

## *The Supporting Cast*

*Cosima von Bülow Wagner, widow and impresario*

Ludwig will have to forgive me, for I shall  
never see Starnberger See  
as the scene of an ending. Richard and I  
conceived Isolde there (though  
Ludwig never knew, nor that he'd played a role,  
placing the *Villa Pellet*  
at the Master's disposal). An ending, yes,  
for Hans and me, and much less  
the beginning of an end, much more the end  
of a beginning. Hans un-  
derstands this as well as anyone. He knows  
that all things are important  
only so far as they relate to *The Work*,  
the Master's, and mine, since I  
alone am left now to see that things are done  
as He would have wished. But this,  
too, is an event in our lives; after all,  
the king was a good soldier  
in the Great War and well deserves his medals  
of honor—for loyalty,  
for service. That's it: one for each of the two  
wreaths he placed on the Coffin.  
If for nothing else, he will be remembered  
for this, I'm sure—a noble  
benefactor at times of greatest incon-

venience to Art. But—and this  
is to be regretted, by him as much as  
anyone—Ludwig was not  
as trustworthy as we had first hoped. In truth,  
he could have saved me writing  
those beseeching letters to secure his last-  
minute support. It was be-  
neath the Master's dignity that I should be  
forced to do so, and had he  
not wasted his time and (our dear) money  
on his infantile castles,  
His work in Bayreuth might have moved along more  
smoothly. In fact, Richard might  
have lived longer. . . . Besides, even they, Ludwig's  
castles, owe more of their praise  
to the Master who inspired them than to this  
altogether less gifted,  
albeit passionate, pupil. Finally,  
in the beginning, those months  
in Munich, Ludwig could have prevented us  
the greater indignity  
of having to deceive him about our . . . what  
we'll call *undressed* rehearsals  
for marriage. I suppose that letter I wrote  
—dictated, actually,  
by Richard—denying rumors of our  
adultery and pleading  
for Ludwig to stifle the scandalmongers,

to demand some decorum,  
is destined now for print along with the rest.

Indeed, there is a good deal  
left for the sorting out of posterity.

My deepest regret is that  
I won't be there to oversee it. For now  
my work . . . *His* work? . . . our work  
goes on. We did all we could for poor Ludwig.

If the histories are less  
than kind to him . . . well, but what can one hope for  
being what he was: servant

to Munich and king of the beer philistines?

We cannot all play the lead.