

# Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature

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Volume 41  
Issue 2 *Writing 1914-1918: National Responses  
to the Great War*

Article 5

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6-15-2017

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### Recommended Citation

Millington, Richard and Smith, Roger (2017) "“A Few Bars of the Hymn of Hate”: The Reception of Ernst Lissauer’s “Haßgesang gegen England” in German and English," *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*: Vol. 41: Iss. 2, Article 5. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1928>

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## **“A Few Bars of the Hymn of Hate”: The Reception of Ernst Lissauer’s “Haßgesang gegen England” in German and English**

### **Abstract**

“The poem fell like a shell into a munitions depot”: with these words Stefan Zweig recalled the impact made by Ernst Lissauer’s Anglophobic poem “Haßgesang gegen England” (*A Chant of Hate Against England*) upon first publication in August 1914. The poem’s success derived from the rhetorical power with which it encapsulated a national emotional response to the outbreak of war. In Germany it initiated an outpouring of Anglophobic verse, but lost favor as it became clear that the patriotism it epitomized would not carry the Central Powers to a swift victory. Even after its disappearance from public attention in Germany, the international notoriety it had already achieved guaranteed it a prominence in the English-speaking world that lasted into the early interwar period. Ultimately, its role in anti-German propaganda was as great as its contribution to its original Anglophobic purpose, and the poem became a globally recognizable symbol of the German national outlook and temperament. This study draws on recently digitized newspaper and journal archives, as well as pamphlets, government records, soldiers’ diaries, and scholarly sources, to trace the reception of Lissauer’s “Haßgesang” in German and English.

### **Keywords**

German Poetry, First World War, Ernst Lissauer, reception

"A Few Bars of the Hymn of Hate": The Reception of Ernst Lissauer's  
"Haßgesang gegen England" in German and English

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Between April and October 1934, German-Jewish poet Ernst Lissauer (1882-1937) made detailed and ambitious plans for posthumous publication of his own collected works ("Bemerkungen" 'Notes'). The first volume of twelve was to comprise his lyric poems, including several war poems, but specifically excluding his "Haßgesang gegen England" (*A Chant of Hate against England*) of 1914. To this day no publisher has adopted Lissauer's collected works. In the last three decades there has been no substantial change to the situation that Cesar Aronsfeld noted in 1987 on the fiftieth anniversary of the poet's death: he is largely forgotten, "even, perhaps particularly, in Germany" (48). Today, when Lissauer is remembered at all, whether in Germany or elsewhere, it is for the single poem from which he expressly wished to distance himself: the "Haßgesang gegen England" (hereafter "Haßgesang"). Although today it hardly counts among the most familiar or celebrated works of World War I poetry, during the war itself it was unrivalled among literary responses for its international fame.

In *The World of Yesterday* (1942), Stefan Zweig sketches an endearing portrait of Lissauer upon their first meeting in the pre-war period. Zweig's familiarity with Lissauer's "pithy Germanic verses" had led him to expect a "slim, hard-boned young man," but instead Lissauer appeared "as fat as a barrel, a jolly face above a double double-chin, . . . warm-hearted, companionable, honest and with an almost demonic devotion to his art" (264-65).<sup>1</sup> Born in Berlin, Lissauer came from a wealthy, assimilated Jewish family. He had studied German literature in Leipzig and Munich before becoming a freelance writer (Albanis 221). By 1912 he had published two volumes of poetry and edited a literary anthology (Heuer 690-91; Albanis 223). Revealing their author's preoccupation with tradition, these works make impassioned calls for German national unity. Aronsfeld even characterizes Lissauer's intense love of German history and culture as "monomania" (48). "Like many Jews," Zweig notes, "he believed in Germany more fervently than the most fervent German" (265).

The sudden popularity that Lissauer achieved in late 1914 thanks to "Haßgesang" derives from the precision with which his poem encapsulated popular feeling in Germany at the outbreak of hostilities. Zweig likened the poem's impact to that of a "shell falling into a munitions depot" (266), while Victor Klemperer observed that it expressed "an indignation and a passion that . . . we all perceived as genuine and all felt in equal measure" (1: 280-81). According to Ernst Volkmann, Lissauer himself dated the poem's composition to the second half of August; Volkmann also mentions its first appearance in the *Dammeck'schen Korrespondenz* ('Dammeck Correspondence' 295).

Neither of these claims, however, is documented. With certainty we know that in the same month, “Haßgesang” was published alongside three other war poems in a pamphlet titled *Worte in die Zeit – Flugblätter 1914 von Ernst Lissauer* (‘Words for our Time—Pamphlets of 1914 by Ernst Lissauer’). From there the poem was reprinted widely throughout the German-speaking world.

The German text of “Haßgesang” is reproduced here, as it appears in *Worte in die Zeit*, followed by Barbara Henderson’s translation.

#### Haßgesang gegen England

Was schiert uns Russe und Franzos’,  
Schuß wider Schuß und Stoß um Stoß!  
Wir lieben sie nicht,  
Wir hassen sie nicht,  
Wir schützen Weichsel und Wasgaupaß, –  
Wir haben nur einen einzigen Haß,  
Wir lieben vereint, wir hassen vereint,  
Wir haben nur einen einzigen Feind:

Den ihr alle wißt, den ihr alle wißt,  
Er sitzt geduckt hinter der grauen Flut,  
Voll Neid, voll Wut, voll Schläue, voll List,  
Durch Wasser getrennt, die sind dicker als Blut.  
Wir wollen treten in ein Gericht,  
Einen Schwur zu schwören, Gesicht in Gesicht,  
Einen Schwur von Erz, den verbläst kein Wind,  
Einen Schwur für Kind und für Kindeskind,  
Vernehmt das Wort, sagt nach das Wort,  
Es wälze sich durch ganz Deutschland fort:  
Wir wollen nicht lassen von unserm Haß,  
Wir haben alle nur einen Haß,  
Wir lieben vereint, wir hassen vereint,  
Wir haben alle nur einen Feind:  
England.

In der Bordkajüte, im Feiersaal,  
Saßen Schiffsoffiziere beim Liebesmahl, –  
Wie ein Säbelhieb, wie ein Segelschwung,  
Einer riß grüßend empor den Trunk,  
Knapp hinknallend wie Ruderschlag,  
Drei Worte sprach er: “Auf den Tag!”  
Wem galt das Glas?  
Sie hatten alle nur einen Haß.  
Wer war gemeint?  
Sie hatten alle nur einen Feind:  
England.

Nimm du die Völker der Erde in Sold,  
Baue Wälle aus Barren von Gold,  
Bedecke die Meerflut mit Bug bei Bug,  
Du rechnetest klug, doch nicht klug genug.  
Was schießt uns Russe und Franzos',  
Schuß wider Schuß und Stoß um Stoß!  
Wir kämpfen den Kampf mit Bronze und Stahl,  
Und schließen den Frieden irgend einmal, –  
Dich werden wir hassen mit langem Haß,  
Wir werden nicht lassen von unserm Haß,  
Haß zu Wasser und Haß zu Land,  
Haß des Hauptes und Haß der Hand,  
Haß der Hämmer und Haß der Kronen,  
Drosselnder Haß von siebzig Millionen,  
Sie lieben vereint, sie hassen vereint,  
Sie haben alle nur einen Feind:  
                  England.

#### A Chant of Hate Against England

French and Russian, they matter not,  
A blow for a blow and a shot for a shot;  
We love them not, we hate them not,  
We hold the Weichsel and Vosges-gate,  
We have but one and only hate,  
We love as one, we hate as one,  
We have one foe and one alone.

He is known to you all, he is known to you all,  
He crouches behind the dark grey flood,  
Full of envy, of rage, of craft, of gall,  
Cut off by waves that are thicker than blood,  
Come let us stand at the Judgement place,  
An oath to swear to, face to face,  
An oath of bronze no wind can shake.  
An oath for our sons and their sons to take.  
Come, hear the word, repeat the word,  
Throughout the Fatherland make it heard.  
We will never forego our hate,  
We have all but a single hate,  
We love as one, we hate as one,  
We have one foe and one alone –  
                  ENGLAND!

In the Captain's Mess, in the banquet-hall,  
Sat feasting the officers, one and all,  
Like a sabre-blow, like the swing of a sail,  
One seized his glass held high to hail;  
Sharp-snapped like the stroke of a rudder's play,  
Spoke three words only: "To the Day!"  
Whose glass this fate?  
They had all but a single hate.  
Who was thus known?  
They had one foe and one alone –  
ENGLAND!

Take you the folk of the Earth in pay,  
With bars of gold your ramparts lay,  
Bedeck the ocean with bow on bow,  
Ye reckon well, but not well enough now.  
French and Russian they matter not,  
A blow for a blow, a shot for a shot,  
We fight the battle with bronze and steel.  
And the time that is coming Peace will seal.  
You will we hate with a lasting hate,  
We will never forego our hate,  
Hate by water and hate by land,  
Hate of the head and hate of the hand,  
Hate of the hammer and hate of the crown,  
Hate of seventy millions, choking down.  
We love as one, we hate as one,  
We have one foe and one alone –  
ENGLAND! (12)

"Haßgesang" has the call-and-response form commonly associated with protest chants and football slogans: "Come, hear the word, repeat the word." It is tailor-made for popular use. Other rhetorical devices include the anaphoric *wir* 'we' and the paratactic layering of images. Internal rhyme and repetition, together with accentual meter, reinforce what Brian Murdoch describes as the poem's "incoherent, but at the same time, cumulatively effective piling up of ideas" (34). Lissauer employs elevated rhetoric to give an illusion of profundity, but the poem's intellectual content is banal.

The title and the closing lines provide a neat summation of both the poem's anti-English message and Lissauer's view of Anglophobia as a unifying force. The image of a united Germany of "seventy millions" is significant because the First World War was the first major conflict involving Imperial Germany since its foundation forty-three years earlier. As the country faced its first true test of national cohesion, the poem called for Germany's disparate social classes, represented by "hammer" and "crown," to unite in hatred; the cultural elite and the proletariat, represented as "head" and "hand" respectively,

are similarly reconciled. Interestingly, the poem shows no overt interest in racial unification, although many German Jews saw the war as an opportunity to strengthen their credentials as German patriots. Indeed, the poem itself was an attempt by its author to do precisely that. Lissauer had been eager to enlist but deemed unfit for service (Zweig 265).

The appeal to German Anglophobia in "Haßgesang" taps into a long-standing tradition. The phrase "perfidious Albion" had been a favourite of Frederick the Great and was as current as ever in Wilhelmine Germany in view of its imperial rivalry with Great Britain. A specifically literary tradition of hate poetry was also well established. Georg Herwegh's "Das Lied vom Hasse" (*The Song of Hate*) of 1841 had been popular in the mid-nineteenth century. Herwegh had been associated with the revolutionary *Junges Deutschland* 'Young Germany' movement, and the target of his venom was the then King of Prussia Friedrich Wilhelm IV. The alignment of Lissauer's poem with the position of Friedrich Wilhelm's great-nephew Wilhelm II makes Herwegh's status as a precursor ironic. The theme of hatred was being explored by other contemporary poets as well. Fritz von Ostini's "Haß! Zu dem Fürstenmord in Serajewo" ('Hate! On the Regicide in Sarajevo'), published just three days after the assassination in its title, has nothing of the exuberance of Lissauer and Herwegh (Ostini 881). Ostini's dark poem personifies hatred in a way reminiscent of Georg Heym's Expressionist personification of war in "Der Krieg" (*War*) published in 1911. Unlike Herwegh and Lissauer, Ostini implicitly rejects hatred by making it ugly.

The focus of Anglo-German rivalry in the early twentieth century was the naval arms race. Britain's maritime supremacy had been a particular irritation to the Kaiser himself. The German navy grew considerably in these years, a sign of the Kaiser's ambition to take the imperial struggle beyond Europe to the high seas (Herwig 17-23). Lissauer's line "hate by water and hate by land" would therefore have had particular resonance for contemporary readers. The poem's naval interest is emphasized by an entire stanza describing a scene set "in the Captain's Mess." Rather than toasting the Kaiser's health, the ship's officer gives the customary German naval toast of the time: "Auf den Tag!"—to the day when the British navy is defeated. Stylistically the stanza stands out because its concrete images contrast with the abstract verbiage dominant elsewhere.

Recalling the extraordinary popularity of "Haßgesang" thirty years later, Zweig observed that the speed of its circulation in Germany had been unprecedented, outstripping even Max Schneckenburger's "Die Wacht am Rhein" (*The Watch on the Rhine*, 1840), inspired by the Rhine Crisis of 1840 (266). The comparison of the two poems can be extended: both call for Germans to unite against a foreign enemy, and the popularity and utility of both were greatly enhanced by their musical settings. With music by Carl Wilhelm, "Die Wacht am Rhein" became the German patriotic anthem of the Franco-Prussian War and established the enduring image of German infantry as singing heroes marching into battle (Hansen 31). Lissauer's choice of the word "Gesang" for

his title places his own poem in the same tradition and indicates he probably imagined it being sung by a new generation of marching heroes. As Zweig notes, Franz Mayerhoff's musical setting of "Haßgesang," composed within weeks of its publication, soon became a favorite in German theatres and music halls (266-67).

The musical setting was only one means by which the poem's fame spread. It was also translated into regional dialects, printed on postcards, and enclosed with business correspondence (Albanis 216). Discussion of the poem was promoted by the political elite. In April 1915, Reichstag member Conrad von Wangenheim said he thought it a "good thing in these soft-hearted times that once in a while this form of hatred against our very worst enemy gets a hearing" (qtd. in Stibbe 106). Its official promulgation was noted by Ethel Cooper, an Australian who spent the war years in Germany. Writing to her sister in February 1915, she complained of "this policy of hate-breeding," and in particular "this so-called 'Song of Hate' against England, which the Kaiser has ordered to be published among all the troops and learned in the schools!" (60). Its place in schools soon became contentious, but in the early months of the war it found its way into the curriculum. We still find the poem in Wilhelm Peper's 1916 anthology *Deutsche Kriegslieder aus dem Jahre 1914/16* ('German War Songs 1914-16'), which was compiled for use in schools (11).

The popular success of "Haßgesang" soon translated into official honors for its author. Lissauer was among four writers awarded the Order of the Red Eagle, Fourth Class, with Crown—normally a military award—on the Kaiser's birthday in January 1915 ("Beförderung des Konteradmirals Souchon" 'Promotion of Rear Admiral Souchon' 12). The Kaiser's personal endorsement both added to the popularity of "Haßgesang" and gave Lissauer what he craved: the highest possible recognition of his status as a German writer and citizen.

Another royal figure to influence the poem's popular reception was Rupprecht, Crown Prince of Bavaria, who at the beginning of the war was given command of the German Sixth Army. Rupprecht had thousands of copies of "Haßgesang" distributed among his troops with the message, "Soldiers of the Sixth Army, we now have the good fortune to have Englishmen at our front. Take revenge upon them, for they are our worst enemies!" (Klemperer 2: 216). The psychological effect upon soldiers, presumably of the kind Rupprecht was hoping for, is shown by one young man's words to his family: "It is a great joy to read such poems that see the war not just as a destroyer but also as creative work, not just as an oppressive necessity but as purification" (qtd. in Witkop 242).

The success of efforts to popularize the poem among frontline soldiers is also evidenced by a front-page article of March 1915 in the *Lille Kriegszeitung* ('Lille War Newspaper'), the soldier newspaper in the occupied French town. Lieutenant Colonel Kaden's article "Feuer" ('Fire') is an Anglophobic tirade containing clear echoes of "Haßgesang": "The fire to be lit inside every German will be a fire of joy, a fire of ardor. . . . Its effect will be terrifying: horror, destruction! Its name is hate! . . . We have one foe and one



alone: England!" Kaden surpasses Lissauer by inciting his readers to murder: "In every dead comrade you must see a victim that this wicked nation has forced upon us. Avenge his heroic death ten times over!" Anticipating—or perhaps already responding to—concern about a posture of national hatred, Kaden calls upon German educators and parents to persuade the country that hatred of the "accursed Englishmen" is "not un-German" (1).

As well as inspiring German soldiers, Lissauer's "Haßgesang" became a model that prompted other poets to vent their hatred. Volkmann notes that many shared Lissauer's feeling of betrayal at Britain's declaration of war and lists twenty poets who composed "Haßgesänge gegen England" (46-47). One consequence of this activity was the publication in 1915 of *Wehe dir, England!* ('Woe betide you, England!'), edited by Heinrich Oellers and containing 107 Anglophobic poems by over seventy German writers. As the prototype for this minor literary movement, Lissauer's "Haßgesang" provides the centerpiece—both figuratively and literally—of the collection.

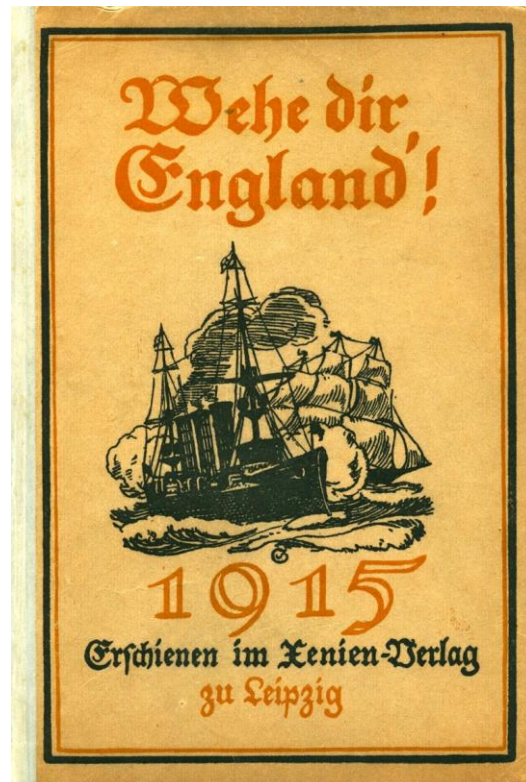


Fig. 1. Book cover – *Wehe dir, England!*

Many poems in *Wehe dir, England!* reprise the themes of Lissauer's "Haßgesang," while others develop particular angles or attack on a different front. Among the first group, Walter Ferl's "Auf den Tag!" echoes Lissauer's naval toast (Oellers 35), while in A. Kaiser's "Gott strafe England" ('God Punish England'), the elements "land, sea and air" are imagined as outraged by England's treachery (Oellers 64). Like Kaden's article in the *Liller*

*Kriegszeitung*, other poems escalate Lissauer's hatred murderously. Paul Keller's "Tod England" ('Death to England'), for example, features the refrain "Tod! Tod! Tod!" (Oellers 65) 'Death! Death! Death!' Instead of overt hatred, several poets praise the heroic deeds of German soldiers and sailors and lament their deaths. No fewer than five poems refer to the SMS *Emden*, the German cruiser destroyed during the Battle of Cocos in November 1914. Will Vesper's "Haß oder Liebe?" ('Hate or Love?') addresses an obvious concern for many readers: the religious objection to hatred. The poem presents a dialogue with Jesus, whose advocacy of love for one's enemies is countered by the speaker's argument that nationalistic hate is really the fruit of the highest love: love for one's country (Oellers 142). An appeal for divine sympathy for German Anglophobia is also evident in the motto "Gott strafe England – Er strafe es" 'God punish England—May he punish it' that early in the war became common as both a greeting and propaganda slogan (Bridgwater 160; Stibbe 18). In the title of W. Tilgenkamp's poem, the same motto is celebrated as "Der deutsche Gruß" ('The German Greeting') (Oellers 142).

Readers wondering just how far the hate theme could be taken needed only wait until November 1914, when Heinrich Vierordt penned "Deutschland, hasse!" ('Germany, Hate!') Vierordt's three strident stanzas had the distinction of being so inflammatory that the German General Staff banned them (Bridgwater 160). The poem is not specifically Anglophobic. Rather it is an impassioned declaration of hatred towards all surrounding nations: "Smash their skulls with rifle butt and axe, / . . . To every foe, a bayonet to the heart" (Vierordt).

Even as the popularity of "Haßgesang" swelled in late 1914, the first signs emerged of a backlash that would gradually gain momentum over the following year. The first argument brought against the poem appealed to German moral superiority. In late October 1914, a lead article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* ('Frankfurt Newspaper') challenged its message: "the greatest mistake we could make would be to reply in kind to the impotent hatred which spits at us everywhere. The fight we are fighting is too splendid. And we have better things to do" (qtd. in "Hatred" 6). The idea of war as a noble pursuit that is debased if combatants stoop to the level of hatefulness preempted responses to "Haßgesang" in several British newspapers, as did the claim that it is a mistake to meet hatred with hatred.

Moral objections to "Haßgesang" were soon followed by others focusing on its author's Jewish background. In December 1914, the anti-Semitic *Hammer* ('Hammer') claimed that the sentiments expressed in "Haßgesang" were entirely un-German, and that certain qualities for which Lissauer was upbraiding the English, such as "pettiness and greed," were associated just as closely with "another race" (qtd. in Albanis 235-36). By linking the same stereotypes with both the English and Jews, the *Hammer* article derided both the poet and the object of his poem. Ironically, the figure who most vociferously attacked the poem as un-German was himself English-born: philosopher Houston Stewart Chamberlain. In a 1915 essay, Chamberlain insisted that a true

German was uncomfortable with Old Testament hate, whereas Lissauer, who was merely posing as a German, belonged to a race for which hatred was a traditional value (8-9). He then observed that the editors of the *Times*, *Daily Mail*, and *Matin* all share this same background, thus almost recasting hatred as an international Jewish conspiracy. In unpublished postwar notes, Lissauer countered Chamberlain's assertion that only a Jew could be so hateful by citing expressions of hatred from Kleist and Bismarck. Rather than defending Jews, he argued that other Prussians had set a precedent that he, as a Prussian, was merely following (Albanis 236).

The contemporary Jewish press responded more forcefully. Writing in *Ost und West* ('East and West') in May 1915, Benjamin Segel objected to Chamberlain's implicit double-standard that identified Jews as Jewish if they were involved in theft or fraud, but "as Germans if they achieve something noteworthy" (13-22). Segel did not, however, approve of the sentiments expressed in Lissauer's poem and suggested that he already regretted writing it. Elsewhere in *Ost und West*, the editors pointed the finger back at Christians, noting that even before Lissauer's poem had become famous there had been "very Christian and very German ladies, who in beautiful and brilliant articles had celebrated unforgiving hatred towards enemies" ("Der ewige Hass" 'Eternal Hatred' 191). Indeed, poets such as Vesper had already sought ways to reconcile hate with Christian beliefs (Oellers 142).

Political discussion of "Haßgesang" centered on fears of corrupting youth through its use in schools (Albanis 235). During a debate in the Prussian Chamber of Deputies in early 1915, Konrad Haenisch warned that displays of hatred did "nothing for an education of mutual understanding among nations," but instead encouraged glorification of violence (Albanis 235). His concerns were echoed in the press. In August 1915 the *Berliner Tageblatt* ('Berlin Daily Newspaper') published a series of articles critical of "Haßgesang." Under the headline "Gegen den 'Haßgesang'" ('Against the "Haßgesang"'), it quoted a clergyman condemning the poem as "against all Christian sentiment" (3). An editorial commentary followed, criticizing the poem's use in schoolbooks.

Two days later, the *Tageblatt* printed Lissauer's response. He explained that the poem expressed a personal sentiment reflecting the already prevalent attitude towards England; his poem had not created it. It was never intended, he went on, for schoolbooks or indeed for youth at all. Notably, Lissauer did not so much defend the poem as mitigate his own responsibility for its glorification of hatred. As in his later comments in response to Chamberlain's attack, here Lissauer was already portraying himself as the victim. Far from having profited from the fame of his poem, Lissauer posited that he had suffered due to his intentions being misunderstood ("Der 'Haßgesang'" 3).

By 1916 "Haßgesang" had ceased to make headlines in the mainstream German press. Enthusiasm for the poem dwindled with the realization that there would be no quick end to the war. As the end of the war approached, the rallying power it had once possessed was referenced with bitter irony in a cartoon in the Viennese *Neuigkeits-Welt-Blatt* ('News World Gazette'). Under the heading

“Der Haßgesang der Ententepresse” (‘Chant of Hate of the Entente Press’), the cartoon depicts a “revenge chorus” delivering its own rendition targeting the Central Powers (Fig. 2).



Fig.2. Der Haßgesang der Ententepresse

For the rest of his life, Lissauer worried that the notoriety of “Haßgesang” would prevent his other writing from being taken seriously (Aronsfeld 48). None of his later works received a level of acclaim even approaching that bestowed upon “Haßgesang.” In 1923 he moved to Vienna, where he remained until his death from pneumonia in 1937 (Noack). Noting that he died barely three months before the *Anschluss* ‘annexation of Austria,’ Aronsfeld remarks that, had he lived any longer, the author of the *Chant of Hate Against England* may well have ended his days as a refugee in England (50).

Volkman observes that the effectiveness of the German hate poems as rallying calls quickly wore off, only for them to be seized upon by the enemy and used against Germany (74). As tools of counter-propaganda, none provided more ammunition for the Allies than Lissauer’s. On 15 October 1914, Barbara Henderson’s English version of “Haßgesang” appeared in the *New York Times*, less than two months after its publication in Germany. This provided the springboard for the work’s international reception and redeployment for the Allied cause. Just as Lissauer’s original was seen on the German side to have captured the *Zeitgeist*, Henderson’s translation was usually read as a summation of the enemy’s principle vice. The equation “Germany is hate” resonated around the English-speaking world. It was adopted, for example, as the refrain of a poem by Australian Arthur H. Adams, which was circulated as a Christmas card in 1914.

Henderson’s translation effortlessly retains the form of the original, and the result is a poetic statement as strident in English as it is in German. Her translation is so good that it runs the risk of appearing to endorse Lissauer’s message. Its quality almost certainly played a substantial role in the rapid rise

to international notoriety of "Haßgesang." Henderson's translation was republished repeatedly and became the only version widely read in the English-speaking world. Furthermore, while the tendency among German writers had been to respond to "Haßgesang" by re-working its themes, English-language writers usually responded by imitating its form.

In the *New York Times*, Henderson's translation appeared alongside an article by her husband Professor Archibald Henderson. Professor Henderson lamented that "virtually all of the poetry printed in our newspapers is contributed by English poets or by American poets who sympathize with England and France" (12). The reproduction of the "best German poems evoked by the war," he argued, would contribute to a better understanding of "the psychology of the German situation at this critical moment in her national history." Henderson's plea for balance was reflected in his juxtaposition of hate poems from both sides. To illustrate the "concentrated hatred of the person and principles of the Kaiser" characteristic of the British, he quoted a section from William Watson's sonnet "To the Troubler of the World." For the German side, Henderson characterized Lissauer's "Haßgesang" as "a veritable chant of hate, resonant with the note of ancient tribal rites and the primitive ferocity of a people stirred to the topmost pitch of a passionate racial animosity." Despite his laudable interest in fairness, Henderson's strategy might seem misguided. Equating "national psychology" with visceral, jingoistic responses seems more likely to intensify enmity than promote understanding.

Henderson's account of his discovery of "Haßgesang" adds an interesting twist to the story of its English-language reception. He claimed to have encountered the poem in a recent edition of the magazine *Jugend* ('Youth') "just come to me from Munich" (12). However, examination reveals no evidence that "Haßgesang" was ever published in *Jugend*, all editions of which can now be scrutinized online. Yet when his wife's translation was reprinted around the world, *Jugend* was often listed as the poem's original source. Richard D. Harlan, for example, perpetuated the story in the British *Spectator* and embellished it through a strikingly false assumption about the target readership of the progressive art journal: "It appeared very recently in a Munich periodical, *Jugend*, which from its title (Youth) is presumably a periodical for boys and girls" ("Letters to the Editor" 11). While there is no reason to think of Henderson's misattribution as anything other than an innocent mistake, its dissemination had important consequences. As well as feeding into anti-German prejudice, it badly misrepresented both the journal's overall philosophy and its ambivalent stance on the war.

Within a fortnight, Barbara Henderson's translation began appearing in British newspapers too, firstly in the *Times*, where the original was once again attributed to *Jugend* ("A Poem of Hatred" 6). Curiously, the *Times* also quoted from the editorial rejecting hatred published just a few days earlier in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, giving a surprisingly nuanced view of German public opinion. Nevertheless, elsewhere in the same issue, the editors were less moderate, characterizing German Anglophobia as "frightful," "deadly," and

“malignant.” Ultimately the *Times* judged that “such verses spring only from the heart of a people” (“A Hymn of Hate” 9). Their conclusion was echoed in a self-righteous letter to the editor by Edward Dutton, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Sherborne, published two days later, which celebrated “Germany’s hatred” as “England’s honour” (Sherborne 9).

One of the longest British responses to “Haßgesang” was by Arthur Conan Doyle. His 1914 essay “Madness” captures several characteristic aspects of the poem’s British reception. First, Doyle argues that “Haßgesang” is indicative of a German lack of manliness, as if “we were really fighting with a furious, screaming woman” (89-90). He then asserts that the Germans, unlike the British, are unsportsmanlike: “We fight as hard as we can, and we like and admire those who fight hard against us so long as they keep within the rules of the game” (92). As an exception proving his rule, Doyle refers to the exploits of the SMS *Emden* and its captain: “if he walked down Fleet Street today he would be cheered by the crowd from end to end. Why? Because almost alone among Germans he has played the game as it should be played” (92). Finally, Doyle plays his trump cards of class and chivalry. He proclaims that the Germans are not behaving as gentlemen, and that poems such as “Haßgesang” illustrate their disregard for the unspoken code of military conduct (92-93).

A mutual fascination can be observed in the reception of “Haßgesang,” as both sides displayed a keen interest in the effect the poem had on the other. A *Times* commentary was reproduced in German, for example, in the *Prager Tagblatt* (‘Prague Daily Newspaper’) in November 1914. Henderson’s translation was printed alongside Lissauer’s original, allowing Prague readers to judge its quality for themselves (“Der Haßgesang gegen England” 5). The English-language press showed similar interest in developments on the German side. In May 1915, the *Times* reported in an understandably sarcastic tone on the publication of *Wehe dir, England!* (“In Germany Today” 5). Yet just ten weeks later, Lissauer’s reservations about his poem’s publication in schoolbooks were also acknowledged (“The Song of Hate” 5). A few days later, the *Times* confirmed Lissauer’s “official regret” but also the enduring currency of “Haßgesang,” particularly its continued use by the military for motivating new recruits (“Notes by a Neutral” 5).

Whereas German Anglophobia softened during the later war years, its mark on the British perception of Germany endured for the entire war. The “Hymn of Hate,” as Lissauer’s poem was popularly known, became a byword for everything that was monstrous about the Germans. As a celebration of German hate, it gave the Allies a convenient basis for righteous indignation. The British self-image of moral superiority was summarized in a letter to the editor of the *Times* of late 1917 by Violet R. Markham:

Organized national hatred, as the Germans have proved repeatedly, is apt to overreach itself. In the effort to be brutal it is often merely foolish—witness their silly Hymn of Hate. In any event such spirit is as the poles removed from the temper of courage, steadfastness, and endurance

in which this country began, and let us hope will finish, its mighty enterprise. (4)

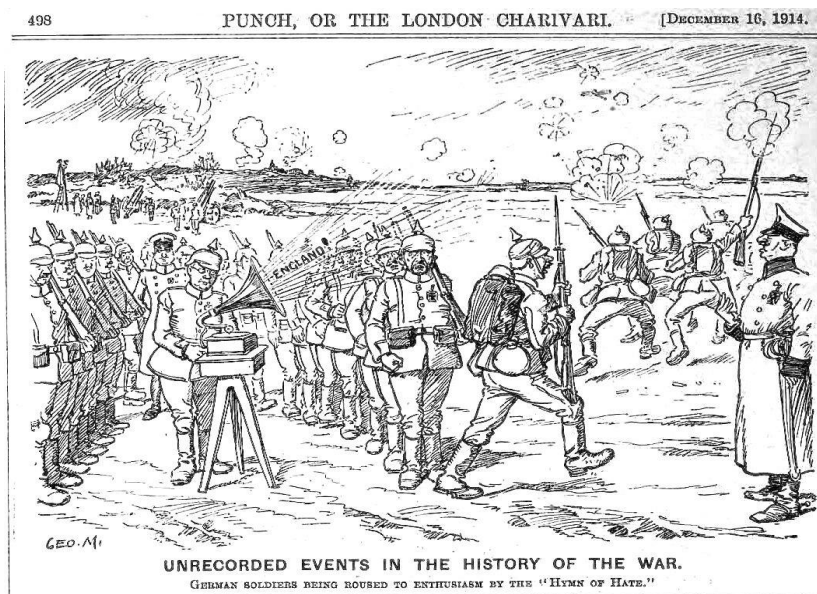


Fig. 3. Unrecorded Events in the History of the War.

Markham’s condescending view of “Haßgesang” as “silly” points to the scope for parody that the poem’s earnest hatred opened for the Allied side. The possibility for satire was ruthlessly exploited by *Punch* magazine, which ran a series of cartoons lampooning the poem (Aronsfeld 49). The earliest appeared in December 1914 and showed German soldiers being driven into battle by a recording of the “Hymn of Hate” (Fig. 3) (Murdoch 33).

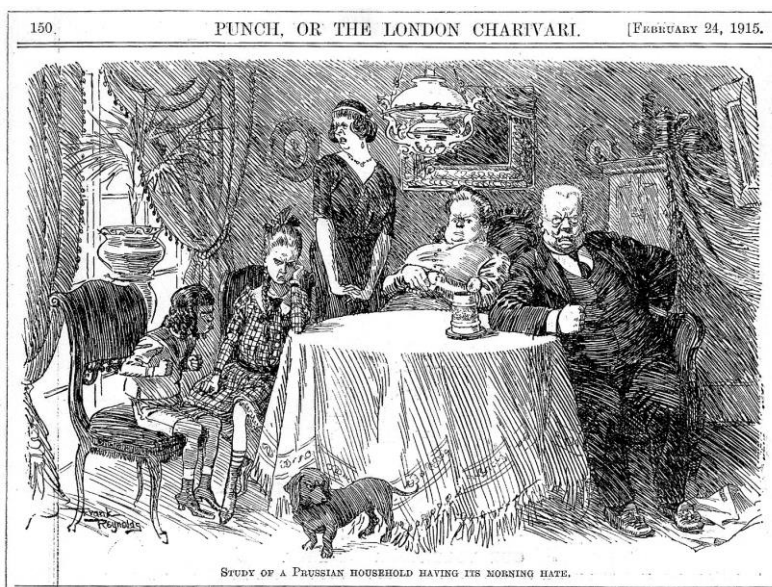


Fig. 4. Frank Reynolds: Study of a Prussian household having its morning hate.

The most famous cartoon inspired by “Haßgesang” was “Study of a Prussian household having its morning hate” by Frank Reynolds, published in February 1915 (Fig. 4). Here, a glowering middle-class family, complete with dachshund, were mockingly depicted around a table in a daily ceremony of ill temper, undertaken with grim Prussian resolve. Reynolds’s cartoon was reprinted in magazines and newspapers around the world and itself became an object of parody. In January 1916, a cartoon in the *NZ Truth* compared the hateful Prussians with a “wowsersish” and similarly joyless English family shown in a similar pose (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Wicked Wilhelmites and Wowsers' Way.

The poem’s combination of rhetorical and emotional force inspired a similar level of lyric production in English as in German. Indeed, a ferocious poetical exchange erupted in the *New York Times* in late October 1914 following the publication of Henderson’s translation (Wienen 3-4). Beatrice M. Barry’s “Answering the ‘Hassgesang’” took an astonishingly early lead when it appeared in the next day’s edition, evidently composed and delivered in the few hours before the deadline. Barry’s poem is constructed as an equal and opposite reaction, giving Germany the same kind of treatment that Lissauer’s reserves for England. In particular, it expresses outrage at the German invasion of “little Belgium”: “Belgium one voice—Belgium one cry / Shrieking her wrongs, inflicted by / *GERMANY!*” (Barry, “Answering the Hassgesang” 10).

Some American readers clearly felt more sympathy with Lissauer’s position than Barry’s and even found additional justifications for Anglophobia. On October 17th, the *New York Times* kept the debate running by publishing “Another Chant of Hate” by Rosalie M. Moynahan (10). Here, too, the form is that of Lissauer’s original, but the content centers on Britain’s mistreatment of



Ireland (a German version of Moynahan's poem would feature the following year in *Wehe dir, England!*). Not to be out-versed, Barry responded with yet another variation on October 20th calling on the Irish to set aside their historical grievances and stand by England during "her hour of trial" ("The Crucial Moment" 12). The series continued the next day with the publication of "Motherhood's Chant" by McLandburgh Wilson, who departed from the Anglo-German confrontation by adopting a pacifist stance. For Wilson, the essential contrast was not nation against nation, but war against peace (10).

Even once the initial furore subsided, "Haßgesang" continued to represent a productive model for the expression of nationalist sentiment, whether serious or jocular. Examples from 1915 include Helen Grey Cone's sentimental "A Chant of Love for England" and an anonymous culinary parody that first appeared in the *Toronto Daily Star*. The latter opens with the memorable line, "Carrots or beets, we hate them not," before building to the refrain, "We love a thousand; we hate but one, / And that we'll hate with hate of Hun – / Sauer Kraut" (qtd. in "A Hymn of Hate" 6).

While in North America "Haßgesang" provoked a barrage of formal imitations by amateur poets, in Britain established writers Rudyard Kipling and Thomas Hardy chose to meet it on their own stylistic terms. For Kipling in particular, Lissauer's poem seemed to confirm his darkest prejudices against Germany. His most direct response is the poem "The Beginnings," which depicts hatred as something that does not come naturally to the British—in implicit contrast to the Germans (Firchow 107). Published in 1915, the poem was appended to the story "Mary Postgate," in which the title figure encounters a dying German pilot, refuses to help him and instead watches him die. If Kipling's anti-German feeling is overt in these works, the bewilderment and regret characterizing Hardy's response to German Anglophobia is most visible in his poem "England to Germany in 1914" (229).

Despite the efforts of Kipling, Hardy, and others, the strong impression that Henderson's translation made on readers left certain commentators with the belief that poetically speaking, Germany had gained the upper hand. In November 1914, the *Springfield Republican* predicted that "Haßgesang" would "live for centuries as a spark struck out by the greatest war in history," while lamenting "the rather poor showing that our own poets have made" in their appeals to the nation (qtd. in "Fired by a Genuine Hate" 6). The sentiment was echoed in early 1916 by British writer Richard La Gallienne, who held up "Haßgesang" as a yardstick against which other nationalist poetry must be measured and noted the great disappointment expressed in literary circles that "our British poets have not risen to the occasion" (qtd. in "Poetry of the Great War" 3).

In Britain, the alliterative phrase "Hymn of Hate" entered popular speech as shorthand for the hatefulness of the Germans. In a 1915 debate in the House of Lords, Lord Sydenham, presumably unaware of the Germanophobic verse of Watson and Kipling, stated: "Happily in this country we have no response to the vile 'Hymn of Hate'; and one of the most striking features,

perhaps, of the war is the extreme tenderness that has been shown to enemy individuals and to enemy interests” (Clarke c425). In the House of Commons, Major John Baird was less sweeping about the lack of a British response, noting that at least a part of the British population was responding in kind to the Anglophobia that in Germany infected “man, woman, and, I think, child, for the children are encouraged with the Song of Hate” (c341).

On the battlefield too, hate was being dealt out by all sides—in a literal but also in a new, figurative sense. In *Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases* (1925), Edward Fraser and John Gibbons testify to the adoption of the expression “Hymn of Hate” as a synonym for artillery bombardment: “the German daily trench bombardments, which took place with a curious regularity, often were [called] ‘Fritz’s Evening and Morning Hate.’ For us, on the other hand, to shell the enemy when he seemed quiet was to ‘Stir up a little Hate,’ and so on” (115-16). Numerous soldiers’ diary entries attest to the new meaning of “hate”; these show that even if hatefulness was perceived as an essentially German quality, the Germans did not have a monopoly on it. In August 1915, New Zealander Joe Kenny, serving in the Dardanelles, wrote: “We are all living in dug-outs close to the beach, and have plenty of swimming until the Turks start with their Hymn of Hate, as we call their shells” (25). In August 1918, Australian Percy Smythe recorded his own “hateful” response to spotting a German post: “I got some 22nd.Bn. Lewis gunners to bring their weapon into a suitable position from which to give the enemy post a few bars of the ‘Hymn of Hate’” (Smythe).

The notoriety of Lissauer’s poem meant that he remained an object of public attention in the English-speaking world long after the German press had lost interest. *Punch* magazine continued to tease him through the war and beyond (Murdoch 37), satirizing Germany’s role in the postwar peace process, for example, in a cartoon showing a stereotypical Prussian couple having to restrain not only themselves but their Anglophobic parrot (see Fig. 6). As late as 1924, *Time* magazine reported Lissauer’s appeal to Germans to respond to the country’s military defeat by celebrating the cultural heritage of Goethe, Bach, and their ilk (“Notes” 11).

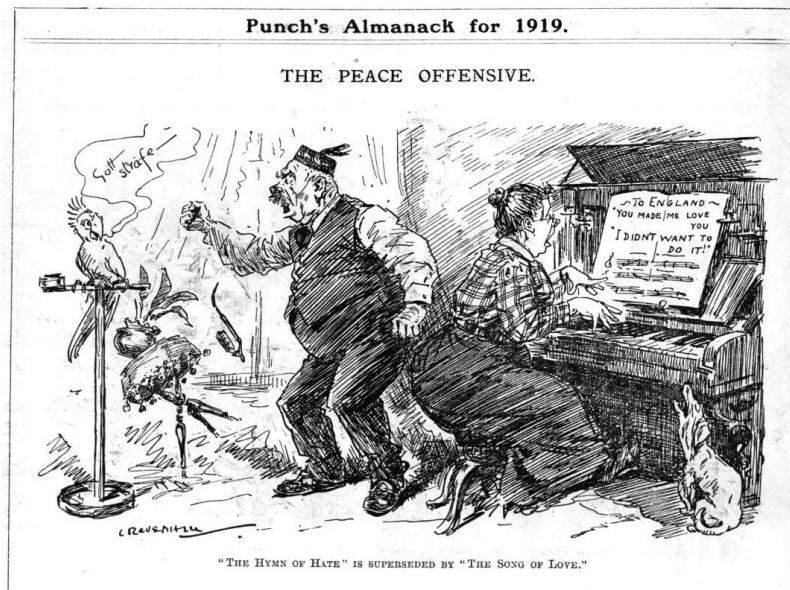


Fig. 6. "The Hymn of Hate" is Superseded by "The Song of Love"

Even in death, Lissauer and "Haßgesang" were international news. The *Adelaide Mail* of South Australia noted Lissauer's passing under the headline "Pacifist Who Wrote Famous Hate Hymn," describing his poem as "a flaming lyric of fury which was Germany's national anthem during the war" (2).

Along with its author and the rest of his work, "Haßgesang" is long since forgotten in all the territories where it was once so familiar. In both themes and form, the poem diverges radically from modern assessments of the most important literary responses to the First World War. Yet the breadth and depth of its contemporary reception single it out as a monument of its time, and if for no other reason, it warrants continued attention for the sake of accurate historical understanding. As a literary document, it is remarkable because it traversed so many social and political boundaries, provoked so many and such varied responses, and became an internationally recognizable symbol of the German national outlook and temperament.

#### Notes

1. All translations from German are by Richard Millington unless indicated otherwise.

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