

The Cathedral of Ice: Terministic Screens, Tyrannizing Images, Visual  
Rhetoric, and Nazi Propaganda Strategies

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### Abstract

Many aspects of the Nazis' methods of persuasion, especially the rhetoric and psychology of printed propaganda and the speeches of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels have been the subjects of intensive study. Oddly, the subject of technology applied as an instrument or supplement to propaganda, or the rhetorical contributions of technological devices, has very little representation in Nazi studies, despite the significance it played in their rise to power.

This thesis attempts to fill that gap. Specifically, I will be treating lights and lighting, sound and music, the Nuremberg Party Rallies, radio, and cinema from a rhetorical perspective. The rhetorical framework I have constructed to analyze these elements relies on a synthesis of Richard Weaver's Tyrannizing Image and Kenneth Burke's Terministic Screen concepts. Burke provides an important connection to visual rhetoric while Weaver provides links to culture, myth, and history.

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to show how the rhetorical theories of Kenneth Burke and Richard Weaver can be used to explain the Nazis' persuasion tactics. Aristotle demanded that rhetors "know all available means of persuasion," and obviously, technological devices have rhetorical value. To prove this, I have relied as much as possible on primary sources, especially the autobiographies of former Nazis and Hitler's Mein Kampf, but the Hitler biographers (Joachim Fest, Robert Waite, and John Toland) have also proved their usefulness.

While this thesis is not an exhaustive treatment of the subject, it at least sows the field with seeds of thought. I do not address either the printed propaganda of Nazism or the speeches of Hitler or Goebbels. I examine instead the rhetorical devices and methods used by the Nazis to reinforce these types of persuasion.

## Preface

"The evil that men do lives after them." Such was the case with Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, and so it is with Adolf Hitler. Fifty-three years after his death, his name still inspires fear, hatred, and guilt all over the world. His incredible rise to power from virtual obscurity to the mighty seat of the Führer is the story of a man, his conviction, and his unconquerable will. But it is also a story with a bad ending. Half of a century has passed since Adolf Hitler left this world, but the hate and fear he caused remain as fiery embers in a pile of ash and debris.

The time has come when we must, with all the powers of our intellect, come to an understanding of how it all began. As Richard Taylor, the author of a book on Soviet and Nazi film has so eloquently put it, "The past does not die. We must contemplate it and know how to recognize the future in it" (10).

During the course of my research for this project, I found that the language used by most mainstream scholars when discussing Hitler is almost always negative. While this is understandable, I feel that these emotions may cloud the researcher's mind, blinding him to the true threat of Nazism. As Sir Neville Henderson, British ambassador to Germany before the Second World War writes, "Ideological hatreds can be as dangerous to the peace of mankind as the ambitions of a dictator" (17).

The Germans were not hate machines. They were human beings caught in the Nazi tempest. They believed that their nation was falling apart, that their people were in grave danger, and that Hitler and the Nazis were their only hope for salvation. They were a people without hope; the Nazis swore that they would rise again. They were a people without faith; the Nazis provided a scapegoat and restored their confidence.

They were a people without a leader; the Nazis gave them a psychopathic god.

One of the goals for this thesis is to at the subject matter with objectivity and dispassion. The morality of Nazism is not at question here. Few know the hearts of men, but with careful analysis we can hope to learn their mind and methods.

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## Introduction

If anyone had cause to fear for his life on August 31, 1946, it was Albert Speer, former Minister of Armaments and War Production under Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. He was "Hitler's man," the designer of projects that surpassed even Hitler's "mammoth dreams" (Schmidt 44). The Nuremberg War Tribunal's charges leveled against him meant almost certain death--men far less important than Albert Speer had already met their doom. Unlike so many other prominent Nazi leaders that faced that vengeful court, however, Speer did not attempt to deny his guilt by claiming to be a loyal officer who had just followed orders. Instead, he made a daring and seemingly suicidal move that would save his life. The former "Architect of the Reich" was the only top Nazi leader that confessed and took full responsibility for his actions (Speer xv). The court had before them the man who had kept the war dragging on even when most of Germany was reduced to rubble, the same cunning individual an English newspaper claimed "was more important to the German war effort than Hitler himself" (Speer xvi). He received a twenty-year sentence; just long enough to miss the beginning of the Space Age.

Speer's speech is intriguing for many reasons other than the dire context behind it. He describes aspects of the Third Reich that only a German who experienced them could describe. For the first time, the world's attention was directed towards the critical role technology played in the rise of Nazism. He talked of radios and loudspeakers that deprived eighty million Germans of "independent thought" (Tribunal 405). Hitler was one of the first German politicians to see the "symbolic and practical" importance of campaigning by plane and radio (Stokes 124). Speer's final address to the Nuremberg War Tribunal is a

warning to the world about the threat of technology, especially when it is used to supplement and intensify verbal persuasion.

"Hitler's dictatorship differed in one fundamental point from all its predecessors in history," Speer declared to his judges. He defined the Third Reich as the "first dictatorship in the present period of modern technical development, a dictatorship which made complete use of all technical means in a perfect manner for the domination of its own people" (Speer 405). The time has come to heed Speer's warning: "Today the danger of being terrorized by technocracy threatens every country in the world . . . The more technical the world becomes, the more necessary is the promotion of individual freedom and the individual's awareness of himself as a counterbalance" (406). Eric Rentschler writes, "The Third Reich fostered the modern era's first full-blown media culture, strategically instrumentalizing audiovisual fantasyware," (38). The Nazis, he argues, wasted no time "introducing radios into almost every household, developing television technology, [and] staging political events as grand photo opportunities" (Rentschler 38). The fact that the term "psychological warfare" was coined in Germany was no coincidence (Wright 66). To understand the rise of Nazism we should investigate their propaganda methods; we must understand the role technology played in the rise of Nazism.

Many aspects of the Nazis' methods of persuasion, especially the rhetoric and psychology of printed propaganda and the speeches of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, have been the subjects of intensive (and even exhaustive) scholarly and popular studies. To name a few, George Mosse (The Nationalization of the Masses), George Gilbert (The Psychology of Dictatorship), Serge Chakotin (The Rape of the Masses), and Ian Kershaw (The Hitler Myth) have published substantial works on the subject. What a researcher can expect to find when approaching the

"how" of the Nazis' rise to power are countless articles emphasizing Hitler's skills as an orator, analyses of the temperament of the Germans (usually with an emphasis on their attitudes toward the *Versailles* treaty), and complex psychological studies delving into their mental conditioning by the disasters of World War I. Karl Bracher was one of the first to recognize that Nazi Germany was the first dictatorship to take place in a highly-developed industrial society (114). Oddly, the subject of technology applied persuasively, or the rhetorical contributions of technological devices, has very little representation in Nazi studies, despite the significance it played in the Nazis' rise to power. Speer's warning has remained, for the most part, unheeded.

Many notable scholars have asked themselves how Adolf Hitler, a man with very little formal education and few connections could rise to the incredible power and supreme authority of the Führer. Historians like Robert Waite and Joachim Fest have looked deeply into Hitler's life and mind to find the answer. How did this "painter from Linz," as he once styled himself, rise from virtual anonymity to the greatest height of fame and infamy? Ironically, Hitler was indeed a master artist, but not of brushes and canvases as we think about them. Rather, his brush was his excellent knowledge of speech, symbols, and propaganda, and his canvas was the hearts and minds of the German people.

Unless one is content to blame fate, or divine intervention, we must look to history to find the answer to this question—but not just its raw facts. In an abstruse paragraph of Mein Kampf, Hitler argued that learning history is a search for the methods and causes of what we later perceive as "historical events" (14). This is precisely what I intend to do in this thesis, with the help of Kenneth Burke and Richard

Weaver. The five chapters of this study are not meant to be the beginning and the end. They are intended to open up a new line of research about a rather complex phenomenon. The first chapter examines the influences upon the Nazis' persuasion methods: the church, opera, and military tradition. The second chapter shows those methods in action at the height of the Nazis' power. Specifically, the chapter discusses the Nuremberg Party Rallies, German cinema, and radio. The next chapter brings us to an examination of the German people's reactions to those tactics. The testimonies of women, Hitler Youth, common citizens, and members of the Nazi Elite will demonstrate just how widespread and effective the methods of persuasion were. The fourth chapter sets up the rhetorical framework. Kenneth Burke's Terministic Screen theory and Richard Weaver's concepts of the Tyrannizing Image and Myth will provide a lens for examining the Nazi phenomenon. In the fifth chapter, we will apply the theories to the data, showing how they can be helpful when discerning the role of technology in the Nazis' rise to success.

I have two goals to accomplish in this thesis. My ultimate purpose is to prove the value of rhetorical theory in understanding certain historical phenomena. Specifically, I wish to analyze the Nazis' nonverbal propaganda methods with the rhetorical theories of Weaver and Burke. The Terministic Screen is a useful concept for understanding nonverbal rhetoric, and the Tyrannizing Image provides a link to history and myth. The integration of these two concepts provides scholars with an excellent rhetorical structure for deciphering the Nazis' methods. In the end, I hope to prove that, by nature of its symbolic character, the Nazis' nonverbal rhetoric (with an emphasis on their technology) was a powerful supplement to and magnifier of their other propaganda.

## **Chapter One: Influences on the Nazis' Methods of Persuasion**

Perhaps one of the best sources to examine when considering the Nazis' rise to power is Mein Kampf, the book of their leader, Adolf Hitler. This book is widely held as a travesty of literature, a badly written and poorly organized work. It is alleged to contain 164,000 errors in German grammar and syntax (Waite 72). Still, while Hitler's prose is a bit garbled in places and many of his metaphors farcical, the book reveals a vivid picture of the Führer's mind and his plans for Germany's future. In the tradition of an Aristotle or a Machiavelli, Hitler adopts a direct, frank style when discussing his rather brutal ideas on mob oratory and political persuasion. These revealing passages concerning methodology are invaluable to scholars studying the Nazis' propaganda methods. From Mein Kampf we can glean the three important sources that influenced Hitler's conception of persuasion. These are the Roman Catholic Church, the opera (specifically that of Richard Wagner), and the popular German military tradition.

### **The Roman Catholic Church**

The Roman Catholic Church was one of the earliest influences on Hitler. Indeed, it may quite possibly be the most important. John Toland, a Hitler biographer, tells us that Hitler often draped the kitchen apron of the maid across his shoulders and imitated his abbot, delivering sermons from atop a chair (12). Waite writes that Hitler dreamed of becoming an abbot as a boy, but as the Führer, raised his sights and desired to become "a political Pope with an apostolic succession" (29). Ironically, Hitler managed to live out this fantasy, though instead of a Pope preaching the sermon of love, he became the Führer, and preached the sermon of hate.

In Mein Kampf, Hitler mentions how his youth gave him "an excellent opportunity of intoxicating [himself] with the solemn

splendor of a magnificent church festival" (6). It was not the message of the sermon that so intrigued him, however--It was the spiritual atmosphere of the cathedrals that captured his imagination. He was especially observant of the effect that "lighted candles, incense and censers" had on his emotions (Hitler 475). The purpose of these effects, Hitler writes, is to "weaken [the] force of resistance" in the audience (475). The mystery and wonder invoked by the flickering fires and smoldering incense allowed the young Hitler to escape into a world of heroic illusion, the "never-forgotten ancestral home" he refers to in *Mein Kampf* (13). Later, when he worked with Albert Speer to design the settings for the Nuremberg Party rallies, he recaptured this effect with giant bonfires, torches, and Klieg lights. William L. Shirer, an important C.B.S. correspondent who was living in Germany during the Nazi period, recognized this aspect of the Nazis' persuasion methods:

I'm beginning to comprehend some of the reasons for Hitler's astounding success. Borrowing a chapter from the Roman Church, he is restoring pageantry and colour and mysticism to the drab lives of twentieth century Germans. (Shirer 18)

In his fascinating memoirs, Alfons Heck, a member of the Hitler Youth, writes that "no one who ever attended a Nuremberg Reichsparteitag [Party Rally] can forget the similarity to religious mass fervor it exuded" (25). Obviously, Hitler and the Nazis had successfully integrated the mystic elements of the Roman Catholic Church into their persuasion strategy.

Although Hitler may have held high respect for the Church's methods of persuasion, he had very little appreciation for the truly personal, spiritual nature of Christianity. He reveals his sentiments in a number of places in Mein Kampf. He clearly states his opinion of Judaism: "The Mosaic religion is nothing other than a doctrine for the preservation of the Jewish race" (150). As far as Christianity is

concerned, however, we must look a little deeper. In the chapter of Mein Kampf entitled "Religious Conditions," Hitler writes that "for the political man, the value of a religion must be estimated . . . by the virtue of a visibly better substitute" (267). If this substitute "appears to be lacking," then only a fool would attempt to "demolish it" (Hitler 267). One wonders if Hitler considered National Socialism to be a visibly better substitute. In the same chapter, Hitler writes that "we cannot sharply enough attack those wretched crooks who would like to make religion an implement to perform political or rather business services for them" (268). Speer gives some interesting quotations from Hitler on the subject in his memoirs. "It's been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. Why didn't we have the religion of the Japanese, who regard sacrifice for the Fatherland as the highest good?" (cited in Speer, 96). Speer explains that while he ordered Goering and Goebbels to remain active members of the Catholic Church, Hitler himself had no "real attachment to it" (96). August Kubizek, a teenage friend of Hitler, writes that while Hitler showed no contempt for the Church, he never attended (80). Kubizek thinks that Hitler was only active in the church during his youth: "As long as the little Adolf remained close to his mother, he was completely influenced by her devout behavior and receptive to all the grandeur and beauty of the church" (80). Sir Neville Henderson writes that "Hitler in his speeches constantly referred to the Almighty . . . [Hitler] was pro-Hitler and anti-Christian" (69). Whatever Hitler's later religious convictions, we can rest assured that he had been exposed long enough to the Church to appreciate its persuasive aspects.

#### **German Opera**

The second influence critical to the Nazis' persuasion strategy was the operas of Richard Wagner. As Joachim Fest points out, many have

perceived the "showy, colorful ritual of the Catholic Church" in the Nationalist Socialist spectacles. According to Fest, however, the heritage of Richard Wagner is equally evident (22). Hitler reveled in Wagner's majestic operas—the "charged emotionality of this music seems to have served him as a means of self-hypnosis" (Fest 22). Another historian, Robert G. L. Waite, writes that when Hitler visited an opera house, he "no longer felt lonely and outlawed and misjudged by society. He was intoxicated and bewitched. He was transported into the blissful regions of German antiquity" (64). Kubizek calls Wagner's operas "the ideal world which was the lofty goal of all [Hitler's] endeavors" (192). Kubizek, who regularly attended operas with the young Hitler, describes Hitler as following all opera performances with "glistening eyes" (7). "Nothing could compete with the great mystical world," Kubizek writes, "that the Master [Wagner] conjured up for us" (187). In Mein Kampf, Hitler claims to have seen Wagner's Lohengrin for the first time at age twelve (16). "My youthful enthusiasm for the master of Bayreuth [Wagner] knew no bounds," he writes (17).

Just as it was not the content of the sermons that interested Hitler in the church, it was not the music that kept him enthralled with the opera house. After watching a Wagner opera, Hitler would speak exclusively on questions of stage technique or the character of production; the music meant little more to him than "an extremely effective acoustic means to heighten theatrical effects" (Fest 520). Kubizek, an eager music student, confessed that his knowledge of music was far superior to Hitler's; on the other hand, Kubizek emphatically agreed with Hitler's comments on casting or stage technique (Kubizek 7).

While Hitler was enjoying these operas, he was thinking of ways to capture their magic and adapt it to his own purposes. What he

learned from Wagner becomes very evident in the Nuremberg Party Rallies, where the "splendiferous theatrical liturgy was carried to its ultimate point" (Fest 512). Indeed, Hitler claims to have learned the advantage of giving speeches at night to his experiences at the theater: "A man . . . will be able to establish at once that the impression made by the performance at three in the afternoon is not as great as that made in the evening." (Hitler 474). "At night," Hitler writes, men "succumb more easily to the dominating force of a single will" (475). It is of critical importance here to realize that Richard Wagner was the first composer ever to darken the audience area during opera performances, beginning in 1876 ("Stage Lighting"). Of course, Hitler had experienced first hand the psychological impact of darkness and would take it into consideration when he scheduled his speeches.

### **Militarism**

The third influence Hitler was subjected to in his youth and early adulthood was the strong German and Austrian military tradition. Goose-stepping soldiers in full military regalia were no uncommon or unpopular sight during Kaiser Wilhelm II's rule (Waite 292). Dressed in their gaudy uniforms, medals, and ribbons, former officers of the war were cheered by the populace when they appeared for royal funerals or political demonstrations. When the Weimar Republic removed the glamour of militarism from the government, it lost the respect and confidence of most Germans. The spirit of military heroism impressed Hitler so much that in Mein Kampf he laments the fact that he was not born a hundred years earlier, when "a man was still worth something, quite apart from business" (67). Speaking on the frequent military parades he saw in Vienna, Hitler writes, "the insignia of former imperial glory . . . still seem to cast a magic spell" (13). In 1933, Hitler said that the Third Reich would not have been possible without the aid of the

army and its popular traditions (Waite 292). Austria had the same enthusiasm for militarism; its army was "the chief supporter and maintainer of the monarchy" (Jászi 141). Certainly, Hitler received a full dose of military influence during most of his life. The ideas he borrowed from the military, such as uniforms, standards, flags, parades, decorations, and rank, all had very important parts to play in Nazi ceremonies of all kinds.

Waite vividly describes the influence the imperial army exerted on German society. "Military standards were reflected [even] in institutions that would seem least likely to cultivate soldierly values," Waite writes, listing the university and home parlors as examples. The military's standards and values, Waite argues, were carried over into civilian social etiquette, imperial hierarchy, rank, and status (293). The military has been called the "cement" that bound together German society; the great importance the society placed on military excellence is hard to underestimate (Waite 294). Shirer comes to a very interesting conclusion in his Nuremberg journal:

All those Americans and English who thought that German militarism was merely a product of the Hohenzollerns—from Frederick the Great to Kaiser Wilhelm II—made a mistake. It is rather something ingrained in all Germans. (22)

The fact that Hitler volunteered to serve Germany during the first world war, and receiving the Iron Cross for his efforts, is no small indication of his own enthusiasm for militarism. But the question is not resolved here.

Although Hitler gives the impression in Mein Kampf that he always appreciated the army, Kubizek gives another story. "When I knew Hitler," Kubizek writes, "he was utterly adverse to anything to do with war or soldiers" (77). According to Kubizek, Hitler was extremely jealous and bitter towards the young officers who always flirted with

Stefanie, an early love interest (77). In many conversations with Kubizek, Hitler launched into vicious tirades against conscription.

Of course, we can assign this anti-militarism to a number of factors. First, at the time Hitler was living in Austria, it was under the rule of the Hapsburg monarchy. Hitler had little love for this regime, and always considered himself a German rather than an Austrian. When the First World War erupted, Hitler made a special effort to enter a Bavarian regiment despite his Austrian citizenship (Fest 64). Perhaps Hitler merely resented these soldiers because they were Austrian and supported the monarchy. The fact that the Austrian army was made up of many nationalities, many of whom were Slavic, could also have helped shape Hitler's opinion. Oscar Jászi writes that the Austrian officers were filled with "an exclusive Habsburg patriotism" and were encouraged to foster a spirit of "apolitical nationalism" in the troops (144). There was also some serious controversy within the army over which language it should adopt (Jászi 144). Undoubtedly, Hitler would have had little love for this state of affairs. Regardless of his feelings at the time, however, Hitler's attitude towards militarism had changed from one extreme to the other after the First World War.

### **Conclusion**

The Church, opera, and military tradition were all necessary components in the forming of Hitler's persuasion strategies. Significantly, the contribution of all three of these elements was required to produce a truly satisfactory rally; excluding one of them from the trinity could quite possibly have disrupted the overall sensation of a Hitler speech. For example, if Hitler had based the nature of his rallies solely on the gloom he took from the theater, he might well have sent his audience into slumber (the soporific effect of operas on disinterested people has been the subject of countless

jokes). Instead, he brought over the mystery and awe of the church with the enforced participation and rigor of a military ritual. To counter the dull routine of a precise military march, he suggested something deeper and more spiritual with fires and lighting effects inspired by the Church. To add punch to the mythic solemnity of the Church aspects, he implemented impressive and often bewitching theatrics. One could say with some truth that for his purpose, Hitler took the best aspects of all three of these components and combined them to create a tremendously successful method of persuasion. This trinity of staging served Hitler and the Nazis extremely well in their rise to power.

## Chapter Two: Technology and Nazi Persuasion Tactics

Obviously, the persuasive components of the Church, opera, and military have existed for quite some time. How were Hitler and the Nazis able to merge and use them so successfully? The answer might be located in the economic context. The Nazis had one important advantage over the Russian and the Italian dictatorships: advanced technology. The Nazis realized the potential of their technology early on, and were quick to seize its propaganda value. In an early government directive in 1933, Hitler summarized his plans for the future regarding propaganda and technology:

In relation to the political decontamination of our public life, the government will embark upon a systematic campaign to restore the nation's moral and material health. The whole educational system, theater, film, literature, the press, and broadcasting—all these will be used to this end. They will be harnessed to help preserve the eternal values which are part of the integral nature of our people. (Welch 40).

Goebbels was particularly enthusiastic about the potential of radio to transmit the Nazi message to the German public. His mass-produced, inexpensive radio set that could only tune to certain frequencies, the "People's Set," was delivering Nazi propaganda to over nine million listeners by 1938 (Bergmeier 8). With a program of propagandistic talks, classical music, and carefully edited news summaries, the radio became a valuable weapon in the Nazis' propaganda arsenal. Because of its Blitzkrieg-like potential to quickly effect a large area, Goebbels coined it the "mind-bomber" (Bergmeier 3). The cinema was likewise a crucial part of Nazi propaganda. David Welch writes that the Nazi leaders considered film the "most highly esteemed" means of exerting control over the mass's opinion (1). In Mein Kampf, Hitler discusses the propagandistic advantage of pictures to texts: "The picture brings them in a much briefer time, I might almost say at

one stroke, the enlightenment which they obtain from written matter only after arduous reading" (470). Hitler considered pictorial representations much more effective than textual-based propaganda. In Mein Kampf he compares the two: "The picture in all its forms up to the film has greater possibilities [than written propaganda]" (470). Film opened up new visual and aural possibilities for propaganda.

The Nazis had many ways of getting their films to the masses. Laws were passed to force German schools to show Nazi educational films (Welch 25), and the RMVP (Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda) established a network of 1500 mobile film units to expose rural populations to their cinema (Welch 28). The popularity of these rural shows was so great they "offset the influence of the church" in most areas (Welch 27).

The fact that Hitler and the Nazis were quick to implement these gifts of science may well have been the key to their success. Hitler and Goebbels thought that the ideological example set by men like Field Marshal Hindenburg, who said that "A decent soldier should fight with only a weapon in his hand," was hopelessly obsolete and ineffective (Bergmeier 1). If the Nazis were to successfully cross the Germans' rivers of resistance, they must know and use all available means of persuasion—and that included the exciting new bridges built by technology.

To describe Hitler's goals for setting the stage for a speech, we must return to the Nazis' trinity of persuasion. Inspired by the impressive theatrics of Richard Wagner's operas, he strove for darkness, mystery, and heroic imagery, distinctly preferring to give his speeches at night (Fest 513). Touched by the solemn illumination of the great Roman Catholic Cathedrals, he wanted fascinating and eerie lighting effects; his stage designers used searchlights, flickering

torches, fireworks and even colored light shows to arrest the audience's attention and influence their mood. Influenced by the pomp and ritual of military ceremonies, Hitler wanted precise order and the bright symbols of soldiery to bolster up his verbal themes of sacrifice, heroism, and obedience. The themes of Nazi ceremonies—solemnity, devotion, obedience, mystery, destiny, and strength were all borrowed from the Church, the opera, and the military. It was a system that soon proved its effectiveness.

But exactly what role did propaganda play in the Third Reich? Many scholars are surprised to learn of the great differences between Adolf Hitler's and Joseph Goebbels' theories of propaganda. On many points, these two propaganda gurus shared the same convictions. "Propaganda has only one object—to conquer the masses," Goebbels wrote in his Diaries, "Every means that furthers this aim is good; every means that hinders it is bad" (13). This seems quite in line with Hitler's understanding of propaganda; he too believed that propaganda must be addressed "always and exclusively to the masses" (Hitler 78).

Still, Hitler's understanding of "masses" was quite different from Goebbels'. Hitler characterized the people as fickle followers of their emotions. When he writes about the psyche of the great masses in Mein Kampf, he compares them to a "woman, whose psychic state is determined less by grounds of abstract reason than by an indefinable emotional longing for a force which will complement her nature" (42). In other words, what the "people" needed was a simple, direct line of propaganda that required heavy repetition and virtually no abstract reasoning.

Hitler also insisted on a clear separation of "art" from propaganda, seeing no possible correlation between the two (Taylor 163). Posters, for example, were useful only as a means of attracting

people to an exhibition, never as "a substitute for the art on display" (Hitler 179). "It makes me sick when I see political propaganda hiding under the guise of art," he told Tony Van Eyck in a 1933 interview (Welch 44). Unlike Hitler, Goebbels felt that propaganda should infiltrate every aspect of culture, especially art. "The moment a person is conscious of propaganda," Goebbels wrote, "[it] becomes ineffective" (Welch 48). Goebbels felt, for example, that propaganda was more powerful if it remained in the background of a very human setting (Welch 48). Films that conformed to Hitler's specifications, and very blatantly delivered their political message like Triumph of the Will, SA-Mann Brand, Hitlerjunge Quex, and Hans Westmar, were, in Goebbels' opinion, less effective than a film like Jud Süß, an anti-Semitic film which offered some entertainment value as a drama. Taylor writes that Goebbels disliked Triumph of the Will because he feared it could cause a "hostile audience reaction" (163). "We National Socialists do not place any particular value on our SA marching the stage or screen," Goebbels said in a 1933 speech, "their domain is the street" (cited in Taylor 163). Even though Triumph of the Will won the Grand Prix at the Exposition Internationale des Arts et des Techniques in Paris, and he himself awarded it a prestigious German film award, Goebbels still felt that propaganda films should not blatantly glorify the Party itself (Barsam 26). Goebbels saw the propaganda film achieving its ends via association and symbolism, leaving it to the audience to determine the moral of the story. Goebbels reasoned that the message of propaganda should remain in the background, "becoming apparent through human beings" (Welch 44). To put it simply, he wanted Nazi films to show but not tell their propagandistic purpose. Goebbels also found the "relaxation and entertainment" element of popular radio music an irresistible avenue for propaganda (Bergmeier 141). Why should

propaganda be direct, when it could be made into a popular and desirable format for the people? Hitler's cut and dry notion of propaganda clashed strongly with Goebbels' plans to diffuse the message of Nazi propaganda into artistic (and intellectual) channels. Goebbels felt that propaganda should function something like the mythical hydra, striking out at multiple targets, some of which were traditionally considered outside the realm of politics.

The Nazis took propaganda very seriously. In 1934, the Ministry of Propaganda was allowed a £2,000,000 budget, which rose to £4,000,000 in subsequent years (Chakotin 183). This large sum of money allowed the Nazis to develop a very widespread and complex propaganda network.

Identifying and discussing their various means of persuasion requires a careful plan and organization. To this purpose, I have divided this chapter into six sections. In the first three, I will discuss lighting, sound (and radio), and the various military elements the Nazis used to enhance their speeches. The fourth section will cover film. In the last section, I will describe the Nuremberg Party Rallies, a particularly potent example of the power of Nazi propaganda methods in action.

### **Lights and Lighting**

According to historian George Mosse, lights "exerted a clear influence on the presentation of many Nazi ceremonies" (3). From bonfires to the great "Cathedral of Ice" searchlight effect, presented at the 1938 Party Rally, Hitler and the Nazis realized the great potential that lighting effects could have on emotion and made rapid strides to implement them in their political campaigns. The Nazis were enthusiastic masters of pyrotechnics, and often staged impressive fireworks shows after significant campaign speeches to gratify the public's appetite for such displays. While electioneering in

"Thalburg", the Nazis put on the largest fireworks show the town had ever seen (Allen 150). (Thalburg is a pseudonym for a small German town that the historian William Allen studied intensively after the war).

Perhaps the oldest lighting "effect" is fire. The flicker of flames has fascinated mankind since his birth, and the Nazis used it quite liberally to generate the appropriate emotion. "Torches, pyres, and flaming wheels were continually being kindled," Fest writes (513). Alfons Heck, a member of the Hitler Youth, writes in his memories that he was greatly touched by the "flames of a huge bonfire" lit on the center of his division's assembly center (25). The fire, Heck writes, "lent an air of mysticism reminiscent of ancient Teutonic festivals" (25). Heck's mythic association with the Teutons is an important one; I will return to this point later in Chapter Five of this thesis. In his memoirs, Neville Henderson, a British ambassador who visited an SS camp at Nuremberg, describes the experience very vividly:

The camp in the darkness, dimly lit by flares, with the black uniform in the silent background and the skull and crossbones on the drums and trumpets lent the scene a sinister and menacing impression. (55)

The Nazis also manipulated the color of lights to achieve and enhance their political symbolism. Joachim Fest mentions a colored light show the Nazis held for Mussolini. The green, white, and red beams of the Italian national colors danced and collided with the black, white, and red beams of Germany's (503). Apparently, this was a rather expensive and extensive project. "The pavements have been torn up the length of Unter den Linden," the *London Times* of the day reported, "and special cables laid for the electric lighting effects in the planned scheme of the dictators" (September 4, 1937). The fact that the Nazis were willing to pay such high costs for this kind of display shows how critical it was to their propaganda strategy.

Floodlights and searchlights also had their place in many Nazi ceremonies. One of the most famous lighting effects in history, the "Cathedral of Ice," which utilized 150 anti-aircraft searchlights to create a majestic dome of light during the 1938 Nuremberg Party Rally, was perhaps the pinnacle of the Nazis' lighting extravaganzas. I will discuss the "Cathedral" in greater detail in the Nuremberg Party Rally section, but mention of it now illustrates the great importance Nazis placed on lighting effects.

### **Music, Sound Effects, and Radio**

Music and sound effects also had their place at Nazi festivals and ceremonies. Certainly Hitler was interested in opera—almost every Hitler biographer mentions how often he visited the opera to pay homage to Richard Wagner. Fest comments that "music meant little more to [Hitler] than an extremely effective acoustic means to heighten theatrical effects" (520). Waite dedicates a large section in Hitler: The Psychopathic God to comparing the beliefs and personalities of Wagner and Hitler. Hitler devoted a great deal of time to studying Wagner's prose, a great deal of which was nationalistic and anti-Semitic (Waite 103).

Whatever the reasons Hitler loved Wagner, no one can deny that he was fascinated by his stage techniques and adapted many of them to enhance his speeches. In an interesting discussion of the 1938 Nuremberg Party Rally, Serge Chakotin describes the persuasive use of sound during an indoor speech. On a "foundation of Wagnerian music," listeners heard rumbling, slow drum rolls, heavy footfalls, and the rattle and swish of armed masses on the march (88). The Nazis recognized the potential to use aural backdrops to promote various themes. In this case, Chakotin argues that the message was "Germany is on the road to war" (88).

The Nazis realized the utility of song early on, and created patriotic songs for almost every occasion. "No political organization in the history of the world sang as much as the Hitler Youth," Heck wrote in his autobiography, going on to say that such songs were "a tool to bind us together in the common cause of Germany" (103). The Nazis were well aware of the hypnotic nature of group singing. They wrote songs and made sure they were frequently sung. Hitler even had his own theme music: The Badenweiler March (Shirer 18). This march was played whenever Hitler made his great entrances. Other important pieces were the Horst Wesl Song, dedicated to the first Nazi martyr, and Deutschland über Alles, the German national anthem.

The first event of every Party Rally was a performance of Wagner's Die Meistersinger (Speer 60). A rather amusing incident Speer discusses in his memoirs is Hitler's efforts to foster an appreciation for Wagner's operas by reserving seats and sending out invitations to the other leaders of the Party. Alas, this was not to be. In 1933, when Hitler entered an almost empty Nuremberg Opera House, Speer writes that he "reacted with intense vexation," and sent out patrols to round up the missing functionaries (60). In the following year, Hitler made a special order to the party chiefs to attend the performance. The audience's obvious boredom, sparse applause, and general indifference did little to satisfy Hitler (Speer 61). In the following years, the tickets were sold out to the public for hard cash, providing a more supportive and enthusiastic audience (Speer 61). This incident shows the weakness of the opera component of the Nazis' persuasion method. Whatever sensations Wagner's operas aroused in Hitler, the party functionaries were unaffected.

Another aspect of technology the Nazis implemented into their propaganda campaigns was the loudspeaker. Of course, electric

amplification itself was a relatively new concept in Hitler's time. Fest writes that when Hitler first used a microphone, he "listened intoxicated to the amplification of his own voice" (519). In Thalburg, the Nazis set up loudspeakers that boosted Hitler's voice until it "boomed across the town" (Allen 150). Coupled with the use of radio, Hitler could have his speeches broadcast all over Germany at the time he made them. Of course, the Nazis realized this feature and took advantage of it with enthusiasm.

Horst Bergmeier, author of Hitler's Airwaves, writes that Goebbels made radio the central concept of an "all embracing propaganda operation at home and abroad" (3). In the early thirties, Goebbels released the "People's set," a very inexpensive mass-produced unit that had a key feature—it could only receive certain frequencies. The People's Set had over four million registered listeners in 1933, and over nine million in 1938 (Bergmeier 8). Obviously, radio was becoming a very popular and ubiquitous phenomenon in Germany. In a 1939 address, Goebbels emphasized the importance of "relaxation and entertainment on the radio" (Bergmeier 141). Although the Nazis prohibited jazz in Germany, describing it as "musical decadence," Goebbels saw no problem with using it in foreign broadcasts to bait listeners (Bergmeier 138).

### **Military Elements**

The defeat of Germany in the First World War did not defeat their faith in their army and its traditions (Waite 307). Rather than accept the conclusion that this defeat was due to inferior military strength or strategy, the common theory was the "stab in the back myth," that is, that a betrayal by treacherous Jews and other revolutionaries at home caused the defeat (Waite 307). The historical importance of this myth, Waite argues, is not that it was false but that it was "believed to be true" (307). As a consequence of this belief, unabashed

nationalism continued even in the aftermath of defeat. The new Weimar Republic, worried about the increasing hatred against them, lowered ban after ban against Hitler and men like him holding military parades (Fest 161). In 1923 the Republic issued a ban against dedicating the national standards in outdoor ceremonies (Fest 161).

Militarism, however, was a key ingredient of Nazism. "The forest of flags and flickering torches, the marching columns, and the blaring bands," Fest writes, "combined to make a magic that the mentality of the age, haunted by images of anarchy, could scarcely resist" (512). Probably the most significant elements of militarism implemented by the Nazis were its uniforms, flags, parades, music, and discipline. The importance of militarism to Nazism is hard to underestimate. "It was especially the pomp and paraphernalia, especially the flag worship of the Hitler Youth," Heck writes, "which instilled the belief in us that we belonged to the chosen ones [the New Germans]" (66). Fest discusses Hitler's obsession with military standards and symbols. He took the use of standards from Italian Fascism, introduced "Heil!" as a greeting and enforced strict rules for the wearing of uniforms (Fest 128). Hitler discovered the eagle that served as the official rubber stamp of the party after hours of hunting in the Munich State Library's heraldic department (Fest 128). As the chairman of the National Socialists, his first circular letter concerned the party badge. Not only were the heads of the local groups to "energetically promote" the wearing of these badges, they were to deal with any Jews who took offense immediately (Fest 129).

Nazi colors were also chosen with care. In Mein Kampf, Hitler writes that the color red was picked for the swastika flag because it was the most "exciting color," and would best serve to "infuriate and provoke our adversaries" (366). As far as Hitler's personal dress is

concerned, Henderson writes that he always wore a "simple brown tunic without any decorations except the Iron Cross" (38). In contrast to heavily uniformed men like Goering, Hitler stood out as both a man of the people and a man of the military. Speer writes that although Hitler loved the pomp of resplendent uniforms, he kept his dress modest as part of a careful strategy. He quotes Hitler from a personal conversation as follows: "My surroundings must look magnificent. Then my simplicity makes a striking effect" (Speer 110).

From the very beginning, the Nazis had strove to identify themselves with militarism and patriotism. Even the London Times, covering a march by the SA on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1934, remark that "the elaborate care shown in the symmetrical grouping of the various formations, their thousands of swastika banners . . . made the whole scene impressive even to foreign visitors" ("Brown Army," 12).

Anyone who has seen Triumph of the Will can appreciate the precision and discipline of the Nazis it portrays. Everyone seems to be marching. A rather unusual style of marching invented during the reign of Frederick II, the goose step, gave the Germans an "aspect which seems at once formidable and comic to a spectator who can withstand its fascination" (Chakotin 88). Fest argues that when one compares the "to-do with marching columns, forests of banners and blocks of humanity to the rites of primitive tribes," the comparison is not as far-fetched as it sounds (517).

### **The Nuremberg Party Rallies**

All of Hitler's ideas about propaganda and persuasion fused together for the Nuremberg Party Rallies. In his memoirs, Albert Speer, an architect Hitler made the "Chief Decorator" of the rallies, was the brain behind many of their innovations, including the famous "Cathedral of Ice" (Speer 58). This post as "Chief Decorator" was impressive

indeed, considering how important Hitler considered these rallies. Although Speer had a large responsibility, Hitler was an almost omnipresent supervisor. Fest writes that Hitler "personally checked seemingly trivial points" when he was setting the stage for these rallies: "He approved every scene, every movement, as he did the selection of flags or flowers, and even the seating of the guests of honor" (512). Matthias Schmidt called these Parties the "largest artistic construction project of the new Reich" (44). Heck, a Hitler Youth, described these rallies as "a jubilant Teutonic renaissance" (19). Compared to other Nazi festivals held throughout the year, the Nuremberg Party Rallies were the grandest—a celebration steeped in the imagery of Nazi persuasion. They were the "public climax of the National Socialist calendar year" (Fest 515).

The city of Nuremberg was a very strategic location for the Party Rallies. Heck calls it the "medieval showcase of Germany" (20). He goes on to say that the city's unique architecture appealed to the nationalist "instincts" of all Germans—its castles, gates, and turrets were an "ideal mythical backdrop" for Hitler's emotion-laden speeches (20). Cecil Headlam, author of a small book on the city, writes that "in spite of all its changes, and in spite of the disfigurements of modern industry, Nuremberg is and will remain a medieval city" (1). Headlam goes on to call it the "city of the soul," and gives several legends that attempt to identify the city's origin (3). The "scenic drama" that Speer strove for in his grand designs made Nuremberg the perfect choice.

The Nuremberg Party Rally of 1934 was, in many ways, a special one. Hitler billed it as the "Triumph of the Will" (Waite 69), which was also the name Leni Riefenstahl chose for her infamous documentary of the event. "Every effort is being made to render it an even greater

triumph of grandiose stagecraft than its predecessors," announced the *London Times* (5 September 1934, 12). William Shirer, a C.B.S. correspondent present at the rally, writes that "two hundred thousand party officials packed in the Zeppelin Wiese with their twenty-one thousand flags unfurled like a forest of weird trees" (21). Hitler's words rang out across the eerie field with the aid of loudspeakers, enrapturing the entire audience (Shirer 21). Afterwards, after they had "recovered enough," the assembly, fifteen thousand of them, formed a torch light parade through the streets of Nuremberg (Shirer 21).

Of course, Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will provides us with an excellent source of information on the 1934 Party Rally. The film opens with a shot from the window of Hitler's plane, soaring above the clouds. After a few shots of the city of Nuremberg, the plane lands and Hitler is greeted wildly by hordes of exuberant Nazis. Many memorable scenes follow, but perhaps the most sensational is the outdoor memorial service. In these shots, we see hundreds of thousands of uniformed soldiers in huge, block-like formations, with a narrow alley between them to allow Hitler and his entourage to pass. The soldiers are so still that the viewer must constantly remind himself that they are human beings at all; they seem rather like scenery. After a symbolic wreath-laying ceremony to the dead, Hitler and the Nazis begin to march. On the film, they resembled a sea of flags, flowing from the top to the bottom of the screen. Another interesting scene is a night speech by Hitler to his storm troopers. In a glow of spotlights, Hitler stands before a huge, majestic eagle, gesticulating wildly and speaking in his legendary style. On a personal note, I must admit that even though I do not understand German, I was still awed by this spectacular flight of oratory.

The Rally of 1938 was, if not the most famous, the most extravagant. The high point of this rally was Speer's "Cathedral of Ice." The London Times eloquently describes it as a "dome of blue light," and mentions how the eagles, swastikas, and standards "flashed like jewels" in the searchlight (September 10, 1938).

Speer talks about his inspiration for the Cathedral in Inside the Third Reich:

I had occasionally seen our new anti-aircraft searchlights blazing miles into the sky. I asked Hitler to let me have a hundred and thirty of these. Goering made a fuss at first, since these hundred and thirty searchlights represented the greater part of the strategic reserve. But Hitler won him over: 'If we use them in such large numbers for a thing like this, other countries will think we're swimming in searchlights.' (59)

Even Speer was impressed with the effect, commenting that it "surpassed anything" he had dared to imagine (59). The beams were visible to a height of twenty to twenty-five thousand feet, where they coalesced into a brilliant glow. "The feeling was of a vast room," Speer writes, "with the beams serving as mighty pillars of infinitely high outer walls. Now and then a cloud moved through this wreath of lights, bringing an element of surrealistic surprise to the mirage" (59). Speer believed it to be his finest architectural concept (59). Also of note is the fact that Hitler was willing to compromise the national defense for a lighting effect. Obviously, he took such matters very seriously.

Besides fantastic lighting techniques, Speer also relied heavily on flags and banners. "I dearly loved flags and used them wherever I could," Speer writes (59), especially since they were "a way of introducing a play of color into somber architecture" (59). Hitler's swastika flag, Speer thought, was particularly useful because of its vivid color contrast, but quite often he

added gold ribbons for an added effect (60). Seemingly, Speer's enthusiasm for flags and banners knew no bounds: "I arranged for veritable orgies of flags in the narrow streets of Goslar and Nuremberg, with banners stretched from house to house, so that the sky was almost blotted out" (60).

### **The Nazi Cinema**

Leni Riefenstahl's film, Triumph of the Will, a quasi-documentary, quasi-propaganda work, serves as an excellent source of information on both the Nuremberg Party Rallies and Nazi film in general. Viewers of Triumph of the Will, regardless of their understanding of the German language, often find themselves bewitched by the order and precision displayed in the film. Scenes of powerful orations and countless marching Nazis spliced with innumerable shots of flags, statues, medieval architecture, and pagan imagery, make for a very impressive film.

Barsam writes that the Nuremberg portrayed in Riefenstahl's film seems like a "Valhalla, a place apart, surrounded by clouds and mist, peopled by heroes, and ruled from above by gods" (27). The shots of heroic statues and monuments sprinkled throughout the film obviously contribute to this effect, but there are many subtler aspects of Triumph of the Will that contribute to its otherworldliness. Whenever Hitler is shown, for instance, the camera is looking up at him from below. There is also some interesting juxtaposition. At several points, the film switches back and forth between a shot of a swastika and a shot of some ancient German monument or mythic symbol. This dramatic effect occurs during the wreath-laying ceremony. The scene rapidly shifts from the funeral pyre, to a swastika, and finally to Hitler. There is obviously some attempt at identification at work here.

Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will is historically valuable as an example of Nazi film, perhaps the glimpses it gives us into the National Socialist society are even greater treasures. But just how coherent and accurate is the National Socialist Germany the film portrays? There is much evidence to suggest that Leni Riefenstahl, a former dancer and costume designer, was never a Nazi (Barsam 9). Still, many scholars debate the documentary status of Triumph of the Will, arguing that it is more a propaganda work than a documentary. "German cinema of the Third Reich still prompts extreme reactions and hyperbolic formulations," Rentschler writes. Whether Triumph of the Will displays truth or illusion is still open to debate.

Riefenstahl had serious doubts about her ability to make a film like *Triumph*, but Hitler, with his legendary persistence, finally convinced her to direct it (Welch 14). When Riefenstahl complained that she knew very little about the movement, and would not even know which men were politically important, Hitler responded that "it is not important who is in the film. It is important that the film has the atmosphere" (cited in Welch 14). "Her task," Barsam writes, "was to make a film of the party rally, not a documentary of prevailing social conditions or a statement of party philosophy" (21). Still, Barsam sees the film as a "cinematic expression of the Nazi mystique" rather than a cogent record of events (22). "The film is both documentary and propaganda," Barsam writes, "and moreover it succeeds in fusing politics with art" (68). The kinetics of the film help to maintain the interest of the audience. Either the camera or the people it captures are always moving with the same, hypnotic rhythm.

Speer and the other planners of the rally made their preparations with the film in mind; however, to say that the Rally was staged for the camera seems a bit drastic (Welch 148). Barsam argues that the

Rallies were annual events, and the 1934 rally was staged "only to the extent that most political conventions in the United States are staged for the television," which seems a fair comparison to most viewers (21).

Although it is hailed today as a propaganda masterpiece, at the time of its release Triumph of the Will generated very little popular enthusiasm and could claim only modest popularity. Although Hitler was pleased with it, Barsam writes that it "was not successful with the general public and was not used very widely as propaganda" (26).

Although the film won Goebbels' National Film prize and the Grand Prix at the French Exposition Internationale des Arts et des Techniques in 1937, most Germans were not interested in the film. "No one could simply mandate that German audiences like German films," Rentschler writes wryly (38). The film seems to have always interested scholars and intellectuals more than lay men. There are several scenes that many viewers would find boring (the dozens of long marching scenes for example). The lack of dialogue and sense of time has a soporific effect that also likely contributed to the film's demise. Unfortunately for the Nazis, Triumph of the Will did not achieve its expected potential.

In June of 1934, the "Reich Office for Educational Films" was founded to install "instructional" films in schools (Welch 25). Dr. Bernhard Rust, the Minister of Education, directed that these films must "clarify political problems of today, [foster] knowledge about Germany's heroic past, and [instill] profound understanding of the future development of the Third Reich" (26). The Hitler Youth had their daily "film hour for the young," which was accompanied by guest speakers and followed by patriotic ceremonies (27).

On a side note, the Nazi-sponsored studios also produced films for entertainment and leisure. An article by Louis Marcocelles tells us

that these "pure entertainment or escapist" films fulfilled the widespread "hunger for entertainment" that gripped the nation as it plummeted into war (67). "It has been argued that only a very small number of the films produced during the Third Reich can be construed as political," Taylor writes, going on to say that even the most "non-political" film should not be considered "apolitical" (161). For while these films appear on the surface to be quite innocent, their purpose was to "lull audiences into a sense of security" (161). Rentschler writes that Goebbels "endeavored to maximize film's seductive potential, to cloak Party priorities in alluring cinematic shapes, to aestheticize politics in order to anesthetize the populace" (34). Political films called the Germans' attention to themselves, while leisure films distracted them from their own situation—a distraction that became more important as the war dragged on.

### **Conclusion**

Obviously, propaganda played a very central role in Nazism. To keep the broad masses under control, the Nazis had to keep them under a deep, sustained psychological influence, or a "medium of emotional remote control" as Rentschler describes it (34). The nature of a fascist government requires the almost unanimous support of the people it exploits. Gaining and keeping this support is an arduous task; as we have seen, the Nazis spent almost incalculable sums of money and manpower in their quest for the ultimate stage. In the next chapter, I will explore the various reactions of individuals to this spiritual pummeling.

### Chapter Three: Acting or Reacting?: Reactions to Nazi Persuasion

When discussing the changing political attitudes of the average German during the Nazis' rise to power, Ian Kershaw writes that the lack of "direct, authentic expressions of opinion in their original form are few and far between" (20). This lack of primary sources creates an almost insurmountable difficulty to scholars trying to measure the success of Nazi propaganda (Kershaw 20). The debate over whether or not the Nazis' methods of persuasion were effective is a complex and often polarized one. On the positive side, Triumph of the Will, even though some prominent scholars have questioned its legitimacy as a documentary, still lives as a testament to the power of Nazi persuasion. In Triumph of the Will, we witness the titanic Nazi persuasion strategy at its peak. Reifentahl's cameras capture legions of cheerful, enthusiastic Nazi supporters. In many scenes, fanatical women almost seem to swoon in the presence of Hitler. In no scene do we see a disillusioned face; at least in Reifentahl's Nuremberg, everyone is raving about Nazism.

Besides the evidence of the film, there exist several enlightening diaries, journals, and essays that document the success of Nazi persuasion. Kurt Lüdecke, a German businessman, talks about how Hitler's speech swept away his "critical faculty," holding him and all the rest of the mob "under a hypnotic spell by the sheer force of his conviction" (Heineman 388). He compares his experience to a religious conversion. A female eyewitness to Hitler's oratory describes the mood of the audience quite vividly:

You cannot imagine how silent it becomes as soon as this man speaks; it is as if all of the thousand listeners are no longer able to breathe . . . Adolf Hitler is so firmly convinced of the correctness of his nationalistic views that he automatically communicates this conviction to his listeners. (Heineman 389)

As a member of the Hitler Youth, Heck saw a different side of Nazi persuasion. "Of all the Nazi organizations," Heck writes, "the Hitler Youth was by far the most naively fanatical. We had no political past" (21). From the very beginning, these youth were taught that their destiny was to rule the world" (Heck 22). Like so many other Nazi converts, Heck cannot seem to remember the "exact content" of his first Hitler speech (22). "But I'll never forget its emotional impact," Heck writes (22). Heck had devoted himself, body and soul, to the god-like *Führer*. Several times in his memoirs Heck refers to Hitler as his God. "Hitler was becoming a God-like figure in our world," Heck writes (17). After Germany's defeat in the Second World War, Heck writes that he "felt betrayed by the man who had become my God" (202). Heck attributes his profound faith to the immature censoring abilities of children (3). "To us the fatherland was a somewhat mystical yet real concept of a nation which was infinitely dear and threatened by unrelenting enemies," Heck explains (8). Undoubtedly, the Hitler Youth would have remained Hitler's most sincere followers had Germany won the war.

#### **Autobiographical Essays**

In 1934 Dr. Theodore Abel held a contest for the best essay on "Why I am a Nazi" (Heineman 390). Many of these essays have survived and been published in English translations. Their confessions of undying, unquestioned loyalty to the Führer are very enlightening to scholars analyzing the impact of political rallies. Usually these accounts stress Hitler's extraordinary skill at public speaking or his overwhelming charisma. Marlene Heder, who was present when Hitler visited Kassel in 1931, indicates in her essay just how influential Hitler had become. According to her account, many old people had come from far distances to see the Führer and fulfill the dream of a lifetime (Heineman 388). Valentin von Berg, a thirty-five year old

Nazi, describes his emotional reaction after hearing Hitler speak for the first time: "I could not see out of my eyes anymore. There were too many tears; my throat was all tight from crying" (Heineman 400). When the speech was over, Berg found himself speechless. "A liberating scream of the purest enthusiasm discharged the unbearable tension, as the auditorium rocked with applause," he writes (Heineman 400). In his autobiographical essay, Georg Zeidler writes that "it was our feelings that led us to Hitler" (Heineman 401). Zeidler was most impressed with Hitler's record of service at the front and his undeniable patriotism. But he ends his essay with a comment about Hitler's eyes: "He who once looked into Hitler's eyes will never get away from him again" (Heineman 401).

Neville Henderson, a British ambassador in Germany until the war, writes, "Hitler had one quality which placed him in an unassailable position—his faith" (32). In many of their post-war accounts, ex-Nazis identify Hitler's uncanny conviction as the primary reason for joining the Nazi party. Captain Hugo Seiler is one of these men. Seiler writes about his initial impression of Hitler in an autobiographical essay:

Later, when I saw the Führer and heard him speak for the first time, his impact on me was overpowering. Here [was] a man who also felt deeply in his heart that which he uttered, for it arose out of passionate love for his people. Unpretentious and emphatic, like his own being, were his words—and yet so powerful. Everyone followed his thoughts expectantly, and whoever once heard him would have to become his follower, that is if he thought and acted in a German, Volkisch, and social manner. (Heinemen 391)

There are a great many more accounts of this sort, all stressing the persuasive power of Adolf Hitler. But what was it about Hitler's speeches that people found so alluring? A 1927 newspaper account of a Hitler speech indicates that it was not Hitler's words:

In the faces of the storm troopers who were guarding the hall you saw a vain effort to follow the details of what the speaker was saying. But their faces did not relax. What

they heard in his words was something that, without having created any intellectual concepts, will emerge in some street battle when they will defend their swastika.  
(Heineman 392)

Of course, what we need to learn is the importance of the role that technology played in the awesome success of Nazi persuasion. While many of these accounts mention Hitler's penetrating gaze or the conviction in his voice, they seem to be generally disinterested in the speech-enhancing technology involved. One can draw two conclusions from this. To understand the first, let us use the analogy of a makeup artist involved in a high-budget film. In most cases, the artist's work will be considered most successful if the audience is unaware that the actors are wearing makeup. We can apply this analogy very easy to technology and persuasion; namely, that once we become aware of the influence of technology, we are no longer affected by it. Joseph Goebbels saw this very clearly, and commented once that "the moment a person is conscious of propaganda, propaganda becomes ineffective" (cited in Welch 48). If we accept this conclusion, then we should not be surprised at the lack of attention most Nazis paid to technology in their memoirs.

### **Acting or Reacting**

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges to a scholar studying the reactions of Nazi propaganda is discovering the true feelings of the almost invisible people under the swastika flags. Triumph of the Will, for instance, does not allow us to glimpse into the inner feelings of individual Nazis. What we see is the outward appearance of fanatical nationalism, especially in the Party leaders. To what extent was this fervor an act? Heck writes, "despite the unsurpassed propaganda skill of the Nazis, the enthusiasm of both spectators and participants was

genuine" (20). In his memoirs, Albert Speer recalls an incident that seems to contradict Heck's analysis:

I recall, incidentally, that the footage taken during one of the solemn sessions of the 1935 Party Congress was spoiled. At Leni Riefenstahl's suggestion Hitler gave orders for the shots to be refilmed in the studio . . . Hess arrived and was asked to pose for the first shot. Exactly as he had done before an audience of 30,000 at the Party Congress, he solemnly raised his hand [and gave his speech] . . . He did it all so convincingly that from that point on I was no longer so sure of the genuineness of his feelings. The three others also gave excellent performances in the emptiness of the studio, proving themselves gifted actors. (62)

Whatever the feelings of the Party leaders, the sincerity of the Nazi "masses" has been observed by William Shirer. In his diary, he notes the fanaticism of "ten thousand hysterics" crowding around Hitler's hotel the night of September 4<sup>th</sup>:

I was a little shocked at the faces, especially those of the women, when Hitler finally appeared on the balcony for a moment. He reminded me of the crazed expressions I saw once in the back country of Louisiana on the faces of some Holy Rollers who were about to hit the trail. They looked up at him as if he were a Messiah, their faces transformed into something positively inhuman. (17)

Shirer's colorful comparison between Nazis and religious fanatics is an interesting one on many levels. To what extent did the Nazis consider Hitler a Messiah?

#### **Hitler as a Messiah**

Waite makes a convincing argument that Hitler considered himself something of a Messiah. His evidence consists of several incriminating quotations from Hitler's speeches, most of which have parallels in the Bible (Waite 27). Hitler likened himself to Jesus at least on two separate occasions. Once was in 1922 when he said "in driving out the Jews I remind myself of Jesus in the temple," and another time was when he said, "Just like Jesus Christ, I have a duty to my own people" (qtd. in Waite 27). At one of Hitler's last suppers in 1945, he invited his

followers to make blood sausage out of his corpse—a invitation Waite compares to Jesus' commandment to his disciples: "Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you" (cited in Waite 32).

Whatever Hitler thought of himself, the real issue is whether the people actually thought of him as a Messiah. Waite gives three very disturbing examples of people who certainly believed so. The first involves a young boy with an "emaciated face" who fell very sick after a forced Hitler Youth march (88). As the mother and the doctor discussed the boy's stubborn father, who was a Storm Trooper and insisted his son follow the commands of the Hitler Youth (89). Although badly sick and in desperate pain, the boy kept his arm in a Hitler salute and repeated "I must die for Hitler!" at the top of his voice until he passed out (Waite 89). Another example is of a badly wounded German prisoner discovered by a French doctor. The Frenchman asks the German to have a life-saving blood transfusion. "I will not have my German blood polluted with French blood," the German replied, dying shortly thereafter (89). The last example concerns a mortally wounded Nazi soldier who was approached by a priest. Rather than receive any final religious rites, the Nazi insisted the priest to get a small portrait of the Führer from his pocket. "My Führer," the soldier murmured as he gazed upon the portrait, "I am happy to die for you" (89). Women were also prone to Hitler worship. Claudia Koonz, author of an essay addressing the role of women in the Third Reich, mentions in the writings of female Nazis, "Hitler appeared to be the Messiah of a secular religion" (452). What these three stories indicate is just how deep the Nazis' devotion to Hitler could reach. Their conversion to Nazism was absolute.

### **Failures of Nazi Persuasion**

On the other hand, the Nazis' method of persuasion did not always live up to their expectations. Hans L. Leonhardt, author of The Nazi Conquest of Danzig, indicates that the loudspeakers, flags, uniforms, and general noise the Nazis brought to their city during their political campaigns served mostly to irritate the citizens. "The display of flags and uniforms and the noise of loudspeakers and brass bands were such that people were almost driven out of their senses," he writes (118). On election days, German airplanes flew over Danzig, dropping some 12,000 yards of swastika material (Leonhardt 118). The loudspeakers the Nazis set up all over town blasted out, without pause, "one military march after another" (Leonhardt 121). Despite this technologically-supported propaganda bombast, the Nazis still did rather poorly at the Danzig elections (Leonhardt 121).

Kershaw writes that most converts to Nazism were won through "their bitterness at the course of Weimar politics and through the expectation that their self-interest would best be served by a Nazi government" (28). While Kershaw's statement may hold true for some Nazis, the accounts I presented earlier in this chapter contradict it. Women do not often swoon, and grown men do not often cry (although there may be quite substantial gnashing of teeth), for a selfish interest. If there was any feeling fostered by Nazism, it was nationalism—and who could term nationalistic feeling as a "self-interest?" Furthermore, to deny that Nazi propaganda did not win support for Nazism seems farcical. After all, the whole thing started with the delusions of one man and a rather obscure beer-hall club. Propaganda was responsible for creating the larger-than-life image the Nazis required. Self-interest and bitterness may have opened the Germans to radicalism, but it seems unlikely that these feelings alone

could have moved so many men's hearts to Nazism. In many cases, joining the Nazi party was a huge economic risk. Helen Ratke's autobiographical essay details the hardships she and her husband endured as a result of her ardent Nazism. "In July 1931 the morning mail brought a blue envelope for my husband—a court-ordered fine because of my political activities," Ratke writes (Heineman 396). This petty fine did very little to dampen her enthusiasm; in response she "sewed a 12 foot wide Swastika banner" and hung it in front of her house on every conceivable occasion (Heineman 396). Communist beatings, potential unemployment, and arrest were only a few dangers faced by Nazis in the early years of its development. With this high cost of membership, it seems even less likely that Germans would have joined the party for selfish reasons.

### **Conclusion**

There is no question that the lack of good primary sources makes determining the success of Nazi propaganda a challenge. Of course, after the War, political pressure probably influenced many former Nazis to burn their links with the past. Films like The Night Porter dramatize the dilemma many of these Germans found themselves in after the last shots of World War II were over. The Nuremberg War Trials had shown them the bloody wrath of the Allies, and with "de-Nazification" squads out for blood, it is likely that most former Nazis preferred to deny their once great devotion to their Führer. Indeed, the safest course was to deny that one had ever been under the influence of Hitler. For historians, this cloud of silence is a tragedy, but an understandable one.

An even more difficult challenge is discerning the effectiveness of the technological aspect of Nazi persuasion. To what extent was technology responsible for the Nazis' rise to power? Little recourse remains to the scholar but to place himself in a German's shoes during

a Nuremberg Party Rally. What would it feel like to be one of 100,000 Germans surrounded by 150 anti-aircraft searchlights, their beams firing into heaven like ghostly columns? We can ask many questions and provide few answers. What we do know is that the Nazis liberally used such technology to enhance their speeches. From virtual obscurity, the National Socialists rose to dominate their nation, eventually breaking it on the anvil of war. The Nazis were very serious about propaganda, constantly exploring new means of persuasion to achieve their ends. If their technological innovations were not having the desired effect, the Nazis would have ceased using them.

#### Chapter Four: Terministic Screens and Tyrannizing Images

There are many rhetorical thinkers whose theories could prove valuable to a scholar analyzing Nazi propaganda. I have chosen the work of two modern rhetoricians, Kenneth Burke and Richard Weaver, but there are many older and more traditional rhetorical thinkers that might have proven useful. Some obvious choices are Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (which lists the available means of persuasion), Francis Bacon's Novum Organum (useful for his Idols of the Marketplace, or a list of rhetorical snares that restrict reason), or Gilbert Austin's Chironomia (visual rhetoric in the form of hand and body gestures). I chose Burke and Weaver for two reasons. First, their theories of rhetoric have much wider implications than traditional rhetoric. Weaver and Burke want to get behind our words and see what makes them work; they seek answers below the surface of speech and symbols. Rather than ask how a man can be persuasive, Burke and Weaver ask why he is able to persuade in the first place. The second reason is a bit more obvious. The study of rhetoric has made some progress since Aristotle's time. Just as a biologist would not limit himself to Charles Darwin's work when studying a detail of evolution, a rhetorician should not rely totally on older works to understand a rhetorical phenomenon. Besides these two reasons, Burke and Weaver have both made quite an impact on rhetorical study. Although neither man can be classified as a "rhetorician" (Burke and Weaver are usually considered philosophers), they can be found in many prominent rhetoric anthologies, Bizzel and Herzberg's The Rhetorical Tradition to name only one.

#### **Kenneth Burke**

One of Burke's most intriguing concepts is the "Terministic Screen." "Terminology," Burke explains in Language as Symbolic Action,

"serves as a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must also function as a deflection of reality" (45). He goes on to explain how colored filters change one's perception of a photograph. Our very observations of reality, according to Burke, "are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made" (46). In other words, human beings can only perceive reality through a "Terministic Screen," which is directly influenced by language, or more broadly, a people's symbology (system of symbols). As certain symbols gain significance through propaganda, for example, they become stronger "deflectors" of reality. In Burke's Rhetoric of Motives, he argues that "every aspect of man's reality is likely to be seen through a fog of symbols" (136). Nonverbal kinds of rhetoric persuade by means of their symbolic character (Rhetoric 172). In this way, images, sounds, or even smells can become symbols that guide action. One example Burke gives is military force: "Military force can persuade by its sheer "meaning" as well as by its use in actual combat" (Rhetoric 161). Another example is a piece of medical equipment in a doctor's office: "Even [this] is not to be judged purely for its diagnostic usefulness, but also [as] a function in the rhetoric of medicine" (Rhetoric 171).

Whenever Burke talks about persuasion or rhetoric, he always returns to "identification" and "consubstantiality." These two are directly related:

A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B . . . To identify A with B is to make A 'consubstantial' with B. (Rhetoric 21)

"You persuade a man," Burke writes, "only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your way with his" (Rhetoric 55). Although both the

persuader and his audience are unique individuals, for identification to occur, the target of the persuasion must consider himself "consubstantial" with or of the same substance as the persuader. A literal example of this is the parent/child relationship. Although the child is distinct from his parents, he is of the same substance biologically. The same is true for the persuader and his audience, though the link is symbolic rather than physical. In Mein Kampf, Hitler writes that "it belongs to the genius of a great leader to make even adversaries far removed from one another seem to belong to the same category" (118). To achieve this end, Hitler argued that all of the Nazis' enemies were consubstantial with Judaism. Once these links were forged, Hitler could concentrate on the Jewish threat, smiting the rest by extension. Thus, if a Nazi hated the Communists, the feminists, or homosexuals, he was encouraged to hate the Jews by means of identification and consubstantiality.

The ultimate expression of identification is mysticism, where the "infinitesimally frail" identifies with the "infinitely powerful" (Rhetoric, Burke 326). Burke argues that this type of identification is particularly prevalent in hierarchy, where it can exist in "nature, society, language, and the division of labor" (Rhetoric 333). The basic principle of hierarchy, that some parts are superior to other parts, leads one to visualize the ultimate superior, or the Great Leader.

"When a figure becomes the personification of some impersonal motive," Burke argues, "the result is a depersonalization. The person becomes the charismatic vessel of some 'absolute' substance" (Rhetoric 277). This person then "transcends" his nature, becoming consubstantial with the image or idea he stands for. This is quite easy to see in politics, when a candidate keeps his personal life in the background, stressing only his stance on a particular issue. If successful, he

becomes consubstantial with his position on the issue, and voters see, not the man, but the position he has become when they pull the lever for him.

To summarize, the terministic screen is the system of symbols through and by which we perceive reality. The function of propaganda is to make a symbol more or less significant (by rendering it consubstantial with an idea, emotion, or another symbol). For example, a brass eagle can stand for many things, but through patriotic and nationalistic propaganda it becomes a political statement; a symbol that can influence action. By affecting symbols in this way, propaganda creates or modifies the terministic screen. If successful, it can actually control the way its victims perceive reality.

#### **Richard Weaver**

Weaver's "Tyrannizing Image" concept resembles the terministic screen in many ways, but Weaver makes more of an attempt to explain how culture, society, and language combine to create and influence a person's conception of reality. Weaver's definition of a culture is a "complex of values polarized by a [system of] image[s] or idea[s]" (Weaver 20). To Weaver, men have two selves: the existential, animalistic self, and the image he evolves from his spirit (Weaver 9). When a man becomes part of a community, the "collective consciousness" of this group, made of up his and everyone else's hopes and fears, "creates a mode of looking at the world" (Weaver 10). At the center of this matrix lies the "tyrannizing image," which everyone in the society is drawn to (Weaver 10). Anyone who does not conform to the image must remain outside the society (the prison system is an effort to remove these elements from the population) (Weaver 11). According to Weaver, a culture must be both inclusive and exclusive of certain values to exist (12). If a culture did not reject anything, it would disintegrate into

tiny, unconnected factions. For instance, a Christian society must necessarily exclude values that conflict with the doctrines of Christianity.

A good example of the expression of a culture's tyrannizing image is its style. "All culture incorporates the idea of style," Weaver argues, "which is an homage to an intangible but felt need of the spirit" (19). Art, then, becomes a partial reflection of the society's tyrannizing image. Why do certain cultures prefer a special type of architecture? Weaver would argue that the secret lies in the language, beliefs, and underlying myths of that culture.

Weaver makes some interesting observations on the "leaders of strong nationalistic movements in the present age" (7). Parnell, Sun Yat-sen, Gandhi, Stalin, and Hitler were all men of some type of "outside experience" (Weaver 7) that allowed them to view their nations from another vantage point than the natives. "These men had all at one time been far enough removed from their future nations to see what these were," Weaver writes, "and what they saw engendered in them an urge to define the reality and the consciousness of that nationhood" (7). Hitler, it must be remembered, was by birth an Austrian, though by all historic accounts, he wished to think of himself as a German. From a distance, Hitler was able to discern clearly what makes the Germans "German:" their tyrannizing images; the hopes and dreams of their ancestors, all submerged beneath their cultural consciousness.

Weaver also talks a great deal about myth. Myths, according to Weaver, are "great symbolic structures which hold together the imaginations of a people and provide bases of harmonious thought and action" (34). Weaver would argue that every culture requires myths to exist. These myths, thought buried deep within a culture's language and ethics, are the founding principles upon which the culture is based.

George Mosse, a German historian, agrees with this analysis, and writes that "symbols, the objectification of popular myths, give a people their identity" (7). Why do people from different cultures respond differently to similar themes? The answer, according to Weaver, is that every culture has its own mythic foundation upon which the entire culture (especially its language) is built. Although these myths seem to disappear with time, they linger on, occasionally forming certain outlets for release (theater, opera, religion, literature, and political demagoguery).

A third topic Weaver approaches is memory. "Between myth and status and memory there is a necessary connection," he writes, adding that societies are their history, and any "sign of prejudice against memory is a signal of danger" (40). This danger arises because "no man exists really except through that mysterious storehouse of his remembered acts and his formed personality" (Weaver 40). In Mein Kampf, Hitler shows that he shared this same attitude towards history: "For the whole of human culture, as well as man himself, is only the result of a single long development in which every generation contributed and fitted its stone" (261). According to Weaver, man's very reality depends upon his memory and his ability to compare past with present. Weaver notes that many times throughout history, extremely successful men have possessed outstanding memories, indeed, they often remember seemingly trifling details (Weaver 42). We should note here that Fest and Waite both agree that Hitler had a profound memory; his ability to memorize statistics and names amazed everyone.

The synthesis of Weaver's tyrannizing image and myth concepts with Burke's terministic screen and identification concepts provides a coherent and applicable rhetorical framework for studying Nazi persuasion. Integrating their theories becomes possible with this

argument: The tyrannizing image is possible because of terministic screens.

## Chapter Five: The Rhetoric of Nazi Persuasion

Richard Barsam has this to say about Triumph of the Will:

According to 20<sup>th</sup> century standards of humanism and democracy, the most insidious aspects of the film are its depiction of the individual as an unidentified part of a regimented mass and its adulatory and uncritical presentation of Hitler and the Party. Its most dangerous suggestion is that emotion is superior to reason. (17)

Barsam's statement could just as well be applied to Nazi persuasion in general. Hitler believed that good propaganda must aim at the emotions, rather than the reason, of its recipients (This is essentially the distinction between rhetoric and dialectic). Dr. Dietrich, the chief of the Reich Press organization, said in a Party Rally speech that "Perhaps the secret of the National Socialist idea is that it cannot be grasped intellectually" ("Nazi Secret," September 7, 1937). Nazism never aimed at the mind; its target was the soul. There is no Karl Marx of Nazism because it was never an intellectual movement. Its chief appeal was its nationalism, racial superiority, and mysticism.

### **Nazi Myth as a Terministic Screen**

One of the biggest problems with studying Nazi ideology is that there does not appear to be one. Welch writes that the "so-called ideology of the Nazi revolution was based upon what were presumed to be Germanic traditions" (97). The true meaning of Nazism is hard to grasp; it seems to reject and embrace the past and the future simultaneously. Welch explains, "While the revolution looked to the future, it tried to recapture a mythical past and with it old traditions which to many people provided the only hope of overcoming the chaos of the present" (97). Together with the rest of Europe, Germany's traditional culture was radically changed with the rise of industrialism. Traditional values were being rendered obsolete, with nothing to replace them. Nazism stepped in to give the modern spirit a foundation in the

ancient, mythic past. Viewed externally, Germany was a towering machine of steel and smoke, but her true power and purpose came from the sacred blood that flowed within her people.

"Hitler's secret," according to Heck, was that Hitler "wasn't afraid to shout out loud . . . that we deserve to rule the world" (23). The Nazis justified this desire to conquer other peoples with their racial myth. The Nazi Primer, the official handbook of the Hitler Youth, stresses that the "fate of a people is determined primarily by its . . . biological forces" (99). Hitler explains this concept in Mein Kampf: "Events in the lives of peoples are not expressions of chance, but processes related to the self-preservation of the race . . . even if people are not conscious of the inner reason for their actions" (283). This myth of the blood was one of the most prevalent myths of Nazism. It explained that the fate of all peoples is determined by the mystic makeup of their blood. Belief in this myth gives substance to other myths, such as the Aryan destiny to rule the world that Heck mentions. In Mein Kampf, Hitler explains that "all the human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan" (290). Hitler argued that the disintegration of every civilization was due to the defiling of their blood through sexual contact with other peoples. "All who are not of good race in this world are chaff," Hitler writes in Mein Kampf (296).

This brings us to the Jewish myth. Hitler believed that "the mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew" (Hitler 300). Throughout Mein Kampf, and indeed, throughout his reign as the Führer, Hitler characterized human history as an eternal struggle between Aryan and Jew, Good and Evil. Anyone or anything that threatened Nazism was of Jewish origin. Historian Dietrich Orlow writes

that this myth became a "totalizing and reflexive" one (4). This form of myth, according to Orlow, "reduces all past, present, and future events to a binary division and simultaneously imparts a moral value to both of the factors in the set" (4). Orlow identifies this set as the Aryan-German, who represented "total good," and the Jew, who represented "total evil" (4). This powerful moral component of the myth "completely politicized" those individuals accepting it, and thus became an integral part of their perception of reality.

Myths like these were undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of Nazism. Hitler was very familiar with ancient German myth. As Kubizek writes in his memoirs that "outstanding" among Hitler's books "were the German heroic legends. He always came back to them and knew them by heart" (182). Perhaps Hitler's great interest in myth was critical to his political success. Waite writes, "Hitler knew how desperately his people wanted to believe in heroic myths" (343). Why would people feel this need for myth?

At this point, we should turn to Weaver. To him, myths are the foundations upon which every culture is built, Germany being no exception. From the beginning, Hitler and the Nazis relied on myth to gain support; one thinks of the "stab in the back" theory that first roused the Germans against the Weimar Republic. It was much easier for patriotic Germans to believe this myth than to accept an honest military defeat. By nurturing this myth, the Nazis were able to unite all sorts of people with their cause. In Weaver's terms, the myth allowed them to "provide a base of harmonious thought and action" (Visions 34). Another critical myth the Nazis relied on was the extreme simplification and polarization of politics (and peoples). According to this myth, only the National Socialist Party stood for a Germany for Germans. Every opponent of Nazism was in some way associated with the

ancient enemy of the Aryan, the Jew, who existed solely to defile the sacred blood of the Aryan. "National Socialism," writes Hitler, "must teach our people to look beyond trifles and see the biggest things" (635). The "biggest thing," of course, is that Nazism is a "fight for the bare existence of our people," and the sole enemy is the "power which is robbing us of our existence," namely, the Jew (Hitler 635). The goal of this myth was to persuade the Germans that Nazism was the only alternative to serving the enemies of their people.

Of course, for these myths to mean anything to the Germans, the Nazis had to make every effort to encourage them to absorb them, in short, to identify themselves with the mythic Aryan destiny. This is where Kenneth Burke comes in. According to Burke, for this identification to take place, the Nazis had to make themselves and their audience consubstantial with the myths. Specifically, the Nazis created a supernatural scene with the help of technology. In Burke's terms, this was a manipulation of the scene/agent ratio. Burke writes that supernatural scenes will allow the "agent contained to partake of the same quality" (Grammar 999). Lighting and sound effects are utilized to create the mystic backdrop. Let us take the example of lighting. "Artificial light denies illusion and also tends to exaggerate it beyond true emotionality," Mosse argues (114). The greater the light effect (Speer's "Cathedral of Ice") the more the "functions of reality-testing and adaptive value judgments" become impaired (Gilbert 308). Sound effects work in the same way. When someone hears an artificial reproduction of the sound of a car whizzing past, he experiences part of the reaction he would have if he heard and saw a real car whizzing past. In some cases, visual and aural effects are provoking enough to cause the audience to flinch. Who has not once felt their mouth watering at the sight of delicious-looking food on the

television? The power of this sensory manipulation is hard to underestimate.

Essentially, Nazi myths provided a "terministic screen," or way of looking at the world. The myths were able to make certain symbols extremely significant—blood, for example, and the Jew. A German who believed the loss of World War I was due to an inferior military force certainly had a different outlook on life than a German who thought it was all due to a "stab in the back" by a Jewish-sponsored Weimar Republic. The Nazis' tyrannizing image became so powerful to certain members of the SS that "Jews" ceased to be human beings. These men saw them as parasites, and considered their murder no different from the cleansing of an infected wound.

#### **The Tyrannizing Image of Adolf Hitler**

Hitler's rise to power could well be described as a "rise to charisma." The German people's meaning for "Adolf Hitler" became far separated from the man himself. Many Germans even made it their God term, a term Weaver defines as an "expression about which all other expressions are ranked as subordinate" (Ethics 212). To achieve this charisma, Hitler had to become the "personification of some impersonal motive," specifically, that of the Führer (Rhetoric 277). Burke argues that the result of such personification is depersonalization. In other words, the closer a man is identified with an issue or movement, the less he is identified as a human being. Hitler made great efforts to keep his personal life out of view. Hitler's private life is never portrayed in any Nazi film; indeed, Welch writes that the Nazis would have considered portraying Hitler on the movie screen "blasphemy" (147). Hitler's effort to keep his past and personal life a secret is well known to his biographers. Fest entitles one of the sections of his biography "View of an Unperson," in which he discusses this issue. Fest

writes that Hitler "regarded life as a kind of permanent parade before a gigantic audience" (518). What Hitler strove to become was an image; his mission was to become "identified" with the God-like Führer, and that required certain sacrifices. Fest states that Hitler lived like an actor, and needing the "resounding alarums, explosive effects with lightning and fanfares" to become the "Adolf Hitler" the Germans identified him with (520). Hitler strove for the image of a "great, solitary man bearing the burden of his election by destiny, marked by the mystery of self-sacrifice" (Fest 521). The official and private life of the Nazi militant, Orlow writes, "found meaning only in serving Hitler as the personification of . . . myth" (10). To these Nazis, Hitler was no mortal man, capable of mistakes or insincerity. He was the Führer, the axis upon which their life revolved.

Hitler cleverly manipulated the scene-agent and the act-agent ratio to accomplish this identification. As we have already discussed, the Nazis enhanced Hitler's speeches with lighting and sound to the point that the person, Hitler, appeared like a god. This "concept of beauty objectified the dream world of happiness and order while it enabled men to contact those supposedly immutable forces which stand outside the daily flow of life" (Gilbert 308). In other words, the dazzling displays of technological brilliance sent the imaginations of the audience back to those glorious myths of their culture; they at once subconsciously struck the tyrannizing image of their culture dead center (Mosse 2). The Germans became consubstantial with their cultural myths.

The view of the world one sees in the Nazis' displays, (for a good example, take the time to see Triumph of the Will), is one of order, happiness, and mystery. The eerie columns of light in the 1938 Nuremberg Party Rally are symbols of the supernatural; they bring back

the innate associations of the great unknown; the long-dormant myths identified by Richard Weaver.

The Nazis' technology also provided a terministic screen, or a view of reality. The sounds of marching men provided a backdrop for Hitler's message: Germany is on the road to war. This sound effect was the same principle as the "colored" filters of Burke's photographs. The disconcerting light effects also played into this; reality was deflected because the Germans were reeling from this manipulation of their emotions. They saw what they were supposed to see: Hitler, alone in a sea of dazzling lights and gothic gloom, a wonderful paradigm of the "great German" who was so far removed from reality that no one could define him, but yet, their feeling upon seeing him could not be questioned. They revered him as the savior and champion of their people. To see this Hitler, they had to look through the "filter" of technological interference.

In Rhetoric of Motives, Burke discusses the resources of identification. When a sense of consubstantiality (something is believed to be composed of the same substance as something else) a symbolic link is established between "beings of unequal status" (46). This link is not a realistic, but an idealistic one. Although Hitler was a human being, and not a demigod, by the spectacular visual and aural effects the Nazis had at their disposal, he was rendered consubstantial with the gods, and thus, the people identified him as a god. The terministic screen deflected reality. They "deflected" any statements that ran counter to "Heil! Hitler."

Weaver's discussion of "Ultimate terms" could be applied here. Weaver talks about how charismatic terms are impossible to discover through a "construct of the imagination" (Ethics 227). He provides the example of the term "freedom," which is obviously a term of no little

feeling for the majority of Americans. Ironically, leaders can use the term to actually abridge freedom! No American really has freedom--what he has is a tyrannizing image that defies definition of freedom, or at least separates the lexical definition from a practicable one. If the government decides that drafting a large number of American youths into the army is the only way to "safeguard freedom," Americans must buy it, or face exile (by exile, I mean much more than physical removal from the culture). Hitler's favorite phrase, "Seig Heil!" (Hail, Victory!) was in this way a charismatic term. Even after the war was obviously lost for Germany, the term still had its emotional value. At the Nuremberg War Trials, several of those to be executed screamed it before they died.

### **Nazi Culture**

According to Weaver's Tyrannizing Image concept, a culture must necessarily reject certain values or elements to exist. For Nazism, this ostracized element was the Jews. One of the strengths of Nazism was that it was able to extend this rejection of the Jews to other elements they considered harmful, such as Marxism or internationalism, by connecting them in some fashion with Judaism. In Mein Kampf, Hitler laments the fact that "nine tenths of all literary filth, artistic trash, and theatrical idiocy can be set to the account" of the relatively small number of Jews in the country (58).

By identifying the Jews with all the evils of society, Hitler strengthening the Nazis' faith in the Aryan myth. The presence of the Jew explained the loss of World War I, but it also explained why the German had not already conquered the world. The Jew was as much a part of the Nazi tyrannizing image as the Aryan; he was the figure that unified the Germans behind Nazism. One could also argue that the Nazis' euthanasia programs for the handicapped were also effects of the

overwhelming tyrannizing image; the mentally and physically handicapped did not fit the image of the strong, heroic German fighter.

### **The Role of Technology**

Could the Nazis' have risen to power without the assistance of technology? Certainly, Hitler managed to achieve quite a measure of success with nothing but his willpower and oratorical ability.

Impressive lighting and aural effects were not an option for the Nazis in their early years; they lacked the money, expertise, and equipment for "Cathedrals of Ice."

This is not to say they did not indulge in visual rhetoric. In Mein Kampf, Hitler describes his initial impression of the German Worker's Party, which he would shape into the National Socialist Party: "There was nothing, no program, no leaflet, no printed matter at all, no membership cards, not even a miserable rubber stamp," (222). Of course, Hitler would see that the Party received all these vital necessities in due time. To a mind seemingly incapable of recognizing individuals based on their personalities, the need for external symbols of identification is paramount.

Consider the uniform. Chakotin writes that the "prime purpose of the uniform is . . . the maintenance of discipline or physical organization" (88). The uniform is essentially a full-body badge, or symbol of belonging. To wear one is to identify, on some level, with the organization the uniform symbolizes. Kenneth Burke describes this as a manipulation of the scene-agent ratio. The wearing of judicial robes "not only hypnotizes the beholder but transforms the wearer," Burke writes (Grammar 1004). This effect partly explains the rhetorical power of military marches. Not only can the soldiers identify with each other by their uniforms, but also by their very behavior. In complicated marches like the goose step, the marchers cease to look

like human beings. Their identification with military discipline (and force) is complete.

This type of discipline and identification was with the Nazi party at the very beginning (one only needs to think of the paramilitary SA). Closely related to this type of militarism is music and singing. Heck writes that singing "was a tool to bind us together in the common cause of Germany as well as a form of relaxation. When we were assembled in large numbers, its effect was hypnotic, as our leaders well knew" (103). Charles J. Stewart writes that songs are a way to "establish, define, and affirm one's selfhood in social movements" (cited in Bowers 25). Singing allows the individuals in the audience to participate. In a mass rally, there are two levels of persuasion. The first level is the actual words of the song, which can have quite strong persuasive content. The second level comes from identification with the mass, who by sharing the act of singing, allow the individual to become consubstantial with the mass.

Already we have seen several powerful persuasive methods in the Nazi arsenal that did not require high technology. The importance of technology occurs later on, when the membership roles entered the hundreds of thousands. The 1934 Nuremberg Party Rally would have been impossible without the loudspeaker; even Hitler could not shout loud enough to be heard by fifty thousand people. The airplane made it possible to ship Hitler all over Germany to strategically located speeches, and radio and cinema brought his message to millions of others.

Still, we must still wonder about lighting and aural effects. Were they icing or cake in the Nazi propaganda method? I have never come across an account of a German becoming a Nazi because of some impressive lighting effect. The situation is analogous to some modern

Hollywood films—are expensive “special effects” enough to get people into the cinema? Undoubtedly, some Germans must have considered these theatrics enough reason to attend a Party rally, but it seems unlikely that most Germans were thus affected. To the majority of the Nazis, these effects must have served to reinforce their beliefs. The “Cathedral of Ice” certainly lent a convincing supernatural quality to the 1938 Party Rally. Just like colored lights in a modern theater production, the “Cathedral” served to alter the scene and thus affect the mood of the audience, perhaps making them more receptive to the mythic qualities of the Rally. Lighting alone does not persuade, but in the right situation, it can be a valuable asset to an orator.

### **Conclusion**

We have seen that the Nazis dedicated huge sums of money and time to propaganda technology. In the case of the famous “Cathedral of Ice,” Hitler was even willing to risk national security. But was it all worth it? There is great evidence that this money and time paid off. First, we must take into consideration Hitler’s belief that successful propaganda must be simple and direct, and Goebbels’ belief that propaganda’s only object was to conquer the masses. “Every means that furthers this aim is good,” Goebbels writes, “every means that hinders it is bad” (13). Certainly, the Nazis would not have spent so much money on things like lighting devices if they did not feel they were serving a useful purpose. Culling the best persuasive features of the Roman Catholic Church, Wagner’s operas, and German and Austrian militarism, the Nazis created an almost irresistible system of technologically enhanced propaganda.

Secondly, the kind of technology the Nazis manipulated to enhance their speeches is still effectively being put to use today. A good rock and roll show is a modern example. With the assistance of colored

lights, lasers, smoke, and explosions, the rock star is placed into a supernatural setting. If the setting is effective, the "mere mortal" rock star becomes consubstantial with the mystery of his surroundings, and the audience identifies him with a higher image.

In the case of the Nuremberg Party Rallies, technology and militarism was used to create incredible mythical backdrops for speeches. Triumph of the Will is one of the best ways to see their method in action. With the constant juxtaposition and switching of old, mythic Germanic images (turrets, funeral pyres, and Nuremberg's medieval architecture) with images of the booming power of modern industry and smooth Nazi militarism (uniformed Nazis, swastika flags, and military vehicles) the audience is induced to identify the Nazis with the sacred, mysterious race of the Aryans. With this clever manipulation, the film adds significance to the symbols of Nazism. The final, catastrophic product of their efforts was the tyrannizing image of the Nazi Aryan, the mighty avatar of manifest destiny. The purpose of his existence was to crush German's enemies and rule the world; every thought and act that ran counter to this was Jewish and alien, foreign to the hearts and minds of the true German. By creating and carefully maintaining this tyrannizing image, the Nazis were able to seize and hold power until Germany lay in ruins.

There are certainly some difficult points that could be raised against this argument. Historians like Orlow and Kershaw scarcely mention the use of technology in Nazi propaganda tactics. For them, the secret of the Nazis' rise to power lies in economic factors. Perhaps the Nazis were just in the right place at the right time. This argument seems quite compelling if one emphasizes the shame of the Versailles Treaty and the wretched economy of post-World War I Germany. Still another possibility is that Hitler's legendary oratorical gift was

responsible for his success. After all, the Nazis only had access to most of their propaganda technology after Hitler had come to power.

One can certainly not deny that all these factors probably played a role in the Nazis' success. Still, the National Socialist German Worker's Party was not the only such party operating after the First World War. If the cause of the Nazis' victory rested solely on an economic or social coincidence, the NSDAP would seemingly have had to compete on less than equal footing with all the other parties operating at the same time, some of which were much larger and popular than Hitler's.

Hitler's great oratorical ability was obviously a great factor in the Nazis' success. The examples I provide in the third chapter reveal just how effective his speeches could be. An appropriate analogy to describe this problem is a revivalist tent preacher and the priest of a majestic, eloquent church. While the preacher may have enough fire and conviction in his sermons to attract listeners, his congregation is always aware that the preacher, and themselves, are human beings on earth. Their reality-testing ability is challenged only by the eloquence of the preacher's words. The priest, on the other hand, has the advantage of censors, flickering candles, beautiful paintings, and awesome architecture to help induce a supernatural mood in the hearts of his congregation. The haunting environment challenges their perception of reality. The words of the priest take on part of this quality, giving his message an added strength. The more mysterious and manipulative a man's setting is, the harder it is for him to test reality. The more emotional he becomes, the less reasonable he remains.

It is precisely this state of mind the Nazis strove for with their technology. The purpose of the light shows was to awe and bedazzle their audience into an emotional tempest. In this state of

mind, Hitler's powerful speeches took on an almost divine quality. Hitler and his speeches were beyond reason. The strings he dangled his followers from were affixed not to German minds but German hearts. Under his control, they laughed, cried, shouted, fought, and died. The tyrannizing images and terministic screens of Nazism provided their way of looking at and living in the world.

What have we to learn from the example of the Nazis? Are human beings incapable of resisting the mighty influence of technology? Have there been even more sinister developments in persuasive technology that could be implemented by a post-Hitlerite dictator? The first topic that comes to mind is "subliminal messages," or messages inserted into films or music that are only received by the subconscious mind. Certainly, Hitler would have used them liberally. Who can say what technology will be available to tomorrow's dictator? Our level of technology has in many ways surpassed the one portrayed in George Orwell's 1984.

Technological devices certainly have their place in rhetoric. They are rhetorical "devices." Aristotle argued that a good orator must "know the available means of persuasion." I think the time has come for rhetoric to address these issues; what I have provided here is only a brief look at the subject. Still, I feel safe in asserting that technology does contribute and influence culture, modifying or creating tyrannizing images and providing terministic screens. Some might argue that this is truly a case for psychology, and not for rhetoric, but I argue that psychology and rhetoric are simply two different methods of going about the same problem. Still, one must consider the rhetorical nature of Nazism—after all, it aimed at the emotions and not the reason. Who better to confront these issues than a rhetorician?

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