

CHAPTER ONE

The Rise and Fall of Nietzschean Anti-Semitism

REACTIONS OF ANTI-SEMITES PRIOR TO 1900

Discussions and remarks about Jews and Judaism can be found throughout Nietzsche's writings, from the juvenilia and early letters until the very end of his sane existence. But his association with anti-Semitism during his lifetime culminates in the latter part of the 1880s, when Theodor Fritsch, the editor of the *Anti-Semitic Correspondence*, contacted him. Known widely in the twentieth century for his *Anti-Semites' Catechism* (1887), which appeared in forty-nine editions by the end of the Second World War, Fritsch wrote to Nietzsche in March 1887, assuming that he harbored similar views toward the Jews, or at least that he was open to recruitment for his cause.¹ We will have an opportunity to return to this episode in chapter five, but we should observe that although Fritsch erred in his assumption, from the evidence he and the German public possessed at the time, he had more than sufficient reason to consider Nietzsche a like-minded thinker. First, in 1887 Nietzsche was still associated with Richard Wagner and the large circle of Wagnerians, whose ideology contained obvious anti-Semitic tendencies. Nietzsche's last published work on Wagner, the deceptive encomium *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876), may contain the seeds of Nietzsche's later criticism of the composer, but when it was published, it was regarded as celebratory and a sign of Nietzsche's continued allegiance to the Wagnerian cultural movement. Nietzsche's break with Wagner occurred gradually during the 1870s, although it may have been punctuated by particular affronts, but from Nietzsche's published writings we can detect an aggressive adversarial position only with the treatises composed in 1888, *The Case of Wagner*, which appeared in that year, and *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, which was published in 1895 after his lapse into insanity. Nietzsche's closest friends retained their connection to Wagner; Franz Overbeck, for example, the Basler professor of New Testament Exegesis and Old Church History who had been close to Nietzsche

since their time together on the faculty of the Swiss institution,² was the head of the local Wagner society, and Malwida von Meysenbug,³ with whom Nietzsche was on good terms for almost two decades, was a fervent adherent of Wagner. The break with Wagner that Nietzsche felt so strongly was almost impossible to perceive from the outside. Second, Nietzsche appeared to be closely associated with anti-Semitism through his brother-in-law, Bernhard Förster, who was a member of the extended Wagner circle. Förster, a Gymnasium teacher in Berlin, was well known for his anti-Semitic convictions and one of the initiators of the notorious Anti-Semites' Petition in 1880, which demanded severe restrictions on rights for Jews and Jewish immigration. He married Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth in 1885 and left with her the following year to found a pure German colony in Paraguay. Third, Nietzsche's publishers were known for their anti-Semitic proclivities; both Wilhelm Fritsch, who was originally Wagner's publisher, and Ernst Schmeitzner, with whom Nietzsche worked from the third *Untimely Meditation* until the third part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–85), were involved with anti-Semitic agitation. In *Schmeitzner's International Monthly*, whose subtitle after 1882 was *Journal for the General Association Combating Judaism*, we find frequent advertisements for Nietzsche's writings;⁴ any reader of this journal might well assume that Nietzsche harbored the same racist sentiments as his publisher. Finally, we should not discount that Nietzsche's early writings, which adopted many of the Judeophobic motifs found in Wagner's critique of modernity, and his later works, which implicated the Jews in slave morality and decadence, could easily have convinced Fritsch—as well as others—that Nietzsche's interest in anti-Semitic politics was greater than it actually was. An outsider unacquainted with Nietzsche's journals and private remarks in correspondence would have been completely justified in concluding that Nietzsche was a potential participant in the widespread and disparate movement that encompassed not only professors like Heinrich von Treitschke or court officials like Adolf Stöcker but also the well known philosopher and socialist Eugen Dühring and the celebrated cultural figure Richard Wagner.

In general, however, Nietzsche's relationship to Jews and Judaism was infrequently thematized in commentary written during his lifetime and into the first decade of the twentieth century. Although it is likely that some individuals, like Fritsch, simply assumed Nietzsche harbored anti-Semitic convictions, Nietzsche's remarks on Jews were infrequent and ambiguous enough that they did not constitute an emphasis in these initial discussions of his thought. In the early years of his reception Nietzsche was much more appealing for his general oppositional attitude, and accordingly he was read

and admired by many writers and critics who identified with his polemics against the status quo and his vaguely defined vision of the future. In some instances he received praise from aesthetically inclined writers, and often they highlighted his early work on Greek tragedy, his emphasis on the irrational creativity of the Dionysian, and his criticism of philistinism in German culture. For many of these Nietzsche enthusiasts, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–85), Nietzsche’s most literary work, provided both inspiration and the possibility to flaunt one’s exegetical skills. Others placed his observations on morality in the center of their reception. Nietzsche was often considered a keen observer of the foibles in Wilhelmine society and someone who did not hesitate to expose the hypocrisy of middle-class norms while envisioning a new, emancipatory, and more natural moral code. Those who opposed Christianity, or who believed that Christianity had betrayed its original teachings and mission, could admire Nietzsche for his ruthless criticism of the Church and its oppressive restriction on human development. Nietzsche especially intrigued members of politically oppositional groups, even if Nietzsche excoriated the groups’ doctrines in his writings. We find an eager reception among anarchists and non-Marxist socialists, despite Nietzsche’s overt and repeated rejection of their doctrines. In a little-known play from 1902 titled *Children: A High School Comedy*, the son of a staid member of the middle class reports to a classmate: “Nietzsche is nonsense, father says, a hack and a social democrat.”⁵ Because of the conservative nature of German society, Nietzsche’s adversarial profile made him initially more attractive to the left. This attraction extended well beyond German borders; in the initial commentary in the United States, for example, Nietzsche is appreciated as a man sympathetic to the working-class struggle and a champion of individual liberties. Indeed, translations of Nietzsche’s writings in the United States very likely appeared first in *Liberty*, the anarchist journal Benjamin Tucker edited.⁶ What fascinated leftist and left-leaning intellectuals about Nietzsche was not his views on socialism, anarchism, or feminism, but rather his vivid expressions of contempt toward the institutions of middle-class society, which they also rejected. Nietzsche could be an uncomfortable confederate, and even admirers admitted that his philosophy had glaring shortcomings, but long before he became identified with the anti-Semitic racism of the political right, we find him serving as an inspiration for intellectuals of the left, for aesthetically minded individuals outside of mainstream culture, and for outsiders to Wilhelmine society.⁷

Among those early commentators were writers and thinkers who were Jewish or from Jewish backgrounds. But for the most part they too studiously avoided discussions of anti-Semitism in Nietzsche’s thought. Even Max

Nordau, cofounder with Theodor Herzl of the World Zionist Organization and a searing critic of Nietzsche's philosophy, skirts any possible relationship to Judeophobic sentiments in Nietzsche's writings. In *Degeneration* (1892), Nordau does emphasize the role Jews play in the origins of slave morality and cites relevant passages from the *Genealogy of Morals* (1887), in which Jews and "Israel" are blamed for overthrowing a previous moral system of values, obviously preferable to Nietzsche and identified with aristocratic norms as well as superior physical strength and will. He recognizes as well that Nietzsche's influence has extended to individuals we today associate with anti-Semitism, noting that Julius Langbehn's *Rembrandt as Educator* (1890) is modeled on Nietzsche's early *Untimely Meditation, Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874). But among the many intellectual sins Nietzsche commits, according to Nordau, anti-Semitism is not included. He accuses Nietzsche of "insane gibberish," of "wild assertions," of "delirious sallies," and of "fabulous stupidity and abecedarian ignorance"; his system is characterized as "a collection of crazy and inflated phrases"; Nordau describes him as an egomaniac and a sadist, who was "obviously insane from birth, and his books bear on every page the imprint of insanity"; and he is associated with megalomania, mysticism, false individualism, and aristocratism. But Nordau never comments on Nietzsche's relationship to the Judeophobic tendencies of the era.⁸ Nordau, of course, may have considered it obvious that Nietzsche was anti-Semitic. In the works of other Jewish writers of the era we find this association asserted with the same sort of evidence Nordau produces. In Bernard Lazare's study *L'Antisémitisme: Son histoire et ses causes* from 1894, for example, Nietzsche is grouped together with Eugen Dühring as part of "Christian anti-Semitism":

After Dühring, Nietzsche, in his turn combated Jewish and Christian ethics, which according to him are the *ethics of slaves* as contrasted with *the ethics of masters*. Through the prophets and Jesus, the Jews and the Christians have set up low and noxious conceptions which consist in the deification of the weak, the humble, the wretched, and sacrificing to it the strong, the proud, the mighty.⁹

Lazare's reference to Nietzsche is fleeting, however; although he is included in this survey of anti-Semitic tendencies of the times, his work does not warrant more than this brief mention. We might justifiably conclude that for most early commentators, both Jewish and non-Jewish, Nietzsche's attitude toward the Jews was of little interest.¹⁰ There may have been general and tacit agreement that he had much in common with more noted anti-Semites of the Wilhelmine period, but other items in his writings attracted more attention, and for those concerned with prominent anti-Semites, there

existed a sufficiently large selection and variety of anti-Jewish writing from which to choose without needing to have recourse to Nietzsche.

The only critics of Nietzsche who seemed overly concerned about his attitude toward the Jews before the turn of the century were the anti-Semites themselves. As we will see later, after receiving an unequivocal rebuke from Nietzsche in two letters, Fritsch not only ceased courting him for the anti-Semitic cause but also published an extremely harsh criticism of his thought, especially regarding the Jewish Question. Once Nietzsche's assault on the anti-Semitic movement in his late works became better known, other anti-Semitic commentators followed suit. One of the most vituperative accounts of Nietzsche's philosophy occurred in 1896 in five consecutive issues of the *Modern Spirit of the People*, a journal that was published for only six years, from 1894 to 1899, and was subsequently relaunched as *Personalist and Emancipator* by its guiding spirit, Eugen Dühring, continuing publication until 1922, a year after Dühring's death. The article, "Friedrich Nietzsche, Part of the Jewish and Lunatic Question," was authored by "–t –n," but the anonymity was lifted in 1931 when the author, Dühring's disciple Ernst Jünemann, republished the essay in a short book format.¹¹ By the time Jünemann's original essay appeared Nietzsche had started to attract considerable attention among his compatriots after nearly two decades of neglect during the 1870s and 1880s. In the same year that the serialized critique of Nietzsche was published, Heinrich Mann wrote that Nietzsche was such "a modish philosopher" (*Modephilosoph*) that it was difficult to assess his true importance.¹² Three years prior to Mann's utterance, the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies composed a pamphlet titled "Nietzsche Nitwits" in which he criticized Nietzsche's views on morality and all those who mindlessly borrowed them. And in 1897 Tönnies would write a text rebuking *The Nietzsche Cult*, which had appropriated Nietzsche in the false hopes of liberation.¹³ Jünemann is therefore writing in the initial phases of Nietzsche's burgeoning popular reception in Germany, and he feels justified in dealing at the outset with the reasons that Nietzsche was suddenly being accorded such widespread attention. In keeping with the anti-Semitic tenor of the journal, he attributes Nietzsche's fame to Jewish advocates:

The writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, who several years ago fell into a state of deep derangement, are currently being purchased and read with great enthusiasm by the public since Hebrew advertisements in particular have propped him up, and Jewish opinion, as is well known, is unfortunately fashionable, which is evidence of how low the intellectual and moral level of today's dominating social powers has sunken.¹⁴

The author, who is transparently acting as the mouthpiece for his mentor, feigns regret at having to take up this topic at all, but rationalizes that since Nietzsche is currently influencing so many people and therefore exercising an unhealthy effect on German society, he must deal with subjects that in themselves have no “internal value.” Much of the article is spent on an account of Nietzsche’s illogical conclusions and apodictic claims, and because Dühring and his thought are the foundation for the periodical, throughout Jünemann portrays Nietzsche as the lesser intellect who envies the superior philosophical insights of Dühring, trying unsuccessfully to present arguments and hypotheses that challenge his more renowned Berlin rival.

Jünemann describes Nietzsche’s philosophical trajectory as a steady decline into insanity and Judeophilia. After a promising beginning when he was engaged productively with Richard Wagner and Arthur Schopenhauer, he strayed from the nationalist and anti-Semitic path in his aphoristic period and descended into irrational argumentation and pandering to Jewish interests in his last writings. In the fourth part of his article Jünemann argues at length that Nietzsche stole his most important insights in his later works from Dühring, but modified them in such a way to make them a virtual parody of the original; ultimately, they amount to little more than an “unsuccessful attempt at plagiarism.”¹⁵ But Jünemann reserves his most venomous attacks for Nietzsche’s perverse, because supportive, relationship to Jews and Judaism. He claims that despite some apparently critical remarks about Jews, they remain for Nietzsche “a non plus ultra of intellectual abilities and powerful will”; they are the true bearers of culture and the creator of values. In reality, of course, Jünemann maintains that Jews are “the opposite of what Nietzsche believes them to be, namely parasites destructive of peoples, culture, and morals.” Fortunately, continues Jünemann, anti-Semitic doctrine has penetrated far enough into contemporary German thought that its assertions and teachings have become common knowledge, and “every normally thinking and perceiving individual can confirm the correctness of these claims on every Hebrew specimen that crosses his path.” Ultimately we are left with the choice of believing that Nietzsche is “the greatest psychologist” and nature is a “comedian,” or considering nature to be true and honest and Nietzsche to be “spiritually and morally defective.”¹⁶ To a large extent Nietzsche’s philosophy is reduced to either illogical nonsense or regarded as propaganda for Jewish interests. At one point his writings are compared to a “Jewish junk shop.”¹⁷ Jünemann suggests what amounts to almost a conspiracy between Nietzsche and the Jews. Nietzsche achieves fame and popularity only when he repudiates Wagner and jumps on the Jewish bandwagon; he then receives favorable coverage in the press and even monetary

sponsorship of his collected works: “the publication of the many volumes appears to have been made possible only through Jewish money.” Since Nietzsche could no longer profit from these alleged subsidies, Jünemann draws Elisabeth into his account, claiming that Jewish interests similarly funded her Nietzsche biography. Indeed, so complete is Jünemann’s rejection of Nietzsche that he censures even Elisabeth’s husband, Bernhard Förster, the darling of other anti-Semitic periodicals such as Fritsch’s *Anti-Semitic Correspondence*. Förster, Jünemann contends, is a “reactionary anti-Semitic agitator,” the proponent of an “anti-Semitic Jewishness and Judaism” that harmonizes well with Jewish blood and has the effect of “watering down genuine anti-Hebraism and weakening it to the point of inefficacy.”¹⁸ Jünemann’s attacks culminate in the speculation that Nietzsche himself is Jewish, or at least that he has “Jewish blood” in his ancestry. In this manner Jünemann can more easily account for the numerous Jewish traits he detects in Nietzsche’s writings: “impudent self-indulgence that knows no bounds; cruelty; crude powers of discernment; abject worship of power and authority; a low, servile morality and mentality.” Jünemann concedes that he does not know Nietzsche’s family tree, but he concludes nonetheless from his intellectual proclivities that he must have had Jewish ancestors: “His forefathers were pastors, which does not mitigate against this assumption, since baptized Hebrews used to prefer turning to the theological trade. The family is also supposed to have emigrated from Poland, and it is well known that one finds many Hebrews there.”¹⁹ In contrast, therefore, to many casual observers who assumed a loose affiliation between Nietzsche and anti-Semitism, the anti-Semitic press not only rejects any connection with Nietzsche but also even considers his works, his reputation, and his family to be infected with the worst aspects of Jewishness.²⁰

INITIAL ATTEMPTS TO INTEGRATE NIETZSCHE BY THE RIGHT

Still some right-wing and *völkisch* nationalists, racists and anti-Semites, and proto-National Socialists found Nietzsche appealing, even prior to World War I, despite the difficulties they encountered reconciling his statements about Jews and race with the convictions they would have preferred him to hold. His attractiveness to the radical right can be explained as part of the oppositional animus almost everyone detected in his work. We should recall that until the advent of the Third Reich, radical nationalists and racists, like socialists, communists, and anarchists, considered themselves part of an adversarial movement aimed at overthrowing the status quo, whether it was

Wilhelmine Germany or, later, the Weimar Republic. Nietzsche's rhetorical assaults on the smug social order of his era had the potential to be just as provocative for the right as for the left. The difficulties right-wing intellectuals had in integrating Nietzsche into their worldview are evident in one of the earliest, more sympathetic discussions of his thought by a right-wing ideologue, Adolf Bartels's essay from 1902, "Friedrich Nietzsche and Germanness." Bartels, who composed the most influential *völkisch* history of German literature in 1901–2 and was extolled throughout the Third Reich for his exemplary accomplishments, recognizes that the radical right must struggle fiercely to retain Nietzsche—"we will not let Friedrich Nietzsche be robbed from us"—but that his many deprecatory statements about Germans and Germany make it a problematic appropriation. Bartels assures his readers, however, that Nietzsche's negative remarks about Germany have nothing in common with similar pejorative statements by Jewish writers, such as Heinrich Heine or Ludwig Börne, since these latter utterances are the consequence of racial hatred. Nietzsche's comments, although misguided, superannuated, and sometimes simply erroneous, are the result of a highly spiritual and ideal temperament. Bartels even concedes that his criticisms of the Second Empire in his early writings may have some justification, but as time went on he committed injustices toward his own people, "while simultaneously he did not tire of singing the praises of Israel, although he very well knew its true nature." Nietzsche, according to Bartels, after an initially sound period of national awareness, was gradually caught in the snares of the Enlightenment, and his turn toward Europeanism and away from German patriotism was the result of a mode of thought inimical to nationalism. With respect to the Jews Nietzsche recognized the purity, vitality, and strength of their race, as well as their potential to acquire a dominant position in European affairs. Despite this recognition, he did not advocate, as the anti-Semitic movement had from its very inception, resistance to Jewish hegemony. Bartels thus denounces Nietzsche's passivity in the face of the Jewish threat to German sovereignty, and in closing he cites a longer passage from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), composed at a time when Nietzsche had not yet succumbed to his unfortunate turn against his own people. Bartels acknowledges in this essay that Nietzsche is no anti-Semite, although he does account for his rejection of anti-Semitism in part as a reaction against his brother-in-law, and credits him with recognizing the Jews as a race that can easily obtain power over Europe and its nations.²¹

Subsequent *völkisch* commentators invented various strategies to overcome the obvious failings Bartels detected in Nietzsche's writings. Particularly in the Weimar period Nietzsche increasingly provided a fascination

for the racist right wing as he became associated with thematic complexes recognizable in retrospect as protofascist. Nietzsche's style made him more easily adaptable for the political purposes for which he was harnessed. Apart from his essayistic writings of the early 1870s, which were more obviously infused with German nationalism and anti-Jewish motifs and therefore presented fewer difficulties for the radical right, his subsequent works were composed in such a fashion that they were susceptible to many interpretations. The aphoristic writings of the late 1870s and early 1880s seem to invite the reader to pick and choose aphorisms or short sections most suitable to a given perspective or ideological direction. Similarly, *Zarathustra* with its highly symbolic passages and its biblical style suggests the need for exegesis, and over the course of the decades has been perhaps the most malleable of Nietzsche's texts. The later writings, although more essayistic in character, still lack the cohesion of more traditional linear argumentation, while the notebooks, filled with aphorisms, sketches, excerpts from other writers, and thoughts in various stages of completion, are open to many different appropriations. Moreover, Nietzsche ranges widely in the topics he included in his published and unpublished writings, from philosophical reflections on truth and epistemology to arguments on morality and religion, to observations on women and politics. The stylistic ambiguity in Nietzsche and the diverse substantive issues he broached contributed to his favorable reception from a wide spectrum of philosophical, aesthetic, and political directions over the past century and a quarter. In the realm of culture he has been viewed as an inspiration for aestheticism, futurism, impressionism, expressionism, modernism, Dadaism, and surrealism. In philosophical circles he has allegedly influenced phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism, post-structuralism, and deconstruction. On the political front he has been considered a promoter of anarchism, fascism, libertarianism, liberal democracy, and—despite his pointed polemics against the most modern manifestation of slave morality—socialism. Observers have often noted that Nietzsche's texts are much like the Bible in that they can serve as evidence for diverse and even antagonistic positions. As Kurt Tucholsky, the most renowned satirist from the Weimar Republic, commented: "Who cannot claim [Nietzsche] for their own? Tell me what you need and I will supply you with a Nietzsche citation: ... for Germany and against Germany; for peace and against peace; for literature and against literature—whatever you want."²² When opponents of *völkisch* interpretations of Nietzsche accuse the radical right of citing him out of context, they miss the point. Nietzsche himself, through stylistic and substantive strategies, decontextualized his own ideas, aiding their adoption from eager acolytes of various stripes, adhering to disparate perspectives.

Bartels emphasized that Nietzsche was a writer whose reception was disputed, and that the right should not allow him to be robbed from them. Like many others, he assumed that Nietzsche's natural home was the Germanophilic tradition that, in Bartels's view, he had regrettably abandoned in the 1870s. There are probably several reasons that the right did not want to relinquish Nietzsche to the leftist and aesthetic opposition, where he had also found allies, and certainly the enormous popularity he acquired during the first three decades of the twentieth century was a motivation for wanting to claim him for one's own cause. But there were several more specific developments that brought Nietzsche closer to *völkisch* values and made his allegedly anti-Jewish views a popular topic. Perhaps most important was the advent of the First World War. It was evident to all commentators that Nietzsche had championed war, battle, *agon*, struggle, and related notions repeatedly in his writings. While many interpreters simply considered statements concerning these terms part of a metaphorical register unrelated to actual military conflict, World War I began a longer association of Nietzsche and the goals of German militaristic and right-wing segments of society who were ultrapatriotic and at the same time xenophobic. Often the irrational hatred of foreigners extended to elements in German society considered nonnative, in particular the Jewish population. As a result his works, or portions of his works, could be read in a new chauvinistic light. His *Zarathustra*, which had sold so poorly in its first editions,²³ became requisite reading for German soldiers. It has been reported that 150,000 copies of a durable war-time edition were distributed to the troops, and 40,000 volumes were sold in 1917 alone.²⁴ Nietzsche had finally been accepted by the Germans, but ironically as the visionary proponent of a narrow-minded German patriotism. Nietzsche also became known increasingly as an inspiration for celebrated fascist or right-wing personalities. The Italian dictator Benito Mussolini had long been an enthusiastic reader of Nietzsche, and he regarded his fascist movement as the concretization of a national "will to power." Oswald Spengler, one of the most influential nationalist philosophers in the Weimar Republic and author of the two-volume *Decline of the West* (1918, 1923), proclaimed that along with Goethe, Nietzsche was his greatest inspiration: "Goethe gave me method, Nietzsche the questioning faculty—and if I were asked to find a formula for my relation to the latter I should say that I made of his 'outlook' (*Ausblick*) an 'overlook' (*Überblick*)."²⁵ And although we have no evidence that Adolf Hitler ever read a line of Nietzsche's philosophy, he certainly did not mind being associated with Nietzsche's sister and with the Nietzsche Archives in Weimar. Finally, right-wing Nietzscheans could take comfort in their ready inclusion in the activities of the Nietzsche

Archives. It would be a vast exaggeration to claim that right-wing elements controlled the Archives' program during the Weimar Republic. But certainly Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth, although she was no longer an anti-Semite and never became a National Socialist, welcomed contributions, monetary and otherwise, from diverse ideological perspectives, including a generous gift from Mussolini;²⁶ and her mother's family, the Oehlers, who were integrated into management positions, leaned further to the right and eventually became active party members. In addition, the board of directors for the Archives, while pluralist, especially in the early years of the Weimar Republic, contained several right-wing appointees, including Spengler, who joined the board in 1923. From 1914 until the end of the Weimar Republic, radical nationalist and *völkisch* observers could easily discern an appreciable expansion in Nietzsche's right-wing profile.

NIETZSCHE AND THE RIGHT IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

The demise of the Second Empire and the Hohenzollern dynasty, the outbreak of World War I, and the imposition of a democratic republic on Germany by the victorious nations opened up new interpretive possibilities for right-wing Nietzsche enthusiasts and different strategies for connecting him with anti-Semitism. While the anti-Semitic movement of his own time had viewed him as an unsympathetic rival for attention, decrying him as a philo-Semite who betrayed the nationalist cause, in the Weimar Republic Nietzsche became a prescient thinker who justifiably expressed dissatisfaction with the half-hearted measures of the Wilhelmine era. Nietzsche's acceptance by the right wing is evidenced in many ways. Arno Schickedanz, for example, who later served in the "Rosenberg Office,"²⁷ in a book whose title betrays its *völkisch* and anti-Semitic content, *Social Parasitism in the Life of the People* (1927), simply includes a citation from Nietzsche (incorrectly quoted) to bolster his case for the ineluctability of the racist cause.²⁸ In Franz Haiser's *The Jewish Question from the Standpoint of Master Morality* (1926), a citation from *Zarathustra* supplies the motto for the entire book, and Haiser devotes a short chapter to Nietzsche, excusing his failings as a product of his era: "Nietzsche died much too early; for the chaos that he created was even more confused than the ruins of the heathen world out of which Christ established his empire." He admits that Nietzsche is frequently "culturally leftist and contradictory," but in an attempt to bind him to his compatriots he asserts, "only the German is able to comprehend completely Nietzsche's greatness." Although opponents of the Jews on the right may often harbor

convictions that differ from his, Haiser concludes nonetheless that Nietzsche provides the appropriate direction for his movement and “is irreplaceable for us.”²⁹ Finally, we could instance a collection like *Clarification: 12 Authors and Politicians on the Jewish Question*, published shortly before the demise of the Weimar Republic in 1932. Unusual about this volume is that it contains a variety of different vantage points; not all of the contributors are pro-Nazi or even right wing; three are Jewish. Of the contributors only Nietzsche, however, was no longer alive at the time of its publication, and the section devoted to his views consists of excerpts drawn from *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) and *The Antichrist* (1895).³⁰ The intent of the volume is obviously to recruit Nietzsche for anti-Semitism. In the first essay, which serves to an extent as an introduction, Ernst Johannsen, who edited the Nietzsche selections, admits that Nietzsche’s writings are “rich enough” to support many different arguments, but in *The Antichrist* Nietzsche is incontrovertibly anti-Semitic: he is “the most profound adversary of the Jews that one can imagine!” Citing further from *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Johannsen concludes again that his remarks should be considered Judeophobic. He exhibits a “love-hate” relationship with his fellow Germans, but “in the course of his observations he provides a serious assessment of anti-Semitism, in which his un-Christian, highly political position becomes unambiguously clear.” Johannsen asserts that Nietzsche supported enmity against the Jews as understandable and even necessary, and he concludes that those who find Nietzsche in opposition to anti-Semitism simply quote him out of context.³¹ In *Clarification*, as in other texts from the Weimar period, we encounter a confirmation of Nietzsche’s adherence to anti-Semitism. In contrast to the anti-Semites of his own era, most right-wing Weimar critics went out of their way to select Nietzsche’s most provocative anti-Jewish statements or to interpret more equivocal utterances in a manner favorable to their cause, integrating them into a coherent, Judeophobic worldview.

By the end of the Weimar Republic the right wing had succeeded in constructing a Nietzsche interpretation that rivaled leftist, moderate, and aesthetic views. We should recall, of course, that Nietzsche’s *völkisch* credentials were never unchallenged by some elements of the radical right. Jünnemann’s book appeared in 1931, and Nietzsche continued to be unacceptable and unaccepted by many anti-Semites and National Socialists even during the Third Reich. But by the end of the 1920s his right-wing credentials had achieved widespread acceptance. Crucial as a culmination for the rehabilitation of Nietzsche on the right and for the transition of Nietzsche studies into the National Socialist era was Alfred Baeumler’s *Nietzsche the Philosopher and Politician* from 1931. Unlike many of the official philosophers in

the Third Reich, Baeumler had acquired a reputation and a position during the Weimar Republic. He had written on Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Bachofen before he turned to Nietzsche in the early 1930s. Closely associated with Alfred Rosenberg, one of the chief racist ideologues of the Third Reich, Baeumler joined the anti-Semitic Fighting League for German Culture in 1930, declared his allegiance to National Socialism before the elections in 1932, and entered the party after Hitler assumed power in January 1933. From the so-called Rosenberg Office, responsible for the education of party members, he served as principal liaison with German universities.³² His Nietzsche monograph was the most important National Socialist work on the philosopher and was reprinted several times before the end of the Second World War. In addition, Baeumler was the editor of several popular editions of Nietzsche's writing, composing afterwords and commentaries from his *völkisch* perspective.³³ Nietzsche was also the subject of many occasional remarks in Baeumler's talks.³⁴ While Nietzsche served to legitimize Baeumler in philosophical circles of the radical right, he, in turn, with his Nietzsche interpretation helped to secure the philosopher's legitimacy among radical nationalists and racists. He argued that Nietzsche's anti-German remarks must be understood in the context of Bismarck's rule and the Second Empire; his views could then be more easily harmonized with the ideology of the Third Reich, which was similarly critical of Wilhelmine political practices. "The German state of the future will not be the continuation of Bismarck's creation," Baeumler announces, "but it will be shaped in the spirit of Nietzsche and the Great War." Reconciling Nietzsche's assaults against anti-Semitism with the policies and practices of National Socialism was a more difficult task, and Baeumler, like many Nazi commentators, is compelled to employ strained arguments that are never entirely convincing. It is noticeable that the Jewish Question is seldom broached in his book, and when it is, it is mentioned only in passing and absent any insistence on Nietzsche's anti-Semitism. Baeumler is convinced, however, that Nietzsche did not have a high regard for Jews. After citing Nietzsche's contention that he has known Jews with tact and *délicatesse*, but no Germans (EH, Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe, Der Fall Wagner 3, KSA 6.363), and after recalling his laudatory comments about Georg Brandes, a Jewish scholar in Denmark who delivered the first lectures on his thought, Baeumler contends: "In his innermost being he was disinclined toward the Jews, in whom he saw the real priestly constitution, and even the flattery that he experienced from them could not alter his opinion." Nietzsche uses the Jews rhetorically, Baeumler claims, as he had used the French: as a foil to the Germans in order to goad them to greatness. Despite his highly deprecatory utterances

about Germans, Baeumler explains that “all of that is not Nietzsche’s real thoughts about the Germans; they are only exaggerations in the heat of battle. Everything is said with calculation.”³⁵ From Baeumler’s presentation we are thus left with the bald avowal of Nietzsche’s furtive patriotism and his dislike of the Jews, as well as a few flimsy explanations of why he often writes favorably about the Jewish people. But on the whole Baeumler leaves little doubt that for him Nietzsche is an important anticipator of the National Socialist state, and that his views on Jews and Judaism are, despite appearances, really in accord with prevailing anti-Semitic positions.

NIETZSCHE IN THE THIRD REICH

By the end of the Weimar Republic the basic strategies for bringing Nietzsche into the anti-Semitic fold were thus well established. Although a few philosophers under National Socialism continued to argue against Nietzsche’s appropriation for the anti-Jewish cause,³⁶ most integrated him as a precursor of the Third Reich by pointing to his early works when he was still associated with Wagner, or by citing from his late writings, where Jews are identified with slave morality and the decline of the heroic—and hence Germanic—worldview. His remarks about the anti-Semitic movement itself or his favorable comments on Jews were attributed to personal circumstances or his strained relationship to the zeitgeist. In the initial year of National Socialist rule, Gottlieb Scheffler categorizes Nietzsche accordingly as a “theoretical anti-Semite,” who grounded his anti-Christianity on anti-Semitism. In spite of his numerous Jewish friendships, Nietzsche regarded the Jewish people as the “party of all decadence instincts,” and the “history of Israel” as the “typical history of the denaturalization of natural values.”³⁷ Heinrich Härtele, Baeumler’s successor in the Rosenberg Office, was both more differentiated and more crucial for Nietzsche’s Nazi appropriation. In contrast to Baeumler, Härtele includes a section on “the Jews” in his book on Nietzsche, *Nietzsche and National Socialism*, which appeared in 1937. He recognizes first that many of Nietzsche’s views result from chance occurrences in his private life: “his attacks on anti-Semitism are conditioned by personal influences, anti-Semitic enemies, and Jewish ‘friends.’” Furthermore, Nietzsche’s putatively Lamarckian assumptions led him to believe that Jews could be assimilated into German culture, a position that Härtele claims has now been superseded by modern biological race theory. With regard to the essence of Judaism, however, Nietzsche made, in Härtele’s view, important contributions to our understanding. He anticipated racist theorists like

Schickedanz in considering the Jews as parasites on the human species. In connection with Nietzsche's discussion of Jewish values, Härtle finds that "Jewishness was never assaulted more sharply." Although Nietzsche does not do justice to the anti-Semitic movement of his own time and proposed solutions to the Jewish Question that differ from those of National Socialism, in his philosophy of values he is the "primeval enemy of everything Jewish."³⁸ Other National Socialist ideologues, such as Heinrich Römer, reached identical conclusions without any of Härtle's caveats. In "Nietzsche and the Problem of Race" Römer brings Nietzsche into close association with the theories of Arthur de Gobineau, whose *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853–55) was the most important early work to hypothesize the superiority of the Aryan race. Römer points out that Nietzsche and Gobineau were contemporaries, which is not entirely accurate; Gobineau, born in 1816, belonged to a previous generation and is contemporary with Richard Wagner, who was a genuine admirer of his writings. Nietzsche did read Gobineau, but it was Wagner's *Bayreuther Blätter* that lionized his theories, and there is little evidence that Nietzsche showed a similar enthusiasm for this type of racism. Römer, however, while admitting that Nietzsche rejected the racist thought of his own times, represented by the anti-Semitic movement—he did so "out of personal and other reasons"—nonetheless claims that Nietzsche was "in his own manner the most ardent anti-Semite that ever lived: he is the most ruthless revealer of the pernicious role that Judaism played in the intellectual development of Europe, which it played above all as Christianity." Indeed, in reviewing Nietzsche's "grandiose struggle against a millennium of decline and degeneration," Römer finds that Nietzsche was an advocate of "racial hygiene" *avant la lettre*: "To be sure Nietzsche did not yet have the word, but he had the substance no matter what he named it: struggle against decadence, or reevaluation of values, or cultivation and breeding, or overman, or 'purification of the race.'³⁹ Like Scheuffler, Härtle, Baeumler, and a host of other Nazi Nietzsche enthusiasts, Römer assesses Nietzsche as an essentially anti-Semitic philosopher whose demands accord well, *mutatis mutandis*, with those of National Socialism.⁴⁰

The philosophers in the Third Reich were not the only observers who believed that Nietzsche was well suited to the anti-Semitic cause. In the United States Crane Brinton, a Harvard historian who served for a time during World War II as chief of research and analysis in the Office of Strategic Services in London, composed in 1941 an introduction to Nietzsche's life and works that agreed wholeheartedly with contemporary German sentiments.⁴¹ Brinton does recognize that National Socialist exegetes do not always quote accurately when they seek to enlist Nietzsche as an ally. He

notes, for example, that Härtle, in citing a passage from the *Genealogy* in which Nietzsche mentions the “blond Teuton beast,” omits Nietzsche’s parenthetical qualification: “although between the old Germans and ourselves there exists scarce a psychological, let alone a physical, relationship.”⁴² Although he concedes that on occasion Nazi interpretations have to bend Nietzsche’s words to their own purposes, he finds, nonetheless, ample evidence in his own readings that substantiates the connection between the philosopher and his fascist admirers. Like Römer, Brinton believes that Nietzsche “dabbled in notions of *Rassenhygiene*” (race hygiene) and that “occasionally he comes very close indeed to the Nazi program.” Likewise his works are a veritable treasure trove for National Socialist Judeophobia:

Scattered through Nietzsche’s work is a good deal of material suitable for anti-semitic use. Nietzsche himself had Jewish friends—if one may use the word friendship of any relation between Nietzsche and another human being—and some Jewish writers have for years been among the most ardent and uncritical of Nietzscheans. Yet most of the stock of professional anti-semitism is represented in Nietzsche: the Jews are intellectuals with a grievance, hence destroyers of what makes for stability in society; they run the press and the stock-exchange, to the disadvantage of the slower-witted but more honest and healthy Gentiles; they are parasites, decadents; they are responsible for the three great evils of modern civilization—Christianity, Democracy, Marxism.

Even when Nietzsche endeavors to compliment the Jews or to be fair to them, he winds up, according to Brinton, providing “good ammunition for Nazi leaders, who have only to excise a few of his qualifying phrases.”⁴³ Brinton devotes less space and energy to exploring Nietzsche’s putative anti-Semitism and his relationship to the Jewish Question than he does to other topics that connect Nietzsche with National Socialism. But it is fair to conclude that in this important and influential monograph Brinton, like his Nazi counterparts, establishes firmly Nietzsche’s anti-Semitic credentials.

FALSE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ELISABETH FÖRSTER-NIETZSCHE

We have seen thus far how Nietzsche, originally spurned by anti-Semites as a friend of the Jews, an opponent of their movement, and a renegade from German nationalism, was eventually transformed after the First World War into a staunch proponent of anti-Semitism. In several post-World War II versions of this transformation critics assign Nietzsche’s sister Elisabeth a seminal role. Henning Ottmann, author of an important study of philoso-

phy and politics in Nietzsche's writings, claims that Nietzsche's appearance in the "ancestral chain of the fathers of anti-Semitism" is a "*chronique scandaleuse* in its own right." At the source of this "scandal" are Elisabeth and her falsifications, which included not only inaccurate presentations of his works, but also literal falsifications of texts—although Ottmann adds parenthetically that they occur mostly in the form of "fabrications and manipulation" in the correspondence. Relying on the research of Karl Schlechta, who had worked in the Nietzsche Archives during the Third Reich and edited a popular postwar edition of Nietzsche's works, Ottmann asserts that among the falsified letters were some that appeared to make concessions to anti-Semitism and that even praised Elisabeth's husband, Bernhard Förster, as an "honorable personality."⁴⁴ Ottmann's endeavor to make Elisabeth the primary cause for Nietzsche's inclusion among the forerunners of fascism is one of many such attempts in the postwar years. In the *Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, for example, the volume's editors refer to "Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, and her fascistic and racist compatriots," claiming Elisabeth's edition of *The Will to Power* (1901, 1906) was arranged in a fashion emphasizing themes that appeared "friendly to the ideals of National Socialism."⁴⁵ Later in the same volume R. J. Hollingdale, repeating the canards of earlier scholarship, abuses Elisabeth for her commercialism (although he himself enjoyed obvious commercial success with his various Nietzsche translations), and contends that "as far as she could she imposed Förster's values," that is, anti-Semitism and proto-Nazism, on the Nietzsche Archives "and adapted Nietzsche in accordance with them."⁴⁶ Perhaps the most virulent assault on Elisabeth, however, occurs in an essay by Weaver Santaniello, who labels Elisabeth a "proto-fascist," "a virulent Christian anti-Semite," and "a staunch supporter of Hitler and the Nazis."⁴⁷ According to Santaniello there is a direct line from Wagner and Elisabeth to the Third Reich; the "process of manipulating Nietzsche ... began with Elisabeth and culminated with Hitler."⁴⁸ The extent to which Elisabeth's Nietzsche is equated with the most pernicious parts of Nazism in the mind of the wider reading public, especially in the Anglophone world, is perhaps shown best in Paul Strathern's *Nietzsche in 90 Minutes*, when he asserts that after Nietzsche's mental collapse Förster-Nietzsche began "doctoring her brother's unpublished notebooks, inserting anti-Semitic ideas and flattering remarks about herself."⁴⁹ Even writers for the *New York Times* uncritically parrot these views: Simon Romero, reporting on Nueva Germania today, describes Elisabeth's post-South American activities: "While Nietzsche derided anti-Semitism and expressed disdain in correspondence with his sister for the anti-Semitic character of Nueva Germania, she went on to reinvent his legacy after his death

in 1900, transforming the philosopher into a kind of prophet for the Nazi propaganda machine.”⁵⁰ From scholarly treatises to newspaper accounts, Elisabeth has been censured not only for falsifying her brother’s writings but also for making him more palatable to the worst parts of National Socialist ideology, in particular anti-Semitism.

There are ample reasons to associate Elisabeth with anti-Semitism, and there is even some circumstantial evidence to support the claim that she welcomed her brother’s inclusion as a precursor of the Third Reich. Elisabeth grew up in the same environment as her brother, one in which there was an absence of Jews, but in the larger German society there was a good deal of unreflected anti-Jewish sentiment. In the 1870s she attached herself to the Wagnerians, and even after her brother distanced himself from the celebrated composer, her social life and connections revolved around Bayreuth and its extended circles. Once Nietzsche retired from university life, and she was no longer called upon to assist with his household, she became attracted to an ambitious and industrious anti-Semitic Wagnerian, Bernard Förster, eventually marrying him on Wagner’s birthday in 1885 and settling with him in the *völkisch*, utopian colony, Nueva Germania, in Paraguay. During her involvement with Förster, she almost assuredly absorbed and echoed his racist views, especially since one of the aims of the colonial enterprise was to escape a “Jewified” Germany. After the collapse of the colony and her husband’s suicide, she returned to Germany, where she took charge of her insane brother, his published writings, and his literary remains, and through cunning, deceit, and perseverance helped to promote Nietzsche into a cult figure of the early twentieth century, and the archives that housed Nietzsche himself until his death in 1900, and Nietzsche’s manuscripts thereafter, into a cultural center of German life. She took charge of publishing his complete works, dismissing one editor after another when they disagreed with her or countered her wishes, and allowed portions of her brother’s writings to remain unpublished for many years, while publishing other parts under titles or arranged in collections that were neither authorized by Nietzsche nor philologically sound. From early on persons working with her in the Nietzsche Archives discovered that she was suppressing certain letters penned by her beloved “Fritz” that portrayed her in an unfavorable light, and even before her death in 1935 there was either suspicion of, or evidence for, numerous forgeries, distortions, or deceptions. Politically Elisabeth, like her brother, was hostile to democracy: before 1918 she leaned toward monarchism; during the Weimar Republic she made no secret of her conservative proclivities and of her animosity toward the parliamentary

order. She admired Mussolini and spoke favorably of his fascist regime when it came to power in Italy.⁵¹ And she was flattered by the attention Hitler showered on her and the Archives in the early 1930s, speaking admiringly of him when he was appointed chancellor in January 1933. When she died on November 9, 1935, the official organs of National Socialism sang her praises, and Hitler himself attended her funeral.⁵²

Still, the notion that Elisabeth is chiefly responsible for her brother's integration into the pantheon of National Socialist philosophers and for his inclusion as a seminal anti-Semitic thinker has scant merit.⁵³ One indication of how inconsequential Elisabeth was for Nietzsche's reputation during the Third Reich is that she is rarely mentioned by the chief ideologues dealing with her brother's thought. None of the studies we have briefly reviewed above include her as a source or inspiration. The letters she doctored or forged play no role in the arguments of National Socialist interpretations, which depend entirely on either published and authorized writings or texts that Elisabeth did not manipulate. Ottmann's accusation of invented positive statements about Förster is odd, since we find Nietzsche favorably inclined toward his brother-in-law in letters that are certainly genuine. In October 1885, for example, Nietzsche writes to Overbeck that Förster "was not unsympathetic," and that he has "something sincere and noble in his being." He goes on to compliment him on his practical abilities: "it surprises me how he continuously accomplishes many things and how easily he does it" (Nr. 636, KSB 7.101–2). Like most commentators who blame Elisabeth for Nietzsche's fascist celebrity, Ottmann misunderstands the nature of Elisabeth's falsifications of the correspondence. As assistants in the Nietzsche Archives in 1937, Schlechta and Wilhelm Hoppe discovered that there existed no original manuscripts for thirty-two letters that Elisabeth had included in the fifth volume of Nietzsche's collected letters, which appeared in 1909. All but two of these letters were addressed to his sister; two were supposedly written to his mother. The letters are falsifications, but they are not entirely fiction. It seems that Elisabeth took letters or drafts of letters and doctored them to make them appear that Nietzsche had sent them to her. In addition, Elisabeth also added and subtracted phrases or entire paragraphs from these letters. As it turns out, several letters that Schlechta at first considered forgeries are real and were taken verbatim into the standard critical edition of Nietzsche's correspondence edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Several other letters are based on existing drafts and are credible at least as actual correspondence from Nietzsche's pen. Others have such mundane and innocuous content that it is difficult to understand why Elisabeth

would have included them in her edition if they were not authentic; they certainly add nothing of any significance to the ideological record, and anti-Semitism plays no part in them whatsoever.

A careful examination of Elisabeth's actions indicates that her motivation in doctoring the correspondence was primarily personal, not ideological; quite simply stated, she falsified letters to make it appear that she was as close to her brother in the 1880s as she was during the previous decade, when she actually did participate intimately in his intellectual and private life. There is only one obvious example of her manipulating a document with anti-Semitic references. It is a letter Nietzsche purportedly wrote to his mother on December 29, 1887. The authoritative Colli/Montinari edition includes this entry as a draft consisting of four paragraphs, the first of which is fragmentary; no actual letter was discovered. The earlier edition from 1909, which Elisabeth edited, includes the three nonfragmentary paragraphs, which may raise the suspicion that Elisabeth suppressed the initial paragraph.⁵⁴ Our suspicion may be heightened by the fact that in this first paragraph Nietzsche writes of anti-Semitism ruining his reputation, his sister, and his friends; he continues by maintaining that the unwanted association with the anti-Semitic party—he is likely referring to the mention of his name and Zarathustra in the *Anti-Semitic Correspondence*—is the only thing standing in the way of his fame, and that it is most fortunate that this party has now begun to attack him: “only it occurs ten years too late” (Nr. 967, KSB 8.216–17). Although it is impossible to tell whether Nietzsche deleted his angry remarks on anti-Semitism before sending the letter, his mother's answer to him makes no reference to these matters (January 17, 1888, Nr. 514, KGB 3/6.147–48). In addition, we know from other examples in his correspondence that often Nietzsche's drafts differed quite a bit from the actual letters, especially with respect to matters that were apt to be controversial. Nietzsche frequently deleted items that might upset his correspondent, or that might cause strains in their relationship. In particular Nietzsche often spared his mother from receiving angry or disturbing sentiments. We therefore have no reason to suspect that Elisabeth did not alter this particular piece of correspondence by excluding the fragmentary initial paragraph, but from the evidence we possess we can also imagine very well that the copy she published in her edition was taken from a genuine letter.⁵⁵ We should note, however, that with regard to anti-Semitism Elisabeth's edition of the correspondence contains several letters in which Nietzsche expresses his antipathy to that movement, and he accuses her of “committing a great stupidity” by marrying Förster and involving herself—and him—with someone who will always be known for his anti-Semitism.⁵⁶ In the last

letter Schlechta suspects is doctored, Nietzsche even writes of his sudden admiration for the young Kaiser (Nietzsche is referring to Wilhelm II) for opposing anti-Semitism and the conservative *Kreuzzeitung*, remarking that his sister should emulate him, and that the Kaiser would certainly understand the principle of the will to power.⁵⁷ There is no instance in his correspondence or in his writings and notebooks in which Elisabeth made Nietzsche appear favorably inclined toward anti-Semitism or adversely disposed toward Jews and Judaism. At times she appears to be solely concerned with her own image as it was reflected in her brother's comments, but anyone who has examined the actual manipulations could not possibly conclude that she was promoting a view of her brother as anti-Jewish or as someone who had sympathy with the burgeoning anti-Semitic movement of the early 1880s.

It is difficult to sustain the claim that Elisabeth made her brother appear anti-Semitic in other areas as well. In her numerous writings on Nietzsche she avoids bringing him into association with the anti-Semitic movement because she knew that he was virulently opposed to it. On numerous occasions in her biography and in other essays she informs her reader of Nietzsche's antipathy to any form of anti-Jewish sentiment. In contrast to Wagner, Elisabeth writes, "my brother was never an anti-Semite; in addition, he was never completely convinced that 'Germany, Germany' should be placed above everything,"⁵⁸ he always recognized that the Jews had done a great service for the intellectual movement in Germany, especially at the beginning of the century.⁵⁹ Similar sentiments can be found in other books and articles. Indeed, Elisabeth may be more justifiably accused of excusing or concealing her brother's anti-Jewish proclivities. As someone acquainted with Wagner and the Wagnerians, she knew very well that Nietzsche had adopted much of the racist attitude of the Meister, and that many of Nietzsche's student friends also harbored Judeophobic views. Citing anti-Jewish remarks in Nietzsche's letters from the early 1870s, however, Elisabeth claims that they reflect "Wagner's views, and not his own."⁶⁰ And although she developed an animosity toward Paul Rée, she, unlike the Wagnerians, never mentions Rée's Jewish heritage. Before 1933 the Nietzsche Archives that she founded was also not a primary source of Nietzschean anti-Semitism. Prior to the Third Reich, the Archives leaned to the right, sometimes far to the right, but it maintained active relations with Nietzsche scholars and enthusiasts from all political perspectives. In 1925, for example, the one and only issue of *Ariadne*, the yearbook of the Nietzsche Society, contained contributions from Ernst Bertram, André Gide, and Thomas Mann. The following year the expanded board of directors included such prominent persons as the

French author and Nobel laureate Romain Rolland and the German publisher Anton Kippenberg, founder of the celebrated Insel Publishing House. The chairman was Arnold Paulssen, a high official from Thüringen in the left liberal German Democratic Party.⁶¹ Indeed, in 1923 Oswald Spengler was appointed to the board of directors for the Archives to offset politically a perception of left liberal domination, represented by the presence of both Harry Graf Kessler and Paulssen.⁶² Above all, Elisabeth at this point in her life was not an anti-Semite herself, despite her marriage to Förster, and despite her later adulation of Mussolini and Hitler. Throughout the Weimar years she maintained a friendship with Ernest Thiel, a Swedish banker and industrialist brought up as an Orthodox Jew.⁶³ She supported Jewish scholarship on Nietzsche, especially when it concurred with her views. A case in point is Paul Cohn's book *Concerning Nietzsche's Demise*, which appeared in 1931 and to which Elisabeth contributed an appendix with letters she wrote to Cohn.⁶⁴ Finally, there is considerable evidence that Elisabeth had disavowed her former convictions long before she began dealing seriously with her brother's writings and the Archives. In her Nietzsche biography she claims that she temporarily adopted anti-Semitic positions out of respect for her husband, while he was away in South America and needed someone to defend him in Germany. But she adds that anti-Semitism "was always unpleasant for me" and that she "did not have the slightest reason" to be an anti-Semite.⁶⁵ Hitler's rise to power evidently did not alter this conviction. In April 1933 she wrote to Andreas Heusler: "Only the persecution of the Jews that Minister Goebbels wrenched from our excellent Chancellor seems to me a bad blunder and is very unpleasant for me. I am certain that it has not been pleasant for our splendid Chancellor Adolf Hitler and that he will do everything to ameliorate this mistake of his fellow party members." And a few days later she reiterates these feelings: "I am not entirely in agreement with the anti-Jewish movement, even though I would have reason to approve of it, since as widow of the first leader of the anti-Semites I have been treated very badly by the Jewish press."⁶⁶ Indeed, Erich Podach, who was anything but an apologist for Elisabeth, notes that she was critical of Max Oehler for suppressing the name of a Jewish author, Albert Levy, who wrote on Nietzsche and Stirner; she had no patience with such opportunism: "To be sure at no time did she ignore the political tendencies that might be favorable for her, but when push came to shove, she not only demonstrated a civil courage that was seldom seen in those times and supported her friends, but also she, the widow of Bernhard Förster, wrote anti-anti-Semitic petitions."⁶⁷ It is difficult to admire Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's political opinions; she obviously embraced views that are loathsome to postwar supporters

of democracy, equality, and cosmopolitanism, and some of her positions were proximate to those of avowed National Socialists. But with regard to anti-Semitism she not only did not try to fashion her brother as a Judeo-phobe; in public and private statements she herself was free from overt, biologically based notions of racism.⁶⁸

NIETZSCHE'S POSTWAR REHABILITATION

Although Elisabeth was not responsible for her brother's association with the anti-Semitism of the National Socialist regime, she played a pivotal role in the postwar era when Nietzsche scholars and enthusiasts endeavored to extricate him from his racist reputation. As we have seen, Nietzsche had undergone a transformation from anti-anti-Semite to anti-Semite during the first four and a half decades of the twentieth century, but we should recognize that not everyone considered him a racist at the close of the Second World War. Many enthusiastic readers regarded his views on Jews and Judaism to be of relatively little importance for an understanding of his work and were unconcerned with Elisabeth and her alleged manipulations. The members of the Frankfurt School, for example, continued to admire Nietzsche while in exile in the United States, and although the scholars most closely associated with the Institute of Social Research were themselves Jewish, and although several prominent members wrote or conducted research on topics related to racism, anti-Semitism, or authoritarian views, they continued to hold Nietzsche in high regard, ignoring entirely the racially informed reception history sketched above. Similarly, authors like Thomas Mann or philosophers like Karl Löwith esteemed Nietzsche, and we have to assume that many intellectuals in the Third Reich who are associated with "inner emigration" valued Nietzsche for qualities other than his views for or against the Jewish people. After the war, as the European intellectual world split into opposing Cold War camps, the Communists in the East disparaged Nietzsche. While many unorthodox socialists had acclaimed Nietzsche during the first half of the twentieth century, the communist left had little use for him or his philosophy,⁶⁹ and they contributed to his image as a fascist during World War II.⁷⁰ Their rejection of Nietzsche became even more obdurate after 1945 as part of the Cold War. The communists, however, avoided or downplayed the topic of racism, and anti-Semitism was an especially sensitive subject because of Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign in the early 1950s.⁷¹ Thus the foremost authority on German culture during the immediate postwar years, Georg Lukács, never mentions Jews, Judaism, or anti-

Semitism in his influential chapter “Nietzsche as the Founder of Irrationalism of the Imperialist Period” in *The Destruction of Reason* (1954).⁷² Although Lukács himself was of Jewish heritage, his analysis focuses on class, since racism was for him and for orthodox practitioners of Marxism only epiphenomenal and a diversion from the real, materialist conflicts in society. Lukács cites Nietzsche’s biologism and his proximity to Gobineau, but contends that he did not place any emphasis on Aryan supremacy, and that he is really more of a precursor to Spengler than to Rosenberg. He continues by expressing regrets that this lineage is now being used by postwar apologists as a means of denazifying Nietzsche, since the exact nature of his racism places Nietzsche in the same company as other irrational racist theorists of the imperialist period, from Gobineau and Chamberlain to Spengler and Rosenberg.⁷³ Lukács obviously knows very well about the nuances of Nietzsche’s position vis-à-vis the Jews and anti-Semitism, but ideological constraints, both external and internal, prevent him from exploring the issue in any detail.

The agenda regarding Nietzsche in the non-Communist West was much different, and it involved perforce the reputation he had gained—deservedly or not—as an anti-Jewish thinker. Class-based issues were of no consequence, but racism was, especially as the enormity of National Socialist crimes against the Jews of Europe became public. To extricate Nietzsche from his fascistoid image, Nietzsche enthusiasts had to provide an explanation for how he had been recruited so readily for the nefarious purposes of the Third Reich. In their efforts Elisabeth became indispensable. She was a person closely connected with Nietzsche and his writings, who came to exercise a domineering influence over his works and reception, and who had also tampered with manuscripts, fabricated evidence about Nietzsche and his life, and defied the accepted traditions and persons of the scholarly community. Karl Schlechta, perhaps the scholar chiefly responsible for rehabilitating Nietzsche’s damaged reputation in German-speaking countries, had known Förster-Nietzsche personally, discovering quite early on, as we have seen, that she was responsible for falsifications in her brother’s correspondence. In the “Philological Afterword” to his important 1956 edition, Schlechta produces the usual litany of complaints about Nietzsche’s sister: she had no understanding for her brother’s philosophy; she was interested only in producing volumes quickly and in spreading Nietzsche’s fame; she illicitly published *The Will to Power* from notes in Nietzsche’s literary remains that were not meant for publication, or at least not in that form or under that title. As we have seen, he established that Elisabeth falsified a significant number of letters, making it appear that correspondence destined for others was

actually written to her, although he left many issues regarding these falsifications unclarified. In the afterword Schlechta only hints at the ideological ramifications of Förster-Nietzsche's actions: the falsifications "built the foundation upon which his sister based her certainly fateful Nietzsche legend," he writes ominously, and the reader is left to imagine what that legend could entail.⁷⁴ In talks and essays written shortly after the publication of his edition, Schlechta is more suggestive about the consequences of Elisabeth's malicious deeds. Speaking of "the catastrophe that lies behind us," he argues that the reason Nietzsche was made coresponsible for it was primarily owing to his obsessively ambitious sister, who hitched her wagon to the fate of the Third Reich, producing simplistic editions and portrayals of her brother. Here the connection between philological shenanigans and political responsibility is more or less explicit. As an extra bonus, in the process of repudiating Elisabeth, Schlechta's own archival discoveries become tantamount to antifascist resistance. Reporting about his exposé in 1937 to the committee charged with oversight of the scholarly work of the Archives, Schlechta writes: "Here Frau Förster-Nietzsche, who had been honored only two-and-a-half years before with a state funeral, which the Führer himself attended, was exposed as a swindler."⁷⁵ The reader of Schlechta's explanations should have no trouble drawing the appropriate conclusion: by concocting her own Nietzsche legend, Elisabeth perpetrated a political act that besmirched her brother's reputation by entwining his fate with National Socialism.

Slechta never directly accuses Elisabeth of promoting a connection between her brother and anti-Semitism. His aims, however, are obvious: (1) to accuse Elisabeth of falsifications that led to her brother's Nazification, (2) to present himself as the resistance fighter, heroically opposing a venerated figure in the Third Reich, and (3) to justify the need for his newly published edition of Nietzsche's writings. On a much smaller scale and without the need for self-promotion, Richard Roos performed an analogous function for Nietzsche in France. Like Schlechta, Roos is centrally concerned with Elisabeth's editorial practices, and his particular focus is the last works, which are particularly difficult to disentangle because of Nietzsche's somewhat less than stable mental condition, and the plethora of plans and projects he sketched in his notebooks during the last two years of his sane life. Criticizing Elisabeth for originally publishing *The Antichrist* as part of *The Will to Power*, which is entirely justified based on several statements Nietzsche actually made, Roos goes on to cite other falsifications in that work and other late texts. Almost all relate to the exclusion of specific derogatory comments about Christianity.⁷⁶ A few exclusions might also have caused political difficulties since they were criticisms directed at Wilhelm II. In

general, Roos, like many scholars in the postwar discussions, aims to discredit Elisabeth's oversight of her brother's writings, but when discussing her philological peccadillos, he makes only minor claims for ideological bias among the various exclusions and falsifications, and certainly none that would connect Nietzsche with Nazism.⁷⁷ Indeed, almost all of the passages that Elisabeth excluded from publication could plausibly have served, in her mind at least, to damage Nietzsche's reputation because they contain direct assaults on Jesus and the Christian religion, or on the Prussian monarchy. In an essay dealing with Elisabeth as "the abusive sister," however, he is more explicit about her purportedly fascist proclivities. Her influence, we are told, has been "sometimes baneful, often embarrassing, and almost always contrary to the ideas and interests of her brother."⁷⁸ Roos leaves no doubt that Elisabeth's influence is primarily responsible for bringing Nietzsche into the proximity of the Nazis, whose assumption of power was "opportune" for her: "In effect, the Nietzsche that Bäumler and Rosenberg made the prophet of the party coincides perfectly with her portrayal of him. Henceforth [after Hitler's assumption of power] any attack on the tradition of the Nietzsche Archives was able to be considered a manifestation hostile to Nazi doctrine."⁷⁹ By specifically mentioning Rosenberg, who was responsible for much of Nazi race theory, Roos makes it appear that Elisabeth's image of her brother partook of the Aryan supremacy and anti-Semitism promoted during the Third Reich. At the close of his essay Roos reproduces damaging documents that demonstrate Elisabeth's enthusiasm for Hitler and the National Socialist regime, thereby advancing the notion by innuendo that Elisabeth's own political activities brought Nietzschean philosophy into association with a political regime he would have detested.

The individual who did the most to connect Elisabeth with Nietzsche's Nazi affiliation, including anti-Semitism, and who contributed most to the decontamination of Nietzsche during the postwar period was Walter Kaufmann. His impact on Nietzsche's reception in the United States cannot be overestimated, not only because his monograph *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* went through four editions since it first appeared in 1950, but also because his many translations and editions of Nietzsche's writings made the philosopher accessible to a wide Anglophone audience.⁸⁰ Kaufmann is the most explicit of the postwar rehabilitators in denying any connection between Nietzsche and anti-Jewish sentiments and in accusing Elisabeth of promoting a National Socialist affiliation with his philosophy. Nietzsche was not a protofascist, argued Kaufmann; he was an existentialist concerned with the creativity of the human spirit and with a strengthening of individualism. That others have not recognized Nietzsche's intentions

has to do with the “Nietzsche legend,” whose main proponent was his sister Elisabeth, a woman unsuited to be her brother’s interpreter and apostle.⁸¹ The “two most common forms” of this legend can be traced back to Elisabeth and consist of the notion that “Nietzsche’s thought is hopelessly incoherent, ambiguous, and self-contradictory” and that “Nietzsche was a proto-Nazi.” In Kaufmann’s account, after her unsuccessful venture in South America with her anti-Semitic husband, Elisabeth returned to Germany and “realized that her brother’s star had meanwhile begun its steep ascent.” It was at this point that Elisabeth Förster became Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. She acquired the rights to her brother’s works, sometimes through unscrupulous means; carefully controlled the publication of his literary remains, thereby withholding texts from the public; and issued interpretations of his works using Nietzsche’s writings not yet in the public domain and therefore possessing an authority that could not be easily challenged. Kaufmann, like Schlechta and Roos, more often cites faulty philology than pernicious ideology in his discussions of Elisabeth’s misdeeds, and although he does not focus on her falsifications, he makes it clear to the reader that she is generally not trustworthy. He complains at length about her editorial practices, in particular her withholding of *Ecce Homo* (1908) from publication. This misdeed had “fateful” implications, Kaufmann claims, since “the book contains explicit repudiations of many ideas that were meanwhile attributed to Nietzsche and have been associated with him to this day.”⁸² And he is especially outraged at the publication of *The Will to Power* as Nietzsche’s magnum opus, although in a strange turnabout he himself edited and translated an English edition of the same work in 1967 and even followed in his arrangement of the English text the previously published German editions. In the editor’s introduction to the translation he endeavors to explain why he would render into English a text whose very existence contributed so extensively to the Nietzsche legend he despises. But his explanation is simply that now that all of Nietzsche’s later writings have been published—and Kaufmann had a hand in all of these publications—“*The Will to Power* should be made accessible, too, for those who cannot read these notes in the original German.”⁸³ It is difficult to make sense of this explanation; if Elisabeth falsified her brother’s thought by selecting aphorisms from different years and different contexts, and then placing them under rubrics that are unauthorized and contrary to Nietzsche’s subsequent plans for the book, why would Kaufmann validate Elisabeth’s work and thereby contribute to the legend he is at such pains to debunk?⁸⁴

Kaufmann’s discussion of the ideological dimension of Elisabeth’s activity is similar to Schlechta’s and Roos’s in that accusations are made more by

suggestion and innuendo than by philological proof and logical argumentation. Elisabeth, as we have seen, is held responsible for propagating a “Nietzsche legend” that harmonized well with tenets of National Socialism, and Kaufmann leaves no doubt that part of this legend entails a connection with anti-Semitism. He accuses Elisabeth of “bringing the heritage of her late husband to her interpretation of her brother’s works,” although he never cites from “her interpretation” to provide evidence for this claim.⁸⁵ If this “heritage” is not delineated clearly enough in the monograph, Kaufmann clarifies when, quoting himself in the introduction to *The Will to Power*, he inserts in brackets after the word “husband”: “a prominent anti-Semite whose ideology Nietzsche had excoriated on many occasions.”⁸⁶ Kaufmann insists that Nietzsche abhorred anti-Semitism. He admits that “anti-Semitic Teutonism,” which he equates with “proto-Nazism,” was “one of the major issues in Nietzsche’s life, if only because his sister and Wagner, the two most important figures in his development, confronted him with this ideology.”⁸⁷ But he cites extensively passages from letters and published writings that demonstrate Nietzsche’s unequivocal rejection of anti-Semitism. He also dismisses the suggestion that Nietzsche’s statements may have had a personal dimension, a common contention we have observed in Nazi interpretations: “His contempt for anti-Semitism was not prompted by the man who took his sister away from him: Nietzsche’s position had been established unmistakably about the time of his breach with Wagner, and *Human, All-Too-Human* (1878) leaves no doubt about it.”⁸⁸ For Kaufmann, Elisabeth’s manipulation of her brother’s thought, which then became associated with the anti-Semitism of the Nazis, is summed up symbolically in the hyphenated last name she assumed: “Förster-Nietzsche. The irony of this name suggests almost everything that could be said against her: the gospel she spread was indeed Förster first and Nietzsche second.” He further maintains that she never accepted her brother’s break with Wagner, and that she “doggedly persuaded the Nazis to accept her brother as their philosopher, and that it was in response to her insistent invitations that Hitler eventually visited the *Nietzsche-Archiv*—on a trip to Bayreuth.”⁸⁹ These claims are offered without evidence. They are odd, especially since we have already seen that in her books and essays Elisabeth distinguishes very sharply between her brother’s views on anti-Semitism and Wagner’s. From the record we possess it is also evident that although Elisabeth did not object to Nietzsche’s appropriation by the Nazis, she generally supported anyone who praised her brother provided they did not oppose her views. Finally, in Kaufmann’s discussion of *The Will to Power* he asserts that Elisabeth and Heinrich Köselitz (Peter Gast), the editors of the work, eliminated “unkind comments” on anti-Semitism

and the German Reich, but he adds that “there is no reason whatever for believing that the hitherto withheld material includes anything of significance that would have corroborated Frau Förster-Nietzsche’s version of her brother’s thought.”⁹⁰ The inference is obvious: Elisabeth’s “version” of Nietzsche is implicitly branded as anti-Semitic and supportive of the Third Reich, but there is nothing in his writings, or in the notebooks that would support the “Nietzsche legend” she purportedly advanced. Despite his philological differences with Schlechta, Kaufmann joins his German colleague and the French scholar Roos in placing the blame for Nietzsche’s Nazi appropriation squarely at the feet of his sister. In the process all three intimate that Elisabeth promoted an image of Nietzsche that connects him with anti-Semitism and racism.

Although Elisabeth played no role in making her brother a racist and anti-Semite, she was nonetheless extremely important in removing any stigma of anti-Jewishness from him after the Second World War. It is worth noting that Schlechta, Roos, and Kaufmann had great familiarity with the textual situation surrounding Nietzsche’s works and literary remains, as well as his correspondence, and that they never produce a shred of evidence in their works that Elisabeth had doctored anything Nietzsche wrote, or invented anything and attributed it to her brother, that would make him appealing to the anti-Semitic fanatics in the Third Reich. Their accusations are subtle and associative, entailing mostly her marriage to Förster and her later activities in the Nietzsche Archives. By emphasizing these personal involvements, leaving vague the notion of what sort of textual manipulation she perpetrated, and confirming that Nietzsche became a precursor of Nazi ideology, they create the impression that Elisabeth bears responsibility for illicitly moving her brother into the anti-Semitic camp. Later postwar commentators, as we have seen, who have no direct acquaintance with, or interest in, philological details, have been less circumspect in their accusations, maintaining against the textual record that Elisabeth’s manipulations led to Nietzsche’s inclusion as an anti-Semite, and against the historical record that she encouraged anti-Semitic interpretations of his work. Today there are few scholars who do not indict Elisabeth for Nietzsche’s Nazi affiliation and anti-Semitism and believe that Nietzsche himself was largely free from nationalist and racist inclinations. If we are going to achieve a comprehensive view regarding Nietzsche’s relationship to Jews, Judaism, and anti-Semitism, however, we will have to pay closer attention to both textual and contextual factors than scholars have in the past. We will have to understand, first of all, what sort of features and statements in his writings led many readers, both anti-Semites and their adversaries, to include him among anti-

Jewish thinkers. In some instances historical and personal circumstances may be decisive for our assessment. It will be important to account for both the atmosphere in Germany during his lifetime and the persons with whom Nietzsche most closely associated, as well as the individuals he read who were most influential in his intellectual development. Second, we must gain a better understanding of the value and import of various positions regarding racial and religious bias in Nietzsche's era. It is essential, for example, that we come to understand "anti-Semitism," both the expression itself and the political movement of the 1880s, as a historical phenomenon, and see how it related to Nietzsche in his professional and personal life. In the post-World War II era, the situation seemed clear: anti-Semitism signified simply a hostility or hatred of the Jews, and the rejection of anti-Semitism is associated with a liberal tolerance for religious and/or racial difference. In the following chapters, however, we have to exercise caution not to project backward our own meanings and associations onto Nietzsche's time, treating his statements and views ahistorically. It is crucial that we cease observing him through the distorting lens of National Socialism and its eliminationist policies toward the Jewish population of Europe. In short, if we want to reach an understanding of where Nietzsche stood on these critical issues, we must endeavor to avoid the very errors we have seen committed in this overview of the rise and fall of the image of Nietzsche as an anti-Semite.