

Writing the Nazi Movement.  
The Poetry of Baldur von Schirach

by

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Thesis submitted to the University of Kent,  
School of European Culture and Languages  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in German Studies

March 2017

Word count: 116,640

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	i
Abstract .....	ii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
National Socialist literature as object of scholarly debate .....	1
National Socialist literature and modernism .....	11
Structure of this thesis .....	20
CHAPTER 1	
<b>Becoming the bard of the Nazi movement</b>	
A first encounter in Weimar .....	25
Family background and education .....	27
Teachers and mentors .....	42
CHAPTER 2	
<b>Taking the universities by storm? Schirach's 'neue Front'</b>	
Patrons and supporters .....	56
Journalism and political activism .....	64
CHAPTER 3	
<b>Beating the drum for Führer and flag: <i>Die Fahne der Verfolgten</i></b>	
Publication history .....	74
Rhetorical structure .....	80
Critical reception .....	91
CHAPTER 4	
<b>Shaping the future, tied to the past. The legacy of the First World War</b>	
World War I and the German literary context .....	95
Schirach and Ernst Jünger in comparison .....	100
War, identity and the young generation .....	111
CHAPTER 5	
<b>New poetry for a new age</b>	
Schirach's concept of authorship in the context of his time .....	118
The poet as 'Gestalter unsres Wollens' .....	122

## CHAPTER 6

### **The poetic and the political in the Weimar Republic**

Stylistic and structural similarities between left- and right-wing poetry .....	139
Intertextuality in Schirach's poetry .....	152
Montage and intertextuality in political and non-political poetry .....	163

## CHAPTER 7

### **Praising the 'German messiah'? Reconsidering perspectives on National Socialist religiosity**

Secularisation theory and the political religion debate .....	172
Rejecting the church's 'alte Bahnen' .....	182
The interrelation of Christian and nationalist symbolism .....	190
Germanic and pagan tendencies .....	202

## CHAPTER 8

### **Inside the 'Blechtschmiede der Dichterlinge'. Schirach as cultural functionary in the Third Reich**

Germany's youth marching to the beat of the music .....	212
Schirach and the Hitlerjugend .....	219
<i>Wille und Macht</i> .....	230
Gauleiter in Vienna .....	236

## CHAPTER 9

### **The prison poems**

'Das Ende' .....	241
Prisoner number One .....	251
<i>Ich glaubte an Hitler</i> .....	268
The final years .....	275

<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	279
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<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	285
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## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and help from a number of people. First of all, I am grateful to both of my supervisors. I am enormously indebted to Deborah Holmes, who has been an amazing primary supervisor for the project from its initial phase to its final stages. I am grateful for her expert guidance, invaluable advice and suggestions, and for encouraging me to pursue the topic of Baldur von Schirach's poetry. I am likewise grateful for the constructive criticism, efficiency and involvement of my secondary supervisor, Ben Hutchinson.

I am grateful to the University of Kent for granting me a Graduate Teaching Assistantship, which made my research financially viable, and to the Deutsches Literaturarchiv for granting me the Marbacher Graduiertenstipendium, which enabled me to work with the archive's seemingly endless supply of material. Many thanks to the staff of the DLA, and especially Marcel Lepper, for providing a friendly and welcoming work environment.

Klaus von Schirach, Natalia von Schirach and Norris von Schirach have earned my gratitude for their support and for trusting me with sensitive and private material. I hope that this thesis will justify their confidence.

I would like to thank Rolf Düsterberg and Harald Haferland for everything they have taught me and for encouraging me to embark on the project. Also my warm thanks to Heide Kunzelmann, Ian Cooper and Michael Maerlein for being supportive colleagues and friends. Their contribution to this project ranges from knowledgeable inputs, constant encouragement and even help in deciphering historical handwriting. Throughout this project, I have benefitted from the help staff of the Kent University library and especially that of Matthias Werner. Many thanks for his efforts in supplying me with any material I needed, no matter how obscure. I am grateful to my sister Kirstin Hundehege and my friends Katharina Obermeier and Rabekah Everett for their help in proofreading.

I owe a special debt of thanks to Stephanie Obermeier and Ian Ellison. You both have helped me in more ways than I can list here. I could not have wished for better friends.

Lastly, but most importantly, my thanks and love to my parents Hildegard and Michael Hundehege, for their unflagging support, both economic and emotional.

Thank you all!

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the literary output and influence of Baldur von Schirach (1907-1974) and – since he devoted his writing to the service of the party and its leader – his resultant cultural contribution to the establishment and consolidation of the National Socialist dictatorship. To date, Schirach's political role as Reichsjugendführer has overshadowed his literary work and influence. By demonstrating that his poems were not only supported by the National Socialist regime but also widely read in nationalist and right-wing circles in and before the Nazi party's rise to power, I aim to complement and correct the current perception of Schirach's role in the Third Reich.

A clearer picture of Schirach's cultural persona and ideological development is achieved by considering literary sources as well as historical and biographical data. Based on the analysis of his published and unpublished texts (poems, songbooks, articles, speeches, correspondence, interviews), this study outlines Schirach's position within the National Socialist movement and also situates his writing within the wider context of his times. To this end, it establishes his literary role models and investigates the extent of their influence on Schirach. It explores his literary response to debates around the role of the author in the politicised sphere of the Weimar Republic. Analysis of his poems in comparison with the war writing of the 1920s, in particular with that of Ernst Jünger, reveals that there is more ambiguity in Schirach's poetry than scholarly accounts of his poems have previously allowed. I identify central features of his writing that can be found in Communist poetry but also in non-political poetry written during the same period, especially as regards use of intertextuality and the blurring or merging of the literary and political spheres. These commonalities reaffirm the existing impetus in scholarly research made by Helmuth Kiesel, Uwe Hebekus, Walter Delabar, Sebastian Graeb-Könneker and others to rethink our binary understanding of modernist and National Socialist literature. The example of Schirach, this study concludes, reveals not only the contrasts but also continuities between the literature of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. It is also possible here for the first time to extend these reflections to the post-1945 period, as unpublished correspondence and poems from Schirach's twenty-year prison sentence, provided by his family, are analysed in the final chapter.

Engagement with Schirach as an author is not an attempt to rehabilitate him, or to rebut his categorisation as a National Socialist writer. Instead, by analysing his literary works and how they relate to other literary and ideological currents of his time, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role literature played in National Socialism at all stages of the party's development and thus to a broader understanding of the movement as a cultural as well as political phenomenon.

## INTRODUCTION

### National Socialist literature as object of scholarly debate

Noch heisst's die Fäuste nicht zu ballen  
und schweigen dem, das in uns schreit,  
Doch ahnt schon diese Botschaft allen:  
Das Volk steht auf! Die Fesseln fallen!  
Mit unsern Fahnen ist die Zeit.<sup>1</sup>

When Baldur von Schirach first published these verses in March 1931, he was on the verge of becoming the leader of what was to be one of the biggest youth organisations in history. Within months, he was appointed Reichsjugendführer, first of the NSDAP and later of the Third Reich. At the height of his career, Schirach was in charge of the indoctrination of over eight million children and teenagers between the ages of ten and eighteen. He led them to believe in Adolf Hitler and his vision of a strong, unified and 'racially pure' Germany. In numerous poems such as the one above, Schirach welcomed and celebrated Germany's supposed national rebirth under the Führer. Between 1929 and 1933 he published two collections of poems in several editions. Schirach's poetic productivity at the time even led Reichsdramaturg Rainer Schlösser to enthusiastically declare in 1934: 'daß mit den Schirachschen Gedichtbänden das Jahr Eins der nationalsozialistischen Dichtung begonnen hat.'<sup>2</sup> By 1945, his best-known collection, *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*, had sold more than 100,000 copies. After the collapse of the Nazi regime, the poems quickly vanished not only from poetry collections and schoolbooks, but also from public memory. Lacking in poetic originality, their popularity and dissemination in the Third Reich had relied greatly on the force of the all-encompassing Nazi propaganda machinery. Post-1945, they were tainted by their close association with National Socialist institutions and ideology. 'Wenn heute einer sagt, er halte *Baldur von Schirach, Hans Baumann, Heinrich Anacker, Herybert Menzel* für große Lyriker', literary critic Walter Boehlich wrote in 1961, 'man würde ihn auslachen; diese Leute und ihre Gelegenheitsarbeiten sind so tot, wie nur etwas tot seinkann.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Geduld,' *Die Bewegung* 3, no. 12 (24 March 1931). Schirach often published poems under different titles or abbreviated titles. Inconsistencies in the spelling in the poems regarding the use of 'ß' and the capitalisation or contraction of words are due to the inconsistent use in the source material and will be reflected in this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Rainer Schlösser, 'Baldur von Schirach als Lyriker,' *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 11 (1 June 1934), pp. 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Boehlich, 'Deutsche Literatur im Dritten Reich?,' *Zeit*, no. 42 (13 October 1961), p. 16; the following quotation *ibid.*

To this day Schirach's political career continues to overshadow his literary works and influence, resulting in an incomplete perception of his role in the Third Reich that this study aims to correct. However, it is not the intention of this study to suggest poetic talent or depth where there is none to be found. My engagement with Schirach as an author is not an attempt to rehabilitate him, nor to rebut his categorisation as a National Socialist writer. Instead, its purpose is to complement our understanding of the man and his political and cultural function by analysing his literary works and ambitions and how they related to other literary and ideological currents of his time. Perceiving his example more clearly will in turn contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role literature played in the rise and consolidation of National Socialism and therefore of the movement as a cultural as well as political phenomenon.

An early follower of the National Socialist movement, Schirach joined the NSDAP in 1925 when he had barely turned eighteen; following a quick ascent within the party ranks, he was already rubbing elbows with leading Nazis such as Joseph Goebbels and Alfred Rosenberg in his mid-twenties. He maintained a close personal relationship with Adolf Hitler, having successfully interested him in mobilising support for the party among the student body in Munich. Schirach also moved in similar social circles to Hitler. In the late 1920s, Schirach, Rosenberg and Hitler frequented the salon hosted by the influential publisher Hugo Bruckmann and his wife Elsa, also in Munich.<sup>4</sup> Goebbels' diary entries show that from 1928 onwards he frequently socialised with Schirach, Goebbels acting as advisor to the younger man in political questions and as regards party strategies.<sup>5</sup> In November 1931 he noted of Schirach: 'Nobler, tapferer Junge. Und voll Geist, mit bravem Charakter.'<sup>6</sup> Schirach's hard work, dedication to popularising the party among the academic youth and excellent connections paid off. He held high-ranking offices right up until the end of the Second World War, acting as Gauleiter of Vienna from 1940 onwards.

Previous research has focused almost exclusively on Schirach's political role. Most notably, Michael Wortmann published a study of the Reichsjugendführer in 1982, covering his biography up to his release from prison in 1966. Schirach's didactic and pedagogical ideas

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<sup>4</sup> See Wolfgang Martynkewicz, *Salon Deutschland. Geist und Macht 1900-1945* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2009), pp. 13, 66, 438.

<sup>5</sup> See Joseph Gobbels, *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, ed. Elke Fröhlich et.al. *Teil I. Aufzeichnungen 1923-1941. 2/I Dezember 1929-Mai 1931* (Munich: Saur, 2005), see for example entries dated 23 July 1930, 24 July 1930 and 17 March 1931, p. 204 and p. 366.

<sup>6</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher (Teil I. 2/II, 2004)*, entry dated 22 November 1931, p. 154.

are its focus, as well as the question of how far he succeeded in putting them into action.<sup>7</sup> In 1988, Jochen von Lang published a biographical monograph on the youth leader's political career. Lang's main emphasis is on the relationship between Schirach and Hitler; he makes an attempt to assess Schirach's participation in and knowledge of the atrocities committed by the NS-regime.<sup>8</sup> Christopher N. Koontz's 2003 study *The public polemics of Baldur von Schirach* explores his speeches and poems as conduits of Nazi propaganda. Koontz's research gives much more room to Schirach's poetry than the two previous studies, but its primary focus is still his position as Reichsjugendführer. In addition, while Koontz makes an important step towards recognising that the cultural and social base of the Nazi regime was mediated and stabilised through literature, in compliance with the study's historical approach and objectives, he does not consider Schirach's poetry within the context of other contemporary literary currents.<sup>9</sup>

While Schirach's poems were highly praised in nationalist circles at the time they were first published – Rainer Schlösser celebrated Schirach's ability to find words of 'fast tänzerische[r] Grazie, die die Schwere des Ausgesprochenen mildert'<sup>10</sup> – more recent appraisals of Schirach's poetic qualities have been considerably less enthusiastic. Although Wortmann conceded in his 1982 study that Schirach's poetry was 'immerhin den Produkten mancher anderer völkischer Reimkünstler überlegen',<sup>11</sup> he also remarked on its limited artistic qualities, its 'Dumpfheit [und] monumenthaft[e] Starre' that, according to him, stem from Schirach's lack of poetic originality: 'Sie sind [...] zusammengesetzt aus Topen, formelhafter Antithetik und immer wiederkehrenden symbolbeladenen Bildern von Kampf, Tod, Sieg, Krieg, Bahren, Fahnen, Altären und Kränzen.' Other more recent opinions read along similar lines. In his 2013 study *Der Weltkrieg als Erzieher* Arndt Weinrich described Schirach's first collection of poems as 'keinesfalls originelles Kondensat völkisch-nationalistischer Topoi und Symbole'.<sup>12</sup> While Koontz 'concurs with such assessments from

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<sup>7</sup> See Michael Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> See Jochen v. Lang, *Der Hitler-Junge. Baldur von Schirach: Der Mann, der Deutschlands Jugend erzog* (Hamburg: Rasch & Röhring, 1988).

<sup>9</sup> See Christopher N. Koontz, *The Public Polemics of Baldur von Schirach: A Study of National Socialist Rhetoric and Aesthetics, 1922-1945* (University of North Texas: UMI, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Rainer Schlösser, 'Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)*, December 2, 1931.

<sup>11</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 62; the following quotations *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Arndt Weinrich, *Der Weltkrieg als Erzieher. Jugend zwischen Weimarer Republik und Nationalsozialismus* (Essen: Klartext, 2013), pp. 55-56.



an aesthetic standpoint<sup>13</sup> in his 2003 study, he nevertheless argues that ‘a modicum of ideological depth and breadth is indeed present in Schirach’s verse [that] is commonly and unfortunately overlooked.’ Koontz’s plea for a more differentiated and refined reading of Schirach’s poetry is indicative of the renewed research interest in National Socialist literature since the 1990s. The awakening of this general trend has sparked a number of studies similar to this thesis, inquiring into individuals’ cultural and literary supportive influence and role in the Nazi state.<sup>14</sup>

The term *National Socialist literature* will continue to be used here, although the coinage has received criticism, mainly since it suggests that this literary epoch is defined by its political background rather than from within itself.<sup>15</sup> Due to Schirach’s high-ranking position within the NSDAP and the fact that he devoted his poems to the service of the party and its leader, the term appears most appropriate to describe the nature of his written works. As Uwe-K. Ketelsen points out in his influential 1992 study *Literatur und Drittes Reich*, it expresses the close relationship between art and politics that fundamentally shaped this era. Besides, he argues, at least in the 1920s, Nazism seems to have been perceived as much as a cultural movement as a political one.<sup>16</sup>

That being said, formal indicators of a writer’s conformity, such as party membership, official accolades awarded by cultural and political institutions, or even an official pledge to Nazism, cannot be considered absolutely reliable criteria for the category National Socialist literature, at least not separately. A number of authors who were widely celebrated in the Third Reich and whose texts endorsed Nazi ideology – such as Adolf Bartels, Börries von Münchhausen and Agnes Miegel – were at no point members of the NSDAP. Other examples, such as Ernst Jünger, show that some authors whose texts were celebrated by the party hesitated to associate themselves with it. Still others produced texts the content of which

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<sup>13</sup> Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 5; the following quotation *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> See for example Stefan Hüpping, *Rainer Schlösser (1899-1945). Der ‘Reichsdramaturg’* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2009); Sven Brömsel, *Exzentrik und Bürgertum. Houston Stewart Chamberlain im Kreis jüdischer Intellektueller* (Berlin: Ripperger & Kremers, 2015); Rolf Düsterberg, *Hanns Johst: ‘Der Barde der SS’: Karrieren eines deutschen Dichters* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004); Simone Richter, *Joseph Goebbels – der Journalist: Darstellung seines publizistischen Werdegangs 1923-1933* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2010); see also Thomas Vodermayr, *Bildungsbürgertum und völkische Idee. Konstitution und gesellschaftliche Tiefenwirkung eines Netzwerkes völkischer Autoren zwischen Erstem Weltkrieg und früher Bundesrepublik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> See Christiane Caemmerer and Walter Delabar, ‘Dichtung im Dritten Reich? Eine Einleitung,’ in *Dichtung im Dritten Reich? Zur Literatur in Deutschland 1933 – 1945*, ed. Christiane Caemmerer (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996), 7–14; Uwe-K. Ketelsen, *Literatur und Drittes Reich*, 2nd ed. (Greifswald: SH, 1994), p. 305.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 70.

would have been in keeping with the Nazi party line, but were rejected nonetheless (for example, Günther Eich). Affinities and affiliations could also change over time. When Gerhart Hauptmann applied for party membership in 1933, his application was rejected. Over the following years he struggled with restrictions and censorship imposed on his works. In 1944, however, his name was added to the Nazis' 'Gottbegnadetenliste', a list that credited selected authors as essential to the National Socialist movement.<sup>17</sup> A combination of the aforementioned criteria – that is literature written by authors who publicly identified with Nazism, the content of which complied with the party's objectives and that in turn was supported by cultural and political institutions of the National Socialist state – would be most likely to bring reliable results of what constituted National Socialist literature, even if these criteria only allow a very restricted view on the matter. In Schirach's particular case, the last two of the three criteria also applies. In his poems he celebrated Nazi personalities and institutions such as Hitler, Rosenberg, the SA and the Hitlerjugend.<sup>18</sup> Senior party figures and cultural functionaries of the National Socialist state such as Schlösser, Bartels, Goebbels, Rosenberg and Hans Severus Ziegler were among the ranks of those who warmly recommended his poems and regularly printed them in their journals and newspapers.<sup>19</sup> After the party's rise to power, many of his poems were used as Hitlerjugend songs or featured in official ceremonies.<sup>20</sup> Closer examination of Schirach's literary works can therefore shed new light on his cultural contribution to the establishment and stabilisation of the National Socialist dictatorship. In turn, their analysis contributes to a better understanding of what exactly might constitute National Socialist literature as regards content, imagery and techniques. Literary approaches to defining National Socialist literature are rare. The most notable example to date is still Ralf Schnell's 1998 study

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<sup>17</sup> See Ulrich Erdmann, *Vom Naturalismus zum Nationalsozialismus? Zeitgeschichtliche Studien zu Max Halbe, Gerhart Hauptmann, Johannes Schlaf und Hermann Stehr* (Frankfurt/M: Lang, 1997), pp. 16-18; Hans-Edwin Friedrich, *Deformierte Lebensbilder. Erzählmodelle der Nachkriegsautobiographie (1945-1960)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Einem Führer,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 6, no. 3 (1929); Baldur von Schirach, *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* [referred from now on as *FdV*] (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte, 1933), pp. 39, 24, 56; Baldur von Schirach, 'Auferstehung!', *Der Nationalsozialist* 3, no. 29 (1926).

<sup>19</sup> Schlösser wrote several glowing reviews, see for example Schlösser, 'Baldur von Schirach als Lyriker'; Bartels wrote warm words for his protégé in his newspaper *Deutsches Schrifttum*. Adolf Bartels, 'Baldur von Schirach: Die Feier der neuen Front,' *Deutsches Schrifttum* 21, no. 9 (1929); Goebbels repeatedly published Schirach's poems in his newspaper *Der Angriff*, as did Rosenberg in his monthly journal *Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für Deutsche Kultur*.

<sup>20</sup> See Hermann Roth, *Die Feier. Sinn und Gestaltung* (Leipzig: Strauch, 1939), for example p. 37 and p. 40.

*Dichtung in finsternen Zeiten*.<sup>21</sup> Attempts to reach an exact definition are made even more difficult by the fact that contrasting notions of National Socialist literature existed even within the party itself.<sup>22</sup>

Whereas Schirach's prominent and unequivocal ties to the Nazi regime facilitate the debate on whether his poetry falls into the category of National Socialist literature, at the same time they make it more difficult to overcome doubts as to whether engagement with him as an author is worthwhile. Scepticism as to the literary and aesthetic validity of National Socialist literature persists even as scholarly interest in it grows. For example, recent surveys of twentieth-century German literature tend to include essays that engage with National Socialist or, closely related, *völkisch* literature.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, in 1974, a newly published edition of a well-established German literary history dismissed further exploration into the field, stating simply: 'Eine nationalsozialistische Literatur gibt es nicht.'<sup>24</sup> The authors, Gerhard Fricke<sup>25</sup> and Matthias Schreiber, added: 'Zwar haben sich eine ganze Reihe nicht unwichtiger Autoren der faschistischen Ideologie angepaßt, aber daraus ist kein einziges bedeutendes Stück Literatur geworden.'<sup>26</sup> Although the resolute tone of their comment is particularly striking, their point of view is nevertheless symptomatic of the dismissive attitude to National Socialist literature that prevailed in post-war German-language literary studies well into the 1970s. Looking back at accounts of literary history in German published shortly after the end of the Second World War, one cannot but notice that the preceding

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<sup>21</sup> See Ralf Schnell, *Dichtung in finsternen Zeiten. Deutsche Literatur und Faschismus* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> See Caemmerer and Delabar, 'Dichtung im Dritten Reich?', pp. 10-11.

<sup>23</sup> See for example Sabina Becker and Helmut Kiesel, *Literarische Moderne. Begriff und Phänomen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007); Moritz Baßler, *Deutsche Erzählprosa 1850-1950. Eine Geschichte literarischer Verfahren* (Berlin: Schmidt, 2015); Christa Karpenstein-Eßbach, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Fink, 2013), in particular the chapter 'Macht, Politik, Literatur'; Reiner Wild, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, 3rd edn. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2008); Dirk van Laak, ed., *Literatur, die Geschichte schrieb* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> See Gerhard Fricke and Mathias Schreiber, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 16th ed. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1974), p. 370. This opening sentence was cut in the 1988 edition. See Gerhard Fricke and Mathias Schreiber, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 20th edn. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1988), p. 351.

<sup>25</sup> Gerhard Fricke was one of the few German literary scholars who publicly spoke about his past in the National Socialist regime after 1945. See Gabriele Stilla, 'Gerhard Fricke: Literaturwissenschaft als Anweisung zur Unterordnung,' in *Deutsche Klassiker im Nationalsozialismus. Schiller, Kleist, Hölderlin*, ed. Claudia Albert (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1994), 18-36. Fricke began lecturing again as early as 1946 and was able to continue his career largely unimpeded. See Christoph König and Birgit Wägenbaur, *Internationales Germanistenlexikon 1800-1950. A-G* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), pp. 525-527; Schnabel, 'Gerhard Fricke. Karriereverlauf eines Literaturwissenschaftlers nach 1945,' in *Deutsche Literaturwissenschaft 1945-1965*, eds. Petra Boden and Rainer Rosenberg (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1997), 61-84, pp. 62-63. and pp. 69-71.

<sup>26</sup> Fricke and Schreiber, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (1974), p. 370; the following quotation *ibid.*

years were largely ignored.<sup>27</sup>

Fricke's decision to exclude what held little or no value for the reader in post-war Germany certainly has its merits. As Paul Fechter points out in the foreword of his 1952 *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, any account of literary history that does not cater exclusively to historians but hopes to appeal to the contemporary reader is bound to select its content by standards of the present rather than those of the past.<sup>28</sup> However, does this justify excluding intellectual trends from literary history that helped prepare the ground for NS, an ideological movement that shaped Germany like no other in the twentieth century? As is the case for any literary epoch, the literature that emerged before and during the Third Reich was the result of many different, conflicting and even contradictory currents. However, Fricke's description of authors as 'der faschistischen Ideologie angepaßt' creates the impression that National Socialism was a cohesive, pre-existing construct, rather than a conglomeration of diverse, at times conflicting ideologies.<sup>29</sup> Rather than simply complying with the demands made by the Nazi regime, the literature in question was not just the result but also a medium of processes that had begun long before the NSDAP appeared on the political stage. Should not this 'inferior' literature that was so very successful even among the educated classes be given some attention – despite its aesthetic deficiencies and in spite of moral reservations – at the very least as a source of intellectual history, as the expression of a generation's mentality?

During the mid-1950s the categories of exile literature and literature of resistance emerged, as well as a small, loosely defined pool of conformist literature. The relationship between the Nazi regime and the authors that fell into the latter category usually remained without further comment; in cases of doubt, allowances were made for the authors who had

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<sup>27</sup> See for example Ernst Alker's 1949 *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von Goethes Tod bis zur Gegenwart* that, despite its title, barely includes works written after 1900. Ernst Alker, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von Goethes Tod bis zur Gegenwart*, 1st edn. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1949) A few years later, Fritz Martini comments in the foreword of his 1954 *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*: 'Besondere Schwierigkeiten bereitete die Darstellung der jüngsten Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, über die inmitten einer gärenden Zeit noch nichts Endgültiges ausgesagt werden kann. Hier muss sich der Verfasser noch häufig mit einer aphoristischen, noch vorläufigen Kennzeichnung begnügen.' Consequently, all twentieth century literature is subsumed under the chapter title 'Vom Naturalismus bis zur Gegenwart'. Fritz Martini, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 5th edn. (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1954).

<sup>28</sup> See Paul Fechter, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1952), no page number given.

<sup>29</sup> See Klaus Vondung, 'Der literarische Nationalsozialismus. Ideologische, politische und sozialhistorische Wirkungszusammenhänge,' in *Die Deutsche Literatur im Dritten Reich. Themen, Traditionen, Wirkungen*, eds. Horst Denkler and Karl Prümm (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1976), 44–65, pp. 44-45.

been taken in by National Socialism.<sup>30</sup> Authors as overtly connected with the regime as Schirach were the first to disappear from these records. Over the course of the following decade most authors known to have been affiliated to Nazism were gradually written out of literary history and the focus was shifted towards literature written in exile or in resistance to the regime.<sup>31</sup> It was not until the 1970s that literary historians began at least to outline the central tropes, topics and techniques of Nazi literature.<sup>32</sup> Fricke and Schreiber's vehement negation of the mere existence of National Socialist literature coincided with the emergence of a critical discourse on National Socialist literature and its problematic nature. Their declaration reflects several points that were under dispute; first and foremost the question of whether National Socialist literature deserves a place in German literary history at all; its existence alone does not necessarily entitle it to be considered part of literary tradition.<sup>33</sup> What is more, reservations as regards facilitating a re-emergence of National Socialist ideas should not be dismissed lightly. According to Fricke and Schreiber, there was no 'bedeutendes Stück Literatur'<sup>34</sup> among the writing produced under the National Socialist regime, that is to say, none of it maintained a place in the literary canon after 1945. The implication is that since such writing had been sustained solely through the regulations of the regime's cultural and political apparatus (which the authors describe in depth), it can have been little more than an instrument of propaganda. Although Fricke and Schreiber do list a number of *völkisch* and nationalist authors (Hans Zöberlein, Will Vesper, Hanns Johst, Agnes Miegel and others), they are not seen as National Socialist authors here, but merely as writers who paved the way for the regime, despite the fact that many of them published successfully even in the late 1930s and early 1940s. As regards National Socialist literature's status as pure propaganda, the authors argue that a list of titles suffices as proof: 'Von den Marsch- und Kampfliedern der Hitlerzeit braucht man ebenso wie von den chorischen Spielen und Kantaten nur einige Titel aufzuzählen, um die propagandistische Appellstruktur

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<sup>30</sup> Similar allowances are made for Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer and Ernst Jünger. See Martini, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte* (1954), pp. 542-543 and p. 548

<sup>31</sup> See for example Martini's 1960 *Literaturgeschichte* mentions Johst, Chamberlain, Schumann, Böhme, Anacker, Menzel, Möller and Burte. Fritz Martini, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 10th edn. (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1960). Eight years later it only references Johst, Chamberlain and Burte. See Fritz Martini, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 15th edn. (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1968).

<sup>32</sup> See Klaus Günther Just, *Von der Gründerzeit bis zur Gegenwart. Geschichte der deutschen Literatur seit 1871* (Munich: Francke, 1973). Fricke and Schreiber, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (1974); Wolfgang Beutin et al., *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 1st edn. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979).

<sup>33</sup> See Ketelsen, *Literatur und Drittes Reich*, p. 46.

<sup>34</sup> Fricke and Schreiber, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (1974), p. 370.

dieser 'Literatur' zu begreifen.'<sup>35</sup> However, these texts had not in fact been forced on the Germans to the extent that many liked to believe afterwards. On the contrary, as Ketelsen and others have pointed out, the core body of the literature widely read in the Third Reich, including Schirach's poems, had been written and enjoyed widespread success prior to 1933.<sup>36</sup> Its readership pre-existed the Nazi regime, and therefore texts such as Schirach's poetry cannot necessarily or solely be seen as the consequence of a totalitarian literary policy, but rather as a contributing factor to its 'successful' implementation.

The disappearance of much of the literature popular in the Third Reich in post-war Germany is usually attributed to its supposed literary and aesthetic inferiority, in particular to its lack of originality. Due in part to the ways in which National Socialist authors sought affiliation with German Classicism or Romanticism, their works are perceived today to have been little more than an epigonal and formulaic conglomeration of symbols, images and phrases, pieced together without genuine understanding and with considerably less skill than their self-proclaimed role models.<sup>37</sup> This generalisation is problematic at best, because it implies that all National Socialist authors without exception were literary dilettantes. At the same time, the conflation of the aesthetic and political spheres is often seen as the Nazis' singular, truly original accomplishment in the field of art.<sup>38</sup> National Socialist literature is not only useful as an intellectual barometer but also potentially interesting from a literary point of view. The National Socialist era does not constitute a self-contained, easily separable part of German history. Its literature is closely interwoven with that of the Kaiserreich and of the Weimar Republic in particular, just as much as it is with the literature of the post-war period. After 1945, it was not only new writers who strove to find their place in both German states, but also authors who had been successful in the Third Reich.<sup>39</sup>

Uwe Ketelsen's study *Literatur und Drittes Reich* is indicative of the interest in the relationship between literature and Nazism that flared up again in the 1990s and that is reflected in surveys of literary history published or re-published during this period. Many

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 372-373.

<sup>36</sup> See Ketelsen, *Literatur und Drittes Reich*, p. 67; see also Wolfgang Beutin et al., *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte* 7th edn. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2008), pp. 438-441.

<sup>37</sup> See Schnell, *Dichtung in finsternen Zeiten*, pp. 113-115.

<sup>38</sup> See the chapter 'Die Ästhetisierung der Politik oder faschistische Politik als Gesamtkunstwerk' in Volker Meid, *Metzler Literatur Chronik. Werke deutschsprachiger Autoren*, 3rd edn. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2006); Brenner identifies political 'Agitationslyrik' as the only truly successful form of literature of Nazism. See Peter J. Brenner, *Neue deutsche Literaturgeschichte. Vom 'Ackermann' zu Günter Grass* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), pp. 253-254.

<sup>39</sup> See Hans Sarkowicz and Alf Mentzer, *Literatur in Nazi-Deutschland. Ein biografisches Lexikon* (Hamburg: Europa, 2000), p. 5.

editions of standard literary histories had reprinted their chapters on literature in the Third Reich in identical form since the 1970s. In the 1990s, these were rewritten for the first time to contain more detailed analysis of National Socialist literature, its problematic nature and specific references to authors.<sup>40</sup> Ketelsen and others have paved the way for an increasing awareness of possible affinities between National Socialist literature and other literary currents of its time. In 2004 for instance, Michael Ley pointed out a ‘gewisse Wahlverwandschaft zwischen dem Expressionismus und dem Nationalsozialismus’<sup>41</sup> in their shared criticism of Weimar society and of modern urban life and technology. Affinities between Nazism and modernist literature might surprise at first glance. However, Eberhard Sauermann claims in his 2008 study *Der Expressionismus als Signum der ‘Moderne’ in den Literaturgeschichten der NS-Zeit* that National Socialist literature may have related to modernist literature more closely than has generally been acknowledged: ‘der Frontverlauf zwischen ‘völkischen Ideologen und Befürwortern modern-funktionalistischer Kunstformen’ [scheint] mitten durch die NSDAP gegangen zu sein.’<sup>42</sup> And as Ines Schlenker points out in her 2007 study *Hitler’s Salon*, the boundaries between accepted art as exhibited at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in Munich and the rejected art exhibited next door at *Entartete Kunst* were by no means as strict or clear-cut as they are usually presumed to have been. Although her research engages with visual art rather than literature, the comparison can still be helpful in questioning assumptions about what is considered modernist or anti-modernist.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Meid and Brenner devote a lot of room to the problematic nature of National Socialist literature. See Volker Meid, *Metzler Literatur Chronik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993); Brenner, *Neue deutsche Literaturgeschichte*; the relevant chapter ‘Literatur im Dritten Reich’ in Beutin’s *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte* remains almost identical between 1979 and 1994, but includes more information on artists affiliated with the Nazi regime such as Leni Riefenstahl in its 2001 edition. See Wolfgang Beutin, et al., *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 6th edn. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001). The version of the chapter as printed in 2001 has remained identical in the 2008 and 2013 editions.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Ley, ‘Gnosis und ästhetische Religion,’ in *Von der Romantik zur ästhetischen Religion*, eds. Leander Kaiser and Michael Ley (Munich: Fink, 2004), 51–60, p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> Eberhard Sauermann, ‘Expressionismus als Signum der “Moderne” in den Literaturgeschichten der NS-Zeit,’ *Jahrbuch für internationale Germanistik* 40, no. 1 (2008): 135–180, p. 136.

<sup>43</sup> See Ines Schlenker, *Hitler’s Salon. The ‘Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung’ at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich 1937-1944* (Oxford: Lang, 2007), p. 159.

## National Socialist literature and modernism

It has long been accepted that the National Socialist movement embraced modernity as far as new technological developments and their propaganda uses were concerned, for example, in the mass production of books, journals and newspapers as well as radio broadcasting and film. In its later stages, the regime also invested a lot of effort and money in sound and light technology during party speeches or marches.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Nazism is still often portrayed as modernity's antagonist from a literary and aesthetic point of view. There are without doubt substantive facts to support this view. The increasingly difficult position many artists found themselves in after the party's rise to power and the official rejection of modernist art in the Third Reich is well documented, for example by the infamous book burnings and the aforementioned 1937 exhibition of *Entartete Kunst*.

This discrepancy between social and political processes on the one hand and aesthetic processes on the other hand is manifest in the terminological distinction between modernisation and modernism. Modernisation refers to the processes of technological and economic advancement and the industrialisation, urbanisation and rationalisation of life, but also includes the intellectual, philosophical and theological ideas these processes sparked and which contributed to a new understanding of history, patterns of state philosophy or societal analysis (such as Marxism, for example). Modernism describes the critical aesthetic reflection on and debate around these changes through literature and art. Drawing attention to the repercussions, ambiguities and ambivalence of progress and enlightenment, modernism exists in a continual state of tension with modernisation.<sup>45</sup> To express this relationship appropriately, the terminological distinction has become prevalent. In *Expressionismus als Signum der Moderne*, Eberhard Sauermaun observes 'seit der Jahrhundertwende [...] eine Kluft zwischen 'Moderne' als ästhetisch-kulturellem Konzept und 'Modernisierung' als Sammelbegriff für die Neuerungen im technischen, industriellen und sozialen Bereich'.<sup>46</sup> Operating with slightly different terminology, Walter Delabar characterises 'die Rolle der ästhetischen Modernisierung als (kritische) Begleiterin der

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<sup>44</sup> See in particular the chapter 'The Mobilization of the Spirit' in Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power 1933-1939* (New York: Penguin, 2006); David Welch, 'Nazi Film Policy: Control, Ideology and Propaganda,' in *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, ed. Glenn R. Cuomo (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 95–120; Rainer Zitelmann, 'Die totalitäre Seite der Moderne,' in *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, eds. Michael Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann, 2nd edn. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994), 1–20, pp. 15-20; Riccardo Bavaj, *Die Ambivalenz der Moderne im Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), pp. 200-204.

<sup>45</sup> See Walter Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne 1890-1933*, 2nd edn. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Sauermaun, 'Expressionismus als Signum', p. 135.



sozialen Modernisierung<sup>47</sup> in his 2007 article 'Zur Dialektik des Modernen in der Literatur im Dritten Reich'. Arguing along similar lines, Walter Fähnders differentiates between 'einem ästhetischen und einem politisch-sozialen Begriff der Moderne' from the very beginning of his 2010 study *Avantgarde und Moderne*.<sup>48</sup>

While there has been a great deal of research done on the general cultural history of the Third Reich as regards modernism and modernity, literary studies that take this aspect into account are still low in numbers. This has not changed since Helmuth Kiesel's 2001 inventory of the theoretical discourse to date as regards the relationship between Nazism and the modern age.<sup>49</sup> And whereas Kiesel himself delivers in-depth analysis of the literature on the processes of technological, economic and socio-political modernisation, even his extensive research into the discourse on the relationship between Nazism and modernist literature does not yield more than a few pages. He observes:

Als opinion communis hinsichtlich der Modernität des kulturellen Schaffens hat sich [...] die These herausgebildet, daß man zwischen der Sphäre der sog. hohen Kultur und der Sphäre der Massenkultur zu unterscheiden habe. Die hohe Kultur sei programmatisch anti-modern gewesen, und die Literatur speziell sei bestenfalls 'epigonal' ausgefallen [...].<sup>50</sup>

According to this view, the National Socialist movement, as it was not in itself a creative force, disapproved of avant-garde artists' disregard of literary conventions and innovative use of motifs. It rejected the chaotic and at times hysterical ecstasy of the radical linguistic poetic experiments of Expressionism or Dadaism, arguing that these were merely aimed at pleasing the vanity of a small group of initiates and would remain inaccessible to the masses. Instead, these authors claim, National Socialist literature was driven by a desire to create order and totality, to give purpose and unity, and it did so by continuing pre-modern literary structures.

As the following theoretical excursion will show, critical examination of the scholarly

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<sup>47</sup> Walter Delabar, 'Zur Dialektik des Modernen in der Literatur im Dritten Reich,' in Becker and Kiesel (2007), 383–402, p. 384.

<sup>48</sup> See Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> See Helmuth Kiesel, 'Nationalsozialismus, Modernisierung, Literatur. Ein Problemaufriß,' in *Reflexe und Reflexionen von Modernität 1933-1945*, eds. Erhard Schütz and Gregor Streim (Bern: Lang, 2002), 13–28.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. See also Ketelsen's summary of the past discourse on National Socialist literature: 'Unter literaturhistorischen Gesichtspunkten wird die Literatur des Dritten Reichs meist unter das Vorzeichen der Epigonalität gestellt. Damit ist ein Blick auf (mögliche) Zusammenhänge mit "Modernität" sogleich verbaut.' Ketelsen, *Literatur und Drittes Reich*, p. 244. Ralf Schnell's study *Dichtung in finsternen Zeiten* (1998) continued along the established line of perception Ketelsen criticised. Schnell characterised National Socialist literature as epigonal both in form and content. See Schnell, *Dichtung in finsternen Zeiten*, pp. 113-114.

discourse on the concept of modernism makes it clear that the normative approach to modernism partly stems from a wish to identify it as the positive counterpart to totalitarian tendencies. However, I will argue that due to the disparate nature of modernism, a normative categorisation can hardly be appropriate, either within the context of modernism in general or as regards the relationship between Nazism and modernism in particular. In order to encompass its dialectic dynamics, we either need to broaden our criteria for modernism considerably, or else make the conscious decision to refrain from any claims to be terminologically comprehensive and discuss the writers under examination and their views on their own terms.

The beginning of modernism is usually dated to the coinage of the term 'Moderne' in 1886.<sup>51</sup> The evasive nature of aesthetic modernism results from the fact that contrasting but also mutually dependent movements existed in rapid succession or even simultaneously, in particular around the turn of the century (Naturalism, Realism, Neo-Romanticism, Symbolism, Impressionism) but also in the early 1920s (Futurism, Dadaism, Expressionism, Constructivism, Purism). It is therefore hardly surprising that terminological insecurities as to how to classify the particular nature of National Socialist modernity in an aesthetic context continue to this day. Sebastian Graeb-Könneker's widely discussed coinage 'autochthone Modernität' tries to encompass the particularities of National Socialist literature while leaving room for debates on its emergence as a planned development. The characterisation of National Socialist modernity as autochthonous, Graeb-Könneker explains, reflects the authors' determination to return to what they saw as their roots and ancient traditions while still slowly advancing forward. At the same time it emphasises the totalitarian intent of the National Socialist worldview since this dogmatic turn to tradition included the obliteration of the Other.<sup>52</sup> Schütz and Kiesel for example approve of Graeb-Könneker's term. According to Kiesel, 'autochthone Modernität' expresses the contradictory nature of National Socialist modernity while acknowledging that German society by no means

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<sup>51</sup> See Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, p. 4. Suggestions range from the year 1500, linking it with the year that is generally accepted as signifying the beginning of modern history, to the era of Early Romanticism around the year 1800. The latter suggestion was put forward by Karl Heinz Bohrer, who argued in his study *Die Kritik der Romantik* that after 1800 the discourse already shows signs of going down different paths. The Romantic aestheticism of modernism increasingly found itself in opposition to the rationalistic, teleological discourse of modernity, marking the onset of an autonomous modern aestheticism. See *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> See Sebastian Graeb-Könneker, *Autochthone Modernität. Eine Untersuchung der vom Nationalsozialismus geförderten Literatur* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996), p. 21 and p. 30.

perceived itself as retrograde and unmodern.<sup>53</sup> Delabar, however, argues that the term cannot accurately reflect National Socialist modernity since it implies the existence of a specific modernist literary conception and style. He insists: 'Der Nationalsozialismus hat [...] für die Literatur keine eigene Sprache gefunden, die als modern gelten kann.'<sup>54</sup> Graeb-Könneker himself admits that his coinage cannot encompass all National Socialist literature and would not have been used by the authors in question themselves: 'Die Bezeichnung ["autochthone Modernität"] darf freilich nur als Hilfskonstruktion begriffen werden. Sie ist ein idealtypisches Gebilde.'<sup>55</sup>

Graeb-Könneker's terminological construction attempts to fit National Socialist modernity into a familiar framework so that it can co-exist with traditional concepts of both modernity and modernism. Others, such as Peter Bürger, have advocated a radical break with established categories. Bürger characterises 'die Moderne' as a 'spezifische Haltung [...], mit der sie ihr Verhältnis zur Gesellschaft bestimmt: Die Moderne sei nämlich als Bewegung zu charakterisieren, die sich "in die Extreme" begeben'.<sup>56</sup> Bürger's approach could open the narrow literary canon of modernism and include texts that are traditionally regarded as anachronistic or even anti-modernist. However, as Delabar rightly points out in his discussion of Bürger, if we consider the tendency to push the limits of forms and styles of whatever kind as indicative of modernism rather than certain forms and styles themselves, our inventory of modernist stylistic devices would need to be broadened extensively, and the result might well be considered too wide to be viable.<sup>57</sup>

Another approach that has been adopted, and that seems most appropriate for the purpose of this study, is one that, with reference to the problematic nature of an exact categorisation, refuses to follow either one approach or the other. Fähnders notices an increase in anthologies of modernism that allow a pluralistic use of the term.<sup>58</sup> To give another example, Delabar does not explicitly state which term he sees fit to best express the 'dialectic' relationship between National Socialism and modernism, although he seems to tend to Schütz's concept of a 'Paramoderne'.<sup>59</sup> Uwe Hebekus likewise refuses to tie his study

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<sup>53</sup> See Kiesel, 'Nationalsozialismus, Modernisierung, Literatur', p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> Delabar, 'Zur Dialektik des Modernen', p. 400.

<sup>55</sup> Graeb-Könneker, *Autochthone Modernität*, p. 29.

<sup>56</sup> Delabar, 'Zur Dialektik des Modernen', p. 386.

<sup>57</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 387.

<sup>58</sup> See Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, p. 276.

<sup>59</sup> Delabar, 'Zur Dialektik des Modernen', p. 400.

to a specific, comprehensive terminological concept of National Socialist modernity. He claims that the established normative conception of modernism, which demands textual attributes such as complexity, transgression and transitoriness, has been fuelled by the political impulse to draw a sharp line between modernism and National Socialism and is consequently inadequate for incorporating contrasting aesthetic standpoints.<sup>60</sup> To illustrate this, he quotes Georg Simmel's praise of Stefan George's early poems. Simmel, generally considered one of the intellectual pioneers of modernism, declared it to be 'Stefan Georges *genuin moderne* ästhetische Leistung [...] daß dieser im ästhetischen Raum seiner frühen Gedichte jenen "Vielsinn der Worte" zu blockieren vermochte, wie er in der außer-ästhetischen Kommunikation des modernisierten sozialen Lebens prozessiert'.<sup>61</sup> Any attempt to reconcile comments like Simmel's seamlessly with the established notion of modernism must necessarily fail, Hebekus observes, concluding: 'die angesprochenen [...] Positionsmaßnahmen sollen deshalb als solche interessieren'.<sup>62</sup>

Examples such as this reaffirm the diverging and conflicting nature of modernism. Widely accepted attributes such as plurality, complexity, fragmentariness, transgression or dispersion *can* be found in modernist texts, but they do not *have to* occur and, more importantly, not all simultaneously. At the same time attributes usually associated with anti-modernist literature, such as criticism of the republic and modernisation or approval of totalising structures, need to be treated with equal caution. As Delabar points out, this binary view is based on an understanding that links certain modernist or avantgardist stylistic forms and narratives with non-literary social and political criteria: the notion that modernism is tied to a specific political or ideological position, i.e. to an open and reflective ideal of society, is too static to capture fully its complex historical and cultural dynamics.<sup>63</sup> The particular status or nature of National Socialist modernity, therefore, remains to be further explored and more closely defined; an end to which this study can hopefully contribute. Acknowledging the necessity of expanding the criteria of how we define modernism and raising awareness of its divergent nature – without implying a simplistic causal link between the intellectual, social, political and technological processes of modernity and the advance of

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<sup>60</sup> See Uwe Hebekus, *Ästhetische Ermächtigung. Zum politischen Ort der Literatur im Zeitraum der klassischen Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 2009), pp. 12-13.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>63</sup> See Delabar, 'Zur Dialektik des Modernen', p. 387.

totalitarian regimes such as National Socialism – allows us to see continuities as well as contrasts and disruptions.

In recent years, following the growing research interest in the complex relationship between Nazism and modernisation as outlined above by Kiesel, scholars have demanded that awareness of the co-existence of seemingly opposing trends in Nazism be extended to the sphere of the literary and the aesthetic. As already mentioned, Michael Ley argued in his 2004 study that Expressionism and Nazism had central themes in common: they shared a profound scepticism regarding the advance of liberalism and technologisation on modern society. Both showed a strong reaction against the reification of sexuality in the brothels of a morally decadent bourgeoisie. Expressionist as well as National Socialist artists denounced the over-stimulating, dehumanising and alienating effects of urban life, which are presented by both in stark contrast to the solace associated with nature. These parallels, Ley claims, went beyond shared themes and often found expression in a similar rhetoric and style. Here he refers back to Jean Clair, who had already observed in 1998: 'Die expressionistische Neigung, die Massen durch das Okkulte zu manipulieren, eher die Sinne anzusprechen, als an den Sinn zu appellieren, eher die Sinnlichkeit zu unterjochen, als den Verstand anzuregen, all das sind Züge, die den Absichten des Nazismus entgegenkamen.'<sup>64</sup> These parallels, Ley argues, even allowed some to entertain notions of collaboration between the German avant-garde and National Socialists. He notes that for instance Expressionist painter Emil Nolde had been a member of the NSDAP and Expressionist architect Walter Gropius had been a member of the Reichskulturkammer.<sup>65</sup> This affinity was by no means one-sided. As Eberhard Sauermann points out, even influential *völkisch* cultural functionaries such as Schirach's mentor Adolf Bartels admitted a certain fascination for the Expressionist movement. Despite being, in his opinion, 'vom Judentum geradezu "gemacht"', Bartels affirmed that Expressionism had a place in German literary history.<sup>66</sup> Walter Delabar stipulates: '[Im] Ganzen [kann] der Nationalsozialismus als Versuch gesehen werden [...], nicht hinter die Moderne zurückzutreten, sondern sie zu bewältigen und damit lebbar zu machen.'<sup>67</sup> Arguing along similar lines, Peter Reichel sees the very existence of the Expressionism debate in particular from the years 1933/34 up to the heated debate between Ernst Bloch and Georg

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<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Ley, 'Gnosis und ästhetische Religion', p. 57.

<sup>65</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Sauermann, 'Expressionismus als Signum'.

<sup>67</sup> Delabar, 'Zur Dialektik des Modernen', p. 391.

Lukács in 1937/38 as indicative of the continuing influence of modernist art in the Third Reich.<sup>68</sup> Another frequently mentioned example of (at least) initial high-ranking support among the Nazi elite is Goebbels' attempted patronage of Expressionist artists Nolde and Ernst Barlach (which later lost out to Rosenberg's cultural politics).<sup>69</sup> Goebbels' early work *Michael* bears further testimony to a Nazi fascination with Expressionism. The inference that political views of fictional characters represent those of their creators needs of course to be treated with caution. Yet the fact that Goebbels and his protagonist share a striking number of autobiographical details gives grounds to suspect that the author at one stage sympathised with Expressionism.<sup>70</sup> For example, the protagonist announces:

Unser Jahrzehnt ist in seiner inneren Struktur durchaus expressionistisch. Das hat mit dem Modeschlagwort nichts zu tun. Wir Heutigen sind alle Expressionisten. Menschen, die von innen heraus die Welt draußen gestalten wollen. Der Expressionist baut in sich eine neue Welt. Sein Geheimnis und seine Macht ist die Inbrunst. Seine Gedankenwelt zerbricht meist an der Wirklichkeit. [...] Expressionistisches Weltgefühl ist explosiv. Es ist ein autokrates Gefühl des Selbstseins.<sup>71</sup>

This interpretation of the Expressionist state of mind is seen through the eyes of and put into words spoken by a fictional character. However, as Michael Ley has pointed out, Goebbels continued to publicly praise Expressionism even after 1933 and defended it against criticism from other party members such as Rosenberg.<sup>72</sup> This circumstance supports the notion that the understanding of Expressionist activism and ambition, as uttered by Goebbels's fictional character Michael, was one the Nazis could appreciate, even identify with.

In the English-language debate on the matter, Peter Fritzsche suggested in his 1996 article 'Nazi modern' that the Nazis could not only been seen as modernisers but also as modernists in their commitment to renewing German society politically, socially, even racially. In spite of their barbarous measures and their project's horrendous outcome, it was based on the post-Enlightenment assumption 'that this worldly existence could be perfected

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<sup>68</sup> See Peter Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches*, 2nd edn. (Munich: Hanser, 1992), pp. 333-335.

<sup>69</sup> See Emily Braun, 'Expressionism as Fascist Aesthetic,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 2 (1996): 273–292, p. 273.

<sup>70</sup> See Peter Longerich, *Joseph Goebbels. Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2010), pp. 106-109.

<sup>71</sup> Joseph Goebbels, *Michael. Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern*, 16th edn. (Munich: Eher, 1929), p. 77.

<sup>72</sup> See Ley, 'Gnosis und ästhetische Religion', p. 56.

by human design'.<sup>73</sup> To clarify this attitude it is useful to take modernist aesthetics into consideration, Fritzsche argues: '[The] aesthetic categories of modernism – shock, disruption, discontinuity, and transience – profoundly shaped the way intellectuals, artists, scientists, and politicians regarded time and approached the future.'<sup>74</sup>

To date these observations have not been followed up in detailed studies of National Socialist literature. The primary focus of Roger Griffin's 2007 study *Modernism and Fascism* lies on the modernist qualities in visual arts (painting, sculpture, film) as well as intellectual and social policies in Nazi Germany, and only touches on the literary sphere briefly.<sup>75</sup> Fritzsche's analysis focuses on the intellectual, social and political affinities between modernism and National Socialism and does not include literary analysis. Fähnder's 2010 study *Avantgarde und Moderne* does not approach the relationship of literary modernism and Nazism. The output of writers associated with the National Socialist movement is barely mentioned in his study at all. Names associated with the conservative revolution such as Hofmannsthal and Jünger only appear on the periphery as 'Teil jener Anti-Moderne, die sich gegen Republik und Modernisierung stellt und ihrerseits also Anteil am Komplex der Moderne hat [...] und als "Antidot gegen Komplexität" fungiert'.<sup>76</sup> Fähnders ends his analysis with the establishment of the Third Reich, arguing: 'Die Zäsur von 1933 bedeutete für die Literatur radikale Schnitte auf den Ebenen der Produktion, der Distribution und der Rezeption.'<sup>77</sup> Although he has to admit: 'Das hieß freilich nicht ein Ende von "Moderne" überhaupt – das Bild von der NS-Gesellschaft ist mittlerweile derart geschärft, dass deren auch "moderne" Züge erkennbar sind.' With this remark Fähnder essentially confirms the status quo: it is National Socialist *society* that has been perceived in sharper detail – not its literature.

In particular among German-speaking scholars Uwe Hebekus observed in his 2009 study *Ästhetische Ermächtigung* the continuance of 'Ratlosigkeit und Denkwänge in der literaturwissenschaftlichen Forschung dort, wo sich am Horizont klassisch moderner ästhetischer Positionsmaßnahmen die Gestalt des politischen Totalitarismus abzeichnet'.<sup>78</sup> Kiesel comments on the normative pressure exerted on scholarly research by the

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<sup>73</sup> Peter Fritzsche, 'Nazi Modern,' *Modernism/Modernity* 3, no. 1 (1996): 1–22, p. 7.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>75</sup> See Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>76</sup> Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, p. 295.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296; the following quotation *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Hebekus, *Ästhetische Ermächtigung*, p. 14.

assumption that National Socialist literature was regressive and purely epigonal; he shows how even scholars who are aware of this self-induced blindness struggle to escape it.<sup>79</sup> For instance, Uwe Ketelsen had already argued in the early 1990s that a closer look at the literature of the Third Reich reveals ‘unter gewissen Vorzeichen [...] eine Orientierung etwa am Expressionismus, an der Avantgarde, am Klassizismus der Jahrhundertwende, am Agitprop’<sup>80</sup> and that ‘das Schema “hie Literatur des Dritten Reichs – dort Moderne” [...] insgesamt in seiner Geltung relativiert werden [müsse]’.<sup>81</sup> However, even Ketelsen, Kiesel observes, ultimately fails to name a work that could be categorised as both modernist and National Socialist.<sup>82</sup> Jörg Schuster made a first step in this direction in his 2016 study *Die vergessene Moderne. Deutsche Literatur 1930-1960* in which he undertakes ‘die Auseinandersetzung mit zu Unrecht vergessenen Texten einer über das Jahr 1933 hinaus verlängerten Moderne und eine Korrektur der Literaturgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts’.<sup>83</sup> Schuster studies authors such as Günther Eich, Oskar Loerke and Wolfgang Koeppen, who all published in the 1930s and 1940s and were to varying degrees affiliated with, supportive of, or resistant to the regime. However, he is not specifically interested in the propagandistic qualities of their writing. Instead, he studies explicitly non-political, ‘naturmagische’ elements of their texts. Schuster concludes that modernism had never come to a standstill: ‘Wichtig ist aber die Feststellung, dass die Moderne hier eben nicht, über die Zäsur der NS-Diktatur hinweg wieder aufgegriffen wird. Vielmehr war sie nie unterbrochen.’<sup>84</sup> Schuster’s study – while it does not engage with specifically political literature – represents an important step towards perceiving continuities in the literature of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich in sharper detail that this study will further contribute to. An attempt to categorise Schirach’s poetry as representative of the classical modernism of the early twentieth century or of its literary avant-garde – for instance of late Expressionism – would without doubt be doomed to failure. Instead, in a step towards a more refined view of the complex ways in which modernist and National Socialist literature are related to one another, the central section of this study in particular considers which stylistic techniques and tropes Schirach and other authors of the Weimar Republic may have shared beyond their political

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<sup>79</sup> See Kiesel, ‘Nationalsozialismus, Modernisierung, Literatur’, p. 24.

<sup>80</sup> Ketelsen, *Literatur und Drittes Reich*, p. 245.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>82</sup> See Kiesel, ‘Nationalsozialismus, Modernisierung, Literatur’, pp. 24-25.

<sup>83</sup> Jörg Schuster, *Die vergessene Moderne. Deutsche Literatur 1930-1960* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2016), p. 11.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191



identities.

### Structure of this thesis

To situate Schirach's writing and literary development within the context of his time and also in the debate around modernist and National Socialist literature, it is necessary to establish who his literary role models were, and to investigate the extent of other influences on his ideological development. The first chapter of this thesis focuses on Schirach's early years in Weimar, which were central to his character and his intellectual, literary and ideological education and tastes. In particular, it explores his family's social connections to *völkisch* and conservative circles. Schirach counted Nazi harbingers such as the publicist Hans Severus Ziegler and the writer Adolf Bartels among his mentors. Following Schirach's first personal encounter with him in 1925, Hitler himself became a guest in the Schirach household – an acquaintanceship which, according to Schirach himself, sparked the composition of his first poem dedicated to the Nazi leader,<sup>85</sup> the first of many.

By considering literary sources as well as historical and biographical data, the second chapter aims to draw a clear picture of Schirach's early ideological development and the activities that formed the basis of his mature political and cultural persona. Following his relocation to Munich, where he enrolled as a student in Germanistik, he learned to combine his political activism in student organisations and activities in journalism – both in the name of the Nazi party. This in due course brought him into closer contact with Rosenberg and Goebbels. Soon, he contributed short written pieces to Goebbels's newspapers and cultural events organised by Rosenberg and in turn received support for his own journalistic enterprises and the publication of his poems.

During Schirach's years in Munich in the late 1920s, he was most active as a poet. Literary analysis of his lyrical skills has so far been confined to articles and, mostly, to the analysis of individual poems.<sup>86</sup> In order to establish the impact of his poetry before and

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<sup>85</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, *Ich glaubte an Hitler* (Hamburg: Mosaik, 1967), pp. 22-23.

<sup>86</sup> See Gerhard Hay, 'Religiöser Pseudokult in der NS-Lyrik am Beispiel Baldur v. Schirach,' in *Liturgie und Dichtung. Ein interdisziplinäres Kompendium I*, eds. H. Becker and R. Kaczynski (St. Ottilien: Eos, 1983), 855–862; Ralf Georg Czapla, 'Erlösung im Zeichen des Hakenkreuzes. Bibel-Usurpationen in der Lyrik Joseph Goebbels' und Baldur von Schirachs,' in *Gotteswort und Menschenrede. Die Bibel im Dialog mit Wissenschaften, Künsten und Medien* (Bern: Lang, 2006), 283–326; Stefanie Hundehege, 'Baldur von Schirach – der "Sänger der Bewegung",' in *Dichter für das "Dritte Reich" 3*, ed. Rolf Düsterberg (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2015), 209–242.

during the Third Reich, the third chapter sheds new light on the publication history, structure, rhetorical arrangement and reception of his main collection of poems, *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1931, 1933).

The middle section – chapters four to seven – also includes an analysis of those poems that were not printed in either of Schirach’s collections, since this gives greater insight into the full spectrum of his writing and perhaps also permits speculation as to which of his poems were more widely known and which were less so. Chapter four explores the tropes of the First World War and the young generation in Schirach’s poetry. Germany’s defeat produced a generation of writers with the urgent need to create meaning from the lost war, including those like Schirach who, having been born in 1907, had been too young to fight. The war and its aftermath deeply impressed and affected him as a teenager, as well as his family, in particular as Weimar became the centre of negotiations during the founding of the new republic. Academic interest in Schirach’s poetry has previously been confined to his glorification of death on the battlefield. I trace attempts to find alternative significance in conflict for himself and his generation, mainly drawing on Roger Woods’ work. His discussion of the war writing of Ernst Jünger and Jünger’s attempts at creating meaning from the German defeat allows for parallels to be drawn with Schirach. Woods argues that a more nuanced view reveals that ‘Jünger’s writing conveys a sense not only of the war’s meaning but also of its futility, not only a sense of community in war but also a sense of isolation’,<sup>87</sup> a view that I extend to Schirach.

Chapter five explores Schirach’s understanding of the role of the writer in the highly politicised culture of the Weimar years, during which the boundaries between literature and politics became ever more porous. I analyse claims made by Schirach and his party comrades about the poetic value of his writing and the role or function of poetry for their political ends. Although the evidence suggests that Schirach (unlike many authors associated with the political left, for example Johannes R. Becher, Erich Weinert, Bertolt Brecht), did not subscribe to or try to establish a coherent poetic programme, a closer look at his poems suggests correlations between the traces of a poetic programme that the material suggests and his political ideals. The concept of authorship conveyed through his poems, although not explicitly formulated, shows how he nevertheless responded to the new ideal of authorship

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<sup>87</sup> Roger Woods, ‘Ernst Jünger, the New Nationalists, and the Memory of the First World War,’ in *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic*, ed. Karl Leydecker (Rochester: Camden, 2006), 125–140, p. 128.

of the 1920s, one that was dominated by the political and social needs of his time.

To situate Schirach's poetic ideas further within the context of his time, in chapter six I draw on work by Friedrich Pohlmann and Alexander von Bormann, which outlines similarities between National Socialist and Communist ideology and literature. In his 2014 article 'Zusammenhänge zwischen der nationalsozialistischen und der kommunistischen Ideologie', Pohlmann argues that both movements – although they regarded one another as enemies and pursued different political goals – showed structural similarities as regards their totalitarian character, dichotomous world view, liturgical rhetoric and religious stylisation of their leading figures.<sup>88</sup> On the basis of Schirach's poetry, I argue that he shared with Communist authors a modernist consciousness of the materiality of texts; that is to say, an awareness of texts as constructs that can serve a certain political purpose and that can be re-written or adapted to suit specific political needs, or even composed of fragments taken from non-literary contexts. At the same time, these text samples also yield insight into the limits of Schirach's poetic creativity and his unwillingness to create moments of irritation and disorientation; instead, he aims to give clarity and direction.

The question of the extent to which biblical references in Schirach's poetry can be considered expressions of genuine religiosity is at the core of chapter seven. Schirach's writing has long been considered a prime example of National Socialist anti-Christian propaganda that tried to introduce Nazi ideology as a 'new' religion and stylise its 'Führer' as the new German messiah. Richard Steigmann-Gall's 2003 study *The Holy Reich* took a new approach to this discourse and sparked a lively debate that continues to this day, suggesting for the first time that the relationship between Nazism and religion was one of synthesis rather than tension, it contends that 'Christianity was deeply relevant to Nazi ideology'.<sup>89</sup> I use *The Holy Reich* largely as a stimulus to see whether Schirach's classification needs reconsideration or at the very least more refined analysis, rather than considering myself as following in Steigmann-Gall's footsteps. Instead, I rely more on Milan Babik's contribution to this debate, in which he argues that Nazism can indeed be considered a secular religion despite its tendencies to use Christian imagery and rhetoric, if we understand secularisation not as a process of de-Christianisation but, with reference to Löwith's 1949 secularisation

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<sup>88</sup> See Friedrich Pohlmann, 'Zusammenhänge zwischen der kommunistischen und nationalsozialistischen Ideologie,' in *Ideologie und Verbrechen*, eds. Frank-Lothar Kroll and Barbara Zehnpfennig (Munich: Fink, 2014), 187–210.

<sup>89</sup> Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich* (Cambridge: UP, 2003), p. 266.

theory, as a transitional process of orienting (Christian) eschatology to the immanent world. My analysis is based largely on close reading of Schirach's poems as well as evidence of his heated public debate with cleric Johannes Jänicke that previous research has mentioned only in passing, if at all. This exchange occurred in 1930, at the same time in which many of Schirach's poems with the most overtly religious content were published. The impetus to reconsider a high ranking Nazi's relationship with Christianity is neither intended to diminish the many examples of courageous resistance against the Nazi regime from within the clergy, nor is it inspired by an attempt to endorse the notion of National Socialist ideology being essentially Christian – on the contrary, Nazi ideology lacked fundamental Christian virtues such as charity, justice, wisdom and mercy.

Chapter eight marks the transition from Schirach's pre-1933 intellectual development and literary output to his post-1933 cultural ambitions. The extent of his influence after Hitler's rise to power is highlighted by the fact that, as leader of the Hitlerjugend organisation, he was in charge of the mental development of all German children between the ages of ten and eighteen – at least outside the classroom. His pedagogical and didactic ideas and the extent to which he successfully implemented them in his capacity as Reichsjugendführer have been previously explored by Koontz, Wortmann and Lang. Chapter eight will therefore focus on his role as cultural functionary and his attempts to foster poetic talent in the younger generation, but also on his realisation that the Nazi state had failed to create its own literary tradition.

Having been appointed Gauleiter, Reichsleiter and Reichsstatthalter of Vienna in 1940, Schirach spent the last five years of National Socialist rule in the former Austrian capital. Thus somewhat removed from the ideological influence of the other party members, Schirach became a more ambivalent figure torn between his sense of duty, his loyalty to the 'Führer' and his own artistic aspirations. Due to his key political position, this period has already been the focus of previous research on Schirach, whereas in this study, new material promising insight into his writing after the collapse of the Nazi state will be at the core of the final chapter. As one of the defendants at the 1946 Nuremberg trials that received worldwide media attention, Schirach experienced how his poems, articles, essays and speeches were turned into evidence against him. Following his conviction and transfer to Spandau prison, where he served his twenty-year sentence, he was previously believed to have ceased literary production. No new publications are recorded in the post-1945 period,

with the exception of his autobiography that was published by the magazine *Stern* in serial form immediately following his release in 1966 and that appeared as a book under the title *Ich glaubte an Hitler* (1967). However, new material was made available for this study by Schirach's eldest son, Klaus von Schirach, consisting of over twenty unpublished poems written during his incarceration. These offer unprecedented information about the prisoner's physical and psychological situation. In my analysis, I discuss the extent to which Schirach addresses the question of German guilt in them, both collective and individual. The poems constitute a revealing point of contrast for the German post-1945 literary tradition. They were not influenced by other, contemporary authors or critics, nor by political support or censorship, nor by the literary upheavals in Germany at the time. Their analysis thus offers a new perspective on the poetic struggle with the German past, written by one of the highest-ranking members of the former Nazi elite, who was at the same time at the centre of the German catastrophe and uniquely isolated from its healing processes.

Encompassing Schirach's literary and intellectual development from his youth in Weimar until his death in 1974 (with the exception of the Vienna period), this study gives an in-depth analysis of his literary and cultural work and of the effects it had on cultural policies and the literary scene in, before, and even after the Third Reich. By including analysis of literary predecessors, role models and other influences, it places him as an author within the literary scene of his time and emphasises continuities and contrasts between National Socialist literature and other contemporary literary currents. It also highlights the trepidations, the sense of guilt but also of nostalgia widely felt long after the Third Reich had ceased to exist, as invoked by an individual who was publicly pushed back into German society after a twenty-year prison sentence. German society has come a long way since then; yet it also faces new challenges, as National Socialism is increasingly perceived as a merely historical phenomenon. As the last generation of eyewitnesses disappears, the transfer of knowledge primarily happens through new media or in the school classroom. In many ways Schirach does not fulfil commonly held notions of the Nazi perpetrator. Here, we have the example of a literary, cultured, upper-middle class individual, not a colourless bureaucrat or common soldier. This study therefore provides new insight into the perpetrator mentality and makes a nuanced contribution to furthering understanding of the genesis, development, methods and 'success' of the National Socialist regime.

## CHAPTER 1

### Becoming the bard of the Nazi movement

#### A first encounter in Weimar

'Hitler in Weimar! In Thüringen! In Mitteldeutschland!'<sup>1</sup> On 22 March 1925 Weimar was in uproar. The leader of the only recently re-established Nazi party was on his way to the Thuringian capital. The agenda of his two-day stay included a visit at the house of his admirer Adolf Bartels, Weimar's leading *völkisch* and antisemitic writer, a tour of both the Schillerhaus and Goethe museum and, most importantly, four speeches at the Schießhaus and Die Erholung, both local club houses.<sup>2</sup> The Schießhaus hall was filled to capacity hours before the speaker even arrived, according to the report of the event's organiser Hans Severus Ziegler, who will be discussed in more detail later. Hitler's presence attracted enemies as well as supporters. Two hundred Communists, the report continues, waited for hours at the Weimar train station. However, their plans were thwarted; Hitler arrived by car and proceeded to the Schießhaus undisturbed. Cheers and hail shouts greeted the speaker, march music played and the Knappenschaft, a local youth federation whose main task was to guard the entrances, saluted.<sup>3</sup> Among them was seventeen year-old Baldur von Schirach.

Hitler's speech followed a familiar pattern: he spoke of the collapse of the German Empire, the ensuing fear and chaos, his love for the fatherland, the origins of the National Socialist movement and the Führer concept. The audience's reaction was perhaps not as enthusiastic as Ziegler's report suggested: 'Hitler [sprach] etwas [sic] eine Stunde lang, bevor er überhaupt den ersten Beifall bekam. Es war eine zähe Rede'<sup>4</sup>, Schirach described the event later during his interviews with Jochen von Lang. He also admitted recalling the emotions that he had felt at the same time much better than the actual content of the speech. The evening made an immense impression on the teenager – '[...] es war eine der

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Severus Ziegler, 'Hitlers Auftreten in Weimar,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 2 (28 March 1925). The only edition available for this study was numbered inconsistently. Over the years of its publication Ziegler's journal underwent several changes regarding its title, format and numbering system. Some issues only listed the volume and issue numbers, others only printed the publication date and some both. Whereas quotations will be referenced as precisely as possible, the references will reflect these inconsistencies.

<sup>2</sup> See Holm Kirsten, *'Weimar im Banne des Führers': Die Besuche Adolf Hitlers 1925-1940* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001), p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> See Ziegler, 'Hitlers Auftreten in Weimar'; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> IfZ: 'Jochen von Lang: Interview mit Baldur von Schirach, dated 9 November 1966 volume I', p. 44. These sources will be referred to as Langzeitinterviews I-IV.

besten Reden, die ich von ihm je gehört hatte'.<sup>5</sup> Afterwards he and one of his friends accompanied Ziegler and Hitler to stand guard at a meeting that took place in the former's home. Ziegler, who had joined the Nazi party only one month previously, would soon become one of Hitler's most important contacts in Weimar, helping him to become acquainted with important families of the city's bourgeois circles.<sup>6</sup> Before his guest left, he introduced the young guards to Hitler, who shook their hands. According to Schirach, this became a defining moment for him: 'Aus diesem ersten Händedruck und dem Erlebnis dieser Versammlung am Nachmittag entsteht bei mir eine patriotisch lyrische Stimmung und ich schreibe eines meiner unzähligen schlechten Gedichte.'<sup>7</sup> This would seem to be a reference to the following:

An Hitler!

Du gabst uns deine Hand und einen Blick,  
von dem noch jetzt die jungen Herzen beben:  
Es wird uns dieser Stunde mächtig Leben  
begleiten stets als wunderbares Glück.

Im Herzen blieb der heiße Schwur zurück:  
du hast uns nicht umsonst die Hand gegeben!  
Wir werden unser hohes Ziel erstreben  
verkettet durch des Vaterlands Geschick.

Wenn sie dich auch entrechteten und verraten  
dich schützt die Reinheit deiner großen Taten,  
mag man dich auch umgeistern und bespeien.

Das Eine können sie uns doch nicht rauben,  
daß wir an dich von ganzer Seele glauben,  
denn du bist Deutschlands Zukunft, du allein!<sup>8</sup>

Despite the lack of poetic quality that Schirach himself acknowledged retrospectively, he nevertheless showed this to Ziegler, who then published it in his local newspaper *Der Nationalsozialist*.<sup>9</sup> The poem is discussed in detail in chapter five; for now it will suffice to say

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<sup>5</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 44; see also Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>6</sup> See Kirsten, *Weimar im Banne des Führers*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>7</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> 'An Hitler!' was not signed with Schirach's name. Instead, the caption reads 'Von einem Weimarer Knappen, der vor Hitlers Quartier Posten gestanden hat'. *Der Nationalsozialist* 2, no. 44 (7 November 1925).

<sup>9</sup> In the Langzeitinterviews Schirach claimed that it was the poem 'Hitler' that he wrote after this first encounter. See Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 45-46. However, I have been unable to verify a publication of 'Hitler' for

that the young man's poetic token of admiration did not go unnoticed. According to Schirach, a few weeks later he was rewarded with a letter containing a note of thanks and a signed photograph of Hitler.<sup>10</sup>

This episode shows Schirach's poem as the spontaneous product of an intense momentary emotion (or at least that he liked to see it as such). He himself claimed his late adolescence and student years to have been his most productive, poetically speaking; a statement that is supported by the publication records of his poems as presented in the thesis.<sup>11</sup> His upbringing in an artistically active family, I will argue, taught Schirach an appreciation for the emotive effects of literature and music and also instilled in him a craving for recognition. His education in Weimar's conservative, nationalist circles impressed on him an aversion for the republic, the overthrow of which he envisaged in his poetry. His family's connections provided him with early publication opportunities. In many ways, then, the origin of Schirach's poetry lies in Weimar. In order to understand his poems, it is important to understand where he came from.

### Family background and education

Baldur von Schirach was born on 9 May 1907 as the youngest of four children.<sup>12</sup> His father, Carl Baily Norris von Schirach (1873-1949), served in the Garde-Kürassier-Regiment der Kaiserlichen Armee, where he held the rank of an Oberleutnant. In 1896 he had married an American, Emma Middleton Lynah Tillou (1872-1942), daughter of a prominent family in

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that year. A few issues of the edition of the only available edition of *Der Nationalsozialist* are missing, so there is a possibility that Schirach's memory might have been accurate. However, the first publications of 'Hitler' that could be verified date to the year 1929, when the poem appeared in three different journals over a period of a few weeks. Given Schirach's tendency to republish his poems, it seems unlikely that he would have let it rest for four years. See Baldur von Schirach, 'Die Feier der neuen Front,' *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 2 (February 1929), p. 7; Baldur von Schirach, 'Adolf Hitler zum 40. Geburtstag,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 6, no. 16 (20 April 1929); Baldur von Schirach, 'Hitler,' *Der Angriff* (April 22, 1929), p. 11. Wortmann also refers to 'An Hitler!' as the poem written after Schirach's first encounter with Hitler although he does not specify how he came to that conclusion. See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 39. Koontz, however, quotes 'Hitler' in his account of the events, using Schirach's autobiography as a source. See Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 45-46; see also Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>11</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> See Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde Sammlung Berlin Document Centre (from now on referred to as BArch, Slg. BDC), SA-Unterlagen, Baldur von Schirach; *Gothaisches genealogisches Taschenbuch der briefadeligen Häuser. Zweiter Jahrgang* (Gotha: Perthes, 1908), p. 815.



Philadelphia.<sup>13</sup> His son described Carl von Schirach as a very strong, soldierly man, who valued social etiquette. Usually rather reserved, he would however quickly warm up when the conversation turned to questions of music or theatre.<sup>14</sup> In accounts of his mother, Schirach emphasised her lively and open personality.<sup>15</sup> Like her husband, Emma was also interested in the arts. According to her son, she was a talented painter and an enthusiast of the works of Symbolist painter Walter Leistikow.<sup>16</sup> The marriage of Carl and Emma further strengthened the family's ties with the United States. Carl von Schirach's mother, Elizabeth Baily Norris (1833-1873), had been the daughter of a wealthy American entrepreneur who built locomotives. In 1869, she married Karl Friedrich von Schirach (1842-1917), who had lived in the United States for over fifteen years during the period 1855-1871.<sup>17</sup>

Soon after their nuptials, Carl and Emma von Schirach moved to Berlin, where their eldest daughter Rosalind was born in 1898. In June 1899 Emma gave birth to another daughter, Viktoria, who did not survive infancy. The following year the family welcomed their first son, Karl. He was seven years old when his younger brother Baldur was born.<sup>18</sup> In late 1908, the family moved to Weimar. When the previous director of the newly built Hoftheater retired, the Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenbach offered his position to Carl von Schirach, starting in January 1909.<sup>19</sup> According to the memories of Erika Watzdorf-Bachow, an acquaintance of the family, Carl von Schirach owed his nomination to the intervention of a friend in his regiment, Rittmeister von Stechow.<sup>20</sup> His appointment sparked an outcry in the press of the political left. For example the *Berliner Volkszeitung* protested against the former soldier's lack of experience and also against the *völkisch* and nationalistic circles in which he moved. The article concludes: 'Ueber allen Wipfeln ist Ruh – es lebe der

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<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*; for Carl von Schirach's date of death see Stadtarchiv Weimar, file 27 2/3, C 623/1949; for Emma von Schirach's date of death see Stadtarchiv Wiesbaden STA-WI S361; for a full family tree see Max von Schirach, *Geschichte der Familie von Schirach* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1939) no page number given; for Carl von Schirach's military ranks see Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr/ file Carl von Schirach; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 27 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>14</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 47-49.

<sup>15</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>17</sup> See *Gothaisches genealogisches Taschenbuch (1908)*, p. 814; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 24-26.

<sup>18</sup> See *Gothaisches genealogisches Taschenbuch (1908)*, p. 815 and *Gothaisches genealogisches Taschenbuch der briefadeligen Häuser. Erster Jahrgang* (Gotha: Perthes, 1907), p. 676.

<sup>19</sup> See Wolfram Huschke, *Zukunft Musik. Eine Geschichte der Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt in Weimar* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), p. 110; see also Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> See Erika von Watzdorf-Bachow and Reinhard R. Doerries, *Im Wandel und in der Verwandlung der Zeit* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), p. 144 and p. 154.

Leutnant-Dilettant auf dem Goethe-Stuhl und die neue “Bartels-Nationalbühne” am Ilmstrande!’<sup>21</sup> Despite this strong reaction against his want of formal musical education or prior experience, Carl von Schirach continued to enjoy the support of the Grand Duke and went on to establish himself as a member of the conservative cultural elite in Weimar. His role as director of the theatre he apparently fulfilled satisfactorily. Although he appears on the periphery of research into the Weimar cultural and political scene in the early twentieth century as well as in Wortmann’s and Koontz’s studies, there is no full account of Carl von Schirach’s cultural work to date.<sup>22</sup> Leonard Schrickel, a local historian and author of *Geschichte des Weimarer Theaters von seinen Anfängen bis heute*, wrote in 1928: ‘Schirach gilt für einen musikalisch hochbefähigten Mann und einen gut durchgebildeten Schüler Martersteigs.’<sup>23</sup> During his interviews with Lang, Baldur von Schirach stated that prior to his appointment in Weimar, his father had been in the habit of taking leave from his military duties to work as assistant director in Bayreuth and in Cologne alongside Max Martersteig.<sup>24</sup> A playwright, historian and fin-de-siècle reformer of the theatre, who was influential for impressionist and symbolist theatre, Martersteig (1852-1926) had published his well-known book *Das deutsche Theater im 19. Jahrhundert* in 1904.<sup>25</sup> His work in dramaturgy and his theoretical and philosophical works on theatre earned him a reputation as “‘Philosoph” unter den Theaterleitern des 19. Jahrhunderts’.<sup>26</sup> Martersteig was interested in how the modern findings of psychology, particularly in the field of hypnosis and suggestion, would influence the actor’s approach to his characters on stage.<sup>27</sup> His theories, although not radically revolutionary, helped to prepare the ground for modernist theatre: ‘Seine Überlegungen [zeigen] einen kleinen Riß im Korsett des bürgerlichen Individuums [...]. Als seine Theorie erschien, stand die moderne Avantgarde schon in den Startlöchern, um die Rüstung des bürgerlichen Charakters endgültig zu knacken.’<sup>28</sup> Perhaps Schrickel mentioned Martersteig partly to point out another Weimar-born artist. While Schirach later described

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Huschke, *Zukunft Musik*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>22</sup> Kirsten, *Weimar im Banne*, pp. 114-119; Huschke, *Zukunft Musik*, pp. 110-115; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 22 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Leonhard Schrickel, *Geschichte des Weimarer Theaters von seinen Anfängen bis heute* (Weimar: Panses, 1928), p. 251.

<sup>24</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 115. Martersteig’s name is mistakenly spelt ‘Mattersteig’.

<sup>25</sup> See Jens Roselt, ed., *Seelen mit Methode. Schauspieltheorien vom Barock bis zum postdramatischen Theater* (Berlin: Alexander, 2005), pp. 208-212.

<sup>26</sup> *Neue Deutsche Biographie 16* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1990), p. 272.

<sup>27</sup> See Roselt, *Seelen mit Methode*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

his father as ‘in künstlerischen Dingen doch irgendwie bahnbrechende Persönlichkeit – man denke nur daran wie er Richard Strauß und Pfitzner gefördert hat’,<sup>29</sup> he does not go into the details of what this support entailed. A growing connection between the Schirach and Strauss families is documented.<sup>30</sup> Strauss, who himself had been conductor in Weimar between 1889 and 1894, was among Carl von Schirach’s favourite composers.<sup>31</sup> Under Schirach’s supervision, the opera house staged a number of Strauss’s operas including *Salome*, *Elektra*, *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Der Rosenkavalier*.<sup>32</sup> However, given Strauss’s status and fame at the time, it remains doubtful to what extent the composer would have relied on his friend’s patronage. What is more, the list of performances conducted in Weimar under Carl von Schirach’s management shows little in the way of revolutionary spirit. He mostly staged plays and Romantic operas of the eighteenth and nineteenth century: Kleist’s *Penthesilea* and *Der zerbrochene Krug*, Schiller’s *Wallenstein* trilogy and *Maria Stuart*, Franz Liszt’s *Die heilige Elisabeth*, Wagner’s *Parsifal* and *Tannhäuser*. Occasionally, the programme lists something more international, for instance Oscar Wilde’s *Lady Windermere’s fan*.<sup>33</sup>

Carl von Schirach was ill suited to break through the sedate, stolid atmosphere at the Hoftheater, which was indicative of the wider cultural and economic stagnation in Weimar. Despite its population of 30,000 people, its economic and industrial development was slow compared to the rest of the country. Weimar’s industry depended on local craft businesses rather than large factories. Compared to the rest of Thuringia, a large part of the population still relied on agriculture.<sup>34</sup> The Schirachs resided in the city’s wealthy area. The family income came from the generous wage and representation allowance attached to the position of theatre director. In addition, Carl von Schirach received interest from the considerable private assets he held in the USA. His wife’s yearly income amounted to several

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<sup>29</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 54.

<sup>30</sup> According to Schirach, his parents had been well acquainted with the Strauss family since his childhood. See Langzeitinterviews III, p. 274. In Munich, Strauss conducted at least one orchestral piece, ‘Lethe’, written by Carl’s brother, Friedrich von Schirach. See Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 4-5 and III, p. 273; Kenneth Birkin, ‘“... wollen sehen, ob’s gelingt” Richard Strauss and the Berliner Tonkünstler-Orchester,’ *Richard Strauss-Blätter*, no. 46 (2001), p. 30. In the 1930s, Baldur and Henriette von Schirach’s house in Berlin was just a short distance away from the Strauss residence. Their youngest son, Richard, was named after the composer. See Richard von Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters* (Munich: Hanser, 2005), p. 114.

<sup>31</sup> See Laurenz Lütteken, *Richard Strauss. Musik der Moderne* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014), p. 105.

<sup>32</sup> See Schrickel, *Geschichte des Weimarer Theaters*, pp. 251-254.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> See Peter Merseburger, *Mythos Weimar. Zwischen Geist und Macht* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1999), p. 245; Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 22-23.

thousand Reichmarks.<sup>35</sup> Overall their shared earnings greatly exceeded the average family's income at the time.<sup>36</sup>

Baldur von Schirach was due to start school in 1913 at the age of six. However, as Schirach stated later, his enrolment had to be postponed because he did not speak German at that point. The family spoke exclusively in English, they had hired an English-speaking governess and also kept in close contact with their American relatives, who frequently visited the household. The parents decided to hire a tutor to teach their son German and he began to attend school one year later. The language spoken at home continued to be English.<sup>37</sup> If his account is to be believed, Schirach did not grow up bilingually. Instead, English was his mother tongue and German his second language, since he only came in contact with it at an age when first language acquisition is almost complete. At least until he began to socialise with other children at school, who would have been German native speakers, his acquisition of German was a conscious learning process.<sup>38</sup>

His diverse linguistic and cultural background has been duly pointed out in existing research literature on Schirach, but treated more as an interesting detail than as an important factor in his intellectual development. Wortmann's assessment of his linguistic development only goes so far as to point out that the language barrier further isolated him

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<sup>35</sup> Carl von Schirach's wage in Weimar initially amounted to the equivalent of 6,000 Reichsmark. Additionally, he received a representation allowance of 1,000 Rm. These sums grew over the next few years to a total of 12,000 Rm plus 3,000 Rm by 1918. His assets in the United States were estimated at \$166,000 in 1918. See BArch, Slg. BDC, von Schirach, Carl: letter addressed to Dr. Greiner, dated 10 February 1941 and letter written by Carl von Schirach, entitled 'Meine wirtschaftliche Lage' and dated 1 July 1942. Carl von Schirach specifies the amounts in Reichsmark, a currency that had been introduced in 1924 to replace the Rentenmark. In 1923, the Rentenmark had supplanted the Mark, which had completely lost its value due to hyperinflation. It remains unclear how Carl von Schirach converts these sums. See Wolfgang Fischer, *German Hyperinflation 1922/23. A Law and Economics Approach* (Cologne: Eul, 2010), p. 68. See also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 28 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> For example, in 1913, the average income per person had been 766 Mark. By 1925, this sum had risen to 961 Reichsmark. See Ursula Büttner, *Weimar: Die überforderte Republik. Leistung und Versagen in Staat, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft und Kultur* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008), p. 817.

The family's title was not tied to any property or income. Austrian Empress Maria Theresia had awarded the title to Gottlob Benedikt von Schirach in 1776 in recognition of his services as a historian. He had published a biographical work on her father Karl VI, who had died in 1740. See Schirach, *Geschichte der Familie von Schirach*, pp. 68-70.

<sup>37</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 119-120; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 28. According to Schirach himself, he was enrolled at age seven. There is no evidence available as to which primary school he attended. See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 119

<sup>38</sup> This assessment relies on Willis Edmondson's definition of second language acquisition. See Willis Edmondson, *Twelve Lectures on Second Language Acquisition. Foreign Language Teaching and Learning Perspectives* (Tübingen: Narr, 1999), pp. 1-9.

as a child.<sup>39</sup> Koontz concludes that: '[...] he remained fluent in English throughout his life. Such ties to the English language and his American kin, [sic] had little restraining influence on the adult Schirach's adoption of Nazi national chauvinism.'<sup>40</sup> While these observations are just and important, a more detailed analysis of his linguistic and cultural identity will be adopted here when exploring the rhetorical skills and the flexibility in his cultural identity as an adept *völkisch* speaker and writer. Judging from his writing and his speeches, Schirach learned to speak German – which he, according to his son Richard, spoke with a faint Thuringian accent<sup>41</sup> – perfectly and with eloquence. In retrospect, Schirach claimed that he identified strongly with both languages and cultures: '[...] wenn ich mich auch Amerika sehr verbunden fühle und sehr stark in der englischen Sprache lebe, ist doch Deutschland mein Vaterland.'<sup>42</sup> It is likely that Schirach particularly emphasised his American roots in interviews after his release in order to distance himself from other representatives of the National Socialist past.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, his claims are supported by the fact that the accounts of his – largely unprepared – freely spoken language show him as occasionally switching from one language to the other. The transcripts of his 1966 interviews with Jochen von Lang show that he slipped into the English language repeatedly or referred to English expressions to clarify his meaning.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, when he held an interview in English two years later with British reporter David Frost, he more than once slipped into German.<sup>45</sup> Having been born in Berlin, spent his childhood and adolescence in Thuringia and raised his own family in Bavaria and later in Vienna, Schirach claimed during the Lang interviews that he felt little regional allegiance and that he – like people in America – defined himself first and foremost by his national identity.<sup>46</sup> Schirach's admiration for the United States was, however, by no means as unequivocally established as many of his statements during the later interviews suggest. On a

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<sup>39</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 18.

<sup>41</sup> See Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, p. 201.

<sup>42</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 119

<sup>43</sup> For instance during the Lang Interviews Schirach prefixes his negative comment on the professional performance of the chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, the American Robert H. Jackson: 'Und ich muß sagen, als halber oder dreiviertel Amerikaner kann ich sagen, habe ich mich durch Jackson blamiert gefühlt.' Langzeitinterviews IV, p. 523.

<sup>44</sup> See for example Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 25, 71, 12, 176, 199.

<sup>45</sup> See David Frost, *Frost on Friday* [DVD] [1968] (Network) 6:56 and 9:46.

<sup>46</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 109. In another example of his recurring opportunism, Schirach also proves to be very versatile on the question of regional identity, claiming: '[...] ich bin meinem Herzen nach, ein Bayer'. Langzeitinterviews IV, 493. During the same interview he also proudly pointed out Berlin as his birthplace. See *ibid.*, pp. 682-683.

trip to Philadelphia and Atlantic City, which he undertook as a student in late 1928, Schirach recorded his impressions in several letters sent back to Germany that were promptly published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. They have previously been ignored in secondary sources on Schirach; yet they add another interesting layer to his complex cultural identity. Revealingly, the letters make no mention of Schirach's own American descent. He portrays the USA as 'Land ohne Seele',<sup>47</sup> a nation whose citizens and even police have been corrupted by the effects of the prohibition.<sup>48</sup> 'Amerika ist nach und nach zum Clown der übrigen Welt geworden. Aus dem ursprünglich bewunderten "Land der unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten" ist heute ein Land der grenzenlosen Unmöglichkeiten geworden.'<sup>49</sup> Americans, Schirach observed, do not value the sophisticated pleasures of dramas and the opera. Instead, they prefer the short-lived entertainment that jazz music and dance revues offer. They are no longer able, he continues, to value pieces of art by anything other than their price: 'Ich stand neulich im Hause eines reichen Amerikaners vor einem altenglischen Gemälde. Plötzlich riß mich die Stimme des Besitzers aus meinen Betrachtung: "That's work [sic] eight thousand dollars." [...] Im Laufe des Abends mußte ich öfters auf das Bild schauen, aber immer war es mir als hinge dort nicht mehr das schöne Gemälde, sondern acht saubergerahmte Tausende-Dollarnoten.'<sup>50</sup> This unflattering portrayal of American society he contrasts with Germany. The article closes wistfully: 'Ich dachte an Deutschland!'<sup>51</sup>

In his portrayal of America as capitalist und uncultured, Schirach placed himself into a rhetorical tradition that had persisted in Europe for a long time and had increased significantly since the turn of the twentieth century. With the rapid industrialisation and the increasing economic influence of the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century, the cultural cliché of America as a land devoid of tradition, culture, moral integrity and intellectual productivity had received new popularity.<sup>52</sup> Anti-American sentiments were widespread not only among the political and cultural elite, who saw the European economical and intellectual hegemony threatened, but also among the lower classes. Among the rural population, for instance, that had access to letters and reports of emigrants

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<sup>47</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Das Antlitz Amerikas,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)*, October 27, 1928.

<sup>48</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Das Antlitz Amerikas,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)*, September 26, 1928.

<sup>49</sup> Schirach, 'Das Antlitz Amerikas,' October 27, 1928.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> See Heiko Beyer, *Soziologie des Antiamerikanismus. Zur Theorie und Wirkmächtigkeit spätmodernen Unbehagens* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2014), p. 36.

or returnees, stories circulated of the hardships of the sea voyage, of the daily struggles of survival in new homes, and of emigrants finding their newly purchased land barren.<sup>53</sup> These attitudes and experiences were also reflected in a number of publications: In 1855, Austrian writer Ferdinand Kürnberger published *Der Amerikamüde*, in which he – despite never having set foot on American soil – wrote about the disappointed expectations of emigrants and returnees.<sup>54</sup> German sociologist Werner Sombart gave a series of lectures in St. Louis, Missouri, alongside his colleague Max Weber in 1904. In his letters, Sombart referred to America as ‘Kulturhölle’ and to the Wall Street as ‘Götterdämmerung der Kultur’.<sup>55</sup> German historian and politician Otto von Gierke referred to America as ‘recht unfertige Nation’<sup>56</sup> in his 1917 essay *Unsere Friedensziele* and expressed his belief in Germany as bulwark against the American influence: ‘[...] daß Deutschland das stärkste Bollwerk gegen die Überflutung des alten Europa durch den Geist seines [des amerikanischen Präsidenten Wilsons] halbreifen neuen Kontinents bildet’.<sup>57</sup> In 1918, Thomas Mann warned against ‘die Mächte der westlichen Zivilisation’<sup>58</sup> and against ‘den westlichen Geist’ in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, which he saw in stark contrast with the German nation: ‘das gebildete, gerechteste und den Frieden am wahrsten liebende Volk’,<sup>59</sup> which he hoped would be ‘auch das mächtigste, das gebietende’.<sup>60</sup> As these examples show, anti-American sentiments were repeated over a long period of time, even by Germany’s intellectual and political leaders. Schirach’s letters to the National Socialist community in Munich thus confirmed and reinforced a widely held cultural pessimism and perception of America as a vessel of intellectual decline.

His own education and background in Weimar provided Schirach with a broad knowledge of German literary and musical tradition. He began to attend the local Wilhelm-Ernst-Gymnasium around Easter 1916.<sup>61</sup> Only one year later, he was sent to the Waldpädagogium in Bad Berka, a boarding school near Weimar. This elitist school had only

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<sup>53</sup> See Max Paul Friedmann, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism. The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: UP, 2012), pp. 48-49.

<sup>54</sup> See Beyer, *Soziologie des Antiamerikanismus*, p. 34.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>56</sup> Otto von Gierke, *Unsere Friedensziele* (Berlin: Springer, 1917), p. 17.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1919), pp. 27-28.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>60</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>61</sup> See Stadtarchiv Weimar, Sammlung ‘Höhere Schule in Weimar’. The Wilhelm-Ernst-Gymnasium in Weimar was renamed Goethegymnasium in 1991.

opened a few years previously, in 1911. Most of its pupils came from wealthy families of the upper middle classes and the nobility.<sup>62</sup> Its design and curriculum were based on the ideas of educational reformer Hermann Lietz. According to the school programme, the institution saw its role not only in the education of the individual but also assumed responsibility on a national level: 'So möchten wir durch Bewahrung und Stählung der gebildeten Jugend mitwirken an der Erhaltung der offenkundig abnehmenden Wehrkraft und sittlichen Kraft unseres Volkes.'<sup>63</sup> Following the teachings of Lietz, the school relied on a simple diet, modest facilities in combination with physical exercise and outdoor activities in order to stimulate and cultivate the boys' intellectual, physical and moral growth equally. An urban environment was considered highly detrimental; it was only in close contact with nature, the school programme explains, that children could become healthy adults and true 'Vollmenschen'.<sup>64</sup> The boys were supposed to be raised to be considerate of the needs of others and of the community<sup>65</sup> and, as the programme explicitly states, were encouraged to respect other people's beliefs: 'Fernhalten aber wollen wir den Kindern jeden Fanatismus. Daher weisen wir auch weder Ausländer noch Andersgläubige von unserer Gemeinschaft zurück.'<sup>66</sup> These professions of acceptance were however in stark contrast with Lietz's own aggressive antisemitism.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the same tolerance does not appear to have been applied for instance to sexual orientation. According to its programme, the school considered itself to have an important role in the 'Kämpfe gegen die sexuellen Irrungen der Jugend',<sup>68</sup> which it tackled through physical exercise and education, through 'nüchterne Aufklärung der Kinder über das, was in der Entwicklungszeit in ihrem Körper vorgeht'.<sup>69</sup> The school's self-proclaimed liberalism is further called into question by the fact that the fees for tuition and accommodation for foreign students were 300 Marks higher than those for German students, who already had to pay the handsome sum of 1,800 Marks annually.<sup>70</sup> According to Schirach's own account, the years he spent at the Waldpädagogium were a profound experience and prepared the ground for the pedagogical and didactic ideals he would later

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<sup>62</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 233.

<sup>63</sup> Stadtarchiv Bad Berka/ Endemann: Informationsbroschüre des 'Waldpädagogiums Bad Berka' (1912), p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>65</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 29.



pursue in his office as Reichsjugendführer. Schirach biographer Wortmann argues that the maxims of the Waldpädagogium and the programme of the Adolf-Hitler-Schulen that Schirach developed in the 1930s indeed showed significant parallels. The values of self-discipline and subordination to the community that the school listed on its agenda were cornerstones of Schirach's pedagogical rhetoric after 1933.<sup>71</sup> Yet, during his career, Wortmann objects, Schirach's behaviour demonstrated repeatedly that neither moderation nor subordination defined his character. Besides, despite being a healthy and strong teenager, Wortmann points out that Schirach never became the athlete envisaged in Lietz's teachings and he also did not care to develop any manual skills to a higher degree.<sup>72</sup>

While Schirach grew up in the secluded environment of the Waldpädagogium, the First World War reached a new critical phase. From his own accounts, as a teenager he appears to have been mostly unaffected by the war for a long time. He was therefore unable to fully understand its dimensions or – when the war suddenly came to an end in November 1918 – the consequences of the German defeat. During his interviews with Lang, Schirach remembered an episode from his school days following the proclamation of the Weimar Republic. When news of the events spread to the school, he arranged for a new flag in black, red and gold to be sewn and, in an outbreak of nationalistic euphoria, hoisted it on the roof of one of the school buildings. His actions – once detected by the school's headmaster, who had fought in the war himself – earned him a stern rebuke.<sup>73</sup> If Schirach's memories are accurate, he later discussed the events with his mother, who declared:

Was ist das für ein Volk, das seine Fahne wechselt. Wir haben hier im Haus eine schwarz-weiße Fahne für Papa, wir haben eine grün-goldene Fahne für unseren Großherzog. [...] Wir haben eine schwarz-weiß-rote Fahne gehabt, die liegt auch noch da [...]. Sieh mal, ich bin als kleines Mädchen in Amerika als allererstes vor die Fahne getreten, und wir haben unserer Fahne die Referenz erwiesen. [...] Die Vorstellung, daß jemals in Amerika die Fahne sich ändern könnte, ist für uns etwas völlig Udenkbares. [...] Aber in Deutschland habe ich den Eindruck, daß es alle paar Jahre wieder eine neue Fahne gibt. Da kann ich eigentlich nicht mehr mit.<sup>74</sup>

This brief episode suggests that the need for a single and permanent flag and what it represented – a stable and united national identity – that was widely felt among the German

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<sup>71</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 30.

<sup>72</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>73</sup> See Langzeitinterviews II, pp. 49-50; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 30 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 20-21

<sup>74</sup> Langzeitinterviews II, pp. 49-50.

population had even reached the Americanophile von Schirachs. The lost war soon affected the family further when significant cuts were made to Carl von Schirach's military pension. He no longer received the annual sum of 1,300 Reichsmark and had to rely on his monthly pension of 695 Reichsmark. Additionally, he lost his position at the Weimar Hoftheater, following the forced resignation of his patron, the Grand Duke.<sup>75</sup>

In the following months Weimar became a centre of political events. In June 1919, the members of the National Assembly came together in the city and decided to consent unconditionally to the Treaty of Versailles. Over the course of the summer, the National Assembly met there repeatedly to discuss the new constitution, which finally came into effect on 11 August 1919. Baldur von Schirach witnessed these developments and the heated debates the assemblies brought with them at first hand, not least because some members stayed at his parents' home. He later recalled how he perceived the events:

Es hat mir einen tiefen Eindruck hinterlassen. [...] Ich mußte mir diesen ungeheuren Gegensatz zwischen dem Elend der Arbeitslosen und diesen in den Weimarer Lokalen öffentlich [...] zechenden Vertretern der Republik immer ansehen. Daraus ist mir ein gewisser Ekel geblieben, eine gewisse Abneigung. [...] Kurz gesagt, ich kam nicht zurecht. Das sollten nun die neuen nationalen Führer eines neuen Vaterlandes sein? Wir sahen sie eben als bezechte Spießler.<sup>76</sup>

Schirach's initial euphoria over the newly established republic and its flag was slowly supplanted by feelings of suspicion and hostility.

In October 1919, the family's loss of status and income were overshadowed by another blow. The eldest son, Karl, unexpectedly took his own life on 28 October, shortly after his nineteenth birthday.<sup>77</sup> He had been away at school, a Protestant monastery in Roßleben, at the time. After completing his education, Karl had had hopes of pursuing the career of an army officer. However, following the demobilisation of the German army and new laws stating that the number of officers could not exceed 4,000, he feared that this dream could no longer come true. Schirach later described his brother's suicide as a 'Kurzschlußreaktion',<sup>78</sup> a result of his disappointment over being denied his chance to fight in

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<sup>75</sup> See Langzeitinterviews IV, pp. 537-538; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 30 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 56.

<sup>77</sup> See Schularchiv Klosterschule Roßleben, Karl von Schirach, Journal Nummer 826, letter written by Michaelis, dated 29 October 1919.

<sup>78</sup> Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, p. 15.

the war. However, Wortmann sees it as an expression of Karl's 'Lebensuntüchtigkeit',<sup>79</sup> of his inability to adapt his plans to the change of circumstances. The school report by the headmaster following Karl's death paints the picture of a very introvert but intelligent and mature teenager. Schirach's remarks during the Lang interviews suggest that the family cultivated an idealised, larger than life memory of Karl, whom he described as 'ein in vieler Hinsicht genial veranlagter Mensch'.<sup>80</sup> For instance he recounts episodes about Karl's early and unusual gifts in ornithology, in taming and breeding wild animals. Some of them date back to times when Schirach was not yet born or would have been too young to remember and which were told to him by his mother.<sup>81</sup> After the loss of his brother, twelve-year-old Baldur found himself forced to redefine his own role within his family as well as his relationship with Germany:

Durch Karls Tod hatte ich mehr verloren als einen Bruder. Er war für mich ein Mensch, zu dem ich aufblickte und dem ich nacheifern wollte. Ich rückte mit meinen zwölf Jahren an seine Stelle. Ich hatte ein Erbe angetreten, das mich zu besonderer Liebe zum Vaterlande verpflichtete.<sup>82</sup>

His reaction, as Schirach remembered and chose to present it, shows that his national pride was not weakened by his brother's death. He did not recoil and turn his back on the aggressive nationalism and the political events that preoccupied his and Karl's generation and indirectly led to Karl's suicide. Instead, he accepted Karl's death as honourable and meaningful and even believed that he could find an obligation for himself in it. Karl's suicide highlights how strongly the events of the German defeat and the post-war chaos were felt even among those who had not experienced the battlefield themselves.<sup>83</sup> Although Karl was not a direct casualty of the war, for his younger brother his death seemed inextricably linked with it. This close connection between death and duty, between destruction and meaning later became one of the recurrent themes of Schirach's poetry and will be explored in more

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<sup>79</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 31.

<sup>80</sup> Langzeitinterviews IV, pp. 536-537. Schirach's fond memories of his brother are partly confirmed but also put in perspective by a report written by Karl's teacher, in which he describes the teenager as 'ein über seine Jahre reifer junger Mann, sicher im Auftreten, gewandten Benehmens, gut begabt und von eindringendem Verstande. [...] Seinen Mitschülern fühlte er sich überlegen, war launenhaft und für seine Jugend reichlich blasiert, mit einem starken Anflug spöttischen und hochmütigen Wesens. Er war nicht gerade unzugänglich, aber auch nicht leicht zu beeinflussen und ging gern seinen eigenen Weg. Es war schwer, ihm näher zu kommen, aber im ganzen war er doch ein erfreulicher Schüler'. Schularchiv Klosterschule Roßleben, Karl von Schirach, Brief zu Journal 885, letter written by Spangenberg, Klassenleiter zur UI [Unterprima].

<sup>81</sup> See Langzeitinterviews IV, p. 537.

<sup>82</sup> Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, p. 15.

<sup>83</sup> See also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 31 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 22-24.

detail in chapters four and six.

Further research into the connection with his brother reveals that Baldur von Schirach was not the only member of his family who wrote poetry; a fact that has not been mentioned in either Wortmann's or Koontz's study. Karl left behind seven handwritten and previously unpublished poems in Roßleben, entitled *Letzte Gedichte*, which he composed in the autumn of 1919. The title indicates that he, as his brother confirmed, wrote poems regularly – poems which, considering his young age, foreshadow his decision to end his life.<sup>84</sup> In length, style and tone, Karl's poems are quite unlike those his younger brother was later to write. They are all written in free verse; they do not follow traditional (high) forms of poetry. The poems show a preoccupation with themes of fighting, suffering, the hope of freedom, but also with death, decay, loss, rest and restlessness. Karl emphasises the beauty but also fleeting quality of the natural cycle. There are frequent neologisms (for example 'Schilfrohrumstöhnten' and 'meerwärtsgleitende sterbende Seele'), metaphors and figurative language. The grim, even morbid tone is perhaps best exemplified by the following example, the untitled poem number four. Despite its exaggerated pathos and at times unoriginal use of imagery, it demonstrates poetic creativity and can be seen as a testimony to the mentality of a generation. The school programmes of both Karl and Baldur suggest that the brothers at least spent the summer months and holidays together in Weimar.<sup>85</sup> Although there is no proof that Baldur von Schirach knew this particular poem, it contributes to our knowledge of his wider surrounding. It gives new insight into the intellectual and artistic environment provided by his family that affected and stimulated him during his youth.

Kultur, oh schwarzes Wort  
du Moloch unserer Zeiten,  
der du in deinem Schoß  
birgst Not und Trunkenheit.  
der Menschheit Segen  
wirst du wohl geheißen,  
der Menschheit Fluch ist's  
was dein Schoß erzeugt.  
denn du gebarst den Staat!

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<sup>84</sup> Schirach mentions that his brother wrote poems both in English and in German in his interviews with Lang. See Langzeitinterviews IV, p. 537.

<sup>85</sup> The Waldpädagogium's school programme specifies: 'Die Ferien verbringen die Kinder in der Regel zu Hause.' Stadtarchiv Bad Berka/ Endemann (1912), p. 30. In his report to Karl von Schirach's parents, the school's headmaster remarks that the pupils spend the summer with their families. See Schularchiv Klosterschule Roßleben, Karl von Schirach, Journal Nummer 826.

Fluch ihm! In seinem Schwanken  
 Löst dumpfes Frohnen wilden Taumel ab.  
 Fluch ihm!  
 der uns gequält  
 mit allzu feinen Schmerzen,  
 Ins Paradies des Geistes uns entrückt,  
 um uns erbarmungslos hinabzustoßen  
 Zur Hölle bleierner Alltäglichkeit.  
 Wo Kolben wimmern  
 Schwarze Räder knirschen,  
 Im Schlamm sich ölige Maschinen winden  
 Beschau sie dir!  
 Sieh! Menschen sind es Menschen  
 Und was sie treiben heißt Kultur, Kultur!<sup>86</sup>

The combination of the semantic fields of birth, death, technology, nature, salvation and damnation was by no means novel in poetry of the time, but it is used effectively. The poem's powerful imagery and language are not restrained by either a regular metre or rhyme scheme. The repeated exclamations and the pathos-filled, almost Expressionist tone add to the intensity of the anger and the pain that is expressed. The state is explicitly mentioned in line nine and it grammatically dominates the following lines up until line sixteen. It is central to the poem, both thematically and spatially. The official proclamation of the Weimar Republic took place a few weeks *after* Karl's death but the solidification of a new German state had become more tangible than ever by autumn 1919. Given that the Schirach family witnessed the negotiations in Weimar, the poem can be read as a reference to the Weimar Republic, but also as a commentary on the modern state in itself. For instance, in the poem, the state is not perceived as a direct result of the war, which is not even explicitly mentioned, but is seen in a wider context as a result of a general cultural decline: 'Kultur [...] / der Menschheit Fluch ist's / [...] denn du gebarst den Staat!' Culture itself is addressed as a personified entity that brings forth man-made change. It is not understood as a way to redeem and save humanity but as the cause of its physical and intellectual decline: 'Not und Trunkenheit'. The state appears as fragile and unreliable 'In seinem Schwanken', and although it promises to put an end to the 'wilden Taumel', to the instability of the war years, it brings only monotony and hardship; it brings 'dumpfes Frohnen'. The term 'Frohnen' with its

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<sup>86</sup> Copies of this and other poems were made available upon request by the Klosterschule Roßleben as part of the school archive material kept on Karl von Schirach, entitled 'Karl Benedikt von Schirach: Letzte Gedichte. Herbst 1919'.

connotations of medieval and Early Modern society and implications of strict subordination and dependency is in stark contrast with the ideals of a modern democratic state. Karl von Schirach blends images of birth ('in deinem Schoß' and 'gebarst den Staat') with biblical vocabulary ('Moloch', 'Paradies' and 'Hölle') and Expressionist rhetoric ('Hölle bleierner Alltäglichkeit'). The contrast between the ideas of culture not being 'der Menschheit Segen' but being 'der Menschheit Fluch' in lines five and seven is underlined anaphorically.

Although there is no direct evidence that Karl read Expressionist poetry, the rhetoric used here is highly reminiscent of it. In the foreword to Kurt Pinthus' collection *Menschheitsdämmerung. Ein Dokument des Expressionismus*, which was published in 1920 (one year after Karl's death), Pinthus wrote:

Aber man fühlte immer wieder deutlicher die Unmöglichkeit einer Menschheit, die sich ganz und gar abhängig gemacht hatte von ihrer eigenen Schöpfung, von ihrer Wissenschaft, von Technik, Statistik, Handel und Industrie, von einer erstarrten Gemeinschaftsordnung, bourgeoisen und konventionellen Bräuchen.<sup>87</sup>

This feeling of being overpowered (and threatened to be destroyed) by the rationalised, anonymous modern society is expressed in a number of poems in the collection, Albert Ehrenstein's 'Ich bin des Lebens und des Todes müde', René Schickele's 'Grosstadtvolk', Georg Heym's 'Gott der Stadt' and Wilhelm Klemm's 'Meine Zeit' to name just a few. The latter opens:

Gesang und Riesenstädte, Traumlawinen, Verblaßte Länder, Pole ohne Ruhm,  
[...] Die Seele schrumpft zu winzigen Komplexen.  
Tot ist die Kunst. Die Stunden kreisen schneller.  
O meine Zeit! So namenlos zerrissen [...].<sup>88</sup>

The poets published in Pinthus' collection still welcomed the revolution, which they hoped would bring a new order, and the new state that would bring peace and unity. In Walter Hasenclever's poem *Der politische Dichter*, which was first published in 1918, the poet is assigned a crucial role in the revolution: 'Er [der Dichter] wird den Bund der Staaten gründen./ Das Recht des Menschentums. Die Republik.'

In Karl von Schirach's poem, however, the speaker cannot share this optimism. Instead, he utters wild curses. The repetition of 'Fluch ihm [dem Staat]' in lines ten and

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<sup>87</sup> Kurt Pinthus, ed., *Menschheitsdämmerung*, 37th edn. (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2016), p. 26.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

thirteen reinforces the bitterness felt against the new state, 'der uns gequält/ mit allzu feinen Schmerzen'. This line can either be read as a continuation of the image of birth or simply as a vivid description of the pain felt over the cruel trick that has been played on the speaker: 'Ins Paradies des Geistes uns entrückt/ um uns erbarmungslos/ hinabzustoßen'. Whereas natural and biblical imagery dominates the first half of the poem, technological images prevail in the second half. Technology is shown as being at odds with nature and not functioning properly: 'Räder knirschen/ [...] Im Schlamm sich ölige Maschinen winden'. It is given almost human qualities, for instance the 'Kolben wimmern'. The negative thoughts and fears are underlined by the onomatopoeic language ('wimmern' and 'knirschen') and the colour associations ('Schwarze Räder' and the dark colour of mud). The last four lines of the poem mark a turning point: the machines, which previously have only been given human qualities, are revealed to be humans after all. The speaker takes a closer look ('Beschau sie dir!') and finds that it is not machines but people squirming in the mud ('Sieh! Menschen sind es Menschen'). The last line brings the poem back to the key word it started with: 'Und was sie treiben heißt/ Kultur, Kultur!' Karl von Schirach thus emphasises again the negative connotations of the term that were begun in the first line ('Kultur, oh schwarzes Wort'), by contrasting the conventional idea of culture as the epitome of a refined and developed society with what he sees as the pitiful reality: mankind has not mastered nature and risen to new heights. It has fallen hard and is in a very miserable state, literally covered in dirt.

### Teachers and mentors

Following Karl's suicide, Emma and Carl von Schirach decided to take their younger son out of school. From the age of twelve onwards, he was then tutored privately at home, where he also began to participate in his parents' social life.<sup>89</sup> Although no longer employed at the local theatre, his father was still an active member of the Weimar social and cultural elite. He was a member and also president of the Goethe-Gesellschaft, the Shakespeare-Gesellschaft and the Weimarer Künstlerverein.<sup>90</sup> Musicians, composers, singers and writers still frequented the Schirach household. Carl von Schirach and his son regularly visited the theatre, where

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<sup>89</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 45.

<sup>90</sup> See Kirsten, *Weimar im Banne*, p. 114; Langzeitinterviews I, p. 54.

the family owned a private box. According to Wortmann, this exposure to the theatrical world played a significant role in the development of young Baldur von Schirach's sense of heroic poses and dramatic effects that would later enable him to become a highly skilled Nazi propagandist.<sup>91</sup>

Although Weimar could no longer claim to be the cultural centre it once had been, the city still profited from its cultural inheritance and indeed managed to attract new and innovative artists, an aspect that has been overlooked in previous accounts of Schirach's early years. The Bauhaus art school, founded by Walter Gropius, was based in Weimar between 1919 and 1925. Highly influential in modernist architecture and design, the school promoted the synthesis of art and craft: its students were educated in the arts and also received technical training.<sup>92</sup> In Gropius's mind the school should ideally have very practical and societal benefits. He hoped that it would improve the situation of the individuals it educated, since their training would make them more qualified on the job market, while believing at the same time that his project could also benefit society as a whole.<sup>93</sup> Gropius's ideas sparked little enthusiasm in conservative circles. Opponents of the project scoffed at what was contemptuously nicknamed the 'Handwerkerschule', they took offence at the unconventional appearance of some of the Bauhaus students and demanded that the previous art school should be restored.<sup>94</sup> The conflict surrounding the Bauhaus school is not mentioned in Wortmann's and Koontz's studies; it is however a very useful example to demonstrate the opposing intellectual camps that existed in (and divided) Weimar society. What is more, Schirach's mentors took an active part in this conflict. In January 1919, Carl von Schirach became a member of the newly founded *Neue Weimarer Literarische Gesellschaft* along with other influential citizens such as the *völkisch* writer Friedrich Lienhard and the poet Johannes Schlaf. This conservative society, that could boast more than one hundred members, hoped to restore classical Weimar as a site of high literature and the stage. The society's influence added considerably to the hostile climate in Weimar towards Gropius's project.<sup>95</sup> Carl von Schirach opposed it as did Ziegler, with whom Carl had become friends over their shared passion for the theatre. Ziegler had established himself as a cultural

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<sup>91</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 32.

<sup>92</sup> See Ute Ackermann, 'Das Bauhaus und die Weimarer Klassik,' in *Klassik und Avantgarde. Das Bauhaus in Weimar 1919-1925*, eds. Hellmut Th. Seemann and Thorsten Valk (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), pp. 26-27.

<sup>93</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>94</sup> See Annette Seemann, *Weimar. Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Munich: Beck, 2012), p. 274.

<sup>95</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 275-276.



authority in Weimar and was still complaining about the ‘orientalisch-bolschewistisch gerichtete[n] Baustil [von] Gropius und Genossen’<sup>96</sup> in 1932, when the school had already long moved to Dessau. Even among more liberal circles the developments in Weimar were viewed with scepticism. An initial supporter of the project, Kommerzienrat Adolf Pochwart, wrote in May 1919, retracting his approval:

Weimar hat schließlich seinen Weltruf einzig und allein der Tradition zu danken. Die dortigen Institute haben die heilige Pflicht, diese Tradition weiterzuführen, [...]. Tut Weimar nun seine Schuldigkeit nicht, so erwächst eben nicht nur der Stadt Weimar und ihrer Bevölkerung, sondern der ganzen zivilisierten Welt [...] ein unermeßlicher Schaden. Wenn ich mir nun aber die futuristischen und kubistischen Bilder bzw. ‘Schöpfungen’ [...] ansehe, dann muß ich einfach mit vielen hundert anderen, die unter reiner Kunst eben etwas ganz anderes verstehen, doch wirklich sagen: hier ist dieser Weg bereits völlig verloren gegangen, hier ist die Kunst bereits in Atome zertrümmert und, auf gut deutsch gesagt: in diese Kunst ist der Bolschewismus eingezogen.<sup>97</sup>

Pochwart argued that Weimar should devote its efforts solely to the preservation of the past, rather than contributing to future innovations. His religiously inflected language when referring to the former contrasts noticeably with the scientific, biologicistic vocabulary that Pochwart employs in his condemnation of the latter. The Bauhaus artworks are associated with loss, violent destruction, even infiltration.

The critical reactions against Gropius’s concept naturally led to a backlash from his associates and supporters. Avant-garde architect Adolf Behne defended Gropius’s concept aggressively: ‘Wir lehnen es ab, uns mit Leuten künstlerisch auseinander zu setzen, die aus Schiller und Goethe eine muffige Attraktion ihres Fremden- und Verkehrsvereins machen und für die alles Neue unbesehen eine Gefahr ist.’<sup>98</sup> Baldur von Schirach’s own negative reaction to the Bauhaus, if his own account is to be believed, was however by no means ‘unbesehen’. The school not only devoted its resources to the education of its students but also hoped to demonstrate its practical potential by completing several housing construction projects. In 1923, it first exhibited the model Haus am Horn, a modern, low-cost, space-efficient building for workers and their families that was designed to be easily mass-produced. In his interviews with Lang, Schirach said he visited the completed model. Despite the respect he claims to have

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<sup>96</sup> Justus H. Ulbricht, ‘“Kunstwerk” versus “Zerrbild”. Der Kampf gegen das Bauhaus im Kontext antiavantgardistischer Kunst- und Kulturkritik,’ in Seemann and Valk (2009), p. 306.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in: Volker Wahl, ‘Die Kontroverse um die moderne Kunst in Weimar 1919. Der Beginn des “Bauhausstreits,”’ in Seemann and Valk (2009), pp. 298-299 and Volker Wahl, *Das staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar. Dokumente zur Geschichte des Instituts 1919-1926* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009), p. 31.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Ackermann, ‘Das Bauhaus’, p. 18.

had for Gropius's architectural talent, he – perhaps in another attempt at self-justification – recalls having had practical doubts regarding costs and feasibility. He did not think that the average family could have afforded a house as it was designed by Gropius: 'Es war mal wieder so etwas typisch deutsches, ein idealistisches Etwas, das der Wirklichkeit nicht standhielt.'<sup>99</sup> In retrospect, Schirach makes no comment on the aesthetics of the model house, neither does he specify the reasons why he visited it in the first place: out of curiosity, out of genuine interest in the project or perhaps even to disturb and ridicule the exhibition tour? However, his memory of it demonstrates the importance of the Bauhaus episode as a showcase of the confrontation between conservative and progressive forces active in Weimar at the time.

Between September 1923 and summer 1926 Schirach attended the Staatliche Musikschule in Weimar in order to improve his piano-playing.<sup>100</sup> The school was led by pianist Bruno Hinze-Reinhold, a great admirer of Liszt. According to the school's records, even the Bauhaus festival week in August 1923 that attracted highly influential modernist composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Ernst Křenek seems to have been entirely ignored by this tradition-steeped institute,<sup>101</sup> once again proving that, although innovative and traditionalist artistic circles existed side by side in Weimar, they mostly stayed out of each other's way. There are no records of Schirach taking part in any of the school's public performances.<sup>102</sup> During his interviews with Lang, Schirach recalled that he at one point considered becoming a conductor. He came from a musically talented family: his father played the violin; his sister established herself as an opera singer, first in Leipzig, then moving on to the Nationaltheater in Mannheim in 1925.<sup>103</sup> Baldur, however, eventually dismissed the idea of pursuing a musical career: 'Ich kam dann zu der nüchternen Feststellung: Für die Musik langt es nicht, laß es sein.'<sup>104</sup> This view was evidently shared by his teachers. School director Hinze-Reinhold later remembered the teenager: Baldur von Schirach 'war sechzehnjährig Gastschüler meiner Musikschule und machte einen

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<sup>99</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 55.

<sup>100</sup> The school has since been renamed Hochschule für Musik 'Franz Liszt' Weimar. See also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 32.

<sup>101</sup> See Huschke, *Zukunft Musik*, p. 157.

<sup>102</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>103</sup> Rosalind von Schirach eventually became a member of the Deutsche Oper Berlin (1930-35). Unlike her brother, she was sceptical of the National Socialist regime and in the late 1930s her career began to dwindle. See K.J. Kutsch and Leo Riemens, *Großes Sängerlexikon 4*, 3rd edn. (Munich: Saur, 1997), p. 3104.

<sup>104</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 55.

unbedeutenden Eindruck, schrieb aber damals schon aufreizende Gedichte.’<sup>105</sup>

His poetic talents soon also caught the attention of other culturally influential figures in Weimar. Ziegler, who was one of the first to provide a publication opportunity for the teenager’s poems, had studied literature, (art) history and philosophy in Cambridge, Jena and Greifswald before settling in Weimar in 1922, where he attended private lectures by Adolf Bartels and worked as editor for the latter’s journal *Deutsches Schrifttum*. In 1924, he founded his own weekly journal *Der Völkische*. In 1925, *Der Völkische* merged with *Deutsche Aar*, a journal previously published by Fritz Sauckel, who was later to become Gauleiter of Thuringia. The result was *Der Nationalsozialist*, a journal that first appeared in Weimar every fortnight and later weekly. The ties between Ziegler and the NSDAP were strong. In October 1927 the journal changed its title to *Der Nationalsozialist. Das Zentralwochenblatt der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei*. It was still published in Weimar, but it was now printed by the party’s official publishing house Franz Eher, which also published the party’s official organ, the *Völkischer Beobachter*.

Ziegler was also the founder of the Knappenschaft that Schirach joined in 1924. In his interviews with Lang, Schirach recounted:

Ich war damals in einen sogenannten Völkischen Wehrverband eingetreten, denn wir Thüringer [sic] waren gezwungen uns gegen die kommunistische Umsturzgefahr selbst zu schützen. Und so, wie unsere Väter in der Bürgerwehr waren, wie das damals hieß, waren wir Jungens aus eigenem in völkische Wehrverbände eingetreten, ich in die sogenannte Knappenschaft, die an Samstagen und Sonntagen ausgebildet wurde von ehemaligen Soldaten und aktiven Soldaten, die der sogen. Schwarzen Reichswehr angehörten.<sup>106</sup>

If Schirach’s memories are accurate, the Weimar Knappenschaft troop was even inspected by the former general Erich Ludendorff. This is presented as a moment of great disillusionment. Ludendorff, apparently not impressed by the makeshift uniforms, weaponry and military education that the young men had received, left the inspection field without a word. Schirach claims that he was cured of his admiration for the man forever.<sup>107</sup> Perhaps his resentment at Ludendorff’s lack of approval abated sooner than he later cared to admit. In January 1928, he published an article about Ludendorff’s latest book in *Der Nationalsozialist*,

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<sup>105</sup> Quoted in Huschke, *Zukunft Musik*, p. 157.

<sup>106</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 42.

<sup>107</sup> See *ibid.* I, p. 43; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 34 and pp. 36-37 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 24-27.

in which he vehemently defended the man and his work as a bulwark against the threat of 'Weltjudentum'.<sup>108</sup>

The Knappenschaft not only provided its members with (para-)military instruction, it also focused on their intellectual education. The young men were introduced to Ziegler's antisemitic and *völkisch* ideology.<sup>109</sup> Even before 1933 he had sought to rid theatre programmes of what he considered Jewish influence and 'das Deutschtum auf Schritt und Tritt verhöhnende'<sup>110</sup> plays. He was also an admirer of the works of Bartels and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, which he made a part of the teenagers' education.<sup>111</sup> During the Nuremberg trials, Schirach remembered:

Ich beschäftigte mich damals mit den Werken des Bayreuther Denkers Chamberlain, mit den 'Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts', mit den Schriften von Adolf Bartels, mit seiner 'Weltgeschichte der Literatur' und der 'Geschichte der deutschen Nationalliteratur'. [...] Das ausschlaggebende antisemitische Buch, das ich damals las [...], war das Buch von Henry Ford 'Der internationale Jude'. Ich las es und wurde Antisemit.<sup>112</sup>

This is obviously a simplified version of Schirach's own reaction to the book. In his interviews with Lang, he elaborated: 'Ja, ich wurde nun [...] ein *bewusster* (my emphasis) Antisemit. Ich hielt also die Ausschaltung der Juden aus der staatlichen Führung für eine absolute Notwendigkeit.'<sup>113</sup> According to Schirach, Ford's book awakened and channelled antisemitic prejudices that up until that point he had not been consciously aware of and that he claims had not been encouraged by his family, although he had previously noticed a latent antisemitism in particular in the military circles of his father's earlier profession:

Wenn man an das Milieu des alten Berlin denkt, aus dem mein Vater als Offizier stammt, da war das doch so, die Leute waren irgendwie antisemitisch angehaucht, aber es bestand eine sehr intime und oft lebenslange Freundschaft mit bestimmten alteingesessenen jüdischen Familien. Das ging nebeneinander her. Ich kann nicht sagen, daß ich in meinem Elternhaus irgendwie antisemitisch geimpft worden bin, von meiner Mutter her schon gar nicht.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Vernichtung der Freimaurerei!', *Der Nationalsozialist* 5, second January issue (1928).

<sup>109</sup> Even in 1964, Ziegler still publicly declared: 'Echte Völker empfinden nicht nur "national" sondern auch "völkisch", wobei wir unter "völkisch" einen biologischen und ethnologischen Begriff verstehen. Wenn ich bekenne, daß ich "völkisch" denke und fühle, so tue ich dies aus dem Wesen meines "Volktums" heraus, dem ich von den Ahnen her angehöre.' Hans Severus Ziegler, *Adolf Hitler, aus dem Erleben dargestellt* (Göttingen: Schütz, 1964), p. 26.

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Kirsten, *Weimar im Banne*, p. 110.

<sup>111</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>112</sup> International Military Tribunal [from here on referred to as IMT], *Der Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof XIII* (Munich: Delphin, 1948), pp. 406-407.

<sup>113</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 208.

<sup>114</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 61.

Wortmann's biography and Koontz's study engage only fleetingly with the influence of these antisemitic texts by Bartels, Chamberlain and Ford. A short overview of the books' core arguments and publication history will help to understand and contrast the authors' ideological approaches. Ford (1863-1947), founder of the Ford Motor company, was the author of several antisemitic pamphlets and articles in which he tried to argue the existence of an international Jewish conspiracy. Between 1920 and 1922, he published a collection of these pamphlets in four volumes, entitled *The international Jew*. A translated edition was published in two volumes in Germany in 1921. The book was an immediate success, in particular among the advocates of the *Dolchstoßlegende*. But even beyond *völkisch* circles Ford's theories were rarely put to critical scrutiny or rejected outright.<sup>115</sup> Ford's defence of antisemitism is veiled in his criticism of the world of finance:

Es gibt einen Über-Kapitalismus, den allein der Wahn trägt, Gold sei Glück. Es gibt eine Ober-Regierung, die keiner Regierung verbündet ist und doch die Hand auf ihnen allen lasten läßt. Es gibt eine Rasse, einen Teil der Menschheit, die niemals und nirgends willkommen gewesen ist und der es doch gelungen ist, sich zu einer Macht zu erheben, die auch die stolzesten Rassen nicht beansprucht hatten [...].<sup>116</sup>

Ford justified the marginalisation of Jewish individuals or communities throughout history, with reference to the 'jüdische Fähigkeit, mit Regierungen Geschäfte zu machen',<sup>117</sup> since this would usually lead to envy. He warned against modern business methods that, he prophesied, would lead to Jewish monopolies and allow them to increase prices any time at their will, leaving the rest of the population at their mercy.<sup>118</sup> Occasionally, he resorted to biologicistic vocabulary, for instance in his characterisation of nomadic Jews, who, Ford claimed, lacked a sense of national heritage and had no scruples in using laws to their advantage to enrich themselves at the expense of their 'Wirtsvölker'.<sup>119</sup> Racial ideology was mixed with an increasing conspiratorial tone, for instance when he made accusations of a worldwide exchange of information in order to secure Jewish financial dominance:

Die jüdische Rasse hat stets einen klaren Begriff von dem Vorteil gehabt, der sich aus Neuigkeiten gewinnen läßt. Das war einer ihrer Machtfaktoren von frühesten Zeiten an. [...] Die Erde wurde im

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<sup>115</sup> See Christiane Eifert, 'Henry Ford,' in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart 2/1 Personen*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), pp. 1-2, 7-8, 241.

<sup>116</sup> Henry Ford, *Der internationale Jude 1*, 9th edn. (Leipzig: Hammer, 1922), p. 24.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>118</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Interesse ihrer Rasse ausspioniert, so wie beispielsweise unser ganzer Planet unter den wachsamen Blicken jüdischer Agenten – meist Nicht-Juden – bezüglich des Bekanntwerdens neuer Goldvorkommen steht.<sup>120</sup>

Ford also suspected Jewish influence behind the First World War: 'Der jüdische Einfluss in Deutschland trat während des Krieges besonders stark in den Vordergrund. Er kam mit der Genauigkeit und Sicherheit einer Wurfmine, als wäre alles schon vorbereitet gewesen.'<sup>121</sup> Ford derived his own authority from his success as self-made businessman. He claimed to feel responsible not only for his own workers, but (as an influential entrepreneur) for society as a whole. Consequently, he wanted to share his knowledge and experience to further social reformation.<sup>122</sup> In American society, Ford's pamphlets were met with great criticism and in 1922 Ford was even forced to retract his book. However, in Germany, sales continued unchecked. By 1933, more than 100,000 copies had been printed.<sup>123</sup> Schirach later remembered:

Was Henry Ford nun aus dem amerikanischen Wirtschaftsleben und Finanzleben und politischen Leben da zusammengetragen hat [...], das hat mich außerordentlich beeindruckt. [...] da [wurden] nun Dinge aneinandergereiht [...], die ich als Fakten akzeptierte, weil eben die Autorität von Henry Ford dahinter stand. [...] Henry Ford war für mich irgendwie der Schöpfer des ganzen modernen Industrialismus und wurde von mir maßlos bewundert. Ich sah nun dieses Buch eigentlich überall. [...] Dieses Buch ging von Hand zu Hand.<sup>124</sup>

Ford and the other authors should be mentioned here because they illustrate the intellectual influences Schirach was exposed to as a teenager, which were widespread at the time and also endorsed by his elders and role models around him. Wortmann takes a similar view: '[Es wäre] verfehlt, in der Lektüre das auslösende Moment für Schirachs Antisemitismus zu sehen; vielmehr hat sie lediglich die argumentative Basis und scheinbar rationale Begründung für seine längst vorhandene Judenfeindschaft geliefert.'<sup>125</sup>

Today, the name of Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) is inseparably linked with the National Socialist movement. He was a writer of British and German descent, whose texts were written first and foremost for the educated German bourgeoisie. Chamberlain was an early admirer of Hitler and his writing was easily adaptable for the

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pp. 178-179.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>122</sup> See Eifert, 'Henry Ford', pp. 1-2.

<sup>123</sup> See Ford Henry, *Der internationale Jude*, 29th edn. (Leipzig: Hammer, 1933).

<sup>124</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 205.

<sup>125</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 35.

movement.<sup>126</sup> In his main work *Die Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, he draws parallels between human and animal development, following the theory of social Darwinism. However, Chamberlain did not simplistically believe that racial characteristics could be bound to linguistic or anatomical characteristics, such as eye-, hair- or skin colour. He believed that 'race' would also manifest itself intellectually, mentally and psychologically: 'Rasse ist ein gesteigerter Lebenszustand, der durch reine Züchtung, verbunden mit besonderen, einseitig fördernden Umständen, erzeugt wird, und durch welchen gewisse Anlagen des Körpers oder auch gewisse Züge des Charakters und des Intellektes eine frühe ungeahnte, individuell differenzierende Entwicklung erfahren.'<sup>127</sup> His line of argumentation was highly flawed because it was largely circular: he would derive racial characteristics from psychological or intellectual qualities and then declare these qualities to be characteristics of a specific Volksgemeinschaft.<sup>128</sup> Using this as pseudo-scientific evidence, Chamberlain tried to argue the superiority of the 'Aryan', and particularly, the Germanic 'race'.<sup>129</sup> The resulting tension between the culturally creative Germanic 'race' and the supposedly culturally destructive Jewish 'race', Chamberlain reasoned, would inevitably lead to a struggle between them and finally to the fall of Judaism. To this construct he added a religious element, the idea of an 'Aryan' Jesus, whose heritage created the struggle between the 'Aryan' Christian and Jewish materialist ideology. Chamberlain thus delivered a cultural and philosophical explanation of historical events that appealed to common prejudices against the Jewish population even beyond conservative bourgeois and *völkisch* circles.<sup>130</sup>

Chamberlain, like other antisemites such as Wagner for instance, had however no problem in distinguishing between Jewish individuals and the idea of a Jewish people and indeed upheld friendships with Jewish intellectuals.<sup>131</sup> The incoherence of Chamberlain's idea of race and of his line of argumentation was a source for criticism and ridicule for his contemporaries. Sociologist Franz Oppenheimer remarked that Chamberlain appeared to decide whether he considered someone Jewish or not based on his sympathy or antipathy towards a person, like a divining rod which he claimed to use in order to solve the mysteries

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<sup>126</sup> See Anja Lobenstein-Reichmann, 'Houston Stewart Chamberlains rassentheoretische Geschichts"philosophie"' in *Antisemitische Geschichtsbilder*, eds. Werner Bergmann and Ulrich Sieg (Essen: Klartext, 2009), pp. 142-143 and pp. 162-166; Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, p. 133.

<sup>127</sup> Quoted in Sven Brömsel, *Exzentrik und Bürgertum*, p. 45.

<sup>128</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>129</sup> See Benz, *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, p. 133.

<sup>130</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 133 and Lobenstein-Reichmann, 'Chamberlains Geschichts"philosophie"', p. 145.

<sup>131</sup> See Brömsel, *Exzentrik und Bürgertum*, pp. 45-46.

of history.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, Chamberlain's influence in particular in conservative bourgeois as well as nationalist and *völkisch* circles was considerable and indeed heightened by his marriage to Wagner's daughter Eva von Bülow in 1908. When Hitler first met the ageing Chamberlain in Bayreuth in 1924, the two men not only shared a vehement antisemitism but also love of Wagner. Another leading Nazi, Rosenberg, stylised Chamberlain as the prophetic 'Seher von Bayreuth', who had foreseen Germany's return to strength and glory in his book. Schirach's Chamberlain reception ran along similar lines. Speaking as Reichsjugendführer in January 1934, he addressed Germany's youth quoting *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* extensively and claiming the deceased Chamberlain for National Socialism: 'Was er [Chamberlain] über Volk und Staat, ja sogar über den ständischen Aufbau sagt, über Parlamentarismus und Einzelherrschaft sowie über Politik schlechthin, ist Satz für Satz Nationalsozialismus.'<sup>133</sup> On another occasion, a few months later, in July 1934, he even ranked him among his most important idols: 'Chamberlain gilt mir nach Hitler und Goethe als die bedeutungsvollste Offenbarung nordischen Geistes.'<sup>134</sup>

Another admirer of Chamberlain, Adolf Bartels (1862-1945), had lived in Weimar since 1895. When the Schirach family moved there almost fifteen years later, he had made himself a name as critic, writer, journalist, editor and literary historian. Today, Bartels is considered 'ein [...] entscheidende[r] Wegbereiter der nationalsozialistischen Ideologie'.<sup>135</sup> Never a member of the Nazi party because he felt that an allegiance to one party would constrain him as a writer,<sup>136</sup> Bartels was nevertheless a great supporter of Hitler and of National Socialism. This he demonstrated in pamphlets such as *Der Nationalsozialismus: Deutschlands Rettung* and his glowing review of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, in which he wrote: '[...] nach dem gründlichen Lesen seines Buches bin ich nun überzeugt, daß er der Politiker ist, den wir Deutschen zur Zeit gebrauchen, der uns "retten" kann [...] Alle ernsten Deutschen sollten Hitlers Werk in die Hand nehmen und es gründlich studieren. Die Zukunft Deutschlands ist ohne das Bekenntnis zu ihm nicht möglich.'<sup>137</sup> Bartel's main work was the

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<sup>132</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>133</sup> Baldur von Schirach, *Revolution der Erziehung. Reden aus den Jahren des Aufbaus*, 2nd edn. (Munich: Eher, 1939), p. 155.

<sup>134</sup> Institut für Zeitgeschichte/Zeitungssammlung/Baldur von Schirach [referred to as IfZ, ZSlg, BvS]: 'Chamberlains Vermächtnis. Eine Rede Baldur von Schirachs im Deutschlandsender', dated 6 July 1934.

<sup>135</sup> Kirsten, *Weimar im Banne*, p. 102.

<sup>136</sup> See Steven Nyole Fuller, *The Nazis' Literary Grandfather. Adolf Bartels and Cultural Extremism 1871-1945* (New York: Lang, 1996), p. 78 and p. 179.

<sup>137</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 165.



*Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, first published in 1901, which had been reprinted in eighteen editions by 1942. His pronounced antisemitism runs through all his publications. He applied the *völkisch* ideal of ‘racial hygiene’ to literature: ‘Die Gesamtheit einer Nationalliteratur bildet stets eine zusammenhängende Entwicklung, wie das Volkstum immer etwas Einheitliches, Organisches ist.’<sup>138</sup> Bartels was convinced that the authors’ purity of blood should be considered a criterion upon which literary texts were assessed. With a few exceptions, he demanded that Jewish authors be banned from literary work. To this end, he compiled a list of Jewish authors whom he rejected, but also listings of German authors whom he particularly recommended. In 1920, Bartels founded the ‘Bartels-Kreis’ which existed between 1920 and 1929. It had up to 110 active members of various professions (teachers, artists, clergymen) whose declared mission was the dissemination of *völkisch* thought in literary and cultural institutions. Applicants had to swear that they would be committed to the advancement of ‘gesunde[r] deutsche[r] Kunst, ins besondere Heimatkunst’.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, they had to sign a declaration stating their own racial purity and their intention to keep this intact, for instance by ruling out marriage to a Jew.<sup>140</sup> Outside of Weimar, Bartels’ radical, aggressive and vulgar antisemitism had led to his marginalisation, even among conservative circles. Since the turn of the century he had received fewer commissions, for instance from the influential conservative journal *Kunstwart*, for which he had worked regularly for many years previously.<sup>141</sup> In 1900, writer and critic Samuel Lublinski warned publicly: ‘Er ist ein Typhus. [...] Dieser Mann erscheint deshalb so gefährlich und so bekämpfungswert weil er [sic] – und mit ihm seine Genossenschaft – in Fleisch und Geist einen ursprünglich großen und entwicklungsschwangeren Gedanken vereinseitigt, verzerrt und verfälscht hat.’<sup>142</sup> Bartels became, by his own admission, the “bestgehaßte” Mann der deutschen Literatur der Gegenwart<sup>143</sup>. Nevertheless, his influence and popularity in Weimar were considerable. He was editor and writer of several antisemitic newspapers. He was a member and, from June 1907 onwards, Stellvertretender Schriftführer of the Schillerbund. Over 2,000 students attended its performances in Weimar in 1907, which were, as Bartels

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<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Thomas Neumann, *Völkisch-nationale Hebbelrezeption. Adolf Bartels und die Weimarer Nationalfestspiele* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1997), p. 96.

<sup>139</sup> Fuller, *The Nazis’ Literary Grandfather*, pp. 157.

<sup>140</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>141</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 76-81.

<sup>142</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>143</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 76.

intended, entirely classical: Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*, Kleist's *Prinz von Homburg* and Goethe's *Egmont*. He initiated and organised the first two Nationalfestspiele held in Weimar in 1909 and 1911 – Carl von Schirach and Ziegler were also involved in the organisation – and by 1915, the Schillerbund could boast 8,000 members. The Nationalfestspiele were largely successful and continued to be staged biennially until 1943.<sup>144</sup>

Carl von Schirach sent his son to Bartels in order to receive private lessons in literary history.<sup>145</sup> Many of Baldur von Schirach's publications show that he became an ardent admirer of the older man but was also fully aware of the criticism and rejection Bartels met with outside the league of his enthusiasts. The connection between Bartels and the Schirach family has already been pointed out by Wortmann, but the extent of Schirach's esteem is perhaps best demonstrated by his poems, which are not explored in Wortmann's study. In 1927, Schirach published a sonnet in which he addresses Bartels as 'du Großer, Treuer' and declares:

Nun faßt die Jugend deine harten Hände,  
die soviel Jahre einsam für sie litten:  
die Zeit ist um, da sie allein gestritten,  
jawohl! Die Einsamkeit hat nun ein Ende!<sup>146</sup>

One of his later articles, 'Bekenntnis zu Adolf Bartels', which essentially repeats the sentiments he had expressed in his poem, was published by the *Völkischer Beobachter*.<sup>147</sup> When they were still teenagers, Bartels trusted Baldur von Schirach and Rainer Schlösser, who was eight years his senior, to work as editors for his newspaper *Deutsches Schrifttum*, an experience which was very valuable for Schirach once he began working on his own journalism projects.<sup>148</sup>

In July 1925, a few months after his speech in Weimar, Hitler published *Mein Kampf*, which he had written in Landsberg prison.<sup>149</sup> Schirach claims that he read it eagerly, having

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<sup>144</sup> See Neumann, *Völkisch-nationale Hebbelrezeption*, pp. 99-104, 119-121, 125; Fuller, *The Nazis' Literary Grandfather*, pp. 93-94; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 24.

<sup>145</sup> See Fuller, *The Nazis' Literary Grandfather*, p. 91.

<sup>146</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'An Adolf Bartels,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 4, no. 45 (1927).

<sup>147</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Bekenntnis zu Bartels,' *Völkischer Beobachter. Bayernausgabe* (November 14, 1931).

<sup>148</sup> See Nina Okrassa, *Peter Raabe: Dirigent, Musikschriftsteller und Präsident der Reichsmusikkammer (1872-1945)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004), p. 57.

<sup>149</sup> See Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (New York: Vintage, 1975), pp. 201-219.

pre-ordered one of the first copies from the publisher. The following month he joined the NSDAP. He was registered as party member 17251.<sup>150</sup> In late October 1925, Hitler was in town again and attended the opera with Rudolf Heß and Ziegler. On this occasion, they had a chance encounter with Carl and Baldur von Schirach. According to Schirach, a brief conversation about the evening's production followed. Hitler's remarks about the performance and the general knowledge of classical music that they demonstrated were met with approval and resulted in an invitation to tea for the following day. Hitler, Schirach remembered, appeared in formal wear, greeted his mother with a kiss on her hand and presented her with a bouquet of flowers. The conversation almost exclusively revolved around music and art. Their guest impressed the Schirachs with his attentive, polite and mild manners.<sup>151</sup> After Hitler had left, Schirach recalled that his father remarked: 'Es ist mir eigentlich in meinem ganzen Leben noch nie jemand begegnet, der als Laie so viel von Musik versteht, vor allem von Wagner, wie dieser, Dein Hitler.'<sup>152</sup> His wife agreed: 'How well behaved, what good manners'<sup>153</sup> and added: 'At last a german [sic] patriot.'<sup>154</sup> In spite of his relief that his parents approved of his role model, Schirach recalled that this last remark affected him deeply at the time. He could not miss the implied criticism of her own offspring.<sup>155</sup> In addition to the fear of inadequacy that Schirach confessed to, he also struggled to make a decision regarding his choice of career as his Abitur drew nearer. By the time he passed his final exams at school, his plans were still uncertain.<sup>156</sup> Schirach's indecisiveness neither stemmed from a lack of resources nor connections but from an awareness of his own artistic mediocrity that could not be reconciled with his own (and his parents') expectations of great achievements. Finally, he decided to go to Munich, enrolling in Germanistik at the Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität on 30 April 1927.<sup>157</sup> Compared to

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<sup>150</sup> See BArch, Slg. BDC, SA-Unterlagen, Baldur von Schirach; Langzeitinterviews I, p 63; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 40-41 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 35.

<sup>151</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 47-49.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>155</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>156</sup> According to the student register, Schirach had been awarded the 'Reifezeugnis eines Realgymnasiums oder einer Studienanstalt realgymnasischer Richtung' confirming his own claim to have taken his Abitur at the Realgymnasium in Weimar. See Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität München [referred to as LMU]/Studentenkartei/Baldur von Schirach and LMU/Studierendenregister Sommer-Halbjahr 1927, p. 67. Langzeitinterviews I, p. 65.

<sup>157</sup> See LMU/Studentenkartei/Baldur von Schirach. Schirach's exact combination of courses remains unclear. According to his autobiography he studied German, English and Art History. See Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, p. 33. His

picturesque Weimar, Munich with its population of 600,000 was a vibrant metropolis with a thriving cultural life. Artists such as Heinrich and Thomas Mann and Max Halbe lived there.<sup>158</sup> However, according to Schirach, it was not the city's cultural attractions that interested him. In his interview with Lang he remembered passionately defending his choice to his father, who could not understand his fascination for the Bavarian capital: 'Ich möchte in der Nähe Hitlers sein.'<sup>159</sup>

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SA file confirms this information. See BArch, Slg. BDC, SA-Unterlagen, Baldur von Schirach. However, Sigmund notes that his wife Henriette said he studied English, Art History and Egyptology. See Anna Maria Sigmund, *Die Frauen der Nazis 1* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1998), p. 200. This is possible, as the LMU department of Egyptology was founded in 1923. Wortmann claims that Schirach occasionally sat in on lectures of other departments, including: 'Anglistik und Kunstgeschichte, Psychologie und Ägyptologie.' Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 47. The course registers of the time span in question no longer exist. There are similarly conflicting statements as to the exact duration of Schirach's career as a student. He claimed he studied for eight semesters. See Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, p. 40. According to his SA file (issued 13 March 1931) he was a student for four semesters. BArch, Slg. BDC, SA, Baldur von Schirach. However, the LMU student registers show he was enrolled for five semesters, from summer term in 1927 to summer term 1929. See LMU/Studierendenregister Sommer-Halbjahr 1927 – Sommer-Halbjahr 1929.

<sup>158</sup> See Mathias Rösch, *Die Münchner NSDAP 1925-1933. Eine Untersuchung zur inneren Struktur der NSDAP in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002), p. 27; David Clay Large, *Hitlers München. Aufstieg und Fall der Hauptstadt der Bewegung* (Munich: Beck, 1998), pp. 269-270.

<sup>159</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 46.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Taking the universities by storm: Schirach's 'neue Front'**

#### Patrons and supporters

In the 1920s, the Nazi party grew from a local political sect to a significant force that sought to appeal to the masses. Munich had become a logistics centre for the NSDAP. Other high-ranking party members besides Hitler had chosen to move there. In Munich, the party established a giant propaganda apparatus, and developed and tested its political programme and public appearances. Still, it did not achieve significant election results until 1930, when numbers increased sharply. The majority of party members in Munich were members of the middle class, craftsmen for example or owners of small businesses, who felt threatened by rising inflation and welcomed the authoritarian leadership and the radicalism of the NSDAP. The proportion of entrepreneurs, academics, artists and students among the Munich party members was also considerable.<sup>1</sup> At the age of twenty, Schirach entered into this highly politicised atmosphere of the city and soon became part of a closely-knit network around the most important political and ideological leaders of the up-and-coming Nazi movement. During his student years, several of Schirach's larger writing projects – journalistic as well as poetic – began to take shape and, I will argue, played a significant role in strengthening his ties to National Socialist functionaries and political writers. Additionally, they stabilised his position at the forefront of the nationalist student community. Today, they also give us further insight into his intellectual and ideological development (and radicalisation).

After relocating to Munich, Schirach for some time applied himself to his lectures and seminars. Due to generous financial support from his parents, he was able to enjoy a carefree student life: he lived in a spacious flat in central Munich, located conveniently near the university, heard lectures that interested him and frequently enjoyed the luxury of morning horse rides.<sup>2</sup> He moved in elegant circles, for instance he was a welcome guest in the salon of Elsa Bruckmann, wife of publisher Hugo Bruckmann. The high society couple were acquaintances of Carl von Schirach's brother, Friedrich; from the time that Baldur moved to Munich in 1927, he too was a regular guest at their house. From 1931 onwards,

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<sup>1</sup> See Andreas Heusler, *Das Braune Haus. Wie München zur 'Hauptstadt der Bewegung' wurde* (Munich: DVA, 2008), pp. 117-122.

<sup>2</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 2 and pp. 65-66.

the friendship became even closer, as he moved into a flat in their house.<sup>3</sup> The Bruckmanns had married in 1898 and their house in Munich had quickly become a meeting place for artists, scientists and intellectuals: among their guests were Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan George, and Thomas Mann. The Bruckmann salon is another example of how modernism and anti-democratic, totalitarian points of view were by no means mutually exclusive during this period. It served as a forum for art connoisseurs, scholars, industrialists and (political) reformers. Prominent Jewish figures such as author Karl Wolfskehl and businessman Walther Rathenau had been welcome guests as well as the previously mentioned openly antisemitic Houston Stewart Chamberlain.<sup>4</sup> Since the mid-1920s, future leaders of the Third Reich such as Rudolf Heß, Alfred Rosenberg and Hitler himself also frequented the salon. On his first visit in 1924, Hitler had astounded and fascinated the elegant guests with his unusual appearance, wearing his habitual trench coat and carrying a riding crop.<sup>5</sup> However, he conducted himself well and became a frequent visitor. He impressed Elsa von Bruckmann with his stories of the war and knowledge of music and art and her husband with his detailed knowledge of politics and history. Hitler's connection with the Bruckmanns was extremely useful to him, particularly during the time he was banned from speaking publicly. Technically, the Bruckmann salon did not qualify as a public space and Hitler regularly used the opportunity to dominate the evening conversation surrounded by an influential and well-to-do audience.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it meant he had established a connection with a successful publisher. Although *Mein Kampf* was not published by the Bruckmanns, his pamphlet *Der Weg zum Wiederaufstieg* was produced by Hugo Bruckmann's publishing house in 1927; Elsa Bruckmann advised on Hitler's manuscripts of the second part of *Mein Kampf* and also encouraged him to write his war memoirs.<sup>7</sup>

When Schirach had some time to spare, he wrote poems.<sup>8</sup> The intensification of his collaboration with Nazi publicists Ziegler and Goebbels is referred to in both Wortmann's and Koontz's studies.<sup>9</sup> However, neither make any attempt to assess the extent to which both

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<sup>3</sup> See Martynkewicz, *Salon Deutschland*, pp. 13-14, 47, 438, 453; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> See Martynkewicz, *Salon Deutschland*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>5</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 410-413.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 186, 421, 424-430.

<sup>8</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 39-40; Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 33-34.

men helped Schirach establish himself by considering the number of poems they (and others) published over what time span or indeed whether they showed a preference for certain poems. Such details will give a better understanding of his development as a poet of the movement as well as of his audience and reach. His collaboration with Ziegler continued after Schirach had moved to Munich. He began submitting various articles for publication in *Der Nationalsozialist*,<sup>10</sup> and Ziegler also continued to publish his poems. Altogether, *Der Nationalsozialist* published eighteen of these between 1925 and 1930, most of them in the years 1928 and 1929. The journal published three poems in 1925 and 1926, and then continued to do so on a more regular basis, publishing four or five poems per year, up until late 1930. Ziegler preferred poems about Hitler or dedicated to Hitler ('An Hitler!', 'Das Größte', 'Hitler', 'Sonett an Adolf Hitler zum Weimarer Tage', 'Des Führers Wächter' and 'Einem Führer') and was also the only one to print one of Schirach's very first poems, the sonnet 'An Adolf Bartels'. However, very few of the more aggressive poems that Schirach wrote during this period explicitly inciting, justifying and glorifying violence appeared in Ziegler's journal (for instance, he never published 'Auch Du!', 'Des Daseins Sinn', 'Durch Taten!' or 'Ehrfurcht'). Ziegler also only published a few of Schirach's overtly religious pieces ('Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle zu München' / 'Gott', 'Gebet' / 'Stoßgebet').

Beginning in April 1927, Schirach's poems were occasionally printed by the *Völkischer Beobachter* and its supplements *Der S.A. Mann* and *Vormarsch der Jugend*. Alfred Rosenberg was editor-in-chief of the *Völkischer Beobachter* in Munich at the time. According to Schirach, he and Rosenberg first met at the house of the Bruckmanns in 1927. He was, Schirach recalled, immediately taken with the older man's neat appearance, excellent manners and good education.<sup>11</sup> Between 1927 and 1932, Schirach's poems appeared fourteen times in the *Völkischer Beobachter* and its supplements, four in 1927, two in 1929, a peak of seven in 1930, and one poem in 1932. Rosenberg also published five of Schirach's poems in his *Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur* in the year 1929 and one poem, 'Des Daseins Sinn', was printed in *Der Weltkampf* that same year.<sup>12</sup> Whereas the *Völkischer Beobachter* and its supplements mostly published Schirach's more aggressive

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<sup>10</sup> For example Schirach, 'Nasse Rakete gegen Shakespeare,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 4, no. 39 (1927); Schirach, 'Warum ihn die Jugend liebt,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 4, third November issue (1927); Schirach, 'Vernichtung der Freimaurerei!'

<sup>11</sup> See Langzeitinterviews II, p. 221; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> See 'Baldur v. Schirach: 'Die Feier der neuen Front,' *Der Weltkampf* 6, no. 65 (1929), p. 44.

poems (such as ‘Durch Taten!’, ‘An die Reaktion’ and ‘Volk ans Gewehr’) and poems about the movement itself, its institutions and martyrs (for example ‘Der Sturmabteilung’, ‘Hitler-Jugend’ and ‘Horst Wessel’), Rosenberg’s *Mitteilungen* preferred to print Schirach’s more pathos-filled poems such as ‘Ehrfurcht’ and ‘Um unsre Augen...’.

Goebbels’s *Der Angriff* also became a willing platform for Schirach’s poetry, so much so that the widely circulated left-wing journal *Die Weltbühne* referred to him disparagingly as the ‘Hausdichter des “Angriffs”’.<sup>13</sup> It mostly printed the poems that challenge and address their audience (‘Was zweifelst du...’, ‘An die Reaktion’ and ‘Aufbruch’), but it also ran poems about the young generation that had been too young to fight in the war (‘Da ihr noch spieltet:’ and ‘Um unsre Augen...’). Goebbels first printed a poem by Schirach (‘Hitler’) in April 1929 and continued to publish him until 1933. Altogether, twenty-nine of Schirach’s poems were published in *Der Angriff* and its supplement: two in 1929, eleven in the following year, five in 1931, seven in 1932 and four in 1933. Some of them, such as ‘Sieg’ and ‘Was zweifelst du?’ were even printed several times. In the Lang interviews, Schirach claims to have first met Goebbels in 1926 when he came to Weimar to prepare a student meeting and Schirach picked him up at the train station. Since the two men shared a passion for German classical literature and particularly for Herder, the setting naturally offered them plenty of material for discussion.<sup>14</sup> According to Schirach, this first encounter marked the beginning of a friendship. In particular in the years 1927–1929, Schirach recalled, Goebbels would often meet him when he was in Munich. If Schirach is to be believed, they read together or provided each other with reading material, such as Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s *Huttens letzte Tage* and even Rilke.<sup>15</sup> Schirach’s enthusiasm was shared by Goebbels: ‘Nobler, tapferer Junge. Und voll Geist, mit bravem Charakter’<sup>16</sup>, he wrote about Schirach in his diary<sup>16</sup> in 1931, and: ‘Ein feiner Kerl. Edelmänn. Fähig und klug.’<sup>17</sup> Goebbels evidently wholeheartedly approved of Schirach’s poetry, an important and previously overlooked aspect of their relationship: ‘Ein sauberer Junge! Schreibt gute Gedichte.’<sup>18</sup>, he remarked in October 1929. Goebbels, Schirach remembered, complimented him on his poems: ‘[...] er [sagte mir], ich habe einige Verse von Ihnen gelesen. Ich finde sie ganz wunderbar. Das geht einem runter wie Honig, wenn man

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<sup>13</sup> ‘Baldur von Schirach,’ *Die Weltbühne Zweites Halbjahr 26*, no. 39, (23 September 1930).

<sup>14</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 128-129.

<sup>15</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 77-78 and p. 132. Schirach does not specify which of Rilke’s texts is being referred to.

<sup>16</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher 2/II* (2004), p. 154, entry dated 22 November 1931.

<sup>17</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher 1/III* (2004), p. 64, entry dated 7 August 1928.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357, entry dated 25 October 1929.



jung ist.<sup>19</sup> As further research has revealed, Goebbels launched a co-production between himself, Schirach, graphic artist Hans Herbert Schweitzer and writer Heinrich Anacker in 1930.<sup>20</sup> The result was a booklet, *Der unbekannte S.A. Mann. Ein guter Kamerad der Hitler-Soldaten*, which includes eleven of Schirach's poems: 'Christus Agitator', 'Auch Du!', 'Um unsre Augen...', 'Hitler', 'Den anderen', 'Es war die Ehre...', 'Durch Taten!', 'Vor der Feldherrnhalle', 'Den Soldaten des großen Krieges', 'Der Tote' and 'Heimkehr'. They blend in perfectly with the militant tone and imagery, simplistic lyrical style, and aggressive glorification of violence and soldiery of the other poems, for example Heinrich Anacker's 'Die Straße dröhnt vom Eisentritt':

Das ist's was uns zu Männern weiht:  
Ins Ganze sich verweben...  
Sturmbrücke sein zur neuen Zeit,  
Siegfroh bereit,  
Das Letzte hinzugeben.<sup>21</sup>

Another example of this is Anacker's poem 'Vor der Feldherrnhalle':

Nur Du, mein Kamerad im braunen Kleide,  
Bleibst sinnend stehn – umtönt von Scherz und Spiel –  
Und denkst in Trauer und in herbem Leide  
Der Schar, die hier für Deutschlands Zukunft fiel.<sup>22</sup>

The collection also contained the well-known Horst-Wessel song ('Die Fahne hoch! Die Reihen dicht geschlossen!/ S.A. marschier mit mutig-festem Schritt [...].'<sup>23</sup>), which ran along similar lines. *Der unbekannte S.A.-Mann* was published anonymously; profits went to injured members of the SA or relatives of those who had died.<sup>24</sup>

Schirach's own first collection of poems, *Die Feier der neuen Front*, had already been published in February 1929. The foreword demonstrated the collection's political potential:

Die neue Front! Das ist kein Schlagwort, sondern das Symbol einer Jugend, die sich ihres gewaltigen Erbes bewußt ist. Diese Front der Wollenden, Sehnsüchtigen und Brennenden kennt nur Freunde oder Feinde, weil ihre Ziele die des Volkes sind. Man mag sie darum bekämpfen oder bejahen:

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<sup>19</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 129.

<sup>20</sup> See Goebbels, *Tagebücher 1/III* (2004), p. 360, entry dated 30 October 1929.

<sup>21</sup> *Der unbekannte S.A. Mann. Ein guter Kamerad der Hitler-Soldaten* (Munich: Eher, 1930), p. 32.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 9.

immer bleibt sie das Deutschland, das da kommt!<sup>25</sup>

In just a few sentences, Schirach laid out the basics of Nazi political propaganda: dichotomous thinking in friend-enemy categories, the central position of the Volk, the point-blank rejection of democratic discussion or opposition and finally the promise of a new and strong Germany. Schirach's own future sphere of activity also began to crystallise: the young, the future generation that was to march as the 'neue Front'. The ideologemes Schirach outlined here are integral parts of *völkisch* and National Socialist thinking and were used by other right-wing political philosophers at the time. For instance, the strict division of the world into friends and enemies was at the centre of the theories of 'NS-Kronjurist' Carl Schmitt. He developed these in the late 1920s and explained them in a series of publications starting in 1928, which became his most famous work *Der Begriff des Politischen* (1932).<sup>26</sup> To give another example, the circularity of Schirach's line of argumentation is reminiscent of that of Chamberlain's theoretical writing as outlined in chapter one: the 'neue Front' declares its own aims to be those of the Volksgemeinschaft. Therefore, Schirach suggests, they do not need to justify themselves, since they are acting in the interest of the people. Their aims, he concludes, are not only valid but also unavoidable.

The collection contains twenty-six poems divided into three sections. The first part, which remained without a title, features twelve poems which express a sense of *Aufbruch*. For instance, in the opening poems 'Um unsre Augen...' and 'In uns ist das Schweigen...', the speaker describes a moment of awakening: 'Um unsre Augen war es wie ein Dämmern,/ als uns die Kunde kam von unsrer Pflicht'<sup>27</sup> and announces a new and exciting era: 'In uns ist das

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<sup>25</sup> Baldur von Schirach, *Die Feier der neuen Front* [referred to as FnF], 2nd edn. (Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1933), no page number given; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>26</sup> Schmitt first gave a presentation entitled *Begriff des Politischen* in Berlin in 1927. His lecture was published in the *Schriftenreihe der Deutschen Hochschule für Politik in Berlin und des Instituts für Auswärtige Politik in Hamburg* one year later. An extended version was published in November 1931 and later shortened again and re-published after the Nazi party's rise to power. In *Begriff des Politischen*, Schmitt writes: 'Die spezifisch politische Unterscheidung, auf welche sich die politischen Handlungen und Motive zurückführen lassen, ist die Unterscheidung von *Freund* und *Feind*. [...] Der politische Feind braucht nicht moralisch böse, er braucht nicht ästhetisch häßlich zu sein; er muß nicht als wirtschaftlicher Konkurrent auftreten, und es kann vielleicht sogar vorteilhaft scheinen, mit ihm Geschäfte zu machen. Er ist eben der andere, der Fremde, und es genügt zu seinem Wesen, daß er in einem besonders intensiven Sinne existenziell etwas anderes und Fremdes ist, [...]'. Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, 9th edn. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2015), pp. 25-26. See Reinhard Mehring, *Carl Schmitt. Aufstieg und Fall* (Munich: Beck, 2009), p. 207; Volker Neumann, *Carl Schmitt als Jurist* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), p. 63.

<sup>27</sup> Schirach, *FnF*, p. 6.

Schweigen der Weihe/ gewaltiger Zeit./ Ernst und bereit/ und feierlich ist unsere Reihe.<sup>28</sup>  
Poems three to twelve focus on soldiery and the First World War (for example 'Durch Taten!', 'Den Soldaten des grossen Krieges', 'Es war die Ehre...', 'Des Daseins Sinn'), celebrating the courage of and honouring the fallen soldiers: 'Hebt diesen Toten hoch zum Gruß die Hand!'<sup>29</sup>  
Often, the poems exhort the reader to follow their example: 'Es kann nicht jeder Feldherr sein,/ doch jeder sei Soldat!'<sup>30</sup>

The second part of the collection is entitled 'Gedichte um den Führer' and consists of five poems. All of the poems in this section mention Hitler either by name or by his (at this point still unofficial) title as Führer ('Hitler', 'Dem Führer' and 'Des Führers Wächter') with the exception of 'Einem Führer', which is dedicated to Alfred Rosenberg. Schirach later reprinted this poem in the 1933 edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* without any mention of Rosenberg which must have led many of his readers to assume that it was in fact referring to Hitler. The poem itself gives no clue as to the identity of the person addressed:

Dir Treuem bauen wir ein Monument  
[...] Und wer dich kennt, der weiß an dem Altar:  
die Flamme ohne Ruh  
und der weiße Marmor, kalt und klar,  
bist Du.<sup>31</sup>

The fact that the celebrated leader in Schirach's poems was so easily interchangeable emphasises again how superficial his poetic tokens of admiration really were. The last part 'Gedichte um Gott', consists of nine poems. The fact that almost one third of the poems in the collection should be labelled 'Gedichte um Gott' is unexpected at first, considering that there is no evidence to suggest that the Protestant Schirach family were particularly devout believers or that religion played a major part in Baldur von Schirach's upbringing, an aspect that will be explored further in chapter seven. The poems contain references to the bible or are charged with vocabulary traditionally associated with Christianity and church ritual as is already indicated by their titles: 'Buße', 'Ehrfurcht' and 'Christus'. However, reflection on God and the use of religious imagery does not preclude references to the National Socialist movement here, quite the opposite. Already the second poem in this section, 'Am 9.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

November vor der Feldherrnhalle zu München', elevates the site of the infamous 1923 Putsch to a place of prayer and service to God. The poem closes: 'uns sind Altar die Stufen/der Feldherrnhalle.'<sup>32</sup> All but three of the poems ('An den Pforten', 'Die Schwelle', 'Ehrfurcht') printed in *Die Feier der neuen Front* were later republished in the 1933 edition of the far more successful collection *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*, which will be discussed in detail in chapter three. In order to avoid repetition, this brief summary of the structure of the collection and its main themes will suffice for now. It should be noted, however, that often at the core of poems dedicated to a beloved person, or even dedicated to a role model admired from afar, lies the sublimated narcissism of the author (just as in religious devotional poetry). The differing modes of devotional poetry (to Hitler, to Rosenberg, to God) included in *Die Feier der neuen Front* perhaps first and foremost attest to Schirach's own desire to submit himself to a greater cause that would enoble him.

*Die Feier der neuen Front* received favourable reviews in party publications at the time and was reprinted in a second edition in 1933. It was applauded as a 'starke [...] Talentprobe'<sup>33</sup> by the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Schirach's friend Rainer Schlösser praised the collection and attested its great popularity even beyond the National Socialist community: '[...] die 'Feier der neuen Front' [spricht] nicht nur zu dem Gesinnungsgenossen, sondern darüber hinaus auch zu jedem Kämpfer der alten Front, zu jedem heimgekehrten Kämpfer.'<sup>34</sup> Rosenberg's *Weltkampf* also printed a brief article about Schirach's publication, emphasising the poems' concise and formal qualities: 'Der – Adolf Hitler gewidmete – Band enthält rhythmisch vollendete, knappe und doch wesenserschließende Gedichte.'<sup>35</sup> The article closes: 'Jedem deutschen Studenten, jedem Hochschullehrer empfehlen wir das Schriftchen zu lesen.' Adolf Dresler wrote a review that Schirach published in his own journal, the *Akademischer Beobachter*: 'Nichts von der überschwänglichen Redseligkeit der üblichen Jugendliteratur, nichts von dem seelenlosen Wortgeklingel literarischen Aesthetentums, hier hat ein unerbittlicher Wille sich in wenig Worten eine Form geprägt, deren Bestimmtheit und gläubige Zuversicht mitreißen.'<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Hans Wippenthorp, 'Baldur von Schirach. 'Die Feier der neuen Front,' *Völkischer Beobachter*. *Bayernausgabe*, 4 May (1929), p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Schlösser, 'Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts'.

<sup>35</sup> 'Baldur v. Schirach: 'Die Feier der neuen Front''; the following quotation *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Adolf Dresler, 'Baldur von Schirach: Die Feier der neuen Front,' *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 5 (May 1929), p. 18.

## Journalism and political activism

Following his enrolment at university, Schirach joined the Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund München (NSDStB) and soon became an active force in the student community.<sup>37</sup> His attempts to renew his acquaintance with Hitler were at first unsuccessful, Schirach remembered during his interview with Lang. Hitler's secretary Rudolf Heß warded off his inquiries for an appointment. Finally, after a chance meeting on the street (Wortmann interprets it as a deliberate interception on Schirach's part), Schirach convinced Hitler to speak in front of a student audience at the Hofbräuhaus.<sup>38</sup> Schirach dedicated much of his time and a substantial amount of his own money into the preparation of this event, which took place in the winter of 1928. More than 10,000 leaflets were distributed, newspaper advertisements printed and over 800 invitations were sent out to student associations and prominent public figures. It was a huge success; the hall was filled to capacity.<sup>39</sup> Schirach, Wortmann points out, had managed to open another willing audience to Hitler, who had not given speeches to students since he had been banned from public speaking in 1923.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, Schirach catapulted the NSDStB out of its previously largely unnoticed existence. In July 1928, he was elected Reichsleiter des NSDStB. Koontz points out, however, that Hitler had let it be known prior to the election that he wished Schirach to take the office; the election was therefore a mere formality.<sup>41</sup> The power struggles within the Studentenbund, the course it took under Schirach's leadership and his arrogant and occasionally callous conduct leading up to and after his election, have been explored in detail by Wortmann and Koontz and will be omitted here.<sup>42</sup>

In the autumn of 1928, Schirach had been offered an opportunity to leave the path on which he had embarked when he decided to move to Munich. As previously mentioned, he joined his mother on a trip to visit his uncle in Philadelphia in the United States. According to Schirach, his uncle, Wall Street banker Alfred Norris, offered him the opportunity to begin a career in the world of finance or in politics, should he decide to join

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<sup>37</sup> See BArch, Slg. BDC, SA-Unterlagen, Baldur von Schirach.

<sup>38</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 5-8; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>40</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>41</sup> See Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 51; see also Anselm Faust, *Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund: Studenten und Nationalsozialismus in der Weimarer Republik 1* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1973), p. 67.

<sup>42</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 45-58; Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 43-61.

his company. But Schirach declined. He believed that his future lay with Hitler in Germany.<sup>43</sup> Upon his return to Munich, he began to give speeches in front of smaller audiences within the circle of National Socialist student groups in Munich, discussing recent developments and the future aims of the organisation but also broader topics with titles such as 'Drei Jahre N.S.D.St.B' which was part of a lecture series 'Einführung in die nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung'.<sup>44</sup> Hitler, Schirach later recalled, encouraged him to speak in front of larger audiences.<sup>45</sup> In June and July 1929 he went on a tour around Germany and held speeches in nineteen different cities, including Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Cologne and Dresden.<sup>46</sup> However, according to Wortmann, Schirach's presence alone at this point did not suffice to attract large audiences.<sup>47</sup> This changed after a speech held on July 1 together with Goebbels in Hamburg in front of a crowd of 3,000 people.<sup>48</sup> As Wortmann put it, Schirach became the 'Reichsredner der Partei'.<sup>49</sup> Soon, Schirach's trips, speeches and his other work for the party left little time to apply himself academically and his performance at university suffered.<sup>50</sup> He mentioned this during one of his conversations with Hitler, who reassured him: 'Schirach, Sie studieren bei mir!'<sup>51</sup> With this, he had found his place:

Ich habe mein Studium praktisch eingestellt. Ich bin jetzt nur noch auf diese Arbeit ausgerichtet. Ich hatte allerdings auch niemals vor, ein Hochschulstudium zu beenden. Ich bin zur Universität gegangen, um zu studieren. Ich habe das studiert, was mich interessierte. Ich war zwischendurch in Amerika. Ich habe etwas von der Welt gesehen. Ich habe viele Menschen kennengelernt. Ich habe mir den Horizont erworben, den ich haben wollte. Das war für mich der einzige Sinn des Studiums. Ich war einer der wenigen Deutschen, die in der glücklichen Lage waren, sich nicht irgendwie auf einen bestimmten Beruf hin ausbilden zu müssen.<sup>52</sup>

It is impossible to determine today whether Schirach had indeed never intended to finish his university degree or whether he simply decided to make a virtue of necessity. But he had made his choice and from then on he was fully dedicated to supporting Hitler and the Nazi movement. Besides his work for the NSDStB, he undertook several journalism projects.

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<sup>43</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 3 and p. 90; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> See 'Aus der Hochschulbewegung,' *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 2 (February 1929), p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 87.

<sup>46</sup> See 'Aus der Bewegung,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)*, June 18, 19, 26 and July 10, 1929; see also Faust, *Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund* 1, p. 84.

<sup>47</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> See 'Aus der Hochschulbewegung,' *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 7/8 (Juli/August 1929), pp. 37-38; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 66.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>50</sup> See *ibid.* p. 47 and p. 70; see also Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 36-37 and p. 43.

<sup>51</sup> Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, p. 59.

<sup>52</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, pp. 86-87.

Wortmann and Anselm Faust have previously given brief summaries of Schirach's first two projects, *Akademischer Beobachter* and *Die Bewegung*, in the context of his role in the NSDStB, but not of his later projects, *Die deutsche Zukunft* and *Wille und Macht*. All four played a significant role in distributing his poetry further and allowed him to address different age groups and audiences, to which Schirach learned to adapt his works. These publications also give valuable information about authors and literature that he himself condoned and supported by printing their texts or advertising them, thus allowing a glimpse at the closely woven network between National Socialist politicians and writers that had already begun to develop.

The *Akademischer Beobachter. Kampfblatt des Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbundes* was launched in January 1929 and succeeded *Der junge Revolutionär*, which had previously been the association's official organ. The journal's financial situation had been precarious when Schirach took over the leadership of the NSDStB and he had let it run its course.<sup>53</sup> Its successor, the *Akademischer Beobachter*, was – at least initially – more successful. The journal's title is a good indicator of its content:

Der 'Akademische Beobachter' ist die politisch-wissenschaftliche Monatsschrift der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung. Unter der Mitarbeit erster deutscher Gelehrter, die im Nationalsozialismus den Weg zur Gesundheit und zur kraftvollen Lebensbetätigung des deutschen Volkes erkannt haben, behandelt er die politischen Grundprobleme der Gegenwart in kurzen wissenschaftlichen Abhandlungen von allgemeiner Verständlichkeit.<sup>54</sup>

The *Akademischer Beobachter* was published monthly by the Eher publishing house in Munich. Most of the articles and reports dealt with changes in university politics, the *numerus clausus* and the need to rebuild the German army. Each issue also contained recommendations of publications in the fields of history, philosophy and literature that certainly did not appear on the reading lists of university classes. The first issue opened with an anonymous article 'An die jungen Akademiker' written – as was later revealed by Anselm Faust – by the Nobel Prize winning physicist Philipp Lenard,<sup>55</sup> a notorious antisemite and supporter of Hitler. His advice to the young generation of academics was: 'Darum gebe er [der Student] sich, gerade in den ersten Semestern am meisten, nicht nur seinen Fachstudien hin, sondern sehe sich in der Literatur um, was von Denkern außerhalb der Universitäten

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<sup>53</sup> See Faust, *Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund 1*, pp. 84-86.

<sup>54</sup> As quoted by Faust, *ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>55</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 86.

gefördert worden ist [...]’<sup>56</sup> Schirach published this along with concrete literary recommendations for the young generation: Chamberlain’s *Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and Arthur Dinter’s *197 Thesen zur Vollendung der Reformation*.

Contrary to Schirach’s announcement, the list of ‘Gelehrte’ writing for the journal was short. Nonetheless, at least initially, he managed to secure some big names for his project.<sup>57</sup> Schirach’s former mentors Bartels and Ziegler submitted articles for publication and, on one occasion, he also printed a poem by his friend Rainer Schlösser.<sup>58</sup> But new acquaintances also supplied Schirach with material: Alfred Rosenberg contributed an article in which he propagated the National Socialist revolution.<sup>59</sup> National Socialist journalist and writer Otto Bangert published two articles, ‘Diktatur’ and ‘Der deutsche Mythos’, in which he explained the need for a Führer and hailed increased nationalism as the re-awakening of *völkisch* instinct and as the guarantor of Germany’s return to power. In the very first issue of the *Akademischer Beobachter* in January 1929 Schirach published the ballad ‘Vision’ by Bangert.<sup>60</sup> The poem spans almost two pages and is different in form but very similar in tone and style to Schirach’s own poetry. The imagery and tone of the first stanza resemble that of Expressionism in its gloomy description of the threatening city:

Endlos weitet sich das Häusermeer.  
Finstre, feuchte Mietskasernen  
starren kantig zu den Sternen.  
Mauern steigen grau und kahl,  
Gaslaternen flackern fahl.

This is contrasted with a pastoral idyll:

Hinter seinem Pfluge breit  
steht ein junger deutscher Bauer [...]  
Durch die Erde rauscht der Pflug

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<sup>56</sup> ‘An die jungen Akademiker,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 1 (January 1929), p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 63.

<sup>58</sup> See Adolf Bartels, ‘Ernst Moritz Arndt als völkischer Führer,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 1 (January 1929), pp. 3-5; Hans Severus Ziegler, ‘Student und Kulturpolitik,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 1 (January, 1929), pp. 9-10; Rainer Schlösser, ‘Glaube,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 3 (March 1929), p. 19.

<sup>59</sup> See Alfred Rosenberg, ‘Im neuen Zeichen,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 2 (February 1929), pp. 2-3.

<sup>60</sup> See Otto Bangert, ‘Vision,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 1 (January 1929), pp. 7-8; Bangert had published articles in National Socialist newspapers and journals *Völkischer Beobachter*, *Angriff* and *Niederdeutscher Beobachter* from 1926 onwards. The author openly identified with National Socialism. See Otto Bangert, *Deutsche Revolution. Ein Buch vom Kampfe um das Dritte Reich*, 2nd edn. (Munich: Eher, 1931, no page number given; Otto Bangert, *Gold oder Blut. Der Weg aus dem Chaos*, 8th edn. (Munich: Eher, 1941), pp. 9-12.



heilig wie vor tausend Jahren, [...]

These lines are very similar to Schirach's poem 'Der Priester', which he first published the following year and which describes a young farmer working on the field: 'Und feierlich wie schon vor tausend Jahren/ sank seine Saat in das gepflügte Land.'<sup>61</sup> The second half of Bangert's poem is spent on the description of a bloody battle:

Sturmwind,  
Sturmwind,  
brausender Bote,  
wirf Fackeln und  
Feuer in alle Welt!  
Die Trommel gellt  
vor stürmenden Haufen --  
Laßt sie in ihrem Blut ersaufen!

The alliterations, imperative forms, repetitions and the frequent use of exclamation marks and dashes are also typical of Schirach's poetic style.

Schirach used the *Akademischer Beobachter* as a platform to propagate his own poems and promote his first collection of poems *Die Feier der neuen Front*.<sup>62</sup> The journal was received warmly among his party friends. In February 1929, Schirach boasted of 5,000 printed copies.<sup>63</sup> Two months later, he proudly published a letter, which he had received from Goebbels, who wrote:

Ich habe mit Freude Ihr junges Kampfblatt in den ersten Nummern verfolgt und dabei festgestellt, daß auch hier wieder ein Charakterzug unserer vielfältigen nationalsozialistischen Wesenheit zum Ausdruck kommt. [...] Ihr mutiges, streitbares Blatt hat mich schon durch seine ersten Nummern wieder in Ihre Reihengestellt.<sup>64</sup>

However, Goebbels's initial enthusiasm was apparently not widely shared and Schirach's pseudo-scientific concept that was intended to reach broad masses proved unsuccessful in the long run. Despite many attempts to raise sales numbers through advertising in *Der Angriff*, it did not make a profit.<sup>65</sup> Schirach approached Goebbels to publish the

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<sup>61</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Der Priester,' *Die Bewegung* (July 8, 1930).

<sup>62</sup> See Schirach, 'Die Feier der neuen Front'.

<sup>63</sup> See 'Drei Jahre Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)*, February 7, 1929; see also Faust, *Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund 1*, p. 108.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Goebbels, 'Dr. Goebbels über studentische Aufgaben,' *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 4 (April 1929), pp. 7-8.

<sup>65</sup> See Faust, *Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund 1*, pp. 86-87.

*Akademischer Beobachter* as a supplement to *Der Angriff*, but was not successful.<sup>66</sup> Although it was read even outside National Socialist circles, those who saw the movement critically were not about to be convinced by Schirach's journal. Heinz-Dieter von Bronsart explained in the *Jung-Adel*, supplement to the *Deutsches Adelsblatt*, that he could not see a clear political line in the Nazi party, an impression that was not lessened by studying National Socialist journals. His comment represents a rare and previously overlooked moment of frank criticism of Schirach: 'Der "Akademischer Beobachter" kann – ich urteile nach verschiedenen Nummern, die ich kenne – kein besonders hohes Niveau beanspruchen, trotz der unter "Mitarbeiter" angeführten hervorragenden Namen.'<sup>67</sup>

In December 1929, not quite one year after its launch, the last issue of the *Akademischer Beobachter* was printed.<sup>68</sup> Its successor *Die Bewegung* first appeared in May 1930 and was published weekly. The format and concept differed greatly from its predecessor; the tone was more aggressive, the content was simpler, the articles were shorter and the headlines bigger.<sup>69</sup> Again, Schirach used the journal as a personal platform, regularly publishing his own poems. The articles in *Die Bewegung* revolve around similar topics as in the *Akademischer Beobachter*: they try to raise awareness of the need for military defence among students, propagate the exclusion of non-Germans from universities and defend the ideal of military uniformity.<sup>70</sup> The antisemitic overtones of many articles emerge most clearly in the section 'Der Judenspiegel', which contained blunt and offensive comments on 'jüdisch' influence in the field of art, literature and politics, and often scorned and ridiculed left-wing press organs (for example, *Die Weltbühne*, *Das andere Deutschland* and *Welt am Abend*).<sup>71</sup> German-Jewish journalist Kurt Tucholsky was a popular target for the writers of *Die Bewegung*, regularly attacked for his pacifist beliefs and his affinity to the Communist movement. In May 1930, he had published an article in *Die Weltbühne*, arguing that the National Socialist party offered neither revolutionary nor even original thinking, that most of its ideas were copied from the political left, and that it essentially offered little more than an outlet for the resentment and anger of the German 'Kleinbürger' and 'Arbeiter':

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<sup>66</sup> See Goebbels, *Tagebücher 1/III* (2004), p. 357, entry dated 25 October 1929.

<sup>67</sup> Heinz-Dieter von Bronsart, 'Die neue Front,' *Deutsches Adelsblatt* supplement: *Jung-Adel* (August 3, 1929).

<sup>68</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 69.

<sup>69</sup> See also Faust, *Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund 1*, p. 87.

<sup>70</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 86-87; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 74.

<sup>71</sup> 'Judenspiegel,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 10 (8 July 1930).

Die [Nationalsozialisten] behaupten, 'revolutionär' zu sein, wie sie denn überhaupt der Linken ein ganzes Vokabular abgelauscht haben: 'Volkspartei' und 'Arbeiterpartei' und 'revolutionär'; [...] Revolutionär sind die nie gewesen. Die Geldgeber dieser Bewegung sind erzkapitalistisch, der Groll, der sich in den Provinzzeitungen der Partei, in diesen unsäglichen 'Beobachtern' ausspricht, ist durchaus der von kleinen Leuten: Erfolg und Grundton dieser Papiere beruhen auf Lokalklatsch und übler Nachrede.<sup>72</sup>

For its part, *Die Bewegung* did its best to discredit Tucholsky by accusing him of lacking political activism. The journal presented him in the role of someone who bemoans society without offering any constructive solutions: 'Tucholsky ist zu klug, um aus Überzeugung – und zu kalt, um aus Mitleid Kommunist zu sein. Er ist es aus – Oppositionsbedürfnis. Er kann nicht aufbauen, ja, er kann nicht einmal sachlich und klar die Mißstände aufzeigen, er vermag allein zu nörgeln, zu höhnen und zu hetzen.'<sup>73</sup>

Despite Schirach's best efforts, *Die Bewegung* was also far from making a profit. This did not change, even when subscription to the journal was made mandatory for NSDStB members in April 1931.<sup>74</sup> One month later, publication stopped. In the meantime, Schirach had made the acquaintance of Henriette Hoffmann (1913-1992), daughter of Hitler's official photographer Heinrich Hoffmann.<sup>75</sup> Schirach described Henriette as 'bildschön', witty and amusing.<sup>76</sup> Both shared a passion for literature, art and above all, absolute admiration of Hitler. In July 1929, Goebbels mentions meeting Schirach and Henriette on several occasions in his diary. Together, the three had tea or went to concerts.<sup>77</sup> Soon, Henriette became involved with Schirach's projects. She joined the NSDStB and assisted with the marketing and distribution of *Die Bewegung*.<sup>78</sup> Less than three years later, on 31 March 1932, Baldur and Henriette von Schirach were married in Munich. Hitler was best man.<sup>79</sup> Through his connection with the Hoffmann family, Schirach had entered the closest circle around Hitler. Henriette had known Hitler since she was eight years old. He had often been a guest in her parents' household and had read stories with her, played piano with her and taught her gymnastic exercises. The family owed their considerable financial assets due to the fact that Heinrich Hoffmann held the exclusive rights to photos of Hitler. Consequently, the marriage

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<sup>72</sup> Ignaz Wrobel, 'Die deutsche Pest,' *Die Weltbühne*, May 13, 1930 in Mary Gerold-Tucholsky and Fritz J. Raddatz, eds., *Kurt Tucholsky. Gesammelte Werke 3 1929-1932* (Rowohlt, n.d.), p. 439.

<sup>73</sup> Karl Münster, 'Der Literat,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 25 (21 October 1930).

<sup>74</sup> See BArch NS 22\_421 'Rundschreiben Nr.2', dated 21 April 1931.

<sup>75</sup> See Sigmund, *Die Frauen der Nazis* 1, p. 193.

<sup>76</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 90 and p. 181.

<sup>77</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher 2/I* (2005), p. 192 and p. 204, entries dated 5 July, 23 July and 24 July 1930.

<sup>78</sup> Sigmund, *Die Frauen der Nazis* 1, p. 199.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p 201; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 91.

not only increased Schirach's status within the party, but also meant a considerable monetary gain. Thanks to Henriette's dowry, the couple could afford a flat close to the Englischer Garten in Munich as well as a small house in the country.<sup>80</sup>

Not only Schirach's private life underwent massive changes. Even though his office remained largely representative for some time, he was named Reichsjugendführer of the NSDAP in October 1931.<sup>81</sup> In the spirit of his new field of activity, Schirach launched another journal project, *Die deutsche Zukunft. Monatsschrift des jungen Deutschlands*, which has not been included in previous studies on Schirach. The first issue was published in June 1931. The journal was printed by Schirach's own publishing house, located on the Schellingstraße in Munich only a short distance away from the editorial office of the *Völkischer Beobachter*.<sup>82</sup> Initially, Schirach was editor alongside Kurt Gruber, who had been leader of the Hitlerjugend until 1931, and Adrian von Renteln, who had been Schirach's predecessor as Reichsjugendführer of the NSDAP.<sup>83</sup> *Die Deutsche Zukunft* appeared monthly. The journal presented itself as 'Organ der nationalsozialistischen Jugend' and was directed at members of the Hitlerjugend, of the NSDStB and the Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Schülerbund. The first issue opened with Schirach's poem 'Hitler', followed by an article written by Hitler himself in which he explained his thoughts on 'Massenführung'.<sup>84</sup> *Die Deutsche Zukunft* discussed ideological questions and political events (both national and international) and how they related to the young generation. Education was an important topic of debate; the journal propagated the unification of the 'Handarbeiter' and 'Kopfarbeiter'<sup>85</sup> in the National Socialist community. Their common enemy was the 'Spießler' and the 'bürgerlichen Patentpatrioten'<sup>86</sup>. The question of Germany's re-militarisation dominated many articles, which reiterated the demand that the nation should be able to defend itself. Many articles propagated the benefits of Socialism and its fulfilment in National Socialism.<sup>87</sup> The debate over Jewish influence in society was by no means as strong as it had been in its predecessor, the *Akademischer Beobachter*, yet, some of the articles published had strong antisemitic

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<sup>80</sup> Sigmund, *Die Frauen der Nazis 1*, pp. 195-202.

<sup>81</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 87-88; see also Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 58.

<sup>82</sup> See Stadtarchiv München/ Gewerbetekartei/ Baldur von Schirach.

<sup>83</sup> On the cover of the first issue in June 1931, Gruber, Schirach and Renteln are all named as editors. *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 1 (June 1931).

<sup>84</sup> Adolf Hitler, 'Massenführung,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 1 (June 1931), pp. 2-5.

<sup>85</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Sozialismus,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 5 (October 1931), p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Meine Herren Bürger,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 1 (June 1931), p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> For instance the fifth issue is entirely devoted to questions of Socialism (for example 'Sozialismus und Staat', 'Sozialismus und Wissenschaft', 'Sozialismus und Hochschule').

overtones. Usually, they centred on influential cultural or literary personalities such as Martin Luther or even Goethe, and claimed to portray their views on Judaism.<sup>88</sup> In January 1932 Schirach's publishing house was incorporated into the National Socialist Jugendverlag. As a result, the journal's new official editor became Gotthart Ammerlahn, the Jugendverlag's editor in chief.<sup>89</sup> However, Schirach continued to write articles for *Die Deutsche Zukunft*.<sup>90</sup> The journal's tone became increasingly aggressive, which also led to a ban on its publication for three months between April and June 1932.<sup>91</sup> Schirach tried to advance his friends' projects, for instance he promoted Rosenberg's Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur.<sup>92</sup> He continued to publish his own poems regularly and to advertise his collections, always including references to their titles when he printed his poems.<sup>93</sup> Several issues also had advertisements for them on the last page, one boasting: 'Die Feier der neuen Front ist immer noch der beste dichterische Ausdruck des Fühlens und Denkens nationalsozialistischer Jugend.'<sup>94</sup> *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* was advertised using the slogans 'Diese Gedichte gehören in den Besitz jedes Nationalsozialisten'<sup>95</sup> and declaring: 'Mit dieser Neuerscheinung wird das dichterische Schrifttum des Nationalsozialismus wertvoll ergänzt. Vor allem aber muß jeder junge Nationalsozialist dies Buch kennen, da gerade sein Wollen hier vollendetsten Ausdruck findet.'<sup>96</sup> *Die Deutsche Zukunft* appeared until 1933, when it was replaced by *Wille und Macht. Führerorgan der nationalsozialistischen Jugend*, which will be analysed in more detail in chapter eight.

Schirach's various journalism projects show him as a young man with tremendous energy and ambition, determined to find his place in the up-and-coming Nazi movement and support the man he saw as 'Deutschlands Zukunft'.<sup>97</sup> His privileged family background meant

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<sup>88</sup> See 'Luther über die Juden,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 3 (August 1931), pp. 28-29.

<sup>89</sup> See 'An unsere Bezieher!,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 7 (December 1931) no page number given; 'An unsere Leser!,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 8 (January 1932), no page number given.

<sup>90</sup> For example his articles opened two issues in 1932. 'Wir Jungen und die Wehrmacht,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 12 (August 1932), p. 1 and 'Der Sinn des Reichsjugendtages,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 2, no. 2 (October 1932), p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> See 'Nach dem Verbot,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 11 (July 1932), p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> See 'Der Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur in München,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 3 (August 1931), pp. 29-30.

<sup>93</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Worte Hitlers,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 7 (December 1931), p. 1 and 'Den anderen,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 4 (September 1931), p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Advertisement 'Die Feier der neuen Front' in *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 4 (September 1931), p. 31.

<sup>95</sup> Advertisement 'Die Fahne der Verfolgten' in *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 7 (December 1931), no page number given.

<sup>96</sup> Advertisement 'Die Fahne der Verfolgten' in *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 5 (October, 1931), p. 29.

<sup>97</sup> Schirach, 'An Hitler!'

he had considerable private monetary resources, had received a very good education, and had been put in the path of the ideological leaders of the *völkisch* and National Socialist camps. By the time that the Nazi party rose to power in January 1933, Schirach – at the age of twenty-five – had managed to rise into Hitler’s inner circle, had established personal and professional relationships with National Socialist publicists Goebbels, Rosenberg and writers Anacker and Bangert, had developed and tested his own rhetorical skills in articles, public speeches and editorial work and had also produced, as will now be shown, not one (as has previously been assumed) but two collections of poetry.

## CHAPTER 3

### Beating the drum for Führer and flag: *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*

#### Publication history

The growing popularity of Schirach's poetry in National Socialist circles is reflected in accounts of both private and public party meetings. However, his early audience has not been explored in depth. Previous studies usually accept his growing reputation as established fact: 'Schirachs Gedichte [...] haben rasch Verbreitung gefunden und ihm einen hohen Bekanntheitsgrad eingetragen',<sup>1</sup> Wortmann summed up. There is, however, as yet little information available as to how exactly and in which circles his poems were cited, especially before the party's rise to power. Koontz bases his study on the assumption that Schirach wrote for a Hitlerjugend audience.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, his gaze necessarily – but, I suggest, wrongly – excludes publications of his poems before he became Reichsjugendführer, including even the 1929 collection *Die Feier der neuen Front*.<sup>3</sup>

Announcements in National Socialist journals and newspapers indicate how and when Schirach's poems were recited in party circles. According to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, during a NSDAP celebration of Hitler's birthday in 1926 Heinz Hugo John, who later was to become a member of Schirach's staff, read out two of Schirach's sonnets, 'Den Wollenden' and 'An Adolf Hitler', which reportedly were received with great applause.<sup>4</sup> In 1928, Schirach himself recited some of his own works during a NSDAP Christmas gathering in the presence of Hitler.<sup>5</sup> He again had a chance to present his own poems at a meeting of the Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur in 1929, organised by Ziegler. Other works that were recited on this occasion were by leading figures such as Adolf Bartels, Dietrich Eckart, Börries von Münchhausen and Hermann Burte – 'mit einer prachtvollen Auslese politischer Kampflyrik (Vorkriegs- und Nachkriegsdichtung) und sozialer Dichtung',<sup>6</sup> as the article reported. These were followed by recitations by Otto Bangert, Rainer Schlösser and Schirach of their own works. 'Und siehe, das Neue, das Eigenartige hat auch einen neuen, eigenartigen Stil erzeugt, der kraftvoll und klar und darum auch schön ist', the report praises the younger poets.

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<sup>1</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> See Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 87 and p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> See 'Weimar,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Münchner Ausgabe)*, April 29, 1926, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> See 'Weihnachtsfeier des Nat.-Soz. Studentenbundes,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 5, no. 51 (22 December 1928).

<sup>6</sup> 'Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 6, no. 43 (fourth issue in October 1929); the following quotations *ibid.*

Following the excitation of the recitations, the audience was offered the soothing sounds of classical music. Students of the Staatliche Musikschule in Weimar performed Haydn's string quartet Opus 76 number 1 and an unspecified string quartet by Schumann in A major, which, the author writes ecstatically, exemplifies 'die große Linie der Blütezeit der deutschen Romantik [...] und deutsches Gemüt in letzten Tiefen'. If the evening's description given in the report is accurate, the Kampfbund meeting is an excellent example of the merger of nostalgia and activism of the National Socialist movement: the appreciation of the harmony and clarity of Classical and Romantic music tradition, combined with the defiant and aggressive Nationalism of the older generation and the forceful energy of the young.

In October 1931, Schirach's works were recited during another meeting of the Kampfbund alongside some of the most prolific authors of the German literary canon. With the exception of Schirach's poetry, the texts named in the article were published in the nineteenth century: Goethe's *Faust* I (specifically the prologue in heaven) was cited, as well as extracts from Kleist's *Penthesilea* and Grillparzer's *Medea*. They were followed by a selection of poems. Among them were Hölderlin's 'Diotima', Nietzsche's 'Vereinsamt' and Löns's 'Der König'. The report does not specify which of Schirach's poems were read out. However, he and Bogislaw von Selchow were singled out as exemplary expressions of 'sieghafte[n] Optimismus unserer nationalsozialistischen Lyriker'.<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that the compliment focuses entirely on the young writers' motivation, not their poetic talent. By contrast, another of Schirach's supporters, Goebbels, believed in his young friend's poetic skills. In July 1932, Goebbels, at this time newly appointed head of NSDAP propaganda, noted in his diary his delight over a small social gathering: 'Abends bei Schirach zum Tee. [...] Schirach hat seine herrlichen Gedichte vorgelesen. Er ist ein plastischer Wortkünstler. Und ein ordentlicher Kerl.'<sup>8</sup>

Following the publication of *Die Feier der neuen Front* in February 1929, the Kampfbund announced another forthcoming 'Gedichtkreis' by Schirach in the winter of same year, which was to be entitled *Das Kreuz auf Golgatha*.<sup>9</sup> Plans to publish it came to nothing, however, after his poem, 'Buße', was printed in the *Völkischer Beobachter* supplement *Der*

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<sup>7</sup> 'Feier der neuen Front,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)*, October 14, 1931.

<sup>8</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher 2/I* (2005), p. 204, entry dated 23 July 1930.

<sup>9</sup> See W. H., 'Deutsches Dichten und Denken,' *Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur* 1, no. 11/12 (November/December 1929), p. 5 and pp. 8-9; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 237.



S.A.-Mann in October 1930.<sup>10</sup> The content of the poem caused an outcry among Protestant clergy and forced the party leadership to intervene – an episode that will be discussed at length in chapter seven. Schirach himself announced the impending publication of his second volume of poetry *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* in May 1931, issued by his own publishing house Die Deutsche Zukunft.<sup>11</sup> This earlier edition is rarely mentioned in subsequent research.<sup>12</sup> Wortmann's biography remains a notable exception, although from his study it remains unclear that the 1931 version is in fact not identical with the 1933 edition.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Schirach's other works, the 1931 version is not dedicated to Hitler. Instead it opens with 'Meiner Mutter', followed by 'Berglied' – 'zwei reinen Stimmungsgedichten',<sup>14</sup> according to Rainer Schlösser. Altogether, the edition contained twenty-seven poems. Some of them had never been published before, although many had already been printed in the party press. All of them would later be included in the second edition in 1933 with the exception of 'Hindenburg', which by then was no longer politically relevant. The poem is a short but forceful comment directed against the ageing Reichspräsident. The speaker expresses disappointment in and anger against Hindenburg, who he thought to be 'der Held, von dem die Hilfe kam' and who was supposed to be 'die Kraft, die selbst im Sturme steht', but then chose to abandon those who believed in him: 'Du gingst von uns. Wir gingen nicht von Dir./ [...] Wir tragen unser Schicksal – Du die Schuld.'<sup>15</sup>

At first *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* was sold directly from Schirach's own publishing house in Munich.<sup>16</sup> The party was still struggling financially and Schirach was no exception. In spite of his wealthy background and the fact that he occasionally seems to have received

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<sup>10</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Buße,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)* supplement: *Der S.A.-Mann* (October 30, 1930); see also Hans-Christian Brandenburg, *Die Geschichte der HJ. Wege und Irrwege einer Generation* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1968), p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> See Advertisement 'Die Fahne der Verfolgten', October 1931.

<sup>12</sup> H See ay and Czaplá both indicate that the year of publication was 1933. Gerhard Hay, 'Religiöser Pseudokult', p. 856; Czaplá, 'Erlösung im Zeichen', p. 320. Fest states that *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* had fifty poems and thus clearly refers to the 1933 edition. See Joachim C. Fest, *Das Gesicht des Dritten Reiches. Profile einer totalitären Herrschaft* (Munich: Piper, 1980), p. 309. Hillesheim and Michael's *Lexikon nationalsozialistischer Dichter* states that the collection was printed in 1933. See Jürgen Hillesheim and Elisabeth Michael, *Lexikon nationalsozialistischer Dichter* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1993), p. 388. Koontz does not specify when the collection was published and refers to an undated copy of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*. See Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 91 and p. 284.

<sup>13</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 63.

<sup>14</sup> Schlösser, 'Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts' mentions Schirach's publishing house *Die deutsche Zukunft* as well as the number of poems. One of the 1931 copies is held by the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

<sup>15</sup> Baldur von Schirach, *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* [referred to as FdV] (Munich: Die Deutsche Zukunft, 1931), p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> See Stadtarchiv München/ Gewerbetekartei Baldur von Schirach.

fees when his poems were printed, he complained about a lack of money.<sup>17</sup> His situation did not improve significantly after he was appointed Reichsjugendführer in 1931, since this office was merely representative at that point. However, it at least gave him increased access to party media. According to *Der Angriff*, following the incorporation of Schirach's own publishing house, *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* was also published by the National Socialist Jugendverlag in early 1932.<sup>18</sup> Despite the provisional circumstances of its publication, the collection received favourable attention in party circles. It was noted with approval in Bartel's *Deutsches Schrifttum* and praised lavishly by Schlösser, newly appointed cultural editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, as the long-awaited fulfilment '[der] schmerzlich vermißte[n] Verschmelzung von Kampfgeist und Können'.<sup>19</sup> While Schirach's verses attracted praise from his supporters, his political and journalistic opponents, not realising the potential threat they could pose one day, evidently largely ignored them. Consequently, previous studies on Schirach rarely provided examples of outright criticism. Wortmann's stated rather vaguely that 'Tucholsky [übergoß] sie [die Gedichte] mit beißender Kritik',<sup>20</sup> besonders abgesehen hat man es auf Kurt Tucholsky, der es wagte, Schirach's Gedichte zu kritisieren'.<sup>21</sup> Faust, who did not specify the source he based this statement on, was likely referring to the following article printed in September 1930 in the leftist journal *Die Weltbühne*. Although the article's author is not named specifically, Faust's conclusion that it was in fact Tucholsky is justified, considering that he temporarily acted as co-editor for the journal and that *Die Weltbühne* regularly published his work:

Baldur von Schirach. [...] Wahrscheinlich sind Sie ein sehr braver Mensch, nur Verse sollten Sie nicht machen, nicht solche Verse wie die an die Hitler-Jugend: 'Sie marschieren fest und anders als die andern (Von dieser Art liegt viel in Flandern)...' Hoffentlich kommen Sie bei den nächsten Wahlen in den Reichstag, damit Sie das Dichten nicht mehr nötig haben. Von Ihrer Art sitzt viel bei den Nazis.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to note that *Die Weltbühne* author's mocking comment targeted Schirach's

<sup>17</sup> By 1930 Schirach commanded a fee of 25 RM for the publication of a poem. See BArch NS 38\_4245 letter addressed to Dr. Erich Helm, dated 4 December 1930. Schirach's complaint is quoted in Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 91.

<sup>18</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Erschlagener Kamerad,' *Der Angriff* (February 15, 1932), p. 8; 'An unsere Bezieher!', *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 7 (December 1931) no page number given.

<sup>19</sup> Schlösser, 'Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts'; 'Baldur von Schirach. Die Fahne der Verfolgten,' *Deutsches Schrifttum* 24, no. 3 (March 1932), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 62.

<sup>21</sup> Faust, *Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund* 1, p. 87.

<sup>22</sup> 'Baldur von Schirach,' (1930).

lack of poetic talent and creativity rather than his zeal or the political ideology his verses endorsed. The fact that the author even goes so far as to wish him political success again demonstrates that in September 1930 even politically minded circles of German society underestimated the political force that the Nazi party would soon become.

In May 1932, Julius Streicher's notorious tabloid *Der Stürmer* once again announced the publication of *Das Kreuz auf Golgatha*, adding the sub-title *Gedichtkreis eines Ketzers*. It was, according to the announcement, to be dedicated to 'Julius Streicher, dem "Vorkämpfer deutscher Freiheit"'.<sup>23</sup> Streicher, an early follower of Hitler, had founded *Der Stürmer* in 1923. The scandal sheet was infamous for its vulgar, crude antisemitism and often semi-pornographic images. The cycle's motto, *Der Stürmer* reported, was to be a bible passage, Matthew 11.12: 'Das Reich Gottes wird gestürmt, und die Stürmer reißen es an sich.' Incidentally, the same passage is used by Schirach's ideological mentor Chamberlain in his book *Mensch und Gott* (1921), when arguing for an undogmatic interpretation of the New Testament.<sup>24</sup> Schirach's relationship with religion and the church will be explored in more detail in chapter seven. In the context of his early poetry publications, it will suffice to say that *Das Kreuz auf Golgatha* did not come to fruition for reasons that remain unclear. Schirach later denied a close relationship to Streicher, on account of his aversion to the latter's rampant antisemitism.<sup>25</sup> The announcement of his next publication in a forum such as *Der Stürmer* decidedly clashed with the (self)image of the educated and refined Schirach. At the same time, it indicates that at some point in his early career he socialised and was at least to some extent connected with the aggressive extreme right wing of the NSDAP more than he later liked to admit.

In summer 1933, after the Nazis' rise to power, a new edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* was issued, this time by the publishing house Zeitgeschichte.<sup>26</sup> From then on the

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<sup>23</sup> 'Ein neuer Gedichtband Baldur von Schirachs,' *Der Stürmer*, no. 20 (1932); see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 237.

<sup>24</sup> See Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Mensch und Gott. Betrachtungen über Religion und Christentum*, 2nd edn. (Munich: Bruckmann, 1929), p. 100. On p. 103, Chamberlain writes: '[...] doch hat er [Jesus] uns ein Bekenntnis und eine Religionslehre hinterlassen, zu deren Wesen es gehört, in keine theologische Kirchenlehre hineingezwängt werden zu können; und ich meine, es wäre an der Zeit, auf dieses Bekenntnis zu hören.'

<sup>25</sup> See Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>26</sup> Zeitgeschichte also published other National Socialist propaganda material such as Alois Schenzinger's novels *Hitlerjunge Quex* (1932), *Wehe den Wehrlosen!* (1933) and journal *Der braune Reiter* (1933-1940), Heinrich Hoffmann's illustrated books *Hitler wie ihn keiner kennt* (1932), *Jugend um Hitler* (1934), *Das braune Heer* (1932) and *Parteitag der Macht* (1934), SS functionary Walther Darré's essay *Unser Weg* [1934] and the booklet accompanying Alfred Rosenberg's 1934 exhibition *Ewiges Deutschland*.

collection contained fifty-one poems in a merger of both of his earlier works.<sup>27</sup> It contained only two new poems, 'Deutung' and 'Herbert Norkus'. The former could be seen as a celebration of pantheism, whereas the latter commemorates a Hitlerjugend member who had been stabbed to death by a group of young Communists while attending a National Socialist propaganda event in Berlin the previous year. The addition of a poem commemorating him was clearly intended to make the collection more relevant to the youth. The circumstances of Norkus' death were well known to his audience. He was celebrated in Nazi circles as a role model for the Hitlerjugend's dedication in the face of danger and persecution. Schirach's contribution to Norkus's role in the Nazi martyr narrative has already been explored by Jay W. Baird, Wortmann and Koontz and can be omitted here.<sup>28</sup> By 1945, *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* had sold more than an impressive 100,000 copies. It remains Schirach's best-known lyrical work. Subsequent research has often cited his poetry as an example of the regime leadership's attempts to imprint National Socialist ideology and combative spirit on Germany's male youth. Schirach had been raised to believe in the heroic, nationalist values of *Heimat, Volk, Blut, Boden* and *Kampf*, which clearly show in his literary output. Everywhere the reader is confronted by the noise of battle fire, by shining weapons and brave soldiers holding up the flag to their dying breath. In his 2008 study *Hitler's War Poets*, Baird writes that the young generation was drawn to Schirach, whom he justifiably (but perhaps too easily inviting dismissal) describes as 'a melodramatic troubadour with a burning death wish, whose rhapsodic lyrics fired their [the young generation's] youthful imaginations into heights of ecstasy'.<sup>29</sup> He considers Schirach to have fed the fantasies of an age group that had been too young to fight in the First World War, but longed to partake in the war experience they idealised and glorified.<sup>30</sup> Koontz even suggests that Schirach specifically directed his writing at this target group, from ten years old into the early teens, and adapted his style of writing accordingly.<sup>31</sup> This observation does not take into account the fact that the vast majority of Schirach's poems had been printed in the party press by the end of 1930; they had been written long before he became Reichsjugendführer and aimed his

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<sup>27</sup> The publication information on the inside of the front cover of the 1933 edition specified the print run as 6,000-10,000, which indicates that the first 5,000 copies belonged to the earlier 1931 version.

<sup>28</sup> See Jay W. Baird, *To Die for Germany. Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990), pp. 108-129; Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 92-93 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 116-120.

<sup>29</sup> Jay W. Baird, *Hitler's War Poets. Literature and Politics in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: UP, 2008), p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>31</sup> See Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 91.

writing at Germany's adolescents. However, the choice and compilation of poems in the 1933 edition leaves little room for doubt that Schirach took far greater efforts to target a younger audience than in his previous publications. The opening poems in particular introduce the speaker as a mouthpiece for this generation and their life situation. For instance, the reference to the death of fifteen year-old Norkus was a tragedy his peers were sure to relate to. Overall, there is an abundance of phrases and hints at the value of youth: in 'Um unsre Augen...' the speaker admires those 'die Helden waren schon mit achtzehn Jahren',<sup>32</sup> in 'Da ihr noch spieltet:' he mourns the loss of 'unsrer Kindheit scheues Heiligtum'<sup>33</sup> and in 'Das neue Geschlecht' he aligns himself with those born too late to join the war: 'Nie dienten wir und doch sind wir Soldaten.'<sup>34</sup>

### Rhetorical structure

A comprehensive analysis of the collection's rhetorical structure has not yet been undertaken. Wortmann's study focuses on Schirach's political career and mentions *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* only in passing. Koontz discusses the poems individually and without references to their position and order in the collection. A first attempt to suggest the existence of wider rhetorical structures in the collection has been undertaken in 'Baldur von Schirach. Der 'Sänger der Bewegung' (2015), but the article's main focus lies on the analysis of the motifs, topoi and *völkisch* ideology put forward in the poems.<sup>35</sup> Structural analysis reveals a careful rhetorical arrangement in the 1933 edition (in contrast to the 1931 edition), which reinforces the message that the single poems impart to the reader. The first three and the last three poems form a frame to the volume, functioning as introduction and conclusion. The first poem 'An die Fahne'<sup>36</sup> picks up the flag symbol that is introduced in the title and recurs in several further poems. It is either depicted as a centre of ritual activity, as indeed it was used during Nazi ceremonies, or else serves as an indicator of atmosphere. 'An die

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<sup>32</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> See Hundehege, 'Baldur von Schirach'.

<sup>36</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 7. The poems referred to in the following quotations will be numbered. Their position in the collection will be indicated in brackets in the main text.

Fahne' (1) is an example of how Schirach repeatedly attributes supernatural powers to the flag. He portrays it as a symbol of loyalty that protects and lends strength to its followers, even granting redemption to sinners: 'Du bist die Kraft, die jeden Kämpfer wirbt,/ Du heiligst selbst den Sünder, der Dir stirbt' (1). The second piece, 'Herbert Norkus' (2), lends a name to the nebulous term 'Verfolgte' used in the title of the volume. The third poem, 'In uns ist das Schweigen...' (3), solemnly announces the dawn of a new era, without however being specific as to what exact changes this will bring to the world. It links to the third but last poem, 'Der S.A.-Mann spricht' (49), which has essentially the same message and only differs in tone. Whereas the former describes the glorious future that is being awaited eagerly yet *silently*, the latter is written from the perspective of the S.A. man of the title, who *loudly* proclaims: 'Es kommt ein Tag, da anbricht unsre Zeit/ und unser Tun.' The penultimate poem 'Auch Du!' (50) summons the reader to join the movement and take part in its hopeful endeavour, a thought that noticeably corresponds with the kind of courage and dedication celebrated in 'Herbert Norkus'. The last poem 'Sieg' (51) again picks up the flag symbol and enthusiastically predicts the ultimate victory of the movement:

Stellt euch um die Standarte rund,  
die Hände schlagt um ihren Schaft:  
[...] Nun kann kein Teufel uns was tun!  
Die Fahne flattert wild im Wind:  
die Siege unsrer Jugend sind  
ein Ruf an alle, die noch ruhn!

The arrangement of the poems reinforces a spirit of awakening and joyful anticipation: it guides the reader from the past and its heroes to the future and those who welcome it. The group of 'Verfolgte', as the National Socialist movement is referred to in the title, now seems safe. They are standing upright and proud around the flag and they feel certain of their victory: 'Nun kann kein Teufel uns was tun!' The flag remains at the centre of attention throughout, but whereas the first poem 'An die Fahne' is addressed to the flag, the last one is addressed to the public: 'ein Ruf an alle, die noch ruhn!' However, despite its appellative and performative tone, which would usually suggest that the focus lies on the agent and not the object, even the participants' gaze is still firmly fixed on the flag that they encircle: 'Stellt euch um die Standarte rund'. The flag symbol, which was central to many National Socialist ceremonies, festivities and rituals, bore political, even religious and very pronounced

military connotations. Sabine Behrenbeck points out in her 1996 study *Der Kult um die toten Helden* that in times before standardised uniforms were provided for those who fought, the flag was an essential part of warfare to differentiate between friends and enemy; lowering the flag or removing it from sight, meant chaos and uncertainty for those who fought.<sup>37</sup> Schirach clearly wishes to see the flag symbol in this tradition. In the end, he assures his reader, the flag as bringer of order and reassurance flies high and is again visible to everyone. Moreover, this incessant re-focussing on the flag fulfilled yet another important function. It set the Nazi state apart from its political predecessor. Even before 1933, the National Socialist movement profited from the hesitancy with which the Weimar Republic only sparingly made use of its new flag. Additionally, on official holidays and on other occasions when flags were hoisted, the state's black-red-gold flag was used alongside the black-white-red flag of the German Empire, which continued to be used as a merchant flag. The picture that this presented was one of indecision and further betrayed the state's inner political conflicts. The swastika flag of the NSDAP however, was paraded proudly and additionally printed on armbands, badges and posters. It suggested a uniformity and prominence that the party in reality had not yet achieved at the time.<sup>38</sup> By making the flag his most often used symbol, Schirach contributes to the positive identification of the new National Socialist state with the swastika flag.

As to the structure of the main part of the collection, Schirach clusters poems similar in content or theme in groups, a technique he had already used in *Die Feier der Neuen Front*. Rhetorically, the arrangement follows the pattern Hitler himself used in his speeches. Ulrich Ulonska suggests in his 1997 article 'Ethos und Pathos in Hitlers Rhetorik zwischen 1920 und 1933' and in his 1990 study *Suggestion der Glaubwürdigkeit* that Hitler's Kampfzeit speeches largely followed the same emotive pattern, which will briefly be outlined in the following. The world, Hitler would begin – speaking quite calmly – was in disarray: the basic needs of safety and comfort were suspended in the Weimar Republic. Legal and social injustices have taken hold of the nation. Among the audience, Ulonska argues, this evoked grief, worries and fear. The tension rose, because the audience felt that Germany was at the mercy of its enemies. The second phase of the speech typically focused on the defamation of the

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<sup>37</sup> See Sabine Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden. Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Riten und Symbole 1923-1945* (Greifswald: SH, 1996), p. 442.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 423.

enemies and was supposed to evoke even more negative feelings: hatred, disgust and aversion against 'the system', other political parties and 'die Juden'. The audience, Ulonska suggests, experienced negative feelings but was at the same time assured that the speaker in front of them was morally superior to the groups he spoke of. Therefore, it could harbour hopes that its wishes and needs might be fulfilled after all. Towards the end of the speech, Ulonska explains, Hitler would dive into an appraisal of the Volksgemeinschaft and conjure up the vision of a blossoming and strong German nation. Although the means he suggested to bring this state about were aggressive and violent, the audience felt they were justified, since his motives – in their eyes – appeared just and morally good. Still filled with anger over the injustices that Hitler previously laid open, the audience, Ulonska argues, desired this promised state of national pride and joy. To release the tension that has been built to this point, Hitler then – having by now established himself as 'ethischen Kämpfer'<sup>39</sup> and morally superior – offered himself as national leader. The audience, by now in awe of his insight and superiority, did not experience this request for their submissal to him as negative, since Hitler portrayed himself as fighting for their needs and interests.<sup>40</sup> Schirach, I will argue, sought to achieve quite similar emotive effects. Despite the differences in genres, the fact that Schirach's poems are short, individual texts, which do not allow for the complex arguments that can be made in a longer speech and despite the fact that they were not written with the idea of publishing them as a collection in mind, their arrangement in the collection shows far greater care and rhetorical awareness than Schirach's 'Minutenlyrik'<sup>41</sup> has traditionally been granted.

The First World War serves as a starting point for the volume, reappearing in particular in 'Um unsre Augen...' (4) up to 'Auf einem Gefallenen-Denkmal' (8). The speaker glorifies the death of fallen soldiers, which he declares to have been their sacrifice for the 'Führer' and Reich. He praises their bravery, mourns their suffering and the tragedy of their death – while constantly exhorting younger generations to prove themselves worthy of their legacy. War – in his words – means awakening, youth, virility, and valour but it also signifies maturing, the loss of innocent childhood, and necessarily brings death, loss, 'Hunger, Kälte

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<sup>39</sup> Ulrich Ulonska, 'Ethos und Pathos in Hitlers Rhetorik zwischen 1920 und 1933,' *Rhetorik. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, no. 16 (1997): 9–15, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 9-11; Ulrich Ulonska, *Suggestion der Glaubwürdigkeit* (Hamburg: Verlag an der Lottbek, 1990), pp. 286-289.

<sup>41</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 62.



und Wunden' (7). The speaker's self-avowed hunger to prove himself in battlefield action goes hand in hand with the feeling of having been deprived of a chance to fight for his country during the First World War: '[...] wir kämpften nie in einem wahren Kriege,/ in einem Krieg der Kugeln und Granaten.' (6) Yet the speaker insists that this generation has been part of the conflicts resulting from the lost war that continue to this day, validating it and its own experiences.<sup>42</sup>

Und doch bekannt sind Kämpfe uns wie Siege –  
nein, nicht im Krieg schlug man uns unsre Narben,  
und doch war's Krieg!  
Denn viele, viele starben....

While Schirach allows his reader small moments of pride when thinking of the courage that the fallen soldiers have proven during the war, this part evokes mostly negative feelings: the memories of loss, sorrow, grief and the anger at the injustices that even the young had had to endure.

In the speaker's mind it is an even graver injustice to accept defeat after having paid so high a price, an argument he develops over the course of several poems, starting with 'Auf einem Gefallenen-Denkmal' (8) up to 'Ihr und Wir' (12). Finally, any notion of closure is violently rejected:

Wehe dem Sohn, der das je kann verwinden  
[...] Wir wollen unsres Daseins Sinn verkünden:  
uns hat der Krieg behütet für den Krieg! (10)

Schirach, similar to Hitler, now dives into a phase of defamation. Subsequently, he divides the world into two groups. He identifies those whose life allegedly consists of nothing but 'Reben,/ Feste und Gesang' (12), who selfishly pursue only their own happiness, but whose names, he predicts, will ultimately leave no mark in history: 'wenn eure Namen längst im Wind verweht,/ strahlt unser Stern noch in die fernste Nacht' (11). They are to be distinguished from those who remain loyal to the fallen German soldiers, who choose to follow their footsteps and whose names will be known long after they are gone. The ideals of permanence, infinity, and guidance associated with the star-filled night sky are contrasted with the unstable and uncontrollable force of the wind. Nazi propaganda emphasised the

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<sup>42</sup> See also Hundehage, 'Baldur von Schirach', pp. 220-221.

supposedly inherently transient nature of Jewish culture.<sup>43</sup> Even though there are no overt references to Judaism, Schirach clearly puts forward racial thought: only he who can accept the hardships fate brings will eventually prove himself worthy to be a 'Sohn der Ahnen'(12) and truly 'ein Deutscher' (12).<sup>44</sup> This said, it is worth noticing that explicit references to nationalities or countries are scarce. Schirach operates with terms that are at once straightforward and nebulous. He divides the world into 'Ihr und Wir' (12) or 'Die Einen und die Andern' (9) without being clear as to whether these groups are defined by nationality, ethnicity or cultural factors. His fellow party members, however, knew how to read them; for instance Rainer Schlösser commented: 'Zu ergreifender Gegensätzlichkeit verdichtet sich in den Strophen 'Ihr und Wir' die Schilderung entdeutschter Allerweltsmenschheit und nationalsozialistischer Volkheit.'<sup>45</sup> Both groups are presented as being in fierce conflict with one another. The poems express resentment not only towards the victorious nations and their conduct after the end of the First World War:

Dass wir Ketten tragen,  
die wir Sieger sind,  
und ins Joch geschlagen  
Mann und Weib und Kind.(12)

But even among his own countrymen the speaker assails those who do not align themselves with his aggressive stance:

Wer nicht an Euren [the dead soldiers'] Leichen  
gelobte, Euch zu gleichen,  
der ist kein Kamerad...(8)

Schirach carves out a very simplistic friend or foe pattern.<sup>46</sup> The negative feelings Schirach has built up in the first part thus continue and now focus on anger and aggression at the injustices that the Germans have suffered and still suffer. The reader is invited to identify with the 'wir' community that has suffered unjustly, Schirach allows the reader to feel morally superior and, what is more, to hope that in the future, past wrongs may be put right.

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<sup>43</sup> For example Klaus von See points out: '[...] daß in der "völkischen" Ideologie die Juden gern als "Wüstenvolk" im Gegensatz zum germanischen "Waldvolk" dargestellt werden.' Klaus von See, *Ideologie und Philologie. Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006), p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> See also Hundehage, 'Baldur von Schirach', p. 221

<sup>45</sup> Schlösser, 'Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts'.

<sup>46</sup> See also Hundehage, 'Baldur von Schirach', pp. 220-221.

This becomes particularly clear in the following pieces, 'Und gäb es niemals ein Gelingen' (13) up to 'Spruch' (19), share not so much a common theme as an appellative tone. In repetitive phrases the speaker implores his audience again and again not to give up, but to fight for 'unsern Staat' (13), if needs be against a union of 'Himmel, Hölle und [...] Welt'. (13) He builds up aggression in short, forceful phrases, for example 'Volk ans Gewehr' (18) and 'jeder sei Soldat!' (19) or else appeals to the addressee's sense of honour, which, according to him, has been cast aside to everyone's humiliation, despite the fate of the German soldiers, of which 'Millionen sind ins Grab gesunken' (15).

'Der Tote' (20) up to 'Grab in der Nacht' (24) deal with the inevitable consequences of war. Death, loss and grief are addressed in sombre words, yet more often in aggressive tones. For instance 'Der Tote' (20) focuses on the thirst for revenge against the enemies who killed a German soldier. However, the speaker never ceases to remind his audience that dead fighters are never truly lost to this world. Instead they live on in the memory of their companions. The fallen men are even frequently presented as still standing in the ranks of the surviving or speaking from beyond the grave:

Wir sind dem Toten fest geschworen  
[...] dem Vaterland bleibt er geboren  
und spricht im Grabe noch: ich bin. (22)

Yet there are moments in which there is an air of melancholy, for example in 'Heimkehr', when a mother's grief over the loss of her son is described. Her pain is, however, immediately rectified and romanticised, since her son's companions declare:

Wir legen ihr das letzte Kind  
in ihres Hauses Halle  
und sagen: deine Söhne sind  
wir alle! (23)

In the collective of the Volksgemeinschaft the individual, Schirach suggests, can seemingly be seamlessly replaced by the other.

The tension continues to build. Looking back at the past struggles of the National Socialist movement, 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle zu München' (25), 'Horst Wessel' (26) and 'Nürnberg 1927' (29) refer to actual events or persons that had achieved cult status within the party. The radical activist Wessel had risen to fame after his violent

death in 1930. Schirach was not the only leading party member to publicly commemorate him. After the attack, Goebbels's *Angriff* daily informed its readers of his struggle for survival. When Wessel finally died, the soon-to-be minister of propaganda arranged for him to be buried with full party honours.<sup>47</sup> The fact that the poem dedicated to Wessel, who was only twenty-three at the time of his death, is (at least formally) placed at the centre of the collection may be another indicator that it was directed at a young audience. However, undoubtedly the core of the anthology, although formally not in a central position, lies in the poems 'Das Größte' (30) up to 'Einem Führer' (35), which focus on Hitler as enigmatic leader. The defiant, aggressive tone becomes more reverential here and the writing shows an increasing use of striking imagery and grand language. Of particular interest is the poem 'Hitler' (32), which is written from his idol's point of view:

Ihr seid viel tausend hinter mir,  
[...] Ich habe keinen Gedanken gelebt,  
der nicht in euren Herzen gebebt.

The choice of perspective offers Hitler as a figure of identification. The closeness of the rhyme 'beben' – 'leben' underlines the circularity of the relationship between the 'Ihr' and the 'ich'. Whereas this seems to give Hitler an accessible, human side, in other poems the speaker also attributes superhuman qualities to him, or at the very least implies divine intervention. In 'Des Führers Wächter' (33) he describes a scene in which the eagles printed on the flag come to life at night to guard Hitler in his sleep. Along the same lines, 'Einem Führer' (35) describes the erection of a monument provided with a torch of eternal flames in honour of Hitler. For the first time, Schirach allows his reader to feel unhampered positive feelings of joy, pride, fascination and reverence.

Dispersing the tension that has been built up to this point, the next poem, 'Berglied' (36), represents an abrupt break both thematically and stylistically from those preceding it. It

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<sup>47</sup> See Nigel Jones, 'A song for Hitler,' *History Today* 57, no. 10 (2007): 23–29, pp. 27–29. Baird also discusses Wessel's role in the National Socialist martyr narrative in Baird, *To die for Germany*, pp. 73–107 but does not mention Schirach in this context. According to a report published in *Die Bewegung*, Schirach also spoke about Wessel in his public speeches: 'In ergreifender Weise führte er [Schirach] den Zuhörern – 250 Studenten und Studentinnen – Leben und Heldentod des Studenten und Sturmführers Horst Wessel vor Augen, der starb im Kampf für die Freiheit und Größe seines Vaterlandes.' 'Pg. v. Schirach spricht in Innsbruck,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 4 (27 May 1930). For further examples that references to Wessel were part of Schirach's rhetoric see Baldur von Schirach, 'Die Sudetendeutschen,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 15 (12 August 1930). '[...] mit seinem Nachruf auf Horst Wessel hat v. Schirach Unzähligen aus der Seele gesprochen', a review celebrated the poem. Karl Hunger and Theodor Langenmaier, *Kurze Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung* (Bamberg: Buchner, 1940), p. 246.

deals with the idea of drawing strength out of a serene experience of nature – offering a moment of respite. The speaker of ‘Berglied’ perceives his return to the mountains as a relief, which soothes his inner turmoil: ‘Küsse mir die heiße Stirne/ mit dem Eiswind, Bruder Berg’, echoing the transition from the ecstatic atmosphere of the previous pieces to calmer and more peaceful, and yet sublime, tones. Whereas ‘Berglied’ had been among the opening poems of the 1931 edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*, in the 1933 edition it marks the beginning of the second section of the collection. The reader is allowed to continue experiencing pleasant, if somewhat less intense emotions. The subsequent poems continue the reflective and more moderate tone. ‘An einen Arbeiter’ (37) is a rather conventional hymn of praise to the unification of the worker and the non-working class:

Ich fasse deine harte Hand:  
hier halte ich mein Vaterland.  
[...] Aus unserm Handschlag wächst empor  
der Glaube, den das Volk verlor.<sup>48</sup>

Even Schlösser had to admit that this poem was ‘etwas im Herkömmlichen steckengeblieben’.<sup>49</sup> It is followed by ‘Manchmal sind wir vom Willen wund’ (38) and ‘Und wollten wir bequem uns betten...’ (39). The former acknowledges the need for a break to re-energise, previously established in ‘Berglied’:

Manchmal sind wir vom Willen wund,  
dann wollen wir den Kampf um Gott begraben.  
Wir möchten eine Märchenmutter haben, [...].

The speaker’s wistful wish for a fairy-tale mother, the idealised notion of a maternal figure, is then surpassed by the phantasy of an almost physical return to the infantile state: ‘und unsre Augen werden gross und rund./ [...] und jeder ist ein kleines, kleines Kind.’ This longing for a past in which the world seemed simpler unveils the dissatisfaction felt at the complexity of the self, but also of the ‘Kampf’ in present society. The poem continues in a reflective tone: ‘Wir wissen, dass wir voller Wunder sind,/ und lächelnd lauschen wir in uns hinein: [...]’ ‘Und wollten wir bequem uns betten...’ (39) restores some of the belligerence of the first part of the anthology, merging religious and militant imagery conjuring up connotations with the

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<sup>48</sup> See also Hundehege, ‘Baldur von Schirach’, p. 222.

<sup>49</sup> Schlösser, ‘Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts’.

crusades:

So wurden wir zu deinen Rittern  
und dienten Dir und sind nun Dein.  
Du warst bei uns, Gott, hinter Gittern  
[...] Wir falten nicht die harten Hände,  
denn unsre Taten sind Gebet.

The imagery of imprisonment continues, as does the rhetoric of dedication and sacrifice. In order to bring about the envisaged glorious future, everyone has to be ready to make sacrifices and work towards the same goal, neglecting personal interests – this message is instilled in the poems' readership. 'Gefängnishof' (40), gloomy lines describing inmates slowly walking about the prison yard, undoubtedly refers to Schirach's own incarceration in 1930 when he had been arrested while giving a speech at an illegal public assembly in Cologne. His short prison sentence, which was suspended, had nevertheless given the movement another hero and martyr.<sup>50</sup> 'An die Reaktion' (41) picks up on this: 'Uns schreckt ihr nicht mit Ketten und Verboten,/ [...] Uns zwingt ihr nicht mit Folter noch Verderben, [...].' He takes the idea of sacrifice one step further by referring to Horst Wessel: 'Wenn's sein muss, kann ein jeder von uns sterben/ wie Wessel fiel.' Moving on from worldly suffering into the religious spheres, Schirach then evokes the Christian embodiment of sacrifice, Christ himself, among the ranks of those who suffered for their belief. In 'Christus' (42) he envisages Christ as a warrior, who gladly shoulders the burden placed upon him a second time and in order to defend his belief endures being nailed to the cross again. 'Golgatha' (45) and 'Deutung' (46) also invoke explicit religious references or imagery. This aspect of Schirach's writing will be examined more closely later in chapter seven. It will suffice for now, for the sake of an analysis of the anthology's rhetorical structure, to point out that by using religious imagery Schirach once again challenges his reader to *believe*, rather than *know*: 'Die Wahrheit steht, wenn auch ihr Träger fällt/ der Glaube lebt, da ich das Leben lasse...' (42). *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* closes by forcefully urging 'alle, die noch ruhn' (51) to spring into action and join the movement.<sup>51</sup> Overall, within the main body of the second half of the collection (36-51) it is not as easy to identify a clear, coherent rhetorical or thematic structure to the extent that the first one represents. This circumstance is

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<sup>50</sup> See BArch/NS 26\_355/b Baldur von Schirach Blatt I; IfZ/ MA 744 'Baldur von Schirach zu 3 Monaten Gefängnis verurteilt'; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 81-81.

<sup>51</sup> See also Hundehede, 'Baldur von Schirach', p. 224.

interesting in itself, since it can be read as further proof that the persecution narrative Schirach sets out in the first half and which the Nazi movement cultivated offered a stronger dynamism and coherence than what followed. Some of the poems, most noticeably the opening poem of the first edition, 'Meiner Mutter' (47), or 'Dies ist die Stadt' (48), stand alone without apparent connection to the ones around them. The first is an expression of thanks to the speaker's mother, whom he deems the most important and lasting influence in his life. This poem is a good example of Schirach's tendency to promote motherhood on those rare occasions on which he makes reference to femininity or womanhood at all. In *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* we encounter a range of male figures, soldiers, sons, and farmers. However, female figures are restricted to motherhood – in line with National Socialist gender ideology – who nurture not only physically, but also mentally.<sup>52</sup> In 'Manchmal sind wir vom Willen wund' (38) the speaker reflects:

Wir möchten eine Märchenmutter haben,  
und unsre Augen werden gross und rund  
[...] und jeder ist ein kleines, kleines Kind.

Similarly, in 'Heimkehr', it is a mother who anticipates the death of her son during the war: 'Es zuckt um müder Mutter Mund/ ein Ahnen...' (23) Other poems, that thematically stand out from the rest of the collection, are for instance 'Dies ist die Stadt' (48), 'Der Priester' (43) and 'O Land...' (44). The first one is a song of praise for the countryside that sets it in sharp contrast to urban life. The city is depicted as a restless, hostile environment, in which life is destined to perish. The same attitude is reflected in the other two, both examples of blood-and-soil poetry. The poems that do not fit in easily with the rest of the collection are often set in close proximity, for instance, 'Der Priester' (43) 'Meiner Mutter' (47) and 'Dies ist die Stadt' (48), contrasting both stylistically and in their focus on the city and the countryside. 'Dies ist die Stadt' is highly reminiscent of Expressionism in its representation of city life and its de-humanising and alienating effects due to its fast pace and overstimulation:

Dies ist die Stadt des Lärmes und der Hast.  
Du kleine Blume auf erstorbne[m] Stein bist nur ein Gast  
[...] Nur unsre Schemen stehn in dieser Stadt.

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<sup>52</sup> See also *ibid.*, p. 223.

The city appears as perilous environment for nature and mankind alike. What is beautiful and natural will perish and be reduced to a mere shadow of itself. Life is transitory; the flower is merely a guest. Since it grows on stone instead of soil, it cannot last and flourish. Even the stone is 'erstorben' and therefore cannot give life. The barren ground described in 'Dies ist die Stadt' contrasts noticeably with the fertile soil of 'Der Priester' (43), which depicts a farmer sowing seed:

Im Licht der Sonne sah ich einen schreiten,  
geboren aus dem Boden, den er trat  
[...] Und feierlich, wie schon vor tausend Jahren,  
sank seine Saat in das gepflügte Land.

This rhetoric of agrarian romanticism that is typical of blood-and-soil literature is traditionally seen as being in opposition to modernist Expressionism. Schirach, however, places both poems in close proximity. While tone and the language contrast, their messages complement each other and thus re-affirm the impetus of the introduction of this study to rethink our binary view on modernist and 'non-modernist' literature.

### Critical reception

Although *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* was to remain Schirach's last published anthology of his own poetry, his name still found its way into the Nazi literary canon. His widespread popularity in the Third Reich is generally accepted, yet his poetic activities are often regarded merely as a stepping-stone to his political career. Wortmann for instance remarks: 'Ohne Zweifel hat der junge Dichterruhm Schirach nicht unerheblich geholfen, seine Stellung in der NSDSAP zu festigen und den Nimbus des berufenen Führers der Jugend, den er jetzt eifrig aufzubauen begann, zu stärken.'<sup>53</sup> Baird merely states that Schirach 'wrote several works that became well known in nationalist circles.'<sup>54</sup> These acknowledgements of his poetic reputation have as yet seldom been substantiated with references to reviews and re-prints, which will help to

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<sup>53</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 62.

<sup>54</sup> Baird, *To die for Germany*, p. 48.



outline the extent of his influence.<sup>55</sup> From the mid-1930s onwards Schirach's poems appeared in several prominent collections. For instance in Herbert Böhme's collection of contemporary poetry *Rufe in das Reich* (1934), Hans Gille's *Das Neue Deutschland im Gedicht* (1936), Will Vesper's *Die Ernte der Gegenwart* (1940) and Friedrich Velmeck's collection of poetry for the Wehrmacht troops, *Dem Führer. Worte deutscher Dichter* (1941) they were printed next to those of other famous National Socialist authors, usually Herybert Menzel, Hans Baumann and Heinrich Anacker.<sup>56</sup> Schirach's poems were included in Hunger and Langenmaier's 1940 edition of *Kurze Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*.<sup>57</sup> In 1941 he was given the ultimate accolade when he was added to Josef Nadler's *Literaturgeschichte*:

Sie [*Die Feier der neuen Front* und *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*] sind auf das junge Herz gestimmt. Sie sprechen vor. Sie reden an. Sie drücken gemeinschaftlich aus, was der einzelne der geistig oder räumlich Versammelten sagen möchte und was, dem Ort und der Stunde gemäß, nur einer auf vollkommene Weise sagen kann, eben der der das Wort hat. Daher sind die Gedichte kein Massenchor. Sie sind ganz Persönlichkeit, die Persönlichkeit eines jeden einzelnen gegenwärtig in der Stimme, die führt. Sie schweifen nicht lyrisch ins Weite aus. Sie fassen, nicht was alle, sondern was jeden bewegt, in das knappe Werk eines Spruches, der trifft und zündet.<sup>58</sup>

Nadler's comments about the dynamics of individual and communal voices, irrespective of the accuracy in the qualities attested to them, certainly are proof of the widespread use of Schirach's poems at Hitlerjugend assemblies (see chapter eight). The poems experienced another rise in popularity after the outbreak of the war. In cooperation with Rainer Schlösser he published a previously overlooked wartime edition of Schirach's poetry, entitled *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940). Schlösser introduced the collection as follows:

Immer wieder fand sich in den Feldpostbriefen unserer Kameraden der Wunsch nach einer handlichen Ausgabe der Gedichte des Reichsjugendführers. [...] Jeder Kamerad wird [...] sich hingeben der Zeitlosigkeit deutschen Gesinnungsadels, der hier zu uns spricht; und stolz darauf sein, daß, was sich im Frieden zu bekennerischem Worte formte, sich im Kriege in schlichte und selbstverständliche Tat umsetzte.<sup>59</sup>

This wartime collection contained two new pieces, 'Die heiligen Namen' and 'Hymne an die

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<sup>55</sup> See for example Hundehege, 'Baldur von Schirach', pp. 210-211 and pp. 226-227.

<sup>56</sup> See Herbert Böhme, ed., *Rufe in das Reich. Die heldische Dichtung von Langemarck bis zur Gegenwart*. (Berlin: Junge Generation, 1934); Hans Gille, ed., *Das neue Deutschland im Gedicht* (Bielefeld: Velhagen & Klasing, 1936); Will Vesper, ed., *Die Ernte der Gegenwart. Deutsche Lyrik von heute* (Ebenhausen: Langewiesche-Brandt, 1940).

<sup>57</sup> See Hunger and Langenmaier, *Kurze Geschichte*, p. 247.

<sup>58</sup> Josef Nadler, *Literaturgeschichte des deutschen Volkes*, 4th edn. (Berlin: Propyläen, 1941), pp. 381-382.

<sup>59</sup> Baldur von Schirach, *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* [referred to as FiF] (Berlin: Steiniger, c. 1940), pp. 5-6.

Jugend', which open and close the collection, both celebrating the gift of youth, lamenting the tragedy but also glorifying the heroism of an early death on the battlefield. Otherwise it consisted of earlier poems – in particular those glorifying war and Hitler, such as 'Den Soldaten des grossen Krieges', 'Volk ans Gewehr' or 'Dem Führer', clearly intended to boost the soldiers' morale at the front. In late 1942 Schirach was informed of plans to print another 50,000 copies of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*.<sup>60</sup> The exaltation of the ideals of 'Kameradschaft', 'Opfertum' and 'Gefolgschaft' as well as the heroic qualities of patriotic death fed directly into the regime's war propaganda. The fact that Schirach's poems, mostly written between 1926 and 1931, and in many respects often reflections of their time, could so easily be re-applied to this war, once again demonstrates how central the war had been to the National Socialist movement, how prominent militant rhetoric and the ideal of fearless soldiery had been from its very beginning. Pointing out Schirach's poem 'Heimkehr', Schlösser aptly summed up what he saw as the heroic-nationalistic character of Schirach's poetry:

Wenn Schirach singt [...] ist das schlechterdings die Verdichtung der heroischen Grundhaltung von zehn Jahren, in denen junge Menschen mit der ganzen Freiwilligkeit des Opferwollens für die Fahne fielen – nicht staatlichen Gegebenheiten folgend, sondern dem schönen Überschwange, von dem die Völker leben. In wenigen Worten ist hier alles: die Größe dieses Sterbens, die Gemeinschaftsbindung durch dieses vergossene Blut – es ist die Einbringung des gemeuchelten Siegfried, übertragen auf die asphaltene Erbarmungslosigkeit unserer Tage.<sup>61</sup>

Schirach's promises of a new direction, his dream of serving the Volk even in the face of impending death, written in melancholic fantasies and half-memories of the First World War, was now to become a horrifying and painful reality for a new, even younger generation. However, by 1943, when the initial war enthusiasm had worn off, when he had briefly fought in the war himself, after the battle of Stalingrad, after fighting, cold and illness had cost millions of young men's lives, his enthusiasm and former belligerence seem to have dwindled. He refused to give his consent to a reprint: 'Der Reichsleiter [Schirach] wünscht', Pressereferent Müller was informed, 'keinen Neudruck seines Gedichtbandes 'Die Fahne der Verfolgten'. [...] Von der Luxusausgabe, die das 100. Tausend umfassen soll, lasse ich, da der Reichsleiter auch darauf keinen allzu grossen Wert *mehr* (my emphasis) legt, jetzt nur 500

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<sup>60</sup> See Österreichisches Staatsarchiv [referred to as ÖStA] /AdR, RStH Wien/ Hauptbüro Schirach 51/265 'Andermann-Verlag' letter addressed to Schirach, dated 23 October 1942.

<sup>61</sup> Schlösser, 'Baldur von Schirach als Lyriker', p. 14.

Exemplare drucken.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> ÖStA/AdR, RStH Wien/Hauptbüro Schirach 51/265 'Andermann-Verlag' letter addressed to Obergebietsführer Müller, dated 12 January 1943; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 168 and p. 246.

## CHAPTER 4

### Shaping the future, tied to the past. The legacy of the First World War

#### World War I and the German literary context

The First World War marked a caesura in Germany's literary tradition in many ways. Not only had the war years themselves spawned an immense body of literature, they had also been anticipated (sometimes eagerly awaited) in pre-war poetry.<sup>1</sup> This initial phase of widely shared nationalist enthusiasm was soon followed by disillusionment. In the very first year of the war, up-and-coming Expressionist writers such as Ernst Stadler, Alfred Lichtenstein, Hans Leybold and Georg Trakl died, either on the battlefield or – in Trakl's case – through suicide having lost the struggle against depression resulting in part from his experience of the war. The legacy of the war weighed heavily on writers who survived and on the literature of the young Weimar Republic. The years immediately following the war had been dominated by detailed (and often repelling) portrayals of crippled soldiers and of bloodshed on the battlefield. Authors such as Ernst Jünger, who described the war in graphic detail in his popular novel *In Stahlgewittern*, were struggling to find access to the events from a literary point of view and to find the 'right' metaphor. Jünger rewrote and reprinted *In Stahlgewittern*, which he first published in 1920, in several editions over the following years, stylistically and ideologically altering its content.<sup>2</sup> The novel, from which Schirach reportedly recited at NSDStB meetings,<sup>3</sup> focuses on the frontline experiences of a war volunteer, the daily dangers of battlefield action and the intensity of a soldier's life. Whereas Jünger had to fund the first edition himself, its success soon rewarded him. By 1943 sales numbers reached an impressive 230,000 copies.<sup>4</sup> Praise even came from unexpected quarters. In 1930, Jewish writer and former soldier Hans Sochaczewer expressed his admiration for Jünger's works and even described them as 'pazifistisch wirken[d]'.<sup>5</sup> Erich Maria Remarque, who is usually

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<sup>1</sup> For example in Georg Heym's famous poems 'Der Krieg' and 'Gebet', both written in September 1911. See Hermann Korte, *Der Krieg in der Lyrik des Expressionismus* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1981), pp. 53-54; Karl Ludwig Schneider, ed., *Georg Heym. Dichtungen und Schriften. Gesamtausgabe 1 Lyrik* (Hamburg: Ellermann, 1964), pp. 346-347.

<sup>2</sup> See Helmuth Kiesel, 'In Stahlgewittern (1920) und Kriegstagebücher,' in *Ernst Jünger-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Matthias Schöning (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2014), 41–58, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> See 'Aus der Hochschulbewegung,' *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 1 (January 1929), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> See Kiesel, 'In Stahlgewittern (1920) und Kriegstagebücher', pp. 53-56 and p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Helmuth Kiesel, ed., *Ernst Jünger: In Stahlgewittern. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Variantenverzeichnis und Materialien* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2013), p. 489. Sochaczewer had been a successful writer and columnist in the Weimar Republic. The National Socialists' rise to power forced him to leave Germany. He lived in England and in Switzerland, where he continued to publish, having changed his name to

cited as the literary opposite to Jünger's war writing, wrote in his review of a series of war novels in 1928:

Die beiden Bücher Jüngers von einer wohltuenden Sachlichkeit [sic], präzise, ernst, stark und gewaltig, sich immer weiter steigernd, bis in ihnen wirklich das harte Antlitz des Krieges, das Grauen der Materialschlacht und die ungeheure, alles überwindende Kraft der Vitalität und des Herzens Ausdruck gewinnt. Den Ablauf der Geschehnisse zeichnen die 'Stahlgewitter' mit der ganzen Macht der Frontjahre am stärksten, ohne jedes Pathos geben sie das verbissene Heldentum des Soldaten wieder [...].<sup>6</sup>

Remarque's own war novel, *Im Westen nichts Neues*, which sold one million copies between February 1929 and June 1930, greatly exceeded even Jünger's sales numbers.<sup>7</sup> The novel describes the gruesome war experiences of a young German soldier and his growing emotional detachment not only from life in civil society, but also from the brutality and losses he experiences at the front. Remarque's book provoked strong reactions, both positive and negative. Fuelled by the crisis of inflation and the conflicts between the political left and right, at the time that *Im Westen nichts Neues* was published the war had become an object of intense ideological debate in literature in the late 1920s. War writing experienced another rise in popularity and a number of new publications appeared on the market: national author Ernst von Salomon's novel *Die Geächteten* (1930), National Socialist writer Hans Zöberlein's novel *Der Glaube an Deutschland* (1931), but also Edlef Köppen's critical novel *Heeresbericht* (1930), to name just a few.<sup>8</sup>

Schirach, who – in a very patronising tone – dismissed Remarque as 'halbverstehenden Journalisten',<sup>9</sup> was however very voluble in his praise of Jünger. There are few records of public support or appraisals of Jünger's work among Nazi leaders or official party offices, although Herbert Kiesel suspects that it was widely read and appreciated in National Socialist circles.<sup>10</sup> In 1926, Goebbels enthusiastically noted in his diary: 'Ich lese: Ernst Jünger. "In Stahlgewittern". Das Evangelium des Krieges. Grausam-groß!',<sup>11</sup> although

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José Orabuena when he took British citizenship in 1948. See Thomas F. Schneider, 'Das Exil als biographischer und ästhetischer Kontinuitätsbruch: Von Hans Sochaczewer zu José Orabuena,' in *Ästhetiken des Exils*, ed. Helga Schreckenberger (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 173–186, pp. 173-187.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Kiesel, *Ernst Jünger*, pp. 470-471.

<sup>7</sup> See Kiesel, 'In Stahlgewittern', p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> See Walter Delabar, *Klassische Moderne. Deutschsprachige Literatur 1918-33* (Berlin: Akademie, 2010), p. 48 and pp. 50-52.

<sup>9</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Bücher, die man kennen muß', *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 4 (April 1929), p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> See Kiesel, 'In Stahlgewittern', p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> Gobbels., *Tagebücher 1/II* (2005), entry dated 13 January 1926.

Goebbels appears to have been less impressed with Jünger's later works.<sup>12</sup> It is unclear whether Schirach and Jünger knew each other personally; one indicator might be the fact that Jünger and Schirach's wife Henriette frequently corresponded at least between the years 1964 and 1988.<sup>13</sup> Schirach's admiration of Jünger and the latter's influence on the former has received little attention to date in existing secondary literature. In a review of Erich Limpach's book *Die Front im Spiegel der Seele* (1927), published in the *Akademischer Beobachter* in 1929, Schirach drew parallels between Limpach and Jünger.<sup>14</sup> It was, however, not their writing style that interested him, but their inner qualities: 'Erich Limpach gehört seinem Wesen nach zu Jünger, d.h. er ist Soldat aus innerster Überzeugung und erlebt dadurch Dinge, von denen die Remarqueianer nicht einmal träumen.'<sup>15</sup> Jünger's commitment, his affirmation of the war, Schirach seems to suggest, has elevated his (and Limpach's) experience of the war. What is more, their attitude was not only central to their personal experience, but also shaped the war (and its outcome) as a whole. Schirach argues: 'Zwei Menschentypen haben den Krieg gestaltet: der Deutsche und der Spießher. Oder: Ernst Jünger und E.M. Remarque (recte Kramer). Jünger ist zum Klassiker des Weltkrieges geworden [...].' This obviously very simplified dualistic representation of the war, of the soldier's motivations and also of the authors writing about it, shows Schirach's criteria for what he considers successful or appropriate representations of war. Firstly, his focus does not lie on aesthetic qualities: the effectiveness of the language, the vividness of the imagery, the originality of the writing and the approach to the subject matter for instance do not interest him. Secondly, the phrase 'den Weltkrieg gestaltet' is revealing because it implies that Jünger, Limpach and Remarque not only shaped the war through their actions on the battlefield, but also continued to shape the war narrative through their writing long after it had ended. Rival narratives, such as Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*, had therefore to be contradicted. One month earlier, in March 1929, another article appeared in Schirach's *Akademischer Beobachter*, attacking Remarque for his refusal to see any deeper meaning in the war:

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<sup>12</sup> See Kiesel, *Ernst Jünger*, p. 448.

<sup>13</sup> The letters are held by the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. See A: Jünger, nr. HS 1994.0009.

<sup>14</sup> Limpach had previously published his experience of the war in *Krieg! Tagebuchblätter eines Kriegsfreiwilligen* (1924) and also wrote for the *Völkischer Beobachter*, where he had written a scathing review of Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*. See Erich Limpach, 'Neudeutsche Kriegsliteratur,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Reichsausgabe)* supplement: *Der deutsche Frontsoldat*, February 16, 1929.

<sup>15</sup> Schirach, 'Bücher, die man kennen muß,' (April 1929); the following quotation *ibid.*

Remarque fand keinen Sinn darin, in den Krieg zu ziehen, und keinen, aus ihm zurückzukehren. [...] Wenn er gefallen wäre, er hätte nicht gewußt warum, aber auch warum und wozu er noch lebt, ist ihm rätselhaft und verschlossen. [...] Der 'Krieg': das war eine große ungeheure Sinnlosigkeit für ihn [...].<sup>16</sup>

The thematic dominance of the First World War and of fallen soldiers in Schirach's poetry has been pointed out in previous scholarly research, usually in the context of his educational principles as Reichsjugendführer. Wortmann writes:

[...] es waren seine [Schirach's] Gedichte, die das Programm [the political programme of the new front] gleichsam ersetzen und hinter dem Nebel von Rausch und Gefühl der Substanzlosigkeit ein Gepräge gaben. In ihnen hat Schirach die mystische Gemeinschaft der Jugend mit den Weltkriegsgefallenen als Grundlage und Kraftquell nationaler Erneuerung in unzähligen Variationen herbeigesungen [...].<sup>17</sup>

Koontz reads Schirach's poetry along the same lines. He points out the aestheticisation of (a soldier's) death and the incitement of violence in *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*. Schirach, Koontz argues, used his poems to teach the Hitlerjugend members two lessons: firstly, to believe in 'the Nazi concept of "thinking with the blood"'<sup>18</sup> and secondly, to prepare them from a young age for the transformation into 'an effective and truly National Socialist warrior'.<sup>19</sup> However, neither study includes a nuanced discussion of the representation(s) of war in Schirach's poetry, nor an attempt to contextualise it within the spectrum of war literature published in the 1920s. As I have pointed out before, reading Schirach's poems exclusively in the context of Hitlerjugend indoctrination ignores the fact that many of the poems were written before he became involved in the party's youth organisation. Such a reading is also reductive in that it fails to see his poems against the backdrop of a general resurgence of war poetry in the late 1920s.

Indeed, the little that is known about Schirach's literary influences around 1930 points towards a great fascination with writing on war and soldiery. In her autobiography Henriette von Schirach describes literary evenings with a circle of friends in Munich: 'Hier wird Stefan George gelesen, über Talhoffs "Totenmal" diskutiert, der "Cornet" bei Kerzenlicht

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<sup>16</sup> Reinhard Sunkel, 'Das Kriegsbuch der Gesellschaft "Im Westen nichts Neues,"' *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 3 (March 1929), p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 61.

<sup>18</sup> Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 99.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

vorgetragen und Ernst Jünger zitiert.<sup>20</sup> Although Wortmann quotes this passage of Henriette von Schirach's autobiography in order to illustrate 'das literarische Umfeld, dem Schirachs Gedichte ihre Entstehung verdanken',<sup>21</sup> he does not provide further contextualisation regarding the texts, the authors and their popularity, in particular in nationalist circles at the time. All of the authors mentioned were Schirach's contemporaries and (with the exception of Rilke who had died aged fifty-one in 1926) still active as writers. Additionally, except for George, all of the texts or authors mentioned were strongly associated with war literature. For instance, the protagonist of Rilke's *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornet Christoph Rilke*, a young nobleman in the seventeenth century who is appointed flag bearer of his troop, had become known as a paradigm of fearless soldiery. When published in 1912 as the first work in the Insel-Bücherei book series, his story became an immense success. The series had been established to make shorter pieces of writing available for the affordable price of fifty Pfennige;<sup>22</sup> the *Cornet* sold 8,000 copies within three weeks. After the war broke out, it also became very popular among the soldiers; it was published in several wartime editions and sent to the front lines. Although Rilke himself later had some reservations about the quality of this early work, it continued to fascinate its readers with its strong rhythmic language and eerily beautiful atmosphere. By the time of Rilke's death, the *Cornet* had achieved cult status.<sup>23</sup> The prose poem was, by its author's own account, 'das unvermutete Geschenk einer einzigen Nacht, einer Herbstnacht, in einem Zuge hingeschrieben bei zwei im Nachtwind wehenden Kerzen'.<sup>24</sup> If Henriette von Schirach's memoirs are accurate, her husband's and his friends' recital was perhaps equally an homage to Rilke's account of the writing process as it was indicative of the romantic mindset of its readers. The *Cornet*, as its full title indicates, tells the story of a young man and his initiation in love and death. Because he was able to have both these archetypal experiences, the protagonist's life, although short, appears complete. This close connection of lust and death, of a longing for life and longing for *Liebestod*, apparently still held its appeal for Schirach in the late 1920s, as it had for the young men in the pre-war period in which it had been so popular – a generation that had been weary of everyday life and, indulging in apocalyptic fantasies, emphatically greeted the

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<sup>20</sup> Henriette von Schirach, *Der Preis der Herrlichkeit*, 8th edn. (Munich: Herbig, 2016), p. 198.

<sup>21</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> See Peter Kunze, *100 Jahre Insel-Bücherei* (Berlin: Universitätsbibliothek der Freien Universität Berlin, 2012), pp. 2-6.

<sup>23</sup> See Manfred Engel, ed., *Rilke-Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), pp. 210-212.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted from *ibid.*, p. 210.



war as the dawn of a new age.<sup>25</sup> The play that Henriette von Schirach mentions, *Totenmal*, is less well known today. It was published and put on stage in 1930 by Swiss writer and director Albert Talhoff. It commemorates the fallen soldiers of the First World War and poses the question of how their memory could be preserved appropriately. *Totenmal* reached a wide audience and sparked strong reactions from national and international critics. Despite its anti-war message, its insistence on the importance of commemoration and its mournful protest against the confusions of the present appealed to nationalist circles.<sup>26</sup> *Totenmal* posed the question of how to process the lost war, how to remember it and even try to find meaning in it. These thoughts continued to dominate the German literary scene long after the war ended and provoked very different answers. Many surviving authors such as René Schickele, Oskar Maria Graf and Walter Hasenclever became active pacifists. They turned against their fathers' generation, whom they considered responsible for the war. They themselves faced harsh criticism from young nationalists who refused to accept the German defeat as futile. Their attempts to carry over military values into peacetime, and to lend meaning to the lost war, often led to mythicised and anti-rationalist interpretations. They glorified the war as an opportunity to prove a man's heroism and courage; hesitations or doubts about meeting a futile death, if they were included at all, were often brushed aside.

#### Schirach and Ernst Jünger in comparison

It is exactly this simplified dualistic representation that Roger Woods challenges in his article 'Ernst Jünger, the New Nationalists, and the Memory of the First World War' (2009). Although Jünger is usually considered a paradigm of indiscriminate glorification of the war, Woods argues that a closer reading of his texts reveals that his 'war writings and those of the new nationalists as a whole are more complex and ambiguous than most critics have allowed them to be'.<sup>27</sup> Jünger's texts, as Woods argues, are without doubt full of praise of the sense

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<sup>25</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>26</sup> See Joseph Bättig, *Einführung in das Werk und die Persönlichkeit Albert Talhoffs*, (Littau: Bühlmann-Fenner, 1963), pp. 13-18, 21-22, 55-71.

<sup>27</sup> Woods, 'Ernst Jünger', p. 127. Woods refers back to dualistic representations of pacifist and nationalist narrations of war in studies by Kurt Sontheimer, Jeffrey Herf and Detlev Peukert that were first published between the 1960s and 1980s. See Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, 3rd edn. (Munich: dtv, 1978), pp. 94-95; Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism. Technology, Culture and Politics in*

of community and solidarity at the front lines, but they also often convey the shattered illusions held in particular by the young generation as well as a sense of isolation in war. Jünger's war writing conveys not only a sense of adventure, but also of war as a profoundly disturbing event. The possibility of meeting death through chance or circumstances beyond the soldier's control is not only emphasised in pacifist literature but also runs through Jünger's work, Woods argues.<sup>28</sup> According to him, Jünger, like many nationalist writers, was unable to accept the futility of war. However, he tried to employ more complex ways to rescue something from the lost war without resorting to conventional nationalism or the recitation of national interests and glory.<sup>29</sup> Woods distinguishes three main literary techniques through which Jünger tries to create meaning. Firstly, Jünger employs metaphors from the realm of nature, whereby destruction, as a part of the natural cycle and as something that lies in the nature of man, can be made to appear inevitable. The knowledge of inevitability can lend death meaning or at least counteract meaninglessness; it can replace chance.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, Jünger incorporates the past into the present. In *In Stahlgewittern*, Jünger tries to reconcile yearning for the unusual experience that the war promised – '[es] wob in uns allen die Sehnsucht nach dem Ungewöhnlichem, nach dem großen Erleben. Da hatte uns der Krieg gepackt wie ein Rausch'<sup>31</sup> – with frontline experience in archetypal patterns that lend it meaning: 'Am Abend saß ich noch lange in jener ahnungsvollen Stimmung, von der die Krieger aller Zeiten zu erzählen wissen [...]'.<sup>32</sup> As Woods points out, 'a mood is endowed with greater meaning if it is felt to have been the mood of countless generations before'.<sup>33</sup> To achieve this effect, Jünger often uses language that would suit older forms of battle.<sup>34</sup> Thirdly, he presents war as an inner experience, as an inner transformation. Material or political reasons for the conflict are pushed into the background. Moral qualities, 'courage, heroism, selflessness',<sup>35</sup> become ends in themselves and therefore the war – although lost – is not without meaning.

Using Woods' analysis as a template, I will argue that Schirach's poetry similarly

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*Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: UP, 1984), pp. 72-75; Detlev J.K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 104-106.

<sup>28</sup> See Woods, 'Ernst Jünger', p. 127.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 130-132.

<sup>31</sup> Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern*, 11th edn. (Berlin: Mittler, 1929), p. 1; see also Woods, 'Ernst Jünger', p. 128.

<sup>32</sup> See also *ibid.*, p. 133; Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> See Woods, 'Ernst Jünger', p. 133.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

attempts to invest the lost war with meaning. By doing so I do not wish to suggest that Schirach – as a writer – is in the same league as Jünger. Schirach's poems about the war display particularly limited poetic creativity and agility, even by his standards. The difference in genre further limits the extent to which comparisons can be made; at the very least, it needs to be kept in mind. Schirach does not, for instance, use metaphors as coherently or pay attention to an overarching logic as Jünger does. Above all, Jünger was Schirach's senior by twelve years. His first-hand experience of the war enabled him to write about it in a very different way – given that his texts were largely based on his own observations from his diary entries – whereas Schirach adopts the voice of a generation that had to deal with the political reality of a lost war in which they had not been able to participate. Moreover, Jünger's constant rewrites of *In Stahlgewittern* indicate that he was still digesting and processing the events and adapting his narratives accordingly. Even though Schirach too tended to rewrite or rephrase his poems, he edited those that related to the war only minimally and mostly in terms of the punctuation and not their description of the war. This suggests that he had very early established 'his' war narrative and how it relates to him and his generation. Nevertheless, both appear to use similar techniques and rhetoric. Schirach also historicises the war by using military vocabulary better suited to pre-modern forms of combat, thus imbedding the events into an archetypal pattern and giving them the gravity and glamour of history. Like Jünger, he refrains from the re-iteration of national interests and instead perceives the value of battle in the affirmation of inner values, of courage, selflessness and perseverance. I will argue that even though he shows a tendency to historicise and mythologise the war, the poems also admit to the possibility of death by chance; at times the description of soldiery – in its focus on qualities such as perseverance in the face of unrelenting hardships – indeed reflects the circumstances of modern warfare.

The First World War had proven that modern combat was fundamentally different from traditional warfare. New technologies such as gas, tanks, machine-guns or planes had shaped the war. While Jünger does include detailed descriptions of attacks involving these new technologies and the mass casualties they caused, he insists that technological advance had not changed the fundamental nature of warfare. In *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, the narrator observes:

Alle Technik ist Maschine, ist Zufall, das Geschoß blind und willenlos, den Menschen aber treibt

der Wille zu töten durch die Gewitter aus Sprengstoff, Eisen und Stahl, und wenn zwei Menschen im Taumel des Kampfes aufeinanderprallen, so treffen sich zwei Wesen, von denen nur eins bestehen kann. Denn diese zwei Wesen haben sich zueinander in ein Urverhältnis gesetzt, in den Kampf ums Dasein in seiner nacktesten Form.<sup>36</sup>

Jünger allows for the threat of death by chance in a thunderstorm of explosives and steel, since the bullets meet their victims blindly and indiscriminately.<sup>37</sup> The metaphor of the thunderstorm adds to this impression of an overpowering force of nature beyond human control.<sup>38</sup> However, the principle of chance is counteracted by the insistence that the 'Urverhältnis' of war remains fundamentally unchanged. Confrontation on the battlefield is thus embedded into an archetypal pattern. The will to destroy lies in the nature of man.<sup>39</sup> Destruction is therefore inevitable and, consequently, as Woods points out, can be seen as meaningful. In reality, the 'Urverhältnis' of two beings colliding on the battlefield no longer decided the outcome of a battle. Soldiers had become instruments of destruction manoeuvred by the general staff as to when, how and where they should strike. At times their superiors' tactical calculation demanded that infantry divisions, for instance, were deliberately sent to the front lines as cannon fodder; this not only added to the high number of casualties, but also meant a fundamental change in the soldiers' conception of their own role.<sup>40</sup>

Jünger, however, historicises the war by including titles, ranks or equipment of past centuries. For instance in *In Stahlgewittern* the narrator remarks: 'Den überstandenen Gefahren ein Landsknechtlachen, den künftigen ein Schluck aus voller Flasche [...]. So war von je rechter Kriegsbrauch.'<sup>41</sup> The lansquenet, as Woods points out, is a foot soldier of the fifteenth and sixteenth century.<sup>42</sup> In another instance, the speaker refers to the guard of the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm I:

Wir wußten, daß es diesmal in eine Schlacht ging, wie sie die Weltgeschichte noch nie gesehen hatte. Bald schwoll die erregte Unterhaltung zu einem Gelärm, an dem alte Landsknechte oder friderizianische Grenadiere ihre Freude gehabt hätten.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Berlin: Mittler, 1922), p. 8; see also John King: 'Wann hat dieser Scheißkrieg ein Ende?' *Writing and Rewriting the First World War* (Schnellroda: Antaios, 2003), pp. 205-206.

<sup>37</sup> See Woods, 'Ernst Jünger', p. 129.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>39</sup> See King, *Writing and Rewriting*, pp. 205.

<sup>40</sup> See Delabar, *Klassische Moderne*, pp. 43-47.

<sup>41</sup> Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 127; Woods, 'Ernst Jünger', p. 133.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>43</sup> Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 83.

The speaker emphasises that history has never witnessed a battle like this and at the same time claims the approval of the seventeenth-century grenadiers. Jünger suggests that warrior traditions continue to exist uninterrupted by modern warfare, by showing the modern warriors carrying on the ways and spirit of their predecessors.

Schirach likewise continues the idea of the 'alten deutschen Heere',<sup>44</sup> using cavalry, and 'dröhn[ende] Trommeln, leuchte[nde] Standarten'.<sup>45</sup> There is no mention of the new technologies that had shaped the war. His poem 'Es war die Ehre...', which on the surface explores the reason for the German defeat, exemplifies the historicisation of war as an attempt to lend this conflict higher meaning through the authority of tradition. It was first published in February 1929 in his own journal *Akademischer Beobachter* and later included in both of his anthologies (1929, 1933), in *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940) and in the multi-author collection *Der Unbekannte S.A. Mann* (1930). It was not, however, reprinted by other National Socialist journals or newspapers.<sup>46</sup> There are no records to show that the poem, once published, was revised or rewritten.

Es war die Ehre...

Das war es nicht am alten deutschen Heere:  
dies Schimmern der Schabracken und Schrabunken...  
Es war die Ehre.

Es war auch nicht das Glänzen der Gewehre,  
für das Millionen sind ins Grab gesunken –  
Es war die Ehre.

Doch dieses Volk versteht nicht seine Lehre!  
War es die Waffe, die es fortwarf trunken?  
Es war die Ehre!

Whereas Jünger sees the soldiers of the past and the present united in spirit but still as separate entities, in Schirach's poem they blend together completely. The first stanza gives the impression almost of a late medieval or early modern war, fought by aristocrats on horses equipped with magnificent saddlecloths and holster covers. Although the speaker

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<sup>44</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> See Schirach, 'Die Feier der neuen Front', p. 8; Schirach, *Die FnF*, p. 10; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 22; Schirach, *FIF* p. 9; *Der unbekanntes S.A. Mann*, p. 46.

refers to the deaths of 'Millionen', recognising the high number of casualties, the poem conveys none of the brutality of the mass killings in the trenches. Instead, the death of the soldiers is described as a gentle sinking into the grave; the 'Schimmern' and 'Glänzen' of the equipment and weapons stands in stark contrast to the mud and dirt of the trenches the reader encounters in Jünger's war accounts.

The archetypal world of the soldier remains intact in the poem, but it is disrupted by the misguided actions of the population. The speaker implies that it was not the army that was destroyed, but rather that the blame for Germany's defeat lies with the entire 'Volk' who decided to relinquish its weapons. The weapons have been tossed away 'trunken', in a state of (temporary) intoxication. The entire people experienced the intoxication of war in a state of frenzy. The people's instinct, usually praised highly in Nazi rhetoric as a force that unites, protects and guides a people, in this case led to a grave mistake. Thus, it did not only surrender in the military sense, but it surrendered higher values that would have been worth defending. The speaker claims that by accepting defeat, the German people metaphorically also tossed away its honour. By styling honour as a transcendental value that is central to warfare, Schirach essentially echoes the rhetoric that had dominated the war years. Ute Frevert explores the discourse on honour, shame and the ecstasy of sacrifice and how prevalent these concepts were in the years during and leading up to the war in her 2014 article on 'Wartime Emotions'. Frevert argues that honour and shame are both based on the assumption of a shared moral universe resting on the notions of 'equality, chivalry and fairness'.<sup>47</sup> This idealised notion is exactly what Schirach tries to conjure up through his representation of soldiers as medieval knights. Wartime propaganda, Frevert claims, sought to radicalise these feelings and connect the notions of personal and national honour to the point where they became synonymous. Honour became an equivalent to power and the state was seen as an entity that possessed honour that, if contested by insult, had to be avenged and restored. Not only armies were to uphold strict honour codes, but also the population at home had its share to contribute: 'The public displayed nothing but contempt for those who shunned their patriotic duty. Propaganda posters showed women (and children) reminding men of their obligation and questioning their sense of bravery.'<sup>48</sup> In 'Es

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<sup>47</sup> Ute Frevert, 'Wartime Emotions: Honour, Shame, and the Ecstasy of Sacrifice,' *1914-1918 Online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, 2014, [http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/pdf/1914-1918-Online-wartime\\_emotions\\_honour\\_shame\\_and\\_the\\_ecstasy\\_of\\_sacrifice-2014-10-08.pdf](http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/pdf/1914-1918-Online-wartime_emotions_honour_shame_and_the_ecstasy_of_sacrifice-2014-10-08.pdf) (accessed July 20, 2015), p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

war die Ehre...’, it was not the German army that forsook its honour, which therefore can be seen as remaining intact, but the rest of the population. The interpretation of the capitulation as entailing a loss of honour fits in with Schirach’s political articles from the same time. Germany’s ability to defend itself by force of arms was one of the key points of discussions in his journals *Akademischer Beobachter* and *Die Bewegung*.<sup>49</sup>

Poetically, Schirach remains very conventional. In order to underline the contrast between superficially enticing but ultimately empty pleasures on the one hand and meaningful, eternal values on the other hand, the speaker praises honour over the gleaming of weapons or the splendour of the ‘Schabracken and Schabrunken’. The technique of the poem underlines this effect: the rhythmic effect of enumerations and alliterations is used to underline the opulence of the superficial attractions described. This is further enhanced by the perfectly regular iambic metre, which is only interrupted in the middle of the last stanza, marking the rhetorical turning point of the poem. By contrast, the phrase ‘Es war die Ehre...’ is short and concise; it is almost monotonously recited. These solemn repetitions were doubtless meant to underline the magnitude of the sentiment. However, it falls short, betraying Schirach’s limited poetic creativity. Linguistically and aesthetically, ‘Es war die Ehre...’ continues pre-modernist poetic traditions: the meaning-creating function of language is in no way challenged or abandoned. The generous use of punctuation markers adds to this effect: the ellipsis points, colon, hyphen, question and exclamation mark add to pauses and emphasis and guide the reader firmly in pace and intonation. The poet remains an integrating force rather than disruptive or deconstructive; he sees through the troubles of his time and acts as an admonishing, moralising voice. The message to his contemporary readers comes to the fore even more strongly as it is the only line in which the speaker breaks into the present tense: ‘Doch dieses Volk versteht nicht seine Lehre.’ However, this warning is not followed by an incentive to take any form of action. Ultimately, the poem offers no explanation of why the German defeat happened or which events led up to it. In the absence of this however, it succeeds in reflecting the surprise felt by many after the end of the war, to whom the surrender of Germany came unexpectedly and remained

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<sup>49</sup> See Friedrich Haselmeyer, ‘Hochschule und Wehrtum,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 1 (January 1929), pp. 5-7; Baldur von Schirach, ‘Hochschultag, Studentenschaft und Wehrgedanke,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 4 (April 1929), p. 15; Friedrich Haselmeyer, ‘Grundlagen einer deutschen Wehrpolitik,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 10/11 (October/November 1929), pp. 23-31; ‘Judenspiegel,’ ‘Der NSDStB gegen die pazifistische Seuche,’ *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 13 (9 July 1930), p. 6.

incomprehensible. The denial of ultimate military defeat allows room for speculation about whether the war could have been won after all, and thus refuses the possibility of closure. The structure of the poem reflects this state of stagnant suspense: each stanza effectively comes back to the same conclusion without bringing new development. The tone and rhetorical structure give the impression that the speaker is trying to counteract other narratives of the events, beginning the first two stanzas 'Das war es nicht' and 'Es war auch nicht' before ending each stanza in an affirmative statement. 'Es war die Ehre...' is an example of Schirach's poetry which tries to create the impression that the circumstances and the rules of war remain unchanged through the use of historicising language (that does not reflect modern warfare) and the celebration of timeless, transcendental values (instead of insight into the political or military situation unique to this war). Schirach thus suggests the existence of an archetypal pattern in which this war can be seen. Actions that follow archetypal patterns, Woods argues, exhibit meaning and necessity.<sup>50</sup> Thus, although the war was lost, it can still hold meaning.

However, although he never allows the war to be seen as meaningless, there are other examples among Schirach's poems which present the First World War in a less heroic way. For instance, in 'Den Soldaten des grossen Krieges', the war is no longer associated with gleaming weapons and shining armour. Initially published in the *Akademischer Beobachter* in February 1929, 'Den Soldaten des grossen Krieges' featured in both of Schirach's collections (1929, 1933) and in the collaborative collection *Der Unbekannte S.A. Mann* (1930). It was one of Schirach's more successful pieces: it was also included in Hans Gille's 1936 collection of contemporary poetry *Das neue Deutschland im Gedicht* and was put to music and published in at least one collection of Hitlerjugend songs, *Die Junge Gefolgschaft* (1937). After the outbreak of the Second World War, the poem was still included in the wartime edition of Schirach's poetry, *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940), despite the fact that – unlike 'Es war die Ehre...' – the poem no longer glorifies the soldiers' experiences in the war.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See Woods, 'Ernst Jünger', p. 133.

<sup>51</sup> See Schirach, 'Die Feier der neuen Front', p. 8; Schirach, *FnF*, p. 9; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 13; Schirach, *FiF*, p. 8; Gille, *Das Neue Deutschland*, p. 191; Reichsjugendführung, ed., *Junge Gefolgschaft*.



## Den Soldaten des grossen Krieges

Sie haben höher gelitten als Worte sagen.  
Sie haben Hunger, Kälte und Wunden  
schweigend getragen.  
Dann hat man sie irgendwo gefunden:  
verschüttet, zerschossen oder erschlagen.

Hebt diesen Toten hoch zum Gruss die Hand!  
Sie sind so fern vom Vaterland gefallen,  
die Türme aber ihrer Treue ragen  
uns allen, allen  
mitten im Land.

Beginning with the formulation 'des grossen Krieges' in the title, the massive scale of the war is highlighted throughout the poem: the speaker does not choose to address an individual soldier, but continuously uses the plural form. The repeated enumerations add to the impression of a mass experience. The focal point of the first stanza is the stoicism with which the soldiers bore their suffering rather than the hardships of war, which are described in very general terms as 'Hunger, Kälte und Wunden'. The enjambement between the second and third line of the first stanza adds to the emphasis on the soldiers' *silent* endurance over individual achievements and heroism, effectively acknowledging that modern warfare had largely suspended traditional fighting strategies involving man-to-man combat. The circumstances of the soldiers' death remain abstract; the speaker makes a point out of not knowing their fate exactly. The men were found 'irgendwo' where they have been 'verschüttet, zerschossen oder erschlagen'. When the poem was first published, this line ended with an ellipsis – 'verschüttet, zerschossen oder erschlagen...' – heightening the sense of foreboding. The change Schirach made, and which he kept for all further publications, does not change the meaning; if anything, it sobers the tone of the poem further.

While the poem conveys a sense of the immense number of soldiers who did not return home from the battlefield, the abstract and general way it addresses their unknown fate at the same time creates a distance between the reader and the soldiers as intended objects of veneration. This distance is continued in the second stanza, in which the admonishing voice of the speaker becomes stronger. It urges the audience to commemorate the fallen soldiers and their unwavering loyalty. However, there is no expression of personal grief. The proposed expressions of commemoration, the hand that is raised in greeting

(perhaps even in reminiscence of the Nazi salute), and the monumental towers that rise above the living as reminders of the soldiers' loyalty remain symbolic; just as the dedication in the poem title suggests that the text itself is composed as a symbolic memorial. The poem – despite its impersonal tone – nevertheless bespeaks the pain caused by the war, what was lost with it and the need to find appropriate ways to remember the fallen. The towers in the second stanza are not built 'irgendwo', far away at the front, but they become a landmark and a point of orientation 'mitten im Land' for those who stayed at home. When the poem was first published, the punctuation was minimally different: 'mitten im Land!' Changing the exclamation mark to a full stop takes away a sense of indignation and makes the tone of the poem seem calmer.

In both 'Den Soldaten des grossen Krieges' and 'Es war die Ehre...', the speaker shifts the focus away from the reality of military and political defeat, requesting from the German people the affirmation of inner qualities and eternal values such as 'Treue' and 'Ehre'. Instead of insisting that it is military victory alone that makes fighting a war worthwhile, these higher values become ends in themselves. In analogy to Wood's line of argumentation, the poems suggest that, if 'Treue' and 'Ehre' are upheld (through war), values that were worth saving could still be rescued from the war and that therefore – despite defeat – it still holds meaning.<sup>52</sup> The formal arrangement of the poem adds to the message Schirach tries to convey. In this, it differs from the monotony and circularity of 'Es war die Ehre...'. At first sight, the poem appears very conventional: both stanzas have the same number of lines and both follow an enclosed rhyme scheme. However, line three of the second stanza, its middle line, stands alone. It refers back to line three of the first stanza, with which it rhymes. Rather than returning to the same point or idea (as the speaker did in 'Es war die Ehre...'), this connection suggests development: that which had to be 'schweigend getragen' before, rises ('ragen') high above all else now. Another formal aspect of this poem that is even more striking is the contrast between the highly irregular metre in the first stanza (which recounts the hardships and death of the soldiers in the war) and the regular iambic metre of the second (which focuses on honouring fallen soldiers). While the need to honour and praise the dead soldiers thus seems certain and clear, the irregular metre reflects the uncertainty the speaker feels about how to express the experiences of war.

This feeling of uncertainty is also addressed in the poem head-on. The speaker is lost

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<sup>52</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 134.

for adequate words to describe the fate of the fallen soldiers – although it is implied that this is not due to the incapability of the speaker. Rather, the quality of the suffering literally elevates it beyond the grasp of language: ‘Sie haben *höher* gelitten als Worte sagen’ (my emphasis). Throughout his poems, Schirach’s attempts to describe battle scenes demonstrate either an inability or unwillingness to visualise violence in the graphic detail for which popular works of the time such as *In Stahlgewittern* had become famous. Representations of death or suffering remain empty and abstract. For instance, in the second stanza of another poem, ‘Um unsre Augen...’, the description of fighting is reduced to one line; it is striking in its uneasy juxtaposition of matter-of-factness and vagueness:

Fern lag uns nun der Kindheit dunkle Pforte.  
Es dröhnten Trommeln, leuchteten Standarten.  
Kampf um die Strasse und Kommandoworte...  
Dann Tote, die zum grauen Himmel starrten.<sup>53</sup>

The poem celebrates the ‘front’ of the young generation, presumably in their violent conflicts on the streets between National Socialists and members of Communist or other political groups. The ellipsis at the end of the third line appeals to the reader to fill the gap that the text itself leaves as the narration skips over the actual fighting and quickly moves on to the aftermath. It follows the gaze of the dead men, staring upwards at the grey sky rather than focusing downwards on the corpses lying dead on the ground. The reader remains essentially ignorant of the horror of the men’s death and its circumstances. ‘So sterben wir, wie jene es gekonnt,/ die Helden waren schon mit achtzehn Jahren’, the speaker claims, blurring the contours between the two generations. It is no longer clear whether the events refer to the soldiers of the war or to the ‘new front’, an ambiguity that was clearly intended. In analogy to ‘Den Soldaten des grossen Krieges’, the ellipsis between the description of fighting and death could indicate that the suffering was too great to put into words. The abrupt manner of the next line, announcing the men’s deaths, reflects its suddenness and unexpectedness, much in the way many men met death during the war. This at least implies an awareness that death could strike at any moment, beyond the control of the individual.

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<sup>53</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 10.

## War, identity and the young generation

Despite the pain and the shame over the lost war that 'Es war die Ehre...', 'Des Soldaten des grossen Krieges' and 'Um unsre Augen...' express, Schirach's poetry contains no hint of reproach against those who instigated it. Many of his contemporaries, for example Expressionist authors such as Becher, Bronnen or Hasenclever, turned against the older generation accusingly. The revolution of the young generation, who resent their fathers and bourgeois roots and rise against the authorities, is a recurrent theme in Expressionist writing, even resulting in the motive of patricide for example in Hasenclever's play *Der Sohn*, Bronnen's drama *Vatermord* and Werfel's poem *Vater und Sohn*.<sup>54</sup> By contrast, Schirach accepts the legacy of the war as a sacred obligation. This is evident in the very title of his first collection of poems *Die Feier der neuen Front*, which is dedicated to the 'Jugend, [...] die bewußt an die alte Frontgeneration anknüpft, sich als Erbin und Trägerin des gewaltigen Vermächtnisses der Stahlhelm-Deutschen empfindet'.<sup>55</sup> One of his strategies to create meaning from the war, in particular for the generation that had been too young to fight, is to put it into a larger historical context not only as regards the past but also as regards the future. He predicts a second conflict as a result of the first, for instance in the decidedly aggressive poem 'Des Daseins Sinn'. This was first published in Rosenberg's *Der Weltkampf* in May 1929 and later reprinted in both of Schirach's collections (1929, 1933) and *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940). In the Third Reich, 'Des Daseins Sinn' was included in at least one collection of contemporary poetry, Gille's *Das neue Deutschland im Gedicht* (1936).<sup>56</sup>

### Des Daseins Sinn

Wenn sie im Schosse ihre Hände falten,  
dann sind sie Greise, auch mit zwanzig Jahren!  
Wir wollen denen unsre Treue halten,  
die grauen Haars im Felde Jugend waren.

Als wir noch Kinder, dröhnten die Kanonen  
und manches Kinderlachen brach entzwei,  
kam eine Meldung von den Todeszonen:  
'Dein Vater starb, damit die Jugend frei!'

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<sup>54</sup> See Delabar, *Klassische Moderne*, p. 107.

<sup>55</sup> Schirach, 'Die Feier der neuen Front', pp. 7-8.

<sup>56</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Des Daseins Sinn,' *Der Weltkampf* 6, no. 65 (1929); Schirach, *FNF*, p. 11; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 16; Schirach, *FIF*, p. 10; Gille, *Das Neue Deutschland*, pp. 191-192.

Wehe dem Sohn, der das je kann verwinden  
und nach so grossem Preis vom Kampfe schwieg!  
Wir wollen unsres Daseins Sinn verkünden:  
uns hat der Krieg behütet für den Krieg!

The changes Schirach made to this poem during its publication history were minimal: in *Den Freunden in Feldgrau*, the rhythm of the third line of the first stanza is altered slightly because the syncopation is removed: 'Wir wollen denen *unsere* Treue halten,' (my emphasis) as well as the punctuation in the following line: 'Als wir noch Kinder, dröhnten die Kanonen'. The first stanza introduces the relationship between the younger and the older generation as the poem's central theme. Our true age, the speaker suggests, is not defined by a number of years and is not even reflected in physical signs of ageing. Instead, it is activism that divides young from old. The speaker is full of contempt for those who resign themselves to inactivity, for those who fold their hands in their laps, a gesture of inertia and lethargy or perhaps of pensiveness and reflection. Advocating activism, the speaker suggests, is at the same time proof of true loyalty to those who fought in the war. The second stanza takes the reader back to the days of the war. The children's light-hearted laughter, symbol of the innocence and carefree joy of youth, is threatened and, in some cases, destroyed by the war. The active voice – 'eine Meldung kam' – emphasises the vulnerability and the passive role this generation found itself in; they are reduced to being mere recipients. The term 'Todeszonen' emphasises the risk and danger that the men put themselves into and makes death sound inevitable. The last line of the first stanza connects the father's death with a purpose. Schirach not only puts the death of the father and the freedom of the child into close proximity, he also creates grammatical causality: 'Dein Vater starb, *damit* die Jugend frei' (my emphasis).

The promised freedom is a noble and essential goal to fight for. At the same time, it remains vague, because we are never given an indication of what threatened it or why it was threatened in the first place. The focal point of the poem lies in the obligation the war poses on the next generation. 'Wehe dem Sohn', the speaker threatens, 'der das je kann verwinden', leading over from one stanza to the next and simultaneously from the fate of one generation to the next. The fact that the generations are referred to in terms of father and son emphasises the strong and natural emotional bond between them. The young

generation has grown up and wants to become active. 'Wir wollen unsres Daseins Sinn verkünden' the speaker announces, underlining the poem's performative character. The speaker claims to be able to encompass (and at the same time reduce) an entire generation's existence in this conflict. The poem closes forcefully: 'Uns hat der Krieg behütet für den Krieg', in a manner that is both paradoxical and repetitive. Its circularity underlines the inescapable nature of war, also for the following generation. The generation of which the speaker claims to be part, and for which he claims to speak, becomes the passive object in this sentence, while the (personified) war steps into an active role, that of the guardian. This reversal must have been felt by many as the epitome of cynicism, although it was certainly not intended as such by Schirach. The ostensibly future-oriented outlook of the poem is ultimately betrayed by the realisation that the young generation is neither free nor protected. The father's death has not set the young generation free; their 'Dasein', their entire existence is determined by it. They are set on the same path as their fathers and, although this remains unspoken, their destiny includes the strong possibility of meeting the same death that their fathers suffered. Here Schirach employs the same strategy as Jünger to suggest the archetypal pattern of war and to give death in war some form of meaning. As Woods pointed out, if destruction appears inevitable, death is not random and can therefore be seen as meaningful.<sup>57</sup> While moving forward – as suggested by the activism called for in the first stanza – the young generation is bound by the past – as forcefully expressed by the paradoxical repetition of the final stanza, in particular its closing line.

Schirach's poems, I suggest, attest to his attempt to redefine his own role as a member of a young generation who struggle for validation but who also see themselves as freedom fighters. Their sense of identity could be described – in analogy to Sebastian Graeb-Könneker, as explained in the introduction chapter – as autochthonous: advancing forward but with a tight grip on their roots.<sup>58</sup> Graeb-Könneker's coinage of the term, as he has pointed out, reflects the contradictory nature of National Socialist modernism. In the context of Schirach's poetry, the term is useful for the characterisation of the young generation's sense of identity as portrayed in the poems, since it emphasises their rigid nationalist turn towards their own roots. As Graeb-Könneker admits, this is not a term the Nazis themselves would have used. Nevertheless, it is suitable here, since it leaves room for the notion that

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<sup>57</sup> See Woods, 'Ernst Jünger', pp. 133-134.

<sup>58</sup> See Graeb-Könneker, *Autochthone Modernität*, p. 21 and p. 30.

they by no means perceived themselves as retrograde but – as in Schirach’s poetry – as politically active individuals that set out to shape society.

This autochthonous sense of identity is also explored in ‘Das neue Geschlecht’, another poem in which Schirach adopts the voice of a young generation that had to deal with the reality of a lost war in which they had not had the opportunity to ‘prove’ themselves.

#### Das neue Geschlecht

Nie dienten wir und doch sind wir Soldaten,  
wir kämpften nie in einem wahren Kriege,  
in einem Krieg der Kugeln und Granaten.  
Und doch bekannt sind Kämpfe uns wie Siege –  
nein, nicht im Krieg schlug man uns unsre Narben,  
und doch war’s Krieg! Denn viele, viele starben...

Frei sind wir alle, doch wir sehn im Dienen  
mehr Freiheit als im eigenen Befehle.  
Am Schreibtisch sitzen wir und an Maschinen,  
sind Hunderttausend und nur eine Seele.  
Wir sind die Ketzer und die tiefen Frommen,  
das Heut’, das Gestern und das grosse Kommen.

The changes made to the poem over time were more substantial than in the previous examples. It was originally published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* in October 1931. Here, the poem was not separated into two stanzas and the punctuation in the first stanza was different in the following line: ‘Und doch war’s Krieg! Denn viele, viele starben.’ The separation into two stanzas and the addition of ellipsis points at the end of the first stanza emphasise the numbers and the gravity of the death of the men: ‘Denn viele, viele starben...’ Additionally, when it was printed in the *Völkischer Beobachter* the penultimate line differed: ‘Wir sind die Sucher und die tiefen Frommen’. This change indicates a significant shift in the self-image of the young generation that Schirach wants to conjure here. While a ‘Sucher’ is somebody who is looking for answers, the more polemical term ‘Ketzer’ implies someone who has found his answer and very deliberately takes a standpoint that deviates from that of the authorities. The religious connotations of this term will be explored in the context of the debate of Schirach’s relationship with religion and the church in chapter seven. ‘Das neue Geschlecht’ was printed by Goebbels’s *Der Angriff* two months later and included in

both editions of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1931, 1933) and *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940). In 1934, it featured in Jacob's *Die Reihe der Deutschen Führer*. The following year, in 1935, the poem was set to music and included in at least one collection of Hitlerjugend songs, *Die junge Gefolgschaft*.<sup>59</sup>

The poem presents us with the description of a German post-war society that has been pacified, at least on the surface. There is no longer the echo of thundering cannons or the memory of incoming death notices. Wounds have already healed to 'Narben'. We now see a fully industrialised, rationalised, functioning society, in which blue and white collar workers are united: 'am Schreibtisch sitzen wir und an Maschinen'. Although physically safe, the new generation still feels the need to redefine what exactly freedom means to them. They reject individual freedom and instead long for clear power structures: 'wir seh'n im Dienen/ mehr Freiheit als im eigenen Befehle'. In its answer to rationalised modern society the new generation turns to mysticism and belief: 'Wir sind die Ketzer und die tiefen Frommen,/ Das heut', das Gestern und das große Kommen.' Yet the young generation does not advocate a retreat from modern society. Instead, the 'wir', proletariat and intellectuals united in one spirit, will decide the course of the nation.

The description of the war remains abstract; it is reduced to the clichés of 'Kugeln' and 'Granaten'. However, it still plays a central role in the identity of the 'neues Geschlecht'. From the very opening of the poem the speaker rejects the suggestion, explicitly and defiantly, that this generation could be seen as defective because it had been too young to have actually experienced the war: '*doch* sind wir Soldaten' (my emphasis). The wish to be a soldier is gratified here by the interpretation of the civilian as part of a conflict that entails both fighting and victories. The political struggles of the up-and-coming National Socialist movement and the fights between Communists and members of the SA often ended in serious injuries and occasionally in casualties. The poem was first published in October 1931, the year when the Nazis intensified their political struggles and street violence spiralled noticeably.<sup>60</sup> Notably, the speaker remembers 'Kämpfe' and 'Siege', but not defeats. To come back to the title of the poems, the notion of a 'neue[s] Geschlecht' superficially

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<sup>59</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Das neue Geschlecht,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)* (October 21, 1931); Baldur von Schirach, 'Das neue Geschlecht,' *Der Angriff* (December 21, 1931); Schirach, *FdV* (1931), p. 7; Schirach, *FdV*, (1933) p. 12; Schirach, *FdV*, p. 25; Bruno Jacob, 'Baldur von Schirach und die Hitler-Jugend,' in *Die Reihe der deutschen Führer. Heft 9* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1934), p. 15.

<sup>60</sup> Burleigh summarises the escalation of violence between NSDAP, KPD and other political groups in the last years of the Weimar Republic. See Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich. A New History* (London: Pan, 2001), pp. 127-133.



resembles the 'neuer Mensch' idea of Expressionism. Closer inspection, however, soon reveals the differences between the two concepts. The phrase 'neue[s] Geschlecht' indicates again the autochthonous element specific to National Socialist modernity – advancing forward but with a tight grip on one's roots. The characterisation of this generation as *new* is juxtaposed with the archaic expression 'Geschlecht', which can be used to mean lineage or clan. The last line of the poem emphasises the new generation's historical origin: 'Gestern' goes hand in hand with the present and the future. The emphatic way in which the poem ends with the speaker defining himself and his generation ('Wir sind [...]') accentuates again his need to assert himself, and perhaps even suggests that Schirach was trying to counteract the political propaganda of his enemies. The perfect regularity of the rhyme scheme – each stanza consists of two alternating rhymes and a rhyming couplet – and the iambic pentameter aim to underline the stability and determination of the young generation's identity.

Although they were undoubtedly used for war propaganda, Schirach's poems need to be seen as more than instruments of indoctrination aimed at Germany's youth. Despite or perhaps because of their poetic limitations and traditionalism, they are testimony to the struggle of a generation that reached adulthood after the war and had to make sense of the German defeat. Schirach wrote very few poems between 1933 and 1945. However, the two poles of meaning and meaninglessness continued to dominate his rhetoric after 1933. For instance, on 21 March 1933, he gave a speech to celebrate the 'Tag von Potsdam', in which he expressed his joy over the party's rise to power. Now that the fallen soldiers would be given their due, meaning and justice were restored: 'Dicht vor mir sehe ich eine alte Frau. [...] Vielleicht hat sie ihre Söhne da draußen verloren und weiß nun plötzlich, daß diese Opfer nicht umsonst gewesen sind. Das ist ja das herrliche, das kaum faßbare Wunder, daß nun alles wieder sinnvoll geworden ist.'<sup>61</sup> More than one year later, in November 1934, he still raged against the Weimar Republic: '[...] die unsterbliche Leistung unserer Armee wurde in öffentlichen Versammlungen ungestraft als sinnlos, ja verwerflich bezeichnet.'<sup>62</sup> This desire to contradict (perhaps even punish) those, who could not find meaning in the German defeat and who condemned the war, fuelled Schirach's poems about the First World War even though the meaning he tries to convey ultimately remains vague, empty and an end in

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<sup>61</sup> Schirach, *Revolution der Erziehung*, p. 15.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

itself. He used writing strategies that were similar to those of other nationalist writers such as Ernst Jünger, whose work Schirach admired and knew well. Nevertheless – and despite the fact that this barely translates into Schirach's mostly highly traditional poetics – his poems describe modern warfare in a number of ways, for instance in the portrayal of death as having taken place on a massive scale during the war and in an often unexpected manner, beyond the control of the individual. Therefore, they are more ambiguous than scholarly research has previously allowed. However, the young generation that Schirach envisages in his poems does not turn away from this bloodshed. Their actions are not the result of a revolt of sons against their fathers' generation. On the contrary, they accept the war as a fundamental part of their identity.

## CHAPTER 5

### New Poetry for a new age

#### Schirach's concept of authorship in the context of his time

Es ist immer ein mißliches Unterfangen in dieser Zeit des Massenkitsches über Lyrik zu schreiben. Erstens hält die überwiegende Mehrzahl unserer ach so klugen Zeitgenossen jeden Lyriker für einen armen Irren, der besser täte, Stiefelwichse zu fabrizieren, zweitens kommt man in den Verdacht, ein rückschrittlicher Großpapa zu sein, der das Rad unserer herrlichen Entwicklung, die natürlich alles was Gefühl, Sehnsucht, Dichtung ist, längst 'überwunden' hat, zurückdrehen will.<sup>1</sup>

With these words – published in his own journal *Die deutsche Zukunft* in November 1931 – Schirach summarised his bleak view of the predicament in which poets currently found themselves. What begins as little more than a nostalgic platitude, a regretful look at the expanding, increasingly chaotic literary market, goes on to show that Schirach was well aware of the on-going tensions in the literary sphere, in which critics were caught in the crossfire between literary traditionalists and anti-bourgeois modernists. The former, considering themselves the guardians of timeless aesthetic categories, were in fact blinded by bourgeois narrow-mindedness and were unable to value contemporary poetry, Schirach suggests. The latter, he argues, reproached the critic who upheld the traditional (Romantic) values of emotion and 'Sehnsucht' in poetry for being out of step with the times. The modern view on poetry that Schirach refers to here was represented, for instance, by authors whose works were later subsumed under the key term 'Neue Sachlichkeit', who were critical of the pathos and self-absorption of the Expressionists, a state which they thought needed to be overcome.<sup>2</sup> Schirach, however, clearly rejects the notion that he was 'ein rückschrittlicher Großpapa' and that his was a regressive ideal of poetry. On the contrary, he considers himself (and the National Socialist movement) to be seeking a way forward: away from the restrictions of the past, in which the sphere of art had been reserved for the upper classes, while still upholding Romantic values: '[...] es [gibt] aber im jungen Deutschland [...] und hier besonders in der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung einige hunderttausend Menschen [...], die heute noch Gedichte lesen und – Wunder über Wunder –

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<sup>1</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Heinrich Anacker,' *Die Deutsche Zukunft* 1, no. 6 (November 1931), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> In 1930, journalist Frank Matzke declared: "'Sachlichkeit' ist ein Merkmal unserer Form, nicht unserer Inhalte. Es bedeutet nicht: selber Sache sein, sondern: sich sachlich verhalten – sich an die Sachen halten.' Frank Matzke, *Jugend bekennt: so sind wir!*, 4th–6th ed. (Leipzig: Reclam, 1930), p. 41; See Walter Delabar, *Klassische Moderne*, pp. 92-93; For an overview of the debate around the term, see Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, pp. 229-233.

sogar Gedichtbücher kaufen [...].<sup>3</sup> The literary traditionalist, Schirach goes on to explain, would spurn poets affiliated with political movements: 'Für die 'literarisch Gebildeten' sind solche Menschen wie Anacker und mein lieber Otto Bangert (der für die nationalsozialistische Bewegung viel mehr bedeutet als wir heute annehmen), selbstverständlich verächtliche Kreaturen: Parteidichter! Tendenzreimer!'<sup>4</sup>

The terminology Schirach uses in his article is highly reflective of his time. A year after its publication, Johannes R. Becher and Gottfried Benn discussed the same issues in the famous radio debate *Dichtung an sich* using very similar diction, discussing the 'Tendenzdichter',<sup>5</sup> and the 'politische Tendenz [...] der Dichtung'.<sup>6</sup> Politically, both men moved in different circles from Schirach. Whereas Becher was a member of the Communist party in the 1920s, Benn's position fluctuates between his early fascination for the Italian futurism, a certain intellectual proximity to the ideas of the Conservative Revolutionaries and irritated rejection and retreat from the political sphere.<sup>7</sup> In the radio debate, Becher reflects on his own poetry and his predetermination through social class:

Ich erkannte, daß der reine Dichter, der ich zu sein glaubte, in Wirklichkeit ein höchst unreiner Dichter war, ein Dichter einer bestimmten Klasse, der bürgerlichen Klasse. [...] Immer hatte ich, wenn auch noch so versteckt, Klasseninhalte gedichtet [...].<sup>8</sup>

Acting on this realisation, Becher embraces the serving function of his poetry to advance the cause of the only historical movement upon which he is convinced the fate of humanity depends:

Ich diene auch als Dichter dem Befreiungskampf des Proletariats. [...] Jede Zeit hat ihre Aufgabe und die Aufgabe dieser Zeit ist die Befreiung des Proletariats und darüber hinaus die Befreiung der gesamten Menschheit. [...] Wer sich als Dichter dieser Aufgabe entzieht, hat sich der Aufgabe entzogen, die ihm als Mensch und Dichter von der Zeit gestellt ist.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Schirach, 'Heinrich Anacker', p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 26. Heinrich Anacker had joined the National Socialist party as early as 1924. He went on to become one of the most highly praised poets in the Nazi state and was awarded several literary official prizes. In his poems he praised Hitler and his service to Germany. He claimed that many of his poems were inspired by his own experiences in the SA. Verena Schulz, 'Heinrich Anacker – der "lyrische Streiter,"' in *Dichter für das 'Dritte Reich' 2. Biografische Studien zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Ideologie*, ed. Rolf Düsterberg (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2011), 21–40, pp. 25–29.

<sup>5</sup> 'Dichtung an sich,' in *Gottfried Benn. Sämtliche Werke VII/I* (Klett-Cotta, 2003), p. 217.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>7</sup> See Peter Davies, "'...poltern und würgen und drohen und wüten...'" The Aesthetic Project of Johannes R. Becher (1891-1959), *Oxford German Studies* 42, no. 1 (2013): 77–95, pp. 77–78; Uwe-K. Ketelsen, "'1933" oder: "Das Volk in Bewegung setzen,"' *Text und Kritik*, no. 44 (2006): 108–118, pp. 108–113.

<sup>8</sup> Benn, 'Dichtung an sich', p. 218.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 217–219.

Benn, however, disagrees with Becher over the question of the writer's political mission. It is human inclination, Benn argues, to see one's own generation as having reached the pinnacle of social ills and – at the same time – of intellectual insight into humanity's plight. He insists on the historical roots of socialist ideals and reminds Becher of the repetitive nature of this cycle:

Betrachtet man die Geschichte und die soziale Bewegung so [...], kann die Frage, ob und wie weit die Dichtung sich mit ihnen zu befassen hat, überhaupt nicht auftauchen. Die politische Tendenz ist keine Tendenz der Dichtung, sondern eine Tendenz des Klassenkampfes. Wenn sie sich in poetischer Form äußern will, ist das Zufall oder private Liebhaberei!<sup>10</sup>

Benn clarified his own conception of the relationship between author and society in another essay published that same year, *Zur Problematik des Dichterischen*, in which he argues 'daß seine [des Dichters] Größe vielmehr darin besteht, daß er keine sozialen Voraussetzungen findet [...]. Daß er dies alles hinter sich läßt, die Perspektive seiner Herkunft und Verantwortung weiter rückt bis dahin, wo die logischen Systeme ganz vergehn, sich tiefer sinken läßt in einer Art Rückfallfieber und Sturzgeburt nach Innen'.<sup>11</sup>

By comparison, Benn and Becher certainly developed their ideas much further than Schirach into coherent poetic programmes. For instance, in contrast to Becher, there is no evidence to suggest that Schirach considered the question of predetermination by social class and his own bourgeois background as a possible hindrance to writing poetry for the masses or even as an expression of the will of the masses. When he announced the release of *Die Feier der neuen Front* in 1929, he claimed:

Immer hat diese neue Front [der Jugend] in mir zu dichterischer Gestaltung gedrängt, und ich habe dann versucht, Wollen und Wirken jener Tausende sprachlich zu formen. So entstand diese Dichtung, die ich gar nicht als mein Eigentum empfinde, weil all die vielen, deren Kamerad zu sein, mich stolz und froh macht, an seinem Werden so lebendigen Anteil haben. Sie alle, die Hunderttausende, die unbekanntes S.A.-Kameraden, haben es mitgeschrieben. Ihr Herzschlag ist der Rhythmus, dem ich folgen mußte.<sup>12</sup>

Schirach insists that as a poet, he can feel confident that he is speaking for all National Socialists, here represented by the SA, because within their community class differences no

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>11</sup> Gottfried Benn, 'Zur Problematik des Dichterischen,' in *Gottfried Benn. Sämtliche Werke 3 Prosa 1*, ed. Gerhard Schuster (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), p. 241.

<sup>12</sup> Schirach, 'Die Feier der neuen Front', p. 7.

longer exist. It is of course a highly stylised proclamation that is imbued with National Socialist propaganda; this is evident not only from the way Schirach managed to work in a nod to Goebbels's construction of the unknown SA man, but also from the metaphor of the joint heartbeat. Schirach conjures up the 'Volkskörper' shared by the 'Hunderttausende'. Its vital organ, the heart – a symbol of emotion, wishes and hopes – beats in unison in a steady rhythm and ultimately, he claims, expressed itself in his poems. There are many ways in which this declaration must be seen as a stylised ideal rather than a reality, however metaphorical: for instance Schirach's claim not to regard his poems as intellectual property was belied by the fact that he exerted strict control over publication rights and also insisted on receiving payment.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, it also needs to be acknowledged at least as an indicator that he saw (or tried to cultivate an image of) his poetry as a product of the spirit of a new generation that wanted to bring about a new society; one that would be free of social restrictions and in which everyone would be of one heart and mind.

Schirach's statement raises further issues regarding the role or function of the poet on the way to this future society. A further question that he addressed only marginally, but that is highly relevant in this context is whether (and how) the new function or role of poetry was to be expressed aesthetically. Aesthetic considerations and, by extension, Schirach's conception of authorship has received little to no attention in academic research to date. Wortmann, who only fleetingly engages with what he calls Schirach's 'literarischen Ergüssen',<sup>14</sup> clearly sees his poetry as literary tokens of admiration for Hitler, assembled with little skill and even less literary ambition: 'Sie [die Gedichte] sind vielmehr zusammengesetzt aus Topen, formelhafter Antithetik und immer wiederkehrenden symbolbeladenen Bildern [...]'.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, Koontz bases his study of Schirach's poetry on his awareness that Schirach indeed 'played an important role in the creation and dissemination of cultural aesthetics in the Third Reich'.<sup>16</sup> However, this shows again that his approach to Schirach's poetry is based on the assumption that it was written and read exclusively within the Third Reich, *after* the Nazi's rise to power. Neither Koontz nor Wortmann therefore engage with

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<sup>13</sup> Schirach was careful to maintain control of when and by whom his poems were published. For instance, he occasionally added the remark 'Nachdruck verboten' when printing his poems in his own journals. Baldur von Schirach, 'An einen Arbeiter,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 4 (27 May 1930). In 1930 he exchanged heated correspondence with his publisher over fees and publishing rights. BArch NS 38\_3606 letter from Schirach to Ernst Boepple, dated 18 October 1930 and letter from Boepple to Schirach, dated 21 October 1930.

<sup>14</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>16</sup> Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 1.

Schirach's poetry as works that reflect or engage with wider literary issues such as the role and function of the poet and its aesthetic reflection in the politicised climate of the Weimar Republic. The following analysis will address these as outlined above, based on Schirach's reviews and articles on poetry as well as reviews of his poetry written by others. It will also take a closer look at his poems themselves and the ideas of authorship he experimented with and promoted in them.

### The poet as 'Gestalter unsres Wollens'

The role of the author had been hotly debated on the German post-war literary scene. Many writers believed that the poet should emerge as intellectual leader in the revolution during and after the war. Walter Hasenclever's famous poem 'Der politische Dichter', published in 1917, exemplifies the Expressionist high hopes for the new state and also the leading role the poet could play in this transformation. It describes a world in uproar: it is a world of injustice and drudgery, in which the victims of capitalism, rationalisation and progress perish from oppression and sickness. Rich and poor exist in close proximity: 'Der Hunger bettelt hinter Marmorhallen.'<sup>17</sup> Educational institutions and state churches are depicted as servants of an ideology that is controlled by the older generation and aims to maintain the status quo. Church bells tell the oppressed to endure the 'Gefangenschaft der Armut', but tension is smouldering under the surface – 'Anarchisten [schärfen] ihre Messer' – and will inevitably be released violently: 'Sturmattacken wüten', 'Freiheitslieder [lärmen]', 'Geschütze rasseln vorwärts und krepieren'. The accumulated anger and desperation of the masses breaks free without direction but with all the more destructive force. 'Halt ein im Kampf!', the speaker pleads. Thanks to the speaker's foresight the crowd is able to regroup and confront the 'Herrscher' as a united front. However, there is another outbreak of violence; the crowd takes its revenge through plundering and rape: 'Im Rohen weiter tanzt die wilde Masse'. Their 'Jakobinermützen', traditionally symbols of freedom and independence, glisten with blood. Again the speaker demands justice instead of retribution: 'Freiheitskämpfer' need to become 'Freiheitsrichter' who ensure compliance with

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Hasenclever, *Tod und Auferstehung. Neue Gedichte* (Leipzig: Wolf, 1917), pp. 89-93; the following quotations *ibid.*

fundamental liberties. Without restraint, the noble enterprise of revolution is in danger of being betrayed. In the midst of this turbulence the poet descends: 'Von Firmamenten steigt der neue Dichter/ Herab zu irdischen und gößern Taten'. He alone is able to see through the troubles and darkness of his time and bring order to chaos. The speaker notes a loss of art – 'Die Muse flieht' – but also that this will ultimately bring about the desired change. In Hasenclever's poem, the poet's mind shapes the physical world and creates a new order in which every person is treated equally: 'alle Früchte reifen auch den Schwachen'. The poet becomes founder of the new republic that will in turn bring peace and unity to the entire troubled continent:

Er [der Dichter] wird ihr Führer sein. Er wird verkünden. [...]  
Er wird den großen Bund der Staaten gründen.  
Das Recht des Menschentums. Die Republik.

He will be assigned the task, the speaker observes, 'Völker zu begleiten'; he will be their 'Führer'. The poem closes by invoking an end to violence: 'Nicht Kriege werden die Gewalt vernichten' the speaker insists: 'So steige mit der Krone Deines Geistes,/ Geliebte Schar, aus taubem Grabe auf!' At first sight this poem announces a fundamental change in the status of the poet, who has descended to earth to stand among the people; the muse's flight signals a rupture with traditional ideas of art. However, the privileged position of the writer (and by extension Hasenclever's own position) in modern life is ultimately re-confirmed by the poet's elevation as leader of the revolution and the new state.

Becher also distanced himself from the traditional ideal of the poet as guardian of eternal values, inspired by divinity or individual genius. In the radio debate discussed above, he uses similar imagery to Hasenclever for the re-evaluation of his self-understanding as a poet: 'Ich könnte sagen, ich stieg in meiner Dichtung von dem Himmel zur Erde herab.'<sup>18</sup> In his poem 'An die Zwanzigjährigen', which he published during the war years in 1915, the poet greets the young generation: 'Der Dichter grüßt euch Zwanzigjährige mit Bombenfäusten,/ Der Panzerbrust, drin Lava gleich die neue Marseillaise wiegt!!'<sup>19</sup> The poet not only welcomes the impending change the young generation will bring, but becomes a catalyst of this change, a literal embodiment of the revolution that provides it with words and rhythm as

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<sup>18</sup> 'Dichtung an sich', p. 218.

<sup>19</sup> Johannes R. Becher, *Ausgewählte Gedichte 1911-1918* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1966), pp. 179-180.



weapons and armour. Poems by Hasenclever and Becher were published in Kurt Pinthus' influential anthology of Expressionism, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, in 1919. Over the following years, however, both authors distanced themselves from their Expressionist roots. Hasenclever was disappointed that the masses did not follow their poet-leader after the end of the war and that the German revolution had not brought the spiritual rebirth Expressionist poets had envisaged.<sup>20</sup> Becher was likewise disappointed by the enterprise of the Weimar Republic, which he viewed as decadent and destructive.<sup>21</sup> The need for more organised activism was felt strongly among many (former) Expressionist writers. Some joined the German Communist party (Becher, Wieland, Herzfelde, Franz Jung, Franz Pfemferd and Erwin Piscator); Expressionist journals (for example, *Die Aktion*) became political fora for Communist ideas. According to Walter Fähnders, this display of political activism was more than the practical implementation of the Expressionists' poetic claim to leadership. It was, he argues, also a reaction to the power vacuum that was felt in the newly established Weimar Republic.<sup>22</sup> Many in the German population felt that the republic had been imposed on them. Moreover, it soon became clear that former power structures largely continued to exist and that the republic was not in fact a fresh start. Over the years frustration grew, even among its initial supporters.<sup>23</sup> For instance Alfred Döblin had originally been in favour of the democratic enterprise and had warned critics in his essay *Drei Demokratien* (1918): 'Glaubt nicht, Demokratie, dieses geschändete Wort, sei ein Knüppel zwischen Deutschlands Beinen.'<sup>24</sup> Three years later, lamenting the lack of genuinely revolutionary political and intellectual changes, he remarked laconically that the Germans had been given 'eine Republik ohne Gebrauchsanweisung'.<sup>25</sup>

Disillusionment and frustration also led to outbreaks of violence. In the early 1920s a series of political murders shook Germany, which in turn led some to reconsider their views. Thomas Mann, for example, who had initially opposed the new state, emerged as one of its most prominent advocates. In his 1922 laudatory speech for Gerhart Hauptmann he

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<sup>20</sup> See Christa Spreizer, *From Expressionism to Exile: The Works of Walter Hasenclever (1890-1940)* (Rochester: Camden, 1999), pp. 88-89.

<sup>21</sup> See Delabar, *Klassische Moderne*, p. 211.

<sup>22</sup> See Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, p. 212.

<sup>23</sup> See Alexander von Bormann, 'Weimarer Republik,' in *Geschichte der politischen Lyrik in Deutschland*, ed. Walter Hinderer (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), 271-303, pp. 272-275; Delabar, *Klassische Moderne*, pp. 20-21; Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, p. 210.

<sup>24</sup> Alfred Döblin, *Schriften zur Politik und Gesellschaft* (Olten: Walter, 1972), p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> Alfred Döblin, *Der deutsche Maskenball* (Olten: Walter, 1972), p. 100; see also Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, p. 210.

announced: 'Mein Vorsatz ist [...] euch [die akademische Jugend] [...] für die Republik zu gewinnen, und für das, was Demokratie genannt wird, und was ich Humanität nenne.'<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, in Berlin, Kurt Tucholsky and Carl von Ossietzky used journals such as *Die Weltbühne* and *Das Tagebuch* as political fora in which they emphatically and often satirically defended the values of pacifism, democracy and their idea of a pluralistic society. In doing so they frequently lashed out against the up-and-coming National Socialist movement and its ideal of the totalitarian 'Führer' state. At the same time they did not shy away from calling out representatives of the Republic with equal vehemence if they felt it was necessary. Their commitment and resonance, whether positive or negative, as well as the rise of other politically active writers – Walter Mehring, Erich Kästner, to name a few – are testimony to a new ideal of the writer in the 1920s; a writer who committed his skills to the needs of the present rather than the pursuit of inner, transcendental values. The valorisation of journalism as a craft and the growing acknowledgement that literature in modern society no longer had the sole purpose of artistic self-expression but could be utilised as a powerful political tool, sparked a heated discourse on the legitimacy, necessity and boundaries of literary political activism. Whereas for example Benn believed that the author could free himself from the restrictive ties of society through his turn inwards, a growing number of writers such as Edwin Hoernle, Erich Mühsam, Hans Lorbeer and Erich Weinert set out to address these ties head-on.

Weinert – to take just one example – was a founding member of the Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller in 1928 and joined the KPD one year later. At that time he was already a well-known figure in the leftist literary sphere. In 1923/24 he had begun publishing texts and publicly reciting poems in which he addressed questions of social class. He rose to great popularity in particular in Berlin, where he wrote for over forty journals and newspapers under different names. Weinert explicitly rejected traditional ideas of authorship. His poems, he argued, should only be published in pamphlets, if at all.<sup>27</sup> As his verses were mostly born out of the current social and political situation, this, in his opinion, precluded any attempt to preserve the material:

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Mann, *Von deutscher Republik* (Berlin: Fischer, 1923), p. 125.

<sup>27</sup> See Fritz J. Raddatz, 'Lied und Gedicht in der proletarisch-revolutionären Literatur,' in *Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Wolfgang Rothe (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1974), pp. 405-406.

Viele Gedichte fanden den Weg zum Vortrag oft schon im Stadium des Rohbaus der Konzeption; sie waren nicht zur endlichen Form geschliffen worden, da der Anlaß von so enger Aktualität war, daß es sich nicht gelohnt hätte, dem vergänglichen Inhalt eine unvergänglichere Schale zu geben.<sup>28</sup>

When reciting his poems at public political meetings, Weinert valued the audience's immediate response. He was ready to accept the fact that this spontaneity would often go hand in hand with a loss of artistic quality:

Den Anspruch Kunst zu sein, haben die meisten meiner Gedichte gar nicht gemacht; sie genügten wenn sie aufklärten, überzeugten und dem Schwankenden Richtung gaben. Wenn sie beim Vortrag die stürmische Zustimmung: So ist es! Sehr richtig! fanden, so hatten sie ihre politische Mission erfüllt. Nicht selten trug ich ein Gedicht nur ein bis zweimal vor, dann war sein Anlaß bereits von neuen Ereignissen überschattet. Hätte ich alles, was ich geschrieben und vorgetragen habe, in der nötigen Maße ausreifen lassen können, damit es als Kunstkristall vor den 'Akademikern' bestehen könnte, so würde ich mich um tausend aktuelle, unmittelbare Wirkungen gebracht haben.<sup>29</sup>

Weinert's ideal of the author who is imperfect in style but perfectly captures the essence of the moment is certainly more radical than that of Schirach, who often reprinted his poems or revised versions of them in various journals. His poetic development, limited as it may be, shows a transition from seeing poetry first and foremost as a means of addressing others to considering it a means of self-expression. Some of Schirach's earliest poems, written between 1925 and 1927, were still composed as sonnets, addressed to those he admired.<sup>30</sup> One of them, 'An Hitler!', was merely signed 'Von einem Weimarer Knappen, der vor Hitlers Quartier Posten gestanden hat'.<sup>31</sup> These were neither reprinted nor included in Schirach's anthologies. Whereas 'An Hitler!' was published anonymously, Schirach was later very punctilious about adding his name to his poems, usually signing them in full. In the case of another of his very early poems, 'Glaube', published in July 1927 by the *Völkischer Beobachter*, he even included the initial of his middle name, Benedikt.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps he felt that the initial in combination with the nobiliary particle of his last name made it awkward to pronounce; he decided against using it again.

In 'An Hitler!' the speaker remembers meeting the object of his admiration. The poem was published only once, in Ziegler's *Der Nationalsozialist* in November 1925.

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<sup>28</sup> Erich Weinert, 'Wirkungen auf die Zuhörer,' in *Ein Dichter unserer Zeit*, 2nd edn. (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1960), p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>30</sup> See Schirach 'An Hitler!'; Baldur von Schirach, 'Sonett an Adolf Hitler,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 3, no. 27 (July 1926); Schirach, 'An Adolf Bartels'.

<sup>31</sup> Schirach 'An Hitler!'; see Guido Knopp, *Hitlers Helfer* (Rheda-Wiedenbrück: Bertelsmann, 1996), p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Glaube,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)*, July 13, 1927, p. 2.

An Hitler!

Du gabst uns deine Hand und einen Blick,  
von dem noch jetzt die jungen Herzen beben:  
Es wird uns dieser Stunde mächtig Leben  
begleiten stets als wunderbares Glück.

Herzen bleibt der heiße Schwur zurück:  
du hast uns nicht umsonst die Hand gegeben!  
Wir werden unser hohes Ziel erstreben  
verkettet durch des Vaterlands Geschick.

Wenn sie dich auch entrechteten und verraten  
dich schützt die Reinheit deiner großen Taten,  
mag man dich auch umgeistern und bespein.

Das Eine können sie uns doch nicht rauben,  
daß wir an dich von ganzer Seele glauben,  
denn du bist Deutschlands Zukunft, du allein!<sup>33</sup>

The first stanza is highly reminiscent of Schirach's account of his first personal encounter with Hitler, which he describes in his memoirs as follows: 'Hitler drückte uns lange die Hand, wobei er uns fest ansah. Zum erstenmal stand ich Hitler unmittelbar gegenüber.'<sup>34</sup> Although these parallels give grounds for the assumption that the sonnet was inspired by Schirach's personal encounter, it appears as a collective experience: he chooses the plural voice 'uns'; in the second line of the first stanza, the plural 'jungen Herzen' again marks the encounter as a shared experience. By choosing a collective perspective, Schirach claims that the emotions described and the binding force of the promise of loyalty that is made were felt generally. The only individual that appears is Hitler; this has the effect of making him stand out from the collective even more. At the same time, he is addressed as 'du'; this familiar form creates intimacy. The emphatic exclamation 'du allein!' in the last line of the poem singles him out further and reinforces the impression of superiority and absolutism. Overall, despite the element of intimacy, the poem does little to characterise Hitler as a relatable personality. 'Hand und [...] Blick' are not described in any detail and can hardly qualify as unique attributes. However, the exhilarating effect of this simple gesture emphasises the charismatic qualities often ascribed to Hitler all the more: even the ordinary becomes

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<sup>33</sup> Schirach, 'An Hitler!'.

<sup>34</sup> Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, p. 22.

exceptional. Nevertheless, he appears to be close to the (young) crowd, close enough to allow (mutual) physical and visual contact. This physical proximity translates into an emotional bond: the handshake and eye contact signal immediate understanding and agreement, transforming into a 'heiße[n] Schwur'.

The only qualities the poem reveals about Hitler have nothing to do with his personality but with his status in society: he is an outcast, he has been betrayed and stripped of his rights by an unidentified group that is merely referred to as 'sie'. The description of him as being 'bespeih't' and 'umgeistert' is echoing the biblical narrative of Christ's crucifixion.<sup>35</sup> This stanza can hardly be read as anything else but a reference to Hitler's failed Putsch and subsequent incarceration. He had been released from prison in December 1924, a few months before his encounter with Schirach. The NSDAP and its affiliated institutions were still prohibited as a result; their uncertain status could at least partly account for the vague character of these references. The expression 'umgeistern' emphasises the intangible nature of the threat that the unknown 'sie' pose. Whereas this group is shown as acting dishonourably, the 'große Taten' and 'Reinheit' of Hitler are praised in panegyric tones. The poem exudes optimism: 'Wir werden unser hohes Ziel erstreben', although it remains unclear what exactly 'hohes Ziel' refers to. There is no doubt in the speaker(s)' mind, however, that it will be reached in a fateful union of Hitler, the people and Germany. The last stanza emphasises unwavering belief in Hitler: 'daß wir an dich von ganzer Seele glauben'. Generally, the poem appeals to its readers on a purely emotional level: the relationship between Hitler and the 'wir' is based on feeling and belief, as indicated by the trembling 'junge Herzen' and the heartfelt 'heiße Schwur'.

It seems likely that Schirach chose the sonnet for his earliest attempts primarily to invoke the sense of prestige and skill associated with this traditionally high form of poetry. In 'An Hitler!' he clearly wishes to demonstrate that he could master the classical sonnet with its regular iambic pentameter and strict rhyme scheme. He manages to link the quatrains by mirroring the half rhymes of the first and last line of each stanza and even achieves a chiasmic arrangement of 'Herz' and 'Hand'. However, perhaps realising that the sonnet, which requires its reader to look for meaning and make connections, was less suited to his purposes, he very soon abandoned it in favour of simpler, catchier and more open forms. This can be seen already in the third of his earliest surviving poems, 'Auferstehung!', which consists of less than

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<sup>35</sup> See Gospel of Matthew 27,30.

thirty words. It was printed only once in Ziegler's *Der Nationalsozialist* in July 1926.

Auferstehung!

(In Erinnerung an den Tag von Weimar).  
Von heiligen Fahnen ein Bannerwald!  
Zu einem Willen die Massen geballt,  
Der immer gleich!

Zehntausend Herzen vom Schwur umkrallt!  
Wir schaffen den Staat der Sehnsucht bald,  
Das dritte Reich!<sup>36</sup>

Although 'Auferstehung!' is very short even by Schirach's standards, it is already indicative of the techniques that would later dominate his poetry as regards its simple rhymes and emphatic acclamations. Alongside the basic poetic patterns that characterise his works, the conception of authorship he propagated is also clear in these early attempts. From his beginnings as a poet, the plural form 'wir' dominates; emotions, hopes and fears are shared; there is no sense of an individual consciousness.

The religious connotation of the title 'Auferstehung!' is reinforced by the description of the flag as 'heilig' in the first line. The religious aspects of Schirach's poetry will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven. The subtitle is more revealing of the poem's ability to create a collective or communal identity. 'In Erinnerung an den Tag von Weimar' carefully situates it in a specific political context: an NSDAP Reichsparteitag was held 3-4 July 1926 in Weimar. It was the first since Hitler's release and took place in Thuringia since he was still banned from public speaking in Bavaria. According to the local police office, the event attracted about 7,000 people. In the poem, Schirach exaggerates this already impressive number – 'Zehntausend' – and conveys the impression of a mass event. The first stanza emphasises the number of flags in a 'Bannerwald'. The image of a forest of banners suggests that this accumulation is not only big in size but also natural. The image of a forest of banners suggests that this accumulation is not only big in size but also natural. Forests and trees as mass symbols, as Elias Canetti pointed out in *Masse und Macht* (1960), suggest unison. All trees grow in the same direction and the spectator is forced to lift his gaze up. A forest is an imposing image through the number and height of its trees. The trees' branches grow

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<sup>36</sup> Schirach, 'Auferstehung!'.

together and form an inextricable unity. The symbol of the forest further evokes connotations of protection and continuity. A forest does not move; it may be cut down but it cannot be dislocated. By using the image of the 'Bannerwald', Schirach suggests that each banner and its carrier would rather be killed than give up only one inch of ground.<sup>37</sup> The masses of people are in unison; they follow 'einem Willen' and they do not waver: 'der immer gleich'. Again, Schirach draws on the image of a shared 'Volkskörper', this time in the image of the clenched fist: the masses are 'geballt', an adjective that suggests concentrated and co-ordinated force, and tense energy that is about to be unleashed. The second stanza confirms again that the 'Zehntausend' feel and act in unison; they are gripped by the same 'Schwur'. The only verb in active form occurs in the poem's penultimate line ('Wir schaffen'), which emphasises the group's creative potential. Interestingly, this claim is contradicted poetically at least to a certain degree through the poem's unsteady and irregular metre as well as through its imagery. The image of the fist and of the claw ('umkrallt') both suggest destruction rather than creation, whereby the latter particularly carries undertones of Nietzsche's metaphor of the 'losgelassne Raubthiere'<sup>38</sup> and the 'blonde Bestie' of the 'vornehme [...] Rassen'. Even though this is not said openly, the poem implies that creation will happen through destruction.

The last lines of each stanza stand out due to their brevity compared to the rest of the poem; Schirach thus links the idea of stability and unity – 'immer gleich' – with the envisaged new state 'Das dritte Reich!'. The poem appeals to the emotion of the reader; the speaker idealises the Third Reich as 'Staat der Sehnsucht'.

Schirach's turn from traditional high forms of poetry to simpler forms was evidently not regarded as detrimental to the propaganda or even artistic value of his works by his party comrades. In a 1929 review of *Die Feier der neuen Front* for the *Akademischer Beobachter*, Adolf Dresler wrote 'daß der Verfasser nicht den Ehrgeiz hat, Dichter zu werden, sondern daß ihm seine Gedichte nur eine der Ausdrucksformen des Dienstes für das Dritte Reich sind'. However, Dresler also felt the need to emphasise that Schirach's poems indeed qualified as works of art: 'Darum dürfen wir es aber doch aussprechen, daß sie auch als Kunstwerke bestehen können [...]'.<sup>39</sup> The same year the *Völkischer Beobachter* praised 'die

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<sup>37</sup> Elias Canetti, *Masse und Macht* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), pp. 97-98.

<sup>38</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988), p. 30; the following quotations *ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>39</sup> Dresler, 'Baldur von Schirach'.

unserem Führer Adolf Hitler gewidmeten Verse Baldur von Schirachs als ein glückhaftes Zeichen dafür, daß unsere Idee wirklich zu künstlerischer Dokumentierung fähig ist'.<sup>40</sup> Arguing along similar lines, Rainer Schlösser (perhaps in reference to Tucholsky's characterisation of Gebrauchslyrik as 'gereimtem oder rhythmischem Parteimanifest'<sup>41</sup>) insisted that Schirach's poetry is more than 'eine [...] gesinnungsmäßig gut gemeinte [...] In-Vers-Setzung unserer Programmpunkte',<sup>42</sup> and closed his review by assuring his readers: 'Der diese Verse fand, ist beides: Ein echter Nationalsozialist und ein echter Dichter.' Both the *Völkischer Beobachter's* description of Schirach's poetry as 'künstlerischer Dokumentierung' and Schlösser's characterisation of Schirach as someone who 'Verse fand' indicate the observant quality the poet is perceived to possess – although this is by no means understood as a passive characteristic. In fact, Richard Euringer, who wrote a glowing review of Schirach's important contribution to National Socialist cultural life, emphasised that writers were 'Arbeiter der Stirn'<sup>43</sup> who could overcome the fractured state of society, by recognising and revealing the essence that is hidden to others. Although all National Socialist reviewers tend to accentuate Schirach's artistic talent, reviewers remained decidedly vague and subdued in their explanations of exactly which aesthetic standards they were measuring him against. Euringer for example was only assertive in his opinion as to what his work could *not* be measured by: 'Seine Gedichte sind nicht "Gedichte". [...] Es läßt sich dies nicht "ästhetisch werten". Es läßt sich dies nicht mit Maßstäben bürgerlicher "Dichtkunst" werten.' Euringer's frequent use of inverted commas is indicative of his own terminological uncertainty, which suggests that the observations he made here were partly made in an attempt to avoid measurement by standards Schirach's poetry would necessarily fail to meet.

It is worth noting that the attempts to stylise Schirach as an 'echter Dichter' were initiated by party comrades rather than Schirach himself. Yet the evidence brought forward thus far nevertheless suggests that he was serious about intending to forego bourgeois literary tradition; that he as a writer first and foremost considered himself – and other Nazi authors – to be committed to the needs of his own time. As becomes evident from his

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<sup>40</sup> Wippenthorp, 'Baldur von Schirach'.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, p. 264.

<sup>42</sup> Rainer Schlösser, 'Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts'; the following quotation *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS/ "'Baldur von Schirach/ Kulturpolitische Aufsätze: Baldur von Schirach als deutscher Dichter" von Richard Euringer', p. 1; the following quotations *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.



review of poetry by Heinrich Anacker and Otto Bangert, published in 1931, he believed the writer should write for the masses, specifically the National Socialist community.<sup>44</sup> Unlike his idea of the bourgeois intellectual, who would like to see poetry confined to the 'Konferenzzimmer einer höheren Schule'<sup>45</sup> and read only by a small group of academics, Anacker and Bangert, Schirach claims, write for a wider audience:

Aber an diese 'Gebildeten' haben sich Leute wie Anacker auch niemals gewandt, sie schreiben für andere. Und die danken es ihnen mit dem Leuchten ihrer Augen, die können ihre Verse auswendig und wissen: das sind die Gestalter unseres Wollens. [...] Sein [Anackers] Resonanzboden ist die braune Armee. Wenn die ganze Zunft der Literaturhistoriker ihn für eine Null erklärt, so steht dagegen die Tatsache, daß er zu den ganz wenigen Lyrikern gehört, die heute im Volke verstanden werden.<sup>46</sup>

Schirach defends Bangert's and Anacker's status as artists and at the same time validates (and delineates) the National Socialist community as passionate recipients of art, reaffirming the party and its army of 'brownshirts' as the people's party. By prioritising the accessibility of literature over the academic approach personified by the literary historian, Schirach seeks to invalidate academic criticism. Only very few poets, according to him, are capable of achieving this degree of accessibility, but they have a wide reach due to the huge numbers of the party and its 'army' of followers. This impression of large masses contrasts with the *guild* of literary historians, a term that indicates a closed group acting primarily to protect its own (hegemonial and financial) interests. What is more, the metaphors Schirach uses suggest an interaction between the artist and the recipient: the vibrations Anacker's poetry produces within his 'Resonanzboden', the SA, will – if the metaphor is brought to its logical conclusion – amplify the stimulus that is received and reproduce it even louder than before.

Schirach's review of Anacker suggests that at this point he identified at least to a degree with the National Socialist ideal of *Volkskunst*. Volk, in this context, usually referred to the lower classes, who were considered to be genuine and unspoiled. In *Volkskunst*,

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<sup>44</sup> Otto Bangert published articles in National Socialist newspapers and journals from 1926 onwards. See Bangert, *Deutsche Revolution*, no page number given, 'Zum Geleit'. In the late 1920s he also began to publish several books entitled *Deutsche Revolution* (1928) and his main work, the highly antisemitic and racist *Gold und Blut*. The latter was first published in 1927 by the official party publishing house Franz Eher and was reprinted in 9 editions until 1945. In *Gold und Blut* – the title alludes to the Nibelungensaga – the author openly identifies with National Socialism. See Bangert, *Gold oder Blut*, pp. 9-12. According to Bangert himself, he had written the book 'in dem unerschütterlichen Glauben an die rassischen Grundwerte unsres Volkes, die sich in unsre späte Zeit erhalten haben und nur von dem Wüstensande einer uns fremden und feindlichen Geistigkeit verschüttet sind.' *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> Schirach, 'Heinrich Anacker', p. 26.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

accessibility and the ideal of authenticity took precedence over aesthetic excellence, as Goebbels freely admitted in his famous letter to composer Wilhelm Furtwängler, published in *Der Angriff* in April 1933: 'Die Kunst soll nicht gut sein, sie muß aber volksmäßig bedingt erscheinen, oder besser gesagt, lediglich eine Kunst, die aus dem vollen Volkstum selbst schöpft, kann am Ende gut sein und dem Volke, für das sie geschaffen wird, etwas bedeuten.'<sup>47</sup> The ideal of Volkskunst helped to build the intellectual foundations for the elimination of independent critical discourse; the idea being that, since Volkskunst enables any 'true German' to participate in cultural life, there is no need for mediation – the literary critic is replaced by 'eine Art völkische [...] Zensur'.<sup>48</sup> Walter Delabar aptly summarised this dynamic: 'Kunststile, Kunstmarkt, Kunstkritik haben deshalb im Dritten Reich auch keinen legitimen Ort, denn wahre Kunst kennt keine Stile, sondern nur den Ausdruck, braucht keinen Markt, weil sie sakral und zudem keine Auslegung und Kritik, weil sie direkt verständlich ist.'<sup>49</sup>

Popular motifs in Volkskunst were taken from nature, rural life and traditional crafts and formed a stark contrast to the modern metropolis.<sup>50</sup> Anacker's poetry, Schirach claims in his review, fulfills 'diese[n] Drang des deutschen Menschen nach guter und befreiender Kunst, diese [...] Sternensehnsucht'.<sup>51</sup> He praises in particular the cycle of poems *Herbst im Tessin* and its idyllic images of the peaceful lakes and mountains, scenic villages and happy, good-natured locals of southern Switzerland. Above all, Schirach appreciates Anacker's simple, traditional style: 'Als Dichter geht er keine neuen Wege, er ist kein Blender, kein Apostel eines neuen Stils.'<sup>52</sup> He clearly does not perceive this as a sign of stagnation or a lack of originality. Instead, he sees the task of the writer as firmly anchored in the present. As 'Gestalter unseres Wollens', he binds the figure of the poet to the demands of the people's current political and social situation: 'Eine Bewegung, die für die deutsche Seele kämpft, bedarf solcher Menschen wie Anacker einer ist. Sie wird den Kampf für gute und tiefe Dichtung als ebenso notwendig und schicksalsbefohlen anerkennen müssen, wie den Streit um die politische Macht.' Schirach acknowledges the unique value artists potentially held for

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Dina Kashapova, *Kunst, Diskurs und Nationalsozialismus. Semantische und pragmatische Studien* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006), p. 163.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>49</sup> Delabar, 'Zur Dialektik des Modernen', p. 396.

<sup>50</sup> See Kashapova, *Kunst, Diskurs und Nationalsozialismus*, p. 163.

<sup>51</sup> Schirach, 'Heinrich Anacker', p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28; the following quotations *ibid.*

the movement: 'Gerade diejenigen, die als Träger unseres harten politischen Kampfes im Lärm und Getriebe des Tages stehen, müssen ein Gegengewicht haben.' His choice of words already betrays his aggressive stance in this 'Kampf für gute und tiefe Dichtung'. The idea that the party was predestined to political power was widely used Nazi rhetoric. In his New Year speeches, Hitler often argued from an imagined standpoint in the future, in which the utopia he envisaged had been realised, analysing the current political situation from that perspective. The writers of the *S.A.-Mann* column that featured in Goebbels's *Angriff* regularly assured their readers that a time would come in which society would recognise and honour the SA for their contribution to Germany. This rhetoric proved useful, firstly because it pacified immediate discontent and secondly, it was difficult to refute because it was based on vague prophetic promises.<sup>53</sup>

The concept of the poet as 'Gestalter' that Schirach uses in his review of Anacker is consistent with the terms used earlier in his announcement of *Die Feier der neuen Front*, in which he described the writing process as 'dichterische [...] Gestaltung'.<sup>54</sup> The idea of the poet almost as a sculptor prevails in Schirach's rhetoric; the poet is someone who can 'Wollen und Wirken jener Tausend sprachlich [...] formen'.<sup>55</sup> This image is also reflected in the reception of his poetry among his close associates. For instance, as pointed out in chapter three, Goebbels referred to Schirach as 'plastischer Wortkünstler'<sup>56</sup> in a diary entry of 1930. Similarly, Schlösser observed in one of his numerous reviews that in particular the poem "'Gefängnishof"' erinnert [...] in seiner Plastik an Liliencron',<sup>57</sup> in another he is even more specific in comparing Schirach's skills to those of a sculptor:

Aber er handhabt diese Kunstfertigkeit nie um der Kunstfertigkeit willen, sondern sie ist ihm stets nur dienendes Werkzeug, eben nur Mittel, um bis zur letzten Klarheit das neue Ergebnis des Nationalsozialismus aus dem spröden Block des geschichtlichen Vorganges herauszumeißeln.<sup>58</sup>

Schlösser very decidedly distinguishes Schirach's poetry from the *l'art pour l'art* ideal of early modernism and instead emphasises its serving function. This is enhanced by the frequent use of words associated with means and ends: 'dienen', 'Werkzeug' and 'Mittel'. The emphasis

<sup>53</sup> See Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik. Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland 1918-1933* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008), pp. 130-131.

<sup>54</sup> Schirach, 'Die Feier der neuen Front'.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher 2/1* (2005), p. 204, entry dated 23 July 1930.

<sup>57</sup> Schlösser, 'Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts'.

<sup>58</sup> Schlösser, 'Baldur von Schirach als Lyriker', p. 14.

does not lie on the mind or the soul of the poet, but on the hand: 'er handhabt diese Kunstfertigkeit'. The description of art as 'Kunstfertigkeit' further suggests that art is a skill to be mechanically learned, studied and perfected. The image of the sculptor – underlined by the reference to the chisel – portrays the movement and its ideology as something that enhances what is already naturally inherent (and therefore inevitable) in history. Baring what is still hidden, Schlösser suggests, promises clarity ('Klarheit'), novelty and productivity (a 'neues Ergebnis') rather than 'spröde Geschichte'.

This insistence on defining National Socialist literature as a creative, productive force is also an attempt to stylise National Socialism in connotative contrast to what Nazi propaganda presented as the over-intellectualising, corrupting influence of Jewish literature. In 1927, for example, Goebbels protested against this ostensibly destructive element: 'Wo bliebe bei solchem Werden [den Ereignissen der Russischen Revolution] noch Raum für den wurzellosen, intellektualisierten zynischen Juden, dem die russische Seele so fremd wie der russische Boden und der aus Rasse und Intellekt nur eines kann: zersetzen, zersetzen, regieren?!'<sup>59</sup> National Socialism was seen as a bulwark against this destructive influence. The movement and its ideology was perceived, as indicated in Schlösser's metaphor, as a force that is inherent in history, solid and lasting, and that, through literature such as Schirach's, can be laid free and shaped, or in Schlösser's words, 'heraus[ge]meißel[t]'. Schlösser echoes Schirach's own conception of authorship.

The idea of the author as a 'Worteformer' resurfaces in Schirach's poem 'Hitler'. Despite its poetic simplicity and lack of originality, this was one of Schirach's most famous and most popular poems. Its first recorded publication was in February 1929 in Schirach's own journal *Akademischer Beobachter*, announcing the release of *Die Feier der neuen Front*.<sup>60</sup> Two months later, *Der Nationalsozialist* and *Der Angriff* both reprinted the poem on the occasion of Hitler's fortieth birthday. It was included in *Die Feier der neuen Front* (1929), *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1933), *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940) and the multi-author collection *Der Unbekannte S.A. Mann* (1930). After the party's rise to power, the poem was put to music; the result appeared in *Wohlauf Kameraden!* (1934), a songbook published on behalf of the NSDStB. The poem also features in Paul Fechter's 1941 edition of *Geschichte der*

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd edn. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), p. 316.

<sup>60</sup> During the Langzeitinterviews, Schirach claims to have written this poem four years earlier, after his first encounter with Hitler (see chapter one, footnote nine).

*deutschen Literatur*. There are no accounts to show that the diction or punctuation was altered significantly after its initial publication.

Hitler

Ihr seid viel tausend hinter mir  
und ihr seid ich und ich bin ihr.

Ich habe keinen Gedanken gelebt,  
der nicht in euren Herzen gebebt.

Und forme ich Worte, so weiss ich keins,  
das nicht mit eurem Wollen eins.

Denn ich bin ihr und ihr seid ich,  
und wir alle glauben, Deutschland, an dich!<sup>61</sup>

The speaker of the poem, the self-proclaimed 'Worteformer', is at once part of the 'viel tausend' and simultaneously standing outside the masses. The speaker and the 'ihr' are united in their joint belief in the German nation. The circularity of this co-existence is highlighted by the recurrence of the equalisation of 'ihr' and 'ich' in the first stanza and later in inverted form in the final stanza of the poem. Despite their close spiritual, emotional and almost physical connection, the speaker is distinguished from the masses by the intensity of his existence and self-awareness: what others merely dream of, he embodies with every fibre of his being; while the masses merely 'wollen' and 'beben', he is the one who can articulate their thoughts. The title reveals that the 'ich' needs to be read as a chiffre for both the poet's voice and Hitler. The 'Worteformer' is a poet but also a demagogue and aspiring political leader. The poem celebrates Hitler's ability, as attributed to him by his followers, to captivate his audience and seemingly express people's hopes and thoughts. Although the poem apparently focuses on Hitler and his glorification as ideal 'Führer' figure, Schirach as author also elevates his own position by insinuating that he is able to fathom and express Hitler's thoughts and feelings. The poet, as the title reveals, is neither 'Führer', nor part of the crowd, but functions as a mediator.

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<sup>61</sup> Schirach, 'Die Feier der neuen Front', p. 7; Schirach, 'Adolf Hitler zum 40. Geburtstag'; Schirach, 'Hitler'; 'Hitler, der Führer des neuen Deutschlands,' *Der Angriff* (second Supplement) (April 9, 1932); Schirach, *FdF*, p. 21; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 39; Schirach, *FiF*, p. 21; *Der unbekanntes S.A. Mann*, p. 36; Pallmann, *Wohlauf Kameraden!*; Fechter, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (1941), p. 764.

This constellation reflects a conception of authorship commonly held within the party. In 1934, party member, National Socialist cultural functionary and successful writer Richard Euringer wrote in a review of Schirach's poetry:

In den Kämpfen um die Macht wie im Ringen um den Menschen bildete ein neuer Typus Dichter sich im Volk heraus. Mannhaft trat er vor sie (sic) Massen. Führend tritt er vor das Volk als Gefolgsmann seines Führers.<sup>62</sup>

The poet is both leading the people and at the same time acting as a loyal follower of the 'Führer'. Schirach fulfills this role 'als Bekenner, als Verkünder und als Rufer' before the masses, Euringer argues. He lists the different aspects of the role of the poet, emphasising the importance of the poet: 'Seine Stimme ist Vorspruch, ist der Wahrspruch, ist der Merkspruch, ist der Ausspruch, ist der Anspruch einer Jugend. Aufruf, Anruf, Weckruf, Nachruf, ja Kommando ist sein Reimwort.' While the polyptonic variation at first sight suggests a dynamic relationship between the poet and the masses, at the same time its repetitive element implies stasis.

According to Euringer, the poet's connection with the masses is supposedly twofold: as someone who gives the people a voice he serves them, but at the same time he also guides them through agitation, affirmation and admonition. This unity of the people and poetry must not be broken up again, Euringer warned: 'Hier bliebe nichts als Literatur und dort bliebe wieder Volk ohne Mund und ohne Mahnung.' Closer examination in particular of Schirach's early poetic activities has shown that he indeed went through an initial phase of figuring out what form his poetry for the movement should take, and also what his role as 'Gestalter' of this poetry would be. Despite the differences between Schirach's political beliefs and those of other contemporary writers such as Benn and Becher, they use a similar diction when discussing the poet's role in modern society. This suggests that even if Schirach never engaged in fully developing a new poetics, he was at least aware of the on-going literary discourse in the Weimar Republic and to some degree influenced by it, deliberately positioning himself within it by using its terms and categories. However, unable (or unwilling) to reflect on his own ability to write poetry for the working classes as the son of a bourgeois (even noble) family, Schirach develops a rhetoric of the poet as 'Gestalter' and 'Former' of the will of the masses. He (and other Nazi writers such as Euringer) ultimately confirm the

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<sup>62</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg/BvS/ 'Kulturpolitische Aufsätze', p. 1; the following quotations *ibid.*

privileged position of the poet, despite Schirach's assurances that his poems were an expression of the feelings of the masses and therefore not even his own property as stated in the preface of *Die Feier der neuen Front*. Schirach had discovered poetry as an important means not only to secure his own privileged position in the National Socialist movement, but also, as the following analysis will show, as medium to establish a narrative for the party.

## CHAPTER 6

### The poetic and the political in the Weimar Republic

Stylistic and structural similarities between left- and right-wing poetry

In the 1920s, the KPD and the NSDAP counted among their followers a number of journalists, poets and intellectuals who were active in the literary sphere while devoting their services to the party. Given the structural and ideological similarities between the two movements, as highlighted for example by Friedrich Pohlmann in his 2014 article 'Zusammenhänge zwischen der Kommunistischen und Nationalsozialistischen Ideologie', the question arises as to what extent this led to similarities in content, literary style or perspective being employed by writers at both ends of the political spectrum.<sup>1</sup> Previous studies on Schirach have overlooked these affinities.<sup>2</sup> Pohlmann, however, conclusively demonstrates that Communists and National Socialists in the Weimar Republic shared political enemies: both movements saw their parties as a bulwark against the representatives of capitalism, the bourgeois and the parliamentary republic. Both propagated the need for revolutionary change to achieve social equality and the abolition of class and can therefore, to a certain extent, be seen as pursuing a similar political objective.<sup>3</sup> What is more, Pohlmann shows that the Nazi party was not alone in betraying its totalitarian character early on. The KPD exhibited similar tendencies in its absolute pursuit of Marxist teachings, rigid hierarchy, binary worldview and violent persecution of political opponents. Both movements' use of messianic rhetoric show them to be religiously charged, extreme forms of contrasting ideologies that had grown over the nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> The ways in which these similarities are reflected in the texts produced (or condoned) by members of both parties were explored by Alexander von Bormann in his article 'Weimarer Republik' as part of the first wave of post-1945 academic interest in National Socialist literature and authors in the late 1970s. Originally published in 1978, this study was revised for republication in *Geschichte der politischen Lyrik in Deutschland* in 2007. The minimal changes Bormann made to his article add nothing to its main line of argument, nor does he

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<sup>1</sup> See Pohlmann, 'Zusammenhänge', p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Wortmann's study only mentions representatives of Communism in the context of violent clashes between KPD and NSDAP members. See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 32 and p. 83. Koontz remarks that Schirach adopted the NSDAP's anti-Communist ideal but does not explore this aspect further. See Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> See Pohlmann, 'Zusammenhänge', pp. 197-207.

<sup>4</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 190-197.



add new sources – a fact that again shows how little attention this field of research has received over a span of almost forty years.<sup>5</sup>

To illustrate the ways in which the similarities in the party's structures, methods and enemies could manifest themselves in poetry, Bormann makes a useful comparison of three poems. All of them employ remarkably comparable metaphors, imagery and poetic techniques.<sup>6</sup> Two are by leading figures of their respective movement: Karl Liebknecht's poem 'Sturm' was composed in 1917, and Dietrich Eckart's 'Sturmlied' was written between 1919 and 1923. The former author founded the KPD; the latter was one of the founders of the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, which was later to evolve into the NSDAP. The third poem, 'Der Sturm', was written by an unknown author and – according to Ursula Münchow, who included it in her collection *Stimme des Vortrupps* (1961) – was printed on pamphlets and distributed among workers in Berlin during the final days of the November Revolution in 1918.

## Sturm

Sturm, mein Geselle,  
Du rufst mich!  
Noch kann ich nicht,  
Noch bin ich gekettet!  
Ja, auch ich bin Sturm,  
Teil von dir;  
Und der Tag kommt wieder,  
Da ich Ketten breche,  
Da ich wiederum [sic] brause,  
Brause durch die Weiten,  
Stürme um die Erde,  
Stürme durch die Länder,  
Stürme in die Menschen,  
Menschenhirn und -herzen,  
Sturmwind, wie du!<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Bormann, 'Weimarer Republik' (2007) as compared to Alexander von Bormann, 'Weimarer Republik,' in *Geschichte der politischen Lyrik in Deutschland*, ed. Walter Hinderer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 261–290. The articles in both editions are identical with the exception of two short passages with additional text examples on page 261 and p. 284 of the 1978 version, which were cut in the 2007 print. For further research on the same topic see also Alexander von Bormann, 'Das nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaftslied,' in Denkler and Prümm.

<sup>6</sup> See Bormann, 'Weimarer Republik' (2007), p. 288.

<sup>7</sup> These are the first of three stanzas of Liebknecht's poem. Franz Pfemfert, ed., *Karl Liebknecht. Briefe aus dem Felde, aus der Untersuchungshaft und aus dem Zuchthaus* (Berlin: Die Aktion, 1919), pp. 70-71.

## Sturmlied

Sturm! Sturm! Sturm!  
Läutet die Glocken von Turm zu Turm!  
Läutet die Männer, die Greise, die Buben,  
läutet die Schläfer, aus ihren Stuben,  
läutet die Mädchen herunter die Stiegen,  
läutet die Mütter hinweg von den Wiegen.  
Dröhnen soll sie und gellen, die Luft,  
rasen, rasen im Donner der Rache.  
Läutet die Toten aus ihrer Gruft,  
Deutschland, erwache!<sup>8</sup>

## Der Sturm

Horch, horch, es klingt vom fernen Osten  
Das Wetterwehen an das Ohr.  
Der Bourgeois greift des Bettes Pfosten,  
Er lugt aus seinem Pfuhl hervor.  
Ihm bangt um seine alten Rechte,  
Da saust herab ein greller Blitz.  
An Ketten rütteln schon die Knechte,  
Es geht um Güter und Besitz.  
*Erst war's ein Wehen nur,  
Es schwillt zum Sturme an,  
Verstärkt sich dann mit aller Macht,  
Wächst zum Orkane an.*<sup>9</sup>

Bormann concedes that a comparison of the poems as contributions to a larger social or political debate is only possible within certain limits due to the differences in perspective. 'Der Sturm' situates the speaker's appeal in a specific time frame with references to the Russian Revolution ('vom fernen Osten') and points towards a political strategy: the destruction of existing power structures ('seine alten Rechte' and 'Güter und Besitz') as a necessary pre-requisite for the new world order. By contrast, 'Sturmlied' is not capable of conjuring up the actions necessary to change the future, because it lacks an active subject. The announcement of 'Donner der Rache', while rhetorically powerful, remains an empty

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<sup>8</sup> These are the second of three stanzas of Eckart's poem. Herbert Böhme, ed., *Gedichte des Volkes*, 4th edn. (Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1941) no page number given; Margarete Plewnia, *Auf dem Weg zu Hitler* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1970), pp. 85-87 and p. 133.

<sup>9</sup> This is the second of five stanzas. Ursula Münchow, ed., *Stimme des Vortrupps* (Berlin: Dietz, 1961), p. 37.

threat; it is not followed up by a more specific vision.<sup>10</sup> Bormann thus suggests an interesting comparison, but does not analyse the poems in detail. Beyond the obvious similarities in the semantic field used, the three poems also share a sense of urgency: In all three texts the speaker is concerned with the immediate present and the future ('Horch, horch'). 'Sturmlied' and 'Sturm' in particular are written in a highly emphatic tone that is supported by exclamation marks and imperative forms (the latter are most prominent in Eckart's poem). The repetition of phrases and grammatical structures, the use of anaphora and enumerations in all three poems is striking. To elaborate further on the differences remarked on by Bormann, it should be noted that in 'Sturm', the speaker considers the storm his comrade and addresses him as friend and conspirator ('Sturm, mein Geselle,/ Du rufst mich!'). The speaker states that he is 'gekettet' but feels confident about the future:

Und der Tag kommt wieder,  
Da ich Ketten breche,  
Da ich wiederum brause,

The storm – beyond the grasp of chains or other means of physical control – and the speaker are in a reciprocal relationship in Liebknecht's poem: 'Ja, auch ich bin Sturm,/ Teil von dir'. The storm, image of the revolution, is part of the speaker and vice versa. At the same time the speaker is part of something bigger. The speaker – bringer of the wind of change – will reach the hearts and minds of the people. He rushes (like the storm) around the earth, affecting individual countries and peoples. The poem does not follow a rhyme scheme or metrical pattern, thus enhancing the impression of an uncontrollable force that both the image of the storm represents and the speaker claims to be. By contrast, Eckart's poem uses conventional rhyming couplets in the first six lines and an alternate rhyme scheme in the last four lines. The dactylic metre that dominates the poem is not used consistently and thus the rhythm is interrupted, but not destroyed, for instance in lines four and eight. Unlike Liebknecht's poem, in both 'Der Sturm' and 'Sturmlied' there is no tangible sense of self; there is no 'ich'.<sup>11</sup> While the speaker in 'Sturm' focuses on his own transformation and its contribution to the revolution, 'Der Sturm' perceives the storm as an outside force and

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<sup>10</sup> See Bormann, 'Weimarer Republik' (2007), p. 288.

<sup>11</sup> While Bormann mentions that the focus of the poem lies on the external forces the speaker is surrounded by in Eckart's poem ('es ist typisch für das faschistische Bewusstsein, daß es nicht identisch ist, nicht bei sich selber bleiben kann'), he does not elaborate this difference in the sense of self. Bormann, 'Weimarer Republik' (2007), p. 288.

describes how different social classes react to the alarm: the bourgeois fearfully clings to his sturdy property, 'des Bettes Pfosten', as symbol of the private sphere, an image that also has connotations of a flag pole that is put in the ground to claim ownership and control. While they cautiously peer out and fear the uncertainty of the future, the working classes become restless in anticipation of freedom: 'An Ketten rütteln schon die Knechte'. 'Der Sturm' uses the image of chains already seen in Liebknecht's poem. Similarly to Eckart, the unknown author uses the rhyme scheme to underline the revolutionary appeal. While the poem's first eight lines are written in an alternating rhyme scheme, suggesting control and regularity, this is broken up in the last four lines, emphasised further by the use of italics. They describe the nearing approach of the storm, symbol of the revolution: 'ein Wehen nur' becomes a stronger 'Sturme' and finally 'Wächst zum Orkane an'.

Similarly to 'Der Sturm', Eckart in 'Sturmlied' focuses on the sound of the storm bell as a signal (of alarm) to the population. However, his poem merely lists the addressees of the alarm – it calls on the old and young, men and women alike to leave the private sphere, and even rouses the dead from their resting places. The lines following this enumeration, 'Dröhnen soll sie und gellen die Luft,/ Rasen, rasen im Donner der Rache', add very little to substantiate the poem's revolutionary claim. They merely illustrate the force with which the ringing of the bells fills the sky. Moving on to the poem's last line, 'Deutschland, erwache!', it is important to note that 'Sturmlied' exclusively addresses the German population. Liebknecht's 'Sturm' takes an international perspective in lines eleven to thirteen ('Stürme um die Erde,/ Stürme durch die Länder,/ Stürme in die Menschen'); the anaphoric enumeration here shows significantly more care than the list that dominates Eckart's poem. The poetic gaze zooms in from 'Erde' to 'Länder' to the masses of 'Menschen', becoming even more specific in line fourteen: the speaker hopes to appeal to people's rationality and their emotions alike: 'Menschenhirn und – Herzen'. Finally, the gaze seemingly returns to the storm itself: 'Sturmwind, wie du!' The rhetorical appeal to the reader is however clearly revealed in the final word 'du'. Thus, the enumeration in Liebknecht's poem is certainly more intriguing and arguably more effective than that of Eckart's text. Even though Eckart ascribes the masses age and gender groups (whereas for Liebknecht they simply remain 'die Menschen' and in 'Der Sturm' they are characterised by their social class 'Der Bourgeois' and 'die Knechte'), Eckart's list of 'die Männer, die Greise, die Buben, [...] die Schläfer [...], [...] die Mädchen [...], [...] die Mütter [...], [...] die Toten' only impresses by its sheer suggestion of

many groups and large numbers rather than its poetic arrangement. Therefore, despite the limits on comparison that Bormann claims, closer analysis shows how both the stylistic similarities and contrasts allow wider-ranging and more detailed conclusions to be drawn regarding the poems' aims: 'Sturm' is eager to engage the reader ('Menschenhirn und – Herzen'), 'Der Sturm' clearly refers to a political and ideological framework, whereas Eckart's verses remain in the pose of a wakening call. While the two left-wing authors reflect the idea of revolution by breaking poetic traditions, Eckart remains poetically conservative and instead overwhelms the reader with a bombast of figures revolving around the central image of the storm bell.

Bormann addresses the discrepancy of poetic quality that these poems exemplify in a wider context. He argues that, generally, the texts of the political left demonstrated more variety in the literary forms and techniques they used to express social conflicts of the time, citing as examples the ways in which Walter Mehring, Joachim Ringelnatz, Erich Kästner and Kurt Tucholsky used role play, irony, disillusionment and paradox. They also used these techniques to reflect on the possibilities and limits of art itself.<sup>12</sup> However, Bormann concedes that, particularly towards the final phase of the Weimar Republic, some Communist poets – for example Erich Weinert – tended to assess texts in the same way as Nazi authors, based on their political functionality, activist potential and galvanising effect on their audience.<sup>13</sup> Left and right-wing writers also showed a preference for the same poetic forms, such as the Gemeinschaftslied, which complied with their political (and poetic) claim to give a voice to the masses. Moreover, both movements appropriated soldiers' and workers' songs from the First World War. Bormann outlines the process of adaptation, which usually took place in two steps. First, the original song would be appropriated by the proletarian-revolutionary movement and changed to suit the movement's activist character and working-class perspective. In a second step, the song would be adapted by the National Socialist movement with further changes made to fit its own political agenda.<sup>14</sup> The fact that these successive adaptations were possible in the first place confirms that certain political and poetic impulses, aims (and enemies) were shared, at least to a certain extent.

While Bormann in his 1976 article 'Das nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaftslied' only

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<sup>12</sup> See Bormann, 'Weimarer Republik' (2007), pp. 289-293.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 293-294; Fritz J. Raddatz, 'Lied und Gedicht', pp. 405-406.

<sup>14</sup> See Bormann, 'Weimarer Republik' (2007), pp. 286-288; Bormann, 'Das nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaftslied', pp. 264-265.

admits to 'die Gleichheit der Lied-Situation'<sup>15</sup> he concedes in his 2007 article 'Weimarer Republik' that the structural similarities and political parallels between the two movements indeed led to similar texts.<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that they use similar forms for similar functions, however, Bormann is still able to distinguish a key difference between the political literature of the left and right wing: in his view, National Socialist poetry does not offer a tangible vision of the future, it does not enter into a process of communication with its addressee and ultimately remains in a pose of self-affirmation. It does so using a technique of externalisation: rather than engaging in self-reflection, the speaker in National Socialist poetry sees himself as entrusted with a (historical) mission. Often, Bormann claims, this charge is communicated through natural forces or the elements, such as the stars, the wind, the earth or soil; in some cases blood is also stylised as a commanding force of nature. As it is predestined, the speaker's historical mission does not require social or political debate. Instead, it demands an avowal of faith.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the many ways in which Schirach's poetry can be seen as a prime example of Bormann's claims, he only appears as an aside in Bormann's work on the Gemeinschaftslied, and does not feature at all in his longer study *Weimarer Republik*.<sup>18</sup> The rhetoric of *Bekanntnis* and the avowal of duty and commitment run through all Schirach's poems. For example in 'Sonett an Adolf Hitler' the speaker delights in the swastika flags and the physical presence of Nazi supporters at the anniversary of the unpopular republic – in the city of the republic's birth, no less:

Heut' weh'n in Weimar Deine roten Fahnen  
und, eine Mauer, sieht man jene stehen,  
die sich zu Dir und Deinem Werk bekennen.<sup>19</sup>

In 'Dem Führer', the speaker affirms and celebrates his relationship with Hitler: 'Das ist die Wahrheit, die mich Dir verband:/ Ich suchte Dich und fand mein Vaterland.'<sup>20</sup> It is one of Schirach's most widely published poems and initially appeared under the title 'Bekanntnis'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>16</sup> See Bormann, 'Weimarer Republik' (2007), p. 288.

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>18</sup> See Bormann, 'Das nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaftslied', pp. 261, 270, 275.

<sup>19</sup> Schirach, 'Sonett an Adolf Hitler'.

<sup>20</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Bekanntnis,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 29 (18 November 1930).

The dynamic in both 'Sonett an Adolf Hitler' and 'Dem Führer' that is also present in many of Schirach's other works is the poetic performance of political identification. The speaker offers his loyalty to Hitler, declares trust in his abilities and his 'fateful' connection with Germany, thus – without debate or reflection – reaffirming him as rightful leader.

The rhetoric of *Bekanntnis* – though not as dominant as in Schirach's poems – was also present in Communist poetry, for instance in the anonymous poem 'Dienstmädchen, hört her!', which was published by the Communist newspaper *Tribüne* in September 1930, the month of the Reichstag election: 'Du mußt dich *bekennen!*/ Wähl rot! Wähl rot!'<sup>22</sup> The poem 'Heraus zur Wahl!', also by an unknown author, which was published on 25 October 1925 in *Die Rote Fahne*, the day of the election of the Berlin city council, asked the voter to choose between the flag of the former German Empire, of the Weimar Republic and the Communist flag: 'Heut gilt es, Farbe zu bekennen:/ Ob Schwarz-weiß-rot, ob Schwarz-rot-gold – ob Rot! [...] *Prolet, heraus:/ "Das rote Banner auf das Rote Haus!"*'<sup>23</sup> Compared to Schirach's poetry, it is noticeable that both poems were published directly in connection with (democratic) election days in the Weimar Republic and that the addressee is asked to identify with the party and its flag as a whole rather than with an individual leader figure. While in these examples, the poets do not presuppose that the addressee identifies with the movement, it is emphasised that the Communist movement is seen as the only answer to the country's troubles. The same dynamic applies to the following example, Gerhart Wehrauch's 'Lied der Verbrüderung', published in the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* in November 1931.

[...] Deutschland, neuen Geistes voll,  
Schönes Land in Sklavenketten,  
Eines nur kann dich erretten:  
Neues Werdens Sturmgegröll!  
Schlagt des Bürgers Angriff nieder!  
Rote Fahnen, rote Lieder  
Künden, was noch kommen soll.  
[...]  
Brüder, Schwestern, reiht euch ein! [...]  
Unter roten Fahnen leben  
Mutter Wolga, Vater Rhein!<sup>24</sup>

The poem repeats the images of chains and of storm already discussed. It is also worth

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Münchow, *Stimme des Vortrupps*, p. 84 and p. 114.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 76 and p. 113.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 85-86 and p. 114.

noting that – not unlike National Socialist poetry – it has decidedly aggressive potential and does not shy from inciting violence: ‘Schlagt des Bürgers Angriff nieder!’ The audience is urged to join the Communist ranks: ‘Brüder, Schwestern, reiht euch ein!’ The fact that the addressee is approached as brother or sister again suggests familiarity and emphasises the trusting nature of relationships within the party. The fact that the author explicitly includes ‘Schwestern’ in his appeal is striking, particularly in comparison with Schirach’s poetry. In his poems, the speaker will appeal to his ‘Kameraden’, but there is a lack of female figures – with the exception of the (apolitical, domestic) mother figure, as has already been pointed out in chapter three.

The poem’s last line with its geographical references – ‘Mutter Wolga, Vater Rhein’, in a vision of a ‘marriage’ between Russia and Germany – serves to counteract the impression that the speaker is not able to outline clearly ‘was noch kommen soll’. Although the appeal to join the party is not made in the context of a specific political occasion like the other examples quoted above, the author makes an effort to contextualise it in the country’s current political situation. Schirach however almost seems to go out of his way to do the exact opposite.

Auch Du!

Sei auch ein Träger dieser deutschen Tat,  
die grösser ist als alles, was da war!  
Sei dieser Sache, die so wunderbar,  
wie wir Soldat.

Auch Deine Hand ist Heiligem geweiht!  
Töte in Dir den Toren und den Tand u  
nd sage dann zu Volk und Vaterland:  
Ich bin bereit.<sup>25</sup>

‘Auch Du!’ was included in Schirach’s collections *Die Feier der neuen Front* (1929), in *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1933) and in the collaborative collection *Der Unbekannte S.A. Mann* (1930). According to Hermann Roth’s *Die Feier. Sinn und Gestaltung* (1939), the first two lines ‘Sei auch ein Träger dieser deutschen Tat,/ die größer ist als alles, was da war!’ were

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<sup>25</sup> Schirach, *FNF*, p. 30; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 57; Schirach, *Der unbekannte S.A. Mann*, p. 25; Roth, *Die Feier*, p. 37.



recommended for use as a theme for anniversary celebrations of the NSDAP's rise to power on 30 January.

The poem's activist tone is already established in the title, in which the reader is directly addressed and urged to join in: 'Auch Du!' What exactly the reader is expected to join, remains unclear. 'Sei auch ein Träger dieser deutschen Tat' repeats the summons of the title. Except for the fact that this 'Tat' is one that will take place within an explicitly nationalist frame, the reader receives no concrete instructions. Both sentences of the first stanza are constructed around the 'Tat' and the 'Sache' without specifying what exactly this refers to. It becomes clear that the speaker deems this 'deutsche [...] Tat' historically significant ('die grösser ist als alles, was da war!') and awe-inspiring ('wunderbar'). The latter could also be read as though the speaker were suggesting that this cause, this 'Sache' will be a 'Wunder', something that is literally outside of natural law. The reader is urged to fight for the cause: 'Sei dieser Sache [...] / wie wir Soldat.' The use of the military term is particularly interesting when linked back to Schirach's ideal of the 'neue Front' seeking to follow in the footsteps of First World War soldiers. The impression of organised, military action is reinforced by the strict formal structure of the poem: both stanzas consist of four lines each; the first three lines are written in iambic pentameter and are followed by one line in iambic dimeter. The masculine cadence, the exclamation marks and the imperative forms used over both stanzas ('Sei', 'Töte', 'Sage') underline the poem's upbeat and activist, even outright aggressive stance.

The second stanza impresses through the abundant use of alliterations in every line; rhetorical bombast by which Schirach perhaps aims to divert the attention of the reader away from the fact that the poem continues to avoid clear political references. 'Töte in Dir den Toren und den Tand', the speaker urges the reader. In order to be part of the 'deutsche Tat' and in order to be 'bereit', an inner transformation has to take place. One has to overcome, the speaker suggests, the naïve, passive, domestic aspects of one's personality. The metaphor of killing underlines the poem's aggressive potential; it is also interesting to note that the inner transformation that is promoted here denotes a loss (of passiveness, naivety) rather than a gain of insight. In order to complete the transformation, the speaker urges the reader to deliver and demands an avowal of willingness and readiness: 'und sage dann zu Volk und Vaterland: / Ich bin bereit!' The crucial part of this affirmation is missing, though, and thus the avowal remains incomplete: ready to do what? There are no explicit

mentions of the party and its leader. Instead, the transformed reader is to address ‘Volk und Vaterland’; although both are of course central to National Socialist ideology, they remain intangible entities here.

In another example of Schirach’s *Bekanntnis* rhetoric, ‘Die Schwelle’, the speaker prompts his audience to be part of the bright future that he foresees, seemingly not through any direct action, but through sheer belief:

### Die Schwelle

Siehe! Es leuchtet die Schwelle,  
die uns vom Dunkel befreit!  
Hinter ihr strahlet die Helle  
herrlicher kommender Zeit.

Die Tore der Zukunft sind offen  
dem, der die Zukunft bekennt  
und in gläubigem Hoffen  
heute die Fackel entbrennt.

Stehet über dem Staube!  
Ihr seid Gottes Gericht!  
Hell erglühe der Glaube  
an die Schwelle im Licht!<sup>26</sup>

The poem was first published in 1929 in *Die Feier der neuen Front*, but it was not included in *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*. There are no records of it having been reprinted by National Socialist journals at the time. After 1933, it enjoyed more success. ‘Die Schwelle’ was put to music and printed in several Hitlerjugend and Bund Deutscher Mädel songbooks, for example *Wir Mädel singen* (1937) and *Das völkische Lied* (1939). It was published again in the wartime collection of Schirach’s poetry *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940).

Schirach uses very conventional imagery of light and darkness here. The poem consists of three stanzas of four short lines each, written in dactylic trimeter and an alternating rhyme scheme that lend regularity and a sense of stability to its supposedly revolutionary ideas. The act of *Bekanntnis* in the second stanza lies at the structural (and thematic) centre of the poem. The stanza consists of only one sentence, culminating in the lighting of the torch in the last line. It is important to note that the torch is lit ‘in gläubigem Hoffen’ – in an

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<sup>26</sup> Schirach, *FnF*, p. 29; Roth, *Die Feier*, p. 38; Schirach, *FIF*, p. 17.

act of faith, rather than in a moment of rationalistic *Erkenntnis*. The biblical narratives of the Last Judgement and resurrection are referred to explicitly in the last stanza: 'Stehet über dem Staube!/ Ihr seid Gottes Gericht!' The act of *Bekanntnis* becomes the key to spiritual salvation: 'Die Tore der Zukunft sind offen/ dem, der die Zukunft bekennt.' The bright future promised here remains intangible; it is not clearly defined even though the salvation referred to can supposedly be attained within this world: it is the 'Tore der Zukunft' that are open rather than the gates to heaven. This idea of immanent salvation in Schirach's poetry and thought will be explored in more detail in chapter seven, but it is important to note here how deeply connected it is with the act of *Bekanntnis*. The addressee is urged to deliver their *Bekanntnis* today. The short sentences and exclamation marks used in the last stanza in particular increase the sense of urgency. Most importantly, the present tense used in the context in which the references to the Last Judgement are most explicit – 'ihr seid Gottes Gericht' and the imperative 'stehet über dem Staube' – indicate clearly that salvation is within reach and that the addressees of the poem are to take on God's task of Judgement in the here and now. It is important to note – particularly in the context of the debate explored further in chapter seven – that God does not disappear in Schirach's poem: he is still mentioned by name, but the speaker and the addressee are to carry out his work in the world. However, in an involuntarily ironic twist, the promised bright future remains elusive and rather obscure. The poem's emphasis is more on the 'Schwelle' and 'Tore' than on what lies behind them. We learn nothing about the poem's speaker other than that he already appears to be in a state of *Bekanntnis*. The same applies to the vaguely outlined group 'uns' in the second line of the first stanza. This implies that the speaker sees himself as part of a community, but in the text alone there is no evidence that helps to define this group more closely. Despite the fact that the poem was never published outside a context in which it was explicitly associated with the Nazi party and its institutions, there is no reference to this specific political affiliation.

According to Bormann, the historical mission so central to Nazi texts is usually imposed on the speaker through external authority or derived from it rather than found internally. And indeed, whether 'Die Schwelle' is to be understood as a narrative of religious or political *Bekanntnis* or both, there is no evidence of an internal struggle or development in the text. The poem begins at the moment in which the addressee is alerted to the gleaming of the 'Schwelle'. The speaker's role appears to be strictly functional: he alerts the addressee

to the impending future and urges him to perform his act of *Bekanntnis* without trying to convince him with political or social arguments. Although acts of recognition and volition might reasonably be expected to be the result of an internal process, of intellectual insight, the addressee appears passive for the most part. It is the 'Schwelle' that is the active force, bringing freedom, 'die uns vom Dunkel befreit'. By contrast, in Becher's rhetoric of the time, it is the reader's 'Herz und Hirn'<sup>27</sup> that literature should, in his opinion, appeal to: 'Durch Gehirne und Herzen zieht sie [die neue Literatur] hindurch, "mit ihr zieht die neue Zeit"!' <sup>28</sup>

To conclude, in 'Die Schwelle', the sphere of the spiritual and the sphere of (political) reality become blurred; in fact the latter remains very vague. Nevertheless, it is evident, not only from the politicised context in which the poem was repeatedly published, but also more importantly in the transformation of the Christian promise of transcendental salvation to one of immanent salvation in this world. It is through this secularised act of *Bekanntnis* that the speaker (and by extension the addressee) fulfils his historical mission, however vague its purpose might remain.

In other poems, Schirach is more overtly political and, as regards the sources of the speaker's historical mission, more conventional. In 'Berglied', for instance, the speaker asks for his actions to be sanctioned by nature:

Küsse mir die heisse Stirne  
mit dem Eiswind, Bruder Berg!  
Hol den Hauch vom fernsten Firne!  
Segne mich: Ich will ans Werk!<sup>29</sup>

In 'Den Soldaten des grossen Krieges', the monuments honouring the fallen soldiers act as constant reminders of their sacrifice for the speaker: 'die Türme aber ihrer Treue ragen/ uns allen, allen/ mitten im Land.'<sup>30</sup> These towers are inanimate objects; yet they are imbued with active powers – they 'ragen' above everything else – and they seem to have power over the human figures. The speaker also claims to have been charged with his mission by political or cultural personalities. Living or dead, they serve as a point of reference. In 'Herbert Norkus',

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<sup>27</sup> Johannes R. Becher. *Publizistik I. 1912-1938* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1977), p. 156.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>29</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 43.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

the speaker declares: 'Und was ich tue, sei auf dein Geheiss...'<sup>31</sup> In 'Nürnberg 1927' the Nazi troops and their leader find approval from beyond the grave: 'Aus Wolken lächelt Albrecht Dürer mild/ dem Manne zu, der morgen Deutschland ist.'<sup>32</sup> The recurring dynamic is the speaker's demonstration of his *Bekanntnis*, followed by his appeal to others to follow his example. The speaker knows himself to be in possession of the truth and is confident that time will prove him right. The historical mission that is conferred on him by the 'martyrs' of the movement or the dead soldiers of the First World War is further sanctioned by forces of nature or even national cultural icons such as Dürer. As in 'Die Schwelle', in these more explicitly party political poems, there is neither internal struggle nor development; the speaker displays no signs of individual personality. Schirach's poems are not supposed to spark questions or debate; they dictate direction, reassure and urge enthusiasm. As a consequence, many poetic devices, styles and genres that were popular and successfully used by the political left in order to reflect on or contribute to the struggle of the proletariat remained alien to him. There is no trace of the satire, sarcasm, irony or paradoxical wit that were so characteristic of writers of the politics and calibre of Kurt Tucholsky and Erich Kästner, who played and experimented with language, with its meaning(s) and its layers, using it to expose unwritten social rules, bigotry and prejudice.<sup>33</sup>

### Intertextuality in Schirach's poetry

Even though Schirach's poems demonstrate less complexity than these left-wing authors and rely more on the demonstration of grand emotions than on wit, he too experimented with the materiality of text, including several layers of political and literary reality in some of his poems. For instance, he repeatedly referenced political catchphrases. The title of one of his poems, 'Volk ans Gewehr', was a well-known slogan widely used in the National Socialist community.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> See for example Kästner's collection of poetry *Doktor Erich Kästners Lyrische Hausapotheke* (1936) and Tucholsky's 'Dreh dich hin, dreh dich her – kleine Wetterfahne –!' (1932), 'Die brennende Lampe' (1931), 'Zehn Jahre deutsche Revolution' (1928) in Gerold-Tucholsky and Raddatz 3, pp. 1011-1012 and pp. 870-872; Mary Gerold-Tucholsky and Fritz J. Raddatz, eds., *Kurt Tucholsky. Gesammelte Werke 2 1925-1928* (Rowohlt, n.d.), p. 1304; Thomas von Pluto-Prondzinski, "'Mit der Sprache seiltanzen, das gehört ins Varieté.'" Zur Neusachlichkeit von Erich Kästners Texten von 1927 bis 1955,' in *Kästner im Spiegel*, ed. Sebastian Schmideler (Marburg: Tectum, 2014), 229–254, pp.239-242.

Schirach published his poem in July 1930 in *Die Bewegung*:

Volk ans Gewehr

In diesem Kampfe geht es nicht um Kronen  
und nicht um Geld!  
Dies ist die Brandung einer neuen Welt,  
ein heil'ger Kampf um Freisein oder Fronen!

Drum her zu uns! Hier stehn wir braunen Horden  
mit festen Fäusten, schwielenhart und schwer.  
Wir woll'n die Feinde deutscher Freiheit morden!  
Volk ans Gewehr!<sup>34</sup>

One of Schirach's most popular poems, it was reprinted by other National Socialist newspapers – Goebbels's *Angriff* and the *Völkischer Beobachter* supplement *Der S.A.-Mann* – shortly after its first appearance. It was later included in both editions of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1931, 1933) as well as *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940). Schirach only made marginal changes to the poem's text. When it was first published in *Die Bewegung*, the last line of the first stanza read: 'ein letzter Kampf um Freisein oder Fronen!'

As is typical of Schirach and the often circular structure of his poems, the title is repeated in the last line of the poem as a final exclamation, impressing its message on the reader once again. The poem is written in iambic pentameter with the exception of the shorter lines two and eight. The rhyme scheme is conventional: Schirach uses an enclosed rhyme in the first stanza and an alternating rhyme scheme in the second stanza. The regular and controlled effect of the rhyme contrasts sharply with the unconventional, unveiled incitement to potentially deadly violence. The first stanza consists of two sentences, each spanning two lines, at the end of which Schirach adds an exclamation mark for further emphasis. The poem's opening first informs the reader of an on-going war. The structure of its first sentence is highly rhetorical but at the same time simplistic: it contains a negative definition of why the war must be fought (power and money), followed by a second positive definition (freedom). Schirach employs crowns as symbols of power but also as symbols of traditional (perhaps outdated) forms of government that were based on succession rather

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<sup>34</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Volk ans Gewehr,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 13 (29 July 1930); Baldur von Schirach, 'Volk ans Gewehr,' *Der Angriff* (July 31, 1930); Baldur von Schirach, 'Volk ans Gewehr,' *Völkischer Beobachter Bayernausgabe*) supplement: *Der S.A.-Mann* (August 28, 1930); Schirach, *FdV* (1931), p. 29; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 25; Schirach, *FIF*, p. 18.

than popular support, which the Nazi movement at least claimed to have had. The enjambement between the first and second line implies a connection between the crown and money, which indicates the corruption of this old world order; similar comments on the current state of affairs could also be found in Communist poetry.<sup>35</sup> The third line brings the promise of a new beginning: like a force of nature, a new world arrives like a wave on the shore; it appears inevitable. The 'neue [...] Welt' at the end of the third line is followed by the 'letzter Kampf' at the beginning of the fourth line, creating the impression of a natural circle of destruction and renewal. There are only two ways for this fight to end that the speaker can foresee: freedom or slavery. The alliteration supports the binary effect.

The second stanza opens with another exclamation, continuing the forceful and energetic tone of the first part. The first word 'Drum' establishes a causal link and leads over to the consequences of the current situation analysed in the first stanza. The reader is addressed and summoned emphatically: 'her zu uns'. For the first time, the poem reveals a sense of who is speaking to the reader. The plural 'uns' indicates a community, subsequently defined more closely as the 'braunen Horden'. Schirach uses the colour brown metonymically, in a reference to the brown shirts of the SA. The description 'hordes' adds to the impression of their wild character. At the same time, however, they seem fixed and static: 'Hier stehn wir'. This was clearly intended to portray them as steadfast and strong, yet the verb also suggests immobility rather than readiness for action. The second line of the second stanza is again brimming with alliterations, adding rhetorically to the effect of the description: the strong, clenched fists indicate that the groups are ready to fight; the calluses imply that they are experienced in fighting or at least in hard work and therefore physically imposing. The last two lines culminate in unambiguous, brutal aggression: 'wir woll'n die Feinde deutscher Freiheit morden', the speaker(s) announce(s), apparently formulating communal will and speaking on behalf of the SA. Again, alliteration supports the impression of a binary and irreconcilable opposition between 'Feinde' and 'Freiheit'. As is typical for Schirach, the formulation 'Feinde deutscher Freiheit' is vague, however, and potentially

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<sup>35</sup> For instance, in the song 'Die rote Flut', which was sung by the Agitprop group Rote Sterne, reads: 'Ohne Scham die Menschheit schändet,/ [...] Wenn Erhabene ewig thronen,/Glanzvoll in Palästen wohnen.', quoted in Münchow, *Stimme des Vortrupps*, p. 40 and p. 111. In 'Herr Marx spricht', which was published in *Die Rote Fahne* on 19 April 1925, the speaker expresses his anger against 'Die dieser Republik ergeben sind/ [...] Die das Gold mit breiten Händen raffen', quoted in *ibid.*, p. 73 and p. 113; In 'Volksentscheid', which was published in the *Dachdeckerzeitung* in July 1926, the speaker warns: 'Der Troß der Fürsten und der Fürstenknechte/ Steht wieder wider dich in Reih und Glied.', quoted in *ibid.*, p. 80 and p. 114.

applicable to different groups. The choice of the verb ‘morden’ emphasises the aggressive potential of the group. This self-referential use of a term that usually has extremely negative connotations clearly indicates that the speaker(s) believe(s) themselves justified in their aggression in order to protect national freedom but at the same time self-confidently style themselves as wild and free: outlaws, terrorists even. Again the text gives no indication of an internal struggle. The last line breaks the iambic metre, drawing particular attention to the consequences that the present situation dictates in the eyes of the SA: the ‘Volk’ must act as one and defend itself: ‘Volk ans Gewehr!’

In 1931, a year after Schirach had published ‘Volk ans Gewehr’, composer and SA member Arno Pardun included the slogan in his immensely popular song *Siehst du im Osten das Morgenrot?* Bormann mentions both songs in his article ‘Das nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaftslied’ as examples of ‘*Sturm- und Kampflieder*’.<sup>36</sup> He does not offer in-depth analysis, but points out the similarities in imagery and tone to Eckart’s ‘Der Sturm’ and their aggressive potential: ‘Die Sturm- und Kampflieder [...] ziehen [...] die Gewaltkonsequenz und verlangen nach deren praktischer Einlösung.’ The first stanza of Pardun’s song reads:

Siehst du im Osten das Morgenrot?  
 Ein Zeichen zur Freiheit zur Sonne!  
 Wir halten zusammen, ob lebend, ob tot,  
 mag kommen, was immer da wolle!  
 Warum jetzt noch zweifeln? Hört auf mit dem Hadern  
 Noch fließt uns deutsches Blut in den Adern.  
 Volk ans Gewehr, Volk ans Gewehr!

Pardun’s song bears some resemblance to the Russian workers’ song *Brüder, zur Sonne, zur Freiheit*, not only through the prominent use of fanfares in both songs, but also in its textual similarity. The latter opens: ‘Brüder, zur Sonne, zur Freiheit,/ Brüder, zum Licht empor!’<sup>37</sup> Pardun’s version retains some of its Socialist tone. The reference to the rising sun in the East in the first line shows that the Socialist element is by no means alien to the image of the SA that Pardun suggests. However, as the song continues, an aggressive, biologicistic nationalism comes to the fore, culminating in the repeated exclamation ‘Volk ans Gewehr’ in the last

<sup>36</sup> See Bormann, ‘Das nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaftslied’, p. 270; the following quotation *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Martin Brady and Carola Nielinger-Vakil, ‘“What a Satisfying Task for a Composer!”: Paul Dessau’s Music for the German Story (... Du und mancher Kamerad),’ in *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic: Production and Reception*, eds. Kyle Frackman and Larson Powell (Rochester: Camden House, 2015), 195–218, p. 209; Agnieszka Rajewska-Perzyńska, *Rolf Bongs: Dissoziation eines Schriftstellers im Spannungsfeld zwischen Selbststilisierung und Anpassung* (Frankfurt/M: Lang, 2009), p. 79.



line. As in Schirach's poem 'Volk ans Gewehr', the notion of potential threats is evident but not clearly identifiable: 'Mag kommen, was immer da wolle.' In contrast to Pardun, Schirach does not try to appropriate Socialist or Communist symbols and rhetoric; in his poems there is no mention of popular Socialist or Communist rhetoric such as references to the East or symbols such as the sickle and hammer. The poems mention 'Licht'<sup>38</sup> and 'Helle'<sup>39</sup> rather than the rising of the sun. The sun is mentioned directly only five times. In 'Mag unser sein', it is used as a symbol of eternity rather than a new beginning: 'unser Wollen, das wird stehn/ im Sonnenglanz der Ewigkeit!'<sup>40</sup> similar diction is used in 'Der Priester': 'Im Licht der Sonne sah ich einen schreiten,/ [...] Den Glanz der Gottheit auf den hellen Haaren.'<sup>41</sup> In 'Die Einen und die Andern', the sun likewise serves as a reminder of God's glory: 'Sind sie vor Gottes Sonne gleich,/ Die Einen und die Andern?'<sup>42</sup> In 'Erschlagener Kamerad', it is the absence of the sun that is remarked upon rather than its presence: 'Uns will die Sonne nicht mehr scheinen.'<sup>43</sup> It is only in 'Des Führers Wächter' that Schirach describes the rising of the sun: 'Stolz fliegen sie [die Reichsbanneradler] zurück zu ihren Fahnen,/ wenn sich der erste Strahl der Sonne bricht,/ und Deine Träume folgen ihren Bahnen/ hinein ins Licht.'<sup>44</sup> Another essential element of Communist rhetoric, the colour red, is only mentioned once in one of his earliest poems, 'Sonett an Adolf Hitler', but in explicit reference to the swastika flag: 'Heute weh'n in Weimar Deine [Hitlers] roten Fahnen.'<sup>45</sup> Altogether, these mentions are too scarce and scattered to justify any claims of appropriation of Socialist or Communist symbols. The fact that Pardun and Schirach used the same slogan is indicative of the aggressive potential their work had in common rather than a shared Socialist impulse. Both aimed to increase the recognition value of their poetry in the community to which their writing was directed by placing the slogan prominently in a climactic position, in the title and/or the final line.

To give a second example of National Socialist intertextuality, Schirach and Pardun also both referenced the acclamation 'Deutschland erwache' in their works. It is included as the final line of Schirach's poem 'An die Jugend': 'Ihr sollt ans Vaterland/ Den Weckruf

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<sup>38</sup> For example Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 10, 40, 47, 50; Schirach, *FnF*, p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> For example *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>40</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), 21.

<sup>41</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 50.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>45</sup> Schirach, 'Sonett an Adolf Hitler'.

richten!/ [...] Deutschland erwache!!'<sup>46</sup> The poem is one of Schirach's earlier works; it was only published on one occasion in April 1927 in the *Völkischer Beobachter* supplement *Die deutsche Frauenbewegung*. 'Deutschland erwache!' is also referenced in the last stanza of Pardun's 'Siehst du im Osten das Morgenrot?' Both refer to Dietrich Eckart's 'Sturmlied' (1922).<sup>47</sup> It was used as the anthem of the SA until it was eclipsed by the growing popularity of the Horst Wessel song after Wessel's death in 1930.<sup>48</sup> As we have seen above, the 'Sturmlied' consists of three stanzas, each of which climaxes in the exclamation 'Deutschland erwache' that became one of the most influential slogans of the SA.<sup>49</sup> Schirach and Pardun were therefore able to assume that their audience would immediately understand the reference, thus creating a moment of recognition and validation for the National Socialist community, strengthening the feeling of solidarity and simultaneously reinforcing the message through sheer repetition. Attempts such as these were obviously successful and the slogan was also associated with the SA outside the National Socialist community. Becher refers to it in his 1932 poem 'SA-Ballade': 'Sie [the SA] zogen spät durch die Stadt in der Nacht/ Und riefen: "Deutschland, erwache!"'<sup>50</sup>

To gesture towards further examples of National Socialist intertextuality in Schirach's poetry that could be of interest for future research into the intrication of the political and poetic spheres, Henriette von Schirach mentions in her autobiography that her husband had arranged extracts from one of Hitler's speeches as a poem, although it remains unclear which speech.<sup>51</sup> The poem became known as 'Worte Hitlers'. The first stanza reads:

'Kann sein, dass die Kolonnen, die hier halten,  
dass diese endenlosen braunen Reihn  
in alle Winde wehn, zerspellen, spalten  
und von mir gehn. Kann sein, kann sein... [...]'<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'An die Jugend,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe) supplement Die Deutsche Frauenbewegung*, April 24/25, 1927.

<sup>47</sup> See Plewnia, *Auf dem Weg*, pp. 86-88.

<sup>48</sup> See Daniel Siemens, *Horst Wessel. Tod und Verklärung eines Nationalsozialisten* (Munich: Siedler, 2009), p. 10 and p. 15; Jost Hermand, *Kultur in finsternen Zeiten: Nazifaschismus, Innere Emigration, Exil* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2010), p. 117.

<sup>49</sup> See Plewnia, *Auf dem Weg*, p. 88.

<sup>50</sup> Johannes R. Becher, *Gesammelte Werke 3. Gedichte 1926-1935* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1966), p. 413.

<sup>51</sup> See Schirach, *Der Preis der Herrlichkeit*, p. 236. Koontz writes in his study: 'Schirach composed a poem, "Hitler's Words" that paraphrased a speech given by Hitler during the Nazi Party's rise to power.' Although it seems likely that Koontz was referencing Henriette von Schirach here, he does not specify the source this statement was based on. Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 94.

<sup>52</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 41.

Whether or not it was a well-known fact that the poem was based on one of Hitler's speeches remains unclear. It should be noted that the poem was usually printed in inverted commas, with the two exceptions of Herbert Böhme's collection *Rufe in das Reich* (1934) and when it was printed in Goebbels's *Der Angriff*. It seems however that 'Worte Hitlers' was not the only poem in which Hitler's public performance inspired Schirach. The closing line of his poem 'Gebet' is reminiscent of a speech Hitler gave in May 1927, which ended:

Als Frontsoldat habe ich erst den Herrgott gebeten: Herr, laß mich nicht feige sein! Wie es auch für uns kommen mag, ob Sieg oder unser Untergang, auch wir wollen für den Kampf, den wir zäh und unerbittlich führen, den Herrgott bitten: Herr, laß uns nicht feige sein!<sup>53</sup>

Echoing Hitler's words, Schirach's poem 'Gebet', which was first published almost a year later in November 1928, ends: 'Drum betet, wenn wir beten müssen:/ Herr! Lass uns niemals feige sein!'<sup>54</sup>

The idea of creating moments of recognition and validation through repetition of phrases, slogans or – as the last example suggests – even extracts from speeches ties in with Uwe Ketelsen's analysis of National Socialist literature. In his article 'Nationalsozialismus und Drittes Reich', published and re-published in the same collection (1978, 2007) as Bormann's *Weimarer Republik*, he points out that in the *Agitationsgedicht* the speaker is relieved from the obligation to present new answers to the conflict at hand, since the emphasis lies on recognition and repetition.<sup>55</sup> Ketelsen lists Schirach alongside other authors (Heinrich Anacker, Herbert Böhme, Gerhart Schumann) as younger representatives of *Agitationslyrik*, but does not engage with his poems further. Ketelsen already argued in his article as well as his study *Literatur im Dritten Reich*, first published in 1992, that the inclusion of popular political slogans and catchphrases constitutes a moment in which the boundaries between literary language and the language of a specific political circumstance dissolve: the speaker of the poem blends with the speaker of a particular political-historical context. The literary character of the poem is compromised, but does not disappear: the speaker in the poem becomes a real-life propagandist while remaining poetic speaker.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> 'Herr, laß uns nicht feige sein,' *Völkischer Beobachter* (Bayernausgabe), May 5, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Stoßgebet,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 5, no. 44 (3 November 1928).

<sup>55</sup> See Uwe-K. Ketelsen, 'Nationalsozialismus und Drittes Reich,' in Hinderer (2007), 303–327, p. 307.

<sup>56</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 306-307; Ketelsen, *Literatur und Drittes Reich*, p. 341.

Considering this strategy in the context of National Socialist literature's manipulative potential, Ketelsen argues that, as an instrument of propaganda, repeated instances of the intrication of the political and the literary sphere and the reiteration of slogans helped to establish a fixed and closed pattern of thought which only allowed certain modes of reading the social and political implications of any given text. Instead of identifying a clear course of action or facilitating political debate, the poems always aim to align political communication with the same propaganda statements and thought patterns.<sup>57</sup> Ketelsen's observations intend to throw light on how National Socialist collective identity was formed; he does not go further into the idea of National Socialist intertextuality and how this might be seen in a wider literary context. In the following poem 'Der Sturmabteilung', Schirach openly incorporates slogan-like statements – that is to say fragments of other texts (in the wider sense of the word) associated with a specific political situation – into his own. There are two textual levels in the poem: the main (poetic) narrative, and the SA mottos introduced as external elements.

#### Der Sturmabteilung

Ihr, die ihr im Herzen die Sehnsucht tragt,  
den Schrei nach loderndem Licht.  
Ihr habt's gesagt:  
'Ketten gibt es, damit man sie bricht!'

Ihr, die ihr die heilige Flamme tragt  
und den Willen, der immer gleich.  
Ihr habt's gesagt:  
'Solange wir atmen, kämpfen wir für's dritte Reich!'

Ihr, denen der Sturm durch die Seele weht,  
der Sturm, dessen Namen ihr tragt.  
Ihr habt's gesagt:  
'Die Idee ist ewig, der Mensch vergeht!'<sup>58</sup>

The poem was first published in February 1927 in *Der Nationalsozialist* and reprinted two months later by the *Völkischer Beobachter*. It was not picked up again in other publications, however, indicating that it was not well received even by a National Socialist readership. As the title shows, it is dedicated to the party's Sturmabteilung (SA). Schirach himself had been

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<sup>57</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>58</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Der Sturmabteilung,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 4, no. 6 (February 1927); Baldur von Schirach, 'Der Sturmabteilung,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)* (February 13, 1927).

a member since 1925, when he joined the SA group in Weimar. According to his SA file, his membership had been suspended the following year for reasons that are unclear. In 1927 however, he joined the 'Sturm 1'<sup>59</sup> in Munich. He was promoted to the position of 'Truppführer' in 1928 and – resulting from his appointment as Reichsjugendführer – finally 'Gruppenführer [...] im Stabe des obersten SA-Führers' in 1931. The poem certainly presents a more than flattering description of the SA, an institution that often amounted to little more than goon squads and was notorious for thrashing the political opposition – particularly members of the KPD – during meetings or speeches. The number of aggressive incidents and the level of violence used during its 'operations' was unprecedented in the Weimar Republic.<sup>60</sup> The SA became, according to Peter Longerich, the 'Terror- und Propagandainstrument der Partei'.<sup>61</sup> Bans and legal sanctions did little to diminish its popularity or progress. Even though violent confrontations with members of other National Socialist institutions, violence against political enemies, and excessive drinking particularly before and after brawls at assembly houses were a regular part of SA life, Weimar courts did little to discourage this behaviour. If brought to court, the majority of SA men who were accused of violent actions were acquitted on grounds of self-defence.<sup>62</sup> Reichstag member Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau, a trusted friend of Reichspräsident Hindenburg, admitted that he found the SA men's dedication imposing: '[...] wenn einer steht und fällt mit seiner Überzeugung, und das muss man den Nationalsozialisten lassen, sie treten mit ihrem Leben ein für ihre Bewegung.'<sup>63</sup> It is exactly these values with which Schirach aims to connect the SA. 'Der Sturmabteilung' invokes the natural forces of fire, light and wind to signal both strength and purity of mind. The poem is divided into three stanzas; each stanza consists of three sentences. The sentence structure is repeated meticulously in each stanza, using the same rhyme scheme, even the same rhymes, with only a slight variation in the last stanza. The last line of each stanza culminates in an exclamation that is clearly marked as an SA slogan or motto by quotation marks. The sentence structure of each stanza is complex by Schirach's

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<sup>59</sup> BArch, Slg. BDC, SA, Schirach; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 88 and Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 34-35; the following quotations *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> See Yves Müller and Reiner Zilkenat, "'... der Kampf wird über unserem Leben stehen, solange wir atmen!'" Einleitung,' in *Bürgerkriegsarmee. Forschungen zur nationalsozialistischen Sturmabteilung (SA)*, eds. Yves Müller and Reiner Zilkenat (Frankfurt/M: Lang, 2013), 9–31, pp. 15-17; Johannes Fülberth, '...wird mit Brachialgewalt durchgefochten'. *Bewaffnete Konflikte mit Todesfolge vor Gericht* (Cologne: PapyRossa, 2011), p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Longerich, *Die braunen Bataillone. Geschichte der SA* (Munich: Beck, 1989), p. 7.

<sup>62</sup> See Müller and Zilkenat, 'Einleitung', pp. 14-15 and p. 17; Fülberth, 'Bewaffnete Konflikte', p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in: Müller and Zilkenat, 'Einleitung', p. 13.

standards. Since he uses attributive relative clauses, it becomes awkward at times, for example, the ungrammatical second line of the second stanza in which the verb 'tragen' does not grammatically correspond with the noun 'Willen'. His seeming carelessness perhaps (ironically) reflects that within a group such as the SA it was not attention to detail and flawless execution that was valued and that, with the correct attitude and enthusiasm, these might easily be overlooked.

The opening line of each stanza addresses the SA. In the first stanza Schirach again uses very conventional imagery of light and flames, perhaps also alluding to the light and fire cult (such as the torchlight processions) in the organisation. The positive association of light is intensified by the alliteration 'loderndes Licht'. The emphasis in the first stanza in his description of the SA lies on the heart. The 'Schrei nach [...] Licht' indicates intense emotion; it is inarticulate and loud because it is, the poem suggests, deeply felt. The third line of each stanza, 'Ihr habt's gesagt', contrasts with the bombast of the rest of the poem; the simple, short sentence and the contraction 'habt's' implies carelessness and informality, perhaps intended to reflect the rebellious image of the SA Schirach tries to conjure. It further suggests closeness and camaraderie, which is intended to evoke agreement and reaffirmation rather than scepticism and inquiry. Grammatically, the line introduces the quotation that follows, but at the same times it implies that the statement has already been proven true. The climactic statement in the first stanza, 'Ketten gibt es, damit man sie bricht', is reminiscent of the proverb that rules were made to be broken; a truism with a rebellious touch. The young revolutionaries break the chains, a symbol of imprisonment; their activist spirit is emphasised by the switch from the passive voice to an active one. The image of breaking chains, as has been pointed out earlier, was also widely used by Communist activists in their songs.<sup>64</sup>

The second stanza begins with another reference to the fire cult of the SA. The flame is described as 'heilig'; the cultic and ritualistic elements (the carrying of the flame) create

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<sup>64</sup> The image is used in *The Communist Manifesto*: 'Die Proletarier haben nichts in ihr [der Revolution] zu verlieren als ihre Ketten.' This perhaps more importantly, also became a slogan of the workers' movement, along with 'Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt euch!' Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014), p. 84. For further examples, see the popular agitprop song written by Max Jensen 'Roter Raketenmarsch' (1929), in which the speaker cries: 'Sklaven am Pflug, in Schacht und Fabrik,/ erkämpft euch die Arbeiterrepublik!/ Werft endlich ab eurer Fesseln Last,/ schließt euch zusammen und Tritt gefaßt.' Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Agitprop-Truppen vor 1945* (Leipzig: Hofmeister, 1959), pp. 58-59; Even more openly, in 'Vorwärts Volk' (1925): 'Revolution soll uns're Losung sein,/ Revolution von Ketten uns befrei'n,/ Revolution – du endest Sklavennacht,/ [...] Auf Proletariervolk! Zerbrich die Ketten!' *Rotfront. Neues Kampfliederbuch* (Berlin: Vereinigung Internationaler Verlags-Anstalten, 1925), pp. 54-55.

the impression of an initiated congregation. All its members are of one mind, and their 'Willen, der immer gleich' is constant in two ways: it is 'immer' (remains the same over time) and also 'gleich' (identical within the group). In the final line of the second stanza, the speaker again appears to be quoting an SA motto: 'Solange wir atmen, kämpfen wir für's dritte Reich.' Here, Schirach states the aim of the intended revolution by introducing the phrase 'Third Reich'. The poem was printed by the *Völkischer Beobachter* in the same month. Here the diction was slightly altered. The last line of the second stanza read: 'Wir kämpfen für's kommende dritte Reich.' The alliteration used in this line connects 'kämpfen' and 'kommende', adding to the impression that the group is confident of future victory. The term 'Drittes Reich' was originally coined by Dietrich Eckart and picked up by Arthur Moeller van den Bruck in his book *Das Dritte Reich* (1923), which contributed to its widespread use and which was published four years before Schirach's poem.<sup>65</sup> Schirach does not capitalise 'dritte' in 'Der Sturmabteilung' indicating that he is not yet treating it as an acknowledged term, while he himself is contributing to its establishment here. He is still using it as a primarily religiously connoted term, as a promise of immanent spiritual salvation in the third Age on earth.

In the third stanza the romanticised glorification of the SA as 'denen der Sturm durch die Seele weht/ der Sturm, dessen Namen ihr tragt' reaches its peak. While the second line at first sight adds so little to the poem overall that the reference to the name seems like a banality, it is in fact a comment on the turbulent birth of the SA. It had developed out of a variety of smaller paramilitary groups and, for the duration of the ban on the NSDAP and its sub-organisations between 1924 and 1925, had existed under the name Frontbann. In 1925 and 1926 the SA was able to revert to its original name, and experienced a sharp rise in popularity: new SA troops were formed almost everywhere across the country.<sup>66</sup> The fact that Schirach's poem was presumably written and published (at least) twice in early 1927 can be seen as a reflection and validation of the recent development of the SA as well as an affirmation of its name. The inclusion of SA slogans demonstrates how Schirach reacted to the party's 'needs'. At the same time, the example of 'Der Sturmabteilung' also shows that his poetry was vulnerable to changes in the political climate. After the purge in 1934, the SA

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<sup>65</sup> See André Schlüter, *Moeller van den Bruck. Leben und Werk* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2010), pp. 347-354 and p. 378.

<sup>66</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 14-15; Markus Mühle, *Ernst Röhm. Eine biografische Skizze* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2016), pp. 19-23.

was overshadowed by the SS, a circumstance that rendered this poem as well as others that referred to the SA increasingly irrelevant.<sup>67</sup> By contrast, 'Hitler-Jugend', a poem Schirach wrote in 1930, gained much more prominence.<sup>68</sup>

### Montage and intertextuality in political and non-political poetry

Given Schirach's efforts to validate and reinforce the SA narrative in 'Der Sturmabteilung', to what extent can comparisons with modernist authors and literary techniques be justified? The inclusion of SA mottos, of Nazi slogans, even the adaptation of extracts from public speeches can arguably be seen as evidence of intertextuality that breaks the boundaries between the political and poetic sphere, a technique that was, I will argue, also used by writers supportive of the political left. Another literary technique that was more radical in its breaking of the text, and that was also more closely associated specifically with modernist poetry, was montage. However, comparisons for instance with Gottfried Benn, likely the best-known representative of modernist montage in the field of pre-1945 poetry,<sup>69</sup> certainly tend to bring out the differences rather than suggest shared aesthetic principles. While Benn – like Schirach – adhered to the traditional poem form, within this frame he suspended grammatical, syntactical and semantic connections between words. His poem 'Chaos' (1923) exemplifies how he takes words out of their usual contexts and strings them together regardless of the relationship between the objects or facts they denote. This creates a moment of alienation for the reader. To give a very brief example, the poem opens:

Chaos – Zeiten und Zonen  
Bluffende Mimikry,  
Großer Run der Äonen  
In die Stunde des Nie –  
Marmor Milets, Travertine  
Hippokratischer Schein,  
Leichenkolombine,

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<sup>67</sup> See Müller and Zilkenat, 'Einleitung', pp. 15-16.

<sup>68</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Hitler-Jugend,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 16 (19 August 1930); Baldur von Schirach, 'Hitler-Jugend,' *Der Angriff* (September 7, 1930); Baldur von Schirach, 'Die neue Front,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)* supplement: *Vormarsch der Jugend* (October 28, 1931); Schirach, *FdV* (1931), p. 28; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 24; Schirach, *FfF*, p. 35; Gille, *Das Neue Deutschland*, p. 192.

<sup>69</sup> See Dieter Lamping, *Das lyrische Gedicht*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), pp. 202-203.



Die Tauben fliegen ein.<sup>70</sup>

Benn combines fragments to form new compounds or word combinations, linking different semantic fields, creating a rush of new associations, allusions and suggestions. Sound and rhythm become the new organising principles. For Benn the text is severed from the logic of the outside world; the words no longer act as signifiers. Schirach does not want to question the conventional or logical connections that we make, nor does he seek to destroy grammatical, syntactical or logical structures. The inclusion of the SA mottos does not represent a moment of alienation or irritation, but on the contrary of validation. Schirach does not aim to challenge or subvert the mottos' authority. Instead, he aims to reinforce them and to create a moment of recognition and inclusion for his target audience, around a (party) narrative that is larger than the individual poem.

For Benn, montage both destructs and constructs; it creates order through disorder. The poet, as he puts it in his poem 'Sänger', becomes a 'Zersprenger mittels Gehirnprinzip',<sup>71</sup> who creates a new order governed by aesthetic principles.<sup>72</sup> Schirach however, carefully avoids disorder. The line preceding the quotations, 'ihr habt's gesagt', announces the break between text levels and thereby anticipates and smooths over the possible moment of irritation for the reader. Both Benn and Schirach make an assumption about art and its relationship to the world. However, where Benn turns inwards, Schirach turns outwards. Benn, as Lamping points out, demonstrates the artist's power to defy the order of empirical reality and instead establish his own order within his poetic creation.<sup>73</sup> Schirach instead wants his art to serve a political agenda and so he blends the poetic and political speaker and thus poetic and empirical reality, one confirming the other.

Another popular example of montage technique, Kurt Schwitters's 'Die Zwiebel', poses a further interesting point of comparison (despite the genre difference), since it also includes political slogans into a non-political narrative and plays with the blending of different perspectives. It is a short prose narrative, although it was also published as

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 207; see also Martin Travers, *The Poetry of Gottfried Benn. Text and Selfhood* (Oxford: Lang, 2007), p. 155.

<sup>72</sup> See Lamping, *Das lyrische Gedicht*, pp. 203-210; Friederike Reents, 'Ein Schauer in den Hirnen'. *Gottfried Benns 'Garten von Arles' als Paradigma der Moderne* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), pp. 269-273.

<sup>73</sup> See Lamping, *Das lyrische Gedicht*, pp. 203-210.

‘Merzgedicht Nr. 8’ in the Expressionist journal *Der Sturm* in 1919.<sup>74</sup> In ‘Die Zwiebel’, the narrator is executed and dissected and later put back together and revived. Much like the narrator, Schwitters’s text does not stay intact. Schwitters interrupts the narrative to include – in German (as well as French, English and Latin) – advertisement (‘Neueste Moccabonbons, Neuheit.’<sup>75</sup>), political slogans (‘Wählt sozialistisch.’), warning notices (‘Frisch gestrichen.’), platitudes (‘Die Kunst des glücklichen Lebens in der Ehe.’), biblical quotation (‘Fürchte dich nicht, glaube nur!’), stage directions (‘Brausender Beifall.’), complete, grammatically correct sentences taken from a different context (‘Der Oberst ist und bleibt ein Gentleman, wenn er auch ein Idiot ist.’), nonsensical sentences (‘Enten gänsen auf der Wiese.’) and even references to other artists (‘Rudolf Bauer ist doch ein Künstler.’). These insertions constantly divert the attention of the reader from the core narrative. Instead, a rich variety of connotations and associations present themselves to the reader. By contrast, Schirach wants his reader to stay focused and able to follow the claims about the SA easily.

In ‘Die Zwiebe’ the role and perspective of the protagonist is often unclear, as Harald Henzler points out in his study *Literatur an der Grenze zum Spiel* (1992). The narrator is protagonist, agent and victim at the same time.<sup>76</sup> ‘Es war ein sehr begebenwürdiger Tag, an dem ich geschlachtet werden sollte. [...] Wir hatten eine geräumige Diele ausgewählt, so daß viele Zuschauer bequem teilnehmen konnten.’<sup>77</sup> The passive voice of the speaker, ‘Nun mußte ich zusammenbrechen’,<sup>78</sup> emphasising the submission to external forces (the laws of physics), swiftly changes into an active voice ‘also brach ich zusammen’. Whereas the quotations in ‘Der Sturmabteilung’ do indeed break the poem’s literary character and introduce a (political) dimension, it is difficult to argue that Schirach changed the speaker’s perspective or creates more than one speaker; that is to say, two speakers whose realities, thoughts, or perspectives clash. Arguably this could be due to the lack of a well-defined speaker in the main narrative. There is no tangible sense of self in the main narrative; the speaker remains invisible. All we learn about him is that he takes an outsider’s perspective; he

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<sup>74</sup> ‘Merzkunst’ was intended by Schwitters as ‘Befreiung von jeder Richtung der Kunst’. Quoted in: Sigrid Franz, *Kurt Schwitters’ Merz-Ästhetik im Spannungsfeld der Künste* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2009), p. 27. While it was a very conscious effort to create something new and to distance himself from other contemporary influences, and in particular from Dadaism, Schwitters did not seek to replace traditions of art but to create a synthesis of the traditional and the new. See *ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>75</sup> Kurt Schwitters, ‘Die Zwiebel,’ *Der Sturm* 10, no. 7 (1919), p. 100. The following quotations on pp. 99-103.

<sup>76</sup> See Harald Henzler, *Literatur an der Grenze zum Spiel. Eine Untersuchung zu Robert Walser, Hugo Ball und Kurt Schwitters* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1992), p. 101.

<sup>77</sup> Schwitters, ‘Die Zwiebel’, p. 99.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

is not part of the 'Ihr'. At the same time, he is clearly highly biased: when addressing the Sturmabteilung, his tone is admiring and his gaze is firmly fixed on the object of his admiration. Schwitters, on the contrary, does not allow his reader's attention to be fixed on the narrative for long, constantly reminding them of the materiality of his text. Whereas the slogans in Schirach's poem arguably do the same, it is clear that although he uses a similar technique in his texts, he does it to a different end and in a very different way, and that it can therefore not be considered montage.

To situate Schirach in the wider literary context of the political literature of the Weimar Republic, it is thus perhaps more fruitful to compare his poems to texts which fulfilled a political function first and foremost. Intertextuality and political cross-referencing were popular among political writers, for instance Tucholsky parodied the Communist *Rote Fahne* slogan 'Schlagt die Faschisten, wo ihr sie trefft!' in his poem 'Rosen auf den Weg gestreut' (1931):

[...] Ihr müsst sie lieb und nett behandeln,  
erschreckt sie nicht – sie sind so zart!  
Ihr müsst mit Palmen sie umwandeln,  
getreulich ihrer Eigenart!  
Pfeift euerm Hunde, wenn er kläfft – :  
Küßt die Faschisten, wo ihr sie trefft!<sup>79</sup>

To give another example, both stanzas of the previously mentioned anonymous poem 'Heraus zur Wahl' end in slogan-like exclamations:

Heraus zur Wahl

Heut' gilt es, Farbe zu bekennen:  
Ob Schwarz-weiß-rot, ob Schwarz-rot-gold – ob Rot!  
Kannst du den Klassenfeind je Bruder nennen?  
Schert sich die 'Vorwärts'-Republik um deine Not? –  
*Prolet, heraus:*  
*'Das rote Banner auf das Rote Haus!'*

Von Moskaus Türmen grüßen Freiheitsfahnen.  
Ihr Sklaven im Bureau, in Werkstatt und Fabrik:  
Wacht auf – und laßt zur Tat euch mahnen:  
Rot sei Berlin und rot die Republik!  
*Prolet, heraus:*

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<sup>79</sup> Gerold-Tucholsky and Raddatz, *Kurt Tucholsky. Gesammelte Werke 3*, p. 814.

*'Das rote Banner auf das Rote Haus!'*<sup>80</sup>

Stylistically similar to Schirach's poem in its frequent use of hyphens, exclamation marks, and colons in every line, the anonymous poem relies on simple, short and clear sentence structures that guide the reader, but also add a sense of urgency. Enjambement is avoided. The syntactic structures are repetitive at times: lines three and four of the first stanza both consist of rhetorical polar questions, seeking to evoke the same answer from the reader. The alternating rhyme scheme further adds to the impression of regularity, control and even inevitability invoked by the sign-posting punctuation. Most importantly, both stanzas end with the same two lines; the proletarian is urged to spring into action and help ensure Communist electoral victory. This section is further set off from the rest of the stanza by the use of italics. The last line *'Das rote Banner auf das Rote Haus!'* is additionally marked as a motto or slogan by inverted commas; it remains unclear who speaks the words or to whom they are attributed, but, as in Schirach's poem, the author clearly wishes them to be recognised as a quotation, given in direct speech. Syntactic and logical rules remain intact; the reader is supposed to recognise the slogan within a clearly defined political context.

To give another and better known example of left-wing intertextuality, Becher wrote a series of poems in support of the Communist movement – such as 'Die Partei', 'Der Tausendjährige Lenin', 'Die Fahne', 'Dem Unbekannten Genossen' and 'Er geht mit der Partei' – published in his collections *Graue Kolonnen* (1930) and *Der Mann, der in der Reihe geht* (1932), poems in which he frequently makes reference to party language, symbols, leading figures and slogans. In 'Die Partei', Becher reflects on the KPD's emergence from the post-war uprisings. The poem consists of nearly fifty stanzas that are divided up into five parts. In the first and second stanza of the first part, the speaker celebrates the uniting power of party nomenclature:

Das Wort 'Genosse'  
Ist uns vertrauter als unser eigener Name geworden.

'Genosse': Das Wort, das uns alle verbindet,  
Unlösbarer als 'Du',  
Metallener Klang, der uns einander verkündet, [...] <sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Münchow, *Stimme des Vortrupps*, p. 76 and p. 113.

<sup>81</sup> Becher, *Gesammelte Werke 3*, p. 312.

Becher, not unlike Schirach, consistently uses the first person plural, suggesting that the speakers in the poem are of one mind. There is, however, still a sense of individual identity – after all, the ‘wir’ still have their own names – but this is slowly replaced by the shared political identity. They now identify as ‘Genosse[n]’, a term that signals shared (leftist) political views. The power of language is emphasised through the use of personification. It is the word that is the active force in uniting the ‘wir’. The conventional form of address, the speakers suggest, is not as strong as the new party language: ‘Unlösbarer als ‘Du’’. If used as a form of address, the word ‘Genosse’ identifies group members: ‘Klang, der uns einander verkündet.’ The speakers emphasise the words ‘Metallener Klang’, aiming to evoke connotations with the working world and with the unbending, hard qualities of metal. With this poem, Becher seeks to reinforce, to unite and direct. The sentence structures reflect this: they are short and clear; the relative clauses in the second stanza help to define the object. The colon, commas, and exclamation mark guide the reader in pace and intonation.

In the second part of the poem, the speakers look back at the past. They remember protests in the German capital following the First World War:

Wir, die wir auf einmal erkannten,  
 Wofür vier Jahre lang in den Tod wir rannten – [...]
 Wir sind durch die Straßen Berlins im Sturmschritt gelaufen, [...]
 Kommt mit und marschiert in der grauen Kolonne,  
 Die die Straße überflutet in Zwölferreihn,  
 Voraus ein Matrose, der das Gewehr schwingt und singt:  
 ‘Diese Welt muß unser sein!’<sup>82</sup>

The large numbers of the protesters is expressed in numbers (‘in Zwölferreihn’) and also highlighted through metaphors of forces of nature, for example a storm (‘im Sturmschritt’) and a flood (streets are ‘überflutet’). At the same time, Becher suggests collective organisation and unity; given the storm imagery, the group after all marches orderly ‘in Zwölferreihn’. Becher uses verbs that convey energy and activism: ‘rannten’, ‘gelaufen’, ‘schwingt und singt’. The last three lines are emphasised in two ways: firstly, the collective voice, the ‘wir’ disappears and is replaced by the single voice of the ‘Matrose’. Secondly, the lines are written in the present tense; the past and present seem to merge. The contrasting image of a seaman swinging a rifle once again emphasises how the movement unites

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 313-314.

individuals from all spheres, but is also a reference to the Kiel mutiny of 1918.<sup>83</sup> The mutineer sings: 'Diese Welt muß unser sein!', a line from the *Internationale*.<sup>84</sup> The unofficial hymn of the working classes was first translated into German around 1901.<sup>85</sup> It is a song that was closely connected with Socialist, Marxist and Communist movements, so it was a reference that Becher's audience would have recognised immediately. Becher (again similarly to Schirach's 'Der Sturmabteilung') takes care to guide his audience and avoid confusion or alienation: the line from the *Internationale* is clearly marked by a colon and inverted commas. However, the literary character of the poem is compromised and the sphere of the political and the literary merge. The seaman becomes a propagandist.

Amidst the protests and riots, the speaker(s) remember(s) trucks speeding past, which had the word '*Bolschewik*'<sup>86</sup> smeared on them with chalk. The streets were lined with advertising columns that are plastered with posters:

Hysterisch glotzten die Litfaßsäulen:  
'Spartakus hat den "Vorwärts" besetzt!  
Bestialisch ermordet zweiundsechzig Polizisten!...  
Bürger!  
Zerfetzt, erschießt, zertrampelt die Spartakisten!'<sup>87</sup>

The poem shows the struggle of conflicting views and narratives, but it does so without referring to specific agents. In this way Becher perhaps reflects the confusing political situation of the time. It is not a clearly identifiable institution or authority but the advertising columns as a platform used to influence people's opinions that are gawking hysterically at the passer-by. The last four lines of this stanza are again separated from the main text of the poem by a colon and inverted commas. They are marked as political headlines or news through their simple sentence structures; each line ends in an exclamation mark, with the exception of line three, which has ellipsis points that further emphasise the magnitude of the events. The headlines refer to the January uprising of 1919, during which armed members of the proto-Communist Spartakusbund occupied the printing house used by the newspaper

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<sup>83</sup> See Robert Habeck, Andrea Paluch, and Frank Trendel, *1918 – Revolution in Kiel* (Heide: Boyens, 2008), in particular chapter 'Zehn Tage im November 1918', pp. 11-88; Eberhard Kolb and Dirk Schumann, *Die Weimarer Republik*, 8th edn. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013), pp. 5-6.

<sup>84</sup> See *Rotfront*, p. 5.

<sup>85</sup> See Walter Moßmann and Peter Schleuning, *Alte und neue politische Lieder. Entstehung und Gebrauch, Texte und Noten* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1978), pp. 176-177 and pp. 183-190.

<sup>86</sup> Becher, *Gesammelte Werke 3*, p. 314.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

*Vorwärts. Zentralorgan der Sozialdemokratie Deutschlands.* The government put a violent end to the occupation, as is reflected in the poem: the members of the Spartakusbund are in danger of being ‘Zerfetzt, ersch[ossen], zertrampelt’. The poem describes the executions of its leading members Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and the (false) reports that followed. Again, it remains unclear who was to blame for the rumours: ‘Wir lasen: “Auf – der – Flucht – –erschossen...”’<sup>88</sup>

The poem’s final part describes the uprising of the Communist party:

Da hat die Partei ihre Hand, ihre millionenhändige Hand  
Ausgespannt,  
Hat an die Fabrikture geschrieben  
Den Aufruf: ‘An alle Arbeiter in den Betrieben’ [...] |  
Ihre Gedanken hat sie in jedes Gehirn gebohrt,  
Ihre Losung wird geflüstert von Ohr zu Ohr –  
Und sie, die Partei, steht auf in der Versammlung und spricht:  
‘Bis hierher! Weiter nicht!’<sup>89</sup>

Similarly to the National Socialist idea of the Volkskörper, Becher conjures up the image of the party’s enormous ‘millionenhändige Hand’. There are, however, two crucial differences: firstly, it is not the shared body of the ‘Volk’, but that of a political party (the idea of the ‘Volk’ implies shared ethnicity, whereas a party relies on shared values and ideas). Secondly, the individual does not disappear within the party; whereas Schirach emphasises that the ‘Neue Front’ shares one heart and one fist, Becher makes sure to point out that the party is ‘millionenhändig’ and thus still recognisable as a joint project. In Schirach’s poems the focus usually lies on the heart as the seat of emotion, whereas Becher’s imagery is centred around the head, the mind: ‘Ihre Gedanken hat sie in jedes Gehirn gebohrt,/ Ihre Losung wird geflüstert von Ohr zu Ohr.’ The metaphors used here let the conversion of new members appear effective and memorable but also secretive. The idea of the party as a shared body is continued in the following lines, in which the personified party stands up during an assembly and speaks to those around it: ‘Bis hierher! Weiter nicht!’ With this Becher echoes a speech given by Rosa Luxemburg in 1913 at the Parteitag in Jena, in which she had protested against the increasing aggression of imperialism and had cried out: ‘Bis hierher und nicht weiter!’<sup>90</sup> It is emphasised in the poem that it is indeed the party that stands up during the assembly (‘sie,

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 321-322.

<sup>90</sup> Richard Wiegand, *‘Wer hat uns verraten ...’: die Sozialdemokratie in der Novemberrevolution* (Freiburg: Ahriman, 1999), pp. 30-31

die Partei, steht auf'). However, the parallels to Luxemburg's speech, a reference Becher's audience would have understood, are very clear and underlined grammatically: 'die Partei' could easily be changed for 'Rosa Luxemburg'. However, since she can no longer stand up and voice her warning, Becher seems to be saying, the party will have to do it in her place.

'Die Partei' shows many references to other texts associated with the Communist movement, which are designed – not unlike Schirach's 'Der Sturmabteilung' – to validate past efforts, to remember its struggles and victims, and to reinforce the party narrative of its own history. By including political statements, speeches, and slogans into his poem, Becher breaks the boundaries between the poetic and the political, but he also guides his reader through it, carefully avoiding moments of irritation or confusion. As political propagandists, both Communist and National Socialist writers have to rely on recognition; they want to create validation and give direction.<sup>91</sup> The authors create different speakers within the poem and thus blend the sphere of the poetic and the political, yet the different speakers' perspectives and wishes align rather than contradict or comment on each other.

The examples quoted in this chapter are not put forward as evidence that Schirach's poems should be considered modernist poetry. If the idea of alienation and interruption is crucial to our understanding of modernist literature, 'Der Sturmabteilung' surely cannot be considered an example of modernist poetry (especially if one applies a strict understanding of modernism as outlined in the introduction chapter). Rather, such examples confirm the structural similarities of poetic techniques in the poetry of National Socialist and Communist poetry and point out links to the non-political poetry of the time. This connection with modernist poetry further deconstructs the idea of National Socialist literature as simply a negative counterpart to modernist poetry.

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<sup>91</sup> See David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 9; Lars Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild : Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005), pp. 179-180.



## CHAPTER 7

### Praising the ‘German messiah’? Reconsidering perspectives on National Socialist religiosity

#### Secularisation theory and the political religion debate

Diese kleine Gedichtsammlung ist Adolf Hitler, dem Führer gewidmet, und zeigt ganz deutlich, daß ein starkes religiöses Empfinden und Wollen emporgekommen ist, das mit dem Vertrauen auf deutsches Volkstum eng vereinigt erscheint und darum über die schwersten Erlebnisse hinwegleiten und uns ‘retten’ kann.<sup>1</sup>

With these words Bartels welcomed his former protégé’s first collection of poems *Die Feier der neuen Front* in 1929. He was not the only one who commented on the religious qualities of Schirach’s poems. Right-wing journalist Adolf Dresler read them as an expression of ‘tiefe[r] Religiösität’.<sup>2</sup> After the release of the first edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* in 1931, Schlösser, newly appointed editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, celebrated Schirach’s poems as ‘religiös [...] weltanschaulich[e] Proklamation’.<sup>3</sup> Much later, during the Nuremberg trial, Schirach himself described them as ‘Gedichte christlichen Inhalts’.<sup>4</sup> As a defendant he would have been anxious to emphasise his roots in Christian tradition; nevertheless, his choice of words reflects earlier claims to religiosity. He repeatedly declared his belief in God during the Nazi period and, unlike other party protagonists, he remained a church member throughout his career.<sup>5</sup> However, often enough his political course as well as his writing raised concerns and criticism among church representatives. For instance, as already indicated in chapter three, the publication of the poem ‘Buße’ in the *Völkischer Beobachter* supplement *Der S.A.-Mann* on the eve of Reformation Day 1930 occasioned severe criticism from Protestant priest Johannes Jänicke.<sup>6</sup> The episode is mentioned in Matthias Klaus Braun’s study *Hitlers liebster Bürgermeister* (2012) and Hans-Christian Brandenburg’s *Die Geschichte der HJ* (1968). However, neither study mentions Jänicke specifically or explores what he objected to. Brandenburg simply notes: ‘[Das] Gedicht erregte berechtigten Ärger in den Kreisen der evangelischen Kirche’, adding ‘Das beanstandete Gedicht, [spiegelt] den

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<sup>1</sup> Bartels, ‘Baldur von Schirach’.

<sup>2</sup> Dresler, ‘Baldur von Schirach’.

<sup>3</sup> Schlösser, ‘Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts’.

<sup>4</sup> IMT, *Der Prozess XIII*, p. 449.

<sup>5</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> See Schirach, ‘Buße’; Matthias Klaus Braun, *Hitlers liebster Bürgermeister – Willy Liebel* (Neustadt: Schmidt, 2012), pp. 254-255.

verwaschenen Protestantismus Baldur von Schirachswider'.<sup>7</sup>

In the poem, the speaker suggests that repentance can be expressed and forgiveness granted without an act of prayer:

### Buße

Wir tragen leicht an schweren Sünden,  
Und sind trotz aller Frevel froh,  
Weil wir dem Besten uns verbünden  
Und unsre Seele suchen so.

Wenn tapfer unsre Fahnen wehten,  
Nicht Feind uns schreckte noch Schaffott,  
War unsre Buße ohne Beten,  
Und doch vergab die Schuld uns Gott.<sup>8</sup>

Jänicke protested: 'Christlich ist das nicht mehr, das merkt jedes Schulkind, das seinen Katechismus kennt, und nun schon gar nicht evangelisch! [...] Von der 'Busse ohne Beten', von der das Gedicht spricht, ist es nicht mehr weit zur Religion ohne Gott'<sup>9</sup> before going on: 'Ja, vor dem Einströmen solcher das Evangelium in sein Gegenteil verkehrender Gedanken behüte der Vater im Himmel unsere evangelische Kirche!' Schirach promptly responded in an open letter, dismissing Jänicke's interpretation:

[...] ich als Christ und Protestant [muss] Ihre Unterstellung, daß diese Verse antichristlich seien, entschieden zurückweisen. [...] Wenn ich von einer 'Busse ohne Beten' gesprochen habe, tat ich das darum, weil ich glaube, daß es zweierlei Gebete gibt. Ich kann zu Gott inbrünstig beten, indem ich nicht das Vaterunser spreche, sondern gegen den händlerischen Geist in einer Versammlung rede und dabei diejenigen anklage, die heute Träger dieses Geistes sind. Ich kann aber auch meine Hände falten und um Erlösung von den Händlern beten. Was ist christlicher?<sup>10</sup>

In a second public response, Jänicke agreed with Schirach that Christianity needed to be active in its pursuit of its values, but cautioned him to be more careful not to mistake the means for the ends: 'Sie werden doch nicht meinen, daß ein Kampf an sich schon deswegen eine 'heilige', 'christliche' Sache ist, weil er in begeisterter Hingabe und auch mit dem Einsatz

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<sup>7</sup> Brandenburg, *Die Geschichte der HJ*, p. 61; the following quotation *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Buße,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 20 (17 September 1930); Schirach, 'Buße' (October 1930).

<sup>9</sup> Johannes Jänicke, 'Buße ohne Beten,' *Mut und Kraft* 7, no. 11 (15 November 1930), p. 6; the following quotation *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Offener Brief an Pfarrer Jänicke,' *Mut und Kraft* 7, no. 12 (15 December 1930), p. 4.

des Lebens geführt wird.<sup>11</sup>

Many passages from Schirach's poems show that he was neither afraid to challenge church authority openly, nor did he balk at setting religious traditions or symbols in a politicised context. Ralf Czaplá suggests in his analysis of Schirach's poetry that he tried to imitate church songs,<sup>12</sup> although he remains vague as to whether this observation is founded on content or style. As Stowers points out, what exactly constitutes a religious tone is difficult to pinpoint.<sup>13</sup> Assuming that it means more than elevated, emotional language, a religious tone is certainly created wherever Schirach makes references to God, Christ or biblical narratives. An argument in favour of Czaplá's theory of Schirach trying to imitate church songs would be the indistinct use Schirach makes of words such as 'heilig', which he applies to the divine and the profane alike in his poems: in 'Auferstehung!', the speaker observes the 'heiligen Fahnen',<sup>14</sup> in 'Der Sturmabteilung' SA men carry the 'heilige Flamme',<sup>15</sup> in 'Die heiligen Namen' he mourns the fallen soldiers.<sup>16</sup> In 'Der Priester', the dividing lines are blurred further still when the 'Priester', who is in fact a farmer, 'gibt das Heilige', i.e. the seeds, 'aus seiner Hand'.<sup>17</sup> On other occasions, however, Schirach uses the word to indicate a connection to the clergy or church, for example in 'Deutung' to refer to the Vatican, 'heilig Rom'.<sup>18</sup> Generally, he seems to have used the term to characterise something as being important or dignified; the vocabulary served to elevate and emotionalise the object in question.

As regards Schirach's political conduct, his resolute attempts as Reichsjugendführer to incorporate denominational youth organisations into the Hitlerjugend met with resistance from Catholics in particular. His efforts also elicited a varied response in party circles. Whereas some celebrated his poems as testimony of a new belief – 'sie [die Gedichte] klingen wie [...] Gebete eines neuen Glaubens'<sup>19</sup> – others remained sceptical. In his memoirs, Hitler's advisor Otto Wagener recalls a discussion between Hitler and Gauleiter Hans Schemm

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<sup>11</sup> Johannes Jänicke, 'Antwortschreiben an Herrn Baldur von Schirach,' *Mut und Kraft* 7, no. 12 (15 December 1930), pp. 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> See Czaplá, 'Erlösung im Zeichen', p. 321.

<sup>13</sup> See Stanley Stowers, 'The Concepts of "Religion", "Political Religion" and the Study of Nazism,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007): 9–24, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Schirach, 'Auferstehung!'

<sup>15</sup> Schirach, 'Der Sturmabteilung,' (no. 6, February 1927).

<sup>16</sup> See Schirach, *FfF*, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Dresler, 'Baldur von Schirach'.

regarding Schirach's support of pagan influences, of 'Old Germanic festivals',<sup>20</sup> in the Hitlerjugend, during which Schemm voiced his concern that 'the youth leaders must not fall into the error of wanting to turn this into a religion'.<sup>21</sup> Post-1945 analysis of Schirach's poetry generally agrees that Schemm's concerns were justified. Gerhard Hay, Ralf Czapla and Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch argue that Schirach consciously adopted and manipulated Christian symbols and traditions for political ends, stylising the swastika flag to take the place of the Christian cross, and offering Hitler, in his new role as mediator between heaven and earth, as German messiah.<sup>22</sup> Hay adds that Schirach also introduced pagan elements in order to create a German doctrine of salvation founded on both pseudo-Germanic myths as well as Christian rituals.<sup>23</sup> Richard Steigmann-Gall remarked in his 2003 study *The Holy Reich* that Schirach had been 'widely regarded as one of the main exponents of an anti-Christian paganism within the Nazi Party'.<sup>24</sup> However, as he rightly points out, this aspect needs reconsideration or at least requires a more refined view. In fact, textual analysis of Schirach's poems shows much more use of Christian symbolism than allusions to pagan traditions and, as will be demonstrated, his reputation as a paganist seems to have been grounded in his activities as Reichsjugendführer rather than in his writing. Moreover, earlier analysis was often based on simplified assumptions about the relationship between the church and the National Socialist regime. New evidence has strengthened the call for a more differentiated perspective, which promises to lead to a more open engagement with church history on the one hand as well as Nazi literature and culture on the other. In Schirach's particular case, it can shed new light on his role in the Nazi confrontation with or exploration of questions of belief. In this respect, research on Schirach has an important contribution to make to more general recent conclusions that have been drawn regarding Nazism as a cultural and ideological movement.

Since the 1990s, the topic of Nazism and religion has been hotly debated and many scholars have turned their attention once again to the relationship between the church and the National Socialist regime.<sup>25</sup> Previously, research had tended to focus on the persecution

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<sup>20</sup> Henry Ashby Turner, ed., *Hitler. Memoirs of a Confidant* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985), p. 277.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>22</sup> See Hay, 'Religiöser Pseudokult', p. 859 and p. 862. Czapla, 'Erlösung im Zeichen', pp. 319-326. Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch, *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd edn. (Munich: Fink, 2002), pp. 167- 171.

<sup>23</sup> See Hay, 'Religiöser Pseudokult', p. 859 and p. 862.

<sup>24</sup> Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, p. 142.

<sup>25</sup> See for instance Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*; Michael Ley and Julius H. Schoeps, eds., *Der Nationalsozialismus als politische Religion* (Bodenheim: Philo, 1995); Hans Maier and Michael Schäfer, eds., *'Totalitarismus' und 'politische Religionen': Konzepte des Diktaturvergleichs 1-2* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996-

of the churches under the regime or on examples of resistance such as the Protestant pastor Martin Niemöller, who protested publicly against the regime's inhumanity, or even more famously the Catholic Archbishop Clemens von Galen and his sermon against the Nazis' programme of euthanasia.<sup>26</sup> Cultural historians not only considered National Socialist ideology to have been essentially opposed to Christianity, but also held the regime's claim to totality to have been incompatible with the church's firm foothold in the population. However, over the past three decades a number of studies have shown the relationship to be closer and also more ambivalent than previously acknowledged. These studies unearthed evidence of clergy members who took a positive stance towards and fostered support for National Socialism both during and before the Third Reich. In this context the policies and actions of the Vatican have come under close scrutiny, as well as the proximity of the Protestant church to the Nazi regime. Often Christian clergy – these studies show – held views similar to those of the National Socialists in many respects, for example anti-Marxism, anti-Liberalism, anti-feminism and against homosexuality, sometimes even antisemitism.<sup>27</sup> These new findings have led to renewed interest in the position of the National Socialist leadership as regards religion. Two strands have emerged; the first, represented for example by Ian Kershaw, Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch and Ernst Piper,<sup>28</sup> insists on the movement's anti-Christian stance, although it acknowledges instances of co-operation and collaboration between the churches and National Socialism. It argues that, following the Nietzschian 'death of God',

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1997); Manfred Gailus, *Protestantismus und Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Durchdringung des protestantischen Sozialmilieus in Berlin* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001); Klaus Hildebrand, ed., *Zwischen Politik und Religion: Studien zur Entstehung, Existenz und Wirkung des Totalitarismus* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003); Klaus Vondung, *Deutsche Wege zur Erlösung: Formen des Religiösen im Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Fink, 2013); Olaf Blaschke, *Die Kirchen und der Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> For example J.S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968); Beate Ruhm von Oppen, *Religion and Resistance to Nazism* (Princeton: UP, 1971); Klemens von Klemperer, 'Glaube, Religion, Kirche und der deutsche Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus,' *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 28, no. 3 (1980): 293–309.

<sup>27</sup> See Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, p. 3; Manfred Gailus, "'Nationalsozialistische Christen" und "christliche Nationalsozialisten". Anmerkungen zur Vielfalt synkretistischer Gläubigkeiten im "Dritten Reich," in *Nationalprotestantische Mentalitäten. Konturen, Entwicklungslinien und Umbrüche eines Weltbildes*, eds. Manfred Gailus and Hartmut Lehmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 223–262; John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope. The Secret History of Pius XII* (London: Viking, 1999); Björn Mensing, *Pfarrer und Nationalsozialismus: Geschichte einer Verstrickung am Beispiel der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Ernst Klee, *'Die SA Jesu Christi': die Kirchen im Banne Hitlers* (Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 1989); Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1996).

<sup>28</sup> See Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*; Klaus Vondung, 'National Socialism as a Political Religion: Potentials and Limits of an Analytical Concept,' *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6, no. 1 (2005): 87–95.

the party attempted to offer Nazi ideology as a new political religion by adapting Christian traditions and rituals in ceremonies and other occasions of self-representation. Moreover, National Socialism introduced its own holidays, rites and festivals, creating a cult that was to be considered of equal significance to Christian tradition or even to replace it, with, for example, 'Morgenfeier' replacing Sunday services.<sup>29</sup> These researchers draw attention to the fact that, while the Nazis borrowed from Christian vocabulary and traditions, they also took inspiration from pagan traditions, which ultimately resulted in a twisted and corrupted substitute religion with a strong racial bent. They tried either to attract those searching for spiritual commitment or else to draw pious Christians away from their belief and to convert them into 'German Christians', in order to create a community willing to follow its leader unconditionally and uncritically, if needs be to death. In the words of Minister of propaganda Joseph Goebbels:

Sie werden niemals Millionen von Menschen finden, die für ein Buch ihr Leben lassen. Sie werden niemals Millionen von Menschen finden, die für ein Wirtschaftsprogramm ihr Leben lassen. Aber Millionen von Menschen werden einmal bereit sein, für ein Evangelium zu fallen, und unsere Bewegung wird immer mehr zum Evangelium.<sup>30</sup>

According to the historians who espouse this approach, this new religion fulfilled the same function as traditional Christianity, that is to say, it satisfied people's need to believe – a longing the Nazis quickly learned to use for their own ends. Only the religious form remained, but authentic Christian content was replaced by political content.<sup>31</sup>

Steigmann-Gall challenges this approach and counters that, based on his findings, National Socialism cannot be considered a political religion since the Christian content largely remained. Given the kind of co-operation and reciprocity we now know existed between the church and state institutions in the Third Reich, how can there have been, Steigmann-Gall asks, a pro-Nazi element in German Christianity without there having been a pro-Christian element in National Socialism?<sup>32</sup> Most Nazi protagonists, he points out – not least Hitler himself – rejected the idea of a new 'German religion'; some out of genuinely felt identification with Christianity, others out of pragmatism because they feared that the

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<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Goebbels, 'Erkenntnis und Propaganda. Rede vom 9. Januar 1928,' in *Signale der neuen Zeit. 25 Ausgewählte Reden von Dr. Joseph Goebbels*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Eher, 1934), pp. 44-45.

<sup>31</sup> See for example Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 252 and p. 256.

<sup>32</sup> See Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, p. 5.

churches' hold was too strong. An overwhelming number of the Nazi elite understood their role to be that of upholding Christian tradition, as demonstrated by their continual use of biblical references and insistence that they were acting in accordance with Christian principles: they claimed to espouse Christian values such as the sanctity of the family, displayed positive engagement with Jesus and found 'a place for him in their world views'.<sup>33</sup> To their way of thinking, they also upheld the social ethics of sacrifice and charity, although these were of course confined to the German Volksgemeinschaft and excluded those deemed 'racially unfit'. Steigmann-Gall argues that the majority of the Nazi elite demonstrated their belief that Christianity was 'deeply relevant to Nazi ideology'<sup>34</sup> and that the rejection of Christianity, where found, was often partial and ambiguous. Therefore, National Socialism, he contends, was not 'the result of a 'Death of God' in secularised society, but rather a radicalised and singularly horrific attempt to preserve God *against* secularised society'.<sup>35</sup>

Since its publication, *The Holy Reich* has been hotly debated. Richard J. Evans welcomed the study as 'a way forward'<sup>36</sup> out of the 'political religion' debate and Milan Babik applauded it as an 'important corrective'<sup>37</sup> to long-held convictions of Nazism as paganism. However, criticism has been directed at Steigmann-Gall's selection and handling of source material as well as the way in which he interprets his findings. More generally, the immensely broad scale of his work has given rise to doubt, as well as the risk he runs of accepting the word of Nazi leaders at face value.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Doris L. Bergen, 'Nazism and Christianity: Partners and Rivals? A Response to Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007): 25–33, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, p. 266.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Richard J. Evans, 'Nazism, Christianity and Political Religion: A Debate,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007): 5–7, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Milan Babik, 'Nazism as a Secular Religion,' *History and Theory* 45, no. 3 (2006): 375–396, p. 382.

<sup>38</sup> For a brief overview, see Evans, 'Nazism, Christianity'; Babik, 'Nazism as a Secular Religion'. Manfred Gailus launched severe criticism against *The Holy Reich*, accusing Steigmann-Gall of faulty analyses and methodology as well as omission of core texts and crucial sources in his subject area, inaccuracies and exaggerations of findings. See Manfred Gailus, 'A Strange Obsession with Christianity: A Critical Comment on Richard Steigmann-Gall's *The Holy Reich*,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007): 35–46. Ernst Piper took issue in particular with his discussion of Alfred Rosenberg's and Hitler's conceptions of religion. See Ernst Piper, 'Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007): 47–57. Doris L. Bergen agreed with Gailus and Piper that Steigmann-Gall's study is prone to accept the Nazi leaders' words at face value. However, she argued that it rightly emphasises the need to recognise the proximity of the National Socialist regime to the church and praised *The Holy Reich* for its new approach. Furthermore, she pointed out some essential aspects in support of Steigmann-Gall's arguments. Firstly, the importance of ritual for the institutionalisation of religious identity. Secondly, the value of church membership statistics which do not show

However, in light of the new evidence that has emerged concerning the relationship between the churches and the National Socialist regime, Steigmann-Gall's impetus to re-examine established ideas and positions remains valid. Without ignoring the deficiencies of his study, his approach can be useful when enquiring into an individual's religious metamorphoses: it can offer, as Steigmann-Gall himself suggests, an additional layer of interpretation rather than a contradiction to earlier analyses.<sup>39</sup>

In the context of this debate, Stanley Stowers draws attention to the question of terminology and the underlying assumptions inherent in the terms used. For example, he points out that employing phrases such as 'pseudo-religious' or 'substitute religion' implies or even emphasises that these concepts are in opposition to genuine Christianity. On the one hand, this is problematic because it impedes or delays acknowledgement of the need for scholarly debate. On the other, the terms also suggest that piety or religiosity is a concept that can easily be defined. The definition of what is considered genuinely Christian or pious is subject to change, since it is dependent on who is in authority to make this decision. Research has failed to deliver a clear, fully developed and consistent definition of religion, Stowers claims.<sup>40</sup> Its content, he argues, is too often characterised as 'an ineffable experience or an incomprehensible pre-rational something or social structure that is then expressed in a uniquely self-referential symbolic form'<sup>41</sup> and definitions thereby merely reproduce an anti-Enlightenment, Romantic understanding of religion that does not help to clarify, but instead further mystifies its object. Stowers acknowledges that this Romantic understanding of the concept of religion was prevalent in the Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic and was indeed present in Nazi rhetoric.<sup>42</sup> However, he rightly points out that characterising a language or tone as religious – one of the arguments most often made in the debate around National Socialism and religion – has to amount to more than examples of sheer emotionality, irrationality or exaltation, since this definition once again precludes the possibility of content logic existing at all in Nazi religiosity.<sup>43</sup>

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a massive decline during the Third Reich. Thirdly, the dynamics created by anti-Christian hostility, which, according to Bergen, galvanised Catholics in particular, haunted as they were by 'Kulturkampf' memories, into a defensive position, leaving them eager to prove themselves as reliable anti-Jewish partners. See Bergen, 'Nazism and Christianity'.

<sup>39</sup> See Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> See Stowers, 'The Concepts of "Religion"', pp. 10-12.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.



Babik's input in this debate may not fully reconcile the contradictory evidence brought forward by the opposing sides, but it can at least provide a solution to the question of terminology. He suggests that National Socialism *can* be considered a secular religion despite its proximity to Christianity, since secularisation does not necessarily pre-suppose de-Christianisation.<sup>44</sup> With reference to Karl Löwith's 1949 secularisation theory, Babik defines this process as the transition from Christian Salvationism to modern progressivism, or more precisely, as the process of orienting transcendental eschatology to the immanent world. Using the example of the medieval mystic and theologian Joachim of Fiore and his influence on Augustinian eschatology, he demonstrates that the process of secularisation began well before the onset of modernity and was by no means incommensurable with an open and self-aware Christianity. On the contrary, since Joachim, secularisation has been part of Protestant millennialism. In contrast to Augustine's idea of a transcendent *Civitas Dei*, Joachim claimed that The Book of Revelations predicts a Third Age or era in the immanent world. This new epoch of peace and happiness will begin, not at a distant unknown point in the future, but in 1260 exactly. He further suggested that those who have studied the Bible will be able to determine the day of the apocalypse and prepare themselves. Joachim, and herein lies the importance of his influence on Protestant tradition, therefore not only suggested that the *Civitas Dei* can actually be an achievable society in the immanent world, but also that it can be shaped by human progress instead of being dependent on (Augustinian) divine providence.<sup>45</sup> If Steigmann-Gall can prove, Babik argues, that the content of the Nazi narrative of progress culminating in the Third Reich was either identical with or else a continuation of Protestant millennialism, it can be described as a secularised eschatology.<sup>46</sup>

A second point Babik raises against the political religion theory concerns the content-form division on which it rests. Here he makes a more convincing case than Stowers, whose main point of criticism lies in the difficulty of determining what would fall into the category of an exclusively religious form.<sup>47</sup> Babik approaches the issue from a different perspective. He argues that since form implicitly communicates content, the distinction between form and content is not valid. Secularisation theory states that the idea of world history being guided

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<sup>44</sup> See Babik, 'Nazism as a Secular Religion', pp. 375-376.

<sup>45</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 388-389.

<sup>46</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 394-395.

<sup>47</sup> See Stowers, 'The Concepts of "Religion"', p. 17.

by divine providence has been superseded by an understanding of world history as progress through which mankind is striving to establish an ideal society in this world. It therefore claims that the idea of mankind's ultimate goal as the transcendental (heaven) has been shifted to the immanent world (the social utopia of an ideal society). Babik points out that this secularised point of view still shares the linear understanding of time introduced by Christian eschatology. As a model of contrast he points to pre-Christian circular interpretations of history prevalent in Roman or Greek society.<sup>48</sup> Since the linear understanding of history has survived into the modern age, all western modern philosophies of history have been influenced by Christian eschatology.<sup>49</sup> Rounding up this theoretical excursion, one of the drawbacks of Babik's use of the term secularisation is that it does not directly address the social and cultural changes around 1900 that Bärtsch and others are concerned with: had there been a decline or loss of Christian piety as a binding force in society?

The question therefore remains as to whether Christian eschatology and tradition were continued in Nazi ideology. If they were, to what extent and how did this differ from institutionalised Christianity? The question cannot be whether or not their 'content' was Christian, but rather the extent to which this was a different idea of Christianity, one that broke with the churches' and the older generation's idea of Christianity. The virtue of Babik's and Stower's theorising of religion is that they increase awareness of the question of terminology, in particular in the case of categorisations such as 'pseudo-' or 'substitute religion'. Opposing these terms does not mean denying the difference between the Nazi conception(s) of religion and institutionalised Christianity. It means avoiding emphasis on its (supposedly) counterfeit nature. As Steigmann-Gall, Evans and Stower point out, we need to start taking the Nazis' own claims about religion seriously if we are to understand their appeal and the place they held in German cultural history.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Babik in particular provides terminology to work with. By drawing attention to the secularisation debate, he offers an alternative that helps us to avoid the trap of the content-form division underlying the term political religion.

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<sup>48</sup> See Babik, 'Nazism as a Secular Religion', p. 387.

<sup>49</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 389-390.

<sup>50</sup> See Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, pp., 265-267; Evans, 'Nazism, Christianity', p. 7; Stowers, 'The Concepts of "Religion"', pp. 16-17.

## Rejecting the church's 'alte Bahnen'

Steigmann-Gall suggests that Schirach, like many other party leaders, directed his hostility against the church as an institution rather than against Christian belief. Although he briefly mentions one of Schirach's poems, 'Christus', his conclusions are largely founded on Schirach's hostile conduct as Reichsjugendführer.<sup>51</sup> As I have pointed out before, although the poems and their propaganda value were in line with and helped to reinforce party ideology after 1933, it should not be forgotten that the vast majority had been written and published by the end of 1931 – a stage during which not only Schirach himself, but the entire movement was still in the process of establishing itself. Therefore, there is an extent to which the genesis of his poetic work needs to be seen separately from his actions as Reichsjugendführer. Schirach's poems include numerous references to Christian tradition and show obvious engagement with religion that in his case cannot be reduced to being the result or remnant of a strict Christian upbringing. There is no evidence of his parents having been particularly devout. On the contrary, both of them left the Protestant church in the late 1920s.<sup>52</sup>

According to Steigmann-Gall, part of the Nazis' conflict with the church was founded on their wish to overcome the religious divide between Catholic and Protestant faith.<sup>53</sup> Even though this issue was to become one of the cornerstones of Schirach's political rhetoric,<sup>54</sup> in his poetry it is addressed explicitly only once. In 'Deutung', first published in 1930 and included in both versions of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1931, 1933), the speaker reflects: 'Gott ist [...] Wittenberg und heilig Rom'.<sup>55</sup> The tone is merely observant; he does not appear to identify personally with either of them. By contrast, in 'Berglied', which was first published in 1931, Schirach employs rhetoric closely associated with a specific confessional tradition. The language used in the poem is a reflection on the *Canticle of the sun*, composed by Francis of Assisi in 1225 – written in praise of God through praise of His creation. The Franciscan

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<sup>51</sup> See Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, p. 143.

<sup>52</sup> Carl von Schirach and his wife left the church in 1927. See BArch/Personalakten Carl von Schirach/Ergänzungsfragebogen. According to the Stadtarchiv Wiesbaden at the time of her death in 1942 Emma von Schirach was registered as 'gottgläubig', a classification introduced by the Reichsinnenministerium in 1936, indicating the person in question had turned away from the official church, but had not lost faith. See Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, pp. 281-283.

<sup>53</sup> See Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, in particular the chapter 'Above the confessions', pp. 51-85.

<sup>54</sup> See Georg Kretschmar, *Dokumente zur Kirchenpolitik des Dritten Reiches I* (Munich: Kaiser, 1971), pp. 122-123 and pp. 182-183; Johann Neuhäusler, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz* (Munich: Katholische Kirche Bayerns, 1946), p. 169; Baldur von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend. Idee und Gestalt* (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte, 1934), pp. 40-45.

<sup>55</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 53.

tradition is part of Catholicism, albeit pre-Reformation, and follows the doctrine that authentic Christianity must live life according to the Gospel alone. Although the order gained papal approval it remained largely independent from the hierarchial structures of the Catholic Church. The 'Berglied' strongly resembles the Canticle's tone and choice of words: the speaker expresses a filial relationship with his 'Bruder Berg'<sup>56</sup> and also invokes cosmic forces and elements such as the 'hoher Himmel' and 'Stern an Stern', as well as the 'Eiswind'. The speaker praises the strength and grandeur of the mountains as a sign of 'formgewordner Schöpferwille'; similarly, the speaker in the Canticle praises the miracles of creation.<sup>57</sup> However, whereas the Canticle, written in the last year of Francis' life while he was suffering from serious illness and was almost blind, ends by praising 'Bruder Tod',<sup>58</sup> the speaker of the 'Berglied' focuses on life in this world and what he intends to accomplish: 'Segne mich, ich will ans Werk!' Although 'Berglied' owes a lot to the Canticle both in tone and imagery, Schirach's readers within the party interestingly did not seem to have picked up on the references. Indeed, Schösser referred to it as a 'reine[s] Stimmungsgedicht'.<sup>59</sup>

Schirach's poems do not contain an open rejection of Christianity, although Steigmann-Gall is certainly correct in saying that he was hostile towards the church as an institution. He claimed that God could no longer be reached by following established religious tradition – for example, in the two published versions of the following poem. The first is the better-known version included in *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*; the second is an earlier version, published only once in Ziegler's *Der Nationalsozialist* in 1928 and simply entitled 'Gott'.

Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle

Nicht in alten Bahnen  
ist Gott.  
Du kannst ihn ahnen,  
wo die Fahnen  
des Glaubens wehn: am Schafott.

Dort, wo die Teufel rufen:

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 43; the following quotations *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> See Ilia Delio, "'The Canticle of Brother Sun": A Song of Christ Mysticism,' *Franciscan Studies* 52 (1992): 1–22, p. 1 and pp. 15–16.

<sup>58</sup> *Der Sonnengesang des Heiligen Franz von Assisi*, 7th edn. (Dresden: Jess, 1948), p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> Schösser, 'Dichtung eines neuen Geschlechts'.

'Schwör' ab, Hund, oder falle!  
Was sie auch Dome schufen,  
uns sind Altar die Stufen  
der Feldherrnhalle.

Gott

Nicht in euren alten Bahnen  
glaube ich den großen Gott!  
Dort allein kann ich ihn ahnen  
wo für ihres Glaubens Fahnen  
Menschen starben am Schafott.  
Gott ist, wo die Teufel rufen:  
'Schwör 'es ab, Hund, oder falle' --  
Was sie auch für Dome schufen,  
mein Altar steht an den Stufen  
jener Münchner Feldherrnhalle...<sup>60</sup>

One of Schirach's most widely known poems, it was included in his main anthologies, *Die Feier der neuen Front* (1929), *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1933) and later also in *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940). It was printed a second time in Ziegler's *Der Nationalsozialist* in November 1929, but not picked up by other National Socialist journals. After the party's rise to power, the poem's first stanza was recommended as a theme for the ceremonial consecration of the flags and pennants, although the two last words ('am Schafott') were omitted. 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle' was also printed in Karl Hunger and Theodor Langenmaier's *Kurze Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung* (1940).

Between the poem's first publication in July 1928 and the publication of *Die Feier der neuen Front* in February 1929, Schirach made a number of significant changes. These have been ignored in Koontz's and Hay's previous discussions of the poem. Koontz's analysis of the poem only marginally touches on the question of religious belief and is instead focused on 'the exaltations of spiritual devotion to Nazism as well as death [that] merge in the poem'.<sup>61</sup> Hay quotes the poem as evidence that Schirach suggests a new (German) religion with a new God – 'in dem Gedicht 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle zu München' [hat]

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<sup>60</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Gott,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 5, no. 29 (21 July 1928); Baldur von Schirach, 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 6, no. 45 (November 1929); Schirach, *FNF*, p. 25; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 32; Schirach, *FiF*, p. 20; Hunger and Langenmaier, *Kurze Geschichte*, p. 247.

<sup>61</sup> See Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 112-115.

dieser neue Gott eine neue Heimstatt gefunden<sup>62</sup> – but does not analyse it further. The changes Schirach makes to the earlier version are interesting as evidence firstly that his poems indeed underwent revisions to enhance their rhetorical effectiveness and secondly, that this poem at least shows significant parallels with Schirach's own (public) pre-1933 confessions of religious belief.

The regular iamabic tetrameter of the earlier version is given up; in its later form the poem becomes more concise, the lines are pared down to its essential message to the point that they become almost reminiscent of the Telegrammstil of Expressionism, although Schirach does not break up their grammatical structures.<sup>63</sup> The title undergoes a conversion too, but to the opposite effect: originally short and concise, it becomes lengthy and cumbersome, initially masking its overtly religious character. The emphasis is shifted to a specific date and location that was fundamental to the National Socialist movement. A similar tendency to include specific places and dates can be found in Communist literature of the time, for example Becher's 'Bülowplatz 1931' and 'Moskau Oktober 1927', as well as exaggeratedly lengthy titles such as Becher's 'Ballade von Karl Schmidt aus der grauen Stadt, der am Weihnachtsabend die Stadt der Reichen besuchen ging'.<sup>64</sup>

The change of personal pronouns, from singular 'mein Altar' to de-individualised plural 'uns sind Altar', from self-referential 'kann ich ihn ahnen' to addressing the reader 'Du kannst ihn ahnen', as well as the loss of pronouns in the lines 'in euren alten Bahnen' and 'glaube ich den großen Gott', marks a shift of focus: the general validity of the ideas expressed is emphasised rather than an individual speaker's personal belief. However, the message to the reader – although intensified by these changes – remains the same: traditional locations for acts of faith are abandoned, and the place of the altar is taken by the Feldherrnhalle in Munich, site of the infamous Beer Hall Putsch in November 1923, the confrontation between Hitler's supporters and the police. The shortening of the last line in the latter version of the poem makes the 'Feldherrnhalle' stand out even more prominently. The changes Schirach made to the punctuation of the poem – adding a colon in the last line of the first stanza, replacing the dashes in the second line of the second stanza with an exclamation mark and removing the ellipsis points in the last line of the second stanza – add to its energetic and

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<sup>62</sup> Hay, 'Religiöser Pseudokult', p. 858.

<sup>63</sup> See Fähnders, *Avantgarde und Moderne*, p. 116.

<sup>64</sup> See Becher, *Gesammelte Werke 3*, pp. 334, 120, 308.

forceful tone.

The opening lines of the later version, 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle' might also be read as Schirach's attempt to echo the opening lines of Hölderlin's famous poem 'Patmos' (1803):

Nah ist  
Und schwer zu fassen der Gott. Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst  
Das Rettende auch.

Schirach imitates the enjambments but inverts the form of Hölderlin's poem: 'Patmos' begins with a short line of two syllables followed by longer line of seven syllables whereas 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle' opens with a longer line of six syllables followed by short line of syllables. In both poems 'Gott' is placed prominently at the end of the second line, which marks at the same time the end of the first syntactical element. The speaker in 'Patmos' feels emotionally close to God but at the same time, God appears elusive: 'Nah ist/ Und schwer zu fassen der Gott.' This sentiment is echoed (in a simplified form) in Schirach's poem: 'du kannst ihn ahnen.' Schirach also repeats (and again inverts) the themes of danger and salvation. Both coincide in Hölderlin's poem: 'Wo aber Gefahr ist/ wächst das Rettende auch.' In 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle', the 'Fahnen des Glaubens' promise 'Rett[ung]', since it is in their presence that the speaker feels close to God. However, they also coincide with danger; they fly high 'am Schafott'. Schirach's recourse to Hölderlin's poem was however not commented on by either his followers or indeed by Jänicke.

The poem's focal point is the demonstration of unwavering belief in the righteousness of the cause even when facing death. Parallels are drawn between the fallen putschists and (Christian) martyrs: the speaker transfigures the events into an 'Inquisitorial auto-da-fe scene',<sup>65</sup> in which those put to the test are given an opportunity to recant and remain unharmed. Their refusal to do so proves them to be true believers.<sup>66</sup> It is in this moment of faith, the speaker notes, that God truly reveals himself. This notion was consistent with Schirach's own belief as declared in his letter to Jänicke: '[...] weder vor Feind noch Schafott Furcht [empfinden] [...] ist doch ein christliches Bekenntnis, wie man es deutlicher gar nicht ausdrücken kann. Denn: Christus lehrte uns durch sein Beispiel, daß Gott von uns fordert,

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<sup>65</sup> Koontz, *The Public Polemic*, p. 113.

<sup>66</sup> See *ibid.* pp. 113-114.

wir sollen unserer Idee ohne Furcht vor Tod und Teufel bis zum bitteren Ende dienen.<sup>67</sup>

This concentration on belief as action was by no means understood as a lack of religiosity by Schirach's followers. The educationist Karl Graucob commented:

Ihre [Schirachs Gedichte] Religiösität ist deutlich spürbar aus dem großen völkischen Erleben der Gegenwart hervorgewachsen; [...] sie sucht ihren Pfad mühsam und kämpferisch abseits vom herkömmlichen Wege der Kirchen: 'Nicht in alten Bahnen ist Gott.' Es ist eine undogmatische, zutiefst auch auf bildhaften Mythos verzichtende Religion der Tat, die mit dem Ethos eine so innige Verschmelzung eingegangen ist, daß man nicht sagen kann, wo das eine aufhört und das andere beginnt.<sup>68</sup>

Religion, Graucob argues, is no longer a model through which to understand the world, its origins and its ultimate destiny. Instead its function is to instil a kind of sanctified activism ('Religion der Tat') in its believers. Following the quotation, Graucob prints 'Durch Taten!', one of Schirach's shortest and most formulaic poems and also, if the frequency of its appearance in various National Socialist journals is an acceptable indicator, one of his most popular ones. In the poem, the speaker rejects the reflective pursuit of spiritual maturity and instead advocates plunging into battlefield action.<sup>69</sup>

Durch Taten!

Ihr sollt brennen!  
Nicht wie Asketen,  
die in Gebeten  
sich bekennen,

nein! Wie Soldaten,  
die tief in Gräben,  
Gebete leben  
durch ihre Taten!<sup>70</sup>

First published in Schirach's *Die Feier der neuen Front* (1929), 'Durch Taten!' was included in

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<sup>67</sup> Schirach, 'Offener Brief'.

<sup>68</sup> Karl Graucob, *Kindliches und jugendliches Seelenleben in deutscher Dichtung* (Erfurt: Stenger, 1936), p. 47.

<sup>69</sup> 'Durch Taten!' is quoted in Koontz's 2004 study as an example of Schirach's propagation of activism over contemplation: 'The Reich Youth Leader implored his young readers to reject contemplation and rationality with "Through Deeds!"' See Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 101. It is not analysed further.

<sup>70</sup> Schirach, *FNF*, p. 8; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 23; Schirach, *FiF*, p. 10; 'Baldur v. Schirachs Werk: 'Die Hitlerjugend, Idee und Gestalt,' *Wille und Macht* (November 15, 1934); Böhme, *Rufe in das Reich*, p. 268; Vesper, *Die Ernte der Gegenwart*, p. 370; Baldur von Schirach, 'Ihr sollt brennen!', *Völkischer Beobachter* (Wiener Ausgabe) (July 12, 1941); *Der unbekannte S.A. Mann*, p. 56; Carl Hannemann, Walter Rein, and Hans Lang, eds., *Lobeda. Singebuch für Frauenchor* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1936).



*Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1933), *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940) and the collaborative collection *Der Unbekannte S.A. Mann* (1930). The poem gained more popularity after 1933 and in particular after the outbreak of the Second World War. It was printed in Schirach's *Wille und Macht* in November 1934, in the collections of contemporary poetry *Rufe in das Reich* (1934), in *Ernte der Gegenwart* (1940) and in the Vienna edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* in July 1941. 'Durch Taten!' was also put to music and included in *Lobeda. Singebuch für Frauenchor* (1936). Its propaganda value lay in its activist message, captured in concise lines and emotionally charged language that can easily be remembered. The rhyming pattern correlates with the number of syllables; the metre is highly symmetrical. Both stanzas open with an exclamation to a very dynamic, energetic effect, expressing confidence. The title is picked up again in the last line, creating a frame for the poem and at the same time reinforcing its central message.

The exclamation 'Ihr sollt brennen' follows the pattern of the ten commandments. Using biblical rhetoric as a linguistic (and perhaps cultural) model for his poetry, Schirach suggests that he introduces a new commandment to be followed. However, the biblical 'du sollst nicht' is turned into an affirmative 'du sollst', again stylising his belief into a resolute and active 'Religion der Tat', in which prayers are *lived* rather than said. This first line could at best be understood as a celebration of unrestrained ardour, albeit with an undeniable self-destructive undertone; at worst as a wishful reflection on the fate of many soldiers who had died in the trenches during the First World War. However, even if they neglect to say their prayers every day, the speaker asserts, this does not lead them away from God, but rather their 'burning' activism brings them closer. An act of affirmation no longer requires the invocation of God, but instead means choosing action over contemplation, battle over conventional prayer, because battle *becomes* a prayer. Both 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle' and 'Durch Taten!' are highly anti-clerical in the sense that they suggest that traditions and symbols central to Christian ceremonies (for example the altar, ritual of prayer, the recital of the ten commandments during mass) have been ousted by an active expression of devotion. However, the diction used is undeniably indebted to Christian biblical tradition.

Schirach saw this new devotion consolidated in the concept of Positive Christianity: 'Wir Nationalsozialisten stehn auf dem Grundsatz positiven Christentums', as he declared in his letter to Jänicke. With this remark Schirach was referring to article 24 of the party

programme, which stated:

Wir fordern die Freiheit aller religiösen Bekenntnisse im Staat, soweit sie nicht dessen Bestand gefährden oder gegen das Sittlichkeits- und Moralgefühl der germanischen Rasse verstoßen. Die Partei als solche vertritt den Standpunkt eines positiven Christentums, ohne sich konfessionell an ein bestimmtes Bekenntnis zu binden. Sie bekämpft den jüdisch-materialistischen Geist in uns und außer uns und ist überzeugt, daß eine dauernde Genesung unseres Volkes nur erfolgen kann von innen heraus auf der Grundlage: Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz.<sup>71</sup>

Positive Christianity is understood to have been the unsuccessful attempt of a movement within the party to offer the German people a national Christian alternative to the Protestant or Catholic church. The extent to which Positive Christianity represented a cohesive construct has been subject to debate. Whereas Steigmann-Gall claims that it does represent a type of Christianity with an inner logic, others, for example Samuel Koehne, argue that it was a highly ambiguous concept and that neither 1930s theologians nor the party's ideological arbiters such as Rosenberg, Gottfried Feder or Hitler could agree on its exact elements.<sup>72</sup>

In the material by Schirach currently available, several mentions of Positive Christianity can be found. For example in 1930, in a personal letter to his editor, he refers to Rosenberg's espousal of Positive Christianity as evidence of his affiliation to Christianity in general.<sup>73</sup> In his statement during the Nuremberg trials he remarked: 'Ich möchte hier sagen, daß ich in meiner erzieherischen Arbeit insofern geirrt habe, als ich der Meinung war, daß es ein positives Christentum außerhalb der Kirche gibt.'<sup>74</sup> His letter to Jänicke gives a detailed definition of what he took the term to mean:

Positives Christentum besteht darin, daß man zu Christus nicht nur betet, sondern auch für ihn kämpft. Positive Christen waren jene zwei Millionen, die auf den Schlachtfeldern des großen Krieges für ihr Vaterland und damit für eine göttliche und christliche Idee gefallen sind. Positive Christen sind auch diejenigen, die heute Sonntag für Sonntag in Sturm und Nässe in Lastwagen durch ihre Heimat fahren und für ein Deutschland der Ehre und Wahrhaftigkeit ihre Stimme erheben gegen die Wechsler und Pharisäer, die heute wie vor 2000 Jahren ihr unchristliches Handwerk treiben.<sup>75</sup>

Although it loses the biologicistic tone of the party programme, Schirach's interpretation

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<sup>71</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, *Das Parteiprogramm. Wesen, Grundsätze und Ziele der NSDAP*, 22th edn. (Munich: Eher, 1941), p. 18.

<sup>72</sup> See Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, pp. 14-15; Samuel Koehne, 'Reassessing "The Holy Reich": Leading Nazis' Views on Confession, Community and "Jewish" Materialism,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 3 (2013), p. 425.

<sup>73</sup> See BArch NS 38\_3606 letter addressed to Otto Lorenz, dated 22 October 1930.

<sup>74</sup> IMT, *Der Prozess XIII*, p. 449.

<sup>75</sup> Schirach, 'Offener Brief', p. 4.

reflects its main points: according to him, Positive Christianity is connected with national renewal and personal sacrifice for the community in the fight against (Jewish) materialism and capitalism. This nationalistic interpretation of Christianity – Schirach exclusively claimed the two million *German* war casualties as Positive Christians – incensed Jänicke further. In his second article, he reminded Schirach that Germany's enemies prayed to the same God and even those who refused military service did so with reference to the Sermon on the Mount. 'Kann eine Gruppe, eine Partei, ein Volk Christus für sich allein in Anspruch nehmen?', Jänicke protested. 'Wo kommen wir da hin?! Wie klein wird da Gott!'<sup>76</sup>

Despite the nationalistic tone of Schirach's illustrations, his opening statements suggest that for him its particular appeal lay in the fact that it represented a Christianity outside of the church, an institution he criticised severely for not being determined enough to make the changes in society that he deemed necessary. However, he did not make any substantial theoretical contributions to actively shape or politically install Positive Christianity, and accounts of him mentioning it, in particular after 1933, are too scarce to support the idea that he considered it a feasible alternative to Protestantism or Catholicism.

#### The interrelation of Christian and Nationalist symbolism

Whereas there is a broad consensus on the anticlerical stance of the National Socialist regime, opinions differ on how to read the sacralisation of Nazi symbols such as the swastika flag. By those who support the political religion theory, this is usually seen as a political ploy, designed to shore up a new 'German' doctrine of salvation. According to Burleigh, the National Socialist movement, with its fondness for heroic gestures, placed images of its symbols, martyrs, heroes and leaders on nationalistic altars, espousing a new faith of politics in the name of patriotism.<sup>77</sup> Combining Christian and National Socialist symbolism is one of Schirach's strategies to stress the western roots of Nazi ideology and make it seem more familiar and accessible to a society that had been moulded by Christianity for many centuries.<sup>78</sup> It can, for instance, be seen in the following example, 'An die Fahne':

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<sup>76</sup> Jänicke, 'Antwortschreiben'.

<sup>77</sup> See Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 8.

<sup>78</sup> See Czaplá, 'Erlösung im Zeichen', p. 322.

## An die Fahne

Du bist die Schönste aller, die uns wehten,  
Du bist die Kraft, die jeden Kämpfer wirbt,  
Du heiligst selbst den Sünder der dir stirbt,  
Du hohe Hand, mit der die Helden beten.

Inbrunst und Wille bist du von uns allen.  
Wer für Dich fiel, zum Bild wird er in Dir.  
Du bist die Brücke zwischen dort und hier.  
Heil denen, die in Deinem Schatten fallen.<sup>79</sup>

The poem was first published in Schirach's *Die Bewegung* in July 1930 and reprinted one month later in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. It was included in both editions of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1931, 1933) and in 1934 it was printed in Hans Böhme's collection of poetry *Rufe in das Reich*. The poem was also put to music and included in Hans Buchner's *Deutschland Erwache! Horst Wessel Marschalbum* (1933). In the poem the flag is addressed as a symbol of long-awaited unity, as a source of protection and strength to its followers. The first line sets it in contrast to all of its predecessors, 'die Schönste aller, die uns wehten', pointing out that *this* flag is not the only nor the first one the nation hoisted, but nevertheless one that is clearly to be distinguished from the others. Its attraction lies in its purity and in its ability to lend strength to its followers. The speaker even promises sacralisation to those who lose their life in its name. More than simply inspiring fighting spirit, this flag has the power to save the sinner and to link this world and the next; it is a metaphorical extension of the praying hands reaching out to heaven. The religious symbolism did not go unnoticed by Schirach's audience; National Socialist critic Karl Graucob wrote in 1936:

Die echt jugendliche Freude am anschaulichen Symbol gewinnt in dem Aufblick zur Fahne und in der Hingabe an sie ganz neue Gestalt; sie wandelt sich aus bloßer ästhetischer Lust zu ernster, letztlich religiös gearteter Haltung.<sup>80</sup>

Graucob understands only too well the appeal the flag ceremonies held, in particular for the

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<sup>79</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'An die Fahne,' *Die Bewegung* (1 July, 1930); Baldur von Schirach, 'An die Fahne!,' *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe) supplement: Der S.A.-Mann* (August 28, 1930); Schirach, *FdV* (1931), p. 6; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 7; Böhme, *Rufe in das Reich*, p. 343; Hans Buchner, ed., *Deutschland Erwache! Horst Wessel-Marschalbum. A*, 11th edn. (Munich: Eher, 1933).

<sup>80</sup> Graucob, *Kindliches und jugendliches Seelenleben*, p. 46.

younger audience to which Schirach's poetry was mainly addressed after the party's rise to power. He suggests that the poem captures the transformation process the teenagers undergo: 'bloße [...] Lust' becomes 'ernst' and aesthetic pleasure becomes 'religiös geartete [...] Haltung'. The way Graucob phrases this could suggest however that he himself was not quite comfortable with labelling it a religious experience and therefore carefully described it as 'letztlich religiös geartet'.

In many ways 'An die Fahne' exemplifies the dialectic quality Michael Wortmann observes in regard to Schirach's poems: 'Stets verhüllen sie dort, wo sie vorgeben, zu offenbaren.'<sup>81</sup> Whereas the repeated formulation 'Du bist' in the first stanza appears to define the flag and its meaning, it ultimately offers little more than vague wishes or feelings. Declarations such as 'Inbrunst und Wille bist du von uns allen' remain without direction; the focus here lies clearly on the expression of great fervour rather than the execution of any particular acts it may inspire. The lack of a speaker identity overall adds to the generalised tone of the poem. The speaker first appears in the first line of the second stanza among the 'uns allen' and otherwise remains out of focus. Instead, the emphasis is on prototypical figures: 'jeden Kämpfer', 'den Sünder' and 'die Helden'. The grammatical structures Schirach uses support the unfocused effect of the poem overall. The interlacing effect of the dominating relative clause precludes the rigid tone that we find in other poems; in contrast to 'Durch Taten!' and 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle' this poem does not contain enjambements; the lines are not as closely connected in their meaning. The anaphoras, repetitive sentence structure and alliterations in the first stanza add to the rhetorical force of the poem and make it easy to remember. The 'Heil' exclamation at its close could be read as a proclamation of (religious) salvation. However, in 1930, when the poem was first published, this diction would already have been highly reminiscent of the Hitler salute, which was common in party circles at least. Here, salvation is to be granted to those who die in the name of the flag, whereas traditionally it would have been promised to those who fought in the name of God. Again, the flag appears to have superseded the symbol of the cross.

In defence of the political religion theory, Doris L. Bergen points out the importance of institutionalisation through symbols and rituals, contending that they always played an important part in (stabilising) people's religious identity.<sup>82</sup> Steigmann-Gall, however, is

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<sup>81</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 62.

<sup>82</sup> See Bergen, 'Nazism and Christianity', p. 29.

doubtful as to whether the Nazi leaders would have considered this a successful method of winning over new followers. The movement certainly made use of symbolism, carefully and consciously staged ritual and grand spectacles, but that does not mean, he argues, that these were intended as religious mass ‘conversion’ experiences from the Nazis’ point of view.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Steigmann-Gall questions the idea of Hitler styling himself as a new German messiah. He and Bärsch agree that Hitler demonstrated his faith in an interventionist God who consented to, even guided, his own actions.<sup>84</sup> The belief in the Führer as the God-sent saviour of Germany has long been established as a crucial aspect of National Socialism, in works such as Kershaw’s *The Hitler Myth* (1987) and Bärsch’s *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus* (1998). Without subscribing to a Hitlercentric interpretation of National Socialism, both authors show how belief in Hitler’s charisma was cultivated and remained one of the regime’s cornerstones until its collapse. Both authors use the term in its theological meaning (based on the concept of ‘charismatische Herrschaft’ by Max Weber), to refer to an individual’s unusual quality, gift or talent vouchsafed by divine powers. This is not to say that Hitler necessarily possessed any of these qualities – the object of interest is not their actual existence, but rather the belief in them.<sup>85</sup> Bärsch convincingly demonstrates that many of Hitler’s followers and close party members, such as Chamberlain, Eckart, Goebbels, Streicher, Himmler and also Schirach, even though they espoused very different ideas of Christianity, expressed their faith in Hitler as a mediator between God and humanity, leading Germany to a better future.<sup>86</sup> Goebbels, for example, clearly entertained the notion of Hitler as a demigod figure when he noted in his diary as early as 1925: ‘Ich lese Hitlers Buch zu Ende. Mit reißender Spannung! Wer ist dieser Mann? Halb Plebejer, halb Gott! Tatsächlich der Christus, oder nur der Johannes?’<sup>87</sup>

Schirach’s representation of Hitler followed a similar pattern. His central position in Schirach’s poetry has often been remarked upon. Koontz, for instance, writes: ‘Through his pen, Schirach attempted to glorify the Nazi ideal of Germanic culture and civilisation by emphasising the image of Hitler as messianic leader.’<sup>88</sup> Czaplá notes that the panegyric tone

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<sup>83</sup> See Richard Steigmann-Gall, ‘Christianity and the Nazi Movement: A Response,’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007): 118–211, p. 190.

<sup>84</sup> See Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, pp. 280-281. and 287; Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>85</sup> See Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’*, p. 8-10; Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, p. 143.

<sup>86</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 143-187.

<sup>87</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher* (1987), pp. 134-135, entry dated 14 October 1925.

<sup>88</sup> Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, pp. 85-86.

of Schirach's descriptions of Hitler by far exceeds the usual rhetoric of reverence that would justifiably be expected between follower and leader.<sup>89</sup> Throughout his career, Schirach repeatedly declared his emotional bond with and adoration of Hitler, and this was echoed in his poems. In his autobiography he stylises his first encounter with the Führer to a moment of personal epiphany. After 1933, the idea of Hitler as God-sent leader, who would guide the nation to its glorious rightful place, emerged in his rhetoric more clearly than before. In June 1936, he gave a speech on the occasion of a summer solstice celebration:

[Wir] öffnen [...] unsere Herzen dem Allmächtigen. Erfüllt von ihm und hingegeben dem Manne, den er uns schenkte als unseren Führer zu Ehre und Freiheit, geloben wir Adolf Hitler, die Treusten der Treuen zu sein.<sup>90</sup>

The idea, however, had already been apparent in his writing much earlier, for instance in his poem 'Das Grösste'. It was originally published under the title 'Hitler' in Ziegler's *Der Nationalsozialist* in October 1927. It was included in Schirach's *Die Feier der neuen Front* (1929) and was printed as 'Der Führer' in Goebbels's *Der Angriff* in April 1932. By 1933 Schirach had settled on the title 'Das Grösste', under which it was published in the 1933 edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* and other National Socialist publications such as Herbert Böhme's *Rufe in das Reich* (1934) and Hans Gille's *Das Neue Deutschland im Gedicht* (1936). It also appeared in the wartime collection of Schirach's poems *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940). The poem was quoted in Bärsch's *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus* as proof of the religious elevation of Hitler on which Schirach founded his call to worship: 'Hitler [ist] [...] Gott und Mensch zugleich. [...] daher muss ihm die Praxis kultisch-religiöser Verehrung angetragen werden.'<sup>91</sup> While the poem indeed elevates Hitler and his status among the people as God-sent leader, close reading does not support the idea that he is portrayed as 'Gott und Mensch zugleich'. This reading of the poem and its religious symbolism as evidence of Schirach's attempt to stylise Hitler as a new religious as well as nationalist leader is, furthermore, reductive, in that it overlooks how the poem reflects the very profane inner-party struggle for leadership, as can also be seen from its publication history.

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<sup>89</sup> See Czaplá, 'Erlösung im Zeichen', p. 320.

<sup>90</sup> Schirach, *Revolution der Erziehung*, p. 35.

<sup>91</sup> Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, p. 170.

Das Grösste:

Das ist an ihm das Grösste: dass er nicht  
nur unser Führer ist und vieler Held,  
sondern er selber: grade, fest und schlicht,

dass in ihm ruhn die Wurzeln unsrer Welt,  
und seine Seele an die Sterne strich  
und er doch Mensch blieb, so wie Du und ich...<sup>92</sup>

The poem emphasises Hitler's humanity, stressing his (to the speaker's mind) modesty, artless ways and upright nature. Schirach's words echo but also reverse Christian liturgy, for example the Nicean Creed of 325, which specifies that Christ is 'God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father'<sup>93</sup> and 'became incarnate, became human'.<sup>94</sup> The phrase 'er doch Mensch *blieb*' indicates that Hitler stayed human, which implies that he has always been human, unlike Christ who *became* human through his incarnation. At the same time the phrase insinuates that he possesses the potential to be more than 'just' human. 'Das Grösste' is therefore another example of Schirach's use of established Christian diction and imagery, whereby he does not simply copy or transpose, but subtly alters, making it on the one hand – to his way of thinking at least – acceptable as Christian poetry and on the other hand supportive of specifically Nazi content.

Hitler's supposedly spiritual connection with celestial spheres, symbolised by the stars, reaching the point of physical contact, is balanced by his bonds with the earth, making him a mediator between heaven and earth;<sup>95</sup> a notion very similar to Goebbels' sentiment of 'halb Plebejer, halb Gott'. The poem's structure enhances the idea of connectedness and balance. Syntactically, it consists of only one sentence stretching over both stanzas; the reader is guided through it by colons and commas. Similar to 'Es war die Ehre...', Schirach employs sentence structures that define and delineate: 'Das ist an ihm [...]' and 'dass er nicht

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<sup>92</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Hitler,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 4, no. 40 (1927); Schirach, *FNF*, p. 19; Baldur von Schirach, 'Der Führer,' *Der Angriff* (April 23, 1932); Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 37; Herbert Böhme, ed., *Rufe in das Reich*, p. 122, Hans Gille, ed., *Das Neue Deutschland*, p. 193; Schirach, *FIF*, p. 19.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in: Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo. Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), p. 24.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>95</sup> See Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, p. 170 and pp. 189-190.



[...], sondern [...]’, which culminates in the tricolon ‘grade, fest und schlicht’ in the last line of the first stanza. The poem’s perfectly regular iambic pentameter and the ellipsis points in the last line again suggest stability but also pensiveness.

In the earliest version of the poem, published in 1927, the first lines ran:

Das ist an ihm das Größte: daß er nicht  
nur der Diktator ist, der Herr, der Held.<sup>96</sup>

The term ‘Diktator’ in this context is particularly striking. Schirach certainly saw its connotations as positive. The fusion of the concepts of dictatorship and tyranny came about over the course of the twentieth century. Schirach likely wanted the term here to be understood in its original meaning, as someone who is temporarily assigned the power of the state in a time of crisis.<sup>97</sup> ‘Herr’ is ambiguous; it can express a sense of ownership as we find it in the relationship between a master and his servant, but it also has a religious ring to it. The dynamics expressed here between the ‘Diktator’ or ‘Führer’, and the ‘Du und ich’, deserve attention: it is the worthiness of the addressee, substantiated by his heroic and moral qualities, that allows for the praise of him as ‘Führer’ or ‘Diktator’. The term Führer had at that point been used within the Nazi Party for several years, but not exclusively to refer to Hitler. Although he had become increasingly dominant within the party, in particular since the mid-1920s, he was still one of several leaders, certainly until Ludendorff’s expulsion in late 1927. After this, he emerged more clearly as the leading figure; but it was not until the end of the 1920s that the term was also used to refer to him outside party circles.<sup>98</sup> Schirach’s switch from ‘Diktator’ in 1927 to ‘Führer’ in 1929 reflects and at the same time publicly reinforces this change.

Schirach later denied having elevated Hitler to demigod status: ‘Ein Vergleich zwischen Hitler und Gott ist von mir nie angestellt worden; und ich sehe darin eine Blasphemie und ich habe zu allen Zeiten in einem solchen Vergleich eine Blasphemie gesehen.’<sup>99</sup> Despite its elevated language and the clear insinuation that Hitler has the potential to become more than human, ‘Das Grösste’ maintains an important distinction

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<sup>96</sup> Baldur von Schirach, ‘Hitler,’ *Der Nationalsozialist* 4, no. 40 (1927).

<sup>97</sup> See Andreas Kalyvas, ‘The Tyranny of Dictatorship: When the Greek Tyrant Met the Roman Dictator,’ *Political Theory* 35, no. 4 (2007): 412–442, pp. 416–417.

<sup>98</sup> See Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’*, pp. 21–31.

<sup>99</sup> IMT, *Der Prozess XII*, p. 525.

between Hitler and Christ, as demonstrated above. Yet Schirach later had to admit:

Daß ich in den langen Jahren, in denen ich an Hitler glaubte, in ihm einen gottgesandten Führer des Volkes sah, das ist richtig. Ich glaube, man kann jeden großen Menschen der Geschichte – und als solchen habe ich früher Hitler gesehen – als einen von Gott gesandten ansprechen.<sup>100</sup>

The boundaries remain blurred. More text samples show that Schirach encouraged a view of Hitler that permitted or even demanded cult-like worship of his idol, as shown in ‘Einem Führer’. The poem envisions the construction of a shrine in Hitler’s honour:

Dir Treuem bauen wir ein Monument  
aus Blöcken von hartem Stein  
Wir stellen ein Feuer, das immer brennt,  
mitten hinein.<sup>101</sup>

At the same time, several of his poems also contain direct references to Christ; one even features him as central figure:

Christus

Wenn er heute vom Himmel niederstiege,  
der grosse Krieger, der die Wechsler schlug,  
so brüllt ihr wieder euer ‘crucifige!’  
und schlägt an’s Kreuz ihn, das er selber trug.

Er aber lächelt leise eurem Hasse:  
‘Die Wahrheit steht, wenn auch ihr Träger fällt;  
der Glaube lebt, da ich das Leben lasse...’  
Und ragt am Kreuz den Kämpfern aller Welt.<sup>102</sup>

This poem only enjoyed moderate success at the time of its publication. It was first published in Schirach’s *Die Feier der neuen Front* (1929) and reprinted in his own journal *Der Akademische Beobachter* in June of the same year. It was also included in *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1933), but not picked up and reprinted by other journals or publications. Nevertheless, it has been one of the most popular poems in scholarly research as evidence of Schirach’s reversal of Christian tenets. Hay writes: ‘Nun ist der Kündler der Nächstenliebe zum

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 525-526.

<sup>101</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 42.

<sup>102</sup> Baldur von Schirach, ‘Christus,’ *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 6 (June 1929), p. 1; Schirach, *FnF*, p. 27; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 49.

hassenden Soldaten geworden, Deutschland zum Bewahrer der wahren Lehre gegenüber den anderen [...] und das Symbol der Erlösung zum Frieden wird zum Symbol des Krieges.’<sup>103</sup> ‘Christus’ was also quoted in studies by Czapla and Bärsch, albeit briefly. Czapla sees it as ‘Eine andere [Strategie, um die Ideologie seiner Partei für das christlich geprägte Deutschland vertraut und sinnstiftend erscheinen zu lassen, die] darin [besteht], den Gottessohn selber as Träger der politischen Verheißung erscheinen zu lassen’.<sup>104</sup> Bärsch cites it as evidence of Schirach’s antisemitism, as example of his ‘Rekurs auf den triumphierenden, die Juden besiegenden Christus’.<sup>105</sup> Neither study draws parallels between the depiction of Jesus in this poem and Schirach’s own confessions of religious belief at the time – observations that become all the more interesting in the context of the debate around the new impetus of Steigmann-Gall’s study.

The first line introduces the scenario around which the entire poem is set: the second coming of Christ, heralding the final events of history – the central event in Christian eschatology. As Czapla points out, the characterisation of Jesus as warrior expelling the moneychangers is a reference to the biblical narrative of the cleansing of the temple,<sup>106</sup> relating how Jesus is infuriated by commercial activities in a place of prayer. By referring to this bible passage, Schirach picks up on an aspect of Hitler’s self-interpretation. Hitler had a fondness for this representation of Christ and saw himself as a national hero defending fundamental values against capitalist forces.<sup>107</sup> The second stanza leads to the central message of the poem: he who stands up for truth and is willing to sacrifice himself for his belief can hope to live on in history as a heroic martyr. This kind of sacrificial warrior ethic is in line with Nazi ideology, as Czapla has pointed out; Christ’s suffering and death are depicted as exemplary.<sup>108</sup> His example shows, the poem reminds the audience, that sacrifice bears witness to the truth and strengthens belief in it.

In his letter to Jänicke, Schirach refers to the narrative of the cleansing of the temple several times, claiming that Jesus too chose to fight for his beliefs rather than just to pray and preach: ‘Hat Christus die Wechsler durch Gebete vertrieben oder durch

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<sup>103</sup> Hay, ‘Religiöser Pseudokult’, p. 860.

<sup>104</sup> Czapla, ‘Erlösung im Zeichen’, p. 322.

<sup>105</sup> Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, p. 169.

<sup>106</sup> See Czapla, ‘Erlösung im Zeichen’, p. 322.

<sup>107</sup> See Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, p. 288.

<sup>108</sup> See Czapla, ‘Erlösung im Zeichen’, p. 322.

Peitschenhiebe?’<sup>109</sup> he asks, and declares:

Christus war nach meiner Ueberzeugung ein kämpferisches Vorbild. Leider haben manche Würdenträger beider Kirchen vergessen, daß er die Wechsler aus dem Tempel peitschte. In bezug auf diese Tat wird sein Wort ‘Ein Beispiel habe ich euch gegeben’ heute von der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung tiefer beherzigt als von vielen Pfarrern...<sup>110</sup>

Almost echoing the words used in ‘Christus’, Schirach concludes: ‘So starb er als tapferer Kämpfer seines Reiches und seines Glaubens, und seine gekreuzigte Gestalt ragt allen Völkern als verpflichtende Forderung.’ However, it is important to note that the founder figure of Christianity and the political Führer – in spite of Hitler’s messianic features in poems such as ‘Das Grösste’ – did not occupy the same space in Schirach’s thinking.

In his reinterpretation of Jesus, Schirach does not go as far as other Nazi leaders such as Alfred Rosenberg, who – echoing Chamberlain’s interpretation of Christ – professed to believe in Jesus, but denied his Jewish descent<sup>111</sup> and instead depicted him as an Aryan: a Nordic warrior and mighty preacher, who declared: ‘Ich bin nicht gekommen, den Frieden zu bringen, sondern das Schwert’,<sup>112</sup> and whose fiery resistance led to his death on the cross.<sup>113</sup> There is no mention of Schirach having entertained the idea of Christ as Aryan at any point. His reinterpretation of Jesus as a great warrior is predominant, but only partial; in ‘Christus’, he also maintains the biblical representation of Christ as sufferer, who meets his enemies with compassion and pity, smiling softly at their hatred. Scholars who support the interpretation of Nazism as political religion regard Schirach’s insistence on his religiosity and his claims to serve a divine plan either as part of a political ploy or ‘*propaganda fidei*’,<sup>114</sup> a public avowal by someone who bought into his own lies. The answer Steigmann-Gall offers to this paradox is as follows: Hitler was not seen as replacing Jesus, but instead as someone who followed in his footsteps. This would account for the co-existence of Hitler and Jesus in Schirach’s poetic-fictional universe. In the poem ‘Christus’, the belief in Jesus’s divinity

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<sup>109</sup> Schirach, ‘Offener Brief’.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid; the following quotation *ibid*.

<sup>111</sup> Rosenberg declared: ‘Was Jesu Herkunft betrifft, so liegt wie schon von Chamberlain [...] betont worden ist, nicht der geringste Grund zur Annahme vor, daß Jesus jüdischer Herkunft gewesen ist, wenn er auch in jüdischen Gedankenkreisen aufgewachsen ist. [...] Streng wissenschaftlich wird die Herkunft Jesu wohl für immer unerwiesen bleiben. Es muß uns genügen, die Wahrscheinlichkeit nichtjüdischer Abstammung anerkennen zu können.’ Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Hoheneichen, 1937), p. 76.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 134 ; Gospel of Matthew 10, 34.

<sup>113</sup> See Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, pp. 238-239.; see also Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, pp. 95-97.

<sup>114</sup> Hay, ‘Religiöser Pseudokult’, p. 856.

remains unchallenged. Since the poem envisages the second coming of Christ, the narratives of the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension – all of which are essential to Christian doctrine – are implied or presented as given. Hitler is clearly distinguished from Jesus in this respect: as ‘Das Grösste’ suggests, he ‘*blieb Mensch*’ (my emphasis), suggesting he had always been human – unlike Christ, who *became* human according to the doctrine of incarnation.

Whereas ‘Christus’ upholds Jesus as a role model with contemporary significance, in ‘Christus Agitator’, which was published a few months later in November 1929, the political leader steps into the limelight. The poem has previously been overlooked in scholarly research on Schirach, despite the fact that it could be used to support the thesis of Schirach’s portrayal of Hitler as new (German) Messiah – as put forward by Czapla, Bärsch and Hay – better than ‘Christus’. The slippage between the political and the religious leader is very close, as the title already indicates:

#### Christus Agitator

Wir stehen an Maschinen und Motoren.  
Wir sind die Menschen einer neuen Zeit.  
Und Gottes Wort, das ihr so ganz verloren,  
tönt wie der Hammer hier in unsern Ohren:  
in neuer Sprache spricht die Ewigkeit.

Kein Gott wird mehr in Bethlehem geboren!  
Heut’ trägt er eines Schlossers blaues Kleid,  
doch abends steht er draußen vor den Toren  
und schreit: ‘Kommt her zu mir! Ich hab’ mich euch verschworen!  
Ich will der Führer sein, der euch befreit!’<sup>115</sup>

The first stanza describes the new industrialised era, a ‘neue [...] Zeit’ that is shaped by ‘Maschinen’ und ‘Motoren’. Some, the speaker observes, have lost their faith (‘Gottes Wort, das ihr so ganz verloren’) in this new time. However, help is at hand. The speaker and his group are still capable of hearing, even unable to ignore His call – it rings in their ears like the hammer striking metal. It is important to note that this loss of faith is not directly linked to the beginning of industrialisation and technicisation as going hand in hand; on the contrary, the noises of industrialisation *are* the ‘neue [...] Sprache [der] Ewigkeit’. The

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<sup>115</sup> Baldur von Schirach, ‘Christus Agitator,’ *Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur* 1, no. 11/12 (November/December 1929); Schirach, *Der unbekanntes S.A. Mann*, p. 17.

alliteration between 'Maschinen', 'Motoren' and 'Menschen' underlines the revolutionary potential of the 'neue Zeit'. Those who do not have access to this industrialised factory surrounding ('ihr'), also have no access to the 'neue Sprache'.

The first stanza revolves around language ('Wort', 'Spache spricht'), sounds and listening ('tönt', 'Ohren'), preparing for the appearance of the 'Agitator' in the second stanza. This leader, chosen to guide mankind out of its misery, is, however, not the biblical son of God, but a man of the people – a locksmith, a craftsman, the industrialised equivalent of a carpenter. His most outstanding assets are his skill as powerful orator on the one hand and his total identification with his fellow workers on the other: 'Ich hab' mich euch verschworen!' This line breaks through the regular iambic pentameter of the poem, switching to hexameter. Parallels between Hitler and the locksmith can hardly be ignored even without the Führer reference in the last line; the description of the locksmith's forceful summons is clearly a reflection on Hitler's agitated speeches during mass demonstrations and election campaigns. In the second stanza, the parallels between Jesus and Hitler the new Führer are invoked connotatively and linguistically: the reference to the divine birth in Bethlehem, for instance, seems to affirm the biblical narrative of Jesus' conception, but at the same time reminds the audience that the biblical son of God was also born into a lowly family of craftsmen. Schirach also blends the boundaries between both figures grammatically. The personal pronoun 'er' in the second and third line of the second stanza refers to 'Gott' and the new 'Führer' equally.

The poem apparently found little echo in the National Socialist community. It was originally published in Rosenberg's *Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für Deutsche Kultur*, and it was included one year later in the anonymously published collection *Der Unbekannte S.A. Mann* (1930), but was not reprinted by other National Socialist newspapers and did not make it into either edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*. Since there are as of today no sources that definitely state why it was not reprinted – after all, Schirach himself was the editor of several journals in which he regularly published his own poems – one can only speculate as to the reasons. Perhaps the proximity of the religious and the political leader was after all too close for comfort. Another reason why the poem did not catch on was simply that Hitler was not any kind of carpenter and that the idea of him as a 'Schlosser' was too specific and too far removed from his actual biography.

## Germanic and pagan tendencies

Whereas Schirach's poetry contains numerous references to God and Christ, allusions to pagan or Germanic traditions are scarce. Although Schirach showed great fascination for the mystic realm of the Nordic Gods as well as for the Middle Ages,<sup>116</sup> this is seldom reflected explicitly in his own writing. In one of his numerous appraisals of his friend, Schlösser noted of the poem 'Heimkehr': 'Es ist etwas in diesem Gedicht, das an die Großartigkeit des Nibelungenepos erinnert',<sup>117</sup> though he was referring to the 'heroische [...] Grundhaltung' expressed in the poem, to what he saw as Schirach's ability to capture 'die Größe des Sterbens' rather than content or similarities in style and language. One of the few possible examples of Norse mythology in Schirach's poetry is the comparison of Hitler to a tree, which Schirach uses in 'Dem Führer' – 'Ich war ein Blatt im unbegrenzten Raum,/ nun bist Du Heimat mir und bist mein Baum'<sup>118</sup> – and in 'Das Größte': '[...] in ihm ruhn die Wurzeln unsrer Welt,/ und seine Seele an die Sterne strich.'<sup>119</sup> The latter example in particular could be read as a reference to Yggdrasil, the eternal ash tree. According to the Edda, Yggdrasil grows from the centre of the earth, its branches reaching around the world and into the heavens and its roots reaching down into the underworld.<sup>120</sup>

The two poems 'O Land...' and 'Der Priester' do not refer to Norse mythology but are certainly interesting as examples of what Hay refers to as Schirach's 'Blut-und Boden-Gedicht[e], heidnisch, pseudogermanisch',<sup>121</sup> without analysing them further. Both poems were included in the second, less structured half of the 1933 edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgte*. As indicated in chapter three, they stand out from the rest of the collection, perhaps indicating that Schirach himself was unsure of how to fit them in. 'O Land...' is an invocation addressed to the soil itself; the poem emphasises the bond between the land and its people:

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<sup>116</sup> For instance, as leader of the NSDStB he invited writer Leopold Weber, whose writing dealt with Germanic or medieval legends and myths, to read extracts of his newly published book *Walthari und Hildegund: Die Gotengeiseln am Hunnenhofe*. See 'Zwei Dichterabende des Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbundes, München,' *Der Nationalsozialist* 5, no. 29 (21 July 1928). On several occasions he published glowing reviews of Weber's works. See Baldur von Schirach, 'Leopold Webers neuestes Werk,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 26 (28 October 1930); Baldur von Schirach, 'Bücher, die man kennen muß,' *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 1 (January 1929), p. 16.

<sup>117</sup> Schlösser, 'Baldur von Schirach als Lyriker', p. 14; the following quotations *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 38.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>120</sup> See Rudolf Simek, *Lexikon der germanischen Mythologie*, 3rd edn. (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2006), pp. 494-495; Wolfgang Golther, *Handbuch der Germanischen Mythologie* (Wiesbaden: Fourier, 2003), pp. 412-413.

<sup>121</sup> Hay, 'Religiöser Pseudokult', p. 860.

O Land...  
(Auf Sylt)

O Land, ich weiss:  
die deinen Boden traten,  
liebten dich heiss.  
Um dich sind die alten Spaten  
rostig von Schweiss.

Doch wir, o Land,  
ringen um Volk, wie die Väter taten  
um deinen Bestand:  
Segne deiner Söhne Saaten,  
o Land.<sup>122</sup>

'O Land...' was first published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* in November 1927 and later included in both of Schirach's main anthologies, *Die Feier der neuen Front* (1929) and *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1933), but there are no documented reprints in other journals, newspapers or poetry collections. The reference to the Northern German island Sylt might surprise at first. Schirach's biography, as known until today, does not suggest a personal connection with the island, opening up the possibility that the poem was inspired by contemporary events rather than private affinities. The opening declaration of the strong bond between the soil and the people is followed by the introduction of two conflicts faced by different generations. The fathers' 'ringen [...] um deinen Bestand' refers back to the not-too-distant efforts to keep Sylt part of Germany. Prussia had taken the island from Denmark in 1864. After the end of the First World War, the discussion of whether it should stay German flared up again. The poem blends (inter-)national policies with agricultural imagery: the struggle for the continued existence of Sylt as part of Germany is preceded by an image of manual labour during the farming of land ('die alten Spaten/ rostig von Schweiss'). The formulation 'um dich' in the fifth line could be passed over as a preposition often used by Schirach as indicator of elevated language, or it could also be read quite literally as designating a location outside of the island: the Hindenburgdamm that connected Sylt with the mainland. The poem was first published only months after the dam was completed.

The young generation's 'ringen um Volk' takes a turn towards racist ideology, binding

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<sup>122</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'O Land...', *Völkischer Beobachter (Bayernausgabe)* (November 5, 1927); Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 51.



the cultivation of land to the question of German (racial) stock: 'Segne deiner Söhne Saaten,/ o Land'. The repeated interjections contribute to the irregular rhythm and metre of the poem and interrupt its otherwise concise form. Its elevated tone contrasts with its reductive style, which is reinforced through the use of enjambements, abbreviations ('traten' instead of 'betraten') and ellipsis ('wie die Väter taten'). Despite its undeniably agrarian imagery and *völkisch* focus, the contemporary relevance of the poem gives reason to question the extent to which it ultimately draws on paganist, pre-Christian 'Germanentum'.

The other poem, 'Der Priester', evokes pastoral fantasies even more strongly. When he first published it in *Die Bewegung* in July 1930, Schirach dedicated the poem to author Max Jungnickel, whose early works were influenced by the Romantic period but also showed strong nationalistic tendencies.<sup>123</sup> It was reprinted without the dedication in Goebbels' *Der Angriff* only a few days later. 'Der Priester' was included in both editions of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* (1931, 1933) and *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940).

#### Der Priester

Im Licht der Sonne sah ich einen schreiten,  
geboren aus dem Boden, den er trat.  
Jüngst sah ich ihn die Scholle hier bereiten,  
nun warf er Saat.

Den Glanz der Gottheit auf den hellen Haaren,  
gab er das Heilige aus seiner Hand.  
Und feierlich, wie schon vor tausend Jahren,  
sank seine Saat in das gepflügte Land.<sup>124</sup>

The figure of the priest, despite his clerical title, is revealed to be a farmer tilling the soil. His life and work are represented as being essentially connected with the earth; he is 'geboren aus dem Boden, den er trat'. The use of religious terminology elevates agricultural work to an act of consecration; the seed, 'das Heilige', sinks into the tilled soil, 'wie schon vor tausend Jahren'. This addition further emphasises the ceremonial nature of this act. Racist ideology

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<sup>123</sup> Jungnickel was celebrated in the Third Reich as 'Liebenswürdiger Erzähler mit ausgesprochener Neigung zum Idyll.' He later published books entitled *Volk und Vaterland* (1932), *Goebbels* (1933), *Mythos des Soldaten* (1938) and *Kommando der Erde* (1939). See Ernst Klee, *Das Kulturlexikon zum Dritten Reich. Wer war was vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 2007), p. 261.

<sup>124</sup> Schirach, 'Der Priester,' (8 July 1930); Baldur von Schirach, 'Der Priester,' *Der Angriff* supplement: *Der Unbekannte S.A.Mann* (17 July 1930); Schirach, *FdV* (1931), p. 17; Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 50; Schirach, *FIF*, p. 28.

surfaces again, in particular in the description of the priest: he has ‘helle[s] Haar’ and is depicted ‘im Licht der Sonne [...] schreiten[d]’, his entire body bathed in sunlight, in particular his head ‘im Glanz der Gottheit’, which bears a striking resemblance to the ‘arioheroischen Lichtmenschen’<sup>125</sup> celebrated in the National Socialist Sonnenkult and visualised by *völkisch* artists such as Fidus or Ludwig Fahrenkrog. The former’s famous painting ‘Lichtgebet’ and Fahrenkrog’s ‘Baldur segnet die Fluten’ both portray a young man surrounded by nature, worshipping the sun. They were very popular among prominent Nazis such as Rosenberg or Martin Bormann, who owned one of the later versions of ‘Lichtgebet’.<sup>126</sup>

Rosenberg’s name can hardly be omitted in any discussion of the influence of Germanic paganism on the Nazi belief system. His ideological influence within the party has been a subject of debate, as has the impact of his main publication, *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1930).<sup>127</sup> Across its 712 pages, he develops his ideas about the nature and quality of race as well as its effects in the cultural spheres of science, philosophy, art and religion.<sup>128</sup> According to Schirach himself, the two men were on very good terms around 1930. The friendly relationship between Schirach and Rosenberg is briefly commented on by Wortmann, who attributes Schirach’s interest in the older man to shared interests but also to his own ambitious character:

Beide verband der mystizistisch überhöhte Blut- und Rassenkult ebenso wie der Glaube, zum Schriftsteller berufen zu sein. Beide waren sie unter den rauhen Kampfgenossen Hitlers Außenseiter [...]. Zudem hat Schirach mit sicherem Instinkt sogleich die Bedeutung der Schlüsselposition erkannt, die Rosenberg als Chefredakteur des Völkischen Beobachters einnahm.<sup>129</sup>

However, what Wortmann does not mention is that Schirach even published a poem

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<sup>125</sup> Ernst Piper, *Alfred Rosenberg. Hitlers Chefideologe* (Munich: Pantheon, 2007), p. 202.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>127</sup> Despite its high sales, Steigmann-Gall questions the book’s true popularity. He claims that the party leadership largely ignored it and that, on account of its abstruse line of argumentation, it was not widely read. See Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, pp. 92-94. During the Nuremberg trials, Schirach indeed claims never to have read it fully. See IMT, *Der Prozess XIII*, p. 494. However, his close relationship with Rosenberg at the time of its publication and his public and private references to it demonstrate that he was certainly sufficiently familiar with its contents. Furthermore, contradicting Steigmann-Gall’s claim, Irving Hexham points out that Rosenberg’s contemporaries would have shared his social, cultural and literary knowledge and therefore found it accessible. See Irving Hexham, ‘Inventing “Paganists”’: A Close Reading of Richard Steigmann-Gall’s *The Holy Reich*,’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007), pp. 76-77.

<sup>128</sup> See Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>129</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 53.

dedicated to Rosenberg,<sup>130</sup> and Rosenberg, as has been outlined in detail in chapter two, repeatedly published the younger man's poems in his *Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur* as well as, on at least one occasion, in his aggressive and highly antisemitic *Der Weltkampf*.<sup>131</sup> It is worth noting that these did not include the poems reminiscent of Norse mythology, nor those resonant of blood-and-soil ideology. Instead, Rosenberg mainly published Schirach's poems about the First World War, which he valued as 'Bekenntnisse zum Volkopfer von 1914, Versprechen, in diesem Sinne weiterzukämpfen bis zur Entscheidung'.<sup>132</sup> In one instance, as previously indicated, he published 'Christus Agitator', a poem with overt biblical references.<sup>133</sup> In Schirach's generally very positive depiction of the figure of Jesus he was by no means in disagreement with Rosenberg. In spite of the latter's criticism of Christianity, the figure of Jesus did not become a target for his attacks. Christ was, according to Rosenberg, '[eine] missbrauchte, große Persönlichkeit',<sup>134</sup> a victim of Roman Christianity and its reign of priests. In *Mythus*, he demands the rehabilitation of the figure of Jesus.<sup>135</sup> He emphasises the need to recant the Old Testament and purify the New Testament from superstition.<sup>136</sup> Whereas there is no account of Schirach rejecting the Old Testament, biblical references in his poems all point exclusively at the New Testament. Schirach's poems only allow for observations of rather broad similarities with Rosenberg's convictions. For a balanced representation of Schirach's religious intellectual development including the period after 1933, his private opinions also need to be taken into consideration as well as his conduct as Reichsjugendführer. Already shortly after its publication Schirach clearly considered Rosenberg's *Mythus* one of the major publications of the movement. He defended it in a private letter:

Mag man auch in vielem der Ansicht sein, dass Rosenberg zu weit geht, man wird doch nicht leugnen können, dass dieses Werk die für die Bewegung bedeutendste Publikation seit Chamberlains 'Grundlagen' und Hitlers 'Kampf' ist; das ist nicht nur meine sondern auch Hitlers

<sup>130</sup> See Langzeitinterviews II, pp. 220-221. The poem 'Einem Führer' was originally dedicated to Alfred Rosenberg. See Baldur von Schirach, 'Die Feier der neuen Front,' *Akademischer Beobachter* 1, no. 2 (February 1929), p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> See 'Baldur v. Schirach: "Die Feier der neuen Front,"' (1929).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. Rosenberg published at least the following poems that all centre around the First World War: 'Des Daseins Sinn,' Ibid., 'Um unsre Augen...,' *Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur* 1, no. 6/7/8 (1929), 'Ehrfurcht,' *Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur* 1, no. 6/7/8 (1929).

<sup>133</sup> See Schirach, 'Christus Agitator,' (1929).

<sup>134</sup> Rosenberg, *Der Mythus*, p. 76.

<sup>135</sup> See Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, p. 219; Rosenberg, *Der Mythus*, p. 604.

<sup>136</sup> See Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, p. 219; Rosenberg, *Der Mythus*, pp. 603-605.

und vieler anderer Überzeugung. [...] Ich kannes [sic] nicht mit meinem Gewissen vereinbaren, eine Entgegnung gegen ein Werk zu veröffentlichen, mit dem ich selbst, wenn auch nicht in allem so doch in vielem und wesentlichem, übereinstimme.<sup>137</sup>

Rosenberg, as explained in *Mythus*, sees history not as a sequence of ideas, but as a succession of Völker that are in constant battle.<sup>138</sup> He attempts to trace the origin and historical development of the Nordic race, which he deems superior, but which was deprived of its rightful place by Roman Christianity.<sup>139</sup> The Nordic race has not only been thrown into chaos by 'Einsickern fremden Blutes', but also by the influence of 'fremder Ideen'.<sup>140</sup> Roman Christianity was, he explains in *Mythus*, foreign to the Nordic soul in its essential prioritisation of merciful, humble love over the Germanic sense of honour and duty.<sup>141</sup> While Rosenberg's ideas and particularly his aversion to the Roman priests appear to owe a lot to Nietzsche's writing on 'Sklaven-Moral'<sup>142</sup> and 'die "Erlösung" des Menschengeschlechtes [...] von den "Herren"',<sup>143</sup> Bärsch points out that Rosenberg quoted Nietzsche 'zwar wohlwollend, aber selten'.<sup>144</sup> Similarly, although terminology such as 'Priester' and 'Asketen' that feature prominently in Nietzsche's writing are also to be found in Schirach's poetry, there is no evidence that he was an avid reader of Nietzsche.

The degradation of Christianity itself, the 'Bastardisierung, Verorientalisierung und Verjudung des Christentums'<sup>145</sup> had begun with the apostle Paul, Rosenberg argues: 'Paulus hat [...] dem unterdrückten national-jüdischen Aufstand die internationale Auswirkung gegeben [und] dem Rassenchaos der Alten Welt den Weg noch weiter geebnet.'<sup>146</sup> However, enduring through centuries of wars, conquests, and, to use Chamberlain's terminology, 'Völkerchaos',<sup>147</sup> the strength of *Urchristentum* showed itself during heretical movements of the Middle Ages, which antagonised the Roman Catholic church.<sup>148</sup> This strength, according to Rosenberg, has re-emerged in the present day: 'eine neue Zeit deutscher Mystik ist

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<sup>137</sup> BArch/NS 38\_3606 letter addressed to Otto Lorenz. Part of this quotation is quoted in Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 53.

<sup>138</sup> See Rosenberg, *Der Mythus*, pp. 1-2. For a summary of Rosenberg's book see Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, pp. 202-226.

<sup>139</sup> See Rosenberg, *Der Mythus*, p. 155.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>141</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>142</sup> Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, p. 26.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>144</sup> Bärsch, *Die politische Religion*, p. 216.

<sup>145</sup> Rosenberg, *Der Mythus*, p. 75.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

angebrochen, der Mythos des Blutes und der Mythos der freien Seele erwachen zu neuem bewussten Leben.<sup>149</sup> Ultimately, he demands a reinterpretation of both churches 'im Sinne eines germanischen Christentums'.<sup>150</sup>

Schirach stressed repeatedly that Rosenberg's religious views were not representative of the party.<sup>151</sup> However, he also publicly demonstrated his great admiration for the author of *Mythus*. In 1934 at a meeting of the Hitlerjugend in Berlin, he declared that Rosenberg's path was the path of German youth.<sup>152</sup> In his opinion, the enormous propaganda value of *Mythus* had gained the party a considerable number of new (and also prominent) followers – for example the writer and cultural functionary Hanns Johst. At the same time, Schirach also recognised that many had been alienated by some of the views expressed in the book (although he does not specify which ones), which had made its author somewhat of an outsider. In 1930 he wrote: 'Es ist eine traurige Feststellung für diejenigen, die seine Qualitäten schätzen, diese so oft verdunkelt zu sehen durch Kleinlichkeiten und Kleinheiten, die ihn immer stärker diskreditieren.'<sup>153</sup>

Despite aligning himself with Rosenberg's ideas at least to a certain extent, Schirach turned against those other convinced paganists, the Ludendorffs. His growing aversion to them has remained unexplored in the existing secondary literature.<sup>154</sup> Erich Ludendorff had been a military leader during the First World War as well as a leading figure in the early Nazi movement. Towards the end of the 1920s, he and his wife Mathilde strayed from the official course of the party. They rejected Christianity because, according to them, it had destroyed the soul of the German people.<sup>155</sup> Both believed the bible to be a Jewish fraud and Jesus an alcoholic.<sup>156</sup> Mathilde Ludendorff sought to disprove the accounts of Jesus' death on the cross by pointing out inconsistencies and improbabilities in the gospels, contesting that Jesus had merely been 'ei[n] immer wieder vor seinen Gegnern entweichende[r] jüdische[r]

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>151</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, *Die Pioniere des Dritten Reiches* (Essen: Zentralstelle für den deutschen Freiheitskampf, 1933), pp. 188-189; see also BArch/ NS 38\_3606 letter addressed to Otto Lorenz, and BArch NS 38\_3606 letter addressed to Karl Ganzer, dated 17 November 1930.

<sup>152</sup> See Piper, *Alfred Rosenberg*, pp. 409-410.

<sup>153</sup> BArch/ NS 38\_3606 letter addressed to Karl Ganzer.

<sup>154</sup> Wortmann briefly mentions a meeting between Erich Ludendorff and Schirach's Knappenschaft in August 1924, which ended in great disappointment on both sides. See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 38.

<sup>155</sup> See Mathilde Ludendorff, *Erlösung von Jesu Christo* (Munich: Volkswarte, 1931), p. 311.

<sup>156</sup> See Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, p. 89.

Wanderredner und Wunderdoktor',<sup>157</sup> who did not even follow the precepts of his own teaching.<sup>158</sup> Ludendorff formally left the church in 1927 and together with his wife founded the mystical-*völkisch* Tannenberg sect. Later that year Hitler expelled his former ally from the party.<sup>159</sup> Whereas in January 1928 Schirach still published a passionate defence of Ludendorff's *Vernichtung der Freimaurerei* in *Der Nationalsozialist*, stressing his pivotal role in the war against Marxism and freemasonry,<sup>160</sup> he soon afterwards made it very clear where his loyalty lay. In May 1929 Schirach excoriated Mathilde Ludendorff's latest publication, mocking its layout as another 'bekannt[e] Geschmacklosigkeit' and dismissing its content as 'Lügengebäude'. He taunted the author herself as a 'germanische [...] Priesterin'.<sup>161</sup>

Despite this open display of contempt for extreme Germanic or paganist activities, as head of the Hitlerjugend organisation he did not strive to ban pagan tendencies. On the contrary, cults and rituals such as Winter- and Sonnenwendfeiern flourished. This trend caused *Die neue Weltbühne* to mockingly compare him to the 'arische[r] Lichtgott Baldur'.<sup>162</sup> Schirach was not to be deterred however; in June 1936 he declared such activities to be: '[ein] schöner Ausdruck für die Selbstbesinnung der deutschen Nation [...] [auf] jahrtausendealte Bräuche'<sup>163</sup> and added:

Nach dem Sieg der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung sind die Sonnenwendfeuer in Deutschland stärker als je zuvor aufgeflammt. In ihnen und an ihnen bekennen sich Millionen Menschen in unerschütterlicher Treue und Beharrlichkeit zu den alten, heiligen Überlieferungen unseres germanischen Volkstums.

Some of Schirach's poems were evidently recited during these celebrations, for instance Hermann Roth's prominent *Die Feier. Sinn und Gestaltung* recommends his poem 'Die Schwelle' to be used during Winterwendfeiern.<sup>164</sup>

A comparison of Schirach's political actions and public statements with the ideas

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<sup>157</sup> Ludendorff, *Erlösung von Jesu Christo*, p. 127.

<sup>158</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>159</sup> See Annika Spilker, *Geschlecht, Religion und völkischer Nationalismus. Die Ärztin und Antisemitin Mathilde von Kemnitz-Ludendorff* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2013), pp. 206-207 and 212; Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>160</sup> See Schirach, 'Vernichtung der Freimaurerei!'.

<sup>161</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Wir hassen Hitlers Feinde,' *Akademischer Beobachter*, no. 5 (May 1929), p. 5.

<sup>162</sup> 'Baldurs Ende,' *Die neue Weltbühne* 31, no. 37 (12 September 1935).

<sup>163</sup> Schirach, *Revolution der Erziehung*, p. 33; the following quotation *ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> See Roth, *Die Feier*, p. 38.

expressed in his poems thus reveals his ambivalent and changing relationship to the church, Christianity and paganism. In spite of his reputation as a paganist, the references he makes to Christian tradition show that he engaged with Christ and Christianity to a much greater extent than with pagan Germanentum. The poems indeed show a continuity of Christian content. They refer to God, the trinity, creation,<sup>165</sup> and – as demonstrated above – indicate belief in the Christian doctrines of Christ's birth, crucifixion and ascension. They also allude to the idea of a second coming of Christ. However, in one of Schirach's poems, 'Christus Agitator', Hitler is offered as leader with unmistakably messianic features as a (supplementary rather than alternative) vision to the return of the 'Gott [aus] Bethlehem'.<sup>166</sup> While the poems admit to the possibility of a world to come, their focus is in this world, on immanent reality. The social utopia of the Third Reich remains vague, but it is mentioned explicitly twice in Schirach's early poems, neither of which is included in *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*: in 'Auferstehung!' the speaker announces: 'Wir schaffen den Staat der Sehnsucht bald/ Das dritte Reich!'<sup>167</sup> This sentiment is repeated in 'Der Sturmabteilung': 'Wir kämpfen für's kommende dritte Reich.'<sup>168</sup> Although the speaker at least implies divine intervention or support for the National Socialist cause, it is at the same time perceived to be a process of human emancipation and self-determination that will bring about a state in which the church, its 'alte Bahnen'<sup>169</sup> and rituals (prayer to be granted redemption) are no longer a necessity.

If Babik's thoughts on secularisation theory are applied to these findings, Schirach's religious beliefs up to 1933 could well be identified as elements of a secular religion – if we assume, using his letter to Jänicke as a guide, that the views he puts forward in his poems sprang from or correlate to his own. Albeit highly unorthodox, anticlerical and entrenched in an aggressive nationalism, Schirach's beliefs rely too much on Christian tradition to be understood as an attempt to rid German society of Christianity, as suggested by the political religion theory. Even the image of the crucified Germany could be read as an (unorthodox) attempt to invest the biblical story of salvation with temporal significance: following the 'crucifixion' of Germany after the First World War, its logical continuation or consequence is

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<sup>165</sup> See Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 19 and p. 43.

<sup>166</sup> Schirach, 'Christus Agitator' (1929).

<sup>167</sup> Schirach, 'Auferstehung!'.

<sup>168</sup> Schirach, 'Der Sturmabteilung', (no. 6, February 1927).

<sup>169</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 32.

the nation's resurrection and eventually permanent restoration in glory and happiness: the Third Reich.

Schirach's poems stand in distinct contrast to his aggressive conduct in religious matters after the party's rise to power. Therefore Steigmann-Gall is right to suggest that Schirach's anticlerical and in particular anti-Catholic course after 1933 was more the result of a vicious struggle for supremacy over rival youth organisations than a struggle against Christianity. However, the remnants of modernist fideism and pre-Enlightenment Romantic irrationalism, as well as (despite Schirach's early claims to Positive Christianity) the lack of coherence and directive, demonstrate that Schirach cannot serve as an example of Steigmann-Gall's claim that there was an attempt or movement within the party promoting Nazi religiosity as a model with an inherent logic. Schirach was certainly not a theorist, nor was he sufficiently engaged in theological discussions to put his poems forward as part of such an attempt. In 1931, Schirach declared he was a Christian, a Protestant and National Socialist.<sup>170</sup> The tenor of his post-1933 speeches is that he is Christian, but neither Protestant nor Catholic, 'sondern Deutscher'.<sup>171</sup> National identity had taken precedence over religious identity.

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<sup>170</sup> See Schirach, 'Offener Brief'.

<sup>171</sup> Kretschmar, *Dokumente zur Kirchenpolitik*, pp. 182-183.



## CHAPTER 8

### Inside the 'Blechtschmiede der Dichterlinge' – Schirach as cultural functionary in the Third Reich

Germany's youth marching to the beat of the music

Having been appointed Jugendführer of the NSDAP in October 1931, Schirach set up a small office and a flat in Berlin.<sup>1</sup> In the following months the party gained popularity rapidly, increasing its public presence and aggressive propaganda. On 31 July 1932, the NSDAP commanded 37.3% of Reichstag election votes, becoming the strongest political party. Schirach and other NSDAP representatives became members of the Reichstag. Even his parents had to acknowledge that he was making professional progress now. During his interviews with Jochen von Lang, Schirach remembered a letter he received from his father, in which Carl von Schirach wrote:

Weißt Du, das verstehe ich, so in die Politik gehen, als jüngster Abgeordneter in den Reichstag, das hat Zukunft. Und wenn ich auch bisher sehr gezweifelt habe an der Richtigkeit Deines Weges, ich bin jetzt damit einverstanden. Ich finde, Du hast alles getan, was in Deinen Möglichkeiten liegt und eigentlich viel mehr, als man von einem so jungen Menschen erwarten konnte.<sup>2</sup>

Schirach's private life also held new challenges for him. In January 1933, his wife gave birth to a daughter, Angelika, named after Hitler's late niece Geli Raubal.<sup>3</sup> Over the following years, three sons followed, Klaus (1935), Robert (1938) and Richard (1942). Henriette von Schirach wrote later that her husband only ever saw their daughter briefly before he had to leave hastily to speak at yet another of many public meetings.<sup>4</sup>

In January 1933, Hitler was sworn in as Reichskanzler. After the Nazi party's rise to power, Schirach's career skyrocketed. On 17 June 1933 he was officially appointed Jugendführer des Deutschen Reiches.<sup>5</sup> His objective was clear: 'Die gesamte deutsche Jugend ist außer in Elternhaus und Schule in der Hitlerjugend körperlich, geistig und sittlich im Geiste

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<sup>1</sup> The registers show an address in close proximity of the Kleinen Wannsee. During the interviews with Jochen von Lang, Schirach confirms that he lived in Wannsee at the time. In July 1935, another more central address in Wilmsdorf appears in the register. One year later, the Schirach also acquired Haus Aspenstein, a holiday home in Kochel am See, convenient distance from Hitler's Berghof. See Landesarchiv Berlin, Historische Einwohnermeldekartei, Bestand B Rep. 021; Langzeitinterviews I, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> See IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS/ 'Der Führer der nächsten Generation' in: *Hamburger Anzeiger*, dated 1 July 1933; see also Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> See Schirach, *Der Preis der Herrlichkeit*, p. 200.

<sup>5</sup> See IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS/ 'Der Reichskanzler hat [...] verfügt' in: *Völkischer Beobachter*, dated 18-19 June 1933.

des Nationalsozialismus zum Dienst am Volk und zur Volksgemeinschaft zu erziehen.’<sup>6</sup> The increasing radicalisation of the Hitlerjugend and the role it played in indoctrinating the young generation have been explored numerous times before, as has Schirach’s role as Reichsjugendführer. Both, will therefore only be examined to the extent they were relevant to his poetry. The intention is not to diminish or ignore the suffering when the military games and camping trips turned into bitter reality, nor the pain caused when state indoctrination turned children against their own non-conformist parents.<sup>7</sup> Instead, my focus lies in the literary and cultural role Schirach and his poetry played in the National Socialist state and therefore, in precisely this pain and suffering.

Schirach’s actions as Reichsjugendführer are explored in detail in Wortmann’s biography *Baldur von Schirach. Hitlers Jugendführer* (1982). According to Wortmann, Schirach fulfilled his role resolutely and passionately, driven by his craving for recognition and, above all, for power.<sup>8</sup> Despite many political successes, Wortmann points out that, particularly during the first years of the Third Reich, the state of the Reichsjugendführung was usually chaotic. Money and resources were spent unwisely, orders were ignored or passed on incorrectly and Schirach was not cut out to bring these incidents under control, relying instead on his competent staff.<sup>9</sup> More often than not he did not live up to his own standards. Hitlerjugend members were expected to sleep in tents when attending summer camps while Schirach himself preferred to stay in hotels; he spoke of healthy diet and exercise, while his own figure became noticeably softer and rounder.<sup>10</sup> Although genuinely enthusiastic about his work, his pedagogical ideas were immature and lacked a theoretical framework: ‘Ebenso wie Hitler huldigte er dem Autodidaktentum, Bildung verstand er allein als Erlebnis.’<sup>11</sup> At times callous and arrogant in his manner (when he could afford to conduct himself that way), his influence grew steadily until the outbreak of the war. His powerful position was partly based on his widespread popularity among young people and partly on his close ties to Hitler. Wortmann’s representation of Schirach’s work as Reichsjugendführer has remained widely influential until the present day. Jochen von Lang’s *Der Hitler-Junge* (1988) and more recently Koontz’s study *The Public Polemics of Baldur von Schirach* (2003) describe

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 144.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Evans, *The Third Reich*, pp. 271-282.

<sup>8</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 119.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 119 and p. 137.

<sup>10</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 132 and p. 138.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

his conduct along very similar lines. Michael Buddrus explores Nazi ideology and youth politics in *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg* (2003) and although Schirach is not at the centre of his study, his efforts to win Germany's youth for (military) service and unconditional love for the Führer and the fatherland feature prominently.<sup>12</sup>

Even before the publication of the 1933 edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*, which contained only two new poems, Schirach's poetic production had slowly ebbed. That, however, does not mean that the existing poems sank into oblivion. After the National Socialist party's rise to power and Schirach's subsequent appointment as Reichsjugendführer, his poems were put to music and appeared in numerous songbooks. This is only mentioned in passing in existing studies on Schirach.<sup>13</sup> The publications were usually – but not always – issued by state institutions, for instance his own office, the NSDStB or the Reichsamtsleitung des Nationalsozialistischen Lehrerbundes. As the titles indicate, they were aimed at the young generation: *Deutsche Jugend heraus* (1934), *Wir Mädels singen* (1937) and *Junge Gefolgschaft* (1937) to name just a few.<sup>14</sup> Among the most popular were 'Stellt euch um die Standarte rund' (the first line of 'Sieg', the final poem of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*) and 'Unsere Fahne flattert uns voran!', which was the theme song of the popular propaganda film *Hitlerjunge Quex* [1933]).<sup>15</sup> Both have optimistic lyrics and are centred on nationalist symbols. The lyrics of the latter were first printed without a title in an article about the making of the film published in *Der Angriff* in August 1933.<sup>16</sup> The first stanza reads:

Vorwärts! Vorwärts! Schmetter die hellen Fanfaren,  
Vorwärts! Vorwärts! Jugend kennt keine Gefahren.  
Deutschland, du wirst leuchtend stehn,  
mögen wir auch untergeh'n.  
Vorwärts! Vorwärts! Schmetter die hellen Fanfaren,  
Vorwärts! Vorwärts! Jugend kennt keine Gefahren.  
Ist das Ziel auch noch so hoch,  
Jugend zwingt es doch.  
Unsere Fahne flattert uns voran,  
in die Zukunft ziehn wir Mann für Mann.  
Wir marschieren für Hitler durch Nacht und durch Not,

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<sup>12</sup> See Lang, *Der Hitler-Junge*; Koontz, *The Public Polemics*; Michael Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg. Hitlerjugend und nationalsozialistische Jugendpolitik* (Munich: Saur, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>14</sup> See Hamburger Sparcasse von 1827, ed., *Deutsche Jugend heraus!*, 2nd edn. (Hamburg, 1934); Kulturamt der Reichsjugendführung, ed., *Wir Mädels singen* (Berlin: Kallmeyer, 1937); Reichsjugendführung, ed., *Junge Gefolgschaft. Neue Lieder der Hitlerjugend* (Berlin: Kallmeyer, 1937).

<sup>15</sup> See Rolf Giesen and Manfred Hobsch, *Hitlerjunge Quex, Jud Süß und Kolberg. Die Propagandafilme des Dritten Reiches. Dokumente und Materialien zum NS-Film* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2005), pp. 31-34

<sup>16</sup> See 'Deutschlands Jugend Deutschlands Zukunft,' *Der Angriff* (August 19, 1933), p. 4.

mit der Fahne der Jugend für Freiheit und Brot.  
Unsere Fahne flattert uns voran.  
Unsere Fahne ist die neue Zeit.  
Und die Fahne führt uns in die Ewigkeit.  
Ja, die Fahne ist mehr als der Tod!

Schirach's usual mixture of facile fearlessness and hollow heroism, led by the Nazi symbol, is set to upbeat marching music. The melody is catchy; the lyrics are repetitive and easy to memorise. The song promises a new beginning, evoking national glory ('Deutschland, du wirst leuchtend stehn') and prosperity ('für Freiheit und Brot'). To the young boys who marched singing these lines, it promised fantasies of manliness ('Mann für Mann') and an active role and purpose in the state, no matter how vaguely this was defined ('Ist das Ziel auch noch so hoch,/ Jugend zwingt es doch.'). The lyrics insist it is enough to know that one is going 'Vorwärts', even though death may be waiting at the end of the path. Whatever dangers await, they remain nebulous and inconsequential ('Jugend kennt keine Gefahren'). The music reaches the highest point in its penultimate line, emphasising the last word ('Und die Fahne führt uns in die Ewigkeit') and then, returning to the previous pitch, the last line follows ('Ja, die Fahne der ist mehr als der Tod!'), almost like an afterthought. 'Jugend' is continuously used without the definite article; as well as being a key word in the song this usage underlines its brisk and catchy quality and is also linguistically more casual, almost juvenile.

Although 'Stellt euch um die Standarte rund' and 'Unsere Fahne flattert uns voran' were certainly the most popular of Schirach's poms that were set to music (if printing numbers are any indicator), they were not the only ones. Other poems by Schirach also found their way into songbooks, most notably 'Das Lied vom Führer' ('Hitler'), 'Durch Taten!' and 'Meiner Mutter'.<sup>17</sup> After the war broke out, the songs were also included in booklets for soldiers, for example *Soldaten des Führers* (1943) and *Chorliederbuch für die Wehrmacht* (1940).<sup>18</sup> Schirach's poetry was thus made available to a much wider audience than before. And its numbers were increasing; the Hitlerjugend grew rapidly thanks to its new resources and influence in the state since the party's rise to power. By the end of 1933, the Hitlerjugend officially counted 2.3 million members. In 1935 this figure reached 4 million

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<sup>17</sup> See Gerhard Pallmann, ed., *Wohlauf Kameraden!*, 2nd edn. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1934); Carl Hannemann, Walter Rein, and Hans Lang, eds., *Lobeda*; Fachgruppe Musik in der Fachschaft II des NSEB München, ed., *Unser Lied. Liederbuch für höhere Schulen* (Augsburg: Böhm, 1935).

<sup>18</sup> See Karl Foltz, ed., *Soldaten des Führers*, 2nd edn. (Potsdam: Voggenreiter, 1943); Fritz Stein and Ernst-Lothar von Knorr, eds., *Chorliederbuch für die Wehrmacht. Kriegsausgabe* (Leipzig: Peters, 1940).

and by early 1939 it boasted 8.7 million members.<sup>19</sup> In their educational work, Hitlerjugend leaders were required to give plenty of attention to music and poetry, not least, Wortmann suspects, to reduce further the influence of school. They organised music camps, concerts, theatre festivals, film screenings and book readings by popular authors (Agnes Miegel, Börries von Münchhausen, Hanns Johst).<sup>20</sup> During the summer months, the Hitlerjugend organised camping trips, which were attended by tens of thousands of teenagers. Every day started with a Kennwort, Tagesspruch, Lied, Morgenfeier and Gemeinschaftsstunde.<sup>21</sup> Schirach's poetry served as material for ceremonies like these and many more: the third stanza of 'An einen Arbeiter' ('Aus unserm Handschlag wächst empor/ der Glaube, den das Volk verlor'<sup>22</sup>) became the theme of May Day Labour Day celebrations.<sup>23</sup> 'Mit unsern Fahnen ist die Zeit'<sup>24</sup> (the final line from 'Geduld') and 'Sei auch ein Träger dieser deutschen Tat,/ die größer ist als alles, was da war' (the opening lines of 'Auch Du!') served as themes for anniversary celebrations of Hitler's appointment as Reichskanzler.<sup>25</sup> 'Ja, die Fahne ist mehr als der Tod'<sup>26</sup> (the final line of the chorus of 'Unsere Fahne flattert uns voran!') and 'Nicht in alten Bahnen/ ist Gott./ Du kannst ihn ahnen,/ wo die Fahnen des Glaubens when'<sup>27</sup> (the opening stanza of 'Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle' without the last two words 'am Schafott') were considered suitable mottos for the ceremonial dedication of the flags and pennants.<sup>28</sup> 'Die Siege unserer Jugend sind/ ein Ruf an alle, die noch ruhn'<sup>29</sup> (the final two lines of 'Sieg') was chosen as a theme for commemorations of Herbert Norkus's death.<sup>30</sup> 'Siehe, es leuchtet die Schwelle,/ die uns vom Dunkel befreit'<sup>31</sup> was used at winter solstice festivities.<sup>32</sup>

Another triumph for Schirach that has been overlooked in existing secondary literature was the publication of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten. Ein Zyklus für Männerchor nach dem*

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<sup>19</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 109-112; Evans, *The Third Reich*, p. 272.

<sup>20</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 154.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>22</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> See Hermann Roth, *Die Feier*, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 34; the following quotation *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>25</sup> See Roth, *Die Feier*, p. 37.

<sup>26</sup> Böhme, *Rufe in das Reich*, p. 360.

<sup>27</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 32.

<sup>28</sup> See Roth, *Die Feier*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>29</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 58.

<sup>30</sup> See Roth, *Die Feier*, p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> Baldur von Schirach, *FnF*, p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> See Roth, *Die Feier*, p. 38.

*gleichnamigen Gedichtband von Baldur von Schirach*, composed by Herbert Müntzel, a popular composer of Volkslieder in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>33</sup> The cycle contains eight pieces, divided into two parts and following the chronological order of Schirach's 1933 collection. The first part begins with 'An die Fahne' (in Schirach's 1933 edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten* this is poem number 1), 'In uns ist das Schweigen...' (3), 'Da Ihr noch spieltet:' (5) and 'Die Einen und die Andern' (9). The second part continues with 'Mag unser Sein' (14), 'Der Tote' (20), 'Heimkehr' (23) and closes with 'Auch Du!' (50). The compositions are mostly slow and contemplative, written for tenor and bass voices. The instructions for the singers amplify this effect. The first lines of 'In uns ist das Schweigen...' ('In uns ist das Schweigen der Weihe/ gewaltiger Zeit,/ Ernst und bereit/ und feierlich ist unsere Reihe.') are to be sung 'Sehr ernst, anfangs fast gesprochen'.<sup>34</sup> The finishing lines ('Denn Dein Wollen sind wir/ auch unbewußt. Tief in der/ Brust/ ahnst Du: wir sprechen von Dir') are delivered 'weich' and 'äußerst zart'.<sup>35</sup> Instructions to sing 'rezitativisch'<sup>36</sup> and 'fast gesprochen'<sup>37</sup> occur repeatedly; 'Die Einen und die Andern', however, begins 'mit Empörung'.<sup>38</sup> The music for the first and the last song is identical ('Auch Du' is supposed to be sung 'Eindringlich (etwas langsamer als in Nr.1)'<sup>39</sup>, reflecting the thematic framework of the original *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*.

In January 1934 the journal *Die Musik* published a very positive review written by none other than Theodor W. Adorno. Given his critical views on Nazism and his own precarious situation in the National Socialist state, which led him to leave Germany the same year, the positive review astonishes today:

Aus den jüngsten Chorphublikationen des Verlages Merseburger [...] hebt sich weit heraus der Zyklus von *Herbert Müntzel*. Nicht bloß weil er, durch die Wahl der Gedichte *Schirachs* als bewußt nationalsozialistisch markiert ist, sondern auch durch seine Qualität: ein ungewöhnlicher Gestaltungswille. Es geht nicht um patriotische Stimmung und vage Begeisterung, sondern die Frage nach der Möglichkeit von neuer Volksmusik selber wird, durch die Komposition, ernst gestellt. Die Antwort, die Müntzel erteilt, ist etwa von dieser Art: gegenüber der herkömmlichen, unerträglichen und untragbaren Männerchorweise wird eine Korrektur versucht durch Rückgriff auf das ältere mehrstimmige deutsche Volkslied zumal des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts; gegenüber allen musikwissenschaftlich-archaischen Tendenzen zu dessen 'Renaissance' jedoch dadurch Freiheit gewahrt, daß *harmonisch* am spätromantischen Material festgehalten, die Mittel

<sup>33</sup> Wortmann does not directly mention Müntzel's *Zyklus*. He quotes a few words of Adorno's review and refers his reader to Joachim C. Fest's *Hitler. Eine Biografie*. Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 63 and p. 237.

<sup>34</sup> Herbert Müntzel, *Die Fahne der Verfolgten. Ein Zyklus für Männerchor nach dem gleichnamigen Gedichtband von Baldur von Schirach* (Leipzig: Merseburger, n.d.), p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

rezitativischen Sprechgesanges einbezogen, insgesamt ein Ausgleich zwischen Kontrapunkt und Vertikale angestrebt wird. Kriegerverein und Neoklassik sind beide negiert, und es wird dem Bild einer neuen *Romantik* nachgefragt; vielleicht von der Art, die Goebbels als 'romantischen Realismus' bestimmt hat. [...] es steht mir außer allem Zweifel, daß ein Stück wie 'Der Tote' von der denkbar stärksten – und auch einer sehr originellen Wirkung sein muß.<sup>40</sup>

Interestingly, Adorno does not comment on the lyrics; he steers the attention away from the words and focuses on the music.

Almost twenty years later, in 1963, Adorno's review caught up with him. Irritated readers were incensed that he of all people, having established a reputation as one of Germany's most stern and admonitory voices regarding the Holocaust, had compromised himself and his moral integrity by writing this review. They pointed out the political content of Schirach's poetry, particularly 'Volk ans Gewehr' and 'Der Tote'. Adorno published an open letter, expressing his regret:

Daß ich jene Kritik damals schrieb, bedaure ich aufs tiefste. Anstößig ist vor allem, daß es sich um Gedichte von Schirach handelt. Ich kann mich freilich nicht darauf besinnen, daß die von Ihnen zitierte Scheußlichkeit, das erste Gedicht ['Volk ans Gewehr'], sich unter denen von Müntzel komponierten Texten befand; sonst hätte ich fraglos die Chöre zurückgegeben. Den Gedichtband selbst kannte und kenne ich nicht.<sup>41</sup>

Adorno's claim to have been ignorant of the poem's author is contradicted by the fact that firstly, Schirach's name is printed quite prominently on Müntzel's booklet (*Die Musik* had been chosen by the office of the Reichsjugendführer to serve as a newsletter for music and cultural projects only three months earlier). Secondly, Adorno referred to Schirach by name in his original review. Since then, publications on Adorno have brought up this circumstance repeatedly, and it has been discussed to what extent this review ought to be read as an indicator that even Adorno felt enough pressure to try to get on the good side of the Nazi regime.<sup>42</sup> Whatever the case, Adorno's review certainly indicates recognition of the Nazi movement's attempts to establish new forms of art: 'gegenüber der herkömmlichen,

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<sup>40</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, 'Aus den jüngsten Chorphublikationen,' in *Die Musik. Amtliches Organ der NS-Kulturgemeinde. 26. Jahrgang. Zweiter Halbjahresband (April 1934-September 1934)* (Berlin: Hesses, 1934), issue no 9, p. 712.

<sup>41</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, 'Ein offener Brief,' *Der Diskus. Frankfurter Student-innenzeitschrift* 13, no. 1 (January 1963), p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> See Ralf Dahrendorf, *Versuchungen der Unfreiheit: die Intellektuellen in Zeiten der Prüfung* (Munich: Beck, 2006), pp. 16-17.; Espen Hammer, *Adorno and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 51-52.; Karen Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics 1900-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2007), pp. 211-212.

unerträglichen und untragbaren Männerchorweise wird eine Korrektur versucht'<sup>43</sup> which is, according to Adorno, 'von einer sehr originellen Wirkung'. To be sure, this neither means that this was a successful attempt, nor that it was necessarily entirely original. On the contrary, Adorno clearly points out the cycle's recourse to older traditions, its 'Rückgriff auf das ältere, mehrstimmige deutsche Volkslied'. The collection, Adorno argues, successfully avoids bland imitation and instead achieves a harmony of old and new: 'daß *harmonisch* am spätromantischen Material festgehalten, [...] insgesamt ein Ausgleich zwischen Kontrapunkt und Vertikale angestrebt wird'. He admits to the composition's 'denkbar stärkste [...] Wirkung' and by doing so, intentionally or unintentionally, evaluates it by the standards by which Schirach himself tended to value art: its emotional effect.

### Schirach and the Hitlerjugend

Alongside his busy schedule of administrative, organisational and representative duties, Schirach also took on new writing and cultural projects designed to stabilise Nazi rule. In 1933, he published *Die Pioniere des Dritten Reiches*. The book contains one hundred and twenty-four encyclopaedic entries on (exclusively male) persons associated with the movement. Hitler, as is explained in the foreword, is not on this list; rather the publication is designed to shed light on those around him who helped to establish the National Socialist movement as a serious political force: 'Wer der Meinung ist, daß die Bewegung Adolf Hitlers eine des "zufälligen" Erfolges, des "Massenwahnes" ist, den wird vielleicht die Erkenntnis von der Stabilität der Führung eines Besseren belehren.'<sup>44</sup> The short biographies of usually two to three pages are paired with portrait photos. Among the men listed are many who would later hold important political or military offices and cultural functionary positions in the Nazi state (Bormann, R. Walther Darré, Gottfried Feder, Heß, Hanns Kerrl, Robert Ley, Rosenberg, Sauckel, Streicher etc.). The list also included Ernst Röhm, one of the founding members of the NSDAP and SA chief of staff, who would be executed one year later, having strayed from the official party line and become a rival to Hitler. Not only political, military or intellectual achievements are stressed in the biographies of the 'Pioniere'; Schirach also

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<sup>43</sup> Adorno, 'Aus den jüngsten Chorpublikationen'; the following quotations *ibid*.

<sup>44</sup> Schirach, *Die Pioniere*, p. 13.



gives glowing accounts of their character traits and personal charm. Göring is celebrated with the romantic epithet 'der Palladin seines Führers'.<sup>45</sup> Goebbels is declared to be 'der populärste Mann Berlins. [...] Er hat etwas an sich, das auch seine Todfeinde faszinieren muß'.<sup>46</sup>

Schirach's name also repeatedly appeared on publications in connection with the Hitlerjugend and photography volumes that his father-in-law Heinrich Hoffmann produced. He wrote prefaces to Hoffmann's *Triumph des Willens. Kampf und Aufstieg Adolf Hitlers und seiner Bewegung* (1933), *Jugend um Hitler* (1934) as well as for the Hitlerjugend and Bund Deutscher Mädel publications *H.J. im Dienst* (1935), *Glaube und Schönheit* (1940) and other publications approved by the NSDAP such as Rudolf Ramlow's *Herbert Norkus? – Hier!* (1933) and Erich Beier-Lindhardt's *Ein Buch vom Führer* (1933).<sup>47</sup> In them, he emphasised the (supposedly) strong bond between the German youth and Hitler, celebrating him as 'Vater seines treuen und geliebten Volkes'<sup>48</sup> and 'ihrem [der deutschen Jugend] treusten Freund'.<sup>49</sup> In other instances he conjured up again the image of the shared 'Volkkörper': 'Euch soll es [das Buch] ein Bild geben von Größe und Werk des Mannes, in dem auch ihr verkörpert seid'.<sup>50</sup> He also impressed on his young audience the values of selflessness and duty: 'Erziehe Dich selbst zu Selbstlosigkeit! Wer gelernt hat, zuletzt an sich selbst zu denken, ist der beste Bürger des neuen Reiches'.<sup>51</sup> He supported contemporary *völkisch* authors such as Eberhard Möller. For instance in 1938 he was editor of Möller's semi-biographical book *Der Führer*. Möller was also a speaker at the festival week *Dramatiker der HJ*, which took place under the patronage of Schirach and Goebbels in 1937.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 78-79.

<sup>47</sup> See Heinrich Hoffmann, ed., *Der Triumph des Willens. Kampf und Aufstieg Adolf Hitlers und seiner Bewegung* (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte, 1933); Heinrich Hoffmann, ed., *Jugend um Hitler. 120 Bilddokumente aus der Umgebung des Führers* (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte, 1940); Reichsjugendführung, ed., *H.J. im Dienst. Ausbildungsvorschrift für die Ertüchtigung der Jugend* (Berlin: Bernard & Graese, 1935); Reichsjugendführung ed., *Aufbau, Gliederung und Anschriften der Hitler-Jugend* (Berlin: Hitler-Jugend-Bewegung, 1934); Clementine zu Castell, ed., *Glaube und Schönheit. Ein Bildbuch von den 17-21jährigen Mädeln* (Munich: Eher, 1940); Erich Beier-Lindhart, *Ein Buch vom Führer für die deutsche Jugend*, 7th edn. (Oldenburg: Stalling, 1943).

<sup>48</sup> *Adolf Hitler in Bilddokumenten seiner Zeit III. Kommentierter Nachdruck der Originalausgaben* (Hamburg: Verlag für geschichtliche Dokumentation, 1979), p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> *Adolf Hitler in Bilddokumenten seiner Zeit I. Kommentierter Nachdruck der Originalausgaben* (Hamburg: Verlag für geschichtliche Dokumentation, 1979), p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> Beier-Lindhart, *Ein Buch vom Führer*, no page number given.

<sup>51</sup> Reichsjugendführung, *H.J. im Dienst*. no page number given.

<sup>52</sup> See Eberhard Wolfgang Möller, *Der Führer*, ed. Baldur von Schirach (Munich: Eher, 1938); Reichsjugendführung and Stadttheater Bochum, eds., *Dramatiker der HJ. Sonderheft zur Theaterwoche der Hitler-Jugend verbunden mit einer Reichstheatertragung der Hitler-Jugend vom 11.-18. April 1937* (Bochum, 1937).

Schirach announced the didactic and pedagogical principles of his politics in *Die Hitler-Jugend. Idee und Gestalt* (1934) and *Revolution der Erziehung. Reden aus den Jahren des Aufbaus* (1938). The former can be seen as little more than a 'Organisationshandbuch'.<sup>53</sup> The latter however, a collection of twenty-three of his speeches, had sold 90,000 copies in four editions by 1943.<sup>54</sup> Some are designed to communicate his pedagogical ideas to German teenagers and parents – 'Der politische Weg der H.J.' and 'Um die Einheit der Erziehung' – while others serve to reinforce belief in the movement's martyrs – 'Neujahrsbotschaft am Grabe Herbert Norkus' and the tenets of National Socialism that he also had propagated in his poetry – 'Vor der Fahne der Jugend sind alle gleich'. There is, however, no evidence that he quoted from his own poems in his speeches.

Schirach further strengthened his cultural influence by making himself patron of the previously mentioned propaganda film *Hitlerjunge Quex* that was released in September 1933.<sup>55</sup> It was based on a novel of the same name, written by *völkisch* writer Alois Schenzinger, who was widely read among children and teenagers. The novel is a fictionalised and dramatised adaptation of the life and violent death of fifteen-year-old Herbert Norkus, who, in the novel, prior to his death undergoes a political conversion and joins the Hitlerjugend. Schirach encouraged Schenzinger to write the novel, which was published only one year before the film, and worked with him on the final version. For the film shooting he made more than sixty Hitlerjugend boys and girls available. The film not only used the aesthetics of proletarian cinema but also some of its stars, popular actors Heinrich George, Berta Drews, and Rotraut Richter. It achieved the rating 'künstlerisch besonders wertvoll'<sup>56</sup> and received glowing reviews. The *Illustrierter Filmkurier* commented: 'Der kleine tapfere Soldat ist den Heldentod gestorben, für seine Sache, für die Kameraden, für die heißgeliebte Fahne und den Führer. Aber andere deutsche Jungens reißen die Fahne wieder hoch, die mit dem Blut eines der besten geweiht ist.'<sup>57</sup>

According to Schirach, he was in Austria, working with Schenzinger on the novel, when he received the news of the Reichstag fire and travelled back to Germany

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<sup>53</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 113.

<sup>54</sup> See Schirach, *Revolution der Erziehung*.

<sup>55</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>56</sup> Giesen and Hobsch, *Hitlerjunge Quex*, p. 32.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

immediately.<sup>58</sup> The mass arrests and violence against tens of thousands of Communists that followed were only a foretaste of the brutalities that were to come.<sup>59</sup> The Nazi party soon seized control of all areas of public life, including arts, literature, education and research. As minister of propaganda, Goebbels soon controlled the media, theatre, film and almost all other aspects of intellectual and cultural life. In May 1933 Jewish members of the Preußische Akademie für Dichtung were excluded from membership. Their places were filled with *völkisch* and nationalist writers such as Hans-Friedrich Blunck, Hans Carossa, Hanns Johst, Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer and Agnes Miegel. Remaining members were warned that they were expected to demonstrate loyal co-operation.<sup>60</sup> Other cultural institutions underwent similar changes. For instance, the board of the German section of the PEN-Club had either left the country or resigned upon receiving the news of the Reichstag elections in March 1933. The party seized the opportunity to carry out a fundamental re-organisation of the Club. Many of the new board members were also members of Rosenberg's Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur. Soon after the new board was installed, Schirach became a club member along with other well-known National Socialists, such as Franz Schauwecker and Rainer Schlösser.<sup>61</sup>

In 1935, *völkisch* writer Hanns Johst superseded Hans-Friedrich Blunck as president of the Reichschrifttumskammer, an institution installed by Goebbels that was responsible for issuing writing licenses. It swiftly proceeded to exclude Jewish or otherwise undesirable writers from literary professions.<sup>62</sup> Given these circumstances, many Jewish or left wing writers and other opponents of the Nazi party left the country. Within months, Germany lost a large part of its intellectual elite, which left a gap the Nazis eagerly, but unsuccessfully, tried to fill. Schirach supported what he considered young talents. In December 1935, he presented his staff and close friends with a small collection of poetry, *Vom Glauben der Gemeinschaft*.<sup>63</sup> It contained twenty poems written anonymously by members of the Hitlerjugend. Schirach was delighted: '[...] sie [die Gedichtsammlung] offenbart uns besser

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<sup>58</sup> See Langzeitinterviews I, p. 151. Schenzinger and Schirach collaborated frequently around this time; Schenzinger printed one of Schirach's poems, 'An einen Arbeiter', in the first issue of his journal *Der braune Reiter*. See Baldur von Schirach, 'An einen Arbeiter,' *Der braune Reiter* 1, no. 1–2 (April 1933), p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> See Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> See Jan-Pieter Barbian, *Literaturpolitik im 'Dritten Reich'. Institutionen, Kompetenzen, Betätigungsfelder*, 2nd edn. (Munich: dtv, 1995), p. 75.

<sup>61</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 80–82.

<sup>62</sup> See Düsterberg, *Hanns Johst*, p. 71.

<sup>63</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, ed., *Vom Glauben der Gemeinschaft* (Berlin: Frisch, 1935), no page number given.

als alle Berichte den Glauben der Kommenden und ihre Treue und Tapferkeit.' Usually the titles of the poems are brief and generic, i.e. 'Fahne', 'Volk' and 'Kampf'. It remains unclear whether the young writers intentionally imitated Schirach's poetic style or whether he tended to select those whose poetry resembled to his own. Whatever the case, the similarities in style and tone are undeniable. A brief comparison of one of the anonymous pieces, 'Volk', and Schirach's poem 'Hitler' (1929), illustrates this point (for in-depth discussion of 'Hitler', see chapter five).

### Volk

War Einer – der erfaßte Dich und mich. –  
Sein Blut war mächtig und zerstäubte sich!

Und unsre Herzen flogen ganz ihm zu.  
Wir meinten Deutschland – und wir sagten: Du!

Und seine Stimme über Dir und mir  
Griff aus den vielen Worten eines: Wir!

So ward ein Volk, wie keines noch ihm glich. –  
Ward eins! Und diese Einheit – die sagt: Ich!<sup>64</sup>

### Hitler

Ihr seid viel tausend hinter mir,  
und ihr seid ich und ich bin ihr.

Ich habe keinen Gedanken gelebt,  
der nicht in euren Herzen gebebt.

Und forme ich Worte, so weiss ich keins,  
das nicht mit eurem Wollen eins.

Denn ich bin ihr und ihr seid ich,  
und wir alle glauben, Deutschland, an Dich!<sup>65</sup>

The parallels in tone, imagery and theme are immediately obvious. Regarding formal aspects, the young writer also did not stray far from the simple path Schirach had carved. If

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., no page number given, poem 5.

<sup>65</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 39.

anything, the meter in 'Volk' is even more regular than Schirach's. The writer uses regular iambic pentameter, whereas 'Hitler' uses a slightly irregular iambic tetrameter. In both poems, the sentences do not stretch beyond the stanzas. The unknown writer connects the last three of his stanzas with conjunctions 'Und' and 'so'; Schirach uses the same technique in his last two stanzas. Hitler as Germany's 'Führer' is at the centre of both pieces; the title 'Hitler' identifies him as poetic speaker of Schirach's poem. Although he remains unnamed in 'Volk', there can be no doubt about who is equated with Germany here: 'Wir meinten Deutschland – und wir sagten: Du!'

Whereas 'Hitler' is set in the present, the speaker in the young writer's poem looks back into the past. In the first line Hitler is introduced as a well-established power: 'War Einer – der erfaßte Dich und mich.' The poem begins mid-sentence, giving it an informal air. This is further enhanced by the frequent use of punctuation, hyphens, and exclamation marks, another feature that is also often found in Schirach's writing. These break off and start new syntactic structures ('War einer – der erfaßte Dich und mich'), creating the impression of spontaneous, emphatic speech.

In 'Volk', Hitler's 'Führer' status is introduced as naturally given. It is his powerful blood that authorises him. The imagery and language used is energetic: the blood is 'zerstäubt', suggesting both movement and intangibility. His followers are quickly captivated ('Herzen flogen'). His voice is bodiless ('seine Stimme [...] griff aus den vielen Worten eines') but nonetheless appears strong through the author's use of personification. The voice, heart and blood, normally physical and therefore stable, clearly located entities, are detached from the body and rendered omnipresent. As far as the characterisation of Hitler is concerned, the poem repeats the portrayal of Hitler as God-like found in Schirach's poetry. He appears powerful, incorporeal, his voice booming from above ('über Dir und mir'). This impression is intensified by the beginning of the last stanza ('so ward') that is reminiscent of the diction of the biblical narrative of genesis.

The crux of both poems lies in the question of identity and the community's relationship to Hitler. This is already indicated in the abundance of personal pronouns in both poems; almost every line of 'Volk' ends on a personal pronoun. 'Hitler' explores the relationship between the community, the 'viel tausend', by using a fictionalised Hitler as the poetic speaker. As has been discussed in chapter five, this raises the question of the role of the poet, the 'Worteformer', who claims to have insight into Hitler's mind. By contrast, in 'Volk'

Hitler is perceived as an external entity ('Einer'), and there is a collective 'uns' consisting of individuals, 'Dir' und 'Mir'. The collective is united in its love for Hitler but divided by its disparate thoughts ('viele [...] Worte'). Hitler unifies and simplifies: before, there were many voices and confusion: 'seine Stimme [...] griff aus vielen Worten eines: Wir!' In the last stanza, 'Dich' and 'mich' have disappeared. Finally, the collective voice sounds; it does not use the plural form 'Wir' but the singular 'Ich' as if spoken by one mind. It is here, in the very last line that the writer switches to the present tense, emphasising that the process of unification has been completed. As has often been pointed out, the united spirit in a Volksgemeinschaft as celebrated in the poem did not exist in the Third Reich in the way that is suggested here. The poem does, however, show that this ideal was taken up and reinforced by the young generation. The idea of identity within a community that is expressed or invoked here is an ideal that Schirach as Reichsjugendführer emphasised over and over again: 'Frei sind wir alle, doch wir sehn im Dienen/ mehr Freiheit als im eigenen Befehle',<sup>66</sup> the speaker declares in another of his poems, 'Das neue Geschlecht': 'Zu einem Willen die Massen geballt,/ Der immer gleich!',<sup>67</sup> the speaker jubilates in 'Auferstehung!'. This idea was also repeated and reinforced by others close to Schirach. Hanns Johst, for example, addressed German youth in a lengthy article published in Schirach's latest journal *Wille und Macht* in February 1935, congratulating them on the freedom they could find in the community and in their uniforms.<sup>68</sup> The existence of a poem like the anonymous 'Volk' suggests that this idea was accepted in a largely unreflected fashion, at least by selected members of the Hitlerjugend, who were then rewarded by the state leadership through the publication of the poem. The fact that the poems are published anonymously is another sign of the de-individualisation of the writer in the Nazi era.

Schirach also was editor of two new collections of poetry and songs, *Blut und Ehre. Lieder der Hitler-Jugend* (1933) and another anonymous collection of Hitlerjugend writing, *Das Lied der Getreuen. Verse ungenannter österreichischer Hitler-Jugend aus den Jahren der Verfolgung 1933-1937* (1938). The former is a collection of songs and marches, ranging from the 16th century to the 1930s. Many of the songs, as is pointed out in the annotations at the

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<sup>66</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 12.

<sup>67</sup> Schirach, 'Auferstehung!'

<sup>68</sup> See Johst, 'Freiheit in der Gemeinschaft,' *Wille und Macht* 3 (1 February 1935), p. 4. Correspondence held by the DLA shows that the Schirach and Johst frequently collaborated and were on very friendly terms. See DLA/A: Langen-Müller, nr. 84.1123/11.

beginning or end of each poem, originated during the Peasant Wars (for example ‘Gott gnad dem großmächtigen Kaiser’<sup>69</sup>), the Befreiungskriege (for example ‘Ihr lustigen Hannoveraner’<sup>70</sup>), or the First World War (the collection includes several songs by Hermann Löns<sup>71</sup> and ‘Wildgänse rauschen durch die Nacht’<sup>72</sup> by Walter Flex, who both died in the First World War<sup>73</sup>). The collection also includes many popular folk songs from eighteenth and nineteenth century. Whereas the music varies from energetic marches to slower and more melancholy melodies, the texts are decidedly belligerent throughout: nearly all feature knights, horses, soldiers of all ranks, sabres, muskets, trumpets and fanfares, brave men vowing to protect the fatherland against enemies in bloody fights and even sea battles. While the authors of some of the songs, in particular the older ones, are unknown, a good many well-known names are among them: the previously mentioned Hermann Löns and Hoffmann von Fallersleben<sup>74</sup> appear prominently with several entries; others only feature once, such as Ernst Moritz Arndt’s ‘Vaterlandslied’<sup>75</sup> and the famous ‘Wiegenlied aus dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg’ by Ricarda Huch.<sup>76</sup> Other contemporary authors include Börries von Münchhausen,<sup>77</sup> and the Hitlerjugend leader, functionary and writer Werner Altendorf with a total of five songs.<sup>78</sup> Schirach’s own popular piece ‘Unsere Fahne flattert uns voran’ (here under the title ‘Vorwärts, vorwärts’) is included, as well as the Horst-Wessel song. The former closes the collection.<sup>79</sup> The latter features prominently between Schiller’s ‘Wohlauf Kameraden, aufs Pferd’ and the national anthem ‘Deutschland, Deutschland über alles’.<sup>80</sup>

*Das Lied der Getreuen* earned Schirach the Nationalen Buchpreis on 1 May 1938, which was worth 200,000 Reichsmark.<sup>81</sup> The poems, Schirach explains in the foreword, had been written by members of the Austrian Hitlerjugend and sent to him as a Christmas

<sup>69</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, *Blut und Ehre. Lieder der Hitlerjugend* (Berlin: Deutscher Jugendverlag, 1933), p. 10; Otto Böckel, *Das deutsche Volkslied* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1917), p. 82.

<sup>70</sup> See Schirach, *Blut und Ehre*, p. 55; Albrecht von Blanckenburg, *Freude am Singen: Ein Liederbuch für Jung und Alt*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner, 1903), p. 224.

<sup>71</sup> See Schirach, *Blut und Ehre*, pp. 21-22, 50-51, 54-55, 72, 80, 89.

<sup>72</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>73</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>74</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 87 and pp. 106-107.

<sup>75</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>76</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>77</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>78</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 115-121.

<sup>79</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>80</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 104-107.

<sup>81</sup> See Helga Strallhofer-Mittelbauer, *NS-Literaturpreise für österreichische Autoren* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1994), p. 29; see also Eva Dambacher, *Literatur- und Kulturpreise 1859-1949* (Marbach: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1996), p. 131.

present in December 1937.<sup>82</sup> While the Hitlerjugend had spread its influence and control in Germany since 1933, it had been an illegal institution in Austria until March 1938 and had often come into conflict with other youth groups. Schirach portrayed the Austrian poems in the same attitude of steadfast opposition he had adopted in the years before the Nazi party came to power in Germany: 'So dichten Deutsche', he declared, 'die den Kampf um die Freiheit nicht nachträglich vom Schreibtisch her betrachten, sondern selbst durchlitten haben. Sie sind nicht nur Deutschland, sondern auch sich selber treu geblieben und haben nicht die schlichte Art unseres deutschen Wesens verleugnet, um, wie so viele dieser Zeit, das Geschwätz von der 'heroischen Haltung' nachzubeten.'<sup>83</sup>

Despite Schirach's insistence on the genuine expression of the poems, they can hardly be considered novel. In their short and succinct style and energetic tone, they are once again very similar to Schirach's own poems. Usually consisting of three or four rhyming stanzas, the young authors neither employed classic forms of poetry nor showed a spirit of adventure in breaking up or playing with traditional patterns. However, the works do differ from Schirach's poetry in that they are altogether less morbid and concerned with death, suffering or war. The First World War plays no role at all and even the looming war is neither anticipated nor awaited. The struggle that emerges most clearly in the poems is that of the Austrian separation from Germany and the reunification, which the speaker(s) long for. Their strong identification with Germany is obvious, for instance in: 'Es ist noch nicht genug getan': 'Nur deutsch sind wir! Deutsch bis ins Mark! / und daran werden wir gesunden.'<sup>84</sup> Hitler as the desirable leader of a German-Austrian nation is mentioned in nearly all of the poems and is at the centre of seven of the twenty-nine poems. He is celebrated as the liberator of the Austrian youth, for example in the first stanza of the opening poem 'Bekenntnis zum Führer':

Wir hörten oftmals deiner Stimme Klang  
und lauschten stumm und falteten die Hände,  
da jedes Wort in unsre Seelen drang.  
Wir wissen alle: Einmal kommt das Ende,  
das uns befreien wird aus Not und Zwang.<sup>85</sup>

Hitler is described as an outstanding personality, burdened with the task of leading the

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<sup>82</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, ed., *Das Lied der Getreuen. Verse ungenannter österreichischer Hitler-Jugend aus den Jahren der Verfolgung 1933-1937* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1938), no page number given.

<sup>83</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS/ 'Schirach über echte und unechte Lyrik' in *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, dated 30 May 1938.

<sup>84</sup> Schirach, *Das Lied der Getreuen*, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.



nation but of course uniquely fitted to this task:

Und mögen tausend Menschen vor dir stehn  
so fühlt doch jeder deinen Blick allein  
und denkt, es muß für ihn die Stunde sein,  
und du willst tief in seine Seele sehn.<sup>86</sup>

Regarding their own roles in a united Austrian-German state, the young writers' ideas are in line with Nazi ideology. Where male or non-gendered speakers usually refer to themselves as 'Kämpfer' or 'Soldat', explicitly female speakers take on the role of future mothers, for instance in 'Die deutschen Mädchen dem Führer':

Wir sind das Tor, das in die Zukunft führt,  
wir sind der Baum, an dem die Früchte reifen;  
[...] In unsern Herzen tragen wir den Schein  
des Lichtes, das du deinem Volk entzündet,  
wir wollen ihm getreu Hüter sein,  
so daß er wieder, unverändert rein,  
durch unsern Leib in neues Leben mündet.<sup>87</sup>

*Das Lied der Getreuen* continued many of the tropes, idioms, images and, most importantly, the gesture of affirmation that mark Schirach's own 'Kampfzeit' poems. It even attracted the attention of those at the highest levels. According to Goebbels's diary entry, it was Hitler who first pointed the collection out to him. Both men were delighted. Goebbels noted:

Er [Hitler] gibt mir Gedichte unbekannter H.J. Leute aus Österreich zu lesen, die Schirach herausgegeben hat. Wunderbar und einzigartig. Ein nationaler Klagegesang von unerhörter Kraft und dichterischer Größe. Ich bin mit dem Führer ganz hingerissen. Das ist der Preis für den 1. Mai. Ich schenke dafür der österreichischen H.J. ein Jugendheim von 200.000 Mk. Symbolisch schön und sachlich ganz richtig. Der Führer ist sehr damit einverstanden.<sup>88</sup>

All the compliments bestowed on the newly found, young poetic talents cannot, however, quite deflect from a sense of defensiveness. *Das Lied der Getreuen*, Schirach declared, represented a welcome exception inside a 'Blechtschmiede der Dichterlinge',<sup>89</sup> which mechanically produced songs of praise of banners, fanfares and flags. His speech was picked up eagerly by Hans Gstettner, editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, who repeated Schirach's impetus:

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>88</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher* (2000), pp. 272-273, entry dated 25 April 1938.

<sup>89</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS/ 'Schirach über echte und unechte Lyrik'.

Es fällt manchem nicht leicht zu begreifen, daß ein Gedicht noch nicht deshalb gut ist, weil es sich z.B. auf sympathisierende Weise mit dem Arbeitsdienst befaßt. Oder, daß es nicht deshalb allein schon 'herausgestellt' werden muß, weil sein Verfasser 'in Ordnung ist', womöglich Rang und vielleicht sogar Verdienste in einer Gliederung der Partei aufzuweisen hat.<sup>90</sup>

The author of the article even acknowledges a 'Verwirrung des künstlerischen Wertegefühls'<sup>91</sup> in the National Socialist state. Goebbels, who announced the prizewinner, tried to give an answer to the question of what literature *should* do and be. It sounds very like earlier reviews of Schirach's own poems, and it too remains vague:

Wie kein anderes Buch erfüllte dieses die in der Stiftungsurkunde des Buchpreises festgelegte Bedingung, aus dem Geiste unserer Zeit heraus geschaffen in höchster künstlerischer Vollendung dem Geiste unserer Zeit lebendigsten und plastischsten Ausdruck zu geben.<sup>92</sup>

Goebbels then goes on to explain that poetry, above all, must appeal to its readership emotionally. His speech is riddled with aggressive and nationalist rhetoric:

Die Verse dieses Büchleins wurden in des Wortes wahrster Bedeutung aus hartem dichterischem Zwang geschrieben und entspringen stärkster nationaler Not. Sie erheben sich in einzelnen Teilen zu ergreifenden Schmerzensgesängen, zu trotzigem dichterischen Anklagen, zu wilden Empörungsschreien oder zu innigsten Bekenntnissen der Heimatliebe und Volkssehnsucht, die tief an das Herz jedes Menschen rühren. Sie gehören mit zu den schönsten dichterischen Strophen unserer Zeit. Sie geben dem aufwühlenden Erlebnis unserer jüngsten Vergangenheit einen so erschütternden Ausdruck, daß man sich beim Lesen manchmal kaum der Tränen erwehren kann. Und das Ergreifendste dabei ist, daß sie geschrieben wurden, von jungen Menschen, die fast noch Kinder sind, und doch in männlichen Worten eine Zeit besingen, deren sie würdig sein wollen.<sup>93</sup>

In his review, poetic and national suffering go hand in hand and together find expression in poetry. Instead of advocating new poetry that finds a *raison d'être*, form and tone in their own time, this poetry echoes the Kampfzeit poetry of the German Nazi movement. Despite Goebbels's emphasis on the background of the young authors, he evidently had no idea of their actual identity. His praise for the collection's 'männliche [...] Worte' is not only revealing of his gendered ideas of authorship but also potentially ironic given the origins of most of the poems in it. Twenty-one of the twenty-nine were by the Austrian writer Ingeborg

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<sup>90</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS/Gstettner, Hans: 'Klärung. Zur Rede des Reichjugendführers', dated 1 May 1938.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS / 'Verleihung des Film- und Buchpreises' in *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, dated 2 May 1938.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

Teuffenbach; she re-published them in her own anthology *Saat und Reife* (1938). The prize money, which according to the guidelines should have been awarded directly to the authors of the poems, was used to build a youth hostel in Linz on Schirach's orders. This happened despite the fact that legally, the decision on how the money should be spent was not his to take.<sup>94</sup>

### *Wille und Macht*

Schirach's latest journal projects also proved successful: *Wille und Macht. Halbmonatsschrift des jungen Deutschland. Zentralorgan der nationalsozialistischen Jugend* was first published in January 1933 in Munich and later in Berlin. At first, Schirach was editor alongside Gotthart Ammerlahn. Although the journal was by no means devoid of political content, it reflected its younger target audience by employing a less overtly political and aggressively antisemitic tone than Schirach's previous projects. The journal contained news about projects of the Hitlerjugend and the Bund Deutscher Mädel as well as theatre and film reviews and almost every issue contained a list of recommended reading, advertising works such as Schenzinger's *Hitlerjunge Quex*, Hanns Heinz Ewer's *Horst Wessel – Das Schicksal eines nationalsozialistischen Studenten*, and of course Schirach's poetry collections.<sup>95</sup> Articles were contributed by Schirach's adjutant and close associate Günter Kaufmann, the Hitlerjugend functionary Karl Cerff and Rainer Schlösser, among other party members.<sup>96</sup> Writers associated with the National Socialist movement also submitted pieces; for instance, the journal published Eberhard Wolfgang Möller's cantata to Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Hanns Johst regularly featured in *Wille und Macht*, trying to reach a young audience.<sup>97</sup> Schirach also used the journal as a platform to (re-)publish his own poems and to advertise his

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<sup>94</sup> See Strallhofer-Mittelbauer, *NS-Literaturpreise*, p. 29; see also Dambacher, *Literatur- und Kulturpreise*, pp. 130-131; Inge Teuffenbach, *Saat und Reife. Bekenntnisse der Liebe und des Glaubens* (Vienna: Luser, 1938).

<sup>95</sup> See 'Bücher unserer Bewegung,' *Wille und Macht* 1, no. 10/11 (1 June 1933), p. 30.

<sup>96</sup> See Günter Kaufmann, 'Außenpolitik im Dritten Reich,' *Wille und Macht* 1, no. 10/11 (1 June 1933); Karl Cerff, 'Wir gestalten die Jugendsendung,' *Wille und Macht* 1, no. 12/13 (1 July 1933); Schlösser, 'Baldur von Schirach als Lyriker', pp. 13-16.

<sup>97</sup> See Eberhard Wolfgang Möller, 'Die Kantate auf einen großen Mann,' *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 23 (1 December 1934), pp. 1-5; 'Dichter und Jugend,' *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 1-2 (1934), pp. 18-21.

publications *Die Hitlerjugend. Idee und Gestalt* and *Die Pioniere des Dritten Reiches*.<sup>98</sup> Many articles addressed the question of a new national literature, usually in a self-indulgent and self-confirming manner. One of these, published in 1934, stated:

Da brauchen wir Verse, die leidenschaftlich, hymnisch dem Ausdruck zu geben wissen, was an dunklem Drang in uns lebt und brennt. Da brauchen wir Verse, die wir gemeinsam sprechen können, um durch diese Gemeinsamkeit des Sprechens die Gemeinschaft unseres politischen Wollens zu bekräftigen. Da brauchen wir Verse, die gesprochen werden können, um die anderen aufzurufen, denn noch immer ist das gesprochene Wort der Funke, der Revolutionen zum Entflammen bringt.<sup>99</sup>

The article then goes on to refer to Schirach, Dietrich Eckart, Heinrich Anacker and Hans Schwarz specifically as examples of the poetry that fulfils exactly these requirements. Richard Euringer's thoughts on *Gibt es eine nationalsozialistische Dichtung?*, to give another example, reinforce the ideal of subordination to the state by celebrating the idea of the 'Arbeiter der Stirn' and poetry as service: 'Gerade der Entschluss zu dienen aber scheint mir als Voraussetzung typisch für die Möglichkeit nationalsozialistischer Dichtung', he writes.<sup>100</sup> In 1935, on the occasion of the 'Woche des deutschen Buches', *Wille und Macht* printed a speech by influential National Socialist literary scholar Hellmuth Langenbacher, in which he praised Eberhard Wolfgang Möller, Heinrich Lersch, Gerhard Schumann and Schirach as representatives of a new type of poet, a type that would put themselves on the frontline of the brown troops.<sup>101</sup> However, despite this praise for National Socialist literature, attempts to find suitable successors who could continue in this vein proved largely unsuccessful. In April 1934 Schirach initiated a competition 'Junge Dichtung', which was advertised in *Wille und Macht* and aimed to support 'echte, aus blutsmäßigem Denken entstandene Dichtung, die ungekünstelt unserem Wollen und Wirken künstlerischen Ausdruck verleiht [...]'.<sup>102</sup> Yet, for reasons that remain unclear, the project was not mentioned again in the journal.<sup>103</sup> In 1936, Schirach again attempted to support a young protégé, Hellmut Willprecht, by publishing

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<sup>98</sup> See for example, 'Dem Führer,' *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 8 (15 April 1934), p. 1, 'Ihr sollt brennen,' *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 22 (15 November 1934), p. 1; 'Baldur v. Schirachs Werk'; 'Bücherschau,' *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 7 (1 April 1934), p. 31.

<sup>99</sup> Thilo Roettger, 'Dichtung und Revolution,' *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 15 (1 August 1934), p. 15.

<sup>100</sup> See Richard Euringer, 'Gibt es nationalsozialistische Dichtung?,' *Wille und Macht* 3, no. 16 (15 August 1935), p. 15.

<sup>101</sup> See Hellmuth Langenbacher, 'Junge deutsche Dichtung,' *Wille und Macht* 3, no. 20 (15 October 1935), pp. 8-17.

<sup>102</sup> 'Wettkampf "Junge Dichtung,"' *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 8 (15 April 1934), p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> See 'Appell an das junge Dichtergeschlecht,' *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 8 (15 April 1934), p. 3.

several of his poems in *Wille und Macht*.<sup>104</sup> The religious imagery, aggressive tone and pathos-filled language of Willprecht's poems are similar to Schirach's own; they also celebrate the ideals of self-sacrifice and subordination. However, Willprecht's traces soon vanish, and he cannot be said to have achieved wider or lasting success. His application to become a member of the Reichsschrifttumskammer (submitted in 1937), currently held by the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, only lists two publications in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* besides his publications in Schirach's *Wille und Macht* and *Vom Glauben der Gemeinschaft*. There is no evidence of independent publications.<sup>105</sup>

Existing scholarship on Schirach agrees that Schirach's poetic productivity came to a stop after 1933.<sup>106</sup> Although it is appropriate to say that Schirach's poetic productivity dwindled noticeably, further research has revealed that in November 1938, on the occasion of the 'Woche des deutschen Buches', *Wille und Macht* published three new poems: 'Hymne an die Jugend', 'Die Warnung' and 'Dem Freund'.<sup>107</sup> A further poem, 'Die heiligen Namen', which was dated 21 November 1939 and dedicated to 'im polnischen Feldzug gefallene HJ-Führer',<sup>108</sup> was published one year later. 'Die heiligen Namen' also featured in the war poetry collections *Den Freunden in Feldgrau* (c. 1940) and in *Tapfere Trauer. Ein Gedenken für unsere Gefallenen* (1942).<sup>109</sup> In the latter, it was printed alongside poems by Hölderlin, Ernst Moritz Arndt, Ina Seidel, Gerhard Schumann, Hans Zöberlein, Agnes Miegel, and Josef Weinheber. The collection consists of poems and short texts, extracts of Hitler's speeches and letters by fallen soldiers or their parents.

In 'Hymne an die Jugend', unlike Schirach's earlier poems, the speaker no longer considers himself to be part of the 'Jugend' that he addresses. The poem's speaker has matured, which gives rise to the hope that the poem's writer also might have evolved stylistically.

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<sup>104</sup> See Hellmut Willprecht, 'Das Innere Reich,' *Wille und Macht* 4, no. 23 (1 December 1936), p. 20; Hellmut Willprecht, 'Bekenntnis des jungen Führers,' *Wille und Macht* 5, no. 1 (4 January 1937), p. 1; Willprecht, 'Der Dämon,' *Wille und Macht* 6, no. 20 (15 October 1938), no page number given.

<sup>105</sup> See BArch/ RK I0619 Fragebogen zur Bearbeitung des Aufnahmeantrags für die Reichsschrifttumskammer. The DLA holds several of Willprecht's handwritten poems. DLA/A. Claudius, nr. HS. 1999.0007.

<sup>106</sup> Wortmann writes: 'Schirach's lyrische Produktion war während seiner frühen Zeit als Studentenführer recht umfangreich.' Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 63. Wortmann and Koontz both do not mention any post-1933 poems.

<sup>107</sup> See Baldur von Schirach, 'Hymne an die Jugend', 'Die Warnung', 'Dem Freund,' *Wille und Macht* (November 1, 1938).

<sup>108</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS/'Neue Kriegsdichtung' in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, dated 18 October 1939.

<sup>109</sup> See Schirach, *FiF*, p. 7; V.A. Frey, ed., *Tapfere Trauer. Ein Gedenken für unsere Gefallenen* (Stuttgart: Truckenmüller, 1942), p. 60.

## Hymne an die Jugend

Du, Jugend, bist unser heiligstes Bild  
dein Glaube ist Gleichnis  
und dein Chor der Begeisterten  
rührt uns das harte,  
erfahrene Herz.

Kämpfe machten uns klug und wir kleiden  
in leidgehämmertes Erz  
Körper, Seele und Geist.

Doch, da so wir dich sehn,  
Jugend,  
sind wir noch einmal Beginn  
und die kindliche Hoffnung, die reine, strahlende  
hebt uns noch einmal  
sternenhoch.

So nah der Geburt noch, Jugend  
lachst du dem Sterben leicht  
und der dunklen, der schweigenden Nacht.  
Doch uns ergreift die Gewalt  
ewiger Wiederkehr  
unser gebändigtes Blut  
Jauchzt mit dir Jugend:

‘Triumph!  
Brause du Brandung der Welt!  
Rausche du menschliches Meer  
zwischen Zeugung und Tod  
Deiner Gezeiten Gesang!’

Unlike Schirach's earlier poems, 'An die Jugend' has an irregular rhyme scheme, metre and form. It consists of five stanzas of different length. The sparse use of punctuation marks also contrasts noticeably with his earlier works. The enjambements within and across stanzas create an unnatural rhythm and increase the emphasis put on individual words, suggesting deeper meaning. The poem continues the religious tone that had caused Schirach so much trouble with the church previously. It is designated as a hymn, a form of poetry traditionally associated with religious services. 'Du, Jugend, bist unser heiligstes Bild', the first line begins, thus provocatively applying the term 'heiligstes' to the young generation. At the same time,

it prepares the second line: 'dein Glaube ist Gleichnis'. The obvious alliteration aside, this line continues to allude to Christian tradition. The 'Bild' used in a 'Gleichnis', a form often employed in the bible, needs to be decoded by the listener and transferred to his or her own situation. The meaning in this case is clear: the young generation's belief is an example to others; it does not need to be spelt out. Others will follow, the speaker implies, once they realise its truth. Religious vocabulary continues in the next line. The 'Chor der Begeisterten' takes the place of the church choir. The visual and the acoustic are thus evoked at the same time; reflecting the atmosphere at Nazi marches or parades, which aimed at engaging the audience completely by appealing to different senses. It should be noted that 'Jugend' is grammatically addressed as singular, as though it were one homogenous entity. This contrasts noticeably with the plural 'uns', referring to the older generation. However, even they share only one singular 'Herz' as though they share one body, one 'Volkskörper'. The young and the old are described in contrasts: whereas the young are 'begeistert' and still capable of 'glauben', the older ones are 'erfahren', which has made them 'hart'. They have fought (and suffered) in the past: 'Kämpfe machten uns klug und wir kleiden/ in leidgehämmertes Erz/ Körper, Seele und Geist', the third stanza reads. This is the only instance of the past tense in the poem; otherwise it is set in the present. Rhetorically, Schirach increases his efforts again, delivering alliterations and the florid neologism 'leidgehämmert' before finishing the stanza with a tricolon: 'Körper, Seele und Geist'. The 'leidgehämmertes Erz', dark and beaten, contrasts with the pure, shining, child-like innocence of youth that the speaker returns to in the fourth stanza. The light-dark contrast is reinforced further by the opposite poles of high and low. The enthusiasm and belief of youth can lift the older generation 'sternenhoch', the absolute opposite of the origins of the ore that is extracted from deep beneath the earth's surface. The contrasts of birth and death, laughter and silence continue in the fourth stanza. 'So nah der Geburt noch, Jugend,/lachst du dem Sterben leicht', the speaker muses, impressing on the reader the very real possibility that the young generation might die on the battlefield.<sup>110</sup> More than that, the following line 'Doch uns ergreift die Gewalt ewiger Wiederkehr' adds to the impression that it is youth that will go to its death in the war that has just been proclaimed, not the older generation. This realisation is however quickly smoothed over by more cheerful tones. The belief of the younger generation and the realisation of natural eternal cycles have taken a hold over the

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<sup>110</sup> The poem was also included in the wartime edition of Schirach's poetry. See Schirach, *FIF*, p. 35.

older generation: 'Unser gebändigtes Blut/ jauchzt mit dir.' Their essence, their blood is personified as a living entity. Their blood and the young generation cry out in unison: 'Triumph!' In the last stanza, Schirach again plunges into ornate language with many alliterations and assonances. In the metaphors of the natural forces of water and the sea he employs, nature and mankind (i.e. civilisation) form a union ('menschliches Meer') rather than being opposites. The beginning and end of life are likened to the tides of the sea. The poem culminates in a cumbersome genitive construction in the very last line: 'Deiner GezeitenGesang!'

Celebrating eternity, emotion, nature, conflict, fighting instinct and blood, Schirach employs many of the tropes of National Socialist poetry. Rhetorical devices are used in abundance and the religious tone suggests deeper meaning and higher values. It celebrates the young generation and validates them. The poem was taken up enthusiastically by the propagandists of a state that had just entered a war. It was immediately put to music. Goebbels noted in his diary: 'Schirach hat eine neue Hymne, komponiert von Bergmann, gedichtet. Ich lasse sie mir vorsingen. Sie ist ausgezeichnet und wird gleich propagiert werden.'<sup>111</sup>

'Anschluss' with Austria in 1938 inspired another poem, 'Großdeutschland', which even by Schirach's standards is an uninspired and repetitive appraisal of the German landscape:

Großdeutschland, früher so fern,  
nun strahlst du so hell wie ein Stern.  
Sei begrüßt von Österreichs Alpen  
bis zum großen deutschen Meer.

It was nonetheless considered material for middle school students and duly appeared in schoolbooks.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher* (2000), p. 227. According to a note of the editor, the correct spelling is 'Bergman'.

<sup>112</sup> See Heinrich Dreyer, Rudolf Fiedler, and Paul Skriewe, *Deutsches Lesewerk für Mittelschulen* (Frankfurt/M: Salle, 1940), p. 1.



## Gauleiter in Vienna

Both in his speeches and in his poems, Schirach repeatedly emphasised that everyone should be ready to fight for their fatherland. However, after the war had become a reality in 1939, he soon discovered that his own political position was considerably weakened by it. Reports of criminal behaviour among teenagers overshadowed his work as Reichsjugendführer. Incidents of theft and burglary committed by youth gangs were increasing and Schirach was accused of losing control. His meetings with Hitler, who might have supported him in this situation, had become much more infrequent since the outbreak of the war. In his 1982 biography, Wortmann claims that for years Schirach's constant proximity to Hitler had been one of the cornerstones of his political authority, since it allowed him to observe the Führer's opinions and held him in his good graces. Having enjoyed Hitler's protection, Schirach had become dependent on it.<sup>113</sup>

In addition to his crumbling authority, Schirach also had to admit that, having turned thirty in 1937, his leadership of the Hitlerjugend was no longer compatible with his own motto 'Jugend muss von Jugend geführt werden.' Wortmann suggests that this fact, combined with the growing distance between Hitler and his Reichsjugendführer, brought the 'Führer' to the conclusion that Schirach should be replaced. Schirach filed an official request on 5 May 1940 to step down from his office and thereby be made available for military service. Two days later he was already in France, to join the second company of the infantry regiment 'Großdeutschland', which fought near Abbeville and Lyon. He had already completed his basic training the previous year. According to a newspaper report, he received the Iron Cross second-class for his service in France and rose to the rank of an Unteroffizier.<sup>114</sup> However, his stint on the battlefield lasted less than three months.<sup>115</sup> In late June, he received a message informing him that he was to replace Josef Bürckel as Gauleiter of Vienna. At least officially, he also continued to be connected with the Hitlerjugend, since he retained his title as Reichsleiter für die Jugenderziehung der NSDAP.<sup>116</sup> On 10 August 1940, Schirach took up his new position as Gauleiter, Reichsstatthalter and Reichsverteidigungskommissar in Vienna. According to his wife, he particularly looked

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<sup>113</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 122.

<sup>114</sup> See IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS/ 'Reichsleiter Baldur von Schirach' in *Berliner Illustrierte*, dated 25 July 1940.

<sup>115</sup> See Deutsche Dienststelle/WASSt 66873/023 and WASSt 86882/022.

<sup>116</sup> See IfZ/ Zeitungssammlung Baldur von Schirach/ 'Ablösung in der HJ' in: *Westfälische Landeszeitung*, dated 8 August 1940 and 'Der Wechsel in der Reichsjugendführung' in: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, dated 8 August 1940.

forward to the cultural and artistic responsibilities that his new role entailed. He was pleased about his transfer, and not only because it took him out of the line of fire: 'In Wien kann ich mich mehr mit Kunst als mit Politik beschäftigen.'<sup>117</sup> Although they form a very interesting chapter in Schirach's life, his actions as Gauleiter in Vienna have been often studied and will be largely omitted in this thesis, so that the focus remains on his poetry. There are no indications that Schirach produced and published any new poems during this period. Secondary literature agrees that Schirach, once removed from the immediate influence of Hitler, Goebbels and other Nazi hierarchs, continually strayed from the official party line regarding the cultural sphere. This eventually led to him falling out of favour. Wortmann delivers an account of festival weeks in music and theatre, art exhibitions, scholarships and awards that Schirach introduced in Vienna under increasingly critical observation from Berlin. His cultural efforts proved initially successful, according to Wortmann: 'Unter Schirach's Aegide erstrahlte Wien trotz des Krieges kulturell in neuem Glanz.'<sup>118</sup> Other publications regarding Schirach's rule of Vienna include Thomas Mang's 2003 study '*Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien – Mein Name ist Huber*', which devotes a chapter to the deportation of 48,000 Viennese Jews under Schirach. Mang challenges Schirach's denial of having been complicit in these crimes. He postulates: 'Die aktive, drängende Mittäterschaft Schirachs bei der Verfolgung, Deportation und damit Vernichtung der jüdischen Bevölkerung Wiens steht außer Frage.'<sup>119</sup> Radomir Luža's study *Austro-German Relations in the Anschluss-Era* (1975) traces Austrian attitudes towards German rule between 1938 and 1945 and explores Schirach's cultural policies in this context. Although he characterises Schirach as someone who 'mingled aristocratic scorn with aggressive manners, and made the empty noises of an emotional orator who takes his ideological outpourings as serious philosophy'<sup>120</sup> and 'basically a nonpolitical man, more an artist than a leader', he concedes that 'there were many instances in which Schirach showed courage', particularly in his rivalry with Goebbels. Birgit Schrader devotes one chapter of her study *Jederzeit wiederuflich* (2008) to the growing cultural clashes of interest between the two Gauleiters in Berlin and Vienna, who both tried to secure high-profile artists for their theatres and concert halls. Schrader argues that whereas

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<sup>117</sup> Schirach, *Der Preis der Herrlichkeit*, p. 214.

<sup>118</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 196.

<sup>119</sup> Thomas Mang, '*Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien – Mein Name ist Huber*'. *Wer trug die lokale Verantwortung für den Mord an den Juden Wiens?* (Münster: Lit, 2003), p. 211.

<sup>120</sup> Radomir Luža, *Austro-German Relations in the Anschluss-Era* (Princeton: UP, 1975), p. 298, the following quotations *ibid*.

there is evidence of Schirach having protected persecuted Jewish artists in Vienna, this was usually only the case when doing so served his own interests: 'Für rassistisch Verfolgte setzte er [Schirach] sich im Grunde auch nur ein, wenn es der eigenen Reputation diene oder wenn es [...] darum ging, persönliche Machtansprüche geltend zu machen.'<sup>121</sup>

The more Schirach stubbornly pursued his own cultural politics in Vienna, the bigger the rift between him and the party elite grew. Goebbels, who had supported and collaborated with Schirach on numerous occasions, was increasingly sceptical. In 1942, he noted in his diary:

Die Entwicklung in Wien unter Schirach gibt zu großen Besorgnissen Anlaß. Schirach ist den Wiener Tücken in keiner Weise gewachsen. Er läßt sich umschmeicheln, ohne zu wissen und zu erkennen, was die Wiener eigentlich damit verfolgen.<sup>122</sup>

Schirach's final attempt to counter concern in Berlin was in vain. In September 1942, he invited delegates of international youth organisations to come to Vienna and discuss founding a European youth association. Due to his antisemitic agitation, the opening speech Schirach held at the conference is one of his most widely known and often quoted speeches.<sup>123</sup> As in *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*, he began with the First World War and its consequences. Schirach raged against the 'Männer des Versailler Diktats'<sup>124</sup> who tried to make 'aus einer Großmacht einen Sklavenstaat' and thus played into the hands of the 'internationalen Judentum'. He boasted of the deportation of tens of thousands of Jews from Vienna while he was in office as a 'Beitrag zur europäischen Kultur'.<sup>125</sup> Schirach lashed out against Germany's enemies: the Russian school system produced criminals, the English system he portrayed as elitist and outdated, the Americans merely capable of copying European ideas and of raising their children to become materialist and corrupt adults.<sup>126</sup> America, he claimed, was the perfect example to show that what he deems 'Vermischung und Vermischung [...] nationaler Kräfte'<sup>127</sup> would lead to intellectual sterility. Only a pure

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<sup>121</sup> Bärbel Schrader, *Jederzeit widerruflich. Die Reichskulturkammer und die Sondergenehmigungen in Theater und Film des NS-Staates* (Berlin: Metropol, 2008), p. 449.

<sup>122</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher. II/4* (1995), p. 96, entry dated 14 April 1942.

<sup>123</sup> See for instance Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 211-213; Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 271; Mang, *Wer trug die lokale Verantwortung*, p. 213; Luža, *Austro-German relations*, pp. 316-317.

<sup>124</sup> Baldur von Schirach, *Europa ist mehr als ein Kontinent. Ansprache des Reichleiters Baldur von Schirach in der Stunde der Begründung des Europäischen Jugendverbandes in Wien am 14. September 1942* (Wien, 1942), p. 4.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>126</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 6 and p. 8.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

'race', he clearly implied, is capable of producing art and culture.<sup>128</sup> He did not explicitly state this, but spoke at length about Europe's excellent indigenous cultural tradition, arguing:

Was einst in den Tälern der Provence erklang und bis auf unsere Zeit ein hohes Lied der Kulturvölker Europas geblieben ist, das Lied der Minne als Ausdruck jener höheren Regung, die uns von Juden und nordamerikanischen Jazzbandnegern unterscheidet, kann von Menschen fremden Geistes nie verstanden werden. Dem Juden ist der Eros fremd. Die antike Welt, das was wir unter Greichenland und Rom, unter italienischer Renaissance und deutscher Klassik begreifen, ist der jüdischen Empfindungswelt so entgegengesetzt, daß wir in diesem Kreise ruhig bekennen dürfen: Jeder Jude, der in Europa wirkt, ist eine Gefahr für die europäische Kultur.<sup>129</sup>

The Vienna edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* celebrated the conference as a historical event. In Berlin, however, the reactions were decidedly cooler. Goebbels noted:

Schirach hat eine Rede vor dem europäischen Jugendkongreß, der augenblicklich in Wien tagt, gehalten. Diese Rede zeichnet sich aus durch eine seltene Weltfremdheit. U.a. erklärt Schirach, daß er zehntausend und Zehntausende von Juden aus Wien in die östlichen Ghettos evakuiert habe. Dieser eine Satz allein würde genügen, uns die ganze internationale Pressemeute nicht nur aus den Feind-, sondern aus den neutralen Ländern auf den Hals zu hetzen.<sup>130</sup>

The North German edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* only printed a brief report about the conference and did not even mention Schirach's speech. It clearly did not have the desired effect of making amends in Berlin; on the contrary it damaged Schirach's position in the National Socialist state further. Later, during the trial in Nuremberg, it would cost him dearly.

The relationship between Vienna and Berlin remained precarious and became even more difficult after Schirach opened an exhibition of modern art, which showed several pieces that had been branded as 'entartet'.<sup>131</sup> According to Schirach, Hitler sent a delegation to Vienna to make sure that the pieces in question would not be exhibited. After the inspectors left, he gave orders to put them up again.<sup>132</sup> Whether Schirach's Viennese cultural policies can be seen as opportunistic obstinacy, inspired by a genuine change in his cultural sensibilities, or whether he simply naively trusted that the system he helped to establish would not turn against him, remain open questions. At any rate, shortly afterwards, a further disagreement between Hitler and Schirach marked the end of what was left of their once

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<sup>128</sup> See Thomas Mathieu, *Kunstauffassungen und Kulturpolitik im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zu Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, Baldur von Schirach, Heinrich Himmler, Albert Speer, Wilhelm Frick* (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 1997), p. 253.

<sup>129</sup> Schirach, *Europa ist mehr als ein Kontinent*, p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher. II/5* (1995), p. 505, entry dated 15 September 1942.

<sup>131</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 214.

<sup>132</sup> See IfZ, Langzeitinterviews II, pp. 169-170.

friendly relationship and, simultaneously, Schirach's political career, although he remained in his post as Gauleiter.<sup>133</sup>

By now the effects of the war were felt throughout the Third Reich; Vienna had been under attack since March 1944. On 30 March 1945, Schirach declared a state of emergency. It soon became clear that the city would fall. By April, the Soviet troops were at the city gates;<sup>134</sup> the Gauleiter and the remaining soldiers left. On 1 May, Schirach later remembered, he heard of Hitler's death via radio transmissions. For some time he and his adjutant lived in Tyrol, using false names and hiding in a small guesthouse. He heard on the news that, according to rumours, he had been declared dead. However, when he learned that the Hitlerjugend had been classified as a criminal organisation and that all former leaders of the organisation were automatically under arrest, he turned himself in.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 214-216 and p. 220.

<sup>134</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>135</sup> See Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, pp. 315-318. According to Schirach, he was arrested on 4 July. However, the draft of interrogation report of the American military states that Schirach turned himself in on 5 July. See Koontz, *The Public Polemics*, p. 249.

## CHAPTER 9

### The Prison Poems

#### 'Das Ende'

With the collapse of the Third Reich, Schirach's literary productivity (with the exception of the publication of his memoirs) seemed likewise to come to an end. This was at least the general consensus reached in the existing secondary literature, and there are no accounts, scholarly or private, that contradict this assumption. His son, Richard von Schirach, repeatedly mentions authors and book titles that Schirach read while he was in prison in his 2005 autobiography, but reveals little about whether his father's imprisonment yielded new poems. He wrote: 'wenn es hochkam, [kannte ich] drei Gedichte von ihm [...], die er alle entweder in Nürnberg oder in Spandau geschrieben hatte.'<sup>1</sup> Most notably, Richard von Schirach quotes a poem that his father sent him from Spandau but he does not make it clear whether he believes that his father wrote these lines himself or not.<sup>2</sup> It is easy to see why Schirach would relate to the emotions expressed in the poem and why it might be mistaken for one of his own although it is written in French. It consists of three brief stanzas and expresses pain over the impermanence of happiness and the triviality of life. The poem was not in fact composed by Schirach himself, but by the nineteenth-century French-British writer George du Maurier.<sup>3</sup> Discovering that Schirach chose to send his son a poem by another writer rather than words of his own fits neatly into the narrative of his poetic inactivity, a view supported by his prison mates. Albert Speer noted in his diary:

Manchmal denke ich darüber nach, welche Bedeutung die Literatur, sein Dichten für ihn [Schirach] hatte. Immerhin galt er im Dritten Reich als einer der führenden Lyriker. Aber schreibt er hier überhaupt noch etwas? Ich habe ihn niemals davon reden hören. Dabei macht doch, wie die europäische Literaturgeschichte lehrt, Gefangenschaft produktiv: Wie viele große Werke bis hin zu Dostojewski verdanken der Haft ihre Entstehung! In Schirachs Fall scheint mir aber, daß seine Lyrik

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<sup>1</sup> Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> An English version of the poem is included in du Maurier's 1895 *Trilby*. It closes the novel:

A little work, a little play  
To keep us going – and so, good day!  
A little warmth, a little light  
Of love's bestowing – and so, good-night!  
A little fun, to match the sorrow  
Of each day's growing – and so, good-morrow!  
A little trust that when we die  
We reap our sowing! And so – good-bye!  
George Du Maurier, *Trilby* (London: Osgood & McIlvaine, 1895), p. 447.

nur Dienstleistung war; daß nicht ein künstlerisches Temperament und ein Formwille dahinterstanden, sondern Verehrungsbedürfnis. Und mit dem einen mußte das andere enden; mit Hitler seine Produktivität.<sup>4</sup>

However, contrary to Speer's observations and to the assumptions of existing studies on Schirach, his productivity had not come to an end. His eldest son, Klaus von Schirach, has made available for this study twenty previously unpublished poems that his father wrote after 1945 in Nuremberg or Spandau, and an additional poem has been made available by his nephew, Norris von Schirach. The poems' importance lies firstly in their value as biographical evidence, since they not only give new insight into Schirach's character but also reflect the prisoners' physical and psychological situation. Secondly, they are culturally and historically important, in particular as regards the question of German guilt, both collective and individual. Schirach's voice, albeit only one of many, bears special significance, because it was he who led a whole generation to believe in Hitler, as he later admitted: 'Es ist meine Schuld, daß ich die Jugend erzogen habe für einen Mann, der ein millionenfacher Mörder gewesen ist.'<sup>5</sup> Of course, unlike many, he not only had to face his guilt on a personal level but was also confronted with it in front of the judges of the allied forces (and the eyes of the world) during the Nuremberg trials. Thirdly, Schirach's post-1945 poems are interesting as literary works. They not only fall into the tradition of prison poetry but also constitute a fascinating point of contrast in the German post-1945 literary tradition. Written behind thick prison walls and largely uninfluenced by the outside world, these poems come from what can almost be seen as a parallel universe. They were not affected by other contemporary authors or critics, patrons, political support or censorship, nor, most importantly, by the literary upheavals in Germany and the hopes of a literary new beginning. Schirach wrote in ignorance of Trümmerlyrik, Kahlschlag and the expectations of a Stunde Null; it is therefore interesting to consider the extent to which parallels or contrasts emerge between his poems and those of post-1945 Germany.

Germany's military defeat in May 1945 sparked hope for a new political era. For some people, the hope for new beginnings in literature grew as well. In particular for those who had been forced to emigrate, it was unthinkable that authors or texts in any way connected with the National Socialist regime should continue to be read. Defending his decision not to

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<sup>4</sup> Albert Speer, *Spandauer Tagebücher*, 3rd edn. (Frankfurt/M: Ullstein, 1975), pp. 552-553.

<sup>5</sup> IMT, *Der Prozess XIII*, 477.

return to Germany, Thomas Mann wrote in September 1945:

Es mag Aberglaube sein, aber in meinen Augen sind Bücher, die von 1933 bis 1945 in Deutschland überhaupt gedruckt werden konnten, weniger als wertlos und nicht gut in die Hand zu nehmen. Ein Geruch von Blut und Schande haftet ihnen an; sie sollten alle eingestampft werden.<sup>6</sup>

The destruction of Germany's cities, the physical but also psychological wounds people had suffered during the war and life under the Nazi dictatorship, shaped the Trümmerliteratur of the immediate post-war period: 'Fort mit dem Schutt! Sonst gelingt kein Aufbau', pacifist writer Kurt Hiller demanded in 1947. A year later, he published a selection of poetry entitled *Trost in Trümmern*.<sup>7</sup> Whereas Hiller wanted to rid himself of the 'Schutt', a process he saw as necessary to move forward and achieve new 'Aufbau', others wanted to remind people of the destruction and its consequences. In 1952, Heinrich Böll observed in his *Bekenntnis zur Trümmerliteratur*:

Wir schrieben also vom Krieg, von der Heimkehr und dem, was wir im Krieg gesehen hatten und bei der Heimkehr vorfanden: von Trümmern; [...] Es ist unsere Aufgabe, daran zu erinnern, [...] daß die Zerstörungen in unserer Welt nicht nur äußerer Art sind und nicht so geringfügiger Natur, daß man sich anmaßen kann, sie in wenigen Jahren zu heilen.<sup>8</sup>

The recovery of the book market in Germany, just like the rebuilding of cities, needed new forms and concepts. Writers began searching for a new language; they rejected ornamental phraseology. They recognised literature's enlightening function, a function that they felt could only appropriately be fulfilled if they used clear words. Wolfgang Weyrauch commented on the state of German literature in 1949 as requiring a clean slate: '[...] die gegenwärtige deutsche Prosa befindet sich in einem verschlungenen und finsternen Dickicht; [...] Die Kahlschlägler fangen in Sprache, Substanz und Konzeption von vorn an.'<sup>9</sup> The post-war authors of this new movement warned against hero worship, slogans and false prophets, but also railed against escapist literature. The influential Gruppe 47 shaped the literary landscape. Although the group, which saw itself as 'politisch engagierte Publizisten mit

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Mann, 'Warum ich nicht nach Deutschland zurückgehe,' in *Gesammelte Werke in zwölf Bänden. Reden und Aufsätze 4* (Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 1960), p. 957.

<sup>7</sup> See Wilfried Barner et al., eds., *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, 2nd edn. (Munich: Beck, 2006), p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> Heinrich Böll, 'Bekenntnis zur Trümmerliteratur,' in *Heinrich Böll Werke 6*, eds. Árpád Bernáth and Annamária Gyurácz (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2007), p. 58 and p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Weyrauch, *Tausend Gramm* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), p. 176 and p. 179.



literarischen Ambitionen',<sup>10</sup> did not issue a manifesto, one of its cornerstones was its unequivocal affirmation of democracy. It held regular meetings and its support of young, unknown authors made it one of the best known examples of an organised attempt to advance new approaches and artists in the young democratic republic.<sup>11</sup>

However, it is now acknowledged that these efforts to pronounce a clean slate were largely in vain. In fact, the premise for Stephen Brockmann's 2004 study *German Literary Culture at the Zero Hour*, which explores Germany's literary and cultural scene after 1945, is the realisation that 'the absolute break in continuity denoted by the concept of a literary zero hour simply did not take place, at least in West Germany, and probably not in East Germany either'.<sup>12</sup> Brockmann points out that authors such as Hermann Kasack, Werner Bergengruen, Marie Luise Kaschnitz and even literary talents associated with the Gruppe 47 such as Hans Werner Richter, Wolfdieterich Schnurre and Wolfgang Weyrauch, all of whom were widely read during the late 1940s and indeed earned a reputation as the founding fathers of post-war German literature, were not able to establish themselves as part of the literary canon in the long run. Rather, they became the background against which, in the late 1950s, a new generation of writers, dominated by Grass and Böll, emerged.<sup>13</sup> Since then it has become known that, despite the group always having distanced itself from the older, and therefore presumably complicit, generation of writers, even prominent members of Gruppe 47 like Richter and Alfred Andersch had to some extent collaborated with or conformed to the demands of the Nazi regime.<sup>14</sup> Some of the authors such as Paul Celan, Nelly Sachs and Thomas Mann, who had opposed the regime fled from the Third Reich and built a new life in exile, did not return to Germany. Others, like Anna Seghers, Arnold Zweig, Hans Meyer and Bertolt Brecht, went to live in the GDR. The realisation that after 1945 the German literary scene consisted of largely the same personnel as before, who continued to write in largely the same style as before, has been commonly acknowledged in scholarly literature at least since

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Dieter Hoffmann, *Arbeitsbuch Deutschsprachige Prosa seit 1945* (Tübingen: Francke, 2006), p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> See Rudolf Walter Leonhardt, 'Aufstieg und Niedergang der Gruppe 47,' in *Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur. Ausgangspositionen und aktuelle Entwicklungen*, ed. Manfred Durzak (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), pp. 61 and 68; see also Sonja Meyer, *Die Gruppe 47 und der Buchmarkt der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), pp. 9-32; Helmut Böttiger, *Die Gruppe 47. Als die deutsche Literatur Geschichte schrieb* (Munich: DVA, 2012), pp. 9-25.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Brockmann, *German Literary Culture at the Zero Hour* (Rochester: Camden, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 1-4.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 11.

the 1970s.<sup>15</sup> The narrative that authors connected to the regime or those who were writing (to various degrees) in its service had effectively stopped writing after the end of the Third Reich was perforated further by more recent studies published between 2009 and 2016 in several editions of *Dichter für das Dritte Reich*. These studies focus on authors who were to varying degrees associated with the Nazi regime, who published successfully in the Third Reich, and whose texts usually reflect elements of *völkisch* and National Socialist ideology. They show that, although some writers such as Hanns Johst, Herman Burte, Eberhard Wolfgang Möller and Heinrich Anacker struggled to be rehabilitated as artists after 1945 and to survive financially, many others did extremely well, both in the BRD and the GDR. They wrote new texts or even re-published older works, were featured in the press, and produced texts for stage and radio.<sup>16</sup> As a convicted war criminal, Schirach must have been well aware that, unlike these authors, there was hardly a chance he would be allowed to publish poetry again. Nevertheless, this does not mean that he had to abandon poetry for himself or his family. In the first, particularly difficult years of his imprisonment, Schirach spent a good deal of his free time writing and translating poems, even composing lullabies (complete with music)<sup>17</sup> and stories for his children. The (dated)<sup>17</sup> manuscripts made available for this study by his son Klaus von Schirach were written in the years 1945 to 1947. Whether he continued to compose poems beyond these first years can only be the object of speculation. However, the fact that at least one more poem is known – from 1963, addressed to his nephew Norris von Schirach – is reason to believe that he did continue.

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<sup>15</sup> See *ibid.* p. 3; see also Stefan Busch, *‘Und gestern, da hörte uns Deutschland’. NS Autoren in der Bundesrepublik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998), p. 10; Heinrich Vormweg, ‘Deutsche Literatur 1945-1960: Keine Stunde Null,’ 14-31, ed. Manfred Durzak. (1981), p. 30; Bernd Hüppauf, ‘Krise ohne Wandel. Die kulturelle Situation 1945-1949,’ 47-112 in Bernd Hüppauf ed. *‘Die Mühen der Ebenen’. Kontinuität und Wandel in der deutschen Literatur und Gesellschaft* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1981), p. 103; David Roberts, ‘Nach der Apokalypse. Kontinuität und Diskontinuität in der deutschen Literatur nach 1945,’ in Hüppauf, p. 23; Helmuth Kiesel, ‘Die Restaurationsthese als Problem für die Literaturgeschichtsschreibung,’ in *Zwei Wendezeiten. Blicke auf die deutsche Literatur 1945 und 1989*, 13-46, eds. Walter Erhart and Dirk Niefanger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997), p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Among the authors and publicists associated and well-connected with the Nazi regime, many of whom continued writing with considerable success, in the German states and in Austria after 1945 were for instance Hanns Johst, Eberhard Wolfgang Möller, Jürgen Hahn-Burty, Alfred Karrasch, Hans Rehberg, Gerhard Schumann, were Hans Venatier, Anton Graf-Bossi-Fedrigotti, Ludwig Finckh, Polly Maria Höfler and Mirko Jelusich. Schumann even became honorary member of the Deutsches Kulturwerk of the Europäischen Buchklub. He was awarded the Ehren-Lyrikring (1971) the Ulrich-von-Hutten medal (1981) and the Schillerpreis des Deutschen Volkes (1983) by the Deutsche Kulturwerk Europäischen Geistes. During the de-nazification process, the majority of them had been found to be a ‘Mitläufer’ or ‘Minderbelasteter’. See Düsterberg, Rolf ed., *Dichter für das ‘Dritte Reich’. Biografische Studien zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Ideologie 1-3*, ed. Rolf Düsterberg (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2009, 2011, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> See Privatarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ Lullaby ‘Dunkel wirds im Stübchen’, dated 26 January 1947.

The post-1945 poems listed in the index are mostly handwritten although some are typed. Length, tone and complexity vary. Particularly those dated around Christmas and New Year's Eve 1946 are short and song-like 'Spruchgedichte'. They are mostly cheerful and snappy, for instance 'Katerspruch' or 'Junges Volk im Vierachtel', which is annotated as 'Tanzlied'. Others show some biting humour, for example 'Punschlied auf das alte Jahr':

Fahr' hin, fahr' hin, Du altes Jahr, ich wünsche dir die Pest!  
Von Heringsdorf bis Sansibar Stellt man Sylvester fest: Wenn je etwas beschissen war,  
Dann Du, dann Du, Du altes Jahr [...].

The majority of the poems follow a strict rhyme scheme, the notable exception being 'Begrift Ihr nicht? So wart Ihr niemals jung', which has no fixed rhyme scheme. The poem is dated 6 March 1946, less than three few weeks before the beginning of Schirach's court trial. 'Begrift Ihr nicht? So wart Ihr niemals jung' is a wistful but also defiant remembrance of youth. Youth is, according to the speaker, a time of happiness, innocence and fraternity:

[...] Jugend ist ein Lied  
voll Vogelzwitschern, Lachen, Saitenspiel  
durch das die Brandung rauscht, ein süsser Sturm,  
Motorentakt und tausendfacher Chor der brüderlichen Stimmen ringsumher.<sup>18</sup>

While youth may fade, the memory of youth remains, the speaker continues: 'es bleibt auf immer Dein:/ Dass jung Du warst.' Youth is pure and radiant: 'Jugend ist Licht, das nichts vom Schatten weiss./ O Licht, Du reines Licht.' It shone so brightly in them, the speaker claims, that it caught on in others who saw them shine and even now, there is a faint glimmer shining in the dark. The poem ends: 'Wir hatten Fehler, doch wir brachen Bahn/ Ihr irrtet nie – ihr habt auch nichts getan.' Interestingly, the speaker admits to having had faults ('hatten Fehler') rather than having made mistakes ('Fehler machen') and thus avoids the impression that their 'Fehler' were the result of conscious decision-making. At the same time, echoing the appraisal of unrestrained activism in his earlier poems, the speaker portrays the youth as daring and ground-breaking ('wir brachen Bahn'), whereas those who were not caught by their light remained inactive and, this implies, unproductive.

'Begrift Ihr nicht? So wart Ihr niemals jung' consists of one stanza of twenty-one lines and is thus significantly longer than many of his pre-1945 poems. Another long piece,

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<sup>18</sup> Privataarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ 'Begrift Ihr nicht? So wart Ihr niemals jung', dated 6 March 1946.

‘Der mondkranke Knabe’, is a poem of eight stanzas that might easily pass for a work of Romanticism. An interesting variation on Schirach’s pre-1945 style is ‘Heimat’, which is written in a mock Bavarian dialect:

Hab so Zeit lang nach Schnee Am geschindelten Dach,  
Nach dem Berg, nach dem See Und des boarischen Sprach [...]<sup>19</sup>

Among the poems is also a translation of Alfred Tennyson’s ‘The Eagle’ into German.<sup>20</sup> During his interviews with Jochen von Lang, Schirach mentioned that he spent a lot of his time in prison translating texts from one language into the other in order to keep mentally fit.<sup>21</sup> Schirach evidently also occasionally occupied himself by recalling works and authors from memory, such as late nineteenth and early twentieth century writer Johannes Trojan and his poem ‘Die achtundachtzig Weine’, which was published in *Scherzgedichte* (1888). Schirach – fairly accurately, with only minor mistakes – wrote down the last stanza of ‘Die achtundachtzig Weine’ and added the author’s name under it. He also wrote down one of his own earlier pieces, ‘Deutung’, which had been first published in *Die Bewegung* in 1930. The poem praises the omnipresence of God: ‘Gott ist die Nähe und was fern/ er ist das Wasser und die Winde.’<sup>22</sup> Again, the punctuation and wording differed slightly from the way it was originally printed: ‘Gott ist die Nähe und was fern,/ Das Wasser ist er und die Winde.’<sup>23</sup>

Among the more serious pieces is ‘Das Ende’, in which Schirach writes about the end of the war. His use of the term ‘Ende’ is interesting in itself, because it suggests a process, taking place over time, which has ceased. It focuses the attention on the present or an earlier state, but does not imply a future outlook. To put Schirach’s choice of diction into context, it is useful to consider other perspectives on the historical significance of the year 1945 as they emerged at the time. Ernst Jünger, for instance, is very closely connected to the idea of a ‘Nullpunkt’, an idea that he explored in *Über die Linie* (1950), an essay in which he takes a spatial perspective on events. In Jünger’s metaphor, human history has passed over the year 1945 into a new history like a ship sailing over the Antemeridian into the beginning

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<sup>19</sup> Privataarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ ‘Heimat’, no date given.

<sup>20</sup> See Privataarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ ‘Alfred Tennyson: The EAGLE’, dated November 1945.

<sup>21</sup> See Langzeitinterviews IV, p. 469.

<sup>22</sup> Privataarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ ‘Deutung’, no date given.

<sup>23</sup> Baldur von Schirach, ‘Deutung,’ *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 32 (9 December 1930).

of a new calendar day.<sup>24</sup> 'Die Überquerung der Linie, die Passage des Nullpunkts teilt das Schauspiel; es deutet die Mitte, doch nicht das Ende an.'<sup>25</sup> *Über die Linie* was however published around five years after Schirach wrote 'Das Ende'; five years in which Jünger witnessed and reflected on reconstruction work in Germany, the normalisation of everyday life and even the establishment of two new German states.

Around the same time that Schirach wrote his verses, Hans-Egon Holthusen – himself compromised as a former member of the SS<sup>26</sup> – composed his famous poem 'Tabula Rasa', first published in November 1945.<sup>27</sup> To Holthusen, any hopes of a 'Nullpunkt' still seemed implausible. 'Ein Ende machen. Einen Anfang setzen',<sup>28</sup> the poem opens, quoting the demands of the victorious nations. Yet here, they become blurred with the slogans of the warmongers (of the National Socialists): 'Noch einmal will das menschliche Geschlecht/ Mit Blut und Tränen diese Erde netzen', the speaker sighs. With its intrinsic dialectical structures Holthusen's poem debunks the idea of a new beginning, linguistic and otherwise. '[...] wir leiden. Sprachlos.', the speaker declares, only immediately to belie his own statement: 'Wir reden ungereimtes Zeug', – an observation that is likewise disproven as it appears in a perfectly rhymed stanza.

Nevertheless, the poem's title, as Brockmann points out, 'suggested a volumetric perspective, emphasising not what had been eliminated but rather the infinite possibility of the new, an emptiness yet to be filled'.<sup>29</sup> Schirach's poem, however, remains firmly in the present. It strays neither too deeply into the recent past, nor does it open a future perspective. 'Das Ende' was dated 13 August 1945. At the time Schirach was under arrest in Nuremberg awaiting the beginning of the trial:

#### DAS ENDE

Ob wir in Freiheit gefallen  
oder Gefangene sind:  
Wir sind mit allen, ja allem  
nichts als die Spreu vor dem Wind.

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<sup>24</sup> See Brockmann, *German Literary Culture*, p. 218.

<sup>25</sup> Ernst Jünger, *Über die Linie* (Frankfurt/M: Klostermann, 1950), p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> See Klee, *Das Kulturlexikon*, p. 265.

<sup>27</sup> See Brockmann, *German Literary Culture*, p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> Hans-Egon Holthusen, *Hier in der Zeit* (Munich: Piper, 1949), p. 29; the following quotations *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Brockmann, *German Literary Culture*, p. 241.

Was uns die Frauen geboren,  
trugen in süßer Geduld –  
Wir haben alles verloren,  
alles durch eigene Schuld.

Heimat und Häuser und Herde  
sind von den Hufen zerstampft  
apokalyptischer Pferde,  
sind nur noch Asche, die dampft.

In dem gewaltigen Grauen,  
das dem Getrümmer entquillt,  
schaudern die Augen und schauen,  
aber sie fassen kein Bild.

Wir sind mit allen, ja allem,  
nichts als die Spreu vor dem Wind,  
ob wir in Freiheit gefallen,  
ob wir Gefangene sind.<sup>30</sup>

The poem consists of five stanzas and is written in a highly regular dactylic trimeter and alternate rhyme scheme. Schirach largely continues his pre-1945 style. The circular structure, the frequent use of assonances and alliterations, is reminiscent of Schirach's earlier works. He does not break through poetic conventions; if anything this poem is more stylistically regular than many of his earlier pieces.

The striking title and the theme of the end of time are present throughout the poem. The first stanza introduces two fates that the collective 'wir' had to face: either death on the battlefield or imprisonment. 'Wir sind mit allen, ja allem', the third line continues, working up a rhetorical climax, by extending 'allen', which grammatically refers only to people, to 'allem', which can also include non-animated objects (and abstract concepts). Neither people, nor houses, possessions, beliefs or values are safe any longer. They are 'nichts als die Spreu vor dem Wind', the poem closes the first stanza, introducing a biblical reference to the book of Job and God's punishment of the ungodly. Just like the 'Spreu' that is drifting and cannot last because it has no roots, the Germans have now lost theirs. The implication of lost roots is particularly interesting in this context, given the major role that agrarian metaphors had played in Nazi rhetoric.

The second stanza contrasts birth and death. The speaker(s) lament(s) the loss of the

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<sup>30</sup> Privatarhiv Klaus von Schirach/ 'Deutung', 13 August 1945.

young generation: 'Was uns die Frauen geboren/ trugen in süßer Geduld – / Wir haben alles verloren.' Similar to his earlier poems, Schirach presents a conservative view on gender roles. Just like in his earlier poems such as 'Heimkehr' and 'Meiner Mutter', women are only seen in their roles as mothers, looking after their children. 'Die Frauen' are not even part of this 'wir'; their loss is not acknowledged. This one-sided view is by no means representative of the active roles women played during the war years and in particular after the war ended. The poem is clearly not concerned with historical accuracy but rather Schirach's personal perceptions and reactions to events. As the Second World War progressed, the numbers rose of teenagers and children who died either during the bombardment of the cities or in battle. They are not explicitly named ('was uns die Frauen geboren'). Rather, the sense of loss over their death is at the centre of this stanza. Schirach, in his role as former Reichsjugendführer, must have felt his share of the blame. The second stanza culminates in an admittance of guilt – 'alles durch eigene Schuld' – but it is only communal guilt that is acknowledged and not individual guilt. In another line of reading, 'Das Ende' could also be read as a reflection of his own situation. Although Schirach did not broach the topic in the letters he wrote to his children (at least, in those that have been made available), the poem could also be read as a reflection of his separation from his own children due to his imprisonment.

Moving on from the loss of children to the destruction of property, of 'Heimat und Häuser und Herde', Schirach employs more biblical, more specifically apocalyptic vocabulary in the third, central stanza: the harbingers of the end of the world that traditionally bring war, hunger, pestilence and death, leave destruction and ruins behind: 'Nur noch Asche, die dampft.' The fourth stanza begins with a series of alliterations, and consonances of harsh-sounding plosives and fricatives further add to the grim content of the lines. However, beyond the striking tonality of the 'gewaltige[s] Grauen', the image remains vague and therefore ineffective. The physical reaction described over the next two lines appears intense: 'Schaudern die Augen und schauen,/ aber sie fassen kein Bild.' The shuddering of the eyes is a strong image, yet just as they cannot take in reality, so this poem does not convey an image of the 'gewaltige[s] Grauen'; it remains abstract. The preposition 'in' suggests that the 'Grauen' is indeed all around the speaker(s). He/they avert(s) the eye and do(es) not (or indeed cannot) describe the all-encompassing 'Grauen' that is around him/them. The eyes are depersonalised further, 'schaudern die Augen' rather than 'meine Augen' or 'unsere

Augen'. The eyes seem divorced from the speaker(s) and almost have taken on a life of their own.

Schirach either escapes into well-worn biblical imagery or speaks about the body's inability to grasp what has happened. This technique is similar to that of an earlier poem, 'Um unsre Augen...' (1929), in which the speaker starts describing a battle scene but then omits the actual fight, jumping to the description of fallen men:

Es dröhnten Trommeln, leuchteten Standarten.  
Kampf um die Strasse und Kommandoworte...  
Dann Tote, die zum grauen Himmel starrten.<sup>31</sup>

Poetically, Schirach also continues to tread familiar ground: despite the poem's apocalyptic content, its form, imagery and poetic gaze seem unperturbed by the events of 1945. The strict rhyme scheme and metre give stability. 'Das Ende' is a poetic expression of finality, of moral capitulation following Germany's military defeat, and it shows that Schirach understood the gravity of events. Nevertheless, it lacks poetic self-reflection.

#### Prisoner number One

Schirach not only had to face 'eigene Schuld' in 'Das Ende', he also had to face the legal consequences of his role in the Nazi state. On 29 August 1945, the chief prosecutors announced the names of the twenty-four men who were to be tried in Nuremberg in front of the International Military Tribunal. Among them were many high profile members of the former Nazi elite: Hermann Göring, Wilhelm Frick, Alfred Rosenberg, Rudolf Hess, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Fritz Sauckel, Albert Speer, Julius Streicher, Martin Bormann (in absentia) and Baldur von Schirach.<sup>32</sup> The four indictments at the International Military Tribunal were: (1) conspiracy to commit crimes 2,3, and 4 listed here; (2) crimes against peace; (3) war crimes; and (4) crimes against humanity.<sup>33</sup> Schirach was accused of point one, having participated in a plan or conspiracy to commit a crime against peace, and of point four, 'the murder,

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<sup>31</sup> Schirach, *FdV* (1933), p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> See Telford Taylor, *Die Nürnberger Prozesse: Hintergründe, Analysen und Erkenntnisse aus heutiger Sicht* (Munich: Heyne, 1996), pp. 116-117.

<sup>33</sup> See Norman J.W. Goda, *Tales from Spandau. Nazi Criminals and the Cold War* (Cambridge: UP, 2007), p. 11.



enslavement, deportation, or extermination of civilian populations [...] on political, religious, or ethnic grounds'.<sup>34</sup> Despite the acknowledgement of guilt expressed in 'Das Ende' (albeit generalised) Schirach pleaded not guilty.<sup>35</sup> His court hearing began five months into the trial, on 23 May 1946.<sup>36</sup> He was confronted with the extent of the Hitlerjugend's militarisation, his knowledge of and cooperation in the deportation of Jews from Vienna, and his visits to the concentration camps Dachau and Mauthausen in 1935 and 1942. Moreover, he was accused of having paved the path to the war as Reichsjugendführer, pedagogically and psychologically.<sup>37</sup>

During his hearing, Schirach's family background and socialisation were examined. He also gave evidence regarding his cultural and literary education. His publications, in particular song books, writing on education and Hitlerjugend decrees, were repeatedly presented as evidence by the prosecuting counsel in an attempt to prove that the organisation had been a militant and antisemitic institution.<sup>38</sup> For instance, the prosecutor cited lines from Schirach's poem 'Vorwärts, Vorwärts', printed in the collection *Blut und Ehre* that Schirach himself had edited:

[...] Jugend! Jugend! Wir sind der Zukunft Soldaten.  
Jugend! Jugend! Träger der kommenden Taten.  
Ja, durch unsre Fäuste fällt, wer sich uns entgegen stellt.  
Jugend! Jugend! Wir sind der Zukunft Soldaten.  
Jugend! Jugend! Träger der kommenden Taten.  
Führer wir gehören dir, wir, Kam'raden dir!<sup>39</sup>

Schirach stubbornly denied that the song had been intended to encourage teenagers to want to fight in the war. He pointed out that the song, published in 1933, did not in any way refer to the war that began in 1939 and argued that it expressed Germany's inner conflicts preceding Hitler's rise to power.<sup>40</sup> The prosecutor also quoted the song 'Wir sind des Geyers schwarzer Haufen', which was not written by Schirach but was also published in *Blut und Ehre*, to illustrate Schirach's influence on young Germans in terms of their religious development. Schirach denied accusations of having tried to stylise Hitler as god-sent saviour on earth,

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> See Taylor, *Die Nürnberger Prozesse*, pp. 166, 205, 686.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 489.

<sup>37</sup> See IMT, *Der Prozess*, pp. 479-482, 491, 560-561.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 399-409.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 505; Schirach, *Blut und Ehre*, p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> See IMT, *Der Prozess*, p. 506.

even when confronted with extracts from one of his speeches, held in 1935, in which he had addressed German youth, declaring:

[...] uns erscheint der Dienst an Deutschland als ein wahrer und treuer Gottesdienst, die Fahne des Dritten Reiches scheint uns seine Fahne und der Führer des Volkes der uns von ihm bestimmte Retter aus einer Not und Gefahr, in die uns gerade die frömmsten Parteien der einstigen deutschen Republik gestürzt haben.<sup>41</sup>

The accused commented: 'Ich sehe eigentlich darin nichts, was irgendwie eine Vergottung des Führers darstellen könnte. Ich habe im Dienst an der Heimat auch einen Dienst am Allmächtigen gesehen.'<sup>42</sup> The prosecutors quoted other publications by Schirach, for instance *Die Hitlerjugend. Idee und Gestalt*. When accused of having drawn comparisons between Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and the Bible in *Die Hitlerjugend*, Schirach defended himself:

Ich habe dem noch etwas hinzugefügt in dem Buch 'Die Hitler-Jugend, Idee und Gestalt'. [...] Ich sagte in meinem Buch, das ich 1933 schrieb und das 1934 publiziert wurde: 'Wir konnten unsere Auffassung noch nicht im einzelnen begründen. Wir glaubten einfach. Und als dann Hitlers 'Kampf' erschien, war uns dieses Buch wie eine Bibel, die wir fast auswendig lernten, um die Fragen der Zweifler und überlegenen Kritiker beantworten zu können.'<sup>43</sup>

When accused of having incited racial hatred among young people with his antisemitic speeches, he declared that, despite having considered himself an antisemite, he did not believe he had attempted to stir up hate against Jews either in his writing or in his speeches 'mit Ausnahme einer Wiener Rede', he admitted.<sup>44</sup> When asked to explain himself, he added:

Ich muß dafür eingestehen. Obwohl der Plan der Judenverschickung Hitlers Plan war und die Durchführung nicht mir oblag, habe ich dieses Wort gesprochen, das ich aufrichtig bereue. Ich habe mich aus einer falschen Loyalität dem Führer gegenüber mit dieser Aktion moralisch identifiziert. [...] Wenn ich nun erklären soll, wie ich dazu gekommen bin, so muß ich sagen, daß ich in jener Zeit bereits mich in einer Zwangslage befand. [...] Es wurde mir ununterbrochen durch die Funktionäre der Parteikanzlei, [...] und durch die Äußerungen aus der Umgebung Hitlers gesagt, daß man das Gefühl hätte, daß auch aus meinen Handlungen und meiner Haltung deutlich zu erkennen sei, daß ich nicht in der üblichen Weise in der Öffentlichkeit antisemitisch und in sonstiger Beziehung mich äußerte.<sup>45</sup>

In this context Schirach also gave an account of the cooling relationship between himself and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 529; Schirach, *Revolution der Erziehung*, p. 149.

<sup>42</sup> IMT, *Der Prozess*, p. 530.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 570.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 463.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 470.

Hitler since the Vienna art exhibition and the subsequent encounter at the Berghof. He declared that by the time that he had been informed of the mass murders of Jews in 1944, his political influence had been too weak for him to intervene.<sup>46</sup>

In his concluding speech, Schirach's lawyer portrayed his client as a weak character who was easy to manipulate; qualities that he claimed had led to a blind allegiance to Hitler, on whose orders Schirach had acted in Vienna. Once he had accepted the position as Gauleiter, he had been bound by the laws of the National Socialist state and as a consequence it had been impossible not to violate the international laws of war.<sup>47</sup> In his own concluding speech, Schirach did not mention his office as Gauleiter. Instead, he focused on his work as Reichsjugendführer, which he defended against the accusation of having corrupted the German youth.<sup>48</sup> When the tribunal announced their verdict on Schirach, he was found not guilty of having participated in a conspiracy, since it could not be proven that the Hitlerjugend had been an integral part of the preparations for war. Furthermore, there was no evidence to prove that he himself had been present at conferences during which plans to commit crimes against peace had been discussed. The verdict against him was based on his collaboration in the deportation of Jews from Vienna and evidence that he had received reports about the brutal actions of the Wehrmacht in the Soviet Union from 1942 onwards. He was convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to twenty years in prison.<sup>49</sup>

On 1 October 1946 the court finally announced the verdicts. Twelve of the accused were sentenced to death by hanging. Three were acquitted. Heß, Raeder, Funk, Neurath, Dönitz, Speer and Schirach were all sentenced to prison terms of fifteen years and more. On 16 October 1946 the executions were carried out, with the exception of Göring, who had committed suicide with a capsule of poison.<sup>50</sup> Schirach later recorded that he had been forced, along with the others who had received prison sentences, to scrub the hall in which the executions had taken place.<sup>51</sup>

In July 1947 the seven prisoners were transferred to Spandau prison in Berlin, which had been renovated solely for the purpose of housing them. Conditions were austere, although, as Norman Goda points out in his study *Tales from Spandau*, by no means

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<sup>46</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 471 and pp. 476-477.

<sup>47</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 560-561.

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 624.

<sup>49</sup> See Taylor, *Die Nürnberger Prozesse*, pp. 494, 686, 691.

<sup>50</sup> See Goda, *Tales from Spandau*, pp. 14-16 and p. 23.

<sup>51</sup> See Langzeitinterviews II, p. 135.

comparable with the circumstances Nazi enemies had endured in concentration or work camps between 1933 and 1945. Germans held in the U.S.S.R. after the war also had to bear more severe conditions, although Goda admits that life in Spandau was rougher than that of prisoners in Allied prisons in West Germany.<sup>52</sup> The inmates' cells were searched twice every day, in order to ensure that they were not in possession of any unauthorised amenities or weapons that they might use against others or themselves.<sup>53</sup> They were not addressed by names, but by their prison numbers: Schirach became prisoner number One.<sup>54</sup>

The prison rules stated that the inmates were to be kept in solitary confinement when they were not working, attending church services or exercising in the prison yard. Their daily routine followed a rigid and minute schedule, including several hours of domestic work, such as cleaning chores or work in the prison garden.<sup>55</sup> Every other month they were allowed to receive one visitor, who had to be approved by the prison director. According to the prison rules, unless a special permit was issued, these visits were to last fifteen minutes. Once a month the inmates were allowed to write and receive a letter. All correspondence was subjected to inspection. The management and guarding of Spandau prison alternated between the four Allies and changed every three months. The prisoners' lives were greatly affected by these changes, in particular as the Four Powers often disagreed over how to treat them. There were for example bitter disputes over food rations; the inmates suffered severe malnourishment in the earlier period of their sentence.<sup>56</sup>

The following two poems, 'Erklärung' and 'Motto', both written on the same sheet of paper dated 'Nov./Dez. 1946', are examples of Schirach reflecting on his situation in prison. The simple titles are reminiscent of earlier poems such as 'Gebet' and 'Ehrfurcht'. Both poems end on a positive note, focusing on inner, spiritual freedom.

### ERKLÄRUNG

Hinter Gittern wie ein Tier  
frierte ich, verkrochen,  
Doch es ist die Welt in mir  
blühend aufgebrochen!

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<sup>52</sup> See Goda, *Tales from Spandau*, p. 56 and p. 60.

<sup>53</sup> See *ibid.* p. 60.

<sup>54</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 51, 61, 285.

<sup>55</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>56</sup> See *ibid.* pp. 69-70 and pp. 82-83.

### MOTTO

Mensch! Kein Flehen und kein Fluch,  
Bricht je diese Mauern,  
Doch ein Lied, ein kleines Buch  
Kann sie überdauern!<sup>57</sup>

Both firmly set in present tense, the poems do not address the past. Judging from the rest of the stanza, the ambiguous title of the former, 'Erklärung', would translate better as 'proclamation' rather than 'explanation'. The positive endings of both suggest that they were written to reassure their author and encourage himself to keep up his strength. Still, both also allow a glimpse into the speaker's inner workings through their imagery, structure and tone. In 'Erklärung', the opposition between man and animal is particularly striking. 'Hinter Gittern wie ein Tier/ friere ich, verkrochen'. The poem describes a double retreat from the world. The speaker is imprisoned by others like a caged animal ('Hinter Gittern wie ein Tier'), but he also hides himself ('verkrochen'). It remains open whether he hides in order to shield himself from the cold or from the world around him; whether this is psychological recoil or animalistic survival instinct. 'Doch', the third line announces, turning the gloomy atmosphere of the first two lines around, he still possesses spirituality, he still has 'Welt in mir'. The speaker indicates self-sufficiency, but also separateness, suggesting that he belongs to a whole different order from what is around him. Imagery of nature, of spring, signaling a new beginning and growth, dominates the second half of the poem. However, this is no slow or tentative spring, it arrives suddenly and with full force. The emphatic last word, 'aufgebrochen' contrasts with the 'Hinter Gittern' in the first line. While the animal crawls into a hole, the man celebrates a new (albeit internalised) start.

The strict regularity of the metre in both poems is striking. In 'Motto' the impression of a 'Spruchgedicht' is further enhanced by the fact that the first line 'kein Flehen und kein Fluch' nearly repeats the structure and sounds of the third line 'ein Lied, ein kleines Buch'. The pathos-filled exclamation 'Mensch' that opens 'Motto', is reminiscent of the 'O Mensch' pathos of Expressionism, appealing to the speaker to remember that his own nature and core are good. The walls around him cannot be broken or overcome. They are immune to pleas or threats. 'Doch', the third line announces again in a fashion identical to the first

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<sup>57</sup> Privataarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ 'Erklärung' and 'Motto', dated November/December 1946.

poem, art can help man to survive, 'ein Lied, ein kleines Buch', echoing the belief in the redemptive power of literature and art, nourishing the soul and the intellect that over the course of history had been expounded by Classicists, Romantics and High Modernists. It remains unclear whether Schirach at this point still hoped that the poems written in prison would one day be read by others (outside his family), in which case the poem could also be read as an appeal for human solidarity, regardless of the walls.

Writing was not only a means of self-expression for Schirach in prison. He was also anxious to use it to preserve his relationship with his family. For instance, even before the prisoners were transferred from Nuremberg to Spandau, he wrote a story for his two younger sons, Richard and Robert, and sent it to them in several instalments between April and July 1947. His four children are the protagonists in his story, experiencing tricks and adventures in a magic shop, which is owned by the king of the wizards and (perhaps inspired by Goethe's *Faust*) his faithful dog, a black poodle. At first, his children received a letter every couple of days; later they had to wait for several weeks. The tone in the stories is unvaryingly cheerful. Occasionally, they were accompanied by a gentle reminder to write to their mother and himself.<sup>58</sup> He wrote poems for his ten-year old son Klaus ('Gang in den Abend') and years later for his new-born nephew ('Für Norris'). Schirach also wrote a number of poems for his wife during the first years of his incarceration. The following poem, 'Der Liebsten', was dated 22 December 1946. Annotations specify that the poem should be read (or indeed sung) 'im Volkston' and that Schirach had the nineteenth-century Thuringian folk song 'Ach, wie ist's möglich' in mind. It is based on a poem written by Helmina von Chezy in 1824 and later put to music by Romantic composer Friedrich Wilhelm Kücken. 'Der Liebsten' continues the overall positive stance of 'Erklärung' and 'Motto':

#### Der Liebsten

Dass sie getrennt so weit  
macht mir viel Schmerz und Leid,  
doch ist mein Herz Dir nah,  
als wärst Du da!

Mag auch viel Zeit vergehn,

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<sup>58</sup> See Privataarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ letters addressed to Robert and Richard von Schirach dated 24 April 1947, 28 April 1947, 8 May 1947, 23 May 1947, 28 May 1947, 6 June 1947, 7 June 1947, 13 June 1947, 19 June 1947 and 13 July 1947.

bis wir uns wiederseh'n –  
Fühl ich doch stets in mir,  
als wärst Du hier.

Wenn mich Leid niederbricht  
such ich des Mondes Licht,  
weiss dann bei seinem Schein:  
bin nicht allein.

Denn jeder Himmelsstrahl  
grünt auch mein Heimattal,  
wenn es auf Dich nun scheint  
sind wir vereint.

Ob ich die Wolken seh,  
oder den weissen Schnee,  
immer zu Dir nur hin  
führt mich mein Sinn.

Dass sie getrennt so weit,  
macht mir viel Schmerz und Leid  
doch ist mein Herz Dir nah,  
als wärst Du da!

Ach, wie ist's möglich

Ach, wie ist's möglich dann,  
Dass ich dich lassen kann,  
hab' dich von Herzen lieb,  
    Das glaube mir!

Du hast das Herze mein  
So ganz genommen ein,  
dass ich kein and're lieb'  
als dich allein.

Blau blüht ein Blümelein,  
Das heisst Vergissnichtmein;  
Dies Blümlein leg ans Herz  
Und denke mein!

Stirbt Blum' und Hoffnung gleich,  
Wir sind an Liebe reich;  
Denn die stirbt nie bei mir,  
Das glaube mir!

Wär' ich ein Vögelein,  
Bald wollt' ich bei dir sein,  
Scheut' Falk und Habicht nicht,  
Flög' ich schnell zu dir.

Schöss mich ein Jäger tot,  
Fiel ich in deinen Schoß;  
Sähst du mich traurig an,  
Gern stürb' ich dann.

In each poem, the speakers assure their partner of their love. 'Herz' is a key, repeated term. Chezy's poem opens describing an intimate and close relationship. The speaker is unable to keep his distance: 'Ach, wie ist's möglich dann,/ Dass ich dich lassen kann'. By contrast, Schirach begins with the fact that the lovers are apart: 'Dass sie getrennt so weit/ macht mir viel Schmerz und Leid.' The fact that Chezy's speaker addresses the lover directly ('Du hast das Herze mein'), whereas Schirach's speaker uses the third person singular ('Dass sie getrennt so weit'), further emphasises the distance between the speaker and his beloved in 'Der Liebsten'. However, whereas the speaker in Schirach's poems appears to derive strength out of his affection, in Chezy's poem the speaker needs to invest strength into his/her relationship. Several times, s/he feels compelled to repeat: 'Das glaube mir!', implying that the partner is doubtful as to the strength of their emotions. 'Der Liebsten!' is more confident. For instance, the speaker reminds himself that he and his lover are united by sharing the light of the moon and the sun. Every stanza ends on a positive note, expressing affection and reunification: 'als wärest Du hier', 'bin nicht allein' and 'sind wir vereint.'

Like Chezy, Schirach uses imagery of nature, but unlike in her poem, nature appears almost unconvincingly perfect, smooth and regular: In 'Der Liebsten' nature seems peaceful and pure, 'der weisse Schnee' is untouched, 'des Mondes Licht' is reassuring and nature is blossoming and intact: 'Denn jeder Himmelsstrahl/ grünt auch mein Heimattal.' By contrast, in 'Ach, wie ist's möglich', nature also has threatening elements, for instance birds of prey. Love and death are connected: in the second stanza, the 'Vergissnichtmein' flower dies once it is picked; in the third stanza, the 'Vögelein' risks being shot while trying to reach the lover. Yet the poem's final lines emphasise that death for love is a bittersweet death after all: 'Fiel ich in deinen Schoß;/ Sähst du mich traurig an,/ Gern stürb ich dann.' By contrast, Schirach's poem does not make this progress; instead, the first stanza is repeated at the end. The





permitted; a notion uncomfortably similar to the vows of selflessness and solidarity in Schirach's earlier, political poems.

The second stanza begins with a conjunction, continuing the previous thought: 'Und hast Du Dich niemals verloren,/ Ganz selbstvergessen, an ein andres Sein,/ Bist du lebendig nicht, nein, nie geboren!' Losing oneself in one's love for the other becomes another premise for happiness, love, and even life. It is striking that the speaker dwells only on the lovers' thoughts. The focus lies on the 'Gedanken', it is not about physical love or passion, as the title might suggest. Eros, unlike Cupid for instance, is usually represented as a fully-grown man; he embodies male sexual power. However, in the poem the speaker insists that happiness can only be found inside: 'Du findest aussen nicht, was innen fehlte:/ Nichts ist beseelt dem, der nicht selbst beseelte!' Unlike 'Das Ende' and 'Der Liebsten', the poem does not repeat its first lines at the end, but it still begins and ends with a circular structure, with a chiasmus, rhetorically reinforcing the idea of the reciprocity of love. ('Was Toren weise macht und Weise Toren' and 'Nichts ist beseelt dem, der nicht selbst beseelte.')

Considering Schirach's position, a few months into a twenty-year sentence, with physical contact between prisoners and visitors not being allowed, it seems natural that his thoughts would evolve around what sustains a love relationship and what it needs to last. His fears, it turned out, were not without grounds. Henriette von Schirach, still a young and attractive woman in her mid-thirties, had to face the prospect of waiting twenty years to be reunited with her husband while bringing up their four children by herself. In 1949, she informed Schirach that she wanted to divorce him as she had formed a new relationship.<sup>60</sup> Schirach agreed and their marriage was ended one year later. Henriette began to write to earn her living. She published her memoirs, which first appeared serialised in the illustrated magazine *Wochenend* and later as a book under the title *Der Preis der Herrlichkeit* in 1956. Years later, she published two more collections of stories, *Anekdoten um Hitler* (1980) and *Frauen um Hitler* (1983), and gave journal and television interviews.<sup>61</sup> Her youngest son, Richard, later recalled that in 1953, constantly in need of money, his mother had sold a letter to a magazine that he had written to her following his first visit in Spandau.<sup>62</sup> In 1950, the

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<sup>60</sup> Anna Maria Sigmund identifies Peter Jacob, the former husband of Leni Riefenstahl, as Henriette's new partner. See Sigmund, *Die Frauen der Nazis 1*, p. 217. However, Schirach's son Richard claims that it was instead a filmmaker named Alfred H. Jacob. See Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, p. 95.

<sup>61</sup> See Sigmund, *Die Frauen der Nazis 1*, pp. 217-219.

<sup>62</sup> See Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, p. 160.

magazine *Wochenend* had already published a letter it had evidently received from Henriette von Schirach, this time by Schirach himself to his wife. In it, he assured her of his gratitude and continuing respect. It remains unclear from the article whether Henriette had received money in exchange for the letter or whether she handed it over because of the pressure she might have felt to justify herself.<sup>63</sup>

The same year that his wife asked him to agree to a divorce, Schirach experienced another blow when he received news of his father's death. Carl von Schirach died in Weimar on 11 July 1949.<sup>64</sup> Schirach's sister Rosalind and his children became his main contacts outside the prison walls. Communication became easier as time passed. Schirach later recalled that, from 1955 onwards, the inmates were allowed to send one letter per week.<sup>65</sup> His son Richard also remembered that letters in which his father could report on his life in prison without being subjected to censorship were smuggled in and out of prison via contact persons. Schirach's letters became an important part of Richard's life. They were the only way for 'prisoner number One' to assume the role of a father, at least to a certain degree:

Ich [Richard] stehe unter wohlwollender Beobachtung aus Spandau. Jede Woche trifft ein Brief meines Vaters ein, der an meinen Fortschritten teilnimmt, mich lobt oder milde tadelt. In seinen Briefen greift er gerne Stichworte auf, und ich profitiere von den Erfahrungen und Lesefrüchten eines Menschen, der nur durch Bücher lebt.<sup>66</sup>

According to Richard von Schirach, art and literature became a frequent topic of discussion in their correspondence:

Getreulich wurde von den jeweiligen Lektüren, Musikaufführungen, Filmen und von Theaterbesuchen berichtet und insgeheim auf eine günstige Aufnahme gehofft. Wie oft tauchten nicht Beethovens 'Fünfte', die 'Pastorale', Tschaikowskis Klavierkonzerte, 'Fidelio', Brahms, Haydn und Mozart auf! Und wie oft wurde man nicht eben sanft in die Schranken verwiesen. Zum Enthusiasmus für die 'Fünfte' hieß es: Denk' an die späteren Quartette! Auf dem Terrain der klassischen europäischen Bildung war wenig gegen den belesenen Germanisten und Musikkenner in der Zelle auszurichten. Es gab auch trotzige Verhandlungen dabei. Als 'Nummer Eins' Knut Hamsuns 'Viktoria' als die schönste Liebesgeschichte überhaupt pries, setzte mein Bruder Klaus Hemingways 'Über den Fluß und über in die Wälder' dagegen. 'Schreib' mir, ob du das Werk kennst, schreib' mir ob Du ihn [Hemingway] magst. Aber schreib mir nicht, daß Du ihn nicht magst', verlangte er und weigerte sich, Hamsun [...] zu lesen, bevor 'Nummer Eins' nicht Hemingway näher kennenlernte.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS/ 'Ein Brief aus Spandau entkräftet Gerüchte', dated 2 November 1950, in *Wochenend*.

<sup>64</sup> See Stadtarchiv Weimar, file 27 2/3, C 623/1949; Langzeitinterviews IV, p. 689.

<sup>65</sup> See Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, p. 348.

<sup>66</sup> Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, p. 268.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

Political authors or any texts that were connected to National Socialism had to be excluded from their correspondence, if only to avoid being flagged up by the censors. Nevertheless, Richard von Schirach recalled that on one occasion, quite innocently and completely unaware of the sensitive subject matter, he wrote to his father of a book he had recently read and that he had found very moving. He was referring to *The Diary of Anne Frank*. His remark was ignored by prisoner number One in his next letter. Neither party broached the subject again.<sup>68</sup>

However, that is not to say that their communication was entirely apolitical. As letters sent to his eldest son Klaus von Schirach show, his father was concerned about past and future political developments. He tried to present the Third Reich as the inevitable result of political and historical events that took place long before Hitler stepped onto the scene:

Was der Amerikaner 'Nazismus' nennt, beginnt bereits lange vor der Jahrhundertwende. Mit der Ausbootung Bismarcks war unser Schicksal zwar besiegelt, aber die dominierende Stellung Preussens im Reichsverband ist doch wohl die Wurzel der Katastrophe. [...] Bei grösserem historischen Abstand wird man die ganze Entwicklung von der 2. Reichsgründung ab bis 1945 als ein Zusammenhängendes (sic) Ganzes sehen.<sup>69</sup>

The letter also shows that (at least as a prisoner in Nuremberg) Schirach still took keen interest in Germany's political future. He expresses the belief that the era of individual nation states was over: 'Es gibt nur noch die Ost-Welt und die West-Welt. [...] beide Welten wirken im Sinne der Auflösung jener Nationalitätsbegriffe, die für die vergangene geschichtliche Epoche bestimmend waren.'<sup>70</sup> Nationality, a driving elemental force of history in National Socialist ideology and rhetoric, has been reduced to being a mere 'Begriff'. Schirach hoped that Germany might even be a role model in creating a new way of life, although he does not presume to play a role in this process: 'Nach der Zerstörung ihrer Städte könnte es ihnen [den Deutschen] gelingen, auf deutschem Boden so etwas wie eine  $\Upsilon$ -Synthese des europäischen und des amerikanischen Geistes zu schaffen.'<sup>71</sup>

The following poem is dated 20 January 1947. Taking stock of his previous life,

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<sup>68</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>69</sup> The page numbers suggest that the document in question in fact consists of two letters that remained unfinished, fragmentary or partly fell victim to the censors. The first letter is dated January 1947; the second is undated. Great similarities in style, tone and content suggest that the letters were written around the same time. Privataarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ letter beginning 'Man hat in törichter Weise', no date given, pp. 3-4.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Schirach dedicates it to old friends:

### DEN FREUNDEN VON EINST

Das war Euer Charme, das war Euer Stil:  
Keine künstliche Form und nie ein Zuviel;  
Ein heiteres schaffen, kein ödes pflichten,  
Ein lächelnd genießen und lächelnd verzichten.  
Leben als Kunst, überlegen gemeistert,  
Südllich beseelt, nicht nördlich begeistert.  
Ein höheres Dasein, ein tieferes Schau'n  
In Schönheit gesegnet durch Mädchen und Fraun.

Musik war bei allem sonst war's Euch nichts wert!  
Ein Takt aus dem Herzen, nicht künstliche Form  
Südllicher Stil, nicht nördliche Norm.  
Was immer geschehe, behütet, bewahrt,  
Das masische [sic] Wesen, die edlere Art;  
Seid treu nur Euch selber – so hab' ich Euch gern,  
Lebt wohl, Kavalier, Adieu, meine Herrn!<sup>72</sup>

Saying his farewell to his friends, the speaker of the poem remembers their admirable qualities: authenticity and a sense of proportion are included as attractive attributes, which – according to the speaker – can be found 'südllich' rather than 'nördlich'. These categories are rather vague at first sight, although significant, given the National Socialist celebration of the allegedly superior Nordic 'Aryan'. How exactly Schirach was using these categories becomes clearer from a letter he sent to his son dated nine days after he wrote 'Den Freunden von Einst'. Here he claims that the Germans lack political acumen: 'Sinn für das Organisierte (von oben), nicht für das Organische (gewachsene). Anders der Süden!!'<sup>73</sup> As Gauleiter in Vienna, he continues, he was surprised to see that the regime did not account for a difference in temperament: '[...] dass die deutsche Führung und Verwaltung sich nicht einmal bemühte, dem österreichisch-deutschen Wesen, das eben ein Südwesen ist, gerecht zu werden.'<sup>74</sup> Schirach continues biologicistic vocabulary in his preference of the 'Organische', even though he applies these categories to different groups now, depicting the Northern Germany as strict and regimental, 'Organisatorisch', and the South of Germany and Austria

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<sup>72</sup> Privatarhiv Klaus von Schirach/ 'Den Freunden von einst', dated 20 January 1947.

<sup>73</sup> Privatarhiv Klaus von Schirach/ letter, dated 29 January 1947, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

as having the desirable, more natural disposition. Prussia in particular becomes Austria's counterpart in his letters: 'Preussen ist nie die Seele Deutschlands gewesen. Es war der Wille Deutschlands und seine Kommandostelle. Die Seele war der Süden und der Südwesten. Hier waren auch stets die grösseren politischen Fähigkeiten zu Hause.'<sup>75</sup> Given this information it seems reasonable to assume that the title most likely either refers to Schirach's Munich days or his Vienna circle. Munich might serve as counterpoint to the (Northern) Berlin and Schirach spent happy student days in the Bavarian capital. The assumption that it might refer to Vienna is however further supported by his own accounts, according to which he greatly enjoyed living in and shaping the cultural life of the Austrian capital.<sup>76</sup>

The poem consists of two stanzas of eight and seven lines respectively, all of which are rhyming couplets with the exception of the first line of the second stanza, which stands alone. The dactylic tetrameter is often irregular. The irregularity of metre and rhyme scheme perhaps aim to reflect the lightness and ease of the South. 'Charme' and 'Stil', authenticity ('keine künstliche Form') and good taste ('nie ein Zuviel') are attributed to the speaker's former friends. Most striking about this poem is the repeated use of opposites that reinforces the contrast between 'nördlich' and 'südlich' life and style. Schirach establishes: 'heiteres schaffen' versus 'ödes pflichten', fulfilling inspiration ('beseelt') versus superficial excitement ('begeistert'). The opposition between 'schaffen' and 'pflichten' is particularly interesting, given that 'Pflicht' had been one of the cornerstones of Nazi rhetoric and had certainly held positive connotations. In earlier poems Schirach had praised the service to the flag as 'hohe und heilige Pflicht'<sup>77</sup> and Hitler as 'ein Priester der Pflicht'.<sup>78</sup> However, here it pales in comparison to the more spirited 'schaffen', which holds the potential of creativity and also of success. Every line in the first stanza has a central caesura indicated either by a comma or a conjunction, adding to the effect of contrasting poles. The contrast becomes most evident in lines six ('Südlich beseelt, nicht nördlich begeistert.') and eleven ('Südlicher Stil, nicht nördliche Norm'), both reinforcing the idea that the South is associated with natural elegance and lasting values. It is inspired, 'beseelt', where the North can only offer short-lived enthusiasm. Inner refinement and grace ('Ein höheres Dasein, ein tieferes Schau'n'), the poem suggests, will be accompanied by outward beauty ('In Schönheit

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<sup>75</sup> Privataarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ letter beginning 'Man hat in törichter Weise', p. 4.

<sup>76</sup> See Langzeitinterviews IV, pp. 660-663.

<sup>77</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Stolz,' *Die Bewegung* 2, no. 14 (5 August 1930).

<sup>78</sup> Schirach, 'Die Warnung'.

gesegnet durch Mädchen und Fraun’).

The ideal of the *ars vivendi*, ‘Leben als Kunst’, echoes Goethe’s thoughts after he travelled around Italy, contrasting Germany as representative of the cold and narrow-minded North to the sunny, paradisiacal culture and landscape of the South, where he believed art and life to be in harmony.<sup>79</sup> The negative counterpart to ‘Leben ist Kunst’ is the ‘künstliche Form’, which is repeated in the second stanza and more plainly contrasted with the natural ‘Takt aus dem Herzen’. That Schirach criticises ‘künstliche Form’ in a poem might be considered ironic, although the fact that, in the second stanza at least, the context is specifically that of music aligned to the beating of the heart suggests that not all art must be considered artificial and that art and nature are not understood to be in opposition generally. In the last four lines the speaker switches to the present tense to bid farewell to his former friends, asking them to stay true to their temperament and way of life: ‘Seid treu nur Euch selber – so hab ich Euch gern’. Schirach uses two words of Romanic origin, ‘Kavaliers’ and ‘Adieu’ in the poem’s last line, evoking once again ideas of Southern exotism and elegance.

The letters and poems Schirach sent from prison complement and illustrate the information regarding his emotional and psychological state in Nuremberg and Spandau that we have from his interviews and autobiography. They show a side that these (official) sources only allow us to glimpse;<sup>80</sup> they show him as family man, as caring father, grandfather and husband, who was justifiably afraid to lose connection with his family. However, the poems do not acknowledge the shift in their lives and the changes that must necessarily happen in his relationship with his wife and children through their physical separation. The poems also reveal the humorous side of a man who is usually described as pompous, even snobbish and arrogant,<sup>81</sup> and whose penchant for turgid and grand language is also evident from his earlier poems. I will not try to argue that the biblical references shown in ‘Das Ende’ should be read as evidence that Schirach, the sincerity of whose Christian beliefs had been challenged by critics both due to his earlier poems and his actions as Reichsjugendführer, once deposed of his political ambitions, found his way (back) to the Christian faith, but they

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<sup>79</sup> See T.J. Reed, ed., *Goethe. The Flight to Italy. Diary and Selected Letters* (Oxford: UP, 1999), pp. XVI-XVII and p. 23.

<sup>80</sup> The exchange of letters between Schirach and Henriette and his children is only mentioned briefly on the last few pages of his autobiography.

<sup>81</sup> See Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, pp. 31, 66-68, 157; Lang, *Der Hitler-Junge*, p. 113; Fest, *Das Gesicht des Dritten Reiches*, pp. 308-311.

do show that he was very comfortable expressing himself and his view of events within a Christian framework (rather than one of pre-Germanic paganism). Overall the poems demonstrate a great need for stasis and harmony (while writing about change), perhaps with the exception of 'Begrift ihr nicht? So ward ihr niemals jung', in which the speaker (defiantly) tries to defend his and his generation's actions.

Schirach addresses the question of (communal rather than individual) guilt in his poems but does not offer any apologies. The speaker in his poems, as shown in 'Das Ende', is unable to find words or even see the 'Grauen' around him clearly. Due to his high rank in the Nazi state Schirach must have had greater knowledge than the average German citizen of the atrocities committed in the name of National Socialism. Yet for him the end of the war and the disclosure of these crimes do not necessitate a poetic or linguistic break. On the contrary, the fact that he rewrote at least one of his earlier poems, 'Deutung', shows that he did not reject his pre-1945 poems indiscriminately and that some of them could still be a source of comfort him – an attitude that is in contrast with the beliefs of authors such as Thomas Mann, with his point blank rejection of literature associated with the Third Reich.

Schirach's letters show that, following the destruction of German cities, he had hopes for Germany's reconstruction and even rehabilitation as 'eine [...] Synthese des europäischen und des amerikanischen Geistes'<sup>82</sup> specifically 'auf deutschem Boden', although he did not appear to have had any hopes of being part of this process. The poems give little evidence as to whether he deemed a literary and poetic new beginning necessary. There are no references to linguistic 'Schutt' that needs be removed, as postulated by Kurt Hiller. Schirach does not portray the inner and outer 'Zerstörungen unserer Welt', to quote Böll again. Instead, his poems remain doubly intact. Not only the language remains unbroken; poems such as 'Der Liebsten' also portray a world that is undisturbed, harmonious and unblemished.

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<sup>82</sup> Privataarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ letter beginning 'Man hat in törichter Weise', no date given, p. 1.



## *Ich glaubte an Hitler*

Of the original seven prisoners, Neurath was the first one to leave Spandau in 1954. Having served nine years of his fifteen-year sentence, he was released due to ill health.<sup>83</sup> Raeder and Funk were released in 1955 and 1957 respectively on similar grounds.<sup>84</sup> Dönitz's ten-year sentence came to an end in 1956.<sup>85</sup> The three prisoners left in Spandau were Schirach and Speer, who were both convicted to serve twenty years, and Heß, who had been given a life sentence. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Schirach's children and his former wife made pleas for his early release or at least for an improvement to the conditions in Spandau prison, even travelling as far as London and Moscow to be heard by representatives of the 'four Powers'.<sup>86</sup> However, their efforts were in vain. Schirach (like Speer) served his twenty-year sentence to the very last day. On 1 October 1966, creating a lot of media attention, the doors of Spandau prison finally opened to release prisoners number One and number Five (Speer). Schirach's sons Klaus, Robert and Richard went to Berlin to meet their father and accompanied him to Munich.<sup>87</sup> According to the autobiography of his youngest son, Schirach spent the first few months of his life following his release living with Robert and Richard in a house in the Munich district of Schwabing.<sup>88</sup> Here, they furnished a room for their father, whose income and property had been confiscated by the state after 1945.<sup>89</sup> Richard von Schirach writes of bundles of letters that arrived for Schirach every day as former acquaintances congratulated the ex-prisoner on regaining his freedom. Often, he claims, the authors of these letters mentioned that they still lovingly remembered Schirach's poetry:

Immer wieder war von der Wirkung seiner Gedichte die Rede. 'Ich habe einige Verse von Ihnen gelesen, welche schöne kristallklare Form! Welches Zartgefühl!', schrieb ihm eine Frau, die mit ihrem Vater zurückgezogen, wie Balzacs 'Lilie im Tal' lebte. Auch ein Pfarrer schrieb ihm: 'Sie sind in der langen Zeit der Haft von vielen nicht vergessen worden. Ich habe öfter im Gottesdienst [ihre

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<sup>83</sup> See Goda, *Tales from Spandau*, p. 129.

<sup>84</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 156 and p. 193.

<sup>85</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>86</sup> See IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS nr. 54104, 'Appeal for Baldur von Schirach' in *The Times*, dated 20 March 1955 and nr. 54351, 'New plea soon for von Schirach' in *The Times*, wrongly dated 6 January 1959, the correct date is likely 6 January 1960 and nr. 36233, Terence Prittie: 'Major war criminal. Family's plea' in *The Guardian*, dated 2 January 1963 and nr. 221, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 'Gnadengesuch für Baldur von Schirach', dated 13 August 1965.

<sup>87</sup> See Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, pp. 285-288.

<sup>88</sup> According to the city archive Baldur von Schirach's registration card no longer exists. A substitute document, on which his relocation from Spandau is recorded, was not yet publicly available in time for this study. However, the registration card issued in Schirach's next known place of residence in Trossingen, mentions Munich as his previous place of residence. See Stadtverwaltung Trossingen/ Melderegister Baldur von Schirach.

<sup>89</sup> See Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, p. 277.

(sic) Gedichte] 'Wenn heute Er vom Kreuz herniederstiege...' oder bei Beerdigungen 'Du, meine Mutter gehst wie eine Flamme hoch über Wolken durch mein Leben hin...' vorgetragen.<sup>90</sup>

Almost immediately following his release, Schirach found himself under pressure to write his memoirs. His son recalls that even prior to the date of his release, his family had entered negotiations with several newspapers and journals. The decision to publish was first and foremost a result of financial difficulties. Schirach no longer had any form of income.<sup>91</sup> The family's domicile Schloss Aspenstein in Kochel am See near Munich had been seized by the American Allied forces after 1945 and was later assigned to the SPD in Bavaria to serve as a school and training institution.<sup>92</sup>

The text of his autobiography as published by *Stern* in weekly instalments from May 1967 onwards, generously illustrated with photographs, was not in fact written by Schirach himself. It was the result of several lengthy interviews, conducted by *Stern* editor Jochen von Lang, captured on tape and typed up. A ghostwriter then prepared them for publication. Later, they were revised again and put together as a book.<sup>93</sup> Time was of the essence; there was a race between Schirach and Speer, released the same day, as to who would bring out his memoirs first. They were awaited, nationally and internationally, with great anticipation. After all, as the *Times* correspondent reported in London, 'anything written by one of the few senior surviving Nazi leaders has a certain fascination'.<sup>94</sup> Schirach won, but there was a price to be paid. The voice in his autobiography was not his own; a fact that did not go unnoticed. Critic Waldemar Besson remarked in his review:

Auch fragt sich, ob das Buch, so wie es vorliegt und im 'stern' vorabgedruckt wurde, durchweg Schirachs eigener Produktion entsprang. Haben vielleicht routinierte Redakteure kräftig nachgeholfen? Der Verdacht drängt sich auf, wenn man zum Vergleich den Brief heranzieht, mit dem Schirach auf die Kritik der 'stern'-Kolumnistin Sibylle antwortete. Da klingt alles holpriger. Da erkennen wir eher den Mann, der offensichtlich von den Ereignissen seines Lebens völlig überfordert wurde. Aber das ist uns auch lieber als die glatte Scheibe, die vorgibt, zu schildern, was damals wirklich hinter den Kulissen geschehen sei.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 304.

<sup>91</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>92</sup> According to a report published in the *Hamburger Echo*, in 1948 Henriette von Schirach demanded that the property should be returned to the family and even decided to seek legal support for her claims, but she was not successful. See IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, *Hamburger Echo*, 'Frau Schirach gegen von Knoeringer', dated 10 September 1948 and nr. 134 'Frau v. Schirach verlor Prozeß' in *Die Welt*, dated 13 November 1948.

<sup>93</sup> See Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, p. 360 and p. 370; IfZ, Zeitungssammlung Baldur von Schirach nr. 56942, 'The Schirach memoirs appear' in *The Times*, dated 16 May 1967.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, *Die Zeit* 'Student à la Gartenlaube', dated 19 March 1968.

*Ich glaubte an Hitler* is structured chronologically. In forty-one chapters, each one usually only spanning a couple of pages, Schirach's life is recounted from his birth until his release from Spandau. Now and again flashbacks provide the reader with additional information. The text is preceded by the description of a brief scene informing the reader of the motivation to write the book. Following his eye surgery, Schirach had been urged by an interested nurse at the hospital to explain to him the 'Phänomen Hitler'. It was at that point, he claimed, that he realised: 'Von den führenden Nationalsozialisten, die Hitler früh und aus nächster Nähe kannte, bin ich der einzige Überlebende. Deshalb faßte ich damals den Plan zu berichten, wie ich zu Hitler kam, wie wir ihm verfielen und das Deutsche Reich verspielten.'<sup>96</sup> The memoir's promise to the reader is exclusive information, given that most of those who had been well acquainted with Hitler were no longer alive, and authenticity, through the two men's close relationship. The formulation 'wie wir ihm verfielen' defines clearly from the outset how Schirach would like to see his own role: a naïve young man, who was seduced by Hitler's promises and who realised too late what terrible crimes had been committed in his name. Although Hitler is never mentioned in his prison poems, these sentiments are perhaps reflected in them: 'Begrift Ihr nicht? So wart Ihr niemals jung./ Wir hatten Fehler, doch wir brachen Bahn/ Ihr irrtet nie – ihr habt auch nichts getan!'

The expectations set up by this preface are followed through. Alongside the most important stages in Schirach's private life, the autobiography describes his role in the party and how he experienced and supported the rise of the NSDAP. Some chapters focus on his political but also private relationships with other high-ranking party members such as Heß, Bormann, Goebbels, Streicher, Göring, but also with the women closely connected to Hitler, that is to say Geli Raubal, Eva Braun and the Mitford sisters. Much time is spent on Schirach's personal relationship with Hitler and how it developed from glowing, almost blind admiration and respectful solidarity. The autobiography also describes what are presented as Schirach's growing doubts that flared up in brief rebellion and finally lapsed into desperate loyalty and bitter realisation. What is more, Schirach uses this opportunity to defend himself once again against the accusations brought up against him in the Nuremberg trials. For instance, he describes his visit to the concentration camp Dachau in 1935. According to his description of the conditions that he witnessed, there was no cause for alarm. The account also includes a brief episode in which Schirach recognised one of the

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<sup>96</sup> Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, p. 6.

prisoners, Karl-Leon du Moulin-Eckart, as a former acquaintance. He intervened repeatedly on his friend's behalf and was successful.<sup>97</sup> Whereas in this case, Schirach portrays himself ignorant of the true nature of the Nazi regime, he often takes on the role of someone who, through his superior knowledge, needs to rectify the public's opinion and in particular that of the younger generation.<sup>98</sup> Altogether, *Ich glaubte an Hitler* attributes Schirach a role and personality similar to that attested to him by the psychologist who had attended to the accused in Nuremberg: 'ein reuige[r] Sünder',<sup>99</sup> who learns too late that he has become guilty and, realising the scope of his guilt, does not seek forgiveness but instead decides to accept responsibility.<sup>100</sup> However, this acknowledgement does not go beyond an admission of guilt, as his son later observed, there is no attempt to make amends:

Aber was hatte er nach den einundzwanzig Jahren zu den Opfern zu sagen? [...] Er gibt nichts Preis von seinen Gefühlen und schenkt ihnen kein Wort. Jede Bitte um Vergebung, jedes persönliche Eingehen, jede Hinwendung an die Opfer, die hinter abstrakten Zahlen verborgen sind, hätte ein Gespräch eröffnen und den Grundstein zu einer neuen Beziehung legen können. Das Geständnis, das er sich abgerungen hat, oder das ihm abgerungen wurde, durchweht ein Hauch von Kälte.<sup>101</sup>

Richard von Schirach recalls that his father had asked him to edit the finished manuscript, since he was aware that it was lacking in something, 'daß seinen Erinnerungen der Tropfen Herzblut fehlte, der sie zum Leben erweckt hätte'.<sup>102</sup> He refused.

The general public greeted Schirach's memoirs with mixed reactions. Some accused him of trivialising events. Among the reactions *Stern* printed, one read:

Die Zeit heilt alle Wunden, aber wenn dann ein Geschichtsschreiber mit einem Schwamm über grausige Ereignisse wischt, wie Schirach es in seinem Bericht über das Dachaulager tat, so daß jüngere Leser des STERN den Eindruck bekommen: Es war gar nicht so schlimm – dann kann man verstehen, daß wohlmeinende Menschen es mit der Angst bekommen.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 203-206.

<sup>98</sup> For instance his comment on Bormann's personality: 'Und da wir keineswegs eine "verschworene Gesellschaft" waren, wie Hitler es so gern darstellte, sondern um Kompetenzen, Einfluß und Macht kämpfende Rivalen, wurde der Sekretär, wurde Bormann schließlich zu einem der mächtigsten Männer im Staat. [...] Allmählich wurde er zum "Joker" in diesem Spiel. Im Grunde ist er nicht nur ein Geschöpf Hitlers gewesen, sondern wir alle, die ihn gekannt, sich seiner bedient und ihn geduldet haben, haben ihn mit groß werden lassen. Deshalb finde ich es geschichtlich falsch, alle Schuld auf Martin Bormann abzuwälzen.' *Ibid.* p. 284.

<sup>99</sup> Taylor, *Die Nürnberger Prozesse*, p. 490.

<sup>100</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 490-491.

<sup>101</sup> Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, pp. 366-367.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>103</sup> Wilhelm Schweren, 'Der Politiker mit seinen Memoiren,' *Stern* 20, no. 42 (11-17 January 1967), p. 168.

Among others, Schirach's frank admission of his guilt was perceived as commendable: 'Weiter muss ich auch den Mut und den Schneid des Herrn von Schirach bewundern, welcher wie so wenige die Kraft aufbrachte, seinen Fehler einzugestehen und der breiten Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen.'<sup>104</sup>

*Stern*, obviously fully aware of the controversial material to which it had bought the rights, even went so far as to let one of its columnists, Anneliese Friedmann, publish a rather aggressive piece in August 1967, in which she attacked Schirach while his memoir series was still running. Friedmann, who was born in 1927 and grew up in Nazi Germany, criticized Schirach vehemently. Sarcastically, she offered to help Schirach to complete his 'kernseifensaubereren Erinnerungen'<sup>105</sup> a point of criticism that might well be extended to his private poems. The 'Grauen' not only remains unseen; the poems are often even unashamedly nostalgic. In 'Den Freunden von Einst' the speaker remembers 'Charme', 'Stil', 'heiteres Schaffen', beautiful women, music and 'Kavaliere'. It is a nostalgic farewell to a past that is remembered fondly and which the speaker wants to be 'behütet, bewahrt'. 'Begreift ihr nicht? So wart ihr niemals jung' presents a glorified portrayal of youth as a happy time of light-hearted amusement and natural energy: 'Jugend ist ein Lied/ voll Vogelzwitschern, Lachen, Saitenspiel/ durch das die Brandung rauscht, ein süsser Sturm [...].' Youth, the speaker claims, is innocent because it knows nothing of the hardships and injustices of life: 'Jugend ist Licht, das nichts vom Schatten weiss.' These sentiments were later repeated in Schirach's memoirs and in the Lang interviews. In them Schirach repeatedly points out his young age – 'ich war damals ja noch ein Junge, 26 Jahre alt'<sup>106</sup> – and his uncritical attitude – 'Sie dürfen von einem siebzehnjährigen Menschen nun nicht den kritischen Verstand verlangen, der nun solche Dinge objektiv nachprüfen kann.'<sup>107</sup> Youth, Schirach continually emphasises, is carefree and capable of great fervour, 'mit Feuereifer und unbeschwert durch Visionen künftiger Katastrophen'<sup>108</sup>. It does not question or challenge figures of authority it admires, even when it witnesses them displaying crude and racist agitation: 'Meinen jugendlichen Glauben konnten solche Eindrücke [Streichers und Dinters aggressiven

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<sup>104</sup> Jakob Schamberger, 'Der Politiker mit seinen Memoiren,' *Stern* 20, no. 42 (11-17 January 1967), p. 168.

<sup>105</sup> Sibylle, 'Glaubten Sie, Herr von Schirach?,' *Stern* 20, no. 36 (29 August-4 September 1967), p. 17.

<sup>106</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 141; for further example see *ibid.* pp. 143, 159, 198.

<sup>107</sup> Langzeitinterviews I, p. 205.

<sup>108</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 36.

Antisemitismus] nicht erschüttern.<sup>109</sup>

In her article, Friedmann reminded the former Reichsjugendführer of the impact his political and pedagogical decisions had on the lives of several generations, as well as the values and principles he taught them in his slogans, speeches and writing:

Sie waren Baldur, ein Lichtgott, von dem wir hin und wieder Hehres gereimt in unsern Lesebüchern fanden, Vorbild, Idealist, Bannerträger. Und erzogen uns 'körperlich, geistig und sittlich im Geiste des Nationalsozialismus', Herr von Schirach. Nämlich engstirnig, blind und tumb. Nur der sportlich Tüchtige taugte etwas, nur Gehorsam war Sittlichkeit, nur linientreues Denken war Geist, der ohnehin klein geschrieben wurde, vor allem aber deutsch. Wir kannten die Franzosen nur aus Landsererzählungen, niemand sagte uns, was Tolstoi und Dickens für die Literatur des Abendlandes bedeuten, wir erfuhren kein einziges Wort über Heinrich Heine, selbst Schiller wurde nur gereinigt geduldet: 'Sire, geben Sie Gedankenfreiheit!' paßte nicht in die Schullektüre.<sup>110</sup>

Friedmann's article was met with mixed reactions from readers. Some felt she spoke for them and shared their stories and experiences of growing up in the National Socialist state; others defended the historical value of Schirach's memoirs and stressed that it was necessary to deal with them and the past: 'Sich für diese Mitteilungen nicht zu interessieren, scheint mir eine merkwürdige Form der Vergangenheitsbewältigung.'<sup>111</sup> Friedmann later stated that she even received a number of aggressive notes from readers.<sup>112</sup> She did not have to wait long for Schirach's response. *Stern* published an open letter in which he defended himself minutely and emphatically, sometimes defiantly, against many of her accusations. The circumstances she depicted, he claimed, had either been out of his control, or were fabricated (or at least unsubstantiated and vague); he accused her of being uninformed of their historical background. In his conclusion he explains why he did not believe that a linguistic clean slate would be necessary, a remark that is particularly revealing giving his fundamental readiness to continue using traditional language and poetic forms as demonstrated in his prison poems:

Heißt es nicht einmal wieder von einem deutschen Extrem ins andere fallen, wenn nach einer Zeit, in der, wie ich zugebe, die Fahnen mystisch verklärt wurden, jetzt gar keine Fahne mehr gelten soll? [...] Weil so viele einfache Worte für Werte, die uns teuer sind, zu oft ausgesprochen wurden, soll deswegen die Treue oder das Vaterland auf den Kehrighaufen der Sprache?<sup>113</sup>

Interestingly, it is only the frequency of usage that he highlights ('zu oft ausgesprochen') as

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>110</sup> Sibylle, 'Glaubten Sie, Herr von Schirach?'

<sup>111</sup> Artur Liesegang, 'Ein Angriff und eine Verteidigung,' *Stern* 20, no. 39 (19-25 September 1967), p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> See Sibylle, 'Mit der Bitte um Absolution,' *Stern* 21, no. 1 (3-9 January 1968), p. 12.

<sup>113</sup> Baldur von Schirach, 'Ein Angriff und eine Verteidigung,' *Stern* 20, no. 39 (19-25 September 1967), p. 7.

problematic and not the re- or misinterpretation of terms by Nazi ideologues. He thus trivialises Nazism by making it seem a mere exaggeration rather than wrong in its core precepts.

In his letter, Schirach neither explicitly apologises for, nor justifies, his past behaviours. The fact that he could or would not go beyond an admission of guilt was repeatedly pointed out by his critics. For instance, Waldemar Besson wrote in a review published in *Die Zeit*: '[...] jede kritische Einsicht in das Selbsterlebte fehlt. [...] Schirach sollte ehrlicher und schonungsloser mit sich umgehen.'<sup>114</sup> He closed the article: 'Baldur von Schirach hat eine schwere Strafe hinter sich. Sie war ein hartes Los. Aber das gestattet nicht, Schirach nachzusehen, daß er nun die selbsterlebte Geschichte von sich wegdrängt. Ein guter Memoirenschreiber wäre er nur geworden, wenn er sie für sich und andere durchsichtig gemacht hätte.' The international response to Schirach's memoirs was similar. Following a detailed account of the information about Hitler's character and private life that Schirach revealed, the *Times*' correspondent David Hotham concluded:

These memoirs, often turgid and self-pitying, and constantly self-justifying in a subtle way, have nevertheless the fascination of a story told by one of the few surviving high Nazi leaders. More striking than the text are two photographs of Schirach himself. In the first, taken in 1943, one sees him young, energetic, walking with Hitler, who holds a large dog on a leash; in the second, taken after his release last year, one sees the white-haired, chastened, almost benign, Schirach.<sup>115</sup>

Similar criticism could be levelled at Schirach's prison poems; they are concerned with his own loss (of freedom, of his wife and family) and situation in prison. What others have suffered remains unseen and untold. In 'Begrift ihr nicht? So wart ihr niemals jung', the speaker justifies and defiantly defends his own memories. Beyond the very generalised admission of 'Fehler', the speaker cannot see or admit to the suffering that the 'süßes Sturm' of youth has led to.

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<sup>114</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, 'Student à la Gartenlaube'; the following quotation *ibid*.

<sup>115</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, nr. 56966, 'Hitler a man who feared illness' in *The Times*, dated 13 June 1967.

## The final years

In spite of the criticism his memoirs earned him, the income Schirach received from selling the rights enabled him to support not only himself financially, but also his youngest son, who at this point was still attending university.<sup>116</sup>

In spring 1969, three years after his release, Schirach decided to settle in Trossingen, a small town near the Swiss border, where he lived with relatives.<sup>117</sup> Schirach's second son, Robert was married to the niece of Fritz Kiehn, a prominent and wealthy manufacturer. Kiehn, a member of the German Reichstag between 1932 and 1945, managed to continue the financial success he had enjoyed under the Nazi regime while remaining a respected citizen.<sup>118</sup> When Robert's marriage ended, his father decided to take up the offer to live with two former Bund Deutscher Mädel leaders, who owned the guesthouse Mont Royal in Kröv, a municipality on the river Moselle. In March 1973, he relocated there and lived quietly and comfortably.<sup>119</sup> Baldur von Schirach died on 8 August 1974.<sup>120</sup> The burial was attended only by the closest circle of family and friends.<sup>121</sup>

The news of his death met with mixed reactions in the German press. Whereas his conduct in the Nuremberg trials and the fact that he was one of the few among the accused who accepted responsibility for his role in the Nazi regime was generally favourably noted, the role that he could have (and perhaps given the goals he set himself with his autobiography *should* have) played in Germany's process of coming to terms with the National Socialist past was remarked upon critically: The obituary published in the FAZ closed:

Der selbstgestellten Aufgabe allerdings, die deutsche Jugend vor einem Wiederaufleben nationalsozialistischen Gedankenguts zu bewahren, hat er nicht mehr entsprechen können. Das hatte seinen Grund nicht nur in dem bescheidenen Gewicht der Einsichten, die er in dem nach zwanzig Jahren Spandauer Haft veröffentlichten Erinnerungsbuch vermitteln konnte; es war auch darauf zurückzuführen, daß er die Motive und Antriebe seiner Generation niemals einleuchtend zu machen verstand. Er sprach wie aus einer anderen Welt. Im Grund war er tot, lange bevor er

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<sup>116</sup> See Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*, p. 352.

<sup>117</sup> See Stadtverwaltung Trossingen/ Melderegister Baldur von Schirach.

<sup>118</sup> See Hartmut Berghoff and Cornelia Rauh-Kühne, *Fritz K.: ein deutsches Leben im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: DVA, 2000), pp. 9-17 and pp. 290-292.

<sup>119</sup> See Verbandsgemeindeverwaltung Kröv-Bausendorf/ Melderegister/ Aktenzeichen 131-01; IfZ/ ED748/24 letter written by Dr. Rüdiger to Horst Voigt, dated 8 October 1983. The name of the guesthouse is not mentioned in the letter and was provided by Klaus von Schirach.

<sup>120</sup> See Verbandsgemeindeverwaltung Kröv-Bausendorf/ Aktenzeichen 131-01.

<sup>121</sup> See IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, obituary notices on behalf of Schirach's children and his friends and former colleagues Gustav Höpken, Günter Kaufmann and Siegfried Zoglmann.



gestorben ist.<sup>122</sup>

*Die Zeit* took a decidedly sharper tone. The author urged readers to remember the young generation killed in the war, and depicted Schirach as directly responsible for this loss: 'Er [Schirach] bezauberte die Jugend mit so verschwommenen Begriffen wie Führer, Volk, Vaterland und Ehre [...].'<sup>123</sup> The former Reichsjugendführer is referred to as 'ein unpolitischer Tor im eitlen Gewande geliehener Macht, [der] bis ans Ende seiner Tage nicht einsehen wollen [hat], daß dieser sinnlose Opfertod [der Hitlerjungen] die Folge auch seiner Erziehung gewesen ist.' Debating Schirach's role as Reichsjugendführer in the Third Reich in terms of responsibility and guilt, in the article Schirach emerges as the 'verführter Verführer', who believed in Hitler and who led millions of others on this disastrous path. After his release from Spandau, the author argues, he would have done better to remain silent:

Er [Schirach] fand nicht den Mut, rechtzeitig gegen das Verbrechen aufzubegehren, beizeiten zu seiner Verantwortung zu stehen. Und nicht zu der Selbsterkenntnis, daß nach seiner Entlassung aus Spandau ihm Schweigen besser angestanden hätte als entlarvende Fernsehauftritte und hochhonorierter Memoirenklatsch.

Schirach's death and the question of his guilt was also the object of discussion in the column *Das Streiflicht*, which is published regularly in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The author took a decidedly more sympathetic and also self-critical stance when he observed:

Nach 1945 haben wir es uns eine Weile lang recht einfach gemacht: Wir haben 'Hauptschuldige' gesucht, diese verurteilt und dann ein schönes Alibi uns eingeredet. [...] Die Hitlerjugend marschierte ja nicht unter Zwang, sondern anfangs überwiegend mit Begeisterung. [...] Ihre Propheten hießen [...] – auf vielfach verbogene, pervertierte Weise – Flex und Langbehn, Moeller van den Bruck ('Das Dritte Reich'), Blüher (Der 'Wandervogel') hießen, auch Jünger und George, Spengler und Treitschke, Paul de Lagarde und Fichte, Arndt und Jahn, die alle gleichwohl keine *schuldigen* Vorläufer waren.<sup>124</sup>

The author sees Schirach in a long line of writers, publicists of the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, many of whose texts were fuelled by an aggressive nationalism, by anti-democratic and antisemitic beliefs. Unlike in Schirach's case, their direct or indirect contributions to the establishment and stabilisation of the Third Reich was not brought

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<sup>122</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, 'Personalien. Baldur von Schirach gestorben', dated 9 August 1974.

<sup>123</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, Baldur von Schirach, *Die Zeit* 'Ein verführter Verführer', dated 16 August 1974; the following quotations *ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, 'Das Streiflicht' in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, dated 9 August 1974.

before a court. In Schirach's letter to his son that was quoted previously, he takes a similar perspective, placing the Third Reich in a larger historical context. The events between the foundation of the second German 'Reich' in 1871 up until the collapse of the Third Reich, Schirach argued in his letter, need to be seen as 'ein Zusammenhängendes (sic) Ganzes'<sup>125</sup>, a connection that according to him would only be recognised 'bei grösserem historischen Abstand'.

Interest in Schirach and his role in the Third Reich flared up again in the 1980s. In 1982, Michael Wortmann published his dissertation entitled *Baldur von Schirach. Hitlers Jugendführer* and in 1988, Jochen von Lang revised and edited the material he had gathered from his interviews with Schirach after his release as the biographical monograph *Der Hitler-Junge. Der Mann, der Deutschlands Jugend erzog*. Wortmann's study in particular sparked irritation among the circle of Schirach's friends and former employees. Günter Kaufmann, who had been Schirach's adjutant, co-editor of *Wille und Macht* and Pressechef for many years in Berlin and Vienna, felt compelled to publish *Ein Jugendführer in Deutschland. Richtigstellung und Vermächtnis*<sup>126</sup> in 1993, in which he accuses Wortmann of a one-sided portrayal of Schirach's character and of occasional misrepresentation of the facts regarding his actions as Reichsjugendführer, his knowledge of Hitler's military intentions and of military service of members of the Hitlerjugend, which Kaufmann then endeavours to correct. Kaufmann's account of Schirach, although mostly supported by sources and archive material, demonstrates at least as much bias as that of Wortmann, even as Kaufmann attempts to address Wortmann's bias. Although some of the points he makes are interesting additions to the representation of Schirach as established by Wortmann and Lang, his explanations are interspersed with snide comments on the young generation of the 1980s and 1990s, who, he claims, are loud, rude and aimless, and lack the sense of community, harmony and solidarity of those who had been young in the 1930s. Wortmann's study and Kaufmann's reaction shows the conflict between a younger generation who grew up in post-war Germany and turned an accusing glare on their elders, who in turn felt that the memories they cherished and the achievements they had made were being undermined. Their debate was essentially a continuation of Schirach's own public feud with columnist Anneliese

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<sup>125</sup> Privatarchiv Klaus von Schirach/ letter beginning 'Man hat in törichter Weise', pp. 3-4; the following quotation *ibid*.

<sup>126</sup> Günter Kaufmann, *Baldur von Schirach. Ein Jugendführer in Deutschland* (Füssen: Selbstverlag, 1993).

Friedmann, sparked by the publication of his autobiography and in which Friedmann challenged Schirach's memoirs as having been purified, biased and incomplete. The defensive stance the ageing Schirach took in his public answer to Friedmann was already visible in his private poems written years earlier in prison. The defiant speaker in 'Begreift Ihr nicht? So wart Ihr niemals jung' (dated 1946) assures his reader (or perhaps even himself): 'es bleibt auf immer Deins/ Dass jung du warst'. The speaker's defensive manner suggests an attempt to pre-empt being robbed of the memories of his/her youth.

Analysis of the poems Schirach wrote during his imprisonment has shown them to be a valuable addition to the published sources of his post-1945 life. Their very existence shows that for Schirach his poems were more than a mere 'Dienstleistung',<sup>127</sup> as suspected by fellow prisoner Speer. They also affirm that Schirach should indeed be counted among those Third Reich writers and publicists listed at the beginning of this chapter, who all – contrary to views long held after 1945 – continued to write after the collapse of the National Socialist regime. Even in their omissions, evasions and repudiations these poems complement our understanding of Schirach's character and private relationships as well as his publicly held views. Like Schirach's autobiography, they can in many ways be described as lacking: although Schirach addresses the question of guilt in them, they do not make up for the lack of unsparing self-accusation that critics pointed out after the publication of his memoirs. Likewise, Schirach does not attempt to make amends in these poems. They are, to echo another review of *Ich glaubte an Hitler*, 'self-justifying'<sup>128</sup> and 'self-pitying', although this is hardly surprising, considering the circumstances under which they were written, which even his critics had to admit were a 'hartes Los'.<sup>129</sup> Schirach could not, or would not, reflect on the horrors committed in the name of National Socialism and its leader; his poem 'Das Ende' describes the end of personal freedom and of physical destruction, but merely implies rather than openly addresses the feeling of moral capitulation. The poems, in what they say as much as in what they do not say, reflect Schirach's inability to address his former life and beliefs critically. In this regard, his determined defence of the validity of his memories, both in his poems and in the debate following the publication of his autobiography, encapsulates the German post-war intergenerational conflict.

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<sup>127</sup> Speer, *Spandauer Tagebücher*, pp. 552-553.

<sup>128</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, 'Hitler a man who feared illness'; the following quotation *ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> IfZ/Z.Slg./BvS, 'Student à la Gartenlaube'.

## CONCLUSION

Two years after his release from Spandau prison, Schirach was interviewed by British journalist David Frost. When asked by Frost for ‘one lesson, one conclusion, that [...] [he] would like to draw, one concluding remark,’<sup>1</sup> the sixty-one year-old Schirach appeared to consider the question for a moment and then went on to recite Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*:

‘If seven maids with seven mops  
Swept for half a year,  
Do you suppose’ the walrus said.  
‘That they could get it clear?’  
‘I doubt it’, said the Carpenter,  
And shed a bitter tear.’<sup>2</sup>

Like the Carpenter, Schirach too had to reach the bitter conclusion that the traces of the past are too vast to ever be cleared away. He preferred not to express his feelings in his own words but in Carroll’s instead; he does not speak of his own tears but lets the Carpenter’s tears speak for him. By quoting a canonical English author – on with whom Frost’s audience would have been familiar – Schirach also consciously styled himself as an educated, well-read man, who did not fit the more familiar image of the criminal, crude and fanatical Nazi. Once again, Schirach emerges as someone who was very conscious of his audience and of how he wanted to be perceived publicly.

Schirach’s high level of education and the fact that he was well-versed in literature has long been established in existing research, but the full extent of his poetic productivity and the reception of his poems in and before the party’s rise to power was previously unknown. As laid out in this study, this knowledge complements our understanding of him and his cultural contribution to the implementation and stabilisation of the Nazi regime. Schirach, as our investigation into his intellectual, social and literary development has shown, learned to appreciate literature from a young age. As a teenager it became (as it had been for his brother Karl) a medium in which to express himself, but he soon discovered that poems could be useful to him in other ways, too. His publications were received enthusiastically in the Nazi party’s propaganda machinery, but, most importantly, they paved his way to Hitler. At the time the party rose to power in Germany, Schirach had fully realised

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<sup>1</sup> Frost, *Frost on Friday*, 37:49-37:57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 38:04-38:29.

the propaganda potential of his poetry and learned to utilise it strategically. He had had ample opportunity to study and practise the rhetorical effectiveness of his words during public assemblies as well as in his journalistic publications.

Not only do we now have a clearer picture of who in the NSDAP supported his poetic and journalistic ambitions; Schirach also emerges from the analysis of his collections of poems and their critical reception as a significant cultural force in – but also, at least within the National Socialist movement, *before* – the establishment of the Third Reich. By making the movement itself the object of his poetry – through his glorification of its political and intellectual leaders, its martyrs (Horst Wessel, Herbert Norkus) and institutions (Hitlerjugend, SA), or even its significant dates and places ('Am 9. November vor der Feldherrnhalle zu München') – Schirach helped establish the official party narrative during the crucial 'Kampfzeit' years, which was then continued after 1933. His conscious and open references to the party, to its personnel and institutions not only made his poems very useful to the movement but also contributed to the fact that they became even more widely known after 1933. However, as Schirach had to learn, this also made him dependent on official approval. Poems referring to events, institutions or persons that fell out of favour – for example Hindenburg and the SA – also disappeared from view.

Closer investigation of his poems has also shown how they related to other literary and ideological currents of his time and that they did so on a larger scale than scholarship has previously allowed. There are shared features to be found with some war literature of the 1920s in the poems' glorification of war, soldiery and death on the battlefield. At the same time, they acknowledge isolation in the field and the random, indiscriminate and unprecedented scale with which death had struck in the First World War. Whereas Schirach, like his literary role models (most notably Ernst Jünger), tried to find meaning in the lost war, he at the same time distinguished himself from them. He sought to represent the voice of a younger generation that felt bound by their fathers' deaths but still sought a way forward. Rather than dismissing Schirach's poems as a poor imitation of Jünger and other war authors, my discussion of his poems shows firstly that he needs to be seen as reacting to and contributing to the literary processing of the war, and secondly that his example further challenges the traditional binary representations of the war literature of the 1920s.

Another way in which Schirach can be seen as engaging with or at least reacting to literary debates of his time is his discussion of the role of the poet, as is evident from his

articles and literary reviews but also from his own poems. My analysis has shown that when discussing the poet's role in modern society, Schirach uses a similar diction to other contemporary authors such as Benn and Becher, although their political beliefs and affiliations differed greatly from his own. Although the evidence does not support the idea that Schirach engaged in fully developing a new poetics, he was nevertheless influenced by literary discourse in the Weimar Republic; using its terms and categories, he developed a rhetoric of the poet as 'Gestalter' and 'Former' of the feelings and the will of the masses. However, this rhetoric ultimately remained hollow and was belied by his actions as well by as his poetry, in which he confirmed the poet's privileged position.

Further evidence of how Schirach's poems related to the literary ideals of his time and even engaged with modernist techniques has emerged in the analysis of parallels between his poems and Communist poetry around 1930. Although fuelled by contrasting political aims, the already well-established structural and ideological similarities between Nazism and Communism were also manifested in similarities in content, style and motifs used for propaganda purposes. When writing poetry, Schirach as well as Communist writers such as Becher were intent upon validating the party they wanted to support, drawing attention to its past efforts, struggles and sacrifices. One of the ways in which they did this was to include political statements, speeches, and slogans in their poems, thus breaking down the boundaries between the poetic and the political. A comparison of their poems to examples of the modernist technique of montage shows how both Becher and Schirach carefully avoided creating moments of irritation or confusion. However, despite this key difference, it has become clear that similarities in technique, style and rhetoric allow us to see continuities as well as contrasts between modernist and National Socialist literature. Schirach's example can thus serve as further evidence to support the growing realisation (as laid out in the introduction to this thesis) that National Socialist literature needs to be seen at the very least as more than simply the negative literary counterpart to modernism.

The aspect of Schirach's poetry that had previously received most scholarly attention is his conflation of nationalist and religious symbolism, language and imagery. Close examination of his poems in combination with new evidence from his public feud with Protestant pastor Jänicke, as well as the impetuses in the political religion debate given by Steigman-Gall and Babik, lead to a clearer picture of Schirach's hostile relationship with the church. What also becomes clear is his scepticism regarding neo-paganist tendencies within

the National Socialist movement as well as the continuing influence of Christian traditions and liturgy on his work; it is thus difficult to see his poetry as an attempt to rid German society of Christianity. Again, Schirach's example can inform a continuing debate over political religion theory, and contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationship between National Socialism and Christian tradition.

In previous scholarly research, Schirach's career as Reichsjugendführer has overshadowed his cultural and literary influence in the Third Reich, although I have been able to show that he continued to publish new poems while in this role. The investigation of his post-1933 publications, his activities as editor of the Hitlerjugend journal, of several song books and poetry collections, his collaborations with and patronage of other writers and artists active in the Nazi state: this study illustrates the full extent of his immense influence more clearly than has been possible before. However, not all of his projects, as I have shown, came to fruition and not all of his protégés experienced success, despite the infrastructure at Schirach's disposal. Schirach himself helped to create what he disparagingly referred to as the 'Blechtschmiede der Dichterlinge', a state in which artistic innovation, diversity and controversy were repressed and expelled.

Finally, Schirach's case once again serves as an example of the continuities in twentieth-century literature across historical caesuras such as the NSDAP's rise to power in 1933 and the collapse of the Nazi regime in 1945. Many examples of authors who had been active writers in the Third Reich and affiliated with the NSDAP to varying degrees have been investigated by scholars over the past two decades. Like them, Schirach – contrary to previous reports – did not cease to write after the end of the National Socialist state. Given his status as convicted war criminal, he had little hope that he could publish the poems written in Nuremberg and Spandau prison. Still, they not only give us new biographical evidence about Schirach but also represent a fascinating point of contrast in German post-1945 literary history. Not all of them could be included in full and analysed within the context of this study, but they would be of great interest for future research. From the analysis of those that I have been able to include, it emerges that the private ideas and views expressed in them largely correlate with those found in Schirach's published autobiography and the statements he made in the ensuing public debate.

Several aspects of Schirach's poetry could not be included in this thesis for reasons of space. They would nonetheless yield extremely interesting results. Firstly, the motif of

Aufbruch merits some attention. It is the first characteristic Ralf Schnell identified in his approach to a definition of National Socialist literature and it is indeed present in several of Schirach's poems.<sup>3</sup> The rhetoric of Aufbruch held, as Schnell pointed out, the promise of a new beginning, the possibility of a bright new future, but also of adventure, uncertainties and even possibly danger. It was therefore extremely useful to Nazi propaganda; its continual proclamation served to re-affirm the self-conception of the National Socialist movement as energetic, creative and revolutionary. It was however, by now means novel. The rhetoric of Aufbruch had dominated the German cultural scene since the fin de siècle, and was widely used by the Expressionists. It quickly became central to the rhetoric of the Nazi movement. The first step to exploring these continuities in more depth would be to establish how and in what ways the term was used similarly or differently over time; and a second step would require asking to what extent it might indicate commonalities between the Expressionist and National Socialist movements. Once again, this might be way step of breaking down the retrospective barriers between what is considered modernist and anti-modernist literature.

Secondly, one of Schirach's self-proclaimed role models that could not be explored in this thesis was Goethe. Having been raised in Weimar as son of the director of the local theatre, it is hardly surprising that Schirach publicly expressed his admiration of Goethe and often referred to him publicly. It would be interesting to explore if and to what extent Goethe's influence on Schirach manifested itself in his poems.

It has become clear that previously held notions of Schirach's poetry as mere 'Minutenlyrik'<sup>4</sup> and 'Gelegenheitsarbeiten'<sup>5</sup> categorisation as a National Socialist author, nor does it imply the presence of deeper literary or aesthetic value. The poetic material analysed in this thesis remains deeply problematic and the analysis and evidence brought forward was not presented in order to suggest overlooked poetic talent or to revitalise or rehabilitate Schirach's writing in any way. In many ways, the direct comparison between Schirach and other authors, such as Jünger, Becher, Benn, Weinert and Schwitters has served to demonstrate definitively the limits of his poetry, not only ideologically but also aesthetically. Nevertheless, analysis and contextualisation have also shown them to be more ambiguous and influenced by literary debates of the time than previously thought. As outlined in the

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<sup>3</sup> See Schnell, *Dichtung in finsternen Zeiten*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>4</sup> Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> Boehlich, 'Deutsche Literatur', p. 16.



introduction, scholarly research has come a long way in better understanding National Socialist society and its conflicting and even contradictory elements. While the accompanying impetus to grasp National Socialist literature in sharper detail has been formulated repeatedly, to date there exist only a few studies that pursue this aim in any detail. Schirach is only one author among many, albeit a highly prolific one, so more research is necessary. However, his poetry is an important example with which to continue building awareness not only of the disruptions, but also of the continuities between the literature of the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich and the post-Second World War German states.

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The following is a compilation of all the published and unpublished poems by Baldur von Schirach that could be verified to date. In cases where a poem was published under several titles, it appears here under the one that was most widely used. Inconsistency in spelling regarding the use of 'ß' and the capitalisation of words are due to the inconsistent use in the source material. If the poem in question was included in the 1933 edition of *Die Fahne der Verfolgten*, the most widely known collection of his poetry, this spelling is used here. Otherwise, the title is spelt here as it was in the earliest documented instance of its publication.

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