

Gottfried Wagner
Thou shalt have no other gods than me
Richard Wagner – a minefield



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WHY NOT TALK OPENLY ABOUT RICHARD WAGNER?

Why, fifteen years after my autobiography “*He who does not howl with the Wolf: The Wagner Legacy*” am I now writing a book about Richard Wagner, my great-grandfather? My notes from 1997 were an expression of my decision to confront my family history, which has become part of German history. My new book is intended to be an objective analysis of the composer rather than a personal account of how my life was affected by my family legacy. With it, I should like to confront the subject of “Richard Wagner” objectively and to examine the repercussions of his legacy which persist to this day.

Anyone who deals with the music magician Richard Wagner is confronted first and foremost with the emotional impact of his music. Like hardly any other composer, he immerses his listeners in veritable rollercoasters of emotions, triggering both extreme admiration and extreme aversion. But what is behind this musical overwhelming? In my opinion, Wagner's world view, which shaped his life, his writings and his operas, is incompatible with the principles of ethical human behaviour. It is determined by racism, misogyny, narcissism and the negation of life. These pillars of Wagner's world view are the subject of this book: it attempts to clear away the morass of the history reception as a composer, thinker and politician.

His authoritarian and- antidemocratic, racist and misogynist legacy is anachronistic, inhumane and anti-European: a glittering but poisonous cupboard from the past that must be responsibly disposed of. I am concerned with defending the principles of an open society with individual freedom of expression, which is once again in retreat in Europe today. This is precisely why it is so important in the Wagner Jubilee Year 2013 to deal with Richard Wagner as a whole and not just with his seductive sound. I think of future generations when I talk about Wagner: do we Europeans want to learn from history through the example of Richard Wagner, an eternal soap opera?

In his selfish, destructive, inhumane behavior and thinking, Wagner stands in stark contrast to everything which constitutes a solid human society. As the philosopher Wilhelm Weischedel expounded: "Responsibility inevitably develops into shared responsibility; but to be in solidarity means to be co-responsible, to make common cause with others, to stand up for them, to stand by their side, to help them. Solidarity also means that one must put oneself aside and recognise that one's fellow human beings are more important than one's own ego. " [1]

My critical view of Richard Wagner, the Bayreuth Festival and the Wagner clan is the result of a long, intensive debate. I grew up in Bayreuth with Wagner incense. As a youngster, I discovered film reels hidden in the BMW side-car of my father, Wolfgang Wagner, which showed my family in happy unity with Adolf Hitler, and I began to ask my father questions - questions to which I received no answers. So I began to search for answers myself. Today I look back on a life which has been dominated by my struggle to come to terms with Richard Wagner and his legacy and which has taken me to five continents not only as a Wagner family member and great-grandson of the composer but also as a music historian.

It was above all the deep personal experiences of my youth that made me become more and more critical. I wrote my doctorate on the Jewish composer Kurt Weill and turned my back on Bayreuth. I met survivors of Nazi terror who shaped my thinking and feelings.

"You need a psychiatrist" – this was the title of an insightful interview with the Wagner star conductors Sir Simon Rattle and Andris Nelsons that appeared in DIE ZEIT at the start of the Wagner year 2013. [2] They spoke about their experiences with the composer. Nelsons asked his colleague: "How dangerous is the overwhelming moment in Wagner's music, its pathos, the intoxication it can unleash?" Rattle replied: "The danger is well known and has left its mark especially on German history. I don't want to say any more on this subject." Instead he quoted another colleague, Wagner conductor Daniel Barenboim, who said: "With Wagner, you can't swim against the tide."

Asked about Wagner's effect, he explained: "You're dealing with plutonium here, and it would be good to wear thick gloves, but since it's the most glorious plutonium in the world you just want direct contact and to take off all your gloves. "

This discomfort is palpable, but out of enthusiasm for Wagner's music, people prefer to keep quiet, as did the long-time music director of the New York Met and one-time Bayreuth conductor, James Levine. Obviously, few have learned anything from the case of Wilhelm Furtwängler, the former star conductor of the Third Reich, whose interpretations of Wagner are still relied upon by

many important musicians today. They don't want to face the question of what lessons can be learned. Instead, people prefer to overlook the incongruity of lauding Wagner the divine composer whilst ignoring his obnoxious world view. One is supposed to have nothing to do with the other, because, as the conductor Christian Thielemann explained, "C major remains C major." [3] The painful questions about the role of Wagner's music in the Nazi state and the connection between Richard Wagner's racial anti-semitism and Auschwitz are suppressed.

Richard Wagner never left any doubt that he wanted to be the greatest in the world of music theatre. With the Bayreuth Festival Theatre he created a monument to himself and a place of pilgrimage for his disciples. Wagner's music and the Festspielhaus together provide the foundation for a Wagner cult business that flourishes to this day, musically, politically and economically. The ethical dubiety of the idol is therefore gladly put aside: the marketing value is too high. Wagner is a bestseller, as valuable an export as VW or Mercedes. Once he is on the programme, no chair in the opera house remains empty. That's why people don't want to deal with the history and the dark side of the Bayreuth Festival and the Wagner cult.

There are many facets to the person of Richard Wagner. Behind the overwhelming and magical musician stands the charlatan, the scrounger, schemer, revolutionary and opportunistic king's favourite. All of these attributes help explain the deeply-entrenched characteristics of Wagner's personality: the fatherless and boundless, the necrophiliac and apocalyptic, the misogynist and racial anti-Semite, the self-idoliser who thought only of himself in everything he said and did. Wagner was not simply an artist, but a politician and artist in one person. His music and his works have had a great influence far beyond the opera public, not least in the propaganda of the Nazi state. To this day, people associate this music with the Nazi marches at Third Reich rallies and with the bombing raids of the Wehrmacht. As is well known, Francis Ford Coppola used this legacy for his film about the Vietnam War, *Apocalypse Now*. The images evoked by the Wagner sound inevitably lead to the Wagnerian Hitler.

Today the neo-Nazis use Wagner's music for their propaganda on the internet. You won't get far here by saying that with Wagner you need a psychiatrist. The educated opera fan knows the explosive potential of his music and, after enduring a lengthy Wagner opera, may admit in private: "There is so much beautiful music without the pitfalls of other composers...", but will hesitate to say this out loud lest he be confused with the powerful who make the annual pilgrimage to Bayreuth for reasons of prestige and who only pretend to be interested in his music. Despite all the talk of its decline, Bayreuth still promises exclusivity: the right place to be seen and a good place to do business. Anything goes?

"The more I read about Richard Wagner, the harder it is for me to perform his music," Sir Simon Rattle confessed in the *DIE ZEIT* interview mentioned above. But this also means that the more one knows about Wagner and the more one has the courage to form one's own opinion, the more clearly Wagner's bleak world view takes shape in his operatic sound worlds. Richard Wagner and the international cult around him remain a ticking bomb. Cave Richard Wagner!

Gottfried Wagner, March 2013

Gottfried H. Wagner

The Racial Anti-Semite 9th Chapter

Thou shalt have no other gods beside me
Richard Wagner - A Minefield

One would think that even the most ardent Wagnerians would not be able to avoid Wagner's anti-semitism . It is so clear . And yet, to this day, leading German Wagner apologists, from Manfred Eger and Sven Friedrich to Joachim Kaiser, Dieter Borchmeyer and Christian Thielemann, continue to deny its existence, or where this is not possible, downplay it, excuse it or even ignore it altogether. Going so, they use recurring patterns of argumentation: Wagner's anti-semitism anti-Semitism was merely a matter of isolated "bad remarks", "bad jokes" and "missteps". In so doing, they use the oft-cited argument that Wagner's anti-Semitism was merely a matter of isolated "bad remarks", "bad jokes" and "faux pas ". Wagner lived within a culture of general "hostility towards Jews", as was to be found among many Germans - from Luther to Kant and Karl Marx. Even his pamphlet *"Das Judentum in der Musik"* was no more than an "intellectual proclamation" without practical consequences for Wagner's own life, as instanced by his "many Jewish friends" and the financial support he received from Jews. Above all they make the mantra-like assertion that Wagner had kept his musical work completely free of "anti-Jewish traces". Whoever cannot agree with them is denounced as a "blind zealot" and "destructive ignoramus" or even as a slobbering "rapist" of Wagner's work.

"In principle, the politically correct interests me little," the conductor Christian Thielemann coquettishly declares in his 2016 book, *"My Life with Wagner"*. But this is not about Contemporary caricature of the Viennese satirical paper *Der Floh* from 1869, which alludes to Wagner's anti-semitism and his presumed Jewish ancestry. The author called Wagner the "Jewification of modern art" and at the same time denied that Jews could possess any talent in the creative arts, whether as composers and musicians or as poets or actors: "We cannot imagine any ancient or modern character on stage, be it a hero or a lover, portrayed by a Jew without involuntarily feeling the unsuitability of such a performance to the point of ridiculousness. This is very important: a human being whose appearance we must consider incapable of artistic manifestation, not in this or that personality, but generally according to his genre, must likewise not be considered capable of the artistic expression of his nature in general."

In his fundamental study of Wagner's "Juden-Aufsatz", Jens Malte Fischer has pointed out that his language goes far beyond what one could otherwise read in anti-Judaic texts of the time in their drasticness and crudeness. Again and again Wagner emphasised the irrevocable differences between Jews and non-Jews, "the involuntary repulsiveness that the personality and nature of the Jews has for us", and "the peculiarity of Jewish nature that is repugnant to us". According to Fischer, Wagner was concerned to postulate "an entity called 'Jewish being', 'Jewish nature', which is independent of history and religion". Jews remain Jews, according to the tenor, a fact that cannot be annulled even by baptism. It is therefore already a "proto-racist" discourse which Wagner conducts in his diatribe.

Wagner's essay ends with a passage on the possibility of the Jews' "redemption" from their Jewishness, which would have to cost them "sweat, hardship, anguish and fullness of suffering and pain", and an appeal to the Jews for self-annihilation: "Participate wholeheartedly in this self-destructive, bloody struggle, and we shall be united and inseparable! But bear in mind that only one thing is at stake: your redemption from the curse of Ahasver : Extermination!".

This brought later to the industrial genocide of six million Jews, planned and committed by Germans.

"Wagnerian anti-semitism," wrote Theodor W. Adorno as early as 1952, "gathers all the ingredients of the later in itself. [...] He even conceived the idea of the extermination of the Jews. He differs from his ideological descendants only in that he only in that he equates annihilation with salvation."

Wagner's anti-Semitism is not an externality, it is the aggressive core of his worldview. And as such it is also recognisable in his stage works, especially in the *Meistersinger* and the *Ring of the Nibelung*. In his later years, under the influence of the French diplomat and writer Arthur de Gobineau, and in connection with *Parsifal*, Wagner developed his racial anti-Semitism into a racist ideology of blood.

Wagner's first anti-semitic statements can be dated to his time in Paris at the beginning of the 1840s. In a letter to Theodor Apel in March 1842, he called his creditors "accursed Jews". His openly anti-semitic career, however, began with the aforementioned hate pamphlet "*Das Judenthum in der Musik*" ("Judaism in Music"), which he published in September 1850 under the name K. Freigedank (Freethought). He told Liszt about his use of a pseudonym as follows: "Not out of fear, but in order to avoid being dragged into the overtly personal by the Jews, I used a pseudonym. I have harboured a longstanding -grudge against-Jewish commerce and this grudge is as necessary to my nature as bile is to blood."

The essay "*Das Judenthum in der Musik*" is Wagner's reckoning with Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn and Heine, but it cannot be reduced merely to that. In it, he held that there had been a "Jewification of modern art" and at the same time denied that Jews could possess any talent in the creative arts, whether as composers and musicians or as poets or actors: "We cannot imagine any ancient or modern character, be it hero or lover, being portrayed on stage by a Jew without involuntarily feeling how ridiculously unsuitable such a portrayal would be. This is very important: a human being who by the very nature of his ethnic origin is incapable of representing this or that character cannot be considered capable of any form of artistic expression either."

When Wagner published his diatribe in 1850 under the pseudonym K. Freigedank in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, it had little effect. The magazine's circulation was between 1500 and 2000 copies, and Wagner was a failed Kapellmeister in exile in Switzerland, wanted by the authorities. Nineteen years later, when the pamphlet was reissued, things were completely different.

Now Wagner was the court composer of the Bavarian king, and the publication was understood for what it was: a slap in the face directed against the progressive emancipation of the Jews, which had led, among other things, to the Jews being given equal legal status in the North German Confederation in 1867. Wagner's confidants such as Franz Liszt were appalled by his actions, and public outrage was almost unanimous. In Mannheim, the performance of "*Die Meistersinger*" was vociferously booed and was soon followed by numerous counter-pamphlets. The journal "*Der Israelit*", the leading organ of German-Jewish Orthodoxy, reacted with sarcasm in an editorial in April 1869:

"We few Jews - scarcely one for every hundred Germans in Germany - are claimed to have judaised science, we have judaised literature, the daily press, art, taste, in short, everything, everything! We are, it is claimed, the creditors of kings, we control the market and industry, the stock exchange and the theatre! [...] And we are supposed to have made all this possible [...] in the few years that the ghetti have been opened and we have been allowed to become actively involved in the arts and sciences! [...] Listen and be amazed! Nineteen years ago, the Lord was able to put an end to the curse upon us: the redemption of Ahasver, - extermination! "

There has been much discussion about the impassioned and apocalyptic conclusion of the essay.

Wagner's apologists have not wanted to understand in it a call to physical self-destruction, but merely a "symbolic act". In the obscure, cryptic words of Dieter Borchmeyer: "There can be no doubt that this quasi-mystical transubstantiation of the Jew, which is achieved beyond all concrete historical-social experience, is nothing other than the effect of the unnamed artwork of the future."

That for Wagner the idea of extermination was much more than a "symbolic act" is clear from the circumstances of the republication of the essay in 1869 - this time under his own name and as a stand-alone pamphlet. Under the heading "*Aufklärungen über das Judenthum in der Musik*" (Clarifications about Judaism in Music), he added his version of the history of the pamphlet's impact - a telling document of his conspiracy paranoia. In order to punish him for his essay, he said, they simply ignored him, his operas and his writings: "The systematic slander and persecution directed at me about these matters, with total avoidance of discussion on the unpleasant question of Judaism, resulted in any case in its intended effect of punishing me." And he added a nasty remark insinuating the need for a violent solution to the "Jewish question": "Whether the decay of our culture could be stopped by a violent expulsion of the corrosive foreign element [Judaism], I am not in a position to judge, because this would require forces beyond what I am aware of."

The militant anti-semitic Cosima Wagner, at any rate, was well aware of the explosive power of this remark: "R. is at his essay, which he concludes in an unexpectedly serious and magnificently scathing manner. It is again evident here how everything goes to his heart and how he never-fails to give a thing its whole, if still any artistic feeling: this later became a central component of the anti-semitic ideology of National Socialism. When in April 1929 Hitler agitated at the Hofbräuhaus in Munich against the festival planned in Munich under the direction of Max Reinhardt, he used Wagner's pamphlet, even adopting individual phrases *verbatim*."

The text also formed the essential template for the Nazi exhibition "Degenerate Music" in Düsseldorf in 1938 and the defamation of Meyerbeer's and Mendelssohn's music in particular displayed its devastating effect far beyond the end of the Nazi era.

How obsessed Wagner was with his crusade against Judaism is revealed in the diaries of his wife Cosima. Already in „Das Judenthum in der Musik“, the Jews are compared to worms that decompose the organism of life and turn it into a "worm-eaten corpse". In the diaries, such similes appear again and again. "R. had a somewhat restless night, first dreaming that I did not love him, then that Jews surrounded him, turning into worms", noted Cosima in July 1881. And in January 1879: "[...] quite strange things had occurred to him, how even the heroic beings in nature must succumb, people as well as animals, what remain are rats and mice - the Jews".

The Jews were "only there like trichinella worms to infest the bodies of others", he hounded a few months later. Wagner called the chloral he had been prescribed by doctors for his facial erysipelas a "Jewish stain", and another time he said: "R. wants all Jews to fall off him 'like warts', against which no remedy helps". This is the imagery that was later to be found in the Nazi hate sheet *Der Stürmer* and in Nazi propaganda films such as *Der ewige Jude* [the Eternal Jew].

In August 1881, Cosima noted in her diary: "An essay about demonstrations against Jews brings him to the point where Wagner had an anti-Jewish article published in a little-known journal under a false name; no one betrayed him, and yet Mr Wagner was subject to the revenge of the Jews for this; as a result, his operas could not succeed, his theorems found no favour, his followers were alienated from him! Germany would have lain at the feet of the great composer, France and England would have paid homage to him, but the nemesis for the anti-Jewish article pursues him everywhere [...] Have we therefore wrongly asserted that Wagner's pamphlet must make a truly pleasant, refreshing and gratifying impression? For the famous composer acknowledges the power, the influence and the great ability of the Jewish tribe, as no one before him, in a way that the most enthusiastic eulogist would not be able to do, and the miserable vituperations contained in the present pamphlet are nothing but the spawn of impotent hatred, poisonous envy, over which we are perfectly justified in smiling pityingly. "

Despite the initial almost unanimous rejection, the after-effect of Wagner's "Judenbroschüre" was to prove fatal. For in the following decades it became a "central narrative of European anti-Semitism". The leaders of the anti-semitic movement from Bernhard Förster to Eugen Dühring referred to it, as did the notorious Imperial German court preacher, Adolf Stoecker. Ten years after its republication, Cosima could proudly note in her diary: "...reading a very good speech by Pastor Stoecker on Judaism. R. is in favour of complete expulsion. We laugh about the fact that it is really, or so it seems, his essay on the Jews that started this fight."

The thesis propagated by Wagner was that Judaism lacked imitation and exploitation. "All these negative traits, un-German traits, were then found united in one hate figure: in the Jew."

In 1876, the year of the first Bayreuth Festival, he met Joseph Arthur Graf von Gobineau in Rome, whose *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Essay on the inequality of the races) had been published between 1853 and 1855-and who can be regarded as the founder of modern racism. They met again in Venice in 1881, and in the following two years Gobineau came repeatedly to Bayreuth for several weeks at a time. From him Wagner adopted the idea of the Aryan race and of "racial decay" through racial mixing and fused it with his anti-Semitism. In April 1877, Cosima reported a dispute between the Bayreuth Dean, Dittmar, and Wagner "about the Jews": "[T]he Dean thinks mixed marriages are the solution to the problem, R. claims: then there would be no more Germans, the German blond blood is not strong enough to resist this melding. We can see how the Normans and Franks have become French, and Jewish blood is even more corrosive than the Latin."

In his essay *Erkenne-dich selbst* (Know thyself), published in 1881, Wagner used his theories on racial doctrine to launch a renewed open attack against the Jewish emancipation movement. He condemned the "entitlement granted to the Jews to consider themselves Germans in every conceivable respect, comparable to the blanket authorisation given to the blacks in Mexico to consider themselves whites". He argued that Judaism was not a religious community at all but a racial community: "... the most astonishing example of racial consistency that world history has ever produced. Without a fatherland and without a mother tongue, [the Jew] will be guided, irrespective of peoples, nationality and language, by his firm instinct for his absolute and ineradicable uniqueness.

On 18 December of the same year, Cosima records what Wagner said in reference to the fire at the Vienna Ringtheater ten days earlier, in which several hundred spectators died: "He says in a violent joke that all the Jews should burn in a performance of 'Nathan'." Wagner apologists in Bayreuth have themselves tried to

excuse this statement, which is one of the composer's most repugnant, by pointing out that he was "always prone to uncontrolled, later often regretted overreactions". There is, however, no indication that Wagner ever regretted this or any other statement in his anti-Semitic diatribes, quite the contrary. Together with his hatred of France and his growing nationalism, his anti-Jewish paranoia developed into an ever more aggressive ideology: Jewry now stood for all those forces that supposedly threatened "Germaness", German values and the existence of the German state and, if not countered, would cause it to disintegrate. Thus his poem *Des Deutschen Vaterland* (Of the German Fatherland) reads:

"What is the German fatherland?
Is it Nibelheim, Krähwinkelland?
Is it where the Jew gets bolshie,
the rascal impudently laughs up his sleeve?"

In an illuminating study on Wagner's ideological and political impact, the historian Ernst Hanisch has pointed out the numerous examples whereby Wagner used dichotomies to distinguish the "German" from the "un-German" in his writings: "German" was represented by concepts such as province, culture, inwardness, authority, idealism, depth, originality and creativity; "un-German", on the other hand, was "the big city", civilisation, outwardness, democracy, materialism, "the abstract". But what about Wagner's musical works? Can it really be that his operas were completely unaffected by their creator's fanatical anti-Semitism?

The British Wagner expert Barry Millington has rightly pointed out how erroneous is the idea that "Wagner's anti-Semitism is something like a shell that can be peeled away from the work without a trace of it remaining, when in fact it is intrinsic to his aesthetic in such a way that it is no exaggeration to say that Wagner would not otherwise have become the composer he was, and his works would have taken on a different form".

But to this day, German Wagner apologists stubbornly close their eyes and ears to this reality. "Even avowed Wagner enemies have to this day owed the world conclusive proof," asserts Christian Thielemann, "that Beckmesser in the *Meistersinger*, Kundry in *Parsifal*, or Alberich and Mime in the *Ring* are malicious caricatures of the eternal Jew. "

It is due to the great work of British and American Wagner scholars - from Robert W. Gutman and Barry Millington to the illuminating studies of Paul Lawrence Rose and Marc A. Weiner - that the intertwining of anti-Semitic ideology and Wagner's musical works has been conclusively demonstrated, by contrast the vast majority of German scholars had until the 1980s given this subject a wide berth.

Yet things are now out in the open. "I cannot believe that people say there is no anti-Semitism in Wagner's plays," declared the opera director Barrie Kosky on the occasion of the Berlin exhibition "Wagner 2013": "It is made so clear and so forcefully in the plays that it is a complete lie to say that!" Anyone who listens carefully to the *Ring* of the Nibelung and has read Wagner's essay entitled *Judaism in Music* will realise that the character Mime and the music associated with him, has led to the infallible finding of that very Jewish activity: even the mingling does not harm him; he mingles, male or female, with the most alien races, a Jew always comes to light again. "

This scenario of endangerment of the purity of the Aryan race is followed by the call to the Germans in particular for a "great solution" to the "Jewish question",

"The proposals on the Jewish question which have been put forward by the 'conservatives', 'liberals' and 'liberal conservatives', and at the end of the day by 'democrats', 'socialists', or also 'social democrats' and so on, seem to us rather pretentious. We, who do not belong to any of those parties but seek our salvation simply by making man aware of his basic sacred dignity, have been excluded from them and deemed not required. Even though we ourselves are sympathetic to his plight, we can only observe the twitchings of the dreamer, since none of our calls can be heard by him. [...] But only when the demon who keeps those frenzied people around him locked in the madness of the party struggle is unable to find a "where" and "when" to rescue him - there will no longer be any Jews. Precisely because of the present movement, what was hitherto unthinkable to all except us could be achieved by the Germans sooner than by any other nation, so long as we unashamedly and to the very heart of our being: "Recognise who we are".

How this "great solution" of the "Jewish question", which the Reichstag parties were not capable of resolving, would look like under the leadership of the German nation, Wagner admittedly left to the imagination of his readers. Those familiar with his anti-Semitic statements in Cosima's diaries can make their own judgement.

...The musicologist Ulrich Drüner noted, Beckmesser is "an exaggerated caricature of Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn and Heine cast back into the 16th century". In the third act, after Beckmesser's abortive performance of Walther's song, he becomes the victim of a collective malicious gloating that does not even try to hide its cruelty. "Bald he hangs on the gallows, you can see him already," cry the city's burghers.

In his book, Marc A. Weiner has pointed out the anti-semitic racist clichés from which Wagner formed his Beckmesser figure - from the posture (he "limps", "staggers" and "stumbles") to the traits and the "staring" gaze. Contemporary audiences, at any rate, immediately recognised the malicious caricature on stage. At the performances in Mannheim, Vienna and Berlin in 1869 and 1870, there were public protests to the point of rioting.

On 14 March 1870 Cosima noted in her diary: "In the *Musikalische Zeitung* there is a report on the performance of M[eister]Singer in Vienna. Among other things, the Jews there had spread the word that Beckmesser's song was an old Jewish song which R. had wanted to satirise. Hereupon hissing in the second act and the shouts, we don't want to hear any more, but complete victory for the Germans. R. says: 'None of our cultural historians has noticed that it has now reached the point where the Jews in the imperial theatre dare to say, "We don't want to hear that".'

The Ring of the Nibelung, on the other hand is entirely characterised by the racist duality between the "Untermenschen" [subhumans] - the Nibelungs or Black Elves - on the one hand and on the other hand the "Zukunftsmenschen" [people of the future], represented by the hero Siegfried. The appearance of his foster father Mime is described by Siegfried thus: this caricature corresponds to the one Wagner spread in his anti-semitic pamphlet. He sings, as Wagner instructs in the score, "with a nasty gravelly voice" and "piteously shrieking", parodying the "Jewish way of speaking and singing" as described in the essay, - a "hissing, shrill, humming and murmuring noise".

The situation is very similar with Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger*. Wagner deliberately assigned the score to a bass voice, although the range required corresponds to that of a baritone.

"This comic character role is in no way comparable to an old-style bass 'buffo' part," he explained to the singer of Beckmesser in the Munich premiere, Gustav Hölzel: "The musically high pitch is produced solely by the passionate, screeching tone of the voice which should be brought out to the full." Beckmesser's shrill, melismatic serenade in Act II follows the "melismas [...] of synagogue singing", which Wagner denounced in „Das Judenthum in der Musik“ [Judaism in Music] as "Sinn und Geist verwirrend Gegurgel, Gejodel und Geplapper" [mind and soul-bewildering gurgling, yodelling and babbling]. The local populace in the „Meistersinger“ react to this with appropriate disgust:

„Who is howling? Who is shrieking with power?
Is this allowed so late at night? - -
Quiet here! It's bedtime!
My, listen to the donkey braying!
You there! Shut up and get out of here!
Howl, shriek, and scream elsewhere! „

As a "reward" for his song, the people then attack Beckmesser with a cudgel and smash his lute. In everything that the town clerk Beckmesser does, he conforms to Wagner's cliché of the inartistic Jew, and for this he is put on "trial" on stage. He joins the ranks of imitators and wreckers of genuine art. One could hope to witness the successes of such a work among us!"

Marc A. Weiner has named and analysed the bodily codes with which Wagner marked the racial differences between "Germanic" and "non-Germanic" – not only in *Die Meistersinger* but also in the *Ring* and finally in *Parsifal*: "Beady or staring eyes, a bellowing or shrieking voice, the bodily odour of youthful love or the stench of sulphur and farts, the steady stride of a muscular warrior or the smell of a woman in a cave". steady stride of a muscular warrior or the crooked, limping gait of a small, hairy, goat-like creature with ashen or deathly pale skin: through such images of the body, Richard Wagner metaphorically expressed his theories."

Wagner did not have to put a Jewish star on the Jewish caricatures in his plays; contemporaries understood the cultural codes as such. When Gustav Mahler conducted *Siegfried* at the Vienna Court Opera in September 1898, he commented on his tenor Julius Spielmann, who sang the role of Mime: "The worst thing about him is the mumbling. Although I am convinced that this character has the banter of a Jew as intended by Wagner (in all the features with which he endowed him – the petty shrewdness, the greed, and the superb jargon, which is excellent both musically and lyrically), for God's sake it must not be exaggerated here and laid on as thickly as Spielmann did - especially in Vienna, at the 'k. k. Hofoper'. It is sheer absurdity - and a welcome scandal for the Viennese!" Mahler - like the opera audiences of his time - was thus aware of the anti-Semitic explosives contained in Wagner's work.

Wagner himself also associated his so-called "Bühnenweihfestspiel" [sacred festival drama] *Parsifal* with Gobineau's racial doctrine. "Gobineau says that the Teutons were the last card that nature had to play, *Parsifal* is my last card. This has got corrupted here so nasty, /angry and grey, /small and crooked, /hunchy and limping, /with drooping ears, /soggy eyes. He is denounced as a "grimace smith", a "disgraceful bungler" and a "shabby wretch" who spreads an evil smell. And finally, Mime is also called an "evil thief" - and thus clearly placed in an anti-Semitic context. That the *Ring* and the power associated with it are to be seen as a symbol of supposed Jewish world domination is something Wagner even publicly acknowledged in the aforementioned essay „Erkenne dich selbst“:

"The doomed Ring of the Nibelung as a stock market portfolio is likely to bring to perfection the ghastly image of the haunted world ruler [i.e. Judaism]".

Opposite the misshapen black Elves, Mime and Alberich, stands the "youthfully beautiful Siegfried man", "the real, naked human being", in whom, as Wagner wrote, "I was able to recognise every surge of blood, every twitch of powerful muscles, in unconstricted, freest movement: the real archetypal human being. Influenced by reading Gobineau's writings, he attested to his Siegfried's "authentic Aryanism", and Wotan was "the undisputed god of the Aryans".

Regarding Siegfried and Brünnhilde's love duet in the third act of Siegfried, he declared: "This is Gobineau music, [...] this is race. Who shall give me these two beings, who burst out in jubilation as they look at each other; the whole world is there in order that two such beings should look at each other!"

In a letter to Ludwig II, written after the first performance of the Ring Cycle in Berlin, Wagner even went so far as to say: "It is certainly the most distinctive work of art of the Aryan race: no other people on earth could be so clearly aware of its origins and its place as the last remaining tribe to enter Europe from amongst the most untainted white peoples of "High Asia". Wagner's "last card", *Parsifal*, is testing even for inveterate Wagner fans: a witches' brew of Christian compassion, Buddhist renunciation, Schopenhauerian nihilism and racist prejudice, as Barry Millington put it. With its strange blood and supper rituals, an undeniable connection emerges: "At its darkest level", according to the American Wagner scholar Robert W. Gutman, *Parsifal* represents "the allegory of the fall and redemption of the Aryan". "In Amfortas, the divine blood of Christ is contrasted with his own sinful blood, which has been made sinful by sexual intercourse with the racially inferior Kundry; this criminal miscegenation is the epitome of the Aryan dilemma. "

There is no place for the diabolically beautiful seductress Kundry in this Aryan male society. "Wild clothing, skimpily clad; long snakeskin belt hanging down : black hair fluttering in loose plaits; deep reddish-brown complexion; piercing black eyes, sometimes flashing wildly, more often as if deathly rigid and immobile " - this is how she is characterised in the stage directions, a mixture of oriental Jewish seductress and subhuman creature. "She has nothing in common with you".

Gurnemanz shouts to his squires. Wagner himself characterised his character as a Jewess, as the incarnation of Herodias (Original Devil!)

Hell's Rose!/Herodias was you, and what else?
what else?/Gundryggia there, Kundry here
and cursed Ahasvera, who longs for her redemption through Parsifal:

For eternity- I have waited for thee,
the Saviour, ah! so late,
whom once I boldly spurned. -
Oh! - Know'st thou the curse,
that through sleep and waking,
through death and life, pain and laughter,
newly steeled for new suffering→
endlessly tormented by my very existence!
[...]
which I long for in agony,"

„My last card“, he declared in March 1881. In the same year, his essay „Christentum und Heldenthum“ was published. Like all of his so-called regeneration writings, this one - the last to be published during his lifetime - also shows evidence of general decline: "We recognise the reason for the decline of historical humanity, as well as the necessity of its regeneration; we believe in the possibility of this regeneration, and devote ourselves to its realisation in every sense of the word. „

Whereas in the previous regeneration writings Wagner identified the consumption of animal flesh as the main reason for humanity's decay, now the focus shifted to the "mixing of the races", which was responsible for the "corruption of the blood". It is a crude idea that he serves up to his readers as an answer to humanity's supposed racial decay - the blood of a pure, redeemed, anti-semitic Christ: "The blood in the veins of the Redeemer should [...] be used for the salvation of the human race, which has succumbed in its noblest races as a divine sublimate of the species itself." And further: "The blood of the whole suffering human species, sublimating itself in that wonderful birth [...] donates itself to the whole human race for the noblest cleansing of all stains of its blood. "

With these words, Wagner arrogates to himself the role of religious founder of an "Aryan" Christianity, cleansed of all Jewish origins.

Wagner's "last card", the "Bühnenweihfestspiel" Parsifal, with its sworn knighthood of the Grail awaiting redemption through the chaste youth Parsifal ("der reine Tor"), puts even die-hard Wagnerians to the test. A "witch's brew of Christian pity, Buddhist-Schopenhauerian renunciation and racist prejudice" is what Barry Millington called it. For anyone with knowledge of the blood ideology of Wagner's "Regeneration Writings"[1883] , comparing the text in the tenth volume of Parsifal, with the Gesammelte Schriften (collected writings) makes the connection absolutely clear. Nevertheless, Wagner apologists continue to close their eyes to this fact-. Dieter Borchmeyer wanted to get rid of it by unceremoniously omitting the offensive texts, as well as "Das Judentum in der Musik" (Judaism in Music), from his ten volume edition commemorating the centenary of the composer's death "for reasons of intelligence level", as he explained, with the flimsy remark that anyone "who objects to a white-washing of Wagner's image" can read about it elsewhere. Instead of acknowledging reality, the Wagner apologists entrench themselves behind Wagner's music and deny its ideological, inhuman context.

Again and again, Wagner apologists justify their position by saying that one need not take the anti-semitism of the "master" seriously because he had Jewish friends in his circle. The catalogue of the infamous Bayreuth exhibition "Wagner and the Jews" from 1985 - a typical Bayreuth token event with the purpose of trivialisation and appeasement - speaks of "close friendships with Jews" who allegedly "by their personality alone led many of Wagner's prejudices ad absurdity". Among those mentioned in this context are the musicians Carl Tausig and Joseph Rubinstein as well as the conductor Hermann Levi, the leader of the royal court orchestra, who conducted the premiere of Parsifal in Bayreuth in 1882.

All three of them are of no use in exonerating Wagner. Levi, who like many others was "devoted body and soul" to his "master", was treated by the latter with remarkable condescension. As conductor for his "Aryan" "Bühnenweihfestspiel" in Bayreuth, Wagner definitely did not want a Jewish Kapellmeister - but Ludwig II, who made his court orchestra available for the performance, insisted on a Jewish conductor. Kundry to Parsifal, act 2: Whom I recognised, the stupidly laughed at, let me weep on his bosom, "unite me to thee for but an hour, and, though God and the world repudiate me.in thee be purged and redeemed! „

Kundry's "deathly prayer" is finally answered. After she has washed his feet, she is baptised by the anointed Grail King Parsifal and redeemed by death - musically dressed up by Wagner as a gesture of compassion. It is - as Robert Gutman has aptly observed - a black mass, celebrated here with the "sultry air of decay" and perversion of the symbols of the Eucharist.

Even his follower Nietzsche no longer wanted to follow this path. He smelled "clouds of incense" and "the scent of church whores" and stated: "Richard Wagner, seemingly the most victorious, in truth a rotten, despairing décadent, suddenly sank down [...] before the Christian cross." In doing so, he missed the core of Parsifal's content. Wagner was not concerned with Christianity, quite the opposite. The Christ of the Bayreuth religion was to be "purified of all Alexandrian-Judaic-Roman despotic disfigurement and redeemed, incomparably sublimely, simply as Redeemer", as Wagner explained to assistant, Hans von Wolzogen, in January 1880.

To this end, he wanted to "mercilessly expose the church, Christianity, indeed the entire phenomenon of Christianity in history". The religious community that Wagner founded with Parsifal is a bleak, equally anti-semitic and anticlerical, misogynistic community, conspiratorially sealed off from the outside world.

Wagner himself wrote his Regeneration essays, which - as Hartmut Zelinsky has noted - are better described as anti-semitic and religiously racist texts accompanying Parsifal.

Wagner's relationship with the pianists Carl Tausig and Joseph Rubinstein was quite similar. The "master" also graciously put up with their services and yet made no secret of his contempt. Tausig, who was a tireless propagandist and fundraiser for Wagner, died of typhus in July 1871 at the age of only twenty-nine. Cosima commented on this with the words: "His death seems to us metaphysically justified; a poor being who has passed away at an early age, who has no faith in himself, who, in spite of everything that brings him close to us, nevertheless feels a profound inner strangeness (the Jewish one)." Later she reported on a conversation over coffee about "the blocks of ice which melted in a sea of wretchedness". On this occasion, Wagner explained that it was "the article on Judaism" that had destroyed Tausig.

The vacant position as house and alibi Jew was then taken up by Joseph Rubinstein, who introduced himself to Wagner with the words: "I am a Jew - herewith everything is said for you", and who sought his "redemption" from him. Wagner took Rubinstein on as his house pianist and had him prepare the piano scores for the Siegfried Idyll and Parsifal - without payment of course. To Cosima he confessed; that Rubinstein's "restless Jewish nature" was very antipathetic to him and that he had "proven the saddest qualities of his tribe". A year after Wagner's death, Rubinstein took his own life at the age of thirty-seven.

It is a tradition in Bayreuth to call on Jewish advocates for Wagner to show that they are welcome on the Grüner Hügel as servants who can help cleanse the reek of Wagner's anti-semitism. There is something deeply dishonest in this approach. One of the most recent attempts in this regard was made by Elke Heidenreich, who in February 2013 - just in time for Wagner's bicentenary birthday - made herself the subject of a major article in DIE WELT on Levi, and so Wagner complied. In Bayreuth he let himself be. In Bayreuth, he had his hand kissed by his "house conductor" and seized every opportunity to insult and lambast the son of a rabbi with anti-Semitic insinuations. Again and again he pressured him to be baptised. In November 1880, Cosima noted: "Very agitated at all he says to Levi in a conversation that he - as a Jew - nly has to learn to die, which, however, Levi understands well."

Levi's self-denying devotion went so far as to unceremoniously declare that Wagner's desire for the extermination of the Jews was also?/in fact? his own: he hoped, he revealed to his "master" on 13 January 1879, "in 20 years they would be wiped out root and branch and the audience of the 'Ring' would be a different people".

On one occasion Wagner showed Levi without comment a letter from an anonymous antisemite who accused the latter of having an affair with Cosima and urged Wagner "to keep his work pure and not to let a Jew conduct it". Dejected, Levi left, but returned to Bayreuth two days later. It was a sadomasochistic relationship that bound the "master" and his "house Jew". When Wagner found the tempi dragging after the first Parsifal dress rehearsal on 24 July 1882, he made the comment to his wife that "he would not like to find himself being conducted as a member of the orchestra by a Jew".

This did not detract from the success of Parsifal in Bayreuth, and so Wagner took the liberty of stealing the baton from his Kapellmeister at the last performance and conducting the redemption scene in the last act himself - a demonstrable humiliation that was not even perceived as such by Levi. Wagner's judgement of his Parsifal conductor was later echoed by his son and successor at Bayreuth, Siegfried, who wrote about Levi in his autobiography: "The Kundry nature was also in him."

... Under the heading "Ab jetzt wagnert's" (From now on it's Wagnerian), she reported how long she was persuaded as a post-war child that Wagner was an antisemite . And she tells of meeting an elderly woman at the Frankfurt Book Fair who asked her to find out what piece had "shaken her to the core" at the concert the night before. The woman was the American sex therapist, Ruth Westheimer, whose parents were murdered in Auschwitz, and the shattering piece was the prelude to Die Meistersinger.

Elke Heidenreich describes Westheimer's reaction as follows: She turned very pale [...] and this clever woman said : You have to hear him. „ If the relatives of the victims of the Holocaust grant us absolution, we Germans can also devote ourselves to Wagner without remorse.

All **quotes** are documented on **page 276 to 285** of my book:

Du sollst keine anderen Götter haben neben mit
Richard Wagner – ein Minenfeld
Ulstein Verlag, Berlin 2013

Thou shalt have no other goods before me
Richard Wagner – a Mine Field
Chapter 9 , The Racial Anti-Semite

Du sollst keine anderen Götter haben neben mir Richard Wagner - Ein Minenfeld

Chapter 12

From the Redemption Company Limited to the Final Redemption Temple

When Wagner died in Venice on 13 February 1883, he left no will. He had considered himself irreplaceable as an artist and even more so as the director of "his" festival. "I cannot name a single person," he wrote to Hans von Wolzogen in September 1882, "who could say the right thing to anyone involved in such a performance, be it the singers, the conductor, the director, the sewing machinist, the set designer or the costumier". And a few weeks later to Ludwig II: "Hereby I am getting myself ready for about ten more robust years of life by which time my son, to whom alone I trust entrust the spiritual and ethical maintenance of my work, will have reached his full maturity. I know of no one else to whom I could hand over my office." It would never have occurred to him that his wife Cosima would one day take his place. Nor would it have occurred to all those in Wahnfried who saw her mourn the loss of her divine husband. According to the diary of Cosima's daughter Daniela, her mother is said to have stepped up to the open coffin in the garden of Villa Wahnfried after the end of the master's grandiose funeral on 18 February 1883: "Mama stepped in, lay on the coffin for a long time until Fidi [Siegfried] came for her and we escorted her back."

It did not take long, however, for the widow to end the public mourning. After all, she did not even think of retiring from the large family business. Within two years, she managed to seize power in Bayreuth and proclaim herself Director of the Festival. She did not need to show any demonstrable qualifications as far as musical theatre direction and opera management were concerned. Her exclusive appeal to the will of the "Master" was enough to nip any resistance to her ambitions in the bud.

The Guardians of the Grail

Cosima's seizure of power on the Green Hill took place in stages and was strategically planned: She reworked the festival in the summer of 1883 - five months after Wagner's death - into a single cult celebration. She skilfully pushed through the dismissal of the singer Emil Scaria, who had risen to the position of stage manager, and who might have been able to compete with her. A few weeks later, she had a detailed staging plan for the festival up to 1889, including the cast lists. During the preparations for the plays the following year, the widow intervened in the opera work for the first time as an eminence grise. She followed the rehearsals from a hut built especially for her in the wings and wrote down her corrections and instructions on slips of paper, which she passed wordlessly to musicians, conductors and singers. Discussions about this were undesirable. She also knew how to ward off the potential artistic and financial influence of the General Wagner Society by means of the newly founded Richard Wagner Foundation. And with the banker Adolf von Groß she had a financial advisor and asset manager at her side whom she trusted. Thus the servant wife of the "Master" became the Matriarch and Grail Mistress of the Hill. With her "model productions" of Wagner's works, which she staged from 1886, she set the direction of travel. In so doing, she relied on his detailed instructions in the scores, his explanatory writings, but above all on her exclusive personal connection to her husband. In her claim to sole representation, she could always refer to the "Master's will": thus she was able to transform the Festspielhaus into a cult site and the Festival into a dusty Wagner museum.

Cosima was just as decisive as she was merciless in securing Wagner's succession. Since there was no will, Wagner's biological children Isolde, Eva and Siegfried should have been entitled to inherit as well as her. But since Wagner, unlike in the case of his son, had never officially acknowledged the paternity of the two girls, Cosima was able to claim that they were the offspring of Bülow, to whom she was still officially married at the time of their birth. She was, however, was still married when Siegfried was born! In order to secure the sole inheritance rights of "the Master's son", she persuaded her ex-husband to sign a declaration in which he assured her that he did not recognise Siegfried as his son. Thus, at the price of the de facto disinheritance of Wagner's daughters Isolde and Eva, the succession of power was clarified. Isolde did not want to submit to this bending of the law. In 1913, she instigated legal proceedings to have her origins as Wagner's daughter confirmed, by the courts, but without success. Because of this rebelliousness, however, she was disowned by her mother. Cosima did not care that she was already seriously ill at the time: she suffered from tuberculosis. Isolde died on 7 February 1919 at the age of fifty-three, a victim of her mother's merciless will for power. It was not to be the last family sacrifice.

And in other ways, too, the mistress stopped at nothing to elevate Wagner to the status of a saint. Anything that did not conform to this image had to be purged or destroyed. All the letters addressed to her by Nietzsche fell victim to her *auto-da-fé*, as did the letters of the rebellious Wagner disciple, Peter Cornelius. The letters of Hans von Bülow, Minna Wagner and Mathilde Wesendonck, which she managed to get hold of, also went into the fire. She also worked on Wagner's autobiography "My Life", which had up until then only appeared in a few copies in private print, in preparation for the publication of the book. The embellished portrait of the Master's life, written with her active help from 1865 onwards, was still not beautiful enough for her, so she deleted the passages she found objectionable. With her policy of destruction, cover-up and whitewashing, the Grail Mistress of Bayreuth established an inglorious family tradition. Her daughter Eva, for example, later burned Cosima's letters to her and blacked out numerous diary entries which Wagner had written in his Brown Book.

Cosima also set the course for the popularisation of Wagner's racist anti-Semitic messages, in particular by binding the reactionary English Wagner enthusiast Houston Stewart Chamberlain to herself and the family. In 1908 he married Eva von Bülow, the second daughter of Cosima and Richard Wagner. Chamberlain took over the post in Wahnfried that Wagner had once intended for Nietzsche: that of chief ideologist and propagandist of Wagnerian sentiments. What particularly qualified him for this role was his major work *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1899. The world view that was promulgated here in over a thousand pages was of captivating simplicity: world history, as Chamberlain saw it, was in truth nothing other than the ongoing "titanic struggle" between the despicable Semitic and the noble Aryan race. This poisonous mixture proved extremely popular. In Germany alone, over a hundred thousand copies of Chamberlain's book were sold by 1914. It rapidly became the bible of racial antisemitism, to which numerous disciples could refer, including Adolf Hitler.

Chamberlain was also one of the most important contributors to the propaganda magazine, *Bayreuther Blätter*, which had been founded by Richard Wagner in 1878. Its editor for sixty years until his death in 1938 was Hans Paul von Wolzogen, an assistant loyal to Wagner. The journal became the central organ of the Wagner cult and the closely associated ideology of "Völkisch Deutschtum" (nationalistic Germanness), Aryan regeneration, racial thinking and antisemitism. The up to eight thousand members of the Wagner societies received it free of charge for a time. One of

the last issues of the "Deutsche Zeitschrift im Geiste Richard Wagners" (German magazine in the spirit of Richard Wagner, as it was called) stated: "From its first issue the Bayreuther Blätter [...] fought steadfastly for six decades in the spirit of Richard Wagner for Germany's unification, for Germany's honour and for the new Greater Germany. Its fight for "Rassegedanken" (literally "racial thinking") and against Jewish exploitation was just as passionate and undaunted.

The Bayreuth pocket calendars were added as a further organ of the association with the same ideological thrust and idolisation of the master: "Blessed are all those who "live" in Wagner's works," preached the Wagner disciple Arthur Seidl, "for they shall have "eternal life". In countless wordy essays, the beliefs of Wagner's Germanic-Christian doctrine of salvation were disseminated. As a "cultural task of the new millennium", an "educational reform" was necessary, in the centre of which Wagner's "enthusiasm" had to stand as a "fundamental reality [...] for all ideal blossoming of the imagination". The mistress herself stood in the background as the "unnamed main editor". From time to time, Cosima also took up the pen herself. Her articles appeared under the not particularly original pseudonym "Wahnfried".

None of the apologist Wagner scholars has ever seriously grappled with the ideology of the *Bayreuth Blätter*. No wonder: they disturb the image of Wagner they have carved out for themselves - on the one hand, the master's grandiose stage work, pure and unsullied by any ideology; on the other, the "Bayreuth Circle" of the widow Cosima, with Wolzogen, Chamberlain and others who would have "misunderstood" Wagner and misused him for their ideological purposes: a bold distortion of the facts that is still common today. For all the ideology that the "Bayreuth Circle" propagated in Wagner's name, they could always be sure that it was in accordance with the fundamental will of the master. It was Wagner himself who founded the Bayreuther Blätter, appointed Wolzogen as editor-in-chief and published his nationalist and racially anti-Semitic regeneration writings there. The antisemitism researcher Annette Hein was the first to subject the approximately twenty thousand pages of the sixty volumes to a fundamental analysis. The result of her study, which appeared in 1996 and has been studiously ignored by orthodox Wagner scholars to this day, is unequivocal: according to Hein, the Bayreuth Blätter show that "Wagner and his views do not have to be appropriated after his death for thoughts and ideologies that were not already inherent in them". She goes on: "It [the journal] functions as a medium for the consolidation and dissemination of antisemitic forms of argument from the beginnings of so-called political antisemitism in the eighties of the last [19th] century up until the Third Reich."

The Wagner apologists could, of course, have already read it in Nietzsche. A year after Wagner's death in 1884, the philosopher passed the following judgement on his journal: "Do you know what a swamp is? Chance allowed me to see once again everything that Richard Wagner and his people preached in words side by side with the pernicious Bayreuther Blätter. "Do you know what a swamp is? Presumption, obscurity, ignorance and tastelessness all mixed up. As the old man sings, so the young chirp: no one will be surprised at that. Were that it were only a song! But it is a whine, the pomposity of an old high priest who fears nothing more than bright, clear ideas."

Siegfried Land

Like Richard Wagner before her, the new mistress of Bayreuth sought funding for the festival from the highest rank of the empire. Unlike Wilhelm I, one could have legitimate hopes for his grandson, who ascended the throne as Wilhelm II in 1888. His penchant for pomp and theatrical gestures was widely known. Wilhelm had already been introduced to Wahnfried in 1886 by Philipp Fürst zu

Eulenburg-Hertefeld, his educator and confidant, where he declared that Bayreuth must become the "German Olympia". Cosima hoped for an imperial patronage of the festival, but the emperor could not be persuaded to agree to this, probably out of diplomatic consideration for Bavaria. Musically, he preferred cheerful material in the style of Lortzing to Wagner's heavy fare. But that did nothing to dampen the triumph of Wagner's musical dramas and the ideology associated with them in the Empire. Germany became "Siegfried-Land": from the dumb nature boy of the Ring grew the image of the "sun-blond heroic boy", which, as Thomas Mann remarked, made "the breast of German youth swell with exhilaration at their manly splendour". "There is always someone," wrote Walther Rathenau in 1918, "Lohengrin, Walther, Siegfried, Wotan, who can do anything and conquer all, redeeming suffering virtue, chastising vice and bringing universal salvation, and all this in a sweeping pose, with fanfares, lighting effects and tableaux."

When the German Empire went to war on 1 August 1914 and the Bayreuth Festival had to be prematurely cancelled, the Kaiser and the Supreme Army Command could be sure of the support of the Bayreuth home front. "The war seems to suit us Germans decidedly better than peace, where everything un-German spreads," Cosima wrote to Ernst zu Hohenlohe-Langenburg at New Year 1915. Hans von Wolzogen expressed his conviction in the Bayreuther Blätter that the war would lead to a nobler, "pure German cultural state" and that "souls ripe for Wagner" would emerge from it.

The sabre-rattling Wilhelm II demanded "Nibelung loyalty" from the fraternal subjects of the Habsburg Empire. Even when surrounded by enemies and fighting a losing battle, it was important to persevere for the sake of the German cause. Soon the battle fronts were named after the characters of the Ring; thus there were Wotan, Brunhild and Hunding positions on the bloodily contested Western Front. An abuse of Wagner's noble work? But was it not Wagner himself who had associated the Franco-Prussian War with his Nibelung drama in 1871 and had sung the song of "Sieg-Fried" ("Victory-Peace") to Kaiser Wilhelm I?

In March 1917, the Supreme Army Command decided to expand the "Siegfried Position" on the Western Front, to which the German troops retreated in the "Alberich Movement". The will to destruction that accompanied this retreat did credit to Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. Ernst Jünger described the work of destruction in his *Stahlgewittern* (Steel storms): "By the time we reached the Siegfried position, every village was a heap of rubble, every tree felled, every road undermined, every well polluted, the course of the river dammed up, every cellar blown up or endangered by hidden bombs, all supplies and metals carried back, every rail unscrewed, every telegraph wire unrolled, everything combustible burned, in short: we turned the land awaiting the advancing enemy into a wasteland. "

A war that could not be won could still be heroically glorified. The last army offensive in the West under General Ludendorff was called the "Hagen attack" - then came the hour of surrender. Who was responsible for the defeat? Field Marshal von Hindenburg knew exactly: "Like Siegfried under the deceitful spear-throw of the fierce Hagen, our weary front fell; in vain it had tried to give new life from the dwindling source of home strength". The spear throw became the insidious stab in the back - and the "stab in the back" legend was born, according to which the German army, "undefeated in the field", had received "the stab in the back" from the revolutionary enemies of the Reich at home - Jews, democrats and socialists. "Those who did not join the fight at that time," Hitler's *Mein Kampf* states, "were the parliamentary vagabonds, this entire politicising party rabble."

They had for so long agitated and raged against certain victory until the fighting Siegfried eventually succumbed to the treacherous stab in the back".

Despite the fact that Germany had lost the war, the Festspielhaus continued to "tower over the beloved hill, proclaiming in its silence a better time". There, too, all hopes now rested on a Siegfried - the only male descendant of the master, who had been named after the heroic stage figure and had been repeatedly dressed up as "Little Siegfried", even as a child. It was a heavy burden but the model son complied. When Cosima relinquished the sceptre in 1908 due to her poor health, he took her place and directed the Festival until his death in 1930. In the family business and beyond, he was also active as a conductor and director. As well as these roles he composed operas and instrumental works but suffered from the fact that they did not receive the recognition he wished for. The only one who was unreservedly convinced of the greatness of his work was his mother. She also remained the only woman he loved. In vain the mistress of the hill tried to keep her son's secret: he was gay. He would have much rather been a free artist in Italy than festival director in Bayreuth. But the Wagner clan took its toll.

In order to preserve the family dynasty and probably also to ward off a public scandal because of his homosexuality, his mother demanded marriage and offspring. In 1914, forty-five-year-old Siegfried was joined by seventeen-year-old Winifred Klindworth, whom he married the following year. Over four years she provided him with a child every year: Wieland (born 1917), Friedelind (born 1918), Wolfgang (born 1919) and Verena (born 1920). With this, Siegfried had done his duty as a producer, and he retired to his "bachelor's house" in the garden of Villa Wahnfried, where he used to receive his friends.

After the war, people waited in Wahnfried for the "rebirth" of the nation. The Weimar Republic - the first democracy on German soil - would not bring it, of that they were sure in the Bayreuth circle. "Mama asks," Cosima's daughter Eva recorded in March 1919, "Why doesn't Ludendorff become our dictator?" And when Mussolini seized power in Italy in October 1922, Cosima recognised in him the "statesmanlike personality" she missed so much in Germany: "What one hears of him suggests a power, and certainly he will remember what Germany did for Italy." She did not have to wait much longer for the Saviour: On 30 September 1923, the NSDAP organised a "German Day" in Bayreuth, at which six thousand participants marched. Chamberlain and his mother-in-law Cosima waved at the marchers from an open window. The following day, Hitler visited the Wahnfried house for the first time; from then on, the Wagner clan - Chamberlain as well as Siegfried and Winifred - fell for the Wagnerian from Braunau.

A month later, on 9 November 1923, Hitler and Ludendorff attempted a putsch in Munich with two thousand followers. This action was supported unreservedly in Wahnfried. Hitler was arrested as he fled, and Winifred, alluding to Wagner's Siegmund figure from *Die Walküre*, told the Bayreuth NSDAP^a members on 12 November: "Believe me, Adolf Hitler is, in spite of everything, the coming man, and he will just pull the sword out of the German oak tree after all." Now she saw the hour had come to confess to the world her loyalty to the arrested putschist in the name of the entire Wagner family - in an "Open Letter" in the Bayreuth *Oberfränkische Zeitung*, published five days after the failed coup: "All of Bayreuth knows that we are on friendly terms with Adolf Hitler [. ...] His personality has made a profound and moving impression on us, as it has on everyone who has come into contact with it, and we have understood how such a simple, physically delicate person is capable of exercising such power. [...] I admit without hesitation that we too are under the spell of

this personality, that we too, who stood by him in the days of happiness, now also remain loyal to him in the days of adversity." And Siegfried seconded, "My wife fights like a lion for Hitler! Great!"

^a NSDAP: Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party)

During Hitler's imprisonment in Landsberg, Winifred made sure that the prominent prisoner wanted for nothing. She sent "love packages" including the stationery which Rudolf Hess used to write down Hitler's dictation of *Mein Kampf*. From the beginning, Winifred's devotion to Hitler bore fanatical, erotically charged messianic traits. "Either he becomes our saviour," she wrote on New Year's Day 1924, "or he, the physically delicate one, is left to perish miserably in prison! But then, woe to Germany!!!"

Just as in Richard Wagner's life there was no difference between reality and his stage characters, so Winifred and Siegfried Wagner's world, illuminated by the slight figure of Hitler, was mirrored in Wagner's musical dramas. When Ludendorff, who unlike Hitler had been acquitted in the trial which followed the attempted putsch, visited Bayreuth in April 1924 as a *völkisch* election speaker, Winifred wrote about the rally: "In the sky a blood-red setting sun: Twilight of the Gods, last sanctuary! At the Reithalle, music, parading of the Front ... four thousand people head to head." She added with satisfaction that Ludendorff knew "no compromise" on the "Jewish question". Meanwhile, Chamberlain wrote to Hitler in prison that the war hero Ludendorff was more of a "Siegfried nature", while the Führer was to be designated as of a "Parsifal nature".

When the first Bayreuth Festival took place in July 1924 following a ten-year break and nine years before Hitler's seizure of power, games were already openly taking place under the sign of the swastika. The black, white and red flag of the Kaiserreich flew on the roof of the Festspielhaus. The Bayreuth Gazette headlined its spring issue under Hitler's motto: "The outer struggle must be preceded by the inner struggle. Our struggle is for the sacred objective." The title page of the Official Bayreuth Festival Guide 1924 was adorned with Siegfried's sword and the verse "Nothung! Nothung! New and rejuvenated! To life I wake thee again!" The declaration printed inside raised Nothung to the status of a battle sword against the Weimar Republic and Bayreuth to the status of a "German armoury": "Only if we go forth into the great German liberation struggle with heroism in our breasts comparable to that of the Knights of the Grail shall we, when the struggle commences, succeed in tearing the Nothung sword from its trunk, and no world god will be able to shatter it for us! We will draw our strength from the spirit of Bayreuth!"

A few pages further on, one could read the words: "It cannot be denied that foreigners, especially those who are not racially oriented or not very Nordic, often have a somewhat alien - or at least not genuinely Bavarian - attitude to the inner essence of Richard Wagner's art". Jews, republicans, social democrats, pacifists and all things considered "un-German" were gladly dispensed with. In Winifred's words: "...a few Nagods less". And further: "Whoever really feels and thinks German comes here."

The Festival opened on 22 July 1924 with *Die Meistersinger* in Cosima's museum-like production of 1911. When Hans Sachs finished with his final verses "Uns bliebe gleich / die heil'ge deutsche Kunst!" the audience rose from their seats and sang the first verse of the *Deutschlandlied*: "Von der Maas bis an die Memel, von der Etsch bis an den Belt ...". Jewish visitors who had come to Bayreuth despite public warnings were spat on and jeered at in the streets. Thomas Mann commented on the events in the *Hamburger Nachrichten* as follows: "Wagner will never cease to interest me [...]"

But Bayreuth as it presents itself today does not interest me at all, and I must believe the world will never be interested in it again either."

Externally, Siegfried Wagner strove to dispel the fatal impression of the "brown" festival. He distanced himself from the antisemitic slurs and slogans in order to keep Jewish sponsors and foreign guests in line. But as festival director he had allowed them, and in his private remarks he called Hitler a "glorious man" and saw "Jew and Jesuit walking arm in arm" "in order to exterminate Germanness". He was not to live to see the Third Reich under the leadership of the "glorious man". During the preparations for the 1930 Festival, he suffered a heart attack during a rehearsal of *Götterdämmerung*, from which he never recovered. The master and model son died on 4 August 1930 at the age of sixty-one, only four months after his grandmother Cosima had died on 1 April at the age of ninety-two. The joint will of the Wagner couple of 8 March 1929 provided for Winifred as the limited heir and the four children "in equal shares" as the subsequent heirs. And so, the day after her husband's death, the fanatical Hitler worshipper Winifred ascended the Bayreuth throne.

Winnie and Wolf

As early as 1925, Adolf Hitler visited the Bayreuth Festival for the first time after being released early from prison. He took the opportunity to present Winifred with a copy of *Mein Kampf*, hot off the press, with a handwritten dedication. In the meantime, he was on good terms with the lady of the house and was called "Wolf" by her and "Uncle Wolf" by the children. When "Uncle Wolf" came to power in Berlin on 30 January 1933, Richard Wagner became the "house composer" of the Reich, Bayreuth became the court theatre and the whole of Nazi Germany became a single Wagnerian stage. To celebrate his "Third Reich", Hitler staged the "Potsdam Day" on 21 March 1933, exactly sixty-two years after Bismarck had convened the first Reichstag of the German Empire, facing assembled front-line soldiers, he shook hands with the aged Reich President Hindenburg in front of the Garrison Church and allowed himself to be celebrated as a worthy heir to the Prussian kings and emperors.

At the end and climax of the day of Germany's "rebirth", a gala performance of Wagner's *Meistersinger* at the Berlin State Opera took place, conducted by Hitler's favourite conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler. Joseph Goebbels wrote about it in his diary: "Everything is immersed in music. Now the radiant "Wacht auf!" chorus has had its meaning restituted." It was only a short distance from Wagner's "Wake up!" call to the Nazi slogan, "Deutschland, erwache!", "Germany, wake up!".

Nuremberg was soon allowed to proclaim itself the "City of the Meistersinger and the Reich Party Rallies". On top of this the Führer gave the clearest expression of his veneration for Richard Wagner and his work by linking for all time the name of the master with the city of the Reich Party Rallies by designating the Meistersinger of Nuremberg as the "Festival of the Reich Party Rallies". This is set out in the book *Richard Wagner und die Stadt der Meistersinger* (Richard Wagner and the City of the Mastersingers) published in 1938 and advertised as a "people's book for every German" with handwritten greetings from Winifred Wagner and Eva Chamberlain-Wagner. The book went on to state: "It is a miraculous coincidence that this great genius in the realm of art, the opponent of the Jews, who was fought and besieged by Jews and their sympathisers in the most vile manner, was honoured in Nuremberg, the city from which Julius Streicher has been waging his difficult struggle against world Jewry for many years. Thus Richard Wagner's ideological aims in life has also found glorious fulfilment in the city of his Meistersinger, the metropolis of the world struggle against

Jewry, where the Führer proclaimed the laws for the protection of German blood, the Nuremberg laws, at the "Reichsparteitag der Ehre"(Reich Party Congress of Honour)."

As had become the custom for the annual Reich Party Congress, the Führer attended a "festive performance" of *Die Meistersinger* in the Nuremberg Opera House on the 10th September 1935. With Beckmesser's expulsion from the stage, the guests were allowed to get in the mood for the mass spectacle that was to follow. On 15 September, the Nuremberg Race Laws were passed unanimously by the Reichstag, which had been summoned to Nuremberg especially for this purpose. Marriages between Jews and non-Jews were henceforth forbidden and German Jews were deprived of their citizenship.

But it was not only *Die Meistersinger* that was highly regarded in the Third Reich. At the opening of the Nuremberg party congresses, the overture of Hitler's favourite opera *Rienzi* was played, dubbed the "secret anthem of the Third Reich". When a representative of the Nazi empire died, the funeral march from *Götterdämmerung* was played on the radio. And when Hitler visited the Bayreuth Festival in the summer, the newsreel showed the crowd cheering for their leader in the streets of the "City of Richard Wagner", accompanied by the sounds of the "Master". When Robert Ley, head of the Reich organisation of the NSDAP, suggested replacing the *Rienzi* overture with a new composition that would also express the National Socialist world view musically, Hitler rejected him harshly: "You know, Ley, I don't open the party congresses with the *Rienzi* overture by chance. This is not just a musical question. This son of a small innkeeper, at the age of twenty-four, led the Roman people to drive out the corrupt Senate by invoking the Empire's great past. With this God-blessed music I had the inspiration as a young person in the Linz theatre that I too must succeed in uniting the German Empire and making it great."

Hitler, however, also knew only too well how the opera ended: with the downfall of the tribune of the people amid the burning ruins of his capital. Much has been written about what fascinated Hitler about Wagner. He himself declared that, with the exception of Wagner, he had had "no predecessors", and he described his idol as "the greatest prophetic figure possessed by the German people". Wagner's apologists have always made it particularly easy for themselves by denying Hitler's inner kinship with his "forerunner" and portraying his love of Wagner as something purely coincidental. "Should we send all vegetarians packing and ostracise all sheepdog owners just because there was Blondi and Hitler didn't eat meat?" asks Music Director Thielemann polemically in his Wagner book. In so doing, he fails to recognise the deep similarity between Wagner's and Hitler's characters.

Joachim Fest vividly described how close they were in his biography of Hitler: "In *Rienzi* or *Lohengrin*, *Stolzing* or *Tannhäuser*, the rejected academy of art applicant recognised exaggerated versions of his own confrontation with the world in front of the box of paints in the reading-room of the men's hall of residence, and sometimes it almost seems as if he had lived up to the admired role model [...]." There is Wagner's own irrepressible "intent to overwhelm", like Hitler's: "It is this unabashed, naked look at effects that characterises Wagner's music like no other, the constant self-seduction through long-winded, overhyped and overexaggerated effects, when the unmistakable mixture of Valhalla, revue and religious sacrament is unfolded amid sharp rosin flashes. [...] The style adopted by the Third Reich for their epic events would have been unthinkable without this operatic tradition, without the truly demagogic artistry of Richard Wagner." There is the "element of the vulgar and the disreputable", the trait of "ingenious deceitfulness and inspired humbuggery" and the "theatrical relationship to the world": "It was the total aesthetic transformation of life under

the leadership of art that he [Wagner] proclaimed. In this way, the state was to be elevated to the height of a work of art and politics was to be renewed and perfected through the spirit of art. In the theatricalisation of public life in the Third Reich and the passion of the régime for elaborate staging [...] elements of this programme are readily identifiable." In addition, there is the tendency to "dilettantise": "Both show the same striking need for opinionated intervention in all areas, a tormenting ambition to have to prove oneself, to dazzle, to impress, to surpass instantly and spectacularly the rapidly fading glory of yesterday." The dependence of Hitler, a Wagnerian, on his role model went down to the smallest detail: "Even the well-known formula from *Mein Kampf*, which records Hitler's "decision" to become a politician, is paraphrased from a Wagnerian phrase: "I decided to become a musician".

The gesture of the upstart, the dilettante trait of the all-rounder, the craving for power and seduction, the tendency to overestimate oneself, the thinking in terms of the enemy, the daredevilry and the gambler's nature, the gesture of putting all one's eggs in one basket, of all or nothing - in all this Hitler is Wagner's revenant on the political stage. In this respect, it is not surprising that *Rienzi* became Hitler's favourite opera. The call for "cure by fire" and the desire for "Untergang" (downfall) were common to both. "In the most insignificant of Wagner's musical dramas, *Rienzi*, the alternatives of final victory or catastrophe had found its most radical expression," says Saul Friedländer. But the *Ring of the Nibelung*, with its eternal struggle between the "Aryan" White Elves and the "Jewish" Black Elve, is also marked by this apocalyptic ideology. Furthermore, and especially with his fanatical racial anti-Semitism, Wagner proved to be a "prophetic figure" for his revenant. Hitler had studied the political writings of the "master" in his youth just as enthusiastically as he had listened to his operas. At the age of twenty-three he wrote at the foot of a sketch he had made for a Siegfried costume: "Young Siegfried, well known from the days of the Linz opera. Wagner's opera was the first to show me what blood myth is." He saw the annihilation of the Jews as his mission and himself as an instrument of providence and the redeemer of humanity. "The Nazi messiah never tired of repeating that his fight against the Jews was a matter of life or death, an absolute *either/or*." And if victory was not possible, there remained heroic doom. As Saul Friedländer put it, "The deep influence of Richard Wagner on Adolf Hitler certainly emanated from the former's death cult: from *Rienzi*'s sacrifice by fire to the downfall of Valhalla in flames. In Hitler's empire, which existed for twelve years, this mythical-aesthetic Wagnerian cult of death and redemption became the murderous impetus for destruction and extermination."

Hitler even staged his own downfall as a poor imitation of a Wagner opera. He forced his secret lover, Eva Braun, whom he took as his wife in their last hours in the Führerbunker, to go with him to his death. Joseph Goebbels also demanded loyalty to the death from his family. One day after Hitler's suicide, he had his six children poisoned with cyanide before he and his wife took poison themselves.

Hitler came to Wahnfried as saviour but then left it in ruins. As early as 1934, Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry commandeered eleven thousand Festival tickets, representing one third of the total. Considerable sums regularly flowed into the Festival coffers for the broadcasting rights for national radio, the Reichsrundfunk. But Hitler did not allow himself to be deprived of his role as the true patron saint of Bayreuth: his Reich Chancellery had by 1939 already supported the Festival with over half a million Reichsmarks. Even during the war years, when most of Germany's theatres were closed, the doors of the Nazi court theatre remained open for the "War Festival". In 1933, according to Winifred Wagner, Hitler "had helpfully stood by her with all his devotion and love for

Richard Wagner and Bayreuth"; but even in the midst of the enemy bombardment towards the end of the war, "the Führer now stood by us with advice and action and immediately ordered that the Festival should continue despite the war".

On Hitler's orders, the organisation "Kraft durch Freude" (Strength through Joy), a subsidiary of the German Labour Front, bought all the tickets and paid almost all the bills. Thus, from 1940 onwards, at least one million Reichsmarks flowed every year to Bayreuth from this source alone and in the years from 1942 onwards it was 1.3 million Reichsmarks. Five percent of the sum went directly to Winifred Wagner as a fee for directing the festival. Wounded soldiers, armament workers and Red Cross workers were given free admission to the performances for their spiritual edification. In the summer of 1943, members of the Hitler Youth, the Bund Deutscher Mädel and the SS-Standarte Wiking, also took to the stage as performers in the Meistersinger.

The ties between the Nazi organisation "Kraft durch Freude" ("Strength through Joy") and the Wagner family soon became familial as well: KdF leader Bodo Lafferentz married Verena Wagner, the youngest of Winifred's daughters in Wahnfried on 26 December 1943. Thus, in many ways, the Wagners became accomplices of the criminal Hitler régime which they supported without reservation. In her welcome preface to the reissued volume "Richard Wagner und seine Meistersinger", given as a memento to the "guests of the Führer" at the 1943 festival, Winifred wrote that the Meistersinger showed "in the most impressive form the creative German man moulded in his "völkisch" creative will [. ...] which, in the present struggle of the occidental-cultural world with the destructive spirit of the plutocratic-Bolshevik world conspiracy, gives our soldiers the insurmountable fighting strength and the fanatical belief in the victory of our weapons".

The artistic director of the Bayreuth Nazi Festival from 1931 onwards was the director and conductor Heinz Tietjen, who worked alongside Winifred Wagner. He is the Mephistopheles of the German opera scene in the first half of the 20th century: his career ran seamlessly from the German Empire through the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich to the Federal Republic. In 1927 he was appointed general director of all Prussian state theatres and thus presided over seven stages in Germany. Four years later, in 1931, he was responsible for the closure of the Krolloper in Berlin, which had gained a reputation as an avant-garde venue with premieres of works by Schönberg, Stravinsky and Hindemith. By doing so, he recommended himself as a "stirrup-holder" (lackey) for the Nazis, for whom the "reddish-Jewish" Kulturinstitut (Cultural Institute) was a particular thorn in the flesh. Under Tietjen's leadership, the Bayreuth Festival, together with the Berlin State Opera and the Berlin Philharmonic, contributed decisively to maintaining the shiny cultural façade behind which the barbaric face of Nazi Germany was concealed. Tietjen managed to play Goebbels and Göring off against each other and at the same time ingratiate himself with Hitler. But he also knew how to influence the Wagners in his favour and to secure his position in Bayreuth through continual intrigues. Above all he tried to keep Winifred's sons Wolfgang and Wieland in check whilst they were positioning themselves to succeed their mother and Tietjen as directors of the Festival.

While Hitler's Wehrmacht was reducing Europe to rubble, Wolfgang and Wieland Wagner were engaged in a brutal struggle for power on Festival Hill that was hardly inferior to that for the Ring of the Nibelung. From childhood onwards, both were used to power intrigues in the Wahnfried house and were also played off against each other time and time again. As the eldest son, Wieland saw himself as the natural successor to the Wagner dynasty. This was also the view of "Uncle Wolf", who protected him. In 1938 Wieland joined the NSDAP, and from the beginning of the war he was exempted from any military service by order of the Führer. During the 1943/44 "War Festival"

Wieland was responsible for the stage decoration of the Kraft-durch-Freude Meistersinger. His plan for Wolfgang was at best a place in the administration but his no less power-conscious brother did not agree with this. He, too, profited from his special status as a member of the Wagner family. Unlike Wieland, Wolfgang had learned opera management from scratch at Hans Tietjen's State Opera in Berlin. Before either brother could settle the power struggle the Wahnfried House lay in ruins. It was hit by an allied bombing raid on 5 April 1945. Six days later following another attack a third of Richard Wagner's "city" lay in ruins.

A dark chapter in the family history is Wieland Wagner's work for the so-called "Institute for Physical Research" from September 1944 to April 1945. This was a Bayreuth satellite camp of the Flossenbürg concentration camp. The concentration camp branch was under the direction of his brother-in-law, the KdF boss, Bodo Lafferentz, who was an SS-Obersturmbannführer and was awarded the SS Death's-Head ring for his "loyalty to the Führer". The secret institute had the task of working on the development of a "miracle weapon" - a "seeing bomb" that would improve the targeting accuracy of rockets. The labour force was recruited principally from the Flossenbürg concentration camp; camp management and supervision were the responsibility of the SS. Of the eighty-five forced labourers employed at the "Institute", eleven did not survive the end of the war. When a Russian inmate managed to escape in December 1944, eighteen prisoners were deported to Flossenbürg concentration camp. Numerous others later died on the death marches.

According to Lafferentz his brother-in-law, Wieland, built stage models in the Bayreuth satellite concentration camp. Wieland, who could have provided information about his activities there, hid this chapter of his life until his death. The fact that the public learned of the existence of the secret camp at all is thanks to the research of Bayreuth schoolgirl, Karin Osiander, who wrote a dissertation about it in 1989. Since 2003, a detailed report on the Bayreuth camp by Albrecht Bald and Jörg Skribeleit has been available, in which the fate of the inmates was investigated. The camp workshop existed up until 1994 when it was demolished by the town – a Concentration Camp close to the theatre does not fit in with the image of Richard Wagner's town which it wished to promulgate. A memorial stone in a car park is the only reminder of this dark chapter.

When Hitler took his life in his bunker on the 30th April 1945, the funeral march from Götterdämmerung was broadcast across the nation by the Reich's radio. Ten days beforehand Winifred had sent "Wolf" yet another final birthday letter to his bunker and true to the Nibelung, she remained devoted to her great idol after his death right up to the end of her life on the 5th March 1980, despite his having led the whole of Europe into the abyss and his responsibility for the murder of six million Jews. Away from the public eye, she never concealed her unbroken devotion to her "Führer". In the documentary film she made with Hans-Jürgen Syberberg in 1975 she explained frankly: "If Hitler were to come through the door here today, for instance, I would be just as happy and pleased as ever to see him and welcome him. I know he had his dark side, but for me this does not exist, as I do not recognise it. You know, for me the only thing which counts in a relationship to another human being is personal experience." And in her delusion Winifred Wagner found nothing she could have blamed Hitler for since her first meeting with her saviour in 1923.

It was not until 2008, and following ever louder international protests directed at Bayreuth as the stronghold of Wagner tourism, that the town began to grapple more critically with its own history during the Third Reich. That year saw the publication of the documentary "*Eine Stadt wird entnazifiziert. Die Gauhauptstadt Bayreuth vor der Spruchkammer*" (A town is denazified. The District Capital Bayreuth in front of the denazification tribunal.) The publication lacks, however, any

critical discussion of Wagner's ideology and his influence on Hitler. The documentary Jüdisches Bayreuth (Jewish Bayreuth) published in 2010 is similarly reticent. It is one of the first more in depth attempts to discuss the horror of the Nazi period and its consequences for the Jews in Bayreuth. In common with the earlier publication from 2008, however, Wagner's rabid antisemitic racism and its effect on Hitler are not openly discussed. There is reticence to lay bare the Bayreuth Wagner cult and the strong links between the Wagner clan and the town. A proper reappraisal of this inglorious state of affairs is yet to be accomplished.

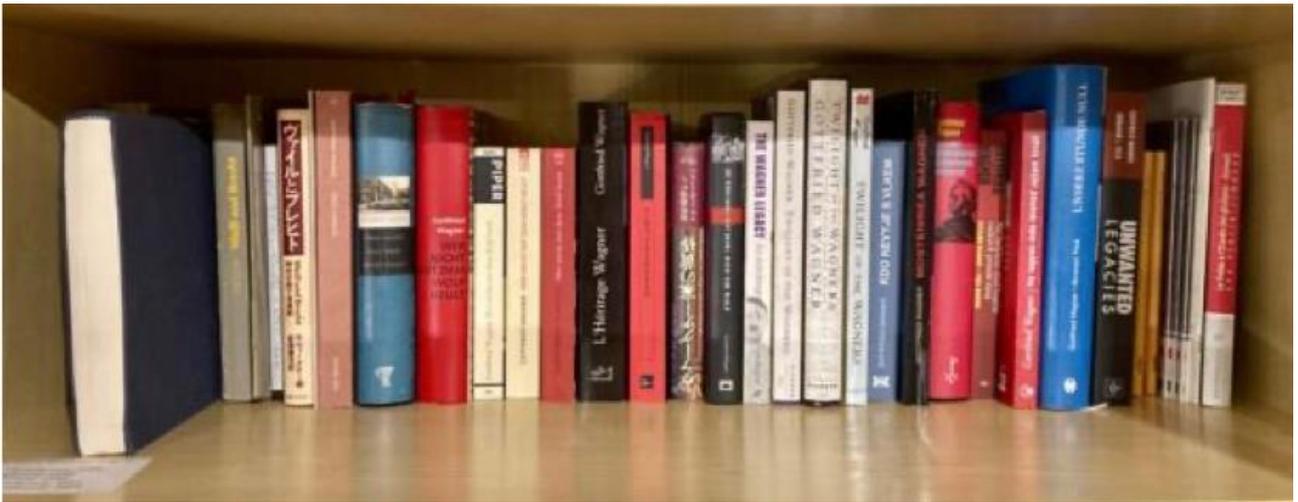


photo: Gottfried H.Wagner's book on Wagner - Wagner Clan - Hitler and consequences until today