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Andreas Dorrer

## „Neider überall zwingen uns zu gerechter Verteidigung“

Legitimation and De-Legitimation  
of World War I in  
German Dramatic Literature

**ESV** ERICH  
SCHMIDT  
VERLAG





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# The version that wanted to be written

Writing the Nazi past  
as historiographic metafiction

By  
Kylie Giblett

ERICH SCHMIDT VERLAG

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## Table of contents

I. Introducing WWI dramatic literature .....	11
II. WWI propaganda and the genesis of Germany's official narratives .....	22
III. The discourse of legitimisation .....	34
1. National stereotypes in the German cultural consciousness and their presence in 1914.....	35
2. Properties of the text corpus between 1914 and 1918 and its division into two phases .....	44
2.1 Theatre repertoires during the war .....	46
2.2 The homogeneity of the text corpus .....	48
2.3 The two phases of the discourse of legitimisation .....	53
3. The first phase – fighting (for) a defensive war .....	57
3.1 The rapacity of the Cossack hordes – Russia's alleged invasion .....	59
3.2 Rivalry and revenge – the portrayal of France's motives .....	65
3.3 The puppet master – England's role in early war plays .....	71
3.4 Arguing with the enemy – the use of enemy characters in early war plays .....	76
3.5 The victory imperative .....	81
4. Phase two – legitimising sacrifices and victims .....	86
4.1 The new role of <i>Heimat</i> .....	90
4.2 Arguing with the inner enemy – the use of German antagonists.....	98
4.3 Reactivating the <i>Verteidigungskrieg</i> narrative as a means of motivation .....	109
4.4 Endurance at home as an obligation to the fallen: the creation of a context of meaning for the victims .....	121



Table of contents

5. The instrumentalisation of the discourse of legitimisation.....	130
5.1 The literary maintenance of a context of meaning despite the defeat: the last plays of the discourse .....	131
5.2 Legitimising political ideologies with propaganda narratives: the instrumentalisation of the discourse.....	137
6. Synopsis: propaganda narratives and WWI dramatic literature .....	144
IV. The discourse of de-legitimisation .....	148
1. “Ein heiliger Verteilungskrieg” – Karl Kraus’ satirical accusation <i>Die letzten Tage der Menschheit</i> .....	155
1.1 Kraus’ satire, its affective implications and the role of the NÖRGLER in the de-legitimisation of propaganda narrative .....	161
1.2 “Ein ausgehöhltes Menschentum” as the prerequisite for the propaganda narratives .....	166
1.3 The fight against the <i>Verteidigungskrieg</i> .....	174
1.4 “Das Volk der Richter und Henker” – Kraus on the state of culture .....	180
1.5 “Es handelt sich in diesem Krieg” – Kraus’ representation of the motives behind the German war effort .....	185
1.6 “Nie war bei größerer Entfaltung weniger Gemeinschaft als jetzt”. The de-legitimisation of the <i>Verteidigungsgemeinschaft</i> .....	190
2. Continuity as means of de-legitimisation in <i>Heimkehrer</i> plays.....	198
2.1 The role of the protagonist in the continuity motif .....	207
2.1.1 How the inner conflict of the <i>Heimkehrer</i> exposes continuities: <i>Trommeln in der Nacht</i> und <i>Der deutsche Hinkemann</i> .....	207
2.1.2 The <i>Heimkehrer</i> as a representation of continuity: <i>Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg</i> .....	220
2.2 Then representation of the mindset that caused the war through the post-war perspective of the <i>Heimkehrer</i> .....	225
2.2.1 “Soldaten! Soldaten! Hurra! Hurra!” – the persistence of Wilhelmine militarism .....	226
2.2.2 “Mein Gatte war Universitätsprofessor” – the continued admiration for prestige and status .....	231
2.2.3 “Der Sau Ende ist der Wurst Anfang!” – opportunism and exploitation .....	234

*Table of contents*

2.2.4 “Frontsoldaten, verwilderte, verlotterte, der Arbeit entwöhnte Abenteurer” – the <i>Heimkehrer</i> as a threat .....	241
2.2.5 “Sie ein zartes Frauchen, er ein Kerl wie aus Stahl...” – society’s admiration of strength and power .....	245
2.2.6 “In der Natur wird gemordet, das ändert sich nicht” – the violence behind the narrative of peacefulness .....	250
V. WWI dramatic literature: synopsis and outlook .....	258
List of works cited .....	268



## I. Introducing WWI dramatic literature

“Among the calamities of war may be justly numbered the diminution of the love of truth, by the falsehoods which interest dictates and credulity encourages” (Johnson, 92). Samuel Johnson wrote this in 1758 in *The Idler* but it could very well have been written after the experience of WWI.<sup>1</sup> In the months before the Great War, it was in the interest of all major European powers to put themselves into the position of the attacked. And so, with great propagandistic effort, the nations radicalised their populations and created a dynamic that would eventually draw 27 parties into the war, ranging in size from the giant British Empire with all its colonies to nations as small as San Marino and Haiti. By 1918, 47 declarations of war were issued, the first one on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 1914 by Austria-Hungary on Serbia, the last one almost exactly four years later on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 1918 by Honduras on the German Empire.<sup>2</sup> And although it is not as easy as to identify pure falsehood behind the position of each nation in July 1914, common sense suggests that it is not possible for *all* combatants of a war to be in the role of the innocent defender. The fact that this was the official position of all four great European powers throughout the war has, especially in Germany, sparked war-guilt debates at irregular intervals for over 100 years to date.<sup>3</sup>

It is no surprise that Germany, as one of the nations that lost the war, intensively debated the question of who was responsible for its outbreak. But this debate did not begin in 1918 or 1919 but as early as 1914. However, at this time the shape of the debate within Germany was different to that of the post-war years, and was, particularly by decision makers and officials, orchestrated as a discourse of legitimisation that aimed to demonstrate the justness of Germany’s war effort. The total war of 1914 to 1918 involved the entire populations of the belligerent nations and required new forms of legitimisation in order to win the people’s support and ensure their willingness to make all their resources available and even risk their lives

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, the more famous proverb, that truth is the first casualty of war, was allegedly first mentioned in a speech by US Senator Hiram Warren Johnson in 1918, although no records of this speech exist. Its first documented appearance in Arthur Ponsonby’s *Falsehood in Wartime* is also a result of the experiences of WWI (see Ponsonby, 11).

<sup>2</sup> See Dollinger, 51.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview on these debates see Lehnstädt.

for their country's cause. The intense effort made by all European governments and their propaganda institutions to place themselves in the position of the defender shows that aggressive annexationist wars were not communicable anymore. In the context of WWI, this caused all nations to develop organised propaganda institutions, which promoted a range of narratives that were used to convince the people of the inevitability of this war and the necessity of the sacrifices that were asked of them.

In Germany, the foundation of all war-propaganda was the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. It provided a specific interpretation of the events that led to the outbreak of the war, which aimed to legitimise the German warfare as an act of defence. Crucial to the narrative was the reactivation of long-established resentments and stereotypes concerning England, France and Russia. They fuelled the increasing mistrust towards the other nations during the first half of 1914 by providing motives for the enemies' allegedly imminent attack on Germany and provided an emotional foundation that increased the narrative's persuasiveness.

Germany's propaganda institutions thereby used a variety of different media to spread this and other narratives, either by controlling and infiltrating means of communication or by producing and distributing propaganda material themselves. The prime example of a medium which fell into the former category was the press. As the first mass medium, the press had the potential to reach large portions of the population and was therefore closely controlled. This function of the press is famously represented in Karl Kraus' (1874–1936)<sup>4</sup> works. The list of propaganda material and media which fell into the latter category is long. Hans Weigel et al. highlight the large variety of print media which ranged from posters to the so-called *Feldpostkarten*, naming their publication after a famous proverb circulated on various propaganda material: *Jeder Schuss ein Russ. Jeder Stoss ein Franzos* (1983). Hermann Arnold's exhibition catalogue *Propaganda trifft Grabenkrieg* (2015) even lists propagandist coins. War photography and even the newly emerging medium of film are more examples of media that were used for propaganda purposes during the war.

Literature was of course one of the mediums employed in this pursuit, as writers and intellectuals frequently saw it as their duty to support the na-

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<sup>4</sup> In the following, I will provide biographical data of people who actively participated in the discourse whenever they are mentioned, preferably in the main text, for the first time. This is intended to provide an idea about the generation and the sides of the discourse these figures belonged to. If the data is missing in some cases, it is not available. For completeness, the data will also be provided for people like Bertolt Brecht and Max Reinhardt, although it can be assumed that it is commonly known.

tional cause through patriotic poetry or essayistic and journalistic works.<sup>5</sup> While WWI novels are a post-war phenomenon, war plays emerged alongside poetry other genres with the start of the war. Considering the significance of the theatre as a mass medium during the first decades of the twentieth century and the fact that it drew its material almost exclusively from literary, dramatic texts, these plays had the potential to reach a wide audience. The theatre was an important part of the cultural life at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the performances influenced not only the artistic but also the socio-political discourses of the time. Theatre performances allowed for the collective reception of representations of the war and influential theatre critics like Herbert Ihering (1888–1977) and Alfred Kerr (1867–1948) extended the reach of the plays performed on the big stages around the country even further through their influential reviews and critiques. All these aspects allowed dramatic literature to play a significant role in the public perception of the war. Research into the war repertoire of German theatres shows that stages were, particularly at the beginning of the war, flooded with patriotic war plays. Furthermore, plays published during the war focussed in particular on easy to stage and clearly identifiable political messages in an attempt to utilize the popularity of theatres to reach a wide audience, demonstrating the potential power of expression that dwelled within drama during the war.

Additionally, the characteristics of dramatic literature and its performance make this genre particularly suitable for the processing of events of the magnitude of WWI and can explain why drama was, unlike longer prose forms, used to process and represent the war as soon as it broke out. Eva Horn emphasised the difficulties in processing an event of the magnitude and traumatising potential of WWI into prose, claiming such a task requires comprehension of the structure of the event that is to be narrated.<sup>6</sup> This means that the processing of the war into literary form depended on the construction of a frame of time and space within which the uncontrollable events could be brought in order and as a result transformed into a narrative. The traditional structure of dramatic literature and the theatrical restrictions of the plays' performances provided such a frame. Written for an at least imaginary stage, the structures of time and place are for dramatic

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<sup>5</sup> The research on WWI poetry started as early as the 1920s with Julius Bab's *Die deutsche Kriegsliteratur* but still produces new publications like *Populäre Kriegsliteratur im Ersten Weltkrieg* by Nicolas Detering et al. On the role of intellectuals during the war see for example Helmut Fries', *Die große Katharsis*; Uwe Schneider's and Andreas Schumann's, *Krieg der Geister* oder Alexander Honold's, *Einsatz der Dichtung*.

<sup>6</sup> See Horn, *Erlebnis und Trauma*.

texts at least partially predetermined. This enforced framework may have made given writers, especially amateurs, the incentive to turn to the dramatic form to process the overwhelming events of the war. Furthermore, Richard Elsner emphasises another aspect specifically prominent in dramatic literature that makes it so suitable for the representation of war in general: War, he states “ist Handlung! Und Drama heißt Handlung!” (Elsner, *Der Weltkrieg im Drama*, 108).

Elsner would, however, no doubt agree that the *Handlung* of most plays written during the war is rather poor and normally overshadowed by the authors’ patriotic and often propagandistic ends. As mentioned earlier, one of the most prominent means to these ends, particularly in the early plays written directly after the outbreak of the war, is the representation of national stereotypes, which were used to support the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Indeed, plays written during the war incorporate the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative essentially uncriticised and unreflected-on, in order to legitimise the German war effort as an act of defence. They thereby establish a discourse of legitimisation that remains the dominant feature of WWI drama until the end of the war.

In the early plays of the discourse, the reasons for the outbreak of the war are represented in a very simplified way. The crisis in the Balkans is portrayed as a trap set by England to lure Austria-Hungary into war with Russia, knowing that Germany will be forced to join sides with its ally, the Habsburg Monarchy. This in turn gives France an excuse to attack Germany under the pretence of having to come to the aid of its own ally, Russia. The inevitable expansion of the war into the territories along Germany’s western borders is then said to provide the excuse which England was waiting for to join the war itself. This provoked war is thereby defined as a fight for the survival of the German people and their culture, which the enemies set out to destroy. Most plays, however, recount only one part of this chain of events, focussing on the representation of either France’s, England’s or Russia’s motives and actions and, like the narratives they represent, support their representation with traditional and now reactivated stereotypes. Which enemy nation the plays focus on thereby typically depends on the background of the author and is expressed by the drama’s setting.

A very frequent setting is East Prussia. Titles like Felix Renker’s (1867–1935) *Von der Knute befreit*, Peter Saget’s (1859–1932) *Im Lande der Knute*, Fritz Kalesky’s *Die Russen kommen!* and a number of plays by different authors called *Kosaken*, all published in 1914 and 1915 and set in East Prussia, indicate the particular tenor of plays set in the region and the way in which the Russian troops represented in them are portrayed. The allegedly typical Slavic “Brutalität” (Enderling, 5) becomes the main as-

pect of the image they convey and is used to gain credibility for the representation of the Russians as “Mordbrenner” (C. R. Schmidt, 20). Reminiscent of the image of the Asiatic hordes which was, for example, immanent in the theories of Karl Marx, this stereotype enhances support for the accusation that Russia’s attack on the peaceful and diligent East Prussians was unprovoked, and fear of the troops which were allegedly pillaging through the lands with unimaginable violence.

Plays set at the western front represent similarly well-established stereotypes regarding the French. Revenge is what the plays claim is the central motive for France’s allegedly imminent attack on Germany, one which can only be fended off by a preventative campaign through Belgium into French territory. The French are portrayed as having developed a hatred for Germany after their armies were defeated twice in previous century by German troops. Further, this hatred is said to build on the traditional rivalry between German culture and western civilisation, in that Germany, “in allen Kultur- und Gefühlswerten [viel höher] steht als das schöne Frankreich, das sich einst rühmte, an der Spitze der Zivilisation zu marschieren” (Reinfels, 132).

English characters are rarely the sole focus of these early plays, although exceptions like in Ilse Nebinger’s *Pflicht*, published in 1915, do exist. Instead, the English typically appear in supporting roles in plays focussing on either France or Russia. This representation can be explained by the definition of England’s alleged role in the outbreak of the war and the stereotype that is allocated to them by the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative; simply put, the English are said to be the “Brandstifter” (Bram, 3) who instigated the conspiracy against Germany. Their alleged motive is based on the long-established stereotype of the business mindedness of the English people and their focus on individual progress rather than on the prosperity of all people and manifests itself in the plays’ accusation that England orchestrated the outbreak of the war to destroy their biggest economic rival, Germany.

These national stereotypes are dominant in plays published during the first 18 months of the war, creating an extremely homogenous text corpus. However, from about 1916 onwards, the German dramatic production enters a second phase. This does not mean that later plays change their general representation of the war or their propagandistic tenor, but they shift their focus from the legitimisation of the war itself to the legitimisation of the sacrifices and victims the war demands. The plays of this phase gain a much stronger cathartic character and advocate for the unity of the German people in the fight for their survival. They propagate an ideological bridge between the spatially separated spheres of *Heimat* and *Front* and claim an interdependence of both spheres in which one can only survive if the other one maintains its will-



ingness to make all necessary sacrifices. This inner logic of the plays defines the unity of the German people simultaneously as the prerequisite and guarantee for victory by claiming that Germany will be victorious, if this unity is maintained and each sphere perseveres. As a literary representation of the narrative of the German *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*, this aspect of the plays is crucial for the understanding of the legitimisation strategy during the second phase of the discourse of legitimisation.

Titles like *Der Heimat Dank an ihre Helden* (1916), *Deutsche Volksoffer im dritten Kriegsjahre* (1917) and *Des Vaterlandes Dank* (1918) demonstrate the message these plays want to send, especially to the people at home. They represent and ultimately stigmatise German characters that commit offenses against the unity between *Heimat* and *Front* and contrast them with characters representing true patriotism, solidarity and determination. The plays typically develop a character constellation in which the representatives of these two opposing principles create a simple dramatic conflict. This conflict then ultimately resolves in victory for the latter, in order to create a cathartic effect that is supposed to show the German people “den Weg zu Trost und Lebenskraft” in a time “da Flaumacher den deutschen Willen zum Sieg benagen” (Seiffert, 3).

Legitimisation of the victims and sacrifices seen as necessary to achieve German victory, which was ultimately the main focus of the plays of this phase of the discourse, was a crucial element of the attempts to retain or renew the people’s faith in the German war effort. Plays like Paul Seiffert’s (1866–1936) *Dennoch durch!* from 1917, arguably the play which most represents the second phase of the discourse, use the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative to create a context of meaning in which to embed the victims and sacrifices the war causes. According to the inner logic of these plays, the sacrifices already made would lose their meaning if the unity of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* were to crumble and the fight for Germany’s survival was finally lost. By this logic past sacrifices are used to legitimise future sacrifices, as only their combination will save the fatherland. For the plays, the survival of the ideological entity of the fatherland is imperative and legitimises all sufferings, as this example from a front scene of *Dennoch durch!* demonstrates:

Warum nur können wir in soviel Dreck und Graus –  
warum nur wollen wir im Höllengraben  
ganz stille – feste – zähe – übermenschlich warten?!?  
Weils nötig ist fürs Vaterland! (Seiffert, 30).

Just like in the first phase, the plays of the second phase of the discourse of legitimisation remain homogeneously patriotic and continue to represent

the propaganda narratives almost unchallenged until the end of the war. The outlined logic of the discourse considered, however, it is no surprise that the discourse of legitimisation could not continue unchanged after the end of the war. Nevertheless, some plays maintain the argumentation of the original discourse and focus on the alleged existential character of the war. The fact that the German nation, its people and culture still exist allows them even in defeat to create a context of meaning for all the sacrifices that had to be made to achieve this. The majority of the post-war plays, however, focus on the reasons for the German defeat and the lessons that have to be learned from it. In these plays, the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative as well as the unity narrative remain unchallenged at their core but the texts shift their focus towards the call for a rebirth of the German nation on the ruins of the old order. As a consequence, they stop being literary representations of the propaganda narratives that were circulated during the war and instead instrumentalise their original argumentation in order to promote political agendas, ranging from anti-capitalistic ideas to anti-Semitic and fascist stab-in-the-back narratives. Because of this instrumentalisation, the literary discourse of legitimisation dissolves into the political struggles of the post-war era and disappears from WWI dramatic literature.

Another reason for the discourse's disappearance after the end of the war is that war-critical plays could now be published and staged. Many such plays were written by professional playwrights and the texts were often of superior literary quality compared to the amateur works that dominated the discourse of legitimisation. They established a powerful counter-discourse and managed to overshadow the majority of the pro-war plays. The fact that these war-critical plays emerged so rapidly after the end of the war sheds light on the properties of the previously discussed body of texts as it indicates that the homogeneity of the text corpus of plays published during the war was strongly influenced by external factors. While state censorship was certainly the most influential of these external factors, Wolfgang Poensgen in one of the first analyses of the war repertoire of German theatres points out that theatres themselves contributed to homogeneity of the text corpus by preferring nationalistic and patriotic plays.<sup>7</sup>

Because of the disappearance of organised and voluntary censorship after the end of the war, the text corpus of anti-war plays published from 1919 onwards is much more heterogeneous. Nevertheless, these plays were still strongly inspired by the war and therefore continued to engage with the same topics and narratives that had dominated the plays published between 1914 and 1918. However, instead of legitimising the propagandistic views of these narratives, such plays expose what their authors see as the truth

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<sup>7</sup> See Poensgen, 26.

behind the narratives and thereby establish a discourse of de-legitimation within WWI dramatic literature that begins with the first wave of anti-war plays published in 1919.

The plays contributing to this discourse generally do so in one of two ways. Some of them, such as Karl Kraus' *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (1922), Adrian von Arx' (1847–1919) *Der Helfer* from 1927, and Adolf Hoffmann's *Lazarett-Baracke 9* (1919), represent the nation at war and create an image of the society that does not reflect the characteristics conveyed by the propaganda narratives. Others are set after the war and represent the conditions of the post-war society as continuities from pre-war and wartime conditions. They thereby reflect a mindset which de-legitimises the propaganda narratives by exposing the discrepancy between propagandistic claims and reality. This strategy is used in many of the *Heimkehrerstücke* of the Weimar Republic, such as the ones analysed in this study: Bertolt Brecht's (1898–1956) *Trommeln in der Nacht* (1922), Ernst Toller's (1893–1939) *Der deutsche Hinkemann* (1923) or *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg* (1936) by Ödön von Horváth (1901–1938).

The most prominent example of the first category is certainly Karl Kraus' *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*. Kraus represents characters from all levels of society that he deems responsible for the war and for the atrocities that were committed in the name of the fatherland. In his image of wartime society, the narratives of the German *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* and the defensive character of the German warfare are reduced to mere masks, behind which people hide while opportunistically exploiting the situation for their own benefit. Having his characters repeatedly refuse to reflect on reality, instead choosing to accept the narratives' version of it, allows Kraus to reveal the contradiction between the narratives' claims and the reality he perceives during the war.

In the centre of his strategy, Kraus places his main character, the NÖRGLER. The moral authority with which he endows this character is one of the most important compositional aspects of the play. It allows Kraus to establish an ideal within the play against which the other characters are measured and in comparison to which they ultimately (self-)expose their true motives. The motives Kraus ultimately reveals are used to de-legitimise the propaganda narratives as a tactic applied by authorities to create support for the war and accepted by the people to justify their own opportunistic and egoistic behaviour during its course. Through keywords and references that tie different scenes of the play together, Kraus creates motive chains that reveal a reality that differs from the version the narratives convey. Within these chains, the scenes I/29 and V/54 function as focal points in which Kraus uses the NÖRGLER as a moral commentator on the majority of topics and motives represented in the play. The scenes are

consequently used by Kraus to structure the de-legitimisation of the narratives he engages with, the same narratives represented in the earlier plays of the discourse of legitimisation.

The second strategy frequently used in the discourse of de-legitimisation is applied most noticeably in *Heimkehrerdramen*. While *Heimkehrerfiguren* appear in WWI dramatic literature very early on, their return is at first usually temporary and they are used primarily to reinstate faith in the German victory and to reinforce the context of meaning for the victims through their determination and willingness to make sacrifices of their own. It is not until after the war that these characters become the protagonists of plays and are used to contrast pre-war with post-war identities. In the plays of the discourse of de-legitimisation, however, the distinction of these identities within the *Heimkehrerfiguren*, or the lack thereof, serves to create a dramatic conflict either between these two identities within the one figure, or between the character's post-war self and the pre-war continuities represented by the other *dramatis personae*.

The title character in Ödön von Horváth's *Sladek*-plays, although not the *Heimkehrer* of the play, demonstrates this strategy. He is, as Horváth explains, "als Figur ein völlig aus unserer Zeit herausgeborener und nur durch sie zu erklärender Typ" (qtd. in Streitler-Kastberger, 16). This characterisation is representative of the influence of the pre-war and wartime periods on the *dramatis personae* appearing in these plays and indicates that *Heimkehrerdramen* are in one way or another always a commentary on the conditions before and during the war.

Horváth's DON JUAN, for example is famously on a journey of regression into his pre-war self and exposes the mindset that led Europe into the war as he increasingly recovers it. ANDREAS KRAGLER in Bertolt Brecht's *Trommeln in der Nacht* und EUGEN HINKEMANN in Ernst Toller's *Der deutsche Hinkemann* serve to expose continuities through their confrontation with the society they return into. Brecht and Toller endow them with identities that have changed because of their personal war experience but upon their return have them realise that this altered self does not fit into a post-war society that seems to be stuck in the mindset they themselves have overcome.

HINKEMANN ultimately learns to believe that all human beings should be united in the suffering they experience but has to learn that this is not the case despite the catastrophe of the war. His journey is a journey of revelation, leaving him in despair once he realises that the mindset that led humanity into the war is still dominating the post-war society. KRAGLER is on a similar journey, although with a different personal outcome. After being outcast by the new bourgeoisie and, realising that the old suppressors have simply changed personnel but not their methods, he joins the revolution of

1918/19. This, however, is only the next step on his journey of realisation. At its end, KRAGLER understands that even the alleged new system the revolution claims to establish is trying to exploit him for its own goals and he decides that he will no longer “den Hals hinhalten ans Messer” (Brecht 1, 225) so “daß eure Idee in den Himmel kommt” (228).

In one way or another, the plays represent a society that still admires power and strength, exploits others for personal gain and accepts violence as a means to move forward in the world. By exposing this representation as a continuity that reaches back into the times before and during the war, the plays de-legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and deny that a united *Volksgemeinschaft* ever existed. This means that the anti-war plays of the post-war era essentially engage with the same propaganda narratives as the plays of the discourse of legitimisation, revealing the existence of an intertextual dialogue between the two bodies of texts.

Using the propaganda narratives through which the plays of both discourses communicate as conceptual framework for this study to engage with this dialogue and to analyse the two opposing discourses is beneficial for two reasons: It connects the almost entirely unknown plays of the discourse of legitimisation to the available research into WWI literature, while simultaneously opening new perspectives on the already well researched texts of the post-war era. This has so far been prevented by the lack of research into WWI dramatic literature in general, especially regarding the text corpus of WWI plays published during the war.

The few exceptions are works by Carl Hauptmann (1858–1921), whose WWI plays are at the periphery of the interest in his works, and by Ludwig Thoma (1867–1921), for which the same can be said with regards to their role in the author’s oeuvre. Added to this are a small number of expressionist plays like Reinhard Goering’s (1878–1936) *Seeschlacht* (1918) and Fritz von Unruh’s (1885–1970) *Ein Geschlecht* (1917). Even with regards to the plays published after the war, scholars tend to focus on a small number of writers such as Karl Kraus, Ernst Toller or Franz Theodor Csokor (1885–1969) and have given some attention to expressionist writers such as Lion Feuchtwanger (1884–1958) or Georg Kaiser (1878–1945). But even if WWI plays by these authors are considered, they are usually analysed only with regards to their functions within the authors’ oeuvres, the literary movement they are associated with or the drama of the Weimar Republic in general.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas F. Schneider comes to a similar conclusion with regards to WWI literature in general and states that literary studies have focused on “ca. 20–30 Texte” (Schneider et al., 7) across all genres. When considering the dom-

The focus on only a few already epistemologically positioned plays has caused the discourses which WWI dramatic literature establishes to remain unidentified. The discourses of legitimisation and de-legitimisation are arguably two of the most important discourses in this context. Their significance within dramatic literature is no surprise when considering the increasing importance of legitimising a nation's involvement in wars, especially on the European continent, that resulted from the change in the way wars were fought, which occurred before the outbreak of WWI. The necessity to legitimise is also reflected in the enormous propaganda efforts made by all nations and by the nature of the narratives they produced. Because of the importance of these narratives for the perception of the war and its representation in dramatic literature, an analysis of German WWI propaganda and the most influential narratives it produced will precede the study on their representation in WWI drama.

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inance of other genres of WWI literature over its dramatic texts, it becomes apparent how few WWI plays have actually been studied in depth.

## II. WWI propaganda and the genesis of Germany's official narratives

The need for governments and monarchs to legitimise a war to their people was rather new and, as mentioned previously, the result of a shift in the way wars were fought. Since the bloodshed of the Thirty Years War, wars in Europe normally saw designated armies fight for particular political goals and ended when one of the armies was defeated. Helmuth von Moltke the Elder describes such wars as “ein im Kabinet [sic] als nothwendig erkannter, längst beabsichtigter und ruhig vorbereiteter Kampf” (Moltke, 426). These so called *Kabinettskriege* are characterised by the attempt to draw a clear line between soldiers and civilians, refraining from using violence against the latter as a strategy of warfare and avoiding as much as possible what in today's terms is known as collateral damage.<sup>9</sup>

But as early as 1888, Moltke declares such so called *Kabinettskriege*, in which “für dynastische Zwecke kleine Heere von Berufssoldaten ins Feld zogen, um eine Stadt, einen Landstrich zu erobern” (1) to be a thing of the past and predicts the age of the *Volkskriege*. According to Moltke, these *Volkskriege* “rufen die ganzen Völker zu den Waffen, kaum eine Familie, welche nicht in Mitleidenschaft gezogen würde” (1). One important step towards this predicted radicalisation of wars is indeed already taken in the 19th century. While most wars between two or more European nations applied the military strategies of a *Kabinettskrieg*, the people of the belligerent nations, as Dieter Langewiesche and Nikolaus Buschmann point out, perceived them as *Nationenkriege*.<sup>10</sup> In this perception, all members of the opposing nation are seen as enemies.<sup>11</sup> In 1914, the combination of the characteristics of both *Nationenkrieg* and *Volkskrieg*

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<sup>9</sup> See Leonhard, 30. Wars of excessive violence and unrestricted deployment of a nation's resources were by no means extinct before 1914 but they were restricted to either wars in overseas colonies or to revolutionary wars within one nation.

<sup>10</sup> Langewiesche/Buschmann, 163.

<sup>11</sup> Julius Weiske (1801–1877) defines the characteristics of these *Nationenkriege* in the *Rechtslexikon für Juristen aller deutschen Staaten enthaltend die gesammte Rechtswissenschaft*, published in 1845. “Der Nationenkrieg” he writes, “sieht in jedem Gliede des feindlichen Volkes einen Feind, der bekämpft oder wenigstens unschädlich gemacht werden muß” (Weiske, 221).

would finally unleash the total war that was WWI and thereby confirm Moltke's prediction.

In his article *Zum Wandel von Krieg und Kriegslegitimation in der Neuzeit* (2004), Dieter Langewiesche argues that this new type of war needed new means of legitimisation. Referring to Carl von Clausewitz's ground-breaking theoretical work *Vom Kriege* (1832–34), he argues that *Volkskriege* democratise the legitimisation of war as a consequence of the increasing degree to which the population of a country is involved.<sup>12</sup> Although Clausewitz exemplifies this theory in regards to revolutionary wars, his arguments do apply to the development leading up to 1914. Although it was ultimately the Kaiser who decided to declare war, he still needed the Reichstag to approve the necessary war credits to finance it and he had to convince his subjects to identify with its cause to a degree where they were willing “andere zu töten und sich selber töten zu lassen” (Langewiesche, 11). As a consequence of this democratisation of wars, the official propaganda narratives of WWI focus on representing the war as the only way to prevent the destruction of the German people and their way of life.

An awareness of this shift in war legitimisation is important in understanding the significance the war-guilt debate had from the very beginning and why propaganda was such an important tool for all nations.<sup>13</sup> Although the institutionalised deployment of propaganda as a means of in-

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<sup>12</sup> See Langewiesche, 22–23. Moltke points out a similar development by criticising the increasing influence of the monarchs' subjects and their representatives on political decisions. He in fact blames the people of France and the domestic pressure they put on Napoleon III for France's declaration of war in 1870. The people's increasingly active involvement in warfare appears in his argumentation as a consequence of their increasing political influence (see Moltke, 1).

<sup>13</sup> Most nations created or assigned special departments responsible for propaganda. In Germany it was the *Abteilung IIIb* of the field army General Staff (see Schade, 37) and in Austria-Hungary the *Kriegspressequartier* and the *Kriegsüberwachungsamt* (see Schwendinger, 8–9). After the outbreak of the war, the Russian Tsar issued a statute that transferred much of the censorship to the military, overseen by the “special committee for military censorship” (Lohr, 94) located in Petrograd. France created the *Maison de la Presse* and Great Britain created the War Propaganda Bureau in 1915 (see Hirschfeld/Krumeich, 102). Britain even established a Ministry of Information, which David Welch calls “a centralised British propaganda organisation” (Welch, *Power and Persuasion*, 86) in early 1918. This long-term commitment to propaganda indicates that the strategist saw propaganda not only as a vital instrument for the rest of WWI one but also for the times after and, if necessary, for future wars.



formation warfare was used for the first time in WWI, the art of persuasion on which it is based dates back to ancient rhetoric, which was, just like modern propaganda, used to manipulate opinions.<sup>14</sup> In different forms, techniques of persuasion can be observed throughout history, but it was eventually the Catholic Church that coined the term propaganda in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to describe “sowing, germination and cultivation of ideas” (Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 2). While originally a neutral term, “[d]ie polemische und aggressive Verwendung des Wortes Propaganda für (gegnerische) dynamische, politisch-ideologische Denkweisen und Handlungen” (Ueding 7, 277) took over in the 19<sup>th</sup> century before the propaganda machines of WWI ultimately “discredited the word ‘propaganda’ which henceforth came to be associated with the manipulation of opinion, by foul means rather than fair, with lies or half-truths, and with deceit” (Taylor, *Propaganda*, 739).

This development was influenced by crowd theory, strongly affiliated with Gustave Le Bon, whose ideas were widely popular at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It adverted to the influenceability of the masses and the important role of the press in this process.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence, the institutions responsible for propaganda during WWI, at least in Germany, were at first mainly concerned with the censorship of newspapers.<sup>16</sup> The speeches in which Franz Josef and Wilhelm II announced the outbreak of the war and ultimately established the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative were also distributed via this medium.<sup>17</sup> In the case of the German Kaiser, whom the public predominantly perceived through his speeches, the positive coverage of the announcements at the beginning of the war significantly contributed to the high popularity he gained in July and August 1914.<sup>18</sup> Crediting him with reaching a truce with the opposition, for which the press coined the term *Burgfrieden*, it portrayed him as the man who united the German people for the defence of the fatherland and reports about the allegedly enthusiastic reaction of the entire German people to

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<sup>14</sup> See Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Publishing in 1895, Le Bon, however, understands the increasing power of the masses as a threat and laments that the press, just like the monarchs, could not steer the opinion of the masses enough (see Le Bon, 139–141).

<sup>16</sup> See Bruendel, 296.

<sup>17</sup> In the article *Propaganda* in the *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, Michael Jeismann refers to Lord Northcliffe who emphasised the value of speeches distributed in newspapers, confirming the power of this mass medium as a means of distribution (see Jeismann, *Propaganda*, 198).

<sup>18</sup> See Bruendel, 283.

the outbreak of the war that laid the foundation for the *Augusterlebnis* and the *Geist von 1914*.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that all these terms were and are inscribed into the German collective memory is further proof of the influence the press had on the discourse and the initial success of the propaganda narratives it communicated. This initial success made all nations realise that effective propaganda cannot rely solely on the containment of information but is essentially a form of communication that must try to actively lead the public opinion in a direction that is beneficial for their own cause.<sup>20</sup> The Austro-Hungarian *Kriegspressequartier* and its *Kriegsüberwachungsamt* is probably the best example of this strategy as it applied it from the very beginning of the war based on plans already made even before its outbreak.<sup>21</sup> In order to create positive images, the *Kriegsüberwachungsamt* famously employed a large number of well-regarded poets and writers in order to provide not only information, but also narratives of aesthetic quality. Furthermore, it managed to hand the control of cultural life over to the military authorities that governed the *KPQ*.<sup>22</sup>

Propaganda is a tool that was similarly important for most belligerent nations, all of which, for the first time, used the mass media of the press to unite the people under their own flag by representing the war as caused by a barbaric enemy. Generally, as David Welch points out, such propaganda had to fulfil three functions: “Propaganda was directed towards the home population to

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Jeismann speaks of a dynamic of self-enthusiasm by the media, which does not necessarily cover the opinion of all people but makes it seem as if the entire nation was carried away by patriotism. These reports thereby create a positive image even in those who might have had doubts (see Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde*, 299–301). In his chapter about *Medien des Krieges* in the *Kulturwissenschaftliches Handbuch Erster Weltkrieg*, Bernd Hüppauf points out that fights on the battlefield are inseparable from their symbolic representation in the media. This dynamic between war and media, according to Hüppauf, began in WWI and is still observable in today's wars. (see Hüppauf, 311). It changed the way people perceive present wars but also how they remember past wars. This means that the modern commemorative culture begins with WWI.

<sup>20</sup> Thymian Bussemer's overview of the different definitions of propaganda and his concluding montage supports the argument that the communicative aspect is essential (see Bussemer, 32–34).

<sup>21</sup> See Haid, 39–40.

<sup>22</sup> Walter Reichel's detailed study of the individual responsibilities of the departments of the *KPQ* lists for example the “Kunstgruppe”, “Lichtbildstelle” (Reichel, 20), “Filmstelle” (21), “Theaterreferat” (24) or a “Musikreferat” (28), to name only a few. See also Colpan et al., 10–11.

support the war, towards neutral countries as a means of influence, and towards the enemy as a weapon” (Welch, *Power and Persuasion*, 81). British propaganda, for example, used the slogan ‘Remember Belgium’ to both define Germany’s invasion of that country as the reason for the war and to establish the metaphor of the Hun as personification of the barbarism attributed to Germans in general and their warfare in particular.<sup>23</sup> It emphasised the atrocities committed by German troops during their campaign in Belgium and gave them an explicit sexual connotation.<sup>24</sup> This clear distinction between the ‘good’ and the ‘evil’ side of the combatants was also supposed to sway neutral states in favour of the Entente and against the Central Powers.

Sophie de Schaepdrijver analyses the importance of the so-called ‘Idea of Belgium’ by emphasising the effect Germany’s invasion of Belgium and its utilisation for propaganda had on the perception of the German enemy within the Entente.<sup>25</sup> France also used Belgium for propaganda purposes, combining it with references to the strict reign Germany imposed on Alsace-Lorraine after its occupation as a warning about what would happen to the entire country under German rule, thereby simultaneously legitimising their own warfare as a liberation. Again, good and evil were clearly distinguished, with France promising “liberty, equality, fraternity, whereas the Germans offered martial law, Schutzhaft” (Chr. Fischer, 213). In Russia the press lodged a campaign that called for internal truce in an attempt to support the Tsar’s efforts to unite the nation. Its strategy was similar to those of the campaigns to establish the idea of the Nation Sacréé in France and the *Burgfrieden* in Germany and once more demonstrates the universality of the propagandistic methods.<sup>26</sup>

Since propaganda must, independent from the context in which it is deployed, achieve very defined goals, it is plausible that it partially follows universal rules and methods. According to the *Historische Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, founded in 1937 in Washington as one of the first institutes to research and inform about the phenomenon, identified eight propaganda techniques which can be categorised into three groups:

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<sup>23</sup> See Buitenhuis, 10. The Germans themselves used this strategy of demonising the enemy when they established the image of the Cossack hordes (see Paddock, 1).

<sup>24</sup> See Todd, 141–144. Sam Keen’s study *Faces of the Enemy* confirms this argument and provides a detailed analysis of the creation of negative images of the enemy in wartime, thus confirming the effectiveness of this propaganda strategy.

<sup>25</sup> See Schaepdrijver, 267.

<sup>26</sup> See Lohr, 91.

Die erste Gruppe umfaßt drei Formen von Wortspielen: diffamierende Bezeichnungen, Euphemismen und große Worte [...]. Die zweite Gruppe schließt falsche Verbindungen ein, wie den unlauteren Wechselgebrauch zwischen politischer und religiöser Symbolik und die Bürgschaft von Personen für eine Sache, für die sie nicht kompetent sind. Die dritte Gruppe unterteilt Referenzen und Bezüge. Hierzu zählen die Volkstümlichkeit, der Appell an das Dazugehören-Wollen und das Angstmachen (Ueding 7, 268).

Additionally, the *Historische Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* identifies four argumentative rhetoric devices, which are used to manipulate the recipients. These are “(a) Verkürzen und Vereinfachen; (b) Vereinseitigen; (c) Behaupten und Dekretieren; (d) Emotionalisieren” (284).

The most important device for the literary representation of these narratives is that of emotionalisation. The effectiveness of what was known in Germany as the Entente's *Gräuelpropaganda*, suggests that emotional control and manipulation, made possible by the emotive function of language in the sense of Roman Jakobson's concept, are an important aspect of propaganda. The plays published during the war, which are often little more than literary representations of propaganda narratives, particularly often use this device to make up for their lack of dramatic conflict, demonstrating the similarity in propaganda usage across large parts of the text corpus of WWI dramatic literature.

The previously outlined examples of propaganda campaigns show that each belligerent nation's most important task was to convince its own people that the nation is acting in self-defence and is therefore fighting a just war. The content of the narratives these campaigns established, however, were very different depending on the individual nation. This is no surprise, considering each nation was in a very different position at the beginning of the war. The *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative is particularly important in Germany as it had to legitimise the invasion of Belgium. Although propaganda campaigns are often created as a reaction to new developments in the war, like the deployment of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917, or as an answer to enemy propaganda, this narrative remains crucial for all other propaganda campaigns and serves as an argumentative guideline that no interpretation of any event or development is ever allowed to contradict.

Although the directed, propagandistic communication of the narrative begun only a relatively short time before the outbreak of the war, its argumentation was based on developments that had been going on in Germany for quite some time. Because of Germany's geopolitical position in the centre of Europe where it was surrounded by major powers, the so-called *Einkreisungsangst* had governed German foreign policy since the time of

Otto von Bismarck.<sup>27</sup> His policy of alliances was a first attempt to establish a “politisch[e] Gesamtsituation, in welcher alle Mächte außer Frankreich unser bedürfen, und von Coalitionen gegen uns durch ihre Beziehungen zu einander nach Möglichkeit abgehalten werden” (Bismarck, 153), as he states in the famous *Kissinger Diktat* on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1877. Bismarck already predicts in this document that his “[...] cauchemar des coalitions” (152) [nightmare of alliances], of which a French newspaper accused him, is not just a momentary nightmare but will “für einen deutschen Minister noch lange, und vielleicht immer, ein sehr berechtigter [Alptraum] bleiben” (152–153). By the time the diplomatic relations between England, France and Russia intensified to the point that they were officially acknowledged in a speech by German Chancellor von Bülow in 1906, the *Einkreisungsangst* might have appeared even more salient than in Bismarck’s time when it was still an abstract concept in the minds of mainly political and diplomatic decision makers.

In his 2014 publication *Die Büchse der Pandora*, Jörn Leonhard points out that the reality of the threat these neighbours actually posed to Germany was less significant than their presence in the German consciousness and public debate. And while historians predominantly agree that the outbreak of WWI has to be understood as a result of the complicated nexus of treaties and the dynamic created by decisions made by the involved nations in the months leading up to the outbreak of the war in August 1914, such complex ideas about the causes of WWI are a rather modern development.<sup>28</sup> It is therefore important to keep in mind that our retrospective view on WWI is different from the view of contemporaries. It is a sad privilege of later generations to have seen the results of the war and to have the chance to compare the early expectations with historical reality.

In the decisive months of 1914, the *Einkreisungsangst* seemed very real and ultimately triggered a

Dynamik gegenseitiger Wahrnehmungen, ein Denken in unterstellten Absichten der Gegenseite, in der Annahme von Wirkungen bestimmter Ereignis-

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<sup>27</sup> The *Schlieffenplan* for example, had been in development since 1905 (see Münkler, 72), so about 15 years after Bismarck’s dismissal but still 9 years before the outbreak of WWI, proving the influence of the *Einkreisungsangst* on German strategic thinking throughout this period.

<sup>28</sup> This was not always the case, as the Fischer controversy of the 1960s, sparked by Fritz Fischer’s *Griff nach der Weltmacht: die Kriegspolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschlands*, demonstrates.

nisse und de[n] subjektiv empfundene[n] Druck, darauf angemessen reagieren zu müssen, das eigene Prestige zu schützen (Leonhard, 51–52).

It significantly restricted “das Denken in Alternativen, die Einschätzung von anderen Handlungsoptionen und möglicher Gestaltungsfreiheit” (52) and led to the “Eindruck einer zunehmenden Alternativlosigkeit” (52).<sup>29</sup>

In this atmosphere of feeling to have no alternatives to war falls the establishment of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and subsequently of the narrative of German unity, the *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*. Its first directed communications can be situated between late July to early August 1914. In the first ten days after the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on Serbia, the emperors Franz Josef and Wilhelm II delivered a number of speeches and addresses in which they justified their decision to go to war as a reaction to foreign aggression. They legitimised the war effort of the Central Powers as an act of self-defence and establish the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, which, because of the authority of the two emperors who established it, became the official version of the outbreak of WWI for Germany and its allies.

The first of these announcements was published in the *Wiener Zeitung* on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1914. Therein, Franz Josef informs his peoples of the declaration of war on Serbia. He emphasises his attempt “Meine Völker vor den schweren Opfern und Lasten des Krieges zu bewahren” (Franz Josef, 1) and, by referring to Serbia’s alleged involvement in the assassination of Archduke Franz-Ferdinand, ultimately manages to blame the outbreak of the war on the “Umtriebe eines hasserfüllten Gegners” (1). In order to extend the reasons for going to war beyond revenge, he claims that Serbia’s behaviour would not only threaten his monarchy’s “Ehre” but also its “Machtstellung” and “Besitzstan[d]” (1) and that it would

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<sup>29</sup> Herfried Münkler indirectly confirms this view when analysing the increasing influence of military leaders on political decisions during the first half of 1914. As the crisis of June and July 1914 hit Europe and a great European war seemed to be more likely than it had been for a long time, political decisions were made in favour of the military’s interpretation of the situation. He argues that politicians failed to control military leaders. This undermined the political radius of operation to a point where Germany could not scale back its already developed military preparations without leaving itself defenceless in the case of any foreign aggression. General Moltke’s early commitment to the *Schlieffenplan* restricted political and diplomatic flexibility even further, as the plan to attack France through neutral Belgian territory made it impossible to limit the war to the Balkans. This not only opened a second front in the West but also ultimately drew England’s full force into the fight (see Münkler, 77).

openly try “untrennbare Gebiete Österreich-Ungarns gewaltsam loszureißen” (2). The German argumentation was very similar but, probably because its diplomatic position was weaker than that of Austria-Hungary, whose heir to the throne was assassinated, applied a much more aggressive rhetoric.<sup>30</sup>

The first of Wilhelm II's addresses, the so-called *Erste Balkonrede*, was delivered to a crowd waiting underneath the balcony of the Kaiser's Berlin residence on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 1914, before Germany was officially involved in the war. It expressed the Kaiser's efforts “den Frieden zu erhalten” but already spoke of envious enemies, which might force Germany to “gerechter Verteidigung” (Wilhelm II, *Balkonrede*, 362). The address was rather short but included the most important motifs of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.

The *Thronrede*, was the second important speech in this context. It was delivered at the opening of the Reichstag on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914, three days after Germany officially entered the war. This speech once more emphasised Germany's peacefulness and reinforced Franz Josef's claim that Austria-Hungary had no choice but “die Sicherheit seines Reichs gegen gefährliche Umtriebe aus einem Nachbarstaat zu verteidigen” (Wilhelm II, *Thronrede*, 364), in order to then segue into Germany's “Bündnispflicht” and the “alt[e] Kulturgemeinschaft der beiden Reiche” (364), which would call Wilhelm II to fight alongside his ally. Using Serbia's alleged “Begünstigung verbrecherischer Anschläge” (365) to justify Austria-Hungary's attack, the German Kaiser blamed the expansion of the war beyond the Balkans on Russia and France by accusing the former of conceding to “dem Drängen eines unersättlichen Nationalismus” by siding with Serbia, and by accusing the latter of being motivated by “alte[n] Hoffnungen und alte[m] Groll” (365).

This argumentation already defines the alleged motivations of France and Russia which are omnipresent in the WWI plays which develop the discourse of legitimisation.<sup>31</sup> These allusions to France's traditional resentments towards Germany and to Russia's *Unersättlichkeit* lay the foundation for the utilisation of stereotypical prejudice in the plays' representation of the enemies. Furthermore, such allusions historicised the reasons for the war by claiming it was not “aus vorübergehenden Interessenskonflikten oder diplomatischen Konstellationen hervor[gegangene]”,

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<sup>30</sup> While they were all delivered by Wilhelm II, the *Zweite Balkonrede* and, as is tradition, the majority of the *Thronrede* were written by the German *Reichskanzler* Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg.

<sup>31</sup> England had not yet declared war on Germany and therefore was not mentioned in the speech.

rather “das Ergebnis eines seit langen Jahren tätigen Übelwollens gegen Macht und Gedeihen des Deutschen Reichs” (365). This is important because it denies France’s *Bündnispflicht* towards Russia any legitimisation, instead alleging France’s true motivation to be revenge for their defeat in two wars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the hope to regain lost territories. This strategy ultimately defined France’s war effort as an attack and allowed Germany to label its invasion of Belgium as a pre-emptive act of self-defence.

The speech’s significance, however, went beyond the reinforcement of the defensive character of Germany’s warfare. It also founded the unity narrative, the narrative of a national *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* without any political or class borders. It contains the famous sentence: “Ich kenne keine Parteien mehr, ich kenne nur Deutsche” (365), with which Wilhelm II persuaded the social democratic opposition to give the necessary approval for the government’s war credits.<sup>32</sup> It referred back to the *Zweite Balkonrede*, delivered from his balcony on the 1<sup>st</sup> August, in which he used a similar phrasing and already prepared the ground for what would later become known as the *Burgfrieden*. This truce included the agreement that social democratic media would refrain from criticising the Kaiser’s warfare. It is therefore not only of political significance as it guaranteed the financing of the war but also of propagandistic significance because it effectively silenced the oppositional media for the majority of the war.<sup>33</sup>

The third analysed address of Kaiser Wilhelm II was delivered in written form and published by the *Deutschen Reichsanzeiger* on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1914. The central message remained the same but he now added an open call to arms and used the narrative in a typically propagandistic way to create a reaction in his audience, the German people: “Mitten im Frieden überfällt uns der Feind. Darum auf! zu [sic] den Waffen!” (Wilhelm II, *An das deutsche Volk*). The last part of this quote is important as it labelled non-contribution as treason and thereby provided the foundation for the stigma-

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<sup>32</sup> This part is a personal addition of Wilhelm II and was not written by Bethmann Hollweg.

<sup>33</sup> David Welch’s convincing argument that an important objective of the military-led censorship and propaganda over the course of the war was to maintain the increasingly fragile *Burgfrieden* shows how imperative the maintenance of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative was in the eyes of the German High Command, because its attempts to “subvert any discussion of Germany’s war aims, which in practice meant suppressing the radical left” (Welch, *Propaganda and Total War*, 64), was essentially an effort to eliminate any other narrative in regards to the German war effort and its aims.



tisation of any pacifist or anti-war voices. By claiming the war was a fight “[u]m Sein oder Nichtsein unseres Reiches” (*An das deutsche Volk*) Wilhelm II defines the war as a matter of survival, which is later used to legitimise the sacrifices demanded from the people and to stigmatise non-contribution as “Verrat am Vaterlande” (*An das deutsche Volk*).

Towards the end of the speech, the Kaiser picked up the previously discussed unity narrative. But he did not simply repeat it, he essentially defined the unity of all German people as the factor which would decide Germany's future; “Noch nie ward Deutschland überwunden, wenn es einzig war” (*An das Deutsche Volk*) established Germany's full determination in the defence of the fatherland as the requirement as well as the guarantee for a German victory. The term *überwunden* further reinstated the image of the nation that was under attack. From a propagandistic standpoint, this phrasing opened many possibilities. It was meant to trigger a certain reaction amongst its audience and simultaneously labelled non-contributors as traitors, who were allegedly compromising an otherwise certain victory. It legitimised the sacrifices the Kaiser would have to demand from his people over the course of the war and provided the foundation for the creation of a context of meaning for these sacrifices which allegedly helped to defend the fatherland.

The so-called *Manifest der 93* titled *An die Kulturwelt* (1914), a statement signed by 93 German academics and intellectuals demonstrates how these narratives were used as the foundation for further propaganda outlets. It demonstrates the fundamental character the narrative possessed within the propagandistic programmatic not the least when looking at the list of signatories, which includes prominent figures like the brothers Gerhart (1862–1946) and Carl Hauptmann, Max Reinhardt as well as scientists like Max Planck (1858–1947) and Wilhelm Röntgen (1845–1923).<sup>34</sup> It contains

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<sup>34</sup> The manifesto was initially created to address the people of neutral as well as enemy nations in their respective languages in order to defend the German reputation from accusations made predominantly by French and English propaganda. It is therefore an early example of propagandistic reactions to foreign *Greuelpropaganda*. The manifesto itself was written and edited by only a few of these 93. In fact, some of them did not even know the text at the time they gave their permission to be listed as signatories (see Ungern-Sternberg/Ungern-Sternberg, 13). The impression it made on readers outside of Germany was nevertheless that of German arrogance and the high number of prominent signatories, who claimed to stand for its content “mit unserem Namen und mit unserer Ehre” (*An die Kulturwelt*, 145) irrevocably linked this attitude to the German scientific and cultural community (see Ungern-Sternberg/Ungern-Sternberg, 81). Despite this propagandistically rather catastrophic result, and the fact that it was created as an address to foreign na-

all central aspects of the narrative and immediately received great attention within and outside of Germany after its publication in October 1914. As a reaction to the claim of England and France that Germany had breached international law by invading Belgium and committed atrocities during its march through Belgian territory, it demonstrates how the propaganda constantly adapted to challenges, while remaining particular about maintaining the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. After calling the war effort of the German people an “ihm aufgezwungenen schweren Daseinskampfe” (*An die Kulturwelt*, 144), it answered six particular accusations. Beginning each paragraph with “Es ist nicht wahr” (144–145), the text denies “daß Deutschland diesen Krieg verschuldet hat” (144) calls the Kaiser a “Schirmherr des Weltfriedens” (144) and claims that “eine schon lange an den Grenzen lau-ernde Übermacht von drei Seiten über unser Volk herfiel” (144). Even the violation of Belgium’s neutrality is represented as a mere anticipation of England’s and France’s plans, who were allegedly “[n]achweislich [...] zu ihrer Verletzung entschlossen” (144).<sup>35</sup> The proclamation also engages with the unity narrative. “Deutsches Heer und deutsches Volk sind eins” (145) represents the unit of *Heimat* and *Front*, which is also an important topic in WWI plays. This conviction, according to the text, “verbrüderet heute 70 Millionen Deutsche ohne Unterschied der Bildung, des Standes und der Partei” (175). As a clear reference to the speech of Wilhelm II, it proves once more the importance of his announcements for the creation of the narrative and demonstrates how successfully it infiltrated the German commemorative consciousness.

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tions, it points to the presence of the narratives in the public discourse within Germany.

<sup>35</sup> “Nachweislich” (*An die Kulturwelt*, 144) is one of the terms that created disagreements even amongst the statement’s signatories, as proof could never plausibly have been delivered. Only days after its publication, the historian Eduard Meyer, who signed the statement, expressed his concerns that he did not know anything about the evidence for England’s and France’s plan to march through Belgium, nor about the German warfare at all except for what the authorities released (see Ungern-Sternberg/Ungern-Sternberg, 61–62). In a way, this example attests the effectiveness of the propaganda machine, which manages to control the narrative and to create a certain trust in the German cause that in the end convinced Meyer.

### III. The discourse of legitimisation

The discourse of legitimisation within dramatic literature was essentially established right after the beginning of the war by the first wave of plays published during the second half of 1914. The vast majority of these more than 100 texts deal to some extent with the question of why Germany was engaged in the war. Moreover, many ask whether Germany's engagement could be legitimised and if so, on what grounds. The defining nature of Germany's propaganda is that it is a consequence of the previously discussed necessity to legitimise any form of war, but especially one of the magnitude of WWI. The outcome of this discourse, meaning either succeeding or failing to create a narrative that established a justification for the war, determined how the German warfare was perceived by the German people and the public opinion in other countries. Furthermore, it determined the nature of many decisive discourses and dynamics emerging within a nation at war.

The inevitable victims of a war, for example, can only be defined as heroes if the war is just. Otherwise, they will either be perceived as victims of the regime that sent them to war or as aggressors and perpetrators. The handling of the commemoration of the fallen German soldiers of WWII demonstrates this by alternating between the two positions. The civilian population will only abide the sacrifices it has to endure if they support the war. This explains why the discourse of legitimisation was so dominant within WWI dramas.

The plays that partake in the literary discourse of legitimisation are certainly not proof of an enthusiasm that infected the entire nation. Too many external influences had contributed to the shape of the text corpus as it appears today for it to be a reflection of reality. But the plays process conceptualised propaganda narratives into literary form, thus becoming representations of a successful adaptation of the reality these narratives are trying to create. The shift in the focus of the plays that can be observed from around 1916 onwards, when the plays started to increasingly legitimise the sacrifices of the people and the victims of the war, is only possible because the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative had been successfully legitimised not only by propaganda but also at the level of its literary representation.

## 1 National stereotypes in the German cultural consciousness and their presence in 1914

Very important in this context are typical resentments against Germany's enemies that have been long established in the German cultural memory and were used within German propaganda to provide credibility for their narratives, especially for the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. These communicated national images of England, France and Russia are essential for the understanding of the narrative's initial success and appear as structural elements in its literary representation within the discourse of legitimisation and essentially also in its counterpart, the discourse of de-legitimisation.

As structural elements, amongst others, these propagandistic national images can, from a literary perspective, only be interpreted within the overall context of the plays. However, it is important to understand their cultural-historical background in order to understand their success. Without this background, their analysis would be in danger of remaining a mere categorisation into 'true' and 'false' in the form of a historical snapshot, making it epistemologically empty. It is also important to point out that detecting similar images and stereotypes of the English, French and Russian character in well-known texts prior to WWI and then in Thomas Mann's essays from 1914 is not meant to evoke the idea that an unmodified and constant national image of these nations ever existed, let alone that it transcended time. Moreover, the examples are chosen to demonstrate that the aspects, or the particular variant of the images of other nations that appear in the propaganda narratives as well as in their literary representation existed long before 1914. This is important to understand the people's subconscious familiarity with the particular resentments represented in the propaganda narratives and therefore the credibility they had in the particular historical situation leading up to the outbreak of WWI.<sup>36</sup>

The examples chosen to demonstrate the existence of these aspects are in themselves influenced by their cultural-historical circumstances and therefore focus on some and ignore other aspects of the national image they represent. This demonstrates that it is not only the producers but also the

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<sup>36</sup> The stereotypisation of other nations and people, as Franz Karl Stanzel points out, dates back far beyond the time from which my examples are chosen, and many of the resentments, towards the Russian people especially, can already be found in a very similar way in the *Nationalitätenschema* that has classified them as uncivilised barbarians on the basis of allegedly universal psychological and physical characteristics. The claim made by the *Nationalitätenschema* that they "lieben den Prügel" (qtd. in Stanzel, 94) appears in many WWI plays such as Peter Saget's *Im Lande der Knute*.

recipients of national images who decide which aspects they will continue to portray as typical for a particular other. The authors of WWI dramas for example could have reactivated Francophile images that existed in Germany throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the historical circumstances led to a different development. Manfred Fischer refers to this selective perception when he asks “ob nicht vielmehr eine partielle Bewertungskonstanz auf der Seite dieser Rezipienten vorliegt denn eine Konstanz der rezipierten imagotypen Systeme” (M. Fischer, 40). Certain portrayals of other people reappear throughout time and therefore might seem as if they have been accepted as universal images of the other nation. The reactivation of pre-existing national images in new historical situations increases their credibility at the time of their reactivation simply because the fact that they have been used before suggests a justified origin, no matter if that is true or not.<sup>37</sup> This means that the national images represented in WWI plays focus on situationally beneficial aspects of the images of other nations. They are stereotypes that are used in order to create credibility for their own position, rather than representations of the multi-faceted varieties of representations of these other nations which have existed within German culture throughout time and even throughout WWI.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly misleading would be to speak of a *Volkpsychologie* when explaining the creation and success of particular stereotypes within a nation or its literature. Rather, this success also stems from particular historical circumstances, which include the influence of war propaganda on public opinion.<sup>39</sup> The *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative especially exploits the human need for belonging and the safety a community provides and installs an exalted image of the fatherland as the provider of these necessities.

With regards to England and especially France, the reactivated stereotypes are closely related to the rivalry between what was called German cul-

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<sup>37</sup> At the same time, it can create the decisive impression amongst scholars, who see them reappear multiple times throughout history, that they are universally accepted within a people.

<sup>38</sup> See M. Fischer, 41.

<sup>39</sup> The previously mentioned fact that narratives of this kind are successful in almost all belligerent nations demonstrates that such beliefs are in themselves propagandistic or at least ideologic and often created by a certain group for a certain reason. Furthermore, images of other people appear in the literature of many nations not only in the context of war. Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*, one of the most famous French examples, or the long list of examples provided by Holger Klein from the English context document this. The latter even states a shift in the way German's were generally portrayed in English literature from the time prior to the foundation of the German Empire to the time between 1871 and 1914 (H, Klein, 90).

ture and western civilisation. When trying to locate the origins of this division, one has to go back to Immanuel Kant, who distinguished between the terms “Kultur” und “Zivilisierung” (Kant, 44) and understood them as antithetical concepts. Kant, however, did not define this antithesis by referring to national identities but rather as the opposing characteristics of different social classes within one nation or society. He differentiates between the “Moralität” (44) of culture and the mere “gesellschaftliche[n] Artigkeit und Anständigkeit” (44) of civilisation. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Kant’s idea of culture is, as Norbert Elias points out, represented by the German speaking middle classes of the various German states which had become increasingly educated during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>40</sup> The aristocracy of these states on the contrary speaks predominantly French and maintains a Francophile admiration for the court of Louis XIV but is not affected by the educational progress of the time. These numerous small German courts imitate the customs of Versailles and the French language as the desirable lifestyle for the upper classes and thereby represent what Kant exposed as the superficiality of civilisation, which sees German customs and especially the German language as being rude and almost barbaric.

Friedrich der Große for example proves the existence of this conviction amongst the German aristocracy in *De la littérature Allemande*, from 1780. He laments the inferior development of German literature and science, its “Armut” (Friedrich II, 76), and blames it on the poor state of the German language. However, the reasons for the slow development were, according to Friedrich, the poverty of the German people following the recent wars. He predicts a revolution of science, the arts and the German language in general as a result of an increase in the living standard of the middle class.<sup>41</sup> Elias correctly points out that Friedrich overlooked that this revolution, to use his term, had already begun. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing died in 1781 and had already written the majority of his works when Friedrich’s text was published. Johann Gottfried Herder, the young Goethe, Schiller and other writers of the *Sturm and Drang* had already found a readership and created followers and critics who, in turn, contributed to one of the most important periods of German literature.<sup>42</sup>

This short digression shows the origins of Kant’s distinction between the superficial civilisation of the German aristocracy and the moralistic culture of the newly educated bourgeoisie.<sup>43</sup> It also represents the origin of a

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<sup>40</sup> See Elias, 20–21.

<sup>41</sup> See Friedrich II, 97–99.

<sup>42</sup> See Elias, 12–15.

<sup>43</sup> Most of the mentioned writers and thinkers, with the exception of Goethe, were members of this class. Herder’s father was a school teacher and Schiller,

German national identity as the *Volk der Dichter und Denker* that emerges out of this newly educated middle class and the petty gentry during the late eighteenth and early 19th century. The idea of the German *Kulturnation* that led to the founding of the German Empire in 1871 is to a significant proportion based on thinkers like Herder and the brothers Karl Wilhelm Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel and of course on writers like Schiller and Goethe. The German *Kulturnation* was ultimately identified by this newly emerging class with the character of the German people, while the superficiality that Kant defines as the nature of civilisation was ultimately assigned to France, from where it allegedly spread into the German aristocracy.

This change in perception is of course influenced by the historical circumstances of the time of this transition. According to Friedrich Meinecke it was the fight against Napoleon which helped Germany “aus der kosmopolitischen Welt des 18. Jahrhunderts in die nationalstaatliche des 19. Jahrhunderts herüber[zu]führen” (Meinecke, 84). Thomas Nipperdey also emphasises that it was ultimately

die Herrschaft Napoleons [...], die das klassisch-romantische Nationalgefühl und -bewußtsein der Deutschen politisch gemacht hat [...]; die Jahre zwischen 1806 und 1813 sind die Geburtsjahre der nationalen Bewegung, und zwar zunächst bei der intellektuellen Elite” (Nipperdey, 303).

One of the results of this increasing nationalism is that Kant’s social contrastive pair, culture and civilisation, are transformed into a national distinction between Germany and the rest of Western Europe.

This distinction established the idea of the different spirit of German and French people that helped to create a rivalry between the two nations. This rivalry, already having found a volatile outlet in the wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, would contribute to the distrust between the two nations at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was eventually reactivated in the propaganda narratives of WWI and represented particularly in early war plays to gain credibility for the legitimisation of Germany’s war effort as an act of self-defence against the attack of their old rival, France.

The representation of the English stereotype in early war plays is related to this distinction and had also existed long before it was used to legitimise WWI. In his *Englische Fragmente* (1831) in the fourth part of his *Reisebilder*, Heinrich Heine wrote about his impression of ‘the English’. Visiting the country from April to August 1827 and spending most of his

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to name just two of the most influential figures of the time, was the son of a military physician.

time in London, Heine partially corrected the positive image he had of the motherland of the industrial revolution whose progressive nature he initially admired. In the first chapter of *Englische Fragmente*, he engages in a fictional conversation with a ‘Yellow Man’, who elucidates the naive views of the narrator towards the revolutionary character of the English people. Comparing it with the French postulation of freedom and equality, the ‘Yellow Man’ states that the revolutionary spirit of Englishmen, who only seek personal and economic freedom, ends at their doorstep. This personal, economic freedom, so Heine, is achieved at the expense of the freedom of the mind, for which France was fighting in the French Revolution and to which the German people had fled as a reaction to the stately repression of the Restoration and the deadlock of progress that it caused. Having looked forward to seeing the land of progress and industrialisation, Heine finds that the cost it paid for this progress, the lack of equality and freedom of the mind, is a price too high to pay. He concludes that the mind’s longing for freedom has lost the battle against the busyness that is necessary to achieve economic freedom and truly mourns this defeat.

The extent to which the German general public understood the intellectual consequences of Heine’s writings at the time is difficult to determine. But another prejudice that appears in Heine’s *Englische Fragmente* was certainly very wide-spread and would end up being the predominant stereotype used in WWI dramatic literature. Heine’s reports and anecdotes frequently include Englishmen’s criticism of the political and social conditions in their home country. Their way of criticising the conditions is – and this ultimately carries the stereotype – based on financial calculations.

In chapter seven Heine reports of William Cobbett, whom he admired, addressing Parliament about the immense debt England had accumulated. Criticising the prevention of any parliamentary reform in England in the wake of the French Revolution, Cobbett ultimately bases his argumentation on a balance. England’s victories in its aftermaths were bought victories, according to Cobbett. In order to raise money for the mercenaries of these wars, a significant tax increase was implemented, on which he blames the effect that “die Armen weit mehr als jemals niedergedrückt wurden” (Heine, 239). He would therefore like to see the cost of six million pound sterling for additional welfare included in the total debt calculation of the wars that, in his opinion, caused it. This anecdote is not so much a criticism of Cobbett, who seems to understand and reject the moral and social injustice of the development he describes, but of the fact that he seems to see a higher chance for his criticism to be heard when basing it on monetary rather than moral values. The nature of the English people that is implied in anecdotes like this can be summed up in one word:



“Krämertugend” (223). It becomes the most widespread stereotype of the English character within German society of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and is used to gain credibility for the accusations made within the plays of the discourse of legitimisation.

Of a different nature are the stereotypes concerning Russia. They are not based on the difference of the country’s civilising process but on the allegation that it lacked any form of civilisation whatsoever. This leads to the Russian people being commonly perceived as uncivilised savages. In his article *The British Rule in India*, published in the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1853, Karl Marx develops what he sees as the reason for the stuntedness of not just the Russian but all Asiatic societies.<sup>44</sup>

Using India as an example for all societies occupying the plains and the highlands of the Asian continent, including big parts of Russia’s eastern territories, Marx’ article states that the small Asian communities he analyses only know “but three departments of Government; that of Finance, or the plunder of interior; that of War, or the plunder of the exterior; and, finally, the department of Public Works” (Marx/Engels, 169). Marx defines these conditions as a deficit of the peoples in the Orient, “where civilisation was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association” and which required the “interference of the centralizing power of Government” (170).<sup>45</sup> Because of such representations, the stereotype of large territories occupied by uncivilised communities sank into the commemorative memory of most western European nations.

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<sup>44</sup> According to Marx, the government system of rural Russian communities is nothing but a special, oriental form of despotism on the basis of which he went on to later develop his concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production. This concept as a political and philosophical theory dates back as far as ancient Greece. Aristotle understood it as a form of legitimised tyranny, which is not forced onto people against their will but is at least passively, if not voluntarily, accepted and therefore most suitable for barbaric cultures. It has since been reshaped and adjusted by thinkers like Machiavelli, Montesquieu and Hegel, amongst others. At its core, it formed the basic distinction between the civilised European and the barbaric Asian forms of society that had begun with Aristotle (see Minuti, n. pag.)

<sup>45</sup> Quoting an official report for the British House of Commons, he specifies the low form of civilisation by giving an example of the way of life that allegedly dominates the small communities across Asia. This report highlights the simple forms of local governments, the simple forms of “worship” (Marx/Engels, 172) that shape their belief system and the poor forms of education provided in the villages, where children learn to “read and write in the sand” (172). This lifestyle and the form of government it creates, so the report, has remained the same “from time immemorial” (172).

At the same time, the Russian people are said to be maligned with a great drive for expansion. In another article titled *The Turkish Question* published in the *New York Daily Tribune* in June 1853, Marx reflects on the expansion of the Russian Empire and concludes that “[t]he total acquisitions of Russia during the last 60 years are equal in extent and importance to the whole Empire she had in Europe before that time” (156). The image of the Russian hordes sitting behind German borders waiting to flood into German territory, which frequently appears in East Prussia plays to legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, is here already immanent in the way the Russian nature is perceived and communicated.

Due to the scope of this book, these elaborations must ignore the individual historical circumstances under which the chosen examples were written and the opposing images of the three nations that existed in parallel. It does not investigate the national images existing in Germany of England, France and Russia, rather only the stereotypical representation of character traits that appear in the narratives and their literary representations and does not claim that these would be universally accepted throughout Germany, but shall provide a cultural background for the success propaganda achieved with their reactivation. One last example will demonstrate how active these stereotypes were in 1914 and that they were even reinstated by such prominent figures as Thomas Mann.

Under the impressions of the first months of WWI, Mann wrote his essay *Friedrich und die große Koalition* (1914), reflecting on the life of Friedrich des Großen. His portrayal of the relationship between Friedrich and Elizabeth of Russia is full of remarks which reinstate the previously discussed stereotypes of Russia in Western Europe. He calls Russia a “halbwilde[s] Lan[d]” (Mann, 78) that is reigned over by a “Liebhaberin des Brantweins und der muskulösen Soldaten” (77). Mann mentions the allegedly promiscuous and alcoholic character of Elizabeth of Russia multiple times and contrasts it with Friedrich’s “Begriff von Soldatentum”, which he describes as “asketisch überhaupt” (72). By accusing even the supposedly noblest Russian of being wild and uncontrolled, or even controlled by instincts and addictive substances, the image of the Russian commoners appears even more barbaric and lends credibility to the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.

Furthermore, Mann describes the undisciplined and barbaric country as having an “Expansionsdrang, gleich dem Sichrecken und dem Appetit eines Riesen”, which is “in dem Gefühle, letzten Endes unbesiegt zu sein, zum Kriege allezeit plump und grenzenlos erbötig” (81). This last comment again reactivates the fear of the wild Russian hordes that dominates the representation of Russia’s Cossacks in WWI dramas. The representation of this alleged nature of the Russian people significantly shaped the mode in

which the enemy in the east was portrayed within dramatic literature during the war.

More famous than those of the Russian nature is Thomas Mann's portrayal of the distinction between culture and civilisation represented by the national character of Germans on the one and England and especially France on the other hand. In the first months of WWI, Kant's originally social distinction had, to an even greater extent, been turned into one of strongly national connotation. In his essay *Gedanken im Kriege* from 1914, one of Mann's most discussed essayistic works, he defines the two principles in a way that is particularly evocative of Heinrich Heine.

Kultur ist Geschlossenheit, Stil, Form, Haltung, Geschmack, ist irgendeine gewisse geistige Organisation der Welt, und sei das alles auch noch so abenteu-  
erlich, skurril, wild, blutig und furchtbar. Kultur kann Orakel, Magie, Pä-  
derastie, Vitzliputzli, Menschenopfer, orgiastische Kultformen, [...] Blüte  
des Giftmordes und die buntesten Greuel umfassen. Zivilisation aber ist  
Vernunft, Aufklärung, Sänftigung, Sittigung, Skeptisierung, Auflösung, –  
Geist. Ja, der Geist ist zivil, ist bürgerlich: er ist der geschworene Feind der  
Triebe, der Leidenschaften, er ist antidämonisch, antiheroisch, und es ist nur  
ein scheinbarer Widersinn, wenn man sagt, daß er auch antigenial ist (27).

Mann sees art as a representation of culture and not of civilisation because “Kunst, wie alle Kultur, ist die Sublimierung des Dämonischen” (28) for which the German *Kulturnation* serves as an advocate. But not only are art and culture linked, war also is of similar nature to both.

With this connection, he explains the enthusiasm that poets, like himself, had felt when WWI broke out. Many of them hoped it would destroy the idle world of which they grew so weary. At this stage, Mann, too, believed in “die Notwendigkeit der europäischen Katastrophe” (31) because he saw Europe infiltrated by “Ungeziefer des Geistes” and “Zersetzungsstoffen der Zivilisation” and he detected “ein[en] neue[n] Wille[n], das Verworfenen zu verwerfen, dem Abgrund die Sympathie zu kündigen, ein[en] Wille[n] zur Geradheit, Lauterkeit und Haltung” (32). These traits of civilisation oppose what he earlier defined as culture and therefore not just artistic ideals but also deeply German characteristics. Moreover, their proliferation endangers the existence of culture in Europe, which, consequently, needs to be defended. He thereby refers to vital aspects of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative which uses the alleged superiority of the German culture to justify its vigorous defence of itself and demonstrates the initial success of these narratives in influencing the people.

Mann also elaborates on the reasons for the proliferation of the values of civilisation and ultimately on the reasons for the outbreak of the war. The common perception, especially amongst Germany's opponents, is that

‘WWI would be a war of “Zivilisation gegen Militarismus” (36). Although he sees a superficial, short sighted perception of reality in this slogan, he highlights the deeper truth that lies at the bottom of it: the struggle between civilisation and culture. For Mann, the German preference of culture over civilisation is an expression of the German soul and its distinction from the rest of Europe, which will never be able to understand the true nature of the German people, the “innerlichste Volk, dies Volk der Metaphysik, der Pädagogik und der Musik ein nicht politisch sondern moralisch orientiertes Volk” (37–38). Later in the same essay he closes the circle between militarism and culture when he highlights the inseparability between “Moralismus” and “Soldatentum” (38) and claims that “während andere Kulturen bis ins Feinste, bis in die Kunst hinein die Tendenz zeigen, völlig die Gestalt der zivilen Gesittung anzunehmen, ist der deutsche Militarismus in Wahrheit Form und Erscheinung der deutschen Moralität” (38). Consequently, a war against German militarism is a war against the German morality, which is a war against the German idea and value of culture and thereby ultimately against the very soul of the German people.<sup>46</sup> The claim by Germany’s enemies that they were fighting the country’s militarism is represented as an attack on the very core of what defines Germany and therefore ultimately legitimises the narrative of the war as an act of self-defence.

WWI is even partially portrayed as a continuation of the defence of Prussia against large parts of Europe by Friedrich II. Although the coalitions had changed, Mann claims it was still caused by the same “im Haß verbündete[n] Europa” (34) that wanted to wipe the German spirit off the map. It is therefore not the German “Soldat aus Moralität” (39), who eventually started the war but the “Händlerum” (39) that defines the alleged motivation of England’s aggression towards Germany as well as France’s “Eitelkeit” and “die ihm unerträgliche, ihm unverschmerzbar Tatsache, daß es von Deutschland militärisch aus dem Felde geschlagen war” that evoked “die idée fixe der Revanche” (40). These extracts from Mann’s text show how permeated even the minds of the intellectual elite of the time were by the same arguments that dominate the official propaganda narratives.

Heinrich Heine’s impressions of the English character are also immanent in Mann’s elaborations on the reasons for the outbreak of the war.

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<sup>46</sup> The previously discussed address *An die Kulturwelt* argues in a similar way. It denies that the attack on German militarism “kein Kampf gegen unsere Kultur ist” and demands the rise to resistance of the German “Kulturvolk” to whom “das Vermächtnis eines Goethe, eines Beethoven, eines Kant ebenso heilig ist wie sein Herd und seine Scholle” (*An die Kulturwelt*, 145).

“Als ob nicht Luther und Kant”, he proclaims, “die Französische Revolution zum mindesten aufwögen. Als ob nicht die Emanzipation des Individuums vor Gott und die Kritik der reinen Vernunft ein weit radikalerer Umsturz gewesen wäre als die Proklamierung der ‘Menschenrechte’” (38). Luther and Kant are used as examples to highlight the emancipation of the individual and the liberation of the mind that led to the moral superiority of the German character over the civic revolutions in England and France. The lack of freedom of the mind, that Heine believed to have found in England, is for Mann an important characteristic of the “englisch-bigotte Art” (37) of civilisation.

Thomas Mann’s essays show the prominence of stereotypes that had been established over centuries and had found their way into the German commemorative consciousness so that they could be reactivated for present propagandistic purposes. The fact that an intellectual of his rank got carried away by the enthusiasm that accompanied the start of the war demonstrates how convincing the narrative’s inner logic was and justifies the choice to look further into the mechanisms that playwrights used to represent the propaganda narratives in WWI plays. The representation of the stereotypes that were already implied in the official *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative is one of these mechanisms, ultimately used to legitimise German propaganda by providing alleged motives and reasons for England, France and Russia to attack Germany.

## 2 Properties of the text corpus between 1914 and 1918 and its division into two phases

The discipline of literature has so far almost entirely ignored the large text corpus of WWI plays published during the war. The most likely explanation for this is the lack of accessibility of the text corpus, which makes it necessary to outline its properties in greater detail. The largest bibliographical work on WWI literature, edited by Thomas F. Schneider et al., contains texts across all literary genres as well as *Feldpostbriefe* and military documents. With over 6750 entries, excluding the listed content of anthologies, it is difficult to use when trying to find works belonging to only one genre. Furthermore, the volume only contains a fraction of the over 750 existing plays. Other bibliographical data is scattered throughout the very few publications that focus specifically on WWI drama.<sup>47</sup> But neither Schlötermann’s early

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Elsner analysed some of the plays from the perspective of a literary critique across the volumes of his periodicals *Das deutsche Drama* and *Das deutsche Drama in Geschichte und Gegenwart* published until 1935. Walter

publication, which is restricted to plays published after the war, nor those of Richard Elsner (1883–1960) and Hermann Wanderscheck (1907–1971) – who both claim that it took ten years for playwrights to process WWI into dramatic literature – consider the plays published between 1914 and 1918 and only include a fraction of the plays published after the war.<sup>48</sup> All these publications together contain less than 150 WWI plays, making the text corpus appear much smaller than it actually is.<sup>49</sup> This did not change until the publication of the *Verzeichnis der deutschen Weltkriegsdramen* in 2018, which remains the most comprehensive bibliographical work on the text corpus.<sup>50</sup> However, due to the scope of that publication, it does for example exclude war plays written particularly for children or those produced to be performed at events like the local celebrations for the Kaiser’s birthday.<sup>51</sup>

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Neumann analysed the *Grundzüge der Technik des Heimkehrerdramas* in 1936 and Heinz Schlötermann *Das deutsche Weltkriegsdrama 1919–1937* in 1939 but the influence of the National Socialist ideology that is obvious in the latter two studies prevents them from being objective. Christian Klein has already indicated their unreliability but at the time of his publication also had no access to bibliographical data that would reveal the real number of existing plays (see Ch. Klein, 167–170).

<sup>48</sup> See Elsner, *Der Weltkrieg im Drama seiner Zeit*, 55; Wanderscheck, 75. Alternative numbers are only provided by theatre study works like those of Poensgen, Stümcke and Baumeister and therefore concentrate on plays that have actually been staged.

<sup>49</sup> Another reason why large parts of the text corpus have been forgotten might be the fact that many of the works have been published in very small numbers. For many of these publications, as little as one remaining copy exists, predominantly archived in the German National Library or as manuscripts for the stage, held only in archives and only accessible on site. This means that some works that might have contributed to this discourse analysis, like Elisabeth Miethes’s *Die Russen in Ostpreußen* (1916) or Georg Holzhey’s *Der Heimat Dank an ihre Helden* (1916) were not accessible. This applies in particular to plays published after the war like Hermann Uhlig’s (1871–1942) *Entwurzelt* (1924), Helma Stötter’s *Verlorene Heimat* (1928) or Walter Bloem’s *Verdun* (1929). The majority of the preserved plays have been published by public book publishing houses. However, there are a number of plays that have been published by dedicated theatre publishing houses, many of them as part of anthologies for smaller stages. The most productive publishers in this regard were the Höflings-Verlag in Munich and the publishing houses G. Danner in Mühlhausen and Strauch in Leipzig, which mainly provided material for amateur stages and youth theatre groups.

<sup>50</sup> See Dorrer.

<sup>51</sup> Exact numbers of how many WWI plays exist are almost impossible to ascertain. Not only because they might be lost but also because of the problems

When including all WWI plays, from August through December 1914 alone, approximately 100 plays engaging with the war were published. By the end of 1918, this number exceeded 500 plays and later rose to 750 published works before WWI ceased to be a topic in German plays in the 1940s.<sup>52</sup>

## 2.1 Theatre repertoires during the war

The discipline of theatre studies has provided a number of analyses of the time from 1914 to 1918 that shed light on the properties of the corpus of plays published during this time and on the reasons for the surprising homogeneity of such a large number of texts, making it worthwhile to have a brief look at the situation on German stages during the war.<sup>53</sup> Unlike today, theatre was not only a medium for artistic but also for societal and political discourse. Besides newspapers, all other mass media such as film or radio were still in their early stages. Theatres, however, were established in cities big and small across the empire.<sup>54</sup> They were regularly visited by a large proportion of the population, making them a space in which current affairs were collectively received and processed. Theatre reviews and discussions in feuilletons of newspapers and in literary journals extended the audiences even further.<sup>55</sup>

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to universally define the term WWI. Christian Klein makes a good first attempt to define the term (see Ch. Klein, 170–172). But since the text corpus is still not fully accessible, all existing definitions are snapshots of the current, very early state of research.

<sup>52</sup> WWI all but disappears as a topic of German dramatic literature over the course of WWII. The only plays known to me that represent WWI in any form after 1945 are Heiner Müller's *Germania 3. Gespenster am Toten Mann* and a play called *Helden im Himmel*, written as a *Beitrag für den Geschichtswettbewerb des Bundespräsidenten 2008/2009* by Luise Maidowski, who at the time attended the seventh grade of the Marienschule in Münster.

<sup>53</sup> Not focussing on drama or theatre but very interesting with regards to the literary landscape during WWI and the compilation of literary works that officials and publishing houses deemed suitable for civilians and soldiers during the war is Thorsten Unger's study *Weltliteratur – Feldliteratur: Buchreihen des Ersten Weltkriegs*.

<sup>54</sup> Although the records of small stages and local performances are difficult to obtain, *Das Verzeichnis der deutschen Weltkriegsdramen* lists the dates and locations of premiers of war plays and shows how active small local communities were in performing dedicated war plays (see Dorrer).

<sup>55</sup> Many of them have been collected in Günther Rühle's *Theater für die Republik*.

Studies show that patriotic discourses were very present on stages throughout the German empire in the first months of WWI. After the war broke out in August 1914, most of the capital's big theatres started the new season in September of that year with a classical repertoire that suited the belligerent and patriotic spirit that had taken over. Kleist's *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* as well as his *Hermannsschlacht* and Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* were all performed in the first months of the new season.<sup>56</sup> Max Reinhardt's (1873–1943) production of Schiller's *Wallenstein* trilogy stands as an example of the attempt to link past and present and shows the “nationale Pathos, das [im Theater] lagerte” (Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland*, 263) during the first months of the war. Reinhardt opened the performance of *Wallensteins Lager* with a patriotic *Kriegsvorspiel für die Bühne* by Wilhelm Schmidtbonn (1876–1952), titled *1914*.<sup>57</sup> This kind of prologue added to performances became a rather typical method of creating a line of tradition between the current fight and the heroic struggles of Germany's past. The fact that in the theatre season 1914/15 about half of all premiers were war plays, often plays written after the beginning of WWI, further demonstrates the great influence the war had on the dramatic production during the second half of 1914.<sup>58</sup>

However, the next season showed significantly different characteristics. Although focussing mainly on bigger theatres or at least theatres in bigger cities, most studies of theatre repertoires during the war show a retreat of patriotic exaltations of the war on stage from as early as 1915, and even a decline in the number of war play performances in general.<sup>59</sup> Many playwrights turned to the past and the so-called *vaterländischen Stücke* gained great popularity. Besides performances of the classics that had already been popular at the beginning of the war, theatres premiered a great number of new plays in which the lives of historical German figures like “Luther, Friedrich der Große, Goethe und die Heroen der Freiheitskriege, Blücher, Arndt und Gneisenau” were “idealisiert auf die Bühne gestellt” (Poensgen, 70). Poensgen sees the tendency that “weniger die Gegenwart, weit mehr die Vergangenheit als Stoffgebiet für die dra-

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<sup>56</sup> See Baumeister, 52.

<sup>57</sup> See Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland*, 264.

<sup>58</sup> Heinrich Stümcke's *Theater und Krieg* provides a long list of premieres between mid-August and the end of December. Furthermore, he claims that the number of patriotic manuscripts that were offered to theatre directors in those early months of the war but never performed is countless (see Stümcke, 19). Unfortunately, the ideological bias of his 1915 publication reduces the scholarly value of his analysis.

<sup>59</sup> Baumeister, 129; Krivanec, 184; Poensgen, 30.



matische Dichtung in Betracht gekommen ist” as one of the direct “Rückwirkungen des Krieges” (70).<sup>60</sup> He also argues that the increasing popularity of innocent and inoffensive, often humorous and easily accessible plays from the season of 1915/16 onwards is a direct consequence of the people’s increasing exhaustion. Censorship, according to Poensgen, intensified the tendency to de-politicise the stages by prohibiting plays with political messages, which were considered to be inappropriate in wartimes.<sup>61</sup> This led to an increasingly de-politicised and often light-hearted repertoire and demonstrates that performances did not have to be political but if they were, they had to convey positive and patriotic representations of the war.<sup>62</sup>

## 2.2 The homogeneity of the text corpus

Many of the WWI plays published during the war, especially in the first 18 months, are works by amateur writers. Richard Elsner called these writers “Dutzenddramatiker” (Elsner, *Der Weltkrieg im Drama*, 109), referring to the simplicity and homogeneity of most of the plays published during this time. Excepting Carl Hauptmann and to a certain degree Ludwig Thoma and Rolf Lauckner (1887–1954), he states that

[u]eberall – ob wir nun von dem Dutzenddramatiker auf einen Bauernhof, in eine Schneiderwerkstatt, in die Zimmer des Offiziers oder des Beamten ge-

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<sup>60</sup> Although he only analyses the plays that actually premiered on stage, a closer look at the entire text corpus of the dramatic production from the winter of 1915 onwards confirms his thesis. The total number of war plays published in the last three years of the war, thereafter decreasing every year, is approximately equal to the number of plays published in the first 18 months. The available data in regards to their performances is difficult to analyse. However, the fact that the recorded number of patriotic war plays that premiered in small theatres in smaller towns remains relatively consistent, while decreasing in the context of big stages, leads to the assumption that regional theatres might have been more open to continue staging patriotic exaltations than the ones in metropolises.

<sup>61</sup> See Poensgen, 66–68.

<sup>62</sup> Although slower than the theatres in its reaction to such tendencies and therefore somewhat delayed, the dramatic production of war plays shows a similar development. The number of war plays published annually peaks in 1915 and from 1916 onwards the dominance of WWI as a topic in published plays decreases.

führt werden oder aber in die Gesellschaft billiger Allegorien – überall tönt uns das gleiche Lied in mehr oder weniger schlechten Versen entgegen” (109)

and later adds: “Mit Bezug auf diese Literatur kann man beinahe von einer Prostitution sprechen” (110).<sup>63</sup>

Elsner’s accusation of literary simplicity is in many cases correct and does to a certain degree indicate a lack of dramaturgical talent. However, it most importantly reflects the purpose of the plays. Many of them were written to be staged at certain events like village fairs, Christmas performances or even local celebrations of the Kaiser’s birthday by one of the many *Kriegervereine* or other amateur groups.<sup>64</sup> The *Dresdner Vereinsbühne* for example published plays aiming to cause “die geringsten Anforderungen an Ausstattung und Darstellung” (qtd. in Lamm, 2). Alone more than 100 plays were written to be viewed or performed by the nation’s youth. The majority of all these plays are rather short, as they needed to be easy to perform.<sup>65</sup> This created a text corpus characterised by the repetition of common plot structures, very simply conducted characters and flat dialogues of little literary value.

Furthermore, repeated reports of theatres and publishing houses and even theatre and literature critics preferring texts of timely nationalistic content over literary quality indicate the contribution of commercial factors to the homogeneity of the text corpus.<sup>66</sup> In addition to influencing the prospect of a play’s success, censorship restrictions seem to also have influenced the decision to stage or publish a play. Censorship in Germany was officially in the hands of the military high command, which was theoretic-

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<sup>63</sup> In his article, however, Elsner acts as a literary critic not as a scholar and therefore concentrates purely on the literary quality of the plays, missing their value as documents for scholarly analysis.

<sup>64</sup> Another indicator is that a substantial number of plays are written in a local dialect, like Josef Mayer’s *In Treue fest 1914*, published in 1917 in Bavarian, Adolf Stoltze’s *Große Zeit*, published in 1915 in Hessian, or have characters that speak a dialect, like Max Simon’s (1884–1950) *GOTTLIEB from Mutter- und Vaterland* published in 1916, who speaks a Tyrolese dialect.

<sup>65</sup> Many of them contain a prelude by the author, stating that the play was originally not meant to be published and was only edited because of successful public performances: “Die reiche Anerkennung, die mir bei den Aufführungen zuteil geworden ist, lässt es mich wagen, die Arbeit in Buchform herauszugeben” (J. Mayer, 3) or “[d]ieser Erfolg und die Besprechungen in großen Zeitungen ermutigten mich, das Bühnenspiel dem Druck zu übergeben” (Schmetzer, 4).

<sup>66</sup> See Baumeister, 61; Saueremann, 192–193.

cally able to apply any restrictions to freedom of speech.<sup>67</sup> It was “mit der speziellen Aufgabe betraut worden, durch eine geschickte Propaganda die Volksstimmung in einem promilitaristischen Sinne zu beeinflussen und nach Möglichkeit zu vermeiden, daß der Krieg zum Gegenstand einer kritischen Darstellung gemacht werde” (Poensgen, 104).

Although Poensgen’s examination focusses on the influence of censorship on the theatre repertoire during the war, his results suggest great parallels to the dramatic production between 1914 and 1918. One example in which plays were consciously used to convey a propagandistic message are the previously mentioned youth plays. Gina Weinkauff’s study of Ernst Heinrich Bethge’s (1878–1944) life and work points out the “wehrerzieherischen” (Weinkauff, 50) character of his work as writer and publisher, which explains the conformity of most youth plays published during the war with official Wilhelmine views.<sup>68</sup> The disappearance of war plays written for Germany’s youth after the war confirms the suggestion that they indeed had the purpose of ideologically involving the younger generation in the war.

As mentioned before, many plays were written for performances at public celebrations and festivities in small towns. Their uniformity with and assimilation into the official propaganda can be attributed to the approval that was required for their staging by local authorities. But at least at the beginning of the war, the desire to perform patriotic plays rather than other material seems to have been as high in cities as it was in rural areas. Poensgen reports of an appeal published by the directors of the Münchner Kammerstücke, asking all German theatre directors for the “Aufführung nur deutscher und patriotischer Stücke” (Poensgen, 26) and states that in the first 15 months of the war 81 plays were prohibited or banned from being performed. Furthermore, he claims that the stringency of the censorship increased over the course of the war, especially from 1916/17 onwards, when

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<sup>67</sup> See Sprengel, 137.

<sup>68</sup> Bethge, together with Paul Matzdorf (1864–1930) probably the most productive playwright and publisher of youth plays during and directly after WWI, produced 90 individual publications for amateur acting groups between 1911 and 1918. Most of them were created in close collaboration with the *Arbeitsausschuss für Jugendpflege* and meant to be performed for or by youth societies and schools in order to protect the nation’s youth, especially young high school graduates, from participation in the entertainment offerings of big city life. During WWI, he became one of the most prominent figures of youth literature and, significantly, formed the appearance of the corpus of youth plays during the war. He remained true to his patriotic views throughout the entire war, publishing exhortations to hold out until the end of 1918 (see Weinkauff, 10; 50).

it reacted to the increase in expressionist plays. Martin Baumeister generally confirms this view for the duration of the war, stating that for the theatre landscape in Berlin, the already existing censorship guidelines were monitored even more closely. The playwright and Romanist Lothar Schmidt (1862–1931) already polemicalised in 1911 against the “sittenpolizeilich[e] Kontrolle” (L. Schmidt, 735) as he characterised the common censorship practice and Baumeister points out that this focus on sexual and immoral content was extended to particular political plays from 1914 onwards.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, Poensgen provides a list with examples of plays that were, not all for political reasons but also for moral reasons, banned from being performed during the war. One very interesting title is Hans Franck’s (1879–1964) *Freie Knechte*, which could not premier during the war and was not published until 1919, suggesting that in some cases the censorship of theatre and or print production coincided. Furthermore, plays underwent pre-censorship and their performance or publication was therefore, unlike in the case of other literary texts, stopped before they could reach the public.<sup>70</sup>

In Austria-Hungary, censorship seems to have been even stricter. Scholars researching Karl Kraus often refer to his fight with censors and expose the stringency of the guidelines.<sup>71</sup> It also seems as if the guidelines were applied more consistently, even in the periphery of the empire, in order to stop the corrosive tendencies with which the Habsburg Monarchy was confronted by the many ethnicities of its subjects. Its organisation was also much more centralised and effective. The *Kriegsüberwachungsamt* was not only a censorship organisation but essentially an intelligence agency that surveyed all aspects of public and private communication throughout the empire.<sup>72</sup> All these arguments suggest that in Germany and Austria-Hungary, censorship had a great influence on the homogeneously patriotic text corpus of WWI dramatic literature.

There are a few plays that seem to confirm this, as they include irregularities. A small number of the plays that were actually published during the war seem like they had managed to surpass censorship by hiding an at least mild critique of the war under a patriotic surface and therefore prove the presence of censorship in publication practises. Friedrich Schare’s (1908–1930)<sup>73</sup> play *In Siegesjubel und Todesqual* from 1916, Agathe Do-

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<sup>69</sup> See Baumeister, 31.

<sup>70</sup> See Sprengel, 135–136.

<sup>71</sup> See Djassem, *Die verfolgende Unschuld*, 113.

<sup>72</sup> See Spann, 59.

<sup>73</sup> These dates are not conclusively determinable but the available records in the German National Library suggest that they belong to the author of this play.

erk's *Nachtwache* from 1916 and partially Hans Schreyer's *Brandung* from 1917 all show these characteristics. They sound patriotic at first but differ from the usual representation of the war in important aspects.<sup>74</sup>

A look at German-speaking publications that were published beyond the reach of censorship seems to suggest a similar phenomenon. Arnold Merz' *Simon Ritter* (1916), Dora Häberlin's *Besser Wunden heilen als Wunden schlagen* (1915), Willy Schalch's *Der Sieg – Ein Ruf nach Frieden und Menschentum* (1918) and Felix Moeschlin's (1882–1969) *Die Revolution des Herzens* (1917) were all published in Switzerland and are all at least critical towards the war. *Die Wiederkehr*, whose protagonist's return fails, ending in his suicide as a result of his wartime experience, was published in New York in 1916 by the Vienna-born Clara Ruge (1856–1937) and is most likely the earliest critical *Heimkehrerstück* of WWI. The text was written at a time in which *Heimkehrerfiguren* appearing in plays published in Germany were only used to promote endurance and promise a seamless reintegration after the war. Since the Swiss perspective on the war is significantly different to the German and Austro-Hungarian and Clara Ruge seemed to have moved to New York before the war, the existence of these critical plays does not come as a surprise, they do, however, indicate that the publication of critical plays was only possible outside of the reach of the Central Power's influence. This indicates the great influence of external factors on the unified patriotic character of plays published within Germany during the war, particularly amongst determined war plays. More research into the censorship system during WWI would certainly be beneficial here.

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<sup>74</sup> This collection of plays by Agathe Doerk is in many ways an exception. Her four plays are amongst the most critical war plays that were published in Germany during the war and probably just passed censorship because of her clever and tactful way of including just enough patriotism to get away with the critique while simultaneously making the patriotic argumentation so fragmentary that she cannot be accused of really supporting this line of argumentation. Even *Der Sohn* seems to walk the line between true patriotism and doubts about war itself. In this short play, predominantly consisting of a monologue by the title character's mother, Doerk reflects on the relationship between a woman and her son and husband in times of war. The similarity to the structure of patriotic plays in the second phase of the discourse could therefore very well be a strategy and its true intention the preparation of this last monologue. See the analysis of Doerk's *Nachtwache* in the context of the contributions of the *Heimat* in the analysis phase of the discourse.

### 2.3 The two phases of the discourse of legitimisation

Within those plays that participate in the discourse of legitimisation, a closer look reveals that with regards to the homogenously patriotic tenor, early plays have a different focus than later plays. For analytical reasons, the plays of the discourse can therefore be divided into two phases. The plays from the first phase represent the war as a fight for the survival of the German nation forced upon the German people by their enemies and portray the national stereotypes previously discussed regarding the enemy nations in order to prove the latter's' alleged aggression. The plays of this phase, which lasts until late 1915 or early 1916, thereby portray the core aspect of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and lay the foundation for the argumentation of the entire discourse of plays written during the war. Using the existential character of the war for the German nation, they propagate a unity within the German people, who will allegedly do anything necessary to protect their fatherland against foreign aggressors. The fatherland thereby becomes an almost religious concept and its defence the sacred duty of the German people.<sup>75</sup> Although this representation of the unity narrative is, in the first phase of the discourse, an accepted fact rather than part of the dramatic configuration, its portrayal lay the foundation for the discourse's second phase.

From approximately 1916 onwards, the plays' focus shifts from legitimising the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative to using it as a foundation for the legitimisation of the sacrifices that have been – and will have to be – made before victory can be achieved.<sup>76</sup> They often briefly refer to arguments le-

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<sup>75</sup> Klaus-Peter Philippi argues in his study *Volk des Zorns* (1979) that this religious exaltation is also an important topos in war poems. Analysing a poem by Fritz Philippi (1869–1933), who also published a play called *Altmutter* in 1916, the author of the study highlights the literary construction of a unification amongst the German people as well as between them and God – expressed in 'we', the first word of the poem. Philippi convincingly interprets "das 'wir' als Instrument Gottes: sicher aber auch dieses selbst instrumentale zurechtgedachten Gottes. Dessen 'Gerechtigkeit' erfüllt sich durch das instrumentale 'wir' als Rache an den 'Frevlern'. [...] Rache ist Gottesdienst, Ekstase, 'heilige Raserei'" (K-P. Philippi, 13). The fatherland thereby becomes "eine Art innerer Über-Welt" (13) and has to be protected because "[s]ein Verlust machte 'gottlos'" (13). The topos of religious exaltation is omnipresent in plays of the discourse of legitimisation and although it will not constitute the focus of this analysis, it is immanent in many important aspects of the discourse.

<sup>76</sup> The representation of the war generally started to lose its dominating status within dramatic literature and other topics began to feature more frequently.

gitimising the claimed defensive character of the warfare that dominated the plays of the first phase, in order to blame the sacrifices of the German people on the aggression of their enemies and thereby ultimately legitimise continued sacrifice with the enemies' sustained aggression. These developments appear parallel to a general change in the way people at home engaged with the war. Because of the totality with which the war affected most aspects of their lives, people were increasingly looking for a possible distraction to establish some kind of normality amongst the increasing shortages and the casualty lists that grew longer by the day. Cinemas, cabarets, theatres and literature could provide a distraction for the increasingly war-weary people and the repertoires of Germany's theatres prove, as previously discussed, that the people's leisure time was now reserved for other things.

Many farces tried to portray the war from an entertaining and humorous perspective. The cleric Heinrich Mohr (1874–1951) for example had already published an anthology called *Kriegsschwänke aus alter Zeit* in 1915 because he considered humour “einen guten Kameraden und brauchbaren Waffenbruder in Heimat und Feld” (Mohr, 6). In a great number of dramas about love and family intrigues, the war only serves as the impulse for a plot that could just as well be represented in a variety of other settings.<sup>77</sup> As a consequence, the variety of the temporal settings within WWI plays increases. The same applies to the plays of the discourse of legitimisation. While the plays published in the first 18 months are predominantly set between July and September 1914, frequently around the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, the temporal settings of the plays published later depend on their topic and are no longer restricted to the beginning of the war.

Instead of representing the reasons for the outbreak of the war and Germany's role in it, the focus shifted more to the unity narrative, the idea of a German *Volksgemeinschaft* which would now, in times of a foreign threat to

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Most scholarly works on the theatre during the war came to the same conclusion with regards to the performances of war plays. The most detailed analysis being Wolfgang Poensgen's *Der deutsche Bühnenspielplan im Weltkrieg*, which examines most large German theatres and the types of plays performed chronologically throughout the whole duration of WWI. Poensgen comes to the conclusion that the number of performances of dedicated war plays decreases from January 1915 onwards.

<sup>77</sup> The war is often used as a reason for the absence of a father or lover and the family or bride he left behind has to overcome all obstacles until he returns. This is for example the plot of Poldi Neudeck's *Weihnachtswunder* published in 1917. In other plays, like in Siegfried Philippi's *Ein deutsches Mädel* from 1915, this was used to provide a framework for a test of character.

the nation, form a united *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*. *Kriegsanleihestücke*, plays advertising war bonds, for example, have to be seen in this context, as the topic was usually used to demonstrate the necessity of a united nation, in which the people at home support those who are fighting at the front lines.<sup>78</sup> Another very frequently found type of play is set in hospitals and emphasises the great work of medical personnel, especially of the many voluntary nurses. And while short, simple “*Gelegenheitswerke*” (Poensgen, 28) still dominated the text corpus in 1916, in 1917 and 1918, *Gelegenheitswerke*, no longer made up the majority of works. It seems as if they had adjusted to the increasing physical and psychological demands on the soldiers at the front lines as well as for the people at home and started to display more elaborate dramatic conflicts. The disappearance of the urgent pressure to create easy-to-stage plays, the people’s rejection of short, uninspired patriotic battle cries and the refusal of many theatres to perform them had certainly facilitated this development. The plays are, however, still extremely homogenous in their patriotic representation. The representation of the legitimisation of the victims usually follows an often very simple antithetic character constellation in which unpatriotic non-contributors and doubters are opposed by determined figures who still believe in the German cause and dedicate all their power to help save the fatherland.

Although the division into two phases is by no means to be understood as a strict temporal classification, the focus on the legitimisation of the war itself is significantly more frequent in publications of the first 18 months than of the last nearly three years of WWI. However, the defensive character of the German warfare and the existential nature of WWI for the German people are a constant topic in both phases. They serve as the foundation for the legitimisation of victims and sacrifices, onto which the focus of the discourse increasingly shifted during 1916. This already indicates the continuity of important aspects of the discourse’s first phase into its second, and there are in fact plays published during later stages of the war that continue the argumentation of the first phase without any changes.<sup>79</sup>

Richard Geßner’s 1916 play *Der Feind* circles around the rivalry between French civilisation and German culture and its plot is very similar to

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<sup>78</sup> The name *Kriegsanleihestück* is derived from Fritz Kalesky’s 1918 play *Die Russen kommen* which is subtitled *Ein lustiges Sammel- und Kriegsanleihestück aus dem Landleben in 2 Aufzügen*.

<sup>79</sup> An additional factor that causes inconsistency in the division into two phases is that the time of publication does not necessarily coincide with the time of the plays’ creation.



many plays from 1914 or 1915.<sup>80</sup> The typical stereotypes of the Russians as dehumanised barbaric hordes are still present in plays published as late as 1918, for example in Willy Tharann's play *Kosaken*. Even settings and other formal aspects are reminiscent of plays from the first phase of the discourse. Just like their predecessors, such plays are set in July or August of 1914, which becomes somewhat of a hallmark of plays portraying a stereotypical representation of English, Russian or French characters, even those published after 1916. Maria Krug's (1855–1929) play *Soldatenblut*, published under the alias Alinda Jacoby in 1917, represents this type of play. Its beginning is set in the last days before the start of the war and represents the French motive of "Rache an [den] Deutschen, Revanche für Elsaß-Lothringen" (Jacoby, 8), the "Niedertracht von dem Russen", who "heimlich seine Truppen mobilmachen [ließ]" (10) and the "bockbeinige Engländer, der sich nur aus Neid und Habsucht in den Streit gemischt hat" (16) who forced the Kaiser into a war he never wanted. These stereotypes serve as the alleged motivations for the attack on Germany of which the plays of the discourse accuse the other nations. And despite the war entering the third and fourth year, "[d]es Kaisers Friedensliebe" (Joerger, 6) remained an often used argument to maintain the image of the war as an act of defence and to legitimise Germany's engagement in it, because "[g]erechte Notwehr ist erlaubt und dieser Krieg ist auf Deutschlands und auf Oesterreichs Seite der gerechtesten, der je geführt worden ist" (Jacoby, 14).

This demonstrates that the division into two phases expresses a tendency, not a strict separation into two groups. It can, however, provide a tool to increase the precision of the analysis of the entire discourse, by allowing extraction of two topoi that dominate the plays participating in the discourse of legitimisation: the legitimisation of the defensive character of Germany's warfare in the first phase and the legitimisation of the sacrifices that the unity narrative, as a derivation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, demands of all people.

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<sup>80</sup> In 1914, a similar distinction between the German and the French national character exists in France. However, the concepts are allocated in reverse, as Marc Ferro points out by quoting the French journalist and writer Henri Lavedan: "The conflict before us is between two opposing forces – the (German) force, which wears itself out because it is not supported by a higher ideal, and the (French) force, which can never be spent because it rests upon an ideal of justice and liberty" (qtd. in Ferro, 295).

### 3 The first phase – fighting (for) a defensive war

Dramatic literature starts to engage with the discourse of legitimisation right after the start of the war. Some of the plays could even have been written as war loomed ahead, considering that it took only six weeks for Anton Ohorn's *Vorwärts mit Gott* to have its premier at the *Neues Stadttheater* in Chemnitz.<sup>81</sup> The *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative is such a dominant topic, it appears in one form or another in almost all plays. Their characters represent small town families during the early stages of the war, simple allegorical figures like Germania, Peace, War or Justice, communities in the border regions to Russia or France and, of course, soldiers on their way into or in the first battles of the war.

Regardless of the details of the individual plays' settings, they all represent the central aspects of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. The first of these aspects is the expectation of an imminent attack on Germany that could not have been avoided, despite the Kaiser's having used every diplomatic measure available to him. The enemies, however, are portrayed as having "sich ja schon jahrelang auf diesen Krieg vorbereitet, so daß uns die schwere Zeit doch nicht ausgeblieben wäre" (Eichler, 26), even if war could have been avoided this time. The second significant aspect is the expectation that a defeat in this inevitable war would cause the annihilation of the German people and their culture. Once more, this confirms the democratisation of war and, as this aspect is part of the narrative to convince the people that the fight is in their best interest by defining it as inevitable to save the fatherland, puts the Kaiser in the role of the defender of his people.

Martin Baumeister sees in the representation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative on the Berlin stages during the first months of the war, especially when appearing in patriotic preludes like Schmidtbonn's *Kriegsvorspiel für die Bühne*, "eine spezifische Schwäche der deutschen Position" (Baumeister, 76). Agreeing with Jeffrey Verhey and Michael Jeismann, he interprets the focus on the defensive nature of Germany's warfare as a desperate attempt to blame the enemy, but understands it as inferior to the argumenta-

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<sup>81</sup> This was followed by premiers of Hermann Freund and Will Wolff's *Immer feste druff!* on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Fritz Redl, Alexander Pordes-Milo and Hermann Frey's *Berlin im Felde* on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Max Neal and Max Werner's *Infanterist Pflaume* on the 24<sup>th</sup> and Carl Hauptmann's *Die Toten singen* on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October. In many other cases, it is not possible to say if or when the plays have premiered, especially since many of them would only ever have been performed on small local stages. Thus, the number of plays that premiered within the first weeks of the war was probably even higher than the number of actually recorded premiers.

tion of the Entente, which could actually refer to the invasion of Belgium. He sees therein the origin of the reactivation of stereotypes of the enemies, which were necessary to back up the narrative. This strategy is not limited to the performance of patriotic monologues and poems recited before theatre productions but is also immanent in the dramatic literature of WWI. But while these scholars' argument is certainly valid on a social historical level, Baumeister's view that Germany's literature had no argument to counter the Entente's allegation that Germany had started the war is a retrospective assessment and does not take into account the conviction of contemporaries of being in the role of the defender. The propaganda narratives and the authority the Kaiser's speeches gave them fuelled this conviction in many people and WWI plays picked it up in large numbers in accordance with the argumentation of the narratives. The plays' representations delegitimise the Entente's accusations that Germany had started the war by portraying the attack on Belgium as an act of self-defence against an inevitable attack. Although their argumentation is, just like that of the narratives, a huge simplification of historical events and seems all too obviously contradictory to later generations, which is what Baumeister's critique is mainly referring to, such an understanding was not yet evident at the time the plays were written. Moreover, at the level of their dramatic configuration, the argumentation of the plays is in itself a logical consequence of the fundamental beliefs on which they are based, not only when considering individual plays but also when seen across the text corpus of the discourse of legitimisation.

“Sollen wir denn warten, bis die russischen Armeekorps unsere Grenzen überschritten haben” (Schare, *Deutsche Helden!*, 3) is the fifth sentence of Friedrich Schare's play *Deutsche Helden!* referring to Russia's mobilisation. The tone, character and message of this play is typical of a large group of short plays, all set around the first of August 1914. SCHRÖDER, a small-town blacksmith, leaves no doubt that it was Germany's obligation to engage in this war for “[w]enn ich jemand aus meinem Hause halten will, dann darf ich ihn nicht erst hereinkommen lassen!” (3). The time to strike has, in his opinion, arrived, “ein weiteres Zögern [würde] für uns schon Verlust bedeute[n]” (3). These few statements are representative of the core argumentation of early German war dramas. They portray the German attack as a pre-emptive and therefore defensive action. The almost unflinching positive reception of these at their core very aggressive statements by other characters once more demonstrates the conviction that Germany has been attacked and that this justifies, if not obligates the German people to defend themselves. Referring to the Russians as the nation that first crossed the line by mobilising their troops, as SCHRÖDER does in the quote above, is a rather common way to interpret the events unfolding in July 1914. The

plays, once more in accordance with the official version of the events, represent this step as proof of an inevitable Russian invasion. The full mobilisation of the Central Powers' armies was therefore without alternative, as the actor and author Vollrath von Lepel (1879–1937) represents in his 1915 play *Für's Vaterland*: “Es gab ja eigentlich kein Zurück mehr, nachdem die Feinde unverholen [sic] ihre Absicht, den Frieden zu stören, klargelegt hatten” (Lepel, 13).

The lack of literary quality, which is apparent in plays like Lepel's and which caused the harsh judgement by contemporary critics like Richard Elsner, frequently leads to a focus on affect creation that is supposed to capture the recipients' reception of the represented narratives on an emotional level. The plays therefore connect German characters to positive affects such as kindness, gentleness, faithfulness and determination, while the enemies, often in absentia, are characterised by negative affects such as hate, aggression and perfidy. These affective antitheses are used to give additional credibility to the protagonists' arguments by confirming the accusations they make throughout the play and to thereby legitimise the propaganda narratives. The prevalent usage of affects in conveying these aspects is, however, frequently a sign of the authors' lack of alternate dramaturgical and literary tools.

Equally as homogenous as the plays' argumentation are the dramatis personae through which it is expressed. Honest and peace-loving German characters discuss or encounter stereotypical representations of their enemies. Depending on the plays' geographical settings, they usually focus on the negative portrayal of the motives of a given enemy nation, blaming the outbreak of the war either on the barbaric nature of the Russians, the vengefulness of the French, or the envy of the English, in order to gain credibility for the legitimisation of the arguments created by the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.

### **3.1 The rapacity of the Cossack hordes – Russia's alleged invasion**

It was certainly easier to legitimise the campaign in East Prussia and Galicia as an act of self-defence than the campaign in Belgium and France. Not only because Russia's mobilisation preceded Germany's but also because of the German campaign strategies. The *Schlieffenplan* required a concentration of troops on the western front in order to defeat France in a very short time frame before redeploying the troops to the Russian front. The defensive stalling tactic and the frequent retreats of the German troops in the East allowed the Russian army to advance onto German soil during the first weeks of the war. At the same time, the military weakness of the

Habsburg Monarchy allowed an advance of Russian troops into Galicia. It was not until the end of August that German troops were able to push the Russians back and out of East Prussia.<sup>82</sup>

This meant that the German's own military strategy had an additional propaganda benefit as it confirmed what the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative had propagated – an imminent Russian attack on Germany. Early war plays frequently use this development to legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Set in small towns in the border regions, they represent the East Prussian people's fight against the Russian invasion and the danger it poses to the survival of German culture by portraying the invaders as a "Räuber- und Mörderbande" (Engelbrecht, 4), which destroys everything in its path like a swarm of locusts. These plays thereby emphasise the unprovoked nature of the Russian attack by portraying Russian troops as uncivilised hordes, whose goal it is to extend their reign and further spread a forced "Panslawismus" (F. Hillmann, 6), as Franz Hillmann (1881–1954) very clearly expresses it. The villagers in these plays are often shown in a state between hope and fear as they await the arrival of the invading Russian army. In some plays, like Wilhelm Ernst's *Fürs Vaterland!* from 1915 and Louis Engelbrecht's (1857–1934) *Ostpreußen* from 1916, the German troops reach the mostly small villages in which they are set in time to defend them against the approaching Russian invaders. In other plays, like Paul Enderling's (1880–1938) *Ostpreußen* or Felix Renker's *Von der Knute befreit!*, both published in 1915, German troops have to free a village after it has fallen under Russian occupation.

In both cases, the Russian attack on East Prussia is characterised as being devious and the enemies are alleged to have "gelogen und Frieden geheuchelt, während hinter der Grenze die Russen in Scharen standen, bereit, unser Vaterland mit den Kosaken zu überschwemmen" (Renker, *Von der Knute befreit*, 21). Choosing the word *überschwemmen*, Renker uses a stereotype of the Russians that is important in the context of the narrative.<sup>83</sup> The Russian invaders are not portrayed as soldiers, but as undisciplined, barbaric, as "wild[e] Horden" (Radermacher, 60), almost untameable by their officers, who in fact hardly try to contain them. This is a clear reference to the stereotype of the Russian people as uncivilised

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<sup>82</sup> See Münkler, 142–143.

<sup>83</sup> After the war, Felix Renker wrote plays for the *Neue Arbeiter Bühne*. In his 1920 play *Um Recht und Freiheit*, set in the aftermaths of the *Kapp Putsch*, he takes a clear stance against reactionary forces. This indicates how comprehensive the stereotypes were, and how they were by no means a sign of a mindset that would almost inevitably lead to reactionary and right-wing ideologies after the end of the war.

savages living in small self-governed communities across Russia's large eastern territory in the tradition of Marx' writings. The popularity of this image of the Russians in early war plays demonstrates that it was very well established in the German cultural memory, suggesting that it made the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative quite plausible in the context of the summer of 1914.

Especially in the plays set in the first weeks of the war on the eastern front, these images are consequently used to create strong negative affects, to enhance the resentments against the enemy and to legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Paul Enderling uses the mayor of the little border town in which his play *Ostpreußen* is set, to demonstrate the impossibility of mediation between the villagers and the Russians and to expose the alleged cultural difference between the civilised Germans and the barbaric invaders.<sup>84</sup> Those villagers who are still alive after the attack serve as eyewitnesses to the Russian barbarism. They report of drunken Russian soldiers, who have “die Schränke und das Klavier” of a villager's house “als Klosett benützt” (Enderling, 64). Even the commanding officer lacks manners and “[w]ischt sich mit einem Zipfel des Tischtuchs [...] die Nase” (81) when he comes to the mayor's house to discuss the lack of discipline in his soldiers. But instead of taking seriously the mayor's concerns about the thefts and cruelties committed by the foreign occupiers, the Russian colonel mocks him, emphasising the accusations Enderling is trying to make. Enderling lets him explain to the mayor that if he were Russian, his zeal could make him rich if it were not for his honest nature. Thus, the Russian officer concludes an anecdote from before the war, “[d]umm und ehrlich ist bei uns ziemlich dasselbe” (84). By locating this anecdote in peace times, Enderling is suggesting that it is the Russian nature itself and not the exceptional situation of war that is responsible for their behaviour. Even the adjutant to the Russian general Nicholas Nikolaevich, a Grand Duke, whose German counterpart would embody great honour balanced by strict discipline and integrity, is reportedly a *bon viveur* and womaniser, who has “[j]eden Tag eine andere” (86).

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<sup>84</sup> The play premiered on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1915 in the Neues Schauspielhaus in Königsberg and received a very mixed reaction. Ludwig Goldstein admitted in a review on the day after the premier in the *Königsberger hartungsche Zeitung* that Enderling did not reach “die Wipfel des Literarischen” (Goldstein, 2) but praised the patriotic tenor of the play. Hans Franck, however, who reviewed the play for *Das literarische Echo*, called it “Abonnenkriegenkunst” (Franck, Rev. of *Ostpreußen*, 1334) about which one should not “schweigen” but emphasise “immer aufs Neue ihre Schädlichkeit” (1335).

All these characterisations serve to portray the Russian people as barbaric and despicable by nature. They appear lost when encountering ‘civilised’ German people, crossing the line into almost comical figures compared to the superior cultural standards with which Enderling imbues the German characters. Despite this comical but nevertheless repulsive characterisation, the Russian soldiers, first and foremost the Cossacks, are not meant to be taken with humour, as they are murderers and opportunists of the worst kind. Enderling’s description of the KOSAKENOBBERST in the *dramatis personae* provides an insight into the “Typus des Slawen” (5) that is conveyed in these plays. They are “nicht rein als komische Figur zu erfassen” because “unmittelbar neben kindlicher Naivität steht rohe Brutalität” (5). Another frequent characteristic of Russian characters is alcoholism. Peter Saget for example points that out in the “Bemerkungen für die Aufführung” (Saget, 2) for his 1915 play *Im Lande der Knute*, which uses the description of SUKOFF’s “dicke[r] ‘Kartoffelnase’, die stark blaurot ist” as a sign to indicate “den Schnapstrinker” (2).

To pre-empt this behaviour, the first scenes of many East Prussia plays are dominated by villagers pondering whether to flee and give up their homes and possessions or stay and hope to be rescued by German troops. These scenes are used to contrast the bravery and innocence of the German people with the cruelty and barbarism of the Russian invaders. The positive affects these scenes attempt to attribute to the German characters are meant to increase the cultural gap between the two nations and to enhance the negative affects the representation of the Cossacks was intended to create. This creates an affective mode within plays set at an eastern front dominated by fear and terror and used to enhance the image of the Russian soldiers as barbaric hordes. This atmosphere facilitates a dehumanisation of Russian characters, which is only matched by the rather rare portrayals of colonial soldiers.

Being the most feared of all Russian troops, the Cossacks are portrayed to be “Höllenhunde” (Engelbrecht, 5) and “Mordbrenner” (C. R. Schmidt, 20) who are “schlimmer als wilde Tiere” (Lepel, 17). Often referred to as murderers, in many different varieties of the term, legends of the Russian soldiers pillaging and burning everything in their way precede their advancing armies in the plays and represent the danger to the German nation of which the propaganda narratives warn. In many scenes they appear indirectly, described by refugees fleeing from villages which have already been attacked. KACZMAREK, one of those refugees, is used by Enderling to inscribe the cruelties the Russians are accused of into the play. When asked why he fled his village, he answers, “[h]aben Sie einmal Gutshöfe und Dörfer von weitem brennen sehen? [...] Haben Sie das Gequiek des verbrannten Viehs und das Geschrei gequälter, malträtiertes Menschen gehört?” (Enderling, 44). Another refugee puts it in even more graphic terms when

she reports “in Prostken haben sie den Frauen die Brüste abgeschnitten und die Kinder auf die Lanze gespießt” (104). Others claim the Russians had “Greise erschlagen aus purer Mordlust, [...] und wehrfähige Männer, soweit sie noch im Heimatdorfe waren, verstümmelt” (Lepel, 17). To emphasise this, Felix Renker has a father in a Russian occupied town threaten to kill himself and his daughter, rather than let a Cossack get a hand on her; “Ehe mir einer das Mädél berühren dürfte, eher machte ich uns beiden selbst ein Ende, das weiß Gott” (Renker, *Von der Knute befreit*, 6) is however only the clearest expression of what is indicated in many ways in many plays.<sup>85</sup>

Comments like “[s]o führt Rußland Krieg” (Lepel, 17) are often used to extend these anecdotes. Such comments attribute anecdotes like these to the entire Russian campaign and, like the example of the burning estates proves, legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by explicitly including the destruction of representations of German culture in East Prussia. They allow the plays to label the Russian campaign as one not led by soldiers but, as Carl Hauptmann expresses it, by “Mörder [...] mit roten Perücken ... mit blutunterlaufenen Augen ... mit greulichen Krallenfüsten” (C. Hauptmann, *Kosaken*, 40).<sup>86</sup> In combination with their characterisation as de-individualised hordes, this strategy contributes to the dehumanisation of the Russian soldiers.<sup>87</sup> Animal metaphors like “Russenhunde” (C. Haupt-

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<sup>85</sup> See for example Radermacher, 63–64.

<sup>86</sup> His *Krieg*, written and published before the war had started and which can be seen as one of the first WWI plays, is free of such images. Instead, it focuses on the state of the secular world, which cannot be saved but must be destroyed in order to be reborn. In a letter to Armin Theophil Wegener dated 17<sup>th</sup> of Mai 1914, Hauptmann writes that Berta von Suttner was so impressed by the play that she tried to convince Max Reinhardt “‘dieses Meisterwerk beim internationalen Weltfriedenskongress im September in Wien zur Aufführung zu bringen’” (C. Hauptmann, *Leben mit Freunden*, 209). But in his five one act plays published in 1915 in the collection *Aus dem großen Kriege*, particularly in *Kosaken*, Carl Hauptmann joins many other renowned writers who turned to the representation of old stereotypes.

<sup>87</sup> The argument of the enemy’s civil inferiority has often been used to legitimise the strategic use of violence in colonial wars, as they were said to be fought against savages who do not have to be treated like equals (see Langewiesche, 12). Although the legitimisation of violence is not evident in the analysed dramas, the dehumanisation serves as a means of legitimisation as it increases the cultural gap between the civilised, peaceful German people and the barbaric foreign invaders. A variation of this method can be seen in the context of the colonial troops used by France and England in plays like Schmetzer’s *Deutschland und seine Feinde*.



mann, *Im galizischen Dorfe*, 78) are frequently used to this effect. Mixing these reports with stories from before the war, Russian refugees are also used to position brutality and uncultured behaviour as part of the Russian nature, rather than the results of being at war. Wilhelm Ernst uses the character of the Russian immigrant JOSEF who fled from his home after the Tsar had “Vatter [sic] und armes Mutter aufhängen lassen” (Ernst, 18), to precisely this effect. Linking Russian wartime behaviours to times of peace disconnects the displayed cruelty from the inevitable atrocities of war by locating it in the nature of the Russian culture itself.

As a consequence, the Russian army as it is commonly represented in East Prussia plays appears like a swarm of locusts which “plündern und morden” (Engelbrecht, 21) in every village and “stecken die Häuser an” (21) if there is “nichts mehr zu plündern” (5), before finally moving on. This biblical allusion, also used in non-literary propaganda, enhances the religious exaltation that underlines the defence of the German fatherland. Central to the argumentation is, again, the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. God, so the logic, will side with Germany, whose people are peaceful and devout and have been innocent victims of an attack by pagan hordes. The characters’ faith, which is frequently the only weapon they have against the invading armies, directly draws from the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. God, so the logic, will eventually help those who are fighting for a just cause, and the almost miraculous last minute rescue or liberation of a German village that often concludes East Prussia plays proves the justness of the German cause.

Besides this religious connotation, the liberation of East Prussia is also used as a sign for Germany’s superiority. It is usually precluded by the representation of the nature of the Russian occupation, the portrayal of which serves as additional justification for the German counter-attack. During the occupation, the Russians drink and eat everything they can find and their barbarism and arbitrariness endangers the villagers at all times, especially since they only move on when “sie sich [...] satt geplündert haben, wenn’s nichts mehr zu morden und anzuzünden gibt” (Lepel, 20).

For the German characters, the plays thereby create an almost hopeless situation and the only reason they do stay in their villages is their faith in the German troops. The hope for the liberators to arrive before the Russians slaughter everybody, burn the town to the ground and move on to the next village is often the entire plot of the plays. It is of course part of the message of these plays that the German troops, frequently with lost or estranged sons of the protagonists fighting amongst them, eventually come to the rescue. Many early plays, such as Hans Radermacher’s *Die Helden der Ostgrenze oder Lieb’ Vaterland, magst ruhig sein* (1914), whose third act is entitled “Einbruch der Russen und ihre Vertreibung” (Radermacher, 3),

Carl Robert Schmidt's (\*1879) *Auf treuer Wacht* (1915) and, Carl Hauptmann's *Im galizischen Dorfe* (1915), in which it is at least implied, finish with the victory of the German army, in order to demonstrate that the German people will eventually overcome the horrors that the Russian campaign brings and emerge from the war stronger than they were before. The conviction amongst the German characters that bravery, unity, endurance and sacrifice will eventually lead to a happy end has to be understood as the main message of these plays. Although the plays of the first phase of the war put a strong emphasis on portraying the guilt of the enemy, this plea for bravery, unity and endurance already lays the foundation for the second phase of the discourse.

Since the attack on Germany was, in reference to the Russian mobilisation, historically evident and did not need to be substantiated, the writers focused on the display of the violence and cruelty of the invading enemy. The eastern front was the only front that was, at least for a certain period of time, in the Central Powers' territory. It was therefore easy to portray the alleged crimes committed in East Prussia as crimes against the German people and their culture and to thereby legitimise the official *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by simply confirming what it predicted.

### **3.2 Rivalry and revenge – the portrayal of France's motives**

Plays not specifically set in East Prussia mainly engage with France's alleged war culpability. Despite all the differences in the portrayal of the enemy in the east and the enemy in the west, the basic representation is the same in plays of both contexts. In a way, the definition of the attack on Belgium as pre-emptive warfare is even reliant on the events in East Prussia. But in their scope, the plays set on the western fronts go beyond the defence of German territory and define the war to a much greater extent than plays set in the East as a fight for the survival of the German culture. Legitimation in western front plays is thereby not only based on the right to defend one's own nation against an invader, but also on the necessity to defend it against the influences of French civilisation.

With this rivalry being inscribed into the cultural memory of both Germany and France, with essays like that of Thomas Mann demonstrating how present it was in the contemporary consciousness, any conflict between the two countries ultimately exceeded its immediate magnitude. Consequently, defeat weighed doubly as heavy as it normally would and could damage the pride of the defeated nation for a long time. Whether or not this was true, the German propaganda instrumentalised France's alleged humiliation after the war of 1870/71 and positioned it as the motive

for the alleged French aggression. French humiliation became an important part of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and its literary representation was ultimately used to legitimise the German attack on Belgium as an act of self-defence against France.<sup>88</sup>

Since playwrights could not factually portray a French army advancing through German territory, murdering and pillaging everything along the way, they had to use different strategies than in those plays set in the East. As mentioned, the plays legitimise WWI as a pre-emptive war and in the first phase of the discourse predominantly base this on two aspects. The first one refers to the long-lasting rivalry between Germany and France, whose last violent confrontation, the Franco-Prussian War, left France as the losing side with a thirst for revenge. Mentioned in the *Thronrede*, revenge is a vital keyword within the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and is used in the plays as France's alleged motive for an attack on Germany. The second argument is based on the treaty between France and Russia, the frequently referred to "Zweibund" (Treichel, 25), and constant mentioning of the already launched Russian attack serves as alleged evidence for an inevitable and imminent French invasion.

Franz Eichler's 1915 play *Die allgemeine Mobilisierung* transforms the complicated implications of July 1914 into a rather simple chain of events that characterises the common representation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* argumentation in the plays. Eichler has his character WENZEL explain that England has "dös ganze Theater arranschiert, um Deutschland zu vernichten" (Eichler, 9) and thereby makes an accusation that spreads the discourse of legitimisation more or less explicitly across all media. The chain reaction he accuses of having turned the whole of Europe into a war zone then has the following logic: for the young boy WENZEL, who has learned this from his teacher, it is indisputably clear that "der Mord in Sarajewo von den Russen angezettelt war, und daher Rußland den Serben helfen muß" (8). Germany, as their ally, will fight on the side of Austria-Hungary and, as a consequence, "greifen die Franzosen Deutschland an" (9). Although this Styria play does not explicitly mention the French's own motives, the fact that they will attack Germany and get involved in the war is undoubted and represents the discourse's usual logic.

Other plays focus more directly on the French motives. Hans von Januszkiewicz' (\*1855) *Die Rose von Gravelotte* (1918), published under the

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<sup>88</sup> After Germany experienced the loss of a war first hand in 1918, the increasingly influential fascist ideology is, ironically, founded on revenge for the loss of WWI, arguing that the inner and outer enemy must be destroyed in order to reverse the humiliation Germany had to endure after the defeat and under the Treaty of Versailles.

pseudonym Hans von Reinfels, is one of them.<sup>89</sup> GASTON, the father of ROSE-MARIE, the female protagonist of the play, fully supports and accepts his daughter's marriage to a German officer, whom she met during the Franco-Prussian War. Despite his approval of this marriage, his heart still belongs to his native France and when the signs point towards a new armed conflict, Januszkiewicz uses this conflict to expose France's alleged motives. He lets the French father warn his daughter about the determination that will in his mind decide the war in France's favour because "[e]s geht um die Revanche" (Reinfels, 91). Although GASTON is portrayed as a loving father who is merely trying to protect his daughter as well as her German husband, his confidence in the French victory serves as a symbol of the alleged arrogance of the French army, which, according to many plays, will eventually backfire.

Furthermore, his idea of a solely militarily led war between two armies dates back to 1871 and is not adjusted to the totalisation the upcoming war will bring about. As an admirer of German culture, caring about German people like his son in law and his grandson, who are both officers in the German army, does not contradict his hope for a French victory that would eradicate the shame of 1871. But as a member of a family of two Prussian officers, he suffers reprisals by the French authorities and the play uses exactly this development to portray the usual propaganda arguments. Through French officers who come to interrogate the family, the play exposes the nature of France's intentions further by basing their reprisals on "Verdachtsmomente [...], noch zurückgehend auf die Zeit des Krieges von 1870" (97). Setting the play in the town of Gravelotte is also noteworthy. Located in the Alsace region, the town saw the longest battle of the Franco-Prussian War and symbolises both France's "Hoffnungen" of regaining the lost territory and its "Groll" (Wilhelm II, *Thronrede*).

The way the French treat GASTON's family highlights the French rejection of anything that is connected to Germany and is supposed to show how nationalistic France has become by contrasting this behaviour to the germanophile character of GASTON's daughter ROSE-MARIE, who represents the true spirit of "[...] was ehrenhaft, frei, mutig und treu ist" (Reinfels,

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<sup>89</sup> Although published in 1918, the play was "[i]m Dezember 1914 [...] fertig gestellt, genau im Wortlaut und in der inneren Gestalt" (Reinfels, 9) in which it was published four years later. Unlike the discourse of de-legitimation, which would not be established until after the war because of a lack of participating plays, the discourse of legitimisation was established at the time of the play's completion. The publication date is therefore, analytically, seen as secondary and the play belongs into the first phase of the literary discourse of legitimisation.

93). In the last scene of the play, the people of Gravelotte, spurred on by JEAN, whom ROSE-MARIE had once rejected and who manifests the motif of revenge on a personal level, forcefully enter her home, causing the death of her father GASTON. JEAN even ends up stabbing ROSE-MARIE to death before he is killed by her son, who arrives at the scene with Prussian soldiers. By portraying how she prevents the Prussian troops from killing any other French perpetrators, even after being stabbed and left dying, Januszkiewicz means to further emphasise “wie viel höher Deutschland in allen Kultur- und Gefühlswerten steht als das schöne Frankreich, das sich einst rühmte, an der Spitze der Zivilisation zu marschieren” (132).

Similar motives are used in J. Herman’s 1914 play *Im Vogesenkampf*, which also legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by basing the play’s conflict predominantly on the discourse. The French officer appearing in it is looking for “Revanche pour Weißenbourg, Wörth, Gravelotte” (Herman, 20), again mentioning three places which signify prestigious German victories in the Franco-Prussian War and thereby serve as proof of France’s thirst for revenge. Following the logic of many plays, the Russian attack on Germany provides the perfect opportunity for French revenge and, as Paul Treichel expresses it in his 1915 play *Deutscher Geist und deutsche Treue*, “diesen Augenblick werden die Franzosen benutzen, um Rache zu fordern” (Treichel, 28).

This conviction is combined with the fear of a treaty between Russia and France, which would allegedly oblige the latter to support any Russian aggression. The bare mention of the keyword revenge combined with a reference to the French-Russian treaty is in most plays enough to convince the German characters of the inevitability of a French attack and they generally do not question these accusations but simply accept them as fact. Written in retrospect, the plays use the factual advance of Russian troops into German territory as confirmation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and in turn justify the German attack on Belgium as an act of self-defence.

The vengeful and opportunistic character that the plays assign to the French people is ultimately used to justify the resentful and spiteful emotions with which the honest German characters are imbued. At first glance, the affective mode created by these representations seems significantly different to that of fear and horror created in East Prussia plays. However, the plays engaging with France also try to evoke affects which go beyond simple repugnance. Besides providing a clear explanation for the inevitability of the French attack, the fact that the French are willing to “benutzen” (Treichel, 28) the Russian aggression in order to get their revenge serves in the plays as evidence of their malice towards the Germans. It attributes a very calculated and actively aggressive nature to France’s course of action in the summer of 1914. Furthermore, it makes the French at least partially

responsible for the invasion of East Prussia and the image of barbarism to which it was connected for contemporary recipients.

Just as in the East Prussia plays, the maliciousness of the French plans is contrasted with the peacefulness of the German characters in order to enhance the affects. The *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative is omnipresent in this context and the German characters are often used to directly refer to its source. They generally adopt the image of being “mitten im Frieden [...] von mißgünstigen Feinden überfallen” (Ewald, 20), like Fritz Ewald’s (\*1870) character LOTTE whom he uses to introduce the Kaiser’s speech into his 1914 play *Der Weckruf*.<sup>90</sup> The parts of Wilhelm II’s speeches in which he refers to the peacefulness of the German people and his own attempts to prevent the outbreak of the war are frequently incorporated into the plays.<sup>91</sup>

They lead to a certain image of the Kaiser that is best summed up in the antonomasia “Friedenskaise[r]” (17), which can be found in a variety of different versions in many plays.<sup>92</sup> Although these references appear in plays of all settings, the emphasis on them is stronger and more frequent in plays set on the western front. If they do not employ the previously mentioned antonomasia, or directly or indirectly quote the speeches, the plays represent the Kaiser’s claim through the behaviour of their German characters, which are used to emphasise the maliciousness and aggression of the enemies with their honesty and attempts to maintain peace.

Typical of the representation of this contrast is the first scene of Paul Treichel’s previously mentioned play *Deutscher Geist und deutsche Treue*. It is set in October 1913 at the annual harvest celebration of a small town. The people are shown celebrating “die blühende, goldene Zeit” (Treichel, 9) with music, dance, food and drink, inviting wandering strangers into their midst, generously sharing what they themselves have and rewarding their

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<sup>90</sup> Although Fritz Ewald was also a pseudonym for Eva von Rappard, neither the German Literature Archives in Marbach nor the German National Library has birth nor death dates of Eva von Rappard, while they provide at least the birth year for the author of *Der Weckruf*, Fritz Ewald. Although this inconsistency makes it difficult to ultimately confirm that the two names belong to the same person, it remains highly likely considering the publication history of *Der Weckruf* and its cataloguing in the German National Library.

<sup>91</sup> Another example would be Franz Hillmann’s 1914 play *Des deutschen Reiches Schirmherr* (see Fr. Hillmann, 8). It also serves as an example of plays written to be staged at particular events like a *Kaiserfeier*, as Hillmann suggests in the subtitle.

<sup>92</sup> See for example Kellert, *Heimkehr*, 34; Jacoby, 7; Joerger, 6; Flinterhoff, 7; Herman, 3; 27; Schare, *Deutsche Helden*, 5. It also appears in Heinrich Houben’s (1875–1935) 1914 play *Weihnachts-Feldpost* (Houben, 12).

guests for their contribution to the festivities. This exaltation of the hospitable German nature and the peaceful way of life of the villagers is then abruptly contrasted by the plays' second act. When the curtain rises for the second act, it is late July 1914, war is imminent, and the previous peaceful times seem like a distant memory.

The dialogues in this act all revolve around the expectations for the upcoming war and Treichel uses them to confirm the argumentation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Written in retrospect, the characters already anticipate the magnitude of the war.

Daß dieser Krieg furchtbare Opfer an Menschen und Material kosten wird, ist sicher. Ungeheure Summen verschluckt ein moderner Krieg. Selbst wenn Deutschland siegend in diesem Kampfe, welcher zum Weltkampf ausarten wird, hervorgeht, so hat es doch Wunden erhalten, die einer langen Reihe von Jahren der Heilung bedürfen (27).

France's opportunistically motivated aggression is just as responsible for this catastrophe as the barbarism of the Russian hordes.

Furthermore, the way in which the relation between the Russian and the French aggression is portrayed reinstates the view of the "verdammte[n] Russenvolk" (25) whose undiplomatic aggression enabled others to take advantage of their rough, martial nature. By using Russia as an ally, France willingly accepts their methods of warfare. The plays include references to the inevitable loss of life and destruction of hard earned prosperity that will come with this great war to represent a reaction of despair amongst the German characters, which over the course of the plays regularly turns into hate and rage. This allows the plays to link the portrayal of France's role in the outbreak of the war to the same strong negative affects as Russia's role and emotionalises the reception of France's alleged motivation on whose basis the attack on Belgium is legitimised as a pre-emptive act of self-defence.

The frequent appearance of established stereotypes regarding the French in these plays show once more how widespread they were and might provide an explanation for the narratives as well as the plays' initial success. Just as in the East Prussia plays, they are used to give additional credibility to the argument of a defensive warfare supported by the emphasis on the peacefulness of the German people. Plays engaging with England's role in the outbreak of the war show similar strategies, ultimately representing the British Empire as the mastermind behind a conspiracy that aims to destroy Germany.

### 3.3 The puppet master – England’s role in early war plays

England’s role in the discourse of legitimisation is linked to both France and Russia and is not limited to a geographical setting within the plays. This can be explained with the role the plays assign to it. England is rendered the driving force behind the Russian and French attacks on Germany and represents an extension of the usual argumentation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative as it was established in the speeches that outlined its argumentation. English characters demonstrate the cunning strategies with which they allegedly manipulated the other nations, while cowardly remaining in the background. This role is frequently referred to by German characters, who label them as “Brandstifter” (Bram, 3), whose “gewissenlose, ehrgeizige Gesellschaft” ensured that “Russen und Franzosen” were “in den Krieg hineingehetzt” (Flinterhoff, 7).

This accusation is again based on historical stereotypes that are evocative linked to Heinrich Heine’s characterisation of the personal- and material-freedom seeking Englishman, amongst others. They are, like all other stereotypes represented in early war plays, used to provide the motivation for the alleged attempt to destroy Germany as England’s most feared competitor and to label Germany’s war effort as an act of self-defence. Although the assigned role remains the same as in other plays of the discourse, the representation of England is more varied than that of the other nations. It includes (1) single-line sidenotes that the plays have German characters make, (2) the appearance of English characters in supporting roles and (3) plots which explicitly focus on England’s deceitful actions. The first of these three strategies is the most frequent one, however, it is not the most analytically conclusive one because the core message of its application can be summed up in the one word – *Brandstifter* – from Max Bram’s (1855–1935) 1914 play *Opfer*, quoted earlier. Although the focus of the following analysis will be on the representation of this aspect, the textual evidence will be taken from plays which represent it in a more dramatically elaborate way than Bram.

The nature of the English character is again often emphasised in contrast to other characters. Flinterhoff’s 1914 play *Ums eiserne Kreuz*, for example, portrays an English officer who shows his arrogance even in defeat, in order to expose this behaviour as a characteristic of the English mindset. He treats the German enlisted men who captured him with disrespect, calls them “deutsch[e] Barbaren” (Flinterhoff, 28) and refuses to surrender to anybody but an officer. Although the latter would not be particularly uncommon in military customs, it enhances the officer’s arrogant appearance, especially compared to the play’s grateful, humble French prisoners of war, who appreciate the way they are treated and follow commands unquestioningly. Having the captured French soldiers accuse their



allied English officer of being “schuld an [ihrem] Unglück” (28) supposedly demonstrates England’s role in the outbreak of the war, but the main focus in this play remains the characterisation of English snobbishness. The subsequent behaviour of the good-natured German soldiers, who treat all prisoners of war humanely, fairly and respectfully, finally deprives of any reason the Englishman’s “hochmütig[e]” and “zornig[e]” (39) reaction to his treatment and thereby emphasises the existence of arrogance in the very nature of the English mindset.

In his 1915 spy-drama *Tsingtau*, Robert Hillmann (\*1870), a teacher by profession, who published over 50 works between 1914 and 1925, portrays an English agent with similar features. The written manuscript contains a “Charakteristik der Personen” (R. Hillmann, 4) that precedes the text and provides instructions for directors and actors. It characterises LOSWORTH, the agent, as of “schlanke[r] Figur mit rücksichtslosen Manieren und zynischer, kalter Ausdrucksweise” (4). But this description of the stereotypical Englishman moreover serves as a background for the deceitful methods Hillmann has him apply in the play, and for the motive he accuses him of, in order to create the image of an English interest in the destruction of Germany. This motive is, following another stereotype, purely monetary. The English appear as “Geschäftsleute” (8), as LOSWORTH himself admits to his Japanese co-conspirator, OKA, when asked for financial support for Japan. His explanation for the rejection of the proposal serves the same representation. Japan, according to LOSWORTH, first needs to provide proof that England will profit from its investment.

By using the more profitable investment in Russia as an example of what LOSWORTH is looking for, Hillmann emphasises the greed of the English, simultaneously exposing their alleged role in the outbreak of the war and legitimising the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. His comment that England “dem russischen Bären erst die Tatzen gründlich vergolden muß[e], ehe er tanzen konnte und wollte” (8), implies that Russia’s attack was instigated by England. England’s interests can so be revealed as pure calculation. They are aiming to harm their rival Germany, while, by remaining in the background until they can be assured that the campaign will end victoriously, bearing very little risk. This representation of the English methods is contrasted by an expression of German culture, which helped to improve the area in which they settled. According to one of the defenders, when the Germans first leased the province from China they found nothing but

[e]lende Lehmhütten [...] mit verarmten, von Seuchen heimgesuchten Bewohnern. Deutsche machten die Scholle urbar; Deutsche schufen menschenwürdige Lebensverhältnisse, Deutsche legten Verkehrswege an. So ist

Kiautschou eine Musterkolonie geworden durch deutsche Arbeit, deutsche Gründlichkeit, deutsche Opfer! (30).

England's materialistically driven imperialism, which sees colonies as mere resources, is here criticised and opposed by the German way of 'enriching' the territories they occupy.

This characterisation of the English motives as monetary and of their methods as manipulative in the play's opening scene contains the two main features of how England's role is portrayed in early war plays. The contempt of French characters evoked by French opportunism pales in comparison to the portrayal of English characters. The derogatory connotation of "englischer Moral und Denkart" (15) that permeates the play is typical of the affects created by the portrayal of the English strategy. While France and Russia at least fight their battles themselves, England is represented only by agents and officers who plot and instruct others on how to fight their battles for them. This is the foundation on which the plays base the defiant reactions of their German characters, whose honesty and morality is once more used as a contrast.

These inherent features also dominate the portrayal of the English war effort in Ilse Nebinger's drama *Pflicht* from 1915. The play follows a German merchant and his family in Antwerp from August to October 1914. It uses the dramatic conflict created by the different loyalties of the individual family members to expose that England only used Belgium as an excuse to expand the war. While the wife and two children are native Belgians, the father of the family, who immigrated to Belgium as a young man and is now a Belgian citizen, as well as his son-in-law, were born in Germany. As the title suggests, the question of duty towards the fatherland constitutes the core topic, represented by the tensions between family members. In the first act, ELOGIUS' Belgian son and German son-in-law have a falling out over what they see as their duty. It ends with the latter leaving Antwerp to join the German troops, setting up a climax similar to that in many East Prussia plays. Basing both their points of view on their duties towards what she lets them see as their fatherland, Nebinger establishes the tension between the family members as a representation of different ideologies.

Over the course of the play, those characters who initially feel obligated to their Belgium home have to admit that they made the wrong decision as the play reveals the morality of the German and the deceitfulness of the English natures, the latter of which blinded the Belgians with propaganda and false promises.<sup>93</sup> This is indicative of the way the *Verteidigungskrieg*

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<sup>93</sup> A similar antithetic structure dominates the plays of the second phase of the discourse of legitimisation.

narrative is represented in regards to the role of England. The predominant perception represented in the plays is that England's role as the protector is only pretence, designed to allow them to pursue their own interests without being blamed for the outbreak of the war. This is one of the reasons why the focus of many plays is on the exposure of the alleged English "Krämertugend" (Heine, 223), which was used to gain credibility for this argument.

Unlike many other early plays, Nebinger's plot does not deny the suffering caused by the German campaign in Belgium. Instead, it addresses this issue in the person of AGNES, the daughter, who shows compassion for the refugees arriving in Antwerp. The play depicts these sufferings through a report from AGNES to her father, ELOGIUS. It is after this report that her mother, MARIA, starts to accuse Germany, which "unser friedlich Land / mit Kriegesschrecken überzog" (Nebinger, 28). She thanks the "edlen Britenscharen" (28) who "eilten, uns zu schützen / [...], um zu retten / die Überfallenen" (29). Her statement is immediately opposed by her husband's opinion on the English and their actions:

Verräter!  
Heuchlerisch sind sie!  
Ja, es gebühret ihnen Dank,  
daß sie den Feind auf uns gehetzt  
und unser schönes Land  
zum Festungswall gestempelt,  
ihr stolzes Inselreich  
mit unsrem Blut zu schützen.  
[...]  
[D]aß unser Volk sein Land, sein Gut,  
die Ehre selbst hat eingesetzt –  
ins Unglück sich hat treiben lassen,  
um neid'schen Krämerseelen  
die niederträcht'ge Habsucht zu befriedigen.  
[...]  
[D]aß – als der Friede rings das Land noch deckte –  
sie planten schon  
des Neides Kriegespläne  
in stiller Heimlichkeit,  
der Kunst der Spinne folgend (29).

In the scene quoted above, Nebinger unmasks what she understands as England's "hinterlistige Lügen / und schmähschliche falsche Worte" (31), which prompted Belgium to side with the wrong ally.

Directly after this dialogue between ELOGIUS and MARIA, Nebinger intensifies the portrayed reprisals against Germans in Belgium. After all

German citizens living in Antwerp had already been banned from city and country, the same fate was now destined to befall all people of German descent, even if they were Belgian citizens, like ELOGIUS. His refusal to follow the new law eventually gets him arrested and sentenced to death. During his arrest, Belgian officers are revealed as marionettes, with Nebinger having them justify their actions by monotonously and constantly claiming that they act “als Schützer unsrer Vaterstadt” (70), while in fact condemning their city to destruction by executing England’s orders.

They doom one of its landmarks by transforming the cathedral’s clock tower into an armed fortress, which forces the advancing Germans to see it as a military target and destroy it. This example can serve as a representation of the scenes in which propaganda and its literary representation are almost identical. The play reacts to an accusation frequently used in English propaganda and, answering to it on an intertextual level, becomes propaganda itself. But the scene also fits in the overall strategy of legitimisation. The destruction that comes with the German invasion is excused and even justified as a terrible result of the decisions of their enemies, and the English propaganda campaign, accusing Germany of the unprovoked destruction of Belgian culture, is portrayed as a lie. ROBERT, a Belgian officer and family friend, reveals the English influence on the Belgian strategy to defend Antwerp when he reports about the discussions between the English and Belgian strategists in which everybody wants “das letzte Wort behalten” (38).

Following these developments and after all attempts to save ELOGIUS fail, MARIA starts to understand that her husband was right in the first place. Throughout the third act, when the Belgian characters increasingly reveal the naivety and credulity with which they followed England’s false promises to their own downfall, all family members start to see the truth which ELOGIUS had already predicted in the previously quoted scene of the second act.

In the last act, Nebinger uses MARIA’s conversion to finally confirm her husband’s initial accusations. Antwerp is now destroyed, civilians and soldiers are fleeing and the city sinks into chaos. MARIA, believing she’s the last one of her family to still be alive, falls into a long monologue in which she depicts the scenes she is witnessing. In a teichoscopy, she describes the fleeing English soldiers, the self-proclaimed “heldenmüt’gen Schützer / unsrer starken Festung” (76) as they

in tollem Laufe  
von hinnen fliehen müß[en]  
vor den Verfolgern,  
die [sie] selbst gefordert (77).

Furthermore, she mocks Churchill, who showed his true face as a deceiver of the Belgian people just as ELOGIUS had predicted. He was celebrated as the saviour when promising troops to defend the city but actually just forced the German army to attack it.

Befriedigt zog drei Tage drauf  
Held Churchill still  
bei Nacht und Grauen  
nach Frankreichs sicherem Gestaden (77)

not only labels him as a coward but also legitimises the German attack on Belgium as provoked by England. Nebinger has MARIA express this when she finally understands the true nature of the deceivers: “unsre Retter selber halfen, / Vernichtungswerke zu vollbringen” (77–78). By blaming England for the destruction of Antwerp, England’s justification to avenge Germany’s violation of Belgium’s neutrality is portrayed as a mere pretence to get involved in a war that they themselves had initiated.

But plays like Nebinger’s are the exception with regards to the role of English characters. Unlike characters of other nationalities, they never appear alone and are rarely the protagonists of the plays. Moreover, they appear in the background and manipulate others. On the one hand, this delegitimises the propaganda of Germany’s attack, on the other hand, it enhances the impression that France and Russia were planning an attack by emphasising that England had manipulated them to do exactly that.

### **3.4 Arguing with the enemy – the use of enemy characters in early war plays**

The representations of these three essentially different types of enemy characters, despite the fact that their characterisations and specific roles within the plays have different nuances, have a clear purpose within the legitimisation discourse. They portray the German characters’ stereotypical perception of their enemies, in order to ‘prove’ the alleged motives of the English, French and Russians and to legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Their greedy, dishonest, vengeful or barbaric behaviour establishes a set of negative affects that contrast and at the same time amplify the positive affects created by the good, honest, peace-loving German characters. Often, the representation of enemy characters does not exceed this purpose. However, in some plays they have an additional effect, which has been used in ancient rhetoric: the *capitatio benevolentiae*.

Their negative representation captures the audience's good will for the German characters and, in consequence, for their argumentation and for the narratives they represent. Rhetoric provides a number of strategies in order to achieve this. These strategies or formulas make use of the characteristics usually attributed to the individual sides of the argument. In the case of a drama, these are represented by the characters of the play. As long as German characters speak about the enemies' motives and plans, these ultimately remain the subject of speculation. If the enemy itself reveals the plans, however, these accusations gain an almost truth-like character. This strategy uses enemy characters to strengthen the German perspective; by confirming the enemies' accusations, the credibility of the intended message of the play is enhanced.<sup>94</sup>

This rhetorical technique can be observed throughout early war plays, including some of the previously mentioned works. The *KOSAKENBERST* in Paul Enderling's drama *Ostpreußen* confirms the Pan-Slavism that the Russian campaign is allegedly trying to spread when he says, "[m]uß alles russisch werden. Alles" (Enderling, 83). This statement is not just the anxious talk of villagers in the border regions with Russia, it rather reveals Russia's intentions through one of its own officers, who can be assumed to be well informed. The statement gains additional authority as it is not just said in a casual dialogue between enlisted Russian soldiers but by an officer to the mayor of an East Prussian town. In this way the statement allows Enderling to portray it almost as a glimpse into Russia's plans for the future of East Prussia and enhances the claim that Germany's warfare is necessary to protect the fatherland.

Carl Hauptmann uses the same strategy in his 1915 play *Kosaken* by having one of the Cossacks who invade an estate in East Prussia shoot a girl "vor [den] Augen" (C. Hauptmann, *Kosaken*, 53) of his comrades rather than letting them violate her. As part of the invading force, the Russian soldier knows of the terrible things his comrades would do to their prisoner. By basing it on the knowledge of a co-perpetrator, Hauptmann increases the credibility of his accusation that the Russian campaign would be carried out with inhumane violence against civilians. Other plays show more directly how Russian soldiers demand sexual obedience, like the Russian officer in Radermacher's play, who claims that only "wenn hübsches Kätzchen ist sehr lieb – und sehr süß – Vater soll sein frei" (Radermacher, 63).

In Robert Hillman's play *Tsingtau*, LOSWORTH, the British agent, confirms the ally's plans for the war: "Sofort bei Beginn überschwemmt Rußland Ostpreußen, Frankreich das Elsaß. Lange kann es nicht dauern,

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<sup>94</sup> See Ueding 1, 1439–1440.

und der Dreiverband tafelt in Berlin" (R. Hillmann, 7). Although set just before the outbreak of the war, the Triple Entente has already established their plans to destroy Germany. With LOSWORTH talking to OKA, a Japanese spy, Hillmann portrays the enemy's intelligence discussing the plans for the upcoming war against Germany and thus conferring additional credibility to the declarations made in this dialogue. These few examples indicate how common this strategy is in early war plays. The most comprehensive use of this strategy, however, can be found in Ludwig Schmetzer's *Deutschland und seine Feinde*.

Schmetzer represents WWI as a conspiracy against Germany and thereby legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. After this is established, he praises the peaceful, hardworking, cultured and inventive Germans, personified by representatives of different German regions and professions, each stating the achievements they are famous for. In the last scene of the play, Germany's enemies are brought in front of WALA, a figure from Nordic mythology who possesses the gift of seeing the truth. This contextualisation is another religious exaltation, positioning the German fight for survival within the realm of divine interest that has arisen as a result of the deceitful methods with which Germany's enemies have allegedly provoked the war. In these court scenes, representatives of the enemies are presenting their accusations against Germany before the character called DER DEUTSCHE disproves them. Schmetzer thereby lets WALA's impartial messengers, who are "der Erdentaten alle kundig" (Schmetzer, 31), confirm the arguments of DER DEUTSCHE, using their divine knowledge as alleged proof of the German position.

In order to further increase the validity of the play's message, and of the effect Schmetzer wants to achieve, England and France are represented by prominent figures: England by Edward Grey, who served as English foreign secretary from 1905 to 1916, and France by Raymond Poincaré, President of France from 1913 to 1920. In scene two, in which Schmetzer lets them discuss and reveal the conspiracy with which he aims to legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, he includes a character simply called RUSSE. He does not, however, reappear in scene seven, where GREY and POINCARÉ make their accusations in front of WALA.

The behaviour Schmetzer has the RUSSE display represents a stereotype commonly ascribed to the Russian hordes. He does not contribute to the strategic discussion of POINCARÉ and GREY but is noticeably drunk and keeps burping in their face. They have to turn "ihre Nasen seitwärts" (11) in order to escape the disgusting bodily functions with which their ally's barbarism is portrayed. Schmetzer only lets him use short exclamations such as "Bravo! Bravo! Gotts Dunner! (*Rülpst.*) Bravo, Brüderchen! Da helfen wir mit! Prost, Brüderchen!" (11), and he is the only one whose

speech is represented in grammatically incorrect German.<sup>95</sup> His desperate response to GREY and POINCARÉ pointing out the achievements of their civilisation, “Wir haben auch Freiheit und Ziwilation [sic]. (*Rülpst.*)” (11) is then supposed to display exactly what he lacks. The impersonalising synecdoche *Russe* used as the character’s name, exposes him as an allegorical representation of the faceless and uncivilised Russian hordes, a strategy that is also used for DER DEUTSCHE but of course with different attributions. Furthermore, especially the interaction of GREY with the RUSSE makes Russia and its brutal hordes not much more than puppets of the other allies. Because of his absence in the scene of the trial, Schmetzer ultimately confirms this impression as it indicates that he would not be able to make a case of his own.

POINCARÉ’s motives are also nothing new. They are intended to represent the superiority of German culture over French civilisation. Schmetzer does this by having him claim that Germany had stolen France’s place “an der Spitze der Zivilisation” (10), which it had earned in twenty years of wars following the French Revolution. In those wars, France overcame, in POINCARÉ’s opinion, the old Europe and was holding “[d]as Panier der Freiheit in der Hand” (10). He claims that Germany first “stahl [...] unsere Siege weg” before Bismarck betrayed them until “er uns das Elsaß stehlen konnte” (10). Not stopping there, “stahl dies Deutschland unsere Wissenschaft” (10). Portraying POINCARÉ as almost foaming, Schmetzer lets him finish with what the play shows France’s true motive to be: “Rache! Rache und Freiheit für Europa!” (11). This freedom being exposed by Schmetzer’s earlier representation of POINCARÉ’s logic, is the freedom Napoleon gave Europe. This labels it, from a German point of view, as an attack and subsequent oppressive occupation and allows Schmetzer to define the war against France as a pre-emptive defence that aligns with the content of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. The enemies’ general misconception of freedom is further confirmed when the RUSSE almost sarcastically states “[d]ie Türken, denen muß ich die Freiheit bringen! [...] Ich brauch’ die Dardanellen!” (12).

While France and to a degree even Russia are represented as having their own motives, England is, eventually very bluntly, exposed as pulling the strings. At first, Schmetzer has GREY provide his allies with a new kind of munition with which he claims to have “die Welt erobert” (16). He even has him bring out marionettes, representative of the different peoples he is using to achieve his goals. He includes puppets of a Belgian, whose neu-

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<sup>95</sup> This is a frequent characteristic used to demonstrate the alleged cultural superiority of Russian characters like Saget’s SUKOFF or the RUSSISCHE UNTEROFFIZIER in Carl Robert Schmidt’s *Auf treuer Wacht* (1915).



trality GREY plans to use as an “Angel” (16) to lure Germany into the war. He presents a “Serb” (17), whose purpose according to GREY is “Meuchelmord” (17) and with whom England will not officially be allowed to be associated, telling the Russian that with “dieser Puppe [...] Du spielen [mußt]” (17).

In this scene, GREY is clearly displayed as the driving force behind all the intrigues which drew Germany into the war and displays Schmetzer’s interpretation of the alleged conspiracy with which he legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. He further shows puppets of an “Italienermännchen” (16), who will stab Germany and Austria-Hungary in the back as well as a “Japs” (16). Letting him call the puppet a ‘Jap’, is one of the methods Schmetzer uses to demonstrate how little GREY allegedly thinks of the nations for and with which he is pretending to fight, and emphasises the egoistic and deceitful nature with which he characterises the representative of England.

His next comment has to be understood in a similar way but simultaneously adds another notion to England’s methods. He shows puppets of his colonial troops, the “Gurkha, Sikh, der Freund vom Senegal, Australier, der von Kanada” (16) and sarcastically comments “[s]ind das nicht schöne Schützer der Kultur!” (16). Colonial troops were commonly seen as savage fighters who would, because of their uncivilised nature, habitually violate the rules of war. Christian Koller’s essay *Wilde in zivilisierten Kriegen* (2001) shows documents that prove that German officials have tried to label the use of colonial troops as a breach of the Rules of War and that stories of crimes against humanity, allegedly committed by colonial troops, were often unrightfully spread by nations with little or no colonial soldiers of their own to confirm this accusation. Schmetzer’s representation of soldiers from Senegal and other colonies is yet another strategy to confirm the illegitimacy of England’s war effort.<sup>96</sup>

Indeed, through the sarcastic way in which GREY speaks about these troops, the play exposes him as being fully aware of his wrong-doing and intensifies the deceitful image Schmetzer is trying to evoke. The whole puppet-sequence of scene two portrays England as evil and deviant and legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by allegedly unmasking as pretence the allies’ official reasons for overthrowing Germany. This is

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<sup>96</sup> This explains why the plays refer to their enemy as England instead of Great Britain, as only England and not the British colonies were regarded as representatives of European civilisation and therefore as the only legitimate opponent in a civilised war. Consequently, the plays referred to the deployment of colonial soldiers by England when trying to demonstrate the illegitimate and uncivilised character of England’s warfare.

exemplified by the protection of nations like Belgium, which the play represents as nothing more than an angel, and the upkeep of European freedom and culture, which the allies just use as a slogan to hide their real motives. The use of the press to spread propagandistic lies, with which they are purposefully turning the world against Germany, is the final evidence for the allies' falseness. They are planning to feed the press with "Übertreibungen" with "kühn geschriebenen Artikeln, mit Schauermaßen aller Art" (13) and are not at all concerned, "wenn der Wahrheit in solchen Artikeln ein wenig Gewalt angetan wird" (13). Schmetzer employs a common strategy here, which aims to reinforce Germany's own narrative by de-legitimising the enemies' allegations of Germany's campaign in Belgium as an unrightful attack and by trying to expose the Entente's accusations as propagandistic lies spread by the English *Lügenpresse*. This represents the at the time typical counter-propaganda arguments that were used to de-legitimise the portrayal of Germany's campaign in Belgium as an invasion, and to legitimise their own propaganda narratives.

After POINCARÉ and the RUSSE have left the stage, Schmetzer lets GREY reveal that he is manipulating them, too.

Es müssen ja Hände verbrannt werden am deutschen Eisen. Es ist heiß! Gefährlich heiß! [...] Die Hände müßt Ihr verbrennen. Angefasst muß es ja doch einmal werden. Habt Ihr's erst aus dem Ofen gerissen, dann verliert's ja auch wohl seine Glut. Und – (*höhnisch lachend*) Ihr werdet euch dann freilich die Hände kühlen müssen für einige Zeit – dann aber sind die unsrigen da, um am gekühlten Eisen glücklich zuzufassen (17–18).

This representation extents England's guilt and charges its representation with the full extent of negative affects created by the brutality of the Russians and the opportunism of the French for which it makes them at least partially responsible. The main goal of this strategy is of course once again the legitimisation of the German war effort as an act of defence. Letting high ranking officials of the enemy explain their own motives thereby enhances the credibility of the allegedly uncovered conspiracy to destroy Germany.

### 3.5 The victory imperative

Derived from the enemies' alleged motives that are established by the plays' argumentation, WWI is also portrayed as a struggle for the survival of the entire nation in which defeat would coincide with the disappearance of the German nation and culture. This made it clear from the very begin-

ning that victory in this fight was imperative and although the plays of the first phase of the discourse of legitimisation put great emphasis on legitimising the war itself, the existential character of this fight is already present even within these plays.

Many of the alleged motives and reasons for the enemies' aggression represented in early war plays can be summed up as envy. Envy of Germany's thriving economy, its great cultural achievements and the prosperity that their diligence had brought the Germans since 1871. Wilhelm II inscribed this aspect into the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, claiming that Germany's enemies "neiden uns den Erfolg unserer Arbeit" (Wilhelm II, *An das deutsche Volk*). In the same proclamation, he declared the war as a fight for Germany's existence and thereby established a causal chain between the enemies' alleged envy and their plans to destroy Germany. This causal chain is processed in early war plays with significant consequences for the development of the discourse of legitimisation.

"[M]an will uns vernichten, wir sollen untergehen" (Schare, *Deutsche Helden!*, 5) is the blacksmith's clear verdict about the importance of the upcoming war in Schare's 1915 play *Deutsche Helden*. This war will not be fought for a small piece of territory or to improve Germany's political position within Europe, it is rather expected to be a struggle for existence. The aforementioned statements of enemy characters like "[m]uß alles russisch werden" (Enderling, 83) are supposed to serve as further evidence for this allegation. As a result, the notion of the fatherland, for whose safety every individual has to fight, becomes a core concept of the plays' argumentation. It is used as an all-purpose argument to legitimise not just Germany's involvement in the war but also individual sacrifices, as the survival of the fatherland is defined as the requirement for the survival of the individual. The plays process this perception in accordance with the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and thereby further legitimise it by stating that every individual German soldier "kämpft [...] für seine Existenz" (Treichel, 27). In doing so, these plays already lay the foundation for the later shift of focus to the legitimisation of the sacrifices demanded by the war, by identifying the contribution of and benefit for the individual as representative of the entire *Volkskörper*.

Furthermore, the constant repetition of the enemies' devious motives creates affects of fear. Fear of the enemies themselves, fear of their actions during the war and, most importantly, fear of what would happen if Germany lost the war. It also creates a dynamic that legitimises individual sacrifices on an immense scale by portraying the consequences of defeat as many times worse than the demanded immolation. Letting all German characters react with absolute determination and solidarity to this threat propagates a unity of all German people under the banner of "Kaiser und

Reich” (Ewald, 21) that was inscribed into the German collective memory as the *Augusterlebnis* or the *Ideen von 1914*.<sup>97</sup> Although the impact of these concepts on society as a whole has been relativised in recent research, they dominate the image of the German spirit in early war plays, and represent it as a united stance of resistance against this historical threat.

Klaus-Peter Philippi’s study *Volk des Zorns* verified this phenomenon as a significant aspect in the poetry of WWI. The poems analysed in his work portray the emergence of Germany as a people, a unity which had, according to some of the poems, not existed prior to WWI, as a result of transpersonal, historical events, while simultaneously establishing the notion of a divine calling of the *Volk des Zorns*.<sup>98</sup>

The view that “die helfende Hand Gottes” (Schare, *Deutsche Helden*, 25) is unmistakably with the German people is also immanent in dramatic literature and is used in many ways to represent the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative of the innocently attacked nation with whose “gerechten Sache” (Ewald, 17) the just Gods will undoubtedly side. Like Ewald’s and Schare’s, almost all plays contain this belief in one way or another. The title of Anton Ohorn’s 1914 play *Vorwärts mit Gott* even uses the principle slogan of this aspect, which appears in almost identical form in many plays, as its title.<sup>99</sup> The *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative is here represented by direct references to Wilhelm II’s address *An das deutsche Volk*, from which the expression stems. In many cases, the deity the characters call upon is the christian God and many of the divine characters appearing in the plays are angels or other biblical figures. From the beginning of WWI drama, however, there is a great number of representations of Nordic, pagan Gods or allegorical figures such as Germania, Austria or Victoria.<sup>100</sup> The militarisation of the divine repertoire, where its representation becomes “[d]er Gott, der Eisen wachsen ließ” (Arndt, 212), is an intricate feature of German poetry from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jürgen Schröder convincingly argues that “aus der christlichen Sakralisierung des Befreiungskrieges die ominöse Formel von ‘Eisen und Blut’ [entsteht]” (J. Schröder, *Deutschland*

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<sup>97</sup> Its significance for the perception of the war at the time as well as in retrospect has been supported by multiple studies. See for example Bruendel, 285–288.

<sup>98</sup> See K-P. Philippi, 12.

<sup>99</sup> See for example C. R. Schmidt, 23; Herman, 18. This aspect remains immanent in plays throughout the war as the analysis of Bunzel’s and Seiffert’s plays of the second phase of the discourse will show.

<sup>100</sup> These religious and pseudo-religious figures are often given the ability to see the truth behind all the enemy’s lies or are capable of predicting the future, normally the victory of Germany.

als Gedicht, 165). He also emphasises the solidarity between the allies against Napoleon within the poetry of the time, which “jene deutsche Nibelungentreue an[kündigt], die Österreich und Deutschland hundert Jahre später in den Ersten Weltkrieg gerissen hat” (160), and which is represented in plays like *Deutsch-Österreich oder: Durch Kampf zum Sieg* (1914) by Edmund Braune (1890–1940). In WWI poetry, Schröder sees the “Militarisierung des Geistes und des Glaubens, die in den Befreiungskriegen begann und im Umkreis der Reichgründung gipfelte, [...] bis ins Irrwitzige gesteigert” (253) and thereby emphasises a continuing line of radicalisation, at least within literature

Unity is the core aspect both of the *Ideen von 1914* and within their representation in the plays of the discourse of legitimisation. Such plays process the narrative of the *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* by frequently referring to Kaiser Wilhelm II’s remarks about the overcoming of political and class divisions. Almost all German characters appearing in the plays are convinced that the people will follow their Kaiser’s lead because, as Treichel has BERGER explain, “[w]enn es eben heißt, das Vaterland steht auf dem Spiel, so steht dem Kaiser ein starkes, edles Volk zur Seite, auf welches er sich gewiß getrost verlassen kann. Da mögen alle kommen” (Treichel, 26). The belief is that everybody should put the greater good, the fatherland’s survival, over their own. Or as Ewald has a veteran officer of the Franco-Prussian War express it, “[j]eder darf jetzt nur den einen Gedanken haben: wie und wo kann ich meinem Vaterland helfen, und selbst die schwache Kraft des Einzelnen wirkt im Ganzen als ein Großes” (Ewald, 15).

The plays thereby claim that dividing categories like wealth, social status or position within German society now cease to exist. “[D]ie Unterschiede existieren nun nicht mehr. Jetzt sind wir alle gewissermaßen bloß noch Menschen. Deutsche” (Enderling, 39). In early plays, this notion is often set in the first days of the war, basically an assumption, a first impression, while in later plays of the discourse it will be portrayed as a virtue of the German people which will eventually lead them to war, before the plays of the discourse of de-legitimisation deny that this unity ever existed. However, the previous quotes are examples of a common strategy that uses the official propaganda narratives to create positive affects of brotherhood and determination as a reaction to the enemies’ threat to the fatherland.

This is defined as a particularly German phenomenon, while in other nations, for example in Russia, “das Volk nur [kämpft], um den Blutdurst, die Habsucht der Großen zu stillen” (Treichel, 27). Representations like this show the close connection between the *Verteidigungskrieg* and unity narratives and how both are used to legitimise each other; the alleged exist-

ence of one proves the existence of the other. A similar strategy is used within the propagation of the unity narrative. Representing the conviction that Germany has never been “überwunden, wenn es einig war” (Wilhelm II, *An das deutsche Volk*), the collective and individual sacrifices of the German people become not only a guarantee but also a requirement for their victory. This is used in the plays to legitimise these sacrifices because it essentially means that “das Vaterland [...] jedes Opfer fordern [darf]” (Treichel, 25). This aspect already points towards the shift which occurs in the focus of the plays commencing from about 1916. The characters in early plays are still portrayed as happily, “freudig” (Lepel, 15), accepting the sacrifices because “[i]n dieser ernsten Zeit [...] der Mann nicht mehr sich selbst [gehört], er gehört dem Vaterland” (Herman, 16) and “[f]ür’s Vaterland ist nichts zu teuer” (Ernst, 11). Sacrifice thereby becomes the duty of all Germans, necessary to win a war that threatens to destroy the whole nation.

Emphasising the responsibility of the individual for the wellbeing of the people ultimately legitimises the sacrifices that will be asked of them over the course of the war and at the same time creates a context of meaning for them. The explicit discussion of the war’s horrors within the plays feeds into this purpose. It is in fact a logical consequence of the argumentation. The characters’ abundance of determination and the will to make any required sacrifice is only convincing if the plays portray them as being aware of the sacrifices they have committed to make. Thus, that “der Krieg [...] kein Erbarmen [hat]” (Treichel, 23) is by no means being concealed. Moreover, death is accepted as “Kriegsgeschick” (Schare, *Deutsche Helden!*, 19) and “[l]iegt in der Natur der Sache” (25). This allows the plays to propagate the idea that faith in the nation’s determination is “[f]elsenfest” (Enderling, 112), as well as to reinstate the created context of meaning by having the characters imagine how their loved ones will soon “hier als Sieger vor uns steh[en]” (H. Marx, 8) before the first battles have even been fought.

The plays, as the East Prussia plays demonstrate very well, establish a causal chain which links perseverance and sacrifice with the achievement of victory. And this victory is represented as an ultimate and final one, in order to enhance the spirit of determination. The present threat, however, needs to be fully removed if peace is to last. This dictates that “[...] nicht eher Friede geschlossen werden [darf], bis wir die sichere Bürgschaft haben, daß eine nochmalige solche Aktion gegen uns für alle Zukunft ausgeschlossen ist” (Schare, *Deutsche Helden!*, 14). Europe needs to be reshaped, even reborn, as some plays metaphorically state, and “beim Gebären geht es nicht ohne Blut und Schmerzen ab” (Enderling, 52). This ultimate goal of the ‘war to end all wars’ legitimises all sacrifices made to achieve it, as

Hans Engler has the volunteer ERNST express very clearly in his 1915 play *Das Franktireurdorf*:

Wir müssen siegen, und wir werden siegen! Erst wenn sich alles unserm Willen beugt, geht Deutschlands Schwert zurück in seine Scheide! Doch dann sind all die Opfer nicht umsonst gebracht, dann stehn wir größer da, denn je zuvor! Und nicht nur unsre Kinder – nein, selbst unsre Enkelkinder werden keinen Krieg mehr sehn (Engler, 13).

The conviction of the German people towards peacefulness and the belief in the prosperity they will bring to the world is once more used to eradicate the contradiction between bringing peace and forcing one's own will on other people. Although the consequences for the continuation of the fight are here secondary to the achievement of peace, the context of meaning on which the plays of the second phase focus is also very directly expressed.

Many plays set in East Prussia even show an immediate rebuilding process, highlighting what will happen to the entire nation after the war has been won. Paul Enderling's *Ostpreußen* ends with the death of the long-lost son who returned from America in order to free his home from the Russians. Lethally injured after the battle which pushed the Russian oppressors out of his hometown, his last words are: "Vater! Bau ... das Haus ... wieder auf ...", to which his father replies "nicht nur ... das Haus! ..." (Enderling, 141). References like the final words of this 1915 play, in which the rebuilding of the house symbolically pre-empts the German revitalisation after the victorious end of the war, are very common for early war plays. Many of these plays, however, were presumably written before it became clear which direction the war would take. Its full extent only became evident as time went on and the casualty lists grew longer. The focus shift towards the legitimisation of sacrifices in the plays from 1916 onwards seems to reflect that. However, the foundation on which later plays base their legitimisation strategies is already present in the early plays analysed above.

#### **4 Phase two – legitimising sacrifices and victims**

With the war entering its second winter, it became increasingly evident that it would not be the short war many people hoped for and expected. The battles of Verdun and the Somme, which would become the epitome of the attrition warfare on the western front, exposed the horrors of modern war-

fare to the people at home.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, the representation of the war in dramatic literature starts to change, once again potentially prompted by censorship. Wolfgang Poensgen states that one of the jobs of censorship was to serve “als Gegengewicht gegen die demoralisierenden Auswirkungen des lange dauernden Krieges” and over the course of the war supported “solch[e] Kunstpflege, die eine möglichst zuversichtliche Stimmung im Inneren des Landes gewährleistete” (Poensgen, 104). It is therefore possible that the promotion and prohibition of certain plays amplified the tendency to write plays of the kind that dominate the second phase of the discourse of legitimisation.

The biggest change is the previously indicated shift in focus from the legitimisation of the defensive character of the war to the legitimisation of its victims and sacrifices. It is inseparable from another change that foregrounded the efforts and plights of the people at home, significantly bringing this aspect of wartime life into the centre of the plays. The third major change concerns the structure the plays used to legitimise the propaganda narratives. Authors started to include characters who displayed a loss of faith in the senseless suffering and who started to doubt the prospect of a German victory, concepts which were previously entirely ignored by earlier plays. The plays thereby create an antithetic character constellation, in which the two principles of dedication to the German cause on the one hand and doubting the sense of this dedication on the other each fight for the prerogative of interpretation. This conflict, however, is only created to eventually be resolved in favour of determination and thereby only serves the purpose of promoting a context of meaning that legitimises the continuation of the sacrifices and the propagandistic calls for endurance.

The plays also continue to demand a full and decisive victory rather than a peace treaty, for which chances occasionally appeared until 1917.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> The symbolic significance of these battles lives on to this day, even though their legacy is perceived very differently by the participating nations. For France, Verdun signifies the “Moment der entscheidenden Bewährung der ganzen Nation” (Leonhard, 444), and this battle boosted the career of the commander of the second army, Philippe Pétain, as the defender of Verdun. In Germany, the insignificant amount of won territory, despite the extremely high number of casualties, created the image of the “Menschenmühle an der Maas” (Ettighoffer, 6) in the German commemoration of the battle of Verdun (see Leonhard, 444–449). The battle of the Somme signifies a similar national trauma for the British Empire as Verdun does for Germany and coined the famous narrative of ‘lions led by donkeys’, describing the bravery of the common soldiers and the incompetence of the British commanders (452–457).

<sup>102</sup> See Münkler, 620–621.



Such an end to the war, however, is not communicable within the logic of the discourse, as it would have contradicted the constant emphasis on the existential character of the war and the imperative of a victory as the requirement for the survival of the fatherland against the alleged envy and barbarism on which the enemies' motivation was based.<sup>103</sup> The plays therefore portray any emerging calls for peace as attempts of the Triple Entente to prevent their alleged imminent defeat, regain strength and begin a new war.<sup>104</sup> "Ein Friede ohne Sieg – und über Nacht ein neuer Krieg" (Gürtler, 84) is a conviction that appears in many plays.<sup>105</sup>

The victory imperative can, however, according to the plays only be achieved if the German people maintain their willingness to make sacrifices until it becomes reality. This argumentation connects past and future victims by defining the latter as a condition to preserve the context of meaning for the former, whose deaths would lose their meaning in case of a defeat.<sup>106</sup>

While the way the war was represented in the first phase of the discourse did not engage with the implications of a total war on the civilian

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<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, annexationist groups within the German parliament gained increasing influence and ultimately affected the public perception of the war, which might have influenced the atmosphere in which the plays were written.

<sup>104</sup> This perception is, as Langewiesche and Buschmann point out, a typical property of a *Volkskrieg*, in which the government can lose control over its dynamic as a consequence of the involvement of a radicalised nation, which might find it harder to accept defeat than military strategists would (see Langewiesche/Buschmann 163–164). Although this was not the case for the German population in 1918, the years to follow would see the rise of a fascist ideology which was yet to fully accept defeat and was trying to reverse its repercussions.

<sup>105</sup> Friedrich Schare's *In Siegesjubil und Todesqual!* is an exception to this rule. The play ends with a call for peace based on the perception that the war had caused enough suffering. The play represents peace as a humanitarian necessity that stands above national interests. Furthermore, an immediate end to the war would secure Germany's survival. Due to this interpretation, the play manages to maintain the context of meaning for all the sacrifices and suffering, while denying that their continuation is necessary. Schare's drama is a rare occurrence amongst the many plays that represent the continuation of the war as a matter of national security and the achievement of victory as the only way to honour the victims.

<sup>106</sup> In retrospect, this argumentation is almost like a literary representation of the war of attrition. It claims that the war can only end if either victory is achieved or the number of casualties exceeds the human resources available. From the perspective of the plays, however, a continuation would certainly lead to a German victory and thereby bring the aggressors to justice.

population, their contribution became increasingly important for the war effort the longer the war lasted. WWI plays reflect this by embedding civilian contribution in the same context of meaning as that of the soldiers and making them subject to the same rules. Furthermore, the spatially separated spheres of *Front* and *Heimat* are increasingly connected in plays from 1916 onwards and the interdependent relationship between both spheres is used in the plays to represent the narrative of the *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*. The contributions and sacrifices that were now demanded of both *Heimat* and *Front* lead to an increasing merging of their ideological distinctions. Every heroic or patriotic deed executed by a representative of either sphere becomes an act of solidarity that benefits the entire German nation and in turn motivates its counterpart sphere to contribute even more and fight even harder. Using the exalted idea of the fatherland as an ideological link between the two spheres, the plays ultimately legitimise all sacrifices with reference to the unity narrative.

Plays continue to introduce negative characters in order to enhance the recipients' sympathy for their patriotic and determined counterparts. Due to the increase in the representation of the *Heimat's* contribution to the war effort, however, the plays no longer recruit negative characters from amongst the enemies' representatives but from the German population of the villages in which the plays are set. This shift is a consequence of the discourse's new focus. The plays of the first phase of the legitimisation discourse had to represent the enemy's culpability for its outbreak. As a consequence, the negative affects created by enemy characters, who represent the threat to the fatherland that made Germany's war effort inevitable. The plays of the second phase, however, focus on the legitimisation of the people's willingness to continue the war until the final victory is achieved, defining the loss of faith in its victorious end and the people's refusal to endure more suffering as the biggest threat to the German war effort.<sup>107</sup> The negative characters are therefore represented by those German characters who fail to fulfil their patriotic duty to contribute to and support the German war effort and thereby violate the demands of the *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*.

These aspects already indicate that the role which representatives of the *Heimat* were assigned in the first phase of war plays had now changed. While in early war plays all German characters were convinced of the cause and the victorious end of the war, this impression was now frequently interrupted by characters who lost faith in the necessity of the war and began to refrain from total solidarity. Such characters are used to create dia-

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<sup>107</sup> This already implies the notion of the 'inner enemy' that characterises especially the right-wing rhetoric of the post-war years.

logues in which the plays dispute the propaganda narratives. Based on antithetical character constellations, which vary in comprehensiveness from play to play, the dialogues always end with the argumentative victory of the side representing the narrative and thereby serve as a means to reactivate the argumentation and affects established in the first phase and to confirm their legitimisation.<sup>108</sup>

#### 4.1 The new role of *Heimat*

The German term *Heimat* is often used to conceptualise the inclusion but also exclusion of cultural belonging, origin and identity, rather than referring to a place of birth. The English term ‘home’ can therefore be too narrow in its scope to be an accurate translation. In the context of war, especially of wars not fought on home soil, the *Heimat* represents the peaceful counterpart to the violent sphere of the *Front* and the battlefield. It can serve as a space of yearning for the soldiers, who have not seen their home for a long time, or as a source of motivation if the home is to be defended. In WWI, however, the clear distinction between *Heimat* and *Front* as respective representations of peace and war disappears, because it saw, as a total war or *Volkskrieg*, entire populations with all of their financial, economic and human resources at war with each other. *Heimat*, therefore, no longer just serves as a space of yearning for those who are spatially separated from it, nor as a representation of peace, but also becomes a decisive factor for the nation’s warfare, gaining importance the longer the war lasts.

Consequently, *Heimat* and its connection to the battlefield becomes increasingly important in the second phase of the discourse. The play *Heimkehr* by the journalist Franz Kellert (1876–1934) represents this. It was published in 1918 and premiered in January 1918 in the Tivoli-Theater in Greiz, a small town in the Vogtland region of Germany. The strong connection between *Heimat* and *Front* is, in the case of *Heimkehr*, already rep-

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<sup>108</sup> Sometimes it constitutes the structure of the entire play, other times it is part of a sub-conflict between two or more characters within the plot. The choice of the textual evidence used in this analysis is therefore a compromise between the aspect of the discourse it is used to exemplify and the level to which it uses the antithetical structure to represent it. The previously mentioned increase in the variety of topics that the plays use to legitimise the people’s sacrifices means that not all plays represent all facets of a certain aspect, as was the case in the first phase. This is also reflected by the examined textual evidence.

resented in a patriotic poem that precludes the play, a common feature of plays, particularly of performances during the war.<sup>109</sup>

Heimatklänge sollen klingen,  
Heute lind in Eure Herzen,  
Und die alten Lieder singen,  
Die geweiht die Not der Schmerzen;

Lieder heilig uns geworden  
Durch der Opfer schwere Wunden,  
Da, umdroht von Feindes-Horden,  
Wir die Heimat neu gefunden. -- (Kellert, *Heimkehr*, 3).

The expression “neu gefunden” (3) must in this case be understood as *erneut gefunden* or *wiedergefunden* so that the verse represents the attack on Germany as the origin of a new sense of *Heimat*. Simultaneously, it emphasises the shared cultural heritage and tradition, here represented by the old songs, whose value has been revived because of the *Not* the war causes. This *Not* is not limited to either sphere but refers to the physical pain of the soldiers as well as to the fear and eventually the grief of those at home, ultimately connecting the sacrifices of both spheres. The verse also reactivates the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by blaming the *Not* on the *Feindes-Horden* and thereby links the suffering that is portrayed in the following play to the aggression of the enemies that started the war. These two connections, between *Heimat* and *Front*, as well as between the sacrifices of the war and the culpability of the enemies, are crucial for the understanding of the second phase of the discourse. Although they can interchangeably be portrayed by representatives of either sphere, the majority of the plays are set, at least for the most part, in the *Heimat*.

Kellert’s play for example tells the story of HEINRICH WERNER, a fictional soldier, who was wounded in battle but heroically held his position rather than fleeing to safety upon the enemy’s advance. Undetected in his hideout, he overheard the enemy commanders discussing their strategy for the battle and communicated the information back to the German commanders, enabling them to outmanoeuvre the enemies and win the battle. While Kellert unfolds the story of HEINRICH’s heroism through dialogues set in a hospital, he uses the preparations for and celebrations of his return to incorporate this individual deed into the usual propaganda narratives. The other characters of the play are all motivated by HEINRICH’s heroism and Kellert has them discuss its meaning in the greater context provided by

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<sup>109</sup> Other examples are Erich Matzker’s *Brudervolk* published in 1917 or Bunzels’s *Deutsche Volksopfer im dritten Kriegsjahre*.

the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. This way, HEINRICH's heroism becomes a deed executed for the security of the entire fatherland, which in turn motivates the characters representing the *Heimat* to do everything they can to support their heroes fighting at the front lines.

This already indicates that the connection between *Heimat* and *Front* is not just an affective or ideological one but also serves a very concrete purpose. The 1917 play *Des Vaterlandes Dank* by Hulda and Albin Schmidt represents an important aspect which exceeds the suggestion of gratitude communicated via the play's title. While telling a rather uninspired story of hidden identity, the play contains various examples of how a direct connection is established between the two spheres. A farmer promises his step-brother that he will look after his child when he emigrates to America, but the farmer's wife convinces her husband to give the child away and to use the money his step-brother regularly sends for their own children. After contact with the step-brother has long ceased, and those who know about the story are dead, it seems her plan has succeeded. But when the step-brother unexpectedly returns from America, the fraud comes to light and he chases the late farmer's wife off the farm and is reunited with his daughter.

Throughout the rest of the play, now set during the war, the two represent the true patriotic spirit and fully commit to the duties demanded of the people at home in the context provided by the unity narrative. The play particularly emphasises, as one of the main responsibilities of the *Heimat*, the care for those who are affected by the war, including not only the wounded soldiers but also the bereaved of those who do not return. The interdependent connection between the two spheres is in this context expressed by a reciprocal duty of care. The young men at the front lines make sure that the *Heimat* stays safe and protect the people who cannot fight for themselves while at the same time the people at home care for the families of the soldiers during their absence and the soldiers themselves once they return.

This is also omnipresent in the 1917 play *Grenzwacht* by the east Prussian teacher Franz Lütke (1882–1945), who publicly and influentially campaigned for East Prussia to remain part of Germany after the war. Lütke gave speeches in the province as well as in Berlin, in order to raise awareness about the threat that he still perceived to his *Heimat*.<sup>110</sup> His

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<sup>110</sup> See H. Menzel, 4–6. Lütke later associated himself with the National Socialist regime and in 1932 gave an interview stating that he fought for the representation of German culture from a very young age: “[W]ir hörten polnische Laute, polnische Wünsche und so gestaltete sich in uns Landschaft, Volkstum und Schicksal zu einem Bilde, das die Farben der Romantik und des gegenwärtigen, kämpferischen Lebens zeigte. [...] [A]ber wir lauschten doch auf den völkischen Kampf, in dessen Brennpunkt wir hineinwuchsen.

commitment indicates that the connection between *Heimat* and *Front* in most plays was not only a literary device within the discourse of legitimisation, but the literary representation of an ideological concept of the time.<sup>111</sup> In *Grenzwacht* the connection between the two spheres is very strong as they are both represented as being at war. Lüdtké uses FRIEDEL's farewell to her husband to express this. Promising to take care of the wounded and to do whatever she can to support the fighting men, she emphasises the importance of all contributions: "Du, Liebster, kämpfst da draußen für die Heimat, und ich kämpf hier für sie!" (Lüdtké, *Grenzwacht*, 24). In this quote, Lüdtké represents the understanding of the German *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* propagated in the official narratives.

In Kellert's previously discussed play, nurse GERDA expresses a similar connection. At first, one of her cases reminds her of how "Weib und Kinder [...] verlassen da[stehn]" (Kellert, *Heimkehr*, 11) when the husband or father falls. "Doch nein, verlassen nicht", she adds immediately, "[d]as Vaterland vergißt nicht seine Helden. Und alle in der Heimat helfen mit. [...] Gibt's etwas Größeres, als der Verwaisten treu sich anzunehmen und so zu danken denen, die für uns gestorben?" (11). Although the fatherland maintains its almost religious status as "das höchste und heiligste Gut der Menschen" (Schmidt/Schmidt, 44) and Germany's soldiers continue to be seen as being "zu dem heiligen Amt erlesen, das Vaterland zu retten" (Lüdtké, 23), this argumentation adds a utilitarian value to the usually ideological concept of the fatherland. The soldiers fight for the survival of the fatherland, which will take care of them when they return, promising the continuation of the newly created unity of all people after the war.<sup>112</sup>

The same aspect is represented in *Des Vaterlandes Dank*. The authors portray the importance of the help for the "Waisen unserer Krieger"<sup>113</sup>,

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All das wurde für mein späteres Schaffen bedeutungsvoll" (Lüdtké, *Worte zu meinem Schaffen*, 125).

<sup>111</sup> According to Herybert Menzel's (1906–1945) homage to Lüdtké on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, "gab [es] eine Zeit, da wurde dies Schauspiel viel in der Grenzmark und überhaupt im Osten [Preußens] zur Aufführung gebracht" (H. Menzel, 11). This can suggest a reciprocal influence between literary works and theatrical performances on the one side and the public debate on the other, which would be worth exploring in further detail.

<sup>112</sup> This aspect is missing in the plays of the first phase, which provide Germany's victory as sufficient solace for the fallen and do not contain wounded soldiers at all.

<sup>113</sup> Orphans are frequently used to represent the duty to care for the weakest of the fallen's bereaved. Remarks as to their great numbers are also rather common within the plays. However, the destiny of the mothers of the many orphans is hardly ever mentioned. This demonstrates the one-sidedness of

whose fathers have given “ihr Herzblut” (Schmidt/Schmidt, 73) for the people at home, as one of the ongoing expressions of gratitude for their duty. They have RENATE, “die Verkörperung des edlen deutschen Weibes” (42), explain to everybody that it is now up to the *Heimat* to show “wie das Vaterland seinen Helden dankt” (73) and thereby emphasise that the support for the children of fallen soldiers is not only a moral obligation but also a way to thank their fathers for their sacrifice.

The fact that the plays predominantly portray the contribution of civilians rather than the role of the state as the second agent that constitutes the fatherland is due to their strong connection to the propaganda narratives. Besides establishing the peacefulness not only of the people but also of the state, they focus on securing the support of the masses by convincing them to fight for their own future rather than out of obligation for the state. The fatherland therefore remains an ideological concept and manifests itself, if at all, through the *Volksgemeinschaft*. As a consequence, the state plays a minor role in the discourse. Kellert’s *Heimkehr*, however, contains a scene in which the character of HELENE is used to refer to the state’s contribution. Her nephew has just died for the fatherland and she is asked how her sister is coping with the loss. After admitting that nothing can fully replace the loss, the scene continues to display the peoples’ acknowledgment of foundations like the *Nationalstiftung*, which “hilft den Witwen allen und den Waisen und trocknet mancher armen Mutter bittre Tränen” (Kellert, *Heimkehr*, 24). But like in most plays, this is a sidenote and the main focus of the play is the connection between the local community and their men on the front lines.<sup>114</sup>

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the representation of suffering in early plays, which predominantly ignore the destitution and even deaths of people at home and focus on the sacrifices of those who fight. The orphans are thereby representative of an indirect way to refer to the sacrifices of the *Heimat* without having to actually represent them in the play.

<sup>114</sup> This promise is relativised in plays published after the war, even if they generally belong to the discourse of legitimisation like Kurt Prager’s (1901–1969) play *Des Kriegsgefangenen Heimkehr oder ‘Harre meiner Seele’* published in 1919. Prager has the wife of a missing soldier state that the “wenigen Pfennige, die mir die Unterstützung bringt, bei weitem nicht aus[reichen], den Anforderungen des Alltagslebens gerecht zu werden” (Prager, 5). These representations are used to emphasise that it is up to the German people to take care of their own future after the state has failed to do so. This is typical of plays published after the war calling for a rebirth of the nation, even if they, like Prager’s play, cannot directly be linked to a particular political ideology.

One particular setting in which the two spheres overlap and work together is the hospital. Besides material contributions supporting the soldiers at the front lines and the aid given to their bereaved, plays frequently represent the medical and psychological care given to wounded soldiers in hospitals as an important duty of the representatives of the *Heimat*. Its significance is new to the discourse. For most of the first phase, the plays represent an entirely different and often naïve image of the war; the magnitude of the physical and especially psychological impact of the war on the soldiers was probably still unimaginable to authors of the time, and reality only slowly found its way into the representation of the war in dramatic literature. In the second phase, however, military doctors, civilian doctors and voluntary nurses establish the hospital as a setting in which civilians and military representatives are used to further the portrayed connection between the spheres of *Heimat* and *Front*.

Agathe Doerk's *Nachtwache*, for example, the play that gave her collection of four short plays its title, is set in a hospital in an unspecified location. This play is in many ways extraordinary. Firstly, Doerk's realistic representation of the war is uncommon among plays published as early as 1916. But more importantly, the suffering of the war is not disregarded by patriotic narratives but embedded in a religious context of meaning, while the nationalistic ideals represented in the play are missing some of the key arguments usually apparent in plays of the time.<sup>115</sup> Although female characters are often more emotional and tend to focus more on the suffering of the men than on the necessity of this suffering, the constellation in which Doerk represents her nurses is unusual. The play lacks male characters, which are normally used to balance the emotionality of the female characters by rationally embedding the suffering in a context of meaning that is based on the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. This in contrast to most other plays highlights the missing elements a reader, who is familiar with the discourse, normally expects and provides a good insight into the discourses' mechanisms.

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<sup>115</sup> This is only noticeable when looking more closely at the representation of the usual narratives. They appear as if they might only be part of the drama, in order to surpass censorship. However, due to the lack of information about the author and the fact that no other works by her are available, this must ultimately remain tentative. But it does raise questions with regards to a number of other plays, for example Friedrich Schare's *In Siegesjubel und Todesqual*, which contain critical voices but might have been published due to a generally patriotic tenor. Further research into this aspect might be able to provide valid new perspectives on the text corpus of WWI plays and the publication practises under which it developed.



Without any patriotic male characters, the only meaning for the suffering is produced by SCHWESTER ANNA's religious point of view. This way, Doerk is able to expose the war as a devastating catastrophe for all mankind, rather than as a crime committed against Germany by its enemies. She portrays the cruelty of war through the observations and thoughts of the hospital's nurses, whose professional and private firsthand experiences again represent the involvement of the entire population in this war. Furthermore, SCHWESTER RICARDA's report that her husband and her two brothers "[...] alle drei tot, jeder in einem andern Winkel der Welt [liegen]" (Doerk, 59), represents the geographical magnitude of the war.

Doerk does not conceal the difficulty of the nurses' job and the effect it has on their minds. She creates affects of sympathy for the soldiers, using, for example, SCHWESTER GISELA's lament "daß in jeder Minute dieser Nächte und Tage hunderte von Lippen ihr letztes Wort sagen und ebenso-viele Seelen von da an in Einsamkeit zurückbleiben" (62). She seems to be overwhelmed at first, as she admits it is "so schwer, so schwer" (63) to witness the deaths of so many young men, who, as Doerk adds, "'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles' singend, ins Sterben gestürmt waren" (64). Furthermore, Doerk has GISELA admit to having dreams in which the hospital's walls are "bespannt mit einem endlosen Muster von Antlitzen" (65), which all ask the same question: "Warum, Gott, warum liebest du mich so enden?" (65). When she finds her way back to her old strength, the purpose of her character is finally revealed. It serves to promote determined solidarity with those fighting at the front lines and the perseverance that the war demands of the people, despite the hardship she had to endure. Her statement that she "hielte es ja nicht aus, zu Hause, während die da draußen immer mit dem Gewehr stehen müssen oder den Spaten führen" (65) thereby represents a connection between *Heimat* and *Front* that is not just ideological but active.

In the final dialogue of the play, Doerk provides the context of meaning for the promoted perseverance. Again using SCHWESTER GISELA, she represents the war as a humanitarian catastrophe. By introducing the character's father, a sculptor, and mother, a painter, through SCHWESTER GISELA's memories, the play provides a humanistic background on which the definition of the war is based. She tells of educational travels during which she has incorporated the ideals of classic arts, connecting these ideals with the German culture that her character represents. Her belief that every human is a "Wunder" (66) opens up the final dialogue, which represents the antithetical structure that is typical for dialogues and sometimes entire plays of the second phase of the legitimisation discourse. Two sides, determination and despair, argue about the correct interpretation of the events.

In *Nachtwache*, they are represented by SCHWESTER GISELA and SCHWESTER ANNA. The former expressing her doubts in her last lines of the play, exclaiming that “jeder Mensch ist ein Wunder – – und zu hunderttausenden werden sie gemäht, ah, warum nur, warum?” (67). SCHWESTER ANNA’s role is to counter these doubts by referring to the invalidity of individuality.

Ah, daß wir nicht davon ablassen können, Aufschlüsse zu fordern für alles, was geschieht. [...] Aber ich sage Ihnen – und wenn wir das hundertmal nicht erfassen: ein Denken ist da, ist, ist, ein zuendedenkendes Denken, – das blühen läßt durch Zermalmen, das fügt durch Vernichten, das baut durch Zerstören, ja durch Zerstören kraft- und wunderreicher Leiber (67–68).

Such a belief in religious renewal of mankind is not uncommon and can already be seen in Carl Hauptmann’s *Krieg. Ein Tedeum* from 1913. However, it is, especially in early plays, always connected to the idea of the renewal of the nation after it has repulsed the enemies’ attacks. This normally represents the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by claiming that the referred-to deity, be it the christian God or the Germanic Wotan, will side with Germany because it is fighting for a just cause.

This nationalistic tenor is missing throughout the majority of Doerk’s work. Even when it is represented by a letter one of the nurses finds in the belongings of a deceased soldier at the end of the play, it appears rather superficial: “Aber wir wollen nicht fragen: Mußte es sein?”, he writes, “[w]enn ich das höre [...] dann lodert in mir von neuem das heilige, gesegnete Feuer der ersten Kriegstage empor. Höre: Behielte ich Leben und Kraft [...] zöge ich wieder mit hinaus, als einer der ersten” (68). What at first sounds like the usual representation of a soldier’s determination to give his life for the fatherland, falls apart after a closer look and especially when compared to other plays.

The letter does not refer to the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative in order to create a context of meaning for the sacrifices, because the expected connection between the religious ideals represented by the nurses and the nationalistic ideals of the soldier is missing. This makes the two concepts appear detached and leads to the aforementioned assumption that the soldier’s nationalism might only have been added in order to bypass censorship or to include, but not justify, the motivation of many young men, especially in the beginning of the war. The previously mentioned scenario of soldiers facing their deaths while singing *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* supports this thesis. Because the usual aspects represented in other plays to legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative remain superficial, but must

first be exposed as such, the play provides an opportunity to sharpen the understanding of the discourse's mechanisms.

These mechanisms are more complex than they were in the early plays which largely just processed the propaganda narratives into a literary form and represented them as fact, unopposed and unchallenged. Later works still contain representations like these, especially when it comes to the portrayal of what the authors understand as the duties that are necessary to win the war. But with regards to the demand for a unity of all German people, the plays increasingly use resistances to this demand in order to ultimately legitimise it. They do so by either stigmatising negative behaviour as unpatriotic or by exposing the consequences a lack of solidarity can have for the individual as well as for the fatherland. This development results in the introduction of negative German characters into wartime plays, which were entirely absent in earlier plays.

## 4.2 Arguing with the inner enemy – the use of German antagonists

While in early war plays all German characters were represented as patriotic and determined, later plays contained German antagonists. The failure to fulfil their obligation to the fatherland is these characters' predominant offence. The homogeneity with which early plays accept and reinstate the unity narrative does not allow for negative German characters, who would have contradicted the rhetorical strategy of the plays, which were instead based on the oppositional representation of German and foreign characters, in order to externalise negative affects from the German nation. In later plays, however, the danger is internalised and represented as the failure to meet the obligations that the war requires of the German people. These obligations and the failure to meet them appear in a variety of different ways and are interwoven in many different topics.

Hulda and Albin Schmidt's aforementioned play *Des Vaterlandes Dank* addresses a misbehaviour that frequently appears in plays of the second phase of the discourse of legitimisation. "Ehrlose Mädchen" (Schmidt/Schmidt, 50) are said to have been spotted, "wie se [sic] mit den gefangenen Russen und Franzosen schön getan haben" (49). The play presents this behaviour as a form of adultery and betrayal, which is elevated from an individual to a national level. This is emphasised by the nature of FRIEDRICH, the character used to report the offence, who represents the simple but hard working and loyal ideal German. He is tied to the land he was born in and is happy with his modest way of life, personifying the peaceful, diligent German that the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative propagates. The inappropriateness of the sexually connoted contact with the enemy is

in this context increased by the chosen representatives of the enemy. The cultural inferiority and dehumanised representation that constitutes the stereotype of the Russians allows the authors to increase the stigma connected to this type of misbehaviour. However, other forms of moral failure play a more significant role in the plays.

The propaganda narratives needed to reach the masses, and, as a consequence, they created the image of hard working, diligent and modest German people as the ideal. This guaranteed that as many people as possible, especially amongst the classes that most crucially needed to be reached, could identify with this image. At the same time, this image distinguishes the German people from the allegedly arrogant and greedy French and English. The plays of the second phase of the discourse reflect this aspect of the narratives by frequently using characters representing wealthy upper classes to demonstrate stigmatised behaviour. The plays' accusation is resultingly that such people are living a lifestyle that is not appropriate for the hard times the fatherland is encountering.<sup>116</sup> They are often accused of shirking and thereby breaching the solidarity that is demanded from all German people. The play *Die Patrioten* by Rudolf Hawel (1860–1923), a teacher by trade, was published in 1917 and premiered in the Deutsches Volkstheater in Vienna on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December the same year. It demonstrates in detail how German characters are used in this phase of the discourse, in order to emphasise the importance of maintaining a unity amongst all German people and to reinstate it as the requirement for and guarantee of a German victory, as established in the unity narrative.<sup>117</sup>

Hawel uses a rather satirical tone to represent the upper classes' misbehaviour in the second and third acts of the play. The first and the final act, however, in which the honest patriotism of a middle class family is portrayed to set a contrast with the misbehaviour of the upper class characters, is missing this ironic undertone. The tenor of the two individual 'parts' is so significantly different, that a critic described the play as "eine Verschmelzung zweier nicht ganz rein zur Entwicklung gekommener Dramen: ein zweiaktiges gemütvolltes Volksstück umarmt eine zweiaktige satirische

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<sup>116</sup> In fact, this describes the background of many of the authors, who seem to predominantly belong to the middle class. Especially teachers and clerics are frequently identifiable as authors. This might, however, not be fully representative since many authors are unknown and the chances for teachers and clerics to be published and recognised are possibly higher than those for authors belonging to other parts of society. They might therefore be overrepresented amongst those authors that can be identified.

<sup>117</sup> The fact that it has evidently been performed and was reviewed in a newspaper indicates that the play was known to a wider audience than many others.

Komödie” (Michael, 158). While this adjacency certainly appears rather rocky on a stylistic level, the structure serves to emphasise the intended effect by contrasting the positive and negative characters who are brought together in the last act, not only in their representation but also via the stylistic mode of the play.

Using ministers and industrialists who abuse their positions to pretend that their business “Kriegszwecken dient” (Hawel, *Die Patrioten*, 34) in order to be excused from serving in the army, Hawel criticises their individualism. Remaining at home, they occupy themselves with banquets and patriotic evenings, in order to glorify themselves for what they see as their contribution. HOHENSTAMM, a poet who proudly claims that he has already written 200 war poems, serves as a representative of this type of misbehaviour. His report about the newest “Heldengedicht” (41) he wrote is used to expose the pretentiousness of their self-proclaimed contribution:

Ich bin eigens auf den Semmering gefahren, um in die richtige Stimmung zu kommen. Vier Gläser Punsch habe ich getrunken – dann aber erfaßte mich glühende Begeisterung. Vom Fenster des Hotelzimmers aus hatte ich den wunderbarsten Überblick über das Gebirge (42).

The topic of his poem is the battle of the Isonzo, which was fought along a river that flows behind the mountain chain which HOHENSTAMM was looking at when composing his *Heldengedicht*. The cosiness of the punch and the hotel together with the double safety of spatial distance from the actual front lines and the protection of the mountain chain that separates him from the battles on the other side characterises the cowardice Hawel aims to expose with these representations.

Furthermore, HOHENSTAMM’s type of contribution is entirely useless and only serves the group he associates himself with. Hawel uses the privileged daughter of one of the guests at a banquet to expose this further by having her admit to never having been “so gut unterhalten, als in dieser großen, herrlichen Zeit” (40), and then emphasises his accusation by showing the guests at the dinner party as they amuse themselves by watching two women fight over coals on the street. Their elevated position, sheltered behind windows, separates them physically from the sphere of regular people and the derogatory comments about the behaviour of the “Pöbel” (43) and “Gesindel” (45) display their inner distinction from the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The last scene of act two amplifies this impression. The dinner party is interrupted by a policeman who makes sure everybody follows the order to have a day without meat in order to ration the decreasing supply. This appears to the company as “unverantwortlich von den Behörden” (60), be-

cause “[s]olche Häuser – wie dieses hier – sollten überhaupt von solchen Amtshandlungen verschont sein” (60). Their attitude goes against the unity of the German people and Hawel characterises it as a betrayal of those who put the fatherland’s needs over their own. The representation of the characters in the middle two acts is reminiscent of the strategies Karl Kraus uses to de-legitimise the unity narrative. But while Kraus contradicts the unity narrative by portraying the war’s victims to expose the complicity of those who demand of others to continue the fight, Hawel contrasts these self-indulgent Germans with the representation of an ideal German family. This structure propagates the patriotism and solidarity that is attributed to and simultaneously demanded in the propaganda narratives.

Another level of treason frequently portrayed in plays of this phase concerns financial profit. Hawel portrays it as underlying the pretentious façade analysed above, exposing it as the real offence against the fatherland and using it to postulate the subordination of the individual to the fatherland and the national community. A newspaper article is used as the medium through which the misbehaviour represented in the play is exposed as such, as well as to expose the power of the state as initiator of the punishments meted out. In the article, Hawel calls the industrialists “Aasgeier” and accuses them of making profit “auf Kosten des allgemeinen Wohles und des ohnehin überbelasteten Einzelnen” (70). Their imprisonment following the newspaper revelations displays the power the state has over individuals who betray the fatherland. Hawel thereby establishes a different connection between state and people than is established in most other plays, as here the state does not only represent an embodiment of the religiously inflated fatherland, but also a superior and powerful institution that, if necessary, is able to enforce its rules on its subjects.

However, the moral implications of breaching German unity are more significant. These actions are represented as moral failures and sanctioned by revoking the perpetrator’s right to be part of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The appearance of ROLLER, one of the guilty industrialists, in the last act is Hawel’s poorly executed portrayal of the consequences for these crimes. He lets ROLLER accept that he has

[s]ich am Vaterland versündigt in seiner schwersten, herbsten Zeit. Und nun hat sich das Vaterland an mir gerächt. Weib und Kind hab’ ich verloren. Glück und Ehre hab’ ich verloren. Und so einer verdient es nicht, daß er eine Heimat hat. Und darum geh’ ich in die Fremde (105–106).

Although the loss of wife and child are not directly linked to his crime, Hawel uses ROLLER to inscribe a notion of faith into the play that allegedly punishes those who commit a crime against the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

In Hawel's representation, this crime is twofold. It is of a legal nature, as ROLLER helped supply black market goods, and was punished by the "vorübergehenden Verluste der Freiheit" (71). The other aspect is a moral one, given that ROLLER gained personal profit from the hardship of the German people and is punished by "dem dauernden [Verlust] der bürgerlichen Ehre" (71), ultimately resulting in his exile. The fatherland appears as a privilege that the individual can lose if they violate the moral codes of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in which the fatherland is manifested. Hawel emphasises the play's warning even more by characterising ROLLER as "ein durchaus rechtlicher Mensch", who has been "mitgerissen" and "betört" (93) by the promise of big profits, but who should have actually known "daß er Unrecht tut" (93). The moral of this representation is that the sacrifices caused by wartime shortages can tempt even otherwise honest people to commit crimes and conduct business on the black market. However, the message of the play is clear. In times of war, solidarity amongst the people is, so Hawel, more important than individual needs and profits.

While *Die Patrioten* shows the methods of the so-called *Kriegslieferanten* on a large scale, many plays portray it instead on an individual level. The *Hamsterstücke*, as Margarete Reichert subtitled her 1920 play *Laß dich nicht erwischen*, represent the mainly humorous attempt to discredit a phenomenon that was very common in Germany during the shortages of WWI and even the Weimar Republic. *Hamstern* was an expression used to describe those who bought and hid provisions from farms or through other connections, in order to bypass the rationing implemented by the government. Plays like Eva von Rappard's *Der Hamster* (1916), Peter Michels' play of the same name (1917), Werner Henschel's *Die Hamsterfahrt* (1918) or Richard Weber's *Hamster Nimmersatt* (1918) all approach the topic in a humorous way and stand alongside a great number of children's plays on the same topic.

Typical for publications of this phase, the formal structure of Hawel's play supports its cathartic message. The unpatriotic and criminal characters of the play appear almost exclusively in the central two acts of the four-act play. They are framed by the portrayal of the working-class family of ROLLER's brother in law, SCHNELLER, whom Hawel uses to contrast the selfishness of the high society and the greed that led ROLLER into his personal catastrophe. SCHNELLER's portrayal is the manifestation of the unity narrative. He accepts that they must "mitkämpfen in der Art, wie sie uns gegeben ist" (12). The social class to which SCHNELLER's family belongs represents the majority of the German people, who play their part in the total war by making ends meet while relinquishing everything the fatherland needs to continue the fight for its existence until it has won. SCHNELLER's oldest son MAX is set to go to war and patriotically states he

“möcht’ [s]ich schämen, wenn ich daheim bleiben müßt” (31). In the last act, he returns injured, promoted to Lieutenant and decorated with the “großen silbernen Tapferkeitsmedaille” (97). His return serves as a representation of the fulfilment of his duty for the fatherland and the play provides a context of meaning for his sacrifice by portraying peace to be imminent and the war to be as good as won.

The obvious dichotomy between the families ROLLER and SCHNELLER, their values and, most importantly, their contribution to the national cause is concluded after ROLLER’s downfall. Hawel uses ROLLER’s farewell bid to the family of SCHNELLER to demonstrate that he has lost the right to be treated as an equal. ROLLER declines to shake hands with the patriotic SCHNELLERS and even says to the war hero MAX, who has “in treuer Selbstverleugnung für das Vaterland [s]eine Pflicht erfüllt” (103), that it would be “eine Schande für dich, neben so einem wie ich bin, zu sitzen” (102). Using an already familiar strategy, Hawel contrasts the model behaviour of the SCHNELLERS with the pretentious and self-absorbed members of the upper class and the greedy industrialists throughout the play in order to amplify the affects linked to both attitudes. The fact that a lack of solidarity is so heavily sanctioned demonstrates the significance the play places on the unity of the German people. Considering that the propaganda narratives defined solidarity as the requirement and the guarantee for Germany’s victory, it is not surprising that patriotic plays increasingly turn their focus to it the longer the war lasts. Hawel’s particular focus on the immorality of individualism represents an important aspect that is portrayed in one form or another in many plays of the discourse of legitimisation.

Helmut Bunzel’s play *Deutsche Volksoffer im dritten Kriegsjahre* provides a good example of another aspect frequently represented in plays after 1916. It is another patriotic play that evidently did make it onto the stage. Typical for these plays, it premiered in a small-town Stadttheater in Lauban, Niederschlesien, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1917, the same year it was published. It emphasises the utilitarian aspect of financial donations and attempts to motivate people to contribute:

Wenn jemand kommt – in Kriegsanleihesachen:  
Er soll nur, was er hat, zu Gelde machen –  
Das Vaterland gebraucht’s – und weiterhin  
Liegt auch für ihn der größte Vorteil drin! (Bunzel, 7).

The benefit for the individual is represented as being twofold. Firstly, based on the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, every contribution is seen as a contribution to the war effort which will ultimately secure the fatherland’s sur-



vival and, secondly, every financial contribution is an investment that will pay off after the war is won.

Die Leute haben Geld und wissen's jetzt  
Allmählich immer besser, wie sie's nirgend  
So gut und sicher unterbringen könnten,  
Als wenn sie's willig ihrem Staate leih'n. –  
Die Geiz'gen bringen's wie die Patrioten (15).

The play focusses for the majority of its three acts on the financial contribution that the people at home can make in the form of war bonds. The date of its premiere is therefore hardly a coincidence as it falls into the closing days of the issuing of the sixth war bond in March 1917.

The revenue of the war bonds of 1917 exceeded those of the previous years. In total, the nine war bonds issued in Germany during WWI raised the enormous sum of 97 billion marks. This was in part due to the great effort that was put into advertising, which from November 1916 onwards was organised by a special department, whose sole responsibility was the promotion of war bonds (Zilch, 627–628). This does suggest a correlation between the increase in promotion of war bonds and the increase of explicit *Kriegsanleihestücken* published in the last two years of the war. Richard Wilde's (1872–1938) *Zum Kampfe entschlossen zum Frieden bereit* (1917) and Bunzel's play, which has a strong emphasis on war bonds as a great way to contribute to the war effort, were published in 1917 and, with the publication of Wilhelm Hausmann's *Die Kriegsanleihe* (1918), Fritz Kalesky's *Die Russen kommen*, Paul Matzdorf's *Kriegsanleihe*, Hellmuth Neumann's (1884–1835) *Wir zeichnen Kriegsanleihe* (1918) und Max Ressel's *Bärmchen zeichnet Kriegsanleihe* (1918), the year 1918 saw another increase in dramatic promotion of war bonds.

Besides representing the benefits of contributing, and this is the more interesting aspect in the context of propaganda narratives, Bunzel also represents the negative consequences of failing to do so. By stigmatising such failure as a moral offence that corrodes the unity of the German people, Bunzel represents the propagandistic claim that the unity of all German people is an essential requirement to ensure victory. He uses the character of KUNO SCHOLZ, whose failure ultimately ends with his death by divine punishment, to expose this alleged moral misdemeanour. It begins when SCHOLZ cunningly convinces the “Veteran von 66 und 70”<sup>118</sup> and “würdi-

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<sup>118</sup> The dates refer to the Austro-Prussian War in 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War in 1870/71. The result of Prussia's victory in both wars was ultimately the foundation of the German Empire in 1871.

ge[n] Greis” (2), FRANZ HILGER, to sell him his house in order to rent it out for profit. HILGER only agrees to the deal because it will enable him to buy more war bonds, which, as he himself said earlier in the play, “[d]as Vaterland gebrauch[t]” (7). His selflessness and devotion to the fatherland serves as representation of a true patriotic spirit and of the claim to totality regarding the people’s commitment which defines the plays of this phase of the discourse. SCHOLZ’ motives on the contrary are portrayed negatively, as he only wants to buy the house as an investment and is only motivated by personal profit. The way in which HILGER and SCHOLZ, who speaks with “*verstellter Freundlichkeit*” (21), are used to personify right and wrong, good and evil is once more very obvious. While this might also be a consequence of diminished dramaturgical talent, it shows the purpose of the play, whose moral message is quite clear from the very introduction of the characters and does not have to be deciphered by the audience.

Also typical of plays like this, the end provides justice for the wrongdoings and creates affects of satisfaction in the recipient in a very simple and foreseeable way. Shortly after FRANZ HILGER sells and moves out of his house, an enemy plane drops a bomb on it and SCHOLZ dies in the fire. HILGER’s relatives see it as a “Wunder” (30) that the bomb hit the house just hours after the former owner moved out and claim that God must have deliberately “nicht verwehrt” (30) the bombing, after it had come into SCHOLZ’ possession, thus confirming the moral nature of this misbehaviour by defining the event as divine punishment.

Bunzel labels SCHOLZ’ death as God’s way of preventing further damage to the German unity, thereby legitimising the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by having God side with the just German cause, evidenced through the divine intervention necessitated by SCHOLZ’ dangerous lack of solidarity. While SCHOLZ’ death is portrayed as divine “Gericht” for his “Arglist” (30), the play uses HILGER’s devotion to the fatherland one last time to represent it as a path towards eternal peace of the soul. The death of the patriotic protagonist in the line of duty opens the part of the play in which the focus shifts away from the issue of financial contributions to the concept of physical sacrifice for the fatherland. While on sentry post HILGER sees the approach of an enemy aircraft and, while fulfilling his duty to alarm the town, is shot by the plane. He is therefore “als Held gefallen” (31) and dies in his granddaughter’s arms who later reports that “[n]icht Schmerz, nur Stolz und Freude” were seen in his “Heldenaugen” (31) in the moment of his death. Besides the personal salvation gained by dying a *Heldentod*, HILGER’s example also motivates his grandson ALFRED “[s]ein Alles, Seele, Leib und Leben / Dem Vaterlande hinzugeben” (32) and is used to establish a link between past and future sacrifices that is, as I will discuss below, crucial for the second phase of the discourse of legitimisation.

While Hawel's and Bunzel's plays portray the negative consequences of failing one's patriotic duties and the resultant punishment as a lesson to be learned, most plays' cathartic messages are created by the return of initially negative characters to the right path of patriotic duty and solidarity. As a consequence, the failure to fulfil the obligation to put the collective above their own individual needs in the first place is represented as the result of the character's temporary moral confusion.

Instead of being severely sanctioned, antagonistic characters in such plays are either tricked into making their contribution or are eventually convinced that this is the right thing to do, allowing the plays to construct a more direct and explicit representation of the propaganda narratives. DREES MÜLLER, the richest farmer and biggest landowner of the rural community in which *Des Vaterlandes Dank* is set, is a typical representative of that type of character. The authors have ROSINE, whom he has just evicted from the house in which she was living, introduce MÜLLER and use her report to characterise him as a man who has "an Stee in der Brust [...] un kee Herz!" (Schmidt/Schmidt, 32). Similar to the high society in Hawel's play, his contribution to the war and to the community in which he lives are insincere and his only goal is personal profit. While he evicts a war widow and her children, he donates money to the church's war aid foundation for widows and orphans, in order to appear a generous patriot. Even the sum of 100 marks which the authors have him donate is used to expose him as "außen a Wohltäter un inwendig a Lump!" (32). Although it might seem generous at first because it is more than most people can spare, it is a rather small amount proportionate to what he actually could give.

This last aspect shows again the totality these plays demand with regards to the people's commitment to the war effort and the importance of the unity narrative for the propaganda of the total war. Characters like MÜLLER are not criticised for not contributing, rather for making profit while others are in need of help and so, essentially, for contributing less than they possibly could. This claim to totality is increasingly demanded by the plays with regards to personal sacrifices, which contrast negative characters with patriotic characters like FRANZ HILGER and create the previously mentioned antithetical constellation, through which the cathartic message of the plays is revealed.

True patriotic characters show their devotion in many ways. However, the conclusion reached through the representation of their sacrifices is that it is not enough to simply invest that which one can spare, but that instead everybody must invest everything they have.

Beim Opfer ist und bleibt das Blut entscheidend. –  
Ein Tropfen Herzblut muss mit drinnen sein. – –

Nicht geben, was man hat, ist Opfer schon,  
Nur geben, was man ist, hat höchsten Lohn – (Bunzel, 25)

is the message that the plays' patriotic characters serve to transmit. Even FRANZ HILGER's 13-year-old grandson WALTER seems to have understood what the fatherland demands of its people. He manages to save up a small sum that he donates to the Red Cross to make at least one wounded soldier happy. Besides the determination that this child shows for the cause, his gesture serves to demonstrate the solidarity between civilians and soldiers. WALTER knows that his contribution is not big, but it is all that he has. The good deed that this child represents is not dependent on the size of the donation, rather on the fact that he gives everything he possibly can.

WALTER's determination is contrasted with the egoistic intention of KUNO SCHOLZ' 100 marks contribution, which Bunzel situates directly after the little boy's donation. Furthermore, he links the two actions directly through a comment of the public servant who receives the donation, whom Bunzel uses to lament that WALTER's devotion to the fatherland "könnte wahrlich manchen heut beschämen" (16). This is the crux of the few lines between WALTER's disappearance and KUNO SCHOLZ' appearance. SCHOLZ feels like he has to give, "sonst gilt man als wer weiß was" (16), and makes sure that his contribution will not be forgotten when he needs a favour.

Bunzel devises this contrast to intensify the positive affects WALTER's action is supposed to create and emphasises the totality of the demanded determination. The intended motivational effect is strategically increased by identifying it not with the large donation of a rich person but with the small donation of a pure hearted child, which could be much more easily copied. But the biggest role model in the play remains the veteran FRANZ HILGER, who knows from his experience in the previous war against France what it will take to be victorious. Bunzel even has him sell his home and give the proceeds to the fatherland, which demonstrates the degree of determination he demands from the people. He expresses this in the very title of his play: *Deutsche Volksoffer im dritten Kriegsjahre*. The term *Volksoffer* implicates the unity and solidarity as well as the absolute devotion of the entire *Volk*.

"Wie die an der Front, so müssen wir daheim einander die Hände reichen" (Schmidt/Schmidt, 62) is another representation of this demand, made by the patriotic protagonist FRANZ who is used to convince the egoistic MÜLLER to contribute to the war effort in *Des Vaterlandes Dank*. It is again used as an ideological link between the individual and the community. With the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative being inscribed into the discourse, the fight for the fatherland and the fight for oneself is represented as identical. The plays emphasise this conviction by portraying not only the nega-

tive effects of a lack of solidarity for the collective but also for the individual.

In ROLLER's case, he is exiled from society for his betrayal while MÜLLER is humiliated and exposed as unpatriotic before he has a change of heart and accepts his personal responsibility. Within the structure of the play, these characters serve a double purpose. Firstly, their 'unpatriotic' behaviour is used to create negative affects. These affects predominantly belong to the emotional family of disgust, often evoked by shame. The girls who sympathise and with prisoners of war, for example, are a "Schandfleck" (Schmidt/Schmidt, 50), KUNO SCHOLZ is a "Halsabschneider" (Bunzel, 10) and his selfish greed, like that of other opportunists, is a "Schmach" (10). Besides the creation of negative affects, the characters secondly serve the purpose of enhancing the positive affects of the plays' protagonists, as they expose or punish unpatriotic deeds. This can mean that they bring the offenders to justice, like in ROLLER's case, or that they bring them back to the right path of patriotism, determination and solidarity. *Des Vaterlandes Dank* exemplifies this strategy in MÜLLER, who eventually commits to contribute financially to FRANZ's plans of building orphanages and veteran homes, fulfilling the purpose of his character's role as the converted sinner. This converted sinner appears more frequently than characters like ROLLER or SCHOLZ, who eventually suffer the severe consequences for their misbehaviour, despite both types of characters ultimately serving the same purpose.

The contributions of the people at home are portrayed as a matter of solidarity and ultimately represent the unity narrative in literary form. The solidarity amongst the people in the *Heimat*, on which the majority of the plays focus, manifests itself in the provision of aid for those who suffered from the war in any form, given by those who can spare it. But the plays also establish a solidarity between the spheres of *Heimat* and *Front*, where those at home support the soldiers, for example with *Liebesgaben*, war bonds or by caring for the bereaved of fallen, while the soldiers sacrifice their lives for the safety of the *Heimat*. This connection between *Heimat* and *Front* is vital because both spheres can only exist if they are supported and protected by the sacrifices of the respective other, which establishes an interdependence that connects inseparably the destiny of both spheres (and thereby the destiny of each individual member of them) to the survival of the fatherland, ultimately legitimising all demanded sacrifices. This explains the frequency with which material sacrifices appear in plays after 1916. Considered within the entire discourse, however, the sacrifice of one's life or that of a loved one and the pain and suffering that the war causes by denying so many young people the chance to return to their families remains the most important type of sacrifice and the most important manifestation of the concept of the *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*.

### 4.3 Reactivating the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative as a means of motivation

The biggest sacrifice that war demands is the sacrifice of one's own life. This type of sacrifice is in most cases reserved for the soldiers, who must "so übermenschlich viel ertragen und erdulden" (Schmidt/Schmidt, 48) that the sacrifices at home appear almost as a pure "Dankesschuld" (83) and rather small compare to the commitment of the soldiers' life.<sup>119</sup> The plays frequently use the death of a soldier to establish an inseparable connection between *Heimat* and *Front* by transcribing the sufferings from the battlefields to the home front, in order to ultimately legitimise them.

The death of a soldier means that he has "alles überstanden" (J. Mayer, 45) and his bereaved become those who suffer in grief. This connection does not yet exist in plays of the first phase, which only portray short, idealised and victorious battles, if any at all. The immanence of victory furthermore prevents the emergence of doubts that cannot easily be brushed away by a reference to the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. In the second phase of the discourse, these illusions are no longer sustainable and the plays are compelled to actually engage with the impact of the great number of casualties to both the soldiers and the civilian population. Although this suffering is represented in the plays, it is portrayed as a necessary sacrifice, which must not lead to surrender or to doubt amongst the people at home, because it ultimately ensures the safety of the fatherland, which in turn, provides it with a context of meaning. The battles of WWI required this sacrifice to be made by millions and in order to maintain the fight each nation had to mobilise soldiers in numbers that had never been seen before. The propaganda of all nations had to maintain the basic motivation of new recruits and their belief in the legitimacy of their sacrifices. In order to achieve that goal, its foundation had to be laid in the minds of the people at home. Only then would they maintain their willingness to sacrifice themselves.

This important aspect of the discourse of legitimisation is one of the key topics in its literary representation at this stage of the war. "Von erster heil'ger Glut – ist manches hin" (Bunzel, 2), as many plays admit in one way or another, but the fight is not over and in order to win the war, more sacrifices will be inevitable. This quote is the opening line of the introductory poem to Bunzel's play.<sup>120</sup> It shows that the representation of the war in

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<sup>119</sup> This interpretation is never used to decrease the importance of the sacrifices of the people at home but to counter any justification of reluctance to give everything they have.

<sup>120</sup> As discussed earlier, it was very common for theatre performances to be preceded by patriotic poems or songs. Especially performances of *va-*

dramatic literature had changed. It no longer appeared as an adventure and the enthusiasm that characterised the departure of the soldiers in the plays set in August 1914 had disappeared. The plays of the second stage frequently portray war as “furchtbare Geißel der Menschheit” (Schare, *Siegesjubiläum und Todesqual*, 58). In order to promote the maintenance of the people’s willingness to make sacrifices, the plays still refer to the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. But unlike in the first phase, it is no longer the main focus of the plays. Instead, they use it as a foundation to propagate the unity narrative’s conviction that Germany will not be “überwunden” if it remains “einig” (Wilhelm II, *An das deutsche Volk*).

In this context, the antithetical structure that dominates the plays of the second phase of the discourse becomes most evident. They establish a dramatic conflict between two possible reactions to the death of a relative: either devastation resulting in the loss of faith in the cause of the war, or the acceptance of this personal sacrifice as necessary for the greater good, resulting in an attitude of determination. The plays use this conflict to create a context of meaning for the sacrifice they represent. Each of them is represented by one or a group of characters, creating a character constellation in which the two opposing sides confront each other about the sovereignty of interpretation of the experienced loss. Usually, the dominance of this structure within the play is as significant as the dominance of this conflict within the plot.<sup>121</sup> This fight essentially represents the defence of the propaganda narratives against a constructed critique personified by characters who fall into despair over the loss the plays have them experience.

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*terländischen Stücken* used this method to emphasise the contemporary context of their patriotic representations, even if they had a setting that was not directly related to WWI (see Baumeister, 61). Like Bunzel’s play or Wilhelm Westerhold’s *Der Heilige Ruf* from 1914, whose poem is, according to the author’s directions “[v]on einem Feldsoldaten zu sprechen” (Westerhold, 3), later works adapt to this fashion and often provide their own poems or songs in the form of a prologue.

<sup>121</sup> The dramatic conflict within bi-national families, analysed earlier in Hans von Reinfels’ *Die Rose von Gravelotte* and Ilse Nebinger’s *Pflicht* and also the topic of plays like Helena Tullius’ *Die Brüder* from 1914, serves as an example for the existence of this structure in the first phase of the discourse and further ties the two phases together, as the topic of bi-nationalism continues into the second phase. But while early plays were set in Belgium or France, later plays like Max Simon’s play *Mutter und Vaterland* situate the conflict in a German context. This change is typical for the general shift from the first to the second phase as it focusses on the inner struggle of the German people that needs to be won for the war to end victoriously.

The creation of negative affects has to be adjusted to the fact that they cannot be evoked by mourning German characters without invalidating their grief. The plays therefore reactivate the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative in order to link the portrayed grief more strongly to the enemies' attack. Although enemy characters are hardly ever represented in the dramatis personae during the second phase of the discourse, they are represented in the dialogues between German characters which provide the negative affects from which the cast can derive their own determination. These affects also form the basis for the legitimisation of the sacrifices and the re-inspiration of those characters who initially lost their faith in the sacrifices' meaning. Furthermore, it enables the plays to define this loss of faith as an understandable and temporary weakness caused by a tragic loss, rather than a character flaw, which further distinguishes these representations from negative characters like ROLLER or even MÜLLER.

This strategy makes these plays and their characters relatable to an audience whose members have presumably often experienced the same loss, and is designed to prompt the audience to undergo the same development as the mourners in the plays. This demonstrates the cathartic intentions of the plays and their aim to promote the maintenance of unity within the people that the propaganda narrative defines as the requirement for victory. Hence, the inclusion of characters who lose or never had faith in the meaning of the war with its many victims, and who are subsequently brought back onto the path of belief and patriotism over the course of the play, can be seen as an attempt to create role models that represent determination despite suffering.

In order to establish the connection between the enemy and the sacrifices of the German characters, the plays reactivate the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative in the same way it is processed in the texts of the first phase. Because the stereotypes of Germany's enemies have already been inscribed into the discourse by the plays of the first phase, later works are able to evoke these by simply mentioning them in their dialogues. In most of the plays discussed so far, for example in Helmut Bunzel's play *Deutsche Volksoffer im dritten Kriegsjahre*, it is a widely accepted fact amongst the characters that the soldiers are defending Germany. If they did not, "[w]är heut' der Russe, der Franzose hier" (Bunzel, 8). In Franz Lüttke's *Grenzwacht*, JOHANN's battalion is located just outside the village he grew up in and his fight is figuratively and literally depicted as him protecting his father's farm.

Kellert's play *Heimkehr* is another play full of remarks about the defensive character of the German campaign. He has HEINRICH claim that the soldiers would essentially "sterben gehn [...]. Um deinen Frieden, Heimat, deinen Frieden!" (Kellert, *Heimkehr*, 26). HEINRICH's return home from the



front in the peaceful sphere of the *Heimat* is thereby used to set the tone for the rest of the play. By letting him express thoughts like the ones quoted above upon returning into the setting of his hometown, Kellert emphasises this opposition between the peaceful *Heimat* and the violent *Front*. It no longer appears as just a geographical distinction but is transferred onto the people occupying each sphere. The German characters represent the peace their soldiers are upholding against the “grauenvolle Wut” (34) represented by the enemy, who would “in Trümmern reißen unsrer Eltern Heim” (34) if they could bring the front to German soil. These statements are not new, but they are no longer accompanied by elaborate representations of the enemies’ motives, as it appears that the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative is by this stage sufficiently established in the public as well as in the dramatic discourse and no longer needs to be explained. This allows the authors of later works to make use of the affects that had already been inscribed into the discourse with regards to the narrative and activate them by simply referring to the enemies’ aggression.

Other plays reactivate the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative in more detail. However, the purpose of this strategy is not primarily to establish the defensive character of Germany’s warfare again, but to prepare the legitimisation of sacrifices by propagating the necessity to maintain unity despite the sufferings of the war. Published in 1917 and premiered on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1917 in Straußberg, the first act of Paul Seiffert’s *Dennoch durch*, set in September 1914, functions to provide the ideological background on which the following conflict is based.<sup>122</sup> In a very soberly but determined way that tries to avoid the enthusiasm of early war plays, it portrays how the German youth was forced to take arms to defend the *Heimat*. Like in early plays, the war is characterised as a defensive battle for Germany’s existence and the reasons Seiffert represents for its outbreak are no different to those portrayed in the first phase of the discourse:

VATER: So wuchs das deutsche Reich an innren Werten,  
und suchte Arbeitsstätten in der ganzen sonngen Welt,  
das gönnen uns die Briten nicht.

GEORG: Dies freche Volk der Lüge und der Mammonsgier  
lebt nur von Raub

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<sup>122</sup> Paul Seiffert’s *Dennoch durch!* (1917) is arguably the most representative play of this phase of the discourse. It not only represents the decisive arguments of the second phase but also creates conflicts between antithetically constructed characters on multiple levels and in almost all scenes of the play and demonstrates better than any other individual play the typical strategy used to create the conflict between determination and doubt in the plays after 1916.

*Phase two – legitimising sacrifices and victims*

und fesselt der Franzosen letzten Rest,  
die unentwirrte Kraft der Russenhorden  
als seine Knechte an sich! – (Seiffert, 18).

In this dialogue sequence between father and son, who personify patriotism and determination throughout the play, Seiffert summarises the representation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* of early war plays. It refers to the superiority of German culture and the prosperity its imperialism provides for the colonies, as well as all the negative stereotypes of the nations of the Triple Entente.

The subsequently established dramatic conflict, however, significantly distinguishes plays written during the second phase from those written during the first phase of the discourse. While in earlier plays the characters predominantly agreed on the defensive character of Germany's warfare and therefore on the necessity of standing together and defending the fatherland, this conviction is challenged in later texts like Seiffert's. But unlike negative characters such as ROLLER and SCHOLZ, the characters that challenge it are not motivated by greed but by fear for the safety of their loved ones. In the first act, Seiffert's play contains two of these characters. The play thereby inscribes the antithetical structure that forms the framework of the entire play into its individual acts and even into its individual scenes. Seiffert's strategy of repeating the conflict in multiple smaller sequences throughout the entire play on both act and scene level emphasises the message he is trying to communicate, especially since each of these small representations of the conflict itself ends with the victory of determination over doubt.

This starts in the first act with scene 5, in which Seiffert provides a dialogue between GEORG's friend FRITZ and his father, SCHULZE. The latter represents doubt and selfishness and thinks that the "janze Krieg is Unsinn" (12) but over the course of the dialogue, FRITZ convinces him that it is in fact necessary and inevitable and can allow no resistance. Seiffert has him claim:

Der Krieg ist not – die Spannung war zu groß –  
zehn Jahre traten ja die andern Völker  
auf uns und Oesterreich herum.  
Soll sich der deutsche Michel immer ducken? (12)

The following reference to the way the Russians have "Ostpreußen zugerichtet" (12) then brings the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative even further into the foreground. This is already enough to make his father recognise that it is "Verrat an alle Völkerbrüderschaft" that the "englischen Genossen

und de Welschen / die Russenpest uns auf den Hals gehetzt” and that “[...] det eigene Vaterland jetzt vor[jeht]” (13).<sup>123</sup> Despite the play’s first representation of an argumentative win for determination over doubt, the father is not quite convinced that this war cannot be fought without his son and Seiffert lets him maintain a kind of selfishness that might be understandable, but nevertheless needs to be overcome to guarantee Germany’s victory and thereby the survival of the German people. In accordance with the unity narrative, Seiffert has SCHULZE finally accept that all parents must make sacrifices and even give their sons so that they can in turn protect “ihre Eltern, ihren Herd” (13). This first of many conflicts of a similar kind is then finally concluded by SCHULZE’s comment: “Na – Junge – denn man feste druff!” (14).

The second and more significant representation of the battle between the two antithetical principles is Seiffert’s dispute between GEORG, the embodiment of German virtues, and his mother, who will later personify the fall from faith. Letting her not yet understand the “Zweck des ganzen Krieges” (16), the following dialogues are used to repeat the official propaganda narratives once more. The antithetical character constellation thereby allows Seiffert to represent more than just the accusations immanent in early war plays. He argumentatively deduces them and simultaneously invalidates possible counter arguments. That the war is fought for “Kaiser und für Reich! Für Ehr und Ruhm” (16) is a cliché that might have lost its conviction by 1917. By letting the mother immediately challenge it by claiming that in modern times “[...] es doch geistge Mittel geben [muß], / die Ehre auch der Völker hochzuhalten” (16), Seiffert sets up the opportunity to ultimately strengthen GEORG’s argument.

The mother’s insertion is therefore only the cue needed to let the father expose the deeper cause for the war that is, according to Seiffert, founded on the superiority of the German culture, which God put on earth as a driving force for the progress of mankind:

VATER: Wenn Gott die Menschen zahlreich wachsen läßt,  
schafft er durch die Natur und Menschenklugheit  
auch Brot genug.  
Viel Oedland liegt noch brach in aller Welt!  
Und deutsche Arbeit macht es fruchtbar.  
Das neiden uns die andern.  
[...]  
Von Gottes Schöpferkraft

<sup>123</sup> Once more, this statement implies the cultural inferiority of the Russian people by calling it a breach of the fraternity of nations to involve the Russian hordes in the war.

hat grad der deutsche Geist besondern Anteil:

Es muß der Deutsche schaffen! –

[...]

Und wo er wirkt, daheim, in fernen Zonen,

da ruht er nicht gefräßig aus und faul,

der unterjochten fremden Völker Mark verzehrend.

GEORG: Wie Britenhabgier Indiens Hungernöte mehrt (17).

This statement emphasises the importance of the survival of the German culture by basing it not only on the obvious wish of the German people for survival but also on its beneficial nature for all other people. Using the alleged superiority of German culture to further legitimise the nation's duty to defend it, Seiffert portrays Germany's fight for survival as a fight for "[d]ie offene Tür / in aller Welt / für deutsche Arbeit" (18) and prosperity for the entire world. Diligence is often used as a metaphor for the peacefulness of the German nation and represents the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative with the argument that Germany never wanted anything but "frei die Hände regen" and to enjoy "unsrer Arbeit Segen" (Kellert, *Heimkehr*, 35). Again, the representation of German diligence gains its full affective strength when contrasted with the negative affects created by references to the enemies' motives. GEORG represents an entire generation of Germans fighting for a victory that gives them the opportunity to teach "in Friedenskünsten [...] die deutsche Seele / mit hellen Liedern aufwärts fliegen" (Seiffert, 18). After this debate ended with the representation of another victory for the patriotic principles, GEORG's spirit is finally sparked and his "Seele innres Glück" convinces his mother to let him leave "mit Gott und [s]einer Mutter Liebe" (20).

The introduction of wavering characters to the cast who express opinions that oppose the representation of the propaganda narratives is a strategy to reinstate the necessity of the war and, as a consequence, legitimise the sacrifices it causes. Characters like the MUTTER in Seiffert's play are introduced for their opinion to be dismissed, their doubts to be destroyed and for them to find their way back onto the right path. They serve as a role model for all the kleine[n] Seelen" (Kellert, *Heimkehr*, 34), who doubt that Germany will be victorious if it stands united.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>124</sup> It is uncertain if the plays actually achieved this goal because studies looking at the reception of these plays have not yet been conducted. Another aspect of the plays, which is often suggested by the texts themselves, is that they might have been written to create a context of meaning for those who had lost a son, in order to provide them with a way to deal with an otherwise incomprehensible loss. The lack of distance of this particular play and the fact that the war was still not over might also explain why *Dennoch durch!* so di-

Seiffert already exposes this intention in the introduction to the play, which claims that it may

[...] in dieser langen Kriegszeit, da  
Flaumacher den deutschen Willen zum Sieg benagen,  
Dir und allen andern Eltern,  
Frauen, Bräuten und Geschwistern, die mit uns  
durch gleiches stolzes Leid verbunden sind, den Weg  
zu Trost und Lebenskraft zeigen (Seiffert, 3).

The *Dir* is in this case his “Freund” (3) to whom the play or at least the introduction is dedicated and who has, like the author himself, lost a son in the war.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, because of its consequent application of the antithetical structure that constitutes the disputes between patriotism and doubt in the overall character constellations as well as within individual acts and scenes, the play is representative of the mechanisms that dominate the plays of the second phase and contains the most important aspects appearing in the plays in order to legitimise the sacrifices of the people during the war.

After having used it in concluded individual scenes of the first act, Seiffert extends the antithetical structure over the entire second act, creating one dominating conflict within it. This second act is set in the shelters and trenches of the front lines and used to represent the demand for a continuation of sacrifices from soldiers in the combat zone. Furthermore, the events of the second act provide the basis for the play’s resolution of the conflict in the third act, where GEORG’s mother and father fight for the correct interpretation of his death. This structure emphasises the connection between *Heimat* and *Front*. Seiffert uses it to ultimately legitimise the sacrifice of both spheres by embedding them into a context of meaning that is based on the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.

The representation of the trench warfare and its ramifications for the psyche of the soldiers is very different from the way the war was represented in early plays. Making use of the knowledge and experiences acquired over the course of the war is a common practise of later plays. When set in

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rectly represents the usual propaganda, which was intended to provoke exactly the affects that appear in the play and the context of meaning it tries to establish.

<sup>125</sup> The continuation of the fight until Germany has finally won as well as the alleged superiority of the culture for which the soldiers fight are both essential if the sacrifices are to maintain their context of meaning. Considering Seiffert’s introduction, the play is not just directed at others but can also be understood as providing meaning for his own loss.

the beginning of the war, it is sometimes even used to create a fictional superiority of the German military by letting characters display knowledge that was very much ahead of the time the plays are set in. BADER from Josef Mayer's 1917 play *In Treue fest 1914* for example, states: "Mit dem Fortschritte der Technik hat auch die Vollendung der Verteidigungswaffe gleichen Schritt gehalten. Wir haben die besten Verteidigungswaffen der Welt" (J. Mayer, 13–14). The knowledge of the advantage of defence over attack on the battlefields of the western front, however, was gained as a result of many failed offensives during the first years of the war. But having BADER display this knowledge before the war had even started allows Mayer to emphasise the defensive character of Germany's campaign, and the unplanned stalemate into which the failure of the *Schlieffenplan* led the armies appears like a strategy to build a ring of defence around the German borders.

In the beginning of the second act of *Dennoch durch!*, GEORG and his comrades – FRITZ and RUDOLF, who had already been introduced in the first act as his friends, are amongst them – appear in the back lines but "das Gedröhne der Granaten, / das Tacktack der Maschinenbüchsen, / das Stöhnen der Verwundeten" (Seiffert, 24) are clearly audible. Through the distance created between the scene and the indicated battle, Seiffert evokes a dispute about the soldier's life in the trenches. Despite having experienced the horrors of the battles of an industrialised war, GEORG's determination to fight is expressed when he states that the "hocken wie ein Maulwurf" (25) is more difficult than the actual fighting. This topic constitutes an important aspect in the conflict represented in this second act. Despite the shelling, the countless casualties and the constant starvation, the main point of critique that Seiffert lets the soldier express is the passivity into which he is forced and which they perceive as unworthy for a German soldier. Representing passivity as the central cause of the soldiers' suffering and war-weariness allows Seiffert to thematise their discontent without depriving them of their bravery and determination and without destroying the myth of the heroic German army.

GEORG's preference for the way the war is fought in the East, where "Denker" come up with plans for "[t]itanenhafte Schlachten", as compared to the "Urwaldkrieg, / von Mann zu Mann, / mit Messern, Zähnen, Faust und Bajonett" (26), has to be seen in the same context.<sup>126</sup> However, what could be mistaken as a critical representation of the German conduct of war is in reality the representation of another ideological attack on the enemy.

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<sup>126</sup> The hand-to-hand combat mentioned here as a representation of the trench war is more likely a product of the imagination of people at home than an accurate portrayal of the reality at the western front.

Their plan, “wahnwitzig tief sich in die Erde einzugraben” (27), unnecessarily prolonged a war that is already lost for them because

[n]utzlos ist jeder weitre Krieg,  
bei Tannenberg  
hat sich das Weltenschicksal schon gewendet.  
Wozu der Dauermord?  
Was nützt es den Franzosen?! (28).

Although the focus of most plays is still on England, France and Russia, works from the second phase frequently mention the role of nations which entered the war at a later stage. In this scene, the soldiers state that “[s]echs Völker [...] schon unsere Feinde [sind] – / Rumänien und Italien sinds schon halb” and also mention “das verheuchelte Amerika” (29).<sup>127</sup>

By representing the stagnation of the war on the western front as a result of the enemy’s intention to prolong the war, Seiffert places the responsibility for the victims of all future battles on the actions of the enemy, thereby opening the way for the legitimisation of the German soldiers’ sacrifices. At the same time, this allows the play to create negative affects with regards to the enemies and to allow the German characters to react with defiance and a consciousness for duty. The title already indicates the play’s demand for defiance and *Dennoch durch!* becomes the verbalisation of ‘endurance despite all hardship’ that represents the core motif for the play. The play uses GEORG once more to reactivate the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and thereby invalidate the previously mentioned doubts and complaints of the soldiers, after having him observe the comrades’ decreasing morale. Seiffert processes the propaganda narratives by transforming their critique into a series of rhetorical questions before letting GEORG destroy their doubts with the last line of his speech, which represents the principle of total unity based on the conviction of fighting a war for the survival of the fatherland.

Warum des Schützengrabens Maulwurfsöde?  
Warum – dort – lauern Kameraden  
in Mantel und in Zeltbahn eingehüllt  
die ganze nasse kalte Winternacht  
in Gruben, Mulden, hinter Busch und Stein?? –

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<sup>127</sup> Martin Gürtler’s 1917 play *Michal. Das Schauspiel des Weltkrieges* is another example of this aspect. It includes the character of SAM, described as a “Friedensrichter” (Gürtler, 3), who is used to allegorically represent the USA. His role as the alleged *Friedensrichter* is thereby ironic, as he is shown pulling the strings behind his “Vetter John” (81) Bull, whose war he finances.

Warum schleicht todeskalte Gänsehaut  
uns über Mark und Bein und Herz und Seele,  
wenn wir im Trommelfeuer ohnmachtsvoll  
die Faust geklammert um die Knarre lauern – ?? –  
Granate reißt den Freund in Fetzen –  
Granate schlägt den Unterstand in Trümmer –  
Erschauernd warten wir der eigenen letzten Stunde! –  
Warum nur können wir in soviel Dreck und Graus –  
warum nur wollen wir im Höllengraben  
ganz stille – feste – zähe – übermenschlich warten?!?  
Weils nötig ist fürs Vaterland! (30).

His comrades eventually realise that they cannot lose faith in the represented values and their response concludes the play's next victory for determination against doubt. Finishing each other's sentence, they reply

FRITZ (*ernst*):  
– fürs Vaterland!  
RUDOLF (*still*):  
– – – – ist jedes Opfer recht! (30).

This scene exemplifies the ideological links between the first and the second phase of the discourse. The *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative on which plays of the first phase focused allows later works to focus on the legitimisation of the victims and the processing of the unity narrative. The religious exaltation of the idealistic sphere of the fatherland is still present and provides the motivation for the plays' demand to maintain the willingness to sacrifice. For the soldiers this means that “für die liebe Heimat, / für unsre Väter, Mütter und Geschwister / [...] uns der Schützengraben not [...]” (31) and for the first time GEORG repeats the title of the play as a representation of the strength of will that is required from all Germans. “Ists schwer auch” he exclaims “dennoch durch!” (31). Although not from the view of a soldier, this motivation is also represented by the two characters enacting the same conflict in Lütke's play *Grenzwacht*. The KANTOR explains the motivation of the soldiers who do not think “an die Gefahr, an die Not, an sich [...]” but understand that it is “ums Große, ums Ganze” (Lütke, *Grenzwacht*, 28). He directs this to a farmer who wants to prevent his son from abandoning him and his farm duties for the army. The *Ganze* is of course the fatherland of which the individual farm is only a small part. And in order to defend the farm, so Lütke's message, the individual man must become part of the unity that defends it. According to the KANTOR, the soldiers have understood this demand and it is ultimately love for the father-



land and what it represents that lets them run “in das Feuer der Feinde, in den sicheren Tod” (28).

Just as Lüdtke uses the death-defying heroism of the soldiers to motivate the doubting farmer, Seiffert uses GEORG’s death to represent the soldiers’ sacrifice as motivation for the people at home. This means that his role is not yet depleted by motivating his comrades and that the link between *Heimat* and *Front* still has to be consolidated. Seiffert does this through the ultimate sacrifice of letting GEORG die for the fatherland.

He makes the spatially separated spheres appear ideologically close when GEORG recollects the “Opfer unsrer Eltern” (Seiffert, 34), even while making his own sacrifice in the trenches. Displaying modesty as a virtue of the true hero, Seiffert even has GEORG see the contribution of those at home as “größer” (34) than that of the soldiers because it is a “stilles, tapferes, / entsagungsvolles Heldentum” (34), which the front soldiers have to honour by enduring whatever they are faced with. This also implies that the soldier’s sacrifices are, unlike those at home, rewarded by the glory that comes with having served in the war. This notion subtly represents the ultimate honour that is connected to being wounded or dying for the fatherland. GEORG’s confidence that “ein neues Deutschland” will rise from the “Dreck und Nacht des Schützengrabenkriegs” (35) is therefore ultimately an assumption that processes the unity narrative and allows Seiffert to demand all necessary sacrifices of the people of both spheres.

Representative of the mutual motivation of *Heimat* and *Front*, GEORG’s dream of a bright future for his *Heimat* gives him and his comrades “neue Kraft zum Kampf!” (38). They follow GEORG’s example and they plead for perseverance:

GEORG: Gelobt es neu: wir halten zähe durch,  
bis wirs erreicht: den Sieg! – Auf vollen Sieg! (38).

The last scene of the act provides the closure of the motivational circle between the two spheres, again, ideologically overcoming their spatial separation. The play uses GEORG’s heroic death at the end of the second act to initiate the final battle between acceptance of and surrender to the challenge that the war victims embody for their relatives. The very short scene of GEORG’s death ends with the second repetition of the play’s title. Setting an example for all German soldiers by representing total dedication to the cause of the war, GEORG charges at the enemy, inspiring his comrades with the last words he speaks: “Nun drauf und dran! Dort steht der Feind! / Ob auch Granaten heulen: ‘Dennoch durch!’” (41).

#### 4.4 Endurance at home as an obligation to the fallen: the creation of a context of meaning for the victims

The final act of Seiffert's play is set in the living room of GEORG's parents, whom Seiffert uses, keeping them ignorant of GEORG's death, to represent the motivation that the soldiers' sacrifices prompt in those at home. His mother is full of sorrow while the father prides himself in his son's bravery. Through a letter from GEORG, the play introduces his example into the parental sphere. There is a section of the letter in which he advises his parents:

Verliert den Glauben nicht an unser Volk.  
Es zeigt so hohe Gaben grad im Kriegssturm! –  
Darum, geliebte Eltern,  
auch wenn ich falle,  
nur keine schwächliche und bittere Trauer  
ich falle für mein Volk und lebe mit ihm ewig (Seiffert, 44).

Through this letter, Seiffert provides a clear message, directed from the *Front* to the *Heimat*, about how a soldier's death for the fatherland has to be interpreted. Using GEORG's own perspective, Seiffert creates additional credibility that allows him to imbue the father with the ideology that will ultimately resolve the conflict between determination and loss of faith.<sup>128</sup>

However, when the parents learn that GEORG fell in battle, both of them struggle at first to cope with the news and even the father initially sees “[i]m Nebel schwinden Weg und Ziel” (49). The understanding that his son has died “fürs Vaterland – den Heldentod” (48) will ultimately define his position in the conflict, which Seiffert initiates with his wife's reply. She questions the idealistic concepts of “Vaterland” and “Heldentod” (48), the very core of the context of meaning that has been created around the victims and sacrifices of war, and calls them “nur Worte, tote Schemen” (48). Less elaborate, Kellert creates the role of CHRISTEL to do the same in his play *Heimkehr*. He has her question the sacredness of the fatherland by asking “was heißt Vaterland, für das sie starben” (Kellert, *Heimkehr*, 34). She even goes one step further by doubting that it would make a difference “wer mich regiert” because she longs for “Frieden. Weiter will ich nichts!” (34). In Kellert's play, however, a real conflict does not emerge as he immediately shuts CHRISTEL down by letting the war hero HEINRICH repeat the common propaganda narratives.

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<sup>128</sup> There is no indication whether this letter is based on an actual letter received by the author.

Und Christel, eins! Ihr sprecht vom Vaterland, als ob das Vaterland ein Plunder wäre. Nein, Christel, nein, fürwahr, das ist es nicht. (*Begeistert*): Ihr müßt die Augen draußen leuchten sehn, wenn's heißt, [...] zu kämpfen für das teure Land der Väter, zu kämpfen für der Kindheit heilig Land. [...] Und diese Heimat soll der Feind verwüsten, [...] dort soll der Feinde grauenvolle Wut in Trümmer reißen unsrer Eltern Heim, wo Vater, Mutter, Weib und Kinder wohnen und wo uns alles lieb ist, alles wert? (34).

Seiffert personifies the principles of determination and inner resolve through the mother and father of GEORG and displays them in a sequence of reactions to the death of their son.<sup>129</sup> While the MUTTER falls into despair and wants nothing but her son back, representing the selfishness of any form of individuality, her husband knows that solidarity remains crucial and that it is necessary “[d]en eignen Willen [...], / in Demut still zu beugen” (Seiffert, 49). The MUTTER even shows signs of active resistance against the war and says she “will nicht feige stille halten! – / [...] Der Mord ist Wahnsinn! Krieg ist Mord! / Mein Sohn ist mir gemordet! –” (50). Another letter, this time from GEORG’s comrade FRITZ, is used to demonstrate the bravery of his last deed. Plays of the second phase of the discourse frequently create a context of meaning for the victims by introducing the circumstances of their deaths either via a letter or the temporary return of an eyewitness. In this context, the first *Heimkehrerfiguren* appear in WWI dramatic literature. While causing the devastation of GEORG’s mother to peak, Seiffert eventually uses this letter to initiate the final turn-around. At first, however, details of her son’s last minutes and the number of other sons who died in the same battle cause an outburst of emotion in his mother:

(*ausbrechend*):

Fluch allen, die den grausen Völkermord  
entfesselten! Das Mutterglück  
verdorre jenen Fraun auf fremden Thronen,  
die ihre Männer eitel aufgehetzt zum Krieg. –  
Und keine Grabesruh  
soll diesen giftdurchtränkten Männern ewig winken.  
‘Gebt meinen Sohn mir wieder’,  
soll es millionenfach  
in ihre Ohren und Gewissen gellen,  
bis sie verstoßen und gepeitscht vom Völkerhaß  
in aller Höllen heißer Glut verzweifelt dürsten! (53).

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<sup>129</sup> That these characters represent the millions of mothers and fathers who were in the same situation is emphasised by the fact that MUTTER and VATER are the only ones without individualising names.

The hysterical nature Seiffert chose for this outcry serves as another way in which he can label her loss of faith in the cause as an instinctive, uncontrollable, yet understandable reaction to the loss of her son. Having the VATER explain that it is simply “zu schwere Last für sie” (55), works in a similar way. Irrationality is frequently portrayed as a female response to the grief that comes with the war, while the men are portrayed as emotional but rational characters, who understand the greater picture and therefore the heroism of their loved one’s sacrifice.<sup>130</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that the MUTTER’s turnaround is guided and initiated by the rational views of male characters. Seiffert directs attention to the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, which allows him to use GEORG’s death to demonstrate the importance of defending the fatherland he died for and so to maintain a context of meaning for his death. Representing the unity narrative, he has the father embody the demand for defiance and the determination to remain united, as well as to bare one’s own destiny while showing solidarity for those still fighting.

Seiffert thereby implies the argumentation of the VATER in the MUTTER’s outburst. This allows him to portray her as a generally positive character, who indeed has faith in the German cause but finds it buried under a layer of grief where it is not yet accessible for her. Cursing those, “die den grausen Völkermord / entfesselten” (53) could be a general critique on the senselessness of war as a “Fortsetzung der Politik mit andern Mitteln” (Clausewitz, 19), as which it was seen for centuries preceding WWI. However, in the mother’s outburst, those who started the war are without exception sitting on “fremden Thronen” (53), making her essentially curse Germany’s enemies, thus ultimately legitimising the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Her aversion to the war is therefore not a sign of weakness in itself but more a plea for peace. She seems to see the role of women in controlling the lawlessness of the male character and curses those women, “die ihre Männer eitel aufgehetzt zum Krieg” (53) instead of trying to protect

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<sup>130</sup> Having male characters bare the loss of their sons with humility and strength and without losing faith in the German cause, while the grief is often too much for the women to deal with, is a very common representation of gender stereotypes in plays published during WWI. Strong female characters are pretty much non-existent until after the war. This shows the emphasis on traditionally male virtues like strength, courage and bravery that are typical for wartime literature (see also Emonds, *Contested Memories*, 167). This representation is, however, not new. Figures like Germania and Wotan as representatives of the German nation gaining the attribute of iron as a sign of strength and the ability to defend itself can, as Jürgen Schröder points out, already be seen in the poetry of the Napoleonic Wars (see J. Schröder, *Deutschland als Gedicht*, 164–168).

their sons, like she did. That Seiffert lets her son die fighting a “schwarze Bande” who fought “mit Messern und mit Zähnen” (51) emphasises the image of lawlessness linked to the enemies’ warfare.<sup>131</sup>

Furthermore, the last two lines of the quote imply that the enemies will be punished for starting the war and for the way they have fought it. Seiffert defines this punishment as both secular and divine. To be “verstoßen und gepeitscht” (53) represents sanctions brought upon the loser, implying that Germany and its allies will win the war. The divine punishment of the enemies’ final resting place being “in aller Höllen heißer Glut” (53), ultimately confirms the righteousness of the German cause. This shows how Seiffert implies the foundation for the redemption of GEORG’s mother even within her emotional breakdown. His message ultimately is that not even the overwhelming emotions caused by the loss of a son can invalidate the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Throughout the rest of the play, Seiffert demonstrates her way back to determination and exposes the purpose of the play, which is essentially the testing and reinstating of German unity. This unity, as the play has its audience believe, will not break despite the sacrifices people have to make, thereby securing victory and a context of meaning for everything the nation has to endure.

In this context, FRITZ’s letter, which initiated the MUTTER’s breakdown, also fulfils a formal purpose. It is used to transport the knowledge of the model function of GEORG’s bravery, which readers or viewers have gained in the second act, to the characters at home and to close the informational gap between audience and cast. This is necessary in order to bring the play to conclusion and to fully reveal its cathartic message. The letter shows the love and respect that GEORG was shown by his men, which is already “ein rechter Trost” (Seiffert, 54) for his father because it means that GEORG has “gewirkt, und nicht vergebens” (54). As a result of his meaningful life, he “lebt im Herzen seiner Leute weiter” (54), resembling the father’s earlier statement that he, who “edel lebt, stirbt nie” (44). With this statement, Seiffert wrests a first sign of hope from the MUTTER when she admits GEORG will “ewig leben” (54) in her heart.

This notion of immortality of the fallen heroes is also an important topic in Walter Bloem’s (1868–1951) *Dreiklang des Krieges*. The collection of three *Szenen aus der Zeit*, as he called the one act plays that constitute this 1918 publication, include *Leben, Tod* and are in fact concluded by *Un-*

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<sup>131</sup> As mentioned before, the use of colonial troops was considered barbaric because they were said to be members of uncivilised races. Many denied them the ability to fight in an honourable way and demanded that they should therefore not be deployed in wars between civilised nations (see Koller, 36–37).

*sterblichkeit*. The last one, however, was not performed when the other two premiered at the Stadttheater Elberfeld on the 6th of March 1920. Bloem later extended the three one-act plays with another one entitled *Heimkehr*, which was published in 1920 and will be part of the analysis of the post-war representation of the discourse of legitimisation. Bloem's biography is characterised by multiple changes concerning his artistic and social points of view.<sup>132</sup> Seeing himself as a soldier poet and following the popularity of militarism, he wrote a trilogy about the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>133</sup> In 1912, Kaiser Wilhelm II was reported to have read and cherished the first two works, making Bloem a temporary star of the literary scene. His WWI dramas were written during this period of fame and represent the glorification of soldierly combat.

In *Unsterblichkeit*, he portrays a HAUPTMANN and a STABSARZT discussing the idea of immortality under heavy artillery fire, which shows the full extent of the war experience incorporated into later plays. Bloem creates the usual conflict between the two characters, with the latter representing doubts about the sense of the killing and the notion of immortality for those who give their life for their fatherland. But he is ultimately refuted by the HAUPTMANN, who claims that all the victims of the war “leben fort – nicht als Individuen, aber als wirkende Kraft” (Bloem, *Dreiklang des Krieges*, 106). And Bloem bases this conviction on the idea of the eternal *Volksgemeinschaft* which contains

die Seelen aller derer, die vor uns waren[,] Ja, unser mächtiger Bundesgenosse ist die Geisterschar, die mit uns streitet: die Millionen derer, die einst

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<sup>132</sup> The chapters of the most recent of at least six biographies on Walter Bloem (see Stauffer, 99), written by Peter Stauffer, like Bloem a Doctor of Law, are therefore structured according to the different ideologies Bloem followed. Stauffer, in an informative but rather superficial way, portrays him as an opportunistic character, whose works follow the fashion of the time. This explains the diversity of his oeuvre. Bloem wrote novels and plays on military topics, on humanitarian reconciliation and advocacy of philo-semitism, encomiums of contemporary political figures, especially Hindenburg, before renouncing his pro-reconciliation and pro-Jewish writings and affiliating with the Nazis before, after 1945, again attempting to vindicate his works published during Hitler's regime. The temporary fame of his books was a result of Bloem's choice of topics rather than of their literary quality, as the negative literary critiques he got for almost all his works indicate. His oeuvre contains over 60 titles and reached, according to the author, a total of 2.3 Million copies (see Stauffer, 97).

<sup>133</sup> *Das eiserne Jahr*, published in 1910, *Volk wider Volk*, published in 1913, and *Die Schmiede der Zukunft*, published in 1913.

wie wir gesprochen, geliebt, gerungen haben – deren Wesen in uns lebt, die Gehirnwindungen bilden half, mit denen wir fühlen, wollen, uns sehnen, leiden, jauchzen, hoffen – und siegen werden! Unsterblich, ewig wirkend sie alle – unsterblich auch wir! (107).

Bloem thereby describes the idea of a collective memory of the German people, into which those who defended the German fatherland throughout history against its enemies are imbedded, and which will now include the heroes of WWI.

The character FRANZL from *In Treue fest 1914* is another representative of the heroes who will become part of this collective memory. His name, so the author, will become “[u]nvergesslich [...] und in den fernsten Zeiten werden unsere Kinder und Kindeskinde erzählen von den Helden, die gegen die halbe Welt gekämpft haben und dabei ihr Leben liessen” (J. Mayer, 45). However, the last example represents a different mechanism of honouring the memory of the heroes. Rather than the gratitude of the people and the love of the fallen’s relatives, Mayer refers to the creation of a national narrative that will follow the end of the war and maintain the memory of Germany’s heroes for generations.<sup>134</sup> Referring to the future creation of this narrative, Mayer confirms the unity narrative by portraying the German nation as continuing to exist after the war has ended, allowing him to define sacrifices like that of FRANZL as a means to enable this survival.

In *Grenzwacht*, Lüdtkke has the dying son of the doubting character fulfil a similar role. After being brought to the parental farm from the nearby battlefield where he was wounded, his last words initiate his father’s repentance. He provides the meaning of his death, which has helped “die Heimat schützen – auch dich, auch den Hof” (Lüdtkke, *Grenzwacht*, 56). Ultimately, the father realises that his son had to die “damit wir, wir alle leben. Er hat auf Grenzwacht den Opfertod gefunden, aber sein Opfertod war nicht vergebens” (57). His contribution to the protection of their home motivated the

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<sup>134</sup> This furthers the importance of a victorious end to the war for the successful establishment of a context of meaning in which the victims must be embedded. Songs about the soldiers who lost a war that was supposed to decide the faith of the German nation would not stand the test of time. The later instrumentalisation of the German war effort by National Socialist literature confirms this argument. It frequently calls for revenge and satisfaction for the defeat in WWI as a result of the betrayal of the German army, which was said to be undefeated on the battlefield. The literary representation of the stab-in-the-back myth can, in this context, be seen as a continuation of the attempt to create a context of meaning for the fallen. However, its purpose is not the legitimisation of WWI and its victims but, ultimately, the legitimisation of a new war.

father who understood that he and his daughter in law must “sein Werk vollenden” (58) so that their home survives “in alle Zukunft hinein” (58).

Seiffert expresses the same aspect by using the circumstances of GEORG’s death as the source from which his father regains his strength. The return of RUDOLF, Seiffert’s *Heimkehrerfigur*, plays an important role in this process and is combined with the previously discussed letter. Like many early *Heimkehrerfiguren*, he serves as a motivator for the people at home by introducing more details about GEORG’s death into the play, while simultaneously transporting the motivation that he provided for his comrades to the people at home. Part of his message is that GEORG’s bravery and ultimate sacrifice helped “den Feindesgraben stürmen” (Seiffert, 55). This is again representative of the strategy in many other plays. They let the deaths they recount be responsible for a small victory, the holding of a position against a superior enemy or the successful charge of the enemy lines, and therefore generally define them as the price of victory.<sup>135</sup> By doing so, they legitimise the unity narrative as the sum of these individual acts of bravery as well as breaking the narrative down to an aspect that directly affects individuals and thereby enhances the cathartic effect of the play on the single recipient.

In this representation, Seiffert turns GEORG’s heroic death for the safety of the fatherland into an “edles Saatkorn für des Reiches Zukunft” (55), and directly demonstrates its sprouting. RUDOLF’s stories of the soldiers’ bravery, commitment and solidarity and GEORG’s heroic self-sacrifice inspire GERTRUD, the bride of the *Heimkehrer*, to contribute by helping on a rural farm where workers are rare, as well as FRITZ’s father SCHULZE to sign up as a “Marketender” (61) for the front soldiers. Once more, the characters become representatives of their individual spheres and the motivational effect between them. RUDOLF’s determination, which Seiffert has him express in a brusque soldierly manner, also serves as a catalyst for the MUTTER’s redemptions. Her “feige Klage” (57), as he calls it, undermines her son’s heroic sacrifice, because he himself “war nicht feig, das war sein Stolz” (57). His bravery was what inspired his subordinates to walk “für ihn durchs Feuer” (58) and win the battle. The father’s comment that this is “auch unser Stolz” (58) represents once again the tight link between *Heimat* and *Front* and propagates the narrative of a *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* of the German people that unites the two spheres to defend the fatherland.

Typical for *Heimkehrer* at this stage of WWI dramatic literature, RUDOLF can hardly wait until he gets back to the front lines and to his comrades. Hearing their voices “fernher, jenseits all der engen Grenzen / des Reichs aus Frankenland, aus Flandern” (58) thereby becomes a symbol for the inseparability of the two spheres that is manifested in these calls.

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<sup>135</sup> See for example Joerges, 11.



RUDOLF's urge to return does therefore not express an estrangement, of which Paul Bäumer in Erich Maria Remarque's (1998–1970) *Im Westen nichts Neues* is one of the most famous representatives, but rather the contrary. Seiffert portrays RUDOLF's job as unfinished and lets him return to the front lines until he and his comrades achieve "den vollen Sieg, den deutschen Sieg" (59).<sup>136</sup>

The full purpose of RUDOLF's return within the play is revealed when Seiffert uses his reports, and even more so his behaviour, to spark an enthusiastic patriotism in GEORG's father, as a reaction to RUDOLF's determination to return to the front. By now, the young men, whether returnees from leave or newly recruited, are aware of the cruel reality and dangers of modern warfare. Their choice to maintain the fight for the fatherland is made despite the many casualties and despite the hardship they will have to endure in the trenches. Seiffert therefore represents this second "Ausmarsch" as "innerlich gewaltiger, und seelisch stärker" (60) than the first one in August 1914 and then continues to process the unity narrative very explicitly, by letting the VATER accept his personal role in this war:

An meines Sohnes Statt  
gelob ichs meinem Vaterland:  
Will sich durch Hungerkrieg  
der Briten Höllenbande Sieg erschachern,  
weil sie in offenem Feldkrieg, Geist an Geist,  
ihn nicht erraffen können –  
gut!  
es sei:  
Mann gegen Mann,  
Brot gegen Brot,  
Schiff gegen Schiff,  
Krieg bis aufs Messer!  
[...]  
Das Heimatheer steht fest zur Front! (60–61).

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<sup>136</sup> Kuno Joerger is one of the very few authors who portray a soldier who neither dies a heroic death nor returns to the front after being wounded. In *Helldengröße*, published in 1916, FRIEDRICH's wounds – he is completely blind – prevent him from doing so. However, the character continues the line of heroic self-sacrifice when comforting his father, who mourns his son's terrible fate, by highlighting that he received his wounds "ja nur fürs Vaterland" (Joerger, 13) and that his biggest regret is that he can "[d]em Vaterland nicht weiter dienen" (13). Another example is the character RUDOLF, whom Edmund Braune portrays returning having lost his left hand in *Landwehrmanns Heimkehr* published in 1916.

Seiffert uses this to identify the war as a fight of all German people and represents the propaganda that it can only be won if they fight united until the end and are willing to make all sacrifices demanded of them. This links the destiny of past and future victims as they either all together maintain or all together lose their context of meaning, depending on the outcome of the war. It legitimises the continuation of the fight as a debt, which the living owe to the dead and ultimately legitimises future victims with past ones.<sup>137</sup>

These events eventually convince the MUTTER of her inappropriate reaction to the death of her son. The play concludes with the realisation that any form of surrender and despair will destroy Germany's future and cause the sacrifices that have been made to lose all meaning, while the continuation of the fight will eventually, as the unity narrative propagates, lead to victory. At first, she starts to understand that who dies "für ein heilig großes Ziel / fürs Vaterland" (62) will live forever and that her son's death might be tragic for his bereaved, but is the fulfilment of his duty in life for himself. While now believing in the spiritual immortality of the victims, the final realisation that ultimately represents the true meaning of all the sacrifices is still missing. Seiffert once more has the father initiate this discussion:

Wie Schnee in warmer Frühlingssonne schmilzt  
und tausend Bächlein an den Bergeshängen murmeln,  
so fließen tausend Trauerbäche jetzt in deutschen Landen.  
Und sie sind not, die neue Saat zu tränken.  
Die Sonne leuchtet: Deutschland über alles!  
Begreifst du diesen schlichten Satz? (62).

Using the sowing-metaphor again, the fight between determination and doubt ends with a final victory for the former and this victory is demonstrated through the reaction of the MUTTER:

Ja, über alles,  
auch über den Verlust des einzgen Sohnes!  
[...]  
Ich will heraus aus meinem Leide! (62).

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<sup>137</sup> This is a trait that can be seen in the National Socialist literature that emerges after the end of the war and continues until the downfall of the regime in 1945. It highlights the danger of glorifying a war or revolution, which can lead to the blurring of the historical reality and the instrumentalisation of its victims for political and propagandistic gains.

Seiffert therefore creates a context of meaning for the death of so many young men. But he also claims that virtues like courage, strength and endurance are important but must not remain theoretical, if the final victory is to be achieved. He uses the concrete victory of storming the enemy's trenches and winning a localised battle, which GEORG's death helped to achieve, in order to embed him in a greater context. This is representative of the processing of the propaganda narratives in the second phase of the discourse of legitimisation.

## 5 The instrumentalisation of the discourse of legitimisation

Considering the properties of the literary discourse of legitimisation, it is relatively easy to anticipate that it was impossible to maintain this argumentation after the end of the war, as the discourse's core beliefs – the defensive and existential character of the war – were shattered. Not only did Germany have to declare sole liability for the outbreak of the war, the nation indeed continued to exist after their defeat, which robbed the discourse of legitimisation of its most crucial foundation.

Consequently, the properties of the text corpus change very soon after the end of the war. In addition to the general decrease in the production of war plays, the discourse of legitimisation in its established form disappeared from the existing plays.<sup>138</sup> The majority of the very few plays still representing the discourse do this in one of two ways. Some legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by representing the negative stereotypes ascribed to the enemy more indirectly, while focussing on the creation of a context of meaning that can be maintained despite the defeat.<sup>139</sup> This strategy emphasises the fact that peace was re-established before the fatherland was destroyed and interprets this outcome as the at least partial fulfilment of the initial war aims. The context of meaning for those who died to secure the survival of the fatherland can so be maintained. Other plays legitimise the propaganda narratives, especially the unity narrative, in a more direct way by identifying an inner enemy, who allegedly corroded this unity and thereby caused the defeat. Who or what the plays identify as this inner en-

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<sup>138</sup> The number of plays published in 1919 does not reflect the production of this year, as it saw the publication of a backlog of plays that had been waiting for the end of censorship.

<sup>139</sup> The number of plays representing this view is probably less than ten. Although it cannot entirely be ruled out that there might be more to discover, the political climate and the production conditions in the time after the war would suggest that this small number is plausible.

emy ultimately depends on the authors' ideological background, but they homogeneously promote their destruction as the first step on the way back to former glory. This is also the origin of the most famous narrative in this context, the stab-in-the-back myth. Early right-wing plays already show the tendency to represent the victims of WWI as betrayed heroes. This interpretation later becomes an important aspect of the founding myth of the National Socialist movement and appears frequently in dramatic literature.<sup>140</sup>

With the instrumentalisation of the discourse after the war, the affects inscribed in it faced the same change. They were still created in the same way but the characters used as vehicles to do so changed once again. The negative affects are thereby assigned to those whom the plays identify as being responsible for the defeat. They predominantly focus on the affect of shame, which they inscribe into the plays by portraying the defeat and the subsequent peace treaty as a humiliation. Especially in right-wing plays, the new society they are propagating is often the reaction to these affects and the urge to reverse the humiliation they experienced. This ultimately leads to the instrumentalisation of WWI and the original narratives of the discourse of legitimisation for either right or left-wing ideologies.

### **5.1 The literary maintenance of a context of meaning despite the defeat: the last plays of the discourse**

The plays still participating in the discourse continue to legitimise the official propaganda narratives by portraying the treatment of the defeated nation as cruel and dishonest in order to retrospectively legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, which predicted this from the very beginning. This allows the plays to propagate the accuracy of the war aims they attributed to the Triple Entente, especially the destruction of Germany's culture. But simultaneously, they use the fact that the nation did survive to create a context of meaning for the sacrifices made during the war and to praise the heroism of the defenders, who at least protected Germany as a nation state and thereby successfully afforded it the chance to be rebuilt by holding out until peace could be established.

This peace however, is represented as shameful and its conditions "hätte keiner von uns ahnen mögen" (Kellert, *Daheim*, 11).<sup>141</sup> In his 1920 play

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<sup>140</sup> See Weller, 201.

<sup>141</sup> In Kellert's case, this seems to have been true considering the entirely different scenario he portrayed in the previously discussed play *Heimkehr*, which was published only one year prior in 1918. When putting this quote in rela-

*Heimkehr*, Walter Bloem for example thematises the tyranny of the victors under which he sees Germany suffering. Written as the “Ausklang der unter dem Titel ‘Dreiklang des Krieges’ vereinigten Einakter” (Bloem, *Heimkehr*, 2), which was published in 1918 and served to provide a context of meaning to those who would not return from the war, this one-act play now tries to provide this context for those who did return. Bloem portrays a nameless soldier’s return from a prisoner of war camp to his also nameless wife. The soldier cannot enjoy his regained freedom, because “Deutschland ist gefangen” under the Treaty of Versailles and he feels as if he would again “in einem Kerker leben” (15).

Almost appearing as an excuse for the defeat of the German army, Bloem, a former soldier himself, continues to represent the war as unbalanced by emphasising the numerical supremacy of the enemies, who had “eisig längst errechnet, daß zehn mehr ist als eins” (19). The “Hungergurt” (19) that they could apply to Germany because of its geopolitical location enhanced their advantage and ultimately extinguished the Germans’ “Mannheit Loderfeuer” (19). These representations of the war are used to emphasise how impossible victory was for Germany and are supposed to explain the defeat without suggesting a lack of bravery, manhood or strength amongst the German soldiers.

Prisoners of war are frequently appearing characters in these plays because they make it possible to reactivate the stereotypes of the enemy by incorporating their stories into the plot. The reports of *Heimkehrerfiguren* or the direct representation of the life in the camps continue to characterise the enemies as barbaric aggressors without honour, who abuse and mistreat the German soldiers and humiliate them even in defeat. As Bloem has his *Heimkehrer* fend off all affection offered to him by his wife, he reveals the self-image he has adopted during his imprisonment to be that of a “schmutziges, entehrtes, ekles Tier” (12) suggesting this self-image is the result of the treatment he received.

While Bloem does not specify the nationality of the captors, another play makes vague references. The prisoners in Kellert’s *Daheim* (1919) see themselves as “Spielzeug wilder Gier” (Kellert, *Daheim*, 8), as pawns in the peace negotiations following the end of the war. This serves as confirmation for the accusations made by the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative with regards to the motives of the enemies, which states that their aim was to eliminate their competition and benefit from the war. Representations like

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tion to how the war and its presumed end is represented in the earlier play, the success of propaganda in making people believe in the narratives seems to be highly evident, even in 1918. However, Kellert is only one example and to make general conclusions, more research would be necessary.

Kellert's claim that the Treaty of Versailles was the tool used by the enemies to do so. This demonstrates how the stereotypes of England and France which appear in the play are still used to gain credibility for these accusations. The plays also mention other prisoners of war, who "in den Lagern leben hinterm Stacheldraht, als wären sie nicht Menschen, sondern Vieh, von rohen Feinden mitleidlos getreten, gequält" (6). The term *Lager* for camp is closely associated with the Russian prisoner of war and labour camps located deep in the inner parts of the gigantic country, and the way it is represented continues the negative stereotype of the barbaric Russian.<sup>142</sup> In Edmund Braune's *Wieder daheim!* (1919) the character of a farmer, who ended up in Russian captivity, represents this in some detail. That his family and friends do not recognise him upon his return demonstrates how estranged he is after having had to spend time under the rule of the barbaric guards. Braune uses the stories of his imprisonment, told half in German and half in Russian, to portray the stereotypes of the inhumane and uncivilised Russians that are familiar from early war plays.<sup>143</sup> The reports of his imprisonment are constantly interrupted by the urge to drink "wodtki, Schnaps, viel Schnaps" (Braune, *Wieder daheim!*, 17). The alcoholism that he developed during his incarceration further emphasises the uncivilised character of Russian society. Furthermore, Braune recounts the physical abuse that he had to endure. The BAUER reports of how he was "gestoßen und geschlagen, – s'batom, mit der Knute geschlagen immerfort, immerfort" (18) by the "verdammten Tyrannen" (16) and "verfluchten[n] Peiniger" (18) that watched over him. He was "angekettet" and had to go "tief hinunter in Bleibergwerk" (18) every day, which enhances the image of the Russian civilisation being archaic and pre-modern.

Repeating the stereotypes that had been used to establish the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative in the plays published during the war is an attempt to keep the conviction of the defensive character of Germany's warfare alive by preserving the enemy's alleged motivation. Furthermore, the attack on Germany is still represented as an attempt "uns zu vernichten", to which "[...] sich fast die ganze Erde verschworen und verbündet [hat]" (Vogel, 8) forcing Germany "[sich] zu schützen mit dem Schwert" (Bloem, *Heimkehr*,

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<sup>142</sup> Although the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Russia and the Central Powers ended the war in the East in March 1918, the full return of prisoners of war was not concluded until the early 1920s (see Wurzer, 496).

<sup>143</sup> The motif of falling back into the language of the former captors is also represented in National Socialist plays like Gustav Frenssen's *Geert Brügge* (1935), in order to define the state of the defeated and humiliated Germany as reminiscent of the uncultured conditions of the former enemy (see Mohi-von Känel, 63–64).

10). Most of the *Heimkehrer*, like Braune's BAUER, at some point of the play explain their conviction that each soldier has fought "für sein Vaterland, für seine eigene Scholle, für Weib und Kind" (Braune, *Wieder daheim!*, 33), a phrase familiar from early war plays, where it was already used to identify the fight for the fatherland as a fight for one's own home and thereby create a sense of duty within all German people.

The fight for the fatherland is still portrayed as the peoples' "heiligst[e] Pflicht" (Vogel, 7). Just like in the plays published during the war, the war itself and the sacrifices of the soldiers are ultimately legitimised by the maintenance of the *Verteidigungskriegsprämisse*. Elly Vogel represents this in her 1919 play *Heimgekehrt* by letting her *Heimkehrer*, KURT BALDNER, comment that there is "kein schönerer Tod [...] in der Welt, als wer vorm Feind erschlagen" (9). Vogel's play is an example of the creation of a context of meaning for the sacrifices made during the war that depends on the legitimisation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Act two is set during the war and legitimises the demand to maintain the willingness of the German people to make sacrifices as with the plays of the second phase of the discourse.

In Vogel's play, FRAU HELLWIG's second youngest son KARL gets drafted and follows his older brother, HEINZ, into the war. Despite her motherly concerns, FRAU HELLWIG accepts that, into the third year of the war, "Deutschland [...] jetzt seine jüngsten Söhne [braucht]" (10) and that it will be the women's "Los, zu warten" (10). Shortly after Karl's deployment, his family is notified of his death on the battlefields of Flanders. Through META, KARL's sister, Vogel legitimises the sacrifice by having her remind their mother to remember "all [die] anderen Mütter, die gleiche Schmerzen mit dir teilen" (12). With the mother finally understanding that she "muß es tragen wie sie alle" (12), the play refers to the unity narrative in order to legitimise suffering by the victims of the war. The first two acts appear like abbreviated versions of plays of the first and second phases of the discourse and indeed serve as reactivations of the legitimisation arguments of these phases. However, the explicit references to Germany's final victory, which were used to legitimise the sacrifices, was of course not available to the plays written after 1918.<sup>144</sup>

Consequently, the context of meaning that is represented in plays like those of Bloem, Kellert and Vogel to legitimise the nation's sacrifices had to be created despite the defeat. Vogel initiates this in the third act by

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<sup>144</sup> There is no evidence for the precise date of the play's creation. However, it does include the fact that Germany ultimately lost the war. Together with the fact that the war is mentioned to have lasted for four and a half years, it can be assumed that the play was written after it had ended.

providing a new function to the *Heimkehrer* KURT BALDNER. By making him the subject of a dialogue in which it is mentioned that he is back in his old job in the bank “wie früher”, (14) she represents the survival of the German people as a result of the efforts of soldiers like him. Kellert uses the same motif in FERDINAND’s returns. His colleagues are amongst the first to welcome him home and they invite him back to his old workplace. “[S]ein Platz ist frei und wartet seiner schon” (Kellert, *Daheim*, 13) and Kellert rewards the defender of the fatherland with the return into the life he helped to save.

Examples of this strategy within the analysed plays are numerous. Letting life continue “wie es war” (15) serves as a representation that the German people have succeeded in a key aspect of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. The dead can therefore be heroised, as Vogel demonstrates very clearly:

META: [...] Ich lasse dich nun eine Weile allein, Käte, und hole Mutter ab, die mit den Kindern draußen war. Ich möchte gern, daß sie sich manchmal zerstreut. Sie denkt zuviel an unsere lieben – (*sie will fortfahren Toten, besinnt sich dann aber und sagt*): Helden. (Vogel, 15).

Bloem represents the same understanding of the soldiers’ achievements when he has the wife greet her returning husband as “mein Krieger du! mein Sieger, Held und Gott” (Bloem, *Heimkehr*, 9) and Edmund Braune’s BAUER is introduced by his servant as one of the participants of the battle of Tannenberg, which was instrumentalised as the turning point in the ultimately victorious war against Russia. The BAUER’s sacrifices in the war are therefore directly linked to events that saved the *Heimat* to which he later returned.

The only significant difference to the legitimisation of the narratives in plays published during the war is the war’s end, after which the survivors have to rebuild the country as the defeated rather than as victors. But despite that, the plays present a positive outlook for the future, claiming it will “wieder werden, wie es war” (Kellert, *Daheim*, 15). With the last sentence of the play, Kellert even provides the methods of restoring the *status quo ante bellum*: “Wir wollen unser altes Heimatland / Durch fleiß’ge Arbeit wieder aufbauen!” (15). He uses this representation to demonstrate that not only has the nation survived but so too has its culture of peaceful diligence.

Bloem even uses the necessary rebuilding of Germany as the reason for the return of his *Heimkehrer*. In a structure similar to the antithetical juxtaposition between determination and devastation that dominates the plays of



the second phase of the discourse, he leads the character out of despair by revealing his survival as a divine calling. Although the idea that his fatherland is being “mißhandelt” (Bloem, *Heimkehr*, 22) by the victors eats his “Seele [...] leer” (20), Bloem initiates this realisation using the manifestation of his daughter, who had died during his absence from “bitterlicher Not” (6). Serving as a representation of the sacrifices the people have made, it reminds him that there is a new task ahead and he has an obligation to honour those sacrifices and rebuild their homeland,

das deinen starken Arm, mein Vater, braucht –  
dies heilige, dies ewige Wunderland,  
das du verteidigt mit blutender Hand,  
das tief in Schande sank und Sklaverei –  
daß es sich ring’ aus den Ketten los,  
mach es wieder groß,  
mach es frei! (23).

Although the defeat seems to weigh more heavily on characters in Bloem’s play than in the other cited plays, Bloem also emphasises the survival of the fatherland. The German diligence that the enemies envied and tried to destroy is still alive and will rise “zur Tat empor, die retten, retten soll” (24). Once more, the last words of the play create a context of meaning that partially legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by claiming that the war had prevented the total destruction of the German people.

The affects of shame inscribed into the plays as an initial reaction to the defeat are eventually superseded by positive affects, caused by the return of loved ones and the re-establishment of peace for Germany. This structure has a similar effect as that of the second phase of the discourse and appears to be used for a cathartic purpose. The plays that exemplify this aspect of the post-war discourse of legitimisation seem to be able to accept the defeat. The newly won peace and the return of the soldiers clearly outweigh the shame connected to the defeat and the humiliating conditions the victors enforced on Germany.<sup>145</sup>

This shame, however, is an important factor in the instrumentalisation of the discourse for right-wing and ultimately fascist ideologies and although they draw different conclusions, it is just as important in plays supporting left-wing ideologies. Plays from both sides of the political spectrum

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<sup>145</sup> Bloem’s play is the exception. His *Heimkehrerfigur* represents shame and devastation throughout the majority of the play. The conflict between his depression and the spirit of optimism represented by his wife is not resolved until the appearance of his dead daughter’s ghost, who convinces him that he has the duty to rebuild Germany in memory of all those who died to save it.

utilise the shame associated with the defeat to promote the necessity to rebuild Germany according to their ideology. These plays display an aspect almost entirely overlooked in the ones analysed so far in this chapter. The reconstruction work within Germany is thereby almost exclusively ideological because, although the war changed Germany's political system by ending the Wilhelmine Monarchy, the damage to towns, cities and landscapes was minimal. This has certainly contributed to the shape of the text corpus of war plays published after the war, which, if not anti-war altogether, turned its representation into a fight for the ideological successor of the Wilhelmine Empire.

## **5.2 Legitimising political ideologies with propaganda narratives: the instrumentalisation of the discourse**

The argumentation of plays of either side of the political spectrum is much more homogenous than one might think. They all legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and although the identified cause of the enemies' aggression differs, they see it as the reason for the outbreak of the war. The German war effort is therefore portrayed as an act of self-defence and the effort of the German soldiers to defend the nation as heroic. The reasons for the defeat as they are identified within the plays are also similar in plays across the political spectrum and ultimately legitimise the unity narrative by blaming the defeat on the fact that the German people failed to stand united against the foreign aggressors. This, however, is where the similarities end, as the plays propagate the creation of a new German society according to their individual political agendas. They do so by using their individual interpretation of the events of the war as a founding myth, which is supposed to legitimise their vision of a future society and thereby instrumentalise the narratives on which this myth is based.<sup>146</sup>

The National Socialist dramas of the 1930s like Hans Fritz von Zwehl's *Unternehmen Michael* (1934) or Hans Lucke's *Der Tod in Flandern* (1934), to name only two of many very similar plays, represent WWI as the starting point of the National Socialist movement.<sup>147</sup> Although the specific NS

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<sup>146</sup> This strategy shows similarities to expressionist plays like Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung*. But because a political call for renewal that might be present in authors like Toller is diluted by the expressionist call for renewal, they appear much less like political manifestos and often manage to maintain an autonomous aesthetic which the plays analysed in this chapter lack.

<sup>147</sup> The representation of WWI in National Socialist plays has already drawn some scholarly attention. Christiane Weller has most recently emphasised

propaganda of a Hitlerite imprint does not yet exist, the ideology it is founded on is already immanent in right-wing plays published in the early 1920s. Actually, both right-wing and left-wing plays of the immediate post-war era use the war as a point of origin from which the new *Volksgemeinschaft* can start to build a better world.<sup>148</sup> This literary representation no longer legitimises the propaganda narratives, but uses the narratives to legitimise the ideology promoted in their plays, and the initial discourse dissolves.

Gertrud Prellwitz' (1869–1942) two-part play *Deutschland! Deutschland!*, (1921) for example represents WWI as the final bankruptcy of an exploitative capitalism and uses this to legitimise its own communist agenda.<sup>149</sup> *Kriegsgefangen in England!* (1919) by Christoph Friedrich Wohlenberg, *Deutsche Höllenfahrt* (1922) by Kurt Gaebel and *Vaterland* (1923) by Ernst Moritz von Kaisenberg represent the defeat as a consequence of the corrosion of the German *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* and use this to promote their right-wing agenda.<sup>150</sup> In Prellwitz' plays, Germany's sole liability for the outbreak of the war is labelled very emphatically als "Lüge" (Prellwitz, *Frühling*, 5). For the prisoners in Wohlenberg's play, the war was a result of the Entente's "Einkreisungspolitik" (Wohlenberg, 7), which had "diesen Mordskrieg jahrelang vorbereitet" (7).<sup>151</sup> The first act of

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their propagandistic instrumentalisation of the war, and especially its victims, as the founding myth of the NS movement (see Weller, 222).

<sup>148</sup> While later WWI plays, such as *Douaumont* (1929) by Eberhard Wolfgang Möller (1906–1972), *Toboggan* (1928) by Gerhard Menzel (1894–1966) and Friedrich Bethge's (1891–1963) *Reims* (1930), are relatively well known because their authors were acclaimed literary figures during the National Socialist regime, the plays from the first post-war years are pretty much forgotten.

<sup>149</sup> Prellwitz, born in Tilsit, a little town located on what is today's border between Poland and Lithuania, wrote both parts of the play in 1919, yet they did not get published until 1921. The plays succeed *Weltsonnenwende*, a deeply mystical play published in 1919, which calls for the reconciliation of the people in order to create a new society in which all peoples live in peace.

<sup>150</sup> This indicated imbalance in numbers of right-wing as compared to left-wing plays is representative for the text corpus, because plays promoting fascist ideals had become increasingly larger in number as fascist influence started to gain momentum in the 1920s.

<sup>151</sup> The play is subtitled *Dramatische Beschreibung des 22. Juni 1919*, which marks the day on which the *Deutsche Nationalversammlung* voted to accept the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. By choosing this date, Wohlenberg represents the *Schandfrieden* as one of the reasons for the rise of the re-named German people.

*Deutsche Höllenfahrt* also focusses on the legitimisation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.<sup>152</sup> The play represents the role of the English press through the character of HARMSWORTH, who later became Lord Northcliffe, founder of *The Daily Mail*, with whom the devils SATAN, BEELZEBUB and MEPHISTOPHELES conspire.<sup>153</sup> These three are the main characters of the play. Gaebel has them use the power of the British media to frame Germany and convince the entire world of the threat it allegedly poses. They therefore provide HARMSWORTH with “Verleumdungsextrakt” and “chemisch gereinigte[r] Lüge” (Gaebel, 24), which allows Gaebel to label all reports of Germany’s culpability as a lie. He even has MEPHISTOPHELES meet with EDWARD VII to congratulate him for his rapprochements with France and Russia, in order to claim that this is what made the war possible in the first place.

Kaisenberg uses the character of an old veteran to legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.<sup>154</sup> He refers to Germany’s prosperity as that which evoked the envy of its neighbours and then continues to reactivate the familiar stereotypes. England, so the veteran’s opinion, “erstrebt die Beseitigung seines gefährlichsten Konkurrenten, Frankreich natürlich Elsaß und Lothringen [...] – und Rußland? Das ist aufgehetzt gegen uns und mit den Milliarden Frankreichs bezahlt” (Kaisenberg, 6). Using the character’s status as a veteran of the Franco-Prussian War creates additional credibility for his characterisation of the French as “rachsüchtig und gemein und gefallsüchtig und eitel” (6).

A similar characterisation of the enemies is also used by Prellwitz to blame them for the outbreak of the war. However, her conclusions differ from the other plays when she has the prisoners realise that “[e]s [...] gar nicht darauf an[kam], die äußeren Feinde zu besiegen” but “den dunklen Abgrundsdrachen zu überwinden, den Geldsinn, den gierigen Zwecksinn, der aller Völker wahrer Feind ist” (Prellwitz, *Frühling*, 17). This last quote is important in understanding the play’s particular communist representa-

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<sup>152</sup> The three-act comedy’s main setting is hell, where the three represented devils, SATAN, BEELZEBUB and MEPHISTOPHELES decide to corrupt the German people, “ein Volk, dessen Tugenden noch unausstehlicher sind als seine Fehler” (Gaebel, 16). Embedded in this comedic setup is a strongly fascist ideology, representing WWI as an alleged conspiracy against the German people.

<sup>153</sup> For a detailed study of Northcliffe’s and the *Daily Mail*’s role in British war propaganda, see J. Lee Thompson’s *Lord Northcliffe and the Great War, 1914–1919*.

<sup>154</sup> The play, its three acts set in 1914, 1917, 1918 and the epilogue in 1923, represents the perceived downfall of the attacked German nation and identifies those who Kaisenberg saw as responsible for it.

tion of the defensive character of the German warfare. The reason for the enemies' attack on Germany is located within their capitalist societies, which caused their envy and led them to start the war. The *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative represented in the play therefore has to be understood on a social rather than a national level, as the reign of capitalism is presented as a problem of all European nations. Although greed is the enemy *aller Völker*, including Germany, it is ultimately the other nations that are accused of starting the war.

This allows the play, despite its idea of capitalism as an international enemy, to be deeply patriotic and to confirm the propagandistic conviction of the superiority of the moralistic German culture that is often used to provide further justification for Germany's obligation to defend this culture. This becomes evident when the play starts to reveal its idea for the future. "Deutschlands hellwacher Geist" (Prellwitz, *Weltsonnenwende*, 11) represents, according to Prellwitz, the only force that can bring salvation to the world. Since only the *deutsche Geist* is able to break the capitalist spell over the people of Europe, the play praises the heroic fight of the Germans, who have "der wahnsinnigen Übermacht standgehalten" and "[w]enn das nicht wahr wäre, daß sie im Lande Revolution gemacht haben und den Kaiser verjagt –, die deutschen Krieger ständen noch hier" (Prellwitz, *Frühling*, 9).

This statement is rather surprising for a left-wing play as this had become the core argument of its political opponents, but it gains context when looking at the praise of the spirit of 1914 as an important ideal in Prellwitz' works.<sup>155</sup> The *Ideen von 1914* represent a first sign of regaining the "echte, deutsche, königliche Art in allen Ständen" (17) that defines the birthing myth of the anticipated communist world revolution. The army is thereby credited with ensuring "[d]aß Deutschland nicht so zerstört und verwüstet wurde" (11) and that the German spirit will be able to rise again.

Wohlenberg also uses Germany's alleged cultural superiority to define its war effort as a "gerecht[e] Sache" (Wohlenberg, 7) and Kaisenberg, similarly to Prellwitz, claims that only Germany's victory "ermöglicht Europas Fortbestehen in einem neuen Aufschwung in germanisch deutscher Kultur zu nie gesehener Blüte" (Kaisenberg, 8). The similarity in the repre-

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<sup>155</sup> Emerging in early right-wing plays, these aspects are immanent in later National Socialist plays. The many front plays, like Hans Ehrke's (1898–1975) *Battaljon 18* (1936) or Arthur Berkuns' (1888–1954) *Unbekannte Helden* (1935) and plays representing particular battles of the war, like Heinrich Zerkaulen's (1892–1954) *Jugend von Langemarck* (1933), for example use the general acceptance of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative to emphasise the bravery of the German front soldiers and promote the stab-in-the-back myth.

sentation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative is striking, despite the fundamentally different ideological foundations of these plays, and continues in the plays' engagement with the unity narrative, which both sides legitimise. However, the different ideas for a future society manifest themselves more clearly in this context. Gaebel's direct reference to the unity narrative, claiming "[n]och nie ist Deutschland überwunden worden, wenn es einig war" (Gaebel, 40), could come from any of the plays of the discourse of legitimisation. Their authors identify the failure to maintain a united *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* as the reason for the German defeat and thereby ultimately legitimise the narrative. In this context, the plays start to reveal what the authors see as the reason for this failure and the differences between the ideologies they promote become obvious as soon as they identify the inner enemy they blame.

For Prellwitz, the unity was broken when "wieder die beiden Stände aufkamen" (Prellwitz, *Weihnachten*, 12). The inner enemy that Germany could not defeat during the war but has to overcome in order to fulfil its role as the saviour of mankind is represented by the social injustice of the pre-war conditions. The character of ANTON is used to describe these conditions as a socially unjust state in which "[d]ie einen schlemmten, die anderen darbtten. [...] Sie waren nicht mehr Menschen. Man war Sache. Die Arbeitskraft Ware" (9). Germany had to suffer because when it was rich and powerful, it forgot its original *deutschen Geist*, it saw "Millionen seiner Kinder so elend, elend" (9) and did nothing about it. Now, so Prellwitz, the people have seen where this path leads and must renew the true German spirit and create a world in its image. This is where the instrumentalisation of the representation of the war is founded in many left-wing plays for which Prellwitz' work here stands representative.

The inner enemy identified by the right-wing plays is of course very different. In the second act of Kaisenberg's play, FRITZ KARL's return home from the front lines is used to introduce the report of his father's "Heldentod" (Kaisenberg, 13) as a representation of the German army, which fought bravely and with honour. It is contrasted by the character of EGON the younger son, who in the dramatis personae is already introduced as "ein Kranker" (3). The play portrays him as one of those 'elements', to use the right-wing and later National Socialist terminology, who "führt jetzt auch so entsetzliche Reden. Gegen den Kaiser, gegen den Besitz, ja gegen seine alte Familie" (12). In the third act he is called a "Spartakist" (14), whose "Novemberwolke [...] zerstörte und tötete" (14), which clearly identifies communists and anti-monarchists as those who caused the defeat.

This is similar in Gaebel's play, which displays a more clearly fascist and anti-Semitic rhetoric, referring to "Hebräer" as the "Platinmohr" (Gaebel, 53), which started the chain reaction within the German people

that ultimately led to their downfall. Representations of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, “[e]ine Bestialität von kolossalen Maßstäben” (59), and the political party system are portrayed as MEPHISTOPHELES’ methods to ruin the German morale and spirit. “Fortschritt, Freiheit, Humanität, Demokratie, Völkerbund und die 14 Punkte” (88) are all tricks of the devils to cause the German people’s “Knochenerweichung und Muskelschwund” (103) and the “Rückgratskrümmung” (104) that is a “typische Deformatio[n] und Degeneratio[n] [...] bei allen Sklavenvölkern” (104). The play also lists a number of people, or even has them appear on stage, who are directly made responsible for Germany’s defeat: LORD NORTHCLIFFE, ERICH LUDENDORFF and WOODROW WILSON are all influenced by the devils that want to destroy Germany. GEORGES CLEMENCEAU is used as the true representation of France in 1918, which is “[g]rausam, aufgeblasen, dumm, gierig, verlogen” (Gaebel, 126). Representing those parts of the German society responsible for the defeat, the Jewish journalist MAXIMILIAN HARDEN appears in hell and is sentenced to read and reread his own articles for all eternity. They are contrasted by references to the anti-Semite Heinrich von Treitschke, who had already died in 1896 and is mentioned as someone whom German politicians should have appreciated more.<sup>156</sup>

Later National Socialist plays like Paul Josef Cremers’ (1897–1941) *Die Marneschlacht* (1933) add another aspect by portraying how the “deutsche Volk, die deutsche Armee [...] die Marneschlacht gewonnen [hat], die deutsche Oberste Heeresleitung aber, im unseligen Bunde mit schicksalhaften Fügungen, [...] die Marneschlacht verloren [hat]” (qtd. in Rohlfing, 12). This allows them to identify a target to blame for the defeat without creating the impression that the German people were defeated by a group that is labelled as inferior in NS racial ideology.

In Wohlenberg’s play, the prisoners detect the “Lügenfabriken unserer Feinde” (Wohlenberg, 7) not only as the reason for the outbreak of the war but also as one of the reasons for the loss of the war. Lies spread amongst the German soldiers on “giftgetränkten Flugblätter[n]” have managed to plant “den Geist der Zaghaftigkeit und Widerspenstigkeit in ihre Herzen” (7). It is ultimately the Germans’ own fault that they have “den bösen Geist der Unzufriedenheit, der Habsucht und der Zwietracht groß gezogen [...], zwischen Offizieren und Mannschaften, zwischen Arbeitgebern und Arbeitnehmern, zwischen Stadt und Land!” (7). These representations are essentially legitimisations of the unity narrative, achieved by assigning the

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<sup>156</sup> Treitschke’s anti-Semitic rhetoric is the origin of the phrase “die Juden sind unser Unglück” (Treitschke, 575), which later became the catch phrase of the National Socialist propaganda journal *Der Stürmer*.

dissolution of the initial unity of 1914 as the true reason for Germany's defeat. However, they are also the foundation for the instrumentalisation of the narratives within the plays as they define the enemy that has to be defeated in order to create a 'better' world.

This better world further reveals the differences between right and left-wing authors. Prellwitz represents the war, its sacrifices and victims as the starting point of a "neue[n], reinere[n] Welt" (Prellwitz, *Frühling*, 20) that has to be built by the survivors. The challenge that lies ahead of the German people is nothing less than the "Wiederaufbau der Welt" (18) as a "reine Welt des Friedens" (Prellwitz, *Weihnachten*, 21). To achieve this, it is, so Prellwitz, necessary to gather all people "mit brennender Liebe zu Deutschland, und mit dem Willen, die große Kluft im Volk zu schließen" (20). In this context, Germany is no longer defined as a geographical construct but rather as an ideological entity. "Deutschland, das ist, wo Deutsche Brüder werden, in der Freude am Reinen und Hohen!" (20). The nation exceeds borders and unites those people who are willing to rebuild a society in which the people do not work for personal monetary profit, but overcome capitalism in order to strive for the "Edelmenschliche" (23) as the highest form of being, through which "das Volks-Ich sich erweitert und zum Menschheits-Ich wird" (Prellwitz, *Wie wir es schaffen*, 25), as she wrote in a manifest in 1918.

Kaisenberg, in contrast, instrumentalises the events of the war for a clearly fascist ideology. He lets MEPHISTOPHELES plot to suppress "die Pflege nationalistischer Völkerverhetzung und atavistischer Blutideale" (Gaebel, 124), without which the German people would remain enslaved. By portraying MEPHISTOPHELES nailing the Treaty of Versailles, "die Grundlage [s]einer Herrschaft" (129), underneath his throne, using "Knechtsinn, Parteigeist, Kneipendunst und Objektivität" (130) as nails, Kaisenberg identifies the foundation of this alleged slavery. The rejection of the treaty and the concentration on a Blood and Honour identity thereby becomes the only way for the German people to regain strength. The war and its repercussions are defined as the straw that broke the camel's back and revealed to the entire nation the path the German people have to take. In the epilogue to his play, set in 1923, Kaisenberg represents a similar demand, using a dialogue between LOUIS FERDINAND, who is characterised as "ein rechter Junge" (Kaisenberg, 3), FRIEDRICH KARL, "ein Kriegsfreiwilliger" (3), both portrayed as members of the *Reichswehr*, and VON WEDERN, a war veteran. Thanks to the rise of fascist groups, VON WEDERN sees the "Krankheitskeime schwinden" (22) and Kaisenberg has him express the solution to Germany's problems on this basis:



Die Grundlage dafür aber liegt in der Gesundung des Volkes. [...] Überall lodern die Feuer der Gesundung auf, es sind hohe und heiße Flammen. Möchten sie sich zusammenschmelzen lassen zu einem einzigen großen nationalen Feuer, das unter der Leitung eines Meisters alles Trennende, Un-deutsche, Internationalisierende verbrennt, vernichtet – oder läutert (23).

This statement is a clear representation of the call for a strong man, who mercilessly annihilates all inner enemies, which is fundamental for Germany's right-wing ideology after WWI.

In plays from both sides of the political spectrum, WWI is instrumentalised as the founding myth of a new movement. Right-wing plays identify their victims as martyrs for the movement and claim to have identified the true enemy of the German nation in those who are allegedly responsible for its defeat. Left-wing plays see the destruction of the old order that was built on capitalism and inequality as the opportunity to abolish these systems and create a new society on its ruins. In both cases, representations of the propaganda narratives are used to provide the foundations for this argumentation.

## **6 Synopsis: propaganda narratives and WWI dramatic literature**

The discourse of legitimisation is established in WWI dramatic literature as soon as it emerges in 1914 and remains homogeneously patriotic essentially until the end of the war, although the proportion of WWI plays' participation in the discourse steadily decreases, paralleling the development on the stages during the war. In 1918, the discourse covers but one topic and ultimately disappears relatively soon after, becoming increasingly instrumentalised.

The plays published during the war show two different foci. Until 1916 the processing of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative dominates the plays, which use its argumentation in order to represent and legitimise the Central Powers' engagement in WWI as an act of self-defence. Later, the focus starts to shift towards the legitimisation of wartime sacrifices, particularly the victims of the war, however is still based on the representation of the propaganda narratives. For analytical reasons, the publications of the years 1914 to 1918 can therefore be split into two phases. Despite the shift in focus from the first to the second phase, important lines of argumentation continue throughout the entirety of publications between 1914 and 1918 and even beyond.

The representations of England, for example in Schmetzer's *Deutschland und seine Feinde*, France, as in Reinfels' play *Die Rose von*

*Gravelotte* and Russia, in the many East Prussia plays of the likes of Paul Enderling's *Ostpreußen*, are based on established national stereotypes. These stereotypes of greedy, envious English and angry French looking to avenge the defeat of 1871, together with the perception of the German culture as superior to western civilisation, were already embedded in the German commemorative memory before WWI. The same applies to the stereotype of the barbaric nature of the Russian people, who are perceived as inferior to all western societies. This allows the plays to simply reactivate these stereotypes and to use them to gain credibility for the claim of an attack on Germany which the plays homogeneously propagate.

However, the longer the war lasted, the more this aspect moved out of the spotlight and the discourse of legitimisation underwent significant changes. The focus shifted from representing the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative to using it as a foundation on which the plays could legitimise the people's sacrifices and the demand for their continuation until Germany has achieved victory. This caused plays like *Des Vaterlandes Dank* and *Deutsche Volksoffer im dritten Kriegsjahre* to concentrate on the *Heimat's* contribution and significance for the war effort, which became a representation of the unity of all German people that is propagated in the narratives surrounding the outbreak of the war.

In this context, the plays no longer represent the enemies as the biggest threat to German victory, instead identifying this as the loss of collective determination to maintain the willingness to make the sacrifices necessary to achieve victory. As a consequence, enemy characters, frequently appearing in early plays, are hardly part of these later plays because their purpose was to prove the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, which appears in later works as sufficiently established. Instead, they contain German characters like KUNO SCHOLZ or DREES MÜLLER, who either fail to obey the imperative of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and are stigmatised for their egoism, or start to doubt the meaning of the German *Verteidigungskrieg* as a result of a personal calamity, like GEORG's mother in Seiffert's *Dennoch durch!* These conflicts are frequently represented in an antithetical character constellation within the plays, used to confront the misbehaviour of negative or at least temporarily faltering characters with representations of determination, solidarity and patriotism. The characters representing the latter generally either punish or correct the portrayed misbehaviour of the former, and the plays create a strongly cathartic message.

References to the continuing threat serve as legitimisation for the demand of continued sacrifices. If the German people lose their unity or their determination, so the consensus of the later plays of the discourse,

victory is in danger, and defeat would render all past sacrifices meaningless. Plays like Seiffert's, but also Bloem's *Unsterblichkeit* or Lüdtke's *Grenzwacht*, increase the focus on the creation of a context of meaning which was, although more strongly embedded in the general representation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative, already implied in early plays like *Deutscher Geist und deutsche Treue* or *Deutsche Helden* and is derived from the fatherland's fight for survival.

These aspects of the literary discourse of legitimisation are also responsible for its rapid disappearance after the war. Germany's defeat and the forced admittance of sole liability for the outbreak of the war deprive the discourse of its very foundations. Furthermore, the context of meaning, in which the sacrifices and victims of the last four and a half years were embedded, disappears. The few plays, like Elly Vogel's *Heimgekehrt*, Walter Bloem's *Heimkehr* and Franz Kellert's *Daheim*, which continue to engage with the discourse regardless and manage to maintain a focus on the legitimisation of the propaganda narratives, rather than using them to legitimise their political agenda, are very small in number. The most strongly representative of these have been analysed in the previous sections. These plays concentrate on creating a new context of meaning that legitimises the sacrifices that had been made. They predominantly portray the survival of the fatherland as having been achieved, focussing on the fact that Germany as a nation still exists and that the German people can now go back to their diligent way of life.

The majority of the plays, however, instrumentalise the initial discourse to promote their political or social agenda. Plays representing a left-wing ideology, like Prellwitz' two plays *Deutschland! Deutschland!*, tend to see the devastations the war has caused as a starting point to overcome the monarchic and divided conditions of the past and build a new society based on the equality of all people. Authors promoting a right-wing, mostly fascist ideology, like Gaebel, Wohlenberg and Kaisenberg, emphasise the humiliating peace conditions imposed on Germany by the victors. They present alleged reasons for the defeat and name those accused of being responsible for it in order to call for their extermination, which will enable Germany to regain strength, reverse the humiliating Treaty of Versailles and rebuild itself as a nation even more powerful and respected than in 1914. These representations dissolve the discourse into different political ideologies and the plays move away from legitimising the actual narratives.

But the initial points of interest, the questions of who is responsible for the outbreak of the war, for its duration of four and a half years and for the death of approximately ten million soldiers, for almost double as many wounded and for a further six million dead civilians, remain an important

topic for WWI dramatic literature. Even though the plays engaging with these topics, to be discussed in the following, still represent the official propaganda narratives, they deny the core arguments any legitimisation and use their characters to expose them as a lie, by which they establish a discourse of de-legitimisation.

#### IV. The discourse of de-legitimation

In *Die Schaubühne*, published on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 1914, Herbert Ihering demanded the removal of all “direkten patriotischen Stücken” (Ihering, 177) from the theatre repertoires and implied that they would only try “mit billigen Anspielungen billigen Beifall zu wecken” (177). Richard Elsner and Julius Bab blame this on the authors’ lack of timely distance to the event they portrayed, especially in the early stages of the dramatic production of WWI plays.<sup>157</sup> As a result, they render the entire production of early plays worthless.<sup>158</sup> Both authors’ analyses focus on the aesthetic and literary quality of the plays and on this basis, their harsh judgement is certainly justified. Elsner, however, republished his article in 1933 only changing the beginning and the last paragraph of the version published in 1918. In this last paragraph, he relativises his initial verdict after seemingly having gained the distance he demands between the subject and its interpreter, coming to the conclusion that all creation “muß aus seiner Zeit heraus verstanden werden, so auch die während des Weltkrieges entstandene Literatur” (Elsner, *Der Weltkrieg im Drama seiner Zeit*, 76). And yet, the literary quality of the plays published during the war is frequently rather low.

Many authors tried to compensate for their lack of dramaturgical talent with their passion for the message that they intended to produce and the

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<sup>157</sup> See Bab, *Chronik des deutschen Dramas IV*, 17; Elsner, *Der Weltkrieg im Drama*, 110. As an example of how this problem could have been avoided, Elsner mentions Alexander von Gleichen-Rußwurm’s 1914 play *Feinde ringsum*, in which the plot is set in the time of the Greco-Persian Wars. In this play, Athens, surrounded by its enemies, represents Germany, as the author clearly states in the prelude. This, according to Elsner, creates the distance needed to produce a dramatic work of literary value (see Elsner, *Der Weltkrieg im Drama*, 111).

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often-cited *Augusterlebnis* may certainly have driven playwrights to produce patriotic plays in greater numbers. But as newer research has repeatedly shown, the enthusiasm for the war was not as comprehensive as once believed.<sup>159</sup> Thus, the assumption that all Germans had a purely positive attitude towards the war and were convinced of a great victory over their enemies does not hold up. In light of the previous analysis of external influences on the text corpus of plays published during the war, it can be assumed that while critical plays were not published until 1919, critical voices certainly existed.

The fact that a significant number of war critical plays were published soon after the war invites the assumption that were already composed during the war but kept private until it was possible to bring them to daylight.<sup>160</sup> Siegfried Jacobsohn (1881–1926), the editor in chief of *Die Weltbühne*, therefore anticipated a “neue Serie” (607) of plays to succeed the propagandistic “Kriegsgesäng[e]” (607) published until 1918, because during the war, so Jacobsohn,

hat beinah jeder Deutsche, den der Teufel nicht zum Alldeutschen mißgeschaffen, dem Krieg fluchen gelernt. Während des Krieges diese Flüche in Jamben zu bringen, war manchem Dichter sicherlich eine Notwendigkeit. Diese Jambik mitanzuhören, hätte viele Theatergäste erleichtert. Das zu verhindern, erschien den Henkersknechten als selbstverständlich, weil sie sonst früher schon Holland, Schweden, die Schweiz hätten aufsuchen müssen. Nun aber hindert die Schubläden nichts mehr, sich gründlich zu leeren (Jacobsohn, 607).

One very famous and well researched example in this context is *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* by Karl Kraus. Kraus started to work on the play in 1915 but did not publish it until 1919.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> See Verhey, *The spirit of 1914; Augusterlebnis*; Baumeister; Münkler.

<sup>160</sup> However, some exceptions exist, amongst them Goering’s *Seeschlacht* or Unruh’s *Ein Geschlecht*. The former was published in the last year of the war and the latter as early as 1917. Although this was certainly influenced by Unruh’s relative prominence, the release of these plays proves the increasing courage of publishing houses and stages in supporting representations of the war that differed from its usual propagandistic portrayal. At the same time, they prove the caution of the censors, which only allowed them to premier “im ‘geschlossenen Kreise’ von literarischen Gesellschaften oder Freunden der Dichter” (Poensgen, 105).

<sup>161</sup> Unfortunately, not many plays are so well documented with regards to their genesis and it is often difficult to determine exactly when they were written, even if indicators suggest that they were finished much earlier than they

This made it possible for the discourse to be established very soon after the end of the war, as writers only had to open their drawers and submit their already finished plays to the now censorship-free publishing houses and theatres. Two of the earliest examples of the discourse's appearance in public are the publication of the epilogue to Karl Kraus' *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* in his journal the *Fackel* in December 1918, and the premier of Hans Franck's play *Freie Knechte* on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1918 in Max Reinhardt's Kleines Theater Berlin.

Within the body of WWI plays, the variety of ways in which the war is represented increases after 1918, when compared to the production during the war. After the war, playwrights and theatre makers start to process the multitude of personal and collective experiences of the past four and a half years and the diversity of these experiences certainly contributed to the diversity of representations of the war. Many already established playwrights, such as Carl Hauptmann or Ludwig Thoma, who had felt the need to participate in the discourse and got carried away by the enthusiasm of 1914 simply ignored the topic in later years. Of the next generation of writers and theatre makers, some, like Ernst Toller, Erwin Piscator (1893–1966), Sigmund Graff (1898–1979), and Friedrich Bethge had seen the trenches. The war changed Toller's views and initiated the pacifism that is evident in many of his works just as much as it influenced Piscator's understanding of the meaning of theatre as a political instrument.<sup>162</sup> Sigmund Graff and Friedrich Bethge later sympathised with the National Socialist regime and made a career in the organisation, with Bethge volunteering for military service in 1939.<sup>163</sup> Others like Karl Kraus escaped the war or, like Bertolt

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were published. Adrian von Arx' rather unknown religious anti-war play *Der Helfer* is one example. The author died in 1919 and the play was, to my best knowledge, not published until 1927. Furthermore, the plot of the play includes the deployment of gas grenades that started in spring 1915 but does not portray a factual end to the war. This all indicates that the play was written during the war but not published before the author's death. Franz Kai-bel's play *Die Sands und die Kotzebues* was censored in 1915 because, as its publisher claims, it tried "das deutsche Volk über das Wesen seiner Diplomaten aufzuklären" (Lehmann, *Vorwort*). Fritz von Unruh's *Vor der Entscheidung* was written in 1915 but the censors only allowed 50 copies to be published because they were afraid it would decrease the morale of its readers. It was then, although altered, published in 1919 (see Kiesel, 501–502).

<sup>162</sup> See Deiters, 105–107.

<sup>163</sup> Graff became a member of the *Reichsdramaturgie*, a department of the *Ministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* during the third Reich, led by the *Reichsdramaturg* Rainer Schlösser. His role within the ministry, as

Brecht, were only marginally involved in it. The next generation, including Ödön von Horváth and Eberhard Wolfgang Möller, were too young to be drafted, but while Horváth used his plays to warn about the rise of fascism as a consequence of what he had learned from the events of WWI, Möller associated with the regime.<sup>164</sup> With the absence of censorship restrictions, which had influenced the properties of the text corpus up until then, the freedom to express these very different experiences was restored and the liberalisation of the theatrical landscape after the end of the monarchy provided new possibilities to bring plays to the stage.<sup>165</sup>

Furthermore, the transition from a total war into a post-war society provided enormous challenges, especially since the significance of the consequences of both war and defeat did not allow a regression into pre-war-like conditions. The *Neue Arbeiter-Bühne* for example, a series that had not been published since 1914, resumed publication in 1919 and reengaged with the political and social struggle of the working class within the altered post-war circumstances.<sup>166</sup> As a consequence, the representations of the war

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well as whether he used his position for the benefit of his career as a writer are very ambiguous. The German Literary Archive in Marbach holds multiple statutory declarations made with regards to his denazification trial. Graff continuously states that he never exploited his position and many of the declarations claim that he was never “Nationalsozialist in seiner Gesinnung” (Kogelin-Kaufmann, Berta, n. pag.) and that he, for example, rejected an “Abmilderung der pazifistischen oder antimilitärischen Szenen” (H. A. Schröder, n. pag.) in performances of *Die endlose Straße*. Katharina Breslauer, formerly employed in the office of Helmuth James Graf von Moltke, even claimed that he could “– als einer der wenigen Schriftsteller von Namen – Anspruch darauf erheben, zu den frühzeitigen Mitwissern der Witzleben-Aktion vom 20.7.1944 [...] zu gehören” (Breslauer, n. pag., emphasis in original), which refers to the failed assassination of Adolf Hitler by high officers of the German military. Whether or not these statements are true is difficult to determine but it is a fact that with 436 recorded performances of his plays, Graff was the most frequently performed living author between 1933 and 1944 (see Hüpping, 153–154).

<sup>164</sup> This list is of course not comprehensive, not even for the playwrights on which I have focused. For a recent study of authors and their involvement in WWI see Alexander Honold’s *Einsatz der Dichtung*. The otherwise very comprehensive work does, like all other works on the topic, unfortunately underrepresent the playwrights in favour of writers of other genres.

<sup>165</sup> See Ch. Klein, 165; Becker, 420.

<sup>166</sup> Ludwig Hesse’s 1877 play *Familien-Politik. Lustspiel in einem Aufzug*, provided a rather light-hearted beginning to the post-war era of the series. The *Neue Arbeiter-Bühne* then continued to publish 20 more plays until 1926,



generally constitute a smaller portion of the overall dramatic output after 1918 as compared to the years before.<sup>167</sup> This is based on the assumption that the overall number of plays written in the years after 1918 remained either consistent or even increased due to the end of the war, while newer research shows that at the same time, the number of WWI plays dropped dramatically in 1920, after the publication of anti-war plays in 1919 which kept the numbers proportionately higher for a further year after the war. This decreasing tendency continued until the topos was revived by National Socialist plays like Eberhard Wolfgang Möller's *Douaumont* (1929), *Reims* (1930) by Friedrich Bethge or *Der Kriegsminister* (1930) by Robert Hohlbaum (1886–1955)<sup>168</sup> which emerged around the same time as WWI novels.<sup>169</sup>

The text corpus of WWI plays released after 1918 is therefore a manifestation of these internal and external influences on the authors, and shows great heterogeneity, which in turn requires a different approach than that taken with regards to the discourse of legitimisation. Additionally, the literary quality of these works is far greater than of most of the earlier WWI plays. The reasons for this must ultimately remain speculation, but time seems to be crucial. The question of the legitimisation of the war had occupied people's minds for four and a half years, and critical plays published after the end of the war, whether written earlier or not, began to show distance from the topic and the knowledge of the full consequences of an industrialised total war which Elsner and Bab saw as lacking in early war plays. Furthermore, the personal processing of events and the dissection and exposure of the ideologies that led to the war's outbreak are more difficult tasks than the creation of a patriotic rush job that is easy to stage.<sup>170</sup> Additionally, the publishing houses and theatres no longer had to cater for patriotic enthusiasm and propaganda efforts in support of certain messages

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which predominantly continued to represent the topic of class struggle that dominated the early volumes of the series. The fact that they paused their political struggle during the war shows once more the comprehensiveness of the *Burgfrieden*.

<sup>167</sup> It is once more difficult to say why. But the sudden disappearance of propagandistic motivations and encouragement to write patriotic plays certainly played a role.

<sup>168</sup> Hohlbaum was the director of the *Anna-Amalia Bibliothek* in Weimar from 1942 to 1944.

<sup>169</sup> See Dorrer, *Verzeichnis der deutschen Weltkriegsdramen*, 250–254.

<sup>170</sup> This would also explain why the number of WWI plays in general declined in the first years after the war and then rose again as soon as this type of play, now with rising National Socialist propaganda as its motivator, re-emerged.

and decisions could again be made on the basis of the literary quality of the works they were presented with.

Some of the playwrights emerging or reappearing in 1918 had remained silent during the war because they did not want to produce the content that was demanded. The plays of the discourse of de-legitimation are therefore not to be seen as a continuation of the discourse of legitimation under the altered circumstances of a lost war. Rather, they are their reversal, representing the negation of the common propaganda and providing a dramatic answer to the patriotic works forming the discourse of legitimation. This became possible due not only to the liberalisation of literature and the theatre landscape, but also because of new information that only became available after the fall of the old order. Karl Kraus, for example, deemed this newly available information so significant that he reworked the 1919 *Akt-Ausgabe* of *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* to include many new scenes and revised old ones according to the new information. Although it is difficult to find evidence for a direct relationship between individual plays of the separate discourses, plays of both discourses process and represent the official propaganda narratives and thereby establish an intertextual relationship.

The post-war plays continue to negotiate the defensive character of the German war effort and the alleged unity of all people that is used to legitimise the people's sacrifices during and even after the war. Some plays, most prominently the *Heimkehrerdramen* of the Weimar Republic, do this by portraying the post-war society. While *Heimkehrerfiguren* were popular in plays published after the war because their individual destiny could be used to create a context of meaning for the ideological rebirth of the nation, the *Heimkehrerdramen* of the discourse of de-legitimation deny that there is any context of meaning for their protagonists' experience. Plays like those of Brecht, Toller and Horváth reject the hope of a rebirth and instead represent what they understand as society's pathological conditions as a constant that caused the war and continues after its end.<sup>171</sup>

Other plays chose a more direct perspective and represent the situation at the *Front* or in the *Heimat* during the war. But plays like Georg Wilhelm Müller's 1914 represent the outbreak of the war not as an inevitable devel-

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<sup>171</sup> National Socialist *Heimkehrerstücke* like Maxim Ziese's (1901–1955) *Siebenstein* (1932) or Hans Stark's *Die heimkehrten...* (1932) often represent a similar situation. But they use their protagonists' actions to demonstrate what they identify as the way into the future, while the *Heimkehrerdramen* analysed in this chapter use them to represent the war from which they returned.

opment but as the decision of a few that devastated the lives of millions.<sup>172</sup> They portray the Central Powers' interest in and culpability for the outbreak of the war, like Adrian von Arx' *Der Helfer* and most prominently Karl Kraus' *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*. Such plays portray the differences between the officers who fight and those who avoid fighting, like Hans Wesemann's (1895–1971) 1921 play *Offiziere*, which premiered on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1920 in the Rosetheater in Berlin and focusses on the division between those who coordinate the war from the base and those who have to bear its terrible consequences in the trenches. In a similar context, Adolf Hoffmann's play *Lazarett-Baracke 9* represents the division between those who preach about the importance of the fight for the fatherland and those who are actually sent to do the fighting and pay with their life or health. Other plays focus on the suffering of individuals but oppose the alleged glory and heroism of the war and represent its destructive forces. Amongst those plays are many expressionist plays such as Fritz von Unruh's *Vor der Entscheidung*<sup>173</sup> but also *Frontstücke* like *Die endlose Straße* by Sigmund Graff and Carl Ernst Hintze.<sup>174</sup>

The last play demonstrates the fine line between de-legitimation and instrumentalisation. It was celebrated by both political camps, as the left saw it representing the senselessness of war while the right saw in it the heroism of the German front soldiers, who fought to the last man despite the hopelessness of the situation. As discussed, the plays of both sides of the political spectrum portrayed the undermined German unity as one of the reasons for their defeat. As this, however implicitly, confirms the narratives and propagates that Germany would have won the war if it had remained united, it allows the plays to use this representation for their political agenda. The omission of this last step is what separates the plays that (de-)legitimise the narratives from the plays that instrumentalise them. The success of *Die endlose Straße* in the 1930s and its divisive interpretation show that the fight for the prerogative of interpretation of the war that was

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<sup>172</sup> Its premier on the 1st of September 1930 at the Deutsches Theater Berlin was directed by Gustaf Gründgens.

<sup>173</sup> It was written in 1915 but censorship only allowed a publication of 50 copies because it was feared that its graphic passages would decrease the morale of its readers (see Kiesel, 501).

<sup>174</sup> Plays like *Journey's End* by Robert C. Sheriff (1896–1975), published in 1929 or the pacifist works of Romain Rolland show that this discourse is not exclusively German. Neither was, not very surprisingly, the discourse of legitimisation. The 1963 stage musical *Oh, What a Lovely War!* by Joan Littlewood (1914–2002) even shows that the discourse continued for much longer in other countries than it did in Germany, where the legacy of WWI was replaced by that of WWII for much of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

also immanent in the theatre scandals evoked by Ernst Toller's *Der deutsche Hinkemann* in 1924 was carried out on the stage.<sup>175</sup> It further demonstrates the significance of dramatic literature and theatre within the discourses of the time.<sup>176</sup>

In their own way, all these plays deny any legitimisation for the war and instead define it as a catastrophe that is not a result of pure circumstances, rather manmade, and was the "größt[e] Verbrechen, das je unter der Sonne, unter den Sternen begangen war" (Kraus 5, 681). Karl Kraus' *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, from which this quote comes, contains almost all motifs familiar from the discourse of legitimisation and attempts to expose what Kraus saw as the reality hidden behind the narratives they represented, making it the most comprehensive engagement with the war-society within the discourse of de-legitimisation.

## 1 "Ein heiliger Verteilungskrieg" – Karl Kraus' satirical accusation *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*

At the time of his death in 1936, Karl Kraus left an extensive oeuvre. His journal *Die Fackel* alone comprises about 30,000 pages.<sup>177</sup> That there is still more to be uncovered has been shown by a recent donation of partially unpublished material to the Brenner Archive of the University of Innsbruck.<sup>178</sup> Karl Kraus' *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* is one of the most

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<sup>175</sup> A look into the reception of the two discourses on the stages of the Weimar Republic and into the possible dynamic the two opposing discourses might have developed within its theatre landscape could even provide an insight into the beginnings of the commemoration of WWI in Germany.

<sup>176</sup> Jürgen Schröder shows that the discourse of de-legitimisation also found its way into the poetry of the post-war era. Considering the enormous numbers of poems produced during the war and the much easier publication conditions, war-critical poems, like Georg Trakl's *Grodek* published in 1914 in the *Brenner* journal, had a much better chance of being published during the war than plays and therefore started the discourse much earlier.

<sup>177</sup> See Krolop, 59. A digitalisation of the entire publications of the *Fackel* was made accessible to the public by the *Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften* in 2007 and contains a search function, which significantly improves the accessibility of this large body of text. (<http://corpus1.aac.ac.at/fackel/>).

<sup>178</sup> Friedrich Pfäfflin, the former head of the museum of the German Literature Archive in Marbach, who edited original material and correspondences of and pertaining to Kraus (see Pfäfflin, *Aus großer Nähe. Karl Kraus in Berichten von Weggefährten und Widersachern; Zwischen Jüngstem Tag und*

epic works about WWI and represents the attempt to process the catastrophe of the time from 1914 to 1918 and to expose what caused it.<sup>179</sup> As much as one sentence can describe a play of this magnitude, the following comment, made by Nobel Peace Prize Winner Alfred H. Fried, who founded the pacifist Magazine *Die Friedens-Warte* in 1899 and reviewed the *Akt-Ausgabe* of Kraus' play in 1920, very fittingly sums up the accusation Kraus made by writing *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*. The play, he said, "führt uns die Gesellschaft vor, die den Krieg macht, ihn dann genießt, ausnützt und die Töpfchen ihres Ehrgeizes und ihres Eigennutzes an dem Flammenmeer schmoren lässt" (Fried, 62).

Portrayed is a society that is crippled by the press, whose reports have managed, "die Gehirne zu benebeln" (Kraus 5, 208) and to suffocate any individual thought amongst its readers. Driven by greed and corrupted by their new power, the press spread the official propaganda narratives using a sensationalist "Phraseologie" (208) that is supposed to increase the sales of their next "Extraausgabe [sic]" (45). The consequence is, according to Kraus, that the peoples' perception of the war is defined by editorials of the likes of Moriz Benjamin with their cliché-loaded repetition of the official propaganda narratives, which deprive language of any meaning. Kraus identifies those who profit from the war as the instigators of these narratives. The monarchs and the military see a chance to regain lost prestige.<sup>180</sup> Opportunists of all sorts see a chance for huge profits and sharing an avoidance of all risk. Kraus presents them acting far behind the front lines, making somebody else fight their war, so that they can pursue their business. He accuses them of manipulating those who do fight, those who believe that the war is in their best interest and that their suffering actually has a meaning. Kraus himself ultimately denies the existence of this meaning. He de-legitimises the narratives that created a sense of meaning and instead exposes the people's faith in them as a result of their failure to comprehend

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*Weltgericht. Karl Kraus und Kurt Wolff. Briefwechsel 1912–1921; 'Du bist dunkel vor Gold'. Kete Parsenow und Karl Kraus. Briefe und Dokumente*), donated his extensive collection of Kraus' manuscripts, hand written poems and unedited letters to the Brenner Archive, as the institution announced in January 2019. (<https://www.uibk.ac.at/newsroom/brenner-archiv-erhaelt-herausragende-karl-kraus-sammlung.html>.de).

<sup>179</sup> See also Szczęśniak, 161.

<sup>180</sup> Melzer emphasises the importance of this aspect, especially for the Habsburg Monarchy (see Melzer, 11). That this aspect of Kraus' analysis should later be confirmed by Clark's examination of Europe's path towards war proves the precision of Kraus' analysis of the two monarchs, whose representation is strikingly similar to Clark's *Sleepwalker*-thesis, not proposed until almost 100 years later.

that their perception of the war was controlled by the media that spread the narratives.

The characters Kraus uses to portray this represent multiple social classes, each with their own language.<sup>181</sup> The play is full of references to historical personae, contemporary events and their representation across the public and journalistic debates of their time. Many of them are difficult to understand or to even recognise for readers who are, because of temporal or cultural distances, not familiar with Kraus' Vienna.<sup>182</sup> But this task is even difficult for scholars familiar with the matter, as the play consists of an estimated one third of direct quotes from verbal and written contemporary sources.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> The play uses countless different dialects from across the multi-ethnic Austrian-Hungarian and the German empires which, as Melzer convincingly argues throughout his comprehensive analysis, contribute to reader perception of the characters, and which is an important aspect in the separation between the NÖRGLER and the other characters.

<sup>182</sup> Especially translators of his work constantly encounter this problem. Modern translations for the reading public must assume that the reader is neither familiar with the time nor with the culture and will especially struggle with them being merged as inseparably as they are in Kraus' drama. Besides providing an interesting insight into the problems of translating Karl Kraus, recent essays on English translations can facilitate an understanding of the relationship between the historic events represented in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* and their relevance for later readers. Detecting this relationship is one of the main aspects in the attempt to increase readability for modern audiences, while staying true to the original text. On the topic of translating Kraus see Brigitte Stocker's *The limits of Translation* and the essay *On Translating Karl Kraus' 'Die letzten Tage der Menschheit'* by Fred Bridgham, who, together with Edward Timms, published the first full translation of the drama in 2015. Marjory Perloff's article *Avant-Garde in a Different Key*, whose complete misunderstanding of the play can only be explained by the inaccessibility of a complete translation, is an example of why a full translation was long overdue. It also shows how difficult it must be for researchers relying on translations to fully understand the play. For the problem of translating Kraus into French see Franz Schwarzinger's "*Sie wollen 'Die letzten Tage der Menschheit' übersetzen? Bumstinazi!*": *Bemerkungen zum französischen Übersetzungsprojekt*.

<sup>183</sup> See Hawig, 24. Theo Buck claims that the number would be as high as 60 percent but due to his very poor referencing, his sources cannot be verified (see Buck, 55). However, it is the reason the play is justifiably regarded as a *Dokumentarstück*. Despite most scholars agreeing on this categorisation, the meaning of the play's subtitle *Tragödie in fünf Akten mit Vorspiel und Epilog*, following approximately one year of the war per act (see Ruske 33–37),

This is typical of Kraus' works. Although the *Dokumentartheater* only really gained momentum during the Weimar Republic, he began to use quotes and documents to prove the deterioration of culture, language and the decline of moral and humanitarian values long before WWI and continued to use them until his death in 1936.<sup>184</sup> The events represented in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* are therefore not a new aspect in his writings but in a way the confirmation of the concerns he expressed in the *Fackel* long before the outbreak of WWI. In *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* Kraus now uses a literary form to expose the pathological development he identifies to have enabled the masses to have supported horrors of such magnitude. One of the major consequences of the deterioration of mankind's moral and cultural standards is, according to Kraus, that violence can easily spiral out of control. This is particularly tragic when it coincides with the events of war because it "trägt ihre Fäulnis in den Krieg, sie steckt den Krieg mit ihr an, sie läßt ihn an ihr verkommen" (193). Kraus thereby explains the hitherto unseen magnitude of violence used in WWI as predetermined by the conditions of the time because the war "wirkt aus den Verfallsbedingungen der Zeit" (193). For

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has also gotten some scholarly attention (see for example Melzer, 133–142). When looking for the properties of a tragic play, the absence of a tragic hero becomes immediately evident. Analyses following this approach often provide interesting insight into the guilt allocated to the represented characters. Especially Horst Thomé's conclusion that all of them are guilty, including the NÖRGLER, and the only victims appearing in the play are the silent cripples in the background, has to be kept in mind whenever one analyses the play (see Thomé, 410–411). Peter Hawig has analysed the play in the tradition of documentary drama, operetta and *theatrum mundi*. His analysis of the individual aspects with regards to the three dramatic categories is valid and finds acquiescence, for example by Irene Pieper with regards to the world theatre motif. However, because of the significance of the document for the play's composition and for Kraus' satire in general, Kurt Anglet points out that it sometimes even replaces his own words (see Anglet, 74–75). Those scholars, who understand the play first and foremost as a *Dokumentarstück* (see Timms, *Apocalyptic Satirist*, 374; Surowska, 257; Elshout, 88), make the strongest case.

<sup>184</sup> The *Dokumentartheater* emerges as part of the increasing popularity of *Zeitstücken* during the Weimar Republic. Ernst Toller's *Feuer aus den Kesseln* and Friedrich Wolf's (1888–1953) *Die Matrosen von Cattaro* are two well-known examples, both processing the mutinies at the end of WWI. Erwin Piscator's technical innovations allowed his productions throughout the 1920s and early 1930s to incorporate documents on stage and represent the performative version of this style (see Deiters, 108).

Kraus, the foundation of this development was the deterioration of language; he believed that this deteriorates the people's ability to perceive and reflect on the reality that surrounds them and makes them vulnerable to manipulation.

Kraus used his play to expose the methods with which the people had been manipulated to support a war which they could not comprehend – the suffocation of individual thought by the empty clichés that constitute the propagandistic narratives.<sup>185</sup> Kraus' drama masterfully reveals the reality these narratives were supposed to conceal and de-legitimises them as propagandistic lies. As a satirist, he exposes the true dealings behind the propagandistic curtain that is represented in the plays of the discourse of legitimisation. He does so by incorporating quotes and other authentic material, which he either isolates or incorporates into a new context within his dialogues. Both methods allow him to put the material on display and to present them in the way he wants them to be understood. Once they are detached from the patriotic propaganda surroundings in which they are usually embedded, Kraus is able to show the brutality, the inhumanity or simply the ridiculous contradiction of the scenes he presents. He excavates the core of the clichés that transport the narratives into the perception of the people and reveals what he identifies as the unperceived reality behind them, while he ultimately de-legitimises the narratives by showing them to be a means of manipulation. These are the same narratives that are represented in the plays of the discourse of legitimisation. Because of his comprehensive knowledge of the literary and theatrical scenes of the time, it can be assumed that Kraus was aware of the discourses negotiated in the plays published during WWI and thereby not only de-legitimises the narratives themselves but also creates an intertextual opposition to their representation in early war plays.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> I agree with J. P. Stern, who identifies Kraus' understanding of clichés as a moral rather than an aesthetic issue, although Stern himself does disagree with this point of view (see Stern, 26–27).

<sup>186</sup> This assumption seems to be confirmed by Kraus' frequent engagement with the topic in the *Fackel* but also by its representation in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*. The play refers to works like Heinrich Gilardone's (1878) *Der Hias* from 1917 (see Kraus 5, 489), the premiere of *Gold gab ich für Eisen* (83), which most likely refers to the *Singspiel in einem Vorspiel und 2 Akten* by Léon Victor, published in 1915, and to theatre productions using soldiers in performances that stage the battles they fought in (650–651). Timms identifies one of these plays as the staging of the Battle of Uszciezko and names another unspecified incident of this nature in Munich (see Timms, *Apocalyptic Satirist*, 327) and Peiter mentions a similar, or maybe the same, situation but does not provide any details about the play itself (see Peiter, 59).



The literary representation of this opposition is the character of the NÖRGLER. Kraus uses him as an instrument to create frames of reference for the represented topics that he distributes throughout the play.<sup>187</sup> The two most important scenes in this context are the scenes I/29 and V/54 which introduce and conclude what is negotiated within this frame. The two scenes demonstrate the structuring effect the NÖRGLER has on the otherwise loose sequence of scenes of the play and the steering effect he has for the perception of the other characters and the topics they represent. The earlier of the two scenes discusses almost the entire motivic repertoire of the play, provides the context that makes it possible to identify the motifs represented in the individual scenes of the play and links them to the greater context of the topics Kraus sees them belonging to. He achieves this through contextual references, by quoting specific parts of other scenes, repeating specific terms or by referring to characters that appear in other scenes and thereby creating motif-chains, which can be traced through the entire play. Furthermore, Kraus has at this point of the play already made connections between the NÖRGLER and himself and the character is already established as the moral authority as which Kraus uses him. This allows him to inscribe a moral standard into the topics he introduces in this scene, to retrospectively demonstrate the failure of the characters in the previous scenes to live up to that standard and to prepare the recipient for the continuation of their failure throughout the play. This strategy ultimately initiates the self-exposure of his characters that constitutes his satirical strategy within the play.

The second of the two scenes contains the famous monologue of the NÖRGLER, which is only followed by the last scene of act five, ending with the collapse of the empires of the Central Powers, and the epilogue, ending with the destruction of mankind by forces from Mars. Using a similar technique as in scene I/29, Kraus concludes the topics by having the NÖRGLER reflect on the past four and a half years, which Kraus covered in the previous scenes, and thereby ultimately reveals the reasons for the subsequent destruction of mankind in the epilogue.

Within the frame these two scenes apply to motivic repertoire of the play, Kraus represents all those parts of society that he saw contributing to the catastrophe as which he viewed the war. One of these parts of society is represented by the family of the industrialist war-profiteer KOMMERZIEN-

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<sup>187</sup> These properties of the NÖRGLER have caused Elena Elshout to see it as an *Erzählerfigur* within the play, as she subtitled her article (Elshout, 87). I consider this terminology difficult from a genre theoretical perspective but support the underlying idea of the NÖRGLER as a literary character that has great influence on the perception of other characters and their actions.

RAT OTTOMAR WILHELM WAHNSCHAFFE, his wife AUGUSTE and his children. In his typical synergetic way, Kraus uses these characters, amongst others, to expose the German *Bürgertum*, the bourgeoisie or (educated) middle class, as the main carrier of the ideology he accuses of being responsible for the war by portraying them as the personification of the pathologic developments he introduced in scene I/29 and then reflects on in scene V/54.<sup>188</sup> Irina Djasemy correctly points out that the couplet at the beginning of the scene represents the German ideology far beyond the propaganda of WWI.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, the WAHNSCHAFFE-scene reveals the correlation between this ideology and the propaganda narratives. Individually and in their compositional relation to each other, these three scenes provide a good insight into the literary strategy with which Kraus identifies and exposes what he believes to have caused the war, whom he sees responsible and what role he allocates to the propaganda narratives in seducing the masses to support the war. Furthermore, scenes I/29 and V/54 demonstrate the central role of the NÖRGLER within Kraus' composition, how his moral authority is literarily created and how this contributes to the de-legitimisation strategies he applies.

### 1.1 Kraus' satire, its affective implications and the role of the NÖRGLER in the de-legitimisation of propaganda narratives

Because of the NÖRGLER's significance for the satirical concept of *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, scholars have discussed the character extensively and controversially.<sup>190</sup> His role within the play, however, can only be un-

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<sup>188</sup> See also Beutin, 165. In reference to a comment on the character by Kraus himself, published in the *Fackel* (F 544–545, 13; F 890–905, 23), Agnes Pistorius emphasises the symbolism of deriving the name of the character who represents the typical German mindset from the verb *wahnschaffen*, meaning as much as disfigured (see Pistorius, 518–519).

<sup>189</sup> Djasemy, *Die verfolgende Unschuld*, 140.

<sup>190</sup> Jürgen Brummack has already pointed out the difficulties the diversity of satire provides for studies that aim to exceed a purely historiographical description and essentially doubts that "es überhaupt eine Satireforschung geben kann, die das einzelne übergreift, da nicht einmal sicher ist, was denn ihr Erkenntnisgegenstand sein soll" (Brummack, *Theorie der Satire*, 275). Of course, this does not mean, as he emphasises in his study *Satirische Dichtung*, that concepts of satire are in general not graspable and that there are not strings of traditions to which the satire of an epoch, a movement or an author can be tied.

derstood when taking into account Kraus's understanding of satire.<sup>191</sup> In 1916, Kraus printed excerpts of Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* in the November issue of the *Fackel*. One of the quotes is Schiller's definition of satire, in which he states that a writer is a satirist "wenn er die Entfernung von der Natur und den Widerspruch der Wirklichkeit mit dem Ideale (in der Wirkung auf das Gemüth kommt beydes auf eins hinaus) zu seinem Gegenstande macht" (Schiller, 442).<sup>192</sup> Following a collection of Kurt Krolop's essays, published in the GDR in 1987<sup>193</sup>, scholars like Norbert Ruske, Linda Simonis, Gilbert Carr, Ari Linden and Gerhard Melzer have since shown that Kraus' satire is indeed oriented on ideals, on the discrepancy between ideological aspiration and reality. This "discrepancy between ideologies and events" (Timms, *Apocalyptical Satirist*, 45) however, is for Kraus only interesting as a symptom of pathological structures.

The typical Krausian representation of small occurrences of everyday life, his "unseligen Hang, die kleinen Erscheinungen und die großen Tatsachen zu verbinden" (Kraus 5, 504) as he has the OPTIMIST express in scene I/29, is his way of exposing these patterns and extending the value of the portrayed situation beyond its immediate context. A closer look at the naming of the play's characters supports this argument. All people represented by their actual names are so familiar to the contemporary reader that they can serve as generalisations of the institutions or social classes they represent, and I agree with Gerhard Melzer and Maximilian Häusler, who see them as archetypes.<sup>194</sup> I also agree with Brigitte Stocker, who states in regards to Kraus' method: the "polemic purpose of satire lies not in attacking historical personalities but in placing great emphasis upon the type of social

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<sup>191</sup> This can here only be done in a simplified way and with a strong focus on the aspects relevant for the epistemological aim of the argumentation.

<sup>192</sup> See also F 443–444, 13.

<sup>193</sup> See Ruske, 280; Simonis, *Die Maske des Menschenfeindes*, Carr, *Figures of Repetition*, 779; Linden, *Beyond Repetition*; Melzer, 23. Kurt Krolop's work is certainly influenced by the communist and Marxist environment in which it was created. But his publication remains in most parts ideologically neutral and factual, providing a good analysis of Kraus' drama (see Krolop, *Sprachsatire als Zeitsatire*). This cannot be said about Emil Sander's *Gesellschaftliche Struktur und literarischer Ausdruck* (1979), which is biased by a strongly anti-capitalist agenda. Sander interprets Kraus' work as a fight against the "Geist des Liberalismus" that would destroy any "Ort der Humanität und der Flucht vor den Folgen der kapitalistischen Verdinglichung" (Sander, 82). The press, for example, is seen as an agent of liberalism and Kraus' critique of the press and the commercial exploitation of the war and its victims as a fight against the domination of capital (see Sander, 82–86).

<sup>194</sup> See Melzer, 112–113; Häusler, 65.

deficiency which they display" (Stocker, *Limits of Translation*, 94).<sup>195</sup> The characters and the situations in which Kraus lets them appear are not used to project the reality of everyday life, but what Kraus perceives as the "Wese[n] der Wirklichkeit" (Lukács, 96). While this method is immanent in the *Fackel*, choosing the literary form of a drama frees Kraus from having to follow the chronology of the represented events and increases his compositional options.<sup>196</sup> He used this freedom to create a carefully composed grid of scenes using the NÖRGLER-scenes as crossroads in order to expose the underlying nexus that ultimately led to the outbreak of the war.

The similarity between the character's views and Kraus' own moral standards, as well as the reference to the character as the "Fackelkraus" (Kraus 5, 177) in scene I/25 have been discussed particularly controversially. Older works frequently identify the character with Kraus himself.<sup>197</sup> But Edward Timms has convincingly argued that this total identification is misleading and newer research, my analysis included, has largely accepted this point of view.<sup>198</sup> This raises the question of why Kraus deliberately created connections between himself and the NÖRGLER in the play. In my opinion, the establishment of a connection between the literary character and the contemporary Kraus makes sense from a literary strategic point of view, without necessarily having to equate the two. Extending Stocker's analysis of the rhetorical methods of Kraus' public speeches to the characters of the NÖRGLER, I understand it as a rhetorical strategy to strengthen the position of the drama's main character as a trustworthy, moral persona in the eyes of the audience.<sup>199</sup> It allowed Kraus to transfer the moral credibility of his

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<sup>195</sup> Häusler correctly identifies two methods to expose these deficiencies: the "diskursiven Modus der Konfrontationstechnik" (Häusler 83), in which either two erroneous clichés are confronted with each other or an erroneous cliché with the truth, and the confrontation of "Rede und Handlung" (82). He does, however, analyse these methods only within individual scenes and overlooks their application across multiple scenes.

<sup>196</sup> The satirisation of historical persons is, as Gilbert Carr points out, very common in Vienna around 1900 and appears in the *Fackel* very early on. Kraus' approach to it, so Carr, differs from the usual fashion of the time by, at least from 1907 onwards, focussing on ethical ideals (see Carr, *Demolierung – Gründung – Ursprung*, 169).

<sup>197</sup> See Melzer, 6; 143; Hindemith, 6–7; 133; Hawig, 29; Weigel, 198. For more recent examples see Bischoff, 136; Böhm, 189.

<sup>198</sup> See Timms, *Apocalyptic Satirist*, 388–391; Riha, 39; Thomé, 395; Peiter, 40; Häusler, 53; Linden, *Between Complicity and Critique*, 105; Stocker, *Rhetorik eines Protagonisten*, 16.

<sup>199</sup> In *Rhetorik eines Protagonisten gegen die Zeit* (2013), Brigitte Stocker analyses his public speeches and argues that he does use these strategies to estab-

own persona, which he had certainly gained by the 1920s, onto the literary character he created, strengthening his position within the *dramatis personae*.

This is also important in relation to the accusation power of the satire. Kraus applies a strategy, in whose centre he again places the NÖRGLER, which becomes particularly evident when looking at the two structurally central scenes of the play. Towards the end of scene I/29, he describes what he sees as the nature of this war and the effects he predicts it will have on the people. This part of his dialogue with the OPTIMIST stands out because Kraus suddenly abandons the satirical tone that has so far characterised their discussion and has the character make a direct accusation. Kraus ends the long dialogue and the first act shortly after and does not really return to the satirical mode until the start of the second act. While in scene I/29 this switch occurs within a short sequence at the end of the long dialogue, the next switch from the usual satirical to a dramatic tone encompasses the entirety of the NÖRGLER's long final monologue in scene V/54, in which Kraus uses him to reckon with what the play has exposed. These passionate speeches stand out and thereby emphasise the horrific consequences of actions and behaviour which is often represented in a tongue-in-cheek manner.

In both cases, Kraus uses the moral authority of the NÖRGLER to inscribe negative affects into the recipient's perception of the war. This strategy is eventually responsible for the creation of negative affects in general. Without it, the satirical and often grotesque appearances of other characters, the de-legitimation of their point of view, could at best ridicule them and the usual pathos of their speeches. But because of the NÖRGLER's exposure of the suffering and death the war causes, the narratives that helped to secure the peoples' support and the characters Kraus uses to represent their effects evoke more than just laughter. Because of this method, farcical dialogues such as the one between the PATRIOT and the ABONNENT in scene II/26, which reveal their confusion about the terms *Angriffskrieg* and *Verteidigungskrieg*, become sharp accusations. Kraus indicates this in the prelude by referring to the nature of the humour that is certainly part of his play:

Der Humor ist nur der Selbstvorwurf eines, der nicht wahnsinnig wurde bei dem Gedanken, mit heilem Hirn die Zeugenschaft dieser Zeitdinge bestanden zu haben. Außer ihm, der die Schmach solchen Anteils einer Nachwelt preisgibt, hat kein anderer ein Recht auf diesen Humor. Die Mitwelt, die ge-

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lish himself as "eine moralische Instanz" (Stocker, *Rhetorik eines Protagonisten*, 41).

duldet hat, daß die Dinge geschehen, die hier aufgeschrieben sind, stelle das Recht, zu lachen, hinter die Pflicht, zu weinen (9).

Kraus uses the NÖRGLER therefore not only on a concrete level to expose the tragic carnival of the other characters, but also to make recipients reassess the laughter that the farcical characters and situations might create, especially in readers of later generations for which the horrors of WWI have become affectless historical knowledge.

The NÖRGLER's purpose for the satirical strategy of the play, as the sole reoccurring character capable of (self-)reflection, is to serve as the literary representation of a moral concept according to which the "Widerspruch der Wirklichkeit mit dem Ideale" (Schiller, 442) is identified. He allows Kraus to unmask the "Täter und Sprecher einer Gegenwart, die nicht Fleisch, doch Blut, nicht Blut, doch Tinte hat" (Kraus 5, 9). In this character Kraus combines the three aspects which Jürgen Brummack identifies as the "konstitutive[n] Elemente" (Brummack, *Theorie der Satire*, 282) of what literary studies understands as the "Satire im engeren Sinne" (276). The individual element of a "private[n] Irritation" (282) is achieved when Kraus infuses his own authority and thereby his personal moral standards into the character. The social element is represented by the moral concept the NÖRGLER represents within the play and the aesthetic element is represented by the language Kraus has the NÖRGLER use. It provides an aesthetic counter draft that is not only an attack on the deteriorated state of the language of his time but also clearly distinct from that of all other characters. All these attributes make the NÖRGLER Kraus' most effective satirical instrument to enhance the self-demasking effects of the other characters. Kraus lets them, as Michael Rogers correctly states, "reveal their own falsehood" (Rogers, 35) by contrasting them with the layer of morality he imbues the other scenes of the play with through his representation of the NÖRGLER.

In this form, the NÖRGLER's dialogues with the OPTIMIST provide the moral and ideological background for previous and subsequent scenes.<sup>200</sup> This allows Kraus to create a fixed point in which the topoi of the play are concentrated and in which the behavior of the other characters is assessed by the NÖRGLER, reflecting on the classes, structures and phenomena they represent. In this way, scenes of the play that externally appear to be unstructured gain an internal structure and make the NÖRGLER's comments function as a compositional tool for the satirical exposure of the portrayed structures' pathological developments of society.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> See also Ruske, 50; Djassem, *Die verfolgende Unschuld*, 120, Häusler, 56.

<sup>201</sup> Norbert Ruske, Gerhard Melzer and Maximilian Häusler come to a similar conclusion in regards to the significance of the composition for satiric effect

## 1.2 “Ein ausgehöhltes Menschentum” as the prerequisite for the propaganda narratives

Besides exposing the reality behind the propaganda narratives, one of the main topics of the play is Kraus’ identification of the reasons for their success. He understands these reasons as a development that began, just like his critique of them in the *Fackel*, long before WWI.<sup>202</sup> The increasing power of the press as the first mass medium was something he observed with great concern and its role in the outbreak and over the course of the war would confirm the fears he had expressed. “Invalide waren wir durch die Rotationsmaschinen, ehe es Opfer durch Kanonen gab” (Kraus 5, 676) is the representation of this aspect, included by Kraus in the NÖRGLER’s last monologue. He indicates in this scene that it is not an exclusively German devolvement. The press, “die Hure von Babylon”, which “in allen Zungen der Welt uns überredete, wir wären einander feind und es solle Krieg sein” (677), is at work all over the world, and yet, “[k]ein Volk lebt entfernter von seiner Sprache, also von der Quelle seines Lebens, als die Deutschen” (200). This alienation between the language and its speakers caused a particularly dangerous situation in Germany and Austria-Hungary and made the masses especially susceptible to manipulation. In other words, Kraus identifies the destruction of the intellectual capacities of mankind as one of the most important preconditions of its physical destruction.<sup>203</sup>

Kraus defines the deterioration of language as far more than just an aesthetic offence. According to him, it robs the masses of their life source, their connection to reality, and thereby increases their predisposition for manipulation as they are no longer able to detect the emptiness of the propaganda narratives they are exposed to. The motif Kraus uses to inscribe this effect into the play is imagination. It is, as he has the NÖRGLER claim, “hinter den technischen Errungenschaften der Menschheit zurückgeblieben” (208), causing the people to lose their ability to perceive reality. What sounds like a contradiction, the necessity to possess imagination to perceive reality, becomes clear when one looks at how Kraus defines imag-

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(see Ruske, 24; Melzer, 117; Häusler, 46) but overlook the discussed bundling of characters into motifs for which the NÖRGLER is responsible.

<sup>202</sup> Kurt Krolop’s essay *Dichtung und Satire bei Karl Kraus* provides an analytical chronology of the essential topics in the *Fackel* and thereby documents the existence of press representations for the entire duration of the 37-year lifetime of the journal.

<sup>203</sup> See Pieper, 84; Kouno, 298.

ination. It is again the NÖRGLER who delivers this definition. If mankind still had imagination, it would no longer wage war:

Weil dann die Suggestion einer von einem abgelebten Ideal zurückgebliebenen Phraseologie nicht Spielraum hätte, die Gehirne zu benebeln; weil man selbst die unvorstellbarsten Greuel sich vorstellen könnte und im Voraus wüßte, wie schnell der Weg von der farbigen Redensart und von allen Fahnen der Begeisterung zu dem feldgrauen Elend zurückgelegt ist; weil die Aussicht, fürs Vaterland an der Ruhr zu sterben oder sich die Füße abfrieren zu lassen, kein Pathos mehr mobil machen [sic] würde (208);

In this sense, imagination is the ability to uncover the reality behind the clichés that constitute the propagandistic narratives and emotionalise the nation's warfare to a point where its terrors are no longer acknowledged. Without imagination, the nationalistic enthusiasm that is evoked by these narratives eventually suffocates the reality they describe. Because Kraus exposes not only the people's perception as manipulated but also their emotions, he de-legitimises the affects created by these narratives and their literary representations. In his strategy to de-legitimise the positive affects related to one's own warfare as well as the negative affects associated with the alleged attack, Kraus tries to direct the emotional repertoire to the war itself, in order to then be able to represent the horrors he identifies with it.

In a way, he is trying to reverse the effects the press coverage of the war had, which in his opinion created a propagandistic curtain of emotions behind which the true nature of the war disappeared. The image of the press in this thought construct of Kraus' is that of "a perfect system of misinformation that creates the world it professes to represent" (Norberg, 47). The NÖRGLER's list of examples of newspapers which wrote such things as that "unser[e] jetzigen Stellungen" are "bombensicher" and that "die Beschießung eines Platzes" was "ein Bombenerfolg" (Kraus 5, 257) serves as a clarification of what he wants to demonstrate: that a people is doomed "wenn es seine Phrasen noch in einem Lebensstand mitschleppt, wo es deren Inhalt wieder erlebt. Das ist dann der Beweis dafür, daß es diesen Inhalt nicht mehr erlebt" (256).<sup>204</sup>

This could have been prevented, "[h]ätte man statt der Zeitung Phantasie" (209). But newspapers had managed to establish themselves as the main source of information and thereby, according to Kraus, increased their

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<sup>204</sup> How important the fight against an increasing phraseology for Kraus is becomes clear when looking at the first issue of the *Fackel*, published in April 1899, where Kraus declares on the first page: "Das politische Programm dieser Zeitung [...] ist nichts als eine Trockenlegung des weiten Phrasensumpfes" (F1, 1–2).



credibility amongst readers to the point where they would believe everything the newspapers were to print. Kraus also represents what he sees as the consequence of this development in the couplet he has OTTOMAR WAHNSCHAFFE sing at the beginning of scene III/40. WAHNSCHAFFE simply accepts that “Wahrheit” is provided by the “Wolffbüro” (394). By portraying the perception of reality in general and of the war in particular as entirely dependent on their representation in the newspapers, Kraus establishes a connection between the propaganda narratives spread by the press and the people’s support of the war. This connection enables him to de-legitimise the narratives as means of manipulation and simultaneously to explain the reasons he saw for their success. By granting the NÖRGLER imagination, a counter concept is established that enables Kraus to provide him with an unclouded view on what he identifies as the reality of war. Because the NÖRGLER’s eye “gewahrt die Konturen, und Phantasie tut das übrige” (224), Kraus can use him to clearly express what the other characters demonstrate: “Der meldende Bote, der mit der Tat auch gleich die Phantasie bringt, hat sich vor die Tat gestellt und sie unvorstellbar gemacht” (209).<sup>205</sup>

Kraus uses scene I/29 to make an accusation that the people are not able to comprehend the reality of the war they support because their perception is blurred by newspapers. He states that the method the newspapers use is to keep repeating the propaganda narratives until the readers perceive them as their personal experience, “im Bericht abgebunden!” (209). Characters like DER ALTE BIACH, the dialogues of the ABONNENT and the PATRIOT and of the two VEREHRER DER REICHSPOST, to name just a few, are then used throughout the play to confirm this accusation by letting them expose their belief system as indoctrinated.<sup>206</sup> Kraus achieves this through

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<sup>205</sup> See also Djassemey, *Die verfolgende Unschuld*, 126–127. In her earlier publication, *Der ‘Productivgehalt kritischer Zerstörerarbeit’* (2002), Djassemey comprehensively and conclusively examined Kraus’ press critique. I agree with her on the here discussed identification “von Bericht und Ereignis” (Djassemey, *Der ‘Productivgehalt kritischer Zerstörerarbeit’*, 233). But by basing the analysis on texts of the *Fackel* her argumentation ignores the responsibility of the newspaper readers, represented in the play by BIACH and other characters, for not seeing through the newspapers’ persuasiveness. Timothy Youker for example phrases it more carefully and speaks of a choice of the reader to cease critical thinking and replace it with the ready-made opinion of the newspapers (see Youker, 36).

<sup>206</sup> Elshout and especially Melzer correctly argue that naming characters after particular characteristics reduces them to these properties (see Elshout, 90; Melzer, 79–83). This is significant as it defines them as a supra-individual representation of a pathologic property of society. The PATRIOT and the

the language he provides them with, which essentially represents colloquialised newspaper articles.<sup>207</sup> Sometimes, their language is even reduced to the newspaper headlines of the infamous editorials of Moriz Benedikt, editor in chief of the *Neue Freie Presse*, who later appears as the HERR DER HYÄNEN, one of the many apocalyptic figures in the epilogue.<sup>208</sup>

In combination with these representations, the NÖRGLER's analysis serves as an amplifier of the expected failure of all other characters, who do not judge what they read according to their own experience and moral compass but simply accept the opinion that is conveyed by the media. Kraus' conclusion is that this development has "ein ausgehöhltes Menschentum vermocht, Greuel zu verüben, die es sich nicht mehr vorstellen kann" (210). The press' "farbigen Redensart[en]" have created so much patriotic "Pathos" (208) that eventually "40.000 russische Leichen, die am Drahtverhau verzuckt sind" (209) are no longer deemed to be worth more than another *Extraausgabe*. Furthermore, Kraus represents the demotionalising and ignoring of the sufferings of compatriots and juxtaposes them with the enthusiasm for victories. He claims the same emotional one-sidedness for the atrocities of the war. Atrocities occurred on all sides but are either condemned or ignored, depending on which nation commits them.<sup>209</sup> The consequence is that the war transforms "das Leben in eine Kinderstube, in der immer der andere angefangen hat" (220). These examples serve Kraus as proof of the emptiness of the German language, which is the "Sprache, die am meisten zu Phrase und Vorrat erstarrt ist" and therefore "den Hang und die Bereitschaft hat, mit dem Tonfall der Überzeugung alles das an sich selbst untadelig zu finden, was dem andern zum Vorwurf gereicht" (201).

The consequence of this representation is ultimately a delegitimisation of the propaganda narratives. Kraus achieves this by expos-

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ABONNENT are de-individualised and represent the members of society who are blinded by patriotic propaganda in general and the press in particular. In this context, Wilhelm Hindemith's heuristic, structuralistic approach, which uses the character constellation as one of three categories with which the structure of the play is analysed, makes sense. However, the classification of the play's content according to reoccurring places, characters and situations (see Hindemith, 53) separates motifs which belong together.

<sup>207</sup> See Arntzen, 435.

<sup>208</sup> See also Thiel, 95–97.

<sup>209</sup> The introduction of euphemisms like the term "Ausputzen" (*Kraus* 5, 584) referring to the "Massakrieren" (585) of enemy soldiers in their trenches with shovels and grenades, or LUDWIG GANGHOFER's description of the German artillery in a feuilleton presented to KAISER WILHELM II in scene I/23 are examples of strategies represented in the play.

ing the language employed by the press as an empty “Phraseologie” (208) that prevents the peoples’ self-reflection and creates a reality that is steered by narratives rather than reflecting the true events.<sup>210</sup> In scene V/54, Kraus provides a retrospective judgement that demonstrates what he sees as the consequences of this development over the last four and a half years. Through the NÖRGLER’s monologue, Kraus expresses this connection between language, imagination and the outbreak of the war, when asking rhetorically:

Waren nicht alle Reiche der Phantasie evakuiert, als jenes Manifest der bewohnten Erde den Krieg erklärte? Am Ende war das Wort. Jenem, welches den Geist getötet, blieb nichts übrig, als die Tat zu gebären (676–677).

Precisely therein Kraus identifies the guilt of the press:<sup>211</sup>

Nicht daß die Presse die Maschinen des Todes in Bewegung setzte – aber daß sie unser Herz ausgehöhlt hat, uns nicht mehr vorstellen zu können, wie das wäre: das ist ihre Kriegsschuld! (677).

The aforementioned BIACH and other newspaper readers are therefore not just farcical, sheepish parodies of the naïve masses but are used to demonstrate the consequence of the development represented in scene I/29. With the language deprived of its meaning, Kraus sees the door open for the manipulation of the masses and thereby ultimately de-legitimises the propaganda narratives as means of manipulating the masses into supporting a war of which they have no perception.

He uses journalists and war correspondents, most famously DIE SCHALEK, to portray how the media create an image of modern warfare as well as of the situation in the *Heimat* which is entirely unrealistic.<sup>212</sup> In the

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<sup>210</sup> Häusler can stand as representative of many other scholars who come to the same conclusion with regards to the fact that the corrupted imagination influences the perception of reality (see Häusler, 63–64). These works, however, normally do not look at what the press is replacing reality with, and therefore miss its influence on the distribution of propaganda narratives.

<sup>211</sup> It is, however, debatable whether Kraus sees the press’s methods of creating support for and then exploiting the war as intentionally causing the war, as Hawig states (see Hawig, 28), or as only an accusation that the newspapers merely exploited this development.

<sup>212</sup> Karl Kraus’ contention with Alice Schalek in the *Fackel* lasted almost 32 years. She first appeared in December 1910 (F 313–314, 10), is first mentioned in her role as the only female war correspondent officially employed by the Austrian *Kriegspressquartier* in October 1915 (F 406–412, 15) and

first scene of the prologue, for example, which portrays the situation in Vienna after the assassination of Archduke Franz-Ferdinand and later in scene I/1, set on the evening of the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on Serbia, reporters simply invent an atmosphere that supports the promoted narrative with the intention "dem Publikum Appetit [zu] machen auf den Krieg und auf das Blatt, das geht in einem" (77).

Kraus manages to portray them as "Ingenieure der Lüge" (199). The term *Ingenieure* is thereby not only a stylistic one but consciously used by Kraus to emphasise the intent that he accuses the media of. They, as the NÖRGLER declares, lie "für den zu erreichenden Zweck" (199), and Kraus portrays this in two scenes. In scene II/16, Kraus introduces a GENERALSTÄBLER who instructs a journalist on how to report on the lost fortress of Przemysl and then contradicts his instructions word by word in scene III/22 when instructing the journalist on how to report on the re-taking of the very same fortress.<sup>213</sup> "Alles kann man vergessen machen, lieber Freund" (274, 364) is the officer's reminder of the influence of the press, which he emphasises by repeating the sentence word for word in both scenes.<sup>214</sup> And so, the press creates a "Kriegs- und Lebenslüge" (199) whose purpose is ultimately defined as the establishment of narratives for the war that suppress its horrific reality.

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appeared regularly until March 1932 (F 868–872, 51). In the play, SCHALEK appears in nine different scenes and is so the most frequently appearing journalistic character. Elisabeth Klaus has accused Kraus of pursuing an anti-feminist agenda in his dealing with Alice Schalek (see Klaus, 66). While his rhetoric in the *Fackel* supports her thesis, the character in the play, like any other character, represents a greater pattern. Being the only female war correspondent in the countries of the Central Powers, her high profile explains Kraus' choice. The fact that she still appears in act five, set at a time when the historical Schalek has already lost her accreditation, supports the detachment between the character and the person although it does not justify the sexist rhetoric.

<sup>213</sup> See Timms, *Kraus' 'Die letzten Tage der Menschheit'*, 154.

<sup>214</sup> Analysing mainly texts from the *Fackel*, Jakob Norberg comes to the correct conclusion that Kraus accuses the press of losing control of its own power and of failing to see the damage they inflict (see Norberg, *Creative Destruction: Karl Kraus and the Paradox of Satire*). In *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, however, scenes like these or scene IV/20, in which a representative of German diplomacy manipulates the attending journalists, are rare. The appearance of Moriz Benedikt as Der HERR DER HYÄNEN in the epilogue also decreases the level to which at least the leading figures of the newspapers during WWI can be excused.

However, Kraus denies that the masses have the ability to identify these lies as such until it is too late, due to their lack of imagination. It is only in the epilogue that Kraus has a dying soldier abjure from the nationalistic idea of defending “Kaiser und Reich” (Ewald, 21). This cliché that dominated the literary discourse of legitimisation until the end of the war is in Kraus’ representation equally long lasting. Only after everything is destroyed does Kraus represent a soldier breaking the spell and screaming that he will not die for “den Kaiser” and also “für kein Vaterland!” (Kraus 5, 731). Instead, he now willingly accepts the “Standgericht” as a punishment as long as his imminent death “die Fesseln bricht” (731) that tie him to the regime that caused the war. In this context, the structural importance of scene I/29 is again apparent as Kraus uses it to indicate this development, thereby relativising those voices that try to use the powerlessness of the masses as an excuse:

Daß er aber die ganze umgebende Welt in ein großes Hinterland des Betrugs, der Hinfälligkeit und des unmenschlichsten Gottverrats verwandeln wird, indem das Schlechte über ihn hinaus und durch ihn fortwirkt, hinter vorgeschobenen Idealen fett wird und am Opfer wächst! Daß sich in diesem Krieg, dem Krieg von heute, die Kultur nicht erneuert, sondern sich durch Selbstmord vor dem Henker rettet. Daß er mehr war als Sünde: daß er Lüge war, tägliche Lüge, aus der Druckerschwärze floß wie Blut, eins das andere nähernd, auseinanderströmend, ein Delta zum großen Wasser des Wahnsinns. Daß dieser Krieg von heute nichts ist als ein Ausbruch des Friedens, und daß er nicht durch Frieden zu beenden wäre, sondern durch den Krieg des Kosmos gegen diesen hundstollen Planeten! Daß Menschenopfer unerhört fallen mußten, nicht beklagenswert weil sie ein fremder Wille zur Schlachtbank trieb, sondern tragisch, weil sie eine unbekannte Schuld zu büßen hatten. Daß für einen, der das beispiellose Unrecht, welches sich noch die schlechteste Welt zufügt, als Tortur an ihm selbst empfindet – daß für ihn nur die eine letzte sittliche Aufgabe bleibt: mitleidslos diese bange Wartezeit zu ver-schlafen, bis ihn das Wort erlöst oder die Ungeduld Gottes (224).

By having the NÖRGLER use the past tense in those sentences in which he defines the war as a lie and predicts that millions of “Menschenopfer” (224) will have to be made before mankind will come to its senses, Kraus suggests that the guilt of a society that has supported the war for so long weighs heavier than the fact that some people had no choice. His accusation is aimed at the acceptance of their circumstances and the arrangements the people made with the lies they had been told, rather than excusing them for having been deceived. Max Jungnickel’s (1890–1945) *Die Gefallenen* from 1920 also represents this aspect. Jungnickel, who later affiliated with the National Socialist regime, lets Death appear and wake up four fallen

soldiers to confront them with their involvement in the war. Their laments are opposed with the revelation that they all bear their own share of guilt not only because of their role during the war but also for their naïve acceptance of the lies that led to its outbreak:

DER TOD: Warum hast du alles verlassen?

DER DRITTE SOLDAT: Weil die Erde nach mir schrie, auf der ich geboren ward und ein Weib nahm, die Kinder zeugte; weil die Erde nach mir schrie, daß ich sie beschützen sollte. --

DER TOD: Und du hast nicht daran gedacht, daß dein Blut mehr ist als deine Erde? -- Daß die Erde von deinen Träumen lebt? Daß deine Liebe alles glücklich machen kann -- Und daß dein Fleiß der König deiner Erde ist?

DER DRITTE SOLDAT: Die Erde schrie nach mir.

DER TOD: Du lügst.

DER DRITTE SOLDAT: Der König schrie nach mir.

DER TOD: Dein König log!

DER DRITTE SOLDAT: Die weisen Herren gaben mir alle mit Bibelsprüchen ihren Segen --

DER TOD: Lug! Lug! (Jungnickel, 50–51).

The long passage quoted above from Kraus, however, goes beyond a pure accusation and concentrates the topics introduced in the scene into an apocalyptic prophecy. As mentioned above, it stands out because it lacks the satirical tone of the previous dialogue between the NÖRGLER and the OPTIMIST and represents the NÖRGLER's ability to anticipate the devastations of this war. The fact that he is not blinded by the press but maintains his ability to reflect on and judge the consequences of the developments he observes is in itself an accusation aimed towards all other characters who fail to do so. But the result of his reflection serves an additional purpose. It inscribes the representation of a reality into the play that no other character perceives and thereby confronts the recipient with the discrepancy between the moral standards the NÖRGLER represents and the structures exposed by the use of other characters.<sup>215</sup>

In the NÖRGLER's final monologue, Kraus has him remember the "Orgie von Kot und Lüge" (Kraus 5, 673) with which the fatherland betrayed the people that it sent to war. By not giving any particular date in the NÖRGLER's recollection of "dem Tag, da du auszogst", Kraus manages to

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<sup>215</sup> Anne Peiter sees the concept of self-exposure as a result of Kraus' realisation that those whom he would like to expose constantly expose themselves, leaving him only the option to represent their self-exposure in his works (see Peiter, 53).

extend the period in which he sees the lies' effects beyond the initial enthusiasm of August 1914 and makes the press responsible for every single soldier that was moved out over the four and a half years of the war. Mankind, so Kraus, consequently "zerbricht an der Lüge: die Wesenlosigkeit, an die er den alten Inhalt seines Menschentums verloren hat, in den alten Lebensformen zu bewähren. Händler und Held zu sein und dieses sein zu müssen, um jenes zu bleiben" (671). Kraus portrays mankind as having become a hollow husk, caught in an anachronistic cask and therefore destined to perish.

These mechanisms are Kraus' representations of the reasons for the narrative's success. The most crucial narrative, just like in the discourse of legitimisation, is the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. All others depend in one way or another on its successful indoctrination into the shared consciousness of the people. Because of the play's attempt "vor der eigenen Tür zu kehren" (508), it does not grant the other nations absolution from these accusations but instead exposes the propaganda narratives circulating in Germany and Austria-Hungary. One method with which Kraus does this is by revealing the motivations and interest groups that are, according to his point of view, the real driving forces behind this war. This representation de-legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative's claim of the peaceful Central Powers, whose people were forced to defend themselves but had no belligerent motives of their own.

### 1.3 The fight against the *Verteidigungskrieg*

*Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* is in a way an accusation against the Central Powers, who had, according to Kraus, caused or at least provoked the outbreak of the war. From this perspective, the entire play is a de-legitimation of the alleged defensive character of their war effort. But Kraus also refers directly to the propaganda narrative and its claim that Germany was attacked in the midst of peace, as Wilhelm II had phrased it. Kraus uses the obvious discrepancy between the propaganda of the *Verteidigungskrieg* and the fact that the involvement of the major European powers was a reaction to the German invasion of Belgium. "Ein Überfall", as Kraus has the NÖRGLER emphasise the ridiculousness of the Central Powers' claims, "geschieht in der Regel gegen den, der überfallen wird, seltener gegen den, der überfällt" (195). With the same irony, he asks if it should perhaps more accurately be called an "Überfall, der für den Überfallenden etwas überraschend kam, und einen Akt der Notwehr, der den Überfallenden ein wenig überrumpelt hat" (195). Kraus' ironic representation of

Germany's attempt to make itself appear the innocent victim of a violent attack is here used to directly de-legitimise the official narrative.<sup>216</sup>

While Kraus lets the NÖRGLER clearly see that the war was essentially a "planmäßige[r] Überfall" (195) by the Central Powers, most other characters are unable to breach the narrative. The PATRIOT and the ABONNENT for example, Kraus' representatives of the manipulated masses of newspaper readers, are confused by the obvious contradictions but are willing to adjust their reality to the narrative no matter how nonsensical the result is. And so they are happy with the explanation that "Deutschland also vollständig gerüstet [war] für einen *Verteidigungskrieg*, den es schon lang führen wollte, und die Entente schon lang einen *Angriffskrieg* [hat] führen wollen, für den sie aber nicht gerüstet war" (295). When seen in the context of the NÖRGLER's comments, the outrage with which Kraus imbues the characters in this and similar scenes exposes a typical, previously indicated strategy of the play. Because of their confusion of *Angriffskrieg* and *Verteidigungskrieg* the pathos of their speeches, and with it the pathos of the newspapers processing of propaganda narratives, is not just ridiculed but exposed as illegitimate.

Having lost the ability to reflect, the masses' blind acceptance of the clichés that blame "britischen Neid, französische Revanchesucht und russische Raubgier" (195) for the outbreak of the war is exposed. After introducing it in scene I/29, Kraus repeats the cliché in multiple scenes throughout the play in order to represent how permeated society is by the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and how willingly they parrot it in order to justify their own actions.<sup>217</sup>

It is also repeated by FRAU KOMMERZIENRAT WAHNSCHAFFE in regards to a proposal to prolong the war beyond a possible peace treaty (400) and

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<sup>216</sup> See Beutin, 166. Referring to the dynamic between Germany and Austria-Hungary, represented in scene III/41, Ari Linden argues in a similar way (see Linden, *Between Complicity and Critique*, 110).

<sup>217</sup> He portrays members of a German nationalist fraternity as they use the war to reinstate conservative role models (348) and physicians, representing the scientific intelligentsia, as they shut down emerging ideas of a premature peace (443). He portrays writers representing the cultural intelligentsia, as they justify their role in radicalising the masses (459) and two Prussian merchants who advocate improving the popularity of Germany amongst the enemies in an effort not to alienate customers. Ironically, they plan to do this by reminding these enemies that they had started the war (665). These two merchants are the characters GOG and MAGOG, whose names are biblical references to the country of Magog and its king Gog, and gain additional symbolic significance as they are, according to the Gospel of John, Satan's accomplices in the apocalypse (see Pistorius, 174; 311).



by her children as a representation of the extent to which the greed of gain and the clichés of German militarism have indoctrinated the class the family represents (405).<sup>218</sup> And while characters like the ABONNENT and the PATRIOT seem to be genuinely confused and blinded, the WAHNSCHAFFE retinue is used to reveal the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative as a convenient lie to cover up the intended expansion of their business pursuits. Kraus expresses this in the couplet of OTTOMAR WAHNSCHAFFE, in which he exposes the behaviour that he defines as characteristic for the class WAHNSCHAFFE represents: “Weil vor dem Krieg ich nicht geruht, / drum gibt es Krieg und uns gehts gut” (393). In this couplet, Kraus represents the war as a consequence of the ambitions and endeavours of the bourgeoisie and thereby clearly de-legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. It shows that in his understanding, the war was by no means an unexpected act of self-defence but rather was used as an excuse to enable economic and territorial expansions. This is even more explicit in the next stanza:

Ich geb' mein deutsches Ehrenwort:  
wir Deutsche brauchen mehr Export.  
Um an der Sonne 'nen Platz zu haben,  
gehn wir auch in den Schützengraben.  
Zu besserer Zukunft Expansionen  
hilft uns so unbequemes Wohnen (393).

When comparing the role Kraus ascribes to the bourgeoisie with his critique of the press, the severity with which he attacks the wealthy middle class becomes even clearer. While he makes one constraint to the extent of the guilt of journalists – that they had not started the war but ‘only’ made mankind receptive for it – the bourgeoisie is represented as part of those forces which actively pushed for its outbreak to satisfy their greed. In the WAHNSCHAFFE-couplet, Kraus emphasises this in multiple stanzas.

Standing “im Dienst der schweren Industrie” (392), WAHNSCHAFFE’s profit from the initial attack on Belgium is used to expose it as part of a pre-planned and calculated expansion. Adrian von Arx’ also represents this accusation in his religious play *Der Helfer*, by letting the AUFSICHTSRAT of a weapon manufacturer explain the aims of this war: “Die Ziele des Krieges, das sind Erz und Kohle, zu denen unsere Geschütze uns den

<sup>218</sup> The casualness and confidence with which they represent these arguments differ in no way from that of adult characters and the characteristics of children and adults seem to merge, raising the question of whether any intellectual difference between adults and children concerning the understanding of the events they engage with actually exists (see also Häusler, 82; Djassem, *Die verfolgende Unschuld*, 150–151).

Zugang brechen. Wer Erz und Kohle hat, dem gehört [...] die Herrschaft der Welt" (Arx, 31). While the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative strives to label the invasion of Belgium as an incident that was unfortunate but inevitable to protect Germany from an imminent French attack, the plays of the dis-course of de-legitimisation use representatives of the bourgeoisie to expose what they see as the true motives behind the attack. The WAHNSCHAFFE-couplet represents the official propaganda narratives as pretence developed to mask the fact that the war is a means to secure lucrative territories:

Wir sorgen, daß uns nicht entgeh'  
das erzne Becken von Briey.  
[...]  
Es geht uns doch nur um die Ehr'.  
Nein, Belgien geben wir nicht her! (Kraus 5, 396).

According to Kraus' play, the occupation is not a necessary measure to prevent Belgium from any further resistance, as the official version alleges, but part of Germany's annexationist aims. The reality of the war appears as the polar opposite of what the propaganda narratives try to convey and Kraus emphasises this by reversing the usual argumentation and claiming in the WAHNSCHAFFE-couplet that it is in fact Germany that has "die Welt [...] eingekreist" (396), reversing the propaganda narrative's argumentation, stating that "weil man etwas Sonne braucht, / haben wir die Welt in Nacht getaucht" (396). As discussed above, the German *Einkreisungsangst* has dominated foreign policies on and off since Bismarck and was one of the key terms in Germany's legitimisation of the *Schlieffenplan*. The metaphor of light and darkness, often used to express the idea of the superiority of German culture, is thus turned against Germany in a technique Kraus employs to expose his opinion on the aggression of Germany's politics and the consequences of using its culture as an argument for war. Furthermore, Kraus represents WAHNSCHAFFE as being fully aware that only the "Endsieg unser Recht beweist" (396), meaning that only the opportunity to write history as the winner of the war can grant absolution. This emphasises the deceitfulness that Kraus sees in the use of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and its creation as an excuse to provoke a war that causes so much suffering for so many people.

Kraus' strategy of satirically turning Germany's own arguments against it permeates the entire couplet and includes an aspect that is repeatedly emphasised in early war plays: the representation of the achievements of the German culture and the peoples' diligence as a peaceful way to bring progress to their own nation, without harming anybody else. *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, however, negates this image and labels the "Wacht am

Rhein” (397), since the 1850s the epitome of Germany’s defence against French aggression, as a way the “Welt vom Frieden zu befreien” (397). With this couplet, Kraus also undermines the constant reassurance that Germany’s war effort only serves the purpose of re-establishing peace, claiming that “Friede uns nicht intressiert, / eh wir die Welt nicht annektiert” (396). Furthermore, he lets WAHNSCHAFFE predict that after the official end of the war there will “noch mehr Arbeit sein / und noch mehr Krieg und noch mehr Pein.” (397). In the next verses he defines a striving for war as the nature of the German mindset:

Wie freue ich mich heut’ schon drauf,  
die Liebe höret nimmer auf.  
Ach, wenn nur schon der Friede wär’,  
damit ich seiner müde wär’! (397).

He thereby de-legitimises the claim of peacefulness of the German people by using WAHNSCHAFFE to represent those classes whose greed always has them strive for expansion. Early German war plays, like Paul Treichel’s *Deutscher Geist und deutsche Treue*, which assigns the entire first of three acts to this theme, went to great effort to represent the peacefulness of the German people. In the quoted four verses of the stanza, however, Kraus rather seems to agree with the propaganda of the Entente, which, symbolised for example by the image of the Hun, represents the German nature as belligerent, aggressive and insatiable.

By representing the war as a continuation of the expansionist nature of the German pre-war society, Kraus extends the search for the reasons for its outbreak to the time before 1914 and emphasises that the war is the consequence of a pathological development that had begun much earlier. The *Heimkehrerdramen* are in line with Kraus’ impression of the German pre-war mindset and even represent it as continuing into the post-war era. Clausewitz’ famous quote of war as “bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mit andern Mitteln” (Clausewitz, 19) is represented by Kraus as the foundation of the German mindset, which, as WAHNSCHAFFE displays, explicitly accepts war as a method to achieve political and economic goals. This also constitutes a similarity to the methods of de-legitimation used in the *Heimkehrerdramen*, although these focus more on the acceptance of violence on an individual level than on the institutionalised use of violence in a war.

Consequently, for Kraus, this nature of the German mindset supports the cause of the Entente. Because,

wenn die andern sagen, die deutsche Kriegführung sei barbarisch, so fühlen sie doch mit Recht, daß die deutsche Friedensführung barbarisch ist. Und das

muß sie gewesen sein, da sie sonst nicht seit Generationen auf dem Gedanken aufgebaut gewesen wäre, die deutsche Kriegführung vorzubereiten (Kraus 5, 199).

The statement represents the pretence of the narratives of peace-loving people, who strive for cultural prosperity under the guardianship of the two fatherly monarchs Franz Josef and Wilhelm II. Instead, and here the circle closes, one has to understand “was man britischen Neid, französische Revanchesucht und russische Raubgier nennt, als seine Aversion gegen den ehernen Tritt deutscher Schweißfüße” (195).

With the metaphor of the stomping German boots, Kraus directs the dialogue between the NÖRGLER and the OPTIMIST onto the topic of the German militarism. But instead of seeing it as the manifestation of an aggressive annexationism during the Wilhelmine Empire, Kraus lets the NÖRGLER represent it as “das Machtmittel, das der jeweils herrschenden Geistesrichtung zu ihrer Durchsetzung dient” (197). He thereby identifies the dominant ideology of the time as the core of the problem and militarism only as the instrument with which it is enforced, absolving the basic concept of militarism itself from any responsibility and instead blaming its misuse. According to Kraus, the dominant ideology responsible is the “Idee jüdisch-kapitalistischer Weltzerstörung” (197) and the identification of “Lebensmitte[!] als Lebenszweck” (204), which forgets “daß Gott den Menschen nicht als Konsumenten oder Produzenten erschaffen hat, sondern als Menschen” (197). Militarism is in this construct alienated from its original purpose, which was “die Freiheit des Geistes gegen die Diktatur des Geldes, die Menschenwürde gegen die Autokratie des Erwerbs zu schützen” (198) and has become “das Machtmittel dieser Diktatur” (198). Citing the misuse of this power by the commanders of the Central Powers' armies who execute it, Kraus uses this representation to expose the dominance of capitalism over humanitarianism, which he defines as the primary characteristic of the current state of German culture and the main reason for its demise. It is obvious that this representation does not accept the traditional distinction between German culture and western civilisation and denies the superiority, if not the existence, of German culture entirely. Instead it exposes this supposed distinction as yet another excuse to conquer other parts of the world under the pretence of bringing them the gift of German cultural achievements.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> During the war, the German and Austrian cultural heritage is in its official representation forced into line. The emotionalised clichés “Schulter an Schulter” (Kraus 5, 71) and “Nibelungentreue” (128) are used to express this alleged cultural unity between the two allies, who in fact could not be more

#### 1.4 “Das Volk der Richter und Henker” – Kraus on the state of culture

The idea of a general morality of the German spirit that distinguishes the German people from the individualistic societies of England and France is used in the propaganda narratives to legitimise Germany’s right to defend itself even at the cost of occupying other territories. A German occupation, so the logic, is still better than what would happen to those countries if the Entente took over. Kraus uses his characters to expose this narrative as a lie that is used to disguise a mindset which Kraus understands as representing exactly what the war was supposedly protecting Germany from.

The many mythical plays of the discourse of legitimisation use the claim of superiority to establish the transcendental idea of the holy fatherland, in whose defence it is worth dying. Kraus’ characters refer to a glorified cultural heritage but then expose themselves as representatives of a perverted version of the glory with which they decorate themselves. This establishes the “motif of masks and disguises” (Timms, *Apocalyptic Satirist*, 43), represented by the mask of culture that Kraus makes the characters wear, and de-legitimises the idea of German morality as a “tragischen Karneva[l]” (Kraus 5, 9), a motif that permeates the entire play. The idea of cultural superiority, or for that matter, of the existence of a German culture in general, thereby becomes another lie that is used to convince people to fight. Kraus has the NÖRGLER express the consequences in scene 1/29 when he says that the people do not die *for* this idea but *from* it:

Die Idee, für die das Volk stirbt, ohne sie zu haben, ohne etwas von ihr zu haben, und an der das Volk stirbt, ohne es zu wissen. Die Idee der kapitalistischen, also jüdisch-christlichen Weltzerstörung, die im Bewußtsein jener liegt, die nicht kämpfen, sondern für die Idee und von ihr leben (194).

The critique in this statement is not however, as Emil Sander claims, a general fight against capitalism, but instead used to expose the alleged idealism of the German fight as a cover under which those who do not fight make

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different (see also Djasemy, *Die verfolgende Unschuld*, 159; Biber, 102). In the Austro-Hungarian case, however, this is more than just a propagandistic tie to the neighbour, rather serving as an exclusion of all non-German ethnicities that are part of the empire, so that ‘Austrian’ culture is essentially understood as the culture of the German *Staatsvolk* of the multi-ethnic monarchy (see Beller, 126–127). The term German culture can therefore be understood as applying to both Germany and Austria-Hungary when meant to separate it from third parties and when used to expose how different they actually are.

enormous profits by exploiting the suffering of others.<sup>220</sup> Kraus emphasises this when calling the Central Powers “jene Kultur, die sich am willigsten der Idee überlassen hat” (194), criticising a commercialisation within German society that does not even stop short of using its cultural heritage as a resource.<sup>221</sup> He thereby exposes the transcendental idea for which the Central Powers claim to fight as a mask and simultaneously the commercialisation of their society as a development that ultimately suffocates its own culture. This allows him to ironically praise the Entente's war effort, to which he certainly was just as opposed as he was to all other belligerent actions, as the fight for a real idea, the idea “die europäische Kultur von dem Druck jener Idee zu befreien” (194).

The German tradition since Kant had prized *Bildung* and *Moral* as crucial virtues for the existence of *Kultur*. Its opposition to *Zivilisation* is founded on the latter's alleged lack of these virtues and its focus on personal freedom is often identified, especially with regards to the British, as the stereotypical “Krämertugend” (Heine, 223). Later nationalised, for example by Thomas Mann, it served as justification for the necessity to defend the “deutsche Wesen, an dem die Welt genesen soll” (Kraus 5, 203), as Kraus lets the NÖRGLER sarcastically express this common cliché. By representing the abuse of this cultural heritage as a commodity, Kraus exposes the German society as having adopted the characteristics of civilisation.

He does, however, not deny a difference between culture and civilisation nor redefine the concepts. In fact, he confirms the critique of civilisation but at the same time reverses their allocation based on the subordination of all other aspects of life under the imperative of business, an imperative that Kraus detects in the German and Austro-Hungarian societies. Having the NÖRGLER frequently claim that especially England shows more aspects traditionally associated with the concept of culture than the Central Powers “weil sie das bißchen Innerlichkeit von den Problemen des Konsums streng zu separieren wissen” (203) and instead occupy themselves with things that “von dem Tagwerk weitab führ[en]” (203), is yet another representation of this reversal. While the superiority of German culture and the other nations' envy of its achievements appear as unchallenged facts in plays of the discourse of legitimisation even after the end of the war, Kraus confronts this conviction with reality and comes to a devastating conclusion: “Die deutsche Bildung ist kein Inhalt, sondern ein

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<sup>220</sup> See Sander, 127.

<sup>221</sup> Melzer's claim that this hypothesis is not exemplified in the play is therefore not justified (see Melzer, 15). The WAHNSCHAFFE-scene is a good example of the business mindedness of the German ideology and yet only one of many examples throughout the text.

Schmückedeinheim, mit dem sich das Volk der Richter und Henker seine Leere ornamentiert” (200).<sup>222</sup>

Kraus identifies the previously discussed ideology as the origin of this development and claims that it is less prevalent within the countries of the Entente:

Während der Deutsche vierundzwanzig Stunden im Tag arbeitet und die seelischen, geistigen, künstlerischen und sonstigen Verpflichtungen, die er durch diese Einteilung vernachlässigen würde, innerhalb der Arbeit absolviert, indem er ihren bezüglichen Inhalt gleich als Ornament, als Warenmarke, als Aufmachung verwendet. Er will nichts versäumen. Und diese Vermischung der inneren Dinge mit den Lebensnotwendigkeiten, diese Einstellung des Lebensmittels als Lebenszweck und gleichzeitige Verwendung des Lebenszwecks im Dienste des Lebensmittels, wie etwa der ‘Kunst im Dienste des Kaufmanns’ – dies ist das unselige Element, in welchem das deutsche Ingenium floriert und verwelkt (203–204).

According to Kraus, all that is left from the German *Kultur* is a memory that has nothing to do with the current state of society. Irina Djassemly correctly interprets the characters’ habit of listing great German minds like “Klopstock und Herder, Goethe und Schiller, Kant und Fichte, Bach, Beethoven, Wagner” (146) as a method to represent the attempt to prove Germany’s cultural superiority, while the contexts in which Kraus has the characters refer to them reveals their ignorance in regards to the intellectual content of the ideas they refer to.<sup>223</sup> Kraus method of de-legitimising the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative is to expose the absence of what it claimed had evoked the enemies’ envy and motivated their attack. By negating German cultural superiority he also destroys the justification for the nation’s powerful position within the world, a position that needed to be defended against the corrosive influence of civilisation.

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<sup>222</sup> Häusler refers to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital and interprets the NÖRGLER’s quote as indication that culture has lost its value within society, resulting in an elevation of the value of economic capital (see Häusler, 76–78). His argument misses that the value of cultural capital within society remains high, but the emptiness of culture represented in the play leads to different ways of accumulating cultural capital. Bourdieu’s idea that “die Akkumulation von Kapital, ob nun in objektivierter oder verinnerlichter Form, Zeit [braucht]” (Bourdieu, 183) no longer applies. Instead, the play represents the content of cultural capital as a relic of a time in which its accumulation was difficult.

<sup>223</sup> See Djassemly, *Die verfolgende Unschuld*, 162.

Kraus has the NÖRGLER admit that Germans are still the most educated of all people, but "weil seine Doktoren ohne Ausnahme, das heißt, wenn sie nicht in einem Pressequartier unterkommen, mit Gasbomben hantieren, macht es gleich seine Feldherren zu Doktoren" (200). He exposes education as utilised and exploited for the war and argues that its high standards are no longer a virtue of culture but another sign of the barbarism of the previously discussed dominant ideology. References to universities, which award "ihre höchste Ehre an einen Organisator des Maschinentods" (200) are made multiple times alongside perversions of the nation's cultural heritage like the selling of toilet paper with Schiller and Goethe quotes on it (212), the tasteless rewritings of Goethe's "Reichskleinod" (495) *Wanderers Nachtlied* (266–267, 331) or the combination of Mozart's *Requiem* with the image of a mortar (223).<sup>224</sup> In regards to the last example, Kraus expresses the NÖRGLER's shock that somebody managed "die beiden Welten unter einen Hut zu bringen" (223) by letting him ask "ob in der Kultur der Senegalneger, die der Feind gegen uns zu Hilfe gerufen hat, solch ein Gottbetrug möglich wäre" (223). This uses a common prejudice to discredit the state of the German culture by representing it as inferior to that of the often-labelled uncivilised colonial troops, demonstrating just how uncivilised these allegations in themselves are.

Thus, Kraus' NÖRGLER sums up what the subordination of culture and morality to the imperative of utilisation creates by exposing what he sees as the true nature of the often praised German thoroughness. The seamless organisation of German society would be "ein Talent [...]. Es ist praktisch, subaltern und dient der Persönlichkeit, die sich seiner bedient, besser als die zerfahrene Umgebung, in der auch der subalterne Mensch Persönlichkeit hat" (204). This is in itself a sarcastic attack on the alleged lack of personality amongst the German people but reveals its full meaning only when looking at it with Thomas Mann's definition of culture and civilisation in mind. "Wie sehr muß aber", Kraus has the NÖRGLER ask, "ein Volk sich seiner Persönlichkeit entäußert haben, um zu der Fähigkeit zu gelangen, so glatt die Bahn des äußeren Lebens zu bestellen!" (204). He later adds that he does not see a

Widerspruch zwischen dem Lob einer Zivilisation, die das äußere Leben reibungslos macht, Straßendreck durch Asphalt ersetzt und der ergänzungswilligen Phantasie Schemen statt einer wertlosen Wesenhaftigkeit liefert, und dem Tadel einer Kultur, die sich eben um dieser Reibungslosigkeit, Prompt-

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<sup>224</sup> The barbaric utilisation of *Wanderers Nachtlied* had already been criticised by Kraus in the *Fackel* (see Timms, *Apocalyptic Satirist*, 291).



heit und Geschicklichkeit willen verflüchtigt hat. Es ist kein Widerspruch, sondern eine Tautologie (206).

This characterisation allows Kraus to expose the ‘German spirit’ as goal driven and directed toward individual benefit. The former *Kulturnation*, so his conclusion, has made education an individual means that serves a communal, instrumentalised end and has “die Kunst in den Dienst des Kaufmanns gestellt” (211).

As a member of the educated middle class from which the *Kulturnation* essentially originated, now a class of greedy manufacturers and merchants, KOMMERZIENRAT WAHNSCHAFFE is used by Kraus to echo the accusations that the NÖRGLER had expressed in scene I/29:

Das eine aber weiß ich nur,  
wir Deutsche haben mehr Kultur.  
Kultur, bei allen andern Gaben,  
ist mit das Beste, was wir haben (395).

The similarity of the two adjacent rhymes represents culture as nothing but the revision of its former glory and the fact that the four verses contain only three tangible nouns symbolises the blandness of its current state. Moreover, its identification as the ‘best’ lacks a reference word and had to be nominalised because the verse has no content left that it could possibly describe. It thereby becomes the grammatical equivalent of the glorification of culture without any idea of or concern for its real meaning. Counting culture as one of many goods appearing parallel in the verses, Kraus defines culture ultimately an asset that has lost its intrinsic value.

In the next two verses, “[w]ir schwärmen für die Schlachtenlenker, / doch sind wir auch das Volk der Denker” (395), Kraus combines the military and the intellectual leaders of Germany in one verse. By mentioning the *Schlachtenlenker* first and then only adding the *Denker* through use of the adverb *auch* Kraus forces the thinkers into a subordinate position. On the surface, the next two lines express the peoples’ admiration for Schiller and Goethe as the two main figures of a time that is often regarded as Germany’s cultural peak. But the poetic persona, the national “wir” (395), is urged to pray an “[...] er war unser” (395) and Kraus’ use of the past tense straight away exposes the bygone character of those times. In the last line of each stanza, Kraus generally summarises the cliché used in the previous verses in form of a slogan with which he satirically characterises the German mindset in regards to the aspect represented in the stanza. By letting WAHNSCHAFFE use a version of the NÖRGLER’s earlier expression, Kraus confirms his accusation about the cultural decline of Germany through one of those accused of

being responsible for it. And so, the verse reading “[m]it Bildung schmückt sein Heim der Deutsche” (395) becomes a representation of the ornamental character to which Kraus sees culture reduced.

By portraying the utilisation of *Bildung* and *Kunst* and the focus placed on individual freedom and economic profit, Kraus makes Germany's society a representative of civilisation rather than of culture. What Germany claimed for itself in order to prove its own cultural superiority, that is, a morality that prevents life from being reduced to mere utility, becomes the true face of an ideology that is based on the pursuit of profit and individual freedom and hidden under the moralistic mask of culture. Letting the OPTIMIST sum up the position represented by the NÖRGLER, who sees “in dem Krieg der andern einen Kulturinstinkt tätig, im deutschen Krieg ein Interesse wirtschaftlicher Ausbreitung” (212–213), Kraus de-legitimises a vital part of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and demonstrates his understanding of the commercialisation of society. This is already indicated in the concept of culture as a development which effects all aspects of society, and which ultimately provides the true motive for the war.

### 1.5 “Es handelt sich in diesem Krieg” – Kraus' representation of the motives behind the German war effort

Identifying the pursuit of profit as the true cause of the war, Kraus ultimately identifies the war as a fight in which “sich zwei Konsumvereine in den Haaren liegen” (Kraus 5, 211–212). The connection between the spheres of commerce and of war is also expressed in one of the play's most famous quotes in which the NÖRGLER asks since when “Mars der Gott des Handels und Merkur der Gott des Krieges [sei]” (162). The indicated shift in jurisdiction between the two spheres is represented throughout the play and identified as having a devastating effect. An all-encompassing war can yield enormous profits and, in their pursuit of this, people do not refrain from exploiting the suffering of others. Moreover, people are willing to cause more suffering if this means more profit.

By exposing the benefits different interest groups gain from the war, Kraus establishes a motivation that is designed to gain credibility for the accusations he makes.<sup>225</sup> The play contains scenes in which Kraus repre-

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<sup>225</sup> From an analytical perspective, this is the same strategy the plays of the discourse of legitimisation apply by reactivating the stereotypes of the enemy nations. And although in Kraus' case based on precise observations rather than on narratives, it serves the same purpose within the play.

sents officers increasing their personal prestige through military success just as journalists and writers do when putting their art in the service of patriotism.<sup>226</sup> Public officials and civil servants are shown gaining power through their authority over supply distribution and their influence on who gets drafted, which they exploit for their own benefit. Even shopkeepers and coachmen could now set their prices almost at will and Kraus presents them as using this opportunity to maximise their profit.

This aspect is also immanent in Walter Resch's *Kriegs-Beginn und –Ende*. In the first act, set just before the start of the war, Resch portrays war profiteers using typical stereotypes familiar to the reader from early war plays in order to drive their profit. But the same merchant that sowed faith in the “Friedenskaiser” (Resch, 15) in order to sell Russian stocks in the first act is later confronted by the people in the second act, set directly after the war's end:

4. BÜRGER: Die Wucherer haben uns in Schmutz und Elend gebracht ...  
5. BÜRGER: Die Kriegsgewinnler an Munition und Kartoffeln ...  
6. BÜRGER: Die haben unsre Sparkassengelder, und wir die blauen Umschläge ...  
4. BÜRGER: Da sind die Krieganleihen und das gute Gold.  
KAUFMANN: Ohne uns wart Ihr alle längst verhungert wie Bettler im Winter!  
3. BÜRGER: Ein Trost für solche Sorgen: sind wir ja alle jetzt so genügend.  
KAUFMANN: Jede Arbeit, ob kurz, ob lang, wird bezahlt redlich, rechtlich ... soll ich nicht auch verdienen wie alle vom Staat?  
3. BÜRGER: Und die Soldaten freuen sich über dreißig Pfennig in bar ...  
6. BÜRGER: Fragt unsere Kriegerfrauen, ob sie mit dem Hungergeld von Papierscheinen auskommen ...  
5. BÜRGER: Er hätte damit nicht die Backen, die nach Braten und Rheinwein leuchten ... (35).

Kraus' critique, however, sets its sights beyond the role of small profiteers. As the main driving force of the war he identifies the Bourgeois industrialists, who get good returns from powering the war machine and thus try to prolong the fighting for as long as possible while hiding behind the mask of patriotism and ideals. These masks are essential because, so Kraus' position, the masses would not be willing “andere zu töten und sich selber töten

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<sup>226</sup> One of Kraus' main points of critique of those who describe the war most vividly, that they themselves never saw any battles but wrote their reports from the security of the *Kriegspressequartier*, has found recent support in Elisabeth Haid's analysis of this institution (see Haid, 46).

zu lassen" (Langewiesche, 11) if they knew that they were dying for the profit of others. In I/29 he introduces this aspect and at the same time emphasises the moral distinction between the Central Powers and the Entente, whose representation in the play is discussed above:

DER OPTIMIST: Es handelt sich in diesem Krieg –

DER NÖRGLER: Jawohl, es handelt sich in diesem Krieg! Aber der Unterschied ist der: Die einen meinen Export und sagen Ideal, die andern sagen Export und diese Ehrlichkeit allein, diese Separation allein ermöglicht schon das Ideal, auch wenn es sonst gar nicht vorhanden wäre (Kraus 5, 212).

The consequences of the disguise of the true nature of the war, for which Kraus holds the clichés of the propaganda narratives responsible, are revealed by the NÖRGLER, whom Kraus again uses to establish the key for the representation of this topic throughout the play: "Das Übel gedeiht hinter dem Ideal am besten" and "mästet sich am Opfer" (193). The narrative of the ideal is, in Kraus' opinion, an invention of those "die nicht kämpfen, sondern für die Idee und von ihr leben und wenn sie nicht unsterblich sind, an Fettsucht oder Zuckerkrankheit sterben" (194). And so the NÖRGLER predicts that the war

die ganze umgebende Welt in ein großes Hinterland des Betrugs, der Hinfälligkeit und des unmenschlichsten Gottverrats verwandeln wird, indem das Schlechte über ihn hinaus und durch ihn fortwirkt, hinter vorgeschobenen Idealen fett wird und am Opfer wächst! (224).

In this excerpt, Kraus reveals the way in which he lets the other characters use the ideal as a mask behind which they maximise their profit.

The WAHNSCHAFFE -couplet reveals very clearly how Kraus understands these mechanisms and how he creates connection points with the comments of the NÖRGLER. When reading the two respective last lines of two subsequent stanzas together, the couplet reveals that "der Deutsche" lives "[f]ür Ideale" but also "[v]on Idealen" (393) and in the following stanza, Kraus de-legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by representing the war as a direct consequence of this development. With the NÖRGLER's earlier comments on the mask-like character of the ideal, the verses are tied to the topic of the commercialisation of society and the following stanza exposes the consequence of this:

Für dies Prinzip, und es ist gut,  
schwimmt heute der Planet in Blut.  
Für Fertigware und Valuten

muß heut' die ganze Menschheit bluten.  
Nehmt Gift für Brot, gebt Gold für Eisen  
und laßt den deutschen Gott uns preisen!  
Gebt Blut – habt ihr das nicht gewußt? –  
für Mark: das ist kein Kursverlust!  
Darum erhofft Profit der Deutsche! (394).

The comedic tone of the song would make for a humorous performance. However, by having identified the mindset he exposes with the WAHNSCHAFFE character as one of the causes of the war, rendered with the NÖRGLER's appearance in scene I/29, and by exposing the suffering and the horrors of war throughout the play, Kraus creates negative affects towards WAHNSCHAFFE, which eventually outweigh the humorous aspects of the character and add to the "Tragödie der Menschheit" (9).

AUGUSTE WAHNSCHAFFE appears in scene III/40 after her husband leaves the stage and goes on to substantiate her husband's remarks in a more concrete way, thus enacting how, according to Kraus, one's own role is legitimised while the suffering of others is commercially exploited. Without children of age, the WAHNSCHAFFES cannot contribute a soldier to the German cause. AUGUSTE uses this unfortunate inability to legitimise their greed. Because "[f]ür das Opfer, fürs Vaterland kein Opfer bringen zu können, müssen einen die geschäftlichen Erfolge entschädigen" (400–401). The newest WAHNSCHAFFE invention is supposed to create the aspired-to monetary compensation. This invention is the "'Heldengrab im Hause', zugleich Reliquienkästchen und Photographieständer [...] für so zeitgemäßen Totenkult" (401), from which AUGUSTE expects a good revenue. For the industrial class represented in the play, the victims of the war are an investment and their blood ensures good profit. As the NÖRGLER expresses it, they had the victims' "Haut zu Markte getragen" (679). War and business are merged, with the result that "Absatzgebiete Schlachtfelder werden und aus diesen wieder jene" (211).

The moral collapse Kraus depicts with these methods is again expressed in the final monologue of the NÖRGLER. He states that if somebody had told the devil

im ersten Jahr schon werde eine Petroleumraffinerie 137 Prozent Reingewinn vom gesamten Aktienkapital erzielen und der David Fanto 73 Prozent, die Kreditanstalt 19.9 Millionen Reingewinn und die Wucherer an Fleisch und Zucker und Spiritus und Obst und Kartoffeln und Butter und Leder und Gummi und Kohle und Eisen und Wolle und Seife und Öl und Tinte und Waffen würden hundertfach entschädigt sein für die Entwertung fremden Bluts – der Teufel hätte einem Verzichtfrieden das Wort geredet! (674).

The masses who supported the war, so the NÖRGLER in his final monologue, were unaware that all the suffering they had to endure was caused by the greed of some, and he assumes that they would have refused to make the sacrifice had they “doch in dem Augenblick des Opfers um den Gewinn gewußt, der trotz, nein, mit dem Opfer wächst, sich an ihm mästend!” (672–673). The fattening metaphor is a particularly frequent trope in the NÖRGLER's dialogues, usually used to emphasise that profit was not made despite but because others suffered.

Kraus emphasises the role he ascribes to greed in what he sees as the key catastrophe of WWI and exposes it to have caused the collapse of civilisation in order to be “Händler und Held [...] und dieses sein zu müssen, um jenes zu bleiben” (671). He thereby implies another tragic consequence of the greed of those who profit from the war. Their greed did not only cause the war, it also prolonged it as much as possible. The WAHNSCHAFFES, for example, hope that “der Krieg” will “noch lange genug dauern” (400). Kraus even lets them actively declare that it “auch nach Friedensschluß fortgesetzt werden soll” (400) and thereby uses them to de-legitimise not only the defensive character of the German war effort but also to de-legitimise the narrative of the existential importance of continued sacrifice, exposed now as a means of increasing and prolonging the profit of others. Kraus refers to this aspect again in scene V/54, revealing what he sees as the consequences of this greed for so many people:

Sie wünschten, daß ihr am Leben bliebet, denn sie hatten auf ihren Börsen noch nicht genug gestohlen, in ihren Pressen noch nicht genug gelogen, in ihren Ämtern noch nicht genug drangsaliert, die Menschheit noch nicht genug durcheinandergepeitscht, in allen ihren Gelegenheiten und Tätigkeiten sich noch nicht genug für ihr Unvermögen und ihre böse Lust auf den Krieg berufen, damit ihr Verbrechen sie entschuldige – sie hatten diesen ganzen tragischen Karneval, in dem Männer vor den Augen des weiblichen Kriegsberichterstatters starben und Metzger Philosophen honoris causa wurden, noch nicht bis zu Kehraus und Fasten durchgetanzt! (674).

The bourgeoisie, represented by the WAHNSCHAFFES amongst others, is once more accused of being the true engine behind the war. This is also represented in other plays. Adrian von Arx' *Der Helfer*, for example, uses the character of the weapons manufacturer EXZELLENZ HEIN to expose the role of the bourgeoisie. Arx introduces the character's motivation in his first appearance by having him say that he will prevent peace until “die Ernte von den Schlachtfeldern eingebracht” and “die Ziele des Krieges erreicht sind” (Arx, 31). The title *Exzellenz* is used to indicate the influence of this class and Arx, through the use of the religious symbolism that permeates the entire play, emphasises the destruction their business brings.

HEIN appears like one of the horsemen of the apocalypse when riding over the battle field on a horse that seems like it is “von der Erde gehoben” (85) and is at the same time tied to the secular realm of men when described as “der mächtigste Mann im Lande neben unserem Herrscher” (85). Characters like HEIN and WAHNSCHAFFE serve as de-legitimisations of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative because they allow the author to expose their culpability for the outbreak of the war and for its duration and therefore a great proportion of the deaths and suffering of millions.

This representation already implies the de-legitimation of another propaganda narrative. Those who make profit do it from the security of the *Heimat*, while others have to shed blood in the war that the profiteers promote. By portraying those who have either enough money or connections to avoid service, those who rely on others to fight the war for them, Kraus aims to expose the unity narrative as a lie.

### 1.6 “Nie war bei größerer Entfaltung weniger Gemeinschaft als jetzt”. The de-legitimation of the *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*

A crucial point within the unity narrative was that the alleged unity amongst all classes and professions was established as both the requirement for and the guarantee of final victory for the Central Powers. This prolonged an atmosphere of pressure to endure the war, as well as a context of meaning for the sacrifices people made. In this atmosphere, non-contribution was stigmatised and labelled as a danger to the greater common good. In the plays of the discourse of legitimisation, especially in its second phase, contribution and sacrifices are ultimately what separates the protagonists from the antagonists. Furthermore, the sacrifices of the people at home are linked to those of the soldiers at the front. This link is established by the representation of the mutual motivation the two spatially separated spheres provide for each other. GEORG from Paul Seiffert’s previously discussed play *Dennoch durch!* is an example of those characters whose sacrifice is used to personify this unity between *Heimat* and *Front*.

The significance the invoked unity has for the continuation of the war can be seen by the attention this topic receives in plays like Walter Resch’s *Kriegs-Beginn und -Ende* published in 1920 or the above-mentioned *Offiziere* or *Lazarett-Baracke 9*. The message of *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* is thereby again representative of the discourse. Kraus was convinced that if the soldiers knew that they were only fighting for the profit of a small clique protected in the hinterland, they would cease fighting and maybe even revolt. Furthermore, if the fighting was to continue, Kraus recognised that it

was important for the propaganda to create at least acceptance for the continuous demand for soldiers and sacrifices. Those who had an interest in the continuation of the fighting therefore needed to convince the masses of the legitimacy of the war and of the sacrifices it demanded while pretending to make the same sacrifices themselves. Kraus, however, exposes this as yet another charade contributing to the tragic carnival. In scene I/29, Kraus has the OPTIMIST represent the gullible who fall for the lie of solidarity, only to have the NÖRGLER expose his counterpart's naivety.

DER OPTIMIST: Wollen Sie etwa die Begeisterung, mit der unsere braven Soldaten ins Feld ziehen, und den Stolz, mit dem die Daheimbleibenden ihnen nachblicken, in Abrede stellen?

DER NÖRGLER: Gewiß nicht; nur behaupten, daß die braven Soldaten lieber mit den stolz Nachblickenden tauschen würden als die stolz Nachblickenden mit den braven Soldaten.

DER OPTIMIST: Wollen Sie die große Solidarität in Abrede stellen, die der Krieg wie mit einem Zauberschlage hergestellt hat?

DER NÖRGLER: Die Solidarität wäre noch größer, wenn keiner hinausziehen müßte und alle stolz nachblicken dürften (Kraus 5, 192).

The scene represents the basic argument of Kraus' de-legitimation of the *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*. It is founded on the conviction that nobody really wants to go to war and that the only difference between the people at home and those at the front is that the latter simply did not have the means to avoid being sent there.

Kraus uses another scene to introduce the central motif for this topic. After letting the OPTIMIST claim proudly that he has "seit der Kriegserklärung noch keinen jungen Menschen in Wien getroffen, der noch da war und wenn er noch da war, der nicht vor Ungeduld gefiebert hätte, nicht mehr da zu sein" (248), the NÖRGLER reports on a phone conversation he hears "mindestens zehnmal täglich" (248). Kraus uses this report to expose the unity as a lie and solidarity as a burden that only applies to those who do not have the financial means or social connections to bribe their way out of military service. This bribery is represented as a common occurrence amongst the well-off and the euphemistic phrase Kraus uses to describe it appears in the NÖRGLER's account:

'Der Gustl is hinaufgegangen und hat sichs gerichtet.' 'Wie gehts denn dem Rudi?' 'Der Rudi is auch hinaufgegangen und hat sichs auch gerichtet.' 'Und der Pepi? Is der am End schon im Feld?' 'Der Pepi hat einen Hexenschuß. Aber sobald er aufstehn kann, wird er hinaufgehn und sichs richten.' (248–249).



The WAHNSCHAFFES are one example of the play's depiction of well-connected circles that use their position to stay and continue their business from the safety of the *Heimat*. Kraus uses them to satirically unmask the discrepancy between ideal and reality that he identifies and especially the pretence with which this ideal is used to mask their selfishness. Their mansion is the subject of one of the longest metatexts in the play. Kraus describes it as castle-like, and puts a knight's armour out the front to represent the old fashioned, feudal-militaristic ideals of the characters and the class they represent. A bust of Wilhelm II is added to characterise their deep nationalism, along with two mortar shells with the inscriptions “*Immer feste druff!*” and “*Durchhalten!*” (391) – the clichés that come with the attributes these objects manifest.<sup>227</sup> These slogans are clearly meant to motivate others, rather than being a symbol for WAHNSCHAFFE's solidarity, as Kraus reveals by the signs he directs to be placed outside their property. They show the individualism that characterises the WAHNSCHAFFES and the entire bourgeoisie. With the slogan “*Macht Soldaten frei!*” (391), Kraus represents their demands to send ever more soldiers to the front so that the war and their business can continue. The other sign reads “*Für Verwundete kein Zutritt!*” (391) and represents a topic with which Kraus permeates the entire play, in order to de-legitimise the unity between *Heimat* and *Front*.

The duty of care for the returning soldiers is in Kraus' representation entirely abandoned. Furthermore, he portrays a utilitarianism with regards to the soldiers, which is also an important aspect of de-legitimation in *Heimkehrerdramen*. Its main message is that for those at home, the soldiers are only of value as long as they can fight or if they have died and their 'heroic' death for the fatherland can be exploited for propagandistic purposes. Kraus therefore frequently portrays silent characters in the background of his scenes. The representation of these wounded and crippled, widows and orphans, outcasts for whom nobody cares, are used to expose this utilisation. Without dialogues or voices, their suffering is inscribed into the scenes by the metatext and they serve as a reminder of the complicity of the other characters.

To reveal the falseness of the alleged solidarity, Kraus uses those who cannot be glorified, exploited for the narratives nor continue to fight. He gradually increases the number of these characters from act to act until they eventually transform the infamous *Ringstraßenkorso*, which appears in the first scene of the prologue and of each act, into a “Spalier der Verwundeten und Toten” (553) through which, by the last act, only a few remaining

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<sup>227</sup> See also Djassemey, *Die verfolgende Unschuld*, 141.

characters stroll.<sup>228</sup> These characters are officers reappearing in the first scene of every act. As they consequently ignore the changed circumstances of their surroundings and the increasing visibility of the effects of the war on the people, Kraus exposes the ignorance and lack of empathy he sees represented by this class.

Furthermore, he denies that the war-profiteers would ever concern themselves with the victims of their greed and that any unity between the bourgeoisie and the masses, especially the front soldiers, could exist. The WAHNSCHAFFE-couplet exposes this conviction and is thereby used to delegitimise the narrative. "Noch lieber laßt uns als den Feind, / die Phrase dreschen, die uns eint" (396) represents solidarity as being limited to the cliché within which the war-profiteers pretend to make the same sacrifices as the rest of the people. While they reinstate the narratives which created the war and which continue to convince people to maintain the willingness to sacrifice in order to beat the enemy, he and his kind beat "die Konkurrenz" (393). The word play links, as Djassemey points out, the competitiveness of commerce with the competitiveness of war, and allows Kraus to expose the hostility and physical violence with which the bourgeoisie fights for its profit.<sup>229</sup> As discussed above, Kraus accuses the middle class that managed to remain in the hinterland of prolonging the war. WAHNSCHAFFE's plans for the time when the current generation of soldiers is depleted are a further representation of this accusation. In order to make sure that the trenches are filled for the future,

[...] woll'n [wir] die Wehrpflicht dann verschärfen,  
die Kleinen lehren Flammen werfen.  
Wir woll'n indes auch für die Alten  
die Kriegsdienstleistung beibehalten.  
Was wir gelernt, nicht zu verlernen,  
laßt uns vermehren die Kasernen (397).

In this context, the previously discussed verses stating that they would all go into the trenches for Germany's place in the sun get another level of meaning, considering that WAHNSCHAFFE himself "leider nicht im Felde ist, weil er zum Glück unabkömmlich ist" (400).

This last quote represents his wife AUGUSTE and her feigned regret at not having a husband at the front to write letters to. Through the contradiction within her statement, Kraus defines her as a representative of the "stolz Nachblickenden" (192), whose talent at finding ways to make others fight

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<sup>228</sup> See also Häusler, 73.

<sup>229</sup> See Djassemey, *Die verfolgende Unschuld*, 143.

the war for them is referred to by the NÖRGLER in scene I/29. While OTTOMAR WAHNSCHAFFE's couplet is a self-exposure of the public influence of the class he represents, Kraus uses the role of the wife to show the private side of the mindset that defines it, thus having her wear the official mask of a Wilhelmine housewife. She regrets that she only has "zwei Kinder, die leider noch nicht militärtauglich sind, umsoweniger als das eine zu unserem Leidwesen ein Mädchen ist" (397), which refers to the stigma that comes with not having a family member in the war. But Kraus uses her reaction to reveal the full extent of the perversity with which the bourgeois families convince themselves and others of their solidarity.

AUGUSTE compensates for the lack of a soldier in the family by imagining "daß mein Junge schon an der Front war, aber selbstverständlich bereits den Heldentod gefunden hat" because "ich müßte mich ja in Grund und Boden schämen, wenn's anders der Fall, wenn er mir etwa unverwundet heimgekehrt wäre" (398). In a later scene, Kraus defines this representation of the "Wahnsinn des Durchhaltens und de[s] elende[n] Stolz[es] auf die Verluste der Andern, der deutsche Männer ebenso auszeichnet, wie deutsche Megären die Begeisterung für den Heldentod ihrer Söhne" as the manifestation of the "perverse[n] Geisteszustand einer Gesellschaft, die in einer organisierten Glorie atmet und sich von Selbstbetrug nährt" (439). By having these characters appear far away from the danger to which they send the masses with whom they pretend to be united, Kraus takes the spatial separation between *Front* and *Heimat*, reinstates it as the ideological separation that many early war plays tried to demolish and de-legitimises the alleged *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* of the German people.

While the bourgeois AUGUSTE WAHNSCHAFFE almost playfully adapts to the conditions of a society during the war, Ilse Langner portrays the struggle of her working class protagonist FRAU EMMA from her play *Frau Emma kämpft im Hinterland*, which premiered in 1929 in the Kleines Theater Berlin and was then published in 1930. The character increasingly excludes herself from the expected behaviour of the women in the *Heimat*. It is thereby exactly the incompatibility between the propagandistic expectations and her role as a mother that, unlike in FRAU WAHNSCHAFFE, initiate the increasing rejection of the unity narrative's demands.<sup>230</sup> FRAU WAHNSCHAFFE and FRAU EMMA both represent female characters who de-legitimise the unity narrative and make references to the class differences within the war society. AUGUSTE's adaption to her husband's belligerent and exploitative mindset and her calls for endurance and unity are ultimately only possible because she enjoys the privileges his position brings her. FRAU EMMA's situation is

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<sup>230</sup> See Emonds, *Inszenierungen weiblicher Erinnerungen*, 150.

significantly different. Her fight for the survival of her daughter and herself can only be won if she rejects the propagandistic demands for obedience and accepts that the people in the *Heimat* are fighting a separate war against each other under the cover of the unity narrative.

Kraus also uses the perspective of the soldiers to de-legitimise the unity narrative. Although the NÖRGLER admits that many people at one stage or another believe in fighting for the fatherland, Kraus also uses this part of his dialogue with the OPTIMIST in scene I/29 to represent a self-exposing contradiction within the unity narrative. This lies in the fact that, after all, the fatherland holds on to what the NÖRGLER defines as the "Naturinsulte [...] allgemeine Wehrpflicht" (219).

DER OPTIMIST: Aber unsere Soldaten kämpfen doch eben fürs Vaterland.

DER NÖRGLER: Ja, das tun sie wirklich, und zum Glück aus Begeisterung, weil sie sonst dazu gezwungen wären (202).

While the narrative suggests that people of all classes would volunteer to fight for the fatherland, the existence of conscription shows that not even the sources of these narratives are confident in what they spread. Considering that those who can, will "sichs richten" (294), conscription increases the inequality within society and furthers a class division, which Kraus represents the real separation between *Heimat* and *Front* to be. It feels, so the NÖRGLER's impression, as if "sich jeder mit seinem Einzelschicksal davonschleicht" (209) and the scene once more prepares the recipient for the lack of solidarity Kraus portrays over the course of the play by already providing the conclusion. "Nie", he states "war bei größerer Entfaltung weniger Gemeinschaft als jetzt" (209).

In his final monologue, the NÖRGLER denies the existence of a unity amongst the people, let alone a nationwide *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*, in which everyone fights for the survival of all others, by representing this division between *Heimat* and *Front* ultimately as a division between those who fight and those they are fighting for, masked by the creation of the false construct of the fatherland and the pretence of a *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* that transcends all classes:

Ja, ihr habt das Vaterland erlebt, ehe ihr dafür starbet! Das Vaterland von dem Augenblick an, wo ihr in der Schweiß- und Bierluft des Vorsaals zum Heldentod entkleidet warten mußtet, als sie Menschenfleisch musterten und Menschenseelen zum gottlosesten Schwure zwangen. Nackt waret ihr, wie nur vor Gott und der Geliebten, vor einer Kommission von Schindern und Schweinen! Scham, Scham für Leib und Seele hätte euch dem Vaterland weigern sollen! Wir alle haben dieses Vaterland gesehn und die Glücklichen unter uns, die ihm entfliehen konnten, sahen es noch in der Gestalt des fre-

chen Grenzwächters. Wir sahen es in allen Formen der Machtgier des losgelassenen Sklaven und der Umgänglichkeit des trinkgeldgierigen Erpressers. Nur daß wir ändern es nicht in der Gestalt des Feindes, des wahren Feindes, erleben mußten, der mit dem Maschinengewehr euch vor das Maschinengewehr trieb (678).

Kraus thereby exposes the unity narrative as a lie that is supposed to create a communal sense of duty. In Kraus' representation those who can bribe their way out of the service and remain in the *Heimat* in order to profit from those who are sent to the *Front*. In this context, conscription becomes a safety-net for the system, which needs more than just a narrative to maintain the so desperately needed stable supply of *Menschenmaterial*, another expression Kraus uses to de-legitimise the unity narrative.

The term "Menschenmaterial" (151) is first introduced by OBERLEUTNANT BEINSTELE, the representative of the ruthless inhumanity and cruelty of officers, but is in various forms used nine more times throughout the play to establish a motif representing the reality of the millions of victims fighting on either side of the war.<sup>231</sup> The officers seem to see the common soldiers as assets which are "befehlsgemäß zu opfern" (450) for military success because "[z]um Erschießen sind sie da!" (451).<sup>232</sup> This impression is, for example, also immanent in the *Vorspiel* to Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung*. While the dead officers have their own space in the graveyard, the common men are "Ganz wie im Leben schlichte Nummern, / Unsre tapfren Helden. / Die Namen wären überflüssig... / Man tat es wohl aus Pietät, / Es hätten Nummern auch genügt" (Toller, *Werke I*, 5).

*Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* is not so much a political comment as a representation of the societal developments Kraus identifies to have led to "dem größten Verbrechen, das je unter der Sonne, unter den Sternen war" (Kraus 5, 681). The deterioration of language, against which he fought so

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<sup>231</sup> By the NÖRGLER (Kraus 5, 303; 495; 673), by medical personal (538), by war correspondents (632) and most often by officers (542; 683; 688; 744). The frequency of its use increases towards the end of the play which is set in the later years of the war. It appears three times in the last scene of act five and the epilogue.

<sup>232</sup> When referring to this and other scenes portraying atrocities, Wolfgang Beutin interprets them as the representation of war crimes in the play and as an attack on the Austrian soldiers (see Beutin, 170). He forgets, however, to separate between the giving and the executing of an order. This separation is not necessary to excuse soldiers who simply obey orders, but it opens up a whole other perspective regarding the inhumane treatment of millions of men and the deconstruction of narratives like that of the *Heldentod*.

fiercely throughout his entire life, is represented as the seminal reason for a deterioration of culture, morality and humanity, which allowed a pathologic ideology to dominate society and elevate "Verdienen und Fressen" to the "höchsten Güter der Nation" (211). Kraus attributed responsibility for this development to a press which had managed long before the war to establish itself as the deliverer not only of reports but of perception, thus preparing its readers to adopt their stories unquestioningly.

In a way, Kraus portrays the war almost as a logical consequence of the developments he identified in the *Fackel*. The desire for prestige and profit that he saw defining the mindset of the societies of the Central Powers harnessed the war as a means to pursue their expansionist and annexationist goals. The narrative of the *Verteidigungskrieg*, that of an attack on the superior German culture in need of salvation from a corrupt western civilisation, and the narrative of a united Germany fighting side by side for the cause, are all exposed as lies with which the real, economic reasons for the war are disguised.<sup>233</sup> These lies, instigated by those who benefit from the war in some way, distributed by the press and accepted by an "ausgehölte[m] Menschentum" (210) are what Kraus ultimately understood as the reasons for leading humanity to set up its own downfall.

Through the comments of the NÖRGLER, Kraus exposes whom he identifies as the actors of mankind's downfall and the mechanisms that led to it. He uses the characters' comments to structure the play by providing a frame of reference for its topics and motifs. By having the NÖRGLER make references to characters, keywords, settings or situations that appear throughout the play, Kraus uses his moral authority to confront the other characters. This allows him to use characters like the WAHNSCHAFFES to ultimately unmask the pathological structure they represent by exposing their failure to live up to the ideal the NÖRGLER sets for a cultured and humanitarian society.

*Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* de-legitimises the way the plays of the discourse of legitimisation processed propaganda as literature, aiming to represent a reality that Kraus observes to be in contradiction with the propaganda narratives that had been positioned to create the image of the peoples' patriotic response to a deceitful attack. The play thus becomes part of a discourse of de-legitimisation for whose literary form it can stand as representative because of its comprehensive and sharp analysis of the Central Powers' war-societies.

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<sup>233</sup> See also Szczyńskiak, 164.

## 2 Continuity as means of de-legitimation in *Heimkehrer* plays

Since Homer created its archetype in Odysseus, *Heimkehrerfiguren* have appeared in dramatic literature in a variety of forms. The Homeric motif of the temptation of the lover who is waiting for the protagonist's return, for example, remains in various ways part of WWI literature as Brecht's *Trommeln in der Nacht* or the 1932 play *Kasper kommt na Hus* by Paul Schurek (1890–1962) suggest, and reappears after WWII in plays like Wolfgang Borchert's *Draußen vor der Tür*.<sup>234</sup> In Germany, the *Heimkehrerdrama* can, at least since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, be regarded as an established subgenre of dramatic literature, but the term is not as unproblematic at this might make it seem.

The motif of the *Heimkehrer* starts to appear in WWI plays from around 1916 onwards. In the plays of the discourse of legitimisation, *Heimkehrerfiguren* are at first used as eye-witnesses to the victories of the German army and to predict an imminent defeat of the enemies, like KARL und ERNST SCHRÖDER in Schare's *Deutsche Helden*. While they are still rather rare in very early plays, the motif of the returning soldier is used regularly in plays of the second phase as a means of motivating the other characters to hold out against the challenges of the war. These *Heimkehrerfiguren* introduce the bravery and sacrifices of frontline soldiers into the plays without having to either euphemise or show the reality of trench warfare. Their dedication and bravery serve as motivation for all other characters and as a strategy to counter war-weariness. In these plays, however, the *Heimkehrerfiguren* are not yet protagonists but supporting characters, such as RUDOLF in Seiffert's *Dennoch durch!*

These *Heimkehrerfiguren* are used for a significantly different purpose than those in texts published after the war and encounter an entirely different scenario upon their often only temporary return to the *Heimat*.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> The Odyssean motif is common in WWI plays and often constitutes the primary focus of the play, while WWI remains a secondary focus and could be replaced by any other war. Josef Eisenburger's (1864–1929) *Heimgekehrt* from 1919, which is subtitled *Ein Bauernstück aus dem Weltkrieg mit Gesang und Tanz* is one example for this type of play. Such pieces are more precisely described as *Heimkehrerstücke* in an odyssean tradition rather than as WWI plays.

<sup>235</sup> Sarah Mohi-von Känel emphasises the difference between *Heimkehrer* and *Rückkehrer*. The former is, in her model, the successful version of the latter, with 'successful' describing the reintegration into a sphere in which the *Heimkehrer* actually finds a home, as compared to the mere return to the place the soldiers left behind (see Mohi-von Känel, 46–48). The term *Heimkehrer*, however, is established in German literature for both types and will

Furthermore, the magnitude of WWI and the totality of its effects on the lives of the people meant that almost all plays with a contemporary setting written after the war contained characters who had fought in the war. However, their experiences during the war are often just used as a background without further influence on the plot. For these plays, the appearance of a *Heimkehrerfigur* does not justify classifying them as *Heimkehrerdramen*.

After the end of the war this began to change, with *Heimkehrerfiguren* becoming more important within the character constellation of plays and their purpose growing more diverse. Because of these very different characteristics, the term *Heimkehrerdramen* must at least briefly be defined as plays in which a former soldier, his journey home or his situation upon and following his return constitutes the plot of the drama.<sup>236</sup> *Heimkehrerstücke*

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therefore be used for both types of returnee, regardless of whether they are successful, like KURT BALDNER in Vogel's play, or fail, like HINKEMANN in Toller's *Der deutsche Hinkemann*. A specific form of the *Heimkehrerfigur* is the invalid. Helmut Bernsmeier analyses this particular character and identifies its appearance across all literary genres. He argues that the characters can either be used to praise the courage of those who gave their health for the fatherland, in order to emphasise the greatness of the nation and its people, or to condemn the war that created so much suffering (see Bernsmeier, 231–233). In dramatic literature, the latter use is far more common. As discussed previously, the actual appearance of invalids is very rare in plays of the discourse of legitimisation and characters like FRIEDRICH in Joeger's and RUDOLF in Braune's plays are the exception. The discourse of de-legitimisation however uses them frequently. They appear for example in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, in Toller's *Die Wandlung* and *Der deutsche Hinkemann*. Hans Chlumberg (1879–1930) lets fallen soldiers rise from the dead in his 1931 play *Wunder um Verdun*, in order to expose the brutality of the war. Unfortunately, Chlumberg did not see the premier of his play; he suffered a fall into the orchestra pit at the rehearsal of the play's premier in the Leipziger Schauspielhaus and died after having spent a few days in a coma (see Heißler, 170). Furthermore, Ralf Georg Czapla points out that artists like Otto Dix and George Grosz (the latter illustrated translations of Toller's *Der deutsche Hinkemann*) participated in the same discourse at the same time albeit within their respective media (see Czapla, 350).

<sup>236</sup> Their use in the call for a rebirth of the nation that would provide a context of meaning for the suffering and was thereby instrumentalised for different political agendas has already been analysed. Leonhard Heubner, who in 1936 analysed the German *Heimkehrerdrama*, further demonstrates their purpose in National Socialist plays, where he detects two categories of *Heimkehrer*. Such plays are inhabited by heroes who "erst durch besonderen Anlaß [...] zum sozialistischen und nationalen Einsatz aufgerufen werden; und in solche:



that satisfy this definition are, because of the central role of the *Heimkehrerfigur*, often *Stationendramen*. This form allows for a focus on the protagonist, the representation of his journey and his inner development and is therefore very suitable for *Heimkehrerdramen*.<sup>237</sup>

WWI *Heimkehrerstücke* generally contain many aspects appearing in other genres of plays written during and after the war. Depending on the intention of the author, the plays are set during the revolution of 1918/19, such as Lion Feuchtwanger's *Thomas Wendt*<sup>238</sup> (1920), during the fight against the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, such as Hans Johst's (1890–

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die vom Beginn ihrer Rückkehr in die Heimat an wachen Herzens und Auges für die Verwirklichung ihrer im Stahlbad des Weltkrieges geborenen Weltanschauung leben und kämpfen" (see Heubner, 291). Heubner, however, simply denies a right of existence to any plays that do not try "die persönliche Schicksalsverbundenheit seiner Helden in die des Volkes einzubetten" (290) and thereby limits his analysis to *Heimkehrerfiguren* used to promote the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*. Arnolt Bronnen's (1895–1959) *Katalaunische Schlacht* (1924) is an example of plays that engage with the trauma that an individual's actions during the war can cause them after its end. This example also supports statements to the effect that a play's contributions to a particular discourse are always tendential and do not cover every individual aspect of the play under analysis. The title of Bronnen's play, referring to an attack of the Huns on Roman and Visigoth troops, could for example very well be interpreted as a de-legitimation of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. This is a common aspect in anti-war *Heimkehrerstücken*, though many of them do not contribute to the discourse.

<sup>237</sup> The clearest representation of this Strindbergian form of drama amongst the plays of the discourse of de-legitimation is *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg*. It is especially often used in plays whose beginning is set at the front as is the case for Horváth's play but also, for example, in *Toboggan*.

<sup>238</sup> *Thomas Wendt* was published as a *dramatischer Roman* and adapted for the stage by the Drei-Masken-Verlag that also held the performance rights for Brecht's *Trommeln in der Nacht*. Although in regards to its genre not purely dramatic, the text is of interest in this context because its representation of the revolution, which according to Feuchtwanger did not change the people and their mindsets, and the experiences of the *Heimkehrerfigur* that falls into despair about the continuity he is confronted with, is very similar to many of the *Heimkehrerdramen* of the de-legitimation discourse. Wolfgang Frühwald even suggests that Brecht's play cannot be understood without considering Feuchtwanger's *Thomas Wendt* (see Frühwald, *Der Heimkehrer auf der Bühne*, 182). However, despite pointing out the similarities and the texts' influence on the development of the *Volksstück* in the 1920s, he does not sufficiently explain why that would be the case.

1978) *Schlageter*<sup>239</sup> (1933), or around the rise of National Socialism, such as Walther Dränert's *Freiheit* (1925), to name just a few common settings for plays of this subgenre.<sup>240</sup>

In all such cases, the front experience is, by definition, part of the character's implicit background. This has to be kept in mind when looking at the representation of the de-legitimisation of propaganda narratives concerning a war that is already over at the time the analysed plays are set.<sup>241</sup> But the retrospective perspective enabled through the use of *Heimkehrerfiguren* can be used to provide a representation of the conditions of the society that sent them to war. The *Heimkehrer* thereby serve the authors as embodiments or "Zeugen" (Mohi-von Känel, 118) to the events of the war as well as the conditions that led to its outbreak, thus exceeding the individual destiny of one particular character.

HINKEMANN provides a good example for this ability. Toller's plays generally negotiate, as Wolfgang Frühwald and John M. Spalek correctly point out, "die alte Frage nach der Wirklichkeit unserer Existenz und die nach der tragischen Schuld des in einer so fragwürdigen Realität zum Handeln gezwungenen Menschen" (Frühwald/Spalek, 272). *Der deutsche Hinkemann* is therefore more than a "Kriegskröppel-Tragödie" (Toller,

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<sup>239</sup> The occupation of the Ruhr is especially prominent in plays of authors with National Socialist sentiments like Johst or Ziese. These plays also show how fluid the term 'WWI play' can be. As *Heimkehrerdramen*, they certainly belong to the text corpus of WWI dramatic literature. But, typical for plays with a National Socialist agenda, they focus much more on Germany's situation after the war and the ways to overcome it and regain the nation's old strength. The war itself or the pre-war society are only marginally represented.

<sup>240</sup> These are however neither exclusively German settings nor are they specific to the *Heimkehrerdrama* of WWI but moreover represent the most common plots of a motif that dates back to Homer.

<sup>241</sup> Walter Neumann comes to a similar conclusion (see W. Neumann, 10). His study *Grundzüge der Technik des Heimkehrerdramas* puts a strong emphasis on the personal experience of the author as well as on the National Socialist demand that in war "alles Individuelle hinter den Forderungen der Gemeinschaft zurückzutreten hat" (11). He further argues that the former front soldier portrayed in the plays has to either adapt to the changed conditions at home or perish in them. The only way to regain his identity, so Neumann, is to become the "Träger einer Idee" which he can through "Beteiligung an soldatischen Unternehmungen und Kämpfen in der Heimat [...] zum Siege führen" (13). His argumentation is clearly based on the National Socialist ideology of the *Volkskörper*, making his study a National Socialist literature critique rather than a scholarly analysis.

*Briefe 1*, 440), and rather the representation of the post-war conditions in which Toller portrays the actions of his protagonist, transcending the individual experiences and timely restrictions of his character by embedding what he represents in a greater context that seeks to examine the very core of the human condition. Klaus Bebendorf's interpretation of the play as "Tollers letztes expressionistisches Drama" (Bebendorf, 138), however, is the exception. HINKEMANN's tragic fate that is the consequence of the rejection of his new idea of humanity and thereby of his own identity in the society of the Weimar Republic is very different from the call for a liberation and renewal of mankind as it is represented, for example, in *Die Wandlung*. This has correctly caused the play to predominantly be seen as Toller's overcoming of his own expressionist beginnings.<sup>242</sup> Dorothea Klein has shown that he also moves away from his earlier plays with regards to formal and structural aspects.<sup>243</sup> That he chooses the form of a Heimkehrerdrama is thereby interesting, considering that Jürgen Hillesheim points out convincing indications that Bertolt Brecht's *Trommeln in der Nacht* is in part also motivated by the attempt to contradict Toller's *Die Wandlung*.<sup>244</sup> This indicates that the fate of Heimkehrern might provide a suitable rejection to this particular expressionist utopia.

Typically for the *Heimkehrer* plays of the discourse of de-legitimation, Toller represents his idea of the human condition by confronting the *Heimkehrerfigur* with the reality of the post-war society. He thereby not only, like Klaus Bebendorf states, "[verkörpert] in der Problematik seiner Person zugleich die Kritik an seiner Zeit" (Bebendorf, 153), which would make HINKEMANN a kind of *Projektionsfläche*, but actually exposes the conditions of his time through the confrontation of the altered mindset he develops with the continuity of the society he encounters.<sup>245</sup> The conflict this structure creates exposes the reality of the society the plays are set in as well as the continuities it inherited from the pre-war era. This allows Toller, and other authors in a similar way, to portray the conditions of the pre-war society and use them to de-legitimise the propaganda narratives. This perspective has so far been almost entirely ignored by scholars, who have focused predominantly on the play as a representation

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<sup>242</sup> See Neuhaus, Ernst Toller und die Neue Sachlichkeit, 151.

<sup>243</sup> See D. Klein, 101–103.

<sup>244</sup> See Hillesheim, 71–73.

<sup>245</sup> However, Sigurd Rothstein's statement that the message of the play is absolutely identical to the statements of HINKEMANN goes too far (see Rothstein, 137), especially considering that HINKEMANN at first represents the very characteristics that Toller later has him realise represent pathological traits of society.

of the “post-war misery of the German proletariat” (Benson, 61), the “male crises in Weimar Modernity” (McCormick, 67) or the representation of the Weimar Republic in general.

Considering that for the authors as well as for the audience of these plays, the war was an immediate memory rather than a historical event, it can be assumed that the conditions of the pre-war society and the events and experiences of the war were much more present in the production as well as in the reception of the plays than so far acknowledged. The implied history of the literary representation of the present the plays are set in, to loosely use Foucault’s concept, can therefore inform the interpretation of the plays. When doing so, the plays reveal much more about the societies before and during the war and many of them thereby participate in the discourse of de-legitimisation.

The *Heimkehrerfiguren* appearing in plays of the discourse of de-legitimisation are very heterogeneous. One only has to think of Toller’s HINKEMANN, Ödön von Horváth’s HAUPTMANN in the *Sladek* plays or DON JUAN in *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg* and ANDREAS KRAGLER in Bertolt Brecht’s *Trommeln in der Nacht*. They represent the period directly after the end of the war, where *Trommeln in der Nacht* is set and the plot of *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg* begins, the time of reparation and job shortages in the early 1920s, when *Der deutsche Hinkemann* is set, through to the time of inflation and armed fights between National Socialist and communist groups, when the *Sladek* plays are set and the plot of *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg* ends. However, these very different characters in their equally different settings are all used to create an inner conflict in their protagonists that is highlighted by their confrontation with the conditions of post-war society. They thereby provide a comprehensive insight into the representation of the literary discourse of de-legitimisation in the *Heimkehrerdramen* of the Weimar Republic.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Toller was arguably the most influential German literary figure of the 1920s and Bertolt Brecht became the most acknowledged German playwright in the 1930s. This means their works were familiar to a wide audience and performed across the theatres of the Weimar Republic. While Ödön von Horváth’s plays were certainly not as famous and widely received, he had made a name for himself as a “treuer Chronist” (Horváth, *Gesammelte Werke* 11, 219) of the Weimar Republic. His plays add a different perspective to the topic because they were written with greater distance from the time they portray. Particularly when writing *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg* from 1934 to 1936, one of the latest *Heimkehrer* plays of the discourse of de-legitimisation, Horváth had seen the full consequences of the continuities the play addresses.

Although the *Heimkehrer* characters in all five plays are used to expose the mindset of the time, the authors do this in different ways. Toller lets HINKEMANN act in an attempt to re-establish his life within the new order. Horváth creates a similar setting for his HAUPTMANN, while constructing DON JUAN's actions as an attempt to fully return home in an Odyssean tradition. KRAGLER, whose return Brecht set for the night of his bride's engagement can also be placed within this tradition.<sup>247</sup> This intertextuality is later intensified when KRAGLER is "[w]eggeblasen" (Brecht 1, 206) by the wind, which is a motif frequently used in regards to KRAGLER being "verschlungen" (206) by the suburbs, where he is lost to his bride.<sup>248</sup> But they all allow for an analysis of the society they are confronted with. By portraying its conditions as a continuity of those which caused the war, the authors de-legitimise the narratives of a peaceful German people who were attacked "[m]itten im Frieden" (Wilhelm II, *An das deutsche Volk*) by their enemies and reveal the mindset that is responsible for the war. They either display it themselves, like the HAUPTMANN in the *Sladek* plays or Horváth's DON JUAN, or struggle to survive within the conditions, like KRAGLER and HINKEMANN.<sup>249</sup>

The complexity in which the individual aspects of the discourse are represented in these texts requires a more elaborate discussion of each individual representation. This results in an argumentation that divides the plays more than was the case in the analysis of the discourse of legitimisation, the homogeneity of which frequently enabled the combination of quotes from multiple texts within one sentence to demonstrate the point to be made. Applying this method would however make it impossible to reconstruct the representation of the individual aspects within the analysed plays to a degree that does justice to their complexity. This particularly applies to the next chapter, which will elaborate on the motif of the *Heim-*

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<sup>247</sup> Elisabeth Frenzel also mentions Kragler's Odyssean character (see Frenzel, 331) and Hans Hahn uncovers a whole range of parallels between the *Odyssey* and *Trommeln in der Nacht* (see Hahn, 344–345). His heuristic method leaves most of his findings, as he acknowledges himself, in the state of hypotheses, which would be worth examining in more detail.

<sup>248</sup> Walter Neumann detects a general passivity of *Heimkehrer* (see W. Neumann, 13), even when they are fighting for a new world order shaped after the National Socialist ideals that Neumann himself follows. While this is true for many of the *Heimkehrer*, HINKEMANN is not passive. He founders because his attempt to act is doomed to fail due to the values of the society he acts in.

<sup>249</sup> Klaus Völker misses important aspects of the character of KRAGLER and its significance in Brecht's structure when he states that he is "ein Sonderfall" which does not represent the "'Typ' des Heimkehrers" (Völker, 364).

kehrer in WWI dramatic literature before switching focus to the analysis of its significance for the discourse of de-legitimation.<sup>250</sup>

Analyses of the plays have so far focused on the representation of the time in which the plays are set. The role of the revolution in *Trommeln in der Nacht* for example, is a frequent topic of studies, especially in the former GDR, where the play was initially received as a "Revolutionsstück" (Kaufmann, 321).<sup>251</sup> *Der deutsche Hinkemann* is still often regarded as a "Tragödie des Sozialismus" (Frühwald/Spalek, 278). Even if scholars have seen *Sladek* as a representation of the "'Jahrgan[g] 1902'" and a "völlig aus unserer Zeit herausgeborener und nur durch sie erklärbarer Typ" (qtd. in Streitler-Kastberger, 16), the focus of most studies is on how this generation influenced the mindset of the 1920s.<sup>252</sup> Although Horváth stated in an inter-

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<sup>250</sup> This approach will inevitably exclude a lot of the motifs and aspects on which scholars have focused so far. The explicit representation of the revolution in *Trommeln in der Nacht*, the gender aspect in *Der deutsche Hinkemann*, especially the relation between sex, masculinity and power, the *Fememord* motif in the *Sladek* plays and the motif of seduction in *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg* are only a few examples of topics that will not be analysed comprehensively. They will however be touched on with regards to the analysis of the discourse of de-legitimation in WWI dramatic literature. The hope is to provide new perspectives on other more thoroughly studied aspects of the plays by pointing out connections wherever they appear.

<sup>251</sup> Because of Brecht's biography and his decision to return from exile to East Germany, his works were often appropriated for a communist agenda by state approved interpretations. This does not render studies like that of Hans Kaufmann invalid but it must be considered when he, for example, argues that Brecht's scepticism towards "die wirkliche Veränderung der Welt, gegen die Revolution" could only have been derived from his "Widerwillen gegen die utopischen Weltverbesserer" of the expressionist movement. In fact, his scepticism against the revolution is a logical consequence of the way in which he creates KRAGLER's destiny and just as valid and representative of his mindset at the time as of his later rejection of KRAGLER's scepticism.

<sup>252</sup> Interestingly, the earlier 1928 text *Sladek oder: Die schwarze Armee* is even more focused on present and future developments than the later text. It includes the court case following the *Fememord* and the dissolution of the *Reichswehr*. This shifts the focus of the play, compared to the shorter, denser second play, much more towards the Weimar Republic's handling of the fascist terror in the first half of the 1920s. In this text, SLADEK is convicted but later pardoned for the murder of ANNA SCHRAMM and escapes, like the rest of the soldiers of the *Reichswehr*, relatively unscathed. Missing justice and therefore a form of closure for the *Fememord*, the play draws more attention to an issue that was, at the time of its creation, still unresolved. The end of

view with the Berlin-based newspaper *Tempo* in October 1929 that his intention was “die gesellschaftlichen Kräfte aufzuzeigen, aus de[nen] dieser Typus entstanden ist” (17), the characters that represent this time (more than SLADEK himself, the HAUPTMANN and the soldiers of the *Reichswehr*) are often only interpreted as representatives of a right-wing ideology but not examined as characters that Horváth used to portray the pre-war era.<sup>253</sup> The same applies to his DON JUAN. He is predominantly seen as a post-war representation of the “Typus Don Juan” (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe* 9, 379), while ignoring what this type reveals about the author’s image of the society that created this “Don Juan unserer Zeit” (379).<sup>254</sup> This society is the pre-war society and Horváth characterises it by having DON JUAN regress into his pre-war self over the course of the play. Previous interpretations have, for the

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*Sladek, der schwarze Reichswehrmann* sees the death of SLADEK and the denial of the *Reichswehr*’s existence by the *maßgebende Stelle*. Although finished only about a year after the first text, this ending creates a more distant perspective and seems to focus on a different, more historical subject. The creation of the second text, subtitled *Historie aus dem Zeitalter der Inflation in drei Akten* might, as Traugott Krischke speculates in his edition of Horváth’s works, reflect the author’s realisation that the political situation had changed and the threat that fascist terror groups caused to the Republic had temporarily been eliminated (see Krischke, *Entstehung, Überlieferung, Textgestaltung*, 147). As Paul Kuntrod noted in his review of the first version, which was performed in the Münchner Kammerspiele in 1972, 43 years after the premier of the second version and 34 years after Horváth’s death, the plays can therefore be seen as two individual plays rather than two different stagings of the same play (see Streitler-Kastberger, 13).

<sup>253</sup> The *Heimkehrer* in this play is not SLADEK himself but the HAUPTMANN. But if one understands SLADEK as “ein völlig aus unserer Zeit herausgeborener und nur durch sie erklärbarer Typ” (qtd. in Streitler-Kastberger, 16) he becomes a product of the time that shaped characters like the HAUPTMANN. Jürgen Schröder correctly states that it is not the *schwarze Reichswehr* itself that is attacked by Horváth but the time in which it originated (see J. Schröder, *Ödön von Horváth*, 455), though he does not explicitly include the pre-war era in this representation of this time. Horváth thereby makes the HAUPTMANN, a former officer and representative of Wilhelmine militarism, not only a random member of the cast but a representation of the central topic of the play. Furthermore, he drives the plot and is involved in a large proportion of the crucial dialogues. The play can therefore certainly count as a *Heimkehrerstück*.

<sup>254</sup> Herbert Gamper identifies Horváth’s characters as types rather than individuals and sees this as a strategy to exceed individual representations already used in his *Fräuleinstücken* (see Gamper, 3–4).

most part, missed the chance to analyse what these plays reveal about the conditions of the society and the mindset that caused the outbreak of WWI.

## 2.1 The role of the protagonist in the continuity motif

At first, the idea of continuities after an event that destroyed four big empires and redrew the map of Europe sounds entirely contradictory. But in the case of Germany, the acceptance of continuities and the failure to eradicate the remnants of the old monarchy proved to be one of the most significant problems of the Weimar Republic. The failure allowed the old mindset to regain strength and the difficult socio-economic problems Germany encountered during the 1920s and early 1930s as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, which served as a unifier by creating a common enemy in the victors as well as in those who allegedly co-operated with them, helped it to spread amongst the population. In this context, especially the early *Heimkehrer* plays like *Der deutsche Hinkemann* or *Trommeln in der Nacht* gain an almost prophetic character. They portray the continuity of the pathological structures that Karl Kraus for example identified as the motivation for the peoples' support of the war and they represent the foundation of the success of reactionary ideas as a consequence of these continuities.

*Trommeln in der Nacht* and *Der deutsche Hinkemann* represent the *Heimkehrer's* confrontation with society as a conflict that leads to a crisis of the protagonist's progressed identity and reveals the anachronistic societal structures that cause it. Horváth also uses his *DON JUAN* to uncover the character of society but, unlike Toller and Brecht, Horváth makes the *Heimkehrerfigur* itself the carrier of characteristics he is trying to expose. His confrontation with other characters is the method through which the author reveals this. These are the two predominant dramatic strategies used in *Heimkehrerdramen* to de-legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and to expose the mindset of the pre-war society that accepted and supported the war in order to achieve their individual goals.

### 2.1.1 How the inner conflict of the *Heimkehrer* exposes continuities:

*Trommeln in der Nacht* und *Der deutsche Hinkemann*.

Bertolt Brecht's play *Trommeln in der Nacht*, whose early *Augsburger Fassung* was finished in 1920, premiered in an edited version on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1922 in Munich and was printed in the same year by the *Drei-*



*Masken-Verlag*.<sup>255</sup> Set during a “Novembarnacht von der Abend- bis zur Fröhdämmerung” (Brecht 1, 176) in 1918 Berlin, it portrays the return of ANDREAS KRAGLER from the front in Africa, where he was a prisoner of war for three years. His former bride ANNA is now pregnant with the child of the *Kriegsgewinnler* MURK, to whom ANNA’s father, a war profiteer himself, would like to marry her off in order to secure the future of his business. Not sure what to do now that she is pregnant, ANNA turns KRAGLER away at first. Subsequently, KRAGLER looks for an outlet for his frustration, ending up in a *Schnapsdestille* from where, more because of a drunken mood than as the result of idealism, he departs to join the revolutionary fights in the suburbs. In the meantime, ANNA changes her mind and leaves MURK, whom she never loved, to look for KRAGLER. When the two find each other, KRAGLER decides to walk away from the revolution, takes ANNA back and they walk off into his “große[s], weiße[s], breite[s] Bett” (229).

Brecht often expressed his dissatisfaction with the play, especially its ending, and actually reworked it for the first edition of his *Gesammelte Werke*, published by the Suhrkamp Verlag in 1953. Despite his comments that KRAGLER’s rejection of the revolution is the “schäbigste aller möglichen Varianten” (Brecht 23, 239), Brecht’s representation of KRAGLER’s reaction does not portray a rejection of progress and change but can instead be seen as a rejection of the continuity of exploitation that caused so much suffering for his character.<sup>256</sup> The first two acts contain KRAGLER’s conflict with the bourgeois world of the *Kriegsgewinnler*, the third act ANNA’s decision to follow him into the suburbs and the last two acts KRAGLER’s realisation that joining the revolution would once more make him a soldier for somebody else’s cause, just as he was during the war. His rejection is therefore an act of recovering his “Selbstbestimmung” (Hillesheim, 58), of which he was robbed by the Wilhelmine Monarchy and would again be robbed of by the revolution.<sup>257</sup>

Brecht sketches KRAGLER as exploited by an old system which sent him to war to secure and extend its own position of power in the world. He

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<sup>255</sup> The play was initially called *Spartakus* but Marta Feuchtwanger suggested the change of title to *Trommeln in der Nacht* (Hermann, *Trommeln in der Nacht*, 247).

<sup>256</sup> Gerhard Fischer also emphasises the accuracy with which Brecht portrayed the nature of the revolution and concludes that distancing himself from his interpretation at the time does not de-legitimise the interpretation itself (see G. Fischer, 119).

<sup>257</sup> Hans-Joachim Schott confirms this thesis and sees it as motivated by “Schoenhauers und Nietzsches Kritik des Ressentiments” (Schott, 157).

does this whenever he has KRAGLER make references to his war experience, especially in the longer tale of Africa in act four. In Brecht's representation, KRAGLER and many others who were allegedly sent to war to save the fatherland from an invasion came to Africa and "verteidigten die Heimat, die Steiner und das andere" (Brecht 1, 214). Reducing the defence of the *Heimat* to the defence of worthless stones, geographically distanced from the place the troops are supposed to save, allows Brecht to inscribe a motivation for Germany's war effort into the play that de-legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Particularly the choice to let KRAGLER have been stationed in the African colonies of the Empire is charged with symbolism. He connects KRAGLER's war experience with the desire for expansion, greatness and prestige the colonies represent. This background emphasises the war as the climax of Wilhelmine Monarchy and as a consequence of its mindset rather than as an inevitable act of self-defence.

Another aspect of Brecht's tactic of de-legitimising the narrative is the exposure of the economic and social benefit the war provides to some. This is represented by the family of KRAGLER's bride, who got rich while he had to suffer. By letting them adopt the usual propaganda clichés with which those who stayed at home legitimised their privileged position to those who were sent to the front lines, Brecht manages to establish a link between the *Kriegsgewinnlern* and the narratives that promoted the war. This creates a causality between the propaganda narratives and the individual interests of those who profit from them. Mother BALICKE for example demands that KRAGLER learn to "leiden, ohne zu klagen" (188; 195) and that he should "[s]tark sein im Schmerz" (196). By having her repeat the cliché's created by the system that sent KRAGLER to war, Brecht represents the old Wilhelmine mindset in the new bourgeoisie. This allows him to expose a continuity of exploitation in which only the exploiters have changed, while their methods and the exploited remain the same.<sup>258</sup>

It also allows Brecht to define the willingness to exploit others as a characteristic of the mindset of the time, rather than a trait of certain parts

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<sup>258</sup> Although it already implicates a sensibility for injustice, it is not yet embedded in communist theories as he had at that time not yet concerned himself with the Marxist theories that would influence him later. Gerhard Fischer convincingly argues that this fact might have contributed to the successful representation of the revolution of 1918/19, which Brecht failed to accomplish twice after he had engaged with Marxism. Fischer suggests that the *Fatzer* and *Garber* material remained fragmentary because the realistic portrayal of the revolution was incompatible with the requirements of Brecht's Marxist ideology and, in case of the *Garber* fragment, the socio-political conditions in the GDR (see G. Fischer, 129–130).

of society. Furthermore, it enables him to expose this as a continuity after KRAGLER leaves the BALICKES and thereby, at least on first glance, the old exploitative system. KRAGLER, however, is not yet fully aware of his situation and Brecht uses his process of realisation throughout the rest of the play to reveal the nature of society as he sees it in detail. In act three, KRAGLER encounters the revolutionaries as he seeks sanctuary in a *Schnapsdestille*. Increasingly drunk, KRAGLER begins to realise that the world is “zu alt für die bessere Zeit” (217). He has already given up any hope of a bettering of his situation, asking rhetorically, “[k]ann man das Militär abschaffen oder den lieben Gott? Kann man es abschaffen, daß es Leiden gibt und die Qualen, die die Menschen den Teufel gelehrt haben?” (216), before answering, disillusioned, that one can “es nicht abschaffen” (217). This act also contains a reference to a children’s song: “Ein Hund ging in die Küche und stahl dem Koch ein Ei. [...] Da nahm der Koch sein Hackebeil / Und schlug den Hund entzwei” (217–218).<sup>259</sup> Its lyrics eventually lead into an endless loop, whereby Brecht alludes to the following representation of the continual return of the ever same pre-war conditions.<sup>260</sup> But KRAGLER is not yet aware of this and still blames the old system, and the BALICKES as its representatives, for his misery, as the reference to the military and God demonstrate. The song creates a link through which Brecht compares KRAGLER’s exploitation by the old system to the following exploitation by the revolutionaries, using the previously mentioned animal metaphors as a motif to identify the two systems’ treatment of KRAGLER, as they are first used by the BALICKES, who call KRAGLER “Vieh” (200) and “Schwein” (201), and then by the revolutionaries, who call him “Kalb” (213) and also “Schwein” (227). The affective component of the dehumanising metaphors ultimately starts the realisation process Brecht puts KRAGLER through by exposing the similarities in the way the old and the new systems treat him.

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<sup>259</sup> Its English version appears in Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*: “A dog came in the kitchen / And stole a crust of bread” (Beckett, 48).

<sup>260</sup> See H. Mayer, 416. Hans Mayer has correctly identified the intensification of this motif in the version of 1953, where Brecht lets KRAGLER sing more lines of the song and includes the part where it enters its infinite loop. However, Mayer’s interpretation that this is an expression of KRAGLER’s petty bourgeois position (see H. Mayer, 411), as well as interpretations of KRAGLER’s rejection of the revolution as nothing more than a return to his petty bourgeois origin, fail to see the similarities between the revolution and the system it tries to replace. They therefore miss the full extent of Brecht’s statement in KRAGLER’s rejection.

Over the course of the play, Brecht intensifies these in order to expose the exploitation of others for their own ideals as being rooted in the general mindset of the people and clearly de-legitimises the image created by the official propaganda narratives. GLUBB, the owner of the *Schnapsdestille*, convinces KRAGLER and the others to man “die Maschinengewehre” (218), resulting in the situation that KRAGLER is once again about to fight somebody else’s battles.<sup>261</sup> By letting KRAGLER display increasingly militaristic behaviour, Brecht manages to emphasise the parallels between his past and present situation. But the increasing irony with which KRAGLER acts within later scenes also prepares his rejection of the revolution at the end of the play. On the way to the fight, KRAGLER sarcastically yells “[a]n die Wand mit euch” (221) and salutes his civilian acquaintances. This demonstrates KRAGLER’s growing recognition of the nature of his situation. It is eventually his reunification with ANNA that is used by Brecht to initiate KRAGLER’s final realisation and the full exposure of the revolutionaries’ character. Labelling everybody an enemy that is not on their side, GLUBB suspects KRAGLER to be a reactionary and MANKE demands he be thrown “die Antwort in die Fresse, dem Bourgeois und seiner Hure” (223). Once KRAGLER has made clear that he will not join them, they even “*stürzen sich auf Anna*” (227), a pregnant, defenceless women, and try to throw “das Aas” (227) into the water. After creating a confrontation between KRAGLER and GLUBB about the suicidal character of joining a revolution that seems to be lost, Brecht uses the latter’s reaction to represent his willingness to sacrifice others for his own cause in a way that is reminiscent of behaviour of the officers towards their soldiers in other anti-war dramas.

KRAGLER: Anna! *Zu Glubb*: Mensch! Du läufst an die Wand und rauchst dabei! Ich sehe dich an der Wand vor der Dämmerung, seht ihr denn nicht wie grau und glasig er dort steht an der Wand? Riecht ihr nichts an ihm? Was soll aus euch werden, geht heim!

AUGUSTE: *lacht*

GLUBB: Ach, sie werden kleine Wunden bekommen im Hals oder auf der Brust, alles ordentlich, sie bekommen Zettel mit Nummern auf die Brust geheftet, wenn sie steif sind, nicht wie ersäufte Katzen, eher wie solche, denen ein kleines Unrecht geschehen ist (225–226).

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<sup>261</sup> In the version 1953 version, GLUBB is the uncle of KRAGLER’s revolutionary “Gegenpart” (Brecht 23, 241). Although he is only spoken of and does not actually appear in the play, with the inclusion of this character Brecht attempted to strengthen “die Gegenseite” (241), in order to balance out the side of “Kragler, des Kleinbürgers” (241), whose characters he said he could not alter.

The last expression draws a connection to KRAGLER, whom GLUBB has already twice called someone who has suffered “ein kleines Unrecht” (217; 218). These dialogues serve to demonstrate the continuity of exploitation of others for one’s own cause, which Brecht sees represented by the old system and the bourgeoisie but also by the revolution. GLUBB, who has incited men to join the revolution in the first place, explicitly excludes himself from those who will end up with a tag on their toe by using third person pronouns. This is, as Jürgen Hillesheim points out, imbued in GLUBB’s character, who prefers to stay behind his bar, and distil the fuel that is supposed to motivate others to join the fight.<sup>262</sup> It also is clearly reminiscent of the representation of officers and war-profiteers in Kraus’ drama, for example.

KRAGLER’s ultimate realisation, after he has regained a perspective of the future through ANNA’s return, is then used by Brecht to finally expose the continuous line he draws from the war experience to the portrayed post-war situation. KRAGLER decides that he will not “den Hals hinhalten ans Messer” (225) so “daß eure Idee in den Himmel kommt” (228). Because of the parallels Brecht creates, the refusal to join the revolution becomes a general rejection of being exploited and expands the meaning of this decision beyond the particular revolutionary setting in which Brecht lets KRAGLER make this realisation. By defining it as a continuity reaching back to pre-war times, he manages to de-legitimise the official propaganda narratives.

KRAGLER’s rejection is therefore not simply a regression into his old, petty bourgeois lifestyle. Moreover, Brecht portrays KRAGLER as reflecting on the experiences of the war in order to progress and overcome the old mindset, rather than, like the revolutionaries, carry it into a new era.<sup>263</sup> Brecht also has KRAGLER accept ANNA’s experiences of the war, including her pregnancy, taking her back. The family he will create as soon as he has “vervielfältig[t]” (229) himself is certainly not the traditional petty bourgeois family of the likes of BALICKE, who sees “eine Frau ohne Mann” as a “gotteslästerliche Budicke” (179), to say nothing of a woman staying with

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<sup>262</sup> See Hillesheim, 56.

<sup>263</sup> Astrid Oesmann’s interpretation of the play’s ending does therefore not go far enough. She sees his rejection as “his counterrevolutionary longing for a bourgeois life”, which would reveal the revolutionaries’ “deficits tied to the movement’s failure to address KRAGLER in his marginalised position” (Oesmann, 40). Instead, KRAGLER’s rejection is a reaction to the revolutionaries’ admittedly poor attempt to address his marginalised position, which is based on the realisation that their intentions to include him in their movement are again exploitative.

a man while being pregnant by another one.<sup>264</sup> Furthermore, ANNA rejects her family and the father of her child, although she could simply stay with them and remain in a rather safe bourgeois environment.<sup>265</sup> This ending might not be radical in the sense that KRAGLER becomes a martyr for the cause of the revolution, which is often expected from a 'radical' character, especially in hindsight. But KRAGLER convincingly rejects the continuity of fighting for somebody else's cause as a lesson he has learned from his experience in the war. Although Brecht does not provide a solution for the problems portrayed in the play, his sweeping renunciation of KRAGLER's past and present is more radical than often acknowledged.<sup>266</sup>

Furthermore, it explains why he has to represent KRAGLER as a "Kleinbürger" (Brecht 23, 241). This position provides the character with sufficient distance from the revolutionary ends to provide him with an authentic motivation to turn his back on it. But it is not the concept of revolution he turns his back on, but rather a revolution that replaces a system that has exploited him for its imperialistic goals with a system that is about to exploit him for a new ideology. In this representation, KRAGLER's personal experience and role in the war and the revolution are alike because they both put him into the position of the exploited, who is supposed to fight and die for someone else's cause. The rejection of the revolution therefore becomes a rejection of being exploited and a logical consequence of the way Brecht constituted the character. The play might not provide a solution to the problem, but with KRAGLER and ANNA walking away, it reveals that the discontinuation of the old continuities is the necessary first step for any form of progress.

By 1953, Brecht had seen the consequences the ultimately failed revolution had for the demise of the Weimar Republic and the rise of National Socialism. Furthermore, considering Brecht's ideological development and his biographical situation by that time, his critique of the play is not only

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<sup>264</sup> Grażyna Krupińska points, for example, to Brecht's ironical use of the bourgeois "Wertekatalog" (Krupińska, 67) represented by the father BALICKE's references to his daughter's sexuality or the constant references to ANNA's virginity, her "Lilie" (Brecht 1, 203). Brecht makes clear from the beginning that neither KRAGLER nor ANNA can meet these expectations after what they have experienced during the war and their reunification in the end is the start of a new path to a destination that Brecht does not reveal.

<sup>265</sup> Nick Greenland sees in this action Brecht's rejection of the *Bürgerliche Trauerspiel* represented, which would also be a rejection of the bourgeois morals this genre would typically display (see Greenland, 222).

<sup>266</sup> It is therefore the opposite of what is attested by Tony Meech, who sees KRAGLER's choice as an acceptance of the world as it is (see Meech, 72).

understandable but almost logical.<sup>267</sup> When looking at Brecht at the time he wrote the play and at the construction of KRAGLER, however, the “untragische Ausgang” (Brecht 26, 151), as Brecht called it in a diary entry in 1920, is just as inevitable.<sup>268</sup> From this point of view, it almost appears as “der einzige Ausgang” (151) because joining the revolution would have only been an “Ausweg, ein schwächliches Zusammenwerfen, Kapitulation vor der Romantik” (151). Making KRAGLER a revolutionary fighter or even a martyr for the romantic cause of a socialist ideal would have not challenged the old mindset, but essentially reinstated it under a different ideological guise.

While Brecht allows for KRAGLER to find a way out of the continuity, Toller’s HINKEMANN does not. Similar to KRAGLER, he understands the necessity of change after the experiences of war but ultimately founders due to the continuities he is confronted with. The play is set “[u]m 1921” (Toller, *Werke 1*, 191), in times of economic struggle. Only his wife GRETE knows that the proletarian EUGEN HINKEMANN was castrated during the war. Although he is otherwise healthy, his self-perception has suffered.

Ich bin ja ein verlornen Mann. Ich bin ja eine heimliche Krankheit. Ich bin ja ein Hampelmann, an dem sie solange gezogen haben, bis er kaputt war [...] Siehst du, hier hier sitzt wie ein Bündel aus lauter Stecknadeln und sticht und sticht: Du bist ein rüudiger Hund für dein Weib (195).

At this point, HINKEMANN’s self-image is still presented by Toller as a reflection of the mindset of the post-war society, which is dominated by the continuation of an admiration for strength and power. Emphasising the strong sexual connotation of these qualities, Toller makes HINKEMANN, who is besides his castration fully able, take on a self-image that is dominated by the perception of having lost these attributes.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> See also Hermand, *Bertolt Brecht*, 21;

<sup>268</sup> Especially so when considering Brecht’s initial scepticism towards revolutions that for example Hans Hahn points out by referring to the *Gesang des Soldaten der roten Armee* from 1919 (see Hahn, 348). Klaus-Detlef Müller portrays a similar image of the young Brecht and states that any form of “Revolutionspathos” would be “expressionistisches Weltverbesserertum” (K-D. Müller, 17). Müller’s statement that the failed *Münchener Räterepublik* confirmed Brecht’s views and his reference to Brecht’s rejection of Toller’s early works give further credibility to the previously discussed connection between KRAGLER’s rejection of the revolution in *Trommeln in der Nacht* and Brecht’s rejection of expressionist dramas like *Die Wandlung*, pointed out by Jürgen Hillesheim.

<sup>269</sup> See Czaplá, 352.

Throughout the play, Toller portrays the tragedy of HINKEMANN's suffering in a society that judges its members solely based on these qualities. In the first scene, he discovers his mother-in-law had blinded a little Finch. Through this incident, Toller introduces a motif that he uses to guide HINKEMANN's journey to overcome this old mindset. HINKEMANN's empathy with the suffering finch reminds him of his own suffering, causing an emotional breakdown. Toller repeats these breakdowns throughout the play in scenes where HINKEMANN's confrontation with other characters exposes the malady caused by society's ignorance of his suffering and so lets him progress on his path to a new understanding of humanity. The affects created by the despair in which Toller portrays HINKEMANN in these scenes create an antithesis to the utilitarianism and indifference of society and thereby enhance the de-legitimisation of its mindset.

At the time of his first breakdown, HINKEMANN is still at the beginning of this path. Toller has him admit that he would have had no problem hurting another creature before his injury but "[n]un ich ein Krüppel bin, weiß ich: Es ist etwas Ungeheuerliches! Es ist Mord am eigenen Fleisch! Schlimmer als Mord! Foltern bei lebendigem Leib!" (194). This realisation initiates HINKEMANN's first emotional breakdown, with which Toller sets the character's journey in motion. After GRETE shows her despair about her husband's depressive state and the living conditions she finds herself in, she eventually manages to convince HINKEMANN that she is "nicht gleich" (198) as other women who need physical love in order to be happy, and does not despise him because of his castration. Toller has HINKEMANN understand this as a sign of love and react with enthusiasm, promising to find work and generate an income. He eventually takes on a job as the strongman Homunkulus at a fair, as which he is once more objectified and exploited as "Menschenmaterial" (200) for someone else's profit. Society's desire for strength and cruelty manifested in the audience's admiration of Homunkulus becomes increasingly incompatible with HINKEMANN's altering post-war identity. When he cannot keep up the charade any longer and reveals his condition to his acquaintances, he is eventually laughed at and cast out. This turning point allows Toller to initiate the change that reveals the continuity of the pre-war mindset into the post-war era, which he uses to de-legitimise the propaganda narratives.

It is in this context that the *Heimkehrer* status has the greatest influence on the de-legitimising strategies Toller applies. Through the origin of HINKEMANN's emasculation, Toller introduces the war as an immanent aspect into the play. By linking his development of a new understanding of humanity to the experiences HINKEMANN has with regards to his injury, Toller additionally emphasises the significance of HINKEMANN's wartime experience for his altering mindset. The frequent references to



HINKEMANN's pre-war personality, which Toller identifies with the mindset of the post-war society, allows the character to encounter and expose this mindset as a continuity that began before the war. In regards to Toller's "Kritik der Gewalt" (Schreiber, 204), as Birgit Schreiber correctly understands the play, the representation of the idea "daß die unendliche Fortschreibung bzw. Fortsetzung der Gewalt auf die geleugnete und vergessene Gewalt der Vergangenheit zurückzuführen ist, welche gerade als verdrängte die Gegenwart bestimmt" (204). In doing so, Toller defines HINKEMANN's conflict with the society portrayed in the play not as a conflict between different post-war responses, but as a fight between continuation and change. Consequently, society's rejection of HINKEMANN's progressed understanding of humanity as an intrinsic value exposes the inhumane nature of the old, unchanged mindset, allowing Toller to reveal what he diagnoses as ultimately having caused the war.<sup>270</sup> The mindset he thus blames for the outbreak of the war thereby serves as a de-legitimation of the propaganda narratives by exposing it as selfish and opportunistic, and the adulatory of power and strength, which directly contrasts the image of the German people created by these narratives.

One particular motif is especially important in this context: the motif of laughter.<sup>271</sup> Appearing in moments in which a suffering creature's "Seele" (213) is exposed, laughter is the visible and audible symbol Toller uses to portray society's disrespect for the value of humanity. The motif of the soul is therefore closely related to the concept of humanity. HINKEMANN refers to it whenever he speaks of the essence of people, that which really defines them. It appears for the first time in the pub-scene, in HINKEMANN's disguised life story, through which Toller lets him realise what he is looking for and why he is so afraid of being laughed at. He shares the story of his injury, disguising it as the anecdote of an acquaintance but adding the happy end HINKEMANN is longing for. In this recounting, he ends up being "einer, der reich ist, einer, der glücklich ist. Und der Grund? Sein Weib

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<sup>270</sup> Richard Dove emphasises that HINKEMANN is a victim of both the pre- and the post-war society, as both are based on the same mindset of "capitalism and militarism" (Dove, 219). While the continuity of the mindset he implies and the impossibility of any form of societal change without the progression of this mindset is correct, the victim status of HINKEMANN is more problematic (see Dove, 239–240).

<sup>271</sup> There are a variety of additional recurring motifs in the play. For example, the animal motif (see T. Hoffmann et al., 490) or the motif of circular structures and movements (see Grunow-Erdmann, 130–131). Even the motif of laughter goes beyond the scope examined here. Its full complexity is indicated by Torsten Hoffmann et al. and analysed in more detail by Birgit Schreiber (see T. Hoffmann et al., 490–491; Schreiber 216–223).

verachtete ihn nicht, sein Weib haßte ihn nicht [...] Das Weib hatte ... seine Seele lieb" (213). In opposition, Toller makes HINKEMANN see himself as someone who "krank ist an seiner Seele" (211) and thereby creates the confrontation that allows him to make HINKEMANN realise that this sickness is not a result of his disfigurement but of society's failure to see the human being behind it.

At this point, Toller reveals the cause of the character's emotional breakdowns. His emotional crisis in scene one is represented as the result of imagining GRETE standing behind the curtain and laughing at him spitefully. The next emotional breakdown is set after PAUL GROSSHAHN tells him that GRETE allegedly laughed at him as she saw him performing as Homunkulus. Through HINKEMANN's reaction to GROSSHAHN's report that at first she was "geekelt ... dann hat sie gelacht" (214), Toller defines the pain caused by her disgust as second to that caused by her laughter. And the pub-scene, in which he confronts his protagonist with this revelation, continues to make use of this motif. HINKEMANN's friends break out in laughter after hearing that the strong man Homunkulus is actually a "Eunuch" (215). For HINKEMANN, their laughter is another rejection of his post-war identity. Still suffering from the pain GRETE's alleged reaction has caused him, he experiences the next emotional crisis.

Da steht der Mensch allein  
Da tut sich ein Abgrund auf, der heißt: Ohne Trost  
Da wölbt sich ein Himmel, der heißt: Ohne Glück  
Da wächst ein Wald, der heißt: Hohn und Spott  
Da brandet ein Meer, das heißt: Lächerlich  
Da würgt eine Finsternis, die heißt: Ohne Liebe  
Was aber hilft da? (216).

After HINKEMANN realises that post-war society has not progressed beyond the experiences of the war, he flees the pub and Toller then orchestrates an encounter with HINKEMANN's fairground boss, in order to initiate the end of HINKEMANN's attempt to fit into this society.

Mir haben sie den Star gestochen. Ich bin sehend geworden! Bis auf den Grund sehe ich! Bis auf den nackten Grund. Die Menschen sehe ich! Die Zeit sehe ich! Herr Direktor, der Krieg ist wieder da! Die Menschen morden sich unter Gelächter! (218).

The result of this realisation is represented in scene III/2. Introducing HINKEMANN's mother and the story of his absent father, Toller demonstrates the level of understanding HINKEMANN has reached, as he is now

able to recognise what caused his mother to hate his father so much because he can relate to it:

HINKEMANN (*nach einer Pause*): Was war das Bitterste, Mutter? War es, daß er den Lohn vertrank, während du Hunger littest?

DIE ALTE FRAU HINKEMANN: Nein.

HINKEMANN: War es, daß er eine fremde Straßendirne sich nahm?

DIE ALTE FRAU HINKEMANN: Nein.

HINKEMANN: War es, daß er in dein Bett mit ihr sich legen wollte?

DIE ALTE FRAU HINKEMANN: Nein.

HINKEMANN: So war es, weil er lachte, als deine Seele sich wehrte im großen Schmerz?

DIE ALTE FRAU HINKEMANN: Das war es, Eugen (225).

Her revenge will be that once “sie ihn im Leichenwagen zum Friedhof hinausfahren”, she will “die Fenster verhängen und die Türen verschließen und nicht hinter seinem Sarg hergehen. (*Triumphierend.*) Fremde Menschen sollen ihn begraben!” (225). At first, Toller appoints affects of revenge to HINKEMANN that are similar to his mother’s. He initially plans to kill GRETE, but not “dafür, daß du einen anderen nahmst – das war dein Recht ... nicht dafür daß du mich belogst – das nahmst du dir als Recht ... sterben mußt du, weil du mich verlacht hast vor der Jahrmarktsbude!” (229). He can accept all other wrongdoings but after society has stigmatised him and stripped him off all other values, he cannot forgive her devaluation of his humanity.

But before he can act, HINKEMANN realises that he is not the only creature that suffers. Toller revives the eye motif that is already established by the blinding of the finch in the first scene of the play in the moment in which HINKEMANN recognises his own suffering in GRETE and realises suffering to be a pathological trait of the society he lives in.

Die Augen kenne ich! ... Die Augen habe ich gesehen in der Fabrik ... die Augen habe ich gesehen in der Kaserne ... die Augen habe ich gesehen im Lazarett ... die Augen habe ich gesehen im Gefängnis. Das sind die selben Augen. Die Augen der gehetzten, der geschlagenen, der gepeinigten, der gemarterten Kreatur ... Ja, Gretchen ich dachte, du bist viel reicher als ich, und dabei bist du ebenso arm und ebenso hilflos ... Ja, wenn das so ist, wenn das so ist ... dann sind wir Bruder und Schwester. Ich bin du und du bist ich ... (229).

By letting HINKEMANN’s own suffering lead to this realisation, Toller transforms the shot that emasculated HINKEMANN into “eine Frucht vom Baume der Erkenntnis” (231), which enables him to see behind the mask of the

people he initially wanted to belong to and realise that what he sees in the streets are “keine Menschen [...] ich sah Fratzen ... und Not ... sinnlose, unendliche Not der blinden Kreatur” (231). By making HINKEMANN’s inner change the requirement for his realisation, Toller defines the suffering as a consequence of the continuities within society, which denies the acceptance of the horrific experiences of many during the war.

The horrors of war have caused HINKEMANN to understand the intrinsic value of humanity and should have united all those who suffered, as they were all equally violated by the war. Even the person who shot him is in the same situation because “[e]r tat mir weh, und ein anderer tat ihm weh [...] *Ein Geist sind wir, ein Leib*” (232). Instead, the world remains the very same one as that which caused and experienced the war. But

es gibt Menschen, die sehen das nicht. Und es gibt Menschen, die haben das vergessen. Im Krieg haben sie gelitten und haben ihre Herrn gehaßt und haben gehorcht und haben gemordet! ... Alles vergessen ... Sie werden wieder leiden und werden wieder ihre Herrn hassen und werden wieder ... gehorchen und werden wieder ... morden. So sind die Menschen ... Und könnten anders sein, wenn sie wollten. Aber sie wollen nicht (232).

By representing the post-war society as a continuation, in the last quote even a repetition, of the pre-war society, the corresponding mindset in the play can be used to expose the conditions of the society Toller blames for the war, ultimately allowing him to de-legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.

Toller and Brecht both detect continuities in the post-war society and expose them in a similar way. Over the course of the plays, their *Heimkehrerfiguren* progress and develop a mindset increasingly incompatible to that of the society they are confronted with. Because Toller and Brecht both make the wartime experiences of their protagonists the driving force for their progression, their developing inner conflict reveals that the post-war society is stagnating in the same mindset that constituted it before the outbreak of the war. Furthermore, this conflict reveals the conditions of this society. This representation supports the argument that Toller, as well as Brecht, sees the mindset of the time as the main driving force of the war and both ultimately use their *Heimkehrerfiguren* to uncover a society whose representation de-legitimises established propaganda narratives.

2.1.2 The *Heimkehrer* as a representation of continuity: *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg*

The primary example for a *Heimkehrerfigur* as a direct representation of continuities reaching back into the pre-war era is Ödön von Horváth's *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg*. By the time he wrote it, Horváth had seen the consequences of the mindset that he had described in his *Sladek* plays and what this led to. The promised cleansing effect of the war and the refocus on values like solidarity and cooperation failed to come true in this text and the people are portrayed as being just as egotistic as they were before.

DON JUAN's journey is therefore a journey of forgetting. "Die tragische Schuld Don Juans ist, daß er seine Sehnsucht immer wieder vergißt oder gar verhöhnt, und so wird er zum zynischen Opfer seiner Wirkung" (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe* 9, 379) is Horváth's description of the way he constituted the character. It is essentially a mirror image of the structure of *Der deutsche Hinkemann*. The representation of HINKEMANN's physical motion through the spaces of the play is circular and leads him back to where he set off from, while the development of the character's mindset is linear, leaving the pre-war mindset behind and developing a new understanding. DON JUAN moves through the play's spaces along a train line, leaving the trenches of WWI behind and ultimately reaching the grave of his idealised bride. His mindset, however, develops in a loop from the albeit superficial intention to change back to his pre-war state. Horváth lets DON JUAN increasingly forget his initial post-war resolutions and regress into his pre-war self.<sup>272</sup> Directly after the end of the war, he "bildet sich ein, ein anderer Mensch geworden zu sein. Jedoch bleibt er, wie er ist" (379). The war only appears to have been an interruption, whose psychological and physical demands created a short-lived desire to change the way of life that ultimately led him into the war, but he soon returns to his old self.<sup>273</sup> Created as a "Don Juan unserer Zeit" (379), he represents the mindset of society. While this mindset regresses, the fictional time moves forward and Horváth, with the knowledge he has gained by 1936, exposes that the pre-war years are only a "scheinbar vergangene Zeit" (379). He thereby reveals continuities between the pre-war years, the time of inflation in which the play is set and in which "sich, auch im banalsten Sinne des Wortes, alle Werte verschoben haben" (379) and the time the play is written. Exposing these continuities through the regression of DON JUAN, Horváth de-legitimises

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<sup>272</sup> Regression has been identified by Jürgen Schröder as a characteristic of Horváth's late texts in general (see J. Schröder, *Spätwerk*, 57) but it is particularly dominant in the representation of DON JUAN.

<sup>273</sup> See Kabic, 131.

the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by representing the egoism, utilitarianism and inhumanity of the mindset he makes responsible for the war.

Although DON JUAN claims that he intends to change, Horváth does not equip him with the type of mindset that would accept transformation. Slavija Kabic has convincingly argued that the attempts to find his ideal woman are, from the very beginning, nothing but a new chase for DON JUAN.<sup>274</sup> He remembers a woman that could have released him from his chase, but Horváth's introduction to the play already defines his desire as a quest to find "die Vollkommenheit, also etwas, was es auf Erden nicht gibt" (379). In his initial attempt to leave this old self behind, DON JUAN does not realise that his idealised memory represents only a new longing for him to pursue. Once on this pursuit, DON JUAN eventually forgets his wish to overcome the attitude that made him forego the opportunity to settle down and which led him down a path that ultimately ended up in the war, at the end of which the play's plot starts.

By having DON JUAN chase a woman who is already dead, Horváth robs his pursuit of any hope for success and turns it into a chase after an unachievable ideal. At the end of the first act, a statement by the GROBMUTTER serves as a prophecy predicting that the "neue Zeit", the time of change, will be short-lived and will soon perish once "die alten Zeiten" (390) return. That DON JUAN will also fall back into his old selfish behaviour is indicated by Horváth in the next scene, the opening scene of the second act. He encounters a woman whom he had seduced before the war, and who predicts that he will not change and that this will ultimately be his end:

- DON JUAN: (*langsam*) Ich glaub, ich bin durch diesen Krieg ein anderer geworden –  
WITWE: (*höhnisch*) Bei deinen Talenten?  
DON JUAN: Ich glaub, die hab ich verloren.  
WITWE: Nein. Du bleibst, wer du bist.  
DON JUAN: Ich bin es müde.  
WITWE: Man sollte dich ausrotten.  
DON JUAN: Ich weiß, ich bring den Damen nichts Gutes – (*Er lächelt leise.*)  
WITWE: Du wirst ihnen nicht entrinnen (392).

DON JUAN's rational understanding of the need to change after his experiences in the war is suppressed by his seductive and egoistic nature, which Horváth reveals through the motif of DON JUAN's smiling throughout the play.<sup>275</sup> Representing the "ewige[n] Kampf zwischen Bewußtsein und Un-

<sup>274</sup> See Kabic, 129.

<sup>275</sup> A related motif is the motif of silence, which Horváth uses 61 times throughout the play (see Ropers, 128). Mirjam Ropers has analysed the

terbewußtsein" that Horváth called the "dramatische Grundmotiv aller meiner Stücke" (Horváth, *Gesammelte Werke 11*, 215), this constant smiling indicates DON JUAN's regression as early as scene I/1. Simultaneously, it symbolises the subconscious acceptance of the inability to change that Horváth inscribes into the character in order to expose DON JUAN's experiences of the war and the shock afterwards as a chapter in his life that does not ultimately change him. Instead, he remains who he always was, allowing Horváth to expose his mindset as representative of the mindset before the war.

In scene I/1, DON JUAN is shown thanking one of the two SOUBRETTEN for reminding him of the woman whose heart he broke. He "lächelt" (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 9*, 383) while giving her a pack of cigarettes, the only trophy he won during the war. This is in itself a symbolic act, as Horváth indicates that DON JUAN no longer needs this particular wartime trophy now that the war is over and he can continue to collect women as trophies.<sup>276</sup> What could be understood as an expression of gratefulness thereby already carries connotations of deceit. Horváth enhances this impression by shifting to an increasingly devious use of the motif over the course of the play until it appears almost Mephistophelean when, at the peak of DON JUAN's regression, he warns the older daughter of his landlord not to mistake him for "eine aufbauende Kraft" (409).

This shift from unconscious expression to sinister acceptance is gradual and at times the metatext containing the motif implies both sets of affects. In the first act, Horváth writes in the stage direction that DON JUAN "lächelt leise" (384) when explaining to one of the women he had already seduced before the war that he did not die at the front lines but "war nur vermisst" (384). Similarly, he tells a prostitute that he is "[f]ast" (387) married and he "grinst leise" (387) when telling her that he is faithful "[s]eit dem Krieg" (387). At the beginning of the second act, the shift starts to become more obvious. Despite still claiming that he has changed because of the war, the metatext again indicates that DON JUAN "lächelt leise" when admitting that

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structure of the dialogues in the play and interprets this silence convincingly as a signal for the disparity between the speech of the characters and the underlying truth Horváth wants to express. Stefan Neuhaus, looking at other plays by Horváth, also sees the use of silence as a motif Horváth frequently uses to expose the truth behind the characters' dialogues (see Neuhaus, *Politisches Schreiben bei Horváth*, 142).

<sup>276</sup> Kabic interprets this passage in a similar way, stating that the war, in which he could conquer nothing but a pack of cigarettes, was essentially only an interruption of DON JUAN's pursuit of women and never really threatened to change him (see Kabic, 131).

he does “den Damen nichts Gutes” (392), and at the end of act two he “grinst” (407) when defining the young girl, a minor, who he is living with as future prey. Horváth then includes the diabolical version of the motif in the opening scene of the third act, where he “grinst” (409) when giving the older daughter of his landlord “*ein Bündel Banknoten*” (409), thereby establishing his dominance over her. This scene is placed shortly before he has to flee from the accusations of abusing a minor, and thereby demonstrates that DON JUAN has almost completely forgotten about his resolution to change and has regressed into the mindset he initially wanted to overcome.

The motif is also omnipresent in the last scene of the play. Again, DON JUAN “*lächelt leise*” (416) when his coat gets caught on the grave of his former lover and he imagines her laughter once his attempt to flee is stopped and his destiny is sealed. The MAGD “*lächelt*” (416) when she calls him a “Schneemann” (416) and so does he when surrendering to the comforting cover of the snow that makes him feel “*immer wärmer*” (416).<sup>277</sup> The smiling accompanies him from the first scene until the end, when he “*lächelt leise*” (417), while dying on his former lover’s grave. The smile is the physical manifestation of his seductive nature and allows Horváth to represent DON JUAN’s increasing acceptance of the characteristic that will ultimately be his downfall.

Jürgen Schröder has pointed to the motif of longing for the paradisiac times of childhood that is typical for Horváth’s late texts and its relation to the disappointments of the war and the post-war times.<sup>278</sup> Yet Horváth does not only represent this desire to return to an innocent time but also the guilt of the time DON JUAN initially wants to escape. DON JUAN’s death is not simply represented as the fulfilment of a death wish. He “*will fort*” (416) from her grave after he remembers how his bride “*aussieh[t]*” (416). The concrete memory replaces the ideal he is chasing and makes his pursuit pointless. In making him try to walk away from his bride’s grave, Horváth has him turn to new seductions and renders his attempt to change an irreversible failure. His death is therefore a salvation for both DON JUAN, the victim of his own mindset, and the women he would have exploited in his next conquests. In its immediate event, Horváth portrays the death to have been caused by the memory of the first woman DON JUAN destroyed, whose

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<sup>277</sup> Horváth also uses the snowman motif for the *Heimkehrer* in *Ein Kind unserer Zeit*, who also experiences the cold getting “wärmer” (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe* 16, 522) as he freezes to death. In both texts, the snow cover is a protection and the characters ultimately welcome the relief death means to them (see also Haag, *Der weiße Mantel*, 65).

<sup>278</sup> See J. Schröder, *Spätwerk*, 68–70.



hand he imagines as holding him back, and by his following surrender to the warming snow.<sup>279</sup> But essentially, it is a consequence of his pre-war mindset. “Alles wär anders geworden, hätte sie geantwortet” (415) might be DON JUAN’s conviction but by letting him chase somebody he had driven into insanity and ultimately death, Horváth denies DON JUAN this option and simultaneously defines the *Heimkehrer*’s pre-war actions as the real reason for his failure after the war. He thereby transforms the continuities he portrays through DON JUAN into a causality, extends it to the time the character represents, which is essentially the pre-war era, and ultimately uses it to de-legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.

Because Horváth creates DON JUAN not simply as a victim of his desires but includes the unwillingness to change in his character, this causality is enhanced. At the beginning of the second act, DON JUAN links the promised change and his faithfulness to the arrival of a letter:

OBERIN: (*fixiert ihn.*) Sagen Sie: Auf was warten Sie denn schon seit acht Wochen?

DON JUAN: Auf eine Antwort. Aber, wenn ich sie nicht bekomme –

OBERIN: (*fällt ihm ins Wort.*) Was ist dann?

DON JUAN: (*grinst.*) Nichts. Dann bleibt alles beim alten (391).

In the very next scene, a letter revealed by one of the female characters proves that DON JUAN’s intention has already completely changed. Because his bride did not answer his letter, he has decided that he will “bleiben, wer ich bin” (393) and before even having finished the letter, he seduces the first woman. From the beginning, his intention to change is not an independent moral decision but dependent on the actions of his bride, and decreases with the prospect of an answer. Not long after this scene, Horváth emphasises DON JUAN’s almost defiant regression into his pre-war self and makes sure that it becomes clear that he implies DON JUAN’s acceptance of this development by letting him acknowledge that he is “durch diesen Krieg ein besserer Mensch geworden, und erst jetzt im Frieden finde ich mich allmählich wieder –” (397). ‘Recovering himself’, or regressing, is represented as a desirable development and thereby implies that he is accountable for its consequences.

Horváth links the glimpses of guilt that he lets appear in DON JUAN’s consciousness to another motif of affect-manifestation in the metatext. Repeatedly throughout the play, DON JUAN is shown to turn around “*als würde ihn wer verfolgen*” (384) or while he “*faßt sich ans Herz*” (388). Most of the

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<sup>279</sup> Ingrid Haag has called the snow a warming coat of protection, which in this context as well gains a double meaning (see Haag, *Der weiße Mantel*, 65).

time, this happens in situations in which he engages with people somehow connected to his bride and who know what he did. Horváth uses the motifs as representations of subconscious affects of guilt and even remorse and the frequency of their appearance correlates with the increasing regression into old habits. The affective manifestations of deceit and guilt therefore signpost DON JUAN's regression in a way that is similar to Toller's use of emotional breakdowns to signpost HINKEMANN's progression. Both authors use them in scenes in which they expose a truth the characters themselves are not yet able to see, or which they at least decide not to acknowledge, and thereby emphasise moments in which the characters' self-perception is distinct from what the external recipient is supposed to perceive.

The way in which Horváth created this old self exposes characteristics that he saw present in the society that caused the war. Unlike Toller and Brecht, Horváth diagnosed this time not by increasingly distancing his *Heimkehrer* from the continuities of society, but by letting him regress into a pre-war mindset. In all three plays, however, the *Heimkehrer* is used to expose the mindset of a society that accepts and supports an event that is seen by all authors of the discourse of de-legitimation as catastrophic. The conflict between the individual and their circumstances which is immanent in most *Heimkehrerdramen* engages with important aspects of the literary discourse of de-legitimation and can thereby further inform the understanding of the entire discourse.

## **2.2 The representation of the mindset that caused the war through the post-war perspective of the *Heimkehrer***

The plays portray a society that has been shaken up by the events of the war and its aftermath. Characters like Brecht's BALICKES and MURK have profited from the war, Toller's BUDENBESITZER from the conditions after its end. DON JUAN also exploits the situations in which he finds the women he seduces. This indicates that all these authors detected the continuation of society's division into privileged and disadvantaged classes, a division that dominated the hierarchical system of the Wilhelmine Empire. But they also saw the shake-up society underwent during and after the war. They portray characters who have climbed or fallen down the social ladder and thereby reveal that the desire of people of all classes is to climb to the top of the hierarchy in order to enjoy the privileges. Representing the desire for individual success and the exploitative methods people apply to achieve it as a continuity of the pre-war era allows them to diagnose these pathological traits as a reason for the outbreak of the war. Similarly to Kraus, they re-

veal that the societal conditions were the decisive prerequisites under which the war was possible in the first place.

These continuities are used to de-legitimise the propaganda narratives. The desire for personal and national prestige is represented as a motivation for the war effort, thereby de-legitimising the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. The representation of the *Kriegsgewinnler*'s opportunistic and exploitative methods in gaining and securing their positions exposes not only the pretence of the claimed solidarity of the German people but also their propagated diligent and peaceful nature. The admiration of power and strength which the plays uncover as an underlying societal desire and the utilitarian and violent nature of the post-war society that, exposed as a continuity of the pre-war mindset, further de-legitimises the propaganda narratives of the moral and innocent German people.

### 2.2.1 "Soldaten! Soldaten! Hurra! Hurra!" – the persistence of Wilhelmine militarism

The infamous Wilhelmine militarism is often used as a symbol for the structure and spirit of the pre-war era and became one of the most direct examples of continuities represented in post-WWI plays. One of the difficulties faced by the young Weimar Republic was that many representatives and supporters of the old system remained in important positions, especially within the police and the newly formed, though numerically small, *Reichswehr* led by Gustav Noske.<sup>280</sup> These continuities created the paradoxical situation that the security of the young republic was in the hands of its own opponents and even enemies.<sup>281</sup> Furthermore, the fact that many of the old monarchical and military decision makers, against whom they had revolted, were still in positions of power, created suspicion amongst the people. The *Heimkehrerdramen* of the discourse of de-legitimation represent this development in different ways. Horváth uses the *Heimkehrerfigur* itself to expose the continuity of this mindset, while Brecht and Toller have the *Heimkehrer* encounter other characters that represent this continuity. In all cases, these plays inscribe the post-war society with a way of thinking with which it had been indoctrinated during the Wilhelmine era. Thus, they expose the continuity of an ideology

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<sup>280</sup> Jan Knopf's interpretation that Noske is the role model for FRIEDRICH MURK in *Trommeln in der Nacht* seems too far-fetched, despite the vague similarities he quotes (see Knopf, 56).

<sup>281</sup> See Kämpner, 378–383.

that they understood as having played a significant role in the outbreak of the war.<sup>282</sup>

In Horváth's *Sladek* plays, this continuity is represented by the HAUPTMANN. Historically, the military leaders of the *Schwarze Reichswehr* were former WWI officers.<sup>283</sup> The HAUPTMANN in the *Sladek* plays is the literary representation of these former officers and clearly displays the mindset of the old officer's class.<sup>284</sup> The character, however, cannot maintain the discipline of his troops as he has lost his former authority. Horváth reveals this by letting one of the soldiers, RÜBEZAHL, threaten to beat his alleged superior with a belt "daß dir das Gott-mit-uns in der Fresse steht" (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 2: schwarze Armee*, 135) and thereby degrades him to the level of a mere child. The *Fememord* of ANNA is also not ordered by the officer but decided by the soldiers, while the HAUPTMANN is simply informed because otherwise "weint der General" (127). Furthermore, the "maßgebende Stelle" (134) controls his movements and even decides when he and his troops are allowed to begin "zu existieren" (134). These are examples of the methods with which Horváth characterises the anachronistic character of the HAUPTMANN's faith in the military chain of command. Stripping the character of any actual power, while letting him still believe in the authority of his rank, he exposes the extent to which the officers of the Wilhelmine army were indoctrinated with a mindset that revolves around the blind acceptance of hierarchy and rank. Through the HAUPTMANN's demands, although he leaves them mostly unfulfilled,

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<sup>282</sup> Right-wing plays like Curt Corinth's (1894–1960) *Sektion Rahnstetten* from 1930 also represent this continuity. Although not partaking in the discourse of de-legitimisation and despite lamenting the lack of militaristic discipline and honour, they portray the persistence of this ideology in the mindset of people from underground societies which many of their *Heimkehrerfiguren* represent. From today's point of view, knowing about the rise of an autocratic system like the Third Reich, it emphasises the role this mindset plays in the emergence of dictatorships and ultimately of war. This confirms plays of the discourse of de-legitimisation in their portrayal of this particular continuity as a precondition for the outbreak of WWI and supports their use of it as a means to de-legitimise the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.

<sup>283</sup> Horváth had access to a number of sources, including witness reports provided by the *Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte*, in whose offices he spent a lot of time in the mid-1920s (see Rüsing, 151).

<sup>284</sup> The character is said to be based on the historical person Major Ernst Buchrucker (see Kampelmüller/Prantner, 23–24). There are certainly parallels between the character and historical person but it seems more beneficial to focus on the mindset the character represents than to analyse whether or not there was a particular historical inspiration.

Horváth uncovers the inhumanity of the mindset of these officers and uses it as a means to de-legitimise the narrative of equality and respect that propaganda used to define the German *Verteidigungskrieg* as an honourable form of warfare.

Similarly to the way Kraus portrays officers, Horváth exposes the HAUPTMANN's dehumanising attitude towards his men. Seeing his soldiers as *Menschenmaterial*, who are not supposed "selbstständig zu denken" (132), the HAUPTMANN continues the traditional division between officer and common men. Later in the play, when surrounded by the troops of the republic, he is, just like the officers represented in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, willing to sacrifice the life of the men on both sides and would rather "deutsches Blut vergießen" (144) than surrender. The represented characteristic of a typical Wilhelmine officer is used to expose the guilt of those who demanded the soldiers should do their "Pflicht" (133) in battle and be bound to "Gehorchen. Bedingungslos" (133). Furthermore, Horváth portrays the de-individualising character of this system that sees its soldiers as part of the war machine: "Dreitausend Sladeks sind erst ein Regiment. Du bist nur ein Teil. Selbständige Teile sind überflüssig, also schädlich, also werden sie vernichtet" (132). Paradoxically, being part of this de-individualised war machine includes accepting personal culpability and accountability since for "das Vaterland muß jeder Soldat jede Schuld tragen. Jederzeit" (133).<sup>285</sup> This again represents how deeply embedded the militaristic spirit is in the minds of the former officers. Through the exposure of the nature of this mindset, Horváth de-legitimises not only the mythologised identity of "Moralismus" and "Soldatentum" (Mann, 38), but also the fatherly relationship between officers and their men that had been constructed in many plays of the discourse of legitimisation as a manifestation of the uniting character of the war.

The grotesque appearance of the war-cripples in Toller's *Hinkemann* also demonstrates how internalised blind obedience was in many soldiers. For the first print edition of the text, Toller moved this episode to scene II/3, where it interrupts the dialogue between GRETE and GROSSHAHN just as Toller has them discover that HINKEMANN is Homunkulus. In this scene, Toller reveals GROSSHAHN's true nature and outs him as a representative of the inhumanity he saw existing at the time. This inhumanity, however, initiates GRETE's recognition of the solitude her husband, who is forced to

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<sup>285</sup> The context of the play suggests that Horváth uses this paradox to highlight the contradicting argumentation of many officers, who demanded full loyalty of their soldiers during the war but tried to blame the atrocities they themselves were accused of on their men, by excusing them as cases of individual misconduct.

hide his castration in order to be accepted, is experiencing. With GRETE'S reaction, Toller draws the physical constitution of HINKEMANN into the scene in order to enhance the contrast that the appearance of the war cripples provides.<sup>286</sup> HINKEMANN'S injury is invisible and although it can be disguised, he struggles with a broken mind. Toller juxtaposes HINKEMANN with characters with clearly visible injuries, "*einarmige und einbeinige Kriegsinvaliden*", whom he shows "[u]nbekümmert" singing a "*Soldatenlied*" (Toller, *Werke 1*, 205). This contrast is used to emphasise HINKEMANN'S crisis as the consequence of his overcoming of his pre-war identity, while the cripples have maintained their old, obedient spirits and seem to be at peace with their situation. This juxtaposition confirms the continuities evident in the mindsets of the others, which Toller ultimately uses to de-legitimise the propaganda narratives, and which simultaneously alienates HINKEMANN'S latently emerging humanity.

Describing the scene in a very grotesque way, Toller evokes affects of estrangement connected to the spirit they represent. Facing each other, each of the cripples claims the spot on which they meet would be "[s]ein Revier" (206) and they all, again "*singend und spielend*" (206), start to march against each other "*wie auf einen Befehl hin*" (206). Since nobody seems to have a clear advantage over the rest, they crash into each other, are "[v]om Aufprall zurückgeschleudert", only to mindlessly march "*von neuem aufeinander los*" (206), with the very same outcome to be expected. Toller structures the scene as a parody of the repetitive and senseless charges of trench warfare before having the police appear to put an end to it.<sup>287</sup> He has this "'Staatsautorität!'" call the "'Alte Soldaten!'" to "'Ruhe und Ordnung!'" (206) and lets the invalids march "*in strammer Haltung davon*" (206) as they sing another soldier song. He replaces the militaristic autocracy of the pre-war period with the authority of police forces but maintains the militaristic obedience of the veterans, who, despite their personal experiences in the war, still keep their "*frühere starre und rohe Mentalität*" (D. Klein, 104).

The three songs they sing during this episode emphasise the significance of this scene for Toller's portrayal of the continuity of an especially Wilhelmine-esque spirit. When charging at each other, the invalids sing lines from the *Heckerlied*. The song is named after the revolutionary Friedrich Hecker and his role in the *Badischen Revolution* of 1848/1849. It was revived at the end of WWI as a song of and for the rebelling soldiers and found its way into the repertoire of the proletariat.<sup>288</sup> Toller frames this

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<sup>286</sup> See D. Klein, 104.

<sup>287</sup> See Dove, 223.

<sup>288</sup> It was later also used by anti-revolutionary troops as a mockery of the revolution of 1918 and appeared at the beginning of the 1920s in an anti-Semitic

song with two old soldier's songs, creating a structure that represents the invalids' development. Having them start with a song which represents their soldierly spirit before singing about rebellion against their military leaders, to ultimately return to another soldiers' song Toller suggests the return of the pre-war spirit after a brief moment of rebellion.<sup>289</sup>

Brecht also uses a song in the fourth act of *Trommeln in der Nacht* to simultaneously represent the abuse of authority over subjects and subordinates and the blind obedience to this authority.<sup>290</sup> The act begins with the "Moritat vom toten Soldaten" (Brecht 1, 211), which Gudrun Tabbert-Jones rightly calls a "Kommentar zum Stück" (Tabbert-Jones, 70). The repetitive and monotonous melody of a *Moritat* symbolises the repetition of old structures and allows Brecht to emphasise the represented mindset as a continuity of these. The song tells the story of a dead soldier, who decides to die "den Heldentod" (Brecht 1, 230/6) and who is then dug up to undergo a physical that deems him "k. v." (230/25) – ready for duty – after which the soldier "so wie er's gelernt" (232/18) once more marches "in den Heldentod" (232/19). It is a clear statement which exposes the brutality of the Wilhelmine militarism, which does not restrain from anything to achieve its goals. Considering the exploitative nature with which Brecht constructed the march of the revolutionaries, it is telling that he chooses the character GLUBB to present the song.<sup>291</sup> He thereby expands the meaning of the song beyond militaristic exploitation and links it with the exploitative methods of the revolution, or any other ideology for that matter, demonstrating the ever returning character of this mindset.<sup>292</sup>

Probably Brecht's most genuine revolutionary character within this play, it seems at first a strategy to make the critique of Wilhelmine obedience more convincing. However, he later exposes GLUBB's own officer-

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version (see Kohlstruck/Scheffler, 142–145). This implicitly extends the representation of the mindset of the soldierly invalids to that of the reactionary forces of later years.

<sup>289</sup> On another level of interpretation, the choice of the *Heckerlied*, whose anti-Semitic versions were also sung by explicitly anti-republican forces (see Kohlstruck/Scheffler, 143), represents the continuity of a monarchic mindset into the society of the Weimar Republic.

<sup>290</sup> Jürgen Hillesheim correctly points out that the song ridicules the German soldier but also portrays him as the victim of an indoctrinated system (see Hillesheim, 28).

<sup>291</sup> In the version of 1953, Brecht further emphasised that GLUBB is perhaps the only character from the *Schnapsdestille* who actually shares the ideals of the revolution by explicitly making GLUBB's nephew KRAGLER's newly included counterpart.

<sup>292</sup> See also Hillesheim, 28; 61–65; Bathrick, 62; 78.

like character by having him lead KRAGLER and the others to their deaths for his ideology, demonstrating that obedience is not just limited to the military sphere but is a general condition of the German mindset,<sup>293</sup> portraying this particular aspect of the Wilhelmine mindset as yet another continuity that allows Brecht to expose the militaristic nature of the pre-war society.

### 2.2.2 “Mein Gatte war Universitätsprofessor” – the continued admiration for prestige and status

A desire the plays represent to be immanent in both the military and the civilian parts of society is the longing for prestige. According to the play, this longing is not simply a development of the post-war era and a consequence of the German defeat but in fact another continuity reaching back into the time before the outbreak of the war. Horváth, for example, exposes it through the character FRANZ, a pacifist and prisoner of the *Reichswehr*. When FRANZ is questioned by the HAUPTMANN in the second act, Horváth has the officer identify his opponent's pacifism, describing him as a “Schuft ohne vaterländisches Verantwortungsgefühl” (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 2: schwarze Armee*, 137). In this dialogue, Horváth ultimately exposes the concept of the fatherland as nothing more than a disguise for the military's craving for recognition that motivates the hawkish behaviour with which they provoked the war. “Das Volk ist das Vaterland” he has FRANZ exclaim, “und Krieg ist das größte Verbrechen am Volk” (137) because “[w]as das Volk aufbaut, wird zerstört” (137).

Responsible for the war and the destruction of the people's achievements is, so FRANZ, the “Größenwahn der Berufssoldaten und die rücksichtslose Kalkulation verrückter Aktionäre!” (137). Furthermore, FRANZ represents the mindset of the pre-war era as sunken in the “Schlamm niedrigster Instinkte” and dominated by the “verbrecherischen Wahnsinn der Raubstaaten” (137). The self-referentiality that Horváth assigns to the officer's motivation is confirmed by the HAUPTMANN's men, who refuse to follow him to die on “dem Felde [s]einer privaten Ehre” (145) or, extending the refusal beyond the HAUPTMANN to the entirety of the officer class, any “Felde eurer sogenann-ten Ehre!” (145). Similarly to Kraus, Horváth

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<sup>293</sup> Although the uniform as a central motif is missing in GLUBB's case, it is reminiscent of the tradition of the *Hauptmann von Köpenick*. Although the most famous literarisation of the topic by Carl Zuckmayer was not published until 1931, a first drama, titled *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick. Ein Lustspiel in vier Aufzügen*, had already been written in 1906 by Hans von Lavarenz.



de-legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative by representing the desire of “Berufssoldaten” (137) to increase the prestige of their class in war.

With the MUTTER and the ERSTE DAME Horváth portrays two civilian characters who represent the importance society places on prestige. By making them characters who have socially fallen and risen respectively, he can demonstrate that this mindset does not disappear with the loss of social status but that it is often adopted with its gain, instead of acknowledging its volatility. The MUTTER, DON JUAN’s landlord, for example, remains in her old bourgeois frame of mind, despite having lost the financial and societal position that defines it. Although now widowed, she is still caught up in her old life as the wife of a professor and the wealth and prestige that comes with this position. By having her younger daughter mockingly call her “Frau Professor” (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe* 9, 395), Horváth exposes the high self-image that he has given her. Keeping her daughter from pursuing a career as a dancer because “eine Tochter als Tänzerin” is “nicht vornehm genug” (395) for a person of her status confirms this identity. The damage Horváth potentially sees in this pathological form of pride is further emphasised by the fact that he makes the MUTTER’s clinging to old values ultimately responsible for bringing DON JUAN into their lives, as they would not have had to rent out the room if she had supported her daughter’s career in dancing.

Her old fashioned mindset is further exposed when Horváth introduces her older daughter into the scene. The MUTTER does not take seriously that her daughter “die Welt verbessern [will]” (396) and is portrayed as seeing her “‘Ideale’” simply as “verrückt” (397). When the younger daughter reminds her of a letter in which the MUTTER’s deceased husband had told her to let “Gretl lernen, was sie will” because “es kommen andere Zeiten” (395), the MUTTER ignores her, just as she had ignored her husband’s advice. She blames her daughters’ whims on the fact that the strict hand of their father, a Wilhelmine bourgeois man, was absent in their upbringing. When finally having her complain about “[s]oviel Opfer, soviel Leid” (398), Horváth not only completes the representation of her old fashioned values but includes the portrayal of the responsibility of this mindset for the outbreak of the war and thereby de-legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. Her critique of all the sacrifices does not extend to the cruelty of the war itself, nor to the fate of its victims. Her only regret is that it made her life “schlechter” (398). The implicated inversion of this argument, that the bourgeois mindset would have accepted the repetition of these sacrifices, if it had bettered their situation, is represented by Horváth in this scene.

The MUTTER’s fall from her privileged position is juxtaposed by a social climber represented by the ERSTE DAME in scene II/4, who is trying to adapt to the upper-class etiquettes that she had no doubt previously ob-

served in her old life as a “Gouvernante” (398). Now that she has risen up to become the wife of an “Inflationsgewinnle[r]” (398), Horváth has her remind others “zu berücksichtigen, daß Sie sich im Hause eines Syndikus befinden, der seit vierzehn Tagen die rechte Hand der Regierung –” (400). By having the DRITTE DAME remind her host that her husband owes his new position to bribery, Horváth represents not only opportunism but also a mindset that equates personal esteem with one’s position in society. And in combination, the exchange in status but not attitude between the MUTTER and the ERSTE DAME exposes this attitude as a continuity of pre-war conditions.

The awkwardness with which Brecht characterises the attempts of the families BALICKE and MURK to adopt etiquettes which they see fit for people in their newly gained societal position also exposes what Brecht sees as typical bourgeois behaviour. The rather comical representation clearly shows these characters as social climbers who cannot shake their lower-class heritage. Brecht provides them with a rather vulgar language typically associated with the proletariat, and describes HERR BALICKE as not yet adapted to his new delicate clothes, having him literally soak his fine shirts in sweat multiple times in the play. Everything Brecht has the characters do appears as a clumsy imitation of the bourgeois behaviour they had experienced before the war, which allows Brecht to dissect the mindset of this class over the course of the two acts in which they appear. By using the *Kriegsgewinnler* BALICKE and MURK to represent the mindset of this class, Brecht exposes it as merely a characteristic of their social position, which is adopted by whoever becomes part of it. He thereby introduces the motif of continuity early on, which allows him to expose the nature of this mindset not only as a post-war phenomenon but also as an immanent part of the pre-war society. This structure ultimately enables him to use the characteristic he assigns to the bourgeoisie as a tool to de-legitimise the propaganda narratives.

One of the features he includes in the opening act of the play is the pretentious admiration of the fatherland that BALICKE claims “ergreift” him when he hears “*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*” (Brecht 1, 183) on the gramophone.<sup>294</sup> His calls for more “Realpolitik”, of which Brecht lets him claim “es uns in Deutschland [fehlt]” (197), furthers this image. Meanwhile, his wife frequently and without actually understanding the

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<sup>294</sup> Gudrun Tabbert-Jones comes to a similar conclusion. Brecht uses the gramophone to introduce songs that juxtapose the characters’ behaviour and thereby emphasise its pretence. Besides the *Deutschlandlied*, he uses a church-song-come-love-song, while trying to marry his daughter off for business and telling her to forget about love (see Tabbert-Jones, 66–68).

ramifications of her actions parrots propagandistic clichés. The Picadillybar, which, as Brecht includes, was renamed to “Café Vaterland” (184), fits this image as replacing names in foreign languages with nationalistic German names demonstrates the pseudo-patriotism that Karl Kraus had previously mocked as a characteristic of bourgeois *Kriegsgewinnler*. The pride Brecht lets MURK take in his new “Stiefel” (197) initially seems to serve a similar purpose. With this motif, however, Brecht reveals the opportunistic and essentially brutal methods with which the war profiteers of the likes of BALICKE and MURK have gained their position. He uses the representation of these methods not only to characterise them and de-legitimise the unity narrative but also to demonstrate the nature of the bourgeoisie of the pre-war era in order to expose the narrative of the humble, diligent and peaceful German people as a lie.

### 2.2.3 “Der Sau Ende ist der Wurst Anfang!” – opportunism and exploitation

The first two acts of *Trommeln in der Nacht* are dominated by the portrayal of the Bourgeoisie and their role within society. As discussed above, by using *Kriegsgewinnler* to represent this role, Brecht predefines the nature of his characters and the methods with which they gain and secure their positions as an exploitation of the war and of the people who had to actually fight it. “Der Krieg” he lets BALICKE admit, has him “auf den berühmten grünen Zweig gebracht!” (Brecht 1, 183). Its outbreak was essentially “ein Glück” that brought them into a position of “Sicherheit” (183). These statements confirm the opportunistic nature with which Brecht imbues the character. He is represented as having grabbed his fortune because it “lag ja auf der Straße, warum’s nicht nehmen, wäre zu irrsinnig. Nähm’s eben ein anderer. Der Sau Ende ist der Wurst Anfang!” (183).

BALICKE is also used to introduce the empty clichés that are so frequently portrayed in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* and thereby exposes the propaganda under whose cover they pursued their opportunistic endeavours. Brecht lets BALICKE define KRAGLER’s suffering as a fight “für Kaiser und Reich” (196), repeat the clichés of the army standing “im Granathagel” like “Eisen”, and claim “[u]nsere Armee hat Gewaltiges geleistet. Sie ist lachend in den Heldentod gezogen” (196). Offering KRAGLER a cigar, a token of the position he was able to gain because of the suffering of people like KRAGLER, is another way in which Brecht exposes the frivolity that underlines the position represented by BALICKE. These representations allow him to reveal the economic interests in the war and the ruthlessness with which the bourgeoisie took advantage of the situation. Furthermore,

Brecht emphasises the emptiness of the clichés in a sense that is reminiscent of Karl Kraus' language critique and thereby de-legitimises the propaganda narrative.

Using the character of MURK, Brecht intensifies his representation of the methods with which the *Kriegsgewinnler* gained their position. He has MURK express this by claiming: "Ellenbögen muß man haben, genagelte Stiefel muß man haben und ein Gesicht und nicht hinabschauen" (182). This is the way in which "[u]nser ganzes Deutschland" is "heraufgekommen!" (182). It has "[n]icht immer Handschuhe an den Händen, aber harte Arbeit immer" (182). By including this reference to German diligence, Brecht represents the usual excuse *Kriegsgewinnler* use to justify their new wealth and uses MURK's justification that he is "zwanzig Jahre in Dachzimmern geflackt, gefroren bis auf die Knochen" (186), to imbue MURK's behaviour with an aspect of revenge for his own suffering that serves as a self-justification for his alleged right to take what he wants.

Through the previously mentioned *Stiefel* motif, Brecht exposes that the reality of the upwards climb through social classes is that it is dominated by kicking downwards with "genagelte[n] Stiefel[n]" (182), so that one can afford the status symbol of the "Knopfstiefeln" (186). By situating KRAGLER's first appearance right after this dialogue, Brecht confronts the profiteers with the victims whose sacrifices enabled them to make their fortunes. This situation is essentially also the reason why MURK can seduce and impregnate KRAGLER's bride ANNA.

MURK's opportunism is further exposed by Brecht through his proposed marriage to ANNA, which is simply another way of securing his business and his position for the future. He wants to be

[i]n Schweiß gebadet, die Augen zu, Fäuste geballt, daß die Nägel ins Fleisch schneiden. Schluß! Sicherheit! Wärme. Kittel ausziehen! Ein Bett, das weiß ist, breit, weich! *Am Fenster vorbei, schaut er, fliegend, hinaus.* Her mit dir: Ich mache die Fäuste auf, ich sitze im Hemd in der Sonne, ich habe dich (186).

With this hand gesture of relief, made famous by Gustav Aschenbach in Thomas Mann's *Tod in Venedig* as a gesture that symbolises an inner change of ethical relevance, Brecht represents MURK's desire to now be able to trade the *Kittel* of a worker for the *Hemd* of a bourgeois.

However, with KRAGLER's return on the evening of MURK's and ANNA's engagement, Brecht endangers the war profiteers' anticipated triumph and manages to use their reaction to this threat as another means of de-legitimising the propaganda narratives by exposing the bourgeois mindset. Over the rest of the first three acts, Brecht represents the bourgeoisie's

attempts to put KRAGLER into a position in which they can control him. In order to expose the methods of the bourgeoisie as exploitative of the soldiers, Brecht repeatedly uses vocabulary that invokes livestock. He has MURK call the entire situation around KRAGLER's return a "Hundekomödie" (195) and his competitor a "Schwein" (198). Mother BALICKE is provided with the same expression (201) and father BALICKE simply refers to KRAGLER as "Vieh" (200). Aside from functioning as insults, this category of animal metaphor is used by Brecht to liken the bourgeois attempt to control KRAGLER to the process of controlling livestock that is ruled over and utilised.

As previously discussed, Brecht links the exploitation of KRAGLER by the bourgeoisie in the first three acts to his exploitation by the revolutionaries in the last two acts. Der BESOFFENE MENSCH, whom he meets in the *Schnapsdestille* emphasises KRAGLER's livestock-status by comparing him to a "Kalb" (213) running after the coach carrying his bride. GLUBB later refers to those who might fall in the fights as "ersäufte Katzen" (226) and AUGUSTE calls KRAGLER a "Schwein" (227) when he refuses to follow and instead wants to go his own way.

ANNA is in a similar situation. She is supposed to marry someone she does not love for the benefit of others, and both her family and, later, the crowd from the *Schnapsdestille* expect her to play a certain role. For her family, she is an asset in their business expansion and for the revolutionaries, she is a spoiled bourgeois woman, who betrays KRAGLER and allegedly makes him reject the revolution which is fighting to overthrow the reign of families like hers. Consequently, the revolutionaries try to villainise her by also calling her a "Schwein" (227) and an "Aas".

The initial acceptance of the role of the exploited by KRAGLER himself is represented by the self-image Brecht imbues him with. He lets KRAGLER remember being shipped off to Africa in "Viehwägen" (200; 213) and represents his return to ANNA as coming home "wie ein altes Tier" (193). Brecht links the creation of this self-image to KRAGLER's war time experiences, when he was under the mercy of superiors, waiting in the trenches like "Aas" (214) and later held under water "wie Katzen" (214). The choice of these expressions establishes an identification of KRAGLER's past experiences with the way the revolutionaries treat him, for which Brecht uses the same imagery. Furthermore, in these recollections of KRAGLER's, Brecht represents the role of *Kriegsgewinnler* like MURK, who made the soldiers feel like "Stiere" (215) forced to fight for them. The use of the animal metaphor in KRAGLER's self-description is also important because it allows Brecht to prepare for his self-liberation, by portraying ANNA's decision to follow KRAGLER as a consequence of the realisation that her lover was beaten "wie ein Stück Tier" (209). Consequently, Brecht culminates

the progress that leads to ANNA's self-liberation in the scream that she is "kein Tier!" (220).

GRETE HINKEMANN's realisation comes at a similar point in the play. PAUL GROSSHAHN tries to convince her to come with him but she, having seen her husband as Homunkulus and understood the exploitative situation in which he has put himself, understands, as Lisa Marie Anderson points out, that this is a consequence of the time they live in: "Was konnte er für den Schuß! Schuld habe ich, daß ich ihn in den Krieg ziehen ließ! Schuld hat seine Mutter! Schuld hat eine Zeit, in der es sowas gibt!" (Toller, *Werke I*, 205).<sup>295</sup> Up until then, GRETE represented, as Frühwald points out, one of the people who was blinded by "Unkenntnis und Nichtwissen" (Frühwald, *Hinkemann*, 153). She recognises her husband's solitude within a society that does not value his humanity and thereby serves as an additional witness to the anachronistic conditions within Germany, while all others who were complicit in the war that broke the bodies and minds of millions take no responsibility and instead continue on as they were.

When Brecht lets KRAGLER finally realise that he is about to get dragged into another fight for somebody else's cause, he also uses an animal metaphor to represent KRAGLER's refusal to follow: "Ich lasse mich nicht noch im Hemd in die Zeitungen schleifen. Ich bin kein Lamm mehr" (Brecht 1, 225). By juxtaposing the change in KRAGLER's situation, represented by the swap from a soldier's uniform to a civilian's shirt, with the continuity of his exploitation by others, Brecht fulfils the purpose of the motif of continuity and lets KRAGLER break the chains that have tied him to those who want to control him. "[I]ch bin ein Schwein" (228), is the almost triumphant representation of KRAGLER's self-liberation, "und das Schwein geht heim" (228–229). Brecht represents his *Heimkehrerfigur* as someone who has been used by the Wilhelmine Empire, the bourgeoisie that supports it and even by those forces that are trying to overthrow the contemporary order. The fact that the fourth act begins with the previously mentioned *Moritat vom toten Soldaten* thereby emphasises the representation of the revolution as a continuation of the war. The beginning of the song, mentioning the war entering its "fünften Lenz" (230/3), even portrays a timely continuation of the war into the revolution of the spring of 1919.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> See also Anderson, 8.

<sup>296</sup> There are different ways to count in this context, considering *Lenz* means spring but is also used as a metaphor for the whole year (see Schuhmann, 20; Hillesheim, 65–66). Schuhmann's counting, however, is only logical when referring to the whole calendar year and counting 1914 as the first *Lenz*. Most logical is Hillesheim's counting, beginning with the outbreak of the war in August 1914. This makes it unambiguous that the song includes the

Despite revolutions usually attempting to change the conditions and the system that is responsible for them, this representation is easily understandable when looking at it through the character of KRAGLER and the way Brecht constructed him. For KRAGLER personally, it makes no difference which idea “in den Himmel kommt” (228), it is always someone else’s, and he always remains the one on whose back this idea’s goals are achieved. This continuation of exploitation and utilisation of others allows KRAGLER to expose the war as a means to reach the individual ends of a deeply egoistic dog-eat-dog society and thereby allows Brecht to de-legitimise the official propaganda narratives.

However, Brecht does not present only the regime and the bourgeoisie as opportunistic but, similar to Kraus, also other parts of society. This is, for example, represented by BABUSCH, who earns his money by reporting about the prices of food which others can no longer afford. Because apricots have risen in price, he will “einen Artikel über die Preise schreiben”, knowing that he can then “die Aprikosen ja kaufen” (191). “Sollte die Welt untergehen, dann schreibe ich darüber” (191) is another derisive comment with which Brecht exposes BABUSCH as an opportunist and his interest in KRAGLER’s fate as nothing more than another story. Furthermore, Brecht has passers-by talk about the shortages, during which people have “gefälschten Methyl verschnitten” and “gefälschten Tabak verschoben” (205). Others have “Menschen in Rattenlöcher gestopft” (205) and cashed in on the rent.

For a brief moment, Brecht even has KRAGLER be tempted to adopt the ways of BALICKE and MURK, because “[w]er ein Gewissen hat, dem scheißen die Vögel aufs Dach! Wer Geduld hat, den fressen die Geier am Ende” (202). Opportunism and the exploitation that comes with it is one of the major pathological continuities that Brecht diagnoses in his play. This ultimately allows him to not only criticise the current state of society, but also the mindset that has led to it and to thereby de-legitimise the image of the German people that was created by the propaganda narratives.

This aspect is also immanent in Toller’s play. He uses the character of the BUDENBESITZER as a representation of opportunists in *Der deutsche Hinkemann*. Instead of the war, Toller has the BUDENBESITZER exploit the conditions after the war. “Mit Kriegsgreuel-Panoptikum verdienen Sie heute keine zehn Pfennig mehr. Aus! Jetzt ist Kultur Trumpf in Europa! [...] Geschäft blüht! Man muß Konjunktur ausnützen!” (Toller, *Werke 1*, 218).<sup>297</sup>

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first half of 1919, regardless of whether one wants to understand *Lenz* as spring or year.

<sup>297</sup> It might be a bit too much to see him as a representation of the “wiedererstarkten Mächte aus dem Kaiserreich” (Bebendorf, 141) but he does portray the continuity of a mindset that originates in times long before 1918.

The culture he mentions is the peoples' lust for blood, sex and violence and in itself de-legitimises the idea of Germany's cultural superiority. The BUDENBESITZER simply takes advantage of the people's instincts in order to combine "Volksinteresse mit Privatinteresse" (201). His promise of a lucrative "Nebenverdienst" (201) for HINKEMANN, if he's willing to manipulate the women who fall for him, already prepares readers for the mindset Toller uses the BUDENBESITZER to represent, expressed by his advice to throw "Moralische Bazillen [...] über Bord" (201). At the same time, he exploits HINKEMANN's position, and derisively suggests that he is free to look for another job although the outcome is clear. "Alles besetzt! Hahaha! Entweder – oder!" (201). Even the ideologies Toller portrays in the pub-scene are used to expose opportunistic traits in the attempt to missionize followers. No matter if they are guided to the "wahre Licht" (210) of a divine entity or into the "Licht" (208) of a socialist future, these ideologies seize the chance to reshape society, whose "Grundstein" the war has "erschütter" (208), according to their agendas.<sup>298</sup>

Horváth even portrays this trait on an institutionalised scale through the character of the BUNDESSEKRETÄR in the *Sladek* plays. *Sladek oder: Die schwarze Armee* contains a dialogue between the BUNDESSEKRETÄR and the HAUPTMANN that reveals the full extent of the opportunism of the "maßgebende Stelle" (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 2: schwarze Armee*, 133), which Horváth uses here to represent a stately power. He portrays this opportunism as the taking advantage of the chaotic situation in order to justify the raising of an army "mit dem Schutze vor äußeren Feinden", while it "in Wahrheit aber die nationale Diktatur erstrebt" (133), and thereby as exploitative of the humiliation of the former front soldiers and officers and the discontent of the people, who would feel "in Schwarzrottreck sauwohl" if there were "keine Neger am Rhein und keine Inflation" (134).

But the ultimate personification of opportunism is DON JUAN. The many versions of Tirso de Molina's original DON JUAN have represented him as "der Sünder und der Frevler, der Verführer und der Verführte, der Rebell und der Außenseiter, der Idealsucher und der Einsame, die Marioulette und der Märtyrer" (Dietrich, 44). Like most others, Horváth's DON JUAN is a mixed form and like most others he takes advantage of the conditions of his time. At the peak of his regression into his pre-war self, just before an accusation of seducing a minor forces him to move on and reminds him of the bride he was trying to find, the elder daughter of his landlord is used to define this time. It is, according to Horváth, marked by

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<sup>298</sup> This is reminiscent of the instrumentalisation of the war experience in plays written after 1918 and therefore the literary representation of an actual development within the literary discourse of legitimisation.



“Terror, Mord und Entrechtung” (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe* 9, 409) and only produces “Ausbeuter und Ausgebeutete” (409). At first a political statement, it is then extended to human interaction, represented by the exploitation that characterises the relationship between DON JUAN and his women, and thereby exposes itself as a representation of the people’s general behaviour and the mindset that causes it.

Horváth uses his *Heimkehrerfigur* to demonstrate what he sees as the general characteristic of his time. He has him seize every opportunity to exploit others who in turn become exploiters themselves if they have the chance. By introducing this trait in a scene in which DON JUAN is still in correspondence with his bride and has not yet seduced anyone, Horváth defines it as a trait that is deeply embedded in his mindset and thereby shows it as a continuity of his pre-war self, on which he falls back as soon as an opportunity to do so arises. The KUNSTGEWERBLERIN whom DON JUAN meets in a café is his first and probably most opportunistic seduction. At the same time, Horváth manages to emphasise the mutuality of exploitation within the play by having the KUNSTGEWERBLERIN initially approach him in an attempt to challenge the assumption that “nur die Männer Don Juane sein dürfen” (393). But her confident appearance is only a mask. After only a few sentences, she is caught in DON JUAN’s charm and he takes control over a situation which arose out of nowhere. By referring to the “Grippe” (394) he has just recovered from, Horváth reveals the danger the character represents for the woman he encounters. Using the previously discussed motif, he has DON JUAN smile when ensuring that he is “ungefährlich” (394) and swap to the more familiar “Du” (394), thereby representing the moment he takes the initiative and starts to gain a position of power over the woman.

Furthermore, Horváth makes DON JUAN a profiteer by using the seduced KUNSTGEWERBLERIN to get involved in the trade, managing to take advantage of the inflation and helping the people “ihr Geld los[zu]werden, bevor es überhaupt nichts mehr wert ist” (396). When Horváth introduces this side of the character of DON JUAN, he once more accompanies it with the motif of smiling. DON JUAN “*lächelt*” (396) when first claiming that before the war it was “nicht nötig, zu arbeiten” but now he is “ein Kunsthändler” (396). This stage direction is then repeated when Horváth has DON JUAN expose that he is essentially a “Schieber, eine Hyäne der Inflation” (396). The admission of his life as a profiteer appears as part of his charm, as an almost melancholy acceptance of the difficulties of the time reflecting the situation of his interlocutor, the MUTTER, in order to win her sympathy. While this works for DON JUAN within the plot and the MUTTER does fall for his display, Horváth’s stage direction exposes the calculating

character of the strategy he lets DON JUAN use and thereby underscores the opportunistic nature he imbues him with.

As Horváth indicates in the *Vorwort*, he constructed the title character as a representation of the pathological opportunism and egoism of his time and thereby provides an insight into the mindset and condition of the time before the war, which he defines as the origin of this mindset by framing DON JUAN's development in the play as a regression. This is in itself an expression of the mindset's continuity, which Brecht and Toller confirm through characters like BALICKE, MURK, BABUSCH, UNBESCHWERT and the BUDENBESITZER. All authors represent the society they portray as split into "Ausbeuter und Ausgebeutete" (409), just like the pre-war and wartime societies represented in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*. Through their plays, these authors all de-legitimise the myth of solidarity and unity amongst German people. Answering the plays which used this alleged unity to legitimise the sacrifices that were demanded from those who actually had to fight, they manage to expose that this narrative had never been more than propaganda. By revealing the rather brutal methods of the characters they use, for example with the representation of MURK's rise to wealth, they also de-legitimise the images of German cultural superiority, peacefulness and innocence.

#### 2.2.4 "Frontsoldaten, verwilderte, verlotterte, der Arbeit entwöhnte Abenteuerer" – the *Heimkehrer* as a threat

As a continuation of the *Kriegsgewinnler*'s rise to wealth, the *Heimkehrer* plays also present their attempts to maintain their newly gained positions as a means of further exposing the bourgeois mindset. Their exploitative and exclusionary methods are directed against exactly the part of society from which they themselves come. The representation of these mechanisms predicts the continuity of the pathological traits analysed above and denies not only any prospect of change but also all alleged 'healing' qualities of the war. Brecht uses KRAGLER to represent this continuity by letting him talk about his war time experience. In the trenches, the soldiers "glotzen die Zeit an" but "[s]ie ging nie" (Brecht 1, 214). Representing the absence of progress and change within society during the war, this almost sounds like a surrender to the conditions KRAGLER finds upon his return.

This is continued by the representations of *Kriegsgewinnler* like BALICKE and MURK, which are used to portray the desperation with which profiteers try to defend their newly gained positions, whereby they simultaneously reinstate the old order. In this context, Jan Knopf has described Brecht's play as

eine Darstellung der – differenziert gezeichneten – bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, während einer Revolution bzw. des (verfehlten) Revolutionsversuchs einer Gesellschaft, die ihren Besitz um jeden menschlichen Preis verteidigt, um sich herum wüste Bilder der Bedrohung zum eigenen Schutz aufstellt und ansonsten – als wäre nicht ein Weltkrieg geschehen – wieder zur Tagesordnung übergeht, zu den Geschäften (Knopf, *Trommeln in der Nacht*, 56).

But besides exceeding the purely revolutionary representation of the bourgeoisie, Brecht in fact creates a situation that contains more potential for actual danger than this quote suggests. By portraying BALICKE and MURK as being very aware of the potential danger of their actions, Brecht suggests that such war profiteers wilfully acted in spite of this knowledge, allowing him to expose the mindset of the class they represent as greed-driven and egoistic. Thus, he is able, ultimately, to deny that class-barriers were, as the unity narrative suggested, ever demolished.

“Die Zeiten sind unsicher. Der Krieg zu Ende” (Brecht 1, 182), represents father BALICKE’s assessment of the situation in act one. By having him regret the end of the war, Brecht de-legitimises the narrative of the purely defensive character of the German warfare and the remorse the people were supposed to have shown for the outbreak of the war. He contrasts the war experience of the *Heimkehrer* with that of war profiteers like BALICKE, thereby exposing that for the latter the war was a time of order and security, further de-legitimising the narrative of shared sacrifices.<sup>299</sup> Representing him as a pure opportunist, Brecht provides BALICKE with readymade plans to secure the continuity of his lifestyle. BALICKE knows that he will only be able to sell ammunition boxes during “ein paar Wochen Bürgerkrieg” (183) and plans to change to “Kinderwägen” (183), knowing that the killing that made him rich cost many lives, which will now have to be replaced, providing him with another business opportunity.

Brecht inscribes into the character the fear that the end of the war could potentially endanger his plans and lets BALICKE express this by stating that

die Demobilisation schwemmt Unordnung, Gier, viehische Entmenschung in die Oasen friedlicher Arbeit. [...] Das schlimmste aber, ich kann es hier sagen, die Frontsoldaten, verwilderte, verlotterte, der Arbeit entwöhnte Abenteurer, denen nichts mehr heilig ist (182).

The above quote demonstrates how the play utilises the absence of any form of gratitude or guilt in BALICKE, for even if BALICKE’s accusations regarding the soldiers were true, his statement neglects to acknowledge that

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<sup>299</sup> See also Knopf, 52.

the soldiers are only unaccustomed to work because they spent years fighting the war from which BALICKE and others profited.

Brecht's personification of this threat is KRAGLER<sup>300</sup>, who is linked with an animal motif. The "Krokodilhaut" (194) signifies not only the danger he poses to the established bourgeois lifestyle of the BALICKES, but also refers to the suddenness of his appearance in Berlin. BABUSCH repeatedly refers to him as a "Wolf" (190) and mother BALICKE calls him a "Hyäne" (201), both animals symbols for violence and even destruction. Aside from the animal motif, there is a second motif associated with KRAGLER. As a reaction to the threat he poses, Brecht has BALICKE constantly refer to KRAGLER as a "Leichnam" (177) who is "verfault und vermodert" (178) and has "nicht mehr ein Knochen beim andern!" (178–179). MURK, too, refers to him as a "Mumie" and a "kalte[r] Mann" (181). Brecht uses this second motif to portray the attempts of the new bourgeoisie to exclude KRAGLER by aligning him with an otherworldly realm, thereby denying him, on whose back they gained their fortune, the right to return to the established order.<sup>301</sup> KRAGLER himself is represented as being aware of his intrusion into bourgeois society when he reports "gehorsamt: habe mich in Algier als Gespenst etabliert. Aber jetzt hat der Leichnam mörderisch Appetit" (186–187). Brecht permeates the entire play with the ghost motif in order to expose the division between the *Heimkehrer* and the characters that represent his exploitation and thereby creates a metaphor that de-legitimises the purported unity of the people.

Although not often represented in as detailed a manner as in *Trommeln in der Nacht*, it is frequently the destiny of the *Heimkehrer* to escape the authoritarian military system, only to find themselves being exploited by others. This establishes a continuity of exploitation that can be used by the plays to de-legitimise the propaganda narratives. Toller uses the BUDENBESITZER's reaction to HINKEMANN's attempt to escape the role of Homunkulus to represent this aspect. Toller expresses the power of the employer on a stylistic level, dropping the spruiker way in which he is normally presented as soon as he realises that his Homunkulus is seriously planning to resign:

Was? Ihr Spleen da ist Ernst? Nee, Freundchen, Spaß bleibt Spaß und Ernst bleibt Ernst. Wer hat Kontrakt unterschrieben für die ganze Saison! Sie oder ich? (*Brutal.*) Mann, ich lasse Sie durch Polizeigewalt zur Arbeit zwingen. Mann, Kontrakt ist Fundament bürgerlicher Gesellschaft. Mann, Sie tasten heiligste Güter der Nation an. Mann, Staatsmacht steht hinter mir. Da wird

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<sup>300</sup> See Bathrick, 13.

<sup>301</sup> See Mews, 92.

nichts draus, Mann! Entweder Sie sind morgen pünktlich zur Stelle oder Sie kommen per Polizeischub. (*Die Stimme verändernd.*) Keine Sperenzchen, Hinkemann, ich meins gut. Ich will Sie vorm Gefängnis bewahren (Toller, *Werke 1*, 218–219).

The BUDENBESITZER's claim to protect HINKEMANN is exposed by Toller to be an attempt to protect his own asset, as, indeed, he is the one threatening to involve the police in the first place. By combining the BUDENBESITZER's attempt to keep HINKEMANN under his control with reference to the contract as the bourgeois order, Toller demonstrates the exploitative nature of this order and denies the transcendence of class divisions that Wilhelm II had proclaimed.

Horváth represents the attempt to maintain the achieved position on a larger scale. The BUNDESSEKRETÄR, as well as the UNTERSUCHUNGSRICHTER and the RICHTER in *Sladek oder: Die schwarze Armee* are representatives of the state authority. Although Horváth uses these characters predominantly to represent aspects of the problems faced by the Weimar Republic, they also portray continuities that are illuminating for this analysis.

Ich mache Sie aufmerksam: Falls Sie sich nicht freiwillig auflösen, so haben wir die Gewalt, es zu erzwingen. Unter allen Umständen, mit allen Mitteln! Das Wohl des deutschen Volkes kommt vor Ihrem Landsknecht-ehrgeiz! Sie sind umzingelt und – (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 2: schwarze Armee*, 144).

While Horváth lets the BUNDESSEKRETÄR pretend to act for the good of the nation, the *maßgebende Stelle* actually sees threats to its relatively new position of power and decides to violently enforce the dissolution of the *schwarze Reichswehr* to fulfil its “außenpolitischen Verpflichtungen”, while disguising it as an act for “[d]es Staates Wohl” (147).<sup>302</sup>

By comparing it to the situation in the “alte[n] Staat”, which “allein für das Wohl seiner Herrschenden Schicht [sorgte]” (147), Horváth exposes the behaviour as a continuity, even regression, into the mindset of the monarchy. He emphasises this by using a direct reference to the monarchy's militarism and the longing for prestige by letting the UNTERSUCHUNGSRICHTER admit that Germany has “[l]eider” (148) no ar-

<sup>302</sup> The fact that the *schwarze Reichswehr* was violent and committed multiple murders and their disbanding can historically be seen as a positive act does not change the fact that the play represents this, intentionally or not, as an act of maintaining power by betraying those who the state had previously exploited in its own interest.

my and that he will do everything to achieve “des Deutschen Reiches Wiedererstarkung” (148). This allows Horváth to expose the represented spirit of the authorities of the Weimar Republic as a continuation of the mindset of the German Empire and their methods as a way to maintain their recently regained relative position of power.

The exposure of the egoism of the time as well as its representation as a continuity denies that there had ever been a unity amongst the people. The methods used by these characters in order to satisfy their own egoism create the image of a society that is based on ruthless opportunism. The desire for wealth and prestige is thereby accompanied by the portrayal of an admiration of power and strength that characterises the characters portrayed in the plays. This desire is used to expose the extension of power as a motivation for the German involvement in the war and thereby functions as a means of de-legitimising the claimed peacefulness of the German people and the propagandistic *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.

### 2.2.5 “Sie ein zartes Frauchen, er ein Kerl wie aus Stahl...” – society’s admiration of strength and power

In *Der deutsche Hinkemann* Toller creates a conflict between HINKEMANN’s altered post-war identity and the continuity of the mindset of the society he encounters. It is HINKEMANN’s gratitude for what Toller lets him see as his wife’s respect that ultimately initiates his journey towards progression. GRETE, who is the only character that knows HINKEMANN’s secret, serves Toller as the symbol for this desire to be respected and simultaneously defines the respect HINKEMANN is craving as an appreciation not of his wealth, power or prestige but for his humanity. If GRETE was to respect him, it would mean the fulfilment of HINKEMANN’s desire to be accepted as the man he is, rather than as the man he used to be and who he no longer has to pretend to be, “ein Kerl wie aus Stahl” (Toller, *Werke 1*, 212). At this point, however, Toller has not yet equipped HINKEMANN with an understanding of what he is looking for. Toller has him reach this understanding in the second act, in which his developing post-war identity collides with a mindset that is still dominated by the admiration of power and strength that was a foundation of pre-war times.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Cecil Davies’ proposed stages of generalisation within the play, from HINKEMANN’s own identity to that of German proletarians, then to all proletarians and, finally, to all of humanity (see Davies, *The Plays of Ernst Toller*, 269), is not unsubstantiated. But the emphasis on the particular proletarian aspects of HINKEMANN’s identity and the exclusion of his status as a *Kriegs-*

The conflicting natures of HINKEMANN's altered understanding of humanity and the rejection of this post-war identity by the rest of society serve Toller to reveal the mindset that dominates the characters he encounters. Scene II/3 uses HINKEMANN's role, the "Bärenmensch" (203) Homunkulus, as the representation of the people's desire for strength. He is "[d]er deutsche Held! Die deutsche Kultur! Die deutsche Männerfaust! Die deutsche Kraft!" (203). In this role, Toller combines the personal admiration of strength with the desire for national power. The fascination he represents thereby exposes brutality as an intrinsic part of German culture and in fact of western societies, as shows of the likes of the BUDENBESITZER's "sieht man einzig und allein in Amerika und in Europa" (208). This allows Toller to de-legitimise the superiority of German culture as well as the narrative of the people's peacefulness.<sup>304</sup> As a consequence of this constellation, the value society places on strength and power results for HINKEMANN in a total loss of self. The strength Toller lets him represent when taking on the role of Homunkulus, his alleged "Bärenmuskeln" (200), are only a pretence, while HINKEMANN's muscles are actually "schwammig" (200). Consequently, his ability to violate others, which, through the announcements of the BUDENBESITZER, Toller suggests is the most appealing aspect of the show for many people, can only be demonstrated by the killing of helpless mice and rats. By taking on the role of Homunkulus, HINKEMANN attempts to gain the respect of his wife by fulfilling the traditional male role of income earner, which is supposed to establish the family as a valuable cornerstone of society. The self-image with which Toller imbues HINKEMANN enables him to portray the character's awakening as a result of the conflict between his identity and the attributes society deems valuable. Furthermore, HINKEMANN realises that the desperate pretence of strength necessitates the rejection of the human propensity for weakness and suffering, and therefore denies the intrinsic value of humanity on which his new identity is based.

HINKEMANN's emasculation is used to expose society's admiration for these attributes through its association with his loss of these qualities and the portrayal of the negative reaction of other characters whenever the condition is revealed. At the time of the premier, HINKEMANN was commonly interpreted as the personification of the castrated and disempowered post-war Germany, which caused vicious attacks from the political right, who saw the play as an attack on the already humiliated fatherland. This demonstrates how real the represented desire for strength and power was in the actual mindset of the time. Himself a socialist Jew, the stereotype of the

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*krüppel* misses an important part of the foundation on which the character's development is based.

<sup>304</sup> See also Reimers, 107.

inner enemy, which according to these groups caused Germany's defeat in the first place, Toller became a perfect target for fascist and anti-Semitic protest under the cover of patriotism.<sup>305</sup> But after a theatrical scandal in 1924 that was created by right-wing supporters at a performance in Dresden, Toller changed the play's name to *Hinkemann*, in order to prevent its interpretation as the allegory of the "kriegsbeschädigten deutschen Seele" (Toller, *Briefe 1*, 396).<sup>306</sup> This clearly indicates that Toller did not intend such a narrow interpretation.<sup>307</sup>

Instead, HINKEMANN's self-image of "elenden Krüppel" (194) aims to show how deeply embedded the desire for strength still was in post-war society, which becomes evident when he loses his strength after being laughed at by all other characters in the pub-scene and renouncing their ideals.<sup>308</sup> "Wie müßt ihr anders werden, um eine neue Gesellschaft zu bauen! Bekämpft den Bourgeois und seid aufgebläht von seinem Dünkel, seiner Selbstgerechtigkeit, seiner Herzensträgheit!" (216) is, although Cecil Davies correctly identifies the play as the "Tiefpunkt der tragischen Vision von Tollers Dramen" (Davies, *Engagierte Literatur*, 271), thereby not an expression of political pessimism but a call for change.<sup>309</sup> It criticises the nature of the post-war society by defining it as a continuity of the mindset that caused the war.

One consequence of the high value of strength that Toller portrays as existing within post-war society is the acceptance of the right of the strongest. In his representation, this manifests itself in a utilitarianism that permeates all classes.<sup>310</sup> He exposes this in the pub-scene. All of the represented

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<sup>305</sup> This indicates a characteristic of the Toller reception, which saw him from the very beginnings as *Ein Autor im Spannungsfeld von Literatur und Politik* (see Neuhaus et al.).

<sup>306</sup> See Frühwald/Spalek, 142–143.

<sup>307</sup> See also Czaplá, 338.

<sup>308</sup> Because of the nature of HINKEMANN's injury, sexuality is an omnipresent topic. In his study *Das Recht auf meinen Körper*, Gerhard Scholz convincingly analyses its relation to power, its effect on the self-image of HINKEMANN and how it affects the structure of the character constellation in the play (see Scholz, 130). The *Nachwort* to the play in the first volume of *Sämtliche Werke* points out that the reinforcement of the societal definition of strength as masculinity and masculinity as sexual potency through HINKEMANN himself means that Toller did not create him purely as a victim but also made him responsible for his own destiny (see T. Hoffmann et al., 491–492).

<sup>309</sup> See also Jordan, 15.

<sup>310</sup> Toller actually introduces the topic at the very beginning of the play by portraying the motif of GRETE's mother in blinding the finch as a utilitarian ac-



ideologies look to create a society based on what they deem useful and productive. By letting them fail to accept humanity as a value in itself, Toller exposes their ignorance towards the individual suffering and personal trauma of *Heimkehrer* like HINKEMANN. Instead, society wants to lock the *Heimkehrer* away in a “Heilanstalt” (Toller, *Werke 1*, 211) if they have mental problems or ‘repair’ them with artificial limbs if their injuries are physical. They will be “genährt, gekleidet, von der Gesellschaft unterstützt und können dann genau so glücklich leben wie die andern Menschen” (211). These ‘solutions’ make HINKEMANN understand that all of these ideologies base their appraisal of human beings on a person’s contribution to their way of life, and that humanity is still not accepted as an intrinsic value in itself.

Consequently, Toller denies the war cripple HINKEMANN any chance of being accepted by a society “in der jeder nur gilt, was er *nützt*” (230), a society that accepts the potent Priapus as their “Gott” (222), while HINKEMANN’s injury makes him a “gesetzlichen Ehescheidungsgrund” (215). In the last scene of the play, Toller diagnoses society’s view on people and uses HINKEMANN to express it. Stumbling through the streets after his previous emotional shock and physical breakdown, HINKEMANN sees the people for what they are, demonstrating the previously discussed eye opening character of the revelation he had in the workers’ pub: “Die eine Seele ist ein Speckgenick, die zweite eine Maschine, die dritte ein Kontrollzähler, die vierte ein Stahlhelm, die fünfte ein Gummiknüttel” (223).<sup>311</sup> Linking it closely to the admiration of strength, Toller represents this utilitarianism as another continuity that is already implemented in the pre-war mindset and thereby exposes the society’s ruthless pursuit of a position of power that opposes the narrative of a *Volksgemeinschaft*.

While Toller’s representation of the utilitarian character of society is probably the most strategic regarding the de-legitimation of propaganda narratives, other plays also portray this aspect. Horváth, for example, uses it in *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg*, in order to expose a dynamic of exploitation amongst the people. He lets DON JUAN put “seine große Liebe

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tion. By pointing out that she read that “blinde Vögel sängen besser” (Toller, *Werke 1*, 193) he represents her action as an attempt to maximise the entertainment she gets out of the helpless and already caged animal.

<sup>311</sup> For the reader of his play, this is emphasised by the speaking of names of the characters he portrays in the dreamlike sequence following HINKEMANN’s breakdown. Through their names, Toller defines them as the sum of their utility rather than as human beings. The fact that he uses methods that make this aspect clear to both reader of the play and viewers of its performance indicates the significance Toller sees in this representation.

stückerweise zusammen" (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe* 9, 399), leaving him disappointed that none of the women are what he is really looking for. He is therefore only interested in a woman as long as she, and this is limited to physical features, "erinnert" him of the "Ideal" (404) he is chasing. After a while, Horváth has him realise that he has "[s]ich in ihr getäuscht" (404) and, again, move on. The utilitarian mindset is so indoctrinated in DON JUAN that he denies any form of "Verantwortungsgefühl" (415) for anything other than his personal interest, which he has no problem admitting. In fact, he almost sees his utilitarianism as a justification for his behaviour: "Kann ich dafür, daß sie mir nicht mehr gefällt? Soll ich mich zu ihr zwingen?" (404). Resultingly, he dehumanises the subjects of his conquests; those, who "[ihm] nicht gefallen können" are "keine Menschen" (409). Thus, in a similar manner to Toller, Horváth thereby exposes the inhumane nature of a utilitarian society, in which those who do not contribute are excluded.

More strategically used is the admiration of power and strength in Horváth's *Sladek* plays. In the last scene of *Sladek oder: Die schwarze Armee*, he portrays a setting similar to the fair in Toller's *Der deutsche Hinkemann*.<sup>312</sup> The visitors are fascinated by the bed of "Haarmann, dem bekannten Massenlustmörder" (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 2: schwarze Armee*, 157) and praise a movie about WWI because it gives them the opportunity "sich den Krieg erst richtig vor[zu]stellen" (159).

Throughout the play, Horváth uses the HAUPTMANN to represent this societal trait as a continuity of pre-war behaviour. Although Horváth uses it predominantly to portray the dominance of right-wing ideologies within the Weimar Republic, by exposing it as a continuity of the Wilhelmine militarism, his representation also de-legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. By presenting the HAUPTMANN's fear of being "vogelfrei vertr[ie]ben, verachtet, verspottet, verdreht" (134), Horváth emphasises the importance of status and honour for the self-respect of this former officer and thereby defines prestige and national greatness as an underlying desire of the Wilhelmine era. Kraus' critique of the officers' willingness to win these attributes through war is also implied by Horváth, through his emphasising the HAUPTMANN's constant involvement in battles. After the war, the HAUPTMANN fought "im Baltikum" and "in Oberschlesien" (134). The choice of the latter is particularly significant, as it refers to a fight which was fought for the maintenance of German greatness, as it was, famously,

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<sup>312</sup> This scene is also part of an intertextual relationship between the two texts and Büchner's *Woyzeck*, which is, to say this in a very simplified way, based on the exploitation of the character's socio-economic circumstances by others and the suffering of a human degraded to a beastly state (see for example Bennett, 218–220; T. Hoffmann et al., 493).

an attempt to limit the loss of German territory after the war. At the fictional time of the play, the HAUPTMANN fights “für das Vaterland. Für seine Größe, seine alte Macht” (138), and wants “dem deutschen Vaterlande seine stolze Weltmachtstellung zurückerobern” (142) so that “Deutschland wieder geführt wird” (144).

Horváth includes a reference to the time before the war in each of these three statements. It is Germany’s ‘former power’ which he has the HAUPTMANN mourn, and his desire for the nation to ‘regain’ its old greatness so that it is feared ‘again’. Similarly to HINKEMANN, the HAUPTMANN has not moved on after the war and is unable to leave his old mindset behind. But unlike in Toller’s play, here it is the *Heimkehrer* character that cannot overcome his old mindset. The HAUPTMANN thereby represents the old officer class and ultimately exposes its mindset as dominated by prestige and as opposing the narrative of the purely defensive character of Germany’s warfare.

Horváth also lets civilian characters reveal that the pursuit of power and greatness is an intrinsic part of the Wilhelmine spirit and was one of the reasons for the war. He shows that SLADEK, who is “in der großen Zeit” between 1914 and 1918 “groß geworden” (121), has internalised this desire for the greatness of the former empire by having him claim that Germany needs its “Kolonien wieder” (119). SLADEK’s justification that the German people “sind wirklich zu viel” (119) is, after the decimation of the population by war, disease and hunger, exposed as a pretence and used to prove the continuity of the imperialist mentality within his generation. With KNORKE, who spent time in the German province of “Tsingtau” (133) in China, and SALM, who lived in “Siebenbürgen” (125) and disassociates himself from its non-Austrian majority by explicitly referring to the women of his past as “Rumäninnen” (125), Horváth indicates that these two *Reichswehr* soldiers might have been partly motivated to sign up for service by the desire to return the nation to the more glorious *status quo ante bellum* and to restore the former prestige of the empires.

#### 2.2.6 “In der Natur wird gemordet, das ändert sich nicht” – the violence behind the narrative of peacefulness

These representations of the peoples’ mindset create the image of a society in which individuals are in constant competition for resources and status, as well as the portrayal of the unbridled use of violence to which these conditions lead. This is once again represented as a continuity that had begun in pre-war times. Ernst Toller lets HINKEMANN reflect on his pre-war behaviour to show just how normalised these violent actions were. Despite being shocked to discover that his mother-in-law blinded a pet finch with a hot

knitting needle he goes on to chastise her “wie man ein Kind züchtigt” (Toller, *Werke 1*, 193). This demonstrates his own acceptance of violence at the beginning of the play. Later, however, Toller initiates a first realisation in HINKEMANN: “Was war mir früher der Schmerz eines Tieres? [...] Als ich gesund war, erschien mir das alles, als müßte es so sein. Nun ich ein Krüppel bin, weiß ich: Es ist etwas Ungeheuerliches!” (193–194). This allows him to imbue HINKEMANN with empathy for the suffering creature and to trigger the development of a new understanding of humanity, which he ultimately derives from his war experience. In the last scene of the play, however, HINKEMANN is willing to kill GRETE because he believes that she laughed at him, leading to another emotional crisis when he realises that he still has the potential to become violent when provoked.<sup>313</sup> Toller thereby exposes the brutality of society before and after the war as a seemingly inescapable characteristic and de-legitimises the narrative of the peacefully striving German people.

Other plays confirm the impression that physical punishment is a normalised and accepted occurrence. Horváth, for example, includes multiple threats of physical violence directed at DON JUAN by the characters he crosses. He has one woman say that she would strangle him “wenn dieser Don Juan mein Bräutigam gewesen wär” (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 9*, 385), while another suggests “man sollte dich ausrotten” (392) and, later in the play, he has a third woman threaten to bring DON JUAN “an den Galgen!” (411). The famous snowman motif at the end of the play is also introduced by the substitutional destruction of a snowman as a punishment for the person who built it.

As mentioned before, in the second act of *Der deutsche Hinkemann*, Toller exposes the underlying fascination with brutality as a characteristic of German culture. This fascination lives on despite the experiences of the war and might even have been increased by the years of sensationalist reports from the bloody battles and the heroisation of the fallen through propaganda. The opportunistic nature with which he imbues the BUDENBESITZER is used to reveal this societal trait. By having him give the people what they want, Toller uncovers their “Instinkt[e]” (Toller, *Werke 1*, 201): “Volk will Blut sehen!!! Blut!!!” (201). He enhances that through the role he lets HINKEMANN play at the carnival, because Homunkulus’ appeal is essentially his ability to inflict violence. Toller reveals this by letting him be advertised as able to put “mit bloßer Hand Nägel durch stärkste Schädelwände” and to strangle “mit zwei Fingern zweiunddreißig Menschen” (203).

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<sup>313</sup> See also Reimers, 110.

Furthermore, Toller presents violence and sexuality as going hand in hand.<sup>314</sup> The “Kunstwerke eines Rembrandt, eines Rubens” (202) are tattooed onto a woman’s front and back, only to allow for the display of her naked body under the cover of artistic representation. This appeal to the sexual desire of the crowd is directly followed by a cruel aside, in response to which the announcement promises that a “Kind enthauptet wird” (202), a “wahrhaft lebendes Kind!” (202–203). Homunkulus becomes once more the representative of the fusion of the lust for violence and sexual lust that Toller creates in this scene. His power leaves the female visitors wishing they could “dem mal auf die Armmuskeln tippen” or “auf den Brustkasten” (203).

Fittingly, the end of HINKEMANN’s journey of realisation is accompanied by representations of violence and the sexual lust it creates in people. Before letting him return home, Toller frames HINKEMANN’s collapse on the street as the result of the emotional crises he had experienced after being exposed to his friends in the scene set in a workers’ pub. The dream-like sequence at the end of scene III/1 is reminiscent of the mass scenes that open each act in Kraus’ *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*. Toller uses it to confirm the barbarism that still dominates the people as well as the commercial exploitation that drives their behaviour. By putting this scene in association with HINKEMANN’s devastating realisation that his mistreatment is nothing but the return of the war, “der Krieg ist wieder da! Die Menschen morden sich unter Gelächter!” (218), he de-legitimises the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative.

Reminiscent of Kraus’ famous *Extraausgaben*, Toller has paperboys appear, who announce news like “Pest in Finnland! Mütter ertränken ihre Kinder! Sensationelle Berichte!” or “Wunder der Technik! Unerhörtes Giftgas! Fliegergeschwader imstande größte Stadt mit Menschen und Tieren vom Erdboden zu tilgen! Erfinder zum Ehrenmitglied der Akademien aller Länder ernannt! Vom Papst in Adelstand erhoben!” (220). This proves that cruelty still fascinates the masses and power, here represented by the ability to wipe out entire cities, is still regarded as an achievement. Two representatives of fascist forces glorify the killing of political opponents and suggest doing the same with HINKEMANN, assuming he is a “Spartakistenbiest” (221), before four prostitutes discover him, recognise him as Homunkulus, the “Liebling der eleganten Damenwelt” (203), and fight over who will get to take him home. The situation only resolves as the crowd gets distracted by the sound of “*Militärmusik*” (221) and disperses to

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<sup>314</sup> Hye Suk Kim for example sees sexuality as the origin of the brutality that Toller imbues the characters with and the neglect of the physical aspects of life as one of the expressionistic aspects Toller overcame in this play (see Kim, 192).

greet the soldiers. Their enthusiastic admiration for the military, "Soldaten! Soldaten! Hurra! Hurra!" (221), completes the representation of values that are, in the play's sense, anachronistic. Toller presents HINKEMANN's collapse in this scene as the impotence of his post-war identity against the continuities within society. He thereby manages to reflect on the helplessness of pacifist voices when faced with a society that accepts violence and brutality as a normality and, in doing so, manages to de-legitimise the propaganda of the *Friedenskaiser* and his peace-loving followers.

Horváth chooses a more direct way to represent the violent nature of the time. "In der Natur wird gemordet, das ändert sich nicht" (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 2: Reichswehrmann*, 165) is the essence of the conviction he assigns the portrayed society, which he accuses of accepting violence as an immutable law of nature and thus a legitimate option.<sup>315</sup> SLADEK's role as the representation of a generation that knows nothing but the war is used as a reminder that this attitude is a legacy, which is reminiscent of Clausewitz' legitimisation of war as "ein Akt der Gewalt, um den Gegner zur Erfüllung unseres Willens zu zwingen" (Clausewitz, 3). The play portrays brutality as a characteristic that is deeply embedded in the mindset of the people.

Horváth combines the characters' lust for violence with the willingness to use it in order to characterise society's brutality. He demonstrates the consequences of this by letting it culminate in the brutal *Fememord* of SLADEK's lover ANNA, which makes SLADEK commit a murder "[o]hne eigentlich Mörder zu sein" (qtd. in Streitler-Kastberger, 16), as Horváth himself phrased it in his interview with *Tempo*.<sup>316</sup> He thereby reflects on the ramifications that this mindset can produce when put into a situation where the dynamic gets out of control. This representation ultimately serves as a means of de-legitimising the myth of the innocence of pre-war society, which he sees this characteristic originating in.

The joy he presents the characters with when acting violently is an important aspect of this argumentation and is already immanent in the first act, in which he portrays the soldiers of the *Reichswehr* beating up their political opponent. HORST "*lacht leise*" (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 2: Reichswehr*, 167) when RÜBEZAHN hits SCHMINKE with a bar and

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<sup>315</sup> Ingrid Haag therefore correctly identifies the *Fememord* as being a result of the language SLADEK is exposed to and eventually adopts (see Haag, *Ödön von Horváth*, 306–307). In a Krausian sense, this makes it impossible for him to recognise the reality of his doings behind the clichés with which he legitimises it.

<sup>316</sup> Legitimising the killing of an enemy for the good of the fatherland can in itself be seen as a continuity of the essence of war.

SALM is almost disappointed that they are not allowed to execute him straight away. The HAUPTMANN is very aware of the brutality of his men. After having overheard that RÜBEZAHL threatened to shoot him “wenn er keine Schweizer Franken [...] bekommen sollte” (168) the HAUPTMANN admits that he “ha[t] Angst” (168). The monetary motivation of RÜBEZAHL indicates the variety of reasons for which the soldiers are part of the *Reichswehr*. Although KNORKE calls the Weimar Republic the “Republik dieser Büttel der Botschafterkonferenz” (170) and HALEF states that he “hass[t] diese Republik” (187), all members of the *Reichswehr* have other, personal motivations. The fact that they desert as soon as they face danger further supports the image of their lack of idealism for its cause. This lack of both principles and soldierly obedience with which Horváth imbues his characters further emphasises the sheer brutality of their nature.

After condemning ANNA to death, SALM and KNORKE seem to look forward to the execution of their plan:

SALM: Ein schöner Abend heute abend.

KNORKE: Sie weiß alles, vielleicht auch das, was ihr bevorsteht. Sie wird trotzdem jede versteckte Patrone der Republik abliefern und alles den Polen verraten. Sie ist toll.

SALM: Ein schöner Abend heute abend.

KNORKE: Ich verstehe, Leutnantleben. Liebling, wir verstehen uns wie ein Liebespaar. Es ist ein schöner Abend heute abend, und es wird für manches Kind keinen schöneren mehr geben (174).

Horváth uses the rest of this conversation as a confirmation of the brutality of the characters. He portrays HORST stating that this “Schandweib” should be “totgeprügelt” (174) and lets him even brag about his remorseless brutality by telling an anecdote from his youth, in which he had his dog’s “Beine zusammengebunden und losgeprügelt” (175). HORST is instantly admired for being “so herrlich hemmungslos, so göttlich selbstverständlich” (175).<sup>317</sup> HORST’s fascination of the “herrliche[n] Folterkammer in der Burg” (181) in Nürnberg completes Horváth’s representation of a character that did not become violent because of his experiences in the war but had grown up in an environment of violence and adapted it as a legitimate means of survival. The general acceptance of violence within the represented post-war society is thereby directly linked to the nature of the society that caused the war and was inscribed in its composition.

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<sup>317</sup> See Kuppaa, 45–55.

The murder of ANNA represents the peak of this violence. Horváth presents the murder as a typical National Socialist *Fememord*, as for example described by Bernd Kruppa.<sup>318</sup> Although the group is armed with a “Revolver” (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 2: Reichswehrmann*, 180), Horváth has them stab ANNA to death, further portraying their lust for brutality. In this context it is symbolic that Horváth chooses RÜBEZAHL, who is motivated by greed and a lust for violence rather than idealism, to ultimately kill ANNA, who in the end was not a traitor as she decided not to disclose any information about the *Reichswehr*. While the others remain in the background, he attacks his victim and gives free rein to his rage:

RÜBEZAHL: (*stürzt sich auf ANNA.*) Was ist das!  
ANNA: Hilfe! Hilfe! – Au!  
RÜBEZAHL: Das Mensch plärrt!  
ANNA: Sladek! Sladek!  
SLADEK: Halt!  
SALM: (*mit dem Revolver; zu SLADEK*) Zurück! Zurück!  
RÜBEZAHL: (*ersticht ANNA.*) Verrat uns! Verrat uns! Vieh!  
ANNA: (*bricht zusammen und winselt.*) Au – Sladek, du schlechter Mensch – du, du, du – (*Sie stirbt.*) (180).

Through the demonstration of their brutality Horváth contradicts the claim of the peacefulness of the German people, which is used to create an image of innocence that increases the credibility of the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative. In *Sladek oder: Die schwarze Reichswehr*, he even includes a direct reference to this aspect. KNORKE's claim referring to the German people as “ein lammfrommes Volk” the like of which he has “nirgends getroffen” (Horváth, *Wiener Ausgabe 2: schwarze Armee*, 120) becomes, juxtaposed with his actions, in this context a representation and de-legitimation of the common propaganda.

*Heimkehrer* plays are predominantly set in the post-war period and have so far mainly been analysed as a representation of this time. But neither the *Heimkehrerfiguren* nor the rest of the characters can be understood without including the war experience that the authors implicate in these plays by using *Heimkehrer* as protagonists. While they present a variety of topics from sexuality to revolution to the problems of the Weimar Republic, all authors have at some point made the conscious decision to portray these aspects in the form of a *Heimkehrerdrama* and they all uncover continuities through the destiny of their protagonists.

<sup>318</sup> See also Rüsing, 172. He points out that these murders are normally very brutal, committed by a number of perpetrators attacking a weaker individual, who very often, like ANNA in the play, did not commit treason after all.



This means that they portray the conditions of the society that ‘allowed’ the outbreak of WWI and thereby, as Toller lets GRETE describe it, the “Schuld” of a “Zeit, in der es sowas gibt!” (Toller, *Werke 1*, 205). They portray a society that has and still does admire strength and power more than humanity, strives for wealth and prestige and does not stop short of exploiting others for individual benefit whenever an opportunity arises, a society that is still caught in the old militaristic mindset and accepts violence as a means of achieving personal goals and in which war sometimes just seems like the extension of this mindset from an individual to a collective level, implying that it is no real surprise that the outbreak of the war was possible.

The developments of the 1920s and 1930s ultimately proved them right, since the conditions the authors blamed for the outbreak of WWI would eventually lead into another, even greater war. The fact that history would later confirm the fertility of these conditions for hate and war thereby only highlights the accuracy of their representation in the plays as *pre-war* conditions. The analysed plays use the *Heimkehrer* characters’ confrontation with post-war society to expose these pathological traits as continuities and thereby create an antithesis to the propaganda’s narrative of the peaceful, diligent and innocent German people, whose culture and way of life was threatened by aggressive enemies.

The dramaturgical strategies used to do so vary. Horváth lets his *Heimkehrer* represent the continuity and exposes the mindset that caused the war by creating characters like DON JUAN and the soldiers of the *Reichswehr*, or portrays the result of being socialised in this time as in the case of SLADEK. Toller lets his HINKEMANN perish in the unsolvable conflict between his progressed post-war identity and the mindset of the society he encounters, which still represents all the characteristics that led to his war experience in the first place. Brecht creates a similar conflict between KRAGLER and the society he encounters upon his return, but lets him finally understand the consequences of the continuities he is faced with, exposing and ultimately rejecting them. All these different examples of inner conflicts of *Heimkehrerfiguren* have in common that they portray a society that is dominated by egoism and the pursuit of one’s own interests. They thereby show that the characters they chose to represent these characteristics either carried traits that were well suited to the violent and martial nature of war, welcomed the development as a chance to be exploitative or themselves exploited, or simply fell for propaganda narratives that told them the war would be necessary to protect their interests.

They are thus used to reveal that they all carry “eigene Schuld” (Toller, *Werke 1*, 230) because they accepted and even welcomed the war and did not rebel “als die Mine entzündet wurde von den großen Verbrechern an der

Welt, die Staatsmänner und Generäle genannt werden" (230), making them "so traurig lächerlich wie diese Zeit" (230). This last quote from the last act of Toller's *Der deutsche Hinkemann* can stand as representative of mechanisms of de-legitimation within the *Heimkehrer* dramas of the discourse.

## V. WWI dramatic literature: synopsis and outlook

The centenary years of WWI from 2014 to 2018 have prompted a revival of interest in the topic. The years saw commemoration ceremonies held for its beginning and its end, brought individual events and battles back into the public eye and inspired many exhibitions. These years also turned scholarly attention back to WWI, resulting in a number of publications in different disciplines.<sup>319</sup> But in regards to WWI literature, 2014 and the subsequent years have continued a tendency that has been dominating the academic engagement with this topic since it was established: the focus on non-dramatic genres. Julius Bab's early work on war poetry, *Die deutsche Kriegslyrik*, was one of the first comprehensive works on a particular genre of WWI literature. This has been followed by extensive works on prose writings, especially the war novels that emerged in the late 1920s, as well as works about war correspondence, war diaries and propaganda material such as posters and postcards.<sup>320</sup> And this is certainly justified, considering the popularity of war novels like Ernst Jünger's (1895–1998) *In Stahlgewittern* or Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* from 1928 onwards and the vast number of poems and other forms of texts published in newspapers, journals and anthologies during the war.<sup>321</sup> But it does raise the question of why the dramatic literature of WWI has so far been widely ignored by scholars.

Since Walter Neumann's *Grundzüge der Technik des Heimkehrerdramas* from 1936 and Heinz Schlötermann's *Das deutsche Weltkriegsdrama*

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<sup>319</sup> See for example Werber et al., *Erster Weltkrieg. Kulturwissenschaftliches Handbuch*; Hirschfeld et al., *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*; Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora*; Münkler, *Der Große Krieg* for historiographic publications. For artistic and cultural aspects of WWI see Schubert, *Künstler im Trommelfeuer des Krieges*; Frick/Schnitzler, *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Spiegel der Künste* and of course the previously mentioned works on the role of writers and intellectuals.

<sup>320</sup> See for example Bab, *Die deutsche Kriegslyrik 1914–1918*; Detering, *Populäre Kriegslyrik im Ersten Weltkrieg*; Erll, *Gedächtnisromane*; Th. Schneider, *Von Richthofen bis Remarque*; Weigel et al., *Jeder Schuss ein Russ. Jeder Stoss ein Franzos*.

<sup>321</sup> In 1920, Julius Bab estimated in regards to poetic production that at the beginning of the war as much as 50,000 poems were written daily (see Bab, *Die deutsche Kriegslyrik*, 25).

from 1939, no studies had been published on WWI dramatic literature as such until Christian Klein's essay on *Die Weltkriegsdramatik der Weimarer Republik* in 2013. Following this came the edited volume *Der Erste Weltkrieg in der Dramatik – deutsche und australische Perspektiven*, edited by Klein and Franz-Josef Deiters, in 2018 and Isabell Oberle's *Herausforderung Drama. Heldenhaftes Warten auf der Bühne am Beispiel des Ersten Weltkriegs* in 2020. Beside these few examples, the scholarly engagement with WWI drama is limited to studies of individual plays and authors, included in edited volumes on the literary and cultural aspects of WWI at large.<sup>322</sup>

One reason for this has certainly been the lack of accessibility to this corpus.<sup>323</sup> Another interesting historical reason that gaining insight especially into the text corpus of early plays is so difficult is the initial disregarding of the majority of WWI plays published during the war as of too poor quality to warrant attention. Whether the opinion of critics like Ihering and Elsner have influenced scholarly opinion or whether scholars simply came to the same conclusion is difficult to determine; fact is that they did. Julius Bab's (1880–1955) fourth volume of *Die Chronik des deutschen Dramas* was published in 1922 and covers the years 1914 to 1918. Therein he claims that all plays written about the war so far remained a “belanglose Redensart” (Bab, *Die Chronik des deutschen Dramas IV*, 17). Consequently, the subsequent volume, covering plays published prior to 1926, contin-

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<sup>322</sup> See for example Neumann/Wimmer, *Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem deutsch-europäischen Literaturfeld*; Burkhardt/Unger, *Der Erste Weltkrieg: interdisziplinäre Annäherungen*.

<sup>323</sup> Another reason why large parts of the text corpus have been forgotten might be the fact that many of the works have been published in very small numbers. For many of these publications, as little as one remaining copy exists, predominantly archived in the German National Library or as manuscripts for the stage, held only in archives and only accessible on site. This means that some works that might have contributed to this discourse analysis, like Elisabeth Miethe's *Die Russen in Ostpreußen* (1916) or Georg Holzhey's *Der Heimat Dank an ihre Helden* (1916) were not accessible. This applies in particular to plays published after the war like Hermann Uhlig's (1871–1942) *Entwurzelt* (1924), Helma Stötter's *Verlorene Heimat* (1928) or Walter Bloem's *Verdun* (1929). The majority of the preserved plays have been published by public book publishing houses. However, there are a number of plays that have been published by dedicated theatre publishing houses, many of them as part of anthologies for smaller stages. The most productive publishers in this regard were the Höflings-Verlag in Munich and the publishing houses G. Danner in Mühlhausen and Strauch in Leipzig, which mainly provided material for amateur stages and youth theatre groups.

ued to ignore WWI drama almost entirely.<sup>324</sup> The initial judgement of Bab, and he was by no means alone in his opinion, is in most cases correct in regards to the literary quality of the plays. Nevertheless, these plays do provide valuable insights into the literary and even political and social discourses of the time. While Bab and his contemporaries could not yet see this context, later works on the literature of the time, like that of Peter Sprengel or Helmuth Kiesel, seem to have accepted the initial judgement, despite their greater distance from their subject of study.<sup>325</sup>

This invalidated the value of this body of texts for the understanding of important discourses of the times both during and after the war and as an influence on the better-known plays of the Weimar Republic. With regards to the war propaganda with its decisive narratives, the plays published during the war present a unique interpretation of the events that led to the outbreak of the war and portray the conditions within Germany during the war, which, regardless whether written in support of or opposed to the war effort, remained a crucial aspect of WWI dramatic literature until it ceased to be produced.<sup>326</sup>

The *Verteidigungskriegsprämisse* is thereby the central argument within the represented narratives. The conviction that Germany's neighbours threatened the nation's existence and that the Kaiser and his generals had no other choice but to defend the fatherland and its culture is an omnipresent conviction in plays published during the war. It gained its validity through the sources that communicated it to the people, Emperor Wilhelm II and Emperor Franz Josef, who claimed to have done everything they could to keep the peace but were ultimately forced to call their people to

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<sup>324</sup> Other scholars and critics like Elsner and Poensgen confirmed this impression.

<sup>325</sup> See Sprengel, *Die Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur 1900–1918*; Kiesel, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur 1918–1933*. The second part of Sprengel's work omits dedicated war plays in his chapter on dramatic literature and only briefly mentions a small number of war plays in a short three page section on the dramatic representation of WWI. Kiesel dedicates a chapter to reflections on WWI, but focusses on only a few individual playwrights. Although this is due to the structure of their works, as in the case of Sprengel and especially Kiesel, it does represent the way in which WWI drama is generally represented within literary studies.

<sup>326</sup> It is of course impossible to determine exact dates. But Anton Horn's *Vorwärts mit Gott*, Ludwig Thoma's *Der erste August* und Rudolf Hawel's *Die Einberufung* (1914) all engage with the narratives and all premiered as early as September 1914. At the other end of the spectrum is Ödön von Horváth's 1936 play *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg*, which was one of the last plays in which WWI is not part of National Socialist narratives.

arms. They established the foundation on which the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative was built in a number of speeches and communiqués throughout the last days of July and the first days of August 1914 and thereby established it as the official narrative of WWI from the Central Powers' point of view and used it to legitimise the countries' involvement in the war. The narrative of the German *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*, which propagated an alleged unity of all German and Austro-Hungarian people as a reaction to the threat the foreign aggressors posed to their survival is thereby inseparable from the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and constitutes a second crucial topic for WWI plays. Propaganda established this unity as the requirement for as well as the guarantee of victory. This promise created a context of meaning that legitimised all sacrifices that were demanded of the people and could simultaneously be used to stigmatise those who were unwilling to contribute or expressed a pacifist opinion as traitors who were endangering the foundation of the German victory.

These aspects appear in almost all the plays published during the war but are particularly crucial for those which propagate the discourse of legitimisation. In the first phase, the discourse is based on the propagandistic *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and prompts literary representations that legitimise its content. The plays are often set around the 1<sup>st</sup> of August; Ludwig Thoma even called one of his propagandistic plays *Der Erste August*, which demonstrates how much the plays were focused on legitimising the decision to go to war. The plays use national stereotypes to give credibility to the motives of the enemies, on the basis of which they decided to engage Germany in war. These stereotypes were already established in the German collective memory and therefore gain instant credibility upon their reactivation through characters like the KOSAKENBERG in Enderling's *Ostpreußen*, JEAN in Reinfels' *Die Rose von Gravelotte* and LOSWORTH in Robert Hillmann's *Tsingtau*. To which enemy the plays ascribe the main guilt varies, often depending on their setting. To reject all responsibility for the outbreak of WWI and to base the alleged motivation for the enemies' aggression on inherited cultural resentments appears very short-sighted for today's reader of the plays. But it must not be forgotten that we have the sad advantage of knowing the consequences of the time from 1914 to 1918. For many contemporary writers, however, their arguments must have seemed just as legitimate as they sound naïve today and the particular cultural and national prejudices that were used to create credibility for the accusations were just as wide-spread and accepted as cultural prejudices are today.

The strategies and structures of the plays are therefore a result of the inner-discursive logic. They are extremely coherent within the described corpus of texts and essentially identical with the official propaganda narratives surrounding the outbreak of WWI, propagating the defensive charac-

ter of Germany's warfare. The texts tend to assign a specific role to each of the main enemies, England, France and Russia. They portray Russia as the first and most obvious aggressor, as the East Prussia plays and, most representatively, Enderling's *Ostpreußen*, demonstrate. According to, for example, Schare's *Deutsche Helden*, Russia's undiplomatic and aggressive actions are argued to be utilised by France, in order to get revenge for the loss of territory and prestige that was a result of the Franco-Prussian War. The plays, Schmetzer's *Deutschland und seine Feinde* probably most elaborately, accuse England of being the puppet master behind all this. Fearful of German competition in commerce and technology, England allegedly incites its two allies to take violent action. Its hope is that they will weaken Germany enough for it to cease being a threat, while England risks and invests as little as possible to then finally defeat the exhausted German armies and so destroy its biggest economic rival. In order to expose this putative political and military conspiracy, the plays present the lies and accusations with which it is allegedly covered up.

While showing dramaturgical deficits and often poor literary quality, the plays' representation of the enemies' motives and actions create strong affects throughout the discourse, in order to influence the recipients emotionally, convincing them to favour the plays' intended messages. The most obvious negative affects are evoked by the portrayal of the Russian brutality and barbarianism during their invasion of East Prussia. Although not as obvious, the affects created by the portrayal of the French are just as strong, as the plays portray their opportunism to be as guilty of destroying German prosperity and of causing the loss of German lives as the Russian invasion. The same strategy is used to blame the entire set of these affects on the representatives of England. Because the plays accredit the role of puppet master to England, they are able to make it responsible for the development that led to the outbreak of WWI and the suffering it caused. This does by no means free any of the other nations of their guilt but seems to intensify the negative affects attributed to English characters, whenever they appear.

As the official narrative states that defeat can only be prevented if Germany stands united against its enemies, the plays let their German characters show positive reactions of unity and determination and collectively, as well as individually, accept the sacrifices that will be necessary to save the fatherland. This is predominantly expressed through dialogues set in the characters' homes, right before the young men are drafted or volunteer for service, as Treichel's *Deutscher Geist und deutsche Treue* and Schare's *Deutsche Helden* exemplify. This collective acceptance ultimately legitimises these sacrifices, while their connection to the safety of the fatherland embeds it into a context of meaning, all based on the acceptance of the propaganda narratives created in the first days of the war.

The plays in this phase were published prior to the end of 1915. This suggests that most of them, especially the ones written for small theatres and only published because of their success, were written during the first twelve months of the war. This can explain why the focus of the plays lies on the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative itself, as well as why the sacrifices are often casually represented as a necessary by-product of the war. With many plays being set around the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1914, many of the sacrifices they refer to are yet to be made and the true magnitude of the war was not yet fully salient to everybody. Nevertheless, the basic tenor for their legitimisation in later plays is already immanent.

The plays of the second phase continue to represent the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative but do move away from elaborately debating the enemies' role in the outbreak of the war and, as a consequence, representations of enemy characters become rare. It appears as if the defensive character of the German warfare was considered by this time to have been successfully established within the public the dramatic discourse, which allows the plays to simply reactivate it to legitimise the victims and sacrifices the war demands of the people. They do so by representing the alleged unity of the German people and by emphasising the danger the failure to maintain this unity would cause.

By reactivating the *Verteidigungskrieg* narrative and the literary representations of the stereotypes concerning England, France and Russia that had been used as evidence in the first phase of the discourse, the plays also reactivate the affects created in this context and carry them into the second phase of the legitimisation discourse. Reactivated, they serve as the foundation of the legitimisation of victims, ultimately creating a demand to maintain the willingness to make sacrifices until the enemies are defeated. The alleged existential character of the war is part of the same narrative and remains crucial for the creation of a context of meaning for the victims.

According to this representation, all sacrifices would be in vain if Germany should not survive after all, which makes a German victory key for this discourse. This general perception links the legitimisation of past sacrifices to the necessity for future ones. The victims of the war, who become an important motif in the plays, are representatives of Germany's determination to defend itself against the enemies' aggression, serving as motivation for those still fighting, but also as a manner of shaming those who are not contributing.

The reference to the endangered fatherland allows authors to represent the victims at the *Front* as heroic defenders of the *Heimat* and to establish an inseparable bond between the two spheres. Simultaneously, the contribution of the *Heimat* becomes a central motif in plays like *Die Patrioten*, *Des Vaterlandes Dank* and *Deutsche Volksoffer im dritten Kriegsjahre*



alongside a large number of very short plays like the many *Kriegsanleihestücke*. These contributions are increasingly represented as crucial for Germany's victory. The connection between *Heimat* and *Front* is defined as an interdependent relationship, as either sphere is only able to survive if its counterpart does. The soldiers need the financial, material and ideological contribution of the people at home in order to maintain the fight and the *Heimat* can only survive if the soldiers keep defending it on the battlefields. This provides a utilitarian aspect to the otherwise idealistic concept of the fatherland that finds its expression, for example, in the care of the people at home for wounded soldiers or the bereaved of the fallen.

The plays of the second phase include a more cathartic message than those published at the beginning of the war. They expose the loss of faith and the associated loss of the willingness to make sacrifices as the greatest danger the German people face as the war drags on. They emphasise the importance of the unity of the German people in order to defend the fatherland against a world of enemies and, similar to the plays of the first phase, create simple dramatic conflicts by confronting patriotic and determined role models with characters and behaviours deemed to lack the required solidarity. The characters used to represent negative characteristics are, however, no longer representations of the enemies, but German characters who fail to meet the obligations that are necessary to win the war and are, thus, ultimately stigmatised.

The reasons for these individuals' shortcomings predominantly fall into either one of two categories: selfishness and greed, represented for example by SCHOLZ and ROLLER, or loss of faith, represented by characters like GEORG's mother. The former represent the moral failure to put the needs of the community over one's own. The latter, frequently triggered by the death of a family member, demonstrate a weakness that makes the characters stray from the right path and lose faith in the victory of the German people and the meaning of the sacrifices that are necessary to achieve it. In both cases, the plays use their antithetic character constellation, Seiffert's *Dennoch durch!* most comprehensively, to expose and ultimately 'correct' what they detect as negative behaviour. The argumentation and actions of the patriotic characters are thereby created in accordance with what the propaganda narratives expect from the German people and essentially embody the concept of the German *Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*, making their 'victory' in the dramatic conflict of the plays ultimately a legitimisation of these narratives.

When Germany failed to win the war, the foundation of the legitimisation for its sacrifices was lost and authors searched for a new context of meaning for their plays. This context of meaning was increasingly derived from the authors' political ideologies, especially as the consequences of the

war for Germany became increasingly dire. As a result, the representation of WWI in post-war plays like Prellwitz' *Deutschland! Deutschland!* or the plays of Kaisenberg, Gaebel and Wohlenberg is embedded into a struggle for the future of the country. The war is thereby instrumentalised by the authors of the plays in order to promote their individual positions, and no longer partakes in a discourse of legitimisation.

At the same time, plays emerged that did engage with the question of the legitimisation of the war. They, however, deny any legitimisation for its outbreak and its victims and thereby establish a discourse of de-legitimisation. The plays contributing to this discourse are far more heterogeneous, as they process the various individual experiences of the people. The authors of these plays were also no longer restricted by censorship, which naturally promoted a variety of opinions that was not possible during the war. These plays continue to engage with the propaganda narratives that had dominated public debate between 1914 and 1918 but in turn expose what their authors identified as the truth behind the official version of events. Due to its extent and the comprehensiveness with which Karl Kraus processed these narratives, *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* is arguably the most representative single work of this discourse.

Kraus' satire creates characters who expose their own role in the outbreak of the war. He thereby manages to unmask the prestige-driven nature of the monarchies and their military as well as the profit-driven nature of the bourgeoisie who, according to Kraus, benefitted from the war while remaining in the *Heimat* and letting others fight for as long as possible in order to maximise their own profit. He identifies the deterioration of language as the key development that made the propaganda narratives so successful and the press for being responsible for this. Through a synergy of the satirical self-exposure of his characters and the comments of his representation of a moral authority, the NÖRGLER, he lets the representatives of the attacked classes expose their motives and thereby de-legitimises the official narratives. This is supported by Kraus' use of original material. By putting these documents and the affects they are meant to evoke amongst the public in perspective he additionally exposes the emotional manipulation of the propagandistic rallying calls that are represented in early war plays and de-legitimises the narratives on an affective level.

Many of the aspects mentioned in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* are immanent in other plays, in a wide range of scenarios. One frequently reoccurring scenario is that of the *Heimkehrer*. The specific situation of the *Heimkehrer* and the fact that the war experience is, by definition, inscribed into these characters, might explain why so many authors used this motif in order to reflect on the war. They appeared very early in WWI dramatic literature but it was not until the end of the war that *Heimkehrer* became the

protagonists of plays. Within the discourse of de-legitimisation, the dramatic configuration in these plays is created by the confrontation between the *Heimkehrer* and the situation they encounter upon their return to society, and used to expose the conditions of the society which other characters represent. Putting the focus on the continuities exposed through these two archetypes of conflicts in *Heimkehrerdramen* demonstrates that these plays partake in debates about WWI to a much greater extent than has been acknowledged so far and that the usual research focus on their representation of the Weimar Republic misses the chance to see them in the greater context of WWI.

In plays like *Der deutsche Hinkemann* and *Trommeln in der Nacht*, the war experience is used as an initiator of change in the identity of the *Heimkehrer*, while the *Sladek* plays and *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg* for example deny that the war had led to any alteration in the mindset of the characters. Both strategies allow the authors to expose the continuities they see in the post-war society and to reflect on the conditions and the mindset that dominated the people before the war, where the continuities they expose began. The authors thereby de-legitimise the propaganda narratives by portraying the brutality, opportunism and selfishness that permeates society represented by the characters they create.

Considering WWI dramatic literature in its entirety and looking beyond the more often analysed anti-war plays of the 1920s presents new perspectives on well-known texts like *Der deutsche Hinkemann* or *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, and brings lesser known texts of well-known authors like *Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg* to the foreground. Connecting these plays more directly to the entirety of the text corpus than has so far been done will enable scholars to see them in the context of now forgotten texts and theatre productions. It can be assumed that these plays and their performances were known to writers like Kraus, Brecht, Toller and Horváth, considering their knowledge of the literary and theatrical scene during and after the war. Re-embedding these plays into the context within which they were originally created can help scholarly researchers to investigate a variety of aspects imperative to WWI dramatic literature. The identification of the discourse of de-legitimisation within the anti-war plays of the Weimar Republic, based on the identification of the discourse of legitimisation in plays published during the war, for example, is a direct result of this approach and demonstrates the potential that considering WWI dramatic literature in a broader sense provides.

Other areas to explore are, for example, the many sub-genres this project has found within WWI dramatic literature, such as the approximately 100 dedicated children's plays. An analysis of this body of texts can even provide connection points for interdisciplinary research, such as the con-

nection to Ernst Heinrich Bethge, Paul Matzdorf and the *Arbeitsausschuss für Jugendpflege* in the Wilhelmine Empire. The comedies, the *Volksstücke* and the many front plays are just a few other topics worth further efforts.

Additional connection points are continuities from the representation of the stab-in-the-back myth in WWI plays of the early 1920s, like Kaisenberg's *Vaterland* from 1923, to its explicitly National Socialist representation in plays like Herbert Schnabel's *Krakatau am 9. November 1918* (1931). Such links are also established in regards to later NS plays, which either focus on particular battles like Hans Fritz von Zwehl's *Unternehmen Michael* set during the German spring offensive of 1918 or Walter Loo-schen's (1898–1975) *Skaggerrak* (1935), to name one of the many plays portraying the war at sea, or on the faith and bravery of the common front soldiers as in Alfred Fischer's *Front* (1934) or Edwin Erich Dwinger's (1898–1981) *Die Namenlosen* (1934).

As the deliberations on the reasons for the homogenous nature of the text corpus of plays published during the war have shown, there are many influencing factors that led to this property, pointing to a desideratum for cultural historical research. The small number of plays breaking this homogeneity, like Friedrich Schare's *In Siegesjubel und Todesqual* and Agathe Doerk's *Nachtwache* as well as other plays published outside Germany, can provide the basis for research within literary studies.

Furthermore, the discourses of legitimisation and de-legitimisation imply connection points to aspects that derive from them. These are, for example, the changing views on heroism, as implied in the analysis of the plays of the second phase of the discourse of legitimisation, or the role of women, who are represented very ambiguously throughout WWI dramatic literature. Georg Kaiser's *Gas II* (1920) for example, represents the aspect of war-technology, the close connection between its production and its use and thereby the dependency of *Heimat* and *Front*. Carl Hauptmann's *Krieg*, written before the start of the war, is one of the earliest anti-war plays that includes aspects like the nation's capitalist paradigm that would become specific for later war-critical plays, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's (1874–1929) *Der Schwierige* (1921) can be read as a *Heimkehrerdrama*.<sup>327</sup> This potential demonstrates the significance of German WWI dramatic literature for German literature in general as well as for other disciplines and indicates how much more research remains to be conducted into the field.

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<sup>327</sup> See for example Honold, *Geburt der Ehekomödie*.

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This allows the analysis of the *Heimkehrerdramen* of Toller, Brecht, and Horváth to focus on the representation of contemporary narratives that have so far been overlooked and embeds these plays in the context in which they were created. Previously, this was only the case for Karl Kraus's *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, which is also interpreted by the author in a newly established intertextual relationship with early WWI dramas.

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