Long before Hitler seized power in 1933, the National Socialists had declared their movement to be the spearhead of a revolution and in general historians have not been notably reluctant to accept that designation. It is as well to be clear, however, in what sense the term is to be used, for—pace David Schoenbaum—to speak of the Nazi "social revolution" is to imply a thoroughness of transformation that is belied by the social structure of the Third Reich. The configuration of economic interests underpinning Weimar Germany was barely challenged, let alone transformed by the Nazi regime, and to argue, as Sebastian Haffner has recently done, that the NSDAP was in essence a "socialist" party is merely to blunt the conceptual tools of political analysis. The real National Socialist revolution was carried through on two fronts but in pursuit of a single goal, namely the total control of the individual. On the one hand, this entailed an administrative revolution that created a state within a state. National Socialism did not smash the existing state apparatus as the Leninist orthodoxy of revolution would demand; rather it created another one, parallel to and ultimately superseding the administrative machinery bequeathed to the regime by the now defunct Weimar Republic. The SS state's "revolution of nihilism," to use Hermann Rauschning's celebrated phrase, was complemented by a cultural revolution, the goal of which was the total control of the individual through the systematic organization and mass dissemination of ideology.

The essence of the Nazi cultural revolution lay in its manipulation of consciousness, a process whereby the status of various groups in society (such as male workers, married women, German youth, and the peasantry) was not actually changed but the attempt was made to transform their perception of that status. To this end the Nazis generated a broad set of innovative cultural organizations and practices, the aim of which was the restructuring of leisure
time and its transformation into a state-controlled instrument of National Socialist ideology. The pervasiveness of such practices was epitomized by the "Strength through Joy" movement, which within two years of its inception had expanded in scope to such an extent that virtually no form of organized recreational activity lay outside its purview. The role of the various Nazi cultural organizations was complemented by what Walter Benjamin designated as fascism's "aestheticisation of politics," that is, the attempt to legitimize political rule through the ritualization of public life and the integration of aesthetics and politics. In particular this was exemplified by the political liturgy of fascism that encompassed not only the mass rallies and party conferences of the NSDAP but also the creation of National Socialism's own calendar of specifically devised customs, ceremonies, and celebrations. The totalitarian character of the Nazi cultural revolution was thus revealed in its ultimate goal, that of abolishing the distinction between society and the state. That is to say, the massive reorganization of public life brought about by the Nazis in the Third Reich had but one aim: to politicize the everyday by eliminating the private life of the individual and substituting for it state controlled patterns of communal activity. As Robert Ley, the leader of the Labor Front, put it: "There are no private citizens any more. . . . Only sleep is a private affair."5

It is, then, a central premise of this chapter that an appreciation of the role of culture is essential for a full understanding of fascism. National Socialism must be seen as in part a cultural movement, that is to say, a movement that brought culture directly into the political sphere, where it was made to serve the formation of mass consciousness. As the following analysis of certain aspects of Weimar culture seeks to demonstrate, however, the roots of that cultural movement extend back well beyond the seizure of power in 1933. For it was fuelled in part by a particular cultural tradition in Germany which, it could be argued, had helped prepare the ideological ground for fascism in the first instance.

Indeed, in one sense the term "Nazi cultural revolution" might seem somewhat inappropriate if by that is meant an absolute break with the immediate past. Certainly, the innovative drive of National Socialism was directed not towards the structure of ideology but towards the mode of its mediation, and Kurt Sontheimer hardly exaggerates in his claim that the Nazis did not make any original contribution to the antidemocratic thought of the time.7 This is attested not only by the paucity of National Socialism's ideological writings but also by the wholly derivative and eclectic nature of those works such as Hein Kampf and Rosenberg's Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts, which comprised the ideological canon of the movement. As Hitler himself confirmed in his acknowledgment that Nazism "takes over the essential fundamental traits of a general völkisch world view,"3
the ideological foundations of National Socialism had been laid long before the NSDAP was officially formed. The status of völkisch thought—which is meant the writings of nineteenth-century cultural critics such as Wilhelm Riehl, Paul de Lagarde, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Julius Langbehn—as the ideological precursor of National Socialism has been corroborated by much recent research and needs no further elaboration here. In essence völkisch ideology constructed a catalogue of enemies and scapegoats that was virtually indistinguishable from those identified by National Socialism. It was implacably opposed to liberalism and democracy, which were seen as corroding the very life-force of the German Volk. It asserted the primacy of race among the determinants of history and national character, and as a consequence singled out the Jews as Germany’s ultimate racial antagonist. This anti-Semitism also encompassed a romantic anticapitalism, which saw the modernizing tendency of bourgeois materialism and industrialization as inimical to the main repository of völkisch values, the natural organic community. As an antidote to these destructive forces, both the German and National Socialist ideology prescribed a völkisch Reich, united and ruled by a charismatic leader and pursuing a vigorous policy of expansionist aggression.

It was the achievement of National Socialism to wed this ideology to political organization and thus to make it the basis of a mass movement. The task of developing these ideas into a form appropriate to the circumstances of the Weimar Republic, however, was fulfilled not so much by the Nazis themselves as by a group of writers residing under the collective rubric of "the conservative revolution." Their significance was, as Fritz Stern states, "they served as cultural middlemen, transmitting old ideas in new combinations to later generations." The most influential of these writers was Arthur Moeller van den Bruck who, in his work Das Dritte Reich (1923), did much more than simply equip the Nazis with the name for their "Thousand Year Reich." Rather the book presented in modernized form many of the principal themes of völkisch ideology.

Central to Moeller's thought is the notion of race. While it is true that Moeller conceived of race primarily in spiritual rather than biological terms, he nevertheless exhibited the typically völkisch tendency to psychologize the concept of the nation, presenting it as a living entity and imbuing it with specific characteristics. Accordingly, he differentiated between two types of peoples, the old and the young, arguing that the future of European civilization was dependent on the victory of vital emergent nations such as Germany over the culturally effete representatives of the old order, England and France. Although anti-Semitism played a minor role in Moeller's philosophy, this was more than offset by his assault on the other main object of völkisch animosity—liberalism. Confronted in the Weimar Republic with the embodiment of everything these
thinkers rejected, Moeller railed in populistic vein against the democratic system and the repercussions of Versailles. Above all, he gave currency to what was undoubtedly the most corrosive antidemocratic slogan of the Weimar Republic, the "stab-in-the-back-legend." To liberalism's belief in man's inherent humanity, Moeller counterposed a crude Social Darwinism that conceived of historical development as a fight for survival "in which the victor is necessarily in the right." This view of struggle as an ennobling process not surprisingly led Moeller to see war as "the national expression of the struggle for survival," and in the introduction to Das Dritte Reich he appended a somewhat prophetic footnote when speculating on the possible outcome of that struggle. The Third Reich, he conceded, could prove to be an illusion and, indeed, one which might well bring about the nation's destruction. Nevertheless, he insisted, it was far better to strive for an illusionary goal and to be destroyed in the process than to remain in the present state of national sterility and cultural decline. What better example of Fritz Stern's "politics of cultural despair," namely the leap from cultural pessimism to aggression, from idealism to nihilism.

It was, though, in his advocacy of imperialism that Moeller formulated his most resonant contribution to the völkisch conceptual framework. Germany's social problems, he declared, derived in the main from its excess population, and a policy of expansionism, therefore, would satisfy the need for Lebensraum and at the same time unite a nation spiritually divided by the inherent discord of the party political system. For Moeller this strategy amounted to nothing less than a "National Socialism." Adopting Spengler's slogan, "every nation has its own socialism," he predicted that the new Germany would take the form of an hierarchical society in which class antagonisms would be harmonized within a Germanic "socialism of entrepreneurship." The significance for Nazism of Moeller's reinterpretation of socialism as the subordination of the individual's interests to those of the community—a view already adumbrated in an earlier work, Der Preussische Stil (1916), and echoed four years later in Oswald Spengler's Preussentum und Sozialismus (1920)—scarcely needs any laboring.

Despite the title of his book, Moeller was more concerned with a critique of the present than with providing a blueprint for some future society. Whatever the metaphysical tenor of his writing, the same cannot be said of Ernst Jünger's celebration of totalitarianism, Der Arbeiter (1932). In it Jünger rejected the belief that man is the architect of his own society, positing instead the primacy of irrational, elemental forces. He decried democracy and the institutions of liberalism as the pusillanimous efforts of an enfeebled bourgeoisie to contain these primordial powers and disguise them as rational intercourse. This attempt was a futile one, however, for it was the elemental forces unleashed by the First World War that, according to Jünger,
were now in control. The precarious structures of bourgeois society, he predicted, would soon be swept away and replaced by a "work-state," founded on the twin physical manifestations of these elemental forces, the worker and technology. Although in his terminology Jünger took over the Marxist idea of an unbridgeable schism between two classes, the workers and the bourgeoisie, he did so only in order to defuse the terms of any concrete sociopolitical connotations. In Jünger's scheme, as was soon to be the case in the Third Reich, the status of the worker was defined not by property relations but by a state of mind. The future work-state would be a dictatorship but not one in the conventional sense, for "the worker knows no dictatorship because for him freedom and obedience are identical."

The actual organization of labor would follow the model of the Russian Five Year Plan, which Jünger praised for its imposition of a "strict and sober discipline" and for its denial to the workers of even the most basic rights. Unlike the Soviet model, however, it would be neither necessary nor desirable to abolish private property, for as long as industry subordinated itself to the state, and in particular to the work-state's ultimate aim, the "total mobilization" for war, private capital would be left intact.

Apologists for Jünger have tended to see in Der Arbeiter a purely predictive as opposed to prescriptive piece of writing. The book's closing lines, however, reveal it to be not simply the diagnosis of an age but an explicit program of action. Written on the very eve of the Third Reich, it was Jünger's metaphysical justification for the strategy of war preparation outlined two years earlier in the essay "Die totale Mobilmachung" (1930). In his vision of an authoritarian society in which class contradictions are reconciled not on the basis of material equality but through the ideologically induced experience of uniformity and whose ethos and social goals are governed by the "total mobilization" for war, Jünger prefigured all too clearly the militaristic and pseudo-egalitarian corporate state of the Third Reich. Whatever his subsequent reservations about Hitler's regime, it is nevertheless difficult to resist the conclusion that objectively a work such as Der Arbeiter was performing the ideological groundwork for National Socialism. What both Jünger and Moeller van den Bruck had in common, along with certain other conservative writers in the Weimar Republic, was their particular conception of revolution: for them this was a passive process, a "Revolution sans phrase," that would be effected by spiritual not political means and that would have as its final goal the inculcation of a specific state of mind. In short, what they advocated was essentially a cultural revolution.

Both in theory and historical practice, such a revolution has been confronted by two related tasks: the selective appropriation of the nation's cultural heritage and the development of new forms of cultural expression as appropriate vehicles for an
ideology aspiring to ascendency. The Nazi revolution, however, was unusual in seeing these two tasks as representing distinct areas of cultural practice: while boundless innovative energies were channelled into the sphere of mass culture, in the realm of high culture the Nazis were content by and large merely to extend certain artistic traditions already prominent in the Weimar Republic. In fact the lines of continuity between the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich are apparent in virtually all sectors of artistic activity.

In no other branch of the arts except the cinema was that strand of continuity more apparent than in literature. Naturally 1933 marked a rupture in the German literary tradition in one sense—as it did in all the arts—for the thoroughgoing purge of the cultural institutions that followed the Nazi seizure of power had as its most immediate consequence the exodus from Germany of some two thousand writers, while numerous others sought political asylum either in literary silence or in the ideological opacity of "inner emigration." And yet there was one vibrant voice among the myriad literary utterances of the Weimar Republic that was anything but muzzled by the advent of National Socialism, for the fictional form too proved an effective vehicle for völkisch ideas and the twenties yielded a rich harvest of such literature. Indeed, it is one indication of the literary continuity between the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich that of the twelve best-selling authors in 1932 seven (lerner Deumelburg, Hans Grimm, Hermann Stehr, Hans Carossa, Edwin Erich Dwinger, Steguweit, and Ina Seidl, all of whom can be legitimately assigned to the völkisch tradition) were subsequently sponsored by the Nazis.

The Nazi canon of literature praised three types of writing, which were basically grouped around the themes of militarism, race, and the movement. Only the last of these, which in the main consisted of functional literature dedicated to particular Nazi celebrities or special occasions in the National Socialist calendar, was unique to the Third Reich; the other two had their roots in the tradition of völkisch thought. The most important was the theme of nationalistic militarism. The First World War spawned a considerable body of literature in the Weimar Republic that testified to the centrality of the war experience for writers of radically differing persuasions. Alongside the pacifist portrayals of war as a dehumanizing exercise in destruction (exemplified most notably by Remarque's Im Westen nichts Neues), there developed another strain of literature that celebrated war as a force of spiritual and national regeneration. In the early 1920s this mystical idea of conflict was expressed in the works of writers such as Hans Carossa, while the last four years of the Weimar Republic witnessed the emergence of a whole series of novels and dramas that derived their inspiration from the Great War (among them Edwin Erich Dwinger's trilogy Die deutsche Passion /1929–327, Werner Beumelburg's Die
Gruppe Bösemüller /1930/, Ernst von Salomon's Die Geächteten /1930/, and Hans Züberlein's Der Glaube an Deutschland /1931/). However, the author whose work epitomizes the glorification of war is Ernst Jünger. Both his fiction and quasi-philosophical writings of the period are suffused with images of war that attribute to combat a dynamic, life-giving force and acclaim physical struggle as "the masculine form of procreation." Since, as Jünger repeatedly avers, it is only in the exhilaration of battle that life can be experienced to the full, war must always remain outside the parameters of mere moral adjudication, for it "is as much a feature of human life as the sexual urge. It is a law of nature... To live is to kill." The antidemocratic war novels of the Weimar Republic thus articulated many of the ideals propounded by National Socialist ideology: the idealization of physical struggle, the depiction of the enemy as an agent of national unity and a catalyst of aggression, and the veneration of the male collective at the battlefront which, by virtue of its authoritarian leadership structures, its socialist character (in the Nazi sense of uniting men from different social classes) and the selfless idealism of its individual members, prefigured the Volksgemeinschaft of the National Socialist community. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that after 1933 such novels were extolled as paradigms of Nazi literature.

The other pillar of the Nazi literary edifice, so-called volkhafte Dichtung, was in effect a residual category in that it was broad enough to accommodate virtually any text that attracted the imprimatur of the custodians of Nazi culture. And yet, as with the war novels, the exemplars of this genre (such as the mystical, pseudo-metaphysical writing of the prolific Hermann Stehr, the romanticized outpourings of Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer, or the historical and mythological novels of Hans Blunck) were mainly written prior to the founding of the Third Reich. Within this somewhat diffuse grouping, one particular area merits attention, namely what has become known in general as the literature of Blut und Boden (Blood and Soil). Its romantically stylized image of the rural community, exalting the simple, natural values of the peasantry, and its mystical relationship to the fertile native soil, accords perfectly with the antimodernist elements of Nazi ideology. The antecedents of such literature go back to the provincial Heimatdichtung at the turn of the century, which yielded many popular novels similar to Der Hütterbauer (1895) by Wilhelm von Polenz and Wiltfeber der Deutsche (1912), whose author, Hermann Burte, was upheld by Nazi literary criticism as one of the very first National Socialist writers. Polenz's book— which Hitler claimed had profoundly influenced his political thinking—tells the story of a peasant whose mystical bonds with nature are severed by the encroachment of industrialization (represented here by a Jewish finance capitalist). Socially and spiritually uprooted, the peasant hangs himself, his eyes staring at the soil, "the soil to which he had dedicated his life, to which he had sold
his body and soul." The 1920s produced a plethora of pastoral idylls from the pen of such writers as Friedrich Griese, Richard Billinger, and Karl Heinrich Wagner. But by far the single most influential example of the entire genre was Hans Grimm's *Volk ohne Raum* (1926) which, despite its twelve hundred pages, had sold over half a million copies by the mid-1930s. The almost biblical status bestowed on this most turgid of tomes is largely attributable to the fact that its title furnished the Nazis with a legitimate slogan for their expansionist foreign policy, even though, paradoxically, Grimm's proposed solution to the problem of Lebensraum, namely colonization, was not in fact the policy Hitler pursued when in power.

The culture of the Weimar Republic thus encompassed a rich vein of völkisch literature that the National Socialists were only too grateful to exploit. Indeed, by comparison the literary output of the Third Reich itself seems positively jejune. Two reasons suggest themselves for this imbalance: firstly, those authors who dominated the literary stage under National Socialism (Stehr, Blunck, Dwinger, Griese, Beumelburg, Grimm, and so on) had by 1933 apparently reached the end of their creative powers, a literary silence, one hastens to add, that in no way betokened disapproval of the Nazi regime. Typically Hanns Johst, who as president of both the Reichsschriftumskammer and the Akademie der Dichtung occupied the two most prestigious positions that National Socialism conferred on any single author, eschewed writing almost completely after 1933, preferring to assume the full-time role of state functionary. More importantly, perhaps, the meagerness of literary production after 1933 to a certain extent reflects the priorities of the overall cultural policy, which seemed altogether more concerned to appropriate a past cultural tradition than to create a new one.

This was certainly true of the theater, for although the typology of fiction outlined above had its equivalent in the sphere of drama, by and large it was the classics that occupied pride of place in the theatrical repertoire of the Third Reich. The cultural heritage was plundered in order to construct a pantheon of drama compatible with National Socialist values. Where these cultural excavations uncovered unassimilable works by otherwise estimable authors, then such plays were either ignored or dismissed as aberrations. Schiller and Kleist were particularly revered, for the heroism and sense of national pride evoked in such plays as *Wilhelm Tell* and *Die Hermannsschlacht* could be readily accommodated within the ethos of the Third Reich. Nor were these efforts at stage management without success, for state intervention in the theater was not only of an ideological nature. The regime provided an abundance of subsidies, commissions and, literary prizes and the lavish productions that these facilitated attracted both large audiences and critical acclaim.

There was, however, one area in which it was claimed the Nazis
had made an original contribution to the dramatic art form and that was in their evolution of the Thingspiel. This was theater in the broadest sense of the term, a grandiose fusion of agitprop, pageant, choral chant, communal song, dance, gymnastics, circus, and military tattoo. Its overall character was essentially that of a cult, a modernized celebration of Germanic rites, the aim of which was the creation of a mass spectacle. One of the first such performances took place in Berlin in October 1933 before an audience of sixty thousand and with a cast of around seventeen thousand, including entire battalions of the SA and Hitler Youth. The cult effect was further enhanced by the setting for these occasions: special Thingsstätten were constructed, open-air amphitheaters often sited on ground associated with ancient Germanic shrines.

Despite its popular appeal, the Thingspiel was relatively short-lived, having virtually disappeared from the cultural calendar by 1937. The reason commonly advanced for this evanescence is that since it came more and more to resemble a purely political event, the Thingspiel gradually lost its distinct function and in effect merely duplicated the Nazi parades, mass meetings, and party rallies. Since the prime mover behind the development of the Thingspiel had been no less an authority than Goebbels, who was convinced that it represented something uniquely National Socialist in character, it seems unlikely that the supposed functional redundancy of the Thingspiel was the sole cause of its demise. In fact, the Thingspiel was by no means as original as it was claimed, and consideration of one of its antecedents suggests another reason why it eventually fell into disfavor.

Although it was the spectacle element that the Nazis particularly cultivated, the ideological backbone of the Thingspiel still remained the text, which more often than not was a chorus delivered in quasi-liturgical fashion by a speech choir. The development of the speech choir had been one of the signal achievements of the working-class cultural movement in the Weimar Republic. There too it had often been incorporated, along with other art forms such as dance and song, into the spectacular enterprise of the Massenspiel, where it served as a simple but effective medium of proletarian solidarity, a collective articulation of shared class experience and political aspirations. While the Nazis took over the outer form of the proletarian speech choir, they clearly intended it to fulfill a quite different function. It now became the vehicle of manipulation, an instrument for the inculcation of authoritarian consciousness as the following quote from the introduction to a collection of völkisch speech choirs shows:

The speech choir group has always to deliver itself up completely, as it were, to the speech choir leader. Subjective feelings and views are to be dispensed with here... In speech choir training there lies an
excellent way of cultivating in men the spirit of loyal obedience and devotion to authority.25

In short, the relationship of the speech choir to its leader was conceived of as replicating at a cultural level that between the masses and their Führer. Clearly, however, the speech choir was so inextricably bound up with the working-class cultural tradition of the Weimar Republic that this particular attempt at Gleichschaltung did not wholly succeed, a fact acknowledged by the Nazis themselves in 1936 when the speech choir was officially banned as a form of cultural expression.26 It is also significant that the subterranean anticapitalism of Nazi ideology was still resonant in many of the texts written for both the völkisch speech choir and the early Thingspiel.27 Moreover, the SA, the main repository of anticapitalist sentiments within National Socialism as a whole, was one of the principal actors in the Thingspiel movement. By the end of 1934, with the "revolution" officially declared by Hitler to be at an end and the SA politically emasculated as a consequence of the Rohm purge, it was perhaps foreseeable that the Nazis would temper their enthusiasm for a cultural form which, however residually, still bore the imprint of left-wing National Socialism and revived notions of an anticapitalism that even from an ideological point of view was now redundant.

Unlike literature, the visual arts would appear to represent an area of German culture in whose historical trajectory the Third Reich can only be seen as marking a massive disruption. After all, the many and various forms of modernist art that emerged and blossomed in the supportive climate of the Weimar Republic—expressionism, dadaism, surrealism, the Bauhaus group, Neue Sachlichkeit, and even futurism which, paradoxically, in Fascist Italy enjoyed semi-official standing—were all summarily cropped by a Nazi regime that branded anything remotely smacking of the avant-garde as "degenerate" and a manifestation of "cultural Bolshevism." And yet antagonism to modern art existed long before the cultural watchdogs of the Third Reich elevated it to the status of an official aesthetic. Even in the Weimar Republic, influential organizations such as the Munich Artists' Association and the Munich Guild of Visual Artists made little attempt to disguise their lack of sympathy for modernism, while elsewhere combat leagues of German culture were formed with the aim of countering modern art's allegedly pernicious influence. Chief among these was the Führer's Council of United German Art and Cultural Associations which, founded in 1930, boasted a quarter of a million members and served as a coordinating body for the multifarious cultural organizations of the völkisch movement.

Painting had occupied a special place in the hierarchy of völkisch ideals ever since the appearance of Langbehn's Rembrandt als Erzieher (1890). Although barely discussed in detail, Rembrandt is championed by the prophet of the Germanic faith as
the embodiment of Volkstümlichkeit, the simple organic artist who gives spontaneous and intuitive expression to the unique character of his people and its traditions. It was the purported timeless quality of such painting that Hitler exhorted the artists of the Third Reich to emulate, for they would thereby be laying "the foundations for a new and genuine German art." Concretely this meant a revival of nineteenth-century genre painting. In place of modernism's preoccupation with style and technique, National Socialist art was to return to themes as its creative principle. These were drawn not from the potentially hazardous terrain of National Socialist reality but from the secluded domain of völkisch idylls: romanticized landscapes and still-lifes, pastoral and domestic scenes of healthy rural simplicity, portraits effusing racial purity. In short, a form of painting was advocated which, although insistently representational, was, by virtue of its tendency to mythologize and dehistoricize, the very obverse of realism.

It is important to stress, however, that despite the impact of modernism in the 1920s, this was nevertheless a tradition to which many artists in the Weimar Republic still subscribed. For example, the prestigious German Art Exhibition of Munich held in 1930 listed nearly 950 painters and sculptors, only a dozen or so of which could legitimately be categorized as modern. Moreover, roughly 250 of these artists subsequently appeared in the catalogues of the Nazi-sponsored Great German Art Exhibitions of 1937, 1938, and 1939. Such statistics invite the conclusion that the supposedly "new" German art merely fed on existing traditions and continued certain trends established long before the founding of the Third Reich. As Berthold Hinz argues, "all it did was reactivate those artists who had been left behind by the development of modern art but who were still active after 1933 and who seized the opportunity to move into the vacuum once modern art had been liquidated." That is to say, National Socialism did not create its own art, rather it created pictorial continuity.

In the case of film, those lines of continuity would probably have been equally apparent even had the National Socialists chosen not to intervene in so direct a fashion in the workings of the German cinema. In view of the Weimar Republic's reputation as a period of great cinematic distinction, this judgment might seem somewhat surprising. The screen classics of this period, however, derive almost wholly from the years 1919 to 1926. Thereafter, as Lotte Eisner points out, the number of quality films, let alone those of a stature comparable with The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919) or Metropolis (1926), was probably limited to four or five per year at the most. Certainly, as far as the structure of the film industry was concerned, 1933 in no sense constituted a break, for despite the National Socialists' rhetorical commitment to small business, the Third Reich witnessed merely a continuation of the trend, already
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well established by the latter stages of the Weimar Republic, whereby Ufa (Universum Film AG) cemented its monopoly position and small film companies went bankrupt.32 Even the censorship law of 1934, which decreed that the screenplay for a film had to be submitted to Goebbels for approval before production could begin, was only a modification of the censorship apparatus that had operated in the Weimar Republic since 1920.33 As for the films themselves, we need only consider Siegfried Kracauer's persuasive argument that the German film industry played a not insubstantial part in helping prepare the ground for National Socialism.34

From 1925 onwards, and in particular during the last three years of the Weimar Republic, the German cinema was in part characterized by a group of films which, broadly speaking, can be seen as supportive of nationalistic and authoritarian values. These films encompassed a wide range of ideological motifs exploited by the Nazis, but two themes gained particular prominence: those of charismatic leadership and nationalist rebellion. In the first category belong a number of films, which in their portrayal of the past, reduce the idea of historical process purely to the intuitive actions of exceptional individuals. By far the most popular subject of these hagiographical narratives was Frederick the Great, for between 1922 and 1933 there appeared no fewer than seven films devoted to his exploits, a series which was directly continued by the cinema of the Third Reich. The image of the Prussian monarch that emerges from these films is summed up by Kracauer in his analysis of Arsen von Cserepy's Fridericus Rex (1922):

This screen Frederick is given two major virtues. He appears as the father of his people—a patriarchal ruler using his absolute power to mitigate legal hardships, further general welfare and protect the poor from exploitation by the rich. Simultaneously, he appears as the national hero who through several successful wars elevates little Prussia to the rank of a great power. The whole construction overtly aims at convincing the audience that another Frederick might not only prove an effective antidote against the virus of socialism but also realize Germany's national aspirations.35

In the Fridericus films of the Third Reich, such as Johannes Meyer's Fridericus (1936) or Veit Harlan's Der Grosse König (1942), the parallel is quite explicitly drawn between Frederick the Great and Adolf Hitler, the implication being that Germany's need of a charismatic leader has now been fulfilled.36

A second ideologically coherent group of films centered on the theme of rebellion. Most of them drew on the Napoleonic wars in order to present Prussia as the agent of a national uprising
and the protagonist of a united German nation. This portrayal of nationalism as a revolutionary force is illustrated perfectly by Luis Trenker's *Der Rebell* (1932), a film which was to attract particular praise from Goebbels. Trenker himself plays the part of a Tyrolean nationalist who returns to his homeland to lead a peasant uprising against Napoleon's army of occupation. As Kracauer points out, the film constructs an obvious analogy between the Tyrol's revolt and the National Socialist movement, for Trenker "only reflects what the Nazis themselves called a national uprising."**37** Gustav Ucicky's *York* (1931) draws an even more revealing parallel between the Napoleonic era and the Weimar Republic. General von York commands an army corps assigned to Napoleon by Wilhelm III of Prussia. Under pressure from the young officers to renege on the terms of the treaty and to attack the French, York at first remains loyal to his monarch's wishes, only finally to rebel when he learns of Napoleon's defeat in Russia, an act which thus initiates the War of Liberation. As Kracauer shows, the film differentiates between two types of military rebel: York's impetuous officers closely resemble the kind of soldier who after World War I provided the nucleus of the Freikorps and the Nazi movement, while York himself anticipates the response of the Reichswehr High Command, rebelling only "when it become apparent that Napoleon is on the decline and that therefore any further loyalty to him might prove disastrous to Prussia."**38** The topicality of this film would scarcely have escaped a German audience by now fully accustomed to regarding the Weimar Republic as being in a state of perpetual crisis, and in 1932 there followed an additional five films on this same subject of national uprising.

Another genre favored by the filmmakers of the Third Reich, the so-called Blood and Soil films, also had its forerunners in the Weimar Republic. In their celebration of the elemental power of nature, their romanticized view of a mountain world intrinsically superior to urban civilization, and their positing of a mystical bond between the peasant community and its natural surroundings, films such as Arnold Fanck's *Stürme über dem Montblanc* (1930), Trenker's *Berge im Flammen* (1931), and above all, Leni Riefenstahl's *Das Blaue Licht* (1932) gave lyrical expression to ideas that formed a central plank of National Socialist ideology. The idealized portrayal of the First World War experience that has already been identified in literature also had its counterpart in the cinema of the Weimar Republic. In addition we must note with Fritz Marburg the undercurrent of anti-Semitism in certain films of the late-1920s and early 1930s, as exemplified by Peter Lorre's caricature of a Jewish reporter in Karl Hankl's *FPI antwortet nicht* (1932).

In no other art form, then, did 1933 constitute so little of a break as it did in the cinema. And yet, that continuity does not derive solely from the fact that the Weimar Republic produced a substantial body of films within which were inscribed some of
the central tenets of National Socialist ideology. It is also a reflection on the cinema of the Third Reich itself, which Goebbels adamantly refused to let become merely a form of "dramatized party program." Rather the cinema was to fulfill its ideological function in clandestine fashion and for the simple reason that, as he put it, "the moment propaganda is recognized as such it becomes ineffective." The best propaganda in Goebbels's view was that "which as it were works invisibly, penetrates the whole of life without the public having any knowledge at all of the propagandist initiative." This notion of covert propaganda seems, incidentally, to have been altogether too sophisticated even for Hitler himself since on more than one occasion he criticized Goebbels's film policy for its failure to produce "National Socialist films." In fact, Goebbels's attitude to the cinema was wholly consistent with his overall cultural policy: his concern was not primarily in the creation of a new and conspicuously National Socialist art but rather in the mode of its dissemination. He wrote:

We are loaded down altogether too much with tradition and piety. We hesitate to clothe our cultural heritage in a modern dress. It therefore remains purely historical or museum-like and is at best understood by groups within the party, the Hitler Youth or the Labor Service. The cultural heritage of our past can be rendered fruitful for the present on a large scale only if we present it with modern means.

His aim, then, was "to bring art to the people," to transform the cultural terrain so that "art no longer stands aside from the people and the people aside from art." In this objective the Nazis attained no small measure of success. By 1942 cinema audiences had grown from the 1932 figure of 250 million to over a billion. Even allowing for the fact of a worldwide growth in film audiences at this time, such a boom, which by the early 1940s made the cinema the fourth largest industry in the Third Reich, was, to say the very least, spectacular. Similarly, the National Socialists provided much greater public access to the visual arts generally, while in the theater audiences were mobilized on an unprecedented scale. In short, high culture, formerly experienced as the preserve of the bourgeoisie, was now presented as the property of the masses.

The National Socialists, however, were not the first in Germany to recognize the political potential of cultural activity, for in the Weimar Republic the organized working class had likewise developed its own cultural movement, and this had generated modes of cultural practice which, in form at least, were not dissimilar to those evolved in the Third Reich. The difference in impact between the two movements lies partly in the fact that since the working class never achieved state power in the Weimar Republic, their cultural activities always remained at the level
of a counterculture. The National Socialists, on the other hand, although they did little in the way of developing prefigurative models, were able after the seizure of power to throw the full weight of the state and party apparatuses behind their activities and were thus in a position to determine directly the shape of the dominant culture in the Third Reich. It almost goes without saying, however, that the high degree of popular support that the Nazi regime secured in the Third Reich cannot be attributed wholly—or even primarily—to its cultural policies. For to isolate the role of culture under National Socialism from economic and political factors (such as the elimination of male unemployment and the spectacular successes of Hitler's foreign policy) would be to lapse into idealism of the most crass kind. Equally, an analysis that ignored or underplayed the totalitarian character of culture in the Third Reich would be untenable. This returns us to our opening remarks on the dual nature of the National Socialist revolution, for the assimilation of all spheres of life, both public and private, within an all-inclusive culture, was predicated on the system of fear bred by the SS state. The two apparently distinct aspects of the revolution, the cultural and the administrative, were thus inextricably bound together. It was the function of terror to atomize German society by dissolving all existing social relations and the function of culture to weld the masses back into a collective form, that of the pseudo-egalitarian Volksgemeinschaft. Goebbels himself provided one of the clearest statements on this relationship between culture and politics under fascism when he boasted:

Politics too is an art, perhaps the highest and most far reaching one of all, and we who shape modern German politics feel ourselves to be artistic people, entrusted with the great responsibility of forming out of the raw material of the masses the solid, well-wrought structure of the Volk.\textsuperscript{46}
NOTES


11 It was only when attempting to discredit Marxism that Moeller resorted to anti-Semitism, arguing that since Marx was a Jew,
he could never comprehend the spiritual essence of man (cf. Moeller van der Bruck, Das Dritte Reich, 3 ed. (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1931), pp. 34, 130.

12 Ibid., p. 58.
15 Ibid., pp. 283, 298, 311.
16 Ibid., p. 162.
17 Gottfried Benn, Kunst und Macht (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1934), p. 17.

For example, Julius Maria Becker, Deutsche Notwende; Kurt Heynicke, Neurude; Heinrich Lersch, Volk im Werden; Heinrich Zerlauen, Die Arbeit der Ehr; and Richard Euripus, Deutsche Passion.


Ibid., p. 15.


See Julian Petley, Capital and Culture: German Cinema 1933-45 (London: British Film Institute, 1979), pp. 29-94.

See Gerd Albrecht, ed., Film im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation (Karlsruhe: Doku-Verlag, 1979), p. 16.


Ibid., p. 255f.

See the introductory caption to Fridericus (quote in Erwin Leiser, "Deutschland, erwach!" Propaganda im Film des dritten Reiches, (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1963), p. 95f. "Encircled by the hereditary great powers of Europe, rising Prussia has aspired for decades to her right to live. The whole world is amazed at the King of Prussia who, first ridiculed, then feared, has maintained himself against forces many times superior to his own. Now they seek to crush him. Prussia's fateful hours has come."

Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, p. 261.

Ibid., p. 265.

Fritz Marburg, Der Antisemitismus in der Deutschen Republik (Vienna: Kommissions-Verlag Josef Brenner, 1931).

Joseph Goebbels, "Rede bei der ersten Jahrestagung der Reichsfilmkammer am 3.3.1937 in der Krolloper, Berlin," in
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41 Goebbels, addressing the Reichsfilmkammer in 1941, quoted in Leiser, "Deutschland, erwache!" p. 106.

42 Hitler, December 11, 1939, recorded by Rosenberg in his political diary and quoted in Leiser, "Deutschland, erwache!" p. 11.


45 For a full analysis of the proletarian cultural movement in the Weimar Republic, see Wilfried van der Will and Rob Burns, Arbeiterkulturbewegung in der Weimarer Republik (Berlin: Ullstein Materialien, 1982).