Epilogue:
The Road to Industrial Culture

The Culture Industry

The expression "industrial culture" was coined more than a century ago by Friedrich Nietzsche. In Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science) he observed that "soldiers and leaders still have far better relationships with each other than workers and employers. So far at least, culture that rests on a military basis still towers above all so-called industrial culture: the latter in its present shape is altogether the most vulgar form of existence that has yet existed."¹ Nietzsche was not the first to establish a connection between the development of industrial capitalism and the change in culture; the Young German writers had repeatedly addressed the issue of literary commercialization. Heinrich Heine, in his Parisian writings, had underscored the influence of capitalism on the production and reception of art. The liberal public sphere of the first half of the nineteenth century was far from the ideal described by later historians when they compared conditions then to those under late capitalism. Nietzsche’s observations and those of other contemporary critics went significantly beyond the criticism made by Vormärz writers. They suggested nothing less than the end of what the liberal elite had hitherto regarded as its culture. Nietzsche traced the demise of the classic national German culture to a number of factors. Among them, he cited the prosperity of the bourgeois cultural elite in Bismarck’s Reich, the expansion of the state school and educational system, and the decline of illiteracy among the masses, who now sought

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to participate in culture. Yet Nietzsche’s critical remarks did not develop into a sociohistorical theory. Horkheimer and Adorno were the first to formulate such a theory in their Dialektik der Aufklärung (Dialectic of Enlightenment) (1947). Although they may have been influenced by Nietzsche, they were clearly continuing Georg Lukács’s analyses of reification (Verdinglichung) under advanced capitalism. The object of their criticism was the America of the 1830s and 1840s rather than imperial Germany. But like the early Nietzsche, they were pointing up a historical contrast; the contemporary American culture industry—which they equated in some respects with conditions in Germany under national socialism—was different from the European culture of the nineteenth century. This is especially clear when Horkheimer and Adorno refer to German history. It was precisely the backwardness of German society, they argue, that protected its culture from the encroachment of organized capital:

In Germany the failure of democratic control to permeate life had led to a paradoxical situation. Many things were exempt from the market mechanism which had invaded the Western countries. The German educational system, universities, theaters with artistic standards, great orchestras, and museums enjoyed protection. The political powers, state and municipalities, which had inherited such institutions from absolutism, had left them with a measure of the freedom from the forces of power which dominates the market, just as princes and feudal lords had done up to the nineteenth century.²

Whether this description is valid or only a nostalgic transformation of the past will be considered later. More important in Horkheimer and Adorno’s theory is the assumption that the formation of culture as a whole was determined by the developing mechanism of the capitalistic marketplace. This is why the nations of Western Europe and the United States, as classic examples of capitalist society, offered a better field for Horkheimer and Adorno’s study of the culture industry than Germany, which entered upon this process later.

The stages of capitalist development also mark the stages of industrial culture. In late feudalism the cultural realm was protected against the marketplace because of its dependence on princely and state control; in contrast, liberal competition capitalism made art a commodity but did not substantially interfere with it. The autonomy of art and capitalistic distribution went hand in hand. The structure that Horkheimer and Adorno, following Nietzsche, characterize as the culture

industry—namely, the wholesale marketing of cultural assets, including formerly autonomous works of art—developed under monopoly capitalism, whose origins are shifted by Horkheimer and Adorno to the twentieth century (World War I seems to have been the dividing line). Production, distribution, and consumption were equally commercialized. Horkheimer and Adorno are really concerned with the psychology of consumption. They analyze the passivity of consumers, who were manipulated into believing that they had to be content with their hopeless circumstances.

Critical Theory defines the culture industry as a mass culture conditioned by monopoly capitalism. It consists of an apparatus by which the production of cultural assets is systematically managed as a business: “Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce.”3 It is unnecessary to reiterate Horkheimer and Adorno’s theory in detail, but two aspects should be noted. In the area of production they emphasize the development of a major apparatus unknown in the period of liberalism. Cultural products are thus subject to the same laws as material products: they are produced in large quantities for a large public. The result is that products and recipients have adapted to each other; both have long since lost their individuality and autonomy. In the area of consumption Horkheimer and Adorno emphasize the manipulation of recipients, who are kept unwittingly passive by the apparatus of the culture industry. The function of this apparatus, which in turn is dependent on big industry, is to entertain a large public. Because the working masses have apparently been freed from the pressure of work for society, they have become all the more involved in this work; leisure-time entertainment, Horkheimer and Adorno theorize, is nothing but an extension of work, not its negation, as the leaders of the culture industry claim.

Notwithstanding its brilliantly formulated insights, the theory of the culture industry presents a number of unresolved problems, connected in part with the cultural outlook of its authors, in part with its theoretical premises. Their statements concerning European culture of the nineteenth century are unmistakably tinged with nostalgia. They can hardly be considered adequate descriptions of the situation in imperial Germany. State protection of the educational system—of schools as well as universities—and control over theaters and opera houses prove on closer inspection to have been a highly problematic defense against capitalism—quite apart from the fact that in Germany and Austria the stage was already run largely with commercial ends in view. At any

3Ibid., p. 121.
rate, it is not difficult to show that improvement of the theatrical repertory in Wilhelmine Germany was the result not of state protection but of such private ventures as the Freie Bühne, which strongly resisted state control. The book trade, not mentioned in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, developed after 1867 into a highly capitalistic industry, which dealt with literary concerns only if they had economic value. The assumption of surviving feudal structures within the political public sphere would lead back in the cultural realm to a problematic assertion of backwardness from which art presumably profited. If Adorno and Horkheimer had held to the core of their theory—the close connection between the culture industry and advanced capitalism—they would have seen that organized capitalism in imperial Germany (cartels and trusts) definitely provided opportunities for industrial culture. Their emphasis on Germany’s special situation brought an element to the fore which had no place in their economically grounded theory but which, in my opinion, was important for the genesis of the culture industry: the role of the state. In marked contrast to France and England, the structure of the political system crucially affected the cultural realm. Yet this influence could hardly be said to have had a protective effect in Horkheimer and Adorno’s sense. It must rather be described as a bureaucratic organization of culture which fostered the development of an industrial culture. State influence and capitalism must therefore be seen not as antagonists but as complements. The important question, then, is: What cultural formation will result from a situation in which an authoritarian political system with a strong central executive power is faced with an economic system that in one generation has completed the transition from an agrarian to an industrial structure?

The theory of the culture industry was not intended as an evolutionary analysis; its focus is on the epochs following World War I, and the genesis of the culture industry is only a secondary concern. Nevertheless, mention is made of some of the historical factors contributing to the rise of that industry. For Adorno and Horkheimer the sociohistorical prerequisite for the culture industry was the development of big industries with a corresponding bureaucratic apparatus at their disposal. Organizations necessary for large-scale production emerged along with a large public whose desires could be made to conform. Significantly, Horkheimer and Adorno refer throughout their book to the masses. The culture industry is neither bourgeois nor proletarian but a formation in which all social groups and levels take part. Whereas

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in the nineteenth century only the nobility and the middle class for the most part had the leisure to share in culture, the reduction in working hours which began in the twentieth century permitted even the wage-dependent mass of the population to participate. Adorno and Horkheimer thus see a close historical connection between the increase in leisure time and the development of the culture industry: "Amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work. . . . What happens at work, in the factory, or in the office can only be escaped from by approximation to it in one's leisure time." In other words, in late capitalism organized culture serves to make the working masses toe the line, to satisfy their desires enough to keep them tractable. To this extent, it is always, directly or indirectly, an apology for existing conditions.

The relationship of the culture industry to the state is almost lost sight of in this analysis. Since *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is primarily concerned with mass culture in the United States, the description stresses the manipulation of the masses by the privately owned film and radio industries. This model would obviously not have applied to Germany under national socialism. To understand the origins of mass culture in Germany, one must examine more closely the importance of the state. This connection was clear to observers of the time. Critics placed no small part of the blame for the corruption and degeneration of culture in imperial Germany on the state. This may have been so partly because interference by the apparatus of the state was more evident than the cultural consequences of economic change, for which no theory had yet been developed. Yet objections to educational policy or state guardianship over theaters and the press were by no means insignificant. Vague and sweeping though the arguments of critics often were, their vehemence nonetheless shows that the traditional liberal concept of culture was inadequate to explain the profusion of troublesome manifestations in the cultural sphere. Contemporary observers not infrequently linked the changes with the founding of the Reich, declaring them to be the result of Germany's new political power. Unfamiliar phenomena were described as symptoms of decline—not only by Nietzsche but by Paul de Lagarde as well. The new German Reich no longer seemed a place where classic German culture could develop, even though its official representatives constantly appealed to that tradition. The more it became apparent that the longed-for national unification had served primarily to consolidate Prussian power, and the less capable the official new Germany was of realizing the hope for cultural renewal, the more such criticism was directed against the Reich and

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5Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 137.
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solutions were sought by which the German spirit could overcome the materialism of the times. Thus Nietzsche hoped in the early 1870s that a counter-public sphere would find its place in Wagner's Bayreuth, until he was forced to acknowledge that as soon as Wagner's festival performances became reality, they bore little relationship to his idea. They exhibited precisely those commercialized traits Nietzsche rigorously opposed.

Bourgeois Criticism of Culture

The cultural criticism of the seventies, which found the new Reich shallow, relied primarily on the concept that had dominated liberal discourse in the early nineteenth century: legitimacy is derived from education. There was an ever-widening gulf, the argument ran, between the aesthetic educational program of the classic period and educational institutions of the present. Criticism was aimed above all at the educational policy of the state, which for various reasons was at the center of discussion in the early seventies. The issue of education went far beyond legal and technical details, for these could be regulated by laws and ordinances. It became, especially for Nietzsche and Lagarde, the central problem of modern culture. Because the state educational system allegedly was a failure, or supported the wrong tendencies, Nietzsche and Lagarde awaited the decline of German culture. Whereas specialists in the history of education are familiar today with the debate over Falk's school reform, the discussion of cultural criticism, which was closely tied to that debate, has been detached from the special historical conditions under which it arose. It is important, however, to reestablish the connection so that its motives and arguments will be understood.

Both in the controversial laws of March 11, 1872, dealing with school supervision, and in the "general regulations concerning the elementary school, preparatory, and teachers-training system," which were issued in October of the same year, the intent was to revoke the counterrevolutionary school policy of the fifties, succinctly defined in the Stiehl directives, and prepare for an appropriate education for industrial society. Public reaction to Falk's reform program, which called for no drastic changes but sought instead to protect schools by adapting them to the changed social conditions, showed how important the edu-

ational issue was considered. The intention of the state to remove the church, as embodied in its priests and ministers, from its traditional office of supervision over elementary schools, was regarded by the parties and institutions concerned as the sign of a new era in school policy. If the reactionary school policy of the Nachmärz had been pursued against a background of cooperation between state, church, and family, the Falk measures seemed an attempt to establish a permanent educational state monopoly. To the extent that these laws and ordinances were directed against the Catholic church, they were part of the cultural struggle of the Prussian government under Bismarck aimed at destroying the influence of the church in the public sphere.

But this was not the only significance of the reforms. In the final analysis, the desired changes went beyond reconstruction of the elementary school system to a redefinition of the cultural public sphere. The changes for which Bismarck had fought ultimately could only strengthen the position of the state. That his intentions were motivated by power politics became clear in the course of discussion in the Staatsministerium (Ministry of State); for him the law was above all a tool for restraining and regulating certain elements presumed to be politically unreliable (for example, Catholics and Poles). It was not the government’s intention to broach the fundamental question of a cultural state monopoly. Yet even though Falk explained to the upper chamber that the issue was not the separation of school and church “but a more precise delimitation of the rights of the state and the church with respect to schools—nothing more, especially not a resolution to the relationship between church and school,” opponents had reason to fear that this was merely the first step on the road to school secularization. As was to be expected, the Catholic church argued against the law, saying it would weaken its historic and constitutional rights. State monopoly of education would be contrary to the interests of both the church and parents and in the last analysis was bound to lead to a secular society no longer compatible with Christian values. These arguments were made even by conservative Catholic intellectuals such as Konstantin Frantz. More important for us, however, are those who distanced themselves from the immediate situation and concerned themselves instead with cultural-political implications: Nietzsche, in Basel, who cited the danger to culture posed by state-controlled education, and Lagarde, a few years later, who raised objections to Prussian school policy. Nietzsche and Lagarde agreed that Prussian school policy

9Quoted in ibid., p. 35.
had misapplied the concept of education by changing higher schools into career-preparatory institutions. These schools had been turned into licensing agencies having scarcely anything to do with the idea of education. Although the Gymnasium was the primary object of their attacks, elementary schools indirectly also came under criticism. In contrast to Gymnasien, elementary schools were to be open to the masses and to educate them to perform useful work for society.

Both Nietzsche and Lagarde criticized the spread of education to broader segments of the population. To them this step, which the Prussian state had pursued since the fifties by establishing middle-class elementary schools (Bürgerschulen) and modern secondary schools (Realschulen), seemed to dilute the real educational objectives of the Gymnasium. Nietzsche’s lectures in Basel left no doubt that he thought it was not the responsibility of the state to educate the masses. The improvement of elementary schools was not in the interest of a cultivated society:

The education of the masses cannot, therefore be our aim; but rather the education of a few picked men for great and lasting works. We well know that a just posterity judges the collective intellectual state of a time only by those few great and lonely figures of the period, and gives its decision in accordance with the manner in which they are recognized, encouraged, and honoured, or, on the other hand, in which they are snubbed, elbowed aside, and kept down. What is called the “education of the masses” cannot be accomplished except with difficulty; and even if a system of universal compulsory education be applied, they can only be reached outwardly.

Even if Nietzsche intended otherwise, this interpretation was more in line with Stiehl’s concept of popular education than with Falk’s reform program. When Nietzsche proposed that true education be reserved for a small elite, he was not, of course, referring to the process of selection which had been followed by Prussian school policy. On the contrary, his Basel lectures were directed against the state’s authority to set qualifications—against the instrumentalization of higher schools for the purpose of preserving fine gradations of social and economic privilege. Professional careers, Nietzsche complained, were predetermined by the number of classes a student had taken. He rightly pointed out that this system had nothing to do with the classic ideal of education but rather corresponded to the needs of the state, which had to provide qualified functionaries for its apparatus. Hence Nietzsche’s criticism was directed not so much against the new Realschulen as against the Gymnasien, which were being used for purposes other than those originally intended. “To say the least, the secondary schools cannot be reproached with this; for they have up to the present propitiously and
honourably followed up tendencies of a lower order, but one nevertheless highly necessary. In the public schools, however, there is very much less honesty and very much less ability too; for in them we find an instinctive feeling of shame, the unconscious perception of the fact that the whole institution has been ignominiously degraded, and that the sonorous words of wise and apathetic teachers are contradictory to the dreary, barbaric, and sterile reality."

Lagarde passed similar judgment on the Gymnasium of his time; he, too, was convinced that higher schools and universities were transmitting not education but a merely superficial knowledge. Like Nietzsche, he held the state’s authority to set qualifications responsible for the wretchedness of the higher schools; the competition for social advantages had filled the Gymnasium with pupils unfit for higher education: "Since, besides, . . . institutions for instruction are very overcrowded, despite their large number, even born teachers are unable to reach the masses, or can do so only as long as their strength holds out. All individualization of instruction ceases, and with it, real instruction; in every aquarium and zoo there is individualization, but not in a Prussian school, which is interested only in handing out diplomas.” Lagarde’s analysis, however, led him to different conclusions from Nietzsche’s. Whereas Nietzsche wanted to restore a pure concept of education, Lagarde proposed abandoning general education and introducing a purely technical school system: “I see only one way to save the situation. For all the reasons just mentioned, the state and the nation must emphatically and with full awareness stop chasing after the phantom of universal education, the phantom, in fact, of an education belonging to a bygone era; they must have the courage to base public instruction—insofar as it is not simply elementary instruction based on personal love—on the only principle on which all public life rests, the principle of duty.”

However different their suggestions for a solution might be, they were in agreement on one point: on contesting the state’s monopoly over education. Nietzsche above all emphasized the incompatibility of public education and true cultivation:

With the real German spirit and the education derived therefrom, such as I have slowly outlined for you, this purpose of the State is at war, hiddenly or openly: the spirit of education, which is welcomed and encouraged with such interest by the State, and owing to which the schools of this country are so much admired abroad, must accordingly originate in a sphere that

never comes into contact with this true German spirit: with that spirit which speaks to us so wondrously from the inner heart of the German Reformation, German music, and German philosophy, and which, like a noble exile, is regarded with such indifference and scorn by the luxurious education afforded by the State.

In Nietzsche, criticism of the educational system was joined with a criticism of pseudoculture; the false desires awakened by the schools gave rise to decadent Bildung:

Such a degenerate man of culture is a serious matter, and it is a horrifying spectacle for us to see that all our scholarly and journalistic publicity bears the stigma of this degeneracy upon it. How else can we do justice to our learned men, who pay untiring attention to, and even co-operate in the journalistic corruption of the people, how else than by the acknowledgment that their learning must fill a want of their own similar to that filled by novel-writing in the case of others: i.e. a flight from one's self, an ascetic extirpation of their cultural impulses, a desperate attempt to annihilate their own individuality.13

Humanistic education, Nietzsche proposed, could only be saved if it was completely separated from the interests of the state. Yet his Basel lectures offered scarcely more than a hint of how this renewal could be brought about. In his conclusion he evoked the spirit of the German students’ associations—their unconditional idealism—in order to give an idea of the energy required to overcome the pseudoculture of his time.

The literary intelligentsia’s greater interest in the educational system reflected concern for the cultural development of Bismarck’s Reich, on which the national liberals had pinned their hopes. The liberal intelligentsia, who called for national unification as the prerequisite for emancipation and were therefore prepared to align themselves with Bismarck after 1866, had counted on the founding of the Reich finally to give German national culture the political form it needed. Thus David Friedrich Strauss expressed the hope in his Der alte und der neue Glaube (The Old and the New Faith) (1872) that the liberal concept of culture could be introduced into the new Reich. Nietzsche’s vehement protest against this cultural concept in his first Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung should be read as symptomatic, not merely as the criticism of a stylistic formation but as the denunciation of a solution no longer historically productive. For Strauss and the moderate liberals, the Reich

at first represented the fulfillment of their hopes. They overlooked the fact, however, that unification did not simply consolidate existing forces but produced structural changes not confined to the political and economic sphere. It suddenly became apparent that society had changed, although this change could not be conceptualized. As a rule, discontent was confined to complaints about the crass materialism of the Gründerjahre (the years of rapid industrial expansion in Germany after 1871). The unexpected changes were still best described by the metaphors of decline and degeneration. For Nietzsche the literature of Young Germany (such as that of Gutzkow) was the first step toward the perverted journalism of his time.

We should not underestimate the fear of the traditional intelligentsia—which included Nietzsche and Lagarde—of the effects of social change on their own position in society. The educational system was of central importance to their status. The intelligentsia received their legitimacy from the state institutions of education. No matter how dissatisfied they may have been with their situation, because they had no share in political power they were not threatened from below, as long as the state employed schools and universities to stabilize existing conditions. The education they acquired was proof of their elevated social position, even if they were not always assured of economic privileges. As long as only a small percentage of the population attended higher schools, the privileged position of the academically educated was obvious. The expansion of the educational system—by increasing the number of Realschulen and improving the Volksschulen—tended to level status. Whereas elementary school teachers educated in teachers colleges supported this tendency because it furthered their social aspirations, Gymnasium teachers were hostile even to the prospect of being on an equal level with teachers in the Realschulen. The claim of teachers in the Volksschulen to be counted among the cultivated was largely rejected by the humanistic intelligentsia. This was just one of many reasons school legislation was so controversial in the seventies. Lagarde, for instance, equated extension of the school system with loss of prestige for the teaching profession. More schools would have to be established, his argument ran, because of the spreading system of qualification. This would create a greater demand for teachers. Because there were not enough trained teachers available, unqualified candidates would be

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14 For more detail on this, see Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand, Deutsche Kunst und Kultur von der Gründerzeit bis zum Expressionismus, vol. 1: Gründerzeit (Berlin, 1965).
hired. The result would be a lowering of the prestige of the teaching profession as a whole. Lagarde saw the German Reich headed for an educational catastrophe that could only be ruinous for the intelligentsia.

Nietzsche’s criticism of the German system of education also betrays a fear of leveling. The state aim of giving a larger segment of the population better preparation for future professions by establishing more secondary schools and improving elementary schools was denounced by Nietzsche as the introduction of pseudoeducation, although he did not contest the practical value of those efforts. Above all he fought against the claim of the masses to take part in classical education. In Nietzsche’s third Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung he called the masses herd people, who were too dull to think and act for themselves and therefore had to rely on public opinion. If it was the goal of culture to produce genius, then the masses, according to Nietzsche, had no part in this task. In the writings of the eighties, sentiment against the claims of the masses was extended to equal rights. Not only was the most basic education barbarism, as Nietzsche put it in 1871, but in Die fröhliche Wissenschaft he compared feudal and bourgeois-capitalist culture and gave the earlier formation the decided edge, because it kept the masses under better control. Nietzsche feared that the new rulers did not have as much authority as the aristocracy: “If the nobility of birth showed in (the manufacturers’ and entrepreneurs’) eyes and gestures, there might not be any socialism of the masses. For at bottom the masses are willing to submit to slavery of any kind, if only the higher-ups constantly legitimize themselves as higher, as born to command—by having noble manners.” This criticism of capitalism did not favor the masses; on the contrary, they were viewed as a serious threat which could be countered only by a strong hand: “An age of the greatest stupidity, brutality, and wretchedness among the masses, and of the greatest individuals,” is the characteristic remark in Nietzsche’s posthumous notes of the eighties.

The crisis in the Bismarckian Reich was a matter of record in the cultural sphere even before the socialist legislation of 1878 brought it to the surface in the political system. In this crisis, political and economic causes were so closely interwoven that for contemporary observers they were all but inseparable. In any case, the means for overcoming them seemed to lie beyond the socioeconomic sphere—in cultural renewal. A

16Lagarde, Deutsche Schriften, p. 163.
regeneration of the German spirit was demanded, as in Nietzsche's early writings, but above all in the works of Lagarde and Julius Langbehn and in the publications of the Bayreuth circle around Hans von Wolzogen. Dissatisfaction with the results of industrialization—especially its second phase, which was marked by economic depression—was expressed in the desire to escape the logic of economic concentration and urbanization by "overcoming" it. The problem of industrialization was temporarily put aside by attributing it to outside difficulties, which could be resolved by looking back to one's own national spirit. In contrast, apologists for the liberal concept of culture saw themselves faced with a difficult task, for their available theoretical models were obviously no longer capable of giving an adequate formulation of the changed situation.

In the 1860s, the idea of political emancipation had in large part already been sacrificed to the authoritarian bureaucratic state; now, with the economic crisis of the seventies, the theory of free trade lost its power to convince. The liberal theory of the public sphere no longer proved compatible with political and social realities after the founding of the Reich. Thus in the last third of the nineteenth century the concepts of the public sphere and public opinion changed. They largely lost their normative content and were introduced descriptively by such theorists as Franz von Holtzendorff, Albert Schäffle, and Gustav Schmoller as a way of explaining the effects of ideas and ideologies on the public. Schäffle viewed the public sphere as a sociopsychological necessity of nature not based on legislative whim, and he thereby eliminated the content of liberal theory.  

The public sphere was no longer the area where a responsible public could come together for deliberation but rather one where the masses were guided by a higher authority. The sociopsychological approach advocated in the early twentieth century by Wilhelm Bauer and Ferdinand Tönnies proceeded from the premise that the public sphere fundamentally could be manipulated. German industrialization revealed the weakness in the liberal theory of the public sphere: despite its apparent openness, the theory made the cultivated bourgeois the representative of universal interests. No room was left for the masses. It was thus not by chance that this theory lost its validity in the face of the Industrial Revolution. Neither the development of the press nor the new form of theater or literature could be understood with the classic arsenal of ideas. Under the circumstances, the only alterna-
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The concept of mass culture introduced into the Anglo-American cultural realm suggests a timeless contrast between the majority of the population on one side and a privileged elite on the other. It thus depends on the standpoint of the observer whether mass culture is welcomed as a democratization of culture or rejected as a leveling of authentic culture. The disadvantage in this conceptual formation is its historical imprecision. It allows for no distinction between the early and the late nineteenth-century constellations. In this respect the concept of the culture industry introduced by Horkheimer and Adorno is more precise. It ties the genesis of the new cultural formation to the transition from liberal competition capitalism to monopoly capitalism. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, to be sure, the beginning of this transition is placed too late. The economic development after 1873 can no longer be regarded as competition capitalism, even in a backward Germany. Economic depression gave rise to a movement toward concentration which in the course of a generation fundamentally changed the structure of heavy industry.\(^\text{22}\) During this phase of organized capitalism, the urbanization of Germany, the key to the reorganization of the cultural public sphere, was accelerated.\(^\text{23}\) This reorganization may be traced in a number of examples.

The theater is not mentioned by Horkheimer and Adorno as a medium of the culture industry. The reason is obvious: compared to films, theater in the twentieth century has long since lost its leading role as a mass medium. This preindustrial medium could be adapted only to a limited degree to the conditions of mass reception. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to draw a sharp distinction between theater and cinema. In the second half of the nineteenth century, industrialization had a lasting effect on the theater as well—on its buildings, on the organization of its apparatus, on the form of plays, and on the relationship between actor and public. To begin with, there were notable changes in the ground plans and interior decoration of theaters built


after 1885. Although the exteriors of these theaters—the Deutsche Theater in Prague (1885) and the Deutsche Schauspielhaus in Hamburg (1900) are good examples—were little altered, their interiors were adapted to new needs. Their auditoriums, foyers, and corridors were given new forms. The space in which the public circulated before and after performances was considerably reduced. Auditoriums, in contrast, were enlarged in capacity by reducing the number of loges (sometimes by removing the central loges altogether) and replacing them with tiers. The two changes were complementary, with the space intended for audiences being used more economically. By sacrificing loges and large lobbies, the chief areas in which the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie had displayed themselves, more viewers were given the opportunity to attend the play, albeit at the cost of public space. It is fair to assume that the new tiers of seats were intended for the petite bourgeoisie, who had not attended court theaters and only rarely bourgeois theaters. The new seating arrangements prevalent after 1885 suggest that the composition of the audience had changed. Previously the nobility had predominated in the loges and the bourgeoisie in the parterre; now the nobility were displaced by the petite bourgeoisie, while the haute bourgeoisie retained their traditional places.

This democratization of the theater, however, led not to a radical petit-bourgeois theatrical public sphere but to an arrangement in which the public increasingly lost its distinguishing characteristics and became subordinate to the theater. It renounced its self-presentation. Indeed, comparison may be drawn with Wagner’s new theater in Bayreuth (1876). There, too, we find (with a few exceptions) that loges were abandoned and seats arranged so that the audience concentrated not on itself but on the stage. This orientation of the audience toward the stage did not mean, however, that it was brought into closer contact with the play. The opposite occurred. Lighting and the arrangement of the orchestra pit created the illusion of another world on stage. The same effect was achieved in the new theaters by enlarging the proscenium. The darkening of the auditorium, introduced by Wagner in Bayreuth in order to prevent the audience from being distracted, intensified the direct effect of the stage action on the spectators, who lost their own reality, as it were, in the darkness and focused on the world of the stage. Democratization of the theater resulted, in other words, in a passive audience whose participation in theater was restricted to looking. Wagner had already insisted in Bayreuth that performances should not be interrupted by applause for individual scenes; he also forbade the repetition of successful scenes. These measures were intended to elimi-

24On the following, see Hays, The Public and Performance, pp. 67-72.
nate the mundane aspects of a visit to the theater so that the special atmosphere of a festival production could predominate.

Yet Nietzsche had already observed that the sacralization of the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk did not necessarily heighten its aesthetic effect but rather manipulated the audience. Wagner’s theater, Nietzsche objected in Der Fall Wagner, was intended to move the masses, to overwhelm them by a combination of theater and music. What in Bayreuth was the result of careful planning was only gradually accepted—and by no means without opposition—in municipal and court theaters. But when we trace the development of the German theater from Heinrich Laube to Max Reinhardt—that is, from the middle of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth—the structural changes stand out clearly. Whereas the form given to the Burgtheater by Laube’s theatrical practices precisely fulfilled the expectations of a bourgeois audience, Max Reinhardt’s productions—his Oidipus Rex in the Zirkus Schumann (1910), for example—were not dependent on a reasoning bourgeois public sphere. They were intended for a huge audience no longer differentiated according to class. The disappearance of the bourgeois theater—bourgeois in the sense of a liberal public sphere—was a process extending over more than two generations, and it would be problematic to describe it merely as an increasing manipulation of the masses. Certain aspects of this manipulation, however, should not be overlooked. They can be characterized as (1) a tendency to subordinate dramatic texts to visual effects, (2) disbandment of actors’ ensembles, and (3) domination by the director.

The first sign of change in the use of the stage became noticeable in the Burgtheater under the direction of Dingelstedt.25 Franz von Dingelstedt was in no sense a revolutionary when he made his debut at the Burgtheater; his work tended to repeat his earlier successes on the Munich and Weimar stages. Whether his adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays, which subordinated the dramatic text to his dramaturgical conceptions, can be regarded as homogenized products of the culture industry is a matter of dispute.26 But his staging, which hypnotized the audience through artful lighting effects, was certainly a step in the direction of total stage illusion. The same can be said for the theater in Meiningen under the direction of Georg II of Sachsen-Meiningen. The duke surely did not intend, through the use of historically accurate

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26Michael Hays has raised objections to this interpretation, pointing out that the purpose of the adaptations was to bring Shakespeare’s plays closer to the classical form. See Hays, “Theatre and Mass Culture: The Case of the Director,” New German Critique, no. 29 (Spring-Summer 1983):133–46.
staging, to attract a new audience unaccustomed to culture, but rather to preserve a prebourgeois condition. Yet the effect of the Meiningen style did not necessarily correspond to this intention. Reviewing a performance of *Julius Caesar* by the Meiningen troupe, Otto Brahm remarked that the power of the production lay in its mass scenes, although the performances of individual actors were mediocre so that by the fourth and fifth acts tension was noticeably reduced.27 However, neither the historical accuracy of the costumes nor the precise choreography of the crowd scenes, for which the Meiningen troupe was famous, resulted in a more accurate rendition of the dramatic work; rather, they exaggerated certain elements of the text. The intrusion of the director is evident in the imposition of his interpretation on the text and the ensemble of actors, which compelled the audience to accept his conception. It was certainly not Georg II’s interest in archeology that made the Meiningen theater an influence on later directors; a greater source of inspiration was the calculated overall effect to which individual elements, including the actors, were subordinated. In Germany it was Max Reinhardt who learned most from the Meiningen troupe and made the new concept of directing a success. This new concept subordinated both the actors and the audience to the will of the director.

The rise of the director to the central figure of the theater and the decline of the ensemble went hand in hand during the nineteenth century.28 The actors of the bourgeois theater formed companies bound by contract, in which every member had a specialty. As it functioned in Vienna under the direction of Heinrich Laube, this organization conformed to the ideas of liberal capitalism. The restrictions imposed on an actor’s self-expression were not comparable to the alienated situation that prevailed around 1900. They were, rather, the limits imposed on bourgeois discourse to set it apart from aristocratic gesture. The individual, as Hays put it, is “not missing from the picture, s/he is redefined and integrated into the social whole, just as Laube’s actors were integrated into the concept of the performance.”29 In the organization of the early bourgeois theater, the director played a subordinate role. According to Philipp Düringer and Barthel’s 1841 dictionary of the theater, the director was primarily a technical manager; in any case, his function was not to interpret the dramatic text by means of his production. The relationship between the actors’ ensemble and the theater director may already have been changing under Dingelstedt and the Duke of Sachsen-Meiningen, but the new arrangement did not gain general acceptance until the eighties. The turning point came with the

28On the following, see Hays, “Theatre and Mass Culture.”
29Ibid., p. 139.
opening of the Deutsche Theater in Berlin in 1883. Although details of the historical relationship are still being debated, the structural change that occurred toward the end of the century is no longer in question. The concept of the director had taken on the meaning it has today. Henceforth the director would be the central figure in theatrical presentations, mediating between the dramatic text and the actors as well as between the production and the audience. When a director controls the form of a performance down to the smallest detail, there is room for neither an ensemble nor the active participation of the audience. The actor submits to control by direction, and in the darkened theater the audience remains in an essentially receptive role, which it may step out of only at a few predetermined points by applauding. The director has a monopoly over interpretation. Through his or her staging, which involves actors, decorations, lighting effects, and so forth, it is the director who primarily decides the interpretation of the text being performed. This shifts communication from the audience's engagement with the play to its reaction to an interpretation placed before it. With this change the audience has obviously ceded the role it had in the classic literary public sphere. It has become mute. This alienation indicates a transition to a new cultural formation.

The institution of the theater, except for the director, included the same elements in 1900 as in 1850, but they had a radically different relationship—quite apart from the question whether we are dealing with a traditional theater or an experimental stage, whether the masses were involved as a viewing public or not. The theater made itself independent, as it were, of the literary public sphere; it was no longer an expression of the latter but rather an apparatus by which that public sphere could be regulated and controlled. At best, viewers found themselves in the position of learners; at worst, they were indoctrinated.

The Press

In classic liberal theory the articulation of public opinion was the responsibility of the press. In 1873 the Leipzig historian Heinrich Wuttke defined the role of newspapers: "And it is the task of newspapers to mediate between those who in this spirit are called on to lead and the mass of the population, to give the latter the necessary enlightenment and understanding, which will allow them to form independent judgments, so that they will not be bewildered by the confusing whirlpool of events but will instead be motivated to take the upward path."30

30Heinrich Wuttke, Die deutschen Zeitschriften und die Entstehung der öffentlichen
We can disregard the question to what extent this circuitous formulation departs from the classic definition of the function of the press (as in distinguishing between leaders and followers). Wuttke stressed the goal of enlightenment not because he was convinced that the contemporary press was fulfilling this task but because he believed it could no longer do so. Toward the end of the century an ever greater number of voices were raised in criticism. The press had assumed a form, liberal observers concluded, which increasingly contradicted its function as an organ of public opinion.

The upheavals described by Wuttke in the early seventies were only a modest beginning, for the new type of paper—the popular, unaffiliated Generalanzeiger—did not gain general acceptance until the eighties. Its massive circulation, which only a generation before had seemed unthinkable, was the result in part of rapid development in the printing process but above all of a new economic concept. Whereas earlier dailies had been financed primarily by the sale of subscriptions, Generalanzeiger relied mainly on advertisements. The commercial press presupposed a new kind of advertising organization, such as the one Rudolf Mosse and other farsighted entrepreneurs introduced in the sixties. In 1867 Mosse founded his Annoncen-Expedition in Berlin, which soon opened branches in other large cities. By offering himself as a mediator between the newspapers and the advertising public, he revolutionized the advertising business and indirectly also the press. The advertising section was now systematically used to sell papers. Newspapers were addressed not only to the reader but to the advertising business as well. By organizing the advertising market, Mosse brought about a reciprocal increase in production and consumption. Thus in 1883 August Scherl was able to publish his Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger—initially a weekly—with a beginning circulation of two hundred thousand, without having to rely on subscriptions, its costs being covered by advertisements. During its first year of publication Scherl charged his customers a small delivery fee of ten pfennigs. Only when the number of buyers leveled off at about 150,000 in 1885 did Scherl resort to subscriptions, at a monthly rate of one mark. The circulation of the Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger was considerably larger than that of other Berlin newspapers. Scherl was more consistent than his competitors Mosse and Ullstein, because he organized his paper around the adver-

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32Berliner Tageblatt, seventy-four thousand (1871), Berliner Zeitung, twenty-five thousand (1878), according to Wilfried B. Lerg and Michael Schmolke, Massenpresse und Volkszeitung (Assen, 1968), pp. 17–18.
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tisement and not the editorial section. Mosse’s appointment of distinguished editors (Artur Levyson, Theodor Wolff) made the Berliner Zeitung into a notable liberal paper, but this approach held no interest for Scherl. The Berliner General-Anzeiger responded to the requirements of the commercial press: its editorial page followed the dictates of the advertising business.

The consequences of this orientation had been described ten years earlier by Wuttke. Newspapers became dependent on advertising and were thus unable to report objectively on matters involving their advertisers: “Businesses dependent on the exploitation of people usually submit articles intended for columns in the main body of the paper. The opinion of the paper is thus determined by the ‘advertisement section.’”33 Even when there was no direct influence, the editorial section of the commercial press, which was primarily profit-oriented, was under pressure to comply with the wishes of its clients. The editorial staff could no longer regard itself as the representative of the public sphere; it was rather an active organ of the management. Public opinion consisted of the combined wishes and interests of the paper’s important clients. The abstract concept of a universal public sphere, illusion though it was, had given early liberal journalists moral support against the pressures of the marketplace. Readers were addressed as reasoning people, whether or not they qualified as such. In contrast, the consideration of the commercial press for its readers and their interests and expectations was motivated by a desire to increase circulation. It is no accident that Scherl began his career as a publisher of dime novels (Kolportageromane). As the journalist Maximilian Harden grimly observed, Scherl had an opinion only if it was marketable: “You are now at the crossroads. Local gazette, weekly: wonderful—innumerable gold pieces and a little spot in the history of culture, before Aschinger and behind Wertheim, close by Loeser and Wolff and Tietz. He was a man, it will be said, who had the bright idea of driving politics out of the paper and of stuffing customers with information and little pictures until they were full and, happily satiated, fell asleep.”34

The new journalism was closely linked to an increase in circulation; it was not, however, created by mass production. The large market and new editorial policies were, rather, variables resulting from the system of the commercial press. Whether the presses bought up old papers or started new ones in the form of the Generalanzeiger, the change was essentially the same: the public sphere was dominated by private interests, which were disseminated as public opinion. The commercial press

33Wuttke, Die deutschen Zeitschriften, p. 20.
34Die Zukunft (February 16, 1901), pp. 281–82.
came on the scene not as the ideological opponent of the opinion press but as its illegitimate heir. Under the pretext of delivering information to the public sphere at a reasonable price, it presented the news as if it were a consumer product. The more extensive the news apparatus of the big papers became and the quicker it could report topical events, the less meaningful individual news items became for the reader, who was simply overwhelmed by the profusion of unconnected details. In this respect the procedures of the commercial press paralleled those of the new theater. They allowed—in fact, encouraged—the petit-bourgeois masses to participate, but they disguised the price required for that participation: the masses were pressured to behave as the apparatus intended them to. The fact that recipients regarded this pressure as their own inclination only gave added strength to their subjugation. Although readers felt that they were represented by the apparatus of the press, the press considered the readers' interests only as long as they remained willing consumers.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century this was nowhere more apparent than in the development of the illustrated magazine. Whereas the family journal, which to a certain extent can be considered the historical predecessor of the magazine, was still interested in summarizing and articulating the opinions of its readers—petit-bourgeois liberal nationalism, for instance, in *Gartenlaube*—the illustrated magazine was the first medium to create its own audience. In 1891 Ullstein Publishers put out the earliest example of this type of publication, the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, which was to be a major influence on the character of the press in the coming century. Although the magazine had few illustrations during its first years because the requisite technology was not yet available, its low price of ten pfennigs an issue soon gave it a circulation of forty thousand. The illustrated magazine borrowed from the family magazine such elements as the serialized novel and cultural and business news, but it presented them in topical form so that the paper could be sold on the street. In a 1927 history of Ullstein we read: “The object of the journal was to be so absorbing that no one would want to switch.” The commitment of readers, however, was no longer secured by the usual subscriptions but rather by weekly competition on the streets. Therefore layout was extremely important: “When the B.I.Z. [*Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*] began, and as long as no new methods of illustration were found, its text was almost more effective than its pictures, its main weekly attraction being the gossip in each issue.” The journal did not attain its full effect until photographs were reproduced mechanically: “The autotype—i.e., a photomechanically transferred tonal etching—quickly completed its triumphal advance
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and displaced the woodcut not only because it was cheaper . . . but because it took less time to produce.” What distinguished the Berliner Illustrirte from dailies and cultural periodicals was its mixture of local information and cosmopolitan reportage, literary entertainment (novels by Max Kretzer, Rudolf Herzog, Ricarda Huch, Georg von Ompteda, Bernhard Kellermann, and Arthur Schnitzler, among others) and popular science. Political information and the formation of public opinion were, in contrast, secondary. The nonpolitical reader was the ideal consumer for periodicals no less than for popular newspapers. The feuilleton, and especially the feuilleton novel, was, as the social democratic press eventually discovered, of central importance for the early magazine form, which could not yet rely on extensive pictorialreportage with running commentary.

If the goal of the new press was to extend the literary public sphere, to make literature accessible to the masses, its result in that public sphere was a change the force of which contemporary observers had difficulty assessing. Complaints about the commercialization of literature and the dependence of literary production on an industrial apparatus give only a partial picture of this change, since they were directed primarily against the commodification of literature. The wholesale transformation of cultural assets into commodities, which Adorno and Horkheimer identified as the distinguishing characteristic of the culture industry, was merely the prerequisite for a new structure that changed general conditions of reception. Walter Benjamin had correctly cited this characteristic in arguing against traditional cultural criticism, although he restricted it too much to technological development. Technical reproduction was merely the medium for a form of communication already anticipated by the apparatus of the press. The new journalism depended on readers looking for a quick source of information, for whom a large, varied quantity of news was more important than a coherent formation of public opinion. Literature had to adapt to these conditions of transmission. Reception was no longer motivated by a concern for personal cultivation but rather by curiosity: an interest in things foreign, sometimes bizarre, but in any case exciting, which the dime novel had introduced into literature in the seventies. Characteristically, the Berliner Illustrirte began its series of novels by printing the reminiscences of a Berlin police lieutenant. Popular papers such as the Berliner Morgenpost, as Arthur Bernstein was able to show, for the

most part became feuilletonistic: "A primary characteristic of the new type of newspaper, the morning post, was that its 'feuilleton' did not—as in other papers—lead a modest existence 'below the line' but instead infiltrated all parts of the paper. Local and crime news, even politics, were 'feuilletonistically' distributed." In other words, the news was presented as a "story" in order to appeal directly to the emotions of the reader. In this process literary-aesthetic and historico-pragmatic discourses drew closer together. The hallmark of industrial culture was an ever-greater meshing of realms and discourses, primarily in the great newspapers but also in the large book publishing firms, which could rightly be called industries.

The Book Market and Mass Literature

Much can be learned about the change in the literary system in Germany from the development of the book market after 1870. The fifties and early sixties were marked by a long recession in the book trade, but the market recovered after 1867 and experienced an exceptional upswing in the seventies and eighties, even though general economic conditions in those decades were anything but encouraging. Between 1868 and 1877 the annual number of books published increased from 10,563 to 13,925. Ten years later it exceeded 17,000. Between 1868 and 1888 production (in titles) rose 62 percent. Ronald Fullerton has rightly pointed out, however, that the number of titles does not give an exact picture of the increase. For this reason he also quotes figures for returns. They confirm a rapid increase. Returns rose from twenty-five to fifty-five million marks. There was a corresponding increase in numbers of bookstores. The 3,079 stores in Germany in 1865 more than doubled by 1885 to 6,304. This growth exceeded that of the population, so that the network of distribution was denser in the eighties than ever before.

A number of factors contributed to the expansion of the book trade, among them development of a national postal service, increase in the number of universities and schools, and urbanization of the population as a whole. Yet these factors alone could not have been decisive, since they did not have the same effect in other economic spheres. More important was the structural change in the book trade and in publishing: the transition from a type of enterprise still rooted in a handicraft-oriented past to one adapted to mass production. Even though the

3750 Jahre Ullstein, p. 160.
important publishing firms were still largely conducted as family enterprises and did not take the form of corporations, their history clearly shows a new phase beginning in the seventies. Traditional business habits were replaced by practices indistinguishable from those in other areas of capitalist endeavor. The special status of the book industry as a trade responsible for the transmission of culture proved an increasing liability and was rejected by the most active publishers. Somewhat later than the editors of periodicals—that is, about 1870—they discovered the reading masses. There were great numbers of readers with no common class background. The traditional liberal concept of education could be reconciled with the capitalist principle of increased turnover and profitability if the literary canon of the classic authors could be successfully offered to a large public for a reasonable price. This was precisely what happened with the series published by Brockhaus and by Gustav Hempel. Hempel was the first to make full use of modern marketing techniques to sell his “Nationalbibliothek.” The series was announced with four million prospectuses and three hundred thousand letters, and free copies of its first installment were distributed in large numbers. Even before the series appeared on the market, forty thousand subscribers had been signed up.

Although subscriptions proved an effective method for selling the classics, a new method proved even more successful. The issues of Reclam’s Universalbibliothek, which began in 1867 with Goethe’s Faust, were offered for sale individually—and for a price that remained substantially below that of the competition. Even though the press could depend on the appeal of the series once it had been introduced, each title had to be sold separately. The selection of works was thus crucial for the success of the series. Reclam was well aware of this and emphasized in its advertisements that readers could pick from the Reclam series what attracted them most and assemble an individual library. Reclam’s Universalbibliothek in fact gained a reputation for making the German classics available to the masses. True though this is, it does not accurately characterize the nature of the series. The selection mixed cultivation and entertainment—canonical texts which one had to read to be considered cultivated, and some that were suited to summer reading and travel literature. This marketing technique unmistakably homogenized literature as a whole. Standards were lowered and aesthetic pretensions were compromised for economic reasons. If the classic con-

39See Fullerton, Development; and Ilseidore Rarisch, Industrialisierung und Literatur (Berlin, 1976).
40See Fullerton, Development, pp. 332–34.
41The published authors included Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Jean Paul, and E.T.A. Hoffmann, but also Kotzebue.
cept of education—as it was once again formulated, for example, by Adalbert Stifter in the fifties—had strictly distinguished the canon of literary classics from the quasi education of the metropolises, the new book industry persuaded its customers that this view was no longer valid. Though the classics were made as accessible after repeal of the perpetual copyright as contemporary light literature, this was in the final analysis detrimental to the idealistic concept of education, because the latter proceeded from the premise that a classic literary text owed its special quality to its reception, a quality also reflected in the purchase of the book. The editions published by Cotta respected this quality, which the new series and Reclam editions purposely disregarded.

I have no intention of lamenting the destruction of the classic concept of cultivation, which had become an ideology by the fifties (cultivation as social status); my concern is, rather, to define industrial reception. In the Reclam series a play by Schiller or Lessing acquired changed status: contemplation was replaced either by study or by consumption. Edification, which had always been an aspect of the bourgeois conception of culture in the nineteenth century, was eliminated. The new editions encouraged a more objective relationship to literary tradition. Objectification, however, by no means excluded the reification of tradition; on the contrary, the complete series of classics appearing on the bookshelves of the Mittelstand did not necessarily promote intimate knowledge of literary texts.

As long as the majority of the population was either completely or partially illiterate, mass literary culture (newspapers, periodicals, books) was impossible. This was undoubtedly the case in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century. The masses were certainly not readers; even less were they buyers of books. They lacked both the necessary education and the economic means. The turning point came between 1850 and 1870. Although these decades were on the whole still characterized by a concept of literature that excluded the masses, conditions for the most part changed after the first phase of industrialization came to an end. Large urban industrial and commercial centers emerged, densely populated areas in which economic and social interaction presupposed a literate population. Indeed, this process now included the proletarian levels of society. By about 1880 illiteracy had all but disappeared in Prussia except in the eastern provinces. This created conditions ripe for an enormous literary output. The popular book market, which had, of course, existed before, expanded after 1870. The process was a continuous one capable of exploiting the technical advances in the printing industry. The high-speed printing

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press and the reduction in the cost of paper made possible the mass production of cheap editions. This benefited such traditional mass publications as almanacs, health books, and religious tracts, but also the new type of novel which in the seventies and eighties was the primary leisure reading of the proletarian masses. We know that dime novels, whose authors included such writers as Franz Pistorius, W. Frey, and Karl May, reached readers not through the regular book trade but through book peddlers, who sold buyers subscriptions and delivered installments on a weekly basis. Both production and distribution were strictly organized by the publishers. Authors were expected to follow existing schemes and formulas in their treatment of plots and characterization. To assure the optimum effect on readers, publishers reserved the right to make changes in the text.

The literary pattern for dime novels was set by the 1870s. The narratives of Sue and Dumas could be imitated, but in order to reach the audience, the effect had to be intensified. Whatever one might say about the practices of publishers such as Münchmeyer in Dresden, Grosse in Berlin, or Oeser in Neusalza, they succeeded for the first time in breaking through the barriers of the traditional book market and selling to proletarian readers. This was made possible by the new method of distribution in weekly installments, which were affordable at ten pfennigs even though the total price of a dime novel usually exceeded that of a comparable novel in a regular bookstore. Whereas family magazines continued to address bourgeois readers—though these already included the petite bourgeoisie—the dime novel was aimed primarily at proletarian readers, who had different wants and literary expectations. That these authors—most important among them Karl May—were able to satisfy the desires and interests of the proletariat, despite being guided and controlled by profit-oriented publishers, tells us that once again a relationship, albeit in an ominous form, had been created between a class and a literary genre. The problem is in assuming that these novels were essentially nothing more than a transformation of the earlier gothic or picaresque novel. Though motifs and themes were undoubtedly taken over from older forms, the dime novel, with its social focus, is not simply equal to its predecessors, as the example of Karl May shows. For one thing, producers sought to make their novels topical by reference to recent historical events and figures; for another, the novels had a more pronounced tendency toward social criticism.

43See Fullerton, Development, p. 411.
45Thus Fullerton, Development, p. 419.
Dime novels exhibited the unmistakable marks of industrial culture: schematic production on a large scale, precisely calculated distribution, and a writing style that tried to reach readers by relying on literary formulas and conventions. Some of the traits of the American film industry, as described by Adorno and Horkheimer, seem to be anticipated here. These novels could in no way pretend to be autonomous works of art, as was obviously clear to contemporary observers. Nevertheless, they can only to a limited extent be considered forerunners of later illustrated novels or entertainment films. That this genre could never free itself of the odium of moral disreputability, that it was either ignored or morally condemned by bourgeois criticism (including social democratic criticism), is a sign that it could not escape the cultural ghetto. It remained bound to the proletarian milieu. By the nineties, the dime novel had already passed its peak and was replaced in the book market by newspapers and periodicals. But the new popular papers and magazines, which were aimed at a large audience, were scrupulously concerned with their reputations. We need only compare the novelists of the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* with the authors of dime novels to see the difference. This development can be summed up as follows: only after the disappearance of the dime novels in about 1900 was the literary public sphere ready for homogenized offerings that could be directed successfully at heterogeneous social groups and classes. The mass audience of the commercial press differed from that of the dime novels; petit bourgeois at its core (artisans and salaried employees), it reached the bourgeoisie on one side and the workers on the other. The book market was headed for a similar future. Publishing houses needed to steer literary production in a direction that would make it independent of specific class wants and expectations. This could be accomplished, however, only when the presses had developed their apparatus to such a degree that they could extensively manipulate production and distribution. These conditions did not exist before World War I. Best-sellers were more likely to be the result of fortunate, but uncontrollable, circumstances than of systematic planning.

**An Alternative Public Sphere and Counterculture**

Industrialization in Germany unquestionably led—especially during its second phase, after 1870—to the development of a literary mass culture in which a majority of the population participated. But can this mass culture be regarded as a culture industry in the sense meant in critical theory? Was it, in other words, a culture in which broad capitalist concerns systematically exploited the cultural wishes of the masses?
Did reasoning readers, to put it in somewhat exaggerated terms, become consumers? The restructuring in the press, the book trade, and the theater conveys a contradictory picture of the developments. The development most easily subsumed under Adorno and Horkheimer’s concept of a culture industry is that of the popular press. Here the establishment of large publishing houses, such as those of Mosse, Scherl, and Ullstein, to name only the most familiar, led to systematic control of the Berlin press, from high-quality organs of opinion to tabloids. The book industry, in contrast, remained divided into two unrelated markets serving different social classes. The economic scale of the book publishing houses, unlike that of the newspaper companies, remained essentially that of extended family enterprises, which were unable individually to dominate the market. Under these circumstances, leading publishers were more concerned with the literary reputation of their firms than with supplying a mass market.

A look at the development of culture as a whole in Wilhelmine Germany prompts one to ask whether the thesis that the conditions of organized capitalism inevitably led to the development of a culture industry is tenable. The erosion of the bourgeois concept of culture cannot be correlated linearly with the development of organized capitalism. In Germany, at least, one must consider additional factors that make the total picture decidedly more complex, for example, on one side the development of a state cultural policy going far beyond merely negative measures (censorship) and, on the other, efforts of the organized working class to create a cultural counter-public sphere. These two forces exerted an influence on the cultural formation of imperial Germany probably equal to that of capitalist industry. Although the state program and the socialists pursued contrary goals, their demands and the measures they took were sometimes in agreement—in the fight against dime-novel literature, for instance. Both sides sought to eliminate certain aspects of the capitalist book industry as hostile to culture. I believe that industrial mass culture was fundamentally influenced by the cultural policies of the state and the organizations closely connected with it. It was the interplay of capitalist organization and state intervention, with its rich potential for conflict, which gave rise to the formation that Adorno and Horkheimer were to characterize in the twentieth century as the culture industry. The importance of the state remained hidden in classic critical theory for two reasons: first, Adorno and Horkheimer were primarily concerned with the United States, where state influence historically played a minor role and where there was no bureaucratic apparatus for organizing culture; second, the cultural policy of the German Reich is not easily defined. Even among the states that made up the Reich there was no unified
cultural policy. The Prussian Ministry of Education and Culture, for instance, dealt with religious matters and issues of public education but left supervision of theaters to the police.

Ever since the elimination of censorship and the liberalization of laws governing the press (such as abolition of securities and stamp duties), the restrictive influence of the state had considerably lessened. The book trade especially benefited from these measures. What replaced negative regulation? Although literary production was left largely to the free market, the state interfered continuously in cultural life by imposing political and organizational measures on the educational system. In comparison, positive state measures affecting the cultural public sphere were relatively modest. Whereas censorship of the theater remained largely confined to restrictive operations, Bismarck's press policy, which systematically shaped public opinion by building an apparatus and manipulating information, was essentially confined to the political sphere. It was not clear to him that the political public sphere could also be influenced by cultural events. Bismarck failed to recognize the possibilities of an aesthetic politics. Significantly, he flatly rejected Wagner's pleas for support of the Bayreuth festival. This decision was undoubtedly influenced by Prussian government reluctance to appear as a competitor to the Bavarian king, who was known to be a patron of Wagner. At bottom, however, Bismarck had no understanding of Wagner's concept of national festivals. If he had recognized their political value, he would presumably have used them, as well as the Wagner-Verein and the Bayreuth circle, for his own purposes. Ludwig II's support also remained tied to the pattern of royal patronage, which owing to its personal character did not readily translate into political control.

The bourgeois intelligentsia and the new proletarian intelligentsia had a decidedly better understanding of this relationship. The shift of the social democrats to cultural organizations, after prohibitions had been placed on the party, should not be understood solely as a screen for political activity; it was also based on the recognition that mass policy required intervention in daily affairs. This was easier to accomplish through cultural than through political action. The most obvious example of the politicization of culture on the part of the bourgeoisie was the circle of Wagner's friends and admirers which assembled for the Bayreuth festival. As part of the national movement that was spreading rapidly in the eighties, this circle used the works of the master to support German cultural reform. The translation of aesthetic opin-

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ions into political ideology was already present in Wagner's writings—initially, about 1848, with a radical-democratic aim, later with a popular-nationalistic aim. The goal of the Bayreuth circle was to disseminate Wagner's message. As Carl Friedrich Glasenapp put it: "But now we should tell ourselves that it is our task, as true apostles and evangelists of a new covenant and as living witnesses, to pass on what we have seen." It is not within the scope of this book to give even a brief sketch of the history of this circle and the development of its Weltanschauung. Only one point needs to be made: the Bayreuth circle formulated an aesthetic view of life aimed at exerting political influence. It set itself the task to regenerate German culture from the spirit of German art. The aesthetics of Bayreuth were emphatically opposed to the contemporary commercial theater and opera. With his formula "art as expression," Friedrich von Hausegger offered the Wagnerians a catchword in 1884 that would distance them from formalism. Art became the expression of the national folk character. Great artists were thus expected to transcend individualistic liberal culture and create a new heroic culture in which the German national character could find appropriate expression.

The core of the state's promotion of culture continued to be educational policy. Through its monopoly of school supervision, which the state had claimed for itself, at least in principle, since the early nineteenth century (though in practice it was shared with the church and local authorities), the state had direct access to the cultural sphere. For this reason, discussions of school policy give us a penetrating, if not always clear, picture of the problems created by industrialization. Both the strengthening of modern secondary schools (Real- and Oberrealschulen), which ultimately gave them equality with the Gymnasien, and the reform of primary schools were responses to social change. The traditional division between higher education for a small elite and basic education for the mass of the population was obviously no longer appropriate in the age of industrialization. On the other hand, the ministry bureaucracy could not overlook the fact that any change in the school structure could have an effect on social structure. If the aim was to stabilize the social status quo, changes had to be made with great caution. Hence educational policy in imperial Germany fluctuated between two tendencies: extending the modernization of society to the educational system and putting educational policy at the service of dominant social groups, which used the educational apparatus to freeze existing class conflicts.

48 Letter of April 29, 1883, quoted in Schüler, Der Bayreuther Kreis, p. 53.
brought with it a fear of the extension of popular education. Prussia had reacted with the Stiehl directives, which restricted the education of primary school pupils to the basic functions of reading, writing, and arithmetic and to religious instruction. This unsatisfactory situation was finally brought to an end in 1872 by Falk's "general regulations." A new plan took into account "the current state of general education, the present development of industry and agriculture, and the situation in public life as a whole" and advocated a new type of school appropriate to the changed conditions.50 Falk and his collaborators were justly convinced that the traditional one-class elementary school did not provide sufficient knowledge. The multiple-class elementary school became the new, though by no means universal, norm. The curricula for the middle and upper levels put emphasis on the Realien—that is, history, geography, nature description, and natural history. Expectations, however, were severely limited in the field of the natural sciences. Schools lacked the learning materials needed to introduce children to developments in technology. Moreover, the adjustment to changed economic and social conditions was in no sense intended to be revolutionary. Falk let it be known in an address to the Reichstag that he viewed school reform as a contribution to the struggle against social democracy.

The reforms undoubtedly strove to make the masses literate in order to qualify them for their future occupations. But this aim was thwarted by simultaneous efforts to secure their religious and political loyalty. Even Falk's ministry held to the view that moral-religious training was at the core of education. Stronger financial support of elementary schools and increases in teachers' salaries, which were perceived by the public sphere as a growing interest by the government in elementary schools, did little to change this basic attitude. Prussia's elementary school policy remained contradictory. The government was completely opposed to separation of church and state, favoring instead church support for the moral education of children. Robert von Puttkamer voiced this view in 1879 when he stated, after Falk's resignation: "An ethical and religious training and instruction of the young in schools is a matter in which the state, which bears legal responsibility for the direction and supervision of all aspects of education, and the church—the Evangelical no less than the Catholic—as the Christian place of healing, have an equal interest, an interest that should be reflected by the work they do together in the schools."51 What German idealism meant for the Gymnasium, religion meant for the elementary school—the firm base on which the structure of knowledge would be erected. This re-

50Quoted in Berg, Die Okkupation der Schule, p. 69.
51Quoted in ibid., p. 92.
ligious concept of education, still based largely on prebourgeois conceptions, was intended, among other things, to be a restraint on social democracy.

The politicization of the schools became especially evident after 1889. The order of Wilhelm II on May 1 of that year officially brought class conflict into the schools. The intensification of the political conflict shifted priority to measures that would foster "fear of God and love of the Fatherland," as Wilhelm II said. The modernization of the schools thus became an explicit political issue. On one side, overt indoctrination was demanded in order to show pupils the destructiveness of social democratic doctrine; on the other, the Social Democratic party (SPD) backed efforts to adapt elementary schools to the requirements of modern economic life (as stated in the election manifesto of 1884). The increasingly conservative educational policy of the Prussian state, the primary goal of which after 1890 was to repulse the socialists, returned to the image of the subservient citizen and subject. To expand education, which would have encouraged independent thinking, was no longer in the interest of the state. If the tendencies of Falkian reform could be regarded as support for the new industrial culture—which is why the conservatives attacked it—the growing political conflict between the various powers supporting the state and the socialists restricted the policy of reform, though without suspending it entirely, since it accorded with the needs of an industrial society. Pupils were to identify with existing conditions and at the same time to acquire as much practical knowledge as was necessary to qualify for a profession. Under the circumstances, the state viewed the literacy of the masses—even when unpolitical, as in the reading of entertainment literature—with suspicion. Legislation against the dime-novel trade, accused of immorality by its bourgeois critics, was evidence of this concern in the bureaucracy.

The Wilhelmine state had an ambivalent relationship to industrial mass culture. It opposed mass culture when the latter cast doubt on existing conditions; it adapted to mass culture—indeed, fostered it—when it promised to support the status quo. This pragmatic approach remained strangely blind to the more profound changes in the cultural sphere. By so obviously politicizing education, the emperor and government obscured their view of the more far-reaching consequences of mass culture, which in the long run—even when it was politically neutral—did not support the authoritarian system of the empire. Few

attempts were made, beyond the scope of educational policy, to come to
terms with the new cultural formation. Guidance was largely left to
local authorities and to organizations not connected with the state, such
as churches or associations that for one reason or another were con-
cerned with the spread of culture, for example, the library movement.

In public discussion the earlier Volksbibliotheken were condemned
by most librarians as being poor in quality. After 1895, however, the
Bücherhallenbewegung (library movement) gave rise to a new concept
of the public library, which, based on the American model, was not
restricted to a specific social class. The new public libraries were to be
open to all citizens, the choice of books taking into account the wants of
a broader public. Constantin Nörrenberg (1862–1937), one of the
leading spokesmen of the movement, advocated merging existing public
and municipal libraries into general educational libraries: "Reading
rooms should be maintained on a regular basis by cities or local govern-
ment units, perhaps with state support. It would be desirable to create
central offices for advising communities or associations seeking to es-
tablish reading rooms." Before World War I, however, local govern-
ment financing for these new educational libraries was less than antici-
pated. In most cases, the establishment of new reading rooms depended
on the initiative of individuals or associations, though up to a certain
point preexisting organizations could count on municipal help. Institu-
tions offering support included the Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur,
founded in 1892; the Comenius-Gesellschaft; and the older Gesellschaft
für die Verbreitung von Volksbildung. The task of these institutions
was to prepare the ground for municipal public libraries. They also gave
money to equip libraries when cities and communities were unable to
assume the costs themselves. Thus in 1899 the Comenius-Gesellschaft
urgently requested the magistrates of German cities with more than one
hundred thousand inhabitants to establish public libraries, offering as
one of their reasons that they would lower the costs of relief for the
poor and of fighting crime. The ideologues of the Bücherhallen-
bewegung advocated public support for libraries as a means of giving a
higher ethical tone to the population. The state and communities, the
argument ran, should provide for libraries, as public institutions of
learning, to the same degree that they provided for pupils, theaters, and
museums. It was suggested to municipal and state administrations
that social problems—not least the bad influence exerted on the masses
by trashy literature—could be resolved by fostering public libraries.

54Wolfgang Thauer and Peter Vodosek, Geschichte der öffentlichen Bücherei in
55See Ernst Schultze, Freie öffentliche Bibliotheken, Volksbibliotheken und Lesehallen
(Stettin, 1900).
Despite this propaganda, cities and communities held back. Even the Prussian state approached the new task with hesitation. Although the Ministry of Education and Culture supported the establishment of public libraries in an edict of 1899, its yearly subsidy of fifty thousand marks shows that the state expected them to have no appreciable influence on the populace. Plainly, a comprehensive cultural policy had not yet been developed. The initiative was deliberately left to private associations and organizations, which were to pacify the masses by working for education. The company library established by the Krupp firm and headed since 1898 by a leader of the public library movement, Paul Ladewig, may have agreed to a certain extent with the intentions of the state (warding off social democracy), but the library founded in Hamburg in 1899 by the Patriotische Gesellschaft was closer to the spirit of enlightened concern for the general good. Cities and communities before World War I by and large played the role of well-intentioned observers. The planning of new libraries and the formulation of politically motivated cultural goals was the work of private associations and their spokespersons. The latter continued the tradition of the Enlightenment, which sought to bring literature gradually to the people. Yet the situation in about 1900 was fundamentally different from that of the early nineteenth century. The literate masses were now pressing for cultural participation. A decision had to be made about the form this participation would take. Although librarians were generally against politicization of public libraries, they repeatedly found themselves between two fronts. In bourgeois circles it was often feared that public reading rooms would serve the forces of the political opposition. The socialists, on the other hand, were convinced that these libraries were intended as countermeasures to the workers' libraries of the party and trade unions.

The public library movement had proceeded by and large from a traditional concept of cultivation. Its goal was to bring good literature to the population. At first, the question whether this concept of education was still applicable did not arise. It became important only after the policy dispute of 1912 between Ladewig and Walter Hoffmann provoked vehement discussion among librarians. The cause of the dispute was Ladewig's Die Politik der Bücherei (The Politics of the Lending Library) (1912). Whereas Ladewig took up the idea of the American public library, defining it as a matter of public communication, Hoffmann, in his response, made its educational value paramount. He

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56 Centralblatt für die gesamte Unterrichts-Verwaltung in Preussen vol. 30 (Berlin, 1899), pp. 760–72.
57 See Thauer and Vodosek, Geschichte der öffentlichen Bücherei, p. 63.
stressed the individual character of library work (guidance and teaching), vehemently opposing American methods, which were adapted for large numbers of people. Ladewig’s point of view was in fact a departure from traditional concepts. In opposition to Hoffmann and his school’s concept of education, Ladewig argued in 1914 that education was not the goal but the consequence of library work.58 He called for libraries that would serve the public as did the post offices and the railroad. In short, he proceeded from the premise that culture was no longer the privilege of a social group but rather the concern of the masses. Whereas Ladewig regarded the reading masses as responsible, Hoffmann saw his readers as in need of guidance; the advice of librarians was thus of central importance. Such phrases as “decorative educational mechanisms,” which were used to describe large libraries, demonstrate the spirit of the cultural criticism of the time.59 Differing criteria for the selection of books reflected the opposing concepts. Whereas librarians in Hoffmann’s camp aimed at imparting a literary-aesthetic education and accordingly sought to restrict both the potential circle of readers and the kinds of books in circulation, Ladewig’s and Erwin Ackerknecht’s supporters, who belonged to the so-called Stettiner Richtung, favored a new cultural concept. They took for granted that the Industrial Revolution had brought literacy to the masses, and they viewed literature as one among a number of forms of communication. In contrast to Hoffmann, Ladewig and Ackerknecht were prepared to recognize contemporary culture as an industrial mass culture.

**Culture Industry or Counterculture?**

This brings us to the central question: Was the development we have just described inevitable? Was industrial mass culture unavoidable? It is worth noting that the social democrats did not pose the question in this form.60 They undoubtedly favored equal cultural participation for the proletarian masses from the start, yet they did not choose to characterize the spread of culture in Nietzsche’s sense as industrial culture.61 Rather, they assumed that correct guidance and education would help the proletariat adapt to bourgeois culture without changing the sub-

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59Cf. the positive evaluation of Hoffmann’s work in Werner Picht, *Das Schicksal der Volksbildung in Deutschland* (Braunschweig, 1950), pp. 160–76.
stance of the cultural assets acquired. To this extent, social democrats shared the concern of the bourgeois intelligentsia that trashy literature (labeled bourgeois) could have a bad influence on the masses. The social democratic polemic against entertainment literature—that is, against dime novels—was not fundamentally different from bourgeois criticism.\textsuperscript{62} In his famous lecture "Wissen ist Macht—Macht ist Wissen," Liebknecht informed members of the Leipzig Workers' Educational Association in 1872 that Bismarck's state was by no means the Kulturstaat it made itself out to be. Liebknecht criticized both the press and mass literature, concluding that "the cheapest kind of light entertainment literature, which is mainly bought by the Volk—including the so-called Kolportageromane or dime novels—are almost without exception (I think one can say without exception) in form miserable trash and in content opium for the mind and poison for morality."\textsuperscript{63} It did not occur to socialist critics to take into account the potential sociocritical content of dime novels.\textsuperscript{64} Their arguments against the new mass literature, from which the working class had to be protected, were comparable to the objections of bourgeois critics; emphasis was on aesthetic mediocrity and moral decadence. When Liebknecht made the claim for social democracy as the party of culture, he referred not to Marx or Engels but to Aristotle: "What is education? According to the classical definition of the Greeks it is the kalon kagathon, the beautiful and the good brought to expression in a personality—'the development of all the virtues,' which Aristotle defines as the purpose of education, the harmonious development of all the capabilities, both physical and mental, slumbering in an individual."\textsuperscript{65} This classical definition was at the heart of Liebknecht's cultural policy, which demanded the development and restructuring of elementary schools and insisted that the class dominance of the bourgeoisie distorted education. Liebknecht undoubtedly wanted to eliminate educational privilege, to make knowledge the common property of all, but it never occurred to him that the concepts of culture and education might in themselves be ideological. In his justified criticism of a false training for literacy among the masses,

\textsuperscript{62}See Meinke, Produktion, pp. 89–96; Kristina Zerges, Sozialdemokratische Presse und Literatur. Empirische Untersuchungen zur Literaturvermittlung in der sozialdemokratischen Presse 1876 bis 1933 (Stuttgart, 1982).

\textsuperscript{63}Wilhelm Liebknecht, Kleine politische Schriften, ed. Wolfgang Schöder (Leipzig, 1976), p. 149.


\textsuperscript{65}Liebknecht, Kleine politische Schriften, p. 166.
which, as Liebknecht pointed out, was merely a preparation for military service, he held to the view that the authentic concept of education could be restored through political strategy. Triumph over class dominance, Liebknecht assured his audience at the end of his lecture, would restore harmonious education in a free society.

Liebknecht’s concept of culture found a parallel in Ferdinand Lassalle’s and Franz Mehring’s concept of literature, which followed the idealistic tradition and made the new class heir to bourgeois literature. Lassalle emphasized the importance of Weimar classicism. Mehring, for political reasons, favored early bourgeois literature over contemporary naturalism, which as a movement saw itself to an extent as the literary counterpart of socialism. He insisted that a socially critical literature had to take an optimistic approach transcending the present. “Only where naturalism has gone beyond capitalist thinking itself,” he wrote, “and is capable of grasping the beginnings of a new world in its inner essence is its effect revolutionary, does it become a new form of artistic representation, which even now is not inferior in its singular greatness and power to any earlier one and which is destined one day to surpass all others in beauty and truth.” Although Mehring believed that this spirit was present in Hauptmann’s Die Weber, he was later to be more skeptical about the modern age of literature, to which he attributed a deep pessimism incompatible with the future of the proletariat. In 1896 he warned in general against overestimating the role of literature in the workers’ struggle for emancipation, citing the political struggle in Parliament, in which the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century could not have participated.

One should not, however, conclude from this assessment, which was shared by Liebknecht and Bernstein, that the ideological literary struggle was underestimated and ignored by the SPD at the end of the nineteenth century. The character and function of working-class literature was insufficiently discussed because the leading theorists of the party favored a traditional concept of culture and made the literary heritage the central issue. How should the party have reacted to this literature, which had been born in the milieu of the labor movement? What rela-

67On Lassalle, see ibid., pp. 47–61.
tionship did this proletarian writing have to the massive quantity of literature then being distributed? Should dime novels have been opposed, or should this new form have been accepted so that new readers could be found for the party’s publications? Kristina Zerges has rightly pointed out that the functionaries of the SPD were well aware of the importance of these questions. Literary strategy was debated not only at the party congress of 1896, as Zerges has shown, but over the course of several decades. After the socialist legislation was rescinded, social democracy was confronted by a different type of press—the mass commercial press, which because of its price policy was able to penetrate the workers’ milieu. The party sought to counter the new strategy of the bourgeois press by fighting it with its own weapons. But this strategy presented problems insufficiently understood and thought through by the socialist editors. As long as the contrast between bourgeois and proletarian culture was substantially maintained—that is, as long as primary emphasis was on class differences—the changes brought about by industrialization were not readily perceived. No appropriate theories and methods for dealing with the new mass press yet existed.

The SPD reacted to the feuilletonistic press by founding Neue Welt, a weekly arts supplement to the regional party papers: “When organizing and structuring individual issues of Neue Welt, its editors copied the layout of bourgeois entertainment journals, especially Gartenlaube.” (The text comprised serialized novels and short prose essays, either on the literary life of the time or addressing questions in the natural sciences. It also included poems, and from 1892 on monotony was relieved by a puzzle corner and a letters to the editor section on the last page of the paper.) Its leading editors, first Curt Baake and later Edgar Steiger, were convinced that class-conscious workers needed to clearly distinguish themselves from bourgeois literary activity. Both Baake and Steiger allied themselves with naturalism and wished to see the political struggle for proletarian emancipation joined with the radical social criticism of the naturalists. On naturalistic literature, Neue Welt said: “We wish therefore to learn from it and to be inspired by it in our struggles. And perhaps the hour is no longer far away when alongside the despairing poetry of the bourgeoisie there will appear a hopeful new proletarian poetry that will be literature, that will truly be the spirit of our spirit.” This alliance with naturalism presented problems for Neue Welt. The newspaper was criticized at the party congress of 1892 because of party concern that the interests of its editors did not accord

71Zerges, Sozialdemokratische Presse und Literatur, esp. pp. 72–117.  
72Ibid., p. 52.  
73Neue Welt 1 (1892):6.
with the wishes of its readers. In particular, the novels printed in the paper appeared not to meet readers’ expectations. Although this criticism was repeated in one form or another at every party congress, the issue was never fundamentally resolved because the attempt was being made to reconcile two mutually exclusive concepts. On one side, the delegates called for a popular entertainment journal able to compete with Gartenlaube; on the other, they sought to improve readers by offering good novels and exemplary biographies. Whatever the case, trashy literature was unwanted. They appealed either to the classic concept of culture or to the interests of readers, which were more in accord with family magazines than with the classics. Both concepts could be characterized as popular education, and it was not always clear from the discussion that they were very different in content.

After 1896 Neue Welt developed into an entertainment supplement that took into account the tastes of its potential readers. The concept was no longer that of a counterculture but rather of a parallel culture that placed the social democratic apparatus alongside the bourgeois apparatus as a means of preventing the proletariat from becoming bourgeois. The same can be said of the magazine In Freien Stunden, founded in 1897. Its aim was to keep workers away from the worthless novels offered by the popular presses and the publishers of Kolportage. A compromise was reached by allowing the voices of both bourgeois and socialist authors to be heard. Novels by, say, Hugo and Robert Schweichel were printed at the same time. During the first years of its publication, the magazine maintained a certain literary standard; in 1899, however, its editors attempted to meet capitalist competition by printing Xavier de Montepin’s dime novel Töchter des Südens (Daughters of the South).74

The social democratic press wavered, as we have seen, between a countercultural and a subcultural conception. Whereas social democratic literary theory favored a concept of culture stressing its contrast to late-bourgeois literary activity, and thus either appealed to early-bourgeois literature (such as that of Mehring) or supported the naturalistic avant-garde, pragmatic journalism, not least because of the pressure of competition from the new mass press, moved closer to the concept of a subculture offering the same forms and works as the dominant culture. Comparisons were drawn to the culture of the bourgeois camp. Thus In Freien Stunden’s choice of novels, for instance, was not essentially different from that of a bourgeois fiction magazine. Bourgeois authors such as Alexis, Grillparzer, Schücking, Gotthelf, and

74 There was no lack of criticism. Such a novel, it was said, could not educate morally and ethically. See Zerges, Sozialdemokratische Presse und Literatur, p. 87.
Gerstäcker, predominated. This selection was in part determined by economic factors; in order to reduce fees, the editors often selected authors whose works could be printed at no cost. Yet the repertoire was obviously determined by a literary concept derived from the bourgeois camp. The link with an older bourgeois culture was regarded as important because it provided a common opponent: the mass literature denounced as trash. Social democrats suddenly joined bourgeois cultural critics without asking themselves whether the concepts of classic idealistic aesthetics were still applicable in socialist criticism. The socialists may have condemned capitalist mass literature, but they had no criteria of their own for distinguishing between worthwhile and worthless literature. This would have been possible only with the help of an ideological-critical method, which was not available to social democratic literary theory in this area. To this extent, the intention to create a separate literary public sphere—and such an intention unquestionably existed—inevitably resulted in the imitation of the bourgeois literary public sphere; that is, in the establishment of another camp, which, although opposed to the bourgeois camp, was yet structurally similar.

The moralizing of literary critics, the fear of trashy literature, proved to be the Achilles' heel of social democratic cultural policy, for it prevented analysis both of the conditions of literary production under organized capitalism and of the receptivity of proletarian readers. Why did workers and their families read “bad” literature with the same enthusiasm as petit-bourgeois readers? Why was an author such as Eugenie Marlitt, whose petit-bourgeois origins were obvious, also popular among proletarian readers? Clearly, the literary education of the masses did not proceed as the SPD would have liked it to. When it established libraries for workers, the party hoped to reach beyond its members. But it never succeeded wholly, or even significantly, in influencing the literary consumption of the working class. This was due partly to the character of the workers' libraries, which were not always geared to the tastes of their readers; partly to competition from commercial lending libraries; and after 1900 increasingly to competition from public libraries. The working class made extensive use of public libraries because their collections clearly accommodated the interests of their readers. As late as the nineties, workers' libraries were still not uniformly organized. It took considerable effort to bring the numerous small, scattered libraries together, for local associations often resisted disbanding their collections and placing them in a central library. Such

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75 See ibid., p. 195.
concentration made progress only after 1900, so that “in the spring of 1914... according to a statistical study undertaken by the central board of education of the SPD, there existed a total of 1,147 workers’ libraries in 748 localities.” Of these, 51.5 percent were centralized, and 48.5 percent were under the jurisdiction of individual parties or trade union organizations. Most libraries were small and could offer workers only a limited choice of the literature they wanted.

As the librarian Ernst Koch defined them, workers’ libraries were the educational institutions of the organized proletariat; they were intended to provide workers with the mental equipment for the class struggle. Librarians, however, had to grapple with the same problems confronting social democratic newspaper editors. Libraries had to help prepare for the socialist culture of the future and at the same time take into account the current needs of the proletariat. The expansion of libraries, which was a response to these needs, did not necessarily accord with the goals of the class struggle. Like the social democratic press, workers’ libraries took the route of accommodation; more belles-lettres than the party preferred was purchased. Not even the reading recommendations of leading party functionaries—Otto Bauer, for instance—had a lasting effect on the reading habits of the workers. According to the calculations of Dieter Langewiesche and Klaus Schönhoven, during the period between 1908 and 1914, 63 percent of the works in circulation were belles-lettres whereas only 4.3 percent were related to the social sciences. The sources show clearly that literature dealing with the class struggle of workers accounted for only a fraction of the works borrowed; the largest proportion was bourgeois entertainment literature or canonical bourgeois literature. Although social democratic literary theorists—notably Mehring—put special emphasis on the classical period, there was little interest in the classic German authors. On the other hand, representatives of European realism—for example, Zola, Scott, and Dickens—were thoroughly appreciated. This is worth noting, because it disproves the notion that trashy literature was the workers’ primary reading material. Among the ten most-read authors in the social democratic Ortsvereinbibliothek (community library) of Leipzig were Heyse and Rosegger, but also Zola, Raabe, and Anzengruber. Dumas was read, but so were Tolstoy, Bulwer-Lytton, and even Fontane. This information does not differ essentially from that imparted by the circulation figures of public libraries. In fact, the record of works borrowed from the library of the Krupp firm demonstrates that workers were more interested in the traditional canonical authors, such as

Schiller, Lessing, Kleist, and Goethe, than were salaried employees. Of course, such considerations have to account for the choices available. A library’s collection determined circulation. Librarians sometimes ignored books by authors such as Marlitt or Nataly von Eschstruth, even though workers enjoyed reading them. Wherever light reading was made available, as in the Vienna workers’ library, it shows up in the statistics. Marlitt, Heimburg, and Doyle were favorite authors. In contrast, the working-class poetry fostered by the party found only moderate response in Austria and Germany. Langewiesche offered the following succinct formulation of the situation in the twenties: “Literature by and for workers—we learn from circulation records—is not automatically what workers read, just as in general the origins of a piece of literature and the group for which it is intended do not necessarily tell us anything about the specific groups receptive to it.”

The reading habits of workers did not accord with the wishes of the socialist parties, which sought above all to further socialist literature. It never occurred even to class-conscious proletarian readers—which is what, we may assume, users of the workers’ libraries were—to regard the reading of novels and plays as mere preparation for scholarly literature. Still, the party could consider it a positive result that those who used the workers’ libraries were exposed more than other groups of readers to sociocritical literature. One can hardly conclude from this, however, that the workers’ libraries created a socialist counterculture. This is precisely what they did not achieve. Yet neither do existing data indicate that they simply duplicated capitalist literary activity. The heaviest borrowing, despite overlapping, did not take place in public libraries. Class-conscious workers were more influenced in their reading by sociocritical engagement than such bourgeois groups as salaried employees.

This fact throws new light on the problem of industrial mass culture. Contrary to the assumption of Adorno and Horkheimer, who proceeded from the premise that specific cultural class formations no longer existed under monopoly capitalism, these structures were to a certain extent preserved. Culture did not become as homogeneous as was assumed in critical theory. Not only bourgeois cultural criticism but also social democratic literary criticism was opposed to leveling culture through mass production and distribution. This concern for spreading

78 Ibid., pp. 167, 192–93, 186.
culture to the working masses, for raising and improving them, was in the final analysis a conservative attitude, even if it was understood as a means of helping the workers in their struggle for emancipation. The revisionist stance of the SPD, which in theory adhered to revolutionary goals but in practice fought for the improvement of social and political conditions among the working class, also affected cultural policy.\textsuperscript{80} It became a policy of offering an alternative; but precisely in developing that alternative, the policy remained indebted to the basic structure of hegemonic culture. The creation of a separate cultural camp did not resolve the contradictions within the dominant culture but reproduced them. This was demonstrated on the social democratic side by helplessness in the face of literary mass production. Moral rather than political and ideocritical arguments were used. But in the end what was needed was a change in the function of mass literature, not of dime-novel literature.

Mass culture in imperial Germany, which must indeed be understood as a new cultural formation, was not simply a product of organized capitalism; in other words, there was no simple correlation between conditions of production and cultural formation. There were, instead, a number of factors affecting the genesis of industrial culture (we will avoid the concept of the culture industry). The most important of these, in my opinion, was the establishment of state and public bureaucracies. No matter how limited the general cultural policy at the disposal of the state, in specific areas—educational policy, for example—it had already developed an apparatus by which it could gain control over and influence parts of the cultural public sphere. Bismarck's press policy shows that the state claimed the right to control public opinion.\textsuperscript{81} Even though comparable interference in the cultural public sphere was rare, there was a notable tendency to control culture on the level of associations and semipublic groups. These organizations owed their existence not least to the commercialization of culture, which became widespread after 1870. The public library movement, for example, was a response to the mass book market and to commercial lending libraries. The clearer it became that the capitalist book market no longer supported the traditional concept of culture but in the long run undermined it, the louder became the demand for reorganization of the literary public sphere on the part of the socialists no less than of the bourgeoisie. Yet this was precisely what brought the cultural sphere increasingly under

\textsuperscript{80}On the SPD's political stance, see Dieter Groh, \textit{Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus} (Frankfurt a. M., 1973).

\textsuperscript{81}See Irene Fischer-Frauendienst, \textit{Bismarcks Pressepolitik} (Münster, 1963); Heinz Schulze, \textit{Die Presse im Urteil Bismarcks} (Leipzig, 1931).
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the influence of administrative apparatuses, whether state, local, or party organizations. The aim of the movement was to fight capitalist abuses. But in the long term, the cultural realm was restructured by institutions that developed without such intentions. The outcome of this reorganization was that cultural planning was carried out by a new type—the professional cultural functionary. The development of a public library system was symptomatic of this bureaucratizing of culture. Only since 1890 have systematic attempts been made to understand and describe readers. Librarians in reading rooms and workers' libraries began to study circulation, the number of registered readers, reading preferences, and similar data as a means of controlling the cultural process. The irony of the situation was that these attempts at control were undertaken in the name of supposedly autonomous culture.

Although more recent scholarship on German working-class culture, following English scholarship, has distinguished between the culture of the workers' party and that of the proletariat, and has taken a deeper interest in the cultural formation of the working class, we still have a far from adequate picture of the restructuring of culture. A survey of literary production and a knowledge of the numerous cultural organizations (theater societies, sports associations, musical associations) and of the library system reveal aspects of this restructuring, yet without allowing us a thematic grasp of the process as such. The social context that gave rise to the new cultural formation is also still largely hidden from view. By now, however, it must be clear that the theory of the culture industry developed by Horkheimer and Adorno does not adequately explain the change. Compared with its bureaucratic reorganization, the convergence of culture with the activity of industrial production must have been of secondary importance. The industrialization of Germany, insofar as it urbanized the German population over the course of two generations, served rather as a general driving force. This urbanization was accompanied by the dissolution of older precapitalist cultural formations. Industrialization, finally, was also closely linked with the change in the rhythm of life that E. P. Thompson, using England as an example, has described so impressively. The separation of work and leisure cleared the way for what we have called industrial culture. In particular, the reduction in the length of the workday after

82Gerhard A. Ritter, ed., *Arbeiterkultur* (Konigstein, 1979), esp. the introduction by the editor and the contributions of Ritter and Dieter Langewiesche.
83See, e.g., the important sixteenth volume of the *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* (1976), with contributions by Klaus Tenfelde, Lutz Niethammer, Dieter Langewiesche, Klaus Schönoven, Jürgen Reulecke, Alfons Labisch, and Eckehart Lorenz.
1900 created for wage earners ample free time that had to be filled. The new cultural formation was inseparable—and this does not apply only to the working class—from the amount of time available for relaxation, regeneration, and entertainment. In this respect, as Horkheimer and Adorno have emphasized, the culture market did indeed play an important part, because it provided the means for organizing leisure time. How those means, in the form of books, magazines, brochures, films, and pictures, determined the activity of the masses is still largely unknown. The thesis of constant manipulation, which underlies the theory of the culture industry, is certainly not tenable. And even Habermas's thesis that the classic literary public sphere broke down at the end of the nineteenth century provides only a negative explanation of the change. A new concept of industrial culture can offer a starting point for investigating the cultural change that occurred after 1870. Such a concept would have to begin by avoiding all culture-critical prejudices and debate anew the problematic correlation between the conditions of production (organized capitalism), social formation, and political structure (state intervention).
