

WAGNER AND THE ROMANTIC HERO

Few major artists have aroused the ire and adulation of successive generations as persistently as Richard Wagner. The centre of controversy during his lifetime, when he died he was the most idolized man in Germany. Little has changed since then. In this book based on lectures delivered at the Bayreuth Festival, Simon Williams explores the reason for this adulation and antipathy by examining one of the most contested aspects of Wagner's work, his treatment of the hero. He begins by defining heroism as it was understood in Wagner's time and then explores the phenomenon of heroism and the hero in all thirteen of the stage works. He concludes with a survey of how the Wagnerian hero and the idea of heroism has been interpreted on the modern stage. Williams offers a theatrical and cultural reevaluation of one of the most enduring and controversial figures in the history of the arts.

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*For
Pene and Clive*

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Note on abbreviations of sources

All references to Wagner's prose writings are taken from two editions: Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Julius Kapp, 14 vols. (Leipzig: Hesse & Becker, n.d. [1914]), which is abbreviated in the notes to *GS*, and Richard Wagner, *Prose Works*, tr. William Ashton Ellis, 8 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1893), abbreviated in the notes to *PW*. All translations from *GS* are my own. Extensive reference is also made to *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, ed. and annotated by Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, tr. Geoffrey Skelton, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978–80), abbreviated in the notes to *CD*.