

## **“But, of course, the real villain is Wagner”: On Richard Wagner’s Appearances in Fiction** (in Hebrew)

NAPHTALI WAGNER

**English abstract:** Richard Wagner is a welcome guest in fiction, because it loves villains. In fact, fiction frequently abuses him and presents everything about him and his legacy in a negative light. Wagner, the prophet of Gesamtkunstwerk, the “total work of art,” sold himself to the world as a complex package deal; so it is no surprise that when people consider his legacy they find it difficult to separate his art from his character, harshly polemic theoretical writings, and antisemitism. Even if we manage to isolate his art from all these other elements, however, we can still identify its potential to be transformed into “demonic” literary material. The repulsive quality that runs through and through Wagner’s work can be called over-expressiveness, artistic superfluity, disproportionate sublimity, and similar terms. His arsenal of radical means of expression and their development and sophistication to the farthest limit is sometimes perceived, rightly or wrongly, as an instrument for the self-aggrandizement of a brutal megalomaniac who forces himself on the world.

The article looks at diverse examples of Wagner’s appearances in literature over the years. It presents and analyzes passages by Herman Hesse, Thomas Mann, Thomas Bernhard, E. M. Forster, Haruki Murakami, Shulamith Hareven, and others. What all these excerpts have in common is the negative connotation they attach to Wagner and his work. The present writer sees it appropriate to add that he himself is an ardent admirer of Wagner’s music dramas.

**Keywords:** Wagner, Fiction, Demonic, Hesse, Mann, Forster, Bernhard