

A Study of Various Nationalist Appropriations of Nietzsche in the Weimar Republic

by

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CHAPTER ONE -- INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to identify and evaluate the ways in which the works of the nineteenth-century philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, influenced or inspired a number of key nationalist figures in Germany during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), and how this influence or inspiration is reflected in their works. The individuals concerned are the author, Ernst Jünger, and two Nazi intellectuals: the Nietzsche scholar Alfred Baeumler and the Party's chief ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg. The decision to choose the works of these three individuals for consideration is based on their varying uses (and, in certain instances, abuses) of Nietzsche's philosophical and political ideas, and the apparent similarities between these ideas and the ideologies of the Weimar intellectuals under consideration.

Of the various Nazi or proto-Nazi examples of the ways in which Nietzsche is used,¹ Rosenberg has been chosen primarily because of his official capacity in the NSDAP (Nazi Party) from 1934 to 1945, as 'Beauftragter des Führers für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP'² and his extensive writings on Nietzsche. Baeumler held a similarly prominent position, though not a political one; it is understood that his book *Nietzsche*,

¹ These include but are by no means limited to: Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche. Versuch einer Mythologie* 7th edn. (Berlin: Bondi, 1929); Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (Munich: Hoheneichen, 1930); Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1931); Alfred Rosenthal, *Nietzsches "Europäisches Rasse-Problem"*. ("Der Kampf um die Erdherrschaft") (Leiden: A. W. Sijhoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1935); Johannes Klein, *Die Dichtung Nietzsches* (Munich: Beck, 1936); Alfred Baeumler, *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1937); Heinrich Härtle, *Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Franz Eher - Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1937); Alfred Rosenberg, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (Munich: Franz Eher - Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1944).

² See Hermann Weiß (ed.), *Biographisches Lexikon zum Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999), p. 385.

der Philosoph und Politiker (1931) set the tone for the politicisation of Nietzsche in the 1930s and 1940s³ whilst, more broadly, he fashioned himself as a public intellectual, stressing Nietzsche's contemporary relevance in public speeches, radio broadcasts and articles for the NSDAP's newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*.⁴

This study is intended to distance Nietzsche further from Nazi appropriations and also to emphasise the significant ideological gap that existed between Jünger and National Socialism. Both of these topics have been heavily researched independently of each other (the former more than the latter), but the intention here is to bring them together and to arrive at a conclusion which defends Nietzsche from misguided or misinformed Nazi appropriations and Jünger from claims of (proto-)Nazism.⁵

The two central chapters of the thesis deal, respectively, with Baeumler's and Rosenberg's reception and use of Nietzsche (these two representing prominent examples of a more general Nazi appropriation), and with Jünger's reception and use of Nietzsche (which represents a more specific and detailed appropriation). The interpretations of Nietzsche included here are only three of many from the era,⁶ though the Nazi association in the case of Baeumler and Rosenberg, and the Conservative Revolution in the case of Jünger justify their close comparison here. The Conservative Revolution in

³ See Max Whyte, 'The Uses and Abuses of Nietzsche in the Third Reich: Alfred Baeumler's "Heroic Realism"', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43 (2008), 171-194 (p. 174).

⁴ See Whyte, p. 173.

⁵ The thesis will build upon the valuable work which has already been done in this area. See, for example, Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (eds.), *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). This study includes a chapter on Jünger and National Socialism: David Ohana, 'Nietzsche and the Fascist Dimension: The Case of Ernst Jünger', pp. 263-90. This chapter builds on an earlier essay: David Ohana, 'Nietzsche and Ernst Jünger: From Nihilism to Totalitarianism', *History of European Ideas*, 11 (1989), 751-758.

⁶ See n. 1 above. For an overview of the bewildering range and variety of Nietzsche interpretations published during the interwar period, see Richard Frank Krummel, *Nietzsche und der deutsche Geist*, 3 vols (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1974-1998), Vol. 3 (Ein Schrifttumsverzeichnis der Jahre 1918-1945).

the 1920s was an essentially ideological rather than overtly political movement on the political Right, but some have argued that it represented a pre-Nazi set of ideas which ‘helped prepare the ground for National Socialism’ by weakening middle-class intellectual resistance to Nazi ideology,⁷ and which, more broadly, provided and strengthened ideas for all branches of German nationalism, including National Socialism.⁸ Despite these claims, Jünger’s association with this particular brand of right-wing nationalism does not justify claims that he was a proto-Nazi.⁹

Before considering any of the selected examples of how Nietzsche has been used, it is first necessary to address a number of terms – most notably ‘influence’ and ‘nationalism’ – which are crucial to this study, and also to contextualise the Nietzsche appropriations under discussion. Given Nietzsche’s inherent ambiguities or, as Roger Woods has put it, his ‘fragmentary mode of expression’,¹⁰ varying and often contradictory interpretations of his work are possible, as will become apparent. Nietzsche’s style, often writing in short aphorisms, leaves him peculiarly vulnerable to (mis)appropriation, most infamously and damagingly at the hands of the Nazis.

Over the course of his working life, Nietzsche wrote prolifically but it is difficult to trace a single thread through his works; as such, there are numerous ideas which are explored and expanded to varying degrees, but not one that stands out as *the* Nietzschean philosophy. In the words of the Nietzsche scholar, Steven E. Aschheim: ‘Nietzsche’s

⁷ Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 2.

⁸ See Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933*, 2nd edn (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlag, 1964), p. 29.

⁹ See Nikolaus Wachsmann, ‘Marching Under the Swastika? Ernst Jünger and National Socialism, 1918–1933’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 33 (1998), 573–89.

¹⁰ Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic*, p. 30.

work cannot be reduced to an essence nor can it be said to possess a single and clear authoritative meaning.¹¹ Consequently, readers and interpreters of Nietzsche have been able to ‘pick and mix’ certain aspects of his works whilst dismissing others which may have contradicted or failed to support a particular message that they were trying to convey.¹² This concept is clearly outlined in the introductory chapter to Aschheim’s study on the Nietzsche legacy in Germany, where he argues that:

the challenge and significance of the Nietzschean impulse resides precisely in its pervasiveness, in its manifold and often contradictory penetration of crucial political and cultural areas. It would, indeed, be more accurate to speak not of one but many “Nietzschean impulses” that both influenced and reflected their changing times.¹³

Robert C. Holub has recently claimed that Nietzsche’s philosophy has been used in defence of positions across seemingly the entirety of political, cultural and philosophical spectra:

On the political front he has been considered a proponent of such widely divergent tendencies as fascism, anarchism, libertarianism, liberal democracy, and socialism. In the realm of culture he has been viewed as an inspiration for aestheticism, impressionism, expressionism, modernism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and postmodernism. In philosophical circles he has allegedly influenced phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction.¹⁴

Since these movements are so various in ideology or sentiment, Holub’s study makes the claim, by way of a rhetorical question, that any or all of these interpretations would have to rely on a distortion or misunderstanding of Nietzsche, whether consciously

¹¹ Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 3.

¹² See ibid., especially the introductory chapter ‘The Historian and the Legacy of Nietzsche’, pp. 1-16.

¹³ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁴ Robert C. Holub, ‘Nietzsche and the Paradigm of Influence Studies: A Review Article’, *Modern Language Review*, 100 (2005), 1043-1053 (1043-44).

or unwittingly.¹⁵ Such is the case for Rosenberg, Baeumler and Jünger; it will not be possible here to make any sweeping or conclusive statements about which represents a ‘correct’ interpretation of Nietzsche, but only to rescue Nietzsche’s original philosophy from the most obvious misrepresentations and misappropriations of the Nazis, and, to a lesser extent, determine whether these misappropriations can be considered as consciously or unwittingly misguided.

It is important that terms such as ‘influence’ and ‘appropriation’ are clearly understood when applied to Nietzsche’s philosophy and how it was received in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. One important study on the subject of influence, and which understands that term in the sense in which it will be used throughout this study, is Howard Bloom’s *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), in which six central modes of influence are presented.¹⁶

Of these six modes, there are two which stand out as particularly relevant to this study, namely *clinamen* and *tessera*. The first of these (from Lucretius, where the term *clinamen* is said to mean ‘to swerve’) involves a ‘corrective development’ of the original author; acknowledging that the precursor went accurately up to a certain point, the second author swerves away from the original, effectively drawing new conclusions from the earlier stock of knowledge.¹⁷ In its most basic form, this can be understood as a

¹⁵ See *ibid*.

¹⁶ See Howard Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). As well as the two mentioned here, Bloom presents four other modes of influence: *kenosis*, which, in a way similar to the way Jesus humbled himself from divine to human; *Daemonization* is the neo-Platonic idea of the counter-sublime to the original’s sublime; *Askesis* from the pre-Socratic shamans like Empedocles, like *kenosis* but involving a curtailing rather than an emptying; and lastly *apophrades* which refers back to the Athenian myth in which the dead return to inhabit their houses – the effect is as if the later poet himself had written the precursor’s characteristic work.

¹⁷ See Bloom, p. 14.

misreading of the original author, or, in fact, an over-ambitious understanding of what he ‘really meant’.

Nietzsche leaves himself vulnerable to this type of interpretation because of the inherent difficulty in tracing a theory through his work from proposition to fruition. Similarly, it must be understood that, certainly in the case of the two examples of the use and abuse of his work by Nazis, the authors studied here approached Nietzsche with a particular motive, a point of view which they set out to substantiate and defend, and consequently it can be argued that their understanding of Nietzsche was tainted from the outset.¹⁸

The term *tessera* applies to an interpretation which Bloom describes as a token of recognition, and of completion and antithesis; retaining the original author’s terms, the second author uses them differently, as if the original failed to go far enough. As an illustration of this type of interpretation, one of the most striking examples which will come to light in this study is the Nietzschean idea of what it means to be a ‘Good European’. Particularly in the Nazi interpretations of Baeumler and Rosenberg, this term was used in such a way as to promote an anti-Semitic and pro-German world view which cannot be traced back to Nietzsche’s original phrase without a degree of interpretative sleight-of-hand.¹⁹

Where at all possible, this study aims to avoid the use of terms such as ‘right-wing’, favouring ‘nationalism’ instead. The reasoning behind this is that the former can

¹⁸ See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, tr. Brian Holmes, ‘The Nazi Myth’, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), 291-312.

¹⁹ See Robert S. Wistrich, ‘Between the Cross and the Swastika’, in Jacob Golomb, and Wistrich, Robert S. (eds.), *Nietzsche: Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2002), 144-172.

only be understood in political terms, and as such would be inappropriate if applied to the largely apolitical Nietzsche²⁰ or indeed to Jünger after he began to distance himself from the day-to-day politics in the mid-1920s.²¹

The term ‘nationalism’ itself raises questions and has been the subject of numerous studies in its own right.²² Its meaning, as used here, will most closely resemble the definition put forward by Smith, who states that nationalism is ‘an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential “nation”’.²³ Nationalism has acquired various meanings since the nineteenth century. According to Smith, these meanings relate to the five central elements of: ‘a process of formation’; a ‘consciousness of belonging’; a ‘language and symbolism’; a ‘social and political movement’; and a ‘doctrine and/or ideology’.²⁴ Some or all of these elements can be applied to the works of Rosenberg, Baeumler and Jünger, and indeed to certain parts of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Importantly, however, it is already possible to highlight where Nietzsche’s and Jünger’s nationalism in these terms can be identified as distinct from that of the National Socialist examples.

²⁰ This idea is still the subject of some debate: whilst the likes of Walter Kaufmann’s *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. 3rd edn (New York: Vintage Books, 1968) and Thomas Mann’s *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: Fischer Verlag, 1922) defend Nietzsche’s apolitical stance, there is a growing amount of research which argues against this. These include but are by no means limited to Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and Daniel W. Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1997).

²¹ See Wachsmann, ‘Marching Under the Swastika?’, p. 582.

²² See, for example, Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed., (London: Verso, 1991), Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).

²³ Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, p. 9.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

Broadly speaking, the Nietzsche appropriations under discussion took place during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), although a number of the key texts considered post-date the Nazi accession to power in 1933. The Weimar period was a significant juncture in modern German history, a time of change and development sandwiched between the two World Wars. It has been characterised as a ‘Cockpit of Ideologies’: ‘the struggle for supremacy between the three great political ideologies that have moved twentieth-century Europe: Fascism, Communism and liberal democracy’.²⁵

The Weimar period was a time in which Germans of all classes and political persuasions – right-wing, left-wing, bourgeois, working class – criticised Germany’s ruling elites for various reasons. Among other things, the Left resented the survival of the old administrative structures which had remained largely intact after the war, a politically biased judiciary and the small but still politically influential Reichswehr.²⁶ Meanwhile, the Right felt betrayed by the ruling classes; the parliamentary Republic was identified with defeat in 1918, the hyperinflation of 1923, ‘the Jews’, cosmopolitan mass culture, and political liberalism.²⁷ It was almost universally believed in post-war Germany that, by agreeing to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919, the ‘November [1918]

²⁵ Anthony Grenville, *Cockpit of Ideologies: The Literature and Political History of the Weimar Republic* (Bern: Lang, 1995), p. 18. Other excellent surveys of political and cultural developments in the Weimar Republic include: David C. Durst, *Weimar Modernism: Philosophy, Politics, and Culture in Germany 1918–1933* (Lanham, Maryland; Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004); Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf (eds.), *Die ‘Krise’ der Weimarer Republik. Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2005); Walter Laqueur, *Weimar – A Cultural History, 1918–1933* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974); David Midgley, *Writing Weimar: Critical Realism in German Literature, 1918–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne*. 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001); Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*; Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²⁶ See Laqueur, *Weimar – A Cultural History, 1918–1933*, p. 44.

²⁷ See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 21.

Criminals' had betrayed and misrepresented the German people.²⁸ These were the essential ingredients of the infamous and powerful conspiracy theory known as the *Dolchstoßlegende* ('stab-in-the-back' myth).²⁹

During the last months of the war, as the country's military defeat became inevitable, Germany saw a relatively peaceful Left-wing revolution. In late October, 1918, mutinies at the naval bases at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven against a rumoured plan by the German Admiralty to stage a last-ditch naval offensive sparked a chain reaction. The unrest spread quickly, causing an uprising in the home Army in both Munich and Berlin, where revolutionaries established *Arbeiter-* and *Soldatenräte* (Soviets). The Kaiser and Germany's other ruling dynasties were forced to abdicate by 9 November 1918.³⁰ In this period of revolution, these *Arbeiter-* and *Soldatenräte* looked to the SPD as the 'traditional moderate party of opposition to the Kaiserreich' to provide political leadership following the overthrow of the monarchy, and consequently Prince Max von Baden relinquished the Chancellorship to the SPD's leader, Friedrich Ebert.³¹

Over the course of spring 1919, as many soldiers (including Jünger) began to return from the front, right-wing paramilitary groups, known as Freikorps, began to emerge. Fearing an uprising from the USPD (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands) and Spartacists on the extreme Left, the moderate SPD government (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands) openly began to support and promote these Freikorps groupings. Violent clashes occurred between supporters of the Left and the

²⁸ Laqueur, *Weimar – A Cultural History, 1918–1933*, p. 5.

²⁹ See Boris Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration: Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2003), pp. 401–3.

³⁰ See Heinrich August Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung: Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1918 bis 1924* (Berlin: Dietz, 1984), p. 40.

³¹ Grenville, *Cockpit of Ideologies*, p. 39.

Right in the period 1918-19, and the split between them was to define the political discourse of the Weimar Republic, as did the threat or undercurrent of physical violence. A government was officially elected in February 1919 and, in June of the same year, the Treaty of Versailles was signed – two events which determined, to a large extent, both the problematic birth of the Weimar Republic and its short, politically turbulent life.

It was to this newly founded Republic that Jünger returned as a war hero, and he continued to serve in the Army until being demobilised in 1923. His war experiences led him to write *In Stahlgewittern*, a sober account of his experience as a soldier on the Western Front, which was popularly received in Germany.³² In the following years, Jünger continued to write, as editor and contributor to various right-wing journals, most notably with Franz Schauwecker as co-editor of *Die Standarte. Wochenschrift des neuen Nationalismus* (1926), the *Stahlhelm* journal, *Arminius. Kampschrift für deutsche Nationalisten* (1926-27),³³ *Der Vormarsch. Blätter der nationalistischen Jugend*, and *Widerstand. Zeitschrift für nationalrevolutionäre Politik* (1927-33). Through articles in these journals, Jünger further explored and developed a number of ideas from *In Stahlgewittern*, principally the ideas that both war itself and the camaraderie of the trenches are steeling experiences; ideas which, as will become clear, are extended and modified in *Der Arbeiter* in 1932. Obviously, this process of modification and extension reflected Jünger's developing opinions throughout the 1920s, as he pondered the political situation around him.

³² To date it has sold over 300,000 copies in nine languages (see Heimo Schwilk, *Ernst Jünger. Ein Jahrhundertleben: Die Biografie* (Munich: Piper, 2007), p. 220). It had sold 15,000 copies by 1925, and 31,000 by 1930. See Hans Peter des Coudres and Horst Mühliesen (eds.), *Bibliographie der Werke Ernst Jüngers* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1985), pp. 27-29.

³³ The *Stahlhelm* was one of the largest war veterans' associations in Germany.

The subject, style and content of many of his essays from the period have led some critics to suggest that Jünger can be understood as a proto-Nazi or a Nazi sympathiser.³⁴ One such example of this subject, style and content would be his essay ‘Revolution und Idee’ from September 1923, in which Jünger overtly criticises the Weimar Republic as the already stagnant result of a ‘Revolution des Materialismus’.³⁵ He goes on to suggest that:

Die echte Revolution hat noch gar nicht stattgefunden, sie marschiert unaufhaltsam heran. Sie ist keine Reaktion, sondern eine wirkliche Revolution mit allen ihren Kennzeichnen und Äußerungen, ihre Idee ist die völkische, zu bisher nicht gekannter Schärfe geschliffen, ihr Banner das Hakenkreuz, ihre Ausdrucksform die Konzentration des Willens in einem einzigen Punkt – die Diktatur!³⁶

In this instance it proves difficult to defend Jünger from the claims of proto-Nazism, and it serves conversely as a striking example of his initial period of flirtation with the movement before ultimately rejecting it at a later stage. As will become apparent, Jünger initially had faith in the NSDAP (Nazi Party) as an ideological movement,³⁷ but for various reasons became frustrated and began to distance himself from those around Hitler as the movement began to acquire a clearer political identity, under a man whom Jünger believed to be too coarse, too violent and, ultimately, too plebeian.³⁸

³⁴ See n. 9 above.

³⁵ Ernst Jünger, ‘Revolution und Idee’, in Ernst Jünger, *Politische Publizistik 1919-1933*, ed. Sven Olaf Berggötz, (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), pp. 33-37 (p. 35).

³⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

³⁷ See Ernst Jünger, ‘Der Neue Typ des Deutschen Menschen’, in *Politische Publizistik*, pp. 167-172.

³⁸ See Arnolt Bronnen, *Arnolt Bronnen gibt zu Protokoll* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1954), p. 190.

The above example from ‘Revolution und Idee’ also serves to highlight Jünger’s transition from ‘a writing fighter to a fighting writer’.³⁹ It can be argued that already at this time, through his interpretation of the war experience as outlined in *In Stahlgewittern* and *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922) it is possible to identify a steadily widening chasm of ideological differences between Jünger and National Socialists. In the closing pages of *In Stahlgewittern*, Jünger makes little more than a passing reference to the Armistice and Germany’s defeat, dismissing them as secondary to the fact that he had won the *Pour le mérite*, the highest German military decoration of the time.⁴⁰ If this is compared with Hitler’s account of the end of the war in *Mein Kampf* (1925), in which he admits having cried for the first time since his mother’s funeral, Jünger’s view of the war as self-justifying is in stark contrast to the views of principal Nazi figures, who were more concerned with the war’s outcome for political reasons and the furtherance of their ideas.⁴¹

An interesting point to mention, as the focus moves now to those members of the NSDAP to be studied here, is Alfred Rosenberg’s involvement with the party from the outset – even before Hitler, it would seem. According to transcripts of his trial at Nuremberg following the war, Rosenberg was a member of the German Workers’ Party (DAP), later the NSDAP, from January 1919, and it was not until October of the same year that Hitler came to associate himself with this movement. On the basis of this information, and the significant availability and popularity of Rosenberg’s *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1930), the prosecution went on to present the claim that ‘there was

³⁹ Wachsmann, ‘Marching Under the Swastika?’, p. 577.

⁴⁰ See Schwilk, *Ernst Jünger. Ein Jahrhundertleben*, p. 89.

⁴¹ See ibid., pp. 575-577.

not a single basic tenet of the Nazi philosophy which was not given authoritative expression by Rosenberg.⁴²

In his ‘sequel’ to Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s most overtly racist tome, *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1899), Rosenberg uses elements of Nietzsche’s philosophy to support his race theories and myths.⁴³ In some instances, this represents a misguided or isolated interpretation, taking an original idea out of context for example, whilst in other cases it represents a gross misappropriation. One striking example of the latter comes from the chapter titled ‘Volk und Staat’ in the third book, ‘Das Kommende Reich’:

In [Nietzsches] Namen ging die Rassenverseuchung durch alle Syrier und Nigros vor sich, in seinem Zeichen, während doch gerade Nietzsche die rassische Hochzucht erstrebte. Nietzsche war in die Träume brünstiger politischer Buhler gefallen, was schlimmer war als in die Hände einer Räuberbande.⁴⁴

Ironically, Rosenberg himself can be counted among these ‘brünstiger politische Buhler’ (translated extravagantly in one English edition as ‘overheated political whores’⁴⁵) in these terms, using Nietzsche as he does in promoting his ideas.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Rosenberg held prominent roles in the Nazi party, being particularly involved with the party’s ideological and philosophical agenda. For instance, in 1921 he was appointed alongside Dietrich Eckart (who had introduced

⁴² International Military Tribunal, *The Trial of German Major War Criminals: Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal Sitting at Nuremberg, Germany: Taken from the Official Transcript* (London: H.M.S.O, 1946-47), Vol. 4, pp. 119-20.

⁴³ See, for example, Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 4th edn (Munich: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1932), p. 523.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 524.

⁴⁵ <http://www.archive.org/details/TheMythOfTheTwentiethCentury>, p. 117.

him to Hitler) to edit the NSDAP's newspaper, the 'Völkischer Beobachter'.⁴⁶ After the abortive Beer Hall Putsch of 9 November 1923, as a result of which Hitler was arrested and briefly imprisoned, Rosenberg was appointed as a leader of the party. This was seen by many as a tactical manoeuvre by Hitler, picking someone who was not likely to present a realistic threat to the leadership once Hitler was released from prison.⁴⁷

Rosenberg remained loyal to the Nazi party throughout its existence and was rewarded with various government appointments. In 1933 he was appointed Reichsleiter and from January 1934 he became the Party's chief ideologue. From 1941 he was Reichsminister for the Occupied Eastern Territories. After the war, he was tried by the Allies at Nuremberg, found guilty of various war crimes (principally in connection with his activities in the Eastern Territories) and executed in October 1946.⁴⁸

The case of Alfred Baeumler's association with the Nazi Party is different altogether from Rosenberg's. Baeumler was an academic by profession; in his study on Nietzsche, Kaufmann claims that 'Alfred Baeumler was the professor whom the Nazis called to Berlin to "interpret" Nietzsche'.⁴⁹ The reasoning behind this accusation, and also later evidence of the result of this role, was a number of studies which will be analysed here, namely *Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker* (1931) and the essays 'Nietzsche' (1930) and 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus' (1934), which appeared in *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (1937).⁵⁰

⁴⁶ See Franz Theodor Hart, *Alfred Rosenberg: Der Mann und sein Werk* (München: J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1933), pp. 43-4.

⁴⁷ See ibid., pp. 36-46.

⁴⁸ For full biographical information see Weiß, *Biographisches Lexikon zum Dritten Reich*, pp. 384-86.

⁴⁹ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, p. 40.

⁵⁰ Alfred Baeumler, *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1937).

It will become clear that, certainly in the last of these works, Baeumler's intention was to present an interpretation of Nietzsche supportive of Nazi ideology, in order to legitimise it, or to lend it credibility.⁵¹ In certain instances, much the same as with Rosenberg's appropriation, Baeumler relied on selective or deliberately false contextualisations, which did not reflect the entirety, or the complexity, of Nietzsche's views on a given subject.⁵² Unlike Rosenberg, Baeumler did not face trial at Nuremberg because his position was entirely academic rather than political, although, by its nature, his philosophy and reception of Nietzsche were inextricably linked with the Nazi ideology and more broadly with German nationalism.

Both Baeumler's and Rosenberg's interpretations of Nietzsche will be considered in more detail in Chapter Two below, which will include a more detailed consideration of the extent to which these represented misappropriations of Nietzsche's philosophy, deliberate or otherwise. This will be followed, in Chapter Three, by a similar approach to Jünger's reception of Nietzsche. The conclusion will bring together these various thoughts in order to analyse and evaluate more broadly the extent to which Nietzsche and, indeed, Jünger can be defended from association with the National Socialists.

⁵¹ See Alfred Baeumler, 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', in *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte*, pp. 281-294 (p. 281).

⁵² See, for example, Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche, Der Philosoph und Politiker* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1931), pp. 173-177.

CHAPTER TWO -- NIETZSCHE AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM

As the introduction to this study outlines, various members of the Nazi Party appropriated elements of the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche in the development of their ideology and, as will become clear, particularly with reference to anti-Semitism and ideas of German racial supremacy.¹ However, it is important to understand that Nietzsche's philosophy was not the direct inspiration for Nazi ideology but only a convenient prop or support for it. As a result, the extent to which the Nazis were correct to attribute their views to Nietzsche, and to claim that his thought had to a large degree defined and bolstered Nazi ideology, remains open to debate, on the basis that Nietzsche's aphoristic and ambiguous style allows a multiplicity of interpretations. The aim of this part of the study is to describe and analyse two of these Nazi interpretations, namely those of Alfred Rosenberg and Alfred Baeumler. It will evaluate the ways in which these interpretations constitute misappropriations of Nietzschean ideas, by selectively appropriating some whilst ignoring others, by taking thoughts out of context, and by (deliberately) failing to recognise the full extent of Nietzsche's thoughts on a given issue. As will become clear, in many instances, Nazi interpretations of Nietzsche derived from more than one of these forms of misuse.

This chapter will further address the two central questions of why and how the Nazis appropriated Nietzsche, highlighting those elements of the Nazi ideology which claim Nietzsche as their source, with a particular focus on the works of Rosenberg and Baeumler, and will conclude by analysing and evaluating their respective interpretations.

¹ See Ch. 1, n. 1 above.

Notable alongside the Nazi intellectuals Baeumler and Rosenberg, is Nietzsche's own sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche; her role in facilitating the interplay between her brother's philosophy and National Socialism will also be considered.

Where Jünger's interpretation will prove difficult to define as a direct transference of original ideas, the case of the Nazis (and Förster-Nietzsche in this context) should prove somewhat easier to analyse in this respect, given their well-documented belief that Nietzsche was an important philosophical precursor of National Socialism.² In each case, analysis will be concerned with assessing the extent to which interpretations and appropriations of Nietzsche can be seen as reasonable or plausible compared with what can be understood of the original.

Perhaps the simplest answer to 'why' the Nazis came to appropriate Nietzsche's work was their desired aim to legitimise their position by rooting it in Germany's cultural tradition. In this respect, Nietzsche is by no means unique; rather he is one of many figures appropriated by the Nazis, and one with whom the stigma of this association has lingered.³ In the years following the Second World War, attempts have been made to defend or 'reclaim' Nietzsche from this Nazi misappropriation, most notably by the American scholar, Walter Kaufmann, whose seminal work *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (1950) challenged the basis of many of the Nazi interpretations.⁴

² See Zoltan Michael Szaz, 'The Ideological Precursors of National Socialism', *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Dec. 1963), 924-945.

³ See Hajo Holborn, 'Origins and Political Character of Nazi Ideology', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (Dec. 1964), 542-554.

⁴ At the time of the first publication of his *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* in 1950, Kaufmann was a professor of philosophy at Princeton University, having received his doctorate from Harvard in 1947. He translated ten of Nietzsche's works into English and is largely responsible for a better understanding of Nietzsche in the English-speaking world.

History and the *Völkisch* Tradition

The principal reason behind the Nazis' appropriation of Nietzsche was the need to lend intellectual respectability to their aims. Hitler and others, including Rosenberg and Baeumler, were keen to establish their position as a natural progression in the fulfilment of Germany's 'destiny'.⁵ Nietzsche was by no means used exclusively to this end; rather, his philosophy was placed alongside ideas which can be traced back to Friedrich Ratzel, Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, Richard Wagner and others, and indeed as far back as Romanticism.⁶ However, compared with these other sources, the number of studies dedicated to Nietzsche would suggest that his influence was more significant than most, perhaps because of the way his aphoristic and ambiguous style leaves him open to misappropriation in support of various central elements of this new, pseudo-Germanic myth, most prominently anti-Semitism.

In attempting to legitimise their position, the Nazis adopted substantial elements of the *völkisch* tradition that had developed in Germany between c. 1890 and 1920. This term has been used to refer to the loose collection of almost a hundred small socio-political organisations formed around shared ideologies and inspired by a 'mystical-racial' notion of the German *Volk* as an idealised community.⁷ Centred around this idea

⁵ George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Universal Library, 1964), p. 13f.

⁶ For an overview of earlier ideas appropriated and manipulated by the Nazis, see Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*.

⁷ George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 286. See also Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (London: Chatto and Windus; Heinemann for Sussex University Press, 1974); Uwe Puschner, Walter Schmitz, and Justus H. Ulbricht (eds.), *Handbuch zur "völkischen Bewegung" 1871-1918* (Munich: Saur, 1996); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley; London; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974).

of the *völkisch*, these various groups aimed at the creation of a German religion focusing on Aryanism and Nordic paganism, as opposed to the existing system based around the traditional views of the Christian church, drawing upon supposedly ‘pure’ Germanic sources (for example the Old Norse Eddas). It has been argued that, in this search, many writers around 1900 (pre-dating the Nazis by at least twenty years, of course) were already turning to the work of Nietzsche. One such example is the pastor, Albert Kalthoff, from Bremen, who delivered *The Zarathustra Sermons* in 1904, in which he sought to replace Jesus with Nietzsche as the prophet of a Marxist Christianity⁸ (itself ironic considering Nietzsche’s detestation of Marxism, and of socialism more generally, as expressions of the ‘herd instinct’ of the masses⁹). This interpretation can be seen as one of the earliest manipulations of Nietzsche’s original philosophy, in this case as a means of promoting a Marxist criticism of the prevailing bourgeois German order.

As an influence on the Nazi philosophy, the idea of the *Volk* in the work of Ratzel and Riehl can be seen as foundations upon which the Nazis later developed their model. In the Romantic tradition, *völkisch* ideas showed a distinct tendency to favour the irrational and emotional elements in life, emphasising the rootedness of man in nature.¹⁰ This was in deliberate contrast to the industrialising process occurring in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a process which proponents of *völkisch*

⁸ See Albert Kalthoff, *Zarathustrapredigten: Reden über die Sittliche Lebensauffassung Friedrich Nietzsches* (Jena: E. Diederich, 1908).

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 116, in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967ff.). V.2. Henceforth references to Nietzsche will be to the relevant work and section number. These can be found in all reliable editions of his works.

¹⁰ See Friedrich Ratzel, ‘Die Deutsche Landschaft’, *Deutsche Rundschau*, 88 (July-September 1896), 346-367.

ideas blamed on the allegedly malign influence of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat and ‘the Jew’. In Rosenberg’s words:

Eng in Raum stießen sich die Millionen in den Weltstädten, aber immer weiter stieg die Menschenflut. Sie rief nach Industrialisierung, nach Ausfuhr, nach Weltwirtschaft, oder vielmehr: in ihrer Not geriet sie unter den Einfluß syrischer Verschwörer, die die Millionen Besitzlosen nicht in raumsehnsüchtige Menschen verwandeln, sondern die noch Besitzenden auch noch proletarisieren wollten, um sich Sklavenheere ohne Boden und Eigentum zu sichern und durch ein nie erreichbares Irrlicht der “internationalen Weltbefriedung” auszubeuten.¹¹

In opposition to this process of industrialisation, Ratzel highlighted the sense of awakening and realisation of one’s kinship with ‘nature’, which demonstrated:

nur ein Anzeichen des zunehmenden Vertrautwerdens mit unserem Lande, das heißt mit uns selbst als Volk. Denn wie wäre aus dem Wesen eines seit anderthalbtausend Jahren auf demselben Boden lebenden, schaffenden und leidenden Volkes der Anteil dieses Bodens herauszulösen?¹²

Seen in this way, the tradition of *Volk* and soil was allegedly something inherent in ‘the German’ but perceived as having been lost or distracted by alternative ambition, spurred on by ‘the Jew’, whose only interest was allegedly money.¹³ Riehl similarly attempted to rescue the modern worker from his industrial fate, claiming that, as he was rooted in the *Volk*, the worker would recapture his individual and creative self, and would, thus, be able to function as a medieval artisan rather than as an alienated modern proletarian or member of the ‘vierter Stand’.¹⁴

¹¹ Rosenberg, *Mythus*, p. 526.

¹² Ratzel, p. 347.

¹³ See Rosenberg, *Mythus*, p. 70.

¹⁴ W. H. Riehl, *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, with an introduction by Peter Steinbach (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin and Vienna: Ullstein, 1976), p. 211.

The Elisabeth Cult

Nietzsche's own sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, played a significant part in linking Nietzsche with these developing ideas, and later in bringing his philosophy to the attention of National Socialists. While she never became a member of the NSDAP, she is seen by many as a key figure in the relationship between Nietzsche and the Nazi Party, and held a special place in Hitler's affections: 'Hitler had "adopted" her for his own purposes as a mother figure to whom he could show duty and respect', and more widely as a mother figure to the Third Reich, since she emphasised, among other things, that her brother approved of the family as an institution.¹⁵

One study suggests that 'perhaps there would have been a Nietzsche cult without Elisabeth; but it would have been [...] neither so popular nor so dubious without her remarkable talents for propaganda.'¹⁶ Much as the Nazis were to do later, she approached her brother's work with a clear, self-aggrandising motive in mind. It has been suggested that Förster-Nietzsche had three ambitions: 'she wanted to create an image of her brother that was little short of divine; another of herself as his only true confidante and supporter; and she wanted to put the best possible construction on his philosophy – her own.'¹⁷ In this respect she adopted, often inaccurately, those parts of her brother's philosophy which served to promote her vision of a philosophy which supported the National Socialist movement, on the basis of her claim that she was her brother's closest confidante.¹⁸ This

¹⁵ Carol Diethe, *Nietzsche's Sister and the Will to Power* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003) p. 153.

¹⁶ Ben MacIntyre, *Forgotten Fatherland: The Search for Elisabeth Nietzsche* (London: MacMillan, 1992) p. 149.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁸ See ibid., p. 152 and Diethe, p. 153.

claim had little foundation in reality. Nietzsche had distanced himself from his sister after her marriage in 1885 to the rabid anti-Semite, Bernhard Förster, remarking in *Ecce Homo* (1888): ‘Wenn ich den tiefsten Gegensatz zu mir suche, die unausrechenbare Gemeinheit der Instinkte, so finde ich immer meine Mutter und Schwester, [...] der tiefste Einwand gegen die “ewige Wiederkunft”, mein eigentlich *abgrundlicher* Gedanke, immer Mutter und Schwester sind.’¹⁹

After being bullied into signing away her claim to Nietzsche’s royalties in 1895, it would have become clear to their mother, Franziska, that ‘Elisabeth was using her sick brother as a defenceless instrument and medium to satisfy her own craving for admiration and urge for fame and recognition’.²⁰ This craving led to her also publishing her brother’s *Nachlaß* and notes under the title *Der Wille zur Macht*, which was later regarded by many – and particularly among the Nazis – as Nietzsche’s seminal work, though Diethe has claimed that ‘the material making up this *Nachlaß* could not be published [in 1901] without doing Nietzsche a grave disservice’.²¹

It was against this background that Baeumler was able to claim, in his 1931 study, that *Der Wille zur Macht* was Nietzsche’s ‘philosophisches Hauptwerk’.²² The philosopher, Martin Heidegger (whose own relationship with the Nazi movement remains open to debate), has also been blamed, to a certain extent, for the ways in which Nietzsche’s texts were manipulated to fit in with Nazi propaganda, as a result of his

¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, ‘Warum ich so weise bin’ 3.

²⁰ Diethe, pp. 85–86.

²¹ Ibid., p. 96.

²² Baeumler, *Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker*, p. 46.

contribution to the activities of the Nietzsche-Archiv around Förster-Nietzsche in the 1930s and his insistence that *Der Wille Zur Macht* was Nietzsche's definitive text.²³

Such was the part played by Förster-Nietzsche as supporter of the Nazi movement and her belief in her brother's philosophy as a part of this, that her funeral, in 1935, was a state event, attended by leading figures of the Nazi Party, among them Adolf Hitler and Alfred Rosenberg.²⁴

Alfred Rosenberg, Volk and Myth

By the 1920s, ideas of the *Volk* myth grounded in the traditions referred to above had become more refined as well as more politically motivated, as friction grew between nationalist groups and the Weimar ruling order; in the case of the Nazis, this refinement is particularly evident in the work of Rosenberg and Baeumler. Rosenberg's *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1930) claims that where, in previous generations, the Germans had been vitalised by the Nordic race-soul myths of Odin and the like, mankind had now come to a stage where it was living an entirely mythless life.²⁵ Throughout its history, the Nordic 'race-soul' myth had been constantly opposed by the Jewish myth of the 'Chosen', which led the Jews to ignore the Nordic myth in the belief of their own

²³ See Diethe, p. 101. See also Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Vittorio Klostermann, Abt. 2, Bd. 43, 'Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst' (Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1985), pp. 9-14. For a detailed discussion of Heidegger's National Socialist sympathies, see Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger. Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1988).

²⁴ See Anon., *Ansprachen zum Gedächtnis der Frau dr. phil. h.c. Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche bei den Trauerfeierlichkeiten in Weimar und Röcken am 11. und 12. November 1935* (Weimar: Wagner Verlag, 1935).

²⁵ See Rosenberg, *Mythus*, p. 514

dominance or inheritance of the world.²⁶ Thus, for Rosenberg, history had been a ceaseless struggle between these competing myths and, according to one critic, in this way Rosenberg overturned traditional nineteenth-century conceptions of progress.²⁷ In its place he favoured the view of perpetual struggle, similar to Nietzsche's proposition of the eternal recurrence of events as presented in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the idea of the universe as an entirely cyclical sequence of events.²⁸ In order to overcome this perpetual struggle, one people had to show an exceptional Will to Power (arguably in the Nietzschean sense of the term), something he believed the Nordic or Germanic peoples more prepared to do.²⁹ Already echoes of Nietzsche can be seen in this – the call for man to exercise his will to power, the idea that man, and indeed everything in nature, is engaged in a struggle for rank: 'Wo ich Lebendiges fand, da fand ich Willen zur Macht; und noch im Willen des Dienenden fand ich den Willen, Herr zu sein.'³⁰ In some ways, as the driving force in life, Nietzsche's Will to Power can be compared with Darwin's theories, though it is clear that Nietzsche was very critical of Darwinism, 'rejecting the notion that life is a relentless physical struggle of evolutionary significance in favour of his own theory that life entails a straightforward struggle for supremacy'.³¹

Rosenberg's theory of myth can be seen as fascist, specifically aimed at inspiring political action. As such it is in a mode based on Georges Sorel, who as an intellectual has been linked with both Communism and Fascism, and who claimed that violence was

²⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 460.

²⁷ See Manfred Frank, *Vorlesungen über die neue Mythologie*. Vol. 2, *Gott im Exil* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 115-117, 127-128

²⁸ See Rosenberg, *Mythus*, pp. 392-3. See also Arthur C. Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965, op. cit. 1980), pp. 195-213.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

³⁰ Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra* II, 'Von der Selbst-Überwindung'.

³¹ Diethe, *Nietzsche's Sister*, p. 94.

justified in the effecting of a general strike in order to bring about revolution.³² As the old Nordic myth was bound up in the perpetual struggle with that of the Jews, Rosenberg proposes a new myth which could in fact be interpreted as the old myth stripped of any historical or temporal inadequacies. This new myth would consist of the values of honour, will, and discipline, and its victory would propel the German people toward a new era of heroic activity.³³

Despite his ambition to see this new myth as the inspiration behind political action, Rosenberg preserved elements of the original. Significantly, he espoused the idea that the Christian church should still play an important role in promoting this new myth: ‘Die Sehnsucht der nordischen Rassenseele im Zeichen des Volksmythus ihre Form als Deutsche Kirche zu geben, das ist mit die größte Aufgabe unseres Jahrhunderts.’³⁴ Arguing for this link with the Church performed two pragmatic functions; it maintained links with the Christian tradition for those who wanted to celebrate the Germanic origins of the liturgy, whilst for others it provided the basis for a religion founded entirely around racial precepts.

Throughout Rosenberg’s text, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, there are numerous references to Nietzsche, as Rosenberg considered his philosophy a central element in the construction of a new myth, although these references are not always explicit. In constructing this myth, Rosenberg relied heavily on a selective appropriation

³² See Oron J. Hale, *The Great Illusion, 1900-1914* (New York; London: Harper and Row Ltd., 1971), pp. 108-110. For Sorel’s own argument, see his *Reflections on Violence*, tr. T. E. Hulme (New York: AMS Press, 1914), pp. 126-127.

³³ See Rosenberg, *Mythus*, pp. 550-551.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 603

of Nietzschean ideas in order to present him in a proto-Nazi light.³⁵ One critic has suggested that Rosenberg ‘did not hesitate to mendaciously distort citations and alter Nietzsche’s remarks, especially on Judaism and the Jews, even inventing quotes when it suited his purpose.’³⁶ Another has said that books such as *Mythus* and Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* ‘hammer at an idea, supporting it with whatever might seem to fit, without any analysis, without any discussion of objections, without any references.’³⁷

The first of these criticisms was in fact levelled at a later Rosenberg work, a pamphlet based on a lecture given at the Nietzsche-Archive in 1944 to commemorate the Nietzsche centenary. Although not a primary source from the Weimar Republic, a number of its key points are ideas developed from *Mythus*, but with new rhetoric of war and crisis attached, which is in turn an anachronistic exaggeration of Nietzsche’s view of himself as a philosopher of war and crisis.³⁸

An example of this rhetoric would be Rosenberg’s claim that Nietzsche had an attractive and incomparable ability to philosophise in soldierly and war-like terms.³⁹ Although it is true that Nietzsche used martial imagery (most famously in the Zarathustra chapter ‘Vom Krieg und Kriegsvolke’), the suggestion that his enemies were identical to those of the Nazis is far-fetched; Rosenberg’s understanding was that, in the desperate war situation facing the Nazis in late 1944, they stood before the world in the same way as Nietzsche had confronted the forces of his own time, that is to say with the same

³⁵ See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 514.

³⁶ Wistrich, p. 147.

³⁷ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, tr. Holmes, ‘The Nazi Myth’, p. 304.

³⁸ See Alfred Rosenberg, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Ansprache bei einer Gedenkstunde anlässlich des 100. Geburtstages Friedrich Nietzsches am 15. Oktober 1944 in Weimar* (Munich: Franz Eher – Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1944).

³⁹ See Aschheim *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, p. 246.

apocalyptic mentality of ‘Sieg oder Untergang’. In terms of Rosenberg’s *Mythus*, the two forces battling for supremacy in the Nazi era were, on the one hand, the National Socialists representing the Germanic or Nordic, and the Communists, on the other, who allegedly represented the Jews and their supposedly materialistic world-view.⁴⁰ ‘die Börse wurde der Götze der stoffanbetenden (materialischen) Zeitseuche. Friedrich Nietzsche stellte den verzweifelten Schrei unterdrückter Millionen dagegen dar.’⁴¹ Rosenberg further asserted that the Germans represented Nietzsche’s idea of the Good European, because they were carrying out his vision of continental, revolutionary regeneration and cultural amalgamation;⁴² in Nietzsche’s own words: ‘[...] so soll man sich nur ungescheut als *guten Europäer* ausgeben und durch die That an der Verschmelzung der Nationen arbeiten.’⁴³

However, Nietzsche’s idea of the Good European, on this definition, proves Rosenberg’s statement to be, at best, ambitious, if not downright false. In *Menschliches Allzumenschliches*, Nietzsche condemns what Rosenberg would later define as nationalism as counter-productive, as the natural process of abolition of nations occurs and in its place a European mixed race comes into being.⁴⁴ Nietzsche goes on to say that the Germans play a part in this transition as the ‘*Dolmetscher und Vermittler der Völker*’,⁴⁵ and adds:

⁴⁰ See Rosenberg, *Mythus*, pp. 523-524.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 523. Viewing Jews as promoters and executors of a ‘materialist’ world-view enabled the Nazis to present them as the alleged driving force behind both Soviet Bolshevism and American capitalism.

⁴² See Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, p.249 (including reference to Alfred Rosenberg, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 22).

⁴³ Nietzsche, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* 475.

⁴⁴ See Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

das ganze Problem der *Juden* ist nur innerhalb der nationalen Staaten vorhanden [...] Sobald es sich nicht mehr um Conservierung von Nationen, sondern um die Erzeugung einer möglichst kräftigen europäischen Mischrasse handelt, ist der Jude als Ingredienz ebenso brauchbar und erwünscht, als irgend ein anderer nationaler Rest.⁴⁶

This demonstrates that Nietzsche was no anti-Semite but his use of the term ‘brauchbar’ is nevertheless problematic.

Similarly, Rosenberg’s application of the term ‘Good European’ – in a way that makes it an aim specific to Germans, and not considering that other nations may be capable of achieving it – conflicts with Nietzsche’s denunciation of nationalism and race hatred in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* as ‘Herzenskrätze und Blutvergiftung’.⁴⁷ Nietzsche claims that he is ‘zu gut unterrichtet’ and ‘der Rasse und Abkunft nach zu vielfach und gemischt [...] an jener verlognen Rassen-Selbstbewunderung und Unzucht teilzunehmen, welche sich heute in Deutschland [...] trägt’,⁴⁸ traditions of racial self-admiration and perversion upon which Rosenberg’s *Mythus* was largely based. This highlights the fact that Rosenberg’s appropriation of Nietzsche is inconsistent. It would seem that in Rosenberg’s interpretation, the question of *why* Nietzsche is used is more significant than the *how*, with the latter being simply a dispersal of Nietzschean ideas, almost at random, around National Socialist aims and ideals.

Rosenberg’s fundamental justification for appropriating Nietzsche is the claim that, on the basis of his revolutionary struggle against the power of the time, Nietzsche was not fully understood in his own era, which also gave rise to his sister’s

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 377.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

manipulations.⁴⁹ Rather, it was only in the generation of the Nazis, according to Rosenberg, with the development of the new myth and the empathy that the war situation allowed, that a full and true appreciation of Nietzsche's thought became possible. However, even this is a contentious claim, because Rosenberg's selective interpretations fail to take into account the full breadth of Nietzsche's philosophy, do not fully acknowledge its inherent complexities and ambiguities and are, consequently, misguided in their understandings of terms such as the Good European and how this might be realised.

Alfred Baeumler's Nietzsche

The case of Alfred Baeumler's use of Nietzsche is easier to document and explain than that of Alfred Rosenberg, given the number of Baeumler's works written with Nietzsche as the central focus, as well as Baeumler's position as professor of Pedagogy and Politics at the University of Berlin from 1933 to 1945, a position conferred upon him for his loyalty to the Nazi Party in its formative years in the 1920s.⁵⁰ He was a close personal and professional ally of Rosenberg and, as 'the primary liaison between the universities and the so-called *Amt Rosenberg* (officially the *Amt für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP*), Baeumler came closer to the centres of power in the Third Reich than any other philosopher'.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Rosenberg, *Mythus*, pp. 511f.

⁵⁰ See Kurt Rudolf Fischer, 'A Godfather Too: Nazism as a Nietzschean "Experiment"' in Golomb, Jacob, and Robert S. Wistrich (eds.), *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy* (Princeton, 2002) pp. 291-300, p. 293.

⁵¹ Whyte, p. 172.

Nevertheless, Baeumler's interpretation of Nietzsche is no less controversial than Rosenberg's, and is arguably even more so, owing to the academic authority and position from which Baeumler speaks, as well as, of course, Nietzsche's own authority as a historical and philosophical figure.

In his understanding of the concept of myth, 'Baeumler maintained that the authentic "Romantic" view of *Mythos* reflected a sense of the "deep" (*Tiefe*), the "primitive" (*Urzeit*), the "religious," and what he called the "deepest foundations of the human soil," all of which were intimately tied to notions of blood and tradition'.⁵² He presented this view in the introduction to a study on Bachofen, whom he rated more highly than the 'too enlightened' early Romantics.⁵³

For much the same reason, Baeumler also held Nietzsche in high regard, and his interpretation of Nietzsche can be found in a number of sources, the most significant of which are referred to above.⁵⁴ Although the essay, 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', in the volume *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (1937), postdates the Weimar Republic, it is nevertheless important in confirming the understanding of Nietzsche that Baeumler had developed in the years following the First World War. It also highlights Baeumler's still more radical view of Nietzsche after the Nazis' accession to power, not least because of its direct reference to links between Nietzsche and the Nazis, evident from the title itself.

⁵² Herbert Brunträger, *Der Ironiker und der Ideologe: Die Beziehungen Zwischen Thomas Mann und Alfred Baeumler* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1993), pp. 91-92.

⁵³ See Alfred Baeumler, 'Bachofen der Mythologe der Romantik', in Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Der Mythus von Orient und Occident: Eine Metaphysik der alten Welt aus den Werken von J. J. Bachofen*, 2nd edn, ed. Manfred Schröter (Munich: Beck, 1926), pp. xxiii-ccxciv.

⁵⁴ See Ch. 1, n. 1 above.

The prominent post-war Nietzsche scholar, Walter Kaufmann, said of Baeumler that ‘he approached Nietzsche with preconceived ideas (Nazism) that he was determined to read into Nietzsche’s work.’⁵⁵ This is a valid claim and, consequently, the ensuing part of this study will focus more on the question of *how* Nietzsche was appropriated, identifying where Baeumler’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s original philosophy is questionable. This is on the assumption that the majority of what Baeumler published can be analysed as propaganda directed at an already sympathetic audience.

Baeumler’s intention is, clearly, to use Nietzsche as a source to legitimise the Nazi position – whether or not he can establish a plausible philosophical or philological link between Nazi ideology and Nietzsche’s texts. One of the central themes of the 1931 work – *Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker* – is the idea of overcoming nihilism through will and the Nazi ‘transmogrification of Nietzsche into the thinker of great politics, whose will to power ushered in the great postliberal, postbourgeois age’.⁵⁶ In this process of ‘transmogrification’, Baeumler emphasises the power elements of Nietzsche’s philosophy in order to portray him, essentially, as a political thinker, while ignoring or downplaying other elements of Nietzsche’s thought, which are not consistent with Nazi ideology. This is evidenced more generally in what he considers to be Nietzsche’s most important texts, most significantly *Der Wille zur Macht*:

he followed Frau Förster-Nietzsche in discounting completely the three works which were the fruit of Nietzsche’s break with Wagner, i.e., *Human, All-Too-Human, Dawn*, and *The Gay Science*, as well as the two

⁵⁵ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, p. 41. Elsewhere Kaufmann denounced Baeumler as ‘one of the worst Nazi hacks’ (Walter Kaufmann, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), p. 604, n. 2).

⁵⁶ Aschheim, p. 157. See also Baeumler, *Nietzsche*, pp. 5-6.

anti-Wagner polemics of 1888; [...] he accepted her edition of *The Will to Power* as Nietzsche's *magnum opus*.⁵⁷

Similarly, Baeumler explicitly rejects Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence as outlined above, brushing it aside as an unfortunate philosophical whim which contradicts the unlimited flux of 'becoming' and the beneficial (power) struggle this entailed. This is the basis of Heidegger's criticism of Baeumler, namely, that, in denying eternal recurrence as a whim, he does not grasp Nietzsche metaphysically but interprets him only politically.⁵⁸

This point is echoed by other studies which defend Nietzsche against Baeumler's interpretation, such as that of Menahem Brinker who stresses that, contrary to Baeumler's efforts at politicisation, Nietzsche was fundamentally an apolitical thinker.⁵⁹ Consequently, it is natural that the Nietzsche who truly appealed to Baeumler was the man who wrote in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*: 'Die Zeit für kleine Politik ist vorbei: schon das nächste Jahrhundert bringt den Kampf um die Erd-Herrschaft, – den Zwang zur grossen Politik.'⁶⁰

Baeumler concedes that, although it may prove difficult, selective channelling of Nietzsche into Nazism's collective, Germanic imperatives was a necessary process. The propelling force of great politics, he claims, was the feeling of power; the 'Machtgefühl, welches nicht nur in den Seelen der Einzelnen, sondern auch in den niederen Schichten

⁵⁷ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, pp. 40-41.

⁵⁸ See Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Vittorio Klostermann, Abt. 2, Bd. 43, 'Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst' (Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1985), p. 22.

⁵⁹ See Menahem Brinker, 'Nietzsche and the Jews', in Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (eds.), *Nietzsche: Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 114.

⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* 208.

des Volkes aus unversieglichen Quellen von Zeit zu Zeit hervorstößt'.⁶¹ According to Baeumler, the Nazi period was one such time, and would lead to development in line with what Nietzsche had called for in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*.

The proposed idea of a *collective* struggle is a deliberate distortion or mangling of Nietzsche's original theory which focused on the individual's struggle, and Baeumler justifies this 'transmogrification' by reassessing ideas presented in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*; he argues that, in this text, Nietzsche talked in historical categories such as species, races, nations, and classes: 'Das Kollektivum, dem der einzelne Mensch entstammt, ist nie die Menschheit, sondern stets eine konkrete Einheit, eine Rasse, ein Volk, ein Stand.'⁶²

In terms of the newly-developed Nazi myth and the difference between the Nordic-Germanic and the Jewish 'races', Baeumler maintains that Nietzsche was aware of and, indeed, insistent on these. According to Baeumler, Zarathustra can be interpreted as a prophet of the Nazi order, who had taken up the Germanic mission to protect the rights of the *Volk*.⁶³ This is based on the idea that Zarathustra had arrived as the embodiment of the awareness that 'Gott ist tot' and as such 'Zarathustra bedeutet die Erfüllung der Ahnung, die in dem Worte liegt: alle Götter müssen sterben.'⁶⁴

Radical anti-Semitism was a, if not the, foundational element of Nazi ideology, and it is very difficult to read anti-Semitism into Nietzsche's texts without simply ignoring particular passages. Such passages from Nietzsche's works contradict claims

⁶¹ Baeumler, *Nietzsche*, p. 171.

⁶² Ibid., p. 179.

⁶³ See ibid., pp. 59-79.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 99.

that he was, in fact, anti-Semitic. Indeed, Richard Wagner's anti-Semitism (as well as Wagner's growing attachment to Christianity) was one reason why Nietzsche parted company with Wagner in 1876-78. At the time of their split, Wagner was promoting ideas of German nationalism and anti-Semitism, and this is believed to be one of the reasons behind Nietzsche's growing appreciation of the teachings of the Enlightenment and his construction of the idea of the Good European.⁶⁵ According to Baeumler's tenuous argument, Nietzsche's pro-Jewish comments could be explained away as an attention-seeking device; playing off Jews against Germans was part of his strategy to get the Germans to listen to him.⁶⁶

The second Baeumler text to be analysed here is the essay 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', in the volume *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (1937). As the title suggests, this volume comprises a series of essays considering – rather ambitiously – the theme of 'the history of ideas', although, generally (with the exception of Kierkegaard), it is limited to German nationals. The reasoning behind this is, arguably, that Baeumler, much like Rosenberg, is keen to ground his ideas of myth in a tradition of German or Nordic ideas, particularly those which he interprets as potential precursors of, or naturally leading to, Nazism. Indeed, other essays in the edition are entitled 'Romantisch und Gotisch', 'Hegel und Kierkegaard' and simply 'Nietzsche', which reinforces the idea that the Nazis aimed to trace their ideological roots through the preceding centuries.

⁶⁵ See Weaver Santaniello, *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews: His Critique of Judeo-Christianity in Relation to the Nazi Myth* (Albany, New York: State University of New York, 1994), p.20. See also Nicholas Martin, “‘Aufklärung und kein Ende’”: The Place of Enlightenment in Friedrich Nietzsche’s Thought”, *German Life and Letters*, 61 (2008), 79-97 (88-89).

⁶⁶ See Baeumler, *Nietzsche*, pp. 158-159.

Even from the outset, the essay ‘Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus’ presents an ambitious premise, implying that the extent of their correlation is due not only to similarities between Nietzsche’s philosophy and National Socialism but also to ‘eine tiefere Beziehung zwischen diesen beiden Größen’, indicated by the ‘und’ in the title of Baeumler’s essay.⁶⁷ This bold opening claim leads on to further, exaggerated romanticising of the National Socialist movement, born in the ‘Feuer und Blut des Großen Krieges.’⁶⁸ This is undoubtedly a deliberate reference to Jünger’s eponymous text of 1925. As the chapter on Jünger will explain in more detail, Baeumler held Jünger in high regard and had hoped to see him align his work with the politics of the Nazi Party. Baeumler praises Jünger as ‘[ein] Mann, der die technischen Tendenzen der Zeit in vollem Umfange begriffen habe, der nicht mehr im rückständigen Bürgerlichkeit stecke’.⁶⁹

The principal idea to draw from the first part of Baeumler’s essay is his claim to understand Nietzsche; an ambitious claim, given the inherent ambiguities in Nietzsche’s texts. According to Baeumler, Nietzsche was the only man of his time who could foresee the impending ‘Katastrophe’ (referring to the period of alleged liberal decline throughout Germany) and who had not only planned for it but also seen the way out of it, through his outlining and encouraging the ‘Entwertung aller Werte.’⁷⁰ This is somewhat different, of course, to Nietzsche’s original theory of ‘Umwerthung (sic.) aller Werthe (sic.)’ (italics

⁶⁷ Alfred Baeumler, ‘Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus’, in *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1937), pp. 281-294 (p. 281).

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 282.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Schwilke, *Ernst Jünger. Ein Jahrhundertleben*, p. 319.

⁷⁰ Baeumler, ‘Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus’, p. 282.

are my own -- RA)⁷¹, but, given the context of this reference, it is undoubtedly no coincidence.

In addition to these compliments, Baeumler also makes bold statements and comparisons where none is necessarily proven, such as the claim that Hitler's opposition to the Weimar Republic was the same stance that Nietzsche would have adopted, emphasising their solidarity by using the term 'einsamer Denker des 19. Jahrhunderts.'⁷² In this way, Nietzsche is aligned with Hitler's self-styled image as the lonely opponent of modernity; an image developed as part of the wider myth construction process of the National Socialists' so-called 'Kampfzeit' between 1919 and 1933.

For several pages, Baeumler continues his line of argument, largely concerned with drawing comparisons between Nietzsche and Hitler in particular, as well as with the Nazi Party in general. Referring again to the idea of myth, he claims that the Nazis are the natural progression in the line of the 'nordische Bewegung', which, in the political sense, can be drawn from the 'Heerkönige' of the Middle Ages, through the founding of Prussia, to Bismarck and, in turn, to Hitler, and, in the spiritual or religious line, from early Germanic paganism, through Eckehart and Luther, to Nietzsche.⁷³

The second part of Baeumler's essay deals with a number of specific Nietzschean ideas, namely, the death of God, embracing one's fate (*amor fati*), the Will to Power and the problem of good and evil, but in each case he draws conclusions or comparisons that a reader even only slightly acquainted with Nietzsche's thought would find, at best,

⁷¹ Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist*. This was initially presented as a subtitle for the work, though this was later changed to 'Fluch auf das Christenthum'.

⁷² Baeumler, 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', p. 283.

⁷³ See *ibid*.

tenuous and, at worst, simply wrong. In approaching the death of God, Baeumler clarifies for the reader that it is meant as a broader attack on Christianity as an institution, which, on the surface, is a reasonable enough interpretation of Nietzsche's original position. However, Baeumler develops this in order to criticise Christianity's negative influence on the morality of 1930s Germany. From the premise of analysing Nietzsche's 'Gott ist tot', he suggests that modern-day Christianity is very much removed from the traditional type, to the extent that Christ would speak out against all that is called Christian today, and, as such, he regards this view of the Christian as an obstacle to the development of a functioning modern society.⁷⁴

Alfred Baeumler and the 'Will to Power'

Baeumler's use of Nietzsche's concept of 'Will to Power' can be understood on two levels: firstly, Baeumler acknowledged as valuable and legitimate Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's publication of Nietzsche's hitherto unpublished notes, and, secondly and more importantly, he understood the idea of 'Will to Power' as Nietzsche's central philosophical concept, representing the fundamental driving force behind all things.⁷⁵ In the first sense, in recognising the 1901 Förster-Nietzsche edition as a philosophical text and subsequently authorising reprints, it has been argued that Baeumler 'supplanted the popular "Dionysian" interpretations of Nietzsche,'⁷⁶ regarding these as irrational, contradictory and over-simplified, and thereby allowing Nietzsche to be more easily

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 287.

⁷⁵ See Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra* II, 'Von der Selbst-Überwindung'.

⁷⁶ Carol Diethe, *Historical Dictionary of Nietzscheanism* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007), p. 17.

interpreted in a National Socialist context. Baeumler's interpretative realignment took place in the wider context of promoting and dismissing particular Nietzsche texts on the basis of their merits or failings as precursors to Nazi ideas. In defending Nietzsche against Baeumler's misappropriation, Kaufmann highlights the fact that, as well as dismissing those books which emphasised Nietzsche's growing hostility towards Wagner, Baeumler 'resorted to the subterfuge that Nietzsche did not mean it' when 'confronted with the books in which Nietzsche quite consistently [...] poured invective on state idolatry, Germanomania, racism, nationalism, and almost the entire Nazi creed'.⁷⁷

In the second sense, Baeumler interprets Nietzsche's notion of Will to Power as a political philosophy; in the closing pages, he suggests that the Will to Power is the will to withstand one's destiny ('das Schicksal zu bestehen',⁷⁸) and to overcome resistance. As such, this interpretation can be seen as a rallying cry, claiming that the Will to Power is strong in Germans because of the level of resistance they have overcome (this is possibly a reference to the *Dolchstoßlegende*); understanding the Will to Power in this way, allows Baeumler to assert that the 'Wir' are more justified in wanting more for themselves. It has also been argued that Baeumler's understanding of the philosophy of the Will to Power is endowed with ancient Greek resonance, being dubbed a 'Heraclitan *Weltkampf* [...] In order to reinforce his own agenda of bellicosity, [Baeumler] cleverly reminded his readers of the constant struggles Nietzsche had to overcome in his own life, whereas, of

⁷⁷ Kaufmann, p. 78.

⁷⁸ Baeumler, 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', p. 294.

course, Nietzsche had struggled against precisely the type of ideology peddled by Baeumler'.⁷⁹

Regarding Nietzsche's theory of good and evil, Baeumler mischievously misconstrues the dichotomy of good and evil as a hierarchy of 'Besser und Schlechter'.⁸⁰ This is a further example of how he manipulates Nietzsche's original in order to serve his own ends, applying his own interpretation to the original philosophy. This, along with his interpretations of the Will to Power, helps to identify the way in which Baeumler chose to approach Nietzsche, using a very broad-brush approach and interpreting the original ideas in a very free, even cavalier manner. Obviously, every reader will take away something different from Nietzsche's ambiguous and, in places, contradictory aphorisms, but Baeumler's approach appears too selective, in a way that is designed to promote his own interests and those of the Nazis. His approach is clearly not intended to further the reader's understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy or to present a balanced account of the relationship between this philosophy and the nature and origins of National Socialist ideology.

As previously suggested, Baeumler's text can be interpreted, primarily, as a piece of propaganda seeking to enlist Nietzsche's authority and legitimacy for Nazi ideas, and this explains his approach and also his extensive use of quotation in an otherwise threadbare essay. In most cases, these quotations are not properly referenced, and their integrity and authenticity is therefore open to question. For Baeumler, it would seem that the need to provide a proper scholarly apparatus for his assertions comes a poor second to

⁷⁹ Diethe, *Nietzsche's Sister*, p. 156.

⁸⁰ Baeumler, 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', p. 293.

the requirement to preach and propagandise to an already converted or at least sympathetic audience.

The emphasis of this study thus far has been on the relevant and most significant first-hand examples of Nietzsche's misappropriation by National Socialists and those sympathetic to the Nazi cause, principally Rosenberg, Baeumler and Förster-Nietzsche. The aim of the next part of this study is to analyse the extent to which these examples specifically, and the Nazi appropriation collectively, can be considered justified.

It has already been stated that very few people came to rescue Nietzsche from his misappropriation by the Nazis, but alongside Walter Kaufmann, Carl Jung (in his Zurich lectures of 1934-39), Karl Jaspers and the Mann brothers can be counted among this number.⁸¹ Similarly, much of the extensive secondary literature concerning the subject, written predominantly in the last thirty years, comes to the conclusion that the Nazis' appropriation of Nietzsche was either mischievous or misguided, or both, although it was made possible by the philosopher's ambiguous written style. Kaufmann has suggested that Baeumler unreasonably politicized Nietzsche, or took specific aphorisms out of context, in order to appropriate him and justify his anti-Semitic ideology, a practice that resulted in a 'pure distortion, a radical inversion of everything that the prophet of creativity [...] actually stood for'.⁸²

It has been demonstrated earlier in this study that both Baeumler's and Rosenberg's understandings of Nietzsche rely on a very restricted or 'blinkered'

⁸¹ See Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens* (Berlin and Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1936); Carl Jung, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar given in 1934-1939*, tr. James Louis Jarrett, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989); Heinrich Mann, 'Nietzsche', *Maß und Wert* 2 (1930), 277-304; Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* and, after the Second World War, *Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1948).

⁸² Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 315.

interpretation in order to present him in a proto-Nazi light. According to one critic ‘linking Nietzsche’s ideas with Nazism is both absurd and contradictory [...] The abuse of Nietzsche by the Nazis was often deliberate, and knowingly deceitful; and even when it was not deliberate, it resulted from a simplistic reading and outright misunderstanding of his complex position’.⁸³ Although it does not mention Baeumler or Rosenberg by name it is clear that this view has their principal works in mind.

By way of an interim conclusion here, it can be said that, in a number of ways and to varying extents, the Nazi interpretations constitute misappropriations or at least misrepresentations of the original Nietzschean they seek to enlist. Although it is accepted that Nietzsche’s ambiguities and his often contradictory aphorisms leave him open to a certain amount of personal interpretation, the extent to which Rosenberg and Baeumler have manipulated or mis-contextualised Nietzsche's original philosophy is entirely unjustified.

Furthermore, it has been shown that, in providing the Nazis with her version of her brother’s texts, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche combined a high degree of both personal ambition and philological incompetence. It has also been shown that Alfred Rosenberg relied heavily on a selective appropriation of Nietzsche’s original texts in order to present him as a pre- or proto-Nazi; and, finally, it has been demonstrated that Alfred Baeumler’s attempt to incorporate Nietzsche’s philosophy into that of the Nazis employed a deliberately reductionist approach, which involved an excessive politicisation of Nietzsche’s philosophical ideas.

⁸³ Yirmiyahu Yovel, ‘Nietzsche Contra Wagner on the Jews’, in Golomb and Wistrich (eds.), pp. 127-143 (p. 141).

CHAPTER THREE -- ERNST JÜNGER AND NIETZSCHE

Ernst Jünger's literary career spanned more than seven decades, from the first publication of his *In Stahlgewittern* (1920) to *Die Schere* (1990), but his writings during the Weimar Republic are, perhaps, his most controversial. Born in Heidelberg in 1895, he enlisted in the Imperial German Army on the first day of the war in 1914, aged just nineteen. In the course of the war he was wounded seven times, reached the rank of temporary company commander and was awarded the *Pour le mérite*. His experiences in the war led Jünger to write *In Stahlgewittern*, which, as the introduction to this study has already made clear, was a well-received account of his experiences as a soldier.¹ Joseph Goebbels, for example, said that it was: 'Das Evangelium des Krieges. Grausam – groß! Eine glänzendes, großes Buch. Grauen erregend in seiner realistischen Größe. Schwung, nationale Leidenschaft. Elan, das deutsche Kriegsbuch.'²

In the years that followed, as editor of, and contributor to, various right-wing journals, Jünger further explored and developed a number of the principal ideas from this text. Clues to the nature of these ideas can be found in the titles of some of his later works: *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), *Der Frontsoldat und die innere Politik* (1925), *Feuer und Bewegung* (1930), *Die Totale Mobilmachung* (1930). His book *Der Arbeiter* (1932) can be said to represent the realisation and consolidation of many of these earlier works and, for this reason, it will be one of the texts most closely analysed here for Nietzschean appropriation as well as Nazi estrangement.

¹ See Ch. 1, n. 32 above.

² Joseph Goebbels, *Tagebücher, Bd. I: 1924-1929*, p. 221f.

Jünger in Nietzsche's Shadow

At least one study has suggested that Jünger was an intellectual disciple of Nietzsche: 'Jünger [steht] in der Nachfolge Nietzsches.'³ Similarly, Roger Woods claims that Jünger's Nietzsche reception was 'one of the major influences on Ernst Jünger's interpretation of the First World War.'⁴ Alongside *In Stahlgewittern* (1920) and *Der Arbeiter* (1932), a number of other articles written by Jünger in the years 1919-1933 will be discussed here, in order to determine and evaluate Jünger's reception of Nietzsche, so that comparisons can be drawn with Nazi readings of Nietzsche.

Determining the influence of one author on another is notoriously difficult, and, as has become clear already in discussion of the two Nazi appropriations above, the case of Nietzsche is particularly difficult owing to his often ambiguous and contradictory aphorisms; his aphoristic style of writing in turn lends itself to selective reading. Consequently, rather than simply listing quotations from Jünger and discussing their potential Nietzschean echoes or resonances, this study will consider broader themes and ideas from the outset, identifying specific examples when necessary.

One study of Nietzsche's influence on Jünger has proposed that the latter's reception of Nietzsche can be understood in three phases, focused around *Das abenteuerliche Herz* (1929), *Der Arbeiter* (1932) and *Auf den Marmorklippen* (1939) respectively.⁵ Worthy of particular note here is a personal letter to the author of that

³ Alfred von Martin, *Der Heroische Nihilismus und seine Überwindung. Ernst Jüngers Weg durch die Krise* (Krefeld: Scherpe, 1948), p. 15.

⁴ Roger Woods, *Ernst Jünger and the Nature of Political Commitment* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1982), p. 59.

⁵ See Reinhard Wilczek, *Nihilistische Lektüre des Zeitalters: Ernst Jüngers Nietzsche-Rezeption* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1999), p. 12ff.

study, in which Jünger himself stated that his reception of Nietzsche was particularly intensive in the years 1913-1930,⁶ the period considered most closely here.

Jünger's Soldier-cum-Worker and the Nietzschean *Übermensch*

It is clear from Jünger's earliest works that the First World War had a defining influence on how and what he wrote during the Weimar Republic, and it is for this that he has been branded by some as 'the most significant representative of that branch of the Conservative Revolution known as new nationalism, which sought to carry forward military values and structures into peacetime society, and which redefined socialism in terms of the community of frontline soldiers.'⁷ If considered further, this view can be understood as Jünger's hostility to the Weimar democracy, his own personal interpretation of the *Dolchstoßlegende* (the view that, in its simplest form, suggests that the Germans had been betrayed by their government's signing of the Treaty of Versailles),⁸ and already comparable in some ways to the antipathy Nietzsche felt towards the political system of his day.⁹ Writing in the nationalist journal, *Die Standarte* in 1925, Jünger claims, for example:

Der Krieg war in dem Augenblick zu Ende, als das Schicksal darauf verzichtet hatte, seine großen Kraftströme[...] zu gestalten, nicht früher und nicht später, und genau so, wie der Mensch auf den Höhepunkten des

⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷ Roger Woods, 'Ernst Jünger, The New Nationalists, and the Memory of the First World War', in Karl Leydecker (ed.), *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic: Intersections of Literature and Politics* (Rochester, NY; Suffolk: Camden House, 2006), pp. 125-140 (p. 125).

⁸ A more detailed account of Jünger's understanding of the 'Dolchstoßlegende' can be found in Boris Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration: Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914-1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2003), pp. 401-403.

⁹ See Woods, *The Conservative Revolution*, p. 31. See also Baeumler, *Nietzsche*, pp. 146-167.

Krieges nur das Ausdrucksmittel eines höheren Willens war, so war er es auch während seines Abschlusses.¹⁰

Alongside the claims that Jünger was a significant proponent of the Conservative Revolution, and of the ‘new nationalism’ within it, it is also possible to consider Jünger’s texts in terms of what Jeffrey Herf has termed ‘reactionary modernism’ – broadly defined as a cultural trend ‘which reconciled the anti-modern, romantic and irrational ideas present in German nationalism with the nationalist functionalism of modern technology’.¹¹ In the case of Jünger specifically, this trend ‘combined the heroic language and themes of German neo-romanticism with an acceptance – and redefinition – of modernity’.¹² Further to this, the applicability of what Aschheim has classified ‘Nietzschean Socialism’ will also be considered. Aschheim defines this as the ‘ongoing quest for new forms of politico-cultural integration, providing suggestive images of an idealized future which transcended conventional class distinction’.¹³

Jünger’s ‘Nietzschean Socialism’, broadly defined, entailed a view of class based on the community of frontline soldiers contrary to conventional societal class distinctions,¹⁴ an aversion to the bourgeois governing class of the Weimar Republic and the view that the ‘Gestalt’ of the Worker or ‘New Man’ was a superior alternative to the bourgeois man.¹⁵ Jünger proposed to categorise in terms of a ‘Typus’ or ‘Gestalt’, a type

¹⁰ Ernst Jünger, ‘Die Revolution’, in: *Die Standarte*, 18. October 1925, in: *Politische Publizistik*, pp. 107-114. (p. 108)

¹¹ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 52.

¹² Steven E. Aschheim, ‘Nietzschean Socialism – Left and Right, 1890-1933’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 23, No.2 (April 1988), 147-168, (p. 162).

¹³ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁴ See Woods, *The Conservative Revolution*, p. 9.

¹⁵ See J. P. Stern, *Ernst Jünger: A Writer of Our Time* (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1953), p. 45.

or form, in effect de-personalising an individual in favour of a collective purpose, often on the basis of a common heritage:

Es ist die große Überlegenheit dieses Vorganges, daß er sich jenseits sowohl der moralischen und ästhetischen als auch der wissenschaftlichen Wertungen vollzieht. Es kommt in diesem Bereich zunächst nicht darauf an, ob etwas gut oder böse, schön oder häßlich, falsch oder richtig ist, sondern darauf, welcher Gestalt es zugehört.¹⁶

This de-personalisation of the individual in favour of various ‘Gestalten’ – the greatest of which being the Worker – can be seen as a transposition of the image of millions of soldiers in the war, all looking alike under their steel helmets, on to the struggle to overcome the bourgeois age in the post-war Weimar era.¹⁷ In the foreword to the 1920 edition of *In Stahlgewittern*, Jünger’s de-personalisation of soldiers forged under the Stahlhelm into a hardened, collective unity is clear in the image he employs of a ‘Gesicht unter wuchtendem Stahlhelm, das still und ernst über die Lande schaut, den deutschen Rhein hinunter aufs freie Meer – Einst wird kommen der Tag...’¹⁸ Similarly, he emphasises the importance of an experience in itself as opposed to any particular outcome: ‘Gleichviel wofür er kämpft, sein Kampf war übermenschlich.’¹⁹

According to J. P. Stern, the Worker can be seen as an extension of the frontline soldier, because his scale of values ‘issues from a transformation of the scale of values which distinguished the warrior; his touchstone is no longer the existential moment of war, but “total mobilization”, that is, absolute working capacity and an ability to

¹⁶ Ernst Jünger, ‘Der Arbeiter’ in *Werke* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1960-65), Vol. VI: *Essays II* (1963), p. 47.

¹⁷ See Stern, *Ernst Jünger*, p. 45.

¹⁸ Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern: Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers* (Hanover: privately published, 1920), p. VII.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. VII. Note Jünger’s use here of the Nietzschean term ‘übermenschlich’ to characterise the supposedly superhuman qualities of elite German soldiers in the trenches.

subordinate all “individual” inclinations to the total demand.²⁰ Thus it can be understood how the ‘Gestalt’ of the Worker can be seen as developing from the image of the soldier. Similarly: ‘Im “Arbeiter” sind totaler Krieger und totaler Arbeiter *ein* “Typus”. Er gehört einer “neuen Ordnung” der Welt an, die vollständig von der Technik bestimmt ist. Ihr wird sich der Mensch in der “Gestalt des Arbeiters” *vermählen*.²¹

Jünger’s Modernism and Nietzsche’s Proto-Modernism

Whether or not Jünger’s ‘New Man’ is indeed a superior being, this theory of the man of the bourgeois age as something to be bettered closely resembles Nietzsche’s construction of the *Übermensch*. More broadly, it is clear that the three compatible and, in places, overlapping theories of ‘new nationalism’, ‘Nietzschean socialism’ and ‘reactionary modernism’ are applicable to Jünger’s work and, as such, reveal the presence of Nietzschean ideas and currents of thought in it.

Given the extent to which these theories overlap, it is not unreasonable to suggest that they represent various authors’ interpretations of some aspects of one over-arching theory, namely modernism. This movement has its roots in the time around the turn of the twentieth century, emerging from ‘the tensions between internationalism and nationalism, between globalism and parochial ethnocentrism, between universalism and class privileges’.²² It continued to develop through resistance or acceptance of these political

²⁰ Stern, *Ernst Jünger*, p. 45.

²¹ Jürgen Manthey, ‘Ein Don Quijote der Brutalität: Ernst Jüngers ‘Der Arbeiter’’, *Text + Kritik: Zeitschrift für Literatur*, 105/106, January 1990, 36-51 (40).

²² David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 24-25.

and social tensions and evolved in ‘a dynamic of an aestheticization of politics and a politicization of aesthetics.’²³ In terms of the effects this dynamic had on the literature of modernism, it meant that the literary language had to become more complex in order to express a more complex world. This was achieved through the fusion of elements of the rational (as seen in the past in neo-classical, Enlightenment and Realist literature) with the irrational or subjective (as seen previously in Baroque, *Sturm und Drang* and Romantic writing). As a consequence of this complexity, ‘[m]odernist literature remained defined by change and reacted to it by constantly changing itself in its quest for a new myth and a new language’.²⁴

Within this newly developed modernist style, there emerged two fundamentally opposite attitudes for dealing with the complexity of the world, namely, resistance and acceptance.²⁵ Both Jünger’s works from the Weimar era and Nietzsche’s (to the extent that Nietzsche’s work can be considered proto-modernist in style and content) are representative of resistance in these terms, and specifically of Aestheticism within this – characteristically concerned primarily with the means rather than the end result, typically withdrawn from reality, and often appearing dark, pessimistic and dehumanised.²⁶ As such, the critic Ned Lukacher has proposed that ‘Ein Jünger is, of course, a disciple or

²³ Ingo R. Stoehr, *German Literature of the Twentieth Century: From Aestheticism to Postmodernism*, Camden House History of German Literature, 10 (Rochester, NY; Suffolk: Camden House, 2001), p. 4.

²⁴ See Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, *Modernism 1890-1930* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1976), p. 47.

²⁵ See Stoehr, p. 4.

²⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 8.

follower, and as Auf den Marmorklippen and his numerous other works attest, Nietzsche is Jünger's master, his subject-who-is-supposed-to-know'.²⁷

One of the fundaments of Nietzsche's philosophy was the need to define new values owing to his belief that the existing ones – those which for two millennia had been dictated by Christianity – were in decline. Generally speaking, his age was one of newly-found faith in democracy, science and other such idols which aimed to challenge or replace the absolute faith in Christianity, and each offered new and alternative, external values. However, these values were also unsuitable for modern man in Nietzsche's view; as man rejected these values he would experience a feeling of emptiness or nothingness. Man would find himself in a state of nihilism. Nihilism is the belief that the world has no objective order, structure, meaning or purpose. It is encapsulated in the striking and terrifying picture sketched by the 'toller Mensch' ('madman') in Nietzsche's *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882).²⁸ This loss of objective values is summarised in the madman's declaration that 'Gott ist tot', by which it can be argued he is referring, more broadly, to the demise of Christianity as a significant force of influence – or indeed oppression – over the individual.²⁹ In this void where God or, indeed, any of the other 'new' external values had once been, Nietzsche believed a role still had to be fulfilled, and this is what fuelled his search for what he was to posit in Part One of *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883), namely, the figure of the *Übermensch*. Nietzsche's 'prophet' or mouthpiece, Zarathustra, announces to a sceptical crowd gathered in a marketplace:

²⁷ Ned Lukacher, 'The "Demolition Artist": Nihilism, Textuality and Transference in the Work of Ernst Jünger and Maurice Blanchot', *Boundary 2*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Spring, 1982), pp. 251-269, p. 255.

²⁸ See Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* 125. For further discussion of Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism, see Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, pp. 195-213.

²⁹ Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* 125.

Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen. Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll. Was habt ihr getan, ihn zu überwinden? [...] Der Übermensch ist der Sinn der Erde. Euer Wille sage: der Übermensch *sei* der Sinn der Erde.³⁰

The principal role of the *Übermensch* was to fill the void left by God in this new world and to instigate the process of creating new values from *within* the individual where the existing ones did not satisfy the needs of modern man. This whole process was what Nietzsche referred to as ‘Umwertung aller Werte’.³¹

The search for the *Übermensch* can further be seen as Nietzsche’s attempt to find a synthesis between the (false) notion of the world as Being (*Sein*) and the world Becoming (*Werden*); and in *Also sprach Zarathustra* he identifies the spirit’s metamorphosis through three stages of Becoming: ‘wie der Geist zum Kameele wird, und zum Löwen das Kameel, und zum Kinde zuletzt der Löwe.’³² In the first instance, the ‘tragsame Geist, so kniet er nieder, dem Kameele gleich, und will gut beladen sein’,³³ and, as such, this represents the spirit which willingly carries the burden of the old values and follows the old commandments.

When fully-laden, like the camel, the spirit ventures into the wilderness where the next metamorphosis occurs: ‘zum Löwen wird hier der Geist, Freiheit will er sich erbeuten und Herr sein in seiner eignen Wüste.’³⁴ In this stage, the spirit resists the ‘Du-

³⁰ Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, ‘Vorrede’ 3.

³¹ ‘Umwertung aller Werte’ was part of the subtitle of a four-volume work that Nietzsche started to plan in 1886, shortly after completing *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, which was intended to be the work’s first volume: ‘Für die nächsten vier Jahre ist die Ausarbeitung meines vierbändigen Hauptwerkes angekündigt; der Titel ist schon zum Fürchten-Machen: “Der Wille zur Macht, Versuch einer Umwertung aller Werte.”’ (Letter to Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, 2 September 1886). Nietzsche abandoned the project in 1888, yet his sister chose to publish many of his notes and fragments under this title in 1901.

³² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra* I, ‘Von den drei Verwandlungen’.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

sollst' of the old values and announces its fundamental freedom of 'Ich will' but does not yet create new values (this was Nietzsche's own historical position). The third stage, of the child, is when new values are created, as the spirit comes ever closer to complete synergy with the world of Becoming:

Unschuld ist das Kind und Vergessen, ein Neubeginnen, ein Spiel, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, eine erste Bewegung, ein heiliges Ja-sagen.

Ja, zum Spiele des Schaffens, meine Brüder, bedarf es eines heiligen Ja-sagens: *seinen* Willen will nun der Geist, *seine* Welt gewinnt sich der Weltverlorene³⁵

Alongside the theory of the *Übermensch*, another central element of Nietzsche's philosophy is the concept of Eternal Recurrence; this is the idea that 'whatever there is will return again, and that whatever there is, *is* a return of itself, that it has all happened before, and will happen again, exactly in the same way each time, forever.'³⁶ Nietzsche spells out the idea of Eternal Recurrence in the form of a parable in section 341 ('Das grösste Schwergewicht') at the end of the Book Four of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882). Nietzsche asks what your response would be to a demon who told you that you would have to live your life again and again, that every moment of joy or of pain you have ever experienced, every thought or sigh, would recur in exactly the same sequence. Would you curse him, or have you experienced a moment so wondrous that you would hail the demon as a god?³⁷ This thought is echoed by Zarathustra when he says:

Ich komme wieder, mit dieser Sonne, mit dieser Erde, mit diesem Adler, mit dieser Schlange – *nicht* zu einem neuen Leben oder besseren oder ähnlichen Leben:
– ich komme ewig wieder zu diesem gleichen und selbigen Leben, im Größten und auch im Kleinsten, daß ich wieder aller Dinge ewige Wiederkunft lehre, –

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Danto, pp. 201-202.

³⁷ See Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* 341.

– daß ich wieder das Wort spreche vom großen Erden- und Menschen-Mittage,
daß ich wieder den Menschen den Übermensch künde.³⁸

If Eternal Recurrence is true, then the path to the phase of the *Übermensch* as a Being can no longer be understood as a linear transition, because the *Übermensch* is understood now as a non-temporal concept of eternal Becoming. However, Nietzsche, voicing his philosophy through Zarathustra, comes to realise that these two concepts – the *Übermensch* and Eternal Recurrence – are, in fact, different manifestations of the same thing: the Will to Power – effectively the force of life itself: ‘[Will to Power] combines the linear motion of the superman [*Übermensch*] and the circular motion of the eternal recurrence in a spiral – it progresses...It is the basis of a still to be developed philosophy of the future.’³⁹

Nietzsche’s notion of the death of God can be grasped more easily, if it understood as the death or downfall of Christian morality; this philosophy of the future will provide a new morality beyond (Christian notions of) good and evil. The *Übermensch* embodies the perfect combination of the Dionysian world, representing the irrational, and the Apollonian spirit of rationality and order. This combination will give rise to a world that, in its eternal recurrence, is perpetually creating and destroying itself. This is itself a theme that later becomes central to the branch of Modernism called Aestheticism and, in turn, can be seen as a central theme in Jünger’s interpretations of war, particularly in *In Stahlgewittern* and *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*.

³⁸ Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra* III, ‘Der Genesende’ 2.

³⁹ Stoehr, p. 11.

Jünger and the Conservative Revolution

As well as refining and modernising aesthetic understandings of war, basing this in part on Nietzschean concepts, Jünger was a major force in the Conservative Revolution (and, as Woods posits, ‘new nationalism’ within this). The intention here is to give a brief outline of this movement on the understanding that Jünger was associated with it, and that the movement itself has been linked to National Socialism,⁴⁰ in order to defend Jünger, to some extent, from claims that he was a (proto-)Nazi.

The Conservative Revolution is the term commonly applied to loose groupings of principally right-wing German nationalists in the Weimar Republic, many of whom had spent their formative years in the trenches of the Great War, and for whom the war had been a defining and galvanising experience. The first documented use of the seemingly paradoxical term ‘konservative Revolution’ was in a speech by Hugo von Hofmannsthal at Munich University in 1927.⁴¹ Stefan Breuer points out that this movement comprised primarily members of the ‘Frontgeneration’ or the ‘Generation von 1914’, who included writers such as Carl Schmitt, Edgar J. Jung, Oswald Spengler as well as Jünger himself, whose experiences of the war and of Germany’s defeat in 1918 led them to question and, ultimately, to reject many of the key principles of Germany’s imperial, bourgeois past.⁴² In the main, they were concerned, not with party politics, but with developments in culture, and with elements largely external to the political processes.

⁴⁰ See Woods, *The Conservative Revolution*, pp. 111-134.

⁴¹ See Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation* (Munich: Bremer Presse, 1927), p. 31.

⁴² Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993), p. 33.

Some have argued that these authors ‘helped prepare the ground for National Socialism’,⁴³ by weakening the middle-class intellectual resistance to Nazi ideology and further that some of them ‘eulogized Hitler and his party as the vanguard of the Conservative Revolution in Germany’.⁴⁴ They favoured the nationalism, militarism and authoritarianism that they had experienced as soldiers in the trenches over the values of liberalism, socialism, democracy and internationalism that had become increasingly fashionable in Wilhelmine Germany, and which ‘conservative revolutionaries’ saw as the defining characteristics of Weimar Germany. Jünger’s *In Stahlgewittern* has thus been identified as celebrating the ‘Fronterlebnis as a welcome and long overdue release from the stifling security of prewar Wilhelmian middle class’.⁴⁵ Similarly, they were opposed to the Weimar Republic, ‘identifying it with the lost war, Versailles, the inflation of 1923, the Jews, cosmopolitan mass culture, and political liberalism’.⁴⁶

The link between the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism (and Jünger specifically) is further evidenced by Goebbels’ eagerness to win Jünger’s ‘sharp pen’ to write for a ‘radical feuilleton’, and that Jünger should co-edit a journal with the ‘revolutionary nationalist’ author, Franz Schauwecker.⁴⁷ Both Jünger and Schauwecker declined this offer, prompting Goebbels to comment privately that: ‘Sie [Jünger und

⁴³ Woods, *The Conservative Revolution*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Martin Travers, *Critics of Modernity: The Literature of the Conservative Revolution in Germany, 1890-1933* (New York: Lang, 2001), p. 220.

⁴⁵ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 72.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

⁴⁷ Before 1933, (Paul) Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), the leader (Gauleiter) of the Nazi Party in Berlin, had overall responsibility for Nazi Party publicity, propaganda and electoral campaigns, and edited the Party newspaper *Der Angriff*. When the Nazis came to power, he was appointed Reichsminister für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, a post he held until 1 May 1945. See Elliot Y. Neaman, ‘The Marble Cliffs: An Allegory of Power and Death’, in *A Dubious Past: Ernst Jünger and the Politics of Literature After Nazism*, Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism, 19 (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 104-121 (p. 118 and note).

Schauwecker] können sich nicht einfügen. Trotzdem muß man ihre spitzen Federn gebrauchen. [...] Radikal im Denken, aber schlapp im Handeln.⁴⁸

Jünger also refused subsequent offers from the Nazis of a guaranteed seat in the Reichstag. He nevertheless wrote some 140 essays or articles during the period up to 1933, often in a style defined as ‘fascist modernism’, displaying an avant-garde, futuristic, disruptive and subversive technique.⁴⁹ He also edited a number of right-wing journals with links to the *Stahlhelm* war veterans’ organisation, and it is these essays and editorships that both catalogue his developing thoughts on the future of Germany, and, crucially, document his growing hostility to the views of the Nazi Party.

Within the framework of the Conservative Revolution, Jünger’s work is described by Woods as representative of ‘new nationalism’ and the applicability of this term, as well as the ways in which Nietzsche’s influence can be seen as integral to this, will form a major part of the discussion here. One of the defining features of new nationalism in the Weimar Republic is the continuation of values supposedly initiated and developed in the First World War; broadly speaking, these can be grouped under the ideas of the primacy of the community of frontline soldiers, based on their shared *Kriegserlebnis*, and the maintaining of military values in peacetime, perhaps best evidenced in the popularity of veterans’ organisations such as the *Stahlhelm*.⁵⁰

It was principally for veterans who had shared Jünger’s experiences of war that he published *In Stahlgewittern*. His account of the war tended to glorify it. In Woods’s

⁴⁸ Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher. Sämtliche Fragmente. Band I: 1924-1929*, p. 619 (17.10.30).

⁴⁹ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 47. See also Frederic Jameson, *Fables of Aggression*, Wyndham Lewis: *The Fascist as Modernist* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1979), and Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens: Die pessimistische Romantik und Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk* (Munich: Hanser, 1978).

⁵⁰ See Woods, ‘Ernst Jünger, The New Nationalists and the Memory of the First World War’, p. 125.

words: '[Jünger] portrays [war] as a natural event, as the reenactment of a noble tradition, and as the expression of the inevitable fate of the nation'.⁵¹ In this can be seen an understanding and reflection of the Nietzschean principle of *amor fati* or 'love of fate': the individual soldier 'affirming his fate yet also shaping it with his own hands by using the will to power as a creative principle'.⁵²

If this is indeed the case, then, for Jünger, the outcome of the war can be interpreted as less important than how one fought, and in this way it can be argued that he transposed the idea of 'art for art's sake' on to war, thus developing an aesthetic understanding of the war as '*la guerre pour la guerre*'.⁵³ This interpretation can further be seen as a development of the original 'Nietzschean revolution' which abandoned the idea of purpose in favour of the value of a process for its own sake.⁵⁴

This is not to say that the war did not also serve a purpose for the future: the war developed 'der neue Mensch, der Sturmpionier, die Auslese Mitteleuropas. Eine ganz neue Rasse, klug, stark und Willens voll'.⁵⁵ Similarly Jünger writes:

Der Krieg, aller Dinge Vater, ist auch der unsere; er hat uns gehämmert, gemeißelt und gehärtet, zu dem, was wir sind. Und immer, solange des Lebens schwingendes Rad noch in uns kreist, wird dieser Krieg die Achse sein, um die es schwirrt. Er hat uns erzogen zum Kampf, und Kämpfer werden wir bleiben, solange wir sind.⁵⁶

Accepting that, for Jünger, the outcome of (the) war is less significant than participating in it, it is also the case that the best qualities of soldiers, including courage and

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 130.

⁵² Ohana, 'Nietzsche and the Fascist Dimension: The Case of Ernst Jünger', p. 264.

⁵³ Erin G. Carlston, *Thinking Fascism: Sapphic Modernism and Fascist Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press) p. 58.

⁵⁴ See Ohana, 'Nietzsche and the Fascist Dimension: The Case of Ernst Jünger', p. 280.

⁵⁵ Ernst Jünger, 'Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis', in *Werke*, (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1960-5), Vol. V: *Essays I* (1960), p76.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp.13-14.

selflessness, become ends in themselves, as do the quasi-Nietzschean values of heroism, struggle and power.⁵⁷ This can be seen, most starkly, in the closing chapters of *In Stahlgewittern*: the armistice and Germany's defeat are not mentioned; they are secondary to Jünger's winning of the *Pour le mérite* decoration for gallantry.⁵⁸

These arguments would all seem to suggest the primacy of the individual, as would the title of the aforementioned 1922 essay, 'Der Kampf als *inneres Erlebnis*' (my emphasis -- RA), yet it must be stressed that the community of soldiers in the trenches was also important for Jünger, and he came to use this as an antithesis to the allegedly formless mass of the Weimar Republic: during the war '[t]he mob was organized into a fighting formation, and the moral Jünger drew from it was "this is how things should be!"' [...] After the war [...] the people had split apart into a disorganized mass as it had been before.'⁵⁹ In his criticism of the 'Donnernde Masse' as 'tausendköpfige Bestie', Jünger's language echoes Nietzsche's in his contempt for the masses, the 'herd' and man's herd instinct.⁶⁰

There is an overlap here with Aschheim's interpretation of 'Nietzschean Socialism', one of the principal defining features of which is the belief that the age of the bourgeois, the 'beast of a thousand heads', is being superseded by that of the 'new man', typified in Jünger's work by the 'Gestalt' (or model) of the Worker.⁶¹ In Aschheim's interpretation, the bourgeois age can be interpreted as roughly corresponding to what Jürgen Habermas

⁵⁷ See Woods, 'Ernst Jünger, The New Nationalists, and the Memory of the First World War', p. 134. See also Aschheim, 'Nietzschean Socialism', p. 158.

⁵⁸ Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern: Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers* (Berlin: Mittler, 1929), p.283.

⁵⁹ Ohana, 'Nietzsche and the Fascist Dimension: The Case of Ernst Jünger', p. 274.

⁶⁰ Jünger, 'Der Kampf als *inneres Erlebnis*', p. 58.

⁶¹ Jünger, *Der Arbeiter*. The first section is subtitled 'Der Arbeiter im Spiegelbild der Bürgerlichen Welt'.

has called modernity, namely, the narrative of enlightenment and human emancipation.⁶²

In Jünger's sceptical view it is an age that constitutes 'a secular form of Christianity'.⁶³ In these terms, *Der Arbeiter* can be seen as postmodern, or at least as something more modern than modernity. The reader is invited, 'seine Zeit mit den Augen eines Archäologen zu betrachten',⁶⁴ and in this reflective metaphor, which Jünger assumes as 'prophetic advocate and dispassionate observer' and the 'scholarly chronicler'⁶⁵, can be seen an element of Nietzsche, who likewise tends to comment on his era as an observer.

Jünger believed that bourgeois values were no longer able to respond adequately to contemporary demands;⁶⁶ their time had passed. The opening chapter of *Der Arbeiter* is entitled 'Das Zeitalter des Dritten Standes als ein Zeitalter der Scheinherrschaft'.⁶⁷ This can be seen as similar to the aforementioned criticism that Nietzsche levelled at values imposed upon the individual by outside agencies such as the Christian church. Instead, Nietzsche promoted the idea of a transvaluation of all values ('Umwertung aller Werte') centred upon, and stemming from, the autonomous individual. Consequently, in addressing this inability to respond adequately in his era, Jünger presents a vision of a new order for a post-bourgeois industrial society based on three principal elements:

Es muß *erstens* ein neues Prinzip oder eine neue Gesetzmäßigkeit vorhanden sein, die die Einheit der werdenden Ordnung garantiert [...] Es muß *zweitens* ein neuer Mensch zu erkennen sein, der dieses Prinzip zur Durchführung bringt [...] *Drittens* müssen sich neue und überlegene Formen

⁶² See Jürgen Habermas, *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt a M., Suhrkamp, 1985).

⁶³ Walter H. Sokel 'The "Postmodernism" of Ernst Jünger in His Proto-Fascist Stage', *New German Critique*, No. 59, Special Issue on Ernst Jünger (Spring – Summer, 1993), 33-40 (33-34).

⁶⁴ Jünger, 'Der Arbeiter', p. 71.

⁶⁵ Sokel, p. 34.

⁶⁶ See Durst, p. 150.

⁶⁷ Jünger, 'Der Arbeiter', p. 17.

andeuten, in denen die Tätigkeit dieses Menschenschlages zum Ausdruck kommt.⁶⁸

In the period of change, Jünger posits that it is the ‘wir als “gute Europäer”’⁶⁹ (another allusion to Nietzsche), meaning that those who had fought in the war would instigate the transition from the bourgeois age to the new order. It should be clarified here that the agent of this new order, the Worker, was in no way intended by Jünger as the final goal of this process. Rather, he was the ‘neuer Mensch’ who would bring the new principle of lawfulness to fruition; his goal was the creation of a new humanity.⁷⁰ A parallel in Nietzsche would be the role of Zarathustra – although he was ‘the prototype that personified the metaphysics that made the Overman [Übermensch] possible, he was not yet the Overman but rather his spokesman’.⁷¹ A Biblical parallel would be with the figures of John the Baptist and Christ.

For Jünger, the overcoming of the bourgeois age is a process beyond good and evil, right and wrong, indeed beyond Christian morality as a whole.⁷² As such, it was the responsibility of the soldiers as ‘Sinnbild des modernen Arbeiters und Kämpfers’ who combined ‘ein Mindestmaß an Ideologie mit einem Höchstmaß an Leistung’, ‘das Deutsche in einer neuen Gestalt zu verwirklichen’⁷³, in which there is a ‘Wille zur Gestaltung’,⁷⁴ a motivation, a driving force, that is not seen in the existing bourgeois

⁶⁸ Ernst Jünger, ‘Untergang oder neue Ordnung?’, in *Politische Publizistik 1919-1933*, pp. 642-650 (pp. 644-645).

⁶⁹ ‘Untergang oder neue Ordnung?’, p. 643.

⁷⁰ See Jünger, ‘Untergang oder neue Ordnung?’, p. 645.

⁷¹ Ohana, ‘Nietzsche and the Fascist Dimension’, pp. 284-285.

⁷² See Jünger, ‘Der Arbeiter’, p. 47.

⁷³ Ernst Jünger, ‘Der Kampf um das Reich: Vorwort’, in *Politische Publizistik 1919-1933*, pp. 527-536 (pp. 529-530).

⁷⁴ Jünger, ‘Der Arbeiter’ p. 231. See also ‘Der Wille zur Gestalt’, in *Politische Publizistik 1919-1933*, pp. 489-493.

‘type’. Consequently, the struggle of the age can be seen between the Jüngerian ‘New Man’ as embodied in the soldier-cum-worker, motivated by this ‘will to form’, and the craven, subservient form of bourgeois man, who according to the *Dolchstoßlegende*, is responsible for, among other things, Germany’s abject surrender in 1918 and for signing the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Versailles.⁷⁵

Aschheim argues that ‘Jünger’s post-war Weimar vision of the future worker society sought to maintain the Kriegserlebnis and make it a part of everyday modern life’.⁷⁶ As such, with the worker having developed from the soldier of the trenches, he can be seen as the ‘antithesis of the bourgeois whose whole project had been to deny the elemental and the dangerous as essential ingredients of life’ and further he ‘emanated a pure will-to-power that was quite removed from all previous bourgeois expressions’.⁷⁷ For Jünger, the elemental and dangerous which the bourgeois had denied and which he thrived upon, had prospered in the war and consequently the age of the bourgeois should now be relegated entirely to the past.⁷⁸ Once this is achieved, the new order of the Worker can draw a line under this past and accept the realisation of a modernised interpretation of the Nietzschean ‘transvaluation of all values’: ‘Es ist unnötig geworden, sich noch mit der Umwertung der Werte zu beschäftigen – es genügt, das Neue zu sehen und sich zu beteiligen.’⁷⁹

It has been argued elsewhere that the New Man is ‘the crown jewel of the myth-creating fascist ideology. He is an individual who identifies with the rhythm of the

⁷⁵ See Jünger, ‘Untergang oder neue Ordnung?’, pp. 642-649.

⁷⁶ Aschheim, ‘Nietzschean Socialism’, p. 162.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See Jünger, ‘Der Arbeiter’, p. 47.

⁷⁹ Jünger, ‘Der Arbeiter’, p. 61.

modern world, who is tested in action rather than contemplation, through initiative rather than continuity, and creativity rather than the preservation of culture.⁸⁰ This reinforces the fact that Jünger's writings typify Herf's posited 'reactionary modernism' and the 'fascist type', as exemplified by 'severity and coldness', wringing form 'for the sake of pure form from chaos'.⁸¹ This fascist style 'in contrast to bourgeois art, does not attempt to civilize but, rather, to disclose and valorize brutality'⁸² and helps to promote the idea that the age of the Worker represents progress through something more modern than modernity.

Technology and Total Mobilisation

Central to Jünger's modernity is the role of technology, arguably because he believed, like other members of the 'avant-garde' (Jünger belonged among the right-wing of the modernist avant-garde that was drawn to fascism⁸³), that it could help in the aestheticisation of politics, and as such it could provide a solution to the 'crisis of cultural decadence and decline'⁸⁴ allegedly prevalent in the Weimar Republic. Therefore, the heroics of the soldier, as expressed in *In Stahlgewittern*, are incorporated into Jünger's analysis of the importance of technology as expressed through *Der Kampf als inneres*

⁸⁰ Ohana, 'Nietzsche and the Fascist Dimension: The Case of Ernst Jünger', pp. 265-266.

⁸¹ Armin Mohler, *Liberalenbeschimpfung: Drei Politische Traktate* (Essen: Heitz & Höffkes, 1990), pp. 80-127 (p. 94).

⁸² Neaman, 'The Marble Cliffs: An Allegory of Power and Death', p. 115.

⁸³ Bohrer, *Ästhetik des Schreckens*, p. 61.

⁸⁴ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 71.

Erlebnis (1922) and *Feuer und Blut* (1925).⁸⁵ In the latter, Jünger praises the machine for its role:

Ja, die Maschine ist schön, sie muß schön sein für den, der das Leben in seiner Fülle und Gewaltmäßigkeit liebt. Und in das, was Nietzsche, der in seiner Renaissancelandschaft für die Maschine noch keinen Raum hatte, gegen den Darwinismus gesagt hat, daß das Leben nicht nur ein erbärmlicher Kampf ums Dasein, sondern ein Wille zu höheren und tieferen Zielen ist, muß auch die Maschine einbezogen werden. Sie darf uns nicht nur Mittel zur Produktion, zur Befriedigung unserer kümmerlichen Notdurft sein, sondern sie soll uns eine höhere und tiefere Befriedigung verleihen. Wenn das geschieht, ist manche Frage gelöst.⁸⁶

Jünger further demonstrates the primacy of the machine as an integral part of the age of the Worker, in stark contrast to the age of the bourgeois, in his 1929 essay, *Der Wille zur Gestalt*: ‘Die technische Präzision, die in unseren Maschinen zum Ausdruck kommt, steht in einem seltsamen Gegensatz zur allgemeinen Verschwommenheit der Literatur.’⁸⁷

There is a clear element of Jünger’s continued resentment of the bourgeois order in this, as well as the seeds of views he would advance two years later in *Die Totale Mobilmachung*. The machine was representative of the new age, and consequently development could be tracked through the mobilisation of machinery and the Worker type. It has been argued that, for Jünger, the First World War had been lost because mobilisation (overseen by the bourgeois ruling classes) had been only partial, and, somewhat contentiously, that the Nazis’ rise to power was the practical, non-metaphysical solution that would put into practice the scheme of total mobilisation in its pure form.⁸⁸ For Jünger, it was enough to say that total mobilisation represented the

⁸⁵ See ibid., p. 73.

⁸⁶ Ernst Jünger, *Feuer und Blut. Ein Kleiner Ausschnitt aus einer großen Schlacht* (Magdeburg: Stahlhelm-Verlag, 1925), p. 82.

⁸⁷ Jünger, ‘Der Wille zur Gestalt’, in *Politische Publizistik 1919-1933*, pp. 489-493 (p. 493).

⁸⁸ Stern, *Ernst Jünger*, p. 12.

functioning of a society that had truly grasped the meaning of the war; the fact that the Nazis were politically in control of the country was secondary.

The above quotation from *Feuer und Blut* indicates that Jünger's ideas concerning technology – at least as an aesthetic phenomenon – may well have had their roots in Nietzsche, though owing to the era in which he lived being one of only partial mobilisation (where the machine was not being used to its full potential), Nietzsche's views on technology and the machine never developed beyond a primitive level. Consequently, Jünger's designs for 'total mobilisation' can be seen as an extension and modernisation of an originally Nietzschean concept – What nature meant to earlier ages, machines mean to Jünger's age.⁸⁹

In this respect, this extension and modernisation of Nietzschean ideas can be seen as illustrating most of the points already raised. Using the theories of new nationalism, fascist modernism and Nietzschean socialism which can be grouped under the umbrella term 'modernism', it has been demonstrated that much of Jünger's published work during the Weimar Republic has affinities with Nietzsche's ideas. It should be emphasised that, although certain elements exist which are similar to both Nietzsche and Jünger, the extent to which this implies a uni-directional 'transfer' of ideas is still very much open to debate. Nietzsche has been praised as one of the defining influences upon the modernist movement,⁹⁰ and Jünger's work has been evaluated in terms of this movement, so a plausible link may be drawn between the two in this respect.

⁸⁹ Stern, *Ernst Jünger*, p. 43.

⁹⁰ Holub, pp. 1043-1044.

The aforementioned suggestion that Jünger is a disciple of Nietzsche can thus be understood in one of two ways. The first way devalues Jünger's work by implying that it is unthinkable without Nietzsche. However, it should be emphasised that Jünger's works have merit in their own right; his ideas, regarding the aesthetic qualities of war, politics and technology, and the Gestalt of the soldier-cum-worker can be traced through their infancy in *In Stahlgewittern* to, arguably, theoretical fruition in *Der Arbeiter*, and despite various acknowledgements of the importance of Nietzsche in these, the entirety of the theory can be found in Jünger. The other way suggests that Nietzsche's radical ideas of Zarathustra, the *Übermensch* and the will to power, developed by Jünger into reasonably practicable ideas in the technologised world of modern Weimar Germany, offer Jünger both an intellectual precedent to work from and confirmation and articulation of ideas that Jünger had arrived at independently.

As was made clear in the discussion of Rosenberg and Baeumler in Chapter Two above, this idea of Nietzsche as an intellectual precedent or a validating theorist was also important in the Nazi appropriation of his work. Consequently, in order to clarify the distinction that existed between Jünger and the Nazis (as was briefly alluded to in the previous chapter), it is not unreasonable to suggest that Jünger's interpretation of Nietzsche's ideas arrived at very different conclusions to those of the Nazis because of differing interpretations and understandings of the original philosophy, which in turn reflected the differing standpoints and starting-points of the interpreters.

CHAPTER FOUR – CONCLUSION

The aim of this study from the outset has been twofold: firstly, to identify and evaluate the ways in which Nietzsche's philosophy was used by three key figures in nationalist Weimar Germany and, secondly, to defend both Nietzsche and Ernst Jünger from claims that they inspired and/or were associated with National Socialist ideology. In attempting to achieve these twin aims, the interpretations of Rosenberg, Baeumler and Jünger have been closely analysed, in order to assess the extent to which any of these can be said to constitute a misappropriation of Nietzsche's original philosophy.

In each case, the intention was to assess both the context and the possible motives behind the appropriation and the ways in which this appropriation manifested itself. To this end, the introductory discussion of Bloom's various types of influence came to the conclusion that in each of the three cases the overall influence could be understood as either *clinamen* or *tessera* or indeed a combination of these two, varying from one specific example to the next.

This conclusion will draw together the key points to have come out of this study, recapping briefly the context in which the appropriations took place, and evaluating the specific examples in more broadly conclusive terms. Owing to their associations with the Nazi Party in the case of Rosenberg and Baeumler, and with the Conservative Revolution in the case of Jünger, it has been argued that each individual's views as expressed through their work constitute a type of nationalism as defined by Smith. This has been the major justification for considering these three specific examples from the numerous available options, owing primarily to this seemingly shared basic premise. However, as

has become clear, by cataloguing Jünger's thoughts and works through the 1920s and 1930s (with a specific focus on his use of Nietzsche in this), it is possible to draw a distinction between Jünger's interpretation of nationalism and that of the National Socialist examples. Whilst there seems to be a certain commonality of 'language and symbolism' in the views expressed by Baeumler and Rosenberg, Jünger's views arguably advocate a social rather than political movement, which is obviously inconsistent with the Nazis' primarily political ambitions. His move away from the political spectrum, where once he had been a keen admirer, if not supporter, of Hitler and the National Socialists, has been outlined and shows that his stance was distinct from the Nazis' and from Nietzsche's.

One point which has been stressed throughout, and which to an extent justifies this study as a whole, is the way in which Nietzsche's aphoristic style and ambiguity lend his works to widely differing interpretations from across the entire breadth of the political, cultural and philosophical spectra. This ambiguity is the principal reason it is not possible to prove conclusively that the appropriations of Rosenberg and Baeumler constitute misrepresentations of the original 'meaning', given that this meaning can never be reliably located or pinned down. As a result, it should be clear that rather the attempt has been made to identify where the Nazis rely on taking aphorisms out of their broader context, ignoring particular elements of Nietzsche's philosophy which do not lend themselves easily, or simply interpreting the original in a way which can be deemed unreasonable, in order to legitimise and defend their position.

Nietzsche was by no means the only cultural figure to fall victim to Nazi misappropriation, but he was certainly a prime example of the process, and it has proved

instructive and salutary to reconstruct the ways in which three interpretations (Jünger's, Rosenberg's and Baeumler's) from within the framework of nationalist Weimar Germany were able to come to such different conclusions about a common source.

Central to Nietzsche's appropriation by the Nazis was the part played by his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, after she inherited his estate. It is clear that she was an admirer of Hitler personally and of the Nazi movement as a whole, and this can be seen as the principal reason for her having so strongly promoted her brother's works in the 1920s and 1930s through the official channels of the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar. More generally, her work in this role arguably served to raise the profile of Nietzsche in Germany, and as such it should be praised as valuable in the long run, even if it did incalculable damage in the short term to Nietzsche's reputation.

It is, of course, not possible to say for certain whether there would have been a Nietzsche 'cult' in nationalist circles in Weimar Germany without her influence. However, given her talent for propaganda and her belief that she was her brother's confidante, combined with her political loyalties at this time, it is clear that she had a vision in mind for the future of her brother's philosophy. Her publication of Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* further suggests that she was determined to shape and control the posthumous reception of her brother's philosophy, and it is no surprise, in many respects, that Baeumler praised it most highly.

Beyond her role at the Nietzsche Archive, Förster-Nietzsche also served a symbolic purpose for the Nazis, both as the stately mother figure revered by Hitler, and more broadly as a direct link back to her brother and his philosophy. As such it could be suggested that Förster-Nietzsche's affiliation with the Nazis was not limited to a one-

directional relationship but rather that some in the National Socialist movement may have considered it as mutually beneficial since it served the party's political interests as well as its craving for philosophical 'approval' and respectability. To an extent it can be said that she succeeded in promoting her brother's philosophy to the National Socialist movement, presenting her brother as a semi-divine figure, ironically enough.

Of the three interpretations studied here, it has been established that Rosenberg's can be accurately defined as the one most closely associated with the Nazi Party as a political body, given that he held a senior position in the party and had been a convinced National Socialist from the outset in 1919. Regarding his use of Nietzsche, it is evident that Rosenberg did not rely on Nietzsche alone but rather used him alongside other prominent figures from Germany's rich cultural history. His aim in doing this was clearly to justify his view of Nazism as a legitimate and natural progression in Germany's history, tracing its heritage and precursors back through Romantic and *völkisch* thinkers from earlier times. Essentially, he claimed it was the Nazis who would, after the mythless era of Weimar, re-assess Germany's future and re-instate the valuable myth of the *Volk*. In attempting this, it has been demonstrated that he relied either on a misreading – or misunderstanding – of Nietzsche or on taking an original idea and using it out of context to defend and indeed promote his position.

In this way, in his *Mythus der 20. Jahrhunderts*, Rosenberg uses Nietzsche's original theories as an essential source in constructing a new Nazi myth. However, the thesis has shown that his uses of Nietzsche's theories of Eternal Recurrence and the Good European were highly questionable in this context. In each case he relies on the premise that these theories were applicable in the way Nietzsche had originally intended but in the

Nazi era, arguably implying that the situation facing the Nazis was, in Rosenberg's opinion, similar to that which Nietzsche had faced, and that they shared a common enemy; an idea that has been shown above to be both unreasonable and unsubstantiated.

In the section on Alfred Baeumler's interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy, it was established that Baeumler's principal aim was to present Nietzsche's ideas as anticipations of Nazi views. In order to do this he chose to over-emphasise the political elements of a largely apolitical, or even anti-political, philosophy. In many cases, references to Nietzsche's original ideas in Baeumler's works are taken out of context or simply not catalogued consistently in any way, and as a result it is difficult for any reader (at that time or indeed even in the present day) to check their accuracy or relevance.

Given his position as a professor at the University of Berlin, Baeumler's works were generally well received and also trusted by many who read them in Nazi Germany. Rather than simply representing new studies of Nietzsche's philosophy, Baeumler's works served also as a source of academic propaganda – read much of the time by an already sympathetic audience – in order to promote the legitimacy of the Nazi position in Germany's development out of the Weimar Republic. In his approach to Nietzsche's work, and particularly in the sense of its applicability to the Nazi era, it has been shown that he emphasised the 'power elements' of the original philosophy, whilst explaining away elements which were not consistent with his views. In this respect it can be said that Baeumler, like Rosenberg, was aiming to politicise Nietzsche's generally apolitical works in a way that legitimised Nazi ideology. However, in order to do so, Baeumler dismissed central elements of Nietzsche's philosophy (Eternal Recurrence, for example) because it did not accord with the Nazis' 'linear' political purpose. This serves to exemplify

Nietzsche's influence on Baeumler in the sense presented by Bloom as *clinamen*; he instigates a 'corrective development' of the original, dismissing the idea of Eternal Recurrence as a whim, and consequently draws new conclusions from the remainder.

In a way that reflects Bloom's definition of *tessera*, Baeumler also interprets Nietzsche's idea of the death of God, implying that Nietzsche was correct to a certain extent but failed to develop the idea far enough. In the context of the 'death of God', he interprets it accurately as a more general attack by Nietzsche on the Christian church and organised religion more generally. However, he continues beyond this interpretation, in order to 'demonstrate' what he perceives to be similarities between Nietzsche's philosophy and the Nazis' programme.

In a similar way, Baeumler makes other elements of Nietzsche's philosophy serve his ends by appropriating them in unusual ways. The Will to Power, for example, which he briefly acknowledges and interprets as a philosophical idea but more prominently in the sense of the Förster-Nietzsche text, which, for Baeumler, represents Nietzsche's most significant work. Also Baeumler's adaptation of the Nietzschean dichotomy of good and evil into a comparative scale of *besser* and *schlechter* is another example of free interpretation that suits his own ends. Perhaps the greatest criticism to level at Baeumler in his interpretation of Nietzsche is that (deliberately or not) he is too selective; using only the elements which serve further to support and promote his personal philosophy and, more broadly, Nazi ideology. Alongside these striking examples of Baeumler's selective appropriation, another example of his deliberate ignoring of a particular element of Nietzsche's philosophy is his suggestion that Nietzsche's aversion to anti-Semitism serves only as an attention-seeking device, used by him to provoke Germans into

listening to him. As well as demonstrating the selective appropriation, for which Baeumler has become notorious, this eccentric interpretation is further proof of Baeumler's desire to politicise Nietzsche's work by riding roughshod over both text and context.

It can be argued that Baeumler's works on Nietzsche continue on the model of myth as set out by Rosenberg in *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, both authors affirming the role of Nietzsche's Zarathustra as a prophet of Nazism, and the apparent distinctions and distance between the Jewish and Nordic-German races. However, it is clear that both of these interpretations rely on a selective appropriation of Nietzsche's philosophy, and furthermore neither author suitably or convincingly justifies how their interpretation of Zarathustra is in fact a continuation of the Nietzschean model. Rather the name is employed, or more often simply appealed to, in order to legitimise the Nazi ideas. These were inserted into a largely re-invented German tradition, which posited a 'natural progression' from Romanticism and Nietzsche, through *völkisch* ideas, to the Nazis.

It has been demonstrated above that in his essay 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', Baeumler consolidates many of his ideas on the relationship between the two, suggesting that the bond is deeper than it initially seems. In defending this position, he unjustifiably makes the link between Hitler and Nietzsche, namely, that Hitler felt the same way about Weimar as Nietzsche had felt about the Wilhelmine Reich of the 1870s and 1880s. This is unjustifiable in the sense that it is clearly not possible to declare outright how Nietzsche would have felt about the Weimar political system.

In the chapter on Jünger's reception of Nietzsche, it was made clear that the First World War played a defining role in Jünger's career and in his appropriation of and

approach to Nietzsche's philosophy. Based on his experiences in the war, his book *In Stahlgewittern* was well received in Germany, particularly within the right-wing if Goebbels's comment is anything to go by. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Jünger continued to develop on ideas expressed in *In Stahlgewittern*, as author and editor to numerous right-wing journals, and the significance of Nietzsche as an influence (alongside his war experience) at this time should not be understated. It is possible to categorise his Nietzsche influence into three phases, and, by his own admission, the period 1913-1930 represents a particularly intensive period of appropriation.

This can be understood as a reflection of the way in which Jünger draws on particular elements of Nietzsche's philosophy. (This point represents one of the ways in which Jünger's appropriation of Nietzsche shares similarities with those of Rosenberg and Baeumler, given his acceptance of particular elements whilst ignoring others, deliberately or otherwise). In many respects, Jünger's reception of Nietzsche seems to be such that he approaches parts of the original and considers them alongside his own personal experiences of the First World War, effectively incorporating them and arriving at his own unique interpretation and criticism of the Weimar Republic.

The most striking example of this is Jünger's 'Gestalt' of the Worker, which is grounded, at least in part, in Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*. According to Jünger, this 'Gestalt' is a development or extension of the soldier of the trenches; Jünger is frustrated by the existing class convention in the Weimar Republic, based on bourgeois principles, and as such presents the Worker as an overriding and superior alternative to the bourgeois 'type'.

In the original Nietzschean philosophy, the role of the *Übermensch* was similarly in the process of transvaluating the existing values, and filling the void where once a Christian God and other outdated values had held prominence. For Jünger, the criticism was that the bourgeois values of the Weimar ruling class were no longer able to respond effectively to contemporary demands. Consequently, he suggests that the New Man, developing in the model of the soldier-cum-worker, who, representing what it meant to be a Good European (though not necessarily in the Nietzschean sense) and the antithesis to bourgeois man, would instigate the modern day transvaluation of all values. In this respect, the soldier-cum-worker can be likened to the Nietzschean figure of Zarathustra, who represented the actor of change rather than the product itself, proclaiming the coming of the *Übermensch*.

In analysing the view of the soldier-cum-worker as a ‘Gestalt’ to aspire to in the process of transvaluing bourgeois values, the evaluations of Jünger presented by Woods, Aschheim and Herf (analysed in terms of ‘new nationalism’, ‘Nietzschean Socialism’, and ‘reactionary modernism’, respectively), have been considered. These evaluations represent the three authors’ individual interpretations of the over-arching theme of modernism, and this theme formed the basis of the comparative study above of Nietzsche’s and Jünger’s works. One of the principal points to emerge from this part of Chapter Three was the importance of aestheticism for both Nietzsche and Jünger. According to both, the means and process of action were more important than the end result.

Identified as an alternative manifestation of the Will to Power, which represents ultimately for Nietzsche the force of life altogether, the Nietzschean concept of Eternal

Recurrence also has its echo in Jünger. This is reflected in his emphasis on the importance of technology as an essential tool in the aestheticisation of politics. Technology, to a certain extent, defined the Worker and certainly served to distinguish him from the bourgeois type. Thus aiming for total mobilisation of the workforce could be seen as achieving a total distancing from the primitive bourgeois type. It has been argued that, holding such views on technology and total mobilisation, Jünger's view is once again an extension or development of Nietzsche's original, where Nietzsche had been writing in and for a less industrialised society.

As well as determining and analyzing the influence of Nietzsche's philosophy on the works of Jünger, it was also an aim of this thesis to establish the distance that existed between Jünger and the Nazis, in order to defend him from this association. Perhaps most effective in achieving this aim was the cataloguing of Jünger's role in the Conservative Revolution, and how that movement as a whole can be seen as occupying an ideological space at several removes from the one inhabited by National Socialists.

Its members promoted the militarism, nationalism and authoritarianism they had experienced in the trenches, and valued them more highly than the Weimar values of liberalism, socialism, democracy and internationalism. Once again, in studying the Conservative Revolution, elements of Nietzsche's philosophy became apparent in Jünger's part in this: he glorified the war experience as fate (*amor fati*), whilst also acknowledging that the individual shaped his own fate by using his Will to Power. This is Jünger's 'Nietzschean Revolution', in which the value of a process for its own sake is more important than its ends.

Given that both Jünger's and the National Socialists' ideologies can be interpreted in terms of nationalism, it is understandable that there are some similarities in their approach to and appropriation of Nietzsche's philosophy as part of this. However, what is clear from the thesis is that there are substantial and crucial differences. The reception of Nietzsche in the works of Baeumler and Rosenberg has been shown to be a misappropriation, and by establishing the differences between these Nazi misappropriations of Nietzsche and Jünger's interpretation of the same philosophy, we have shown how it is possible to defend both Nietzsche and Jünger from association with the Nazi movement.

This subject is inevitably still riddled with complexity, and, much like Nietzsche's own work, his appropriation by Nazis and by Jünger can be considered in terms across the breadth of the spectra of philosophy, politics and culture. What Rosenberg and Baeumler did with his work represent only two of the numerous interpretations from the time, albeit the two most significant in terms of their prominence in the Nazi movement. Jünger's is a more personal and infinitely subtler interpretation, which has been, quite unjustly, tarred with the same 'nationalist' brush. Within its necessarily limited scope, the thesis has shown how Nietzsche, or rather the varied interpretation of his thought, sheds important light on the complex, differentiated nature of views on the nationalist wing of the Weimar political spectrum.

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