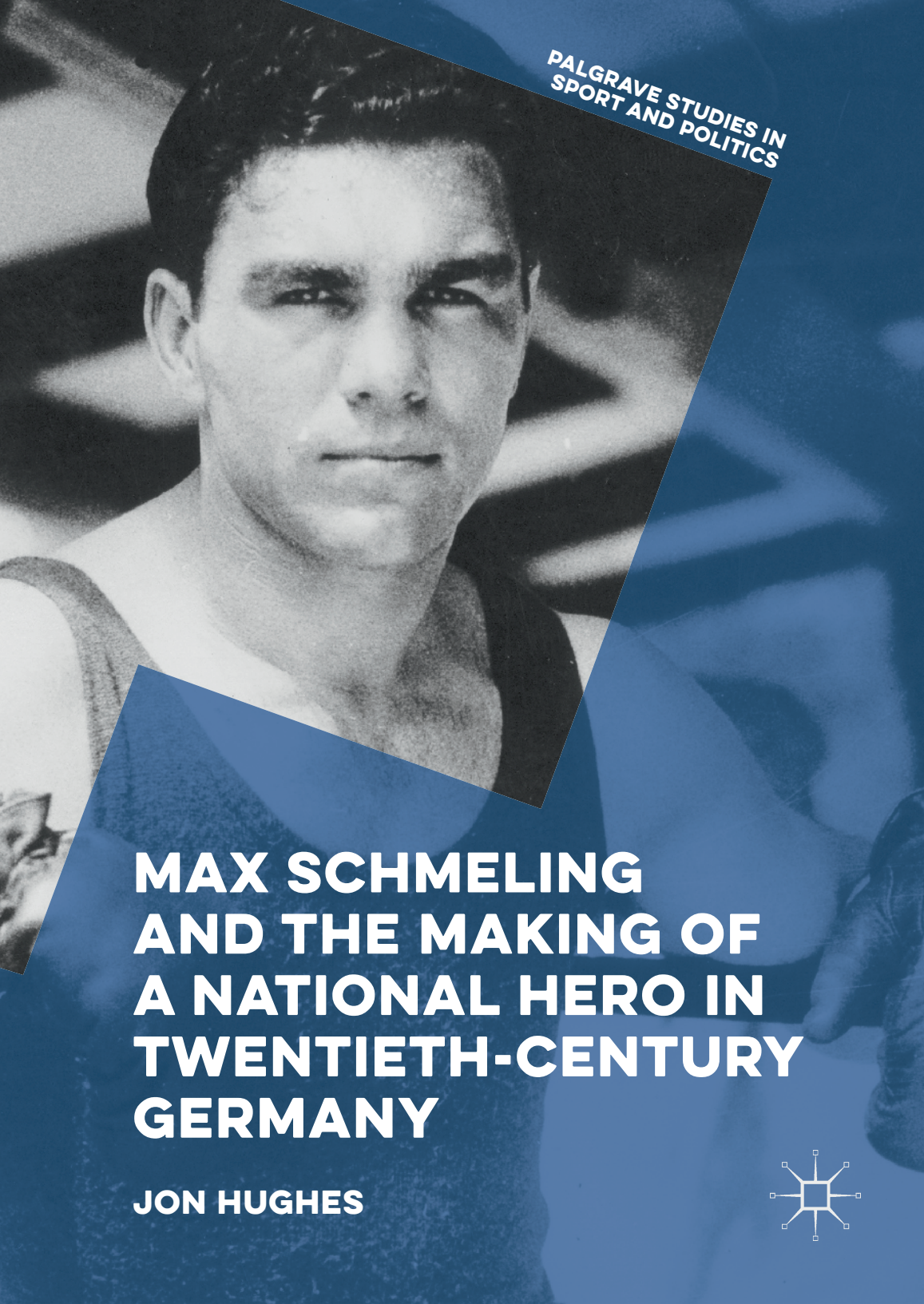

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MAX SCHMELING AND THE MAKING OF A NATIONAL HERO IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMANY

JON HUGHES

Palgrave Studies in Sport and Politics

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

This is an interdisciplinary study of the representation of the boxer and businessman Max Schmeling that will, I hope, be of interest to a wide range of readers. It may appeal to those with an interest in the history of sport and sporting cultures, in the history of Germany in the twentieth century and its struggle with questions of memory and national identity, and in the cultural construction of "hero" figures. I have attempted in writing the book to cater for this potential readership. I make few presumptions and have attempted to introduce, in context and in a clear manner, the data upon which my argument relies, whether they relate to Schmeling's life, the political context or the specificities of sport and boxing. The reader will notice that quotations from German sources are provided both in the original language and in English translation. I am grateful to the publisher for permitting me to do this, which will allow readers of German to engage with specifics of language, terminology and rhetoric, but will not exclude the reader who is unfamiliar with German. Unless otherwise indicated, translations into English are my own. I have attempted for the most part to be faithful to the source text in these translations, but on occasion have favoured readability and style over a more literal approach. Translations from poems and songs are rendered in functional prose, and I apologize for the inevitable loss of flavour.

The chapters dealing with National Socialism and the Third Reich presented particular difficulties with respect to translation, as this was a political culture that generated countless ideological neologisms and peculiarities of language. Some of the favoured lexis of National

Socialism may already be familiar to the historian, and I have attempted to retain standard translations wherever possible. Certain key terms, such as *Volksgemeinschaft* and *Gleichschaltung*, are explained in the first instance and thereafter left in the original German. Other important terms, such as the deceptively simple *Kampf*, proved impossible to render consistently; *Kampf* can variously suggest "fight" in the physical sense (including a boxing match), "combat" in the military sense, "conflict" in a more general sense, or "struggle" in a metaphorical sense—as in *Mein Kampf*. *Der Faustkampf* can be translated simply as "boxing" but was politicized in the Third Reich and consciously distinguished from *das Boxen*; as a consequence, I have sometimes translated it as the more antiquated "pugilism". I hope, in any case, that the translations always retain the sense, if not in every case the style, of the original.

Much of the primary material cited in this book was originally published in ephemeral sources such as newspapers and magazines. I have accessed these sources in part through the invaluable digitization projects that have proved enormously beneficial to a project such as this one. I wish in particular to commend the *Zeitungsinformationssystem* of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, which has digitized the *Vossische Zeitung*, amongst other titles, and the collaborative digitization project "Illustrierte Magazine der klassischen Moderne" (run by the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden and the University of Erfurt, Seminar für Medien- und Kommunikationsforschung) through which I was able to access *Der Querschnitt*. Other primary sources were accessed through the microfilm collections held in the newspaper archives of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin and the British Library in London. I am also especially grateful to the University of Potsdam for making its edition of *Boxsport* available to me.

This study is the product of research on Max Schmeling, and on sport in the German context, stretching back almost a decade. It would have been impossible for me to complete without a generous period of sabbatical leave provided by the School of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures at Royal Holloway, University of London, to which I am indebted. I am also above all grateful to Janet, both for her eagle-eyed proofreading and for her love and support throughout.

This book is dedicated to Janet, and to the memory of my mother Merle Hughes (1944–2010).

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Max Schmeling (1905–2005) was the first global star of German sport. He came to prominence in an age in which professional sport was a novelty in Germany and paved the way for iconic figures of later decades such as Steffi Graf, Boris Becker and Michael Schuhmacher. His career was extraordinary and in some ways contradictory. In a period characterized by social, political and cultural upheaval and by the German nation's fatal and ultimately self-destructive commitment to fascism and a genocidal war, Schmeling emerged as one of the finest heavyweight boxers of the century, recognizable to millions on both sides of the Atlantic. A darling of liberal Weimar Berlin in the late 1920s, Schmeling's move to New York in 1928 saw him achieve, in 1930, what no other European had to that point—he became the world heavyweight champion, the most iconic of titles in a globally popular sport. Under the Nazis, Schmeling became a propaganda figure like few others. His fights against Joe Louis, in 1936 and 1938, are remembered not only as electrifying sporting events but as examples *par excellence* of social, cultural and political investment in sport.

After 1945, as the Federal Republic of Germany underwent a process first of economic recovery and then of "coming to terms" with the past, Schmeling was able to re-establish himself as a successful entrepreneur. Despite his close association with Hitler's regime, he not only retained his celebrity status but also, with the passage of time and with changing political and cultural agendas, came to be admired as an emblematic figure, a so-called good German, and a national as well as a sporting

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hero. When he died, just months short of his one hundredth birthday, the nation mourned the loss of a man it chose to remember as a legend. This legend has its origins in the popular fascination with sport and its champions, but it had also been cultivated through conscious interventions both by Schmeling himself and, crucially, by generations of journalists, intellectuals, artists and ideologues.

When I first began to think about Max Schmeling in the context of the intellectual debates around sport and the sports movement in the Weimar Republic, I did not initially anticipate that a book-length study would be the eventual result. But it became rapidly clear that to understand Schmeling and his meaning, one also needed to reflect on complex, evolving questions of culture, ethics, memory and national identity. In the course of a long life, Schmeling was subject to an extraordinary level of public scrutiny, and the status he enjoyed decade after decade provokes important and difficult questions. If German history over the last century has been (as is often claimed) characterized by transitions, breaks and renewals, how was it possible for one individual to retain continuous popularity and prominence throughout that time? How did his image develop through periods of extreme political contrast, and what does the process reveal of the nation (or the national cultures) that he was so often said to reflect or for which he was held up as a role model? How significant is it that he was a boxer, and thus an exponent of a sport in which Germany had little or no tradition? And should the celebration and commemoration of Schmeling in Germany after 1945 be seen as the result of a willful failure of collective memory or a justifiable desire to find a redemptive connection to the past? These are the overarching questions that inform the chapters of this study, which aims to make a significant contribution to the existing body of work on Schmeling and on German sports history, but also to complement the growing number of interdisciplinary analyses of sport in the context of culture in the broadest sense. My argument will also, I hope, offer something to the reader with an interest in the problematic function of so-called heroes in society, or in the interaction between professional sport and broader political, ethical and so-called national questions.

The following sequence of five chapters re-examines the key stages in Schmeling's story, from the 1920s to the decade following his death. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the Weimar Republic, reflecting on the sports movement and the critical discourses surrounding sport, Schmeling's emergence as a star and symbol, and the importance of America in the

shaping of Schmeling's career and reputation. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the period of National Socialist rule. Chapter 4 examines the relationship between sport and ideology under Hitler and the claims made by the Nazis on boxing in particular and assesses the ways in which Schmeling adapted to political culture and propaganda expectations after 1933. Chapter 5 analyses the discourses of "heroism" and the "national" that shaped the two extraordinary fights with Joe Louis and, later, the representation of Schmeling's wartime military service. Chapter 6 reconstructs the process through which Schmeling emerged, yet again, as a kind of role model after 1945 and pays particular attention to the mapping onto his biography of a moral framework that reflected Germans' desire both for continuity *and* for *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past).

Each chapter focuses on representation and the social, cultural and political contexts that have informed the development of an enduring public image. As such, although the reader should certainly learn a great deal about Schmeling's life, this is *not* a biography. There are a number of published biographies in German, the most authoritative (and critical) of which is that published by Volker Kluge in 2004.[1] In English, three monographs focused on Schmeling's fights with Joe Louis.[2] David Margolick's work in particular is important and useful in its reconstruction of the circumstances surrounding the two occasions, but its scope is necessarily limited by a narrative strategy that depends on the presentation of parallel stories (Schmeling and Louis in the 1930s). Like the other recent works in English, it does not aim to reflect in depth on the manner of Schmeling's representation throughout his life or how it has intersected, often problematically, with the critical discourses surrounding sport, nationhood, memory and morality. My aim is to do exactly this, by drawing comparatively on a wide range of primary sources and material, including journalism and essays, life writing, prose fiction, film, visual art and museums. In this respect, this book aligns itself with the body of comparative work on the cultural significance of sport by scholars including Allen Guttmann, Benoît Melançon, Kasia Boddy and David Scott.[3]

Schmeling has often been described as being *more* than a boxer, and the reasons for this will become clear. That said, sport, and its potential meanings, lie at the heart of this study. The degree of cultural investment in sport, in Germany as in many countries, makes it a particularly rich area for interdisciplinary study. There are few areas manifesting

such intense popular interest, commercial exploitation and on occasion political resonance as modern professional and competitive sport. This was true of the pre-war period in which Schmeling was at his competitive peak, and it remains the case today. I approach sport as a social, psychological, technological and aesthetic phenomenon and as a cultural product that interacts with others, such as art, fashion and the media, and, like these, is encoded with complex messages and layers of meaning. It has often been observed that sport might in some respects be comparable to art in its social and psychological functions, indeed, that the playing of sports, like art, might embody some of the very things that make us human. In his recent *Philosophy of Sport*, Steven Connor teases out the peculiar philosophical implications of sport as a cultural institution that is essentially "non-necessary". He notes that Jean-Paul Sartre found existential value in the arbitrary nature of sport and its performance, comparing the actor (who is also a player) and the sportsman.[4] This comparison also suggests that sport may have a further value, namely in the act of spectatorship—in particular, in the experience of spectatorship *en masse*. Michael Mandelbaum, in his recent study of the meaning of sport in American life, also draws structural parallels between sport and drama and between sport and the epic, in which the protagonist "encounters a series of challenges that it must meet to achieve its ultimate goal".[5] Sport may be arbitrary in the sense that it serves no immediate practical purpose, but Mandelbaum emphasizes the self-contained "coherence" of the sporting contest, which, in the context of the often incoherent modern world, helps to explain why sports matter to so many: "While they do not furnish a coherent picture of the world as a whole, they do at least offer a coherent picture of *something*."[6] In this context Roland Barthes' suggestion, in the commentary text he wrote to accompany the visuals in the short documentary film *Le Sport et les hommes* (dir. Hubert Aquin, 1961), that sport fulfils the same social function that theatre once did makes absolute sense: "Sport is a great modern institution cloaked in the ancestral form of the spectacle."[7]

For Barthes, the appeal of sport lies in its ability to elicit a direct, visceral response, to break down the barrier between spectator and player: "Everything that is happening to the player is also happening to the spectator."[8] Joyce Carol Oates, in her philosophical meditation on boxing, refers to the intimate and painful "connection between the performer and observer".[9] This immersive form of identification is undoubtedly part of the reason why certain star performers have, from

the earliest days of organized sport, been elevated to a particular form of hero status. Amongst these are a few who achieve something even higher, the status of legend or even myth. The manner in which these figures are represented, and the sort of responses these representations in turn elicit, is revealing in a way similar to the iconography of saints, reflecting patterns of cultural, social, racial and national identification. The achievements of such so-called legendary personalities are invested with what Oates refers to as mythopoetic status: "to be a great champion, like Muhammad Ali), one must transcend the perimeters of sport itself to become a model (in some cases a sacrificial model) for the general populace, image-bearer for an era."[10] Muhammad Ali is certainly one of the best examples of this phenomenon. Yet if transcending sport is a condition for such elevated status, it is also clear that sporting excellence, in the first place, is also a requirement. If the claim is true, we should find evidence of a double encoding in the public image of such an athlete, reflecting, on the one hand, the perception of athletic prowess and, on the other, the functions one would expect of a symbol or image-bearer for a collective of some sort, national, regional, racial or otherwise. And if this image endures, lasting and developing beyond the period of sporting success, then we might well see something akin to the mythological, hinted at in Oates' phrase. For example, in his cultural history of the French-Canadian ice hockey player Maurice Richard, Benoît Melançon makes the claim that Richard, known as the "Rocket" and undoubtedly a legendary player for many Canadians in general and Québécois in particular, enjoys the status of myth:

> The mythical figure draws his power from amplification and from cultural transmission, for in order to survive in memory, his exploits must be handed down from one generation to the next. The myth, like the hero and the legend, is intimately connected with collective identity.[11]

To return to our previous example, the case of Muhammad Ali, the definition seems particularly apt, as the worldwide reaction to his death in 2016 demonstrates. The obituary in the *New York Times*, for example, referred to him as "a secular saint, a legend in soft focus".[12] As perhaps the most recognizable "symbolic" sports hero in history he offers a useful point of comparison. Like Schmeling before him, Ali was—in his case an unprecedented three times—the heavyweight champion of the world, a title that, from the late nineteenth century onwards, has had wider

cultural symbolism as a supposedly ultimate achievement. He used this status, quite consciously, as a platform for a political-religious stance that was hugely divisive, raising questions about race relations in the USA and patriotism that remain relevant to the present day. Ali, in part because of his association with the Nation of Islam, but also because of his infamous posturing and provocations, was by no means universally popular. Although he was a hero to many, for others, including many African Americans, he was something of a villain, displaying none of the humility traditionally expected of the sports champion—especially, as we shall see when we come to consider Joe Louis, of the *black* champion. Popularity in itself is not a precondition for mythic status, and in the context of the late 1960s Ali's defiant attitude became an integral part of an enduring symbolic image. According to Jeffrey T. Sammons, "Muhammad Ali symbolized America under siege" and was the "personification of the discontent and unrest, […] a deracinated, classless, alien, antiestablishment figure of broad appeal".[13] By the 1970s, at the end of his boxing career, Ali's status as an admittedly ambiguous cultural icon was cemented by the publication of an autobiography, *The Greatest* (1975), which, as Gerard Early has noted, is a "self-consciously political construct" aimed at establishing an exemplary narrative of a man's fight, via the boxing ring, against oppression.[14] At the same time, as Kasia Boddy observes, the exploitation of the commercial potential of Ali—or rather, we might say, of the constructed myth of Muhammad Ali—was under way, via feature films, artworks, media and staged appearances.[15] The established image of him as a suffering martyr, most memorably transmitted by the 1968 cover of *Esquire* magazine depicting him as Saint Sebastian, was subsequently adjusted to incorporate his Parkinson's disease.

In most respects, Max Schmeling could be said to have been the antithesis of Muhammad Ali—modest, apolitical, conformist and adaptable. Yet through his long life he also attained the status of a revealing heroic myth that, likewise, was the product of decades of adaptations to cultural and political shifts. Just as in the case of Muhammad Ali, it is not difficult to find claims that Max Schmeling had somehow transcended the sport that made him famous. As Volker Kluge suggests, in his later years Schmeling had become for many Germans something like a "personifizierte[r] Wunschtraum" (personification of their dreams), "weil Schmelings Lebensgeschichte beinahe symbolisch mit allen Höhen und Tiefen deutscher Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts verknüpft war" (because Schmeling's life story was connected, almost symbolically, with

all the highs and lows of German history in the twentieth century).[16] Schmeling himself, in his autobiography *Erinnerungen* (*Memories*, 1977), written in collaboration with the journalist Ludwig Maibohm and the historian Joachim Fest, makes the attempt to frame his life story against that of the German nation.[17] Schmeling had, from the early days of his career, a reputation for intelligence and thoughtfulness, which prompts Kluge to observe: "Schmeling [war] immer mehr als ein Boxer; sicherlich auch, weil es ihm am besten gelang, den ewigen Widerspruch von Körper und Geist aufzuheben" (Schmeling was always more than a boxer, not least because he succeeded in overcoming the eternal conflict between mind and body).[18] As we shall see, this perceived conflict, between *Körperkultur* (body culture) and *Geisteskultur* (intellectual culture), was at the heart of the often-polarized discourses surrounding sport in Germany, particularly during the early part of the twentieth century. Schmeling defied the stereotype of the athlete-fighter as purely physical, brutal or violent, instead coming to be viewed as a calculating, intelligent boxer in the ring and as a model citizen outside it, although this shifted as conceptions of citizenship and Germanness changed over the course of the century.

However distinctive, the combination of a successful career in boxing with a reputation for culture and intelligence (which he shared with the American champion Gene Tunney, who never came close to enjoying legend or myth status) does little to explain how Schmeling could become an image-bearer for a nation. This only became possible via a process of continuous mediation, in the right circumstances and contexts, of a particular image and persona. Many former sports stars, once they retire, gradually fade from the public consciousness. This was never the case with Max Schmeling, which is all the more remarkable given that he lived to the age of 99. In the final decades of his long life, even when he became less publicly visible following the 1987 death of his wife, the actress Anny Ondra, the various milestone birthdays through which Schmeling lived were reliably marked by articles, tributes, television programmes and special events. When he died in 2005, following a short illness, the response offered a revealing snapshot of his place in the national imaginary in twenty-first-century Germany. The summative, reflective nature of obituaries and posthumous tributes often makes apparent how professional achievements or personal qualities can be elided with idealized forms of collective or national identity. Again, there are parallels. Despite the many transformations that marked his life

and career, for example, this clearly applies to Muhammad Ali, whom *The New Yorker* called in its obituary "the most fantastical American figure of his era".[19] Melançon provides an account of the extraordinary response to the death of Maurice Richard in 2000, when he was consistently acknowledged as "the embodiment of success for the French Canadians, then for the Québécois, even beyond their national borders; his was the example to be followed".[20] In the British context one might cite the posthumous tributes paid to the former England football manager Sir Bobby Robson, "known throughout the world as a gentleman of British sport", who died in July 2009.[21] Of course, obituaries and immediate responses to an individual's death can tend towards paean and are not always credible as an index of the standing of the person in question or as measured records of a life. But the response generated by the death of Max Schmeling in the German media was nevertheless noteworthy for the intensity and tone of the public tributes paid to him by prominent figures from all avenues of German society. Moreover, it was unusual for a man who had once been held up by the Nazis as the epitome of German racial superiority, and whose success in the ring had been exploited as propaganda, to be celebrated above all in terms of his moral standing.

The official memorial service for Max Schmeling took place on 1 March 2005 in St Michael's Church in Hamburg, the city in which Schmeling spent his childhood and pursued his postwar career in the soft drink business. In accordance with Schmeling's wishes, his funeral was held in private just 2 days after his death and before any public announcement about it. The event on 1 March was, by contrast, highly public and offered the opportunity for the thousand invited guests, many of them prominent figures from the worlds of sports, politics and culture, to pay tribute to Schmeling. The speakers included Otto Schily, Minister of the Interior, mayor of Hamburg Ole von Beust, and the president of the *Deutscher Sportbund* (German Sports Federation) Manfred von Richthofen. The service was reported in detail in the national media. It is striking how, in the tributes, Schmeling's achievements as an athlete are given rather less attention than his personal qualities and behaviour. Schily in his tribute viewed Schmeling as a "Meister des Fairplay" (champion of fair play), who had become a civilian hero "auf den Trümmern des Militarismus" (on the ruins of militarism).[22] He made repeated reference to the ways in which Schmeling had helped others, both during the period of Nazi rule and later, and had

made a positive contribution to Germany's relationship with America. Von Beust highlighted Schmeling's status as an idol and role model for multiple generations, claiming that Schmeling was "zu aufrecht für Verherrlichung und zu bescheiden für Personenkult" (too upstanding to be glorified and too modest for a personality cult).[23] In truth, as we shall see, such claims are themselves a form of glorification, overlooking aspects of Schmeling's personality that did not fit this ideal. Indeed, in the memorial service, von Richthofen escalated the rhetoric yet further, making the somewhat paradoxical claim that Schmeling's supposed transfiguration (presumably meaning in the public imagination; the religious term is revealing) reflected the reality of his life: "Verklärung und Wirklichkeit bilden bei ihm eine Einheit, die letztlich frei von Zweifeln ist" (Transfiguration and reality form a unity in him that is ultimately beyond all doubt). Sport, he suggests, is lucky to be able to claim "diesen Kronzeugen der Leistung, Ehrlichkeit, Aufrichtigkeit und Hilfsbereitschaft auch über den Tod hinaus" (this ultimate example of achievement, honesty, decency and altruism, even beyond death).[24] The evocation here is not so much of an actual human being as of a *transfigured* personality embodying a set of almost saintly attributes. That he had come to prominence as a boxer seemed almost incidental.

Perhaps surprisingly, it was the prelate Stephan Reimers, representing the evangelical church in Germany, who attempted to make a more direct link between Schmeling's standing as hero and his sporting career.

> [I]n Deutschland war [der] Wunsch aufzublicken besonders ausgeprägt. Der verlorene Krieg, die Reparationen des Versailler Vertrages, die Inflation—all das hatte die Menschen deprimiert und tief verunsichert. Vielleicht kann man sagen, dass die unaufhaltsame Karriere des Boxsportlers Max Schmeling in der Weimarer Zeit ähnlich begeisternde Kraft entfachte wie das "Fußballwunder" von Bern 1954 – Balsam für die Seele einer desorientierten Nation, Hoffnung auf Zeiten mit mehr Glanz. Dass er ein Hoffnungsträger für sie war, haben viele Menschen ihm gedankt und deshalb ist sein Lorbeer niemals welk geworden. Wer bekommt schon Jahr für Jahr 600 Briefe zu seinem Geburtstag?[25]

> (In Germany the desire to look up to someone was especially pronounced. The lost war, the reparations demanded by the Versailles Treaty, the hyperinflation—this had all served to depress and deeply unsettle people. One can perhaps say that the unstoppable career of Max Schmeling in the Weimar Republic had a similar inspirational power to the "football

> miracle" of Berne in 1954, providing balm for the soul of a disorientated nation and hope for a brighter future. Many people were grateful that he was a figure of hope for them, and for that reason his esteem has never diminished. Who else receives six hundred letters every year on their birthday?)

The sermon revealed the inherent difficulty for Germans in remembering Schmeling as a sportsman, on the one hand seeking to validate his standing an inspirational figure, on the other aware that he became an "Aushängeschild des 3. Reichs" (propaganda figure for the Third Reich). The comparison with the so-called miracle of Berne indicates that Reimers was aware that sporting victories can take on national significance. The 1954 World Cup victory, in which West Germany unexpectedly defeated heavily favoured Hungary, has come to be understood as a symbolic moment sealing (West) Germany's postwar recovery and helping to restore the national pride that drove the so-called economic miracle of the 1950s. Reimers suggests that Schmeling's victories were likewise a kind of balm for the national soul, but although Schmeling became World Champion in 1930, the years of his greatest popularity and celebrity came later, under the Nazis. The acclaim that accompanied his victory over Joe Louis contrasted markedly with the widespread scepticism and indeed scorn with which his world championship victory was greeted, awarded when his opponent Jack Sharkey was disqualified for an alleged foul blow. If, as in the case of the World Cup win in 1954, Schmeling's sporting victories and the hero status they gave him had a morally beneficial effect at a national level in the Weimar Republic, then one may justifiably ask what the effect of his victories after 1933 was. The sermon, naturally, overlooked the implications of this question, but it seems that the national myth of Max Schmeling, as it exists today, struggles adequately to incorporate the historical facts of his career, depending instead on something that is not unlike a personality cult in its uncritical, celebratory nature.

In fact, many of the tributes paid to Schmeling after his death suggest a lasting pride in his achievements as a professional boxer that would seem still to be nationalistically coloured. For example, Angela Merkel (not yet chancellor in February 2005) reportedly commented that Schmeling "war nicht nur ein außergewöhnlicher Sportler sondern auch ein mutiger deutscher Patriot" (was not only an extraordinary sportsman but also a courageous German patriot).[26] The reference to

patriotism is both intriguing and again problematic, not least because the memory of Schmeling's career as a boxer should have been tainted by the perception that—even though as a professional athlete he was in a sense only representing himself—he had represented the nation at the peak of its fatal obsession with Adolf Hitler. Merkel, presumably, is referring to a quite different conception of *Federal German* "patriotism" in her comments. The posthumous tributes in 2005 consistently highlight Schmeling's moral qualities and character. Merkel continues: "Er ist trotz internationaler Erfolge ein bescheidener Mensch geblieben, der einen sensiblen Blick für diejengen Menschen in unserer Gesellschaft hatte, die vom Leben in irgendeiner Weise benachteiligt worden waren" (Despite his international successes he remained a modest person who was sympathetic towards those in our society who had somehow been disadvantaged in life).[27] The modesty and charitable instincts singled out by Merkel are echoed in the countless other responses and obituaries, which for the most part are interchangeable, so limited is the pool of attributes and qualities they make reference to. Prominent amongst these, for example, is *fairness*, a concept that has sporting connotations. Thus Chancellor Gerhard Schröder spoke of "Fairness, Bescheidenheit und Untadeligkeit" (fairness, modesty and irreproachability); Edmund Stoiber saw Schmeling as "der Inbegriff des fairen Sportlers in Deutschland: erfolgreich, sympathisch und bescheiden" (the embodiment of the fair sportsman in Germany: successful, sympathetic and modest); and, again and again, Schmeling's status not simply as an idol or star, but equally as a "Vorbild" (role model), is emphasized. This was, it would seem, not simply a life to be admired, but one from which to learn. These were certainly not new sentiments—many of them had already been voiced by the preceding generation of prominent politicians and commentators, as evidenced by a collection of comments and quotations assembled for a 1996 volume of contemporary and retrospective accounts of Schmeling and his career. The views of Helmut Kohl, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and the President of the Republic Roman Herzog, who referred to the "Menschlichkeit" (humanity) and "Bescheidenheit" (modesty) of the "Vorbild" (role model) Schmeling, are virtually indistinguishable from those published after Schmeling's death a decade later.[28] The Polish-born, German-based boxer Dariusz Michalczewski's reverence is also revealing: "Als gebürtiger Pole würde ich meinen Besuch bei ihm mit einer Audienz beim Papst gleichsetzen" (As a Pole by birth I would equate my visiting him with an audience with the

Pope).[29] Much like John Paul II, who died 2 months after Schmeling, he had become, it would seem, a legend in his own lifetime, his status so firmly cemented in place that—as the repetitive consistency in the tributes suggests—no conscious reflection was required after his death.

All of this provides evidence of the way in which Max Schmeling's life had been shaped into a revealing narrative that continues to resonate, a process to which Schmeling himself had actively contributed. This narrative is underpinned by two key assumptions: that Schmeling's identity was informed by the fact that he was German, alongside a conviction, moreover, that he was an admirable, great or good German. Schmeling's so-called Germanness was, on the face of it, clear; although his life was not remotely typical, his name had come to be used to suggest a distinctly German experience of the century with which his life dates closely coincided. This image of Schmeling as "Jahrhundertdeutscher" (German of the century), to use the term used by Michael Krauß for the title of his biography, was one cultivated by Schmeling himself, most explicitly in his 1977 autobiography, which includes frequent excursus illustrating the wider context of the stations of his life. Yet as we shall see, Schmeling's identity as a German was never stable, any more than the self-understanding of Germans has been over the last century. It was informed by competing discourses of modernity and tradition, American pragmatism and European culture, self-interest and collective responsibility. And the qualities to be demonstrated by a so-called great German have likewise been subject to an extraordinary degree of ideological interference. To attempt to deconstruct Schmeling's public identity therefore requires unpicking many of the complexities and paradoxes of German national identity. I will argue that the coincidence between the chronology of Schmeling's life and the course of the twentieth century meant that his identity could also be perceived in terms of continuities that transcended the discrete epochs through which he lived. For example, the pre-existence of an already established public identity *before* 1933 facilitated his post-1945 reinvention, even if the latter also drew on aspects of his public image that had been emphasized in National Socialist propaganda. It is to the Weimar Republic, the era in which boxing established itself as a sport in Germany and Max Schmeling became its first truly great star, that I now turn.

Notes

1. Volker Kluge, *Max Schmeling: eine Biographie in 15 Runden* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2004). Two other, shorter, biographies were published around the time of Schmeling's death; they had undoubtedly originally hoped to capitalize on Schmeling's centenary. Martin Krauß, *Schmeling: die Karriere eines Jahrhundertdeutschen* (Göttingen: Die Werkstatt, 2005); David Pfeiffer, *Max Schmeling: Berufsboxer, Propagandafigur, Unternehmer: die Geschichte eines deutschen Idols* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2005).
2. David Margolick, *Beyond Glory: Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling, and a World on the Brink* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006); Patrick Myler, *Ring of Hate: The Brown Bomber and Hitler's Hero—Joe Louis v. Max Schmeling and the Bitter Propaganda War* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2005); Lewis Erenberg, *The Greatest Fight of Our Generation: Louis vs. Schmeling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
3. Kasia Boddy, *Boxing: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2008); Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Benoît Melançon, *The Rocket: A Cultural History of Maurice Richard*, trans. Fred A. Reed (Vancouver: Greystone, 2009); David Scott, *The Art and Aesthetics of Boxing* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); David Scott ed., *Cultures of Boxing* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015).
4. See Steven Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport* (London: Reaktion, 2011), 25–6.
5. Michael Mandelbaum, *The Meaning of Sports: Why Americans Watch Baseball, Football and Basketball and What They See When They Do* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 24.
6. Ibid., 26.
7. Roland Barthes, *What is Sport*, trans. Richard Howard (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 59.
8. Ibid., 59.
9. Joyce Carol Oates, "On Boxing", in Oates, *On Boxing* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 1–116 (59).
10. Joyce Carol Oates, "Muhammad Ali: The Greatest", in Oates, *On Boxing* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 203–27 (205).
11. Benoît Melançon, *The Rocket: A Cultural History of Maurice Richard*, trans. Fred A. Reed (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2009), 192–3.
12. Robert Lipsyte, "Muhammad Ali Dies at 74: Titan of Boxing and the 20th Century," *New York Times*, 4 June 2016. Accessed 19 November 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/04/sports/muhammad-ali-dies.html.

13. Jeffrey T. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 199, 200.
14. Quoted by Boddy, 334.
15. Boddy, 335.
16. Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 416.
17. Max Schmeling, *Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Ullstein, 1995). Further references to this edition (reissued paperback edition, which includes an appendix featuring an additional interview with Schmeling) are included in parentheses in the main text.
18. Kluge, 7.
19. David Remnick, "The Outsized Life of Muhammad Ali", *The New Yorker*, 4 June 2016. Accessed 19 November 2016. http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-outsized-life-of-muhammad-ali.
20. Melançon, 229.
21. "Sir Bobby Robson, Former English Football Manager: Obituary", *Daily Telegraph*, 31 July 2009. Accessed 19 November 2016. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/teams/england/5946641/Sir-Bobby-Robson-former-England-football-manager-obituary.html.
22. Quoted by Jörg Marwedel, "Der große Abschied von Box-Idol Max Schmeling", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2 March 2005, 14.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Stephan Reimers, "Predigt bei der Trauerfeier für Max Schmeling in der Hauptkirche St. Michaelis, Hamburg". Accessed 19 November 2016. https://www.ekd.de/predigten/2005/050301_reimers_trauerfeier_schmeling.html.
26. Quoted in "Reaktionen: "Einer der wenigen Jahrhundert-Helden", " *Spiegel Online* (4 February 2005). http://www.spiegel.de/sport/sonst/0,1518,340350,00.html.
27. Quoted ibid.
28. Tobias Drews, ed. *Max Schmeling* (Stuttgart: Engelhorn, 1996), 12.
29. Quoted ibid., 15.

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CHAPTER 2

The Weimar Republic 1: A Star is Born

Sports Discourse and the Rise of Boxing in the Weimar Republic

The Weimar Republic started and finished in catastrophe. Yet the democratic "experiment" between military defeat in 1918 and the National Socialists' seizure of total power in 1933 produced a rich, heterogeneous culture. It was a period of contradiction and contrast. The Republic was politically unstable but was famously open to new fashions, technologies and ideas. The capital city, Berlin, grew into a cosmopolitan European metropolis with over four million inhabitants, at the same time as the reactionary nationalism and ideological extremism that were ultimately to destroy the Republic emerged. An underlying democratic spirit, though by no means embraced by all, allowed a multifaceted intellectual and political culture to flourish and debates on the nation's past, present and future to take place, in which little escaped scrutiny and analysis. Contemporary observers noted, for example, how avant-garde cultural trends, popular media such as film and radio, youth movements such as the *Wandervögel*, and dance crazes such as the Charleston seemed to be carried by the same ideological and cultural currents that were defining the era as a whole.[1] The same certainly applies to the increased popularity of sport in Germany after 1918, which saw boxing became fashionable and the young Max Schmeling rise to a degree of prominence that extended well beyond the context of sport. It is impossible to understand

J. Hughes, *Max Schmeling and the Making of a National Hero in Twentieth-Century Germany*, Palgrave Studies in Sport and Politics,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51136-8_2

how the latter came about, or what it reveals, without first reflecting on the factors that drove this boom in sport and informed the responses to it.

A specific constellation of circumstances allowed sport to become a mass phenomenon, peaking in the years of relative stability and prosperity between 1925 and 1929. It captured the collective imagination even in the early years of the Republic, as indicated by the expanding membership of sports clubs and organizations. One practical explanation for this was the establishment in 1918 of the 8-hour working day, allowing workers more time for leisure and recreation, which also resulted in attendance at sporting events becoming popular as never before. Venues such as the Sportpalast in Berlin soon became emblematic of the fast-paced tempo of modern life. Yet there may have been other, more profound, reasons for the emergence of sport as a collective obsession so soon after the war. Author and journalist Sebastian Haffner, born in 1907, experienced this "Sportfimmel" (sports mania) as a young man. Looking back as an exile in 1939, he recalled his dedication to athletics and to improving his personal best time over 800 metres. He had also been fascinated with the performances recorded by great international athletes, such as the German middle-distance runner Otto Pelzer: "Die Sportberichte spielten eine Rolle wie vor zehn Jahren die Heeresberichte, und was damals Gefangenenzahlen und Beuteziffern gewesen waren, das waren jetzt Rekorde und Rekordzeiten"[2] (Sports reports played the same role that reports from the War had 10 years previously, with numbers of prisoners and quantities of captured material replaced by records and times). The novelty (in a German context) of a sport such as track and field lay in its performance-oriented, competitive nature. Prior to the war, a native tradition of militaristic but non-competitive gymnastics (*Turnen*), dating back over a century to the establishment of the gymnastics movement by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, had been the dominant form of organized physical exercise in Germany. Gymnastics certainly remained a popular participation activity after 1918. Membership of the national gymnastics association, the *Deutsche Turnerschaft*, continued to grow, peaking at 1.6 million, but this happened alongside unprecedented growth in a diverse range of competitive sports, as well as in forms of expressive gymnastics (*Gymnastik*) and an aestheticized body culture (*Körperkultur*).[3] These "new" forms of sporting and physical activity came to be perceived by some in Germany as international, as intensely modern, as an "Erneuerung der Vitalität" (renewal of vitality), or even, as one tongue-in-cheek article put it, as

the "Weltreligion des 20. Jahrhunderts" (the global religion of the twentieth century).[4] Amateur participation sport, organized by an expanding network of clubs, by youth and workers' organizations and by some businesses and organizations, flourished alongside professional sports such as cycling and boxing, which attracted a hugely passionate following and filled the expanding sports sections in newspapers and magazines. In 1920 there were already 160 different specialized German sports magazines and newspapers, and by 1928 that number had grown to 380.[5] The emergence of sport as a cultural phenomenon on this scale coincided with the years in which a new Germany was emerging, falteringly, from the trauma of war and the shock of defeat, and some commentators were keen to make a connection between the two.

One of the central figures in the public discussion of sport and the sports movement, whose work represents a significant primary source for this chapter, was the Austrian journalist Willy Meisl. Meisl was based in Berlin from the early 1920s and became the sports editor at the liberal daily newspaper the *Vossische Zeitung*, published by Ullstein Press, where he made a major contribution to the development of sportswriting as a journalistic genre in Germany.[6] He used his by-line not only to report on sports events, especially football and boxing, and on the career of Max Schmeling and other stars, but also to reflect on their cultural impact. In 1928, Meisl edited a volume, *Der Sport am Scheidewege* (*Sport at the Crossroads*), devoted to the question of sport and its various functions. It represented a cross section of the hopes and concerns for which sport had become a focus and outlet. Meisl himself argued the case for the specificity of sport to the era: "Kann es denn Zufall sein, daß gerade unsere Epoche, gerade die kurze, noch nicht einmal vollendete Nachkriegsdekade diese springflutartige Ausbreitung der Sportbewegung mit sich brachte?"[7] (For can it be a coincidence that it happens to be our era, this brief, not-quite-finished post-war decade, which has produced such a flood-like expansion of the sports movement?) In the absence of conscription, forbidden under the terms of the Versailles Treaty, he asked whether the popularity of sport should be considered a form of compensation, an alternative means of asserting traditional national and gender identities. Meisl believed not, suggesting that it in fact served to strengthen democratic principles and reconnect individuals with a more holistic sense of physical and mental identity. It was certainly true that the Republic proved highly receptive to global trends and currents, and Meisl was not alone in speculating that the enthusiasm with which

sport had been embraced by all levels of society meant that it should be seen as a "Produkt seiner Zeit" (product of its time).[8] There was arguably also a specifically German dimension to the way in which sport was perceived. Meisl suggests that it might be a means by which a damaged generation was seeking to heal itself from the lasting trauma inflicted by a static, destructive war. He also argues that, as a largely urban phenomenon, it could be understood as a form of physical compensation for the loss of nature in modern, industrialized cities, and even as a spiritual reaction to the notoriously rigid German education system, and of "[d]ie Negierung des Leibes" (the negation of the body) therein.[9] These provocative thoughts are representative of an unusual degree of critical reflection on an activity that was seen either as a significant example of national (or transnational) culture or else as a potential threat to such a culture.

As was the case for other highly visible cultural innovations, notably film, the extent of the popularity of sport prompted analysis of and commentary on almost every conceivable aspect, both practical and theoretical. This was conducted, first and foremost, in the sports sections of local and national newspapers across the political spectrum. The exceptions were those on the extreme left and right wings, which, for different but comparable reasons, rejected commercialized and especially professional sport as a distraction from, or even a betrayal of, "class" or "national" identity.[10] As the *Reichshauptstadt* (imperial capital) and Germany's political and cultural hub, Berlin supported an extraordinary number of daily newspapers during the 1920s, many appearing in two editions per day.[11] The mass-appeal, so-called *Boulevard* newspapers variously appeared in morning, midday and evening editions, and all had illustrated sports supplements written by permanent sports correspondents such as Hans Bötticher of the *BZ am Mittag* (also published by Ullstein), Rolf Nürnberg of the *Neue Berliner Zeitung*: *Das 12 Uhr Blatt* (Steinthal, Stern and Co.) and Alfred Eggert of the *Berliner Morgenpost* (Ullstein).[12] Weekly magazines such as *Kicker*, founded in 1920 as a general sports magazine with in-depth coverage of football, and *Boxsport*, likewise founded in 1920 by Arthur Bülow, who became Max Schmeling's manager in 1926, offered a more specialized platform.[13] Reporters for *Boxsport*, such as Erwin Thoma, wrote expansively (filling as much as ten pages per weekly issue) on almost every conceivable aspect of an event, from technical matters to its broader cultural relevance. Sport was also a regular theme in popular illustrated lifestyle

magazines, such as *Sport im Bild*, *Uhu* and *Das Leben*, in the *Feuilleton* (cultural) section of daily newspapers and even in highbrow cultural and literary journals such as *Der Querschnitt*, *Die Weltbühne*, *Das Tagebuch* and *Die Neue Rundschau*.

Amongst these journals, *Der Querschnitt* (literally, The Cross Section), which is a key primary source for this chapter, is worthy of particular note. In its first incarnation (1921–1924), when the journal was published in a very limited edition by the influential gallery owner and art dealer Alfred Flechtheim, the publication defined itself on its cover as a "Magazin für Kunst, Literatur und Boxsport" (magazine for art, literature and boxing). It aimed to be a new type of magazine, liberal and free thinking, covering art, architecture, film, theatre, literature—as well as sport and what Silke Kettelhake refers to as "mondänes Savoir-vivre" (sophisticated *savoir-vivre*).[14] "Die Zeitschrift der aktuellen Ewigkeitswerte" (The Magazine for Contemporary Eternal Values) was its well-known tagline in the late 1920s, when it acquired almost legendary status. Despite not attempting to offer a true cross section of society, it became, in Peter de Mendelssohn's words, a "Wahrzeichen einer ganzen Zeit" (symbol of an entire era).[15] Flechtheim was a passionate supporter of boxing, and so his magazine regularly featured writing about and illustrations of this sport in particular.

For all the near-utopian enthusiasm displayed by Flechtheim and many others for boxing and other sports, their sudden popularity was viewed by some, as a critical discourse around sport began to be articulated, with caution, cynicism and sometimes genuine concern. There were, for example, plenty of satirical depictions of boxing in particular as crude or mindless, as in Kurt Jackmusch's 1923 comic poem "Mensch…det Boxen" ("Gosh…that boxing"), which employs Berlin dialect and simple rhyming couplets to dismiss intellect sarcastically as useless in comparison with boxing: "Weg mit allem Bücherknast, / Meld' dir an im Sportpalast"[16] (Get rid of your prison of books, / And sign up at the Sportpalast). Frequently, jokes were made poking fun at the way in which boxers were granted the same sort of public status as cultural or political icons such as Goethe or Bismarck. In 1924 the journalist and novelist Joseph Roth, for example, published a satirical "Lobgedicht auf den Sport" (Poem in Praise of Sport) in the left-wing magazine *Lachen Links*, in which the perceived disjunction between achievement and status is milked for humour:

> Der Zeitgeist streckt den Bizeps und erfüllt
> mit Knock-out und Bauchstoß das Jahrhundert –
> wenn jemand ist, der sich darüber wundert,
> der las noch nie die Zeitung: Sport im Bild.
>
> Aus ihr erfährt man, wer die Welt bewegt:
> Ob Neger Tompson oder Breitensträter –
> Gott ist ein kleiner Mühlenaushilfstreter,
> vergleicht man ihn mit dem, der Runden schlägt.[17]

(The Zeitgeist flexes its biceps and fills / The century with knockouts and body shots—/ If you're surprised by this / Then you've never read the newspaper *Sport im Bild*. // You read it to learn who really matters to the world: / Whether it be the negro Thompson or Breitensträter— / God himself is the lowest part-time labourer / Compared with the men who fight through the rounds.)

The poem is primarily concerned with the attention granted to boxers such as Hans Breitensträter, to whom there is an explicit reference. Often known as "der blonde Hans" (blond Hans), he was German heavyweight champion from 1920 to 1924 and then again from 1925 to 1926. The mocking tone depends for its effect on an acceptance of the dualist division between the intellectual and the physical and the implicit valuing of the former over the latter. Much the same ironic comparison, depicting the apparent progress from Goethe, via Bismarck, to Max Schmeling, was made in a cover illustration, "Deutschlands Aufstieg" (Germany's Rise), by the satirical journal *Simplicissimus* in 1930.[18] Satire is one thing, but Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, speaking at the party conference of the Deutsche Volskpartei (DVP, German People's Party) in 1926, was quite serious when he gave voice to the view that veneration of physical achievements was un-German, fearing that an obsession with the sensationalism of elite and professional sport would have a pernicious effect upon the moral and intellectual life of the nation:

> Hier scheint es notwendig, auch wieder auf die Gefahr hin, weiten Massen zu mißfallen, einmal ein Wort dafür zu sagen, daß das Geistige gegenüber dem Körperlichen nicht weiter so zurücktreten darf, wie das jetzt der Fall ist. […] Wir sind Freunde jeder körperlichen Ertüchtigung, aber […] die Aristokratie des Geistes [kann nicht] durch die Aristokratie des Bizeps ersetzt werden.[19]

> (It seems necessary here, even at the risk of displeasing the masses, to argue that intellectual life cannot continue to be allowed to be secondary to the physical, as is currently the case. […] We are in favour of all physical exercise, but […] the aristocracy of the mind cannot be replaced by an aristocracy of the biceps.)

Such fears of a culture dominated by the biceps rather than the mind and by admiration for what might be considered trivial—or at any rate purely physical—achievements were perhaps unsurprising. The sentiment was consistent with long-established religious and educational norms in Germany, where *Bildung* (education, development) had been revered as the source of the fulfilled self. Physical education had, after Jahn, been included in the curriculum mainly as a means of imparting national character and teaching practical, especially militarily useful, skills. This was particularly the case after the introduction in 1813 of general conscription for men in Prussia.[20]

However, one can argue that in the 1920s it was less the case that sport was somehow replacing so-called high culture, as feared by Stresemann, than that the boundaries between the two were being eroded, as was frequently asserted in contemporary reflections on the popularity of sport in Germany. Vivid evidence of such sentiments is provided by a lecture given in Berlin in 1925 by the young Russian emigré and novelist Vladimir Nabokov. It provides a passionate account of the fight between Breitensträter and the Spanish (Basque) boxer Paolino Uzcudun in Berlin in December 1925. Nabokov makes the case for the essential nature of play in human life and culture, anticipating the idea of *homo ludens* in Johan Huizinga's influential 1938 study of the play element in culture. Nabokov concludes his lecture by attempting to pinpoint the cultural value offered by the spectatorship of sport:

> And so the match came to an end, and when we had all emptied out onto the street, into the frosty blueness of a snowy night, I was certain that in the flabbiest family man, in the humblest youth, in the souls and muscles of all the crowd, which tomorrow, early in the morning, would disperse to offices, to shops, to factories, there existed one and the same beautiful feeling, for the sake of which it was worth bringing together two great boxers—a feeling of dauntless, flaring strength, vitality, manliness, inspired by the play in boxing. And this playful feeling is, perhaps, more valuable and purer than many so-called "elevated pleasures".[21]

Nabokov's sentiments, challenging the traditional cultural hierarchy of so-called higher pleasures, provide a sense of the cultural potential that many now saw in sport, even if it was sometimes underpinned by a certain ambivalence in general about mass phenomena. This positive spirit was even embraced by publications that were otherwise socially conservative, such as *Sport im Bild*, of which Roth, in his poem, was particularly dismissive. *Sport im Bild* was Germany's first illustrated sports magazine, founded in 1895 by two Britons, photojournalist Andrew Pitcairn-Knowles and publisher Horace F. Simon, and was later acquired by the publisher August Scherl, becoming one of the best-selling magazines in Germany.[22] By the 1920s the magazine carried the revealing subtitle "Das Blatt der guten Gesellschaft" ("The paper for polite society") and was published bi-weekly by the conservative Hugenberg-Konzern. Despite the socially elitist tone of the publication, which also covered so-called high society and fashion, it was one of a number of publications to dedicate space to reflections on the social, aesthetic and cultural implications of sport. For example, in a 1925 article, we find the claim that sport had achieved parity with the theatre in the cultural life of the capital: "Sport ist im Grunde heute dem Berliner […] nur eine andere Art des Theaters, des Films" ("Sport today is to the Berliner basically just another type of theatre or cinema").[23] The implication is that sport had a functional value as a form of entertainment, and perhaps also that it had an aesthetic value comparable with that of art.

For a commentator like Meisl, sport was identified with modernity itself, a symbol of a new, democratic, youthful and healthy age. By extension, a comparison could be made with the nation that seemed best to combine democratic ideals and a culture in which sport played a pivotal role, namely the USA. The 1920s saw the emergence in Germany of *Amerikanismus* (Americanism) (see also following discussion and Chap. 3) as a trend and discourse, of which the popularity of boxing was frequently viewed as a symptom. The term was often applied, negatively, to the superficial aping of what were perceived as American fashions, standards, attitudes and values. The phenomenon also reflected a positive desire, articulated by both liberals and conservatives, to learn from the example of America's economic and industrial might and from a society that was perceived as being dynamic and rational. "America", as an idealized rather than a geographical location, came to function for many Germans, most of whom had never crossed the Atlantic, as a synonym for modernity itself. David Bathrick, in

one of the first articles to consider the cultural value of boxing in Weimar Germany, locates sport at the centre of a "nexus between modernity and Americanism" that allowed it to "subvert 19th-century Wilhelmine culture".[24] Boxing, as a manifestation of German "Americanism", was invested with particular symbolic value, despite or perhaps because of the fact that in Germany the history of boxing dates back barely further than 1919, when the first public boxing match between the professionals Richard Naujoks and Gustav Völkel took place in the Sportpalast on 18 February.[25] Prior to this, boxing had been not only illegal but also widely perceived, as its popular appeal (in its brutal, bare-knuckle antecedent form) grew in Britain through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as an "englische Schrulle" (English eccentricity), or else as a debased form of entertainment for the *Pöbel* (mob).[26] Few considered it a serious sport or civilized pastime. By the early twentieth century, however, as it became subject to the same processes of rationalization, standardization and regulation that were shaping the development of modern sport in general and, inevitably, to commercial exploitation, perceptions were beginning to change.

Modern boxing had been standardized under the Marquess of Queensbury rules in 1867, became an Olympic sport for amateurs in 1904, and had world champions, at least in name, from the middle of the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century the idea of a *world* champion was becoming more meaningful as the sport was being adopted in more countries. Boxing became international, even if the long-standing association with Anglo-Saxon culture remained firmly in place, in a modified, transatlantic form. By the end of the nineteenth century, the USA, despite ongoing opposition in certain states and from determined "bluenose" protectors of public morals, had become the sport's spiritual home. It was the place where boxers could make the move from socially marginal, outsider figures, comparable to circus strongmen or wrestlers, to popular, even mythic heroes, modern gladiators who were not only accepted but celebrated by society. Modest levels of interest in boxing had existed in Germany in the twilight years of empire, when it was technically illegal and restricted to unofficial so-called demonstration contests. In the space of a few years after its full legalization, paralleling in accelerated form its growth and commercialization in the USA, boxing made the transition from sideshow to mainstream.[27] This happened remarkably quickly. In 1921, the high-minded

Querschnitt still felt the need to proselytize, programmatically, on behalf of the sport in Germany:

> Der Boxkampf ist verhältnismäßig neu in Deutschland. Das grosse Publikum, das sich aus Vorkriegszeiten immer noch der Reden von einer Brutalität des Boxens erinnert, hat von den Feinheiten dieses Sportes keine Ahnung. Es gilt, aufklärend zu wirken, es muß Lektüre geschaffen werden, die volkstümlich und gewinnend vom Boxsport plaudert, von seinen Sportregeln erzählt, das schwere Training schildert und gut sportliche Kämpfe in Wort und Bild demonstriert.[28]
>
> (Boxing is relatively new in Germany. The masses who still recall the pre-war talk of the brutality of boxing have no idea about the subtleties of this sport. We have to educate them, create reading matter which talks about boxing in an accessible and appealing way, explains its rules, describes the difficult training and shows off the sporting fights through words and images.)

Just 2 years later, in an article for *Sport im Bild*, Job Zimmermann was able to reflect on the irony of Germany's pre-war antipathy towards boxing: "Wie arg waren wir auf dem Holzwege, da wir die Deutschen für Verächter des Faustkampfes hielten…"[29] (How wrong we were when we thought the Germans had only contempt for pugilism.) By 1924, the year of Max Schmeling's first fight as a professional, boxing had established itself in Germany both as an amateur sport and, at the professional level, as a form of mass entertainment commanding the attention of the media. The professional sport was successfully promoted at the various arenas equipped to stage spectator sports. In the capital these included the Zirkus Busch, the Admiralpalast and, especially, the Sportpalast, the venue on Potsdamer Strasse just south of the centre of Berlin that could accommodate crowds of up to 10,000 at its "big fight" evenings (*Großkampftage*). Even the years of economic crisis in the early 1920s had little impact on the growth of boxing; indeed, it may have even helped. When the hyperinflation of 1923 made it difficult to attract foreign boxers to Germany, domestic fighters came to occupy centre stage. Boxing undoubtedly held a socio-economic appeal in this period. In the face of apparently insurmountable social and economic obstacles, boxing offered a potentially rapid route to success. In Germany in the years following the First World War, economic instability and high

unemployment levels made the dream of a professional boxing career attractive to many young men.

If Meisl was correct in identifying the German sports movement as a positive response to the war, then the individualistic nature of boxing, requiring total self-reliance, may have been the key to its social impact, not only in Germany, in the wake of the mechanized, anonymous and indeed dehumanized destruction witnessed in the war. This argument has been applied by Jeffrey Sammons, Roderick Nash and others to the American context, who view the popularity of boxing as a symptom of a desire for a reaffirmation of "self-worth and manhood": "After the horrors of mustard gas, bombs, mortars, and machine guns, boxing represented a more simple and noble past, with men in control of their destiny."[30] It may even be true that an appetite for an immediate, violent and direct approach to boxing arose as a means of "releasing aggression in a tense society".[31] Erik Jensen has also argued that boxing "counteracted the irrational violence of the First World War and of the turbulent post-war German society by refracting it through the prism of sport, a 'rational form of violence'.[32] The assertion is difficult to prove, but it is a view that made sense to some contemporary commentators seeking a psychological explanation for what was happening. Rolf Nürnberg, introducing his 1932 biography of Schmeling, suggests that the common experience of the military and the war had resulted in a collective sense of lost or damaged self-worth and gender identity. For Nürnberg, the sports boom was driven by the impulse to reassert a form of masculinity in which, in contrast to what had happened on the battlefield, the body is subject to full, personal control:

> In denen, die übrig geblieben, stauten sich mächtige Reflexe gegen diese Entmännlichung des Mannes, gegen diese Vernamenlosung des Körpers, gegen die Unpersönlichkeit der Kampfmaschinerie. Der Mann kam wieder auf, wollte wieder aufkommen. Das war die neue Sportidee.[33]
>
> (In those who survived, powerful reflex reactions had built up against this emasculation of men, against this anonymizing of the body, against the depersonalized battle machines. The man rose again, or wanted to rise again. This was the new idea of sport.)

For Germany in the post-war period, even more so than for America, acts suggestive of regeneration, recovery and youthfulness exerted a considerable psychological power, and not only for men. For example, jazz

and dance, particularly the wildly popular Charleston, functioned as symbols of a new age. The 1920s also saw the *neue Frau* (new woman), who was typically as enthusiastic about sport—even boxing training—as she was about jazz, challenge gender stereotypes. Competitive boxing was, however, seen as masculine territory, a form of regenerative self-assertion. A number of the most successful German boxers of the immediate post-war period had become proficient in the sport in the Knockaloe internment camp on the Isle of Man and had come to view sport as a healthy antidote to the privations of war and a means of asserting a very physical form of masculinity that was under threat.[34] Hans Breitensträter, a sailor, had been an internee at Knockaloe. In his 1923 memoir, he writes nostalgically of life in the camp: "Und eines Tages sehe ich, ich bin auf der schönsten Boxerinsel. Junge Kerle mit Muskeln und Knochen, herunter von der See und in die weiche Inselluft auf viele Jahre vielleicht hinter Stacheldraht—da geht der Sport auf."[35] (And one day I saw that I was on the most beautiful island of boxers, full of muscular, bony young fellows. They had come straight from the ocean into the soft island air and were destined to spend years behind barbed wire—it's only natural that sport flourished.)

As Germany struggled with its new identity after 1918, boxing seems not to have functioned straightforwardly as an extension of the rather aggressive, militaristic forms of national identity that had been promoted in the early years of the war effort. It is interesting to note that among the victorious powers, the situation was slightly different: the popular French champion Georges Carpentier's distinguished wartime service record in the French Air Force was a significant factor in his broad appeal and allowed his presentation as a twofold focus for identification (military and sports hero). Likewise, the military record of Gene Tunney, heavyweight world champion from 1926 to 1928, facilitated his popularization as the "Manly Marine". By contrast, the fact that Jack Dempsey, who held the title from 1919 to 1926 and was a global figure in the first half of the 1920s, had *not* served during the war was problematic for many sports fans and commentators in post-war America. Indeed, it became the subject of a much publicized trial in which Dempsey was accused of "shirking" (giving false information to avoid the draft). In the Germany of the early 1920s, the controlled violence of boxing could be said to have offered the boxer, and perhaps also spectators, a compensation of sorts for the anonymous suffering and static, interminable tension of the war. Yet if the spectacle of sports was also concerned with the

overcoming of the past, then perhaps it is appropriate that Schmeling, as the highest-profile German boxer of the era, was in any case too young to have participated in the war. This meant that there was never any sense that his success could be explained *only* as a form of recovery from trauma.[36] Schmeling's relative youth allowed him to function as a figurehead for modernity, and perhaps even democracy, in a way that would have been uncomfortable with older boxers.[37] The idea that boxing was defined by individual self-realization, coming after a period of the suppression and radical effacement of the self by social and technological means, offers a revealing parallel with Joyce Carol Oates' assessment of its popularity in America during the 1920s "as a consequence of the diminution of the individual vis-à-vis society; the gradual attrition of personal freedom, will, and strength".[38] Oates locates boxing's popularity as an element of "what Americans honor as the spirit of the individual".[39] The popularization of so individualistic a sport in the new, democratic Germany, a nation whose attitude to the rights of the individual vis-à-vis the state had traditionally been ambivalent, offers evidence of a cultural, perhaps even an ideological, paradigm shift. We should be cautious, however, in assigning a single interpretation to the sport and its popular appeal.[40]

If boxing was seen as individualistic, then it could also be associated with the performance of a particular form of self-reliant masculinity. Such an understanding of boxing tends, reductively, to focus less on its highly regulated nature as a modern sport than on the inherent brutality and the finality of the knockout blow. Undoubtedly, this explained part of the popular appeal of boxing; contemporary reports frequently point to the behaviour of boxing crowds and their passionate, selfless immersion in the fight. This was sometimes viewed positively. The renowned theatre critic Herbert Jhering, writing in 1927, analyses the behaviour of crowds at boxing matches approvingly, noting their fixation on results rather than aesthetics, and on the moment of victory.[41] Zimmermann, in *Sport im Bild*, evokes the atmosphere of a "big fight" night at the Sportpalast, focusing on the passionate responses of a socially diverse crowd, unified by its shared excitement. Employing an appropriately modern metaphor, the author describes it as electrified: "alles ist in der glühenden Spannung geeint, die wie elektrischer Strom zum Ring hinunterführt".[42] (Everyone is united by the luminescent tension, which leads down to the ring like an electric current.) The article dwells on the socially and culturally levelling effects of immersion in the crowd and can be understood

in the context of a wider contemporary debate about mass culture. These effects were sometimes viewed as a source of potential liberation from the restrictions of class identity, but also as potentially threatening, in that individual inhibitions and identities can be abandoned in a crowd. Dieter Behrendt observes that the "Anteilnahme" (active participation) of spectators, and even an occasional loss of self-control, was legitimized in the sports arena as it never could be in everyday life.[43] For Siegfried Kracauer, the emergence of the urban masses had resulted in a culture of superficiality and distraction ("Zerstreuung").[44] Sport as a spectacle in this respect was comparable to other mass phenomena such as the illustrated press, film, jazz and chorus lines. Boxing crowds, which in their excitement often seemed possessed by a sort of "bloodlust", also elicited anxious reactions not only from sceptical observers but from some admirers of the sport. Writing in 1928, Curt Gutmann complains: "Wie wenig die breite Masse tatsächlich vom Boxsport, seinem Wesen und seiner Kunst versteht, ist bei jedem Kampf von neuem mit tiefem Bedauern festzustellen. Man will k. o.'s sehen, Blut muß fließen, Dreschen, Hinlangen will man sehen, bis der eine oder andere Boxer, noch lieber beide, umfallen".[45] (How little the masses really understand about boxing, its essence and its artistry, can alas be seen at every fight. People want to see KOs, blood has to flow, they want to see wild punching and flailing until one or the other boxer, preferably both, falls over.)

It was clear that sport had the potential to generate emotional responses that took the spectator beyond everyday experience and rational thought. Some commentators sought to highlight the role played by emotion, instinct and the unconscious in sport itself. They argued that sport as a form of cultural expression should be an end in itself rather than a means to some other, utilitarian end. Reacting against its instrumentalization within a rationalist discourse that brought it into the proximity of scientific management (Taylorism) and "hygienic" lifestyles, the playwright Arnolt Bronnen, in keeping with his Expressionist background, praised the supposedly irrational, unpredictable nature of sport and the role of chance. In his contribution to Meisl's 1928 volume of theoretical sportswriting, he argues that in sport the outcome is (or should be) determined by "der Instinkt der Reaktion […] und nicht der Intellekt" (reflex instinct […] and not the intellect).[46] His sometime collaborator Bertolt Brecht, just as he was to argue against bourgeois art forms such as opera, was critical of attempts to make sport "useful" or "gesellschaftsfähig" (socially acceptable): "Ich bin für den Sport, weil

und solange er riskant (ungesund), unkultiviert (nicht gesellschaftsfähig) und Selbstzweck ist" (I am in favour of sport because and as long as it is risky (unhealthy), uncultured (not socially acceptable) and an end in itself).[47] Brecht had applied this understanding of sport, and specifically of the boxing match as an absolute, self-contained world without "motives", as a central metaphor in his play *Im Dickicht der Städte* (*In the Jungle of the Cities*, 1923). It is unsurprising that Brecht disliked the regulation of boxing, suggesting that all fights should be settled by knockout.[48] Both he and Bronnen present a vision of sport as an expression of primal urges, as a form of risk taking that modern society otherwise excludes; they are undoubtedly correct in their identification of a significant element in the appeal of boxing. As Joyce Carol Oates observes in a long 1988 essay on Mike Tyson: "if 'sport' means harmless play, boxing is not a sport; it is certainly not a game". She views boxing as "the quintessential image of human struggle, masculine or otherwise, against not only other people but one's own divided self".[49] Oates' reading of the appeal and meaning of boxing echoes Brecht and Bronnen and recalls the terms in which fights were described in German sports reporting of the early 1920s. Yet this conception of sport as a performance of qualities that have a gendered (masculine) encoding, such as willpower and self-assertion, and of the male body as a symbol of the struggle between life and death is also problematic. As we shall see in Chaps. 4 and 5, in the German context, it had the potential to align closely with right-wing ideas of Germanness and masculinity that by the late 1920s had begun to appeal to Bronnen, who was later to become a Nazi.

In the Weimar Republic, however, as Brecht intimates, it was politically more expedient for advocates of sport and the sports movement to interpret boxing in a very different way. Far from being something risky and primal, possibly arising from trauma and loss, it had the potential to embody democratic modernity—it had after all been popularized internationally by the USA. And in practical terms, reliance upon primal "instinct" or gladiatorial willpower was wholly inadequate; winning required an approach that was a good deal more "scientific". Some optimistic commentators hoped that the raucous, bloodthirsty crowds would become more analytical once they had a grasp of finer points such as tactics and psychology. This conviction may help to explain the noticeable emphasis on the intellectual qualities of the best boxers in writing about boxing in the Weimar Republic. For example, the journalist, boxing referee and former Olympic athlete Kurt Doerry, who

was also editor in chief of *Sport im Bild* during the 1920s, reflects on a recent bout between two popular German middleweight boxers, Kurt Prenzel and Adolf Wiegert (a fight he had in fact refereed). He argues that the most successful boxers are not only physically and technically strong but also psychologically and intellectually superior. In this case, he suggests that Wiegert had lacked the psychological acuity to finish the fight when he had the opportunity and allowed his opponent to recover and eventually to emerge victorious. Newspapers and magazines also published first-hand accounts by boxers of their fights, which not only offered tactical and psychological insights but also gave readers access to the intense *experience* of boxing in a way that objective reports could not. Kurt Prenzel, for example, authored a first-hand, round-by-round account of the fight cited by Doerry. It appeared in the *Acht-Uhr Abendblatt*, was republished in *Der Querschnitt*, and includes a description of the experience of being knocked down and the struggle to recover in the aftermath.[50]

Both Doerry and Meisl actively sought to promote boxing as a sport characterized by preparation, strategy, technique and willpower. They viewed successful boxers as individuals distinguished by both their physical and mental abilities. As such, boxers could be cited as role models in an era in which conceptions of the "neuer Mensch" (new man; literally, new human) had found fertile ground: "Meisterschaften pflegen gewöhnlich nur von solchen Boxern errungen zu werden, bei denen sich zu den hohen körperlichen und technischen Fähigkeiten noch geistige Qualitäten gleicher Art gesellen."[51] (Championships usually only tend to be won by those boxers combining a high level of physical and technical ability with intellectual qualities of the same standard.) Doerry concludes, however, by noting that German boxers still fell short of this ideal combination: "Wir haben in Deutschland noch nicht allzu viele Boxer, die technisch weit genug sind, um in einem Kampfe den Gegner durch ihre überlegene Intelligenz zu besiegen".[52] (In Germany we do not yet have many boxers who have sufficient technique to defeat a boxer through their superior intelligence.) That mildly nationalistic sentiment (with the implicit claim that German boxers are generally more intelligent than their rivals) is undoubtedly tempered by an awareness that German athletes were in any case banned from most international competitions, including the Olympic Games, as a sanction applied after the First World War.[53] It also, however, points to the manner in which sporting success could become a matter of national pride—but it was

not until the emergence of Max Schmeling that Germany could credibly claim to have a boxer in the mould of Doerry's ideal.

German boxing did, however, already have stars. It had been quick to market its first homegrown champions, who paved the way for and anticipated the subsequent construction of Max Schmeling as a national hero. In the early years of the Republic, the photogenic "blonder Hans" Breitensträter was the first example of this new phenomenon—the athlete as star.[54] As Schmeling would also do, he cultivated a reputation that defied the stereotypical image of the boxer, developing an interest in orchids and claiming he had a collection of teddy bears. He was also the first German boxer to become an object of fascination for artists and intellectuals, becoming a particular focus for *Der Querschnitt*. In an illustrated 1921 article for *Der Querschnitt*, republished in the left-wing literary journal *Die Weltbühne*, Hermann von Wedderkop (editor of *Der Querschnitt* from 1924) describes a visit he paid to the "Boxermärchen" (fairly tale boxer) Breitensträter in the company of a number of other journalists and artists, including Rudolf Großmann, Ernesto de Fiori and Renée Sintenis.[55] Wedderkop reveals little about him as a person, and even less about him as a boxer, instead presenting an abstract, mythologized sketch of a man whom he sees as the product of experience but who seems to live only in the present moment: "Dieser hier ist abgeschliffen, abgespült vom Leben im Freien, unter Fremden, durch unalltägliche Ereignisse, die durch Häufigkeit und Uebung zu Alltäglichem wurden. Er hat etwas durchgemacht, eine sehr wohltuende Schule, um die wir ihn sofort beneiden."[56] (This man has been washed up and polished by a life outdoors, among foreigners, by unusual events that became usual in their frequency and through practice. His experiences have proven to be a really beneficial school, of which we are immediately envious.) The article's illustrations include two photographs of Breitensträter as a boxer and two of him posing with the artists Sintenis, Susi von Zimmermann and de Fiori.[57] Breitensträter's status anticipates what Schmeling was to achieve, not least in the manner in which a public image was created by and for him: he published an autobiography, was a subject of works of art (including as a series of lithographs by Großmann, issued with the memoir, and a sculpture by Kurt Edzard (1923)), and was frequently photographed and filmed. His defeat against Paolo Uzcudun in late 1925 (the same fight attended by Nabokov) was documented in the first German sports feature film, *Breitensträter-Paolino. Des deutschen Meisters schwerster Kampf* (Breitensträter-Paolino.

The German Champion's Hardest Fight). His fights, particularly those against the first official German heavyweight champion Otto Flint (in 1919 and 1920) and the three against Paul Samson-Körner, the other truly popular German heavyweight in the first half of the 1920s, attracted huge crowds and became cultural events on a par with theatre premieres.

Breitensträter's career coincides with the development of sports reporting as a journalistic genre in Germany, and it is notable that the reports published by national newspapers frequently focus, as in the aforementioned article by Job Zimmermann, on the event and its atmosphere as a whole as much as the course of the actual fight. This applies, for example, to the reporting of the hugely anticipated attempt by Breitensträter, 3 months before the fight against Uzcudun, to regain his German title from Samson-Körner, after he had lost their previous contest in 1924. The fight took place amid chaotic scenes of overcrowding in a sold-out Kaiserdamm-Arena in Berlin on 11 September 1925 and was refereed by Kurt Doerry. Most newspapers carried a substantial report in the following day's edition, in many cases with equal weighting given to the occasion itself and the behaviour of the crowd. The *Berliner Tageblatt*, for example, begins by noting the extraordinary levels of interest generated by the fight, resulting in the "beängstigende Dimensionen" (frightening dimensions) of the crowd, to which the report later refers, in a conscious echo of Ernst Toller's Expressionist drama of 1921, as "Masse Mensch" (Mass Men).[58] Throughout, emphasis is placed on the total, fanatical *immersion* of the crowd in the event. In his report for the *Vossische Zeitung*, Willy Meisl begins with a pointed cultural comparison: "Massary-Premiere im Künstler-Theater, Knockout-Premiere am Kaiserdamm—kein Zweifel, die Saison hat pünktlich begonnen" (There's a Massary premier in the Künstler-Theatre, and a knockout premiere on the Kaiserdamm—there's no doubt about it, the season has started on time).[59] The implication is that boxing is not a fundamentally different cultural option to opera or theatre (the reference is to the popular Austrian soprano Fritzi Massary). The subsequent text, written as was typical for Meisl very much in the style of a literary *feuilleton* (cultural essay), devotes close to half its space to an evocation of the event as a sensual experience, with conspicuous use of descriptive language and metaphor to evoke the sense of scale, excitement and "occasion":

> Menschenmassen treiben in dem Riesensaale. Grelle Lampen flammen plötzlich in der Mitte auf, bestrahlen das Ring-Plateau. Der wirbelnde Riesenraum versinkt im Dunkel, auch der Lärm scheint irgendwie dunkler geworden, alles verliert sich in dieser ungeheuren Halle, nur die grellen Lampen, das strahlende Plateau bleiben, geben Orientierung. Halt, Mittelpunkt.
>
> (Masses of people are on the move in the gigantic hall. Bright spotlights suddenly flare in the middle and illuminate the plateau of the ring. The huge, turbulent space sinks into darkness, and even the noise somehow seems to have gone darker; everything loses itself in this colossal hall. Only the harsh lights and the glowing plateau remain, and give us orientation. Something to hold on to, a central point.)

The account of the fight, which saw multiple knock-downs and moments of controversy, and which Breitensträter won on points, likewise eschews technical precision in preference to dramatic metaphors (the fight as a storm), rhetorical rhythm and the deployment of motifs of willpower and determination:

> Zum erstenmal in deutschem Ringe ist Samson am Boden. Er kommt hoch, er wird gefällt, er kommt hoch, er wird gefällt, bewußtlos steht er auf und wird niedergehämmert, aber irgendwo in diesem zerschlagenen Gladiator lebt der Wille, keine Niederlage hinzunehmen, und er übersteht fünf Niederschläge, er erlebt die rettende Pause. Im Saale tobt Sturm. Schlechtwetter für die Tausende von Wettern ist heraufgezogen, sie alle segelten auf Samson. Plötzlich ist aus dem schon Geschlagenen der Schläger geworden. Amboß Breitensträter ward Hammer.
>
> (For the first time in a German ring, Samson is down. He gets up, he's knocked down again, he gets up, he's knocked down again, unconsciously he gets up and is hammered down, but somewhere within this battered gladiator is the willpower to refuse to accept defeat, and he survives five knock-downs and is saved by the end of the round. In the hall a storm rages. Bad weather for thousands of gamblers has moved in, they'd all gone with Samson. Suddenly the man who had already seemed beaten has become the one delivering the blows. Breitensträter has changed from anvil into hammer.)

The reader learns little or nothing of the comparative styles or technical abilities of the two fighters, and despite Meisl's later support for sport as a civilizing, modern phenomenon, his report here reflects a more

sensationalist interest in boxing as a primal, "gladiatorial" contest. The article seeks, coloured far more by the Expressionism of the early part of the decade than by the "Sachlichkeit" (objectivity) of the latter part, to convey mood, an atmosphere in which a frenzied crowd is wholly absorbed by a fully engaged "battle" and which other forms of cultural entertainment were hard pressed to match.

Breitensträter was in fact technically limited, relying on what at the time was sometimes perceived as a typically German style—flatfooted, rather upright, and engaging the opponent head-on—that left him exposed against stronger or more artful opponents.[60] Samson-Körner, defeated that night by Breitensträter, boxed in a more American style (crouched, with much more lateral movement) and epitomized, according to most reports, stubbornly courageous determination. He was almost as popular a figure as Breitensträter, offering an alternative model for the modern sports star, for while Breitensträter was depicted in terms of cultural literacy and relative sophistication, Samson-Körner had a reputation for humility and a lack of pretension. In his report for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on the 1924 fight between the same two boxers, Joseph Roth reports on Samson-Körner's popular appeal: "Die Mehrheit schenkte ihre Gunst dem Samson-Körner, von dem die Berichte rühmend hervorheben, daß er ein einfaches möbliertes Zimmer bewohnt, genauso wie ich und du."[61] (The majority favoured Samson-Körner, who has been lauded in reports because he rents a simple, furnished room, just like you and I.) According to Roth, it counted against Breitensträter that he had a rich father-in-law and could fall back on resources that he had not strictly earned himself. Samson-Körner's rise to prominence from humble origins, through a period spent in the USA and other countries (during which he added the "Samson" monicker), had a certain Romantic quality to it. It was precisely this that appealed to Brecht, who befriended Samson-Körner in this period and produced a number of boxing-themed texts inspired by his conversations with him. In 1926 he announced that he would write Samson-Körner's biography and published four instalments of a playful "autobiography" in the short-lived sports magazine *Arena*, ostensibly narrated by Samson-Körner himself, covering his early years as a sailor.[62] Brecht has his narrator suggest that he was born in Utah and that he was thus a "richtiger Yankee" (real yankee), rather than an immigrant—before he admits that, literally speaking, he was born in Zwickau in Saxony.[63] The implication is that in spirit, if not literally, this is to be an "American"

life of personal reinvention, upward mobility, willpower and achievement, not a "European" one restricted by class or by parochial identities. Breitensträter had spent far less time in the USA, but in his 1921 article Wedderkop thought he could detect the same "touch" of the American in him, conjuring an image that owes more to the popular German author of fantastical Westerns Karl May than to Breitensträter's actual biography: "Aus Magdeburg? Aber sehr lange in den Wäldern von Westamerika. Also 'getouched' vom Amerikanischen."[64] (From Magdeburg? But a long time in the forests of the American West. So was "touched" by American-ness.)

The idea that a boxer is a man who forges his own path and for whom anything is possible exercised considerable appeal, even though it was far from the reality of the professional sport. It closely relates to the potent myth of America—the sport's symbolic home—as the land of opportunity. As already observed, in many ways Breitensträter anticipated Schmeling's cultivation of the image of the boxer who transcended his sport, but from an early stage a crucial element in Schmeling's image drew on the same themes that were applied to Samson-Körner. Even the latter's supposed American style anticipated in some respects what Schmeling, modelling himself in his early career on Jack Dempsey, was to adopt. In an article for *Boxsport* in 1927, right at the start of Schmeling's rise to prominence, Hans Bötticher argues that to be successful, the modern boxer needs to lead "ein vorbildlich sorgfältiges Leben" (an exemplary, careful life), citing Tunney and Corbett as the great examples of this. He concludes by naming Samson-Körner and Schmeling as the closest German equivalents:

> Aber manches Beispiel von charakterfester Lebensführung zeigt unser noch so junger professioneller Boxsport, von ehrgeizigem Streben, hartem Training und selbstauferlegtem Verzicht der mancherlei Freuden des Lebens. Nur zwei Namen sportlich vorbildlicher Lebensführung sollen zur Nacheiferung genannt sein: Paul Samson-Körner und Max Schmeling, Samson-Körners Nachfolger.[65]
>
> (But professional German boxing, still so young, can point to many examples of disciplined living, ambitious work, hard training and the self-imposed rejection of many of life's pleasures. We will name just two instances of exemplary living as role models: Paul Samson-Körner and Max Schmeling, Samson-Körner's successor.)

The transition between generations of boxers in the mid-1920s coincided with a temporary downturn in boxing's popularity.[66] By 1927, at the latest, this had reversed, and Schmeling, as Bötticher's article indicates, was identified as the star among a new generation of younger German boxers. The implication was that an essential prerequisite for a successful career in boxing is a willingness to work, to suffer and make sacrifices, and Schmeling, his supporters claimed (as they would repeatedly throughout his career), had precisely these qualities.

"Boxing Is an Art Too"

Schmeling was born in the village of Klein Luckow (today a part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, close to the Polish border) but moved with his family at an early age to the working-class district of St. Georg close to the centre of Hamburg. Like many of his generation he had been swept up by the sports craze as a teenager and tried football and, for a short period, wrestling before taking up boxing. His career as a professional boxer started in Cologne, the city to which he had moved in search of work like so many other young men in the early 1920s. He joined the Mühlheimer Box-Klub and, after learning the basics of boxing in various self-study guides, began to train properly under the guidance of experienced boxers.[67] After making good progress as an amateur, Schmeling made the decision to become a professional at the age of eighteen in 1924, despite having promised his father that he would not do this. Under the management provided first by Hugo Abels and for a brief period in 1926 by Willi Fuchs, with whom the young boxer, according to the memoir he published in 1930 (*Mein Leben—Meine Kämpfe* (My Life—My Fights)), soon fell out, Schmeling made steady but hardly spectacular progress.[68] *Boxsport* reported favourably on the potential of the young Schmeling, but it was not until his move to Berlin, in the middle of 1926, that his fortunes began to change, both professionally and in terms of his standing as a public figure. Now managed by Arthur Bülow, the editor in chief of *Boxsport*, in August 1926 Schmeling succeeded Paul Samson-Körner as the German light-heavyweight champion. Erwin Thoma's report in *Boxsport*, which admittedly cannot be considered unbiased given the link to Bülow, was the first to claim that Schmeling might become something more than just another boxer: "Der deutsche Boxsport hat einen neuen Meister und einen neuen Mann, auf den er wieder bauen kann, vielleicht einen Stern

am Boxhimmel, der die Kraft besitzt, alle einstigen und vorhandenen zu überstrahlen."[69] (German boxing has a new champion and a new man on whom it can build, perhaps even a star in the firmament of boxing with the power to outshine all those who have gone before.) Schmeling is imagined, literally, as a star with the power to reinvigorate German boxing, and this is the point at which a public image of the young boxer begins to emerge.

From 1926 *Der Querschnitt*, which was published as a monthly magazine and with a much higher circulation after being acquired by the publisher Ullstein in 1924, began to promote the star quality in Schmeling, initially as one of a number of boxers it regularly featured, primarily in photographic illustrations. As was the case with other boxers, including Erich Brandl and Adolf Heuser, the magazine included not only boxing photographs but also artistic nudes. A very good example is offered by the nude portrait of Schmeling published in late 1926, credited to the Atelier Baruch, the photography studio run by Lili Baruch in Berlin, which specialized in portraits of dancers rather than athletes (Fig. 2.1). It was paired on the same page with a photograph of the cabaret artist and actress Alexa von Poremski (better known as Alexa von Porembsky).[70] The photograph frames Schmeling from the hips upwards, showing him with his right biceps flexed, left fist lightly clenched and head turned to his right. His face is expressionless, his gaze directed downwards. It is a striking image of poised masculinity that clearly revels in the athletic male body.

It is tempting to detect in an aspirational image of youthful bodily "perfection" elements of the pseudo-Nietzschean vitalism that had shaped discourses of health, gender and the body in previous decades and that had been ideologically exploited by proponents of militarism, nationalism and eugenics. Maurizia Bosagli, for example, writing of images of masculinity at the turn of the twentieth century, argues that "[t]he qualities of endurance, discipline and strength suggested by the toned muscles of the national athlete anticipated and provided an image for the agonistic-sportive totalitarian state of 30 years later, in which ideological muscularity would be deliberately trumpeted against liberalism and its 'disembodied', weak politics."[71] Yet the composition of the portrait of the muscular Schmeling emphasizes poise and balance rather than agonistic endurance; this is not a body fit for war but is in fact, with the discreet framing just above the groin, eroticized and slightly vulnerable. The averted gaze is non-aggressive, even coy. The display

Fig. 2.1 Max Schmeling, photograph by Lili Baruch, 1926 (Ullstein Bild – Lili Baruch)

of ornamental rather than functional muscle suggests a fetishization of the male body that echoes images of the so-called father of body-building, Eugen Sandow, who (quite unlike today's bodybuilders) had attempted to model his body on the proportions of classical statues. Indeed, as Erik Jensen notes, the renowned scientist Adolf Hirschfeld

included a nude photograph of Schmeling, placed next to a classical statue of Aphrodite, in his 1930 magnum opus *Geschlechtskunde* (*Science of Sex*).[72]

Although Lili Baruch's photograph carries the title "Max Schmeling, der deutsche Meister im Halbschwergewicht" (Max Schmeling, German light-heavyweight champion), this is noticeably *not* a boxing photograph, which is perhaps unsurprising in the context of her work. It can instead be understood as part of the ongoing attempt, in the pages of *Der Querschnitt*, to normalize boxing and challenge any lingering sense that it is *roh* (crude).[73] Baruch's portrait is intended to be read as an image of the successful boxer as the embodiment of harmony, control and balance. The following year the photograph was used as an illustration in an article in the popular magazine *Uhu* (like *Der Querschnitt* an Ullstein publication), reflecting on shifting notions of masculine beauty.[74] In this context, no reference is made to boxing in particular, with the author instead noting the recent shift to a corporeal rather than a physiognomic ideal of aestheticized masculinity, with sport as the claimed catalyst: "eine Vorstellung, bei der Körper, Knochenbau und Muskulatur eine weit wichtigere Rolle spielen als das Gesicht: der Körper als zweckmäßigste Maschine, nicht einseitig ausgebildet (um Gottes willen keine Muskelprotzerei mit wulstigen Auswüchsen), langbeinig, gestrafft und leicht entspannt, mit stählernen Kugelgelenken".[75] (A conception in which the body, bone structure and musculature play a far more important role than the face: the body as the most functional machine, well proportioned (for God's sake no posturing with bulging muscles), long-legged, tensed and at the same time slightly relaxed, with joints of steel). The admiring, slightly coquettish language hints, perhaps, at the (homo) erotic nature of the Schmeling nude and similar depictions of masculinity. By removing the sporting context for which it has been trained, they in fact place little emphasis on the body as functional machine and invite a desiring gaze, from both men and women.

The Baruch portrait marked the start of a period in the later years of the Weimar Republic in which images of Schmeling, in parallel with his growing reputation as a boxer, shaped perceptions of him. In a period in which sport was becoming a major theme for international art, he repeatedly stood as a model, just as Hans Breitensträter had in the early 1920s.[76] These works were for the most part commissioned by Alfred Flechtheim from artists with whom he had a contract.[77] According to Schmeling, he also starred in a film, *Ein Filmstar wird gesucht* (*Searching*

for a Film Star), for the first time in 1926, well before his name was widely known beyond boxing aficionados.[78] Just as Breitensträter and Samson-Körner had come to be admired by artists, intellectuals, journalists and writers in aesthetic or metaphorical terms, Schmeling too was embraced by representatives of Berlin's artistic circles in a manner that has become firmly fixed in the Schmeling legend. This cultural interest in boxing and boxers extended to the widely reported practical interest in boxing training from various prominent individuals, including women. However, the embedded association of boxing with masculinity meant that women were normally permitted only to learn the techniques and to train using implements such as punching bags, not to actually fight in the ring. Yet the masculine image of the boxer, as visualized in the portrayals of Schmeling from the late 1920s, is nuanced and open to symbolic readings that are not tightly bound to a reactionary embracing of the "primitive". Indeed, the association with Weimar culture came to have a lasting, arguably redemptive, effect on the reputation of Max Schmeling, who could claim to have belonged, at least briefly, to the inclusive, liberal and creative Berlin scene that would be wiped out by the Nazis just a handful of years later.[79]

Schmeling himself, in his *Erinnerungen*, refers to himself as "eine Art Symbolfigur des Sports" (a kind of symbolic figure for the sport) and claims to have understood that the various artists were fascinated with the idea of the boxer rather than with him as an individual ("Dazu ist es erst viel später gekommen" (that only came much later), *Erinnerungen*, 85). The boxer, he suggests (*Erinnerungen*, 86), represented an "Idealtypus" (ideal type). The depictions of Schmeling in visual art would appear to confirm this, although the precise nature of the ideal in question needs explanation. Alongside the countless informal photographs, sketches, prints and caricatures that appeared in newspapers and magazines, at least three formal portraits of Schmeling, dating to the late 1920s, were made by significant artists. The earliest, and probably the best known, is the large-scale oil portrait "Der Boxer Schmeling" (Schmeling the Boxer) by George Grosz, usually dated 1926 and reproduced in the May 1927 edition of *Der Querschnitt*.[80] The Italian-born German artist Ernesto de Fiori produced a plaster sculpture, "Der Boxer Max Schmeling" (The Boxer Max Schmeling), in 1928, and Rudolf Belling made a bronze, "Der Boxer (Max Schmeling)" (The Boxer (Max Schmeling)), in 1929.

Schmeling reports in his *Erinnerungen* that he also posed for the German sculptor Renée Sintenis, who produced "eine Plastik von mir in Kampfstellung" (a statuette of me in fighting stance) (*Erinnerungen*, 86). Sintenis was a member of Flechtheim's circle, and her striking height and appearance meant that her image, presented as the visual embodiment of the so-called new woman, was seen regularly in the pages of *Der Querschnitt*. She developed an interest in sport and was an acquaintance of Hans Breitensträter. During the 1920s she produced a number of small sculptures depicting boxers, dancers and other athletes, including one of the Finnish runner Paavo Nurmi in 1924 titled "Der Läufer Nurmi" (Nurmi the Runner). However, the nude bronze figure reproduced in *Erinnerungen* (239) dates to 1925 and in fact depicts the German middleweight boxer Erich Brandl, who was active between 1925 and 1929.[81] A photograph of the statuette appeared in *Der Querschnitt* in February 1926 alongside an oil painting of Brandl, depicted wearing only a jockstrap, by Alfred Sohn-Rethel.[82] The magazine had featured Brandl the previous year in a nude photographic double portrait by Frieda Riess, one of the most prominent portrait photographers in Berlin. These soft-focus images and Sohn-Rethel's portrait are decidedly more eroticized than any of the images of Schmeling.[83] At the same time, Schmeling's mistake demonstrates that many of the depictions of boxers from this period, particularly the sculptures, are to an extent interchangeable, emerging from a desire to capture the ideal rather than the individual. Something of the same idealism applies, for example, to de Fiori's statuette "Boxer Jack Dempsey" (1926), depicting a slightly built male nude who bears only a passing resemblance to the ostensible subject.[84] From around 1929, as Schmeling became more successful and his distinctive features better known, artistic depictions of Schmeling are generally much more personalized and recognizable. We can point, for example, to the lithograph of Schmeling by Rudolf Grossmann, which was issued by the Verlag der Galerie Flechtheim in 1929 in an edition of 100 copies at a price of 25 German marks, and to the very personal, instantly recognizable 1931 sculpture of Schmeling's head by Josef Thorak. Thorak became Schmeling's close friend, hunting companion and neighbour at his countryside house in Bad Saarow in the early 1930s. He used Schmeling repeatedly as a model, not only for such small-scale, personal works but also for some of the monumental sculptures Thorak produced for the Nazis, under whom he became a significant, officially favoured artist.

The portraits by Grosz, de Fiori and Belling all depict their subject in variations of an orthodox boxer's stance, with clenched fists and left foot forward, but are not depictions of boxing as a sport, as indicated by the absence of gloves. The iconography of boxing is in fact noticeable by its absence. The images might be contrasted with the highly dynamic boxing paintings and prints by the American artist George Bellows, in which boxers are usually depicted in frenzied action, and the referee, the ring, the crowd and the punch (throwing and receiving) all feature prominently in the composition. Indeed, one of Bellows' best known works, "Dempsey and Firpo" (1924), not only attempts to depict, in dramatic fashion, the physical impact of a punch but also documents a specific moment in an actual fight, when the Argentinian challenger Luis Firpo knocked the champion Jack Dempsey out of the ring in their controversial 1923 fight, which Dempsey came back to win. The portraits of Schmeling are quite different. As in Baruch's photographic portrait, their interest is in the male body, in particular the torso. In the case of the sculptures, the recognizability of the subject is clearly a secondary consideration: these are evocations not of aggression, dynamism or triumph but of strength, confidence, stability and balance. They recall the perceived classical harmonies of ancient sculptures of athletes and suggest a return to an ideal balance of body and spirit that Willy Meisl and Carl Diem detected in sport: "eine Vergeistigung des Körpers zum Geiste" (a transformation of the body into intellect).[85]

This utopian ideal informs numerous cultural artefacts and events from the period. For example, in 1925, UFA, Germany's major film studio, released the *Kulturfilm* (documentary) *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* (*Paths to Strength and Beauty*), directed by Wilhelm Prager and the medical doctor Nicholas Kaufmann. The film is structured as a visual essay, documenting the physical benefits of various fitness programmes and forms of dance, gymnastics and sports, including boxing. As its title suggests, it sets out an argument that both mind and body should be cultivated according to an aestheticized ideal of harmony, which is visualized in protracted slow-motion sequences focused on the bodies of athletes and dancers. The principle of a balance between body and mind was equally in keeping with the sort of very modern, socially ambitious idealism that underpinned the Düsseldorf GeSoLei expo in 1926, the largest such event held in the Weimar Republic, which aimed to promote health, "hygiene" and the athletic body as a means "zum leistungsfähigen

Menschen" (of producing a human capable of performing), a new type of dynamic, high-functioning citizen.

The sculptures of Schmeling, which can also plausibly be related to the discourses of renewal, regeneration and recovery that informed the reception of sport in general, are relatively small scale. In their suggestion of poise and harmony they form a striking contrast with the aggressively muscular pseudo-classicism that is a feature of the depictions of the athletic male body under fascism, as for example in the post-1933 work of Arno Breker and Thorak. Indeed, one can locate de Fiori's work in particular within German Expressionism and the shift away from naturalism that was a feature of German modernism; it bears comparison with that of contemporaries such as Wilhelm Lehmbrück or Ernst Barlach, in whose works human emotion is embodied in idealized, symbolic figures. If Lehmbrück's "Der Gestürzte" (The Fallen Man) (1915–1916) expresses the despair felt as the world was engulfed by war, then the many sculptures of athletes made by de Fiori, Belling and Sintenis would seem to express a much more optimistic vision of mankind that can be connected both to the utopian Expressionism of the early 1920s and the forward-looking ambitions for a kind of new sort of capable citizen that were at the core of the much discussed GeSoLei expo.

Grosz's oil portrait differs slightly, not just in terms of the medium, but in the precision of the style and recognizability of the subject.[86] Painted using a relatively soft palette in the "veristisch" (veristic) manner favoured by Grosz in other portraits of this period, such as his well-known portrait of the poet Max Hermann-Neiße (1927), it directs our attention to Schmeling's muscular body and powerful fists. The plain background heightens this effect, removing all depth from the image. In Schmeling's account of the painting of the portrait in *Erinnerungen*, he claims to recall that Grosz had spelled out that he would aim to produce an idealized image:

> "Ich möchte Sie allerdings nicht so sehr als Max Schmeling porträtieren", sagte er zu meiner Verblüffung, "sondern als den Typus des Faustkämpfers. Was mir vorschwebt, ist ein Bild, das Sie als Kämpfer zeigt oder, noch richtiger, ein Bild, das die Idee des Mannes im Ring zeigt. Daher möchte ich Sie in Kampfpose malen." (*Erinnerungen*, 89)

> ("Admittedly, I don't really want to paint you as Max Schmeling", he said to my considerable surprise, "but as the pugilist as a type. What I have in mind is a picture that shows you as a fighter, or, to be more precise, a

picture that shows the idea of the man in the ring. That's why I want to paint you in a fighting stance.")

The image contrasts markedly with Grosz's better-known and highly controversial political satire from the same period. A painting such as "Stützen der Gesellschaft" (Pillars of Society, 1926), for example, depends for its effect on the use of viciously caricatured representations of the conservative forces of the Weimar Republic. Grosz, writing in 1926, describes his approach thus: "Ich zeichnete und malte aus Widerspruch und versuchte durch meine Arbeiten die Welt davon zu überzeugen, daß sie häßlich, krank und verloren ist." (I drew and painted to be contradictory and tried in my works to persuade the world that it was ugly, sick and lost.)[87] His Schmeling portrait, however, depends for its effect upon the isolation of the individual and the removal of context and background. It is possible, at one level, to read the image as a portrayal of youthful self-assurance. One should note, for example, the casually defensive stance, with fists ready but not raised. In the context of Grosz's oeuvre, however, it can also be viewed as an optimistic image of an alternative force in contemporary German society—unencumbered by the past, balanced and, as the blue trunks and the stance make clear, incorporated into a global phenomenon, a *Weltsport* (global sport), with strong ties to the USA.

In his Berlin period between 1926 and 1928, Schmeling's career went from strength to strength. Training in a close-knit group under Max Machon, from whom he acquired a cautious, counter-punching style, he fought often, recording fifteen wins in 1927. As Kluge notes, he was not hugely popular in these early years, despite his growing prominence and a degree of celebrity within Berlin society, yet he was able to achieve key sporting goals. He became the first German European champion, again in the light-heavyweight category, won an unusually personal match after being challenged by the German middleweight champion Hein Domgörgen, a rival from his days in Cologne, and defended his European title a final time against the Italian Michele Bonaglia in Berlin in January 1928.

The press had begun to pay close attention to Schmeling, and a public image was in the making. His European title win was achieved, according to Erwin Thoma's report in *Boxsport*, through "systematische, kühl berechnete Kleinarbeit" (systematic, coldly calculated precision work). It provided, in Thoma's nationalistically oriented view, an affirmation

for German boxing as a whole: "Das in Boxsport so junge Deutschland hat jetzt, nach neun Jahren, den Beweis erbracht, dass sein Material, das ja immer vorzüglich gewesen ist, Qualität genug besitzt, um mit den Besten Europas in einer Linie zu stehen."[88] (Germany, still young in boxing terms, has now, after 9 years, proved that its material, which was always excellent, has sufficient quality to hold its own against the best in Europe.) The fight was relatively poorly attended at a venue, the massive Westfalenhalle in Dortmund, that was much too large. Yet it was also greeted by Alfred Flechtheim, writing in *Der Querschnitt* with a degree of prescience, as a symbolic moment, establishing the international quality not only of Schmeling but of German sport in general.

In an article accompanied by a sketch of Schmeling by Ernesto de Fiori (who attended the fight), Flechtheim goes further, arguing that too few Germans *in general* operate at a European level and comparing the achievements of other athletes, such as the swimmer Erich Rademacher as well as those of various artists, musicians and scientists: "Deutschland ist an Menschen internationaler Klasse arm. […] Nun hat Deutschland aber wieder einmal einen Mann europäischer Klasse."[89] (Germany is short of people of international class. […] But now Germany has once again got a man of European class.) The line of argument is interesting in that it runs counter to the triumphalist, nationalistic narratives that frequently accompany an international victory of any kind. Although Flechtheim had a vested interest in promoting Schmeling, whose image so often graced the pages of the magazine he had founded, the text nevertheless points to the way in which Schmeling was being adopted, without really being a public favourite, as a figurehead of transnational, or European, Germanness. Flechtheim states that Schmeling had been warmly greeted as European champion on a visit to London: "weil die sportverstehenden Gentlemen in diesem jungen Bengel den Menschen ahnen, der vielleicht einmal eine Weltmeisterschaft für Europa retten wird" (because the gentlemen there, who understand sport, recognize in this young lad somebody who may one day win a world title for Europe).[90] Undoubtedly, Flechtheim misjudged British as well as German national sentiments when it comes to sport, for, aside from a handful of partial exceptions such as the Ryder Cup in golf, there has rarely been much enthusiasm for a collective European identity in sport. Yet it is a remarkable claim all the same, in that it anticipates precisely the sort of transnational identity that later became an established part of the myth of Max Schmeling.

This emerging image was further nuanced when Schmeling successfully defended his European light-heavyweight title against the Italian Michele Bonaglia in a sold-out Sportpalast in Berlin on 6 January 1928. It proved to be a hugely successful international sports event, promoted by Paul Damski, who was one of the three major boxing promoters in Berlin and was to become a close friend to Schmeling. With his name topping the bill at the capital's premier sports arena, the fight generated the sort of excitement and attention that boxing had not seen in Germany since the peak in the popularity of Breitensträter and Samson-Körner in the earlier part of the decade. Regional venues, such as the Westfalenhalle, were never able to do this, but above all a suitable new hero for the masses was needed.[91] In Ernst Thoma's view, they now had one:

> Es war wie zu Zeiten unserer Größten. […] Die Krisis ist überwunden. Wir haben in Max Schmeling wieder einen Helden des Ringes, und lediglich dieser fehlte unserem Boxpublikum, um sich wieder in Scharen um die Standarte unseres schönen Sportes zu sammeln.[92]
>
> (It was like it was in the days of our greatest fighters. […] The crisis is overcome. In Max Schmeling we once again have a ring hero, and that was all that our boxing fans needed in order once again to gather in their masses around the standard of our beautiful sport.)

In advance of the fight, Schmeling, with other members of his camp, had conducted public training sessions at the Sportpalast (in its sports "school", a sort of fitness centre), on which the press duly reported. The arrival of his unbeaten opponent from fascist Italy was also covered in detail in most of Berlin's daily newspapers in the days leading up to the fight. Schmeling was now enjoying the levels of attention enjoyed by a bone fide star. "Und wenn immer der deutsche Europameister trainierte, fand sich stets eine große Schar Interessierter und Fanatiker ein, die jede Bewegung, jeden Schlag Schmelings mit größter Spannung verfolgten, die den Boxmeister in jeder seiner Trainingsphasen studierten."[93] (And whenever the European champion trained, a great crowd of the curious and the fanatical gathered who watched Schmeling's every movement and every punch with the greatest excitement and studied the champion in each phase of his training.) These visitors included other celebrities; the *12-Uhr-Blatt* published a sketch of the well-known actors Fritz Kortner and Alexander Granach attending a sparring session (which was

jokingly labelled a "rehearsal").[94] The sense of an *occasion* was palpable, prompting Nürnberg in the *12-Uhr-Blatt* to grant Schmeling the status of "ein repräsentativer deutscher Boxer" (a representative German boxer) and his sport greater, national significance.

> Man geht heute wohl auch nicht nur in den Sportpalast um des Boxens willen, nicht nur, um zu sehen, wer der Bessere wird, wie es so ausgeht, man geht heute wohl nicht nur in den Sportpalast, um Boxkunst zu genießen und boxerisches Können zu bewundern, man geht wohl einmal in den Sportpalast, weil das hier eine *nationale Sache* ist.[95]
>
> (These days you don't go to the Sportpalast just because of the boxing, or just to see who's the best or how it turns out. You probably don't go to the Sportpalast just to appreciate the boxing artistry and admire the boxing skill. You go to the Sportpalast because it has become *important for the nation*.)

Nürnberg's typical, rhetorical use of repetition lends the sentiment weight, and the association with national feelings proved remarkably prescient. On that night, all the major sports reporters were in attendance, and their reports were given considerable space in the following day's editions, with many displaying the result on the front page. The *Berliner Volkszeitung*, for example, placed a sketch by Julius Kroll, depicting the moment of Schmeling's victory, in a prime location on the front page of the evening edition. All the reports of the fight are in agreement about the frenzied atmosphere amongst the excited crowd of 8000. "Tausende aber im Sportpalast haben Alltagsträume und Sorgen, Krisen und Börsen vergessen; Tausende überrennen die Bordermänner, Stühle warden niedergerissen, Frauen kreischen auf."[96] (But the thousands in attendance at the Sportpalast forgot their everyday dreams, forgot their worries, the crises and stock exchanges. Thousands pushed past the security men, knocked down chairs. Women were screaming.) The challenger Bonaglia was reputed to be a particular favourite of Mussolini and was thus associated and perhaps even identified with Italian fascism. This is quite possibly one reason why he proved to be unpopular with the partisan crowd. In the *Vossische Zeitung*, Willy Meisl, as he had done in his 1925 report of the Breitensträter–Samson-Körner fight, comments on the somewhat hypocritical psychology of the crowd, which he deems "die Masse Mensch" (mass men): "Sie verlangt vom Boxer, dem bezahlten oder auch unbezahlten Gladiator alles, Mut, Selbstaufopferung, Selbstbeherrschung,

sie selbst aber *pfeift* im Wortsinne auf alles."[97] (It demands everything of the boxer, regardless of whether he is a professional or amateur gladiator—courage, self-sacrifice, self-control. But the whistling crowd allows itself to do whatever it likes.) He is particularly critical of the unsporting booing and whistling meted out to the Italian, although this was partly prompted by the foul blows he delivered, for which he received a warning from the referee. Bonaglia achieved little else in the fight, as in the final minute of the first round he was dramatically knocked out by a powerful short right from Schmeling. The *sachlich* (objective) Hans Bötticher, writing in the *BZ am Mittag*, employed a range of metaphors suggesting what he saw as Schmeling's "cold", mechanical precision in the short fight: "Genau so, wie Schmeling an der schweren Birne diesen Rechten durchbrachte, genau so kalt, mit eiserner Ruhe, schlug er ihn gestern, dafür mit einer cleverness, Präzision, die ihm so leicht kein deutscher und—kein europäischer Boxer nachmacht."[98] (Just as Schmeling had on the heavy bag, yesterday he used his right with the same coldness, with steely calm, and with an intelligence and precision that other Germans, indeed other Europeans, will struggle to match.) This stood in considerable contrast to the huge excitement in the arena created by the spectacular victory. Almost all the accounts attempt to convey the extraordinary response from the crowd. Erwin Thoma, in *Boxsport*, evokes the transformative effect upon the otherwise cynical urban crowd: "Das Haus ist irrsinnig. Brüllen, Lachen, Jauchzen, —noch nie sah ich die Berliner so ehrlich und tief mitgerissen wie an diesem Tage und in diesem Moment."[99] (The venue goes crazy. Screaming, laughter, yelling. Never before have I seen Berliners so honestly and deeply moved as they were on this day and at that moment.) In the *Berliner Tageblatt* the reference is to "der außergewöhnliche Beifall, der orkanartige Stärke erreicht hatte" (the extraordinary applause that had reached the strength of a hurricane), while the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* chooses an even more dramatic comparison: "Die riesige, unter dicken Nebeln der Leidenschaft flimmernde Arena wird zu einem speienden Krater, zu einem einzigen, tosenden Maul".[100] (The huge arena, shimmering under a thick mist of passion, becomes an erupting crater, a single, great, wild mouth.) Meisl also comments on the crowd's reaction, focusing again on the negative reaction to the defeated man: "Und den Abgang dieses geschlagenen Kämpfers […] begleitete ein Teil der Zuschauer mit Pfeifen und Johlen."[101] (And a section of the spectators accompanied the departure of the defeated fighter with whistles and booing.)

These reports provide vivid evidence of the perceived psychological effects of the collective spectatorship of sport. However, one particular detail, mentioned in most but not all of the accounts of the evening, elicited explicitly political interpretations. Following Schmeling's victory, amid chaotic scenes and considerable noise, the brass band in the Sportpalast struck up the German national anthem, the *Deutschlandlied*, and it seems clear that at least a portion of the crowd stood up to sing: "Wer in dem nicht endenden Donner des tobenden Beifalls die Melodie erkennt, singt begeistert mit."[102] (Those who were able to pick out the melody within the never-ending thunder of the raging applause sang along enthusiastically.) Neither Bötticher nor Nürnberg, whilst noting this occurrence, attempts to make much of it. For Erwin Thoma, however, it was a symbolic moment in which Schmeling *represented* Germany:

> Zum erstenmal ist ein Boxkampf eine nationale Angelegenheit im besten Sinne des Wortes geworden. Schmeling ist in diesem Augenblick nicht Boxer, er ist ein großartiger Repräsentant einer ganzen Nation, die ihren Meister mit einem Feuer und einer Begeisterung ehrt, wie wir alle, die wir von den ersten Anfängen an dabei waren, es noch nicht erlebt haben.[103]
>
> (For the first time a boxing match has become a national matter in the best sense of the word. At this moment Schmeling is not a boxer but a great representative of the entire nation, which honours its champion with a fiery enthusiasm never before experienced by those of us who have been there from the start.)

Thoma was a nationalist, and later a Nazi, and the evocation here of *national* triumph experienced through a representative figure anticipates the way in which he and other writers would attempt to configure Schmeling's landmark victories in the 1930s as *German*. Yet in 1928 this was not the only possible interpretation. Retrospectively, at least, this moment was identified by some who had witnessed it, including Fritz Kortner, as "ein Triumph des demokratischen Prinzips über das faschistische Italien" (a triumph of the democratic principle over fascist Italy) (*Erinnerungen*, 64). Of course, this precisely reverses the political allegorization that was later applied to Schmeling, and it is unclear how many of the excited fans in attendance really felt this. What seems most likely is that a degree of confirmation bias coloured the responses, with those who most wanted to connect Schmeling and his sport to the new, democratic Germany most open to reading the event in this way. Yet

it is worth observing, as additional context, that the Sportpalast itself had an association with Republicanism in the mid-1920s; it had provided the venue for numerous pro-Republican political events and had been christened the "Haus der Republik" (House of the Republic) by the Social Democratic newspaper *Vorwärts* in 1925.[104] In any case, the political readings of the aftermath of the Bonaglia fight set an ambiguous precedent for the politicization of Max Schmeling.

A more concrete impact was the cementing of Schmeling's status within Berlin's high society and artistic elite. Already he was becoming a divisive figure, in many respects reflecting the divergent views on sport in general and boxing in particular and on culture and identity, that were at the heart of the intellectual discourse of the later Weimar years. Some commentators, such as Meisl, viewed Schmeling and his approach to his sport positively: "Max Schmeling ist erst 22 Jahre alt. Er ist im Ring und außerhalb des Ringes ungemein sympathisch, intelligent und ein ernster Sportsmann, der ein musterhaftes Leben führt."[105] (Max Schmeling is just 22 years old. In the ring and outside it he is uncommonly sympathetic and intelligent and is a serious sportsman who has an exemplary lifestyle.) The statement, with its motifs of intelligence, seriousness and exemplariness, undoubtedly reflects aspects of Schmeling's personality and anticipates some of the ways that Schmeling would continue to be viewed for the next eighty or so years. As he became better known and, eventually, internationally famous, Schmeling's "musterhaftes Leben" (exemplary lifestyle), the image of the "good boy", was reinforced in multi-media performances that capitalized on the rapidly developing technologies shaping modern culture. Many of these were stage-managed by others, but Schmeling, increasingly aware of the value of publicity, willingly complied. In 1929, for example, Schmeling found the time to star in one of the first German sound films, *Liebe im Ring* (*Love in the Ring*, directed by Reinhold Schünzel, released early 1930).[106] The film was conceived as a silent but, as was common in this transitional period in film history following the success of the first sound films in 1928 and 1929, several sequences of recorded dialogue and music were included, as well as a musical soundtrack and post-production background sound. The film is a bespoke vehicle for its star, a novice actor, and can be classified as an early example of the so-called boxing film (see also Chap. 6). As is typical of the genre, it uses a variant of the archetypal rags-to-riches narrative. Although *Liebe im Ring* is a much simpler effort than well-known later examples, such as *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (directed by Robert Wise, 1956),

Rocky (directed by John G. Avildsen, 1976) or *Cinderella Man* (directed by Ron Howard, 2005), like these films it structures the story of a boxer's journey to success around the obstacles, both sporting and social, he faces on the way. By casting Schmeling in a central role that is reminiscent of aspects of his own career, and moreover by calling his character "Max", the film rises to what we might think of as a metatextual level. As would be the case with the other film in which Schmeling starred in the 1930s, *Knock Out* (directed by Carl Lamač, 1935) (see also Chap. 4), the viewer is encouraged to retain an awareness of the identity and established image of the actor, which the sentimental narrative simultaneously embellishes.[107] Schmeling plays a fantasy version of himself, a young man from humble origins whose talent is spotted by a manager (Kurt Gerron) but who is then tempted away from both his girlfriend Hilde (Renate Müller) and his training regime by wealthy socialite Lilian (Olga Tschechowa), before discovering the latter's shallow nature and renewing his dedication to his sport. The film concludes with a climactic fight, staged with the Portuguese heavyweight José Santa, in which Max survives several knockdowns and, showing "heart", comes back to win by a knockout. The final scene has Schmeling and Müller kissing (for a full 10 count), having rediscovered true love.

Schmeling's performance is today mainly remembered for the song, "Das Herz eines Boxers" (The Heart of a Boxer), that he performs with his co-stars Gerron and Hugo Fischer-Köppe, who plays one of Max's trainers. The lyrics of the song, whose refrain Schmeling delivers in a sort of *Sprechgesang*, summarize one of the film's central ideas, namely that women and love (by which of course we should understand above all sex) are fatal to a boxer's career:

> Das Herz eines Boxers kennt nur eine Liebe,
> den Kampf um den Sieg ganz allein.
> Das Herz eines Boxers kennt nur eine Sorge,
> Im Ring der erste zu sein.

(The heart of a boxer only knows one love, / And that is to fight for victory. / The heart of a boxer only knows one worry, / And that is to be number one in the ring.) Rolf Nürnberg was scathing in his dismissal of the film as "das Musterbeispiel eines schlechten und noch dazu

unverständlichen Tonfilms" (the perfect example of a bad film that is also incomprehensible).[108]

Comparing *Liebe im Ring* to a canonical film such as Josef von Sternberg's *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*), also released in the spring of 1930, it is hard to disagree with Nürnberg. Yet the film is nevertheless an interesting example of the manner in which generic motifs (of the boxer; the romantic hero; the son) were being incorporated into a collectively imagined "Max Schmeling"; the deliberate blurring in *Liebe im Ring* of fictional and actual identities is an indication of this. The story hinges on the dichotomy between a supposed pure masculinity, required in order to perform in the ring, and the alleged corrupting force of sexualized femininity, represented in the film by the *femme fatale* played by Tschechowa. The maternal and the virginal, represented respectively by Max's mother and Hilde, who are frequently seen together, are by contrast safe and non-threatening.

This motif is echoed in many later examples of the boxing film, such as *Body and Soul* (directed by Robert Rossen, 1947, see also Chap. 6), an excellent film that depends on the same constellation of figures—a boxer caught between two women and between two opposing lifestyles: pleasure, money and sex are contrasted with work, discipline and family. It is a socially conservative scenario; indeed, it is reminiscent of the dynamic in many of the proto-fascistic texts persuasively analysed by Klaus Theweleit. It also draws on stock motifs and character types that appear regularly in Weimar cinema. The work of F.W. Murnau frequently plays with such contrasts; for example, it is central to *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927), the first film Murnau made in America, in which nameless, archetypal characters are used to embody a binary understanding of the world—the city not only contrasts with but is seen as entirely incompatible with the country, lust with love, pleasure with morality. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) is likewise fascinated by symbolic contrasts, memorably represented by the two roles played by Brigitte Helm, the virginal Maria and the robotic "false" Maria, who seduces the masses into a self-destructive revolution. These films, like *Liebe im Ring*, draw on ancient motifs, present in the Bible, Homer, Arthurian myths and numerous folk tales, in their construction of masculine heroes who must overcome temptation in order to return to the true path.

Such comparisons may seem far-fetched, yet in the modern context, sports heroes have frequently been judged by very different standards than those that prevail in society. Black American athletes like Joe

Louis and Jesse Owens for many years had to maintain a pretence of chastity and devotion to their mothers, even when, in Owens' case, he already had a child by his long-term girlfriend. In the case of the young Schmeling, devotion to his mother was also an important part of the public image; on 22 May 1930, just 2 months after the premiere of *Liebe im Ring* in March 1930, a conversation between Schmeling, who was in the USA preparing for his world title fight, and his mother Amanda, who was in a Berlin studio, was broadcast live on radio to a national audience. The event had a dual significance, showcasing the power of radio and capitalizing on Schmeling's popularity. It further reinforced the sentimental image of the hardened boxer's love for his mother. Although the broadcast was widely reported on, not everyone was willing to accept Schmeling's emerging image as a man of culture and familial devotion.[109] For Nürnberg, Schmeling seemed to embody a culture of vacuous celebrity and self-serving ambition. In his generally hostile biography of Max Schmeling (see Chap. 3), Nürnberg observes that the Bonaglia fight marked the start of Schmeling's widespread popularity, implying that it was the product of happy circumstance as much as anything else:

> Was soundsoviele Siege, soundsoviele Erfolge, soundsoviele Arbeit, soundsoviele Zufälle nicht vollbracht hatten, das erreichte dieser eine rechte Schlag nach einer Kampfdauer von zweieinhalb Minuten. Ueber die Nacht dieses 6. Januar 1928 war Schmeling Deutschlands Sportheros geworden.[110]
>
> (A single right after a fight lasting two-and-a-half minutes brought about what previous successes, work and coincidences could not. Overnight, on 6 January 1928, Schmeling had become Germany's sporting hero.)

In the months that followed, Schmeling, very much in the style of the reigning world heavyweight champion Gene Tunney, became an active participant in Berlin's cultural scene, attending theatre premieres, being seen in the company of liberal and left-wing intellectuals, actors and artists, and frequenting Viktor Schwannecke's *Weinstuben* (wine bar) on Rankestraße, a favourite haunt for Berlin's theatrical and literary circles. He was already well known within Alfred Flechtheim's circle, and now he began to read newspapers and literature, while cultural celebrities like the stage actor Fritz Kortner, who had been swept up in the general enthusiasm for boxing, were keen to befriend Schmeling. It was in the guest book at Schwannecke's that Schmeling entered his

famous two-line motto: "Künstler, schenkt mir Eure Gunst / Boxen ist doch auch 'ne Kunst!"[111] (Artists, lend me your favour / As boxing is an art too!) Schmeling's retrospective explanation for his behaviour, in his *Erinnerungen*, is that he wanted to make up for a lack of education: "Versuche Dir anzueignen, was Du versäumt hast" (Try to make up for what you missed out on, 87); and this is not fanciful, for, as we shall see, a desire for continuous self-improvement emerges in the late 1920s as a distinct and lasting element in Schmeling's public image. For Nürnberg, however, Schmeling's desire to be seen as more than *just* a boxer was unforgivable pretension, a symptom of what he saw as shallowness and vanity. The willingness of Berlin's cultural elite to indulge him in this respect reflected what he viewed, in unintended anticipation of the attitude of many on the Far Right, as the cultural decadence of the metropolis and of contemporary society. Yet Schmeling's public self-stylization, in defiance of formulaic expectations of both boxers and Germans, reflects revealing changes in the way in which so-called national identities were subject to change.

In the spring of 1928, Schmeling, after suffering an unexpected knockout defeat to the British boxer "Gypsy" Daniels, made the widely expected decision to step up to heavyweight, and his fight in April 1928 against the German champion Franz Diener, who was himself becoming something of a star, became a cultural occasion comparable to a theatrical premiere, with the Sportpalast completely sold out despite extraordinarily high ticket prices.[112] Indeed, the programme for the fight, which was a close affair and decided on points in Schmeling's favour, featured essays and comments from writers, journalists, artists, actors and directors, including Kurt Pinthus, Max Hermann-Neiße, Leo Lania, Egon Erwin Kisch, Leopold Jeßner, Werner Krauß and others. The playwright Carl Zuckmayer's short contribution to the programme reflected a tendency to view boxing itself as an expression of a supposed democratic ideal: "Boxen: der prachtvollste, fairste Kampfsport / Der Kampf über den Klassen und Massen / Das heroische Ideal des Kampfes: Mann gegen Mann."[113] (Boxing: the most splendid, fairest combat sport / To fight above all classes and masses / The heroic ideal of battle: man against man.) Naïve as this seems in an age in which gambling, racism, corruption and fixed fights were already a part of the culture of boxing, particularly in America, the sentiment reflects a sense that, though still very much a gender-specific phenomenon, boxing, in its simplicity, represented a means to bypass and perhaps even combat age-old class

divisions and prejudices.[114] The aspiration was occasionally voiced in America, too, where, despite the deep-rooted racism that prevented a non-white from challenging for the heavyweight title for 22 years (see Chap. 5), black boxers were making names for themselves: "You can't Jim Crow a left hook" was the view of one.[115] Zuckmayer's optimistic sentiment says less about his awareness of the realities of professional boxing than it does about the willingness on the part of liberals to embrace boxing as a symbol, or principle, suitable for a *fair* society.

In a sense, both the new, democratic Germany and the sport of boxing had been born at the same moment. Schmeling himself, in his first memoir, seems to invite the comparison between his sport and the development of the German Republic. It is interesting to note the way in which national identities play a role in the text's depiction of the (sporting) progress the nation had made by the mid-1920s, when Schmeling turned professional: "Aber gegen die führende Weltklasse konnten die Deutschen wenig ausrichten, ein Beweis dafür, daß es für uns noch emsigster Arbeit bedurfte, um im Boxring der Völker einmal eine Runde mitkämpfen zu können" (*Mein Leben*, 41). (But Germans could do little against the best, world-class boxers, proving that we still needed to work hard if we were ever to hold our own for even a single round in the boxing ring of nations.) To improve, and to be able to match the Americans, he goes on to say, it was necessary to learn from them, echoing contemporary discourses of positive *Amerikanismus*. Discussions of America and its influence often had less to do with the USA as it really existed and everything to do with competing aspirations and claims for Germany; Hans Joachim observes, writing in 1930: "Wie wir zu Amerika standen, zeigte, wo wir standen."[116] (Our view of America showed our view of ourselves.) Expressed in numerous articles, essays, reports and monographs, attitudes ranged from extreme, optimistic openness to American influence, to outright hostility to the idea of American "civilization". The sports administrator Carl Diem was not alone in admiring the American culture of individual aspiration and success, finding particular inspiration in American "Körpererziehung als Weg zur Menschbildung" (physical training as a means to personal development).[117] By contrast, in his 1927 study *Amerika und der Amerikanismus* (America and Americanism), Adolf Halfeld portrayed America as materialistic and mechanistic and contrasts it, in a conscious application of Oswald Spengler's influential diagnostic categories, as the antithesis to European (or at least German) *Kultur* (culture), which he

understood in traditional terms as entirely non-physical and thus excluding sport.[118]

In *Mein Leben*, the association of boxing with training, learning and self-improvement is significant. In a reversal of the previously widespread association of boxing with *Pöbel* (mob), the notion was beginning to be voiced that the physical discipline demanded in the sport could result in self-improvement and, moreover, have a beneficial effect in the moulding of individuals not only into better human beings, as per Diem's concept of *Menschbildung*, but into *better citizens.* There was an emerging interest in this period in the transformative effects of sports. The aforementioned film *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, for example, presents the argument that the modern, urban human will be *improved*, both physically and morally, by a return to a more natural, harmonious and physical self, which it associates with classical culture. The film's intertitles are frequently categorical and universalizing, suggesting that *all* humans will benefit from this, as will the nation: "Heute ist es nicht miltärischer Drill, sondern der Sport, der die Quelle der Stärke der Nation ist." (Today the source of the nation's strength is not to be found in military drills but in sport.) This is consistent with comparable views voiced in the American context, often in connection with boxing. Former champion "Gentleman Jim" Corbett had argued, in 1905, that "if every young man in America would take up boxing as a pastime we would have better men *and better citizens*".[119] In many respects, Gene Tunney was the living embodiment of Corbett's claim, and indeed he took care to craft precisely such an image. Tunney's first, rather fragmentary, autobiography seems only ever to have been published in German translation, appearing in 1927 shortly after the second and most controversial of his two victories over Jack Dempsey. The appetite in Germany for information about American boxing is reflected in the very existence of the publication. Although it does not always read as if conceived as a single volume, this autobiography precedes by some 5 years the first to appear in English. Schmeling was often compared to Tunney and, in his own autobiographical writing, frequently cites his admiration for him. There are striking parallels between Tunney and Schmeling in temperament, training methods and approach, and outlook. The "intellectual" athlete Tunney and, to a lesser extent, the rather less cerebral but ruthlessly effective Jack Dempsey served as a models for Schmeling, not only in his development as an athlete, but in his conscious construction of himself as a modern individual. In his text Tunney is concerned to define his sport in terms

consistent with an optimistic vision of modernity as civilizing, progressive, healthy, constructive and rational:

> Später bin ich dann zu der Erkenntnis gekommen, daß auf dem Wege der Evolution alles menschliche Kämpfen und Ringen nach oben strebt und daß die Zivilisation selbst das Resultat von der Menschen Tasten nach einem fernen Lichte ist. Und so lernte ich auch, daß selbst die Boxkunst einem ständigen Hang nach besseren und vornehmeren Regeln unterlag und daß damit von Generation zu Generation gesündere Wirkungen erzielt worden waren.[120]
>
> (Later I came to recognize that on the path to evolution humanity has struggled and fought its way upwards and that civilization itself is the result of humans striving towards a distant light. And so I also learned that even the rules of boxing have been subject to constant improvement and refinement, and in the process, from generation to generation, healthier effects have been achieved.)

Elsewhere in his volume it becomes clear that this understanding of boxing's development is related to a positive conception of American values—in particular fairness and equality of opportunity—that Tunney, the son of Irish immigrants, certainly shared with many.[121] In the context of a German Republic still seeking widespread acceptance and identification, it is possible, despite the divergent views on the nature and purpose of sport, to locate the impetus behind the emergence and continued promotion of boxing in Germany during the 1920s within a liberal discourse in which citizenship and responsibility are core values. Such a discourse did not remain unchallenged—for example, by the distinctly nationalistic (and anti-Semitic) agenda embedded in the German gymnastics movement. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the later claims on boxing made under National Socialism, the popular appeal exercised by a so-called foreign sport that was illegal and marginalized only a few years previously is remarkable.

Could one therefore argue that, in the latter years of the Weimar Republic, boxing functioned as a metaphor for the democratic principles of republican Germany, with Schmeling as its appropriate champion? Perhaps. Schmeling, probably more by an accident of his American manager Joe Jacobs's planning, certainly presented himself as such a symbol of the Republic when, in 1930, he appeared at a demonstration bout in Berlin wearing trunks in black, red and gold, the national colours

of the Republic that were hated by those on the right.[122] The association was not accepted by all, and one finds little evidence of it in the many pages of *Boxsport* devoted to Schmeling during this period. From 1928, as Schmeling became closely identified with America and with an individualistic, supposedly American approach to sport, it also became less than straightforward to claim that he represented Germany, republican or otherwise. Indeed, it seemed to some that Schmeling was attempting to live the American, not the German, dream.

Notes

1. A classic account of the cultural life of the Weimar Republic is given by Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970). On the *Wandervögel* and the post-war "hunger for wholeness" see 77–9.
2. Sebastian Haffner, *Geschichte eines Deutschen. Die Erinnerungen 1914–1933* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002), 74.
3. See Stefan Jacob, *Sport im 20. Jahrhundert* (Münster, Hamburg: Lit, 1994), 17–18; Gabriele Wesp, *Frisch, fromm, fröhlich, Frau: Frauen und Sport zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Königstein/Taunus: Ulrike Helmer, 1998), 9–11; Peter Tauber, *Vom Schützengraben auf den grünen Rasen* (Berlin: Lit, 2008), 8–9. The term "Sport" was still generally reserved for modern competitive sports, and was distinguished from "Turnen".
4. Hermann Kasack, "Sport als Lebensgefühl", *Die Weltbühne*, 24:21 (9 October 1928): 557–60 (558); Hans Seiffert, "Weltreligion des 20. Jahrhunderts. Aus einem Werk des 120. Jahrhunderts", *Der Querschnitt*, 12:6 (June 1932): 385–7.
5. See Erik Eggers, "'Deutsch wie der Sport, so auch das Wort!' Zur Scheinblüte der Fußballpublizistik im Dritten Reich", in *Fußball zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus: Alltag – Medien – Künste – Stars*, ed. Markwart Herzog (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), 161–82 (162–3).
6. Meisl was born in Vienna and enjoyed some success as an amateur football player and coach before moving to Berlin and beginning his journalistic career in 1924. His older brother, Hugo Meisl, was the legendary manager of the Austrian football *Wunderteam* (wonder team) of the 1930s. Meisl was Jewish and emigrated to Britain in 1934, where he re-established himself as a sportswriter and administrator. He was one of relatively few journalists to have his own by-line (always "Dr. Willy Meisl') in the sports section of a daily newspaper, which is also

an indication of the importance that the *Vossische*, published by Ullstein Press, attached to sport.

7. Willy Meisl, "Der Sport am Scheidewege", in *Der Sport am Scheidewege*, ed. Meisl (Heidelberg: Iris, 1928), 19–131 (20).
8. Ibid., 20.
9. Ibid., 21.
10. The communist newspaper *Die Rote Fahne* and the National Socialist newspapers the *Völkischer Beobachter* and the Berlin-based *Der Angriff* adopted this stance towards sport during the 1920s. The attitude of the Nazi press to professional sport shifted radically in the early 1930s (see Chap. 4).
11. An authoritative account of Berlin's newspapers in the first half of the twentieth century is provided by Peter de Mendelssohn, *Zeitungsstadt Berlin: Menschen und Mächte in der Geschichte der deutschen Presse* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1959).
12. Hans Bötticher, who wrote for the *BZ am Mittag* and was also a contributor to *Boxsport*, is certainly *not* identical with the poet and artist Joachim Ringelnatz, as claimed by Knud Kohr and Martin Krauß (in Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage: die Geschichte des deutschen Berufsboxens* (Göttingen: Die Werkstatt, 2000), 50), and again by Krauß in his 2005 biography of Schmeling (28). The mistake arises from the fact that Ringelnatz was the pseudonym used by *another* Hans Bötticher. Ringelnatz was primarily based in Munich, not Berlin, and died in exile in 1934. The Berlin journalist Bötticher (often given as H.Bö., as was typical for the German press in this period, when many journalists were identified by a unique set of initials or similar abbreviation) continued to write on boxing in the Third Reich, contributing to newspapers such as *Der Angriff* until at least 1938.
13. Unlike the majority of national newspapers, both *Kicker* and *Boxsport* resumed publication after 1945 and continue to be published to the present day.
14. Silke Kettelhake, *Renée Sintenis: Berlin, Boheme und Ringelnatz* (Berlin: Osburg, 2010), 87. For a good account of the career of Flechtheim see Kettelhake's chapter, "Alfred Flechtheim und *Der Querschnitt*", 81–8.
15. De Mendelssohn, *Zeitungsstadt Berlin*, 259.
16. Quoted by Dieter Behrendt, "Boxen mußt de, boxen, boxen", in *Arena der Leidenschaften: Der berliner Sportpalast und seine Veranstaltungen 1910–1973* (Berlin: Verlag Willmuth Ahrenhövel, 1990) ed. Alfons Ahrenhövel, 84–9 (84). The reference to *anmelden* ("signing up") alludes to the Sportschule (sports school) at the Sportpalast, about which more is written in Chap. 3.

17. Joseph Roth, *Werke*, ed. Fritz Hackert and Klaus Westermann, 6 vols. (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1989–91), II, 4.
18. *Simplicissimus* 35 (7 July 1930).
19. Gustav Stresemann, "Rede auf dem Parteitag der DVP in Köln vom 2. Oktober 1926", in *Gustav Stresemann – Reden: 1926*, ed. Wolfgang Elz (Online publication: http://www.geschichte.uni-mainz.de/neuestegeschichte/Dateien/Text_1926.pdf, 314–337 (334). Accessed 19 November 2016.
20. The resultant confusion between national, military and masculine identity has been explored in particular by Ute Frevert. See Frevert, "Soldaten – Staatsbürger: Überlegungen zu historischen Konstruktionen von Männlichkeit", in *Männergeschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte: Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne*, ed. Thomas Kühne (Frankfurt a. M., New York: Campus, 1996), 69–87.
21. Vladimir Nabokov, "Breitensträter – Paolino", trans. by Anastasia Tolstoy and Thomas Karshan, *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 August 2012. Accessed 19 November 2016. http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/private/breitenstrater-paolino.
22. See de Mendelssohn, *Zeitungsstadt* Berlin, 139.
23. "Adam", "Berlin beim Sport", *Sport im Bild* 20 (1925): 1264.
24. David Bathrick, "Max Schmeling on the Canvas: Boxing as an Icon of Weimar Culture", *New German Critique* 51 (1990), 113–36 (116).
25. See Alfons Arenhövel, "Chronik der Veranstaltungen 1910–1973", in Arenhövel ed., *Arena der Leidenschaften*, 129–571 (153). Naujoks was one of the most popular early champions in Germany, and was later part of the same training group as Schmeling, for whom he frequently acted as second.
26. Herbert Heckmann, "Der Faustkampf als edle Kunst", in *Schneller, Höher, Weiter: eine Geschichte des Sports*, ed. Hans Sarkowicz (Frankfurt AM.: Suhrkamp, 1999), 113–24 (117); Kluge, 33.
27. See Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 46–9; Manfred Luckas, *"So lange du stehen kannst, wirst du kämpfen"—Die Mythen des Boxens und ihre literarische Inszenierung* (Berlin: dissertation.de, 2002), 64.
28. M. te Kloot, "Wie gewinnt der Boxsport das Allgemein-Interesse", *Der Querschnitt* 2:6 (1921): 218–21 (219).
29. Job Zimmermann, "Großkampftag", *Sport im Bild*, 16 (1923): 496–7 (496).
30. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring*, 49, 49–50.
31. Ibid., 50.
32. Erik Jensen, "Crowd Control: Boxing Spectatorship and Social Order in Weimar Germany", in *Histories of Leisure*, ed. Rudy Koshar (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 79–101 (85).

33. Rolf Nürnberg, *Max Schmeling: die Geschichte einer Karriere* (Berlin: Großberliner Druckerei für Presse und Buchverlag, 1932), 5–6. Compare also Schmeling's own speculative comments on the popularity of sport after military catastrophes (*Erinnerungen*, 512).
34. See Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 38–40; Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 47.
35. Quoted in Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 39. Another internee who became interested in boxing and fitness was Joseph Pilates, inventor of the fitness programme. Pilates was a pioneer of boxing for fitness and personal training in Berlin in the 1920s before he emigrated to the USA. He claimed to have made the boxing journalist Nat Fleischer, of *Ring* magazine, aware of Max Schmeling and to have indirectly helped shape Schmeling's career. See Eva Rincke, *Joseph Pilates: Der Mann, dessen Name Programm wurde* (Freiburg: Herder, 2015).
36. Schmeling's cumbersome ring nickname in the USA, the "Black Uhlan of the Rhine", was entirely fanciful—Schmeling was neither from the Rhineland nor had served with the Uhlans.
37. That he had had nothing to do with political or paramilitary organizations after 1918, such as the so-called *Freikorps*, is also significant in this regard. Franz Diener, whom Schmeling defeated in 1928 to take the German heavyweight title, was a veteran of the *Freikorps* and later a member of the NSDAP.
38. Oates, "On Boxing", 114.
39. Ibid.
40. The National Socialists, from the early 1920s, embraced boxing under rather different terms, for example. See Chap. 4.
41. Herbert Jhering, "Boxen", *Das Tage-Buch* 8 (1927): 587–9.
42. Zimmermann, "Großkampftag", 497.
43. Behrendt, "Boxen mußt de, boxen, boxen", 84.
44. "[D]as homogene Weltstadtpublikum, das vom Bankdirektor bis zum Handlungsgehilfen, von der Diva bis zur Stenotypistin eines Sinnes ist." (The homogenous metropolitan masses, which are made up of bank managers and trainees, divas and shorthand typists, and yet have a single identity.) Siegfried Kracauer, "Kult der Zerstreuung", in Kracauer, *Das Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1977), 311–17 (313).
45. Curt Gutmann, "Boxen als Geschäft und Sport", *Der Querschnitt* 8:8 (1928): 560–63 (560).
46. Arnolt Bronnen, "Sport und Risiko", in *Der Sport am Scheidewege*, 140–3 (141).
47. Bert[olt] Brecht, "Die Krise des Sports", in *Der Sport am Scheidewege*, 144–6 (146).

48. See also Eric Jensen's suggestion that, especially in the middle part of the 1920s, more and more Germans came to favour the "American style of boxing, which favoured the knockout blow". This perception may have derived from Dempsey's reputation, but in fact there were plenty of examples of American boxers who used a tactical approach, particularly in the lighter weight divisions. Eric N. Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender and German Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 63.
49. Joyce Carol Oates, "On Mike Tyson", in Oates, *On Boxing*, 119–181 (125–6).
50. Kurt Prenzel, "Fünf Runden gegen Adolf Wiegert", *Der Querschnitt* 3 (1923): 71–2.
51. Kurt Doerry, "Der psychologische Moment", *Sport im Bild* 16 (1923): 493–5 (493).
52. Ibid., 494.
53. The Olympic ban was lifted in 1925.
54. See Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 49.
55. H. von Wedderkop, "Hans Breitensträter", *Der Querschnitt* 1:4/5 (1921): 136–41 (137); also in *Die Weltbühne* 38 (1921): 296–8.
56. Ibid., 140.
57. All three produced works depicting Breitensträter. Von Zimmermann's oil portrait was published in *Der Querschnitt* in the following issue.
58. "E.", "Wie Breitensträter Samson bezwang", *Berliner Tageblatt*, 12 September 1925 (evening edition), 5.
59. Willy Meisl, "Breitensträters Wiederkehr", *Vossische Zeitung*, 12 September 1925 (evening edition), 4.
60. See Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 43.
61. Joseph Roth, "Der Kampf um die Meisterschaft" (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, 3 March 1924), in Roth, *Werke*, II, 72.
62. *Der Lebenslauf des Boxers Samson-Körner. Erzählt von ihm selber, aufgeschrieben von Bert Brecht* (The Life of the Boxer Samson-Körner. Told by himself, written up by Bert Brecht) was never completed. The other literary texts relating to boxing written by Brecht in this period are the short story "Der Kinnhaken" ("The Uppercut", published in *Scherl's Magazin*, 1926) and the unfinished *Das Renommee. Ein Boxerroman*, which was inspired by the fight between Jack Dempsey and Georges Carpentier in 1921.
63. Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, ed. Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei and Klaus-Detlef Müller, 30 vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1992), IXX, 216–35 (216).
64. Wedderkop, "Hans Breitensträter", 141.

65. Hans Bötticher, "Noblesse oblige. Auch für den Box-Champion", *Boxsport*, 361 (30 August 1927), 1. Of all the German boxing writers of the 1920s, Bötticher consistently places the most focus on the "science" of the sport and the need for so-called modern methods and a healthy lifestyle, and as such was amongst Schmeling's most prominent supporters.
66. See Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 58–9.
67. The guides he consulted seem to have included Georges Carpentier's *Meine Methode des Boxens*; *Boxen* by Joe Edwards, the pseudonym adopted by Paul Maschke, who had spent time in England and later ran boxing courses in Berlin, and the "Lehrbriefe" (letters of instruction) written by Jack Slim, a British boxer who had given boxing demonstrations in late Wilhelmine Germany and for a brief period gave lessons to Prince Friedrich Karl, son of the Kaiser.
68. Max Schmeling, *Mein Leben – Meine Kämpfe* (Leipzig: Grethlein, 1930), 49. Further references to this text (*Mein Leben*) will be parenthesized in the main text.
69. Erwin Thoma, "Die kürzeste deutsche Meisterschaft", *Boxsport* 309 (25 August 1926): 3. Thoma, later a convinced Nazi who was editor of *Boxsport* during its rapid *Gleichschaltung* (synchronization) in 1933, provides a retrospective account of Bülow's and *Boxsport*'s "discovery" and support for the young Schmeling in the 1937 biographical volume published in Nazi Germany (and therefore to be read critically) in the aftermath of his victory against Joe Louis. Erwin Thoma, "Vom Amateur zum Weltmeister: kleine Studie über Kampfstil und Charakter", in *Max Schmeling: die Geschichte eines Kämpfers*, ed. Arno Hellmis (Berlin: Ullstein, 1937), 31–45.
70. "Max Schmeling, der deutsche Meister im Halbschwergewicht", 6:12 (1926), 108. Jensen mentions this photograph but incorrectly states that its use on the cover of *Boxsport* 339 (29 March 1927) was its first publication (Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 72). A second portrait of Schmeling by Atelier Baruch was published in *Der Querschnitt* 8:2 (1928): 61. In this photograph Schmeling wears a suit and tie, projecting an image of affluence and success.
71. Maurizia Boscagli, *The Eye on the Flesh: Fashions of Masculinity in the Early Twentieth Century* (Boulder: Westview, 1996), 83.
72. See illustration in Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 74.
73. See for example O.F., "Ist der Boxsport roh?", *Der Querschnitt* 1:6 (1921): 221–3. This is a propagandistic article which argues for the "noble", formative nature of a sport which has been unfairly stigmatized: "So wird durch den Boxsport der junge Mann zu einem gesunden, gekräftigten und harten Menschen erzogen, der jeder Lage im Leben gewachsen ist." (Thus a young man will through boxing be

shaped into a healthy, strong and tough person, able to cope with any situation in life; 223).

74. Jensen (*Body by Weimar*, 72) also notes that the photograph was used in 1927 in the magazine *Sport und Sonne*. The multiple republications provide evidence of the power of the image and its widespread appeal.
75. Ludwig Reve, "Der schöne Mann", *Uhu* 4:3 (1927/28): 78–83 (82).
76. Willy Meisl writes about the growth in the artistic interest in sport in *Der Querschnitt* in 1927: "Sieh da, der Sport!", *Der Querschnitt* 7:4 (1927), 300–02. There were a number of major sport-themed exhibitions in the 1920s, including Düsseldorf's Große Ausstellung für Gesundheitspflege, soziale Fürsorge und Leibesübungen (GeSoLei; Great exhibition for healthy living, social care and exercise), a colossal Expo featuring numerous art works, the spring exhibition "Sport" at the Berlin Secession in 1927, and the international art exhibition held in Amsterdam as part of the 1928 Olympics.
77. In his *Erinnerungen* Schmeling suggests (83) that he only met Flechtheim in late 1927 or early 1928, as he reports that before meeting him Flechtheim had travelled to Leipzig to watch his fight against Hein Domgörgen (on 8 November 1927) in the company of the sculptor Rudolf Belling and the British conductor Leopold Stokowski. This dating seems quite unlikely as by that point both the Baruch portrait and the large portrait by George Grosz (see below) had already appeared in *Querschnitt*, and Schmeling is quite clear that the latter was a commission from Flechtheim ("Flechtheim wollte mich von ihm malen lassen" (Flechtheim wanted to have me painted by him)) (*Erinnerungen*, 88). It seems more likely that the introduction to Flechtheim and his circle happened in 1926, possibly after he became German light-heavyweight champion in August 1926. According to Volker Kluge, Schmeling's introduction into artistic circles came through the journalist Wolfgang Fischer in August 1926. Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 95–6.
78. The film seems to have been made as an amateur enterprise and may never have been officially released, as I was unable to find any record of a film with this name from 1926. Kluge states that Harry Piel, a major star at the time, appeared as an extra. See Schmeling, *Erinnerungen*, 141; Kluge, *Max Schmeilng*, 96.
79. For example, reviewing Schmeling's 1977 *Erinnerungen*, the novelist Siegfried Lenz argued for the particular importance of this period in the construction of the myth of Schmeling: "Was seinen Ruhm über alle bisherigen Lebensrunden brachte, kann wohl nur dadurch erklärt werden, daß Max Schmeling einst zum Matador und Idol einer Epoche gekürt wurde, die mittlerweile zu einer der attraktivsten Legenden geworden ist: die späten zwanziger- und die frühen dreißiger Jahre."

(Max Schmeling's fame throughout each stage of his life can probably only be explained by the fact that he was once the matador and idol of an era that has since become legendary: the late 1920s and early 1930s.) "Rezension: Schmeling, Max: Erinnerungen", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 September 1977, 24. Lenz undoubtedly exaggerates by suggesting that his fame can *only* be explained in this way, but the identification of Schmeling with an era was undoubtedly formative.

80. See *Der Querschnitt* 7:5 (1927): 69. The painting was also exhibited at the Berlin Secession at its annual spring exhibition in 1927, and features in the catalogue.
81. See Kettelhake, *Renée Sintenis*, 160–1. The other figure of a boxer produced by Sintenis (1927) depicted Helmut Hartkopf.
82. "Der Boxer Erich Brandl", 6:2 (1926), [112]. Sintenis' sculpture is now a part of the collection of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne. See: http://www.kulturelles-erbe-koeln.de/documents/obj/05020557). Accessed 19 November 2016.
83. "Der Boxer Erich Brandl", *Der Querschnitt* 5:9 (1925): [100]. A photograph of Schmeling posing informally with "die Rieß", as she was known, appeared in *Der Querschnitt* 7:12 (1927): [69].
84. Dempsey had in fact sat for de Fiori in Berlin in 1925, not for the statuette, but for a bust.
85. Meisl, "Der Sport am Scheidewege", 23.
86. The painting also featured as the cover image of the weekly satirical magazine *Jugend* (44, 29 October 1927). There are two photographs in the Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz of Grosz completing the portrait, apparently using another model. Incongruously, this model is bald, rather overweight and considerably older than Schmeling. He is also wearing boxing gloves, unlike Schmeling in the portrait. The photographs are dated to 1930, which is incorrect if it is the actual portrait depicted in the photographs and may well have been staged as a prank on Grosz's part.
87. Quoted in *George Grosz, Leben und Werk*, ed. Uwe M. Schneede (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1975), 161–2.
88. Erwin Thoma, "Schmeling Europameister", *Boxsport* 351 (21 June 1927): 1.
89. Alfred Flechtheim, "'So fast as Düörpen'", *Der Querschnitt* 7:12 (1927): 923–5 (925).
90. Ibid., 925.
91. In the mid 1920s the Westfalenhalle in Dortmund, under the management of the promoter André Picard, who had previously promoted boxing at the Sportpalast, had been able to attract many of the major boxing matches in Germany, primarily because of the high taxes

demanded in Berlin. Despite this, in the late 1920s the Sportpalast in Berlin once again became the country's chief venue.

92. Erwin Thoma, "Schmelings Blitzsieg", *Boxsport* 380 (1928): 1–3 (1).
93. Anon., "Schmeling ist 'fit'", *Neue Berliner Zeitung: Das 12-Uhr-Blatt*, 5 January 1928, sports section (unpag.). These and the other unattributed boxing reports in the *12-Uhr-Blatt* are almost certainly the work of Rolf Nürnberg, editor of the sports section and the newspaper's lead boxing reporter.
94. Illustration ("Fritz Kortner und Alexander Granach bei Schmelings 'Probe'"), *Neue Berliner Zeitung: Das 12-Uhr-Blatt*, 5 January 1928, sports section (unpag.).
95. Anon., "Es geht um Europas höchsten Titel", *Neue Berliner Zeitung: Das 12-Uhr-Blatt*, 6 January 1928, sports section (unpag.).
96. Rolf Nürnberg, "In 2 Minuten 32 Sekunden", *Neue Berliner Zeitung: Das 12-Uhr-Blatt*, 7 January 1928, sports section (unpag.).
97. Willy Meisl, "2500 Mark für 2½ Minuten", *Vossische Zeitung*, 7 January 1928 (evening edition), 5.
98. H.Bö. (=Hans Bötticher), "Statt 15 Runden 2 Minuten", *BZ am Mittag*, 7 January 1928, sports section (unpag.).
99. Erwin Thoma, "Schmelings Blitzsieg", 1.
100. A.H., "Knock out auf den ersten Blick", *Berliner Tagesblatt*, 7 January 1928 (evening edition), 5; *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, quoted by Kluge, 90.
101. Meisl, "2500 Mark für 2½ Minuten", 5.
102. H.Bö., "Statt 15 Runden 2 Minuten".
103. Erwin Thoma, "Schmelings Blitzsieg", 2.
104. See Karlheinz Dederke, "Vom Kaiserreich zum Dritten Reich: Massenaufgebot zur Politik", in Arenhövel ed., *Arena der Leidenschaften*, 42–64 (44–5). The association was short lived—in the 1930s the Sportpalast became an important propaganda venue for the Nazis, hosting numerous events and proclamations, many of them recorded and broadcast.
105. Meisl, "2500 Mark für 2½ Minuten", 5.
106. The film was made by Terra Filmkunst and premiered in Berlin on 17 March 1930. It also starred Max Machon, who played Schmeling's trainer. An American version was released in August 1930, and a further re-edited version (*The Comeback*) was released in 1937 to capitalize on Schmeling's renewed fame in the wake of his victory over Louis in 1936.
107. This applies especially to the American re-release of the film in 1937, which, rather bizarrely, includes introductory captions suggesting that

what follows will be the *actual* story of Max Schmeling's early career. Schmeling's full name is used throughout, and this version also includes a concluding "appendix" in which the former lightweight champion Benny Leonard summarizes Schmeling's career.

108. Nürnberg, *Max Schmeling*, 117.
109. *Boxsport* (504 (1930): 7) reproduced the rather banal conversation in full.
110. Nürnberg, *Max Schmeling*, 39.
111. See the account in Schmeling, *Erinnerungen*, 87.
112. See Behrendt, "Boxen mußt de, boxen, boxen", 87.
113. Quoted by Krauß, *Schmeling*, 44.
114. For a survey of some of the many controversies and allegations of corruption that dogged American boxing in the 1920s see Sammons, 66–72. Despite continued corruption, American boxing had become socially acceptable in a way that anticipates this phenomenon in Germany. The presence of women at boxing matches provided an indication of shifting social attitudes. See also Jack Cavanaugh, *Tunney: Boxing's Brainiest Champ and His Upset of the Great Jack Dempsey* (New York: Ballantine, 2007), 313.
115. Quoted by Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 11.
116. See Jon Hughes, "'Sprechen wir wie in Texas': American Influence and the Idea of America in the Weimar Republic", *Edinburgh German Yearbook* 1: *Cultural Exchange in German Literature*, ed. Eleoma Joshua and Robert Vilain (Rochester: Camden House, 2007), 126–41. Joachim quoted by Erhard Schütz, "'Fließband–Schlachthof–Hollywood: literarische Phantasien über die USA" in *Willkommen und Abschied der Maschinen: Literatur und Technik – Bestandaufnahme eines Themas*, ed. Schütz (Essen: Klartext, 1988), 122–43 (125).
117. Carl Diem, *Sport in Amerika: Ergebnisse einer Studienreise* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1930), x.
118. See Adolf Halfeld, *Amerika und der Amerikanismus: Kritische Bemerkungen eines Deutschen und Europäers* (Jena: Diedrichs, 1927).
119. James J. Corbett, *Scientific Boxing: Together with Hints on Training and the Official Rules* (New York: Fox, 1912), 12 (my italics).
120. Gene Tunney, *Wie ich Weltmeister wurde* (Berlin-Schöneberg: Peter J. Oestergaard, 1927), no translator named, 46.
121. His views echo an aspect of the nineteenth-century American discourse of "muscular Christianity", which found virtue in a robust physical life, and the related advocacy of boxing and other sports a means of invigorating the "character" and health of the nation.
122. In his *Erinnerungen* (176) Schmeling recalls a near-riot breaking out in response. Compare Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 135.

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CHAPTER 3

The Weimar Republic 2: The American Dream

Hero and Villain: Schmeling as World Champion

After his victory over Franz Diener, Schmeling did not fight again in Germany until 1934.[1] Just a month later, on 18 May 1928, he embarked for the USA from Cuxhaven on board the SS *New York*, accompanied by his manager Arthur Bülow, and was joined later by his trainer Max Machon. They did so with both sporting and professional ambitions. In America, where boxing was big business, particularly in its heartlands in New York City and on the East Coast, it was possible for a talented boxer not only to reach the pinnacle of the sport, and gain the right to fight for a world title, but also to earn far more than would be conceivable in Europe. Reporting the news, *Boxsport* published a cartoon depicting Schmeling swimming across the Atlantic towards the skyscrapers of New York in pursuit of a giant dollar symbol: "Schmeling schwimmt dem Dollar nach".[2] (Schmeling swims for dollars.) After this date one finds numerous cartoon and caricature depictions of Schmeling's alleged desire for money (especially American dollars), in both the German and American media. Although such images play on the traditional iconography of greed, Schmeling did not shy away from the association, which informed the emerging image of him not only as a professional but as an archetypal "self-made man". The decision was a shock for many of his fans in Germany, not least because it meant giving up his championship titles, as he would no longer be in a position to defend them. The time Schmeling hereafter spent in America, effectively basing his career there

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even if he never moved there on a permanent basis, inevitably had an impact on perceptions of him in Germany.

He endured a frustrating first few months in New York and decided, controversially, to replace Bülow with an experienced American manager, Joe Jacobs. The move was viewed as brutal and possibly risky.[3] Bülow, having effectively given up everything (including the editorship of *Boxsport*) to support Schmeling in America, was hugely resentful at what he saw as a betrayal, and contractual issues between them dragged on for months through 1929 and continued to cost Schmeling money. When Bülow was interviewed by Rolf Nürnberg in 1930, his bitterness was given full expression in a depiction of Schmeling as inhuman: "'Dieser Schmeling ist ja eigentlich gar kein Mensch mehr, das ist eine überlegene, kalte Rechenmaschine, die immer weiß, was sie zu tun hat, ein Mensch ohne Leidenschaft, ohne Erregungen. Es gibt Leute, die könnten niemals so handeln, wie er an mir gehandelt hat, aber daß er so handeln konnte, war vielleicht sein Erfolg.'"[4] (That Schmeling isn't really a human being anymore, he's a cold, superior calculating machine that always knows what it has to do. A man with no passion, no emotions. There are people who could never do what he did to me—but perhaps he has been successful precisely because he was able to do it.) Indeed, Schmeling's decision did seem to result in success, as he won his first four American fights in late 1928 and early 1929 and finally established a reputation for himself in the symbolic home of boxing.

His victory against the talented Johnny Risko on 1 February 1929, before a crowd of 20,000 at Madison Square Garden, was widely acknowledged as the finest in his career to date—Schmeling was now not only a German star but an international one. The American press was genuinely excited by the performance. The *New York Times* devoted an entire page to its coverage, which included a large portrait photograph of Schmeling; its author, the *Times'* boxing correspondent James Dawson, asserted that "[a]ny doubt that Max Schmeling is destined for ring glory was dispelled last night in the ring of Madison Square Garden," and "Schmeling is made, there can no longer be any doubt about that".[5] *Boxsport* declared that Schmeling was now "Weltmeisterklasse" (world champion class), while the *Vossische Zeitung* summarized the ecstatic responses in America with the revealing headline: "Dempsey + Tunney = Schmeling?"[6] Again and again, comparisons were drawn between Schmeling and those two great American champions of the 1920s. Despite the doubts expressed in 1928, Schmeling was now spoken of as a prime contender for the world

championship. When he returned to Germany at the end of February 1929, primarily to resolve the contractual situation with Bülow, Schmeling was greeted as a conquering hero. As it happened, he was not the only prominent passenger on the SS *Deutschland*—the opera singer Heinrich Schlusnus and the hugely popular film actor Conrad Veidt were also on board (Fig. 3.1). As Meisl observed in the *Vossische Zeitung* with typical acuity, the reactions of those waiting to greet them invited a comparison of the relative standing of three cultural forms, opera, film and sport:

> Wie man sie erwartete und wie man sie aufnahm, daraus ließe sich leicht ein lebendiges Bild des Weltlaufs formen. Von Schlusnus nahm kaum ein Mensch, kaum ein Journalist in des Wortes wahrster Bedeutung Notiz. Von Veidt holte man sich im Zuge nach Hamburg Interviews. Zu Schmeling drängte alles in langen Artikeln, als er noch auf dem Dampfer beim Frühstück saß. Conny Veidt wurde auf dem Bahnhof in Hamburg mit begeisterten Hochrufen begrüßt. Schmeling wurde von vielen Tausenden erwartet und ging auf den Schultern der Menge sozusagen von Hand zu Hand. Der Film führt vor der Oper, aber die Faust führt vor dem Film.[7]
>
> (You could easily form a lively picture of the way of the world from the way they were anticipated and then received. Hardly anyone, including the journalists, noticed Schlusnus. Veidt was interviewed on the train to Hamburg. But they were already writing long articles about Schmeling when he was still sitting on board the ship having breakfast. Conny Veidt was welcomed at Hamburg station with enthusiastic cheers. Thousands awaited Schmeling and he was hoisted onto the shoulders of the masses. So film ranks ahead of opera, but the fist is ahead of film.)

Meisl goes on to portray Schmeling as a more rounded and mature personality than previously and stresses both his determination and the formative effect of experience:

> Schmeling hat viel durchgemacht. Er hat sich zum Erfolg durchgebracht, und das ist jetzt die Hauptsache. Er ist von den Amerikanern nicht weniger begeistert als diese von ihm, und er ist in Amerika heute sicherlich unter dem halben Dutzend der populärsten Persönlichkeiten. (ibid.)
>
> (Schmeling has been through a lot. He has made a success of himself, that's the main thing. He is no less enthusiastic about the Americans than

Fig. 3.1 Conrad Veidt and Max Schmeling on board the SS Deutschland, 1929 (AF archive / Alamy Stock Photo)

> they are about him, and today he's certainly among the half dozen most popular celebrities in America.)

The last claim was a considerable exaggeration, but it reflects the manner in which Schmeling's American success was beginning to mould the way he was portrayed in Germany.

It is, however, certainly true that in 1929 and 1930 Schmeling became one of the most recognizable and popular foreign boxers in the USA. A physical resemblance to Jack Dempsey helped cement his image. This was much commented on, on both sides of the Atlantic, and symbolically indicated that Schmeling transcended a narrowly defined "German" identity. The resemblance is accentuated in his 1930 memoir, in which Schmeling, supposedly to illustrate how he had modelled his new stance (a less upright semi-crouch) on Dempsey, presents a full-page image of himself opposite one of Dempsey posing, rather unfortunately, in an upright stance (*Mein Leben*, 76–77). Schmeling was sufficiently well known to become the star attraction, on 27 June 1929, in the annual boxing match organized in support of the "Free Milk Fund for Babies", the charity founded in 1921 by Millicent Hearst, wife of media tycoon William Randolph Hearst. Hearst owned many of the major US newspapers and was thus in a position of considerable power. Schmeling's fight against Paolo Uzcudun, which he won comfortably on points, took place in front of 40,000 fans at Yankee Stadium in New York and was, for the first time, broadcast live on the radio in Germany. His victory was scrutinized by the German media with relish, with much being made not only of the ease with which he won but also of the money he had earned in the process—after deductions, including those for the Milk Fund, it amounted to $48,000, a fortune in the eyes of almost anyone.

Each new success for Schmeling, every new record he set, all the praise he received in the American press was received with pride and jubilation in Germany, and his career was now, unmistakably, being invested with so-called national qualities. We find this, unsurprisingly, in the nationalistically coloured reporting in *Boxsport*, which repeatedly invites direct identification with Schmeling as a German: "Unser Landsmann Max hat die großen Hoffnungen, die wir und seine Heimat in ihn gesetzt haben, erfüllt, darüber hinaus hat er sich als ein Mann höchster Klasse erwiesen."[8] (Our countryman Max has lived up to the great hopes that we and his homeland had placed on him, and more than that,

he has proved himself to be a man of the highest class.) Thoma reports that he was surprised to find himself being personally congratulated on Schmeling's victory over Uzcudun: "Ich war im ersten Augenblick etwas perplex. Aber dann überlegte ich, daß jeder andere Deutsche, der für Sport Interesse hat, sich selbst gratulieren wollte. Die Angelegenheit Schmeling-Paolino ist eine nationale geworden."[9] (At first I was somewhat perplexed. But then I realized that every German interested in sport wanted to congratulate himself. Schmeling versus Paolino has become a matter of national interest.) Even Willy Meisl, just 6 months after his expressions of doubt about Schmeling's decision to go to America, reflected on the national implications:

> Heute hat er es erreicht, heute jubeln ihm hundertausende Deutsch-Amerikaner begeistert zu, denn sie wissen—wir hier wissen es nicht—daß dieser Schmelingssieg für uns mehr wert ist als bloß der Sport- oder Gelderfolg eines Faustkämpfers. Schmelings Triumph ist praktisch politisch für uns in der angelsächsischen und vor allem in der amerikanischen Welt ein nationaler Erfolg, wie er kaum einem Diplomaten glücken könnte, Schmelings Boxsieg ist tatsächlich eine Tat für das Deutschtum, und wenn wir auch auf andere Taten stolzer sind und sein sollen, so ist das kein Grund, etwas gering zu schätzen, was andere so hoch veranschlagen.[10]
>
> (Today he has made it. Today he is cheered on excitedly by hundreds of thousands of German-Americans, for they know, unlike us, that this victory for Schmeling is worth more to us than just another sporting or financial success for a boxer. In the Anglo-Saxon world, and especially in America, Schmeling's triumph is a practical-political success for the nation. A diplomat would scarcely be able to match it. Schmeling's victory is indeed an achievement for Germany, and even if we are, and should be, prouder of other achievements, that's no reason to dismiss something that is valued so highly by others.)

Meisl and others in Berlin's liberal press did not attempt to capitalize on Schmeling in nationalistic terms, but instead pointed to the acclaim received by Schmeling internationally as a victory for *Deutschtum*, for a conception of Germanness that is fair and modest, earning its success through application and work. There are parallels here, as we shall see in Chap. 5, with some of the claims made in the Nazi press about the likely impact of Schmeling's victory over Joe Louis, but the difference in tone is stark.

Although Schmeling was faced with ongoing complications related to contractual duties and obligatory fights, by the end of 1929 a first contract was in place for a fight against Jack Sharkey for the heavyweight world championship that had been vacant since the retirement of Gene Tunney. The fight was eventually scheduled for New York on 12 June 1930 (meaning a whole year passed before Schmeling fought again), and proceeds of the contest would again support the Milk Fund. Sharkey, 4 years older than Schmeling, was a tough and experienced boxer who was the marginal favourite in the eyes of many. Schmeling's preparations had in fact been undermined by illness, but although this was reported in *Boxsport*, it was unknown to the wider world, and the weeks before the fight saw a frenzy of anticipation and hype in both the USA and Germany.[11] Schmeling was to become only the second European, after Georges Carpentier in 1921, to make a bid for the heavyweight title. For this reason the fight was presented, in the popular press, as a matter of national prestige. However, perhaps because Sharkey, the son of Lithuanian immigrants and a former sailor, was not remotely as popular as Dempsey had been, the nationalistic-symbolic investment in the fight did not come close to that seen in 1921 and pales in comparison with the hyperbolic promotion of the Schmeling–Louis fights.[12] But at the same time, this was an event that *mattered* to millions in a way that is perhaps hard to imagine today. Since Schmeling's previous fight, the global economy, triggered by the Wall Street Crash on 29 October 1929, had been plunged into crisis. Unemployment figures, on both sides of the Atlantic, were climbing ever higher. The newspapers in Germany were filled daily with reports of political turmoil, demonstrations, violent confrontations between National Socialists and Communists, and political assassinations. Against this background, sport represented a welcome outlet for frustrations and a distraction from problems. In the late spring of 1930 Schmeling's profile in German popular culture was matched only by that of Marlene Dietrich, whose role in Josef von Sternberg's film *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*), which premiered in April 1930, had catapulted her to superstar status. A cartoon published in the *12-Uhr-Blatt* drew a humorous comparison, depicting Schmeling in the seated pose Dietrich made famous in the film, singing: "Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Sharkey eingestellt…"[13] The level of interest justified Berlin's press sending correspondents, including Rolf Nürnberg for the *12-Uhr-Blatt*, to New York to cover the fight, and even newspapers that otherwise paid little or no attention to professional boxing

felt obliged to comment. For the *Rote Fahne*, the newspaper of the German Communist Party, the nation's interest in a professional boxing match was a symptom of its exploitation, a needless distraction from real problems. The National Socialist *Völkischer Beobachter*, which since its founding had rejected all forms of competitive and professional sport, nevertheless published a short history of the heavyweight world championship in an attempt to convey the national prestige that would accompany a victory: "Wer wird sich nun am 12. Juni als nächster in die Liste der Weltmeister eintragen, Schmeling oder Sharkey? Hoffen wir der Deutsche."[14] (Who will be the next to add his name to the list of world champions on 12 June, Schmeling or Sharkey? We hope it's the German.) For the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, a financial newspaper, the potential economic and political significance of the event was of interest, and the paper noted the surprising levels of sympathy accorded Schmeling, the "foreigner": "das eine müssen wir betonen, daß es nicht zu verkennen ist, daß heute, was noch vor einigen Jahren durch die wüste Hetze derselben Hearstpresse unmöglich war, man jenseits des Großen Teiches einem Deutschen lebhafte Sympathien entgegenbringt."[15] (One thing we have to stress is that on the other side of the big pond many people today unmistakably have the greatest sympathy for a German, which the vicious campaigns of the Hearst press would have made impossible just a few years ago.) For the masses who stayed up past 3 a.m. to listen to the live radio commentary ("Seit Jahren waren die Straßen zur vierten Nachtstunde nicht so belebt") (The streets hadn't been this busy after three in the morning for years), the fight was a distraction they were only too glad to have.[16]

As it turned out, the live broadcast never happened—the signal across the Atlantic failed because of atmospheric conditions and listeners were forced to sit through music, interrupted periodically by snippets of information that the station was receiving by radio telegraph. The announcement of the provisional result came at 4:30 a.m. But although this result was exactly what most Germans had been hoping for, with Schmeling declared the first German heavyweight champion of the world, the unprecedented and controversial manner of his victory was, for many, more of an embarrassment than a cause for celebration. In his memoir published earlier in the year, Schmeling describes the world title belt as "das letzte Ziel und den letzten Erfolg" (the ultimate goal and the ultimate success) (*Mein Leben*, 129). But what should have been a crowning moment in the boxer's career became a problem, yet another

obstacle to be overcome. The precise details of what happened on the night remain somewhat unclear, despite the existence of film footage. During the opening rounds, Schmeling was forced onto the defensive and struggled to land scoring punches; although it was still early, he was certainly behind on points after the first three rounds. In the final seconds of the fourth round, Schmeling fell to the canvas, incapacitated by a low, foul blow, which is confirmed by the film. The bell saved him from being counted out, but it quickly became clear that he was in no state to continue. Although the referee had not seen the blow land, it was confirmed by one of the two ringside judges. After several minutes of chaos, and after interventions from various interested parties and with apparent confusion about the rules, Sharkey was disqualified and Schmeling declared the victor and the new world champion. It remains the only time in the modern era that a world title has been "earned" in this way, and the rules were subsequently modified to ensure, firstly, that fighters wore appropriate protection around the genital area and, secondly, that a "victory" would never again be awarded based on a technicality. On the night of 12 June 1930, however, before thousands of amazed spectators, Schmeling's arm was raised by the referee in victory, even though he was incapable of standing without support.

The victory was, eventually, confirmed by all the relevant authorities, including the International Boxing Union, the Boxsport-Behörde Deutschlands (German Boxing Commission) and the New York Boxing Commission, the last setting the condition that Schmeling defend the title in New York as soon as possible. Schmeling himself made repeatedly clear that he regretted the manner of the victory, not least because he had not seemed to be in a winning position before the foul blow (which is not to say that an eventual victory would have been impossible). He later suggested that he was immediately aware that it would create "neue Gegner" (new enemies) (*Erinnerungen*, 194); "meine Krone war ohne Glanz" (my crown did not shine) (*Erinnerungen*, 195). The media response in Germany was considerable, lasting several days and even weeks, and not entirely consistent—the press found itself torn between an instinctive sense of embarrassment at the manner of the victory and the desire to celebrate the achievement regardless. On 13 June the *Berliner Volkszeitung* argued that the decision was correct and suggested that most of those present, including American fans, recognized this. The newspaper presumed that most German fans would be delighted and proud: "Ein deutscher Boxer hat auf jeden Fall,

da gibt es keinen kleinlichen Beigeschmack, zum ersten Male den Titel des Weltmeisters aller Kategorien im Boxen errungen, und man kann sich den Jubel aller Deutschen vorstellen, als Hans Braun um 4 Uhr 20 Minuten bekanntgab […]: 'Schmeling ist Weltmeister!'"[17] (In any case, a German boxer has for the first time earned the title of world champion, and we shouldn't be petty about that. One can imagine the joy felt by every German when Hans Braun made the announcement at 4:20: "Schmeling is world champion!") Other reporters shared this view, that despite the controversy the victory was a cause for celebration for Germans: "In einer Umgebung, in der der deutsche Name vor zehn Jahren fast ein Schimpfname war, hat der deutsche Boxer Max Schmeling den deutschen Namen in den Mittelpunkt eines gewaltigen Interesses gestellt und zu großem Ansehen gebracht."[18] (In a country where ten years ago a German name was something like an insult, the German boxer Max Schmeling has put a German name at the centre of colossal interest and brought it great respect.) The *Völkischer Beobachter*, still cautious about professional boxing, chose simply to report the result and, other than describing it as "bemerkenswert" (remarkable), made no further comment on its implications.[19]

There were, however, negative responses, on both sides of the Atlantic. In Thoma's view, a courageous, valiant fight, even if it ended in defeat, would have been preferable to this hollow victory, which he feared would somehow reflect on German boxing as a whole:

> Ein derartiges Ende ist das schlimmste, was man für uns, d. h. den deutschen Boxsport überhaupt und schließlich auch Max Schmeling wünschen kann. Hätte er eindrucksvoll verloren, vielleicht sogar vor der Distanz, wäre er mit fliegenden Fahnen untergegangen, so hätten die Nachwirkungen einer derartigen Niederlage sicher nicht schrecklicher sein können, als die Kommentare, die man heute im Stillen zum Ende dieser Weltmeisterschaft gibt. Das Tragische daran ist, daß Schmeling an dieser Disqualifikation völlig unschuldig ist, daß man ihm nicht den geringsten Vorwurf machen kann.[20]
>
> (Such a conclusion is the worst thing we, that is German boxing in general and ultimately even Max Schmeling, could have wished for. If he had lost with an impressive performance, even if he'd been stopped, if he had gone down with all flags flying—then the consequences of such a defeat would certainly not have been worse than the comments that people are privately making about the way the world title was decided. The tragic thing is that

> Schmeling is entirely innocent in the matter of the disqualification and one can't criticize him in the slightest for what happened.)

Plenty of other voices, however, were more than willing to criticize Schmeling openly, with some pouring scorn on him for choosing to accept the title, foul blow or not. Those who were in any case hostile to professional boxing saw the spectacle as a confirmation of their scepticism: "Schmeling zum Weltmeister geprügelt — Katzenjammerstimmung in allen kapitalistischen Ländern" (Schmeling battered into the world title—bitter recriminations in all capitalist countries) was the headline above a scathing report in *Die Rote Fahne*.[21] And for many others, to be a champion by default was, understandably, simply not credible, despite those initial claims to the contrary and attempts to interpret the outcome as a victory for Germany. Thus, for a period, beginning in the summer months of 1930 and lasting until 1931, Schmeling went from being a national hero to something approaching a national disgrace. Berlin's cabaret performers and comedians made the most of the comical side to the "victory". The political journalist Carl von Ossietzky, editor of *Die Weltbühne*, published an article reflecting on the absurdity of the idea of "winning" a fight that in any other context one would have lost. Von Ossietzky, who admittedly had little interest in boxing and employed a mocking tone throughout, presented the event as a metaphor for the fantasies of right-wingers clinging to the *Dolchstoßlegende* (myth of the stab in the back) and still reluctant to admit that Germany had been defeated in the war:

> So hätte es von Rechts wegen 1918 sein müssen, als die Franzosen mit den verwerflichsten Mitteln zu siegen anfingen und der berühmte Tiefschlag von hinten ihre schoflen und unsportlichen Erfolge vollendete. Da hätte der Ringrichter eingreifen, den Marschall Foch vor ein Kriegsgericht schicken und den Deutschen den verdienten Sieg zusprechen müssen. Das wäre nur gerecht und sportlich gewesen. Dieser Sieg, weil der Feind regelwidrig geschlagen hat und dem Zusammengehauenen trotzdem der Titel zuerkannt wird, das ist der deutsche Wunschtraum seit zehn Jahren.[22]
>
> (This is how it really should have been in 1918 if there had been any justice, when the French began to win using the most despicable methods and the famous low blow from behind completed their dastardly and unsporting victory. A referee should have intervened and put Marshal Foch before a court martial, and then awarded the Germans the victory

> they deserved. That would only have been fair and sporting. This victory reflects the secret wish Germany has had for years—to get beaten up and then told you have won anyway, as your enemy has broken the rules.)

It is, as was typical of von Ossietzky's journalism, a highly perceptive reading of the result, and it tapped into an undercurrent of embarrassment over the idea that such a potentially significant moment in sporting, if not national, history had been robbed of its dignity. Rumours of *Schiebung* (corruption), that the fight had somehow been fixed, circulated. There is no real evidence to support this, even though this was an era in which corruption was indeed rife in the sport. Yet that mattered little, and it was in any case certain that Schmeling had been paid an extraordinary amount for an event that some saw as farcical. Satirical representations of Schmeling's "outrageous" earnings proliferated—even *Boxsport*, which was predisposed towards Schmeling, published a cartoon depicting the two boxers literally shovelling their earnings into sacks.[23] *Jugend* magazine ran a cartoon entitled "Unser Weltmeister" (Our world champion), in which Schmeling's hand is held victorious as various dubious financiers, all smoking cigars, place cheques like sticking plasters onto Schmeling's groin. The rhyming motto reads: "Man hat auf deine harte Faust gewettet, /Dein Kampf war kurz und dennoch weltbewegend, /Ein kühner Schwinger in die Leistengegend /Hat rasch die Ehre der Nation gerettet."[24] (People gambled on your hard fist, /Your fight was short and yet earth-shattering, /A bold haymaker into the groin, /Swiftly saved the nation's honour.) The satirical weekly *Kladderadatsch* published, in the full knowledge that its readers would know the outcome of the fight, a parodic heroic ballad ostensibly in praise of Schmeling, entitled, with ironic quotation marks, "Vor dem 'großen' Kampf" (Before the "Great" Fight). The praise escalates stanza by stanza, reaching comically absurd heights, recalling both the themes and tone of Joseph Roth's satirical poem from 1923:

> Kinderspiel nur scheint des alten Fritzen,
> Scheint uns Alexanders Heldentum;
> Da wo Schmelings wuchtige Hiebe sitzen,
> Wächst und blüht der Menschheit höchster Ruhm.

Ob die Erde Goethen auch vergesse,
Ja ob ganz der Dichtung Muse schweigt:
Schmeling boxt den Scharkey in die Fresse,
Und hurrah, das Ansehen Deutschlands steigt![25]

(Mere childish games are Frederick the Great's /and Alexander's heroic deeds; /Wherever Schmeling's mighty blows land, /There grows and blooms mankind's greatest esteem. //Even if the world forgets Goethe, /and even if poetry's muse falls silent: /Schmeling simply needs to smack Sharkey in the gob, /and hooray, Germany's reputation grows!)

Der Querschnitt, which was very open to sport and had supported and indeed promoted Schmeling, published a column that was critical of his willingness to accept the title. The author, Carl-Erdmann Graf von Pückler, suggested that this would cost Schmeling his popularity (particularly in the USA) and was for this reason, even if money rather than prestige was all that he cared about, a tactical mistake: "Wir sind um einen langweiligen Boxkampf reicher und um einen Meister, der mit all seinen gewiß feinen menschlichen und sonstigen Eigenschaften farblos und in den Händen unfähiger Manager ist, die nicht die leiseste Ahnung von Psychologie haben und nicht wissen, daß das Geld der *Popularität* folgt."[26] (We are richer to the tune of one boring boxing match and one champion who, for all his undoubtedly fine human and other qualities, is bland. He's handled by incapable managers who don't have the faintest idea about psychology and don't understand that money will follow popularity.)

Few journalists were as hostile as Nürnberg, whose indignation at Schmeling's conduct was made very clear in his reports for the *12-Uhr Blatt*. Even before the fight it was plain that the reporter had developed a distinct antipathy towards Schmeling. En route to New York he published a scathing assessment of Schmeling's first autobiography, apparently considering it a premature work of vanity: "Er, der sich früher, wie er selbst immer erzählte, geistig am 'Faust' und an der 'Fackel' schulte, hätte doch auch soviel Stil und Inhaltskritik besitzen müssen, um die Lächerlichkeit des Machwerks in seiner Gesamtheit zu ermessen."[27] (The man who had once, as he himself always claimed, schooled himself with *Faust* and [Karl Kraus' famous literary journal] *Fackel* should have possessed enough style and critical sense to recognize how ridiculous this whole pathetic project was.) In his reporting of the outcome

of the fight, Nürnberg stated plainly that he believed Schmeling was "keine Weltklasse" (not world class) and that he had not "earned" the title: "Dem neuen Weltmeister ist nur eines zu sagen, er hat noch unendlich viel zu lernen, um den Titel, den er nun trägt, einmal zu verdienen."[28] (One can say just one thing about the new world champion: he still has an endless amount to learn if he is ever actually to earn the title he now holds.) When it eventually became clear that Schmeling did not intend promptly to defend his title in a rematch with Sharkey in New York, Nürnberg was inspired to publish his own biography of Schmeling whose objectivity, for all the detail it records, is arguably undermined by the personal venom with which it portrays Schmeling.[29] His attitude to Schmeling was later the subject of a contemptuous portrayal by the Nazi sports journalist Alfred Eggert, who in 1930 wrote for a rival publication, the *Berliner Morgenpost*, and later also for the *BZ am Mittag*. Writing in the 1937 biography of Schmeling which was edited by Arno Hellmis, he attempts to read the negative reactions to Schmeling's victory in 1930 as "Kulturdokumente" (cultural documents) revealing the failings of the decadent "system", the dismissive term favoured in National Socialist discourse for the democracy of the Weimar Republic.[30] Eggert deems Nürnberg an "Orchidee der Systemzeit" (orchid of the age of the system) who criticized "fast sadistisch hemmungslos, bar jeder Verantwortung" (without mercy, almost sadistically, and devoid of all responsibility).[31] Eggert was undoubtedly anti-Semitic (he omits all reference to Joe Jacobs, who was Jewish) and the 1937 volume is utterly uncritical in its highly selective portrayal of Schmeling—yet the aggressive tone of Nürnberg's work is unmistakable and indeed, at times, rather strange. In his description of the outcome of the fight, Nürnberg paints a picture of calculated manipulation and deception on the part of Joe Jacobs, referring to "seine Cleverneß, seine Erfahrung, seine Routine, seine Gerissenheit" (his cleverness, his experience, his routine, his cunning).[32] According to Nürnberg, Schmeling had "won" only because of Jacobs' intervention and the favour of Millicent Hearst, who, sitting ringside with the columnist Arthur Brisbane and concerned about her Milk Fund, had allegedly used the power of the Hearst press to force a decision for Schmeling. Whether this was true or not, Schmeling had undoubtedly become a world champion through luck rather than skill, and in Nürnberg's eyes his readiness to accept this served to undermine him both as a boxer and a human being:

> Schmelings Glück schien unfaßbar. Als geschlagener Mann, geschwächt durch Krankheit, gehandicapt durch einen sinnlosen Kampfstil, im Ring zu stehen ohne Hoffnung auf Sieg oder gutes Abschneiden, und dann einen Weltmeisterschaftskampf nach zwölf Minuten, ehe man kraftlos zusammensank, zu gewinnen – unausdenkbar! Er hatte es wahrgemacht. Es wunderte ihn nicht einmal, er hielt es für selbstverständlich.[33]
>
> (Schmeling's good fortune was hard to grasp. He had stood in the ring as a beaten man, weakened by illness, handicapped by a senseless boxing style, without any hope of victory or even of performing well. And then, after collapsing impotently after twelve minutes, to win a world title fight—unbelievable! He had made it happen. He wasn't even surprised, he took it for granted.)

Although Nürnberg was himself Jewish, his depiction of Jacobs bears many of the hallmarks of anti-Semitism and is not at all inconsistent with the manner in which he was portrayed by *Der Angriff*, the National Socialist newspaper published in Berlin and edited by Goebbels. Conveniently ignored by Eggert in his later account, *Der Angriff* eventually weighed in on the controversy surrounding Schmeling with particular aggression. Early in 1931, it ran an anti-Semitic attack piece on Schmeling and his team with the headline: "Die Wahrheit über 'unseren' Weltmeister. Schmelings gemeiner Wortbruch. Undank ist der Welt Lohn. Joe Jacobs, ein Jude wie er leibt und lebt."[34] (The truth about "our" world champion. Schmeling shamefully breaks his promise. Ingratitude is the world's reward. Joe Jacobs: a Jew as he lives and breathes.) Amongst other things, the author, Herbert Mann, accuses Schmeling of betraying his "väterlichen Freund" (paternal friend) Bülow, working with "dieser schmuddlige Jude Joe Jacobs" (that filthy Jew Joe Jacobs), and going back on his word of honour regarding the rematch with Sharkey. His victory is dismissed as an elaborate trick. Mann concludes by dismissing any attempt to view Schmeling as a worthy representative of Germany: "Das Maß zum Überlaufen aber bringt die Behauptung dieses kläglichen Weltmeisters und unfertigen Menschen, daß er durch sein Verhalten dem deutschen Sport gedient zu haben glaube." (The ultimate impertinence is the claim made by this miserable world champion and unfit human being that he served the interests of German sport with his actions.) The remarkable hostility of this piece was to be swiftly forgotten once the decision was made, soon after

January 1933, that Schmeling could be strategically and politically useful to Hitler's new regime.

The number of negative reactions to Schmeling's world title, and to his subsequent decision not to defend it in New York, is explained in part by the fact that he was already such a prominent individual in German society and culture. Within the space of around 4 years, a well-defined image had been constructed, which the result had the potential to undermine or to ironize: the one-time darling of Berlin's republican left had been reduced to a metaphor for the fascistic *Wunschtraum* (daydream) of victory in defeat; the "good boy" who looked after his mother was implicated in corruption and scandal; an ambassador of modern Germany had been made to look foolish on the global stage. However, the embarrassment did not last. It was partially erased by a convincing and redemptive defence of his title against the American Young Stribling in July 1931, a fight that took place in Cleveland rather than New York. His performance against Stribling prompted *Boxsport* once again to attempt to build up Schmeling as a national hero: "Er hatte in Young Stribling den besten hundertprozentigen amerikanischen Schwergewichtsboxer vor seinen Fäusten; und er hat ihn erledigt. Wir Deutschen haben alle Berechtigung, auf diesen Sportsieg unseres Mannes stolz zu sein."[35] (In Young Stribling he was facing the best, 100% American heavyweight boxer, and he beat him. We Germans have every right to be proud of our man's sporting victory.) A year later, on 21 June 1932, Schmeling for the second and, as it turned out, last time defended his world title, in a rematch with Jack Sharkey. The fight mattered every bit as much to the two men involved as the Schmeling–Louis rematch would 6 years later, even though it had generated comparatively little excitement in the American media. For Sharkey it represented the chance to correct what he always maintained had been an injustice, and for Schmeling the opportunity to prove once and for all that he was in fact a worthy champion. A crowd of 70,000 was in attendance at the Madison Square Garden Bowl in Long Island City, Brooklyn, and after fifteen hard-fought rounds the judges' decision went to the American, even though Schmeling seemed to be the stronger of the two in the final rounds. Schmeling lost his title, but in the eyes of most observers—including the American newspapers—he certainly proved himself, and probably should have been declared the victor.[36] "Schmeling war besser als Sharkey" (Schmeling was better than Sharkey), declared the headline in the *Vossische Zeitung*, for which Willy Meisl had conducted a late-night

interview with a disappointed but bullish Schmeling: "Das amerikanische Publikum ist fair, und selbst meine schärfsten Kritiker sagen, daß mir heute Unrecht geschehen sei. Man wird mir Gelegenheit geben, das Glück durch einen neuen Kampf zu korrigieren und die Boxfreunde in Deutschland sollen sicher sein: *ich hole mir den Titel wieder*."[37] (The American public is fair, and even my harshest critics are saying that today's decision was unjust. They will give me the chance to correct this in a rematch, and friends of boxing in Germany can be assured: *I will get the title back*.) Ironically, a defeat had helped to restore the reputation that had been damaged by his hollow "victory" in 1930. Yet the second rematch with Sharkey never happened; Sharkey lost the title, in equally dubious circumstances, when he was knocked out in his first defence against the giant, but technically limited, Italian boxer Primo Carnera.[38] And just months later, in 1933, Schmeling's homeland changed beyond all recognition. Yet, although perceptions of Schmeling after 1933 also shifted, as he became closely associated with the ruling National Socialists, his public image, as it had evolved through the 1920s, was never wholly erased.

The Construction of Schmeling's Image in the Weimar Republic

Before I turn my attention, in Chap. 4, to National Socialism and the emergence of an apparently different, politicized public image of Max Schmeling, it will be helpful first to reflect in more depth on the structure of his multi-faceted public profile as it existed in the final years of the Weimar Republic and to ask what it might begin to reveal about conceptions of Germanness in this period. There are three ways in which Schmeling's image can be said to have been constructed (a process in which he was a willing participant), in particular under the influence of German "Amerikanismus". They relate to his biography as a narrative, his status as a professional, and his methods as an athlete and as a boxer. As noted in Chap. 2, one of the ways in which boxing came to be viewed, by some, as an "Abbild des wirklichen Lebens" (reflection of real life) relates to the economic and social conditions that have tended to motivate young men to box.[39] The conditions in post-war Germany, following the devastation of the war, made it a fertile ground for boxing, and *Boxsport* regularly carried classified advertisements from hopefuls looking for a way into the profession. Of course, boxing is painful

and hugely demanding and requires wholehearted commitment and determination. Few truly succeed. In his biography of Jack Dempsey, Roger Kahn notes that "[a]lmost all the men who take up boxing and *stay* with boxing as professionals have known the hounds of poverty".[40] Or to put it another way, for all the merits of boxing as a sport, as a profession it is chosen only when there are no other options. The sentiment echoes Oates's observation that (American) boxers are "[f]or the most part […] the disenfranchised of our affluent society, they are the sons of impoverished ghetto neighborhoods in which anger, if not fury, is appropriate".[41] The poet and journalist Wolf Wondratschek, who has written extensively on boxing, commented in a 1985 essay on the absence of a recent German boxer equivalent to Schmeling in ability or status: "Um einen Boris Becker des Boxsports zu bekommen, brauchten wir wieder schwere Zeiten, Hunger, Entbehrung, einen Krieg—einen Weltkrieg gar".[42] (For us to have a Boris Becker in boxing we would need to have hard times again, hunger, deprivation, war—maybe even a world war.) The darkly humorous comment was not entirely original, recalling Jack Dempsey's comment in 1956, with tongue slightly in cheek: "Right now what boxing needs is a good depression."[43] In the Weimar Republic, as embedded social structures began to break down and hierarchies became more fluid, the ground was prepared not simply for the acceptance of boxing as a sport but for its incorporation into a modern mythology of self-motivated success. As narratives, the lives of *successful* boxers, as well as their achievements and skills in the ring, often depend upon a recognizable pattern ("rags to riches"), and as such have the status of modern myths.[44] Sammons identifies attitudes to nineteenth-century Irish American champion John L. Sullivan, very much a rough-and-ready "man of the people", as formative in this respect: "He is the embodiment of the American Dream, in which the lowliest individuals rise to the top by their own initiative and perseverance."[45] Sullivan proved divisive, at the same time, reflecting the social divisions that were a hallmark of nineteenth-century America. Allen Guttmann observes that "[w]hile the 'shanty Irish' idolized Sullivan as one of their own, the "lace-curtain Irish" […] distanced themselves from him; they saw Sullivan not as a symbol of Erin's manhood but rather as a reminder of unflattering stereotypes they had labored to overcome".[46]

In the twentieth century, as social mobility became more common in America, a successful boxer such as Jack Dempsey was constructed in the popular imagination as, according to Oates, "an American myth of

comforting dimensions".[47] The "Manassa Mauler" Dempsey's humble origins played a significant role in the manner in which he was perceived and, eventually, admired—the trajectory of his life, along with his mixed ancestry, was crucial in his celebration as the ultimate *American* boxer. His very public success in an era of emerging mass media thus allowed Dempsey, even more than Sullivan before him, to embody the "American dream", not just to working-class Americans, but to the many who came to admire him in Europe and elsewhere. Certainly, a new, modern culture blurring heroism and success was emerging in tandem with the sports movement in post-war Germany. The figure of the boxer came to represent the popular dream of adulation and affluence like no other, reinforced, as Erik N. Jensen has observed, by a tendency in the media to exaggerate the likely financial rewards offered by a boxing career.[48] Volker Kluge also noted the manner in which the masculine sports star came to be configured in so-called heroic terms, seeing him, as Sebastian Haffner implied, as a replacement of sorts for the war heroes of the previous generation, but also suggesting that the sports hero was admired less for his physical prowess than for his conspicuous success.[49] The tendency primarily to value results and the achievement of success represented a significant cultural shift.

These patterns of thought play a significant role in a text such as Gene Tunney's autobiographical *Wie ich Weltmeister wurde (*How I became world champion, 1927), the German publication of which reflected the appetite for stories of success. It focuses, as the title suggests, on a process of becoming, or developing, and charts a trajectory that takes him from a poor upbringing in Greenwich Village (then still a working-class Irish district of New York City) through a single-minded, disciplined and determined career as a boxer, to the fulfilment of his goal in becoming world champion. Aims and goals, and the achievability of these goals through work, are of central importance within the narrative, as is the motif of the *journey*: "Am fernen Horizont konnte ich jetzt die Dämmerung erkennen; das große Ziel rückte näher; den langen Weg zu Ruhm und Wohlstand sollte ich bald hinter mir haben."[50] (On the distant horizon I could now make out the dawning day; my great aim was moving closer; I would soon have finished the long journey to fame and fortune.) The journey does not lead to success for its own sake, but to the prestige and comfort that are, at least in modern America, its rewards.

Schmeling did not experience the traumatic, scarring childhood and adolescence documented by many boxers in their autobiographical writing, but he certainly came from humble origins. The reports of Schmeling's victories in 1928 and 1929, and the rapidly increasing amounts he was paid, frequently employed motifs of progress, transformation and success. A 1928 summary of his career ("Max Schmeling als Mensch und Boxer" (Max Schmeling as a person and as a boxer)) in the *BZ am Mittag*, for example, was accompanied by a cartoon illustrating five ways in which Schmeling's career had progressed. Depictions of him as an apprentice and journeyman are contrasted with ones of him paying money into his bank account and travelling first class.[51]

The memoir published in early 1930, *Mein Leben—meine Kämpfe* (*My Life—My Fights*), positions its subject in precisely this way, which is almost certainly one of the reasons it so provoked Rolf Nürnberg.[52] Appearing on the eve of his challenge for the world title, it surveys his career to date and makes no attempt to document a "complete" life, but in one sense it marks the completion of a journey from obscurity to fame and fortune. The text is set in a consciously modern Roman (rather than gothic) typeface and is lavishly illustrated. It opens with a portrait photograph of Schmeling taken in New York, wearing not boxer's trunks but a dark double-breasted suit and pale homburg hat and looking very much like the embodiment of an American success story (*Mein Leben*, 10). The life story is introduced via a sort of narrative frame that also serves as an immediate signal of the narrator's success in life—he claims to have been asked at a Hollywood party held by the film director Ernst Lubitsch about his "debut" performance in sports. His star-studded audience included Clara Bow, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and Greta Garbo, as well as various German-speaking emigrants to Hollywood. The narrative immediately points up the narrator's desire to have an audience and to be admired, and also his willingness to "perform" himself, almost as a role, just as had happened in *Liebe im Ring*. The pride he takes in his success, and in particular in his acceptance and integration amongst society's most exclusive circles, is repeatedly emphasized in the text: "Es ist für einen Menschen, der in den ersten Zeiten seines Lebens hart zu kämpfen hatte, der einfach und schlicht seinen Weg ging, ein über das gewöhnliche Maß hinausgehendes Ereignis, wenn sich Leute, die er sonst nur in der Entfernung sah, jetzt mit ihm an einem Tisch setzten" (*Mein Leben*, 95). (It was especially significant for someone who had to fight hard in the first years of his life, who was simple and uncomplicated

in his ways, to be able to sit at the same table as people whom he had otherwise only seen from a distance.) Although he makes clear that at this point, prior to his greatest sporting achievements, his ambitions are by no means satisfied, in one sense he has already "made it" and completed a rapid transformation from a casual provincial labourer to a respected and glamorous society figure moving between Berlin and New York.

It is notable that in his public pronouncements on his career, from the earliest days onwards, Schmeling places great emphasis upon his *individual* achievement of success, even greatness, despite the odds, and on the *work* that this required. One *earns* success. In this his credo parallels closely the one articulated repeatedly in Gene Tunney's text, in which self-reliance functions as a necessary complement to a work ethic:

> Ich habe die Meisterschaft nicht durch einen Zufall, auch nicht durch unverdientes Glück gewonnen. Ich habe schwer daraufhin gearbeitet, habe das Ziel immer fest im Auge behalten, habe viele Opfer gebracht und so manches durchgemacht.[53]
>
> (I did not win the championship by chance or through luck I had not earned. I worked hard for it, never lost sight of my goal, made many sacrifices and struggled through a lot.)

Like Tunney, on more than one occasion Schmeling is at pains to present his sport as "Facharbeit" (specialized work), and the boxer as "Handwerker" (craftsman; *Erinnerungen*, 96), a skilled worker who cannot rely on luck to achieve his goals. Luck, chance and coincidence naturally play some role in almost every form of sport, yet they are consistently marginalized in both Schmeling's and Tunney's assessments of their sport and their own achievements within it. In this context, the fact that Schmeling did indeed acquire his world title through a stroke of luck takes on particular irony. The idea of random good fortune contributing to a narrative that foregrounds self-determination and willpower is an uncomfortable one. Schmeling later attempted to explain the apparent luck that accompanied him, insofar as it cannot be viewed as a product of his talents as a boxer or his commitment to his sport, by referring to his charismatic "aura", his "star" quality, which he seems to have cultivated almost as a social duty: "Jeder, der sich in der Öffentlichkeit präsentiert, auf welchen Brettern er auch stehen

mag, muß etwas Unwägbares mitbringen, eine gewisse Ausstrahlung, die das Publikum anzieht und für sich gewinnt. Das braucht nichts mit Begabung oder Können zu tun zu haben, es liegt in der Person begründet" (*Erinnerungen*, 58–59). (Anyone who places himself in the public eye, regardless of the context, must have an indefinable quality, a certain aura that attracts and wins over the public. This does not need to have anything to do with ability or skill, but is rather to be found inside the person.) The repudiation of luck is not an essential element in sports narratives: we might contrast the narrativization of the unlikely world champion James Braddock as the "Cinderella Man" or the popularity of the *Rocky* films as what Oates terms pop-iconographic success stories;[54] in both cases luck plays a crucial role in the narratives, and "heart", that is courage and willpower, counts for more than talent and skill. Tunney's and Schmeling's narratives of discipline, work and preparation contrast markedly with more sentimental success narratives, such as *Rocky*, which hinge on faith and opportunism.

An insistence upon individuality, which Schmeling shares with Tunney, is also consistent in his self-presentation from the Weimar era. The themes of discipline and self-assertion, and the pride he takes in *Leistung* (performance), are placed in the context of his Protestant, North German upbringing, and it is certainly plausible to make a connection to a specifically Protestant tradition of industry and personal responsibility. Schmeling was a consciously secular figure whose self-stylization as a "modern", rational man resulted, for example, in his public rejection of the sort of superstitions and lucky charms of which many athletes were (and still are) fond: "Es wäre mir auch ein viel zu unsicheres Gefühl, mich auf solche Dinge, statt auf meine beiden Fäuste verlassen zu können"(*Mein Leben*, 80). (It would worry me to feel I was relying on such things instead of my two fists.) Yet in other respects he could be said to have embodied Protestant, even Puritan, attitudes. His cultivation of diligence and sobriety (he was a lifelong teetotaller and non-smoker), the value he placed on work and productivity, and the insistence upon individual responsibility and personality are all consistent with the same Protestant tradition that could be said to have had such an influence on the modern world, and on America in particular. However, German culture and German sports, for example in the *Turnbewegung* of the nineteenth century, had developed in such a way as to *discourage* individualism and self-assertion as potentially subversive and to downplay the inherent value of performance in favour of drills and training, and

of notions of *usefulness*. Schmeling had perhaps inherited something of Jahn's discipline, but in the context of the 1920s, his attitude is better explained with reference to a transatlantic discourse of self-improvement, individual performance and achievement.

In 1928 Schmeling (probably again with a collaborator) contributed a short essay, entitled "Der Weg des Sporthelden" (The Path of the Sports Hero), to a lavishly produced, three-volume study of the concept of success and of successful individuals. *Der erfolgreiche Mensch* (*The Successful Person*) was edited by the educationalist Ludwig Lewin, and the concept underpinning this project is in itself revealing. There is a presumption shared by almost all the many contributors that it is possible to *learn* to be socially, economically and publicly successful. Their essays proceed from the conviction that the self—one's own sense of oneself as well as the way in which one is perceived by others—can be cultivated, shaped and controlled through determination and training, and that this rounded conception of the successful, modern individual is attainable by all. It is an egalitarian ideal. Throughout the volume, the influence of America ("das Land des Wirtschafts-Erfolges", the land of economic success) and of the perception of American success is pronounced.[55] It is explicit in the contributions considering the positive effects of ingrained American optimism, encapsulated in the "keep smiling" mantra, and the benefits of American youth organizations. It is also implicitly significant in the adoption throughout of rational thinking and *Sachlichkeit* (objectivity) of a type that is consciously removed from a reverence for innate and ultimately mysterious "genius" that was traditionally more typical of Germany, characterized as "das Land der Dichter und Denker" (the land of poets and intellectuals).[56] Modern examples of successful men, such as Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, are presented as case studies, not in "genius", but in the determination "sich nicht unterkriegen zu lassen, sich vielmehr durchzusetzen, unter allen Umständen" (not to be defeated, to assert oneself come what may).[57] America, as "das klassische Land des Erfolgs" (the classical land of success), is offered not as a model culture to be aped by contemporary Germany, but rather as a set of principles that are identified as *modern* and of *universal* relevance.[58]

Schmeling's contribution does two things—it places emphasis upon the significance of individual decisions and determination, and it sketches boxing as a sport, echoing the efforts made in publications such as *Der Querschnitt*, in which preparation and strategy count for more than instinct and spontaneity, and "Verstand" (intelligence) for more than

raw "Mut" (courage).[59] He writes: "Der große Boxer scheint mir […] als Persönlichkeit, als Individualität in das Bewußtsein der Massen einzudringen."[60] (A great boxer seems to me to be able to penetrate the consciousness of the masses in terms of his personality and individuality). This is possible, he suggests, because "das Boxen ist *technisch vollkommenster, geistig durchdachter, von der ganzen Persönlichkeit getragener Kampf*" (boxing is the form of combat that is technically the most perfect, is determined by the mind and carried by the force of personality).[61] His analysis displays the same range of motifs later employed in his autobiographical texts: the orientation around goals, consciousness and willpower—often employed in combination: "der zielbewußte Wille, der schon im jungen Anfänger lebendig sein muß, um zum Erfolg zu führen" (goal-focused willpower must be present even in a young novice if he is to be successful); "der bewußte Wille des jungen Menschen, im Boxen etwas leisten zu wollen" (the conscious will in a young person to achieve something in boxing).[62] This account of boxing and his own career is noticeably meritocratic if not democratic, and it is unsurprising that Schmeling became so attached to the United States, which clearly appealed in a way that went beyond sport. The image projected by Schmeling and reinforced in the media was that of a self-made man, a leitmotif of the age closely associated with the myth of American freedom and democracy.

Closely related to Schmeling's "self-made" success story was his public status as a *professional* athlete. Professionalism was the subject of an intense debate in Weimar Germany and is the aspect of contemporary sports discourse in which an engagement with American capitalism becomes most evident. The crux of such discussions lay in the redefinition of sport as a form of entertainment, as an industry in which the workers, that is to say the athletes, are paid for their performance. Accordingly, sport itself might be reduced to a spectacle to be consumed rather than participated in. For some, this amounted to a moral crisis—at stake was the potentially revolutionary cultural potential of sport. For example, the conservative author Frank Thieß, writing in 1928, draws on a variation of the sociological dichotomy between community and society, or culture and civilization, as developed in the influential work of Tönnies and Spengler. He suggests that there are, comparably, two rival conceptions of sport: "Die erste entwickelt die edlen Instinkte: Mut, Ritterlichkeit, Gerechtigkeitsgefühl, Achtung vor dem Gegner, Energie, die zweite nur die gröbsten: Genußsucht, Sensationslust, Blutgier (etwa in der Hoffnung auf den k.o.)."[63] (The first of these develops

the noble instincts: courage, chivalry, a sense of justice, respect for the opponent, energy. The second develops only the crudest: hedonism, the desire for sensation, bloodlust (as when a knockout is hoped for)). He distinguishes between the benefits of active participation and the supposedly pernicious effects of passive spectatorship, and again uses boxing as his example: "Wer selbst boxt, sucht das Vergnügen im Sport nicht im beliebten k.o., sondern in der geistvollen und instinktsicheren Kampfmethode."[64] (If you box yourself, you don't seek sporting satisfaction in the popular KO but in developing an intelligent and instinctive fighting style.) Implicit in his argument is a contrast between cultural values that he would like to believe are German and the ruthless logic of industry and commerce, routinely associated with America. The principle of amateurism, and the rejection of competitive, performance-oriented sport, were also central facets of the German *Arbeitersportbewegung* (workers' sports movement), whose political conception of sports placed an emphasis on collective participation and the resulting sense of solidarity. Left-wing critics and writers tended to view *professional* sports as a form of *entfremdete Arbeit* (alienated work) equivalent to other forms of work within capitalism—although some, at the same time, found much to admire in the theatrical spectacle of elite sports. This is reflected, for example, in the Communist newspaper *Die Rote Fahne* and the tone of its reporting of Schmeling's world title fight. It notes that "Sportgauner" (sports gangsters) will have made huge sums of money through the fight and that Schmeling would receive 800,000 marks for his performance, a vast sum in the context of ongoing economic crisis and hardship for the majority. "Mit Abscheu und grenzenloser Verachtung wendet sich die klassenbewußte Arbeiterschaft der Welt von dieser barbarischen Kulturlosigkeit ab. Unbeirrt von dem widerlichen Reklamegeschrei der bürgerlichen Sensationspresse wird sie mit verstärkter Energie ihre Sportorganisationen zu einer wahren Massenbewegung ausbauen."[65] (The class-conscious workers reject this uncultured barbarism with disgust and complete contempt. Undeterred by the vile marketing clamour of the sensationalist bourgeois press, they will work to expand their sports organizations into a true mass movement.)

Social class also informed this debate, and there was undoubtedly a degree of European snobbishness informing discussions of the so-called *Amateurfrage* (amateurism question). This was still an era of enforced amateurism in many sports, making tennis, golf and skiing, to name just three, effectively inaccessible to the working classes. The Deutscher

Boxverband (German Boxing Union), which organized amateur boxing in Germany alongside the Arbeiter-Athleten-Bund (Federation of Worker-Athletes) within the *Arbeitersportbewegung*, had worked through the 1920s to encourage amateur boxing, promoting it both in moral terms as the epitome of fairness and as a means to achieve fitness and confidence. Yet for young, working-class men, boxing was not only accessible but offered the prospect of a professional career. It was entirely clear that Schmeling, like many of the most revered so-called prizefighters, was very conscious of the money that could be earned through the sport. His income from his American fights featured prominently in many of the newspaper reports. Throughout his life, for all his efforts in the late 1920s to present himself as a man of "culture" and a lover of art, Schmeling was most credible in his consistent stylization of his life in terms not only of work but of entrepreneurial spirit. He viewed himself—even, it would seem, in his career as an athlete—as a businessman. This even extends, in *Mein Leben*, to an account of his early childhood that consists almost entirely of a description of a series of attempts, beginning at the age of three, to develop his "bescheidene kaufmännische Begabung" (modest talent as a businessman) (*Mein Leben*, 20) by working for a profit, making money and asserting his independence. This was a key reason, as we have seen, for Schmeling's leaving for America, the "Dollarland" (*Mein Leben*, 61). Reflecting on his motives in his 1956 memoir, Schmeling claims to have calculated precisely how much Gene Tunney had earned in his final fight ("78 125 Mark pro Minute"; 78,125 marks per minute). Even after taxes, he concludes, "bleibt so viel übrig, daß es sich wohl lohnt, in dieses Geschäft einzusteigen"(there would still be so much left over that it was probably worth entering this business).[66] His 1930 volume includes a ranking table of the richest fights in boxing history, and Schmeling notes his own place on the list. Elsewhere in the volume he describes it as sensational that he no longer thought in German pfennig but in dollars (*Mein Leben*, 95). In the same volume he is clearly not embarrassed, but rather proud, to include a caricature of himself balancing on a coin featuring the dollar symbol (*Mein Leben*, 70).[67]

These two facets of his public image—the individual achiever and the professional—would not seem to encourage readings of Max Schmeling as a focus for collective or national identity. Indeed, to present him as precisely such a figurehead, the Nazis were obliged either to manipulate or ignore them. In the context of the Weimar Republic, however, the

perception of Schmeling's individuality and his material success was not necessarily inconsistent with the simultaneous perception of him as a representative of the so-called new Germany. It is of course true that the elite status of an athlete such as Schmeling put him at a remove from the socially "levelling" phenomenon of mass-participation sports. In another sense, this very same exclusive status could be said to have promoted a form of self-determined freedom that was consistent with the democratic principle. Thieß, writing in 1927, had in fact argued for just this: an association between modern sport and a democratic society:

> Erst unter demokratischen Bedingungen kann der Sport zur vollen Entfaltung kommen […] Dem autoritären Staat hatte der militärische Schema von Befehl und Gehorsam entsprochen. In der neuen Republik hingegen agieren "freie Menschen"unter "eigengesetzter Disziplin".[68]
>
> (Sport only developed fully under democratic conditions. The militaristic structure of orders and obedience had suited the authoritarian state. In the new republic, by contrast, we saw "free people" acting according to "self-imposed" discipline.)

As already noted, Thieß's views on sport became more negative as he reacted against what he perceived as the over-commercialization of professional sports in particular. Yet the references in his earlier article to personal freedom, in defiance of authority, brings this observation close to an affirmation of American values—a Jeffersonian emphasis on the liberty of the individual over and above forms of identity dictated by nation or state. Thieß was not alone in wanting to embrace the modernity of sport whilst somehow holding in check the processes of rationalization that had in fact helped create it.

This tension, inherent in divergent views of prominent Americans and the values they supposedly represented, is reflected in the ambiguities in Schmeling's emerging image. In the Weimar Republic, individual Americans were often held up as objects of approbation or admiration. For example, President Woodrow Wilson, architect of the Versailles Treaty, became a particular object of hate for both the right and left wings; he was viewed as a symbol of American hypocrisy, preaching democracy and virtue while practising the most materialistic, imperialistic form of capitalism, and profiting from Germany's defeat.[69] Yet during the 1920s American aid and industrial methods had helped to re-establish the German economy, and Henry Ford's exemplary status as

the ultimate self-made man had been cemented in Germany through the publication, in 1924, of his autobiography. Charles Lindbergh, who succeeded in flying solo across the Atlantic in 1927, became a global hero overnight. It was in the wake of Lindbergh's success that Schmeling's public image began to take shape. By 1930, it resonated with a set of ideas, motifs and principles that were associated with America rather than Europe: individual rights as opposed to collective duties; the rational fulfilment of aspirations as opposed to mystical or irrational traditions; forward-looking "youthfulness" as opposed to a backward-looking attachment to the past.[70] What we might term a symbolic association was complemented by a biographical one, as "Maxie" Schmeling gained considerable popularity in the USA, with its huge population of German Americans, and came to view it as a "zweite Heimat" (second home; *Erinnerungen*, 460).

Professionalism in sport necessarily implies a formalization as "work" of an activity that is otherwise not only unpaid but also performed in a more casual or leisurely way. The single-minded dedication of the full-time professional, who could spend the entire working week training and practising, was still considered something of a novelty in the interwar years, at least in the context of German sport. This was, after all, an era in which it was still possible to play Davis Cup tennis and compete at Wimbledon and at the same time represent one's country in ice hockey, as Gustav Jaenecke did during the 1920s and 1930s. This type of elitist amateurism had become less conventional in the USA, where the professional *attitude*, even to an amateur sport such as athletics, was often commented on by Europeans. The approach invited comparison to parallel developments in science and industry, which likewise were moving away from ideals of universal learning and craftsmanship towards narrow specialization. An Austrian sports magazine in 1921 drew an explicit comparison between science and sport: "So wie es unter den heutigen amerikanischen Ärzten fast nur Spezialisten gibt, so sind auch die Yankees-Sportsleute nur mehr in einer Disziplin und auch da weiterspezialisiert, 'fit'."[71] (Just as today's American doctors are almost all specialists, Yankee athletes are also now specialized in and "fit" for just one discipline.)

Against this background, Schmeling's style as a boxer, and his reported training and preparation methods, which demanded six weeks "die mich voll und ganz nur für den kommenden Kampf interessiert sehen" (in which I am focused entirely only on the upcoming fight)

(*Mein Leben*, 79), were the epitome of modern, *sachlich* (objective) thinking. From the start of his career, he was associated with "coldly" rational, strategic thinking and preparation. In his *Erinnerungen* he refers to his "Lieblingsthese" (favourite thesis), which he claims to have explained to George Grosz whilst standing for his portrait: "Mit Taktik und Strategie könne auch ein physisch unterlegener Boxer einen Riesen ausmanövrieren" (A physically inferior boxer can outmanoeuvre a giant through tactics and strategy) (*Erinnerungen*, 94). As he hints in his 1928 essay, Schmeling and his trainer Max Machon came to employ what Kohr and Krauß term "Sporttaylorismus" (sports Taylorism), involving the detailed analysis of film footage in slow motion, which revealed potential weaknesses of opponents and allowed a more systematic and specific preparation for a fight.[72] The method was most famously employed by Schmeling in preparation for his first fight against Joe Louis, when his scientific methods and his systematic "Zergliederung" (dissection) (*Erinnerungen*, 331) of Louis's style before the fight were, ironically, perceived by some American commentators as typically German. The technique was mentioned in *Boxsport*'s preview of his first fight against Sharkey as an essential part of the so-called modern method: "Sharkey und Schmeling besichtigen und studieren Filme, in denen der Gegner im Kampf aufgenommen wurde, um seine Schwächen festzustellen."[73] (Sharkey and Schmeling study films of their opponents' fights in order to identify weaknesses.) Such an approach may well have been modern, but it did not always endear Schmeling to observers of sport, just as Taylorism itself proved divisive.

The global impact of the theory of scientific management and economic efficiency pioneered and popularized by Frederick Winslow Taylor can hardly be overstated. Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) helped to trigger lasting changes in the way in which business and industry organized labour and production. In Germany of the 1920s, Taylorism was embraced as part of a movement towards rationalization that had its origins in the drive for administrative and economic efficiency in Wilhelmine Germany.[74] Taylorism was applied in industrial contexts with great success, as was mechanization of the manufacturing process of the type pioneered by Henry Ford through the assembly lines in his Detroit factory and introduced in his first German car plant in Berlin in 1925. Ford's factories elicited near-utopian praise from many German visitors. As Erhard Schütz has noted, published accounts of such visits emphasize not only their efficiency but their sterile, cold

and indeed inhuman quality.[75] The potential social and cultural implications generated considerable anxiety, particularly about the nature of rationalized work and the status of the worker. Taylor's absolute separation between managerial/administrative work on the one side and manual labour on the other, and the monotony of work that has been broken down into a repetitive sequence of tasks, were the subject of critical accounts from both the left and right wings. Adolf Halfeld was one such conservative critic whose ideas were much discussed. Halfeld had been the US correspondent for the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* and argued against what he viewed as a mechanistic civilization of the masses that devalued the individual, presenting as conceptual alternatives unashamedly elitist notions of *Geist* (Intellect/Spirit) and *Kultur* (culture). The left-wing playwright Ernst Toller, who published an account of his visit to Ford's factories in his volume of travel writing *Quer durch* (1930), presented an equally bleak view of the impact of rationalization and extreme specialization upon individual workers, describing the Ford works as a self-contained totalitarian state: "Die Mechanisierung der Arbeit, soweit sie überflüssige Arbeitskraft spart, hat für die Gesellschaft große Bedeutung. Aber wenn der Mensch zum leblosen Hammer oder Hebel herabsinkt, wird der Gewinn fragwürdig."[76] (The mechanization of work has, insofar as it reduces superfluous work, great significance for society. But if it reduces the human to a lifeless hammer or lever, then the gain is questionable.) In Toller's view the problem would remain insoluble under capitalism. With memories of the mechanical nature of modern warfare still painfully fresh, dystopian visions of a reductively mechanized future, in which human nature itself has been compromised, developed into a characteristic genre of the post-war period. German examples include Georg Kaiser's Expressionist *Gas* plays (1918–1920), Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and a number of fantasies with a more pronounced nationalistic colouring, intended as warnings against the rampant influence of America. Yet, despite or perhaps because of the widespread misgivings about rationalization, the perceived "objectivity" of American methods and culture had a formative influence on the Zeitgeist in the Weimar Republic. By the late 1920s, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) had emerged as a trend and catchphrase, if not quite as a coherent movement, partly in reaction to the extreme emotionality of Expressionism. It manifested itself, for example, in the eschewing of ornament in contemporary design, exemplified by the work of the *Bauhaus* school, and the adoption of a sort of hyper-realism that

valued the documentary, the factual and the so-called real in figurative art and literature.[77] In popular culture, for example in films and in the many novels serialized in newspapers and magazines, the representative figures of this cultural trend were grounded in "reality": engineers, scientists, detectives, journalists, pilots, explorers and the sportsmen and sportswomen who were the focus of an expanding body of reportage and theory and whose sports themselves could be said to mirror the changes that society was undergoing.[78]

Since the late nineteenth century, sport had also undergone rationalization and standardization. Both the state and private enterprise had begun to make use of descriptive statistics as a means of documenting and ultimately better controlling the economy. Thus, in an environment in which "Denken in Quantitäten" (thinking in quantities), as Stefan Jacob puts it, was the norm, sport became a global rather than a strictly local phenomenon through the standardization of rules and the detailed recording and reporting of results and performances, both on specific occasions and through time.[79] With fixed points of comparison in place, documenting improvement and training to achieve this became a less subjective matter. Taylorism, particularly as it was developed by Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, demanded that a given task be studied systematically through time and motion studies, which often involved the use of film. The resulting analysis allowed the worker to complete the task faster and, crucially, more efficiently. Similarly, by breaking down a basic sporting activity into its component parts—whether it was running, jumping, swimming or boxing—it could likewise be better understood and improved. The connection between the two phenomena did not go unnoticed. In feuilletons and essays published in the 1920s and 1930s, sport often served as a convenient metaphor for the growth of international capitalism and for the increased alienation of the worker, not only from the products he or she helped to make but even from his or her own body. The repetitive, mechanical nature of the six-day cycling races that were popular in Berlin and in many other countries offered a springboard for such commentary.[80]

The implications of Taylorism for sport extended beyond an analytical approach to training and performance for competitive athletes and what was often perceived as an obsession with metrics—with records, in particular. It also led to the social and psychological instrumentalization of sport. Just as the workers' movement sought to foster class consciousness and solidarity through participation in sport, businesses and other

organizations saw sport as a means of encouraging greater productivity among employees. In his 1929 analysis of the lives of white-collar workers, the new middle class of employees that had emerged with modern business methods, Siegfried Kracauer notes precisely this. He comments on the pressure to conform and take part in a company's sport and leisure activities, which were ostensibly designed to benefit employees. According to his analysis, participation in sport was in fact more likely to discourage social mobility, reinforce existing hierarchical structures and allow companies to extend their control to "private" life and leisure time: "Der Wert, der von den oberen Stellen auf sie gelegt wird, beweist, daß sie der Machterweiterung des Betriebes dienen."[81] (The value placed on [such activities] by senior management proves that they serve to extend the power of the business.) There was a recognition that the "team building" that takes place in a sporting context might indirectly result in a greater commitment to the sponsoring organization. The emphasis in Kracauer's account upon *control* is telling, for at the same time that a variation of the American dream of self-realization and liberty was being popularized, a culture was emerging in which systematic attempts were being made to control every aspect of the lives of workers and citizens, with the physical (through work and leisure activities such as sport) offering access to the psychological. This totalitarian approach is consistent with the way in which the Nazis subsequently functionalized sport as a mass-participation activity, co-opting the professional Schmeling as a figurehead for it.

The application of analytical methods comparable with those that had transformed business and industry—at the cost of a more rounded, fulfilling experience of work for individual workers—undoubtedly had a revolutionary impact in sport. By the early twentieth century sports science was emerging as a discipline, and the idea that effective training was more important than other factors, such as talent or willpower, had taken hold. In the Weimar Republic ongoing concerns about the overvaluing of results at the expense of experience and of longer-term gains related in part to a long-standing conceptual disagreement within the German gymnastics movement. The movement had long resisted the *Versportung* ("sportification") of a discipline that, in its nineteenth-century, pedagogically inspired form, was non-competitive. But while non-competitive forms of physical exercise—particularly for women, for whom *Leibesübungen* (structured physical exercise) and so-called expressive gymnastics offered an alternative to sport—remained popular, they

had neither the aspirational, global reach of competitive sports nor the same "spectacle" to offer.[82] In Germany, by the 1920s, large numbers of training guides, systems, manuals and schools were available for all sorts of sports, often making exaggerated claims and capitalizing on a Zeitgeist that valued self-improvement. The trend was symbolized by the *Sportschule* (sports school) located in the Sportpalast in Berlin, which was founded in 1922 by André Picard. This innovation was an early example of what might today be termed a private gymnasium or fitness studio and offered the very latest in training equipment (in particular for boxing), a sauna, massage rooms, personal trainers and even a library. The *Sportschule* was designed to appeal to novices as well as experienced athletes: "Aber nicht nur Meisterboxern oder Boxern soll diese Stätte dienen, nein, auch Anfängern und überhaupt jedem Mann mit aktiv sportlichen Wünschen oder Gefühlen, der seinem Körper und seiner Gesundheit in dieser nervenaufreibenden Zeit wichtige Dienste erweisen […] will".[83] (The facilities are intended not only for the use of champion and experienced boxers but also amateurs and any man with active sporting desires and feelings who wants to do his body a service in these stressful times.) The film *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, which likewise conceives of sport as a sort of antidote to the effects of modern urban life, offers a vivid document of this spirit and of many of the various schools of training, health and fitness that proliferated during the 1920s. Boxing features, for example, primarily as a form of exercise and training, with a long sequence in the film focused not on a competitive fight but on the various forms of physical training undertaken by boxers. The pages of *Boxsport* confirmed the growing interest in the training methods and exercise that underpin the sport.

Schmeling was among the first and most prominent German advocates of a systematic, results-focused approach to training and preparation; there is no question that he and his trainer Machon were unusually rigorous and committed to it.[84] His methods, in fact, could be said to have their origins in, say, the revelatory impact of Eadweard Muybridge's photographic studies of *Animal Locomotion* (1887), which include a sequence of images representing boxers, and certainly reflected the German reception and perception of what was commonly referred to as "das praktische Denken" (practical thought) in America.[85] Exaggerated as German expectations of the pragmatic rationality of modern America may have been, there was certainly plenty of evidence for it, and the development and practice in America of a relatively new sport such as

boxing could be neatly mapped onto a narrative in which the twentieth century had supplanted the stagnant, backward-looking sentimentality of the previous century with rational thinking and calculated achievement. As early as 1905, James Corbett, the so-called Father of Modern Boxing, had published a study of *scientific boxing*; Corbett's success, but also his popularity, derived from his employment of an efficient, rationalized approach that could be viewed as the antithesis of the brawling style employed by John L. Sullivan, whom he defeated in a legendary, appealingly symbolic match, fought under the Marquess of Queensbury rules, in 1892.

In the 1920s Gene Tunney consciously styled himself Corbett's legitimate successor, not least through the application of a studied, methodical approach to the preparation and execution of fight plans.[86] Amongst "boxers"—a term often reserved for those adopting a more strategic, defensive approach, as opposed to "fighters" or, in German, *Draufgänger* (scrappers)—Tunney was by far the most prominent and successful advocate of such a rationalized approach. In his 1927 volume, Tunney outlines his belief in the necessity of an "ureigenes System für das Training" (a unique, personal training system), developed by the individual athlete, who must be self-critical and willing to learn through experience and able to study and analyse his own body and style as well as those of his opponents.[87] It was a credo that was intended to be generally applicable and was underpinned by a holistic conception of the modern human, for whom lifestyle was tailored to individual goals, experience was harnessed and learned from, and the body existed in harmony with the intellect.[88] The body, in Tunney's account, is an "Apparat" (apparatus) to be controlled through conscious effort: "ein unendlich fein eingestellter und abgestimmter Mechanismus" (an infinitely nuanced and finely tuned mechanism).[89] The mechanical imagery employed here, and the *systematic* approach to training and competition, and indeed to life in general, would certainly have resonated with German readers in 1927, one of the peak years of the aesthetics of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity). A point of cultural context and comparison is offered, for example, by the representations of boxers and other athletes in the work of the German graphic designer and artist Willi Baumeister, whose work regularly appeared in *Der Querschnitt*. In his paintings and drawings from the late 1920s athletes are represented as geometric, functional forms, perfectly adapted to their tasks.

There can be little doubt that, judged purely in terms of efficacy, Tunney's basic sports science made sense. Even Jack Dempsey, despite his brutal reputation as a wild "tiger" who fought on instinct without much of a plan or defence, proved in fact to have been a thoughtful, systematic boxer as well as an uncompromisingly aggressive one. Like Corbett he also published, after his retirement, a study of technique and strategy.[90] Schmeling, as his 1930 memoir makes plain, hoped to adopt aspects of both Dempsey's and Tunney's techniques and methods—he was aiming, in a way, to become the ultimate "American" boxer, to outdo the Americans at their own game, and this is exactly how the German media represented him in this period.

As we have seen, in their earliest manifestations in the post-war era, boxing reports in the German press were primarily concerned with conveying the drama and excitement of an event. By the late 1920s, however, the range of coverage in the German print media, again under the pioneering influence of the sports sections and supplements of the American press, had extended considerably, and writers such as Meisl and Bötticher were given licence to present a more rounded picture of the most prominent athletes. As a result, a more nuanced picture of the sport itself emerged, with the focus no longer only on the course and outcome of matches but also on the extended periods of training and planning that preceded them. In a long 1928 article for a New Year sports special in *BZ am Mittag*, published shortly before Schmeling's fight against Bonaglia, Bötticher provided a detailed survey of a typical day's training as a "Musterbeispiel" (model example) of modern methods in sport.[91] Schmeling's rigour, sobriety, discipline and intelligence are emphasized throughout the article, and these almost ascetic qualities are clearly assumed to be unusual, at least in Germany. Schmeling, in this account, embodies the modern, autonomous and objective citizen, and it is notable that the author downplays the influence of the trainer, Max Machon, who is not referred to by name in the article. If Schmeling owes a debt, it lies elsewhere: throughout, Bötticher not only makes use of English-language terminology in describing Schmeling's approach, but he makes repeated comparative references to the *standards* set by American boxers: "Auch Schmeling bevorzugt, wie viele amerikanische Boxer, das Holzschlagen" (Schmeling, like many American boxers, favours chopping wood [as part of his training]); "Der amerikanische Boxer atmet möglichst mit jedem Schlag aus, dadurch ist der Schlag natürlich viel schneller und die Rumpfmuskulatur geht natürlich

mit" (American boxers try to exhale with every punch, which naturally makes the punch faster and the muscles of the torso move with it); "Schmeling bevorzugt neben einer lang 'jabbenden' Linken, ähnlich den amerikanischen Boxern, neuerdings den Short arm [b]low, den mit aller Gewalt und Muskelkraft geführten Kurzhieb" (Alongside a long left jab Schmeling has recently come to favour, like American boxers, the "short-arm blow" delivered with all available force and muscle power). Schmeling's (and Machon's) innovation was in the systematic application of these standards in Germany, not in their invention.

The rationalized, controlled training exhaustively documented by Bötticher in fact reflected only one aspect of American boxing. Indeed, part of the appeal of boxing lay then and still lies in the potential for contrasts in technique, temperament and style. While Corbett's victory over Sullivan seems to have been embraced as a symbolic triumph of the modern age, it is certainly *not* the case that Corbett's style was perceived by Americans as particularly or exclusively American. In the Weimar Republic, however, depictions of Schmeling's practical, focused personality and his efficient sports strategies corresponded closely to the image conveyed by contemporary reports on American life and the American character. The optimistic Carl Diem, for example, reporting on a five-week study trip to the USA, suggested that the American national character had been shaped by the nexus of pragmatism, performance and competition that characterized the education system, which tended to assess everything with points and scores.[92] Schmeling himself denied he had a rigid system, as his method depended on the ability to prepare for and adapt to specific individual opponents. It is again notable that the reflective, strategic approach that becomes evident in his 1930 text, and in the accompanying illustrations of the modern, so-called scientific boxer in training, is explicitly identified as *American*. He reports that "präzise Arbeit" (precise work) is required, "da die amerikanischen Boxer viel, viel überlegter arbeiten, als man es bei uns in Europa gewöhnt ist" (as American boxers work in a much, much more systematic way compared to what we are used to in Europe) (*Mein Leben*, 79). To be successful in America, he suggests, it was necessary to adopt American techniques as well as an American attitude, in order to meet the expectations of the American public.[93] It was necessary, in other words, to become an honorary American, so powerful was the presumed link between the sport and the country in which it had become so popular. The assumption underlying Schmeling's approach mirrors that upon which contemporary debates about America and American

influence often hinged—namely that contemporary America was defined by an aggressively efficient business and industrial culture that Europe could only match by attempting to adopt it.

Contemporary reports of Schmeling's fights indicate that his self-perception was to an extent reflected in public perceptions of him. A repeated motif, in accounts of both his performances and his character, relates to *coldness*. As we have seen, his former manager Bülow bitterly likened him to a machine. Elsewhere, similar metaphors were used more positively, or at least to suggest how he had managed to intimidate others. He was described, variously, as "kaltberechnend" (coldly calculating), as "der kalte Denker" (the cold thinker), and "[d]er kalte, lauernde, stets gesammelte Sportsmann" (the cold, predatory, always calm sportsman) (all cited in *Mein Leben*, 55, 61, 63). Rolf Nürnberg in his biography describes Schmeling as "dieses mystische Eis" (that mysterious block of ice) and invests him with a power that would seem to go beyond what was rationally explicable, suggesting that this icy aura had become a part of Schmeling's intimidating image: "Etwas Isoliertes, Eisiges lag um diesen Schmeling, seine Macht war, daß er dastand und nicht recht anzufassen war".[94] (Something isolated and icy surrounded Schmeling. He had the power to be there and yet to be untouchable.) The motif suggests machine-like inhumanity and disinterested efficiency. The impression of coldness and control is present in reports of many of his fights: "Kalt boxend macht er den Gegner für das Ende fertig."[95] (Boxing coldly, he prepared to finish his opponent.) In his report of Schmeling's comfortable victory over Uzcudun in June 1929 ("Kopf schlägt Kraft"; Brains defeat Strength), for example, Meisl sketches a portrait of Schmeling that reinforces the impression that success has been achieved through "cold" intelligence and craft, rather than through raw power or aggression, drawing a direct, fascinating comparison with Tunney:

> Ist es ein Zufall, daß der Shakespeare-Enthusiast und Shaw-Freund Gene Tunney den größten Kämpfer der Boxgeschichte, Jack Dempsey zweimal klar und kalt nach Punkten schlug, ist es ein Zufall, daß im Kampfe um den durch Tunneys Rücktritt freigewordenen Titel Max Schmeling den Kraftkoloß Paolino, der ihn erdrücken zu können schien, klar und kalt nach Punkten besiegte? Ist es ein Zufall, daß die beiden eisenharten Faustkampfhelden Dempsey und Paolino, diese beiden Dampfhämmer an Schlagkraft von Tunney bzw. Schmeling zerschlagen wurden. Nein, Zufall

> ist das nicht, das ist Entwicklungsgeschichte. […] Heute gilt Kopf mehr als Faust sogar – so paradox es klingen mag – im Faustkampfe. Nicht mehr Kraft und Widerstandskraft entscheiden, es ist die Kampfkunst, die vollendete Beherrschung der Muskeln durch das Gehirn, die Berechnung der eigenen und gegnerischen Fähigkeiten, die den Gegner unterliegen macht, es ist der Geist, der sich den Sieg erst baut, zugegeben ein recht körperlicher, recht matiereller Geist, aber doch ein Geist.[96]
>
> (Is it a coincidence that the Shakespeare enthusiast and friend of Shaw Gene Tunney twice defeated the greatest boxer in history, Jack Dempsey, clearly and coldly on points? Is it a coincidence that in the battle to challenge for the title vacated by Tunney Max Schmeling defeated the powerhouse Paolino, who looked like he could crush him, clearly and coldly on points? Is it a coincidence that these two iron-hard boxing heroes, Dempsey and Paolino, these two jackhammers of punching power, were defeated by Tunney and Schmeling respectively? No, it's not coincidence, it's progress. […] These days one's brains matter even more than one's fists in boxing, as paradoxical as this sounds. It's no longer strength and the ability to take punishment that are decisive. One gains the edge over an opponent through ring artistry, through the brain's ability to control the muscles perfectly, through the assessment of one's own and one's opponent's abilities. It is the intellect which constructs a victory—admittedly a very physical, material form of intellect, but it's intellect all the same.)

Then as now, crowds tended to find it easier to warm to less predictable, more obviously passionate, aggressive or emotional performers than to the boxer in the mould of Tunney and Schmeling, who consciously sought to eliminate emotional involvement and all forms of unnecessary expenditure and risk. The calculated control Schmeling brought to his fights, despite its effectiveness, undoubtedly affected his popularity as his career developed. *Boxsport* wondered early on whether the emphasis on dispassionate control reflected a lack of the instinctive "Vernichtungswillen" (will to destroy), occasionally also referred to as "Kampfgeist" (fighting spirit), that a boxer should allegedly possess.[97] Even Meisl, writing quite light-heartedly in *Der Querschnitt* in the wake of the victory against Bonaglia, suggests that Schmeling's approach could be patented as an endlessly reproducible "recipe". In the same article he makes notable use of mechanical metaphors in his description of Schmeling's qualities—for example, his right is likened to a "Schmiedehammer" (jackhammer).[98] But Meisl also asserts that Schmeling is still in the process of developing, and is capable of changing

and *learning*: "Er lernt von Kampf zu Kampf."[99] (He learns from fight to fight.) The image here, which echoes Schmeling's own repeated emphasis on his willingness to learn, to adapt his style for a specific occasion, unites two aspects of the modern, "new" man of 1920s Germany. On the one hand, he is objective and driven by *Leistungswillen* (the will to perform); on the other, he is something of a chameleon, a changeling. The supposed objectivity he embodied should not be viewed only in the light of a culture in which automata and machine-men had taken on a dangerous allure, but as part of an evolving, rational culture of self-improving citizens. Although, as we have seen, Schmeling was frequently celebrated as a role model and as a cause for national pride, these characteristics do not fit the self-image of the German, at least as this figure was commonly represented in contemporary culture, where we find representations of the German as *Untertan* (obedient subject) and a long-established image of sombre inwardness. Today's stereotypes of *German* efficiency originate in part in the tradition of Prussian militarism and bureaucracy, but they have undoubtedly also been coloured by the influence of the image of America in this period.

In the era of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and *Amerikanismus*, Schmeling was an appropriate hero. Whilst he was obviously not *literally* thought of as an American, the image that emerged in the late 1920s reflects a process of redefinition of what it meant, firstly, to be German and, secondly and relatedly, what it meant to be a modern person. The experience of modernity in Germany in the interwar period, which manifested itself not only in a mass culture of "diversion" but also in the rethinking of identity in terms of physicality, individuality and subjectivity, is clearly discernible in sport and its transmission and reception. The radical, even traumatic, nature of this process helps to explain the extraordinary intellectual and artistic response to the new popularity of sports in this period, as well as the many negative voices. Certainly, this process would have been unthinkable in the absence of America's global presence and the subtle transmission of values through popular phenomena, many of which were dismissed by the establishment as trivial or barbaric. In this context Max Schmeling had become, by the early 1930s, identifiable not so much with nationality as with modernity itself, as, to an extent, had sport in general. All of that was to change, radically and lastingly, after 1933.

Notes

1. In this period of economic crisis and political turmoil, professional boxing proved increasingly unprofitable for German promoters, who struggled, with many of the nation's best boxers fighting abroad, with the high taxes and, from 1929, falling numbers of spectators. As a result, there were fewer than ever fight nights at the nation's boxing venues, with many fans preferring to watch amateur boxing at much cheaper prices. See Behrendt, "Boxen mußt de, boxen, boxen", 87.
2. *Boxsport* 399 (1928): 2.
3. Meisl predicted that he would soon return to Germany and resume his career in Europe. Willy Meisl, "Bleibt Bülow bei Schmeling?", *Vossische Zeitung*, 1 December 1928 (evening edition), 5.
4. Rolf Nürnberg, "Begegnung mit Arthur Bülow. Das Schicksal des Schmeling-Entdeckers", *Neue Berliner Zeitung: Das 12-Uhr-Blatt*, 7 June 1930, second supplement (unpag.).
5. James Dawson, "Schmeling stops Risko in the ninth", *New York Times* 2 February 1929, 16.
6. Anon., "Schmeling ist Weltmeisterklasse", *Boxsport*, 436 (1929), 1–2; Anon., "Dempsey + Tunney = Schmeling?", *Vossische Zeitung*, 3 February 1929, 9.
7. Willy Meisl, "Schmelings Ankunft in Deutschland", *Vossische Zeitung*, 27 February 1929 (evening edition), 4.
8. Erwin Thoma, "Schmeling vor der Meisterschaft", *Boxsport*, 457 (1929), 1–6 (1).
9. Ibid., 6.
10. Willy Meisl, "Kopf schlägt Kraft", *Vossische Zeitung*, 28 June 1929 (evening edition), 5.
11. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 136–8.
12. Jack Sharkey was born Joseph Zukauskas.
13. "Schmeling wird interviewt", *Neue Berliner Zeitung: Das 12-Uhr-Blatt*, 12 June 1930. This is a play on Friedrich Hollaender's famous song from *Der blaue Engel*, "Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt" (literally "I am tuned into love from head to toe"; the song's English title is "Falling in Love Again (Can't Help It)").
14. E.S., "Um die Weltmeisterschaft im Boxen", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 12 June 1930. The Berlin-based Nazi newspaper *Der Angriff*, edited by Joseph Goebbels, ignored the occasion altogether and remained viciously hostile to both professional sport and Schmeling in particular until the Nazis' seizure of power.
15. Anon., "Schmelings schwerster Gang", *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, 12 June 1930 (morning edition), 5.

16. Anon., "Wie Max Schmeling Weltmeister wurde", *Berliner Volkszeitung*, 13 June 1930 (evening edition), 3.
17. Ibid.
18. Anon., "Max Schmeling Boxweltmeister, *Freiburger Zeitung*, 13 June 1930 (evening edition), 5.
19. Anon., "Weltmeister Schmeling", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 14 June 1930.
20. Erwin Thoma, "Schmeling Weltmeister", *Boxsport* 507 (1930): 5–9 (5).
21. Anon., "Schmeling zum Weltmeister geprügelt—Katzenjammerstimmung in allen kapitalistischen Ländern", *Die Rote Fahne*, 14 June 1930, 10.
22. Carl von Ossietzky, "Endlich ein Sieger", *Die Weltbühne*, 26/25 (1930): 900–02.
23. Cartoon: "Geld haben sie beide genug gescheffelt" (They both shovelled enough money), *Boxsport* 507 (1930), 11.
24. "Unser Weltmeister", *Jugend* 27 (1930): 425.
25. W., "Vor dem 'großen' Kampf", *Kladderadatsch* 83/25 (1930): 2.
26. Carl-Erdmann Graf von Pückler, "Die Sache mit Schmeling", *Der Querschnitt* 10/7 (1930): 470-2 (472).
27. Rolf Nürnberg, "Schmeling und die Vibration. Von Büchern und vom Zittern", *Neue Berliner Zeitung – Das 12-Uhr-Blatt*, 4 June 1930, second supplement.
28. Rolf Nürnberg, "Die nackte Wahrheit: Schmeling, keine Weltklasse!", *Neue Berliner Zeitung—Das 12-Uhr-Blatt*, 14 June 1930, sports supplement.
29. Rolf Nürnberg was co-founder of the *12-Uhr Blatt* and eventually emigrated (probably in 1937) to the USA, where he published as Ralph Nunberg. There are conflicting reports about an eventual reconciliation between Schmeling and Nürnberg, either in person or by telegram, after the former's victory against Louis in 1936. See Kluge's account, *Max Schmeling*, 394–5.
30. Alfred Eggert, "Jahre des Kampfes—Jahre des Aufstiegs", in Hellmis, ed., *Max Schmeling*, 7–29 (22–3).
31. Ibid., 22.
32. Nürnberg, *Max Schmeling*, 136.
33. Ibid., 139.
34. Herbert Mann, "Die Wahrheit über 'unseren' Weltmeister. Schmelings gemeiner Wortbruch. Undank ist der Welt Lohn. Joe Jacobs, ein Jude wie er leibt und lebt", *Der Angriff*, 7 January 1931, sports page.
35. Lothar Knud Fredrik, "Maxens Sieg und sein Einfluß auf Amerika", *Boxsport* 563 (1931), 4. Sharkey, a second-generation immigrant, was presumably not considered to be "one hundred per cent" American.
36. James Dawson noted: "There were many, however, who did not agree with the official decision, and boos were mingled with cheers when

Sharkey was declared the winner. Not only did the speculators voice strong disapproval, but a canvass of newspaper experts at the ringside showed the majority believed the German was entitled to the verdict." James Dawson, "70,000 see Sharkey outpoint Schmeling to win World Title", *New York Times*, 22 June 1932, 1, 28 (1).

37. Quoted in Willy Meisl, "Schmeling war besser als Sharkey", *Vossische Zeitung*, 22 June 1932 (evening edition), 12.
38. Carnera, notoriously, had close ties to organized crime, and many of his fights are believed to have been fixed.
39. Heckmann, "Der Faustkampf als edle Kunst", 121–2.
40. Roger Kahn, *A Flame of Pure Fire: Jack Dempsey and the Roaring '20s* (Orlando: Harcourt/Harvest, 1999), 44.
41. Oates, "On Boxing", 63.
42. Wolf Wondratschek, "Danke, Schmeling", in Wondratschek, *Im Dickicht der Fäuste: Vom Boxen* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005), 71–8 (76).
43. Quoted by Kahn, *A Flame of Pure Fire*, 322.
44. This is confirmed by Manfred Luckas's interesting assessment of autobiographies by boxers. Luckas emphasizes the function of such texts as a form of testament and self-assertion, and also as expressions of "exemplary" careers, and as such of "didactic" significance. See Luckas, "*So lange du stehen kannst, wirst du kämpfen*", 89–103.
45. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring*, 3.
46. Allen Guttmann, *Sports Spectators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 175.
47. Oates, "On Boxing", 87.
48. Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 74.
49. Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 93.
50. Tunney, *Wie ich Weltmeister wurde*, 181.
51. Anon., "Max Schmeling als Mensch und Boxer", *BZ am Mittag*, 4 January 1928, sports section.
52. We can presume that Schmeling had assistance in the writing of the memoir, just as he did with later publications. Although he presumably approved of and signed off on the text, I do not necessarily identify the narrative voice with the historic Max Schmeling, but rather with the constructed image of Schmeling that is the focus of this study.
53. Tunney, *Wie ich Weltmeister wurde,* 6.
54. Oates, "On Boxing", 58.
55. See *Der erfolgreiche Mensch*, ed. Ludwig Lewin, 3 vols (Berlin: Allgemeine Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft/Eigenbrödler, 1928), III, plates 393–6.
56. Ibid., III, plates 401-16.

57. Ludwig Lewin, "Der erfolgreiche Mensch", in Lewin ed., *Der erfolgreiche Mensch*, I, 17–45 (23).
58. Ibid., 26–7.
59. Max Schmeling, "Der Weg des Sporthelden", in Lewin ed., *Der erfolgreiche Mensch*, III, 407–12 (409).
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 410.
63. Frank Thieß, "Zweierlei Sport", in Meisl ed., *Der Sport am Scheidewege*, 132–9.
64. Ibid., 138.
65. Anon., "Schmeling zum Weltmeister geprügelt—Katzenjammerstimmung in allen kapitalistischen Ländern", *Die Rote Fahne*, 14 June 1930, 10.
66. Max Schmeling, *-8-9-aus* (Munich: Copress, 1956), 7. Further references to this text (*-8-9-aus*) will be parenthesized in the main text.
67. The caricature first appeared on the cover of the weekly magazine *Box-Woche,* 279 (10 March 1929), reproduced in Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 75.
68. Quoted by Luckas, "*So lange du stehen kannst, wirst du kämpfen*", 52.
69. See Dan Diner, *Feindbild Amerika: Über die Beständigkeit eines Ressentiments* (Munich: Propyläen, 2002), 66–75.
70. Compare my account of *Amerikanismus* in Jon Hughes, "'Sprechen wir wie in Texas': American Influence and the Idea of America in the Weimar Republic", *Edinburgh German Yearbook 1: Cultural Exchange in German Literature*, ed. Eloma Joshua and Robert Vilain (Rochester: Camden House, 2007), 126–41.
71. Anon., "Die Leichtathletik in Amerika", *Illustriertes Sportblatt*, 9 July 1921, 7–8 (7).
72. Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 66.
73. Anon., "Die Boxer studieren den Film", *Boxsport*, 505 (1930): 6.
74. For a discussion of Taylor's theories and their application, with particular reference to the German context, see Herbert Mehrtens, "Arbeit und Zeit, Körper und Uhr: die Konstruktion von 'effektiver' Arbeit im 'Scientific Management' des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts", *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 25 (2002): 121–136.
75. Erhard Schütz, "Fließband—Schlachthof—Hollywood: literarische Phantasien über die USA", in *Willkommen und Abschied der Maschinen: Literatur und Technik—Bestandaufnahme eines Themas*, ed. Schütz (Essen: Klartext, 1988), 122–43 (127).
76. Ernst Toller, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*, 5 vols, ed. Dieter Distl et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), IV, 16.

77. For a comprehensive account of the aesthetic and practical principles underpinning *Neue Sachlichkeit* see Sabine Becker, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, 2 vols (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000).
78. The peak years of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, approximately between 1925 and 1930, saw the emergence of the sports novel as a genre, most commonly serialized in newspapers and magazines.
79. Jacob, *Sport im 20. Jahrhundert*, 20.
80. See my account in Jon Hughes, "'Im Sport ist der Nerv der Zeit selber zu spüren': Sport and Cultural Debate in the Weimar Republic", *German as a Foreign Language*, 2 (2007): 28–45.
81. Siegfried Kracauer, *Die Angestellten: aus dem neuesten Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1971), 79.
82. On women's sport and exercise see Wesp, *Frisch, fromm, fröhlich, Frau*, 9. The discourses surrounding all forms of sport and physical activity sprang from deep-seated gender essentialism.
83. From a 1922 article in *Boxsport*. Quoted by Alfons Arenhövel, "Die Sportschule Sportpalast", in Arenhövel ed., *Arena der Leidenschaften*, 97-9 (97).
84. It was also employed by Franz Diener and his trainer Sabri Mahir. Diener had spent a relatively unsuccessful period attempting to further his career in the USA. Mahir, a Turkish immigrant, ran a successful boxing gymnasium in the west end of Berlin. In 1928 Erich Kästner published an interesting account of one of Diener's training sessions at Mahir's gym. His first choice had been Schmeling, but he was turned down by Bülow, shortly before they departed for America. Erich Kästner, "Boxer unter sich", *Das Leben* 6/8 (1928-29): 24–28. See also Krauß, *Schmeling*, 38.
85. Carl Diem, *Sport in Amerika: Ergebnisse einer Studienreise* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1930), 2.
86. Tunney was convinced that Dempsey could be beaten through the application of "speed, defense, science, form". Cavanaugh, *Tunney*, 52.
87. Tunney, *Wie ich Weltmeister wurde*, 47.
88. Ibid., 29.
89. Ibid., 70.
90. Jack Dempsey, *Championship Boxing: Explosive Punching and Aggressive Defense*, ed. Jack Cuddy (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1950). Dempsey also had a lively interest in the idea of systematic "self-improvement" through autosuggestion as popularized by Emile Coué in the 1920s.
91. H. Bö. (= Hans Bötticher), "Der Meister trainiert. Besuch bei Max Schmeling", *BZ am Mittag*, 1 January 1928, unpag. third supplement. The article was republished in the Austrian *Illustriertes Sportblatt*, 7 January, 12–13.
92. Carl Diem, *Sport in Amerika*, 9.

93. Dempsey's controlled aggression was the key to his success as a boxer, but also to his popularity. It was sometimes perceived as an "American" quality akin to directness, honesty and efficiency, and contrasted—as in the publicity surrounding his 1921 title defence against Georges Carpentier—with European "artistry".
94. Nürnberg, *Max Schmeling*, 16.
95. *Boxsport*, 209 (1924): 4. Quoted by Kluge, 58.
96. Meisl, "Kopf schlägt Kraft", 5.
97. "Einen Mangel hat Schmeling noch! Er ist noch immer nicht von dem rechten Vernichtungswillen beseelt."(Schmeling still has one flaw! He still doesn't display the right will to destroy.) Erwin Thoma, "Schmelings großer Sieg", *Boxsport*, 341 (1927): 1–3 (2).
98. Willy Meisl, "Schmelings Knockout Rezept", *Der Querschnitt*, 8:2 (1928), 122, 124 (122).
99. Ibid., 124.

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CHAPTER 4

The Third Reich 1: The "Loyal Citizen"

National Socialism, Power and Sport

The start of 1933 saw the Weimar Republic in a state of political crisis. After two Reichstag elections in 1932 had failed to deliver a workable governing coalition, Adolf Hitler was appointed *Reichskanzler* by President Paul von Hindenburg on 30 January.[1] Hitler thereafter established total power in Germany without ever having a democratic mandate to do so and, despite widespread use of the term, without the need for a revolution. The National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) received 33.1% of the vote in the election of 6 November 1932, which made them the single largest party in the Reichstag, but that did not amount to a clear mandate to form a government. Indeed, it represented a 4% reduction in their share of the popular vote compared to the election that had taken place the previous July. Both the president and the National Socialists' most likely political partners, the right-wing DNVP and the Zentrumpartei, had been wary about conceding to Hitler's demands for power, fearing a National Socialist government would lead to dictatorship. It soon became clear, however, that the alternative proposed by the Zentrumpartei, namely a cabinet under the leadership of Franz von Papen, would not be supported. The decision, with time running out and in the absence of credible alternatives, to allow Hitler to form a cabinet with von Papen as vice-chancellor was made in the hope that the strong representation within it from coalition partners would ensure that the extreme, anti-democratic ambitions of

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the NSDAP could not be converted into government policy. This hope, of course, proved to be naïve—the Nazis celebrated 30 January 1933 as the moment of their long-desired *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power). It was soon clear that Hitler's intention was to move from the pretence of co-operation in his cabinet of *nationale Konzentration* (national concentration), which in addition to Hitler included only two other National Socialists, Wilhelm Frick and Hermann Göring, to a consolidation of absolute power. This would do away with what he saw as the chaos of the democratic system of the Weimar Republic and replace it with a totalitarian state, founded on the same top-down, authoritarian *Führerprinzip* (leader principle) that had formed the organizational basis of his party since the mid-1920s.

In the ensuing months, the Nazis moved ruthlessly to make this ambition a reality, with the Reichstag once again dissolved, forcing another set of elections. Fear of a supposedly imminent Bolshevik terror was artificially heightened, and the Reichstag fire of 27 February, which was certainly stage-managed by senior Nazis, was used as a pretext for the declaration of a state of emergency, allowing the government extraordinary powers and effectively suspending constitutional rights. Jewish citizens and political opponents, in particular the Communists, were subjected to a state-sanctioned campaign of terror that saw Nazi paramilitary organizations, the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) and the *Schutzstaffel* (SS), become an auxiliary (and entirely unqualified) police force. The first of many concentration camps, in Dachau and Oranienburg, were constructed in the first months of National Socialist rule. The campaign that preceded the election on 5 March 1933 was conducted in this atmosphere, with the country flooded with propaganda for the National Socialists. It was once again managed by Joseph Goebbels, the *Gauleiter* for Berlin who had been responsible for propaganda for the party since 1930. Soon after the election, on 13 March, Goebbels was appointed *Reichsminister for Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda), giving him a strategically crucial role in controlling the press, film and broadcasting, and literature and the creative arts. The election saw the National Socialists increase their share of the vote to 43.9%, still not an absolute majority. This mattered little, for with the so-called *Ermächtigungsgesetz* (enabling act), approved by the necessary majority in the Reichstag on 23 March 1933, with only the representatives of the SPD (Social Democrats) opposing it, Hitler attained the power to make and change German law without the

approval of parliament and without the support of the president. This supposedly temporary measure (which remained in place until 1945) effectively transformed what remained of the pluralistic Weimar Republic into a totalitarian dictatorship, under a single, absolute leader. As William Shirer observes: "Thus was parliamentary democracy finally interred in Germany. […] Parliament had turned over its constitutional authority to Hitler and thereby committed suicide."[2]

The consequences of this decision were felt at every level of German society, for Hitler and the Nazis immediately began a programme of enforced centralization and ideological *Gleichschaltung* (synchronization; sometimes translated as co-ordination) of the disparate organizations and structures that had characterized Weimar society, with its international orientation and multiplicity of parties, opinions, lifestyles, beliefs and agendas. The aim of this rapid process of, in Roger Griffin's phrase, "destruction, neutralization and absorption" was the construction of a national *Volksgemeinschaft* (literally, "people's community"), which the Nazis conceived of as an homogeneous, submissive society in which everything followed from and was ultimately controlled by a single authority—Adolf Hitler and the party.[3] Moreover, by making membership of the *Nation* dependent upon belonging to the *Volk* (people), a category constructed in (pseudo-)historical-scientific terms, citizenship itself, and its associated rights and liberties, was fundamentally redefined. In line with this ambition, in the course of 1933 and early 1934, the democratic structure of the republic was dismantled. Unions were broken up and opposition parties banned. Prominent opponents, including journalists such as Carl von Ossietzky and Egon Erwin Kisch, were arrested and imprisoned. The organizations that made up the fabric of German society, from the justice system, police force, civil service and education system to the medical profession, agriculture and media, were quickly brought under the control of the one-party state. The impression was of swift and brutal efficiency, although it should be stressed that the administrative authority in the Third Reich was hugely complex, even chaotic, with multiple offices frequently overlapping or competing.[4] The so-called *Arierparagraph* (Aryan clause), an anti-Semitic law passed in April 1933, forbade the employment of non-Aryans in the civil service. Alongside calls for a boycott of Jewish-owned businesses, it represented the first step on the path that would lead within three years to the Nuremberg laws, which withdrew full citizenship from German Jews, and ultimately to the sequence of decisions that resulted in the Holocaust. The cultural implications of

the process were immediately discernible in the blacklisting of hundreds of authors, academics and artists, dramatically symbolized by the ceremonial book burning organized at German universities (in particular by the *Deutsche Studentenschaft*, the conservative German Student Union) in May 1933. The list of banned authors included many of the most prominent and celebrated names of the preceding decade including Bertolt Brecht, Alfred Döblin, Joseph Roth, Erich Maria Remarque, Erich Kästner, Siegfried Kracauer and Heinrich Mann.

Sport was not exempt from this process, and the transformation of both the organization of sport in Germany and the cultural value invested in it by National Socialist ideology had a lasting impact on the perceptions of Max Schmeling. For a period in the mid-1930s, especially following his victory against Joe Louis in the Olympic summer of 1936, Schmeling became a living symbol of the racist ideology and geopolitical ambitions of the Nazis. Yet it was by no means automatic that Schmeling would be adopted in propaganda and promoted as a German hero. He was, as we have seen, closely associated with the society and culture of the Weimar Republic, with a foreign power, the USA, and with one of the most commercialized and international sports. His manager since 1929 was the American Joe "Yussel" Jacobs, who was the son of Hungarian Jewish immigrants, for which *Der Angriff* had not shied away from attacking him. To understand how Schmeling's image continued to evolve after 1933, in sometimes contradictory or ambiguous ways, it will be helpful first to assess the manner in which the Nazis came to view sport and athletes in general, and boxing in particular. The organization of sport in Germany was also subjected to a process of *Gleichschaltung*. Soon after the seizure of power, by the end of March 1933, the *Arbeitersportbewegung* (Workers' Sports Movement) was broken up and its property seized. With the appointment in April 1933 of Hans von Tschammer und Osten as *Reichssportführer* with total oversight and power over all organized sport in Germany, sports clubs and organizations were forced to fall in line with Nazi expectations, amongst other things by excluding Jews and other non-Aryans, or face serious consequences. By the summer of 1934, mandatory affiliation with a central organization under the leadership of von Tschammer und Osten was demanded. The *Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* (German Reich Federation for Physical Exercise) replaced the *Deutscher Reichsausschuss für Leibesübungen* (German Reich Committee for Physical Exercise) that had been chaired by Carl Diem in the Weimar Republic.[5] And just as

those deemed to be non-Aryan suffered in every other walk of life, so too did they suffer in the field of sports.

Although there had in fact never been a dedicated National Socialist sports organization prior to 1933, the party had long believed in the practical and symbolic role that sport and physical exercise could play in the creation of a united *Volksgemeinschaft*, physically and psychologically ready to fight another war—the barely concealed long-term strategy that was central to Hitler's decision-making. The party (unlike the parties of government in the Weimar Republic) had from its earliest days favoured obligatory sports and gymnastics for children.[6] Although Hitler was not known to be personally interested in sports himself (with the partial exception of motor sports), in his treatise *Mein Kampf* (1925–6) he makes the case—like others in the 1920s—for an educational curriculum in which the body receives training as well as the mind: "ein Ausgleich zwischen geistigem Unterricht und körperlicher Ertüchtigung" ("a balance must be created between mental instruction and physical training").[7] But whereas Willy Meisl, for example, places considered emphasis on achieving an actual balance between mind and body, Hitler's argument has a different emphasis. Although he frames his views using the discourse of rationalism, they are underpinned by the superficial social Darwinism that informs his ideas about "health", nation and race. He suggests that an exclusive emphasis on *Geist* (intellect) has led not only to a lack of physical fitness, of the type that is parodied in the first part of *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, but to moral and spiritual decadence. It is a claim that is ideological in nature and, by linking physical strength with morality and character, fundamentally irrational.

> Die ausschließlich geistige Einstellung unserer Bildung der oberen Schichten macht diese unfähig in Zeiten, in denen eben nicht nur der Geist, sondern die Faust entscheidet, sich auch nur zu erhalten, geschweige denn durchzusetzen. In körperlichen Gebrechen liegt nicht selten der erste Grund zur persönlichen Feigheit.[8]
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> (In times when not the mind but the fist decides, the purely intellectual emphasis of our education in the upper classes makes them incapable of defending themselves, let alone enforcing their will. Not infrequently the first reason for personal cowardice lies in physical weakness.[9])

In this passage Hitler recommends sports and gymnastics training as a means of literally and metaphorically "hardening" the individual so

that he or she is impervious to sensual, emotional and indeed intellectual interests and attractions. Much as Jahn had envisaged in the previous century, Hitler understands sport primarily as a means of shaping national character, which is to say of forming militaristic qualities such as strength, discipline, courage and self-confidence, and the ability to defend oneself. With such a conception of sports education in mind, it is at one level perhaps unsurprising that he saw boxing as a particularly appropriate form of sporting activity. The paragraph in *Mein Kampf* dedicated to boxing is worth quoting in full, as it not only illustrates the Nazis' instrumentalized view of sport, and of boxing in particular, but also perfectly reflects the patterns of thought that dominated the National Socialist imagination.

> Es dürfte kein Tag vergehen, an dem der junge Mensch nicht mindestens vormittags und abends je eine Stunde lang körperlich geschult wird, und zwar in jeder Art von Sport und Turnen. Hierbei darf besonders eines Sportes nicht vergessen werden, der in den Augen von gerade vielen "Völkischen" als roh und unwürdig gilt: des Boxens. Es ist unglaublich, was für falsche Meinungen darüber in den "Gebildeten" Kreisen verbreitet sind. Daß der junge Mensch fechten lernt und sich dann herumpaukt, gilt als selbstverständlich und ehrenwert, daß er aber boxt, das soll roh sein! Warum? Es gibt keinen Sport, der wie dieser den Angriffsgeist in gleichem Maße fördert, blitzschnelle Entschlußkraft verlangt, den Körper zu stählerner Geschmeidigkeit erzieht. Es ist nicht roher, wenn zwei junge Menschen eine Meinungsverschiedenheit mit den Fäusten ausfechten als mit einem geschliffenen Stück Eisen. Es ist auch nicht unedler, wenn ein Angegriffener sich seines Angreifers mit der Faust erwehrt, statt davonzulaufen und nach einem Schutzmann zu schreien. Vor allem aber, der junge, gesunde Knabe soll auch Schläge ertragen lernen. Das mag in den Augen unserer heutigen Geisteskämpfer natürlich als wild erscheinen. Doch hat der völkische Staat eben nicht die Aufgabe, eine Kolonie friedsamer Ästheten und körperlicher Degeneraten aufzuzüchten. Nicht im ehrbaren Spießbürger oder der tugendsamen alten Jungfer sieht er sein Menschheitsideal, sondern in der trotzigen Verkörperung männlicher Kraft und in Weibern, die wieder Männer zur Welt zu bringen vermögen.[10]

> (Not a day should go by in which the young man does not receive one hour's physical training in the morning and one in the afternoon, covering every type of sport and gymnastics. And here one sport in particular must not be forgotten, which in the eyes of many "folkish" minded people is considered vulgar and undignified: boxing. It is incredible what

> false opinions are widespread in "educated" circles. It is regarded as natural and honourable that a young man should learn to fence and proceed to fight duels right and left, but if he boxes, it is supposed to be vulgar! Why? There is no sport that so much as this one promotes the spirit of attack, demands lightning decisions, and trains the body in steel dexterity. It is no more vulgar for two young men to fight out a difference of opinion with their fists than with a piece of whetted iron. It is not less noble if a man who has been attacked defends himself against his assailant with his fists, instead of running away and yelling for a policeman. But above all, the young, healthy body must also learn to suffer blows. Of course this may seem wild to the eyes of our present spiritual fighters. But it is not the function of the folkish state to breed a colony of peaceful aesthetes and physical degenerates. Not in the respectable shopkeeper or virtuous old maid does it see its ideal of humanity, but in the defiant embodiment of manly strength and in women who are able to bring men into the world.[11])

Boxing, in this account, is defended as educationally useful, in that it teaches the "Angriffsgeist" (spirit of attack) the Nazis so valued, and as authentic and practical, for example as a means of self-defence. It is telling that an alternative course of action in the self-defence scenario—running away and seeking help—is presented as implicitly weak and symptomatic of degeneracy, reflecting the National Socialists' instinctive refusal to trust in established authorities and their belief that violent action needed no further justification. The importance attached to a willingness to take punishment ("Schläge ertragen lernen" (learning to take blows)) is just as interesting. The comments might seem to anticipate Joyce Carol Oates' reading of the boxer's ability to accept and transform pain: "pain now but control, and therefore triumph, later".[12] The difference is that for Oates the boxing ring is a space quite distinct from everyday life, and she notes that the best boxers often become, in George Garrett's words, "good and gentle people" outside the ring.[13] Hitler, by contrast, imagines that there will be a direct transfer from the boxing ring to everyday life. His ideal citizen is embodied by a "masculine power" that is sado-masochistic in character: defined by pain, and willing to suffer it in order to be able to inflict it. Moreover, Hitler's account of boxing presents a distorted mirror image of that which, as we have seen, was offered by many liberal commentators and by boxers themselves in the Weimar Republic, who viewed the sport as modern, precise and egalitarian.

The evocation in Hitler's text of a "Menschheitsideal" (ideal of humanity) suggests another way in which National Socialism as a fascist movement was predisposed to embrace sport. One of the ways in which National Socialism, as an extreme example of fascist theory put into practice, distinguished itself as a political ideology was in the employment of so-called mythic structures, rather than rational argument or ideas, as part of its appeal. This understanding of fascism has been persuasively developed by Roger Griffin. Griffin uses the concept of the mythic to account for "the inspirational, revolutionary power which an ideology can exert whatever its apparent rationality or practicality".[14] He suggests that *all* ideologies have this character and that fascism is further defined by the use of a "pallingenetic" myth, that is to say a myth of rebirth or renewal, in combination with populist ultra-nationalism. The trappings of religion are employed, but stripped of the metaphysical character of actual religion, with its reliance upon divine forces and an ahistorical understanding of time; the Nazis were, strictly speaking, anti-religious, operating on a decidedly historical timescale, and were reliant on the masses as a collective rather than on a god. Yet the claims National Socialism made about, say, race, *Volk*, or nation and the sacred quality with which these motifs were invested were mediated by mythic narratives, symbols and rituals. This powerful strategy underpinned much of the propaganda output and was incorporated into the infrastructure of the Third Reich. It emerged in part from the explicit invocation and indeed reinvention of various forms of mythology in the work of Nazi academics and ideologues such as Alfred Bäumler and Alfred Rosenberg, who made selective use of the work of Bachofen, Nietzsche and the anti-intellectual *Lebensphilosophie* (life philosophy) of Ludwig Klages, as well as the extensive proto-fascist *völkisch* (folkish; see note) culture of the late nineteenth century.[15] Klages' anti-intellectualism, alongside Rosenberg's wide-ranging attempt to identify the ancient, historic roots of the *Rassenkunde* ("racial" science) of Aryan culture in an eternal struggle with the Semitic, fed into the movement's cultish veneration of hero and martyr figures.

Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s an ideal of so-called self-sacrificing heroism occupied a central place in the party's mythology. Like many on the right, the Nazis venerated the "fallen" soldiers in the war as national heroes whose sacrifice would be rewarded in the future with the re-emergence of a stronger fatherland. This was mirrored in the cultish celebration of their own "fallen" as *Blutzeugen* (martyrs;

literally, "blood witnesses")—the Nazis who had lost their lives, for example, in the failed putsch of 1923. Perhaps the most extraordinary example of the party's use of a symbolic hero figure is in the elevation of Horst Wessel, who held the rank of *Sturmbannführer* in the SA, was shot in his home in January 1930 by a pimp who was also an ex-partner of his girlfriend, and died of his injuries some three weeks later. Goebbels engineered a process of mythologization in which Wessel was memorialized as a martyr for the cause. His life and death were represented, as Sabine Behrenbeck argues, in terms of the "Grundelemente jedes Heldenmythos […] (Geburt, Kindheit, Jugend, Intitiation, Weg der Prüfungen, Lehre und Gefolgschaft, Opfertod und Auferstehung)" (basic elements of every hero myth […] (birth, childhood, youth, initiation, the road of trials, apprenticeship, martyrdom and resurrection)).[16] The historical facts—a flawed individual and the murky, sordid circumstances of his death—were essentially irrelevant in this process. Horst Wessel's name became indelibly associated with the "Horst Wessel Lied" (Horst Wessel Song), which was based on a text by Wessel that had been published in *Der Angriff* on 23 September 1929 and which became *the* Nazi anthem in the Third Reich. The man himself rapidly became a mythical figure with emblematic significance for the party and—since the party identified itself with the nation—for the *Volksgemeinschaft* and its supposed yearning for liberation ("Die Knechtschaft dauert/ nur noch kurze Zeit" (Our subjugation will not last much longer) as the song has it) and redemption.[17]

Once the National Socialists had attained power, the morbid symbolism of heroic (individual) death and future (national) rebirth lost its immediate relevance, as did the need for a heroic figure so closely associated with the SA. Yet, although the *Heldenkult* (heroic cult) in National Socialism increasingly focused on the figure of the *Führer* himself, individual national heroes were still strategically promoted, often opportunistically, by Goebbels. This applied to further *Blutzeugen* for the cause, such as the party functionary Wilhelm Gustloff, who was assassinated in 1936, and the diplomat Ernst vom Rath, whose assassination in Paris in November 1938 served as the pretext for the pogroms of the *Reichskristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass), but also to successful pioneers and so-called conquerors of various kinds, such as the Austrian climber Heinrich Harrer. The idea of *Kampf* (struggle, battle—but also more prosaically "fighting") as *Lebensprinzip* (life principle) could be retained if the establishment of the Third Reich was not understood as

the ultimate goal, but rather as a step in the journey towards *Endsieg* (ultimate victory) over all Germany's enemies.[18] As such, sports heroes could be singled out as special representatives of this principle and other national qualities. The victorious athlete who was willing to endure pain for his cause embodies both the heroic potential of the sort the Nazis wished to foster, as well as the vitalistic aesthetics of the body triumphant over the restrictions of *Geist*. This, as we shall see, is the context in which Max Schmeling, both in the present and through a selective curation of the memory of his past career, became subject to a process of mythologization over which he had little control and influence.

"A German Boxer Is not Allowed to Cry"

Despite Hitler's praise for boxing as practical training, many National Socialists tended to view the international, professional sport with suspicion. Moreover, unlike so-called German sports such as gymnastics, boxing had a limited history in Germany, was highly commercialized and had a record of champions from a variety of national, ethnic and social backgrounds. Before Schmeling or indeed any other professional boxer could be celebrated as a heroic German, the sport first had somehow to be brought within the compass of both the new regime's centralized organizational structures and, just as importantly, the ideological and cultural *Weltanschauung* with which the party was attempting to imprint all aspects of life. A concerted effort was therefore made in the first years after the *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power), taking a lead from Hitler's often-cited thoughts in *Mein Kampf*, to define a specifically German approach to boxing. The tone and content of sportswriting in the German press after March 1933 reflects this, whilst the most explicitly theoretical evidence is to be found in Ludwig Haymann's volume *Deutscher Faustkampf nicht pricefight* (*German Pugilism not Prizefighting*, 1936), which is examined in detail in Chap. 5 alongside other responses to Schmeling's victory against Joe Louis.[19] The process went hand in hand with the reorganization of all sporting activities through the totalitarian *Gleichschaltung* that was a hallmark of Hitler's first years of power.

The manner in which boxing came to be adopted by the Nazis reflects some of the ways in which the party, once in power, proved itself willing to adapt some of the core beliefs that had evolved during what it liked to refer to as the *Kampfzeit der Bewegung* (the movement's years of struggle). As hinted at in the passage in *Mein Kampf*, the Far Right

had traditionally identified with the gymnastics movement, and with its advocacy of non-competitive *Leibesübungen* and rejection of results-driven sport. The latter was, as we have seen, commonly associated with America in particular. Throughout the Weimar era the *Deutsche Turnerschaft*, which was both the oldest and most politically conservative of sports associations in Germany, was opposed to Germany's participation in international competition in all sports, including in the Olympic Games.[20] It was equally vehemently opposed to professionalism. This attitude was adopted by many within National Socialism and was, for example, the official line taken by the *Völkischer Beobachter* party newspaper in the early 1920s and later by Goebbels' *Der Angriff*. It was also expressed by influential figures such as Rosenberg, who was particularly opposed to the ideals of the Olympic movement, with its emphasis on inclusiveness and international comradeship, as an expression of precisely the sort of internationalism and pacifism that National Socialism detested.[21] Yet competitive sport had been integral to service in the SA, the paramilitary organization that had been founded, in name, as the *Turn- und Sportabteilung* (gymnastics and sport section) of the NSDAP. Ludwig Haymann, the aforementioned author of *Deutscher Faustkampf*, had been the German amateur heavyweight champion (and in 1928 succeeded Schmeling as the professional heavyweight champion of Germany) and was a member of the SA from its earliest days; from 1921 he functioned as a sports advisor and trainer within the organization. The image of the SA within the movement was one of robust, "hardened" physicality. In December 1929, on its regular page for the SA ("Der Kampf um Berlin" (The Battle for Berlin)), *Der Angriff* featured illustrations of SA men sparring and working on a punching ball; the purpose of the training is not to prepare them for sport but rather to "harden" themselves: "Unermüdlich wird von unseren Braunhemden der Körper gestählt!"[22] (Tirelessly our Brownshirts harden their bodies.) A few months later, on the day of Schmeling's fight for the world title, the newspaper featured an article recommending to its readers that they learn "Selbstverteidigung" (self-defence). Although *Der Angriff* at this point still contained no reports at all on professional sports and ignored Schmeling's world championship fight, it was happy to recommend boxing as a form of self-defence training, supposedly because of the threats posed by contemporary society: "[W]ehe dem Rowdy oder Einbrecher, der mit einem Boxer handgemein werden sollte. Mit Leichtigkeit gelingt es dem im Boxen Ausgebildeten die schwingerartigen

Windmühlenschläge des Gegners durch Vor- oder Schrägbücken zu meiden und kühl den Moment abzupassen, bis er einen "tötlichen" [sic] Treffer landen kann."[23] (Pity the hoodlum or burglar who tries to get physical with a boxer. A man who has trained in boxing can easily avoid the wild haymakers thrown by his opponent by bending forwards and sideways and will clinically wait for the right moment to land his "deadly" punch.) As Hans Joachim Teichler observes, it seems clear that boxing training in the SA, which was notorious for its brutality and violence, was seen as a means of increasing the political "Schlagkraft" (impact) of the party.[24] In other words, boxing was seen as something like a martial art with real-world applicability. In his 1936 treatise, *Deutscher Faustkampf*, Haymann, despite objecting to the exploitation of boxers for commercial or entertainment purposes, approves of their political, paramilitary exploitation: "Auf Grund [Hitlers] These, daß Terror nur durch Terror gebrochen zu werden vermag, war er sich bewußt, daß der Boxer in hohem Maße jene Eigenschaften besaß, die ihm dazu befähigten, rücksichtslose Gewalt erfolgreich niederzukämpfen."[25] (Hitler was aware, because of his belief that terror can only be broken by terror, that boxers possessed many of the qualities needed to successfully counter ruthless violence.) Such disingenuous claims that violence was used only reactively were commonplace; the truth is that, in total contrast to the claims made for boxing by its contemporary advocates, the SA valued boxing as a means of training for violent confrontations of the sort they routinely provoked and encouraging a brutal mentality. From 1929 the SA boxing championship was held at the annual party conference, and after 1933 many boxers, including Brecht's erstwhile friend Paul Samson-Körner, applied to join both the NSDAP and the SA.[26]

By the early 1930s there had been a clear shift in National Socialist thinking, in recognition of the undeniable popularity of sport and the potential prestige to be gained from German successes in sports on the international stage.[27] The *Völkischer Beobachter*, which had previously been opposed to it, began to offer more substantial coverage of international sports, for example of Schmeling's successful defence of his world title against the American Young Stribling in July 1931. The following year the paper appointed Haymann, who had since retired as a boxer, its chief sports editor. *Der Angriff*, likewise, finally introduced a sports section in 1931. The question of Hitler's and the party's attitude to international sports had to be immediately addressed in early 1933,

because in 1931 Berlin had been awarded the right to host the 1936 Olympic Games. Within weeks of taking over as chancellor, Hitler had confirmed that the Games would go ahead as planned, with full support from his party and government. There was continued opposition to a German Games from some within the *Volkssportbewegung* (the conservative "People's Sports Movement") and the *Deutsche Turnerschaft*, who had demanded either that Germany should withdraw altogether from Olympic competition or, fancifully, that the Games should be run in accordance with racist ideology, for example excluding Jews and non-whites. The National Socialists' agreement to proceed with the Games, and moreover to meet the non-exclusionary requirements of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), at least on paper, is an indication of the political value that the party now saw in international sports. The Berlin Games were of course then stage-managed in a notoriously calculated attempt to project a positive vision of Nazi Germany to the world, with great store being set in the success of the German team.

As the *gleichgeschaltet* (synchronized) structure of the Third Reich emerged in the course of 1933 and 1934, sport and physical exercise were at the forefront of a prescriptive programme for citizens, and in particular for German youth. Both the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) and the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (Federation of German Girls), the party youth organizations for boys and girls aged between 14 and 18, in which membership was compulsory from 1936, integrated into their activities not only gymnastics, the most "German" of sports, but a range of competitive sports, including athletics and, for the boys, boxing. There were organized competitions at regional and national levels, for example at the annual *Turn- und Sportfest* (gymnastics and sport festival) and the *Deutsches Jugendfest* (German Youth Festival), in which by 1939 some seven million German children were taking part. Subsidized sporting activities and events, alongside organized exercise programmes, were also incorporated into the centralized organizations that, in place of the disbanded trade unions, claimed to represent employees—the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German work front) and its subsidiary organization *Kraft durch Freude* (KdF; Strength through joy), which was established to offer Germans more varied, albeit strictly organized, leisure activities. Schmeling's fight against Walter Neusel in Hamburg in August 1934 (about which more below) was, for example, organized in collaboration with KdF, which subsidized tickets (offering many for free) and cheap day-trip packages for Berliners. The result was an unprecedentedly

large crowd of at least 80,000.[28] In a clear sign that previous resistance to the quantification of performance had been abandoned, a national certificate of sporting achievement, first established in 1912, was made available by the *Reichssportführer* to all citizens. The *Reichssportabzeichen* (Reich sport certificate) was to be awarded to those individuals who achieved a range of minimum standard performances in various disciplines, including athletics, swimming, cycling and shooting.[29] The underlying agenda in all of this was, of course, ideological and driven by power and control—the intention was to utilize physical education and sports training as part of a controlling process of *totale Erziehung* (total education) through which individuals would be moulded, both psychologically and physically, into disciplined and obedient members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. It was described by von Tschammer und Osten as a means of creating character and willpower—"Der Wille wächst mit der steigenden Kraft und Leistung des Körpers" (Willpower grows with the body's increased strength and performance)—and developing soldierly qualities—"Nur wer seinen Körper beherrscht, lernt die Waffe beherrschen und meistern" (Only a person who is in control of his body will learn to control and master a weapon).[30]

Boxing was subjected to the same process of ruthless Nazification as other sports. The organizations responsible for both the amateur and professional sport were swiftly integrated, in accordance with the *Führerprinzip*, into an authoritarian administrative structure built around disciplinary categories (*Fachsäulen*), each with a dedicated *Führer* answerable to the *Reichssportführer*.[31] The two key organizations for professionals, the *Verband deutscher Faustkämpfer* (VDF; the Association of German Boxers, representing professional boxers, founded in 1919) and the *Boxsportbehörde Deutschlands* (BBD; the German Boxing Authority, the sport's governing body, founded in 1926), were effectively taken over by the NSDAP within weeks of the March election. *Boxsport*, under the editorship of Erwin Thoma, became the official mouthpiece of this restructured, politicized version of the sport. The journal signalled its stance with a brief announcement in March 1933, in which Hitler's views on boxing from *Mein Kampf* were quoted and the hope expressed that boxing would now be introduced into German schools, "zur Erstärkung und zur Ertüchtigung der Jugend" (in order to strengthen and discipline young people).[32] Just a week later *Boxsport* formally announced the "Umbildung" (restructuring) of the VDF through a ten-point decree. Item one on this list of draconian rules

declared: "Sämtliche Juden, auch getaufte, sind von der Mitgliederliste zu streichen"[33] (All Jews, including baptized Jews, are to be struck from the membership list). Boxers were furthermore released "von der weiteren Erfüllung eines mit einem Juden eingegangenen Arbeits- oder Managervertrages" (from continuing to honour a work or managerial contract with a Jew). They were also banned from using Jewish doctors, dentists and lawyers. Board members who were not National Socialists ("die keine nationale Gesinnung nachweisen können" (who could not demonstrate a national sensibility)) were to be suspended, and members who in any way attempted to oppose the organization's national agenda were to have their membership revoked (and thus prevented from boxing in Germany). The commentary accompanying this announcement furthermore suggested that henceforth "das Geschäftliche" (the business side) would be replaced by a new "Idealismus" (idealism), an indication that underpinning all of this was an antipathy towards the very idea of a professional boxer: "Wir haben das System des deutschen Berufsboxsports der neuen Staatsform deshalb so strikt angepasst, damit jedem klar einleuchtet, wo wir stehen, und welche Ziele wir in Zukunft erzielen" (We have been so strict in matching the system of German professional boxing to the new form of the state so that it is clear to all where we stand and which goals we are aiming for in the future). This was the new face of professional boxing in Germany, and as with the regime itself the message was clear—accept it or face the consequences. At the same time, the Jewish president of the BBD, Peter Ejk, was replaced by the *Führer* of the fourth *Fachsäule* (the combat sports category), the SA-*Sturmbannführer* Hans-Joachim Heyl. Its board was likewise filled with NSDAP members, including Franz Diener.[34] The reformed BBD initially made the decision to prevent amateur boxers from joining the VDF and turning professional, again reflecting the hostility to professionalism that was typical of the *Volkssportbewegung*. This decision was, however, reversed in 1934, as a more pragmatic attitude to professionalism, and in particular to the most prominent German professional athletes, was adopted.[35]

There were of course lasting consequences to the boxing organizations' brutal anti-Semitic decrees. Jewish professionals were faced with a stark choice—move abroad or give up the sport. Among the Jewish boxers who chose to emigrate in 1933 was Erich Seelig, German champion at both middleweight and light-heavyweight, who left for the USA, where he continued his career. Others simply found that their careers

were over. The attempt to prevent boxers from working with Jewish managers and promoters was aimed squarely at the exclusion from the sport of some of its most influential and successful figures, such as the Jewish promoters Joseph Burda and Paul Damski. The Turkish-born and very popular Sabri Mahir, the former trainer of Franz Diener, was also effectively prevented from continuing to work in Germany. On 11 April, *Boxsport* published an unpleasant and manipulative announcement (translated into English and French) that was directed at domestic and international organizers. It reported the names and contact addresses of a number of the most prominent German professional boxers who would henceforth, it claimed, be managing their own affairs.[36] The list included the name of Walter Neusel, the heavyweight boxer managed by Paul Damski, but in his case the announcement was presumptuous and premature, as Neusel, rather than abandoning Damski, chose to move with him to Paris so that they could continue to work together, in so doing risking his career in Germany. Yet Neusel (about whom more below), unfortunately, was an honourable exception. Needless to say, without the contribution of Damski, Burda and other Jewish managers and promoters, the sport would almost certainly never have developed in Germany to the extent that it did. The same applied to some of the most successful sports journalists and writers, many of whom were either Jewish or unacceptably liberal and now found themselves forced out of their jobs; Willy Meisl, for example, emigrated to Britain in 1934, and Rolf Nürnberg's critical biography of Schmeling was fairly swiftly banned and he eventually went into American exile.

Another who suffered was Johann Wilhelm Trollmann, an ethnic Sinto from Hannover, who contested the German light-heavyweight title against Adolf Witt in the Bockbrauerei in Kreuzberg, Berlin on 9 June 1933.[37] His treatment stands as a case study in the hypocrisy that underpinned the management of sport in Germany after 1933, with ability and results now considered to be of less importance than conformity to racial, political and social categories. Trollmann provoked both in terms of his ethnic identity *and* his personal manner and technique. At this stage, only Jews had been formally excluded from membership in the VDF, which had followed the letter of the so-called *Arierparagraph* ("Aryan clause") law of April 1933. Yet other non-Aryan Germans, such as Roma and Sinti, were increasingly subjected to various forms of prejudice, disadvantage and abuse. Trollmann had been moderately successful since the late 1920s, both as an amateur and a professional,

and had cultivated an unorthodox style that anticipated the extravagant showmanship later associated with post-war boxers such as Muhammad Ali—"dancing" feet, side-steps, evasive manoeuvres and deliberate dropping of the guard in order to counterpunch. It was clear that this style, which could be vaguely associated with his ethnic identity (for example with the tradition of so-called gypsy dances), was unacceptable to the authorities. Previewing the fight, *Boxsport* makes this clear and attempts to blame his supporters for encouraging him to be a "Ringclown": "Trollmann hatte besonders viele Anhänger unter denen, die sich mit der neuen Richtung des Verbandes nur schwer oder garnicht abzufinden wussten, Anhänger, die das Theatralische in seinem Stil, diese zigeunerhafte Unberechenbarkeit schätzten."[38] (Trollmann had a particularly large number of supporters who were reluctant or unwilling to accept the new direction of the Association—supporters who appreciated his theatrical style and the unpredictability of the gypsy.)

The title fight ended in confusion and scandal. The fight went the full twelve rounds and, according to *Boxsport*, was initially declared "no decision" following an intervention by the VDF's chair, Georg Radamm, who had no official role in judging the fight but had removed the *Meisterschaftskranz*, the victory wreath awarded to the German champion, from the arena. Following further discussion, this verdict was then overturned, and Trollmann declared the champion, with, according to *Boxsport*, massive pressure from a vocal crowd filled with Trollmann's supporters and after a tearful appeal from Trollmann himself. Yet only days later the BBD announced that the fight itself should indeed have been declared "no decision", and Trollmann's title was withdrawn. The report in *Boxsport* identified what it considered a poor standard from both fighters and suggested, somewhat bizarrely, that they should have been told in the middle of the fight that they were not performing at a sufficiently high level for a champion to be declared. Revealingly, the report also suggested that Trollmann's *style* was not worthy of a champion: "Der Zigeuner ist nun einmal ein Stimmungs-Boxer, ein Instinkt-Boxer, der mit seinem Herumspringen manches Mal von der sportlichen Linie stark abweicht. Oft genug kann man davon absehen, diese Unseriosität seines Boxens anzuprangern. Geht es jedoch um eine offizielle Meisterschaft, dann besteht die Gefahr, daß der innere Wert eines Titels durch den merkwürdigen Stil dieses Instinktboxers herabgezogen werden kann."[39] (This gypsy is quite simply a boxer driven by emotion and instinct, and by jumping around as he does often deviates from

what is acceptable in sporting terms. Often enough one can overlook it and decide not to criticize the lack of seriousness in his boxing. But if an official title is at stake, then there is the danger that the inner value of a title will be diminished by the peculiar style of this instinct boxer.) The suggestion here that a German championship has an "inner" value that demanded an appropriately serious—implicitly German—style was something new and ran counter to the nature of a sport that thrived on the diversity of styles, techniques and tactics that were possible under a unified set of rules. The report in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* reflected both the racism underpinning the decision and, relatedly, the gendered behavioural norms that the Nazis were seeking to enforce. Boxing, as the passage in *Mein Kampf* made clear, was to be associated with masculinity, "hardness", and an imperviousness to pain. Trollmann had openly displayed emotion, and cried in public, and it seems that this apparent effeminacy, which was categorized as "un-German" and thereby implicitly linked with his identity as a gypsy, disqualified him from bearing the symbolically important title of German champion:

> Es gab keine andere Lösung, wenn man den deutschen Berufsboxsport nicht der Blamage aussetzen wollte, und es musste so kommen, denn man stellt sich einen deutschen Meister anders vor. Ein deutscher Boxer darf nicht weinen, erst recht nicht ein Meister in aller Öffentlichkeit heulen oder wenigstens den "Heulenden" markieren.[40]
>
> (There was no other solution if German professional boxing was to be spared being exposed to ridicule. No other decision was possible, as we picture a German champion rather differently. A German boxer is not allowed to cry, let alone a champion weeping in full public view, or at least pretending to.)

Such a blatantly political intervention in a professional sports event indicated the extent of the so-called Nazification of the sport.[41] Equally significant was the suggestion, widely made in the press, that Trollmann, who had long been known as "Gypsy Trollmann" despite his protests against this nickname, practised a form of "Instinktboxen" (instinct boxing) that was also "un-German".[42] By the time of Trollmann's next fight, against the German welterweight champion Gustav Eder in July 1933, the VDF had even stipulated that he should either adopt a German style of boxing or face disqualification. What exactly this stipulation meant, which ran against both the letter and spirit of the rules of boxing, was

unclear, but Trollmann's outrageous and courageous response was to attempt to conform to it in the most provocative way imaginable—he appeared in the ring with his dark skin dusted white with flour and his black hair dyed blond in a parody of an Aryan. He then abandoned his usual style and attempted to engage Eder in the sort of orthodox, static infighting that he had always avoided. The result was a victory by knockout for Eder and, ironically, a positive review for Trollmann from *Boxsport*, which approved of his abandonment of his familiar style, even though he knew it would cost him the victory: "Trollmann ging unter mit fliegenden Fahnen" (Trollman went down fighting).[43] Trollmann's career petered out through the 1930s, and in 1942 he died, most probably murdered by execution, in the Neuengamme concentration camp near Hamburg.

The sad case of Johann Trollmann reflects the confusion that was a feature of National Socialist attitudes to performance in sports. He was the victim of a twofold, contradictory assault. On the one hand, there was the belief that, no matter how talented the boxer, ethnicity should in itself be sufficient to disqualify an athlete from being a *German* champion, so Jewish boxers were no longer able to compete. This segregationist view of sport was certainly not an invention of the Nazis—the exclusion of black Americans from the major professional baseball and basketball leagues offered a legitimizing parallel, for example. The abilities of the non-Ayran athlete could be explained by the pseudo-scientific *Rassenkunde* (racial science) that was central to National Socialist ideology. Supposedly innate racial characteristics, labelled "primitive" or "degenerate", which served as a pretext for exclusion from the *Volksgemeinschaft*, might, according to this view, offer a certain advantage in the sporting arena. Thus, sporting "excellence" was turned on its head and used as a further argument for the supposed inferiority of certain groups of people. This line of thought informed the attempts from some within the *Volkssportbewegung* to establish a racially selective alternative to the Olympic Games, for example.

Trollmann was subjected to a second line of attack, arising from the uncomfortable awareness that Nazi ideology was also premised on the supposed *superiority* of the Aryan race, both intellectual *and* physical. This claim was used to legitimize the systematic ostracizing and dehumanization of those who did not fall into this artificial category. To concede that a boxer such as Trollmann was indeed, in some ways, superior, no matter how this was explained, might expose the premise as the

fallacy it so evidently was. Thus, by suggesting that Trollmann's technique as a boxer, and indeed his behaviour in general, was somehow un-German, and by making it an expectation that German boxers should box in the German style, a first attempt was made to make a *national* claim on an international sport. Boxing, with its combination of the tactical and the physical, was a suitable target for such a strategy, in a way that the absolutes of physical performance in athletics, for example, were not. It was, of course, nothing new to suggest that different nations had developed different boxing styles, and it was not necessarily fascistic to suggest that there might be a typically German style, any more than it is to speak of other cultural differences between nations. What we find in National Socialist sporting discourse, however, is rather more extreme, even if it was rarely applied with consistency—namely the attempt to define an approach to boxing that reflected the supposed national character, effacing individual differences and preferences, and even to claim boxing itself as a German sport. The representation of Max Schmeling in Nazi Germany was shaped by this process, which saw his image and reputation selectively employed as an *example* to others.

Within a few months in early 1933, boxing in Germany had been transformed from a largely inclusive, fair and diverse sport, which had seemed to reflect the spirit of the Weimar Republic, into one that was toxic, politicized and much diminished. Max Schmeling had not fought in Germany since 1928, but as the nation's most famous contemporary boxer there was an immediate expectation that he would fall into line with this new, nationalized version of his sport. His willingness for the most part to conform to the demands placed on him by the new regime had a decisive impact on his reputation and public image both in Germany and internationally. In their celebration of German culture in exile, published in English in 1938 as *Escape to Life*, Klaus and Erika Mann observe that very few non-Jews were forced into exile from Hitler's Germany after 1933.[44] Those who did choose to leave were exiles by choice, motivated above all by conscience. They note, for example, the case of the poet Oskar Maria Graf, who had been so offended by his omission from the list of banned authors in 1933 that he had demanded that his books also be burned. The Manns observe that even "Aryan" Germans whose previous political affiliations or lifestyle made them natural opponents of the Nazis had the option of staying, but to do so had to be willing to be loyal citizens of the new regime and to conform to its expectations.[45] For many, of course, voluntary exile after

1933 was simply unaffordable or impractical. Max Schmeling, who had been so proud to count himself a part of Berlin's liberal society, unquestionably had both the means and the contacts to become such an exile by choice in America, where he felt so comfortable. It is clear, however, that he never seriously considered this an option. He even later claimed, extraordinarily, not to have particularly noticed what had happened: "Ganz in meine privaten Freuden und Sorgen verstrickt, bemerkte ich kaum die Zeitenwende, als die sich später die Machtübernahme durch Hitler herausstellte" (Caught up in my private joys and cares I hardly noticed the epochal change that Hitler's seizure of power later turned out to have been) (*Erinnerungen*, 259). After the war, in the subsequent mythologizing of Schmeling as a "great" and a "good" German, much was made of the fact that he had never joined the NSDAP, retained his Jewish manager, and had little influence over the way in which the Nazi propaganda machine represented him and indeed his sport. All of this is true, but in the case of his non-party membership and retention of Jacobs, it should be understood in the context of a regime that was willing to be flexible in such matters when it was deemed practically necessary. Schmeling was not in fact put under pressure to join the party or formally required to dismiss Jacobs as his manager, even though the arrangement was in contravention of the VDF's edict of April 1933 banning Jewish managers. The theory was that this would allow him to retain a certain air of political neutrality on the international stage. It was also the case that Schmeling was able to refuse the honorary membership in the SA offered to him prior to his second fight against Louis in 1938. As Kluge has documented, he was subsequently assured by Himmler's office that he would not be expected to join either the SA or the SS, as some other prominent sportsmen had done.[46] That said, considerable efforts were made in propaganda and publicity to claim Schmeling for Hitler's Germany.

We shall return to the post-war representation of Schmeling's conduct in the Third Reich in Chap. 6, but what can be asserted with certainty is that *simply by choosing to remain in Germany* Max Schmeling made a statement in 1933. The decision signalled that, like millions of others, he was willing, essentially, to become the loyal citizen that the regime demanded. There are three parallel cultural contexts to his subsequent representation in Hitler's Germany. Firstly, he retained his status as a star of German popular culture under National Socialism, which was considerably enhanced by his marriage to the film actress Anny Ondra. Secondly,

his career as a boxer reached a second peak during the 1930s and was subjected to propagandistic appropriation. Finally, he functioned as a representative German, fulfilling the regime's expectations of its citizens in, for example, his public support for state-backed initiatives, and then through his military service during the war. In each case, it is possible to make a case for Schmeling as an ideologically conformist figure, who with little intervention could be presented as the ideal German. At the same time, as we will see in Chaps. 5 and 6, there were sufficient "faultlines" in this image to allow Schmeling's retrospective (self-)reinvention as a non-conformist, if not an oppositional, figure.

Schmeling later reported that in the spring of 1933, just before he embarked for the USA to fight Max Baer, he had the first of what were to be many private meetings with Adolf Hitler, during which he was asked to act as a sort of ambassador for Hitler's Germany: "'Dann können Sie ja die Schwarzseher beruhigen, wie friedlich hier alles ist and daß alles vorangeht'" (Then you can reassure the pessimists that everything is peaceful here and things are going well) (*Erinnerungen*, 263). Schmeling was happy to admit that he was flattered to be courted by Hitler in this way. This is consistent with the desire, also expressed earlier in *Mein Leben*, for public acknowledgement and conspicuous success, and in this respect his attitude after 1933 was not inconsistent with that displayed in the Weimar Republic:

> Auf dem Heimweg fühlte ich mich natürlich ein wenig geschmeichelt; man kann ja durch kleine Gesten bestochen werden. Ich war jetzt seit Jahren Deutscher Meister und Europameister, ich hatte die Weltmeisterschaft als erster Europäer im Schwergewicht errungen. Nie aber hatte sich in Deutschland – in den Staaten war das anders – ein Politiker um mich gekümmert, weder ein Minister geschweige denn ein Reichskanzler hatte je Notiz von mir genommen. Ich kann mich nicht erinnern, nach einem meiner Erfolge auch nur ein Telegramm erhalten zu haben. (*Erinnerungen*, 264)

> (On the way home I naturally felt a little flattered. You can be bribed by such small gestures. I had been German and European Champion for years, I had been the first European to win the world championship. But in Germany—in the States it was different—no politician had ever shown an interest, no minister, let alone a chancellor, had ever taken any notice of me. I can't even remember receiving a telegram after any of my victories.)

Fig. 4.1 The photograph of Schmeling and attendants giving the Hitler Salute, following his victory over Steve Hamas in 1935, that proved so controversial. Joe Jacobs is on the far right (Everett Collection Historical / Alamy Stock Photo)

This retrospective assessment of his own psychology is credible—it confirms that Schmeling, although he retained a belief that he was somehow apolitical, was from the moment Hitler gained power willing to co-operate with demands placed on him in the most uncritical way, choosing to see in them personal affirmation rather than exploitation for political ends. This effectively meant, although he perhaps did not immediately recognize it, that he had given up control over the image he had helped to create for himself.

His reward came in the personal access he enjoyed to Hitler and to other senior figures, such as Goebbels, which was further facilitated by close friendship with influential party members such as Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's photographer (who also took many photographs of Schmeling). When he came under investigation in 1934 for contravening the regime's strict laws governing currency exchange (he had apparently privately traded dollars for shares and gold), a direct appeal to

Hitler sorted the issue out for him.[47] Other problems and transgressions, which might have cost others their career (or worse), were also forgiven in subsequent years. These included the potential embarrassment of a photograph of Joe Jacobs seemingly delivering the Hitler salute with a lit cigar in his hand after Schmeling's second fight against the American Steve Hamas, which took place in Hamburg in March 1935 (Fig. 4.1). This strange, almost comical, episode resulted in considerable bad publicity for Jacobs in the USA, where the episode was considered evidence of his stupidity or naivety—"When Yussel Went Nazi" was the headline above the photograph when it appeared in the *New York Daily News*.[48] When it appeared in several publications in Germany, it incurred the wrath of the *Reichssportführer* and the *Führer* with responsibility for sports journalism, Herbert Obscherningkat.[49] In Schmeling's account (*Erinnerungen,* 297–298), the potentially serious consequences of this minor scandal were avoided through another personal plea to Hitler to allow him to maintain the professional relationship with Jacobs. Of course, a *quid pro quo* was expected. Schmeling, internationally useful to the regime as a globally popular athlete, also proved himself by and large willing to co-operate with its expectations regarding his domestic profile. For example, he joined other celebrities in collecting for the *Winterhilfswerk* (Winter Relief Drive, the annual, politicized charity collection to provide winter relief for the poor and needy), was available when required for photo opportunities with Hitler and other senior Nazis, acted as an informal ambassador for the Berlin Olympics, and, by 1934, had agreed to fight once again in Germany. This last decision was pragmatic at one level, as we shall see, yet symbolically resonant all the same. And if Schmeling, the bachelor with an "international" lifestyle, might have seemed a poor fit with the Nazis' vision of a German masculinity defined by the bond with *Heimat* (homeland) and family, his marriage in the summer of 1933, and his establishment of a household in the German countryside, transformed him into an entirely suitable figure to be held up as an example to the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Max and Anny

On 8 June 1933, one day before the Trollmann–Witt fight signalled the end of boxing as a fair sport in Germany, Schmeling fought for the first time since Hitler rose to power. The fight, against the Californian Max Baer, took place once again in New York, in oppressive midsummer

heat, and resulted in a hugely disappointing defeat for Schmeling. After his meeting with Hitler, Schmeling had been in the USA since April and undertook an exhibition tour in the company of the fight's promoter, Jack Dempsey, which had generated a lot of goodwill and positive publicity. The fight itself, however, was a fractious occasion in which, for the first time in Schmeling's career, race became an issue. Baer, sometimes known as the "Merry Madcap" because of various eccentricities, wore the Star of David on his trunks, much to the surprise of many commentators in the American press. He claimed in explanation that his father was Jewish and indeed is still commonly referred to as a Jewish boxer. Although this may not, in reality, have been the case, Baer's political gesture is perhaps the first indication of the way in which Schmeling's name was to become inseparable from the politics of his homeland.[50] Few of the German press reports of the fight, which represented a career low point for Schmeling, chose to mention Baer's self-identification as Jewish. A notable exception was the rabidly anti-Semitic *Der Stürmer*, which deemed the fight a "Kultur- und Rassenschande" (cultural and racial disgrace).[51] In *Boxsport*, in a display of brazen hypocrisy given the magazine's recent content and the merciless condemnation of Trollmann in the very same edition, Erwin Thoma chose to highlight that Schmeling had lost fairly to a "Halbjude" (half Jew) and claimed that: "Sport bedeutet fair play jedem gegenüber, der sich an die sportlichen Regeln halt. Auch uns interessiert lediglich, wie der Kampf vom sportlichen Gesichtspunkte aus zu beurteilen ist."[52] (Sport means fair play to all who keep to the rules of the sport. We too are only interested in judging the fight from the sporting perspective.)

The loss to Baer was followed by another defeat, to the American Steve Hamas, in February 1934, and as a consequence Schmeling was no longer a prime contender for the world championship, which Max Baer went on to win, comfortably, against Primo Carnera in June 1934. The German press did not see a way back to the top for Schmeling, assuming that the apparent loss of form was the start of a terminal decline in his career, even though Schmeling was still only 28. "Es müßte ein Wunder geschehen, wenn Schmeling noch einmal eine Chance in Amerika gegen einen führenden Schwergewichtler erhalten sollte."[53] (There would have to be a miracle for Schmeling to get another chance against a leading heavyweight in America.) It was now several years since anyone in Germany had actually seen Schmeling fight, and in the absence of reports of victories abroad his popularity

was starting to wane. It therefore was for both sporting and commercial reasons that Schmeling decided in 1934 to refocus his career and once again to fight in Germany and Europe. No miracle was in fact required to change his fortunes. A return to form and a series of reasonably convincing victories allowed Schmeling to return to the top and to achieve renewed popularity, which peaked after 1936. But the over-dramatization of the so-called tragedy of Schmeling's supposedly career-ending form in 1934 allowed his comeback to be represented in equally dramatic terms—as a near-miraculous regeneration. His existing image, in the meantime, was subjected to a process of revision that largely served the interests of the Nazi regime. The correlation between Schmeling's rising stock and the emergence of the new Germany may have been coincidental, but it undoubtedly played a significant role in his transformation between 1933 and 1936.

The loss to Max Baer had coincided with a revelation of the sort that was certain to attract media interest and that served to reinforce Schmeling's affiliation with his homeland. In June 1933, Schmeling's engagement to the film actress Anny Ondra was finally and formally made public, with the news that they were soon to be married at the registry office in Charlottenburg, Berlin. The *Berliner Morgenpost* illustrated its report of the Baer fight with portraits, presented side by side, of Schmeling and Ondra.[54] Thoma began his report for *Boxsport* with the news, claiming it was not really a surprise, and proclaiming "Boxheil dazu, Maxe!" (A boxing "hail" to you, Max!). It was also news outside the sports pages and the subject of a certain amount of gentle satire. *Simplicissimus* played on the coincidence of the defeat to Baer and the announcement of the engagement in a poem:

> Sonst stets frisch wie eine junge Rüde,
> War er diesmal schon zu Anfang müde
> Und betupfte nur des Gegners Kinn!
> Tat man ihm vielleicht was in die Suppe?
> Oder lag ihm seine Ondra-Puppe
> Allzu schwer in Herz und Hand und Sinn?

(He was usually as fresh as a young pup/But this time was tired at the start/And could only dab at his opponent's chin!/Had they put

something in his soup?/Or was he weighed down by his Ondra doll/ Heavily in his heart, hand and mind?)

The proximity to a sporting low point was unfortunate, but it was nevertheless a significant moment, not only for Schmeling and Ondra personally, but in the cultivation of their respective star personas. Hereafter, Schmeling's marriage to and life with Anny Ondra became a staple of German popular media, of interest and relevance, as stories about celebrity couples always are, well beyond the sports pages. They were married at the Charlottenburg registry office on 6 July 1933, which was followed on 20 July by a church wedding in Bad Saarow-Pieskow, the village and so-called artists' colony in Brandenburg where Schmeling had a house, nicknamed the "Dudel".[55] As Schmeling later observed, this "Traumhochzeit" (dream wedding, *Erinnerungen*, 234) in a scenic location provided the German media with ample material, as did the pleasing image of the tough boxer "knocked out" by the charming actress ("Schmeling KO" was the title of a literal representation of this in a cartoon by Olaf Gulbransson in *Simplicissimus*).[56] In November 1933 the popular magazine *Das Leben* published several of the photographs taken by the couple, all outside in the garden or on the *Gut* (estate) attached to the house, during the honeymoon they spent there. The sentimental text emphasizes the ambitions of "Max und Anny" (the title refers to them in this way, already a recognizable "brand") for a privileged life (and lifestyle) that would in a previous age have been the preserve of the landed aristocracy:

> Hier, in soviel Herrlichkeit, ist es von Natur aus leichter, die äußere Harmonie durch die innere zu ergänzen und so versteht man ohne weiteres, daß dem Dudelbauer und der Dudelbäuerin das Leben hier so großartig gefiel, daß sie sich mit der Abischt tragen sollen, dieses Leben auf noch breiterer Basis fortzusetzen: angeblich wollen sie einen Großgrundbesitz erwerben und auf größerem Fuß das Dudelhofleben, um das sie Tausende beneiden mögen, weiterführen.[57]

> (Here, in such a glorious setting, it's naturally easier to find a sense of inner harmony to match the external one. And so one immediately understands that the "Dudel" farmers enjoy life here so much that they are considering expanding it: apparently they would like to acquire a larger property so that they can live the country life, which thousands would envy them, on a larger scale.)

This is just one of a number of such illustrated magazine features to appear during the 1930s, all of which, while ostensibly being unpolitical, present the couple in terms that subtly echo many of the leitmotifs of National Socialist ideology—the harmony between inner self and nature (recalling *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil)); the dream of expansion (*Lebensraum* (living space)); the attachment to home (*Heimat*); stereotypical, essentialist gender roles, for example in the association between femininity and fertility (Ondra was usually depicted in the garden) and between masculinity and conquest. Schmeling, for example, was often depicted with horses or hunting, one of the passions he cultivated during this period. His interest in hunting had begun in the 1920s, when it occasionally attracted scorn or ridicule as an aristocratic pretension.

Schmeling's enthusiasm was evidently real, and in 1930s there were numerous published accounts and depictions of his hunting expeditions, often in the company of his trainer Machon and friend and neighbour at Saarow, the sculptor Josef Thorak.[58] The opportunities for social "networking" offered by hunting were undoubtedly also significant for him. Other friends with an interest in hunting, with whom Schmeling associated at the Roxy Bar, a Berlin venue popular with Germany's sporting elite, included the legendary "flying ace" (and influential Nazi) Ernst Udet and the aristocrat Adolf Friedrich zu Mecklenburg-Schwerin, a noted hunter and "explorer". It was at the latter's suggestion that Schmeling and Ondra spent their official honeymoon at the Baltic coastal resort Heiligendamm close to his residence and hunting grounds at Bad Doberan.[59] If hunting had class associations, after 1933 it also came to have a certain political significance, with many senior members of the party, like Schmeling, belonging to the *Reichsbund Deutsche Jägerschaft* (Reich Federation of German Hunters), which, despite not being a party organization, fell under the control of the *Reichsforst- und Jägermeister* (Reich Master of Forestry and Hunting), one of the many titles held by Hermann Göring. Although both Hitler (famously, a vegetarian) and Goebbels disapproved of hunting for sport, participation in a formally organized and licensed hunt could certainly function as a sign of political acquiescence. It was well publicised that Schmeling often hunted with Göring at his estate, Carinhall in the Schorfheide forest in Brandenburg—at least until 1936, when the publication of photographs taken at Göring's private hunting parties was forbidden, lest the impression be given that the *Reichsmarschall* (Marshal of the Reich, yet another of his titles) was not hard at work.[60] Many of the motifs with which

Schmeling and Ondra were portrayed in 1933 remained firmly in place in the post-1945 depictions of the couple. Their marriage, insofar as it was publicly visible, quickly became part of a narrative that was far from neutral in its implications.

Anny Ondra (1903–1987, originally Ondráková) was a star in her own right.[61] She was a film actress who by 1933 had starred in over 60 films in various European countries, including Germany, Britain and Austria, as well as in her native Czechoslovakia, where her career had started and she had established a long-term creative (and for a time romantic) partnership with the actor and director Karel Lamač. She collaborated with Lamač on dozens of films and in 1930 founded a film production company with him, based in Germany: the Ondra-Lamač-Filmgesellschaft. With her blonde hair and athletic figure, Ondra had early on tended to be typecast as what Dorothea Friedrich describes as a "Kindfrau" (child-woman), whose sexual allure is offset by a certain infantalization, an image of child-like innocence.[62] Internationally she is today undoubtedly best remembered for the two films she made in London with Alfred Hitchcock, one of which was *Blackmail* (1929), Hitchcock's first sound film, which gave her the honour of starring as the first of many morally ambiguous blondes in Hitchcock's films. The transition to sound film had initially caused Ondra a problem, and, because of her accent, her speaking part as a Londoner in the sound-version of *Blackmail* was synchronized by the British actress Joan Barry.[63] However, after returning to Germany, her home since the late 1920s, she was able to establish herself quickly as a star of sound film, her accent often explained by casting her as an Austrian. Ondra made a sequence of mostly successful "screwball" comedies and musicals with Lamač, including *Die vom Rummelplatz* (1930) and *Kiki* (1932), which made her into an honorary German film star. She was certainly well known enough to resort to extreme measures to avoid media reporting of her burgeoning relationship with Max Schmeling in the early 1930s.

Schmeling of course had had his own experience of film and had professed a fascination both with the medium and with the stars it produced: "Ganz ehrlich muß ich noch feststellen, daß mir der Schauspielerberuf wahrscheinlich auch deswegen so sympathisch ist, weil man als Schauspieler wie als Boxer populär sein kann, und diese Volkstümlichkeit kann man nicht mehr entbehren, wenn man einmal Blut geleckt hat" (If I'm honest, I have to state that acting as a profession probably appeals to me so much because as an actor you can be

popular, as you can as a boxer—and it's hard to do without this once you've had a taste of it) (*Mein Leben*, 99). He had previously been romantically linked, at least in the German media, with two other film stars, Jarmila Vacková (like Ondra a Czech) and his co-star from *Liebe im Ring*, the Russian-born Olga Tschechowa.[64] Schmeling was also undoubtedly aware of a number of prominent celebrity liaisons between boxers and actresses, including his idol Jack Dempsey, who was married to the actress Estelle Taylor, and the popular German middleweight champion Kurt Prenzel, who had married the American actress Fern Andra. In an oft-repeated anecdote (*Erinnerungen*, 201-2) Schmeling had "courted" Ondra, who was a neighbour in his apartment block at Sachsenplatz, Berlin, and used his friend Paul Damski, the boxing promoter who was soon to be forced into exile in France, as an intermediary to arrange their first meeting in 1930. Over the next few years their relationship, although known to many and occasionally referred to in public sources, was conducted with extreme discretion, despite the aforementioned well-known relationships between sports and film stars. Ondra seemingly even went so far as to force Schmeling to put on a disguise to avoid their being recognized together in public. Despite this, by 1932 the relationship was hardly a secret, referred to in film magazines and in the publicity material for Ondra's film *Eine Nacht im Paradies* (1932), and reported as a fact in Rolf Nürnberg's biography, which even included the anecdote about their introduction via Damski.[65]

Schmeling later explained the discretion with which they conducted their relationship in the context of their respective roles as stars:

> Wir hatten verabredet, unsere Verbindung so lange wie möglich geheimzuhalten. Der Grund war sehr einfach. Anny und ich waren Stars, und wir hatten eine genaue Vorstellung von den Verpflichtungen, die damit verbunden waren. Der Star, gerade erst geboren, war etwas anderes als der Publikumsliebling vergangener Generationen. Zum "Glamour", der ihn umgab, gehörte eine gewisse Alltagsferne, etwas Geheimnisvolles. Jeder Schritt in die banale Wirklichkeit beeinträchtigte seine Popularität beim Publikum.
>
> Ein Star hatte daher keine Herkunft, kein Familienleben, keine Kinder. Er war ein Idol, dessen Zauber nicht gebrochen werden durfte. Wer gegen diese Regel verstieß, verlor nicht nur an Magie, sondern auch an Marktwert. (*Erinnerungen*, 220)

> (We had agreed to keep our relationship secret for as long as possible. The reason was very simple. Anny and I were stars, and we had a precise understanding of the obligations that go with that. The star, still a new concept, was something different to the favourites of the public of previous generations. The "glamour" of the star required a certain distance from the everyday, something mysterious. Every step into the banality of reality would affect our popularity.
>
> A star therefore had no background, no family life, no children. The star was an idol whose magic could not be broken. Whoever broke this rule did not just lose magic, but also market value.)

There may have been a degree of truth to this assessment of the nature of stardom, certainly as it was applied to female film stars in this era. It had relatively little direct relevance to sport, despite the myth, played on in *Liebe im Ring*, of the detrimental effects of sex upon athletic performance. Yet as we have seen, Schmeling differed from the vast majority of other successful athletes in cultivating precisely such an image as an "Idol", and in his autobiography he had made clear that he saw an inherent value in popularity: "Popularität ist doch schön und ich gäbe viel drum, wenn ich sie nie zu vermissen brauchte" (Popularity is wonderful and I would do a lot to ensure I never lose it) (*Mein Leben*, 105). For Nürnberg, the relationship was another example of Schmeling's luck, although he does not try to argue that it was in any way false. Far from it, he provides the first example of what was to become a standard motif in accounts of Schmeling's life—the unlikely, profound bond with Ondra. Even in Nürnberg's account, the humanizing effect on his image is made clear:

> Was für andere Menschen Wunschtraum eines Lebens blieb, wurde für ihn Erfüllung. Sie verstanden sich rasch, der zurückhaltende, kühle, nüchterne, kluge Boxer und die kaprizöse, talentierte, witzige, scharmante und lustige Person. Sie fanden sich, so glaubten sie in guten Stunden, gegenseitig reizend; sie schätzten sich gegenseitig, und das war noch mehr; sie hatten Hochachtung vor einander, und das war das wichtigste.[66]
>
> (What for other people would remain a distant dream became a reality for him. They got on with each other immediately, the reserved, cool, sober, clever boxer and the capricious, talented, witty, charming and funny girl. They often thought that they each found the other charming. Even better, they admired each other. And most importantly, they had mutual respect.)

Schmeling's marriage to Ondra, far from breaking the so-called rules of stardom, served to adjust and enhance his image. The disciplined, temperate "good boy" of the 1920s emerged now, at precisely the same moment as the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* and its enforced values, as the loving husband, and the urban socialite of the late 1920s was replaced by the country-loving landowner.

Once they were married, the couple seemed determined to capitalize on their high-profile relationship. In early 1935 they agreed to co-star in *Knock Out* (initially released as *Ein junges Mädchen, ein junger Mann* in March 1935), a film produced by Ondra-Lamač and originally due to be directed by Reinhold Schünzel, who had worked with Schmeling on *Liebe im Ring*. Schünzel had enjoyed a hugely successful career as an actor in the Weimar Republic and had latterly made his name as a director of comedies. From 1933 he was permitted to continue working in the *gleichgeschaltet* film industry only with special permission, as he was classified as a *Halbjude* (half Jew). He was nevertheless able to continue for a time to make films that defied the ideological straitjacket imposed by the regime, most notably *Viktor und Viktoria* (1933). A cross-dressing comedy that plays with gender roles and sexuality, this film had been surprisingly well received in Germany and featured Schmeling's co-star from *Liebe im Ring*, Renate Müller, and the Austrian actor Hermann Thimig, who had co-starred with Ondra in *Eine Nacht im Paradies* and *Kiki*. *Viktor und Viktoria*, which has had two Hollywood remakes, would seem to be an anomaly and more readily comparable with films of the Weimar Republic than other films made under National Socialism, and Schünzel's German career, despite the popularity of his work, was already on borrowed time. Ondra-Lamač and its productions were now subject, as was the entire German film industry, to the political control exercised through the *Reichsfilmkammer* (Reich Chamber of Film), which was part of the *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Chamber of Culture) controlled by Goebbels' *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (RMVP, Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda). The same applied to such matters as distribution, sales and indeed reception, with independent film criticism censored and eventually entirely replaced by anodyne descriptions.[67] Many of the creative partners with whom Ondra and Lamač had worked prior to 1933, such as the actors Siegfried Arno and Kurt Gerron (who had starred with Schmeling in *Liebe im Ring* and in successful films such as *Der blaue Engel*), were in exile and unemployable in the Aryanized industry. Goebbels, notoriously, had a

particular interest in film and in its propaganda potential. He had delivered his "vision" for German film to representatives of the film industry in a speech in March 1933 at the Hotel Kaiserhof in Berlin, praising the artistic potential of film but making it clear that the industry would have to operate within ideological parameters.[68] Under the conditions that now prevailed, even the many *Unterhaltungsfilme* (entertainment films) produced under National Socialism, which were often ostensibly apolitical, were expected to conform to the social and cultural values dictated by the Nazis' understanding of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and their expectations of public taste. Yet—and this partly explains how a film such as *Viktor und Viktoria* was even possible—it proved "impossible to streamline popular culture", and many of the most popular films of the period arose from what Antje Ascheid refers to as "nonsimultaneous discourses".[69] There is an overlap between these and those that characterized the films of the Weimar Republic and indeed contemporary Hollywood productions.

In some cases, the fate of individual films and indeed careers hinged on whether they found personal favour with Goebbels. The latter had threatened, prior to his work on *Knock Out*, to withdraw Reinhold Schünzel's permission to work in the German film industry, and he followed through with this threat after filming had already started, forcing Karel Lamač to step in and complete the film.[70] Lamač is credited with the direction, and Schünzel, who later emigrated to Hollywood, receives no credit at all in the film. Lamač did what he could to adapt to the political expectations of directors after 1933 and continued to work in Germany until 1938, at which point he too fell out of favour with Goebbels and returned to Prague (and thereafter went to Great Britain). Anny Ondra, like Lamač, was Czech, but, despite this, for much of the next decade both she and Schmeling benefitted from (often public) support from Goebbels, which lasted at least until Schmeling's defeat in his second fight against Joe Louis in 1938. The public face of this relationship is strikingly visualized in the well-known photograph of Anny Ondra listening to the live radio broadcast of Schmeling's first fight against Joe Louis, demonstratively "Daumen drücken" (holding her thumbs, the equivalent of crossing fingers) for him, in the company of Goebbels and his wife Magda. The photograph, evidently arranged by the *Reichsminister*, featured as the cover image of the *Berliner Ilustrirte Zeitung* along with a smaller photograph of him congratulating Ondra after the victory.[71]

Knock Out clearly aims to be non-political, a light romantic comedy set in the parallel worlds of show business (musical theatre) and boxing.[72] Although both Schmeling and Ondra were now 29 and 31 respectively, they play characters who are evidently meant to be considerably younger and are still trying to find their way in life. The film showcases Anny Ondra's deft physical comedy whilst allowing Schmeling another chance to demonstrate some fairly basic qualities as an actor and comedian, as well as his skills as a boxer, which feature in various training montages and in the fight that forms the climax of the film. As in *Liebe im Ring*, Schmeling's role is designed to blur reality with fiction, and even as he strives to perform a fictional character, aspects of his identity are retained. His character is once again called Max (Max Breuer) and is an aspiring boxer who, because of various implausible machinations involving a rivalry between two Hamburg boxing managers, takes on the pseudonym "Max Schmeling" for his first fight. Viewers are thus plunged into metafictional confusion—the film depicts a fictional world in which there is a boxer called Max Schmeling, played by the real Max Schmeling, but who isn't actually a fictional representation of the real Max Schmeling! The film deploys, in its climactic scene, a staple motif of the boxing film—the underdog who triumphs against the odds. The novice Max Breuer (pretending he is called Max Schmeling) is seemingly outclassed against the experienced Irish champion Jim Hawkins, only to rally, with the encouragement of the woman he loves, Marianne (played by Ondra who pleads "Bitte steh' auf Max!" (please get up Max!) as he hits the canvas for the fifth or sixth time), and win the fight against the odds. The peculiar use of Schmeling's actual name in the film can be understood in part as an attempt at reinvention, at wiping the slate clean. Rather than representing an arduous journey that is rewarded with success—usually one of the key motifs in the depiction of boxing—the film presents an improbably swift transition from novice to champion, with the moment of sporting success simultaneously also the moment of romantic conquest. The depiction of a young boxer at the mercy of conspiratorial managers is moreover consistent with National Socialist suspicion of professional boxing. That said, Hans Zerlett's screenplay does not invest the victory against the Irish boxer with especially nationalistic tones.

This modified version of Schmeling's image was given a more explicitly propagandistic treatment in an unusual double biography of Schmeling and Ondra, written by the popular novelist and artist Hans

Leip and published in 1935: *Max und Anny: Romantischer Bericht vom Aufstieg zweier Sterne* (*Max and Anny: Romantic Report on the Rise of Two Stars*).[73] With Nürnberg's hostile 1932 biography quickly blacklisted in 1933, there was a gap in the market for an accessible assessment of Schmeling's career, and the marriage to Ondra offered Leip the chance to produce something that could appeal to an even wider market. The title, with its generic categorization as a "romantic report" promises both facts and sentiment. Leip was from Hamburg (and he presents Schmeling as a *Hamburger* without mentioning he had been born elsewhere), known for seafaring adventure stories with a good deal of local North German colour.[74] By 1935 Leip was certainly a member of the *Reichsschriftumkammer* (Reich Chamber of Literature), the *gleichgeschaltet*, Aryanized organization established in November 1933 to exercise oversight over all forms of publishing. Like the film industry and broadcasting, it was controlled by Goebbels through his centralized *Reichskulturkammer*, and from July 1934 all authors were obliged to belong to it if they wished to continue to publish (this effectively ended the German careers of German-Jewish authors). As with all cultural productions in Germany after 1933–34, *Max und Anny* cannot be read without an awareness of this publication context, which informs both the explicit treatment of political themes and the implicit, ideological discourses that inform its narrative. The text makes its National Socialist credentials quite explicit on a number of occasions, for example by citing the passage on boxing from *Mein Kampf* and mocking critics of boxing for an evident lack of "masculinity":

> Gerade damals [ca. 1926] nahmen einige Sanftmutsapostel die Gelegenheit wahr, sich gegen den Boxsport zu erklären. Das alte Wort von der "blutigen Rohheit" wurde aufgefrischt und fand manchen Beifall. In diese allzu bequeme Zartheit der Sofaliebhaber und Blümchenpflücker funkelten die prächtig männlichen Sätze, die Adolf Hitler um jene Zeit bald zu Anfang des zweiten Bandes seines Werkes "Mein Kampf" niederschrieb. Sie sind heute so beherzigenswert und gültig wie je.[75]

> (At that time [around 1926] some apostles of gentleness took the opportunity to declare themselves opposed to boxing. The old idea of it being "bloody and crude" was dusted off and they had a lot of support. The all too comfortable tenderness enjoyed by the sofa-lovers and flower-pickers was interrupted by the gloriously manly sentences written at that time by

> Adolf Hitler at the start of the second volume of his work *Mein Kampf*. They are as relevant and valid today as ever.)

The concise account provided by Leip of Schmeling's career to date draws attention to Schmeling's particular qualities, which include determination, ambition, "Konzentrationskraft" (the power to concentrate) and "Enthaltsamkeit" (abstinence). As we have noted, all of these were a familiar part of the narrative and image that Schmeling had sought to construct through the Weimar period. Yet whereas they had previously resonated, for example, with his admiration for America, and his "scientific" approach in the era of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, in Leip's account the personal is downplayed in favour of the national. Schmeling is no longer depicted as an extraordinary (individual) athlete but rather as a heroic figure invested with *national* qualities.

This is particularly evident in the account of Schmeling's victory over Bonaglia in 1928. Whereas in some of the contemporary accounts, as noted in Chap. 2, the crowd's response to the victory was read in political terms as a victory over fascism, Leip attempts to present it as a moment that anticipated the rise of National Socialism. He makes reference, for example, to the later use of the venue, the Sportpalast, as the scene of Nazi political events—on 10 February 1933 it was, for example, the location of Hitler's first broadcast speech to the nation as *Reichskanzler*.

> Ein Orkan tobt durch das Haus. Das Gefühl der Nation ist erwacht, das Gefühl, das denselben Raum in wenigen Jahren mit nicht weniger ungestümem Beifall füllen sollte, der höheren Erfolgen und Zielen galt.
>
> […] [D]ie Menge bricht in das Deutschlandlied aus. Parteigezänk, Börsenkrisen, Länderkonferenzen, alles ist vergessen. Es zeigt sich, wie einheitlich die Stimmung sein kann, wenn ein Sieger vor der Masse steht.[76]
>
> (A hurricane sweeps through the venue. The emotions of the nation have awoken, the same emotions that were to fill the same room a few years later with applause which was no less deafening and which was focused on greater victories and goals.
>
> The masses start to sing the national anthem. Political arguments, stock market crises, international conferences are all forgotten. We see how unified the mood can be when a victor stands before the masses.)

These lines, making conspicuous use of the language and rhetorical devices typical of fascism (the "awakening" of the *Nation*, the power of the united masses, the worshipping of a victorious hero) reflect the Nazis' functional attitude to sport as a means of fostering and indeed manipulating an emotional attachment to the nation. This is indicated by the repetition of the word "Gefühl" (feeling, emotions), the same concept emphasized, as we shall see in Chap. 5, by Ludwig Haymann in his theory of boxing. In the year leading up to the Olympic Games, sport's potential relevance to national identity and pride was of course receiving particular attention. Schmeling's professional status is here evidently irrelevant, and Leip's text re-imagines the peak of Schmeling's career to date in nationalistic terms. The ignoble nature of the world championship victory against Sharkey and the subsequent controversy are scarcely acknowledged at all. Schmeling's 1929 victory against Uzcudun, by contrast, is invested with the sort of symbolism that reverses the internationalist hopes expressed by Willy Meisl, namely that Schmeling's success would function as a form of diplomacy, helping nations come together and earning respect for Germany on the international stage. For Leip, the significance of the victory lay primarily in its reception in Germany:

> Fürwahr, in jenen Stunden war es wirklich ein Genuß, ein Deutscher zu sein, und der Ruhm des einen Sieges strahlte auf die anderen Siege über. Schmeling war nicht nur der bewundernswerte Held aus eigener Kraft, er war zugleich das Sinnbild eines aus tödlichem Niederschlag erwachten und neu erstarkten Volkes.[77]
>
> (Indeed, it was truly a pleasure to be German for those hours, and the glory of this one victory extended to other victories. Schmeling was not only an admirable hero fighting with his own strength, he was at the same time the symbol of a *Volk* that had woken from a mortal blow with new strength.)

Only at one point does Leip attempt to make the claim that Schmeling was actually a supporter of Hitler. It comes at the end of a passage in which Schmeling's "glorious" defeat in his second fight against Sharkey—regaining his honour—is juxtaposed with a description of the resurgent Nazis celebrating the lifting of the ban on the SA (and its "Brownshirt" uniform). The implied parallel between the two is clear. Schmeling is presented as a mirror image of the myth of the *Nation* that was at the heart of National Socialist propaganda, emerging against the

odds as the heroic victor and reflecting the masculine qualities to which all Germans should aspire:

> Jedermann hatte Mitleid mit Max. Man feierte ihn aufs neue, als sei er, der Besiegte, der Sieger. Keine Zeile des Makels wurde gegen ihn gedruckt, er war beliebter den je. So kam er zurück in die Heimat.
>
> In Deutschland war das Uniformverbot aufgehoben. Braunhemden marschierten durch die Straßen, und ihre Züge wuchsen von Tag zu Tag. Das neue Banner mit dem Kreuz der Sonne wehte kühn, und lauter dröhnten die fordenden Gesänge. Der Name Hitler war in aller Munde.
>
> In Amerika sprach Gene Tunney für Roosevelt. Daheim in Deutschland fand Max Schmeling es gleichfalls für angebracht, daß endlich eine starke und junge Hand die auseinanderstrebenden Zügel ergreife und dem allverehrten Volkshelden, dem Feldmarschall v. Hindenburg, in seinem schweren Amt zur Seite trete.[78]
>
> (Everyone had sympathy with Max. He was once again celebrated as if he were the victor rather than the loser. Not a single line of criticism was published, and he was more popular than ever. This is how he returned home.
>
> In Germany, the ban on the uniform had been lifted. Brownshirts were marching through the streets, and their numbers were growing daily. The new banner bearing the swastika was flying boldly, and the stirring songs were ringing out ever more loudly. Everyone was talking about Hitler.
>
> In America Gene Tunney spoke out for Roosevelt. At home in Germany Max Schmeling also thought it was right that a strong, youthful hand should take hold of the unruly reins and support the venerable hero of the people, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, as he fulfilled his difficult office.)

Schmeling never made any such public statement in favour of Hitler. But in the absence of any indication that he did *not* believe in the Nazis' project (presented here disingenuously as an act of "assistance" to the president), Leip evidently felt it was not inaccurate to make this claim. After all, as already noted, merely by remaining in Germany and co-operating, Schmeling had made an *indirect* statement of support. Of course, by setting so much store in *victory* as a concept, with the implied symbolic parallel with national resurgence, Leip faced a potential problem in accounting for Schmeling's decidedly poor performances in 1933 and 1934. For Ludwig Haymann, this period could be explained as a consequence of Schmeling losing touch with his national and racial identity.

Leip deals with it, absurdly, by including an entire chapter devoted to astrology, analyzing Schmeling's star sign (Sagittarius) and the potentially malign influence of planetary alignments on his fortunes as a boxer. This allows Leip not only to account for his "Neigung zu Sport und Leibesübungen" (predisposition for sport and exercise) and his "unermüdliche Arbeitskraft" (tireless energy)—both supposedly typical of Sagittarians—but to explain his defeats with reference to "[d]ie ungünstige Stellung des Saturns zu Jupiter und Uranus, namentlich in der Zeit von April 1932 bis Mitte August 1934" (the unfavourable alignment of Saturn with Jupiter and Uranus between April 1932 and August 1934).[79] This bizarre insertion gives an indication of the fundamentally irrational nature of a narrative strategy that, despite the repeated observation of Schmeling's personal qualities, ultimately strips him of individual responsibility for his successes as well as his failures. By reducing him to a "Sinnbild eines […] Volkes" (symbol of a *Volk*), failure can have no place in the story, any more than it can be contemplated for the nation, which is, likewise fatalistically, assumed to be destined for a return to greatness. Much the same holds true of Haymann's analysis with its equally unscientific analysis of human nature and national identity, with the difference that he chooses to see Schmeling as a herald or pioneer, with the greatest victories for German boxing projected into the future—a parallel of sorts with the mystical and impossible "ultimate victory" towards which *Volksgenossen* (national comrades) were expected to work.

Leip intertwines his account of Schmeling's career with a parallel biographical narrative focused on Anny Ondra, culminating in the chapters in which the two come together. Ondra is also granted a rather shorter "zodiac" chapter, and the astrological compatibility of the two stars (the pun is probably intended by Leip) is duly established. Ondra's story likewise combines biographical data and sentimental, if not overtly ideological, interpretation. In both cases, the omissions are often telling. Just as Schmeling's manager Joe Jacobs' identity as a Jew is suppressed, Ondra's identity as a Czech is also largely side-stepped. Her Slavic family name of Ondráková is never given, and instead Leip creates the impression that she was, essentially, Austrian. He reports that she was the daughter of an officer in the Austrian imperial army, and although he mentions that she grew up in Prague, the reader is told that the city is home to "die erste deutsche Universität" (the first German university) and is "eine zwiespältige, aber reizvolle Stadt" (a divided but charming city).[80] The implication is that, despite the fact that it was in Czechoslovakia,

Prague should really be thought of as a German city.[81] That Czech, and not German, was her native language is briefly touched on, but rather than making her seem foreign, the accent becomes part of her charm. More significant is the so-called type that she represented. Anny Ondra was blonde and as such conformed to the superficial physical "German" ideals promoted under National Socialism.[82] This, combined with her gift for physical comedy, dance and music, prompts Leip to reflect on her type: "Ein Typ wie Anny Ondra war das gerade Gegenteil von der dunklen Leidenschaft und Schwermut einer Asta Nielsen".[83] (Anny Ondra's type was the exact opposite of the dark passion and melancholy of an Asta Nielsen.) The dark-haired Asta Nielsen, associated with passionate, erotic and often tragic roles, is referred to as a contrast to the more child-like, lighter roles in which Ondra specialized. She is even praised by Leip for refusing to copy the most famous German blonde of all, Marlene Dietrich, as others were doing.[84] The relationship with Schmeling is presented, in a repeated motif, as a "Märchen" (fairy tale) and their life together in Saarow as a bucolic idyll. As in the magazine feature on the couple's honeymoon at Bad Saarow quoted earlier, the wedding day is evoked in the sort of exclamatory language of popular romantic fiction: "Wundervoll war dieser Sommertag. Vor dem Kirchenportal hatte sich die Einwohnerschaft versammelt, die Sportjugend des Ortes bildete Spalier, Kinder mit Rosenkränzen im Haar streuten Blumen auf den Weg. Wie schön war die Welt!"[85] (This was a perfect summer's day. The villagers had gathered before the church gates, the local sporting youngsters formed a guard of honour, children with rose garlands in their hair scattered flowers on the path. How lovely the world was!) The intended effect is to establish "Max und Anny" as something close to an ideal German couple, rooted in an authentic, rural community, personally successful but content with each other and, crucially, the "neues Land" (new land) in which they lived.[86] Indeed, according to Schmeling (*Erinnerungen*, 270), he and Ondra received a Japanese maple as a wedding gift from Hitler—a clear signal of the favour with which they were seen.

"Hysterical Patriotism"

By 1934 it was clear that the regime fully recognized the potential propaganda benefits of German participation on the international sporting stage. The forthcoming Berlin Olympics offered the opportunity not

only to present a positive image of the new Germany to the world, but also to celebrate sporting success as a symbol and expression of the national renewal that was central to National Socialist mythology. The determination to make the most of this opportunity undoubtedly helped to foster a climate in which even non-Olympic and professional sports received backing. Remaining concerns about the egalitarian "level playing field" of international sport and the potential embarrassment of, or loss of prestige through, defeat or failure were now outweighed by the desire to exploit the symbolism of German victories—and, as Holt and Mangan observe, even "[f]ailing can be a kind of success" in the hands of a propagandist.[87] Indeed, narratives of heroic, self-sacrificing failure were readily integrated into public discourse. Mountaineering (or alpinism as it was known) offers an interesting example of this process. As a physical activity it had long been practised, since its nineteenth-century origins with the British Alpine Club, in a manner that reflected, more or less explicitly, nationalistic, imperialistic and colonial ambitions. The obsession with conquest and discovery, for example, can be understood in these terms, as can the race, conducted between rival national teams, to be the first to scale difficult peaks—particularly those in the Himalayas, such as Everest—or make difficult ascents, such as the north face of the Eiger in Switzerland. For Germany in the 1930s, attention was focused not on Everest, which it was unable to access, but on Nanga Parbat, also in the Himalayas. Nanga Parbat is the ninth highest mountain in the world but has a fearsome reputation as a disproportionately dangerous, "killer mountain". Nazi Germany sponsored five separate expeditions to Nanga Parbat between 1934 and 1938 in an attempt to claim the first ascent. All five attempts failed, with those in 1934 and 1937 ending in disaster and the deaths of eleven German climbers. The mountain gained a mythologized reputation as the *Schicksalsberg* (mountain of destiny) for Germany, and the failed expeditions were swiftly cast in what Harald Höbusch refers to as a "glorifying light".[88] The *Reichssportführer* von Tschammer und Osten cited the tragedies as exemplifying the virtues of "comradeship, loyalty and sacrifice", turning "the dead mountaineers into national heroes who had given their lives for the greater good of the German people".[89]

In professional boxing, the equivalent pinnacle, which for most of the twentieth century carried more international prestige than almost any other sports honour, was to be the world heavyweight champion. Although there is no formal hierarchy in boxing, the heavyweight

division had carried particular status since the introduction of weight divisions in the previous century. It was the ultimate in the sport, and its champion should in theory have been able to defeat any other boxer in the world. Of course, it was a title that Schmeling had already won and lost before 1933. The sport was, however, still dominated by America. For supporters of professional boxing in the Third Reich, regaining this title for Germany was a key aspiration, as was moving the geographical focus of the sport from the USA to Germany. The latter ambition echoed sentiments expressed through the 1920s but now had the same political colouration as the plans to host the Olympics as a "Fest der Völker" (festival of nations). In 1934, following Schmeling's recent run of poor results, many felt he was no longer the strongest German contender in the heavyweight division. In Walter Neusel there was, once again, a credible German rival to Schmeling. Neusel was up and coming, slightly younger than Schmeling, and had recently returned from a successful period in the USA. On 9 March 1934 he had defeated King Levinsky at Madison Square Garden, a result that saw him climb to fifth place in the heavyweight rankings, just behind Schmeling.[90] As such, a fight between the two could be marketed not only as a match between the two best German heavyweight boxers but as an eliminator bout (albeit unofficial) for the right to challenge Max Baer for the world championship.

The fight between Schmeling and Neusel on 26 August 1934 was therefore looked forward to with great anticipation. Arno Hellmis, who became the highest-profile sports journalist and broadcaster in Nazi Germany, described it as "eine Sensation im besten Sinne des Wortes" (a sensation in the best sense of the word).[91] *Boxsport* demanded that the fight serve as a global advertisement for German sport: "Es liegt an beiden Boxern, den Kampf zu einer Propaganda für den Sport werden zu lassen. Wir erwarten von ihnen, nicht enttäuscht zu werden."[92] (It's up to both boxers to make the fight into the best propaganda for the sport. We do not expect to be disappointed by them.) Had Schmeling lost, it seems unlikely that his career would have recovered. In the event, a nine-round victory saw a return to form that would culminate, just under two years later, in the victory against Joe Louis that represented the high point in Schmeling's career. It was equally significant in being Schmeling's first fight in Germany since his victory over Franz Diener in April 1928. The promoter, Walter Rothenburg, was determined to make the most of the occasion. As noted earlier, the event was staged with the active co-operation of the *Kraft durch Freude* organization and

as such was politicized in a way that was unprecedented in Schmeling's career. Rothenburg's intention was not simply to organize a successful *Großkampftag* (big fight day) on the scale that had been typical of German boxing since the early 1920s, but rather to stage something considerably larger. It was to be a grand gesture with nationalistic implications, demonstrating that Germany could stage boxing in a way that matched the great American world title fights in New York and Chicago, with their open-air arenas, extraordinary crowds and aura of excitement and "occasion". The Hamburger Rothenburg was an experienced promoter whose plan to break the American grip on global boxing ("einen Keil in Amerikas Box-Vorherrschaft zu treiben" (to drive a wedge into America's dominance of boxing)) clearly resonated with the expansionist ambitions of National Socialism, and so the event received the full backing of the party.[93] It took place at the open-air "Dirt Track" arena in Hamburg, located close to the famous Hagenbeck zoo in Lokstedt, which had been rapidly converted to seat more than 100,000 spectators. Even though it seems likely that no more than 80,000 attended, Rothenburg could credibly claim that it was the "größte Boxveranstaltung, die Europa je erlebte" (largest boxing event ever seen in Europe).[94] The German press took their cue from the grand scale plans and made exaggerated claims that it had been the best attended boxing match in history: "Noch niemals waren so viele[e] Menschen zu einem Boxkampf gekommen, *auch in Amerika nicht*."[95] (Never had so many people attended a boxing match, not even in in America.)

This conspicuously *German* occasion came shortly after the ceremonial marking of the twentieth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, the death of Hindenburg on 2 August, and the referendum held on 19 August that saw Hitler "elected" as head of state.[96] It also coincided with a rally, attended by Hitler, organized by the right-wing *Deutsche Front* (German Front), which was campaigning for the reintegration of the Saarland into the *Reich*—a cause presented to the German people as one of national pride, reversing as it would one of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. It was a month redolent with political symbolism, of which the athletic event became a part. The boxing in Hamburg was preceded by rituals that marked it as a National Socialist occasion, notably a triple *Sieg Heil* (Hail Victory) from the masses to mark support for a German Saarland. The fight was also preceded by a politicized speech from Erich Rüdiger, who was *Führer* of both the VDF and the *Deutscher Amateur-Box-Verband* (German Amateur Boxing

Association).[97] For Erwin Thoma, the enthusiastic *Sieg Heil* reflected the spirit of the new Germany, in which the ostensibly superficial pleasure of a sporting event was inseparable from larger political aims.[98] Yet in some respects this ostentatious demonstration of National Socialist orthodoxy was incongruous, given that neither boxer had shown much commitment to German boxing in recent times, and Neusel fitted even less comfortably than his opponent into the mould that the party had for its elite athletes. He was managed by Schmeling's erstwhile friend Paul Damski, who had based himself in Paris since 1933, with the consequence that Neusel, like Schmeling in breach of the ban on working with Jewish managers, had fought mainly outside Germany, in France, Great Britain and the USA, during the previous two years. His response to a request in March 1934 that he should leave Damski resulted in a provocative refusal—Neusel moved to Paris to be able to work more closely with him.[99] This was awkward for National Socialists wishing to maximize the propaganda value of the fight—in the retrospective account of the fight provided by Hellmis in 1937 neither Schmeling's nor Neusel's managers are named, with Damski referred to anonymously as Neusel's "European" manager and Joe Jacobs entirely ignored.[100] As Krauß notes, the regime seemed willing to tolerate Neusel's stance, apparently keen, as with Schmeling, to retain the affiliation of one of the few world-class German boxers.[101] The fact that Neusel was blond-haired and blue-eyed (his nickname was "the blond tiger") and as such the perfect representative of the idealized Aryan no doubt also counted in his favour. A degree of non-conformism was tolerable to the regime if an athelete could be used to further political goals, and for Schmeling, who agreed to have Rothenburg promote his next two fights, this was evidently a price worth paying.

Over the following two years Schmeling returned to form and fought twice more in Germany in rematches against Steve Hamas, in Hamburg on 10 March 1935, and Paolino Uzcudun, whom he fought for a third time in the Poststadion in Berlin on 7 July 1935. Both were promoted by Rothenburg, who was determined to build on the successs of the Neusel fight and, he hoped, secure a world championship fight for Schmeling on German soil. As part of that plan he had created a purpose-built boxing arena in Hamburg, the Hanseatenhalle, for the fight against Hamas and, again in co-operation with *Kraft durch Freude*, arranged for extra train and bus services to Hamburg. In *Simplicissimus*, "Benedikt" captured the nationalistic investment in the

fight in another of his humorous poems: "Denen überm großen Teiche /mußt du's zeigen wie noch nie:/unser Maxe, Deutschlands Eiche,/ der ist 'made in Germany!'"[102] (You have to show them over the pond/ As never before/Our Max, Germany's oak,/is "made in Germany"!) In the eyes of the German press, the event was praised as a perfect example of controlled organization: "Mustergültig funktionert der Apparat aus Polizei, Feldjägern, SA und Schließern."[103] (The organization of the police, MPs, SA and private security worked perfectly.) Schmeling's accomplished technical knockout victory against Hamas, who had beaten him the year before during his run of poor form, produced an ecstatic response reminiscent of that which had greeted his win against Bonaglia in 1928. The difference was that the crowd's singing of the national anthem—"Ein Beifallsorkan brach aus, die Menge sang spontan das Deutschlandlied" (Thunderous applause broke out and the crowd spontaneously sang the national anthem)—was this time accompanied by the Hitler salute.[104] The political colouration of the organization and the behaviour of the crowd extended to the German media coverage, which, whilst duly speculating both that Schmeling could once again be considered a legitimate contender for the world crown and that a world title fight could and should take place in Germany, reported the congratulations Schmeling had received from Hitler, Goebbels and Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick.[105] For the American press in attendance, Schmeling's one-sided victory was acknowledged as impressive, but the politicization of a sporting event did not escape notice. Albion Ross's report for the *New York Times* is particularly interesting in the details it provides and its assessment of the atmosphere of nationalistic hysteria from the point of view of a foreigner. The report is noticeably fair in the distinction it draws between Schmeling as an individual and sportsman and the political exploitation to which the occasion had been subjected:

> After the fight the Nazi crowd, which had been brought here in special trains run by the Strength through Joy organization, shouted at the top of their voices: "Victory heil, victory heil," and sang "Deutschland Ueber Alles."
>
> Boxing fans nearer the ring stood silent. They knew that Hamas, for all his poor showing, had given the hysterical crowd a demonstration of that courage about which Nazi leaders continually are talking. They knew also that "victory heil" was in rather bad taste and said so.

> Despite the hysterical patriotism of Nazi excursionists, the bout was clean cut and about the ring an atmosphere of good sportsmanship prevailed. It was clearly not Schmeling's idea that his victory should be made the signal for a political demonstration. He disappeared from the ring as soon as possible while his admirers were still standing at attention with their hands raised in the Hitler salute.
>
> The fight, however, represented more than a victory for the German champion. Germany has issued a challenge to America's supremacy in boxing and to its monopoly of major bouts.[106]

Despite the suggestion that Schmeling was at best a reluctant participant in the politicization of the occasion, it is clear that by this point his career had become inseparably entangled with nationalist sentiment, Nazi ideology and business ambitions.

In the end, Rothenburg's plans to bring the champion Max Baer to Germany were foiled by the refusal of the authorities to authorize a fight featuring an apparently Jewish boxer on German soil, and all hopes of a rematch with Schmeling in any case became irrelevant when he unexpectedly lost his title to James Braddock on 13 June 1935. This was a major upset, as Braddock had been widely considered to be little more than a routine, "journeyman" opponent for Baer, and consequently few expected him to be able to defend the title against any of the best ranked contenders, Schmeling included. As an alternative, a rematch with Paolino Uzcudun was agreed to, with both fighters contracted to receive payments that were extraordinarily high by German standards and were underwritten by the city of Berlin on the promise of Berlin's *Reichskommissar*, Julius Lippert. The fight had none of the appeal of Schmeling's previous two bouts, was poorly attended and failed to make a profit. With the promised payment outstanding, Schmeling became embroiled in a dispute, threatening to sue Lippert (he later claimed it was Göring (*8-9-aus*, 134)). Even though Lippert and various party functionaries in Berlin were furious about this ostensible "greed", the matter was settled and both boxers were eventually paid, with Schmeling's close association with Hitler again working to his personal benefit.[107] The individualistic, business-oriented attitude to his profession that Schmeling had been so publicly proud of in the Weimar Republic—it represented a pillar of his image as a self-made man—remained firmly in place, even under a dictatorship, although for the most part it was now veiled by the nationalistic appropriation. His points

victory against Uzcudun had been unspectacular, but it was enough to manoeuvre him into a strong position. Professionally, Schmeling's career was undeniably back on track. The decision to fight again in Germany had re-established his profile in Germany while simultaneously politicizing it. Regardless of whether he approved of it, Schmeling's image was now closely aligned with that of Nazified German sport, and the pieces had fallen into place for one of the most politically charged sporting events in history.

Notes

1. The following accounts of National Socialism, and the manner in which the Nazis attained and consolidated power, proved particularly useful for this chapter: Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power 1933–1939* (London: Penguin, 2005); Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 2014), esp. 305–391: Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), esp. 94–106; William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (London: Secker & Warerg, 1960); *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. by Wolfgang Benz, Hermann Graml and Hermann Weiß (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1997).
2. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 199.
3. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 102. See also Shirer, 196–204.
4. See Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 107.
5. The DRL was renamed, and further politicized, as the *Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* (National Socialist Reich Federation for Exercise) in 1938.
6. See Hans Joachim Teichler, *Internationale Sportpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Schorndorf: Verlag Karl Hofmann, 1991), 21.
7. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf: eine kritische Edition*, ed. Christian Hartmann et al., (Munich and Berlin: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2016), 665. English translation here from: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf. With an Introduction by D. C. Wyatt*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Radius 1972), 230.
8. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf: eine kritische Edition*, 665, 667.
9. Hitler, trans. Mannheim, 230–1.
10. Hitler, *Mein Kampf: eine kritische Edition*, 1045–47.
11. Hitler, trans. Mannheim, 372–3.
12. Oates, "On Boxing", 27–8.
13. Quoted ibid., 28
14. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 28.

15. The term *völkisch*, translated by Mannheim literally as "folkish", was used to refer to nationalist beliefs and political ideologies of the extremist, anti-democratic variety. Griffin (86) rightly notes that many of these ideas emerged from Europe-wide trends, but that German nationalism had seemed particularly receptive to them, offering them "an ideal glass-house".
16. Sabine Behrenbeck, "Wie man Helden macht. Heroische Mythenbildung nach dem ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Machtergreifung", in *Attraktion der NS-Bewegung*, ed. Gudrun Brockhaus (Essen: Klartext, 2014), 79–108 (8).
17. Ibid., 91.
18. See ibid., 99.
19. Ludwig Haymann, *Deutscher Faustkampf nicht pricefight: Boxen als Rasseproblem* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, [undated, probably 1936]). 'Pricefight' is how the word is given. On the date: it is clear from a reference to Schmeling's victory over Joe Louis (41) that the volume was published after June 1936, and a reference to the present "Olympic year" (34) suggests it was published around the time of the Berlin Olympics.
20. The *Deutsche Turnerschaft* was the only sports association to undergo a process of voluntary *Gleichschaltung* before 1933, excluding Jews from its membership. See Lorenz Pfeiffer, ""…unser Verein ist judenfrei": Die Rolle der deutschen Turn- und Sportbewegung in dem politischen und gesellschaftlichen Wandlungsprozess nach dem 30. Januar 1933", *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 32/1 (2007): 92–109.
21. See Teichler, *Internationale Sportpolitik*, 46.
22. *Der Angriff*, 22 December 1929.
23. Georg Haller, "Lernt Selbstverteidigung. Die Erziehung des waffenlosen Körpers zur Waffe", *Der Angriff*, 12 June 1930.
24. Teichler, *Internationale Sportpolitik*, 30.
25. Haymann, *Deutscher Faustkampf*, 10.
26. Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 189.
27. See Teichler, *Internationale Sportpolitik*, 48.
28. Newspapers reported differing attendance figures, with *Boxsport* quoting a figure as high as 100,000.
29. The standards are set out in a programmatic pamphlet published as part of a National Socialist educational series in 1937. Hans von Tschammer und Osten, *Sport und Leibesübungen im nationalsozialistischen Staat* (Berlin: Industrieverlag Spaeth & Linde, 1937).
30. Ibid., 8.
31. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 204.

32. Anon., "Boxsport wird gefördert. Hitler und der Boxsport", *Boxsport*, 652 (1933): 17.
33. Anon., "Deutscher Boxsport. Zur Umbildung des Verbandes Deutscher Faustkämpfer", *Boxsport*, 653 (1933): 2.
34. See Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 79. Eyk had been the chief sports reporter for the *Acht-Uhr Abendblatt*.
35. Ibid., 80.
36. Anon., "Wir und das Ausland", *Boxsport*, 654, (1933): 2.
37. The historical details included here about Trollmann's career are drawn in part from Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 83–7. Trollmann has in the last decade been rehabilitated and since 2003 has been recognized in the list of German champions. His story has recently inspired a number of artworks and memorials, including Stephanie Bart's novel *Deutscher Meister* (2014), Felix Mitterer's play *Der Boxer* (2015) and the memorial artwork "9841" by the collective Bewegung Nurr, which was displayed in Kreuzberg in 2010.
38. "Anon., "Zwei Meisterschaften in Berlin", *Boxsport*, 662 (1933): 6–7 (6).
39. Anon., "Wie Seisler Meister wurde", *Boxsport* 664 (1933): 7–9 (7).
40. Quoted by Kohr and Krauß, *Kampftage*, 85.
41. The press either ignored or dismissed as unimportant the initial decision in Trollmann's favour, even misreporting (as in the *Vossische Zeitung*, 10 June 1933 (morning edition), 7) his name as Heinrich.
42. The nickname given to Trollmann by his friends and supporters was "Rukelie". It is unfortunate that the publishers of Kohr and Krauß's *Kampftage* use the racist nickname he disliked on the back-cover blurb.
43. Anon., "Eders große Klasse", *Boxsport*, 669 (1933): 4–5 (4).
44. Erika and Klaus Mann, *Escape to Life: Deutsche Kultur im Exil* (Munich: Edition Spangenberg, 1991), esp. Chap.4 ("Freiwillige Emigranten"), 76–94.
45. Ibid., 76.
46. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 279–80.
47. Kluge (*Max Schmeling*, 216–17) notes that Schmeling's wife Anny Ondra likewise used her relationship with Goebbels to reduce her tax burden.
48. See Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 55.
49. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 223.
50. Martin Krauß claims that both Baer's parents were of Irish-Scottish extraction and were Catholics. Krauß, *Schmeling*, 78. His suggestion that Baer had taken to wearing the Star of David earlier is not, however, consistent with the contemporary report in the *New York Times*, which makes clear that he had done so for the first time against Schmeling.

"The appearance of the Star of David, Jewish religious insignia, on Baer's trunks in his bout with Schmeling, occasioned comment in view of the conflicting views on the Californian's race. He explained yesterday, however, that he wore this insignia for the first time, because he is partly Jewish." James Dawson, "Dempsey Seeking Title Bid For Baer", *New York Times*, 10 June 1933, 11.

51. See Krauß, *Schmeling*, 79.
52. Erwin Thoma, "Nach dem Kampf", *Boxsport*, 664 (1933): 3–5 (3).
53. From *Boxsport* (19 February 1934), quoted by Alfred Eggert, "Jahre des Kampfes—Jahre des Aufstiegs", in Arno Hellmis ed., *Max Schmeling*, 28.
54. Anon., "Schmelings Niederlage", *Berliner Morgenpost*, 10 June 1933, 9.
55. In *Erinnerungen* (206–7) Schmeling states that he bought the house as an investment in 1930 or 1931, and contemporary reports are all in agreement that Schmeling *owned* the house. Kluge (*Max Schmeling*, 186) suggests that Schmeling must in fact have rented the house in question, which combined modernist design with traditional features such as a distinctive thatched roof. It had been designed by the artists Bruno Krauskopf and Wilhelm Kohlhoff and built in 1926, and Kluge states that the house had in fact been owned since 1930 by Sonja Damski, the wife of the boxing promoter Paul Damski and like him a Jew. However, Damski himself, in a 1968 interview with Stanley Weston of *Ring* magazine (translated in Tobias Drews' edited volume), claims that the house was always Schmeling's and had been bought with Schmeling's money in Damski's wife's name as a favour to help him avoid paying taxes. Stanley Weston, "'Max war niemals ein Nazi. Nie!'", in *Max Schmeling*, ed. Tobias Drews (Stuttgart: Engelhorn, 1996), 124–42 (130). In 1935, on the pretext of an outstanding tax bill, the house was confiscated and sold cheaply at auction to Schmeling for 2038.40 Reichsmarks. Kohlhoff was one of Schmeling's neighbours in Saarow-Pieskow, as was the Austrian sculptor Josef Thorak, who became a close friend during the 1930s. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 186–88. For more on the house see also Waleri Ripperger, *Weidmanns Heil, Max Schmeling! Boxlegende, Heger und Jäger* (Tessin: WAGE-Verlag, 2004), 55–9.
56. *Simplicissimus*, 38:14 (1933): 160.
57. Anon., "Wo Max und Anny ihre Flitterwochen verbrachten", *Das Leben* 11:5 (1933): 6–7 (7).
58. A full, if often anecdotal, account of Schmeling's passion for hunting is provided by Ripperger's hunting-themed biography of Schmeling.
59. See Ripperger, *Weidmanns Heil, Max Schmeling!*, 76–81. Ripperger's socially conservative, uncritical account provides expansive details on Schmeling's artistocratic contacts, noting (86) that Schmeling returned

to Heiligendamm following his victory over Joe Louis in 1936 to shoot clay pigeons with Großherzog Friedrich Franz IV.

60. See Ripperger, *Weidmanns Heil, Max Schmeling!*, 122–6.
61. Ondra's date of birth is sometimes given as 1905 in older sources. Like many film stars, she was either vague or dishonest about it.
62. Dorothea Friedrich, *Max Schmeling und Anny Ondra: ein Doppelleben* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2001), 18–19.
63. Two versions of the film were made, one silent and one with sound. There are differences between the two versions, with Hitchcock famously experimenting with "expressionistic" use of sound, as for example in the breakfast scene in which Ondra's character can only hear the word "knife".
64. He had met Vacková on the same transatlantic crossing in 1929 during which he had met Conrad Veidt and Heinrich Schusnus (see Chap. 2). He subsequently visited her in Prague. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 122; Friedrich, *Max Schmeling und Anny Ondra*, 79–80. In his *Erinnerungen* (200) Schmeling reports that he first saw Ondra, starring in *Die vom Rummelplatz*, when seeing a film in the company of Tschechowa, but who then refused to play matchmaker and introduce them.
65. See Friedrich, *Max Schmeling und Anny Ondra*, 95; Nürnberg, *Max Schmeling*, 195–6.
66. Nürnberg, *Max Schmeling*, 196.
67. On the control of film by the Propaganda Minstry, see Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 129–33.
68. See "Dr. Goebbels" Rede im Kaiserhof am 28.3.1933", in Gerd Albrecht, *Film im 3. Reich* (Karlsruhe: Schauburg und Doku, 1979), 26–31.
69. Antje Ascheid, *Hitler's Heroines: Stardom and Womanhood in Nazi Cinema* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 7.
70. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 220.
71. *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* 45:26 (1936).
72. The story begins in the Berlin theatre in which Max Breuer (Schmeling) is in charge of the lighting. Marianne Plümke (Ondra), hoping for secretarial work, is mistaken for a new member of the chorus line, which results in a number of comical scenes. Max is fired after fighting with a boxer, played by Paul Samson-Körner, but has been spotted by a boxing manager (Otto Wernicke), who takes him to Hamburg to train him. His love for Marianne is initially unreciprocated. The second half of the film sees Schmeling tempted by a *femme fatale*, Camilla (Annie Markart), working for a rival boxing manager, who arranges for him to fight against a more experienced boxer using the pseudonym "Max

Schmeling" in the assumption that he will lose. The scheme is designed to humiliate both Max and his manager, but Camilla regrets her actions when she falls in love with Max. The film concludes with both Marianne and Camilla supporting Schmeling in his fight, which he eventually wins. The final scene sees Max carrying Marianne, triumphantly, from the arena.

73. Hans Leip, *Max und Anny: romantischer Bericht vom Aufstieg zweier Sterne* (Hamburg: Verlagsbuchhandlung Broschet & Co., 1935).
74. Leip is now chiefly remembered as the author of the poem "Lili Marleen", which as a song gained massive popularity among German (and other) soldiers during the Second World War.
75. Leip, *Max und Anny*, 41.
76. Ibid., 60.
77. Ibid., 81.
78. Ibid., 128.
79. Ibid., 149–50.
80. Ibid., 11.
81. In his *Erinnerungen* (297) Schmeling reports that Hitler was particularly taken with Ondra and with the fact that she was from Prague, "'das schöne, alte, deutsche Prag!" […] [Ü]berhaupt sei Böhmen so etwas wie das Herz und Kleinod Deutschlands'" ("beautiful, old, German Prague!" Hitler said that Bohemia was something like the jewel and heart of Germany).
82. The *New York Times* reported Schmeling's engagement to "Anny Ondra, blond German film star". Anon., "Berlin hears Schmeling Will Wed Actress; Report Eclipses Surprise Over His Defeat", *New York Times*, 10 June 1933, 11.
83. Leip, *Max und Anny*, 20.
84. Ibid., 93. By 1935 Dietrich was no longer working in German cinema.
85. Leip, 140–1.
86. Ibid., 134.
87. Richard Holt and J.A. Mangan, "Prologue: Heroes of a European Past", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 13.1 (1996), 1–13 (6).
88. Harald Höbusch, "German Himalaya Expeditions and the Fictional (Re-)construction of National Identity", *Sporting Traditions*, 20:1 (November 2003): 17–42 (25).
89. Höbusch, "German Himalaya Expeditions", 25.
90. Levinksy was a very strong Jewish boxer from Chicago, and Krauß detects a note of relief in *Boxsport*'s report of Neusel's "surprising" victory. There had been rumours in the preceding months that Jacobs was

to arrange a match between Levinsky and Schmeling, and the *Jewish Voice* had reported that Levinksy and various other Jewish boxers were keen to take on Schmeling. Krauß, *Schmeling*, 87–8.

91. Hellmis, ed., *Max Schmeling*, 61.
92. Erwin Thoma, "Schmeling oder Neusel?", *Boxsport*, 725 (1934): 2–9 (5).
93. Quoted by Friedrich, *Max Schmeling und Anny Ondra*, 149.
94. Quoted by Krauß, *Schmeling*, 90.
95. Anon., "Schmeling siegte nach der 8. Runde", *Teltower Kreisblatt*, 27 August 1934, 4. The attendance at the second fight between Dempsey and Tunney in Chicago in 1927 was certainly larger, consistently reported at more than 100,000 and given at the time as around 145,000. See Cavanaugh, *Tunney*, 351.
96. Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 213.
97. See Friedrich, *Max Schmeling und Anny Ondra*, 148–9, Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 213.
98. Erwin Thoma, "Nachschau zu Schmeling-Neusel", *Boxsport*, 727 (934): 2–8 (3).
99. See Krauß, *Schmeling*, 89. Krauß also records that *Boxsport* had reported a rumour that Neusel had fought in a benefit event for the Jewish Relief Fund in England.
100. Hellmis provides an account of Rothenburg's struggle to secure Damski's signature on the fight contract without naming the latter or giving any indication of his political reservations. See Hellmis, ed., *Max Schmeling*, 62–3.
101. Krauß, *Schmeling*, 89.
102. "Benedikt", "Nun geht's um die Wurst!", *Simplicissimus*, 39:50 (1933): 596.
103. Quoted by Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 220–1.
104. Anon., "Schmeling schlägt Hamas k.o.", *Teltower Kreisblatt*, 11 March 1935, 6.
105. As reported in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 221. The fuss over Joe Jacobs and his *Hitlergruß* was retrospective, based on the (inconclusive) photograph—no one seems to have noticed anything on the day.
106. Albion Ross, "Crushing Attack by Schmeling Knocks Out Hamas in Ninth Round at Hamburg", *New York Times*, 11 March 1935, 21.
107. See Kluge's detailed account, *Max Schmeling*, 225–6.

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CHAPTER 5

The Third Reich 2: "A German Victory"?

Joe Louis

By the end of 1935 it was apparent that if Schmeling wanted to earn the opportunity to face James Braddock and attempt to regain the world title, he would have to return to the USA. He would also have to defeat the young fighter who had, since bursting onto the scene in 1934, emerged as *the* leading heavyweight contender and undoubtedly the most feared boxer in the world—Joe Louis (Fig. 5.1). In December 1935, Schmeling travelled with his trainer Machon to New York and watched Louis knock out Paolino Uzcudun. It was the first knockout suffered by Uzcudun in his career, in his seventy-first and final fight. While Schmeling was in New York, a contract was agreed with the promotor Mike Jacobs—Schmeling was to face Louis in an eliminator bout in June 1936. It was the start of an extraordinary rivalry. It is no exaggeration to say that Joe Louis (born Joseph Louis Barrow) is one of the most culturally significant figures in twentieth-century American history. The encounters with Schmeling were laden with an unprecedented degree of political, cultural and psychological symbolism, and they have been the subject of far more attention from sports and cultural historians than any other aspect of either of the two boxers' careers. In an era of racial segregation and widespread prejudice, which meant that the most popular American sports, including baseball and basketball, were closed off to African Americans by a so-called colour line, Louis was the first black American athletic superstar. His standing matched and even

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Fig. 5.1 Joe Louis in 1937 (Keystone Pictures USA / Alamy Stock Photo)

surpassed what had previously been enjoyed by Jack Dempsey or the baseball star Babe Ruth. Joe Louis was, according to the pioneering black tennis player Arthur Ashe, "the best known and most admired black man on earth":

> Nearly every black person and most whites in America knew who Joe Louis was. They knew his face, his voice, his record in the ring, his family, and his life history that so closely mirrored the background of other striving blacks. He was the first black role model to appear regularly in movie newsreels.
>
> Louis literally represented "his race" at a crucial time in black American history.[1]

In a time of widespread hardship, black Americans looked to Louis as a source of hope; through his success he "exemplified black perseverance".[2] Insofar as Louis was a hero and idol for a "race", he was also, at least in the first years of his career, a source of anxiety and ambivalence for many white Americans. This was, eventually, to change and the myth that surrounded Louis was redefined as American rather than (only) black, and his fights against Schmeling played a significant role in this process. Yet the admiration, and indeed reverence, he attracted from African Americans during the 1930s and 1940s gave him a significance that had political potential—and certainly went beyond sport. For some, Louis was a gift from God, "to lift 'the colored people's heart'".[3] This status is reflected in the well-known, but certainly apocryphal, story, later recounted by Martin Luther King Jr., of a black prisoner facing execution in a North Carolina gas chamber and praying, not to God or Jesus, but to Joe Louis: "Save me, Joe Louis!"[4] Just as Schmeling found that his image and reputation were no longer in his own control, Louis too, although he was only in his early twenties, had by 1936 become a living symbol, represented variously as a saintly figure carrying the hopes of his race or as a barely human, unsmiling "killer". In reality, he was a soft spoken, poorly educated young man who had grown up in poverty in Alabama, where he was born, and Detroit, where his family had moved as economic migrants, seeking work in its factories. He was, for all his extraordinary physical ability and gifts in the boxing ring, an unlikely hero with little of the charisma of someone like Muhammad Ali. Yet perhaps this lack of an assertive personality, as David Margolick has

suggested in his detailed account of the Schmeling–Louis fights, was part of the reason that his mythologization was so successful: "He was the perfect vehicle for everyone else's dreams; he could be, and was, whatever someone wanted him to be."[5] He was unfortunately also exploited by the many individuals and groups who sensed an opportunity in his success.

The manner in which the fights between Louis and Schmeling became emotionally and politically charged was unprecedented only in its degree. The appealingly simple, stereotyped contrasts they seemed to represent, reinforced in much of the press coverage on both sides of the Atlantic—the black race against the white, America against Europe, democracy against fascism, brute force against intelligence—had been seen before. Indeed, the representation of boxing as a test of racial superiority had a long and troubled history in the USA. Louis was not aspiring to become the first black heavyweight world champion, but the second. Jack Johnson was the first, holding the title between 1908 and 1915, and acquiring a notorious reputation in the process.[6] Prior to Johnson there had been many talented black boxers, but few had been given the opportunity to fight for a world title, and none in the heavyweight division. Although interracial boxing had been relatively common where boxing was permitted in the USA, a de facto "colour line" operated to prevent non-white challengers for the world title. As Sammons explains: "Since prizefighting has been characterized by some as a true test of skill, courage, intelligence, and manhood, boxing champions have traditionally stood as symbols of national and racial superiority."[7] The same logic later applied by the Nazis to exclude non-"Aryans" from German boxing had ensured that all the heavyweight champions would be white. Johnson was the first black boxer to combine boxing ability with self-confidence, courage and marketing skills. Prevented in the USA from challenging the current world champion, the Canadian Tommy Burns, Johnson followed him across the world, goading and taunting him in the manner for which he became notorious. He eventually fought and defeated Burns in Sydney, Australia, and defended the title ten times before losing it to Jess Willard in Havana, Cuba, in 1915.

His tenure as champion was dogged by controversy and by no means meant the end of the colour line, as Johnson refused to fight black boxers for the first 5 years. It sparked the search for a "Great White Hope" (the novelist Jack London's coinage) to challenge Johnson, a project characterized by Sammons as a planned "lesson akin to a public lynching

for blacks who did not know their place in American society".[8] Former champion James Jeffries was coaxed out of retirement to challenge Johnson in what was billed as the "fight of the century", which took place on 4 July 1910. It was provocatively promoted by Tex Rickard, who later was responsible for staging many of Jack Dempsey's fights, as the "ultimate test of racial superiority". Newspapers happily bought into this simplistic reading and, as Boddy notes, speculated on the fight in terms of long-established racial stereotypes. Characterizing Jeffries as a "thinker" who "undoubtedly possesses the worrying qualities of the white race", the *New York Times* speculated that he might lose out to the "care free and cool" Johnson.[9] As we shall see, this putative contrast between intellect and instinct later informed the coverage of the fights between Schmeling and Louis. In the event, the Johnson–Jeffries fights delivered a "lesson" only to Jeffries, who retired after being outclassed in fifteen rounds, and those who had backed him in racial terms. The result triggered appalling scenes across the country, including race riots and lynchings. Johnson's arrogance, brash personality, ostentation and "loose" morals resulted in his becoming a hate figure for many. He was also unpopular with moderate African Americans, who felt his behaviour had done considerable damage to their cause. After his defeat to Willard (which Johnson later claimed had been fixed), it took another 22 years before a black boxer would be permitted to bid for the heavyweight title again. The champions of the intervening years, notably Jack Dempsey, never fought the best black boxers, such as Harry Wills, who was widely recognized as the best of the legitimate challengers for most of the 1920s.

Against this background, as the young Louis started to gain a fearsome reputation, his management team believed that the only way he would ever be "allowed" to challenge for the world title was by banishing the memory of Jack Johnson. He was to achieve this, essentially, by conforming to the behavioural norms for African Americans dictated by the white majority, in an era in which segregation was widespread and lynch mobs were still not uncommon. By becoming an unthreatening, clichéd "credit to his race", publicly abstinent, disciplined, chaste and polite—the virtues that Johnson had symbolically spat upon—his managers John Roxborough and Julian Black hoped that he would succeed where Harry Wills had not. They even went so far as to allow newspapers to publish the seven "rules" by which, as Donald McRae puts it, "[t]he break from 'Papa Jack' would be made irrevocable".[10] The rules

included commitments to "live and fight clean", never to gloat over a fallen opponent (implicitly over a *white* opponent), and even, in the most direct attempt to distance himself from Johnson's lifestyle: "Joe Louis will never have his picture taken alongside a white woman."[11] To an extent this emphasis upon Louis' virtuous character recalls the way in which Schmeling and other white athletes had likewise cultivated a supposedly moral image designed to conform to the expectations of bourgeois society. As with Schmeling during the early stages of his career, devotion to family, and especially to his mother, was a feature of the newspaper coverage of Joe Louis, as was an abstinence from all so-called vices, including by implication sexual abstinence. This, in essence, was the underlying myth in Schmeling's film *Liebe im Ring* and of the *Schlager* (popular song) "Das Herz eines Boxers". Yet, less than 100 years since the abolition of slavery, the idealization of a black American man in these terms—docile, emasculated, controllable—had a particular resonance; for all his physical prowess in the ring, this was not an image of threatening "black power" as it would be projected by a later generation. It was, however, effective as a means to an end. Even though the reality of Louis's lifestyle—particularly his promiscuity—was far removed from this idealized image, it was widely accepted and encouraged by the media, just as it was for his friend and contemporary, the athlete Jesse Owens.[12] In the 1960s Muhammad Ali and other athletes criticized Louis and Owens as "Uncle Toms", essentially agreeing with the sportswriter Paul Gallico's unthinkingly racist assessment of Louis' rise to become world champion against the odds: "Louis is what is known definitely as a 'a good nigger who knows his place.'"[13] Yet this unkind accusation overlooks Louis' extraordinary status as a figure of hope and, indeed, racial pride and power, which was potent and real; Louis served as an inspiration to many who later fought for civil rights. It likewise overlooks the fact that the attempt to appease the white establishment was only partially successful, and some of the things Louis had undertaken *not* to do (never to gloat, never to smile), ostensibly to avoid appearing arrogant, also had an intimidating effect, just as they would, decades later, for the young Mike Tyson.

Louis' apparently modest lifestyle and self-discipline may have received praise, but he was just as often, as boxing writers sought a way to explain his shockingly one-sided victories against mainly white opponents, characterized in terms that dehumanized him as robotic, bestial or cold. The contribution Louis was making to his sport was of

course acknowledged, not least by those who stood to profit from his popularity. The founder and editor of *Ring* magazine, Nat Fleischer, observed in May 1936: "One man—Joe Louis—has done more for boxing than have any ten dozen men since Jack Dempsey was in his prime."[14] Moreover, by no means did all mainstream reporting on his career reflect the casual racism that was typical of American society (notably the balanced boxing reports of James Dawson of the *New York Times*). Yet even positive assessments of Louis' qualities struggled to represent him as fully human. Both Fleischer and his colleague at *The Ring* Daniel M. Daniel consistently employed mechanical metaphors to account for Louis' reputed "efficiency". Describing his defeat of Carnera, Fleischer wrote of his "machine-like precision", and it is interesting that this apparent precision resulted in *The Ring* adopting a more "scientific" approach to the analysis of the sport, notably through the use of so-called Magic Eye sequences of photographs.[15] By using a custom-designed camera that was able to take fifteen photographs per second, the magazine was able to put together "narrative" sequences of images, "objectively" recreating key moments in fights. Decades before live television and slow-motion replays, this gave fans what Ian Jeffrey terms "forensic access" to knock-downs and other controversial moments. The fights of Joe Louis, more than those of any other fighter from the era, were the subject of numerous Magic Eye pages in *The Ring*, some of which were reproduced under licence by *Boxsport* in Germany. By "dissecting" the rapid, precise technique of Louis in this way, the reader was sometimes given the impression of a fighting machine rather than of an accomplished sportsman. Even late in his career, when Louis' fallibility had been exposed on more than one occasion, Daniel continued to depict him as something akin to an android; the influence of the Magic Eye analyses, which are reminiscent of Eadweard Muybridge's famous photographic sequences depicting human and animal "locomotion" and through which his fights had often been "consumed" by readers, seems to be evident in the choice of metaphor in a 1946 article referring to Louis' "photographic mind".[16] Daniel writes that he has "a cerebellum which takes motion pictures, and which can unroll those pictures whenever he wants it to. When he fights a man, that motion picture machine in the back of his noggin keeps taking films. Once taken, these films are analysed by the Louis sub-conscious".[17]

The dehumanizing tendencies of such descriptions in *The Ring* are perhaps inadvertent, as much a product of the magazine's desire

to represent the sport as being up to date and modern with regard to prejudice or racism. Elsewhere, this was not the case. Paul Gallico, for example, exemplified much of the deeply ingrained prejudice that characterized American sports journalism of this era. In an essay on "negro" sportsmen in his lauded 1937 anthology *Farewell to Sport*, which is in other respects extremely perceptive in its assessment of the impediments faced by black boxers, Gallico recites hackneyed "truisms" about "the black man" that have their origins in the dehumanizing discourses that had helped to justify slavery—that he is generally "a magnificent physical specimen", is "not nearly so sensible to pain as his white brother", and "has a thick, hard skull".[18] Reporting from Louis' training camp at Pompton Lakes, New Jersey, in advance of his fight against Primo Carnera in June 1935, Gallico refers to Louis as a "splendid, vicious male animal, completely destructive", saying of his trainers that "they remind me more of animal trainers than fight managers".[19] In speculating in the *New York Daily News* on the outcome of the fight between Louis and Max Baer in September 1935, Gallico again makes the comparison with an animal, suggesting that Louis "lives like an animal, untouched by externals. Is he all instinct, all animal? Or have a hundred million years left a fold upon his brain?"[20] He predicted, incorrectly, that Baer would win because he was "more of a human being".[21] The nickname that stuck with him, the "Brown Bomber", was one of many that referred to his (in fact relatively pale) skin colour—others included the "Sepia Slasher" and the "Dark Destroyer". Well before Joe Louis became world champion, he too had triggered a search for a "white hope" to beat him and stop his rise to the top. As with Jack Johnson some 25 years earlier, this was, in part, little more than a media gimmick. As Margolick suggests, "the object was not just to hold the black man back, but to cash in on his allure".[22] But for this gimmick to work, a society that was still deeply divided along racial lines was assumed. It was not enough that Louis, like Johnson, was an American—his ethnicity was, in the eyes of some, more important. Thus, from the moment that a world title eliminator fight between Schmeling and Louis was agreed to, race became one of the cornerstones of the media coverage.

Politics was the other constant. Again, there are precedents for the presentation of a sporting event as a sort of geo-political allegory. There were, as we have seen, hints of it in the contemporary representation of Schmeling's victory over the Italian Bonaglia in 1928 as a victory for democracy, and in Hans Leip's later attempt to re-imagine the

occasion in purely nationalistic terms. More recently, Max Baer's decision to sport the Star of David in his fight against Schmeling had offered a concrete portent of the potential for political symbolism in any future fights between Schmeling and an American, particularly a non-"Aryan" American. In both of these cases, however, the political implications had not been anticipated beforehand. The same could not be said of Joe Louis' first fight in New York (his previous fights had been mainly in Chicago and Detroit), against Primo Carnera, the Italian former world champion. Carnera is an interesting case study in the propagandistic appropriation of an athlete. He had become famous as much for his unusual size and physique as for his boxing skills, so when he unexpectedly defeated Jack Sharkey to claim the world title, as Simon Martin observes, "the Fascist propaganda machine set about extracting the maximum possible from his image and commitment to the regime".[23] Whereas Schmeling, as we have seen, was opportunistically willing to cooperate with many of the expectations placed on him by Hitler's regime after 1933, the notoriously naïve Carnera, who had been manipulated by organized crime in New York, placed himself wholly and subserviently at the service of the fascist regime. The first of his two defences of his world title, against Paolino Uzcudun, took place in Rome in front of a crowd of around 70,000—and in front of Il Duce himself. As happened with Schmeling's fights in Hamburg in 1934 and 1935, the regime ensured an appropriately high attendance by subsidizing tickets and travel to the event. It was, according to Martin, one "of the first great sporting opportunities that allowed the regime to associate itself with and create a national, collective experience".[24] Carnera entered the ring wearing a fascist blackshirt and gave the obligatory, so-called Roman salute to all four sides of the ring. It is hard to imagine a more visible performance of the athlete as symbol of "virile Italy", demonstrating "the virtues of the new, indefatigable race that the regime claimed to be creating".[25] Of course, the athlete as symbol of a resurgent race is only credible as long as the athlete in question remains victorious, and when Carnera lost his title to Max Baer in 1934, he was, Martin observes, "almost immediately dropped as the Fascist flag bearer".[26] The association between Carnera and Mussolini's regime had, however, been firmly established. When Carnera fought Louis at the Yankee Stadium on 25 June 1935, the newspapers were filled with reports of the escalating tensions between Fascist Italy and Ethiopia (Abyssinia), and it was not long before diplomacy failed and Italy invaded, in October 1935. It did not

take much imagination for this high-profile fight between a black boxer and a de facto representative of Fascist Italy to be invested with political symbolism. Louis knew little or nothing of Ethiopia or Africa, but with some 15,000 black fans attending the fight, his ethnicity sufficed to make him an honorary representative of Africa for the evening, which took place with a massive police presence.[27] Carnera was thoroughly outboxed and knocked out in the sixth round. Aware of the resonance, the Italian Ministry of Popular Culture banned the publication of photographs of the defeated Italian boxer, whose career was never to recover.[28] It was widely reported that in New York City's Harlem district and in other American cities, African Americans celebrated Joe Louis' victory with particular excitement in the full expectation that it would lead to a successful challenge for the world title. Needless to say, in the aftermath of this sporting debacle for Fascist Italy, the authorities in Germany were well aware of the risk in backing a fight between Schmeling and Louis, and in particular in attempting to make him into a comparable flag bearer for the regime. At the same time, Goebbels was quite aware of the propaganda coup that a victory for Schmeling would mean.

Kampf and *Sieg*: The Louis Fights and Their Exploitation

The timing of the fight between Schmeling and Louis, scheduled for late June 1936, meant that the build-up towards it overlapped with the preparations for the summer Olympic Games, which were due to start in Berlin on 1 August, and the politics surrounding the two occasions soon became entangled. The moment that Hitler confirmed that his regime would honour Berlin's commitment to host the Games, and moreover would abide by the rules of the IOC, controversy became inevitable. The NSDAP, as already noted, had a record of agitating against the "spirit" of the Olympic movement and had, through platforms such as the *Völkischer Beobachter*, been vocally critical of the very successful selection of black American athletes at the Los Angeles Games in 1932. It was equally evident to international observers that, no matter what was claimed in official pronouncements, Hitler's government had introduced measures that were in blatant contravention of the Olympic charter, which demanded that national Olympic committees be free from "political or other influence".[29] Moreover, the exclusion on racial grounds of

groups of citizens from free access to sport, and beyond that from basic human rights, as was evidently the case by the time of the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, was hardly consistent with the spirit of "chivalry, love and 'fair play'" that were explicitly cited as the cornerstones of "Olympism" as it had been imagined by Pierre de Coubertin, the founding father of the modern Olympic movement.[30] The result was a growing clamour in the USA, with its large and influential Jewish population, for an organized boycott of the Games. These calls were led by the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League, which had been founded by Samuel Untermyer in 1933 as the American League for the Defense of Jewish Rights.

Avery Brundage, the president of the American Olympic Committee and former head of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), was not in favour of a boycott, publicly dismissing it as un-American and driven only by "malicious propaganda".[31] Brundage was on friendly terms with von Tschammer und Osten, allowing himself to be courted by him on his visits to Germany, and seemed happy to accept the reassurances given to him about the treatment of Jews in Germany and the fair conduct of the Games—in particular that black and Jewish athletes would not face discrimination. For most international observers there was little doubt that, as an article in the *Manchester Guardian* put it, "the Nazi philosophy is essentially hostile to the Olympic idea".[32] But Brundage faced considerable opposition, not only from American Jews and the Anti-Nazi League, but also from the AAU, which at its annual convention in 1933 had voted in favour of a boycott unless Germany's treatment of the Jews improved. Many of its members, including the current president Jeremiah Maloney, supported the accusations against Germany, which were summarized in a 1935 publication from the Committee on Fair Play in Sports, presenting "a case against American participation in the Olympic Games in Berlin".[33] The concerns were shared by many athletes, and Jesse Owens was among those who had dared to speak out, declaring in a radio interview in November 1935, much to the displeasure of his coach Larry Snyder, that he believed America should boycott the Games "if there is discrimination against minorities in Germany".[34] In New York in particular, tensions between protesters and Nazi supporters, of which there were many among the city's German-American population focused in Yorkville, were running high through 1935 and 1936.[35]

Brundage was eventually able to avert the threat of the boycott that Germany had feared by winning a vote on Olympic participation at the annual convention of the AAU in New York in December 1935. Schmeling played a small role in this. After being approached by Arno Breitmeyer (see *Erinnerungen*, 322), deputy to the *Reichssportführer* and his eventual successor, he had undertaken to represent the Games, informally, during his trip to New York to watch Louis take on Uzcudun. He had also agreed to carry with him a letter to Brundage from the organizing committee of the Berlin Games. He delivered the letter to Brundage and, by his own account, made promises regarding the fair treatment of participating athletes. In the run-up to the Games, when he spent an extended period in the USA preparing for the fight against Louis, Schmeling faithfully adhered to this line and did what he could to offer assurances about the Games, if not about the treatment of Jews in Germany. He repeatedly mentioned German excitement about the Games and his own plans to attend upon his return to Germany (which he duly did). Schmeling later referred to his "grenzenlose Naivität" (boundless naivety) (*Erinnerungen*, 324) in promising things over which he must have known he had absolutely no control. As evidence that his intervention on behalf of the Games had mattered—and providing further evidence of the paradoxical egotism that underpins much of his self-presentation, even when it also reveals "naivety"—Schmeling mentions that he was later rewarded with "der Große Olympische Orden" (Great Olympic Medal) (*Erinnerungen*, 324). Although Kluge is certainly right to argue that Schmeling considerably overestimated his own importance in this matter, it is once again noticeable that in his public profile the ostensibly apolitical boxer had once again aligned himself with the very political interests of the regime.[36]

In the meantime, the Anti-Nazi League had turned its attention to the upcoming Louis–Schmeling fight and now called on Jewish fans to boycott it. The fight promoter, Mike Jacobs (himself Jewish, no relation to Joe Jacobs), concluded that Louis' star power, along with the perceived probability of a defeat for the German boxer, would prevent any boycott from having an impact.[37] He continued to do all he could to promote the fight. While the Nazi regime was doing all in its power to ensure that the Berlin Games were a success, it had mixed feelings at the prospect of Schmeling's fight against Louis. Schmeling, of course, had permission to go ahead with the fight, but in the eyes of the most extreme National Socialists, the mere idea of a professional boxing match

between an "Aryan" and a black man remained repugnant. Indeed, aware that black American athletes would certainly do well at the Games, Goebbels was apparently reluctant to see the fight represented primarily as a battle between races, and on the scheduled day of the fight he instructed the press to act accordingly when reporting the result, even in the event of a victory for Schmeling.[38]

In America, reports circulated that the regime was shying away from promoting the fight or had somehow disowned Schmeling. This perception of "shabby" treatment of Schmeling allowed some American observers to distinguish between the athlete, who was often referred to as sportsman-like, and the country he was, in most people's eyes, "representing". The *New York Times* dedicated an entire article to this on the day of his departure for the USA in April 1936, remarking on Nazi "race prejudice" and the distrust of professional sport: "Race conscious Germany cannot forgive Max for fighting a Negro and letting himself be paid therefor".[39] In fact, according to the report in *Boxsport*, Schmeling's late-night departure had been kept deliberately low key, as this was what Schmeling preferred.[40] In the weeks preceding the day of the fight, the preparations were covered extensively in the German media, and Schmeling's chance of victory was assessed with equal parts optimism and caution. The German press was encouraged by the repeated reports that Louis did not appear to be in his best form, while Schmeling certainly did. There were, despite the official concern about making one of the cornerstones of Nazi ideology a hostage to fortune, plenty of examples of grotesque racial stereotyping in the coverage. The *Boulevard* newspaper *BZ am Mittag* had commissioned its cartoonist "Hicks" to visit the training camps and deliver both cartoons and light-hearted reports. A number of the former are informed by race. On 16 June, for example, two cartoon illustrations of Schmeling and Louis, positioned facing each other in the top left and top right of the page, are titled simply "Der Vetreter weißen Rasse" (the representative of the white race) and "Der Vertreter der schwarzen Rasse" (the representative of the black race).[41] On 18 June, Hicks imagined Schmeling as the last "white hope" in a cartoon titled "Wer hat Angst vor dem schwarzen Mann" (Who's afraid of the black man); he depicts a confident (but tiny) Max Schmeling facing up to a monstrously oversized, crudely stereotypical depiction of Louis as a sort of black demon; the sketch depicts the white boxers recently defeated by Louis (Paolino, Carnera, Retzlaff, Baer) running away in fear.[42] On the following page, in a piece entitled

"Schwarz gegen Weiß" (Black against White), the nineteenth-century precedent of the bare-knuckle fights between the white English champion Tom Cribb and the black American Tom Molineaux, a former slave, is cited.[43] However, other previews of the fight, published in less sensationalist newspapers, sought to avoid such a drastic representation of the fight, although prejudice was so ingrained that it is implicit even in ostensibly positive comments about Louis. A preview of the fight in one local party newspaper opens by portraying Louis very much as a racial hero but does not do the equivalent for Schmeling:

> In den Kirchen von New Yorks Negerstadt Harlem liegen seine Rassegenossen auf den Knien und erflehen seinen Sieg gegen Max Schmeling aus Deutschland. Vor einiger Zeit war Joe Louis mit seiner Frau in einer Baptistenversammlung in Detroit. Zweitausend Zuhörer drängten sich. Und der schwarze Pfarrer sagte in seiner Predigt: "Du bist uns näher als irgendein anderer seit den Zeiten Abraham Lincolns."[44]
>
> (In the churches of New York's negro district Harlem his racial comrades are on their knees praying for a victory against Max Schmeling from Germany. Not long ago Joe Louis attended a Baptist service with his wife in Detroit. Two thousand people had packed in. And the black priest said in his sermon: "You mean more to us than anyone since the days of Abraham Lincoln.")

By introducing Louis to his readers in these terms, the author signals the relevance of the question of race. The reference to a black congregation praying for his victory precedes any acknowledgement of Louis' impeccable record as a boxer (after all, most people thought Louis would do very well without the need for divine intervention) and contrasts markedly with the depiction of Schmeling's "Ruhe, seine ausgefeilte Technik" (calm, his precise technique). No reference is made to the hopes of Germans, or of other whites, for a Schmeling victory. Instead, motifs that had long played a role in the discourse of race and power are suggested, without the implications being made explicit: devotion and faith are contrasted with self-confidence and reason. However, the measured tone of the article lacks both the aggression and propagandistic crudeness that is typical of much journalism produced under National Socialism and, by removing all supposedly national qualities from the depiction of Schmeling, could be said to allow for the possibility of a defeat. Even the reference in the title to "Der Kampf des Jahrhunderts" (the fight

of the century) is enclosed within quotation marks. It is the Americans, rather than the author, who have attached this label to the fight, just as it had been attached to other fights in the past, such as those between Johnson and Jeffries and between Dempsey and Tunney.

Arno Hellmis seems to have been the only German sports journalist sent to the USA to cover the fight. His live radio commentary was remembered by those who heard it for the hysterical excitement that accompanied the moment of Schmeling's victory. His reporting on the fight for the *Völkischer Beobachter* and *Der Angriff*, as well as for *Boxsport*, was rather more reserved beforehand. In the two newspapers he was granted less space than, for example, stories relating to the preparations for the Olympics. On the day before the fight the *Völkischer Beobachter* published a preview, including a short interview with Schmeling, in which Hellmis delineated the fight in racial terms, but with no sense whatsoever that Louis was anything like an "idol":

> Amerika befindet sich im Boxfieber […] Dabei wird vielfach das rassische Moment stark in den Vordergrund gestellt, und man hofft, daß es dem Vertreter der weißen Rasse gelingen wird, dem ungewöhnlichen Aufstieg des Negers Einhalt zu erbieten.
>
> Der Neger kennt keinerlei Hemmungen, er hat vom Betreten des Ringes an nur ein Ziel vor Augen: schnellste und unbarmherzige Vernichtung des Gegners.[45]
>
> (America has boxing fever […] Racial themes are frequently placed in the foreground, and people are hoping that the representative of the white race will succeed in arresting the unusual rise of the negro.
>
> The negro has no inhibitions of any kind. From the moment he enters the ring he is focused on one aim only: the merciless, swiftest destruction of his opponent.)

It is noticeable that in this preview the emphasis is on Louis as a fearsome, but essentially inhuman, opponent, defined by race and characterized in feral terms—he is without inhibition, driven only by a "merciless" desire to destroy. Such racist discourse was not unusual in the context of a Nazi publication, but the language also recalls that used by some American sportswriters, such as Paul Gallico. Schmeling is granted the status of "white hope", but relatively cautiously. The implication is that courageous defeat to such a monstrous fighter would

in fact be no shame. In *Boxsport*, Erwin Thoma allowed himself not just more space but also more licence to be more explicitly political in his reading of the fight. His final preview, tellingly, is entitled "Schwarz oder Weiß?" (Black or White?); it presents the occasion in explicitly racial terms, arguing that Schmeling is widely perceived (not only in Germany) as a "Bollwerk" (bulwark) of the white race:

> Die Hoffnungen der ganzen weißen Welt ruhen auf Max Schmeling, der das letzte Bollwerk gegen eine grosse, anscheinend erst im Entstehen begriffene schwarze Welle im Boxsport sein soll. Man hofft mit ganzer Kraft und Gläubigkeit, und je mehr die Nachrichten aus Amerika von mangelhaften Trainingsleistungen des Joe Louis erzählen, um so sicherer glaubt man an Schmeling. Niemals hat ein Mann die Sympathien der ganzen weißen Welt so rückhaltlos auf sich vereinigt wie unser Landsmann […]. Wenn diese Sympathien fähig sind, Kraftlinien zu bilden, dann muß Max Schmeling in dieser Nacht über sich selbst hinauswachsen.[46]
>
> (The hopes of the entire white race are resting on Max Schmeling, who is seen as the last bulwark against a great black wave in boxing, which seems to have only just started to grow. People are hoping with all their strength and belief, and the more the news from America relates the substandard performances from Joe Louis in training, the more they believe in Schmeling. Never before has a man unified the sympathies of the whole white world so unconditionally as our countryman […]. If these sympathies are able to create lines of power, then tonight Max Schmeling will grow beyond himself.)

In contrast to his low-key departure from Germany, Schmeling was confronted by dozens of American reporters and photographers upon his arrival in New York on 21 April and in the weeks that followed found his every move and word reported and scrutinized. In an effort to avoid some of the hype that surrounded the fight, he selected a training camp at the Naponoch Country Club at a remote location in the Catskill Mountains, several hours' drive from New York, and then chose to lodge in a cabin in the woods, at a further distance from the training camp. With the fight scheduled to take place at Yankee Stadium on 18 June, Schmeling allowed himself a full 7 weeks to prepare, an unusually long period. The American press reported regularly from both Schmeling's camp and Louis' at Lakeside, New Jersey. For the most part, despite the proposed boycott and Schmeling's association with a regime

that seemed alien and hostile to a majority of Americans, Schmeling was at this stage still viewed kindly by the American media, which generally portrayed him as earnest, honest and pleasant. There were exceptions, with some reports, reprising the motif that was central to Rolf Nürnberg's portrayal of Schmeling, suggesting he had been "lucky", or was "past his prime" and "never a great fighter at his peak".[47] Harry Grayson, sportswriter for the NEA syndication service (the Newspaper Enterprise Association), devoted an entire article to his career earnings, accompanied by an illustration of Schmeling surrounded by dollar signs, and noted that the Louis fight was due to take them to more than $1,200,000 in total.[48] This was still the era of the Great Depression, so to profile Schmeling in these terms—even though the figures quoted are commensurate with a boxer with a record stretching back years and who had been world champion during that period—invited a degree of resentment. It is, at the same time, interesting that the article, despite referring to Schmeling by alliterative epithets mocking his "Germanness" (the "Ferocious Frankfurter", the "Pretzel Pounder"), makes nothing of the link to Nazi Germany and singles out the individualism, even greed, of the professional. This, of course, was the focus of equivalent hostility from National Socialists and was only tolerated in the expectation that Schmeling would bring a degree of international prestige to German sport.

Other portrayals of Schmeling focus on his meticulous preparation (he is a "boxer" rather than a "fighter") and his courage ("Schmeling, we believe, has courage…The experts should not forget that").[49] With previous opponents such as Carnera and Baer) having been visibly intimidated by Louis, Schmeling's apparent lack of fear was the subject of some comment; he was judged "typically German in his Teutonic stolidity, stoicism and raw courage".[50] A defeat for Schmeling was, however, considered a certainty by almost every American boxing expert. The pre-fight reports, by couching their predictions in such unambiguous terms, simultaneously prepared the ground for the shock that accompanied Louis' defeat: "there has not been an occasion in this writer's memory when such complete, unqualified unanimity prevailed on the day of a big fight".[51] Schmeling's "eerie self-assurance" and good form were certainly noted, but few predicted anything other than a win for Joe Louis, with debate focusing mainly on how long Schmeling might last.[52]

The first fight between Schmeling and Louis took place on the evening of 19 June 1936, a day later than planned, after heavy rain on 18 June led

to its postponement. Ticket sales had already been sluggish, with the apparent certainty of a one-sided victory for Louis acting as a deterrent, as had the calls for a boycott. The result was a much reduced crowd; announced as 70,000 and even 80,000 in the live radio broadcasts on the night, it was officially slightly less than 40,000, but in reality probably around 45,000. The stadium seemed half empty, although numerous dignitaries and celebrities were in attendance.[53] The fight may have been witnessed live by fewer than expected, but this was a *modern* event and was also experienced through various technologies on multiple media platforms. The live radio broadcasts in English, German and Spanish were heard by a huge audience of many millions. An estimated 60 million heard Clem McCarthy's commentary for NBC in the USA, and in Germany around 30 million listened, at three in the morning, to Arno Hellmis live for the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft (RRG), the state broadcaster controlled by the propaganda ministry.[54] Whereas Schmeling's earlier American fights had attracted large radio audiences in Germany (although the broadcast of his world title victory in 1930 had failed), they were modest in comparison with this. Boxsport, reporting on the radio audience, even implied that listening to the fight was a patriotic duty: "Jeder gute Deutsche wollte in dieser Nacht dabei sein".[55] (Every good German wanted to listen in on the night.) Radio had become one of the key propaganda media under National Socialism, overseen like film by Goebbels' ministry. The significance attached to radio audiences was demonstrated by the subsidization of affordable radio sets for the masses, the so-called *Volksempfänger* (literally, people's receiver) and other models that by 1943 accounted for one out of every three radios in Germany. Collective listening—for example to Hitler's speeches—became a feature of everyday life.[56] But as was the case with film, the propaganda function of radio had to be adapted to audience desires and tastes, and thus radio continued to function as a form of ostensibly apolitical, popular entertainment under the Nazis. However, as Inge Marßolek observes, this entertainment was often configured in ways that were entirely compatible with the party's ideological goals, such as the construction of a sense of *Volksgemeinschaft*.[57] Needless to say, stage-managed events such as the annual *Reichsparteitage* (party conferences) in Nuremberg or the ceremonies around the Olympic Games were carefully mediated, with reporters acting as the "eyes" of the audience, to convey the desired impression of aesthetic and symbolic impact. Sports events, by their nature, could not be controlled in quite the same way,

which meant that the role of the commentator, and his use of language not only to describe events but to reflect the appropriate *Weltanschauung*, became politically crucial. In Arno Hellmis, German audiences not only had a sports expert and an experienced journalist as their commentator, but a committed Nazi and long-standing member of the SA.[58] The fight was mediated in other ways too. Updates via newswire were sent around the world; an early experiment in television allowed a select audience to watch the fight live at Radio City Music Hall in New York; and for the first time a photograph (taken during the fourth round) was transmitted wirelessly and published in Germany before traditional photographs had crossed the Atlantic.[59] Newsreel film footage of the fight was also recorded and in Germany was incorporated into a full-length feature film celebrating the result.

Those who attended witnessed a victory by knockout for Schmeling in the twelfth round, and one of the great upsets of sports history. Schmeling had retained, through his weeks of preparation right up to the fight itself, a confidence in his chances of victory that few had shared but many noticed. It even seems to have informed the composition of the photographs of the weigh-in on 18 June used by the press, which portray an apparently relaxed and calm Schmeling shaking hands with an expressionless Louis, but, standing on the scales, it is Schmeling who seems to exude confidence and power (Fig. 5.2).[60] Hellmis later even suggested an implausible reading of the image as evidence of Louis' pre-fight nerves.[61] With the benefit of hindsight, Schmeling's confidence seemed to have been remarkably prescient and was cited as evidence of the effectiveness of a tactical or "scientific" approach to the sport. Shortly after he had watched Louis' victory against Uzcudun, Schmeling had been asked how he rated his own chances against Louis. He replied that not only did he think he had a chance against Louis but also that he had "seen something" in the fight. The phrase—"I have seen something"—was subsequently widely quoted, though few seemed to have believed that it might be true. Regardless of whether Schmeling really had seen something on the night of the Uzcudun fight, it reinforced already existing perceptions of Schmeling as an "analytical", methodical boxer, in marked contrast to Louis, which in turn informed the set of symbolic contrasts through which the fight was analyzed on both sides of the Atlantic.

Ludwig Haymann, as we shall see, subsequently attempted to claim Schmeling's style as "German", driven by racial "sentiment" (*Gefühl*)

Fig. 5.2 Schmeling and Louis at the weigh-in, 18 June 1936 (Everett Collection Historical / Alamy Stock Photo)

rather than intellect. Haymann makes the sort of sweeping generalizations that are typical of National Socialist discourse; by classifying humans according to national and racial categories he leaves little room for individual specificity. In the chapter on his "System" in his 1930 autobiography, however, Schmeling had placed little emphasis upon subjective responses of any kind, recommending instead an analytical approach that allows for specific preparation for *individual* opponents: "die richtige Einstellung auf den Gegner, der ja von Fall zu Fall wechselt und dessen Eigenart einzig und allein maßgebend ist" (the right approach to an opponent, which will change from case to case and whose individual nature is the only determining factor) (*Mein Leben*, 75). In his interview with the *Völkischer Beobachter* prior to the Louis fight Schmeling implied that his approach had not changed, and indeed had become even more refined, *sachlich* (objective) and intellectualized:

> Ich werde den Kampf systematisch nach einem bestimmten Plan führen, den ich mir zurechtgelegt habe, nachdem ich Louis in seinem Kampf gegen […] Paolino selbst gesehen, und seinen Kampfstil noch in Filmaufnahmen von seinen anderen Kämpfen sehr genau studiert habe.[62]
>
> (I will conduct the fight systematically according to a definite plan, which I devised after seeing Louis in his fight against Paolino and after also closely studying his technique in film recordings of his other fights.)

Schmeling's plan had evolved through the use of film footage of Louis, which he and Max Machon had brought back with them, secretly, from the trip to New York in December 1935, and in particular from the slow-motion analysis of the patterns in Louis' technique. The "Taylorist" approach that had been a feature of the emerging "science" of sport in the previous decade was applied to an extent that was certainly innovative. Far from relying on generalizations about race or Louis' inhuman qualities and animalistic instincts, Schmeling's team had prepared for him as an individual human being who had individual habits and weaknesses. In particular, Schmeling later reported, they had observed that Louis had a habit of dropping his guard momentarily after delivering the left hook that had proven so devastatingly effective in his fights to date. It was this brief opening at close quarters, which could allow him to land one of his famously hard straight rights, that Schmeling aimed to exploit. In fact, while the majority of the German accounts of

Schmeling's shocking victory stress that he had trained hard, few paid attention to the strategic preparation he had undertaken. It was not really until the publication of his *Erinnerungen* that Schmeling provided a detailed account of the process that he referred to in the interview with the *Völkischer Beobachter*:

> Ich habe in diesen Wochen wahrscheinlich mehr dazugelernt, als in meiner gesamten Laufbahn. Und diese theoretische Vorbereitung war ohne jeden Zweifel genauso wichtig für mich wie das eigentliche Training. Am Ende war ich ziemlich sicher, Joe Louis bewußter zergliedert und folglich besser begriffen zu haben als er sich selbst. (*Erinnerungen*, 331)
>
> (During those weeks I probably learned more than I had in my entire career. And this theoretical preparation was undoubtedly just as important for me as the actual training. By the end, I was fairly certain that I had dissected Louis thoroughly and consequently understood him better than he did himself.)

The plan worked. When the fight finally got under way, a little after 10 p.m., Schmeling exploited his opponent's dropped guard from the very first round, even though Louis' left jab initially, during the first three rounds, seemed to be as effective as ever. Schmeling began to find his way through with the short, straight right with which he had made his reputation, holding his right high and "cocked", ready to be unleashed. Having landed at least one solid right in the third round, in the fourth round he did so again, and followed up with several more unanswered blows to send Louis to the canvas for the first time in his career. The crowd could scarcely believe what it was seeing, and the radio commentary reflected this. Clem McCarthy, in the distinctive, gravelly patter for which he was famous, struggled to describe the sequence, but his rapid, breathless narrative conveyed the panicked intensity of the moment—and even in the heat of the moment he managed to incorporate a metaphorical reference to the programme's sponsor, Buick:

> […] and Schmeling got over a right hand high on Louis' jaw that made Louis rock his head. Schmeling has sent Louis down. Joe Louis is down! He did not wait for the count, he got up on the count of two. Schmeling came back at him and gave him another right and Schmeling is pouring in now and Louis for the first time is getting the real test. Schmeling gave him another right to the jaw. Schmeling has put in four rights

> to Louis' jaw. They're on the other side of the ring, with Schmeling following him, as quick as a cat. And all the power of a Buick in that right hand. Schmeling's right hand is going to tell the story of this blow [sic] for Schmeling, win or lose.[63]

For Arno Hellmis, this was a moment of elation, with any pretence of objectivity abandoned: "Louis taumelt! Max ist überlegen. Louis ist am Boden. Louis war am Boden, ist wieder auf, stellt sich. Max hat ihn angeknockt. Bravo Max! Bravo Max!"[64] (Louis is staggering! Max is dominating. Louis is on the floor. Louis was on the floor, has got up, is fighting again. Bravo Max! Bravo Max!) McCarthy retained apparent impartiality and did not make a single reference to race or nationality, conveying a sense of excitement and dynamism in the virtually unbroken stream of words with which he described the fight. By contrast, Hellmis' strategy was different—he assumed a listener who was not only German but passionately supportive of Schmeling, whom he refers to much of the time as "Max", in his battle with Louis, who is routinely reduced to "der Neger" (the negro). As noted by Ralf Klee, who recently rediscovered a recording of the commentary, Hellmis' use of the first person plural suggests that he imagined himself in the ring with Schmeling, but it also included the listeners, making the fight into a *collective* struggle: "So ist es richtig Max! Immer schön auf Distanz gehen, sich auf nichts einlassen. Wir haben Zeit. Der Kampf dauert 15 Runden und Herrn Louis erwischen wir noch oft."[65] (That's right Max! Keep him nicely at a distance, don't fall for any tricks. We've got time. The fight is scheduled for 15 rounds and we're going to catch Mr Louis plenty of times.)

After the knock-down in the fourth round, Louis sprang back to his feet within 2 seconds—usually seen as a sign of inexperience, as it reduces the time one has to recover—and from that moment on, he reported later, he could remember almost nothing of what happened. The fight was certainly not over, but Schmeling's confidence was now high, and even though Louis was able to rally briefly in the seventh round, landing hooks to Schmeling's body, he continued to absorb ever more punishment, and the left side of his face began to swell up painfully. Louis began to land low, foul blows, not deliberately but as a consequence of the exhaustion that became a refrain in Clem McCarthy's commentary ("Louis gives every evidence of being a very tired young man"). He attempted to apologize for at least one of these blows, prompting McCarthy's co-commentator Ed Hill, who filled in between rounds,

to reflect, between the ninth and tenth rounds, on the "fairness of the fighters". He went on to claim that the same spirit of fairness applied to the crowd: "There isn't a trace of that which so many people have been afraid of, racial feeling or of anti-Nazism, anything of that kind. These people here in this Yankee Stadium are realizing that we've got two great athletes." In fact, what Margolick terms "the fickle loyalties of the fight crowd" were beginning to shift, as the likelihood of a victory for the underdog became ever clearer.[66] The mood had certainly changed, and some, no doubt, were excited to see the white boxer winning; Hellmis later reported that his American technician was screaming for a Schmeling victory: "Go on, Maxieboy, kill that nigger, kill him!"[67] Hellmis was not, admittedly, an objective witness. In contrast to the American commentators, he became increasingly, and aggressively, partisan as the fight developed and Schmeling's dominance became apparent, even invoking notions of *deutscher Faustkampf* (German pugilism): "Der schwarze Ulan vom Rhein ist da und zeigt den Amerikanern hier, wie man zu kämpfen versteht bei uns." (The Black Uhlan from the Rhine is here and is showing the Americans how we fight in Germany!) Hellmis delivered to his German audience a picture of a fight that, far from being the epitome of sporting fairness evoked in the American broadcast, was characterized by the brutality of the schoolyard bully, an image he clearly relished: "Wer hätte das gedacht? Der überlegene braune Bomber, der hier keinen einzigen Schlag mehr anbringen kann, der in der neunten Runde von Schmeling behandelt wird wie ein Schuljunge." (Who would have thought it? The superior Brown Bomber, who can no longer manage to land a single blow, who in the ninth round is being treated by Schmeling like a schoolboy.)

In the twelfth round Louis could take no more and Schmeling knocked him down with a devastating combination of unanswered blows. As the referee, Arthur Donovan, delivered the count, Louis could only shake his head and roll onto his front, making no further attempt to rise. Donovan spread his arms to signal the knockout, and Schmeling jumped in the air, his arms aloft, in triumph. Hellmis had his own moment of triumph, delivering the piece of commentary that made his name:

> Max fightet jetzt, wie er noch nie gefightet hat. Kämpft buchstäblich bis zum Umfallen. Schlägt dem Neger zur Zeit die Seele aus dem Leibe. Der Neger geht zurück. Wackelt. Kann nicht mehr. Da geht… Ooh… Er ist

> angeknockt. Schmeling hat ihn zu Boden geschlagen. Er kommt nicht mehr hoch. Er kann nicht mehr hoch. Er schüttelt den Kopf. Er weiß, es geht nicht mehr. Aus-aus-aus-aus-aus-aus.
>
> (Max is fighting now as he has never fought. Fighting literally to the point of falling over. He's beating the negro's soul out of his body at the moment. The negro is stepping back. He's wobbling. He can't go on. He's going… ooh… He's been knocked down. Schmeling has knocked him to the floor. He's not going to get up. He can't get up. He's shaking his head. He knows it's over. It's over, over, over, over, over, over!)

This dramatic moment of triumph and devastation was captured in dynamic photographs that appeared in the newspapers the following day and are still often reproduced, with the three contrasting figures combining to form a vivid composition, to capture the emotion of that moment (Fig. 5.3). In America, press reactions to the result combined admiration

Fig. 5.3 The moment of victory for Max Schmeling, 19 June 1936 (Press Association)

for Schmeling, disappointment at Louis' performance and an element of *Schadenfreude* informed, not a little, by racism. There was consensus, in the immediate aftermath, that Louis' superhuman aura had disappeared and that Schmeling had done enough to earn the right to challenge Braddock for the world title. On the front page of the *New York Times*, James Dawson observed that "Louis, hailed as the king of fighters entering the ring, was counted out, his invincibility as a fighter a shattered myth, his vulnerability convincingly established and his claims to heavyweight title distinction knocked into the discard".[68] For Louis' legions of black fans, the defeat was devastating. The African-American newspaper the *Atlanta Daily World* published on its front page a photograph of the moment of the knockout with the headline "The Spectacle That Chilled a Race". There were reports of fights, and even riots in the streets of Harlem, the South Side of Chicago, and Louis' home town, Detroit: "A Negro girl took the defeat so to heart she attempted to drink poison in a drug store".[69] For many it was simply too hard to accept, resulting in wild rumours that Louis had been drugged or had thrown the fight. By contrast, in Yorkville, the district on the Upper East Side of Manhattan that was home to many German immigrants, there was reportedly widespread jubilation: "Yorkville hailed Schmeling into the wee hours today and drank his very good health in an ocean of beer".[70] In Germany, for all the political and diplomatic need for caution on the eve of the Olympics, the victory few had dared to hope for represented a propaganda opportunity that the regime could hardly fail to exploit.

In the aftermath of Schmeling's victory, among all the many messages of congratulation Schmeling received, which he later said included telegrams from exiles such as Ernst Lubitsch, Marlene Dietrich and George Grosz (*Erinnerungen*, 357), the ones that received the most public attention were from Nazis. These included Goebbels, with whom, as was widely reported, Anny Ondra had listened to the fight, and Hitler himself. This applied both to the German press and the American and was perceived as an official endorsement of Schmeling and as a way of claiming his victory as "German". The *New York Times* reported:

> The German [sic] film star [Anny Ondra] was a guest of Goebbels, the fiery Minister of Propaganda, who is one of the driving powers behind the Nazis' racial campaign, when her husband knocked out the Brown Bomber.

> Schmeling received the congratulations of official Germany, represented by Dr. Goebbels, by a cable dispatched a few minutes after his victory was announced over the radio. [71]

A slightly awkward translation of the cable was provided, the original wording of which was given in the *Völkischer Beobachter* the following day:

> Zu Ihrem wunderbaren Sieg, den wir heute nacht am Rundfunk erlebten, meine allerherzlichsten Glückwünsche. Ich weiß, daß Sie für Deutschland gekämpft haben. Ihr Sieg ist ein deutscher Sieg. Wir sind stolz auf Sie. Mit Hitler-Heil und herzlichen Grüßen Ihr Dr. Goebbels.[72]
>
> (Please accept my sincerest congratulations on your wonderful victory, which we experienced tonight on the radio. I know that you fought for Germany. Your victory is a German victory. We are proud of you. Heil Hitler and warmest wishes, yours Dr Goebbels.)

Thus, literally within minutes, a "German" victory was being claimed, and this motif was to become a key strand in the propagandistic exploitation of Schmeling's achievement. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, in addition to reporting on Goebbels' congratulatory telegram, claimed that "the official Nazi News Bureau" was demanding that the world title fight between the champion Braddock and Schmeling should be held in Germany, sowing the first seeds of discontent with the political implications of Schmeling's victory and the prospect of his likely defeat of Braddock.[73] In the German press, *Der Angriff* claimed, somewhat fancifully, that Schmeling's first question upon reaching his dressing room after the fight was: "Ob der Führer im Radio zugehört hat?" (Was the *Führer* listening on the radio?)[74] The *Völkischer Beobachter* dedicated a significant portion of its front page, on 21 June, to a detailed account of those who had congratulated Schmeling, which in addition to Goebbels included Hitler, who had also sent a message (reproduced in full) and a bouquet of flowers to Ondra, Göring, Frick and von Tschammer und Osten.[75] The official congratulations continued upon Schmeling's prompt return to Germany—this time via the airship Hindenburg—where he was greeted on 26 June in Frankfurt by cheering crowds (as well as his wife and mother). An aeroplane provided by the RMVP took him directly to Berlin to fulfil press duties and, as was widely reported,

to receive congratulations from Hitler in person the following day (Fig. 5.4).[76] On 27 June, the *Völkischer Beobachter* reported Schmeling's return to ecstatic crowds in Berlin, accompanied by a photograph of a victory wreath hung on Schmeling's front door by "die sportfreudigen S.A.-Männer aus Dahlem" (the sports-mad SA men of Dahlem) with a self-composed verse.

Schmeling's fame and popularity reached a peak that surpassed anything he had experienced in the Weimar Republic. He was instantly recognizable, seemingly to everyone he met. Describing a visit made by Schmeling to the athletes' village shortly before the opening of the Olympic Games, Edmund Schneider made precisely this claim: "Ob es nun der verkehrsordnende Schupomann ist oder ein radfahrender Bäckerlehrling, eine autofahrende Dame oder ein promenierendes Brautpaar, alle erkennen sie den markanten Mann am Steuer—Max Schmeling."[77] (Whether it is the policeman directing traffic or a baker's apprentice on his bike, a lady driving a car or a married couple out for a walk, they all recognize the striking man at the wheel—Max Schmeling.) The athletes themselves, described by Schneider as "Sportjugend" (sporting youth), greeted him as a superstar, mobbing him for autographs and attempting to shake the hand of "ihr […] große[s] sportliche[s] Vorbild" (their great sporting role model).[78] The politicized organization of the Games ensured that even such an ostensibly informal visit had propagandistic overtones; thus we learn that Schmeling also visited the young volunteer helpers at the Games (the so-called *Jugend Ehrendienst*, undoubtedly consisting of members of the Hitler Youth and the Federation of German Girls), who accorded him "ein dreifaches "Sieg-Heil" (a triple Hail Victory).[79] It was during this visit, as Schneider reports, that Schmeling met Jesse Owens, a close friend of Joe Louis. According to Donald McRae, the two men talked for 5 mins ("as the Nazis watched from a discreet distance"), with Schmeling doing his best to be friendly towards Owens, who had been reluctant to meet the man who had beaten his friend.[80]

Regardless of Schmeling's intentions, his victory against Louis had made him a focus for propaganda. Arno Hellmis was the journalist who seemed most determined to capitalize on the opportunity it presented. On the front page of the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 21 June, Hellmis had a first chance, following his broadcast, to articulate what he saw as the symbolic significance of Schmeling's victory. His primary report was less interested in reflecting on the fight than in vicariously basking in the

Fig. 5.4 The Schmelings (Max, Anny Ondra and his mother) meet Hitler following his victory against Joe Louis. The photograph appeared in the magazine, *Illustrierter Film Kurier* (United Archives GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo)

international prestige Schmeling was now enjoying, which by extension could be of advantage to Germany. Making reference to the continuing disapproval of professional boxing among some National Socialists, he argues:

> Über Wert oder Unwert des Berufsboxens zu streiten ist wohl überflüssig zu einer Zeit, wo ein deutscher Berufsboxer im Mittelpunkt des Interesses eines 100-Millionen-Volkes steht, und nur wer die Mentalität dieses Volkes kennt, weiß, was für eine großartige, lebendige Propaganda dieser Max Schmeling leistete.[81]
>
> (It's probably pointless to argue about the value of professional boxing at a time when a German boxer is the focus of attention for a population numbering 100 million, and anyone who knows the mentality of this people knows that Max Schmeling has delivered fantastic, living propaganda.)

Hellmis, whose attitude to America reflects the typical stance of National Socialism—a combination of veneration and contempt—here recommends using Schmeling as a sort of "außerordentlicher Gesandter seines Landes" (extraordinary emissary for his country), echoing Willy Meisl's rather more liberal hopes voiced in the aftermath of Schmeling's first victory over Uzcudun in 1929.

Yet on the same page, in the words of a different reporter, the temptation to elevate Schmeling into a national symbol is already discernible:

> Man wird in Amerika über den Ausgang der erbitterten Auseinandersetzung zwischen dem schwarzen Bomber und unseren Max überraschter gewesen sein als in Deutschland. […] Dem deutschen Sport ist es eine Freude und Auszeichnung, in Schmeling wieder einen Boxer stellen zu können, der in einem so großartigen Sportland wie den Vereinigten Staaten für sein Volk erfolgreich sein konnte.[82]
>
> (In America people will have been more surprised at the outcome of the bitter struggle between the black bomber and our Max than in Germany. […] It's a pleasure and an honour for German sport to once again have in Schmeling a boxer who can win for his nation in a great sporting country such as the USA.)

The weeks following the victory saw final preparations being made for the summer Olympics, and Schmeling's fame and popularity allowed him to function, immediately, as a sort of international goodwill ambassador.

This process of capitalizing on Schmeling's victory occupied Hellmis for much of the following 2 years, until Schmeling's defeat in his rematch with Louis seemed to turn his world upside down, leaving him literally speechless. Hellmis provided the narration for *Max Schmelings Sieg—ein deutscher Sieg* (*Schmeling's Victory—A German Victory*), the propagandistic feature film that was swiftly edited from the fight footage (released in the USA as a conventional newsreel soon after the fight) and other footage of Schmeling's and Louis' training camps (Fig. 5.5). The following year he co-wrote and edited a biography of Schmeling (*Die Geschichte eines Kämpfers*), in collaboration with Alfred Eggert, Erwin Thoma and the promoter Walter Rothenburg. The rather fragmentary volume, published with a major press, Ullstein, aimed to present Schmeling's career, according to the dust cover, as "ein leuchtendes Vorbild für die Jugend der Welt" (a glorious role model for the youth of the world). The slighty overlapping contributions narrate the various key moments in Schmeling's career from the perspective of journalists who had reported on him (for *Boxsport* and for various newspapers) from its earliest stages and, in the case of Thoma, claimed personal friendship with him. The volume also served as a reckoning of sorts with the culture and media of the Weimar Republic, dismissively referred to, in the language of National Socialism, as "die Systemzeit" (the System era). Parts of Schmeling's career that do not fit the image of the "glorious role model", notably his recruitment of a Jewish manager, were simply omitted. In an act of brazen journalistic dishonesty, Thoma, who had probably devoted more time to writing about Schmeling than any other journalist, suggested that after dismissing Arthur Bülow as a manager, Schmeling had effectively managed himself, something no professional boxer has ever done: "Schmeling war dreiundzwanzig Jahre alt, als er sein sportliches Geschick selbst in die Hände nahm".[83] (Schmeling was 23 years old when he took his sporting destiny into his own hands.)

Such falsifications, simplifications and omissions are found in even more concentrated form in a biographical series on Schmeling written by Hellmis for the *Kampfblatt* of the Hitler Youth in 1937 and 1938, which, as Margolick very rightly observes, went further than ever in casting Schmeling in the image of the regime.[84] In the lead-in to the rematch with Louis in 1938, *Der Angriff* published yet another serialization of Schmeling's life, emphasizing his status as "ein Sportlervorbild" (a sporting role model). Again, a mythologized version of the virtuous warrior was perpetuated in this account, which, in wilful ignorance

Fig. 5.5 Promotional advertisement for the film *Max Schmelings Sieg - ein deutscher Sieg* (1936), published in the magazine *Illustrierter Film Kurier* (United Archives GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo)

of the facts, downplayed the influence of money as a motivating factor: "Max Schmeling konnte diesen zweiten Titelkampf nur deshalb bekommen, weil er im Gegensatz zu allen anderen Faustkämpfern der letzten 20 Jahre sich nicht vom Geld blenden ließ, den kleinen Gelüsten des Lebens nicht erlag, sondern weil er ein *Musterbeispiel sportlichen Ehrgeizes und innerer Charakterfestigkeit* ist."[85] (Max Schmeling was only able to get this second title fight because, in contrast to all other boxers of the last 20 years, he has not allowed himself to be blinded by money, and has not succumbed to the little temptations of life, but is the model of sporting ambition and inner strength of character.)

The claim that Germans were not surprised by Schmeling's victory was of course an exaggeration. As we have seen, the pre-fight reports had been carefully framed to allow for the possibility of a defeat at the hands of an "inhuman" opponent. The fact that Schmeling had prevailed not only against a boxer but against an intimidating myth could now be used to develop what we might call a counter-myth—Schmeling as an heroic figure akin to Theseus, who slayed the minotaur. Indeed, despite Goebbels' instructions, and ignoring the fact that Schmeling was neither a German champion nor formally representing his country, some publications, such as the weekly newspaper for members of the SS, *Das schwarze Korps*, did not shy away from claiming that the fight "war nicht allein Sport, er war eine Prestigefrage für sein Volk, für seine Rasse" (was not just sport, it was a question of prestige for his people and for his race).[86] In the biography Hellmis devotes many pages to "Der Louis-Mythos" (The Louis Myth) and to an evocation of "das Idol der Amerikaner" (the idol of Americans). It is a narrative strategy that allows the chapter to conclude with a reference to Schmeling as "Der Mann, der dazu ausersehen war, dieses Idol zu zertrümmern, den Mythus in Stücke zu schlagen" (the man who was destined to destroy this idol and smash the myth to pieces).[87] Hellmis borrows this image, also used by James Dawson, from a cartoon by Burris Jenkins, reproduced in Hellmis' biography and originally published in the *New York Evening Journal* the day after the fight. The illustration, titled "The Joe Louis Myth", depicts Schmeling literally shattering a statue of Joe Louis. References to the broken myth of Joe Louis' invincibility abounded in the American press reports, some of which Hellmis includes in an appendix. As we have already noted, National Socialism extensively exploited forms of myth and mythic structures, and it was perhaps inevitable that Max Schmeling would now find himself incorporated into these structures. Within weeks

of his victory the film *Max Schmelings Sieg—ein deutscher Sieg* had its premiere in Berlin on 9 July and was released nationwide the following day, accompanied by a largely unnecessary campaign of publicity and promotion. The film, as Margolick observes, is a "crude effort" when compared, say, to Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*, but it was a tremendous success all the same.[88] The premiere in Dresden, attended by Schmeling and Ondra, saw scenes of wild jubilation, with crowds gathered outside their hotel into the night. The Berlin premiere, attended by Goebbels and Göring, was equally dramatic, with Schmeling taking curtain calls, like an operatic star, long after the end of the film. For a few weeks, in the summer of 1936, Schmeling was undoubtedly the most popular and most admired German in the country, and it was unsurprising that a claim was made on him as *nationally* relevant. In the full-page advertisement for the film published in *Boxsport* it was described not only as "[e]ine Weltsensation" (a world sensation) but as "[e]in Film, der alle Deutsche angeht" (a film relevant to all Germans).[89] *All* Germans, it suggested, should see the film and, presumably, learn from Schmeling's example.

There are parallel examples of the National Socialists employing the same strategy of selectively claiming individuals as heroes and exploiting their achievements in nationalistic, symbolic narratives and images. For example, a biography of the showjumper Carl-Friedrich von Langen by Clemens Laar was published in 1936 with a foreword by von Tschammer und Osten (*…reitet für Deutschland. Carl-Friedrich Freiherr von Langen. Ein Kämpferschicksal*) (*…rides for Germany. Baron Carl-Friedrich von Langen. A Warrior's Fate*). The aristocratic von Langen was in many respects an ideal hero for the National Socialists—he had overcome terrible injuries suffered in the First World War to have a successful sporting career, the high point of which was an Olympic gold medal in dressage at the Amsterdam Games in 1928. In 1930 von Langen joined the SA and played a role, after 1933, in the *Gleichschaltung* of regional riding clubs, before dying after a fall from his horse in 1934. His story, combining "blood" sacrifice for the fatherland, suffering and willpower, glorious victory, military discipline and valiant death, seemed ready-made to appeal to the "mythic" core of National Socialism. A UFA film adapted from Laar's book (*…reitet für Deutschland*, dir. Arthur Maria Rabenalt, 1941) was considered particularly effective as wartime propaganda by Goebbels, although Rabenalt himself later attempted to argue that it was entirely apolitical, and it has found many later admirers as an inspirational story

of victory against the odds. Yet in the context of Hitler's Germany, such motifs, and such narratives, were certainly not politically neutral.

Central to the National Socialist construction of Schmeling's image after 1936 were the motifs of the *fighter* or *warrior* (*Kämpfer*) and of *victory* (*Sieg*), both of which are of key importance in the "core" utopian myth of fate and nation underpinning National Socialism—the belief that Germany's collective *Kampf* (struggle) against her dehumanized enemies would culminate, eventually, in the *Endsieg*, a (vaguely delineated) "total" victory that would retrospectively justify the sacrifices that were demanded in order to achieve it. As already noted, alongside the cult of the *Führer* himself, the ultimate example of the "New Man", the use of individual heroes served not as celebrations of personal achievement, but as symbols and exemplars for the emerging *Volksgemeinschaft* and *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* (literally, community of fate). Schmeling, whose story was retold by Hellmis and his colleagues as "Die Geschichte eines Kämpfers" (The Story of a Fighter), to go alongside the "Kämpferschicksal" of von Langen, had now been elevated to just such a lofty position. The difference, of course, was that he was still alive and his story far from complete. In Thoma's contribution to Hellmis' volume, which he presents as a study of the relationship between fighting style and "Charakter", the metaphorical "fight" to overcome difficulty is portrayed as the key to understanding Schmeling. He cites the examples of personal tragedy (his teenage sister had died in the sidecar when Schmeling crashed his motorcycle in 1927), professional calamities (the unexpected knockout he suffered to "Gypsy" Daniels in February 1928 and his loss to Baer) and the hostile reception he faced after the Sharkey fight in 1930. These "innere Kämpfe" (internal fights) are not explicitly linked to "national" character, although Thoma takes care to note, citing the reaction to his victory over Steve Hamas as well as that over Bonaglia in 1928, that Schmeling is unique in his ability to inspire German crowds as a "Vorkämpfer der Nation" (the nation's model fighter).[90] But in the context of such a publication, the motif of "fighting" quality, requiring iron willpower, a determination never to give up, and the resolve to "fight" through adversity, is very much in keeping with National Socialist notions of Germanness and of the ideal citizen.

The promoter Walter Rothenburg, in his contribution to Hellmis' volume, initially concentrates on the qualities he claims to have detected in his business and contractual dealings with Schmeling, before

identifying the key to his success as a boxer. In both cases he emphasizes Schmeling's intelligence, which is presented as a reflection of "character". Schmeling had made his business acumen and professionalism a point of pride, but a focus on financial gain did not sit comfortably with the image of the selfless, "national" warrior that was being cultivated for him. Rothenburg therefore chooses to focus on "moral" qualities: "Tapferkeit und Ehrgefühl, die höchsten Tugenden eines Mannes, sind bei ihm Grundursache und das rein Natürliche". [91] (Courage and a sense of honour, the highest virtues in a man, are a fundamental motive and completely natural for him.) These "virtues" are implicitly masculine and in Rothenburg's eyes were lent authenticity through the force of Schmeling's character and conviction: "Schmeling ist ein Mann von Charakter."[92] (Schmeling is a man of character.) The socially conservative implications in the choice of the vocabulary of chivalry are clear, and in his explanation of Schmeling's "optimism" Rothenburg becomes overtly political. Rothenburg suggests that optimism is a characteristic of youth: "So optimistisch jemand ist, so jung ist er, denn: Pessimismus ist stets Altersschwäche—bei Rassen, Völkern, einzelnen."[93] (If a person is optimistic, then he is young, as pessimism is a weakness born of age, in races, peoples and individuals.) National Socialism placed particular emphasis on youth and youthfulness and frequently sought, metonymically, to identify the state's "youth" with the nation as a whole (that is, with the emerging *Volksgemeinschaft*). One of the marching songs used by the Hitler Youth, for example, was "Ein junges Volk steht auf" (A young people arises). Rothenburg describes Schmeling as child-like ("kindlich"), with his "Jungenlachen" (boy's laugh) reflecting a "wahre, positive Kraft" (true, positive strength).[94] Although the propaganda is relatively subtle by the standards of National Socialism, the emphasis on positive characteristics, youthfulness and on Schmeling's "human" side (at the expense of a credible depiction of his American fights and the total omission of Joe Jacobs from the narrative) reflects the desire to elevate its subject into a role model. Rothenburg's analysis of Schmeling's style employs motifs that had accompanied Schmeling since the Weimar period—the "cold", calculating and controlled boxer who patiently waits to exploit his opponent's weakness: "Er hat Körper und Seele in der Gewalt" (He has control over his body and soul). He tries to see in Schmeling's employment of a clever combination of different styles "German" qualities that are, stereotypically, expressed in military terms.

Rather chillingly, Schmeling becomes a living embodiment of modern, strategic warfare:

> Ruhig zieht er ins Gefecht. Alle Kanonen sind geladen, aber aus dem Kommandostand, aus dem Hirn, kommt erst in letzter Minute, in letzter Sekunde der Befehl zum Feuern. Auf jeden Gegner weiß er sich einzustellen, immer ist seine Taktik im Kampf eine andere, wenn sie sich auch, im Prinzip, stets gleicht: Unnütz wird keine Munition verschossen und leichtsinnig keine Gefahr gesucht. Schnell werden Schwächen und Stärken eines Gegners erkannt.[95]
>
> (He engages in battle calmly. All cannons are loaded, but the order to fire comes from central command, from his brain, only at the last moment, in the final second. He knows how to deal with every opponent, and his tactics vary in each fight, even if in principle they remain the same: no ammunition is wasted and unnecessary danger is avoided. The weaknesses and strengths of an opponent are swiftly recognized.)

The evocation here of Schmeling as fighting "unit" dehumanizes in a manner that is comparable with the monumental pseudo-classicism that was the stylistic norm for art under National Socialism. The representation of the male body, particularly the martial nude male, had particular significance as a "representational icon of political power". As J. A. Mangan observes, "[t]he strong body signified the strong state".[96] The visual representation of Schmeling in the Third Reich includes works of art that employ precisely this iconography and reduce him to little more than a transparent visual metaphor for the "national" characteristics the state expected of its citizens: willpower, strength, self-sacrifice. Schmeling modelled, for example, for the monumental figure of a pugilist ("Faustkämpfer") created by his friend Josef Thorak for the *Reichssportfeld* (Olympic Park) in Berlin. As an essential component of the architect Werner March's grand design, it was one of several monumental nudes positioned at key sites, most with a classical sporting theme, by artists who had proved themselves willing to conform to the political and aesthetic expectations of the regime, including Arno Breker and Karl Albiker.[97] Many of the artists whom Schmeling had known and in some cases modelled for in the 1920s were now in exile, their art categorized as "degenerate" (*entartet*). From 1937 huge numbers of works in German galleries and private collections were confiscated by the RMVP and sold overseas or, in some cases, destroyed.[98]

The application to art of the pseudo-scientific term "entartet", otherwise to be found in the Nazis' racial and eugenic theorizing, reflected the ideological value assigned to art under National Socialism. Theories of art and architecture as forms of "racial" expression had developed alongside ideas of a supposedly authentic "nordic" culture. For example, the work of the architect and theorist Paul Schultze-Naumburg, author of *Kunst und Rasse* (*Art and Race*, 1928), found an enthusiastic admirer in Hitler, whose views he influenced. The infamous, and at the time hugely (and tellingly) popular exhibition "Entartete Kunst" (Degenerate Art) opened in the Hofgarten-Arkaden in Munich as part of the "Münchner Festtage" (Munich Festival) in July 1937. The festival was intended as a celebration of National Socialist art and culture, and the exhibition invited public scorn for the non-naturalistic modernism that Hitler so detested. It also sought to establish a link between images that served as evidence of "cultural" degeneracy and moral and indeed biological "degeneracy". Likewise, the neo-classicism and prosaic realism typical of National Socialist art, as showcased in the parallel, rather less popular "Große Deutsche Ausstellung" (Great German Exhibition) in the newly opened Haus der Deutschen Kunst, embodied ideals of "racial" purity and superiority that went beyond the merely aesthetic.[99]

Among the various portraits and sculptures of Schmeling (and other boxers) produced by the artists in and around the Alfred Flechtheim circle in the 1920s, Rudolf Belling's 1929 bronze sculpture of Schmeling was, arguably, the most aesthetically conservative. With Schmeling's name and image a focal point for propaganda in 1937, it was unsurprising that the sculpture appealed to National Socialist sensibilities. This was despite the fact that Belling himself, who had attempted to further his career in Germany after 1933, was considered suspect, and at least four of his pieces were confiscated after 1937. Belling, extraordinarily, saw his 1929 Schmeling sculpture displayed in the "Große Deutsche Ausstellung" as an example of National Socialist(-approved) art, while at the same time another major work, the abstract "Dreiklang", which had been confiscated from the National Gallery in Berlin, was exhibited as "degenerate".[100] It is worth observing that the small-scale Schmeling sculpture lacks the monumentality of Thorak's or Breker's figures of athletes, and its naturalism, gesturing to the modern sport by depicting the boxer's trunks, is devoid of the distant classicism of more overtly fascist art. It has none of the triumphalism of, say, Thorak's "Faustkämpfer", with the bowed head and defensive, non-aggressive posture reflecting,

perhaps, confident self-containment; it is certainly not an image of the martial "victor". But it was recognizably Max Schmeling, and this alone was sufficient, in 1937, to merit its official recognition.

Schmeling's victory in 1936 also served as the encouragement needed by Ludwig Haymann to publish a treatise on *Deutscher Faustkampf* (*German Pugilism*). The text was published in 1936 by the house press of the NSDAP, which also published the newspapers *Der Angriff* and *Völkischer Beobachter*. It uses Max Schmeling as a central example, viewing him through an ideological lens that conveniently ignores the many aspects of Schmeling's character and career that did not support its theory. No other publication from the period makes such an explicit attempt to take an international phenomenon—boxing—and make a specifically national claim upon it. The formulation of a theory of "German" boxing was intended as the next step in the process that had supposedly begun with the sport's rapid and ruthless politicization in 1933, and Schmeling's victory over Louis, which had virtually nothing to do with the sport's *Gleichschaltung* in Germany, served as a symbolic illustration of the validity of this theory. To add credibility to such a proposition, the volume includes an endorsement from Schmeling in the form of a one-page foreword. In making its case for a specifically German form of "Faustkampf" it combines the aggressive racial theorizing typical of National Socialist discourse with unsubstantiated speculation about humanity, national character and the nature and history of boxing. Schmeling's short contribution should certainly not be read as evidence of real engagement with or commitment to National Socialism. It is fairly unlikely that he had had the time to consider Haymann's theories, but it certainly signalled his acquiescence to the demands that were made of him and to the claims that were being made on his sport, on athletes and on young Germans. In tone and content the foreword is utterly conformist and in keeping with a volume published by the party. He praises the book as offering valuable "Werbung" (advertising) for boxing and includes a deferent reference to Hitler's recommendation of boxing: "Kein geringerer als unser Führer Adolf Hitler hat den charakterbildenden Wert des Boxsportes erkannt und sich deshalb dafür eingesetzt, daß die heranwachsende deutsche Jugend im Faustkampf ihren Mut erprobt und stärkt".[101] (No less a person than our *Führer* Adolf Hitler has recognized the character-building value of boxing and recommended that the growing German youth test and strengthen their courage in boxing.)

Haymann's argument begins with an attempt to demonstrate the natural alignment between the "idea" of boxing and the core principles of National Socialism. He presents a pseudo-Darwinist account of human history in which a state of *Kampf*, by which he means perpetual conflict, is the natural condition and argues that combat using one's bare hands is fundamental: "Seit der Mensch seine Fäuste zu ballen vermag, hat ihn sein instinktischer Wille getrieben, die Fäuste zum Kampfe zu verwenden".[102] (Since man has been able to ball his fists, his will has instinctively driven him to use them to fight.) This first stage of the argument is significant in that it makes a connection between the sport and *Kampf* in a more general sense. Encouragement of a state of constant readiness to fight the nation's perceived "enemies", both internal and external, had been at the heart of the early development of the National Socialist movement and, as already noted, was still considered essential to the party's programme even after it had gained power. By identifying the nature of boxing as ancient, even timeless—the text's opening words are "Im Anfang war der Kampf!" (In the beginning there was physical conflict)—Haymann attempts to free the sport both from its "foreign" and also from its modern associations; so primal an activity, according to this argument, cannot be "foreign":

> Der Faustkampf […] ist also kein während einer hochentwickelten Kulturepoche von Mathematikern oder sportwissenschaftlichen Denkern errechnetes System, sondern er war eben da, erwachsen aus dem Kampfinstinkt des Menschen und dem seiner mechanischen Veranlagung nach selbstverständlichen Bewegungsgefühl.[103]
>
> (Pugilism is thus not a system devised by mathematicians or theorists of sports science during an epoch of highly developed culture, but it was simply there, having grown out of the fighting instinct of man and the sense of movement which mechanically came naturally to him.)

Haymann consistently rejects attempts to intellectualize boxing or to focus mainly on technical or strategic aspects, instead presenting an abstract "Idee des Faustkämpfers" (idea of the pugilist), an animalistic creature driven by instinct and the will to fight. The contrast with Schmeling's advocacy of a calculated, intellectual approach to boxing is, of course, notable but is entirely ignored in the text. It paints, again employing some of the standard motifs of National Socialist discourse, a distorted picture of the development of boxing in Germany after 1918

as a story of betrayal by (mainly Jewish) managers and promoters, who devalued the sport for commercial gain and transformed boxers into exploited "gladiators". Haymann would have his readers believe that this all changed in 1933, with Hitler's creation of "eine einige deutsche Boxbewegung" (a unified German boxing movement).[104] At its heart, he suggests, boxing is a sport that is perfectly suited to the German national character as the party would seek to define it. He asserts "daß die Grundlagen für den Faustkämpfer eben jene Eigenschaften sind, die ein ganzes Volk, das seinen Platz an der Sonne behaupten will, zum Leben braucht" (that the fundamentals for a pugilist are exactly those qualities needed for life by an entire people attempting to assert its place in the world).[105]

Having established that boxing is, as he would have it, uniquely suited to Germans and to Germany, Haymann argues that the development of a specific form of German boxing is now required: "die schöpferische Umgestaltung des kämpferischen Stils, so wie er nach den ewig gültigen Gesetzen von Rasse, Charakter und Temperament dem nordischen Menschen am besten entspricht" (the creative reworking of fighting technique according to the eternally valid laws of race, character and temperament, so that it best suits the Nordic man).[106] The argument depends on an acceptance of a simplistic spectrum of "national" or "racial" characteristics and ignores the role played by physical and personal differences between individuals, as was typical of such discourse. As such he is critical of the use of "fremde Vorbilder" (foreign role models)—specifically American—in the first decade of legalized boxing in Germany: "jedes Volk muß seinem rassischen Gefühl entsprechend kämpfen" (each people must fight according to its racial feeling).[107] His theory, based entirely on personal opinion and with few concrete examples provided to illustrate its validity, was that a "German" approach to boxing would emerge from a process of de-intellectualization, allowing the body's natural instincts and reactions to emerge from *Gefühl* (feeling) rather than conscious planning.[108] In the knowledge that competitive sport was no longer considered secondary to gymnastics within National Socialism, Haymann even dares to be critical of the rigid "Verkrampfung" (cramping) of the body that in his view resulted from the recommendations of the gymnastics movement. He suggests that the unpredictable nature of a boxing match can be prepared for by reconnecting with the environment and draws on motifs that form part of the National Socialist myth of the nation's "rootedness" (via *Blut und Boden*

(blood and soil)) in nature and land. This could supposedly be achieved by teaching children the traditional tracking skills of the hunter and by learning from animals. The text repeatedly invests the idea of "feeling" with mystical properties, akin to those associated with the "soul" in opposition to the "intellect" in the work of Klages: "Nur der aus dem Gefühl hervorbrechende, vom Unterbewußtsein gestärkte heilige Wille veleiht uns Menschen die Kraft, richtig zu kämpfen und zur rechten Stunde wohl gar nach dem olympischen Lorbeer zu greifen."[109] (Only the sacred will, emerging from feeling, strengthened by the subconscious, gives us humans the strength to fight correctly and even, when the time is right, to reach out for Olympic glory.)

Haymann includes practical recommendations, for example about the best way to breathe during a match, and proposes a programmatic "Schule des Boxens" (school of boxing), which he imagines will result in the next generation of successful boxers practising "arteigener Faustkampf" (pugilism specific to one's kind) and indirectly will benefit the nation by fostering appropriately combative instincts and skills.[110] The forerunner and, in Haymann's eyes, best example of this style was Max Schmeling, even though his conscious adoption of a supposed "American" style and his use of a "scientific" approach to training and tactics were not particularly consistent with Haymann's ideas. The text, rather than engaging with the specifics of Schmeling's style as a boxer, instead attempts to re-imagine him as a pioneer of racially specific boxing: "eine in Temperament und Volkstum wurzelnde Kampfform und mithin der erste gelungene Schritt zum deutschen Boxen" (a form of combat rooted in temperament and the character of the people).[111] Schmeling's run of poor form in 1933 and 1934, which had resulted in speculation that his career was over, is explained away as the result of his attempt to copy the Americans too closely and, implicitly, of his spending too much time away from Germany. Haymann uses the correlation between Schmeling's return to European boxing rings in 1934 and his improvement in form as evidence for his thesis, although in reality Schmeling's approach to boxing had been remarkably consistent, and his victory against Louis was a triumph of precisely the sort of deliberate planning that Haymann attempts to criticize. Haymann's text seems to have had a modest impact at best but is interesting in its attempt to portray boxing as a symbol of the ideological anthropology of the Nazis and its development as a sort of allegorical parallel to the Nazis' version of recent history, with the years of the Weimar Republic subject to a

distorted portrayal as the period of betrayal preceding an era of national rebirth. Schmeling, as the archetype of his theory of racially specific boxing, was claimed unambiguously as the embodiment of racially essentialist, supremacist fantasies. It was small wonder that by the end of 1936 his public image, both domestically and internationally, was inextricably bound up with politics. It was no longer possible to refer to Max Schmeling simply as a boxer, or even as a German boxer—he was a boxer who represented an ideology.

Two years separated Schmeling's victory against Louis in 1936 and their hugely anticipated rematch, which took place in the same venue, Yankee Stadium, on 22 June 1938. In the interim, although Schmeling had won three times, it was Louis who had become world champion, defeating James Braddock in June 1937. As a consequence of some blatantly dishonest manoeuvring, Schmeling was denied the right he believed he had earned in 1936 to challenge Braddock for the title. An initial plan for the two to meet as early as September 1936 proved impossible after Braddock claimed he was suffering an attack of arthritis in his notoriously fragile right hand. He then signed a contract to fight Schmeling, the official challenger, at the Madison Square Garden Bowl, Long Island City, on 3 June 1937, only for his manager, Joe Gould, to arrange a more lucrative fight against Louis to take place in Chicago less than a month later. No one seriously believed Braddock planned to honour the contract to defend his title against Schmeling, despite attempts by Schmeling's team, with the official backing of the German regime, to persuade him to do so; Braddock even received an extraordinary offer of $350,000, tax free, to fight Schmeling in Germany, most likely in the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. Yet Braddock, who had fought only exhibitions since his unexpected victory over Baer in 1935, was unwilling to risk losing his big "pay day" against Louis, for which he had been guaranteed $500,000 by Mike Jacobs, Louis' promoter. The result was farcical—the Braddock–Schmeling fight was promoted, even though all concerned were aware that Braddock intended to fight Louis rather than Schmeling. Ever the professional, Schmeling trained for the fight as he always did and duly attended the weigh-in. Braddock, as expected, was nowhere to be seen, and later claimed an injury to his hand, which did not, however, prevent his fighting Louis some 2 weeks later, despite a suspension and fine from the New York Commission. "Cinderella Man" Braddock's pragmatic decision, which also saw him agree to an extraordinary clause guaranteeing him 10% of Mike Jacobs' share of

Louis' gross earnings from all defences of the world title for the next 10 years, was entirely understandable given the impoverished circumstances from which he had emerged.[112] However, there is no doubt that political considerations were also a factor. As Schmeling observes in his 1956 autobiography, his nationality had now become a problem for him in the USA: "Nicht mir persönlich, Hitler gönnte man den Titel nicht" (It wasn't me but Hitler who wasn't allowed the title) (*8-9-aus*, 187). Schmeling's attempt at a promotional tour had been plagued by protests and controversy, and the threats of a boycott that had been made the previous year became much more vocal in 1937, with the prospect of a German world champion a reality. David Margolick's analysis of the American press coverage in 1937 reveals how, although there were many in America who sympathized with him, Schmeling's popular image had merged with that of Nazi Germany; Schmeling found himself labelled, crudely, "Hitler's boyfriend" and "Storm Trooper Moxie".[113] The events of June 1937, inevitably, were condemned as a betrayal and a disgrace in the German media. Hellmis had once again been sent to New York and found he only had a "phantom fight" to report on. In his report for the *Völkischer Beobachter*, he claimed the moral high ground for Schmeling as "der ungethronte Weltmeister" (the uncrowned world champion) and even suggested that he remained, as an individual, "der populärste Sportmann" (the most popular sportsman).[114] Hellmis chose to blame negative reporting about Germany—he cites rumours of Jews being murdered as an example of how ridiculous this is—for the prejudicial treatment of Schmeling.

For all Schmeling's, and indeed Germany's, complaints, there was little that could be done to prevent Louis becoming the second black heavyweight champion of the world. Braddock in fact put up much more of a fight than many had expected before being knocked out in the eighth round of his first defence of the title, which took place in Chicago on 22 June 1937. Louis' achievement was celebrated wildly by black Americans, who created scenes of "absolute bedlam" in towns and cities across the country.[115] In New York "5000 people paraded up Seventh Avenue", "blowing fishhorns, clanging cow bells, and beating drums."[116] It was a significant moment of black pride. In Germany, brief attempts to arrange an "alternative" world championship, in which Schmeling would fight the Welsh boxer Tommy Farr, failed when Farr, like Braddock, was tempted away to face Louis, to whom he lost in August 1937.[117] Schmeling instead defeated the American Harry

Thomas in New York in December 1937, an event beset by problems caused by protests co-ordinated by the Anti-Nazi League. The German press attempted to celebrate this not only as a great sporting victory (although Thomas was not remotely comparable with Louis, to whom he also lost) but as a symbolic victory over anti-German sentiment, incited not by "Americans" but "Jews" and, in the view of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, as a triumph of German-American friendship. Back in Germany, he then fought twice in Hamburg in early 1938, defeating the South African Ben Foord, in a disappointing points decision, and the American Steve Dudas. Both these fights were, like those in 1934 and 1935, stage-managed, politicized occasions. Schmeling's status as a legitimate challenger to Louis remained clear in sporting terms, and for many, not least for the new champion himself, Louis' status as "true" champion would not be final until he defeated Max Schmeling. The rematch was agreed and scheduled for 22 June.

All the signs were that this second fight between Louis and Schmeling would generate both massive publicity and unprecedented levels of controversy, as the political tensions and concerns that had coloured sporting events in the previous years had reached a new peak. The continued mistreatment in Germany of Jewish and other citizens, despite the hypocritical assurances given prior to the Olympic Games and the pretence of a fair society staged for the international visitors during the Games, was belatedly becoming a focus of international concern and protest. Hitler's aggressively imperialistic foreign policy had seen the explicit rejection of the restrictions placed by the Treaty of Versailles, with conscription reintroduced in March 1935 and re-armament of the expanding armed forces underway. Following the occupation of the demilitarized Rhineland in 1936, March of 1938 saw the triumphal annexation of Austria.[118] Using the question of the rights of ethnic Germans in the Czech Sudetenland as a pretext, Hitler's clear intention was to continue his expansion eastward into Czechoslovakia. Unsurprisingly, despite the notoriously misguided efforts at appeasement, war was now considered a real possibility. In the USA, the FBI had uncovered an extensive German spy ring (the "Rumrich case"), which provided one of the most sensational news stories of 1938, dominating the headlines in the months following the initial arrests in February and stoking anti-German sentiments.[119]

Against this background, the prospect of America hosting another grand sporting event featuring the man who seemed to embody the

aggressive pretences of a fascist regime and its racist concept of a "master" race was greeted by some with dismay. Since 1936, the time Schmeling had spent in the USA had been dogged by protests. Despite widely expressed arguments that sport should be kept separate from politics or that, conversely, it would be politically advantageous to see the "Nazi" Schmeling knocked out by Louis, the Anti-Nazi League was determined, once Schmeling had arrived in New York in early May 1938, to escalate its protests. Once again, it organized a campaign encouraging a boycott of the fight, which saw pickets posted outside the outlets for tickets, including Madison Square Garden, the New York Athletic Club, the Hippodrome and Mike Jacobs' ticket offices.[120] However, given the unprecedented levels of anticipation that already existed, such political protests scarcely put a dent in ticket sales and may even have increased levels of interest. The American press, for its part, once again covered the lead-up to the fight with customary hyperbole and detail, despite Schmeling's decision to base his training camp in Speculator in upstate New York, many miles distant from New York and the "ballyhoo" surrounding the fight. The letters pages of the *New York Times* documented the range of American views, after the sports columnist John Kieran published in his column a letter from a reader condemning the decision to stage the fight in America. The reader, Hugo K. Kessler, argued that, given the lack of "fairness" and "sportsmanship" in Germany, it would be wrong to permit Schmeling to contest the world championship in America ("What chance would a Jew have of fighting Schmeling in Germany?").[121] Kieran's response was to disassociate sport and politics in precisely the way that Schmeling himself was attempting by deflecting most of the questions he faced about Hitler and politics. Kieran poured scorn on the notion that Schmeling should be seen as a "representative" of his government:

> A representative of a government? Come, come, good people! If Shufflin' Joe Louis fought in London, would he be a representative of the United States? He would be just Joe Louis, a professional athlete engaged in a private enterprise, fighting for the benefit of his own bank account. To link a prizefighter with a political program, or to view a prizefighter as the standard-bearer of a race, a creed or a nation still seems to this observer to verge on the fantastic.[122]

Kieran was not alone in defending this view of professional sport, as a number of the letters published in response over the following days and weeks demonstrate.

It was of course true that neither Schmeling nor Louis was formally representing their respective nations. Yet Schmeling had been so explicitly and publicly invested with "national" qualities that it was, in a sense, irrelevant that he was technically an individual, professional athlete; certainly, by the day of the fight it was impossible to disentangle Schmeling's name from political and ideological associations. Although the mainstream American press still tended, like Kieran in the *Times*, to downplay the politics surrounding the event, the left-wing and African-American press were keen to cast to Schmeling not only as a figurehead for Nazism but as an active defender of his regime. Indeed, Schmeling made a handful of comments, in interviews with the American press, praising Hitler and conditions in Germany, just as he had given similar hollow reassurances to Avery Brundage in advance of the Berlin Olympics. For the communist *Daily Worker*, Schmeling was "an outspoken representative of the perverted, bestial nationalism and race hatred fanned by the oppressors of the real German people to hide their bloody war against all progressive humanity".[123] Perhaps it was inevitable that Louis would also now be granted a "nationally" symbolic status for the first time; Louis now enjoyed widespread support from a spectrum of American fans, not just from African Americans, for whom he remained, of course, an idol. The *Manchester Guardian* summed up the mixture of national, political and racial sentiment that had created levels of excitement that were surpassing even those seen at the peak of Jack Dempsey's popularity in the previous decade:

> There is no question that the anti-Jewish drive in Germany and the sensational American spy indictment in which several Germans are involved have caused many Americans to hope fervently that Joe Louis will beat Max Schmeling in their world championship fight here tonight.
>
> As an individual Schmeling is obviously popular with most people, but as a German he will have to bear the brunt of Americans' general dislike of many of Germany's recent actions. To them he is a symbol of Nazism.
>
> Many people regard the fight with mixed feelings. If only Schmeling was not a German they would not say a word if the title left the United States. They are torn between wishing that a white man would win the title and not wanting the German to win. Political dislike, however, is not keeping people away, and thousands of Jews, for instance, could be seen wending their way to the stadium.[124]

The politicization of the fight, and the hostile treatment Schmeling had received from some Americans, encouraged the German press in its continued construction of a narrative, ongoing since the "phantom" fight against Braddock the previous year, of Schmeling's heroic struggle against injustice and treacherous, conspiratorial forces, embodied above all by Untermyer's Anti-Nazi League. Germans were once again encouraged to feel a sense of collective pride in Schmeling and to stand behind him. Writing in *Der Angriff*, Hans König describes this process of "national" identification with the boxer as something akin to an act of devotion on the part of German fans:

> Sie führen jeden Schlag mit ihm, sie treffen so vernichtend wie er, und sie machen Luftsprünge, wie er es tut, wenn er gewinnt. Sie glauben an ihn, wie und weil er an sich glaubt: an seine Fäuste, an seinen Willen, - an seinen kühlen Kopf.[125]
>
> (They throw every punch with him, they hit as devastatingly as he does, and they jump in the air like him when he wins. They believe in him, as and because he believes in himself: in his fists and in his willpwer, and in his cool head.)

Louis was once again considered the favourite by most observers in America, albeit with far fewer predictions of an easy victory for him this time. For most Germans, however, conditioned by the partisan media, another victory for Schmeling was the expected outcome. During June, *Der Angriff* ran a competition in which readers were invited to predict the outcome of the fight. Several days afterwards they announced that not a single submission had predicted that Schmeling would lose in the first round but instead offered consolation prizes to the very small number of readers who had predicted a defeat for Schmeling in a later round. The vast majority, of course, had predicted a victory, as had the numerous experts asked by *Boxsport* for their view on the fight, with not a single vote for a Louis victory.[126] Belief in Schmeling had, essentially, become a form of political orthodoxy from which few dared to deviate. A narrative of *Kampf* was best concluded, after all, with the celebration of *Sieg*. The two motifs had been so embedded in the representation of Schmeling and his career since his "Deutscher Sieg" (German victory) of 1936 that the coverage of the rematch allowed little room for an objective assessment of the challenge facing Schmeling. Once again, Arno Hellmis was the correspondent in New York for the *Völkischer Beobachter*

and a number of other newspapers, and he again provided live radio commentary on the night of the fight. For *Boxsport*, Erwin Thoma also travelled to New York to witness the "fight of the century". The tone of Hellmis' reporting, more so than in 1936, is that of a true believer. In the days before the fight he reported that Schmeling was "in der Form seines Lebens" (in the form of his life) and that Louis was nervous; reviewing the American press, which generally viewed Louis as the favourite, he dismissed it as "Bally Ho" [sic]. The "racial" significance of the fight is also explicitly addressed in his final preview, in which Hellmis disingenuously suggests that this is how the fight was widely being viewed around the world, rather than in Germany:

> Man kann dem großen Kampf verschiedene Nenner geben: Alter gegen Jugend, Können gegen Veranlagung, Rechte gegen Linke, Gehirn gegen Muskel, Schwarz gegen Weiß, es liegt jeweils im Auge des Beschauers, sich das Passende auszuwählen. Sicher ist, daß nicht Deutschland, dem man es so gern andichten, möchte, aber die Südstaaten der USA, ganz Südamerika, Südafrika und Australien, die den Kampf als eine Auseinandersetzung des zurzeit besten Mannes der weißen Rasse gegen den Neger ansehen und inbrünstig auf Max Schmelings Sieg hoffen.[127]
>
> (One can label the big fight in different ways: age against youth, skill against instinct, right against left, brain against muscle, black against white. It's up to the individual observer to decide what suits best. But it is certainly not Germany, as so many falsely claim, but the southern states of the USA, all of South America, South Africa and Australia who are viewing the fight as a confrontation between the man who is currently the best of the white race and a negro and are fervently hoping for Max Schmeling's victory.)

There is, however, plenty of evidence that Schmeling was being perceived in the light of the regime's racial doctrines. Erwin Thoma's long preview in *Boxsport*, employing peculiarly mystical language, suggests that Schmeling's charismatic aura had the ability to captivate his fellow Germans and transcended the field of sports:

> Es ist eigenartig, daß die Fachleute von diesem Kampf fachlich fast überhaupt nicht sprechen, sondern daß das eigenartige Fluidum, das die Persönlichkeit und die Laufbahn eines Max Schmeling ausstrahlt, alle in Bann geschlagen hat. Es ist fast, als drehte es sich nicht "nur" um einen

> Boxkampf, sondern als wäre darüber hinaus der 22. Juni entscheidend in einem weitaus größeren als nur rein sportlichen Sinne.[128]
>
> (It's strange that the experts are hardly speaking of the fight in technical terms at all, and that the peculiar aura of Max Schmeling's personality and career has captivated all. It is almost as if it is not "only" a matter of a boxing match but moreover as if the 22 June is to be decisive in a much greater sense than the purely sporting.)

Thoma does not make entirely clear what this greater "sense" actually is, but it is obvious that he views Schmeling, "Detuschlands größter und repräsentativster Boxer" (Germany's greatest and most representative boxer), in both national and racial terms. His assessment of the two boxers is once again coloured by racial profiling. He employs motifs in his depiction of Schmeling's will to win and his "cold" approach, which are very familiar: "Max Schmeling ist kalt; er weiß auch dann, was er tut, wenn selbst einmal der Blitz einschlägt."[129] (Max Schmeling is cold; he knows what he is doing even in the heat of battle.) This emphasis on focus and control is contrasted with an account of Louis' supposed weaknesses, which are presented as racially determined and suggest a lack of personality and self-control.

> Vergeßt eines nicht, Joe Louis ist ein Neger, ausgestattet mit den Vorzügen seiner Rasse, einer unglaublichen Körperkraft, eines Vernichtungswillens, aber auch behaftet mit ihren Nachteilen, mit einer gewissen Gleichgültigkeit und Melancholie. Neger urteilen über Neger am besten, und Jack Johnson, hat vor seinem späteren Nachfolger niemals große Achtung bewiesen. […]
>
> Wenn ein Neger nur ein einziges Mal hart einstecken muß—das ist eine Tatsache, die die vielen Ringschlachten immer wieder lehren—, schaltet in seinem Gehirn und in seinem Herzen irgendwie etwas aus. Es fehlt ihm dann der Wille zum Sieg, es mangelt ihm an der Energie, weiter voranzuschreiten. Joe Louis wird davon kaum eine Ausnahme machen. Wir gehen mit Schmeling, wir glauben an seinen Sieg und mit uns sicher die ganze deutsche Sportgemeinde.[130]
>
> (Don't forget that Joe Louis is a negro, equipped with the advantages of his race, such as unbelievable physical strength and a will to destroy, but also burdened with the disadvantages, with a certain disinterest and melancholy. Negroes judge other negroes best, and Jack Johnson has never thought much of his successor. […]

> If a negro has to take punishment just once—countless battles in the ring have taught us this fact—then something switches off in his brain and heart. He then lacks the will to victory and the energy to keep pressing on. Joe Louis will hardly be an exception to this. We are tipping Schmeling. We believe in his victory, as does the whole German sports community.)

To suggest that Joe Louis, who had suffered just one defeat in thirty-six professional fights to this point and who had in fact been knocked down by Braddock before coming back to win, lacked a will to win was, of course, absurd, as was the blinkered faith in Schmeling's ability to dictate the course of the fight. In the event, to the amazement even of Louis' fans, Schmeling lost control of the fight from the opening bell, and the fantasy of Schmeling as victor for Germany was destroyed in two crushing minutes.

Although Schmeling's training for the fight had gone well, and he felt that he was in good condition, the circumstances in which he entered the stadium on the evening of 22 June were certainly not ideal. He had travelled from his training camp 2 days earlier in the company of armed state troopers and had been guarded by additional police officers in the interim; threats made against him were being taken very seriously. Joe Jacobs had been forbidden from entering the arena, as his licence had been suspended by the State Athletic Commission after another of his boxers, Tony Galento, had failed to appear for his scheduled fight against Harry Thomas the previous February. "Doc" Casey, the trusted second with whom Schmeling had worked for years, had also refused to attend, fearing the consequences of association with the German.[131] And as Schmeling later recalled (*8-9-aus*, 189–90), even his trainer Machon could not be with him as he prepared in the changing rooms because he was required to attend the wrapping of Louis' hands, a potentially controversial process that was frequently the subject of protest and delay (indeed, Machon reported that he had attempted to protest on this occasion, a request that was denied). The atmosphere was clearly much more tense than had been the case in 1936. Yankee Stadium was full if not technically sold out, as the number of tickets sold came to just under 70,000, significantly under the stadium's capacity. One hundred news wires were in place for the hundreds of reporters in attendance. Once again, live radio broadcasts were to be provided for NBC by Clem McCarthy and by Arno Hellmis for RRG, alongside colleagues broadcasting in Spanish and Portuguese. Between them, a worldwide audience

was anticipated on an unprecedented scale. Some seventy million Americans are estimated to have heard the NBC broadcast, the largest live audience for a broadcast to that date.

Schmeling later recalled entering the arena to an extraordinarily hostile reception, defined by what he perceived as unadulterated hatred:

> Etwa 100 Meter lang ist im Yankee-Stadion der Weg vom Umkleideraum zum Ring. 100 Meter mußte ich in dieser Juninacht des Jahres 1938 Spießruten laufen. Als mich die ersten 70,000 Zuschauer zu Gesicht bekamen, brach die Hölle los. Nicht Erregung und Neugier warteten auf mich, sondern der blanke Haß. Obwohl mich mindestens 25 Polizisten flankierten, wurde ich mit Zigarettenschachteln, Bananenschalen und Coca-Cola-Bechern bombardiert, wurde ich bespuckt und beschimpft.
>
> So sprang das aufgehetzte Publikum mit einem Mann um, den es für einen Nazi hielt. (*8-9-aus*, 191)
>
> (The distance from the changing room to the ring in Yankee Stadium is about 100 metres. And I had to run a 100 metre gauntlet on that June evening in 1938. When the first of the 70,000 in the crowd caught sight of me, all hell broke loose. I was greeted, not by excitement and curiosity, but by pure hatred. Although I was flanked by at least 25 policemen, I was bombarded with cigarette cartons, banana peels and Coca-Cola cups. I was spat on and verbally abused.
>
> This is how the agitated crowd responded to a man they considered to be a Nazi.)

Whether the reception really was quite so extreme is unclear, as, judging by what can be discerned from the recording of the fight, Schmeling's pre-fight introduction seems to have been greeted politely with applause and cheers. It certainly was in his interest to present himself later in the role of victim, unfairly tarred with the same brush as the Nazis; it may also have been the case that a vocal minority gave Schmeling the impression of a crowd entirely united in their hatred. Nevertheless, it was true that the atmosphere was politicized and nervous, as indicated by the police presence. For Louis, it was a matter of personal pride, and he approached this fight, taking nothing for granted, with an aggressive focus that he had lacked in a number of his previous fights.

From the opening bell, Louis went on the attack. Schmeling, hoping to ease his way into a longer fight and to employ tactics similar to

those that had worked so well in 1936, attempted to fend off Louis' first attacks with a probing left guard and the threat posed by his right. He was evidently unprepared for the speed and strength of Louis' first attempt to find his way behind his guard, which succeeded well within the first minute. From that point onwards, Schmeling offered little. Shortly into the second minute of the fight Louis forced his opponent to the ropes and landed a series of heavy blows to Schmeling's exposed head. A heavy right hook stunned Schmeling, and Louis, sensing the opening, produced a devastating series of unanswered punches to Schmeling's head and body. Schmeling, perhaps in an effort not to go down, half-turned away from Louis, touching the ropes, and Louis landed at least one hard right to the side of Schmeling's body, in the kidney area. Spectators close to ringside later reported that Schmeling cried out in pain at this point. With Schmeling virtually defenceless and turned away from Louis, the referee, Arthur Donovan, broke them apart, only for Louis to send Schmeling to the canvas with his next short right to Schmeling's jaw. The crowd, on its feet and screaming support for Louis, was making McCarthy's excited commentary increasingly hard to understand, but the gist was very clear indeed—the fight would not last much longer.

Schmeling was evidently badly hurt and no longer able properly to defend himself, let alone threaten Louis. Nevertheless, he was able to get up, briefly, before being sent down a second and then a third and final time. McCarthy yelled, echoing the phrasing he had used about Louis in the first fight: "And Schmeling is down. Schmeling is down." Machon, recognizing the hopelessness of the situation, threw a towel into the ring to signal surrender. The referee ignored this and attempted to continue his count but did not quite make it to ten before Machon and Schmeling's cornermen entered the ring to rush to his aid. It later emerged that Donovan had officially ended the fight with the count at five, so that the result was officially recorded as a technical knockout. However, as the *New York Times* reported the next day, "[n]o fighter ever was more thoroughly knocked out than was Max last night".[132] The entire world title fight had lasted just 2 minutes and 4 seconds, the shortest in heavyweight history.

For German audiences, the defeat, and particularly the nature of the defeat, came as a shock, more so than a defeat in the first fight would have. The millions listening to their *Volksempfänger* at three in the morning, expecting the sort of partisan excitement conveyed in Arno Hellmis'

previous commentaries, suffered the additional disappointment of a commentator rendered incoherent with despair, seemingly unable to comprehend what he was witnessing. In a total abdication of professionalism, it seems that Hellmis failed to describe much of the fight at all, leaving the audience guessing what exactly had happened. The only thing that was clear was that Schmeling had somehow managed to lose before the fight had properly started. The *BZ am Mittag* gave an impression of the fight as a mediated experience in which emotion had entirely replaced objective detail:

> Der gewandte und aus unzähligen großen Kämpfen an Routine erprobte Sprecher [Hellmis] schlug einen neuen Ton im Klang der berichtenden Stimme an. Es war der Klang der hellsten Verzweiflung, ein Klang des wachsenden Entsetzens. […] Alles, was er in diesen Sekunden am Ring für Schmeling empfand, rief er in das Mikrophon hinein. Hier wurden Sprechergesetze und Sprachgepflogenheiten über den Haufen geworfen. *Seine Stimme rief SOS.* Dann kam etwas von dem fliegenden Handtuch. Dann die unfaßbare Mitteilung, daß der Kampf aus sei. Hellmis sprang seinem Freunde Schmeling mit all seinem Empfinden bei und konnte schließlich, etwas zu sich gekommen, nichts anderes sagen, als daß eine große Boxerlaufbahn ihr jähes Ende gefunden habe.
>
> Man hätte ja so gern noch viel, viel mehr gewußt. Doch schon war der Bericht zu Ende. Man war sich selbst überlassen.[133]
>
> (The voice of the skilled commentator, whose routine has been tested in countless big fights, took on a new tone. It was the sound of the purest despair, the sound of growing horror. […] He yelled all that he was feeling for Schmeling into the microphone during those seconds. The rules and customs of commentary were abandoned. *His voice was calling SOS.* Then we heard something about a flying towel. Then the incomprehensible announcement that the fight was over. Hellmis was at his friend Schmeling's side with all his emotion, and eventually, having composed himself somewhat, all he could say was that a great boxing career had come to a sudden end. One would have liked to know much, much more. But the report was already over. We were left to ourselves.)

The broadcast had been unceremoniously cut off after just a handful of minutes.

Defeat could not be easily accommodated within the Schmeling narrative as it had been constructed over the previous 2 years. In 1936, notes of caution had allowed for the possibility of courageous defeat.

The blinkered faith invested in Schmeling in 1938 now exposed the limitations of the partisan sports reporting produced by supposed experts such as Thoma and Hellmis and, more seriously from the perspective of the Nazi leadership, risked exposing German sport and the pretensions of the regime to international ridicule. In America, the result was greeted with jubilation tinged with *Schadenfreude* directed not so much at Schmeling as an individual but at the regime that backed him. This was especially true of the African-American population, with scenes of wild celebration reported in Harlem, Chicago and other locations with large black populations. The press was filled with cartoons enjoying the idea of Hitler's champion, and all that he seemed to represent, so comprehensively beaten by a black American. As Volker Kluge has documented, many Americans felt moved actually to write to Hitler, and the *Reichskanzlei* was inundated with various communications from around the world, mostly gloating at Schmeling's defeat and its supposed implications.[134]

The German press did not have the option of simply cutting off its coverage, as the RRG had done so abruptly. The media, led by Hellmis reporting from New York, adopted a two-fold strategy in its response to the unwelcome result. It suggested, firstly, that Schmeling had been unlucky, and possibly had suffered from foul play; and secondly, it moved quickly to distance the nation as a whole from the fate of Schmeling the individual sportsman. Schmeling had suffered an injury to his spine in the fight, possibly incurred at the moment Louis delivered a blow to the kidney area as he turned towards the ropes. X-rays confirmed a fracture to the third lumbar vertebra, a painful injury, which hospitalized him. In his first interviews after the fight, Schmeling stated that this blow had effectively paralyzed him and, moreover, that it had, in his view, been a foul blow.[135] In fact, under the rules (at least in New York state), blows to the kidney area were permitted; and in any case, most agreed that Schmeling was already in serious trouble before the blow, which was certainly accidental and the result of Schmeling turning away from his opponent. Schmeling later conceded that he had been beaten fairly. Nevertheless, the injury provided the German press with an explanation to offer the nation, and over the following days the blow, and the injury it caused, became a convenient focus for the reporting of the fight. An injury to the back, of all places, allowed the insinuation of ill-disciplined boxing from Louis, or even of actual cheating. In his reports for *Der*

Angriff and the *Völkischer Beobachter* Hellmis describes how Schmeling was "überrumpelt" (caught unawares).[136]

A report in *Der Angriff* suggested that a "Zufallstreffer" (lucky punch) finished the contest, which it somehow linked with Louis' primal "instinct", which sensed his opponent's vulnerability: "Und deshalb liegen die Grundursachen für diese Unglückssekunde weniger auf sportlichem, als auf psychologischem Gebiet. *Instinkt* und *Glück* halfen dem Neger zum Sieg."[137] (And therefore the real reasons for this unfortunate second have less to do with sport than with psychology. *Instinct* and *luck* helped the negro to win.) No reference is made, needless to say, to the much clearer example of luck from which Schmeling himself had benefitted in 1930. *BZ am Mittag* published three separate reports examining the 2 minutes of the fight that do their best to interpret the catastrophic sequence of events positively. It suggested, for example, that a combination of bad fortune for Schmeling and poor discipline from Louis had conspired against the former: "In diesem Stadium des Kampfes muß ein Rechtshaken von Louis in die linke Körperpartie Schmelings gegangen sei[n], der infolge der unglücklichen Stellung und der mangelhaften Schlagkontrolle von Louis in die Nierengegend ging."[138] (At this stage of the fight a right hook from Louis must have landed on the left of Schmeling's body, which because of his unfortunate position and the poor control exercised by Louis hit the area of the kidneys.) Both Arno Hellmis, reporting for *Der Angriff*, and the *BZ*'s unnamed correspondent (quite likely also Hellmis) comment on Schmeling leaping back to his feet after being knocked down—the same mistake Louis made in the first fight—but refrain from criticism, instead employing motifs of desire and willpower: "da stand Schmeling, von ungeheurem Siegeswillen beseelt, wieder auf den Beinen. Er konnte und wollte nicht an eine so schnelle Niederlage glauben".[139] (And Schmeling was back on his feet, consumed by an immense will to win.) "Aber sein brennender Ehrgeiz und sein starker Wille, den Titel zu erobern, und sein Unvermögen, an einen Niederschlag zu glauben, trieben ihn sofort wieder hoch".[140] (But his burning ambition and strong will to gain the title, and his refusal to believe he had been knocked down, forced him straight back to his feet.) The following day the *BZ* carried an interview with the doctor who had treated Schmeling and suggested that the serious nature of the injury had ensured that Schmeling enjoyed universal sympathy among Americans, who keenly followed the recovery "of the German heavyweight who had been seriously injured

through rare, probably unprecedented ill fortune" ("des durch seltenes, wahrscheinlich niemals dagewesenes Unglück ernst verletzten deutschen Schwergewichtlers").[141]

Parallel to this tendency one finds the attempt to strip all national and racial significance from the defeat—precisely the associations that had unambiguously featured in the representation of Max Schmeling before the fight. As Kluge has documented, the official notice issued to the press by Goebbels' office stressed that there could be no implication that Germany had suffered a loss of prestige: "Schmeling ist nicht Deutschland" (Schmeling is not Germany).[142] Two days after the fight, Hellmis, writing in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, did exactly as instructed, stressing that it was a defeat only for the boxer, not for the nation:

> Die Niederlage Schmelings erweckt in ganz Deutschland Mitgefühl mit einem Mann, der durch seine Haltung und seine hohe Auffassung vom Sport Vorbild wurde und im deutschen Boxsport bleiben wird. Eines aber muß in aller Deutlichkeit gesagt werden: die Niederlage eines Boxers bedeutet keinen nationalen Prestigeverlust: sie ist eine verlorene Schlacht immer nur für den Boxer selbst, der mit den möglichsten Wechselfällen des Ringschicksals von vornherein rechnen muß.[143]
>
> (Schmeling's defeat has resulted in sympathy throughout Germany for a man who became and will remain a role model for German boxing through his attitude and his honourable approach to sport. But one thing has to be stated with absolute clarity: one boxer's defeat does not mean a loss of national prestige. It is only a lost battle for the boxer himself, who always has to be ready for the vagaries of fortune in the ring.)

For *Boxsport*, Thoma invoked the spirit of National Socialism, attempting to argue, conveniently forgetting the way in which Schmeling's victory in 1936 had been celebrated, that as a movement it should not be affected by individual victories or defeats: "Der Nationalsozialismus ist keine Bekennung zum Augenblickserfolg, is kein Hurrapatriotismus. Ernste Arbeit wird mit ernster Anerkennung belohnt, auch dann, wenn der Erfolg einmal ausbleibt." (National Socialism is not about celebrating short-term success, or jingoistic patriotism. Serious work is earnestly acknowledged, even when success happens not to be forthcoming.) He suggests that Schmeling should remain a role model: "Max Schmeling ist und bleibt Vorbild für alle jungen deutschen Sportler! An seinen Leistungen im Ring können sich alle ein Beispiel nehmen! So sollen

stets junge Kräfte im deutschen Boxsport kämpfen um die Geltung als deutscher Sportsmann in aller Welt."(Max Schmeling is and will remain a role model for all young German athletes! Everyone can learn from the example of his achievements in the ring! The young talents of German boxing should, like him, fight for their standing as German sportsmen throughout the world.) In practice, National Socialist propaganda had little use for a *Vorbild* (role model) who had suffered such a comprehensive defeat to a black boxer, and after 2 or 3 days of post-fight reflection, Schmeling's and Louis' names swiftly disappeared from the sports pages of the German press. The footage of the fight, which does not conclusively capture any clear "foul" against Schmeling, was not released in Germany.

"Our National Heroes Are Different": The Farmer and the Soldier

In the period of National Socialist rule in Germany, Schmeling was never again to feature so prominently in the media. Aged 32, his sporting career was unlikely to reach its prior heights again, and he could now no longer be held up as the embodiment of "victory" in the regime's propaganda, which was adopting ever more aggressive tones. Yet he was certainly *not*, despite his later claim to the contrary ("für Hitler wie für Goebbels existierte ich nach dieser Niederlage nicht mehr" (after this defeat I no longer existed for Hitler and Goebbels) (*Erinnerungen*, 432), a *persona non grata* for the party—he was simply no longer as useful.[144] Goebbels did, however, give a clear instruction to the press that reporting of future sporting plans, especially of any hope he might have of a third fight against Louis, was not to be permitted. However, Schmeling remained a celebrity, and, alongside Anny Ondra, he now projected an image of rooted stability, closeness to nature, familial devotion and aristocratic affluence. Shortly after Schmeling had returned from New York in 1936, their home at Bad Saarow had burned down when lightning struck its thatched roof (it was widely reported that Schmeling had rushed back in to save a treasured bust of Hitler). Rather than restore the house, they decided to acquire a new country estate, much further east in Pomerania. In 1937 the couple bought a large *Gut* (estate) at Ponickel, very close to the Polish border as it then existed (today it is in western Poland). They moved into the house in autumn

1938, taking on the management of the attached farmland and animals, as well as the woodland, which was ideal for hunting. In an interview with *Boxsport* in early July 1938, Anny Ondra stated:

> Unsere Zukunft liegt in Pommern! Max hat dort alles, was er braucht. Nicht nur die Landwirtschaft, sondern auch große Waldgebiete, ein wahrhaft märchenhaftes Jagdgebiet, so recht geschaffen für einen Menschen wie Max, der die Natur liebt. Nebenbei gesagt, das ist auch mein Schwarm, und es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, daß wir uns später gänzlich nach dort zurückziehen.
>
> (Our future lies in Pomerania! Max has everything he needs there. Not just the farmland but a large area of forest too, truly magical hunting grounds, perfect for a person like Max who loves nature. Incidentally, that's my great love too, and it's not out of the question that we will permanently move out there at a later point.)

In 1938 and 1939, one can find almost as many references to Schmeling and Ondra in connection with Gut Ponickel as to Schmeling as a boxer. The location close to the border meant that the estate was at the epicentre of the tensions that reached their peak with Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, when Germany's highly mobile forces passed through Pomerania into the neighbouring country. Shortly afterwards, *Boxsport* published a feature on the life of the Schmelings on their estate, evoking an image of the industrious landowner and hunter "in his element":

> Hier, inmitten seiner rund 70 Angestellten und Tagelöhner, ist Max in seinem Element. Man muß den gebürtigen Klein-Luckower gesehen haben, wenn er frühmorgens mit seinen Männern und Frauen aufs Feld hinausgeht, sich selbst auf den großen Trecker setzt, selbst mit dem Gespann auf die Aecker fährt, im Stall nach dem Rechten sieht, hier und dort anpackt, wenn die Kühe gemolken oder die annähernd 300 Schweine gefüttert werden, den Fuchs sattelt und zusammen mit dem Verwalter über das Anwesen reitet oder – endlich zum Gewehr greift und auf die Pirsch durch den herrlichen Wald, den Max zum Teil neu aufforsten und aufroden ließ, geht, nur begleitet von seinen beiden Spaniels und dem Jagdhund.[145]
>
> (Here, in the midst of his 70 or so employees and day-labourers, Max is in his element. You should see the native of Klein Luckow heading out to the fields early in the morning with his men and women, climbing on to

> the huge tractor himself, driving the ploughing team, checking the stables, helping out here and there when the cows are being milked or the 300 or so pigs fed, saddling his horse and riding with his estate manager across his land or finally reaching for his rifle and heading out to hunt through the glorious forest, which Max has partly cleared and replanted, accompanied only by his two spaniels and his hunting dog.)

The central motif here—of hard work—connects with the long-established image of Schmeling as a motivated "self-made man", which was equally significant in the public perception of him after 1945. In 1939, however, the motif also resonated with the idealization of rural life and the *Bauer* (farmer) in National Socialist ideology, which often functioned as symbolic contrasts with modern city life. The latter, as Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann observe, was "denigrated as the breeding-ground of liberalism and Marxism, and held responsible for a declining birthrate".[146] The proximity to the mythology of *Blut und Boden*, the idea that a racially defined *Volkskörper* (literally, body of the people) had a special, profound connection with the land it settled, is also relevant here. This concept was used, for example, to highlight the supposed difference between "Aryans" on the one hand and Jews, Roma and Sinti on the other, who were understood to be "nomads", devoid of any such connection with a particular land or area. The creation of a new, racially "pure" rural population (referred to as *Bauernadel*, or farmer or peasant aristocracy) as the "life source" of the nation was one of the stated ambitions of National Socialist agrarian policy, which manifested itself, for example, in changes to the law (the *Reichserbhofgesetz*) allowing farmsteads to be declared inalienable and impartible, and inheritable by one male "Aryan" heir.[147] As wealthy incomers, the Schmelings were not directly affected by such policies, which did little to halt the decline in the rural population, but their representation in the context of their rural home, even though they remained childless, chimed with the idealized image of the (usually pre-industrial) German *Bauer* and the rural environment that were a staple of National Socialist art.[148]

Schmeling did not in fact choose to retire after recovering from the injury sustained in the defeat to Louis. He returned to the ring in Stuttgart in July 1939 to defeat the European champion AdoIf Heuser in one round, in his final fight before the outbreak of war, which once again was organized through *Kraft durch Freude*. However, in the aftermath of Schmeling's defeat, the traditional *völkisch* hostility to

professional sport re-emerged. In 1938, the *Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* (German Reich Federation of Exercise) underwent "totale Gleichschaltung" (total co-ordination) and was rebranded the *Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* (National Socialist Reich Federation of Exercise) under the leadership of *Stabsleiter* Guido von Mengden. The result was the removal of what little autonomy remained in German sport, with all sports clubs and organizations (and all their funds and property) now formally "betreut" (managed) by the party.[149] However, it was difficult to integrate the activities of independent professionals, and of managers and promoters, into this centrally controlled system, and von Mengden, though mindful of the status still enjoyed by Schmeling, was keen to move to ban professionalism. He was unhappy, as many within the National Socialist movement had been in the early 1930s, with the hero-cult that many professional sportsmen enjoyed in comparison with the self-sacrificing (dead) military heroes the Nazis had always preferred: "Wir haben andere Nationalhelden wie Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney oder den Nigger Louis. Bei uns heißen die Männer etwa Richthofen, Boelcke, Schlageter, Horst Wessel."[150] (Our national heroes are different from Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney or the nigger Louis. Our heroes are men like Richthofen, Boelcke, Schlageter, Horst Wessel.) In the event, the Second World War intervened and professional sport remained legal, but the expectations the party had of its national "heroes" were changing.

With the outbreak of the war, it was to be expected that Schmeling, who had so often been held up as a German role model, would again be used for propaganda purposes. Military service was not, however, a certainty, as some prominent athletes, artists and entertainers were officially excused from such duty. Schmeling later reported that he had hoped and expected to be excused (*Erinnerungen*, 447–9), also because of his age (34) and history of sports injuries. He suggested that the *Reichssportführer*, apparently in an act of revenge for various disagreements over the years, had ensured that he would be called up to active duty in the usual way. Seeing no way out of it, Schmeling agreed to serve with the prestigious *Fallschirmjäger* (parachute regiment), hoping, he claimed, to work as a trainer for the recruits.[151] Paratroopers, like pilots, were the subject of particular propaganda efforts. In publications such as Walter Gericke's *Soldaten fallen vom Himmel* (*Soldiers Fall From the Sky*, 1940), they were frequently portrayed as the ultimate modern

soldier, for use in hazardous "special operations". It was certainly not coincidental that Schmeling was asked to join them. In the event, he underwent the same rigorous training as the other recruits, suffered a new back injury in the process, and re-joined his regiment following his recovery. At the start of May 1941 the regiment was stationed in Greece, which had been recently captured as part of the German Balkan offensive. Kluge disputes the degree to which Schmeling was pressured, more or less against his will, into active service as a paratrooper, citing a depiction of his apparent eagerness to serve and the obstacles he had to overcome to be accepted in a 1941 feature in the magazine *Signal*. The context of this article is relevant. *Signal* was not, as Kluge implies, a publication aimed at boosting the morale of German soldiers. It was an extremely influential illustrated magazine published by the press office of the *Wehrmacht* between 1940 and 1945, which by 1943 had a circulation throughout Europe as high as 2.5 million.[152] It was in fact targeted not at German soldiers but at readers in allied and occupied countries, and it appeared in editions in as many as twenty different languages (including bilingual editions and a German edition officially sold only in Switzerland). The magazine reported on and glorified the war effort, Germany in general, and the NSDAP in particular; amongst other things, it aimed to demonstrate the value of service in the *Wehrmacht* (for example in the Waffen-SS, which was open to various other "Nordic" types, such as Scandinavians and the Dutch). The *Wehrmacht* High Command hoped *Signal* would encourage "the confidence and the willingness to work in the populations of occupied regions" ("das Vertrauen und den Arbeitswillen der Bevölkerung besetzter Gebiete").[153] As an example of National Socialist propaganda *par excellence*, it cannot be used to support any conclusions about what Schmeling may or may not have hoped for in connection with his military service. In such a context it was very much in the interest of the regime to point to such an *internationally* famous individual as Schmeling, who had for years allowed himself to be held up as a role model to Germans, voluntarily serving in such a dangerous role.

The consequent blurring of the image of the individualistic sports hero and the military hero willing to sacrifice himself for the nation was a happy one for the National Socialist imagination. It was to reach a peak, in Schmeling's case, the following summer, following the occupation of Crete. The figure recalls von Mengden's roll-call of "heroes" such as Richthofen, Schlageter and Wessel as alternatives to Dempsey,

Tunney and Louis. Several other elite sportsmen had also volunteered. A prominent fellow paratrooper, for example, was the gymnast Alfred Schwarzmann, winner of five medals, three of them gold, at the 1936 Olympics. Schwarzmann had technically been an amateur but had, like many other elite Olympic athletes, been a professional soldier since 1933, which had given him the support he needed for training and competition. He had already been decorated for his contribution to the occupation of the Netherlands in 1940; as such, he very much fit the mould of the German hero as athlete-cum-soldier and was singled out in another feature in *Signal* on the supposed military benefits of sport: "Sport und Leibeserziehung—die Grundlage des deutschen Erfolgs". (Sport and physical exercise—the foundation of German success.) Schwarzmann is presented as a double exemplar: "Der beste Turner der Welt Ritterkreuzträger".[154] (The best gymnast in the world has earned the Knight's Cross.) Drawing the perversely logical conclusion from decades of fascist discourse, in which sport and exercise had been primarily valued as a form of ersatz-war, or as preparation for actual war, the author goes on to suggest that the war was now offering Germans an alternative to the Olympic Games that had been cancelled in 1940: "Wir hätten auf einer Olympiade von 1940 unsere sportliche Leistungsfähigkeit sicherlich in noch erhöhtem Maße aufweisen können. Und wir haben sie aufgewiesen, aber es war auf einer Schaubühne, wo sie von uns gefordert wurde."[155] (At the Olympic Games in 1940 we would certainly have been able to demonstrate our athletic prowess to an even greater degree. And we have in fact demonstrated it, on the stage that has been demanded of us.)

Perhaps, against this background, it was unsurprising that Schmeling, for so long associated with *Kampf* and *Sieg*, was now expected to participate in what the regime saw as the ultimate *Kampf*. In April 1941, the German Balkan offensive, aimed at the capture of Yugoslavia and Greece with the support of Italian and Bulgarian forces, commenced. By the end of May, Belgrade, Athens and mainland Greece had been taken and only the strategically important island of Crete, defended by British and Commonwealth (New Zealand and Australian) forces in co-operation with Crete's civilian population, remained to be captured. Schmeling was in the first wave of paratroopers to jump on the first night of the German offensive over Crete on 20 May. They flew in as low as possible to minimize the risk of being hit by enemy fire as they floated to the ground, but even so, as Schmeling reported in his *Erinnerungen*, they suffered many casualties. In fact, around 3000 paratroopers were

killed. Schmeling himself had "Glück im Unglück" (fortune in misfortune) (*Erinnerungen*, 456); he was fortunate enough not to be hit, but he nonetheless landed awkwardly in a vineyard and again suffered a painful back injury. According to Schmeling's later account, the combination of heavy fire from the British and his paralyzing injury meant that he lost contact with his unit and was only able to find them again a day later. He was sent to a field hospital some distance away and, he claimed, was tasked with bringing a captured British soldier, who turned out to be a boxing fan and a friend of the Welsh boxer Tommy Farr, to the hospital. Schmeling's account of the short-lived friendship between the two is granted much more space in his memoir than his experience of the invasion of Crete. The Germans, under the command of General Kurt Freund and despite suffering heavy losses, were able to conclude the invasion successfully by the start of June, partly also as the result of tactical mistakes made by the British. Contemporary perceptions of Schmeling's brief experience of frontline combat, however, were shaped by two contrasting interviews he gave in the week following 20 May, which reflect the manner in which his name still invited political exploitation by competing wartime agendas.

Schmeling's fate had, for a day or two, been unclear to the outside world, and reports that he had been killed in action ("sacrificed to [the] Führer's lust for world domination") had been carried by newspapers around the world.[156] When it emerged that he was in fact alive, recuperating in the hospital in Athens to which he had been transferred, the RMVP, keen to highlight the unreliability of the foreign media, ensured that a statement was swiftly issued. Numerous German newspapers, including *Der Angriff* and the *Völkischer Beobachter*, followed this up by publishing a detailed interview given by Schmeling to Siegfried Kappe of the *Wehrmacht Propagandakompanie* (PK or Wehrmacht Propaganda Unit).[157] Once again, given the context, the content of the interview should be treated with caution as evidence of Schmeling's actual experiences or views at the time; it is unsurprising in a piece of propaganda to find that he not only confirms the heroic actions of his fellow paratroopers but also—as highlighted by the reference to the "Kampfesweise der Engländer" (the combat methods of the English) in the title—that British tactics amounted to war crimes. The latter suggestion was significant in the context of many days of reports in the German press of "[e] nglische Greuel" (English atrocities), war crimes involving the mutilation of captured and killed German soliders. Schmeling is presented as a

particularly reliable witness: "Der Name Max Schmeling ist für die ganze Welt zu einem Inbegriff des wahrheitsliebenden und fairen Sportsmannes geworden." (Max Schmeling is known throughout the world as the epitome of a truth-loving and fair sportsman.) As evidence of this fairness, the article cites a grudging concession that some British soldiers behaved respectably. This precedes explicit criticism of the use of snipers:

> "[M]anche Tommies haben sich auch soldatische anständig betragen, auch unseren Gefangenen gegenüber. Ich habe zB. selbst gesehen, wie ein in unsere Gefangenschaft geratener englischer Arzt im Notlazarett mitgeholfen hat […]. Das ist aber ein Einzelfall und wiegt nicht die Tatsache auf, daß die Mißachtung des Kriegsrechtes durch die britische Führung und den Tommy vor allem durch die Aufhetzung der kretischen Bevölkerung zu dem gemeinen und hinterhältigen Heckenschützenkrieg manchen deutschen Soldaten das Leben gekostet hat. Die angedrohten Vergeltungsmaßnahmen des Oberkommandos der Deutschen Wehrmacht bestehen deshalb zu allem Recht!"
>
> Das sagt ein Mann, der früher als Boxweltmeister und heute als Gefreiter in der Welt das gleiche Ansehen genießt, ein Mann, der im schwersten Kampf dabei war und der nur schildert, was er mit eigenen Augen gesehen hat.
>
> ("Some Tommies did behave in a soldierly and decent way, even to those of us taken prisoner. For example, I saw myself how an English doctor captured by us helped out in the field hospital […]. But that was an individual case and does not compensate for the fact that the contempt for the rules of war shown by the British command and by Tommies, above all by inciting the Cretan population to conduct a vicious, treacherous sniper campaign, has cost many German soldiers their lives. The retaliatory measures threatened by the Senior Command of the German *Wehrmacht* are therefore entirely justified!"
>
> This is the view of man who is respected throughout the world as a corporal just as he once was as a world boxing champion, a man who was there during this most difficult battle and is only describing what he saw with his own eyes.)

Schmeling's pre-established image as an "honourable" and "sporting" individual was utilized as a means of granting additional authenticity to propaganda. Of course, by dehumanizing the enemy and intimating that they had behaved dishonourably or unscrupulously, one's own behaviour

and actions—the threat of "retaliatory measures"—became easier to justify. There is no evidence that Schmeling himself had contributed more than any of his comrades during his short frontline deployment, but it suited the regime, as had happened with Schwarzmann, to be able to configure an established sports hero as a suffering military hero—hence the photographs of a weakened, hospitalized Schmeling, who was also ill with dysentery, which appeared in various German newpapers and magazines through the summer of 1941. This reinvention of Schmeling as a war hero was capped by the award of the Iron Cross 1st and 2nd class for his contribution to the Crete campaign.

Schmeling gave a second interview in the aftermath of the battle for Crete to the American journalist Harry W. Flannery. Flannery was on assignment in Germany for the CBS broadcasting company and had flown out to Greece to cover the aftermath of the Crete campaign. He provided a retrospective account of his assignment in his book *Assigment to Berlin*, published the following year, in which he recounts his interview with Schmeling, conducted in the presence of two "censors" from the Foreign Office and the RMVP. Flannery had in fact met Schmeling earlier in the year, when the latter had attended the fight between Walter Neusel and Adolf Heuser in the Deutschlandhalle in Berlin. On that occasion, Flannery claimed, Schmeling "was afraid to say much more than that he hoped to fight again during the summer and that Joe Louis was the best fighter of all time".[158] In Athens, Schmeling seems to have been rather more forthcoming and was considerably more positive towards the enemy than in the German report: "He paid several tributes to his opponents and said he did not believe the British had committed any of the reported mutilations. 'Some of my comrades who were captured by the English and later released said they were treated very well'".[159] He also provided a banal explanation for his dysentery, which he thought he might have contracted by drinking a bowl of chocolate milk "abandoned by the British". According to Flannery, "[the] fighter wanted to know about the United States". "I have a lot of friends over there".[160] The positive tone of the interview was later cited by Schmeling (*Erinnerungen*, 460) as having caused him serious difficulties with Goebbels and the RMVP, and he was even, according to the account of his military service written by his friend Joe Biewer in 1948, forced to explain himself before a military court.[161] Whether or not this really happened, Schmeling faced no consequences, although Goebbels' diaries confirm that he was aware of the interview and was particularly infuriated

by the decidedly unheroic details about sour drinking chocolate and his desire to see his good friends in America again: "[Schmeling] soll lieber kämpfen, als in Athen sitzen und Sprüche klopfen". (Schmeling would be better off fighting than sitting in Athens mouthing off.) He soon disappeared from the news again, following an instruction from Goebbels' office.

Schmeling did not see frontline military service again and was released from the Wehrmacht in 1943, the same year in which he formally gave up his licence as a professional boxer. He saw out the remaining years of the war serving primarily as a symbolic, propaganda figure, not unlike the capacity in which Joe Louis served in the American military. As a *Bauer* of sorts, and then as a soldier, in the eyes of the German public the sportsman Schmeling had rounded out the years of National Socialist rule, as Germany was plunged into the darkness of "total war", genocide and catastrophic defeat, as a conformist figure. The memory of his years as a representative figure of the urban culture of the Weimar Republic, an icon of self-interested professionalism and scientific, *sachlich* training, had faded. Internationally, he was now best known as a "Nazi" hero—the opponent of Joe Louis who then risked his life serving a dictatorial regime. Yet that memory had not been entirely erased. After he and Anny had fled west in 1945, it eventually became clear that Schmeling had remained sufficiently distinct from the regime that had exploited his name for him credibly to emerge, yet again, as a role model for another age. This time, Schmeling was a representative figure for a reborn, forward-looking Federal Germany, in which market forces, rather than ideology or myths of nationhood, were the determinant of success.

Notes

1. Arthur R. Ashe, Jr., foreword to the American edition, in Joe Louis Barrow Jr. and Barbara Munder, *Joe Louis: The Brown Bomber* (London: Arthur Baker, 1988), xv–xvii (xv).
2. Dominic J. Capeci Jr. and Martha Wilkerson, "Multifarious Hero: Joe Louis, American Society, and Race Relations during World Crisis, 1935–1945", in *From Jack Johnson to LeBron James: Sports, Media, and the Color Line*, ed. Chris Lamb (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 86–116 (86).
3. Ernest Gaines, quoted by Capeci Jr. and Wilkerson, 86.

4. Margolick (*Beyond Glory*, 126) is able to confirm that the details provided by King cannot be true, but the fact that the story was given credence is evidence enough of the extraordinary status enjoyed by Louis in this period.
5. Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 65.
6. On the representation of Jack Johnson see Boddy, *Boxing*, 181–7. The first black world champion in any weight was the Canadian George Dixon, who won the bantamweight title in 1888.
7. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring*, 31.
8. Ibid. 35.
9. Quoted by Boddy, *Boxing*, 183.
10. Donald McRae, *In Black and White: The Untold Story of Joe Louis and Jesse Owens* (London: Scribner, 2003), 62.
11. Ibid.
12. See Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 69.
13. Paul Gallico, "Eightball", in Gallico, *Farewell to Sport* (London: Simon & Shuster, 1988), 299–309 (307).
14. Quoted by Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 124.
15. Ian Jeffrey, "From Joe Louis to the Sluggers – Boxing Mediated", *Boxer: An Anthology of Writing on Boxing and Visual Culture*, ed. David Chandler, John Gill, Tania Guha and Gilane Tawadros (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 1996), 43–53 (44).
16. Quoted ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Paul Gallico, "Eightball", 306. The title makes use of a dated racial epithet—the eightball is the black ball on an American pool table
19. Quoted by McRae, *In Black and White*, 67.
20. Quoted by Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 102.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 124.
23. Simon Martin, "In Praise of Fascist Beauty", *Sport in History*, 28:1 (2008): 64–82 (78).
24. Ibid., 76.
25. Ibid., 79. The fight went the distance and, perhaps unsurprisingly given that the regime had invested so much in the symbolism of the occasion, the decision went unanimously in Carnera's favour. According to Arno Hellmis, Carnera was booed by the crowd for his poor performance. Hellmis, *Max Schmeling*, 46.
26. Martin, "In Praise of Fascist Beauty", 78.
27. See McRae, *In Black and White*, 69.
28. See Martin, "In Praise of Fascist Beauty", 79.

29. Anon., *The International Olympic Committee and the Modern Olympic Games* (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1933), 12.
30. Ibid., 9.
31. See for example: Anon., "Brundage Scores 'Alien Agitators'", *New York Times*, 4 December 1935, 26.
32. Anon., "Olympic Games in the New Germany", *Manchester Guardian*, 6 December 1935, 11.
33. Anon., *Preserve the Olympic Ideal: A Statement of the Case Against American Participation in the Olympic Games in Berlin* (New York: Committee on Fair Play in Sports, 1935).
34. See McRae, *In Black and White*, 141. Within weeks Owens had been persuaded, along with a number of other prominent black athletes, to back participation in the Games.
35. See Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 116–7.
36. Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 237.
37. See Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 126.
38. Instruction to the press, 18 June 1936. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 244.
39. Anon., "Schmeling's Departure for U.S. Practically Ignored in Germany", *New York Times*, 16 April 1936, 31.
40. Erwin Thoma, "Max Schmeling ist abgefahren", *Boxsport*, 312 (1936): 3–4.
41. *BZ am Mittag*, 16 June 1936, 9.
42. Ibid.
43. Anon. (but probably by "-egg" (= Alfred Eggert)), "Schwarz gegen Weiß", *BZ am Mittag*, 18 June 1936, 10.
44. Karlheinz Christiansen, ""Der Kampf des Jahrhunderts': Am 18. Juni boxt Max Schmeling in New York gegen Joe Louis", *Teltower Kreisblatt*, 16 June 1936, 6.
45. Anon., "USA im Kampffieber", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 18 June 1936, 8.
46. Erwin Thoma, "Schwarz oder Weiß?", *Boxsport*, 820 (1936): 3–8 (3).
47. "Burnley", "Preview of the Big Bout?", *The Advance News*, 18 June 1936, 8.
48. Harry Grayson, "Quarter-Million Ring Prize to Swell Uhlan's Earnings on This Side to $1,200,000", *Ogdensburg Journal*, 24 April 1936, 12.
49. Harold Weldon, "Sport Spindles", *Plattsburgh Daily Press*, 15 June 1936, 2.
50. "Burnley", "Those Joe Louis Jitters", *The Advance News*, 23 May 1936, 8.
51. Alan Gould, "Schmeling 10 to 1 Shot in Betting; Thousands of Tickets Are Unsold", *Ogdensburg Journal*, 18 June 1936, 6.
52. Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 142.

53. See ibid., 149. Gate receipts came to $547,000. Margolick (*Beyond Glory*, 152) lists those sitting ringside, who included sports stars such as James Braddock and Babe Ruth, stars of entertainment including Irving Berlin, George Raft, Al Jolson and numerous other celebrities. As Margolick notes, almost all were white, with the exception of Bill "Bo Jangles" Robinson.
54. McCarthy was a well-known broadcaster known for horse-racing commentary. Both he and Hellmis also delivered the commentary on the second fight between Louis and Schmeling.
55. Quoted by Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 248.
56. See Inge Marßolek, "Radio in Deutschland 1923–1960: zur Sozialgeschichte eines Mediums", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 27:2 (2001): 207–239 (217–18).
57. Ibid., 218.
58. See Kluge's note, *Max Schmeling*, 491.
59. The photograph is of very low quality but nevertheless was published, as a technical novelty, in the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* 45:26 (1936): 965. This is the issue that featured the photograph of Ondra listening to the radio broadcast with Joseph and Magda Goebbels as its cover image.
60. The same photograph is included in Schmeling's *Erinnerungen* (395) but is mistakenly positioned alongside the photographs of the 1938 rematch.
61. Arno Hellmi ed., *Max Schmeling*, unpag. photographic insert adjacent to 97. "Joe Louis ist nervös!" (Joe Louis is nervous) reads the caption.
62. Anon., "Max Schmeling sagt selbst", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 18 June 1936, 8.
63. A full transcript of McCarthy's commentary for both the 1936 and 1938 fights can be accessed on the website of the *The Fight*, an American television documentary about the Louis-Schmeling fights made by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in 2005. See: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/fight/sfeature/sf_radio.html. Accessed 19 November 2016.
64. Quoted by Ralf Klee, "Schmeling vs Louis. Jahrhundertkampf auf Schallfolie", *Der Spiegel Online*, http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/schmeling-vs-louis-a-948566.html. Accessed 19 November 2016.
65. Ibid.
66. Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 156.
67. Hellmis ed., *Max Schmeling*, 117.
68. James Dawson, "Schmeling stops Louis in the Twelfth as 45,000 look on", *New York Times*, 20 June 1936, 1.
69. Anon., "Nazis Demand Titular Bout", *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 20 June 1936, 1–2 (2).

70. Ibid.
71. Anon., "Goebbels Hails Victor", *New York Times*, 20 June 1936, 10.
72. Anon., "Der Glückwunsch des Führers", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 21 June 1936, 1.
73. Anon., "Nazis Demand Titular Bout", 1.
74. Quoted by Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 251.
75. In his *Erinnerungen* (357) Schmeling mentions that Göring promised him a prize stag, presumably as part of a visit to Carinhall.
76. Kluge (*Max Schmeling*, 253) notes how carefully Goebbels managed Schmeling's return and the way in which he was to be represented by the press.
77. Edmund Schneider, "Jubel um Max Schmeling im Olympischen Dorf", *Boxsport*, 827 (1936): 4–5 (4).
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., 5.
80. McRae, *In Black and White*, 154. According to Schneider the visit was not as official as McRae suggests, for he states that Schmeling drove there in his own car and was accompanied not by party officials but by friends—Schneider, Machon and the brother of the German discus thrower Paula Mollenhauer.
81. Hellmis, "Schmeling Anwärter auf die Weltmeisterschaft", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 21 June 1936, 1.
82. "-rz", [no title], *Völkischer Beobachter*, 21 June 1936, 1.
83. Erwin Thoma, "Vom Amateur zum Weltmeister: kleine Studie über Kampfstil und Charakter", in Hellmis, *Max Schmeling*, 31–45 (40).
84. Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 247.
85. Anon., "Ring Frei! Schmeling – Heuser – Eder/Woher sie kamen, wie sie wurden", *Der Angriff*, 22 June 1938, 3.
86. Quoted by Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 256.
87. Hellmis ed., *Max Schmeling*, 89.
88. Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 184.
89. *Boxsport*, 824 (1936), back cover.
90. Thoma, "Vom Amateur zum Weltmeister", 39, 37.
91. Walter Rothenburg, ""drahte ob einverstanden"", in Hellmis, *Max Schmeling*, 51–7 (53).
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., 54.
95. Ibid., 57.
96. J. A. Mangan, "Icon of Monumental Brutality: Art and the Aryan Man", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 16:2 (1999): 128–152 (128).

97. The sculpture still stands there today.
98. An estimated 16,000 works of art suffered this fate in the years following 1937. A full inventory of the confiscated works is held by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. See: "*Entartete" Kunst: digital reproduction of a typescript inventory prepared by the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda ca. 1941/42* (V&A NAL MSL/1996/7) (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1914). Accessed 19 November 2016. www.vam.ac.uk/entartetekunst. See also the searchable database of confiscated works produced by the Freie Universität Berlin: www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/db_entart_kunst/datenbank. Accessed 19 November 2016. The list of confiscated works includes almost everything by Grosz (though not the portrait of Schmeling), as well as many works by Rudolf Großmann (including his "Boxer" lithographs of Hans Breitensträter, confiscated from the Kunst- und Gewerbemuseum in Dortmund), Ernesto de Fiori, Renée Sintenis and others from Flechtheim's circle, such as Willi Baumeister, who had been influenced by the sports movement of the 1920s.
99. This became an annual event until 1944. The exhibitions are documented, via surviving photographic records, in the valuable online resource www.gdk-research.de. Accessed 19 November 2016.
100. The inclusion of the bronze in the Große Deutsche Ausstellung (Room 36) is confirmed by the catalogue, available at www.gdk-research.de.
101. Max Schmeling, "Geleitwort Max Schmelings" in Haymann, *Deutscher Faustkampf*, 3.
102. Haymann, *Deutscher Faustkampf*, 6.
103. Ibid., 5, 6.
104. Ibid., 10.
105. Ibid., 7.
106. Ibid., 11.
107. Ibid., 17.
108. It seems likely that Haymann was influenced by Klages' vitalistic "Lebensphilosophie", possibly mediated through the work of Alfred Rosenberg.
109. Haymann, *Deutscher Faustkampf*, 28, 29.
110. Ibid., 11.
111. Ibid., 40.
112. For further details of the circumstances surrounding this "non"-event see Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 266–71; Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 202–21.
113. See Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 208.
114. Arno Hellmis, "Braddock tritt nicht an", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 3 June 1937, 8.
115. Louis Barrow Jr. and Munder, *Joe Louis*, 88.

116. Ibid., 88.
117. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 271–4.
118. Schmeling was photographed, smiling, while casting his vote to ratify the *Anschluss* in April 1938.
119. For more on the Rumrich case and the "saturation coverage" it received see Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), esp. 49–72.
120. See Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 254–5.
121. John Kieran, "Sports of the Times: Fighting Words", *New York Times*, 13 May 1938, 25.
122. Ibid.
123. Quoted by Margolick, *Beyond Glory*, 270.
124. Anon., "Americans and Prize Fight: Anti-German Feeling Last Night at the Yankee Stadium", *Manchester Guardian*, 23 June 1938, 6.
125. Hans König, "Wetten, daß Schmeling…", *Der Angriff*, 23 June 1938, 1–2 (2).
126. Anon., "Was die Prominenten sagen", *Boxsport*, 925 (1938): 10, 12–13.
127. Arno Hellmis, "Joe Louis muß Farbe bekennen", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 22 June 1938, 9.
128. Erwin Thoma, "Max besser als Joe?", *Boxsport*, 925 (1938): 2–9 (6).
129. Ibid., 9.
130. Ibid., 9.
131. In his commentary for NBC, Clem McCarthy refers to Doc Casey giving a "last word" to Schmeling in his corner before the first round. This is presumably a mistake, as Schmeling reports his absence in both *8-9-aus* (189) and his later *Erinnerungen* (426–7).
132. James Dawson, "Louis defeats Schmeling by a knock-out in the first", *New York Times*, 23 June 1938, 1, 14 (14).
133. "v.d.D.", "Die Sekunden am Mikrophon", *BZ am Mittag*, 23 June 1938, 2.
134. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 292–3.
135. See Joseph C. Nichols, "Beaten Challenger Says He Was Paralyzed When Louis Sent Right to Kidneys", *New York Times*, 24 June 1938, 14.
136. Arno Hellmis, "Wie Schmeling überrumpelt wurde", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 24 June 1938, 9; "Louis schlug pausenlos", *Der Angriff*, 23 June 1938, 3.
137. Anon., "Louis' Glück und Instinkt", *Der Angriff*, 25 June 1938, 10.
138. Anon., "Welcher Treffer entschied?", *BZ am Mittag*, 23 June 1938, 2.
139. Arno Hellmis, "Louis schlug pausenlos".
140. Anon., "Welcher Treffer entschied?".

141. Anon., "Dr. Smith erklärt der "B.Z..", *BZ am Mittag*, 24 June 1938, 2.
142. Quoted by Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 291.
143. Arno Hellmis, "Schmelings Niederlage", *Völkischer Beobachter*, 24 June 1938, 1.
144. Kluge (*Max Schmeling*, 299) documents that the Schmelings were received socially by both Hitler and Goebbels after his defeat, and he was again invited to the Reichsparteitag in September 1938.
145. Ludwig Maibohm, "Max Schmeling einmal ganz privat!", *Boxsport*, 990 (1939): 5.
146. Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 279.
147. Ibid., 279–81.
148. For example, according to the list of motifs at www.gdk-research.de, the annual Große Deutsche Ausstellung in Munich (1937–44) displayed 2979 works of art depicting landscapes and 636 depicting agriculture and fishing.
149. See Benz, Graml and Weiß eds., *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, 609.
150. Quoted by Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 312. The "heroes" named, besides Horst Wessel, are Manfred von Richthofen, known as the "Red Baron", the aristocratic figher pilot killed in action in 1918; Oswald Boelcke, another flying "ace" and mentor to von Richthofen, likewise killed in action; Albert Schlageter, a member of the right-wing *Freikorps* executed by the French for sabotage in 1923.
151. All recruits to the *Fallschirmjäger* (parachute regiment) were, at least theoretically, volunteers.
152. Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 327. A smiling Schmeling, wearing uniform and helmet, featured on the cover of *Signal*, 5 (March 1941).
153. Quoted in Benz, Graml and Weiß eds., *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, 730.
154. Gustav Gärtner, "Wie habt ihr das gemacht", *Signal* [bilingual German-Italian edition], 12 (September 1940): 19–22, 36 (19, 21).
155. Ibid., 36.
156. Anon., "Schmeling Killed in Crete", *Manchester Guardian*, 30 May 1941, 2.
157. Siegfried Kappe, "Max Schmeling mit auf Kreta. Der Boxweltmeister über die Kampfesweise der Engländer", *Der Angriff*, 31 May 1938, 2.
158. Harry W. Flannery, *Assignment to Berlin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 161.
159. Ibid., 314.

160. Ibid., 315.
161. Joe Biewer, "Allen Gewalten zum Trutz… Ein Schlußkapitel", in Carl Otto Hamann, *Ein Leben auf eigene Faust* (Cologne: Ewald Berger, undat. [1948]), 186–203 (189).

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CHAPTER 6

After 1945: "The Good German"

Success After the "Zero Hour"

At the moment of Germany's unconditional surrender in May 1945, the country lay in ruins. Hitler was dead, as were Goebbels and many other senior Nazis.[1] Others, such as Göring, Himmler and Frick, were soon captured. The final months of "total" war had seen ferocious and ultimately pointless last-ditch fighting in defence of what was left of Hitler's Reich and the continuation of a devastating series of essentially indiscriminate Allied air raids targeting population centres such as Berlin and Dresden. The bombing war killed as many as 600,000 German civilians, and 25,000 were killed just in Dresden in February 1945. Around 7.5 million were left homeless.[2] In the eyes of many among the victorious Allies the country had brought this upon itself, and there were few objections to the plan, agreed at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, to strip Germany of around a quarter of her territory in the East, including cities such as Breslau that had been German-speaking for centuries. With military governments established by the Allies in the four occupied zones into which the country had been divided, the strategy, championed in particular by the Americans, was to enforce a total break with the National Socialist regime and all it had represented. As the full extent of Nazi crimes emerged, with the liberation of the concentration camps, the need for judicial retribution against the leading perpetrators was clear, and this process was begun—insofar as they had not already committed suicide, as Himmler had—at the Nuremberg trials in 1945

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and 1946. It was equally evident that a more profound and wide-ranging process of "denazification", one of the strategic "D"s agreed upon in Potsdam (alongside demilitarization, democratization, decentralization and decartelization), would also be required.[3] The strategy was to ensure not only that a restructured Germany would lack the means to conduct another war of aggression but would no longer have the ideological, political or cultural ambitions to do so.

At the end of the war Max Schmeling and Anny Ondran, for all the privileges and wealth they had previously enjoyed, shared a common fate with many Germans. They had almost nothing left. They had abandoned their estate at Ponickel before the advancing Red Army, saving what they could. The German—Polish border was soon redrawn, moving many kilometres to the west and leaving Ponickel squarely in Polish territory. The Schmelings were never to return. Like thousands of other "displaced" Germans (around 12 million in total voluntarily abandoned or were forcibly expelled from their homes, with 1.95 million from Eastern Pomerania alone), they headed west, preferring to be in a region taken by the Western Allies rather than the Soviets. The Red Army had earned a reputation for appallingly savage treatment of German civilians, committing rape and murder as "revenge" for the (often equally inhuman) behaviour of the Wehrmacht during the war in the East, which had seen some 25 million Soviet citizens die.[4] The Schmelings initially moved to Hamburg, located in the occupied zone under British administration. Like many Germans, they were faced with the prospect of starting over, with their previous careers apparently consigned to the past. The infrastructures for film and sport lay in ruins, and the future directions for both were uncertain as denazification measures were introduced to ensure a break with the politics and culture of National Socialism. The prospects for a former boxer and erstwhile film star, both now in their forties, did not, on the face of it, seem positive.

Schmeling's eventual success in the post-war era, rebuilding a career and a life from the ruins without seeking to rest on past laurels, and indeed seemingly drawing a line beneath that past, is undoubtedly a testament to his adaptability and determination. It also explains how, at least in the West, Schmeling was soon celebrated, once again, as a role model. After 1945, Schmeling's return to material success was utilized as part of a narrative of post-war German history in which the traumatic past could be overcome through hard work. For many Germans, not just for convinced Nazis, 8 May 1945 was a day not of liberation but of fear

and uncertainty. There was of course widespread disillusionment with Hitler, and recognition of the catastrophic consequences of the nation's faith in him, but the sudden loss of the certainties that the totalitarian regime had claimed to guarantee also represented a shock. The ideological foundations of the lifestyle and attitudes that had been accepted by millions were, overnight, delegitimized and criminalized.[5] With the past declared invalid, the immediate post-war years, prior to the foundation of the two rival German republics in 1949, saw the emergence of the potent, and problematic, motif of the *Stunde Null*—the metaphorical resetting of the clock to a "zero hour". The implication was that a better Germany (which, exposing the overly simplistic nature of the motif, in part reconnected with the democratic, moderate traditions of the Weimar Republic) might emerge from the shattered wreck left by the Nazis.[6] In reality, as Waltraud Wende argues, there was never actually a moment of *tabula rasa*, and political and cultural continuities between the previous era and the present were numerous, though they were often overlooked in the euphoria of the hoped-for "new start".[7] There were attempts, during the immediate post-war era, to acknowledge Germany's "guilt", made explicit in Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's agreement, in the Luxemburg Treaty of 1952, that the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), or West Germany, would pay Israel three billion Deutschmark in "compensation" for the Holocaust. However, it is questionable whether such moments really reflected widespread acceptance of collective "guilt", and the treaty may well only have been signed, despite Adenauer's later claim that it was done as a moral duty, under pressure from the USA.[8] The past remained present in another way. As Robert G. Moeller has observed, public discussion of German suffering and even "victimhood", which is sometimes assumed to have been a "taboo" subject until its emergence as a controversial discourse around the turn of the century, certainly did take place in the decade or so following the war: "Germans—East and West—identified themselves as victims of a war that Hitler started but everyone lost."[9] This relativizing belief that Germans had eventually suffered alongside the Nazis' victims is highly problematic, but it helped to provide a moral basis for the so-called zero-hour mentality. It was not until the 1960s that a younger generation in the West began vocally to demand a more meaningful process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with, or overcoming, the past), forcing the Federal Republic to begin to confront difficult

questions relating to continuities with the past and to national responsibility for the crimes committed under Hitler.

The idea of the zero hour, with an implicit suppression of memory in favour of a focus on the future, has long been abandoned in German national historiography, as the public, highly visible memorializing of the Holocaust at sites around the country indicates. If Schmeling's postwar popularity derived from a reinvention that seemed to offer a parallel to that undergone by zero hour Germany and its economic "miracle", the abandoning of the zero hour as a reference point for contemporary German society does not seem to have had an impact on his standing. The explanation lies, in part, in the fact that the degree of Schmeling's prominence meant that he *always* served as a symbol of continuity between past and present. An idealized and essentially naïve understanding of sport in absolute separation from politics allowed Schmeling to be re-embraced in the public sphere, not as a reminder of the Nazi propaganda in which he had figured so prominently, but as the embodiment of aspirational qualities that were assumed to transcend the political. Many of his contemporaries sought to forget or downplay the degree of their support for or complicity with National Socialism and were able to enjoy successful careers in the Federal Republic in politics, the police, the judiciary and business. For example, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, chancellor from 1966 to 1969, and Walter Scheel, who was president of the republic from 1974 to 1979, had both been members of the NSDAP, in Kiesinger's case from as early as 1933. Only rarely, usually after several decades, did revelations relating to an active contribution to Nazi tyranny result in serious consequences for lives and careers. The resignation in 1978 of the Christian Democratic Union politician Hans Filbinger as *Ministerpräsident* of Baden-Württemberg, after he was widely judged to have lied about his role as a prosecutor and judge for the German navy, was one such rare case. In the case of Max Schmeling, who never aspired to hold public office, a collective memory of his past, particularly of the fights against Joe Louis, was too firmly established to be suppressed. As Hans Joachim Teichler has observed, in the collective memory of Germans from this era, sport was one of the few aspects of life under National Socialism that tended to have mainly positive associations, with its political instrumentalization being overlooked or ignored.[10] This fact helped to establish a narrative of Schmeling's past in the collective imagination, according to which he had co-operated only reluctantly and had exploited his prominent status in the Third Reich for

benign purposes. Schmeling became a "Good German" of the sort that post-war (West) Germans could both be proud of—as they were of a very select number of heroic individuals, such as Sophie and Hans Scholl, who had actively opposed the regime—*and* to whom they could readily relate, as Schmeling, like millions of others, had largely conformed with the regime's expectations of him. This process, which reached a peak in the posthumous tributes paid to him in 2005, was gradual and went through several revealing phases in parallel to the shifts in the nation's attitude to memory and national identity. In the immediate aftermath of the war, such a remarkable rehabilitation seemed unlikely, even though Schmeling's personal ambitions, and willingness to do whatever necessary to realize them, remained as strong as ever.

Schmeling spent the first years after the war attempting to find a new direction. He recognized that, as at all such historical turning points, there were bound to be opportunities, and he had a wide network of friends and associates to help him. But, initially at least, he found that his name did not guarantee that every door opened for him. In 1948 a new biography, with the symbolically defiant title *Ein Leben auf eigene Faust* (literally, "a life by one's own fist", a phrase which approximates to "self-sufficiency"; a pun is intended) was published and can be considered a first step in the reconstruction of Schmeling's public image. The author was a friend, Carl Otto Hamann, and a concluding chapter covering the immediate post-war period was contributed by another long-term associate, the sports journalist Joe Biewer, who had taken over after the war as editor in chief of *Boxsport* magazine. Biewer depicts these years as a period not only of hardship but of undeserved victimization. His narrative speaks directly to a post-war readership that may well have suffered some of the same administrative and legal frustrations as Schmeling:

> Wer von uns hat das nicht erlebt, 1945 und später, den schwerfälligen Gang der Verwaltungsmaschinerie, die nach dem Zerschlagen der deutschen Organizationen neuerrichtet wurde und auf neuen Wegen zu wandeln bestrebt schien. Wie lange es dauerte, bis erkannt wurde, daß viele dieser Wege nicht passierbar waren und die meisten Hilfskräfte untauglich.
>
> Glücklich, wer damals keine Genehmigung brauchte und in der Fragebogenepoche mit den unzähligen Bestimmungen nicht kollidierte.

> Die Göttin Fortuna ließ Max Schmeling damals vorübergehend im Stich. Er besaß einen zu großen Betätigungsdrang für jenen Abschnitt der Nachkriegszeit.[11]
>
> (Which of us did not experience, either in 1945 or later, the tortuous turning of the cogs of the bureaucratic machine that replaced the German one, which seemed determined to do things differently? It took a long time for them to realize that this wasn't always realistic and the majority of the administrators appointed were unfit for the job.
>
> You could count yourself fortunate back then if you didn't need a permit, or, in the age of the questionnaire, you never came into conflict with the countless regulations.
>
> It was at this time that the goddess Fortuna temporarily abandoned Max Schmeling. His desire to apply himself was too strong for the postwar era.)

The British viewed Schmeling with suspicion. In the summer of 1945 an attempt jointly to found a publishing house for educational children's books, with his friends Axel Springer and John Jahr, experienced publishers who were formerly members of the NSDAP, failed when the licence was refused. The sticking point was Schmeling, who had thought his association with the project would lend it credibility; it had the opposite effect, and only after the resignation "of the former Nazi heavyweight boxer" could it go forward.[12] For the British, he was still strongly associated with the National Socialist regime, and the authorities were therefore displeased when they became aware of a story published on the front page of the *Daily Express* announcing that "Schmeling Will Reform Youth".[13] He had given an interview to Vivien Batchelor of the *Express*, who quoted Schmeling as claiming not only that he would definitely be going ahead with his publishing venture but that he had been formally asked "to select and publish new books and literature, and supervise translations of British, American and French works to eradicate Nazi ideas, and show the German youth something of the outside world". Positive as such sentiments might now seem—in the same interview Schmeling also recommends that "every German youth should be compelled to see the films of Dachau, Buchenwald and Belsen"—the report was sufficient for him to be charged with breaking regulations, and he was only discharged following Batchelor's testimony. The following year, however, he was found guilty of breaching building

regulations by building a house without the requisite planning permission and sentenced by the British authorities to 3 months in prison. Biewer pointedly suggests that Schmeling's name now counted against him, and that he had received an unduly harsh sentence as an "example" to others: "Es wurde ein Exempel statuiert. Ordnung mußte sein. Vivat Justitia!"[14] (An example was made of him. Rules and regulations had to be upheld. Vivat Justitia!)

From 1946, Schmeling revived his association with boxing, which was showing signs of renewed popularity, just as it had after 1918. In Biewer's account, Schmeling made the decision to make a comeback as a boxer only when all other avenues seemed to be closed off, and he did so less in an attempt to recapture the sporting success of the previous decades, or even purely in order to earn money, than as an attempt to overcome "die Schranken, die Mißtrauen und Unvernunft" (the barriers, the mistrust and unreasonable behaviour) he had encountered since the end of the war.[15] To acquire a boxing licence, he had to go through the formal denazification process and prove that he had neither been a Nazi nor been actively responsible for crimes committed under National Socialism. Kluge has documented the information provided by Schmeling in the denazification questionnaire, in which he cited examples of him using what influence he had to help various people. These included the Austrian boxer Heinz Lazek, who had been denounced by a boxing administrator after his fiancée, whose father was Jewish, became pregnant. The couple had been arrested in 1941 by the Gestapo and faced charges of Rassenschande ("racial disgrace"). According to Schmeling, it was only after his intercession with Phillip Bouhler, head of the *Reichskanzlei* (Reich chancellery), who dealt with pleas for clemency, that the charges were deferred.[16] Although it was certainly impossible for the British authorities to verify every detail of such claims, in Schmeling's case they proved sufficient for him to receive the necessary clean bill of political health, the so-called *Persilschein* (Persil certificate, so called after the brand of laundry detergent). The authorities, given the sheer numbers of Germans who had been members of the NSDAP, in any case were soon forced to adopt a certain flexibility, allowing those who could plausibly claim to have been nothing more than passive *Mitläufer* (followers) back into key professions such as the law. In this context it would have been difficult to refuse Schmeling, who had, as he often pointed out, never been a member of the NSDAP, despite the symbolic value he had been invested with by the Nazis.

Schmeling was of course now approaching middle age, with inevitably slower reaction times and his effectiveness further limited by the cumulative effect of injuries, including damage to his right hand. According to the account he provides in his *Erinnerungen*, his loyal trainer Max Machon was reluctant to be involved in a comeback he considered unwise, agreeing only once Schmeling had demonstrated a reasonable level of fitness. After an 8-year absence, Schmeling fought a further five times in 1947 and 1948, winning three times and losing twice, including to his erstwhile rival Walter Neusel, whom he had defeated in his previous "return" to a German boxing ring in 1934. His final fight, a points defeat to Richard Vogt in Hamburg in October 1948, marked the end of his extraordinary sporting career; the decision at that point to retire for good was unquestionably the right one. Despite the modest record, his post-war comeback was in one sense entirely successful. It had allowed Schmeling to legitimately re-establish himself in post-war Germany, and it also began to re-establish a bond with the Germans, and indeed the many international sports fans who flocked to see his comeback fights. His first fight in 1947 took place in Frankfurt am Main, in the American zone, and the 30,000 in attendance included, according to Biewer, several thousand Americans.[17] It was, for all the drawing power of his name, still uncertain how his return would be received in the German press, which had undergone a more profound transformation than almost any other cultural sphere. In 1945, the Western Allies applied a particularly strict approach to publishing, initially banning all existing newspapers and publications. They carefully supervised the re-establishment of an independent, democratically oriented press, primarily staffed by editors and journalists who had not been a part of the *gleichgeschaltet* propaganda machine into which the Nazis had transformed German newspapers. The fawning tone of reporters such as Arno Hellmis and Erwin Thoma was, as could be expected, entirely absent from the reports on Schmeling in the late 1940s, and in the case of the Communist press the reporting on Schmeling's comeback was hostile, motivated by a reluctance to see the former hero of National Socialist propaganda, and moreover an individualistic professional, once again elevated to role model status. In 1947 *Neues Deutschland*, the newspaper for the Soviet administration zone founded in 1946 by the SED (Socialist Unity Party, the successor to the German Communist Party and later the ruling party in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), that is, East Germany), published an article accusing Schmeling and Machon of having attempted

in 1939 to arrange a fixed fight against Neusel.[18] The accusation was based on second-hand testimony provided by the boxer Richard Grupe and proved to be unfounded when it was formally investigated by the newly founded controlling authority for German boxing, the *Oberste Boxaufsicht* (OBA), in 1948.[19] In the Western press, the accusations were given little credence, but many of the new generation of younger sports journalists were nevertheless unimpressed by Schmeling's performances. Despite this, his reception was generally sympathetic, and an attempted comeback of a former champion had then, as it does today, a certain romance and excitement. For some, he could never possibly live up to the expectations created by his own career, no matter how well he performed for his age; a report in *Die Zeit* observed that to watch him fight at the age of forty-two inevitably also prompted the "Erinnerung an Schmeling, wie er einstmals war" (memory of Schmeling as he once was).[20] Yet he was also soon referred to as something like an elder statesman and example to a younger generation.

Given the recent past, to find him so swiftly granted the status of role model, yet again, is extraordinary. In 1948, the recently founded weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* published an article, authored by Schmeling himself, doing exactly this; it is entitled "Max Schmeling: Vorbild und Lehrer" (Max Schmeling: Role Model and Teacher). In the article, Schmeling suggests his comeback was motivated by the desire to help boxing in Germany by acting both as a role model and a teacher: "Für meinen Entschluß, wieder anzufangen, war […] maßgebend, daß ich mit dazu beitragen wollte, dem deutschen Boxsport nach dem Zusammenbruch wieder auf die Füße zu verhelfen."[21] (My decision to make a comeback was determined in part by my desire to help German boxing back to its feet after the [previous regime's] collapse.) In a rhetorical gesture that mirrors a pattern that was common in this period, his complicity with National Socialism, in particular his association with Hitler, is relativized and instantly dismissed:

> Mein Leben lang bin ich nur Sportsmann gewesen und Kosmopolit. Wenn man mir nachsagt, ich hätte mich mit Hitler photographieren lassen, so kann ich dazu nur sagen, daß ich nicht der einzige Sportler bin, dem das passierte, und man könnte mir umgekehrt entsprechend vorwerfen, daß mich Präsident Roosevelt 1932 in meinem Trainingskamp […] besuchte.[22]

> (Throughout my life I have only ever been a sportsman and a cosmopolitan. When people accuse me of allowing myself to be photographed with Hitler, then I can only say that I am not the only sportsperson this happened to, and conversely one could also accuse me of being visited by President Roosevelt in my training camp in 1932.)

Schmeling dismisses the association with Hitler by arguing that this was something that "happened" to others as well as him, which offers a context but nothing like an ethical justification. However, as an indirect, psychological explanation of the conformism characteristic not just of athletes, but of ordinary Germans, the claim is nonetheless revealing. It anticipates, as does the assertion that he had "only" ever been a sportsman, a central claim of his later *Erinnerungen*—namely that as an athlete he had attempted to stand outside politics and had not been fully aware of the political implications of the manner of his representation in propaganda. By suggesting that the association with Hitler was no more revealing or relevant than his earlier photo-opportunity with (in fact then still governor) Roosevelt in 1932, Schmeling attempts to relativize the significance of the former by implying that he was simply another politician, not unlike the president of a democracy. The article omits all reference to the personal benefits Schmeling had enjoyed as a result of a relatively close relationship with senior figures in the regime. Yet in the context of postwar Germany, in which there was still little appetite for serious reflection upon questions of guilt and national responsibility, neither the tone nor the relativizing implications of these comments were surprising.

Following a fairly comprehensive defeat in his final fight, Schmeling's decision to retire prompted public reflection on his achievements and his standing. Joe Biewer's account points to many of the same qualities that had previously featured prominently in propaganda: "Dieser Mensch holte alles aus sich heraus, was durch Fleiß und Energie erreicht werden kann, durch Mut und Entschlußkraft. Seine Lebensführung konnte jedermann zum Vorbild dienen."[23] (Digging deep into his resources, this man achieved all that was possible through hard work and energy, and through courage and decisiveness. His lifestyle could serve as an example to anyone.) The *Hamburger Abendblatt*, which was the first newspaper to be published by Schmeling's friend Axel Springer and unsurprisingly took a favourable view of him, echoed this and, full of regional pride in Schmeling's career, suggested that his lasting achievement was in his status as a role model:

> Wir verlieren in ihm den fairsten Vertreter einer Gedankenrichtung, die das Leben zwar als Kampf, aber als einen durch Gesetz und Überlieferung eindeutig geregelten Kampf betrachtet. Der deutschen Jugend, die jetzt ihr Recht der Nachfolge fordert, dieses Vorbild gegeben zu haben, ist vielleicht sein größtes Verdienst, wobei nur noch ganz nebenbei auf die Tatsache hingewiesen werden soll, daß dreiundvierzig Lebensjahre in dieser körperlichen Verfassung kein schlechter Beweis für die Güte einer disziplinierten Lebensführung sind. Ein Kreis hat sich geschlossen, ein Berufsleben sich vollendet. Und in die leise Wehmut darüber, daß wieder einer der Unseren abtreten mußte, mischt sich nur die eine Freude, daß "Maxe", jetzt endgültig zu uns nach Hamburg zurückkehrt. Hamburg wird seinetwegen reicher sein, gleichgültig ob er Sportlehrer oder Geschäftsmann werden wird.[24]

> (We are losing in [Schmeling] the fairest representative of a mode of thought that views life as a fight [*Kampf*] but one that is regulated by laws and tradition. That he has provided such a role model for the German youth, which now demands its right of succession, is perhaps his greatest achievement. And incidentally we can add that to be in such good physical shape aged forty-three is pretty good evidence of the benefits of a disciplined lifestyle. A circle has closed, a professional life come to its conclusion. And the quiet sadness that another one of our own has stepped down is mixed with the happiness that "Maxe" will now be coming back to us in Hamburg for good. And whether he becomes a sports teacher or a businessman, Hamburg will be richer for having him.)

The tone adopted here—reverent and uncritical—set the precedent for the representation of Schmeling from this point onward. As an exemplar of "fairness" and moral and physical "discipline", the assumption was that he would continue to inspire a younger generation. In a clear indication of the superficiality of Germany's supposed zero hour, the article makes no reference at all to National Socialism, or the way in which the same qualities had been trumpeted as indications of Germanic character. A longer summary of Schmeling's career, published 2 days later in the same newspaper, likewise ignores the changing political contexts that had shaped his career. Even though a case can be made, as it would be in later decades, for Schmeling's moral stance during the years of the Third Reich, it was evidently more convenient in 1948 to leave aside such problematic matters and instead look forward. The possibility of Schmeling becoming a businessman was not idle speculation—it was the

ambition he had been working towards since 1945. The resumption of his boxing career, really, was little more than a means to this end.

Schmeling and Ondra had, in the late 1930s, attempted to establish themselves as farmers (or farmer-managers) at their estate in Ponickel. Inspired by the experience, it was again agriculture and farming to which they gravitated in the 1940s and early 1950s. The aim was to establish a business, and Schmeling spent a number of years trying to identify potentially lucrative gaps in the emerging post-war market. He invested the money he had earned from his comeback (around 40,000 DM for his final fight) in forty acres of land in Hollenstedt, a small town south-west of Hamburg, on the edge of the Lüneburg Heath, which remained his home for the rest of his life. Initially operating on a relatively small scale, with limited support, the Schmelings started as chicken farmers, producing eggs for the production of their own brand of *Eierlikör* (a German egg liqueur similar to the Dutch advocaat) and then branched out into more unusual products, tobacco and fur. It was, perhaps, a sign of changing times, of the dawn of a decade that seemed to promise a degree of affluence in the Federal Republic, that Schmeling should have chosen to invest in such a high-value luxury product as fur. The investment paid off, and by the early 1950s Max Schmeling was an award-winning mink breeder. A newsreel feature (the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau*) from 1950 shows the Schmelings enjoying the "good life" on their farm, feeding fish, looking after their hens and checking on their mink cages. The commentary attempts to use them both as a means of offering audiences a sense of legitimized continuity with the (pre-1945) past *and* as a symbol of changing times and hope for the future. Before showing their new venture, the commentator introduces them as "ein Ehepaar, das Sie alle gut kennen" (a married couple you all know well) and then suggests that they seem not to have changed: "Sie werden zugeben, die beiden haben sich nicht verändert—sie sind die Alten geblieben".[25] (You have to admit, these two haven't changed—they are still the same as in the old days.) It is, taken literally, undoubtedly a reference to their relatively youthful appearance, but the secondary implication, given the era in which they had reached the peak of their fame, is that they had *no need* to change, that they were the *same people* they had been 10 years previously. Just a year after the founding of the Federal Republic in May 1949, which merged the three western sectors into a single German parliamentary republic, Schmeling and Ondra were among the few surviving representatives of popular culture under National Socialism for whom such assertions could still be made.

During the 1950s, as his business continued to flourish, Schmeling retained a surprising degree of prominence in the West German media, regularly featuring in newspapers, magazines and broadcast media. He maintained an association with boxing and regularly served as a referee. In 1957 he was honoured, at the annual sports awards ceremony that had been organized since 1947 by the association of sports journalists, as the most successful German sportsman in history.[26] With all other awards going to West German athletes and teams, Schmeling's accolade offers a further indication of the willingness to integrate selected aspects of pre-1945 culture into notions of national identity as they were cultivated in the Federal Republic during the 1950s. His prize—in recognition of his passion for hunting—was a rifle. The process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with, or overcoming, the past) in German sports had in fact barely begun by this point. Numerous functionaries and academics who had loyally served the *gleichgeschaltet* sports system of the Nazis, such as Carl Diem, Professor Hermann Altrock and Guido von Mengden, had been able to move, more or less seamlessly, into positions of responsibility in West German sports.[27] In the context of a conservative nation more focused on the threat from the East than on difficult but necessary questions about its own past, and the continued wilful ignoring of the politicization of sport, it is unsurprising that Schmeling, as an ostensibly apolitical symbol of continuity, was once again so readily claimed as a representative of the nation; it was possible *because of* not despite the continuation of his career in Germany after 1933. The cumulative psychological stress of the previous years had resulted, as Teichler notes of the 1950s, in a strong desire for "Ruhe, Ordnung und Wohlstand" (calm, order and prosperity) rather than recriminations and difficult questions.[28] Schmeling was increasingly now associated with affluence and with a comfortable consumer lifestyle promoted in the pages of the popular illustrated magazines, such as *Der Stern*, in which he often featured, photographed attending galas, weddings and social events.

Towards the end of the 1950s Schmeling's business interests changed direction once again, with the help of James Farley, formerly an influential figure in the Democratic Party in the USA, secretary of the New York State Athletic Commission and head of the New York Boxing Commission. Farley had since 1940 been chairman of the board of the Coca-Cola Export Corporation, which was responsible for arranging the lucrative export contracts for Coca-Cola throughout the world. Coca-Cola as a brand was of course closely associated with the USA,

but it had long been available throughout the world. It had never been directly exported as a finished product but, for economic reasons, was always produced on site using local ingredients and a secret flavour concentrate provided by the parent company in Atlanta.[29] The local rights to the brand name were sold to "concessionaires". It was first manufactured in Germany in 1929 and was able to establish itself in the German market via around fifty nationwide concessionaires in the 1930s, despite competition from rival brands, including the German cola drink Afri-Cola, which was made in Cologne. In 1940, Coca-Cola built a major German plant in Essen—the date precedes the entry of the USA into the war but nevertheless gives an indication of the ruthless capitalism that has driven the expansion of the brand, which today claims to be available in almost every country in the world.[30] Following the end of the war, Coca-Cola rapidly expanded throughout the Western "Trizone", initially to meet the demand created by American and Allied soldiers, and by the 1950s had licensed "more than one-hundred independent Coca-Cola bottlers throughout the country".[31] Although James Farley had, in 1930, been in dispute with Schmeling over his failure to defend his world title against Sharkey, as had provisionally been agreed, the two had remained on friendly terms. In 1954, during Schmeling's first trip to the USA since the end of the war, the two had met once again. In 1957, on the strength of Farley's recommendation, Schmeling was granted the rights, jointly with the Holsten brewery, to bottle and distribute Coca-Cola in Hamburg. Shortly afterwards, he established his own firm, Getränke-Industrie Max Schmeling & Co (Max Schmeling & Co. Drinks Industry), based in Wandsbek, Hamburg. Schmeling became the brand's most prominent concessionaire; from autumn 1957 onwards, and especially during the 1960s, Schmeling became an effective salesman for Coca-Cola in Germany, rarely missing a photo-opportunity and frequently seen in public, even in television appearances, holding the iconic Coke bottle (Fig. 6.1). Unlike many contemporary athletes, the teetotaller and non-smoker Schmeling had always refused to advertise alcohol and tobacco (although these apparent scruples did not prevent him later producing his own); he showed no such reticence in his new venture and became associated with the slogan that featured in Coca-Cola advertising in Germany during the 1950s: "Mach mal Pause…trink Coca-Cola" (Take a break…drink Coca-Cola). The relationship between the former boxer and the most American of brands was apposite, for it not only gave the company an established and trusted figure who could make the most

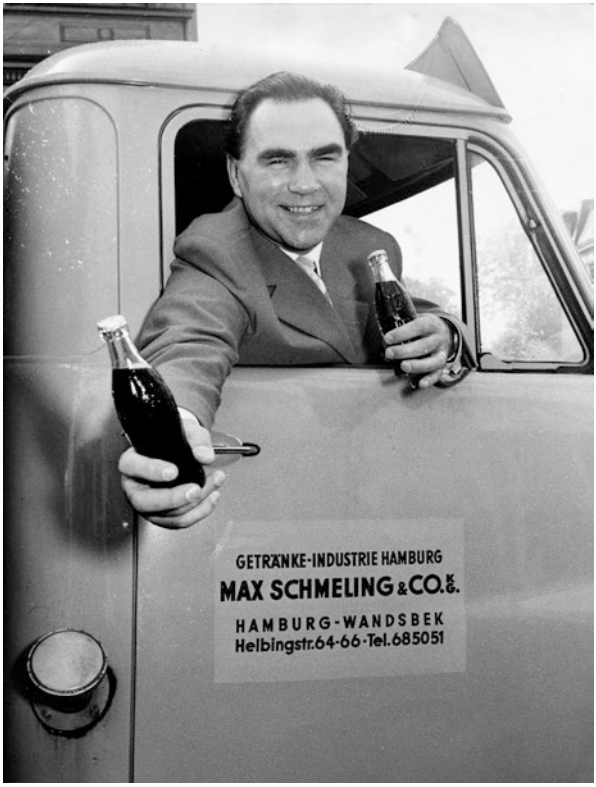

Fig. 6.1 Max Schmeling promoting his newly founded soft drinks venture in September 1957 (Press Association)

of the local market, but it also allowed Schmeling to revive an aspect of his public image, the association with America and with the American lifestyle and attitudes, that had been downplayed during the years of National Socialism. In an era that was experiencing another wave of "Americanism", Schmeling once again seemed to embody the *Zeitgeist*.

By the 1960s, as is evident in a 1965 profile published in the weekly magazine *Sonne*, the "story arc" of Schmeling's life was so familiar it only needed the faintest, entirely uncritical, adumbration, which the author executes with familiar motifs—"ein Leben wie aus dem Märchenbuch"

(a life straight out of a fairy tale); "so etwas wie ein deutsches Sportdenkmal" (something of a German sporting monument).[32] From 1963, he was the star of a series of special editions of the weekly television programme *Der Sportspiegel* on the "second" channel in the FRG, ZDF. The programmes, entitled "Hallo Max", were hosted by the presenter Harry Valerian and featured Schmeling alongside Anny Ondra and the actor Gustav Knuth; they were designed as light entertainment, allowing Schmeling to present his life story through well-rehearsed anecdotes. A sense that Max Schmeling had once again come to represent not only his era but also the nation, or at least an idealized image of the nation, is reflected in the periodic tributes paid to him in the German media, such as on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday in 1965, and thereafter in 5-year cycles on his milestone birthdays. Writing in *Die Zeit* in 1970, just before Schmeling's sixty-fifth birthday, Alexander Rost reflected on the reasons for Schmeling's continued fame:

> Über Max Schmeling ist, seitdem er nicht mehr boxt, mehr geschrieben worden als in seinen Fighter-Jahren. Der Mann ohne Skandal, der Geschäftsmann, der Weidmann, der Mann, der sich nicht von der Politik um den Finger wickeln ließ, der brave Mann—das ist ganz offenbar ein Thema, das sich nicht erschöpfen läßt. Und das vielleicht erklärt, warum Max Schmeling, über alle Popularität hinaus, nicht ein berühmter Mann ist, sondern der Ruhm in Person, und das, was so selten ist, in ziviler Person.[33]
>
> (More has been written about Max Schmeling since he retired than during his years as a boxer. The man without scandal, the businessman, the hunter, the man who never let himself be manipulated by politics, the respectable man—he's evidently a topic that can never be exhausted. And perhaps that explains why Max Schmeling, beyond all his popularity, is not merely a famous man but represents fame personified, and moreover, and this is a rare, is a thoroughly decent person.)

Rost evokes Schmeling as the epitome of essentially *bourgeois* qualities; he is *brav* (this word connotes respectability rather than moral goodness) rather than *gut* (good), valued as a businessman and outdoorsman and for living a scandal-free life. He is presented here as a Federal German fantasy figure—apolitical, successful and supposedly incorruptible in an era that was characterized by political division, paranoia and scandal.

Schmeling himself, as he grew older, increasingly cultivated what is implicit in Rost's tribute—a sense that he had representative status, and not only reflected the sort of nation contemporary Germany aspired to be, but had lived a life that could be mapped onto the contours of recent German history. It was this, as well as a sense that at the age of seventy his life had reached the traditional point of "completion", which inspired his final and most detailed volume of autobiography. *Erinnerungen* was published by Ullstein in 1977. Schmeling's second autobiography, *8-9-aus* (*8, 9—Out!*), had been published in 1956 and offered a highly compressed account of his career, strangely divorced from political and cultural reality. The book was written with the help of the sports journalist and broadcaster Ludwig Maibohm, who had been a regular contributor to *Boxsport* during the 1930s and appeared with Copress in Munich, a publisher specializing in popular sports titles that had recently published two successful books by Fritz Walter, who had captained West Germany to World Cup victory in 1954.

Like Walter's volumes, Schmeling's title proved to be a huge success, going through numerous editions in the following years.[34] The 1977 volume superseded the previous book both in the level of detail it offered on the key stages of Schmeling's career and in its more ambitious concept. This time, quite unlike the previous two autobiographical volumes and the post-war biography *Ein Leben auf eigene Faust*, the account of Schmeling's life was to be grounded in the cultural and historical context. The text was designed to tell not only Schmeling's story but that of the nation and the century through which he had lived. It was once again written in collaboration with the (uncredited) Maibohm, and the publisher also arranged for its bestselling historian Joachim Fest to consult and to ensure as far as possible that the anecdotes and recollected details in the narrative were both credible and historically accurate. *Erinnerungen* remains in print and was reissued for a new generation, with a foreword by the boxer Henry Maske, in 1995. Throughout, it attempts to be more personal and reflective than anything Schmeling had previously published in his name. It relates key events to the political, socio-economic and cultural context, as reflected in the choice of illustrations, which include many not directly relevant to Schmeling's life but intended to add colour to the accounts provided of the Weimar Republic, New York, the Third Reich and the war. In the prologue, "Nach fünfzig Jahren" (Fifty Years Later), Schmeling reflects both on the nature of fame and on what he views as his key achievements, and he

articulates a clear sense that he sees himself less as one particularly successful boxer than as an example of success, achieved through determination and application:

> Wenn ich zurückdenke, tauchen weniger einzelne Kämpfe vor meinem inneren Auge auf als vielmehr die Genugtuung darüber, daß es mir gelungen ist, mein Leben von früh auf in die eigenen Hände zu nehmen und etwas daraus zu machen. Auch will ich die Erfahrung des Erfolgs, die Befriedigung über den errungenen Ruhm nicht gering schätzen. (*Erinnerungen*, 13)
>
> (When I think back, what springs to mind first is much less the individual fights than a sense of satisfaction that I succeeded in taking hold of my own life early, and making something of it. And I wouldn't want to devalue the experience of success or the sense of gratification at the fame I achieved.)

The self-made man, as we have noted, had emerged as a significant motif in the cultural discourse of the Weimar Republic and came to be associated with boxers such as Dempsey, Tunney and Schmeling. For Schmeling, however, its significance now seemed to lie in relation to his post-1945 achievements. In the 1977 memoir he stresses that he sees himself as more than just an athlete, pointing to his business career after losing everything:

> Das hat mir bewiesen, daß ich mehr war als nur ein erfolgreicher Faustkämpfer. In solchen Augenblicken bin ich stolzer auf die bürgerliche Existenz, die ich mir geschaffen habe: auf die Tabakplantage, auf die Pelztier- und Hühnerfarm und auf die Führung der Getränkefirma, die ich jetzte innehabe. (*Erinnerungen*, 14)
>
> (This proved to me that I was more than just a successful boxer. At such moments I am more proud of the *bourgeois* life I have created: of the tobacco plantation, the fur business and chicken farm, and the management of the drinks business that I now own.)

Precisely this, as we have seen, had seemed to resonate with the post-war Federal Republic as an exemplary or aspirational tale. The volume can be seen as an attempt to point to the origins and development of the qualities that allowed Schmeling to make a success of his entire life, not

just his sports career, and by extension to serve as an example of positive continuities between the troubled epochs through which he had lived.

What is entirely absent from these introductory words is any form of reflection on the ethics of his "success" under National Socialism—Schmeling instead focuses on his celebrity acquaintances, all dating from before 1933. The autobiography itself does of course offer a great deal of detail on his life and career under Hitler, for the most part carefully maintaining that he had kept his distance from the politics of the regime and had seen himself primarily as a sportsman. Although he could point to numerous ways in which he had defied the conventional expectations of the Nazis, and it was evident that he had never been a National Socialist, this could and perhaps should have been identified as a problematic position. In fact, the critical reception of Schmeling's *Erinnerungen* was positive and generous. The novelist Siegfried Lenz, for example, reviewing the volume for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, is content merely to reflect Schmeling's own perception of himself as "gesellschaftliches Phänomen" (social phenomenon) and to comment, uncritically, on the anecdotal narrative style: "In seiner unangestrengten Art, zu erzählen" (In his casual manner of narration).[35] This sort of treatment is symptomatic of the widespread acceptance that Schmeling not only reflected post-war German success but could also be viewed as an example of the sort of moral redemption that the nation craved. Although it was not at all how Schmeling had attempted to define himself in the volume, by the 1980s and 1990s Schmeling was routinely identified as both a great *and a good* German.

Writing in 1985, the journalist and poet Wolf Wondratschek observed that it had become difficult to see past the mythologized aura that now surrounded Max Schmeling. He is critical of the sentimentality that informs many of the depictions of him as a "Heiligenbild" (image of a saint) and "Musterknabe der Nation" (poster boy for the nation).[36] For Wondratschek, the memory of him as a boxer, and of the essence of boxing as a sport, had been lost, replaced by a "legend" that he suggests is artificial. It is an accurate observation—Schmeling was no longer thought of as (only) a boxer—but Wondratschek chooses not to probe why this was so and what that image, which he dismisses as saccharine—"Der Ruhm hat Schmeling verewigt, der Nachruhm aber überzuckert" (Fame immortalized Schmeling, but posterity has dusted him with sugar)—revealed.[37] The nature of Schmeling's "legend" had in fact evolved with time and reflected some of the changing ways in which Germans now saw themselves. By the

1960s, a public discussion of the recent past, and how it should be remembered, had finally begun in the Federal Republic. The forms of denial, evasion, relativization and a wilful "Vergessen des Nationalsozialismus" (forgetting of National Socialism) that were characteristic of the immediate post-war period were analyzed by the philosopher Theodor Adorno in his 1959 lecture on the "Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit" (working through the past).[38] For Adorno, the idea of "working through" or "overcoming" was suspect. He viewed such tendencies as symptomatic of the "Schrumpfen des Bewußtseins historischer Kontinuität in Deutschland" ("how the consciousness of historical continuity is atrophying in Germany").[39] Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, in their influential account of Germany's "inability to grieve" (*Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern*, 1967), analyzed a collective refusal to accept both the nature of National Socialism and the genocidal war waged in Germany's name, and indeed the reality of the defeat. Employing a psychoanalytical framework to their reading of contemporary society, the Mitscherlichs pointed to the way in which a focus on economic regeneration had compromised memory work that should have been a matter of urgency:

> Auch die Millionenverluste des vergangenen Krieges, auch die Millionen getöteter Juden können nicht daran hindern, daß man es satt hat, sich an diese Vergangenheit erinnern zu lassen. Vorerst fehlt das Sensorium dafür, daß man sich darum zu bemühen hätte—vom Kindergarten bis zur Hochschule—, die Katastrophen der Vergangenheit in unseren Erfahrungsschatz einzubeziehen, und zwar nicht nur als Warnung, sondern als die spezifisch an unsere nationale Gesellschaft ergehende Herausforderung, mit ihren darin offenbar gewordenen brutal-aggressiven Tendenzen fertig zu werden.[40]
>
> (Even the millions killed in the War, even the millions of murdered Jews can't prevent people feeling tired of being reminded of this past. They lack the emotional capacity for the constant effort, from kindergarten to university, needed to incorporate the catastrophes of the past into our collective experience. This is necessary not only as a warning but as part of the challenge, specific to our society, of coming to terms with the brutal and aggressive tendencies that have become evident within it.)

In this spirit a younger generation, many of whom had been too young to be complicit in the crimes committed, had begun to ask questions of the preceding generation, which had in large part been content with the convenient myth of the zero hour.

In the case of Max Schmeling, his rapid re-emergence as cultural figure in post-war Germany offers evidence not so much of the political amnesia that allowed former convinced Nazis such as Kurt Kiesinger to rise to the highest positions in the Federal Republic so much as of a form of potent but covert nostalgia for an era in which Germans, deprived of all individual power, had taken pride in a fantasy of "collective" power offered by the ideology of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and what Adorno terms collective narcissism and national "Eitelkeit" (vanity).[41] As mediated through the propaganda ministry, Schmeling's successes in sports, especially the victory against Joe Louis, were closely associated with the affirmation of this fantasy but after 1945 were routinely dissociated from the political context, thereby legitimizing the continued celebration of Schmeling's career—the memory of the boxer was cultivated, while that of the propaganda figure was suppressed. Schmeling's second autobiography, *8-9-aus*, offers precisely such an account of his career. The chapters covering the years after 1933, extraordinarily, make almost no reference to National Socialism or the role it played in his sports career. A few passing references to the conflict between Schmeling and the *Reichssportführer*, specifically in connection with Joe Jacobs, serve to remind the reader of the context and that Schmeling was no Nazi (*8-9-aus*, 137). This is explicable insofar as it was common, in German narratives of the Third Reich and war from the 1950s, to distinguish simplistically between the Nazi leadership (by implication perpetrators) and the nation as a whole (by implication their victims). As Peter Fritzsche observes, this "articulation of victimhood kept intact the idea of the German nation and probably facilitated the transition to democracy".[42] The description of the aftermath of his victory over Joe Louis focuses on the jubilation of Germans in general rather than on the political resonance, although the text does report that he was invited to meet Hitler upon his return, something he feels moved briefly to justify. Once again the instinct is to relativize:

> Merkwürdigerweise hat man mir später Besuche dieser Art übelgenommen. Warum? Als Russe wäre ich wahrscheinlich von Stalin empfangen worden, als Amerikaner vom Präsidenten. Es ist nun mal üblich, daß erfolgreiche Sportler – ob sie es wollen oder nicht – zu Heroen gestempelt werden. Viele Olympia-Sieger erlebten das, und um ein Beispiel aus der jüngeren Vergangenheit zu nennen: Der große Fußballsieg von Bern machte die Spieler der deutschen Nationalelf – ohne daß sie es verlangt hätten – zu Helden. (*8-9-aus*, 174)

> (Strangely, people later held such visits against me. Why? As a Russian I would probably have been received by Stalin, and as an American by the president. It's simply customary for successful sportsmen—whether they want this or not—to be labelled heroes. Many Olympic champions have experienced this, and to take an example from the recent past: the great World Cup victory in Berne made heroes of the players of the national team, something they didn't ask for.)

The attempt is again made to isolate himself from the accusation of active co-operation with the National Socialists by implying that he had no choice in this matter, and once again he makes an oddly apolitical and indeed amoral equation between Hitler and the American president, as he had done in his 1948 article for *Der Spiegel*. By comparing himself with the victorious World Cup team he also chooses to ignore the specificity of fascism and its "total" claim upon citizens. It is certainly true that both were granted a political and cultural symbolism that was beyond the control of the athletes involved, and the celebration of "das Wunder von Bern" (the miracle of Berne) in 1954, for some, had revived memories of the nationalistic tones of the Third Reich, although it was also widely perceived as reflective of rebirth and hope. The explicit effacing of the distinction between individual and national victory in 1936 was, however, categorically different, consciously designed to reinforce a pernicious, supremacist nationalism. It was disingenuous of Schmeling to equate the two so casually, but such a self-serving narrative was also characteristic of an era that had not demanded any greater engagement with the past than this.

Memory and the "Moral Hero"

Starting in the 1960s, things began to change. This was the decade in which a younger generation, represented above all by the left-wing '*68er* (1968 generation), came into open conflict with the older generation who had lived through the Third Reich and shaped the culturally conservative society of the 1950s. For the first time a more explicit acknowledgement of German collective guilt began to inform public discourse; the exculpatory narrative binary of Nazis/Germans, which overlooked the massive grassroots support upon which Hitler's power had depended, was replaced in the Federal Republic by a rather more uncomfortable historical model, which accounted for genocide by

acknowledging the facilitating role played by "ordinary" Germans and the unthinking bureaucratic efficiency that had allowed the Holocaust to take place (Arendt's "banality of evil"). It eventually also raised questions relating to the distinction between individual and national responsibility and to whether a succeeding generation, benefitting from what Helmut Kohl controversially referred to in the 1980s as "die Gnade der späten Geburt" (the mercy of a later birth), should also bear some of the same "guilt" that could be more directly pinned on the generation who had supported or tolerated Hitler for twelve or more years. From the 1980s onwards attempts were once again made, not to forget, but to look forwards rather than backwards and to "normalize" Germany's relations with her European neighbours and with the rest of the world.

Despite the passage of time and the largely successful transformation of Germany into not only a prosperous but a truly democratic modern nation, this remains an ongoing project; with Holocaust survivors still alive and, even in 2016, another trial of a perpetrator taking place (possibly the last), the events of the 1930s and 1940s remain a painful, living memory. While the GDR cultivated its "anti-fascist" credentials by exclusively venerating Communist opponents of the Nazis, such as KPD (German Communist Party) leader Ernst Thälmann or Olympic wrestler Werner Seelenbinder (both executed in 1944 after incarceration in concentration camps), in the West, despite the desire to build on the heritage of "das andere Deutschland" (the other Germany)—that is, the non-Nazi, "good" Germany—there was initially a clear reluctance to dwell on acts of resistance. As Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönfeld observe with reference to this phenomenon, "the implication was that Nazi control had been so total that resistance had been virtually impossible. This offered a form of exculpation for individual Germans even while the collective guilt of the German nation was acknowledged".[43] Eventually, in part as a consequence of the pressure to "come to terms" with the past in the 1960s, exceptional individuals such as Sophie and Hans Scholl, who had been executed in 1943 for orchestrating the "White Rose" resistance movement in Munich, and Claus von Stauffenberg, the aristocrat who was likewise executed for his pivotal role in the plot to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944, became part of an accepted narrative of German history and identity. Numerous schools, streets and public buildings were, particularly from the 1960s onwards, named after both the Scholls and Stauffenberg, who have also been celebrated on postage stamps and in a number of television and

feature films.[44] In the case of Stauffenberg, the fact that he had been a vocal supporter of Hitler since the early 1930s, and was certainly *not* fighting for a return to a republican, democratic Germany, has tended to be ignored—such historical details were outweighed by his exemplary status as a German who had, like the Scholls, been willing to die for his cause. Of course, as the Federal Republic sought to establish itself with so many former Nazis still present in society, it had from the start been important—not least to the Allies—to be able also to point to living Germans as role models who could be said to represent an alternative, morally credible Germany (and, importantly, who were not also communists). Such formative figures included prominent representatives of "high" German culture who had been in exile, and in some cases no longer carried German passports, such as the novelists Thomas Mann and Lion Feuchtwanger. Among the leading politicians in the newly founded FRG, the first chancellor Konrad Adenauer had been dismissed as mayor of Cologne in 1933 and had refused all co-operation with the Nazis, while the leader of the opposition Social Democrats Kurt Schumacher had been a vehement opponent of the NSDAP, which resulted in his spending more than a decade in concentration camps.

Although his moral standing could hardly be compared either to that of Thomas Mann or of principled politicians such as Adenauer and Schumann, Max Schmeling, who had long been both prominent and popular, eventually also came to enjoy a comparable level of admiration and respect. Exiles such as Mann, unfortunately but perhaps understandably, often seemed distant to post-war German audiences, from whom they had been separated for such a long time. Insofar as sport was (wrongly) understood to be separate from politics, Schmeling offered a sense of apparently "legitimate" continuity with the mainstream culture of the Third Reich. He continued frequently to be praised as an exemplar of individual behaviour, and, as such, depictions of him after 1945—as for example in the tributes paid to him upon his retirement—tended to imply that he should be admired in moral terms. Just as some of the earliest references to him in the 1920s had done, he was invested with ethical as well as athletic, psychological or intellectual attributes. With the passage of time, as the memory of Schmeling as an active athlete began to fade, the willingness to view him in such terms increased. It seems plausible to suggest that in the context of a nation that was in the process of "reinventing" itself whilst retaining the memory of the past, it became important to find ways to reconnect with a history that was not

one of resistance and opposition, nor of exile and persecution, and yet was still morally redeemable.

We also find in the post-war representations of Schmeling powerful tropes that are absent from earlier depictions but speak to some of the priorities of West Germany. For example, it is notable that Schmeling was frequently represented as a figure of reconciliation, in particular through the reporting of his periodic reunions with Joe Louis between the 1950s and 1970s. The first of these took place in Chicago in May 1954, during the same trip in which he met James Farley, now of Coca-Cola. Just as their fights in the 1930s had been represented in symbolic terms, the depiction of their later "friendship" was frequently referred to not only as evidence of the character of both men but also as a symbol of post-war reconciliation between two nations. In *8-9-aus* Schmeling uses the reunion as his concluding scene and attempts to invest the moment of apparent reconciliation (although in truth the two men had never truly been "enemies" at a personal level) with exemplary status:

> Wir schüttelten uns kräftig die Hand. Ich war inzwischen einsichtig genug, um zu erkennen, was mit diesem Händedruck besiegelt wurde. Er war viel mehr wert als ein dritter Kampf Schmeling gegen Louis. Er war der friedliche Höhepunkt zweier Karrieren, von denen die eine ohne die andere nicht denkbar schien.
>
> Ich wollte, alle Menschen auf der Welt hätten das Kriegsbeil so ehrlich begraben wie Joe Louis und ich. (*8-9-aus*, 222)
>
> (We shook each other's hands energetically. I now had enough insight to recognize what was sealed in this handshake. It was worth much more than a third fight between Schmeling and Louis. It was the peaceful highlight of two careers which were each unthinkable without the other.
>
> I wished that everyone in the world could have buried the hatchet as honestly as Joe Louis and I.)

The stories of Joe Louis and Max Schmeling were inextricably linked in the public imagination, but the two also continued to function as striking contrast figures (Fig. 6.2). If Schmeling's story was one of continued success, personal happiness and successful new starts, Louis' was one of merciless decline and personal misery. Following his retirement as world champion in 1949, undefeated in 25 defences since his victory against James Braddock in 1937, Louis had found that, despite

Fig. 6.2 Max Schmeling and Joe Louis at their first post-war reunion in 1954 (Everett Collection Historical / Alamy Stock Photo)

earning a fortune during his career, he was left with very little, the victim of unscrupulous management and his own poor financial decisions. Despite generously donating the purses from his wartime fights to the armed forces, in which he had served as a sergeant and as a focal point for propaganda, he had been presented with an enormous bill by the IRS for unpaid tax. By the mid-1950s, his debt stood at well over $1 million, and it would dog him for the coming decades.[45] It had prompted a comeback the following year that was probably more unwise than Schmeling's own, culminating in a brutal defeat against the upcoming (and regretful) Rocky Marciano in 1951; in the years that followed, Louis abortively, and demeaningly, attempted a career as a professional wrestler, before injury ruled out further participation in contact sports, and was troubled by gambling and drug addiction and persistent mental health issues. Subsequent meetings between Schmeling and Louis, which

included a visit from Louis in Hollenstedt, were frequently reduced to symbolic photo-opportunities, with the two men embracing or jovially adopting a fighting stance. Schmeling appeared as a surprise guest on an episode of *This Is Your Life* devoted to Louis in 1961. Yet in truth there was no "close friendship" (as numerous online sources, such as Louis' Wikipedia entry, like to suggest), but Schmeling's willingness to offer financial support to Louis was eagerly reported as further, sentimental evidence of the former's selflessness. Indeed, in later life, Schmeling became known for his financial generosity, sponsoring and making donations to individuals, towns (both in his local community and across Germany) and organizations and responding to emergencies and disasters with substantial cheques. In 1991 Schmeling, who had never had children of his own, founded the Max Schmeling Stiftung, a charitable organization for which projects benefitting children and young people remain a particular focus.

The image of wealthy benefactor was not unique to Schmeling, of course, but in his case it served to amplify the aura of moral integrity that, by the late twentieth century, was integral to his public persona. Between the 1960s and 1980s there had been a steady trickle of positive "revelations" relating to Schmeling's life that, like the perceived "friendship" with Joe Louis, tended to reinforce his status as a moral "instance" who seemed to reflect the willingness of the Federal Republic to "make good" for some of the suffering Germany had inflicted on the world. Thus, at a time when the personal histories of other Germans of his generation were being subjected to the scrutiny they had evaded in the first post-war years, Schmeling was treated with a surprising degree of sentimentality, and not only in Germany. The shaping of a life into a celebratory or exemplary *moral* narrative partakes in a long-established hagiographical or heroic tradition. J. Hughson, in considering constructions of the "sporting hero", distinguishes between "prowess heroes", a category into which Schmeling's boxing successes clearly place him, and "moral heroes".[46] Hughson argues that those who display aspects of *both* categories seem most readily to meet the expectations created within culture (the reference point is American culture, but the argument seems to hold in the German context as well). The two types of heroic status may even, Hughson suggests, be "symbiotic" in the case of sports heroes like Muhammad Ali or the baseball star Jackie Robinson, albeit unevenly so because of "the particularity of prowess in given sports"—that is to say, it is easier to become a moral hero if one is already a prowess hero.[47]

In the case of Max Schmeling, the potential taint of his association with National Socialism could be compensated for. Indeed, in the context of a post-war society in which a majority of citizens had cooperated to some extent with the previous regime, it may even have been seen as a forgivable indication of human imperfection making him *more* of an identification figure. [48] The aforementioned article in *Sonne* is revealingly dismissive of the accusation that Schmeling's career had served the interests of the National Socialist regime, perhaps absurdly so: "Der früher gern erhobene und später ab und zu wiederholte Vorwurf, er sei ein Hitlerknecht gewesen, ein Bannerträger des hitlerischen Rassenhasses, ist stets an seiner Gelassenheit abgeprallt."[49] (The accusation people once liked to make, and occasionally still do, that he was Hitler's pawn, a proponent of Nazi racial hatred, has always been deflected by his good nature.) Yet, particularly from the 1960s onwards, accounts of Schmeling's life generally attempt a more robust defence than this, referring, typically, to his refusal to join the NSDAP, his retention of a Jewish manager (both of which had been sanctioned by Hitler) and his eventual falling out of favour with von Tschammer und Osten and Goebbels. Additionally, revelations of alleged multiple interventions, previously unknown to the public, on behalf of individuals threatened by Nazis, were readily accepted.

An example of this is offered by the reporting of another moment of personal reconciliation, this time with his friend Paul Damski. Their reunion also took place during his eventful trip to the USA in 1954, during which, according to his later account, he had also visited the grave of his manager Joe Jacobs, who had died in 1940. Damski, the Lithuanian-born boxing manager and promoter, had been one of Schmeling's closest friends in Berlin prior to 1933 and had played a role in introducing him to Anny Ondra. As noted in Chap. 4, the banning of Jewish boxing managers in 1933 that followed the *Gleichschaltung* of Germany's sports infrastructure had forced Damski into exile. He had broken off all contact with Schmeling, viewing him, he claimed, as a Nazi. After initially basing himself in Paris and London, from where he continued to manage Walter Neusel, Damski later emigrated to the USA and established himself as a jeweller in New York. In an interview with Stanley Weston first published in *The Ring* magazine in 1968, Damski offered an account of his reconciliation with Schmeling in 1954, which took place in the Manhattan restaurant owned by Jack Dempsey. The article was republished in German translation, without any commentary

or correction, almost 30 years later in a volume collecting various texts about Schmeling (mostly paeans). It provides a sentimental narrative of friends cathartically reconciled after many years: "Die Wunden der Vergangenheit waren auf wundersame Weile geheilt. Es war ein wunderbarer Abend in 'Dempsey's'."[50] (The wounds of the past were miraculously healed. It was a wonderful evening in "Dempsey's".) It also represents one of the first concerted attempts to cast Schmeling not just as a *representative* but also as a *good* German.

In the interview with Weston, Damski states that he had been wrong to consider Schmeling a Nazi, and to break off his friendship with him, and justifies this with an account of covert oppositional activity supposedly undertaken by Schmeling in Nazi Germany. He depicts him as an undercover resistance fighter with close ties to the group that plotted Hitler's assassination in 1944. He also reports that Schmeling had claimed to have saved "fast einhundert Juden" (almost one hundred Jews) from the gas chambers and provided details in evidence of this. He had allegedly used his network of contacts among senior Nazis to gain access to Gestapo headquarters and to hospitals and prisons, where he was able to intervene on behalf of prisoners.[51] According to Damski, Schmeling had said that he hated Hitler and would have liked to kill him himself: "'Am liebsten hätte ich ihn vergiftet, weil ich wußte, daß er verrückt war—wie ein wilder Hund.'"[52] (I would really have liked to have poisoned him because I knew that he was insane, like a mad dog.) The claims themselves, as reported by Damski, are fanciful. They are not corroborated by any evidence beyond his supposed recollection of what Schmeling had told him, nor are they supported by any of the accounts provided by Schmeling himself. If he had been active to anything like the extent suggested by Damski, he would certainly have used the information in his defence when he returned the denazification questionnaire.

Schmeling did cite examples of his attempts to use what influence he had to help individuals, as in the case of the boxer Heinz Lazek, but not of his undertaking highly risky and dramatic interventions of the sort described by Damski (such as removing a prisoner's file in Gestapo headquarters or extracting a prisoner from a truck *en route* to a concentration camp). It is possible that in conversation with Damski Schmeling had reported a murderous rage towards Hitler, although if he did claim such passion it is hard to square with the Schmelings' willingness to cooperate with the propaganda expectations of the regime well into the war years. Damski, at any rate, suggests that he was persuaded without the

need for any further evidence, and Weston, as the author of the article, does little more than report the assertions, concluding with the observation that he inclines to believe him—and by extension the veracity of the claims about Schmeling's heroic behaviour. This uncritical article is wholly unreliable as an historical or biographical text, and the claims it makes, while they were never denied or disowned, have not found their way into many accounts of Schmeling's life. The article does, however, stand as evidence of the active mythmaking that Schmeling was now inspiring and that, moreover, escaped real critical scrutiny.

The credibility of Schmeling's story as a morality tale was significantly strengthened in late 1989 with the emergence of an account of selfless "helping" behaviour during the so-called *Reichskristallnacht*, the co-ordinated pogrom targeting Germany's Jewish population which took place from 9 to 10 November 1938. On 6 December 1989 Schmeling attended an event held in his honour at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. Its organizer, Henri Lewin, the German-born president of the hotel, in an apparently spontaneous response to a comment about Schmeling being a former Nazi, announced during the ceremonies that Schmeling had once saved his life and that of his older brother Werner.[53] Unlike the elaborate and dramatic actions mentioned by Paul Damski, Lewin's story was plausibly simple. *Kristallnacht* saw the destruction of some 7000 Jewish-owned shops, businesses, homes and synagogues, the arrest and incarceration in concentration camps of around 26,000 Jewish citizens and the deaths of at least 91.[54] As such, it represented a third, critical moment in the escalation of state-sponsored anti-Semitism after 1933, following the initial wave of exclusions and boycotts in 1933 and the Nuremberg laws of 1935. It was during this night of terror for Germany's Jews that Max Schmeling had, it was claimed, protected two Jewish teenagers, the sons of David Lewin, an established restaurateur, hotelier and businessman from Potsdam. David Lewin, according to his son Henri (born Heinz), had belonged to Schmeling's wide circle of friends in Berlin's high society, and the family later emigrated to Shanghai and after the war to the USA, where Henri also became a successful hotelier. Lewin reported that Schmeling had been approached by his father on the evening of 9 November and agreed to hide the two boys, aged fourteen and fifteen, in his apartment in the Excelsior Hotel in Berlin. According to Lewin, they remained hidden there for 3 days before Schmeling, in one version subsequently reported, felt it was safe enough to take them to another apartment owned by David Lewin elsewhere in Berlin.[55]

The story was widely reported in 1989 and 1990 both internationally, for example by the *Jerusalem Post*, and in Germany, in *Bild* and other popular newspapers. The reported action was enough to justify Schmeling's inclusion in Eric Silver's *Book of the Just* (1992), dedicated to the unsung heroes, such as Oskar Schindler, who had saved Jewish lives in Nazi Germany and during the Holocaust. A 1993 article by Robert Weisbord and Norbert Hedderich, constructed around the story and published in the American journal *History Today*, has helped to further cement it as biographical fact rather than unsubstantiated anecdote—it is depicted, for example, in the two recent biographical feature films made about Schmeling, *Joe and Max* (dir. Steve James, 2002) and *Max Schmeling* (dir. Uwe Boll, 2010).[56] Weisbord and Hedderich's somewhat manipulative narrativization of the moment Lewin revealed his story to the audience leaves no doubt that they regard Schmeling's actions as selfless and heroic:

> Schmeling had placed in jeopardy his name and reputation, said Lewin. "If we had been found in his apartment, I would not be sitting here this evening and neither would Max," he added as Schmeling wept. […] Not surprisingly, it is Henri Lewin's opinion that Schmeling is "a man of the highest character - a champion outside the ring as well…a truly great German."[57]

Henri Lewin had apparently kept silent on the subject for more than 50 years, which he explained to Tom Tugend of *The Jerusalem Post*: "Lewin later told *The Jerusalem Post* that he had not publicly revealed the story before, at Schmeling's request. Even after Schmeling agreed to attend the tribute in Las Vegas, he asked Lewin not to "glorify" him, Lewin said, adding, "He told me what he had done for me and my brother was 'doing the duty of a man'."[58] Even after it became public knowledge and indeed a part of the "myth" of Max Schmeling, reinforcing more than any other single detail his status as a "moral" as well as a "prowess" hero, Schmeling refused to elaborate on the events, although he does briefly mention them in the "final" interview provided as an appendix to the 1995 edition of his *Erinnerungen*.[59] There are in fact unresolved questions relating to the story the veracity of which has seldom been challenged—after all, why would Lewin fabricate such a tale? Volker Kluge has rightly highlighted a number of peculiarities that arguably undermine the credibility of the story as it stands; these include the

fact that Schmeling had not made reference to the episode in his denazification questionnaire in 1945, apparent exaggerations by Henri Lewin about his father's businesses in Berlin and Potsdam and the assertion that Schmeling was living in a Berlin hotel in November 1938 when he in fact still owned a house in the city.[60] A hotel would certainly have made hiding two Jewish boys, which was not in fact illegal at this point but would have aroused suspicions, much more difficult. This does not mean that the story is untrue, as the passage of time and the subjective nature of memory could perhaps explain some of these issues. In the absence of absolute certainty, what is more interesting, at least in the context of this chapter, is that Lewin's story has been so readily believed.

The tale of the "rescue" of the Lewin brothers has helped to burnish Schmeling's already gilded public image further, effectively granting him the status of unrecognized hero, or "stiller Held" (silent hero), the term that has come to be applied to individuals who risked their lives to assist Jews and other people threatened with persecution, many of whom chose not to speak openly of their actions after the war and were only recognized much later. Weisbord and Hedderich deem Schmeling, in their title, a "Righteous Ring Warrior".[61] The attribute "righteous" (or "just") has a particular connotation in the context of the memorializing of the Holocaust, as it is the moral category formally applied, as an honour, by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre founded in 1953. In 1963 the centre launched its ongoing project to recognize, document and honour the "Righteous Among the Nations", which is to say individuals, mainly from perpetrator or occupied states, who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.[62] Some 26,000 people, among them just 587 Germans and 107 Austrians (tiny numbers compared with 5516 Dutch and 6620 Polish among the Righteous), have thus far been recognized in this way. Schmeling is not among them, not because of insufficient evidence but because the reported action, on that date, would not qualify. We cannot be certain what the consequences for someone like Max Schmeling would have been had the presence of the two boys been reported, but it most certainly would not, even after the embarrassment of his comprehensive defeat to Louis, have cost him his life. That was a very real possibility for the vast majority of "helpers" honoured at Yad Vashem, who hid or smuggled Jews during deportations, provided false papers and passports, or otherwise directly risked their lives.

The revelation of Schmeling's more modest but nevertheless exceptional action during *Kristallnacht* was, however, significant, both for Schmeling's reputation and, arguably, in the broader context of a nation that was undergoing rapid change and reassessing how it viewed itself and the memory of the past. Of course, 1989 was the year of the *Wende* (literally, change or turning point; the term refers to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the East German state). By October 1990 Germany was, once again, a unified state, although the process of cultural and social unification has taken a good deal longer. There is no question that, starting in the 1990s, a reunified Germany has displayed a much greater willingness to engage with the period of National Socialism and the Holocaust in a more nuanced way, freed from the political interference that the Cold War and the divided nation had resulted in. Numerous academic and public initiatives bear evidence of this, drawing attention either to the culpability of the nation as a whole or to the irreplaceably rich contributions made by German-Jewish culture over centuries. The extraordinary and huge Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* (Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe), for example, was initiated in 1994 with a design competition and inaugurated in 2005. The two controversial exhibitions themed around "Die Verbrechen der Wehrmacht" (The Crimes of the *Wehrmacht*), which were designed by the Hamburg Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research) and toured the country between 1995 and 1999 and 2001 and 2004, challenged the ingrained belief that the *Wehrmacht* could be "honourably" dissociated from the crimes committed by the Nazis. The exhibitions aimed to inform the German public about the extent to which the military had contributed to the atrocities associated with the so-called *Vernichtungskrieg* (internecine war) in the Soviet Union, as well as to the Holocaust. They prompted considerable controversy and, whilst they were positively received by a mainstream German culture that was more receptive than ever before to an expanded notion of German "guilt", were vehemently rejected as tendentious by right-wing and conservative commentators and groups.

Partly in response to this, the turn of the century also saw the re-emergence of an equally problematic discourse centred on a subject that, at least since the 1960s, had been seen as a taboo: German "victimhood". In the late 1990s and early 2000s a number of historical and literary publications highlighted the suffering of Germans in, for example, the Allied bombing raids, abuses committed by the Red Army or through

their forcible expulsion from their homes at the end of the war. The "fire storm" bombing of Dresden, just 3 months before the end of the war, has become a particular focus for historical debate about how and why it happened, whether civilians were specifically targeted and whether such an event should be explained or even justified as an inevitable consequence of Hitler's war, as the official discourse both in the GDR and the FRG since the 1960s had tended to accept. The potential problem with such debates, as has been widely discussed and analyzed, is that by attempting to acknowledge a human fact—many German civilians most certainly did suffer terribly during the war—one might implicitly relativize the unspeakable suffering inflicted by Germans on others or be seen to downplay the significance of the attempted genocide committed in the name of Germany. Indeed, there is no question that far-right parties, such as the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (National Democratic Party of Germany), have attempted to instrumentalize the commemoration of Dresden's bombing for political purposes. Against this background, initiatives to recognize and honour the actions of "good" Germans—for example in the establishment in Berlin in 2008 of the *Gedenkstätte Stille Helden* (Memorial Centre for Silent Heroes), the first such centre in Germany designed to inform about and honour the country's "righteous"—can be seen as offering a necessary counterbalance. They serve as a reminder that Germany's civilian population was not bound to be passive or to be defined by their eventual suffering, but had the opportunity to act in a positive way. Max Schmeling, despite being a far more morally ambiguous historical figure than any other such so-called hero, has come to occupy a place on this spectrum of German "righteousness". Thus while his popularity in the 1950s and 1960s partly depended on an older generation seeking cultural continuities with National Socialism, he has never been "claimed" by the reactionary, far-right and neo-Nazi groups who enjoyed a resurgence following the collapse of the GDR.

Following the *Wende*, Schmeling's ability to offer a sense of morally justifiable continuity between the epochs that marked the German century allowed him to function as a "unifying" figure of whom even citizens in the so-called *neue Bundesländer* (the new federal states that formerly made up the GDR) could be proud. Schmeling, who was born in eastern Germany, played a public role in some of the campaigns aimed at bringing Germany together as a single nation. In 1995, for example, he appeared in a national poster campaign organized by the

charity Aktion Gemeinsinn to promote German unity alongside the most famous German boxer of the 1990s, Henry Maske.[63] Maske had enjoyed a successful amateur career in the GDR, earning a gold medal at the Seoul Olympics in 1988, turned professional soon after reunification, and won the IBF world light-heavyweight title in 1993, which he held until 1996. Alongside other prominent athletes from the former GDR, such as the sprinter and long jumper Heike Drechsler, swimmer Franziska van Almsick and winner of the 1997 Tour de France Jan Ullrich, Maske was one of the most representative faces of post-reunification German sport. He was voted German sportsman of the year in 1993, and his "clean-cut" image (his nickname was the "Gentleman", and he had served as an army officer in the GDR) and technical, efficient style as a boxer evoked comparisons with Schmeling, who thought highly of him.[64] In 1995, Maske contributed a brief foreword to the reissue of Schmeling's *Erinnerungen*: "Er wollte nur eines—genau wie ich—Erfolg durch Leistung."[65] (Like me, he only wanted one thing: success through performance.) In 2010, further blurring and merging their respective identities, Maske played the role of Max Schmeling in Uwe Boll's film *Max Schmeling* (about which more in what follows).

The 1995 poster campaign is interesting in suggesting both continuity and unity. Schmeling was cast both as a predecessor and paternal inspiration for the younger boxer and as a representative of "West" German sport alongside an equivalent from the East, hence the slogan "Kaum war die Mauer eröffnet, haben wir Freundschaft geschlossen. Das Land sind wir. Alle" (As soon as the wall had come down we sealed our friendship. We are our country. All of us). Some 60 years on from his peak popularity in Nazi Germany Schmeling, alongside a protégé who seemed cast from the same mould, was once again held up as an aspirational symbol of a nation seeking to foster a sense of national, which is to say pan-German, community and identity. Sport, from the victory of the German football team in the World Cup of 1990 to the successful World Cup tournament held in Germany in 2006, has played an important, positive role in this process.

Curating and Narrating a Legend

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, as Schmeling lived into his eighties and nineties, he continued to be lavished with tributes, praise and awards, and following his death a number of temporary exhibitions

dedicated to him were created, mostly at locations that could point to a particular connection with him, such as Hamburg, Bad Saarow and Cologne.[66] Hollenstedt has marked Schmeling's long period of residence with a permanent memorial statue, an oversized bust portraying him as a youthful boxer with a towel around his neck, as though fresh from sparring (Fig. 6.3). It was created by the sculptor Carsten Eggers and unveiled in 2010 at a ceremony attended by both Henry Maske and the German-based Ukrainian heavyweight world champion Wladimir Klitschko. A small permanent exhibition at the Jagdschloss Groß Schönebeck in the Schorfheide forest in Brandenburg was also created. In addition to this, Schmeling has in recent years been the subject of repeated fictionalized representation in film and literature, both in Germany and internationally. The degree of variation in the image mediated through these different platforms is striking, reflecting some of the inconsistencies in contemporary German identity. Schmeling's story has been "curated" variously as that of an athlete, a hunter, an altruistic hero, an egotist, a liberal and a conservative.

The site-specificity of the Max Schmeling exhibition in Groß Schönebeck is intriguing and revealing in that his connection to the location is through hunting rather than residence or boxing. The Schorfheide was the location of Hermann Göring's notoriously extravagant private estate Carinhall, which was built in 1933 with funds provided by the Prussian state, of which he was *Ministerpräsident* (minister president), and decorated with art that was likewise funded by taxpayers, confiscated from museums and galleries or in many cases stolen from Jewish citizens. The expansive estate, which also included an elaborate mausoleum for Göring's first wife Carin, after whom it was named, was kept well stocked with game, including exotic species such as bison. In addition to visits from senior figures in the regime and supporters, Göring, wearing an array of uniforms and regalia, hosted numerous quasi-official state visits from politicians and dignitaries such as Mussolini, the Hungarian Prince Regent Miklós Horthy, the Duke of Windsor and the British foreign secretary Lord Halifax. Schmeling's passion for hunting may have alienated Hitler somewhat, but it evidently facilitated good relations with Göring, whose near-obsession with the activity, which he indulged even in at the height of the war and viewed in the context of an idealized image of the "Germanic" warrior-hunter, was well known. He was not only a regular hunting guest at Carinhall, as noted in Chap. 5, but also accompanied Göring on an elk hunt in

Fig. 6.3 (L-R) Henry Maske, Carsten Eggers and Wladimir Klitschko at the unveiling of the memorial to Max Schmeling in Hollenstedt, 2010 (European Pressphoto Agency b. v. / Alamy Stock Photo)

Eastern Pomerania in 1938.[67] The main exhibition at Groß Schönebeck today is a well-researched, multi-media exhibition entitled "Jagd und Macht" (Hunting and Power), exploring the ways in which hunting in Germany has been exploited as a means of expressing and consolidating political power, something that continued in the Schorfheide beyond the destruction of Carinhall at the end of the war into the GDR era, when Erich Honecker was a regular visitor. In this context it is, from a curatorial point of view, a little odd that the Schmeling exhibition, running alongside "Jagd und Macht" in a separate building, should offer a relatively simplistic view of the significance of hunting in Schmeling's biography.

The exhibition has two parts, the first focused on boxing and also telling the story of Schmeling's marriage and business career. In addition to a number of photographs from Schmeling's private collection, the exhibition features audio stations and a heavy bag with a set of period boxing gloves, which visitors are encouraged to try out. The exhibition's second,

"nature"-themed room is dedicated entirely to Schmeling the hunter and "Naturfreund" (friend of nature). It recreates a hunting lodge, decorated with a number of trophies, and incorporates personal artefacts, such as Schmeling's hat, as tangible links to the man. The room also includes two of Schmeling's personal photograph albums (surprisingly, the originals are on open display). The binary conception of the exhibition perhaps uses the sentiments expressed by Schmeling in the conclusion to his *Erinnerungen* as its starting point, in which he muses on the "elemental" connection between boxing and hunting:

> Sicherlich erschließt sich im Kampf das Leben in seiner elementarsten Form. Aber wenn das Wild aus dem Dickicht tritt oder ein Vogelschwarm lärmend aus dem Unterholz stiebt, denke ich manchmal, daß ich auch hier dem Elementaren nahe bin. Das Erlebnis des Ursprungs, das ich im Boxen suchte, hier habe ich es gefunden. Nun brauche ich weder den Kampf noch die Sensationen oder den Ruhm, um mich in Einklang mit dem Leben und mit mir selbst zu fühlen. (*Erinnerungen*, 527)
>
> (In combat [*Kampf*] life certainly reveals itself in its most elemental form. But I sometimes think that I am just as close to the elemental when a deer steps out of the bushes or a flock of birds rises noisily from the undergrowth. Here I found the experience of essence that I sought in boxing. I no longer need to fight, or need sensationalism or fame, in order to feel at one with life and with myself.)

Noticeable by its absence in this exhibition is a clear sense that the link between Schmeling and the Schorfheide is not only in nature and hunting but in the destructive vanity of Hermann Göring and in National Socialism's spurious ideological claims on rural communities and on nature itself. The visitor can, it is true, partly make up for this shortcoming by visiting the "Jagd und Macht" exhibition, but, even taking into account the modest scale and budget, the underlying desire to simplify and sentimentalize the subject is unmistakable in the binary conception. Moreover, by offering an affirmative vision of hunting—still very much associated with social and political conservatism—as a means to commune with nature, Schmeling is offered again as a continuity figure who (because the link to Göring is not stressed) is able to connect with the "timelessness" of the area in a way that is strained by its historical association with both the GDR and National Socialism.

A different form of sentimental mythologization is characteristic of the film adaptations of Schmeling's story. These narratives hinge on the idea that Schmeling was fundamentally a good person, someone who could be claimed as a hero both in sport and in terms of his conduct. The films are of limited artistic merit judged individually but are nevertheless interesting both in the construction of Max Schmeling as a character and, with broader questions in mind, as evidence of an ongoing process of "normalization" in the portrayal of Germany's past, in which an idealized image of Schmeling as moral hero plays a role. As has been the case with documentary films and works of non-fiction, the rivalry with Joe Louis has tended to be used in feature films concerned with Schmeling to provide narrative structure. A handful of films and television dramas have used Max Schmeling as a fully developed character, including *Joe and Max* (2002), an American—German production directed by Steve James, and *Max Schmeling* (2010), the aforementioned German film directed by Uwe Boll. Both films draw in part on the narrative conventions of the boxing film, which has remained a popular genre even as the sport's popularity and relevance has, arguably, declined. *Joe and Max* is, to be sure, limited in many respects. It was made for television by the Starz cable network and by attempting to compress twin narratives—the stories of Schmeling (played by the popular German actor Til Schweiger) and Louis (played by Leonard Roberts)—into less than 2 hours, the film often feels hurried and underdeveloped; and the use of accented English to represent the German language, while this is not an uncommon device in popular Anglophone film, also serves to undermine the realism it seems otherwise to be striving to create. It borrows its structure from an older American television film, *Ring of Passion* (1978), which likewise dramatized the two Schmeling—Louis fights.

Uwe Boll's *Max Schmeling* was made for cinema release and is more ambitious, attempting to present a more rounded picture of Schmeling's career between 1930 and 1948 without focusing exclusively on the Louis fights. Its production standards are somewhat higher than those of *Joe and Max*, although it is still clearly constrained by the limits of its modest budget of €5 million and Croatian shooting location, and its critical reception was generally negative, which was perhaps unsurprising given Boll's reputation as a director of American "trash" cinema.[68] The casting in the lead role of Henry Maske, an actual boxer with a personal connection with Schmeling, can be understood as an attempt to lend the

film the sort of authenticity an actor such as Til Schweiger could never achieve, and this is certainly true of the boxing scenes, which feature a number of other prominent German-based boxers playing Schmeling's opponents.[69] Boll notes in his published *Drehtagebuch* (shoot diary) that he encouraged the novice actor Maske to play himself rather than attempt a faithful impersonation of Schmeling. He sees their affinities—not just a superficial physical resemblance—as advantageous: "Er hat ja sehr viele Ähnlichkeiten mit Schmeling—er sieht aus wie er, kennt ihn persönlich gut, hat ein ähnliches Gesicht, war erfolgreicher Boxstar und ist nun ein erfolgreicher Geschäftsmann."[70] (He has a lot of similarities to Schmeling—he looks like him, he knows him well personally, he has a similar face, was a successful boxer and is now a successful businessman.) The casting of Maske draws on his indebtedness to Schmeling; both had been able to attain popularity through a period of political turbulence as well as an image that emphasized moral qualities. The identities of these two "model" Germans were therefore deliberately blurred.

Both *Max Schmeling* and *Joe and Max* seek to offer their audiences an exemplary German from a period that was bound up with German collective guilt and national shame. In this respect, the films deviate noticeably from a convention of the boxing film, which, arguably, is also the source of its power—the boxer is rarely employed as a figure of unambiguous virtue and much more frequently represents the range of human frailties and failings. He is typically at the centre of various conflicts with their root in his own conflicted self. Drawing on the linguistic terminology used by the film theorist Rick Altman, Leger Grindon has identified six distinct conflict areas that characterize the "syntax" of the boxing film genre, whose arrangement and treatment determine a given film's core themes. A number of these conflict areas hinge on questions of a moral nature, between material and spiritual or ethical values, or between society and community.[71]

The story arc of the classic post-war boxing film, as it emerged when boxing reached new audiences via television and anti-corruption investigations into the sport were creating headlines, typically hinges on the figure of the conflicted boxer reaching a breaking point, torn between two incommensurable ambitions. For example, *Body and Soul* (dir. Robert Rossen, 1947) opens with the world champion Charley Davis, played by John Garfield, in crisis, having agreed to throw his next fight, alienated from both the woman he loves and his mother. A flashback narrative, typical of the *films noir* of this era, retraces his story as a cautionary

version of the archetypal "rags to riches" narrative—for Charley, emerging from humble origins in a Jewish family on the lower east side of New York, a desire to provide for his widowed mother soon becomes an addiction to the superficial attraction of money itself, which brings nothing but misery to him and the people nearest to him. He is tied to a gangster who functions as a sort of Mephistopheles figure, and, as the title implies, the boxer here becomes a symbolic figure for the modern urban man, torn apart by conflicting desires and pride. In the final scene, Charley regains his pride by winning the fight despite the "fix", but this token "happy ending" leaves open what this decision may eventually cost him in the corrupt world he inhabits. For Charley, materiality and morality cannot be fully reconciled—only by rejecting the former can he hope to reclaim happiness and a family life.

Both *Joe and Max* and *Max Schmeling* establish a comparable moral conflict at the outset—between political compromise on the one hand and friendship and honour on the other. They aim to portray Schmeling as a decent man in conflict with the politics of his country. *Joe and Max* makes this conflict its central theme by expanding upon motifs lifted from Schmeling's *Erinnerungen* and the mythology of Schmeling as "good German" that emerged around Henri Lewin's story. Thus we witness Schmeling threatened with consequences when he defies the Party's expectations of him or because of his friendship with the Lewin brothers' father. The film depicts these tensions as definitive in Schmeling's life. It opens with Schmeling attending a party held in his honour by David Lewin. The latter, as in *Max Schmeling*, is depicted as a humble tailor rather than as the entrepreneur and hotelier described by his son and is represented as one of Schmeling's closest friends (a claim not even Henri Lewin had ever made). The party is interrupted by an SS officer demanding that Schmeling attend a meeting with Goebbels, who functions throughout as an antagonist figure whose demands and expectations—for example that he dismiss Joe Jacobs as his manager and join the party—Schmeling must repeatedly resist. Schmeling's approving foreword to Haymann's *Deutscher Faustkampf* is explained in this way; the narrative has Schmeling sign it only under duress, as a condition of Hitler's allowing him to retain the services of Joe Jacobs. Boll's film likewise posits Schmeling as an oppositional figure. A frame-and-flashback structure allows the film to begin with the depiction of Schmeling's military service as a paratrooper in Crete and to establish him immediately as a figure who is recognizable to and popular with all, including the British soldier to whom Schmeling narrates

his story. Moreover, he is represented from the outset as a nonconformist who pointedly defies the Nazi regime, which is embodied in the character of Hans von Tschammer und Osten. The *Reichssportführer* does not appear in *Joe and Max* but in the later film occupies the role of a generic antagonist, who engineers Schmeling's military service as part of a plan to see him killed. The milestones in Schmeling's life are plotted through his devotion to his wife, his sense of "honour", and a desire to help others that is given as the reason for his staying in Germany ("Wenn wir bleiben, kann ich helfen" (If we stay I can help)). His commitment to friends such as Joe Jacobs, who is, oddly, portrayed as if he were a German rather than an American Jew, is also highlighted repeatedly. Both *Joe and Max* and *Max Schmeling* dramatize the events of *Kristallnacht*, with the former embellishing the details of Henri Lewin's account by portraying Schmeling, with the aid of his wife, not only saving the two boys but their father too, as, somewhat improbably, the family is actively being sought by the Gestapo. Only by bluffing are the Schmelings able to avoid their apartment being searched and the family discovered. In the aftermath, Anny Ondra describes Max and herself as "enemies of the Reich". In *Max Schmeling* the scene follows the details given by Lewin more faithfully, with Schmeling encountering the Lewins by chance as their shop is being ransacked and agreeing to look after the two boys. In both films, the exaggerations, omissions and artistic licence applied to the historical facts serve to make entirely unambiguous Schmeling's status as a moral hero.[72] The portrayal in *Joe and Max* of the relationship with Joe Louis is shaped in the same way and given a sentimental gloss. For example, the film concludes with a fictional scene in which Schmeling wanders the streets of Chicago looking for Louis, to honour a promise he had made to him, and then concludes with an image of redemption and reconciliation.

The critical reception of *Max Schmeling* noted the limitations of Maske as an actor, even while praising the boxing scenes, but reserved particular venom for Boll's direction—a perceived over-reliance on dialogue, according to *Der Spiegel*, and a repetitive dramatic structure, as *Die Welt* pointed out.[73] Such objections are entirely justified. At the same time, Boll's film could be said to fail, both as a dramatic narrative and an example of a boxing film, for the same reason that *Joe and Max* does. Despite the often perilous situations depicted, the viewer rarely gets the impression that anything is truly at stake. In neither *Max Schmeling* nor *Joe and Max* does the conflict between politics and ethics

seem to be meaningful. Schmeling, in repeated scenes, is seen to do exactly what he wants, apparently without fear of the consequences and without doubt or inner "conflict". His career progresses with few real obstacles, but the ethics of Schmeling's "Mephistophelean pact" with the Nazis are left unscrutinized—he is shown in both films to have Hitler's support, but the price demanded for this exceptional status is ignored.

Outstanding cinematic portrayals of boxers, such as Garfield's Charley Davis in *Body and Soul*, Sylvester Stallone as the eponymous Rocky, or Jake LaMotta as played by Robert De Niro in *Raging Bull*, display moments of self-destructive torment. Max Schmeling as a screen character, by contrast, is unfailingly resolute and unwavering. Indeed, such is his confidence in every situation, particularly as depicted in Boll's film, that it even seems questionable whether his actions can be thought of as courageous. Only after years of apparently open insubordination, particularly towards von Tschammer und Osten, is Schmeling eventually punished through his service as a paratrooper. And even then, in a scene that deviates from Schmeling's own account, he is shown casually releasing the British prisoner he has been ordered to guard, with no apparent consequences. The result is that the impact of the films is diminished—Schmeling remains psychologically flat, even bland. Even sentimental boxing films, such as the *Rocky* series, ensure that the emotional high points stand in contrast to the preceding moments of doubt, misery and suffering; Rocky almost quits before eventually proving himself, both in the ring and in life (without ever quite resolving the tension between the two). In the Schmeling films the boxer is not seen to suffer at any stage, making the depiction of his successes less potent in dramatic terms. The problem lies in the desire to depict, not a rounded person, but, as Heino Ferch (who plays Max Machon in *Max Schmeling*) puts it, "[e]iner der größten Sportler aller Zeiten, ein Weltstar, eine Legende, ein Vorbild" (one of the greatest sportsmen of all time, a global star, a legend, a role model).[74] The extraordinary status enjoyed by Schmeling, who for years had only ever been subject to public adulation, has resulted in a lack of critical distance and a determination to portray *only* "heroic" qualities. All sense of Max Schmeling as a human being, who had negative qualities as well as positive (for example his evident vanity, his willingness to do almost anything to succeed, his need for affirmation and appreciation), is absent from the films.

It is striking that these narratives, alongside which we can also list *Der Kampf des Jahrhunderts* (*The Fight of the Century*), a musical

based on the Schmeling—Louis rivalry by Paul Graham Brown and James Edwards Lyons, are almost exclusively concerned with Schmeling's career in the Third Reich.[75] They should be seen in the context of a number of other recent, arguably problematic depictions of civilian Germans in the Third Reich, who, despite *not* being represented as opponents of the regime, function as moral agents or identification figures rather than as perpetrators. Of course, not all Germans had always been represented simplistically as Nazis, even in post-war British and American cinema. Soon after the war, in films such *The Desert Fox: The Story of Rommel* (dir. Henry Hathaway, 1951), which mythologized Field Marshall Erwin Rommel as an honourable and apolitical soldier, a popular cultural tradition was established that distinguished between "ordinary" soldiers and the Nazis who commanded them. Successful German films such as *Das Boot* (dir. Wolfgang Petersen, 1981) and *Stalingrad* (dir. Joseph Vilsmaier, 1993) operate within this tradition.

Germany's civilian population, and its experience of and contribution to National Socialism, had not been represented to anything like the same extent in German film and television. The airing in 1978 and 1979 of *Holocaust*, a mini-series made for American television, can be identified as a pivotal moment, after which, according to John Bendix, serious attempts were made to "integrate the Nazi past into German feature films" and television drama.[76] Edgar Reitz's epic television drama *Heimat* (1984), for example, explores questions of German national culpability through the prism of a small community, while widely seen films such as *Hitlerjunge Salamon* (*Europa Europa*; dir. Agnieszka Holland, 1989), *Comedian Harmonists* (dir. Joseph Vilsmaier, 1997), *Aimee & Jaguar* (dir. Max Färberböck, 1997), *Sophie Scholl—Die letzten Tage* (*Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*; dir. Marc Rothemund, 2004) and *Elser* (*13 Minutes*; dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2015) highlight the brutality of the regime through the examples offered by subversive, countercultural or oppositional behaviour, which in every case is seen to have been irreconcilable with everyday life under the Nazis. Since around the turn of the century, a process of gradual "normalization" of Germany's relationship with National Socialism and the past has been identified by some commentators. Evidence for this can be found in the treatment of historical material in a number of the most commercially successful German films in recent years.

The internationally successful film *Der Untergang* (*Downfall*; dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004) is one example that focuses on the final days of the war, and specifically on Hitler, who is portrayed as distinctly human (but not remotely humane) rather than as the monstrous or absurd figure familiar from countless other narratives and images. As Bendix observes of the film, "Hitler is the embodiment of questions about national identification, or more specifically, stands for what is now regarded as an 'abnormal' past as compared with the 'normal' present."[77] "Normality", in the context of the film, is represented by Traudl Junge, one of Hitler's private secretaries, and a number of other identification figures employed by Bernd Eichinger's screenplay. Yet these semi-fictionalized "ordinary" Germans are, strictly speaking, also Nazis, and in a film that makes the decision not to show the atrocities committed in the name of Germany, that is potentially problematic. In a consideration of *Der Untergang* as an example of the internationalization of German cinema, Paul Cooke notes the numerous negative responses it generated through its strategic diversion of attention from the Holocaust—the honest portrayal of which is an ethical imperative for a filmmaker such as Wim Wenders—by focusing instead on unrepresentative "moral" or otherwise admirable Germans.[78]

Released the same year, *Napola* (*Before the Fall*; dir. Dennis Gansel, 2004) depends upon a comparable identification strategy. The film is set in 1942 in one of the selective "Napola" (*Nationalpolitische Akademie*) boys' academies, which were established to create the next "elite" generation of fanatical National Socialists. Gansel makes boxing a thematic focus of his film, which follows the story of 17-year-old Friedrich, who is recruited to the academy because of his talent as a boxer. The film draws a very clear distinction between the relative "innocence" of the boys, most of whom serve as identification figures for the viewer and who are indistinguishable in their "normality" from contemporary teenagers and the abusive Nazis who control their lives. Boxing is accurately presented as a sport favoured by National Socialism for political-ideological reasons—Friedrich is encouraged by his teacher to extinguish all "humanity" within himself when he is in the ring and to cultivate a will to destroy. In this context Friedrich's refusal to do this at the film's climax, when he has the opportunity to win a crucial fight for the honour of his academy, is a sign of moral strength, not weakness. He deliberately lowers his guard and allows himself to be knocked out rather than fight for his academy and, by extension, for the system. Friedrich has grown

up under the Nazis and yet seems shocked, bewildered and alienated by the brutality and cruelty he experiences, behaving almost as though he has been transported to 1942 from another era. Although such naivety is implausible—not least because many of his generation were more convinced of the National Socialist cause than their parents (as depicted in an earlier film such as *Die Brücke (The Bridge*; dir. Bernhard Wicki, 1959)—it is not *impossible*; he represents an idealized good German who seems to have survived National Socialism psychologically and morally intact.

Another, potentially more problematic, example of the same trend is offered by *Nordwand* (*North Face*; dir. Philip Stölzl, 2008), which dramatizes the true story of the German mountaineers Toni Kurz and Andreas Hinterstoisser and their fatal attempt to scale the perilous north face of the Eiger in July 1936. This film chooses to downplay the political context and does not make clear that a successful ascent would certainly have been exploited as propaganda, just as Schmeling's victory against Louis had been the previous month. Instead, it presents the planning, execution and tragic failure of the bid as a suspense narrative. Kurz and Hinterstoisser's battle with the mountain takes place in an apolitical context, allowing the characters to be "normalized" as identification figures for the viewer, who naturally hopes that they succeed in their ascent.

These films offer interesting parallels to the strategies adopted in many of the narrative representations of Schmeling in recent German popular culture. The films discussed earlier do not avert their gaze from the political context, as happens in *Nordwand*, but they do not have the option of showing their subject, like Friedrich in *Napola*, choosing defeat over victory for a cause in which he does not believe. Instead they would have the viewer believe that Schmeling's personal integrity offset and outweighed the propaganda benefits his sporting career gave to the regime. This is a myth that is central to his *Erinnerungen*: that it was possible for him to co-operate with fascistic propaganda expectations without ever compromising his integrity, betraying ideals or letting down friends, and without ever having any doubts about his stance.

An alternative approach to the depiction of Max Schmeling is evident in a recent novel by the American author Robert Sharenow, which also takes its cue from the account of Schmeling's actions during *Kristallnacht* but exists entirely outside the "aura" cast by the "legend" of Max Schmeling. *The Berlin Boxing Club* (2011) is aimed at teenage readers and deftly merges fact and fiction. The novel is narrated by Karl,

a Jewish teenager in 1930s Berlin, whose father is an art dealer and, we learn at the start of the novel, an old friend of Max Schmeling. The plot revolves around Karl's discovery of boxing when Schmeling offers him lessons at the fictitious Berlin Boxing Club in exchange for a painting (the Grosz portrait) from his father's gallery. Boxing gives him a sense of purpose and self-worth as the situation for Jews in Berlin becomes increasingly intolerable. At the novel's climax, Sharenow reimagines the story of Max Schmeling and the Lewin brothers: in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, after Karl's father is injured and then arrested by the Gestapo, Karl and his sister are looked after first by their father's old war comrade, the transvestite Bertram, known as the Countess, and then by Max Schmeling, after Karl seeks him out in desperation (at the same hotel mentioned by the Lewins). The novel concludes with Schmeling helping Karl's mother in her attempts to free her husband and arranging for Karl and his sister to leave Germany for relatives in America.

What is noticeable about Sharenow's text is that, despite seeming to cast Schmeling in the role of moral agent and helper, he is not perceived by Karl, who idolizes the Jewish-American World Champion Barney Ross, as an unambiguous hero. Schmeling is represented throughout as well-meaning but self-absorbed—he drifts out of Karl's life for long periods, forgetting about promises he had made, and leaving Karl wondering about his real motivations and beliefs. Karl writes to him repeatedly prior to *Kristallnacht* pleading for the assistance his father is too proud to ask for, but his letters are ignored. When he does take in the children, he seems to do so reluctantly and is more interested in negotiating a second possible rematch with Louis. When challenged by an angry Karl, Schmeling delivers a lecture about "feinting", suggesting that his behaviour in the Third Reich should be seen as a clever manoeuvre rather than as evidence of cowardice or complicity. Karl, who has always admired Schmeling even though he could see how he was being used for propaganda, is now furious:

> Everything he said made complete sense, but those few words suddenly changed my view of him and of every other German who thought they were feinting through the rise of Hitler and the Nazis. For my entire life Max had always represented strength, but now I saw only weakness and self-interest.[79]

At the conclusion, facing an uncertain future in America, Karl implies that Schmeling's actions don't quite amount to heroism, lacking the proactive nature one might expect of behaviour meeting that description: "Without Max we would never have been able to escape from Germany. Yet I wondered how much, if anything, he would have done for us had I not confronted him."[80] Sharenow's novel is not the product of the depth of familiarity with the "myth" of Max Schmeling that a German author might have had. It was researched using Margolick's and Myler's studies as well as the translation of Schmeling's *Erinnerungen*, but it succeeds in presenting a far more credible and psychologically nuanced portrait of Schmeling as a morally compromised and even self-centred individual than either of the films discussed in this chapter.

The post-war "afterlife" of Max Schmeling has, then, been long and varied. Following his retirement from boxing, his name continued to figure in the German national "imaginary", and does so to the present day. A figurehead of Nazism became the face of the Federal Republic's post-war economic miracle, before emerging as a much-admired symbol of both continuity and reconciliation. It is striking how little, in order for this to happen, the "myth" of Max Schmeling needed to be subjected to a process of transformation. Just as the image that had emerged during the Weimar Republic was not wholly erased under National Socialism, relatively light adjustments after 1945 were all that were needed for these "reinventions" to take place. The gradual escalation of Schmeling's standing, as role model, hero and "legend", can be traced in an unbroken upward curve through epochs that defined themselves by supposed new beginnings and *tabula rasa*. This process also reveals the paradoxical nature of the hero, who is on the one hand defined by history and memory and on the other seems ahistorical and archetypal. The next, concluding, chapter presents some final thoughts on the problematic nature of the heroic in contemporary German society.

Notes

1. This chapter expands on my previously published discussion of Schmeling as a "good German". See Jon Hughes, "From Hitler's Champion to German of the Century: On the Representation and Reinvention of Max Schmeling", in *Representing the "Good German" in Literature and Culture after 1945*, ed Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönfeld (Rochester: Camden House, 2013), 50–65.

2. See Robert G. Moeller, "Germans as Victims? Thoughts on a Post-Cold War History of World War II's Legacies", *History and Memory*, 27:1/2 (2005): 147–194 (151).
3. See Frederick Taylor, *Exorcising Hitler: The Occupation and Denazification of Germany* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 125.
4. For a survey of the statistics of German "suffering" at the end of the war, which included as many as 1.5 million instances of rape, see Moeller, "Germans as Victims?", 151. See also Taylor, *Exorcising Hitler* (esp. 38–64) for an account of the Red Army's treatment of the German civilian population as they advanced. Particular atrocities, such as the rape, torture and murder of Germans at the village of Nemmersdorf in October 1944, became the subject of propaganda scaremongering in the final months of the war, intended to inspire the population to fight to the bitter end.
5. On this point see Waltraud Wende, "Einen Nullpunkt hat es nie gegeben: Schriftsteller zwischen Neuanfang und Restauration—oder: Kontinuitäten bildungsbürgerlicher Deutungsmuster in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit", in *Die janusköpfigen 50er Jahre*, ed. Georg Bollenbeck and Gerhard Kaiser (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000), 17–29 (esp. 18).
6. On this subject see Jeffrey Herf, "Multiple Restorations: German Political Traditions and the Interpretations of Nazism, 1945–46", *Central European History*, 26:1 (1993), 21–55.
7. See Wende, "Einen Nullpunkt hat es nie gegeben", 19–20.
8. See Felix Bohr, "Wiedergutmachung für Israel: was Adenauer verschwieg", *Spiegel Online*, 18 March 2013. Accessed 19 November 2016. http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/adenauers-wiedergutmachung-fuer-israel-a-888997.
9. Moeller, "Germans as Victims?", 152.
10. Hans Joachim Teichler, "Zur Erinnerungskultur im deutschen Sport nach 1945", *Historical Social Research*, 32/1 (2007): 12–23 (14).
11. Joe Biewer, "Allen Gewalten zum Trutz… Ein Schlußkapitel", in Carl Otto Hamann, *Ein Leben auf eigene Faust* (Cologne: Ewald Berger, undat. [1948]), 186–203 (190).
12. Anon., "Schmeling resigns from publishing firm", *Manchester Guardian*, 31 August 1945, 8. The press founded by Springer and Jahr developed, as Axel Springer Verlag, into the most successful publisher of popular newspapers and magazines of the post-war period, responsible for such titles as the radio and television magazine *Hör Zu!* (1946), the *Hamburger Abendblatt* (1948), *Bild* (1952) and *Die Welt* (founded by the British military government in 1946 and acquired by Springer in 1953).
13. Vivien Batchelor, "Schmeling Will Reform Youth", *Daily Express*, 27 August 1945, 1.

14. Biewer, "Allen Gewalten zum Trutz…", 191.
15. Ibid., 192.
16. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 372.
17. Biewer, "Allen Gewalten zum Trutz…", 94.
18. Ulrich Frank, "Das GROSSE Geschäft", *Neues Deutschland*, 11 November 1947, 4.
19. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 387–8.
20. "MTR", "Erinnerung an Schmeling", *Die Zeit*, 50 (11 December 1947).
21. Max Schmeling, "Eine 'Spiegel'-Seite für Max Schmeling: Vorbild und Lehrer", *Der Spiegel*, 20 (1948): 16.
22. Ibid.
23. Biewer, "Allen Gewalten zum Trutz…", 203.
24. Anon., "Abschied vom Ring", *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 1 November 1948.
25. *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau*, 39 (24 January 1950). Accessed 19 November 2016 via the website of the Bundesarchiv: https://www.filmothek.bundesarchiv.de/video/585935.
26. Reported by the *UFA-Wochenschau*, 73 (18 December 1957). Accessed 19 November 2016 via the website of the Bundesarchiv: https://www.filmothek.bundesarchiv.de/video/584263.
27. Carl Diem founded the *Sportshochschule* (Sports University) in Cologne in 1947; Hermann Altrock, Germany's first professor of sport at the University of Leipzig, who had willingly shaped his work to meet ideological expectations, was appointed Professor of Sports Science at the University of Frankfurt; most incredibly, Guido von Mengden, formerly *Stabsleiter* (deputy leader) in the *Reichssportführung* (Nazi sports leadership), served as head of the *Deutscher Sportbund* (German Sports Federation) from 1954 to 1963. See Teichler, "Zur Erinnerungskultur", 17–18.
28. Teichler, "Zur Erinnerungskultur", 18.
29. A detailed account of Coca-Cola's early development as a brand in Germany is provided by Jörg Bohn, "Coca-Cola Reklame", *Trödler*, 4 (2009); republished: www.wirtschaftswunder-museum.de/coca-cola-reklame-1.html. Accessed 19 November 2016.
30. From 1942, Coca-Cola stopped exporting the concentrate that formed the basis of the drink to Germany, but the Essen plant, through its home-grown "Fanta" drink, remained successful even at the height of the war.
31. Anon., "A Pair with a Punch: How World-Class Boxer Max Schmeling Discovered His Love for Coca-Cola": http://www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/00000142-05ea-dc23-a5c2-9fffccf20000. Accessed 19 November 2016. This short account appears on the website of the Coca-Cola Company.

32. Anon., "18:4 für Maxe: wir besuchen Max Schmeling," *Sonne* (16 October 1965): 3–5 (3).
33. Alexander Rost, "Max Schmeling 65: Die Faust des Ruhms", *Die Zeit* (25 September 1975).
34. See Volker Kluge, "Lebensläufe von Sportlern und Sportfunktionären zwischen Sport, Politik, Kultur, Medien und Gesellschaft—eine kurze Geschichte von Sport Auto-Biographien", in *Der deutsche Sport auf dem Weg in die Moderne: Carl Diem und seine Zeit*, ed. Michael Krüger (Berlin: Lit, 2009), 357–68 (esp. 359).
35. Siegfried Lenz, "Rezension: Schmeling, Max: *Erinnerungen*", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 September 1977, 24.
36. Wolf Wondratschek, "Danke Schmeling", in Wondratschek, *Im Dickicht der Fäuste. Vom Boxen* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005), 71–8 (74).
37. Ibid.
38. Theodor W. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit", in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997), 555–72 (558). English translation here from: Theodor W. Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past", in Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 89–103 (91).
39. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit", 558; Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past", 91. The debates around the specificity of the Holocaust and of German national guilt re-emerged in the so-called *Historikerstreit* (historians' dispute) of the 1980s, in which a conservative comparative model of history, relativizing National Socialism in the context of other nations' pasts, clashed with a left-wing understanding of German history, in which the relationship to the past could at best be normalized but never "overcome" or erased.
40. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich: Piper, 1967), 23.
41. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit", 563; Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past", 96.
42. Peter Fritzsche, "What Exactly is Vergangenheitsbewältigung? Narrative and Its Insufficiency in Postwar Germany", in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, ed. Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 25–40 (31).
43. Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönfeld, "Introduction: Finding the 'Good German'", in *Representing the "Good German" in Literature*

and Culture after 1945, ed. Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönfeld (Rochester: Camden House, 2013), 1–15 (4).

44. See ibid., 3–4.
45. See McRae, *In Black and White*, 307.
46. J. Hughson, "On Sporting Heroes," *Sport in Society* 12.1 (2009): 85–101 (85–6).
47. Ibid., 96.
48. This provides a partial answer to Hughson's question as to "why people claim as heroes individuals they recognize as imperfect". Ibid., 85.
49. Anon., "18:4 für Maxe," 3.
50. Stanley Weston, "Max war niemals ein Nazi. Nie!," 139.
51. Ibid., 136–7.
52. Ibid., 137.
53. Kluge (*Max Schmeling*, 435) notes some of the discrepancies between the accounts of the event given by Lewin and by Schmeling's friend Ivar Butterfas, who had accompanied him and was sponsor of the campaign to restore the Nikolaikirche (St Nicholas Church) in Hamburg, one of many causes Schmeling had supported financially. There are also minor inconsistencies in the details given by the various newspaper reports and the later article.
54. Statistics taken from the entry on "Reichskristallnacht" in Benz, Graml and Weiß eds., *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, 679.
55. Tom Tugend, "Former German Heavyweight Champ Rescued Jewish Brothers From Nazis", *Jerusalem Post*, 26 December 1989.
56. Robert Weisbord and Norbert Hedderich, "Max Schmeling: Righteous Ring Warrior?", *History Today*, 43.1 (1993): 36–41.
57. Ibid., 40.
58. Tugend, "Former German Heavyweight Champ".
59. "Ich habe gerade Juden sehr oft geholfen, so 1938 nach der Kristallnacht, als die beiden jüdischen Jungen Henri und Werner Lewin zu mir flüchteten und einige Tage in meiner Wohnung lebten" (Schmeling, *Erinnerungen*, 544). (I often helped Jews in particular, for example in 1938 after *Kristallnacht* when the two Jewish boys Henri and Werner Lewin fled to me and spent a few days in my apartment.)
60. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 438–41.
61. The obituary published by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation notes that Schmeling "declined to be recognized publicly […] for saving the Lewins' lives. He was sent a certificate and medal instead". Anon, "Obituary in brief: Max Schmeling". Accessed 19 November 2016. http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/?en/press/obituary-brief-max-schmeling.2191.htm.

62. See the website of Yad Vashem for a full account of the rationale behind this project and a link to the database of the "Righteous". http://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/about-the-righteous.
63. For a discussion of the poster in terms of the exploitation of symbolism in photography see: Ulrich Hägele, "Bildsymbol und Wirklichkeit: über den öffentlichen Umgang mit Fotografie", in *Symbole: zur Bedeutung der Zeichen in der Kultur*, ed. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich and Heinz Schmitt (Münster: Waxmann, 1997), 459–70 (459).
64. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 443–4.
65. Henry Maske, "Vorwort", in Schmeling, *Erinnerungen*, 9.
66. "100 Jahre Max Schmeling—Ein Brandenburger" (Historic railway station, Bad Saarow, 6/8 - /10/2005). "Der Boxer" (Helms-Museum, Hamburg, 28 September–31 December 2005) was planned with Schmeling's co-operation both to celebrate the 100 years of his life and present the history of boxing. The exhibition included a rare opportunity to see Grosz's portrait of Schmeling. A version of this exhibition was then staged (25 August–26 November 2006) at the Deutsches Sport- und Olympiamuseum in Cologne, which received Schmeling's collection of sporting memorabilia following his death.
67. See Kluge, *Max Schmeling*, 301. The precise number of Schmeling's visits to Carinhall cannot be ascertained because the records are incomplete. There were, as Kluge has documented (*Max Schmeling*, 262), several visits.
68. Uwe Boll, who also produced the film through his company Boll AG, was unable to secure the German funding he had hoped for, making it unaffordable for him to shoot the film in Germany. The attempts were undoubtedly hampered by Boll's reputation for making self-financed, often poorly reviewed films, several of which are adapted from video games, such as *Alone in the Dark* (2005) and *Far Cry* (2008). See Uwe Boll, "Schmeling-Drehtagebuch", in *Max Schmeling* [no editor named] (Feldafing: Hansanord, 2011), 21–32 (22–3). The marketing of the English-language release of the film with a distinctly inappropriate secondary title (*Max Schmeling—Fist of the Reich*) is in keeping with the exploitative tone of much of Boll's work.
69. These include former world champions Arthur Abraham and Yoan Pablo Hernandez and European champion Alexander Frenkel. These boxers were all, as Maske had been, managed by the promoter Wilfried Sauerland, and offered their services free as a mark of respect both to Schmeling and Maske. See Boll, "Schmeling-Drehtagebuch", 25.
70. Boll, "Schmeling-Drehtagebuch", 22.
71. See Leger Grindon, "The Boxing Film and Genre Theory", *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 24 (2007): 403–10 (406).

72. There are numerous historical inaccuracies throughout both films, most of which are evidently the result of a conscious decision to heighten the moral standing of the hero. The inclusion of scenes in *Joe and Max* in which the famously abstinent, non-smoker Schmeling is seen drinking and smoking is puzzling, however, and suggests poor research.
73. Jenni Zylka, "Misslungenes Max Schmeling-Biopic. Wie ein milder Stier", *Spiegel Online* (8 October 2010). http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/misslungenes-max-schmeling-biopic-wie-ein-milder-stier-a-721618. Harald Peters, "Zwei Legenden—Henry Maske wird zu Max Schmeling", *Die Welt* (online, 6 October 2010). https://www.welt.de/kultur/kino/article10094449/Zwei-Legenden-Henry-Maske-wird-zu-Max-Schmeling. Accessed 19 November 2016.
74. Heino Ferch, "Vorwort", in anon ed., *Max Schmeling* (2011), 17–18 (17).
75. *Der Kampf des Jahrhunderts* had its premiere at the Tribüne theatre in Berlin on 4 October 2008 and ran until early 2009.
76. John Bendix, "Facing Hitler: German Responses to *Downfall*", *German Politics and Society*, 25:1 (2007): 70–89 (77).
77. Ibid., 72.
78. See Paul Cooke, "Abnormal Consensus? The New Internationalism of German Cinema," in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 223–35 (esp. 233–34).
79. Robert Sharenow, *The Berlin Boxing Club* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 371.
80. Sharenow, *The Berlin Boxing Club*, 398.

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CHAPTER 7

No More Heroes?: Conclusion

In my introduction, I noted how, under certain conditions, the successful athlete can transcend mere popularity and come to represent something beyond sport. In the ensuing chapters, I have reconstructed the process through which Max Schmeling achieved precisely this. My analysis of the public representation of his life and his career has focused on the contexts provided by the recent history of Germany. Its shifting, divisive attitudes to sport in general, and boxing in particular, its political demons and ethical challenges, and its ongoing culture, identity and memory contests have informed my reading of the "meaning" of Schmeling. In these contexts, it is not a simple thing to describe someone as a national hero. In this concluding chapter I wish to reflect, briefly and comparatively, on what the elevation to such a status might imply, culturally and ethically, in the modern world. What distinguishes the sports icon from the sports hero, and what qualifies the latter to be a *national* hero? Given the apparent proximity to nationalism, should the continued representation of Schmeling—or any sports star—in such terms be viewed as problematic? Indeed, is the very concept of the sports hero still meaningful, in an age in which sport is determined by science, and sometimes undermined by it, and is dominated by a culture of celebrity and commercialization?

Sports stars can be admired, even worshipped, in different ways. Not every star or icon is necessarily also a hero, let alone a national hero. Heroic status might, for example, emerge from a meaning constructed by a particular community or interest group. A generation of

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black Americans saw their fight for civil rights reflected and magnified in Muhammad Ali's extraordinary life and personality; Maurice Richard, the famed "Rocket" of Canadian ice hockey, attained an equivalent mythologized status in Québec, reflecting the province's nationalism and pride as well as its ambivalent relationship to Canada as a whole. In team sports such as ice hockey and football, a hero for one set of fans can function as a hate-figure for the fans of a rival team. Yet, like the classical and biblical hero figures to whom they are sometimes compared (Hercules, David, Ajax, Spartans), sports heroes are also sometimes represented by evoking a form of experience that seems to transcend a specific time and place. Eduardo Archetti, in a discussion of the devotion inspired by the Argentinian football star Diego Maradona, suggests that the sports hero belongs to "the time of heroes". This, he suggests, is a "dream-like time during which the daily mediocrity of normal life is suddenly transcended", allowing athletes to "become mythical icons representing mastery over mortality".[1] For all their rootedness in the political and cultural dynamic of specific communities, Ali and Richard certainly seem to fit this description—indeed, both have been represented in ways that explicitly evoke the iconography of the suffering saint. Maradona, to whose emotionality many fans could relate, functioned as a "transnational" hero, as idolized in Italy (where he played for Naples) as in Buenos Aires.[2]

Few individual sports stars have so consistently been associated with the "national" as Max Schmeling. Schmeling, for all the regional pride that was invested in the most famous resident of Hollenstedt, and for all his own "transnational" fame and American influences, has consistently been represented as a German first and foremost. This meant that he could be held up as an identification figure at the national level, which happened under the Nazis, and then once again following Germany's reunification in 1990. He embodied individualism, self-determination and self-reliance, but these attributes manifested themselves in ways that encouraged popular identification and allowed a semi-official status as a national role model to emerge from his representation by journalists, commentators and broadcasters. This process took place over an unusually protracted period of time and with a particular intensity, but it is not unique. One might cite as a parallel the more recent example of the Catholic Irish boxer Barry McGuigan, who, in the 1980s, was adopted as unifying "national" hero both north and south of the contested Irish border and across sectarian lines.[3] McGuigan, like Schmeling, was

admired for his individual "toughness" and determination, as well as for his tolerant and open-minded character, qualities that on the one hand seemed to transcend politics and religion and on the other to reflect aspects of daily experience within "troubled" communities. McGuigan never quite enjoyed the same degree of "official" approval as Schmeling, but the comparison helps to contextualize the way Schmeling was repeatedly adopted as a heroic role model by contrasting political cultures in Germany. Each reconfiguration of Germany, from the Weimar Republic to the present "Berlin" Republic, has sought to harness individual energies—represented in the physical qualities of the boxer and the personal attributes of the celebrity and entrepreneur—in the name of larger projects. Schmeling was the ideal role model for this, driven by personal goals that could be perceived as making a contribution to something of "greater", national importance. Thus the same set of aspirational qualities has been cited in support of a disparate range of goals and projects: the reinforcement of democratic principles, the fostering of a sense of national—and even racial—identity, national regeneration and moral redemption, and the creation of national unity. The fact that these agendas are for the most part incompatible reveals the superficial nature of heroic role models within public discourse, but it also points to some of the structural continuities, to which Germans have often been blind, across the regimes and cultures bisected by Schmeling's life and career.

Schmeling was an appropriate "national" figure for another reason. It is notable that he displayed few of the personality traits that are the hallmark of many other "prowess" heroes in sport, such as spontaneity, creativity, rebelliousness and risk-taking. The football legend George Best, for example, cultivated an image that derived almost exclusively from such qualities and was frequently lauded as a "genius". His hedonistic and, ultimately, self-destructive lifestyle seemed to reflect aspects of youth culture in the 1960s, but his adoption as a role model or national hero was far less plausible. In the generally stable societies of the so-called developed, Western world, the unpredictable and individualistic "genius" tends to fail as an identification figure for the same reason he or she excels in sport. By contrast, in post-colonial nations, for example in Latin America and Africa, the opposite may hold, and an individual as temperamental as Maradona could be adopted as a popular national hero in his native country. According to Archetti's analysis, he was viewed as exemplifying, in his intuitive and fluid dribbling, a style of football that was viewed as an authentic, "Latin" contrast to the

"mechanical" discipline of the traditional "British" style; by extension he could be viewed as the embodiment of Argentinian national character (or at least of national masculinity), defined in opposition to (stereotypes of) European imperialism.[4] No one ever considered the temperate, disciplined Max Schmeling to be a genius. However, his predictability, amenability and innate conservatism, characteristics that never seemed to waiver through time, made him a reliable, stable figure in German culture. As the newsreels often remarked, he never seemed to change, his life characterized only by gradual ageing and the generally upward curve of personal success. The collective perception of Schmeling as a German success story—precisely as encouraged by his memoir—demanded that certain associations and qualities be selectively remembered and others suppressed. First in 1945 and again after 1990, Germany was a nation determined to look forwards rather than back, and only gradually have more complex processes of remembering, processing and reflecting taken place, from which Schmeling's status and longevity seem to have exempted him. The result was a beatified aura that was increasingly distant from the historical reality of the cultures that had first made him.

The idea of the national hero is arguably both dated and problematic. As we have seen, the "mythological" structure of National Socialism prized a particular notion of the self-sacrificing hero. The political culture of the GDR, after 1945, likewise encouraged a cult of heroism in the name of socialism rather than nationalism, exploiting the image of its Olympic stars, cosmonauts and political icons in highly visible propaganda. The moral philosopher Torbjörn Tännsjö has argued that a continued, uncritical celebration of victorious, individual sports stars as heroes of the "nation", for example in the Olympic Games, is evidence of "fascistoid" tendencies. Tännsjö objects in particular to the "abstraction" of the outstanding athlete into a mere symbol, akin to a flag (or perhaps more accurately a synecdoche): "This way of regarding our sports stars as representatives of our country, conceived of abstractly, fits with a common view of the military force. It may easily spread and permeate all the relations between people in a country."[5] There is no question that what he describes here applies to the exploitation of sport under fascism or National Socialism, as my analysis of Schmeling's case amply shows. In the context of a post-totalitarian German society that hopes that it has "normalized" its relations with other nations, Tännsjö's analysis, if it is valid, would seem to be particularly problematic. He further makes the case that national investment in sporting excellence

implies contempt for the "loser", a judgement that "other people, who do not win the fair competition, those who are comparatively weak, are *less* valuable."[6]

Tännsjö's analysis may be overstated, although the festival of flag-waving and nationalistic hysteria that accompanies some of the British and American coverage of the Olympic Games, by supposedly neutral broadcasters, makes some of his claims seem credible. Yet the reunified Germany has, in fact, seemed remarkably resistant to the tendencies he describes in its responses to sporting success, of which the nation continues to see an abundance. The football World Cup that took place in Germany in 2006 is, for example, remembered not as a manifestation of aggressive identification in the national team as emblem, but as an idyllic *Sommermärchen* (*Summer Fairy Tale*), as it was dubbed in the title of Sönke Wortmann's documentary film of the tournament (an explicit reversing of Heine's pessimistic *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* (*Germany. A Winter Fairy Tale*) of the nineteenth century).[7] The media coverage repeatedly noted the manner in which German fans seemed for the first time to be reclaiming national emblems, in particular the flag, in a way that *avoided* the triumphalism of previous generations. The generous public celebration of a national team that had in fact *lost* (in the semi-final) did indeed seem extraordinary in a German context. And in this context we can again observe that, although Schmeling continued to be celebrated as a national hero, as a "courageous German patriot", in Angela Merkel's phrase, all triumphalism seemed to have disappeared by the time of his death. This was a sports hero whose sporting prowess had almost been erased by the conviction of his moral standing. The Schmeling mourned at the public service in Hamburg in March 2005 may in some respects have been a fictional construct, a useful myth rather than an individual human being, but the vision of a democratic, tolerant, modern German nation—the Germany of the *Sommermärchen*—for which he was now being claimed is a beguiling one.

Despite this, it seems doubtful that a figure equivalent to Schmeling, at least in the context of modern Germany, could ever re-emerge. Recent years have seen doping scandals tarnish the reputation of international stars—notably the American cyclist Lance Armstrong, who, before his eventual confession to the systematic abuse of performance-enhancing drugs in 2012, had clung to a narrative of heroic overcoming and willpower to explain his extraordinary athletic performances. Alongside

corruption scandals and the continued commercialization and internationalization of sports, this has undoubtedly resulted in a greater degree of scepticism on the part of a public with greater choice than ever before in how it chooses to be entertained. The days when entire nations could be united by the media coverage of a single sporting event, as happened in the 1920s and 1930s, are long gone—and perhaps this is not a bad thing. In Germany, and perhaps throughout the developed world, the culturally determined figure of the role-model hero also seems to belong to a previous age. It assumes, firstly, that there are in fact universally desirable attributes and, secondly, that the idea of the "nation" and its character is stable. In a globalized, highly mobile world, the latter assumption seems increasingly fanciful, even if the discourses around nationhood and nationalism remain as potent as ever. In 21st-century Germany, as in other members of the European Union, there has been an ongoing and fractious debate focused on, for example, the cultural impact of migration and globalization. Britain's referendum vote in June 2016 in favour of leaving the European Union, which in part seems to have been driven by a desire to regain a supposedly lost sense of national identity, has given such discussions a new impetus. Whatever the future holds for Europe's nations, they would do well to understand the dangers as well as the seductive appeal of heroic discourse. In his historical drama *Leben des Galilei* (*Life of Galileo*, 1939), Bertolt Brecht has his protagonist, the eponymous scientist of the seventeenth century, who was persecuted for daring to challenge dogma, reflect on this very lesson. When his protégé Andrea bemoans the fate of a country that has no heroes, Galileo replies: "Unglücklich das Land, das Helden nötig hat."[8] (Unhappy is the land that is in need of heroes.) The extraordinary story of the making of Max Schmeling as a national hero not only reveals the general validity of this sentiment but also tells us that the desire for hero figures is deep-seated and not always negative, particularly in times of change. If this is the case, it is important for there to be continued reflection, both in academic and more general discourse, on the ways in which such figures are created and represented and the social and cultural needs they meet. I hope that this study has made a contribution to this process.

Notes

1. Eduardo Archetti, "The Spectacle of a Heroic Life: The Case of Diego Maradona", in *Sports Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, eds David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson (London: Routledge, 2001), 151–63 (153).
2. Ibid., 154.
3. See the comments on McGuigan by David Hassan, "Introduction: What Makes a Sporting Icon?", *Sport in History*, 33.4 (2013): 417–26 (419–20).
4. See Archetti, "The Spectacle of a Heroic Life", 155.
5. Törbjörn Tännsjö, "Is Our Admiration for Sports Heroes Fascistoid?", *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 25:1 (1998), 23–34 (24).
6. Ibid., 27.
7. *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen*, directed by Sönke Wortmann for ARD television, 2006.
8. Brecht, *Werke: große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, V, 93.

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