



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE
Department of History and Civilization

Ernst Toller: An Intellectual Youth Biography, 1893-1918

Frederik Steven Louis Schouten

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining
the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization
of the European University Institute

Florence, July 2007

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Table of Content

Acknowledgements.....	7
Introduction: aim of, and approach to, an intellectual youth biography.....	9

PART I: RESTLESS WANDERINGS, 1893-1914

CHAPTER 1. The World of the Young Toller, 1893-1918:

<i>Wilhelmine Society and Cultural Revolt (1890-1914).....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>World War I and Generational Conflict (1914-1918).....</i>	<i>36</i>

CHAPTER 2. Toller's Family Background and Early Life up to World War I, 1893-1914:

<i>Toller's Family Background and Parental Home.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Childhood in Samotschin (1893-1906).....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Adolescence in Bromberg (1906-1914).....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Early Student Life in Grenoble (1914).....</i>	<i>69</i>

PART II: THE LONELINESS OF WAR, 1914-1916

CHAPTER 3. Volunteer for War: Sacrifice for the Fatherland, Rebirth through the Motherland, 1914-1915:

<i>Apocalypse 1914.....</i>	<i>79</i>
<i>German Soldier, German Hero (1914-1915).....</i>	<i>85</i>

CHAPTER 4. The Front Experience – Or: The Loneliness of War, 1915-1916:

<i>Front Soldier at Pont-à-Mousson (March-June 1915).....</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Slaughter in the Priest's Wood (June 1915-April 1916).....</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>Physical and Mental Collapse (April-November 1916).....</i>	<i>108</i>

PART III: THE STRUGGLE FOR REBIRTH, 1916-1917

CHAPTER 5. In the Shadow of the War: The Struggle with the “Inner Enemy”, 1916-1917:

<i>“I want to forget the War” (1916-1917).....</i>	<i>117</i>
<i>Civil Rights in No Man’s Land (1916-1917).....</i>	<i>123</i>

CHAPTER 6. Community and Geist-Revolution, 1917:

<i>Arthur Kutscher’s Seminar (Summer 1917).....</i>	<i>130</i>
<i>The Conference at Lauenstein (Fall 1917).....</i>	<i>143</i>

PART IV: YOUTH SOCIALISM, 1917-1918

CHAPTER 7. “Den Weg, Du Dichter Weise ...”, Fall 1917:

<i>Student Actions in Heidelberg (Fall 1917).....</i>	<i>153</i>
<i>‘Persecution’ and Escape (December 1917).....</i>	<i>169</i>

CHAPTER 8. Youth Socialism and the Working Class, 1918:

<i>In Defence of the Bund (January 1918).....</i>	<i>173</i>
<i>The January Strike and Imprisonment [Jan.-April 1918].....</i>	<i>179</i>
<i>A World Upside Down: Apocalypse 1918.....</i>	<i>189</i>

Conclusion	195
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Bibliography: Archives and literature.....	201
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Introduction – Aim of, and Approach to, an Intellectual Youth Biography

Träumen wir nicht von einer Gemeinschaft, die sich nicht mehr in den minderwertigen Kämpfen der Politik zerreibt, ja, die vom Berufspolitiker als gesellschaftlichem Typus befreit ist? Von einer Gemeinschaft, die ohne Hunger und ohne Angst, dem edlen Glück, dem edlen Leid lebt?

- ERNST TOLLER, *Der Deutsche Hinkemann*.

Why write another Study of Ernst Toller?

Today few people have heard of the German playwright of Jewish descent, Ernst Toller (1893-1939). Yet he was well-known as a playwright and a public figure in Germany and beyond, especially during the 1920s. As a writer, his success equalled, if not surpassed that of many contemporary writers, whose names nowadays are often better known, including Georg Kaiser (1878-1945) and Bertold Brecht (1898-1956). In 1939 the literary critic and expert on Expressionist literature, Kurt Pinthus (1886-1975), spoke of Toller as being the “most successful dramatist of the Expressionist generation in Germany”. In fact, his work was translated during his lifetime in twenty-seven languages and staged in a variety of countries, ranging from Germany to Russia, and from Japan to the United States. His autobiography, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* (1933), somewhat misleadingly translated in English as *I was a German* (instead of “A Youth in Germany”), appeared in Italian, Dutch and Chinese.¹ Perhaps

¹ On the number of languages, see: Kurt Pinthus, “Life and Death of Ernst Toller” in: *Books Abroad*, XIV (1939) 3; on the fact that his success surpassed that of Carl Sternheim (), Kaiser and Brecht, see also: John M. Spalek, “Ernst Toller: The Need for a New Estimate”: *German Quarterly* 39, No 4 (1966) 593; repeated in: Jost Hermand, “Vorwort” in: Ibid. (ed.), *Zu Ernst Toller Drama und Engagement. Ein Modellfall des politischen Theaters. Toller's Dramen als Manifestationen von Revolution, Gefängnis, Weimarer Republik, faschistischer Machtsübernahme und Exil* (Stuttgart, 1981) 6, and Richard Dove, *He was a German: a biography of Ernst Toller* (London, 1990) 1; on the translation in Chinese, see: Huang Guozhen, “Die Aufnahme des deutschen Expressionismus in China und sein Einfluß auf die moderne chinesische Literatur” in: *German Quarterly*, 60:3 (1987 Summer) 365-376, 372. Note: the English title only emphasizes the ‘German’ context of his life, leaving out the central dimension of ‘youth’ (*Jugend*); in combination with the national dimension, it is this that gives the book its particular message, that is: its appeal to German youth to rebel against Hitler. Arguably the dimension of ‘youth’ was more important for Toller than the German aspect, for the book is, first of all,

the decline of Toller's fame can be ascribed to the strong historical dimension of the themes of his plays, generally Socialist and Pacifist in orientation – yet, it is precisely this that makes his work appealing to the historically interested scholar, including the author of this study.

Undoubtably, Toller's fame as a writer and an historical actor in the 1920s owed much to his role as a key figure in the Munich Council Republic (*Räterepublik*). Born in the aftermath of World War I, this utopian experiment was intended as a revolutionary counter-model of the newly founded Weimar Republic under the Social-Democratic leadership of Friedrich Ebert (1871-1925). Contrary to the latter's ideal of a parliamentary democracy, the Council Republic opted for a 'democracy from below'. Organised in revolutionary councils, the people were supposed to be actively committed to political decision making rather than giving away their votes to parliamentarians. The Republic is generally divided into two phases, that of the so called 'Writers Republic' from 6 to 13 April 1919, and that of the Communists from 13 April to 3 May. Toller was active in both 'Republics', but he identified only with the first. On the night of 6th April 1919, he was elected president of the Central Council (*Vollzugsrat*), the umbrella organisation led by the Councils which controlled the executive Council of People's Commissioners (*Rat der Volksbeauftragten*); as power formally lay with the *Vollzugsrat*, it meant that power de facto lay in Toller's hands.

Toller's utopian experiment was short-lived. Under the leadership of the Russian born German Jew Eugen Leviné (1883-1919) the Republic was overtaken by the Communists on 13 April, after which it opted with the support of Moscow for a dictatorship of the proletariat under strong party discipline. Toller was assigned the role of military Commander, but he became estranged from the Communist Republic through Leviné's anti-humanist ideals and leadership. Before he fully distanced himself, however, the Republic was overruled by the Weimar government, which was able to count on the support of the German army. The terror and violence that accompanied the siege of Munich stained the memory of the Council Republic, and it deeply upset Toller. Both the Red and White troops caused bloodshed, killing innocent people. Toller fled, but was soon arrested and brought to trial. Leviné, who had also been arrested, was shot without trial. Alarmed by this blunt murder, public

an autobiography of his youth, not of his life in Germany; the book ends in 1924, when Toller is

figures and intellectuals came to the rescue of Toller, whose trial in July 1919 now became a *cause celebre*. This contributed to great extent to his relatively mild prison sentence of five years. On 30 September 1919 Toller's first play, *Die Wandlung* (The Transformation, 1917/18), was staged in Germany. With its author in prison, it became a tremendous success and made his name as a successful writer of plays, soon including other Expressionist works like *Masse-Mensch* (Masses and Man, 1919), *Hinkemann* (1921-22) and *Der Entfesselte Wotan* (Wotan Unchained, 1923). All these plays dealt with the theme of the failed revolution and exposed a re-working of the writer's socialist and communitarian ideals.² Released in 1924, Toller was expelled from Munich, after which he mostly resided in Berlin. An opponent of the Nazis, he was expelled from Germany in January 1933 and he set out for Great-Britain and then for the United States. He committed suicide in the Mayflower hotel in New York on 22 May 1939.

After his death, Toller's fame began to wane. His fate in West Germany was similar to that of many authors who had fled into exile. Demonised by liberal forces which continued to see him as a dreamer rather than a man with true insight into politics, he could hardly count on a positive evaluation and continued to stand in the shadow of the Council Republic.³ In East Germany interest in Toller was always substantially bigger than in West Germany, a politically coloured stereotypization notwithstanding. Whereas in the West he was often seen as a 'Communist', he was generally depicted as the prototype of a petit bourgeois intellectual and a "half-Fascist" by the Communists in the East.⁴ A first publication of Toller's work in West Germany dates from 1961, entitled *Prosa – Briefe – Dramen – Gedichte* (with an introduction by Kurt Hiller), which was anything but perfect from an editorial point of view, but its review by Wolfgang Frühwald in 1963 featuring in *Literaturwissenschaftlichen Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft* did much to stimulate study of Toller's work in West Germany during the 1960s and 1970s, and also interest

released from prison, not when he goes into exile in 1933.

² Carel ter Haar, "Bild-Selbstbild-Bild; zur literarischen Rezeption der Gestalt Tollers" in: Stefan Neuhaus, Rolf Selbmann and Thorsten Unger (eds.), *Ernst Toller und die Weimarer Republik: ein Autor im Spannungsfeld von Literatur und Politik* (Würzburg, 1999) 17-18.

³ Dove, *He was a German*, 1, 2, 5, 7; Spalek, "New Estimate": *German Quarterly*, 588, 590, repeated in Ossar, *Anarchism*, 10; see also: Werner Geifrig, "Ernst Toller – Dichter und Denker ,zwischen den Stühlen'" in: Albrecht Goetze und Günther Pflaum (eds.), *Vergleichen und verändert* (Munich, 1970) 116-242; Wolfgang Rothe, *Ernst Toller in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1983) 113.

⁴ Spalek, "New Estimate": *German Quarterly*, 588.

in him as an individual and in his status as an independent socialist.⁵ Meanwhile, a more positive evaluation also set in from the United States, where John M. Spalek (1929) called for a “new estimate” in 1966 and wrote an intense and essential bibliography, entitled *Ernst Toller and his Critics: a Bibliography* (1978).⁶ The work of Frühwald and Spalek was crucial in the re-habilitation of the reception of Toller’s personality, ideas and creative work in West Germany and the United States since the 1960s. In 1978 they edited a concise and still authoritative publication of almost all his work (including dramas, letters, and other publications), facilitating to great extent further research on the life and thought of Toller.

Today a whole list of articles, books and dissertations on Toller exists.⁷ The vast majority of these studies are literary accounts, dealing with interpretations of Toller’s creative work. Noteworthy are, amongst others, Carel ter Haar’s *Appel oder Resignation?* (1977), Sigurd Rothstein’s *Der Traum der Gemeinschaft* (1987), René Eichenlaub’s *Ernst Toller et l’Expressionisme politique* (1980), and Andreas Lixl’s *Ernst Toller und die Weimarer Republik 1919-1933* (1986). More recently, an insightful article was written by Christa Hempel-Kütter and Hans-Harald Müller on Toller’s early “search for spiritual leaders”.⁸ From a different angle, a whole range of studies of varying value were undertaken into the significance and role of Toller’s Jewish identity, always considered crucial to understanding Toller’s life and work. Included among these studies is a thought-provoking though somewhat disappointing article by Michael Ossar (1985), explaining Toller’s ‘messianism’ from the Messianic Idea in Judaism (to which I shall return later), and various articles by Carsten

⁵ Wolfgang Frühwald, “Rezension der Toller-Auswahlbände” in: *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft*, Neue Folge, Band IV (Berlin 1963) 279-312; on this, see also: Ter Haar, “Bild-Selbstbild-Bild” in: Neuhaus/Selbmann/Unger (eds.), *Toller und die Weimarer Republik*, 22; on the impact of the 1961 edition, see also: Hermand, “Vorwort” in: Ibid. (ed.), *Zu Ernst Toller Drama und Engagement*, 7.

⁶ Up to the 1970s, Toller was long equated with “Communism” in American publications, although not always intended as a means to discredit him, see for example: Georg Franz, ‘Munich: Birthplace and Center of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party’ in: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. XXIX, no.4 (Dec, 1957) 319-334; Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage. An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New York, New Brunswick, 1987)

⁷ For an overview and analyses of the works on Toller that have been published before 1998, see: John M. Spalek, *Ernst Toller and His Critics. A Bibliography* (Charlottesville, 1968: Nachdruck New York, 1973); Sigurd Rothstein, *Der Traum der Gemeinschaft. Kontinuität und Innovation in Ernst Toller’s Dramen* (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris, 1987) 16-33; Distl, *Toller*, 6-13; see also Carel ter Haar’s good overview, “Bild-Selbstbild-Bild” in: Neuhaus/Selbmann/Unger (eds.), *Toller und die Weimarer Republik*, 15-26.

⁸ Christa Hempel-Küter and Hans-Harold Müller, “Ernst Toller: Auf der Suche nach dem geistigen Führer: ein Beitrag zur Rekonstruktion der “Politisierung” der literarischen Intelligenz im Ersten Weltkrieg” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse* (Tübingen, 1997) 78-106.

Schapkow who understands Toller's ambivalence about his Jewish identity in terms of the questionable concept of Jewish "self-hatred".⁹ There are also two substantial, all-round biographies by Wolfgang Rothe and Richard Dove, entitled *Ernst Toller in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (1983) respectively *He was a German: a biography of Ernst Toller* (1990), both of which are important and crucial works on Toller, although the second is unquestionably the most extended, if not, the most authoritative of the two. In addition to these all-round biographies, Dieter Distl wrote a political biography of Toller in 1993, entitled *Ernst Toller: Eine politische Biographie* (1993).

In the light of this impressive list of publications, it may come as a surprise that research on Toller's early life and youth remains sparse and un-systematic. With the exception of the above mentioned text of Hempel-Küter and Müller and a few lesser concise and more descriptive articles (including a re-working of a somewhat outdated masters thesis), Toller's youth is often seen as an introduction, if not, prelude to his later life rather than as a phase in itself. Bernard Grau, author of an authoritative biography on Kurt Eisner (1867-1919), has pointed to the need to place Toller in the context of the phenomenon of youth in Germany, but his article reveals more about the context of youth around Eisner than about that of Toller himself, something to which he also fairly admits in the title of his article.¹⁰ Most scholars point to the great importance of Toller's youth for an understanding of his later life, but there is not yet any coherent or in-depth analysis of his youth as a whole. Considering Toller's own interest in youth as a stage in its own right (reflected, moreover, by the fact that youth takes up more than a third of his autobiography!), this absence may come as an even greater surprise.

⁹ Relying on the work of Sander L. Gilman, Schapkow equates Toller's ambivalence about Jewish identity with "self-hatred", but the term "self-hatred" does not seem to cover Toller's actual sentiments. Toller did not feel (or at least it is not detectable in his memoirs) 'hatred' toward himself, nor – as Schapkow wants us to believe – to Jews in general. Toller discredits Jews, as Schapkow rightly notes, but he also discredits non-Jews, for example "Siegel" (chapter 4). Perhaps one might better argue that he discredits people who obstructed his self-relation or for whom he simply felt contempt. See: Carsten Schapkow, "Judentum als zentrales Deutungsmuster in Leben und Werk Ernst Tollers" in: *Exil. Forschung, Erkenntnisse, Ergebnisse*. Hrsg von Joachim H. Koch., 7. Jg. (Frankfurt a/Main, 1996) No. 2, 25-39; Ibid, "Judenbilder und jüdischer Selbsthaß. Versuch einer Standortbestimmung Ernst Tollers" in: Neuhaus/Selbmann/Unger (eds.), *Toller und die Weimarer Republik*, 71-86; Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore, London, 1986); on the difficulty of the use of "self-hatred", see also: Shulamit Volkov, "Selbstgefälligkeit und Selbsthaß" in: Ibid. (ed), *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1990) 181-197.

¹⁰ Bernhard Grau, "Kurt Eisner und sein Verhältnis zur Jugend im Ersten Weltkrieg und in der Zeit der Revolution (1918/19) aus der Perspektive Ernst Tollers" in: Neuhaus/Selbmann/Unger (eds.), *Toller und die Weimarer Republik*, 58.

Filling part of that gap with an intellectual biography of Toller's youth is the aim I have set myself in this study. I do not seek to present a definitive biography of Toller's youth, but rather seek a method to trace back his early utopianism to its personal and social context. Toller's youth can roughly be divided into two parts: that of his life up to World War I, and that of life during World War I itself. I shall focus largely on the second part, although I also make reference to the first. In fact, the period up to World War I is essential to understand the drives and needs that characterized Toller's life in war.

At one level, this study can be seen as an accumulation of earlier knowledge about Toller's youth. It seeks to assemble, unite, and correct earlier facts and interpretations about that period. With that I have opted for a chronological approach, which shows the specific development of Toller's early life and creative 'production'. At another level, I seek to accomplish earlier knowledge with new information. In so doing, I pay much attention to the socio-cultural networks of his early life (family, friends, combat units, intellectual groups) through which we are able to better understand the concrete and 'practical' frame in which both Toller's needs and humanitarian socialism were born.

Methodology and Hypothesis

This study, an intellectual youth biography of Ernst Toller from 1893 to 1918, shows the interdependence of intellectual development, biography, and socio-cultural setting.¹¹ In so doing, it differs from previous studies on Toller in two crucial ways: first, it pays more attention to the psycho-social dimension of that early life, and second, it seeks to understand that life in a larger intellectual context which has received far too little attention so far:

Psycho-Social dimension. The sensitive nature of Toller's character begs for a more psychological approach to his person and thoughts. From his birth in 1893 to his death in 1939 Toller was haunted by psychological problems which manifested themselves in headaches and states of depression for example. In his age Toller was supposed to

¹¹ I learned here from: Arthur Mitzman, *Michelet, Historian: Rebirth and Romanticism in Nineteenth-*

be suffering from “neurosis” (now: DSM-IV),¹² a concept that today is subject to severe critique, largely for its vagueness that often seeks to ‘medicalize’ a pathological disposition which can equally be explained in terms of heightened or more developed sensibilities. Wolfgang Rothe, author of the first biography on Toller, did point to the need to understand Toller’s life in psychological terms, but did not explore this further in his own study on Toller. In their 1994 article Christa Hempel-Küter and Hans-Harold Müller gave an important impetus to that ‘call’ when shifting attention from the general stress in scholarship of Toller on the central role of Jewish identity in his early life to the “offences and discriminations” that were connected to that identity, thus pointing to the development of specific sensitivities, which they also decipher as the source of his later socialism.¹³ I would like to take this road toward psychology somewhat further by both pointing to the central role of anxiety and trauma in Toller’s experience of the world in his early life. At the same time I would like to point to the internal contradiction of a character that sought social inclusion, on the one hand, and solitude, on the other.

In order to understand the psycho-social dimension that underlay Toller’s early life and creative ‘production’ it seems fruitful to divide that life in the two abovementioned periods. In the first period (1893-1914), which shall be discussed in chapter 2, we detect the dominance of an overall feeling of estrangement from the world in which Toller was born. Scholars of Toller have often ascribed this sense of alienation to his “Jewish background” (Dove), but it seems more fruitful to understand it in a much larger context of the interplay of Toller’s sensitive character and his socio-cultural setting, where morality and social conflicts were dominant. In this context Toller felt isolated and displayed the need for spiritual “order”, closely related to an understanding of the Godly essence. When he grew older, such moral disorientation was aggravated by a lack of purpose, which only gained new meaning through the war in 1914. In the second period (1914-1918), hope for psycho-social rebirth from early wanderings was strengthened, although the experience of war soon

Century France (New Haven and London, 1990).

¹² Rothe has pointed to the possibility of genetic origins of Toller psychic constitution, but he relies on an unreliable remark of Dr. Ernst Rüdin in psychological report from 1918; Rüdin was a eugenic doctor and a political opponent, inclined to racial notions – there is no evidence that further supports a genetic explanation, see: Rothe, *Toller*; Bundesarchiv (BA), Potsdam: Zwischenarchiv Bundesarchiv Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten: 30.03 ORA: Oberreichsanwalt beim Reichsgericht (ORA/RG), C 24/18, *Psychiatrisches Klinik der K. Universität München, 12.8.1919: Psychiatrisches Gutachten über Toller..*

¹³ Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 82.

complicated this hope. Rooted in trauma, it aggravated rather than solved his psycho-social disorientation; this necessitated a desperate struggle to find (new) spiritual values of community (*Gemeinschaft*), which Toller then found through the work of Gustav Landauer, the founding stone of his early utopian socialism.¹⁴

Romanticism and rebirth. Scholars of Toller often point to the romantic character of Toller's early life up to 1919, but they rarely give it more in-depth attention. Perhaps a (unintended) consequence of the "new estimate" (seeking to show that Toller was anything but an irrational *Schwärmer*), attention has drifted away from earlier accounts which explained the ideas of Toller in the frame of (neo)romanticism. This study, then, seeks to revive the romantic context of Toller's youth and early utopianism: however, by romanticism I do not mean the literary tradition *pur sang* (which was often intended in earlier research on Toller), but rather an anti-materialist and anti-capitalist world view (*Weltanschauung*), closely connected to the problem of modernity in Wilhelmine Germany (1890-1918) and vividly expressed by its cultural elite at the beginning of the twentieth century. This anti-capitalist romanticism, rooted in the spiritual and pseudo-religious need for "wholeness" through cultural rebirth, provided the overall context of Toller's social utopianism. Toller not only dwelled on its ideas for a cultural self-understanding, but also gave active shape to its ideal of cultural rebirth. It is the aim of this study to show the development of that process, and how it brought an essentially non-political view into the political arena, fusing it with socialist idealism.

Closely connected to this romantic *Weltanschauung* was the notion of 'youth' as a metaphor of cultural rebirth. As we shall see, the war experience gave that concept a crucial meaning for Toller, as only then the need for spiritual regeneration radically increased.

This view of an anti-capitalist romanticism strongly opposes research that has tried to frame Toller's early utopianism in the context of the Messianic Idea in

¹⁴ In all this I learned much from Freudian and post-Freudian theory, although this study can hardly be regarded as a psycho-analytical work. As a theory rooted in neurotic analysis, Freudian thought is largely outdated, but it is interesting still for its analysis of fear and anxieties (understood in terms of powerlessness and a loss of love, care, and security replacing Freud's initial understandings of anxiety as transformed libido), and thus of in- and exclusion. I personally cannot agree with the metaphysical implications of Freudian theory, including the notion of pre-Oedipal bonds (with either mother or father) and the fixation in sexual and libidinal drives. I can neither agree with the idea of oedipal conflict itself, largely undermined by post-Freudian and other scholarship through greater emphasis on peer analysis in the study of individual development.

Judaism. Relying on a thought-provoking hypothesis of Michael Löwy, developed in his *Redemption et Utopie* (1987), Michael Ossar defended the untenable hypothesis of an “elective affinity” between Toller’s utopian anarcho-socialism and the Messianic Idea in Judaism. Alo Allkemper has already shown that this discourse evolves around a “wrong axis”, pointing to Toller’s ambivalence to Judaism, on the one hand, and to the greater relevance of Christian messianism, on the other.¹⁵ Connected to pre-war psycho-social needs, moreover, Toller’s intellectual ‘messianism’ only emerged under the impact of the war experience, when arch-typical metaphors of the Bible and Christian Passion gained strength. These notions were an essential part of the romantic legacy in Germany. Accordingly, Toller’s ‘messianism’ was a romantic creed; when I refer to Toller’s idealism in this study in terms of a “mythical messianism” (Hübinger) it only has an ideal-typical meaning.

Aside from these overall considerations, a few remarks about my sources are in place. As I hoped to consult all possible records of Toller’s early life and its immediate socio-cultural context, I have consulted a variety of sources, including both published and unpublished sources. Although I also work with lesser known material, including the manuscript of *Die Wandlung* (then still called: “Der Entwurzelte” or Uprooted One) and various unknown ego-documents and official certificates of birth, marriage and death, most of my sources are well-known in research on Toller. My aim is to re-interpret and re-evaluate these sources, and with that also earlier interpretations by scholars of Toller.

Most prominent among these sources is Toller’s autobiography, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland*. Though incredibly rich, it is also rather unreliable at times. Wolfgang Rothe already warned in 1983 of the possibility of a “distorting stylisation of social

¹⁵ Alo Allkemper, „„Aber bin ich nicht auch Jude“ – Zu Ernst Tollers Judentum“ in: Ibid (ed.), *Literatur und Demokratie* (Berlin, 2000) 169-183. Ossar relies on Michael Löwy, who also stresses that the revival of Jewish Messianism occurred through German romanticism, where a vivid current of mysticism was present (Eckahrt, Boehme). It is precisely this element that undermines the ‘Jewish’ nature of ‘Jewish’ messianism. Löwy relies on the messianic theory of Gershom Scholem, deeply influenced by the romantic tradition as well. Did Scholem not present a romanticised version of Jewish messianism? On the influence of the Christian Passion, see also: Sokel, “Toller” in: Hermant, *Zu Ernst Toller*, 27; Catherine Mazellier-Grünbeck, *Le Théâtre Expressionniste et le Sacré: Georg Kaiser, Ernst Toller, Ernst Barlach* (Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt a/Main, New York, Paris, Wien, 1994) 67, 292; Thomas Koebner, “Der Passionsweg der Revolutionäre: Christliche Motive im politischen Drama der zwanziger Jahre“ in: Klaus Siebenhaus, Hermann Haarmann (ed.), *Preis der Vernunft: Literatur und Kunst zwischen Aufklärung, Widerstand und Anpassung* (Berlin, 1982) 39-50; Mahmoud Al-Ali, “Die Hauptfigur Friedrich und ihre religiösen Züge in Ernst Tollers Drama “Die Wandlung““ in: Erich Maria Remarque-Archiv (ed.), *Krieg und Literatur* (Osnabrück, 2000/2) 59-68.

reality”.¹⁶ In addition Dieter Distl added that Toller’s autobiography is sometimes almost written as a novel, where dramatization often takes over from reality, as in the case of his role during the revolution and Council Republic.¹⁷ Pointing to that dramatization, Carel ter Haar stressed that work’s highly defensive character to justify earlier actions in his life.¹⁸ Bernard Grau even speaks of a “not always easy detectable mixed-relationship” in that book between “wish and reality”.¹⁹ In addition I could add that the book also *invents* anecdotes, though often based on a certain relation to reality, which makes it problematic as a source. At times these inventions reveal knowledge about Toller in a more symbolic way, but they often also raise more questions than answers.

Written in 1933, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* appeared against the background of Hitler’s ascent to political power in Germany. Although the book seeks to justify earlier actions in Toller’s life, it also is intended as a call for ‘youth’ – whatever Toller’s precise definition of ‘youth’ – to rebel against Hitler. Rather exceptionally among generational literature in Weimar Germany during the 1930s, it is a Leftwing attempt to exploit the myth of youth as a force of renewal, which was then more commonly done by the conservative Right, most notably in the works of Ernst Jünger (1895-2003) and the many intellectuals around Hans Zehrer’s *Tat*-magazine.²⁰ In so doing, moreover, Toller remoulds his own youth into a model for German youth in general.

Another source that is of great importance for understanding Toller’s youth was his first play, *Die Wandlung*. First staged in September 1919, it was largely written in 1917, with final revisions in February and March 1918. Where his autobiography is often more a novel, *Die Wandlung*, Distl writes, is often more autobiography than fiction.²¹ Yet this does not mean that the book was a concise reflection of his own life. It is true that there are many parallels, but there are also differences between Toller and his alter ego, Friedrich. Written under the immediate

¹⁶ Rothe, *Toller*, 23.

¹⁷ Distl, *Toller*, 13, 55-57.

¹⁸ Ter Haar, “Bild-Selbstbild-Bild” in: Neuhaus/Selbmann/Unger (eds.), *Toller und die Weimarer Republik*, 18-19.

¹⁹ Grau, “Kurt Eisner und sein Verhältnis zur Jugend” in: Neuhaus/Selbmann/Unger (eds.), *Toller und die Weimarer Republik*, 49.

²⁰ Wohl, *Generation of 1914*, 54; on Zehrer and others, see also Walter Struve, *Elites against Democracy. Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890-1933* (Princeton, 1973); Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt, 1993).

²¹ Distl, *Toller*, 13.

impact of World War I, the book often reveals more about the ideas that Toller had developed through war and its aftermath than about his actual life. Crucial to the play was its highly utopian – and somewhat naïve – character, relying on a sincere faith in the spiritual rebirth of man.²² Like his autobiography, the book also contains a strong element of ‘youth’ and generational understanding, but it was equally retrospectively applied to the analysis of Friedrich’s early life, twisting and distorting Toller’s own reality. In addition to *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* the drama is very insightful, however, and offers a sometimes deviant, though complementary story of Toller’s life until the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918. Written from different historical viewpoints, and with different aims, the books gain specific meaning in their interdependence and interrelation.

In addition to these two sources there are many other sources that compliment the story of Toller’s early life. Worth mentioning are poems, psychological reports, and police reports. I shall deal with a limited number of poems, because most of the early poems are undated. James Jordan has analysed these poems, often rather speculatively. With the exception of a few poems, which includes the, for these purposes, crucial poem “Der Ringende” (see: chapter 6), I therefore reject them as sources. With respect to the psychological reports, caution is in place. Various scholars have already noted that many of these reports were written during a radicalisation of political events; most of Toller’s doctors cherished nationalist sympathies and blurred these with their diagnoses of Toller himself, who was on the other end of the spectrum to their own ideas. Yet the reports also reveal useful information about the early life of Toller: often this is factual information, but at times psychological insights are given as well. The police reports, largely written in the aftermath of the January strike (1918), are very useful, although one should always remain conscious that they were written by state officials.

Research took place in a whole variety of archives and libraries in Germany, Poland, Italy, the Netherlands and the United States. Because the archival sources are so dispersed, however, I have been constrained to omit consultation of a few (possible) sources. I have not therefore consulted the archives of the universities of Grenoble,

²² Rothstein, *Traum der Gemeinschaft*, 33-34; Sokel, “Ernst Toller” in: Wolfgang Rothe (ed.), *Deutsche Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert. Strukturen und Gestalten*, Bd II (Bern and Munich, 1967) 302; Horst Denkler, “Ernst Toller. Die Wandlung” in: Manfred Brauneck (ed.), *Das deutsche Drama vom*

Heidelberg and Munich, where Toller stayed between 1914 and 1919. Some of the most important archival material from these universities has already been published elsewhere. Direct access to the archive of Toller's birth-town, Samotschin, moreover, was denied.

Expressionismus bis zur Gegenwart. Interpretationen (Bamberg 1970) 57.

PART I

RESTLESS WANDERINGS

[1893-1914]

FRIEDRICH: Sie zünden drüben Lichter an. Kerzen der Liebe. Mysterien offenbaren sich. Lichtmeer der Liebe... Ausgestoßner taumle ich von einem Ufer zum andern. Denen drüben Fremder, den andern fern. (...) Länger schleppe ich nicht diese Zerissenheit mit mir umher. Was sind mir die! Daß ihr Blut in mir strömt, was will das bedeuten? Zu denen drüben gehöre ich. Einfacher Mensch, bereit zu beweisen. Fort mit aller Zersplitterung. Nicht mehr länger stolz schützen, die ich verachte. Aufrecht. MUTTER: (...) Wo warst du den ganzen Tag? FRIEDRICH: Auf der Wanderschaft, Mutter. Auf der Wanderschaft... Wie immer. (...) Wie Er, Ahasver, dessen Schatten zwischen geketteten Straßen kriecht, der sich in pestiger Kellerhöhlen verbirgt und nächtens draussen auf frierenden Feldern verfaulte Kartoffeln sammelt... Ja, ich suchte Ihn, meinen großen Bruder, Ihn, den ewig heimatlosen... MUTTER: Du versündigst dich, Friedrich. Bist du heimatlos? FRIEDRICH: Wo habe ich denn eine Heimat, Mutter. Die drüben haben eine Heimat, in der sie wurzeln. Die drüben sind eins mit sich und ihrem Boden... frei von Zerrissenheit, die gleich eiternden Schwären Denken und Fühlen zerfrisst... Sie können lachen und frohen Herzens tat tun. Sie haben ihr Land, in dem sie wurzeln... dem sie sich darbringen können...

ERNST TOLLER, *Die Wandlung*.

The World of the Young Toller

[1893-1918]

Wilhelmine Society and Cultural Revolt (1890-1914)

Any understanding of the social utopianism of the young Toller, culminating in the period of the revolution and its aftermath of the Council Republic in Munich of April 1919, must take as its starting point the broad and very pluralistic cultural environment of Wilhelmine Germany (1890-1914). Motivated by psycho-social needs, Toller's early humanitarian socialism reflected much of the intellectual language, form and sentiment of its cultural environment at large.

The cultural life of Wilhelminian Germany must in turn be viewed against the background of the rapid modernization of the country, in other words the transformation of the country from a predominantly feudal-agrarian society into a modern, capitalist-industrial nation. This process took place between 1850 and 1914 and transformed Germany in less than sixty years in a whole number of social, political, economic and cultural fields. Although economic development and technological inventions were crucial in that process, it also involved an increase of demographic growth and social mobility, a decline in the death rate and in analphabetism, and processes of urbanization, secularization, bureaucratisation and democratization. In his article "Probleme der Modernisierung in Deutschland" (Problems of Modernization in Germany), Thomas Nipperday sums up about fifty partial characteristics of the modernisation process in Germany.²³ None of these developments occurred at the same time, and they also moved

²³ Thomas Nipperday, "Probleme der Modernisierung in Deutschland" in: Ibid. (ed), *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte. Essays* (Munich, 1990) 52-70, esp. 52-53. On democratization and an increase of political commitment, see also: Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton, 2000); David Blackbourn, *History of Germany 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century*. Second Edition (Oxford, 2003); on urbanization, see: J. Reulecke, *Geschichte der Urbanisierung in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1985), esp Chapter III, 68-146, including the Tables on 201-222; on mobility and migration, see: Steve Hochstadt, *Mobility and Modernity: Migration in Germany, 1820-1989* (Ann Arbor, 1999).

into different directions, but they can all largely be located within the period from 1850 to 1914. In all these developments, moreover, a lead was taken by Prussia, the heartland of the modern unified German nation, although many other federal states were soon to follow.

Typical for the process of modernization in Germany was that its speed was much higher in the sixty years before World War I than in countries like Great Britain and France, while at the same time its enormous proportions radically surpassed the size of modernisation in those nations. Germany was already able to transform into a leading European economic giant by 1871, for example, the year of its unification, but after 1895 it also outranked Great Britain as a leading nation in a number of fields, including the mining, engineering and shipping industries, and it became the world's greatest exporting nation of metal with a lead in the chemical and electro-technical industry.²⁴ At the same time, and a consequence of its rapid modernization, there was hardly any other European country where modern and traditional elements were able to exist so strongly in parallel to each other as in Wilhelmine Germany. The country knew a highly developed and modern educational system, for example, but it was also an extremely conservative state where democracy was poor and political power remained in the hands of a tiny elite under the patronage of the unpredictable German Emperor William II (1859-1918) that was closely tied to the interests of a landed aristocracy. A highly developed social system, moreover, existed besides the suppression of the emancipation of the worker. In this context Hans-Ulrich Wehler quite adeptly ascribed to German society from 1847 to 1914 a “Janus-face of modernity and tradition”.²⁵

This rapid speed and its parallel existence of movement and stagnation have contributed to the intense oppositions and tensions that characterised the German *Kaiserreich*.²⁶ In this context Michael Stürmer also spoke about the *Kaiserreich* in terms of a “restless *Reich*”, while Joachim Radkau thereafter deciphered it as “the age of nervousness”.²⁷

²⁴ Thomas Nipperday, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1866-1918*, I, 230; Gerhard A. Ritter and Jürgen Kocka (eds), *Deutsche Sozialgeschichte, 1870-1914: Dokumenten und Skizzen* (Munich 1982) 116; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1849-1914* (Munich 1995) 38-105, 547-699 (on the economical development in the 19th century) 613-618.

²⁵ Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1849-1914*, 1250-1295.

²⁶ Patrick Dassen, *De onttovering van de wereld. Max Weber van het probleem van de Moderniteit in Duitsland, 1890-1920* (Amsterdam, 1999).

²⁷ Michael Stürmer, *Das ruhelose Reich. Deutschland 1866-1918* (Berlin, 1994) [1983]; Joachim Radkau, *Das Zeitalter der Nervosität: Deutschland zwischen Bismarck und Hitler* (Munich, 1998).

In general the modernisation of Germany was reason for optimism and pride. To a great extent this optimism was a consequence of better medical knowledge and a rising living standard, resulting in the growth of a consumer market and better possibilities for leisure, sports and a declining death rate. The many technical and communications innovations radically improved the lives of Germans, such as the bicycle, car, film, phone, photography, the zeppelin, the press, and a better postal system. At times these technological and communications innovations caused outright fascination among Germans, most typically expressed by Wilhelm II, cherishing faith in the future of the country through its industry, technology and military strength.²⁸ Unquestionably the propertied bourgeoisie (*Besitzbürgertum*) profited most from the development of the country into a capitalist nation, but there was also reason for optimism among a growing working class, which experienced an increase in wages, in social welfare and a reduction of working week hours. Although the working class was still denied equal citizenship, the authoritarian German state nonetheless arranged in the 1880s a whole range of social insurances for workers, which turned Germany into one of the most progressive nations of Europe.²⁹

However, modernization also joined hands with intense uncertainties and a whole set of speculations about an unknown future, and which had to be accepted with fatalism.³⁰ With the loss of uncontested submission to the authority of positive religion, and thus of conventional faith in God, these uncertainties further accelerated, especially in the big towns. Most affected by these uncertainties was the (largely) Protestant and urban educated bourgeoisie (*Bildungsbürgertum*), the backbone of bourgeois society since the late 18th century. Although this group still made up the core of the German bureaucracy circa 1900, it nonetheless fell prey to a decline in social status and prestige in Wilhelmine Germany in favour of the above mentioned *Besitzbürgertum*. In the nineteenth century the *Bildungsbürgertum* had played an important role in the transformation from a feudal to a liberal bourgeois society, but with the further rationalisation, capitalization and democratisation of society it became subject to a more reactionary mentality, increasingly seeking refuge in its ideals of *Kultur* (culture) and

²⁸ Dassen, *Onttovering van de wereld*, 108; see also: Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (Frankfurt a/Main, 2003) [1944], describing pre-war society as an age of optimism and full of faith in progress.

²⁹ Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (Oxford, 1992) [1978] 150-153, 166-67-288; Nipperday, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1866-1918*, I, 304, 335-355.

³⁰ Frits Boterman and Piet de Rooy, *Op de grens van twee culturen. Nederland en Duitsland in het Fin de Siècle* (Amsterdam, 1999) 94.

Bildung (self-formation) These concepts, associated with the idealist and neo-humanist legacy of Johann W. von Goethe (1749-1832), Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), had been the key to the ascent of the educated bourgeois elites in feudal society and continued to play an important role for bourgeois self-understanding in the capitalist world of Wilhelmine Germany, but under the influence of the socio-economic modernisation process, the power of *Besitz* (capital) slowly gained greater importance and gradually undermined the central place of *Bildung* and *Kultur*. This was clearly shown by the loss of prestige of the humanities through the rise of technological studies and ‘practical’ education. At the secondary level the creation of the *Realschule* and the *Realgymnasium*, paying more attention to the modern languages and natural sciences, undermined the dominance of the *Gymnasium*, the incarnation of the classical ideology of *Bildung*.³¹ In order to prevent the loss of both *Geist* (spirit) and their social-cultural dominance the *Bildungsbürgertum* reacted with abhorrence and contempt to modern capitalist society, criticizing it for its “soulless” materialism and artificial money-based “civilisation” (*Zivilisation*), which it contrasted with the moral, spiritual and aesthetic values of *Kultur*.³² In so doing, it redefined the primacy of *Bildung* in terms of a nostalgic romanticism, which was not necessarily anti-modern, but hoped for the creation of a counter-reality under the leadership of the cultural elite instead.³³

First signs of a romantically inspired critique against *Zivilization* had already been formulated during the middle of the nineteenth century by isolated individuals like Richard Wagner (1813-1883), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891). Dwelling on the romantic cult of the poet, the popular composer Richard Wagner cultivated the religious value of art as a means to cultural rebirth and salvation from modern civilisation.³⁴ Nietzsche, impressed by Wagner in the beginning, unquestionably formulated the most radical and profound cultural critique during this

³¹ Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins. The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (New Hampshire, 1990) 31, 50. Nipperday, *Deutsche Geschichte*, I, 692-796. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde. Kultur und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich, 1870 bis 1918* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1994)

³² Thomas Mann, “Gedanken im Kriege, in: *Ibid, Essays*, Band II. Edited by H. Kurzke (Frankfurt a/Main, 1976) 23; Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*; Dassen, *Onttovering van de wereld*, 131; Michael Löwy, *Erlösung und Utopie. Jüdischer Messianismus und libertäres Denken. Eine Wahlverwandschaft*, translated by Dieter Kurz and Heidrun Töpfer (Berlin 1997) 41-42; Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Frankfurt a/Main, 2001) [1918].

³³ On the romantic *Weltanschauung* as a counter-current of modernity, see: Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Révolte et mélancolie. Le romantisme à contre-courant de la modernité* (Paris, 1992).

³⁴ Dassen, *Onttovering van de wereld*, 115-116.

period, calling for a “*Umwertung aller Werte*” (revaluation of all values) to save humanity from a society that kept it enchained by life-negating values of traditional religion. Inspired by Nietzsche, then, the former theologian Paul de Lagarde called for the spiritual unity of a divided German nation and formulated the thought that unity of the Germans could be realised through the *Gemeinschaft* (community) of the *Volk* (people), which he praised as a safeguard against material progress and as the carrier of a religious rebirth – a kind of Teutonic-German Christianity, of which he himself was the prophet.³⁵ Largely forgotten today, Lagarde was immensely popular and inspired – together with Wagner and Nietzsche – many members of the higher and lower echelons of the educated elite after 1890,³⁶ when the power of *Bildung* was further undermined. Influenced, amongst others, was the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), who further outworked the concept of *Gemeinschaft* in opposition to *Gesellschaft* (society), largely running parallel to the distinction of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* and thus to that of “genuine” and artificial society.³⁷

Wilhelmine Germany was incredibly rich in anti-capitalist ideas, and there was a host of autonomous reform movements all of which claimed absoluteness of ideas and leadership. Each had its own recipe for cultural and social renewal, which was neither capitalist, nor Marxist, but rooted in a cultural and a-political ‘third way’ – this led to a variety of views, though always with the urge to seek aesthetic or cultural answers to what were essentially economic or political questions. Their ideal was that of the *Gemeinschaft*, organised in the *Bund* (league), which served as the exodus for a total transformation of the political and socio-economic reality. The *Bünde*, microcosms of the larger *Gemeinschaft*, were anything but a democratic organisation and centred on fraternity and charismatic leadership, often relying on an intimate and personal bond of the leader to his/her group.³⁸ Reform ideas and its leagues were critical of modernity, but

³⁵ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair. A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1984) [1961], 1-94.

³⁶ On cultural renewal since the 1890s, see also: Nipperday, *Deutsche Geschichte*, I, 692-796. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde. Kultur und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich, 1870 bis 1918* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1994)

³⁷ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, translated by Jose Harris and Margeret Hollis. (Cambridge, 2001) [*Gesellschaft und Gemeinschaft*, 1887]; on the influence of Lagarde, see: Dassen, *Onttovering van de wereld*, 119.

³⁸ Matthew Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871-1918* (Houndsmills, Basingbroke, Hampshire and New York, 2003) 192; on a “third force” or “third way”, see also: George L. Mosse, *Germans and Jews. The Right, the Left and the Search for a “Third Force” in pre-Nazi-Germany* (New York, 1970); Janos Frecot, ‘Die Lebensreformbewegung’ in: Klaus Vondung (ed.), *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum. Zur Socialgeschichte seiner Ideen* (Göttingen, 1976) 149, 152; on the role of the

not necessary anti-modern – some sought to master technology, but most rejected it. The “*Gebildeten-revolt*” (Ulrich Linse)³⁹, then, was a mix of escape from and mastery of the world, of conservative-regressive and progressive tendencies, ‘though it always centred around what Peter Gay has called a “hunger for wholeness” and ‘unity of the relationship between the world and the disoriented self’.⁴⁰ In this context it is unsurprising that the flight into an anti-capitalist world of *Kultur* joined hands with a return to religion, often in pseudo- and non-conventional forms, and a re-activation of a whole variety of religious spiritualities.

Central to many reform movements was less national rebirth through a change of the social or political order than through that of the individual and his/her lifestyle. In this context there was much attention for education and pedagogy. Reform pedagogues, like Ludwig Gurtlitt (1855-1931) and Hermann Lietz (1868-1919), both deeply inspired by Nietzsche, believed that school was more than the spot for the acquisition of knowledge alone, and stressed the need for anti-authoritarian education and respect for the child, which had to develop itself in an all-round way and in an open environment with other children. Lietz, inspired by the ideals of Rousseau as well, was also close to life reform (*Lebensreform*) and believed that schools had to be created far away from the big towns, where children could enjoy a “natural” environment and healthy food. He realised his ideals in *Haubinda*, a boarding school for secondary pupils.⁴¹ In addition Gustav Wyneken (1875-1964), one of his (former) adherents, was more inclined to the spiritual dimension of youth, and developed the concept of “youth culture”, which centred on the ideal of an independent, self-conscious youth. In 1906 he founded with Paul Geheeb (1870-1961) the *Freie Schulgemeinde* (Free School Community) at Wickersdorf in Thuringia, where he cherished aspirations of *Menschheitsverjüngung* (‘rejuvenation of humanity’) through youth. Wyneken, a homosexual who organised his pedagogical ideals around the ‘erotic’ bond of the teacher with his pupils (in terms of

Bund, see also: George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1998) [1964], Chapter 11, 204-217.

³⁹ Ulrich Linse, “Die Jugendkulturbewegung” in: Vondung (ed), *Das Wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 119-138, esp 119-123. On cultural renewal since the 1890s, see also: Nipperday, *Deutsche Geschichte*, I, 692-796.

⁴⁰ Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture. The Outsider as Insider* (New York) 96-7; on progressive and regressive tendencies, see also: Frecot, ‘Die Lebensreformbewegung’ in: Vondung (ed), *Das Wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 138-152; Nipperday, *Deutsche Geschichte*, I, 563-568, 733-741; see also: Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism. Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984), which shows the importance of modern technology in the anti-modern critique.

⁴¹ On Gurtlitt and Lietz, see: Sterling Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth: The Search for Educational Reform in Imperial Germany* (New York, 1976); on the central place of education in

charismatic leadership), was not uncontroversial, however, and he was forced to resign in favour of Martin Luserke (1880-1968) in 1910. There after he founded the *Bund der freien Schulgemeinden* (League of Free School Communities) and published a magazine of the same name.⁴²

In alignment with these attempts at human rejuvenation the artistic and literary avant-garde formulated a cultural critique by radically distancing itself from bourgeois conceptions of art through the creation of purely aesthetic counter-worlds, although with moral claims.⁴³ An important stimulus in that direction was given by the *Jugendstil*, which was organised in 1896 by Georg Hirth who founded the magazine *Jugend: Zeitschrift für Kunst und Leben* (Youth: Magazine for Art and Life).⁴⁴ In addition groups of painters around the magazines *Die Brücke* (1904) and *Der Blaue Reiter* (1911) further clung to the flight from bourgeois society and expressed sentiments of cultural renewal in terms of visionary apocalyptic symbolism. Later grouped under the banner of Expressionism (1911), these painters hoped for a new mankind and glorified the ideal of the artist as a prophet of cultural renewal.

Similar tendencies toward alternative realities from modern society were present in literature. In symbolism writers like Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), Hugo von Hoffmansthal (1874-1929) and Stefan George (1868-1933) all showed a retreat from the outer world into the spiritual reality of the *Geist*, offering aesthetic and even pseudo-aristocratic counter-realities.⁴⁵ Most outspoken in this respect was unquestionably George, who was the lively centre of an elitist circle which rejected every day ‘banal’ reality and fostered a deep contempt of the masses. Stefan Breuer has called the Georg-circle, besides the ideas of Nietzsche, an expression of the most radical critique of

reform, see also: Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, Chapter 8, 149-170.

⁴² On Wyneken and “youth culture“, see: Gustav Wyneken, *Der Kampf der Jugend* (Jena 1920) 100-101; Wyneken, *Jugendkultur*, 95; on Wickersdorf, see: Thijs Maasen, *Pädagogischer Eros. Gustav Wyneken und die Freie Schulgemeinde Wickersdorf* (Berlin, 1995) 25-26. Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement, 1900-1945: an interpretative and documentary History* (London, 1981) 25-27. On the central place of youth in Wilhelmine Germany and its role as a symbol for cultural renewal, see: Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (London, 1980) 43, 45-6; Winfried Speitkamp, *Jugend in der Neuzeit: Deutschland von 16 bis zum 20 Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1998) 130; John R. Gillis, *Youth and History. Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-Present* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, San Francisco, 1981) 141. Thomas Koebner, Rolf-Peter Janz, and Frank Trommler (eds.), „Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit“. *Der Mythos Jugend* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1985); Mark Roseman, (ed.), *Generations in Conflict: youth revolt and generation formation in Germany, 1770-1968* (Cambridge, 1995); Walter Rüegg (ed.), *Kulturkritik und Jugendkult* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1974).

⁴³ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde. Kultur und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich, 1870 bis 1918* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1994) 98.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 99.

⁴⁵ Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 105.

modernity in Wilhelmine Germany, as it denounced almost all dimensions of modernity: capitalism, democracy, urbanization, etc.⁴⁶ An alternative to modern society was found in the myth of a “New Empire”, a religious reign which incorporated the values of the circle itself. In this context George united the darkest pessimism with the most optimistic belief in rebirth.⁴⁷

From a different perspective, though also concentrating on the need for spiritual rebirth (*Geist*-revolution), the mystical socialist and publicist Gustav Landauer (1871-1919) created a synthesis of rebirth with a more positive conception of humanity, expressed by his concept of anarcho-socialism.⁴⁸ Landauer, who was to exert deep influence on Toller during the fall of 1917, developed a romantically inspired socialism beyond classical (that is: materialist) Marxism, which fused *völkisch*-romantic elements with anarchist-mystic ones. Inspired by a host of thinkers (Nietzsche, Moritz von Egidy, Proudhon, Meister Eckhart), he infused the idealist concept of *Geist* with (ancient) Christian notions of brotherly love and developed in Nietzschean terms a ‘re-valuation’ of the Judeo-Christian conception that salvation only lies in the tragic fate of the individual itself, that is, lest the individual had the *will* to seek that salvation. In the modern state, thus Landauer, the *Geist* that united humanity had been buried, but atoms of that *Geist* were present in isolated individuals, especially in artists and writers who had went into retreat from the state.⁴⁹ In order to give an impetus to the organisation of the *Geist* of these isolated atoms Landauer founded in 1908 the *Sozialistische Bund* (Socialist League), which served as a model for the future *Gemeinschaft*. Branches of the *Bund* were created in Germany and Switzerland, and most notably in Munich under the leadership of the self-styled bohemian anarchist Erich Mühsam (1878-1934).⁵⁰ From that

⁴⁶ Stefan Breuer, *Bürokratie und Charisma. Zur politischen Soziologie Max Webers* (Darmstadt, 1994) 153.

⁴⁷ On George, see esp.: Stefan Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus. Stefan George und der Deutsche Antimodernismus* (Darmstadt, 1996); see also: Dassen, *Onttovering van de wereld*, 133-136.

⁴⁸ On Landauer, see esp. Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community. The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1993), possibly the best account on Landauer still, though other insightful works are also at hand.

⁴⁹ These ideas were best developed in Landauer’s *Die Revolution* (1907) and *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* (1911).

⁵⁰ In 1909 Mühsam founded a local branch of Gustav Landauer’s *Sozialistische Bund*, the so called *Tat-Gruppe*, which fused Landauer’s ideas with sexual and radical individualist principles, including members like Oscar Maria Graf, Franz Jung (1888-1963), Leonhard Frank (1882-1961) and Otto Groß (1877-1920). The latter was a charismatic psychiatrist and psycho-analyst who reworked Freudian theory through a reevaluation of matriarchal theory and oedipal revolt which divided society in oppressive male and loving female forces. Groß soon transformed himself into the group’s lively centre and actively sought to bring free love principles into practice, combined with drug therapies which indirectly caused the death of Frank’s fiancée, Sophie. Landauer, at odds with free love principles and annoyed by the dominant influence of Groß, launched a fierce attack in writing upon Groß in 1911,

time onwards Landauer also worked on his *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* (Call to Socialism, 1911), the ‘bible’ of his anarcho-socialist ideals, which called for a harmonious society based on the free will of man to unite and on the peaceful exchange of economical goods. It was in this book that he also most profoundly articulated his critique of classical Marxism.

Landauer’s socialism was not intended as a political philosophy, but it had clear political implications. Concentrating on an antithesis between *Geist* and state, it aimed at a counter-reality that would result in the demolition of the state. Such political interest was exceptional among the reform movements in Wilhelmine Germany, but found support with Heinrich Mann (1871-1950) who published in 1910 his essay “Geist und Tat” (Spirit and Deed) in the avant-garde magazine *Pan*. Like Landauer, though not influenced by his ideas, he opposed the discrepancy between ‘intellectual’ isolation and social reality and called for the *Geist* to actively penetrate into the field of social reality. German intellectuals, he claimed, had to take up the example of the French *Literaten*, who had rebelled against the establishment from Rousseau to Zola.⁵¹ Mann’s essay had a great appeal for those members of the literary establishment around the Expressionist magazine *Die Aktion* (1911), edited by Hiller (1885-1972) and Franz Pfemfert. After a dispute with Pfemfert, Hiller withdrew from the magazine and pushed Mann’s principles further; together with the Expressionists Alfred Wolfenstein (1883-1945) and Rudolf Kayser (1889-1964) he invented the term “Activism” in the fall of 1914.⁵² Activist Expressionism became popular during the war in pacifist and leftwing circles of young students.

Closely associated with all these a-political and pseudo-religious reform ideas and movements, though with a somewhat less spiritual character, were the many movements of life reform (*Lebensreform*), which centred on a longing for purity and a return to ‘natural’ life. There was a whole legion of life style reform movements, including dietary reformists, naturists, abstentionists, vegetarians and clothing reformers. We have already mentioned the ideas of Lietz, but there was also Fidus (Karl Höppner),

when the latter had already left for Switzerland. The Tat-Gruppe continued to exist, but lost in significance after that time. Arthur Mitzman, “Anarchism, Expressionism and Psychoanalysis” in: *New German Critique*, 10 (Winter, 1977) 77-104; Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen*; Lunn, *Prophet of Community*.

⁵¹ Heinrich Mann, “Geist und Tat” in: Kurt Hiller (ed.), *Das Ziel. Aufrufe zum tätigen Geist. Dritte Auflage* (Munich & Berlin, 1916).

⁵² Kurt Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit. Erinnerungen. Band I [Logos]* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1969) 94-95, 98-99; on Hiller’s Activism, see also: Lewis D. Wurgaft, *The activists: Kurt Hiller and the politics of action on the German left 1914-1933* (Philadelphia, 1977).

a painter with theosophical and *völkisch* conceptions, who dabbled in adoration for nudism, sun bathing, muscle building and masculinity ideals.⁵³ Life reform was also popular in the Free Student's League (*Freistudentische Bund*), the alternative of the conservative duelling and beer drinking fraternities (the so called *Burschenschaften*). An example is the then very popular alcohol and tobacco-free *Deutschen akademischen Freischar* (hereafter: *Freischar*) under the leadership of the charismatic medical student Knud Ahlborn (1888-1977).⁵⁴

Disgusted with the insanity and criminality of life in the modern (big) towns, moreover, there was an attempt at the creation of autarkic and “healthy” settlements, such as the vegetarian and alcohol- and prostitute-free *Obst-Bau-Colony Eden*, a large-scale orchard and market garden enterprise set up on a co-operative basis.⁵⁵ Other colonies sought to combine autarky with artistic and aesthetic self-realisation, like the colony of Worpswede, north of Bremen, where painters like Heinrich Vogeler (1872-1942) and Carl Emil Uphoff (1885-1971) united. Among writers, then, such life reformist initiatives led to the foundation of the *Neue Gemeinschaft* (New Community) around the brothers Heinrich (1855-1906) and Julius Hart (1859-1930) which resulted in 1902 in the buying of a sanatorium in Schlachtensee, near Berlin, and transformed itself into an artistic earthly paradise with some fifty to sixty members, including Landauer, Mühsam and the cultural Zionist Martin Buber (1878-1965). The New Community had its own journal, staged lectures and organised excursions and other events on a variety of themes, and was intended to transform the whole community into a ‘living work of art’.⁵⁶ Sometimes, and especially after World War I, the longing for purity in settlement movements resulted in the wish for racial hygiene, so that the movement was not always free of anti-Semitic tendencies.⁵⁷

A special place among all these life reformist movements and leagues was taken by the German Youth Movement. Although youth could count on a growing interest as a

⁵³ Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, 58, 84-89, 173, 177, 189, 226.

⁵⁴ On the prominence and influence of the *Freischar* and the person of Ahlborn among students, see: Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), Berlin, MM 51: Philip Loewenfeld, *Memoirs* [typewritten manuscript] 100.

⁵⁵ On the life-reform movement, see: Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871-1918*, 204-5; Ulrich Linse, *Zurück, o Mensch, zur Mutter Erde. Landkommunen in Deutschland 1890-1933* (Munich, 1983); Frecot, “Lebensreform” in: *Wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 149; Mühsam, *Ascona: eine Broschüre* (Locarno, 1905); Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago and London, 2003).

⁵⁶ Quoted from: Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871-1918*, 204-5; Linse, *Zurück, o Mensch, zur Mutter Erde*; on the New Community, see also: Lunn, *Prophet of Community*, 142-148; Erich Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1961) [1949]; Stefan Großmann, *Ich war begeistert. Eine Lebensgeschichte* (Berlin, 1931).

stage in life itself with the social-economical transformation of the country, strict parental control was experienced as suffocating, so that youth felt the urge to organise itself on its own principles and objectives.⁵⁸ This led to the foundation of the *Wandervogel* (somewhat awkwardly translated as ‘migratory birds’) in November 1901 in the Berlin suburb of Steglitz. Since 1896 pupils of a local *Gymnasium* had already been taking part in informal hikes, organised by the Berlin University students Hermann Hoffmann and Karl Fischer, but after Hoffmann left for the diplomatic service, the charismatic Fischer founded the *Wandervogel*, and transformed its initial ideal of country rambling from short daytrips to fortnight-long expeditions that were undertaken during school holidays.⁵⁹ This occurred not from revolutionary and hostile impulses directed against adult society, but with the support of the adult world, which sponsored and advised the *Wandervogel* over the course of its existence, especially in the early stages of the movement.⁶⁰ Encouraged by progressive teachers like the above mentioned Gurtlitt and Lietz, then, attracted by the *Wandervogel*’s alternative educational ethos, the idea caught on quickly in schools throughout Germany, although the movement remained a predominantly urban, middle class and Protestant phenomenon. Since 1904, when it came under the influence of reform and life reform, it was subject to splits and controversies over issues as alcohol consumption, homosexuality, nudism, and, above all, the participation of girls and Jews – some *Wandervögel* decided to exclude women and Jews, like the *Jung-Wandervogel*, founded in 1910, but others were more tolerant, including Fischer’s *Alt-Wandervogel*. In 1912 Hans Blüher (1885-1955), who wanted to strengthen the erotic dimensions of the movement, published his *Geschichte der Wandervogel* (History of the Migratory Birds, 1912), which greatly popularised the movement. Hence it also caught the attention of Wyneken, who sought to redefine its ideals in terms of “youth culture” and now steadily increased his influence on the movement.⁶¹ In 1913 an attempt was undertaken to establish an umbrella organisation, the *Wandervogel e.V. Bund für deutsches Jugendwandern* (sometimes known as the

⁵⁷ On racial-völkish settlement movements, see especially: Linse, *Zurück, o Mensch, zur Mutter Erde*.

⁵⁸ Stachura, *Youth Movement*, 15; Speitkamp, *Jugend in der Neuzeit*, 118-161.

⁵⁹ On the *Wandervogel*, see: Stachura, *Youth Movement*, 13-23; Walter Z. Laqueur, *Young Germany. A History of the German Youth Movement* (London, 1962); Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871-1918*, 199-202; Sigrid Bias-Engels, *Zwischen Wandervogel und Wissenschaft. Zur Geschichte von Jugendbewegung und Studentenschaft 1896-1920* (Cologne, 1988); Gudrun Fiedler, *Jugend im Krieg. Bürgerliche Jugendbewegung, Erster Weltkrieg und Sozialer Wandel, 1914-1923* (Cologne, 1989); Gay, *Weimar Culture*, 77-78; Gilles, *Youth and History*, 149-155. Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, Chapter 9, 171-189.

⁶⁰ Stachura, *Youth Movement*, 15-16.

‘United Wandervogel’), but the unity was only partial, and short-lived. The *Wandervogel* grew from around 100 in 1901 to some 25,000 members in 1914, adult leaders and supporters not included.⁶²

On 11-12 October 1913, a rally took place on the Hohe Meißner, near Kassel (Hessen). Organized as an alternative meeting of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig that was celebrated in that weekend in the presence of some 43,000 patriotic *Gymnasium* pupils, the meeting united fourteen different *Wandervögel* and educational reform and life reform organisations, representing a wide coalition of pacifist, environmentalist, vegetarian and abstinent students from the Free Student’s Association, including the *Freischar*-member Christian Schneehagen (1918†) and its abovementioned president Ahlborn, who was also a co-founder of the *Hamburger Wandervogel*.⁶³ Officially entitled the first “Free German Youth Conference”, the meeting attracted only 2,500 participants, but its symbolic meaning was of great importance.⁶⁴ Eugen Diederichs (1867-1930), one of the co-organisers of the meeting and the editor of a pivotal publishing house of neo-romantic and pseudo-religious works (including Paul de Lagarde’s *Deutsche Schriften*), held the inaugural meeting.⁶⁵ He

⁶¹ Ibid. 24

⁶² Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871-1918*, 200-201, who also notes that the growth, though substantial, remained very small in comparance with a whole variety of rival youth groups which were established under adult leadership at the time. These groups included religious (Christian and Jewish) and Socialist youth associations, Baden Powell’s Boy Scouts (1911) and the quasi-military *Jungdeutschlandbund* (1911), founded on the initiative of the imperial authorities and led by serving army officers. In 1914 these groups counted some two million members and thus “vastly outnumbered the membership of the ‘free’ *Wandervogel* societies”.

⁶³ The participating *Bünde* at the meeting were: *Jungwandervogel*, *Österreichischer Wandervogel*, *Deutsche Akademische Freischar*, *Bund abstinenter Studenten*, *Vortruppbund*, *Bund Deutscher Wanderer*, *Germania: Bund abstinenter Schüler*, *Freie Schulgemeinschaft Wickersdorf*, *Bund für freie Schulgemeinden*, *Landschulheim am Solling*, *Akademische Vereinigung Marburg und Jena*, *Serakreis-Jena*, and *Burschenschaft Vandalia* from Jena

⁶⁴ The name “Free German Youth” was taken from Fichte’s „Reden an die deutsche Nation“ from 1806/7.

⁶⁵ On Diederichs and his relationship to the youth movement and the meeting, see also: Gangolf Hübinger, “Eugen Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur” in: Wolfgang Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1996) 259; R. Hinten Thomas, *Nietzsche in German Politics and Society, 1890-1918* (Oxford, 1982) 105. Besides Lagarde’s seminal work, Diederichs was the publisher of Ferdinand Avenarius’ *Kunstwart* and of many books with a religious or semi-religious orientation from Germany and beyond, including the works of Søren Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Maurice Maeterlinck and Julius Langbehn’s *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Rembrandt as Educator), a popular *völkisch* publication, as well as the mystical works of *Meister Eckhart* (Master Eckhart, edited by Gustav Landauer) and Martin Buber’s Chassidic stories (Baal Schem and Rabbi Nachman), soon to become very popular among a disoriented (Jewish) youth in seach for community and new forms of (Jewish) religiosity. On the central importance of Diederichs much has been written, see (besides the above mentioned publication of Gangolf Hübinger): Gangolf Hübinger, in: Ibid. and Wolfgang Mommsen (eds.), *Intellektuelle im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1993); Gangolf Hübinger (ed.), *Versammlungsort moderner Geister: der Eugen Diederichs Verlag – Aufbruch ins Jahrhundert der Extreme* (Munich, 1996); Irmgard Heidler, *Der Verleger Eugen Diederichs und seine*

placed his faith in youth as a force for the future, but it was Wyneken who was able to attract most attention during these days, defending the universal claims of youth against too much chauvinism and seeking to make himself master of the Youth Movement. A final resolution was drafted by the 57-year-old Ferdinand Avenarius (1856-1923), convinced of the redeeming power of youth and both founder of the *Dürerbund* (1902) and editor of *Der Kunstwart*, a pivotal magazine in the anti-materialist reform and life reform critique and in that sense Germany's most important cultural magazine at the time.⁶⁶ The text (the "Meißner formula") became a famous dictum after the meeting and could count on broad support from the present people, but also from many leading cultural figures in German society at large, including the writer Gerhart Hauptmann and the George-adapt Ludwig Klages (1872-1956): 'The Free German youth is determined to fashion its life on its own initiative, on its own responsibility, and in inner sincerity'.⁶⁷ Toller later admitted the impact of these words on his mind, even quoting them in one of his publications from 1930 to express the right of the youth to act on its own.⁶⁸

The Meißner-formula of 1913 gave the impression that the German youth movement had shifted towards a synthesis with the ideals of the 38-year-old Wyneken into one single 'Youth Culture Movement', but this was not the case. Largely uninterested in institutional matters, the *Wandervogel* did not follow Wyneken's call for a 'conquest of the school' and stuck to its activist hiking and roaming in the end. Wyneken found more interest for his ideas among various members of the alternative Free Student's League, most notably in Berlin and Vienna, where pupils published a school news paper which propagated the ideal of "youth culture", entitled *Der Anfang*

Welt (1896-1930) (Wiesbaden, 1998); Erich Viehöfer, *Der Verleger als Organisator. Eugen Diederichs und die bürgerlichen Reformbewegungen der Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1998) Justus H. Ullbricht and Meike G. Werner (eds.), *Romantik, Revolution und Reform. Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag im Epochen-Kontext 1900-1949* (Göttingen, 1999); Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 162-167.

⁶⁶ The magazine boasted 20,000 members in 1903/8, see: Gerhard Kratzsch, *Kunstwart und Dürerbund, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gebildeten im Zeitalter des Imperialismus* (Göttingen, 1969); Ibid., "Der Kunstwart" und die bürgerlich-soziale Bewegung' in: Ekkehard Mai, Stephen Waetzoldt and Gerd Wolandt (eds.), *Ideengeschichte und Kunstwissenschaft. Philosophie und bildende Kunst im Kaiserreich* (Berlin, 1983) 371-396; Frey, 'Die Lebensreformbewegung' in: Vondung (ed.), *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 148.

⁶⁷ Quoted from: Winfried Mogge, and Jürgen Reulecke, *Hoher Meißner 1913. Der Erste Freideutsche Jugendtag in Dokumenten, Deutungen und Bildern* (Cologne, 1988); on the Free German Youth, see: Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871-1918*, 254; Dietmar Schenk, *Die Freideutsche Jugend 1913-1919/20. Eine Jugendbewegung in Krieg, Revolution und Krise* (Münster, 1991); Knud Ahlborn, *Kurze Chronik der Freideutschen Jugendbewegung 1913 bis 1953* (Bad Godesberg, 1953); see also: Wohl, *Generation*, 43.

⁶⁸ Ernst Toller, *Quer durch: Reisebilder und Reden* (Heidelberg, 1978) [1930] 260.

(The Beginning). Still support was limited and the newspaper never counted more than 800 subscribers.⁶⁹ In Vienna support was further complicated by its close affiliation with Jewish self-consciousness, expressed by the future psycho-analyst Siegfried Bernfeld (1892-1952) and Käthe Pick (1895-1942).⁷⁰ In Berlin support for school reform was limited to the Philosophy student and future logical empiricist Hans Reichenbach (1891-1953) and the future Neo-Marxist scholar Walter Benjamin (1892-1940). Other students of the Free German Youth Movement instantly rejected the ideas of Wyneken or came to reject them soon after initial flirtation. Knud Ahlborn, for example, initially open to Wyneken, expelled him from his *Freischar* in May 1914, when the Bavarian parliament had prohibited his movement for Wyneken's 'immoral' ideas.⁷¹ Walter Benjamin soon also lost his faith in Wyneken when the latter dropped his pacifist ideals in support of war in 1914.⁷² It was not until the coming of World War I, and for other reasons than school reform, that the ideal of "youth culture" as a means to anti-materialist and cultural critique would gain strength among alternative German students, including the subject of this study.

World War I and Generational Conflict (1914-1918)

Perhaps it is an understatement to write that World War I had a profound influence upon the people of Wilhelmine Germany. Wolfgang J. Mommsen has understood the war in this context as an "*Urkatastrophe*" ('primeval catastrophe'), which seems appropriate indeed.⁷³ War created feelings of anxiety, of uncertainty, leading to a great sense of excitement, but there was hardly enthusiasm for war. A sense of "shared fate" (Jeffrey Verhey) convinced most people to support war when this "primeval catastrophe" was a fact,⁷⁴ though generally in the firm belief that the country fought a defensive war against hostile aggression.⁷⁵ Sentiments of duty also strengthened the cultural elite in its

⁶⁹ Ulrich Linse, "Jugendkulturbewegung" in: Vondung (ed), *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 128-9; Maasen, *Eros*, 27-28

⁷⁰ Linse, "Jugendkulturbewegung" in: Vondung (ed), *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 128-9.

⁷¹ Stachura, *Youth Movement*, 33-34.

⁷² Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin. A Biography* (London, New York, 1996).

⁷³ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Die Urkatastrophe Deutschlands: der Erste Weltkrieg, 1914-1918* (Stuttgart, 2004)

⁷⁴ Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge; New York, 2000) Chapter 1.

⁷⁵ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarines*, 182.

conviction of the need to come to the aid of the nation. The watershed of publications that followed this “spiritual mobilization” showed a variety of ideas, but common to all was the need to justify war in moral terms.⁷⁶ In so doing, the *Bildungsbürgertum* generally presented World War I as a ‘war of cultures’ rather than of nations: at stake was the essence of the nation – war, in other words, was a proud defence of German *Kultur* against western *Zivilisation*.⁷⁷

The German cultural elite experienced World War I in apocalyptic terms.⁷⁸ It suddenly seemed to lift its pre-war isolation and to offer the role of a cultural leadership to the nation. War also envisioned the end of capitalist-bourgeois society and the beginning of a new dawn, although it was unclear what the new world would look like. This apocalyptic sentiment is clearly reflected in the words of Thomas Mann (1875-1955), author of the novel *Buddenbrooks* (1901) and one of Germany’s then most respected writers, summarising the ‘spirit of (August) 1914’ in terms of “purification, liberation, (...) and an enormous hope”.⁷⁹

With the exception of some isolated pacifist voices, most publications and speeches came to the defence of war in 1914. Professors, but also people like Wyneken, warned of the threat of “hostile enemies” and stressed the need to do one’s bit. There was an explosion of poetic creativity, moreover, through which many professional artists and young (bourgeois) soldiers sought to express their emotions and expectations of war. Julius Bab (1880-1955), a leading literary critic, estimated that in August 1914 50.000 poems were written a day (!).⁸⁰ These poems often gave expression to the notion of war as a redeeming event. Glorifying war in allegorical terms, and dwelling on a long tradition of war heroism, they stimulated the cult of sacrifice. Exemplary are the war poems of Richard Dehmel (1863-1920), collected in *Volksstimme, Gottesstimme* (People’s Voice, God’s Voice, 1914), which were widely read and deeply admired by

⁷⁶ Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 117-153, esp. 117-118; on the spiritual mobilization, see also: Kurt Flasch, *Die Geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 2003).

⁷⁷ On this, see esp.: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*; Flasch, *Geistige Mobilmachung*, Chapter 1; Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarines*, 182.

⁷⁸ Klaus Vondung, ‘Deutsche Apokalypse 1914’ in: *Das Wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum. Zur Sozialgeschichte seiner Ideen* (Göttingen, 1976) 153-172; Ibid., ‘Geschichte als Weltgericht: Genesis und Degradation einer Symbolik’ in: Ibid. (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis. Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen* (Göttingen, 1980) 62-85; Ibid., *Die Apokalypse in Deutschland* (Munich, 1988); on war as redemption, and not solely in Germany, see also: Roland N. Stromberg, *Redemption by War: the Intellectuals and 1914* (Lawrence, 1982).

⁷⁹ Mann, “Gedanken im Kriege, in: Ibid, *Essays*, II, 23

youth during the war.⁸¹ Although the vast majority of soldiers at the front were workers and peasant farmers, largely at odds with ‘bourgeois’ ideals of *Gemeinschaft* and heroic sacrifice, these poems struck a sensitive chord in the minds of young bourgeois soldiers with literary interests and often played a pivotal role in their conviction to strengthen its effort at the front and to respond to its duty for the country.

In quantitative terms the “spiritual mobilization” weakened after the first war months,⁸² and when the war stabilized, but most publications stuck to the notion of war as a revitalising event for the nation at least up to 1916. It was also in this period that the so called “ideas of 1914” gained specific importance to revive the ‘spirit of 1914’, which now had waned. The term “ideas of 1914” derived from a speech that was held by the national economist Johann Plenge (1874-1963) in the autumn of 1914, which envisioned the ideal of a new harmonious people’s community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) through the creation of what he called national ‘war socialism’. Shortly after, he further strengthened this notion by placing the “ideas of 1914” in direct opposition to the revolutionary “ideas of 1789”, which gave the ideal of a *Gemeinschaft* a specific anti-western character. When pre-war fragmentations returned after the first war months, these “ideas of 1914” could count on great support in Germany among the cultural elite.⁸³ Seeking to revive the spirit of 1914, the sociologist Werner Sombart (1863-1941) pushed these ideals further and presented war in terms of a struggle between *Händler und Helden* (Merchants and Heroes, 1915).⁸⁴ His book directed its arrows mainly at Great-Britain, the prime example of a highly industrialised nation and the incarnation of *Zivilisation*.⁸⁵ Bourgeois youth at the front, educated in the cultural ideals of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, was not insensitive to such ideas, although the reality of war often made them less susceptible to extreme ideas and defamations of the enemy.

⁸⁰ Julius Bab, “Die Kriegslyrik von heute“ in: *Literarisches Echo. Halbmonatschrift für Literaturfreunde* 17, No.1 (1 October 1914) Spalte 5, printed in: Thomas Anz and Joseph Vogl (eds.), *Die Dichter und der Krieg. Deutsche Kriegslyrik, 1914-1918* (Munich, 1982).

⁸¹ Patrick Bridgewater, *The German Poets of the First World War* (London, Sydney, 1985) 143; on Dehmel’s war enthusiasm, see: Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 128.

⁸² Günter Häntzschel, “Literatur und Krieg: Aspekte der Diskussion aus der Zeitschrift ‘Das Literarische Echo’” and Helmut Börsch-Supan, “Die Reaktion der Zeitschriften ‘Kunst und Künstler’ und ‘Die Kunst’ auf den Ersten Weltkrieg” in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 209-219 resp. 195-207.

⁸³ Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 123-124; on Plenge, see also: Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarines*, 181-182.

⁸⁴ Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 126-127; Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarines*, 183-185.

⁸⁵ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarines*, 185.

Since February 1916, then, when discontent with the war was strengthened by massive slaughter and growing fragmentations among the German population, bourgeois youth shifted away from the “ideas of 1914”. Disillusioned with the war experience and the gradual polarisation among the population, it grew conscious of the need to overcome a world it held responsible for the massacre of war. War, Carl Zuckmayer records, was not “fate”, but the failure of a world as such – it was time for a re-valuation of all existing values. It was the beginning of a generational conflict by a youth that now claimed its rights.

Against this background World War I opened up a new playground for the ideal of “youth culture”. Not for its critique of school, but for social-utopian idealism bourgeois youth was now attracted to Wyneken’s ideal. Hoping for an all-integrating ideology of “socialism”, it filled up “Wyneken’s empty *Geist*-scroll” with a new sacred mission of youth.⁸⁶

First initiatives to such a “youth socialism” were offered by Ernst Joël (1893-1929),⁸⁷ a Berliner medicine student and the editor of the *Flugblätter für die deutsche Jugend* (Leaflets for the German Youth, 1915-1919) and, more importantly, *Der Aufbruch* (The Awakening, 1915), a short-lived but very important anti-war monthly periodical which appeared three times from July to September 1915, where after it was banned as subversive for its antiwar character. The *Aufbruch*, published by Diederichs,⁸⁸ contained articles by Ernst Joël, Gustav Landauer, Kurt Hiller, Rudolf Leonhard, Bernhard Reichenbach (the brother of the above mentioned Hans Reichenbach) and others, expressing socially conscious tendencies, often even outright socialist and anarchist stances. Closely aligned to Landauer’s social utopian idealism and Hiller’s activist conception of Expressionism, the magazine became the voice of an academic youth that sought for a more socially conscious and utopian conception of Wyneken’s “youth culture”. Disillusioned with Wyneken’s war enthusiasm, Joël – like Benjamin – already broke from the educational reformer by the end of 1914, whereafter he turned to Anglo-Saxon settlement ideals which he sought to fuse with the ideal of a youth-inspired *Geist*-revolution. The result was the foundation of the so called

⁸⁶ Linse, “Jugendkulturbewegung” in: Vondung (ed), *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 132-137, here 130.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 131; on the term “youth socialism”, see: Gustav Wyneken, *Der Kampf für die Jugend* (Jena 1919), 143.

⁸⁸ Heidler, *Diederichs und seine Welt*, 106

Settlement Home (*Siedlungsheim*) in the working class quarter Berlin-Charlottenburg.⁸⁹ Founded shortly before the birth of his *Aufbruch*, the Home became a central meeting point for socially conscious students within the academic youth movement, including Benjamin and Gerschom Scholem (1897-1982).⁹⁰ After his magazine was banned, Joël was expelled from Berlin University. His expulsion became a rallying point for those who protested against wartime censorship and a petition was drawn up, signed by some of the leading cultural figures of the day, including Benjamin, Landauer, Buber, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Kurt Eisner, Alfred Kerr (1867-1948), Fritz Mauthner and Frank Wedekind.

Parallel to Joël's social reform movement Wyneken was also working on the idea of a 'youth socialism', which he claims to have done without knowledge of Joël's attempt. What he offered youth was a *Verwirklichungssozialismus* (a term of Gustav Landauer – roughly translated as: 'Socialism of the Deed') in terms of "inner renewal, rejuvenation and spiritualisation of socialism", which he – in line with cultural socialists like Landauer – sharply distinguished from what he called the "mechanical Socialism" of the (Marxist) SPD. In so doing, Ulrich Linse writes that he not only proposed the ideal of "youth socialism" as an alternative to proletarian socialism, but also the ideal of youth that would resume leadership of the working class as a means to safeguard itself from 'cultural decline'.⁹¹ Thus he envisioned the ideal of an intellectual leadership – that is: a *Geist*-aristocracy – under the sole responsibility of youth. Directed essentially to the Free German Student Movement, Wyneken was able to gain support for this "youth socialism" in student groups in Berlin around the cultural Zionist Hans Koch and future Communist Alfred Kurella (1895-1975), displaying a growing interest in the working class. In 1916 and 1917 both Kurella and Kohn actively worked for a rehabilitation of Wyneken.⁹²

By the fall of 1917, however, it became clear that both Kohn and Kurella wanted more than the affirmation of Wyneken in the academic youth movement. Growing discontent with the war pushed Kohn and Kurella, both ex-soldiers, towards pacifism.⁹³ Now they actively sought contact with opponents of the war. This led to a meeting in

⁸⁹ Linse, "Jugendkulturbewegung" in: Vondung (ed), *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 131.

⁹⁰ Benjamin and Scholem first met each other in Joël's Home, which was the beginning of a good and life-long friendship, though both soon rejected Joël's ideas on practical student involvement in social reform, see: Gerschom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: Story of a Friendship* (New York, 1981) 15-16.

⁹¹ Linse, "Jugendkulturbewegung" in: Vondung (ed), *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 131.

⁹² Ibid. 131-132.

⁹³ Ibid. 132.

Berlin-Westend with representatives of the proletarian youth movement in August 1917, where for the first time members of the academic youth movement came into contact with a proletarian (revolutionary) youth. Many of the present students and proletarians experienced the moment as a conversion. Finding common ground in war experiences and opposition to the war, it laid the basis for a new cooperation between bourgeois and proletarian youth.⁹⁴

On a different plane, though closely associated with the social utopian sections of the academic youth movement, similar tendencies toward political commitment and radical pacifist idealism was stimulated by Activist Expressionism. Crucial was the publication of Kurt Hiller's *Das Ziel. Aufrufe zum tätiger Geist*, in January 1916, a collection of articles which included texts from Heinrich Mann, Ludwig Rubiner and Alfred Wolfenstein. The publication, prohibited by the state and thereafter illegally sold, was the first of a series of year books that appeared under the title *Das Ziel* (of which a second and third volume appeared in April 1918 respectively in 1920).⁹⁵ It opened with a reprint of Mann's "Geist und Tat" (1910), calling for the artist's junction with social reality, followed by a powerful essay of Hiller, entitled "Philosophie des Ziels", in which he formulated the idea that all 'true' thought was essentially political. In so doing, he called for a *Geist*-aristocracy to show leadership and actively commit itself to what he called a "politics of responsibility" (*Verantwortungspolitik*). Though Hiller did not address himself to youth alone, but to the 'artist', his ideas exerted strong influence on many social reformist students with literary affiliations and intellectuals, including Walter Hasenclever, author of the Expressionist play *Der Sohn* (The Son, 1913), who developed Hiller's notions in 1917 in the concept of the "political poet".⁹⁶ In August 1917, Hiller organised a meeting in Berlin, where various *Ziel*-adherents decided to form a *Bund zum Ziel* (League to Action) which opposed the war and called for replacement of the Imperial monarchy by a "republic of peace, freedom, social justice, and *Geist*." It had little practical impact, but it was symbolic of the growing political commitment of intellectuals – with some amendments the *Leitsätze* (Principles) were re-accepted after the revolution in November 1918, when *Bund zum Ziel* was renamed into *Aktivistenbund* (Activists' League).⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Ibid. 132-133

⁹⁵ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*. I, 102-3.

⁹⁶ Walter Hasenclever, 'Der politische Dichter' in: Ibid., *Der Politische Dichter* (Berlin, 1919) 23.

⁹⁷ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*. I, 118-120.

Activist Expressionism and the social reformist academic youth movement were at the foreground of revolutionary groups that openly called for an end to war and the destruction of the authoritarian German state. Opting for political and social commitment, they shifted away from the former social and political isolation of the vast majority of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, although it often stuck to its anti-materialist world view and communal idealism. Largely dependent upon the state for its status, the academic elite, both extremists and moderates, expressed contempt for this development. Although many members of the German cultural elite expressed political ideas during the war, though not always under the banner of ‘politics’, they scorned youth for its naivety and radicalism, which further estranged youth from the elder generation and its values. Some, like Kurella, decided to reject bourgeois culture as a whole, shifting to Communism.⁹⁸ But most wished to re-mould the anti-materialist *Weltanschauung* of the *Bildungsbürgertum* on humanitarian, if not, leftwing terms. It often lead to affiliation with the proletariat, although the vision was that of the *Volksgemeinschaft* rather than of class society. In this context youth aimed at the restoration of the primacy of *Kultur* over politics, of *Geist* over *Macht* – it was the claim of the fathers themselves, but now formulated by the sons.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 133.

Toller's Family Background and Early Life up to World War I [1893-1914]

Toller's Family Background and Parental Home

Ernst Hugo Toller was born on 1 December 1893 in Samotschin (*Szamocin*), a small provincial town of some two thousand inhabitants in the East-Prussian province of Posen (today: *Gorzow Wielkopolska*, Poland).⁹⁹ The town was conquered by the king Frederick the Great (1749-1786) in 1772, following which a policy of germanification during the nineteenth century, and especially in its latter half, further tied it to the German speaking motherland. By 1900 Samotschin had become a very “German” town, even though (Catholic) Poles continued to live on the south-side of town and in its surrounding countryside.¹⁰⁰ Modernization had affected Samotschin by 1900 through the introduction of electricity and modern communication networks (like railway, telephone and press),¹⁰¹ but there was hardly any industry and a largely rural economy (with product like corn and wood) and traditional norms and values continued to define the character of the town. In economical respect, then, Samotschin belonged to Germany's most backward regions.

Toller was the third and youngest child of Max (Mendel) Toller (1856-1911) and his wife, Ida (Charlotte Chaia) Toller-Cohn (1856-1933). His parents were middle class

⁹⁹ Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu Oddział w Pile (APPOP), 574 (Urząd Stanu Cywilnego w Szamocinie – mieście, 1875-1900), II 47/62 (1893) No.233 (birth certificate Ernst Toller); Königlichen Statistischen Bureau (ed.), *Gemeindelexikon für die Provinz Posen. Auf Grund der Materialien der Volkszählung vom 1. December 1905 und anderer amtlicher Quellen* (Berlin, 1908) 66-67.

¹⁰⁰ Ernst Toller, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland*, in: Ibid., *GW*, IV (hereafter: Toller, *GW*, IV) 12; Max Broesike, *Die Provinz Posen unter Berücksichtigung der einzelnen Städte, Landgemeinden und Gutsbezirke* (1908), which shows that in 1908 50-75% of the town's inhabitants on the south-flank of the town spoke Polish; on germanification, see: William Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago and London, 1980).

¹⁰¹ Rothe, *Toller*, 22; Friedrich Ebert, *Samotschin als Handels- und Fabrikstadt* (Samotschin, 1908).

corn traders who also ran a tavern (with sleeping allocations) and store of general merchandize in the centre of Samotschin. They also owned and tended a piece of arable land, where they grew corn, although the majority of corn was possibly bought from peasants in the vicinity, and stored in a barn next to the house. In their shop, which was located on the ground-floor of their house, they sold corn and other products like chocolate, raisins, lemonade, bonbons, and strings.¹⁰² It is possible, moreover, that they branded their own corn-based liquor, as was quite common in Posen at the time. In religious terms the family belonged to a small but quite influential group of Jews, which was of great importance to the local trade. Over the course of the nineteenth century their number had drastically declined. Since their fullblown emancipation in 1847, and the unification of Germany in 1871, many Jews had settled in the economically more attractive parts of western Germany, and especially Berlin, but many poor Jews also fled to the United States. In 1871 the Jews were still 19.3% of the total population, but in 1905 they had declined to 8% – corresponding to some 20-25 families.¹⁰³

On the paternal side, Toller's ancestors came from Tuchel (*Tuchola*) in the province of West-Prussia (Prussia). Archives reveal the name of a certain Pinkus Toller, who was Toller's great-great-grandfather.¹⁰⁴ In his autobiography Toller records that this man possessed a piece of land in West-Prussia and that he was of Sefardic descent, but the latter seems somewhat unlikely, as there is no evidence of Sefardic Jews in the area of Tuchel.¹⁰⁵ He was possibly a horse trader, as we know that all three grandchildren dedicated themselves to that profession. One of his sons, Samuel Pinkus Toller (ca.1781/2-1853/62), is registered in Tuchel in 1812, when he was emancipated as a Prussian state citizen, so he was a wealthy Jew.¹⁰⁶ All his sons were horse traders,¹⁰⁷ but

¹⁰² On the merchandize and the piece of land, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 12, 15; on the full names of the parents, see: APPOP 574, II 47/39 (1885) No.27 (marriage certificate Max Toller and Ida Cohn, 17.7.1885)

¹⁰³ Königlichen Statistischen Bureau (ed.), *Die Gemeinden und Gutsbezirke der Provinz Posen und ihre Bevölkerung. Nach den Urmaterialien der allgemeinen Volkszählung vom 1. December 1871* (Berlin, 1874) 152-153; *Gemeindelexikon [1905]* (1908) 66-67.

¹⁰⁴ *General-Verzeichniß sämtlicher in dem Departement der königlichen Regierung von Westpreußen vorhandenen Juden welchen das Staatsbürger-Recht ertheilt worden* (Marienwerder, printed in the Royal Westprussian Court Press) [1812]; Archiwum Państwowe w Bydgoszczy (APB) 1674 (Akta Miasta Tucholi, 1721-1939)/608 (Die jüdischen Personen Standlisten, 1812-1867), *Liste von denen in der Stadt Tuchel in der jüdischen Gemeinde vorgefallenen Heurathen*, and *Journal der jüdischen Personenstandliste 1813*.

¹⁰⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 12; Carsten Schapkow, "Judentum als zentrales Deutungsmuster in Leben und Werk Ernst Tollers" in: *Exil. Forschung, Erkenntnisse, Ergebnisse*. 7. Jg. 16 (1996) No. 2, 25.

¹⁰⁶ *General-Verzeichniß* [1812]; on Samuel Toller, see: APB 1802 (Urząd Stanu Cywilnego, Tuchola Miasto, 1874-1903), No. 55 (1881); APB 1674/1090, *Seelenliste der Stadt Tuchel pro 1843*; APB 1674/608, *Heurathen, Personenstandliste 1813* and *Geburten*; APB 1674/1099 (Personen-Ständeliste der Stadt Tuchel, 1888-1889); APB 1674/620 (Angelegenheiten der Synagogegemeinde, 1903-1919).

the second son, Joseph Toller (1818-ca.1895), also opened an inn in the mid-nineteenth century, which he possibly combined with horse trade in the beginning, although he there after seems to have shifted to other (unknown) merchandize. This man was Toller's grandfather. He was married to Hannah Meijer (1819-1868/74),¹⁰⁸ who bore him seven children, including one son, who was Toller's father, Max Toller.¹⁰⁹ The latter seems to have been raised in a traditional Jewish family, although he no longer enjoyed a traditional Jewish education. Quite common to bourgeois Jewish families of his generation, he was sent to a modern secondary school (*Gymnasium* or *Realgymnasium*), but "failed" in the highest grade. When he also "failed" as an apprentice pharmacist,¹¹⁰ he became a merchant, which seems to have occurred around the time of his mother's death. In May 1883, we find him registered on the marriage contract of one of his sisters as a "peddler" with residence in Neu-Tuchel (a suburb of Tuchel).¹¹¹ It is not clear in what kind of goods he traded, but there is reason to believe that he traded in general goods.

On the maternal side of the family, we can trace origins back to Toller's great-great-grandfather, a wealthy Jew who had been allowed by Frederick the Great to settle as the *only* Jew in Samotschin after the Prussian take-over from 1772.¹¹² His name was Marcus Mendel (Cohn) (ca. 1740/50-1810).¹¹³ Conferred by a Prussian Charter of 1750, he was privileged with a *Schutzbrief*, or letter of protection, in exchange for an (undefined) "sum of money".¹¹⁴ As the town, favourably situated at the river Netze

¹⁰⁷ Samuel had three sons: Pinkus, Joseph and Wolf (c.1824), the latter who was the grandfather of Willy and Else Toller, see this chapter, footnote 1. From 1854 onwards we all find them registered as "horse traders", see: APB 1674/1095 (Seelenliste der Stadt Tuchel pro 1854, aufgenommen am 6ten October 1853) and 1674/527 (Statut über die Gründung einer Öffentlichen jüdischen Konfessionsschule in der Stadt Tuchel, 1847-1869), [Wahlliste] zur Wahl dreier Schulvorsteher... [Tuchel, 23 December 1858], Wahlliste zum Wahl des Schulvorstandes am 27 November 1861, [Wahlliste] zur Wahl dreier Schulvorsteher im Stelle der im Jahr 1864 gewählten herrn E. Fabian, L. Goldberg und Wolf Toller... [Tuchel, 6 August 1865] and [Wahlliste] zur Wahl dreier Schulvorsteher im Stelle der ausgeschiedenen herrn Davidsohn, ... [Tuchel, 17 January 1868].

¹⁰⁸ APB 1674/1090, Seelenliste der Stadt Tuchel pro 1843.

¹⁰⁹ In a chronological order the names of their children were: Dore (c.1841), Karolina (c.1843), Minna (c.1848-1894†), Rafle [*Rachel*] (1849), Paulina (1851), Max [*Mendel*] (1856-1911), Hinde (1858), and Emma (c.1865), see: APB 1802/Nos. 45 (1886), 21 (1877), 50 (1883), 45 (1886), 63 (1894) [all death certificates]; APB 1802/Nos. 7 (1876), 13 (1882) [marriage certificates]

¹¹⁰ Toller, GW, IV, 12.

¹¹¹ APB 1802/No. 7 (marriage certificate Hinde Toller)

¹¹² Toller, GW, IV, 12.

¹¹³ Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), New York, Herman Seligsohn, *Geschichte der Familie Seligsohn zu Samotschin, Provinz Posen: Tragische und humoristische Geschehnisse aus Samotschin*. (Unpublished Memoirs: 1903) [hereafter: *Memoirs*] 131-132, 136, 63-64, 144-145; Aron Heppner and Isaak Herzberg, *Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der Juden und der jüdischen Gemeinden in den Posener Landen nach gedruckten und ungedruckten Quellen* (Koschmin-Bromberg, 1909) 902.

¹¹⁴ Toller, GW, IV, 12; on the charter, see: Arno Herzig, *Jüdische Geschichte in Deutschland. Von der*

(*Noteć*), enjoyed significance as a cloth maker settlement around that time,¹¹⁵ and local Jews were not allowed to trade in other materials than wool and cloth up to 1801,¹¹⁶ there can be little doubt that he was attracted to this town as a wool and cloth trader. His sons, Salomon Marcus (✠1819/20) and Moses Marcus Cohn (ca.1780-1856), continued their father's business and together with another Jew they were granted the monopoly on the local wool trade for the lower cloth maker classes in 1815.¹¹⁷ When the local magistrate liberated the local trade for Jews in 1801, Salomon also established an inn, "combined with material and detail". According to Herman Seligsohn (1832-1915), a neighbour of the Toller family, Moses thereafter also turned to these branches.¹¹⁸ It is not clear when this occurred, although it must have happened by 1840, when a big fire destroyed most of the town, and gave a final blow to the already dying local wool and cloth industry.¹¹⁹ Moses Cohn had various sons, but only Toller's grandfather, Heimann Moses Cohn (1815-1871), would run an inn, which he possibly did independently of his father.

Educated from 1828 to 1833 as a Talmuddist at the then well-known Talmud-school (*Jeschiwa*) in Lissa (*Leszno*) in Posen, Toller's grandfather established himself in the 1830s as a corn trader in Samotschin, which he combined with an inn (and

Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart (München, 1997), 120-121; Sophia Kemlein, *Die Posener Juden, 1815-1848: Entwicklungsprozesse einer polnischen Judenheit unter preußischer Herrschaft* (Hamburg 1997) 46-47; Michael Brenner, Stefi Jersch-Wenzel and Michael Meyer (eds.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit: Band 2: Emanzipation und Akkulturation, 1780-1871* (Munich, 2000) 16.

¹¹⁵ Max Beheim-Schwarzbuch, "Der Netzedistrikt zur Zeit der ersten Theilung Polens" in: *Zeitschrift der historischen Gesellschaft für die Provinz Posen*, 8 Jg (Posen, 1893) 206, 260; Heppner/Herzberg, *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, 901-902; Hans Schmidt, *Geschichte des Deutschtums in Szamocin*, 13-22, 44; Adolf Warschauer, "Reklameblätter zur Heranziehung deutscher Kolonisten" in: *Zeitschrift der historischen Gesellschaft für die Provinz Posen*, 13. Jg (Posen, 1898), 60-70; Ebert, *Samotschin*, 3.

¹¹⁶ Heppner/Herzberg, *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, 901-902

¹¹⁷ Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu [APP], 290 (Naczelne Prezydium Prowincji Poznańskiej 1815-1918), XVIII (Handel i Rzemiosło): A (Handel): 6447/5074 (Gesuche und Beschwerden in Gewerbe- und Handelsangelegenheiten, 1844-1851), *Gesuch der Tuchfabrikanten zu Samoczyn, den dortigen Kaufleuten Moses Marcus, Chone Marcin und Machol Itzig die Erlaubnis zum An- und Verkauf der Wolle zu erteilen*; APP 290: XVIII: A: 6438/5047 (Der Hausierhandel und der mit einer herumziehenden Lebensart verbundene Gerwerbebetrieb, 1815-1965), *Notiz über das Gesuch des Tuchmachergewerks zu Samoczyn, den dortigen Kaufleuten Moses Marcus, Chone Marcus und Machol Itzig die Erlaubnis zu erteilen, für die ärmere Klasse der Tuchmacher Wolle aufzukaufen und an selbige durch baren Verkauf oder gegen Tuchtausch abzulösen*; on Moses as a monopolist, see also: Heppner/Herzberg, *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, 902; on Salomon and Moses being brothers, see: Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, 63-64; in 1834 Moses is still registered on the list of Naturalised Jews in the province of Posen as a "broker", see: Isidor Hirschberg, *The naturalized Jews of the Grand Duchy of Posen in 1834 and 1835: an alphabetical list of Jews naturalized in the Grand Duchy of Posen in 1834 and 1835, as published in Verzeichniss sämmtlicher naturalisierten Israeliten im Grossherzogthum Posen*. Compiled by Edward David Luft (Atlanta, Ga., 1987) [Bromberg, 1836] 18.

¹¹⁸ Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, 63, 64, 131-132, 136-137.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 67, Anhang, 143-144.

possibly with the distillation of corn-based liquor).¹²⁰ He married in the 1840s to Ernestine Tuchmann (1823-1884) from the nearby town of Margonin,¹²¹ who soon became the driving force of her husband's business. Common to the milieu of Jews in Posen, she took care of the inn and restaurant while her husband spent working days on business trips and dedicated himself as a devout Jew to the study of the Talmud. When the tavern was also transformed into a small hotel, it was she who took care of the (Jewish) travellers who decided to spend the night.¹²² The impression exists that Heimann was a man of learning rather than of business. Rather exceptionally, he was a lifelong member of the council of the Jewish *Volksschule*, or elementary school, founded in 1847 after the dismantling of the traditional *cheder* by the state.¹²³ When he died in January 1871, a friend of Toller's mother writes, Nathalie Berg-Syna (1851-1939), his wife was able to carry "the business to another level" with the aid of her second eldest daughter (Toller's mother) and her two sons, Nathan (Nesper) (1851/6) and Moritz (ca.1856/60-1912/20), so that "one said", she adds, that they were able to realise "what Heimann Cohn was unable to do during his life-time".¹²⁴ When Ernestine died in June 1884,¹²⁵ eyes turned to a suitable marriage partner for Toller's mother, someone willing

¹²⁰ Heimann Cohn was a fellow-student of Salomon Brann (1814-1903), a pioneer of German preaching in the 1840s and the rabbi of Schneidemühl (*Pila*), north of Samotschin, from 1853 until his death in 1903, see: Marcus Brann, 'Aus H. Grätzens Lehr- und Wanderjahren' in: *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* (1918) 235 (also on the year of Heimann's birth and death); Michael Brocke und Julius Carlebach (eds.), *Biographisches Handbuch der Rabbiner. Teil 1. Die Rabbiner der Emanzipationszeit in den deutschen, böhmischen und großpolnischen Ländern, 1781-1871*. Bearbeitet von Carsten Wilke (Munich, 2004). Band I: Aach-Juspa, 207-208; Heppner/Herzberg, *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, 895, 903, 925. On his status as a corn trader and tavern-keeper, see: APPOP, 14 (Acta Miasta Szamocina), 1 (Torfablösungssachen, 1870-1867), *Nachweisung des von den Eigentümer zu Samoczyn im Jahre 1863 entnommenen Dominialtorfes*; A) *Ermittelung der heizbaren Räume in der Stadt Samoczyn* [1870] and B) *Ermittelung des Holzbedarfs der Stadliche Kommune Samoczyn*. [1870]; Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, Anhang, 10; APPOP 574, II 47/6 (1875) No.15 (marriage certificate), II 47/37 (1884) No.90 (death certificate Ernestine Tuchmann).

¹²¹ APPOP 574, II 47/37 (1884) No.90.

¹²² Toller, GW, IV, 12; on women working in the store and business of their men, see also: Marion A. Kaplan, *The making of the Jewish Middle Class. Woman, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York/Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1991) 26; Steven Löwenstein, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Peter Pulzer and Monika Richarz (eds.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit. Band 3: Umstrittene Integration, 1871-1918* (Munich, 2000) 42; Monika Richarz (ed.), *Bürger auf Widerruf. Lebenszeugnisse deutscher Juden, 1780-1945* (München, 1989) 213.

¹²³ Between 1874 and 1871 Heimann Cohn was the *only* life-long member of the school's five-men-headed executive board (*Vorstand*), see: APB 2/Abteilung II: Szkoły A-Z. Nr.II/4222 (Einrichtung einer jüdischen Elementar-Schule in Samoczyn 1846-1886).

¹²⁴ Berg, *Memoirs*, LBI, no pagenumbers. Heymann and Ernestine had (at least) six children, of which four daughters and two sons; in a chronological order these were: Rosalie (ca.1851), Nathan (later: Nesper) (1851/6), Ida (1856-1933), Moritz (1856/60-c.1912/20+), Sina (1860) and Henriette (1863).

¹²⁵ APPOP 574, II 47/37 (1884) No.90.

to settle as a corn trader in Samotschin and to take over the business. This man was Toller's father, whom she married in July 1885.¹²⁶

In keeping with the Eastern Jewish tradition of their parents, Max and Ida Toller both dedicated themselves to the multi-sided family business and took on similar roles. While Toller's father must have travelled much as a corn trader, his wife bore responsibility for the inn, restaurant and hotel. Expanded with a general store upon marriage, she also stood behind the counter, which was located in the inn itself. In order to relieve her from the work in the kitchen, they installed a cook only shortly after their marriage, Juliana (Jule) Jungermann (ca.1860-1905), who served in the home for more than thirty years.¹²⁷ When Toller was young, moreover, his mother was also aided in her domestic tasks by a nanny (Marie) and a parlour maid (Anna).¹²⁸ Circa 1900 there was also an odd-job man, Moses, a somewhat simple-minded man who moved day and night in the Toller home, store, hotel, kitchen and tavern, and served, as Seligsohn writes, "as a bellboy and Cicerone for the many business travellers one could find there".¹²⁹ With the exception of Moses, who was a Jew, all servants were Catholic and of lower class or peasant descent.¹³⁰

In a cultural respect Toller's parents identified with the norms, values, lifestyles and world views of the local small-town German bourgeoisie. They cherished what Otto Dann has called an "affirmative patriotism", which implied loyalty to the German state and its policy and institutions, and not aggressive nationalism.¹³¹ They were "pioneers of the German *Kultur*", moreover, and incorporated in this respect the mentality of "Jewish bourgeois homes" in the small towns of Posen as a whole which "moulded the spiritual centres" of their largely rural environment and which, in Toller's words, 'protected and took care of German literature, philosophy and art with a sense of pride that was almost ridiculous'.¹³² This German cultural consciousness joined hands with anti-Polish sentiment, although largely in terms of a non-aggressive sense of cultural superiority

¹²⁶ APPOP 574, II 47/39 (1885) No.27.

¹²⁷ Toller, *GW*, 4, 28; Jule died circa 1905, after thirty years of service so that she must have been employed since the time of the marriage of Toller's parents in July 1885. As she gave birth to an (illegitimate) child in May 1885, and servants were generally not employed when they had children, she cannot have been employed *before* but only *after* that marriage, which took place during the same month when she lost her child only two months after having giving it birth, see: APPOP 574, II 47/40 (1885) No.94 (death certificate Franziska Jungermann).

¹²⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 13, 18.

¹²⁹ Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, Anhang, 55-56, 195-196.

¹³⁰ Toller, *GW*, IV, 18; APPOP Urzad II 47/40 Miasto (1885) No. 94.

¹³¹ Otto Dann, *Nation und Nationalismus in Deutschland* (Munich, 1993) 197.

¹³² Toller, *GW*, IV, 13.

toward “Slavic non-civilisation” (Victor Klemperer). As a child Toller grew accustomed to such feelings of cultural superiority: “We children spoke of the Poles as ‘Polacken’ and believed that they were the descendants of Cain who had killed Abel and therefore carried the sign”.¹³³

Common to Jews in rural and small-town Posen, they combined this German cultural consciousness with a strong devotion to the religious legacy of their parents. Although acculturated in many ways, they advocated dissimulation in religious matters. In what way, and in how far, the family entirely lived according orthodox custom and ritual cannot be defined with precision from Toller’s memoirs, but Toller gives us the clear impression of a home where a traditional Jewish life was central.¹³⁴ This meant that *Gottesfurcht*, or piety, and *tsedakah* were central assets of their lives. Herman Seligsohn also records that the family fell prey to gossip during the Jewish New Year festivities (*Rosh-Hashanah*) in the fall of 1904, when the family was said to have continued its fasting at the end of those festivities.¹³⁵ Circa 1900 this was exceptional, so the family possibly belonged to the most orthodox section of a community that was itself very traditional.

Toller’s father was a respectable bourgeois citizen of Samotschin, who was active in town as a public figure. He was part of a close-knit elite of influential middle class Jews who defended local Jewish and bourgeois interests.¹³⁶ He was a member of the Jewish popular school council until 1902, as was Adolph Senger (the teacher) and Max (Marcus) Levy (1845/6), a cousin of Toller’s mother and Head of the Jewish

¹³³ Ibid.; on Jews as the bourgeois element in a rural environment, see: Monika Richarz, ‘Landjuden – ein bürgerliches Element im Dorf?’ in: Wolfgang Jacobeit u.a. (eds.), *Idylle oder Aufbruch? Das Dorf im bürgerlichen 19. Jahrhundert. Ein europäischer Vergleich* (Berlin, 1990) 181-190. On bourgeois society as a specific ensemble of norms and values, lifestyles and world views, see: Jürgen Kocka, “Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit” in: Ibid. (ed.), *Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1987) 42-48, 43.

¹³⁴ Toller, *GW*, IV, 15, 35; on the Jewish home, see also: Alfred Bodenheimer, “Ernst Toller und sein Judentum” in: Itta Shedletsky and Hans-Otto Horch (eds.), *Deutsch-jüdische Exil- und Emigrationsliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert* (Tbingen, 1993) 185-93; Schapkow, “Judentum”, in: *Exil*, 25-28.

¹³⁵ LBI New York, Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, Anhang, 194-195.

¹³⁶ Compared with the two other popular schools of town (including a Protestant and Catholic school), the Jewish school was only very small, counting between 16 and 29 pupils between 1898 and 1914; by contrast, in 1905 the Protestant and Catholic school counted 208 respectively 260 children, see: Ebert, *Verwaltungsbericht* [1915]. Like in the rest of Prussia, the number of Jewish pupils declined between 1870 and 1904; between 1898 and 1914 the number fluctuated between 16 to 29 pupils. On this, as well as on the members of the school council, see: APPOP 44/8-21, *Nachweisung der Schulverhältnisse in der jüdische Schule zu Samotschin mit 1 Klasse und 1 Lehrer* (29.4.1898-1.5.1905); on Prussia, see: Mordechai Breuer, *Jüdische Orthodoxie in Deutschland, 1871-1918. Sozialgeschichte einer religiösen Minderheit* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1986) 94, 137; Chaim Schatzker, *Jüdische Jugend im zweiten*

corporation since 1879.¹³⁷ Known as a “gourmet”, Toller’s father often sat together in his inn with this “inseparable” company.¹³⁸ In 1905, then, he was also elected as a town councillor.¹³⁹ It is likely that he cherished a loose affiliation with Left Liberalism, which was common to Jews in Posen and Samotschin.¹⁴⁰ We also know that August Heyer, a Left-Liberal town councillor of Lutheran descent and a “friend of the Jews”, was a frequent visitor of Toller’s inn.¹⁴¹ Still, affiliation with Liberalism on the local level had little to do with Liberalism on the national party political level, as municipal politics in Wilhelmine Germany primarily aimed at municipal self-government, though in alignment with loyalty to the state and the Emperor. It was interest related, moreover, and bound by educated middle class values, although in theory Left Liberalism was generally more critical of traditional feudal politics and sought for a liberalisation of trade.¹⁴² As a traditional Jew, then, there is little doubt that Toller’s father placed his career in the town council at service of the local Jewish community.¹⁴³

Toller’s mother was a hardworking woman who carried responsibility for the business while her husband as a corn trader must have travelled much. In alignment with the Eastern Jewish practice of her parents she provided to an important extent for her family and therefore worked very long days: ‘Early, when I wake up, mother is working; she works in the store, she workes in the corn barn, she works in the tavern, she sends food to the poor people and invites the beggars for lunch, and when the

Kaiserreich. Sozialisations- und Erziehungsprozesse der jüdische Jugend in Deutschland 1870-1917 (Frankfurt a/Main, 1988) 68.

¹³⁷ Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, 143, 145-146, 198-199; Max Levy was witness of the marriage of Max and Ida Toller and also declared the death of Toller’s grandmother to the civil authorities in June 1884, see: APPOP 574, II 47/37 (1884); II 47/39 (1885) No.27; He was also the owner of a (succesful) colonial goods’ store in town, see: Wilfried Gerke, ‘Ernst Toller aus Samotschin’ in: *Jahrbuch Weichsel-Warthe*, no. 48 (2002) 101.

¹³⁸ Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, Anhang, 197-8.

¹³⁹ *Verwaltungsbericht des Bürgermeisters Ebert in Samotschin für das Jahr 1915* (Samotschin 1915); Richard Dove writes that “Mendel Toller“ became a town councillor in 1906, which is repeated in: Krämer, Wolf-Dieter; Gerstenberg, Günther; Kleiber-Wurm, Dieter (eds.), *Ernst Toller. Pazifist – Schriftsteller – Politiker. Ausstellung vom 7.-19. Dezember 1994. Volkshochschule Karlsfeld. Foyer des Bürgerhauser Karlsfeld* (Ingolstadt: Panther Verlag Lutz Tietmann, 1994) 4; Wolfgang Rothe writes that Toller’s father was the *only* Jew in the communal council, but it included various Jews in reality, including Isaac Cohn, a relative of Toller’s mother, see: Rothe, *Toller*, 22; *Verwaltungsbericht*.

¹⁴⁰ Pulzer, *Jews and the German State*; Klemperer, CV, I, 17-19; Monika Richarz, *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland, Selbstzeugnisse zur Sozialgeschichte im Kaiserreich. Jüdischer Leben in Deutschland*, Band II (Stuttgart, 1979) 222, 371. Before 1893 Left-Liberalism was expressed through the Progressive Liberal Party (Fortschrittspartei), but after 1893 this party split into two parties, of which the Freisinnige Volkspartei (FVp) was a little more dominant in Posen (and thus possibly the party of Max Toller).

¹⁴¹ Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, Anhang, 71-5, 128.

¹⁴² Langewiese, *Liberalism in Germany*, 133, 136, 155, 199, 218-219, 228.

servant (red: Moses) sets for the countryside to plough the land and sow the corn, she brings him the corn. In the evening she reads until late at night, and often falls asleep over her books.’ When Toller asked *why* she had to work so much, she replied: “Because you want to eat, my child”.¹⁴⁴ A similar conception of sacrificial motherhood is recorded in *Die Wandlung*, where Friedrich’s mother recalls to her son that she gave everything to the benefit of her children through her work, and nothing to herself.¹⁴⁵ In the face of her husband, then, Toller’s mother comes across as a rather modest and somewhat silent, if not, humble woman who completely understood her role as a mother and housewife in terms of what Marion A. Kaplan calls “unselfish love” to the benefit of the others.¹⁴⁶ Contrary to her husband, moreover, she was a sober woman, uninterested in a life of consumption and luxurious food. Toller also records that she went dressed in a “blue checked apron”, which was anything but decadent and bourgeois dress.¹⁴⁷

Toller’s mother was also a deeply religious woman who explained the essence of life as being according to God’s will.¹⁴⁸ In his autobiography Toller records that she gave food to the poor and invited beggars to lunch, a religious practice in Judaism, although no longer upheld in most parts of (non-traditional) Wilhemian Germany, so a clear indication of her pious nature.¹⁴⁹ It is not clear whether, and in what way, she also lived up to traditional Judaism by a kosher kitchen and the celebration of Sabbath and Jewish festivities, as Toller records nothing of this, but there is hardly doubt that she did (and with the aid of a Catholic cook).¹⁵⁰ In his memoirs about Samotschin Herman Seligsohn remembers that she carefully organised the festivities on occasion of Jewish New Year in September-October 1904 in “her own pious, perfect way”.¹⁵¹

¹⁴³ Pulzer, *Jews and the German State*, 121, 135.

¹⁴⁴ Toller, *GW*, IV, 15; Toller’s image of the mother corresponds to an image we often find in the memoirs of Eastern European Jews, see: Rachel Monika Herweg, *Die jüdische Mutter. Das verborgene Matriarchaat* (Darmstadt, 1995) 157-160, 171-172; Richarz, *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland*, II, 244; considering her prominent role in the business, Ida Toller was all but an “insignificant woman”, as Wolfgang Rothe once suggested, see: Rothe, *Toller*, 27.

¹⁴⁵ Toller, *GW*, II, 19.

¹⁴⁶ Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 30-1.

¹⁴⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 15.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 16-17; her piety is recalled in a poem by Else Lasker-Schüler, entitled “Ernst Toller” (1925)

¹⁴⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 15, 35.

¹⁵⁰ Strick ritual homely practice – and not service attendance – was decisive for the measure of orthodoxy in Imperial Germany, see: Breuer, *Orthodoxie*, 17-18.

¹⁵¹ LBI, Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, Anhang, 194.

It is not easy to define the precise nature of the relationship between Toller and his father, although it seems to have been largely characterised by emotional distance and fear.¹⁵² Absent from the home in physical terms, Toller's father was present as a moral authority in bourgeois and religious terms. When Anna turned out to be pregnant circa 1900, for example, Toller records that it was his father who made sure that she was fired to uphold bourgeois respectability. When Toller accidentally did something wrong once, then, it was his father who told him that he had committed a 'crime'. It was also his father who prohibited Toller from touching the *mezuzah* in his bedroom, that is, from touching the small parchment scroll inside the small box that was affixed on the right side of the doorpost (Hebr. *mezuzah*) of his bedroom, containing the first two paragraphs of the *Sjma Israel* (Dt. 6:4-9, 11:13-21) which recall God's omnipresence.¹⁵³ As it was an object of special blessing to traditional Jews, it is certainly no coincidence that Toller presents his father as having prohibited him from touching the scroll, as it shows how much he understood the role of the fatherly authority as the "source and warrant of the validity of the Divine Law" (Stéphane Mosès).¹⁵⁴ In *Die Wandlung* Toller portrays the father as a blunt tyrant who "had ruined his youth" because he had obliged him to stay in Samotschin at a time when 'he wanted to break away',¹⁵⁵ but this is a clear exaggeration of the power of his authority. Richard Dove has already noted that it was Max Toller who sent Toller's first poems to the father of Kurt Pinthus, a literary critic, indicating that he did not obstruct his son's literary ambitions.¹⁵⁶ Although this does not mean that Toller's father would have advocated a fulltime literary career for his son, it clearly shows how much *Die Wandlung* was written under the immediate impact of Expressionist clichés of generational conflict between fathers and sons.

At odds with a 'strange' father, Toller was closer to his mother, although this bond was not without problems and a certain feeling of ambivalence. Toller records

¹⁵² How much the relationship of father and son was influenced by emotional distance and fear may also result from Toller's later attitude toward Christiane Grautoff who experienced similar feelings of fear towards her father. Toller insisted on her talking with him in 1935, where after she lost that fear and the relationship notably improved, see: Grautoff, *Die Göttin und ihr Sozialist*, 12-17, here 16-17.

¹⁵³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 18, 22-23; on the *mezuzah*, see: R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder (chief eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion* (New York and Oxford, 1997) 460-461; Philip Birnbaum, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts* (New York, 1998); Rabbijn S. Ph de Vries Mzn, *Joodse Rituelen en Symbolen* (Amsterdam, 1968) 51; Julius H. Schoeps (ed.), *Neues Lexikon des Judentums* (Munich, 1992) 314.

¹⁵⁴ Stéphane Mosès, "Zur Frage des Gesetzes" in: Karl-Erich Grözinger, Stéphane Mosès, Hans-Dieter Zimmermann (eds.), *Kafka und das Judentum* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1987) 15.

¹⁵⁵ Toller, *GW*, II, 18.

that he generally spoke with his mother when he was puzzled about social and moral matters,¹⁵⁷ but he also lamented, as we shall see, her absence as a ‘guide’ in his moral confusion. This absence was further sustained by her physical absence from the home. An incredibly busy woman, she left her son largely to the servants. There was Maria during infancy, but when Toller grew older, and thus more conscious, Jule became a kind of ‘surrogate-mother’. He also records more about Jule than about his mother and presents her as the embodiment of a self-sacrificing and hardworking woman, transposing his own mother’s ideals.¹⁵⁸

Toller is remarkably silent about his brother, Heinrich (1886-1940/5), and his sister, Hertha (1887-1940/5).¹⁵⁹ Toller was closer to his sister than to his brother, but we know too little to give a precise description of their relationship. Richard Dove draws a parallel with *Die Wandlung*, where the ‘sister’ appears as a *deus ex machina* in time of trouble,¹⁶⁰ and thus concluded that Hertha “often” functioned as “the guide and confident” of Toller’s early life, but this may be exaggerated, even though it is not unlikely that she mothered over her little brother to relieve a busy mother. With a difference of seven and respectively six years of age, Heinrich and Hertha were possibly closer to each other than to their little brother. Most of their socialisation processes ran asynchronously; when the latter was born, for example, they already went to popular school; when he went to that school, they went to secondary school (and in Hertha’s case possibly a girls’ boarding school); and when Toller went to high school, Hertha married with a textile merchant from Landsberg a/Warthe in 1908 and Heinrich was educated as a merchant in Berlin, but soon assumed the management of the family business after the death of his father on 29 August 1911.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Dove, *He was German*, 10, relying on Pinthus, “Toller” in: *Books Abroad*, 4.

¹⁵⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 15, 17, 21.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 26.

¹⁵⁹ APPOP 574, II: 47/41 (1886) No. 83 (birth certificate Heinrich Toller); II 47/46 (1887) No. 216 (birth certificate Hertha Toller).

¹⁶⁰ Dove, *He was a German*, 10.

¹⁶¹ In 1908 Hertha Toller married with Erich Cohn from Landbergs at the Warthe, who worked in his father’s fashion business (Louis Cohn & Co) in the Richtstrasse 67/68, see: *Adressbuch Landsberg a/Warthe*, 1913.

Childhood in Samotschin (1893-1906)

Toller grew up in his birth-town, Samotschin. Just like in the other small-towns of Posen, its social life was deeply fragmented along the lines of class, nationality and religion (and to a lesser extent of age and gender). As a very young child, Toller played with the ‘other’ children in the streets, but when he grew older social fragmentation complicated contact with children, including those with friends. In his autobiography Toller records that his dearest friend was Stanislaus (presumably: Stanisław Wrzesinski), a Catholic Polish boy from a poor working class family and the son of the local nightwatchman.¹⁶² As Toller was a German bourgeois Jew, the fate of their friendship was a symbol of the socio-cultural tensions at large.

In his autobiography Toller records his childhood as a period of loneliness, isolation and estrangement from the world in which he lived his first experiences. In the introduction I have already explained that Toller’s unhappiness was a consequence of the interplay of a rather sensitive character with its specific socio-cultural setting. It is therefore impossible to reduce his unhappiness to one single source, although it was closely related to a particular preoccupation with morality. In 1920 he wrote to his good friend Netty Katzenstein-Gerstle (1889)¹⁶³ that his childhood was a period of “unrest and restless wanderings”, which he blamed on the absence of “inner order that shapes spiritual life in great, clear lines”.¹⁶⁴ This lack of spiritual clarity was not limited to his Jewish identity alone. A somewhat anxious child, Toller was not merely receptive for the pious orthodox Judaism of the paternal home, as is often stressed by scholars of Toller,

¹⁶² Toller, GW, IV, 14; Maria Piosik, relying on an oral source, identifies Stanislaus as Stanisław Wrzesinski, but I was unable to trace that name myself in the official records of the Catholic school; nor did I find the surname of the nightwatch, Stanislaus’ father, see: APPOP 44/134, *Schülerverzeichnis für das Schuljahr 1903/4*; Maria Piosik, in: Thorsten Unger and Maria Wojtczak (eds.), *Ernst Tollers Geburtsort Samotschin* (Würzburg, 2001).

¹⁶³ Netty (Nanette) Katzenstein-Gerstle (1889) was a daughter of Emil Gerstle and Laura Frankenheimer from Memmingen, Bavaria. Though not relative by blood, she was related to a branch of Toller’s family in Memmingen through the marriage of her father’s sister, Josephine Gerstle (1872-1937), with Dr. Max (Mendel) Toller (1855-1915) from Ichenhausen, a son of the younger brother of Toller’s paternal grandfather from Tuchel and therefore a full cousin of Toller’s equally named father. Circa 1916 Netty married Erich Katzenstein (1893), a medicine student, with whom she had a son, Julius Georg (1916). After the war they settled in Switzerland, where Erich became a neurologist and Netty became active in the Swiss women’s movement. See: StA Munich, II: *Bestände des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, 1: *Polizeidirektion*, 14332 (*Erich Katzenstein*); HStA Munich, Abteilung IV – Kriegsarchiv (KA), Personalakte 10018 (*Willy Toller*); on Willy Toller and his family, see also: Johannes Timmerman, “Die Entstehung der Freikorpsbewegung 1919 in Memmingen und im Unterallgäu” in: Reinhard Baumann und Paul Hoser (eds.), *Die Revolution von 1918/19 in der Provinz* (Konstanz), 173-188, esp. 178-179 and footnote 22; Julius Miedel, *Die Juden in Memmingen* (zusammengestellt mit Unterstützung der Familien Gerstle and Toller, 1909).

but equally affected by the bourgeois and Christian (that is: popular Catholic) principles of morality. While bourgeois principles of morality largely came down upon him through his own family, he learned more about the popular Catholic ones through his contact with the domestic servants and Stanislaus. From an early age these notions seem to have had a profound impact on Toller. At around age five, for example, he was deeply impressed by the superstitious ethical ideas of Stanislaus' grand-mother, an illiterate woman of more than eighty years old.¹⁶⁵ Bourgeois notions of morality, moreover, seem to have blurred with religious ones, which is understandable in a world where the supremacy of the Godly essence went untouched. A sensitive character, Toller seems to have experienced fear of the pious conception of God of his world (both Jewish *and* Catholic). When his father scolded him for misbehaviour, for example, he immediately understood that scolding in terms of sin, and feared moral punishment from his religious teacher and God.¹⁶⁶

The most outspoken confrontation with God in his autobiography is recorded in an invented anecdote in which Toller imagines himself as the killer of the “dear God” for fear of His punishment.¹⁶⁷ This God was supposed to hide in the *mezuzah* in his bedroom, as Anna, the parlourmaid, had once told him that the “God of the Jews” was hidden inside (which seems to be a popular Catholic equation of the scroll with a

¹⁶⁴ Toller, *GW*, V, 28-29.

¹⁶⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 15-17; Ernst Toller, “...Geschichte Erzählen” in: *Berliner Tageblatt*, 9.10.1927 (Jg 478).

¹⁶⁶ Toller, *GW*, IV, 23.

¹⁶⁷ In an obviously invented anecdote Toller records that he killed the “dear God” after he was accused by Jule and “mister Levy” of a fire which he had not committed and which caused the death of a woman called “Eichstädt”. As Toller had lied to his mother, having wrongly claimed that he had washed himself, he wonders whether God is the One Who created the fire for punishment of his sin. If we follow Toller's own (not always consistent) chronology, this fire took place immediately *before* he entered the local Jewish popular school in 1899, but there are no traces of a fire in Samotschin at that date in published records, nor is the death recorded of a woman called “Eichstädt”, and not a trace of someone who died in a fire between 1874 and 1903. Interestingly enough, Herman Seligsohn records the death of a “poor blind widow” during the notorious fire of 1840 (which destroyed most of the town); he writes that this woman lived in a house at the market place which was the home of Max (Marcus) Levy circa 1900, “and I have seen the burned skeleton next to the well of Stenzel with horror.” It thus seems likely that “mister Levy” was Max Levy, the good friend of the family and the Head of the Jewish corporation. Seligsohn also records that Max Levy lived in a house *opposite* that of the Tollers (and thus on the other side of the marketplace where Toller also located the house of “Eichstädt”), so that there is reason to believe that “*Frau Eichstädt*” had once lived in the home of Levy. I am inclined to believe that Toller must have known this story and retrospectively re-worked it in his autobiography. Considering the presence of Jule in the anecdote, she may have been the one who told him that story. See: Toller, *GW*, IV, 18-19; Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, Anhang, 143-146; fires were often explained in terms of sin in rural communities, see: Regina Schulte, *Das Dorf im Verhohr. Brandstifter, Kindsmörderinnen und Wilderer vor den Schranken des bürgerlichen Gerichts – Oberbayern 1848-1910* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1989) 45-51, here 45.

hostie).¹⁶⁸ Intended to kill the fear connected to the traditional God-conception of his Jewish *and* Catholic environment, the killing reveals more about the wish of little Toller to come to terms with rather than to destroy the “dear God”. Afraid of moral punishment, the killing betrays the need for God’s love and affection, and thus the wish to prevent social exclusion.¹⁶⁹ On a sub-conscious level, then, the killing shows Toller’s need for community with the Godly world, although joined by the wish to give new, positive meaning to the conception of the “dear God” itself. Yet his environment was unable to recognize that need. When he was sent to the Jewish popular school in April or October 1899,¹⁷⁰ for example, the teacher, Adolph Senger (a friend of Toller’s father), only strengthened the principles of moral punishment and exclusion through corporal punishment.¹⁷¹

It was during his time at the popular Jewish school, moreover, that Toller also grew more conscious of ethnic, class and confessional differences among children.¹⁷² He writes that he made friends with a Jewish middle class boy he calls “Max Sell”, who was called Max Seligsohn (1892) in reality.¹⁷³ This friendship further tied him to a

¹⁶⁸ Toller, GW, IV, 18.

¹⁶⁹ At first sight Toller’s killing of God seems to show parallels with the Nietzschean proclamation that “God is dead”, although there are more differences in reality. Unlike Toller, Nietzsche seeks a “*transvaluation of all values*”, that is, a search for a new moral *beyond* the Godly order of Judaism and Christianity, rather than a *re-valuation* of existing values in more humanitarian terms. Nietzsche’s death of God, then, is a reality, that is, a fact that needs no verification, whereas Toller’s killing is an act of self-liberation, if not an act to *prove* something about the nature of the God Himself, that is, an act of verification itself. Thus, Toller – unlike Nietzsche – does not place *death* in the centre of attention, but *killing*. Further, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra claims not that *he* has killed God, but rather that “we have killed him”, that is, humanity as a whole, whereas Toller’s struggle is an individual one in opposition to a mankind that still believes in God. In some way there is a closer parallel between Toller’s assault on God and Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*; like Toller, Dostoevsky places the *relation* of God to man at the centre of attention, and not, like Nietzsche, the existence or problem of God Himself; unlike Toller, however, Ivan Karamazov tends to nihilism after his trial of God. An echo of this Dostoyevskian trial we also find in Toller’s play *Masse Mensch* (1920), written long before the anecdote of the killing of God in his autobiography; “I call God before the bench!” Toller later recorded that he read literature of Dostoyevsky, whereas he was never openly a Nietzsche-adapt. On Nietzsche, see: Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy* (London, 1996) 152; Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (New York, 1968) 100-101.

¹⁷⁰ Generally children were 5 or 6 when then entered the elementary school. Toller himself was nine when he entered the local private boys’ school after Jewish elementary education. As we shall see, he left the two-year private boys’ school in December 1905, where he had stayed longer than the usual two years. There were two terms when one could enter, in April and in October, so that he started that school in either April or October 1903; he must have thus ended the Jewish school in one of these months; as the Jewish school only had four grades in Samotschin (unlike the Catholic and Evangelical schools which had six grades), he thus entered that school in either April or October 1899. See: Toller, GW, IV, 24.

¹⁷¹ Toller, GW, 4, 19.

¹⁷² Ibid. 19-20.

¹⁷³ Max Seligsohn was the eldest son of a respectable local Jewish middle class corn merchant Heinrich Seligsohn, elected as a town councillor in 1911. He succeeded between 1909 and 1914 Max Levy as head of the Jewish corporation, see: Toller, GW, 4, 24-25; APP 44, List of pupils [1903/5]: APPOP 574-II

Jewish bourgeois world, clearly expressed by the contempt they felt for “Kurt”, a poor working class Jew.

However, further inclusion in a Jewish bourgeois world also meant exclusion in a world that was subject to anti-Semitism. One of Toller’s most vivid impressions during this period was the increase of anti-Semitism as a consequence of the brutal murder of an eighteen year old Christian boy in March 1900 in the West-Prussian town of Konitz, some eighty kilometres north of Samotschin (and close to Tuchel). As the body was cut to pieces with a great measure of precision in which no traces of blood were found, the idea gained ground that the blood was taken out of the body before it was cut into pieces. This gave rise to a revival of the medieval legend of a Jewish ritual murder, according to which Jews were said to ritually slaughter Christians because they needed their blood to bake it into their matzos. As the murder had taken place just before *Pessach* (Jewish Easter), suspicions towards the Jews only increased. The delay, rage, mystery, and confusion that surrounded the affair were enough to stir popular imagination to new heights and unleash anti-Semitic cries in Konitz and its immediate environments.¹⁷⁴

Hermann Seligsohn records that anti-Semitism notably intensified since the 1880s (as elsewhere in Germany), but it was not until after Konitz that he detected an acceleration toward a more sophisticated and organised kind of anti-Semitism, forcing Jews to better organise themselves: “Even previously unprejudiced men were infected by this plague” – “Priest, doctor, pharmacist, teacher, merchants and others celebrated this Moloch!”¹⁷⁵ In addition Toller records how Konitz also strengthened popular agitation in the streets of Samotschin. Children shouted anti-semitic slogans and a (possibly Catholic lower class) boy sang an anti-Semitic song behind the back of his teacher, when the latter crossed the market place one day. When Toller asked Stanislaus why the children shouted anti-Semitic slogans, he noticed that his friend cherished anti-Semitic ideas as well: although he did not believe the story of the ritual

47/59 (1892) No. 153; LBI, Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, 98-90; Ebert, *Verwaltungsbericht* [1915]; Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin – Centrum Judaicum, Archiv (CJA Berlin), *Letter by H. Seligsohn, 1914*; he must have succeeded Max Levy after 1909, as it was then that Heppner and Herzberg had interviewed Levy for their book on the Jews of Posen, see: Heppner and Herzberg, *Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, 903.

¹⁷⁴ Helmut Walser Smith, *Die Geschichte des Schlachters. Mord und Antisemitismus in einer deutschen Kleinstadt* (Göttingen, [2002/3]) esp. 7-8, 17-55; Christoph Nonn, *Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder. Gerücht, Gewalt und Antisemitismus im Kaiserreich* (Göttingen, 2002) here 7-54 and 169-187.

¹⁷⁵ Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, 167

murder, he *did* explain to Toller that the Jews had nailed Christ to the Cross.¹⁷⁶ Toller records that he “suffered bitterly” from that accusation; when he was at Stanislaus’s home, and nobody paid attention, he went to a statue of Christ and begged Jesus to forgive him because “the Jews” had nailed Him to the Cross.¹⁷⁷ There is little doubt that the anecdote is invented, but it shows Toller’s ambivalence about Jewish identity, both defending and taking distance from “*the Jews*”. It also shows that he largely understood himself as a Jew for the apology was on behalf of “the Jews”. Thus anti-Semitism strengthened his consciousness of Jewish identity. As a consequence he one day asked his mother why they were Jews, though she could not console his “restlessness”. Unable to understand such “foolish” thoughts, she told him to go to sleep.¹⁷⁸

Puzzling with his Jewish identity, he grew curious about an apocalyptic sect of “true Christians” in 1900/2, offering radical rebirth in terms of faith alone. Possibly a sect of Mennonites, it initially embraced Toller in “love and unity” and asked him to read out a Christmas poem, but anti-Semitic prejudices soon ended that dream for the next day he was told that “it would be more pleasant to the Lord Saviour if Franz would recite the poem.”¹⁷⁹ It is tempting to believe that Toller thus flirted with alternative forms of Christianity, but this would be going too far. Possibly the text says more about his wish for community than about preference for a specific kind of religion.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Toller, *GW*, IV, 20-21.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 21.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 21.

¹⁷⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 21.

¹⁸⁰ The presence of a sect is not impossible, as we find “other Christians” (that is: *other* than Catholics or Evangelicals) registered in Samotschin between 1871 and 1910. Following Toller’s own descriptions of the sect, it may have been a Mennonite one. The Mennonites were part of the Anabaptist movement that rejected the grip of church and state over individuals’ lives and took the lives of the first generations of the Christians as a model. They believed solely in the centrality and inspiration of the Bible and in Jesus Christ as the One sent by God to bring reconciliation between the Creator and a broken World. Menno Simons, in his *Fondamentboek* (1539), first developed a coherent doctrine for the Anabaptist movement. Thanks to him Anabaptism, now also known as “Mennonism”, developed in the Netherlands, but stimulated by persecution it spread into other regions of Europe, including the Netze region, where Polish landlords allowed them to settle in the 16th century in exchange for the cultivation and drainage of the then still swampy lands. The majority lived on the countryside in so called *Häulander* villages (a corruption of the word ‘Hollander’, meaning: Dutchman), but many also moved to towns during the 19th century. On the Mennonites, see: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Los Angeles, 1996) 144-154. On the “other Christians”, see: Königlichen Statistischen Bureau (ed.), *Gemeinden und Gutsbezirke der Provinz Posen [1871]*, 152-153; *Gemeindelexikon [1905]*, 66-67; Königl. Statistischen Landesamts (ed.) *Gemeindelexikon. Auf Grund der Ergebnisse der Volkszählung vom 1. December 1910 und anderer amtlicher Quellen*. (Berlin: 1912) 26-27.

At age nine, in 1903, Toller was sent to the local private school for boys that was run by a certain “*Pfarrer Kusch*”, a retired pastor – presumably: Otto Kuß, a pastor from 1891 to 1893 in the Posner town of Czarnikau (*Czarników*).¹⁸¹ The school prepared him for the third grade (*Tertia*) of the *Realgymnasium*, where it was intended that Toller would go afterwards. As private education was expensive, it was a school for wealthy children which counted in 1904 only six pupils from the (upper) middle class. As Jews made up a disproportionate share of the local (upper) middle class, 50% were Jewish, whereas the other half were Lutheran.¹⁸² The lower-class Stanislaus continued at the Catholic *Volksschule*, while Toller now learned to look down “on the children of the poor people who would go to the *Volksschule* and who would not learn Latin”.¹⁸³ As he was thus something “better” than Stanislaus, their friendship ended, according to Toller by the decision of Stanislaus himself. Due to competition and jealousy, moreover, his friendship with Max Seligsohn also ended during these years. At the same time we detect a growing inclination in Toller to self-imposed isolation. When “Frieda”, the younger sister of Max Seligsohn,¹⁸⁴ asked him why he did not want to play ‘with them’ anymore, we must probably seek Toller’s answer in his wish for solitude. Apparently Toller developed at this time into a “lonely, even solitary child, given to daydreaming and introspection.”¹⁸⁵ It is not clear in what way this corresponds to the loss of contact with Stanislaus, but it seems to have occurred rather independently. Dove writes: “He would rarely play with other children, often sitting in front of the house for hours, lost in thought. His mother was worried by his solitary nature”, and wondered why he did not play with other children.¹⁸⁶ At odds with horizontal bonds of fraternity, Toller sought for vertical bonds of community through the company of Jule, who was the only

¹⁸¹ On “Kuß”, see: Wilfried Gerke, ‘Ernst Toller aus Samotschin’ in: *Jahrbuch Weichsel-Warthe*, no. 48 (2002), 103. I was unable to find the name of a teacher at the private school before 1905; a “pastor” “Kusch” is not registered in Samotschin, so he must indeed have come from another place, see: APPOP 44/140 (Acta Speciala der königlichen Kreisschulinspektion Samotschin betreffend höhere Privat-Knabenschule zu Samotschin, 1899-1916). Toller writes that he was nine years old when he went to Kusch’s school, so he must have joined that school in April or October 1903, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 24; thus it cannot be correct that Toller entered this school in 1900, see: *Ernst Toller: Pazifist – Schriftsteller – Politiker*, 4.

¹⁸² APPOP 44/140, *Verzeichnis der höhere Privatschule Samotschin im Schuljahre 1904 besuchenden Knaben*.

¹⁸³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 24.

¹⁸⁴ Frieda Seligsohn (1895), see: APPOP 574, II 74/No.94 (1895); Seligsohn, *Memoirs*, LBI, 99.

¹⁸⁵ Dove, *He was a German*, 10.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, relying on an unpublished autobiographical manuscript ‘Death of a Mother’.

one who ‘understood’ him.¹⁸⁷ It is to her that he read his first poems. Her death in 1905 therefore must have come as a shock to Toller.¹⁸⁸

Shortly after that moment, Toller finished the private boy’s school. As the school closed down, Toller was educated in the home of “Kusch” as his only pupil. Relying on an autobiographical sketch from Toller, Fritz Droop writes that he left that class in December 1905.¹⁸⁹

Adolescence in Bromberg (1906-1914)

At age twelve in April 1906 Toller was sent to the *Realgymnasium* in Bromberg (*Bydgoszcz*), the capital and socio-economic and political centre of the similarly named administrative district. The choice for a *Realgymnasium* is unsurprising. Although the *Gymnasium* as the embodiment of Von Humboldt’s classical ideology of *Bildung* at this time enjoyed the highest status among secondary schools still, many Jews, excluded from academic careers, preferred to send their sons – red: these schools were only for boys – to the more ‘practical’ *Realgymnasium* to better guarantee social security for their offspring.¹⁹⁰

Situated some forty kilometres eastwards of Samotschin, he was hosted in the home of Willy Freundlich, a (possibly retired) “teacher” and the supervisory bookery

¹⁸⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 25.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 25-28; Toller records that he first discovered that she had an illegitimate son at her funeral. Jule had always kept him a “secret”, although Toller’s mother was the only one to whom she had entrusted that secret. It was Toller’s mother, then, who informed Jule’s son about his mother’s death. Being a “secret”, the son must have been born after 1885, when Jule was already in the service of the Tollers; he is not registered in Samotschin, so he may have been born elsewhere so as not to jeopardise her employment. Among servants in Imperial Germany illegitimate motherhood was not seldom, see: Regina Schulte, *Sperrbezirke. Tugendhaftigkeit und Prostitution in der bürgerlichen Welt* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1984) 87.

¹⁸⁹ Droop, though not the most concise author, writes that it was in 1905 when Toller was twelve years old, so that I conclude that it was December 1905, see: Fritz Droop, *Toller und seine Bühne Werke*. (Franz Schneider: Berlin und Leipzig, 1922) 7. On the closure of the school, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 28; APPOP 44/140, *Brief von der Königlichen Regierung, Abteilung für Kirchen- und Schulwesen, J.nr.1350.u.II, 9.3.1909*.

¹⁹⁰ George L. Mosse, “Jewish Emancipation: Between *Bildung* and Respectability” in: Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (eds.), *The Jewish Response to German Culture. From the Enlightenment to the Second World War* (London, 1985) 1-13; see also: Toller, *GW*, IV, 33, who writes that the *Realgymnasium* prepared him for “practical life”. Although Toller was twelve when he went to Bromberg, not thirteen, neither fifteen, see: Hempel-Küter/ Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 83 respectively Maria Wojtczak, “Ernst Toller’s Geburtsort Samotschin und die Ostmarkenliteratur” in: .. (eds) *Samotschin*, 59.

man (*Rendant*) of the local Jewish corporation.¹⁹¹ Possibly no more than a transition place, he already moved in either 1906 or 1907 to the home of a certain “*Frau Dr. Ley*”, a (possibly traditional) Jewish woman with cultivated bourgeois ideals who introduced Toller to the refined senses and mores of the urban bourgeoisie by teaching him how to play the piano. She had divorced her husband, but was keen on her status, so that she constantly considered whether she had to change the nameplate on the door and join in the elevation of the social status of her former husband after he was nominated the honorary title of *Sanitätsrat* (‘medical councillor’).¹⁹² It is not unlikely that “*Frau Dr. Ley*” was the former wife of Dr. Lipowski, the director of the local hospital and “one of the most visited doctors of Bromberg” (Alfred Cohn) with a reputation that extended far beyond Bromberg.¹⁹³ He must have stayed there until the summer of 1910, whereafter he moved from the home of “*Frau Dr. Ley*” to a pension that was run by a certain “*Frau Möller*”.¹⁹⁴ It must have been in this pension where the future Communist and literary critic from the German Democratic Republic Walther Victor (1895-1971)

¹⁹¹ Toller, GW, IV, 28; Willy Freundlich is registered between 1906 and 1913 at the Thorner Straße no 62, in the south-east of Bromberg, see: *Adressbuch 1908, nebst Allgemeinem Geschäfts-Anzeiger von Bromberg und der Vororten* (Bromberg, 1908) Teil IV, 278; on his being *Rendant*, see: *Ibid.*, Teil I, 20; on the numbers of Jews, see: Heppner/Herzberg, *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, 347, 285.

¹⁹² Toller, GW, IV, 28-29; on symbols and titles to strengthen identity, see: Kocka, ‘Bürgertum und Bürgerliche Gesellschaft’ in: Kocka (ed.), *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*. Band I, 11-76, 29-30.

¹⁹³ Cohn, *Erinnerungen*, 121-122. The name “Ley” does not appear in the Bromberger address books between 1906 and 1914. As Toller stayed in her home until the summer of 1910, “Dr. Ley” must thus have been appointed to *Sanitätsrat* between 1906 and 1910. He may have either lived in another town or Toller changed his name. Adopting the assumption that “Ley” was a doctor in Bromberg, then, it is not unlikely that he was Dr. Israel Lipowski, whose name is the only one of a practicing doctor that comes close to “Ley”. Although information on nominations of doctors between 1906 and 1910 is not available, Lipowski was one of the most popular doctors of Bromberg, so that he may well have been nominated to *Sanitätsrat* during his lifetime. The only other name of a practicing doctor and *Sanitätsrat* in Bromberg that comes close to “Ley” was that of Ernst Leißner (1861), a conservative Lutheran who lived in Bromberg since 1890; yet he was nominated to *Sanitätsrat* in 1913, when Toller had already left the home of “*Frau Dr. Ley*”, see: *Adressbuch nebst Allgemeinen Geschäfts-Anzeiger von Bromberg und dessen Vororten auf das Jahr 1900* (Bromberg, 1899) Part I, 115; *Adressbuch 1908*, IV, 49. I; *Adressbuch 1909, nebst Allgemeinen Geschäfts-Anzeiger von Bromberg und den Vororten* (Bromberg, 1909) Teil II, 115; APB, 189/Nr 2130 (Verleihung des Charakters als Sanitätsrat an prak.Ärzte, 1913-1918, 1921), *Vorschlag zur Verleihung des Charakters als “Sanitätsrat” an den prakt. Arzt Dr. Ernst Leissner in Bromberg und Verzeichnis der in Bromberg wohnenden Ärzte [7.1.1917]*; Walther Victor, ‘Ernst Toller: Über den Menschen und Dichter in: *ibid.*, *Köpfe und Herzen*, 62-63.

¹⁹⁴ Toller, GW, IV, 36-37. From 1910 to 1914 the name of a woman called “Möller” is not registered in the local address books; thus, she was either not registered at all or she lived in the home of a husband or relative. As the name “Möller” is rare, she was possibly related to one of the five “Möllers” that we *do* find registered, including Robert Möller, a former accountant of the *Regierungs-Hauptkassen* [*Reg-Hauptkassen buchhalter a.D.*] and *Rechnungsrat*. Interestingly enough, the address book of 1913 also records a certain “Möller” as the *Rendant* of the Jewish community (and thus as the successor of Willy Freundlich). This many have been Robert Möller, who lived in the Johannesstraße, see: *Adressbuch [1910-1914], nebst Allgemeinen Geschäfts-Anzeiger von Bromberg und den Vororten* (Bromberg, 1910-1914)].

spotted Toller for the first time in December 1910, smoking “an enormous tobacco pipe”.¹⁹⁵

Toller disliked education at the *Realgymnasium*, which he records as a boring institution and a breeding place of obedience and subservient citizenship. “Sour teachers” educated the pupils of the school in very much the same way as they had once been educated and their puritan Lutheran morality deprived them of all life-affirming sensations. Scornful of the ‘practical’ nature of its curriculum, Toller is critical of the “formulas that we do not understand and quickly forget”. “History”, he adds, “exists by the grace of dates; unimportant is to understand the occurrences in their interrelation; important to master the dates of battles and beginnings of royal governments.”¹⁹⁶ Toller did his best with teachers he liked, but otherwise he did not. Release only came with holidays, when he returned to Samotschin,¹⁹⁷ but even more important was literature and drama, which offered him a counter-world to life at school. Influenced by the later wish to stress his rebellious nature, Toller writes that he was fond of those authors that were proscribed at school: “Hauptmann and Ibsen, Strindberg and Wedekind.”¹⁹⁸ No less, however, was the influence of Goethe and Hölderlin, who both belonged to his favourite authors even after the war.¹⁹⁹ He also records that he found pleasure in writing, including poems with a “rebellious character” and newspaper articles for the local *Ostdeutsche Zeitung*, a Liberal daily of the educated middle class (with 18,000 abonnees in 1908) that not merely defended small-landowners’ interests, but was also well-known for its literary critiques.

In order to give further expression to his passion for literature Toller joined a Bromberg literary circle in 1911, which was organised around the Jewish baker’s wife, Clara Rittler. Obviously convinced of his ‘talent’, she established contact between Toller and her brother-in-law, Sigmar Mehring, a then famous art critic of the Liberal *Berliner Tageblatt*.²⁰⁰ Around the same time Toller’s father sent some of his son’s first

¹⁹⁵ Victor, *Köpfe und Herzen*, 62-63.

¹⁹⁶ Toller, *GW*, IV.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 30

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 34

¹⁹⁹ Toller, *GW*, V.

²⁰⁰ René Eichenlaub, *Ernst Toller et l'expressionisme politique* (Paris, 1980) 33, relying on a letter from Walter Mehring to John Spalek (5 January 1965, Ascona); though Mehring also claims that his father published these poems in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Eichenlaub was unable to trace these; see also: Walter Mehring, *Die verlorene Bibliothek: Autobiography einer Kultur* (Icking and Munich, 1964) 185. According to the address books of Bromberg from 1895 to 1902 Clara Rittler lived at the Corn Market 11. She was married with Salomon Rittler, a Jewish backer. The couple had a son, Leo Rittler, who owned an inn and branded his own distillery at the Corn Market 4. In 1922 Clara moved to that his address, possibly

manuscripts to the father of Kurt Pinthus, who was a friend of his and an art critic at that time.²⁰¹ Formally allowed to join in April 1911 (as a pupil of the *Ober-prima*),²⁰² Toller also joined the literary association of his school, Clio. It was only a small group of eleven to sixteen pupils, but it was serious, and had its own newspaper for which members wrote historical and literary contributions. Under tutelage of a teacher, the group read from the works of the classics, including Goethe, Schiller and Shakespeare, but there was also an interest in “modern” works, including Gutzkow, Wildenbruch and Björnson.²⁰³ Hempel-Küter and Müller write that the group also read from Ibsen, Hauptmann, Strindberg and Wedekind, but these authors were forbidden at school, which did not prevent Toller during one of these meetings from reading fragments from Hauptmann’s drama *Rosa Bernd* (1903).²⁰⁴ On the occasion of the festivities around the Schiller-commemoration Toller was awarded a prize along with two other pupils on 16 November 1912.²⁰⁵ Toller was obviously attracted to theatre and he records that he also began to write dramas after 1912. He played “big roles” in the school theatre, including that of Tiberius in Geibel’s *Tod des Tiberius* (Death of Tiberius), and he wanted to become an actor toward the end of his time at the *Realgymnasium*,²⁰⁶ although his mother objected to that wish.²⁰⁷ In *Die Wandlung* this objection is also recorded, when the mother objects to her son’s wish to become a sculptor.²⁰⁸

During his adolescence Toller suffered from a whole range of illnesses, which all seem to have been related to a weak physical constitution.²⁰⁹ A fellow pupil of Toller, Rudolf Jonas, records that Toller was “retarded during studies because of an illness”, although he did not know its nature. A psychological report from April 1918 records a

after Salomon’s death.

²⁰¹ Pinthus, “Ernst Toller” in: 4. According to Kurt Pinthus, his father received these poems when he already worked as a literary critic of the Rowalt and Wolff Publishing House in Leipzig; as he began to work there in 1910 these poems must thus have been sent in either 1910 or 1911, when Toller’s father died. Ward B. Lewis, “Kurt Pinthus” in: John M. Spalek/Joseph Strelka (eds.), *Deutschsprachige Exilliteratur*, Bd. II (1989) 1711.

²⁰² *Einundsechzigster Jahresbericht des königlichen Realgymnasium zu Bromberg* (Bromberg, 1912) 17.

²⁰³ *Jahresberichte [1911-1913]*.

²⁰⁴ Toller, GW, IV, 34; Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 82. Toller was not, as they also write, the “leader” of the group, as the group was organised under a teacher’s tutelage.

²⁰⁵ *Zweiundsechzigster Jahresbericht* (1913) 18.

²⁰⁶ Toller, GW, IV, 34.

²⁰⁷ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Psychiatrisches Gutachten über Ernst Toller*.

²⁰⁸ Toller, GW, II, 18.

²⁰⁹ Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 83

whole range of unspecified illness-symptoms, like heart-disturbances, rheumatic fever (*Gelenkrheumatismus*), nervous breakdowns, stomach and speech disturbances, heart neurosis, shivering of the whole body, inflammation of the maxillary sinus, nerve-pains, and conditions of complete exhaustion; Toller had to interrupt school every year for two to three months for these illnesses, which were said to be for the most part figments of his imagination. For years, the report adds, Toller was unable to walk without a stick, even though there was no clear physical explanation for this, and in later years he only needed to carry the stick under his arm.²¹⁰ The doctor who made that statement was the abovementioned Dr. Lipowski, who possibly treated Toller for “neurosis” in his private clinic which was wellknown in town and treated patients with “neurotic” disorder. An advocate of suggestive (non-scientific) treatment methods, Lipowski often prescribed diet and rest-therapies.²¹¹

In addition to these illnesses Toller records in a letter to Netty Katzenstein that he was sensitive during that period to what he calls “outer sources”, including ‘heavy’ literature: “When I came across a book that touched my soul, then ... immediately ... after a few pages the chest was oppressed, I had to stop instantly; full of anxious oppression I took up the book the next day, the next week; it demanded inexplicable and enormous willpower before I submitted myself to further reading; only after months was I able to gain some distance from the text, while with some books critical reflexion still failed after years.” He was about thirteen years old, he adds, when he first had such an experience after he set himself to the task of reading Wilhelm Bölsche’s *Das Liebesleben in der Natur* (1898).²¹² In the light of this statement there is

²¹⁰ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Psychiatrisches Klinik der K. Universität München: Psychiatrisches Gutachten über Toller*. Various scholars of Toller mention his “illness” in close relation to an operation he was supposed to have undergone in youth, but there is no evidence of such an operation. John M. Spalek writes that Toller left high school a year late because of “illness and a serious operation”, but Toller did not stay any longer at the school than other pupils; he did take a year – or half a year – extra in finishing his preparatory education in Samotschin, but there are no indications that this was due to an operation, as Dove suggests. Dove also writes that Toller needed to walk for quite a while with a stick and long after experienced psychic consequences of that operation, but he mixes up the statements of Lipowski, who also claimed that no medical cause lay at root of his need for that stick, see: Spalek, “Toller” in: *German Quarterly* 39/4 (1966), 581; Dove, *He was a German*, 13-14; another work that uncritically recalls Spalek’s hypothesis is: *Ernst Toller: Pazifist – Schriftsteller – Politiker*, 4.

²¹¹ Cohn, *Erinnerungen*, 121-122.

²¹² Toller, *GW*, V, 91-92. Bölsche’s then very popular book explains in bombastic language the secrets of sexual evolution, transforming the (Darwinist) motor of human evolution from man’s most instinctive sexual drives into that of a conception of ‘human love’ (*Menschenliebe*) that united man as a harmonious entity into a brotherhood of man. Possibly the impact of that book on Toller’s ‘soul’ lay less in the nature of its message than in its unconventionalism.

reason to believe that Toller mostly read drama and poetry while he was in Bromberg, and left 'heavy' literature aside.

In Bromberg Toller continued his struggle with God, who remained a binding force and presence of his inner experiences. At school he received separate religious education and confronted his teacher, rabbi Dr. Gottchild Walther (1865), with difficult questions about the Bible, but the man was all but a soul-keeper to his restless soul and punished him instead.²¹³

On a different plane, Toller displayed moral commitment during the so called Abraham-affair in Samotschin in August 1910. Known for his drinking habit, the 44-year old retarded labourer Julius Abraham (1865-1910) had been invited for a drink by local peasants, amusing themselves over his getting drunk. When he left the inn, Abraham was struck by epileptic cramps. In the belief that Abraham was drunk, "half-grown boys" (Ida Toller) threw dirt and stones towards a man who was, in fact, dying. When the police took notice of the incident that same evening still, they did not act, as the matter was not their business for the man was lying on state territory of the Royal Prussian Railway. Abraham died that evening, whereafter the rumour of his brutal death spread throughout town; it left people shocked, but nobody made a fuss of the matter. By contrast, the sixteen year old Toller wrote an article in the *Samotschiner Zeitung*. Was it possible that the police stuck to the strict letter of the law and thus did not act where the life of a human being was at risk? Not intended as political critique, the article was nonetheless taken as an insult by the local mayor, Friedrich Ebert (not to be confused with the same named future and first president of the Weimar Republic), who ordered the "anonymous writer" in the next edition of the *Samotschiner Zeitung* to reveal his name within three days.²¹⁴ Toller initially did not respond, but when the situation held on, and pressure increased, he went to his former Jewish teacher (Senger)

²¹³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 34. As biblical history was taught in all lower classes and repeated in the higher ones, it is impossible to locate the anecdote. Walther, trained at the well-known Jewish-Theological Seminar in Breslau (*Wroclaw*), was the rabbi of Bromberg from 1892 to 1919. Open to some reform, he remained a very conservative Jew, who was also known as somewhat of an arrogant man, see: Cohn, *Erinnerungen*; Klemperer, *CV*, I, esp. 17; Heppner/Herzberg, *Vergangenheit*, 343-346; *Jahresberichte* [1906-1914]; LBI, Berg, *Memoirs*; Breuer, *Othodoxie*, 25-26, 54, 223.

²¹⁴ Ida Toller, 'Ernst Toller' in: *Berliner Tageblatt*, No.108 (Berlin 5. März 1927); Toller, *GW*, IV, 30-31. Fritz Droop falsely writes that Toller was 13 years old when he wrote the article; Walther Victor that he was fifteen, see: Droop, *Toller*, 8; Walther Victor, 'Erinnerungen an Ernst Toller' in: *Panorama* (Mai 1959) (AK) - no page numbers. The newspaper article itself could not be consulted, but Toller's mother already confirmed that Ernst had written that article before he himself wrote it down in his autobiography. In the light of his mother's article, then, René Eichenlaub's skepticism about the anecdote is unjustified, taking it as an example of literary (Naturalist) compassion for the poor and of affinity with Dostoevsky, see: René Eichenlaub, *Ernst Toller et l'expressionisme politique* (Paris, 1980) 28.

to avoid disgrace who then went to Toller's father who settled the matter with the mayor.²¹⁵

Toller is remarkably silent about social contacts and friends. He only mentions his contact with "Maria Gross", an actress with whom he fell in love between 1912 and 1914. He had first seen her in the Bromberg Municipal Theatre, where she played a role in Hugo von Hoffmannsthal's *Jedermann* (Everyman) in 1912.²¹⁶ Considering her name, she may have been a Catholic woman, although it is not unlikely that Toller changed her name. Besides "Maria", Walther Victor records his contact with Toller, but it is unclear how intense their relationship was. Victor, two years younger than Toller and a pupil of the local *Gymnasium*, records Toller as a somewhat "extravagant" personality of "few words", who was attracted by the "unusual" in life. Having first seen him in December 1910, they had lunch once in company of an unknown third person on which occasion Toller spent a long time studying the menu and finally ordered the most unusual dish on the list.²¹⁷ Interestingly enough, Victor was present at the meeting of the Free German Youth at the Hohe Meißner in 1913.²¹⁸ It is unclear whether Toller was conscious of these developments, but there are no indications that he displayed a particular interest in "youth" at this time. The Meissner formula would deeply impress Toller during the war, but he was at odds with the life reformist *Wandervogel*. Since 1911 there was a branch of the (Fischer-inspired and conservative) *Alt-Wandervogel* in Bromberg (which also accepted Jews as members),²¹⁹ but its stress on carefree, uncharted and collective roaming and hiking in nature does not seem to have inspired the somewhat solitary and intellectually inclined Toller, who not only had a weak physical constitution, but who also seems to have smoked at least since 1910.

In July 1911 Germany was on the brink of war during the so called Agadir-crisis (or: second Morocco-crisis). Since the accession to the throne of Wilhelm II in 1888 Germany had displayed an aggressive urge towards expansion to obtain an equal

²¹⁵ Toller writes that his father heard about the story by "coincidence", but his mother writes that it was through his "teacher", see: Ida Toller, "Toller" in: *Berliner Tageblatt* (1927); Toller, *GW*, IV, 32. There can be little doubt that this "teacher" was Adolph Senger, a close friend of Toller's father. As the affair took place in the summer, moreover, Toller was in Samotschin, so that it seems unlikely that he approached a "teacher" in Bromberg.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* 36.

²¹⁷ Victor, *Köpfe und Herzen*, 62-63, here mostly 63.

²¹⁸ Walther Victor (Ps. Werner Voigt), *Ein Weg nach Weimar: Lebens- und Gefühlswelt eines leidenschaftlichen Publizisten* (Berlin, 1998).

²¹⁹ On the *Alt-Wandervogel*, see: *Einundsechzigster Jahresbericht* (1912) 19; *Zweiundsechzigster Jahresbericht* (1913) 19-20. *Dreiundsechzigster Jahresbericht* (1914) 23; it was initially quite popular, but as a consequence of internal difficulties in the movement its membership soon declined by more

position among the great powers of Europe, a position which it justified on account of its giant economic, military and political size. Based on the rather naïve supposition that the European great powers would shrink from German aggression, the German *Weltpolitik* (“world-policy”) created the opposite effect and led to the country’s own encirclement (*Einkreisung*). Especially Great Britain felt threatened by a powerful Germany, so it had allied itself in 1904 with France in the so called *Entente Cordiale*; in 1907 this bloqué was transformed and re-named into a *Triple Entente* as a result of Russia’s joining. In July 1911 Germany attempted to break its political *Einkreisung* through a split of this *Triple Entente* by sending a war-ship to Morocco in order to defend ‘German interests’ against the French expansion in that country, but it did so without success. In fact, the German provocation caused a serious diplomatic crisis with the actual threat of war. Everywhere in Germany this created a wave of war excitement, including among the staff of Toller’s school. Hoping for a liberation from school, Toller shared in that excitement, but war did not come and school continued as before.²²⁰

Shortly after, Toller’s father died of cancer. Prior to his death, he had spent time in the clinic of the above mentioned Dr. Lipowski, although treatment was fruitless and he returned home after a number weeks. Without taking further action, he then stayed in bed for weeks.²²¹ As Toller was in Samotschin during the summer, he must have experienced that process at closehand. When his father died on 29 August 1911, he alone was at his side.²²² As a traditional Jew, his father had to justify himself in the face of God in his hour of death; it was a religious duty of the son (and the rest of the family) to read psalms and to recall for him, with or without the dying father, the confession of sins by a repetition of the Jewish confession of faith (*Sjma Israel*), so that the dying man with his last breath spoke or heard it.²²³ Instead of whispering the *Sjma Israel*, however, Toller records that his father with his last breath made a mysterious accusation to his family and son: ‘My father died; in his dying hour I am with him,

than 60 in early 1913 to 27 school boys on the eve of World War I.

²²⁰ Toller, GW, IV, 36.

²²¹ In her almost illegible memoirs Nathalie Berg writes: “Zur dieser Zeit lag Max Toller sehr Krank [–] ich hatte vergassen zur berichten, daß besser wir [ihm] auf Polzin führen ließen, wir unser Wagen aufhalten und zu ihm hineinzugehen und er so zu sagen, da sein Leiden damals sehr bedenklich war. Er lag vorher wochenlang in Bromberg im Sanatorium bei Dr Lipowksi. Da dieser sage, daß der Aufenthalt leider keinem Zusatz hatte, so schickte er ihm zur Haus und so lag er längere Zeit daheim im Bett ohne mehr aufzustehen. Er tat einem Jedem sehr leid“, see: LBI, Berg, *Memoirs*, no pagenumbers.

²²² Toller, GW, IV, 35.

²²³ Leo Trepp, *Die Juden: Volk, Geschichte, Religion* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1998) 386; De Vries, *Joodse riten*, 250.

alone (...) heavy goes his breath; he wants to get up; I push him back into bed / - You (*Ihr*) are to blame, he groans, You (*Du*) are to blame. / -Father! I scream upset.’ Now his mother walked in and ordered the doctor to be fetched, but before this could be done, his father had died.²²⁴ The text is exaggerated and the meaning of the anecdote is symbolical instead of real. Richard Dove takes it as a means to show that the relationship of father and son was a “difficult one, in which guilt played a considerable role”,²²⁵ although it possibly says less about the relationship of father and son than about the role of the religious fatherly authority; influenced by later Expressionist clichés of generational revolt, the text is thus a means to retrospectively take distance from the parental religious legacy through the *symbol* of the father rather than depicting his father as a person.²²⁶

There is reason to believe that Toller distanced himself further from Judaism after the death of his father in August 1911. From *Die Wandlung* the impression arises that he regarded Judaism at this time more and more as a stifled religion of “Legal Paragraphs” (*Gesetzesparagrafen*) and that his attendance in the synagogue declined.²²⁷ It is not clear whether he also rejected *kosher* food, although he did so by the time of World War I. Yet Toller did not reject the parental legacy as a whole. He records that he only profoundly questioned the ‘fatalism’ of his mother in 1914, whereas he is not registered ‘without confession’ until August 1914. In *Die Wandlung* discontent with Judaism leads to an open conflict with the mother, but at the same time Friedrich reveals that he tended to “proudly” uphold what he “despised” in reality.²²⁸ It is this ambivalent relation to Jewish identity which makes him identify with the mythical figure of Ahaseurus, the homeless Jew, whom he calls his ‘big brother’. Dwelling on a

²²⁴ Toller, *GW*, IV, 35

²²⁵ Dove, *He was a German*, 11.

²²⁶ A similar critique and analysis of the attack on the paternal authority can be found in the work of Kafka, see: Mosès, “Zur Frage des Gesetzes” in: Grözinger/Mosès/Zimmermann (eds.), *Kafka und das Judentum*, 15.

²²⁷ Toller, *GW*, II, 19.

²²⁸ Toller, *GW*, 2, 17. It was very uncommon in Imperial Germany to reject the religious heritage of the parents openly. Children declined or waited for conversion to Christianity until the death of their mothers, as a sign of respect, see: Charles Bloch, “Paul Levi – Ein Symbol der Tragödie des Linkssozialismus in der Weimarer Republik” in: Walter Grab and Julius H. Schoeps (eds.), *Juden in der Weimarer Republik: Skizzen und Porträts* (Darmstadt, 1998) 245; Margret Heitmann, ‘Jonas Cohn: Philosoph, Pädagoge und Jude. Gedanken zum Werdegang und schicksal des Freiburger Neukantianers und seiner Philosophie’ in: Ibid. 179-199; Richarz, *Bürger auf Widerruf*, 328, 301; Herweg, *Jüdische Mutter*, 144.

popular theme in (neo)-romantic literature, Ahasverus is the symbol of his “restless wanderings”.²²⁹

Toller’s moral restlessness was furthered by the lack of a sense of purpose in life, which strengthened his melancholic disposition. In the summer of 1912 or 1913 Toller spent holidays in Denmark. He visited the “false grave” of Hamlet, where he identified with this tragic hero and his paradoxical “longing for action and death”. Back at school, he felt enchained and further fantasized about his future, flirting with agriculture after his mother’s ban on a career as an actor.²³⁰ Yet he decided to study law and political economy, possibly in agreement with his family. After his exams (*Abitur*) in April 1914,²³¹ he spotted an advertisement at the *Gymnasium* in Bromberg which spoke of the possibility for German students to spend a semester at the university of Grenoble in France. Stimulated by grief over the loss of his platonic love affair with Maria Gross, he decided to go to France.²³²

Early Student Life in Grenoble (1914)

On 20 April 1914 Toller enrolled for the summer semester in Law at the University of Grenoble and, one day after, also in political economy at its faculty of Arts.²³³ As the university had the reputation for hosting many foreign students, he was one of its many foreigners, mostly students from Germany, but there were also students from Austria, Serbia and Russia.²³⁴ He found lodgings in a local pension that was run by a certain

²²⁹ The legend of Ahasverus goes back to the 16th century, when it was first recorded in a book that spoke of a Jewish shoemaker who had been cursed to eternal wandering on bare feet, as he had refused to let Christ in when the latter had stopped by his house when he was on his way to Golgotha. Circa 1900 the myth was popular to express ‘homelessness’, and not always in connection to its Jewish connotation. The myth of Ahasverus was closely connected to the romantic myth of the *Wanderer*, popularised by Goethe and others, and equally popular in *fin de siècle* Germany, see: Julius H. Schoeps (ed.), *Neues Lexikon des Judentums* (Munich, 1992) 19-22; Galit Hasau-Rokem and Alan Dunder (eds.), *The Wandering Jew. Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend* (Bloomington, Ind. 1986); Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen*, 18.

²³⁰ Toller, *GW*, IV, 35.

²³¹ Thieme (ed.), *Dreiundsechzigster Jahresbericht* (1914), 24; Toller did thus *not* do his *Abitur* “in December 1913” or “in 1913”, see: Dove, *He was a German*, 16, respectively: *Ernst Toller: Pazifist – Schriftsteller – Politiker*, 4.

²³² Toller, *GW*, IV, 38.

²³³ Eichenlaub, *Toller*, 34, 282-283, *List of Matriculated Students*, no.241; AK, Berlin, Sammlung Toller H Br (p)/DHPE (p), *Brief Toller an Alfred Kerr ohne Datum*.

²³⁴ Since the end of the nineteenth century the University of Grenoble stimulated visits of foreigners, both during holidays and the academic year. Their number grew rapidly; there were 35 foreign students in 1895, 110 in 1899 and 200 in 1900; when Toller attended the university, there were 391 foreign students at the faculty of Arts, of which 66 were Germans, and there were 21 Germans at the faculty of

“mademoiselle Ferrier (?)”. Besides Toller, she also hosted several other foreigners, including an Austrian former officer and a Russian woman who was known as a “nihilist” and haunted Toller with fear.²³⁵ Financially dependent on his mother,²³⁶ Grenoble nonetheless enabled Toller to gain greater distance from his family home and life in Posen.

In his autobiography Toller records his time in France as a time of leisure in which he profited from his newly regained liberties. He became a member of a German student organisation (*Verein deutscher Studenten*), offering a “home” to the many German students at this university. It is unclear what kind of society this was, but it seems to have shared the same elitist pride and national consciousness of the traditional fraternities (*Burschenschaften*) in Germany, although Toller records that it included women as well. Fashionable among students at the time, they discussed the ideas of Kant and Nietzsche, but they also drank litres of beer to feel even more “at home”. Afraid of anti-German sentiment in France, Germany’s ‘arch-enemy’ since 1871, they stayed close to each other in the streets. They saw themselves as “pioneers of a higher culture” and ended by singing, from their open windows, the (informal) German anthem: *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles* (Germany, Germany Above All).²³⁷

Toller records that he hardly attended the university. He declared in an official statement from 1918 that he intended to follow “lectures on French literature and also several lectures on Jurisprudenz (Roman Law) and Political Economy”,²³⁸ but in *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* he writes that the professors were unable to excite him, as they reminded him of “floor managers of a warehouse”. He socialised exclusively with German students; in addition to the *Verein*, he also joined German students in the university’s canteen. “I live in France”, he writes, “and have never left Germany.” The poor French that he had learned at school in Bromberg grew worse every day. It was for this reason that Toller now decided to avoid the German students’

Law amidst 196 French students, see: Eichenlaub, *Toller*, 34-35, 282-283; *Université de Grenoble, 1339-1939* (Grenoble, o.D) [1939] 121.

²³⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 39; on Ferrier and the (badly readable) address, see: Eichenlaub, *Toller*, 282-283.

²³⁶ Toller, *GW*, IV, 45.

²³⁷ Ibid. 39-40. Toller writes “Verein deutscher Studenten”, but it seems unlikely that we are dealing with the equally named anti-Semitic students’ association – founded at the end of the 19th century to give new meaning to the nationalism of the *Burschenschaften* – and which formerly excluded Jews from membership.

²³⁸ Bundesarchiv (BA), Zwischenarchiv Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten (here after: Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten), ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungsprotokolle der Angeschuldigten-Vernehmung Ernst Tollers*.

association.²³⁹ Considering his individualistic nature, one wonders whether this was not also a consequence of discontent with its collective character. Although he shared the patriotic clichés of his time, he had never displayed an interest in group behaviour up to that time. Rooted in fear of the French, then, the group cherished community ideals in negative terms, which had little to do with friendship. Toller may have had friends in the *Verein*, but it seems unlikely that their bond was profound. He writes that he now established contact with the Austrian former officer from his pension. This man introduced him to French pubs and brothels. Here he learned to gamble for money and perhaps also had his first sexual contacts, although he soon wished to return to the university again.

It was around this time, too, that Toller also began to read from works of Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy.²⁴⁰ It is not clear which works he read, or in what way they left their mark, but it seems unlikely that he set himself to the study of these works systematically for he was not known to be a “systematic reader” up to January 1918.²⁴¹

At the end of June Toller joined a group of German students on a guided trip in Provence, but he soon got bored and fled the group, deciding instead to travel as a solitary *Wanderer* throughout the south of France. He left for Nîmes, Marseille and several smaller locations in Aix-en-Provence.²⁴² Left to his own company, he seems to have reflected upon his identity during these weeks. He records that he now for the first time began to doubt his mother’s ‘fatalism’ to explain the things in life on the basis of her religion.²⁴³ In search of a mission in life, he flirted with the French Foreign Legion, on the one hand, and with monastic ascetism, on the other. It is not clear to what extent Toller here exaggerates his need for a solution to his “restless wanderings”, though it shows that he was in need for some sense of community.²⁴⁴ He also seems to have written various poems during his time in France, some of which deal with the

²³⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 40.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 42-43.

²⁴¹ Margerethe Turnowsky-Pinner, “A student’s friendship with Ernst Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 15 (1970) 214.

²⁴² Toller, *GW*, IV, 43-44; Richard Dove writes that he also went to Northern Italy, but – as far as I know – this is not based on Toller’s own records, see: Dove, *He was a German*, 17.

²⁴³ *Ibid.* 44-45.

²⁴⁴ Toller’s flirt with the Foreign Legion was not uncommon at the time: as it appealed to adventure, it exerted a magical attraction to many adolescent and young bourgeois men, including the then eighteen year old Ernst Jünger (1895-2002) and Carl Zuckmayer (1896-1977). In Toller’s case I wondered whether this flirt was truth or rather a retrospective self-stylation in which he wanted to illustrate the search for adventure typical of youth, see: Franz Baumer, *Ernst Jünger* (Berlin, 1967) 15; Martin

Cult of the Virgin Mary.²⁴⁵ It is tempting to see this preoccupation with the symbol of Mary in the context of Toller's struggle with his mother's values around that time, and perhaps even to detect in it an expression of his sub-conscious needs for *Gemeinschaft* in terms of a mother-child bond.

It was around this time, too, that the political climate in Europe was subject to drastic change. The bullet that killed the Austrian Archduke and successor to the throne, Franz Ferdinand von Habsburg-Lotharingen (1863-1914), and his wife, Countess Sophie Chotek (1868-1914), on 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo carried the threat of war. The assassin, Gavrilo Princip (1894/5-1918), was a Bosnian Serb who had acted on behalf of the secret Serbian nationalist society of the *Tsrna Ruka*, or Black Hand. Since the end of the nineteenth century the Austrian monarchy had suffered with nationality problems, but this time things were different. As the Black Hand had ties to the leadership of the Serbian military intelligence, suspicions increased that the murder was intended as an assault from the Serbian government.

Hurt in their dynastic honour, the Austrians wanted to hit back hard and teach the Serbs, the symbol of anti-Austrian obstinacy, a lesson. Hence they sought contact with Germany, with whom they had had an alliance since 1887.²⁴⁶ This alliance, the so called *Dreibund* or Triple Alliance, of which Italy also became a member, was the counterpart of the above mentioned anti-German Triple Entente. On 12 July the Austrians discussed an ultimatum with Germany in secret. Although Germany was not contractually bound by the Alliance to give Austria unconditional support in case of an eventual Serbian attack, the small coterie of high-level political and military advisors around Wilhelm II nonetheless gave a "blank check" which promised unconditional support.²⁴⁷ Like Austria, Germany accepted war as a means to solve diplomatic matters and counted with the possibility of a 'localised war' to enforce its "place in the sun" on the European

Meyer, *Ernst Jünger* (Munich, 1990) 11; Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 222; Toller, *GW*, IV, 45-46.

²⁴⁵ Toller wrote various poems about "Mary" in his younger years which are undated, although they seem to have been written in Grenoble and World War I from 1914 to 1919. Jordan interpretes "Mary" as Maria Groß, but this seems rather unconvincing, also because I have already indicated that Maria Groß was possibly a pseudonym.

²⁴⁶ Richard C. Hall, "Serbia" in: Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (ed.), *The Origins of World War I* (Cambridge, 2003) 92-111, here 95-96, 101-102, 106-108; on dynastic honour as motivation: Alan Sked, *Decline of the Habsburg Empire*, 256; on revenge that led to a 'conscious and calculated' design for war, see: Tunstall, "Austria-Hungary" in: Hamilton and Herwig (eds.), *Origins of World War I*, 112-149, esp. 131-132, 143; on the alliance, see: F.R. Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System, 1815-1914* (New York, 1992) 142-189.

²⁴⁷ The agreements obliged Germany to react in case of an attack on Austria, but did not oblige Germany to unconditionally give a "blank check" to the Austrians, see: Hamilton and Herwig, "World Wars: Definitions and Causes" in: *Ibid.*, *Origins of World War I*, 17.

political stage. There was no well-coordinated war strategy on the side of the Germans, except for a 1905 plan by the late General Alfred Graf von Schlieffen (1833-1913) that suggested that all forces in case of a war should concentrate on a rapid and massive attack on France before it would shift to other fronts, but the German “check” gave the Austrians enough support to increase their pressure on the Serbs.²⁴⁸

On 23 July Austria presented its ultimatum to Serbia, demanding amongst other things a share in the trial and punishment of the offender of the assassination, as it formally held Serbia responsible for the murder. Before the ultimatum would finish, however, on 25 July, Vienna received a hardly satisfying answer. The Serbs did not opt for a war with Austria and accepted most of its demands, but could not possibly accept them all. Austria now mobilized her troops for an attack. Russia, which had enjoyed strained relations with the Austrians since the middle of the nineteenth century, now hastened to the rescue of its Serbian ally, even though it was formally not obliged to do so. In secret Tsar Nicolas II began to mobilize his troops in an attempt to answer an eventual attack, which meant that an Austrian attack on Serbia now carried the risk of a bigger, Russian-Austrian war. On 28 July Austria declared war on Serbia. Two days later the Russians openly started to mobilize. Subject to self-overestimation and a politics of naivety and bluff, Austria’s ally, Germany, demanded an immediate halt of the Russian mobilization on 31 July, threatening a so called “defensive war” (*Verteidigungskrieg*) to put the Russians in their place. Seeking to counterbalance an increase of Austrian influence on the Balkans, however, the Russians ignored this threat and continued their mobilization with the risk of a much greater war.²⁴⁹ At this point anti-war protests were organised in Germany and France. Toller records that his eye fell on a poster from the

²⁴⁸ Craig, *Germany*, 345; Holger H. Herwig, “Germany” in: Hamilton and Herwig (ed.), *Origins of World War I*, 150-187 (including the notion of the small number of decision makers); on the small number of ‘decision’-makers and the notion of calculation, though not rational and free from emotions, see also: Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig, “World Wars: Definitions and Causes” in: Ibid. 1-44, esp. 10-16; on localised war, see: Michael Howard, “Europe on the Eve of the First World War” in: M.C. Brands etc., *De Veiligheid van Europa. Aspecten van de Ontwikkeling van het Europese Statenbestel* (Rijswijk, 1991) 153; Tunstall, “Austria-Hungary” in: Hamilton and Herwig (eds.), *Origins of World War I*, esp. 145, 149; with respect to this openness to war as a means to solve diplomatic problems, Wolfgang Mommsen once argued that war was even regarded as an “inevitable” means in German military circles from 1912 onwards, see: Wolfgang Mommsen, “The Topos of Inevitable War in Germany in the Decade before 1914” in: Volker R. Berghahn and Martin Kitchen (eds.), *Germany in the Age of Total War* (London, 1981) 23-46.

²⁴⁹ For the Serbian and Austro-Hungarian context, see: Hall, “Serbia” in: Hamilton and Herwig (ed.), *Origins of World War I*, 92-111 and Graydon A. Tunstall, Jr, “Austria-Hungary” in: ibid. 112-149, here esp 112.

local Socialists in Grenoble which called upon French workers to demonstrate against war. Curious, Toller attended that meeting.²⁵⁰

Although the news from the press was not very hopeful at that time, Toller took up the plan to move to Paris. As the university in Grenoble had come to an end in late July, he hoped to take a French course at the Sorbonne.²⁵¹ He also made plans to go to London for the next semester.²⁵² As there was lots of talk about war, however, he first paid a visit to the German consul in Lyon on 31 July. In order to assure himself of the safety of his trip to Paris, he asked the consul whether war was imminent, but the latter did not see any threat and advised him to proceed with his plans. A few hours later, however, the news came in that Germany had declared a “state of imminent danger of war”.²⁵³

On 1 August 1914 the German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg (1865-1921), pushed by the military command,²⁵⁴ declared war on Russia. As France was a Russian ally, he also delivered an ultimatum to France. Triggered by the German actions, French nationalism reached new heights. Toller began to feel uncomfortable and now decided to leave France. On 3 August he went to the train station to search for a train that would bring him back to Germany. As he had forgotten to take his suitcase,²⁵⁵ he must have set off in a stroke of panic. At the station he was told that a train would leave for Germany at 2 a.m. (4 August), and while he waited for that train to arrive in a nearby café that evening, everyone spoke of war. The French national anthem, the *Marseillaise*, was repeatedly sung. Then a sergeant brought the news that Germany had declared war on France. After a moment of silence, patriotic pride took the French into its grip and the *Marseillaise* was sung again, increasing Toller’s now desperate wish to leave for Germany.²⁵⁶

Joined by many other Germans who wished to flee France, Toller managed to get his train. It was only twenty kilometres to the Swiss border, he records, but the ride took

²⁵⁰ Toller, *GW*, IV, 47; on the anti-war strikes, see: Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918* (London, 1997) 33-37; on curiosity, see: Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, Chapter 1.

²⁵¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 47.

²⁵² BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Psychiatrisches Gutachten über Ernst Toller*.

²⁵³ Toller writes “state of war” (*Kriegszustand*), but the formal declaration was “state of immanent danger of war” (*Kriegsgefahrzustand*), see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 47; Herwig, “Germany” in: *Origins*, 174.

²⁵⁴ Herwig, “Germany” in: *Origins*, 173-185.

²⁵⁵ Toller’s third wife, Christiane Grautoff (1917-1974), records that Toller forgot his suitcase as he “ran so quickly into the war”, but Toller did not leave France to go off to war, but to escape war, see: Grautoff, *Die Göttin und ihr Sozialist*, 88.

²⁵⁶ Toller, *GW*, IV, 47-49.

almost twenty-four hours. As one of the last trains before the French closed their border, the train reached Genf in Switzerland. Now a feeling of relief lifted all tensions and fears of the previous weeks, so that the passengers fell into each others arms and sung the song that united them most, *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*.²⁵⁷ United by a sense of “shared fate” (Jeffrey Verhey), Toller experienced a “mystical unification” (Gertrud Bäuml) with the German motherland and its people as he had never experienced before.²⁵⁸ It was a genuine sensation of liberty and personal rebirth through spiritual community.

That same day, German troops marched into Belgium, openly infringing its neutrality which had been safeguarded by the international treaty at the Congress of Vienna (1815). Great Britain, cherishing that neutrality for safety reasons, felt threatened by this offence, and now also rallied around its allies of the *Triple Entente* and declared war on Germany. With that a European war had turned into a reality in less than a week.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. 49.

²⁵⁸ Gertrud Bäuml, quoted from: Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 51; Frevert, *Women in German History*, 152; on “shared fate”, see: Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 74-75.

PART II

THE LONELINESS OF WAR

[1914-1916]

FRIEDRICH: Nun kommt Befreiung aus dumpfer quälender Enge. Oh, der Kampf wird uns alle einen... Die große Zeit wird uns alle zu Großen gebären... Auferstehen wird der Geist, alle Kleinlichkeiten wird er zerstören, alle lächerlichen, künstlichen Schranken niederreißen ... sich wieder offenbaren in seiner unendlichen Schönheit... und mir – mir bringt diese Stunde besonderes Geschenk...

ERNST TOLLER, *Die Wandlung*.

Volunteer for War: Sacrifice for the Fatherland, Rebirth through the ‘Motherland’ [1914-1915]

Apocalypse 1914

The train that had brought Toller and his compatriots into safety continued from Genf to Lindau in the German federal state of Bavaria, just across the Swiss border. Once it arrived, all passengers had to alight. Now they were placed on different trains with unknown destinations, although one knew that “it would be a German town”.²⁵⁹ Here Toller read German newspapers for the first time since the outbreak of the war. To strengthen the notion that Germany was fighting a “defensive war”, the German government had published a report on the previous day that French airplanes had bombed a railway between Karlsruhe and Nuremberg, an accusation which was also included in the German letter to France declaring war on that very same day. The report was almost unanimously taken up by the German press,²⁶⁰ so that Toller to his surprise now read that Bavaria had been attacked by French airplanes. Conscious of the contradiction with the news in France, he was nonetheless trusting, and believed, as most other Germans at the time, the distributed news.²⁶¹

Shortly after, when the train had set off for Munich (which at the time Toller did not know), he received postcards at the train stations where the train stopped. They showed the picture of the Emperor and the text of his call for a *Burgfrieden* or “civic truce”, which had been declared by him on that very same day. Intended to gain the

²⁵⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 50.

²⁶⁰ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 77.

²⁶¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 50; on the Bavarian press which distributed that news (including the *Bayerische Staatszeitung*), see: Benjamin Ziemann, *Front und Heimat. Ländliche Kriegserfahrungen im südlichen Bayern, 1914-1923* (Essen, 1997) 52; on faith in the official news, see also: Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 242; on the centrality of the trains and train stations as the setting of many conversations about the war and its news, see: Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge, 1979) 50.

support of the nation, and especially of the SPD (of whose support of the war in the vote in parliament that day the Emperor was not certain),²⁶² he had declared that Germany now no longer knew any parties, but only Germans (“I no longer recognize any parties, I recognize only Germans”).²⁶³ Within hours, Jeffrey Verhey writes, newspapers proclaimed these words in their headlines. Postcards with the picture of the Kaiser and these words were rapidly distributed throughout Germany, where the idea of a civic truce turned into an essential part of the so called “ideas of 1914” that were propagated by Germany’s intellectual and artistic elite.²⁶⁴ Toller recalls the great impression these lines made on him: “The Emperor no longer recognizes parties, here it is written in black and white, the country knows no longer races, one and all speak one language, one and all defend one mother: Germany”.²⁶⁵

Calling for an end to anti-Semitism, the *Burgfrieden* undoubtedly struck a sensitive part of Toller’s mind, but there is no reason to believe that he was blinded by these words.²⁶⁶ In fact, in his autobiography he records how the ideal of a unified Germany was contradicted by his immediate experiences of a reality where rumours and sensationalist fantasies strengthened distrust among the German passengers of his train. Posters, which must have hung at train stations, warned the passengers for spies (“Be aware of Spies!”) and to be careful in discussions in public, as there were traitors and internal enemies present. The country was overruled by Russian and French saboteurs, a rumour that had been formally unleashed by the state, but that was now accepted by the press and the population at large.²⁶⁷ Newspapers, predominantly conservative and national-liberal at this time (for the Socialist daily *Vorwärts* – or: Forwards – had not

²⁶² Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 339; Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 137, 156-173.

²⁶³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 50.

²⁶⁴ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 136.

²⁶⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 50.

²⁶⁶ Sensitivity to the *Burgfrieden* was not strange to Jews in Imperial Germany, understanding it in terms of hope for an end to anti-Semitism, see: Saul Friedländer, “Politische Veränderungen der Kriegszeit und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Judenfrage” in: Werner E. Mosse and Arnold Paucker (eds.), *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916-1923* (Tübingen, 1971) 30; Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised Land. The Dilemma of the German Jew, 1893-1914* (University of Michigan Press, 1975); George L. Mosse, *The Jews and the German War Experience, 1914-1918* (New York, 1977); more recent, stressing the role of plight and contesting the previously widely held assumption among historians that Jews became fierce patriots as a consequence of the impact of the *Burgfrieden*, is Ulrich Sieg’s *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg. Kriegserfahrungen, weltanschauliche Debatten und kulturelle Neuentwürfe* (Berlin, 2001); my findings about Toller correspond to Sieg’s argumentation that does not exclude the impact of the *Burgfrieden* but rejects its central role as motivation to apply for war – this view opposes general understanding of Toller’s application, most clearly expressed by Dove in his *He was a German*, 20-21.

been allowed to be sold at train stations up to 15 August),²⁶⁸ exploited this sensationalism to gain the strength of the nation.²⁶⁹ In Fulda the son of a forester was said to have been tried because he had accepted Russian money to blow up a bridge.²⁷⁰ In Munich, according to what the German writer and philologist Victor Klemperer (1881-1960) was told, a Russian spy disguised as a woman had been arrested.²⁷¹ The longer the train ride lasted, Toller writes, the greater the distrust among the people – a distrust which he also began to experience toward his compatriots.

Late that night, Toller arrived in Munich. In the train he had already decided not to go home first, but to seek a hotel and to volunteer for war the next morning, which was 5 August.²⁷² He applied for service with the infantry and the cavalry, but against the background of the enormous influx of volunteers it was decided that no further names be accepted.²⁷³

Later that day, Toller walked through the streets of Munich and witnessed a further increase of the national spy fever. He saw popular beatings of two women accused of speaking in French. In German they said that they were not French, but they were beaten until their faces bled and the crowd was chased away by the police. Then, Toller sat down on a bench in the English Garden, the park on the south-side park of town. Here a man next to him spotted the name of his hat's French manufacturer from Lyon, clearly written on its lining. Aware of what the man had seen, Toller took off his hat and decided to leave the park. But the man gathered a crowd which flocked behind Toller. As Toller well remembered the fate of the above mentioned women, he decided to approach a policeman and showed him his passport, confirming that he was not a Frenchman. It was shown to the people that now had completely surrounded Toller, after which they left, "unwilling and swearing".²⁷⁴

²⁶⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 51; on spy fever, see also: Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 84; Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann (eds.), *Frontalltag im Ersten Weltkrieg: Wahn und Wirklichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994) 29; Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 241.

²⁶⁸ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 147; on the ideological non-neutral character of newspapers in Germany: see also Volker R. Berghahn, *Imperial Germany 1911-1914: Economy, Society, Culture and Politics* (Providence and Oxford, 1994), 187-188.

²⁶⁹ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 75.

²⁷⁰ Arthur Kutscher, *Kriegstagebuch. Namur – St. Quentin – Petit Morin – Reims – Winterschlacht in der Champagne* (Munich, 1915) I, 6.

²⁷¹ Klemperer, *CV*, II, 180.

²⁷² Toller, *GW*, IV, 51.

²⁷³ Victor Klemperer writes that an acquaintance of him, working in the War Ministry, told him that the army had to close the selection on 6 August for the enormous run on voluntary war service in Munich, and thus not yet on 5 August, so that we should not exclude that Toller was rejected for other reasons, see: Klemperer, *CV*, II, 183.

²⁷⁴ Toller, *GW*, IV, 51-52.

Such incidents notwithstanding, Toller stuck to his wish to sign up. On 6 August he therefore volunteered with the First Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment (*Erstes bayerisches Fußartillerieregiment*), which was a heavy artillery regiment.²⁷⁵ There was doubt, apparently about his physical strength (or at least Toller must have interpreted that doubt in such terms),²⁷⁶ but after strong insistence he was admitted: “The next morning I report myself to the artillery, where the doctor examines me, and shakes his head; I am afraid that I will not be accepted; I tell him that what he sees about my strength and health is not what it seems; I am strong and healthy; I have to be accepted, I want to go to war; The doctor smiles, I am accepted.”²⁷⁷ Equating a healthy body with a healthy mind (reflecting much of the contemporary notions about health),²⁷⁸ willpower convinced the doctor of Toller’s ‘health’. Toller was proud, and his self-esteem increased: “The old worn out uniform flutters around my limbs, and my boots are too tight and my feet hurt, but I am proud; I finally am a soldier, accepted among the ranks of the fatherland’s defenders.”

In the past scholars of Toller have often explained his choice to volunteer in terms of enthusiasm for war, but there is no evidence that supports that hypothesis. We have already seen that Toller in Grenoble did not display enthusiasm about the coming of World War I, but rather concern. Excitement about the situation exploded into feelings of communal idealism when he arrived in Switzerland, but this does imply enthusiasm for the war. These sentiments corresponded to those of the large majority of people in Germany. In his excellent study on the ‘spirit of 1914’ Jeffrey Verhey has shown that very few people in Germany during the first war days actually felt enthusiasm about the war. The overall sphere, he writes, was one of a common shared fate that necessitated support for war; in the firm belief that Germany had been attacked, one showed a “grim determination” to do one’s duty. This “determination”, then, had little to do with nationalist or brotherly sentiment; both press and propaganda appealed to one’s inner code and notions of duty rather than to the harmony of the nation.²⁷⁹ As

²⁷⁵ HStA Munich, IV, *Kriegsstammrol* (KrStR) 15367 (*Ersatzbattalion des I. Fußartillerieregiment*), book I, no. 525 (Toller); Toller, *GW*, IV, 239.

²⁷⁶ Richard Dove suggests that Toller’s fear for rejection was related to his illness and supposed operation in childhood, but it seems more likely that it was simply the result of his knowledge that his weak physical constitution might obstruct his desperate wish to be part of the hotbed of the moment, see: Dove, *He was a German*, 19.

²⁷⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 52.

²⁷⁸ George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York; Oxford, 1996), esp. 57, 59-60.

²⁷⁹ On “grim determination” and war as “shared fate” and necessity, see: Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 26-47,

the war veteran and writer Carl Zuckmayer records in his autobiography, *Als wär's ein Stuck von mir* (As if it were a Piece of Myself, 1966), the overall mood during these days was to the hand of fate; to try to avoid that “fate” seemed simply “inhumane”.²⁸⁰ Educated in bourgeois principles of honour, patriotism and romantic warfare, Toller shared that mentality and human idealism: sincerely convinced of a defensive war, the fate of the country necessitated loyalty to the cause, and thus he felt the moral duty to volunteer for war.²⁸¹

True, many intellectuals glorified the war immediately after its outbreak in terms of higher national ideals (and thus introjecting the ideal of the *Burgfrieden* in their works and public speeches during these first war days), but Toller had little time to take notice of these publications before his application. He applied almost immediately upon his arrival in Munich, and he seems to have made that choice already *before* he got off the train. It was only *after* his application for war that the “ideas of 1914” began to play a role, especially under the impact of the war experience itself as a means to counter its horrors.

This is not to say, however, that the war did not appeal to deeper, psycho-social needs. In fact, Toller displayed a deep urge to be part of the hotbed, which is evident not only in the above mentioned anecdote of his application, but also in his desperate need to express national commitment. In a psychiatric report from April 1918, by Ernst Rüdin (1874-1952), a Swiss-born nationalist psychiatrist and eugenicist from the academic clinic of Munich, records that it was apparently a “matter of course to him” “to rush to the colours to prove as a Jew that he felt German”.²⁸² Although Rüdin’s report needs to be treated with caution, the statement nonetheless seems to confirm Toller’s wish to be part of larger German community, although it is unclear in what way this relates to his Jewish identity. Scholars of Toller often stress in his application the centrality of overcoming his Jewish identity, but Rüdin’s statement seems to reveal more about the harmony than the ‘antithesis’ of Jewish identity and *Deutschtum*. Moreover, Toller applied for war while registering himself as “without confession” as well. Of course, it is tempting to believe that the war thus stimulated his ‘denial’ of Jewish identity, but we have also seen that he

53, 55, 74-75, 118-119.

²⁸⁰ Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 238.

²⁸¹ The call to duty in Toller’s case worked because it appealed to already present sentiments of duty; on a similar ‘mechanism’ of the mind in the case of propaganda, see: Klaus Vondung, “Propaganda oder Sinndeutung?” in: Ibid. (ed), *Kriegserlebnis. Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen* (Göttingen, 1980) 16.

²⁸² BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Psychiatrisches Gutachten über Ernst Toller*.

already experienced greater distance from the ‘fatalist’ religion of his mother in France, so that it is unclear whether this rejection of Judaism was due to the 1914 apocalypse.²⁸³ In general it seems safe to state that Toller’s feelings of duty to volunteer joined hands with a silent hope to transcend the spiritual conflicts of his pre-war life: war gave him a destiny; he seems to have hoped that this destiny would overcome the past as a whole, and not just his Jewish identity. In this light, then, Toller’s ‘choice’ not to go home first after his arrival in Munich can perhaps be read as a subconscious act of his desperate wish to transcend the ‘home’ of the past, and to substitute it with the ideal of a new one: Germany.²⁸⁴

In *Die Wandlung* Toller gave expression to this hope behind his sacrifice for the fatherland. Immediately upon hearing the news of war, Friedrich realises that he can finally do his bit and thereby prove that he was one of the ‘them’, e.g. the Germans: “Now I can do my duty”, he exclaims, “now I can prove that I belong to them – Now I can prove it, prove it!”²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Catherine Mazellier-Grünbeck falsely writes that Toller was registered “without confession” for the first time after the Council Republic, see her *Le Théâtre Expressioniste et le Sacré*, 88; Hempel-Kütter and Müller only point to registration “without confession” in a report of the Imperial Court in Leipzig from April 1918, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 81, relying on: BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Angeschuldigten-Vernehmung in der Voruntersuchung gegen Kurt Eisner und Genossen wegen versuchten Landesverrats, 18.4.1918 (Abschrift)*.

²⁸⁴ Toller does not recall at all whether he informed his mother or asked her permission; in fact, he gives the impression that he made the choice to volunteer completely alone. Yet this choice in Germany was often made in agreement with parents. It often led to long discussions before children could override their parents’ preference; several parents refused, but many gave in when they realised that their children truly believed in the cause. Parents were not indifferent to the fate of their children; the image of crying mothers is a recurring theme in literature. In a poem, “Soldatenabschied” (1914), the volunteer Heinrich Lersch wrote: “*Lass mich gehn, Mutter, las mich gehn! All das weinen kann uns nichts mehr nützen, denn wir gehn, das Vaterland schützen!*”; similar emotions of a crying mother we find in Alfred Lichtenstein’s “Abschied” (1914), written shortly before its author fell: “*Was liegt an mir. Ich gehe gerne ein. Die Mutter weint. Man muss aus Eisen sein.*” Quoted from: Patrick Bridgewater, *The German Poets of the First World War* (London, Sydney, 1985) 65, 123; see also: Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 64; Regina Schulte, “Käthe Kollwitz’ Opfer” in: Ibid. (ed.), *Die Verkehrte Welt des Krieges. Studien zu Geschlecht, Religion und Tod* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998); Noack, *Jünger*; Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 233. Note: Though Toller sees the war as a necessary defense against hostile foreign threat, he does not mention the specific ‘barbarian’ threat of the Russians that gave many German Jews (due to pogroms against the Jews in Russia before World War I), and especially Zionist and Orthodox ones, a stimulus for loyalty to the German war. This absence of a crusade against ‘tyrannical’ Russia confirms that Toller primarily sought identification with Germany rather than some intra-Jewish or supra-national Jewish bond. On Jews and the threat from barbarian Russia, see: Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised Land*; Breuer, *Jüdische Orthodoxie*, 342-350; Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion. My Encounter with Marx and Freud* (New York, 1990) 7; see also: Christhard Hoffmann, “Between Integration and Rejection: the Jewish Community in Germany, 1914-1918” in: John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997) 93.

German Soldier, German Hero (1914-1915)

On 9 August 1914 Toller joined his regiment for a military training of a week in the small town of Milkertshofen, north of Munich.²⁸⁶ Interestingly enough, he decided to matriculate at the University of Munich for the upcoming semester shortly before that leave. In line with the Emperor's promise and the prevailing mood in Germany he must have believed war would be short and thus to that he would be back in Munich for study "before the leaves would fall", as Wilhelm II had also literally promised his population at the outbreak of war.²⁸⁷ This optimism was further nurtured during his military training in Milkertshofen, where he not only learned "how a real man had to stand still and how he had to move", but also about the continuous German successes in war. New victories were announced two or three times a day, stimulating his impatience to join the war as quickly as possible and 'before it would be over'.²⁸⁸ When Toller took his oath of allegiance on the local church square, the father of a fellow recruit was present, and later described him as a "pale, almost boyish man... a modest, rather shy person."²⁸⁹ This father was Ludwig Gurlit (not to be confused with the equally named pedagogue and ideologist of the Steglitzer *Wandervogel*); we cannot exclude the possibility that his son was Helmuth Gurlit, a student who two years later belonged to the *Werkschar*, a Munich literary circle that maintained contact with Toller through various members during the spring of 1917 (see chapter 6).

On 16 August the troops marched for war, saluted by women and children who threw "love gifts", including chocolate and flowers.²⁹⁰ Stimulated by the news of continuous German victories such farewell parades turned into public festivities since the middle of August indeed,²⁹¹ further sustaining Toller's pride in being among the "defenders of the fatherland".

²⁸⁵ Toller, *GW*, II, 20-21.

²⁸⁶ HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15367, I/525; "Protocol" in: Toller, *GW*, IV, 239.

²⁸⁷ *Zählkarte Ernst Hugo Toller* (Wintersemester 1917/18 Universität Heidelberg) in: Eichenlaub, *Toller*, 284; Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 86, footnote 42: Toller was registered as taken "into the army" from 16 August 1914 to 28 November 1916, which means that Toller must have matriculated himself before 16 August 1914; as he was then outside Munich for a military training since 9 August 1914, he must have matriculated before this date.

²⁸⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 52-3; see also: Verhey, *Spirit*, 102.

²⁸⁹ Professor Ludwig Gurlitt, quoted from Dove, *Toller*, 21, relying on Gurlitt's article in *Junge Menschen* II, 24 (1921).

²⁹⁰ HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15367, I/525; Toller, *GW*, IV, 53; Zuckmayer recalls a similar throwing of "love gifts" when leaving for war: *Stuck*, 250.

²⁹¹ Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 78, 102.

Toller's regiment left by train, a journey that took days and which led to a then still "unknown destination".²⁹² When it stopped at a station, Toller for the first time saw wounded soldiers on a parallel railway track. The image of blood stained cloths, a leg that was shot off, and a face that looked at him with "hollow eyes" caused fear for his upcoming experience in war, but he sought to suppress that fear by focussing on his new 'mother': "I am afraid, I do not want to be afraid, I do not want to become weak, for what are we?; I think of Germany."²⁹³ This attachment to national idealism as a means to gain moral strength further increased when the train crossed the Rhine river, in the middle of the night, and thus the former German-French border, bringing war frightfully close. In order to counter their fears, Toller records that the soldiers enacted 'heroic', masculine behaviour through songs, reviving the mystical fraternal feelings that Toller had experienced two weeks earlier in Genf and which intoxicated his mind amidst these soldiers in the train: 'The cadets draw their swords from their sheaths, "attention!" one screams, another sings *Die Wacht am Rhein* (The Watch at the Rhine), we sing, and with us threateningly our rifles. Yes, we are living in a state of emotional delirium. The words Germany, Fatherland and War exert magical power when we pronounce them; they do not vanish but float in the air, circle around themselves, and brighten both these worlds themselves and us.'²⁹⁴

Toller's regiment was encamped near the western front lines, in a small town called Bellheim,²⁹⁵ close to the settlement Germersheim in the Palatinate (Rhineland-Pfalz), in the vicinity of Strasbourg, where several decades earlier the *Marseillaise* had been composed. It took up positions far behind the front and its soldiers slept, Toller records, in "the storage accommodation of a chemical factory"; withheld from the front, they were further trained with useless exercises, but they did not complain. We know too little about Toller's regiment and their social life to give a consistent picture, but Richard Dove writes: "Among those serving in Toller's regiment was the young bookseller and publisher Heinrich F.S. Bachmair, who had already published the early poems of the

²⁹² Toller, *GW*, IV, 53.

²⁹³ Ibid.; on singing in war, see: George L. Mosse, "Zum deutschen Soldatenlied" in: Vondung (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis*, esp. 332; Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 244-245, 251, recalling that his "generation", that is, the 'generation of 1914', to which Toller also belongs, continuously sang songs that dealt with sacrifice, death, fall, and gave expression to their romantic attitude to life. Though Zuckmayer romanticises the naivety of his "generation", there is an element of truth in his claim that these songs reflected much of the atmosphere and state of mind of a generation that did not know about the reality of war yet.

²⁹⁴ Toller, *GW*, IV, 53; on war as an emotional delirium (*Rausch*), see also: Ernst Jünger, *Im Stahlgewittern* (Stuttgart, 1978) 7.

²⁹⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 53.

Expressionist poet J(ohannes) R. Becher. The two men met at the end of 1914: four years later Toller would appoint Bachmair as commander of the local Red Army's artillery in Dachau."²⁹⁶

Before that time, however, the situation at the front had radically changed. There had been victories in the first weeks of the war, but from the start the war did not proceed as planned. Obstructing the idea of a quick and mobile war, or *Blitzkrieg*, the Germans received harsh opposition in the west, from the Belgians. At the same time, in the very first week, they were pushed back by the Russians within their own national borders. Contrary to the idea of a war that essentially had to be fought in the west, the military command was now forced by this unexpected setback to turn its focus from the western to the eastern front, so that the French were able to re-group. Although the Germans were able to maintain their positions in the east, the march in the west ran aground. During the notorious battle at the Marne River from 6 until 9 September 1914, France was able to push Germany back beyond the river Aisne in the Champagne, between Compiègne and Verdun.²⁹⁷ To save what could be saved, the German troops now began to entrench themselves, with the French and the British – stationed further north – following their example. The result was the emergence of a trench system that ran along the whole western front line, from the North Sea, via Belgium and France, to the Swiss border.²⁹⁸

After these German setbacks in France, General Erich von Falkenhayn (1861-1922) replaced Helmuth von Moltke (1848-1916) as the German Supreme Commander. The new commander wanted to force the situation at the western front and strove for a victorious battle in Flanders, but his actions equally failed, due to heavy opposition of the allies and to a lack of German munitions. Von Falkenheyn, then, who continued to look for a victory in the west (in line with the Von Schlieffen Plan), tried to force that victory with the aid of young reserve-units to break the hostile lines. The result was the notorious battle at the Langemarck from 10-18 November 1914.²⁹⁹ In spite of official statements that this battle was a success, it was in reality a tremendous failure, costing some 145,000 lives and with no advance at all. Yet it gave rise to a legend of a heroic battle in which thousands of young and untrained volunteers had marched to their deaths

²⁹⁶ Dove, *He was a German*, 21.

²⁹⁷ Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 343-344.

²⁹⁸ On the trench system, see: Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918. The Live and Let Live System* (London, 1980) here 3-4.

²⁹⁹ Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 346-347.

while singing heroically *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*.³⁰⁰ It found fruitful soil in the homeland, where it was spread throughout the country by newspapers and other publications. Contrary to the front soldier who knew about the war, the German people, and especially its academic and cultural elite, was more open to the glorification of war and its myth of an heroic youth, culminating in the well-known 1916 publication of war letters from German students by the German writer and literary critic Philipp Witkop (1889-1942).³⁰¹

Excluded from active front service, Toller was able to uphold similar notions of war and youth during the winter of 1914/15. We can only guess at the works he read, although we can be sure that he found enough time to read literature. We know that he was a reader of *Der Kunstwart* during the war,³⁰² one of Germany's most popular cultural magazines at the time, as we have seen, and one of the main cultural magazines which propagated the "spirit of 1914" during the war. It clung to a cultural nationalism, rooted in an anti-materialist critique, and was fiercely proud of Germany and its cultural mission, though mostly in alignment with respect for other nations. Probably Toller also read the war poems of the immensely popular Richard Dehmel, which glorified sacrifice through war in terms of a cataclysmic event. On 25 November 1917 Toller would send a letter to Dehmel, himself a volunteer at age 51 (!) in 1914,³⁰³ in which he confessed that Dehmel's work had "meant inextricably much to me".³⁰⁴ That Toller already read his poems during the winter of 1914/15 is possibly evident from a poem called "Frühling

³⁰⁰ In reality only 18 percent of the German regiments who fought at the Langemarck were university students and teachers, whereas most were conscripts, not volunteers; the battle was not fought at Langemarck, moreover, but at Bixchote, less German sounding and five kilometres west of Langemarck, and there are no accounts that recall that they were actually singing the *Deutschlandlied*, see: George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, 1990), 71-74; Karl Unruh, *Langemarck. Legende und Wirklichkeit* (Koblenz, 1989); on the reception of the myth, see also: Hüppauf, Bernd, "Langemarck, Verdun and the Myth of a *New Man* in Germany after the First World War" in: *War and Society* 6, no.2 (September 1988) 70-103; Ibid, "Schlachtenmythen und die Konstruktion des 'Neuen Menschen'" in: Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..." Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1996) 55-59; Gudrun Fiedler, *Jugend im Krieg: Bürgerliche Jugendbewegung, Erster Weltkrieg und Sozialer Wandel, 1914-1923* (Cologne, 1989) 48-52.

³⁰¹ Philipp Witkop (ed.), *Kriegsbriefe deutscher Studenten* (Gotha, 1916), reprinted in 1918 and 1928, see: bibliography.

³⁰² Toller, *GW*, IV, 67.

³⁰³ On Dehmel's war enthusiasm, see: Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 128.

³⁰⁴ I here rely on Dove, *He was a German*, 23, 271; the quote comes from an unpublished letter from Toller to Dehmel of November 25, 1917 (Richard-Dehmel Archive, State and University Library, Hamburg); see also: Jordan, *Unpublished Poetry*, 10.

1915” (Spring 1915), dedicated to “R.D. in admiration” (E.D. probably stands for Richard Dehmel).³⁰⁵

On 31 December Toller’s regiment departed for the Alsace-Lorraine, which more than four decades earlier had been taken from the French during the Franco-Prussian war.³⁰⁶ As a consequence of the relatively high degree of French speaking citizens and the presence of a rather strong local particularism in combination with a cultivated national and regional sentiment (comparable with that of the Poles in Posen), the population of this region was treated with great suspicion by many Germans and often regarded as being unreliable in war. Effectively, Alan Kramer writes, the Alsace-Lorraine was seen as enemy territory and its population as the “enemy within”.³⁰⁷ Thus, Toller’s superior, commander (*Hauptmann*) L. Freiherr von Biegeleben (a descendent from a wellknown German noble family), delivered a speech before they left, warning his men that the local population could not be trusted, and suggesting that they lock the bedroom door while asleep at night.³⁰⁸

Toller’s regiment was now stationed directly behind the last front lines, in a village called Schiltigheim,³⁰⁹ close to Strasbourg, and the soldiers were distributed in the homes of Alsatian people in the surrounding villages. Toller stayed in a house of a wife and her daughter whose husbands had been sent to the eastern respectively western front. Clearly heeding the words of his superior, he locked his door every night, and slept with a loaded rifle.³¹⁰

Since 3 February 1915 the regiment was officially called Reserve Battallion of the First Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment (*Ersatzbataillon des I. bayerisches*

³⁰⁵ Dove, *He was a German*, 271.

³⁰⁶ HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15367, I/525; Toller, GW, IV, 54; Toller writes January (which Dove takes over), but the transfer is formally registered on 31 December 1914; for Dove, see: Dove, *He was a German*, 21.

³⁰⁷ Alan Kramer, “Wackes at War: Alsace-Lorraine and the Failure of German National Mobilisation, 1914-1918” in: Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe*, 105-106, 112; see also: Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 248, recalling their treatment as “second rang citizens”.

³⁰⁸ Toller, GW, IV, 54; on the name of the commander, see: Bayerischen Kriegsarchiv (BKA), *Die K.B. Schwere Artillerie im Großen Kriege 1914-1918. Nach den amtlichen Kriegstagebüchern und persönlichen Aufzeichnungen. Bearbeitet von alten Wafenkameraden* (Munich: Verlag Max Schick, 1928); HStA Munich, IV, *Ersatzbattalion des I. Fußartillerie-Regiments* (Eb-I.FaRgt), Bund 1, 7359/1891 (*Kriegstagebuch 1.1.1915-31.3.1915*); possibly Commander L. Freiherr Von Biegeleben, who commanded the third battery of the Reserve Battallion of the First Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment from 2 August 1914 to 22 August 1915, was (the later *Generalmajor*) Ludwig Freiherr von Biegeleben (1849-1921) from Hessen.

³⁰⁹ The regiment stayed in Schiltigheim until 15 September 1915, where after it left for Mainz until 5 March 1918 and then for Neu-Ulm until demobilization, see: BKA (ed.), *Die K.B. Schwere Artillerie im Großen Kriege 1914-1918*, 700.

³¹⁰ Toller, GW, IV, 54.

Fußartillerieregiments).³¹¹ It was divided into six batteries of which Toller was stationed in number three.³¹²

In spite of this change, however, little changed regarding the boredom that Toller had experienced in Bellheim; the troops were trained, but they were kept away from the front.³¹³ Nobody knew what was actually happening. The march in France had come to a standstill, but nobody knew why. Newspapers and the military command told nothing about the lost battle at the Marne in September 1914, through which the trench system had thus come about, while at the same time lies were consciously spread by the propaganda to uphold the morale of the soldiers. Although the war had definitively run ground by November 1914, the image was upheld that Germany was on the winning hand – “nonetheless Paris has not yet fallen; nonetheless the war goes on.”³¹⁴ In a newspaper article from 1920, Toller later called it a basic failure of the government to withhold his generation from the truth about the war because it had seriously undermined their faith in that government, forcing an irreparable rupture between youth and the German state as such.³¹⁵

In the light of this boredom, Toller grew hopelessly impatient and began to yearn more and more for the front. He expected much of this war, but he had not seen anything of it and was kept away from the fight. In the firm belief of the necessity of his duty, strengthened by romantic ideals of a heroic war, he felt the urge to be useful, to actually *do* his bit.

On 31 March 1915 this urge was satisfied when his superior, Commander Von Biegeleben, was in need for three volunteers for the front and called the men of his battery together.³¹⁶ Official records write that he had been requested for those volunteers on the previous day by a lieutenant called Rudolph Wiegel (1889), a twenty five year old Catholic Bavarian and medicine student from Munich who commanded a small combat unit near Pont-a-Mousson, close to Metz and the Mosel river.³¹⁷ Against military codes,

³¹¹ Ibid. 55.

³¹² HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15367, I/525; StA Munich, II/1: Polizeidirektion, 15591 (Toller): VI a 432/25, *Schreiben an Herrn Landrat Kremmler in Hamm i. Westf. d.d. 5.3.1925*.

³¹³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 55.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Letter “an den herausgeber der zeitung ‘Kampf’” (n.D), Toller, *GW*, V, 48-49, here 48.

³¹⁶ HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15367, I/525, 527; KrStR 15368, II/578; Toller, *GW*, IV, 55. Besides Toller, the Catholic Bavarians Johann Hagemann (1894) and Andreas Bleier (1888) were recruited; Hagemann was a *Gutler*, Bleier a peasant.

³¹⁷ In his autobiography Toller records the name “Siegel”, but this was Rudolph Ernst Wiegel (“Wiegl”) (1889) from Munich in reality. On Wiegel’s request, see: HStA Munich, IV, Eb-I.FaRgt, 1, 7359/1891; on Toller’s transfer to the “9cm battery Wiegl” and Wiegel’s curriculum, see: HStA Munich,

Toller openly stepped forward and asked for a transfer to the front, even though he was initially passed over because of his weak physical constitution: “When one day the commander looks for three strong people for a unit in France and passes me over again, I un militarily step forward and volunteer. ‘You are not strong enough, the commander says.’ ‘I am even stronger, I do not stand it here any more, I want to go in the field!’ The sergeant (*Feldwebel*) strikes dumb, the non-commissioned officers (*Unteroffiziere*) throw angry looks to me; the commander does not really know what to do with me; he hesitates whether he has to punish me, but then turns around and yells at the sergeant: ‘To the front with him!’”³¹⁸ A victory of willpower upon physical weakness, it was also a victory of the future upon the past that opened the vision of community in the realm of the German mother.

This vision is well expressed in the above mentioned poem, “Frühling 1915”, where the road to the front is described as a heroic sacrifice for the fatherland in the name of this new mother:

In spring I go to war
To sing or to die,
What do I care for my own troubles?
Today I shatter them, laughing, in pieces.

Oh, Brothers, know that young spring came
In a whirlwind.
Quickly throw off tired grief
And follow her in a host.

I have never felt so strongly
How much I love you, Oh, Germany,
As the magic of spring surrounds you
Amidst the bustle of war.³¹⁹

KA, KrStR 15367, I/525 resp. Pa 18279 (*Rudolph Wiegel*).

³¹⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 56.

³¹⁹ For the English translation I draw on: Dove, *He was a German*, 271; in German the poem is printed in: Jordan, *Unpublished Poems*.

The Front Experience – Or: The Loneliness of War [1915-1916]

Front Soldier at Pont-à-Mousson (March-June 1915)

On 31 March 1915 Toller was transferred by train to Wiegel's artillery unit at Pont-à-Mousson. In Metz, where the front became audible, the train stopped, and Toller and the other two soldiers got off. They were presented to Wiegel's combat unit, which was a heavy artillery firing unit. Although Toller does not record its actual size, these kinds of units generally existed out of a maximum of ten to twelve men.³²⁰ As it had emerged sporadically from the immediate needs of the war, it was loosely organised within the larger military hierarchy.³²¹

Toller cherished high expectations and excitement about life at the front. In his diary he wrote: "How happy I am to go to the front at last; to do my bit; to prove with my life what I think and feel."³²² But he soon learned that the soldiers of his new unit did

³²⁰ In his autobiography Toller mentions six names: "Siegel" (that is: Wiegel), "Josef", "Alois", "Sebastian" (the oldest man of the unit and a peasant farmer from Berchtesgaden), "Sedlmeier" (the assistant of "Siegel") and "Franz" (a Bavarian peasant farmer or lower class soldier). He also mentions a cook, but without his name. These names may be invented; I found six names of soldiers who fought in Wiegel's unit; besides Johann Hagemann and Andreas Bleier, who joined the unit with Toller on 31 March 1915, these were: the economist Johann Forstenaichner (1893), the blacksmith Johann Frank (1893) and Johann Hurler (1893); all were conscripted soldiers and Catholic Bavarians from small town or village communities. An exception is the sixth soldier, Otto Steiner (1895), the son of a Jewish merchant from Alt-Ulm (and born in Württemberg), who was both a Jew and volunteer, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 59-61; *StAM*, IV, *KrStR* 15367, I/527; *KrStR* 15368, II/578, 704, 705, 707.

³²¹ As was common, the unit was named after its commander and thus known as the "9cm battery Wiegl". Shortly before Toller left the squad in June 1915, this Bavarian unit was placed under Badean command and re-organised into, and re-named as, the Bavarian Foot Artillery Battery 409B (*Fußartilleriebatte-rie 409B*) from 1 September 1915 until somewhere in 1916, when it became part of the Saxon Foot Artillery Battery 123 (*Fußartilleriebatte-rie 123*) that was founded on 2 August 1915. See: *Übersicht der Behörden und Truppen in der Kriegsformation. Teil 7. Fußartillerie, Abschnitt A* (Berlin, 1918) 354-488; Toller, *GW*, IV, 63.

³²² Toller, *GW*, V, 9 (introduction); this diary does not exist any more.

not share such optimism – on the contrary, scepticism and mistrust dominated its social atmosphere.

From the start Toller was an outsider in Wiegel's unit, largely composed of conscripted Catholic soldiers from Bavaria of lower class and peasant descent.³²³ As he was formally registered as "without confession", his isolation was less a consequence of his Jewish background (which still seems to have been a secret to the men of his unit at this time) than of his status as a volunteer and bourgeois student of Prussian origin. He not merely spoke with a northern accent, which southerners often disliked and mistrusted, but he also had a 'better' social rank and held different notions of patriotism and sacrifice. With one possible exception, none of his fellow soldiers shared his ideals of "Germany" and the "Fatherland", equated with bourgeois idealism and Prussian hegemony. Though all these men accepted war as "fate" (and often in terms of Godly Providence or natural catastrophe), they were shaped by their own class and localist interests, and often desired nothing more than a return to pre-war realities.³²⁴ For them *Heimat* meant a wife, a piece of land, a job, and in some cases children,³²⁵ but for Toller it meant a new reality breaking with past. At odds with ideals of sacrifice for an abstract "Fatherland", Toller's fellow soldiers saw him as an "idiot" rather than as a "courageous warrior" when he joined the unit in March 1915.³²⁶ In *Die Wandlung* this patriotic scepticism is evinced by the men of Friedrich's unit who tell him that they do not know a "Fatherland" at all or share its so called 'civilising' ideals.³²⁷

Toller entered the front at a time when the initial dynamism of war had waned. Instead of a dynamic battle, then, he found an immobile war (*Stellungskrieg*) that was characterized by stagnation and inertia. As the situation in the west had run ground, the western front – with some exceptions in Belgium at that time – exclusively aimed to defend lines that were already in possession, so that real movement had vanished from

³²³ As footnote 1.

³²⁴ On the Bavarian anti-Prussianism and lack of patriotism, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 61-62; Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, 265-289; Klemperer, *CV*, II, 167, 366-367, 375; Nikolaus Buschmann, "Der verschwiegene Krieg: Kommunikation zwischen Front und Heimatfront" and Anne Lipp, "Heimatswahrnehmung und soldatisches 'Kriegserlebnis'" in: Gerhard Hirschfeld et al. (eds.), *Kriegserfahrungen: Studien zur Social- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der Ersten Weltkrieg* (Essen, 1997) 217 resp. 232; on distrust for northern accents in Bavaria, see: Alfred Neumeyer, *Lichter und Schatten. Eine Jugend in Deutschland* (Munich, 1967) 132-133; on war as Godly Providence or natural catastrophe, see: Buschmann, "Krieg" in: Hirschfeld (ed.), *Kriegserfahrungen*, 220-221; Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, 260-261.

³²⁵ Erich Maria Remarque, *Im Westen Nichts Neues* (1929) 23; most soldiers were young, but half of the unit's soldiers already had jobs, see: footnote 1.

³²⁶ Toller, *GW*, IV, 57; on scepticism toward volunteers, see also: Leed, *No Man's Land*, 89; Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 258-259.

³²⁷ Toller, *GW*, II, 23-24.

war.³²⁸ Although it may have further strengthened Toller's belief in a defensive war, it also meant that war was extremely boring at times. In this war Wiegel's soldiers found time to play cards, whereas Toller may have also spent time reading literature and writing poems.³²⁹

Tony E. Ashworth has described the immobile trench war in terms of a "live and let live" system that primarily aimed at the minimalisation of warfare and thus of the risk of death, discomfort and injury. Though combat and risk of death were always present, a silent truce had emerged between the hostile troops that deliberately restricted aggressive activity, that is, on condition that the enemy required the restraint. The duration of such "unofficial and illicit truces" varied from a few minutes to several days, weeks or months, whereas some sectors were quieter than others, but in all units soldiers experienced a similar situation.³³⁰ As a means to show that a war was still going on, one began in Ashworth's terms to "ritualise" warfare.³³¹ Toller records that every day at eleven o'clock, with exact punctuality, the French fired a "thousand snap shots" which were answered one hour later with shots from his own unit, but the French did not erase the German cannons, nor did the German ones trigger the French. "(O)ne shoots as a sign", Toller writes; "to show that there is still war, that they on the other side are still there, and that we are still here". One grew accustomed to such rituals and felt uncomfortable when they were broken, as it meant that something was at hand. Waiting for a hostile attack to come placed great tension upon the 'nerves' for one knew that one

³²⁸ Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918*, 19-23, 49; on *Stellungskrieg*, see also: Toller, *GW*, IV, 207.

³²⁹ Scholars of Toller – including Dove and Jordan – often assume that Toller wrote poems at the front, which is beyond doubt, but many of the 'war poems' that are often located by these scholars in war itself were possibly not written until after that time, especially in 1917, when Toller was able to express his feelings better and with greater distance. With respect to the literature that Toller read at the front, we can only speculate. We have already referred to the poems of Richard Dehmel. Very popular at the time among soldiers were the poems of Heinrich Lersch and Karl Bröger, which show similar symbolism, themes and vocabulary to Toller's war poetry, but direct influence cannot be detected. Steven E. Aschheim writes that the New Testament, Goethe's *Faust* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* could all count on great popularity among bourgeois youth at war and experienced an increase in sales during the war. Toller may have been inspired by these works, but there is no proof that he actually read them. R. Hinten Thomas doubts whether Nietzsche was avidly read in war and relativises the importance of Nietzsche: though his *Zarathustra* was read at the front in 1916, he claims, other authors were read as well, including Wilhelm Bölsche. This may also be true for Toller, who never refers to influence from, or sympathy with, Nietzsche, unlike the New Testament and Goethe. See: Dove, *He was a German*; Jorden, *Unpublished poems*; Aschheim, *Nietzsche Legacy*, 135-136; see also: Fiedler, *Jugend im Krieg*, 60; R. Hinten Thomas, *Nietzsche in German Politics and Society, 1890-1918* (Oxford, 1982) 103-104; on the war as a time of intellectual development and reading, see: Hirschberg, *Jude und Demokrat*, 105; Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 283-288.

³³⁰ Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918*, 19-23, esp. 19; Ibid, "The Sociology of Trench Warfare" in: *British Journal of Sociology*, XIX (December 1968) 407-423; Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2005) 93.

³³¹ Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918*, 39, 101.

was vulnerable to death when hit by a grenade, even though most casualties took place during attacks, and not in the trench, granting soldiers protection, as a ‘mother’ shielding her children.³³²

In reaction to these psychological tensions, Toller clung to the higher aim of war. This is clearly evident from *Die Wandlung*, where Friedrich is unable to understand how his fellow soldiers can live without a “Fatherland”, which to him is a *necessity* to counter the horror of the war without which he would go mad.³³³ Thus patriotic idealism gained strength by the experience of war, and thus his utopianism and ideals of *Gemeinschaft* equally increased.

In the past intellectual historians have often explained the idealisation of the front experience and its ideals of *Gemeinschaft* in terms of the communal life of soldiers in the trench itself,³³⁴ but Toller’s utopianism was less inspired by the presence than by the *absence* of comradeship in the trench. Although a whole range of experiences (including: common fear for death, submission to common discipline, to a limited sex life and dirty living conditions amidst lice and rats) stimulated a certain consciousness of community in the minds of trench soldiers, it had little to do with comradeship in terms of fraternity and recognition. Toller records that he found community with the rest through a common repulsion for the ‘vanity, bumptiousness and megalomania’ of their commander,³³⁵ but this is anything but *Gemeinschaft* in positive terms. Sincere feelings of fraternity may have been present at times, of course, but they are not recorded by Toller, whose war experiences with the group further sustained rather than eliminated loneliness at the front.

Instead of comradeship, what dominated daily life in the trenches was the struggle to survive.³³⁶ One day, when Toller’s unit was playing cards, the French broke their silent truce and opened an armed attack, which was followed by a two hour fight with heavy shooting. When the soldiers of Toller’s combat unit did not receive a phone

³³² Toller, *GW*, IV, 59-60.

³³³ “How can you live without a Fatherland? Madness would come over me amidst all this horror”, see: Toller, *GW*, II, 23-24.

³³⁴ On this, see amongs others: Stromberg, *Redemption by War*.

³³⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 61-62; see also: Toller, *GW*, II, 23; on the cleavage and tension between officers and men, see also: Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, 141-157; Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 258-261; on lice and rats, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 58; Toller, “Geschütz wache” in: Hiller (ed.), *Prosa*, 440; see also: Fussell, *The Great War*, 48-49; on pollution: Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 18-19; Remarque, *Im Westen Nichts Neues*. Since 1913 Wiegel had been appointed to non-commissioned officer for his academic status and on 15 February 1915 to lieutenant, see: HStA Munich, IV, Eb-I.FaRgt, 1, 7359/1891; Pa 18279, *Personalbogen Rudolf Ernst Wiegel* and his *Abgangszeugnis der Königlichen Kriegs-Schule zu München*, dd. 31.8.1913.

call from their commander in the observation post, two volunteers were needed to reach that post to see what was wrong. “Josef” and Toller volunteered. As men were expected to now and then sacrifice themselves for their unit,³³⁷ this was less an act of heroism than of duty and solidarity toward the group. When they returned from that mission, and things had turned to ‘normality’ again, they found their fellow soldiers opening presents that had been sent by the home front as an act of the latter’s commitment to and moral support for the front. As Toller had risked his life in an act of solidarity, he was deeply disappointed when he noticed that the others had not waited for them. It showed that solidarity was not to be found at the front.³³⁸

Absence of fraternal sentiment was made even clearer by the return of anti-Semitism. In his autobiography Toller records an anecdote in which he was able to wash himself after weeks of service at the front. As showering conditions at the front did not give space for privacy, Toller took a shower in the nearness of his combat unit, naked. While taking that shower, the oldest and most pious man of the squad, the Catholic peasant farmer “Sebastian”, started a conversation.³³⁹ A rural Bavarian, “Sebastian” not merely cherished popular Catholic conceptions, but he also cursed Prussians, whom he considered to be a greater threat to Bavarian liberties than the French. It was clear that Toller was a Prussian, so that it may have been precisely for this reason that “Sebastian” shared his anti-Prussian frustrations with Toller, whom he thus considered less a foe than a fellow soldier – that is: until he noticed that Toller was naked, Toller writes, and thus must have seen that he was circumcised. Shocked, he shut his eyes, opened them, put his pipe in his mouth, and while looking away over Toller’s shoulders into the trees, he said in Bavarian dialect: “Now one knows why the war had to come” (*Jetzt woß ma ja, warum der Krieg hat kemma müssen*), “The Prussian is washing himself naked” (*Der preiß wascht sich nackad*). And while spit dripped from the corner of his mouth, he cried: “Damned Prussian!” (*Saupreiß!*), and then lay himself down on the straw.³⁴⁰ Thus

³³⁶ On survival at the front, see: Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 89; Buschmann, “Krieg” in: Hirschfeld (ed.), *Kriegserfahrungen*, 223.

³³⁷ Wilhelm Rees, *Mit der schweren Artillerie im Westen: Für die Batterie 1/407 dargestellt* (Remscheid, 1920) 39.

³³⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 60; on the lack of camaraderie at the front, see also: Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 254-255, 258, where he writes that theft by comrades taught him to be a “mean man” rather than a heroic warrior at the front; on presents as commitment and support, see: Buschmann, “Krieg” in: Hirschfeld (ed.), *Kriegserfahrungen*, 215.

³³⁹ I was unable to trace the identity of “Sebastian”, of whom Toller writes that he came from Berchtesgaden (Bavaria), see also: footnote 1.

³⁴⁰ The term “Sauptreiß”, or – with accent: “Sauptreiß” – was a commonly used term in Bavaria to express contempt for the Northern-Germans. On “Sauptreiß”, see: Bruch and Müller (eds.), *Universität*

Toller had been accused of being a Jewish agent in the service of a larger, Prussian conspiracy against the liberties of the Bavarians.

It is tempting to believe that anti-Semitism hit hard upon Toller, but he seems to have worried less about anti-Semitism than about feelings of shame. As the anecdote shows that his Jewish identity came as a complete surprise to “Sebastian”, he obviously kept it a secret up to that moment.³⁴¹ Withholding an identity that was considered important at the time, however, he unintentionally sustained an identity of being a ‘suspicious traitor’ among Bavarians.

Moreover, anti-Semitism did not seriously distort the relationship between Toller and his fellow soldiers. Strengthened by popular Catholic conceptions, Bavarians regarded Jews as ‘strange’, but they were also known for their relatively mild attitude and tolerance. Compared with Prussia, where Jews were formally excluded from the higher ranks of both the army and the civil and legal services, Jews were not as rigidly excluded from the officer ranks in the Bavarian army, although prejudice was present as well.³⁴² Under the threat of fire, then, support for anti-Semitism was largely undermined because “times were (simply) too serious”.³⁴³ In his excellent study on war experiences in the Bavarian army and homeland, Benjamin Ziemann shows that anti-Semitism in Bavarian troops was present, but not dominant.³⁴⁴ Possibly Toller’s status as a Prussian was an even greater problem to his peer soldiers than his status as a Jew. That anti-Semitism was subject to anti-Prussianism is also shown by the fact that the anti-Semitism of “Sebastian” was but a part of a larger Prussian conspiracy.³⁴⁵ In this context Toller seems to have been able to relativise anti-Semitism as well. In line with the attitude of many German Jews he seems to have done so from a deep conviction of patriotic duty. Gotthold Kronheim (1889-1917), a distant relative of Toller from Samotschin and an artillery soldier at the front in Flanders, considered his duty more

München, 215. With respect to circumcision: Toller never records that he was circumcised, although it *indirectly* results from the anecdote.

³⁴¹ Toller’s physiognomy may have perhaps caused ‘suspicion’, although this may not necessarily have been so among Bavarians.

³⁴² On Bavarian tolerance and mildness toward the Jews before World War I, see: Rudolf Frank, “Meine Münchener Jahre” resp. Moritz Julius Bonn, “Meine Beziehungen zu München” in: Lamm (ed.), *Vergangene Tage*, 235, 227-8; Donald L. Niewyk, ‘Das Selbstverständnis der Juden und ihre Beteiligung am politischen Leben des Kaiserreiches und der Weimarer Republik’ in: Manfred Tremml and Josef Kirmeier (Eds., with aid of Evamaria Brockhoff), *Geschichte und Kultur der Juden in Bayern. Aufsätze* (Munich, 1988) 373-375; on the situation in the Bavarian army, see: Hermann Rumschöttel, *Das bayerische Offiziercorps, 1866-1914* (Berlin, 1973)

³⁴³ Joachim Beutler, quoted from: Witkopp, *Briefe*.

³⁴⁴ Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, 167-268.

³⁴⁵ This is also shown by the interdependence of the terms “Saupreiß” and “Saupreuß”, see: footnote

important than his worries about anti-Semitism.³⁴⁶ At the same time he believed like many other Jews that war would bring better times and thus anti-Semitism may well have sustained rather than weakened Toller's utopianism.³⁴⁷ As we have seen, Toller saw war as a test to prove his admission into a community of Germans. Anti-Semitism could easily be seen as a part of that same test. It was this idealism, and not his Jewish identity, which further estranged him from his peer soldiers.

Toller records the revival of anti-Semitism in *Die Wandlung* where the soldiers explain that Friedrich will always remain the “stranger” of the group. Although prepared to fight with and for that group, he will always be without a “Fatherland”: “curse” (*Fluch*), they say, “hangs at you, you one without a Fatherland (*Vaterlandsloser*)”.³⁴⁸ In the light of the abovementioned anecdote it is possible to read this “curse” as the ‘stain’ of circumcision, which equally ‘hung’ at Toller's body. As in the case of Toller, then, anti-Semitism does not deter Friedrich but rather strengthens his idealism in terms of his own personal needs. He is prepared, if necessary, to fight for his “Fatherland” all by himself.³⁴⁹

Isolated from his fellow soldiers by his war idealism and urge to seek recognition in a post-war *Gemeinschaft*, Toller must have focussed on the staff rather than his ‘comrades’, represented by lieutenant Wiegel. Although he disliked Wiegel, they shared a common identity as bourgeois students and possibly similar conceptions of war. Yet Toller was frustrated in his self-realisation by Wiegel, who subjected Toller to repeated humiliations after he had once not saluted him strictly enough. It is unclear whether anti-Semitism was a silent part of their motive, but Toller records that these humiliations were mainly to be ascribed to a competition struggle of two men who were both known as “intellectuals”. It was “Franz” who explained to him that “intellectuals” could not tolerate each other well,³⁵⁰ a view that not merely aimed to

28.

³⁴⁶ Gotthold Kronheim was a non-commissioned officer in the 53rd Fieldartillery Regiment and died at the Pashendale in Flanders on 11 November 1917; he was a son of the wealthy Jewish merchant Louis Kronheim (ca.1850) and his wife, Riecke Nanette Cohn, a daughter of the elder brother of Toller's maternal grandfather Isaac Cohn (1848†), see: APPOP, 574/79 (1898) No. 138; II 47/41 (1886) Nr. 87; II 47/47 (1888) Nr. 112; II 47/50 (1889) Nr 138; II 47/56 (1891) No. 45; Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten (RJF) (ed.), *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Deutscher Juden* (Berlin, 1935) 41; APPOP, 574/II 47/50 (1889) No. 138.

³⁴⁷ On war as a path to better times, see: RJF (ed.), *Kriegsbriefe*.

³⁴⁸ Toller, *GW*, II, 24.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ Toller, *GW*, IV, 62-63. Though anti-Semitism was not always openly mentioned in memoirs of Jewish intellectuals, Sieg argues that it often played a role in teasings, see: Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 116-117.

help Toller, but which also carried a sceptical undertone about the status of the intellectual, common to peasant perceptions and thus indirectly pointed at Toller as well.³⁵¹

Toller suffered deeply due to these personalised offences, excluding him from upward mobility and social recognition. Isolated amidst soldiers and commander, his utopianism of a post-war German *Gemeinschaft* turned inward.³⁵² It is not unlikely that he found a welcome companion in poetry to counter the loneliness of war. One – and possibly more – of these poems dealt with the Virgin Mary, the mother-symbol which had also attracted him in France.³⁵³ In another poem, entitled ‘Geschützswache’ (Armed Watch), we detect for the first time an appropriation of nature, a recurrent theme among soldiers in a technological war. Perhaps Mother Mary and Mother Nature can be seen as derivations or partial surrogate mothers of the supreme mother he had not yet met in war, Mother Germany.³⁵⁴

On 31 May 1915 Toller fell prey to skin problems. It is unclear what the origins of these problems were, but they may have been caused by the unhygienic conditions at the front. They were serious enough to bring him to a front hospital in Montigny, near Metz, which for the sake of the war had been transformed from a former dancing room into a hospital.³⁵⁵

Somewhere between that moment and 5 June 1915, when he was dismissed from hospital, Toller asked for a transfer to the immediate front lines.³⁵⁶ As Wiegel’s combat unit was integrated into a larger Badean unit round about that very same time, he profited

³⁵¹ On the ridiculisation of intellectuals, see: Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 115-116.

³⁵² On the war experience as a period of “inhumane loneliness”, see also: Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 277.

³⁵³ I already referred in chapter 2 to Toller’s poems about Mary; the poem ‘Gebet an Maria’ (Prayer to Mary), though undated, was certainly written at the front, and perhaps in Wiegel’s unit still.

³⁵⁴ On the revival of religion at the front, see: Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995) 64-65; on religious revival during World War I, see: Annette Becker, *La Guerre et la Foi, de la Mort à la Mémoire, 1914-1930* (Paris, 1994); on the appropriation of both nature and religiosity, see: Fiedler, *Jugend im Krieg*, 58-60; Mosse, *Fallen soldiers*, 59, 75, 78; Fussell, *The Great War*, 51-63; 231-269; Klemperer, *CV*, II, 425; Winter, *Sites*, 64-69, 77; Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, 246-265; on the appropriation of nature through watch at night, see also: Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 256.

³⁵⁵ HStA Munich, KA, KrStR 15373/984; *Bescheinigung von dem Versorgungsamt-Krankenbuchlager (VK) des Landesamtes für Gesundheit und Soziales* (LAGeSo), Berlin, 905b: Ernst Toller dd 6.7.2005. Note: I rely for the date of his illness on the *Stammroll*, writing that Toller was shortly treated from 31 May to 5 June 1915 in the “Festungslazarett Tanzsäle Metz-Montigny” for skin problems; in the letter from the *Krankenbuchlager* he is said to have stayed there since 21 May 1915. On former schools, churches, castles or cloisters as war hospitals at front and home front, due to a lack of hospitals and the great number of patients, see: Carl Altgeld, *Feldsanitätswesen* in: Max Schwarte (ed.), *Der Große Krieg 1914-18: Band 9, Die Organisationen der Kriegsführung*, 2 (Leipzig 1923) 401-539.

from this development by directly approaching the latter's commander, a Badean major from Karlsruhe "with a friendly drinker's face".³⁵⁷ Temporarily released from Wiegel's direct control, he was able to surpass his immediate superior while he was in hospital. As it went against military codes, it explains why the major was surprised to see him, but he was nonetheless open to his demands, as he as well, Toller writes, disliked Rudolph Wiegel. When the major asked him what his wishes were, he replied that he wished to go to the machineguns in the *Priesterwald*, or Priest's Wood (today: *Bois le Prêtre*), a small distance shooting infantry combat unit that was stationed in the west of Pont-à-Mousson, at a stones throw from his current position.³⁵⁸ Hoping for a war entailing a more human and heroic dimension, he explains to the major: "We shoot but we do not know at whom, (t)hose over there shoot as well, but we do not know who is shooting. I want to see the enemy against whom I fight."³⁵⁹ In alignment with the ideas of many soldiers at the time, the infantry thus came down upon him as more "human" than the artillery, enabling him to look the enemy straight in the eye. The major immediately understood Toller's motivations, as he replied that Toller thus longed for a "small romantic war".³⁶⁰ Ordered to get his things two hours later, Toller was received for a last time by Wiegel, who now reached out his hand, but Toller, who felt little respect for the moral abuse of authority by his superior, writes that he refused that hand.³⁶¹ This may be exaggerated, but also shows that Toller's wish for a "romantic war" cannot be seen apart from his desperate wish to escape from the burden of a commander who obstructed his war ideals.

³⁵⁶ For the date, see: VK, LAGeSo Berlin, 905b.

³⁵⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 63. I could not trace the name of this major in the archives.

³⁵⁸ Geographically Pont-à-Mousson and the Priest's Wood are very close, which explains why Toller knew this unit when he went to the major. Toller writes that he was transferred to the infantry, but it was an infantry-division (*Etappe Infantry Abteilung*) of a heavy artillery unit, the Foot Artillery Battery 407 (see: footnote 62), see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 63; VK, LAGeSo, Berlin, 905b.

³⁵⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 63.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; on the infantry as more "human", see: Kutscher, *Kriegstagebuch*, 92-3, 103.

³⁶¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 64; on a distinction between authority and the *abuse* of authority, see: E.D. Watt, *Authority* (London & Canberra, 1982) 19-25.

Slaughter in the Priest's Wood (June 1915-April 1916)

On 5 June 1915 Toller was dismissed from hospital and joined his new combat unit, east of Verdun.³⁶² We do not know who commanded this unit, but it must have been equally small and organised along similar lines as Wiegel's firing unit at the time of Toller's arrival.³⁶³ Unlike Wiegel's unit, however, its small distance shooting range minimised physical distance between Germans and French, so that Toller now could actually see and hear the enemy. "We are lying so close to each other", he records, "so that, should we stick out our heads from the trenches, we could speak with each other, without raising our voices."³⁶⁴

More than Pont-à-Mousson, the Priest's Wood confronted Toller with the brutal character and bitterness of trench warfare. The forest itself, a metaphor of the shield of Mother Nature, was the symbol of death and destruction. Influenced by the German Romantic tradition that equated nature through its innocence and beauty with the "genuine" in life and the roots of man, Toller understands the 'assassinated wood' in his autobiography in terms of the assassination of life and humanity as a whole.³⁶⁵ This notion dwelled on the experience of war itself. As George L. Mosse writes, the soldier was indebted to the wood in the same way as he was indebted to his fellow soldiers, as they both protected him and enabled him to survive the war. In a trench journal, *Die Feldgraue Illustrierte* (The Field-Grey Illustrated), one German soldier explained to its readers in 1916 that the "assassinated wood is my comrade, my protection, my shield against the bullets of the enemy".³⁶⁶

In the Priest's Wood life and death intermingled – one gained a closer view not only of the enemy, but also of the dead. Surrounded by dead corpses, the front transformed into a transgression zone of life and death,³⁶⁷ where the dead were like the living, and the living like the dead: "We sleep tightly pressed against each other in muddy dug-outs; water runs down from the walls; rats gnaw at our bread and the war and the *Heimat* at our part; today we are with ten, tomorrow eight; two have been torn

³⁶² VK, LAGeSo, Berlin, 905b.

³⁶³ It is impossible to reconstruct the composition of the unit (see: footnote 62); we have no names, except "Franz", of whom we know nothing at all, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 66.

³⁶⁴ Ibid. 64-65.

³⁶⁵ Ibid. 64; on the tree as a symbol for life, see also: Sigrid Bauschinger, *Die Symbolik des Mütterlichen im Werk Else Lasker-Schülers* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1960) 63-71; on the romantic origins and the "assassinated forest", see: Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 107-125.

³⁶⁶ Quoted from: Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 108.

³⁶⁷ On this, Leed, *No Man's Land*, 21-24, esp. 21

apart by grenades; we do not bury our dead, but place them in small niches, which have been dug out for us in the trench wall to take a rest; when I sneak bent down through the trenches I do not know whether I pass by a dead or a living person; here the dead and the living have the same grey-yellow faces.” The lack of decent and conventional modes of burials clearly illustrated this intermingling of life and death. Sometimes, Toller writes, the corpses were no more than “pieces”, so that burial made no sense at all; sometimes, Mother Nature buried her sons herself, when she was hit by an explosion and instantly covered the soldiers with her earthly blanket.³⁶⁸ Some three hundred meters on the right of their positions there was a blockhouse, better known as the *Hexenkessel* or witches’ cauldron; as it had frequently changed hands, a “pile” of German and French corpses lay entangled in each other, as if they were, Toller writes, in a “big embrace”.³⁶⁹ The image of this pile was later re-worked in a poem, entitled “Leichen im Priesterwald” (Corpses in the Priest’s Wood), possibly written in 1917, where the “embracing” of soldiers becomes a metaphor of the unity of all men. The poem, though written after the war experience itself, reveals how Toller reached out to a more mystical sense of war to transcend the horror of slaughter itself.

On 1 September 1915 the machine guns were withdrawn and transferred to the east of Verdun. As part of an overall reorganisation of the Bavarian (and German) artillery units, and parallel to a further sustainment of the immobile war, Toller’s unit was formally re-grouped (or re-integrated) into the newly founded, Badean commanded Foot Artillery Battery 407 (*Fußartilleriebatterie 407*).³⁷⁰ Here life became more “boring”, Toller writes, but also more “peaceful”. In this context there was more time to further read literature and write poetry, whereas it also enabled him to further grow conscious of social tensions at the front. Shared by the other front soldiers, his discontent with the staff now increased for their useless commands and greater luxury, symbolised by their better meals and by a new casino that was built at a time when the conditions of the trenches and its dug-outs were subject to improvement.³⁷¹ He also

³⁶⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 65.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ Unfortunately information about this combat unit has gone lost. As it was part of the 15th German Army Corps at the end of World War I, it fell under Prussian military command; the records of the Prussian army, however, stored in the military archive in Berlin after that war, were bombed in 1945. On the name and date of birth of the battery, see: *Übersicht der Behörden und Truppen in der Kriegsformation*, 7, A; for his part, Toller only records that this withdrawal happened when the trees still had leaves, see Toller, *GW*, IV, 65; with respect to the loss of information of the battery and its explanation, I thank Manfred Hennhöfer of the *Generallandesarchiv* in Karlsruhe, Germany.

³⁷¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 61-62, 65-66; in general on the cleavage and tension between officers and soldiers,

records the cleavage between the *Frontschweine* ('front pigs') and the other soldiers, a division often exacerbated when the latter were rewarded for work that had actually been done by the *Frontschweine*. When the Kaiser came for a visit, the 'pigs' were not allowed to present themselves, but only those with clean uniforms were called upon, and decorated with iron crosses. As the term *Frontschwein* already reveals,³⁷² it shows how much the war had inverted heroic ideals.

As before, the soldiers were not informed about what was going on at the front or in the war in general. Toller knew only what happened in his own little microcosmos, where rumours about desertion and misbehaviour of officers were often more dominant than truthful news.³⁷³ Unable to understand the larger picture, soldiers were often less well placed to understand the battles in which they fought than were the newspapers from the homefront.

But the press also increased false perceptions of reality, contrasting not seldom with Toller's own experiences. As early as September 1914, soldiers at the front complained about the caricatured depictions of the enemy in the postcards, Verhey writes, "feeling that these humorous representations of the enemy as pure cowards and criminals did not do justice to the reality of the front".³⁷⁴ Often these depictions were part of an attempt to strengthen morale at home,³⁷⁵ but they were often critically received by the soldiers at the front. It is for this reason that between June and December 1915 Toller decided to send an article to Germany's most prestigious cultural magazine, *Der Kunstwart*, in which he protested against the "disgusting" defamations of the enemy in the domestic press.³⁷⁶ As the magazine had earlier published two or three articles in

see: Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, 141-148, 149-157; see also: Rees, *Batterie 1/407*, 36-37; on food as a matter of social difference and complaint, see: Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 128; Klemperer, CV, II, 373; on better sleeping allocation, see also: Toller, *GW*, II, 23.

³⁷² Blackburn, *History of Germany 1780-1918*, 352.

³⁷³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 66. Many historians have pointed to the importance of legends, myths, and rumours at the front and during the war, see: Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York, London, 1975), 114-154; Leed, *No Man's Land*; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*; Mosse, *Germans, Jews and the Myth of the War Experience*; Winter, *Sites*; Bernd Ulrich, "...Als wenn nichts geschehen wäre". Anmerkungen zur Behandlung der Kriegsoffer während des Ersten Weltkriegs, in: Hirschfeld/Krumeich/Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..."*, 140-156, esp. 152-153.

³⁷⁴ Quoted in Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, 125; on discontent with the defamations of the enemy, see also: Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*; Hans Weigel, Walter Lukan and Max D. Peyfuss, *Jeder Schuss ein Russ, Jeder Stoss ein Franzos. Literarische und graphische Kriegspropaganda in Deutschland und Österreich, 1914-1918*. (Vienna, 1983) 24; Hakfeszbrink, *Unknown Germany*, 107-112; Ulrich Sieg writes that Jews were generally patriotic and loyal in terms of duty, but not hatefull, see: Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 81, 83-84; on hatred for the enemy as a motivation for war at the front, see: Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18, Retrouver la Guerre* (Paris, 2000).

³⁷⁵ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, 1990) 118.

³⁷⁶ Toller, *GW*, IV, 67. Toller writes that he read the news in the feuilletons of "newspapers", which

which the demonisation of the enemy by the war propaganda was opposed,³⁷⁷ he may have felt encouraged to do so, but the magazine's editorship refused to publish his article for it 'did not fit with the public mood'.³⁷⁸ There is no evidence that Toller actually sent that article, but – taking Toller on his word – it implies that it must have fallen in the hands of a wrong editor; possibly identifying with more tolerant forces connected to that magazine, Toller thus sought to give strength to the cultural nationalism of the magazine in more open, humanitarian forms, which included respect for the enemy as a human being.

Toller's compulsion to confess his contempt for hatred and intolerance during the war shows not merely that he began to yearn for communal idealism in more universal terms, but also that his understanding for the fate of the enemy began to grow. In fact, he identified more with the enemy *at* the front than with his own military command *behind* the front. Carl Zuckmayer, then fighting up north at the western front, records that such "identification" often occurred in regions where the enemy was close, as was the case for him as well.³⁷⁹ With the duration of a war that seemed ever more abstract and unreal, then, this process increased. In his novel *Im Westen nichts Neues* (All Quiet on the Western Front, 1929), the ex-soldier Erich Maria Remarque (1898-1970) gives expression to this process through the discussions between the protagonist Paul and his comrades, conscious of the internal contradiction of a war in which soldiers of warring nations equally do their duty. Growing understanding of that contradiction creates problems of conscience when Paul walks by a Russian war prisoners' camp and grows silent. A similar silence falls on him when he sees the former inhabitants of a French village that was cleared by his unit.³⁸⁰ Although he does not feel personal guilt, he seems to feel shame about the fate of the 'enemy'. Possibly inspired by Remarque's novel,³⁸¹ Toller records similar feelings of shame in his autobiography in

were newspapers from the homefront, as both newspapers created and controlled by soldiers (i.e. trench newspapers) or by their staff (i.e. army newspapers) did not exist before 1916, see; Lipp, "Heimatswahrnehmung" in: Hirschfeld et al (ed.), *Kriegserfahrungen*, 225-242.

³⁷⁷ Kratzsch, "Kunstwart" in: Mai/Waetzoldt/Wolandt (eds.), *Ideengeschichte*, 388; see also: Eichenlaub, *Toller*, 41, relying on Pierre Grappin, *Le Bund Neues Vaterland (1914-1916). Ses rapports avec Romain Rolland* (Lyon-Paris, 1952), 150, Third part: *Documents relatifs au Bund Neues Vaterland*, 71, 89-90, who refers to an article in the *Kunstwart* from February 1915 that pleads to "rendre justice à l'ennemi aussi (...) Ne méprisez et ridiculisez pas l'ennemi!"

³⁷⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 67.

³⁷⁹ Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 195-196; on "identification with the enemy", see also: Hafkesbrink, *Unknown Germany*, 107-146, 118-119; Ullrich and Ziemann (eds.), *Frontalltag*, 153-159.

³⁸⁰ Remarque, *Im Westen Nichts Neues*, 131, 133-134, 138-142, 162.

³⁸¹ Toller lauded Remarque's novel in a 1929 review for having spoken "on behalf of all of us, all those who lay in the trenches, filthy and infested with lice", see: Ernst Toller, "Im Westen nichts Neues" in:

an anecdote about a French village (named A.) that had to be cleared after having fallen to German hands. Though the village was completely deserted, he identified with the spirit of all these people that still hung round their houses when he made a walk through the streets, asking himself why all this had been necessary; “as if I heard the voice of one of the chased people”, he told himself that things had to be this way. And when there was nothing to fear in reality, he was overwhelmed with fear, “and with hasty steps I run out of the village, nobody will stop me; from whom do I flee?”³⁸² It is clear that Toller fled from his self, of course, who now began to cherish feelings of doubt about the righteousness of war. Though the anecdote seems to be fantasized, it illustrates that Toller’s belief in the meaning of war was waning around this time. He clung to the necessity of war to suppress these thoughts, although this necessity was now more and more understood in terms of an unknown and mystical realm beyond the reality of war itself. As long as massive warfare was minimised, the sense of war was still upheld, but when war turned into massive slaughter, this sense was gradually undermined.³⁸³

This transformation took place on 21 February 1916, when the German army started – for the first time since 1914 – a massive offensive at Verdun to break the hostile lines. The battle of Verdun, which took place from 21 February to 18 December 1916, would be the longest battle of World War I and ended in complete failure, with 360,000 respectively 330,000 dead men on the French and German sides.³⁸⁴ It opened a more active and impersonal phase in war,³⁸⁵ where any idea that war was a human enterprise disappeared. It ended all notions of war as a heroic battle and substituted the image of war as a machine in which technology controlled the soldier rather than the other way round.³⁸⁶ In this war a victory over the enemy was senseless when all were

Die Literarische Welt (22 February 1929) 5.

³⁸² Toller, *GW*, IV, 68.

³⁸³ Ashworth, “Sociology of Trench Warfare” in: *British Journal of Sociology*, 10; Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 105.

³⁸⁴ Ibid. 55; see also: Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 68, who estimates the number of French and German victims at Verdun at 315,000 respectively 218,000; “French casualties during the battle were steimated at 550,000 with German losses set at 434,000”, see: <http://www.firstworldwar.com/battles/verdun.htm>

³⁸⁵ Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 53-54.

³⁸⁶ Hüppauf, “Langemarck, Verdun and the Myth of a *New Man* in Germany” in: *War and Society*, 70-103; Ibid, “Schlachtenmythen” in: Hirschfeld/Krumeich/Renz (eds.), *Keiner fühlt sich hier als Mensch*, 43-84; on war as a ‘machine’, see also: Daniel Pick, *War Machine: The rationalization of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (New Haven, London, 1993).

losers in the face of technology. As Carl Zuckmayer writes, the enemy became less the enemy itself, but war instead.³⁸⁷

Against the background of the new offensive Toller was assigned a new task in which he had “to define the precise positions of the hostile guns.” In his autobiography he records that he had duty in a small unit, operating in three shifts, and always worked at night, as the night enabled him to define the place of the hostile arms by calculation of the time that passed between the “light and sound” of gunfire.³⁸⁸ It was a dangerous task, since it was performed in “no man’s land”, directly exposed to hostile fire. The threat of death was horrible, but Mother Nature was able to console his anxieties: “But amidst all horror the night tranquilises our hearts; immense and solemn she surrounds earth and creation; our breath, our pulse becomes more relaxed; she embeds us in the flow of eternal Laws.”³⁸⁹ It is likely that Toller was selected for this assignment because of his educated background.

In keeping with this dangerous assignment Toller was now also able to rise in rank. On 3 March 1916 he was appointed from a gunner into a non-commissioned officer and less than two weeks later, on 16 March, he became a trainee officer (*Offiziersaspirant*) as well,³⁹⁰ which means that he now formally was running for the rank of officer. In scholarship it is often stressed that Toller was a ‘good’ soldier, but his rise of rank must have been largely a consequence of the army’s need to strengthen his motivation in his new assignment.³⁹¹ Of course, Toller may have been a ‘good’ soldier (whatever that may mean) during his time at the front, but his behaviour was similar in many ways to that of other bourgeois soldiers at the time. In fact, his rise in rank after service of more than a year corresponded to the ‘normal’

³⁸⁷ Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 271.

³⁸⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 68.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 68-69.

³⁹⁰ HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15367, I/525; KrStR 15373, II/984; KrStR 15421 (*EB-I.FaRgt/Rekrutendepot IV*)/7743 (Toller); Toller, *GW*, IV, 68.

³⁹¹ Hans Marcuse and a certain lieutenant Malo recalled at Toller’s trial in 1919 that he was a good and conscientious soldier, but we should not forget that this was an act of loyalty from a (Jewish) fellow soldier and a lieutenant who – considering his name – possible was of Jewish descent as well, see: StA Munich, II/1 Polizeidirection 15591. Wolfgang Rothe also records that Toller received ‘a decoration of bravery’, and the novelist Walter von Molo (1880-1958) claims that he received the Iron Cross, a German badge of honour for conspicuous bravery in combat, but official records do not support to either of these statements. Not mentioning his source, Rothe may well rely on *Die Wandlung*, where Friedrich is assigned a “Cross” for heroic bravery, an indirect reference to the Iron Cross, see: Rothe, *Toller*, 133; HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15367, I/525; KrStR 15373, II/984; KrStR 15421/7743; Walter von Molo, *So Wunderbar ist das Leben. Erinnerungen und Begegnungen* (Stuttgart, 1957). Bernard Ziemann has shown that 91 non-commissioned officers in the Bavarian army were promoted to officers for bravery from 1914 to 1918, whereas most non-commissioned officers were generally nominated to sergeant or lieutenant.

career of non-Jewish bourgeois soldiers during the war – to which category Toller (registered “without confession”) formally belonged. Still, the psychological impact of these nominations must have been immense, as they were an important elevation of social status, and especially for a ‘Jew’ who was desperately in search of recognition from a Gentile world.³⁹²

Toller recalls his new and perilous assignment in *Die Wandlung*. When a corporal appears on stage, seeking one more man for an expedition to locate the positions of the hostile reserves, Friedrich volunteers as an attempt to further prove his *Deutschtum*.³⁹³ Though there is no prove that Toller volunteered for his assignment in reality, he must have seen that job in similar terms of emancipation, and of a road to social recognition.

The encounter with mechanized warfare and massive slaughter after Verdun strengthened Toller’s doubts about the war. The horror of a war that seemed ever more unreal estranged him from the human dimension of war itself. “I see the dead”, Toller writes, “and I do not see them”. There was a sense of “unreality” about the dead people surrounding them, he adds, “producing horror, but not pity.”³⁹⁴ What seemed real was unreal, and what was unreal seemed real. In this context the understanding of war’s meaning was transported increasingly into mystical realms. The war machine continued, and soldiers did their duty, but in the face of an ever more impersonal and mechanised war French and German soldiers were further drawn together. In this context the idea of war as fratricide gained strength. In his autobiography Toller describes his consciousness of the common brotherhood of man in terms of a sudden revelation, occurring one day when he “grubbed in the mud” and the bayonet of his rifle got stuck into a “slimy nut” that was in reality a piece of “human intestines”: “A dead human being is buried here. A – dead – human being. Why do I grow silent? (...) Three words like whatever other three: A dead human being – I want to forget these three words, (...), why do they surprise and overpower me? A – dead – human being. And suddenly, as though darkness were separated from the light, (...) I grasp the simply truth of humanity which I had forgotten, which lay buried and hidden, the common interest, the single unifying quality. A dead human being. Not: a dead Frenchman. Not: a dead German. A dead human being. (...) In this hour I know

³⁹² See also: Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 89.

³⁹³ Toller, *GW*, II, 25.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*; on not seeing, or, not wanting to see, the dead, see also: Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 253.

that I was blinded for having kept closed my own eyes; in this hour I finally know that all these dead, Frenchmen and Germans, were brothers, and that I am their brother.”³⁹⁵ There can be little doubt that this text is retrospectively stylised and dramatized, although the idea of brotherly love may well have gained ground in the trenches itself. Richard Dove has placed this human awakening in the context of pacifism, but this is incorrect.³⁹⁶ Toller did not become a pacifist in war – he doubted the point of mass slaughter, but not the meaning of war itself, nor of mass death. War remained a necessity, though at times it was better not to speak of duty any more.³⁹⁷

‘Thirteen months I have been at the front: grand sentiments grow hollow, big words small, war becomes normality and front service daily work, heroes become victims and volunteers enchained; life is a hell, death a bagatelle; we are all but screws in an ever moving machine that throws itself forward, although it is not clear in which direction, and backward, although it is not clear why; we are disconnected, polished, dressed, changed, depraved – the point has got lost: what burned, died; pain displaced; and the soil, from which action and dedication grew, has turned into an empty desert.’³⁹⁸ In this context heroic sacrifice had lost all meaning: “We cut off the firing pins of non exploded grenades, for frivolity – recently one exploded and tore two men to pieces: isn’t everything meaningless?”³⁹⁹

Physical and Mental Collapse (April-November 1916)

On 3 April 1916 Toller was taken away from the front. Official records write that he was sent to the third reserve battery of the (Lower-Saxon) Foot Artillery Regiment 10 (*Fußartillerieregiment 10*), then active as the “change-post” of his combat unit (and possibly stationed in Bischheim-Hohenheim). It is unclear why this transfer took place, but he was probably taken away for a rest.⁴⁰⁰ In this context he felt the urge to “break out

³⁹⁵ Ibid. 69-70.

³⁹⁶ Dove, *He was a German*, 25.

³⁹⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 71.

³⁹⁸ Ibid. 72-73.

³⁹⁹ Ibid. 73.

⁴⁰⁰ HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15373, II/984; KrStR 15421/7743; on the Lower-Saxon Foot Artillery Regiment 10, see: Paul Bansi, *Das Niedersächsisches Fußartillerie-Regiment Nr 10. Der Regimentsstab im Felde* (Oldenbourg, 1928); Helmut Wendtlandt, *Das I. Hannoversche Bataillon des Niedersächsischen Fußartillerie-Regts Nr 10* (Oldenbourg, 1922); Hermann Wentzel, *Kurzem Auszug aus der Geschichte des (Niedersächsischen) Fußartillerieregiments no.10* (..); Helmut Gießen, *Das II. Kurhessische Bataillon des Niedersächsischen Fußartillerie-Regts. Nr. 10* (Oldenburg, Berlin, 1924);

of the masses”, as he calls it in his autobiography, to break “out of mass life, out of mass death”.⁴⁰¹ In so doing, he decided to apply for the aviation corps shortly after, during that same month.

Toller’s choice for the aviation corps as a means to escape massive war should be understood in the frame of a much wider idealisation and admiration for pilots and airplanes during World War I.⁴⁰² Although the airplane was in its infancy during the war still, various historians have shown that the act of flying became the object of romantic longing, of knightly combat, and of a more civilised kind of warfare than that of the barbarism in the trenches. Unlike the ground soldier, fighting an *impersonal* war, the pilot fought a *personal* and heroic fight, from man-to-man, respecting the enemy. In this way the aviator was idealised as a modern kind of knight, associated with a chivalric morality that enabled him to control his plane almost literally as a “knight of the clouds”.⁴⁰³ Unlike the ground soldier, then, the aviator dominated the war and its technology; he was literally lifted above the mechanised, blind fate of the ground soldier and enjoyed a more coherent picture of the war.⁴⁰⁴ It granted him a distinct elitism that turned him into the German war hero par excellence.⁴⁰⁵ This elitism was strengthened by the fact that pilots were all officers and volunteers,⁴⁰⁶ who died, moreover, as individuals rather than as numbers. In this way names like Oswald Bölke (1916†) and Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen (1892-1918) were adopted by the nation as personal heroes and as subjects of cults of worship.⁴⁰⁷ Though the importance of such cults during the

on the location of this Lower-Saxon unit, see: StA Munich, 15591, which contains a reference to Toller’s stationing “in 1916” at that location; as this does not count for the First Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment, it may thus count for this Lower-Saxon Regiment.

⁴⁰¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 73.

⁴⁰² Peter Fritzsche, *A Nation of Fliers: German Aviation and the Popular Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); *Ibid.*, “Planes, Pilots and Patriots: Aviation and German Nationalism” in: *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für die deutsche Geschichte* (1989) 417-439; Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 123-138; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*; 119-125; Mosse, *Image of Man*, 117-119; the aviation corps also attracted Hans Marcuse, who served with Toller at the front and applied for the aviation corps round about that time as well, and Willy Toller (1892), a son of Max and Josephine Toller from Memmingen (see chapter 3, footnote 1) and a volunteer in a Bavarian infantry regiment who was decorated with the Iron Cross second Class on 9 June 1916 and applied for the aviation corps circa one year after Toller, see: IISG Amsterdam, Nachlass Georg von Vollmar (NL-Vollmar), 1363 (Walter Marcuse); HStA Munich, IV, Pa 10018; on Willy Toller, see also: Timmerman, “Entstehung der Freikorpsbewegung” in: Baumann/Hoser (eds.), *Die Revolution von 1918/19 in der Provinz*, 178-179; Miedel, *Die Juden in Memmingen*.

⁴⁰³ Mosse, *Image of Man*, 117; *Ibid.*, *Fallen Soldiers*, 119-125, esp. 121; Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 123-138.

⁴⁰⁴ Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 123, 134-135.

⁴⁰⁵ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 119-125, here 119-120.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 122.

⁴⁰⁷ Johannes Werner, *Bölke, der Mensch, der Flieger, der Führer der deutschen Jagdfliegerei. Ein Lebens- und Heldenbild aus seinen Briefen gestaltet* (Leipzig, 1932); “Vigilant”, *Richthofen: The Red Knight of the Air* (London, 1938); Rolf Italiaander, *Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen: Der beste Jagdflieger des großen Krieges* (Berlin, 1938).

war may have been slightly exaggerated in scholarship, they were nonetheless part of the imagination of many ground soldiers in search of a nobler kind of warfare.⁴⁰⁸

In his autobiography Toller indirectly suggests that he was accepted for the corps, though historical evidence does not combine this; in fact, he seems to have been rejected, as there is no trace of a post in the aviation corps in the personal record that the army kept of Toller during the war.⁴⁰⁹ Opening the threat of a return to the front, then, this rejection possibly accelerated his collapse. In his autobiography Toller records that he developed “heart and stomach” problems, but official records say that he succumbed to what was then known as “war neurosis” (also known as “shell-shock”),⁴¹⁰ a disease caused by the experience of war, although its origins and exact relation to the war itself were not very clear at the time still (and nor are they today). As Toller records somatic problems, “war neurosis” possibly expressed itself through the body, bringing to the surface what the mind was unable to recognise.

On 28 April 1916 Toller was sent to a hospital at the front, where they possibly diagnosed “nervousness” and “tonsillitis”.⁴¹¹ On the next day he was sent to a hospital in Königshofen, near Strasbourg, where a neurological section must have been present to give treatment.⁴¹² We can only guess at the treatment he received in that hospital, and it is also unclear who treated him, but Paul Lerner has shown that treatment of “war neurosis” in this phase of war generally consisted of passive “lying therapies”, often in combination with medication in the case of fever and pain. In his autobiography Toller also notes that the nursery in the hospital lay in the hands of “Franciscan monks”, which may in reality have been Capuchin monks for the hospital was a former Capuchin cloister.⁴¹³ Toller records his treatment in the hospital of Königshofen in *Die Wandlung*, where his alter ego wakes up after his perilous mission for the Fatherland. There is a Cross above his head, which indirectly may refer to the cloister in Königshofen, but it also refers to the fate of the fallen soldier itself, often equated with the Passion of Christ during the war. Friedrich is treated for what the “modern school” calls “nerve-shock”,

⁴⁰⁸ Blackbourn, *History of Germany 1780-1918*, 352.

⁴⁰⁹ HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15367, I/525; KrStR 15373, II/984; KrStR 15421/7743.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.; StA Munich, II, 1/15591; BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Psychiatrisches Gutachten über Ernst Toller*.

⁴¹¹ HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15367, I/525; KrStR 15373, II/984; KrStR 15421/7743.

⁴¹² Ibid.; approximately two-thirds of the some 26,300 doctors on war service from 1914 to 1918 (out of the 33,000 who then lived in the borders of the German empire) saw duty in the field, while one third remained within Germany. A substantial part of these were psychiatrists and neurologists, see: Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 42.

⁴¹³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 73.

the doctor tells the nurse, although he believes that Friedrich has “problems of digestion” in reality. It shows that Friedrich had “stomach” problems and that treatment was a hundred percent somatic, as is also evident from the specific medication (*Rhizinusöl*) he was prescribed.⁴¹⁴

Toller seems to have reflected upon his recent war experiences and his doubts in Königshofen. His struggle over the sense of war is echoed in *Die Wandlung*, where the “nurse-comrade” (Schulte) well understands that his alter ego is not fighting for his life in physical, but in moral terms.⁴¹⁵ When he wakes up, she explains that he had been taken a prisoner by hostile troops, after which he was bound to a tree and later found as the only survivor. An old “barbaric” practice in war,⁴¹⁶ this binding at the symbol of life has a deeper meaning and stands in direct opposition to the Cross that hangs above his head. Then an officer comes in and rewards the “young hero” in the name of the “Fatherland” with another “Cross” that refers, as we have seen, to the Iron Cross.⁴¹⁷ While the man hands over the war decoration, he solemnly adds that Friedrich has now become one of the ‘others’: “Stranger you were to our people, now you have obtained civil rights.”⁴¹⁸ Somewhat flabbergasted Friedrich stammers some words that give expression to both his joy and disbelief, while the news comes in that war has ended and victory is won over the enemy at the cost of no fewer than “ten thousand dead”! The correlation between his reward and “ten thousand dead” immediately creates doubt in the mind of Friedrich: “Ten thousand dead! Through ten thousand dead I belong to them. Why cannot I be happy? Is that salvation? Is that the great time? Are those the great people? (...) *Now I belong to them.*”⁴¹⁹

On 17 June 1916 Toller was released after two months of treatment.⁴²⁰ Four days later, on 21 June, he was transferred to the recruit company (*Rekrutendepot*) IV of the Reserve Battalion of the First Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment, his initial regiment,

⁴¹⁴ Friedrich is treated with *Rhizinusöl*, aspirin and quinine which was common in case of a mix of digestion problems, pain and (high) fever, see: Toller, *GW*, II, 28; on this kind of medication, see: Israel Lipowski, *Compendium der Arzneimittellehre, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der neuen Arzneimittel, der Organotherapie, Serologie und Nährpräparate* (Vienna-Berlin, 1914) 104-105, 119-120; 127-128, 139, 144-145, 148; Ibid., *Leitfaden der Therapie der inneren Krankheiten, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der therapeutischen Begründung und Technik. Ein Handbuch für praktische Ärzte* (Berlin, 1901) 169-170.

⁴¹⁵ Toller, *GW*, 2, 29; on the nurse as a “comrade” or (“mother”) of the soldier, see: Regina Schulte, *Die Verkehrte Welt des Krieges*, esp. 108-109.

⁴¹⁶ Remarque, *Im Westen Nichts Neues*, 69.

⁴¹⁷ On the significance of the cross as a “change of paradigm”, see also Mazellier-Grünbeck, *Le Théâtre Expressionniste et le Sacré*, 72-3.

⁴¹⁸ Toller, *GW*, II, 29.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

which since 15 September 1915 had been stationed in Mainz, in the German federal state of Hessen.⁴²¹ Here his superior, Oberleutnant L. Kimmich, had to decide what to do with him, a choice that must have wavered between return to the front or further treatment in the *Heimat*.⁴²²

For unknown reasons the choice fell on the second option. Now Toller was sent to an experienced doctor in a (private) nerve clinic in Ebenhausen, close to Munich.⁴²³ This doctor was Dr. Julian Marcuse (1862-ca.1943), an assimilated Jew and a sexual hygienist with life reformist ideas, who diagnosed “physical exhaustion and a complete nervous breakdown”.⁴²⁴ Combining life reformist ideas with suggestive will-power therapies, Marcuse advocated so called “nerve gymnastics” (Du Bois-Reymond) through bodily care,⁴²⁵ which meant that he sought to strengthen the patient’s will by diets, sports, gymnastic and water-, sun- and air baths.⁴²⁶ Inclined to the spiritual needs of man, there is no reason to believe that Toller was impressed by these therapies, although he neither seems to have experienced them in negative terms. On the contrary, Toller returned for treatment in the Ebenhausen clinic of his own will during the summer of 1918.⁴²⁷

For Toller, then, Ebenhausen seems to have been a resting house, where he was able to read literature in a tranquil environment and to further clarify his thoughts about the meaning of World War I. In July 1916 he wrote a letter to the novelist Cäsar Fleischlen (1864-1920), praising his book *Jost Seyfried* (1905). As Richard Dove writes: “The theme of the novel is the struggle of the artist at an historical turning point: ‘We

⁴²⁰ VK, LAGeSo 905 b; StAM, KA, StR 15373/984; KrStR 15421/7743.

⁴²¹ Instead of 21 June 1916 we also find 26 June 1916, see: StAM, KA, StR 15421/7743 respectively: StAM, KA, KrStR 15373/984; on Mainz, see: chapter 4, footnote 56.

⁴²² From September 1915 to September 1917 the recruit deposit IV of the First Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment was commanded by “Oberleutnant L. Kimmich”, see: BKA, *Die K.B. Schwere Artillerie im Großen Kriege 1914-1918*, 700. This choice of a return to the front or further treatment is clear from the fact that he was neither stationed in a reserve battery (*Ersatzbatterie*) or in a convalescent company (*Genesenbatterie*).

⁴²³ On experienced doctors in the *Heimat*, see also: Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 140-141.

⁴²⁴ StA Munich, II, 1/15591, *Letter from Dr Marcuse*.

⁴²⁵ Julian Marcuse, *Körperpflege durch Wasser, Luft und Sport* (Leipzig, 1908) vi.

⁴²⁶ On water and bathing therapies, see: Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 118-9; Julian Marcuse, *Bäder und Badewesen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Eine kulturhistorische Studie* (Stuttgart, 1903), 138-151; Marcuse, *Körperpflege*, 62-3, 67-68; 73-122, 130, 140, 142, 145-147, 152-3, 159, 167; see also: Lipowski, *Leitfaden der Therapie*, 116; on *Nervengymnastik*, see: Marcuse, *Sexuele*, 75.

⁴²⁷ StA Munich, 15591, *Bericht Standgericht München*. Unlike Königshofen, he does not criticise his treatment in *Die Wandlung*, but sometimes bathing therapies also resulted in nightmares, as was the case for the German writer and ex-soldier, Oscar Maria Graf, see: Oscar Maria Graf, *Wir sind Gefangene. Ein Bekenntnis aus diesem Jahrzehnt* (Berlin, 1948) [1927] 210; Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 119; Marcuse concluded already before the war that extreme temperatures and excessive long-term bathing had to be avoided.

must become new people', declares its protagonist, 'we must create new souls, new values to live by!' The appeal of this novel for the twenty-three year old Toller needs little elaboration."⁴²⁸

Possibly Toller himself had a hand in his transfer to Ebenhausen. Marcuse was the father of Hans Marcuse, a soldier who came to Toller's defence – together with Julian Marcuse – when he stood trial for high treason in July 1919. Both Hans and his brother, Walter Marcuse, served in the Prussian Foot Artillery Regiment 225 (*Fußartillerieregiment 225*), a heavy infantry unit that was part of the Fifth Army Corps and therefore stationed in the neighbourhood of either Toller's unit in Pont-à-Mousson or in the Priest's Wood.⁴²⁹ Though Hans is said to have served with Toller at the front,⁴³⁰ details about the location and time are unknown (although it seems likely to have been in the Priest's Wood where Toller records cooperation with a Prussian infantry man).⁴³¹ Interestingly enough, the non-commissioned officer Walter Marcuse was stationed on 19 June 1916 in Toller's recruit company of the Reserve Battalion of the First Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment in Mainz, as is evident from a letter that Marcuse sent to Georg von Vollmar (1846-1929), the well-known reformist leader of the pre-war Bavarian SPD and a close friend of the Marcuse family as a whole.⁴³² This means that his combat unit recruited its soldiers from the same regiment as that of Toller; it may imply that Toller had known the Marcuse brothers for much longer, perhaps even since his training in Milkertshofen. Since Walter was expecting to begin with an officer training course in July 1916, this may explain why he was stationed in Mainz. As Toller arrived two days later, it is very likely that the two men met here. It is unclear whether Hans was also present in Mainz, although the correlation between his brother's presence and Toller's road to Ebenhausen might be enough to explain why Toller was sent to that clinic in particular. We can only speculate about the influence of this context of personal relations on a diagnosis that now relieved Toller from war.

On 29 August 1916 Toller was transferred to a convalescent company of his regiment in Mainz.⁴³³ Due to Marcuse's diagnose he was placed on half-pay as a soldier,

⁴²⁸ Dove, *He was a German*, 29.

⁴²⁹ IISG Amsterdam, NL-Vollmar, 1363, which contains various letters of Walter (and Hans) to Georg von Vollmar, written in 1915 and 1916 and showing that these two brother served in the same, Prussian Foot Artillery Regiment 225, also known as the Royal Prussian Heavy Field "Haubitze"-Battery No.225.

⁴³⁰ StA Munich, II, 1/15591.

⁴³¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 71.

⁴³² IISG Amsterdam, NL-Vollmar, 1363, *Letter from the non-commissioned officer Walter Marcuse to Georg von Vollmar, 19.6.1916 (Mainz)*.

⁴³³ There were 5 convalescent companies, but it is unclear in which one Toller was stationed. See: HStA

until he was officially released from front service on 4 January 1917; “unfit for war, but permanently fit for work.”⁴³⁴ Officially Toller now ran the risk of employment in the war industry, but the army soon dismissed him for holidays to study from 15 January to 1 April 1917.⁴³⁵

Munich, IV, KrStR 15373, II/984; KrStR 15421/7743; BKA, *Die K.B. Schwere Artillerie im Großen Kriege 1914-1918*, 700.

⁴³⁴ Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 12; Paul Lerner has recently shown that this diagnosis, which was common in the case of “war neurotics”, had less to do with an intention to actually employ ‘war neurotics’ than with the state’s efforts to prevent claims to war pensions, see: Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 149.

⁴³⁵ Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 86.

PART III

THE STRUGGLE FOR REBIRTH [1916-1917]

FRIEDRICH: Sonne umwogt mich, / Freiheit durchströmt mich, / Meine Augen schauen den
Weg. / Ich will ihn wandern, Schwester, / Allein, und doch mit dir, / Allein, und doch mit allen, /
Wissend um den Menschen.

ERNST TOLLER, *Die Wandlung*.

In the Shadow of the War: The Struggle with the “Inner Enemy” [1916-1917]

“I want to forget the War” (1916-1917)

Before his official release from the army on 4 January 1917, Toller had already returned to Munich to take up his studies that had been interrupted by the war. As we have seen, he already had plans to attend Munich University in 1914, but war kept him away longer than expected. In November 1916 he registered at the local university in law and political economy (*Volkswirtschaft*) in the departments of respectively law and philosophy.⁴³⁶

Toller found lodgings in the centre of the town, near the university and close to Schwabing, Munich’s artistic quarter.⁴³⁷ This quarter, the self-styled anarchist and full-bearded Erich Mühsam records, was in many ways better known as a “cultural” than a geographical expression.⁴³⁸ Situated on the town’s northern periphery, it was the homeland of many uprooted intellectuals and displaced bourgeois artists and writers from Germany and abroad, including the Russian and Polish painters, Vassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) and Alexei von Jawlensky (1864-1941), the Austrian born poet Rilke, and German writers like the novelist Thomas Mann and the dramatist Frank Wedekind (1864-1918), author of the popular *Frühling’s Erwachen* (Spring’s Awakening, 1891). Gathering in its many coffee-houses and beer halls, and dabbling in endless talks, there

⁴³⁶ Toller, GW, IV, *Protocol*, 240: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 12.

⁴³⁷ According to the list of inhabitants of the Munich police, Toller first lived in the Kurfürstenstraße 31/I (with Schlemau) and then moved to the Amalienstrasse 44/III (with Herter) on 19 December 1916, where after he lived in the Akademiestrasse 11/0 (with Huber) from 1 January to 14 October 1917, see: StA Munich, 15591, *Report of the Stadtkommandantur* dd 7.5.1919, no. 124.

⁴³⁸ Erich Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1961) 34, 88.

was a variety of artistic circles in “Mother” Schwabing,⁴³⁹ ranging from anarchist-bohemian networks to esoteric pagan-Gnostic groups. Circa 1900 the latter had included the so called “Cosmics”, a literary circle that was organised around the aesthetic and charismatic poet Stefan Georg, Ludwig Klages and Alfred Schöler (1865-1923), and that was inspired by the matriarchate theory of J.J. Bachhofen’s *Mutterrecht* (Mother Right, 1861). Georg had left the group in 1904, but its influence remained dominant during the time of the war. This also counts for the influence of George himself, as we have seen in chapter 1. In literature Naturalism had dominated before the war, and particularly through the work of Munich’s uncrowned king, Paul Heyse (1830-1914), but since the war ideas that were later grouped as ‘Expressionism’ also conquered a central place in the artistic and literary minds. Many schools blossomed, but it was mainly the activist one, inspired by the ideas of Kurt Hiller and the intellectuals around Joël’s *Aufbruch*, dreaming of a new organic society on the basis of a brotherhood of man, which was most influential.⁴⁴⁰

When Toller came to Munich, his principal aim was to forget the trauma of war, although this was not so easily done.⁴⁴¹ The town bore scars of the war in the shape of the many war cripples and “embittered women” that walked its streets and the university counted largely women or wounded soldiers among its students for most ‘healthy’ men stood at the front.⁴⁴² Like most other ex-soldiers in the *Heimat* who had been

⁴³⁹ On “mother” Schwabing, see: Arthur Mitzman, “Anarchism, Expressionism, and Psychoanalysis” in: *New German Critique*, 10 (Winter 1977) 77-104.

⁴⁴⁰ On Munich’s literary and artistic climate before and during World War I, including the Klages-Schöler circle, see among others: Peter Jelavich, *Munich and Theatrical Modernism* (Cambridge: Massachusetts, 1985); Robin Lenman, “Politics and Culture: The State and the Avant-Garde in Munich, 1886-1914” in: Evans (ed), *Society and Politics*, 90-111; Mitzman, “Anarchism” in: *New German Critique*, 77-104; Sterling Fishman, “Prophets, Poets and Priests: A Study of the Men and Ideals that made the Munich revolution of 1918/19” (Wisconsin, 1960), esp. 10-13; Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen*; Franziska zu Reventlow, *Herrn Dames Aufzeichnungen* (1913); Graf, *Wir sind Gefangene*; Ibid., *Das Leben Meiner Mutter* (...); Neumeyer, *Lichter und Schatten*, 111-112; Hubert van den Berg, “Naar een nieuw hetairendom; Bachofen-renaissance en matriarchale utopie in de Münchense bohème (1900-1914)” in: *Bulletin. Geschiedenis, Kunst, Cultuur*, 2, No.1 (1993) 41-61; on Munich as a principle art centre, see: Robin Lenman, “Networks and Boundaries: German Art Centres and their Satellites, 1815-1914” in: Malcolm Gee, Tim Kirk, and Jill Steward (eds.), *The City in Central Europe: Culture and Society from 1800 to the Present* (Ashgate, 1999) 45-62.

⁴⁴¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 76. Much recent literature about the war deals with its commemoration in post-war society, especially by memorials and graveyards, while its “forgetting” receives less attention. Eric J. Leed already paid attention to the veterans’ need to forget the war in post-war British and German society in his insightful *No Man’s Land* (1979), which he recently further elaborated in an article. In addition Sonia Batten has called for more attention to the element of “forgetting” in war memorials and graveyards in Britain. See: Leed, ‘Fateful Memories: Industrialized War and Traumatic Neuroses’ in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 35, No. 1 (January 2000) 85-101; Sonia Batten, “Forgetting the First World War” in: *Journal of the Centre of the First World War* (November 2005) 44-65.

⁴⁴² Toller, *GW*, IV, 76; on the image of war cripples in the streets and at university, see: Paul Lerner, ‘Psychiatry and Casualties of War in Germany, 1914-18’ in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19;

prematurely released from war, Toller sought to repress the psychological wounds of his recent war experience through silence and denial.⁴⁴³ Rosie Grafenburg, a student in Munich at that time, writes that she and other female students respected the silence of the male students and ex-soldiers,⁴⁴⁴ so that they kept their memory as a “secret that” could “never be communicated”.⁴⁴⁵

While upholding this “secret”, mother Schwabing offered Toller enough activity and amusement for his heart’s content. He records that he enjoyed this local Walhalla of artistic galleries and attended music concerts of Bach, Beethoven, and Schubert: “When the music sets in I forget the cry of the man who died helplessly between the trenches”. Everything in wartime society seemed new and refreshing after his recent experiences – books, but also the comfortable lodging conditions of the home where he lived, including the care of a hostess, a warm bath, and a comfortable bed. Toller made trips to the nearby Bavarian lakes, where nature, through beauty and tranquillity, offered him relief from the worst of his recent war experiences. In keeping with this need to suppress the memory of war, moreover, he avoided the news: ‘The War? The word overshadows my eyes. Since weeks I have not read any newspapers anymore; I want to know or hear nothing about the war.’⁴⁴⁶

Uprooted by the war Toller also experienced in Munich a desperate urge to know more about what he calls the “secret” and “law” and “meaning” of things.⁴⁴⁷ It was for this reason that he attended the university with a great “hunger for knowledge”, attracted by the “particular”, though searching for “the general”.⁴⁴⁸ He attended various courses with a variety of themes, although mostly juridical and literary ones. Christa Hempel-Küter and Hans-Harald Müller have shown that his study plan contained seminars in German philology with Friedrich von der Leyen (1873-1966), Fritz Strich (1882-1963), and the historian of art, Franz Muncker.⁴⁴⁹ Though these lectures betray a heightened

Leed, ‘Fateful Memories’ in: Ibid. 90; Rosie Grafenburg, *Prelude to the Past: The Autobiography of a Woman* (New York, 1934) 79.

⁴⁴³ Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 251; Remarque, *Im Westen Nichts Neues*, where Paul takes a similar attitude.

⁴⁴⁴ Grafenburg, *Prelude to the Past*, 79.

⁴⁴⁵ Charles Edmund Carrington (1897-1990), British historian and a soldier in World War I, quoted from: Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 12.

⁴⁴⁶ Toller, *GW*, IV, 75-76; Zuckmayer records music and other things in the *Heimat* as “extacy” after the war experience, see his *Stuck*, 278-9.

⁴⁴⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 74.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.; professors like Friedrich von Müller and Richard Willstätter record the enthusiastic spirit of former war participants in their memoirs, “willing and desperate”, as Von Müller writes, to return to *intellectual work again*, see: Bruch and Müller (eds.), *Universität München* 153, 204; on the will to study after the war experience again, see also: Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 283-284.

⁴⁴⁹ Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 86.

interest in literature since the experience of war, equally noted by Hempel-Küter and Müller,⁴⁵⁰ they do not seem to have left specific traces on Toller's mind, however, with the possible exception of Von Leyen's seminar on *The German Press and German Education* which may have stimulated Toller's interest in the role of the public press.⁴⁵¹

A course of art history by Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) on the German Renaissance painters Dürer and Holbein made more impression on Toller.⁴⁵² Wölfflin, author of the well-known *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst* (Principles of Art History: The Problem of Style Development in Modern Art, 1915) and often considered as the father of historical formalism in art, was an imposing figure in Munich's academic establishment and a very popular lecturer for his pioneering use of twin projectors.⁴⁵³ His notions of Renaissance art, putting man in the centre of the universe, must have had a strong appeal for Toller and his generation which had hoped for a renaissance of the world itself. Wölfflin's emphasis on the supremacy of emotions, and his use of the methods and concepts of cultural history and psychology in the judgement of works of art, surpassing all conventional intellectualism, may have touched Toller's religious mind and strengthened the idea that explanations were perhaps not simply to be found in what one saw.⁴⁵⁴ It is an attractive thought that Wölfflin's seminar deepened Toller's sense, based on his experience at the front, that the essence – and meaning – of things lies in some higher realm. Yet the seminar did not offer Toller the light he was so desperately searching for at this time, so that “the general, that I seek, remains hidden for me”.⁴⁵⁵

In his autobiography Toller writes that he established contact with “friends” in Munich, including a girlfriend, but he does not mention any names. Dove suggests that this girlfriend was Grete Lichtenstein, but it is difficult to trace the source on which he relies.⁴⁵⁶ Toller also writes that he esteemed contact with these “friends”,⁴⁵⁷ which might

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid. 87-88.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. 91.

⁴⁵² Toller, *GW*, IV, 74; on Wölfflin, see: Conrad Fiedler, *Heinrich Wölfflin* (1994);

⁴⁵³ Bertha Badt-Strauss, “Studententage in München, 1912-1913” and Julie Meyer-Frank, “Erinnerungen an meine Studienzeit” in: Lamm, *Vergange Tage*, 197 resp. 216; Bertha Badt-Strauss in: Bruch and Müller (eds.), *Universität München*, 283.

⁴⁵⁴ Meyer-Frank, “Erinnerungen” in: Ibid. 216.

⁴⁵⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 74.

⁴⁵⁶ Dove, *He was a German*, 27. It is not impossible that this girlfriend was Sophie Steinhaus instead; in any case, if indeed we are dealing with Lichtenstein, as Dove writes, then her father might have been

point to intimate contacts and sincere horizontal bonds of fraternal community.⁴⁵⁸ Most of these bonds, as we shall later see, were moulded by the “secret” of the war, and centred on the need to find new values in a world that had been severely uprooted by the war.

One of these “friends” was the Berlin sculptor Kurt Kroner (1885-1929), who made a bust of Toller in 1916 so that they must have met during the course of that year still.⁴⁵⁹ Having lodgings close to Toller’s in this period,⁴⁶⁰ he shared with Toller a deeper need for religious knowledge since his early youth. According to his elder (and only) brother, the neo-Kantian philosopher and editor of the magazine *Logos*, Richard Kroner (1884-1974), Kurt was a “stormy, passionate and in essence wretched nature and genius” who at an early age was influenced by the work of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and attracted by the unconscious forces of life, “which made him a lonely and somewhat dark man, albeit passionately devoted to the Godly which he carried as his personal secret inside himself.”⁴⁶¹ He was “a passionately religious man, but in conformity with the age in which he lived, his faith was not bound by any positive religion”.⁴⁶² Born and raised in an assimilated Jewish family from Breslau, he had tried to adapt his religious needs to a Christian environment, though free from all forms of dogma. As a student from 1904 to 1909, he cherished the wish for absolute truth and a better understanding of the Godly essence, which was not fulfilled by his study of medicine in Lausanne, Breslau, Freiburg im Breisgau, and Munich. It had driven him to northern Italy, where he had spent time in a monastic cloister in Porto

Max Lichtenstein, a local doctor and dentist who lived in the Eiselzstrasse 21-T, see: Handelskammer München (HkM) (ed.), *Adreßbuch für München und Umgebung 1917, hergestellt nach dem Stande vom 31. Okt 1916* (Munich, 1917).

⁴⁵⁷ Toller, GW, IV, 75.

⁴⁵⁸ Toller also had a relative residing in Munich, in the Klenzestrasse 41-II, e.g. Else (Rosalie) Toller, a sister of Willy Toller and daughter of Josephine and Max Toller from Memmingen (chapter 2, footnote 1; chapter 5, footnote 10). As the only relative in town (who also had warm thoughts about Toller), we may assume that Toller took up contact with her after his arrival in Munich and it may have been in this way that he also met Netty Katzenstein, Else’s cousin and an intimate friend of Toller by 1918 (chapter 2, footnote 1). See: HkM (ed.), *Adressbuch* (1917); HStAM, IV, *Personalakte Willy Toller*.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ausstellung* (1928), no pagenumbers, here No. 63: “Ernst Toller” (1916); a picture of the bust is printed in: Oscar Walzer, *Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft. 2: Deutsche Dichtung von Gottsched bis zur Gegenwart*, Part II (Wildpark-Potsdam, 1930) 362; see also: Distl, *Toller*, 24, footnote 6, who also points to that picture.

⁴⁶⁰ Since December 1916 Toller lived in the Amalienstrasse 44/III (see: footnote 2 of this chapter); Kroner lived in the Amalienstrasse 74/I, see: HkM (ed.), *Adressbuch* (1917). The address book records the situation of 1916.

⁴⁶¹ Richard Kroner, quoted in: Asmus, *Kroner*, 54.

⁴⁶² Ibid. 12-13; on Kroner, see also: Otto Grautoff, *Kurt Kroner* (Berlin 1929); Thieme-Becker, *Künstlerlexikon*, XXI (1927) 576; Vollmer, *Künstlerlexikon*, III (1956) 124; Hanns Martin Elster, “Kurt Kroner” in: *Die Horen*, IV (1928/29) 321-333; *Ausstellung* (1928). Interestingly enough, Otto Grautoff

Fino. When he returned, he came across the work of the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), crucial in his choice to become a sculptor.⁴⁶³ In that profession he sublimated his religious feelings into his artistic creativity, the only thing, as Richard Kroner writes, that could temper his religious needs and search for God: “His work”, relying heavily on religious symbolism and thematic, “was therefore a real salvation for [Kurt], without which he would have suffocated inside.”⁴⁶⁴ At the outbreak of World War I, this romantic irrationalist lived in Italy, where he stayed until May 1915, when Italy decided to fight on the Allied side of the war. Now Kroner returned to Munich and served at the headquarters of Prince Leopold of Bavaria Regiment that was stationed at the Russian-German frontlines in the East,⁴⁶⁵ although it is not clear whether he served as a soldier or doctor in that regiment. For unknown reasons he was dismissed from active service in 1916, after which he re-settled in Munich. Eight years Toller’s senior, it seems likely that he also shared with Toller a discontent with the war experience, besides his need for religion.

In the light of this friendship, it is perhaps not too surprising that Toller modelled the profession of his alter ego in *Die Wandlung* on a sculptor. When Friedrich is released from war, he feels doubt about the moral character of war but nonetheless sets himself to the construction of a heroic statue to symbolize the victory of the fatherland.⁴⁶⁶ In order to banish the human cast of his idealism from his mind, he seeks to convince himself of its righteousness by this statue. Dwelling on heroic images of war, he aims at “a statue with over-immense dimensions, a naked man, completely muscled” and who is “clenching his fist”, the exact opposite of the “neurotic” self that war had made of Toller in reality.⁴⁶⁷ In the light of the recent war experience, however, it is impossible to present

was the father of Christiane Grautoff, Toller’s third wife, see: Grautoff, *Die Göttin und ihr Sozialist*, 8.

⁴⁶³ Elster, “Kroner” in: *Die Horen*, 327.

⁴⁶⁴ Richard Kroner, quoted in: Asmus, *Kroner*, 12-13.

⁴⁶⁵ Elster, “Kroner” in: *Die Horen*, 327; Kroner’s regiment was probably the Third Bavarian Field-Artillery-Regiment “Prinz Leopold” from Munich, although it may have theoretically also been the Seventh Bavarian Infantry-Regiment “Prinz Leopold” from Bayreuth.

⁴⁶⁶ On the need to construct a statue to give sense to soldiers’ ideals, see also: Schulte, “Kollwitz’ Opfer” in: *Ibid.*, *Die Verkehrte Welt des Krieges*, esp. 127; Ulrich Linse, ““Saatfrüchte sollen nicht vermahlen werden!” Zur Resymbolisierung des Soldatentods” in: Vondung (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis*, 262-274.

⁴⁶⁷ Toller, *GW*, II, 35. The “man of the fist”, denounced in Heinrich Mann’s essay “Geist und Tat” (1910), is a metaphor of the opposite of the humanity ideal propagated by activist Expressionism; it is likely that Toller knew that essay by the summer of 1917, when he began to write *Die Wandlung*; on the antagonism between manly strength and neurosis, see: Lerner, “Psychiatry and Casualties of War” and George L. Mosse, “Shell-shock as a Social Disease” in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35/1, 13-29 resp. 101-108; E. Showalter, *The Female Maledy: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1890* (New York, 1985) 167-194; Lerner, *Hysterical Men*; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 61-63.

‘war’ as ‘victory’, which explains why he has difficulties constructing the statue. When his old “friend” comes in and asks him whether he still has doubt, he replies that he does not so much doubt the existence of *a* fatherland but wonders whether there is not something *more*, something “higher” than that. Puzzling with the internal contradiction of a war in which enemies are created “arbitrarily”,⁴⁶⁸ he thus wonders whether his utopianism is possible within the frame of patriotism. He refuses to give in to that doubt, however, as it means re-alignment with Ahaseurus, the guide and symbol of his restless and lonely pre-war past.⁴⁶⁹ In so doing, he clings to his statue to revive rather than to commemorate a lost dream.⁴⁷⁰

Civil Rights in No Man’s Land (1916-1917)

Accordingly, Toller’s life in Munich was characterised by the attempt to suppress the reality of war and to stick to his former idealism. Yet it was precisely at the home front where that idealism was undermined. Toller does not record the impact of the social situation in Munich in his autobiography, but it is clear from *Die Wandlung* that he must have been deeply disillusioned by the deceitfulness of his communitarian idealism after his release from war.

In the previous chapters we have already seen that World War I from the beginning gave rise to xenophobia, directed against either internal enemies like spies and other traitors or against the enemy itself, denigrated in aggressive publications at the home front. This need for an “enemy” increased during the war itself, when it turned out to be impossible to fight a short war and when the war increased its toll upon the life of the German population. Socio-economic discontent was crucial in that development, most clearly experienced by an increasing lack of food. The government had already started food rationing in 1914, but this did not prevent rising prices and stagnating incomes from leaving many people increasingly short of food. The allied blockade and bad harvests strengthened that tendency and led to a worsening of the quality of food as well. In March 1916 the food situation was the subject of an extensive internal discussion within the SPD and in May 1916 the War Food Provisions Office was created

⁴⁶⁸ Toller, *GW*, II, 35.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ On the relation between memorials and mourning, see: Winter, *Sites of Memory*.

to further rationalise the food supply. In June 1916 food demonstrations in the centre of Munich led to battles between mostly lower class rioting women and the army. Mounting casualty figures contributed to the declining public morale.⁴⁷¹ The state was aware of this, and perhaps also worried, but did not yet seem alarmed.⁴⁷² However, in the winter of 1916/17 the situation worsened due to an extremely hard winter during which there was not enough coal to keep people warm. When the potato supply ended, there were only turnips (*Dotschen*), which hit the population hard as a whole.⁴⁷³ Even in bourgeois families, like that of Thomas Mann, one was now always “hungry”.⁴⁷⁴ Illegal trade and usury began to flourish as a consequence of price fixing and confiscation by the government and led to conflicts and riots in Munich, and between the town and its countryside.⁴⁷⁵ It joined hands with an increase of anti-Prussian sentiment and hatred toward “Germany” – how closely loss of patriotic enthusiasm was related to the misery caused by lack of food is well expressed by the German economist Lujo Brentano (1844-1931) who wrote that one now often sang *Dotschland, Dotschland über Alles*.⁴⁷⁶

Socio-economic discomfort increased social tensions not only between the state and the population, but also between the population and the Jews. Although first signs of anti-Semitism were already noticed during the winter of 1915-16, it did not radicalise until after Verdun.⁴⁷⁷ Jews, associated with capitalism and modernity, were not merely

⁴⁷¹ On the food problem and its rationalisation, see: Gerald D. Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany 1914-1918* (Princeton, 1966) 45-52; Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 39-40, 40-47; overall Munich lost 13,725 soldiers by death, see: Nipperday, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1866-1918*, I, 850; Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 36

⁴⁷² The Prussian War Ministry reported in its monthly assessment of domestic conditions in September 1916: “Without being an alarmist one can say that the bulk of the population is weary of the war”, quoted from: Peter Jelavich, “German Culture in the Great War” in: Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (eds.), *European Culture in the Great War: The arts, entertainment, and propaganda, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1999) 36.

⁴⁷³ Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 47; Karl-Ludwig Ay, *Die Entstehung einer Revolution. Die Volksstimmung in Bayern während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Berlin, 1968) 26-29; on the turnip winter and coal shortages, see also: Thierry Bouzon and Belinda Davis, “Feeding the Cities” and Armin Triebel, “Coal and the Metropolis” in: Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919* (Cambridge, 1997) 305-341, 324, 336, resp. 342-373.

⁴⁷⁴ Mann, *In meinem Elternhaus*, 64.

⁴⁷⁵ Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 40-47; on the hunger riots, see Willy Albrecht, *Landtag und Regierung in Bayern am Vorabend der Revolution von 1918* (Berlin, 1968) 147-153, 238-242, 326-331, 343-348; Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, 342; on tension between home and countryside, see also: Meyer-Frank, “Erinnerungen” in: Lamm, *Vergange Tage*, 212.

⁴⁷⁶ Lujo Brentano, quoted from: Geyer, *Verkehrte welt*, 47; on Prussian hatred, see: Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, 272; on the critique to the authority of the state, see: Bouzon and Davis, “Feeding the Cities” in: Winter/Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War*, 38.

⁴⁷⁷ Eva G. Reichmann, ‘Der Bewusstseinswandel der deutschen Juden’ in: Werner Mosse and Arnold Pauckner (eds.), *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution, 1916-1923* (Tübingen, 1971) 511-612; Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik und die Juden*, 516-567; Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 174-194.

accused of hoarding and profiteering, but of evading the draft as well. On 11 October 1916 the Prussian War Minister Adolf Wild von Hohenborn (1860-1925), pushed by an anti-Semitic lobby (and supported by the higher officers corps), issued an order to all military commands to carry out an investigation of the levels of Jewish participation in military service.⁴⁷⁸ As this notorious *Juden­zählung* or Jew census created a huge protest, and not only from individual Jews and Jewish organisations, the government decided to drop its publication, but now speculation took over from statistics and – as Saul Friedländer argues – possibly damaged the position of the German Jews more than publication of the statistical material would have done, since it clearly showed the Jewish effort during the war.⁴⁷⁹

Treated as second rank citizens, Jews experienced the *Zählung* as a shock.⁴⁸⁰ Although at times the war also granted better prospects for Jews in army and society, it made very clear that civil equality for Jews in German society was an illusion. For many Jews it was a turning point in their lives, especially for many young Jewish soldiers who had risked their lives for a state that now questioned their loyalty. It not only strengthened a new Jewish self-consciousness, but also a more positive valuation of Jewish identity.⁴⁸¹ The number of young Jews who interchanged assimilationist for Zionist aspirations is well known, including Ernst Simon (1899-1988) who writes that the census convinced him for the first time in his life of the need for a brotherhood of Jews.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁸ On the census, see: Zechlin, *Politik*, 529-533; T. Angress, 'The German Army's "Juden­zählung" of 1916: Genesis – Consequences – Significance' in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXIII (1980) 117-135; Stephen Magill, *Defense and Introspection. The First World War as a Pivotal Crisis in the German Jewish Experience* (Ann Arbor, 1977) 256-286; Saul Friedländer, 'Die Politischen Veränderungen der Kriegszeit und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Judenfrage' in: Mosse/Pauckner (eds.), *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution*, 27-76; Hoffmann, "Jewish Community" in: Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization*, 98; Jelavich, "German Culture", and Aviel Roshwald, "Jewish Cultural Identity in Eastern and Central Europe during the Great War" in: Roshwald/Stites (eds.), *European Culture in the Great War*, 36 resp. 103; Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 87-96; Jakob Segall, *Die deutschen Juden als Soldaten im Kriege, 1914-1918. Eine statistische Studie* (Berlin, 1922)

⁴⁷⁹ Friedländer, 'Politischen Veränderungen' in: Mosse/Pauckner (ed.), *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution*, 27-76; on support from non-Jews, see: Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 87-96, here 90-1.

⁴⁸⁰ Arthur Stern, *In bewegter Zeit. Erinnerungen und Gedanken eines jüdischen Nervenarztes. Berlin-Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, 1968), 71-2; Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 92; Hoffmann, "Jewish Community" in: Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization*, 98-102.

⁴⁸¹ On the search for a this new consciousness of Jewish identity, see: Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 20; Shulamit Volkov, "The Dynamics of Dissimilation: *Ostjuden* and German Jews" in: Reinharz/Schatzberg (eds.), *The Jewish Response to German Culture*, 212; Paul Mendes Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven, London, 1999) 22, 56-58; Stern, *In Bewegter Zeit*, 73, 86-89.

⁴⁸² Ernst Simon, quoted from: Hoffmann, "Jewish Community" in: Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization*, 102. Historians often also point to the revival and reinforcement of anti-Jewish stereotypes through contact of soldiers at the eastern front with traditional forms of Jewish life, something often conveyed in war memoirs, but such stereotypes were possibly also strengthened by the presence of

No detailed study exists of the rise of anti-Semitism in Munich during the war, but there is little doubt that it increased both at a popular and an educated level. It was the latter which was specifically worrying to Toller, as it excluded him from those areas where he sought recognition. Conservatives and *völkisch* members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* already exploited the myth of a racial antithesis between Jews and Germans before the war, but it was only after 1916 that their ideas could count on a growing sympathy in academic environments. In this context Toller's encounter with the social reality of the *Heimat* undermined his last, saving reality after his disillusion with the war experience itself.⁴⁸³ As Jews were called profiteers, sacrificial aims for the fatherland were inverted.⁴⁸⁴ It might therefore be argued that Toller was perhaps less hurt by anti-Semitism per se than by this implicit assault on his war effort, which possibly created a sense of betrayal.

In *Die Wandlung* Toller recalls how anti-Semitism destroyed his alter ego's 'victory' through war. Although Friedrich has formally acquired civil rights, he does not possess the racial kinship and bonds of consanguinity that turn out to be the criterion for his admission into a post-war German *Gemeinschaft*. He is informed about this by the one who is closest to him and the symbol of the *Heimat*: his girlfriend, Gabriele. The two had plans to get married, but Gabriele's father does not approve of this. Without explanation, the man has made clear that he would feel obliged to turn his back upon his daughter in case of marriage. Although Gabriele loves Friedrich and wishes "that he be the father of her children", her father owns a piece of 'native' soil (*Scholle*). She explains

Ostjuden in Munich itself. During the war the number of *Ostjuden* increased because of pogroms in Russia and Poland, and most of them worked in the war industry, which in Munich was largely concentrated around Krupp which had founded an important branch there in 1916. On the confrontation with the *Ostjuden* during World War I, see: Reichmann, "Bewusstseinswandel" in: Mosse/Pauckner (eds.), *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution*, 511-612; Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison, 1982) 139-184, 215-252; Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers. East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (New York, 1987) 5-6, 202-203; Sander Gilman 'The Rediscovery of the Eastern Jews in the East, 1890-1918' in: David Bronson (ed), *Jews and Germans from 1860 to 1933: The Problematic Symbioses*. (Heidelberg, 1979) 338-365; Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 199; on the impact of *Ostjuden* in the homeland, see: Canetti, *Gerettete Zunge*, 136-137; on Krupp, see: Lothar Gall (ed), *Krupp im 20. Jahrhundert. Die Geschichte des Unternehmens vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Gründung der Stiftung* (Berlin, 2002); on *Ostjuden* in the German industry, see: Ludger Heid, *Maloche – nicht Mildtätigkeit. Ostjüdische Arbeiter in Deutschland, 1914-1923* (Hildesheim, 1995)

⁴⁸³ Leed, *No Man's Land*, 190; Carl Zuckmayer shares this disappointment about social fragmentation in his *Stuck*, 280.

⁴⁸⁴ On the profiteer as the opposite of the soldierly man of sacrifice, see: Leed, *No Man's Land*, 206-207; Jean-Louis Robert, "The Image of the Profiteer" in: Winter/Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War*, 118-132; on loneliness in the *Heimat*, see: Zuckmayer, *Stuck*, 278-279; Remarque, *Im Westen nichts Neues*.

that she springs from this soil and that a life without ‘roots’ is impossible for her.⁴⁸⁵ Unwilling to accept the end of their relationship, Friedrich points to the fact that he as well possesses a *Scholle*, namely “the immensely great fatherland”, but the *völkisch* tendency in Gabriele’s ideas undermines this argumentation. Left alone, he flees into the aesthetic counter world of his heroic statue to turn his war ideals into a reality after all, although it is clear that this is useless.⁴⁸⁶

Accordingly, Toller found in Munich a “no man’s land” that not merely threw him back to the “no man’s land” of Ahaseurus, but also re-confronted him with the “no man’s land” of the trench.⁴⁸⁷ Stripped of the sense of sacrifice for the fatherland, the war appeared in different light.

In his autobiography he records that he had sought to suppress the memory of war in Munich, but this grew ever more difficult as time went on.⁴⁸⁸ Increasingly aware of the social situation at the home front, and unable to forget the horror of mass slaughter, Toller fell prey to depression. In February he was taken into a local hospital with “psycho-neurotic and depressive disturbances”. His doctor, the Jewish psychiatrist Max Isserlin (1879-1941),⁴⁸⁹ was one of principal researchers of the academic clinic of Munich, one of Germany’s best known institutions in the field of psychiatry, and a pupil and assistant of its director, the well-known psychiatrist Emil Kräpelin (1856-1926). Isserlin, known as a psychologically oriented psychiatrist, worked on a variety of topics, including association therapies and studies of movement and speech in case of bipolar disorder. He shared an interest in psycho-analysis which had begun to attract more attention from neurologists and doctors before the war, although he remained an empirical researcher who accepted contemporary theories of will power in the treatment of neurosis.⁴⁹⁰ During the war he was appointed as a doctor for

⁴⁸⁵ Toller, *GW*, II, 36-37.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 14.

⁴⁸⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 76.

⁴⁸⁹ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Psychiatrisches Gutachten über Ernst Toller*.

⁴⁹⁰ On Isserlin, see: Jutz, *Isserlin*, 12, 14-15, 19; Isserlin, “Psychologische Untersuchungen an Manisch-Depressiven (Assoziationsversuche)” in: *Monatschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie*, 22, No.IV/V/VI (1907) 302-355, 419-442, 509-536; Emil Kräpelin, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, Tokyo, 1983) 135; Friedrich Deich, ‘Jüdische Mediziner in München’ in: Lamm (ed.), *Jüdische Kultur in München*, 311-318; Jan Martinus, “Max Isserlin: Begründer der Kinderpsychiatrie in München” in: *Zeitschrift für Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie und Psychotherapie*, 28, I (2000) 59-62. On his interest in psycho-analysis, see also: Jutz, *Isserlin*, 15-18 and 104-140; Isserlin, “Über Jungs Psychologie der Dementia praecox und die Anwendung Freudscher Forschungsmaximen in der Psychopathologie” in: *Zentralblatt für Nervenheilkunde und Psychiatrie*, 18: 329-343 (1907); Isserlin, “Die psychoanalytische Methode Freuds” in: *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, 1 (1910), 52-80. Isserlin gained a special interest in youth, which would make him especially known as a

soldiers with psychological and nervous diseases in a Munich-based hospital (“L”), a former school.⁴⁹¹ As part of the further rationalisation of war neurosis treatment, his hospital was transformed into a station for brain damaged people in the summer of 1916, at first exclusively for the First Bavarian Army Corps, but then for the whole of Bavaria.⁴⁹² This also explains why Toller ended up with Isserlin. Toller must have been aware of the correlation between his depressions and the war. Formally on holidays since 4 January, he possibly took up contact with Isserlin’s hospital though his own regiment. It is unclear why he did not take up contact with a private clinic at this time, although it seems likely that his choice for a (state) hospital was motivated either by financial reasons or by an awareness of the gravity of his condition.

It is not clear with which methods Toller was treated in Isserlin’s station. In 1917 Isserlin held a presentation, *Über psychische und nervöse Erkrankungen bei Kriegsteilnehmern* (On Psychological and Nervous Diseases among War participants, 1917), which shows that “all kinds of psychotherapeutic methods” were used in his station, including hypnosis (according to Breuer-Freud), application of medication, electroshock therapy (according to Kaufmann), bathing therapies as well as working therapies, then gaining in popularity, whereas “pedagogical and suggestive methods” were applied with the aid of a whole army of professional doctors, physiotherapists and “special school teachers” to strengthen the patients’ will.⁴⁹³ Paul Lerner has shown that all these methods were common since the beginning of 1917, when neurologists and psychologists shifted to a more active kind of treatment to gain greater and more rapid success against a disease which took ever greater forms and caused serious problems to the state.⁴⁹⁴ As Isserlin seems to have treated Toller himself, and Isserlin’s own interest lay in the field of psycho-therapy by association tests and voice analyses.⁴⁹⁵ it is not unlikely that these methods were applied to Toller as well. Of course, one can only speculate on the influence of such therapies. Was

psychiatrist after World War I.

⁴⁹¹ This was the *Ridlerschule*, or Ridler school, see: Jutz, *Isserlin*, 22.

⁴⁹² Ibid. 23.

⁴⁹³ Jutz, *Isserlin*, 22-23; Isserlin, “Über psychische und nervöse Erkrankungen bei Kriegsteilnehmern“ in: *Würzburger Abhandlungen*, 16, No.10-11 (1917), 237-267; on these kinds of methods of ‘active’ treatment, see also: Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 92, 102-113, 113-123.

⁴⁹⁴ Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 124-162, esp. 149-150. War neurosis was often called “war hysteria”, and especially since the end of 1916; a turning point was a special war congress of the Association for psychiatry and the annual meeting of the German Neurological Association from 21-23 September 1916, the largest and most significant wartime meeting of psychiatrists and neurologists, where the general acceptance was that war neuroses were hysterical reactions, see: Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 67-74, 74-79.

⁴⁹⁵ Jutz, *Isserlin*, 24-25; also: Martinius, “Isserlin ” in: *Zeitschrift für Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie*

Toller alerted to the importance of speech as a means of giving expression to his deeper, psycho-social problems? In other words: did Isserlin persuade him of the need to create a language to give expression to his war experiences? In the light of Toller's shift to a more active commitment to the production of poetry after his treatment in April 1917, the latter is an attractive thought indeed.⁴⁹⁶

Toller records his mental breakdown in *Die Wandlung*. After Gabriele has ended the relationship with the protagonist, Friedrich clings to his heroic statue and receives a visit by a couple that is victimized by war. The woman is stricken with sores on her hands, caused by sexual contamination with venereal disease from her husband after his return from the front. Like Friedrich, this man fought in the colonies. Once a handsome man, he is equally stricken with sores; his face is torn, his hands have been substituted by artificial ones and his memory is gone.⁴⁹⁷ Hesitant to approach this man, Toller's alter ego nonetheless walks out to this faceless man, who turns out to be a comrade with whom he had undertaken his perilous mission in war. They had split up, although the man cannot remember that undertaking anymore. To him the defence of the Fatherland has lost all meaning.⁴⁹⁸ Haunted by the sight of the seemingly senseless suffering, Friedrich destroys his statue in an act of despair – with that he destroys his idealism for the Fatherland.

Desperate he calls out for Ahaseurus, the symbol of his restless past, but unable to accept regression he prefers to take a gun.⁴⁹⁹ In this situation, then, only a revolution of the spirit, or *Geist*-revolution, is able to save Friedrich.⁵⁰⁰

und Psychotheraphie, 59-62.

⁴⁹⁶ So far no (indepth) research has been done on the relation between Expressionism and the problem of war neurosis, or – more specific – on the relation between psychological treatment and creative forms of expression, although many Expressionists fell pray to war neurosis and knew about its methods of treatment. An exception to this relationship, although from a negative frame of prejudice, is the study of Hanz Prinzhorn (1886-1933), *Artistry of the mentally ill: A Contribution to the Psychology and the Psychopathology of Configuration*. (Wien, New York, 1995) [1922].

⁴⁹⁷ Toller develops the theme of sexual mutilation as the source of human suffering in *Hinkemann* (1923), where impotence prevents the quest for the absolute happiness of mankind, see: Toller, *GW*, II, 191-274; on the problem of venereal disease during World War I, see: Catherine Rollet, "The 'Other War'", I: Protecting Public Health" in: Winter/Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War*, esp. 446-449.

⁴⁹⁸ On the "man without the face" as a man without identity, see: Ulrich, "...Als wenn nichts geschehen wäre" in: Hirschfeld etc. (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..."*, esp.140-143; on men with "broken faces" as men without identities, see also: Jay Winter: "Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War" in: Ibid. and Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1999) 40-60, here 48.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid. 39.

⁵⁰⁰ On *Geist*-revolution as the essence of Toller's *Wandlung*, see: Franz Norbert Mennemeier, "Das idealistische Proletariendrama: Ernst Tollers Weg vom Aktionsstück zur Tragödie" in: Hermand (ed.), *Zu Ernst Toller*, 78.

Community and Geist-Revolution

[1917]

Arthur Kutscher's Seminar (Summer 1917)

When Toller was treated for depressive disturbances in Isserlin's clinic, Germany entered a new phase in war. On 6 April 1917 the United States decided to participate in war, provoked by the German unrestricted submarine-warfare, which not merely sought to run the British sea blockade, but also civilian transports to the United Kingdom.⁵⁰¹ It not merely strengthened the character of war in terms of a *world* war, but also gave a strong impetus to the struggle for democracy, especially when the Russians decided for an immediate end to war after revolution had broken out in February 1917, and revolutionary forces deposed the autocratic regime of Tsar Nicolas II.

In this context pressure for democratic reform in Germany increased. Under the threat of the Russian revolution, Reich chancellor Bethmann Hollweg had already persuaded the Kaiser to proclaim a message on Easter 1917 with the promise of a "revision" of Prussian suffrage after the war, known as the so called "Easter message" (*Osterbotschaft*). In order not to immediately antagonize conservative and right wing circles, the chancellor had decided for the moment only upon the formation of an inter-fractional commission to explore the possibility of constitutional reforms. However, the news of political reform was enough to unleash a whole series of strikes in April 1917, which united in Berlin alone some 200,000 workers in about 300 enterprises, though mostly munitions factories.⁵⁰² Rooted in socio-economic discontent, aggravated by upcoming bread rations, these strikes soon turned into mass protests against the war. In this context the SPD's left wing and pacifist section also increased its demands for

⁵⁰¹ Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 381.

⁵⁰² Ibid. 381-382; Jürgen Kocka, *Facing Total War: German Society, 1914-1918* (Leamington, 1984) 49; working class women were dominant in the April strikes, subject to hardship after their husbands had been sent to the front, see: Frevert, *Women in German History*, 153-154, 166-167.

peace; when the party's majority openly choose to support the state in upholding war, it led to a schism and directly there after to the foundation of an Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) in April 1917.⁵⁰³ While the SPD continued under the leadership of Friedrich Ebert, the USPD was led by Hugo Haase (1863-1919), a pacifist lawyer of Jewish confession.

As Dieter Distl rightly notes, Toller seems to have had little notion of these developments.⁵⁰⁴ Though he may well have heard of them, he was weary of politics and pacifism. Too much occupied with his own problems, his interests primarily lay with literature and the need to come to terms with both the trauma of war and its aftermath of depression.

In this struggle a positive twist emerged when he returned to Munich University in April 1917 and decided to attend a seminar on German literature by Arthur Kutscher (1878-1960), entitled *Übungen in literarischer Kritik und deutsche Stilübungen* (Practicing Literary Criticism and German Style). Kutscher, who had served at the front as an infantry man and was released on the grounds of a damaged knee, was well-known for his “modern” contacts in the artistic and literary circles of Mother Schwabing.⁵⁰⁵ His best friends included the poet Karl Henckell (1864-1929) and the playwrights Frank Wedekind and Max Halbe (1865-1944).⁵⁰⁶ In his “revolutionary” and immensely popular seminar he paid attention to all arts, although he displayed a special preference for poetry and drama.⁵⁰⁷ Kutscher's aim was to bring modern ideas and techniques to the attention of his students, which included the so called “station”-technique that was developed by Strindberg in such plays as *To Damascus*, *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata*. Often he took his pupils to the theatre, following which they would have to write critiques. Some students were also invited in a room of a local hotel, where they were introduced to the epitomes of the Munich artistic and literary scene, presenting their work in the form of readings.⁵⁰⁸ It is for this reason that the café-*Literat* and self-styled

⁵⁰³ David W. Morgan, *The Socialist Left and the German Revolution: a history of the German Independent Social Democratic Party, 1917-1922* (Ithaca, 1975)

⁵⁰⁴ Distl, Toller, 23.

⁵⁰⁵ Toller, GW, IV, 74; on Kutscher, see: Arthur Kutscher, *Kriegstagebuch. Namur – St. Quetin – Petit Morin – Reims – Winterschlacht in der Champagne* (Munich, 1915) Part I; *ibid*, *Der Theaterprofessor: Ein Leben für die Wissenschaft vom Theater* (Munich, 1960); Herbert Günther Düsseldorf (ed.), *Arthur Kutscher. Festschrift zu seinem 75. Geburtstage*. (Bremen, 1953); Kutscher records that he had 800 students in the winter semester of 1918/19, see: Kutscher, *Theaterprofessor*, 72, 128.

⁵⁰⁶ Toller, GW, IV, 74; Kutscher, *Theaterprofessor*, 64, 58.

⁵⁰⁷ Artur Kutscher, *Die Ausdruckskunst der Bühne. Grundriß und Bausteine zum neuen Theater* (Leipzig, 1910); Kutscher, *Theaterprofessor*, 84.

⁵⁰⁸ Kutscher, *Theaterprofessor*, 81-84.

anarchist Erich Mühsam, a frequent guest of these meetings, called them a particular “breeding ground of the Schwabinger spirit”.⁵⁰⁹ Kutscher records the privileged character of these meetings, “only” granted to pupils “who had proven themselves as worthy through papers and discussions, and who were all invited by me”. He included Toller to his “dearest and most talented pupils”,⁵¹⁰ so that Toller was allowed to join these selective meetings with the icons of the local bohème: “Thomas Mann, Karl Henckell, Max Halbe read from their works,” he writes, and “Frank Wedekind sings his lovely diabolical ballads in raw staccato.”⁵¹¹ Kutscher also introduced his students to Expressionist works, including that of the future Nazi Hanns Johst (1890-1940), an ex-soldier who then was still a pacifist. Johst read at a meeting in July 1917 from his then brand new play, *Der Einsame: Ein Menschenuntergang* (The Lonely One: Decline and Fall of a Human Being, 1917), not performed in Germany until after the revolution in 1918. The play, dwelling on the influence of Wedekind and the theme of generational revolt, is about an uprooted youth, at odds with the values of their fathers and guided by their own, inner experiences.⁵¹² It need not surprise, of course, that this thematic appealed to Toller.

Toller was enthusiastic about Kutscher’s seminar.⁵¹³ It not only introduced him to the fashionable trends in literature, but it also enabled him to exchange ideas with some of the great names of the Munich avant-garde. Besides Mann, Henckell, Halbe, Wedekind and Johst, these names included Erich Mühsam, who later joined sides with Toller during the Council Republic in 1919. At times also quite dominant, Mühsam was close to the students and often joined them on their visits to the theatre.⁵¹⁴ According to the student and ex-soldier Alfons Hartmann, who knew Toller (possibly through Kutscher’s seminar), Toller not merely frequented local literary circles at this time, but he also had “quite a lot of contact” with Mühsam.⁵¹⁵ Yet it seems unlikely that contact between Toller and Mühsam was profound. Hartmann gives his statement in a police

⁵⁰⁹ Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen*, 138.

⁵¹⁰ Kutscher, *Theaterprofessor*, 81, 83.

⁵¹¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 74.

⁵¹² On Johst in July 1917, see: Kutscher, *Theaterprofessor*, 72-3, 131, 134; on the play, see: Hanns Johst, *Der Einsame. Ein Menschenuntergang* (Munich, 1925); Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*, 55-56; Horst Denkler, “Hanns Johst” in: Rothe (ed.), *Expressionismus als Literatur*, 555-556; on Johst, see: Rolf Dürstberg, *Hanns Johst: “Der Barde der SS”. Karrieren eines deutschen Dichters* (Paderborn, 2004).

⁵¹³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 74-75.

⁵¹⁴ Kutscher, *Theaterprofessor*, 129-130; Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen*, 138-140.

⁵¹⁵ StA Munich, 15591, *Brief (228) der Stadtkommandantur*, 21.5.1919. Kurt Kroner, moreover, had met Mühsam already before the war in Switzerland (Ascona?), although his relationship to him in Munich is unclear, see: Elster, “Kroner” in: *Die Horen*, 321-333.

report from 1919, when Toller and Mühsam were already associated with each other for their political actions in the Council Republic, but they had very different temperaments and ideas in reality, and they were never close during the Republic. Nor do they record each other in their own memoirs. Mühsam, moreover, was known for his radical political ideas (which was often ground for dispute between him and Kutscher) and he had openly propagated pacifist ideas in his magazine *Kain* (which for that reason was prohibited in 1916), but Toller was at this time not politically interested and, unlike Mühsam, did not associate himself with pacifism. As we have seen, Mühsam had also founded a local branch of Landauer's *Sozialistische Bund* before the war, but Toller seems to have remained outside this political network. Oscar Maria Graf (1894-1967) records that the circle had fallen in disarray during the war, but a core was still present when he returned to Munich in 1916 after he was dismissed from war. Graf, impressed by Landauer's *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* since 1912, also writes that he only met Toller in February 1918, and in different circumstances, so that it seems unlikely that he was part of this anarcho-socialist group.⁵¹⁶ Thus Toller and Mühsam knew each other, and they seem to have had regular contact with each other, but their relationship was little profound, and cultural in orientation.

More important than "contact" with Mühsam, was Toller's relation to various literarily interested students whom he met during Kutscher's seminar. These students included Otto Zarek (1898), a Berlin born Jew from Russian parents who studied since 1917 at the University of Munich, and Eugen Roth (1895-1976), an German ex-soldier of Jewish bourgeois descent who gained some fame as a poet in Germany after the war. Both Zarek and Roth record that they were friends of Toller.⁵¹⁷ Roth was also a friend of the sculptor Fritz Claus, who is recorded by Toller himself as a "dear friend" for whom he also wrote a poem in April 1917, entitled "Nacht im Priesterwald" (A Night in the Priesterwald, 1917). As Claus was a sculptor, a link to Kroner is well possible, although Toller's poem and his friendship with Roth equally point to the likelihood that he visited Kutscher's seminar as well. Both Claus and the blond-haired Roth were ex-soldiers. Heavily wounded, Roth had been released from war. In his memoirs Arthur Kutscher also includes Zarek among his "dearest and most talented pupils",⁵¹⁸ so that he must

⁵¹⁶ Graf, *Wir sind Gefangene*, 342; Georg Bollenbeck, *Oscar Maria Graf. Mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten dargestellt* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1985) 56.

⁵¹⁷ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Zeugenaussage Eugen Roth*; Otto Zarek, *German Odyssey* (London, 1941) 85.

⁵¹⁸ Kutscher, *Theaterprofessor*, 81, 83.

have been part of the intimate settings of his seminar, but it seems likely that he also invited the then twenty year old Roth, who was an ambitious young writer who wrote a Strindberg-oriented drama for Kutscher in the summer of 1917, entitled *Die Gespensteretüde: Ein dramatischer Abweg* (The Study of Ghosts: A Dramatic Downfall, 1917).⁵¹⁹

I believe that Toller records Roth in his autobiography as the energetic student he calls “Weiß” (and thus through his interchanging of the colors “Weiß”, e.g. white, and “Rot(h)”, red), who wrote “twelve poems a day, sometimes even fifteen” – “Goethe, he says, had attained eighty volumes; he hopes to reach a quarter of a thousand”. This student, Toller records, stimulated him in his writing of poems, so that his tiny collection could soon boast “thousands of manuscripts of poems”.⁵²⁰ Zarek, invited to read some of these poems, records that Toller was scornful of a purely aesthetic poetry; poetry had to confront the issues of the day, he believed, and in times of war this could only be the war itself.⁵²¹ It is important to note, however, that his was not a confrontation with the war in political terms, but rather one in moral terms that sought to give sense to its sufferings through a re-symbolisation of sacrifice. This notion is clearly expressed in the abovementioned poem which he dedicated to Claus.⁵²²

Interestingly enough, Roth was connected to the *Werkschar*, a local literary circle of students which was founded in 1916. Besides Roth, the circle included Walter Krüger, Helmuth Gurlitt (who possibly joined Toller as a recruit in Milkertshofen), Richard Reichelt, Robert Wolfgang Wallach and Erich Trummler (1891-1983), the latter who was the circle’s lively centre.⁵²³ A non-political and spiritual community of friends, the

⁵¹⁹ Ibid. 136.

⁵²⁰ Toller, *GW*, IV, 74-75. I was unable to trace the identity of “Weiß”.

⁵²¹ Zarek, *German Odyssey*, 85.

⁵²² On the need to give sense to suffering in war in terms of a mystical ‘re-symbolisation’ of sacrifice, see: Linse, “Saatfrüchte sollen nicht vermahlen werden!” in: Vondung (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis*, 262-274; on its implicit a-political nature, see: Winter, *Sites*, 221.

⁵²³ Linse, *Zurück zur Mutter Erde*, 277-292, esp. 279 and 283. Robert W. Wallach wrote a dissertation, *Über Anwendung und Bedeutung des Wortes Stil* (Munich 1919, defended in Würzburg in September 1919). Erich Trummler wrote a dissertation entitled *Der kranke Hölderlin: Urkunden und Dichtungen aus der Zeit seiner Umnachtung* (Munich 1921) and studied in 1922 at the Shakespeare institute in Birmingham. We know less about Helmuth Gurlitt, but he was possibly a member of Toller’s regiment (see chapter 4). Trummler and Wallach were both war veterans, the latter who published a war diary, entitled *Aus dem Tagebuch eines Kriegsfreiwilligen 1914/15* (Leipzig, 1916). Richard Reichelt, then, wrote a dissertation with the German philologist Franz Muncker (see chapter 6) in Munich, entitled *Geschichte der Ode in der deutschen Dichtung*, which was defended on 8. Juli 1919 and printed in 1921. After the war Trummler migrated to Norway, where he dedicated himself to music and theatre. Roth gives an indirect description of the circle in his dissertation, *Das Gemeinschaftserlebnis des Göttinger Dichterbundes; Ein Beitrag zu Wahrheit und Dichtung des 18. Jahrhunderts*, which he defended in Munich on 3 March 1922 and which was published in 1923.

Werkschar, not to be confused with the later Nazi organisation of the same name, was united by the ideals of cultural rebirth with a special interest in reform of youth education at schools and universities.⁵²⁴ Accordingly they were close to the ideas of Wyneken, which re-gained, as we have seen, popularity among social-reformist and radically inclined sections of the Free German Students' League around Joël, Kohn and Kurella in Berlin. Closely associated with the ideas of Expressionist Activism, we cannot exclude their interest in that movement as well. Like Joël, moreover, who had organised a social-home for poor people in Berlin-Charlottenburg in 1915, members of the *Werkschar* flirted with settlement ideas, although less concrete at this time, while at the same time that flirtation seems to have been somewhat more spiritually inclined. In the summer of 1917, when Toller may thus have already met members of the circle, Trummler and Reichelt toyed with the idea of a religious-communitarian settlement, but they only pushed these ideals further after the failure of Council Republic in 1919. In this they were aided by Johannes Müller, author of the book *Der Krieg als religiöses Erlebnis* (The War as a religious Experience, 1915) and a *Freischar* member in Elmau bei Klais (Upper-Bavaria), where Reichelt was a teacher; plans failed, after which they took up new plans with the aid of the *Wandervogel* in Aschaffenburg (Bavaria), but equally without success. Then Trummler turned to anthroposophy and its founder, Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925).⁵²⁵

Close to the ideas of the Wyneken-inspired social-reformist academic youth movement, moreover, it is quite likely that the *Werkschar* was familiar with Landauer's *Aufruf zum Sozialismus*, widely read among social-reformist students at the time and also closely affiliated with the movement of Activist Expressionism around Kurt Hiller and Joël's *Aufbruch*. However, Roth himself seems to have been more attracted to the equally influential aesthetic notions of rebirth of Stefan George, and the religious-esoteric dimension of the poems which the melancholic Roth published at this time for the *Freischar*'s shortlived magazine, *Das Werkschiff* ('Working-Boat') (which appeared only twice) may be a reflection of this.⁵²⁶

In May 1917 the *Werkschar* members Trummler and Wallach were invited for one of the most celebrated intellectual meetings during World War I, organised by the publisher Diederichs at *Burg Lauenstein* in Thuringia (Baden-Württemberg) to discuss

⁵²⁴ Linse, *Zurück zur Mutter Erde*, 279.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.; DLA, Marburg, Lauensteiner Tagungen, 1917-1918, *Teilnehmerliste*.

⁵²⁶ Linse, *Zurück zur Mutter Erde*, 279.

the “meaning and purpose of the age”.⁵²⁷ As the ideal of the *Burgfrieden* had lost much of its appeal in the course of the war, Diederichs hoped to establish a new common ideal of *Deutschheit*, or Germanness, and unite members of the German cultural elite under the banner of one national flag, although he thereby unintentionally forced the controversies of the age.⁵²⁸ Invited were members from the academic establishment and beyond, and from a variety of directions and disciplines, including the sociologists Max Weber and Ferdinand Tönnies, the pan-German publicist and former Socialist Protestant pastor Max Maurenbrecher (1874-1930), the ethical philosopher Franz Staudinger (1849-1921), the women’s activist Gertrud Bäuml (1873-1954), and the president of the (Anglo-Saxon inspired) German Garden-Town Society (*Deutsche Gartenstadt-Gesellschaft*) Hans Kampffmeyer (1876-1932). As Diederichs’ interest mainly lay with the *Wandervogel* and the academic youth movement, he had also recruited various young people between the age of 24-35, and mostly from the Free Students’ League and Free German Youth Movement, including the abovementioned Trummler and Wallach, Werner Mahrholz, the life-reforming *Freischar*-president Ahlborn, the Worpaweder painter Uphoff, the poet Wilhelm Vershofen (1878-1960), the editor of the left-liberal magazine *März* Theodor Heuß (1884-1863) and, interestingly enough, Toller’s friend, the Berlin sculptor Kroner. The meeting was organized by Diederichs with the aid of Avenarius’ *Dürerbund*, the religiously inclined Comenius-Society (*Comeniusgesellschaft*) and the Patriotic Society 1914 (*Väterlandische Gesellschaft 1914*) from Thuringia, the latter of which was co-founded by Diederichs himself.

According to the protocol of the conference, written by the Dresdner *Kunstwart*-editor Wolfgang Schumann, youth hoped at this conference ‘for concrete guidelines for a political activism of the German spirit (*Geist*)’ and emerged deeply disillusioned when this was not the case.⁵²⁹ In fact, the conference was dominated by a heated debate between Maurenbrecher and Weber, which symbolically anticipated the political schism

⁵²⁷ Hübing, “Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur” in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 265; Hübing, “‘Journalist’ und ‘Literat’” in: Ibid./Mommsen (eds.), *Intellektuelle im deutschen Kaiserreich*, 107-109; Heidler, *Diederichs und seine Welt*, 91-98; on the meeting, see also: Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 162-167.

⁵²⁸ Hübing, “Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur” in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 264, 259-261; see also: Hübing, “Kultur und Wissenschaft” in: *Romantik, Revolution und Reform*, 31.

⁵²⁹ Wolfgang Schumann, *Protocoll*, printed in: Hübing, “Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur” in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 271, on Schumann, who would later join the SPD and was tolerant toward Jews, see: Kratzsch, “*Kunstwart*” in: Mai/Waetzoldt/Wolandt (eds.), *Ideengeschichte und Kunstwissenschaft*, 390; Kratzsch, *Kunstwart und Dürerbund*, 437.

that deeply divided Germany a few months later.⁵³⁰ While the Pan-German life-reformer glorified the sacralisation of the authoritarian German state and called for a revitalisation of the Old Prussian values and the aristocratisation of society through the establishment of a “party of the educated (*Geistigen*)”, Weber propagated the democratisation of that state through a reform of the German suffrage system, and that of Prussia in particular. Rooted in an aristocratic contempt for what he considered the “characterless ‘plebeian’ politicians of the imperial regime”,⁵³¹ Weber was deeply irritated by Maurenbrecher’s views and in his anger even proclaimed that he personally held the *Kaiser* responsible for the current misery in Germany. With volcanic torment Weber exclaimed that when the war would be over, he would insult him so long that he would prosecute him, and that he would then force the statesmen responsible for the current misery to resign. Wondering whether Weber was perhaps not, as Theodor Heuß later put it, a “secret romantic”, many young people were deeply impressed by these actions, although they rejected Weber’s ‘realism’, seeking for a concrete debate of values rather than a reform of politics and existing institutions. It was Knud Ahlborn who stated this wish most clearly, recalling the need for cultural rebirth of a society that had chased youth into war. Defending an internationalist stance, he was open to students in other countries and felt contempt for a state which had transformed itself into a machine in this age of war. Ahlborn’s notions were representative for those of a much larger war generation, but they could count on scepticism from the elder generation, including from Weber, who attacked youth for its naivety, and with such scorn that he lost much of the credit he had previously won among youth. As Weber was obviously only informed about the ideals of youth through Wyneken-inspired circles, Ahlborn re-emphasised his distance from Wyneken (see chapter 1), and found a solution to the age only in life reform itself.⁵³²

Contrary to the life-reformist solutions of Ahlborn, however, most of the young people present clung to a romantic and mythical messianism. Centering on the

⁵³⁰ Hübing, “Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur” in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 266; Distl, *Toller*, 26.

⁵³¹ Mitzman, *Iron Cage*, 293. Maurenbrecher’s speech was based on his essay, *Der Krieg als Ausgangspunkt einer deutschen Kultur* (May, 1917, published in *Die Tat*), which all participants had been advised to read.

⁵³² On Weber and Maurenbrecher, see: Hübing, “Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur” in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg* 264-265; the term “secret romantic” comes from Theodor Heuß, quoted from: Mitzman, *Iron Cage*, 293; also printed in Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 27; on Ahlborn, see: Schumann, *Protokoll*, printed in: Hübing, ‘Diederichs’ in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 272; the term “mythical messianism”, see: Hübing, “‘Journalist’ und ‘Literat’” in: *Ibid.* and

redemptive force of “youth culture” and charismatic *Gemeinschaft*-ideals, the *Werkschar* called for a pseudo-religious revival in terms of a “new myth” – which possibly further sustains the above mentioned suspicion of George’s influence – that would resolve “all problems”, the protocall recalls, “including the political”. Relying on Walter Rathenau’s *Von Kommenden Dingen* (On Things to Come, 1917), a then popular text that called for a renewal of the nation through a new morale, Wilhelm Vershofen – himself almost 40 – concluded that youth needed “to built anew from bottom up”. To him “the German *Geist* in the sense of Goethe and Schiller”, that is, a tolerant and cosmopolitan notion of *Geist*, was capable “to penetrate the world” and to give an impetus to a new, German spirit (*Geist*). In line of this call for spiritual rebirth, Carl Uphoff showed deep disillusionment with the lack of leadership from the elders and spoke of the need to find a “synthesis of the German man”. Kroner further supported these notions, envisioning the salvation of the German nation through the construction of a “new Temple; through a new German religion; through a kind of monastic community of the Holy German orientation (*Gesinnung*)”, views which were badly understood by the elders and even caused ‘some impatience’,⁵³³ but they were typical for the longings of the academic youth movement in Germany.⁵³⁴

If we now turn back to the protagonist of this study, we here thus find a link to a group of students who were more than a group of literary students alone, but who were radically uprooted by the war experience and desperately in search for a re-valuation of existing values. Although the exact relation between Toller, Claus, Kroner, Zadek, and the members of the *Werkschar* remains somewhat unclear, they shared their need for spiritual rebirth (*Geist*-revolution) and all fostered socio-religious communitarian ideals that could give new meaning to the sense of war. As Toller shared that need, he thus found a group of like-minded students that further strengthened him in his striving to find an answer to the war. When Toller recorded that he esteemed contact with “friends” in Munich (chapter 5), it may have not merely been a reference to these people, but also for this reason.

Perhaps inspired by the mythical messianism of these “friends”, then, Toller may have felt the urge to sublimate his own needs for moral rebirth and social utopianism into

Mommsen (eds.), *Intellektuelle im deutschen Kaiserreich*, 108.

⁵³³ Schumann, *Protokoll*, in: Hübinger, “Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur” in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 273. On Rathenau’s *Von Kommenden Dingen*, see: Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 156-7.

⁵³⁴ Hübinger, “‘Journalist’ und ‘Literat’” in: Ibid./Mommsen (eds.), *Intellektuelle im deutschen*

what is possibly one of his nicest poems ever written: “Der Ringende” (The Striver, 1917).⁵³⁵ The poem is an expression of the need to re-valuate the existing values of the past, which throws him back to the parental home, symbolised by the mother. Influenced by neo-romantic thought,⁵³⁶ and with a clear (implicit) Nietzschean undertone, the mother is presented as a reproductive body, although in moral terms. Seeking to become the genesis of his own values, the mother is accused of spiritual infanticide,⁵³⁷ which the child seeks to undo. Responsible for his own birth, then, Toller becomes the authority – that is: God – over his own moral reproduction, and thus he becomes a “mother” to himself. In so becoming, Toller finds *Gemeinschaft* through a re-definition of the values of the past:

Die Dichter weihen bunten Versenkrans
 Verständnisvoller Lieber zarter Mütter
 Die schütten süßen Tau und Blütenschnee
 Auf Knospen, die in Junistem beben.-
 Ich lasse meine magren Finger
 Behutsam über jene weichen Worte gleiten
 Und denke schmerzlich grauer Stunden
 Da mich Erkenntnis schüttelte mit dürrer Faust.

Kaiserreich, 108.

⁵³⁵ In the literature on Toller it is falsely believed that *Der Ringende* was written in 1912, when Toller was eighteen; the content, thematic and symbolism betray influence of the war and show similarities with other war poems. The date 1912 is written in: *Vormorgen*, Potsdam, 1924, which is copied by: Rothstein, *Gemeinschaft*, footnote 10, 2, 287; Rothe, *Toller*, 27-28; Dove, *He was a German*, 15; Toller: *Pazifist – Schriftsteller – Politiker*, 4.

⁵³⁶ Toller’s conception of motherhood was deeply influenced by romantic thought, which dwelled on a conservative but positive conceptualisation of woman- and motherhood; ideas of Bachofen and his matriarchal theory circulated in *fin de siècle* Germany, infusing these notions of motherhood with new, counter-patriarchal insights. Influences of both currents were present in Expressionism, published in magazines like *Die Weißen Blätter* and *Die Aktion*. Lu Maerten (1879-1970), for example, influenced by Bachofen, appeared in *Die Weißen Blätter* with an article entitled “Geburt der Mütter” (1916) and the Expressionist painter Otto Freundlich (1878-1943) followed in *Die Aktion* with an article entitled “Das Kommende Reich” (1917), in which it said: “Jeder... mußte einmal im stillen die Nabelschnur zerrissen haben, die ihn mit den alten Müttern verband”. A similar notion of cutting the umbilical cord to express the need for a re-valuation of values we find in Hermann Hesse’s *Demian* (1919), written in 1917. It is unclear, however, in what way Toller was influenced by such matriarchal theories, although it is possible to see in the first phrases of “Der Ringende” a reference to his awareness of such theories in Munich (through a George-inspired Roth?). On the influence of psycho-analysis in Expressionism, see also: Mitzman, “Anarchism” in: *New German Critique*, 77-104, who points, amongst others, to the central role of Otto Groß on Franz Jung and Franz Werfel.

⁵³⁷ Infanticide was a popular literary theme of the late 18th century German Romantic Movement, see: J.M. Rameckers, *Der Kindesmord in der Literatur der Sturm und Drang* (Rotterdam, 1927) – one can think of: Goethe’s *Urfaust* (1775-76); Schiller’s “Die Kindsmörderin” (1781); Heinrich Leopold Wagner’s *Die Kindsmörderin*; Wilhelm Friedrich Wucherer’s *Julie oder die gerettete Kindsmörderin* (1782); Gotthold Friedrich Stäudlin’s poem “Seltha, die Kindermörderin” (1776); and Anton Matthias Sprickmann’s poem “Ida” (1777).

Geschenke wurden Hagelkörner, die mich schlugen
O Mutter, Mutter,
Warum bist Du nicht?

Kann ich nicht jene Frau,
Die mir mit ihrem Blute
In dunklen Nächten Herzslog lieb,
Aus frommen Herzen Mutter nennen.
So will ich weite Wege wandern.
O, daß ich einst von langem Suchen nicht ermüdet,
An stachlichen Ligusterhecken träumend,
Dich, Mutter, fände.

Bin ich nicht selbst mir Mutter?
Du, Frau, gabst stöhnend
Einmal dumpfes Leben mir.
Ich starb so oft seit jenem Tag.
Ward neuer Keim, der wuchs und sich entfaltete,
Der Frucht entgegenreifte.
Gebär mich schweigend unter namenlosen Quälen
Ich ward mir Mutter.

The centrality of rebirth also characterised the writing of Toller's drama *Die Wandlung*, which he began to undertake during the summer of 1917 (and possibly when Kutscher's seminar had already come to an end). Richard Dove writes that Toller spent two months in a sanatorium in Bad Schachen at Lake Constance in the south of Germany during that summer, although it is unclear on which source he relies, and what the reason for that stay was.⁵³⁸ Residing at the lake or not, Toller now set himself to the writing of his play, which was then, characteristically, still called *Der Entwurzelte* (The Uprooted One, 1917).⁵³⁹

Unlike "Der Ringende", however, where the *need* for rebirth is central, *Die Wandlung* was written *through* rebirth. This was unquestionably the consequence of Toller's reading of Landauer's *Aufruf zum Sozialismus*, of which he later recorded that it

⁵³⁸ Dove, *He was a German*, 30. Toller records that *Die Wandlung* was written in a first draft in 1917 and finished in February and March in prison 1918, see: Toller, *GW*, II, 8. As he was then no longer at the front, the play was thus not "created in 1917/18 in the trenches", as Horst Denkler once wrote, see: Horst Denkler, "Die Wandlung" in: Hermand (ed), *Zu Ernst Toller*, 119.

⁵³⁹ IISG Amsterdam, Landauer-Archive, No. 34, *Der Entwurzelte: Das Ringen eines Menschen* (Theaterstück, undated Typoscript).

had “touched and defined” him “decisively”.⁵⁴⁰ As Dove rightfully notes, *Die Wandlung* is a “carefully structured” play which centres on the seventh scene, where rebirth is central. This scene betrays clear influences of Landauer’s conception of rebirth, so that he thus cannot have written the play until after he read the book. As the book was popular in student circles, Toller may have heard about it before the summer of 1917, but it was possibly not read until shortly before he began to write *Die Wandlung*, and in any case after “Der Ringende”. As there is reason to believe that Toller did not begin to write *Die Wandlung* until after (or at the end of) July 1917, he possibly read that book in July 1917.⁵⁴¹

Landauer’s *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* had a great impact on Toller because of its mystical and spiritual dimension. The book offered a tolerant and humanitarian conception of *Gemeinschaft*, in which people were united through a conception of *Geist* that largely equated the mystical experience of community itself – and thus the experience of both the Godly and human unity of things. As we have seen, *Geist*, according to Landauer, was present in the existing world, although exclusively among isolated individuals (and especially artists and intellectuals) who served as vehicles to awaken it in humanity as a whole. According to Landauer, however, *Geist* could only be awakened in those who had reached their deepest crisis, as only then the *Volk* had the will to rebirth.⁵⁴² Accordingly, suffering was the key to salvation. This notion, which was a re-working of a Judeo-Christian core-belief, showed that Toller’s suffering was not sad, but positive, as it was a necessity to rebirth. Thus Landauer showed that Toller’s struggle for rebirth was the key to rebirth itself. It not merely opened the perspective of a *Gemeinschaft* of human beings, but it also gave Toller a claim to take a lead in the awakening of humanity as a such.

Modelling his play on Strindbergian ‘station’-technique,⁵⁴³ unquestionably influenced by the insights of Kutscher’s seminar (and perhaps by his contact with Roth), *Die Wandlung* deals with the theme of a rudderless youth and its struggle for personal and national rebirth. Walter Sokel discovered traces of the work of Wedekind in the

⁵⁴⁰ Toller, *GW*, IV, 84.

⁵⁴¹ There is disagreement among scholars of Toller at what moment Toller first read Landauer’s *Aufruf zum Sozialismus*. In the past it was often located in the fall of 1917. Margerethe Pinner, who met Toller in October 1917 in Heidelberg, wrote that Toller had to have come across that book shortly before they met, but Dove suggests that he must have read that book earlier and points to the summer of 1917. See: Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* (1970); Dove, *He was a German*, 39.

⁵⁴² Landauer, *Aufruf zum Sozialismus*, 51.

⁵⁴³ Rothe, *Toller*, 43; Dove, *He was a German*, 49-50.

generational rhetoric of the play,⁵⁴⁴ but we may also detect an even more direct influence of Hanns Johst's *Der Einsame*, presented to Toller, as we have seen, in July 1917. Like *Der Einsame*, Toller's drama opens with an attack on the bourgeois character of his mother's home; the mother is at odds with the son and cannot understand his wish to become a full-time artist; art can be tolerated as spare-time activity, but a man needs to fulfil his "real" task in life with a decent job, as Johst writes, and with 'a steady profession' (*bürgerliches Brotberuf*), as Toller writes.⁵⁴⁵ Reworking the moral critique of "Der Ringende", Toller lets Friedrich accuse his mother of spiritual infanticide: 'Am I an unthankful, waisted son? No, mother, no. You have taken care of me with money, want to pave my way to gain money... yes, my economic future is safe. But what did you do for my *soul*? You have taught me hatred toward the strangers. *Why?*' Clearly written from the perspective of the war experience, the mother becomes the symbol of outdated values which caused the sacrifice of her son. As a moral example, therefore, Friedrich can no longer accept his mother: 'Mother I called you because you gave birth to me; can I still call you mother today for having abandoned my soul in the same way that foolish mothers abandon their naked child?'⁵⁴⁶

Having rejected the old world, Friedrich enters war, as we have already seen, but he is disillusioned with its experience because it undermined all his values, so that he destroyed his statue. In this context only a *Geist*-revolution can save Friedrich, as we have also seen, which is now offered in the seventh 'image' of the play, the core of *Die Wandlung* itself. On the brink of suicide, Friedrich's sister – obviously influenced by the thought of Landauer – enters the stage and reveals to her brother the truth of humanity (*Menschtum*), that is, of *Gemeinschaft*, which he also carries within him. "Your road",

⁵⁴⁴ Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*; on the Strindbergian model, and the fact that it must have therefore been "carefully constructed", see: Dove, *He was a German*, 50.

⁵⁴⁵ Johst's *Einsame* may have been the first Expressionist drama which Toller read that placed the cult of generational revolt at its centre. Hasenclever's *Der Sohn*, written in 1913/14 and the first real Expressionist example of that revolt, was staged in September and October 1916, but outside Munich, and it only was published in 1918, see: Günther Rühle, "Väter und Söhne: der Aufstand der Expressionisten: Hasenclevers "Der Sohn" und Tollers "Der Wandlung" in: *Theater Heute*, 1 (Berlin, 2001) 29; Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, Band 1, 87. Possibly Toller also knew Johst's first anti-war drama, *Stunde der Sterbenden* (Hours of Dying People, 1914/15), first published in the *Literarischen Echo*, a leading magazine in Germany at the time which lauded this play in the first months of war as one of the few dramas in Germany that was able to catch the "reality" of war through its emphasis on metaphor and symbolism, see: Häntzschel, "Literatur und Krieg" in: Mommsen (eds.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 216. We find symbols and metaphors of this play in *Die Wandlung*, including the thirst that Friedrich has when he wakes up in the hospital (a Biblical connotation), the role of the idiot, of the soldier's regeneration, of his Passion, of the crucifixion of man to the earth (and the earth itself as the cross e.g. horizontal crucifixation). Richard Dove, then, detects indebtedness to Strindberg in the opening scene of *Die Wandlung*, when Friedrich identifies with this playwright, see: Dove, *He was a German*, 50.

⁵⁴⁶ Toller, *GW*, II, 19.

she says, leads “to God, who is *Geist* and love, and strength; to God, who lives in humanity”, but he “who wants to turn to the people“, she adds, “needs to turn to himself first.”⁵⁴⁷ Communicated in biblical language, she reveals to her brother that his suffering is the very source of his salvation. All but rational knowledge, this ‘truth’ appeals to belief, and thus to *Geist*. Employing Christian symbolism, the sister proposes closing the eyes of her ‘blind’ brother, so that he shall see.⁵⁴⁸ Through the eyes of the *Geist*, then, the world appears in a different light. Reborn, Friedrich is also sent, and becomes a key to the regeneration of humanity as a whole. Although the future is unknown, he has become a prophet who wants to walk “that way; alone, but nonetheless with you – alone, but nonetheless with all – knowing about the people”. It is the start of Friedrich’s prophecy of *Geist*-revolution.

The Conference at Lauenstein (Fall 1917)

In the summer of 1917 Germany’s political climate was drastically changing, as a result of further discontent with the war. Following the April strikes and the chancellor’s promise for political reforms, the *Reichstag* shifted in favour of moderate forces and passed its famous Peace Resolution (*Friedensresolution*) on 19 July, calling for a negotiated peace and renouncing the policy of annexations. It was attacked from the Right, which, pressed by the military command, reacted with the foundation of the *Deutsche Vaterlandspartei* (German Fatherland’s Party, DVP) in early September, and which called, under the leadership of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz (1849-1930), for a *Siegfrieden* (‘peace through victory’), for annexationism, and for a strengthening of the German autocratic state. Although opposition to the DVP was expressed, it was a tremendous success and its membership by July 1918 by far exceeded that of the Social Democratic Party. Klaus Schwabe has shown that the DVP could also count on the support of a large number

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid. 40. The words are a clear echo from Landauer’s *Aufruf zum Sozialismus*: “We cannot wait for humanity”, Landauer writes, we must “ourselves find humanity within us and then create it anew. From the individual begins everything, and in the individual lies everything”, see: Landauer, *Aufruf zum Sozialismus*, 145.

⁵⁴⁸ New Testament, Luke 18:35-43; Markus 9:47; the idea of belief through blindness was a recurrent theme in romantic and naturalist literature as well, and it is often used in Expressionism, amongst others in Hasenclever’s *Antigone* (1917), which exerted some influence on Toller (see next chapter), see: Walter Hasenclever, *Antigone: Tragödie in 5 Akten* (Berlin, 1918 – Third Edition), 41.

of academics, receiving no less than 1,100 signatures of German professors upon its foundation.⁵⁴⁹ Before that time, and shortly after the Peace Resolution, Bethmann-Hollweg was sacked as chancellor by the Kaiser, pressed by the military command of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and replaced by an obscure Prussian civil servant named Georg Michaelis (1857-1936), who was unable to counter-balance the power of the two military leaders, and for that reason they became the virtual rulers of the country.⁵⁵⁰ In this context Wilhelm II stood isolated, and more and more became a puppet of the army.

In the light of these developments Eugen Diederichs decided to organise a new conference at *Burg Lauenstein* in Thuringia, which took place from 29 September to 3 October 1917. Disillusioned with the May conference, he hoped to give new birth to his ideal of Germanness, although the conference now formally addressed “the problem of leadership in state and culture”.⁵⁵¹ All together he invited some seventy to eighty intellectuals, artists and representatives of the German academic elite, including many of the people who had been invited to the May conference, but also a variety of new attendees. Besides Weber, Maurenbrecher, Kampfmeyer, Vershofen and Tönnies, he invited the historian Friedrich Meineke (1862-1954), the sociologists Werner Sombart and Edgar Jaffé (1866-1921), as well as various writers and artists, like Richard Dehmel, Walter von Molo, Paul Ernst (1866-1933), the war and working class poet Karl Bröger (1886-1944) and Heinrich Lersch (1889-1936), a member of the so-called “workers-poets” known as the *Werkleute auf Haus Nylandt*, which also counted the above mentioned poet Vershofen among its members. As youth had felt neglected at the May conference, he decided to invite a larger share of youth as well: Ahlhorn, Kroner, Uphoff, and Heuß had already been present in May, but new were

⁵⁴⁹ Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 387-388; Klaus Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral: Die deutsche Hochschullehrer und die politischen Grundfragen des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen, 1969) 160.

⁵⁵⁰ Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 385.

⁵⁵¹ Hübinger, “Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur” in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 263. Toller records the theme of the second conference in terms of the first, and speaks of “the meaning and purpose of the age”, although it formally had a different title. It reveals much about the way in which he himself understood the conference. His statement is nonetheless confusing, especially in combination with his recalling of Weber’s denunciation of the Emperor and struggle with Maurenbrecher, as it gives the impression that Toller was present at the (more important) May meeting, as Gangolf Hübinger – and in addition: Wolfgang Mommsen – suggest. Walter von Molo, however, testifies that Toller was present at the fall gathering, which is also clear from statements in the 1919 *Protokoll*, Toller’s reference to evening “dances”, and his statement that he left immediately after the conference for Heidelberg, where he settled in October, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 77-78, 240; Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Der Fall Toller*, 13; Molo, *So Wunderbar ist das Leben*, 193; Hübinger, “Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur” in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 265; Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 164; see also: Heidler, *Diederichs und seine Welt*, 95, who records Toller’s presence in the fall.

people like Toller and the Heidelberger national economist and Stefan George-adapt, Edgar Salin (1892-1974).⁵⁵²

In reaction to the May conference, which had deeply disappointed him for its polarisation, Diederichs had published a pamphlet in July, entitled *Das Kulturelle Deutschland* (The Cultural Germany), in which he had called for the renewal of our national life' as the actual task for the future, demanding an "undogmatic" religious orientation, 'social remoulding of life', 'new creations in literature and art', and the 'development of national sentiment at service of humanity'.⁵⁵³ In this he placed high hopes on youth, moreover, which he embodied as the "new man, whose inspiration was grounded in the *Geist*" and therefore could serve as a model for leadership in Germany.⁵⁵⁴ Christa Hempel-Küter and Hans-Harold Müller also in this context refer to a letter that he sent to Weber on 22 July 1917, writing that youth embodied his ideal of a "creative-political man" which could restore communal bonds in the world on the ground is its nature alone.⁵⁵⁵

It is unclear how Diederichs came across the name of Toller for his invitation. James Jordan's suggestion that Toller had either sent him samples of his poetry or that he had met him via Kutscher's seminar is speculation.⁵⁵⁶ Certainly, Kutscher knew Diederichs, and he was also on the list of invitees for the May conference (although it is not clear whether he was present), so that he may have offered him a network, if not, a direct entry to either Diederichs or his immediate environment. Yet Jordan exaggerates Toller's role and self-understanding as a poet at this time of his life. He shared poems with fellow students (Zadek, Claus), but there is no proof that he also sent poems to the 'elder' generation before the fall of 1917. For the same reason Dove's suggestion to explain Toller's invitation in the light of the "impression he had made on established literary circles" fails to convince, equally noted by Hempel-Küter and Müller.⁵⁵⁷ It is

⁵⁵² On the participants, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 77; AdK Berlin, Diederichs-Archive, *Teilnehmerliste*; Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 27, quoting Theodor Heuß (1963); Molo, *So Wunderbar ist das Leben*, 192-193; Heidler, *Diederichs und seine Welt*, 95, on the Bröger and the Nylandt poets, see: Bridgewater, *German Poets*, 120-153, esp. 121-122.

⁵⁵³ *Das kulturelle Deutschland* was an extra publication for circa 50 *Bünde* to his own publishing house magazine *Die Tat*, and therewith intended as a counterbalance to the power state principle of the ruling elites, see: Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 162; Hübinger, "Diederichs und eine neue Geisteskultur" in: Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 263.

⁵⁵⁴ Diederichs, quoted from: Dove, *He was a German*, 32.

⁵⁵⁵ Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 89-90.

⁵⁵⁶ Jordan, *Unpublished Poetry*, 10

⁵⁵⁷ Dove, *He was a German*, 31; Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 89. In this context one might also point to the the experiences of Franz Jung, who recorded difficulties to enter established 'bohemian' networks before the war and therefore left for Berlin.

true that Kutscher later called Toller one of his “dearest and most talented” students, and that he had invited him to his selected meetings for the same reason, but Thomas Mann did not remember him as a poet at all.⁵⁵⁸ Halbe, one of Kutscher’s close friends and invitees of his seminar, was also listed by Diederichs,⁵⁵⁹ but we do not know anything about his relation to Toller.

It seems more fruitful to seek the reason of Toller’s invitation in the context of the attempt to reach out to youth. Hempel-Küter and Müller point to an account by Max Weber from March 1918, which records that Toller had been invited as a “representative of student associations”, as were other young people as well.⁵⁶⁰ Although Weber does not further explain which kind of “associations” these were, and as there is no evidence that Toller was a (formal) member of a student association at this time, we may well seek the reason for his invitation in his contacts with alternative, that is, social-reformist and “youth culture”-inspired branches within the milieus of the Free German Student Association, which thus included students around Kroner and the *Werkschar*. Present at the May conference, Kroner was also invited to the conference in September, although we do not know whether this was also the case for Trummler and Wallach.⁵⁶¹

Dove rightly suggests that Toller possibly attended the conference in the hope of finding a solution to the problem of the war, although this should not be understood in terms of “positive initiatives for peace”.⁵⁶² He was disgusted with the suffering

⁵⁵⁸ Toller records in his autobiography that he shared several of the manuscripts he wrote during Kutscher’s seminar with Thomas Mann. He even writes that he was invited at his home in the Herzogspark, where Mann aided him with “fatherly” advice in his writing of poems and wrote him a long letter in which he had further re-considered his manuscripts. Although it left the twenty-two year old Toller ‘deeply impressed’, Mann himself does not remember much of Toller in his diaries. In fact, Christa Hempel-Küter and Hans-Harold Müller have shown that Mann only records him as a student who once brought him eggs at the time of the revolution. In the same way Mann’s wife and son, Katia and Klaus, record him for his generous heart rather than for his abilities as a poet, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 74-75; Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 87; Katja Mann, *Meine ungeschriebene Memoiren* (Frankfurt 1976); Klaus Mann, *In meinem Elternhaus* (Stuttgart, 2002) [1952].

⁵⁵⁹ AdK, Berlin, Diederichs Archive, *Teilnehmerliste*

⁵⁶⁰ Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 89, relying on: BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Aussage Max Weber, 12.3.1918 (Heidelberg)*.

⁵⁶¹ It might also be noted in this context that it is striking that none of the leading Activist-Expressionists (Hiller, Franz Werfel, Walter Hasenclever, Leonard Frank, Heinrich Mann) were present at the conference. There are (preliminary) lists of participants of all three conferences at Lauenstein (1917-1918), moreover, which show that Diederichs had no intention of inviting them either. Diederichs’ interest in youth concerns students groups first of all, not literature: he was open to all kinds of alternative youth and student groups – Kurella and Reichenbach were on the list, but Joël and Kohn were not, see: AdK Berlin, Diederichs-Archive, *Teilnehmerliste*.

⁵⁶² Dove, *He was a German*, 32; direct war criticism, moreover, was never popular, see: Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 153.

connected to war, but he did not oppose war as a political phenomenon and continued to believe in its necessity. What he hoped was to give new meaning to the war, but he disapproved – as Weber records – of an immediate peace agreement at this time.⁵⁶³ Peace without regeneration was useless. It was precisely this that united him with Diederichs, who had expressed similar views and expectations in his pamphlet *Das Kulturelle Deutschland*. It was also this hope for cultural regeneration that united Toller with youth, which yearned at the conference for a concrete debate of values and, as Edgar Jaffé writes, for the “coming of the *Geist*” and a uniting spiritual “leadership” from the elder generation.⁵⁶⁴

In this light the conference at Lauenstein was deeply disappointing. Instead of a forum for discussing values, the conference was dominated by a debate on the role of the German state in a future society, centring on a debate between Maurenbrecher and Weber who largely repeated their arguments from the May Conference. While the war-idealist and *völkish* theorist Maurenbrecher lost credibility, youth, Toller writes, turned “its eyes” to Weber,⁵⁶⁵ including Toller himself, responding more to the “impact of his person” than to his message,⁵⁶⁶ although Weber’s strong emphasis on political reform and scepticism toward youth proved disappointing in the end. Toller: “[Youth] wants more than attacks on the Emperor,” Toller records, “and more than just a reform of electoral law; they want to built a new foundation, [and] they believe that a change of the outer order also changes man.”⁵⁶⁷ Edgar Jaffé has recorded the impatience of youth in a then anonymous article in similar terms, writing that youth’s rejection of the German institutions caused scepticism within the elder generation, and created an irreparable rift between the generations.⁵⁶⁸ Toller also records this estrangement between generations: ‘All (red: these elder and academically educated people) have stood up from behind their desks. They all doubt yesterday’s and today’s values, but only youth wants clarity. To them (red: youth) this world is ready for destruction; they search for a way out of the horrible disturbances of the age, they seek for the deed of the heart as a means to ban the chaos, and believe in the unconditional, incorruptible spirit (*Geist*), which lives up to its obligation, and to the truth. But these (red: old and educated) men, who are honoured as

⁵⁶³ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Aussage Max Weber*, 12.3.1918.

⁵⁶⁴ Edgar Jaffé, “Lauenstein” in: *Europäische Staats- und Wirtschaftszeitung*, II, No. 42 (Berlin, 1917) 994-996.

⁵⁶⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 78.

⁵⁶⁶ Edgar Salin, quoted from: Mitzman, *Iron Cage*, 294.

⁵⁶⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 79.

⁵⁶⁸ Jaffé, “Lauenstein” in: *Europäische Staats- und Wirtschaftszeitung*, 994-996.

the bearers of the *Geist*, are no biblical prophets who judge and condemn a mistaken world with powerful words, and prepare to fearlessly carry the thorn of kings and tyrants. They are not rebels, but seek refuge in the ghost of a state romanticism that has estranged itself from life.⁵⁶⁹

Toller lamented the lack of moral leadership at Lauenstein. Aware of the “chaos” among youth,⁵⁷⁰ he records that he uttered an emotional plea in which he called upon the fathers to resume their role as moral leaders, but nobody showed the way “that led to the world of peace and brotherliness”. He adds that mystic dances of “female dancers” took place thereafter and remembers them as the symbol of an escape from the problems of the age.⁵⁷¹

In reality Toller did not speak before but after these mystic dances, and also in a different way. Walter von Molo, present during that plea for moral leadership, writes that a small group of participants gathered after these dances in a small and intimate setting in the castle’s tower room, including Toller, Heuß and Molo himself. Here the ex-soldier and icon of youth Richard Dehmel read from his *Kriegs-Brevier* (War Breviary, 1917), after which “youth would speak”. Von Molo writes that Dehmel expressed his faith in the regenerative value of the soldier at the front during that meeting by saying that he was convinced that the leader of the new Germany was already present among the soldiers at the front.⁵⁷² It may well have been because of this statement that Toller felt emboldened to express his thoughts, as it was according to Von Molo after Dehmel’s words that he made a desperate plea for guidance of a youth which seemed hopelessly divided to him. Though Toller claims to have called upon the whole conference, he thus seems to have addressed himself mainly to Dehmel, who had been a literary example during the war. Unlike Toller’s conclusion that his plea was not answered, then, he received a very clear answer instead. Von Molo: “The student Ernst Toller confessed passionately how chaotic the situation in the young generation was; he begged, almost with tears, for help. Richard Dehmel answered: ‘It is useless to say nice

⁵⁶⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 77.

⁵⁷⁰ Molo, *So Wunderbar ist das Leben*, 193.

⁵⁷¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 79-80; it might be noted that “peace” does not necessarily mean pacifism, but also ‘peace of mind’; with respect to these “female dancers”, then, Toller writes that they included the “daughters of the poet Falke”, although in reality there was only one daughter of the late poet Gustav Falke(e) (1853-1916); as Toller writes “poet Falke”, René Eichenlaub suggests that this was Konrad Falke (1880-1942), but this is incorrect, see: Eichenlaub, *Toller*, 48; Molo, *So Wunderbar ist das Leben*, 193 (where he refers to the ‘late poet Falke’); Heidler, *Diederichs und seine Welt*, 96.

words to you (*euch*); to help, we elders can only do with money, all the rest you have to suffer and stand all by yourself, for, if not, nothing shall become of you (*euch*).’ Hurt and full of pain was Dehmel’s face, when he so bravely spoke out these open, heavy words.”⁵⁷³

Dehmel’s words deeply impressed Von Molo, but there is reason to believe that they also impressed others,⁵⁷⁴ including Toller. Unquestionably Dehmel’s call for youth to seek a leadership of its own must have come as a great disappointment to Toller, but he later re-worked that message in a positive way in his autobiography. Here he records that he recited *Der Ringende* and other poems to Dehmel when they walked through the Thuringian forest, and where the latter should have said: “Do not bother yourself about us old people”, and “go your own way, even when the world pursues and opposes you. You have just recited me a poem, that concluded with the lines: ‘I died – gave birth to myself – died – gave birth to myself – I became a mother to myself’. That is decisive. At a certain point of life one has to undo oneself of everyone, one has to become one’s own mother.”⁵⁷⁵

In the light of Von Molo’s testimony it is obvious that Toller here exaggerates his intimacy with Dehmel and distorts the real significance of his message. As Dehmel made clear that youth should not expect anything from his generation, the message to become a “mother” to himself is a clear romantization of a message he received from the symbol of a generation that had been responsible for the moral justification of the war and that now abandoned an uprooted and restless youth in its quest for new values. In this light, then, Toller must have grown conscious of the need to act on his own.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷² Molo, *So Wunderbar ist das Leben*, 193; when Jaffé writes that one spoke at the conference with “respect” for the “field grey” as a future arbiter in spiritual matters, he may have had this statement in mind, see: Jaffé, “Lauenstein” in: *Europäische Staats- und Wirtschaftszeitung*, 996.

⁵⁷³ Molo, *So Wunderbar ist das Leben*, 193.

⁵⁷⁴ Kurt Kroner, who made a bust of Dehmel in 1917, was possibly present in the tower as well, see: Kroner, *Zur Ausstellung* (1928), No. 66: “Dehmel” (1917).

⁵⁷⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 79-80; in Toller’s autobiography Dehmel refers to a revised (and shortened) version of *Der Ringende*. The two versions were first published in 1919 respectively 1924. In 1933 he wrote his autobiography, which may explain why Toller here refers to the second (although then possibly not yet written) version, originally published in: Toller, *Vormorgen* (Potsdam, 1924); reprinted in: Toller, *Auswahl*, 439.

⁵⁷⁶ Carel ter Haar writes that Toller’s revolt against the fathers was the result of his deep disillusionment at

Lauenstein rather than of generational conflict as such, see: Ter Haar, *Appell*, 162.

PART IV

YOUTH SOCIALISM

[1917-1918]

FRIEDRICH: Nun öffnet sich, aus Weltenschoß geboren/ Das hochgewölbte Tor der Menschheitskathedrale./ Der Jugend aller Völker schreitet flammend/ Zum nachtgeahnten Schrein aus leuchtendem Kristall./ Gewaltig schau ich strahlende Visionen./ Kein Elend mehr, nicht Krieg, nicht Haß./ Die Mutter kränzen ihre lichten Knaben/ Zum frohen Spiel und fruchtgeweihten Tanz./ Du Jugend schreite, ewig dich gebärend./ Erstarrtes ewig du zerstörend./ So schaffe Leben gluterfüllt vom Geist.

ERNST TOLLER, *Die Wandlung*.

“Den Weg, Du Dichter Weise” [Fall 1917]

Student Actions in Heidelberg (Fall 1917)

In October 1917 shortly after the conference at Lauenstein (and when Toller had thus read Landauer's *Aufruf*), Toller left for Heidelberg and registered in Law and Political Economy.⁵⁷⁷ He found a place to live in the centre of a town which had been drastically affected by the war.⁵⁷⁸ Wellknown as a student town before World War I, many students fought at the front and the relatively greater share of women therefore did not go unnoticed. One medical student recorded Heidelberg as “a ‘girls’ boarding school” at this time, but this is an exaggeration for women never exceeded one fifth of the total number of students.⁵⁷⁹ Students were forced to be economical at this time, so that many “landladies”, Toller writes, “speak of the good old times before the war when numerous corps students, dressed with colourful strings and caps, walked the streets and drank many litres of beer, and complained about the female students who turn over every cent twice.”⁵⁸⁰

Scholars of Toller generally assume that Toller left for Heidelberg because of Max Weber, a central figure of local student and intellectual life who made a strong impression on Toller at Lauenstein.⁵⁸¹ However, Toller writes in his autobiography

⁵⁷⁷ *Zählkarte Ernst Toller* (1917/18) in: Eichenlaub, *Toller*, 284.

⁵⁷⁸ Toller lived in Friedrichstraße 8, see: IISG Amsterdam, Landauer-Archive, *Letter from Ernst Toller to Gustav Landauer*, 6.12.1917; AdK Berlin, Hauptmann-Archive, *Letter from Ernst Toller Carl to Hauptmann*, 8.11.1917. On 14 October 1917 he gave up residence in Munich, see: chapter 5, footnote 2.

⁵⁷⁹ Kaplan, *Making*, 147. Women had always been attracted to Heidelberg, the first university in Germany to open up to women to attend all faculties in 1901, see: Frevert, *Women in German History*, 122. The number of female students had risen to 500 (18%) of a total of 2,800 students in 1918; in 1919 the university mentioned 449 fallen students, see: Eike Wolgast, *Die Universität Heidelberg, 1386-1986* (Berlin 1986), 123

⁵⁸⁰ Toller, *GW*, 4, 80; on the worsening social-economic situation in Germany, see: Triebel, “Coal” in: Winter/Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War*, 353; Meyer-Frank, “Erinnerungen” in: Lamm, *Vergange Tage*, 212; Scholem, *Von Berlin zu Jerusalem*, 114.

⁵⁸¹ Rothe, *Toller*, 34, 134; Dove, *He was a German*, 33; *Ernst Toller: Pazifist – Schriftsteller – Politiker*,

that he came to Heidelberg to finish his studies with a dissertation in political economy, a subject that had good name in Heidelberg. For a supervisor he approached Eberhard Gothein (1853-1923), Max Weber's successor in political economy since 1904, the year when Weber's mental collapse had made him unable to uphold that chair.⁵⁸² This choice was not motivated by a deep interest in the field of political economy, as Bozena Choluj believes, but was rather a matter of course for "sons from bourgeois families who do not know what to do with themselves".⁵⁸³ It is unclear why he chose Gothein for supervision, since in theory Alfred Weber (1868-1958), Max Weber's younger brother and a professor of political economy in Heidelberg since 1907, was also available. Gothein was an openminded and liberal person with a greater passion for cultural history than for national economy, but Toller records him in rather dull terms in his autobiography, writing that he proposed the topic of "pig breeding in East Prussia".⁵⁸⁴ In 1918, however, Toller declared that he had planned a dissertation with the title "Modern Magazines as Expression of Modern Social Feelings and their Economic Sources" (*Moderne Zeitschriften als Ausdruck modernen Gesellschaftsempfindens und ihre wirtschaftliche Grundlagen*) which he systematically prepared before coming to Heidelberg.⁵⁸⁵

In Heidelberg Toller planned to attend courses on psychology and philosophy with the future existential psychologist, Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), and the neo-Kantian scholar Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936), a pupil of Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and his successor in Heidelberg, who taught a course in the fall of 1917 on *Die deutsche Philosophie von Kant bis Nietzsche: Einführung in die Probleme der Gegenwart* (German Philosophy from Kant to Nietzsche: Introduction to the Problems of Today).⁵⁸⁶

In spite of these plans, however, Toller kept puzzling about Lauenstein, unable to accept its lack of moral action. In spite of Dehmel's advice not to concentrate on

4; Jurkut, *Apokalypse*, 158; Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 91.

⁵⁸² Wolgast, *Heidelberg*, 111, 120.

⁵⁸³ Toller, GW, IV, 80; Bozena Choluj, *Deutsche Schriftsteller im banne der Novemberrevolution 1918: Bernard Kellermann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Ernst Toller, Erich Mühsam, Franz Jung* (Wiesbaden, 1991) 59.

⁵⁸⁴ Toller, GW, IV, 80: on Gothein's personality, see: Marie Louise Gothein, *Eberhard Gothein. Ein Lebensbild seiner Briefen nacherzählt* (Stuttgart, 1931) 145, 186, 188-189.

⁵⁸⁵ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungsprotokollen der Angeschuldigten-Vernehmung Ernst Tollers*; Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 91, which first pointed to this dissertation.

⁵⁸⁶ Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 91, footnote 70.

his generation, he nonetheless still hoped for a spiritual leadership of the elder generation. Convinced of the cultural-romantic notion of the poet as moral example for the nation, he wrote a letter to Gerhart Hauptmann, calling on him to assume his role as a public figure and leader of the nation. Hauptmann was the author of *Die Weber* (The Weavers, 1890-1), a play that had been banned in the 1890s, but Toller was mistaken in believing this hero from his adolescent years was a revolutionary leader, and he received no reply from Hauptmann.⁵⁸⁷

It must have been in this context of a search for leadership that he also took up contact with Max Weber, who then invited him to attend the meetings organised every Sunday at his home. This famous “Sunday circle” united a heterogeneous group of intellectuals with varying and opposing ideas. Besides Toller’s supervisor Gothein, it included since its beginnings people like Alfred Weber, Tönnies, Sombart, the Sociologists Georg Simmel (1858-1918) and Robert Michels (1876-1936), the theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), the George-follower and German philologist Friedrich Gundolf (1880-1931), Georg Lukács (1885-1971), Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), and the mysterious Russian born Talmuddist Salman Baruch Rabinkow (1879-1941), a rather unknown but quite influential teacher of a small group of Jewish and non-Jewish students from 1907 to 1927, including Ernst Simon, Erich Fromm (1900-1980) and Karl Jaspers, the latter who also attended Weber’s Sunday circle. In 1917 and 1918, partly in reponse to his appearance at Lauenstein, Weber began to attract various young pacifists and socialists to this circle.⁵⁸⁸ It is unclear who of these attended the circle in the fall of 1917, but there is reason to believe that they included Käthe Pick, an ex-member of Wyneken’s *Anfang* (see chapter 1) and a convinced Socialist (and a future prominent member of the Austrian Socialist Party) from an assimilated Jewish family Vienna, and either the Jewish Käthe Markus and/or the Protestant Elisabeth (‘Elli’) Harnish, both students of political economy.⁵⁸⁹ Overall a neo-romantic

⁵⁸⁷ Toller writes in *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* that he sent a letter to Hauptmann, but there is no proof that he actually did so. Like Dehmel, Hauptmann had idealised war in 1914 and 1915 as a revitalising action for the nation, and was generally considered a cultural example for many bourgeois people and young soldiers. In 1914 Romain Rolland, a French pacifist who cherished German-French cultural relations, had called upon him for similar reasons to place himself at the head of writers and artists who would protest against the ridiculousness of nationalist hysteria in all warring nations, but he too did so in vain, see: Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 132-133; Jelavich, “German Culture” in: Roshwald and Stites (eds.), *European Culture in the Great War*, 44; Andreas Schumann, “Der Künstler an die Krieger”: Zur Kriegsliteratur kanonisierter Autoren“ in: Mommsen (eds.), *Kultur und Krieg*, 228.

⁵⁸⁸ Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: Ein Lebensbild* (Tübingen, 1926) 613.

⁵⁸⁹ Gothein supervised the PhD of Elisabeth Harnisch, defended in Heidelberg in 1917, entitled *Die*

worldview dominated the circle, so that discussions on religion, mysticism, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were “vividly present”,⁵⁹⁰ even though Weber’s own ideological position cannot properly be classified as neo-romantic.⁵⁹¹ We can be quite sure that Toller discussed matters of religion with Weber. In March 1918, for example, Weber stated that he had had the impression that Toller was spiritually deeply uprooted by the war experience and very concerned with moral and religious matters during that time, and with the justice and the righteousness of war.⁵⁹² It is unlikely that they found agreement in their ideas, but they seem to have appreciated each other as human beings. For his part, Weber appreciated the sincerity of Toller’s morality and came out in his defence at his trial in 1919; Toller later summarised his admiration for Weber by writing that he then considered him to be the only German professor “who was a real politician and – an even greater rarity at German universities – a man of true character”.⁵⁹³ A similar idea was later formulated by Käthe Pick.⁵⁹⁴

Parallel to his contact with Weber, Toller established contact with other students. Most of these were students of political economy, and there is reason to believe that he met some of them through Weber’s circle. It may have been through either Markus or Harnish, then, that Toller also met Margarete Pinner (1894), a cultural Zionist from Berlin who was also spending the semester in Heidelberg. Pinner records that she met

Kartellierungsfähigkeit der Maschinenindustrie (Leipzig, 1917); on Käthe Pick (later: Leichter), see: *Österreichs Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950*. Band. 5, 103; Herbert Steiner (ed.), *Käthe Leichter: Leben und Werk*; on her younger days active in the Austrian socialist youth movement, where Wyneken’s influence was notably strong, see: Stachura, *Youth Movement*, 26; Distl writes “Käthe Lichter”, which might be a typing error, see: Distl, *Toller*, 26.

⁵⁹⁰ Paul Honigheim, “Max Weber in Heidelberg” in: R. König and J. Winckelmann (eds.), *Max Weber zum Gedächtnis. Materialien und Dokumente zur Bewertung von Werk und Persönlichkeit* (Opladen, 1985) 261-271, 240; on the circle see also: Ibid., “Max-Weber-Kreis”, *Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Soziologie*, 270-287, 284; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, “Universalgeschichtliches und politisches Denken” in: *Max Weber. Gesellschaft, Politik und Geschichte* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1974), 97-143; E. Karadi, “Ernst Bloch und Georg Lukács im Max-Weber-Kreis” in: Wolfgang J. Mommsen and W. Schwentker (eds.), *Max Weber und seine Zeitgenossen* (Göttingen, 1988) 682-702; Peter Honigmann, “Der Talmudistenkreis um Salman Baruch Rabinkow” in: Norbert Giovannini, Jo-Hannes Bauer and Hans-Martin Mumm (eds.), *Jüdisches Leben in Heidelberg. Studien zu einer unterbrochen Geschichte* (Heidelberg, 1992) 269; Mitzman, *Iron Cage*, 256-276, 295, stressing the antimodern interest of the circle; on this, also: Löwy, *Erlösung und Utopie*, 54-55, 189; Ibid., *Georg Lukács. From Romanticism to Bolshevism*, translated by Patrick Camiller (London, 1979) 37-40, 91-128; Edith Weiller, *Max Weber und die literarische Moderne. Ambivalente Begegnungen zweier Kulturen* (Stuttgart: 1994)

⁵⁹¹ On Weber’s mystical interest and attempt to come to terms with the vitalist currents of his age, see esp. Mitzman, *Iron Cage*, 239-240, 251, 254.

⁵⁹² BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Grossh. Amtsgericht II, Heidelberg, 12.3.1918: Zeugenvernehmung Professor Max Weber*.

⁵⁹³ Ernst Toller, quoted from: Dove, *He was a German*, 33; Angela Jurkat suggests that Toller was influenced by Weber’s social and economical worldview, but this is speculation, see: Jurkat, *Apokalypse*, 158.

⁵⁹⁴ Käthe Leichter, “Max Weber als Lehrer und Politiker” in: *Der Kampf*, 375 [1926].

Toller shortly after his arrival because he took lunch at the same boarding house where she had lodgings with her friends Markus and Harnish. The four students developed what she calls a “romantic” friendship. They shared a liking of the countryside and often made trips into nature, where they sometimes went rowing on the Neckar River. They never spoke about the “secret” of war with Toller, but they shared his contempt for war, as Markus had recently lost her brother at the front and Pinner’s own brother had returned severely wounded.⁵⁹⁵

Born in a traditional Jewish family from Kosten in the province of Posen, Pinner became a cultural Zionist during the war. In Berlin she had been a co-founder of the Jewish Female Students Association (*Jüdische Studentinnen Verein*) in 1916 and she was sensitive to the fate of poor Eastern European Jews who had settled in the capital for political and economical reasons. She had also been a visitor of the Jewish People’s Home (*Jüdische Volksheim*), a school officially intended for the education of poor Eastern Jewish children and young adolescents in Berlin, but which also sponsored cultural programs and lectures designed for a general Jewish public. Founded in May 1916 by the cultural Zionist and advanced medicine student Siegfried Lehmann, the People’s Home was rooted in the idea of synthesising western civilisation with socialist values and elements of Eastern Jewish cultural consciousness, which was attractive to many culturally interested Jews and Zionists, including Martin Buber, Franz Kafka (1883-1924), Gertrude Welkanos (later: Weil), and Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888-1970).⁵⁹⁶ Lehmann had close connections to the Free German Youth Association, moreover, where he had been an active member from 1913 to 1915 (with Walter Benjamin), and identified with the social-reformist wing which under the leadership of Joël had founded the Settlement Home in a Berlin working class quarter.⁵⁹⁷ It was at the People’s Home that Pinner first met Landauer, one of its regular spokesmen and a close friend of the cultural Zionist Buber, whose ideas were dominant in the People’s Home.

⁵⁹⁵ Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 212-22. Note: Pinner’s brother is possibly Ernst Pinner, a Zionist and future lawyer from Berlin who also published an article about Toller in Martin Buber’s *Der Jude*; see: Ernst Pinner, “Der Dichter Ernst Toller” in: *Der Jude*, 8 (1924), 483-487; on Margerethe Pinner (later: Turnowsky), see: Martina Kliner-Fruck, “*Es ging ja ums Überleben*”. *Jüdische Frauen zwischen Nazi-Deutschland, Emigration nach Palästina und ihrer Rückkehr* (Frankfurt/New York, 1995) 127; Desider Stern, *Werke jüdischer Autoren deutscher Sprache: Eine Bio-Bibliographie* (Berlin, Munich, 1970 – Third edition) 358; *Biographisch Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933*, Band I, 770; Ludwig Pinner, “Geleitwort” in: Margerete Turnowsky-Pinner, *Die Zweite Generation Mitteleuropäischer Siedler in Israel* (Tübingen, 1962).

⁵⁹⁶ On the Jewish People’s Home, see: Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 193-203; Aviel Roshwald, “Jewish Cultural Identity in Eastern and Central Europe during the Great War” in: Roshwald and Stites (eds.), *European Culture in the Great War*, 110-111; Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem*, 84-87.

Like Toller, Pinner had been impressed by Landauer's *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* because of its mystical and spiritual appeal.⁵⁹⁸ A confident woman, she also co-organised a meeting of female Zionists in Heidelberg in the fall of 1917. Like many feminists at the time, she believed that the highest mission in life for woman was to be a mother, and thus to fulfil her 'nature' rather than any public role. There is reason to believe that she was attracted to the "new ethics" of the *Bund für Mutterschutz* (League for the Protection of Mothers). This was an initially moderate, but later rather more radical feminist movement that campaigned on behalf of unmarried mothers, setting itself practical tasks that included setting up refuges for unmarried mothers, and advocating state recognition of unformalised marriages.⁵⁹⁹

It was Pinner who now introduced Toller to a group of seven female and four male students, organised around the above mentioned Käthe Pick. Having acquainted herself with Marxist thought as a student of political economy in Vienna, she organized meetings to acquaint students with socialist works. She was reacting in particular to an attempt by the German army at the start of October 1917 to counteract labor shortages by mobilising female students for employment in the ammunitions industry. Better known as the Hindenburg program, this plan upset students, so that Pick suggested to "clarify our thoughts" by reading socialist works.⁶⁰⁰ Pinner tried to win Toller for participation,

⁵⁹⁷ Scholem, *Von Berlin zu Jerusalem*, 83-84.

⁵⁹⁸ Turnowsky-Pinner, "Toller" in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 215.

⁵⁹⁹ The League for the Protection of Mothers was founded in 1905 on the initiative of Ruth Bre and had between three and four thousand members by 1912. After disagreement between Bre and Helene Stöcker (1869-1943), the latter assumed its leadership and transformed the aims of the Bund into advocacy of free love principles, of legalisation of abortion, and of easier access to contraception, which caused many people – including Weber – to withdraw support. Although the *Bund* was moderate, it stood left of, and was formally excluded from, the Federation of German Woman's Associations (*Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine*), which was the general body representing women's organisations, see: Ute Frevert, *Women in German History. From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (New York, Oxford, Munich, 1990), 112-113, 125-126, 130; Cornelia Usborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany*, 66; Christl Wickert, *Helene Stöcker 1869-1943. Frauenrechtlerin, Sexualreformerin und Pazifistin. Eine Biographie* (Bonn, 1991). On Pinner's conception of motherhood, see also: Margerete Turnowsky-Pinner, "Die Bewertung der Mutterschaft" in: Sidy Wronsky, Felix Theilhaber and Ibid., *Jüdische Bevölkerungspolitik. Bericht über die Tagung des bevölkerungspolitischen Ausschusses des preussischen Landenverbandes jüdischer Gemeinden vom 24. Februar 1929* (Berlin, 1929) 82-85. In this panic related research to the quantitative and qualitative decline of Jews in Germany, she placed the saving of Jewish identity in the hands of Jewish mothers, calling them "the educators of the Jewish community in Germany" (p.84).

⁶⁰⁰ Turnowsky-Pinner, "Toller" in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 215. On the Hindenburg-program and the forced mobilisation of women, doomed to failure, see: Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany*; Baier, *Arbeitssoldaten in Bayern*, 118-128; Richard Bessel, "Mobilization and Demobilisation in Germany, 1916-1919" in: Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization*, 214, 218-220. Though women were employed in the war industries, and they in absolute numbers by far superseded pre-war numbers, Ute Daniel shows that their numbers were always modest in relation to men still. The increases of women in factories were not a consequence of propaganda, but of pre-war developments, see: Ute Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen und Kriegsgesellschaft. Beruf, Familie und Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg*

even though he was sceptical about discussion groups as a result of his experience of Lauenstein. Yet she knew how to convince him. “I finally meet friends”, Toller writes, ‘young people who know that the ‘great age’ is a miserable small age in reality; they denounced the war and its futile sacrifices, and have but one wish – to acknowledge the truth in this bustle of lies.’⁶⁰¹

Besides Pick, Pinner, Markus, Harnish, and Toller, other participants included Auguste (‘Gusti’) Mendl, an Austrian friend of Pick who had been active with her in the Wyneken-inspired academic youth movement in Vienna and now was also spending the semester in Heidelberg,⁶⁰² and Nelly Auerbach (1894), a friend of Pinner and, like her, a cultural Zionist and feminist who also joined the above mentioned meeting of female Zionist students in Heidelberg. Auerbach later shifted to Marxism and displayed an interest in the educational and cultural significance of trade unions after the war, defending the thesis in her later written dissertation that unions should be exploited as “schools of Socialism” (Marx).⁶⁰³ Further members were an unknown (male) “Galician medicine student”, and the future Communist Bernhard (Bernard) Schottländer (1895-1920), a son of a Jewish printing family from Breslau who was later murdered during the Kapp-Putsch in 1920.⁶⁰⁴ Schottländer was a member of the Zionist Student

(Göttingen, 1989); Frevert, *Women in German History*, 155-157.

⁶⁰¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 81; there has been unclarity in scholarship of Toller on the number of students that composed this group, but Pinner – who thus was a member herself – writes that they were eleven: four men and seven women, see: Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 216; in January 1918 professor Friedrich Endemann (1857-1938) from the university of Heidelberg estimated its number at “10-12 Students”; Gershom Scholem speaks of “10 holymen”; and the official report of the hearing of Toller in March 1918 mentions “10 to 15 students”, see: *Bericht des Rektors der Universität München an das K. Staatsministerium des Inneren, für Kirchen- und Schulangelegenheiten*, 7.2.1918 (Betreff: Allgemeine Studentenversammlung vom 25. Januar 1918) in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 37; Scholem, *Tagebücher*, II; BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungprotokollen*.

⁶⁰² Leichter, *Leben und Werk*, 339, 371.

⁶⁰³ Auerbach criticised Scholem at this meeting for his actions at the Jewish People’s Home, where cultural Zionism held sway and where he grew conscious of the lack of knowledge of historical Judaism when discussing Martin Buber’s reflections on Chassidism in 1916. Critical of cultural Zionism as a means to revive Jewish self-consciousness, he defended the thesis that one had to learn Hebrew to penetrate historical Judaism. It created a heated debate with the Home’s director, Lehmann. Scholem stood isolated, and it was not until a few years later, when the letters of Franz Kafka were published, that he noticed support from Kafka in a letter to his fiancée, Felice Bauer, a frequent visitor of the Home who had informed him about the debate. Considering Auerbach’s scepticism, we may conclude that she identified with Lehmann and his Buber-inspired cultural Zionism, see: Scholem, *Tagebücher*, I; Scholem, *Von Berlin zu Jerusalem*, 86. Nelly Auerbach wrote a dissertation at the end of the war and after the strike movement and the split of socialism, between 1917 and 1919, into three parties which all questioned the power of the party as a political instrument, see: Auerbach, N[elly]: *Marx und die Gewerkschaften. Die Gewerkschaften im theoretischen System von Marx* (Berlin, 1972) [1922]; the Munich police called Auerbach a “radical” in 1919, see: StA Munich, 15591, *Tgb.nr 1487 from the Stadtkommandantur in Munich*, 29.5.1919.

⁶⁰⁴ Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 217; Otto Leichter, “Käthe Leichter’

Association in Breslau and a central figure of the Wyneken-inspired social utopian academic youth movement close to Joël and Kurella in Berlin. At Christmas 1915, he received a letter from Gustav Landauer, an active supporter of the social academic youth movement around Joël, requesting a list of academic magazines and editors from Breslau to gain further support for a protest against Joël's expulsion from the Berlin University for his pacifism. In December 1916 Schottländer made contact with Landauer about the work of Tolstoy and Max Nettlau (1865-1944), the latter who was both a friend of Landauer and an important historian of anarchism in Germany, so that Schottländer may have already been interested in pacifism and anarchism by this time.⁶⁰⁵ Like Kurella and Kohn in Berlin, then, Schottländer gave further expression to his pacifist and socialist sympathies through commitment to the proletariat. When he spent the winter semester in Heidelberg, he was known as a "trained Marxist", according to Pinner, and kept contacts with Socialist students at other German universities. It is perhaps for this orientation that Pinner writes that Schottländer always remained a "stranger" in the group.⁶⁰⁶

Pick's group was organised around discontent with the war, but it was moderate rather than radical in its aims. Pinner records that the group mainly saw itself as supporting already existing peace objectives, centred around the ideal of a negotiated peace. The group, she writes, "closely knit and strong in its socialist zeal", wanted to raise its voice to assist socialist peace efforts: "All that mattered to us was to bring the war that had been raging for more than three years to an end. We wanted Germany to declare her readiness to make peace, and for this objective we wanted to fight with redoubled passion and force, but by methods no different from those adopted shortly before by a circle of men of eminence and position who had formed the *Bund Neues Vaterland* (New Fatherland League)". This *Bund*, prohibited since the German army sought to regain strength at Verdun in February 1916, had campaigned for a negotiated peace from 1915 onwards, an ideal that was later also expressed, as we have seen, by the peace resolution of July 1917. With the foundation of the DVP, and of a branch in

in: *Werk und Widerhall* (Wien, 1964) 237.

⁶⁰⁵ IISG Amsterdam, Landauer-Archive, No.144, *Letter from Gustav Landauer to Bernard Schottländer, 24.12.1915*, and *Postcard from Gustav Landauer to Bernard Schottländer, 12.1916*. As Landauer held a lecture about Tolstoy at the Jewish People's Home, it is not unlikely that Schottländer attended that Home as well

⁶⁰⁶ Turnowsky-Pinner, "Toller" in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 217. Schottländer spent the winter semester of 1917 in Heidelberg, but was before in Breslau, where he lived in December 1916 at the Kaiser Wilhelmsplatz 4, see: IISG Amsterdam, Landauer-Archive/144, *Postcard from Gustav Landauer to Bernard Schottländer, 12.1916*.

Heidelberg on 21 October, Pinner's wish to support and further stimulate that resolution, adopted by a majority in parliament, increased. In Heidelberg the impression also existed that this wish could count on wide consent. On 22 October a group of thirty prominent professors of Heidelberg University, including Jaspers, Hermann Oncken (1869-1945) and the noted professor of constitutional law Gerhard Anschütz (1867-1948), dissociated themselves unequivocally from the local extremists, regarding the foundation of the DVP as a "threat" to patriotism, and to the unity of the homefront. In the local *Heidelberger Neueste Nachrichten* they stated that they 'knew no 'Fatherlandparty', but only a fatherland that is common to all parties'.⁶⁰⁷ Such ideas must have convinced Toller and Pinner of their belief that action against the DVP was justified, and would be supported.

Besides this common dislike for war, the group also shared its consciousness of problems at the homefront, where poverty increased and people were more and more employed in arms' factories. While consuming *Ersatz*-tea in badly heated rooms, the group discussed social misery and its relationship to war.⁶⁰⁸ Pinner records that Toller once wrote her a note when he had left town, saying that he could hardly bear to see the poverty in the streets, but she does not rule out the possibility that he at times may have dramatized those sentiments. In *Die Wandlung* Toller gives social suffering a place in a (Strindbergian inspired) 'dream scene',⁶⁰⁹ where he develops the Landauer-inspired notion that human suffering is the key to its own salvation. The stage of a "big factory" (possibly inspired by the overall context of Pick's meetings) is transformed into a true prison, which is a metaphor for the current human condition. As he has killed his mother ("die Alte") in his dream, Friedrich ends up in this prison, where he witnesses in apocalyptic terms the salvation of humanity through the sufferings of the prisoners, symbolised by the birth of a child at the same time as the death of a prisoner.⁶¹⁰

After a few sessions Toller grew impatient with the discussions of the group, and pressed for action.⁶¹¹ Perhaps this impatience was stimulated by developments in his immediate environment, where Weber further agitated against the Pan-German League and the DVP. On 5 November Weber held a famous lecture at a well-attended

⁶⁰⁷ Turnowsky-Pinner, "Toller" in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 216-217.

⁶⁰⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 82.

⁶⁰⁹ On the influence of Strindberg's "dream plays", see: Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*, 37-38.

⁶¹⁰ Toller, *GW*, II, 46-46.

⁶¹¹ Turnowsky-Pinner, "Toller" in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 219; Toller, *GW*, IV, 81-82.

conference of the Free German Youth Association in Munich, and which was wellknown outside that town.⁶¹²

Pick's group began its activism by seizing upon an incident at Munich University, where nationalist students at the end of October disturbed a lecture by Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster (1869-1966), a wellknown pedagogue with pacifist sympathies and a member of the *Bund Neues Vaterland*. In January 1916 he had already called for opposition to the war and to the militarist politics of the German state, but it went unnoticed until May 1916, when some of Foerster's colleagues in Munich expressed contempt for his action and the situation escalated due to public opinion, which now took an interest in the "Foerster case" as well. Foerster was sent on holidays for a year, and left for Switzerland, although he continued to rally against the war, publishing another pacifist article in the fall of 1916, entitled *Die deutsche Jugend und der Weltkrieg* (German Youth and the World War, 1916). In October 1917, then, he returned to Munich to take up lectures again, and immediately upon arrival at Munich University began articulating his pacifist views again. His call for an end to a seemingly useless war found a positive echo among various students, mostly ex-veterans, but it also found strong opposition. During his first lectures nationalist students disrupted his lecturing by systematic noise making with music-instruments. Led by an air force officer, forty pan-German activists then attempted to enter the room with sticks to beat Foerster out of the room, but other students present came to the rescue of their professor, and kicked out the offenders.⁶¹³

Together with Elisabeth Harnisch, Toller wrote a pamphlet that defended Foerster and criticised the way in which such an "honourable personality" was being subjected by "political sensations and noisy scenes". If he had political opinions that opposed those of students, the latter were free to express their critique as part of their right to freedom of speech, but physical maltreatment was simply "barbarism". The pamphlet also seized the occasion to plea for lifting the ban on the right of association and assembly which had been imposed on by universities to suppress socialist and pacifist activities among youth. It was disgraceful, it ran, that youth was denied the chance to exercise responsibility by a state that nonetheless expected its support by

⁶¹² Max Weber *Gesamt-Ausgabe 1/15 (Zur Politik im Weltkrieg. Schriften und Reden, 1914-1918)*. Edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen (in collaboration with Gangolf Hübinger) (Tübingen, 1984), 700, 720.

⁶¹³ On these events, see: Maria Hoschek, *Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster (1869-1966)* 100-116; Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, *Erlebte Weltgeschichte, 1869-1953. Memoiren* (Nuremberg, 1953), 187-188, 209-

giving its life and strength. This was all the more reprehensible since young people also *wanted* to take responsibility and constituted, in Toller's and Harnisch's words, a "political factor".⁶¹⁴ Signed by Toller and Harnish, "on behalf of 135 students of the University of Heidelberg", the pamphlet was distributed among students of other universities in Germany, and then published in the *Münchener Zeitung* on 10 November 1917.

In a wider context, and in addition to this pamphlet, Toller and the "socialist students" also attempted to support action against the demands of the DVP and for a negotiated peace.⁶¹⁵ In reply to Toller's pressing demands for action, he was asked to draft a call (*Aufruf*), and Pinner was supposed to assist him in that task. Intended as a call to students to resist the war, however, Toller transformed the document into an appeal to students in Germany for human rebirth and moral regeneration in terms of Landauer's *Aufruf*, believing, Pinner records, that "peace without regeneration, without a remoulding of the social order" was impossible.⁶¹⁶ Thus, slightly modified by the group, the *Aufruf* said: 'We defend ourselves against the arrogance of the German Fatherland Party and similar movements to cover and defend personal interests. We know that our culture must not be crushed by any foreign power, but we reject the attempt to violate other peoples with our culture. Instead of an increase of power, we call for a deepening of culture in the name of human morality (*Menschheitsittlichkeit*); instead of spiritless organisation, we call for organisation of the spirit.'⁶¹⁷ In scholarship of Toller this call is generally understood as the *Aufruf zur Gründung eines Kulturpolitischen Bundes der Jugend in Deutschland* (Call for the Foundation of a Cultural Political League of the Youth in Germany), but the call never carried that title in reality, being simply called *Aufruf*.⁶¹⁸ Pinner, moreover, records that the group neither understood itself in terms of a *Kulturpolitischen Bund*, which "was rather a pretentious name which we never

210, 236-242; Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 167; Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 36; Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 29.

⁶¹⁴ *Der Neue Fall Förster als Anlaß zum Protest gegen die Einschränkung der politischen Freiheit der Studierenden in Deutschland*, printed in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 29-31.

⁶¹⁵ *Aufruf*, printed in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 31-33.

⁶¹⁶ Turnowsky-Pinner, "Toller" in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 217.

⁶¹⁷ *Aufruf*, printed in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 31-33; Ernst Toller, „Aufruf“ in: *Die Tat*, 98 Jg. (11 february 1918) 977-978, 978, taken from Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 93-94. Toller copies the text in a modified form, presenting as if it was a reply against agressions from the DVP and "democratic professors", see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 82-83.

⁶¹⁸ The reason for this misconception is the way in which Wolfgang Frühwald and John M. Spalek printed that call in their compilation of sources, adding it as an addition as if it was its title, see: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 31.

used”.⁶¹⁹ The idea of a *Bund* derived from the neoromantic Toller himself, who further developed that idea during the next weeks to give expression to the moral implications of the *Aufruf*.

Parallel to the Foerster-document, the *Aufruf* was sent to students at universities in the whole of Germany (including mostly ‘socialist’ students through Schottländer’s network), but it was also sent to various members of the German cultural elite, including the editor of the pacifist *Weißes Blätter* René Schickele (1883-1940), the Expressionist playwright Walter Hasenclever, whose play *Antigone* (1917) – a pacifist reworking of the equally named classical drama – seems to have impressed Toller around that time, and Carl Hauptmann, the living embodiment of the Worpsweder artistic colony and the elder brother of Gerhart Hauptmann, whose anti-war drama *Krieg* had equally impressed Toller.⁶²⁰ Wolfgang Frühwald and John M. Spalek write that the call was also sent to Foerster, Henckell, Heinrich Mann, Walter von Molo and Albert Einstein (1879-1955).⁶²¹ Foerster and Einstein were members of the *Bund Neues Vaterland*, whereas Toller had met Henckell and Von Molo through Kutscher’s seminar respectively through Lauenstein.

Sent on 8 November, the *Aufruf* was not unpositively received among the above mentioned intellectual groupings, although student circles seem to have been more critical. According to Frühwald and Spalek Toller could count on the support from Foerster, Henckell, Mann, Hasenclever, Von Molo and Einstein.⁶²² The same counts for Carl Hauptmann, who detected in the *Aufruf* the nature of a “human being who sought freely for the truth, and for whom the truthfulness of our social and moral life-relations was the last and highest purpose of humanity.”⁶²³ Yet the *Aufruf* was counter-productive in Jena, where students reacted with the foundation of a branch of the DVP which soon counted more than a hundred members.⁶²⁴ Was it this that prompted the group’s dissolution? Pinner records that the group now gathered only to discuss reactions from letters or newspapers, and how to respond, but contact between Toller and the group declined during the next two weeks, and there was no contact at all between Toller and Pinner from the end of November up to 18 December (!). More than before, she adds,

⁶¹⁹ Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 217.

⁶²⁰ AdK, Berlin, Hauptmann Archive, *Letter from Toller to Carl Hauptmann*, 8.11.1917, and *Letter from Hauptmann to the Munich court*, 3.7.1919 (Mittel-Schreiberhau).

⁶²¹ Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 33.

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ AdK, Berlin, Hauptmann Archive, *Letter from Hauptmann to the Munich court*, 3.7.1919.

⁶²⁴ Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 94.

“Toller sought solitude at that time”, and in mid-November often “wandered over the mountains, sometimes staying away for many days without letting us know.”⁶²⁵ There is little doubt that Toller sought ascetism to give further shape to *Die Wandlung*, to various ‘activist’ inspired poems, and to the way in which he could give further strength to his actions in line of the *Aufruf*.

Deeply inspired by the romantic and anti-materialist tradition in Germany, Toller began to flirt with the pseudo-religious ideal of a *Bund* as the starting point for socio-cultural renewal. He also wrote a program, the so called *Leitsätze für einen kulturpolitischen Bund der Jugend in Deutschland* (Guiding Principles for a cultural-political League of the German Youth). These Principles seem to have been solely the initiative of Toller, but Pick’s students agreed with their final form and elected Toller as their president on 24 November.⁶²⁶

An expression of Landauer’s anarcho-socialism in terms of “youth culture”, the *Leitsätze* were a call for *Geist*-revolution to bridge the cleavage between youth and the people (*Volk*) and to establish under the leadership of (an intellectual) youth a true *Gemeinschaft* of peoples. Practical aims were subject to spiritual ones, as “the community that we strive for can grow only from an inner transformation of man (*Mensch-Wandlung*)”. Calling for the descent of the god of love and the all embracing human *Geist*, the *Leitsätze* envisioned a humanitarian “youth socialism”, although they also summed up some ‘practical’ demands that seemed urgent, including that for the separation of church and state, for the protection of (unmarried) mothers, and for the abolition of poverty, of the militarization of youth and schools, as well as of the death penalty. It also demanded free supply of all types of art “with a human character”, or at least against reduced costs, including books like Hauptmann’s *Krieg*, Hasenclever’s *Antigone*, and Leonhard Frank’s *Der Vater*.⁶²⁷ These practical aims not merely betray the influence of Landauer and a Wyneken-inspired youth idealism, but also of a growing influence of Activist Expressionism, as well of the “new ethics” of the *Bund für Mutterschutz* (which reached Toller possibly via Pinner and perhaps through Pick). Local branches were to be created, of which the leaders were to be elected in open voting systems, and which served as a further vehicle toward the *Gemeinschaft* of peoples: “Out of the League of Youth shall one day become a League of the People (*Volksbund*).“

⁶²⁵ Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 218.

⁶²⁶ Ernst Toller, ‘Leitsätze für einen kulturpolitischen Bund der Jugend in Deutschland’ in: Toller, *GW*, I, 34.

Copies of the *Leitsätze* were sent to a whole range of intellectuals, including Carl Hauptmann, Gustav Wyneken, Richard Dehmel, Eugen Roth, Max Weber, Gerschom Scholem, Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, and possibly, though evidence is not at hand, Gustav Landauer. Toller later recorded that he received “partly expressions of warm sympathy”, although evidence rather reveals true critical responses: Carl Hauptmann was rather positive, detecting a caring and loving devotion to humanity and to the truth, in line of the “classical Jesus-ideals”.⁶²⁸ In a police report Foerster declared that he had given “a partly somewhat critical, partly somewhat approving answer”. Eugen Roth, Toller’s friend from Munich, exchanged a letter with Toller “about the content of the call”, because they ‘did not correspond entirely to his own ideas’,⁶²⁹ although it is unclear for what reasons. Scholem, known in (Jewish) intellectual student circles at that time for his pacifism, was highly sceptical, confiding to his diary on 27 November that he did not know why he would support a “league of 10 holy men” when he did not know why these men claimed to right to act above ten ‘normal’ individuals.⁶³⁰ Max Weber, then, wellknown for his opposition to the DVP, found a frightening lack of realism in the program, which he regarded ‘at many points as an immature work’; his offer to debate the issue with the group was rejected.⁶³¹ Wyneken’s reaction is unfortunately

⁶²⁷ Toller, ‘Leitsätze’ in: Toller, *GW*, I, 31-34.

⁶²⁸ AdK, Berlin, Hauptmann Archive, *Letter from Hauptmann to the Munich court*, 3.7.1919.

⁶²⁹ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Zeugenaussage Eugen Roth*.

⁶³⁰ Scholem, *Tagebücher*, II. Toller had heard of Scholem through Grete Lissauer, the wife of a medical professor from Königsberg and a Jewish feminist with pacifist sympathies who taught a philosophy seminar in Heidelberg. Scholem writes that Lissauer introduced Toller to some Jewish students, but it is unclear who these students were. Nor do we know how he met Lissauer. As she seems to have been Scholem’s source in Heidelberg about the local Jewish feminist meeting in the fall of 1917, she may have known Pinner and Auerbach, see: Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem*, 79-81, 120-121; *Ibid*, *Tagebücher*; on this letter, see also: Ruben Frankenstein, “Eine zionistische Episode im Leben Ernst Tollers: Über seine Beziehung zu Betty Frankenstein” in: Neuhaus/Selbmann/Unger (eds.), *Ernst Toller und die Weimarer Republik*, 122-123. Frankenstein suggests that Toller devoted himself to specific Zionist undertakings, but there is no evidence for such a flirt with Zionism. It is true that Toller moved among Zionists in the group of “socialist students”, but the group was united by opposition to the war and aggressive nationalism. It was this, not uncommonly at the time, that drew Socialism, Pacifism and Zionism together. Scholem was not only known as a Zionist, moreover, but also as a ‘pacifist’; as a Zionist, he was not uncontroversial, as I earlier already pointed out. There are no indications that Toller had contact with the IVRIA, moreover, the Jewish Zionist organisation in Heidelberg. Ina Lorenz, then, has also pointed to Toller’s post-war admiration for the Zionists in Palestine, but this was admiration for their commitment to communal settlement, see: Ina Lorenz, “Sozialistische Gesellschaft in Palestina. Ein Briefwechsel Ernst Toller’s mit einer Hamburger Zionistin (1925)” in: Peter Freimark (ed), *Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden*. Band IX (Hamburg, 1983) 221-292; on shared fate of Socialists and Zionists through opposition to nationalism, see: Paul Mendes Flohr, *German Jews: a Dual Identity* (New Haven and London, 1999) 52-54; Straus, *Wir lebten in Deutschland*, 222; on the IVRIA, see: Norbert Giovannini, “Jüdische Studentinnen und Studenten in Heidelberg” in: *Ibid*./Bauer/Mumm (eds.), *Jüdisches Leben in Heidelberg*, 209.

⁶³¹ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Statement by Max Weber*, 12.3.1918. Marianne Weber wrote that Toller took up contact with her husband to get support for his actions to establish “among

unknown,⁶³² and so is that of Dehmel, although Toller was optimistic in his approach to him, adding a personal letter: “I read some of your war poems today – glorifications of war – do you still stand by them?”⁶³³ The answer was, of course, affirmative, although Dehmel may not have written that to him.

Just when reactions were coming in, Toller fell prey to renewed disturbances of “neurosis”. He was taken into a local hospital at the end of November, where he was treated for his “old suffering (heart- and nerve disturbances) and a *Bronchialkartarrh*”,⁶³⁴ and where he stayed until mid-December 1917. On 6 December he sent three poems to Landauer, of which we can be certain that they were written during the weeks he spent in hospital: “Aufrüttlung” (Awakening), “Den Müttern” (To the mothers), and “Den Spielerischen” (To the Playful Ones).⁶³⁵ Whereas “Aufrüttlung” transforms the cry of a soldier at the front into the artist’s call for action against the war, “Den Müttern” is a call for mothers to become mothers again, and to awaken through the horror that has been committed to and by their sons; the poem seems to betray influence of Walter Hasenclever’s “Der Politische Dichter” (The Political Poet, 1917) (chapter 1). In their cultivation of the (artist’s) quest for action and their contempt for aesthetic poetry both these two poems betray the obvious influence of Activist Expressionism. “Den Spielerischen” is, as far as I know, an unknown poem of Toller, which shows the influence of Landauer and dwells on the artist’s struggle to find *Gemeinschaft*. It is the only poem of Toller that also records contempt for city life, although we should not rule out the possibility that this may have been heavily stylised to express the spiritual dimension.

In keeping with this poetic creativity Toller also wrote an end to *Die Wandlung*, clearly betraying the influence of his recent experiences with the *Bund*. Having been ‘saved’ by his sister, and having envisioned the salvation of humanity after he had killed his mother in a dream, Friedrich is now present at a conference where members of the cultural elite have the opportunity to formulate their thoughts on the problems of the age, although none of the representatives of the old order provide convincing solutions to

other things the rule of Eros in the world and the abolition of poverty”, see: Weber, *Lebensbild*, 648; see also: Mitzman, *Iron Cage*, 295.

⁶³² Sigurd Rothstein points the copie of the *Leitsätze* at the archive of the German Youth Movement in Witzenhausen, Germany.

⁶³³ *Letter from Ernst Toller to Richard Dehmel, 25.11.1917*, see: Dove, *He was a German*, 32-33.

⁶³⁴ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungsprotokollen*.

⁶³⁵ IISG Amsterdam, Landauer-Archive, *Letter from Ernst Toller to Gustav Landauer, 6.12.1917*. Thus, Toller did not take up contact in 1916 or 1917, as Carel ter Haar once suggested, see: Carel ter Haar, ‘Biographischer Überblick’ in: Hermand (ed.), *Zu Ernst Toller*, 10.

youth.⁶³⁶ It is clear that this is a reference to Lauenstein, although reality is retrospectively re-worked. The debate is between Friedrich and a demagogue, the so called *Kommis des Tages*.⁶³⁷ It recalls the debate between Maurenbrecher and Weber, but it is not a repetition of that debate. While the *Kommis*-Maurenbrecher represents the DVP, Friedrich is not Weber, but rather his alternative who is able to show youth its way after all. Warning youth of the danger of *Kommis*' glorification of war and sacrifice, he warns youth not to believe this deceiver, as he does not really love mankind. Friedrich, however, wants youth to have faith in itself and in humanity. Convinced of his message, a student walks towards him, after which they unite. It is a reference to the birth of the *Bund*.⁶³⁸

Interestingly enough, and often forgotten in analysis of the play, Friedrich seeks consolation with his mother in the light of this vision. Although she does not understand her son, he shows her his love and seeks to restore the broken bond of the past, as she also has been blinded by false convictions. Once restored in the mother-child bond, Friedrich calls for a *Geist*-revolution of humanity as a whole. In a last speech to the old world, he calls upon all individuals to "have faith in yourselves and humanity", to be "filled with *Geist*."⁶³⁹ As the symbol of rejuvenation, a young student steps forward, and on his *Geist*-revolution humanity is reborn. Now Friedrich calls for the destruction of the "false barricades" of the existing world, which is anything but a political revolution, as

⁶³⁶ Toller, *GW*, II, 47.

⁶³⁷ In the past scholars have sometimes seen in the *Kommis* a (materialist) Marxist, a Communist, and a proletarian man, but this is incorrect. In fact, the play was largely written *before* the foundation of the German Communist Party (KPD); Toller sought cooperation with the Communists in 1919 and only grew conscious of their 'inhuman' dimension during the second phase of the Council Republic, but *Die Wandlung* was already finished in March 1918. The term *Kommis* refers to both "army" and "servant", indicating that he was a man who served the interests of the army, which he then also does through his glorification of war in terms of a spectacle. This had nothing to do with Socialism, but all with Pan-German and *völkisch* demagoguery, which was becoming more fashionable at that time. On the *Kommis* as a Marxist and a materialist, see: Willibrand, *Toller*, 40; Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*, 183 (dwelling on Willibrand); on the *Kommis* as a "boljevist agitator" (Sokel) and a "man of the proletarian masses" (Mennemeier), see: Walter Sokel, "Ernst Toller" respectively Mennemeier, "Das idealistische Proletarietdrama" in: Hermand (ed.), *Zu Ernst Toller*, 28 resp. 76. From a more religious point of view, Michael Ossar, dwelling on Martin Buber's *Prophetie und Apologhie*, compares the struggle between the *Kommis* and Friedrich with that between the "apocalyptic man" and the "prophetic man", the first who sees the destiny of man as a catastrophic "fate" and the second as a positive, constructive element; as both entail apocalyptic and prophetic dimensions, however, Ossar's argumentation is unconvincing, and it may perhaps be better to speak of a false and true prophet. Nor is "the conflict between the agitator and Friedrich actually an embodiment of the two tendencies within Friedrich", as Ossar also suggests, as Friedrich rather seems to have *overcome* the stage of the *Kommis* and his war idealism. In addition, Ossar adds that Friedrich is voluntaristic rather than necessitarian, but in reality there is a necessitarian dimension in Friedrich's thought as well, even though it is only by will that people unite, see: Ossar, *Anarchism*, 72.

⁶³⁸ Toller, *GW*, II, 49-51.

⁶³⁹ Ibid. 58-59.

has sometimes been suggested, but a call upon the present crowd on stage to enlighten the world through their own rebirths.⁶⁴⁰ It is, in other words, nothing else than the reproduction of Friedrich's own 'revolution'.

'Persecution' and Escape (December 1917)

While Toller-Friedrich experienced visions of a *Geist*-revolution of youth and society at large, his call (*Aufruf*) against the DVP began to create serious problems for Toller and his Heidelberg friends. The text had fallen into the hands of the conservative (and philo-Pan-Germanic) *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, which published in its entirety on 11 December.⁶⁴¹ It caused commotion in the DVP, which now began an aggressive campaign against the Heidelberg students, calling them "traitors of the patriotic idea" and "pacifist criminals".⁶⁴² Unfounded rumours and crude speculations began to circulate as well. In an article that appeared in the *Göttinger Tageblatt* on the next day, 12 December 1917, Max Weber was accused of providing financial support to the League (here called "an anti-pan-German student committee") with no less than 100,000 German Marks – Weber replied on 24 December 1917, calling the accusation "nonsense".⁶⁴³ Undoubtedly, he was right, but the negative public opinion around the *Bund* alarmed students and professors of Heidelberg University, who now began explicitly to dissociate themselves from the *Bund*.

⁶⁴⁰ FRIEDRICH: Nun, ihr Brüder, rufe ich zu euch zu: Marschier! Marschier am lichten Tag! Nun geht hin zu den Machthabern und kündet ihnen mit brausenden Orgelstimmen, dass ihre Macht ein Truggebilde sei. Geht hin zu den Soldaten, sie sollen ihre schwester zu Pflugscharen schmieden. Geht hin zu den Reichen und zeigt ihnen ihr Herz, das ein Schutthaufen ward. Doch seid gütig zu ihnen, denn auch sie sind Arme, Verirrte. Aber zertrümmert die Burgen, zertrümmert lachend die falschen Burgen, gebaut aus Schlacke, aus ausgedörrter Schlacke. Marschier - marschier am lichten Tag. Brüder, recket zermarterte Hand/Flammender freudiger Ton!/ Schreite durch unser freies Land/ Revolution! Revolution! (Alle stehen nun aufrecht, die Hände gereckt. Dann fassen sie sich an den Händen und schreiten davon.) ALLEN: Brüder recket zermarterte Hand, / Flammender freudiger Ton! / Schreite durch unser freies Land / Revolution! Revolution!

⁶⁴¹ In opposition to common understandings in scholarship of Toller, Hempel-Küter/Müller claim that it was the protest against Foerster, and not his *Aufruf*, which fell into the hands of this newspaper, but this is a false assumption. The newspaper article clearly refers to the *Aufruf*, when referring to words like "*Menschheitsittlichkeit*" and "*Organisation des Geistes*", which come from the *Aufruf*, and not from the pamphlet in favour of Foerster. HH stress that the anti-DVP agitation was the source of the commotion that now followed, but this agitation was not central only to the Foerster-pamphlet, but also to the *Aufruf*, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 93; the newspaper article in the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* is printed in Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 33-34.

⁶⁴² Toller, *GW*, IV, 82.

⁶⁴³ Weber, "Aristokratie und Demokratisierung in Deutschland", in: *Ibid.*, *Max Weber Gesamt-Ausgabe*, 735-738, esp. 737.

On 18 December a Committee of the Heidelberg Student Association published a statement in the *Heidelberger Tageblatt*, pointing out that “the Heidelberger students had always adopted a strictly nationalist point”, that “peace efforts were being made by a very narrow circle of Heidelberg students under the leadership of one Ernst Toller”, and that the Committee rejected all the endeavours of certain groups, which “at this grave juncture when the large majority of our fellow students are helping to defend the frontiers of our cherished fatherland, take it upon themselves to cast doubt upon the traditional and often-tested attitude of the students here”.⁶⁴⁴ These words, Pinner writes, “for the first time” mentioned Toller “as the leader of a revolutionary group”.⁶⁴⁵ One day later, on 19 December, an anonymous Heidelberg “University professor”, in an article in the *Deutsche Zeitung*, spoke of the *Bund*’s actions as an expression of “unclear minds without historical and political education”, revealing “a frightening lack of patriotic sentiment”.⁶⁴⁶ Democratic professors also distanced themselves from Toller and his friends. In his last lecture before Christmas, Gerhard Anschütz, one of the signatories of the academic anti-DVP-petition from 21 October, called their actions “treason against the fatherland”.⁶⁴⁷ Possibly the historian Oncken expressed himself in similar terms, as Toller felt during a student meeting in Munich in January 1918 that the former had misused his academic profession to express political opinions against him and his friends.⁶⁴⁸

Alarmed by these developments, the military Supreme Command interfered, and prohibited the League.⁶⁴⁹ The General Command of the Badean Army Corps there after expelled Pick and Mendl from Germany; the other students were ordered to return to their federal states of origin, and its men were threatened with military call-up.⁶⁵⁰ As the police had learned from the statement of the Committee of the Heidelberg Student Organisation that the League was guided by “one Ernst Toller”, an arrest warrant was

⁶⁴⁴ *Statement of the Committee of the Heidelberg Student Association*, quoted from: Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 218; on the concise date of that statement, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 94.

⁶⁴⁵ Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 218

⁶⁴⁶ Anonymous Heidelberg “University professor”, quoted from: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 94.

⁶⁴⁷ Gerhard Anschütz, quoted from Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 218. Possibly Toller also had Anschütz in mind when he wrote that “democratic professors” criticized the *Bund* and called its members “worthless pacifists”, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 83. Toller also writes that an anonymous “German mother” wished them to be shot by English fire and that a veteran of the Franco-Prussian war hoped that “black French soldiers would take off their skins while they were alive to bring them as trophies into the darkest places of Africa”, see: *Ibid*.

⁶⁴⁸ *Bericht des Rektors der Universität München, 7.2.1918* in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 36.

⁶⁴⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 84.

issued against him, and security officials also called at his house, but Toller's landlady seems not to have mentioned that he was in hospital since November.⁶⁵¹ Alarmed by Anschütz's lecture, Pinner and other students decided to warn Toller, but – having not seen him for more than three weeks – she did not know that he was in hospital, and only learned so from his landlady. “On the day of the persecutions”, Toller dramatizes, “I am in hospital with a high fever; a girl student comes to me with the news: “They have already been looking for you in your room; you must leave at once or you will be arrested””.⁶⁵² Although the police had not (yet) searched his home, the threat of an arrest hung in the air. Hence Toller decided to leave Heidelberg for Berlin, ‘shivering with fever’.⁶⁵³ Wolfgang Frühwald and John M. Spalek write that he had reached Berlin by 21 December.⁶⁵⁴

Before he left, however, Toller wrote a newspaper article in which he replied to the accusations against his *Bund*. In his autobiography he writes that it was published in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Germany's biggest Liberal daily (and a forum of the moderate forces in favour of a *Verständnisfrieden*), but in reality it seems to have been appeared in the *Heidelberger Nachrichten* on 20 December 1917: ‘Since long dissensient thought was made the prejudice of being ‘unpatriotic’ or ‘worthless’! Is he ‘unpatriotic’ who seeks for the peaceful unity of free independent peoples? Does that imply the will to gloss over the disgracefulness of whatever governments? Does that mean to seek for peace at any cost? – In that case our German speech would have lost all sense.’ Echoing the influence of Hiller, he went on: “Politics to us means to feel oneself also responsible for the fate of one's country and to act accordingly; those who do not fulfil that task, will have to do battle with their conscience; there is only one morality (*Sittlichkeit*) that can be ascribed to humanity; there is only one spirit (*Geist*) that lives in humanity (...); we too love Germany, but in a different way, and with higher claims – on ourselves as well.”⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁰ *Bericht des Rektors der Universität München, 7.2.1918* in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 37.

⁶⁵¹ Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*; Toller writes in his autobiography that he was in hospital for fever. Toller, *GW*, IV, 84.

⁶⁵² Toller, *GW*, IV, 84.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁴ Spalek/Frühwald (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 13; Dove, then, writes 22 December 1917, but also resumes giving a source, see: Dove, *He was a German*, 39.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 83; the text was also published in Diederich's *Die Tat* in February 1918, see: Toller, “Aufruf” in: *Die Tat*, 98 Jg. (11 February 1918) 977-978, 978, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 94. I was unable to verify whether the text really appeared in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in December 1917, and in this form. Its reprint in *Die Tat* is nonetheless the exact text of which Toller claims that it appeared in the *Berliner Tageblatt* and which thus appeared in any case in the

Interestingly enough, he also wrote a letter to Gustav Landauer on that very same day, obviously seeking the support of his intellectual father amidst the turmoil of the current events. Possibly a reply to a letter from Landauer (and perhaps in reaction to Toller's letter from 7 December), Toller set out the motivation for his actions connected to the *Bund*. Recording that he was driven by his inner *Not* and a complete struggle with the essence of humanity, he gives expression to the ideas of a man in whom he hoped to have found a teacher. The letter is a passionate recalling of his religious sentiments and gives expression to complete identification with Landauer's philosophy.⁶⁵⁶ Not knowing what "outer bounds" or "detailed forms" humanity should have in a future world, he expressed the need to "fight, above all, the war, poverty and the state, (...), and (to) replace it with the *Gemeinschaft*, economically bound by the peaceful exchange of products for equivalent others; the *Gemeinschaft* of free people, which exists by the (grace of the) *Geist*."⁶⁵⁷

Toller begged Landauer for a "full" reply, or otherwise a reply need not to be written at all – but the answer is unknown.⁶⁵⁸

Heidelberger Nachrichten.

⁶⁵⁶ Rotstein, *Traum der Gemeinschaft*, 3. Toller writes that the letter came in on the day before he left Heidelberg, so that Pinner must have brought him that letter into hospital, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 84.

⁶⁵⁷ Toller, *GW*, I, 36, *Letter to Landauer*; Toller, *GW*, IV, 84-85; the first letter is complete, the second a derivation of the first. The letter was published in 1920: Ernst Toller, 'Brief an Gustav Landauer' in: *Der Freihafen. Blätter der Hamburger Kammerspiele*. Hrsg von Erich Ziegel, 3. Jg., Heft 1 (1920/21) 5-7

⁶⁵⁸ "Auf diesen Brief sollen Sie mir *ganz* antworten oder *gar nicht*, ich bitte Sie darum!", see: Toller, *GW*, I, 36, *Letter to Landauer*.

Youth Socialism and the Working Class [1918]

In Defence of the *Bund* (January 1918)

Toller describes the *Bund* in his autobiography as a “sign” that youth was able to revolt against the “fathers” – this is a clear exaggeration, as there had been initiatives of youth before that time.⁶⁵⁹ Instead, the *Bund* was a “sign”, as Christa Hempel-Kütter and Hans-Harold Müller have rightly emphasised, that Toller was able to take the step from moral disorientation to social practice, on the one hand, and to propagate the re-creation of that practice through a *Geist*-revolution under the leadership of a revolutionary youth, on the other.⁶⁶⁰

By 21 December Toller had arrived in Berlin. The *Bund* had been prohibited, but Toller did not accept this. Although he never displayed any particular interest in political parties, he now – possibly at the suggestion of Max Weber – informed members of the *Reichstag* about the military actions against the students. It was Weber who suggested that he approach Georg Gothein (1857-1940), the younger brother of Eberhard Gothein and an openminded Left Liberal politician of the Progressive People’s Party (*Fortschrittliche Volkspartei, FVp*), which I earlier suggested was possibly also the political party of Toller’s father.⁶⁶¹ He also approached Wolfgang Heine (1861-1944), a well-known SPD-politician who was open to social reformist ideas and artistic circles. On 5 November Heine had stressed the need for a negotiated peace during the well-attended and famous Munich conference of the Free German Student Movement, where Weber had also denounced the DVP (see chapter 7). Gothein’s reaction is unknown, but Heine seems to have indeed asked questions about the expulsion of the two Austrian

⁶⁵⁹ This is also what Margerethe Pinner concludes, see: Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*,.

⁶⁶⁰ Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 96.

students, though they remained unanswered.⁶⁶² There are no indications that Heine pushed his efforts further, so that one wonders how deeply interested he was in the matter.

In Berlin Toller also continued to seek support for the *Bund* among students. Just before Christmas, Scholem tells us, he sent Schottländer to Scholem in Jena to convince him to support the League. As the *Bund* had found strong opposition among students in this town, it is not unlikely that Toller displayed a particular interest for support in Jena. Scholem records in his memoirs that it lead to a “stormy” meeting in the presence of various other students because he stubbornly refused to commit himself to the activist League.⁶⁶³

Meanwhile, Toller was treated in a Berlin hospital for “ear-ache” and since 1 January 1918 also spent time in the Sanatorium Grunewald in Berlin-Wilmersdorff, a western quarter of Berlin.⁶⁶⁴ Toller declared later that he was taken in that sanatorium for “further recovery”, but it is not clear what this means.⁶⁶⁵ It was possibly not for “ear-ache” (alone), as otherwise it seems unlikely that he would have been released from the Berlin hospital. Toller had fled Heidelberg when he was being treated for “neurotic” disorder, so that we should probably understand his “further recovery” as

⁶⁶¹ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Aussage Max Weber*, 12.3.1918.

⁶⁶² *Bericht des Rektors der Universität München, 7.2.1918* in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 37; Dove, *He was a German*, 37. Heine was close to the German literary scene, to the ideas of Wyneken and to the Free German Students' League; he was one of the signatories of the 1915 petition for Ernst Joël and his son, Walter, had been a pupil of Wyneken's school at Wickersdorf before the war; at the well-attended meeting organised by the Free German Students' League on 5 November 1917, where Weber denounced the “all-German” danger, Heine spoke in favour of a negotiated peace; Heine was also on the list of invitees for both meetings at Lauenstein in 1917, but it is not clear whether he was present as well, see: DLA, Marbach, Diederichs, *Teilnehmerlisten*; on his son and Wickerdorff, see: IISG Amsterdam, Salomon-Archive; on the Munich meeting, see: Weber, *MWGA* I/15, 720. Toller boasted in January 1918 at a students meeting in Munich about his contact with Heine, but took distance from him when he begun to identify with Eisner and Heine affiliated himself with the revolution of Ebert and Scheidemann, see his essay “Die Friedenskonferenz zu Versailles” (The Peace Conference of Versailles, 1918/19), published in: Toller, *GW*, I; on his boasting about Heine, see: *Bericht des Rektors der Universität München, 7.2.1918* in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 37.

⁶⁶³ Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem*, 120

⁶⁶⁴ Toller was possibly treated in the Saint-Joseph-Hospital in Berlin; on 15 December 1917 he wrote a letter to Carl Hauptmann, but it was sent from that hospital in the “Landhausstraße 23”, which is not in Munich but in Berlin; he thus possibly posted the letter after his flight from Heidelberg, see: AdK Berlin, Hauptmann-Archive, *Letter from Ernst Toller to Carl Hauptmann, 15.12.1918* (*St. Joseph-Krankenhaus*).

⁶⁶⁵ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungsprotokollen*. The Grunewald, a large forest of some 32 square kilometres in Berlin-Wilmersdorff, was granted the status of a *Freigemeinde*, so that many artists had settled at this location by 1900. The private clinic was located in the Grunewaldstraße 44; in early 1917 the “neurotic” Paul Cassirer, the publisher of *Die Wandlung*, spent some time in the clinic; before the war Victor Klemperer's father, Wilhelm Klemperer (the former rabbi of Bromberg), was here treated for cancer, see: Christian Kennert, *Paul Cassirer und sein Kreis: ein Berliner Wegbereiter der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Wien,

being related to that, but we cannot exclude political grounds either, as Toller was threatened with a possible return to war after the prohibition of the *Bund* and it was well-known that “neurotics” were generally not recruited.⁶⁶⁶ Interestingly enough, the clinic was around the corner from the home of Kurt Kroner, who by this time had returned from Munich to his native Berlin. Kroner organised artistic meetings at his place. In January 1918 Toller read here for the first time in public from *Die Wandlung*.⁶⁶⁷ There were at least two readings. A first one took place on 1 January. It seems to have been organised spontaneously, as Toller had sent a telegram to Carl Hauptmann that very morning to invite him for his readings, although the latter was unable to come. Another reading took place on 17 January. He seems to have re-invited Hauptmann for this meeting, although he again had to decline.⁶⁶⁸ Possibly there were more of these readings. At one of these meetings Toller’s friend Pinner was present, who had similarly fled from Heidelberg to Berlin and now learned for the first time that Toller had been working on a play.⁶⁶⁹ Auerbach had moved to Berlin, so that she may have been present as well.⁶⁷⁰ Toller regarded these readings not as literary but as ‘political’ readings. He later recorded that he already read from his play in student circles in Heidelberg to “agitate against the war”,⁶⁷¹ though he had never told people that he was writing a play. Pinner records that he had read out loud poems in Heidelberg which left them “deeply moved”, but she learned only in Berlin that he had thus been working on a play.⁶⁷²

It was around this time, too, that Toller encountered some underground pamphlets and other works which were printed and illegally distributed by the Spartacus League (*Spatakusbund*), the USPD’s radical Leftwing. The works included the memoirs of the former German Ambassador in London, Karl Max Fürst von Lichnowsky (1860-

1996) 130; Klemperer, CV, I, 656, 590.

⁶⁶⁶ Hempel-Küter and Müller explain Toller’s presence in the clinic exclusively on medical grounds, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 97.

⁶⁶⁷ Toller sent on 1 January a telegram to Carl Hauptmann to attend his readings at 8.15 p.m. at Kroner’s place in the Kurfürstenstraße 54 (Berlin-Grunewald), see: AdK Berlin, Hauptmann-Archive, *Telegram from Ernst Toller to Carl Hauptmann, 1.1.1918 (Sanatorium Grunewald, Berlin Grunewald)*.

⁶⁶⁸ Carl Hauptmann writes that he unfortunately had not been present at a reading of Toller’s drama in “artistic circles” on 17 January 1918 in Berlin, see: AdK Berlin, Hauptmann-Archive, *Letter from Hauptmann to the Munich court, 3.7.1919 (Mittel-Schreiberhau)*.

⁶⁶⁹ Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 219.

⁶⁷⁰ Auerbach also had a sister in Berlin, Edith Auerbach, an Expressionist paintress who may have been present at these readings as well. She lived in the Jenauerstraße 1 in Berlin, see: StA Munich, 15591, *Brief 331 or 334 (unreadable) of the Stadtkommandantur of Munich, 2.6.1919*.

⁶⁷¹ Ernst Toller, “Bemerkungen zu meinem Drama „Die Wandlung“” in: *Der Freihafen. Blätter der Hamburger Kammerspiele*, II, No. 10 (1920) 145-146, printed in: Toller, GW, II, 360.

⁶⁷² Turnowsky-Pinner, “Toller” in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 219.

1928), *Meine Mission in London* (My Mission to London, 1916), a letter of one of the former director of the industrial arms factory Krupp, Wilhelm Mühlön (1878-1944), author of the then notorious anti-war publication, *Die Verheerung Europas* (The Vandal of Europe, 1918), and possibly also Hermann Fernau's *Durch! Zur Demokratie!* (The Coming Democracy, 1917) and *Michel wach auf!* (Michel Wake Up, 1919) by the German military officer Hans-Georg von Beerfelde (1877-1960), an active pacifist who joined a revolutionary organization close to the USPD.⁶⁷³ Toller stated in 1918 that he had already come across Lichnowsky's memoirs before they were published,⁶⁷⁴ but he re-read them at this time, and only now do they seem to have had a great impact on him. Believing that Germany had fought a defensive war, Toller now disavowed the diplomatic manoeuvres on the eve of the war and the unwillingness of the German state to avert World War I. Toller concluded from those works that Germany had submitted itself to organised capitalism, as it seemed to have hoped for material gain.⁶⁷⁵ Instead of a spiritual event to rejuvenate the nation, he wrote in 1933, Toller felt deeply betrayed when it turned out that politicians fought "for gold, for land, for ore, for oil, for only dead things."⁶⁷⁶ Today historians have shown that this 'conspiracy' of politics and capitalism to be a distortion of reality, as many businessmen had no idea of the plans of Germany's political elite in 1914, but it was widely shared in neo-romantic and Leftwing pacifist circles.⁶⁷⁷ It is unclear how Toller had received these works. He writes that he found them on his writing table one day,⁶⁷⁸ but it is likely, of course, that he was pointed to these works through his immediate artistic and literary milieu in Berlin, including people like Kroner, Pinner and Auerbach. As Auerbach had an interest in the trade union

⁶⁷³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 86; Toller stated in 1918 that he read brochures, "including the Belgian-English guilt problem by a nobleman from Mecklenburg, the *Denkschrift* of an unknown about the executions of the Reichs Chancellor and the *Völkerschiedsgerichtsfrage*, the expose of a unnamed (namely commanding General), Fernau, *durch zur Demokratie!*", see: BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungprotokollen*: I was pointed to the names of Hermann Fernau and Hans Georg von Beerfelde by: Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 98.

⁶⁷⁴ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungprotokollen*.

⁶⁷⁵ On his feelings of betrayal, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 86.

⁶⁷⁶ In addition he wrote: "The question of war guilt paled before the guilt of capitalism", see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 86-87.

⁶⁷⁷ Herwig, "Germany" in: Hamilton and Herwig (ed.), *Origins of World War I*, 150-187, which states that the war was the consequence of a very small group of people that centred immediately around the Emperor, who, in the end, decided upon war, and from which businessmen were largely excluded; Klaus Tenfelde, then, dispels the myth that Krupp had prior knowledge in 1914 of the Schlieffen Plan to invade Belgium, see: Klaus Tenfelde, in: Lothar Gall (ed), *Krupp im 20. Jahrhundert. Die Geschichte des Unternehmens vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Gründung der Stiftung* (Berlin, 2002); on the peaceful intentions of Hugo Stinnes and Max Warburg, two of Germany's leading industrialists, see: Hamilton and Herwig, "World Wars" in: *Origins of World War I*, 32.

⁶⁷⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 86; *Protokoll* in: *Ibid.*, 240.

movement, she may have been open to the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919) and the Spartakist League.⁶⁷⁹

Toller's critique of capitalism was deeply influenced by a neo-romantic contempt for material things.⁶⁸⁰ He criticized the capitalist system from an ethical rather than from a material (that is: economical) point of view, so that it has little to do with the "Spartakist" context in which they were distributed. Nonetheless, Toller did find himself increasingly moving into the arms of politics, above all as a result of his immediate environment – around Kroner, Pinner and Auerbach – where sympathy existed for the USPD, the political party that most clearly expressed contempt for the war. At the suggestion of "friends", Toller writes, he was put into contact with the Jewish born Socialist Kurt Eisner (1867-1919), one of the founders of the USPD, who had come to Berlin for a meeting of that party.

Born in an assimilated Jewish family from Berlin, Eisner was very much a literary man, who had made a living as a political journalist and drama critic since his days as a student. Interested in Socialism, he wrote for various Socialist dailies, including the prestigious SPD-daily *Vorwärts* and the *Fränkische Tagespost*. He was a critical opponent of the authoritarian Imperial state, which he equated with Prussian militarism and feudal politics. A fierce critic of the monarchy, he found the enemy of the working class less in industrial capitalism than in the Hohenzollern monarchy.⁶⁸¹ As a pupil of the neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), Eisner had tried to synthesise the ethics of Kant and the ideas of Marx, which he found in an ethical and idealist interpretation of Marxism which interchanged the economical 'sub structure' with a strong emphasis on man's free will and morale. In so doing, Eisner made socialism dependent on human will rather than on historical materialism,⁶⁸² showing affinity with Landauer's romantic socialism, although the latter was deeply rooted in a neo-romantic Nietzschean tradition that Eisner rejected.

⁶⁷⁹ She wrote a dissertation on Marx and the trade unions, see: chapter 7, footnote 27. The Munich police later described her as a "radical", see: StA Munich, 15591.

⁶⁸⁰ This results, among others, from the fact that Toller also 'forgave' the politicians themselves, whom he considered blinded by a false Geist.

⁶⁸¹ The best and most complete and recent account on Eisner is: Bernard Grau, *Kurt Eisner, 1867-1919: eine Biographie* (Munich, 2001); on *Vorwärts*, see also: Wilhelm Hausenstein, "Erinnerung an Eisner" in: Lamm, *Vergangene Tage*, 217; on his anti-monarchism, see also: Falk Wiesemann, 'Kurt Eisner. Studie seiner politischen Biographie' in: Karl Bosl (ed), *Bayern im Umbruch. Die Revolution von 1918, ihre Voraussetzungen, ihr Verlauf und ihre Folgen* (Munich, 1969) 390-391; Allan Mitchell, *Revolution in Bayern 1918/1919. Die Eisner-Regierung und die Räterepublik* (Munich, 1965) 39.

⁶⁸² Kurt Eisner, 'Kant' in: Kurt Eisner, *Gesammelte Werke*, III en IV, 177.

Before becoming one of the founders of the USPD, Eisner had been a prominent member of the SPD, where he was sometimes seen as a revisionist, but this was a serious distortion of his views. Revisionism, central to Eduard Bernstein's interpretation of Marxism, aimed at the peaceful transformation from capitalism to socialism through a gradualist program of political and economic reform, but Eisner remained an advocate of the revolutionary ideals of Socialism. Instead of parliamentary democracy, he wanted what Toller once called a "perfect democracy", which actively committed people to politics and gave it a clear voice.⁶⁸³ A practical man, however, Eisner subjected theory to practice. In his aims to create a democratic counter-force to the authoritarian state, he had repeatedly made compromises with the Left Liberals, who since 1878 had come into the opposition. Shortly before the war he called for a common democratic front of Socialists and Liberals against the authoritarian state, expressed in his *Militärprogramm der Linken* (1913). As an ethical scholar, Eisner had a special interest in the education of the worker in both a general and Socialist sense. A pupil of Marx, he believed that awareness of 'false consciousness' was the primary condition for freedom and human action. Eisner summarised his educational strategy in the concept of "illuminative work" (*Aufklärungsarbeit*), which revealed itself as an instrument for peace and democracy during the war. In line with the SPD's mainstream, he had shortly flirted with the war in 1914, but he quickly returned to his former pacifism, which, together with the further development of his critique on the monarchy, defined the content of his workers' program. Several months before the foundation of the USPD in April 1917, he had also begun to apply his *Aufklärungsarbeit* on the German youth. Having settled in Munich, he was able to group some young followers on Monday evenings at the 'Golden Anchor' (*Golden Anker*) in the Schillerstrasse, where he presented material from German and foreign press releases that sharpened insight into the war, including the abovementioned documents of Lichnowsky and Mühlton. After his break with the SPD for its support to war in April 1917, Eisner became the *de facto* leader of the USPD in Bavaria, where he could count on ever greater support of youth. The original group at the Golden Anchor comprised no more than twenty five people, but in the course of 1917 it grew to over a

⁶⁸³ Toller, GW, IV, 116-117. The reason for the idea that Eisner was a revisionist was rooted in his conflict with Karl Kautsky (1854-1938), an orthodox and revolutionary Marxist, and which forced Eisner to resign as the chief-editor of *Vorwärts* in 1905.

hundred, providing, as Richard Dove writes, the “nucleus” of the later revolutionary movement in Munich.⁶⁸⁴

In March 1918 Eisner stated in a police report that he had been invited to attend Toller’s readings of *Der Wandlung* in Berlin. He was unable to attend, but he then spoke with Toller ‘one or two days’ later, although they did not speak, if he remembered well, about the politics of the USPD, except perhaps in ‘a very general way’.⁶⁸⁵ It is clear that Toller was less interested in Eisner as a political than as an ethical man, while at the same time he was impressed by his activist orientation and his respect to youth. In this context Toller found in him an alternative to the charismatic leader that Weber could not be.⁶⁸⁶

The January Strike and Imprisonment (Jan.-April 1918)

Shortly after his encounter with Eisner, Toller left for Munich, where he decided to take up his studies again and intended to dedicate himself to his dissertation on the role of modern magazines and its economic motivations.⁶⁸⁷ At the same time he seems to have left Berlin out of fear of re-call to the Bavarian army, which had become acute since Heidelberg, as he hoped to re-establish his release in Munich, where the headquarters of his regiment was located. He also wanted to give his *Bund* a stimulus in Munich by founding a local branch.⁶⁸⁸ Scholars of Toller have also seen his move to Munich in the light of his attachment to Eisner, although Toller himself does not corroborate this.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁴ Dove, *He was a German*, 42; on Eisner during the war, see: Grau, *Eisner*; on Eisner’s practical mind and will to compromise, as well as on his *Aufklärungsarbeit*, see also: Wiesemann, ‘Eisner’ in: Bosl (ed.), *Bayern im Umbruch*, 392-394; on his leadership of the USPD in Munich, see: Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 400.

⁶⁸⁵ BA Potsdam, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Aussage von Kurt Eisner*, 7.3.1918.

⁶⁸⁶ Jurkat claims that Toller now adopted socialist ideas and socialized with the Berlin working class (circa January 1918), which is not true. Jurkat, *Apokalypse*, 159.

⁶⁸⁷ *Protokoll* in: Toller, *GW*, 4, 240; Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 35-8. Toller must have left between the middle and 25 January 1918, when he was present at a student meeting in Munich; Fishman and Hempel-Küter and Müller write that he left mid-January, but this is thus not entirely correct, see: Fishman, *Prophets*, 32; Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 99; the meeting on 25 January 1918, see: BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungsprotokollen*, see also Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 35-8.

⁶⁸⁸ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungsprotokollen*, see also Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 99.

⁶⁸⁹ On the notion that Toller followed Eisner, see: Rothe, *Toller*, 41; Dove, *He was German*, 43; Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 99.

On 25 January 1918 Toller was present at a student meeting in Munich, where he sought to get support for his actions in Heidelberg.⁶⁹⁰ He had not yet matriculated and already started his missionary campaigning for peace and for his students' League. A student recorded that Toller was given seven minutes to speak, but was able to extend that time to twenty minutes with the support of the present students. In his speech Toller was critical of the attacks against his *Aufruf* by a large share of German students and professors, including Oncken, and he called for equal rights of assembly and for political commitment for youth, while referring to other countries than Germany where this was already the case. When he also called upon the students to resist the threat of the DVP, he was deprived of his right to speak. At the end of the meeting he circulated a piece of paper for signatures to support his aims.⁶⁹¹ He seems to have mislaid at this meeting an (unpublished) literary sketch, entitled *An das deutsche Volk* (To the German People, 1918) – a direct reference to the Kaiser's equally named call upon the nation to defend itself in unity against foreign aggression from 6 August 1914.⁶⁹²

On the next day Toller contacted Eisner,⁶⁹³ who informed him during that visit about a meeting of the USPD that would take place on the next morning in the *Kolloseum* beer hall in Munich, which was on Sunday 27 January.⁶⁹⁴ Organised against the background of a strike that had broken out in Kiel, in northern Germany, it was a political meeting that was intended to seek support for a similar strike in Munich. In Kiel the strike had been prompted by anger at the news that the German peace settlement with the Russians at Brest-Litovsk earlier that month had been dictated by the German delegation according to its own wishes, including many annexionist aims, so that it had ignored the peace resolution of July 1917, accepted by the majority of the parliament. The news created a wave of protest among adherents of peace and democracy, and it could count in a short time on the support of great parts of the population. Fed by food shortages, it resulted in a strike in Kiel, which soon turned into a massive strike action at the end of January 1918 that spread in a

⁶⁹⁰ *Bericht des Rektors der Universität München, 7.2.1918* in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 35-38.

⁶⁹¹ Leutnant Metzger, quoted in: Ibid. 36-37.

⁶⁹² Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 102 and 100, where the text of this sketch is printed; Kaiser Wilhelm II, "An das deutsche Volk" *Neue Preußische Zeitung* (Berlin, 7 August 1914).

⁶⁹³ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Aussage Eisners vom 7.3.1918*.

⁶⁹⁴ Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 38; on the location and date, see also: Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 102.

few days time over the whole country.⁶⁹⁵ The SPD and USPD supported the spontaneously emerging strike movement in Germany – in Bavaria the SPD was initially sceptical, but Eisner decided to support the movement.

Against this background Eisner held seven speeches at three mass meetings of the USPD from 27 to 30 January 1918. Present at the meeting on 27 January, where Eisner called for support of the strike movement to pursue the aims of peace and democratisation,⁶⁹⁶ Toller experienced a “strong excitement”, which Eisner must have noticed, as Toller went to him after that speech, who then, Toller writes, “tried to calm me down”. Toller did not speak at this meeting himself, thus he stated shortly after, adding that “in my excitement I would not at all have been able to do so”.⁶⁹⁷ Toller records that he met “workers, women, young people who searched for the road to peace”.⁶⁹⁸ These people included Emilie and Betty Landauer, sisters of Gustav Landauer, and a student called Kröpelin, who invited him for a discussion evening in *de Kunstzaal Steinecke* in Munich on the next day, 28 January.⁶⁹⁹ According to an eye witness, he read in a circle of students his “poem, ‘Ein Entwurzelte’”, which according to him was characterised by the present students as “supra-revolutionary”.⁷⁰⁰ The poem, which was never published, was an integral part of the manuscript of *Die Wandlung*, which then was thus still equally called *Der Entwurzelte*. As the student remembers Toller well, Toller must have made impression on this circle of students.

That same day Toller spoke at a USPD-meeting of metal workers that took place in the ‘Golden Anchor’. As Christa Hempel-Küter and Hans-Harold Müller have recently shown, he here tried to lift people out of the “purely political discussions into higher human and morel considerations” (Toller) and thus, as they write, “to spiritualise and moralise politics“ in terms of his own ideal of a *Geist*-revolution. His contribution started with some passages from the *Aufruf der*

⁶⁹⁵ Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 387; Baier, *Arbeitssoldaten in Bayern*, 110.

⁶⁹⁶ Wiesemann, ‘Eisner’ in: Bosl e.a. (ed.), *Bayern im Umbruch*, 401.

⁶⁹⁷ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungsprotokollen*, Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 100.

⁶⁹⁸ Toller, *GW*, IV, 87-88.

⁶⁹⁹ *Bericht des Rektors der Universität München, 7.2.1918* in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 35-38. I was unable to find information about the sisters Landauer and Kröpelin; Frühwald/Spalek write that they were sisters of Landauer (p.290), it is not clear whether they were also family of Carl Landauer (1891-1983) from Munich, an SPD-member and economic theorist who received his doctorate in Heidelberg in 1915 and fought during the Bavarian Council Republic in 1919 against Toller, although he did not feel hostile sentiments towards Toller himself and was the central figure in the negotiations with Toller.

russischen Soldaten an die deutschen Soldaten zur Einleitung eines Waffenstillstandes (Call of the Russian Soldiers to the German Soldiers to begin an Armistice), which he had received several weeks before from a German soldier.⁷⁰¹ Hempel-Küter and Müller also write that it was apparently less the political than the “general human language“ (Toller) of that text that had “caught” him “very much”, especially referring to passages like: “We are all children of burden, we are all children of desperate circumstances (*Not*), we believed that we could escape the misery of life by killing each other, but this could not be; we want to forget the disgrace of the past, agree on an honest peace, and embrace each other as brothers.“ In the light of such thoughts Toller felt strong enough to give a speech in which he recalled the horror of war and expressed his worry about the presence of people who still hoped for an offensive in war. “I also directed myself against educated people and journalists who idealised the war and tried to justify it morally. I here also read some phrases from the manuscript of my sketch that had been the source of the *Aufruf an das deutsche Volk*.”⁷⁰²

Meanwhile, Eisner, and his adherents, had been successful, as the strike came to Munich on Thursday 31 January as well.⁷⁰³ About eight to nine thousand workers from the arms industry laid down their work in the factories of Krupp, Deckel, Otto, and Rapp-Motorworks, supported by workers of the leather factory Hesselburger and the cigarette factory *Austria und Phillips-witwe am Ausstand*.⁷⁰⁴ Women, especially lower class women, some of whom were active as employees of the abovementioned factories,

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungsprotokollen*, Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 101-102. I was unable to trace that document, which seems to have been an unpublished pamphlet that circulated among soldiers. Toller wrote a poem, entitled “Brief” (Letter, 1917), which refers to this passage from that leaflet and outworks the general human dimension of those words. The poem is printed in: Jordan, *Unpublished Poems*, 76. Jordan interpretes the poem but is unaware of the text of Hempel-Küter and Müller or their archival material, which thus refers to its source and not to revolutionary Russia, see: Ibid. 77. As Toller wrote that poem in 1917, he must have thus already possessed the leaflet in 1917.

⁷⁰² BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Vernehmungsprotokollen*, Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 101. Richard Dove suggests that he here held the speech where Oscar Maria Graf was also present, but this is incorrect, as that speech took place on 1 February, see: Dove, *He was a German*, 44. This Russian pamphlet may explain why Endemann in his report wrote that the “rumour was circulating in students circles that one had found Russian leaflets during a house search”, see: *Bericht des Rektors der Universität München, 7.2.1918* in: Frühwald/Spalek (eds.), *Fall Toller*, 35-38.

⁷⁰³ Baier, *Arbeitssoldaten in Bayern*, 110.

⁷⁰⁴ There were strikes at *Krupp-Werke, Bayerische Flugwerkzeuge, Rapp-Motoren-Werke, Präzisionsfabrik Deckel, Otto-werke, Hesselburger* and *Austria und Phillips-witwe am Ausstand*, see: Wolfgang Zorn, *Bayerns Geschichte im 20. Jahrhundert. Von der Monarchie zum Bundesland* (Munich, 1986) 109; Baier, *Arbeitssoldaten in Bayern*, 111; Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 48-9.

also joined the strike movement.⁷⁰⁵ A resolution of Eisner was signed by the workers of Krupp, in which they agreed, as Eisner put it, “to immediately prepare an end to the war of madness and of the mad”⁷⁰⁶ Desperately yearning for an end to war himself, the strike excited Toller, as people were on strike “not for wage, but for peace”,⁷⁰⁷ and he now began to actively commit himself to the movement and stimulate the revolt of the workers.

In line with Eisner’s *Aufklärungsarbeit* he distributed poems “born from the horror of war” to further the anti-war spirit in Munich and also distributed fragments from *Die Wandlung*, all of which he marked by the word “Wandlung” (Transformation) on top of the page.⁷⁰⁸ He made contact with central spokesmen of the strike, including not merely the sisters Landauer, but also Sonja Lerch (born: Rabinowitsch), a Russian born Jewess with humanitarian pacifist ideals who was the wife of a Prussian-born (Christian) professor and literary scholar called Eugen Lerch (1889-1952). Notorious as an agitator at that time, Franz Muncker, an old professor of Toller during the winter of 1916/17, once nicknamed Lerch “the Russian Steppenfurie” who was said “to have stirred the workers even more than Eisner” during the strike.⁷⁰⁹ Toller records that Lerch had visited him that evening at his place and ask him whether she could stay the night because she was in the process of divorcing her husband. Toller agreed, whereafter she decided to go back to her husband to see him one more time. Toller claims to have warned her about the risk of an arrest, but she nonetheless went and was arrested by the police.⁷¹⁰

Initially on the margins of strike, Toller was assigned through these contacts to give a speech to female workers at the above mentioned cigarette factory on 1 February.⁷¹¹ Oscar Maria Graf was present among the listeners of Toller’s speech, and

⁷⁰⁵ Frevert, *Women in German History*, 167.

⁷⁰⁶ Quoted from: Wiesemann, ‘Eisner’ in: Bosl (ed.), *Bayern im Umbruch*, 402; see also: Dove, *He was a German*, 44.

⁷⁰⁷ Toller, *GW*, IV, 88.

⁷⁰⁸ Lixl, *Toller*, 14; Schuerer, “Literarisches Engagement” in: Hermand (ed.), *Zu Ernst Toller*, 44.

⁷⁰⁹ Victor Klemperer, quoted from: Klemperer, *CV*, II, 610, 622-3.

⁷¹⁰ Toller, *GW*, IV, 89.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*; on the date, see: BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, 9, 169: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 102: Ter Haar writes that Toller spoke on 2 February, which is incorrect, although repeated by Richard Dove, see: Ter Haar, ‘Biographischer Überblick’ in: Hermand (ed.), *Zu Ernst Toller*, 11; Dove, *He was a German*, 45. As Eisner was arrested on 31 January, and Toller writes that he spoke the day after, it must have been 1 February. There is uncertainty as to whether Toller spoke in the cigarette factory or in a “brewery”, although I here take Toller on his word. On the brewery, see: BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, 9, 169; by contrast, Hempel-Küter and Müller rely on that report (although not written by Toller himself), see also: *Ernst Toller. Pazifist – Schriftsteller – Politiker*, 4.

records Toller's talent as an orator in a vivid testimony, though one not free from dramatization: "He cried out his feelings heatedly, ecstatically, and with wild gesticulations and a distorted face. He shook as though he were feverish and foamed at the lips. 'You mothers!' he began – again and again – and painted with poetic and rhetorical fire the horror of the war: 'You brothers and sisters!' He carried everyone along with him. Single women wept or became completely wild".⁷¹² It is not clear whether this speech relied on written material, but the individual reference to mothers, brothers and sisters was typical of Toller's rhetoric, developed in various texts at this time.⁷¹³

It was at this meeting, too, that Toller was informed about the arrest of Eisner and several other strike leaders, including Albert Winter, Johann Baptist Unterleitner, Emilie and Betty Landauer, and the above mentioned Lerch.⁷¹⁴ They had all been arrested on the evening of the previous day; 31 January. When Lerch heard that she would be tried for high treason a few days later, she committed suicide, which seems to have affected Toller deeply. In his autobiography he indirectly blames her husband for her death, but this does less justice to the truth than to his own sympathy for this woman.⁷¹⁵

Informed about the news of their arrest, Toller and the workers decided to continue the strike unconditionally and established two delegations to release Eisner and the others. Toller, obviously successful as an orator, was elected as the leader of the second delegation, which served as a 'back-up' for the first if it did not return "after an hour" from the police head quarters. Joined by "three thousand strikers", Toller records, the strikers now left for the local Head Quarters of the police. When the first delegation

⁷¹² Graf, *Gefangene*, 338. Graf's reference to these women might be a further indication that Toller thus spoke before a female working public, and thus in the cigarettes factory, see footnote 53.

⁷¹³ Toller uses "You mother" in his *Aufruf an das deutsche Volk*, but in *Die Wandlung* and other poems (like "Brief" and) uses similar forms, like "You Soldier", "You Brother", "You sister", and "You Richman".

⁷¹⁴ Toller, *GW*, IV, 89; on the names besides Eisner, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 102.

⁷¹⁵ Possibly Toller did not even know Eugen Lerch, but relied on a newspaper article in the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* that told of the arrest of Eisner and Lerch, and that her husband, a *Privatdozent* at the university had publicly announced to be "already since weeks in the process of getting divorced with her". In reality Lerch had no bad intentions with those words, of which he possibly may not have realised that they would be quoted. According to Victor Klemperer, a colleague, Lerch had warned his wife against her risk when she slid into the revolution, but she had laughed at him. Like Toller, she was not politically interested before the war, but passionately clung to the USPD during the strike itself. She also became more anti-German and pushed for a rapid divorce from her German husband. When she was in prison, Eugen wanted to visit her, but she did not want him, see: Klemperer, *CV*, II, 610, 618-623, 647, 280-285. Toller later modelled the protagonist of *Masse-Mensch* (Masses and Man) (who similarly commits suicide in prison) on Sonja Lerch.

indeed did not return after an hour, Toller went in with the second delegation to plea for the release of Eisner and the others – but to no avail, as the chief-commissioner of the police was not empowered to decide upon release. Toller gives the impression in his autobiography that he played a crucial role in those negotiations, but there is no evidence that supports that suggestion and we cannot exclude a degree of self-stylation.⁷¹⁶ In reaction to the negative news in the press, then, Toller later that day wrote a leaflet, entitled *Kameraden* (Comrades, 1918), to inform the people of Munich of the ‘true’ and peaceful intentions of the strikers.⁷¹⁷ The leaflet was printed and distributed throughout the town.

On 2 February, then, a meeting of some “five thousand workers” took place at the Theresienweide, transforming itself into the biggest gathering since the outbreak of the strike.⁷¹⁸ Due to its massive character, and afraid of a political revolution (which since the Russian revolution was no longer impossible), the police kept silent. The SPD-leader Erhard Auer (1874-1945), Eisner’s biggest political rival, was able to take control of the gathering and brought it to an end three days later, promising to take action for the creation of a delegation that would work to persuade the German Minister of the Interior to deal with their demands and not to prosecute the strikers.⁷¹⁹ Before the strike ended, however, the state had already opted for a militarization of the situation. Toller was placed under military supervision and formally re-integrated as a soldier in the Bavarian army on 3 February, in a reserve battery of the First Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment “Prince Regent Luitpold” (*I. bayerisches Feldartillerieregiment Prinz-Regent Luitpold*) in Munich.⁷²⁰ Though he was free to move, he was watched by a non-commissioned officer named Guggenhuber, who also had to make sure that he kept a distance from the regiment. But on 5 February, when the strike had come to an end, *Oberstleutnant* Wolfram Freiherr Freyschlag von Freyenstein (1862-1938), convinced of the danger of

⁷¹⁶ Toller, *GW*, IV, 90-91.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*; on the title of the leaflet, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 101-102.

⁷¹⁸ Quoted from: Toller, *GW*, IV, 92.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.* The idea of that delegation was born on 2 February by the strikers, who also elected Toller as a member, but he was arrested prematurely, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 102.

⁷²⁰ HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15373/984, KrStR 15421/7743, and Truppenakten: E/I.Fussart.regiments: Bund 102 – I. Genesen-Batterie, *Lazarett-Aufnahmen: Protokoll* in: Toller, *GW*, IV, 241; Rudolf Ritter von Inlander (Oberst a.D.m.d.U. des Generalstabs, zeitweise Kommandeur des Regiments), *Geschichte des 1. Feldartillerie-Regiments Prinz-Regent Luitpold. IV. Band 1911 bis 1920* (Munich, 1931) 487.

Toller's person, gave order for his arrest.⁷²¹ Although Toller insinuates that Auer was behind that arrest, this seems not to be true. Toller was accused of high treason against the German state for his call for the strike, for producing and distributing his leaflet *Kameraden* and for the literary sketch *An das deutsche Volk*, as well as for the distribution of the Lichnowsky memoir.⁷²² He was sent to the military prison in the Leonrodstraße in Munich.⁷²³

Life in prison was hard and full of social and legal irregularities,⁷²⁴ but it also enabled Toller to reflect upon his recent experiences, which had opened his eyes to the role of the working class. In this context he profited from his prison time and began to read classical works in Socialist theory, including “works of Marx, Engels, Lasalle, Bakunin, Mehring, Luxemburg, and the Webbs”. Toller slightly exaggerates the impact of these works in his autobiography (and we should not forget that Toller spent only two months in prison), although it is beyond doubt that he now began to identify with the labour movement. He records that it was only now that he began to consider himself as a “socialist”.⁷²⁵ This socialism has little to do with classical socialism, however, even though he felt sincere commitment to the working class. Toller, deeply influenced by Landauer, continued to believe in the primacy of his own ideals,⁷²⁶ and there is no reason to believe that the abovementioned readings altered his views. Like Landauer, moreover, he understood the working class less in terms of a specific group or class in society than as a metaphor of the human condition where the will to rebirth was present, as here human suffering was deepest.⁷²⁷ Yet this awakening could only come under the leadership of youth.

How much Toller continued to believe in the pivotal role of youth in the struggle for the rebirth of humanity, and thus as a leader of the working class, is shown by his reflections over his play *Die Wandlung*, which he claims to have definitively finished in prison. Though the text was largely finished by December 1917, he thus may have made

⁷²¹ Inlander, *Geschichte des 1. Feldartillerie-Regiments Prinz-Regent Luitpold*. IV, 487; Hempel-Küter/Müller write 3 February 1918, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 101.

⁷²² Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 101. On the central role of his leaflet *Kameraden*, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 94.

⁷²³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 94-95.

⁷²⁴ Ibid. 97-98.

⁷²⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 95.

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

⁷²⁷ See also: Ter Haar, *Toller*, 143.

some last corrections in February and March 1918.⁷²⁸ As the message remained that of a call upon youth to take leadership in the regeneration of the world, there can be little doubt that Toller's socialism was "youth socialism" first of all.

In March 1918 Toller fell seriously ill. He records that he was initially not taken seriously by a nationalist doctor, but a "kind" doctor, who "hated war" like him, promised to send him to the military hospital and then have him declared "unfit for prison".⁷²⁹ Military reports reveal that Toller was sent to that a Munich hospital for "nervous heart disorder" (*Nervöse Tachykardie*), although Toller thus records that it was as a result of the doctor's pacifism.⁷³⁰ From 22 to 27 March 1918 Toller was treated in a reserve station of a Munich hospital.⁷³¹ He returned to his prison cell in the Leonrodstrasse, but was already released on 4 April 1918 for "heart- and nervous disorder".⁷³² Toller records in his autobiography that the "kind doctor" had kept his promise and passed by one day. Toller's condition was investigated and after a few days he was released from jail.⁷³³ "Unfit for prison", Toller was sent to the first convalescent company (*Genesenbatterie I*) of his regiment, the First Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment, which since March had been stationed in the Bavarian town of Neu-Ulm, on

⁷²⁸ Toller, *GW*, II, 8. Although I here take Toller at his word, he may have placed that remark at the beginning of his play to dramatize the desperate conditions in which it was written. As he had begun to present the play since January 1918, then, we may thus assume that it was already more or less finished and that he only made minor changes and re-considered the drama as a whole. Rothe's statement that Toller wrote his last scene (on the revolution) in prison, seems thus unconvincing, which is also sustained by the fact that we deal with a *Geist*-revolution in terms of a Wyneken-Hiller-Landauer inspired conception of rebirth rather than with a revolution that was idealized by political experiences, see: Rothe, *Toller*, 42.

⁷²⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 98.

⁷³⁰ HStA Munich, IV, Truppenakten: E/I.Fussart.regiments: Bund 102 – I. Genesen-Batterie, *Lazarett-Aufnahmen*

⁷³¹ Ibid. Toller's accounts of the events in the hospital are very unreliable and serve to express his contempt for the nationalist medical world, which he accuses of being on the other spectrum of the road to man's rebirth (and thus as the opposite of youth and the working class). He records, for example, that he found consolation in the religiously inclined poems of the Expressionist Franz Werfel (1890-1945), including his poem "Lächeln Atmen Schreiten", recalling the message that the renewal of the human-Godly world can only come through man's spiritual rebirth. Reading that poem, he was visited by the hospital's medical staff. Looking at the book he read, the senior staff doctor (*Oberstabsarzt*) read out aloud the first lines of that poems and then remarked that "[w]hoever reads such nonsense, need not be surprised if they end up in jail". In any case, the text also shows Toller's identification with Werfel's Expressionism – note: Toller only writes out the first lines of Werfel's poem, which made it clear that we are thus dealing with that poem: "Schöpfe du, trage du, / Halte Tausend Gewässer des Lächelns in deiner Hand! / Lächeln, selige Feuchte ist ausgespannt / All übers Antlitz, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 99.

⁷³² HStA Munich KrStR; Inlander, *Geschichte des 1. Feldartillerie-Regiments Prinz-Regent Luitpold*. IV, 487.

⁷³³ Toller, *GW*, IV, 102.

the border with Baden-Württemberg.⁷³⁴ Since he was placed in a convalescent company, there was no acute threat of a return to the front.⁷³⁵

In Neu-Ulm Toller was placed on half-pay (non-active service), although he was obliged to stay in town. He had time to wander around Neu-Ulm, where he grew yet more conscious of the misery among people in a war which, in the words of Klaus Mann, meant “hunger”, not heroism.⁷³⁶ There were rumours of mutiny at the front and Austria was said to have withdrawn from the war. Stimulated by deprivation, there were riots in the country, which also included soldiers.⁷³⁷ The situation further worsened at the end of the summer when the Spanish flu took its first victims, reaching its peak from February to April 1919, ending worldwide in a larger number of deaths than those caused by the war.⁷³⁸

In this context Toller paid a visit to Landauer. Although forbidden to leave Neu-Ulm, he left around the middle of July 1918 for a short visit to his intellectual father, who lived in Krumbach, close to Neu-Ulm. It was the first time that he met Landauer. Toller writes that he went to Landauer because he wondered why he remained silent in these times of despair, to which Landauer was supposed to have responded: “All my life I have worked for the downfall of this system, this society founded on lies and betrayals, on the beggaring and suppression of human beings; and I know that this downfall is imminent – perhaps tomorrow, perhaps in a year’s time. I have the right to reserve my strength until that moment. When the hour strikes I shall be there and ready”.⁷³⁹ In

⁷³⁴ On his place in the convalescent battery I, see: HStA Munich, IV, KrStR 15421/7743; on the location of his regiment, see: chapter 4, footnote 56. The convalescent battery I was commanded by *Hauptmann* L.L. Harrasser from 15 March 1916 until demobilisation. Note: there is some unclarity about Toller’s destination, however, as he sent a letter to Carl Hauptmann on 17 May 1918 from the recrutes desposit IV (*Rekrutendepot IV*) of the First Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment in Neu Ulm. Perhaps he was thus sent from the convalescent battery to this deposit, which in theory (but possibly not in practice) meant that he was trained and prepared for a possibly return to the fights. See: AdK Berlin, Hauptmann-Archiv, *Letter from Ernst Toller to Carl Hauptmann, 17.5.1918*. The recrutes deposit IV was commanded by *Hauptmann* L. Marc, who had replaced *Oberleutnant* L. Kimmich (see chapter 5, footnote 117) since September 1917 and stayed in command until demobilisation, see: BKA, *Die K.B. Schwere Artillerie im Großen Kriege 1914-1918*, 700.

⁷³⁵ On the diagnosis, see: HStA Munich, IV; Marianne Weber claims that it was Max Weber who had requested a hearing before the court which resulted in Toller’s release, but this cannot be so in the light of the formal medical ground of his release, see: Marianne Weber, *Lebensbild*, 648

⁷³⁶ Quoted from Klaus Mann, *In meinem Elternhaus*, 64.

⁷³⁷ Baier, *Arbeitssoldaten in Bayern*, 115-117; Albrecht, *Landtag*, 335.

⁷³⁸ On the Spanish flu, see: Catherine Rollet, “The ‘Other War’”, II: setbacks in Public Health” in: Winter/Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War*, 456-486.

⁷³⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 104. Translation from Lunn, *Prophet*, 256-257.

reality it seems more likely that Toller went to Landauer to bring him the manuscript of *Die Wandlung*.⁷⁴⁰

A World Upside Down: Apocalypse 1918

Shortly after returning from his secret mission to Landauer, to Neu-Ulm, Toller heard that he was to be subjected to a psychiatric investigation, and he was sent to the then very well-known psychiatric clinic in Munich. Toller records that this was a consequence of his mother, who had requested the investigation. He also records that she was unable to accept the charge of high treason against her son, while at the same time she could not understand why her son identified with the labour movement – he “had to be ill”, he writes about her thoughts, stressing that he “as a child had already been nervous”.⁷⁴¹ Possibly Toller exaggerates his mother’s motivations and she may have had real worries about her son, whom she wanted to safeguard against legal prosecution. It was wellknown that mentally ill and “war hysterics” were often exempted from persecution, so that she may well have chosen that path.⁷⁴²

From 22 to 25 July, then, Toller was subjected to a psychiatric investigation in the Munich academic clinic. In his autobiography he presents that treatment as a world upside down, where unity with the existing order definitively became impossible.⁷⁴³ This was a result of his awareness that his treatment was not a sincere inquiry, but an extension of the larger political struggle in the country.⁷⁴⁴ The symbol of that ‘treatment’ was the clinic’s director, Germany’s pre-eminent psychiatrist Emil Kräpelin, a consulting doctor for the First Bavarian Army Corps in Munich.⁷⁴⁵ Kräpelin, “a small

⁷⁴⁰ There is a copy of that manuscript in the archives of the Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, but an additional letter is absent, whereas there is such a letter (with envelope) in the case of the poems Toller had sent on 7 December; this makes it likely that the text of *Die Wandlung* was not sent, but given.

⁷⁴¹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 104.

⁷⁴² Some doubt might be casted upon the fact that Toller’s mother was behind the investigation, as Toller was examined together with three other participants of the strike movement: the *Schriftsetzer* Michler, who had sought to win the Munich book publishers for the strike, the mechanic Winkler, who had been mainly active at the *Bayerischen Motorenwerken*, and the *Werkzeugmacher* Lang, who belonged to the striking labourers of Krupp, see: Matthias Weber, *Ernst Rüdin, eine kritische Biographie* (1993) 89.

⁷⁴³ Ter Haar, *Toller*, 156.

⁷⁴⁴ In spite of Germany’s high status in this field, the popular image of psychiatry was not very flattering, see: Eric J. Engstrom, *Clinical Psychiatry in Imperial Germany. A History of Psychiatric Practice* (Ithaca, 2003).

⁷⁴⁵ HStA Munich, IV, Truppenakten: E/I.Fussart.regiments: Bund 102 – I. Genesen-Batterie, *Lazarett-Aufnahmen*.

stocky man with yellowish skin and a full, dark beard”,⁷⁴⁶ was wellknown for his extreme political and nationalist ideas. Not only was he a member of the *völkisch* Pan-German League, but he was also the author of the “Guidelines for Paths to Lasting Peace”, which demanded far-reaching territorial expansion during the war; as they threatened the *Burgfrieden*, the “Guidelines” were prohibited by the Ministry of War, even though they were signed by 91 Professors (including a large share of the Munich university clinic). Kräpelin also subscribed to the unlimited submarine warfare, while at the same time he found his foe in Great-Britain, so that he co-founded the *Bund zur Niederkämpfung Englands* (League for the Defeat of England) in July 1916, a Bavarian movement of 20,000 members that aimed at a nationalisation of the country by opting for nationalist-annexationist aims and seeking unity beyond party political differences. In October 1917 he had signed the call for the local Fatherland Party.⁷⁴⁷ For political motivations, he often despised patients of “war neurosis”, in whom he detected a lack of willpower to fight in war. In May 1918, for example, “a Captain Müller”, a victim of “war neurosis”, “complained that his rights and dignity had been violated by the psychiatrist, who allegedly denied that he was ill and refused to show him his chart”, but the patient’s charge was not taken seriously and Kräpelin’s actions were deemed appropriate.⁷⁴⁸ Kräpelin only visited Toller at the end of his stay (when the investigation had possibly already come to an end), which Toller records in terms of a nationalist tirade that completely estranged him from the doctor.⁷⁴⁹

It was, however, not Kräpelin, but Ernst Rüdin, a racial hygienist and since 1909 the chief-doctor (*Oberarzt*) of the clinic,⁷⁵⁰ who was in charge of Toller’s examination. Possibly the genetic psychiatrist Eugen Kahn (1887-1973), the author of a later notorious

⁷⁴⁶ Karl-Alexander von Müller, *Mars und Venus – Erinnerungen, 1914-1919* (Stuttgart, 1954) 128-9, taken from: Eric J. Engstrom, “Emil Kräpelin: Psychiatry and Public Affairs in Wilhelmine Germany” in: *History of Psychiatry* 2 (1991) 125.

⁷⁴⁷ On this, see: Toller, *GW*, IV, 107; Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 32; Kräpelin, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 192; Weber, *Rüdin*, 85-86; Engstrom, “Kräpelin” in: *History of Psychiatry*, 111-132.

⁷⁴⁸ Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 200.

⁷⁴⁹ Toller, *GW*, IV, 107; on the blurring of politics and treatment, see: Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 40-1, 87, 162, chapter 7, 193-222, esp. 193-194. Toller also recalls his encounter with the third born daughter of Kräpelin, Ina Kräpelin, as a nurse in her father’s clinic, who equally exposed nationalist ideas. That this daughter was Ina Kräpelin – Toller only writes “daughter” – is evident from her father’s memoirs: Kräpelin, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 186-187, here 187. Another daughter, Eva, worked not as a nurse in the clinic but rather dealt with a section that offered space for sewing-practices for women at service of the army.

⁷⁵⁰ Kräpelin, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 171; HkM (ed), *Adresbuch* (1917); Weber, *Rüdin*, 80.

(and politically coloured) psychological report on Toller,⁷⁵¹ also participated in the investigation. On 12 August, two weeks after Toller's release on 25 July, Rüdin presented his report in which he came to the conclusion that Toller was a degenerate and generically diseased personality with all signs of a "hysterical Psychopath", although the concept of a "psychosis" itself seemed not appropriate to him.⁷⁵² The political prejudice implicit in that diagnosis was obvious. Although one could detect some honesty and sincerity in his drive for political action, Rüdin wrote, Toller was also an "unrealistic, self-willed, fantasizing and unpractical "ideological humanity-happymaker", who took imagined realities for real as a result of his "over-excited, excentric nature". The conflicts of his "purely ideological world view with the real proportions", thus Rüdin, reflected the inner contradictions of his person.⁷⁵³ As Matthias Weber has shown, Rüdin gave in Toller's case an obvious double meaning of the "psychopathy"-concept which he ascribed to inheritance and degeneration, on the one hand, and which he placed outside the usual illness-qualities of other psychotic disturbances, on the other.⁷⁵⁴ The latter meant that legal persecution was possible, which was exactly what Rüdin had in mind. Toller's reaction to the report is not known, but he may well have seen it as a confirmation of his ideas about Kräpelin.

Rüdin's advice notwithstanding, the army decided to drop the charge against the strikers shortly thereafter. At the same time Toller was definitively dismissed from the army for "heart- and nerve-disorder" in September 1918.⁷⁵⁵ Out of the blue, Toller was thus free.⁷⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the war had reached its final stages. The Germans were no longer capable of taking the initiative. In order to break the hostile lines, Ludendorff had started a final offensive (the so called: "peace offensive"), but it failed at Reims. The army suffered from a bad food supply, logistical problems in the replacements of troops, and there was

⁷⁵¹ Eugen Kahn, "Psychopathen als revolutionäre Führer" in: *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, Band 52 (1919) 90-106; Ibid., "Psychopathie und Revolution" in: *Münchener Medizinische Wochenschrift*, 66 (1919) 968-969.

⁷⁵² BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Psychiatrisches Gutachten über Toller, 12.8.1919*.

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Weber, *Rüdin*, 89-90. How much Rüdin was subject to political opinions was clearly shown by his role in the psychological report of Anton Graf von Arco auf Valley (1897-1945), the murderer of Kurt Eisner in February 1919, who was not diagnosed by Rüdin on 21 May 1919 as mentally ill, but as "only an immature character that neighed to impulsive actions", see: Weber, *Rüdin*, 91.

⁷⁵⁵ StA Munich, Staatsanwalt, Nr 2242, *Protokoll der Vernehmung vor dem Staatsanwalt am 4.1919*, printed in: Viesel, *Literaten an der Wand*, 361.

⁷⁵⁶ Toller records that he left for Berlin upon release, but there is no prove for this, see: Toller, *GW*, IV,

a worrying shortage of munition. Now the allies began a tough counter-offensive in the area of the rivers Aisne and Marne. In July they brought heavy damage to the Germans, and the Americans, having already more than a million soldiers in Europe, began to record their first successes as well. In August 1918 the allies opened an attack that took the Germans by complete surprise – holes emerged in the German defense system, and the allies were able to break through the western front lines. In September and October new, heavy attacks followed, among others in Artois, which forced the Germans to leave their positions. Trust in the military command waned among German soldiers – desertion and refusal of service mushroomed. In the East the situation also became hopeless, as the allies had been able to crack in September the lines of Germany's ally, Bulgaria, and marched into Serbia, which had been under central control since 1915. Now Germany was also threatened from the south-east. The Bulgarians arranged an armistice with the allies, which was shortly after followed by Turkey (since 1915 an ally of Germany). That same month the Austrians informed Germany that they had started diplomatic talks with the allies as well.⁷⁵⁷

In this context Ludendorff was forced to arrange an armistice. As the American president Wilson had made clear that he only wanted to deal with a 'democratic' German government, he decided to create a new government, which favoured democracy. It was composed of the SPD, the (Catholic) Centre Party and the Liberal Progressive Party, a continuation of the coalition which had signed the Peace Resolution in July 1917 (see chapter 6). The new Reich Chancellor was Prince Max von Baden, a liberal democrat who decided for an armistice on 3 October. The news of an armistice struck the German population like a bomb: having been seduced by the German propaganda for years, it was not prepared for this sudden recognition of defeat. Under pressure of the long and disappointing development of the war, the massive loss of human lives, and the poor food supplies, social tensions had mounted and had only partially been released during strikes and protest actions. Afraid that the military command would use the armistice for a new attack, Wilson's response to this German offer was reserved, with the consequence that peace negotiations were delayed and tensions among the Germans increased. The new government was unable to counter these growing social tensions and political unrest.⁷⁵⁸

107

⁷⁵⁷ Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 353, 395.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 398.

On 25 October Admiral Reinhard Scheer, the Commander of the Navy, and Captain Magnus von Levetzow launched the proposal of a *levée en masse* that would mobilize all means to mount a last stand against the British Navy. It received support in various circle of the German Navy and politics, but it was rejected by a majority of the parliament. It created tension between politics and the army, and finally led to the replacement of Ludendorff by the moderate General Wilhelm Groener (1867-1939). Among the *Bildungsbürgertum* Dehmel called upon the nation to gain strength and unite, but he was opposed by the sculptress Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), who cried that that there had been enough dying and relied “on someone greater (*red*: Goethe) who said: ‘Seedcorn ought not to be ground’”⁷⁵⁹ In Berlin Walther Rathenau took the initiative to organise meetings of citizens and students to protest against the naval call. Toller, who had come to Berlin in October, used that initiative to unite and re-organise his Heidelberger *Bund* to have it protest against the planned action of a national defence.⁷⁶⁰ At a meeting of the parliamentary delegate Heine (SPD), moreover, whom he had met earlier that year, he spoke against this action of national defence as well.⁷⁶¹ It is not clear though, what was said. Similarly, we do not know which members of the *Bund* were on Toller’s side.

Toller left Berlin shortly after that speech and returned to his mother, who had moved during the war from Samotschin to Landsberg a/Warthe,⁷⁶² where Toller’s sister had lived since 1908. He was in bed with fever when revolution broke out. In reaction to the news of the *levée en masse*, sailors in Kiel began to mutiny. Officers tried to take control of the movement, but it soon radicalised and then sailors took control of the town. After Russian example, they created a sailors’ council (*Rat*), which emerged spontaneously and which were not structurally organized, and demanded the resignation of the Kaiser and a direct end to war. Within days other towns followed: Wilhelmshaven, Hamburg, Braunschweig, Hannover and other northern-German towns, after which the movement went inland, to the south, where it reached Munich on 7 November. In all these towns revolutionary councils mushroomed, in which soldiers, workers, peasants

⁷⁵⁹ Käthe Kollwitz, quoted from Schulte, *Verkehrte Welt des Krieges*, 145; on Dehmel and Kollwitz, see also: Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und Künstlerische Avantgarde*, 173; Linse, “Saatfrüchte sollen nicht vermahlen werden!” in: Vondung (ed), *Kriegserlebnis*, 262-274.

⁷⁶⁰ Toller, *GW*, IV, 112.

⁷⁶¹ *Protokol* in: Toller, *GW*, IV, 241.

⁷⁶² Toller’s mother moved to the Goethestraße 4 in Landsberg at the Warthe in either 1917 or 1918 and thus not, as Carel ter Haar once wrote, after the death of her husband, see: Ter Haar, ‘Biographischer Überblick’ in: Hermand (ed.), *Zu Ernst Toller*, 11; on the adress of the mother, see: AdK Berlin, Hauptmann-Archive, *Letter from Ernst Toller to Carl Hauptmann*, 24.10.1918.

and sailors united in their struggle against the war and Wilhelm II. Having been released from prison on 14 October,⁷⁶³ Eisner was able to turn a massive demonstration of 10,000 workers into a revolutionary movement in Munich, which soon took hold of the city. With a cigar box under his arms King Ludwig III of Wittelsbach (1845-1921) fled from Bavaria, while revolutionary councils filled up the power vacuum.⁷⁶⁴ On 9 November, then, the revolution also entered Berlin – anxious to forestall the proclamation of a soviet republic by the radical Communists under the leadership of Karl Liebknecht, Phillip Scheidemann (SPD) called for the abdication of Wilhelm II. Although Ebert had hoped to prevent this situation in reality, the Kaiser fled to the Netherlands, and Germany became a republic under Ebert's Social-Democratic leadership.

Toller records that he heard the news of the revolution from his sister, who came to her mother's home. In his autobiography he also writes that he left for Berlin on the day after the revolution, and then went to Munich, as Eisner had asked him to come, but this was not the case. In 1919 Toller stated that he send Eisner a telegram with the question whether he could be of use, whereafter he concluded that he was "welcome".⁷⁶⁵ Eisner's answer is unfortunately unknown. Though he was open to youth, Bernard Grau has shown that he was not waiting for youth to take a leading political role.⁷⁶⁶

In reality, then, Toller left for Munich only *after* 24 November, more than two weeks after its outbreak (!).⁷⁶⁷ Up to that time he was in Landsberg. It seems unlikely that this was due to his fever from 9 November. He may have wavered over Eisner's reaction, but possibly even more over the course of events. Perhaps he was cautious about embracing this sudden apocalypse, as he had once embraced another too soon. Perhaps he preferred the safety of his mother's home before sliding down into the turmoil of the age and dedicating himself to the further construction of a new world through the Munich revolution.

⁷⁶³ Wiesemann, 'Eisner' in: Bosl e.a. (ed). *Bayern im Umbruch*, 403; Fishmen, *Prophets*, 31; Graf, *Wir sind Gefangene*, 312-3.

⁷⁶⁴ Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 54-6.

⁷⁶⁵ *Protokoll* in: Toller, *GW*, IV, 240; Carel ter Haar already pointed to Toller's "self-stylation" in 1980, see: Ter Haar, 'Biographischer Überblick' in: Hermand (ed.), *Zu Ernst Toller*, 11.

⁷⁶⁶ Grau, "Kurt Eisner und sein Verhältnis zur Jugend" in: Neuhaus/Selbmann/Unger (eds.), *Toller und die Weimarer Republik*, 56.

⁷⁶⁷ On 24 November 1918 Toller sent a letter to Carl Hauptmann from the address in Landsberg a/Warthe, so that he must have left for Munich only *after* that date, see: AdK Berlin, Hauptmann-Archive, *Letter from Ernst Toller to Carl Hauptmann, 24.10.1918*.

Conclusion

Toller's role in the Bavarian revolution and the Council Republic has been the subject of many studies. There are good studies at hand, although unquestionably much can be done still. If we pursue the approach I have undertaken in this study, many other questions may arise: first of all, where did Toller move during these events? Who were his friends and contacts? What was the place of student groups in this? And what was the role of the *Bund*?⁷⁶⁸ Too often Toller's revolutionary events in Munich are seen from the perspective of politics alone, although a socio-cultural approach – which should also include an interest in politics – would be able to address these questions. Too often, moreover, Toller is seen only in relation to Eisner during the revolution, but he remained close to Landauer at this time as well, both in intellectual and socio-political terms. This is shown not only by the character of his idealism, but also by Toller's strong commitment to the revolutionary councils and his common position with Landauer (and Mühsam) in a council-organisation which in many ways opposed the political system that was led by Eisner. In this context other questions should be: what was the relation of the *Bund* to the council?⁷⁶⁹ And: in what way, or to what extent, did the revolutionary practice actually change Toller's social utopianism? In what way did his idealism take on in a truly political frame?

Such questions might pose an introduction to new research, but cannot be the aim of this study. All that I intended to offer in this study was a new contribution to the understanding of Toller's early life and thought from 1893 to 1918. In so doing, I have paid central attention to the description and analysis of Toller's personal and intellectual development, and in close relation to and interdependence with the larger socio-cultural context.

In writing this study I could dwell on a whole storehouse of literature by scholars of Toller. As I also wrote in the introduction, information about his youth is present, but inconcise and fragmentary. This study, though not so extensive in terms of its number of

⁷⁶⁸ In all these questions one can think of the network around Netty Katzenstein's *Bund für Sozialistische Frauen*, which included Sophie Steinbach, but also Auerbach.

⁷⁶⁹ It can be argued that the ideal of the *Bund* was later expressed through the ideal of the *Rat*. Historians have often interpreted the councils from a political (not seldom Marxist) point of view, but it would be interesting to see the birth of the *Rat* in a romantic context as well: that is, as a counter-*Gemeinschaft* of the state, organised on corporative and organic principles.

pages, is the fruit of intensive research to get factual knowledge about Toller's early life in place. In so doing, it presents a more concise chronology of that life, and corrects many mistakes in previous work on Toller. I also extends existing knowledge with new facts and material: at times it contradicts earlier assumptions about Toller's early life, but it also complements them. I have focussed particularly on Toller's social contacts during his early life to understand not merely where he moved, but also whether it was in isolation or community.

Stress on the psycho-social dimension has paid more attention to the interplay of character and socio-cultural setting. A sensitive person, Toller suffered from injuries and discrimination since his early childhood, but this was not – as is often believed in research on Toller – a consequence of the experience of Jewish identity alone⁷⁷⁰; true, in a traditional Jewish and anti-Semitic environment Jewish identity was unquestionably intensely experienced, but Toller was equally sensitive to impulses from a whole variety of other “sources” (Toller), including literature.⁷⁷¹ In this context we detect the sensitivity of a specific character that was strongly stimulated by outer impulses – it is *this* which made him susceptible to the unpleasant socio-cultural setting of which he was part.⁷⁷² It is also this which led to his particular moral preoccupation with the place of the self in the larger whole. Though he experienced the God of this early world in terms of anxiety and fear, he was desperately in need for a re-valuation of the Godly essence to still his moral restlessness.

Toller was a loner, but lamented his loneliness at the very same time. The internal ‘contradiction’ of a character which sought inclusion, on the one hand, and isolation, on the other, shows that Toller's communal longing were a spiritual rather than a social creed, even though it had clear social implications and an obvious link to the social world. Toller's wish for community shows regressive and progressive tendencies, conservative and utopian ones. Twisted between the need for protection, on the one hand, and for recognition, on the other, it also showed a double wish for a vertical connection in terms of the mother-child bond (of dependence and authority) and that for

⁷⁷⁰ Hempel/Mueller, as I also wrote in the introduction, point to the need to transcend the place of Jewish identity alone, but they also relate Toller's sensitivity for “offences and discriminations” to the experience of that identity, which is too narrow; for example, in war Toller suffered equally from Wiegels “offences and discriminations”, though there is no prove that this was related to jewish identity, see: Hempel-Küter/Müller, “Toller” in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 82.

⁷⁷¹ See chapter 2 of this study.

⁷⁷² Ernst Niekisch, a friend of Toller who shared a cell with Toller in prison after his arrest on behalf of the Munich adventure in 1919, also writes that Toller was very sensitive for impulses of the external world, see: Ernst Niekisch, *Gewagtes Leben: Begegnungen und Begebnisse*, Volume I (Cologne, 1958).

a horizontal connection in terms of a fraternal bond (of equality). These tensions, which correspond to the psycho-religious mood that underlay Toller's 'messianism', sound a consistent refrain through Toller's early life. It was only in the mystical concept of humanity that Toller found a harmonisation of these opposing tendencies. This concept replaced the 'old' God-concept – if Toller had been unable to find the “dear God” in the *mezuzah*, he found Him in humanity. Crucial in that ‘awakening’ was the traumatic war experience, accelerating Toller's psycho-moral disorientation, and necessitating rebirth. Landauer's philosophy responded to that need, which explains to a great extent the crucial importance of that work.

The intellectual context of this study was that of an anti-materialist romanticism, where the concepts of community, youth and rebirth were central. Since his adolescence Toller read romantic literature, but it was not until during the war that he strengthened his identification with its anti-materialist *Weltanschauung*, as a consequence of the profound impact of the reality of war. In this worldview the ideas of the Free German academic youth movement were prominent. Before the war Toller knew Walther Victor, who had been present at the Hohe Meißner, but there are no indications that he already shared conceptions of “youth culture” at that time – the alignment to that ideal we only find from April 1917 onwards, even though Toller may have identified with that concept before that time. Essential to a further understanding of the romantic need for personal and cultural rebirth, then, was Kutscher's seminar, where Toller for the first time met like-minded young students, and thus “friends” (in terms of horizontal bonds of community). It was the war experience which retrospectively created a “generation” in Munich in 1917.⁷⁷³

The need to bring down the war, which was always closely connected with the need for a moral regeneration of humanity, brought Toller in “socialist” circles during the fall of 1917. Corresponding to a larger tendency among social reformist youths, it opened up the ideal of a bourgeois-cultural “youth socialism”, and with interest in the fate of the proletariat. Toller never understood his socialism in terms of this concept, but his *Bund* was nonetheless a clear expression of the social-reformist ideals of the academic youth movement in the sense of this Wyneken-inspired concept. Contact with Eisner, and the coincidental participation in the strike movement, first awakened Toller to the central role of the proletariat. Conscious of its potential to cultural rebirth, he now

identified with socialism as a proletarian movement, though always from a bourgeois perspective and from the central need for a leadership of youth. In this context Toller hoped for a *Volksgemeinschaft* that would transcend all class barriers through a new morality.

Toller is often seen as an outsider of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, which is certainly true from the perspective of his solitary attitude and preparedness to act on his own; during the war he was prepared to fight for his own ideals, but this also counts for his commitment to the *Bund*, which seems to have been the sole creation of Toller himself. Nonetheless, as I have shown, Toller's utopianism was also representative of his age for its connotation of "youth socialism", connecting him with the ideas of the 'Leftwing' branches of the (free) German academic bourgeois youth and of Activist Expressionism.

This study has repeatedly referred to the need to relativize the place of Jewish identity in Toller's early life. In their insightful article Christa Hempel-Küter and Hans-Harold Müller already pointed to the complexity and contradictions of Toller's relationship to his Jewish identity.⁷⁷⁴ When Toller volunteered, as we have seen, the (racialist) psychiatrist Rüdin wrote that it was because Toller "as a Jew" wanted to prove that he was German; yet Toller also claims that he sent a letter to the Jewish community in Samotschin during the war to strike him from its registers.⁷⁷⁵ After the Council Republic, when Toller was in prison, he questioned whether he had done right in sending that letter, but he does not explain why.⁷⁷⁶ Rüdin also records in his psychiatric inquiry of 1918 about Toller: "It was not right to think that his confession had damaged him, 'e.g. that it *did*', but it had left him indifferent"; according to Rüdin Toller also had a "specific conception about the Jewish question, but he preferred not to speak about it."⁷⁷⁷ In chapter 2, moreover, we have seen that anti-Semitism not only created contempt for, but also defence of Jewish identity. In *Die Wandlung* Friedrich, referring to his Jewish identity, records that he long defended what he actually despised. During his early life Toller largely moved among Jews, largely a matter of course in Wilhelmine Germany, whereas he never displayed specific interest in Jews for their Jewishness. What united

⁷⁷³ On generations as a group of people with "shared assumptions", see: Alan B. Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1987); Wohl, *Generation of 1914*.

⁷⁷⁴ Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 81.

⁷⁷⁵ Toller, *GW*, IV, 227; The letter does not exist anymore (and thus there is no prove that he actually wrote that letter).

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁷ BA Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten, ORA/RG, C24/18, *Psychiatrisches Gutachten über Ernst Toller*.

Toller with Jews in Munich and Heidelberg was a moral disorientation, largely caused by the reality of war, which was related to the problem of religion, but with Jewish identity as such it had little to do.

In the light of this lack of clarity about Toller's relation to Jewish identity, then, Hempel-Küter and Müller certainly make a point in expressing their doubt about the validity of the many attempts by scholars of Toller to understand his later socialism as the fruit of his Jewish identity.⁷⁷⁸ In fact, Toller's socialism envisioned the ideal of an utopian reality in which he found a place as a human being, and not (merely as) a Jew – it was the ideal of a *Gemeinschaft* beyond anxiety and loneliness, where hatred and suffering were replaced by love and recognition.⁷⁷⁹ It was, in other words, an answer to his psycho-social disorientation.

Questions that remain are the following: what precisely was Toller's relation to Judaism? Was he open to Christianity? Is it possible to trace back his idealism to a specific Jewish or Christian ethic?⁷⁸⁰ And what was his relation to the ideas of Stefan George?⁷⁸¹

These are only a few of the questions that may arise from a study on Toller's early life. It is up to somebody else to answer them.

⁷⁷⁸ Hempel-Küter/Müller, "Toller" in: *Literatur, Politik und soziale Prozesse*, 82.

⁷⁷⁹ See the quote from Toller's *Hinkemann*, see: Introduction of this study, page 9.

⁷⁸⁰ Adam M. Weisberger, for example, refers to the presence of a Jewish ethic in Toller's work, although to my opinion to a rather unsatisfying and suggestive extent, see: Adam M. Weisberger, *The Jewish ethic and the spirit of socialism* (New York, 1997).

⁷⁸¹ As I suggested, Roth seems to display influence of George. Toller was apparently especially close to him in Munich in 1917, whereas the poem "Der Ringende" somehow also reminds of George's "Stern der Bünde". I was pointed to this by Jan Aarts, though I was unable to trace actual influence to further outwork this.

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