß war und keiner nichts [sic] Trinkbares

bei sich hatte, litten wir sehr Durst.⁷

while letters home show that to the occupants of the trenches incessant rain became the biggest drain on their morale:

Zwischen Lille und La Bassee, 10. Januar 1915.
[...] Schlamm und Wasser füllen den Schützengraben, Wasser von unten und Regen von oben. Tag und Nacht wird geschanzt, Erde geschaufelt, Wasser geschöpft und gepumpt. Und dabei die Fruchtlosigkeit, daß alles vergeblich ist! Das Wasser bleibt. Und immer weiter fällt Regen in schweren Schauern. [...] Ich kann gestehen, daß oft Ekel mich ergreift gegen das Leben in diesem Schlamm und Dreck und das unausgesetzte, naßkalte, vergebliche Arbeiten. Es sind Strapazen, die kein Mensch im Frieden für eine zivile Sache ertragen würde.⁸

Letters home by the soldiers were intended to, and did, indeed, provide their families with a picture of the war that stood in sharp contrast to the official bulletins on the campaign; however, both kinds of literature provided just as potentially distorted a picture of the war as any other account, due to their limitations.

The pacifist novelists used the climatic conditions in their works. In *Im Westen nichts Neues*, for example, the motif of incessant rain, the ultimate element of general discomfort for the troops, appears as one among many others at the end of the novel, which coincides with the end of the war:

Einige Regenwochen liegen hinter uns ... Wenn wir hinausfahren dringt uns bereits die Nässe durch die Mäntel und Kleider, - und so bleibt es die Zeit vorne auch. Wir werden nicht trocken. Wer noch Stiefel trägt, bindet sie oben mit Sandsäcken zu, damit das Lehmwasser nicht so rasch hineinläuft ... Die Uniformen verkrusten, alles ist fließend und aufgelöst, eine triefende, feuchte, ölige Masse Erde. (*Im Westen ...*, p.280f.)

Common to all the examples quoted are the detailed descriptions of what the weather in Flanders was like; they also, generally, fail to provide

any image of sick soldiers as a result of the weather. It is in the British accounts that references to some medical conditions, in particular 'Trench foot', surface. While not one of the German accounts examined mentions, for example, the problems 'Trench foot' caused even once, British war memoirs repeatedly refer to this medical phenomenon. This is peculiar, as both sides had dug their trenches in the same stretch of land and were all together gravely affected by the same geographical and meteorological circumstances. Fussell, in *Great War and Modern Memory*, offers one possible explanation:

Flanders and Picardy have always been notorious for dampness. It is not the least of the ironies of the war for the British that their trenches should have been dug where the water-table was highest and the annual rainfall the most copious. Their trenches were always wet and often flooded several feet deep. Thigh-boots or waders were issued as standard articles of uniform. [...] Pumps worked day and night but to little effect. Rumor held that the Germans not only could make it rain when they wanted it to - that is, all the time - but had contrived some shrewd technical method for conducting the water in their lines into the British positions - perhaps piping it underground. (*Great War ...*, p.47f.)

Graves, in *Good-bye to All That* also remembers 'Trench foot', although personally he was not affected by it. He describes the condition as:

Almost entirely a matter of morale. [...] Caused by tight boots, tight puttees, or any other clothing calculated to interfere with the circulation of blood in the legs. Trenchfeet was caused ... by going to sleep with wet boots, cold feet, and depression. Wet boots, by themselves, did not matter. If a man warmed his feet at a brazier, or stamped until they were warm, and then went off to sleep with a sandbag lied around them, he took no harm. He might even fall asleep with wet feet, and find that they had swelled slightly owing to the pressure of his boots or puttees; but trenchfeet came only if he did not mind getting trenchfeet, or anything else. (*Good-bye ...*, p.144f.)

Furthermore, references to ice and snow are almost exclusively confined to those works who take account of the fighting in the mountains and the

eastern theatres of war. Representative of those with first-hand experience of waging war in Russian winters is Walter Flex. His work *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten*, which he wrote during the war, is both about the war, as the author reflects on his personal experiences of the conflict in the East and the West - thus succeeding in combining past and present - and about the friendship between himself and a fellow junior officer, Leutnant Ernst Wurche, who was killed at the Russian front, and to whom it is dedicated. The text skillfully combines prose and poetry to create an atmosphere of tranquility that is every now and then interrupted by images of warfare. In addition, Flex's autobiographical account contains a variety of impressions of the inclement cold, biting frost and masses of snow as well as images of soldiers fighting each other as much as the weather, and is, for all that, in many respects, a unique reflection of the reality of the short period of static warfare in Russia:

Tag und Nacht schanzten unsre Leute. [...] Und wieder monatelanges Stillliegen in Schützengräben wie einst auf den Maashöhen vor Verdun und in den Wäldern vor Augustow. Und doch alles anders. Wie ein ferner, schöner Traum lagen die lauen Sommernächte hinter uns ... Jetzt türmten sich Schneewälle um unsre Erdhöhlen. Schneidende Ostwinde fegten das graue Eis der Seen und peitschten nadelscharfe Kristalle gegen die wachtmüden Augen.
(*Wanderer ...*, p.97)

In line with other authors though, Flex hardly ever considers the more serious health risks of being exposed to heat and rain, ice and snow, as being worth noting in any great detail. While his account contains plenty of references to the cold, frost and snow, the painful medical conditions they caused, such as chilblains, coughs, fever, frozen limbs, ears and noses, which sometimes needed to be amputated, find no

reverberations in *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten*, or in any of the other non-literary memoirs or nationalist and realistic war fiction. Of course, just like the venereal diseases these medical conditions allowed the soldiers affected to get away from the front for a while; but while Weimar war prose makes at least some references to the effects of the latter, it tends to ignore the effects of the climate on the combatants completely. The medical long-term implications of the exposure to ice and frost for lengthy periods of time which could, for example, result in rheumatic conditions, the effects of which only emerged after the end of the war, have experienced similar literary neglect, while the effects of shell-shock are a high-profile issue in Weimar war prose, where they have been repeatedly utilized by the novelist to make the point that for the soldiers affected, the war would never be over. It appears that compared to the risks the incessant metaphorical 'hails of grenades', 'storms of steel', and 'showers of shells' posed to the men's health, the effects of the weather conditions were regarded as negligible by the writers. The range of medical implications, as listed here, can therefore only provide an objective view of the human suffering that resulted directly in the prevailing conditions in the trenches.

b) The Living Quarters

Although soldiers' billets have always been, by their very nature, sparsely equipped, and accommodation in the trenches along the western front was spartan initially, during the course of the war the living-quarters in the second and third line of the trench system developed into an increasingly comfortable, safe and sophisticated system of shelters. As the First World War was to show, it is a

strategic necessity for any army to keep the standard of accommodation in the front line as low as possible for psychological reasons, as soldiers living in relatively comfortable accommodation are usually less willing to leave their favourable location and do what they are trained to do. Unlike any other, the image of the dug-out penetrates both Allied and German First World War prose repeatedly. While those inhabiting a dug-out in the early days of trench warfare remember it as the ultimate symbol of discomfort:

Diese Unterstände! Es waren nach dem Graben zu offene, in die Kreide eingehauene Löcher, mit einer Lage von Brettern und einigen Schaufeln Erde bedeckt. Hatte es geregnet, so tropften sie noch tagelang nachher. [...] Wollten mehrere darin der Ruhe pflegen, so waren sie gezwungen, ihre Beine als unfehlbare Fußangeln für jeden Vorübergehenden in den Graben zu legen. Unter diesen Umständen konnte natürlich auch tagsüber von Schlaf wenig die Rede sein.⁹

the post-war novelists made use of it as a, sometimes rather ambiguous, symbol of accommodation, identity, protection, a sewage system, and, sometimes, as a trap. In doing so, they succeeded in showing their audience that the conditions brought about by the war had not only changed the men's quarters, but had also compelled them to change their attitudes and life style and adapt to the newly arisen challenges accordingly. Nowhere is that more evident than in the image of soldiers unable to relieve themselves in the line for fear of soiling their positions:

Der Graben war breit und auch tief, und darüber war rechts eine Gartentür, oder so etwas, gelegt und Zeltbahnen darüber gehängt. [...] Nicht den Graben verunreinigen; wir müßten's eben halten bis zur Nacht!¹⁰

It was not unusual for war correspondents to visit a section of trenches in the vicinity of the front to report about life in the trenches. Clouded by jingoistic undertones, their reports naturally painted a very different picture from those of the soldiers, historians and novelists. Having spent a few hours in the trenches Kipling's account about his experience differ naturally from the soldiers'. His report, intended for an ignorant audience back in the United Kingdom, and fairly representative for all jingoistic pieces of war literature, concentrates on a carefully selected range of aspects which were, undeniably, genuinely and truly part of the every-day existence in the trenches; unfortunatelly, the report continues in that fashion and includes even more idyllic images of front line existence, ranging from soldiers cooking their stew in the trenches, to nature observations. The reassuringly euphemistic style of Kipling's language and the total absence of any genuinely martial aspects, such as combat action, shell-fire and images of casualties are an interesting indication of too perfect and too distorted a picture of trench warfare to be true. As an ardent supporter of the war effort, Kipling's wartime impressions are naturally not concerned with the dirty aspects of trench warfare, as these would have been detrimental to his intentions of depicting war as a comfortable affair:

Here the trenches began ... there was no lack of timber and there was unlimited labour. It had made neat double-length dug-outs where the wounded could be laid in ... well tended occasional latrines properly limed; dug-outs for sleeping and eating; overhead protections and tool-sheds where needed, and ... very clever cellars against trench-sweepers. [...] Comfortably equipped with bath and laundry.''

In the eyes of the pacifist writers such imbalances of the portrayal of modern warfare were an inexcusable affront; those with first-hand experience of trench warfare repeatedly made the point that the war had, literally, been a dirty affair in any respect. In Sherriff's *Journey's End*, for example, where the scene is set in a trench, the dirty aspects of trench life emerge straight away. There Captain Stanhope, commander of an entrenched front line unit, intends to reprimand his second-in-command, Hardy, for allowing his platoon to mess up the trenches without cleaning them for the platoon taking over:

Stanhope: [...] 'You never saw the blasted mess those fellows left the trenches in. Dug-outs smell like cess-pits, rusty bombs; damp rifle grenades; it's perfectly foul.' (*Journey's End*, p.23)

The history of the conditions and life in the trenches was a tale of deprivation and desperation, disease and illness, shortage and want on all sides, and we must not lose sight of the use of these aspects in the Weimar *Frontromane*. It is there that the modern saga of human endurance that borders on the incredible has been preserved, too. For example, the lack of washing facilities contributed much to the reputation of the trenches as a hygienic disaster. This motif has been ingeniously dwelt upon by some novelists. Köppen's *Heeresbericht*, for example, features a genuine contemporary advertisement celebrating *Kiri*, a soap-like product that is, allegedly, very effective, even without water, and thus suitable for the *Krieger* in the trenches. Although the advertisement, albeit implicitly, insinuates that the German people are aware of the hygienic shortfalls in the trenches, its jingoistic undertone is indicative of the real gap between those in Germany supporting the war

effort, without knowing very much about it, and those suffering at the front. The comments of one of the entrenched are correspondingly bitter:

Wasche dich ohne Wasser und ohne Seife mit Kiri.
Unentbehrliche und schönste Liebesgabe für unsere Krieger im Felde.
Ein wenig 'Kiri' nimmt von Gesicht und Händen selbst den ärgsten Schmutz in einer Minute und unsere Krieger fühlen sich nach der Benutzung sauber, erfrischt und wie neugeboren!

'Hör auf', brummte Rabs. 'Denen sollte man soviel Kiri ins Maul schmieren, daß sie das Waschen vergessen. Mensch, Mensch, und deshalb liegen wir hier im Dreck.' (Heeresbericht, p.142)

Other Frontromane aim to show the gap between the soldiers in the line and those in the communication zone. There are several examples of staff officers insisting on leading the war by military manuals. The characteristic attributes of these figures are deliberately exaggerated by the novelists and intended to reveal the extent of their ignorance concerning the front line troops and the reality of trench warfare which demanded a degree of adaptability and improvisation that totally defied the laws of civilization, not to mention the paragraphs and regulations of military manuals, and constantly forces the entrenched to concentrate on, and reduce their desires to the bare essentials of life, such as eating, sleeping, surviving:

'Mir fällt die Unsauberkeit ihrer Leute auf. Wir müssen streng auf Sauberkeit halten.' ... 'Es wird sich das kaum erreichen lassen, bis wir nicht bessere Unterstände haben; denn bei den meisten sind die Eingänge so eng, daß man auf allen vieren herauskriechen muß und dabei vollkommen schmutzig wird.' [...] 'Haben Sie sich heute schon gewaschen?' Sänger sah wirklich sehr schmutzig im Gesicht aus.
'Nein, Herr Oberleutnant, wir haben kein Wasser im Graben.'¹²

Water, if it was available at all, was reserved for drinking only, or as a coolant for the machine-guns. Non-literary memoirs of those experiencing the conditions first-hand are less elaborate, yet

nevertheless just as blunt when describing that side of the reality of life in the trenches. They provide an image of trench warfare that was either not properly acknowledged, or utterly ignored by those at home. The following passage from a letter is an indication of how badly these conditions affected both health and morale of the soldiers:

23. April 1917, bei Reims.

[...] Morgens wäscht man sich mit Spucke die Augen aus, natürlich spuckt man zunächst ins Taschentuch und 'wäscht' dann. [...] Wie sehr sehne ich mich nach geordneten Verhältnissen, wo man auch die Lumpen vom Leibe bekommt und öfter als alle acht Tage mal Nachtschlaf hat!'³

The effect of such an impression on the audience must have been correspondingly repulsive.

All the examples featured did result in a variety of minor, yet nevertheless unpleasant, medical conditions, such as burns, eczema, rashes and sores, none of which have been considered worth a line in the novels. In addition, the danger of troops catching an epidemic disease by consuming contaminated water, which was very real, as contaminated water is a transmitter of contagious diseases such as cholera, as is food contaminated with infected faeces of insects, has suffered similar literary neglect. Insanitary conditions, a lack of drainage and sewage systems, for example, contribute to the spread of typhoid fever, which is also transmitted by lice and other vermin. A sudden rise in temperature, headaches, nose-bleeding, drowsiness, lassitude and a characteristic rash on the abdomen accompanied by pains all over the body are symptomatic for the disease. Yet, although these symptoms were widespread, none of the major German war novelists makes any explicit reference to these medical conditions in a literary context.

The intolerable level of hygienic conditions coupled with a lack of washing facilities was also the main reason for the undesired and unpleasant presence of all kinds of vermin in the trenches, the main beneficiaries of the prevailing conditions. As soon as it turned static the war turned into a celebration for the minor forms of life causing major problems for the inhabitants of the dug-outs:

Not only did the lice cause frenzied scratching, they also carried disease, and one which proved to be a continual and heavy strain on manpower. This was known as trench fever or, with disarming honesty, 'pyrexia of unknown origin'. The two conditions were diagnosed separately but were almost certainly the same disease. The Germans showed a similar lack of precision, calling it variously Wolhynian Fever, Five Days Fever, Polish, Russian, Intermittent, or Meuse Fever. First noticed in 1915, the actual connection with the louse was not made until early 1918, and no cure was found until the end of the war. A common ... symptom were acute shooting pains in the shins, after which a high fever would set in. It was never fatal ... In 1917 it accounted for fifteen per cent of all cases of sickness in the British Army.¹⁴

which the German forces tried to combat with all kinds of creams, ointments, and soaps, also designed to sooth the sores; but all efforts failed miserably. These facts were, incidentally, made use of by the novelists; countless are the references to lice and rats in pacifist Weimar war prose. Some accounts refer to vermin in a deliberately simple fashion, Renn, in *Krieg*, for example, remarks almost casually: 'Mich plagten die Läuse', (p.300) but they are repetitive in this respect, hinting at the perpetual presence of vermin infesting uniforms, beds, the human body and dug-outs, and generally causing a lot of discomfort for the combatants. Others are less straightforward and of a more symbolic nature. In *Im Westen nichts Neues*, for example, killing lice has the same routine to it as killing the men on the other side; Bäumer and his friends have got used to doing both as a matter of course. In

the following instance the seemingly endless and senseless struggle against the massive number of lice which the soldiers are desperate to kill but cannot, and the soldiers on the other side against which they have no personal grudgings but are compelled to kill, nevertheless, is indicative of the perversion of morality as a direct result of the war:

Es ist beschwerlich, die einzelne Laus zu töten, wenn man hunderte hat. Die Tiere sind etwas hart, und das ewige Knipsen mit den Fingernägeln wird langweilig. [...] Wir sitzen rundherum, die Hemden auf den Knien ... die Hände bei der Arbeit. Haie hat eine besonders feine Art von Läusen: sie haben ein rotes Kreuz auf dem Kopf. Deshalb behauptet er, sie aus dem Lazarett in Thourhout mitgebracht zu haben; sie seien von einem Oberstabsarzt persönlich.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.79)

Remarque develops this particular motif in the sequel to the novel, *Der Weg zurück*. (p.344) But the moral of the passage, whose tone is resignedly indifferent, is that there can be no winner, just as there is no winner in war but war itself. Remarque and other novelists also tended to depict the war against lice as a personal and intimate affair of an individual soldier, the attempts to fight off rats are usually described as a communal effort, albeit just as futile.¹⁵

Quite a common sight, and familiar to many accounts as well, is the image of rats feasting on disintegrating corpses of soldiers lying around in No Man's Land. As it was common practice on both sides to use corpses, or parts of them, to fortify positions, or to fill the gaps in the sandbag barrier, it is not surprising that the novels make use of that image. Another image that appears in some accounts also is the ghastly sight of remnants of human bodies either hanging in the entanglements of the barbed wire in front of the trench, accompanied by a breath-taking and horribly sweet smell emanating from the corpses, or

the countless other bodies lying around everywhere in the trenches and blocking the various routes and escape routes and the exits of the quarters while, at the same time, serving as shelter for the soldiers in the trench:

17. Oktober 1915.

[...] Noch heute aber hängen Fetzen von Menschenleibern in den Drahtverhauen. Vor unserem Graben lag bis vor kurzem noch eine Menschenhand mit Fingerring, ein paar Meter davon ein Unterarm, von dem zuletzt nur noch der Knochen übrig war.¹⁶

In Jünger's *In Stahlgewittern* the images reaches apocalyptic proportions with the dead still uttering strange noises like the living. They lie around in a bizarrely surrealistic fashion and continue to 'do their bit':

Und immer dieser süßliche Geruch! [...] Hinter mir ertönte ein gedämpftes, unangenehmes Geräusch; ich stellte mit merkwürdiger Sachlichkeit fest, daß es von einem riesenhaften, in Zersetzung übergegangenen Leichnam herrührte. [...] Zwischen den lebenden Verteidigern lagen die toten. Beim Ausgraben von Deckungslöchern bemerkten wir, daß sie in Lagen übereinandergeschichtet waren. [...] Aus den Böschungen starrten Arme, Beine und Köpfe; vor unseren Erdlöchern lagen abgerissene Gliedmaßen und Tote. (*Stahlgewitter*, p.104f.)

There is a similar picture in *Im Westen nichts Neues*:

Die Tage sind heiß und die Toten liegen unbeerdigt. Wir können sie nicht alle holen, wir wissen nicht, wohin wir mit ihnen sollen. Sie werden von Granaten beerdigt. Manchen treiben die Bäume auf wie Ballons. Sie zischen, rülpsen und bewegen sich. (*Im Westen ...*, p.129)

Jünger's sober and descriptive language is indicative of his intentions to present a factual account of life in the trenches, where death is an indisputable occurrence; Remarque's intention is to expose the horror of the war and is reflected in the use of the bizarre image of the dead

soldiers inflated like balloons and making negative noises. The tone of the passage, dominated by simple but grotesque language and short sentences only adds to the gloomy atmosphere created.

In this context, attention must also be drawn to the life the sailors led in the war. Although they did not live in trenches, they were, however, by the very nature of their area of service confined to narrow, dark, and often unhealthy living-quarters aboard their vessels. Life in these quarters was not dissimilar to that in the front line. Living in perpetually damp cabins combined with a low quality diet affected their health just as much as did the severe weather conditions they were exposed to on a constant basis on their voyages. The medical implications of naval warfare found their reverberations in some narratives, of which Plievier's *Des Kaisers Kulis* is certainly the most comprehensive in that respect:

Wenn der Arzt über das Deck geht, fällt ihm die eigentümliche Blässe vieler Gesichter auf, bei Untersuchungen konstatiert er Pupillenerweiterung und Kurzatmigkeit, einige Leute klagen schon über geschwollene Knie. [...] Bis jetzt sind nur die Symptome für allgemeine Blutarmut, Blutversäuerung und fortschreitende Körperschwäche da. Aber dahinter steht das Gespenst: Skorbut! Beriberi! (*Kulis ...*, p.269f.)

c) Food

There are many examples in the Weimar *Frontromane* that show how the popular perceptions of war being fought against 'the enemy', implicitly meaning other human beings, were often anything but true. Non-literary memoirs had long made the point that the real enemy for the troops in the trenches was the war itself with its unpredictable concomitants. 'Hunger und Regen sind die schlimmsten Feinde', remarked one soldier during the war, whose conclusion, unlike that of the propagandists at

home, was based on his personal perspective and first-hand experience of the conflict.¹⁷ The pacifist novelists consequentially utilized that fact in their works to make another negative point about the war. The following situation from Renn's *Krieg*:

'Warum kriegen wir nur nie Brot?' fragte einer. 'Weil wir so schnell marschieren, daß die Backereikolonnie nicht nachkommt.' (*Krieg*, p.66)

is indicative of a situation that was fairly typical and bears witness to the irony that when there was enough food to go round, the inadequately organized distribution system failed to deliver it to where it was needed. The longer the war dragged on the more complaints about an inadequate, monotonous, and inedible diet there were, filling the pages of the letters sent home. Some of these complaints were kept deliberately ironic to make the point, the language adopted resembling that of the daily military bulletins:

Im übrigen führen wir hier 3 Kämpfe: Gegen die lausigen Russen, die russischen Läuse ... und - um das Dicke im Feldkessel.¹⁸

Remarque's use of the motif of a severely depleted unit returning from the front and receiving the full food allocation is a rather sophisticated way of making the point that hunger and the war of attrition go hand-in-hand. Ironically, the death of their comrades-in-arms, tragically though it is, guarantees Bäumer's unit the first decent and satisfying meal in weeks. (pp.7-12)

The Allied blockade, having succeeded in cutting off Germany's food supplies, made rationing inevitable. Soon turnips and potatoes were the main components of the daily diet; that was to have severe consequences

for the health of the nation, also dangerously impairing the fighting strength of the troops. Plievier, in *Des Kaisers Kulis* states:

Aber dann - die Ernährung: Dörrgemüse, Dörrkartoffeln, Reis, Corned Beef, Gefrierfleisch, Konserven. Kein frisches Gemüse und kein Obst. Eine vitaminlose Ernährung, die nicht ohne Folgen bleiben kann.
(*Kulis ...*, p.269)

implying the medical consequences. Zweig, in *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, supplements his description of the monotony of food supplies with images of its direct medical effects on the combatants:

Ein Schub ruhrleidender Infanteristen kam an dieser Stelle dem Auto des Generals entgegen. ... Hochfieberige Krankheiten sorgten dafür, daß die wirkliche Kampfstärke der Division jeden Augenblick schwankte und sich verminderte. Man hatte diesen Winter den 'Leuten' nicht nur zu einförmige Kost, zu wenig Fleisch, sondern auch zu wenig Brot und statt frischen Gemüses gedörrtes Zeug und Kartoffelschnitzel verabfolgt; das rächte sich jetzt.
(*Grischa ...*, p.84)

while in *Erziehung vor Verdun* the lack of food supplies is part of the plot which leads to Christoph Kroysing's untimely death. (p.30)

Remarque, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, combines the motifs of hunger and deprivation with that of the war profiteers to emphasize the point that numerous were the fronts on which the ordinary soldier had to fight for survival. (p.274) It was not uncommon for the German troops to attack the Allied trenches for the sole purpose of taking their food supplies. That image has been made use of by Jünger in *In Stahlgewittern* (p.270) and Remarque in *Im Westen nichts Neues*. (pp.120-21) Incidentally, both Plievier and Remarque use images of hunger and deprivation at a relatively late stage in their novels. This is intentional, since their accounts climax with these features to provide not only a comprehensive picture of the war of attrition causing general discomfort for the

troops exposed to it, but also to make reference to some medical conditions as a direct consequence of the war, something Zweig does much earlier in his novel. Depicting war as the cause of disease is definitely intended by all three. Once that conclusion has been arrived at, it is only a small step to the statement that war equals disease. The use of the overtly political statement by Bäumer in an otherwise politically indifferent war novel is also worth noting.

d) The Military Equipment

Their equipment, which had served the soldiers well before the war, very quickly turned out to be neither up to the requirements of modern warfare, nor was it suitable to trench warfare. Allied and German uniforms were designed to be stylish, lavishly equipped with a great number of shining buttons and silver beltbuckles. They provided ideal targets to aim for in the open plains of Flanders and both sides succeeded in inflicting severe losses on each other in the early phase of the war. Issued in three standard sizes, large, medium, and small, with high collars restricting the movement of the head basically to one position, straight-forward, the uniform was uncomfortable to wear but guaranteed that the soldiers would appear neat and clean to look at when lined up on a parade ground. Unfortunately for the soldiers, the war was not fought on a parade ground. The thousands of sore feet during the first six weeks of the war emanating from the peace-time issue of ill-fitting boots bore witness to that fact, and the equipment, preventing them from moving freely and speedily in battle, qualities which were absolutely essential for modern warfare, let them down from the beginning of the war to the end. While it would be unfair to state

that a soldier's kit did not change during the course of the war - it was in fact augmented with the infamous gas mask and respirator in 1915 and the steel helmet in 1916 and underwent several other, albeit minor, changes until the final German offensive of March 1918 - it is indisputable that the issue of new uniforms more suitable to the demands of modern warfare lacked not only momentum but also regularity. Also, even if the quality of the uniform material was initially anything but a compliment for the European textile industry, in the case of the Central Powers it never came even close to satisfying the expectations of the soldiers in the trenches. It quickly became clear that the standardized uniform issues offered virtually no protection against the weather. They were simply not able, nor designed, to prevent water from impregnating the equipment and soaking the unfortunate individual to the skin, not to mention the ideal nesting opportunities it offered to lice and other forms of vermin. Later issues, in a time of wanting quality textiles from overseas, left still more to be desired, in fact, more often than not, turned out to be utterly useless. To combat the perpetual plague that vermin presented it was suggested that soldiers change their clothes every so often, but that proved a futile exercise due to a lack of textiles. Parcels from home or the various relief organizations containing home-made woollen socks, jumpers, and other useful pieces of clothes were a welcome commodity in the dug-outs on both sides. But the quantity was never enough to satisfy the sheer insatiable demand of the men:

Meine Unterhosen waren so zerrissen, daß nur noch die Beine zusammenhängen. Der Hosenboden war fast weg ... Mein einziges Paar Strümpfe hatte schon lange keine Fersen mehr.¹⁹

All these facts have been made use of by the novelists and the motif of front line soldiers clad in ragged and worn uniforms is one of the most widespread in German war literature where it is designed to enable the audience to draw their own conclusions about the effects of the war of attrition; first the equipment is disintegrating, closely followed by the soldiers themselves:

Das ganze Kommando des Sergeanten Barkopp treibt sich überhaupt in verzweifeltem Zustand herum. Das Unterzeug der Leute, von ätzenden Waschnitteln zerfressen, muß immerfort geflickt werden und hält nicht mehr, will nicht mehr wärmen. ... Sie wehren sich kaum noch gegen die Läuse, mit denen sie behaftet sind.²⁰

Stripping fallen friend and foe of personal equipment became an increasingly necessary activity in which everybody in the line was compelled to compete, sooner or later, driven by the desire for a little comfort and to survive:

Am Boden lag ein Toter, dem sie Schuh und Strümpfe und auch die Hosen ausgezogen hatten; denn wir alle hatten Mangel an Bekleidung.²¹

With his mind firmly focussed on showing the effects of the war of attrition on the front line troops in the autumn of 1918 Bäumer, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, observes the progress of the uniforms disintegrating at a rapid pace. Remarque expands this motif. It is not only the men's equipment that has begun to disintegrate, it is the soldiers themselves who are about to become one with and part of the elements, evoking echoes of a funeral and the apocalyptic 'earth-to-earth, ashes-to-ashes, dust-to-dust':

Die Uniformen verkrusten, alles ist fließend und aufgelöst, eine tiefende, feuchte, ölige Masse Erde, in der die gelben Tümpel mit spiralförmig roten Blutlachen stehen und Tote, Verwundete und

Überlebende langsam versinken. [...] Unsere Hände sind Erde, unsere Körper Lehm und unsere Augen Regentümpel. (*Im Westen ...*, p.280)

Replenishing the German soldiers' military equipment during the First World War was a saga of inadequacy, deprivation and want, an all too familiar tale of too little, too poor, too late, and German war prose does not lose sight of that fact. What has been, implicitly or explicitly, stated there in that respect was a fairly typical fact. The unsatisfactory state of the equipment contributed a great deal to the miserable state of health of the combatants on all sides during the war.

In this context, it is interesting to look at the use of the motif of soldiers rendering First Aid to their wounded comrades-in-arms in the novels. While there is a variety of images in the *Frontromane*, ranging from the figure of the lone soldier who carries his friend on his back from the trenches to the nearest medical establishment as, for example, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, (pp.281-83) to the paramedics, or others, stretcher-off casualties to a *Verbandplatz*, as for example in Richert's *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*, (p.40) most of the novels, in such instances, also make reference to the *Verbandpäckchen*, the gauze. Part of the uniform, every German soldier was equipped with at least one, but more often two, of those:

Alle Angehörigen des Feldheeres und der besonderen Formationen der Festungen (Offiziere usw., Beamte, Mannschaften) trugen in einer, dem Futter des Rockvorderschoßes aufgenähten, Tasche 2 Verbandpäckchen, über deren Gebrauch sie unterrichtet worden waren. Die Verbandpäckchen enthielten in einer wasserdichten, fadenverschnürten Zwirntuchhülle eine 4 m lange und 7 cm breite Mullbinde aus Sublimatmull, auf die, 25 cm von dem einen Ende entfernt, 3 Kompressen aus Sublimatmull so aufgenäht waren, daß sie ohne Anfassen mit den Händen auf die Wunden aufgelegt werden konnten.²²

The use of the Verbandpäckchen as a motif in Weimar war prose is, however, an ambiguous matter. Nationalist war fiction looks at it two ways. First, as a useful medical device to stop bleeding and close wounds, a task heroically performed by soldiers who, more often than not, succeed in saving a life; and secondly, as a means of dwelling on, and perpetuating, the myth of the true spirit of comradeship of the front line troops, as, for example in *Wir von der Somme*. (pp.286-289) Realistic war prose, on the other hand, regards the Verbandpäckchen as just another hopelessly inadequate medical device insufficient to stop any wounded man from bleeding to death, as, for instance, in *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*. (p.38) The image of the gauze as another antiquated means in the literary context also serves to underline the brutality of the war of attrition, rather than providing some hope for those involved, as in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, (p.73; p.75) for example. Although realistic war prose operates with the image of soldiers bandaging, or rather, patching up, their friends and comrades-in-arms, too, without making any reference to the notion and spirit of comradeship at all, their desperate matter-of-course attempts are often to no avail, and usually end tragically for the victims, as in *Krieg*. (p.216)

The examination of the various non-literary war memoirs and post-war accounts with regard to their presentation of the medical implications of trench warfare has shown that the presentation of medical conditions caused by trench warfare in the Weimar Frontroman is conditioned by the ideological lines that divide the two philosophies, as there are: nationalist war fiction and realistic war prose. Nationalist war fiction, with the emphasis firmly on the martial aspects of trench

warfare, tends, for the most part, to ignore the living conditions in the line, unless they fit into the propagandistic pattern of war being an adventure and an heroic affair; realistic pacifist war prose, on the other hand, is inclined to show what coping with the conditions prevailing in the line, which made a mockery of all notions of war being a neat, orderly, and tidy affair, meant for those exposed. So are, not surprisingly, most of the letters and the diaries examined. Remarkably, and in spite of their ideological divisions, both nationalist and realistic war fiction, together with most of the non-literary war memoirs, fail, by and large, to present the medical implications of trench warfare. The metaphorical storm of steel was enough, only the lice persist.

NOTES

¹ Hans Zinsser, *Rats, Lice and History* (Boston: 2nd edn, Bantam, 1967), p.111. (1st edn 1934). Analysing British First World War accounts the sociologist Anthony Ashworth, in 'The Sociology of Trench Warfare 1914-18', in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 19 (1968), 407-23 (pp.407-08), points at their discrepancies of presenting life in the trenches. He quotes one soldier who, looking back at the war, stated that he had never felt better and never been happier than in the line.

² Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.288, and Thomas, *Katrin*, p.230.

³ Compare Gollbach's analysis in *Wiederkehr*, pp.52-54.

⁴ Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.206. Sir Ian Hamilton, in his letter dated 2. April 1929, which is addressed to Alexander Huntingdon, editor of the magazine *Life and Letters*, makes the following interesting comment on that issue also quoting from the English translation of *Im Westen nichts Neues*: 'Remarque seems to me a writer who could do anything. He says some incredibly coarse things, but he lets slip sometimes, as if by accident, astonishingly true things hitherto unsaid. As, for instance, his answer to those who with their clumsy questions grope and rummage about his heart, seeking for his innermost feelings upon the happenings of the Western Front: 'a man cannot talk of such things; I would do it willingly, but it is too dangerous for me to put these things into words. I am afraid they might then become gigantic, and I be no longer able to marshal them'.' In Remarque and Hamilton, 'The End', p.404. In Renn's *Krieg*, p.344, the central figure levels severe criticism against both priests and officers who, at a time when the war is almost over and lost for Germany, still try to provide the

front line soldiers with reasons for their presence in Belgium and Northern France. In that scene Renn rejects their reasoning for war entirely.

⁸ Renn, *Krieg*, p.329.

⁶ Beumelburg, *Sperrfeuer*, p.53.

⁷ Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.124.

⁹ Karl Aldag, letter dated 10. Januar 1915, in *Kriegsbriefe*, pp.32-33 (p.32).

⁹ Jünger, *Stahlgewitter*, p.7.

¹⁰ Renn, *Krieg*, p.20.

¹¹ Rudyard Kipling, *France at War* (London: Macmillan, 1915), pp.54-55.

¹² Renn, *Krieg*, pp.339-40.

¹³ Rud. Krüger, letter dated 23. April 1917, in *Kriegsbriefe*, p.296.

¹⁴ John Ellis, *Eye-Deep in Hell* (Abingdon: Purnell, 1976), p.57.

¹⁵ Remarque, *Im Westen*, p.111.

¹⁶ Kurt Müller, letter dated 17. Oktober 1915, in *Kriegsbriefe*, p.244.

¹⁷ Fritz Meese, letter dated November 1914, in *Kriegsbriefe*, p.88.

¹⁸ Kurt Bergter, undated letter, in *Kriegsbriefe*, p.308. The pun is very common on all sides; for example, one of the songs of the British Expeditionary Force in Belgium and France contained the line: 'when this lousy war is over.' The phrase 'lousy war' became very popular in the U.K. in those years.

¹⁹ Renn, *Krieg*, p.188.

²⁰ Zweig, *Erziehung*, p.242.

²¹ Renn, *Krieg*, p.211.

²² Waldmann, *Sanitätsbericht*, I, p.66.

WAR AS DISEASE

The literary development of the 'war as disease' motif in Weimar war literature is an interesting one and merits closer investigation because, unlike any other, it reveals clearly the discrepancies in the interpretation of war, in general, and the First World War, in particular, by Weimar nationalist war fiction and realistic war prose of the same period. The motif is almost entirely confined to Weimar realistic war prose and it is more literary than medical.

When the First World War broke out, booklets, leaflets, pamphlets and poems, which portrayed war as an exciting adventure in what had been perceived by the majority of the European people as a dull and stale age, appeared in large numbers in all the belligerent nations, to incite the fervour for war still further. Like the majority of their fellow countrymen and -women most contemporary German writers had welcomed the conflict enthusiastically. Jünger's reflections in *In Stahlgewittern* on the atmosphere in the country and the attitudes towards the war in the summer of 1914 are representative for most of the German population:

Wir hatten Horsäle, Schulbänke und Werkische verlassen und waren in den kurzen Ausbildungswochen zu einem großen, begeisterten Körper zusammengeschmolzen. Aufgewachsen in einem Zeitalter der Sicherheit, wob in uns allen die Sehnsucht nach dem Ungewöhnlichen, nach der großen Gefahr. Da hatte uns der Krieg gepackt wie ein Rausch. In einem Regen von Blumen waren wir hinausgezogen, in einer trunkenen Stimmung von Rosen und Blut. Der Krieg mußte es uns ja bringen, das Große, Starke, Feierliche. Er schien uns männliche Tat, ein fröhliches Schützengefecht auf blumigen, blutbetauten Wiesen. Kein schöner Tod ist auf der Welt ... Ach, nur nicht zu Hause bleiben, nur mitmachen dürfen. (*Stahlgewitter*, p.1)

the image of war as Rausch, intoxication, being a far cry from the 'war as disease' motif as developed by many Weimar pacifist authors. In addition, nationalist war writers celebrated the war as the dawning of a new era; in their publications they expressed the hope that this war would be the purging fire of a decadent age. This war, so their theory ran, would remove the corrupt and weak elements from society and those who survived would emerge as a new and strong people.

The presentations of both German nationalist war fiction, and also the few pacifist works which take account of the early days of the war, generally show the whole nation displaying three specific symptoms which, as time progresses, turn out to be directly linked with the war: first, there are references to the intense atmosphere in Germany before the general mobilisation, which is then followed by a tremendous sense of relief when the official announcement has been made, which, finally, results in a wave of enthusiasm that sweeps through the country after the declaration of war, affecting almost everybody and triggering off hectic, but often senseless activity.' Interestingly, both contemporary and post-First World War writers occasionally equate this excitement for war with a disease which hardly anybody immediately exposed to can resist. But unlike any other disease, this one does not affect human beings negatively in any respect initially. Instead of weakening those affected, it has a stimulating effect on them; instead of consuming most of their physical strength, it releases incredible and hitherto unknown physical forces in a very short spell of time. In the short-term, general inertia and passivity are replaced by frenzied, if aimless, activity. In the long-term, though, these useful effects tend to wear off. While all this has been, by and large, acknowledged and described

by both literary tendencies, nationalist publications in the war, in spite, or perhaps because of the nature of the war of attrition, maintained their enthusiasm for waging it, a phenomenon that continued even into the Weimar Republic, when the true picture of the conflict was beginning to emerge. Incidentally, those works of nationalist war fiction which combine medical and military aspects in terms of explaining the nature of war, tend to utilize images of war and disease, disease *caused* by war, rather than the 'war as disease' motif as such. These presentations are deliberately kept either explicitly detailed or unspecific, depending on authorial intention and the effects on the victims. One kind of disease is labelled Kampffieber and is an interesting phenomenon because it affects exclusively soldiers, no matter their location or rank, either immediately involved in battle action in the opening stages of the conflict, in daring missions during the stalemate of trench warfare or, of course, during the final German offensive in spring 1918, in any case events nationalist war fiction prefers to highlight time and again. While those authors who touch upon it make no attempts to explain its origins, their presentations also imply that Kampffieber is void of any symptoms, does not progress in definite stages, but is contagious, nevertheless. It just suddenly emerges and takes control of those exposed to war. In his war narrative, *Kriegstagebuch eines Richtkanoniers*, Gunner Gerhard Siegert makes a reference to the Kampffieber, describing it as a state of hectic activity triggered off by a fierce artillery attack by his own battery that overcomes all the gunners, the officer-in-charge, every non-combatant attached to the unit and even the horses. Incidentally, Siegert himself is wounded on that occasion but unaware of the pain

until afterwards.² This presentation is reminiscent of a fever attack, differing only in the showing of the stimulating effects on the individual; predictably, as soon as the engagement is over, the fever disappears. Implicit in many works of nationalist war fiction, on the other hand, is the presentation of a second kind of disease which remains unnamed but less enigmatic to its origins as the Kampffieber. It is part of the presentation of a people at war suffering from the effects of the blockade. And although its characteristics, it, too, is epidemic by nature, though not everybody seems prone to catching it, devastating on a mental and physical level and potentially lethal, make it appear much closer to an actual medical condition, for which general feebleness, exhaustion and weariness are symptomatic, the impressions of the silent, yet passionate determination on the part of the majority of the German population to continue waging the war against overwhelming odds that is visible in their willingness to sacrifice everything, including their life, to bring the conflict to a successful conclusion, support such views only to a limited extent.

At first sight, the presentation of the 'war as disease' motif in pacifist Weimar war prose seems a matter of course, but a closer analysis of the texts at hand reveals that here, too, the motif is dealt with either implicitly: carefully and almost imperceptibly developed in the course of an entire work, to provide the audience with sufficient evidence to draw a negative conclusion about the conflict; or explicitly: emerging in one form or another at a certain stage in a narrative but, of course, to the same end. That most of the central figures in the anti-war narratives and novels, whenever they begin, apparently remain completely immune to the fervour for war evidently

present in most other people around them, is remarkable. While in the case of those anti-war writings which open while the conflict has already lasted for several years this is comprehensible because they are designed to make the point that the war had been going for too long, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, for example, Bäumer and his classmates are presented as having been pressurized by their teacher into joining up and consequently everybody joined up because nobody wanted to stay behind to be branded a coward, it is less so with the novels commencing right at the beginning of the war. Plievier, in his *Des Kaisers Kulis*, makes the point that the merchant sailors, who are opposed to war anyway, have been pressganged into service, and Richert, in his second year of national service in 1914, frankly admits that he is scared of being killed,³ while, in fact, only one central figure, Reisiger, in *Heeresbericht*, is shown to have volunteered enthusiastically, but he is the exception to the rule, and, in any case, after almost five years of service and after having declared war an insanity, he is himself declared insane, although he is not. That the moral of the novel is that war equals insanity, a serious medical condition, is an interesting example of the implicit development of the 'war as disease' motif in a Weimar war novel.

Another work characteristic for using the implicit method to make the point that war equals disease is Thomas' novel *Die Katrin wird Soldat* which is designed to enable the audience to take a look at the nature of the war through the eyes of a young woman tending the results of the fighting. The heroine is severely affected both mentally and physically by the total destruction of an entire generation of people by the war. With the realization that the nature of war is one of

monotonous grand-scale killing, beyond the control of the individual and seemingly never ending, sets in a process of inner numbness and resignation that reaches its pitch with the death of her fiancé Lucien. Katrin does not want to live any longer and dies of pneumonia. Since both her inner numbness and resignation are clearly shown to have been caused by the war she must be considered a genuine casualty of the conflict. The presentation of war killing human beings just like any other fatal disease is designed to show that war equals, indeed, disease.

Less apparent, and, therefore, less effective than Köppen or Thomas, is the resignedly philosophical method of presenting the nature of the modern war of attrition in Arnold Zweig's two novels *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* and *Erziehung vor Verdun*. But although Zweig succeeds in providing a comprehensive analysis of human behaviour and nature in difficult situations and under extreme strain, this, sadly, happens at the expense of the 'war as disease' motif, which remains, to a large extent, sidelined throughout the two novels. However, the statement:

Krieg ist keine kleine Sache; wenn er erst angefangen hat, macht er sich selbständig. (*Grischa* ..., p.46)

seems to suggest that although war is a matter between people who, after all, participate in, and are adversely affected by it, it is, also, a viable entity in itself, entirely self-sustaining, further underlined by the use of the abstract form *er*. Worse still, when it is being waged by human beings, war, nevertheless, tends to go beyond human control, with devastating effects for those involved:

Davon unangefochten rasten in der Champagne, in Flandern die Granatschleudern, die Maschinengewehre, flogen menschliche

Körperteile blutend durch die Luft, platzten Erdgänge mit Dynamit gefüllt unter bewohnten Höhlen, piffen, von Fliegern gelenkt, Bomben auf die Köpfe von Flüchtenden, nähten klappernde Maschinengewehre endlose Sticketten des Todes in den Frontsaum der Völker. (*Grischa ...*, p.135f.)

Similarly in *Erziehung vor Verdun*, where war is either presented in metaphorical:

Der Krieg, ein von Menschen eingerichteter Betrieb, erschien ... als ein vom Schicksal verhängtes Unwetter, eine Entfaltung reißender Elemente, nicht kritisierbar und niemandem Rechenschaft schuldig. (*Erziehung ...*, p.85)

or theological:

'Die Krankheit unseres Volkes, die moralische Krankheit, kann ... gar nicht mehr beeinflußt werden. Ich war mit unseren Rheinländern in Belgien beim Einbruch der Gewalt in die Neutralität und das Recht. Was ich gesehen habe, was unsere Leute stolz verrichteten als Dienst und Pflichterfüllung war hundertfacher Mord, Raub, Vergewaltigung, Brandstiftung, Kirchenschändung, jegliches Laster der menschlichen Seele. Sie taten es, weil es befohlen war, und sie gehorchten mit Wonne, weil der Teufel der Zerstörungswut in der Menschenseele nun einmal seine Hausung hat.'
(*Erziehung ...*, p.138)

rather than strictly medical terms. But although Zweig's focus remains largely on the effects of war on people, rather than its origins, the definition of war by Lochner, a Catholic priest at the front around Verdun, in both theological and medical terms as a moralische Krankheit ... der menschlichen Seele, a deficiency of morality in the human soul, insinuates that war is, on the one hand, a moral enigma, equalling original sin, on the other a psychological disease, and hence a medical phenomenon, which causes one set of human beings to commit unspeakable acts of atrocity with glee, and inflict a great amount of suffering on

other people, whose response is correspondingly implacable since war is innate and, therefore, difficult to restrain once unleashed.

Compared to Zweig's relatively modest and somewhat pale attempt to develop the 'war as disease' motif in any greater detail, Remarque's approach to the issue, in his two novels *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Der Weg zurück*, is much more transparent, explicit and down-to-earth. His technique of equating war with disease in *Im Westen nichts Neues*:

Der Krieg ist eine Todesursache wie Krebs und Tuberkulose, wie Grippe und Ruhr. Die Todesfälle sind nur viel häufiger, verschiedenartiger und grausamer. (*Im Westen ...*, p.266)

differs fundamentally from that of all the other Weimar writers in that it centres exclusively on the lethal aspects of the disease war as such. Even an earlier attempt of his to equate war with a kind of fever:

'Ich glaube, es ist mehr eine Art Fieber', sagt Albert. 'Keiner will es eigentlich, und mit einem Male ist es da. Wir haben den Krieg nicht gewollt, die anderen behaupten dasselbe - und trotzdem ist die halbe Welt feste dabei.' (*Im Westen ...*, p.205)

that is contagious, epidemic and enigmatic as to its origins, seems to be no more than a slight deflection from the actual point Remarque wants to make, viz. that war equals disease, equals death. Interestingly, in the novel itself there are no references to anyone who could be held responsible for either catching this particular kind of fever, or passing it on. Although unwanted by many, once there, it is, apparently, uncontrollable and incurable. This verdict, ultimately, redeems everybody involved in the war from any responsibility for waging it.

To emphasize his point further that war equals disease, Remarque, in the course of his novel, implicitly equates guns, tanks and poison gas

with disease generally. This he can do, because, like most of the Weimar war authors, he did experience war both at home and at the front himself and was wounded in the line. His central figure Bäumer, a front line soldier, too, makes a similar equation:

Granaten, Gasschwaden und Tankflotillen -
Zerstampfen, Zerfressen, Tod.
Ruhr, Grippe, Typhus - Würgen, Verbrennen, Tod.
Graben, Lazarett, Massengrab - mehr Möglichkeiten gibt es nicht.
(*Im Westen ...*, p.277)

The literary technique of categorizing the devices of modern warfare in groups where they have equal status (and equal effects) with diseases in this instance serves to emphasize the fact that from Bäumer's personal perspective in the line it is only logical to equate shells, poison gas and tanks with disease in the context of his experience of the war. After all, in his experience shells, poison gas and tanks are the war, causing death indiscriminately, culminating in the destruction of an entire generation of people. Since shells, poison gas and tanks are devices that potentially have the same lethal effects on people as viruses, they are to Bäumer, in effect, like lethal viruses. What is more, just like viruses they are seemingly indestructible, beyond human control and, therefore, unavoidable. Nobody is immune to catching them. Just like contagious diseases, such as diarrhoea, influenza or typhus, they also cause a great deal of pain and suffering to their victims, leaving Bäumer and his comrades-in-arms with no adequate means of defense or protection at all against them. Interestingly, the resigned tenor of the statement atop is not only indicative of Bäumer's war-weary state of mind, but also a deviation from the 'spark of life' motif attached to the central figure which keeps him alive in a conflict where

death seems to be the only way out. That Bäumer is killed by a bullet in the head, in itself a mercifully quick death, shortly before the end of the conflict, goes to show that nobody who is immune to the initial fervour for war is necessarily immune to being killed by the 'disease war' itself.

In *Der Weg zurück*, Remarque takes the quest for finding an answer to the origins of and a possible cure to war one step further still, albeit in a slightly different context from the *Frontroman Im Westen nichts Neues*. As the title indicates, *Der Weg zurück* is a narrative about the soldiers who survived the conflict and tried to reintegrate into a post-war German society which remained largely indifferent to their problems. Ludwig Breyer is one of a range of tragic characters in the novel who were part of a generation that was destroyed by the war even though they survived its immediate impacts. During his service he did contract syphilis, probably in a military brothel. Knowing nothing about life and still less about venereal disease, which is not surprising considering the attitudes towards sex in pre- and wartime Germany, it is obvious that he has become a victim of the war, after all. In Breyer's case, catching syphilis is a direct consequence of his involvement in the war. Of course, it could have been avoided, if only the symptoms had been noticed in time and properly diagnosed but Breyer declines, at one point, to accept any responsibility for contracting it, pleading ignorance:

'Haben Sie es im Felde bekommen?' fragt der Arzt. Ludwig nickt.
'Warum haben Sie es nicht gleich behandeln lassen?' 'Ich habe nicht gewußt, was es war. Man hat uns früher ja nie etwas von diesen Dingen gesagt. Es kam auch erst viel später und sah harmlos aus. Dann ging es von selbst wieder weg.' (*Weg zurück*, p.282)

thereby shifting the burden of responsibility on to both the military and medical authorities.

Incidentally, unlike in *Der Weg zurück*, where the negative symbolism of venereal diseases is utilized as a direct result of the war, to equate war with disease, works of nationalist war fiction applied it two ways. Firstly, in a chronological context, authors of nationalist war fiction used it to represent part of the decadent age preceding the First World War. They expected the conflict, which they had considered to be a cure for the nation and welcomed as a cleansing and purifying affair, to rid society of the corrupt and weak elements and lead to the emergence of a new people. And secondly, in a medical context as in their works, they expressed the view that the war had been brought to a premature end, before it was won, to accomplish that task. Logically, in their eyes it was the weak elements in society, those who had campaigned for and actively supported the end of the war, the pacifist, who had brought about defeat for Germany. Exemplary for these views is Arthur Klietmann's novel *Contra Remarque - Im Westen wohl was Neues*, in which the author accuses the Weimar pacifists, generally, and Remarque, specifically, of being syphilitic degenerates, (preface, unpaginated) unable to understand the true meaning and nature of war. (pp.7-9) Describing the roots of the 1918 revolution he uses the medical image of a virus affecting thousands of people like a contagious disease causing, eventually, the Kaiser to abdicate, the empire to crumble and the republic to be announced. Besides implying that the results of the events in the late autumn of 1918 were due to the action of a mob of syphilitic sailors, he simultaneously equates peace and the Weimar

Republic with venereal diseases, further emphasizing his rejection of, and resistance to both. (pp.172-73)

The image of Breyer still having the war, literally, in his blood is an interesting one, as it raises all sorts of general questions as to the impacts and origins of war as well as prophylactic measures that can be taken to avoid contracting the disease. If one analyses Remarque's presentation closer and considers war as a medical problem, as a disease like any other contagious disease which is transferred by viruses and/or contracted via physical contact generally, sexual intercourse, as specifically outlined by the author in the example provided, and/or an already infected transmitter, then the implication is that the responsibility for catching it lies entirely with the soldiers themselves, not the military or the medical authorities. However, at the same time, there still is a relatively limited chance of curing the disease in its early stages, before it develops into a full-blown painful affair, but certainly not at such a late stage as the one presented by the author in *Der Weg zurück*. Breyer, in any case, rejects the idea of a cure straightaway, preferring death instead, which is, of course, the most likely and almost inevitable outcome in war, a point even *Der Weg zurück* is designed to make, if only to a limited extent. Be that as it may, that still leaves open the question: where precisely does the virus emanate? And because that remains unanswered, since Remarque himself, unfortunately, fails to answer it, it remains open to all sorts of, more or less, useful suggestions. What is interesting, nevertheless, is that the presentation in *Der Weg zurück* alludes that women, apparently, have a vital role to play in passing it on.

The only alternative line of hypothesizing available is the constitutional one, which considers war as a genetic, not a medical phenomenon. But if war was, indeed, a hereditary disease, its status would be equal with that of original sin; that not only would remove it from the constitutional stage altogether, moving it instead into the realm of theological, or, to be more precise, metaphysical speculation, but it would also imply that war is a potentially epidemic affair, inevitable, incurable and interminable as long as mankind exists. From that line of arguing it follows that everybody involved in war, no matter the personal circumstances or attitudes, would automatically be exonerated from the responsibility for their actions in any military conflict. Allowing anybody and everybody to justify virtually anything and everything that occurs in war seems, however, to be too simple a way out of the many personal dilemmas caused by war which have found their reverberations in war literature generally.

NOTES

¹ See, in particular, Glaeser, *Jahrgang 1902*, pp.101-18, and Huhnhäuser, *Erinnerungen 1914*, p.2 and p.10. Recent historical research into the matter by Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann shows that the Kriegsbegeisterung, the excitement for war, in Germany in 1914 was largely confined to the population centres while the rural areas apparently remained either completely unaffected by these developments, or tended to be opposed to the war. For further reference covering this aspect see Ulrich/Ziemann, *Frontalltag*, pp.29-33.

² Siegert, *Tagebuch*, p.49.

³ Richert, *Beste Gelegenheit*, p.15. William Rose, in his paper 'The Spirit of Revolt in German Literature from 1914 to 1930', in *Men, Myth and Movements in German Literature* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931), pp.245-72 (pp.251-52), makes the interesting observation that in pre-war German literature some anti-war journals attributed to patriotism a similar disease status as Weimar realist war fiction did to war: 'The Expressionist periodical *Die Aktion*, edited by Franz Pfemfert, which was founded in the year 1911, was opposed to the War from the beginning, and even before 1914 it was the organ of those who declined to see in any war anything exalting or sacred. It fought against what the editor called the *Völkerkrankheit* of patriotism, and when, during the War, it was compelled to cease its political activities, it devoted itself to promoting the international spirit.'

CONCLUSION

The conflict of perception concerning the presentation of the medical aspects of the First World War in Weimar literature is largely dominated by the two different tendencies - the nationalistic apologetic approach on the one hand and the pacifist realistic on the other - which emerged in the 1920s and the early 1930s. Common to both groups was their claim to write the truth about the war; both groups also presented a variety of images of the war at or closely behind the front; these included, of course, medical aspects.

Authors with a nationalist bias favoured the bird's eye perspective; trying to provide a more generalized view of the war, they failed to present a detailed account of the day-to-day development of the struggle. Authors with a pacifist predisposition overwhelmingly favoured the worm's eye view, to make a negative point about the conflict; this, however, was too limited a perspective to maintain the coherence necessary to put certain events of modern warfare into context.

While nationalist war fiction contains various presentations of medical aspects, these are generally looked at from a distance. The results of modern warfare are generalized and minimized; the scale of the suffering and death is correspondingly shown as an inexorable and worthwhile sacrifice for the survival of the nation. The presentation of particularly horrible mutilations, i.e. the loss of several limbs, head wounds etc. occurs far less frequently or not at all.

The approach of the pacifist realistic works is much more critical. Kept deliberately subjective and often based on first-hand experience, they aim at exposing the horrors of war by demythologizing it and stripping it of its heroic myths. The medical aspects play an important role in achieving this objective as they are used as a literary device to expose the brutality, futility and inhumanity of modern warfare. The images applied range from the great and pointless waste of human life for a few yards of barren soil to horrible mutilations of individual soldiers, psychological disorders, the suffering of the victims of poison gas and venereal diseases, the long-term effects of which affect the victims long until the actual fighting is over. The fact that there are major discrepancies regarding the assessment and the presentation of medical aspects in Weimar pacifist literature itself, such as, for example, stretcher-bearers and women nurses as well as chemical warfare and poison gas, is an interesting feature in this literary genre. These peculiar divergencies extend beyond any individual work, author or medical issue. They are also evident in the various women's accounts which also make different points about the war; in addition, women's war literature, be it of a nationalist or pacifist tendency, reflects the ethical and moral changes which occurred in the war more comprehensively than men's literature. But although the war provided a common basis for both male and female participants on which their experience was rooted, their writings show considerable discrepancies concerning the presentation and interpretation of the role of the medical aspects in the war; this is, of course, due to the personal perspective of each individual author in the conflict as well as their objective in writing about (the) war.

As the examination of the medical aspects in both nationalist and pacifist Weimar war literature has shown, the most important discrepancy in both literary tendencies is their literary interpretation of the conflict itself. That this is done in medical terms is significant.

Nationalist war literature welcomes (the) war as the dawning of a new era and looks at it as a cure for social ills, stimulating those affected by it with ecstasy and euphoria.

The pacifist works consider war to be an equally unavoidable experience as influenza or typhoid, causing suffering and/or death to its victims. Some novels go even further than that, stating that war does, indeed, equal disease. By acknowledging that there is, apparently, no cure for war, they plainly reject any notion of man's responsibility for the origins of war and its nature, too.

In that respect the conflict of the perception and the presentation of the medical aspects in Weimar war literature truly represents the ultimate dividing line between the two irreconcilable ideologies.

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APPENDIX

This section of the thesis contains a variety of illustrations, photographs, and other authentic contemporary material; they refer to medical aspects of the First World War which have been reflected in the narratives and novels.

Although they were widespread in the Weimar Republic and are still relatively well-known today, I have not included some particularly distressing pictures showing soldiers with facial injuries and head wounds. They were mainly used for propaganda in the years from 1919 to 1933 by left-wing politicians, anti-war campaigners, and pacifists to draw the masses' attention to the effects of war on those involved and to prevent another war. The point is made when a French soldier expresses the desire to make some of these photographs public after the war in Johanssen's *Vier von der Infanterie*. In the novel the photographs are eventually torn up.

Please note that the postcards and one of the original photographs showing a group of soldiers in front of their dug-out at the Russian front have been reproduced at 120% of their original size.

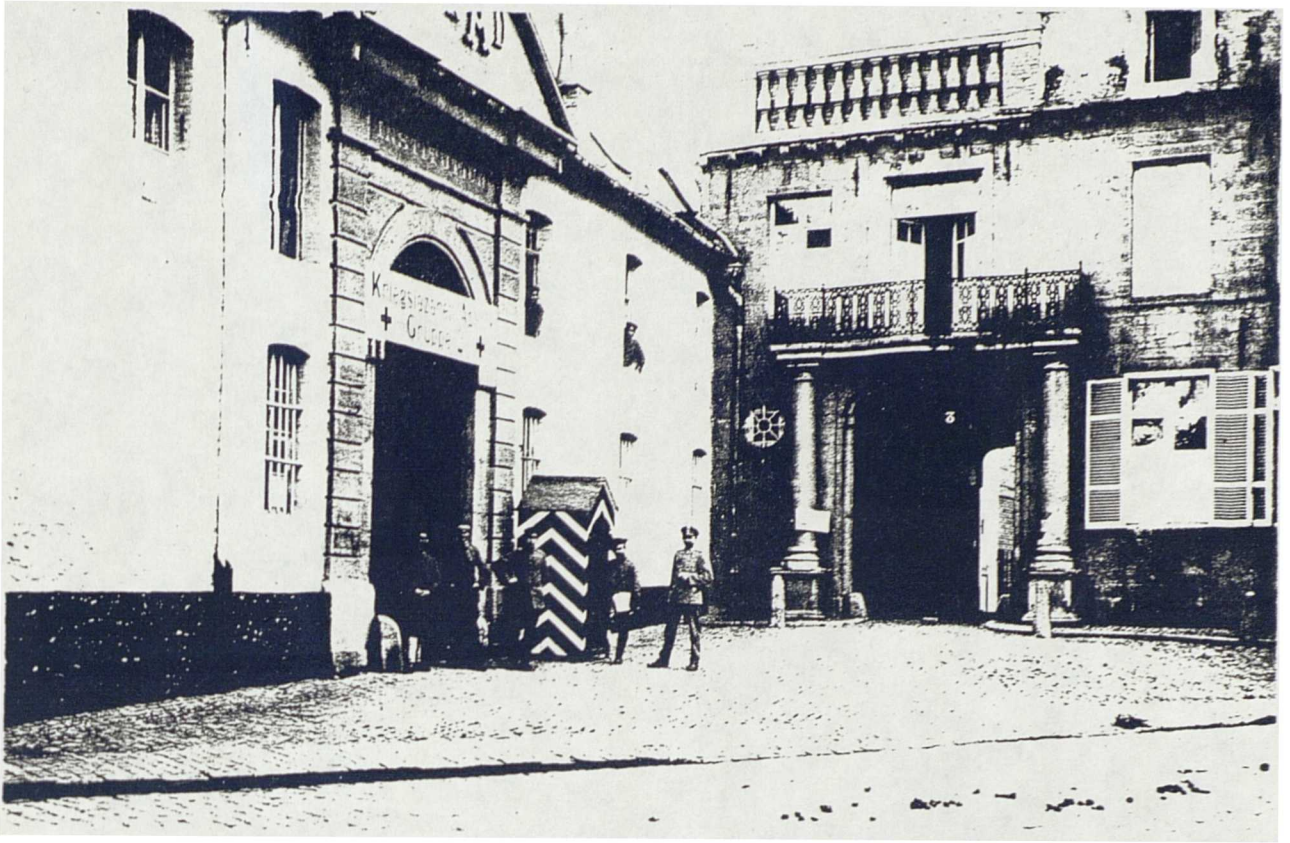
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heavily wounded against the blazing sun, wet cloths were placed on
their heads)
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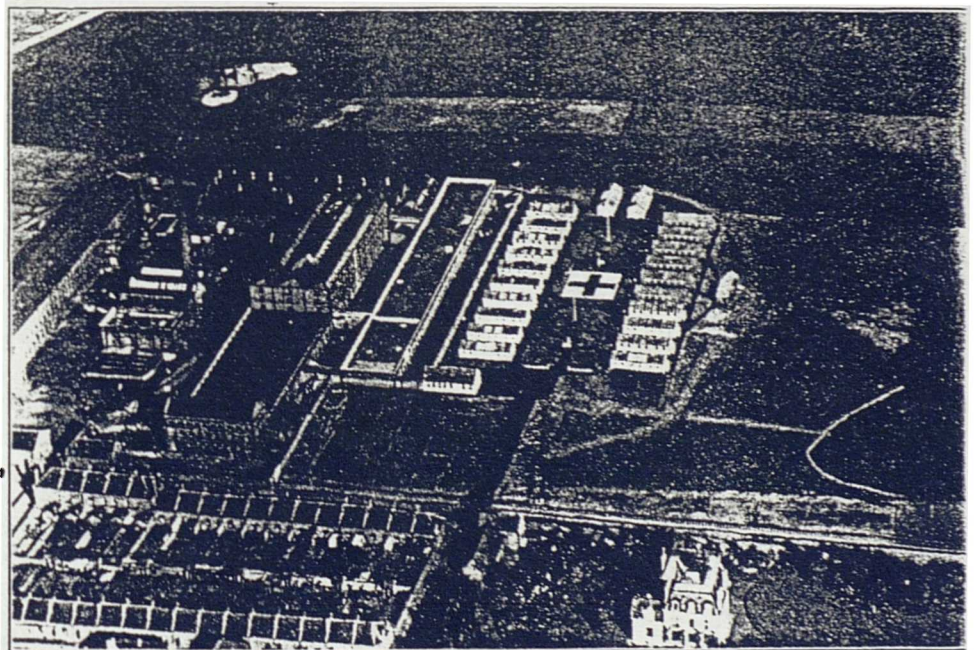
16. German photograph, entitled: 'Russischer Soldat mit einem Herzschuß'. (Infolge der sofort eingetretenen Leichenstarre blieb der Soldat während der ganzen Dauer des Feuergefechtes in dieser sitzenden Stellung und wurde von den feindlichen Kugeln durchsiebt.) ((Russian soldier shot through the heart) In consequence of the stiffening that immediately set in, the soldier remained in this sitting position during the whole battle and was pierced through and through by enemy bullets.)
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(Tilsit: Pawlowski, undated)

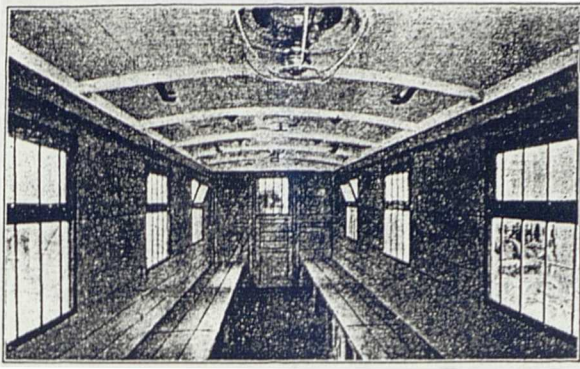
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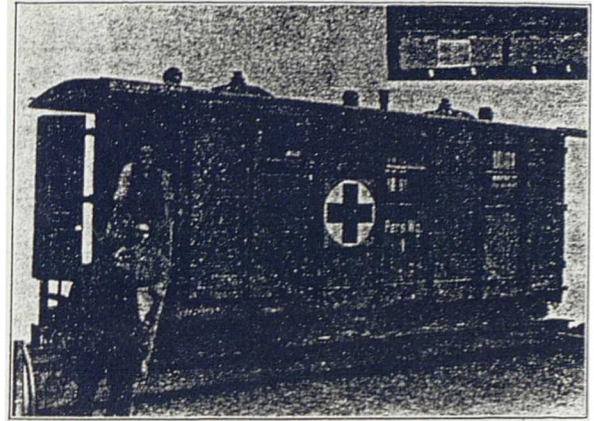
1. A German Kriegslazarett. It was not unusual for Feld- or Kriegslazarett to be accommodated in municipal buildings, schools, castles, etc., to which there are some references in Weimar war literature, such as in Jünger's *In Stahlgewittern*, Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, and Remarque's *In Westen nichts Neues*.

2. Bird's eye view of the German Kriegslazarett Caudry. This is an example of a fairly typical German Kriegslazarett. Note the large Red Cross, a protective device against accidental aerial bombardment and artillery shelling. Zweig, in his novel *Erziehung vor Verdun*, utilized the Kriegslazarett Dannevaux, which is destroyed in a nocturnal air raid because the Red Cross cannot be spotted in the dark, to show the brutal nature of the war which kills people suddenly and indiscriminately.

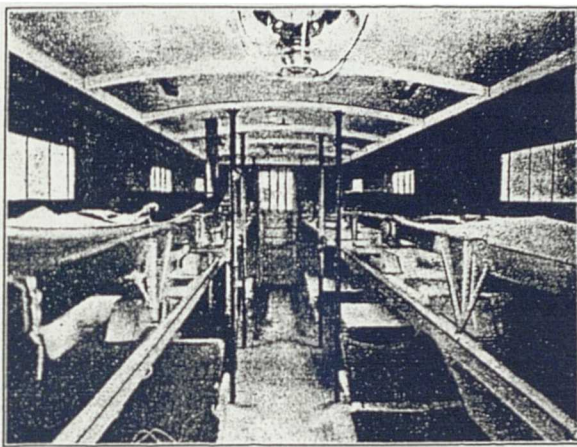




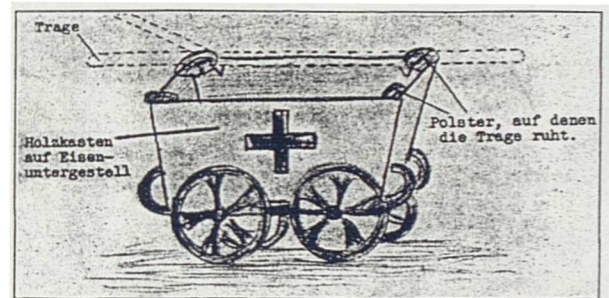
3



4



5



6

The illustrations 3 to 6 display a variety of railbound means of transport used by the German Heeressanitätswesen to move casualties from battlefields and medical establishments in the communication zone back to Germany. These have found their literary reverberations in, for example, Frank's *Der Junge, der seinen Geburtstag vergaß*, Remarque's *In Westen nichts Neues*, Richert's *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*, and Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*. Jünger's *In Stahlgewittern* and Renn's *Krieg* provide the audience with some vivid illustrations of the ordeals wounded soldiers were to face in the later stages of the conflict when taken to hospitals in the communication zone. Their presentations are intended to show that the vintage ambulances used were cold, uncomfortable, and unsuitable means of transporting casualties. These impressions stand in stark contrast to their descriptions of the clean, warm, and almost pleasant atmosphere aboard the hospital trains.

Osten. Das tägliche Baden der Armierungs-Soldaten



7

Narratives and novels with their focus firmly set on the front, Zweig's *Erziehung vor Verdun*, for example, which is about a sapper serving at the fortress Verdun, occasionally utilize the motif of soldiers enjoying a bath in a river. Richert, in *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*, also makes a reference to such an occasion. Those literary sources at our disposal which mention the procedure agree, however, that it was by no means a daily event, as this postcard wants the reader to believe. In fact, only on rare occasions did a front line soldier have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a cool, refreshing bath in a river, having been confined to the trenches, both in the East and the West, for weeks on end.



8

This is a picture of a Verbandtornister members of the Sanitätsunterpersonal were sometimes required to carry in the trenches. Since it contained only the most basic medical items, mainly bandages and plasters, it was baptized Pflasterkasten.

By deciding to call his anti-war novel about the Sanitätsunterpersonal *Die Pflasterkästen*, Frey turned this simple medical device into not only a symbol of the inadequacy and powerlessness of the senior and junior medical personnel, including the military nurses and stretcher-bearers, but also into a symbol of the complete failure of the civilian and military medical service as a whole in the war.

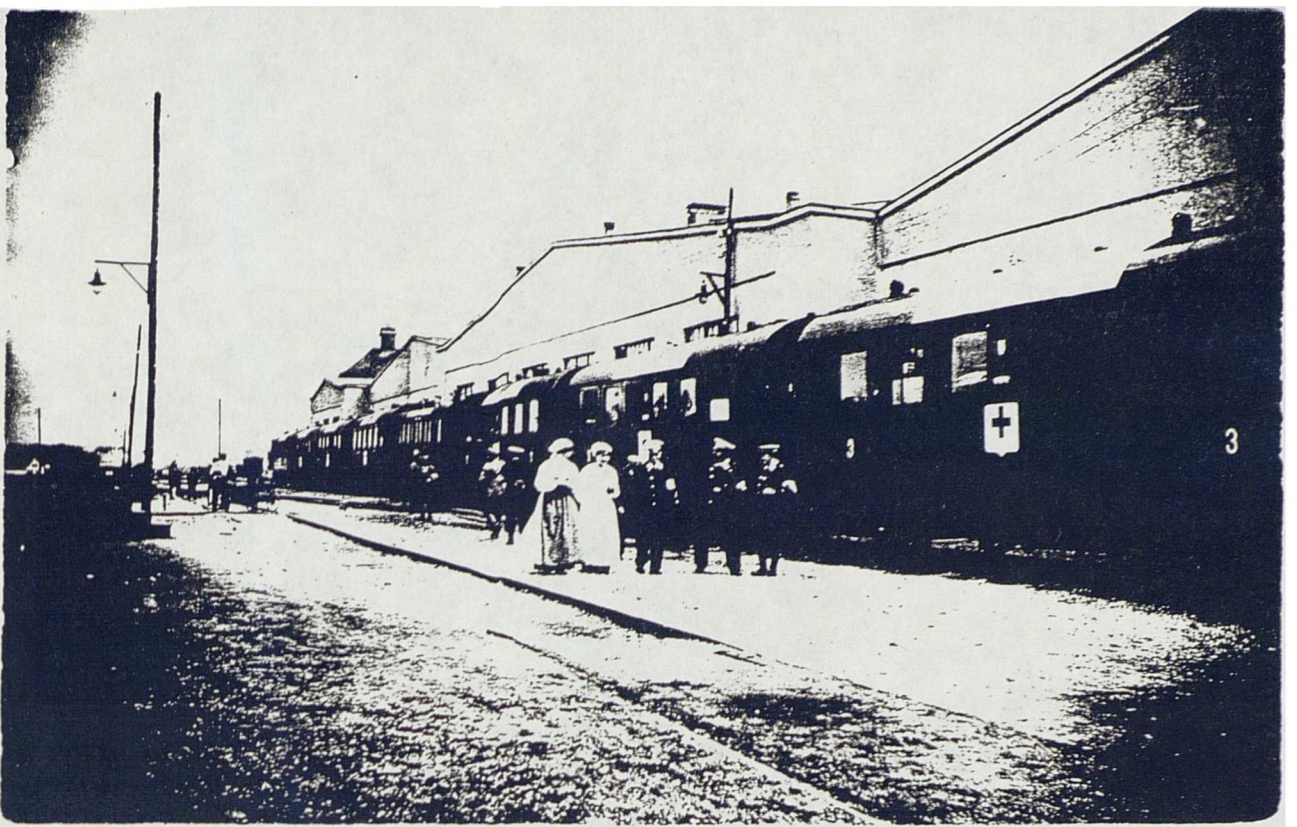
Removing wounded soldiers from the open ground or the narrow trenches always was a dangerous and difficult affair. Consequently, the presentations in Weimar war literature, regardless of their tendency of those who risked their life for their comrades-in-arms have generally been quite positive. Frey's *Pflasterkästen* not only extensively dwells on the equipment and methods used by the stretcher-bearers to carry casualties to the rear, but also makes the point that by taking care of the enormous masses of the victims of the conflict the members of the medical personnel became themselves victims of the war.



Even a pacifist novelist as critical as Remarque of anything attached to the German military medical service in the First World War, did, once in a while, allow his central character in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Paul Bäumer, to make a favourable comment about the *Sanitätsunterpersonal*, thereby accepting that these men (and sometimes women) were directly confronted with the horrors of the war. Unlike any other member of the German forces, these men (and women) immediately encountered the results of the fighting and were therefore in the best conceivable position to demythologize war and strip it of its heroic myths, as Frey's *Pflasterkästen* clearly demonstrates.

10





11

In spite of the relatively large number of women volunteering for war service, there are only a few accounts by women about their nursing experiences. Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat* is certainly the best-known of them, while Riemann's *Schwester der IV. Armee* presents an interesting example of a failed attempt by a woman to justify waging war.

Due to the nature of the service almost all of the works promote strong pacifist viewpoints and convictions, though they are less concerned with critically examining the role played by women nurses in the conflict, taking account of the erosion of the ethical, moral, and social conventions of the time instead.

12



Women volunteering for war service in nursing to 'do their bit' had to be adequately qualified. Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* and *Erziehung vor Verdun* only feature qualified nurses working in the various Lazarette behind the front, unlike Remarque, whose *In Vesten nichts Neues* shows auxiliaries working shoulder to shoulder with qualified staff. Katrin, central figure in Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, by obtaining her nursing certificate, becomes eligible for service on the wards of a Kriegslazarett. The horrors she encounters there contribute to her totally resigning herself to the inner numbness that eventually overwhelms her, causing her untimely death.

13



Ausweis

Musik

für

Saarbrücken.

staatlich anerkannte Krankenpflegepersonen.

..... Eisenberg Frida aus Saarbrücken welcher
 welche

vor der staatlichen Prüfungskommission in Saarbrücken die Prüfung für Krankenpflegepersonen mit der Gesamtzensur Gut bestanden hat und die zur Ausübung des Krankenpflegeberufs erforderlichen Eigenschaften besitzt, erhält hiermit die Bescheinigung, daß sie staatlich als Krankenpfleger / Krankenpflegerin anerkannt ist.

Für den Fall, daß Tatsachen bekannt werden, welche den Mangel derjenigen Eigenschaften dartun, die zur Ausübung des Krankenpflegeberufs erforderlich sind, oder daß die Krankenpflegeperson den in Ausübung der staatlichen Aufsicht erlassenen Vorschriften beharrlich zuwiderhandelt, bleibt die Zurücknahme der Anerkennung vorbehalten.

..... Trier , den 2. Dezember 1915

(Dienststempel.)



Unterschrift.

..... Der Regierungspräsident

I. V.

Schulze



14

Emphasizing the underlying theme of the senseless destruction of a whole generation of young men in the war, which appears in Thomas' *Die Katrin wird Soldat*, but also in the pacifist Weimar Frontromane, Köppen's *Heeresbericht*, Richert's *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*, Renn's *Krieg*, and Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*, for example, pictures 14 and 15 provide a brief impression of the nature of the First World War and what the enormity of the tragedy meant for the victims. That theme is enhanced still further in Frey's *Die Pflasterkästen* where there are references to the international scale of suffering in the conflict.

15



The ghastly sight of remnants of human bodies issuing a breath-taking horribly sweet smell and a great number of corpses lying around in the trenches and the fortifications and making strange noises are an image that repeatedly emerges in letters home.

16



17

In Jünger's *Stahlgewittern* the image reaches apocalyptic proportions with the dead lying around in a bizarrely surrealistic fashion; Remarque, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, provides similar illustrations of the front line, utilizing them as a motif to emphasize the brutal nature of the war.

By the end of 1914 the German Heeres sanitätsdienst had succeeded in disposing of the horse-drawn carriages that had been used for transporting casualties for the better part of half a century, replacing them with motorized ambulances which were judged to be much quicker and more effective in performing that task. But that was by no means the end of the Leiterwagen as a military vehicle. They still could be put to good use and subsequently functioned as hearses. With the Allied blockade succeeding in strangling Germany's important overseas supply lines and a tangible shortage of vital medical and military supplies, the Leiterwagen were increasingly used to replace the modern ambulances, beyond repair due to a lack of spare parts.

There is a scene in *Im Westen nichts Neues* showing the wounded Paul Bäumer and another soldier waiting for an ambulance and being picked up by such a Leiterwagen which takes them to the nearest medical establishment.

18



Merkblatt für den Gasschutz.

1. Vertraue Deiner Maske. Sie schützt Dich, wenn sie gut verpackt ist, sich in gutem Zustande (ohne Löcher, Risse usw.) befindet und Du sie sicher und rasch zu gebrauchen verstehst.

2. Vertraue dem Einsatz und wechsle ihn nicht während eines Gasangriffs. Er schützt Dich unbedingt im Gaskampf, mag dieser auch stundenlang dauern.

3. Achte stets auf Wind und Wetter. Hauptsächlich die Nacht und die frühen Morgenstunden benützt der Gegner für seine Gasangriffe. Darum trenne Dich nie von Deiner Maske, auch nicht während des Ruhens, Essens, Arbeitens usw. Mußt Du sie ablegen, so halte sie in greifbarer Nähe bereit.

4. Schone die Maske wie Deine Schußwaffe und halte sie sauber. Schütze Maske und Einsatz vor Nässe. Deine Gesundheit hängt im Gaskampf von ihr ab. Bringe kein Fett an ihre Metall- und Stoffteile, weil es den Gummistoff unbrauchbar macht.

5. Befolge genau die Gebrauchsanweisung in der Bereitschaftsbüchse und achte besonders auf die Gummidichtung im Mundring.

6. Wenn Du Gaswolken siehst, riechst oder Gasalarm hörst, und wenn Du Granaten mit schwachem Knall oder Entwicklung eines weißen, länger am Boden haftenden Rauches in Deiner Nähe be-

19

achtet, so lege sofort Deine Maske an und machrichtige Deine Kameraden rasch; denn das Gas ist schnell da. Rufe »G—a—a—s«, lege die Maske an, rühre das Läutewerk, mache Dich feuerbereit.

7. Atme ruhig und langsam, und laß es Dich nicht anfechten, wenn der Einsatz heiß wird. Das schadet nichts. Vermeide zu laufen und die Maske durch Anstoßen zu verschieben. Deine eigene Unruhe wäre der beste Gehilfe des Feindes.

8. Bediene Deine Schußwaffe wie sonst.

9. Der Unterstand schützt Dich nicht vor Gas, wenn Du keine Maske hast.

10. Wenn Deine Maske beschädigt ist, nimm als Notbehelf das Gewinde eines Einsatzes fest in den Mund und halte die Nase zu.

11. Lockere die Maske nach einem Gasangriff nur, wenn Du kein Gas mehr siehst, und nur mit großer Vorsicht. Setze sie nur ab, wenn Du beim Lockern kein Gas mehr riechst.

12. Entfette Deine Schußwaffe, wenn sie im Gase war und fette sie frisch ein. Die Munition wische trocken ab und öle sie wieder ein.

13. Nach einem Gasangriff betritt Deinen Unterstand nicht ohne Maske. Sorge für gute Lüftung von Graben und Unterstand.

14. Wische die Metallteile und tupfe die Stoffteile sorgfältig innen und außen trocken, ehe Du die Maske wieder verpackst. Fehlt Dir ein trockener Lappen, so trockene sie an der Luft, bei heißer Sonne im Schatten, bei Regen oder Frost im Unterstand, jedoch nicht am Ofen.

There are surprisingly few references to poison gas and chemical warfare in letters and war-time accounts until 1916. Weimar war literature is similarly oblivious to the issue. This extract from the pay book issued by the German forces in 1914 shows, however, that the issue was taken seriously long before the actual era of chemical warfare commenced.



20

There is a significant degree of disagreement in the literary sources concerning the gas mask. Some German novelists, including some pacifist writers, such as Köppen, in *Heeresbericht*, and Remarque, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, acknowledge that the device is the most effective means of protection against poison gas. Others, such as Richert, in *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*, and Zweig, in *Erziehung vor Verdun*, detest it as difficult to handle, uncomfortable to wear and dangerous to its bearer. Jünger, in his *In Stahlgewittern*, states that what was an allegedly protectionary device was, in effect, a potentially suicidal weapon.



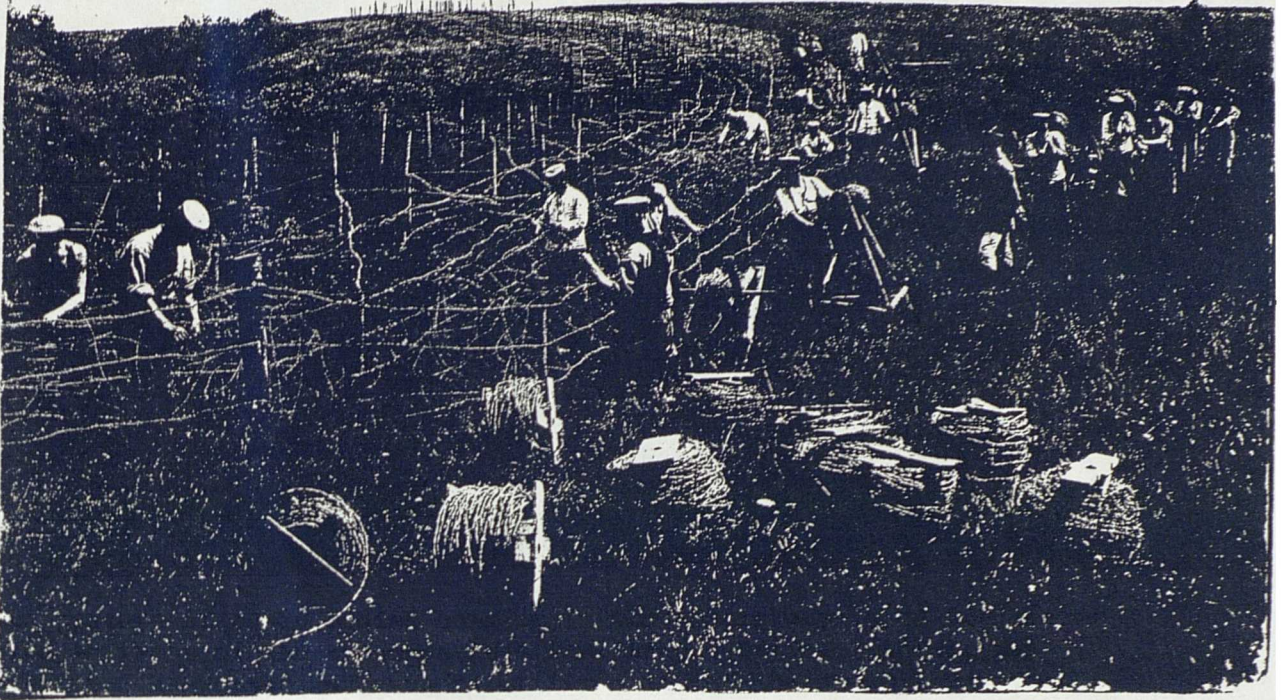
21

Some of the *Frontromane*, especially Johannsen's *Vier von der Infanterie*, and Remarque's *In Westen nichts Neues*, make the point that poison gas precisely is poison gas and kills people. Other authors, like, for example, Jünger, in *In Stahlgewittern*, and Richert, in *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*, dispute that conclusion. They condemn poison gas for its nature as a weapon that can cause sudden, random, and agonizing death; but they also claim that a contaminated victim need not necessarily die of gas poisoning, depending on the kind and quantity of gas he has swallowed. Interestingly, in line with illustrations 21 and 22, not one account examined provides an example of medical assistance having been successfully rendered to a contaminated soldier, demonstrating the total and utter ineffectiveness and powerlessness of the medical services to cope with the effects of modern warfare on its victims on a literary level.

22



Im Osten. Bei den Armierungs-Soldaten. Herstellung des Drahtschlingenhindernisses durch Akademiker



23

The picture of human bodies hanging in the entanglements of the barbed wire in front of the trenches is a familiar one in non-literary war memoirs. The Weimar war authors utilized it for their own intentions. Jünger, in *In Stahlgewittern*, presents a factual account of life and death in the trenches and uses the image correspondingly. There it appears as just another kind of death. Renn, in *Krieg*, Zweig, in *Erziehung vor Verdun*, Remarque, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, and Richert, in *Beste Gelegenheit zum Sterben*, on the other hand, use it to expose the true nature of war in which death regularly occurs in many different horrible forms.

24



Russen versuchen beim Sturmangriff den Drahtverhau zu durchkriechen, fallen aber durch deutsches Feuer



25

The extent of the suffering for the soldiers in the trenches was unimaginable. This is especially true for those soldiers fighting at the northernmost districts of the Russian front in winter where the war turned static for nearly eighteen months. Flex's work, *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten*, provides impressions of the inclement cold, biting frost, and masses of snow in the winter 1915/1916. But the author does not make any references to the painful medical conditions as a result of the bad weather.



26

There can be no doubt, though, that all the soldiers, East and the West, had to fight as much against the weather conditions as against the 'enemy'.

Nowhere else are the conditions and circumstances of the life the front line soldiers led in the early days of the conflict so aptly described, than in Löns' war diary *Leben ist Sterben, Werden, Verderben*. They show that the war was just as much a fight against dirt, filth, and the unpredictable weather as against other people. This motif regularly occurs in the *Frontromane*, regardless of their tendency.

Jingoistic war items, of which the following postcards (items 27 and 28) are an example, celebrated those existing in these circumstances as heroes.

27



Pacifist Weimar war accounts, on the other hand, like Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Johannsen's *Vier von der Infanterie*, and Köppen's *Heeresbericht*, as well as Zweig's *Erziehung vor Verdun*, with their focus firmly on trench warfare, symbolic for the war of attrition, used those conditions as a motif to strip the war of its myths of being a clean and glorious affair.

28



Im Schützengraben

Ein Nachtquartier



29

Research in medicine, especially plastic surgery, and other scientific areas blossomed during the conflict. It is one of the biggest pieces of irony that while an entire generation of young people was being sacrificed for irrational and illogical concepts of forced economic and territorial expansion, national honour and pride, the results emerging from scientific research were to benefit only those who had remained at home or survived the carnage.

The few Weimar authors who deal with the matter, Remarque, for example, in his post-war narrative *Der Weg zurück*, point out that even those soldiers who were to receive the benefits of the new developments made possible by the war, had paid too high a price for that 'privilege'. Moreover, if they had lost an arm, a leg, or several limbs, they would be unable to forget about the war. Trying to re-integrate into a post-war German society which wanted to forget about the conflict, their disability was a constant reminder of the war, which was therefore never going to be over for these men, until the day they died.

There are only a few references to venereal diseases in Weimar war literature. Those authors who mention them, like, for example, Plievier, in *Des Kaisers Kulis*, and Köppen, in *Heeresbericht*, merely show them as having been a safe and easy means for soldiers to escape the war, while Frey's *Die Pflasterkästen* also takes account of the medical implications of venereal diseases. Remarque differs from the other authors because of his approach and attitude towards venereal diseases. In *Der Weg zurück* he takes account of their long-term medical implications, demonstrating that their victims could not forget about the war, because it was, literally, still in their blood.

30

