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**Poewe, Karla. *New Religions and the Nazis*. New York&London: Routledge, 2006. Pp. 218. Hbk. \$120.00; Pbk. \$29.95.**

Karla Poewe's *New Religions and the Nazis* casts a penetrating light on the 1920s and 30s in Germany. Using original documents, letters and unpublished papers, most notably, the SS personnel files in Berlin's Bundesarchiv, Poewe explores how Germany came under the sway of National Socialism. To this end, the author, an anthropologist and specialist on new religious movements, focuses on the Indologist, Jakob Wilhelm

Hauer, and the German Faith Movement he helped create. She persuasively reassesses Hauer's and the German Faith Movement's importance to the rise of Nazi Germany. Poewe examines how he and other leading cultural figures promoted a type of religious romanticism whose belief systems underpinned Nazi ideology and extremism. She demonstrates that the study of, and enthusiasm for, Aryan and folk religions, while serving to restore dignity to a humiliated nation, was also employed to validate the political agenda of National Socialism.

*New Religions and the Nazis* opens with an examination of the economic and political causes for Germany's economic distress and shameful humiliation between the two wars. Poewe describes the rise of the German Faith Movement as part of the attempt to reinvigorate the German sense of self through a heroic reclamation (or invention) of a *volkisch* religion. This movement both glorified and promoted a virile Germany free of what its followers considered the weakening and polluting contamination of Jewish, womanish, and non-Aryan influences. Instead, the new faith rested on supposed past pagan glories, while Hauer, himself, drew inspiration from Indian Hindu and Buddhist texts, often bending them to his political agenda. Most notable in this respect was his interpretation of the *BhagavadGita* as justifying ruthless male violence and hierarchical *noblesse oblige*.

Throughout her book, Poewe reveals much important new information about Hauer. Chapter two recounts his early life; chapter three details Hauer's increasing politicization; chapters five and six describe Hauer's German Faith Movement in depth as well as Hinduism's influence on it and on the SS. While chapter seven, often threatening to bury the reader in sources, documents, letters, and quotes, makes a persuasive case for the reciprocal importance of Hauer and his German Faith Movement to the *Wehrwolf* (an arm of the Hitler Youth) and the SS, and the backing they in turn provided for him. In the final chapters, Poewe links what Hauer had called German Faith with the neo-conservative violence of 'Europe's own religion' in contemporary Germany today. Poewe concludes that if one does not understand and learn from the past, there is a danger of repeating it.

Poewe's book concerns the rise of Nazi Germany; Carl Jung isn't mentioned. However, Poewe's analysis of the religious romanticism underpinning National Socialism and its initial enthusiasm for Aryan and folk myth and religion provides a shadow history, as it were, for what also fascinated Jung—most notably in Jung's 1936 essay, *Wotan*, and *The Visions Seminar* (1930–1934). Hauer, Poewe's leading character, was Jung's friend and colleague from about May, 1930 through March of 1938. Her book adds valuable new information for those who desire to gain a more nuanced and more complete understanding of problematical areas of Jung's thought and Jungian psychology. Poewe's extensive use of primary documents, perhaps unavailable to earlier scholars (such as Horst Junginger and Sonu Shamdasani), provides archival evidence of Hauer's deep involvement with the SS and its organizers—in fact serving as an SS spy during some of the time he was also corresponding with Jung, lecturing with him or at the Psychology Club, and staying as an old friend at Jung's house. A Jungian's interest cannot help but be captured by the ways this movement, and its leading proponent, Hauer, may have influenced Jung's

thinking. It is hoped that some of the still unpublished correspondence between the two men will throw further light on this subject.

Throughout *The Visions Seminar*, Jung explored the upheaval in Germany in the 20s and 30s, the same epoch that concerns Poewe. Jung viewed this upheaval as a great archetypal force overwhelming civilized cultural consciousness, yet perhaps leading to some more idealistic state. He regarded National Socialism, thereby, as an attempt toward individuation (eg, *Visions*, p. 976). Perhaps due to Jung's own

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German Romantic soul and his undeveloped inferior feeling function, abetted by Hauer's enthusiastic promotion of the mythic potency of the New Germany, Jung during the '30s neither saw nor valued the horror clearly. It is just here that Jung gets targeted as a Nazi or Nazi sympathizer. Jung may have been enthusiastically surveying the rise of grand archetypal forces—the undercurrents of the collective unconscious - while failing to notice human feeling and human pain. Jung commented at the time about his own analysis of the situation: 'it is exceedingly difficult to judge events that are happening right under our noses, one can easily go astray in one's judgment' (*Visions*, p. 971). After 1938, Jung broke off relations with Hauer and re-evaluated his once favourable judgment both of Hauer and of the situation in Germany. *New Religions and the Nazis*, by focusing on heretofore unknown facts about Hauer, especially his early involvement in the SS, and of Jung's collaboration with Hauer, brings Jungians a better, though more problematical, grounding in a dark corner of our past.

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