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DIE SIEGER AND *DIE WIBELUNGEN*:

How *Parsifal* Is the Fifth Opera of Wagner's *Ring*

In the summer of 1990, when I was in San Francisco for the *Ring*, I had the chance to talk with a particular opera conductor, and I asked him what he thought of *Parsifal*. He replied, "*Parsifal* is the one I don't have a handle on."

Parsifal is, and always has been, the one many people "don't have a handle on." It is the most thematically complex, intriguing, perplexing and mystifying of any single opera ever written. It remains mysterious, however, only when we ignore two very important but often overlooked works by Wagner, his 1856 sketch for the opera *Die Sieger* (The Victors), and his 1849 essay *The Wibelungs: World-History as told through Myth*. These two works, along with a letter Wagner wrote to Mathilde Wesendonck in August of 1860, allow us to see *Parsifal* in its true light: as the literal fifth opera of the *Ring*.

The idea, by itself, of *Parsifal* being the fifth opera of the *Ring* is not new. In 1950, for example, composer and teacher Leon Stein wrote in his book *The Racial Thinking of Richard Wagner*, "As for *Parsifal*, we shall see that, far from being a consistent Christian expression it is actually rooted in Paganism, and is in truth *the fifth opera of the Ring*."[1] This statement comes from the chapter "Wagner and Christianity," and is made in the context of Wagner's rejection of organized Christianity and subsequent embracing of Teutonic myth and German culture. Stein believes that *Parsifal* continues in the Germanic pagan tradition of the *Ring* rather than in the tradition of orthodox Christianity, and is in this way the fifth opera of the *Ring*. Stein does not develop the connection between the *Ring* and *Parsifal* beyond this particular context.

Bernard Förster, Robert Gutman and Franz Winkler are other authors who have connected *Parsifal* to the *Ring*. But no one has yet understood the full connection of these great works, or what it is at the deepest levels that makes *Parsifal* the actual and literal closing opera of the cycle. *Parsifal* is indeed the fifth opera of the *Ring*, but for reasons that go much deeper than those put forth by Leon Stein. The connection between the *Ring* and *Parsifal* is far more profound than just a tradition of Paganism versus Christianity. What Stein has left out is the all-important subject of Buddhism, Wagner's acceptance of its central teachings, and his incorporation of those teachings into the *Ring* and *Parsifal*.

Much has been written over these past two decades concerning Wagner and Buddhism, but I have yet to read any article or book that truly shows an understanding of the extent to which Wagner both understood Buddhism and incorporated that understanding into his later music dramas. What I have read so far on the subject tends to deal only with the interpretation of certain outward symbols through an often shallow and at times even incorrect knowledge of Buddhism and its teachings. In this article I would like to use my experience of nine years as a Buddhist monk to explain how profound the connection between the *Ring* and *Parsifal* really is.

Wagner read as many books on Buddhism as were available to him in European translations during his lifetime. He believed very seriously in reincarnation, what he himself termed metempsychosis and what Buddhism most often terms rebirth. Wagner also had an intuitive understanding of the moral and spiritual purpose of rebirth, that what we do and learn in one lifetime carries over into the next. In the course of this article I will show that the true connection between the *Ring* and *Parsifal* lies in what Buddhism understands as the process of karma and rebirth, that the four main characters of the *Ring* are reborn in *Parsifal*, completing in *Parsifal* the spiritual journey actually begun in the *Ring*. I will explain how and why Alberich is reborn as Klingsor, Wotan is reborn as Amfortas, Brünnhilde is reborn as Kundry, and Siegfried is reborn as Parsifal. I will show how a connection between the *Ring* and *Parsifal* was in fact embryonic in Wagner's own ideas going all the way back to his *Wibelungen* essay of 1849. I will also show that the idea of characters from one opera being reborn as characters in an-

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Paul Schofield's seminal article on Parsifal *and the* Ring *absorbs most of this issue. Its fascinating ideas come from Schofield's new book which is to be published soon. Secondly we offer a most interesting review of a biography of Winifred Wagner. Concluding the issue is another of the Ogden photographs of Cosima's 1892* Tannhäuser: *we found it amusing.*

—Book Review

WINIFRED WAGNER: A BIOGRAPHY

Winifred Wagner: A Life at the Heart of Hitler's Bayreuth, by Brigitte Hamann, translated by Alan Bance. 506 pp. of main text, plus 48 pp. of notes, plus index, 20 illustrations. Published by Granta Publications, 2/3 Hanover Yard, Noel Road, London NI 8BE, tel: 0207 7049 776. Price in UK: £30. (First published in Germany as *Winifred Wagner oder Hitler's Bayreuth,* Piper Verlag GmbH, München, 2002). Available from Amazon.com in paperback.

Hyperbole and exaggeration in books are usually in inverse proportion to the amount of intrinsic worth and interest of their subject-matter, and they are employed in the hope of making that subject-matter more interesting than it really is, and therefore more saleable. Both are impossible in Brigitte Hamann's superb biography of Winifred Wagner, for the simple reason that Winifred's life was (in the opening words of the author's preface) "the kind of story you only find in novels". Perhaps that should be modified to read "some novels", for assuredly there are many novels that for one reason or another are far less interesting than either Brigitte Hamann's subject, or her account of it.

Winifred Wagner, born Winifred Williams, was undoubtedly the most dynamic 'first lady' of Bayreuth after Cosima, and was possessed of tremendous vitality, determination, honesty, and courage, as well as personal charm and charisma. She was born in 1897 in Hastings, Sussex, of a Welsh father and (presumably) English mother, but after becoming orphaned at the age of two, Winifred retained no memory of her parents, not even by picture or photograph; and her subsequent, but mercifully brief, sojourn at an orphanage in East Grinstead (described as "a terrifying place") probably laid the foundation of her later strength of character, indomitable will, energy, discipline, capacity for hard work, and the determination to survive in adverse circumstances. She was, in fact, a perfect exemplar of Novalis' dictum "Character is fate", and the Norn who spun the web of Winifred's fate would seem to have loved her well, hence her extraordinary good fortune. This began with her adoption, at the age of nine, by elderly distant relatives, the Klindworths, who lived in Berlin. But it must have been more than mere good fortune that Karl Klindworth (1830–1916), himself no blood-relation to the orphaned Winifred, was a superb musician, pianist, piano teacher, an outstanding former pupil of Liszt, Wagner enthusiast, and the founder of the Karl Klindworth Music Conservatory in Berlin; not only this, but he was responsible for the vocal scores (i.e. voice-parts with orchestral part transcribed for piano) then being prepared by the publishing house of Schott (subsequently reissued by Schirmer Inc., New York), and which are still very much in use today. Not surprisingly, therefore, Winifred's adoption by the Klindworth family occasioned her first acquaintance with the music of Wagner, especially *Der fliegende Holländer,* with which Karl Klindworth was busy at the time; and, equally unsurprisingly, Winifred, an impressionable young girl of ten, was soon fascinated by the story of Senta and her fate. And, once again, it was more than good fortune that the Klindworths were friends of Cosima Wagner, and that Cosima invited them to the dress-rehearsals for the Bayreuth Festival of 1914, which included Siegfried Wagner's new production of *Der fliegende Holländer.* Of course, Winifred, by then aged 17, was allowed to accompany her foster-father to Bayreuth, and of course Winifred was soon introduced to Siegfried, then festival director and conductor of his new Dutchman production. And, of course, Winifred fell in love at first sight with Siegfried Wagner (as did Senta with the Dutchman), married him just over one year later (on 22nd September, 1915), and bore him four children, one of whom (Wolfgang) remains festival director to this day.

That these facts, each one slotting into its predestined place like clockwork, were not a succession of coincidences, or a random sequence of events, seems to me undeniable (and, incidentally, the same applies to events in the life of Richard Wagner himself):

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other opera for the purpose of spiritual progress and eventual enlightenment comes directly from Wagner himself. I believe that with the *Ring* and *Parsifal* as one work, Wagner achieved the greatest of all artistic feats: the portrayal in symbolic form of the entire panorama of existence, from the original Fall to final enlightenment and salvation. This journey begins when Wotan breaks the branch of the World Ash-tree and Alberich steals the gold of the Rhine, thus separating Spear and Grail. (The relationship of the Rhinegold to the Holy Grail will be explained shortly.) The journey culminates in the reunification of the Spear and Grail in the Grail Castle of Monsalvat, the Mount of Salvation.

Karma, Rebirth, and *Die Sieger*

Buddhism teaches that each of us born into this world has inherited past karma from our own individual karmic stream. (An explanation of Wagner's symbolic representation of the origin of this stream is given in the next section.) This karmic stream contains karma, both meritorius and non-meritorius, accumulated from many lives in many realms, and beings will continue to be born from this stream until all the karma in that particular stream is converted and cleansed. Karma in this context refers to the consequence of action, as all actions, words and thoughts have consequence. Upon cleansing all the karma in one's own stream, one attains Nirvana, the state of enlightenment free from all rebirth in any impermanent realm. This has been explained by the famous Buddhist monk Narada Thera in the following passage:

> As long as one is bound up by craving or attachment, one accumulates fresh Karmic activities which must materialize in one form or other in the eternal cycle of birth and death. When all forms of craving are eradicated, reproductive Karmic forces cease to operate, and one attains Nirvana, escaping the cycle of birth and death.[2]

According to Buddhism, one may attain Nirvana in this lifetime, while still in our human body. At the time of death, we leave the physical body and enter Parinirvana, that state of eternal meditation forever at one with the Infinite. While this is certainly beyond verbal description, Buddhism does point to it with such terms as "Emancipation," "highest bliss," and "the eternally shining light."

The extent to which Wagner understood the basics of karma and rebirth is evident from his 1856 sketch of *Die Sieger*. This understanding was quite remarkable for a person of his time and place who did not have access to a genuine Buddhist teacher, but only to the books that were appearing in European language translations throughout the nineteenth century. Schopenhauer, for example, who also had access to many of these books, did not properly understand either karma or rebirth, and his philosophy and conclusions suffered accordingly. The subject of Schopenhauer and Buddhism is too complex to include in an article of this length, but I mention it to show how remarkable Wagner's understanding was for that time.

The years 1854–57 were among the most creatively intense and fruitful of Wagner's whole career. During this time he not only continued on the composition of the *Ring*, finishing *Die Walküre* and starting on *Siegfried*, but he also conceived *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Sieger*, and *Parsifal*. Wagner began sketching *Tristan* at the end of 1854, after finishing Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. He wrote the sketch for *Die Sieger* in May of 1856, and the first sketch for *Parsifal* in 1857. Even though this latter sketch has been lost, we know that he was working simultaneously on all these projects. It is very important to understand the import of the *Ring*, *Tristan*, *Die Sieger* and *Parsifal* all developing in his mind at the same time.

By 1856, Wagner had read enough about Buddhism to know that the Buddha had ordained women, and that his chief attendant, Ananda, had been instrumental in convincing the Buddha to found the order of female monks, called Bhikkhunis in Pali. (Bhikkhu is the Pali word for a male monk.) *Die Sieger* means The Victors, and the term "victor" is used here in the specific Buddhist context referring to those who have been victorious in their quest for enlightenment. Wagner knew the history of the founding of the order of Bhikkhunis, but for dramatic purposes he created a fictional character named Prakriti who becomes the first Bhikkhuni. I will summarize Wagner's sketch in my own words. The verbatim translation can be found in the works of William Ashton Ellis.

Prakriti is a maiden born into the clan of Chandalas, who at the time of the Buddha had a very low status in Indian society. The Buddha and Ananda visit Prakriti's city, and Prakriti falls in love with Ananda. Knowing that he is a celibate monk, and therefore unavailable for marriage, Prakriti goes to the Buddha to ask him what she can do. The Buddha tells her that in her previous life she was the daughter of an arrogant Brahmin. The Chandala king of that time, remembering a previous life of his own where he had been a Brahmin, asked the arrogant Brahmin for his daughter's hand in marriage for his son. The daughter haughtily refused, mocking the sorrow of the Chandala king's son. The Buddha tells Prakriti that because she behaved this way in her former life, she was now born Chandala herself, feeling the pangs of unrequited love so as to know the pain she had caused and mocked before. The Buddha then tells her that she can cleanse her former karma and find full redemption by entering his monastic order. Because she has asked him for union with Ananda, the Buddha offers this to her in the context of monastic training. He tells her that she must share the monks' vow of chastity. At first she "sinks down horrified and sobbing" when she real-

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izes what it is she has to renounce, but in the end she says yes to the Buddha and is admitted into the order of monks. Ananda welcomes her as a sister, and the order of Bhikkhunis is founded.

Even though Wagner never completed the full opera of *Die Sieger* (he didn't need to because of *Parsifal*), we can see the extent to which Wagner had understood the karmic connection between previous and future lives. He incorporated this understanding into the *Ring* and *Parsifal.*

The *Ring* and *Parsifal* As One Work

The separation of the Spear and Grail does not happen just prior to the start of *Parsifal.* The separation comes at the start of the *Ring.*

Even though Wagner originally meant the first notes of *Das Rheingold* to portray the beginning of the world emerging out of primordial darkness, the actual events of the story that becomes the *Ring* begin prior to Alberich's appearance on the Rhine in Scene I. As we are told by the First Norn in the Prelude of *Götterdämmerung*, everything starts with Wotan breaking a branch from the World Ash-tree, and fashioning that branch into a spear which he uses to rule the world.

At the World Ash-tree
once I wove,
when fair and green
there grew from its branches
verdant and shady leaves.
Those cooling shadows
sheltered a spring;
wisdom's voice
I heard in its waves;
I sang my holy song.
A valiant god
came to drink at the spring;
and the price he had to pay
was the loss of an eye.
From the World Ash-tree
mighty Wotan broke a branch;
and his spear was shaped
from that branch he tore from the tree.
As year succeeded year,
the wound slowly weakened the tree;
dry, leafless, and barren —
death seized on the tree;
whispering waters
then failed in the spring:
grief and sorrow
stole through my song.[3]

Prior to Wotan's appearance, the World Ash-tree bloomed "fair and green," and the spring of wisdom ran with water. The three Norns wove the rope of fate, and even though Wagner does not specify this, we can use our imaginations to see also the three Rhine Daughters representing the elemental forces of nature, and of course Erda, the Earth-mother, asleep and dreaming the world.

Into this world of women and original innocence comes a male sky god bent on conquest and power. He commits an act of violence against nature, and uses this act to give himself power over the world. The Wheel of Karma has started to turn.

We can see several important symbols here that relate to Grail mythology. First are the symbols of Dolorous Stroke and Waste Land. In the traditional Grail legends, it is the Dolorous Stroke, a blow with a sword or spear against the Grail King, that causes the land to become waste. In the *Ring* the blow is to the World Ash-tree, but the effect is the same. Wotan breaks a branch off the tree, and immediately it begins to wither and die, and the spring to dry up. The tree becomes leafless and barren, the waters cease to flow. The Dolorous Stroke has plunged the world into a waste land, both in terms of nature and in terms of spiritual understanding, for it is the spring of wisdom that has run dry. Wagner even refers to the "wound" slowly weakening the tree. As we shall see, Amfortas receives a reciprocal wound by a blow from the branch of that very tree.

We also see a version of Genesis, a portrayal in symbolic form of the original Fall. Through an act of greed and violence the original "Garden of Eden" has been spoiled, raped, and the world falls into a cycle of fear, greed, hate, violence, despair, and eventual destruction. The world is in need of a Savior, a great hero who will perform the act of atonement for the original sin, who will redeem the world from its present state of chaos, and who will restore the world, both naturally and spiritually, to its original pure state.

In Buddhist terms this scene symbolizes the way in which the Wheel of Karma was first set in motion. While the Buddha never tried to explain an "ultimate beginning," and even said that such a beginning, at least in intellectual terms, was not fathomable, Buddhism does teach that we can find the beginning of our own individual karmic stream. That is, we can find out what started the ball rolling in our own particular case. In seeing what it was that started the turning of the Wheel of Karma, we can see how to stop it, and how to turn instead the Wheel of the Dharma, the Wheel of Truth. By ceasing to turn the Wheel of Karma and by turning instead the Wheel of the Dharma, we can cleanse the karma from our own karmic stream and find the way to enlightenment. By finding the way to enlightenment for ourselves, we help the whole world find that way. In the context of Buddhism, the great savior and hero who found the way was the Buddha. In Christianity this hero/savior was Christ. In Wagner this hero/redeemer is Siegfried reborn as Parsifal.

Wotan's act of violence and theft against the World Ash-tree is only one half of the separation of Spear and Grail. The other half is performed by Alberich.

Wotan and Alberich are reflections of each other. Alberich is *Schwarz-Alberich*, "black-Alberich," and Wotan is *Licht-Alberich*, or "light-Alberich."[4] Here the "black" refers to the earth, Alberich the dwarf coming from the darkness of caverns and mists beneath the earth. The "light" refers to the sky and sun, where Wotan dwells in the realm of the gods. Both Wotan and Alberich desire world power. Both, in their own ways, renounce love in order to acquire that power. And both commit an act of

violence and theft against nature, fashioning the stolen objects of nature into objects of power. With Wotan this object is the broken branch of the Ash tree formed into a spear. With Alberich it is the theft of the Rhinegold and the fashioning of this gold into a ring. At the end of Scene 1 of *Das Rheingold* both the Spear and the Grail have been torn away from their original places in nature, which is the original Temple. Spear and Grail have thus been separated, and the world has become a Waste Land. Redemption will not be found until the Spear and Grail are once again united, and the karma of the thefts and violence finally converted and cleansed.

At this point it can rightfully be asked, "What is the basis for equating the Rhinegold with the Holy Grail?" The answer, as always, is in Wagner himself.

Wagner completed the scoring of *Lohengrin* in April of 1848. He then wrote a prose piece called *The Nibelungen Myth as Sketch for a Drama*, from which he fashioned the original libretto to *Siegfrieds Tod* (Siegfried's Death). The latter was finished in time for Wagner to read it to a group of friends that December. Early in 1849 he also wrote the essay *The Wibelungs: World-History as told through Myth.* This essay of approximately 13,000 words is Wagner's attempt to put his research into Teutonic myth and German history together with his own ideas concerning Friedrich Barbarossa, about whom he had planned an opera in 1846. Friedrich was Holy Roman Emperor from 1152–1190, as well as King of Germany during those same years and King of Italy from 1155–1190. It was the Italians who gave him the nickname "Barbarossa," or "Redbeard." Friedrich died while leading an army to the Holy Land during the Third Crusade. He did not die in combat, but rather by trying to swim across a river. Failing, he drowned.

Many of the historical conclusions that Wagner draws in the *Wibelungen* essay can never be taken seriously as history, and much of what he says about Friedrich is more myth than historical fact. But if we examine the essay closely we can, amidst the convoluted writing and unsupportable ideas about Friedrich and world-rule, find moments of genuine insight into Wagner's original inspiration and design concerning the *Ring* and the Holy Grail. In 1849 Wagner was by no means clear in his mind about all of these concepts, and a great deal was still undeveloped. But we can see in his thoughts of 1849 embryonic ideas that over the next thirty-four years fully bloomed into what we have now as the *Ring* and *Parsifal.* And a number of these ideas lead us directly to our interpretation of the *Ring* and *Parsifal* as one work.

Because Wagner's prose in the *Wibelungen* essay is often confused and scattered, I will simplify and sum up the relevant ideas and put them into my own words, rather than try to explain these ideas by using Wagner's own quotations. The translation I have used is that by William Ashton Ellis published in 1898.

Wagner believed that during the era of the Great Deluge, the cradle of civilization was in the highest mountains of India, what we know as the Himalayas. He believed that this area was the ancestral seat of all religions, and that this civilization was ruled by a line of great priest-kings. He held that when the waters receded, a great migration over the rest of the earth began. As time went on, and civilization spread throughout the world, the peoples of various races and cultures retained in their collective consciousness a memory of this original home, and believed that there had been an original great ruler, the "Stem-father," who was descended from the gods. These people believed that their own race and culture were descended from this divine king.

Wagner believed that people migrating from this original kingdom eventually reached Europe, and that the German branch of this migration retained its connection to the original race through the lineage of the Franks. Wagner used the word *Wibelingen*, or *Wibelungen*, to identify the connection of the Frankish Merovingians to the original peoples from Asia. Along with this connection, in Wagner's mind, came the right to rule. Wagner further believed that the myths and sagas of a particular culture retained not only a memory of ancient events, but also the spiritual heritage of that culture, and that a particular people could trace its origin through its myths and sagas.

Through a very long and complex analysis, with which we do not have to concern ourselves, Wagner places Friedrich Barbarossa in line with the original rulers from India, in terms of both blood lineage and spiritual succession. Wagner then speaks of a legend which told of a distant land in "farthest India" where a divine Priest-King ruled through the power of a "wonder-working relic called the Holy Grail." According to this legend, the Keeper of the Grail had once brought this relic to the West, but when the West proved unworthy of this spiritual light, the Keeper returned with the Grail to the mountains of India. According to Wagner, Barbarossa was on his way to India in search of this Grail when he died in the river after defeating the Saracens.

Historically, Barbarossa was on his way to the Holy Land with an army in 1190. Barbarossa did indeed win an initial confrontation with the Saracens, but he had by no means reached Jerusalem, and he died trying to swim across a river rather than travel over a steep mountain pass. He was not on his way to India. Wagner was dealing far more with myth than with history, and we do not need to concern ourselves with Barbarossa. Wagner himself abandoned his Barbarossa project, and completed instead what turned out to be the *Ring* and *Parsifal.* But there is a portion of the *Wibelungen* essay that does concern us. This is the relationship between the Nibelungen Hoard and the Holy Grail.

The word "Nibelung" is problematic even in the sagas. There is no firm consistency as to what the word refers to when it is mentioned in connection to the Hoard. In the Norse *Volsunga Saga*, Nibelung is the son of Hogni, who is the brother of Gunnar. Hogni becomes Hagen in the German *Nibelungenlied,* and

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Gunnar becomes Gunther. Nibelung as a character plays no great part other than to help Gudrun slay Atli. Gudrun becomes Kriemhilde in the *Nibelungenlied*, and Gutrune in Wagner. Atli refers to the historical Attila, who is Etzel in the German epic.

In the *Nibelungenlied* there are two Nibelung princes who rule the Nibelungs, a people consisting of humans, dwarfs, and giants. These two princes are Schilbung and Nibelung. Sifrid (Siegfried) kills both of them, thus inheriting their jewels, gold, magic cloak, and a great sword called Balmung, all of which together are known as the Nibelung treasure. (In this work Sifrid kills a dragon, but it is not connected with the gold.) Alberich is a dwarf who was in the service of the two princes, but with their (and his) defeat at the hands of Sifrid, he becomes Sifrid's servant and is put in charge of guarding the treasure. Later in the work there is further confusion when Sifrid marries into the Burgundian clan. Since he had conquered the Nibelungs, he was referred to as "hero of the Nibelungs." The Burgundians are now sometimes referred to as Nibelungs, and the two names become, at times, interchangeable.

The word "nibelung" itself comes from *nebel*, which meant mist or fog. There is also the word *Niflheim*, which in the Teutonic mythology of Creation referred to an area of shadows and clouds north of the great void. This area existed before the creation of earth and sky. Niflheim later became associated with the goddess Hel and the land of the dead.

In the *Wibelungen* essay, Wagner states what he believes to be the true meaning of the word Nibelung, and how it is connected to the Hoard. He takes the word "Niflheim" and combines it with "Nebel" or "Nibel," and gets "Nibelheim," the "Home of Haze." He equates this word with the subterranean realm of Night-spirits, which he terms *Schwarzalben*. Opposed to these are the Spirits of Light, *Lichtalben*, who dwell in the heavens. The "Nibelungen" are the children of Night and Death, who burrow into the earth and live in its dark caverns and crevices. They find the ore deep in the earth, and through their skills as smiths they fashion this ore into weapons and trinkets, creating the Nibelungen Hoard.

This is, however, just the physical level of the term and idea of the Hoard. There are also mythological and spiritual levels.

Wagner believed that what he called the "Nibelungen-myth" rose out of man's first attempts to perceive and comprehend the forces of nature around him. The most important natural phenomenon was the rising of the sun. The sun gave warmth, sight, and life to nature. Nightfall brought cold, blindness, and subsequent fear. Thus the earliest and simplest form of the myth was the celebration of the rising of the sun and the conquest of the forces of darkness. In this context, Siegfried is the Sun god, or God of Light, who slays the monster (or dragon) of Chaotic Night. But just as the sun sets each day, and night conquers day, so must the Sun god himself be slain, and thus his victory also carries with it the necessity and inevitability of defeat and death.

As the myth evolves, the dragon becomes the representation of the forces of darkness as well as a guardian of the treasures of the earth. Thus Siegfried killing the dragon is the God of Light who vanquishes the Night, and who also inherits the treasure the dragon was guarding, the Nibelungen Hoard. This gives him, for a time, great powers. But all the while the heir of the dragon plots to win back the Hoard, just as night must again conquer day. Thus there is a "curse" on the gold, for whoever slays the dragon and for a while possesses the Hoard must also die because he *is* the possessor of that Hoard. The cycle of day and night becomes a symbol of the constant and ever-renewing cycle of birth and death.

Wagner then takes the symbolism a step further and attempts to reconcile the confusion in the sagas as to the identification of the "Nibelungs." According to Wagner's idea, the Hoard becomes the source of all worldly might, and there develops the inevitable struggle among the races and kingdoms of the earth to possess this Hoard and its attendant power. Whoever owns the treasure and rules by the power of the Hoard at any one time becomes known as a Nibelung.

At this stage the Hoard represents not only earthly power, but also the right *to* this power. In what Wagner called "the ascent of the ideal content of the Hoard into the Holy Grail," this Hoard over time lost more and more of its material worth, and in the process yielded to a higher spiritual content. As this happened, the struggle to possess and control the Hoard gave way to the quest for the Holy Grail, and the Grail became what Wagner called "the Ideal representative of the Nibelungen-Hoard." This "ascent" is a transfiguration of consciousness whereby the initial desire for worldly wealth and power becomes transformed into desire for spiritual knowledge and enlightenment. This is precisely the transformation we see from the *Ring* to *Parsifal*. The main characters of the *Ring*, all in their own ways, are involved with acquiring fame, wealth, power, and the means to assert their own wills over the events that are happening. In *Parsifal*, this energy and effort is channeled away from selfish pursuit and into spiritual quest. Wagner believed that this transfiguration had happened in the character of Friedrich Barbarossa, and that when he died he was on his way to India to reclaim the lost relic. Wagner ends his essay referring to the legend that Barbarossa sits to this day asleep in the interior of the

Paul Schofield

Paul Schofield was active for many years in WSNC, having served as a Director as well as Editor of LEITMOTIVE. In the fall of 1991 he entered the Zen Buddhist monastery of Shasta Abbey in Mount Shasta California. He was ordained in 1992 by the late Jiyu Kennett Roshi. In 2001 he made the decision to leave the monastery in order to write about Buddhism and Wagner. He continues to have contact with the monks at Shasta Abbey.

Kyffhäuser hills in Thuringia, awaiting the time when his people will need him most, and he will awaken and lead them to victory against their enemies. "There in the Kyffhäuser he sits, the old 'Redbeard Friedrich', all around him the treasures of the Nibelungen, by his side the sharp sword that one-time slew the dreaded Dragon."

It is interesting to note that an exact parallel legend exists about King Arthur. According to this legend, Arthur right now is asleep in a cave underneath Glastonbury Tor, awaiting the day when the people of Britain will need him most, and he will awaken and ride out with his knights to protect them from their impending disaster. Mythologically, if not historically, Barbarossa has become equated with both Siegfried and King Arthur.

Robert Gutman, in his Introduction to William Morris' translation of the *Volsunga Saga*, has summed all of this up very well:

> *The Wibelungs* identifies Frederick Barbarossa as the reborn sun god, Siegfried; the Nibelungen hoard mysteriously ascends, is transmuted in the process of time into the Holy Grail, and becomes the object of the emperor's last journey to the East. Despite the turgid prose, a reader with knowledge of the completed cycle of Wagner's masterworks is thrilled to perceive in this essay what the struggling young genius could himself only dimly apprehend, the unparalleled path that lay before him from *Rhinegold* to *Parsifal*, a road that was to lead from the theft of the treasure in the river's depths to the reunion of spear and grail in the temple of Monsalvat.[5]

Gutman is not alone in his perception of the connection between the *Ring* and *Parsifal*. There is an entry in Cosima's diaries that is very interesting concerning Wagner's own sense of this connection. Cosima writes on April 29, 1879, three days after the orchestral sketch for *Parsifal* had been completed:

> Over coffee he said to me that in fact Siegfried ought to have turned into Parsifal and redeemed Wotan, he should have come upon Wotan (instead of Amfortas) in the course of his wanderings — but there was no antecedent for it, and so it would have to remain as it was.[6]

The great irony of Wagner's statement, in light of our current interpretation, is that Siegfried *does* "turn into" Parsifal, and he *does* come upon and redeem Wotan, Wotan reborn as Amfortas.

The idea of characters from one opera reincarnating as characters in another opera originated with Wagner himself. In a letter to Mathilde Wesendonck from August of 1860 Wagner wrote:

> Only a profound acceptance of the doctrine of metempsychosis has been able to console me by revealing the point at which all things finally converge at the same level of redemption, after the various individual existences — which run alongside each other in time — have come together in a meaningful way outside time. According to the beautiful Buddhist doctrine, the spotless purity of Lohengrin is easily explicable in terms of his being the continuation of Parzifal — who was the first to strive towards purity. Elsa, similarly, would reach the level of Lohengrin through being reborn. Thus my plan for the "Victors" struck me as being the concluding section of Lohengrin. Here "Savitri" (Elsa) entirely reaches the level of "Ananda". In this way, all the terrible tragedy of life would be attributable to our dislocation in time and space: but since time and space are merely *our* way of perceiving things, but otherwise have no reality, even the greatest tragic pain must be explicable to those who are truly clear-sighted as no more than an individual error: I believe it is so! And, in all truth, it is a question simply of what is pure and noble, something which, in itself, is painless.[7]

Although Lohengrin cannot be the literal reincarnation of Parsifal, since Parsifal is Lohengrin's father, Wagner very clearly sees Savitri as a rebirth of Elsa. (Wagner is here not worried about the chronological problem of a character from the Middle Ages being reborn as a character in the Buddha's time. He is thinking spiritually. He had, by this time, renamed Prakriti Savitri.) Additionally, Wagner had not originally conceived *Die Sieger* as a conclusion to *Lohengrin*, but after a number of years came to see this as a genuine possibility. A character from one opera is reborn as a character in another opera for the purpose of finding salvation, the error of action in the first opera being expiated in the action of the second. While Wagner never completed *Die Sieger*, the idea he put forth in this letter to Mathilde *did* come to fruition, and on a much larger scale, in the *Ring* and *Parsifal*.

There is a great "karmic cleansing" at the end of the *Ring*, with both fire and water, the two Biblical symbols of baptism. One of the meanings of the word "baptize" is to cleanse, or purify. However, in spite of the conflagration at the end of *Götterdämmerung*, not all the karma of the *Ring* is cleansed at the end, and thus further rebirth is needed in order to carry this out. Buddhism teaches that not all of one's karma that needs rebirth is necessarily negative. Meritorious karma, what is called *kusala* karma, also takes rebirth along with the negative, or *akusala* karma. The merit of positive deeds influences one's rebirth just as much as the negative deeds. Thus, even though there is un-cleansed karma left over when one dies that needs rebirth, each successive rebirth *can* work towards enlightenment because of the merit gained in each lifetime from spiritual training, genuine contrition for one's negative deeds, and/or wisdom gained at the end of one's life.

This is what happens in the *Ring* and *Parsifal*. Through a combination of karma still needing to be cleansed *and* merit gained for the reasons just de-

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scribed, the four main characters of the *Ring* are reborn in the opera *Parsifal*. Alberich is reborn as Klingsor, Wotan is reborn as Amfortas, Brünnhilde is reborn as Kundry, and Siegfried is reborn as Parsifal. On a subtle level, Siegmund and Sieglinde are reborn as Gamuret and Herzeleide, though the latter do not actually appear in the drama.

According to the Buddhist teaching of karma and rebirth, there is no inherently individual, unchanging entity or "soul" that simply transmigrates from one life to the next, maintaining its individual identity from one existence to another. This is what Buddhism terms *anatta*, or "no separate soul." Rather, the un-cleansed reproductive karma left over at the end of one life will condition rebirth in another life, in whatever form and circumstance offer the best opportunity for the cleansing of that karma. What continues from one life to the next is not an individual personality, but rather what Narada Thera has called "a continuity of a particular life-flux."[8] Among the aspects of this "life-flux" can be particular karmic tendencies, habitual patterns of thought and behavior, which can continue from one life to the next until the karma associated with them is cleansed. Zen Buddhism sometimes uses the term *koan* to describe these patterns. The term *koan* is complex, and can be used in different ways in Zen, but I will use it here in relation to the characters of the *Ring* and *Parsifal* in regards to their habitual thoughts and actions, thoughts and actions which carry over from the *Ring* into *Parsifal*. One's own "personal koan" can be described not only as a manifestation of these karmic tendencies, but also as the core spiritual question which motivates a person's search in this lifetime, the distilled essence of what has yet to be worked through and taken care of. This is the meaning of the term *koan* that I will use in the course of the following discussion.[9]

When karma conditions rebirth in human form, the new person is not completely the same as the previous person, nor is this new person completely different. The new person has inherited karma from the previous person, but it is very important to realize that the new person is not the same as the old one in all aspects. This is particularly true if a good deal of merit was gained in the previous life. The new person will also inherit this merit, not just the un-cleansed karma. In this regard the new person has the opportunity to correct the errors of the past, thus cleansing the old karma. If this is not done, the new person runs the risk of falling back into the old tendencies and habits, thus perpetuating and compounding the old karma rather than cleansing it. If old karma is compounded, its cleansing often becomes more difficult and painful in the future.

With this in mind we can look at the rebirths of the characters mentioned above.

Alberich – Klingsor

Alberich's personal koan is greed. At the start of *Das Rheingold* that greed takes the form of sexual lust. Alberich lusts for the Rhine Daughters, and is spurned by them. Frustrated in his pursuit of sexual satisfaction, he learns that if he renounces love he can acquire the gold of the Rhine which will give him power over the world. His greed for sex then turns into greed for wealth and power, and he forswears love in return for the Rhinegold.

Alberich, like all the other characters of the *Ring*, gains insight and wisdom in the course of the events of the *Ring* and the final conflagration. He is therefore reborn as Klingsor. Klingsor has inherited the koan of greed, as this koan was not resolved or converted by any action that Alberich took. But because of the insight gained, Klingsor has enough spiritual inclination to ask for admittance into the Order of the Grail. Celibacy is a requirement for entrance into the Brotherhood, and because Klingsor has not yet learned to control sexual desire, he fails in his attempt to become a Grail knight. He retires from Monsalvat to a valley where he tries to overcome this desire and attachment, but is unable to do so. He then castrates himself, hoping that this will gain him entrance into the Order, but Titurel, at that time the Grail King, scorns Klingsor and his hideous act, and refuses to admit him. Klingsor is furious with rage at the refusal, and vows to capture the Grail by force. He uses his castration to gain magic arts, and by these arts he creates a castle and pleasure garden where he ensnares the knights of the Grail through the very temptation he himself was unable to overcome: lust.

We have here a mirror of Alberich. Alberich too had been rebuffed, and in return renounced love for power and wealth. Klingsor is rebuffed, and his self-castration is another form of renouncing love. Attempting to capture the Grail through the use of magic power mirrors Alberich's attempt to gain power over the world through the Rhinegold. Klingsor has made a genuine attempt to convert his karma, but through weakness and anger he gives up too soon, reverting back to the actions of his previous life and thus continuing and compounding the error rather than converting and cleansing it. Because of this he does not achieve salvation in this lifetime. Klingsor will have to be born again, achieving in some future life the salvation the others attain at the end of *Parsifal*.

Wotan – Amfortas

Wotan's personal koan is ambition fired by hubris, excessive pride that leads to error in judgment and error in action. Wotan is the king of the gods, and he attempts to rule the world with order and justice, at least as far as he can conceive of them. He breaks a branch off the World Ash-tree and fashions a spear of power. Into the shaft of this spear he carves the laws by which he will rule, showing on one hand that he really does want to rule justly and not as a tyrant. But because his actions remain controlled by ambition and hubris, he becomes an unwitting mirror to Alberich. Wotan too renounces love in

his way, seeking in its stead power over the world. As he says to Brünnhilde in Act II of *Die Walküre*,

When youth's delightful
pleasures had waned,
I longed in my heart for power;
and driven by impetuous desires,
I won myself the world.[10]

In the course of the events of the *Ring*, Wotan perceives the error of all he has done, and by renouncing any further attempt at recapturing the ring he performs his first act of contrition. The merit of this contrition allows him to be reborn as Amfortas, with a chance to dedicate his life to spiritual quest. Amfortas inherits the koan of ambition and hubris, which was not entirely converted at the end of the *Ring*, as Wotan's renunciation alone was not enough to cleanse all the karma of his actions. More positive action is needed in order to cleanse that karma completely, and thus the reproductive karma left over at Wotan's death conditions rebirth in the person of Amfortas. The spear of Amfortas is not only the spear of Longinus, the Roman centurion who pierced Jesus' side while he hung on the cross (Wagner's interpretation), it is also the spear of Wotan, a spear that had been misused for power. Amfortas, as Grail Guardian, is given the opportunity to use this spear for selfless action in service of the Grail, and by doing so to cleanse the old karma completely. However, albeit with best of intentions, he uses the spear for personal ambition, trying to conquer Klingsor in knightly combat out of pride and a desire for glory. As Gurnemanz tells the squires in Act I, "All too daring Amfortas, thus armed, / who could have prevented you / from vanquishing the sorcerer?"[11] This is the reason that he loses the spear, and suffers the horrid wound which cannot be healed until the coming of the redeemer. Like Klingsor who had reverted to karmic tendencies inherited from Alberich, Amfortas unwittingly reverts to a karmic tendency inherited from Wotan, and in doing so mirrors Klingsor just as Wotan had mirrored Alberich. Amfortas' wound is the wound of compounded karma, and the terrible suffering he bears for so long is what is needed to cleanse the karma first set in motion by Wotan in the *Ring*. With the return of Parsifal to Monsalvat, the period of suffering is over, and Amfortas is ready for redemption.

Brünnhilde – Kundry

The Brünnhilde – Kundry connection is the most fascinating and complex of the four. The koan is not so simple and direct as the others, as there was a dual nature to Brünnhilde which is reflected in the dual nature of Kundry. The koan that Kundry inherits from Brünnhilde is one of pride, anger, a deep sense of personal hurt, and a fierce, even warlike, desire for revenge. All of these traits flared up in Brünnhilde during the events of the *Ring*, and particularly in *Götterdämmerung*. While it is true that Brünnhilde's final forgiveness and self-sacrifice greatly soften these traits, they are not completely expunged, and enough traces still remain for Kundry to inherit.

Wagner himself gave Kundry past lives. As Klingsor calls Kundry from her sleep in Act II of *Parsifal* he says:

Come up! Come up! To me!
Your master calls you, nameless one,
primaeval witch, rose of hell!
You were Herodias, and what else?
Gundryggia there, Kundry here![12]

According to an entry in Cosima's diaries of March 14, 1877, Wagner briefly considered giving Kundry the name Gundryggia. "...at lunch he tells me: 'She will be called Gundrigia *(sic)*, the weaver of war,' but then he decides to keep to *Kundry*."[13] While no Valkyrie in any of the sources used by Wagner is named Gundryggia (Gundryggia as a name is Wagner's invention), Gunn ("strife" or "battle") is one of Odin's principal Valkyries, and thus we can see that in Wagner's own conception, at least one of Kundry's past lives was a Valkyrie.

The dual nature of Kundry, that she serves both the Grail Brotherhood and their enemy Klingsor, stems from the karmic debt she inherited from Brünnhilde. Brünnhilde began her life serving Wotan as one of his Valkyrie daughters. Indeed, she even considered herself to be "Wotan's will." Thus she has an obvious karmic connection to Wotan. After her rebellion, Wotan kisses away her godhead and makes her mortal. She is awakened on the rock by Siegfried, and the two briefly share an idyll. When she is betrayed by Siegfried she plots revenge, and it is she who tells Hagen, the son of Alberich, where Siegfried is vulnerable. Hagen, armed with this knowledge, kills Siegfried. This is Brünnhilde's karmic debt, for she directly participates in Siegfried's death.

Before Brünnhilde performs the final immolation, she communes with the Rhine Daughters and learns the truth about Siegfried's betrayal. She does forgive him, and with her own self-sacrifice she performs much of the contrition necessary in order to turn her karmic stream in the direction of salvation. But the final karmic debt of Siegfried's death must still be redeemed, and thus she takes what will be her final incarnation before enlightenment as Kundry.

Just as Brünnhilde served both Wotan and Alberich (through Hagen), so Kundry serves both the knights of the Grail and Klingsor. Brünnhilde was intrinsically good, and would not have served Alberich and Hagen had she not felt so betrayed by Siegfried. Thus Kundry instinctively serves the Grail, and serves Klingsor involuntarily only when summoned by his magic. That his magic can work on her is due to the karmic bond Brünnhilde formed by plotting with Hagen. This bond is severed in Act II of *Parsifal*.

Siegfried – Parsifal

Siegfried's koan was naïve pride and greed, plus an inability to feel compassion for others. Siegfried, on one hand, was intrinsically good and even noble, but he was also naïve to a fault, selfish, prideful, and at times arrogant. His in-

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ability to feel compassion for the suffering of others precluded him from being able to accomplish the work of redemption.

Siegfried considered the world to be there for his taking. Anything he wanted he took, and there was no one who could stop him. He never even considered that there might be something wrong with this. It is only when he is dying, with a spear wound in his back, that he begins to see the world in its true light. It is only then that wisdom begins to dawn on him. He sees Brünnhilde in her true light, as "Heilige Braut," "Holiest Bride," not as something to take when he wants, trade when he wants, and forget about when it suits him. He never did these things out of evil, only out of ignorance. In his dying moments this veil of illusion begins to lift. It is too late for him to come to full wisdom in this particular lifetime, but the fact that the veil lifted even partially was enough for him to be reborn as Parsifal.

When we first see Parsifal he seems to be Siegfried exactly. He is young, strong, and full of aggressive energy. Just like Siegfried, he bounds into the world considering it there for his taking. He is prodigious with arms, and has made creatures and people fear him. He is ignorant of worldly ways, having grown up in the wilds away from men and society. And like Siegfried, his father fell in battle before he was born, and he has a strong yearning for his mother.

But Parsifal is not the young Siegfried, for he has inherited the wisdom of Siegfried's final vision. Thus there is a "seed" in Parsifal that was not there in Siegfried as a youth. As Siegfried lies dying, the orchestra plays Brünnhilde's awakening music, and Siegfried sings, "Brünnhilde! / Holiest Bride! / Now wake! Wake from your slumber!"[14] The orchestra recalls Brünnhilde's awakening on the rock from the third act of *Siegfried*, but this music is not just remembrance of a former event. It now becomes symbolic of Siegfried's spiritual awakening, commenting on the action just as the Chorus would have done in ancient Greek tragedy. This spiritual awakening is now just under the surface in Parsifal, needing only a catalyst to bloom and flower in this lifetime. That catalyst is Gurnemanz's admonishment at the killing of the swan. For the first time in the life-flux of Siegfried-Parsifal, true compassion for the suffering of another is awakened. While Siegfried had felt a kind of sympathy for, and kinship with, the animals of the forest, he had never felt contrition for any of his own acts that had caused suffering to others. It is this very important and vital contrition that Parsifal feels for killing the swan, and this genuine contrition opens up his way toward becoming the true redeemer.

Parsifal then performs an all-important act: he breaks his bow and hurls away his arrows. This is the reversal of Siegfried's famous deed, the re-forging of the broken Notung. With this action Parsifal radically changes the course of his karmic stream. He will never again carry a weapon of his own making into the world for violence and glory. When, in Act II, he receives the kiss from Kundry, he recognizes the origin of suffering: craving and the continual pursuit of worldly desire.[15] He feels upon his own body the full weight of the karmic consequence of all he has done throughout his former lives. He feels the wound of Amfortas. By refusing the advances of Kundry, here symbolizing the temptation of all temporal desire, Parsifal severs the connection to the wheel of birth and death. Thus, when Klingsor hurls the Spear at him at the end of Act II, it is to no avail. Parsifal catches the Spear, and with it destroys Klingsor's castle of illusion. There is now only clear light. The veil of Maya, the veil of delusion that clouds all unenlightened action, has been dissolved.

When Parsifal arrives in Monsalvat bearing the returned Spear, it is spring, the actual day of Good Friday. The flowers and trees are again in bloom, the Waste Land is ended and redeemed. Spear and Grail are once again united, and before Parsifal heals the wound of Amfortas and performs the Grail ceremony, two very important actions take place. When Parsifal first arrives and is told that the day is Good Friday, he is asked by Gurnemanz to disarm. Parsifal plants the Spear in the ground and kneels before it. This is the restoration of the World Ash-tree. The severed branch has been returned. Later, hearing of Titurel's death, Parsifal is about to faint, but Kundry and Gurnemanz revive him with water from "Die heil'ge Quelle," "the holy spring." This is the spring that ran dry when the branch was torn from the tree. Not only have Spear and Grail been reunited, so have the Tree and Spring. The original acts of violence have been redeemed, and all has been restored to the true state. The karma set in motion by the events of the *Ring* has been converted and cleansed; the wound has been healed; the world is again in bloom with new-found life; and Kundry, released after all this time from the numberless rounds of birth and death, enters Parinirvana, the eternally shining light.

* * *

Author's Note: There is, of course, much more to talk about concerning this interpretation, including a more detailed explanation of karma and rebirth and their relation to the specific events of the *Ring* and *Parsifal*. This more detailed explanation and discussion is included in my recent book, *The Redeemer Reborn: "Parsifal" As the Fifth Opera of Wagner's "Ring"*, which is currently under submission to publishers by an agent in New York.

— Paul Schofield

NOTES

1. Leon Stein, *The Racial Thinking of Richard Wagner*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), pp. 93–94. The italics are Stein's.
2. Narada Maha Thera, *The Buddha and His Teachings*, (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: The Buddhist Missionary Society, 1964, 1973, 1977), pp. 491–492.

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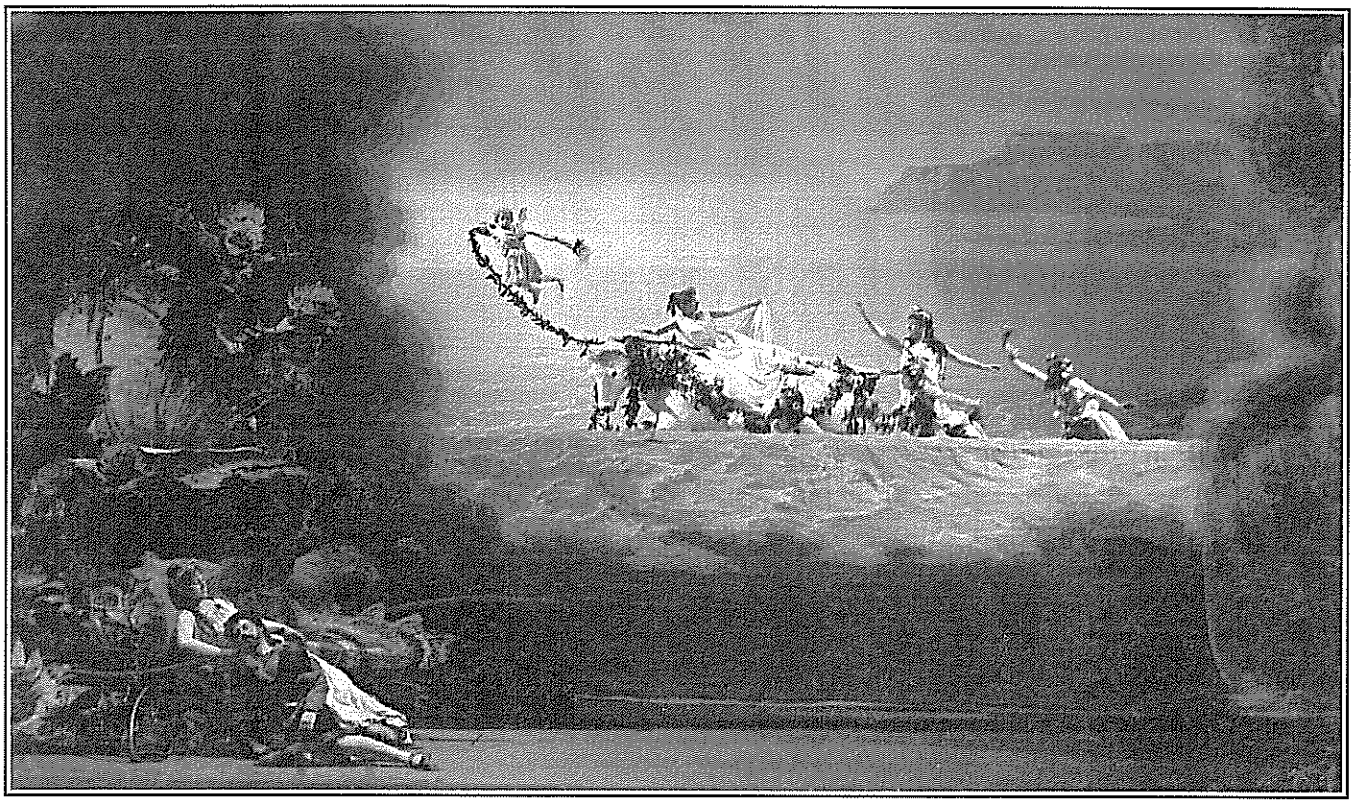

For the 1892 Bayreuth production of Tannhäuser, *Cosima curiously chose to use the later Paris version rather than Wagner's original Dresden rendering. Although she grew up in Paris and doubtless was generally comfortable with things French, the unhappy experience which Wagner had endured with the 1861 Paris production would probably have caused him, had he still been living for this first Bayreuth production of the work, to have used the earlier version: but he was not alive and Cosima understandably wanted to maximize the chances for success. Thus, early in the first act, the ballet Wagner had added to placate the Parisians was of the "Rape of Europa". Here Europa can be seen on a steer being taken away while Venus and Tannhäuser recline in the front left corner of the stage, apparently thoroughly bored by the proceedings. Photo from the Ogden collection.*

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which is to say that they are in no way arbitrary, or conditioned by 'chance' (as ordinarily understood). This is not the place to argue this theory (if it is a theory) in detail; but what I have outlined in the preceding paragraph, is, of course, expertly amplified by Brigitte Hamann, and ought to be sufficient to indicate something of the extraordinary fascination of Richard Wagner's only daughter-in-law. Of course, numerous other facts and events, both artistic and political, influenced and interacted with Winifred's earliest and most impressionable years in Germany, the most important being the First World War. This had followed a period of rapid industrial and economic expansion and growth of national consciousness and awareness, so that the defeat of Germany in that war (deserved or not) was a profoundly devastating blow, psychologically, for all who lived through it. This was the background to the re-opening of the Bayreuth Festival in 1924, by which time a new force in the future destiny of Germany was beginning to make its presence felt. These facts should not be occasion for either praise or blame, unless you wish to praise or blame those responsible for the treaty of Versailles; likewise it should not be a matter of either praise or blame that Hitler was a sincere (indeed fanatical) admirer of Wagner's work, or that Helene Bechstein (wife of the wealthy piano manufacturer Carl Bechstein) was a mutual friend of Hitler and the Klindworths, which fact led in turn, to Winifred's first meeting with Hitler in Bayreuth in 1923. I am not going to argue here, any more than does Brigitte Hamann, the case for or against (if there can be said to be a case to be answered at all) Winifred Wagner's friendship with Hitler, and the question of whether she contributed, however indirectly, to the evils of the Nazi regime [1]. But it is certain that without Hitler's support, both personal and financial, the Bayreuth Festival would have been in severe difficulties in the early 1930's. This was particularly the case with the *Parsifal* production of 1934. This was also the occasion when, at Hitler's suggeston (certainly not insistence) Alfred Roller was sent for from Vienna to design new stage-sets, the old ones "on which the Master's eyes had rested", dating from the first production of 1882, being faded and the machinery worn-out. And this was implemented by Winifred in the face of huge opposition from Eva Chamberlain (Richard Wagner's daughter) and Daniela Thode (Cosima's daughter

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3. Richard Wagner, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, German text with English translation by Andrew Porter, (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), p. 248.
4. Wotan as the Wanderer uses these terms for Alberich and Wotan (as ruler of the gods) in his scene with Mime in Act I, Scene 2 of *Siegfried*.
5. *Volsunga Saga*, translated by William Morris with an Introduction by Robert Gutman, (New York: Collier Books, 1962 and 1967), p. 51.
6. *Cosima Wagner's Diaries, Volume II*, translated by Geoffrey Skelton, (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1977), p. 299.
7. *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, translated and edited by Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington, (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), p. 499. Wagner at this time was spelling Parsifal "Parzifal."
8. Narada Maha Thera, *The Buddha and His Teachings*, p. 468.
9. This meaning of the word "koan" is not to be confused with the meaning of the word when it is used to describe a particular question or story, as in Rinzai Zen's "Book of Koans."
10. Wagner, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, p. 106.
11. Richard Wagner, *Parsifal*, translated by Lionel Salter, Copyright 1970.
12. ibid.
13. *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Volume I, translated by Geoffrey Skelton, (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1976), p. 952.
14. Wagner, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, p. 320.
15. This is the second of the Four Noble Truths. Simply explained, these truths are: (1) The existence of suffering; (2) That the origin of suffering is tanha, or craving; (3) The cessation of suffering; (4) The Noble Eight-fold Path, which is the way to the cessation of suffering.

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by von Bülow). It also deserves to he said that Winifred was responsible for assisting, and in some cases protecting, hundreds of individuals who for one reason or another got into difficulties with the Nazi regime. Once again, we become even more acutely aware of numerous interacting and overlapping causal chains of events, each one of which was beyond the conscious control of a single individual. I continue to stress this because it is all too easy to speak with the 'insight of hindsight' and to say that "had so-and-so not happened, then so-and-so would not have happened, etc. etc.", which is a negative way of saying the same thing. It is what *did* happen that is of importance, even if some of the determining factors are inaccessible, or *a fortiori* impossible to ascertain.[2] Certain it is, however, that the names of Bayreuth, Winifred, and Hitler became linked, ultimately to the detriment of all three. It is also equally true that, in 1945

> American troops ...stormed the Festspielhaus ...looting the wardrobe and all the lighting installations ...all the expensive apparatus, the lenses etc. were shot to pieces with their revolvers ...It was a great joke for the men to dress up as Lohengrin or Wotan out of the theatre's stores ...the Yanks made a hat-stand out of the venerable limewood head of Christ, under which all the Wagner children had been baptized ...they stole the family christening vessel ...American soldiers played hit-songs and jazz on the grand pianos of Wagner and Liszt (p. 403).

This, which is partly Winifred's testimony, and partly based on the diary of Gertrud Strobel 'makes as shocking reading as Belshazzar's desecration of the holy vessels stolen from the temple of Jerusalem.'

Brigitte Hamann's biography, which is, as far as I am aware, the first biography of Winifred Wagner, is comprehensive, scholarlily researched, lucid, objective, and well written, without any special pleading in any one particular direction. It is a mine of fascinating information about Bayreuth and the artists who worked there, not merely during the Nazi period, but also during Siegfried Wagner's regime and during the post Second World War period of Wieland and Wolfgang, up to the death of Winifred in 1980. The book is well-produced, with not a single misprint (noticed by me), and good value at £30, considering its 500± pages of main text. The translation is also excellent, and reads effortlessly and spontaneously. Highly recommended.

— Ian Beresford Gleaves

NOTES

1. "There was no special relationship between Wagner and the Third Reich" (Bryan Magee: *Wagner and Philosophy*, p. 366).
2. "...certain members of the still warring Wagner family continue to keep all the papers of Winifred, Siegfried, and Wieland Wagner under lock and key" (Brigitte Hamann: Preface).

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