

**Bayreuth after Wagner: Psychosocial Perspectives on
Cosima Wagner, Winifred Wagner, and Houston Stewart
Chamberlain**

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Abstract

The Wagner institution at Bayreuth, after Wagner, was shaped as much by the psychologies of those to whom the composer's legacy was entrusted as it was by purely historical and political events. Entwining musicological, philosophical, sociological, and psychoanalytic discourses, this revisionist and hermeneutic history of Bayreuth focuses on three individuals whose lives were acutely intertwined with the cultural and political evolution of the establishment: Cosima Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Winifred Wagner. Their personal and social paths were embedded in larger political and cultural changes, especially German nationalism, yet despite the intensity of their nationalist affinities none was indigenously German and in childhood each lacked those influences now considered essential for effective individuation. Following an initial discussion on Wagner, character studies of each applying, particularly, Jungian and Eriksonian theory explore the extent to which those absences and related factors informed not only their personal development but also the dynamics of their respective relationships with Wagner from which our perception of the composer and Bayreuth as an institution derives.

For my family

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Introduction

When we look at human history we see only what happens on the surface, and even this is distorted in the faded mirror of tradition. But what has really been happening eludes the inquiring eye of the historian, for the true historical event lies deeply buried, experienced by all and observed by none. It is the most private and subjective of psychic experiences. Wars, dynasties, social upheavals, conquests, and religions are but the superficial symptoms of a secret psychic attitude unknown to even the individual himself.

Carl Jung ¹

The theme of this work is the centrality of identity and individuation in the formation of post-Wagner Bayreuth.² Focusing upon three people most accredited with shaping our perception of the institution – Cosima Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Winifred Wagner – the study asks what light an investigation of their psychodynamics using psychoanalytic (and related kinds of) theories might throw on an understanding of the social and political dynamics of Bayreuth after Wagner. Over a series of character studies and an initial discussion of the composer and his aesthetic to contextualise its argument, the work will extend that of Oliver Hilmes, Brigitte Hamann, and Bryan Magee,³ and argue that Wagner's institution was posthumously shaped not by the dystopian politics with which it has since become synonymous but, rather, by the personal circumstances and issues of those charged with its curation.

This appears to be a timely venture. For some commentators, amongst them John Deathridge, a provocative Carl Dahlhaus, and Tom Sutcliffe, the story of Richard Wagner has been told to exhaustion.⁴ Yet it seems the story of the Wagnerian afterlife and its production has seldom been recounted other than chronologically and empirically, in the biographical or

¹ C.G. Jung, R.F.C. Hull (trans.), Gerhard Adler, Michael Fordham, Herbert Read (eds.), *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung Vol.10: Civilisation in Transition* (Hove: Routledge, 2015), 148.

² Here, in keeping with established practice, the term 'Bayreuth' refers to the Festival and institution established in 1876 by Richard Wagner at the Bavarian town of Bayreuth.

³ Brigitte Hamann, Alan Bance (trans.), *Winifred Wagner: A Life at the Heart of Hitler's Bayreuth* (London: Granta, 2005); Oliver Hilmes, Stewart Spencer (trans.), *Cosima Wagner: The Lady of Bayreuth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011); Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin, 2000); Bryan Magee, *Aspects of Wagner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). To date, the works by Hamann and Hilmes are widely recognised as being the first exhaustive studies of their subjects.

⁴ John Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Tom Sutcliffe, *Believing in Opera* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998); Carl Dahlhaus, Mary Whittall (trans.), *Richard Wagner's Music-Dramas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). While Arnold Whittall notes that Dahlhaus' 'deliberately exaggerated rhetoric' was intended to draw attention to what he saw as 'the pernicious influence of non-musicians in Wagner study' and the increasing anagogic interpretation of Wagner's works, it can also be said that Dahlhaus inadvertently highlighted the paucity of a more three-dimensional scholarship on Wagner, his work, and those associated with it. See Arnold Whittall, review of Barry Millington, *Richard Wagner: The Sorcerer of Bayreuth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012), *Gramophone*, Vol. 90, 5/13, 112.

historical accounts of those persons and events with which the composer has since become bracketed, shaping how we think of him, how we hear him, and how we remember him.⁵

Despite a sizeable body of scholarship our reception of Wagner still tends to focus on, and is refracted by, the events that played out at Bayreuth between 1922 and 1945 when the Festival became associated with German National Socialism. It is an understandably instinctive, if not necessarily accurate, correlation, for certainly the historical afterlife of Wagner is very dark and the tone of current discourses suggests that we are still very much in the fallout. Clearly, the discourse of politics cannot entirely be removed from any Wagner-related discussion: the complexity of the composer's extra-musical ideas, the extent to which he voiced them and to which they have been interpreted renders such an idea virtually impossible.⁶ Nevertheless, by continuing to situate Wagner and his enterprise as the harbingers of Nazism the general attitude has shrunk to a median of predictable responses. Few appear inclined to rescue Wagner or Wagnerism entirely from their negative connotations,⁷ demonstrating how successfully both have been stigmatised as a means of escaping from an unwanted past. Academic analysis tends to mirror this broader cultural unease, indicating the necessity for further discussion.

Here, then, politics, as such, becomes very much a surface element. It is Cosima, Chamberlain, Winifred, and their individualities that supply a place of depth.⁸ This is not an attempt to acquit Wagner – far from it; but in order to understand what happened at Bayreuth after his death we need to consider the bigger picture, and that picture incorporates many figures other than the composer and many elements other than party politics.

In their respective accounts of Cosima and Winifred, Hilmes, and Hamann allude to, but do not explore, certain patterns of behaviour which, upon further investigation, appear to be symptomatic of personal need. A re-examination of their original source materials reveals sufficient evidence to suggest that the actions of these women, like those of Chamberlain,

⁵ As used here, the term 'afterlife' denotes the continued existence, use, and popularity of Richard Wagner, his aesthetic, works, and his enterprise at Bayreuth beyond that of his natural life, as rehearsed by those members of his circle entrusted with the curation of his legacy but in a way not necessarily agreeing with his original intentions. This is consistent with Carl Dahlhaus who reminds us musical works are not irreversibly consigned to the past like historical events, but instead have a prolonged afterlife during which they undergo change, acquire different characters and meanings, and influence other events and works. See Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), ix.

⁶ Many would argue that the political appropriation of Wagner was merely an extension of his already problematic ideas; others, that our continuing interest in Wagner is due to that very ambivalence without which there would no longer be any need to bother with him.

⁷ Those few can be said to include Bryan Magee and Michael Tanner. See, for instance, Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 2001); Bryan Magee, *Aspects of Wagner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Michael Tanner, *Wagner* (London: Flamingo, 2008).

⁸ *Pace* issues surrounding gender differentiation, here the first names of the women will be used since they both share the same surname and it would become cumbersome and inelegant to use full names throughout.

were driven not, as generally accepted, by any racial or political ideology *per se* but by their pursuit of personal identity of which the complexion of their respective relationships with Wagner and their orientations and actions, political or otherwise, were characteristic.

Although crosslinked with a number of topics this seems to be an unexplored avenue of enquiry. There is no ostensible research.⁹ This, and the apparent reluctance of specialists to engage with the present project suggests that it is a dimension lying outside the current discursive arena and the political Richard Wagner's own relationship to philosophy and aesthetics upon which so much scholarship is based. And so the potential importance of this particular venture lies in the way it adds to the current Wagnerian academic tradition by providing an alternative epistemological perspective on the composer and especially, on those to whom his appeal was as much psychological as ideological. In short, the study opens a discursive space.

Epistemological and Methodological Framework

The significance of Cosima Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Winifred Wagner lies in their backgrounds and the way their specific individualities re-versioned Bayreuth, their actions driven as much by their psychology as by the emerging German nation. It is a complex nexus indicating that something other than a purely linear, historical-political account is required. Foregrounding the psychoanalytic is one way of exploring it, and we will find it useful to begin by clarifying the term and the use of appropriate models within the context of this study.

Whereas psychology denotes the scientific study of the human mind, specifically the mental characteristics and behaviour of an individual or group within a given context and the influence of an individual's character upon their behaviour,¹⁰ psychoanalysis is the system of psychological study and therapy originally devised by Sigmund Freud which aims to treat mental disorders via an investigation of the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements and impulses in the mind, and by bringing repressed fears and conflicts into the conscious mind using techniques such as dream interpretation and free association.¹¹ The term depth psychology, as first coined in 1914 by Eugene Bleuler, is the study of unconscious mental processes and motives especially in psychoanalytic theory and practice, and is a scheme that

⁹ The body of Wagner scholarship is immense and, here, we should bear in mind Jean-Jacques Nattiez who, in discussing his own writings on Wagner, acknowledges there may lie buried in some hidden corner of a bibliography somewhere a study of similar compass. See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Stewart Spencer (trans.), *Wagner Androgyne: A Study in Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), xiv.

¹⁰ Source: Oxford English Dictionary.

¹¹ Source: Oxford English Dictionary.

takes a topographical view of the mind in terms of different psychic systems. As further defined by Henri Ellenberger,¹² depth psychology is the enquiry of the symbolic meaning of things – of symptoms, images, and emotions that an individual experiences throughout the course of their lifecycle, and has since come to denote the continuing development of theories and therapies forwarded by Pierre Janet, William James, and Carl Jung which aim to study the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious,¹³ and in so doing embrace both psychoanalysis and psychology.

The realms of psychology and psychoanalysis, problematic in themselves, are thickly populated by contrasting and often hostile schools of thought both old and new. However, while this study acknowledges that both disciplines and what Stephanie Lawler calls their ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ still encounter resistance,¹⁴ here, they are not used to diagnose but to interpret. It is because, for Stephen Frosch, psychology ‘does not close its eyes in the dark’,¹⁵ and because, for Lawler, psychoanalysis ‘mistrusts the apparent and looks instead for different sets of meanings’,¹⁶ that their employment is justified in a study that, above all, seeks to challenge the apparent.

For our purposes, the psychoanalyst Carl Jung and the developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson can provide a productive analytical tool. Their use may be seen as surprising but, as will unfold below, their frameworks are particularly apposite when one considers the range of issues that arise when discussing our particular actors.

Certainly, there are psychoanalytical models more contemporaneous with Wagner himself. One thinks of *Richard Wagner: Eine Psychiatrische Studie* (*Richard Wagner: A Psychiatric Study*) by the German medical historian and early pioneer of psychiatry, Theodor Puschmann, published in 1873.¹⁷ Otto Rank’s doctoral thesis, *Die Lohengrinsage* (1911) also

¹² Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

¹³ See for instance Pierre Janet, *Le médecine psychologique* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005); William James, *The Hidden Self* (The Perfect Library, 2015); Carl Jung, R.F.C. Hull (trans.), *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

¹⁴ Stephanie Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 100. Lawler is borrowing the phrase ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ from Ricouer and, granted, the concept is rooted more heavily in Freudian and Lacanian approaches.

¹⁵ Stephen Frosch, *For and Against Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1997/2016), 231.

¹⁶ Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*, 100.

¹⁷ Theodor Puschmann, *Richard Wagner: Eine Psychiatrische Studie* (Berlin, np., 1873/Forgotten Books, 2018).

comes to mind,¹⁸ as does his *Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Sage* (1912), and *Die Bedeutung des Psychoanalyse für die Geisteswissenschaften* (1913).¹⁹

Puschmann's account of Wagner draws on the French physician Bénédict Augustin Morel's 1857 treatise, *Traité de dégénérescence physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine* (*Treatise on the Physical, Intellectual and Moral Degeneration of the Human Species*),²⁰ and Jacques-Joseph Moreau's *La psychologie morbide dans ses rapports avec la philosophie de l'histoire, Ou de l'influence des neuropathies sur le dynamisme intellectuel* (*Morbid Psychology in its Relations with the Philosophy of History, or, The Influence of Neuropathies in Intellectual Dynamism*) of 1859.²¹ It was with this last work that an attempt was first made to institute a scientific theory by which to establish the Romantic notion of 'genius' as a form of neurosis.²² As a consequence, from around 1869 the language of illness began to play an increasing role in the critical discourse on music. As the cult of the genius became progressively absorbed into the debate music became ever more regarded as an expression of a composer's latent degeneration. Until then, the large majority of writers who had discussed music in psychiatric terms had been music critics, but it was with the publication of Puschmann's analysis of Wagner that the idea was endorsed scientifically. Writing when the orthodox sciences were in their infancy, Puschmann tapped into current trends, and in the terminology of Morel argued that Wagner was clinically insane.²³

Since Puschmann and Wagner had never met, Puschmann's 'diagnosis' (which did much to establish the idea of 'degenerate' music) was asserted without any personal examination of the 'patient'.²⁴ Moreover, the tone of the study is strikingly consistent with the polemics surrounding Wagner at that time, and specifically with the negative reception of his music and lifestyle. In Puschmann's rationale are to be found all the recognisable anti-Wagner tropes of the period: monomania, megalomania, paranoia, and moral decadence, prompting a

¹⁸ Otto Rank, *Die Lohengrinsage* (Paderborn: Salzwasser Verlag, 2015); Otto Rank, Gregory C. Richter (trans.), *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991); Otto Rank, *Die Bedeutung des Psychoanalyse für die Geisteswissenschaften* (Barsinghausen: Unikum Verlag, 2012).

¹⁹ Translated here as, respectively, *The Lohengrin Saga*; *The Incest Theme in Poetry and Legend*; *The Importance of Psychology for the Humanities*.

²⁰ Bénédict Augustin Morel, *Traité de dégénérescence physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine* (Paris: Baillière, 1857).

²¹ Jacques-Joseph Moreau, *La Psychologie morbide dans ses rapports avec la philosophie de l'histoire, Ou de l'Influence des Neuropathies sur le dynamisme intellectuel* (Paris: V. Masson, 1859).

²² James Kennaway, *Bad Vibrations: The History of the Idea of Music as a Cause of Disease* (Ashgate: Routledge, 2012), 93-94.

²³ A diagnosis that was all the more readily acceptable following 1869 when Wagner published the revised version of his essay, *Judaism in Music*, the substance of which, for many, vindicated Puschmann.

²⁴ Today, such a practice would render an analysis inadmissible.

suspicion that Puschmann's verdict may be as prejudiced as it was, to modern thinking, ethically questionable.

To borrow Heinrich Heine's description of Franz Liszt, Wagner's self-belief and modes of self-promotion demonstrate he was undoubtedly the 'general-intendant of his own celebrity'.²⁵ But the entire concept of insanity has been challenged profoundly throughout history and Puschmann's conclusions were contested at the time.²⁶ Puschmann would be useful were we to embark upon a historical account of the discourse of illness in relation to the notions of genius and the artist in nineteenth-century Western European society, or upon Wagner-reception during the same period. Interesting though these discussions would be, here space prohibits their inclusion, although Puschmann will remain a contextualising presence.²⁷

As to the works by Otto Rank, these were written in the initial stages of his career when he was a disciple of Freud. While alluding to Wagner and charting the historical, cultural, and psychological significance of myths, Rank underpins his arguments by what is, essentially, Freudian theory. His is a methodology not adopted here for the following reasons.

Firstly, the application of Freud when discussing Wagner is an approach that has been extensively exploited elsewhere. Thomas Mann, Theodor Adorno and, more recently, Adrian Daub and Thomas Grey, Inge Wise, and Tom Artin, amongst others, have either noted proto-Freudian elements in Wagner's stage works or have applied Freudian theory to their writing about the composer or his oeuvre.²⁸ While acknowledging the undoubted importance of Freud in the fields of psychoanalysis and Wagner scholarship (indeed, Jung's own conceptions of analytical psychology and Bleuler's depth psychology emerged from the ground work of Freud), the aim of the present study is to see what fresh insights are to be gained by exploring epistemological paths comparatively less well-travelled.

Secondly, a key aspect of the Jungian framework, depth psychology, is an interdisciplinary undertaking that draws on literature, philosophy, mythology, anthropology, and the arts. Freud looked at literature and the visual arts, but despite his intention to re-

²⁵ Heinrich Heine, *Musical Reports, 1844*. See also Heinrich Heine, Frederick H. Martens (trans.), 'Heinrich Heine's Musical Feuilletons', *The Musical Quarterly* Vol. 8. No.3 (July 1922), 435-468 (458).

²⁶ Despite failing to convince a number of his professional coevals, Puschmann's study nevertheless gathered sufficient interest to prompt Wagner to retaliate in print that it was because of the commotion generated by Puschmann that his own works were being ignored. See Kennaway, *Bad Vibrations*, 93-94.

²⁷ For discussions on genius and illness in the discourse of music see, for instance, William Hirsch, *Genius and Degeneration: A Psychological Study* (Forgotten Books, 2018); James Kennaway, *Bad Vibrations: The History of the Idea of Music as a Cause of Disease* (Ashgate: Routledge, 2012).

²⁸ See, for instance, Thomas Mann, Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter and Rita Reil (trans.), *Freud, Goethe, Wagner* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1939); Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner* (New York: Verso, 1981/2005); Inge Wise, *Die Walküre: A Tale of Oedipal Longings and Desires* (podcast: <https://www.freud.org.uk>); Adrian Daub and Thomas Grey, *Wagner after Freud: Stages of Analysis* (<http://oq.oxfordjournals>); Tom Artin, *The Wagner Complex: Genesis and Meaning of the Ring* (Free Scholar Press, 2012).

interpret myths as products of the inner world his own psychological issues appear to have prevented him from fully accommodating music or religion.²⁹ This lacuna is addressed by Jung and Erikson. By embracing a range of atavistic modes of human expression including music and religion, and by identifying a greater number of archetypes, or ‘primordial images’, than Freud (who, according to Jung, discovered only one, the Oedipus complex),³⁰ Jung and Erikson offer not only a more comprehensive theoretical framework but one capable of accommodating a discussion about the social and cultural agency of a significant musical polymath, his music, and his institution.

As the above critique of Puschmann illustrates, the question of period specificity will inevitably arise whatever the elected theoretical model. Therefore it is acknowledged, here, that a historically-focused mind-set may bring a degree of scepticism to the Jungian notion of archetypes and their putative universality, or to the Eriksonian notions of individuation, the journey inwards, and step-development theory, all of which may be regarded as ideas of their time. However, the point to be made by this discussion is that however contentious they may be, and whatever the period, Jung and Erikson are operating a model of the psyche which already existed, or, perhaps more accurately, operating a model of the psyche which emerged historically under Wagner.

Wagner had previously asserted the power of the myth not only to unify Germany but also to explore the depths of the psyche. Wagner assumed a model of the unconscious before anyone like Freud came to theorise it, by which time it had already become very much an integral part of the surrounding aesthetic. There is a congruence between the assumed world of the consciousness in Wagner and in psychoanalytical theory, and therefore, in a sense, it is immaterial whether Jung and Erikson – or indeed Freud – are considered ‘correct’ or not

²⁹ See Adrian Daub and Thomas Grey, ‘Wagner after Freud’, *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol.31, Issue 1-2, March 2015, 116-133; Kimmo Lehtonen and Michael F. Shaughnessey, ‘Sigmund Freud’s Enigmatic Relationship to Music’, *International Journal of Advances in Psychology* Vol.4 (2015). See also, Ernest Jones, *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud* (Basic Books, 1974); Peter Gay, *Freud* (Helsinki: Otava, 2004). While Kimmo Lehtonen and Michael F. Shaughnessey acknowledge that the illusionary nature of music and religion was problematic for Freud, and that he believed that some kind of rationalistic or analytic principle prevented him from responding positively towards music and religion, it is their professional opinion that Freud actually feared the strong emotions music inspired in him.

³⁰ Jung traced the concept of archetypes back to Philo, Irenaeus, and the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which associates archetypes with the divine and creation. Jung defined and redefined ‘archetype’ throughout his career, but in an early definition writes that archetypes are ‘primordial images’ that ‘dwell in a world beyond the chronology of the human lifespan’, living and functioning ‘in the deeper layers of the unconscious’. Archetypes, therefore, are ‘typical modes of apprehension, and wherever we meet with uniform and regularly recurring modes of apprehension we are dealing with an archetype’. By drawing on mythology and legend for his stage works, Wagner encountered thematic material enshrining phenomena later identified by Jung as archetypes. Wagner also touches upon the mechanics of archetypes in his essay *Opera and Drama*, where he maintains we should become ‘knowers though feeling’; in other words, we would be able to comprehend the meaning of his works via an intuitive response.

since, ultimately, they are of a piece. Unlike, say, Maynard Soloman,³¹ who has attracted censure for theorising the actions and motivations of eighteenth-century Mozart according to unspecified but recognisably late nineteenth and early twentieth-century psychoanalytical models,³² or Allan Keiler, who has used Freud's theories to analyse the religiosity and musical genius of Franz Liszt despite Freud's resistance to both religion and music,³³ here it will be interesting to use Jung and Erikson in our discussion about Wagner because they are coming out of the same historical and cultural world of which Wagner was a lynchpin. And such can be said of their application vis-à-vis Cosima Wagner, Winifred Wagner, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain since in their own ways those individuals, too, were very much a product and part of that world.

But any discussion regarding the pros and cons of contrasting approaches and theory would be to misunderstand the aim of this project. Rather, theory is used, here, to bring into some form of focus that which is currently diffuse. Certain aspects of our actors' lives, personalities, and actions are not currently addressed by Wagner scholarship. If one takes a long view of history, Wagner, like Shakespeare, still speaks to us through his construction of subjects, people, and their relation to society. While, in itself, this observation goes a long way to answer any anxieties new musicology may have relating to discourses of universality, issues which are already treated by Matthew Head,³⁴ the theme of the relationship between individual and society also suggests further grounds for using Jung and Erikson.

Firstly, Jung and Erikson offer a method of theorising the stages of life which seems to harmonise with the Wagnerian idea of the journey towards compassion and wisdom that characterises Wagner's later music-dramas. In their respective ways, both Erikson and Jung believed that the personality of an individual develops in a series of definite stages. By foregrounding the individual-society dialectic and by viewing the lifespan of the individual and the stages of development experienced by the individual within a collective context, Jung and Erikson not only mirror a recurring theme of Wagner's concerning the role of the individual within society,³⁵ but allow for the effects of social experiences and their impact over the whole lifespan of an individual.

Secondly, Jung is interested in the agencies of the collective conscious (i.e., the shared beliefs and ideals which act as a unifying force within a society) upon a person, and of the

³¹ Maynard Soloman, *Mozart: A Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).

³² See Matthew Head, 'Myth of a Sinful Father', *Music and Letters* Vol.80 (1999), 74-85.

³³ See Allan Keiler, 'Liszt as Romantic Hero: Imposturing and the False Self', *Journal of the American Liszt Society* Vol.67 (2016), 72-84.

³⁴ Head, 'Myth of a Sinful Father', 74-85.

³⁵ For example, *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

collective unconscious, that is to say a form of the unconscious representing the repository of the mind, putatively common to all humanity and originating in the natural, congenital structure of the brain, containing memories and impulses of which the individual is unaware. As will unfold, each of the above notions, along with Erikson's theories regarding lifelong development within a collective social context, have substantial relevance to our discussion. They not only allow us to appreciate the centrality of the 'common experience' (that is to say, the process by which people connect and interact), as a unifying factor in the integration of culture, society, and the functioning individual,³⁶ but also to recognise those forces assumed to be residing in the collective unconscious, i.e., archetypes, which can be said to have shaped our actors' lives.

Thirdly, there is a post-Jungian secondary literature that can be of assistance to us. Besides being closely related to that of Wagner, the Jungian and Eriksonian worlds are compatible, hermeneutically, with the episteme of Bryan Magee and Robert Donington whose seminal work, *Wagner's Ring and its Symbols*, ties Wagner and Jung together.³⁷ Jung and Erikson offer a historical epistemological position that we can tap into, represent a continuation of thinking about the psyche which extends into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with Daniel Levinson and George Valliant,³⁸ and therefore might offer ways to orientate new enquiries. Jung was happy to interpret culture through psychoanalytic insight and he, together with Erikson, provides the opportunity to not only re-read the politics represented in Wagner's stage works, supplying potentially the tools by which to think

³⁶ For discussions on the 'common experience' see for instance, Wolfgang Ruttowski, *German 'National Character' and Cultural Profile: Some Thoughts* (Norderstedt: GRIN Verlag, 2013). Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Enquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001); George Herbert Mead, Charles Morris (ed.), *Mind, Self, and Society: From a Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); George Herbert Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present* (New York: Prometheus Press, 2002); Jean Piaget, Malcolm Pierry, D.E. Berlyne (trans.), *The Psychology of Intelligence* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001); Alfred Irving Hallowell, *Culture and Experience* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1955); Stephanie Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008/2014); Walter P. Metzger, *Academic Freedom in the Age of the University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Gerald M. Philips and Nancy J. Metzger, *Intimate Communications* (Allyn & Baker, 1976); Emile Durkeim, W.D. Halls (trans.), Steven Lukes (ed.), *Divisions of Labour in Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2013).

³⁷ Robert Donington, *Wagner's Ring and its Symbols* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963).

³⁸ See D. Levinson, C.N. Darrow, E.B. Klein, and M. Levinson, *Seasons in a Man's Life* (New York: Random House, 1978); Daniel Levinson 'Role Personality and Social Structure in the Organizational Setting', *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* Vol.58, 170-180 (1959); Daniel Levinson, 'The Mid-Life transition: A Period in Adult Psychosocial Development', *Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes* Vol. 40, 99-112 (1977). George Valliant, *Aging Well* (Boston: Little Brown, 2002); George Valliant, *Spiritual Evolution: A Scientific Defence of Faith* (Broadway Books, 2008).

See also Robert. E. Nolan and Nidhin Kadavil, *Valliant's Contribution to Research and Theory of Adult Development*, 2003 Midwest Research to Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education. <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/341/nolan20%&%20kadavil.pdf?sequences> (17 February 2016).

through the social, the historical, the political, the personal and the relationships between them, but also the dissimilar psychologies of Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred whose own times and relationships with Wagner did so much to shape the composer's afterlife.

Yet what follows is not a set of case histories.³⁹ The ensuing text should be read as a revisionist, biographical history informed by psychoanalytic theory and as one which looks at specific individuals, their backgrounds, development and how they responded to the big historical demands placed upon them within the confines of local circumstances. It is a nexus that makes a turn out into the social with a reading of Eric Hoffer's mass-movement theory and T.S. Eliot's theory of culture,⁴⁰ both of which can be linked to the Eriksonian notion that society and the personal development of the individual are inextricably interwoven.

Jung articulates the life cycle of the individual and their journey through life in terms of an arc. The parabola of life will therefore be an important pattern throughout this discussion. And while the arc of life plays out in Wagner's creativity, albeit in mediated form, the arc of Wagner's own life was enmeshed in the idea of nation. In time, both life cycles became part of an even bigger cycle: that of the Wagnerian institution and the people posthumously involved in its curation. Here, in an entirely different context, we encounter what Wilkie Collins once described as 'the influence of character on circumstances'.⁴¹

The research methodology reflects the hermeneutic nature of the venture, placing equal emphasis on historical events and interpretation. In doing so it invokes Stephanie Lawler, who notes:

In producing a life story (one sort of text) we are always, implicitly or explicitly, referring to and drawing on other texts – other life stories, fictional and non-fictional, as well as a range of different kinds of texts. This should not be taken to suggest that the resulting narrative is 'false', but simply that, in telling a life, people are simultaneously interpreting that life. Narrative analysis is embedded within a hermeneutic tradition of inquiry in that it is concerned with understanding: how people understand and make sense of their lives, and how analysts can understand that understanding.⁴²

³⁹ This study cannot offer claim to offer definite psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is usually avoided except when professionals meet face to face with analysands and, clearly, in this case that is not possible. As mentioned above, Theodor Puschmann's analysis of Wagner was conducted without personal contact between analyst and subject and no records have emerged to suggest that Cosima Wagner, Winifred Wagner, or Houston Stewart Chamberlain ever underwent any form of psychological analysis upon which to draw as evidence.

⁴⁰ Erik Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York and London: Norton, 1998); T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962).

⁴¹ Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (London: Harper, 2011), xxi.

⁴² Stephanie Lawler, 'Stories in the Social World', in M. Pickering (ed.), *Research in Cultural Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008). As quoted in Lawler, *Identity*, 14.

And so what follows is based upon intertextuality, the shaping of a text's meaning by another text to produce meaning, for while there is no apparent scholarship, there is, by contrast, a rich resource of data upon which to draw. Accordingly, the study will consult diaries, correspondence, contemporary biographical accounts, and testimonies. Granted, these last are notoriously subjective, but given the nature of this particular study subjectivity is likely to be as revealing as scientific evidence. For clarity, correlated scholarship and literature will be reviewed within the appropriate chapters and all data will be aligned with sociological, cultural, and psychoanalytic theory. This includes the aforementioned Eric Hoffer and Stephanie Lawler, as well as Leighton McCutchen, Otto Fenichel, Sandy Hotchkiss, Neville Symington, Robert B. Milmann, Pierre Bourdieu, and Max Weber, the process of triangulation suggesting itself for the following reasons.

The sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson and the Jungian analyst John Haule variously maintain that 'when facts and theories from different disciplines all point in the same direction they implicitly support one another and jointly contribute to their mutual likelihood of being proven correct',⁴³ thereby creating a 'common groundwork of explanation'.⁴⁴ This strategy, known as consilience, 'convinces us by its cable-like argument [in that] we follow a bundle of evidence strands all supporting one another so that gaps here and there in some of the strands do not damage the argument'.⁴⁵ It is a practice anticipated by Jung who maintained that for the effective construction of knowledge 'we need not only the work of psychologists, but also the that of philologists, historians, archaeologists, mythologists, folklore students, ethnologists, philosophers, theologians, pedagogues, and biologists'.⁴⁶

While a number of events here under discussion appear to be consistent with what Jung would consider to be archetypal activity, conversely, in a historiographical context, clear and coherent developments can be detected in the procession of those events. Jung was contemporary with a number of those episodes and their attendant discussions and so, from a cultural point of view, this provides additional traction, a form of *Zeitgeist* justification, particularly so when we recall Jung revised his ideas on archetypes and concluded they were neither good nor bad, but powerful.

⁴³ John Ryan Haule, *Jung in the Twenty-First Century Vol.1* (Hove: Routledge, 2011), 1.

⁴⁴ Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

⁴⁵ Haule, *Jung*, 1.

⁴⁶ Carl Gustav Jung, Gerhard Adler, Aniela Jaffé (eds.), R.F.C. Hull (trans.), *Letters Vol. 1* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 106.

Sources

Although, as mentioned above, Jean-Jacques Nattiez considers the body of Wagner scholarship to be so immense no single scholar can claim to have read all of it,⁴⁷ the decision, here, to limit the scholarly compass to Anglophone literature is not a question of convenience. While, pragmatically, one could argue that to focus upon a specific area of scholarship is therefore one way of narrowing down a considerable literature, in this instance the use of English-only sources can provide a practical, scholarly benefit for a number of precise reasons.

Firstly, Richard Wagner, his extra-musical ideas, institution, and his and his family's location within a specific German socio-political history are highly charged and emotive subjects which remain contentious and divisive, particularly in Germany. As we shall see, the writings of the composer's own great-grandson Gottfried, to name but one German-born commentator, are infused with a guilt, widespread within the post-Holocaust German collective consciousness, which, arguably, has established a discourse born of contrition.⁴⁸ If we are to engage in responsible debate and increase knowledge in an objective manner then, here, we should sidestep unnecessary engagement with German sensitivities over questions of race and nationalism, all of which have been dealt with elsewhere. In this respect, Anglophone literature provides a critical distance.

Secondly, this work is not exclusively about Richard Wagner upon whom the greater part of Wagner scholarship has, understandably, tended to focus. More accurately, it is about his French-born widow and his English-born son- and daughter-in-law, all of whom are comparatively under-represented in Wagner study, and, notably, given the original nationality of two of these individuals, in the key realm of Anglophone Wagner scholarship.

There is a definite Anglophone Wagnerian tradition with a specific history traceable to 1872, if not before, with the formation of the London Wagner Society by Wagner's German-born, but British-based, anglophile advocate Edward Dannreuther. Ernest Newman and George Bernard Shaw wrote extensively on Wagner, with Shaw viewing Wagner through a socialistic, not political lens as such, and to this day an Anglophone discourse persists, as the work of, amongst others, Bryan Magee, Barry Millington, and John Deathridge, together with the sizeable body of new scholarship currently emanating from the USA, demonstrates. But as

⁴⁷ Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, xiv.

⁴⁸ The tone of the email conversations between the present author and an eminent German-born academic during the initial stages of this study seems to confirm this impression, as it appears that native German authors, such as Udo Bermbach and Dieter Borchmeyer, who do not dwell upon Wagner's racial and political ideology are considered by their coevals to be underestimating, or, indeed, denying, the agency of the composer's ideas.

the focus of this discourse is Wagner himself, the present study asserts there is room for an understanding of key actors in Wagnerism in both English-language scholarship and Wagner-study in translation.

It is widely acknowledged that, to date, the only exhaustive studies of Cosima and Winifred are those by German-born authors Oliver Hilmes and Brigitte Hamann. Intended for a wider audience, by academic standards these works may be considered somewhat journalistic in tone. Nevertheless, they provide the bases for the following discussion because, quite simply, they present new material and crucial data previously denied scholars, particularly so in the case of Winifred Wagner whose estate, at the time of writing, is not within the public domain, thereby enabling us see the wider picture. Their authors open up, unconsciously or otherwise, facets of their subjects' characters hitherto unknown to, or unexplored by, academia. The glare of the more conspicuous events of our actors' lives may have blinded us to their characters and to the less convenient and comfortable aspects of their stories, aspects which may even challenge our ideas about how history is shaped. The adopted methodology therefore brings its own cultural focus and gives a particular complexion to the undertaking. It cuts out the discourse of contrition, provides a perspective outside these limits and, importantly, gives an Anglophone take on something which was itself a blend of cultures.

Aside from the matter of the language of sources other questions arise. These concern the extent to which primary source material might be used and, by extension, the different roles and values of primary and secondary sources in relation to our actors. Unlike Cosima and Winifred, whose problems and inner feelings are enshrined in the private world of their diaries and correspondence, those of Wagner and Chamberlain were recorded for public consumption and, moreover, with a specific public in mind. Wagner, especially, wrote tirelessly about his ideas and himself, but as commentators have noted, those writings are notoriously contradictory and abstruse.⁴⁹ Wagner was to later acknowledge these tendencies, and laughingly chided himself for his foolishness. Nevertheless, throughout his career he continued to revisit his essays and revised his opinions on a number of topics several times.⁵⁰ While in a historical sense this may allow us to map the development of a considerable

⁴⁹ Bryan Magee attributes these issues to a number of factors, including Wagner's ever-developing intellect and a propensity to publish underdeveloped ideas in a writing style he assume to have been appropriately academic. See Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin, 2000), 23; 95-98.

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (eds.), Geoffrey Skelton (trans.), *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 2* (London: Collins, 1978), 826, entry dated 14 March 1882 in which Wagner doubts some of the ideas expressed in his essay *Oper und Drama (Opera and Drama, 1850-1851)*; *Ibid.*, 253, entry dated January 13 1879, in which Wagner boasts he always expressed himself in 'a simple and natural way'.

intellect and aesthetic, Wagner's vacillations confound attempts to tie the man down, as it were, or rather insufficiently so in order to base a psychoanalytically-orientated rather than historicised account upon his words alone. Of more methodological importance to this study is its assertion that, by their very nature, Wagner's prose works and the manner of their transmission were of a piece with the contemporaneous discourse of genius and are, therefore, as much part and product of the surrounding society as they are an indication of Wagner's psychology.

Such can also be said of Chamberlain. As will unfold over the course of Chapter 3, Chamberlain's theoretical works were of questionable scholarly propriety; the ideological and propagandist writings were products of the prevailing *Zeitgeist* and, along with his more personal discussions, correspond to cultural and literary traditions of an adopted country within which he sought validation. Therefore, within the context of the present study, the words Chamberlain wrote are, in a sense, incidental to the personal circumstances surrounding their conception. As with Wagner, it is in what lies behind the words rather than the actual words themselves that we will discover the inner man. This is not to say the writings of Wagner and Chamberlain become irrelevant to our discussion, but it is upon the context of their composition, the themes that underpin Wagner's musical output, and the writings of third parties, specifically those for whom Wagner came to represent more than a composer, that we will focus. It is in these details that a more reliable and comprehensive picture of these men – and, indeed, of those third parties – can be gained, for in such arenas their inner worlds are revealed.

The foregoing observations go a long way to answer Wagner's critics, then and now, and the science of Puschmann noted above. They also vindicate Jung and Erikson's notions regarding the indivisibility of the individual and society, thus justifying further their employment here.

The ensuing discussion has a strongly hermeneutic impulse, and underscoring it all is Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's reminder that apart from being about music, musicology can also be about us and our relation to music and music-related areas. No less importantly than its scientific constituents such as physics and maths, musicology is about ideas and opinions and not about demonstrable facts as generally understood.⁵¹ Although one's ideas may be weakened or strengthened by the discovery of other evidence, to do musicology is essentially

⁵¹ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music: Scholarship, Ideology, Performance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 216-217.

‘to make guesses into arguments’,⁵² and Leech-Wilkinson echoes Lawler when he maintains that the process of historical recovery is necessarily interpretive. What constitutes evidence is a matter of judgement and is determined by both the surrounding discourse and how we, as individuals, view the world. We all face the difficulties of escaping the pre-conceptions of our own culture, as the tone of current Wagner-study often demonstrates and, therefore, knowing for certain what is accurate, or what actually happened, is practically impossible.⁵³ Leech-Wilkinson offers his reminder when discussing the performance practice of medieval music, but his summary remains apposite within the present context when he says that to undertake musicology honestly one must let go of any claims or belief in being right when one offers a hypothesis based on the results of one’s research.⁵⁴ ‘The best one may allow’ he concludes, ‘is that one is offering a view that will need to be scrutinised but that should be accepted until shown to be less right than another yet to emerge’.⁵⁵

The landscape we are about to enter is complex and, to some extent, unfamiliar. To navigate it we need to acquaint ourselves with our three principal actors, Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred, for it is in their personal circumstances and dispositions that we will discover the source of their actions, the outcome of which is the Richard Wagner we know today. To make sense of it all, it is with him, or more accurately his enterprise, that we should begin.

Bayreuth and Post-Wagner Bayreuth

Every year the unassuming Upper Franconian town of Bayreuth becomes the focus of significant artistic and socio-cultural activity as dedicated Wagnerites, the international media, and prominent figures from the realms of politics and high society make their pilgrimage to the festival founded there in 1876 by the German musical polymath, Richard Wagner.⁵⁶ Originally conceived as a centre of artistic and ideological synthesis, a place of spiritual communion through music, the Festival and the Festival Theatre itself (henceforward referred to as the *Festpielhaus*), were directed by the composer to be ‘neither within, nor in the periphery of, a major urban centre, but in a modest community where it would be the dominant spatial element’.⁵⁷ At Bayreuth Wagner’s message to the world could be absorbed

⁵² Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music*, 218-219.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 216-217.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 218-219.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, xi.

⁵⁷ Marvin Carlson, ‘The Theatre as Civic Monument’, *Theatre Journal*, 40/1 (March 1988), 12-32 (27).

without the distractions of metropolitan life.⁵⁸ The town's comparative remoteness would allow the spectator to focus their undivided attention upon Wagner's art, which, in an increasingly materially-minded society, would, he believed, transcend the role of conventional religion and supply a much needed spirituality without recourse to religiosity.⁵⁹

Somewhat contrary to Wagner's professed Hellenic ideal, both the Festival and *Festspielhaus* came to resemble not so much the civic celebrations and performance spaces of the Greek model than the pilgrimages and great pilgrimage churches of the Middle Ages which were 'supported not by a local population, but by a public which considered the spiritual rewards gained there worth the labour and expense of a lengthy journey'.⁶⁰ Bayreuth, therefore, may be regarded as being 'the Santiago de Compostela of late nineteenth-century Europe'.⁶¹ But while this artistic and quasi-religious site continues to celebrate Wagner and his musical works, Bayreuth as an institution also possesses a symbolic significance and capacity to galvanise the German collective consciousness at times of national need.

Irrespective of Wagner, the town of Bayreuth was not without cultural substance of its own, being, for instance, the capital of Upper Franconia, the erstwhile court of the Margraves, and home of the writer Jean Paul. It was, however, Wagner's artistic experiment which ultimately – and decisively – situated Bayreuth as a centre of national significance and, in the sense of an institution, one capable of reimagining itself according to the vicissitudes of the nation's fortunes. If one looks at nineteenth- and twentieth-century European history, it would appear that significant German political, economic, and cultural advancement occurs at moments of domestically perceived inferiority or vulnerability.⁶² The Wagnerian institution has always been alive to this; and while it can be said that Bayreuth has modified according to circumstance in the interests of its own continuing relevance, it is remarkable that the key advances in its own creativity coincide with defining moments of national anxiety. The development – destiny, as it were – of Wagner's enterprise and German society appear to be

⁵⁸ Arguably, Wagner's choice of Bayreuth was as rooted in pragmatism as it was in aesthetics. Wagner's preferred location for his Festival had been Munich, then the centre of Bavarian artistic life. Although revered by his patron, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, Wagner was highly unpopular with the Bavarian authorities who, at a time of political unrest, disapproved of subsidising Wagner's enterprise.

⁵⁹ Eva Rieger, Chris Walton (trans.), *Richard Wagner's Women* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), 215.

⁶⁰ Carlson, 'The Theatre as Civic Monument', 27.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Bach, Beethoven, and Goethe notwithstanding, throughout nineteenth-century Western Europe Germany was generally regarded as something of a cultural backwater. Politically disunited and preoccupied with establishing a definitive sense of identity, Germany watched the economic prowess of its industrialising and imperial neighbours with unease. Germany's concern for equivalency is symbolised by Pagner's address to the Mastersingers in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and in Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* where Hermann (or Germann depending upon translation), an ethnic German and lowly engineer in the Imperial Russian army, learns the secret of the three cards in order to outdo his aristocratic betters at the fashionable card game, Faro.

interwoven. One recalls the political and sociological climate at the time of the Festival's inception, and the Brand Bayreuth of today represents as much a twenty-first century EUtopian Germany as it did the Germanies of the Third Reich, Adenauer's post-war economic miracle, and *die Wende* ('The Turning Point') of the late 1980s.⁶³ Apart from being place of pilgrimage, the Bayreuth Festival is, in short, an index of Germany's now. Throughout its history it has stood as a unifying symbol of the nation fostering identity and nationhood. Geographically and institutionally, Bayreuth is a place of symbolic potency which exploited, and continues to exploit, the public sense of heritage. A singular phenomenon, then, if one considers that, until the 1970s when it began to receive guaranteed state subsidies,⁶⁴ the Festival's survival was dependent not only upon healthy box office returns but also the generous financial support of the many international (i.e., non-German) Wagner societies and patrons, suggesting that Wagner and his institution provide something other than a national identity. Perhaps some discover the significance of Wagner and Bayreuth within themselves.

Wagner and Wagnerism: Institutionalisation, Representation, and Misrepresentation

As Charles Harvey has noted,⁶⁵ the work of art is a material manifestation of the artist's inner self, of their thoughts and emotions. We may challenge Harvey's assertion that while the artist lives the work of art lives as it was intended to live, but concur with him that with the death of its creator the work of art dies as an organic entity. Thereafter it is an object the value of which is determined by those in whose own interest it is to possess it, intellectually or physically. Its possession endows and empowers. The work of art represents both a frozen moment in its creator's thoughts and in time. It stands for its creator in the creator's absence, that with which the creator was associated. But it is nevertheless an object, and in the hands of others becomes something else. It can become a source of capital and a conduit of cultural

⁶³ Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner's Hellenic-inspired 'New Bayreuth' was unveiled in 1951. In the 1970s, Bayreuth's employment of the East-German directors, Götz Friedrich and Harry Kupfer symbolised and presaged the unification of Germany. In contrast, the final years of Wolfgang Wagner's intendantship were dogged by accusations of unoriginality, complacency and superficiality. Much the same has been said of the work of Wolfgang's successors, his daughters, the half-sisters Eva Wagner-Pasquier and Katharina Wagner. It is notable that this perceived decline in creative standards has coincided with a politically and economically powerful Germany. Parenthetically, Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner's 'New Bayreuth' was virtually contemporaneous with a similarly rehabilitative exercise at Darmstadt. There, another centre of excellence synonymous with Nazism, the *Technische Hochschule*, became the base of the iconoclastic *Ferienkurse* music school.

⁶⁴ See this volume, Chapter 2, 69; Chapter 4, 178.

⁶⁵ See Charles Harvey, Jon Press, and Mairi Maclean, 'William Morris: Cultural Leadership and the Dynamics of Taste', *Business History Review*, 85 (Summer 2011), 245-271. See also Pierre Bourdieu, Richard Nice (trans.), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

exchange. It can also become a way of living. William Morris is an example. He and his works came to represent Englishness. To be English was to be Morrisian, and it is an image which persists since his works continue to be seen as a representation of his ideals.⁶⁶

Such was the case with Wagner and the Wagnerian aesthetic. The essence of Wagner's ideas lie in the preservation of humanist values thought to be imperilled by social upheaval, but following his death, and in a move not only mirroring the times but also pre-echoing Harvey's thoughts on the institutionalisation of taste, Wagner's works and ideals came to represent something else, principally the current reading of the national project. In the politicised post-Wagner Bayreuth of Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred, to be German was to be a Wagnerian and to be a Wagnerian was to be German. As with other works of art, the value and meaning of the object, in this case the Wagnerian aesthetic, oeuvre, and institution, were determined by the possessors according to their respective psychologies, understandings, and agenda.

While Wagner asserted that comprehension of his musical work would be intuitive, misunderstanding and misrepresentation were his greatest fears. 'Interpretative mistakes', he maintained, 'are only possible in the case of a reader who puts his own ideas for those of the poet'.⁶⁷ When on cordial terms, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and the composer's then future wife Cosima often speculated as to what posterity would make of Wagner.⁶⁸ Over time the question would trouble Wagner himself. In Nietzsche he found intellectual equivalency and stimulus. Yet their relationship soured, and after Nietzsche abandoned him Wagner believed himself surrounded only by inane and incompetent people.⁶⁹

According to Cosima, everyone – detractors and supporters alike – 'seemed designed to make all the ideas [Wagner] expresses look ridiculous.'⁷⁰ These ideas he then saw

⁶⁶ Harvey, Press, and Maclean, 'William Morris: Cultural Leadership and the Dynamics of Taste', 245-271.

⁶⁷ Richard Wagner, *Oper und Drama (Opera and Drama, 1850-1851)*. See Richard Wagner, *Oper und Drama* (Berlin: Holzinger, 2015); Richard Wagner, William Ashton Ellis (trans.), *Opera and Drama* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995). See also, William Ashton Ellis (trans.), *Richard Wagner's Prose Works Vol.2* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co.Ltd., 1893).

⁶⁸ Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (eds.), Geoffrey Skelton (trans.), *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 1* (London: Collins, 1978), 164. Diary entry dated 13 November, 1869. In 1868, Cosima von Bülow née Liszt abandoned her unhappy marriage to the conductor, Hans von Bülow, and fled to Switzerland where she lived with Richard Wagner and their two illegitimate children, Isolde and Eva, at Tribschen, Wagner's villa near Lake Lucerne. It was there in June 1869 that Cosima gave birth to Wagner's third child, Siegfried, who was legitimised by his parents' marriage in 1870. The young philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, was a frequent visitor to Tribschen. Indeed, he was a house-guest when, on the famous Christmas Day morning, Wagner serenaded Cosima with his *Siegfried Idyll*.

⁶⁹ Dietrich Mack, 'Mama Embraces the Image of the Whole Century', in *Bayreuther Festspiel Programmhefte, 1980, Nr. 1 Parsifal* (Verlag der Festspielleitung Bayreuth, 1980), 28-41 (31).

⁷⁰ Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (eds.), Geoffrey Skelton (trans.), *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 2* (London: Collins, 1978), 1007. Entry dated 9 February 1883.

‘reflected back to him as in a distorting mirror’,⁷¹ and he witnessed innumerable esoteric groups espouse his views according to their particular programmes.⁷² Initially a source of some amusement, this became steadily problematic. Drawing distinctions between ‘perception’ and ‘act’ (by which Wagner means idea and application), and between ‘perceivers and followers’ (by which he means visionaries and their disciples),⁷³ the composer came to deplore those devotees in whose self-interested hands his theories became ‘mistakenly converted into a petty practical act [...] just for a sect’.⁷⁴ It is therefore ironic that those people came to include members of his family.

Cosima Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Winifred Wagner

Between the death of Wagner in 1883 and the rise of Adolf Hitler in 1923 there existed a period of transition, virtually coincidental with the retirement of Bismarck and the emergence of the Pan-German League, within which the Wagnerian legacy and values were commended to familial custodianship.⁷⁵ Here, the eye is drawn by three key figures: the composer’s French-born widow, Cosima Wagner, and her English-born son- and daughter-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Winifred Williams. It was during their respective regimes at the core of the Wagnerian enterprise at Bayreuth that its ideals regarding patriotism and cultural cohesion underwent modification, and the image of both composer and Wagnerism as embodiments of what is now regarded as an acute and malign nationalism was instituted. Unquestionably, it was Cosima who enabled the institution to realise its artistic potential and achieve its international breakthrough.⁷⁶ Under her not uncontroversial stewardship, ‘what had been no more than a provincial experiment in Wagner’s hands became a flourishing family concern and a social institution’.⁷⁷ Without Cosima and her collaborators, known

⁷¹ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner’s Diaries Vol. 2*, 576. Entry dated 16 December 1880.

⁷² Richard Wagner’s radical ideas attracted diverse organisations seeking his support, amongst them vegetarians and anti-vivisectionists. In a letter dated 16 March 1881, Wagner wrote to his patron, King Ludwig II of Bavaria: ‘The sort of misunderstandings to which I [...] am exposed [...] is instructive, but also a source of entertainment. Not a day passes without my receiving some absurd communication or other: vegetarians, Jew haters, religious secretaries – they all believe they can enlist my support. Recently, however, I received news from Paris of my election as a “membre honoraire de la société des amis du divorce”. I ask you: “amis du divorce”!’ See Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (eds., trans.), *The Selected Letters of Richard Wagner* (London: Dent, 1987), 910. [Italics as original]

⁷³ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner’s Diaries Vol. 2*, 576. Entry dated 16 December 1880.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ For many commentators, including Kim Su Rasmussen, Kruck, Arendt, and Chickering, the Pan-German League was one of the immediate forerunners of German National Socialism. See Kim Su Rasmussen, ‘Foucault’s Genealogy of Racism’, *Theory, Culture, Society*, 2011. <https://tcs.sagepub.com/content/28/5/34> (30 November 2015). The electronic version of this document bears no pagination.

⁷⁶ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, xiii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

collectively as the Bayreuth Circle, what Hilmes regards as ‘the occasionally bizarre cult of Wagner in Wilhelminian Germany’ may have petered out ‘in the sands of insignificance [had they not] jointly succeeded in transforming the spirit of Bayreuth into a national and nationalist “cause”’.⁷⁸

However, the glare of politics has occluded our vision. Instead, the eye should be drawn further to Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred by their particular similarities. Of immediate interest is that, despite their aggressive German nationalism none was indigenously German.⁷⁹ Secondly, as children, all three lacked consistent contact with both biological parents, either because of divorce or bereavement. Thirdly, at formative ages, each was removed from their respective domestic environments to become resident in an alien and identity-unstable Germany, where, fourthly, their respective journeys ultimately ended in the orbit of the formidable musical polymath, Richard Wagner.

For Hilmes, the cumulative effect of such upheavals upon a young mind would be a form of crisis regarding the self. Conscious, perhaps, ‘that they were not at home in a country that was in any case difficult to define’ their situation may have ‘left them all suffering from alienation complexes that found expression in an aggressive ultra-nationalism’, the intensity of which being ‘conditioned by their degree of uncertainty’.⁸⁰ The observation is entirely logical for, if Nora and O’Keefe are to be believed, the pursuit of identity invariably originates in stress and fracture.⁸¹ However, further research reveals that displacement was not the exclusive source of Cosima, Chamberlain, or Winifred’s issues. That, as will unfold within their respective chapters, lay much deeper.

Briefly, it would be incorrect to assume these three individuals had any regard for or at any time mourned the milieu from which they had been removed. On the contrary: not for them sentimentality or affectionate nostalgia for that lost. Of the three, Winifred appears to have been more indifferent than hostile towards her motherland. Indeed, throughout her life

⁷⁸ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 201.

⁷⁹ It is notable that a number of the key members of the Bayreuth Circle were not indigenously German. For example, Wagner’s biographer, Carl Glasnapp, was Latvian, and despite being born in Germany, Hans von Wolzogen, editor of the Wagner journal, *Bayreuther Blätter*, considered himself ‘rootless’ due to being orphaned in infancy. See also Hans von Wolzogen, *Lebensbilder* (Regensburg: np., 1923), 51-52; Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 255-256.

⁸⁰ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 201.

⁸¹ See Tadgh O’Keeffe, ‘Landscape and Memory : Historiography, Theory, Methodology’, in Niamh Moore and Yvonne Whelan (eds.), *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 3-18 (6-7); Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, II: Traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, III: The Symbols* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Pierre Nora (ed.), *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Memoire, I: The State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

she maintained contact with her English friends and relations and, in an attempt to instil some form of discipline in her errant daughter, Friedelind, was to send the girl to a boarding school in Yorkshire.

Orphaned at the age of two, placed in the care of St. Margaret's Orphanage, East Grinstead, Sussex, and lacking any strong familial ties, Winifred appears to have made the emotional and cultural transition from England to Germany without any conspicuously traumatic repercussions. At the age of nine, she was sent by the orphanage to Berlin for a curative holiday, there to stay with distant relatives of her late mother who then adopted her. In many ways, both Winifred and her outlook were the products of habitus. Rather than being a personal response to an extant sociological issue, her nationalism was essentially learned behaviour, the result of socially circulated ideologies mediated by various agencies, principally her foster parents and a formal, German middle class education.

By contrast, Cosima and Chamberlain harboured a profound loathing towards their respective homelands and countrymen. As their private writings indicate, it was an enmity born of childhood adversity and one that found expression in an aggressive Germanophilia: Cosima a pawn in the acrimonious relationship between her parents and the product of religious and educational regimes that bleached the individual of all sense of worth, Chamberlain a victim of parental divorce, intimidation and alienation. Arguably, then, the intensity of their German nationalism and anti-Semitism – which, in any case, were part of wider conversations – represented a psychological response to those early, determinative experiences. For Hilmes, their Germanophilia was a coping mechanism. It masked a hatred which provided Cosima and Chamberlain with a sense of supremacy and, consequently, a sense of self-worth. However, if we consider their prejudices within the terms of the Jungian Shadow, Hilmes' proposition takes on further significance, for then, as will be discussed in due course, Cosima and Chamberlain's issues appear to have been the products of ineffective or delayed individuation. Whether their issues would have found expression in some way or other irrespective of place is a moot point.

Identity

So while these three people entered the world of Wagner and Wagnerism in very different ways, their attraction to the composer was rooted in a mutual need that both differentiates and unites: identity. The term 'identity' is slippery. Like 'nationalism', its meaning changes according to context and so its future use, here, requires clarification.

For Thomas Turino, ‘identity’ involves ‘the partial and variable selection of habits and attributes that we use to represent ourselves to ourselves and to others, as well as those aspects that are perceived by others as salient’.⁸² However, the processes by which those qualities are ascertained, acquired, and rehearsed are complex and much debated for while comprehensive the term ‘identity’ is paradoxical in that it indicates both sameness and difference. Its Latin root, *idem* (‘same’) points towards ‘identical’, that is to say, the sharing of common qualities or factors, for instance, ‘black’, ‘white’, ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘British’, ‘German’ etc. Yet, conversely, the term also implies uniqueness, and points to the differences that distinguish individuals or groupings from one another.⁸³ So while Turino’s definition is effective to a point, the plasticity of the term prompts us to recall Lawler who asserts that ‘it is not possible to provide a single, overarching definition as to what [identity] is, how it developed and how it works’, since ‘there are various ways of theorising the concept, each of which develops different kinds of definitions’ according to the discipline, sphere or, indeed, moment in time in which the term is invoked.⁸⁴

In psychology, sociology, and anthropology, identity is generally defined as a person’s conception and expression of their own (self-identity) and others’ individuality or group affiliations, of which national identity and cultural identity are examples. This definition is distinct from personal identity which is concerned with the persisting entity particular to a given individual. In other words, personal identity is the individual characteristic by which the person is recognised or known. Essentially, then, ‘identity’ is a label, ‘identification’ a classifying act. Identity is relational and contextual whereas identification is processual.⁸⁵ While identity can be also read as the ‘I Am’ (with Belonging as the ‘I Want’), both readings suggest a complex about an object or image: both are states of aspiration. But with Cosima, Chamberlain and Winifred aspiration was only partially the case, and so, here, a more accurate reading of identity would be ‘Becoming’, in the sense of representing a journey; for theirs was a journey towards personal identity and individuation.

⁸² Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 102.

⁸³ According to Michel Foucault, the identification of the other is now an almost intuitive practice descending from the nineteenth century concern for the scientification and categorisation of phenomena. See Michel Foucault, Robert Hurley (trans.), *The History of Sexuality Vol.1* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1990).

⁸⁴ Lawler, *Identity*, 2.

⁸⁵ The body of scholarship on identity, its definitions, and psychological and sociological implications is immense. In addition to those titles cited here, see also, for instance, Ivana Marková, ‘Améndée or how to get rid of it: Social Representations from a Dialogical Perspective’, *Culture and Psychology* 6 (4), 2000, 419-469; Sergei Moscovici, ‘The History of and Actuality of Social Representation’, in Gerard Duveen (ed.), *Social Representations: Explorations in Social Psychology* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

At the time of their initial encounters with Wagner all three were in either the Jungian First or Second stages of life, times when either the Mother and Father archetypes are crucial in the development of the individual, the Mother in teaching the individual the components of relatedness to others; the Father, the components of operating with their specific environment and to creatively interface with it.⁸⁶ Wagner appears to have fulfilled this function. As will unfold, for Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred it was not simply a case of ‘I am a German’ or ‘I am a Wagnerian’. Important though these concerns were for them in establishing various points of contact and departure, they were, to an extent, ancillary. Rather, the crux of their journeys lay in what Wagner and Wagnerism embodied and offered. That our actors found in Germany a stable domesticity or, in Wagner, a *locus docendus*, is too simplistic an assumption. More accurately, it was in Wagner that they recognised that which had been absent in their childhood, and it was via the Wagnerian environment that they encountered a community, as opposed to a society, with which they could variously identify, realise their potential and locate those elements now thought necessary for effective psychological development and wellbeing. The manner in which these people later misrepresented Wagner (or, rather, represented him according to their respective readings of him), was indicative of their particular relationships with the composer, which, in turn, were symptomatic of their specific psychologies and needs.

Wagner’s ideas and the foundations of their misrepresentation can be attributed to an array of interrelated factors and theories all of which crowd for attention. While a major issue, Wagner’s reading of Germanness, will be discussed in the next chapter, space prohibits a comprehensive survey of Germany’s emergence as a nation state, its culture, position within Europe, and its irredentism as it does the wider concept of nationhood within nineteenth-century Europe as a whole.⁸⁷ Yet all these components intertwine with other contemporary issues: the dialectics of science and idealism, Utopianism, and the existential and metaphysical location of the artist within society are all implicated, providing a rich and intricate backdrop against which the stories of not only Richard Wagner and Wagnerism were – and still are – acted out but also the stories of Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred. In many

⁸⁶ Dr Robert L. Johnson, Tallahassee Centre for Jungian Studies. <https://jungian.info/library.cfm?idsLibrary=29> (20 June 2016). The mother and father are not necessarily the biological parents of the child but those figures corresponding to the archetypes.

⁸⁷ For detailed discussions of these issues see, for instance, Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Paul Claval, ‘Changing Conceptions of Heritage and Landscape’, in Niamh Moore and Yvonne Whelan (eds.), *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Alon Confino, *Germany as Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Carolina: University of North Carolina, 2006).

ways, they are all of a tradition presaged by the Goethean *Bildungsroman*, a convention which flows through Wagner's music dramas and the autobiographical work, *Mein Leben*, as much as it does Cosima's diaries, Chamberlain's *Lebenswege meines Denkens*, and Winifred's personal correspondence. For whether it is Wilhelm Meister, the Dutchman or Siegfried, Wotan, Parsifal, or Sachs; or be it Wagner, Cosima, Chamberlain, or Winifred, all are on their own road to self-fulfilment. And in each case the journey is played out against a backdrop of profound and unprecedented change. It is part of evolution; it is of a piece with modernity.

Chapter 1

The Parabola of Life: A Psychosocial Genealogy of the Wagnerian Aesthetic

To appreciate Richard Wagner's significance to Cosima Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Winifred Wagner, and certain strata of society, we need to examine not only the composer's aesthetic but also the considerable revisions it underwent over the course of his life and what may have brought about those shifts in his thinking.

Richard Wagner, the young radical of the Romantic operas with their themes of individuality and utopian dreams shattered by social reality, was not the same man as the middle-aged Wagner of the music dramas *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Parsifal* preoccupied with community and the inner self. While Wagner the musical iconoclast remains recognisable throughout and issues regarding the self, society, and their interrelation persist, the composer's outlook altered substantially over the intervening years, prompting him to review his ideas and philosophies. Clearly, historical events and personal circumstances would have exerted considerable influence in shaping Wagner's perspectives, but we should not discount the natural processes of maturation as being equally agentic.¹

According to Erik Erikson, 'an individual life cycle cannot be adequately understood apart from the social context in which it comes to fruition [since] both individual and society are inextricably interwoven'.² For Carl Jung, the judicious management of one's life cycle is fundamental to effective individuation and psychic well-being.³ This chapter will explore these propositions in relation to Wagner whose own processes of individuation can be said to have underscored the evolution of an aesthetic and instituted a cultural significance that was to be of considerable influence in the personal development of others. This will provide an opportunity not only to reframe Wagner but also to better understand Cosima Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Winifred Wagner whose life cycles and social contexts were inextricably linked with Wagner. Focusing on a key period in Wagner's life that correlates with those later works and drawing on events, anecdotes, and testimonies to support

¹ Here, and throughout this chapter, the term 'agentic' is used as an adjective in the sense of 'being of agency' and not in reference to social cognition theory perspectives which hold that individuals are producers as well as products of social systems, although, given the present context, that would make for an interesting and not unrelated discussion.

² Erik Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York and London: Norton, 1998), 114.

³ Carl Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1933/66).

the argument, we will consider not only how we may theorise middle age, but also how the physical and psychological changes middle age can bring plays out in Wagner's life and works, and how the processes of his own maturation informed an aesthetic predicated upon a faith in humanity.

Bryan Magee has written along similar lines, albeit anecdotally, and with exclusive reference to Schopenhauer.⁴ Here, Erikson and Jung and may be of greater service. They are rich models by which we can rationalise Wagner's later thinking and, when used in conjunction with Max Weber and Eric Hoffer, Wagner's appeal. Apart from using theoretical texts and ideas we will also ground the argument in a reading of Wagner's later music dramas, for when viewed through Eriksonian and Jungian lenses, these become as much an indication of the composer's own psychosocial development as parables for the individual and society. Preoccupied with community but written at a time when such a notion was becoming anachronistic, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Parsifal* enshrine Wagner's revised ideas about community that proved attractive to the disaffected. What follows, then, is a particularised account of the central issues discussed above, and one in which nationhood, charisma, and what Hoffer has since identified as the mass movement become intertwined and woven into the fabric of Wagnerism, a concept that came to mean many things to many people.

Nineteenth-Century German Society and the Wagnerian Objective

Central to an understanding of the Wagner phenomenon is the composer's personal response to the surrounding socio-cultural upheaval and anxiety initiated by an industrialising Western Europe. His was a time of unimagined scientific advancement and social change; a time of systemisation and discovery when rationality instrumentalised scientific objectivism conspired with industrialised modernity to generate a materially- and economically-orientated mode of thinking. Wagner's reaction was very much an inner resistance to a situation which not only challenged extant values but also triggered interrelated chains of events throughout the western world, among them the disintegration of long-established communities as large proportions of the populace, drawn by the prospect of work, emigrated to the major centres of production, initiating in turn the demise of centuries-old traditions, crafts, and their auxiliary occupations.

⁴ Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 2001).

Within this maelstrom, Germany, a land which until 1871 had comprised twenty-five independent states, dukedoms, and principalities, many newly emergent from French occupation, lacked a definable identity. Although industrialising itself, the country was not a major player on the economic world stage. It lacked not only the technological and commercial expertise of its imperialist neighbours France and Great Britain, but also the latter's religious, political, and linguistic homogeneity. Although this had been achieved at the expense of the Irish, Scots, and Welsh whose minority languages, cultural traditions and variant memories of the past were suppressed by the state in favour of a unified national history, language, and culture,⁵ the process nevertheless produced a strengthened whole, a sense of civic community which brought significant political and economic benefits,⁶ abetted in no small way by Britain's maritime supremacy which had opened up the global market.

These factors could not have gone unremarked by the German intellectual and ruling elites. In a region lacking cultural homogeneity and political organisation nationalism consequently took on added meaning and provided an ideology to create and augment state power.⁷ German nationalism may also have masked a collective inferiority complex, something intensified in an increasingly materialist (in every sense of the word) society by the lack of a definable identity.⁸ While Wagner argued that commodification and pecuniary gain were decidedly alien to the German spirit and sense of values, he nevertheless recognised the importance of the national project and sought a suitably German, and artistic, remedy. His rhetoric and musical produce therefore represented very much a rejoinder to the current state of affairs, and a rejoinder which became, with age and experience, a warning against, not an endorsement of, politics.

The materially-minded condition spawned many groups, each pursuing, according to their esoteric convictions, a something they believed lacking in society. Vegetarianism, orientalism, antivivisectionism, and theosophy – to name but a few – were all symptomatic of the moment and, by mid-century, Wagner the idealistic polymath had become a sufficiently significant cultural figure to command validation in certain quarters despite his decided unpopularity in others.

⁵ Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 17.

⁶ One of the reasons why 'The Young Pretender' Charles Stewart failed to attract universal support within eighteenth-century Scotland was because, now as part of Great Britain, major Scottish centres of production such as Glasgow were enjoying unimagined prosperity. Charles Stewart appealed to those, such as the disaffected, who referenced an idealised past rather than a modernistic future.

⁷ Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, 17.

⁸ Such could be said of Germany's situation in the period between the two world wars.

A prolific if impetuous writer, Wagner had always been interested in a wide range of topics other than music, qualifying him to be described as an intellectual in the sense he was conversant in many matters far beyond the requirements of his own work.⁹ For many, then, Wagner stood as a source of learning. Despite his disillusionment with humanity, he was, mostly, sanguine about the future and his works affirm a faith in humanity's redemption through art, and specifically through his art. Wagner genuinely believed he held the key to the future and promoted this belief – and himself – accordingly. It was to Wagner and the alternative community and moral regeneration he offered that many people out of sympathy with their times, and perhaps themselves, gravitated.

Concerned for the maintenance of community, Wagner's ideology nevertheless represents something more than a utopian vision: it provides an insight into the composer's own psychology, specifically the natural processes associated with effective individuation. Despite an unerring belief in his creed and the transformative power of his art, the aging Wagner was not the same man as his younger self. As many of his writings reveal, the revolutionary zeal of Wagner the young Dresden *Kapellmeister* underwent considerable revision as the century and his lifecycle unfolded.¹⁰ His perspectives altered. Although remaining committed to the Romantically-inspired notion of humanity's salvation, foreshadowing Jung and Erikson by a considerable number of years, Wagner was to discover that the concern for the recovery and development of other people is intrinsic to one's own psychological well-being.

David Trippett has written about the parallelism of Wagner's Zurich essays enshrining his idealist, Feuerbach-inspired ideas of acoustical intuitiveness and sensory perception and the emergent natural sciences.¹¹ Although by 1849 Wagner had 'rejected the inference [...] that "life itself could be dependent upon scientific speculation"',¹² and had 'placed (sensible) art above (theoretical) science',¹³ the composer's work nevertheless became unintentionally contiguous with that of nascent scientific orthodoxy and represents an epistemological synthesis, a paralleling of artistic idealism and scientific materialism at a time

⁹ Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 23.

¹⁰ Wagner's essay of 1865, *Was ist deutsch?*, underwent considerable revision before its eventual publication in 1878; similarly, *Deutsche Kunst und Politik* of 1867. With age, Wagner came to regard his early theoretical prose works with increasing amusement and mocked himself for a density of style he had once thought consistent with contemporary academic practice. Although Wagner's treatises have been widely criticised for their abstruseness and confusion of argument they should more accurately be regarded as the workings of a creative mind in the process of development.

¹¹ David Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies: Aesthetics and Materialism in German Musical Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 346.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 371.

when both spheres often overflowed their respective boundaries.¹⁴ When, by mid-century, the notion of *Sinnlichkeit* had become ‘both arbiter and actor in the decline (but survival) of idealism and the rise of the natural sciences’, and the ‘possibility that a physiological explanation for how we perceive emotion’ became actual, a discursive space hitherto occupied by the Wagnerian notion of the ‘intuitive response’ was opened.¹⁵ With Wagner’s aesthetic hypotheses and musical output mirroring concurrent philological and physiological theory, specifically within the realms of acoustical physics and linguistics,¹⁶ Wagner’s was the art-work of the future in more ways than one.

Yet for Wagner and many of his contemporaries the future remained a source of anxiety. According to Hoffer, a fear of the future is a psychological condition. Essentially, Hoffer is talking about *metathesiophobia*, a fear of change, and we will return to his proposition in due course, for if we synthesise Trippett’s observations with Bryan Magee’s philosophical musings on Wagner and his late music-dramas a new proposition presents itself. Now, Wagner’s mysticism and notorious opacity of literary expression become symptomatic of a deeper unease. Although the composer wrote his treatises in a style he thought consonant with contemporary academic practice,¹⁷ and, as befits an artist, nurtured a suitably esoteric aura, here it can be said that Wagner’s abstruseness becomes more than a stylistic issue or an aesthetic conceit. Instead, it represents concealment and protection in the face of social change and scientism. Consciously or otherwise, Wagner’s response denotes an aging man’s concern for continuing relevance and value in a mutable world and, as we shall see, is one of many age-related issues underpinning Wagner’s later thinking, the sum of which shaped an

¹⁴ Trippett, *Wagner’s Melodies*, 9. For Trippett, slippage occurred when Feurbachean and Goethean theory, which had already articulated the concepts of *Sinnlichkeit* (sensory experience or of a sensual nature), and *Klangfarbe* (tone-colour, timbre, the colour of sound), within an idealist context, inspired scientific rationalisation, firing, in turn, ‘the imagination of researchers as diverse as Rudolf Hermann Loetze and Gustav Fechner’. Rudolf Hermann Loetze (1817-1881): German philosopher and logician active within the period of transition between the idealistic legacies of Kant and Hegel and the materialism of new scientific enquiry and the interpretation of reality. Premise: if the physical world is governed by mechanical laws, then developments, relationships in the universe could be explained as the functioning of a world mind. Gustav Fechner (1801-1887): Philosopher, physicist and experimental psychologist; founder of psychophysics. Fechner demonstrated the non-linear relationship between psychological sensation and the physical intensity of a stimulus.

¹⁵ Today, these areas of enquiry are addressed by what we now call neurophysiology.

¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Nattiez has suggested the opening minutes of *Das Rheingold* not only depict the flowing waters of the Rhine but also the origins of language, Woglinde’s initial vowel sounds being analogous with contemporary linguistic theory that the first vocal communications made by human beings were unconsonanted. See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 60. This study asserts as much can be said about the encounter between the eponymous hero and the Woodbird in Act Two of *Siegfried*. Here, Wagner synthesises scientific theory, the nature imagery of the Romantic and its notions of the primordial with the idealist hypotheses in the tradition of Wackenroder, Feuerbach, Grimm, Herder and Mundt, whose ideology of nationhood, based upon a linguistic unity, became central to the German national project. See Trippett, *Wagner’s Melodies*, 5.

¹⁷ Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 94-96.

aesthetic that was to hold particular significance for many people, among them Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred.

‘Progress’ was a notion born of the eighteenth century. Ancient cultural traditions were woven into the fabric of history, set down in times when people could expect to live, at best, to thirty years of age and when forty was considered positively venerable. People lived in constant spiritual readiness for the afterlife and God was an ever-present figure. While it can be debated, but not proven, that the lifecycle of ancient or medieval man was simply not long enough for an individual to experience as many age- or sociologically-related alterations as, say, their Industrial counterpart of greater longevity, or that nature compresses these alterations according to the epoch-specificity of a lifecycle’s duration, the nineteenth-century psyche nevertheless experienced a time in which God had been all but assassinated.¹⁸

Hitherto, whatever the event, calamitous or otherwise, God had been in His Heaven, presiding over all. Now in an increasingly scientific and materially-minded society, His authority was contested. Old certainties were being challenged, values revised, and a new god, Wealth, venerated. It was not only the geo-political, socio-cultural and scientific landscapes that were being redrawn: so, too, was the understanding of the human mind. Although psychology, as the term is now understood, was then in its infancy the spirituality that pre-occupied Wagner, and which Jung subsequently considered so important for psychic well-being, was eroding. Not for nothing did Søren Kierkegaard come to the conclusion that the greatest despair is not knowing who you are.¹⁹

Wagner essays these concerns, and more, in his commentaries on Germanness, drawing in times of socio-cultural instability inspiration from times past, identifying qualities and creating symbols around which people could gather. Indeed, Wagner became such a symbol himself when, on 22 May 1872, his fifty-ninth birthday and one year after the establishment of the German Empire, the foundation stone of his Festival Theatre at Bayreuth was laid, a congratulatory telegram from his patron, Ludwig II of Bavaria, interred beside it. However, unlike that foundation stone Wagner’s thoughts on Germanness were not so immovable. Rather, he revisited them at various stages in his life that seem to correspond with personal, physical, and psychological change; and while theorists such as Jung, Erikson, and Valliant attend to age-related changes with the benefit of certain scientific orthodoxies, Wagner works them out for himself within his creativity.

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, R.J. Hollingdale (trans.), *Beyond Good and Evil* (London: Penguin, 2003).

¹⁹ See Søren Kierkegaard, Alastair Hannay (trans.), *The Sickness unto Death* (London: Penguin, 2008).

Wagnerian Germanness: Synergy and Rupture

Inevitably framed by the Herderian humanist tradition, which itself was influenced by Tacitus' *Germania* (c.98 AD), Conrad Celtis' *Germania illustrata* of 1491, and Heinrich Bebel's *Proverbia Germanica* of 1508, and where, in the Göttingen scholarly tradition, the concept of 'nationalism' was 'one of culture, not of political action',²⁰ Wagner's reading of 'Germanness' corresponds equally to the pre-Classical, Herodotian, concept of constitutional ethnicity. This was a system in which groupings were understood to have been contingent and where a public consisted of peoples irrespective of biological or geographical origin. Moreover, Wagnerian Germanness also parallels the nascent physiological, philological and ethnographic conversations with which it is roughly coeval, synthesising elements of Feuerbach, Hegel, Stirner, Bauer, Nietzsche, Marx, Heidecker, and Schopenhauer.²¹

However, if O'Keefe is to be believed and the pursuit of identity is ignited by moments of social stress and fracture,²² then, more accurately, Wagner's reading of Germanness originates in the rupture within German society. While extending his theories regarding the function of art, Wagner's idea of Germanness represents a multi-layered rejoinder to the social upheaval and spiritual barrenness then convulsing industrialising Europe, and specifically the lands we now call Germany. In *Was ist deutsch?* (*What is German?*), and *Deutsche Kunst und Politik* (*German Art and Politics*),²³ Wagner essays current racial, philological, and ethical issues and defines endangered qualities he thought to be exclusively German.

²⁰ Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, 22-23. According to Geary, Herder was even more enthusiastic for the Slavic world, urging it to replace the declining Latin-Germanic culture with its own. This would suggest a sense of decay existed in Germany before Wagner and Gobineau.

²¹ For example, Ludwig Feuerbach, Manfred Vogel (trans.), *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986); Ludwig Feuerbach, George Eliot (trans.), *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, T.M Knox (trans.), *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, A.V. Miller (trans.), *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Max Stirner, David Leopold (ed.), *The Ego and its Own* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Arthur Schopenhauer, Richard Aquila and David Carus (trans.), *The World as Will and Representation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). Barry Millington considers Wagner's self-confessed indebtedness to Schopenhauer to be overstated, although the redemptive aspects of Wagner's reading of Germanness are typical.

²² Tadgh O'Keefe, 'Landscape and Memory: Historiography, Theory, Methodology', in Niamh Moore and Yvonne Whelan (eds.), *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 3-18 (6-7).

²³ Richard Wagner, *Was ist deutsch?* (1865, revised and published 1878); *Deutsche Kunst und Politik* (1867). For both essays see Charles Osborne (ed., trans.), *Richard Wagner Stories and Essays* (London: Peter Owen, 1973). Between 14 and 27 September 1865 Wagner noted down his thoughts on Germanness in his journal, extracts from which were copied out by Cosima and presented to Wagner's patron, King Ludwig II. Excerpts also appeared in the 1878 editions of *Bayreuther Blätter* under the title *Was ist deutsch?* The first complete text of the essay was edited and published by Otto Strobel as *König Ludwig II und Richard Wagner: Briefwechsel*, 5 Vols. (Karlsruhe: np., 1936-1939).

Yet Wagner despairs for Germany and the German people. In *Was ist deutsch?*, he berates the German disposition for its complacency and ‘the national propensity to phlegmatic sloth’,²⁴ believing that ‘no other great racial culture has fallen into the plight of building for itself a fanciful renown as wholeheartedly as have the Germans’.²⁵ Although ruthlessly critical of the human animal and its capacity for inhumanity, Wagner nevertheless trusts in its deliverance. And so, for him, Germanness does not sit exclusively within the realm of nineteenth-century scholarship or imaginative heritage, or entirely within the national project, but, rather, in the idea of community.

Echoing its Hellenic model, the Wagnerian aesthetic maintained that art, the people, and the nation were inextricable; one defined the other. As Wagner’s contemporary Edward Dannreuther explains, less verbosely than the composer himself:

The inner and outer life of the nation was shadowed forth in the great union of all the arts upon the tragic stage, and where again the exquisite sense of beauty and proportion, for high and noble thought and action, and for perfect expression of these, seems to have reacted upon both the form and the spirit of the national and individual existence.²⁶

Wagner connects the eventual decay of Greek drama with the fragmentation of art into its distinct spheres (rhetoric, sculpture, painting, etc.), the gradual decline of the Greek states and the attendant diminution of political liberty.²⁷ Unlike the majority of nineteenth-century art which, in both Dannreuther and Wagner’s opinion, was commercially driven and had little or no connection with, or influence upon, national life as such,²⁸ its Hellenic counterpart had an unequivocal impact upon society. Consequently, as Wagner maintained, art drew people into communities; it represented the essence of the people and caused that essence to materialise. Therefore the strength of a nation – and thus of a people – lay, as once it had, in synergy, in political and artistic cohesion. Since the Germanic states were currently anything but cohesive, identity and the national project assumed particular significance.

As defined by Herder, the term ‘nationalism’ denoted ‘the spirit of the people’ (*der Volksgeist*) and, as in other activities, formed the fundamental, creative, and stimulating

²⁴ Richard Wagner, ‘What is German’, in Charles Osborne (ed.), *Richard Wagner Stories and Essays*, 42.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁶ Edward Dannreuther, *Richard Wagner: His Tendencies and Theories* (London: Augener & Co., 1873/Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Library, 1991), 14. The German-born pianist, writer, and champion of Richard Wagner, Edward Dannreuther (1844-1905), became a resident of England in 1863, founded the London Wagner Society in 1872, and in 1895 became professor of piano at the Royal College of Music, a post he led until his death. Like Magee, Dannreuther believed that the verbosity of Wagner’s prose rendered it problematic. Unlike Magee, Dannreuther attributes this to the nature of German grammar, the complexity of which renders complicated concepts more so, particularly in English translation.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

element in art. For example, Dahlhaus notes it was the spirit of the people of Norway that demanded musical expression in and through Edvard Grieg, and not Grieg himself, as an individual rather than as the representative of his nation, who first created what is thought to be quintessentially Norwegian in music.²⁹ Such, it can be said, was the case with Germany, the German people, and their reading of Richard Wagner. While Wagner believed his art would promote values thought to be uniquely German, and while he undeniably ‘exerted a greater extra-musical influence than any other composer in history’,³⁰ it is equally true that the image of Wagner as ‘the prophet of aggressive Teutonicism’,³¹ and the phantasmagoric ‘idol of nationalist culture’ were applied mostly posthumously by others.³²

Therefore, by the dawn of the twentieth century the composer’s ideas had undergone considerable recalibration. Now in tune with the new spirit of the emergent nation, Wagnerism had become an increasingly politicised concept, fortified by treatises such as August Meitzen’s *Siedlung und Agrarwesen der West-germanen und Ost-germanen, der keltern, Römer, Finnen und Slaven* of 1895, which proposed that geographical origin defined a people. Hence, ‘landscape and land organisation became markers of the ethnic or national genius of human groups’,³³ and these imagined communities ‘called into being by the creative efforts of nineteenth-century intellectuals and politicians [...] transformed earlier, romantic, nationalist traditions into political programs’.³⁴

But Wagner’s anterior reading of ‘Germanness’ is more about an idea than a geographical area. Rather than a specific nationalist ideology it denotes affinity in the sense of facilitating the coalescence of people of different cultures within a non-geographical space of interaction – in other words Wagnerism – even if the architect of that space anticipated its values, which included integrity, would necessarily be those he considered essentially Germanic.

By foregrounding connectivity, Wagnerian Germanness may be said to represent a naïve form of multiculturalism (however problematic that notion may be to the twenty-first

²⁹ Carl Dahlhaus, Mary Whittall (trans.), *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies on the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 81-82.

³⁰ Carl Dahlhaus, J. Bradford Robinson (trans.), *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 285.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 287.

³² *Ibid.*, 263.

³³ Paul Claval, ‘Changing Conceptions of Heritage and Landscape’, in Niamh Moore and Yvonne Whelan (eds.), *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity*, 85-93 (89).

³⁴ Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, 16.

century mind),³⁵ in the sense that multiculturalism is ‘based on an analysis of human evolution which has ceased to be centred on individuals and nations, but is focused on cultural communities’.³⁶ Pre-echoing current thinking, Wagner maintained that multiple, and multicultural, networks can be ‘drawn together, held together, created and re-created through music’.³⁷ It is a premise which chimes with modern theoreticians, such as Lipsitz and Appadurai, who challenge the very concept of nationhood, believing the concept of ‘nation’ or ‘nationhood’ in the twenty-first century may be an obsolete formant of identity. Today, due to the multicultural fluidity activated by migration, revised ethnographic demographics and, crucially, technological advancement, community or communities become increasingly created by, or identified as belonging to, one or more of a series of global flows. These flows, termed thematically by Lipsitz as ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples, ideoscaples (the suffix ‘scapes’ being ‘spheres of democratic cultural interaction’),³⁸ represent phenomenal conduits ‘through which we can all inhabit many places at once’.³⁹ Considering its Herderian and Tacitean pedigree, such can be said of the Wagnerian reading of Germanness and, indeed, Wagnerism. Crucially, both heralded rebirth and offered a faith in the future.

According to Hoffer, ‘fear of the future causes us to lean and cling to the present, while faith in the future renders us receptive to change’.⁴⁰ During a time of uncertainty the Wagnerian aesthetic provided bolstering assurance, and in so doing satisfied a profound psychological and spiritual need; for, according to Jung, a lack of spirituality has a profound psychological effect upon the human psyche irrespective of how culturally or scientifically developed an individual or society may consider itself to be.

³⁵Multiculturalism is a wide and many-faceted concept embracing ideas such as interculturalism and transculturalism. The term ‘multiculturalism’ is used here due to its general acceptance and comprehensibility.

³⁶ Claval, ‘Changing Conceptions of Heritage and Landscape’, 87.

³⁷Andrew Blake, *The Land without Music: Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 176. See also Thomas Hodgson and David Clarke, *South Asian Musics, Multiculturalism and Communities: A Review of Literature and Key Concepts*, 4. <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/icmus/scholarship/musicsofsouthasia/> (27 November 2017).

³⁸ Ostensibly, these non-corporeal, non-geographically dependent states of belonging are constellated via socio-technological rather than specific historio-political or ethnographic criteria. Nevertheless, they are inevitably bound by the historical rubric since nationally-centric ideo-domination may still be achieved within, for instance, a finance-scape by the dominant national economy within it, as exemplified at the time of writing by the dilemma facing the Euro currency where the robust Franco-German alliance has determined and dominated Eurozone policy to the exclusion of other member, but less economically secure or affluent, states.

³⁹ See George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (New York: Verso, 1994), 5. See also Ajun Appadurai, ‘Disjuncture in the Global Cultural Economy’, in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press, 1996), 27-47.

⁴⁰ Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1951), 22.

The psyche, Jung maintains, is not to be found entirely within us but, rather, outside, that is to say externally, in society and its corresponding belief systems.⁴¹ If those external systems, be they ritual or religion, adequately express all the needs of the soul then, for Jung, the psyche is outside and, strictly speaking, no spiritual problem will exist.⁴² While man lives as a group (or herd as Jung describes it), man has no individual spiritual needs and does not require any, save for a belief in the immortality of the soul. As long as whatever external system delivers a true expression of life, the psyche will be satisfied and psychology need be nothing but a technical adjunct to healthy living.⁴³ But, as soon as humankind outgrows whatever local form of religion it was born into, in other words as soon as that religion can no longer satisfy or embrace life in all its fullness, then the psyche ‘becomes something in its own right which cannot be dealt with by the measures of the church alone’.⁴⁴ It is for this reason, Jung maintains, that we have a psychology predicated on experience, not articles of faith or the hypotheses of a philosophical system; and the fact we have such a psychology is, for him, symptomatic of a profound convulsion of spiritual life. This disruption of an epoch’s spiritual life is of the same pattern as radical change in the individual. As long as psychic energy finds its application in ‘adequate and well-regulated ways, we are disturbed by nothing from within. No uncertainty or doubts besets us, and we *cannot* be divided against ourselves.’⁴⁵ Yet as soon as one or two channels of psychic activity become blocked, then like a stream that is dammed, ‘the current flows backward to its source; the inner man wants something which the visible man does not want, and we are at war with ourselves’.⁴⁶

For Jung, each culture has the potential to produce a destructive opposite, yet he maintains that it is only our present culture that has been forced to acknowledge the existence of psychic undercurrents. Previously, there had been in place a metaphysical system of some sort through which psychic life found expression, but ‘now the modern man has lost all the metaphysical certainties of his medieval brother, and set up in their place the ideals of a material security’.⁴⁷ Foreshadowing Jung, and, in many ways, Habermas and Claval who are occupied with the collapse of the entire ideological basis of modernity,⁴⁸ Wagner predicted a

⁴¹ Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 231.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 232. While Jung regularly used the term ‘soul’ in a theological context, he also employed the word to articulate a number of psychological concepts of which anima and animus are partial manifestations.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* [Italics as original]

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁴⁸ See Jürgen Habermas and Seyal Nen Habib, ‘Modernity versus Postmodernity’, *New German Critique*, No. 22 (Winter 1981), 3-14 (9); Claval, ‘Changing Conceptions of Heritage and Landscape’, 87.

materialistic outlook would be no protection as we begin to appreciate that each step in material progress increases the threat of physical and spiritual catastrophe. As Jung proposes, science has destroyed the refuge of the inner life and what had been a haven has become a place of terror.⁴⁹

And so, to a nineteenth-century society in a state of unprecedented flux the concept of community became ever more a central concern. Yet, although the allure of large centres of production and the prospect of higher earnings undermined ancient communities and family ties as a whole, for Hoffer the ‘disruption of a family, whatever its causes, fosters automatically a collective spirit’.⁵⁰ ‘By weakening the family [for which one can read community] these factors contributed somewhat to the growth of the collective spirit in modern times.’⁵¹ In other words, the more a society fragments, the greater will be its inclination to gravitate to that which offers belonging. Here we discover one of the attractions of Wagner, Wagnerism, and, later, Nazism.

The cultural and socio-political circumstances which engendered many of Wagner’s ideas have been extensively rehearsed.⁵² But if we extend Jung and Erikson, and incorporate Magee, we can begin to appreciate the extent to which Wagner’s thinking may also have been the product of less visible forces, namely certain natural physical and psychological conditions concomitant with the aging process. With post-Holocaust understanding of Wagnerian Germanness and Wagnerism now firmly rooted in the detritus of dystopian political agenda, one should consider the proposition that it was the composer’s altering physical and psychological state that was central to the formation of his later aesthetic. It is a proposal that would certainly help rationalise the many inconsistencies and revisions which can be found in his prose works, and is one demonstrated by a series of events and anecdotes, as follows.

The Aging Wagner and Readjustment of his Ideas

In 1872, afflicted by physical and psychosomatic illnesses, and a disillusionment with humanity that can be read as a psychological response to the aforementioned changing socio-cultural landscape, Wagner revisited his essays, *Was ist deutsch?*, and *Deutsche Kunst und*

⁴⁹ Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 235-236.

⁵⁰ Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 51.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See, for instance, the aforementioned Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Paul Claval, ‘Changing Conceptions of Heritage and Landscape’, in Niamh Moore and Yvonne Whelan (eds.), *Heritage, Memory, and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

Politik, and concluded that, ultimately, Germanness was ‘not so much a question of national identity: more a Germany of the mind’.⁵³ As he explained to Nietzsche,

I have been thinking more and more about ‘what is German’, and, on the basis of a number of more recent studies, have succumbed to a curious scepticism which leaves me thinking ‘Germanness’ as a purely metaphysical concept; but as such, it is of immense interest to me, and certainly something that is unique in the history of the world.⁵⁴

Essentially, the Wagnerian notion of Germanness originates in faith: faith in the fraternalism of the human spirit, the unifying conductive agency of music between the physical and metaphysical worlds, and the future. As such, it echoes Feuerbach in its cathartic mission, identified by Millington as the ‘transformation of human values’.⁵⁵ Wagnerian Germanness emerges from the confluence of, and the dialectical tension between, the aesthetic and the scientific, and between the ethical and the material. It metabolises parallel theological and philosophical thought, synthesising Christian, Buddhist, and Kantian-Schopenhauerian ideas in the expression of oneness, and in doing so situates music as being capable of articulating noumenal reality. While this can be said to represent the composer’s response to the nature of the surrounding society and to the emergence of materialist epistemologies,⁵⁶ it can also be attributed to the current stage in Wagner’s psychological development.

While *Was ist deutsch?* and the efflorescence of scientific enquiry are roughly contemporaneous, it should also be noted that the essay is equally coincidental with the onset of Wagner’s middle age; moreover, that its first draft and the subsequent revisions all span the composition of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, a work which, as Bryan Magee has proposed, mirrors the aging composer’s awareness of his own mortality.⁵⁷ But aside from the generality of physical aging, at the time of writing both works Wagner was entering a transitional stage in the psychological life cycle, as revealed by series of events and anecdotes.

In her biography of Cosima Wagner, Alice Hunt Sokoloff discusses the complexity of Wagner’s personality.⁵⁸ Besides Wagner’s compulsion to assert his ideology and artistry, Sokoloff draws particular attention to the composer’s many demonstrations of virility and

⁵³ Barry Millington, *Richard Wagner: The Sorcerer of Bayreuth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012), 187.

⁵⁴ Richard Wagner. Letter to Friedrich Nietzsche dated 23 October, 1872. See Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (eds., trans.), *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner* (London: Dent, 1987), 812.

⁵⁵ Millington, *Richard Wagner: The Sorcerer of Bayreuth*, 101.

⁵⁶ Trippett, *Wagner’s Melodies*, 5.

⁵⁷ Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 251-253.

⁵⁸ Alice Hunt Sokoloff, *Cosima Wagner: A Biography* (London: Macdonald, 1970).

masculinity, especially when in the company of others. Wagner's lifelong fascination with women is well documented: both his first wife, Minna Planer and, later, Cosima learned to endure if not accept their husband's extra-marital affairs. The tone of his correspondence with two such paramours, Mathilde Wesendonck and Judith Gautier, suggests these liaisons were more the fancies of a Romantic artist.⁵⁹ Rather than being sexual in the conventional sense, it would appear that, regardless of the turmoil they created in the respective marriages, Wagner regarded these relationships primarily as a means of inspiring creativity, and his later infatuation with the British soprano Carrie Pringle seems to have been nothing more than folly – a 'sin of old age' as it were – despite its supposed consequences.⁶⁰

But Wagner's machismo becomes noticeably darker when in the presence of males, and in particular that of the young philologist, philosopher, and aspiring composer, Friedrich Nietzsche, who, for some years between 1868 and the mid-1870s when their friendship soured, visited the Wagner's some twenty-two times and was their frequent guest at Tribschen.⁶¹ Intellectual compatibility notwithstanding, the dynamic between the two men is interesting. Wagner's conspicuous exhibitions of virility (which included such spontaneous athletic activity as scaling Tribschen's outer wall) are notable when one considers that at the time of Nietzsche's first visit Wagner was fifty-six years old, Cosima thirty-one, and Nietzsche twenty-five. With Nietzsche, Wagner's often brutal teasing of his friends surpassed its usual vulgarity and focused upon the philosopher's supposed celibacy and proclivity for

⁵⁹ Mathilde Wesendonck, wife of the Swiss financier and patron of Wagner, Otto Wesendonck. At one point Wagner lodged with the Wesendoncks, regarded Mathilde as his creative muse and set five of her poems to music. Known as the *Wesendonck Lieder*, the third and fifth of the set, *Im Triebhaus*, (*In the Greenhouse*) and *Träume* (*Dreams*) were musical sketches for *Tristan und Isolde*. Judith Gautier, writer, daughter of the French poet, Théophile Gautier, was a frequent guest of the Wagners at Tribschen and Wahnfried.

⁶⁰ For discussions on Carrie Pringle and her relationship with Wagner see David Cormack, 'English Flower Maidens (and other transplants) at Bayreuth', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 150. No.1909 (Winter 2009), 95-102; John W. Barker, *Wagner and Venice* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2008/12), 276-278; Oliver Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner: The Lady of Bayreuth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 151-3; Jonathan Carr, *The Wagner Clan* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 48. For a diagnosis of Wagner's death by his physician, Dr Friedrich Keppler, see Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (eds.), Geoffrey Skelton (trans.), *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 2* (London: Collins, 1978), 1013-1014. 'Sin of old age': reference to *Péché de vieillesse* (*Sins of Old Age*), a collection of 150 vocal and piano pieces by an elderly Gioachino Rossini who referred to his *Petite messe solennelle* of 1863 as his final 'sin of old age'.

⁶¹ For the complete correspondence between Nietzsche and Wagner see Elizabeth Foerster-Nietzsche (ed.), Caroline V. Kerr (trans.), *The Nietzsche-Wagner Correspondence* (London: Duckworth, 1922). Also available at https://www.archive.org/stream/nietzschewagnerc00nietziala/nietzschewagnerc00_djw.txt (11 August 2017). Elizabeth Foerster-Nietzsche was the philosopher's sister. In the introduction to her edition of the correspondence between her brother and Wagner she not only offers a frank assessment of each man's character but also the reasons for their friendship and eventual animosity. Apparent is Wagner's determined underappreciation of Nietzsche's talents despite knowing otherwise, an attitude suggesting jealousy or resentment which Foerster-Nietzsche attributes to Wagner's dislike of rivals.

masturbation.⁶² It is therefore possible the composer was conscious of their respective ages and regarded the younger man as a threat, sexually if not artistically. Certainly, Nietzsche was a house guest on the famous Christmas Day morning in 1870 when Wagner serenaded Cosima with his birthday gift, the *Siegfried Idyll*, an event which Sokoloff views as much a carefully aimed declaration of sexual and artistic supremacy as an expression of affection for his wife,⁶³ a subliminal social statement, as it were, by which Wagner may have assuaged certain insecurities in himself.

Writing of Wagner's middle age in a Schopenhauerian context, and using Hans Sachs to illustrate his points, Magee suggests that *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (the work which immediately pre-dates the *Siegfried Idyll*), symbolises the composer's journey inwards in that, following many years of hardship, Wagner recognises and eventually rejects the world of *Wahn*, in other words the world of illusions. Doing so, Magee also draws attention to the many meanings the term *Wahn* possesses, and to how Sachs corresponds to them, particularly as regards the suppression of the Schopenhauerian will, that is to say the instinctive forces that drive us, as symbolised by Sachs' renunciation of Eva and the pivotal role he plays in the union of her and Walther von Stolzing.⁶⁴ We can flip Magee's idea by reading Sachs' actions as denoting Wagner's acknowledgment of his advancing years and general physical decline; moreover, that in surrendering Eva to Walther, Sachs reveals Wagner's possible unease about the presence of younger men such as Nietzsche within the domestic environment.

Conversely, Sachs' actions can be seen as altruistic, as representing a selfless concern for the welfare of others. Certainly, Jung and Erikson would recognise his attitude as being wholly consistent with the processes of maturation. With this in mind, and given the

⁶² In 1877 Nietzsche sought medical advice about his increasing blindness, a condition then thought to be caused by masturbation. Wagner heard of the consultation and, without Nietzsche's knowledge, contacted his friend's doctor to advise he persuade Nietzsche to abstain from masturbation. Offended, Nietzsche declared himself betrayed and Wagner's interference compounded an already deteriorating relationship. It was long supposed that Nietzsche's blindness was due to syphilis but recent research has revealed that he may have been suffering from frontotemporal dementia or a meningioma. See Leonard Sax, 'What was the Cause of Nietzsche's Dementia', *Journal of Medical Biography*, Volume 11 February 2003, 47-54.

⁶³ Sokoloff, *Cosima Wagner*, 208-235.

⁶⁴ See Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 251-252. Magee notes that *Wahn* is a difficult word to translate into English since it encompasses many concepts. Closest, Magee believes, is 'human folly', but *Wahn* can also mean madness, delusion, and illusion. In Buddhist terms, *Wahn* can be read as being samsara, the repetitious cycle of life and the intermediate state that arises from a mistaken concept of reality, self, and experience. When discussing the difficulty of translating *Wahn* into English, Magee notes *Wahn* is very much a 'Schopenhauerian word', its plasticity of meaning allowing the philosopher to put it to many uses. For Schopenhauer, *Maya*, the Hindu's 'veil of illusion', characterises the noumenal as against the phenomenal world and so he uses *Wahn* as denoting the ephemeral world of illusions, dreams, and shadows. Then again, there is what Magee describes as the 'crazy world of human beings, with their savage and ridiculous follies'. This is *Wahn* in another sense, and so, in the *Wahn* Monologue, Sachs embodies Schopenhauerian man expressing a Schopenhauerian view of humanity at large by the many meanings *Wahn* possesses.

proximity of the *Siegfried Idyll* to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, it can be suggested, here, that the birth in 1869 of Wagner's son, Siegfried, not only provided the composer with a much needed heir and the inspiration to resume work on the *Ring*, set aside for some twelve years, but also triggered within the composer a series of responses which Jung and Erikson would regard as necessary for effective psychosocial development. In other words, Wagner had passed through a problematic phase of development concomitant with middle age in which he commenced a journey inwards and, with the birth of a son and heir progressed to an equally significant stage in life in which, in the interests of effective psychic wellbeing, inner contentment and self-actualisation are achieved by the nurturing of others.⁶⁵ It is a condition Wagner also explored in his final music-drama, *Parsifal*, where, by extension, Wagner and Wagnerism begin to correspond to other theoretical models. This proposition will be discussed in greater detail below, but to appreciate this progression and how the composer's revised, aesthetic reading of Germanness, and his cultural significance which became so agentic in the personal development of others can be said to be as much the products of his own individuation as any political ideology, it will be useful to begin by considering further Jung's prescription for effective maturation and Magee's thoughts on the composer.

Wagner's Aesthetic and Reading of Germanness as Products of Middle Age

According to Jung, men and women entering middle age experience not only physical but also psychological adjustment. As he says:

We see that in this phase of life – between thirty-five and forty – a significant change in the human psyche is in preparation. At first it is not a conscious or striking change; it is rather a matter of indirect signs of a change which seems to take its rise from the unconscious. Often it is something like a slow change in a person's character; in another case certain traits may come to light which had disappeared in childhood; or again, inclinations and interests begin to weaken and others arise to take their places. It also frequently happens that the convictions and principles which have hitherto been accepted – especially the moral principles – commence to harden and to grow increasingly rigid until, somewhere towards the age of fifty, a period of intolerance and fanaticism is reached. It is then as if the existence of these principles were endangered, and it were therefore necessary to emphasise them all the more.⁶⁶

Such can be said of Wagner. Like others of similar disposition, Wagner formulated a set of social and political attitudes which, although they endured, became evermore complex

⁶⁵ Wagner recorded his emotional response to his son's birth in Cosima's diary. See Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (eds.), Geoffrey Skelton (trans.), *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol.1* (London: Collins, 1978), 103-104. Entry dated 6 June 1869.

⁶⁶ Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 120.

over time.⁶⁷ For Magee, this is a familiar pattern, particularly among intellectuals who so often set out in early life believing they can change the world for the better and that it is within the capacity of every human being to do so should they possess the necessary resolve.⁶⁸ Yet, Magee continues, people who think along these lines in early life generally become disillusioned in middle age, unless, as he puts it, they are foolish.⁶⁹ It is not that they change their values but that experience of life causes them to reconsider and alter their perspectives and assessment of the facts. In doing so, they discover that the world is not what they imagined, and nor are human beings. Instead, these individuals come to appreciate that in everyone there exists equal measures of good and bad and that, ultimately, all are intent upon one thing in life and that is sheer survival. The idealist learns that the nature of people is unvarying and that no one can be seriously expected to disregard their own interests.⁷⁰ Such is the human animal. And such Wagner was to discover.

Despite his anti-capitalist leanings, and much to Nietzsche's disgust, it was upon the moneyed elite he had so openly despised that Wagner came to rely for the realisation of his artistic vision. It was not that Wagner had abandoned his values, but recalibrated them. Certainly, with age, some people do abandon once-held principles. Conversely, others do not. One need only recall Hitler's three 'marathon runners of history' (Wagner being one, Martin Luther and Frederick the Great the others), to appreciate that precedents exist to prove that significant advancements have been made due to tenacity of spirit.⁷¹ But while this study asserts Wagner's withdrawal from the world corresponds as much to Jungian and Eriksonian theory as it does the Schopenhauerian model noted by Magee in the sense of being age-related, Wagner's thinking does not necessarily indicate, as Magee seems to suggest, a retreat into total disillusionment.

Like his friend, Arthur Gobineau, whose works encapsulate the uncertainty of the moment,⁷² Wagner was fearful for the future of humanity. However, unlike Gobineau,

⁶⁷ Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 23.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Adolf Hitler considered Martin Luther, Frederick the Great, and Richard Wagner to be the 'marathon runners of history', by which he meant the 'great and solitary individuals who work for the future, doomed to be largely not understood in their own day, but ready "to carry on the fight for their ideas and ideals to their end"'. See Adolf Hitler, Ralph Mannheim (trans.), *Mein Kampf* (London: Hutchinson, 1974), 16; 193-194. See also Jonathan Carr, *The Wagner Clan* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 188.

⁷² Arthur, comte de Gobineau (1816-1882): French aristocrat, diplomat, novelist, and ethnographer now renowned for developing the idea of the Aryan master-race and the legitimisation of racism by use of scientific and pseudo-scientific theory.

Wagner was relatively sanguine. ‘Reluctant Hegelian that he was’,⁷³ Wagner was nevertheless ‘Hegelian by upbringing, conditioned to ideas of historical progress and human perfectibility [and] irresistibly drawn [...] to the progressive thought of the day’.⁷⁴ Wagner sincerely believed humanity could be salvaged by his art, the aim of which, in part, was to present humanity with its potential as much as its failings. Where Gobineau corresponds to Magee’s rationalisation Wagner often does not. In many respects Gobineau’s was a voice unheard and he died an unhappy and unfulfilled man. But Wagner did not. It is entirely possible to be sagacious yet still pro-active in the pursuit of one’s ideology, even if, in the interest of personal well-being, that ideology has necessarily to be re-calibrated.

Wagner seems to acknowledge this during the course of his journey inwards. Utopian ideologies are commendable but it is a fact of life that, sometimes, an ideology does not correspond to actuality. One might argue that the real world and, indeed, reality are subjective concepts, and that it is the purpose of ideologies to challenge the existing state of affairs (a notion which accepts there must be a reality in order for it to be challenged). Nevertheless, facts and forces beyond our control exist, and no matter how one might philosophise or resist this, or the proposition that an ideology may be mistaken, it would be unwise to deny the possibility, or to insist against all evidence to the contrary that it is the facts and not the ideology that are in error. This is, perhaps, what Magee means when he refers to foolhardiness. It is folly to be impervious to the mutability of social opinion and life in general. It is not a question of defiantly maintaining or relinquishing moribund principles but, rather, of modifying one’s beliefs according to circumstance and moment.

Pragmatically, we must consider Wagner’s physical condition at that time. In her diaries, Cosima frequently refers to the composer’s recurring nightmares, headaches and dental problems; so, too, to his many gastric upsets and bouts of ill-temper which were invariably triggered by the consumption of certain foods.⁷⁵ Here, we should also recall the observations of Wagner’s physician, Friedrich Keppler, who, despairing of the composer’s habit of consulting more than one doctor and, moreover, of consuming a range of inappropriate and incompatible medications, notes that his patient’s ailments were principally the product of hyper-tension. In Keppler’s opinion, it was the accrual of these disorders and

⁷³ Stewart Spencer, ‘Or Strike at Me Now, as I Strangle thy Knee’, in Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (eds.), *Wagner’s Ring: A Companion* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 11-13 (11).

⁷⁴ Roger Hollingrake, ‘Epiphany and Apocalypse in the Ring’, in Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (eds.), *Wagner’s Ring: A Companion* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 41-47(41).

⁷⁵ Wagner’s favourite snack of bread, butter, and coffee was one such combination. In her diaries, Cosima frequently reproaches herself for failing to dissuade Wagner from consuming foods known to cause him digestive problems.

factors that contributed to Wagner's death, which he records as being due to heart failure induced by a reflux of wind.⁷⁶ Whether the reflux was precipitated by hyper-tension, and that the hypertension was caused by the quarrel that allegedly occurred between Cosima and Wagner shortly before his death, will forever remain a point of conjecture.

Given his personal circumstances and the surrounding social environment any philosophical and physical retrenchment on Wagner's part would have been prudent. Yet apart from being utterly exasperated by humanity in general there is nothing in Wagner's writings to suggest he ever rejected his principles or, indeed, ever seriously thought of conceding defeat: quite the contrary, for if that were the case, *Parsifal* and *Der Sieger* would not have been conceived.

Clearly, *Parsifal* could not have been written by a young man, but Wagner's abandonment of the projected *Der Sieger* was not due to any existential or age-related crises but, simply, to the realisation that, as a creative artist, he had gone as far as he could within a particular genre. By the time *Parsifal* received its premiere at the 1882 Bayreuth Festival, Wagner had already resolved it would be his final music-drama. Henceforth, new work would be in a symphonic form eschewing verbal reasoning and visual signposting; a purely sonic expression of intent liberated from the material constraints and the histrionics associated with theatrical presentation.⁷⁷

Of all Wagner's music-dramas, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* is the most social and the one most designed for audience enjoyment. Replete with Schopenhauerian allusions yet echoing the Hellenic practice of following a tragedy with a satyr play, the music-drama can be regarded a comedy conceived to counterbalance the conceptual and emotional intensity of its predecessor, *Tristan und Isolde*.⁷⁸ Certainly, Wagner voiced his personal need for respite.

⁷⁶ See Friedrich Keppler's notes as reproduced in Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 2*, 1013-1014. Hilmes proposes that a combination of the condition known as coronary insufficiency (i.e., the inability of the heart to supply sufficient blood and therefore oxygen to bodily tissue), and Wagner's chronic gastro-intestinal complaint contributed to his final attack. Regarding Wagner's dermatological complaints which rendered him allergic to certain fabrics, Hilmes offers as explanation erysipelas caused by a streptococcus. For both diagnoses see Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 173.

⁷⁷ Houston Stewart Chamberlain reports that immediately following the first performance of *Parsifal*, Wagner addressed a gathering of all those concerned with the project. In his speech, Wagner described his endeavours since the first Festival of 1876 to create his ideal and to correct the many misunderstandings that had arisen in relation to his ideological and dramaturgical intentions. Wagner's homily also appears to indicate a conscious decision to withdraw from his usual compositional style. See Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Lebenswege meines Denkens* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1919), 238.

⁷⁸ It had been Wagner's intention to follow his earlier, Romantic opera, *Tannhäuser*, with a light, comic work. In *A Communication to My Friends* (1851) Wagner describes how, encouraged by his friends and in need of a commercial success, he identified *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* as a suitable subject, his treatment of the historical figure, Hans Sachs, and the guilds of Nuremberg providing a satyr play-like foil to his *Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg* (i.e., *Tannhäuser*), the theme of a song contest being common to both works.

Nevertheless, the composition of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was underpinned by personal sorrow,⁷⁹ and so in more ways than one, to use another Hellenic dramatic device as metaphor, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* can be regarded as a *stasimon*, a still-point as it were in the canon of music-dramas in which the composer paused and reflected upon his creative and personal position.⁸⁰ This proposition appears to chime with Magee; but if, as Magee suggests, in coming at a specific time in the composer's life *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* represents a journey inwards, then it can also be said, here, that, like *Parsifal*, it is also a work that looks to the future. Like *The Thousand and One Nights*, the conclusions of their respective narratives indicate the commencement of a new one and, if Foucault is to be believed, the continuity of a narrative represents the literal and metaphorical deferral of death. Death only occurs upon a work's completion,⁸¹ and although Wagner's biographer Glasenapp tells us the composer always feared being 'interrupted by death',⁸² at no point did Wagner ever believe his work to be entirely completed despite his spells of depression and disillusionment.⁸³ Indeed, we should remember that it was in middle age that Wagner discarded his long held idea that suicide would be the sole solution to his many misfortunes, a *volte-face* which surely indicates a new perspective on life born of age and experience.⁸⁴

Magee points out that while Bayreuth's remoteness suited Wagner's aesthetic aims, its choice and the name he devised for his home there, Wahnfried,⁸⁵ also indicate a conscious removal from a hostile society following seemingly interminable years of exile, penury, thwarted ideals and the politics and intrigue of municipal musical life. This study would qualify Magee's proposal by suggesting it was not a question of withdrawal as such, but of

⁷⁹ Although Wagner commenced composition of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in 1863, the work was not completed until 1867. These were difficult years for Wagner: he all but gave up hope of ever completing *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, the 1864 Vienna premiere of *Tristan und Isolde* was abandoned and, in 1866, Wagner's first wife, Minna Planer, died. Of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Cosima Wagner was to write in her diary: 'When future generations seek refreshment in this unique work, may they spare a thought for the tears from which its smiles arose'. See Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (eds.), Geoffrey Skelton (trans.), *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 1* (London: Collins, 1978), 568. Entry dated 8 December 1872.

⁸⁰ It is notable that in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* Wagner reverted to and incorporated many of the operatic devices he had long denounced such as choruses, trios, and arias. This may have been part of Wagner's process of self-reflection, a re-examination and reappraisal of his ideals, creativity, and artistic progress.

⁸¹ Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in James D. Faubion (ed.), Robert Hurley et al (trans.), *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault Vol.2* (New York: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1998), 205-222.

⁸² Carl Friedrich Glasenapp, as quoted in Christian Thielemann with Christine Lemke-Matwey, Anthea Bell (trans.), *My Life with Wagner* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2015), 240. See also Carl Friedrich Glasenapp, *Das Leben Richard Wagners* 6 Vols. (Leipzig: np., 1910-1923).

⁸³ Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 128.

⁸⁴ Bryan Magee believes Wagner's state of despair about humanity and art was depression in the full clinical sense of the term, and notes Wagner's indebtedness to Schopenhauer for a revised outlook on life by which the composer overcame his depression. See Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 128.

⁸⁵ Considering the many viable meanings of *Wahn* (see above), 'Wahnfried' can be read not only as 'Free from Care' but also as 'Free from Madness' or, in Schopenhauerian terms, as 'Free from Illusion'.

conservancy and consolidation, of acceptance rather than rejection; in short, Wagner's actions denote wisdom.

Jung articulates the psychological need for seclusion when he refers to the yearning for rest that arises during a period of unrest, or to the longing for security that is born of insecurity, believing it is need and distress that give rise to new forms of life and not mere wishes or the requirements of our ideals.⁸⁶ As Friedrich Hölderlin wrote, 'Danger itself / Fosters the rescuing power',⁸⁷ and it is Wagner's internal response to the physically and mentally demanding circumstances he experienced throughout his life which eventually fostered the rescuing power that lies at the heart of the later music-dramas and which reframed the composer's reading of Germanness as a metaphysical, rather than political, concept.

With the *Wahn* of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and the reflectiveness of Hans Sachs, then the *Mitleid* of *Parsifal* and the sagacity of Gurnemanz, Wagner's journey into the inner self becomes clearly perceptible. The journey, however, is problematic. Jung describes this transitional and potentially traumatic process thus:

Experience shows us [...] that the basis and cause of all the difficulties of this transition period are to be found in a deep-seated and peculiar change within the psyche. In order to characterise it I must take for comparison the daily course of the sun – but a sun that is endowed with human feeling and man's limited consciousness. In the morning it arises from the nocturnal sea of unconsciousness and looks upon the wide, bright world which lies before it in an expanse that steadily widens the higher it climbs in the firmament. In this extension of its field of action caused by its own rising, the sun will discover its significance; it will see the attainment of the greatest possible height – the widest possible dissemination of its blessings – as its goal. In this conviction the sun pursues its unforeseen course to the zenith; unforeseen, because its career is unique and individual, and its culminating point could not be calculated in advance. At the stroke of noon the descent begins. And the descent means the reversal of all the ideals and values that were cherished in the morning. The sun falls in contradiction with itself. It is as though it should draw in its rays, instead of emitting them. Light and warmth decline and are at last extinguished.⁸⁸

And so this latter stage does not represent a withdrawal from the realities of life which is, as Magee notes, the conventional interpretation of those not yet touched by middle age. Rather, it represents a readjustment, a reassessment of one's values via a process of an internalised self-technology. Intrinsicly, it represents a significant development. Many schools of psychological thought may not recognise it as such. Nonetheless, it can be argued that change

⁸⁶ Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 250-251.

⁸⁷ Friedrich Hölderlin, as quoted in Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 250-251.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

in any way represents a form of progression, and not necessarily one of decay. Self-knowledge is a positive force and one which illuminates from within.

It is notable that the drama of *Die Meistersinger*, like that of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is played out at midsummer, traditionally a time of folly and inversion. Moreover, that the lifecycles of the individual and of the year are often regarded as being analogous. For Jung, midsummer corresponds with his reading of noon, the high-point of the day being a metaphor for the corresponding point in life. In *Die Meistersinger*, Wagner expresses this concept in terms of the turning year, midsummer marking a comparable high point after which we descend towards autumn and to inner reflection and illumination (autumn being a common allusion to middle age), thence to winter, and death.⁸⁹ Therefore it is surely no coincidence that Sachs recognises his folly and begins his inner journey at the mid-point of the music-drama, that is to say Act Two, withdrawing from the world in the *Wahn* monologue of Act Three.

For Jung, to speak of the morning and spring, of the evening and autumn of life is not 'mere sentimental jargon [as] we thus give expression to a psychological truth, even more, to psychological facts'.⁹⁰ We cannot 'continue to live the afternoon of life according to the programme of life's morning – for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true will at evening have become a lie'.⁹¹ A period of self-reflection must follow, a period for attention to one's self, when the sun, as Jung puts it, must 'withdraw its rays in order to illumine itself'.⁹² However, 'the unexpected result of this spiritual change is that an ugly face is put upon the world. It becomes so ugly no one can love it any longer – we cannot even love ourselves – and in the end there is nothing in the outer world to draw us away from the reality of the life within.'⁹³

⁸⁹ Similarly, Oswald Spengler uses the turning year to express the rise and fall of societies. In his two-part work, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes (The Decline of the West)*, pub. 1918-1922), Spengler explains the contemporaneity which exists between disparate societies by using as an analogy the rotational concept of the seasons from verdancy to decay. For Spengler, the springtime brings a parallel between Vedic religion and the cult of the Virgin Mary, summer heralds Pythagoras and Leibniz, Milton and Mohammed, autumnal reason the parallelism of Voltaire and Socrates, and the 'chilled hands' of Napoleon and Alexander the Great, the 'harbingers of the politics of winter'. Oswald Spengler, as quoted in Michael Biddiss, 'History as Destiny: Gobineau, H.S. Chamberlain and Spengler', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Vol.7 (1997), 73-100 (91). This distinction between 'culture' and 'civilisation' and the tension that Spengler believes exists between them was a concept central to many thinkers of the time. For example, in *Der Zauberberg (The Magic Mountain)*, Thomas Mann had used the notion as means of expressing the contrast between Germanic values and those of other western cultures.

⁹⁰ Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 123.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 245.

Historically, religion of whatever theological system offered profound assistance in addressing and coming to terms with these issues: the symbolism of the Christian parables, for example, illustrates the inevitability of an individual's pathway through life, supplying, as it were, a highway code of, and for, living. However, following the ontological upheaval of the Enlightenment and the steady withdrawal of religion from public life, such signposts became lost to many. With anti-capitalist leanings Wagner became appalled by the spiritual emptiness and fragmented nature of the surrounding society. Nonetheless, he was also professedly anti-religious, and thus, for him, the pathway through the Jungian change could be expected to be difficult. A reading of Kantian and Schopenhauerian thought, together with a growing interest in eastern theology, supplied him with a philosophical route.

If throughout the course of their lifecycle the individual had, as Jung says:

filled up the beaker of life and emptied it to its lees, they would feel quite differently [...] all that wanted to catch fire would have been consumed, and the quiet of old age would be very welcome to them. But we must not forget that only a very few people are artists in life; that the art of life is the most distinguished and rarest of all the arts. Whoever succeeded in draining the whole cup with grace? So for many people all too much life remains over – sometimes potentialities which they could never have lived with the best of wills; and so they approach the threshold of old age with unsatisfied claims which inevitably turn their glances backward.⁹⁴

Such, it can be said, was the case with Wagner's friend, Gobineau. Faced with socio-cultural change on an unprecedented scale both men referenced a heroic past, clearly fearing the new, of which their oppositional vehemence was symptomatic. Jung notes, however, that 'whoever protects himself against what is new and strange and thereby regresses into the past, falls into the same neurotic condition as the man who identifies himself with the new and runs away from the past.'⁹⁵ 'In principle both are doing the same thing; they are salvaging a narrow state of consciousness. The alternative is to shatter it with the tension inherent in the play of opposites' that is to say, to pursue an 'extension of the horizon of life', 'and thereby to build up a state of wider and higher consciousness'.⁹⁶

In this regard, Wagner fared better than Gobineau. The Frenchman's threnodic writings reflect a bitterness and despondency for not only what was, or soon to be, lost, but also for a voice essentially unheard. It can be said that, for Gobineau, both the future and the aging process (which is the natural product of the future) represented inevitable and irrevocable decay. Wagner, by contrast, thought otherwise and accordingly developed a

⁹⁴ Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 127.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

suitably optimistic, redemptive outlook. Based on a synthesis of Christian, Buddhist, and Kantian-Schopenhauerian thinking, Wagner's revised attitude demonstrates Jung's premise in that 'for every piece of conscious life that loses its importance and value there arises a compensation in the unconscious'.⁹⁷ Chiming with, and extending Schopenhauer's understanding of music as being 'the self-expression of that which cannot be expressed', the ideas exercised in Wagner's late works would not only be efficacious for his own particular psychic hygiene but also the formulation of his reading of Germanness and therefore, by extension, the psychic well-being of humanity.

If *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* can be seen to enshrine the Jungian notion of inner illumination that comes with age and the withdrawal from folly then by extension, so, too, can *Parsifal*.⁹⁸ Accessible only to the innocent and incorruptible, conceptually the Grail Temple of Montsalvat may seem as far removed from Nuremberg and the world of *Wahn* as it is geographically. Yet if we view Wagner's theme of self-realisation through the lens of Erikson's psychosocial step development theory the work overflows the boundaries of any supposed religious orthodoxy, be it Christian or Buddhist, to become an exegesis on the processes of psychological maturation. Whereas *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* is a work very much of this world and frames the concept of the inner condition and psychic development within a human context *Parsifal*, by contrast, explores the ideas in a metaphysical one. In *Parsifal* Wagner rescues metaphysics by rendering it a system by which to explore psychic life, a system as important to Jung as it was to Erikson.

Wahn: Die Meistersinger, Parsifal, and Erikson's Psychosocial Step Development Theory

In contrast to the philosophies of Magee, who appears to be occupied with decline, and Jung, who appears to regard death as completion rather than decline, Erikson describes maturation in the more optimistic language of ascendancy and continuance. Although it can be said Erikson's psychosocial step-development theory becomes sketchy around mid-life and tends to treat post-midlife as one block, perhaps two, he nevertheless offers an epistemological model capable of rationalising Wagner's sanguinity and use of Buddhist philosophy, with

⁹⁷ Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 241.

⁹⁸ Although from as early as 1857 Wagner had considered Wolfram von Eschenbach's epic poem *Parzifal* a suitable subject, it was not until 1877 that he changed the spelling of the hero's name to Parsifal believing it derived from the ancient Persian 'fal parsi' ('pure fool'). In 1859, Wagner wrote to Mathilde Wesendonck that he was contemplating a work far darker than *Tristan und Isolde*, one that would go beyond the limits of its predecessor. The conductor, Christian Thielemann, has recently noted that Amfortas is Tristan 'taken to unimaginable extremes', and that, as a work, *Parsifal* is, in many ways, anti-*Tristan*. See Thielemann, *My Life with Wagner*, 239.

which he was currently intrigued, since central to all these systems of thinking is the notion that the effective completion of one stage, or level, of the lifecycle facilitates progression to the next.⁹⁹

If we accept that *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* represent an exegesis on spiritual journeying towards wisdom, then it is but a short move from Magee's *Wahn*-theory to Erikson's psychosocial step-development theory because now, like Sachs, Wagner had entered one of life's most significant phases. By denying the driving force of existence, defined by Schopenhauer as will, Sachs reaches not only Schopenhauer's ultimate stage of being but also the ultimate rung on Erikson's ladder of psychosocial step-development, Old Age, thereby achieving its attendant quality, Wisdom.

Like Freud, Erikson believed that the personality of an individual develops in a series of definite stages. However, unlike Freud's theory of psychosexual stages which looks at childhood and barely into adolescence, the Eriksonian model, while more youth-orientated compared to Jung, illustrates the effects of social experiences and their impact over the whole lifespan of an individual. Key to Erikson's theory is the development of ego identity, this being the conscious sense of the self we develop through social interaction, and something which is in a constant state of change, altering according to new experiences and information acquired by the interaction with others. Here, identity is the beliefs, value and characteristics which shape and define an individual, and while the formation of identity is something which commences in childhood and becomes particularly important during adolescence, the process continues throughout the lifespan of the individual. Therefore personal identity supplies the individual with a sense of self that endures and continues to develop with age.

According to Erikson, an individual's behaviour and actions are motivated by what he calls competences, and so each stage of his psychosocial developmental theory is concerned with becoming competent in a sphere, or number of spheres of life. If each stage is managed well the individual will experience a sense of mastery (also known as ego strength or ego quality) and will progress to the next; managed poorly the individual will experience a sense of inadequacy. In each stage the individual will experience a conflict. These conflicts serve as a turning point in the individual's development and are centred on either developing, or failing to develop, a psychosocial quality. At these conflicts the potential for successful and unsuccessful development is high.

⁹⁹ In Erikson's schemata, unsuccessful completion of one level does not preclude progression to the next, which is achievable by revisiting and revising errors.

In relinquishing his claim to Eva and focusing upon supporting Walther, Sachs demonstrates his entry into the generative stage (Stage 7) of Eriksonian psychosocial development (see Figure 1). This, according to Erikson, is the phase in life when people in middle age come to understand, in the interests of their psychological wellbeing, the importance of improving the lives of others and of the generations to come. It is part of the processes of self-actualisation and self-awareness, and success in this respect can be achieved by parenting, teaching or mentoring, as demonstrated symbolically by Sachs' selfless championing of Walther's art and relationship with Eva, and, in Wagner's case, actually, by the birth of a son and heir.

We can extend this proposition into the realm of *Parsifal* where it comes to express Wagner's concern for community and the future of humankind. Here, the Grail Temple at Montsalvat can be read as a metaphysical space, as a sanctuary from *Wahn* (in all its senses) within a Kantian-Schopenhauerian noumenal reality, as denoted by the Act One transformation from forest to temple and Gurnemanze's explanation to Parsifal that, here, 'Space becomes Time'. The Grail fraternity inhabiting the temple simultaneously represents a Buddhist Oneness and the Jungian idea that 'the psyche is not individual, but is derived from the nation, from collectivity, or from humanity, even. In some way or another we are part of an all-embracing psychic life, or a single "greatest man", to quote Swedenborg.'¹⁰⁰

Entwining the Western and Eastern elements of *Parsifal* with a reading of Erikson's psychosocial development theory and the various stages of life in encompasses reveals age-related issues as being intrinsic to the music-drama's philosophic structure. In *Parsifal*, Wagner's quasi-religious and symbolic treatment of an individual's journey through life towards inner illumination is illustrated over a span of three acts, by Erikson via an ascending gradient, or ladder, upon which are positioned at strategic intervals identifiable stages of life, each of which is grounded in its predecessor.

¹⁰⁰ Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 242.

Commencing in the bottom left hand corner with ‘Infancy’, Erikson’s gradient of psychological maturation ascends incrementally to the top right corner, ‘Old Age’, via ‘Early Childhood’, ‘Play Age’, ‘School Age’, ‘Adolescence’, ‘Young Adulthood’, and ‘Adulthood’.

PSYCHOSOCIAL STAGES OF LIFE

Old Age <i>VIII</i> MATURITY								Ego Integrity vs. Despair. WISDOM
Adulthood <i>VII</i>								Generativity vs. Stagnation. Self-Absorption. CARE
Young Adulthood <i>VI</i>								Intimacy vs. Isolation. LOVE
Adolescence <i>V</i> PUBERTY AND ADOLESCENCE								Identity vs. Confusion. FIDELITY
School Age <i>IV</i> LATENCY								Industry vs. Inferiority. COMPETENCE
Play Age <i>III</i> LOCOMOTOR- GENITAL								Initiative vs. Guilt. PURPOSE
Early Childhood <i>II</i> MUSCULAR- ANAL								Autonomy vs. Shame, Doubt. WILL
Infancy <i>I</i> ORAL- SENSORY								Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust. HOPE

Figure 1: Erik Erikson: The Psychosocial Stages of Life ¹⁰¹

Key words associated with the positive qualities/strengths, or ‘ego qualities’, of these categories grow out of each other as the ladder ascends, emerging at appropriate point of the scale. For instance, a key word in ‘Infancy’ is Hope, a quality, Erikson believes, which is ‘mandatory for survival’ in that it is ‘needed for all other strengths’.¹⁰² A key quality of ‘Young Adulthood’ is Love, and other stages incorporate, respectively, Will, Purpose, Competence, Fidelity, and, in ‘Adulthood’, Care. The gradient concludes with Old Age and the key word, Wisdom.

Parsifal begins in Act One an innocent fool, which can be interpreted as a form of psychosocial infancy. Over the span of the drama he undergoes a mode of Eriksonian development, encountering, in Act Two, Love (or what Erikson would describe as the psychosexual awakening of ‘Young Adulthood’). Having negotiated further processes of maturation in ‘Adulthood’ and attaining Care, as represented by his years of wandering, Parsifal arrives at Act Three, or, metaphorically, at Old Age and Wisdom.

¹⁰¹ For technical reasons the rendition of this figure is taken from Google Images, it being however a faithful reproduction of that provided by Erik Erikson in *The Life Cycle Completed*, 56-57.

¹⁰² Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed*, 58.

While the Act I journey from the forest to Montsalvat can be read in Schopenhauerian terms as the transference from physical to metaphysical space, from phenomenal to noumenal reality,¹⁰³ it can also be regarded as the Eriksonian progression from Infancy to the next stage in psychosocial development. Only the innocent can gain admittance to Montsalvat and so the metaphorically Infant Parsifal gains access not only because of his innate innocence but also because the temple represents, in dramaturgical form, the portal to the next phase in psychosocial development. The temptations by Kundry and the flower maidens in Act 2 represents sexual awakening, Oedipal issues being apparent in the Kundry-Parsifal interchanges. In a direct representation of the suppression, or denial, of the Schopenhauerian will, Parsifal rejects Kundry and thus sexual love, the earlier defeat of Klingsor's men suggesting the assertion of the 'I', that is to say, of the ego.¹⁰⁴

Ordinarily, experience of the temporal world would preclude any return to Montsalvat, innocence naturally being lost on the journey through life, a concept which parallels the expulsion from Eden and the proto-Nietzschean 'Man out of Nature' idea as enshrined in *Das Rheingold*. That Parsifal can regain admittance to the Grail Temple having attained compassion and wisdom (in the true sense of the word) through years of wandering, (i.e., life experience = psychosocial development), demonstrates the cyclic nature of Erikson's theory in that the initial and final stages of the life cycle, respectively Infancy and Old Age, are directly linked by the key word, or strength, Hope.¹⁰⁵

Yet Erikson believes Old Age requires an additional key word (or strength) lying beyond Wisdom. Accordingly, he seeks a word with the capacity to express 'the last possible form of hope as matured along the whole first ascending vertical'.¹⁰⁶ This word, he decides is Faith. Here, Hope, defined by Erikson as 'expectant desire',¹⁰⁷ 'connotes the most basic quality of "I"-ness, without which life could not begin or meaningfully end'.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, Faith is Hope's ultimate manifestation, one which returns itself to its infantile precursor, but

¹⁰³ For a discussion on Wagner's representation of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds within the musical structure of *Parsifal*, see Katherine R. Syer, 'Unseen Voices: Wagner's Musical-Dramatic Shaping of the Grail Scene of Act One', in William Kinderman and Katherine R. Syer (eds.), *A Companion to Wagner's Parsifal* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 176-214. See also Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth-Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁰⁴ Clearly, Parsifal is more symbolic than real: he is a fairy-tale character who goes through progressions that a 'real' person his age would not reach. He is an otherworldly character at every level.

¹⁰⁵ Erikson's idea has an affinity with the cyclic nature of existence and therefore chimes with Buddhist theory, Thomas Mann's concept of 'einst', and is in many ways Nietzschean in that it denies time to be linear or teleological.

¹⁰⁶ Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed*, 62.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

now infused with wisdom. And so Faith and Hope facilitate Parsifal's return to Montsalvat, as they do Wagner's aesthetic.

The word 'Wisdom', Joan Erikson reminds us, has its root in *vēda*: 'to see, to know'.¹⁰⁹ The correlation between 'seeing' and 'knowing' can also be found in the Hellenic notion that knowledge was acquired via sight,¹¹⁰ thus foreshadowing Wagner's idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and the acquisition of knowledge via the senses. Joan Erikson's outlook is consistent with the mysticism and Orientalism that pre-occupied the minds of the nineteenth-century Western European intelligentsia, for, as Magee reminds us, there was no greater surprise to Schopenhauer than his discovery that the ideas he had laboured for many years to articulate, specifically that 'reality is immaterial, spaceless, timeless, and above all One',¹¹¹ had already been expressed by Buddhism or Hinduism.¹¹² And so Wagner's premise that we can become 'knowers through feeling' can be read as relating to a compassion born of experiences as much as an intuitive response to aural and ocular stimuli.

There is a widely held opinion that *Parsifal* represents a treatise on Christian supremacy over other theological systems, particularly Judaism. But *Parsifal* is not a Christian work, as such. Indeed, it is not a religious work at all, but a highly charged one. Houston Stewart Chamberlain stated as much when he noted that with *Parsifal* Wagner was concerned with the development of the inner man.¹¹³

Wagner was explicitly contemptuous of religion irrespective of creed and, for that matter, of any group that privileged its orthodoxy over the interests and welfare of society or humanity as a whole, Christianity included. There is no specific mention of Christianity in *Parsifal*. Christ is never mentioned by name and although Acts 1 and 3 contain obvious references to Christian ritual, here, they represent community rather than Communion and the continuity of anciently held values. Parsifal's Good Friday 'baptism' is more to do with the sloughing of an old self, of the progression from one Eriksonian state of being to the next, than any identification with the Christ figure, as such. While, arguably, Wagner presents an altered Christianity, that is to say one that is not entirely free of the original materials, it is the theatricality of the Christian rites rather than their theological meaning which suited Wagner's

¹⁰⁹ Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed*, 6-7.

¹¹⁰ See Eric Doughney, *Archetype and the Art-Work of the Future: The Agency of the Sophoclean Oedipus within the Musicalisation, Transmission, and Reception of the Wagnerian Stage* (Unpublished MLitt. Dissertation, Newcastle University, 2010).

¹¹¹ Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 164.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *The Wagnerian Drama* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1923), 220-221.

dramatic plan for *Parsifal*. While Chamberlain reminds us that Christianity would be the one theological system with which, at the time, Wagner and his audiences could be fully conversant, and therefore ‘what is generally known requires less demonstration for the understanding and is consequently more compatible with immediate artistic reception’,¹¹⁴ the fact that Wagner was also reading Schopenhauer would make Buddhism very exciting.¹¹⁵

As with Mendelssohn and the *Reformation Symphony*, Wagner’s use of the Dresden Amen is in the spirit of the Augsburg Confession, which, shunning hierarchies and dogma, is rooted in the faith of the individual, in fraternalism over fundamentalism. It represents an open-armed embrace, the proposition to start again, to rework the errors of the past while remaining in the present and, as such, can be read as a metaphor, and one that mirrors Erikson’s premise that psychosocial progression is activated by the revisiting and correction of past mistakes and his belief in a correlation between Hope and Faith. These, along with Charity, are the three key creedal values of life, irrespective of culture.¹¹⁶ ‘Durch Mitleid wissend der reine Tor’, the innocent fool made wise through compassion, a principle which resonates throughout many theological manuals, codes by which to navigate the perilous highway of life.

To the twenty-first century mind, Erikson’s theory may seem the very definite product of its 1970s provenance, as modish New Age thinking crystallised in psychoanalytic terms. The treatment of fictional characters as life-symbols may also be regarded as problematic when the mapping is not entirely perfect or when the extreme ends of the conceptual spectrum become blurred. But in accordance with Jungian work this study asserts it is sufficient to recognise and demonstrate the presence and agency of archetypes within the narrative. In which case Amfortas can certainly be regarded as having failed in satisfying certain criteria in the final stages of Eriksonian development. With Amfortas, to paraphrase Beverly Skeggs, the focus ‘is on the self, on the self as a suffering subject’.¹¹⁷ Amfortas finds identity in his pain and in doing so neglects the needs of the community and, in particular, those of his father, Titurel, who is dependent upon the Grail for its life-giving properties, which, here, can be read as long-held values. Consequently, Amfortas fails as, or more accurately does not reach the Jungian and Eriksonian compassionate mentor-parent figure, one who, in the final stages of psychosocial development, should achieve effective psychic well-being by selflessly

¹¹⁴ Chamberlain, *The Wagnerian Drama*, 220-221. See also Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Das Drama Richard Wagners* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1892), 139.

¹¹⁵ Ideas which, Wagner discovered, corresponded with his notion of the ‘improved Christ’ and which he intended to explore further in the projected but abandoned *Der Sieger (The Victors)*.

¹¹⁶ Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed*, 58.

¹¹⁷ See Beverly Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

nurturing the interests of others. Amfortas also fails in Buddhist terms because, unlike Parsifal, he does not learn compassion by observation and pity. Absorbed by his own martyr-like suffering he neglects the needs of others. Parsifal acquired wisdom through his wanderings, but his was wisdom in the original sense of the word and one which he uses for the redemption of the Montsalvat community.

And so, rather than a 'religious' work, *Parsifal* can more properly be understood as a metaphor for personal development and the preservation of community, and one mirroring Wagner's own psychosocial development in that it essays his sagacity, transcendence of temporal issues (including politics), and his concern for society. The work is at once a Pilgrim's Progress, a Divine Comedy, a demonstration of the life cycle and individuation. Like *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Parsifal* represents the journey towards psychic maturity and inner spirituality borne of experience – qualities which can only be attained with age and for the benefit of the collective. In short, both are blueprints for living. Here, we see Wagner's psychic development take a turn into the social. Addressing a public for whom nationhood and the national project were increasingly ever-present issues, Wagner the idealistic polymath who sat in the German cultural tradition of pedagogy and whose musical and extra-musical work was predicated upon on a faith in humanity and a Utopian future, becomes significant in a sociological sense.

Sachs' Act Three address, so often seen as a very public expression of German cultural and political superiority, becomes an appeal to the assembled populace to embrace a wider and spiritual sense of community. At a time when the German national project was centred on the unification of twenty-five previously independent states, and therefore reliant upon the interweaving of multitudes of cultural pasts and traditions,¹¹⁸ Sachs warns against insularity, as symbolised by the walled nature of the city of Nuremberg, and stagnation, as symbolised by the inflexibility of the song contest regulations. Here, Sachs – and Wagner – expresses a concern for the healthy maintenance of society. It is at this point the work corresponds to the Wagnerian idea of Germanness, not in an explicitly partisan sense, but in one of a community representing, or possessing, a set of values. But as is often the case at times of anxiety, events acquire their own momentum. In due course, Wagner was overtaken by historical events and by his own reception, and, as E.T.A. Hofmann wrote, 'what mischief

¹¹⁸ Alon Confino, 'The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Heimat, National Memory and the German Empire 1871-1918', *History as Memory*, Vol 5 No. 1 (Spring-Summer 1993), 42-86 (42).

could be caused in the realm of art through mistaking a strong external stimulus for a true inner calling'.¹¹⁹

Wagner, Community, and the Artist in Society

Wagner's situation may be characterised by Kafka's story, *Josephina the Singer, or the Mice People* in which Josephina, a singer, is producing something amazing. In the pursuit of her art she taxes herself to the utmost. But the public is uncomprehending and therefore assumes that what Josephina is producing, together with her mode of production are truly significant. Consequently, the community bestows validation upon Josephina, a community which admires in her what it does not admire, or cannot actualise, in itself. Josephina represents potentiality. However, the crucial significance of her astonishing art is that she draws vulnerable people together. She creates community and allows people be what they already are, something that might not have been possible without her. Thus she constitutes the necessary element of exteriority that facilitates immanence to come into being. The essence of her act, or art, therefore, is not the performance of songs but the assembly of people.¹²⁰

Described by Frederic Jameson as 'more a parable of the artist than a blueprint for communal living',¹²¹ one could go further: Kafka's tale is a parable of what society makes of an artist, for such, it can be said, was the case with Wagner. Perceived to be doing something astonishing he, like Josephina, was an enabling influence. Like Josephina, Wagner made certain strata of the people visible; he drew them out, as Jameson says of Josephina, from the crevices of society and drew them together into a new community. Through Wagner the disaffected could repair themselves, for 'the ultimate Utopian drive [...] whether it be expressed in religious or salvational terms, or in symbol like the Grail or under the magic word *socialism*, seems to have something to do with [the] recovery of other people'.¹²²

Utopia, like nationalism and socialism, is always in a state of becoming. Indeed, for Jameson, its vocation lies in failure.¹²³ In achieving its purpose it becomes purposeless. In the end Kafka's Josephina has no purpose. 'Insofar as Josephina causes the essence of the people to appear, she also causes this essential indifference of the anonymous and the radically democratic to also emerge. Her difference, by revealing identity, is then cancelled by the force

¹¹⁹ E.T.A.Hoffman, *The Tales of Hoffman*.

¹²⁰ Frederic Jameson, 'Utopia, Modernism, and Death', in *The Seeds of Time* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1994), 125.

¹²¹ Jameson, 'Utopia, Modernism, and Death', 123.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 96. [Emphasis as original]

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 125.

of that absolute identity'.¹²⁴ It became no longer certain if Josephina was a great artist at all, or, indeed, had ever been. To the community she became ludicrous and rather pathetic. Such, perhaps, was Wagner's anxiety.

Kafka was born in 1883, the year in which Wagner died. While Kafka sits firmly within modernism his theme is not only symptomatic of the age but also the outcome of Wagner's. The Wagnerian Wotan ceased to exist because those who peopled the world of the *Ring* stopped believing in him. Granted, their disbelief was prompted by the god's contravention of his own laws, but it was equally due to the fact that he was superseded historically by new humans. A different – indeed, indifferent – society no longer needed him. He became irrelevant. Such could be the fate of Wagner.

The question therefore arises as to where, in this brave new world, the artist would sit. The fate of Josephina and Wotan could herald that of the idealistic artist in the materialist and materially-minded world. Seen in this light, Wagner's abstruseness and shrewd paralleling of scientific theory was, perhaps, both protection and defence – a means by which to remain relevant in a world of deepening positivism. Invention apart, Wagner's is a modernising strategy as much to do with himself and the artist as it is with the future of the German people and Germany.

A reading of Dahlhaus seems to support the proposition. Around the mid-nineteenth century, he notes, Romanticism experienced a break.¹²⁵ It can be suggested, here, that the break occurred at the point of the 1848 revolutions since the Romanticism of Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn was not that of Wagner, who sits firmly on the later side of this break. With Wagner, what previously had been the expression of the interior self, but expressed as still very much of the present became transformed: it became fantasy, illusory. If we consider the advancements made concurrently within the realms of the visual arts and literature Wagner, apart from his radical tonality, remained very much in the old world, referencing a one even older and, moreover, one imagined. It was not just technology and science that were evolving but art, too, and towards modernism while Wagner lingered in the transcendental. At once radical and reactionary – perhaps something even more antique, and a reaction into something even more unmodern – Wagner was both in and out of his own time; paradoxically so, considering his enabling agency and influence on key figures such as Mahler, Schoenberg, and Debussy.

¹²⁴ Jameson, 'Utopia, Modernism, and Death', 127.

¹²⁵ See Carl Dahlhaus, Mary Whittall (trans.), *Between Romanticism and Modernism* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press).

But there is a difference, or dislocation, between modernism and modernity. The former is aesthetic, the latter social, and it was the social as opposed to the aesthetic that troubled Wagner. Clearly, for him, Romanticism and the Romantic still had a critical force supplying cognition not available through pure reason. In the Romantic one could still envision. But in Wagner's case, although he saw a dislocation from society he seemingly did not see himself as being dislocated.

Indeed, Wagner believed he embodied the idealist spirit that would transcend the materialist, and supplied a sense of timelessness – a continuity of values – all of which were an antidote to uncertainty both present and future. For many people, then, Wagner took on added significance, particularly after his death. In an increasingly politicising environment, Wagner and Wagnerism were embraced as totems by a range of consortia, each following their own agenda. We have discussed how misinterpretation and misrepresentation were Wagner's greatest fears, and so in time, and prefiguring Dahlhaus' definition of the term afterlife, Wagner starts to change character, discarding old and acquiring new meanings. In so doing, Wagner begins to correspond to a number of social and psychological phenomena. Here, Jung's father-leader archetype, Weber's charismatic leader and Hoffer's mass movement present themselves.

Wagner and *Parsifal* in terms of Weberian Charisma and Hofferian Mass-Movement Theory

Hence it is a short step from the metaphysical and psychosocial Parsifal of Jung and Erikson to Parsifal the Jungian father archetype and Weberian charismatic leader, roles Wagner came to fulfil as both concepts offer protection and a continuity of tradition.¹²⁶

One of the defining strands of Weberian theory is the proposition that 'charisma relates to the sacred qualities of an individual and the sense of mission and duty that defines

¹²⁶ The principle of the charismatic leader does not represent a specifically organic development in German culture or politics. On the contrary, its antecedents can be found as much in other cultures as in the Germanic counterparts. However, in contrast to those counterparts, the Germanic model follows a precise pattern of predestination. In British lore, for instance, charismatic leader-figures were produced by circumstance, of which Robin Hood, Horatio Nelson, and Winston Churchill are examples. As such, they represent a response to a given situation. Signifying resistance to tyranny and unjust authority, all three Britons materialised at moments of national peril. When the peril had passed they vanished from the public consciousness, a further characteristic of charisma theory, as exemplified by Churchill's post-war election defeat. Nelson endures because he died while at the height of his charismatic power. Siegfried, on the other hand, signifies an authority figure created with the express purpose to inspire and lead the Germanic people to a glorious future; to save them, and in turn, the world, from dark forces, either through art or politics according to whichever German is speaking. However, each of the above corresponds to the Weberian idea of the charismatic leader.

the relationship between the individual leader and his or her followers'.¹²⁷ In short, charisma is an exchange; it is the interactive play of the mythic and the religious, of ideas of the hero, of the sacred and of salvation. Above all, it is the attraction of the sacred from the mundane, and is the spiritualisation of the mundane and not, as often imagined the reverse. A sparkling feature of charisma is that it is universally expressed as a salvation narrative and in the grammar of the sacred.

Max Weber defines charisma, his third and most problematic form of *Herrschaft*,¹²⁸ as 'a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities' not accessible to the ordinary person and therefore regarded as exemplary or of divine origin.¹²⁹ On this basis the possessor of these powers or qualities is regarded as a leader. In ancient times, these qualities were thought to rest on magical powers, 'whether of prophets, persons with a reputation for therapeutic or legal wisdom, leaders of the hunt, or heroes in war'.¹³⁰ The question of ethics, aesthetics, or other points of view are entirely indifferent, for what is of sole importance is how that individual is regarded by those subject to charismatic authority. In other words, 'it is recognition on the part of those subjects to authority which is decisive in the validity of charisma'.¹³¹ This recognition is freely given,¹³² and is invariably 'guaranteed by what is held to be a proof, such as a miracle, and consists of devotion to the corresponding revelation, hero worship, or absolute trust in the leader'.¹³³ However, Weber points out, true charismatic legitimacy lies:

in the conception that is the duty of those subject to charismatic authority to recognize its genuineness and to act accordingly. Psychologically, this recognition is a matter of complete personal devotion to the possessor of the quality, arising out of enthusiasm, or of despair and hope.¹³⁴

Collectives or any groups whose behaviour corresponds to these patterns Weber refers to as 'charismatic communities' which he defines as:

¹²⁷ Philip Smith, 'Culture and Charisma: Outline of a Theory', *Acta Sociologica* 43 (2), 2000, 101-111 (102).

¹²⁸ Introduced by Max Weber in *Economy and Society*, the term *Herrschaft* has no literal English translation. However, it is generally regarded as meaning 'institutionalised authority inducing obedience'. Weber identifies three *Herrschaft*: legal, traditional, and charismatic. The first two are based on rationality and implemented by the public servant, defined by Weber as an 'ordinary person'. By contrast, Charisma is irrational and is possessed by an 'extraordinary person'. The charismatic leader is a figure that only appears in times of chaos and need. Unlike legal and traditional authority, charisma is personal, fugitive and, essentially, bestowed.

¹²⁹ Max Weber, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (eds., trans.), *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 241-242.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

an organised group subject to authority (*Gemeinde*) [...] It is based on an emotional form of communal relationship (*Vergemeinschaftung*) [...] The group is chosen in terms of the charismatic qualities of its members. The prophet has his disciples; the warlord his bodyguards; the leader, generally, his agents (*Vertauensmänner*).¹³⁵

Montsalvat is such a community rescued from decline, and it can be said that, following Wagner's death, for many of his followers, both *Parsifal* and the Bayreuth Festival came to embody charisma theory on several levels.

Attending the 1889 festival a pupil of Brahms, Elizabeth von Herzogenberg, remarked on the sanctity of the event, the reverence of its audiences and, in particular, the significance they accorded to *Parsifal*:

People like that go to Parsifal just as Catholics visit graves on Good Friday; it has become a church service for them. The whole bunch of them are in an unnaturally heightened, hysterically enraptured state, like Ribera's saints, with their eyes raised aloft so that one can see only the whites of them, and under their shirts they all have carefully tended stigmata. I tell you, the whole thing has a really bad smell to it, like a church that has never been aired or like a butcher's display of meat in summer: a blood-thirstiness and musty smell of incense, a sultry sensuality with terribly serious gestures, a heaviness and a bombast otherwise unprecedented in art weighs down on one, its brooding intensity taking one's breath away.¹³⁶

To the pupil of Brahms, a composer whose musical aesthetic was the antithesis of Wagner's, the spectacle must have been not only perplexing but alarming. Herzogenberg is not merely expressing anti-Wagnerian feeling when she describes what she encountered at Bayreuth as a 'bag of spiritual conjuring tricks' and 'an emetic for stomachs accustomed to Bach'.¹³⁷ What Herzogenberg moved amongst at Bayreuth was not the standard audience commonly seen frequenting the opera houses and theatres of Europe, even for Wagner's operas. Hilmes touches upon this when he notes Cosima's letter to the Kaiser in which she compared Bayreuth audiences to a congregation and refers to *Parsifal* as representing a sacred relic 'which in terms of group psychology [...] allowed Cosima's congregation to define itself by virtue of its exclusive access to this fetish'.¹³⁸

For Hilmes, this religiosity originated with the networkers of the Bayreuth Circle. Although Wagner had believed the salvation of humankind could be achieved through art and had enshrined his philosophy in the very concept of Bayreuth, for the Bayreuth Circle, or

¹³⁵ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 243.

¹³⁶ Elizabeth von Herzogenberg to Adolf and Irene von Hildebrand. Letter dated 7 August 1889. See Bernhard Sattler (ed.), *Adolf von Hildebrand und seine Welt: Briefe und Erinnerungen* (Munich: Georg D.W. Callwey, 1962), 327-328. Also in Oliver Hilmes, Stewart Spencer (trans.), *Cosima Wagner: The Lady of Bayreuth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 194.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

‘Bayreuthians’ as they also referred to themselves, Bayreuth itself became a substitute religion with the Bayreuthians considering themselves, as Wagner’s disciples, the best qualified to interpret Wagner’s often ambiguous ideas for the benefit of their congregation.¹³⁹ But one could go further, for although the exclusivity Hilmes refers to was as much to do with the copyright Bayreuth held on *Parsifal* as belonging to an elite, what Herzogenberg witnessed was clearly of a disturbing nature for in what she is describing there is a sense of an archetypal/religious energy that had been somehow perverted. Rather, the festival audiences encapsulate and enshrine the charismatic community and the festival, the festival theatre, and *Parsifal* itself reliquaries celebrating the memory and the remains of its absent leader. For Wagnerians and, particularly, for Cosima and the Bayreuthians, the uncovering of *Parsifal* in the *Festspielhaus* corresponds to the revelation of the Grail before the fraternity of Montsalvat. Cosima, in particular, parallels Titirel in his dependency upon the Grail as a life giving force. As will be discussed in the next chapter, after Wagner’s death it is for moments such as these that Cosima lived and had reason to live, the Grail representing for the sinner-widow that higher state of being and purity that we may seek but can never achieve. Under Cosima, both festival and music-drama evince a potent salvation narrative beyond that envisaged by their creator. The sociology of Bayreuth became something other and profounder and the institution became a fetish, an object which stands for that which is absent.

That the original production of *Parsifal* was kept in repertory for so long and to the point of utter decay indicates that this was not only something upon which, famously, ‘the master’s eyes had rested’, but because the staging represented for Cosima and Wagnerians the direct link to the dead charismatic leader who, like Alexander the Great and Nelson, had died at the height of their charismatic power.

Seen in this light, *Parsifal* is charisma theory made visual, the eponymous hero representing the charismatic leader, the Grail fraternity the charismatic community, and Klingsor the negative charisma, that is to say the evil to be conquered by the charismatically endowed. Here, the narrative is expressed within Christian terms not because *Parsifal* is a treatise on Christian supremacy but because, historically and pan-culturally, charisma is expressed in sacred grammar and imagery.

Entwining Weberian charisma with Durkheim’s concept of ritual re-frames the interplay of Wagner, Cosima, and the Bayreuth Circle. Philosophically, Durkheim and Weber have similar expectations. As Carlton-Ford reminds us, ‘charismatic leadership should

¹³⁹ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 198.

psychologically transform believers. Similarly, ritual in conjunction with collective effervescence should transform individuals'.¹⁴⁰ Both exert considerable effect upon self-esteem, and, as will unfold over the following chapters self-esteem was a significant issue for many of the inhabitants of a post-Wagner Wahnfried. A crucial factor in charisma is the attribution believers make: 'It is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive'. Importantly, 'charisma [...] may effect a subjective or *internal* reorientation born out of suffering, conflicts, or enthusiasm'.¹⁴¹ Again, such can be said of those inhabiting a post-Wagner Wahnfried.

And so another short step takes us from *Parsifal*, Weber, and Durkheim to the Hofferian mass movement, for central to all these theories is the power of the future. For Hoffer, a mass movement is any compact corporate structure, such as a revolutionary, political, or religious organization, with the capacity to attract people of like interests or objectives. Hoffer is explicit that a mass movement is not necessarily a political movement as that term is generally understood. Rather, mass movements are essentially 'generating plants of general enthusiasm',¹⁴² and 'conspicuous instrument[s] of change'.¹⁴³ By identifying a malady, in other words a social or political condition in need of rectification, a mass movement then offers itself as a cure and, irrespective of its doctrine or agenda, breeds 'fanaticism, enthusiasm, hope, hatred and intolerance'.¹⁴⁴ Common to all mass movements is the capacity to release powerful flows of activity in various spheres of life, and whatever their nature, all mass movements demand a blind faith and single-hearted allegiance.¹⁴⁵

Such was Wagnerism, for be it theological, political, sociological, or aesthetic, no faith 'is potent unless it also has faith in the future [for] as well as being a source of power, it must also claim to be a key to the book of the future'.¹⁴⁶ Wagner's aesthetic made such a claim. 'All movements, however different in doctrine and aspiration, draw their early adherents from the same types of humanity; they all appeal to the same types of mind',¹⁴⁷ of which alienation is the common denominator.¹⁴⁸ In its active phase, a mass movement 'appeals not to those intent on bolstering and advancing a cherished self, but to those who crave to be rid of an

¹⁴⁰ Steven L. Carlton-Ford, 'Charisma, Ritual, Collective Effervescence, and Self-Esteem', *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 365-387 (365).

¹⁴¹ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 245. [Italics as original]

¹⁴² Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 15.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴⁸ While Hoffer uses the term 'The Frustrated' to describe those so predisposed, here it can be suggested that frustration is a symptom of alienation.

unwanted self'.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, a mass movement magnetises and maintains a following 'not because it can satisfy the desire for self-advancement, but because it can satisfy the passion for self-renunciation.'¹⁵⁰ In offering the key to the future Wagner, like Kafka's Josephina, made certain strata of society visible. Like her, he gave the disaffected a place, all the while looking towards the future. And so to paraphrase Field, it was the aesthetic utopianism of Bayreuth, its stress on the inward condition of the individual, and on self-realisation through art that fascinated.¹⁵¹ This latter point is crucial to an understanding of Cosima Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Winifred Wagner. The details of their circumstances differed but, to them, mass movements, whether aesthetic or political, were a means of ridding themselves of an unwanted self, for as Hoffer observes:

When our individual interests and prospects do not seem worth living for, we are in desperate need of something apart from us to live for. All forms of dedication, devotion, loyalty and self-surrender are in essence a desperate clinging to something which might give worth to our futile, spoiled lives. Hence the embracing of a substitute will be passionate and extreme. We can have qualified confidence in ourselves, but the faith we have in our nation, religion, race or holy cause has to be extravagant and uncompromising. A substitute embraced in moderation cannot supplant and efface the self we want to forget. We cannot be sure that we have something worth living for unless we are ready to die for it. The readiness to die is evidence to ourselves and others that what we had to take as a substitute for an irrevocably missed or spoilt first choice is indeed the best there ever was.¹⁵²

Towards a post-Wagner Bayreuth

Dieter Borchmeyer has noted that while we tend not to hear of people describing themselves as Shakespeareans or Mozarteans, there are those who define themselves specifically as Wagnerians.¹⁵³ Considering what has been discussed over the course of this chapter, and in answer to Borchmeyer, it seems appropriate to recall a letter Cosima wrote to her daughter Isolde:

As an opera composer your papa cannot be regarded as a party leader, but he may be seen as the founder of Bayreuth and as a philosopher, and to that extent the term Wagnerian may be used to describe those people who everywhere follow him [...] That is why there can be Wagnerians because there is a Wagnerian idea that these people attempt to put into practice, whereas there can be no Lisztians as your

¹⁴⁹ Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 25.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Geoffrey G. Field, *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 54-55. See also David Large and William Weber (eds.), *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 113-125.

¹⁵² Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 28-29.

¹⁵³ Dieter Borchmeyer, Daphne Ellis (trans.), *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), vii.

grandpapa, although a great artist, did not implement any ideas any more than Beethoven and others did.¹⁵⁴

The issue is what that ‘Wagnerian idea’ was and how it was put into practice. Wagner left Germany while it was still in the process of becoming. Physically present or not, he became for many the representation of the charismatic leader. He was German identity incarnate. In this, perhaps, lies Wagner’s later appeal to Nazism for, as Magee has pointed out, Wagner’s social and political tendencies ran contrary to everything the Nazis stood for,¹⁵⁵ and as Hitler’s personal secretary Traudl Junge later noted, many Nazi officials, and Germans in general, found Wagner’s art utterly boring.¹⁵⁶ In more ways than one, then, Wagner was overtaken by his own reception.

But with Wagner, those in accord with this aesthetic had been deeply in touch with a highly-charged archetypal realm. Wagner had understood the amoral nature of those powers and harnessed them by his creativity. By this he drew out what was highly charged in others. But now Wagner was dead and the personal had eroded. Without Wagner only the archetypal images were left. Wagnerism became no longer a matter of creation but of curation, and what creative processes there were revolved around the construction of the Wagner Myth.

It was the aesthetic, rather than political, utopianism of Wagner’s Bayreuth, its link to the past (albeit an imagined past), and its promise of both tradition and rebirth that appealed to people in times of change and national anxiety. But after Wagner’s death his ideals became recalibrated, re-versioned, read as something else and not only according to the prevailing *Zeitgeist* but also to the psychologies of the non-indigenously German gatekeepers of the Bayreuth Circle to whom Wagner’s legacy was entrusted. For while Hoffer maintains that faith in the future renders us receptive to change, for some, including the Bayreuthians, change was synonymous with decline.¹⁵⁷

Distinct from the many national and international Wagner Societies that Wagner came to avoid, the elite of the Bayreuth Circle, having once been close to the composer, regarded themselves not as epigones but interpreters. Challenging and abstruse though Wagner’s ideas were, if they were to be rendered coherent in the post-Wagner world they would first require

¹⁵⁴ Cosima Wagner to Daniela von Bülow. Letter dated 4 April 1881. See Max Freiherr von Waldberg (ed.), *Cosima Wagners Briefe an ihre Tochter* (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1933), 185, note 48. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 196.

¹⁵⁵ Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 366.

¹⁵⁶ See Traudl Junge, Melissa Muller (ed.), Anthea Bell (trans.), *Until the Final Hour: Hitler’s Last Secretary* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003), 81. This would represent the break between high and low culture, which will also get entangled with modernism versus popular culture, in which case giving Wagner lip service would be consistent in twentieth century terms.

¹⁵⁷ Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 22.

clarification, and it was the belief of the Bayreuth Circle that, in this respect, they were the best qualified to do so. It is notable that the group comprised few, if any, of Wagner's musical staff: like Wagner's conductor of choice, Hermann Levi, they refused to endorse the Circle's pseudo-intellectualism and politicisation of Wagner. It was therefore not for nothing that Harry von Kessler was prompted to remark: 'it throws a curious light on Wagner's admirers and on Wagner himself, that one can enjoy him passionately without understanding him'.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, for Michael Karbaum the work of the Bayreuth Circle was 'one of the darkest chapters in the history of German ideas'.¹⁵⁹

As with everything in the built world, the complexion of an organisation is dependent upon the dispositions of those who possess it. And so Wagner became a palimpsest. He was not consigned to history as an eccentric or aberration of the high Romantic, but accorded an afterlife during which he, his works, and his enterprise acquired new meanings. Claiming authority, lesser mortals attempted to grasp the archetypes but, Semele-like, were incinerated by them for their presumption. Montsalvat fell in time to the Nazis. Although Cosima, Chamberlain and Winifred were all in different ways implicated, their complicity was linked by the pursuit of personal identity. As will unfold over the following series of character studies, Wagner, as he had with others, drew out the essences of these individuals. No less than in the case of Wagner, their life cycles were interwoven with the social context in which they came to fruition, and, like Wagner, their journeys towards individuation played out against the backdrop of their particular now.

¹⁵⁸ Harry von Kessler. Diary entry dated 19 July 1897. See Roland S. Kamselak, Ulrich Ott (eds.), *Das Tagebuch* Vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 2004-2010), 70. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 201. Count Harry Clément Ulrich Kessler (1868-1937): Anglo-German diplomat, writer and patron of modern art.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Karbaum, *Studien zur Geschichte des Bayreuther Festspiele, 1876-1976* Vol. 1 (Regensburg: Bosse, 1976), 132. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 199.

Chapter 2

Cosima Wagner

For many of the post-Holocaust generation she was a rabid anti-Semite, a proto-Nazi who, along with others of the Bayreuth Circle, politicised the Wagnerian aesthetic. For Richard Wagner, Francesca Gaetana Cosima von Bülow née Liszt was lover, muse, redemptive feminine and, ultimately, the representation of his will. As his widow she became for countless Wagnerians, but, above all, for herself, the Guardian of the Wagnerian Grail.¹ Wagner's willing avatar, she was an epochal *conductus et conducere* in the sense of leading and bringing Wagnerians together, mediating between the deceased and the living, and 'identifying with her husband's person and works'² to such a degree that 'the dead Meister seemed to live on' in her.³ To others she was simply a French autocrat. Cosima has many faces. Or, more accurately, many facets, all of which overlap and intersect, and all of which originated in the character of her psychology. This chapter will explore that psychology, its various planes, their likely origins, and agency in shaping a post-Wagner Bayreuth.

It is not a simple discourse. While many images of Cosima are imprinted as much with atavistic traditions as Wagnerian hyperbole or contemporary social expectations, aspects of her behaviour, such as her fixation upon suffering and the paradoxical coexistence of hauteur and willing subservience, suggest deeper issues. These characteristics are detectable in her personal writings. From them one senses that Cosima was simultaneously of a narcissistic and masochistic personality type for there are also indications that the dynamics of her relationship with Wagner, and her management of his afterlife, were informed as much by her reading of herself as by her reading of the composer or his aesthetic. Moreover, evidence suggests those readings were not the product of her association with Wagner but of her pre-Wagner life which lacked those elements now considered essential for effective individuation, rendering her susceptible to Wagner and the mechanics of Wagnerism discussed in the previous chapter. While Cosima's story, like those of her son- and daughter-in-law, Houston

¹ 'Guardian of the Wagnerian Grail': Cosima Wagner as referred to by Richard Graf du Moulin Eckart in Richard Graf du Moulin Eckart, *Cosima Wagner: Ein Lebens- und Charakterbild*, 2 Vols. (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1929-1930); Richard Graf du Moulin Eckart, *Cosima Wagner: Ein Lebens- und Charakterbild: Die Herrin von Bayreuth 1883-1930* (Hamburg: Severus, 2012).

² Oliver Hilmes, Stewart Spencer (trans.), *Cosima Wagner: The Lady of Bayreuth* (London: Yale University Press, 2011), xv.

³ *Ibid.*

Stewart Chamberlain and Winifred Wagner, can be defined as the pursuit of identity ultimately found in the service of Wagner, the search for Cosima should commence not in the realm of Wagnerian cliché or hyperbole, nor in the historical events with which she has since become associated, important though they are, but, rather, within her own discourse.

In every account of Cosima, whatever its provenance and reliability, the portrait we gain of her is that of a deeply spiritual yet resolute woman who, over the forty-seven years she lived as Wagner's widow, assiduously protected the memory and legacy of her husband. The methodology she employed in the prosecution of her duties, whether as lover, wife, or avatar, was, and is, not without its critics, but the consensus seems to be that this was a woman reconciled to what she considered to be her calling. An enigmatic woman, Cosima is not to be found in the historical events of her life but rather in how she responded to them and to the big historical demands placed upon her. We can begin our search for Cosima in how her life is recorded, for it is in the tenor of the documentation that we can gain initial insights into a complex disposition that played such a major role in shaping Wagner's afterlife.

Cosima in the Literature

Considering her cultural significance it is surprising that Cosima has been so little researched in her own right. The body of Wagner scholarship is immense and naturally Cosima features large within it,⁴ yet little seems to have been written specifically about her, at least in English. Apart from the few biographical accounts that appeared at the turn of the last century and the aforementioned 2010 survey by Oliver Himes, *Cosima Wagner: The Lady of Bayreuth*,⁵ all discussed below, there appears to be no in-depth analysis of Cosima, suggesting that her image as the embodiment of Wagner has been transmitted so effectively as to become indelibly imprinted upon the public psyche. Or, perhaps, that like Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Winifred Wagner, Cosima has become so synonymous with a dystopian political ideology that it becomes difficult to uncouple her from it. While she has fared rather better, biographically-speaking, than her son- and daughter-in-law, like them she remains very much on the scholastic periphery.

It was not until the publication of Himes' work that something resembling an objective study of Cosima – or, at least, objective as any mediated account can be – appeared.

⁴ See, for instance, Mark Berry, 'Richard Wagner and the Politics of Music Drama', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.47. No.3, 2004, 663-683; Robert Anderson, 'Cosima's Wagner', *The Musical Times*, Vol.118, No.1618, 1977, 1002-1008; Ernest Newman, 'Cosima Wagner', *The Musical Times*, Vol.71, No..1047 (1 May 1930), 401-402; Eric Salzman, 'On Reading Cosima Wagner's Diaries', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol.68, No.3,1982, 337-352.

⁵ Oliver Himes, *Cosima Wagner: The Lady of Bayreuth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010).

As mentioned, by academic standards the work is journalistic in tone. Nevertheless, it is now widely considered to be the first exhaustive account of its subject available in English and, as such, forms both basis and point of departure for the following discussion.

In his Introduction, Hilmes supplies a concise overview of those early accounts of Cosima, a notable feature of which was their hagiographic nature. Then, Cosima's papers and diaries were unavailable to independent researchers. No contemporary critical editions were written because, in general, authors were able to publish only what the Wagner family sanctioned,⁶ suggesting there existed a carefully constructed and guarded discourse. As Hilmes puts it:

True, the family's privileged writers were granted access to the archives, but this access was entirely arbitrary. It is also true, of course, that these authors were not interested in a balanced account of Cosima's life, but were concerned, rather, to glorify the family. The result was a series of biographies notable for their sycophantic, hagiographic tone.⁷

Once such, *Cosima Wagner: Ein Lebens- und Charakterbild* by Richard Graf du Moulin Eckart, was a study of Wagner's widow in two volumes dating from 1929 and 1931, and in which Cosima was famously referred to as 'the greatest woman of the century' and 'the Guardian of the Grail'. Although clearly sycophantic the finished work did not receive the unqualified approval of the Wagner family, Eva, for one, believing the author had 'burned insufficient incense to the glory of the Wagners'.⁸

Two further biographies, the 1935 *Cosima Wagner, die Hüterin des Grals*, a 'novel about the life of a German woman' by Ilse von Lotz,⁹ and Max Millenkovich-Morold's 1937 *Cosima Wagner: ein Lebensbild*, inevitably display a distinct National Socialist tone.¹⁰ Lotz, in particular, presents Cosima as the embodiment of the true German woman and mother. Although Cosima was French, a detail expediently overlooked at the time, the accolade is significant in the sense that it not only reveals Cosima regarded herself primarily as German but also as one corresponding to a German cultural tradition then embodied by another 'foreigner', Winifred Wagner. In this respect Millenkovich-Morold remains useful, for in refuting many of Moulin Eckart's claims as sanctioned by Cosima he presents an image of

⁶ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, xiv-xv.

⁷ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Ilse von Lotz, *Cosima Wagner, die Hüterin des Grals* (np: Görlitz, 1935). The work is also known as *Cosima Wagner, die Hüterin des Grals: Der Lebenroman ein deutschenfrau*.

¹⁰ Max Millenkovich-Morold, *Cosima Wagner: ein Lebensbild* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1938). See also review of this work by 'R.L.J', *Music and Letters*, Vol.1, No.3 (July 1938), 348-349; Bayard Q. Morgan, *Books Abroad*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1938), 81-82. The spelling of Millenkovich-Morold differs according to reviewer.

Cosima as sanctioned by Winifred Wagner. Here we have contrasting representations of the same woman. They may have been prepared according to different agenda and the prevailing Zeitgeist, but they nevertheless demonstrate the multi-faceted nature of Cosima.

More reliable is *Cosima Wagner-Liszt* by ‘Wagner’s lost grandson’, Franz Wilhelm Beidler, son of Cosima’s daughter, Isolde.¹¹ Described by Hilmes as ‘a convincing picture of Cosima’s character and of the age in which she lived’,¹² and subtitled *The Road to the Wagner Myth*, the work is essentially a collection of essays and letters within which Beidler triangulates the memories and testimonies of sufficiently authoritative yet independent persons with his own, empirical, observations. Given the context of the present study, Beidler’s work remains an important document in that a perceptive Beidler acquits Cosima’s hauteur as being in keeping with the spirit of Wilhelmenian Germany, her standing and patrician background appealing not only to the German upper class but also the new aristocracy of financiers and industrialists who were currently forming the upper stratum of the Reich.¹³ It was an environment in which Wagner and Bayreuth were becoming recalibrated, regarded more for their national rather than aesthetic significance, hence Beidler’s subtitle. However, there are caveats. Although Cosima’s imperiousness may have chimed with the spirit of the age, being seemingly intrinsic to her disposition it predates the formation of the Second Reich. Secondly, we should bear in mind Beidler was an unsuccessful claimant to his Bayreuth inheritance: the failure of the paternity suit his mother brought against Cosima effectively erased Beidler from the family lineage. This cannot be overlooked as possibly influencing his editorial decisions, particularly so when ostracism would deny Beidler access to family records, the greater part of which only passed into the public domain with the sale of the Wagner Archive to the city of Bayreuth in 1973, rendering them available to scholars for the first time.¹⁴

¹¹ Dieter Borchmeyer (ed.), *Cosima Wagner-Liszt: Der Weg zum Wagner-Mythos. Ausgewählter Schriften des ersten Wagner-Enkels und sein unveröffentlichter Briefwechsel mit Thomas Mann* (Bielefeld: Pendragon Verlag, 1997). Until the birth of Wieland Wagner in 1917, Franz Wilhelm Beidler (1901-1980) was the only grandson of Richard Wagner, and it was in a letter to Ernest Newman, dated October 1937 that Beidler described himself as ‘Wagner’s lost grandson’. See also Dieter Borchmeyer, Daphne Ellis (trans.), *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2003), 329.

¹² Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, xv.

¹³ Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, 335.

¹⁴ In 1973, Winifred Wagner sold the *Festspielhaus*, the family’s Bayreuth home Wahnfried, and the Wagner Archive to the City of Bayreuth for the sum of 12.4 million marks. The transaction finally assured the financial stability of both the Festival and the Wagner family. In accordance with the terms of the purchase, the civic authorities then transferred the *Festspielhaus*, Wahnfried, and the Archive into the care of the newly formed Richard Wagner Foundation. See also this volume Chapter 4, 178.

Consequently, in 1987, Dietrich Mack published an edition of 350 letters between Cosima and Wagner's patron, King Ludwig II of Bavaria.¹⁵ While Mack presents data hitherto unseen, it can be said the value of his work rests upon that virtue alone. There is no attempt at any form of critical analysis and subsequent scholarship, by Mack or others, appears to rotate around this collative style of research. And so, as far as can be discerned, nothing of any further academic significance, at least critically and in English, was published until Hilmes' work, Françoise Giroud's *Cosima, la sublime* of 1996 being dismissed by Hilmes for its journalistic flavour and lack of research.¹⁶

However, in surveying the available literature Hilmes overlooks two significant points. Firstly, it is surprising that, given its provenance, he makes no reference to Alice Hunt Sokoloff's 1970 *Cosima Wagner: A Biography*.¹⁷ Sokoloff was a pupil of one of Liszt's most favoured students, Alexander Siloti,¹⁸ and, in the main, her narrative is constructed from his memories, recollections, and letters which she augments with those of his associates. Again there are qualifying factors: testimonies are notoriously unreliable and one should remember a number of Liszt's pupils were openly antagonistic towards his daughter, maintaining that her accounts of events and, especially, of her ministrations during her father's final days do not correspond to the facts as recalled by them.

Secondly, in dismissing Eckart, Lotz, and Millenkovich-Morold Hilmes fails to recognise that while these authors may not offer scientific evidence *as such* the manner in which the material is presented offers crucial evidence in other respects. It is because of their hagiographic nature these works are significant, for here we see how the post-Wagner machine operated under the direction of Cosima, providing insights into her character. Hilmes also omits to mention that Cosima's editorial control was not confined to the printed word but extended to any Wagner-related work. One recalls Carl Fröhlich's 1913 film, *The Life and Works of Richard Wagner*, now widely recognised as being the first 'bio-pic', but one that presents its content, which includes a representation of Cosima, in a manner carefully tailored to her approval.¹⁹ It is, therefore, in the praise of Cosima and in her management of the

¹⁵ Dietrich Mack, *Das zweite Leben: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1987).

¹⁶ An opinion this study cannot verify as the work was found to be untraceable.

¹⁷ Alice Hunt Sokoloff, *Cosima Wagner: A Biography* (London: Macdonald, 1970).

¹⁸ Alexander Siloti (1863-1945): Russian pianist, conductor, and teacher.

¹⁹ Carl Fröhlich's film *The Life and Works of Richard Wagner* was released in November 1913. Made as part of the Wagner centenary celebrations, and with a running time of eighty-two minutes rather than the then customary ten, the film was, to date, the most adventurous exercise in cinematography, predating D. W. Griffiths' American Civil War epic, *Birth of a Nation*, traditionally held as being the first 'long' silent movie, by some two years. In 1933, Fröhlich became a member of the National Socialist Party and, in time, President of the *Reichsfilmkammer*, an organisation which controlled access to, and practise within, the German film industry.

Wagner brand that we encounter the essence of the woman and witness a form of narcissism that does not entirely originate in her sense of entitlement as widow of an important cultural figure or curator of his legacy.

As will be discussed in due course, narcissism manifests itself in many forms, several of which, as defined by Sandy Hotchkiss,²⁰ are discernible in Cosima's behaviour and actions, underpinning, for instance, the disparity of perspective that often exists between her version of events and those of her coevals. Consequently, an appreciation of Cosima's image of herself and how she saw the world, the origins of these impressions, and the means by which they were transmitted is central to an understanding of her. The value of, say, Sokoloff's narrative lies not in the seemingly mundane, in the everyday events of the Wagner household as recorded by Cosima, but in how Cosima records those incidents. Cosima's writings are a window into her psychology, and since there is no better place to encounter that psychology than in her personal diaries it is with them that we should begin.

The Diaries

Unseen by scholars until the Wagner archive was opened to public scrutiny, Cosima's diaries comprise a series of twenty-one identical volumes measuring 17.2 cm. x 22cm. Entries commence on Friday 1 January 1869, a few months after Cosima fled her unhappy marriage to Hans von Bülow to join Wagner at Tribschen,²¹ and terminate in Venice on Monday 12 February 1883, the day before Wagner died of a supposed heart attack.²²

In 1879 Wagner had written to Ludwig II, '[Cosima] is writing for our son a remarkably exact diary, in which there are entries for every day regarding my state of health, my work, and my occasional sayings, etc.'²³ But the diaries are about rather more than Wagner or the day-to-day vexations of the Wagner household: they are an insight into Cosima's mind and the dynamics of her singular relationship with the composer for whom she risked everything by abandoning her husband and family. They are a reflective validation of

Honoured by Josef Goebbels, after the war Fröhlich was arrested for his association with the Third Reich. De-Nazified in 1948, his films were confiscated by the new Federal Republic.

²⁰ See Sandy Hotchkiss and James F. Masterson, *Why Is It All About You?: The Seven Deadly Sins of Narcissism* (New York: Simon and Schuster Free Press, 2003).

²¹ Ostensibly, Cosima had joined Wagner at Tribschen to act as his personal assistant, her principle duty being to take down his memoirs to dictation.

²² Cosima's final diary entry is immediately followed by an account of Wagner's death written by Cosima's eldest daughter, Daniela.

²³ Richard Wagner to King Ludwig II of Bavaria. Letter dated 11 October 1879, as quoted in Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (eds.), Geoffrey Skelton (trans.), *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 1* (London: Collins, 1978), 18. In reality, Wagner and Cosima's son, Siegfried, never saw the diaries. For an account of this and the diaries' history until their eventual publication see Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 1*, 17-24.

her actions to date and, as such, they not only petition the reader for understanding but also articulate a longing for punishment and atonement. ‘This book belongs to my children’ reads Cosima’s Dedication, ‘quite especially to Siegfried [...] You shall know every hour of my life, so that one day you will come to see me as I am’.²⁴ And, in a way, we do see her as she is, or was, for the diaries contain many dark crevices. The investigation of these crevices reveals another narrative, one that exists, as it were, between the words. Here we encounter the inner woman; it is a story of guilt, worthlessness, and alienation but, above all, it is one of a journey in pursuit of personal identity.²⁵

Many commentators find the dairies problematic. Eric Salzmänn, for one, doubts their reliability and criticises their author for cosmeticising the truth. As Sokoloff has demonstrated, Cosima’s accounts of events often differ to those of her contemporaries,²⁶ but here, like Hilmes, Salzmänn misses a very important point: when studying Cosima the question surely should not be about the ‘what’ and the ‘when’ but, rather, the ‘how’ and ‘why’. As suggested above, it is her reading of events and not the events themselves that is of interest, for in her readings of things we discover how she sees herself, the world, and her location within it.

The glare of Wagner’s dynamic personality and the enormity of his cultural significance have apparently blinded the reader to this internalisation and other, less visible characteristics of the diaries. To date, the volumes appear not to have been scrutinised for the many insights they unwittingly afford, or to have been subjected to any psychological or sociological theory – historical and cultural contexts notwithstanding – by which to test and better understand their author,²⁷ for certainly there are moments when that author’s inner disposition – not to mention those of her closest associates – are ingenuously disclosed.

²⁴ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner’s Diaries Vol. 1*, 27.

²⁵ By necessity, this study has consulted Cosima’s dairies in an English translation by Stewart Spencer. One therefore encounters Cosima via the intervening hand of the translator who admits that, in this particular case, the process of translation presented a range of stylistic and contextual issues, including the ‘foreignness’ of Cosima’s German and the ethical question as to whether this should be reflected in an equivalent ‘foreign’ English. While the untranslatability of the many colloquialisms, puns, and word play of which Wagner was fond posed challenges, sufficient material was uncovered to warrant the use of Spencer’s edition.

²⁶ Consonant with current historiographical discourse, it is considered unhistorical to claim that any one account of an event is definitive. An account of an incident, and one’s response to it, is necessarily subjective and the product of individual perspective. Contemporary sources provide accounts of events which differ from those by Cosima. However, since Wagner had as many enemies as he had admirers, and considering the strength of feeling held by both factions, it is not possible, at this juncture, to assert that the accounts of either party, or of the commentator, are entirely disinterested or accurate.

²⁷ Clearly, here one is studying a nineteenth-century psychology within the terms of twentieth- and twenty-first century thinking. While Foucault repudiates the existence of ‘human nature’ he does, however, admit to the existence of what he calls ‘patterns human behaviour’. Logically, certain phenomena are constant; it is that by which we know them that alters with time.

Wagner's irascibility, for instance: its causes, and her methods of managing it;²⁸ or her assurances to the reader that her life with the dyspeptic composer was not as miserable as may be supposed,²⁹ a remark which, in itself, invites investigation. Apart from recording often unintentionally amusing domestic incidents, such as the irritation caused by the arrival of a team of interior decorators during the composition of a particularly difficult passage of *Götterdämmerung*, the diaries reveal a portrait of Cosima which contrasts sharply with that of the patrician and somewhat supercilious woman she presented to the world at large.

Ostensibly, her regard for station can be attributed to the chauvinism of her French upbringing and to the respect that is due by virtue of qualification, that is to say as the daughter of one prominent artist, Franz Liszt, and the muse and spouse of another, Richard Wagner. However, Cosima's grandiosity may not be narcissistic as the term narcissism is commonly understood, that is to say as demonstrating an overly high regard for oneself. On the contrary, the inner Cosima appears to have been insecure. According to several theoretical models discussed below, her hauteur can be read as a persona, a coping mechanism or compensatory device masking the sense of guilt and worthlessness inculcated during a troubled childhood upon which she fixated. Here was Cosima's narcissism, an inverse or negative narcissism, as it were, and, as we shall see, Wagner nourished it.

A notable feature of Cosima's diaries is her frequent applications to Wagner for his approval and reassurance she is German, a singular preoccupation, considering her pedigree, particularly when the obsession appears to pre-date any obvious political or nationalistic stimuli such as the Franco-Prussian war or the establishment of the Second Reich. While Cosima's need for approval can be attributed to childhood circumstances her need to be considered indigenous to an alien nation, particularly at a time when that nation was, itself, building an ideology of nationhood born of anxiety, and one she had once regarded as something of a cultural backwater, is notable.

Cosima was French, and despite the many years she lived in Germany and of her connection with an important cultural institution there she was consistently regarded by many Germans as French. Throughout her life, French conventions and attitudes underscored her outlook. As Sokoloff observes:

[Cosima's] entire upbringing had been French; her mother was French; [her father] Liszt regarded France as his adopted home and spoke French always by preference. Cosima had not only inherited much of her mother's uniquely French grace and

²⁸ See, for instance, Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol.2*, 725. Entry dated 29 September 1881; *Ibid.*, 778, entry dated 28 December 1881.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 804. Entry dated 7 February 1882.

charm, but she had acquired fully the arts and graces of a Frenchwoman. Fluent as her German was, she nevertheless spoke it with a slight French accent throughout her long life.³⁰

Indeed, decades later, Winifred Wagner described her elderly mother-in-law's command of German as still being that of a well-trained linguist.³¹ For some, it was Cosima's imperiousness that betrayed her French origin, inappropriate behaviour, perhaps, for one so closely linked to an important German institution such as Bayreuth – more so when, upon Wagner's death, and without any provision by him, she had assumed command of the institution, marginalising many connected with the enterprise in the process. To these, and a considerable number of other Germans, hostile or envious, Cosima would always be known as the 'Frenchwoman'.

And yet Cosima detested France and the French, remaining throughout her long life more German than the Germans in her sympathies.³² That her paternal grandparents had been German-speaking Austro-Hungarians may have unconsciously tinted Cosima's attitudes. Conversely, it may have been the conscious need to integrate with the people and cultural traditions of Germany, together with an awareness of her significance as widow of an important national figure that led to a degree of over-compensatory behaviour which she evidently presumed to be appropriate. But it can also be said her grandiosity originated in something deeper, specifically in the need to *feel* superior for which her imperiousness, like her distaste for France and all things French was an attempt to come to terms with her unhappy French upbringing.³³ As she once confessed:

³⁰ Sokoloff, *Cosima Wagner*, 221-222.

³¹ Transcript of a tape-recorded interview between Winifred Wagner and Geoffrey Skelton, Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung, Bayreuth, as quoted in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 49. There has been much discussion regarding Cosima's proficiency in the German language. Eric Salzmann has drawn attention to the many grammatical errors and solecisms to be found in Cosima's diaries and correspondence, and that these inaccuracies distort or invalidate many of her accounts of events. However, as Ernest Newman reminds us, Cosima, although born and raised stolidly French, must have been conversant with the German language from an early age: her mother was of German descent on her own maternal side, and Cosima's paternal grandmother, Anna, under whose care the Liszt children were entrusted for a time, spoke German fluently, learning only a small amount of French in her later years. Correspondence between Franz Liszt and his mother contain references to Cosima reciting German poetry at the age of eleven. At fourteen, Cosima is known to have been writing letters in German using Gothic script. She is also known to have conversed in German with her brother, Daniel, in preparation for his visit to Weimar. Moreover, at eighteen, Cosima married the German conductor, Hans von Bülow, went to live with him in Berlin where she moved in significant German cultural circles, and thereafter spent her life in Germany. Newman also counters criticism of Cosima's linguistic skills by drawing attention to the grammatical and stylistic errors to be found in the writings of esteemed native Germans, specifically Wagner and Nietzsche. See Ernest Newman, *Fact and Fiction about Wagner* (London: Cassell, 1931), 281-284. Considering Cosima came to loathe her native France and its people it is strange that she expended so little effort to lose her French accent, suggesting Cosima's French-accented German was either an affectation or a symptom of deeper issues, or both.

³² Sokoloff, *Cosima Wagner*, 221-222.

³³ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 116.

Everything that hurt me sounded French, everything that healed me, German; my good grandmother who loved me in my childhood spoke German, whereas my governesses and the adoptive mothers who took charge of me spoke French, the German language was a place of refuge that I and my brother and sister sought out in order to escape from their care; Herr von Bulow and I seasoned the wretchedness of our marriage with the pepper of Gallic wit. With the first letter I wrote to Wagner –and more generally, too – the eternal hour of my liberation struck. My faith, my love, and my hope are German, whereas nothing that affects my heart occurs to me in French.³⁴

Prudently, Cosima learned to conceal her Francophobia: in time the French would become the most responsive of people to Wagner's works and France was to house many influential and financially useful Wagner Societies. Nevertheless, Cosima's dislike of her native country and its people persisted, and the issues which can be said to have underpinned her outlook can also be said to have informed her notorious anti-Semitism. Here, a reading of Foucault and Jung can offer an explanation.

Unlike Wagner, Cosima appears to have been curiously intransigent in her opinions and no more so than in her attitude towards the Jews. Then, anti-Semitism was part of a wider and older conversation, and therefore the anti-Semitism that Cosima has since been accused of propagating was not excusive to her or Wagner. But as Dieter Scholz notes, 'the difference between Wagner and Cosima's remarks [about the Jews] is that Wagner was always capable of revising his views and adopting a sense of self-critical distance, even demonstrating a certain ability to learn from his own experiences'.³⁵ This is proven by the various revisionist comments Wagner made in later life, duly noted by Cosima in her diaries.³⁶ Indeed, as Roger Scruton reminds us, Wagner's Jewish assistant, Heinrich Porges, had always 'regarded Wagner's anti-Semitism as a regrettable weakness rather than the heart of what he was as an artist and as a man'.³⁷ Wagner's sagacity was based upon pragmatism in that it 'was coupled with a political awareness and a clear talent for observing social changes, whereas Cosima's judgements were unchanging'.³⁸ In contrast to Wagner whose anti-Semitism derived largely from a philosophical standpoint, not to mention a suspicion he may have been Jewish himself,

³⁴ Cosima Wagner to Marie von Schleinitz. Letter dated 31May1871. Wagner Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung, Bayreuth. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 116-117.

³⁵ Dieter David Scholz, *Richard Wagner's Antisemitismus: Jahrhundertgenie im Zweilicht. Eine Korrektur.* (Berlin: Parthas, 2000), 63.

³⁶ The aging Wagner later regretted his impulsiveness regarding the publication of his nascent beliefs and, in her diaries, Cosima notes a significant comment by him: 'If I ever wrote again about the Jews, I should say I have nothing against them, it is just that they joined us Germans too soon, we were not yet steady enough to absorb them'. See Gregor Delvin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol.2*, 207. Entry dated 22 November 1878. Bran Magee translates 'steady' as 'stable'. See Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 2001), 73.

³⁷ Roger Scruton, *The Ring of Truth: The Wisdom of Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), 11.

³⁸ Scholz, *Richard Wagner's Antisemitismus*, 63.

Cosima had no such point of reference. Her othering seems to have been integral to her personality. Cosima's anti-Semitism, along with many of her other scruples, may have been contracted at a very young age from her father's paramour, 'the rabidly Catholic Caroline Sayn-Wittgenstein or the no less fanatical Madame Patersi Fossombroni, Cosima's governess'.³⁹ Conversely, we can read Cosima's prejudices in terms of what Foucault would call hetero-referential racism, in other words a form of racism that manifests itself in xenophobia and the negation of the value of the other via stereotypes, becoming auto-referential in affirming the superior value of the self while following a logic of seclusion. Internal racism ensues, an auto-referential form of racism that is concerned with the composition, reproduction, and development of the population by isolating and excluding the abnormal; a biopolitical caesura, as it were, between worthy and unworthy life. In Cosima's case, it can be said to be an outlook born of unhappy childhood experiences and an inculcated sense of worthlessness and resentment, as much as any contemporaneous sociological and racial theory, for as Hilmes proposes,

[Cosima] reviled the Jews because she lacked the ability to see herself as a fully integrated person. She was never at peace with herself but felt weak and inferior and found in the Jews a group that in her opinion was beneath even her. In spite of all her complexes, she could point the finger of blame at these people.⁴⁰

For Hilmes, then, Cosima's grandiosity and anti-Semitism were two sides of the same coin: effectively, both were coping mechanisms.⁴¹ But one could go further. Arguably, for Cosima, the general atmosphere of anti-Jewish feeling conveniently masked deeper issues, and not only hers but Germany's as well, for here one may detect the mechanics of the Jungian Shadow at play in that one identifies a deficiency in oneself as a deficiency in another. While the Shadow is the less developed side of ourselves and 'personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself',⁴² its recognition is nevertheless integral to the processes of individuation, that is to say the life-long course of development towards a well-functioning whole by means of integrating innate elements of personality with life experiences. Since individuation is therefore partly dependent upon the recognition of the shadow, it can be suggested that, lacking consistent contact with both parents during what Jung describes as the First and Second Stages of Life – stages in which, sequentially, the mother and father figures are crucial to a child's psychological development – Cosima was denied those elements now considered essential for effective psychic development. So while

³⁹ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 109.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² C.G. Jung, *The Archetype and the Collective Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 1996), 284.

the attitude we now call anti-Semitism was endemic throughout nineteenth-century Western Europe, Cosima's brand of anti-Semitism, like many of her principles, was arguably symptomatic of a delayed individuation. Similarly Germany; here was a nation also in the process of becoming, of discovering its own identity while on a journey towards a well-functioning whole. It is a proposition seemingly supported by Wagner's revisionist comments, mentioned above, that hitherto the country had not yet been ready for assimilation with the Jews.⁴³ Here Wagner demonstrates a wisdom that comes of a well-functioning whole; in other words, of effective individuation and self-development as outlined in the previous chapter. That throughout her life Cosima remained inflexible in her views suggests a state of ineffective individuation. In many ways, then, Cosima and Germany mirror each other, are metaphors for each other, microcosmic and macrocosmic manifestations of similar issues.

Two orthodoxies shaped Cosima's life: Roman Catholicism and Wagnerism. Both demanded subjugation and it is therefore reasonable to assume the expectancies of both checked further the natural emergence of Cosima's personal identity. Yet, paradoxically, it was the very negation of her individuality that ultimately supplied Cosima with the identity and belonging she clearly sought. The doctrinal bleaching that had characterised her formative years created the empty vessel she had been tutored, as a good Roman Catholic, to become. But, ultimately, it was not in the imitation of Christ that Cosima discovered herself but, rather, in the imitation of Richard Wagner. It was for service to him alone that she came to believe that she had been born; it was for he whom she existed and, posthumously, it was for his memory and legacy that she continued to exist, surviving him by some forty-seven years during which both memory and legacy underwent considerable reinterpretation.

In such a way Cosima became Wagner's willing avatar. Without him she may well have reverted to being the empty vessel she had been taught in childhood to be. Possessing no actual independent identity Cosima could once again become rather unremarkable. Here, representation became introjection, a mask behind which, or without which, there was nothing. And so, Cosima developed a persona. She played a role. But as Lawler has noted, 'roles, or performances, far from masking the true person (as is commonly assumed) are what *makes us persons*' and, while we are constantly rehearsing a 'repertoire of behaviours

⁴³ Both Wagner and Martin Luther believed that the conversion of Jews to Christianity was possible. While to the post-Holocaust mind this may appear to be anti-Semitic, Wagner and Luther's ideas were part of an older and wider conversation.

associated with our roles’, these roles ‘become second nature. We are constantly playing various parts, but what those parts add up to is ourselves’.⁴⁴ As Park has written:

It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role [...] It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves [...] In a sense, and in so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves – the role we are striving to live up to – this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons.’⁴⁵

Accordingly, Cosima constructed – became – herself. But, in many ways, hers was a persona based upon negatives. While she was at once muse and avatar she was also sinner and martyr; a sufferer in search of atonement, and the expression of these qualities became her particular narcissism. And so she became as allegorical as any one of Wagner’s characters, each bearing their own cross, as it were, over-identifying with his aesthetic. Yet however saturated with Wagnerian hyperbole the dynamics of Wagner and Cosima’s relationship may have been, we should not overlook the possible psychological origins of the acquiescent role Cosima played in that relationship, acquiescence that pre-dates her Wagner life. The diary entries in which she seeks Wagner’s approval resemble a child seeking a parent’s approval. One begins to suspect that the various identities Cosima derived from their relationship lie not entirely within the realm of the Wagnerian aesthetic *per se* but in Cosima’s pursuit of the archetypes denied her in childhood, specifically the father figure. While Cosima’s paternal grandmother, Anna, may have fulfilled the Jungian mother archetype there appears to have been no one in Cosima’s early life corresponding to its counterpart. And it is here that Cosima’s story becomes a complex landscape defying linear exploration and explanation. Much of what needs to be discussed regarding her life and disposition occurs simultaneously: as in the circular relationship between cause and effect each appears to be the product of the other. And since numerous theoretical models are now crowding for attention it will be advantageous, here, to offer a concise biographical study of Cosima; one that is based not only upon the historical data provided by Hilmes, but also upon Cosima’s own words and the insights afforded by revisiting afresh her diaries.

⁴⁴ Stephanie Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 106. [Italics as original]

⁴⁵ R.E. Park, *Race and Culture* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1950), 249-250.

Cosima: A Concise Biography

Francesca Gaetana Cosima Liszt was the second of three natural children born to the Hungarian Franz Liszt, and his French paramour, the Countess Marie d'Agoult.⁴⁶ After the birth of their third child, Daniel, the couple became increasingly estranged, their relationship acrimonious, and they sparred over their children's welfare. Consequently, from 1839, Cosima and her siblings, Blandine and Daniel, were raised by their Austrian-born paternal grandmother, Anna Liszt, whom they adored.⁴⁷ Their father assumed sole responsibility for his children's education while their mother apparently paid them scant regard, except when it was tactically advantageous to do so in her ongoing battle with their father.

When in time Daniel was sent away to school his sisters were removed from Anna's care to be placed under the tutelage of governesses, the aforementioned ascetic Madame Louise Adélaïde Patersi Frombossi, a seventy-two year old widow and erstwhile governess of Liszt's current lover, the Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein,⁴⁸ and her equally austere and unmarried elder sister, Madame Thomas de Saint-Mars. The values of these women, based upon a stringent Roman Catholic orthodoxy and a cherished pre-Revolutionary France, were central to the educational programme they designed for the Liszt girls,⁴⁹ and were inculcated with such force that they remained embedded in Cosima's psyche throughout her long life.

In many ways pre-echoing Gobineau's writings, the governesses believed in a world-order that was becoming an increasingly distant memory, and in actions which expose their own social background they instilled in their impressionable wards a 'contempt for all things

⁴⁶ Maria Catherine Sophie de Flavigny, daughter of Alexander Victor Francois Vicomte de Flavigny (1770-1819) and Maria Elizabeth Bethmann (1772-1847), daughter of a German banker. In 1827, Marie married Charles Louis Constant d'Agoult, Comte d'Agoult (1790-1875). They were divorced in 1835 after which Marie lived with Franz Liszt (1811-1896) who was six years her junior and to whom she had three children: Blandine (1835-1862) who was to become first wife of the Prime Minister of France, Émile Ollivier; Cosima (1837-1930), and Daniel (1839-1859), a promising pianist who died of tuberculosis. Marie d'Agoult wrote romantic literature under the pen name of Daniel Stern.

⁴⁷ Anna Liszt, née Lager (1788-1866). Born Krems, Austria. In 1811, Anna married Adam Liszt (1776-1827), a musician at the Esterhazy estate. After her husband's death Anna moved to Paris where, in 1839, she raised her two granddaughters, Blandine and Cosima. Her grandson, Daniel, joined them in 1841. Apart from the little French she learned in later life, German was Anna's only language and it is believed that, essentially, she was uneducated.

⁴⁸ Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein (1819-1887). Born Karolina Elzietta Iwanowska, at the age of seventeen, and under parental pressure, she married Prince Nikolas zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berle-Burg-Ludwigsburg (1812-1864), an officer in the Russian service and son of Ludwig Adolph Pete, Prince Wittgenstein (1769-1843), a Russian Field General who distinguished himself in the Napoleonic Wars. An author of note, and a supporter of Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) who dedicated his opera, *Les Troyens (The Trojans)* to her, Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein pursued a liaison with Liszt that lasted some forty years.

⁴⁹ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 18-19.

bourgeois'.⁵⁰ All forms of enjoyment were abhorrent to Mdm. Patersi. In fact, to her, 'enjoyment' was an alien concept, something to be discouraged along with other hedonistic pursuits such as 'comfort'. Again, this asceticism was instilled in the Liszt girls in such a way that it became an intrinsic part of Cosima's personality. By contrast, Blandine seems not to have been so indelibly effected, suggesting there may have been other, underlying issues in Cosima's personality rendering her susceptible to authority and indoctrination.

Effectively, the Liszt children grew up without consistent contact with their biological parents, at one point not seeing their father for nine years. Even allowing for nineteenth-century conventions in parenting and education, and for the benefit of hindsight that Foucauldian archaeology affords us, it would appear that Cosima grew up in an atmosphere not conducive to one of such an uncommonly sensitive nature as she.

'How alien everything to do with the world has now become to me! And I know that nobody in it has ever loved me'.⁵¹ So wrote Cosima in her diary on 11 January 1869. The previous November she had abandoned her husband, the celebrated conductor and former pupil of her father, Hans von Bülow, and their children in order to join the object of her devotion, Richard Wagner, at his Villa Tribschen, near Lucerne, where, on 25 August 1870, they married.

Some thirteen years earlier, on the morning of Tuesday 18 August 1857, and following a complicated courtship in which each felt themselves unworthy of the other, Cosima had married Bülow in St. Hedwig's church, Berlin. Evidence would suggest that the marriage had been prompted by pity, not love. The couple had become engaged in October 1855, soon after a badly received concert Bülow had conducted, also in Berlin, after which he suffered a nervous breakdown. Liszt assisted the conductor home and then, believing Bülow to be alone, departed. However, Cosima had remained. She sat with Bülow throughout the night, consoling him. They opened up their souls to each other, exchanging unhappy tales about their lives and discovering many of their experiences to be mutual. By morning they found themselves engaged. Two years later, and much against Liszt's advice, they married.

Since the bride was Roman Catholic convention required the ceremony to be conducted accordingly. Since Bülow, a Protestant, wished to avoid the upheaval of a full-scale social event, the ceremony was low-key and announced in the press retrospectively and in the briefest manner. Only immediate family were present; Cosima's mother, siblings, and beloved paternal grandmother were absent. The union was generally considered advantageous

⁵⁰ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 18-19.

⁵¹ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 1*, 35. Entry dated 11 January 1869.

to the illegitimate Cosima: not only did it supply her with a name and security but, as befitted the daughter of an eminent musician, positioned her firmly within the German musical arena. Nevertheless, the marriage would prove to be disastrous.

For another of Liszt's students, Peter Cornelius,⁵² the marriage represented 'a sacrifice offered up by a friend to his master, Liszt; [Bülow's] aim was to give the natural child a brilliant, honourable name and thereby give the father a profound sense of satisfaction and a lifetime's solace. It was an act of gratitude.'⁵³ It was certainly not an act of love; except, perhaps, in the sense of Christian self-sacrifice where it chimed with Cosima's martyr-like disposition.

Liszt was acutely aware of his student's temperament. In many ways paralleling Friedrich Wiek's concerns about the relationship between his daughter, Clara, and Robert Schumann, Liszt felt Bülow's complex personality unsuitable for the ingenuous Cosima. Liszt had purposely procrastinated in giving the union his blessing, arguing that his daughter was still too young to commit herself to such a significant step and advising a further period of one year to elapse before giving it serious consideration.

Despite the advantages marriage would bring her, throughout the preparations Cosima remained indifferent and proceeded in a mood of utmost resignation, or, in her own words, 'without making any move' of her own and 'above all, without any brooding on the matter'.⁵⁴ Indeed, as late as 1881 Cosima still wondered how she and Bülow ever managed to become engaged: 'Even now I do not know how we ended up getting married', she confided to their daughter, Daniela,⁵⁵ noting further in her diary, 'It was a great misunderstanding that bound us together in marriage; my feelings toward him are today still the same as twelve years ago: great sympathy with his destiny, pleasure in his qualities of mind and heart, genuine respect for his character, however completely different our temperaments'.⁵⁶

It was in 1853 that Cosima first met Wagner. The composer had accompanied Liszt, Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, and her daughter, Marie, on a visit to Paris, during which, on 10 October, Liszt, as noted above, saw his three children for the first time in nine years. The meeting was uncomfortable for all concerned. As Wagner later wrote:

⁵² Peter Cornelius (1824-1874): Composer, poet, music critic, and musical assistant to Richard Wagner.

⁵³ Peter Cornelius to his fiancé. Undated letter, presumed early June 1866. See Carl Maria Cornelius (ed.), *Peter Cornelius: Ausgewählte Briefe nebst Tagbuchblättern und Gelegenheitsgedichten*, 4 Vols. (Leipzig: np., 1904-5), Vol. 2, 382. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 42.

⁵⁴ Cosima Wagner to her daughter, Daniela von Bülow. Letter dated 23 March 1881. See Max Freiherr von Waldberg (ed.), *Cosima Wagner's Briefe an ihre tochter Daniela von Bülow 1866- 1885* (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1933), 176. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 41.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 1*, 33. Entry dated 8 January 1869.

One day, Liszt invited me to spend an evening with his children, who lived a secluded life under the care of a governess. It was a new experience to observe my friend in the company of these girls, who were already growing tall, and his son, who was just entering adolescence. He himself seemed a bit bemused by his role as a father, from which over the years he had derived only the cares and none of the satisfaction.⁵⁷

According to Marie Sayn-Wittengenstein, the meeting was not at all auspicious for ‘at the time Wagner had no eyes for the ugly child who was one day to become his Isolde’.⁵⁸ After a modest supper hosted by the governess, Patersi the party withdrew to the salon. There, Wagner read from his poem, *Götterdämmerung*, and through her tears it was all Cosima could do to ‘stare at the ground, my poor eyesight and timidity of mind allowing me to take everything in only furtively, for I knew that it was not really there for me’.⁵⁹ By the time of their later, fateful, meeting Cosima had married Bülow who, according to Cornelius, was becoming increasingly ill, mentally. ‘His condition is giving some cause for concern’, Cornelius noted.⁶⁰ So, too, did the couple’s domestic situation. ‘They are both noble, sophisticated people, but Heaven only knows what may happen, given the way they live together’.⁶¹

Cornelius’ concerns were apparently justified. Bulow’s disorder led to bouts of violent physical abuse which his wife, who in any case had come to regard suffering in any form as just punishment for her very existence, silently accepted.⁶² Years later Cosima noted in her diary that Wagner still recalled ‘scenes, at which he was present, when Hans struck me, and says he was horrified at the calm indifference with which I bore this’.⁶³ Even allowing for contemporary social conventions that regarded the wife as the property of the husband, and sanctioned what action thought necessary to ensure her obedience, clearly Cosima’s apathy was the product of her governesses’ tutelage, a time when Thomas à Kempis’ *De Imitatione Christi* had been required reading: ‘If you will be exalted in Heaven humble thyself in the world. If you wish to reign with me, carry the Cross with Me’.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Richard Wagner, Martin Gregor-Dellin (ed.), Andrew Gray (trans.), *Mein Leben* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 503.

⁵⁸ Marie Fürstin zu Hohenlohe, *Erinnerungen an Richard Wagner* (Weimar: np., 1938), 14, note 69.

⁵⁹ Cosima Wagner to Marie von Schleinitz, Letter dated 10-11 October 1875. Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung, Bayreuth. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 28.

⁶⁰ Peter Cornelius. Diary entry dated 1 January 1865. See Peter Cornelius, *Literarische Werk Vol. 2* (Leipzig: np, 1904/5), 6. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 79.

⁶¹ Peter Cornelius. Diary entry dated 26 November 1864. Ibid.

⁶² For a discussion and diagnosis of Bülow’s mental disorder see J. C. Wöhrle and F. Haas, ‘Hans von Bülow: Creativity and Neurological Disease in a famous pianist and conductor’, *Frontiers of Neurology and Neuroscience*, Vol. 22, 2007, 193-205.

⁶³ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Diaries Vol. 1*, 123-124. Entry dated 11 July 1869.

⁶⁴ Thomas à Kempis, *De Imitatione Christi* (London: The Big Nest, 2014), 126.

With Bülow, Cosima found herself once more living a miserable life; torn now not between her embattled parents but between her often unstable husband ‘who is slowly fading away’,⁶⁵ and her ‘eccentric fatherly friend’,⁶⁶ Wagner. Cornelius’ reference to Wagner’s fatherliness and Cosima’s response to it is noteworthy. Read through a Jungian lens it suggests Cosima’s needs within a relationship extended beyond the conventionally wifely or sexual, adulterous or otherwise.

The Father, Fatherlessness, and the Father Figure

The concepts of the parent, parenting, and the agency of the father and mother figures within the psychological development of the child have preoccupied major thinkers since Sophocles.⁶⁷ While, today, different societies, cultures, and conflicting psychological and sociological theories continue to inform and inflame debate regarding that agency as well as the nature of its source, it appears that few psychologists, psychoanalysts, or sociologists would disagree that, whatever the society and its values, many of the issues that can afflict people in adult life originated in difficult or traumatic experiences with those people closest, or who perhaps should have been closest, to them, namely the biological parents.⁶⁸

In 1991, Margo D. Maine coined the phrase ‘father hunger’ to describe paternal absence, physical or emotional, and, in particular, the ‘natural longing children have for their fathers’. According to Maine, if unmet, this hunger can initiate emotional responses within the child which, in the case of daughters, range from an unhealthy narcissism, identity issues, and

⁶⁵ Peter Cornelius to Carl Hestermann. Letter dated 17 January 1865. See Cornelius, *Literarische Werk Vol.2*, 20. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 79.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Shakespeare, Ibsen, Freud, and Jung are just a few of the many figures who have addressed these issues in their work.

⁶⁸ See, for instance, Pamela Thomas, *Fatherless Daughters: Turning the Pain of Loss into the Power of Forgiveness* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), x-xi; Barbara Defoe Whitehead, ‘Dan Quayle Was Right’, *Atlantic Monthly*, 1993. See also Isabel Sawhill ‘Twenty Years Later It Turns Out Dan Quayle Was Right About Murphy Brown and The Unmarried Mom’, *The Washington Post*, 2 May, 2012.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinion/20-years-leter-unmarried-moms/2012/05/25> (21 January 2016). The titles of these articles refer a 1992 election campaign address made by the then American Vice President, Dan Quayle, in which he censured the popular American television comedy series, *Murphy Brown*, for glamorising the concept and lifestyle of the single mother. In what became known as the ‘Murphy Brown Speech’, Quayle emphasised the importance of the biological father in a child’s life, for which he was vilified by his critics. For Whitehead it was the critics, and not Quayle, who were out of touch as the conscious decision to choose single motherhood was, in Whitehead’s opinion, neither virtuous nor appropriate for the simple reason that a father’s consistent presence has been found to be a crucial element in a child’s psychological development. The absence of a father, Whitehead argued, can result in a number of related behavioural disorders including delinquency and drug abuse which, in turn, have an adverse effect on the wider society. It remains a moot point whether the father-figure is necessarily required to be male, or indeed whether it is necessarily the biological father. Rather, it is the presence of the father figure, of whatever gender or relationship to the child, and what the father figure, or lack of it, represents that is of primary importance.

the pursuit of external sources of self-esteem of which eating disorders, amongst others are symptomatic.⁶⁹

Within the realm of psychoanalytic theory, James Herzog has extended Maine's concept to encompass the emotional effects father hunger can have upon sons and the development of the masculine self.⁷⁰ The notion of fatherly provision also underscores the writings of the clinical psychologist, Michael J. Diamond,⁷¹ and Pamela Thomas where it then filters into the softer forms of 'self-help' literature and the popular genre now known as 'mis-lit' ('misery literature'), of which more later. The latter focus on suffering, are largely female-orientated, and are generally acknowledged to be driven by narcissism,⁷² and narcissism, as Maine has noted, is key symptom of father hunger.

Jungians have foregrounded the related concept of parent hunger as a state which forces the individual to seek elements of the father archetype in the external world, of which generativity – that is to say the act of locating the lost father within oneself then tendering him to successors, offspring or otherwise – is a remedial exercise of mutual benefit.⁷³ Here, the means of shifting an internal demand to the act of providing it for others parallels the later stages on the Eriksonian ladder of psychosocial development, as discussed in the previous chapter within the context of Wagner and Parsifal, and the notion enables us to appreciate, at least in part, the essence of Cosima's later beneficent image of herself as Wagner's avatar, interpreting and handing down the words and works of The Master, Richard Wagner for the benefit of others.

McCutchen believes the process he calls 'fathering' to be crucial in a child's development. Here the term 'fathering' does not allude to the physical act of procreation but, rather, to the practice of identifying a father figure, much as 'othering' identifies a distinct person or persons. 'The crisis out of which the father figure grows [...] not only works to resolve conflict and heal trauma, but also moves the child to recognise the peculiar strength which is constructed out of self-realisation'.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Margo D. Maine, *Father Hunger: Fathers, Daughters and the Pursuit of Thinness* (Carlsbad C.A: Gürtze Books, 2004).

⁷⁰ James M. Herzog, *Father Hunger: Explorations with Adults and Children* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁷¹ See Michael J. Diamond, *My Father Before Me: How Fathers and Sons Influence Each Other Throughout Their Lives* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007).

⁷² Lawler, *Identity* (2014), 36.

⁷³ See for instance, James Hollis, *Under Saturn's Shadow: The Wounding and Healing of Men* (Toronto: Inner City Books: 1994); Anthony Stevens, *Archetype Revisited: An Updated Natural History of the Self* (Hove: Routledge, 2015); Ian Allister and Christopher Hauke (eds.), *Contemporary Jungian Analysis: Post Jungian Perspectives from the Society of Analytical Psychology* (Hove: Routledge, 1998).

⁷⁴ Leighton McCutchen, 'The Father Figure in Psychology and Religion', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 40. No.2 (June 1972), 176-190 (177).

The role in achieving a consciousness for the species may be very important. The argument for this view might be put in this way: Man has no ecological niche as do most other species. Nor does he have a complete set of inner mechanisms for adaptation to only this or that milieu. The female's short gestation period leaves a long childhood to make up for the lack of ready-made responses to a ready-made environment enjoyed by other animal species. From this evolutionary point of view, fathering is *the* uniquely human enterprise, for it is the father figure who transmits the tradition, taboo, and opportunity to the child, boy or girl. Its pattern is to unite, fellow-felling and tenderness with an active transformation of the goods of the environment for the good of the kind. Now, if the father figure is so all pervasive, and if it holds the a key to the survival of our species, it reminds us of those mythic hero figures which held the allegiance of certain communities as they made their way into the future by explaining their origin in the past. A father figure looks like a god, or even a godhood. It is a single agency, indirect in its influence in creating persons, and then fatefully engaged in interaction with them behind the scenes [...] It is the bearer of internal subjective companionship and external technical possibility.⁷⁵

The father figure concept resonates throughout history, underscoring the monarchical tradition and, by extension, the notion of the charismatic leader of which King Arthur, Siegfried, Adolf Hitler, and Winston Churchill are examples. So while the nineteenth-century father was, essentially, the locus of moral authority, viewed through McCutchen's lens the archetype represents protection and the continuity of tradition, not only as regards the individual, but also society. It is from this function the child and society derives a sense of security and identity.

Cosima in search of the Father Figure

McCutchen maintains that 'the adult's father figure is a selective memory of the past. It arises to adult consciousness for definite motivational reasons having to do with the balance between psychic deficiency and affluence' as experienced during the child's formative years.⁷⁶ 'The father figure is built upon a triologue [sic] between the actual interrelations of child, father and mother as those come to focus upon the problem of limitation and initiative'.⁷⁷ In other words, the father figure is crucial in determining parameters of acceptable behaviour while encouraging individual development. The three-way dialogue established, the child will then make

a fateful choice or series of choices. More precisely he begins to take a direction more toward the style of one parent than the other. He differentiates between those of the previous generation that care for him and chooses to be like someone when he grows

⁷⁵ McCutchen, 'The Father Figure in Psychology and Religion', 182-183. [Italics as original] See also Joseph Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University, Bollingen Series XVII, 1949), 334-341.

⁷⁶ McCutchen, 'The Father Figure in Psychology and Religion', 177.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

up, and unlike someone else. “In whose presence,” he seems to be saying “I will bring my up my ideas and my toys, my wishes and my tools? Before whose face and into whose ears will my language be spoken? With whom shall I learn the right way to do things, and how to finish doing things? Who is *with* me in my own definitive way?”⁷⁸

And so whoever is identified by the child as satisfying, or likely to satisfy, these criteria will fulfil the role of father figure.

Cosima lacked this crucial ‘trialogue’. As we have seen, both biological parents were emotionally and physically absent throughout her childhood. Therefore, if we accept McCutchen’s premise the subconscious dilemma facing Cosima would be with whom of her immediate circle she could identify. Of these, ostensibly, the French governesses could best supply protection and the necessary delineation of socio-behavioural parameters since, for McCutchen, the father figure is not an automatic province of a particular adult whatever the gender. Rather, the father figure is selected, consciously or otherwise, by the child; and since ‘the father figure remembered by the adult is a multiple construct of [a] pre-school developmental crisis’,⁷⁹ clearly, in Cosima’s case, affection and its supplier would have been an essential element in that construct.

Cosima’s journals and her correspondence with both parents reveal a desperate need for love and approval. The sense of worthlessness instilled by her education and orthodoxy of her religion clearly amplified that need. As far as can be discerned, there is nothing to suggest that Liszt was an unaffectionate father. Indeed, he was most solicitous of his children’s welfare, particularly when that welfare became the province of their mother, at which time the children became weapons in the ongoing battle between their parents. But even allowing for convention Liszt’s own circumstances made him a particularly inattentive father. As a celebrated artist operating within a society in which it was anyway the custom to assign one’s offspring to the ministry of a wet-nurse upon birth, only to reclaim them once the difficult early years had passed, Liszt’s lifestyle and, no doubt artistic self-centeredness, rendered him negligent. The recognition of this negligence remained with Cosima throughout her life, her resentment fully manifesting itself, if Smalhausen is to be believed, in her rancorous conduct towards her father throughout his final, fatal illness.

So while Cosima’s relationships with both Bülow and Wagner represent flights from untenable situations, they equally represent the pursuit of something defined by McCutchen as the socio-culturally and psychologically important father figure from which the processes

⁷⁸ McCutchen, ‘The Father Figure in Psychology and Religion’, 179. [Italics as original]

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

of individuation proceed. Marriage to a man enjoying the approval of her father – an approval she had long sought – could conceivably satisfy the unworldly Cosima’s need for a role model; he would certainly supply her with a name. But the indications are that Bülow, the product of a comparably unhappy childhood, was as emotionally immature as Cosima. He was, therefore, possibly detrimental to the natural processes of his wife’s individuation, delaying, possibly preventing, their progress. In a robustly patriarchal society Cosima’s flight to Bülow can be read as demonstrating a naïve form of father figure identification; her flight from him an exercise in self-preservation. It was in Wagner that Cosima found what she sought. It was in her relationship with him that the processes of her identity formation began. Here was one who could not only supply approval and protection, but also someone she could revere and emulate. Keiler notes ‘the feeling of union with a personal God is a partial solution to the need to find a parental replacement worthy of idealisation and emulation’.⁸⁰ While Keiler is taking within a specifically religious context, in Cosima’s case the parallel is apposite.

Cosima and the Father Figure defined in terms of Will and Representation

‘In the human relations that mattered to him’, Scruton notes, ‘Wagner’s first concern was to dominate’.⁸¹ Certainly, Wagner owned a dynamic personality, one that today would doubtless be regarded as narcissistic in that he expected the subservience of others in the interests of his own aims and needs. Those possessing a sense of independence, such as Wagner’s one-time assistant, Peter Cornelius resisted: ‘Wagner’s genius had an annihilating force to it’,⁸² Cornelius once wrote, later adding the composer robbed him ‘of the air I need to breathe’,⁸³ and that he

does not understand that although I may have some of the qualities needed for dog-like devotion, I unfortunately also have a little too much independence of character and talent to be no more than a footnote to his personal history.⁸⁴

‘But’, Scruton continues, ‘there are human beings who flourish under domination and who also encourage it – Cosima Wagner was one’.⁸⁵ She had no such reservations in offering up

⁸⁰ See Allan Keiler, ‘Liszt as Romantic Hero: Imposturing and the False Self’, *Journal of the American Liszt Society* Vol.67 (2016), 72-84 (76).

⁸¹ Scruton, *The Ring of Truth*, 5.

⁸² Peter Cornelius. Diary entry dated 23 November 1862. See Peter Cornelius *Literarische Werk Vol. 1*(Leipzig: np., 1904-5), 687. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 78.

⁸³ Peter Cornelius to Carl Cornelius. Letter dated 26 November, 1864. See Cornelius *Literarische Werk Vol. 1*(Leipzig: np., 1904-5), 687. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 79.

⁸⁴ Peter Cornelius to Rheinhold Köhler. Letter dated 24 June, 1864. See Cornelius *Literarische Werk Vol. 1*(Leipzig: np., 1904-5), 772. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 78.

⁸⁵ Scruton, *The Ring of Truth*, 5.

her body and soul to Wagner unreservedly, or about submitting to him in all things and valuing his approval above all else. While this, after all, was how she had been taught to be, the situation provided her with another persona.

Played out against a complicated cultural and political background the dynamics of Wagner and Cosima's relationship are complex. Clearly, it functioned on a routinely heterosexual level even if, as his many romantic liaisons suggest, Wagner's libido appears to have been more animated than that of Cosima who, by contrast, was comparatively prim. Equally clearly, the couple viewed their union in philosophical and allegorical terms, over-identifying with each. Of particular interest is their use of certain expressions when referring to themselves or the other. For example, in describing her marriage to Wagner Cosima frequently uses the German word *Betätigung* (activity, occupation), clearly believing her position to be vocational and one of service. This perception is demonstrated further by the pet names they assigned each other: Will and Vorstel – Will and Representation – he the former, she the latter, a reference to Schopenhauer's seminal work, *The World as Will and Representation*, the influence of which Wagner freely acknowledged despite adapting its meaning according to his own needs. While the source of these soubriquets was rooted in humour, Wagner having recorded their more amusing exploits together as 'the adventures of Will and Vorstel', the terms are an insight into how they saw themselves.

While Wagner explores Schopenhauer's more nihilistic ideas in *Tristan und Isolde*, the dynamics of will and representation can be found in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, specifically in the father-daughter relationship between Wotan and Brünnhilde where the latter is an external representation of the former's inner self, as demonstrated in the following passage from Act 2 of *Die Walküre*:

Brünnhilde:	Zu Wotans Willen sprichst du sagst zu mir, was du willst; wer bin ich, wär ich dein Wille nicht?	You are speaking to your will when you tell me your will; Who am I if not your will?
Wotan:	Was keinem in Worten ich künde Unausgesprochen bleib' es den ewig: mit mir nur rat' ich red' ich zu dir.	What I tell verbally remains unspoken forever: I talk only to myself when I talk to you.

Such can be said of Wagner and Cosima's partnership, and following Wagner's death Cosima was to invoke the notion in order to justify her claims to artistic and intellectual

authority at Bayreuth.⁸⁶ However, the dynamic appears to have operated on a deeper level, entwining a number of psychological conditions, for while a reading of the father-daughter axis can be said to represent Cosima's identification of Wagner as the father archetype she lacked during her formative years, it also indicates the existence of a certain sado-masochistic narcissism.

As late as 1876 Cosima notes in her diary that 'the more deeply I suffer the stronger grows this strange ecstasy of suffering within me'.⁸⁷ Now divorced from Bülow, remarried to Wagner and with all her children around her, Cosima nevertheless continues to punish herself daily for her sins past and present. Despite an often difficult but loving relationship with Wagner she still regards herself as unworthy of him, suggesting further she was of a masochistic nature, possibly intrinsic or the product of a rigorously Roman Catholic upbringing.

Although the term masochism was unknown until 1886 when it was coined by the Austro-German neurologist and forensic psychiatrist, Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing,⁸⁸ in reference to the works of the Austrian writer and journalist, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch,⁸⁹ whose popular novels employ the concept of pain and submission, it is one commonly used in conjunction with its counterpart, sadism, and designates an exclusively sexual practice. No evidence appears to exist suggesting that Cosima's masochism was sexually motivated; indeed, many of her diary entries reveal her to be rather prudish as her frequent lectures to Wagner on the virtues of sexual abstinence demonstrate. However, like the term 'narcissism', the definition of 'masochism' has become confined.

For Cosima, 'masochism' was to be read, along with abstinence, suffering, and submission, in a quasi-religious context with abstinence and renunciation, as prescribed by her governesses, referring to all worldly pleasures not just the carnal. Consequently, for Cosima, the term 'passion' encompassed a wider meaning than mere physical desire. This

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Magee advises us to be wary of associating the Schopenhauerian concept of Will and Representation entirely with the Valkyries' function as *Wünschmädchen* (Wish-maidens). Although the term is conventionally translated as one, or those, whose function it is to satisfy the needs of Wotan and the fallen heroes living in Valhalla, any exclusively Schopenhauerian correlations are problematic, etymologically. Wotan's name in Old Norse is Oski or, as translated in Middle High German, Wunsch. Therefore, a *Wunschmaid*, or the *Wünschmädchen*, are the daughters of Wunsch, that is to say Wotan, and not simply the doers of Wotan's, or others', commands which, of course, they also are. See Elizabeth Magee, *Richard Wagner and the Nibelungs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 175-178.

⁸⁷ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 1*, 895. Entry dated 27 February 1876.

⁸⁸ Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902). Noted for his seminal work, *Psychopathia Sexualis: Eine Klinisch-Forensische Studie* (Sexual Psychopathy: A Clinical-Forensic Study). Although disputed by some, it is generally accepted that this work contains the first use of the term 'masochism'.

⁸⁹ Leopold Sacher-Masoch (1836-195): Austrian author and journalist.

aversion to pleasure, which bordered on outright fear, afflicted Cosima throughout her life, as demonstrated by her account, decades later, of her daughter Eva's second birthday:

Presents for the children, meals with the children, much rejoicing. When we drink Eva's health, she is out of her mind with delight, in spite of having nothing to drink herself. Then I say she must go to bed; R., much dismayed, says this strictness is my catholic side of my nature and that when my pleasure is greatest I am always ready to renounce it.⁹⁰

While Cosima's action may have been prompted by a maternal concern for her over-excited child's welfare, Cosima's further remark that 'the one single difference between Richard and myself is that he takes pleasure in comfort and in pretty things, while I tend almost to prefer abstinence',⁹¹ is additional evidence of Cosima's innate abhorrence of material gratification.⁹² Although her determined refusal to acknowledge any form of pleasure or enjoyment of it, together with her inclination to avoid any opportunities and environments that may afford it, can be attributed to her upbringing it can also be said that these were strategies by which punish to herself. Cosima's long-standing doctor, the fashionable Ernst Schweningen, often prescribed luxury as a cure for many of his affluent patients' ills. Whereas Hilmes' seems to imply Schweningen's methodology amounted to no more than sycophancy and, in Cosima's case, one tailored to appeal to her elevated opinion of herself (foregrounding further the narcissistic aspects of Cosima's personality), the doctor's medicament may not be as comical as it may first appear. Rather, it can be read as representing an exercise in human psychology, in this instance a means of encouraging Cosima to be less self-punishing or, in other words, less masochistic, a proposition supported by Cosima's admission that her main aim in life was 'certainly to dispel all passionate feelings and in this way to atone until I can make things good again'.⁹³

Although Cosima was emulating educational and theological models, today, her particular brand of masochism would be more accurately defined as a form of 'self-harming disorder', a condition considered not only symptomatic of low self-esteem but also a means of seeking attention, in which instance masochism becomes narcissistic. Here, reference is again made to the Wotan-Brünnhilde exchange in Act 2 of *Die Walküre*. As the external

⁹⁰ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol.1*, 62. Entry dated Wednesday 17 February 1869.

⁹¹ Ibid., 108. Entry dated 16 June 1869. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 106.

⁹² Wagner's regard for luxury is well documented, ranging from furnishings and fabrics to colours and scents. While he maintained luxury was necessary in the interests of creativity, we should remember that Wagner suffered from a neurologically-induced dermatological disorder, possibly the result of a hypersensitive disposition, which was exacerbated by coarse or inferior fabrics. Today, Wagner would no doubt be classified as a Highly Sensitive person (HSP), and his condition, which still remains little understood, may also have accounted for his heightened reactions to certain stimuli, particularly smell, colour, and touch.

⁹³ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol.1*, 134. Entry dated 6 August 1869. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 107.

representation of Wotan's inner will, Brünnhilde does his bidding. Her disobedience is met with punishment and consequently she is expelled from her father's service. Since her identity lay in being the extension of her father's personality, the removal of Brünnhilde's godhead is the removal not only of his protection but also of her identity and, therefore, her purpose for existence. Not possessing a personal identity, Brünnhilde is therefore reduced to nothing.

In many ways, the situation can be read as the psychological management of one by an authoritative other and, moreover, if viewed through a feminist lens, of the supremacy of the patriarchal male over the subservient female. But Cosima became Wagner's willing adjunct, the obedient submissive empty vessel that her upbringing had taught her to be. Here, Wagner and theology become synthesised: Brünnhilde and the Christian martyr become one. 'Not as I will but as You will',⁹⁴ 'Not my will but Yours be done'.⁹⁵ Whatever the context, be it mythological or theological, with Wagner Cosima was not to be the author of her own destiny. She appears to welcome the state of affairs when, like a true penitent, she notes in her diary:

When R. complains of his upset stomach, I blame myself for having lost the moral courage I once possessed and not warning him off. "So", says R., "I have destroyed you utterly, moulded you utterly anew?" I: "I hope so".⁹⁶

And, further:

'Today, I came to understand the idea of metempsychosis'.⁹⁷

The situation also reveals the chiaroscuro of Wagner's personality. For him, the attraction of Cosima may not have lain solely in her capacity to inspire but also in her masochistic proclivities. Here was one whom Wagner could dominate and control, one who would acquiesce. For Cosima, this became enabling. It was from this she would derive identity. Moreover, given her upbringing and her moralising lectures to Wagner on the benefits of sexual abstinence this, possibly, was how she found sexual gratification: to be submissive for religio-aesthetic, rather than physical, satisfaction would perhaps circumvent any disquiet or ascetic guilt. And although there were times when Cosima was provoked

⁹⁴ Mathew 26:39.

⁹⁵ Luke 22:42.

⁹⁶ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 2*, 161. Entry dated 16 August, 1878. Cosima is referring to Wagner's delicate stomach. Throughout his life Wagner suffered from a number of gastric complaints which, today, would undoubtedly be diagnosed as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). While in Wagner's case these complaints were probably psychosomatic, a number of foodstuffs were nevertheless identified as liable to trigger physical discomfort. Irascible by nature, his ill-temper was worsened by these attacks and, consequently, everyone around him also suffered.

⁹⁷ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol.1*, 121. Entry dated 6 July 1869.

sufficiently to defend her own opinions, she discovered it was prudent to vacate Wagner's presence rather than arouse his wrath. Besides, it was never long before she succumbed to his better judgement. Whereas Bülow had employed physical violence, it is possible that Wagner resorted to a more psychological form of control.

While the dominant male-submissive female axis is illustrative of the patriarchal structure of nineteenth-century Western Europe, within the narrower context of Wagner's relationship with women it foregrounds the light and dark sides of the composer's personality, the artistically divine and the sado-narcissistically earthly. In many ways mirroring Kundry, Cosima's piety fuels Cosima the penitent, the servant to Wagner's needs. In contrast, Cosima as woman, that is to say as sexual and intellectual object, is governed by the controlling Wagner as Klingsor dominated Kundry. It would be presumptuous to suggest Wagner constructed the dramaturgy of *Parsifal* as vindication of any sado-masochistic proclivities, but from careful scrutiny of Cosima's writings it would appear the couple gained reciprocal, sado-masochistic satisfaction from the exchange. Her acquiescence nourishes his vanity and from this he derives gratification. As soon as Cosima demonstrates independent thought in aesthetic and intellectual spheres, Wagner becomes aggressive. She then pleads for both punishment and forgiveness for her presumptions. She learns to follow his precepts, always believing herself in error, avoiding the outbursts of rage contradiction prompts with an acquiescence which completes the narcissistic-masochistic circle.

Fenichel recognises such reciprocity as a system of narcissistic supply. Here, it is generally acknowledged that sources of narcissistic nourishment – in this case Cosima – tend to be exploited by the object they seek to nourish, in this case Wagner. Moreover, those who provide the overt narcissist with narcissistic supply are regarded by the recipient of that supply as an extension of him or herself. 'In the mind of the narcissist there is no boundary between self and other'. With Wagner and Cosima, then, Will and Representation became more than an expression of the father-daughter axis of Wotan and Brünnhilde and became a form of sado-masochistic and narcissistic exchange.

Undoubtedly, Cosima was indispensable to Wagner. After all, she inspired his creativity, facilitated his social and artistic mobility, and diplomatically defused the antagonism he could arouse in others. This he duly recognised. But in the more intimate and darker spaces of their relationship, the suffering and punishment Cosima experienced was an enabling force. They not only fed her narcissism but, as we shall see, were to supply, in a post-Wagner world, authority.

Cosima as Narcissist

Binary opposites define Cosima Wagner: grandiosity and humility, authority and penitential servitude. Although seemingly distinct, these characteristics are interconnected. Each is symptomatic of one of a series of behavioural patterns corresponding to what is regarded today as a narcissistic personality. What is notable, in Cosima's case, is how a number of these patterns appear or evolve out of each other in direct chronological relation to certain events and her standing in life. Although not seeking to be deterministic, here we should consider how modern theory can rationalise Cosima's behaviour and actions.

At the time of writing, the professionally recognised manual used in the diagnosis of mental disorders, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Illness (DSM), lists narcissism as one of ten Personality Disorders. A Personality Disorder, or PD, is currently defined as 'maladaptive patterns of behaviour, cognition and inner experience exhibited across many contexts and deviating from that accepted by the individual's culture'.⁹⁸ The British National Health Service (NHS) currently employs the phrase 'PD traits', which seems to afford a greater degree of diagnostic plasticity when identifying a patient's relative position on the behavioural spectrum. While this suggests specialists are permitted to pick and choose the PD labels they think a patient fits best,⁹⁹ what is of importance is the general acknowledgement that PDs exist.

⁹⁸ Source: Wikipedia. At the time of writing, two main prescriptive indices co-exist: the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Illness, or DSM, an index maintained by the American Psychiatric Association, and The International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, or ICD, which is maintained by The World Health Organisation. The most recent DSM report to the time of writing, DSM-5 (2013), lists ten personality disorders which it divides into three categories, or clusters. Narcissism is placed in Cluster B (Dramatic, Emotional, and Erratic behaviour). By contrast, the most recent index of ICD does not recognise narcissism as a distinct condition and is listed under 'Other'. The indices frequently differ on issues regarding recognition and classification. For example, the ICD considers transgenderism as a personality disorder, while the DSM regards it as a mental illness. The identification of personality disorders can be traced back to Ancient Greece, when the Greek philosopher, Theophrastus, (c.371-c.287BC), defined twenty-nine character types. Similar taxonomy can be found in ancient Asian, Arabic, and Celtic cultures. Later, personality types were thought to relate to the Four Humours, as defined by Galen. Personality as a psychological concept became widely accepted in the nineteenth century when, according to Michel Foucault in *A History of Sexuality*, the nineteenth-century fixation with enquiry and categorisation led to the creation of what was essentially being described. For instance, homosexuality had been practised since time immemorial; it was a word that indicated a particular pattern of behaviour. During the nineteenth century, it became personified, that is to say, with men being referred to as 'a homosexual', and so behaviour became an object. The anti-psychiatry movement would dispute the legitimacy of any positivistic epistemology or orthodoxy regarding the definition and diagnosis of PD, believing the practice nothing more than political labelling. Certainly, Foucault found the term problematic, preferring 'behavioural variant' as a more precise expression.

⁹⁹ Parenthetically, Carlyle maintained that any device devised by one human mind to assess another's would necessarily be the product of a mind equally fallible as that which it sought to measure. Carlyle appears to be vindicated when one considers that, today, the medical profession accepts that the extant criteria for PD diagnosis are vague. This imprecision is rendered more ambiguous when the criteria are clearly prone to subjective interpretation, as it is generally accepted that, as human beings, we each possess degrees of those forms which, in excessive levels, distinguish a patient as being of a PD. What constitutes an acceptable pattern

Of these, Neville Symington foregrounds narcissism as the one psychopathology which underscores all others.¹⁰⁰ While distinct from egocentrism,¹⁰¹ popular misconception situates a narcissist as purely one who overly admires themselves. However, *pace* Theodor Millon,¹⁰² a narcissist is, more precisely, one who has ‘an innate uncertainty about their own worth’,¹⁰³ a perspective which, in turn, ‘gives rise to [...] a protective but often spurious aura of grandiosity’.¹⁰⁴ For psychologist, Stephen Johnson, the narcissist is someone who has ‘buried his true self-expression in response to early injuries and replaced it with a highly developed, compensatory false self’.¹⁰⁵ As Preston Ni explains:

This alternate persona to the real self often comes across as grandiose, ‘above others,’ self-absorbed, and highly conceited. In our highly individualistic and externally driven society, mild to severe forms of narcissism are not only pervasive but often encouraged. Narcissism is often interpreted in popular culture as a person who’s in love with him or herself. It is more accurate to characterize the pathological narcissist as someone who’s in love with an idealized self-image which they project in order to avoid feeling (and been seen as) the real, disenfranchised, wounded self. Deep down, most pathological narcissists feel like the ‘ugly duckling’, even if they painfully don’t want to admit it.¹⁰⁶

With narcissism now redefined as ‘a defence mechanism of denial by overcompensation’,¹⁰⁷ we may consider Hilmes’ rationalisation of Cosima’s hauteur, cited earlier, as vindicated.

But Cosima’s narcissism seems to have extended beyond this. A synthesis of nineteenth-century French societal and Roman Catholic catechisms instilled in the daughter of a father preoccupied with his own stellar musical career and a mother prone to emotional, if not exactly mental, instability, a complex form of suffering that found expression in feelings of inferiority. Her loveless childhood, the ‘reign of mental terror’ devised by her elderly

of behaviour is therefore both relative and contingent, and dependent upon the surrounding sociology. What constitutes ‘acceptable’ today may not have been so in the past, and may not be so in the future. For instance, today’s celebrity-obsessed society openly encourages narcissistic behaviour by endorsing popular cultural phenomena such as social media, ‘selfies’, and television talent shows. These phenomena exploit and escalate the individual’s innate, naturally occurring narcissistic trait and their universal popularity renders as standard higher than hitherto usual levels of narcissism. Within this instability, PD and the diagnostic criteria may only be relative.

¹⁰⁰ Neville Symington, *Narcissism: A New Theory* (London: Karmac, 2003), 114.

¹⁰¹ In contrast to the narcissist, the egocentric does not derive gratification from the admiration of others.

¹⁰² The Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI). The American psychologist, Theodor Millon (1928-2014) seems not to accept that the grandiosity associated with narcissism can also be caused by its counterpart, low self-esteem.

¹⁰³ Simon Crompton, *All About Me: Loving a Narcissist* (London: Collins, 2007), 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Stephen M. Johnson, *Humanizing the Narcissistic Style* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1987).

¹⁰⁶ Preston Ni M.S.B.A. ‘Communication Success’, *Psychology Today*, 4 January 2015.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/communicate> (5 February 2015).

¹⁰⁷ Symington, *Narcissism: A New Theory*, 114.

governesses,¹⁰⁸ her unhappy and failed marriage with Hans von Bülow, and even the fact he physically abused her – throughout all this Cosima made no attempt to rebel but bore it silently in the spirit of *De Imitatione Christi*.¹⁰⁹ Here, Cosima's suffering becomes a manifestation of her narcissism.

Today, it is widely accepted that the exposure of a child or young person to abuse and neglect can hinder psychological development, triggering personality disorders in adulthood.¹¹⁰ Further, according to current theory, people exhibiting high degrees of a personality disorder tend to come from broken homes,¹¹¹ in other words, arenas of conflict in which violence, be it physical or mental, or neglect have occurred. Cosima and her siblings experienced all of these: their parents, separated by a waning passion and very distinct lifestyles and both with no real idea of how to be a parent, grew apart in a state of enmity. For the sake of his children, Liszt was anxious that their parents' final separation should be on amicable grounds. Yet, torn between the two adults the children sought the affection and approval of both. Theory holds that in times of domestic conflict, and especially at times of irreparable familial rupture, a child's tendency to seek attention from one or other parent represents an unconscious competitiveness. Automatically, the child competes for attention in an environment in which the parents have themselves become competitive. For the child, attention-seeking becomes common practice and by adulthood has become learned behaviour, normalised.

However, if behaviour is socially acquired, the question arises as to what extent it can then be regarded as a personality disorder. Certainly, their artistic personalities would place Liszt, Wagner, and Cosima outside the contemporary norms of social control and behaviour, hence the antagonism they variously encountered: quite simply they subverted convention; they stood outside what was considered by a large majority to be socially acceptable. Conversely, Wagner would argue that it is the need – indeed the right – of the artist to stand apart from social norms, to live above the law because, for the artist, compliance to convention would snuff out all forms of creativity. Claims that Wagner and Cosima necessarily represent PDs therefore need careful consideration: in many ways they were merely unconventional in outlook and demeanour. More than unconventional and open to scrutiny, however, was the gratification Cosima derived from suffering. Here, Lawler provides a clue when she asserts pain and suffering supply identity and authority.

¹⁰⁸ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 106.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹¹⁰ Source: UK NHS, 2015.

¹¹¹ Source: UK NHS, 2015.

Pain, as a concept, spans cultural traditions and temporal distances. For example, pain plays a major role within Christian theology where the Crucifixion encapsulates the concept of knowledge and identity acquired by self-sacrifice, suffering, and the appropriation of the pain of others, and travels across time to remain equally relevant within our own society, as demonstrated by the current fascination with trauma narratives.¹¹² Suffering supplies truth and enables empathic understanding, something Parsifal, especially, acquires through his years of wandering. Here, though, suffering can become an expression of narcissism and the identification with a ‘suffering other [...] a particular kind of cultural imperative’.¹¹³ As Lawler explains,

Identities are produced through complex processes through which we identify with an other – in which, as it were, people put themselves into someone else’s story, and, in the process and through processes of re-working, make it their *own* story.¹¹⁴

Moreover, as Lawler and Laurent Berlant have variously noted, pain supplies authenticity, its mobilisation being a means of claiming authority. In other words, pain is capital. Echoing Lawler and Berlant, Gross and Hoffman maintain that ‘to be the subject of pain is almost to guarantee authority’ because ‘pain is understood as producing truth’.¹¹⁵ Pain, therefore, creates the authority which provides identity. And as Lawler, Berlant, Gross, and Hoffman have variously suggested, to resolve the pain is to remove the identity. Yet, to invoke Beverly Skeggs, Cosima’s pain was arguably a means to ‘focus on the self, on the self as a suffering subject’.¹¹⁶ Here, authority becomes something else and we should consider Wendy Brown whose idea of ‘wounded attachments’ extends Nietzschean *ressentiment*, in the sense that ‘those who suffer rationalise their suffering into a form of moral superiority’.¹¹⁷ For Wagner-saturated Cosima, to be morally superior would demonstrate an almost spiritual transcendence of the material world, endowing her with an unassailable, almost supernatural authority. Following Wagner’s death Cosima persistently saw herself as a martyr, and corresponding to psychoanalytic theory as outlined by Hotchkiss, her martyrdom was an

¹¹² Stephanie Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 22.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹¹⁶ Beverly Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹¹⁷ Lawler, *Identity* (2014), 168. See also Wendy Brown, ‘Wounded Attachments’, *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No.3 (August 1993), 390-410; Friedrich Nietzsche, Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (trans.), *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (New York: Vintage, 1969); Friedrich Nietzsche, Keith Ansell-Pearson (ed.), Carol Diethe (trans.), *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

extension of the narcissistic Seven Deadly Sins,¹¹⁸ one of which is the narcissism born of station, as follows.

Cosima defined in terms of Acquired Situational Narcissism

In time, and despite her dogged self-effacement, Cosima became perceived by many to be all-powerful. Seemingly, this is a contradiction of terms, but one that can be explained by a reading of Robert B. Milmann and Stephen Sherrill's concepts of Acquired Situational Narcissism (ASN).

According to Milmann and Sherrill, ASN differs from classic, or classical, narcissistic personality disorder, which is characterised by a lack of empathy and an excessive need for approval usually resulting from an uneven transition between infancy and childhood when a more realistic view of the world should be developing,¹¹⁹ only in its late onset. Building on existent narcissism, or a narcissistically-orientated disposition, ASN is invariably the result of status and fortune and is exacerbated by the support of others, more often sycophants, whose inability – or unwillingness – to communicate to the individual the realities of life contributes to the narcissist's feelings of invulnerability.

By 1876, the year of the first Bayreuth Festival, Nietzsche was showing the first signs of the mental instability symptomatic of what is assumed to have been encroaching syphilis. Nevertheless, he was deeply shocked by his experience of the Festival for there he saw examples of all human life abhorrent to him: wealthy industrialists, socialites, aristocrats, and politicians, all of whom, in his opinion, had 'become the master of Wagner'.¹²⁰ For Nietzsche, Wagner had betrayed his much-vaunted social and artistic principles. But, as the composer pragmatically realised, here was to be found the source of much needed funding and, ever-conscious of his humble origins and often uncouth and insensitive manner, he recognised the value of his wife, Cosima whose patrician background and diplomatic ease opened many doors to that end.

Consequently, Nietzsche believed Cosima exerted considerable power in the husband-and-wife relationship, proven, he maintained by the composition of *Parsifal*, a work for which he held Cosima entirely responsible, believing she had corrupted Wagner entirely.¹²¹ From 1876 to his death in 1900 Nietzsche's mental state became increasingly unstable, rendering

¹¹⁸ See Sandy Hotchkiss and James F. Masterson, *Why Is It All About You?: The Seven Deadly Sins of Narcissism* (New York: Simon and Schuster Free Press, 2003).

¹¹⁹ See Stephen Sherrill, 'The Year in Ideas, A-Z., Acquired Situational Narcissism', *New York Times* 9.12.2001. <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/9/magazine/the-year-in-ideas> (13 April 2015).

¹²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, R.J. Hollingdale (trans.), *Ecce homo* (Hammondsworth 1979), 90-91.

¹²¹ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 140.

his observations entirely unreliable.¹²² Yet he makes one telling comment. Directed at Cosima, it draws attention to her agency:

You know very much how well I know the influence you have exerted on W[agner] – you know even more how much I despise that influence [...] I turned my back on you and Wagner as soon as the fraud began [...] Whenever Liszt's daughter attempts to meddle in matters relating to German culture, and even religion, I am implacable.¹²³

For Hilmes, Nietzsche's outburst represents proof that in the post-Wagner environment, Cosima was 'the true representative of the fanatical cult of Wagner that was growing increasingly strident',¹²⁴ and evidences her agency in the politicisation of both Wagner and the Wagnerian enterprise by virtue of her self-asserted authority. Cosima's contemporaries also noted these qualities and, moreover, the deep respect she demanded of others:

Here is a court whose mistress almost believes that her womb brought forth all that blossoms and blooms on this sod of earth, a belief she is persuaded to hold because every breath and gesture on the part of her many courtiers counterfeits that conviction [...] This Bayreuth is the brain-spun creation of her, and she alone is its God. In the convent whose air is thick with incense and which forces even the most defiant of men to his knees, Nietzsche's shrill anger, sprung from disappointment, would have learnt how to laugh. Instead of contemptuously promising 'Redemption to the Redeemer', he would have called for some oaf to shatter the stained glass windows and allow the stale and stuffy convent air to be blown away by the springtime breeze of a cheerfully active existence.¹²⁵

Nevertheless, countless people gravitated towards Cosima, praising her intelligence, wit, and artistry: 'Frau Cosima only ever says clever things. It does not matter what she is talking about'.¹²⁶ As now, image was paramount. Cosima's striking appearance and bearing carried all before her. In 1900, the diplomat and writer, Harry Kessler, noted, 'Socially speaking, Cosima rules the roost here; such a position is unique; princesses, ambassadors' wives and countesses – all of them tremble before her and blush with delight when Cosima deigns to address them'.¹²⁷

¹²² According to Sokoloff, Nietzsche died referring to Cosima as his wife.

¹²³ Friedrich Nietzsche to Cosima Wagner. Undated draft of a letter, presumably September 1888. See Friedrich Nietzsche, Giorgio Coll, Matzino Mantinari (eds.), *Sämtliche Briefe*, Vol 3. (Munich and Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 604. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 140.

¹²⁴ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 140.

¹²⁵ Maximilian Harden. See Maximilian Harden, *Köpfe*, Vol.4 (Berlin: np., 1923-24), 303; 305. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 212-213.

¹²⁶ Eulenberg to Kaiser Wilhelm II. Letter dated 21 March 1892. See Rohl, *Eulenberg's politische Korrespondenz* Vol. 2, 816-18. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 212.

¹²⁷ Harry Clément Ulrich Kessler. Diary entry dated 15 March 1900. See Roland S. Kamselak, Ulrich Ott (eds.), *Das Tagebuch*, Vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Cotta Verlag, 2004-2010), 291. Count Harry Clément Ulrich (1868-1937): Anglo-German diplomat, writer and patron of modern art.

In 1891 Cosima's new production of *Tannhäuser* attracted lavish plaudits. Eckart's later claims that it raised Bayreuth to 'the lofty heights at which it was to remain under the wonderful and ever more comprehensive guidance of this altogether unique woman',¹²⁸ demonstrates the virtually universal esteem in which Bayreuth's *Hohe Frau* was held – 'virtually universal', since some dissenters were able to penetrate the ostensible artifice.

Earlier, in 1897, Kessler had noted that 'Bayreuth has all the appearance of a minor princely state with the Wagners as its tin-pot potentates'.¹²⁹ Later, in reply to Kessler's criticism of Cosima's regality towards the public, particularly those indigenous to Bayreuth, an acquaintance replied without irony, 'Oh, but you know, she is a Queen'.¹³⁰ Countless anecdotes exist to the same effect, proving the present hypothesis that Cosima's narcissism developed in accordance with various stages of her life: her initial 'negative' narcissism, that is to say a narcissism that emerges from a low rather than high self-esteem, had, over the years, developed into a strand of psychological dysfunction since defined as Acquired Situational Narcissism.¹³¹

Wagner had been similarly affected. He accredited the nature of his private affairs as the entitlement of an artist, but when castigated by the Bayreuth town council for some civic transgression, such as the conduct of his dogs in public parks,¹³² had frequently reminded the city fathers that the town owed much of its prosperity to him alone. Cosima continued in similar vein.¹³³ At first, her ASN was fed by others in search of their own needs, later, as the representative of an important cultural and, potentially, economic phenomenon, by the public.

In this respect, the public is as culpable as the individual in the creation and maintenance of ASN and the wider effect it exerts. Cosima has been widely criticised for her superciliousness and sense of entitlement, but it is entirely feasible she was not exclusively of her own creation but, rather, of both the Wagner-loving public, German or otherwise, and, in time, of the German public in general. Then, as now in the current celebrity-obsessed environment, the public is in effect complicit in creating celebrity by dint of bestowing

¹²⁸ Richard du Moulin Eckart, as quoted in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 211.

¹²⁹ Kessler *Das Tagebuch Vol. 3*, 71, note 55. Entry dated 20 July 1897.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 291. Entry dated 21 March 1900.

¹³¹ See, for instance, Stephen Sherrill, 'Acquired Situational Narcissism' at <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/09/magazine/the-year-in-ideas> (13 April 2015); Sam Vaknin, Lidija Rangelovska (ed.), *The Narcissist and Psychopath in Therapy* (Prague and Haifa: Narcissus, 2014). At the time of writing, Robert B. Millman is Professor of Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medical Centre, Cornell University.

¹³² Richard Wagner to Adolf Eisendorf. Letter dated 4 March 1881. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (eds.), *The Selected Letters of Richard Wagner* (London: Dent and Sons, 1987), 906-907.

¹³³ In August 1894, Cosima's Newfoundland dog fell ill and required an operation. Instead of engaging a vet Cosima persuaded one of her own physicians, Heinrich Landfraf, to perform the operation at Bayreuth's municipal hospital.

charisma upon the object of its admiration, for, as Weber has noted, charisma, like some forms of narcissism, is a process of exchange.¹³⁴

It therefore becomes easy to appreciate how Cosima and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, similarly narcissistic, attracted each other. In a situation mirroring her relationship with Wagner, it was she who had come to expect admiration and deference and Chamberlain, in pursuit of his own objectives, adroitly became the prime source of narcissistic supply.¹³⁵ And while we have noted that it is generally acknowledged that sources of this form of nourishment tend to be exploited by the object they nourish, corresponding to further mechanics of ASN Chamberlain projected his own desire for recognition onto his idol. By this, the narcissistic needs of both were satisfied and the circular relationship between cause and effect maintained.

It is said that everybody needs a hero, and the greater the sense of collective insecurity the greater the need. In this respect both Cosima and, later, Chamberlain, exerted considerable influence, consciously or otherwise, for at a time of domestic political instability their ASN-engendered pronouncements were consumed by the German people with alacrity, facilitating the politicisation of Bayreuth of which they are conventionally accused. And so what Wagner had conceived as a spiritual haven became translated by a darker pathology, although one not exclusive to the Wagnerian elite.

Cosima defined in terms of the Hofferian Sinner

In such a way Wagner and Wagnerism began to be associated with current political ideology, and, in time, National Socialism. The mechanics of each were similar, rendering both what Hoffer would recognise as a mass-movement. However, when applying Hofferian theory to Wagner and Wagnerism, we should not ignore Thomas à Kempis who, in *De Imitatione Christi*, writes: ‘Our entire peace in this miserable life consists more in humble suffering than in our exemption from that suffering’,¹³⁶ adding that ‘He who understands how to suffer will have the greatest peace’.

Kempis’ words resonate across time as, for Hoffer,

¹³⁴ Max Weber, Guenter Roth and Claus Wittich (eds., trans.), *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretative Sociology* (Berkeley: 1978), 241.

¹³⁵ Narcissistic supply is a concept developed and introduced to psychoanalytical discourse by Otto Fenichel in 1938. The term, which is normally used in a negative sense, describes an individual’s pathological, excessive need for admiration, and the interpersonal support drawn from co-dependents and the surrounding environment which is essential to their self-esteem.

¹³⁶ Thomas à Kempis, *De Imitatione Christi*.

It sometimes seems [...] mass movements are custom-made to fit the needs of the criminal [...] The technique of a proselytizing [sic] mass movement aims to evoke in the faithful the mood and frame of mind of a repentant criminal. Self-surrender, which is [...] the source of a mass movement's unity and vigour, is a sacrifice, an act of atonement, and clearly no atonement is called for unless there is a poignant sense of sin.¹³⁷

Such can be said was the case with Cosima. Besides offering many a therapeutic space, Wagner and Wagnerism supplied Cosima, and many others so disposed, with a much needed pathway towards atonement, narcissistic though that need may have been. Again, Wagner allowed the essences of people to appear. Cosima's desertion of Bülow brought about a near total ostracism by conventional society and she spent a large proportion of her time praying for forgiveness and, to vindicate her actions, to be worthy of Wagner's genius. Clearly, the strain their circumstances took its toll on the couple's health: Cosima's diary entries invariably begin by declaring either she or Wagner, or both, were ill. Equally clearly, Cosima regarded herself to be the architect of those circumstances and metaphorically flagellates herself daily for her sins. The dairies are littered with comments illustrating her sense of alienation, her fear of the future and of a longing for death, death as both punishment and release. But, like Kundry, that death that will not come but is deferred. Life, then, is punishment, a notion confirmed, ironically, by the forty-seven years by which Cosima outlived her husband, for as she had declared in the early years of their relationship, 'My single prayer: one day to die with Richard at the self-same hour'.¹³⁸ It was not to be. Her solution was renunciation and to surrender to providence.

And so, of all the character types identified by Hoffer as being susceptible to the mechanics of mass movements, Cosima resembles the Hofferian 'Sinner', a genus comprising those for whom patriotism or religious enthusiasm of some form is an escape from a blemished life, and those who nurture a sense of remorse or grievance or who seek atonement.¹³⁹ 'Fervent patriotism as well as religious and revolutionary enthusiasm often serves as a refuge from a guilty conscience', Hoffer notes,¹⁴⁰ for, in every instance, 'remorse and a sense of grievance seem to drive people in the same direction'.¹⁴¹ And so patriotism, as demonstrated by her anxiety to be suitably German, as much as the religious orthodoxy

¹³⁷ Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 64.

¹³⁸ Gregor-Dellin and Mack, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol.1*, 74. Entry dated 15 March 1869.

¹³⁹ Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 68.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

instilled in childhood, rendered Cosima susceptible to both Wagnerism and, later, the increasingly nationalist environment.

While it seems that Wagner exploited the internal torment with which Cosima perpetually cloaked herself in the interests of his personal and artistic aims, it would be inaccurate to claim that he alone was the source of her sense of sin. But it was certainly the composer's cultural crusade which nourished Cosima's crises and then, paradoxically, supplied a suitable environment for vigorous atonement out of which her essence and identity emerged.

Upon Wagner's death Cosima became a living *Liebestod*. She fully embraced mourning. It became her masochistic nature. She retreated into profound sorrow and, as noted, resorted to a form of self-harming, as attested by her cropping of her famously waist-length hair.¹⁴² If it is true that Wagner's fatal heart attack was prompted by a quarrel with Cosima over his infatuation with Carrie Pringle,¹⁴³ the extremity of his wife's subsequent behaviour may have represented an expression of self-castigation, a further guilt to add to an already extensive litany of iniquities. Conversely, it may have been a reaction to the sudden removal of that which had hitherto supplied her with an identity. But now, in an exchange of identities, lover and muse became martyr and avatar.

Cosima's widowhood was to last longer than the total of years lived before and with Wagner. Consequently, Wagner became monumentalised, later commodified and, throughout, Cosima becomes ever more a living but shadowy figure mediating between the living and the dead. Sinners all, she is at once Amfortas, her guilt the wound that will not heal; she is Titirel, existing solely for, and maintained solely by, the life-giving Wagnerian rituals; and she is Kundry, the eternal penitent and servant who cannot die. She is Empress and Priestess, the *Hohe Frau* of the Wagnerian enterprise at Bayreuth. She is oracle, the guardian of the Wagner aesthetic, memory and archive and, in turn, the embodiment of Teutonic ideals which situated the woman as site of knowledge acquisition. What may have constituted 'Cosima' had long since been bleached away. It was the mask of Wagner that now supplied her with identity, those previous being exhausted, sloughed with the death of the master.

Above all, Cosima was a mother: *the* mother of an important dynasty and representation of the mother archetype, the realisation of mythic and temporal ideals. In time, she came to represent the father figure herself in that, as Guardian of the Wagnerian Grail she became a cultural conduit, 'fathered', as McCutchen might have put it, by the German people.

¹⁴² Cosima placed her cut hair in a velvet cushion upon which Wagner's head rested in his coffin.

¹⁴³ See this volume Chapter 1, 38, fn. 60.

While, for Cosima, it had been Wagner who came to represent the father archetype such became both, in a wider sense, to the German people. As Hitler was later to do, each corresponded to McCutchen's criteria in supplying a people with its past and its traditions, imagined, crafted, or otherwise. It is not a coincidence that Wagner and Cosima read Carlyle and, in particular, Carlyle's writings regarding myth and the hero figure for as McCutchen has since noted:

Myths lure and sanction present activity, because they channel the imagination as to what may yet be. Yet, they feel partly false, partly dangerous, and in so doing they attract poets, theologians, and scientists of the age to tease out their truth. Viable truth must tell a story about man that encourages him to act as he must in any event-act (although if he acts without mythic encouragement he acts cowardly). In the first instance, myth is an encouraging story about destiny. Second, myth must be suspiciously fantastic, begging for enlightenment from intellectual curiosity and luring various communities of men into behavioural embodiment as a kind of test [...] In sum, myths encourage necessity, but they do so in a way that strengthens man with creative flourishes towards his destiny.¹⁴⁴

Yet,

At some crucial time of childhood, we focus our imaginations by limiting them through identification with the father, in order to cope with the psychic affluence of personal energy. The childhood resolution of psychic affluence effects later attempts to come to terms with adult initiative through the father figure [...] The psychology of the father figure can function within the matrix of myth. It can function to order and bless and authenticate human agents. Placed within the larger psychological story about 'normative growth,' the father figure works within the whole pattern of meanings about what makes man human.¹⁴⁵

So it may be that Cosima needed the father figure, not only as a psychologically important archetype, but also to authenticate or justify her behaviour, invoked as a means of off-loading or deflection, as it were. Certainly, in time Cosima appears to equate, or confuse, the father figure with the heroic figure as representing German culture and values; hence again her repeated need for reassurance from Wagner that she was German. Just as a child, perhaps, seeks approval of the parent. And despite her social and cultural standing, her roles of mother, avatar, and curator of a significant cultural tradition, a child Cosima in many ways remained; or, more accurately, remained on the lower rungs of the Eriksonian ladder of psychosocial step development. Erikson tells us that failure to successfully complete each phase of the framework does not preclude progression to the next, merely a delay as one revisits one's errors in order to correct them. However, Cosima's believed herself to live in a perpetual state of error, and instead of progressing lived in that state as punishment for her

¹⁴⁴ McCutchen, 'The Father Figure in Psychology and Religion', 181.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

sins. Arguably, it was her unchanging, unalterable impression of herself as a martyr that prevented effective individuation. Clearly, in this she was collectively hampered by her upbringing, Bülow, and Wagner; but by maintaining the masks of martyr and Wagner she was equally culpable in establishing a personal stasis.

Even after Wagner's death Cosima did not seize the opportunity to locate a sense of self and to continue her husband's work in that capacity but, rather, chose to remain the earthly representation of another, possibly because there was no Cosima. She resisted change and the calls to modernise, declining all advice to engage with new ideas and theatrical trends.¹⁴⁶ Here, one recalls Hoffer's proposition that a fear of change represents a fear of the future. Considering Cosima's intransigence, this may be correct. Whatever the reason, given the *Zeitgeist* and the financial precariousness of Bayreuth, its politicisation was perhaps inevitable. But it was naivety rather than dystopian ideology which, in time, opened Bayreuth's doors to National Socialism, a move made all the more possible by Cosima's narcissism and her inability to see beyond herself and her reading of the immediate Wagnerian world.

Cosima died in 1930 at the age of ninety-two. In the period that separates her death and that of Wagner, Bayreuth as an institution underwent considerable alteration; so, too, German society. As envisaged by its architect, Wagnerism was to be an enabling force and, like the *Festspielhaus*, a spiritually therapeutic space. In keeping with the times that axis veered ever more towards the political. Wagner's hymn to the redemption of humanity became one tailored to the specific needs the moment, of a Germany in need of redemption, a country once again in social turmoil and needful of a totem around which to gather. And although he had once publically condemned the Bayreuth Circle for their over-intellectualisation of Wagner, the principle conduit facilitating that change was another, non-German, person 'fathered' by Wagner, and, moreover, one apparently intent upon changing the world into something in which he could better fit: Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

¹⁴⁶ The designers Edward Gordon Craig and Adolph Appia were constantly recommended to Cosima as representing the latest ideas in scenography. Siegfried Wagner was to adopt a more progressive approach to stage production recognising the need for Bayreuth to modernise, if only to remain commercially viable. Later, Cosima's grandson, Wieland, employed many of Craig and Appia's precepts at New Bayreuth.

Chapter 3

Houston Stewart Chamberlain

History has not been kind to Houston Stewart Chamberlain. An elder cousin of the pre-WWII British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, Houston was an author, racial theorist and, in time, a key member of Cosima Wagner's Bayreuth Circle. Yet he is a relatively little known figure to modern readers, and then principally as the ideological guru of German National Socialism.¹ As such, he remains a source of interest for political historians, researchers of Nazi culture and occultists.² Otherwise he is something of an enigma and, apparently, very much an avoided topic since it appears to be the aim of the prevailing discourse to erase him entirely from history. Scholarship is sparse and in the town of Bayreuth the once prominent civic esteem indicators of its former 'honourable citizen' have been removed from public view: the thoroughfare that once bore his name has been rechristened, and his one-time address at No.1 Wahnfriedstrasse now serves as a museum dedicated to an earlier resident of Bayreuth, the author Jean-Paul.³ Clearly, post-Holocaust memory has become cloaked by remembrance to such an extent that a discourse has materialised which appears to deter open discussion making Chamberlain somewhat difficult to write about.

But Chamberlain's link with Nazism should not blind us to his other, and anterior, activities for in these we can discover the essence of the man. We should recall he was an accomplished astronomer and botanist and, for the purposes of this study, that he wrote perceptively on music and on Wagner in particular.⁴ As a founder member of the first French Wagner Society and regular contributor to the Paris-based periodical, *Revue Wagnèrienne*, Chamberlain did much to promote Wagner and Wagnerism outside Germany, establish the French as one of the composer's most receptive audiences (not an inconsiderable achievement

¹ While Nazi ideology referenced a number of *völkisch* writers, amongst them Hans Grimm, Edwin Guido Kolbenheyer, Wilhelm Schäfer, Emil Strauss, Böries Freiherr von Münchhausen, and Rudolf Binding, it was due to Chamberlain's celebrity and his association with a significant German cultural figure, Richard Wagner, and the composer's institution at Bayreuth that attracted figures such as Adolf Hitler and Josef Goebbels, and inspired the Nationalist Socialist philosopher, Alfred Rosenberg. For a discussion about *völkisch* writers, their agency in German culture, thinking, and politics in both pre- and post-WWII Germany, see Guy Tourlamain, *'Völkisch' Writers and National Socialism: A Study of Right-Wing Political Culture in Germany 1890-1960* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2014).

² Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Alexander Jacob (trans.), *Political Ideals* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), 3.

³ Jonathan Carr, *The Wagner Clan* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 90-91.

⁴ Lucy Beckett, 'Houston Stewart Chamberlain', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Vol. 4* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 113.

in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War), and defended the composer's widow Cosima against her many opponents at Bayreuth and beyond. To us, Chamberlain may have been a prolific author of questionable ideology and scholarly propriety, but it was upon the basis of his Wagner-related work, rather than his socio-political treatises, that he attracted the attention of Bayreuth and so gained access to a significant German institution within which he was to exert considerable influence and from where he was to extend considerable emblematic power.

Chamberlain was a key protagonist and the first critical player in a particular construct of Bayreuth which established social and cultural relationships that were to be crucial for the future of Bayreuth and for the German collective consciousness. The aim of this chapter is to explore how this happened, how Chamberlain insinuated himself into Bayreuth and became not only an important link in Wagner's afterlife but also the lives of those who came afterwards. Here, we will need to address at length the dialectic that existed between Chamberlain and Cosima Wagner; and to do this, rather than resorting to the benefit of hindsight their politics affords us – what Michael A. Bernstein would call 'backshadowing' – we will need to consider other less apparent factors.⁵

As is the case with Cosima, Chamberlain's is not a simple discourse. Like Cosima, there are many facets to Chamberlain's character and, like her he appears to have been a compendium of personal and social issues. Although the politics of both were rooted in older and wider conversations, Chamberlain's particular activities and actions leads us to the prospect that his thinking and the singular nature of his relationship with Germany, Wagner, Wagnerism, and especially the Wagner family and Bayreuth, were symptomatic of his pathology. This brings a hermeneutic dimension to the discussion and so in addition to empirical biographies as mediated by, among others, Alexander Jacob, Geoffrey Field, and Michael Biddiss (see below) we will once again consult Jung, Erikson, and Hoffer. As in the previous chapter, a preliminary review of the available literature and a concise biography will contextualise a discussion which, although necessarily exegetic will tease out those issues and facets of Chamberlain's character that give clue to his susceptibility to, and agency within, Wagnerism, his appeal to the German public and, later, to German National Socialism.

⁵ As advanced by Michael A. Bernstein, 'backshadowing' denotes 'a kind of retroactive foreshadowing in which the shared knowledge of the outcome of events [...] is used to judge everything that went before'. See Michael A. Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 16. See also Hans R. Vaget, Nicholas Vaszonyi (ed.), *'Du warst mein Feind von je': The Beckmesser Controversy Revisited, Wagner's Meistersinger: Performance, History, Representation* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 192.

Chamberlain in the Literature

As indicated, what scholarship there is on Chamberlain is biographical, empirical, and set within a strict politico-historical context. Of this, the present study will triangulate works by Geoffrey Field,⁶ Michael Biddiss,⁷ and Alexander Jacob's translation of Chamberlain's *Political Ideals* with the more journalistic Oliver Hilmes and Jonathan Carr,⁸ and the contrasting views of Chamberlain's contemporaries, Lord Redesdale and Charles Clarke.⁹

While the National Archives of the Richard Wagner Foundation at Bayreuth houses Chamberlain's many unpublished papers, to date the documents are uncatalogued and undigitised, placing them beyond the means of this particular project. Hilmes, however, experienced no such constraints and it is via his work that reference is made here to that resource, albeit with a degree of academic prudence. Chamberlain's published correspondence, diaries, and his autobiographical work *Lebensweg meines Denkes (The Way of My Thinking)* are also consulted for ultimately, as with Cosima Wagner it is in his own words and those of his contemporaries, not post WWII commentaries or political histories that we discover Chamberlain.

In terms of scientific evidence, Chamberlain's autobiography is generally considered to be unreliable. This is unsurprising given today's reception of him. But to uncritically concur is to overlook an important point: like Wagner in his autobiographical work, *Mein Leben*, and Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, Chamberlain records his life, events, and facts as he understands them to be. If one accepts current narratological theory, then this is true of all autobiographies.¹⁰ But like Wagner and Hitler, Chamberlain saw his early life as a particular journey towards inner fulfilment. While all three works are very much in the tradition of the

⁶ Geoffrey Field, *The Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 24.

⁷ Michael Biddiss, 'History as Destiny: Gobineau, H.S. Chamberlain and Spengler', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Vol.7 (1997), 73-100.

⁸ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Alexander Jacob (trans.), *Political Ideals* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005); Oliver Hilmes, Stewart Spencer (trans.), *Cosima Wagner: The Lady of Bayreuth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010); Jonathan Carr, *The Wagner Clan* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007).

⁹ See Redesdale's Introduction to Houston Stewart Chamberlain, John Lees (trans.), *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1911/Alkaline paper preservation copy University of Virginia). Also available at <https://archive.org/details/TheFoundationsOfThe19Century/-32> (16 August 2017); Charles Clarke (ed., trans.), *The Ravings of a Renegade: Being the War essays of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (London: Jarrold, 1915).

¹⁰ For narratological theory and other discussions regarding life stories and identity in psychological terms see, for instance, Jerome Bruner, 'The Autobiographical Process', in R. Folkenflik (ed.), *The Culture of Autobiography: Construction of Self-Representations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 28-56; Paul J. Eakin, *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narratives* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2008); James Olney, *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life Writing* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998). For a concise history of biographical and autobiographical writing and associated theories see Helga Schwalm, 'The Living Handbook of Narratology'. <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/autobiography> (27 July 2017).

Goethean *Bildungsroman*, they focus not just upon self-consciousness but also on a later characteristic of the genre defined by Park Honan as ‘all that is against us’,¹¹ in other words, a sense of personal victimhood. Chamberlain’s outlook and actions were to a considerable extent shaped as much by his relationship with society as by how he saw himself. And so, contrary to popular belief, Wagner, Chamberlain, and Hitler are linked not only by politics as such but by the way they correspond, or see themselves as corresponding, to the anterior cultural tropes of the suffering individual and, in turn, to the hero- and leader-figure for whom suffering was an imperative, and from which nineteenth and early twentieth century German ideas of monarchical politics derive.

Jacob’s account of Chamberlain forms the introduction to his translation of Chamberlain’s political principles in essay form. Consequently it is biographically concise. The tenor of the account is positive yet uncritical, the author’s position being to deliver a forthright delineation of Chamberlain’s overall *Weltanschauung* and faith in the political doctrine to which he adhered. The modern eye may suspect mediation, a suggestion, perhaps, of personal perspective, of partiality in its apparent impartiality. Certainly, the absence of critical analysis renders it susceptible to post-Holocaust accusations that it represents an endorsement, rather than a critique of Chamberlain’s ideas. But such an opinion would only reinforce the point made above: we have become so conditioned by post-Holocaust thinking that in reading Jacob’s text one finds oneself expecting censure. One consciously looks for it and, finding none, suspects the author. Such is the power of discourse. Therefore the strength and worth of Jacob’s narrative lies in its forthrightness.

Despite supplying details of Chamberlain’s background, Jacob does not consider the possible sources of, or reasons for his subject’s ideas within a biographical context. These, however, can be detected in Chamberlain’s propagandist texts emanating from WWI which were published in both the British and German press and distributed throughout Germany in pamphlet form. Clearly influenced by the conflict, or, more accurately, by his incredulity at Britain’s declaration of war on Germany, Chamberlain’s war writings, particularly the essays, *Germany as Leading Power*, and *England*,¹² exhibit a profound hatred for his countrymen, a hatred that was rooted not only in an abhorrence of the British class system and the current political situation but also, paralleling Cosima Wagner’s animosity towards the French, in

¹¹ Park Honan, ‘The Theory of Biography’, in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol.13, No.1, 1979, 109-20, (109).

¹² Houston Stewart Chamberlain, ‘Germany as Leading Power’, in Charles. H. Clarke, *The Ravings of a Renegade: Being the War Essays of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (London: Jarrold, 1915), 157-207; Houston Stewart Chamberlain, ‘England’, in Charles. H. Clarke, *The Ravings of a Renegade: Being the War Essays of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (London: Jarrold, 1915), 109-154.

Chamberlain's unhappy childhood experiences at British schools. While Clarke's introduction to his edition of Chamberlain's war essays is clearly an exercise in British counter-propaganda, undermining Chamberlain's arguments by highlighting their inaccuracies it nevertheless gives us an impression of Chamberlain before Nazism distanced him from us. With Clarke we are very much in a pre-Hitler and pre-Holocaust world, and therefore better able to attune to Chamberlain's character and the vagaries at that time.

By contrast, the accounts of Chamberlain by Hilmes and Carr are, as noted, journalistic in tone. They focus on the many salacious details of Chamberlain's life to the exclusion of more studied analyses. However, in their salaciousness we discover many crevices overlooked (or ignored) by Jacob: Chamberlain's first marriage and extra-marital activities for instance, or the nature of his fatal illness, are all aspects that afford greater understanding of the man whose colourful early life contrasts sharply with the piety of his later years within the realm of Wagner whose cause he championed and upon whose name he capitalised. Although Hilmes refers to the similarities of circumstance linking the childhoods of Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred, like Carr and Jacob, he does not attempt to explore how the events of Chamberlain's early life may have shaped his later philosophies and actions. Indeed, nothing appears to exist, at least in English, which examines Chamberlain's ideas and actions in terms of their likely psychological origin. And so it is from the pieces of information left us by his contemporaries and, indeed, himself, that we can build a composite picture of Chamberlain from boyhood to the fashionable author and member of the Wagner family.

We may begin with a letter Chamberlain wrote to his 'most loyal and appreciative admirer',¹³ Kaiser Wilhelm II. Dating from the time of Chamberlain's marriage into the Wagner family, it reveals how Chamberlain saw his life up until that point:

After arduous years, first an intolerable conjugal life, then a period that, although it enriched my soul, was one of aching loneliness, my life's ship now glides into friendlier waters.¹⁴

Clearly, Chamberlain saw in Wagner's family a safe haven, a 'coming home', as it were. But as will unfold, his *Bildung*-like journey towards that haven was particular and calculated, for

¹³ Kaiser Wilhelm II, as described by Empress Hermine to Daniela Thode. Letter dated 2 July 1926. Wagner National Archive, Bayreuth.

¹⁴ Houston Stewart Chamberlain to Kaiser Wilhelm II. Letter dated 1 December 1908. See Paul Pretsche (ed.), *Houston Stewart Chamberlain Briefe 1882-1924 und Briefwechsel mit Kaiser Wilhelm II* (Munich: np., 1928). Also in Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 110. See also Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 261.

of all the individuals here under discussion, Chamberlain was the most unmoored from any sense of home.

Houston Stewart Chamberlain: A Concise Biography

Born 9 September 1855 in Southsea, England, Houston Stewart Chamberlain was the youngest of three sons born to William Charles Chamberlain, an admiral in the British navy, and Eliza Jane Hall, daughter of Captain Basil Hall, R.N., an eminent scientist whose own father, Sir James Hall, was the founder of experimental geology.¹⁵

When Houston was only a few months old his mother died. Soon afterwards, their father sent all three boys to France, there to be raised in Versailles by their paternal grandmother Anne,¹⁶ and aunt, their father's half-sister, Harriet Chamberlain. There, Houston commenced his education at a *lycée*, but his father, increasingly concerned that his youngest son would lose all contact with his mother country and tongue, eventually recalled the boy and sent him to a series of English schools including, at the age of eleven, Cheltenham College then renowned for the training of officers destined for the military. At these very middle- and upper middle-class institutions Houston was subjected to physical and mental torment he was never to forget. Bullied and alienated, he became lonely and homesick, although, as Carr points out, strictly speaking, Chamberlain had no real home to yearn for.¹⁷

Appalled at the prospect of a military career, and smarting from his treatment at the hands of his establishment-minded fellow pupils and schoolmasters, the young Chamberlain developed a highly romanticised outlook on life and, although essentially a liberal, became influenced by the romantic conservative critique of the Industrial Revolution which identified the greed of the philistine middle class as the source of society's ills.¹⁸ Chiming with the distaste Chamberlain had developed for the British class system, it was an outlook which arguably seeded his later political thinking. He also developed an interest for the arts and the natural sciences, particularly astronomy, of which he later recollected:

The starlight exerted an indescribable influence on me. The stars seemed closer to me, more gentle, more worthy of trust, and more sympathetic – for that is the only word which describes my feelings – than any of the people around me in school. For the stars, I experienced true friendship.¹⁹

¹⁵ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, John Lees (trans.), *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century Vol.1* (London: John Lane, Bodley Head, 1923/Preservation Photocopy, University of Virginia, undated), v-vi.

¹⁶ Anne Eugenia Chamberlain, née Morgan.

¹⁷ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 92.

¹⁸ Field, *The Evangelist of Race*, 23-27.

¹⁹ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, as quoted in Field, *The Evangelist of Race*, 4.

It was a consolation that extended into adulthood, for even as a successful author living in Bayreuth, Chamberlain would often end the day in his roof-top observatory, there to sit for hours at his telescope, surveying the heavens much as he had done as a child.²⁰

At his English schools Chamberlain's health steadily declined, possibly psychosomatically. Doctors diagnosed a respiratory ailment and recommended spa treatment in a more efficacious European climate. Accordingly, at the age of fourteen he was withdrawn from the English education system and, in 1870, spent time travelling in Europe accompanied by his devoted Aunt Harriet who seems to have become a mother-substitute. Never again did Chamberlain return to England for any significant period,²¹ writing, in 1876:

The fact may be regrettable but it remains a fact; I have become so completely un-English that the mere thought of England and the English makes me unhappy.²²

As a boy, Chamberlain had been seized with a passion for all things German and, as he later claimed, it was on that very trip with his aunt in 1870 that he first encountered the Wagner household, albeit from a distance, having previously never heard of the composer Richard Wagner. After completing his prescribed treatment at the German spa town of Bad Ems, Chamberlain and his aunt progressed to Switzerland. There, they took a boat trip on the Vierwaldstätter Lake, during which Chamberlain noticed some of his fellow passengers pointing to a distinctive villa on the headland and overheard their conversation about 'a wild composer and his mistress who lived there in sin'.²³ The month was August, only a few weeks before his fifteenth birthday, and the same month in which Wagner had finally married Cosima in nearby Lucerne, consequently legitimising their son, Siegfried, as Wagner's rightful heir.

That same year, when it became obvious that Chamberlain had no intention of returning to England, he was assigned a Prussian tutor, Otto Kuntze, who nurtured the youth's burgeoning interest in German culture. In 1874, and by now an ardent Germanophile, Chamberlain met Anna Horst, a Prussian woman and daughter of a Breslau Public Prosecutor, who, although ten years his senior, shared many of his interests. In 1878, and very much against the wishes of Chamberlain's family, the couple married. Chamberlain's friends regarded Anna as rather plain, and, as Carr suggests, it may have been her nationality, rather than anything more personal, that initially attracted the young Englishman.²⁴ The marriage

²⁰ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 90.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

²² Houston Stewart Chamberlain, as quoted in Field, *The Evangelist of Race*, 32.

²³ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 94.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

lasted for some thirty years, and it would appear that throughout that time, until their divorce in 1906 (when Chamberlain was declared the guilty party following a decade long dalliance with the prostitute, Josephine Schinner), Anna, like Minna with Wagner, stoically supported her husband through his many ailments, failed enterprises, and infidelities.

In 1881, Chamberlain was awarded a bachelor's degree in botany by Geneva University. Although a consummate botanist his subsequent doctoral work was suspended when he abruptly removed to Paris in order to embark upon what proved to be a precarious financial partnership. Considering the delicate state of the European economies following the Franco-Prussian War it was a somewhat foolhardy venture and, unsurprisingly, it foundered. Chamberlain was rescued from total bankruptcy by his aunt Harriet and returned to Switzerland where he suffered a breakdown, nursed throughout by the faithful Anna.

In 1882, the couple visited Bayreuth and attended six performances of *Parsifal* which was receiving its premiere. The effect on Chamberlain was epiphanic. While Anna shared her husband's admiration for Wagner's music, she was unwilling to enter into the quasi-religiosity of the Wagner-machine as then operated by Wahnfried. Initially, Chamberlain had responded likewise, writing a number of articles refuting Wagnerian theory regarding the synchronicity between art and ideas and challenging the intellectualisation that the Bayreuth Circle was currently projecting onto the composer's stage works. Nonetheless, Chamberlain continued to submit articles to the influential Wagner journal, *Bayreuther Blätter*, only to have them rejected by the editor, Hans von Wolzogen, who maintained that only a German could comprehend art as Wagner envisioned it. Although Chamberlain never forgave Wolzogen for the slight, the profundity of the *Parsifal* experience literally changed Chamberlain's life overnight, and it was here that his seemingly calculated journey towards the centre of the Wagnerian cosmos commenced.

Chamberlain was not entirely unknown to Cosima Wagner and the Bayreuth Circle. While in Paris he had become a representative of the Patrons' Society in which capacity he had won new recruits for Wagnerism and for this Bayreuth was grateful.²⁵ Recuperating in Dresden after his breakdown, Chamberlain read widely and began writing his first articles in the German language. One in particular caught the attention of Cosima. In it, Chamberlain defended her against the increasing number of charges made by many of her father's associates, including a number of his former pupils, that in 1886 her treatment of her dying

²⁵ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 94.

father had not been as virtuous as she had maintained, nor that her version of events was entirely that as recalled by them.²⁶

Clearly, Chamberlain could not have had any personal experience of these events when he wrote his defence of Cosima,²⁷ or, for that matter, of the nature of Liszt's relationship with his daughter and son-in-law.²⁸ Yet, given the weight of empirical evidence against Cosima, and given the strength of negative feeling about her in general, perhaps it was an intrinsically British sense of fair play, the defence of the underdog as it were, which prompted Chamberlain's support. In his article he very clearly argues that Cosima and Wagner had always shown nothing but the greatest respect towards Liszt. As again this could not have been based upon any first-hand knowledge, it can therefore be suggested that it was Chamberlain's empathic recognition and acknowledgement of mutual childhood experiences, albeit within their respective orthodoxies – hers religious, his social – that both inspired and underscored his defence of Cosima.

Although there had been no direct contact between them as yet, it is unlikely Cosima's life-story and circumstances would have been unknown to Chamberlain. His work within a Wagner Society and his activism on Wagner's behalf would have exposed him to the histories and gossip regarding the various members of the Wagner family. Here, we should consider the proposition that Chamberlain's article may also have been a consummate exercise in ingratiation, for by the time he wrote it he had embarked upon his programme of personal advancement within the Wagnerian realm. Whatever the reasons, following the article's publication, a grateful Cosima expressed a wish to meet Chamberlain, which she did in 1888 when visiting Dresden.

²⁶ In 1881, Liszt had fallen down a flight of stairs in a Weimar hotel, had never fully recovered and thereafter was plagued by bouts of depression, dropsy, and asthma, all of which can be symptomatic of heart disease. It was in 1886, during a visit to his daughter Cosima in Bayreuth that Liszt succumbed to his final malady. It coinciding with the opening of that year's Festival, Liszt is reputedly to have said, 'If only I had fallen ill elsewhere, but to have fallen ill right here, amongst all this clamour, is really too stupid', as all attention, including that of his daughter, was focused upon the event. That Cosima had taken control of her father's welfare too late and in too draconian a manner for her assistance to be of any benefit – indeed for it to have been possibly detrimental – was seen by many as once more example of her intrinsic haughtiness. While the cause of Liszt's death was officially recorded as pneumonia many of his associates suspected malpractice. If the latter was true, then given their antipathy towards Cosima it is perhaps understandable that many of the composer's friends and students held her responsible. Carr suggests that Cosima's alleged callousness towards her father, particularly during his final hours, represents a punishment, her valedictory reprisal for an unhappy childhood. See Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 95. In accordance with his wishes, Liszt was buried in Bayreuth municipal cemetery.

²⁷ For an account of Liszt's death by his pupil Lina Smalhausen, see Hilmes *Cosima Wagner*, 179-182.

²⁸ The relationship between Liszt and the Wagner couple was not entirely amicable. Wagner regularly took his old friend to task over his vivid personal life, and although not exactly in a position himself to dispense homilies on morality was particularly scornful when Liszt took Holy Orders, accusing him of breath-taking hypocrisy. Liszt's exploitation of the Wagners' hospitality, not to mention the contents of their wine cellar, also became a serious bone of contention.

The concord ‘between the intense and soft-spoken Englishman and the widow of French-Hungarian birth, both self-exiled in Wagner-land’ was immediate.²⁹ According to Carr, Cosima, with unmarried daughters and a dynasty to maintain, was ever on the lookout for eligible bachelors. Indeed, when on cordial terms with the family, Richard Strauss had more than once sensed ‘the net closing around him and had bolted for (relative) freedom and married the shrewish Pauline de Ahne’.³⁰ But from the outset, Cosima’s contact with Chamberlain was on another level. For Carr, it was as though she saw in him not so much a potential husband for a daughter as a soulmate for herself. Marriage, Carr notes, would have been out of the question, not because Chamberlain was already married, nor because Cosima was eighteen years his senior, but rather ‘by remaining simply Wagner’s widow Cosima retained a mystique she would largely have lost by becoming someone else’s wife’.³¹

It was through Cosima’s dependence upon her youngest daughter Eva that Chamberlain became attached to the Wagner family. Her always defective eyesight now failing completely, Cosima appointed Eva her administrative assistant. Eva wrote to dictation and read all her mother’s correspondence, and it was in writing out Cosima’s response to one of Chamberlain’s effusive letters that Eva began to correspond with him herself. A seemingly amorous relationship developed between them, but as his diary entries and letters to his associates suggest, Chamberlain’s motives appear to have been rather more mercenary. As he noted in 1908, two years after his divorce from Anna and a few months before his marriage to Eva, ‘By the 8th August the intermediate stage was over’, indicating a vaulting ambition exercised with consummate precision.³²

While still married to Anna, Chamberlain had courted Eva’s sisters, in turn Blandine and Isolde, and had been rejected by both. Indeed, Isolde emphatically expressed her physical revulsion towards him, declaring later that she could not abide his ‘fish-like staring eyes’.³³ In 1896, Chamberlain turned his attention to Blandine, whose husband was in severe ill health and not expected to live. Again, he was rejected. Undaunted, in 1908 Chamberlain focused his attention on forty-year old Eva, this time with success. Throughout these courtships the Wagner family was apparently unaware of Chamberlain’s colourful personal history.

²⁹ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 95.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Diary entry dated August-November 1908. Nationalarchive der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung, Bayreuth. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 255.

³³ Gertrude Strobel. Diary entry dated 29 June 1946. Also in Brigitte Hamann, *Winifred Wagner, oder, Hitler’s Bayreuth* (Munich: Piper, 2002), 21. The passage is excised in the translation by Alan Bance, but included in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 255.

In a letter to Cosima dated 1 September 1908, Chamberlain describes himself as a lonely figure seeking a home in Wahnfried, adding that, as to this, she should 'read between the lines'.³⁴ While the sentiments expressed here are similar to those previously conveyed to the Kaiser, Chamberlain's knowing aside suggests another, and chilling, agenda. It is Carr's view that Chamberlain was using Cosima's daughters not only as proxy for the mother but also as a means by which to gain access to the powerbase of a significant institution and, crucially, one that was German.³⁵ Certainly there was a pattern: Chamberlain had presumably married Anna Horst on account of her nationality and his pursuit of the Wagner girls follows suit, albeit at an entirely different register. On 26 December 1908, Chamberlain and Eva married. He was fifty-four, she forty-one.

Eva's half-sister, Daniela Thode, later wrote: 'Our misery began in 1908, with Eva's marriage',³⁶ for henceforward Chamberlain began to exert considerable influence within the family. With Eva, he progressively controlled access to the aging Cosima, much to the consternation of the other members of the family, except for Siegfried, who seemingly complied with the regime, content to pursue his own interests. Chamberlain became increasingly divisive, no more so than when, in 1913, he took Cosima's side in the paternity case Isolde brought against her mother in the interests of her own son's inheritance.³⁷

Now firmly established within a significant cultural institution, Chamberlain continued to write. His study of modern civilisation, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century)* of 1899 and written at the request of his Munich-based publisher, Bruckmann, had been an international success. Questionable though its argument may have been, the work earned Chamberlain the respect not only key members of the Bayreuth Circle and the Kaiser, but also that of a wider public which included Theodor Roosevelt. His enthusiasm for Wagner notwithstanding, Chamberlain's growing renown as an author undoubtedly facilitated his admittance into the Wagnerian circle for, at a time of relative mutual instability, it can be said each supplied a form of symbolic capital advantageous to both parties. Chamberlain's assimilation also indicates the recognition of an

³⁴ Houston Stewart Chamberlain to Cosima Wagner. Letter dated 1 September 1908. See Paul Pretsche (ed.), *Cosima Wagner und Houston Stewart Chamberlain im Briefwechsel 1888-1908* (Leipzig: np., 1934), 691. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 255.

³⁵ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 96.

³⁶ Daniela Thode, nee von Bülow, as quoted in Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (eds.), Geoffrey Skelton (trans.), *Cosima Wagner's Diaries Vol. 1* (London: Collins, 1977), 18. Daniela was the eldest daughter of Cosima and her first husband, the conductor and Wagner-champion Hans von Bülow. In 1886, Daniela von Bülow married writer and academic, Henry Thode, having been first engaged, at her mother's behest, to the technical director of the Bayreuth Festival, Fritz Brandt. Brandt withdrew his suit after discovering Cosima's complicity in the engagement.

³⁷ For details of the Isolde Beidler paternity case see this volume Chapter 4, 144-145.

emergent political agenda at Bayreuth, as demonstrated by his opening declaration to Cosima in Dresden that he was a 'Bayreuthian' rather than the more obvious and natural expression, 'Wagnerian'.³⁸

When, in 1914, Great Britain declared war on Germany, Chamberlain was forthright in his astonishment and refused to speak English ever again, even to his young English sister-in-law, Winifred, who married into the Wagner family the following year. In 1900, Chamberlain had visited Britain for the first time in many years and was appalled by what he witnessed, commenting to Cosima that the Britain of aristocratic rule and respectability that he once knew had been replaced by a soulless society which, powered by avarice and the Jews, lacked a collective purpose. For Chamberlain, therefore, Germany's defeat was an impossibility since the German people's greater sense of integrity and culture would prevail, and Germany's victory would rescue Britain from the capitalist ruin it had brought upon itself.³⁹

In his 1914 essay, *Whose Fault is the War?*, Chamberlain puts the blame squarely on Britain, claiming that France and Russia were merely Britain's pawns. He wrote prodigiously to this effect in both the German and British press and in 1916, the same year he was granted German citizenship he was awarded the Iron Cross for his services to German propaganda.⁴⁰

In the imaginary, Romantic world with which Chamberlain had cloaked himself since his schooldays, German victory was guaranteed. When the opposite happened in 1918 Chamberlain's world fell apart,⁴¹ literally and metaphorically. The stringency of the Versailles Treaty and the November Revolution in Russia swept away the monarchical social structure he had revered. Like many Germans, Chamberlain blamed Germany's defeat on the Jews, and his anti-Semitic writings became more intense, although this may have been due, in part, to a worsening medical condition.

In the early stages of the war Chamberlain had been stricken with a serious nervous and muscular disorder for which, it appears, no records offering a definitive diagnosis exist.⁴² While it was Chamberlain's opinion he had been poisoned by the British Secret Service, the

³⁸ Distinct from 'Wagnerian' which implies an admirer of Wagner, his works, and aesthetic, the term 'Bayreuthian', as seemingly intended by Chamberlain, implies a follower of the Bayreuth Circle, their work, and a tacit acknowledgment of their politicisation of Wagner and his enterprise.

³⁹ Field, *Evangelist of Race*, 352

⁴⁰ Chamberlain was obliged to apply for German citizenship. In the initial stages of WWI his habitual and solitary study of the heavens led to accusations he was a British spy transmitting information to the enemy from his roof-top observatory. Although he emphatically denied the charges, they were of such intensity that Chamberlain began to fear for his life and it was mainly to prove his innocence that he applied for German citizenship. Considering the intensity of Chamberlain's Anglophobia it is interesting it took him so long to apply.

⁴¹ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 91.

⁴² Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 297.

official story was that his complaint was a nervous response to England's declaration of war upon Germany. Considering Chamberlain's medical history, a psychosomatic explanation is entirely feasible. However, as both Carr and Hilmes suspect, the account may have been intentionally ambiguous. While Jacob maintains Chamberlain was suffering from Parkinson's disease,⁴³ it seems likely that, as Carr and Hilmes believe, the symptoms signify the onset of syphilis, a legacy, perhaps, of Chamberlain's Viennese days and his dalliances with prostitutes. Certainly, the later developments of his condition are consistent with the onset of the fourth and final stage of neuro-syphilis.⁴⁴ In time, Chamberlain lost his power of speech, became confined to a wheelchair, then bed, finally becoming completely paralysed. In the polite society of the early twentieth century syphilis was a well-known condition seldom referred to. Clearly, his position as the ideological guru of not only the Bayreuth Circle but also a nascent political movement whose creed expounded the purity of living, as well as the purity of race, it would have been imprudent to broadcast the true nature of Chamberlain's illness (if, indeed, that is what it was), although, doubtless, many would have had their suspicions.

It was in 1920, and through his disciple, the *völkisch* activist Josef Stolzinger-Cerny, that Chamberlain first became aware of Adolf Hitler. That March, Chamberlain had supported the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch against the Weimar Republic.⁴⁵ For Chamberlain, the failure of the coup not only discredited conventional conservatism but also a former political idol of his, the right-wing nationalist and journalist, Wolfgang Kapp, prompting Chamberlain to advocate a more extreme political alternative – a new, uniquely German socialism that would sit somewhere between capitalism and socialism. It was because of Kapp's inability to put his lavish words into action that Chamberlain was initially sceptical of Hitler's rhetoric, considering him to be nothing more than another idealistic but ineffective politician. However, it was Hitler's personal involvement in the pitched battles between the Nazis, Leftists, and the Communists on 14 October 1922 that became known collectively as the

⁴³ Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 9.

⁴⁴ Neuro-syphilis is a life-threatening complication of syphilis affecting the spinal cord and brain. Caused by the bacteria *Treponema pallidum*, it affects 25-40% of those people who have had chronic, untreated syphilis, usually about 10-20 years after the initial infection although, according to the United States' Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it can occur any time during the term of infection. Symptoms include, but are not limited to, blindness, confusion, disorientation, dementia, incontinence, muscle weakness, and muscular atrophy. In severe cases the symptoms of neuro-syphilis can mimic those of Alzheimer's disease.

⁴⁵ The Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch, 13 March 1920. Named after its perpetrators, Wolfgang Kapp and Walter von Lüttwitz, and supported by monarchist, conservative, and military groups, the coup was an attempt to overthrow the Weimar Republic and to establish in its place a right-wing, autocratic government.

'Battle of Coburg' that prompted Chamberlain to revise his opinion of the Nazi leader and henceforward follow his progress with interest.⁴⁶

The two men first met in 1923. Hitler expressed his admiration for Chamberlain, his work, and for the *Grundlagen* in particular, and demonstrated a thorough knowledge of Chamberlain's ideas; and Chamberlain, impressed as much with Hitler's eloquence as his objectives, became the first celebrity to openly endorse Hitler and his party, consequently and considerably enhancing the public profile of both.

Chamberlain, paralysed but sufficiently alert to write by dictation, was invited to contribute articles to the Nazi newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, and, with a mutual love of Wagner's works providing a common point of contact for him and Hitler, pressed for the Bayreuth Festival, the post-war revival of which was scheduled for 1924, to be openly identified with *völkisch* politics, rendering the event symbolic of Germany's regeneration.⁴⁷ With Bayreuth now facing an uncertain future without royal patronage, and Siegfried Wagner ever-watchful for likely sources of funding, Chamberlain's efforts were rewarded when for the Festival's re-opening the trees lining the Festival Hill were decked with swastika flags and other *völkisch* images, and *völkisch* officials, such as Colonel Erich Ludendorff, delivered speeches from the *Festspielhaus* stage demanding the release of Hitler who, following the failed Munich beer-hall putsch the previous November, was currently imprisoned. Such was Chamberlain's faith in Adolf Hitler that he closed one of his final letters to him with in the valedictory remark that he, Chamberlain, could 'now go to untroubled sleep'.⁴⁸

On 9 January 1927 Chamberlain died. As a Freeman of Bayreuth he was accorded the highest possible honour of a civic funeral, but the Nazis, mourning their spiritual leader while undoubtedly exploiting the event as publicity exercise, appropriated the proceedings. Brown-shirted SS troops escorted the coffin on its procession through the town while, much to the distaste of the Bayreuth press, civic and foreign dignitaries were relegated to the rear of the procession. Cosima, now frail and in precarious health, and confined to an upper floor of Wahnfried, was not informed of Chamberlain's death. Indeed, until her own demise some three years later she was completely unaware he had gone.

⁴⁶ On 14 October 1922, Hitler led some 800 Stormtroopers to a rally in Coburg. Violent clashes erupted between the Nazis, leftists and Communists, with the Nazis emerging as the overall victors.

⁴⁷ Field, *Evangelist of Race*, 429.

⁴⁸ Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), 84-85.

Chamberlain: Celebrity, Narcissism, and the Wagner Family

While Chamberlain's work on behalf of Wagner and Wagnerism attracted the attention and gratitude of Wahnfried, and while his books, *Das Drama Richard Wagners* (1892) and the biography *Richard Wagner* (1895) consolidated his reputation as an author and doubtless facilitated his entry into the Wagner family, it was the publication of the aforementioned *Grundlagen* that decisively positioned Chamberlain as an intellectual and almost instantly turned him into the prophet of race for educated laymen in Central Europe,⁴⁹ thereby establishing the basis for his later appeal to National Socialism.

The key to Chamberlain's literary success lay not in his scholarship but in a perspicacity which appears to have characterised his entire approach to life. Unfavourably received in literary and academic circles, Chamberlain's works nevertheless became the 'must read' of the less critical members of the public, and, for many, 'the last word of truth'.⁵⁰ At the turn of the twentieth century Chamberlain was what we would now call a celebrity.

Except, Chamberlain's best-selling works were not entirely original. It is now commonly held that he constructed them upon the bedrock of historical inaccuracy and a large degree plagiarism.⁵¹ According to Hermann Keyserling,⁵²

Chamberlain literally lived off sayings that were articles of faith to him; he would quote from the writings of others where any other writer would personally have examined the matter, drawing rational conclusions and demonstrating the validity of his argument. He showed an astonishing lack of the gift necessary for exact analysis an accurate discrimination.⁵³

Jacob notes that Chamberlain's entire scholarly outlook descended from the epistemological premise that 'a subjective imaginative insight into life, rather than a mere

⁴⁹ See Geoffrey Field, *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York: 1981). See also Biddiss, 'History as Destiny', 80. The *Grundlagen* went to eight editions and sold 60,000 copies within a decade, 100,000 copies before the outbreak of WWI, and quarter of a million copies by the outbreak of WWII. Further volumes were planned but remained unwritten.

⁵⁰ Clarke, *The Ravings of a Renegade*, 12.

⁵¹ Biddiss, 'History as Destiny', 80. For instance, in 1901, Chamberlain's rival within the Bayreuth Circle, Henry Thode, academic and husband of Daniela, publically accused Chamberlain of appropriating large passages of Wagner's prose works when writing the very work which has secured Chamberlain's reputation as an intellectual, i.e., the *Grundlagen*. As Hilmes notes, the accusations severely compromised Chamberlain's hitherto cordial relationships with the Wagner family, making his marriage into the family in 1908 all the more remarkable. Clearly, all concerned thought the union to be of mutual benefit, whatever the indelicacies. See Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 259.

⁵² Hermann Graf Keyserling (1880-1946): Philosopher, popular essayist, and acquaintance of Chamberlain whose interests extended to the natural sciences, travel, and geology. Born to a wealthy family in what is now Estonia, he married Maria Goedela von Bismark-Schönhausen, granddaughter of the German Chancellor Bismarck. Though not a pacifist, Keyserling nevertheless believed Germany's policy of militarism was outmoded and that the country's future lay in the adoption of international, democratic principles.

⁵³ Herman Keyserling, *Reise durch die Zeit: Ursprünge und Entfaltungen* (Vaduz: Liechtenstein Verlag, 1948), 126. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 257.

observation of the phenomena, was a prerequisite of scientific research'.⁵⁴ This had been the basis of Chamberlain's doctoral work and it may account for the blitheness of his later writings.⁵⁵ Whatever the reason, central to Chamberlain's success was a literary technique which never failed to engage his readership. He may have had few ideas of his own,⁵⁶ but Chamberlain clearly knew what would sell. It was an acuity driven as much by intent as content. Identifying a receptive audience and capitalising on the social anxiety currently underscoring interest in the national project, Chamberlain, to re-contextualise a phrase of Eric Hoffer, tuned into ideas and passions already simmering in the minds of his readers and echoed their innermost feelings.⁵⁷ Considering Chamberlain's later significance as guru of National Socialism, here we should recall a further observation by Hoffer: 'Those who would transform a nation or the world [...] must know how to fan an extravagant hope'.⁵⁸

Expertly delivered, Chamberlain's writings represent the judicious exploitation of certain intellectual trends and conversations expressed within an easily accessible language for the consumption of the educated layman. Quite simply, Chamberlain told the German people – and, crucially, the Kaiser Wilhelm II – what they wanted to hear. And the half-British Kaiser, malformed, complex, and bellicose, whose nation was economically and technologically inferior to that of his powerful British relatives and increasingly isolated by an Anglo-French *entente cordiale*, was captivated.⁵⁹ For the German ruling elite and public to be told at a time of national anxiety they were the greatest nation on earth was flattering, but to be told by an educated Englishman like Chamberlain, whose Anglo-Saxon and Norman-

⁵⁴ Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 5.

⁵⁵ Given the resistance to Chamberlain's work within informed circles it is notable that he did not become the focus of attack from satirists such as Karl Kraus. Somewhat paradoxically, Chamberlain and Kraus entered into a cordial correspondence and Chamberlain became a frequent contributor to Kraus' periodical, *Die Fackel* (*The Torch*). Edward Timms attributes this to Kraus's respect for Chamberlain's uncompromising bluntness, yet it can also be said that Kraus' attitude demonstrates that Chamberlain and society were in tune with each other's ideas more than historians care to acknowledge. See Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus Apocalyptic Satirist: Culture and Catastrophe in Hapsburg Vienna* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 238-339.

⁵⁶ Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 5.

⁵⁷ Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1951), 124.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁹ Wilhelm II's left arm was under-developed, a result of a difficult breach birth supervised by two British physicians recommended to his mother, the British Princess Victoria, by her mother, Queen Victoria. The deformity was carefully concealed from the public: contemporary paintings and photographs of Wilhelm tend to favour his right side, and the left arm is carefully posed as to deflect attention. At a time when the condition of a nation, particularly one publically modelling itself on mythic masculinity, was still generally gauged by the physical condition and prowess of its leader, a physical deformity such as the Kaiser's would, if generally known, be considered an indicator of a wider national malaise, compromising his, and his country's, position on the world stage. Wilhelm was a very complex and troubled person. In adolescence he developed an erotic love for his mother who, although attentive to her son admitted she found it difficult to love such a malformed child. Wilhelm's resentment of Great Britain was perhaps due as much to the lack of unconditional motherly love and his deformity at British hands as Britain's economic domination.

Frankish ancestry could be traced back into English history to the Earls of Westmoreland and, through them, back further to the Plantagenet kings of England and France,⁶⁰ was regarded as the highest accolade.⁶¹ Then again, that the Kaiser reciprocated by declaring Chamberlain a ‘reformed Englishman’ was no less an honour for the author.⁶²

It may be that the Kaiser’s pronouncements supplied Chamberlain with a sense of belonging; certainly, each supplied the other with a sense of worth. The two men began to correspond on a more personal level. Each had a high regard for the nation and culture of the other, and regarded each other as offering a way forward for the future,⁶³ but ‘it was an unholy alliance that brought the Kaiser and the writer together [for] Chamberlain’s ingratiating letters bolstered Wilhelm’s chauvinistic self-confidence, while the latter’s praise confirmed Chamberlain in his “German mission”’.⁶⁴

When one considers the political and cultural condition of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Germany one cannot deny the charismatic potency of Chamberlain’s arguments. Indeed, they remain ‘a powerful reminder of the extraordinary political potential that Germany possessed during the first half of the twentieth century’.⁶⁵ In them, Chamberlain reminded the German people – and, crucially, her imperial neighbours – that although Germany ‘periodically relaxes into unconsciousness of herself and must be awakened by a message from above’,⁶⁶ and while she had once again ‘forgotten herself [...] by degrees has she again arrived at a proper estimation of her own value’.⁶⁷ No-one, save Voltaire, had imagined upon Germany awakening and what the consequences would be if she did.⁶⁸ Hitherto, it had been ‘so fearfully convenient for England and France not to have to reckon with Germany as a stable, lasting factor’.⁶⁹ Now, the case was altered.

But, according to Hilmes, ‘Chamberlain’s image of Germany had little in common with reality but was rather a blank canvas on which he could project his own ideas’.⁷⁰ And those ideas were highly romanticised, based as much on an imagined past as on an imagined future. Instead of embracing history as a developmental process Chamberlain, like many

⁶⁰ Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 4.

⁶¹ Ian Buruma, *Anglomania: A European Love Affair* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 210-211; 219-220.

⁶² Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 258.

⁶³ Towards the end of WWI, Chamberlain became disillusioned with the Kaiser, regarding him as a weak leader and criticising him for retreating from public view, thereby undermining the notion of monarchy. See Field, *Evangelist of Race*, 254; 261.

⁶⁴ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 258.

⁶⁵ Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 50.

⁶⁶ Chamberlain, ‘Germany’, 168-169.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 195-196.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 191-192.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

⁷⁰ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 258.

within the German intelligentsia, attempted to predetermine and dictate the course of the German nation's development by invoking, as a means of rationalisation, precedents that never really existed except in the imagination. It was a history based upon an idealised reading of abstract concepts for, as Chamberlain maintained, 'we can cast a shadow over the future by the light of the past'.⁷¹ It was also a demonstration of the ideological power of myth building, something in which Wagner, in his own way, had himself invested. And so mythological and legendary figures and events representing values thought specifically German became the models upon which subsequent ideologies and political policies were constructed.

Unlike Spengler, who 'believed in German superiority, but not in the racial superiority of Germans',⁷² Chamberlain understood the Germanic race as being in a state of linear ascendancy. His racial theories were based on othering – what in Foucauldian terms would be called hetero-referential racism – and essentially founded upon xenophobia and the negation of the value of the other via stereotypes.⁷³ As with Cosima Wagner, Chamberlain's racism affirmed the superior value of the self. Chiming with the surrounding *Zeitgeist*, it was through Chamberlain's writings that this outlook took a turn into the social. The result was that Chamberlain's was an internal racism, an auto-referential form of racism that is concerned with the composition, reproduction, and development of the population by isolating and excluding the abnormal by determining what is considered worthy and unworthy life. Capable of being born of adverse childhood experiences as much as any contemporaneous sociological and racial theory, Chamberlain's outlook, like that of Cosima Wagner discussed in the previous chapter was a means of establishing a sense of self-worth and, as with Cosima, one reminiscent of the Jungian Shadow.

In Chamberlain's case, however, the behavioural pattern may have also been symptomatic of a sociopathic disposition, of which an aptitude for manipulation, calculation, and superficial charm are, today, recognised symptoms.⁷⁴ As his letters to both the Kaiser and

⁷¹ Biddiss 'History as Destiny', 73-100

⁷² Walter Struve, *Elites Against Democracy: Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany 1890-1933* (New Jersey: Princeton Literary Press, 1973), 272.

⁷³ See Michel Foucault, Robert Hurley (trans.), *The History of Sexuality Vol.1* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1990); Michel Foucault, G.Burchell (ed.), *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978* (New York: Picador, 2008); Kim Su Ramussen, 'Foucault's Genealogy of Racism'. <https://doi.org/10.117/0263276411410448> (14 September 2014).

⁷⁴ Diagnoses of currently recognised psychiatric disorders are categorised by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR), as published by the American Psychiatric Association. <https://justines2010blog.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/dsm-iv.pdf> (7 September 2017). It should be noted these dimensions are not immutable, appear to alter according to ongoing research and social attitudes, and are used, here, to interpret and not to diagnose.

Cosima Wagner suggest, one of Chamberlain's greatest skills was his ability to insinuate himself with figures of authority. The obsequiousness that lubricated his relationship with the Kaiser extended to the Wagner family, and particularly to Cosima who, at a time of financial and artistic difficulties, profited by the association. Decades earlier, Wagner had recognised the strategic importance of the patrician Cosima. Irrespective of her agency as his creative muse, Cosima's social standing had opened up circles Wagner had previously found impregnable. Chamberlain, it would appear, was similarly astute. Even allowing for social conventions and the prolixity of contemporary writing, his correspondence with the composer's widow is effusive, invariably commencing with the terms *Hochverehrte* (Revered), *Ergebener* (Devoted), or, significantly, *Meisterin* (Mistress, or Champion).

Their relationship appears to have operated on a number of levels other than the artistic. If we pare back the aesthetic illusion and contextualise Wagnerism and Bayreuth sociologically, that is to say to regard both as a space in which dominant groups from diverse sections of society interact – what Bourdieu would call fields of power – then the (inter)action between the culturally significant Wagners and the erudite, celebrity Chamberlain becomes something rather worldly and mercenary.⁷⁵ Seen in this light, the Wagners and Chamberlain quite simply benefitted by their association in that, at a time of mutual instability, each supplied the other with what Bourdieu identified as symbolic and cultural capital. The legitimacy bestowed upon both parties in consequence was immense.⁷⁶ Certainly, the exchange provided the composer's beleaguered widow with a much-needed ally at Bayreuth, valorising the author further.

Conversely, we can view Cosima and Chamberlain's relationship through a psychologically-orientated lens since a comparable symbiosis plays out if we consider their rapport in terms of narcissistic supply. As discussed in the previous chapter, following Wagner's death Cosima's behaviour became consistent with a condition now identified as Acquired Situational Narcissism (ASN). Criticised for her grandiosity and sense of entitlement it is entirely feasible that the *Hohe Frau* of Bayreuth was not exclusively her own creation but, rather, that of the Wagner-loving public, German or otherwise, and, in time, of

⁷⁵ Pierre Bourdieu would call this 'fields of power'. See Pierre Bourdieu, Randall Johnson (ed.), Claud DuVerlie et al (trans.), *The Field of Cultural Production*, (Cambridge: Polity press, 1993); Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez, *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁷⁶ In Bourdieusean terms, legitimacy is the possession of a high degree of symbolic capital conferred by subscription to the myth, in this case Wagner and Chamberlain. See Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in J. Richardson (ed.), Richard Nice (trans.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 46-58; Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in Imre Szeman and Timothy Kaposy, *Cultural Theory: An Anthology* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 81-93; Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).

the German public in general. At a time of national need, Cosima represented a significant talismanic institution and so, as now, the public were as culpable as the individual in the creation and maintenance of both celebrity status and ASN. Eventually, both the celebrity and ASN-type becomes charismatic for, charisma, as noted in Chapter 1, like the endowment of celebrity, is a matter of consensual exchange.

Hence it is easy to appreciate how Cosima and the similarly narcissistic Chamberlain were attracted to each other. She had come to expect admiration and deference, and he, in pursuit of his own objectives, was willing to provide it by means of Fenichel's system of narcissistic supply. Since sources of narcissistic nourishment tend to be exploited by the object they nourish, consistent with the further mechanics of ASN, Chamberlain projected his own desire for recognition onto his idol. By this, the narcissistic needs of both Cosima and Chamberlain were met. If Wagner nourished the masochistic side of Cosima's narcissistic character, then Chamberlain fed a narcissism born of status.

But Chamberlain's admission into the Wagnerian hierarchal structure and his essentially minoritarian agency, that is to say his transformative intervention, within its networks was to have significant consequences.⁷⁷ While Chamberlain effectually facilitated the transmission and favourable reception of Wagner and Wagnerism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by consolidating his position by marriage Chamberlain became in effect the dominant male at Bayreuth.

From the moment Chamberlain first met Cosima Wagner he moved ever nearer to the core of the Wagnerian power base by means of entrepreneurial philanthropy and reflexivity in equal degrees. Ostensibly, his commitment to Richard Wagner and his holy cause was irrefutable. Like Wagner, Chamberlain professed a concern for humanity and its salvation. He also regarded the promotion of the composer's aesthetic as his life's work: it was, as it were, his contribution to the move to cure society of an insidious malady both he and Wagner believed to have originated in capitalism, industrialisation, urbanisation, and material acquisitiveness. His devotion was seemingly boundless: 'If it was any use to Bayreuth',

⁷⁷ Minoritarianism, in its essentially political sense, refers to the agency and degree of primacy that a minority element of the population maintains and exercises within a particular grouping, particularly in relation to the processes of decision making specific to that grouping. A Deleuzian turn redefines the term as being, rudimentarily, the collective perception of a particular unit within a grouping, irrespective of numerical power, according to societal constructs, gender and race being conspicuous determining factors within that construct. A constellatory reading of the above enables the term to denote the transformative agency of a minority (such as, for instance, an individual) to the meaning of a group upon its entry. Arguably, such was the case with Chamberlain within the Wagner family.

Chamberlain once wrote to Siegfried Wagner, 'I would without hesitation let myself be roasted on a slow fire'.⁷⁸

Chamberlain's dedication may not have been as ingenuous as it appears. As noted, his diary entries and correspondence reveal a daimonically motivated opportunism,⁷⁹ and his particular Wagnerian *Bildung* may have been more psychotic than aesthetic, more studied than providential, prompted by childhood adversity which not only shaped his reading of the composer but of German culture and politics as a whole. And if, as his writings suggest, Chamberlain regarded Wagner as a holy cause then we should also recall Hoffer's observation that 'faith in a holy cause is to a considerable extent a substitute for a lost faith in ourselves'.⁸⁰

Celebrity may have satisfied Chamberlain's need for worth and recognition but it also facilitated the means by which to access a world in which that need could be exorcised. Chamberlain's politics may have chimed with those currently held at Wahnfried, and he may have been 'deeply attracted by [the Wagner movement's] anti-capitalist leanings and its critique of the spiritual emptiness and fragmented nature of modern society',⁸¹ but for Chamberlain, like so many of his contemporaries, 'the Wagner movement heralded rebirth'.⁸² 'Chamberlain's initial enthusiasm [for Wagner] had little to do with nationalist or political feeling. It was the aesthetic utopianism of Bayreuth that fascinated him [with] its stress on the inward condition of the individual and on self-realisation through art.'⁸³ As he had with many contemporaries out of sympathy with their times and themselves, Wagner enabled the essence of Chamberlain to appear. Flattery aside, by Chamberlain's own admittance his life has been purposeless before discovering Wagner. Once again, Wagner became a means by which to not only actualise personal development and individuation, but also the means by which to be rid of an unwanted self.

⁷⁸ Houston Stewart Chamberlain to Siegfried Wagner. Letter dated 18 July 1896, as quoted in Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 101-102.

⁷⁹ Daimonic: the spiritual force or genius. In a psychological context it is understood to mean 'the elemental force which drives one towards individuation'. In a literary sense it means 'the dynamic unrest that exists in us all, leading us towards the unknown, to self-destruction of self-discovery'.

⁸⁰ Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 26.

⁸¹ Field, *Evangelist of Race*, 54-55.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.* Regarding this and the two preceding quotations see also David Large and William Weber (eds.), *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 113-125.

Chamberlain: Hofferian, Jungian, and Eriksonian Perspectives

Like Cosima Wagner, Chamberlain was of aristocratic birth. Hence it is to Chamberlain's Anglo-Saxon and Norman-Frankish ancestry, which belonged to the Germanic family of nations, that Jacob attributes Chamberlain's Germanophilia.⁸⁴ This lineage would be sufficient in itself to explain Chamberlain's reverence for what Jacob describes as the concept of noble thought and action, and it may also explain Chamberlain's contempt for Communism and the 'self-seeking and corrupt party politics of those nations governed by democratic political systems'.⁸⁵ Jacob also proposes that Chamberlain's adoption of Germanic nationality and reverence for Germanic traditions, values, culture and politics originated in an affinity with the racial values with which German people then identified.⁸⁶ However, this is to simplify Chamberlain's story. In Hofferian, Jungian, and Eriksonian terms there are other connections between Chamberlain's background and thinking, particularly his tendency to project his own image of Germany upon the country and its people.

As we have seen, until he encountered Wagner and Wagnerism Chamberlain's life lacked direction. Essentially a victim of the French and English class systems, his was a life characterised by a hatred born of adversity and resentment. This resentment becomes an increasing feature of his writings, particularly the war essays which can be read as much as a response to his childhood experiences of the British class system as to the current political situation, and his anti-Semitism which, although of a piece with the surrounding discourse was, in Jungian terms, like that of Cosima, a means of acquiring a personal sense of worth. Even accounting for extant conversations regarding 'social war' in which ethnicity, as defined by the Enlightenment and Gobineau, does not only mean the identification of, and contest between, contrasting ethnicities but also the contest between elite and mass for which Aryan and Non-Aryan are metaphors, Chamberlain's outlook is particular. Here, as with Cosima, the concepts of distinction, otherness and the other as a focus of hate, whether in the sense of ethnicity or social origin, become a coincidental but convenient means by which to mask, consciously or otherwise, other more personal issues and where, once more, the universally suspect Jew becomes an especially easy target.

Unable see himself as a fully integrated individual, the friendless Chamberlain, like Cosima, found in the Jews a group to whom he could feel superior. Like Cosima, Chamberlain abhorred his homeland and its people and, as with Cosima, this abhorrence can

⁸⁴ Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

be read as a psychological response to adverse experiences during the formative years, an attempt, as it were, to come to terms with an unhappy past,⁸⁷ or, in Hofferian terms, to be rid of an unwanted self. In Chamberlain's case, both the Briton and the Jew become the Jungian Shadow. As Chamberlain openly rejoiced, 'there is no man alive whom the Jews hate as much as they hate me',⁸⁸ and the best thing that could happen to the British would be defeat by the Germans with their deeper and truer culture.⁸⁹

Chamberlain's was a passionate hatred, and according to Hoffer,

Passionate hatred can give meaning and purpose to an empty life. Thus people haunted by the purposelessness of their lives try to find a new content not only by dedicating themselves to a holy cause but also by nursing a fanatical grievance. A mass movement offers them unlimited opportunities for both.⁹⁰

Once again, Wagnerism became that mass movement.

Children often invent make-believe kingdoms and other realms of fancy into which they can retreat. Chamberlain's observatory can be said to have been such a realm, Wagner another. These were spaces in which the young and adult Chamberlain could feel safe, could escape from reality in a life lacking friendship. Chamberlain became alienated from English, then French society and, in time, from society as a whole. Around 1876, Chamberlain, once an ardent Francophile, became a Francophobe. By then saturated with Wagner, Chamberlain recognised what he claimed to be the full degeneracy of French culture when compared to its German counterpart. If Erikson is to be believed and the individual life cycle cannot be adequately understood apart from the social context in which it comes to fruition,⁹¹ then Chamberlain and Germany were certainly of a piece, growing together in a carefully manufactured sense of self belief.

But Erikson's theory appears to assume the individual develops within a single society. If the individual finds themselves enmeshed, yet alienated, within a procession of societies each in the process of a specific socio-political development then, perhaps, the development of that individual may become arrested, delayed or, indeed, perverted. Internal conflict may ensue. Certainly, from an early age Chamberlain floated between three diverse cultures and their idealisms and consequently lacked a specific national identity of his own at a time when such things were becoming increasingly important in society.

⁸⁷ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 116.

⁸⁸ Houston Stewart Chamberlain to Major Kotze. Letter dated 3 April 1915. See Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Brief 1882-1924 und Briefwechsels mit Kaiser Wilhelm II*, Vol. 1 (Munich: Bruckmann, 1928, 2 Vols.), 307-308. Also in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 258.

⁸⁹ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 91.

⁹⁰ Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 116.

⁹¹ Erik Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York and London: Norton, 1998), 114.

One could say that in Eriksonian and Jungian terms Chamberlain, after an initial journey through adversity, entered middle age with his eyes turned with Faith towards a utopian, Wagner-inspired future, thus satisfying the later stages of psychosocial development. Conversely, it could also be said that Chamberlain's individuation was ineffective. In his case, the wisdom that Erikson and Jung believe necessary for effective individuation did not evolve from any inner illumination or compassion but, rather, was conferred upon Chamberlain by his public. Contrary to Erikson's advocacy, Chamberlain did not revisit and repair past mistakes in order to progress psychologically. Even if we discount Eriksonian and Jungian theory, the teachings of numerous theological systems pre-echo Erikson and Jung in that in the interests of psychic wellbeing they advocate forgiveness as a means by which the individual may distance themselves from situations likely to inhibit personal progression.

Chamberlain appears not to have forgiven. His negative feelings did not decrease with maturity, but intensified. And so throughout his life he remained the hurt child. Twice married, once clearly for convenience, perhaps Chamberlain's childhood experiences rendered him incapable of extending and receiving love. He displayed no real concern for the welfare of others, except in the sense that he used the welfare of others as justification to broadcast his own ideology. In many ways, his was a Machiavellian strategy designed to further his own interests, and so it can be suggested, here, that in order to obtain an identity and sense of belonging Chamberlain determined to play a significant part in the construction of a new society in which he could better fit.

Certainly, Chamberlain's actions are consistent with those individuals identified by Hoffer as The Misfit, in other words unfinished beings who 'have not found their place in life, but still hope to find it',⁹² and who demonstrate the theory that 'we run fastest and farthest when we run from ourselves'.⁹³ Unable to reconcile themselves with their surroundings, it is the aim of the Misfit to change their environment,⁹⁴ hence Chamberlain's view of Germany as a blank canvas – here he could shape a society more convivial to his disposition and needs.

⁹² Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 62.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Eric Hoffer, *Innovators*. Undated and unpublished document. Eric Hoffer Collection Box 44, Folder 6, Hoover Institution Archives USA. As quoted in Daniel David Slate, *The Working Mind: The Philosophy of Eric Hoffer* (unpublished Honours thesis, Stanford University, 2009). This document bears no pagination. See also Hoover Institution Archives at <http://www.oac.org/findaid/ark:/13030/ktOn996dd> (18 November 2014).

The Misfit is both a weakling and an innovator. For the innovator, ‘the plunge into the new is often an escape from a familiar pattern that is untenable and unpleasant’,⁹⁵ but is as the weakling that the Misfit discovers their innovative agency:

The crippled warrior who had to stay behind while the manhood of the tribe went out to war was the first storyteller, teacher, and artisan. The old and sick had a hand in the development of the arts of healing and of cooking. One thinks of the venerable sage, the unhinged medicine man, the epileptic prophet, the blind bard, and the witty hunchback and dwarf.⁹⁶

In a way, such was Chamberlain. Intimidated and isolated at his British and French schools, friendless, unfocused and feckless, a highly-strung loner as much at war with himself as society, Chamberlain appears to embody the Hofferian weakling who sought a means to innovate. And so with his theoretical works Chamberlain told the German people a story, and it was a story everyone wanted to hear. In many ways, Chamberlain became the venerable sage – Hilmes’ prophet of race for the educated layman – through which he acquired purpose and status. And so he was ‘fathered’; first by the German people, later by the founding fathers of a nascent political movement who, in their own ways, were also misfits intent on building a world better suited to their needs. Like Chamberlain, they told the public a story it wanted, rather than what it ought, to hear and, crucially, they told their story to a public whose disposition it was, historically, to follow willingly.

Chamberlain as Link in Cultural Chains

Essentially Prussianist in his political outlook,⁹⁷ Chamberlain’s inclinations were propagated by his study of Wagner, Goethe, Kant, and Stein, and therefore his writings ‘mirrored what he regarded as the ennobling cultural standards that prevailed in Germany before the two world wars plunged the country into, first, physical devastation and, then, deleterious political and cultural transformations’.⁹⁸ Chamberlain represents a link in cultural chains which through him became connected. Firstly, rather than being an ideological innovator Chamberlain is more accurately a link in German cultural and political thinking from which National

⁹⁵ Eric Hoffer, *The Weak Things of the World*, The Ledger Syndicate 4 May 1969. Eric Hoffer Collection, Box 96, Folder 41 Hoover Institution Archives, USA. As quoted in Slate, *The Working Mind: The Philosophy of Eric Hoffer*.

⁹⁶ Hoffer, *Innovators*. Undated and unpublished document. Eric Hoffer Collection Box 44, Folder 6, Hoover Institution Archives USA. As quoted in Slate, *The Working Mind*.

⁹⁷ For an outline and discussion of Chamberlain’s political ideas see Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Alexander Jacob (trans.), *Political Ideals* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), 66.

⁹⁸ Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 3.

Socialism emerged. As Fritz Fischer has noted,⁹⁹ the movement was in effect the culmination of an aggressive militarism dating back to Frederick the Great, if not further.¹⁰⁰ Therefore Nazism did not conveniently begin with the advent of Houston Stewart Chamberlain any more than it did with that of Richard Wagner; and neither individual created Hitler. Rather, they each represent one of the many chapters in the books of Germany, Europe, and the long nineteenth century; books within which many currents flow and many conversations intertwine. It was the coincidental alignment of these conversations with psychologies and circumstance in a post-Wagner world that determined the direction and force of those currents, and in this a significant catalyst was Chamberlain.

Both Wagner and Chamberlain regarded the politician as the root of all evil. But for Chamberlain – and therefore Wahnfried – Hitler came to represent the authority figure born to salvage something from the ashes of the Second Reich and the ignominy which followed defeat in the Great War. Hitler was, as Chamberlain told him, ‘the opposite of a politician [...] for the essence of all politics is membership of a party, whereas with you, all parties disappear, consumed by the heat of your love for the fatherland’.¹⁰¹ While, with Hitler, political parties did indeed disappear – but not for the reasons or in the poetic manner Chamberlain had in mind – Chamberlain’s ideas, consistent with Goethe, presumed governance by an elite. But it was a fraternity and not a mass movement that was sought, and certainly one not bolstered by the intimidation advocated by National Socialism. Consequently, for Jacob, no one in Wahnfried, not even Chamberlain,¹⁰² would have condoned the violence that later erupted in the name of German Nationalism, a time when Humanism became inhumanised. But whereas Wagner had recognised the nature and danger of archetypes, Chamberlain, like Goethe’s sorcerer’s apprentice,¹⁰³ was unable to stem the events he put in train.

On the events of the infamous *Kristallnacht*, which occurred nine years after Chamberlain’s death, his widow Eva is reported to have said that ‘my husband would not

⁹⁹ Fritz Fischer, *Germany’s Aims in the First World War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007). The original German title, *Griff Nach der Weltmacht* translates as *Bid for World Power*, or, *Grab for World Power*.

¹⁰⁰ The British Empire can date its consolidation and rapid expansion to 1714 and the accession of the German House of Hanover to the British throne. As Elector of Hanover, George I had exercised an aggressive expansionist programme against his neighbouring German states. This he continued as British king by an adroit use of British foreign policy.

¹⁰¹ Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 10.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰³ Goethe, *Der Zauberlehrling* (*The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*). First published 1797, the poem tells of a sorcerer’s apprentice who, believing he has the power to command a broom to carry water for him, realises too late that he cannot control the forces he has released.

have liked this'.¹⁰⁴ 'Even Alfred Rosenberg, Chamberlain's most significant ideological disciple in the Nazi party never proposed the extermination of what he perceived to be the Jewish enemy but only their exclusion from all political and intellectual affairs of the state'.¹⁰⁵ Clearly, as Jung's own writings would later illustrate, no-one had appreciated the ambivalent and annihilating power of archetypes. It is curious that Chamberlain, immersed in Wagner and conversant with Nietzsche, did not recognise the cautionary signs underscoring the works of both, particularly the idea of cyclic recurrence. In the Wagnerian and Nietzschean realms time is no longer considered linear or teleological. Instead, it folds back upon its own imprint; what will occur has already occurred, and will continually recur across time. Considering Chamberlain's belief in the capacity of the past to inform the future it is unfortunate that he failed to see the possible consequences of his advocacies. The folly of vanity, as the sorcerer's apprentice discovered, is impervious to time and space. However, when Clarke employed the same Goethean imagery to critique Chamberlain's WWI essays neither he nor Chamberlain could have envisaged the mass of brooms that were soon to march past at the Nuremberg Rallies.

To move this chapter towards its conclusion, it can be said Chamberlain was a linchpin figure in the story of Wagner's afterlife in that he represents the end of one world and the beginning of another, a transitional link from Romantic idealism to modern politics. Clearly, Chamberlain's opening declaration to Cosima in 1888 that he was a 'Bayreuthian' rather than a 'Wagnerian' indicated an awareness of a growing politicisation of Wagner and his institution. As noted in the Introduction to this study, the cult of Wagner and his artistic experiment may both have petered out as nothing more than curiosities of a Wilhelminian Germany had Cosima not succeeded in transforming Bayreuth into a nationalist cause.¹⁰⁶ But for the wider public, it was Chamberlain's celebrity and his ideological treatises and propagandist writings emanating from Bayreuth that established the institution as a centre of intellectual excellence, political or otherwise, purely by association.

Chamberlain steered Wahnfried's already emergent but somewhat naïve political ideas through the rising groundswell of nationalist pride. But in doing so he contributed to the organic creation of what Biddiss has described as a 'revamped, more buoyant, racist Teutonism',¹⁰⁷ over which, ultimately, Chamberlain had no control, his actions underpinned by the attempt to create a world better suited to him, a place where he would find the

¹⁰⁴ Field, *Evangelist of Race*, 12. Also quoted in Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Chamberlain, *Political Ideals*, 11.

¹⁰⁶ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, xiii; 201.

¹⁰⁷ Biddiss, 'History as Destiny', 79.

belonging and self-esteem he sought, for like many others, in Wagner Chamberlain discovered a community, rather than a society, with which he could identify and be reconciled not only with the world but also himself.

But living within a Wagner-saturated world Chamberlain and the Wagner family superciliously played with modish issues, their ideas reinforced by their Weberian *Herrschaft* and sense of entitlement. The Bayreuth Circle may have been an elite group of ‘foreign eccentrics’,¹⁰⁸ and, in a changing world, they may have sought relevance as much for themselves as for the aesthetic and institution they curated, but it was Chamberlain who catapulted them into the entirely alien realm of reality. It can therefore be asserted, here, that Chamberlain’s significance at Bayreuth lay not in his politics or racial theories, or in the way he awakened the institution to them, but in the way he opened it to the actual political world and exposed it to its realities. In short, Chamberlain was more a gate than a gatekeeper and, as such, he is the decisive link in chains of events.

Like Wagner, Chamberlain engaged with deep cultural connections. Like Wagner, Goethe, Nietzsche – even Jung and Freud – Chamberlain drew on an idealist tradition of which they were all part. But what Wagner put in place ended up being read according to the emergent ideas of nationhood, and in this respect Chamberlain’s agency is an example of an individual’s psychopathology mediating between social and national pathology. Like Hans Sachs in his Act Three address in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Chamberlain tapped into the German collective consciousness. He knew how to perform anger, but it was an energy that got channelled at Bayreuth and due to the institution’s standing became widely regarded as endorsed. Chamberlain achieved his position by projection. Quite simply, he played a role that needed to be played, or, more accurately, a role the public wanted him to play in time of need; and need is a hallmark of the phenomenon we now call celebrity culture, the mechanics of which appear to remain constant irrespective of the age and environment in which they are invoked.

But celebrity is distinct from fame. As variously defined by Simon Schama and Joseph Epstein, fame derives from the accomplishment of astounding deeds, celebrity from what is currently in vogue, and while fame endures, celebrity is transient.¹⁰⁹ Wagner was famous; Chamberlain, a celebrity. Current theory views celebrity and celebrity creation through a composite sociological and semiotic lens, the sociological view being that the celebrities and

¹⁰⁸ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 200.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Epstein, ‘Celebrity Culture’, *The Hedgehog Review* (Spring 2005) 1-14 (3). <http://iasc-culture.org/THR/archives/celebrity/7.1CEpstein> (15 August 2017).

the mechanisms that create them are the phenomenon, the semiotic view being that celebrities are created by the meanings and symbols that become attached to their work.¹¹⁰ Whatever the approach, for a celebrity to exist society must first be in need of one; and should none exist to satisfy that need, then society will implicitly contrive to supply one.¹¹¹ A problem generates its own solution and given Germany's socio-political climate at the turn of the twentieth century such seems to have been the dynamic between the German people and Chamberlain. One recalls Gobineau who, hitherto ignored in his native France, attracted the attention of the German intelligentsia due principally to the counsel of his patron, Alexis de Tocqueville, who noted that, 'alone in Europe, the Germans possess the talent for getting impassioned about what they see as abstract truth, without any regard for the consequences - and it is they who could provide you with a really favourable audience'.¹¹² And so it was with Chamberlain.

According to Epstein, 'one can be immensely talented and full of achievement and yet wish to broadcast one's fame further through the careful cultivation of celebrity'.¹¹³ This was something at which Wagner had been adept, Liszt, too. Then again, 'one can have the thinnest of achievements and be less than immensely talented and yet be made to seem so through the mechanics and dynamics of celebrity creation'.¹¹⁴ This would appear to have been the situation with Chamberlain, for while fame is based on achievement celebrity is 'based on the broadcasting of that achievement, or by creating something that, if not scrutinised too closely might pass for achievement',¹¹⁵ in this case Chamberlain's theoretical writings. Celebrity culture may have been an alien concept in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century society, and so a more suitable synonym may be ego, for in many ways Chamberlain's time prefigured Lacan's Era of the Ego. Today, Chamberlain is certainly famous, but his is the fame Epstein calls a wretched fame, in other words infamy.¹¹⁶

Many would argue that history is not a totally arbitrary set of events: Chamberlain may have been a link in a chain wrought from a number of already intertwining socio-cultural links but their direction was not inevitable. Here we should consider the proposition it was Chamberlain's death and not Chamberlain himself that determined the direction events took. As the proceedings at his funeral would suggest, dying at the height of his emblematic power

¹¹⁰ For a discussion on how celebrity and celebrity culture may be theorised, and for a comprehensive bibliography on the subject see Kristine Harmon, 'Celebrity Culture', *The Hedgehog Review*, Spring 2005, 98-106. <http://iasc-culture.org/thr/archives/Celebrity/7.1/Bibliographic> (15 August 2017).

¹¹¹ Epstein, 'Celebrity Culture', 5.

¹¹² Biddiss, 'History as Destiny', 79.

¹¹³ Epstein, 'Celebrity Culture', 3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Chamberlain acquired added potency. He became mythologised. Even dead he played a part everyone wanted him to play – in a way, he still does. And so instead of being a link in a chain, we may regard Chamberlain more accurately as a link in the chain which got forged.

Erikson appears not to have a model for ineffective individuation. Broadly speaking, individuation involves knowing oneself. We can individuate if we allow ourselves to. The tragedy of Chamberlain is that he did not. Seemingly incapable of overcoming what was in effect a sociopathic disposition, Chamberlain never really developed a sense of Self and instead became entrenched in a narrative of partly his own construction. Clearly, his boyhood experiences affected him more profoundly than it did his elder brothers, Harry and Basil who both went on to become pillars of the establishment – Harry following his father into the navy, Basil a professor of Japanese and Philology at Tokyo University. By contrast, oscillating from an early age between British and French society and considering himself as belonging to neither, Chamberlain was regarded as an outsider. Consequently, he was bullied at both his British and French schools, a certain chauvinistic attitude towards both possibly worsening the problem. Withdrawn totally from the French and English educational systems and assigned a personal tutor while still at a formative stage, Chamberlain remained essentially unsocialised and without socialisation it is not possible to acquire an idea of one's Self. In this respect, Chamberlain and his outlooks and actions can be regarded as an example of ineffective individuation.

Throughout his life Chamberlain appears to have remained in a state of perpetual alienation. In consequence of his boyhood experiences he seems to have associated any form of stable or establishment-orientated environment with alienation because in such settings he had been subjected to physical and mental harm. And so it appears that when such an environment presented itself he resisted it, suggesting a need to avoid anything likely to produce a sense of alienation: even when an integral part of the Wagner family he regularly escaped to the seclusion of his observatory where, by his own admittance, the stars became once again his only friends.

It is possibly due to this tendency to retreat, to shut down as it were, as much as his divisive agency within the Wagner family (which may also have been an unconscious means of asserting presence) that he was as unpopular with many of its members as he had been with his classmates: his remoteness simply aroused in people a sense of unease. In short, Chamberlain was unliked for being unlike. Despite his need for belonging, for him there was always the nihilism of being socialised. Chamberlain may have striven to create a world in which he would better fit, but for that very same reason such a prospect would forever be

elusive. The possibility of change was imperative, but for him change could never be now: it would always be a case of something somewhere else, for if it were otherwise his nihilism would prevent its acceptance.

In this, perhaps, lay Nazism's appeal for Chamberlain. Like Wagner, and indeed all Utopianist ideologies, Nazism offered the key to the future, but again, like all Utopianist ideologies, their success must forever lie in the future; success is never, cannot be, now. If the world Chamberlain wished to create had come into being one wonders if it would have been sufficient for him, and how he may have striven to escape it or, indeed, perhaps transform it. It is therefore fitting that Chamberlain died when he did: given his wife Eva's remarks following the events of *Kristallnacht*, and considering subsequent social and political developments, we can only speculate as to Chamberlain's reactions if, once again, he had been abused, metaphorically speaking, his own methodology of advancement having been used against him. Certainly, Hitler and the Nazis profited by association with Chamberlain and Bayreuth as once Chamberlain had profited by his association with the institution, Wagner, and the Wagner family. Once more, Bourdieusean capital and fields of power came into play and supplied much-needed validation.

The foregoing discussion is of course an interpretation. But it is perhaps for the above factors that Chamberlain is difficult to write about, why scholarship has focused on surface ideologies, facts, and events because, quite simply, Chamberlain is never present. We can only really know him by his activities and by the imprints he leaves for whenever we look beyond what is generally known about him he shuts down, as it were. The persona by which he was, and remains known was constructed upon existing German cultural traditions, tropes and the writings of other individuals; in the Wagnerian realm he and Cosima busied themselves maintaining each other's illusions, and, to be accurate, despite Hitler and Rosenberg's early conversance with and enthusiasm for his writings, Chamberlain's actual agency as an ideological guru for German National Socialism only really evolved after his death, aided, no doubt, by a new edition his works by his shrewd publisher, Bruckmann. Chamberlain was useful to the Nazis because of his absence: he and what he stood for were easier to deal with that way.

And in this respect, Chamberlain was a bridge, a link. To use once more the *The Thousand and One Nights* as an analogy, Chamberlain is the means by which the end of one narrative becomes the beginning of another. Ironically, it is in this new narrative and in the politics Chamberlain inspired, rather than Wagner and his works that another English-born member of the composer's family, Winifred Wagner, discovered on a more personal level the

means by which to actuate their own processes of individuation, and where, again, the pursuit of identity and belonging was to have cataclysmic ramifications

Chapter 4

Winifred Wagner

The name Winifred Wagner is heavy with negative meaning. Her association with Adolf Hitler, the Nazification of the Bayreuth Festival, and the consequent estrangement from her family have condemned the English-born orphan and wife of Richard Wagner's son, Siegfried, to be synonymous with fascism. Many find it difficult to uncouple the individual from the politics with which she has become so closely identified. Understandably so, since it is not easy to be compassionate about a person who supported such an ideology as Nazism. Yet, while Winifred is known about, she remains largely unknown.

This chapter will revisit Winifred's story, and, using Brigitte Hamann's account of her as a basis,¹ explore the less conspicuous aspects of Winifred's narrative. Here we will focus on Winifred's impulses and what drove her, for as the discussion will argue, contrary to popular belief politics, as such, were ancillary to what for Winifred was an agenda rooted in personal need. Rather than being a political activist in the sense that politics were her sole rationale, Winifred's activism was one of many pursuits symptomatic of a need which manifested itself physically in metaphorical conditions of lack. More accurately then, Winifred can be described as a damaged individual working within a politically complex and dark society. As such she suffered in her own way, for it was her personal circumstances as much as her political beliefs (which, like those of Cosima Wagner and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, were in any case part of an older and wider conversation) that shaped her actions.

As mentioned in the Introduction, to date, the estate of Winifred Wagner is not within the public domain. Unlike those of Cosima and Chamberlain, whose papers can be found in the National Richard Wagner Archive at Bayreuth, documents once belonging to or concerning Winifred remain the property of her family.² Apart from the Wagners, then, few people have seen any original materials regarding her. Therefore what we know of Winifred,

¹ Brigitte Hamann, Alan Bance (trans.), *Winifred Wagner: A Life at the Heart of Hitler's Bayreuth* (London: Granta, 2005).

² Winifred's personal correspondence and, it is widely assumed, the legendary 'Siegfried Papers' are currently held by Winifred's daughter, Verena Lafferentz and her daughter, Amelie. Other records are thought to be in the possession of the 'Bayreuth' Wagners, Katharina and Eva, Winifred's granddaughters by her son, Wolfgang.

together with our negative reception of her is to a great extent the product of received memory. Once again, scholarship is sparse and since what there is tends to focus upon conspicuous historical events, it is linear in nature and unavoidably mediated. What we have are representations of Winifred, and while this can be said to be true of any account of an historical figure, the dystopia that provided the backdrop to Winifred's story makes her particularly susceptible to post-Holocaust authorial intervention.

Adolf Hitler was but one in a series of four men influential in Winifred's personal development and with whom, other than her husband, she was on intimate terms. As we shall see, her adoptive father, the German musician Karl Klindworth, the English writer, Hugh Walpole, and the stage director, Heinz Tietjen, all played equally significant roles in the formation of her character. It is due to Hitler's infamy that Winifred has since become defined by politics.

Winifred's story typifies Erikson's idea that a correlation exists between an individual's lifecycle and the social context in which it comes to fruition.³ Clearly, National Socialism and Hitler were important to Winifred but, as this chapter will demonstrate, although Wagner and Wagnerism propelled Winifred towards politics, it was not for the reasons generally assumed.

While this account sets out to rescue Winifred from a large degree of reputation damage, it is not apologist, nor does it seek to exonerate her. What follows is a historical reassessment: like the preceding discussions, it is a re-reading of existing material, which, in order to advance the argument, deploys a range of psychoanalytic theory. And while it is essentially a psychologically-orientated story it is one nevertheless happening within a big cultural context. In the balance of probabilities, then, the ensuing proposals are heuristic. At such a remove and without access to further original source materials nothing can be conclusive. That said, here the principal aim is to open a discursive space, and below are the materials at our disposal.

Representations of Winifred

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 German reunification has afforded Germanist cultural theorists the opportunity to revisit the various concepts and determinants associated with nation-building.⁴ One arena of exchange is cultural production and the theoretical

³ Erik Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York and London: Norton, 1998), 114.

⁴ See, for instance, Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (eds.), *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 6.

connection between Germanness, politics, and specific kinds of musical idiom, of which the works of Richard Wagner and the Bayreuth Festival are a patent illustration.⁵ By extension, Winifred Wagner is an obvious subject but the aforementioned constraints present the researcher with problems.

While many have applied for, and been denied, access to Winifred's papers – Eva Rieger and the present author amongst them – Brigitte Hamann has been more successful, producing what is widely acknowledged to be the first exhaustive and objective study of its subject in print form.⁶ Objective, that is, as any mediated account can be. A number of academic papers and articles pre-date Hamann but, consistent with the general reception of Winifred, these tend to focus on the very visible aspects of Winifred's political activities.⁷ It is Hamann who presents new and previously unseen data, and so provides the point of departure for the following discussion.

Not all Winifred-related material is in print form. Hans Jürgen Syberberg's 1975 filmic interview, *Winifred Wagner und die Gesichte des Hauses Wahnfried von 1914-1945*, was recorded in 1975, some five years before Winifred's death. The film's English title, *The Confessions of Winifred Wagner*, suggests something valedictory in nature for in it an unseen Syberberg interrogates the elderly woman about her relationship with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime.

According to Marcia Landy,⁸ Syberberg's intent was not simply to discuss the dystopian appropriation and politicisation of a key German cultural phenomenon during the inter-war years but, rather, to challenge his global audience to consider the wider questions of cultural representations and the political determinants of cultural production within their own cultural contexts.⁹ For Syberberg, Landy argues, the issues explored in the film are not exclusively German. Consequently, throughout the four-hour long, black and white documentary, Winifred is used as an exemplar rather than a subject *per se*. The results cannot be regarded as being biographical or, indeed, reliable in the general sense, as Syberberg's shrewd editing mediates and re-contextualises Winifred's words, creating, in many instances,

⁵ Nicholas Vazsonyi, 'Marketing German Identity: Richard Wagner's "Enterprise"', *German Studies Review* Vol. 28. No.2 (May 2005), 327-346 (331).

⁶ Brigitte Hamann, Alan Bance (trans.), *Winifred Wagner: A Life at the Heart of Hitler's Bayreuth* (London: Granta, 2005).

⁷ See, for instance, Pamela Potter, 'Wagner and the Third Reich', in Thomas Grey (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 235-245; Sebastian Werr, 'Die Bayreuther Festspiele – eine jüdische Angelegenheit?', *Musikforschung*, 2012, Vol.65 (3), 254-265; Hans Vaaget, 'Wagner Self-Fashioning: The Case of Adolf Hitler', *New German Critique*, No.101 Summer 207), 95-114.

⁸ See Marcia Landy, 'Politics, Aesthetics, and Patriarchy in the Confessions of Winifred Wagner', *New German Critique*, No.18 (Autumn 1978), 155-166.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

entirely new meanings.¹⁰ The value of the film lies elsewhere in that while it attends to some questions it raises others.

Winifred's reminiscences ingenuously, almost insouciantly, uncover much that is overlooked by Syberberg, who, in the pursuit of his wider, or perhaps narrower, agenda, underestimates his subject, her relationship with Hitler and, critically, what that relationship represented. Crucially, Syberberg fails to exploit those remarks which afford portals into Winifred's psychology. Her references to Hitler's Austrian warmth, charm, and goodness are all glanced over except when they usefully underline Winifred's Nazi affiliation. Questions exploring the possible non-political reasons why she should respond so positively to Hitler do not arise. And here lies the problem with all post-WWII studies of Winifred. The glare of politics and salacious gossip has occluded a less convenient story. As Winifred let slip in Syberberg's film – and as Hamann touches upon but, like the director, does not pursue – there are many incidents and patterns of behaviour in Winifred's life, both as a young girl and as a Wagner, which suggest that her actions were the result of something other, and deeper, than a straightforward interest in politics. It is entirely possible that Winifred's loyalty and seemingly unquestioning belief in Hitler is suggestive of something more personal than the usual commitment expected of a political activist, and which originated in the nature of her relationship with Wagner, his enterprise, and family.

Evidence of this can be found in two works authored by Winifred's granddaughter, Nike Wagner: *The Wagner Family: The Dramas of a Musical Family* and her paper, *Für uns war er überhaupt nicht der Führer*.¹¹ While the former is more multi-layered in its narrative, encompassing several aspects of the Wagner institution, the latter more specifically Winifred-orientated, each offers valuable insights. Nike Wagner interweaves the private and public dynastic crises of her family with personal recollections and hermeneutically based studies of her great-grandfather's works. Although it appears not to be Nike's overall intent to draw specific parallels between archetypes and family (although this would open a fascinating

¹⁰ Syberberg's methods in engaging Winifred Wagner's interest for his project are ethically questionable. Winifred had no editorial control, and delicate material recorded without her knowledge was inserted into the film without her permission. Carefully positioned within the documentary, Winifred's unguarded remarks caused alarm throughout the family, straining already fraught relationships. Winifred only agreed to participate in the project because, despite her misgivings, she believed that to do so would assist the career of Gottfried, then an aspiring director. Syberberg later admitted his aim was 'to procure a document in any way I could'. See Hans Jürgen Syberberg, *Filmbuch* (Munich: np., 1976), 271. For examples of Winifred's correspondence expressing her concerns about Syberberg's project see Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 493-494.

¹¹ Nike Wagner, Ewald Osers and Michael Downes (trans.), *The Wagners: The Dramas of a Musical Dynasty* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000); Nike Wagner, 'Für uns war er überhaupt nicht der Führer', in Saul Friedländer and Jörn Rüsen (eds.), *Richard Wagner im Dritten Reich: Ein Schloss Elmau Symposium* (Munich: Beck, 2000), 179-193.

arena for discussion), nor does it seem to be her intention to pursue to any great extent the psychologies of its members, she speaks with an authority that comes with personal experience of being a Wagner, and, crucially, about what being a Wagner means.

While the enormity of the Wagner inheritance has naturally exerted an effect upon her, Nike, unlike her cousin, Gottfried – the family’s greatest critic – seems to be more judicious than judgemental about her heritage and does not appear to exhibit the same degree of animosity towards her relatives or self-loathing for their war-time activities as he. It was Gottfried who facilitated the Syberberg film and although he has repeatedly called for greater transparency regarding his family’s wartime past, the Syberberg affair may, in part, account for the Wagner family’s continuing custody of Winifred’s estate and their wariness towards potential researchers. The publication in 1997 of Gottfried’s book, *He Who Does Not Howl with the Wolf: The Wagner Legacy*, consolidated matters further, for in the twenty or so years that separate the work and Syberberg’s film Gottfried appears not to have altered in his opinion of his family.¹²

Gottfried’s choice of sub-title is notable in that it suggests that he is pursuing his own, possibly sub-conscious, agenda. Throughout, he presents us with the Wagner legacy as experienced and understood by Gottfried. Consequently, the work says as much about its author as it does his family, and for that reason it is of interest here. If one studies it in parallel with the aforementioned writings by Nike, it would appear that it is that very legacy, together with the intensity of familial expectations, which lie at the root of a Wagner’s actions, driving them irrespective of whom they may be or what they may do. Winifred was no exception and an appreciation of this phenomenon is central to an understanding of her. A suitable starting point for our discussion would therefore be Nike Wagner’s observations on what it is to be a Wagner, for it is with the family that the story should begin.

The Wagner Family: Expectation and Individuality

When, on 22 September 1915, the eighteen year old English orphan, Winifred Williams, married the forty-six year old Siegfried Wagner, son of the composer Richard Wagner, she married into not only one of the most bourgeois of German families but also one of the most culturally significant. Nike Wagner writes:

¹² Gottfried Wagner, Della Couling (trans.), *He Who Does Not Howl with the Wolf: The Wagner Legacy* (London: Sanctuary, 1997). Gottfried Wagner’s critique of his family was so damning that the book’s launch in Bayreuth on the opening night of the 1997 Festival prompted Wolfgang Wagner to ban his son from the environs of the *Festspielhaus* for the duration of the event.

We do not need a sociologist to define the bourgeois family: this small social unit is clearly recognisable by its careful handling of the economic constraints of the moments, and its concern to safeguard, even to increase, the legacy that will be passed down to its descendants. In these respects, the Wagners were no different to any other family whose principal concern is the prudent management of their business. It is inevitable that the division of the profits will not always be conducted fairly or amicably: the dynamics of family histories have always been marked by the residue of an economic and psychological ‘wolf principle’, and by the suffering which the operation of that principle has caused. The roles of the sexes, too, are largely prescribed by the patriarchal culture of which the bourgeois family is part: its head is the father (Wagner, the early socialist, demonstrated his bitter awareness of the connection between capitalism and the masculine principle of *The Ring*). The fact that female rulers appear in Wagner genealogy does not contradict the basic pattern, but rather confirms it: only women who assume ‘masculine’ characteristics stand a chance of prevailing within this male-dominated bourgeois tradition, and the behaviour of Cosima and Winifred bears this out.¹³

Winifred as representation of the phallic woman will be discussed in due course, for it not only underpins her strategies as intendant at Bayreuth following her husband Siegfried’s death, but also her appeal to the Nazi regime. However, as Nike continues:

There are two factors in particular that set the Wagner family apart. Both are closely linked to the character of Wagner’s work, and both continue to affect the family subconscious: they are the demand that each family member should submit to his or her cultural mission, and the psychology that results from the shared musical heritage. The first of these factors is perhaps the more obvious to the outsider. The nature of the festival enterprise places both economic and artistic demands upon the family: each generation is required to produce at least one member with artistic vision. This irrational union of dynastic and artistic principles – which was Cosima’s doing, since Wagner himself left no last will and testament and did not appoint an heir – has had curious and, in human terms, disastrous effects ever since the composer’s death [...] each newly-born Wagner is expected to not only have the right physiognomy – the Wagner nose – but also a conspicuous artistic talent. The family itself is in thrall to this absurd principle just as much as the general public [...] Childhood in the family is overshadowed by the weight of this expectation: it reaches deep into the relations between parents and children, brothers and sisters.¹⁴

The above quotations express in the words of a Wagner ideas that are not only central to understanding the Wagner family but also, by extension, an understanding of the dynamics that existed between the family and Winifred. An individual’s requisite submission to, and compliance with, familial and public expectations in the interests of tradition and the cultural

¹³ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 169-171.

¹⁴ Ibid. Nike Wagner’s remarks resonate with an angst specific to her siblings. This, entwined with the indignity of a legacy associated with fascism, has produced from the younger generation of Wagners a literature, not to mention a litany of actions, representing the exercising, or, perhaps more accurately, the exorcising of that angst. However, while every young Wagner claims to kick against their inheritance they nevertheless seize the chance to take control of it when the opportunity arises, as demonstrated in 2010 by the contest between Nike and her cousins, Eva and Katharina, for the role of Festival intendant upon the death of Wolfgang Wagner.

mission is telling. It foregrounds the phenomena of identity and individuality and, moreover, of the need to express them within a grouping. Here is the dialectical tension that exists between identification, that is to say the classifying act, and individualism, that is to say the assertion of self- or personal identity within that of a group affiliation.¹⁵ Clearly, Nike Wagner is talking about herself and her siblings, for at some point in their lives each has in their own way rebelled against both family and legacy, and against familial and public expectations, by asserting their personal identities in their choice of careers outside the Wagnerian realm.¹⁶ However, this ‘Wagner effect’ is not biologically exclusive.

Originating not, as Nike Wagner states, with Cosima but, arguably, with Richard Wagner who believed it the sole purpose of others to be of service to him, the phenomenon extends to all who come within the gravity of both the composer and his family, and represents nothing less than the necessary renunciation of personal identity and will.¹⁷ We have already seen how collaborators such as Peter Cornelius and Paul Joukowski found the experience suffocating. The young Winifred Williams appears to have been no exception. The personal development of the orphaned and ingenuous Winifred no doubt suffered because of what, in its own interests, the family expected of her, thereby unwittingly shaping her future ideas and actions.

Winifred Williams and Siegfried Wagner

When in 1870 Richard Wagner married Cosima he was fifty-seven, she thirty-two, an age difference of twenty-five years. When forty-five years later, in 1915, their son, Siegfried, married English-born Winifred Williams he was forty-six, she eighteen, a discrepancy of twenty-eight years. While the parallel is remarkable in its coincidence, disparity of age can be said to have been a determining factor in each relationship.

¹⁵ The dialectic tension existing between the needs of the individual and the needs of the grouping is atavistic and forms the basis of not only many Greek tragedies but also the Wagnerian music-dramas.

¹⁶ Of Wieland Wagner’s family, Nike is a dramaturge, arts administrator, and author. Her sisters, Daphne and Iris, pursued careers in, respectively, acting and directing, and their brother Wolf-Siegfried is an architect and director. Of their cousins, Wolfgang Wagner’s family, Gottfried is an author and publicist. Only his sister, Eva Wagner-Pasquier, and half-sister Katharina Wagner have entered ‘the family business’.

¹⁷ In many ways, both the Wagner family and the Wagner phenomenon, as described by Nike Wagner, signify, microcosmically, the concept of continuity and the conformity of thought and idea, notions that were taken to a new level by German National Socialism, and which may explain the movement’s attraction to Wagner in that each phenomenon demands of the individual a total dedication to its particular cause while absorbing the individual into a greater entity. By this, both Wagnerism and Nazism correspond to the concept of mass movements, as defined by Eric Hoffer. See Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1951). If this proposition is accepted then it was not merely political ideology which fused aesthetics and politics, but, rather, a shared set of values.

Both marriages were rooted in salvation. While that between Wagner and Cosima had been born of misfortune, that between Siegfried and Winifred was motivated by need: need not only to continue the Wagner line but also to quell public speculation about Siegfried's sexuality, the nature of which had been threatened with exposure during a paternity case brought by his half-sister, Isolde Beidler, née von Bülow, against their mother.¹⁸ In order to appreciate the significance and implications of the case it is necessary to outline its background.

For some time Siegfried (or 'Fidi' as he was known to friends and family) had been involved in a series of casual homosexual relationships, but his friendship with a young Englishman, Clement Harris, the son of a wealthy London ship builder, appears to have been at an entirely different register. A talented artist, protégé of Oscar Wilde, and pupil of Clara Schumann, Harris was at that time a music student at Frankfurt, and it was through a shared love of music that he and Siegfried had met. According to Hilmes, Siegfried was attracted to the young Englishman while in the process of discovering his own sexuality.¹⁹ However, when one aligns Nike Wagner's comments about familial expectations and duty with the knowledge that Siegfried had originally intended to become an architect, the pressure exerted upon the son of Richard Wagner by his family would have been considerable. While the relationship between Siegfried and Harris was clearly homosexual, it can also be read as the assertion of Siegfried's personal identity, for as Sven Friedrich has argued, the holiday the two men enjoyed together in 1892 represented 'Fidi's honeymoon',²⁰ in the sense of being a

¹⁸ In 1906, Isolde had made claim to her Wagner inheritance in favour of her son, Franz Beidler, who was, to date, Wagner's only grandchild. In this, Isolde was supported by her husband, the conductor, Franz Beidler. Isolde's parentage was ambiguous. Although the relationship between Cosima and Wagner had been physical, Isolde had been born while Cosima was still married to Hans von Bülow and German law recognised any child born to a married woman to be naturally that of the husband. Moreover, von Bülow had acknowledged Isolde as his daughter and she had since benefitted from his will. Only Cosima's elder daughters, Blandine and Daniela, were unequivocally von Bülow's offspring: Isolde, like Eva, was Wagner's child and now, in her son's interests, she sought recognition as such. By 1914 Isolde was divorced, the case having strained her marriage, and it was clear that no other successors were likely: Eva was forty-seven and childless, and Siegfried had never shown an inclination to marry. Throughout the case, Isolde had sought constructive discussions with her mother, but her advances had been blocked by her brother-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who, with his wife, Eva, controlled access to the ailing Cosima, and by Siegfried who undoubtedly had his own future dynastic and financial interests in mind, copyright on his father's works having expired in 1913 thereby denying the Wagner family a considerable income. During the final and very public stages of the paternity case, Isolde retaliated to family pressure by threatening to reveal Siegfried's homosexuality and it is likely that it was the disloyalty to the family that the threat represented, rather than the paternity case itself that caused the irrevocable rift in the family. Supported by Siegfried and Chamberlain, Cosima contested Isolde's claims and asserted in writing that her daughter was unquestionably her former husband's child. It therefore became apparent that Cosima had been sexually active with two men simultaneously. This was disgrace in itself, but since, legally speaking, Isolde had been conceived within wedlock there was no means by which she could prove otherwise.

¹⁹ Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 206.

²⁰ Siegfried and Harris voyaged from London to India on a ship owned by Harris' father.

period of freedom from his mother's authority before being fully absorbed into the family business.²¹

It is unclear whether the Wagners were aware of the actual nature of the friendship. Their financial manager, Adolf von Groß, had often been required to pay off would-be blackmailers,²² so it is inconceivable that any of them would be oblivious to the facts. That both Isolde and her husband Franz Beidler threatened to disclose the relationship during the paternity case proves the situation was fully understood by the more worldly members of the family.²³ And so Isolde's lawsuit threatened to damage the reputation of Richard Wagner and his family in more ways than one.

However, the courts ruled against Isolde and on 19 June 1914 her claim was dismissed. The family now irreparably divided, Cosima forbade any further mention of her daughter who, tubercular and embittered, died four years later. While Siegfried's claims to his father's enterprise were now unassailable, the integrity of the family had been called into question. The press had followed the case and its salacious details with interest, and none more so than the influential journalist, editor, and scourge of the illustrious and hypocritical, Maximilian Harden.

On 27 June 1914 Harden published his devastating verdict of the proceedings. In an article for his journal, *Die Zukunft (The Future)*, Harden examined the material as presented in court and concluded that Cosima and Siegfried had committed perjury. Therefore, in Harden's opinion, the Wagnerian organization at Bayreuth was immoral and unprincipled. Renowned for 'outing' homosexual men in high office, Harden's most famous victim to date had been Prince Philipp Eulenberg, the eminent diplomat who had advised Cosima on matters of protocol when she sought patronage from his friend the Kaiser. Harden claimed not to be homophobic but was, in the public interest, committed to the exposure of double standards in high office, for while homosexuality was then a criminal offence incurring severe penalties it was clearly tolerated in elite circles. Although the exposure of Eulenberg had not resulted in sentencing, it rocked the Kaiser's court and destroyed Eulenberg's career. Now, apart from revealing the family of a significant German cultural figure to be less than honourable, Harden's further insinuation that 'Herr Wagner [...] cannot wish for too much exposure to the

²¹ Sven Friedrich, 'Siegfried Wagner zum 75. Todestag'. As quoted in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 207.

²² Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 210-211. According to Hilmes, even as late as the 1970s there were residents of Bayreuth who could still recall 'shenanigans in the municipal park'.

²³ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 8.

public eye' alarmed the Wagner household. It became necessary for Siegfried to marry and produce an heir.²⁴

While there appears to be no evidence to suggest that a young friend of the Wagner family, Winifred Williams, had been specifically groomed for the role of Siegfried's wife, the haste by which she became so indicates the seriousness of the Wagners' situation. Hitherto demonstrating no inclination for marriage or, indeed, a relationship of any form with a woman, Siegfried was left in no doubt about his familial and ethical responsibilities. That Winifred was English, not German, and of no significant cultural background adds to the enigma.

From Winifred Williams to Winifred Wagner

Winifred Marjorie Williams was born in Hastings, Sussex, on 23 June 1897, the only child of fifty-four year old engineer, John Williams, and his second wife, the actress and painter of Danish ancestry, Emily Florence, née Karop who was twenty-five years Williams' junior.²⁵

By the age of two Winifred was an orphan, her father dying of a liver disease when she was one, her mother of typhoid the following year.²⁶ While various relatives provided the child with temporary homes, none was prepared to keep her indefinitely, and so, aged two, Winifred was placed in the care of St. Margaret's Orphanage at East Grinstead, Sussex. There, she developed a survivalist mentality based upon self-reliance and hard work. She also developed a severe dermatological condition which was to recur throughout her life in times of extreme stress.

Williams and his wife had been considered financially 'comfortable', but in real terms there was nothing their daughter could inherit.²⁷ She wrote that over the years her father had 'sunk £12,000 into literary enterprises [...] There had also been a fine house, but so laden with mortgages that there was nothing in it for me [...] This reckless tendency is something I've inherited from my father',²⁸ and it may explain the fervour of Winifred's later actions, particularly her political activities.

A feisty but infirm child, at the age of nine Winifred experienced a particularly severe attack of her dermatitis. As a cure, doctors prescribed a six-week holiday in a more congenial

²⁴ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 9.

²⁵ John Williams enjoyed an interest in theatre and had written prolifically as a theatre critic. It was in this capacity that he had met Winifred's mother who had ran away from home to become an actress. See Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 2.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

climate. There being no British-based relative willing to oblige, the orphanage entrusted Winifred to her biologically and geographically distant maternal relatives, the kindly, but elderly and childless Berlin-based Karl and Henrietta Klindworth, he a former pupil of Liszt, devoted friend of Richard Wagner and founder of the eponymous Music Conservatory in Berlin, she Winifred's blood relative.²⁹

The Klindworths were an urbane couple and enjoyed the friendship of many society figures, the Wagner family included. Both couple and child responded well to each other and the intended holiday became a permanent arrangement when, in 1907, at the age of seventy-seven and seventy respectively, Karl and Henrietta officially fostered Winifred.³⁰ Klindworth wrote to Cosima and Eva Wagner:

At our advanced age, we have now taken upon ourselves something else to worry about – the care and education of a nice young girl of ten who is completely without means and all alone in the world. She is a little English girl, a distant relative of ours – and now we must hope to live long enough for the little creature to achieve sufficient independence to make her own way.³¹

As Klindworth was currently transcribing Wagner's opera *Der fliegende Holländer* for piano, the couple henceforth referred to Winifred as Senta, the young girl who falls in love with a charismatic but lonely stranger, sacrificing herself for his salvation. Winifred flourished under the guardianship of her 'grandparents' (as she called them) who gently introduced their charge to the language and music of her new homeland, especially the works of Wagner.³²

At thirteen, Winifred was sent to boarding school where she was a conscientious worker. At sixteen, as customary with girls of her class, she attended finishing school and undertook a course in household management, receiving a thorough grounding in catering, etiquette, infant care, French, and civics. In Nike Wagner's opinion, Germany was the young Winifred's saviour; it was, as it were, a lifebelt.³³

The politics of the Klindworth household were consonant with the ideas of Heinrich Class, leader of the Pan-German League and friend of Karl Klindworth. Class was an ardent nationalist and advocated economic and colonial policies intended to undermine the standing of Great Britain. He favoured a dictatorial style of government; for too long, in his opinion, Germany had been eaten away by internal wrangling and the activities of the Jews whose

²⁹ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

³¹ Karl Klindworth to Cosima and Eva Wagner. Letter dated 21 April 1907. Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung, Bayreuth. Also in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 1-2. At the time, Winifred Williams was nine years old and not ten, as Klindworth states.

³² Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 3.

³³ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 165.

liberty should now be forfeit in consequence. Only by this, and with outright war against her imperialist and rapidly industrialising neighbours, would Germany regain its glory. Demonstrating a continuity of the collective inferiority complex discussed in previous chapters, these sentiments echoed throughout German society and, crucially, throughout the pages of the Wagnerian journal, *Bayreuther Blätter*, which was avidly read by the Klindworth household.

A committed Wagnerite, Klindworth noted in a letter to Cosima: ‘I firmly believe that our group will one day lend a powerful hand to liberating our misguided people from the degrading chains of their enemies within’.³⁴ Consequently, the young English-born Winifred was raised within an overtly German nationalist domestic environment, a dynamic microcosm of the prevailing macrocosmic outlook.

Over time, Winifred was introduced to the cosmopolitanism of Berlin society and prominent German cultural circles, including that at Bayreuth. Winifred’s first visit there was in 1914 when, aged seventeen and deputising for an ailing Henrietta, she accompanied the equally infirm eighty-four year old Karl to the dress rehearsals of a new Festival production of *Der fliegende Holländer*, its first since 1902. There, Winifred was presented to the Wagner family and met with their approval. The girl, now carefully tutored in the works of The Master, and the Wagnerian dynasty requiring an heir, the apparently fortuitous relationship which developed between Winifred and Siegfried was actively encouraged by their respective families, despite the couple’s difference in age. At Wahnfried, the centre of the Wagnerian universe, Winifred joined her illustrious compatriot and dedicated Germanophile, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who, because of the war and, in his opinion, Great Britain’s perfidy, would only talk to ‘Siegfried’s English bride’ (as she was referred to by the Wagner family) in German.³⁵

Marriage and Politics

Clearly, the Wagner family primarily regarded Winifred as one sent to fulfil their dynastic and domestic requirements. While Siegfried was essentially homosexual we should recall that in

³⁴ Karl Klindworth to Cosima Wagner. Letter dated 24 December 1913. Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung, Bayreuth. Also in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 1-2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vi. Shocked at Britain’s declaration of war on Germany, Chamberlain disseminated anti-British propaganda in a series of pamphlets and articles for which he was disowned by his family and stripped of his British citizenship. Regarded in Germany as an enemy alien despite his number of years’ residency, Chamberlain applied for German nationality which was granted in 1916. In 1915 he was awarded the Iron Cross for his services to German propaganda.

1901 he allegedly fathered a son by the daughter of a Bayreuth pastor.³⁶ Although the boy, Walter Aign, (1901-1977) was later absorbed into the Festival as musical assistant without any public knowledge of his paternity, being illegitimate he could not so easily be absorbed into the family as heir.³⁷ Ironically, had Harden been aware of Aign's existence and supposed paternity his insinuations against Siegfried would have been unnecessary, as would the family's haste to marry him off.

But Siegfried's terms for marriage were as particular as they were challenging and, as Nike Wagner notes, odd in that they ran counter to those normally associated with the politics of matrimony,³⁸ especially so when the family is of some consequence: Siegfried declared he could only marry a woman who was 'quite poor' and 'without family'. Since it was unlikely that such a person would inhabit the exalted circles in which the Wagners moved, it is possible that Siegfried conceived these criteria in order to mask his sexuality. Alternatively, as Nike Wagner believes, Siegfried's stipulations can be explained in both pragmatic and psychological terms. Firstly, she proposes, Siegfried's security depended upon finding a spouse who stood socially below him. Such a woman would be unlikely to clash with his beloved mother or make demands of her own. She would be grateful for the marriage and therefore someone to whom serving her husband would be everything, even to the point of turning a blind eye to his homosexual peccadillos.³⁹ Yet, Nike Wagner adds that Siegfried's dream of a poor wife also betrayed his need to remain within his personal fairy tale. Most of the women Siegfried met – singers, musicians, aristocrats, bluestockings – would by their definition fail to meet Siegfried's criteria. Instead he chose a seventeen year old schoolgirl, unworldly but deeply affected by Wagner's music.⁴⁰ In Winifred, then, 'Siegfried had found his Cinderella: the glass slipper of Wahnfried fitted her perfectly'.⁴¹

A more fitting analogy would be golden handcuffs. Of no particular standing, it would be unlikely that Winifred would challenge Siegfried and his family, or, indeed, attract a suitor of comparable status. But with her marriage into the Wagner brand and the provisos that came with it, not least, as will be discussed in due course, the terms of Siegfried's will, Winifred's

³⁶ It was Siegfried Wagner's biographer, Peter Pachl, who first declared Siegfried's paternity of Aign. Although Pachl provided no evidence to support his claim the theory nevertheless persists since Brigitte Hamann refers to the matter in her biography of Winifred Wagner.

³⁷ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 202. Walter Aign was engaged twice as musical assistant by the Bayreuth Festival; initially, between 1917 and 1920, and then again between 1951 and 1957 when he would have been employed, in effect, by his half-brothers, Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 202-203.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

obligation to the Wagner family was locked into eternity, arguably arresting her personal development and initiating a train of behavioural patterns and actions symptomatic of need.

Upon the couple's engagement, Siegfried's half-sister, Daniela, took sole control of the young bride-to-be.⁴² Recently divorced and suffering from depression, Daniela bought linen, underwear and other items for Winifred's trousseau without consultation and according to her own severe and dated taste. Throughout the entire wedding preparations Winifred was not permitted to contribute any ideas or express a will of her own. On the contrary, she was required to be grateful.⁴³

Married, Winifred learned to navigate the Wagnerian world with care. Eva and Daniela immediately tried to dominate the young girl and a game of power politics ensued. Although Wahnfried employed a team of servants, in what appears to be an attempt by Cosima and her daughters to undermine Winifred's position as wife of the Master of Bayreuth, Winifred found herself required to undertake a number of domestic chores and, despite her qualifications in domestic management, her competence was critically, and constantly, monitored by the Wagner women. The superciliousness Winifred endured at the hands of her sisters-in-law can therefore be read as being the expression of their demotion within the family hierarchy.

Winifred's correspondence of the time, particularly with her childhood girl-friends, is littered with complaints about the Wagner family's habits, traditions, taboos, and expectations. In the thirty or so years since Wagner lived there, nothing in Wahnfried had been changed. The furnishings and his personal items were all as and where he had left them before embarking on his fatal trip to Venice. A whole protocol was in place of which Winifred was completely unaware. Consequently, she often caused offence as on the evening when, no other seat in the salon being vacant, she innocently sat in Wagner's armchair, unused since his death. Everything, Winifred discovered, was to remain as the composer had last seen it. What – under Wagner – had been the centre of the cultural avant-garde had – under Cosima and her daughters – become a mausoleum within which the English bride was frequently reminded of her place.

It was from the moment Winifred became a mother that the power axis at Wahnfried altered. Between 1917 and 1920, she bore Siegfried – and the family – four children:

⁴² Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 18.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Wieland, 1917; Friedelind, 1918; Wolfgang, 1919; and Verena, 1920.⁴⁴ Like Cosima before her, Winifred now acquired significance. More than a wife, she became the dynastic mother, conclusively deposing the childless sisters-in-law in the familial and corporate social order. In short, Winifred acquired an identity. The presence of young children and Winifred's pragmatic nature did much to dispel Wahnfried's stagnant, sanctified atmosphere, and while the Chamberlains still exercised a certain control over Cosima the running of both Festival and household gradually passed into Winifred's hands.

She became her husband's personal assistant, much as Cosima had been to his father, throwing herself into her work, managing his correspondence and, in time, having his signature. Once again a form of Will and Representation was established in a marital relationship in the sense that, like Cosima as described in Chapter 2, Winifred became the external, accomplishing incarnation of her elder husband's inner thoughts and wishes, for soon she was signing on her husband's behalf not as 'Fr. Siegfried Wagner', but as 'Siegfried Wagner' himself, making it difficult for anyone now studying Siegfried's correspondence to know exactly who is speaking, particularly when the theme of a communiqué is politics.

Siegfried was quiet, affable, and not unwise. His father's enterprise depended heavily for its existence upon the goodwill of numerous benefactors. Many of these, of course, were German but a considerable number were not and many were Jewish. Accordingly, Siegfried appears to have steered a shrewd diplomatic course. The general opinion at Wahnfried, as throughout Germany, was that the country and its people had been 'stabbed in the back', betrayed at its interior by the Left and the Jews who had conspired to take advantage while Germany's attention was focused elsewhere, namely on the battlefield. Siegfried had followed the events of the Great War closely and patriotically but, unlike others of his family, particularly Chamberlain, was sufficiently realistic to be stoic in defeat. The terms of Armistice meant Germany would be a republic. Consequently, the Bayreuth Festival would lose royal patronage and be all the more financially dependent upon civic bureaucracy and the benevolence of the many Wagner Societies and Wagnerites overseas requiring Siegfried to navigate a delicate political course. Siegfried was not given to excessiveness or impetuosity, but the pragmatism of his political standpoint can also be read as ambivalence, for when, in the early 1920s, his young wife unreservedly embraced the German Nationalist cause, he initially regarded her actions with a degree of benevolent, fatherly indulgence.

⁴⁴ Winifred had wanted more children but Siegfried objected, claiming the noise they made disrupted his work and the general routine of the household.

At the time of their marriage Europe was in the grip of the Great War. Despite being domiciled in Germany since the age of nine, as an enemy alien Winifred had been continually denied German citizenship and therefore the right to marry a German. The problem was finally overcome when, in mid-1915, Siegfried had himself appointed Winifred's legal guardian. It was a move that not only restored to Winifred her original Christian name and dissolved any obstacles preventing her Germanisation and marriage, but also rendered Siegfried both Winifred's father and husband. Their difference in age notwithstanding, Siegfried's new role subconsciously established a father-daughter dynamic in the relationship between husband and wife, one mirroring that between his father and mother, and exacerbated by his, and his family's attitude to Winifred who, in short, was infantilised by the marriage.

Despite the increasing politicisation of his father's aesthetic, Siegfried initially viewed his 'Little Winnie's' interest in National Socialism with what Nike Wagner describes as paternal tolerance.⁴⁵ This may have been due to Siegfried's attitude to politics in general for, as later recorded by Hitler's one time private secretary and Chairman of the Party Chancellery, Martin Bormann, it was Hitler's opinion that Siegfried was 'politically neutral'.⁴⁶ For Nike Wagner, however, it was not indifference but naivety that shaped Siegfried's attitude to Winifred's activism, a further demonstration, she believes, that Siegfried lived his life as if in an aesthetic fairy tale.⁴⁷ However, Siegfried's brother-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who for many years had published extensively on the subject of German racial superiority, was now a celebrity of the pseudo-intellectual and, consequently, by the turn of the 1920s, apart from being a site of cultural production Bayreuth had become an ideological centre for the National Socialists.

While Winifred's enthusiasm for the nascent organisation was marked, Siegfried remained at a slight remove from it all. Not actively condoning, but at the same time not actively condemning the party, he appears to have been mindful of his delicate situation and remained careful not to offend a likely source of future funding, the international public, the wealthy businessmen and Jews upon whose donations and subscriptions he, and therefore the

⁴⁵ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 207. 'Little Winnie' was Siegfried's pet name for Winifred, the diminutive nature of which seems to emphasise the father-daughter dynamic of their relationship as well as their difference in age.

⁴⁶ Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens (trans.), *Hitler's Table-Talk 1941-1944: Hitler's conversations recorded by Martin Bormann* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 348. Entry dated night of 28 Feb-1 March 1942. 'Politically neutral' translated as 'politically passive' in Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 147. See also Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1997). Martin Bormann: Chairman of the Party Chancellery (1941-1945); Hitler's private secretary (1943 -1945).

⁴⁷ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 208.

continuation of the Festival, currently depended, or, indeed, the theatres who supplied Bayreuth with artists.

Although Hitler regarded Siegfried as politically unreliable,⁴⁸ in many ways Siegfried's attitude towards politics reflects that of a number of aesthetically minded people of the period. Indeed, Nike Wagner likens him to the Italian poet and proto-fascist Gabriele de Nunzio, friend of Siegfried's half-sister, Daniela, for whom art and politics were inextricably and romantically linked. For years Wahnfried had resonated with political philosophy. Favouring the monarchical model of leadership, the Wagners had never held the Weimar Republic in any high regard, considering it ineffectual. But Wahnfried's political horizons, in the opinion of the writer and friend of Winifred, Erich Ebermayer, were narrow and 'more appropriate to a farmhouse in distant Pomerania than to the descendants of Richard Wagner'.⁴⁹ At best, Wahnfried's philosophies were idealistic, and it is the assertion of this study that the motivating force behind Bayreuth's relationship with fascism was not Richard Wagner, or indeed Houston Stewart Chamberlain, but Winifred, although not for the reasons generally assumed.

It would appear that around 1924, and certainly by 1925, Siegfried became nervous about the intensity of his wife's political fervour, of her involvement with National Socialism's affairs and, in particular, of her relationship with Hitler. Winifred attended party meetings and rallies, organised fund-raising events, and, critically, became known, along with her friends Helena Bechstein and Helena Boy, as a patroness of the Führer. As such, she tutored the somewhat gauche political leader in matters of etiquette, introduced him into the circles of the cultural and industrial elite and, during his incarceration in Landsberg Prison following the failed Beerhall putsch of 1923, supplied him with provisions, including the writing paper upon which many believe he wrote *Mein Kampf*. When on 20 December 1924 Hitler was released from prison on probation and announced his intention to visit Wahnfried the following January in order to thank Winifred personally for her support, Winifred was quick to dissuade him since the press was becoming increasingly critical of Bayreuth's involvement in politics. When the police became aware of Hitler's plan and placed Wahnfried under surveillance, Siegfried took steps to curb his wife's political pursuits.

'Fidi has laid down the law to me' Winifred wrote to Helena Boy, 'and forbidden me to play any active public role in the movement from now on. You can imagine how difficult

⁴⁸ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 146-147.

⁴⁹ Erich Ebermayer, as quoted in Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 206.

that will be for me'.⁵⁰ Siegfried instructions, however, did nothing to curtail Winifred's enthusiasm for Nazi politics, or for the Führer; in fact they seem to have had the opposite effect. While Siegfried prohibited his wife from attending public meetings he was powerless as regards her personal contact with Hitler, having often noted in his diaries his irritation and resentment of the Führer's presence at Wahnfried.⁵¹ Instead, Winifred carried on very much as before. She continued her custom of regularly dining privately with Hitler, often being chauffeured to these assignments by Siegfried who would then dine alone elsewhere, arranged Hitler's clandestine and always nocturnal visits to Wahnfried, and involved Hitler in her children's activities to such an extent they not only came to regard him as 'Uncle Wolf', but also to relate to him more than to their father.⁵²

Denied his public visit to Wahnfried, Hitler invited Siegfried and Winifred to Munich to hear what would be his first political – and illegal – speech since his release from prison.⁵³ While Siegfried declined the invitation, citing professional commitments in Plauen,⁵⁴ Winifred went to Munich alone. There she was overcome by Hitler's rhetoric. Ebermeyer may have regarded Bayreuth's politics as naïve, but political philosophy and political activism are two different things, and it is this study's assertion that Winifred's new pursuit was symptomatic of something more personal than a hobbyist's interest in politics.

By the tone of her correspondence with her friends it appears that by 1920 Winifred was feeling superfluous within the Wagner family structure. Hitler later revealed to Martin Bormann that Cosima and her daughters had merely tolerated Winifred, were perhaps jealous of her, and that he had witnessed a number of embarrassing scenes between the women during his visits to Wahnfried.⁵⁵ Such was the intensity of the criticism directed at Winifred by her female in-laws that in 1923 she was compelled to complain to Eva and Blandine that she was,

⁵⁰ Winifred Wagner to Helena Boy. Letter dated 3 January 1924 (in error: should read 1925), as quoted in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 104.

⁵¹ See Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 146

⁵² Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 209. Hitler and the National Socialists needed Bayreuth and its associated networks in order to gain validation. Since Hitler knew of Siegfried's homosexuality and was aware of Winifred's domestic circumstances, it is plausible he exploited the situation, deliberately ingratiating himself with the Wagner family and coming between Siegfried and Winifred.

⁵³ Although on probation following his release from Landsberg Prison, Hitler delivered his illegal speech in the Bürgerbräukeller, Munich on 27 February 1925. The event attracted an audience of some 3000 people and effectively re-launched the National Socialist Party. On 9 March the Bavarian authorities banned Hitler from public speaking, with other German states following suit soon after.

⁵⁴ Siegfried's opera, *Schwarzwälderweihnachten* was due to be performed in Plauen and, ostensibly, he was required to attend rehearsals. His excuse to Hitler may have been spurious in that in the interests of the Bayreuth Festival he could not be seen to openly endorse a political party with which he may have been more in sympathy than was expedient to be known.

⁵⁵ Cameron and Stevens, *Hitler's Table-Talk*, 359. Daniela had always claimed that Cosima had promised her, as eldest child, control of Bayreuth. Siegfried's marriage to Winifred effectively removed his sisters and half-sisters from Bayreuth's line of succession. See also Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 111.

playing the part of an outcast: you have taken from me every feeling of happiness, every sense of being at home here and belonging to you [...] because of my temperament, because of circumstances a happy person has become isolated, a cheerfully active one has become bitter and worried – an open, honest soul has shut herself off.⁵⁶

While, clearly, affection existed between Siegfried and Winifred, and she was unquestionably devoted to him as wife and administrative assistant, it is equally clear that the family's narcissistic expectations were suffocating the young woman, arresting any process of individuation and denying the development of her specific identity. It is from this point in time that Winifred begins to exhibit patterns of behaviour symptomatic of what in modern parlance is called depression.

Amid the family protocols and the deference Cosima and her family felt due not only to Wagner but to them,⁵⁷ Winifred occupied an uncomfortable space between dynastic mother and domestic servant. To be regarded by that family with a degree of superciliousness would be sufficient grounds for emotional escape. It is possibly for this reason that Winifred became attracted to other men and not only to the English author, Hugh Walpole, but also to Adolf Hitler and the complex world of German politics.

Winifred Wagner and Hugh Walpole

Winifred first met Walpole in 1923 when he accompanied the Danish tenor, Lauritz Melchior, to Bayreuth. While Siegfried, Melchior, and the other artists were occupied with rehearsals for the following year's Festival, the first since the war, Winifred and Walpole became close friends. With Walpole Winifred could once again communicate in her native tongue.⁵⁸ She was enthusiastic about his books,⁵⁹ and the two would often be seen taking walks together, enjoying each other's sense of humour and attracting what Winifred referred to as 'town gossip'.⁶⁰

Rumours aside, Winifred must have been sufficiently smitten with Walpole for Siegfried to feel the need to acknowledge the situation and to come to terms with it.⁶¹ The real problem, however, lay with his sisters, who, suspicious of a love affair between Winifred and

⁵⁶ Winifred Wagner to Eva Chamberlain and Blandine Gravina. Letter dated 30 August 1923, as quoted in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 49-50.

⁵⁷ For instance, to receive the Master's first grandchild, Wieland, Cosima had sat, as if enthroned, in the middle of the entrance hall at Wahnfried, where, to the sound of Wagner's music, Winifred ceremoniously presented her with the baby.

⁵⁸ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 49.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Winifred Wagner to Helena Boy. Letter dated 14 September 1924. *Ibid.*, 99.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

Walpole, openly quarrelled with him. The situation worsened over the year to such an extent that by the end of the 1924 Festival Siegfried suggested Daniela should remove herself from Wahnfried and find alternative accommodation. For the first time since her marriage, Winifred was freed from Daniela's tyranny. 'I find it strangely touching that Hugh should have brought about this liberation after nine years', Winifred wrote to Helena Boy, 'he's done me the greatest favour'.⁶² It was liberation in more ways than one.

Although Winifred's friendship with Walpole lasted for many years it did not develop in personal significance. It never could, for although Winifred may have been unaware of it, Walpole, like her husband, was homosexual. However, as with the 'town gossip', this is to view the relationship in very narrow and obvious terms. Both friendship and event represent the first of Winifred's many assertions of independence and individuality within the familial and corporate structures. In short, 'Little Winnie' was finally expressing the conception she had of her own self-identity. The relationship between Winifred and Walpole was to forever remain platonic. It could be not be otherwise. Not so her relationship with the man who soon replaced Walpole in Winifred's affections, Adolf Hitler, whose arrival at Wahnfried in October 1923 sent shock waves through the household, vitalising Winifred.

Winifred Wagner and Adolf Hitler

It is generally held that Winifred Wagner's attraction to Adolf Hitler originated in a shared political ideology. Evidence suggests that the relationship operated on a number of other levels.⁶³ By the time of Hitler's first visit to Wahnfried Winifred was under considerable strain, and a more likely stimulus of her enthusiasm was Winifred's domestic situation: as Joseph Goebbels noted in his diary following a dinner party at Wahnfried in May 1926, '[Winifred] put her sorrows to me, [...] Siegfried is so limp',⁶⁴ 'a good woman crying because the son is not what the Master was'.⁶⁵

⁶² Winifred Wagner to Helena Boy. Letter dated 14 September 1924, as quoted in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 102.

⁶³ From its inception, the nature of the relationship between Hitler and Winifred Wagner was the subject of much discussion. Once, in reply to enquiries at school about her mother's likelihood of marrying the Führer, Winifred's eldest daughter, Friedelind, piped in her broad Franconian accent, 'me ma wanna, but me Uncle Wolf, he don't wanna'. The term, 'uncle', demonstrates how close Hitler was to the Wagner family during the 1920s and 30s. Indeed, during the 1920s, Hitler often stayed at the family home of Wahnfried, albeit clandestinely as he was concerned that his illegal political activities would compromise not only the family but also the Bayreuth Festival itself. Hitler did not attend the Festival after 1925, maintaining his presence was a distraction and that he would only return when legally elected leader of Germany. He refused to attend the 1927 Festival in protest to the many roles being assigned there to Jewish artists.

⁶⁴ Joseph Goebbels, as quoted in Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 206-207.

⁶⁵ Joseph Goebbels, as quoted in Hilmes, *Cosima Wagner*, 304.

Hitler's magnetism was widely acknowledged,⁶⁶ and decades later Winifred freely admitted that she had responded to what she described as his Austrian warmth and charm. However, the Führer claimed his duty to the German nation precluded any physical relationship with a woman.⁶⁷ Consequently, many commentators have interpreted Winifred's unswerving loyalty to Hitler as an expression of unrequited love.⁶⁸ However, that Winifred could fondly recall Hitler's blue eyes nearly half a century after their first meeting, and insist that, were he to enter the room at that very moment, she would still welcome him as a dear friend,⁶⁹ 'clearly reveals her fixation on Hitler's person: a fixation that went beyond all critical reason and political judgement, but which obeyed the rules of an archaic desire for submission'.⁷⁰ The use of the term 'submission' is interesting. It can be read, as Nike Wagner seems to intend, as relating to the German cultural tradition of leader and follower, a concept of protective governance and compliance which resonates throughout the country's history, irrespective of how the term 'country' is defined. Yet the term is also suggestive of other archetypes, specifically the father-figure, of which the leader-follower concept can be said to be an extension.

Her biological father having died when she was a baby, Winifred first encountered the father-figure in her elderly foster-parent, Karl Klindworth. From the age of eighteen the archetype was embodied by Winifred's husband, Siegfried who, as we have seen, legalised his marriage with Winifred by becoming her father by adoption, the age gap between the couple reinforcing the dynamic. With Winifred as Siegfried's personal assistant the couple then rehearsed the idea of will and representation, albeit less self-consciously and at a lower register than Wagner and Cosima had done. In each case – Wagner and Cosima, Siegfried and

⁶⁶ In conversation with the present author, Christian Dyall, son of the British actor, Valentine Dyall, told how, against her better judgement, his mother was completely won over by Hitler's charm when she and her husband met him in Berlin during the 1930s.

⁶⁷ Hitler's promise extended to his so-called mistress, Eva Braun. According to Herbert Döhring, one of Hitler's bodyguards, domestic staff at the Berghof inspected Hitler's and Eva Braun's bedlinen daily for any evidence of sexual activity. None was ever found. Hitler's sexuality and his erotic effect upon women has been the subject of much discussion and commentators continue to be divided in their opinion. Salacious details are legion; so much so that many are likely to be the product of anti-Nazi propagandists. According to a study conducted in 1943 by Walter C. Langer on behalf of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), leading psychologists and psychiatrists reported that Hitler exhibited symptoms suggestive of an array of psychological conditions of which latent homosexuality, sado-masochism, castration anxiety, and coprophillia are only a few. Many of the theories included in the report have since been discredited. Other than the testimonies of those who personally knew Hitler, no documentary evidence has yet been unearthed to support the majority of the report's claims or, indeed, of those made since. For a discussion of Hitler's possible sexual proclivities and their assumed origin see Robert C. L. Waite, *The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 237-243.

⁶⁸ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 207.

⁶⁹ See Hans Jürgen Syberber's film, *Winifred und die Gesichte des Hauses Wahnfried von 1914-1945* (English title, *The Confessions of Winifred Wagner*; France/ Germany/Great Britain, 1975).

⁷⁰ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 207.

Winifred – the male is simultaneously father-figure and sexual object, and the pattern is repeated in Winifred’s relationship with Hitler.

Hitler represented authority, protection, and the link with cultural tradition; but, crucially, he differed to Siegfried in that he could supply Winifred with something that Siegfried could not: the means by which she could pursue her individual development and realise her potential, hitherto arrested by the death of her biological parents and stifled by the draconian orphanage and the domestic situation at Wahnfried. Seen in this light, Winifred’s fixation on, and fidelity towards, Hitler lies outside the political and, along with an emerging hyperphagia and periods of over-industriousness, can be regarded as one of her many actions symptomatic of need.

Disorders and Politics

Nike Wagner draws on Wagner family anecdotes when she tells us that, following Hitler’s first visits to Wahnfried, Siegfried had noted his young wife’s increasing weight and frequently admonished her for it, instructing her not to ‘stuff yourself so’.⁷¹ Nike Wagner attributes Winifred’s gluttony to a pent-up erotic energy originating in the nature of her marriage and Hitler’s allure. While, according to Nike Wagner, Winifred was too young and ingenuous to be aware of her erotic desires,⁷² nowadays we would see the dynamics of Winifred’s relationship with her husband, her excessive demonstrations of attachment (of which her extreme loyalty to Hitler is characteristic), compulsive eating, and over-industriousness as being related and symptomatic of depression.⁷³

From the moment she married into the Wagner family Winifred’s sense of self-esteem had been under constant attack, particularly from the female members of the family.⁷⁴ Winifred’s experiences in the orphanage had made her a resilient woman, but it seems the barrage from Cosima and her daughters was relentless. In times of stress it was Winifred’s habit to immerse herself in energetic activity of some kind. Invariably, this activity took the form of Festival-related work, but, given her domestic circumstances, Winifred’s political activism can be regarded as a similar outlet. Without access to medical records or comparable

⁷¹ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 207.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Until the mid-nineteenth century, the term ‘melancholia’ remained the dominant diagnostic term for a physical or metaphorical lowering of a person’s spirits. The German psychiatrist, Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926) is widely considered to be the first to use the term ‘depression’ to encompass a series of terms describing melancholic, or depressive, states. It was the English psychiatrist, Henry Maudsley, who proposed an alternative term ‘affective disorder’. Dr John Cade was the first to propose and administer a definite process of treatment.

⁷⁴ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 49.

documentation indicating Winifred was ever diagnosed as suffering from depression (or melancholia as the condition was then more generally known), or from states reminiscent of depression, it is impossible to prove scientifically that depression was the source of her emerging disorders. But because Winifred exhibited identifiable patterns of neurotic behaviour, the present author, while mindful of Bernstein's warning against backshadowing, would suggest a hypothetical diagnosis of depression, although conjectural, is also plausible.

Clearly, schema and their definitions change historically, but we may at least begin to appreciate Winifred's situation if, without being deterministic, we consult modern accredited medical organisations, for example the British National Health Service (NHS) and World Health Organisation (WHO), and certain dimensions and disorders on the affective spectrum recognised by them.⁷⁵

For example, 'emotional eating' is now considered to be a maladaptive coping strategy thought to be caused by the inability to distinguish physical hunger from unpleasant emotional states.⁷⁶ Inadequate Affect Regulation Theory currently maintains that individuals indulge in the practice of emotional eating as a means of alleviating negative feelings.⁷⁷ Negative affectivity is a personality trait involving negative perception and poor self-concept. Low negative affectivity is characterised by frequent periods of calm along with states of confidence, activeness, and an excessive enthusiasm for something, all of which Winifred appears to have demonstrated as her eating habits, outward self-confidence, industriousness, and eagerness for Hitler and his party demonstrate.

According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) nearly half of all patients diagnosed with binge eating disorders or 'eating disorders

⁷⁵ The affective spectrum is a band of affective conditions related to medical and psychiatric disorders, including eating disorders.

⁷⁶ See, for instance, J. Bennett, G. Greene, and D. Schwartz-Barcott. 'Perception and Emotional Eating Behaviour: A Qualitative Study of College Students', *Appetite* 60 (2013), 187-192. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2012.09.023> (19 July 2015); Nicole M. Avena, Pedro Rada, and Bartley G. Hoebel, 'Sugar and Fat Bingeing Have Notable Differences in Addictive-like Behaviour', *Journal of Nutrition*. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc2714381> (19 July 2015). S.T.Spoor, M.H. Becker, T. van Strien, and G.L. van Heck, 'Relations between negative affect and emotional eating', *Appetite*, 48 (2007), 368-376. According to Nicholas Bello et al, sugars and fats release opioids in the brain. Opioids are the effective ingredients of cocaine, heroin, and other narcotics, and the consumption of sugars and fats initiate similar calming and euphoric effects. See Society for the Study of Ingestive Behaviour, 'High-fat, High-sugar Foods Alter Brain Receptors', *Science Daily*, 6 August 2009. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/2009/07/090727102024.htm> (19 July 2015).

⁷⁷ See, for instance, S.T. Spoor, M.H. Becker, T. van Strien, and G.L. van Heck, 'Relations between negative affect and emotional eating', *Appetite*, 48 (2007), 368-376. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17145096> (19 July 2015).

not otherwise specified' (EDNOS) have a history of depression,⁷⁸ which, in turn, can also originate in discontent, a sense of low self-esteem, or anxiety. NIDDK has also noted that the majority of patients with eating disorders had, at some point in their lives, suffered some form of emotional trauma. We may never know the full extent to which the death of Winifred's parents actually affected her as a child, or, despite her candid account of them cited above, to what extent their absences were felt when she was in need of support,⁷⁹ but her experiences of Wagner family life as 'Fidi's English Bride' were indelible. And while her industriousness does not exactly conform to the WHO definition of Anankastic (or Obsessive-Compulsive) Personality Disorder (ICD-10), it can be read as representing a condition of lack which eventually extended to the home, as in the case of her clandestine affair with Heinz Tietjen discussed below, and one that came to express dissatisfaction and retaliation.

Rebellion and Retaliation

That Winifred came to relate better to Hitler than to her husband can be explained in a number of ways: firstly, by a reading of Maine's theory of father hunger, as outlined in Chapter 2; secondly, by the many archetypes and dynamics connected with the father-daughter relationship and, thirdly, by the application of Hoffer's theory of mass movements. As all crowd for attention and all are intertwined we will consider them as follows:

While both Cosima and Winifred experienced the emotional emptiness attendant with father hunger, Cosima's needs were sated by her relationship with Richard Wagner from whom she derived validation and identity. Apart from her narcissism and low self-esteem (which, in part, were due to her Roman Catholic upbringing), Cosima appears not to have exhibited any of the other disorders Maine identifies. Winifred, however, did, and so we should consider the very real possibility that the Wagner family, with their supercilious expectancies and persistent demeaning of Winifred may have amplified her father hunger and triggered in her a number of psychologically-related disorders, such as her emotional eating, which led her to fixate upon a possible contender for the father-figure.

While fixation upon a person or cause can be symptomatic of father-hunger, depression, or suppressed erotic energy, it is also a characteristic of those personality types

⁷⁸ <http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/eating-disorders> (10 July 2015). Experts are divided in their opinion on cause and effect. Debate continues as to whether depression causes eating disorders and anxiety or, conversely, that eating disorders and anxiety cause the depression.

⁷⁹ Winifred's adoptive father, Karl Klindworth, died in July 1916, a few months into Winifred's first year of marriage.

susceptible to the mechanics of mass movements, as described by Hoffer.⁸⁰ In Chapter 1 we discussed how Wagnerism can be regarded as a mass movement, but in Winifred's case the phenomenon is represented not by Wagnerism, as one may assume it may, but by Adolf Hitler's National Socialism.

Of those classified by Hoffer as being most likely to be attracted to a mass movement, the 'Bored' comprise women of a certain age and social standing, invariably the wives of industrialists or other powerful figures, who seek some form of stimulation. Even in the case of the Nazi movement, which disapproved of feminine activity beyond the home, women of a certain type played an important role in the early stages of the organisation's development.⁸¹ Like marriage, mass movements offered women a new purpose in life and a future, perhaps even a new identity, and it was boredom with their marriages and an awareness of a barren, spoilt life that inspired women to flirt with these organisations.⁸² For Hoffer, there is perhaps no more reliable indicator of a society's readiness for a mass movement than unrelieved boredom, and that when people are bored it is usually with themselves that they are bored.⁸³ Where individuals are relatively well-off yet lack creative outlets or useful action, Hoffer notes, 'there is no telling to what desperate and fantastic shifts they might resort to give meaning to their lives'.⁸⁴ If boredom is a symptom of discontentment and discontentment can, in turn, be the product of a circular relationship existing between sexual frustration and depression, then such, it can be said, was the case with Winifred.

Referencing Hermann Rauschning,⁸⁵ Hoffer notes that, during the 1920s, Hitler made full use of the society ladies, who, sick of their 'empty lives' and 'no longer getting a "kick" out of love affairs',⁸⁶ thirsted for adventure. These women were financing or supporting the young Austrian radical in some form long before their husbands were fully aware of him.⁸⁷ In this sense the women were not unique. Their French counterparts had done likewise in the years immediately preceding the French Revolution: 'devastated with boredom

⁸⁰ See Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1952).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Hermann Rauschning (1887-1982): German Conservative revolutionary. Briefly a member of the Nazi Party, Rauschning renounced his party membership in 1934 and emigrated to the USA in 1936 from where he actively denounced Nazism.

⁸⁶ Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 67.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* See also Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1940), 268; Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 108. Winifred Wagner's friend, Helena Bechstein, was so infatuated with Hitler that she imagined that he would marry her daughter, Lotte.

[these women had] applauded innovators'.⁸⁸ It was Eros without the sex. With these women representing the Jungian anima, quite simply they were attracted by the energy.

In Winifred's case the energy was exactly this. It offered freedom from the repressive, the old, and the old-fashioned: a symptom of the modern and the shift to the individual. Consequently, it would be relatively easy to be seduced by something darker. Hitler and the Nazis were that dark power, but theirs was the only power happening in Germany at that time. If Erikson is correct and, as discussed in Chapter 1,⁸⁹ the individual lifecycle and society are inextricably linked, then for somebody who is developing in line with what is happening around them, what is happening in the artistic, the political, and the cultural would be amplified according to intrinsic qualities. For people whose development goes in the opposite direction, that is to say, for people who are not in tune or sympathy with what is occurring around them, the result will be that they become internalised, private. For Winifred, the effect was the reverse. She was hearing the rhetoric of a new social order and it fitted to what she needed, a proposition vindicated by Nike Wagner's observation that National Socialism offered Germany the abolition of the extant unbridgeable class divide, a divide the disadvantaged Winifred had personally encountered at Wahnfried.⁹⁰

While there is literally no reason to suppose Winifred's relationship with Hitler was sado-masochistic in the sexual sense, their roles of the helpless and the masterful, which in their case were interchangeable, cannot be overlooked. While each, in their own way, was the helpless victim of circumstance each was associated with power, and each possessed the means by which the potential of the other could be realised. In many ways, it was a situation that paralleled the relationship between Cosima and Chamberlain. At a time of mutual insecurity (he politically, she artistically in that the future of the Bayreuth Festival remained precarious), Hitler and Winifred supplied each other and their enterprises with a significant degree of what Bourdieu later defined as symbolic capital. In a more personal sense, had the domestic conditions at Wahnfried been more favourable then perhaps Winifred would not have moved her relationship with Hitler forward as she did and to have become so politically active. Occupied though she was at Wahnfried her work was in the Wagners' interests, not her own. And while the Wagners had toyed with political philosophy for many years, Winifred's political activism was something quite different.

⁸⁸ Miriam Beard, *A History of the Businessman* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1938), 462.

⁸⁹ Erik Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York and London: Norton, 1998), 114.

⁹⁰ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 207.

Pace Erikson, the lifecycle of a nineteenth- and early twentieth-century woman was determined as much by a patriarchal social expectancy as by current affairs. Whether men could ascend the Eriksonian ladder of psychosocial development, as, again, outlined in Chapter 1, more easily than women is therefore a moot point. Certainly for the woman the arena changes; development and environment would be relative, and for a large majority of women that arena would be the home. Winifred's was a very significant home and therefore her unhappy domestic situation would be as influential in her development as the surrounding social climate.

Although Siegfried was initially tolerant of his wife's new political interests, he became concerned about the fervour by which she pursued them and of her involvement with actual Party affairs. Mindful of his father's valedictory belief that all politics and political activity were folly, and anxious about the Festival's image Siegfried feared Winifred was destroying everything he had built up.⁹¹ For Nike Wagner, Winifred's political activities offered her the opportunity to free herself from her guardianship of the aging Wahnfried court,⁹² but his study would go further by suggesting her actions also denoted a need to express individuality and reprisal.

Winifred's consistent assertion that the Hitler known to her was not the Hitler as known by the world has been widely interpreted as meaning she only ever saw the 'good' in Hitler and was incapable of confronting the facts a counter narrative would provide. However, a new translation made for this study of Nike Wagner's *Für uns war er überhaupt nicht der Führer*, reveals that 'Hitler was probably the only one who was good to the ideologically-orientated former orphan'.⁹³ This sheds new light on the dynamic their relationship. In contrast to the Wagner family, Hitler was attentive and courteous to Winifred. He made her feel like a woman – probably the first time in her life this had happened – and, moreover, a woman worthy of respect, something she had rarely experienced. Seen in this light, Winifred becomes a somewhat tragic figure, and, moreover, one with archetypal precedents.

Winifred and Archetypes: Daughter-Adjutant, Phallic Woman, Redemptive Female, and the Mother-Figure.

In *Die Walküre*, Wotan refers to his favourite Valkyrie daughter, Brünnhilde, as his 'wish-maiden', one of a band of females whose duty it was to satisfy the needs of the fallen heroes

⁹¹ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 208.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Nike Wagner, 'Für uns war er überhaupt nicht der Führer', in Saul Friedländer and Jörn Rüsen (eds.), *Richard Wagner im Dritten Reich: Ein Schloss Elmau Symposium* (Munich: Beck, 2000), 179-193 (192). [My translation]

in Valhalla.⁹⁴ By this, Wotan reveals the extent to which his daughter has become the incarnation and representation of his needs and fantasies, accomplishing his internal thoughts ‘as if his unconscious has taken shape in her’.⁹⁵ Essentially, Wagner is articulating his reading of the concept of Will and Representation, but in discussing this symbiosis Nike Wagner reminds us of Thomas Mann’s notion of the daughter-adjutant and, moreover, of its risks:

We are sufficiently well aware of the problems of infantile narcissistic symbiosis within the family circle, and have been ever since Enlightenment called for the independence of the individual and psychoanalysis reinforced its message by demanding maturity. Let us remember Thomas Mann, who coined the phrase ‘daughter-adjutant’ to describe the role of his favourite daughter Erika, who also acted as his secretary, biographer and guardian of his archive; let us recall Anna Freud, interpreter, successor and ‘Antigone’ to her eminent father. Brünnhilde belongs to the same breed of ‘daughter-adjutant’; the military connotations of the term reflect the element of identification with the masculine role which the daughter undertakes for her father’s sake. The masculine associations also suggest the risks involved in such a symbiotic relationship with the father. Daughter-adjutants often lose their own femininity as they renounce their independence, and they frequently end up as childless spinsters, victims of their own devotion. Such women are often depicted as having ‘missed out’: Ibsen and Schnitzler have both created telling depictions of the fate of this type of woman within bourgeois patriarchal society. The crucial issue for the daughter-adjutant is whether she can detach herself from her father. This is generally not possible without conflict, pain, and the danger of lapsing back into the quasi-incestuous relationship.⁹⁶

Nike Wagner is focusing on the hermeneutics of *The Ring*, but the scenario is equally applicable to the dynamics that existed between Richard Wagner and Cosima and, less poetically, between Siegfried and Winifred. Both women functioned not only as amanuenses but as the representation of the masculine will in metaphorical father-daughter relationships. Whereas Cosima found the role of daughter-adjutant liberating – indeed, by her own admission, it supplied her with a reason to live – Winifred appears to have found it the reverse.

The tragedy of Winifred Wagner is that she became the servant of many Wagnerian masters. At Wahnfried, Will and Representation overflowed its philosophical boundaries to encompass familial expectations, for not only did Winifred attend the requirements of her father-husband Siegfried, but also those of his father and family.

Unlike the masculine-centric Oedipus archetype which expresses inter-generational conflict and the eternal power-struggle that exists between old and new authorities, as

⁹⁴ Wishmaiden: See this volume, Chapter 2, 89, fn. 86.

⁹⁵ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 73.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

represented by father and son, there appears to be no corresponding archetype illustrating the dynamic that can exist between father and daughter or the conflicts that might arise between them. This is unsurprising considering the procession of patriarchal structures within which, historically, the archetypes have been identified and articulated. Antigone, Nike Wagner notes, would be the most likely example, for daughter-adjutants, of which Antigone was one, eventually rebel against the father-figure:

She selflessly and touchingly accompanied her blinded father, Oedipus, into exile. However, her subsequent behaviour also makes her an archetype of inter-generational conflict, when she rebels against the inhuman, patriarchal authority of her uncle Creon by deciding to give her brother a proper burial. Wagner, significantly, loved and praised Antigone, and Brünnhilde can be regarded as her spiritual kinswoman [...] Brünnhilde's story, too, can be interpreted in terms of emancipation from the older generation by establishing the moral supremacy of the new.⁹⁷

Nike Wagner is discussing the archetypes in relation to Wagner's *Ring*. Nevertheless, the parallel with Winifred's circumstances is notable, for as Nike Wagner continues:

Generally speaking the psychological remedy for such a situation is for the girl to fall in love with a younger, stronger man – ideally a stranger, who removes her from even the temptation of relapse.⁹⁸

Brünnhilde found this figure in the hero Siegfried, who, in complete contrast to Wotan, offered liberation. With Siegfried, Brünnhilde renounced the child-like qualities which made her subject to the commands of the father's inner will. Crucially, she exchanged filial love for sexual love: 'What shines on me now is Siegfried's star'.⁹⁹ As Brünnhilde so, too, Winifred; but Winifred's Siegfried, unlike his mythological namesake imprisoned his bride.¹⁰⁰ It was to be through her relationships with the younger men – Hugh Walpole, Adolf Hitler, and Heinz Tietjen – that Winifred would find liberty and would assert her individuality, independence, and femininity, unfettered from her own devotion to the moribund father-figure.

While we should be wary of drawing parallels between the real and mythological actors in the various Wagnerian narratives, as regards Winifred's predicament it is worth considering the archetypal activity at play. Brünnhilde, imprisoned by fire, was denied mastery of her own fate. Likewise Winifred by the terms of Siegfried Wagner's will, which, as discussed below, bound his young wife to Wagner and the Wagner family in perpetuity.

⁹⁷ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 75.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁹⁹ Richard Wagner, *Siegfried*, Act Three. Translation from the original German by Ewald Osers and Michael Downes, as quoted in Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 74.

¹⁰⁰ Cosima once remarked to Siegfried that, 'You are more like a daughter to me than a son', indicting the 'supportive daughter' relationship also existed between mother and son. See Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 154.

Heiress to the Wagnerian legacy only if she remained a widow, and to forfeit the inheritance and be reduced to an uncertain and possibly ignominious future should she remarry, Winifred, like Brünnhilde, was imprisoned by accords and threatened with banishment from another Valhalla. It is ironic that the Siegfried who once came to Winifred's rescue, albeit self-interestedly, proved not to be the agent of liberation but of captivity.

In time, Winifred, like Brünnhilde, turned the means of her imprisonment upon her Wagner father and his family. By courting both Nazism and Adolf Hitler she ultimately set upon the Wagners the political idealism with which they had superciliously toyed for so long. The archetypes which Wagner had understood and warned of were unleashed, forever connecting the family name with a dystopian ideology. As the gods perished in a conflagration so too, metaphorically, did the Wagner family name. And as if to reinforce the parallel, we may recall Winifred's behaviour after Siegfried's death when driven to distraction by the duplicity of her married business partner and necessarily covert lover, Heinz Tietjen. Loyally defending him from Nazi officialdom while fully aware of his perfidy – not only as regards other women but also her eldest daughter – Winifred tore down Wahnfried's hallowed décor, gifted its sacrosanct furniture to members of the family and museums and, for the first time since Richard Wagner's death over half a century earlier, completely redecorated:

Farewell, Vallhall's
radiant world!
Fall into dust
you proud castle!
Farewell sumptuous
splendour of gods.¹⁰¹

Clearly, new furnishings and the re-decoration of Wahnfried did not precipitate the destruction of the entire Wagnerian edifice but, following years of disparagement at the hands of her in-laws, and at a time of extreme provocation and frustration, Winifred's action can be interpreted as symbolic of retribution.

Winifred, Hitler, the Mother Figure, and the Redemptive Female

Following the deaths of Siegfried and his mother in 1930, Winifred managed the Wagnerian enterprise with consummate skill. Like Brünnhilde, her training in masculine behaviour set her in good stead. The roles of daughter-adjutant and the embodiment of another's will

¹⁰¹ Richard Wagner, *Siegfried* Act Three. Translation from the original German by Ewald Osers and Michael Downes, as quoted in Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 74.

furnished Winifred with the necessary qualities to withstand the surrounding patriarchal environment in which both she and Cosima had encountered resistance.¹⁰²

Like Cosima, Winifred was an outsider, a foreigner, and a woman. However, in Winifred's case, the role of phallic woman and what Nike Wagner describes as her striking masculine beauty serendipitously corresponded to one of the contemporary *Männerphantasie*: that of the statuesque, Valkyrie-like figure.¹⁰³ This, perhaps, was part of her appeal to Nazism, to male Nazi officials and, particularly, to Adolf Hitler whose mistress, Eva Braun, contrastingly adopted the child-like, dirndl-skirted image of femininity.¹⁰⁴ While historical and current discourses on sexuality and sexual practices appear to agree that subjugation relieves the psychological tension concomitant with authority,¹⁰⁵ it remains a matter of speculation whether for many male party members this particular Valkyrie represented more than a metaphor, for as early as 1926 Goebbels thought Winifred the exemplar of womanhood, 'a woman of fine race. That's how they should all be.'¹⁰⁶

On 30 July 1939, during an interval of *Die Walküre*, Hitler awarded Winifred the Reich Cross of Honour for Mothers of Numerous Progeny in recognition of her rearing 'four genetically sound [children] of German blood'.¹⁰⁷ Arguably, the award represented more than party propaganda. For the Nazis, Winifred corresponded to another image associated with the female: the mother-figure, a role traditionally regarded in German culture as the site of knowledge acquisition with males being seen as the users of that knowledge.¹⁰⁸ This can be said to have been a further dynamic driving the relationship between Winifred and Hitler.

¹⁰² According to psychologists, while our contemporary culture encourages women to undertake, and be successful in, masculine pursuits the basics of the requisite character are formed in infancy and by the age of five. While learned social behaviour may reinforce the character trait, it does not exclusively form it.

¹⁰³ For discussions on Facsim and *Männerphantasie* see, for instance, Klaus Theweleit, Stephen Conway (trans.), *Male Fantasies*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁴ While visiting Berchtesgaden in 1923, Hitler was attracted to Frau Büchner, wife of the proprietor of the Pension Moritz where he was staying. Frau Büchner was six feet tall and a strikingly handsome, Brünnhilde-like woman. Hitler was apparently sexually attracted to her, but the more he tried to attract her attention, striding about, slapping his thigh with his dog-whip, the more she ignored him, thereby inflaming his interest further.

¹⁰⁵ See, for instance, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, F.S.Klaf (trans.), *Psychopatia Sexualis* (New York: Bell, 1896); Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, *The Pelican Freud Library Vol.7* (London: Penguin); P. Califia, *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex* (Pittsburgh, PA: Cleiss Press, 1994); C. Gosselin and G. Wilson, *Sexual Variations: Fetishism, Sadomasochism, and Transvestism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980); Gary W. Taylor and Jane M. Usher, 'Making Sense of S&M', *Sage Journals* Vol.4 Issue 3, 293-314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634600100400302> (24 October 2017).

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Goebbels. Diary entry dated 8 May 1926. See Elke Fröhlich (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph, Teil 1: Aufzeichnungen 1923-1941* (Munich: K.G.Saur, 1997). Also in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 115.

¹⁰⁷ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 304. Magda Goebbels was another high-profile recipient of the award – ironically so as she was to murder her children in the Führerbunker during the last days of the war.

¹⁰⁸ The notion resonates throughout the Wagnerian canon, most conspicuously in the Erda-Wotan consultations of *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried*, and in the Brünnhilde-Siegfried and Kundry-Parsifal relationships. The concept of the female as the site of knowledge acquisition can be traced from the ancient oracles and vestals via the Christian sisterhoods to the archivists and librarians of today.

In 1926, prompted by a biography of Mussolini she was currently reading, Winifred reflected upon the nature of her singular relationship with Hitler and his with women in general:

In their inner life people who are destined for such great things naturally had to become totally solitary – their mission placed them above others and therefore on the outside – a relationship with a female represents the only bridge and contact to connect them with the rest of humanity, and was therefore immeasurably significant to such men – unique in fact for their character and their development, formed and directed almost exclusively in the case of such men by the mother (true of W[olf] and of M[ussolini]) and unconsciously [signifying] for such men their longing for their late mother. I had never previously understood the importance of such a relationship – and I couldn't help thinking of myself and W. – and I did so finding, I believe, the truth of this assertion confirmed.¹⁰⁹

Clearly, Winifred the young woman was in love with Hitler, her senior by eight years. But as the above quotation indicates, by 1926 she had realised her love would be forever unrequited in the routinely heterosexual sense and that her role in the relationship was of other significance. Winifred had not found the father figure she sought in Siegfried, even though the dynamic of their relationship would suggest that she should. Here, the mundanity of human behaviour intervened. The suitability – and fascination – of Hitler lay in his very unattainability.¹¹⁰

From 1926, then, it is apparent that Winifred regarded herself not as the young lover of Hitler but, rather, that of the all-important mother-figure: a cultural conduit and facilitator. In this she gained over her female friends, such as Helena Bechstein and her daughter, who were equally infatuated with the young radical. Wealthy and influential though these people were their names and enterprises were not of comparable cultural magnitude. And it was perhaps because of her standing and mother image that Winifred did not consider herself

¹⁰⁹ Winifred Wagner to Helena Roesener. Letter dated 22 November 1926. As quoted in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 114.

¹¹⁰ There has been much speculation about Hitler's relationships with women and, in particular, with his mother. As a child, he and his siblings had experienced a considerable amount of domestic violence, frequently witnessing their father beat their mother. Many commentators believe those experiences coloured Hitler's attitude towards his father and to women in general. Irrespective of the important position the mother archetype occupies in German cultural tradition, and in cultural tradition overall, in Hitler's case the mother figure seems to have assumed Freudian significance, resulting in one or more of the hetero- and homosexual proclivities with which he has since been credited. At this juncture it is virtually impossible to conduct any conclusive analyses. Many contemporary documents concerning Hitler's psychological and physical states, together with their authors, were eradicated by party officials during Nazism's ascendancy. Moreover, subsequent studies of Hitler conducted by the Allies, such as that undertaken in 1943 by Dr Walter C. Langer for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, the American intelligence service) may have been based upon data and testimony of uncertain reliability, and distorted further by the political agenda surrounding their commissioning. However, Winifred's assessment of Hitler appears sufficiently insightful to be consistent with modern psychology theory.

complicit in the writing of the political doctrine, *Mein Kampf*, but, rather, of facilitating a work corresponding to an important German cultural tradition, the *Bildungsroman*.

While Winifred was to laughingly refute all accusations of authorial complicity, her actions would nevertheless be concordant with intellectual and archetypal ideas. Reverting to her childhood name of Senta, she may have identified with the redemptive female, projecting onto Hitler the tragic figure of the Flying Dutchman, misunderstood and wandering the world alone in search of salvation.¹¹¹ Then again, by clothing, supporting, and instructing Hitler in the ways of etiquette, Winifred corresponded not only to the Hofferian bored wife but also to the German idea of the mother-figure.

Bearing in mind her intrinsic sense of loyalty, these propositions would help explain Winifred's emphatic defence of Hitler and her later, and equally emphatic, denial that she had been mistaken about him. For her, Hitler had represented something more than a political leader and, reciprocal capital aside, for Hitler, she more than an activist, since Wagner and Chamberlain had previously advocated German cultural and political hegemony.

It should be remembered that Winifred joined the Nazi Party in 1926 at Hitler's request. Her membership number was 29,349, entitling her to the Party Gold Badge awarded to anyone whose number was under 100,000. It is a popular misconception that the badge was conferred on her in recognition of any particular service to the Party. Indeed, at no point did Winifred hold any post within the Party, nor did she make any monetary donations to it. Nor, as intendant of the Bayreuth Festival, did she ever join the Reich Cultural Chamber or Reich Theatre Chamber,¹¹² organisations which regulated cultural production within German and German held territories, the membership of which was a legal prerequisite for any artiste or cultural institution wishing to practice. Throughout the National Socialist administration Winifred assiduously maintained the Festival's artistic autonomy, arguing that she alone was sufficiently qualified to oversee the Wagnerian enterprise and to assess the suitability of prospective artists. Contrary to legislation, this selection was to be determined by ability 'and not in accordance with the views of some chamber'.¹¹³ In Festival affairs she remained

¹¹¹ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 209.

¹¹² The Reich Culture Chamber was formed by Joseph Goebbels on the 15 November 1939. Membership of the Chamber, or one of its subsidiaries, was compulsory for those involved with some form of cultural production. To be rejected by the Chamber for whatever reason, be it race or political views, was to be effectively barred from professional practise.

¹¹³ Winifred Wagner. Memorandum for the *Spruchkammer* 1946. Private archive of Wolfgang Wagner. As quoted in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 206.

Spruchkammer: a court-like institution used throughout Germany immediately following WWII for the purposes of denazification.

unchallenged, primarily because everyone knew of her close relationship with the Führer and that she enjoyed his personal protection.

Throughout the 1930s Winifred became ever critical of Party policies, believing many to be misguided and, equally misguidedly, believing her personal relationship with Hitler furnished her with certain privileges. In the years immediately prior to the war, then during it, Party officials became increasingly irritated by Winifred's continual interventions, whether for increased funding or to secure assurances for Jewish artistes. In a further demonstration of industriousness, she dedicated herself to the continuation of the Wagner enterprise, and not only in the interests of art and her children, but also herself, for all the while Hitler became ever more remote.

When, on 4 August 1930, Siegfried Wagner died some four months after his mother, Winifred found herself in a situation paralleling that of Cosima some fifty years earlier when her husband, Richard Wagner, died. Like Cosima, Winifred came under attack from traditionalists who 'sided with the dead Wagner against the widow',¹¹⁴ using their foreignness or lack of experience as a pretext.¹¹⁵ Whereas Richard Wagner had had no suspicion of imminent death and consequently left no written instruction that his widow should assume control of the Festival until their son Siegfried was sufficiently experienced to do so, in Winifred's case the situation was the reverse. Siegfried had left a will, but as regards his widow, its terms and conditions, as indicated above, were stringent.

For some months before his fatal heart attack, Siegfried had experienced shortness of breath and asthmatic spasms for which he did not seek medical advice. These spasms worsened and on 8 March 1929 Winifred accompanied her husband to the offices of Fritz Meyer, the family solicitor, who had been instructed to draw up Siegfried's will. There, she discovered that, contrary to her expectations, Siegfried had not appointed her his successor as intendant of the Bayreuth Festival. Rather, in the event of his death, she was to hold the directorship until such time as their children were sufficiently experienced to assume control and, thereafter, for control to be held by them, jointly. However, while in the event of Siegfried's death Winifred would inherit her husband's entire estate, were she to remarry this would be forfeit. Instead, she would 'be entitled only to the compulsory portion [of that estate] prescribed by law',¹¹⁶ and be required to relinquish her connections with the Festival.

¹¹⁴ Nike Wagner, *The Wagners*, 213.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ For details of Siegfried Wagner's Will and its terms see Wolfgang Wagner, *Acts* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), 312-315.

In 1930, Meyer requested access to the now hospitalised Siegfried in order to advise him to review his directives. Winifred, not wanting her husband to suspect he was dying, refused, thereby condemning herself to the fate decreed by the original will.¹¹⁷ Ostensibly, Siegfried's terms appear excessive, but it may be that Winifred's relationship with Hitler and her passion for his politics alerted Siegfried to the possibility of Nazism appropriating the Wagnerian legacy by marriage. In the event, it would be a more trusted figure that imperilled the Wagner dynasty and, potentially, the composer's enterprise: the aforementioned Heinz Tietjen.

Heinz Tietjen

It is generally supposed that the source of Winifred's often problematic relationship with her offspring was her politics, but even before the outbreak of war there was an Oedipal and Hamlet-like quality about the relationship between Winifred and her elder children. The tensions appear to have originated in Winifred's associations with men other than her children's biological father. As we have seen, the nature of these relationships and their significance lies not in the men themselves or their political ideologies as such but, rather, in what they and Winifred's attraction to them represented. Since Winifred and her children had lost their respective biological fathers at a critical age it could be said that the troubled dynamics of their relationship reflected their mutual lack and pursuit of the father archetype. The arrival into this equation of Heinz Tietjen amplified their problems.¹¹⁸

Tietjen was the Artistic Director of the Berlin State Opera. Born in Tangier, his father was German diplomat and his English mother had been a friend of Cosima Wagner. Wahnfried was therefore not unaware of him. Winifred first met Tietjen in 1929 when she accompanied her husband to Berlin for a performance of Tietjen's acclaimed staging of *Lohengrin*. Impressed with the production and mindful of the age difference between Winifred and himself and of her lack of stage craft, Siegfried recommended Tietjen to his wife as a future director of the Bayreuth Festival. It was helpful that the Berliner's ethos of musical and visual correspondence chimed with that of Richard Wagner, and that both Tietjen

¹¹⁷ This did not, however, prevent Winifred from objecting to her situation, or to that of Wieland who, as eldest child and in accordance with the *Erbhof* laws of the Third Reich, she believed should inherit the entire estate unconditionally and to the exclusion of his siblings. *Reichserbhofgesetz*: A form of land heritage law implemented by the Nazis to preserve the blood-source of the German people (*Das Bauerntum als Blutquelle des deutschen Volkes erhalten*), under which all land, including property and estate, automatically passed from father to eldest son.

¹¹⁸ The relationship between Heinz Tietjen and Winifred's children was complex. In time, Wieland Wagner was to accuse Tietjen of denying him his rightful inheritance as heir to the Wagnerian empire, taking his complaints as far as Hitler who ostensibly supported him.

and his designer of choice, Emil Preetorius, represented what can be described as the moderate Modernist movement in theatrical production for this, Siegfried felt, would be to Bayreuth's advantage, it being necessary for the Festival to modernise in order to survive. And so, in accordance with Siegfried's wishes, both Tietjen and Preetorius were contracted by Bayreuth with Winifred retaining overall administrative control.

Her children were typically disrespectful towards Tietjen. Known to them only through the indistinct photographs of newspaper articles they nick-named him 'orang-utan', doubtless on account of his high forehead and large-framed spectacles.¹¹⁹ Hoping to make a more favourable impression, Tietjen countered by sending them a more flattering photograph for which he received their dutiful thanks but with the qualification that 'one of the children' – whom we now know was Friedelind – 'still maintains that the dogs look better than you'.¹²⁰

Tietjen assisted in the children's education, was appointed their guardian and, in time, his business relationship with their mother developed into something more personal. Mindful of the terms of Siegfried's will, Winifred urged her friends to be discreet. Any suspicion of a romantic liaison 'would really endanger my whole future [...] it's all so complicated and opaque that the slightest external hint could destroy everything'.¹²¹

Tietjen was a consummate, even duplicitous, tactician. For many years as intendant of Berlin and Bayreuth he navigated a carefully charted course in Nazi waters. Suspected by the Nazis of left wing sympathies, he was regarded with suspicion by officialdom. Throughout the early years of the Third Reich Winifred diligently defended him, vainly attempting to establish a concord between him and Hitler. However, 'an insurmountable distrust, if not open dislike, prevailed on both sides [...] and caused me many difficult times and many a hard struggle'.¹²² The perilous professional and personal situation took its toll on Winifred's nerves and her deepening love for Tietjen affected her hitherto rational behaviour.

Tietjen was married but he and his wife had been estranged for many years. A divorce had been agreed upon in principle but was not in process. When not in Bayreuth, Tietjen lived in Berlin with a former girlfriend, Nena, who was ostensibly his housekeeper. Nena suffered from mental ill-health and Tietjen was disinclined to abandon her. Winifred eventually discovered this duplicity, only to encounter a further deceit in that her elder daughter, Friedelind, had replaced Winifred in Tietjen's affections. Coincidental with Winifred's enduring defence of the left-wing Tietjen in the face of Nazi scrutiny, the revelation

¹¹⁹ Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 192; Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 155.

¹²⁰ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 154.

¹²¹ Winifred Wagner to Helena Rosener. Letter dated 2 February 1931. *Ibid.*, 155.

¹²² Winifred Wagner. Statement made on oath in defence of Heinz Tietjen, 4 April 1947. *Ibid.*, 172.

undoubtedly contributed to her stress-related energetic outburst that was the total refurbishment of Wahnfried referred to above, and a manifestation of one of the symptoms associated with father-hunger; a cry for help, as it were. She did not shrink from tackling ‘the sacred rooms of the Master’,¹²³ for it is as if she were symbolically eradicating not only the past but the very institution itself which had demanded so much of her, asserting herself and her individuality after years of servitude to the family, the family to whom he had been wife, mother, nurse, administrative assistant, diplomat, and more besides. Now her own lover and business partner had been perfidious and not only with other women but her own daughter who, ironically, bore a striking resemblance to the man to whose edifice Winifred was bound by the terms of her husband’s will and was struggling to maintain.

Winifred’s clandestine affair with the deceptive Tietjen made her, as she said, ‘a bundle of nerves’.¹²⁴ Trusting the discretion of only a few carefully selected friends, she suffered from ‘moments of terribly painful loneliness’ and sometimes had to ‘cry her head off’ because ‘I miss so much the love, kindness and care that I should have. What are you for? – that’s the question that constantly arises. I’m uselessly frittering away the best years of my life – no amount of willpower and distraction can get around that. I’ll try as hard as I can to be reasonable [...] but it’s hard!!!.’¹²⁵ ‘Reading, writing letters, watching Kasperle theatre etc. etc.: what sort of occupation is that for a woman of my ability? But for the moment there’s nothing for it, and I’ll just have to come to terms with it.’¹²⁶

Realistically speaking, Winifred’s situation would be enough to drive anyone over the edge. Arguably, it drove her nearer to the only man who had ever shown any decency towards her, Adolf Hitler. Yet while Winifred remained devoted to him to the very end of her days, he, too, exploited her.

Winifred: Denazification and a New Bayreuth

The war over, official de-Nazification proceedings against Winifred Wagner commenced on 14 May 1947. The court’s verdict was announced on 2 July. Because of her close association with Hitler the prosecution vainly attempted to have Winifred classified as a Group I (Major Offender). Winifred’s council for defence countered the move by presenting impressive testimonials from the many people, including Jews, whom Winifred had helped throughout the Nazi regime by intervening with officialdom on their behalf and securing exit visas or

¹²³ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 173.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

other forms of protection for those in danger of prosecution or persecution. Moreover, although condemned to death himself, Hitler's personal physician, Karl Brandt, whom Winifred had known principally as an intermediary between herself and the Führer, also provided Winifred's hearing with an eloquent statement in her defence.¹²⁷ And so, because of her 'generous spirit and great humanity' and the fact she had not shown any brutality, the Allies spared Winifred a labour camp sentence and decreed that she be instead considered as belonging to the less severe Group II (Offender or Activist), the prescribed sentence for which was the confiscation of 60 per cent of total assets and a period of 450 days community service.

Ever pragmatic, Winifred thought her punishment just. That handed down by her family, particularly her sons, was, however, more morally stringent and, considering their own war record, arguably hypocritical. The court had also barred Winifred from all further involvement in Festival affairs, initiating a series of actions by Wieland and Wolfgang which can be interpreted as a deflective expression of self-preservation. Virtually disowning her, their retribution, conceivably intended to protect their own futures as much as the Festival's, has proven to be more damaging to Winifred's reputation than anything prescribed by the Allies,¹²⁸ cultivating the current negative reception of her which, doubtless, will continue until such time her estate is placed within the public domain and a more fully informed debate finally becomes possible.

One cannot deny that Winifred did anything less than protect Wagner's legacy and ensure its continuity. Ever since Siegfried's death it had been, as she put it, her mission to do so.¹²⁹ She achieved her aim with characteristic obduracy despite personal risk, for we should not underestimate just how much Friedelind's defection to the Americas at the beginning of WWII jeopardised her family.¹³⁰ The anti-Hitler propaganda Friedelind broadcast throughout

¹²⁷ The de-Nazification Court found Karl Brandt guilty of involvement with the Nazi's human experimentation programmes. He was hanged in Landsberg Prison on 2 June 1948.

¹²⁸ Although Hitler had exempted Winifred's eldest son, Wieland, from all military service due to his cultural significance, he was nevertheless given a position within the Nazi 'research centre' at Bayreuth which had as one of its commandants Wieland's brother-in-law, Verena's husband, SS Officer Bodo Lafferentz. While Wieland's duties were light and not strictly researched-based, here Wieland would have witnessed work connected with the development of the VI flying bomb. Wieland and Wolfgang had both been members of the Hitler Youth. Wolfgang found the movement risible, resigned, and was later wounded while fighting on Germany's Eastern Front. Hitler exempted him from further active service.

¹²⁹ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 506.

¹³⁰ When war broke out in 1939, Friedelind was on holiday at Tribschen with her aunts, Eva and Daniela. In protest to Hitler and the Nazis, Friedelind refused to return to Germany. Abetted by the vociferously anti-Fascist conductor, Arturo Toscanini, Friedelind made her way to New York via Great Britain (where she was held for a time in an internment camp), and Buenos Aires. Prior to a radio broadcast of a performance of *Tannhäuser* from the Metropolitan Opera, New York on 14 February 1942, émigré Erika Mann (daughter of Thomas Mann), interviewed Friedelind about her defection. For a transcript of the interview see Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 345-

the war from the United States did nothing to endear her family to Nazi officials wearying of Winifred's constant stream of demands. Friends of the Führer they may have been, but the Wagners were made fully aware of their expendability when Reich Minister Joseph Goebbels threatened dire consequences if Winifred failed to persuade her daughter to desist in her polemics.

But even then, Nazi objectives achieved, Winifred found herself shunned by both party and its leader, left to continue the Festival as best she could until the course of the war prevented it. The war over, the occupying American troops turned the *Festspielhaus* into a Vaudeville theatre. Her home, Wahnfried, bombed to near total destruction, became the hunting ground of trophy hunters and a backdrop for Allied forces' group photographs, the conditions of her denazification adding to the privations of post-war German life. Denounced by her children and barred from any further activity in Festival matters, Winifred receded into the background of cultural life where, despite their differences and loyal as ever, she always kept her family's interests at heart.

Although Friedelind's actions prove that not all Germans were blind to the reality of the situation or did not warn of the likely consequences, when one thinks through Winifred's story from its beginnings there is nothing unusual, sociologically or psychologically, in a young person adopting the prevailing conventions and beliefs. As Rutkowski has noted within the context of cultural profiling, we need not necessarily be dependent or delayed in the analysis of learned behaviour by anything as complex as Freudian guidelines.¹³¹ Over the years many theorists such as Erich Fromm, George Herbert Mead, Jean Piaget, A. Irving Hallowell, and Stephanie Lawler have all offered ideas which serve to explain the processes of social role learning.¹³² Read in tandem with Durkheim's notion of collective consciousness, and Walter P. Metzger and Gerald Philips and Nancy Metzger's readings of the

346. Despite her mother's appeals, Friedelind continued to issue anti-Nazi propaganda and always maintained the Nazis deployed a network of spies in America with orders to assassinate her.

¹³¹ See Wolfgang Rutkowski, *German 'National Character' and Cultural Profile: Some Thoughts* (Norderstedt: GRIN Verlag, 2013).

¹³² See for instance, Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Enquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001); George Herbert Mead, Charles Morris (ed.), *Mind, Self, and Society: From a Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); George Herbert Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present* (New York: Prometheus Press, 2002); Jean Piaget, Malcolm Pierry, D.E. Berlyne (trans.), *The Psychology of Intelligence* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001); Alfred Irving Hallowell, *Culture and Experience* (Philadelphia.: Pennsylvania University Press, 1955); Stephanie Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008/2014).

‘common experience’,¹³³ their arguments enable us to realise that a grasp of German, and later Nazi, notions of common beliefs, ideas, and moral attitudes – in other words a shared understanding of social norms – is key to understanding Winifred.¹³⁴ The ‘common experience’ is a central and unifying factor in the integration of culture, society, and the functioning individual. It forms the basis upon which judgements and actions are made. And so, ‘subject to emotional and intellectual forces that have their origin in the social and cultural configurations of [...] Germany’,¹³⁵ Winifred was one of the many who Kahler sees as being ‘influenced by the traditions of their people and the climate of their epoch’,¹³⁶ although all this raises the question of how we individuate in relation to our social environment rather than merely reduce to it. Even Syberberg was at pains to point out to his audience that despite all the accusations against her Winifred was not an isolated case. Rather, Syberberg sees his subject as representing ‘the not unintelligent fellow-travellers who existed in their millions, who never harmed anybody, but for some reason fell intellectual prey to the Nazi movement’.¹³⁷

Eva Rieger has proposed that Winifred’s political activism represented a fierce desire for stability following years of rootlessness as an orphan. Perhaps, for on the other hand it may have been the strict discipline she encountered at the orphanage that enabled her to respond so positively to the authoritarian doctrine of Nazism. Then again, she may have even believed her cultural status as a Wagner qualified her to play a part in the shaping of a new nation, a world in which, rather like Chamberlain, she could better fit. Whatever the reason, it was the domestic situation at Wahnfried that ignited and propelled her fascination with Hitler. That a person in so close a relationship with another could be so unaware or blind to their criminality is, for many, incredible. It is surely not possible to separate Hitler the man and Hitler the monster. But as Winifred exclaimed,

Yes, yes, that’s just what I can do! I mean, I regret everything else, I most profoundly regret it. I do regret it. But it makes no difference to my personal relationship with him. The part of him that I know, shall we say, I value as highly today as I ever did. And the Hitler that everybody utterly condemns does not exist in my mind, because

¹³³ See, for instance, Walter P. Metzger, *Academic Freedom in the Age of the University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Gerald M. Philips and Nancy J. Metzger, *Intimate Communications* (Allyn & Baker, 1976).

¹³⁴ See Emile Durkheim, W.D. Halls (trans.), Steven Lukes (ed.), *Divisions of Labour in Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2013).

¹³⁵ Erich Kahler, as quoted in Ruttkowski, *German ‘National Character’ and Cultural Profile*, 2.

¹³⁶ Erich Kahler. *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Interview with Syberberg published in *Neue Rhein Ruhr Zeitung* 12 June 1975. Also quoted in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 494.

that is not how I know him. You see, everything about my relationship to him rests absolutely on a personal basis.¹³⁸

Quite simply, Hitler was one of the very few men in Winifred's life who had ever been good to her.

Unlike, say, Unity and Diana Mitford for whom Nazism was means to exercise a certain narcissism – Unity, victimhood; Diana, arrogance – Winifred was simply dutiful. For her, Nazism was real and tangible. It offered dynamism, the new, freedom from the old-fashioned and, above all, independence. As for Hitler, as she later admitted, 'I am a madly loyal person. If I form an attachment to somebody, I maintain it through thick and thin'.¹³⁹ Punctilious to the last, loyalty motivated her, defined her, but ultimately loyalty betrayed her.

The 1970s saw Winifred and her family reconciled. In 1976, despite the hiatus caused by the release of Syberberg's film, the Wagners rallied for the Festival's centenary and a season that included Patrice Chéreau's iconoclastic and essentially Marxist production of the *Ring*.¹⁴⁰ Along with the majority of critics and audiences that year, the ever-conventional Winifred loathed it.¹⁴¹ Maintaining that contemporary opera productions were anyway beyond her comprehension, Winifred suspected that Chéreau's reading of the tetralogy was part of a left-wing plot devised by agents within the circle of East German directors Wolfgang was currently engaging at Bayreuth.¹⁴² Nevertheless, Winifred found the young, good-looking French director entrancing.¹⁴³ Clearly, she still responded to charismatic men.

¹³⁸ Winifred Wagner to Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, *Confessions of Winifred Wagner* (Dir. Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, 1975), as quoted in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 493.

¹³⁹ Winifred Wagner. *Ibid.*, 493.

¹⁴⁰ Winifred's prediction that people would find Syberberg's film uninteresting proved to be correct. Of the estimated 100 people who attended the premier only 37 remained as the credits rolled, two being Nike Wagner and her cousin, Gottfried, who had severed his relationships with Syberberg beforehand. See Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 494.

¹⁴¹ Even allowing for the adverse reactions with which new operatic productions are generally received, that which greeted Chéreau's 1976 Bayreuth Centenary *Ring* was particularly hostile. Each performance was met with whistling and booing. Pamphlets were published and articles appeared in the press demanding the production be withdrawn and the Festival management replaced. By its fifth and final year, the staging was hailed a masterpiece. Employing a certain amount of nineteenth-century stage craft, Chéreau presented images of industrialisation, capitalism, science, nature, Romanticism, and other contemporary issues in stage pictures that drew inspiration from, amongst others, the symbolist Böcklin (whose painting *The Isle of the Dead* was the model for the Valkyrie rock), Strindberg, and contemporary industrial architecture. The 'Centenary *Ring*', or 'The French *Ring*' as it was variously referred to, was conducted by the musical iconoclast, Pierre Boulez, whose ability to bring a transparency of sound to Wagner's music was much admired by Wieland Wagner. For Foucault, Chéreau had presented the audience with nothing less than the 'imagination of the nineteenth century'. See Michel Foucault, 'The Imagination of the Nineteenth Century', in James D. Faubion (ed.), Robert Hurley et al (trans.), *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology Vol. 2* (London: Allen Lane Penguin Press, 1998), 235-239 (238-239).

¹⁴² Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 500. The early 1970s saw Wolfgang Wagner engage the East German directors Götz Friedrich and Harry Kupfer. Friedrich's Bayreuth production of *Tannhäuser* opened in 1972 and immediately drew criticism for a perceived left-wing perspective, the red linings of the Wartburg nobles' cloaks, for instance, being seen by many as a covert reference to Communism. Friedrich's production of *Lohengrin*

The decade also saw the establishment of the Richard Wagner Foundation. By selling the *Festspielhaus*, Wahnfried, and the greater part of the Wagner archive to the city of Bayreuth for a sum of 12.4 million Deutsch Marks in 1973, Winifred ensured not only the future of the Festival but also her family's financial security. In accordance with the terms of the contract, the civic authorities immediately transferred the estate to the newly-formed Richard Wagner Foundation, and Wahnfried would be restored as the home of the 'National Archive of the Richard Wagner Foundation'. 'This', Winifred hoped, 'may be my last' but, she trusted, 'most important contribution to the preservation of Richard Wagner's legacy'.¹⁴⁴ 'When the Foundation comes into effect' she added, 'I regard myself as a "free woman", released from all obligations – except for those towards the family – and so I'm going to use my few remaining years to do as much travelling as I can'.¹⁴⁵ Finally, Winifred's particular ring of imprisoning fire that had been the terms of Siegfried's will was extinguished.

In 1979 the 82-year old Winifred and her widowed daughter, Verena, spent Christmas at the family's home on Lake Constance. Soon after, weakened by her cancer treatment, Winifred was hospitalised. There, surrounded by her family, on 5 March 1980 she died.

Winifred and Cosima had survived their respective husbands by a considerable number of years – Cosima forty-seven, Winifred, fifty – and both had fought almost single-handedly to maintain the Festival's existence. Given their times, this was a considerable achievement for a woman, irrespective of their chosen methodology. As both mother of a significant cultural dynasty and custodian of the Wagnerian legacy Winifred, like Cosima before her, represented the guardian and conduit of cultural tradition, and held the key to what Derrida has described in another context as the 'institutional passage from the private to the public'.¹⁴⁶ Under Winifred, to recontextualise Carolyn Steedman, the Wagner archive remained a 'place where things begin, where power originates, its workings inextricably bound up with the authority of beginnings and starting points',¹⁴⁷ and reimagined, Bayreuth

followed in 1979, as did Kuypfer's *Der fliegende Holländer*, with Kuypfer's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, appearing in 1988. Wolfgang Wagner's employment of East German directors arguably represented a symbolic reunification of Germany, an ideal realised in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

¹⁴³ Interview with Friedelind Wagner in film documentary, *The Making of Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Dir. Peter Weinberg. 56mins. Included with Richard Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* Bayreuth Festival: Producer Patrice Chéreau; conductor Pierre Boulez; video direction Brian Large (Germany: DVD Deutsche Grammophon 0734057, 2005).

¹⁴⁴ Winifred Wagner, article for the 1972 Bayreuth Festival programme, as quoted in Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 483.

¹⁴⁵ Winifred Wagner to Fritz Kempfler. Letter dated 25 June 1974. *Ibid.*, 484.

¹⁴⁶ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 5.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

had maintained its role as the site of cultural ‘commencement and commandment’,¹⁴⁸ ‘the *now* of whatever kind of power is being exercised, anywhere, in any place or time’.¹⁴⁹

When discussing Winifred we must make a clear distinction between two Bayreuths. Firstly, there was the institution and, secondly, Wahnfried. The former represented the public, the latter the personal aspects of Winifred’s life as a Wagner. Despite her tribulations Winifred relished the public aspect: it offered freedom and opened up her world by providing the tools and the opportunities by which she could pursue her personal development. It was in the personal, in the private world of Wahnfried, that the source of Winifred’s problems originated, shaping her actions.

From her twenty-sixth year onwards [Winifred] was proud of her friendship with [Hitler], and at his side in the 1930s, she experienced the glittering high point of her life. ‘Punishable stupidity’ was the mild verdict of the returning exile Karl Würzburger on her continuing gratitude after 1945 to her dead friend Wolf whose crimes were plain for the whole world to see.¹⁵⁰

Whether any of the foregoing discussion exonerates Winifred’s political actions is a moot point. Punishable stupidity her actions and loyalty may have been,¹⁵¹ but as this chapter has demonstrated, they denote something other and more deeply psychological than has been hitherto acknowledged.

¹⁴⁸ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, 1.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* [Italics as original]

¹⁵⁰ Hamann, *Winifred Wagner*, 506.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

Bayreuth: Beyond Good and Evil

The chief value of history is not that it helps us to understand the present or decipher the future but that it furnishes us clues concerning the manner in which man is affected by his natural and social environment. We cannot experiment with humanity, but history is a record of how man reacted under a variety of conditions.

Eric Hoffer ¹

Erikson maintains that the personal development of an individual is a lifelong process and not exclusively determined by childhood experiences. Every event throughout the lifecycle is of significance and, certainly, the circumstances Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred faced in adulthood were as challenging as those encountered as a child. Extending the work of Oliver Hilmes, Brigitte Hamann, and Brian Magee, this study has explored the extent to which the respective circumstances of our actors were instrumental in the development of their psychodynamics and how, in turn, those psychodynamics were as much central to the formation of post-Wagner Bayreuth as the political ideology with which they all have since become more readily – and conveniently – associated.

Originally, Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred attracted attention by the fact that none was indigenously German, hence the study's initial theory that both their attraction to Wagner and their aggressive German nationalism originated in displacement. This was found not to be entirely the case. Clearly, their outlooks would inevitably have been shaped both by the nature of their adoptive environment and the conversations circulating within it, but all three harboured deeper issues born of childhood and adult adversity and, at least as far as Cosima and Chamberlain are concerned, psychology hosts sufficient theory capable of supporting the proposition that their insistent nationalism and other prejudices represented the means by which to establish identity and a personal sense of worth.

It has been argued here how the actions of these individuals, enmeshed in their particular now, were symptomatic of their own pathway towards individuation. By foregrounding the personal the study has highlighted the fallibility and untidy reality of it all, and not only as regards these particular actors but also Richard Wagner, whose aesthetic was as much a product of his own individuation as it was formative for that of others.

¹ Eric Hoffer, *Working and Thinking on the Waterfront* (Titusville, N.J.: Hopewell, 2009), 33.

The project has necessarily been a hermeneutic, multidisciplinary venture. The research adopted an episteme and methodology which placed equal emphasis on historical events and interpretation, triangulating the most recent scholarship with philosophical, sociological, cultural, and psychoanalytic theory, all of which have been used to interpret rather than to diagnose. Jung and Erikson were appropriate in that, in their respective ways, each considers the individual and the individual's development within a collective context and because the Jungian world in particular is very closely related to that of Wagner. Alternative systems of understanding exist: Freud, Lacan, and Žižek come to mind, but, given the present context, they seemed rather distant.

While the project sought to fill the many gaps present in the familiar picture we have of post-Wagner Bayreuth, some gaps unavoidably remain. Firstly, a considerable amount of material known to exist is not currently within the public domain and, realistically, until such time as the situation is reversed research of the kind undertaken here cannot make any significant advance. Secondly, to date the Wagner Archive at Bayreuth is not fully digitised. Researchers are still required to attend in person, and while this renders the consultation of the archive as much an act of pilgrimage as attending the Festival itself, it puts the resource beyond the means of this particular study for logistical reasons. Thirdly, in order to side-step the complexity of German sensitivities over questions of nationalism etc., only English-language material, or material available in English translation, was employed; a decision justified by the fact that the Anglophone tradition provides a critical distance from such matters and because there is room for an understanding of key actors in Wagnerism currently under-represented in English-language scholarship and Wagner-study in translation. Other, essential translation was undertaken by the present author who takes full responsibility for the results, while acknowledging there could be more material and mileage in consulting German texts, something that would necessitate the services of a translator. Nevertheless, while some gaps remain many may, in a process resembling the restoration of a damaged artwork, be filled by informed conjecture. Speculation with evidence can be enlightening and so, to borrow a phrase from Christoph Berner, this account asserts its findings are as difficult to prove as they are reasonable to assume.²

Over the course of this study we have seen how Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred became transplanted into the alien environment of a nineteenth-century Germany very much in search of its own identity, and how their circumstances determined their relative positions

² Christoph Berner, 'Clara, Robert and Johannes: A Musical Correspondence', in booklet accompanying *Schöne Wiege meiner Leiden* (France: CD, Harmonia Mundi HMG501843 (2004), 17.

to Wagner and his aesthetic: Cosima by the need to remove herself from untenable situations; Winifred on account of being orphaned; and Chamberlain, it would appear, by precise calculation. While the dynamics of each relationship with the composer are distinct, all can be understood, in Jungian terms, as being about individuation. At the time of their initial encounters with Wagner, all three actors were in either the Jungian First or Second stages of life, times when, respectively, the Mother and Father archetypes are considered to be crucial in the development of the individual's ability to relate, operate, and creatively interface with their particular environment. Otherwise lacking the all-important father figure, for them Wagner came to fulfil the role and thus the means by which they could, within the context of their specific circumstances, pursue their personal identities.

The women found a path that reflected their position within a Wagner-saturated universe. They worked through their complexes towards individuation – Cosima, paradoxically but in a manner entirely consistent with her Roman Catholic upbringing, by denying herself in the interest of Wagner, over-identifying with his aesthetic and becoming his willing avatar; Winifred, at a time when the notions of the individual and the empowerment of women were in the ascendant as much as German nationalism, by resistance and rebellion to the personal constraints impressed upon her by the Wagner family. Now mainly remembered for her nationalist fanaticism and key role in the Nazification of Bayreuth during the interwar years, up until then Winifred was never actually in control of her lot in life or, indeed, of its direction. Essentially, this had been determined by others: her English relatives, the staff at her orphanage but principally the Wagner family or their immediate affiliates. Therefore, in contrast to Cosima and Chamberlain, Winifred's later actions can be read as representing an assertion of her individuality and difference by means of revolt.

Chamberlain's relationship with Wagner was at an entirely different register. Quite simply, Chamberlain wanted, and waited for, Wagner to remake him. Undoubtedly all three individuals were drawn to power, albeit on very different grounds and for very different purposes. But whereas their innate sense of duty committed Cosima and Winifred to their respective causes, Chamberlain appears to have been more an opportunist. Having led a somewhat feckless and unfocused life, his entry into the centre of the Wagnerian world appears to have been facilitated by that which Bourdieu was to later define as cultural and symbolic capital. Chamberlain clearly prized Wagner and his artistry, but for him the composer was also the means of activating a rather different kind of personal development.

Chamberlain had, according to his contemporaries, not a single original idea in his head, living, as it were, on the coat-tails of others, accused of plagiarism and tailoring his

work to the vanity of a pseudo-intellectual mass market. That the plagiarised included Wagner makes his acceptance by the composer's family somewhat surprising – that is, until one recognises the forces of cultural and symbolic capital at play in that both Chamberlain and the Wagner family profited by their connection with each other. Chamberlain attached himself to the Wagner institution by marriage and achieved status by association. But aside from his renown as a writer and ideological guru of National Socialism Chamberlain was not universally popular inside an organisation where, until the New Bayreuth of the 1950s, women, not men, were the dominant actors.³ In such a highly charged archetypal system as pre-WWII Bayreuth one wonders how a man could possibly compete with Richard Wagner. Like Nietzsche and Jung, Wagner was fascinated by women and all three had countless female followers, principally because through their works all three gave women a place. In their literally and metaphorically corseted world, women found emancipation and expression through these men. By contrast, males fared less well in the Wagnerian environment. As musical assistants, collaborators, cuckolds, or husbands of powerful Wagner wives they were adjuncts to a bigger scheme of things. Successful author he may have been, but other than his divisive agency within the family, as an honorary Wagner Chamberlain was more a gate than a gatekeeper. He represents a link in a cultural chain, the end of one Wagnerian and political world and the beginning of new ones. According to Nietzsche, success has always been the biggest liar and therefore it can be said of Chamberlain that he was, as Nietzsche might have put it, 'disguised by his creations'.⁴

And such could be said of all three. Enmeshed in their historical moment, they read cultural and nationalist ideologies according to personal need and modified Wagner to fit. They used their relationship to the public to create an internal father image. In turn, as McCutchen might have put it, the public fathered them,⁵ as it had fathered Wagner and was to father Hitler, and in an exchange of Bourdieusean capital both Wagnerian institution and political movement benefitted by association. Yet, by the time Nazism became recognised as a political force its ideological guru, or, more accurately, its own source of cultural and

³ Upon Cosima's 'retirement' in 1907, it was familial expectations that obliged Siegfried to assume stewardship of his father's enterprise. Although he had originally planned to pursue a career in architecture, Siegfried managed the Bayreuth Festival with skill, albeit in accordance with Cosima's vision for the institution. Dying within a few months of his mother, Siegfried was effectively denied the opportunity to formulate and implement his own ideas regarding Bayreuth's artistic and commercial development which had been halted by WWI. The Festival re-opened in 1924 and Siegfried's 1930 production of *Tannhäuser* was critically acclaimed, giving an idea of what he may have achieved had he lived.

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Judith Norman (eds., trans.), *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 165.

⁵ See this volume Chapter 2, 84-85.

symbolic capital, Chamberlain, was dead. Dying whilst the movement was in the ascendant, ultimately death, not Wagner, supplied Chamberlain with the status he had so clearly needed.

And, in the end, need was what it was all about. Whether we regard Wagnerism as a therapeutic space or a Hofferian mass movement, need, and not politics, defines Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred. One recalls George Bernard Shaw's quip that Wagner was a sanatorium for the emotionally deprived. Shaw was referring specifically to the composer's music, but, for our particular actors, the 'sanatorium' was more than an emotional retreat: it facilitated Becoming.

Here we should pause to consider what we are to make of all this; what the preceding discussion tells us about our actors, Wagnerism, and its relationship with other cultural traditions, and, importantly, what contribution this study makes to an already extensive Wagner scholarship. In the Introduction mention was made about opening a discursive space. Here, we can clarify that claim.

Firstly, this study acknowledges that the practice of interpreting historical figures using psychoanalytical theory is, and will undoubtedly remain, contentious. Nevertheless, by adopting a psychoanalytic rather than purely historicised approach this work has offered fresh perspectives on our actors and, by not rehearsing the tropes of nationalism, race, etc. (points which, though important, have been well enough made elsewhere), has been able to cut out the discourse of contrition to provide instead a perspective outside these limits, one that not only challenges current perceptions of our actors but also of how history is shaped. And so this work not only makes an effective contribution to the larger history of the Wagnerian afterlife and Bayreuth as an institution but also to the Anglophone Wagnerian tradition and, thus, to the less ample scholarship of key actors in Wagnerism written in English.

Secondly, by foregrounding the personal, the discussion has offered possible explanations as to how and why these individuals were drawn to Wagner, the extent to which they positioned themselves in the world, and what motivated them. The discussion has shown that, in both the personal and public arenas of their lives, common to all our actors' stories is a profound commitment to a particular transnational creativity. Wagner not only signifies a father figure but also a transnational moment. The Wagner figure comes to represent a hyperbolic model of creativity and changes the meaning of what it is to be a creative artist. Wagner strengthens the archetypes, stands in as it were for the archetypes and, consequently, becomes a force that both attracts and enables. Cosima was drawn to Wagner like a moth to a flame, but in the case of Chamberlain and Winifred the attraction was not only political but driven by desire. Wagner was an autocrat, and there is an autocratic modality. The

relationships our actors had with Wagner were powerful – dysfunctional, but still powerful – and with them, or, perhaps more accurately because of them, an autocratic modality persisted, the conjunction of historical events and their respective personalities shaping the Wagner and the Wagner afterlife we are familiar with today.

Thirdly, this work has brought three key people together for what appears to be the first time. It adds to the corpus of biographical investigations, but whereas these works tend to look at our actors individually this study has brought them together under one roof, as it were, and in such a way to allow us to see them in relation to each other. Moreover, the study reverses the polarity of individual and social, and tries to look at these people not as exemplars but as individuals, and with some level of empathy. And so this work adds richness and depth not only to notions of creativity, of how an autocratic personality plays out in the personal as well as the institution of Bayreuth, but also to our understanding of our actors to such an extent we can never think about these people in the same way again. And in this assertion new issues and questions arise.

Toward the Unknown Region: Implications for Future Research

So far we have looked at these three people separately. While it is necessary to understand why Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred behaved as they did, an outcome of this project is the complexity of the human situation and the assertion that the significance of these individuals extends beyond the personal and lies in what, in an abstract and wider sense, their stories and that of Wagner represent collectively.

In dealing with the intense and archetypal Wagner had a strong psychological impact, and while there is a discernible string of patterns and impulses extending from his life through to today, increasing and decreasing in intensity in recontextualised form, there are new things to bring out. Attention becomes refocused and centres not so much on the individual, their motivations and actions but on the interaction of the individual and society. Wagner and Wagnerism become more than an aesthetic project, our three actors more than curators. Instead, they reveal themselves to be manifestations of psychological phenomena, intrinsic to the human mind and condition that extend beyond the personal into the social. Importantly, we discover there is a fourth character in the story: Bayreuth itself, a place that speaks as much of the human condition as the artworks it annually presents.

It is here that we encounter the metanarrative that builds out from the preceding discussions: what it is to be human. If Wagner supplies the opportunity for individuals to explore their inner selves, then the stories of our actors and of Bayreuth supply the means by

which we can explore the dialectics and our relationship to them. It is a tension which confronts us with ourselves. This study becomes not a retrial but an exploration of the complexity of the human being and, crucially, about what relationship we take to these individuals, the dilemmas they experienced and about what, in a wider sense, they represent. One could dwell on Bandura's notion of reciprocal determinism,⁶ wonder if the agency of an individual may animate a specific situation, and whether an individual can be held solely responsible for what is essentially the product of a collective consciousness within a given social climate. But the argument, here, is more metanarrativistic. It is about the complexities of ethics and the complexities involved in the making of judgements. Here we meet intricate concepts and seemingly irresolvable issues, all of which remain relevant to our society and ourselves, and all of which require careful unpacking as follows.

In Chapter 1 we invoked Foucault's reading of the *Thousand and One Nights* to contextualise the plight of the artist and their continuing relevance within a mutable world.⁷ Foucault's perspective is equally applicable to the repeated reimagining of Wagner and Bayreuth in the interests of their survival and, on a more personal level, with Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred in that, consciously or otherwise, each recognised the institution as giving reason for their respective existences. In Foucauldian terms, the death of the Wagnerian institution, that is to say the completion or cessation of the work, would herald their metaphorical death. In Jungian terms, continuance is a means of Becoming; in maintaining their life purpose the three actors ensured the survival of not only Bayreuth but also, in a psychological sense, themselves, for at Bayreuth was to be found the rediscovered father, even though, in Winifred's case, that was not necessarily Richard Wagner.

Bayreuth, then, is more than a celebration of a composer: it is a tangled compendium of conceits, of personal investments and a socio-cultural emblem around which many continue to gather. Historically presented as a unifying symbol of Germany fostering identity and nationhood, Bayreuth, geographically and institutionally, is a place of symbolic potency which exploited, and continues to exploit, the public sense of heritage. To this end, the venture has endured across the years by adroitly adapting (or by being adroitly adapted) to the needs of the moment; and not only in relation to the dispositions of its curators (whose own

⁶ See Albert Bandura, *Social Development Theory* (Oxford: Prentice Hall, 1977). As defined by Bandura, 'reciprocal determinism' concerns the idea that society and the behaviour of the individual cause each other.

⁷ Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author', in James D. Faubion (ed.), Robert Hurley et al (trans.), *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault Vol.2* (New York: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1998), 205-222.

needs in the scheme of things, as Nike Wagner has made plain, have always been secondary), but also according to the vicissitudes of the nation's fortunes.

For Nike Wagner, 'Bayreuth was – and still is – an exhibition piece of German (spiritual) history. In this regard it does not resemble in the least the untouched *hortus conclusus* that shelters something essential. Bayreuth has never been an ivory tower, but rather an agitated subject and damaged object of historical events.'⁸ Here, we may add that Bayreuth has always been alive to providence in that significant advances in its creativity appear to coincide with crucial moments in Germany's political development. The founding of Bayreuth itself was contemporaneous with the formation of the Second Reich. The Bayreuth of Siegfried Wagner and his adoption of the scenographic theories of Adolphe Appia and Edward Gordon Craig not only reflected the institution's move towards modernism and modernity but also the symbolic rebirth of Germany following WWI, as did the Bayreuth of Winifred Wagner and its association with German Nationalism. Similarly, Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner's radical, Hellenocentric reimagining of the institution as New Bayreuth. Rising from the ashes of a dystopian ideology, in the 1950s Wagner's enterprise became once more a symbol of Germany's regeneration, one that was as much a cultural flagship for the Adenauer economic miracle of post- WWII Germany as it had been for Hitler's Third Reich, and as indelibly associated with those events as Wolfgang Wagner's engagement of East German producers in the 1970s and 1980s is in heralding the fall of the Berlin Wall and the re-unification of Germany. And through it all, the Wagners remain a form of cultural royalty. It is notable that a republic should need such a thing: a head of state, as it were, which floats above the political now but is not entirely detached from it. But then again, every society needs a celebrity.

While Bayreuth is currently regarded as a lucrative commercial enterprise reflecting Germany's healthy EUtopian economy, there is nevertheless a critical perception that during the final years of Wolfgang Wagner's command and under the Festival's most recent intendants, Katharina Wagner and Eva Wagner-Pasquier, the institution has become artistically superficial and complacent. While this inertia may be attributable to Germany's domestic stability, Uwe Eric Laufenberg's 2016 'Islamic' *Parsifal* arguably reflects the political and ethical issues regarding mass immigration and Islamic extremism currently facing both Germany and the European Union, demonstrating once more that Bayreuth is, always has been, and will mostly likely remain, an index of Germany's now. Factor in the

⁸ Nike Wagner, 'Bayreuth...?', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol.78, No.1 (Spring, 1994), 159-170 (164).

psychologies of Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred, or of their successors – Wieland Wagner, his brother Wolfgang, or Katherina Wagner and Eva Wagner-Pasquier – and it would be interesting to see how Erikson’s hypothesis that the individual and society are inextricably interwoven travels across a transmutable space of socio-cultural significance such as Bayreuth.

Ambivalence lies at the heart of Wagner and Bayreuth,⁹ and it is this quality as much as any artistic significance which ensures the prolongation of both composer and institution and makes them so useful. This is why it would be both imprecise and inaccurate to say that Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred misappropriated Wagner. Rather, they were written into the ambivalence and, however problematic we may find these people, before we admonish them we should pause to consider what, for us, they have come to represent in a wider, ethical sense.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche chides philosophers for their historical and uncritical acceptance of extant moral principles and for basing their metaphysical schemes upon the assumption that the good person is necessarily the opposite of the evil person. Instead, Nietzsche suggests, both are a different manifestation of the same basic instincts that happen to find a more immediate expression through what is conventionally defined as the evil person. Nietzsche envisions a place ‘beyond good and evil’ in that he rejects the idea of a universal morality, that is to say one that is applicable to all human beings and cultures, in order to foreground the precarious situation of the modern individual in a mutable world, the irrational forces that drive humans to make the choices they do, and the perspectival nature of understanding and knowledge.

Whether Nietzsche would have thought differently had he lived to witness the Holocaust is a moot point. Certainly, as his *Wotan* essay demonstrates, Jung revised his attitudes regarding morality following the escalation of National Socialism.¹⁰ Yet Nietzsche’s hypothesis has a long history projecting forward into our own times. Alain Badiou has picked up on Nietzsche’s theme and worked with it, suggesting it may be sufficiently robust to provide some traction as regards understanding the wider set of human conditions and the vicissitudes of history. And so at this point we could easily enter into a discussion about normative, descriptive, and other forms of moral theory. However, here, we are not obliged to

⁹ See, for instance, John Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Frederic Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994); Alain Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner* (London and New York: Verso, 2010); Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner* (New York: Verso, 1981).

¹⁰ Carl Gustav Jung, *Wotan: An Essay* (Sweden: Cymophane Publishing, 2001).

adopt a moralistic stance: the political and moral issues surrounding all things Wagner have been rehearsed *ad infinitum* elsewhere, albeit according to the status quo so anathematic to Nietzsche and Badiou. Sufficient material has been written about the dark things. Instead, it is time to consider what those dark things actually are. We will not progress by othering Cosima, Chamberlain, Winifred, or even Wagner as being evil. Rather than re-dredging exhausted Wagnerian ground, future research should try to interpret this tendency and ask what, in a wider sense, we are actually dealing with, psychologically and ethically, when we discuss Wagner and allow Cosima, Chamberlain, Winifred, and indeed, Bayreuth, to teach us what the dark things are about. Post-Holocaust scholars such as Theodor Adorno may have situated Wagner as a proto-Nazi, an evangelist of the unthinkable as it were, but a reading of Nietzsche and Badiou should alert us to the prospect that what we are addressing when we talk of Wagner or, indeed, of those who curated his afterlife, is far more complex.¹¹

If Nietzsche and Badiou are to be believed and there is no absolute code of ethics since all discursive statements are imprinted with historical and cultural contexts that limit the scope of what is considered as ethical to the particular instance in question, and therefore what is universally human is everywhere and always rooted in principals that are particular to place and moment, then the Wagner scholar is presented with two moral imperatives. Firstly, it is necessary to think what is considered to be unthinkable in order to understand it, and secondly, in order to understand it, it is therefore necessary to bracket out, or rather suspend judgement in order to explore it. We should not use the unthinkable as a means of absolving ourselves of our scholarly responsibilities, or use the premise that something is unthinkable as an excuse to avoid it because, according to Nietzsche and Badiou, ethics is simply a means of protection, an intellectual justification for the orthodox.¹² Instead, future research needs to press beyond the social consensus or, to paraphrase Nietzsche, to go beyond good and evil, however uncomfortable it may be, in order to understand the issues actually at play.

And, here, those issues and the historical events surrounding them are more complicated than we think however we look at them epistemologically. If Shoshana Felman is correct and the twentieth century was the century of trauma,¹³ then essentially what we have been dealing with throughout this discussion is what is to exist in society, collectively as well

¹¹ See Friedrich Nietzsche, Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (eds., trans.), *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Alain Badiou, Peter Hallward (trans.), *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London and New York: Verso, 2001); Alain Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner* (London and New York: Verso, 2010).

¹² Badiou, *Ethics*, xiii.

¹³ Shoshana Felman, *Juridicial Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

as individually, and how the individuals under consideration were the result of their own connectivity in their lives. Here we head towards a land beyond good and evil, a place in which we not only confront ourselves, question how we judge and upon what bases we make our judgements but also why human beings need organisations as represented here by Wagnerism, Bayreuth, and, indeed, Nazism. In this space we should pause to consider the prospect that we may have made Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred the Jungian Shadow.

It was Wagner's belief that society was harmful for art and that art had the capacity to release in the individual all that had to be repressed for the sake of society. Many found, and continue to find, this idea problematic as Art would therefore become de-civilising.¹⁴ However, as Magee maintains, Wagner's art gives expression to phenomena within us which remain unconscious only because they are repressed.¹⁵ In this respect, Wagner can be considered as a precursor of Freud and Jung in that he recognised the psychic importance and function of myths, dreams, and symbols as alternative languages of unconscious feeling.¹⁶ Wagner allows the individual to explore their inner self and the depth of their own personalities,¹⁷ to sweep away inhibitions and become whole within a private world of subliminal knowledge.

Conventionally, this notion is discussed within the context of the erotic,¹⁸ but considering Wagner's concern for the human condition we should also consider it in terms of the spiritual or, more accurately, the repression of those impulses which are commonly bundled together under the slippery term 'spirituality'. It may be difficult to uncouple the concept from the erotic-orientated Freud, but if we rethink the idea of self-exploration within a spiritual context how, then, would Wagner provide for the individual in pursuit of belonging, in discovering their inner self within a world in flux? Perhaps we can answer the question, and better appreciate the dilemmas confronting our actors, their contemporaries – and ourselves – by drawing parallels with some of the issues facing our own society. It is but a short step from the nationalist zeal and transitional confusions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to those of today.

¹⁴ Bryan Magee, *Aspects of Wagner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*.

According to Tadgh O’Keefe,¹⁹ the pursuit of identity originates in rupture, in moments of social stress and fracture.²⁰ Essentially, Wagner offered a foundational ontology in an increasingly anti-foundationally-orientated society; an alternative space of interaction at a time when God was being all but assassinated in an increasingly acquisitive society. And as Nietzsche enquired of us, what is to be done when it is we, whom he calls the murderers of all murderers, who have assassinated God?²¹ Scruton may be correct when he suggests that in *Götterdämmerung* Wagner leads us into the twilight of the modern psyche when he shows that as the star of religion declines so the lust for desecration increases. In other words, the Wagnerian twilight of the gods signifies the end of a sense of the spiritual and, therefore, of everything that makes us human.²²

If, then, we dispense with the concept of the metaphysical higher order we should ask ourselves to what or whom we turn to in times of inner need. This was a dilemma facing nineteenth-century Western Europe and, arguably, one confronting our current society. The answer to the question, as history has demonstrated, is that individuals and groups within certain historical contexts tend to gravitate to that which offers hope. Whether it be Wagnerism, German National Socialism, nationalism in general, or one of the many fundamentalist organisations presently existing, it appears that in times of anxiety the human being, individually or collectively, seeks out a spiritual centre.

Habermas reminds us that while enlightenment thinkers had the extravagant idea that the arts and sciences would promote the understanding of the world, of the self and even the happiness of human beings, the dystopian events of the early twentieth century have shattered that optimism.²³ Emerging from the wreckage of WWII and the consequent intensifying dissonance between received ontological and epistemological frameworks, current Western European ontology is based upon a system which, possibly in an attempt to preclude the authoritarianism that has come to define the war, privileges the individual and the individual perspective. Adverse economic conditions as much as politics ignited the conflict, but because

¹⁹ Tadgh O’Keefe, ‘Landscape and Memory: Historiography, Theory, Methodology’, in Niamh Moore and Yvonne Whelan (eds.), *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 3-18 (6-7).

²⁰ Ibid. See also Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, II: Traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, III: The Symbols* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Pierre Nora (ed.), *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Memoire, I: The State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: ‘God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?’*

²² Roger Scruton, *The Ring of Truth: The Wisdom of Wagner’s Ring of the Nibelung* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), 221.

²³ Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Nén-Habib, ‘Modernity versus Postmodernity’, *New German Critique*, No.22 (Winter 1981), 3-14 (9).

of the inauspicious alignment of both we now tend to resist the idea of an overarching authority to which we are expected to acquiesce. Adorno famously defied Wagner's artistic phantasmagoria but it may be the idea of illusion as a whole he, and we, are actually resisting. Illusion is not specific to Wagner. As Hoffer has shown, illusion is within the province of any compact corporate structure with the capacity to mobilise and motivate at times of societal uncertainty, capitalising on circumstance, and many individuals and groups appear happy to comply for in return they are offered assurance and a faith in the future.

Precedents exist, as history can all too clearly supply, and invariably they emerge at times of confused, overlapping identities. Identity crises have become very much a part of our culture and, in many ways, Wagnerism and Nazism pre-echo a lot of modern confusions and splits in that essentially they were the products of grievance.²⁴

Essentially, Wagnerism and Nazism represented an increased need to assert identity. They are a demonstration of what can happen when people feel threatened. Modern parallels exist, as many of today's fundamentalist organisations prove. These organisations, like Nazism and Wagnerism, grow out of local and global crises and, like Nazism and Wagnerism offer a rallying point for traumatised individuals at a time of change. This is not to equate Nazism or Wagnerism with, say, Islamic fundamentalism in any way other than in representing a mass movement. The point in question is that they are not the results of a single issue but of an array of coinciding and interconnecting social and economic problems, and are linked by their claims to offer the future and a means by which to express identity. They are, or were, totems around which to gather. In the case of Bayreuth, the institution becomes a different kind of totem that resonates with its times.

In today's increasingly materially-minded society the death of grand narratives is part of our condition. One could therefore suggest that modern fundamentalist organisations are attempting to reinstate a god, in other words trying to re-establish a metanarrative in a world where the desire for the divine has been replaced by the desire for the object. It was a condition recognised by Wagner and Gobineau and, it can be said, is one to which the increasing claims to entitlement, alienation, disaffection, and disenfranchisement that we hear today are attributable.²⁵ Here, opinions regarding the ideals, objectives, and methodologies of

²⁴ This raises some fundamental questions – about how we can describe the psychology of a mass movement like German National Socialism; about whether this can be done without closer reference to the material historical forces; and whether all ugly ideologies can be essentially attributed to the same thing.

²⁵ For discussions on materialism, neo-liberalism, postmodernist philosophy, political correctness, and their effect upon contemporary society see Steve Smith, 'Singing our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11', *International Relations Theory Today*.
http://www.faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/gmbonham/ISA_Presidential_Address.doc (6 January 2012); Paul Johnson,

these mass movements are incidental, as, in a way, are the many theoretical models one could invoke in order to rationalise the particulars of their specific emergences, simply because these are dependent upon perspectives. We need to go beyond this point. Hoffer has analysed the mechanics and appeal of mass movements in terms of historical contexts and the susceptibility of certain personality types, but we should consider the proposition there may be a wider set of psychological issues at play, for irrespective of culture and period there appears to be an enduring need for a spiritual centre.

While the peoples of Western nations are increasingly being encouraged by their respective governments to identify areas requiring social improvement and to accept a high degree of liability for the rise of localised ethnic fundamentalism, it can be said that the root of the malaise lies not exclusively in social injustice but equally in the increasing secularism (or more precisely, the deliberate lessening in visibleness of locally traditional systems of faith),²⁶ which Governments feel impelled to encourage in an attempt to eradicate the cultural divide.²⁷ Ultimately, it will be as much global warming as social identity theory that will enforce intergroup contact and interfaith dialogue, but as regards both individual and collective wellbeing we should not underestimate the psychosocial and neurophysiological necessity of spiritually-orientated signs and symbols. In Western Europe we now occupy a space vacated by conventional religion and, arguably, it is the assassination of God, that is to say, of the concept of an authoritative higher order to which we are all morally accountable,

Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties (New York: Harper Collins, 1993); Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning* (London: Penguin, 2009); Jonah Goldberg, *The Tyranny of Clichés: How Liberals Cheat in the War of Ideas* (London: Penguin, 2013).

²⁶ Here, the term secularism and its derivatives are inadequate. Secularism is commonly used to denote the separation of public and political affairs from religious decrees or, simply, the division of religion and politics. As defined by George Oakes, secularism denotes a social order separate from, but not denying the existence of, religious belief; a system which privileges knowledge founded in, and relating to, this life which conduces to the welfare of this life. Yet, here, the terms secular, secularism, secularity, and laicism seem inadequate when endeavouring to address cultural diversity and the issues that arise in consequence. The terms religion and secular are Western concepts, formed within the Christian environment. However, cultures exist that either do not have equivalent notions or words, or that make little or no conceptual distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Consequently, the notions of 'religious' and 'nonreligious' are rendered meaningless since there are beliefs systems which accommodate spiritual things other than deities. Other issues also need to be taken into account such as the concept of secularised religion, the way in which religion and the spiritual have developed, their cultural sources, specificity, and the discourses that articulate them. For a comprehensive discussion on these matters, see Phil Zuckerman, Luke Galen, and Frank Pasquale, *The Nonreligious: Understanding Secular People and Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). See also Joanna Burch-Brown and William Baker, 'Religion and Reducing Prejudice', *Sage Journals* (March 2016). <http://journals.sagepub.com> (12 April 2017).

²⁷ This move manifests itself in the removal of Christian symbols from customs associated with Christian festivals. For instance, at Christmas and Easter, images of the Nativity and Crucifixion are replaced by images of winter, teddy bears, chocolate, and alcohol in an environment where gift-giving is no longer driven by the symbolic act of giving but by market forces and desire.

that has caused much contemporary discontent and negativity. There is no longer a quest for the Holy Grail, or in other words a pursuit for the unattainable yet aspirational which represents a higher state of being. Today, inequality, whatever its form, is invariably defined within a material and economic, not spiritual, context. In a world where status is defined by the possession of material goods there appears to be no effective framework by which to encourage individual and collective spiritually-derived aspiration and stability.

For this reason social enquiry should not be the exclusive province of the social sciences. Rather, as Lawler has hinted, sociology should embrace psychology, and not only because the social is born of the interaction of minds but, echoing Jung, because the wiring of the human mind, irrespective of class or culture, may require for the sake of its individual and collective wellbeing the existence, or presumed existence, of a higher authority or system of accountability other than that of its own. In other words something, be it metaphysical, theological, or political that will shoulder all responsibility. The need may represent the penalty humanity pays for intellectual evolution. Certainly, it is intrinsic to the 'out of nature' process symbolised in Christian theology by the expulsion from Eden.

So it would appear that in those cultures where a strong religion has existed, such as those to be found within the Christian and Islamic worlds, the human psyche requires, and will intuitively seek at times of anxiety, a God-figure in whatever forms that figure assumes according to moment; a figure, such as the father-figure, that whether contextualised biologically, theologically, or as the Weberian charismatic leader, is capable of providing continuity of tradition, the delineation of socio-behavioural parameters, protection and, thus, identity.

Issues of identity will unavoidably arise in multicultural societies or when people are ethnically of one people while politically of, or domiciled within, that of another; especially so if the respective codes and ideologies are in some way incompatible. Allegiance will always be problematic while the dilemma as to which one belongs continues to be a source of concern. As history demonstrates, it will be to that system which offers the greater sense of belonging – the accountability to a higher order – that the identity-challenged will naturally gravitate. And the greater the sense of insecurity the greater will be the likelihood of its articulation in fundamentalist terms. The individual's conscious renunciation to a higher order, however that order may present itself, allows for the divestment of all personal responsibility and guilt for the outcomes their actions initiate. Such was the appeal of Wagner, of Wagnerism and, later, of the Bayreuth Circle to whose politicised reading of the Wagnerian paradigm the Nazis gravitated. Clearly, Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred had their own

issues, but their stories demonstrate what can happen given certain conditions. We should also note that in contrast to National Socialism, modern theologically-driven examples, or examples where, as in the case of Islam the state and the theology are one, correspond more to Wagnerism in that their ideologies defy a geographically-defined space. While a reading of Lipsitz and Appadurai would define these bodies as providing non-physical spheres of interaction these organisations are not unique. Like Wagnerism and Nazism, they are part of a pattern, of a piece with of the human condition.

To address these issues, future research into Wagner, Wagnerism, and their appeal may need to invoke discourses beyond those employed by the present study. It may be here that Freud, Lacan, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Žižek offer some traction since all attend in some way to the social and psychological matters we are now touching upon. Lacan's reading of pre-Oedipal mother and the mirror image concept both encapsulate the plights of Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred. As regards Wagnerism and Bayreuth, Freud's name-of-the-father, Lacan's big Other and the symbolic order, Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, and Žižek's reading of God as the big Other all offer useful rationales in that they essentially deal with the various manifestations, functions, and disseminations of authority.

As to the apparent need for spiritual centres and the tendency to gravitate towards them, it seems the actual needs of the human mind differ little across the years, being only recontextualised. This pursuit may originate somewhere deeper in our evolutionary story and, hence, there may be some medical justification in the ideas presented here. We have seen how Trippett correlates Wagner's theory of the intuitive response with contemporary enquiry into what we now call neuro- and acoustical physics. Elsewhere, Kelly Bulkeley has suggested that cognitive neuroscience (CN) and religion may be of mutual epistemological assistance.²⁸ Since Bulkely and Trippett's ideas appear to chime, in an aesthetic context, with the more recent work of, say, Arne Dietrich,²⁹ it would be interesting to consider the work of all three in relation to the spiritual and sociological aspects of the Wagnerian aesthetic, particularly if, as suggested here, that aesthetic was itself both product and manifestation of certain psychological processes.

²⁸ Kelly Bulkeley, *The Wondering Brain: Thinking About Religion With and Beyond Cognitive Neuroscience* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).

²⁹ See Arne Dietrich, 'The Cognitive Neuroscience of Creativity', *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*, Dec 2004 11 (6), *ProQuest Psychology Journals*, 1011-1026.

An End and a Beginning

The endings of Wagner's stage works do not represent the conclusion of a narrative but the beginning of another. Such is the case here. There can be no conclusion to this particular discussion, at least not in the sense of arriving at a final deduction. Instead the narrative continues in the sense of offering suggestions for future research. This is likely to be challenging. A lot of darkness has been projected onto Wagner. When we get into the Nazi period that darkness becomes so visible we cannot see around or beyond it. If, as Nietzsche proposes, there is no such thing as moral phenomena, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena,³⁰ and that different societies and, indeed, times, are 'likely to have different moralities and therefore different conceptions of good and evil',³¹ then if we are to understand not only Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred, but ourselves we must go beyond the idea of good and evil.

The actuality of life is that it is a procession of physically and psychologically challenging episodes. Although damaged, Cosima, Chamberlain, and Winifred are not other. We, like them, are enmeshed in the discourse that surrounds us. Like them, we have our own obsessions and aspirations, our own unspoken secrets and are as disguised by our work as they were by theirs. Therefore, to write responsibly on Wagner, Wagnerism, his institution, and its curators one requires more than data and theory alone. In order to comprehend their essences one also needs to factor in the variable of the human condition, its inherent psychological issues, and the paradoxes and contradictions of human behaviour. In closing we should recall Solomon Asch and Stanley Milgram in that, irrespective of our sense of ethics, none of us can be entirely certain of our actions if, in some way or other, our personal interests were in the balance.³² This is what it is to be human. We may have indeed made Cosima Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Winifred Wagner carry the projections of the Shadow for us all.

³⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 108

³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* (Createspace, 2015), 84.

³² See Solomon Asch: The Asch Paradigm; Stanley Milgram: The Milgram Experiment.

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