Before their deportation, German Jews were subjected to a period of 'ghettoization', in which they already experienced ostracism and banishment - a total expulsion from society. Thus prepared, they were to embark on their last journey. In autumn 1941, three years after the November pogrom and on the eve of the deportation, there were still 164,000 Jews living in Germany, one-third of the Jewish population in 1933. Most of them still intended to leave Germany. The National Socialists, however, no longer permitted this escape from the German-Jewish existence; by October 1941, emigration was forbidden. The 'Final Solution' was to be executed. Decimated and ageing, separated from their families and cut off from the outside world, stripped of all rights and impoverished, pressed into forced labour and undernourished, restricted in their freedom of movement, herded together in Judenhäuser and finally branded with a yellow star, the remaining Jews had become a minorité fatale, a burden to society which the Nazis were allowed to dispose of in secrecy. When, finally, 134,000 German Jews were dragged from their last refuges and loaded on to the trains, the public silence was undisturbed. Only 8,000 returned.

How does one speak of the unspeakable? Clearly, with difficulty. The subject of German literature in the Third Reich has remained a thema non grata for the great majority of scholars and critics working within the area of twentieth-century German literature in the post-war period. Until very recently, questions concerning literary life during the years 1933 to 1945 had not only been left unanswered and unexplored but even, in many circles, positively repressed, displaced from an historical agenda that moved out of the expressionism of the early years of this century, through such 'classics' as Thomas Mann, Kafka and Brecht, to re-emerge into the post-war sobriety of Böll and the post-modernist enthusiasm of Grass. One looked in vain through many of the standard literary histories for any mention of literature under National Socialism; even when the talk was of 'tradition' or 'exorcism', the coverage of this period conspicuously hovered around an absence.  

The reasons for this neglect of a whole era in German literature are complex, and deserve their own full-length enquiry. We would need to look at a constellation of factors, from moral distaste and aesthetic rejection through to political expediency and the traditional German abhorrence of Nachschulnutzung (fouling the nest); these are all factors which impinged upon the process of Vergangenheitsbewältigung (coming to terms with the past) during the post-war period.  


2. The secondary material that attempts to deal with the national trauma of
particular they have taken over a key assumption, or set of assumptions, inherent in much of the historical and historiographical writing about National Socialism, namely the totalitarian thesis or totalitarian model, a systematic approach first developed in the work of Hannah Arendt and Carl Friedrich. 5

The central argument of this thesis is well known. Totalitarian political systems, which are meant to include not only those of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but also that of the Soviet Union, are distinguished from the political systems found in liberal democracies by a number of key structural features: they possess an all-pervasive official ideology; they are governed by a single mass-based party led by a charismatic leader; a total control of the nation is exercised both through the terroristic intervention of a police force and through propaganda media; and there is a central control of the economy. In short, totalitarian societies stand rigidly 'closed' to the pluralistic values of 'open' societies. The totalitarian model has, it is true, been modified in recent times by its more sophisticated exponents such as Karl Dietrich Bracher, but the essential assumption of total control of state over civil society has been largely retained. 6

It is precisely this thesis that has been taken on board, sometimes unconsciously, by previous critics trying to construct a canon of literature in the Third Reich, and has been permitted to become the guiding light for their approaches. Scholars working within this area will be familiar with the major titles. 7 There is much good scholarship here, and the whole field has made significant advances in its ideological analyses undertaken in these studies, or with the political sympathies that underwrite such approaches. 8 It is certainly

5. Here the seminal texts are Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, New York, 1951; and Carl Friedrich and Zdeněk Brejcha, Totalitarismus: Historischer und methodologischer Überblick, Cambridge, MA, 1956. Putting the totalitarian thesis on a firm political-historical foundation, and incidentally adding two key terms to its rhetoric, was the achievement of Karl Popper; see his The Open Society and Its Enemies, 2 vols, London, 1959.

6. For an excellent survey of the arguments involved, expounded with a clear eye to their German relevance, see Ian Kershaw, The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation, London, 1985, pp. 11-26, 3-7.


8. It is, however, highly significant that most of these studies, such as those by the
mainstream academy art of the nineteenth century—took over two years to resolve and spilled over into the literary arena, putting an end to the careers of Gottfried Benn, who had nailed his colors to the expressionist mast. This time it was Rosenberg who emerged the victor, but only after yet another timely intervention by Hitler, who felt his own Biedermeier tastes were more in keeping with the conservative image that the new national government wished to cultivate. The point that needs above all to be registered is that, in the final analysis, political decisions and the implementation of cultural criteria were not the culmination of rationally formulated and coherent aesthetic, but the consequences of overt and covert power struggles within the cultural bureaucracy of the Nazi regime. In the end, the continuing nature of these power struggles and the shifting centres and deployment of power often left official cultural policy in an indecisive and vacillating state.

The second set of assumptions that needs to be challenged concern the exercise of control. Here the received opinion in many circles is that the state was entirely successful in manipulating the literary behaviour of the public sphere. This set of assumptions needs to be modified in three ways: firstly, we need to distinguish between National Socialist policy and legislation on the one hand, and its effect or realization on the other; secondly, we need to distinguish between the different targets (social groups, individuals and institutions) of that legislation; and finally, we need to be clear that the Nazis had only limited success in eradicating the private means of literary education and self-cultivation. The central assumption challenged by all three points is the idea that the state was successful in its penetration of all aspects of civil society. In other words, this set of modifications to the totalitarian thesis does not so much concern the controlled production of literature in the Third Reich, but rather its reception and dissemination. There were numerous instances of the reception of literature taking place beyond and contrary to the dictates and stipulations of official policy. Werner Bergengruen was just one of a number of authors who felt, as a writer and a reader, relatively untouched by the interventionist tactics of the Nazi state. In his account of the genesis of his novel Der Große Tyrann und das Gericht (The Great Tyrant and the Court), which was published in 1935, Bergengruen argues that the control exercised by the various cultural surveillance bodies in the Third Reich was both fragmentary and inefficient, and that the whole system of cultural surveillance soon found itself out of touch ('in einer sonderbaren Isolierung') with developments in the cultural sphere. Bergengruen’s account acts as a useful antidote to those historians, both political and literary, who wish to convince us of the ‘unified’ and all-pervasive nature of Nazi control. Bergengruen is often typified as a writer of the ‘inner emigration’, a not unproblematic term coined to describe those writers who felt they could resist, in both senses of the word, the pervasive influence of the state’s policies: who tried, in other words, not only to remain impervious to such policies, but also to inscribe into their fiction, through allusion, allegory and symbol, values that stood, at least implicitly, in direct opposition to those of the regime. In the final analysis, it might be necessary to query the success of this inscribed or covert opposition; encoded messages could only be deciphered by readers in possession of the relevant codes. For other readers, not trained to problematize the ‘surface’ of the text, the implicit moment of political opposition would have gone unregistered.

The existence of the work of the literary emigrants does, however, serve to emphasize one important but frequently overlooked point, namely that any adequate analysis of the success or failure of Nazi intervention in the literary sphere must take into consideration previously installed techniques of reading, which vary across social groups and age differences. There is increasing evidence to show that Nazi literary policy had its greatest successes amongst

19. There is no full-length study of this aesthetic conflict, but for a brief résumé of events and positions see Berthold Hörschelmann’s Art in the Third Reich, London, 1979, pp. 34-6, 55-8.
20. Thus Hans Hinkel, the general secretary of the Reich Chamber of Culture, felt able in 1945 to reverse the previously supportive policy on Fest und Boden (folk and soil) literature; see Noakes and Hird, Nazi, pp. 409-10, which should be compared with Goebbels’s earlier directive, pp. 408-9.

21. See the pamphlet Rückblick auf einen Roman, Wiesbaden, 1961. To prove convincingly that Bergengruen was not a rare exception would require greater documentation that can be provided here. However, the case of Erna Wiechert is yet another example of a writer who felt that the regime, at least in its early days, was sufficiently disorganized in cultural matters to permit the expression of critical views; see her essay ‘Der Dichter und die Jugend’ given as a speech at Munich University in 1936.
22. This is a point very sufficiently discussed by Ralf Schnell in his otherwise excellent Literarische inneres Emigration, 1933-1945, Stuttgart, 1976. One author who does subject the concept of inner emigration to a more detailed theoretical analysis, paying attention to the problems of literary hermeneutics involved, is Gisbert Bergmann; see his Der Kampf um den Leser im Dritten Reich, Worven, 1980, pp. 213-44.
The youth and the very young, groups they specifically targeted.

The difficulty the Nazis encountered in eradicating deeply installed reading assumptions and practices is nowhere better exemplified than in the cases of those individuals and institutions who were able to preserve their own private libraries or, at least, had frequent access to them. Information is understandably scarce concerning this area, and much of it is of an anecdotal nature. The philosopher Wolfgang Harich, for example, who was ten years old when the Nazis took power in 1933, tells of his formative years in the Third Reich and of the decisive influence of the writings of Thomas Mann, to which Harich had access through the continuing existence of his father’s library in spite of the ban put on Mann’s writings in 1936. Harich’s account of his autodidactic contact with forbidden or unverwischte (undesirable) literature is not without retrospective embellishment, or a tendency to idealize Mann; but his point is an important one, namely that reading literature in the Third Reich did not, as is sometimes assumed, commit one to the passive acceptance of the products of the Nazi literary establishment. Harich’s reading experience of Thomas Mann could be applied to the reception of a number of other established writers. The young poet and critic Felix Hattlau, for example, tells in his diary of the importance to him of the works of Kafka and Proust during the war.

The third area in which we must revise the totalitarian thesis relates precisely to the intrinsic nature of the literature published and disseminated during the Third Reich. Here, in response to those critics who insist upon the sui generis nature of ‘Nazi’ literature, a number of points need to be made: firstly, much of the writing valorized and canonized in the ‘Third Reich’ was published well before 1933; secondly, many of the most popular authors of this period continued to publish in Germany after 1945; and thirdly, the Nazis tolerated and in some cases cultivated a good deal of literature which had no affinity with their ideology or policies. These three points, all controversial to varying degrees, would require detailed documentation and careful argumentation to substantiate in a convincing way. But for the purposes of this chapter, a number of more general observations must suffice. We should start by conceding that the advent of the Third Reich did allow the emergence of types of literature which, peculiar to that period, conformed to and openly celebrated the policies and general ideology of the Nazi Party. Examples of this Parteidichtung include both the work of poets such as Heinrich Anacker, Horstben Menzel, Gerhard Schirmann and the leader of the Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth), Baldur von Schirach, and that of the playwrights of the so-called Thingpiel. The latter was a dramatic form prevalent in the early years of the Third Reich, in which plays, frequently of a ritualistic or pseudo-culic nature, were performed in purpose-built amphitheatres, often in front of audiences of up to ten or fifteen thousand people.

Both these subgenres were products of a group that soon became designated as the Junge Mannschaft (Young Crew). This was not a tightly knit school or movement, but rather as ad hoc grouping of writers of similar age and background, idealists in the cause of National Socialism, who had been marginal, not to say unknown, figures in the world of Weimar belles-lettres. They had been party members prior to 1933, and had come to the fore in the early days of Hitler’s chancellorship in order to ‘mobilize’ the population in the direction of the ‘national revolution’. Their work, in both poetry and drama, is interventionist; it propels the reader or audience directly. The poetry is meant to be sung, chanted or recited, around camp fires or during political rallies; the drama is intended to draw the spectator into the spectacle, either literally as a charic respondent, or more metaphorically through emotional or psychic absorption in the ceremony of the drama. It is a literature that hovers between magic and manipulation, and thus represents, as Walter Benjamin would have noted, a fateful blurring of the discursive distinctions between politics and aesthetics.

22. See Peter Aley, Jugendliteratur im Dritten Reich, Görreskol., 1967; and Kaunte-
netsky, Children’s Literature.


24. The Nazis themselves were also aware of this fact in the pronouncements of Will Vesper who, as editor of the Nazi-oriented journal Die neue Literatur, played a major role in directing literary taste in the Third Reich. Vesper was highly indignant that the work of Thomas Mann, Franz Werfel and Jakob Wassermann could be readily bought well after the Nachkriegszeit (postwar). See Berndt, Der Krieg, p. 14.

25. Hattlau is mentioned, and further examples are given, in H.-D. Schiller, ‘De nichtfaschistische Literatur der „Jungen Generation in nationalsozialistischem Deutschland’, in Denkler and Prinz, Literatur im Dritten Reich, pp. 499–503.


29. I am thinking here of the final words to Benjamin’s famous essay ‘Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit’ (1935), in Illuminations, Frankfurt/M., 1961, pp. 148–44. For a more sustained analysis of
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The work of the Junge Mannschaft can justifiably be seen as sui generis; its producers, its ideological content and its modus operandi fully conform to the interventionist goals espoused by the propaganda minister, Goebbels, in his directives to writers and artists in the early years of the regime. Though it had a high profile within the academy of Nazi literature, this literature nevertheless represents quantitatively but a small portion of the literature actually written and published in the Third Reich. Indeed, evidence suggests that it reached its heyday as early as 1936, after which it declined in popularity until it was revived during the war years. The reasons for this, paradoxically, in its very success. The work of the Junge Mannschaft was functional; it was aimed at specific groups of the population, such as youth and the party faithful, into which it sought to instil the militant values of the 'national revolution' on specific occasions during the year (such as national holidays or party rallies). Its task therefore was a limited one, and this it seems to have carried out with conspicuous success. It was part and parcel of the national revolution; once this was officially recognized as having been achieved (in the months following the Röhm Putsch in July 1934), the raison d'être for such a militant type of literature ceased to exist.

What the Nazi cultural apparatus required after that date was a literature that could promote the image of the regime as a stable and respectable government of the conservative centre, based on reason, law and order and political continuity to the public and private institutions of an impoverished and strife-torn Germany. What the Nazis proffered in their policies and election programmes was a reactivation of the traditional German values threatened and partially obliterated by the march of liberal democracy and the 'foreign' spirit of republican politics. It was for this reason that the greatest official encouragement was given not to the writers of the Junge Mannschaft (although their 'idealism' and selfless commitment to the cause continued to demand respect) but to the elder statesmen of the conservative Right, the support of whose middle-

class readership was regarded as essential for the political continuity of the new national government.

The majority of these writers, who had made their reputations long before 1933, were from a generation formed in the apolitical traditions of German culture, and hence did not always openly evince any commitment to the policies or ideology of the Nazi Party, preferring instead to celebrate what they saw as the eternal verities of German Volk and nationhood. Because such a celebration often contained an implicit critique of the modernist ethos supposedly inscribed into the Weimar Republic, they were often brought under the rubric of the 'conservative revolution'. This term was coined in the later years of the Weimar Republic to describe those writers, philosophers and politicians who hoped to achieve the overthrow of the democratic system of government and to replace it, not with a socialist state, but with one founded on the pre-republican values of patriotism, conservatism and even, for some, monasticism.

Amongst the literary representatives of this reactionary grouping we should include Hans Friedrich Blunck, Emil Strauss, Hans Grimm, E. G. Kolbenhuyser, Ina Seidel and Hermann Stehr. Prior to 1933 this was a diverse group of writers, the producers of a sub-current of literature running under the mainstream modernist writing of authors such as Thomas Mann, Alfred Döblin, Robert Musil, Hermann Hesse and others. They were the authors of Heimatromane and Dorfromane (homeland and village novels), historical sagas, nature and religious poetry, war novels and other work that, although marginalized by the progressive publishing houses and journals, nevertheless found a wide reading public in more traditional middle-class circles. It was this social group who felt most threatened by the rapid progress of modernization, which not only put at risk the financial welfare of large sectors of the working and small farming sectors, but also undermined their sense of status and personal worth in the Weimar Republic. The growing support of this social group for the

33. This was not always admitted by a regime that claimed to be in the throes of constructing a classless Volksgeist (community of the people). A fuller analysis of Hitler's social policies and how they squared with the professional and economic realities of the Third Reich can be found in David Schoenbaum, Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, London, 1966.

34. Standard studies of the policies and philosophy of the conservative revolution include Kleist's From Kleesperey, Germany's New Consensus: Its History and the Cultural and Political Debates of the 20th Century, Fink, 1968; and Kurt Sontheimer, Nationalsozialistisches Denken in Deutschland: Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalsozialismus zwischen 1918-1933, Göttingen, 1962.
policies of the Nazis has been well charted. What the writers of the conservative revolution offered to this group — in works such as Hermann Stehr’s *Das Geschlecht der Machter: Romantrilogie einer deutschen Familie* (The Machter Clan: Trilogy of a German Family, 3 vols, 1929–44), Karl Heinz Waggerl’s *Brot* (Bread, 1930), Friedrich Gries’ *Der ewige Acker* (The Eternal Soil, 1930) and Emil Strauss’s *Das Riesenpflanzeng* (The Giant Toy, 1934) — was a fictional world in which the threat of modernization was met and largely overcome by the reinstatement of the Gemeinschaft (community) values of an idealized rural existence. A similar compensation was offered in the war fiction of Werner Beumelburg, E. E. Dwingler and Josef Magnus Wehner. But in the case of the latter group of writers, it was not the ‘softer’ values of rural integration and domestic harmony that were on offer, but the ‘harder’ values of martial prowess, front-line comradeship, and a general idealization of the ethos of military Einsatz (service).

These authors continued publishing in the Third Reich, and it is their writings, rather than those of the Junge Mannschaft, that came to form the canon of Nazi literature. The important point to stress is that even where new titles appeared, the content and style of this literature after 1933 differed in only minor ways from the literature published by the same group prior to 1933. Indeed, for many of these writers of the conservative revolution, new publications were hardly necessary, as was the case with Hans Grimm, the author of the best-selling and politically influential *Voll und Raum* (People without Space, 1926), the majority of these conservative writers were able to sustain both reputation and income through new editions of earlier published works. For such writers, 1933 represented not so much a radical break as a renewed opportunity to occupy more central positions within the literary life of the nation — to become, in short, lionized and canonized figures within the literary establishment. Few, in fact, joined the Nazi Party; indeed like Gottfried Benn, who found himself, as a member of the Prussian Academy of the Arts, an unlikely associate of this group, few seem to have even bothered to familiarize themselves with the contents of the Nazi political platform. They were fellow-travellers of the radical Right, and the perpetrators of a massive *traision des clercs*; but they can only be typified as ‘Nazi’ from the point of view of their willing occupancy of high office, which helped lend the Nazi state a certain legitimacy, and not from the point of view of their literary production.

The second set of overlaps and continuities between Nazi and non-Nazi areas of literary production concerns the continuing publishing record of canonized Nazi authors in the post-war period. This is a vexed and controversial subject; the essential issues became obscured by the political rhetoric brought forth in the subsequent Cold War between East and West. Once again, it is important not to overstate the matter and claim that nothing changed for these authors of the radical Right after 1945; on the contrary, all went from positions of power and prestige to positions of marginalization. But remain they did. Many, such as E. E. Dwingler, Werner Beumelburg and Paul Alverdes, continued to write and publish new fiction; others, such as Hans Grimm, were content simply to oversee the republication of earlier work, which in many cases reappeared in the form of a collected edition. To be sure, these writers were more circumspect in voicing their previous political views; positions were modified, anti-liberal sentiments mollified, and explicit conservative rhetoric largely abandoned. Some, such as Ernst Jünger, even undertook a complete revision of all earlier fiction, expurgating the more trenchant expositions of previously nationalist creeds.

On the other hand, little was taken back; one looks in vain for any expression of remorse or admission of complicity. And even when this takes place, as in the case of Hans Friedrich Blunck or the nationalist critic Paul Fechter, the *mea culpa* is often hedged by references to the pitfalls of political inexperience and a regrettable surrender to the tide of the times. The same values of the small-town *Unsicher* (underling) are defended and allowed to inform a continuing rejection of the politics of a pluralist society. It was only

36. For an extended treatment of the political role of war fiction in the Weimar Republic see Martin Travers, *German Novels on the First World War and their Ideological Implications, 1918–1933*, Stuttgart, 1982.
37. This is according to the account given by Benn in his autobiography, *Doppel- leben: Zwei Selbstzeugnisse*, Wiesbaden, 1950.
39. This is the case with the most recent Klett edition of his Werke. For a highly enlightening account of this process of self-expurgation see Ulrich Böhm, *Faschingsfeier bei Ernst Jünger*, Meisenheim am Glan, 1972.
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the noted appenbalsch of the Nazi state like Hans Johst who remained subject to Schreibverbote (literary prohibition) in the post-war period. 41

This brings us to the third point that needs to be made about the nature of literary production in the Third Reich. It is often assumed by literary historians and scholars working within the assumptions of the totalitarian thesis that the radically changed political conditions brought about by the Machtgreifung (seizure of power) were necessarily reproduced in the cultural and literary sphere: 'new state, new literature' seems to be the catchphrase here. It is an interpretation which is not only erroneous but, unhappily, close to the National Socialists' own view of things. 42 As I have tried to show above, even if we focus on those literary groupings that were granted canonical status in the Third Reich, the case for claiming them as purely 'Nazi' is not a strong one. But if we turn our attention to the general picture of literary production at this time, and examine the political proclivities of the great bulk of literature in circulation between 1933 and 1945, we shall have to conclude that the advent of the Nazi regime changed far less than is generally assumed in the reading habits of the nation.

This is not to deny that the Nazi intervention into the institutional terrain of cultural and literary production was not a radical one; it is undeniable that the construction of regulative bodies such as the Reichskulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture) and the Amt Rosenberg (Rosenberg Office), which sought to control both production and dissemination in the Third Reich, had a decisive impact on the literary life of the nation. The result of these checks and controls was the elimination of whole schools, styles and even genres of writing. Literature with a clear liberal or left-wing bias, or with stylistic affinities with any of the various modernisms, could no longer be published or openly discussed. For this reason it is understandable that most literary historians - who tend to equate the move of literature in the twentieth century with the progress of experimental, avant-garde or, to adopt a phrase from the world of film criticism, 'art-house' literature - should seek to stress the totalizing effect of the Nazi intervention into the cultural

41. Perhaps the classic study of the continuing presence of National Socialist sympathies in the post-war period is Heinz Brüggen, Der Schoß des frihhab hoch ... : Nazionsitische, militaristische, nationalistische Literatur und Publizistik in der bundestheorie, Frankfurt/M, 1965.
42. This proximity of views is brought about, it must be quickly added, not by any political sympathy but as the consequence of the application of a certain methodology.

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sphere. Here the line is that all great writers left in a mass exodus in 1933, whilst those that decided to stay either went into inner emigration or were condemned to silence. It is a picture familiar to anyone conversant with the secondary material on the subject. 43 Such a view neglects, however, an important 'middle' stratum of literature lying between 'Nazi' literature proper (however that is interpreted) and the writings of the inner emigrants. This stratum consists of the great mass of 'everyday' literature: novels, plays, poetry and short stories which exhibit no evident concern for political policies but understand themselves as having a diverting, entertaining or amusing function - in short, the 'bread-and-butter' offerings of all but the most minority-based avant-garde publishing houses prior to, during and since the Third Reich. The range of this material was enormous: domestic fiction, adventure stories, biographies, humour, travelogues, nature poetry and even detective fiction. 44

Certain authors within this popular mode were, indeed, ideologues of the new state. For example, the journalist and cultural commentator Friedrich Sieburg published a number of travelogues throughout the 1930s in which criteria drawn from the foreign policies of the National Socialists are clearly implemented. 45 Countries such as Portugal and Japan, with their new and 'vital' systems of government, are valorized over countries like England, whose days as a world power are held to be numbered. But Sieburg is a rare case within this literature. On the whole, the writings of Hans Fallada, Erich Kästner, Heinrich Spoerl and Erwin Petzold (to name the better-known writers) carefully avoid the explicitly political; the goals, different in each case, are diversion, compensation and consolation. It is a body of work that has generally been overlooked in previous studies of writing in the Third Reich.

43. This is how Gerhard Schoobenbuerer describes the effect of the Nazi Machtgreifung of 1933: 'The emigrants included thousands of scientists, including many Nobel prize winners, actors and producers, a large part of the elite of the German theatre, writers and journalists, including almost all authors of world fame. The representatives of literary and intellectual Germany turned their backs on the new regime. Many fled because they saw their life, freedom or existence threatened, but not a few left the country because they were not prepared to sell their conscience and convictions.' Arturs gegen Hitler: Persecution, Exile, Restarmer, Bonn, 1984, p. 8.5.
44. Recent work on the German cinema has come to recognize the existence of this broad area of 'popular' or 'everyday' culture. See Arthur Rabenalt, Film im Zwischten: über den unpolemischen Film des Dritten Reiches und die Begrenzung des sozialen Anspruchs, Hildesheim, 1978.
45. See, for example, his Notor Portugal: Bildnis eines alten Landes, Frankfurt/M, 1937.
because it is a literature that does not unambiguously fall into either the pro-Nazi or the anti-Nazi camp, and hence cannot be recognized by those critics working within the totalitarian thesis. A comprehensive account of the work produced by the writers of this 'middle ground' of literature has not been attempted to date, and cannot be attempted here. But such an account is essential if we are to understand the attractions of Fascism, and, more specifically, if we are to explain why the National Socialists met with such little resistance to their seizure of power in 1933. We have been informed in great detail about the control exercised by the Nazis over writers in the Third Reich, about the successes of the propaganda machine, about the processes of Gleichschaltung, and about the systematic persecution of individuals; in short, about the imposition of Fascism from above. This has tended to produce a picture of a nation kept in a state of political and psychological bondage, the despairing victims of a highly instrumentalized irrationality. We have heard less about the emergence of Fascism from below, of Nazism as something if not actively desired then at least deeply tolerated because, far from representing the breakthrough of demonic forces, it actually brings into play and consolidates values and desiderata that are part of shared subjectivities which exist in non-Fascist societies as well. In short, the existence of this 'middle ground' of literature in the Third Reich testifies to the perpetual possibility of Fascism.

It is for this reason that we need to look again at the apparently 'apolitical' nature of much of this 'middle-ground' or 'popular' literature. We might begin by asking questions about the implications of the compensatory function of such literature, particularly in a state benef of many of what we would now call civil rights. In works such as Erich Kästner's Drei Männer im Schnee (Three Men in the Snow, 1934) and Edlef Koppen's Vier Mauern und ein Dach (Four Walls and a Roof, 1934), the reader is offered a world where political impotence in the real world is sublimated into a Märchen (fairy tale) social world in which the private tasks of self-cultivation and material advancement are exalted. In such works, the pervasive feeling is of res non nisi agitare, of the main course of public affairs developing beyond not only personal control but also personal relevance.

More seriously, much of this 'middle-ground' literature is predicated upon a series of assumptions about the 'normal' basis of social behaviour which, if not co-terminous with the ideology of Nazism, are at least conducive to it. This area is both politically controversial and theoretically obscure, but it is worth arguing that in their descriptions of domestic hierarchies and the role of women, in their valorization of financial and property values and in their emphasis upon charismatic individualism, such works as Hans Fallada's Wir hatten mal ein Kind (And We Had a Child, 1934), Ernst Pfenzoldt's Kleiner Edenwurm (Little Earthworm, 1934) and Conrad Moschler's Sucher und Versucher (Seeker and Tempter, 1935) interpellate the reader, in their different ways, as an at least willing accomplice in the politics of Fascism proper.

Earlier in this chapter I asked the question: 'What would be a view of literature in the Third Reich which is constructed beyond the methodology of the totalitarian thesis?' I have tried to answer this question in a schematic way, which has often run the risk of an overly polemical painting in black and white. I should perhaps stress in conclusion that I have been my intention not totally to undermine or replace the assumptions of the totalitarian thesis, but rather to revise and supplement them. I have accordingly placed the emphasis upon the weaknesses of the totalitarian thesis, what it neglects or represses, rather than upon its strengths, which are well known and have been worked up into a historiographical orthodoxy in the secondary literature on the topic. It is perhaps best to think of the two competing models as Weberian ideal types which, when applied to a series of empirical phenomena, allow different objective to emerge, and different sets of questions to be answered.

Unless, however, the findings of the set of questions aired in this chapter are admitted into standard accounts of the Third Reich, the attractions of Fascist politics must remain inherently irrational and impervious to systematic reconstruction, their sources the barely fathomable workings of parapsychology. Were we to accept this as

46. This corpus of literature is simply not on the agenda for Wolf, Schonau and Loewy, but it is disappointing to discover that it does not warrant even a minor coverage in Denki, Liebetrau, Literature im Dritten Reich, and Bokum and Bucet, Nationalsozialismus.

47. This is the thesis represented by Vondung, amongst others, in his Magie und Manipulation.

48. It is an easy matter to reconstruct these values from within the text, but the concepts of the Erwartungshorizont and the implied reader, developed in the reception theories of Jelas and liter, provide at least a starting point. For a systematic analysis of their approaches see Rainer Warting (ed.), Rezeptionsästhetik: Theory and Practice, Munich, 1979.

49. For a modest amount of theory see Max Weber, 'The Ideal Type', in Kenneth Thompson and Jeremy Tunnell (eds), Sociological Perspectives, Harmondsworth, 1971, pp. 63-7.
being the case we would, unhappily, be close to compensating Fascism for its political and military defeats by granting it, retrospectively, a methodological victory within the academy of historiographical explanation.

The Ritual and Stage Management of National Socialism

Techniques of Domination and the Public Sphere

WOLFGANG BENZ

The rule of National Socialism was founded on the ecstasy of the ruled. The conquest, exercise and consolidation of power involved, to an extent unrealized by any other regime, the devising of institutions and mechanisms whose purpose was to transport the populace into a form of permanent intoxication and to generate and maintain a climate of mass hysteria – a climate in which a constant, unreflected acclamation of the regime thrived.

The ideology of National Socialism was meagre in the extreme, in essence confining itself to several stereotypes of the enemy, the most well known being the Jew and the Bolshevik; to the propagation of Social Darwinism and abstruse racial and hereditary theories; and to the postulates of an aggressive all-German nationalism, namely the acquisition of colonial territories in Eastern Europe and aspirations to the status of a world power. Added to this, as a substitute for the building blocks of a unified political, economic and social programme, was the glorification of rural life, the cult of militarism, the propagation of the master race doctrine, and the mystification of the German past, Fatherland, native soil, folklore, custom and tradition – however these might be understood. These ideological set pieces, which could be arranged arbitrarily, were constantly deployed in daily political life in the form of slogans: Blut und Boden (blood and soil), Volk ohne Raum (a people without space), Fronterlebnis (front experience), Blutzeuge (martyr), alter Kämpfer (old warrior), Volksgemeinschaft (community of the people).

The most important element of National Socialist ideology was the identification of Hitler, the Nazi movement and the German

This chapter has been translated by Joe O’Donnell.