

INTRODUCTION TO
THE WOUND THAT WILL NEVER HEAL

A comprehensive musico-dramatic study of Richard Wagner's 'The Ring of the Nibelung', with additional chapters on each of Wagner's six other canonical artworks

By

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THE IMPORTANCE OF WAGNER'S RING:

Richard Wagner's four-part musical drama, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, can justifiably be called the Holy Grail of art criticism. It is not only the most extensive in scope of all the canonic stage-works in the Western theatrical and operatic traditions, but is arguably the most comprehensive vision of the human experience presented on any stage since its premier in 1876. It remains the single work of art which most fully expresses that angst which is the hallmark of the modern world. Its great magnitude is a tribute to Wagner's evident belief that in it, he was unveiling a world-myth, i.e., disclosing the essence of universal human nature - what he described as the "purely-human" - beneath the façade of diversity in the world's distinct cultures, religions, traditions, governments, languages, and customs. What it means, and how its musical motifs carry or express this meaning, is still to be determined after nearly 130 years' effort. A key purpose of the present study is to demonstrate how completely absurd it is to treat it as just another opera, and that it can best be understood as a work of drama expressing a unified philosophy or world-view.

THE PROBLEM:

The *Ring* remains a mystery to this day, and is what Deryck Cooke called a "problematic" work (like *Hamlet* or Goethe's *Faust*). Playwright Gerhard Hauptmann described it as "... perhaps the most mystifying work of art of the last few thousand years." Given its world-historical importance, it is astonishing that no study has yet been produced which comprehends the entirety of the drama and its music. George Bernard Shaw's *Socialist*, and Robert Donington's Jungian interpretations are universally regarded as one-sided and incomplete today, and the most serious effort to encompass the entire work in a single study, by Deryck Cooke, was left incomplete by his premature death. For the most part scholars and students of the work now remain content to enjoy it

in the theater without troubling themselves further about any deeper meaning. It is generally assumed that it is too densely packed with a variety of sometimes contradictory meanings, which are in any case largely subliminal and therefore inaccessible to reasoned discussion, to be grasped as a whole.

In his *Wagner's 'Das Rheingold'* (1993), Warren Darcy, noting that Deryck Cooke "... proposed to follow Wagner's own suggestion ... that the transformation of each [musical] motif should be pursued carefully 'through all the changing passions of the four-part drama' ", observed that "unfortunately, Cooke died before he could carry out this task, and no one else has attempted it." Cooke himself, speaking - in his *I Saw the World End* (1976) - of a particular example of the confusion Wagner caused by associating a single musical motif with two passages of text from the *Ring* poem which seem conceptually inconsistent, stated that "... there are many others in the *Ring*, all of which lead away from their immediate dramatic contexts to the whole involved story, and to its complex tangle of symbols, which seem intended to bring some great revelation but has always eluded our understanding." It appears, then, that much of the *Ring's* meaning remains unconscious for its audience, something "felt" but not "thought." On this subject, Michael Tanner, in his *Wagner* (1996), quotes Hans Keller: " 'Wagner's music, like none other before or after him, let what Freud called the dynamic unconscious, normally inaccessible, erupt with a clarity and indeed seductiveness which will always be likely to arouse as much resistance (to the listener's own unconscious) as its sheer power creates enthusiasm.' " To this Tanner retorts: "The trouble with that highly plausible-sounding suggestion is that no one has succeeded in developing it any further, no doubt because to do so would involve independent research of a kind that musicologists are unwilling or unable to undertake"

THIS STUDY'S POTENTIAL SOLUTION:

The Wound that Will Never Heal picks up the threads of debate where the major studies of the past dropped them, from an entirely new perspective. It is the first attempt since Deryck Cooke's passing to provide a comprehensive conceptual interpretation of Wagner's *Ring* (and his other canonical artworks) which includes a complete assessment of its poem and music. It explores Wagner's musico-dramatic meaning in a way intended to illustrate his remark to Mathilde Wesendonck (12/8/58) that "... there was never another who was poet and musician at once (in my sense), *and thus to whom insight into inner processes is possible such as to none other.*" Wagner seems to have recognized that his unique artistic insight into unconscious processes might have unforeseen, troubling consequences, as Cosima noted in her diary (7/27/69): "... he says he sometimes has the feeling that art is downright dangerous – it is as if in this great enjoyment of observing he is perhaps failing to recognize the presence of some hidden sorrow." This study will examine this question in considerable depth in order to demonstrate that Wagner's notion that he was uniquely capable of accessing heretofore unconscious and potentially dangerous knowledge, and therefore at risk of unwittingly revealing it to his audience, may provide the key to a coherent, unified understanding of the entire *Ring*, and even several of Wagner's other canonical works. Most Wagner scholars of both the past and present, including George Bernard Shaw, Cooke, Tanner,

and Jean-Jacques Nattiez, have assumed that the *Ring* has no global meaning which will allow us to grasp it as a whole. A primary task of this study is to demonstrate that though such writers have made very important contributions to our knowledge of this subject, they have only to a limited degree grasped Wagner's allegorical logic - which would have granted them insight into the *Ring's* conceptual unity - because they have generally approached the *Ring* in terms of its topicality or from a one-sided perspective, rather than seeking its universality, and therefore did not pose the right questions.

BASIS OF ARGUMENT:

This study stands upon four propositions which can potentially disclose the true subject of the *Ring* allegory with greater detail and consistency than prior studies. These are: (1) That the Ring and its power is a symbol for the nature, and the power, of the human mind itself (a thesis for which I am partially indebted to Robert Donington); (2) That in the *Ring* the creator god is Mother Nature (Erda), not God-the-Father (Wotan): the implication of this is that our religious beliefs in Godhead, immortality, free will, redemption, paradise, and transcendent love and value, are an illusion; (3) That the *Ring* is an allegory which depicts the historical process whereby secular art (represented by Siegfried's and Bruennhilde's love) fell heir to the religious longing for transcendence, the religious wish to flatter "feeling" without limit (Wotan's quest for redemption from reality), when religious belief in the form of "thought" - its claim to the power of "truth" - could no longer be sustained in the face of the advancement of knowledge, and was therefore being exposed as an illusion. This advancement in knowledge, the true source of earthly power, is represented equally by the accumulation of Alberich's hoard of treasure in the bowels of the earth (the earth's, i.e., Erda's, umbilical nest - "Erde Nabelnest"), by Wotan's quest to obtain knowledge from Erda (Mother Nature) of the meaning of his fear and how to end it, and by Wotan's wanderings over the earth (Erde, i.e., Erda) through which he obtains knowledge of his heart's "Not" and how to assuage it. A powerful basis for propositions 1, 2, and 3 can be found in Ludwig Feuerbach's philosophic writings. (4) That Siegfried's loving relationship with Bruennhilde is Wagner's metaphor for Siegfried's unconscious artistic inspiration. On this basis Siegfried is considered Wagner's image of the secular artist, Wagner himself, who falls heir to religious faith's feeling or inner music (and therefore to the unconscious inspiration through which the original Folk first collectively, involuntarily, and unconsciously invented, as if dreaming, their gods), when religious faith as a concept, a belief system, is dying. The idea that Siegfried is Wagner's metaphor for the music-dramatist himself was explored by Jean-Jacques Nattiez in his *Wagner Androgyne* (1990), where he proposed that Siegfried's relationship with Bruennhilde can be understood as a metaphor for the relationship of the poet to music, their union producing the music-drama, as described in Wagner's great theoretical treatise *Opera and Drama* (1851). However, this thesis was anticipated by myself in college papers presented in 1974 and 1976, and in studies copyrighted at the Library of Congress in 1981 and 1983, the latter study (*The Doctrine of the Ring*) having been personally provided to Nattiez by myself in 11/83.

The title of my book, *The Wound that Will Never Heal*, is an image of that existential dilemma which reappears in different incarnations in all of Wagner's canonical artworks, which has both plagued and inspired man since the first emergence of human consciousness in evolution. This dilemma is that the very nature of our uniquely human reflective consciousness (represented - according to Robert Donington in his *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbols* - by Alberich's forging of the Ring itself) makes our species inherently unable to accept the world as it is. It is precisely this inherent feeling of lack, or "Noth", which according to Feuerbach is the basis of all cultural evolution, and according to Schopenhauer is the essential nature of the "Will", which is unassuageable. This is embodied particularly in Alberich's curse on his Ring. It is this inherent inability - combined with our compulsion - to assuage our desires which produces scientific and technological advancement in those instances where through hard work and learning we can improve our lot in the real world, and produces religious belief and art where the real world cannot satisfy us. The central thesis of *The Wound that Will Never Heal* is that the *Ring* is an allegory of the world-historical conflict between our conscious advancement of objective knowledge of our true nature and our world, and our religious and artistic - i.e., subjective - longing for transcendent value, which impels us to seek refuge from reality in the womb of the unconscious, the source of religious and artistic inspiration. A crucial feature of this interpretation is that Wotan's eventual paralysis, his inability to act, is understood to represent Wagner's own rising consciousness of his inability to resolve his existential dilemma. Wagner's dilemma was that though he (as a good Feuerbachian) could no longer believe in religious mythology, he (unlike Feuerbach) could not accept the only alternative, the objective, scientific world-view which was supplanting religious belief. This was Nietzsche's definition of nihilism. For a brief overview of the argument, see my talk *The 'Ring' as a Whole* (given 4/17/00) in the "archives" section of the website for the Wagner Society of Washington, DC, www.wagner-dc.org.

FEATURES OF INTEREST:

- This study contains some new features of considerable interest. It employs Dr. Allen B. Dunning's motif list, at 178 the most complete, and therefore the most useful for assessing the relationship between musical motifs and the concepts in the poetic text with which these motifs are associated. Dr. Dunning is the music consultant for this study. His *A Comprehensive Guide to the Musical Themes of Richard Wagner's 'Der Ring des Nibelungen'* is available on the web at <http://allenbdunningmd.com/ringthemes.htm>. He has incorporated the valid insights of prior musical studies of the *Ring*, in particular Deryck Cooke's work, into his own original contribution. A byproduct of our collaboration will be the embedding of every single appearance of each motif, identified by number, at those points where they are heard in both Stewart Spencer's English translation of the *Ring*, and in the original German libretto. This project is nearly complete. As a compact disc this will be an invaluable aid to students of Wagner. It will be possible, for instance, to print out a list of every single appearance of a motif and/or its variants in chronological order, in the context of its appearances within the poem, in order to obtain the motif's dramatic profile. It will also be possible to

hear the motifs by clicking on the numbered motifs and their variants in the initial list of motifs, and also key examples found in the context of the poetic text.

- Six separate chapters provide original conceptual studies of each of Wagner's six other canonical artworks, namely, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhaeuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, and *Parsifal*, seen in the light of their conceptual relationship to each other and to the *Ring* in particular. Hundreds of heretofore unknown conceptual links between these works have been disclosed, which will greatly enhance future study.
- It is the most thorough assessment to date of the relationship between Wagner's copious writings, letters, diary entries (both Cosima's, and his own in the *Brown Book*), autobiography, and recorded remarks, and the ideas expressed in the *Ring* and his other canonical artworks. A byproduct of this was the creation of the most complete chronological anthology currently available of all of Wagner's writings and recorded remarks which have a significant bearing on understanding the *Ring* and his other artworks. It is fully annotated to demonstrate this relationship.
- It includes the most complete, detailed account available of the influence of Ludwig Feuerbach's philosophical works upon the *Ring* poem. Virtually the entire relevant content of the four books by Feuerbach known to have influenced Wagner in writing the poetic text of the *Ring* has been applied to the detailed exegesis of every scene in the *Ring*, Wagner's other artworks, and the entire legacy of Wagner's writings and recorded remarks, with surprising results. My detailed exploration of two other problems has important implications for future scholarship: I demonstrate that (1) Feuerbach's work influenced the poetic texts of *Tannhaeuser* and *Lohengrin*, and therefore Wagner must have been familiar with Feuerbach at least through friends from 1842 onward; (2) Feuerbach remains a key influence on Wagner's music-dramas and writings after 9/54, the date of his self-proclaimed conversion to Schopenhauer's philosophy.
- I read and annotated in detail the complete works of Arthur Schopenhauer (after Feuerbach the other great philosophic influence on Wagner's art) in preparation for completing the remaining chapters on *Tristan and Isolde*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, and *Parsifal*. This study will culminate in a comprehensive anthology of key passages from all of Schopenhauer's works which have a bearing on the understanding of Wagner's works and thought, annotated to demonstrate this influence, similar to the previously completed anthology of Feuerbach's key works.
- Having read virtually all of the philosophic works of Friedrich Nietzsche and annotated them in light of his relationship with Wagner, I will also make the results of this informal study available in the form of a critical anthology of key passages from Nietzsche's works similar to those concerning the writings of Wagner, Feuerbach, and Schopenhauer.

- A compact disc accompanying the book may well include all of the special features I have itemized above, making this book (aside from its merits as an original study of Wagner's artworks) by far the most comprehensive resource for the study of Wagner's works, under one cover, currently available.
- It provides original solutions to perennial problems in Wagner exegesis, such as the allegation that anti-Semitism is inscribed in Wagner's operas, Nietzsche's critique of Wagner, and the proposition that under Schopenhauer's influence Wagner converted from a Feuerbachian optimist to a pessimist, and not only made textual alterations to the *Ring* reflecting his change of philosophy, but also altered his approach to the relationship of music to word.

BOOK'S LAYOUT:

It is a peculiarity of Wagner's operatic legacy that each new creative effort was a continuation of his past efforts. Not only do characters and dramatic situations from his prior operas reappear in a new, yet dimly recognizable guise in his subsequent operas and music-dramas (as Tanner put it), but musical elements from his earlier romantic works are also carried over into his more mature output, enormously enriched and developed. This phenomenon attains its climax in the transition from his romantic operas to his music-dramas which is to be found in that miraculous progress from *Lohengrin* to *The Ring of the Nibelung*. Wagner believed that the key to his revolutionary transformation from opera composer to music-dramatist lay in Elsa's asking Lohengrin the forbidden question regarding his true identity (Wagner valued understanding through love - i.e., feeling, art, music -, and disdained faith and worship of the incomprehensible, which he, following Feuerbach's lead, identified with egoism and fear). His consciousness of the world-historical import of this supreme moment of self-discovery is embodied not only in his creation of the *Ring*, by far the most ambitious work in all of musical theater, but in a series of theoretical writings which Wagner produced from 1848 through 1853 in order to come to terms with the implications of his aesthetic revolution. It is as if Wagner needed that inspiration which produced the *Ring* to reveal to him his own true identity, and to disclose to him retrospectively the meaning of his prior life's work. Scholars have long noted that Wagner was perpetually reinterpreting his completed operas in terms of his most recent insights into his creative processes.

The organization of the contents of this book reflects this insight. It does not begin, as so many comprehensive studies of Wagner's artworks do, with the first of the canonic works, *The Flying Dutchman*, but begins instead with the *Ring*, because it was in the *Ring* that Wagner first discovered and set forth the heretofore secret source of that unconscious inspiration which produced both his earlier and his later works. The *Ring* provides us not only with the prehistory of all of Wagner's own canonic artworks, but an allegory of what in his view was the prehistory of all creative endeavor in not only art but religious and scientific thought also. This prehistory is the subject of the *Ring's* Prologue, *The Rhinegold*. The *Ring* is the frame of reference in which all of Wagner's other artworks can be understood. They are in fact each systematically, conceptually related to different parts of the *Ring* because it was there that Wagner first attained the ability to encompass

the whole of his prior work in one single vision. Wagner seems to have viewed the *Ring* as in a sense the universal master-myth which is the underlying template for all specific myths. Therefore virtually all of Wagner's prior operatic ideas, or musico-dramatic seeds, are reborn and come to fruit in their definitive form in the *Ring*. For these reasons this comprehensive study begins with the *Ring*, in the depths of that Rhine of aesthetic intuition which was the womb in which all of Wagner's seeds came to birth.

Its second section considers the earlier romantic operas from the novel perspective of our new understanding of the *Ring*. For instance, while the *Flying Dutchman* provides a very general template for the *Ring* plot, and *Tannhaeuser* carries the primary conceptual seeds for *The Twilight of the Gods*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, and *Parsifal*, *Lohengrin* provides, among other plot elements, the key to Wotan's confession to Bruennhilde in *The Valkyrie*. Its third and final section is a re-consideration of Wagner's other mature music-dramas, *Tristan and Isolde*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, and *Parsifal*, which describes their systematic conceptual relationships both to the *Ring* and to each other. An outline of the contents of these three sections follows:

PART ONE – ALBERICH'S RING: A comprehensive musico-dramatic interpretation of *The Ring of the Nibelung*

Wotan's Story (God-the-Father's {Religion's} Story - Wagner's Old Testament)

Chapter One - *The Rhinegold*: The story of the birth of the Folk and their first form of thought, religion (represented by Wotan). This is an account of the origin of our human civilization, and its foundation upon mythology, the belief in a divine cosmogony. Wotan, Wagner's image of the historical Folk, initiates civilization (Valhalla) on the basis of the artistic self-deceit of religious belief instead of objective knowledge. Wotan's dependence on Loge is Wagner's metaphor for man's dependence on artistic self-deceit, while Alberich's Ring-power is his metaphor for the power objective knowledge brings. Wotan's renunciation of Erda's knowledge of all that was, is, and will be (the sin of world-renunciation Alberich accuses him of committing, which Alberich's curse on the Ring is intended to punish), in favor of man's futile bid for transcendent meaning, divinity, and immortality, is the essence of Alberich's curse on the Ring: all men will by nature long for what they cannot possess or cannot enjoy if they did. This is the unhealing wound, the nature of the conscious mind which compels man to complete the incomplete.

Chapter Two – *The Valkyrie*: This is an account of the waning of religious belief and its direct influence on human affairs. Wotan, striving to ensure the survival of man's religious impulse through the influence of his (religion's) moral idealism on the revolutionary hero Siegmund, is forced to acknowledge that Siegmund's heroism and love are merely the product of Wotan's own fear and self-deception (i.e., the influence of our religious legacy on the morality of self-sacrifice). Recognizing that he (the idea of divinity) can no longer intervene in human affairs directly, Wotan turns inward for consolation. Having inexorably accumulated – thanks to Alberich's curse - a Hoard of knowledge of himself (i.e., human nature) and the world (Mother Nature – Erda) which will in time destroy belief in the gods and the Folk's transcendent value, Wotan transfers

the Folk's primevally unconscious inspiration (represented by his daughter by Erda, Bruennhilde) to his heir, the artist-hero, Siegfried. Wotan will be reborn as Siegfried, minus the memory of his true identity, thanks to his confessor Bruennhilde. Wotan attains rebirth as Siegfried by repressing his own bitter self-knowledge - his unspoken secret, that he is a craven, cowardly hypocrite who is dependent on a belief in transcendent ideals which are predestined to destruction by the truth - into his unconscious mind, Bruennhilde, through his confession to her. Bruennhilde, now Siegfried's unconscious mind, will impart Wotan's unbearably abhorrent, fearful Hoard of self-knowledge, and longing to consign this Hoard of knowledge to oblivion (which is the profound secret of his poetic intent), to Siegfried, subliminally.

Siegfried's Story (The Artist-Hero-as-Savior's Story - Wagner's New Testament)

Chapter Three - *Siegfried*: The secular artist Siegfried (Wagner) falls heir both to the Folk's Hoard of objective knowledge (Alberich's Hoard of treasure and Wotan's Hoard of knowledge of the earth, or Erda, which he confessed to Bruennhilde), and to dying religious belief's essence, the longing for infinite satisfaction of feeling. In this way he unwittingly becomes the champion of the Folk's futile longing for transcendent value, and redeems religious feeling (music, religion's last refuge) temporarily from destruction by scientific analysis. Fafner, the guardian of Alberich's Hoard, Tarnhelm, and Ring, insures that the sources of Alberich's power, and his objective knowledge, remain inaccessible to the Folk. Fafner represents Wotan's fear of the truth, religious faith, which holds freedom of thought (Alberich/Hagen) hostage. Siegfried must kill Fafner (faith's fear of truth) in order to free religion's essence, musical feeling, from the intellectual contradictions of dogma and faith, and take aesthetic, artistic possession of Alberich's fearful Hoard of knowledge, to render his curse harmless. Siegfried's unconscious artistic inspiration by Wotan's (the historical Folk's) fear of the truth (Fafner), is depicted in Siegfried's loving union with Bruennhilde, his muse, who imparts to him unconsciously, i.e., musically, the contents of Wotan's fearful confession. This provides a key insight into the nature of Wagner's musical motifs, and Siegfried's fear. What Wotan thought, Siegfried will only feel, thanks to Bruennhilde, who holds Wotan's (Light-Alberich's) and Alberich's Hoard of knowledge for Siegfried. Art - which according to both Feuerbach and Wagner stakes no claim to the truth (the Ring and its power), and thus owns itself a mere game, a mere fiction, or mere feeling (music) - thus replaces religion, which staked a claim to the truth which was false because it was unsustainable in the face of science's (Alberich's/Hagen's) valid claim. Wotan's only hope is that Siegfried's heroic deeds of art, inspired by his muse Bruennhilde's love, will be invulnerable to Alberich's curse on religion's (the gods') false claim to the truth (Ring), and redeem religion's essence, its music, from Alberich's and Hagen's (modern science's) threat.

Chapter Four - *Twilight of the Gods*: The story of the demise of art and the artist - the last stand of the Folk's futile bid for transcendent meaning - at the hands of scientific analysis. Siegfried unwittingly reveals the secret of his formerly unconscious artistic inspiration by giving his muse Bruennhilde - who keeps the secret of his true identity as heir to the Folk's (Wotan's) futile bid for transcendence - away to his audience, represented by Gunther and the Gibichungs. In Siegfried's narrative of the story of his

life in act three of *The Twilight of the Gods*, instigated by Hagen (Wagner's symbol for the scientific, skeptical spirit of the modern world), in which Siegfried exposes his true relationship with his muse Bruennhilde to the public, Wagner provides a metaphor for his own *Ring*. By interpreting the Woodbird's song (music, God's last refuge) conceptually, at Hagen's behest, Siegfried (Wagner) the music-dramatist betrays the secret of the Folk's ageless, unconscious poetic intent to consciousness. The tragedy is that in the very effort to provide religious mystery, the noumenal, one more lease on life in an increasingly scientific, de-mythologized world, Wagner the Nibelung - Wotan as Light-Alberich - unwittingly dredged the last refuge of religion, the mystery of unconscious artistic inspiration, up from the silent depths of night to the light of day.

PART TWO: Prelude to the *Ring* – The Romantic Operas' contributions to the content and structure of the *Ring*

Chapter Five – *The Flying Dutchman*: Wagner's initial symbol for the wound that will never heal, man's existential dilemma, is the curse embodied by the Dutchman's refusal to accept nature as he finds it. By refusing to give up his futile quest to round the cape against the wind, the Dutchman is taken at his word by Satan, and must wander the world forever unsatisfied and unredeemed. This provides a model for Wotan's (Light-Alberich's) subjection to Alberich's curse, and Loge's (Satan's, i.e., self-deceit's) complicity in it. This chapter will explore how *The Flying Dutchman* provided Wagner with numerous plot elements for the *Ring*, including the concept of Wotan as World-Wanderer, the notion of a curse that involves the endless accumulation of a Hoard of treasure, the thesis that there can be redemption by love, the concept that redemption requires immersion in the depths of the world's waters, and the pessimistic vision of a cosmic holocaust. It also introduces the key concepts that the cursed one's identity and fate are one, that contemplation of one's true identity is unbearable, and that the heroine-redeemer takes upon herself the burden of the hero's consciousness of sin - his identity.

Chapter Six – *Tannhaeuser*: *Tannhaeuser* introduced the concept that the inspired artist might unwittingly reveal the true source of his unconscious artistic inspiration in his artwork (Tannhaeuser's unwitting revelation of his sojourn in the Venusberg – previously forgotten by him - during his contest-song), with tragic consequences. Tannhaeuser's involuntary revelation of the secret of religio-artistic inspiration, which seemingly betrays his love for Elizabeth, exposes the true source of man's longing for spiritual value, in man's physical, sensual nature (one of Feuerbach's key propositions). This is the "inner" basis for Siegfried's and Tristan's betrayals of Bruennhilde and Isolde, respectively (though outwardly Wagner obtained this plot element from his various sources in legend and myth). Siegfried - like Tannhaeuser when performing his contest-song - reveals the secret of his unconscious artistic inspiration (Siegfried's seemingly illicit relationship with his muse Bruennhilde) while narrating the story of his life under Hagen's influence. *Tannhaeuser's* influence on the plots of *Twilight of the Gods*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, and *Parsifal* is considered in detail.

Chapter Seven – *Lohengrin*: This chapter demonstrates how Wagner followed up his Feuerbachian critique of heaven and divinity as being nothing more than man's sensual

longings masquerading as spiritual (as found in *Tannhaeuser*), in the notion that it is the ostensibly divine, immortal, celibate Lohengrin who needs redemption from his faux divinity through Elsa's earthly love. Elsa offers to help Lohengrin keep the secret of his true identity - i.e., that he is in fact an earthly being, not divine, who poses as divine through the magic of art, which is the implication of Ortrud's and Frederick's accusations - and protect him from the "Noth" (danger, anguish) which he would suffer if the truth were exposed. Elsa's offer, which Lohengrin does not accept, is the basis for Bruennhilde's offer to hear Wotan's confession of his divine "Noth", which Wotan does accept. Since for Wagner the male represents conscious conceptual thought (power), the word, and the female represents unconscious artistic inspiration, aesthetic intuition, or music (the language of the unconscious mind, which Wagner identifies with love), Wotan's acquiescence in Bruennhilde's wish is seen as the conceptual foundation of Wagner's revolutionary transition from romantic opera - in which music is still only mechanically related to the poetic text - to the music dramas, in which poem and music are fused in an ecstatic union. *Lohengrin* provides the last step in the evolution of Wagner's concept that the heroine is the artist-hero's unconscious mind, his source of artistic inspiration and redemption, prior to its full flowering in Bruennhilde. As Wagner said, "Elsa showed me the way to this man [Siegfried]." It is thanks to Wotan's acquiescence in Bruennhilde's request to hear his confession of his divine "Noth", i.e., the repression of his unbearable self-knowledge into his unconscious mind, that he is reborn as Siegfried. Siegfried does not know who he is because Bruennhilde holds this self-knowledge for him, and he is fearless because Bruennhilde's loving magic protects him, at the front, from his (Wotan's) foreknowledge of his inevitable, shameful end.

PART THREE: The Shadow of Schopenhauer – The other music dramas interpreted in light of the *Ring*

Chapter Eight – *Tristan and Isolde*: *Tristan* is interpreted in light of Wagner's observation in *Epilogue to the 'Nibelung's Ring'* that *Tristan* is in essence the same story as *Twilight of the Gods*, a variant of the same myth. Tristan, like Siegfried Wagner's metaphor for the artist-hero, unwittingly exposes the secret of his unconscious artistic inspiration, and thus exposes the secret of his true identity which the heroine Isolde's love keeps for him, to his audience, by giving his muse Isolde to King Marke (like Gunther Wagner's metaphor for his own audience). Isolde's anger at Tristan stems primarily from the fact that she had kept the secret of his identity through her silence, a secret he has glibly now exposed for all the world to see, thus tearing open again the wound she had temporarily healed. Tristan, like Siegfried and Parsifal Wagner's metaphor for the unconsciously inspired artist who has fallen heir to man's religious longing for redemption from reality, has also like them fallen heir to the sin of world-renunciation, religious pessimism. This sin's archetype is Wotan's original sin against (denial of) Erda's - Mother Nature's - knowledge of all that was, is, and will be, which brought down upon Wotan Alberich's curse. Wotan represents the historical Folk who invented their God as the antithesis to, and substitute for, Mother Nature (Erda). Thus Tristan, Siegfried, and Parsifal regard themselves in various ways as responsible for their mothers' death (i.e., figuratively, for "killing" Mother Nature, as Feuerbach put it), either by being born through her death (Tristan and Siegfried), or killing her through neglect

(Parsifal's mother died of a broken heart because he abandoned her to seek out the Grail knights). One thinks here of Orestes' matricide, and Athena's role in redeeming him. The artist-hero Tristan suffers from the fact that he is growing conscious of having perpetuated this sin, which is punished by an unhealing wound, and wishes to end his life. Tristan, Siegfried, and Parsifal – each in different ways – confuse the heroine-muse (their lover or, in Parsifal's case, his potential lover Kundry) with their mother, because the art which the muse inspires them to create is a surrogate for man's true mother, Nature, and also because man's unconscious mind, according to Feuerbach, is Mother Nature in man.

Chapter Nine – *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*: Wagner's utopian image of the unconsciously inspired artist's perfect bond with his audience, reinterpreted in light of its remarkable conceptual links with *The Valkyrie* and *Siegfried*. This chapter explains how *Mastersingers* is the only "comedy" among Wagner's canonical artworks because in this work alone (with the possible exception of the Dutchman), the artist-hero preserves the secret of his unconscious artistic inspiration (i.e., he neither gives his muse away to another man or exposes her secrets to his audience, nor does he become conscious of his perpetuation of the sin of matricide, the renunciation of our mother, Nature), and therefore is able to offer the Folk, his audience, temporary redemption from his "Noth", his forbidden knowledge, through his mastersong. A major focus is Sachs' confession of the secret of unconscious inspiration, in both religion and art, to Eva. Eva is the music-dramatist Walther's unconscious mind, his muse, his repository of fatal knowledge of the bitter truth which Sachs confessed to Eva, which is the source of Walther's dream of inspiration. Sachs' confession to Eva is based upon Wotan's confession to Bruennhilde. The risk that Sachs' forbidden knowledge of the Folk's "Noth" might rise from Eva's silent depths to the light of day provides the explanation for the riot in the second act, just as it explains the knights' and ladies' explosion of outrage at Tannhaeuser's revelations in his contest-song, the horror of the Folk at Frederick's and Ortrud's suggestion that Lohengrin's true source of inspiration is not the noumenal mystery they had supposed, and the dismay of the Gibichungs at Bruennhilde's terrible revelations about Siegfried.

Chapter Ten – *Parsifal*: Understood as the final drama of the *Ring* and as Wagner's perhaps subliminal renunciation of the Folk's (i.e., mankind's) religio-artistic bid for transcendence. In this interpretation Parsifal, representing the formerly unconsciously inspired artist-hero of each of Wagner's prior operas and music-dramas, has been reincarnated for the last time. Kundry, the reincarnation of the heroine-muses in Wagner's prior operas and music-dramas, knows for Parsifal what he, up until now, has not known, his true identity. Upon attaining complete enlightenment (complete wakefulness) regarding his true identity and fate, and becoming fully conscious of the formerly unconscious source of all religio-artistic inspiration, he holds himself responsible for having unwittingly perpetuated throughout the ages Wotan's original sin of denying Mother Nature (his sin against all that was, is, and will be, Erda's knowledge), the true cause of man's unhealing wound. He escapes the eternal cycle of rebirth and the endless production of works of art, which provided only temporary redemption from, or a temporary balm or balsam for, man's unhealing wound, by renouncing unconscious religio-artistic inspiration. In other words, he refuses to seek redemption through union with Kundry, his potential muse, who dies, in order to restore the real world's, Mother

Nature's, rights. In this way Parsifal redeems himself, the redeemer, and Mother Nature, from man's age-old sin of world-renunciation which religion and its heir, secular art, had perpetuated throughout all prior history. Amfortas' – man's - unhealing wound (his futile longing for transcendent meaning) is finally healed, through reconciliation with Nature.

MARKET POTENTIAL:

Though this book is clearly not for the casual reader, it will certainly appeal not only to all thoughtful lovers of opera and the arts, but to all others who are interested in the key philosophical questions regarding the meaning of life and the destiny of our species. Records of the Bayreuth Festival, during which several of Wagner's ten canonical works are produced annually, indicate that each year between 500,000 and 900,000 people request tickets, and only about 30,000 of the requests can be honored at a time. The remainder are put on a waiting list: notoriously, it can take ten years or so before receiving tickets, and requests must be renewed annually. This is a huge potential market for an original, comprehensive study of Wagner's ten canonical works. Currently there are some one hundred and thirty eight Wagner societies world-wide, with a collective total of approximately 38,000 members, which offer a hardcore potential market, and whose members can be counted on to advertise the book widely. There is also a significant academic market across a wide-spectrum of disciplines, including departments of drama, music, literature, philosophy, psychology, religion, mythology, history, etc. Aside from this there is the much larger opera-lovers market which has been greatly increased in the past twenty years or so thanks to productions of opera on tv, the availability of the entire repertoire on dvd's and cd's, and the expansion of opera performances regionally. Other factors which could increase the potential market include the regular succession of articles in major newspapers and magazines (including *Time*, *The Economist*, etc.) on Wagner productions, the Wagner family's dynastic history (including the current and controversial search for a new director of the Bayreuth Festival), Wagner's anti-Semitism and purported influence on the rise of National Socialism in Germany, etc. His rising popularity was surely a factor in the planned collaboration of Placido Domingo (perhaps the most influential figure in opera today, who has devoted himself to Wagner in recent years) with George Lucas of Dreamworks (who collaborated with Steven Spielberg in a number of highly popular – if lowbrow – films) to produce the most elaborately staged production of Wagner's *Ring* to date at the Los Angeles Opera. If this plan comes to fruition it will be a major media event, and could well be a spring-board for production of the first feature film version of Wagner's *Ring*, which will in turn both greatly enlarge the audience for his work, and increase the potential market for a comprehensive book on the subject. Wagner's fascinating and controversial biography, his leading position as an avatar of the avant-garde in the Nineteenth Century, the fact that his greatest work remains startlingly new, fresh, and exciting even today, and his huge and continuing influence on the arts and culture of our time have made him a subject of great interest far beyond the bounds of opera.

**CRITICAL REVIEWS BY WAGNER SCHOLARS AND OTHER
PROMINENT ADMIRERS OF WAGNER'S ART WHO HAVE READ
PORTIONS OF THIS STUDY AT VARIOUS STAGES OF ITS EVOLUTION**

(A) CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT:

STEWART SPENCER: Editor and Translator of *Wagner Remembered*, published by Faber and Faber in 2000; former Editor of WAGNER (scholarly publication of The Wagner Society, London, England); translator and editor of *Wagner's 'Ring of the Nibelung' – A Companion*, published by Thames and Hudson in 1993; co-editor and co-translator with Barry Millington of *Selected letters of Richard Wagner*; co-editor with Barry Millington of *The Wagner Compendium*; co-editor with Barry Millington of *Wagner in Performance*. Mr. Spencer published my article *How Elsa Showed Wagner the Way to Siegfried* in the May, 1995 issue of WAGNER:

- (11/22/91:) “... **your interpretation of the *Ring* is novel and potentially interesting**”
- (10/12/93 – Reviewing the responses of three anonymous scholarly referees he consulted before deciding to publish my paper on *Lohengrin's* relationship to the *Ring: How Elsa Showed Wagner the Way to Siegfried*.) “**A second reader ... dutifully summarised the argument and concluded that the piece had made him rethink the opera [*Lohengrin*].**”
- (3/13/95:) “**I have now worked through your revised typescript and must congratulate you and Mr. Taylor [my editor] on your revisions On the whole, I'm impressed by what I read here. Unwittingly, you launched your investigations with the very work – *Lohengrin* – that I find most problematical, so that I'm naturally responsive to any attempt to make sense of it.**”

JIM K. HOLMAN: Author of *Wagner's 'Ring' – A Listener's Companion and Concordance*; Collaborator with Monte Stone on the *Ringdisc*; Chairman of The Wagner Society of Washington, DC; Managing Director – Saudi Arabia Desk – The Carlyle Group:

- (5/4/99 – Inviting me, in his capacity as Chairman of The Wagner Society of Washington, DC (www.wagner-dc.org), to speak before his group in the Spring of 2000:) “... **until now I have not had the time to give your phenomenal commitment to The Ring, and the other operas, anything like the attention it deserves. I am deeply impressed with what I have read, including the Rhinegold lecture you gave to [The Wagner Society of Dallas].**”
- (8/13/99:) “**I must say that, the more I get into your work, and I still have a long way to go, the more impressed I am by your thesis, the way you are working it out, and your clear writing. It's going to be great having you.**”

PAUL LAWRENCE ROSE: Author of *Wagner Race and Revolution*; Mitrani Professor of Jewish Studies, and Director, Center for Research on Antisemitism, at Penn State University:

- (9/8/97 – In response to my book on *The Rhinegold*;) **“I have looked at your book, and read it in light of your detailed letters, where it makes a good deal of sense. For me, the most interesting question you raise is perhaps the enigma of how Wagner dealt with the matter of his own putative Jewishness as well as that of German and World society. I think you are on to something with the conclusion that he decides ... to suppress it as a matter of philosophy and not just tactics; and I would like to see the notion fully worked out in due course. (I must say it is refreshing to find a Wagnerian who does not recoil ... from the idea that there is an inscribed Antisemitism in the operas, but rather tries to make sense of it in a new framework as you do).”**

ELLIOTT ZUCKERMANN: Author of *The First Hundred Years of Wagner’s Tristan* (Columbia Univ. Press), and Tutor at St. John’s College in Annapolis, MD:

- (11/9/84:) **“I read your *Ring* chapter with admiration and some assent.”**
- (7/8/95 – In response to my published article *How Elsa Showed Wagner the Way to Siegfried*;) **“It’s clear and well written. What I most responded to were the very telling parallels you draw ... to situations in the later dramas. You certainly see the significance in the relationships among the characters. [This article may provide] “... what I hope turns out to be not only an arrival but a permanent position in Wagnerheim.”**

PROF. DR. DIETER BORCHMEYER: Author of *Richard Wagner Theory and Theatre*, and *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, and Director of the Germanistisches Seminar at Heidelberg University:

- 8/7/97 – In response to my book on *The Rhinegold*;) **“The attempt to offer an exhaustive interpretation of the whole *Ring* from a particular philosophical vantage point is a courageous undertaking.” [You] “... grasp the *Ring* as a kind of philosophical world formula.”**

MONTE STONE: Creator of the RINGDISC (see ringdisc@snet.net), in collaboration with Jim Holman:

- (8/27/01:) **“I am very aware of your work. I read the speech at Wagner Society of Washington, DC, a while ago. I presented the Ring Disc there a few years back. (...) Who is publishing your book? I’ll be the first to buy one.”**

BRYAN MAGEE: Author of “Wagner and Philosophy” (published in the USA in 10/01 as “The Tristan Chord”), “Aspects of Wagner”, and “Schopenhauer”; former Member of the House of Commons in Parliament, Great Britain; former Professor of Philosophy at Oxford University:)

- (2/14/90 – In a letter to Andrew Gray concerning my controversial claim that I can reveal the unified allegorical logic underlying Wagner’s mature music-dramas:) **“If Heise demonstrates this conceptual coherence he will have illuminated the works for all of us”**

ALLEN B. DUNNING, MD: Author of “A Comprehensive Guide to the Musical Themes of Richard Wagner’s ‘Der Ring des Nibelungen’”, posted on the Web at <http://allenbdunningmd.com/ringthemes.htm>; (Dr. Dunning, my music consultant, is collaborating with me to produce the most comprehensive study of Wagner’s *Ring* under one cover):

- (5/7/00 – Responding to my talk “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole”:) **“Paul, your essay is quite intellectually provocative and very creative in its complexity.”**
- (6/5/00:) **“Your analysis has much going for it. (...) ... I think your overall interpretation ... is valid. (...) I think the manner in which you bring into support of your thesis excerpts from Wagner’s prose writings is an excellent technique and one that few, if any, of the RING’s commentators have applied in such depth as you do.”**
- (6/8/00:) **“... you presented enough supporting evidence to convince me that you are representing things that Wagner believed and therefore it is reasonable to conclude that those beliefs had a significant effect on his creation of Der Ring des Nibelungen.”**

DERRICK EVERETT: Creator and Webmeister of the great Wagner website devoted to PARSIFAL, <http://home.c2i.net/monsalvat/menu.htm>, and Webmeister of the Wagner message board Humanities.Music.Composers.Wagner; Author of “Parsifal under the Bodhi Tree”, a study of the crucial influence of Buddhist thought on Wagner’s *Parsifal*, published in the 7/01 issue of WAGNER, the scholarly journal of THE WAGNER SOCIETY (United Kingdom); Mr. Everett has already provided extensive editorial advice on the first drafts of my chapters on *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhaeuser*, and *Lohengrin*, and has agreed to provide editorial advice on my first draft of the newly completed chapters of my book which cover Wagner’s *Ring*:

- (8/18/00:) [Your contributions to this message board] **“... are exceptionally thought-provoking.”**
- (10/20/00:) **“From what I have read of your work, ... as one of thousands of Wagnerians who might be, and I believe would be, interested in reading your book, I urge you to find a competent publisher. Your interpretation is at least**

as interesting, and probably more accurate, than those by Shaw or Donington”

MICHAEL TANNER: Author of “WAGNER”; Author of “The Total Work of Art” in THE WAGNER COMPANION; Contributor to ‘The Times Literary Supplement’; Dean of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge Univ.; former Prof. of Philosophy at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge:

- (12/27/96 – In response to my manuscript study of “The Rhinegold”, and to my published article “How Elsa Showed Wagner the Way to Siegfried”:) **“... I have very much enjoyed your piece for Spencer’s magazine. (...) I have, I suspect, big areas of agreement and big areas of disagreement with you. (...) I wonder if you ever come to England. If you do, it would be great to meet and argue at greater length”**

NIKE WAGNER: Great Granddaughter of Richard Wagner, currently seeking to become Director of the Festpielhaus at Bayreuth; author of “*The Wagners The Dramas of a Musical Dynasty*”:

- (1/23/97 – In response to my paper “How Elsa Showed Wagner the Way to Siegfried” and to my book on THE RHINEGOLD:) **“With greatest interest I am reading your perceptive study on Wagner Enclosed you will find an essay of mine which is much less original!”**

PHILIP WINTERS: Contributor of articles to THE NEW CRITERION, and a respected linguist and musicologist:

- (1/12/84 – In response to my study “The Doctrine of the Ring”:) **After reading certain parts of your paper carefully and others cursorily, I would have to say right off that you are on to something.”**

HARRY WAGNER: Editor of WAGNER NOTES, newsletter of The Wagner Society of New York, Inc.:

- (6/95 Issue – Vol. XVIII, No. 3:) **“... Mr. Paul Heise ... addressed the society in 1991 on his remarkable and ground-breaking study of Wagner’s thought as manifested in his works.”**

LAURENCE B. LUECK: President of The Wagner Society of Hawaii; Editor of the recently published anthology of essays entitled: *Wolfgang Wagner: An Appreciation*

- (6/30/03 – responding to this book proposal) [Re your] **“... attachment detailing your work on “*The Wound that Will Never Heal*”, ... I very much appreciate your sharing this information with me, and have read it several times. There is much --- indeed very much --- that I personally find intriguing and agree with. I also note that you have given lectures at several Wagner societies on**

your viewpoints and conclusions regarding the “Ring” and other Wagner operas. ... our society would be interested in having you provide us a lecture on your concepts and arguments.”

(B) NO LONGER AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT OR STATUS UNKNOWN

ANDREW GRAY: [DECEASED] Translator of Wagner’s autobiography *Mein Leben* into English (published by Cambridge University Press in 1983), and lecturer on Wagner. Mr. Gray sponsored my first trip to Bayreuth in August of 2001:

- (11/28/83 – responding to my study *The Doctrine of the Ring*:) **“You have already done – even at this stage – what Donington did 20 years ago – given Wagner interpretation a new dimension. But you are even more original, and suggestive, than he – the subchapter on the night serenades of Sachs and Beckmesser alone is ... beyond most everything else being written about the deeper levels of meaning in Wagner. If Sir Peter Hall [who produced Wagner’s *Ring* at Bayreuth] had the benefit of your work ... his *Ring* would certainly have turned out differently, as he is quite obviously searching for structural coherence without finding it. (...) I’d be sorry to see US publishers miss this opportunity to do something really striking from these shores (...) RW’s spirit beams at you.”**
- (3/29/90:) **“You are the vanguard of a major reassessment.”**
- (Undated letter from the 1990’s:) **“W. is central to my life, and in your work, he becomes intelligible for the first time in the sense that I have tried to grasp him. ... there are many who have been obliged to consign whole segments of W’s work to the category of excess baggage, because we couldn’t incorporate them into the sense of the whole. You remedy this for us all.”**
- (1993 – From a review of Stewart Spencer’s translation of the *Ring: Wagner’s ‘Ring of the Nibelung’, A Companion*, for *Wagner Notes*, Publication of the Wagner Society of New York, Inc.): **“If the *Ring* text were read more closely, and if Wagner were to be granted more conceptual intelligence commensurate with his genius as a dramatist and composer, we might well be in for some big surprises. The present interpretative chaos surrounding the work, it is true, testifies to its enduring capacity to stimulate the imagination, but also, in this reviewer’s opinion, to a pervasive failure to consider the text systematically enough. The work in progress of our member Paul Heise promises to constitute a significant remedy for this deficiency.”**

DR. WILLIAM WEBSTER: [STATUS UNKNOWN] Contributor of Articles to the *Opera Quarterly*, and former Professor of German Studies at Stanford University:

- (10/12/85 - At the request of Dr. L.J. Rather (deceased), author of *The Dream of Self-destruction* and *Wagner Reading*, and former Professor at

Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Dr. Webster wrote a critical review of my work:) “... it would seem to claim a unique place for itself as the Wagnerian interpretation to end all interpretations, for the author sees in Wagner’s later music dramas the key to unlock the riddle of human nature. ... he can be congratulated for the audacity of his conception of the inner meaning of the *Ring* and other later Wagnerian operas seen as of a piece and not isolated artistic efforts (...) I was at first tempted to dismiss his conception of the *Ring* and such works as *Tristan and Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg* as artistic elucidations of humanity’s existential dilemma, the ... dichotomy between man’s desire for transcendent permanent values disseminated in both religion and art and the presumed negation of such values attributed to modern science, as simply another speculative Wagnerian exegesis ... , works which are long on the free play of the speculative imagination ... but short on scholarship. After having attempted a careful reading ... , I am of the opinion that a case can be made for at least part of the author’s audacious interpretations of the *Ring* and the other music dramas. Just how convincing a case or how complete a case he can make for his breathtaking propositions cannot be judged prior to a reading of the finished exegesis. (...) If the author proceeds with his ambitious endeavor, at the very least he will succeed in creating a very arresting updating of Wagner’s own Schopenhauerian interpretation of his operas.”

ROBERT DONINGTON: [DECEASED] Author of *Wagner’s ‘Ring’ and its Symbols:*

- (3/13/86:) “May I thank you warmly for showing me your long and lucid *Prolegomenon to ‘Then, I myself am the world?’* [Another of my studies of the conceptual unity underlying Wagner’s mature music dramas]. It is, I think, very well written, and more than that it is thought through with great conviction and consistency, amounting ... to a very personal and sustained statement in metaphysical philosophy. (...) your own insights, so long and rigorously pursued, have led you to a stance more questioning than most (...) It does me good to know that someone of your inquiring mind is at work in such a field.”

REVIEWS BY OTHER SERIOUS STUDENTS OF WAGNER

DALIA GEFFEN: Founder and President of the Boston Wagner Society; Editor of Scholarly Books for Princeton Univ. Press, Harvard Univ. Press, etc.; Edited the English translation of Dieter Borchmeyer's *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner* for Princeton Univ. Press. Mrs. Geffen has edited and published the first two of four parts of my article "The 'Ring' as a Whole" in the newsletter of the Boston Wagner Society WAGNERIANA during the fall of 2004, and will publish the last two parts in subsequent newsletters:

- (5/27/04 – Review of my article "The 'Ring' as a Whole" and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **"You take such a wide view! It's quite impressive. I don't think I've read anyone whose outlook is so large and comprehensive. I've always known that Wagner is very big, which is one reason I have been so attracted to his operas. But often critics, scholars, etc., seem to pick one particular aspect or push an interpretation that accords with their political views (Shaw, for example). And you seem to see the Ring from an all-inclusive human perspective, something all of us have wanted to do, I'm sure.**

I really liked the idea of the Ring containing the themes/ideas/feelings of all the other operas. Somehow, it made intuitive sense to me. And the connections you make between the operas and their characters gave me several "Aha!" moments. (...) I think this book would fly."

- (12/7/04 – In response to my talk "How Elsa Showed Wagner the Way to Siegfried", presented to the Boston Wagner Society on 12/4/04:) **"Thank you so much for the wonderful talk! I think the audience was very excited about all the ideas you presented. It's clear that you know a whole lot about Wagner. It was an exciting presentation, and we would like you to come back for more. Can we include you in next year's event?"**

JERRY HASHIMOTO: Member of the Wagner Society of Northern California:

- (8/2/04 In response to my article "The 'Ring' as a Whole" and to my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **"Analysis of Wagner's 'Ring' as allegory is familiar ground that has been plowed before; sometimes productively, sometimes not. However, all these attempts have shared the same fate; they are happily collecting dust at the back of my bookshelf, untouched since their initial reading.**

This book [my *The Wound That Will Never Heal*] promises to be something different: one that you would want to re-read on many occasions. It would be a wonderful resource to take with you and read while you go trotting to the four corners of the globe in pursuit of Wagner opera. It is a lucid, level-headed analytical thesis in an academic area notably devoid of such

properties. My only request is that it be compactly packaged so you can easily pack it in a suitcase or backpack.”

ILKKA PAJAANEN AND MARKUS ILMONEN: President and Vice President, respectively, of the Richard Wagner Society of Helsinki, Finland. They provided translations into Finnish and German of my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole”, and have published the first of its two parts in the November 2004 issue of their magazine GRANE. The second and last installment will be in the 1/05 issue of GRANE.

DR. JOHN WEINSTOCK: Scandinavian Program, The University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Weinstock has taught Wagner’s *Ring* for fifteen years. His website on *The Ring of the Nibelung* can be accessed via the website for the Wagner Society of Washington, DC: www.wagner-dc.org. Click on links to other sites:

- (6/23/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal on *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I will ... see whether I can arrange for you to give a lecture here at the Univ. of Texas in the fall.”**
- (8/20/04:) **“I haven’t had the chance yet to get through all your material, but what I’ve read I like. (...) ... I start teaching next week ... , and will be able to get through the rest of your work. I will also try to get funds for you to visit the Univ. of Texas in the near future.”**
- (10/12/04:) **“... I promise to get back to you soon with some commentary on your 4 chapters. What I’ve read so far I generally like (...) I need to see if I can convince a colleague in the Music School to come up with some funds for you to make a visit here.”**
- (10/19/04:) **“I think I can get some funds to bring you here. Not completely certain yet. How would mid-November work for you?”**
- (12/10/04:) **“... the ground in the School of Music has been plowed, making a visit by you likely next fall.”**

CHAD TAYLOR: Freelance Editor and Proofer, and editor of my article “How Elsa Showed Wagner the Way to Siegfried”:

- (9/14/94 – From a letter to Stewart Spencer, Editor of the scholarly journal WAGNER:) **“In my opinion Mr. Heise’s interpretation has great merit. Much seems farfetched at first, but the argument is carefully thought out and, once grasped, impressively logical. For a number of reasons Mr. Heise has chosen to introduce the reading public to his ideas using Lohengrin. When one realizes, thanks to his discoveries, how much more developed conceptually are Wagner’s later works, one will see that this paper is an excellent introduction to his thought. I hope that you will be the first to publish it.”**

DR. R. KEVIN HILL: Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Portland State University.
Author of *Nietzsche's Critiques*, published by Oxford Univ. Press:

- (11/10/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“The material you sent is highly suggestive The interpretation of the meaning of the ring is perhaps the most startling initially (...) I can’t comment about the specifics of the interpretation you’re offering without seeing the thing in more developed form. It does look promising and plausible, however.”**

JOHN JARVIS: Formerly employed as a scriptwriter for Lorimar Studios in Culver City, CA, and in Public Radio in Norfolk, VA:

- (11/4/88:) **“... what you say about the RING explains it more than anything I’ve ever read. (and I’ve read most: Cooke, Dahlhaus, Rather, Tanner, Magee, etc..”**
- (1/10/89:) **“I have never read anything on Wagner as thought-provoking as your essay.”**
- (3/20/90:) **“I have had a chance to look over your notes and find them extraordinary. ... you have solved in depth questions that have plagued Wagner students for ages. Your discussion of the subject of love in the RING is one of the best things of its type I have ever read. (...) This is surely a most stimulating contribution to Wagner Scholarship, and one that will change the direction of all future investigations.”**

JOHN CERULLO: President of Amadeus Press and of Limelight Editions – Proscenium Publishers:

- (10/27/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and to my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“The work is wonderful, complete in scope and brilliant. (...) Every publisher has a personality and usually, when the submission is of such high quality as yours, it isn’t a matter of the work being rejected because it shouldn’t be published and isn’t worthy, it is simply a matter of there not being a good fit or match with the particular “personality” of the publisher. That is the case here.”**

GLEN WOLFSEN:

- (5/1/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“Thank you very much for sending me the introduction and further information on your new book on Wagner’s Ring. I appreciate this tremendous project. I have only had time to read through this material once, but from what I have absorbed of it, the conception and scope are truly breathtaking. Obviously no one has attempted this type of synthesis nor has one been able to back it up and illustrate it as fully and carefully. My background is in theology, philosophy, psychology, mythology, music and art. With this rather wide and eclectic history I can even more comprehend and appreciate how this book will make an impact in various disciplines to the enrichment of them all and even toward a more unified understanding of the thread that exists among them. Please accept my brief thanks for this more than valuable material. I am very excited about it and look forward to its publication and to my reading (more than once I am sure). (...) I will also do what ever I can to promote this book for the good of all who may respond to this profound event in the world of Wagnerian love and study. I agree that anyone with a concern for the meaning of life and the destiny of our species will need to come to grips with this book’s message and world-view as it reflects that of Wagner himself.”**
- (5/10/04:) **“I appreciate your communication and look forward to having the time to write to you with broader and deeper comments on what for me at least is a most significant breakthrough in Wagner understanding/research in a very long time!”**

ALBERT REINER: A Physicist (liquid state theoretical physics) residing in Norway:

- (7/11/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“... I did indeed find a number of your points significant and interesting; as an example let me mention the parallelism of the bird in Siegfried and the shepherd’s melody in Tristan that I had failed to notice so far.”**
- (10/16/04:) **“... I had to drive from Trondheim, where I now live, to Vienna ..., and back again. During those ... drives I took advantage of the occasion to listen to the whole Ring very attentively. ... In a couple of places I really thought that your view of ... the Ring did add to my understanding, or that I could see that some things certainly fit your interpretation very well. ... I feel I owe you a big Thank You for enhancing my experience of the Ring.”**
- (10/20/04:) **“By now you have convinced me that your whole approach is indeed worthwhile so that I will certainly buy a copy once it is published.”**

- (10/25/04 – Responding to my following remark: “The final stage in this process of interpretation was a comprehensive review of the four key works by Feuerbach which were known to have influenced Wagner, and I found, to my delight, that the 600 or so passages from Feuerbach which correspond with over 1,000 from Wagner’s writings and recorded remarks, also cumulatively describe my own interpretation. This is a key point because I wrote a 130 page study containing my interpretation of Wagner’s four mature music-dramas in 1983, before I’d ever read anything by Feuerbach, and it now turns out that I was able to reconstruct virtually the entirety of Feuerbach’s philosophy, in full ignorance of it, just by interpreting Wagner’s four mature music-dramas as if they were one single philosophy. This cannot possibly be an accident: we are talking about virtually hundreds of points of agreement here”:) **“I find this a very intriguing and impressive achievement. Maybe this would make for a good argument in the introduction to your book?” (...)** **By now I am quite sure it would be a major loss if you were not able to publish your book”**

KIMBERLY CORNISH: Australia:

- (5/1/04 In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and to my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I read your stuff with growing interest and enthusiasm. (...) This is just a note to say that I think your work is terrific. (...) Unlike most Wagner commentators (Newman, Cooke, Tanner and Magee excepted) you have something worthwhile to say and it ought to see the light of day in print.”**

PETER CRESSWELL: ORGANON ARCHITECTURE, Auckland, New Zealand:

- (11/11/04 In response to my introductory article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and to my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I did find your intro a very interesting read, and like all similarly thoughtful works on Wagner very thought-provoking. (...) I wish you well with publication – an appearance in book form for what you’ve written is certainly richly deserved. I look forward to having a copy on the shelf in my own small but growing Wagner library.”**

MICHAEL MOUNTAIN: Alumnus of Oxford University, presently residing in Angel Canyon, Utah:

- (4/4/91 In response to my talk “Can Nothung Really Draw Advantage from Alberich’s ‘Noth’?”:) **“I was struck by everything in the transcript of your lecture. The fundamental notion that the Ring is consciousness rings all the right bells. (...) And I see, just from the quick overview of the other three works, Tristan, Meistersinger and Parsifal, that you have a yet deeper understanding of the whole than I had imagined. Really very inspired. (...) I can tell you ... that the work and effort you have put into this has been worth**

every minute, and that you have seen something most profound – not only in the works of Wagner, but in your own right.”

- (5/4/91 – In response to my study of “Parsifal”:] **“And this, of course, is where you have seen into the totality of what Wagner is saying, in a way that no one else has that I have ever come across. So that’s why I was completely stunned as I leafed through your letter, saying to myself: Good grief, he’s seen the entire thing! (...) Your points about Wotan, Erda, Siegfried and fear are extremely brilliant, and I had never seen any of that.”**

A.C. DOUGLAS:

- (5/2/04: In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“Just finished reading your first-rate book proposal, and ... all I can say is it makes my mouth water ... for the actual book. ... it’s beautifully written, most comprehensive, and – most importantly – tantalizing. I do hope you manage to secure a publisher for your book ..., and would appreciate your informing me should that come to pass. I want that book!”**

CRUZ TIJERINA:

- (5/3/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and to my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I’d like to extend my congratulations for taking the necessary steps to bring to fruition this project you’ve been working on for over 30 years. Needless to say, as a devoted Wagnerian, I more than look forward to get my hands on a copy of your book, which I am sure will be published soon. Despite the fact that I have obviously not read your book yet, I am almost sure that it will be a very insightful reading into Wagner’s Ring. I read the transcript of your lectures at the Wagner Society and was positively impressed by the different angles that you take on a work I have known for so long and that suddenly made me look at it in a different light.**

Have you also considered publishing it as an e-book? Given the market your work will appeal to Wagner scholars, music lovers, etc. I believe this could also be an interesting option. In any case, please do keep me informed about the progress you are making and please keep me in your list of people that will DEFINITELY acquire your book and read it with interest.”

DICK: contributor to Lichtalberich's message board f24708.siteboard.de:

- (7/15/01 – Responding to my having gone offline in order to concentrate on completing my book:) **“Is it me or do I detect a trend in the subject matter of postings as being dominated by tedious discussions of the relative merits of old and obscure recordings? I suppose that these posters are avid ... record collectors, but what has happened to the far more interesting discussions of the substance of Wagner's works? Where are the Alberich 2000's [i.e., Paul Heise] with their provocative analysis and interpretations?”**

ANSELM: Contributor to the Wagner-on-the-Web message board:

- (10/19/00:) **“I'd have to say that the exchange involving Alberich00 and Laon [Laon, a leading contributor to Wagner-on-the-Web discussions, had challenged me to a debate on my talk: “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole”, which consumed hundreds of pages and many months] (or, for that matter, any exchange involving either of those two) has to be worth its weight in gold. Keep it up, fellas – I've learned at least as much from you two over the last few months as I have from any single book I've ever read on Wagner. (...) ... the rest of us are reading and learning from you two!”**
- (5/2/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **[re my letter and attachments] “... having seen the letter and just started to flick through the proposal, they sound extremely exciting! (...) Your list of referees is very impressive indeed! I was particularly struck by Dr. Dunning's comment: ‘ ... you presented enough supporting evidence to convince me that you are representing things that Wagner believed and therefore it is reasonable to conclude that those beliefs had a significant effect on his creation of Der Ring Des Nibelungen.’ This on its own would make me extremely anxious to read the whole thing – I'm constantly on the lookout for the truth about Wagner (...) I think it's widely agreed that Wagner has received more than his fair share of misunderstanding, whether negative or positive, and any attempt such as yours to present Wagner rather than what people say (often at third, fourth, or twentieth-hand) about him is to be applauded.”**

TIMOTHY FISHER: A Greek Orthodox seminary student from Monsey, New York, with whom I carried on a debate about the RING's meaning for several years:

- (Late Spring of 1991:) **“Let me thank you for the thoroughness with which you have pursued your ideas. They are an attempt to deal seriously with the profounder implications of RW's works and I hope this means a new seriousness in W studies will unfold. I find many insights in what you have to say, especially in the area of the inter-relationships throughout W that make him coherent”**

WILLIAM: Contributor to the Wagner-on-the-Web message board:

- (5/17/01 – In response to my talk “The RING as a Whole”:) **“I have read your interpretation of Wagner’s RING many times. It is excellent and I believe accurate. Good fortune on publishing the book!”**

CHENLEI: Contributor to the Wagner-on-the-Web message board from Shanghai, China:

- (4/16/01:) **“This weekend I read your speech to the Wagner Society of DC (“The Ring as a Whole”), and was deeply impressed by the forcefulness of your argumentation. I think you should try to publish some chapters or even sections of your book in a literary study journal first; perhaps literary men are more tolerant of radical ideas. Yes, they are radical, but the word more to the point is “fascinating”.”**

VIRGINIA ABDO: Founder of the Wagner Society of Dallas, who invited me to present my talk “Some Overlooked Aspects of RHINEGOLD” in preparation for the Wagner Society’s attendance at the Dallas Opera’s performance of RHINEGOLD:

- (2/4/98:) **“You were a big success, ... [and] many people commented to me that you had made them think about the RING in a different way.”**

DAVE SHIFRIN: Member of the Wagner Society of Dallas:

- (2/98 - Responding to my talk “Some Overlooked Aspects of RHINEGOLD”:) **“I enjoyed your presentation last month on RHINEGOLD. I would enjoy reading your book and I enclose some money to cover sending me a copy.”**

JANICE ROSEN: Founder of the Wagner Society of Washington, DC; Contributor to the Wagner-on-the-Web message board: Ms. Rosen has offered to archive my most important research documents by placing them with the Public Library System of Washington, DC, so that various byproducts of my study of the RING and Wagner’s other operas and music dramas can be disseminated to interested students and scholars:

- (8/31/01:) **“I look forward to reading your book. Please keep in touch on its progress. (...) I thoroughly enjoyed your presentation on your theories at the Wagner Society of Washington, DC program over a year ago and your writings on the Wagner Message Board. (...) I have learned a lot from you.”**

JOHN: Contributor to the Wagner-on-the-Web message board:

- (5/5/00 – Responding to my talk “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole”:) **“I printed out your discourse ... and took it to work with me. I liked it, found it interesting, and appreciated your talking in simple matter of fact terms that made it easier to**

follow. I also found the argument very convincing and I now see the Ring in an entirely different light. I can't wait for the book Alberich!"

PIATT GRAY: Son of Andrew Gray, who translated Wagner's autobiography *Mein Leben* from German into English: published originally by Cambridge Univ. Press, and later by Da Capo Press:

- (5/3/04 – In response to the announcement I had completed the first draft of my book *The Wound that Will Never Heal*, to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole”, and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I congratulate you on completing and reaching this remarkable stage of your efforts: 30 years of devotion to an idea is most uncommon; having those 30 years produce a valuable finished product is truly extraordinary. I look forward to being able to buy a finished copy In the mean time, of course, I have several cubic feet of your work in my attic library, of which I pick out random selections periodically.”**

PAVEL:

- (5/8/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I know enough about music, the arts, and philosophy to realize that your knowledge of his works is light years ahead of anything I can hope to ever comprehend in this lifetime. It will take several re-readings of your synopsis to gain a full understanding of your theses but I am impressed. I wish you luck in finding a publisher as it seems you have a lot to offer.”**

CHRISTINE ROTHAUER: The Richard Wagner Society of South Australia:

- (10/16/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I really liked your idea for a new book on the Ring. I am copying the attachments which I am going to give to our President Brian Coghlan. (...) I just rang him and he would be interested to include you in the first of our Wagner symposia on November 21. You could speak during the round table.**

If you can't make it now, we would like to have you next year for one of our lectures. Probably in April.

- (10/20/04:) **“I shall have a word with the different presidents during the Ring. I shall also have a word with the President of the New Zealand society**
- (10/21/04:) **“I have spoken with the President of the Western Australia [Wagner] Society I have mentioned your name and said we could all try to bring you here and share the cost. He seemed interested. I shall speak to the other presidents during the Ring and ‘taste the water’ so to speak.”**

HENRY FOGEL:

- (6/23/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and to my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I ... read the attachments and am intrigued by your ideas, and I look forward to reading the full book, and getting a deeper understanding of your explorations and your views.”**

FATHER JAMES O’LEARY:

- (5/17/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and to my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I am a Greek Orthodox Priest in Boca Raton, Florida who is maniacal about Wagner. I have devoured everything I can find on the subject and eagerly await the publishing of your book. Put me down for a first edition.”**

TERRI STUART: Program Coordinator and Treasurer of the Wagner Society of Northern California:

- (6/22/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I currently have speakers in place through July 2005. (...) I will contact you after the first of the year when we start booking for Fall 2005 or earlier if I receive any cancellations of speakers.”**

ROBIN HOBBS: Member of the Manchester Wagner Society in Britain:

- (10/16/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I think it is important, what you have to say, and should be available to as wide an audience as possible.”**

LEONARDO:

- (5/19/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“It was with great interest (and some surprise) that I read the email you sent me a few days ago. I appreciate very much your project, and you can count on me for any further requests. ... I’m always open to serious, competent Wagnerians”**

RICHARD LOEB:

- (4/30/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“Sounds like it might be a worthy completion of what Derek Cooke started in “I Saw the World End”. Best of luck in finding a publisher!!!! I’ll be reading with great interest.”**

MICHAEL SINCLAIR: Editor, The Opera Critic, Auckland, New Zealand:

- (5/26/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“Thanks for sending me this information on your book. I must say that it sounds very interesting. However, there is probably not much I can do to assist you until you can find a publisher and the work goes into print. When that happens I would be more than happy to give the book some publicity on The Opera Critic.”**

RICHARD SMITH:

- (4/30/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*: **“Of course I am astonished by the enormity of your undertaking and I wish that I had ... academic credentials to appreciate the subtleties of your book.**
- (5/5/04:) **“From what little I know of your work you have produced a brilliant study confirming most higher level considerations into a coherent whole. But the underlying creative spark by its nature remains elusive and probably unknowable.”**

PATRICK SWINKELS: Director of The Wagner [online] Library, and member of the Flemish Wagner Society:

- (4/30/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“I’m very interested in your study of Wagner’s Ring and other dramas, and hope you will find a publisher (have you considered on-line publishers ... ?). (...) I’ve read about your eventful path in writing your study on the humanities.music.composers.wagner newsgroup and wish you all the best.”**

JON E. SZOSTAK, Sr.:

- (6/2/04 – In response to my article “The ‘Ring’ as a Whole” and my book proposal for *The Wound that Will Never Heal*:) **“Please let me know where and when you speak in Chicago.”**