



Kirsten John-Stucke | Daniela Siepe (eds.)

Myths of Wewelsburg Castle

Facts and Fiction

BRILL | SCHÖNINGH

Myths of Wewelsburg Castle

Publications of the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg

VOLUME 12

Edited on behalf of the District of Paderborn by

Kirsten John-Stucke

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The translation was funded by the Landschaftsverband Westphalia-Lippe.



Für die Menschen.
Für Westfalen-Lippe.

Front cover illustration:

The crypt in Wewelsburg Castle's northern tower, 2010
(Kreismuseum Wewelsburg)

Back cover illustration:

Wewelsburg Castle in 2010
(Kreismuseum Wewelsburg)

Translation by:

David Antal, James Bell

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data available online: <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

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Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Hotei, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau, and V&R unipress.

www.schoeningh.de

Cover design: Evelyn Ziegler, Munich, using a design by Inga Hellmich
Production: Brill Deutschland GmbH, Paderborn

ISSN 1617-8254

ISBN 978-3-506-79200-6 (hardback)

ISBN 978-3-657-79200-9 (e-book)

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Preface

With its decision in 1977 to establish a documentation and memorial site in Wewelsburg, the District of Paderborn took on a special responsibility for the place and its history. Since 1982 the contemporary history exhibition *Wewelsburg 1933–1945: Cult and Terror Site of the SS* has been part of the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg. At the beginning of the new millennium, the District of Paderborn commissioned a project team led by the museum's long-standing director Wulff E. Brebeck and the assistant director at the time, Kirsten John-Stucke, to undertake a scholarly revision and substantive reconception of the previous exhibition. In 2010 the District of Paderborn opened the exhibition *Ideology and Terror of the SS* at the Wewelsburg 1933–1945 Memorial Museum.

Wewelsburg has become a nationally and internationally respected and recognized venue for the museum-based examination of the history of National Socialism and especially the SS terror organization. Commemoration of the 3,900 prisoners held at Niederhagen Concentration Camp in Wewelsburg, no less than 1,285 of whom died there, is, and will remain, a central concern of the museum and its sponsor, the District of Paderborn.

From the outset the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg's commemorative work has also focused on the societal debate about the site's relationship to National Socialism since World War II. This period has unfortunately not been consistently and exclusively characterized by democratically responsible historical clarification of what happened. The lack of sources on the SS's construction projects in Wewelsburg left leeway after 1945 for the castle and the village of Wewelsburg to be associated with diverse mythical and historically falsified ideas about Heinrich Himmler's self-proclaimed "Black Order." The narratives that were then constructed and disseminated about alleged events at and plans for Wewelsburg Castle during the National Socialist era often obscured and trivialized the criminal character of the SS. This led to Wewelsburg becoming an icon in the haze of neo-Nazism, esotericism, and occultism. The best-known example of this phenomenon is the floor ornament dating from the SS era in the northern tower's *Obergruppenführer* Hall. Despite the absence of any historical evidence, this circular ornament has been referred to as the *Black Sun* in right-wing extremist circles for more than three decades and used as a badge of recognition.

Dealing with such undesirable and dubious forms of popularity regarding Wewelsburg Castle is an ongoing challenge for the museum and the District of Paderborn. One response was to place colorful beanbags on the floor ornament

in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall to counteract the potential allure of the building's association with the SS and its Nazi symbolism to socio-politically problematic groups. Furious reactions in neo-Nazi internet forums confirmed that the intervention had succeeded in disrupting the impression of a compelling aura.

Rather than keeping the legacies of the SS in Wewelsburg hidden, they are exposed and their inhuman aspects are analyzed. Numerous educational programs heighten seminar participants' awareness of anti-Semitic and racist tendencies and offer strategies for resolutely countering them. Anyone who now chooses to openly display their malevolent sentiments in Wewelsburg in symbols, gestures, words, or deeds is directly expelled from the site in accordance with its rules and regulations.

This edited volume is being published in English for the first time. It represents an important contribution to the reappraisal of the history of Wewelsburg Castle and the legends that have enshrouded it since the end of the Nazi dictatorship and gained growing acceptance internationally. At a time when right-wing conspiracy theories are gaining in popularity and anti-Semitic and racist tendencies are making inroads into civil society, it is important to explain the sometimes far-reaching political implications of such legends and theories. It is therefore my sincere wish that the book will find many attentive and thoughtful readers.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this volume, especially its two editors, Daniela Siepe and Kirsten John-Stucke, as well as the authors of each and every essay.

Christoph Rüter
District Administrator, Paderborn



The *Obergruppenführer* Hall in Wewelsburg Castle's northern tower.

Introduction

Kirsten John-Stucke, Daniela Siepe

In 2012 the Finnish science-fiction comedy *Iron Sky* opened in movie theaters. The story postulates that just before the end of World War II, the Nazis managed to establish a secret base on the dark side of the moon. The movie tells of the lunar Nazis' attempt to invade and take over the earth. Their secret base is called *The Black Sun*, which refers to the twelve-spoked sun wheel that appears in many places on the base; the design is drawn from the motif embedded in the floor of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall at Wewelsburg Castle.¹ In 2014 a volunteer battalion of neo-Nazis supported the Ukrainian army in house-to-house combat against pro-Russian separatists in the city of Donetsk. The Azov volunteer unit's insignia incorporated the Wewelsburg sun wheel along with a wolf hook and other symbols.²

Since the 1990s the *Obergruppenführer* Hall's sun wheel ornament has been used in widely differing circles under the name Black Sun. In pop culture it can stand for crackpot Nazi science, in right-wing extremist contexts for struggle and salvation. The Black Sun is just one recent variant of the numerous legends that have emerged since the 1950s and continue to flourish around Wewelsburg Castle in eastern Westphalia.

For many people Wewelsburg Castle is a mysterious place that is both eerie and romantic – the National Socialist SS's Grail castle and scene of secret rituals – and for some it is a particularly energy-laden site. These notions have nothing to do with the reality of the “Wewelsburg SS School” under National Socialism. It was not a mystical place but rather part of the SS's system of power relations, academic activities, and persecution apparatus. If the SS had succeeded in implementing their gargantuan construction plans using prisoners from a concentration camp specially built for that purpose, nothing would have remained of the Westphalian village of Wewelsburg.

In the late 1990s the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg began a multi-year research project funded by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and the European Union to study the history of Wewelsburg Castle under National Socialism and the legends that have grown up around it since World War II. This edited volume examines the various strands of these myths and the Wewelsburg sun wheel ornament in their respective contexts. It encompasses several chapters by Daniela Siepe, who has conducted extensive research into the myths enshrouding Wewelsburg Castle, along with essays by Frank Huismann, Eva Kingsepp, and Thomas Pfeiffer, who analyze different aspects of the castle's

reception at the junction of esotericism, popular culture, science fiction, and right-wing ideology. This publication thus represents a historical and journalistic contribution to the reception of National Socialism after 1945 in an area of contemporary history on which very little research has been conducted, despite the topic's significance. This book is therefore also intended to provide teachers and those engaged in political education with useful factual knowledge for their work.

Six years have passed since publication of the first German edition, during which time the myths and legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle have not diminished but rather persisted in all contexts, even propagating in some areas. What is striking is their proliferation in the entertainment sector (music, comics, and television) and the violent far-right scene, which is a particularly alarming development. The Black Sun is increasingly becoming a globally known symbol of violent right-wing-extremist sentiment. The deadly incidents in Christchurch (New Zealand), in which the attacker entered two mosques and murdered fifty-one people in March 2019, and in Halle (Germany), in which the perpetrator attacked a synagogue and killed two people in October 2019, are linked via the Wewelsburg sun wheel symbol. Globalization and growing international connectivity through the social media, internet, and dark net have certainly accelerated this process. Right-wing conspiracy theories are increasingly gaining visibility and spreading in the population.

We therefore considered it advisable and necessary to update the individual essays for the first English-language edition of the edited volume and to provide information on current trends in the conclusion. A supplementary essay examines recent developments regarding adoption of the Black Sun within international right-wing extremism and places them in the sociopolitical context.

This volume is the result of several years of careful research. We extend our sincere thanks to the many colleagues, scholars, and friends who have accompanied us on this journey and supported us with their collegial advice and professional suggestions. We would especially like to mention our colleagues Markus Moors and Jörg Piron. Special appreciation is due Professor Michael Wildt for assisting us with his informed judgment.

We express our gratitude to all the authors who contributed to this volume. Thomas Pfeiffer and Eva Kingsepp kindly agreed to write scholarly essays for the project. Frank Huisman deserves our appreciation on several levels. In his role as author he not only agreed to prepare a scholarly text but also demonstrated particular commitment in taking on the time-consuming editorial work connected with the first edition of this publication. Very importantly, he

always stood ready with advice and encouragement when the project threatened to falter.

We would like to thank Jörg Piron for the editorial work on the second edition and for supervising the English translation. Our acknowledgement goes as well to translators David Antal and James Bell for their sensitive translation of the multifaceted subject matter into English and for their meticulous work.

We are grateful to the district of Paderborn, represented by District Administrator Christoph Rütter, for its extensive financial support for the publication of the edited volume.

Finally, we wish to thank our editor Dr. Diethard Sawicki, from the publishing house of Ferdinand Schöningh, for his confidence and consistently constructive cooperation. He explicitly advocated the volume's inclusion in the publisher's program and paved the way for the English-language edition.

Notes

- ¹ The 2019 sequel *Iron Sky: The Coming Race* took up conspiracy theories about reptilian creatures and the Vril Society. A third episode is planned.
- ² See the article by Christian Esch about neo-Nazis in house-to-house combat in Donetsk ("Neo-Nazis im Häuserkampf") in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 10 August 2014. The Black Sun symbol was removed from the emblem in mid-2015.



View of the inner courtyard toward the northern tower.

Himmler's Plans and Activities in Wewelsburg

Kirsten John-Stucke

Wewelsburg Castle is a Renaissance edifice located in the village of the same name some 20 kilometers (approx. 13 miles) southwest of Paderborn. The prince bishop of Paderborn, Dietrich von Fürstenberg, had the castle constructed between 1603 and 1609 on the site of an earlier complex¹ documented since the Middle Ages, subsequently using it as a hunting lodge and secondary residence. The castle's unusual design in the shape of an isosceles triangle is explained by its topographical location on a crag overlooking the Alme River valley. In the early nineteenth century Wewelsburg Castle passed to the Prussian state owing to secularization and the dissolution of the Prince Bishopric of Paderborn. During this period the castle fell into increasing disrepair, before it was taken over by the then district of Büren in 1925 and converted into a cultural center with a museum of local history and a youth hostel.² In 1933 the castle came to the attention of Heinrich Himmler,³ the *Reichsführer-SS* (Reich leader of the SS).



Figure 1.1 Heinrich Himmler with Dr. Robert Ley, NSDAP Reich Organization Leader, and Manfred von Knobelsdorff, castle administrator, during an inspection tour of Wewelsburg Castle, 1937 (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

The Current State of Research

Research into the plans and activities of Himmler and his *Schutzstaffel* (SS, initially a protection squadron for Hitler and senior National Socialists) at Wewelsburg Castle cannot draw on an extensive body of records locally. However, the few surviving documents and plans have been supplemented in recent decades by previously unknown sources and numerous contemporary witness accounts.⁴

Fundamental scholarly research into the history of Wewelsburg Castle during the National Socialist era was initiated in the late 1970s by Karl Hüser, a professor at the then Comprehensive University (now University) of Paderborn.⁵ His research findings provided the basis for the contemporary history exhibition, *Wewelsburg, 1933–1945: Cult and Terror Site of the SS*, which opened in the former SS guard building on the castle grounds on 20 March 1982, as well as for the accompanying catalog of the same title.⁶ In that volume Hüser describes the development of the SS project in three phases: 1) the establishment of an SS Reich Leadership School for the ideological instruction of senior SS leaders; 2) as of 1935 the school's replacement by a "Nordic academy," where "pseudo-scientific basic research to substantiate the SS racial doctrine" was to be conducted; and 3) as of 1938, the site's megalomaniacal expansion into a "pseudo-religious cult site."⁷ Although Hüser also viewed Wewelsburg Castle as a place where SS *Gruppenführer* (high-ranking SS officers) were to be encouraged in their self-image as a select elite, he emphasized the planned supposedly religious and ritualistic significance of Wewelsburg Castle.⁸ In the following three decades, research on the activities of the SS in Wewelsburg and the history of Niederhagen–Wewelsburg Concentration Camp and its inmates continued at Wewelsburg District Museum under the direction of Wulff E. Brebeck. The findings of more recent research into the SS's various spheres of activity in Wewelsburg were incorporated in 2010 into the new concept for the museum's permanent contemporary history exhibition, *Ideology and Terror of the SS*,⁹ and included in the volume, *Die SS, Himmler und die Wewelsburg* (The SS, Himmler, and Wewelsburg Castle), edited by Jan Erik Schulte. In his essays Schulte formulates the significance of Wewelsburg Castle as a mythic center of the SS worldview, where political course setting was to be exalted ideologically and Himmler and his leadership clique reassured of their significance.¹⁰

The most recent contribution of research on the role of Wewelsburg Castle for the SS does not concentrate on the ideological and mythological interpretation, but rather on the examination of surviving land-use-planning records, which envisaged the transformation of the entire village into a huge castle

complex. In his 2013 publication Markus Moors interpreted the few SS buildings completed in the village of Wewelsburg and the architectural drawings by Herman Bartels, the architect commissioned by Himmler, as a kind of background reflecting the SS's steadily growing importance and ever more pronounced claim to power within the National Socialist dictatorship. According to Himmler's ideas, the highest ranking SS *Gruppenführer* were to have the opportunity in Wewelsburg to experience and understand themselves as the central representatives of this elitist self-image.¹¹

Himmler's Search for an SS Reich Leadership School

Under *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler, the SS saw itself as the militant, martial, ideological, and racial elite of the movement as of the early 1930s. To give expression to this elitist self-image of his SS within the Party as well, Himmler sought more autonomy and a separation from the *Sturmabteilung* (SA, Storm Detachment), leading him to look for a site for a Reich Leadership School solely for the SS.¹² Together with Richard Walther Darré, head of the Race Office (*Rasseamt*, subsequently the Race and Settlement Main Office, RuSHA),¹³ he selected Westphalia-Lippe as a suitable location and delegated the search to the members of Darré's staff responsible for the ideological training of SS members.¹⁴

Himmler got to know the state of Lippe while accompanying Adolf Hitler during the state election campaign there in January 1933. Together with other party members, they spent several days at Grevenburg Castle as guests of Baron Adolf von Oeynhausen and his wife Jutta, enjoying the romantic atmosphere around the fireplace after strenuous campaign outings.¹⁵

During this time he also visited the Externsteine and the Hermann Monument near Detmold. The Externsteine, a sandstone formation on the edge of Teutoburg Forest, had been interpreted in nationalist circles as a former Germanic sacred site since the nineteenth century, while the Hermann Monument commemorated Arminius, who was revered as a Germanic hero for his troops having decimated the legions of Roman commander Varus in 9 BC.

Against this background Himmler embraced an image of Westphalia-Lippe as the Saxon heartland of Germania, a supposed homeland of the Aryan-Nordic race, in an interpretation suiting his racist veneration and idealization of everything ostensibly Germanic.¹⁶ This notion was now reinforced by the setting of Grevenburg Castle, whose atmosphere combined traditional features of aristocratic rule with a secluded and seemingly mysterious ambiance.¹⁷

Darré's staff initially proposed setting up a SS Reich Leadership School at Schwalenberg Castle. There, groups of between eighty and a hundred SS leaders were supposed to take part in eight-week training courses run by the SS Race Office.¹⁸ Manfred von Knobelsdorff, Darré's brother-in-law and a staunch supporter of his blood and soil ideology, was appointed training supervisor.¹⁹ Despite the promising course of negotiations, the SS's leasing of Schwalenberg Castle failed shortly before the contract was to be signed.²⁰ Himmler's focus then shifted to include castle-like structures in the neighboring province of Westphalia – a development endorsed by the Oeynhausen couple and Hermann Bartels, the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers Party) cultural affairs supervisor in the Westphalia-North district and a professional castle conservator at the Antiquities and Monuments Office of the Westphalian Provincial Association in Münster.²¹

On 3 November 1933 Himmler, together with the Oeynhausen couple and Bartels, visited Wewelsburg Castle in the East Westphalian district of Büren and immediately took a shine to the fortress-like Renaissance structure.²² In his role as technical advisor, Bartels was promptly commissioned to draw up construction plans, which he submitted in December 1933. In June 1934, after lengthy negotiations, Wewelsburg Castle was finally leased by the NSDAP for the symbolic price of one Reichsmark per year.²³

The Wewelsburg SS School – A Scholarly Institution or Central Meeting Place?

As early as January 1934, the *Büren Zeitung*, a local newspaper, reported on the future role of Wewelsburg Castle:

This wonderful use of the heroic Wewelsburg Castle as a SS Reich Leadership School, a function that could not have been more ideally chosen, means many a great advantage for our home region. ... It will become a place of quiet assembly and spiritual inspiration for our fatherland's most senior decision-makers. It is also significant that *Reichsleiter* Himmler already heads the secret state police in numerous German states and will certainly have the leadership of this office for the entire German Reich in his hands.²⁴

The newspaper article makes clear that even in the early stages of the construction project, Himmler's plans were not focused solely on a functioning training facility but also on the idea of an exclusive meeting place for the

SS.²⁵ Moreover, early conversion designs for Wewelsburg Castle, dating from December 1933, show neither instruction rooms nor multi-bed accommodations for SS members. The upper floor of the southern and western wings show only eleven double rooms, along with the castle administrator's family quarters and Himmler's private apartment (see Figure 1.2). Prior to the conclusion of the lease, rooms for the Volunteer Labor Service crews and utility purposes had been set up in the eastern wing. Plans for the southern wing's ground floor included a dining room, a lounge, and the library, as well as an entry hall providing access to the castle administrator's quarters. The western wing already contained a large hall with a stage, which the SS subsequently converted into a "courtroom." The basement housed the kitchen, an officers' mess, and the rooms of the local history museum, which was transferred elsewhere before the SS moved in.²⁶

Instead of setting up a proper training program, Manfred von Knobelsdorff, the head of the SS castle personnel, established a "Nordic-inspired" academic research facility. For its staff he independently chose personnel convinced of the *völkisch* idea and the blood and soil notion. The SS scholars, who officially were subordinate to the Race and Settlement Main Office, pursued their own research objectives at Wewelsburg Castle from the beginning. Manfred von Knobelsdorff's interest, for instance, lay in genealogy, with establishing the ancestral line of his brother-in-law Darré being one of his objectives. Knobelsdorff had found it difficult from the onset to work with Hermann Bartels as the head architect of the Wewelsburg project, leading him to select Walter Franzius as an additional architect and entrusting him with the planning and construction management of the National Socialist village community center. Franzius was quite interested in *völkisch* rural settlements and sought to manifest the blood and soil ideology through various buildings and activities in the village of Wewelsburg.²⁷ Dr. Hans-Peter des Coudres, training supervisor and librarian, established an extensive library in Wewelsburg Castle with more than 16,000 volumes.²⁸ SS archaeologist Wilhelm Jordan carried out numerous excavations in his attempts to substantiate traces of the Germanic heritage in the region, and as of 1935 founded his own museum in the rooms of the former museum of local history.²⁹ Folklorist Bernhard Frank researched the cadastral names in the area, and Rudi Bergmann supported the genealogical research.³⁰ An unsuccessful attempt to find a specialist in "Germanic astronomy"³¹ was undertaken via Otto Sigfrid Reuter, a *völkisch*, religious Germanic scholar.

The two Race and Settlement Main Office employees, Karl Maria Wiligut, known as Weisthor, and Otto Rahn, were involved professionally with the Wewelsburg SS School but did not belong to the Wewelsburg Castle staff. The former Austrian officer Karl Maria Wiligut was a *völkisch* esoteric and



Figure 1.3 Silver SS death's head ring with engraving: "S.l.b. Baltes 21.6.43 H. Himmler" (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

adherent of Ariosophy.³² He claimed to be able to trace his ancestors back to the Germanic dynasty of the Æsir gods and propagated Irminism, believing himself to be an "heir to the memory" of the Germanic lifeworld. Both Himmler and Knobelsdorff valued him as an ideological advisor. Wiligut designed the SS death's head ring and was consulted about the furnishing of Wewelsburg Castle (see Figure 1.3). However, he was also involved in other regional projects, such as the study of the Externsteine, which repeatedly brought him into conflict with other researchers.³³ He was expelled from the SS in 1939 because of mental incapacity when knowledge surfaced of his three-year stay in an Austrian mental hospital and severe alcoholism.³⁴

Otto Rahn, a writer and *völkisch* esoteric who researched the Christian tradition of the Holy Grail, corresponded with Wiligut. In his book *Kreuzzug gegen den Gral* (*Crusade against the Grail*), Rahn interpreted the Grail as a "stone of light," following Wolfram von Eschenbach's description, and associated it with the medieval Cathar sect and their Montségur Castle in southern France. He viewed the Cathars as guardians of the Grail and keepers of an ancient religion equating light with the divine. However, apart from written correspondence between Rahn and the Wewelsburg SS School concerning the genealogical research initiated by Knobelsdorff, no closer connections to the work in Wewelsburg can be verified. Likewise, it is not possible to prove that Rahn influenced the design of Wewelsburg Castle or to establish a direct link between the Grail mythology and the castle.³⁵ The research about witches initiated by Himmler also had no close organizational ties to Wewelsburg Castle. In 1935 Himmler had a "Special Assignment H" (for *Hexen*, or witches) department set up within the SS Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*, SD), for which

several SS researchers combed archives and libraries for records relating to witch trials. Although Coudres, head of the SS library, was engaged in research on witch trials before his move to Wewelsburg, there is no evidence of a personal connection to the Special Assignment H. Wewelsburg Castle's dungeon, formerly used by the village bailiff and popularly known as the witch cellar, played no role in this.³⁶

Whereas castle administrator Manfred von Knobelsdorff and his scholars were focused on the idea of a training site in the form of an academic facility, Himmler had other interests. Although the *Reichsführer* officially retained the designation "Reich Leadership School" or "Wewelsburg SS School"³⁷ and showed great interest in the scholarly research, he also supported his architect Bartels, who took the artisan furnishings and architectural development of the castle complex in a different direction.³⁸ Their common interest from the beginning was oriented toward the expansion of Wewelsburg Castle as an exclusive location for the SS to practice seemingly traditional rituals of nobility and rule.³⁹ The press also seized on this symbolic thread of tradition, with an article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* of 27 September 1934 describing Wewelsburg Castle as an "old, defiant fortress ... located on a historical site in Old Saxony."⁴⁰ In 1935 Himmler established service designations for the castle staff drawn from medieval custom. The head of the SS department at Wewelsburg Castle, Manfred von Knobelsdorff, was called the *Burghauptmann* (historically the castle castellan, warden, or governor); his staff the *Burgmannschaft*, or castle garrison; the housekeeper Elfriede Wippermann the *Beschließerin* (from (*ab*) *schließen*, to lock up); and the maids the *Burgmaiden*.⁴¹ On 6 November 1935 Himmler imposed a ban on visiting Wewelsburg Castle, thus shielding the entire construction project from public view. At the same time he announced the SS castle was to be officially referred to as the Wewelsburg SS School.⁴²

Even before the definitive lease was signed, Hermann Bartels had begun modifying the former Renaissance castle to give it an appearance rooted in an earlier Westphalian tradition. Initially Labor Service volunteers already engaged at the site were employed for this purpose; subsequently it was members of the Reich Labor Service (RAD). They were accommodated in large dormitories in the eastern wing until 1935, when a separate RAD camp was established at the "Kleiner Hellweg" site. In 1934 the castle's existing exterior plaster had been removed to create the impression of a medieval fortress with an exposed stone façade. Similarly, the moat along the southern and eastern wings was excavated to lend the castle an imposing, defiant look, while to the west it was blocked off with a closed bridge construction. The old, eighteenth-century stone bridge was demolished and replaced by a wider, rubble-clad concrete bridge so that the SS limousines could also drive into the castle courtyard.



Figure 1.4
Mascaron mounted on the present-day
access bridge, 2010.

The new bridge bore a grotesquely featured face, or mascaron, to ward off calamity (see Figure 1.4). Fashioned in the medieval tradition, it was created in 1934, probably by the then well-known stone sculptor Adolf Wamper.⁴³

The Furnishings of the Wewelsburg SS School

Due to the ban on visitation and – as of 1939 – publication, few contemporary photographs exist of Wewelsburg Castle's interior furnishing.⁴⁴ It consisted of heavy, solidly crafted, antique-looking wooden furniture that did not imitate any particular art movement. The design followed a style widespread among the SS leadership that consciously rejected "industrial mass production."⁴⁵ The Hardeweg company from Velen produced the oak wall and ceiling paneling for the most prestigious rooms, the richly carved spiral staircase in the entry hall of the castle administrator's apartment, and the large table for the courtroom.⁴⁶ Individual pieces of furniture have been preserved and attest to the heavy, angular forms. They were produced from native woods by regional craftsmen. In 1935 an SS artist blacksmith's shop serving the castle was set up in the northern tower, with four artisan blacksmiths producing lamps,



Figure 1.5
Entry hall in the southern wing, with a view of “The Corner” (original caption). Clearly visible is the stone floor with Germanic runic symbols, ca. 1935–38. (Photo album of Manfred von Knobelsdorff, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

candlesticks, and other objects often decorated with runes, trees of life, and swastikas. The Wewelsburg district museum still holds two large candelabras, sconces with tree of life motifs, and several railings, including the one from the southwestern bridge built in the mid-1930s.⁴⁷ Also preserved is the floor in the former stately entrance hall, consisting of natural stone and ceramic tile in square patterns with runes, sun wheel designs, and swastikas (see Figure 1.5). The beam ceiling was reconstructed after 1945.

The furnishings of the guest rooms in the western wing were kept simple and unpretentious. In addition to a desk with chair and a wall hanging, a niche is said to have contained a shelf with books bound in white leather by Wolfgang Kausch, the SS bookbinder.⁴⁸ The lining of the rooms with wall hangings and Gobelin tapestries also corresponded to the *Heimatschutz* (homeland protection) style preferred by the SS. The latter weavings incorporated trees of life, Germanic symbols, animal images, and runes (see Figure 1.6).⁴⁹

The guest rooms were named after historical figures or ideological constructs. The surviving names fueled subsequent attempts at interpretation and the creation of legends concerning a possible connection between Wewelsburg Castle and the Arthurian legend, the Grail myth, and the lore surrounding Henry I.⁵⁰ When listing all of the surviving room names, mention needs to be made of three different sources, whose designations partially overlap. Manfred von Knobelsdorff noted the following names in his diary on 7 March 1938: “*Reichsführer* room, Aryan, Seasons and Runes, Vehmich Court, Westphalia, etc.

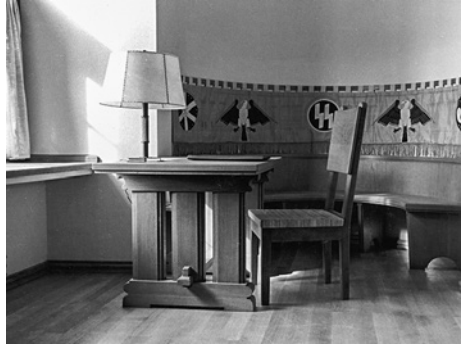


Figure 1.6
Guest room with a round niche on the western wing's upper floor, ca. 1935–38 (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

Teutonic Knights, Frederick the Great, Mad Christian, German Language, and Grail.”⁵¹ Based on concurring statements by Wilhelm Jordan and Hermann Bartels, Karl Hüser refers to the rooms of King Arthur, Grail, Widukind, King Henry, Henry the Lion, and Christopher Columbus.⁵² Karl Wolff, chief of the *Reichsführer-SS* Personal Staff, named the following room titles in the *Neue Illustrierte* magazine of 30 April 1961: New Nobility, Marienburg, Blood and Soil, Race Issues, Henry the Lion, Widukind, and Frederick the Great.⁵³

Whether all guest rooms were actually furnished with items intrinsic to their names can no longer be established because of a lack of evidence. All that has been verified is that there was a globe in the Christopher Columbus room and a rock crystal in the Grail room. Manfred von Knobelsdorff and his wife Ilse apparently had a dispute with Hermann Bartels about the furnishing of Wewelsburg Castle. In a diary entry from spring 1938, Knobelsdorff expressed his outrage about the illuminated wreath Bartels had chosen for the Grail room: “Does Mr. Bartels even know what the Grail means for the German soul? The jewel of Percival is the Grail, a stone of light.”⁵⁴ He found the furnishings in the Fridericus room too paltry and the *Reichsführer* room inconsistent in its “naïve combination of colors, with the furniture also being too light in tone.”⁵⁵ Whether there actually was a statue of Henry I in the castle, as is often claimed, cannot be proven on the basis of available sources.⁵⁶ From the beginning of the project, different notions about the furnishings led to conflicts between Knobelsdorff and Bartels. In a letter to her brother Richard W. Darré on 28 June 1934, Ilse von Knobelsdorff complained about Bartels’s lack of an ideological mindset:

Manfred ... will ... assert our Nordic worldview, for we unfortunately do not get along with Mr. Bartels on the level of blood. ... I am convinced the castle needs a Nordic interior designer, who must be in constant contact



Figure 1.7
Corridor to Himmler's private rooms on the southern wing's upper floor, ca. 1935–38. (Photo album of Manfred von Knobelsdorff, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

with Colonel Weisstor, ... And for this reason we must prevail. Which has already been achieved in the case of our spiral staircase, by adding Nordic ornamentation.”⁵⁷

The castle administrator resided with his family in official quarters in the southern wing of Wewelsburg Castle, next to Himmler's apartment, which occupied the southwestern tower and adjacent rooms (See Figure 1.7).

In addition to the furniture, a “species-appropriate,” tradition-conscious tableware and cutlery reflecting the ideology of a “Nordic style of kinship” was introduced at Wewelsburg Castle. The southern German pottery manufactory Seelos und Rottka was commissioned to produce craquelure ceramic tableware (glazed earthenware) with runes and swastikas (see Figure 1.8). In addition, standard-series cutlery and flatware with an embossed “SS Wewelsburg” stamp was ordered in nickel silver from the Württembergische Metallwarenfabrik (WMF).⁵⁸

After Himmler had transferred organizational responsibility for the Wewelsburg project from the Race and Settlement Main Office to the *Reichsführer-SS* Personal Staff in early 1935,⁵⁹ he also moved to make the project financially independent. On 1 February 1936 the *Reichsführer*, together with the then chief of the SS administration and subsequent head of the Economic and Administrative Main Office, Oswald Pohl, and five SS leaders, founded the Society for the Preservation and Care of German Cultural Monuments in Munich.⁶⁰ With the property development of the project now in the hands of

Figure 1.8
Teapot decorated with a sun wheel motif,
from the possessions of the Wewelsburg
SS School, 1935–38 (Kreismuseum
Wewelsburg).



the private society, Himmler was no longer accountable to the NSDAP Reich treasurer and able to independently raise numerous donations for his building project. This approach solved funding problems and further advanced the process of separation from the NSDAP. Himmler's striving for more autonomy went hand in hand with his increasing power on the political level. After the Night of the Long Knives in June 1934, Hitler had elevated the SS to an "independent organization within the framework of the NSDAP" and initially placed Himmler in charge of the Political Police of the German States. In June 1936 Himmler was appointed head of the German police, thus gaining access to all branches of the police, which he linked more and more with the SS and involved in the increasingly radical practices of persecution.

The more powerful Himmler became within the National Socialist state, the more importance he attached to the expansion of Wewelsburg Castle as an exclusive place of assembly.⁶¹ On 18 February 1937 Himmler announced at the *Gruppenführer* conference in Bad Tölz that the coats of arms of deceased *Gruppenführer* were to be hung in a "*Gruppenführer* Hall" at Wewelsburg Castle; in addition, a *Gruppenführer* conference was to be held annually at Wewelsburg Castle.⁶² As early as 1934, Himmler and Darré had entertained the idea of displaying the family coats of arms of senior SS officers in Wewelsburg Castle. Wiligut developed various designs to this end. A year later it was decided to suspend the heraldic insignia project for the time being. In 1939 Himmler had his Personal Staff request the coats of arms of all SS *Gruppenführer*. Professor Karl Diebitsch, SS-*Obersturmbannführer* and Himmler's advisor concerning artistic design, stated in a letter that he should be given the task of carving the coats of arms out of wood for their display in Wewelsburg Castle's *Gruppenführer* Hall.⁶³ The undertaking was halted after the war began because it turned out a majority of the SS families did not bear coats of arms, making it impossible to find enough heraldic motifs.⁶⁴

Himmler supplemented the castle furnishings with numerous works of art and paintings to underscore the exclusive claim of an elite, tradition-conscious meeting place with their history-laden motifs from Germanic mythology.⁶⁵ A transcript has survived of a meeting from 15 to 18 January 1939



Figure 1.9 *Frieden (Peace)*, one of three surviving studies for the Wewelsburg triptych by Hans Lohbeck (1909–1974), (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

attended by Himmler; Josef Terboven, district leader and artistic advisor on the *Reichsführer-SS* Personal Staff; Karl Diebitsch; and Werner Peiner, director of the “Hermann Göring Master School of Painting” located in Kronenburg (Eifel). In the document Himmler commissions an “ash tree of life for the courtroom,” an “image of Marienburg Castle for the room addressing the Teutonic Knights,” a “triptych for the forecourt in front of the Führer’s apartment” (see Figure 1.9), a ceramic Reich eagle (already commissioned from Allach SS Manufactory), a large carpet for the courtroom, and a Gobelin tapestry for the *Reichsführer’s* room.⁶⁶ Heinz Hindorf was commissioned to create the painting of the ash tree and Willi Wewer the depiction of Marienburg Castle.⁶⁷ Peiner’s student Hans Lohbeck⁶⁸ was awarded the contract for the triptych and produced various studies according to Himmler’s specifications. The panels summarize central aspects of the SS ideology. Through their triptych form, old masters’ painting style, and gold ground the images are meant to have a sacral effect. Emphasis is placed on the woman’s role as mother and thus as the guarantor of the “racial purity” of coming generations. The portrayed “soldier–peasants” allude to the blood and soil ideology and the claim to living space in the East. The depiction of oil refineries in one of the studies is interesting here, presumably meant to refer to the Eastern European oil fields. The SS men are shown as protectors and preservers of the kin, of the “noble blood.” In the three known studies, Wewelsburg Castle is either shown in a large format in the left triptych panel in combination with Nuremberg as the site of the city’s National Socialist rallies, or – as is conspicuous in two studies – enthroned on a mountain in the middle of the painting overlooking a half-timber house, which in one study is very

similar to the National Socialist village community center. In all three studies the castle takes on an ideologically significant role as the key building.⁶⁹

The Development of Wewelsburg Castle into a Central Meeting Place

In 1938 castle administrator Knobelsdorff left Wewelsburg due to disciplinary shortcomings among his castle staff and increasing problems in dealing with the village population.⁷⁰ His journal contains the following entry about his official farewell on 22 May 1938, commenting about a speech by Himmler in which he explained why he had chosen Wewelsburg Castle:

It occurred to him to search in the old Germanic region for a castle that externally expressed a sense of history but internally offered all the advantages of modern technical achievements. His harried *Gruppenführer*, rushing around in the fight for Germany, could not be assembled for drill in training camps, but rather at a more comfortable venue, one that also inspired them ideologically.⁷¹

Himmler's thoughts about integrating the SS library into the SS research organization, the Lehr- und Forschungsgemeinschaft "Das Ahnenerbe" e. V. (Ancestral Heritage Research and Teaching Association), and establishing a central site for the Ahnenerbe Association in Detmold jeopardized the academic activities in Wewelsburg.

Although the academic facility remained in Wewelsburg after negotiations in Detmold failed, the training supervisors and many of the SS scholars left Wewelsburg Castle as of 1938 because of uncertainty about the future.⁷² The academic undertaking stagnated, in part because the newly appointed castle administrator, *SS-Brigadeführer* Siegfried Taubert, had no ambitions to continue the research program at Wewelsburg Castle. As a former staff leader in the SD main office, he saw his duties more in military organization and the soldierly discipline of his men.⁷³ Taubert also chose not to live in the feudal-looking official quarters in Wewelsburg Castle, moving instead into the SS guard building erected in 1936 on the castle forecourt. Himmler's idea of Wewelsburg Castle as the future central meeting place for upper echelon SS leaders was already being rehearsed from 19 to 21 May 1938, when Himmler met there with nine high-ranking SS officers.⁷⁴ A few months later, he confirmed his ideas in a speech on 8 November 1938 at the officers' club of the SS-*Standarte Deutschland* regiment in Munich. There he specified that Wewelsburg Castle would be the annual venue for the periodic *Gruppenführer* conferences, as well

as the location where newly promoted *Gruppenführer* would take their oaths in the future.⁷⁵

In another speech in 1938, Himmler referred to the death's head rings designed by Wiligut. The rings awarded to deserving SS leaders as a special distinction were to be kept in a shrine at Wewelsburg Castle after their deaths.⁷⁶

During a visit to Wewelsburg in early 1939, Himmler informed the new castle administrator what his future priorities were to be. He pointed out, for instance, that Wewelsburg Castle could only be visited by special invitation and prohibited all publications about the site. In addition, "gold and silver caches" were to be collected, for tradition's sake and as "a nest egg for bad times."⁷⁷ In this way Himmler underscored the exclusivity of the place. Besides occasional high-level guests, only the SS *Gruppenführer* Corps, as the new ruling elite of the Reich, was to be allowed to visit the castle, as something special to strengthen its esprit de corps and self-confidence.⁷⁸

In the following years Himmler and his staff responded generously to the request to accumulate art treasures at Wewelsburg Castle. He continued buying paintings dealing with standard motifs of his *völkisch*, racist worldview: the role of women as mothers and "guardians of the species," the awareness of Germanic culture, the claim to living space in the East, and the observance of Germanic traditions. He acquired many paintings at the annual Great German Art Exhibitions. In the course of the war, Himmler abandoned the ideological, "Nordic" orientation of the collection, randomly and indiscriminately collecting paintings and artisan objects such as carpets, furniture, glass, ceramics, and historical weapons, including items from the occupied territories.⁷⁹ An Allach Porcelain Manufactory collection is also said to have been in Wewelsburg.⁸⁰ During the war, archaeologist Wilhelm Jordan, deployed as a "military geologist," confiscated archaeological and geological artifacts in Eastern Europe on behalf of Himmler and added them to his collection in Wewelsburg.⁸¹

The Modification of the Northern Tower

Although construction activity had initially been limited to the conversion of the castle itself and the erection of several new buildings in its immediate vicinity (including the SS guard building in 1937), Himmler's renewed surge in power after the war began was reflected in ever more extensive plans for the development of Wewelsburg Castle and the expansion of his project into the village area.

As of 1938 Hermann Bartels included the modification of the northern tower in his plans. It had been a gutted shell since being struck by lightning

in the nineteenth century and no longer in use. The outer walls were initially stabilized with reinforcement rings. In 1939 Bartels presented the first plans, which foresaw transforming the former basement cistern into an imposing domed hall and the ground floor, historically the prince bishop's chapel and more recently an artisan blacksmith workshop, into a spacious columned hall. The construction plans envisaged another hall on the upper floor, but this was never implemented.⁸² A flight of stairs was to lead from the castle's inner courtyard into the domed hall.⁸³ The RAD had meanwhile been assigned to constructing the Siegfried Line, so Himmler deployed concentration camp prisoners for the work, as he had been doing in other SS economic enterprises since 1939. He had a concentration camp built that initially operated as a sub-camp of Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.⁸⁴ The prisoners were deployed to work on the modification of the northern tower and at other sites in the village.⁸⁵ In October 1941 Bartels submitted revised construction plans for the northern tower, replacing the initially foreseen battlement with an enormous domed roof and cupola. While the two lower rooms – the crypt and the *Obergruppenführer* Hall – deviated little from the first plans, the *Gruppenführer* Hall on the upper floor had been considerably expanded, making it necessary to substantially strengthen the northern tower's foundations and outer walls. The new plan now called for a staircase leading into the basement from the eastern wing (see Figure 1.10).⁸⁶

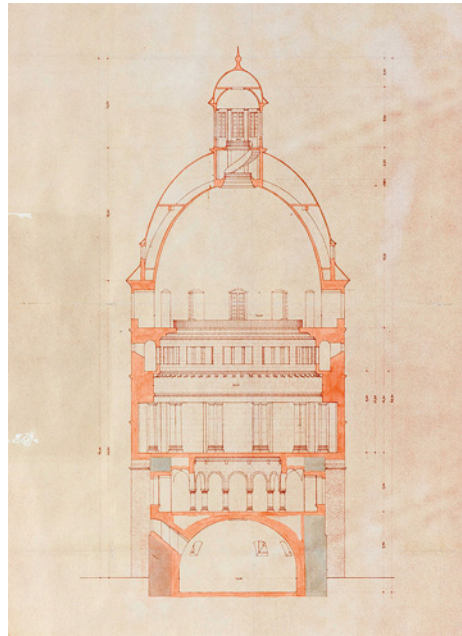


Figure 1.10
Longitudinal section for the modification of the northern tower with an imposing domed roof and cupola; design by Hermann Bartels from 1 October 1941. The diagram clearly shows the crypt and *Obergruppenführer* Hall (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

For the construction of the crypt, the prisoners had to lower the floor of the basement, which entailed excavating 4.4 meters (approx. 14 feet) of bedrock and demolishing the former cistern vault on its two supporting pillars.

This was very hard work for the prisoners in a constantly damp, cool space with inadequate tools. As with the access bridge, the modification of the northern tower used modern building materials, which were subsequently concealed behind rubble stone facing to achieve the desired historicizing effect. The domed ceiling with a height of some 9.5 meters (approx. 31 feet) was cast in concrete and clad with rubble stone from the nearby quarry. Thus, the space still gives the impression of a Mycenaean domed tomb, without this architectural design having been specified as a model in writing by the SS. Twelve round stone pedestals lacking any distinctive ornamentation were built along the walls. Initially there were wall niches above the pedestals, but these were closed again during the construction phase. A stone relief with a swastika whose ends terminate in sig-runes was mounted in the apex of the dome. Four angular openings, whose purpose remains unclear, penetrate about forty centimeters (approx. 16 in.) into the concrete ceiling. Daylight entering through five large window openings in the meter-thick walls shines into the center of the chamber.⁸⁷ The concrete structure of the dome is clearly visible in the window niches because electric lights were supposed to be installed in the openings.

The floor made of dark slabs of Anröchte limestone is mounted on the bedrock. Although the underlying rock's rough structure does result in smaller cavities and crevices beneath the floor, there is no reason to assume there might be secret passages or rooms. A circular basin recessed in the floor is served by two metal pipes. Their similarity to gas pipes and the room's designation as a crypt suggest a gas flame was to burn there, although this premise can only be corroborated by oral accounts because of a lack of written explanations in the building plans. The two pipes extend into an anteroom connecting to the outside through which prisoners entered the work site during the construction phase. This space has now been converted into a staircase.

The *Obergruppenführer* Hall was built on the ground floor and, according to its name, was to serve as a prestigious setting. Bartels had twelve columns of green Anröchte sandstone installed in the circular hall and joined by an arched arcade of the same material. The ambulatory beyond the arcade consists of groined vaults clad with local calcareous sandstone slabs (see Figure 1.11). As in the cases described earlier, the hall's ceiling with its ornamental plasterwork also conceals the supporting concrete structure. The twelve segments of the ambulatory contain niches with eight elongated, rectangular window openings and four doorways. Above the door to the eastern wing hangs a blank stone tablet, whose meaning has yet to be clarified. Access to the *Obergruppenführer*



Figure 1.11
View of the arched arcades in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall during the construction phase. The groined vaults in the ambulatory were stabilized with support posts during construction, 1941–42 (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

Hall would only have been possible through the castle wings if the outside staircase had been built.⁸⁸ The SS removed the archway bearing the Latin inscription “*Domus mea domus orationis vocabitur*” (My house shall be called a house of prayer) facing the castle’s inner courtyard and stored it in the construction yard. After 1945 the portal was reinstalled, although this time in the middle of the wall.

Written records from the SS about the design models for the *Obergruppenführer* Hall are also lacking. There are certainly architectural similarities with the prince bishops’ former baroque chapel, which also had twelve columns. Whether the design was meant to draw on other medieval traditions, like the replicas of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Paderborn and Helmarshausen, remains a matter of conjecture, as do the numerous interpretations and legends that have grown up around this hall since the postwar period.⁸⁹

The design of this room is focused on the center of the marble floor, with its inlay of a sun wheel motif made out of dark green stone. It consists of twelve symmetrically arranged stepped spokes in the form of laterally reversed sig-runes. Seventh-century Alamannic bronze fibulae, or brooches, which were known to some SS scholars through their research, for instance, SS archaeologist Wilhelm Jordan, are considered to be models for the design of this sun wheel.⁹⁰ Neither information clarifying the architect’s selection of this motif



Figure 1.12
Winterhilfswerk badge, 1941–42
(Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

for the northern tower nor other authentic interpretations of this symbol by the SS have survived. There is no evidence the symbol in Wewelsburg Castle's northern tower had more than a decorative meaning for the SS or was used frequently. In Wewelsburg there is another example of a stepped sun wheel, reduced to eight spokes, as a wrought-iron grate at the auxiliary building of the National Socialist village community center. Other sun wheel depictions resembling Alamannic brooches, and therefore the Wewelsburg sun wheel motif as well, can be found in a series on "Jewelry from Ancient Cultures with the Swastika Symbol" (*Schmuck alter Kulturvölker mit Hakenkreuz-Symbol*) published by the Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Fund) in the war winter of 1941–42 (see Figure 1.12).⁹¹

Reckless Spatial Planning and Isolation from the Outside World

During the war special permits from Adolf Hitler were essential for the continuation of construction work. His directive of 12 June 1940 granted Himmler planning sovereignty over the castle complex and village, an authority Bartels exploited in the following years without concern for the interests of the Wewelsburg population or the concentration camp prisoners (see Figure 1.13).⁹²

The prisoners suffered from the hard work, lack of food and medical care, and harassment by the SS. To relieve financial pressure on the "Society," the subcamp under its administration was handed over to the German Reich in September 1941 and declared independent as the Niederhagen–Wewelsburg Concentration Camp.⁹³ Until the camp was disbanded in spring 1943, some 3,900 prisoners were held in Wewelsburg. At least 1,285 of them died, including



Figure 1.13 Concentration camp prisoners had to break rocks in the quarry below Wewelsburg Castle and push them up the hill in tipcarts, 1939–43 (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

52 men, women, and children who were executed as Gestapo prisoners in Niederhagen Concentration Camp on Heinrich Himmler's personal orders.⁹⁴

The surviving construction plans reveal the far-reaching ideas Himmler and his architect had for spatial development in and around Wewelsburg, which involved an ever increasing isolation of the castle complex from the outside world. Significant for this development is the plan from August 1940, which is the earliest surviving draft to envisage the complete overbuilding of the existing village and ignored all previous plans and the already completed buildings, such as the *Führerhaus* (the architect's private home) and the National Socialist community center.⁹⁵ The plan thus scrapped earlier designs, which included an elongated building complex in front of Wewelsburg Castle that had required elaborate negotiations over the purchase of the Catholic church at that location.⁹⁶ Another plan, dated 23 April 1941, pursued the idea of the concentric building complex and included a large street leading directly to Wewelsburg Castle.⁹⁷ In these drawings Wewelsburg Castle with its northern tower forms the center of the overall complex, the "center of the world,"⁹⁸ which is enclosed by a concentrically laid-out complex of buildings penetrated by a wide street leading to Wewelsburg Castle. The Alme Valley was omitted from the circular grounds for topographical reasons. Bartels presented his planning concept in writing on 6 May 1941:

The starting point of the whole design is the center of the northern tower of Wewelsburg Castle, whose layout forms an isosceles triangle. The peak of this isosceles triangle marks the direction of the main access street, which is to run in a straight line for 2 kilometers (approx. 1 1/4 miles) in a north-northwesterly direction toward the castle and be laid out as a boulevard with 4 rows of trees. ... The actual castle site will be surrounded by a circular grounds with a radius of 430 meters (approx. 470 yards) reaching three quarters of the way around it and enclosed by a wall with 18 towers. A large number of buildings will be built within this castle property exclusively for the use of the SS Reich leadership. The future village's main street will run circularly around the center of Wewelsburg Castle's northern tower at a distance of 635 meters (approx. 695 yards). This main street will be connected to the castle grounds by 3 radial roads and through special gateways. ... In the future, the provincial road is to be routed around the village in a semicircle at a distance of 1115 meters (approx. 1220 yards) from the northern tower.⁹⁹



Figure 1.14 SS development plan of Wewelsburg by Hermann Bartels, February 1944 (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

Even after the war-induced halt to work in spring of 1943,¹⁰⁰ the construction management staff numbering around fifty, including several architects and technical draughtsmen, continued to develop additional plans based on this design principle, with their alignment becoming increasingly stringent. The development plan from February 1944 shows the well-known final version in a north-south orientation as a clear, geometric continuation of the grounds in the triangular shape prescribed by Wewelsburg Castle (see Figure 1.14).¹⁰¹ The interpretation of this shape as the Spear of Longinus or Holy Lance cannot be substantiated through either oral or written sources.¹⁰²

The SS construction management worked continuously until the end of the war to isolate the planned SS central meeting place ever more massively from the outside world to form an exclusive refuge for the SS elite.¹⁰³ This indicates that Himmler was intensely preoccupied with the construction project even during the war years. As late as 26 February 1944, for example, he informed his castle administrator Siegfried Taubert from field command that “the best way to describe Wewelsburg Castle in peacetime would be: ‘Wewelsburg Castle–Reich House of the SS-*Gruppenführer*.’”¹⁰⁴

Wewelsburg – A Place of Self-Affirmation for the SS

Himmler visited Wewelsburg Castle at least twenty-five times, usually for just a few days at a time. He was often accompanied by senior SS leaders or persons who could benefit the organization, such as Albert Speer from 28 to 30 March 1940,¹⁰⁵ or, just ten days earlier, five high-ranking *Gruppen-* and *Obergruppenführer*.¹⁰⁶ However, the *Gruppenführer* meetings envisaged by Himmler could not be held annually as planned.

Following the aforementioned meeting in May 1938, the meeting planned for spring 1939 was canceled because of the establishment of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, among other things. It was not until 12 to 15 June 1941 that another large *Gruppenführer* meeting would take place that in its special significance for the SS leaders came close to fulfilling Himmler's expectations. The SS elite met – just a few days before the German assault on the Soviet Union – at the meeting place specially prepared for them, where they were to gain an awareness of their ideological status as an Aryan elite and to assure themselves that the planned war of annihilation was correct and of great historical significance according to the SS worldview (see Figure 1.15).¹⁰⁷ For this purpose the converted castle complex offered precisely the ambience Himmler sought – that of a defiant Westphalian stronghold providing quiet evenings around the fireplace.¹⁰⁸ However, actual use of the northern tower by



Figure 1.15 Meeting of SS *Obergruppenführer* in June 1941. Far left, Reinhard Heydrich; far right, the castle housekeeper Elfriede Wippermann; second from right, the new castle administrator Siegfried Taubert (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

the SS leaders can be ruled out, because both the crypt and *Obergruppenführer* Hall were still under construction at the time.

Before American troops advanced into the area on 2 April 1945,¹⁰⁹ the SS had concentration camp prisoners hide many of the art objects, paintings, carpets, tapestries, and other items collected at Wewelsburg Castle in the SS guard building and on the neighboring Böddeken estate. Heinz Macher, *Hauptsturmführer* in the *Waffen-SS*, received orders from Himmler to blow up Wewelsburg Castle. By the time Macher arrived in Wewelsburg with an SS pioneer detachment on 31 March 1945, castle administrator Siegfried Taubert and his staff had already fled with their families. Macher attempted to demolish the castle and the SS guard and staff buildings in front of it but had not brought enough explosives to do the job. Although the other buildings were severely damaged, Wewelsburg Castle only caught fire. After the SS detachment withdrew, the inhabitants of the village and surrounding area looted the castle. On Easter Sunday, 1 April, the fire flared up again for unknown reasons, leaving the castle completely gutted (see Figure 1.16).¹¹⁰ The fire resulted in Himmler's efforts ultimately being successful. He had not only managed to keep his elite



Figure 1.16 Wewelsburg Castle after the demolition. Fire damage to the southern wing is clearly visible, 1949–50 (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

meeting place largely secret from the German public but also to deny Allied Forces access to it.

Even though Himmler's extensive construction plans could not be implemented by the end of the war, despite the SS's considerable efforts, the consequences of the SS project were profound. Nearly 1,300 people died because of inhuman working conditions and SS violence at the concentration camp in Wewelsburg. The structural traces of the SS activities are still clearly visible at the castle and in the village of Wewelsburg and serve as a reminder of the SS past.

Notes

- 1 The earliest written record stems from the annals of an anonymous author, the "Saxon annalist," from the years 1148–52. The chronicler is often identified as Abbot Arnold of the Berge Monastery, near Magdeburg.
- 2 Brebeck (2005).
- 3 Himmler became the *Reichsführer* (Reich leader) of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) in 1929. The organization was originally a paramilitary formation that had already made a name for itself within the National Socialist movement prior to 1933 as Hitler's bodyguard and the Party police, as well as by stylizing itself as a racial elite. After Heinrich Himmler took over the Prussian Gestapo (secret state police) and the secret police of the German states in 1933–34, the SS developed into a key source of authority and the National Socialist regime's most important terror instrument.
- 4 Current research in this area is based primarily on files from the Federal Archives in Berlin (BAB), the Landesarchiv NRW Abteilung Ostwestfalen (LAV) of the Kreisarchiv

Paderborn (KA PB, largely construction records), and several compiled documents (including various egodocuments, i.e., autobiographical writings, and contemporary witness interviews) from different collections and archives.

5 In 1977, after years of controversial debate about how to deal with the SS's history in Wewelsburg, the district of Paderborn commissioned Karl Hüser to carry out research to develop a contemporary historical documentation.

6 Hüser (1987).

7 Hüser (1987), pp. 28, 71–72, 119.

8 See Moors (2013), pp. 55–88, here p. 69.

9 On 10 April 2010, the new Wewelsburg 1933–1945 Memorial Museum opened with the permanent exhibition, *Ideology and Terror of the SS*, in the former SS guard building.

10 Schulte (2009b), p. 20.

11 Moors (2013, pp. 57–59) views the SS plans for the castle and village as the symbolic expression of Himmler's increasing belief that his organization was the true, hierarchically structured, racially defined, militarily underpinned, and, above all, violent embodiment of National Socialism.

12 Moors (2013), p. 61.

13 Himmler's thinking at this time was strongly influenced by Richard W. Darré; see Longerich (2008), pp. 137–38. Darré, the leading agricultural policy politician in the NSDAP and SS, was appointed Reich Farmers' Leader (*Reichsbauernführer*) in May 1933 and Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture (*Reichsminister für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft*) a month later.

14 Moors (2013), p. 60.

15 Otto Dietrich, NSDAP Reich press officer, wrote afterwards about the atmosphere of the stay at Grevenburg Castle, which is situated near what was then the Prussian border to Lippe in the district of Höxter: "Every evening around 6 p.m. we left the castle to go out into the surrounding countryside, crisscrossing it in the course of attending two or three meetings. At midnight or even later, we returned to our castle idyll. We had managed to keep the magnificent accommodation secret from the entire public. ... After our cars had arrived back through the narrow entrance of this castle's romantically converted, ivy-covered courtyard, we would still enjoy a quiet, peaceful hour with the splendid landlord and his hospitable wife around the blazing fire. Such hours of contemplative conversation and relaxation were a rarity in our rushed existence." Otto Dietrich (1934), *Mit Hitler in die Macht. Persönliche Erlebnisse mit meinem Führer*; quoted here from the 1936 edition, in Wehrmann (1984), pp. 79–80. Jutta von Oeynhausen subsequently also wrote down her memories of those days: "Am Kamin der Grevenburg," in Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord der NSDAP (ed.), *Hitler kämpft und siegt in Lippe 1933*. Detmold (1934), pp. 32–33.

16 Moors (2013), p. 59.

17 Even if there are no reliable sources providing verbatim proof that Himmler actually did decide on a castle as a place of assembly for the SS because of his stay at Grevenburg Castle, statements by architect Hermann Bartels (Hüser, 1987, p. 15) and journal entries by castle administrator Manfred von Knobelsdorff confirm that Himmler was lastingly impressed by the idyll of Grevenburg Castle. His subsequent dealings with Wewelsburg Castle reflect precisely the elements mentioned in the memoirs (seclusion, secrecy, castle idyll, sense of tradition) of O. Dietrich and J. v. Oeynhausen; on this topic, see Moors (2009a), here pp. 163–67.

18 *Süddeutsche Sonntagspost*, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Munich, Pressesammlung 329, quoted in Moors (2009a), p. 167.

- 19 Former imperial career officer Manfred von Knobelsdorff had already been commissioned in spring 1933 to organize the educational work of the SS Race Office in Section V (Essen). In August he was asked by the SS Race Office deputy director, Dr. Horst Rechenbach, whether he wanted to take on the job of ideological training supervisor at Schwalenberg Castle; see BAB/BDC, RS, Manfred von Knobelsdorff.
- 20 On the lease negotiations with the owner of the castle, Countess Marie zur Lippe-Biesterfeld, see LAV NRW Abt. Ostwestfalen, L 80.03, Nr. 94.
- 21 Moors sees the choice of Westphalia as a location based primarily on the fact that both Bartels, as a Westphalian provincial civil servant, and Oeynhausens preferred the region for professional and political reasons. Since April 1933 Oeynhausens had been district president of the East Westphalian district of Minden, which was part of Westphalia.
- 22 Himmler's visit to Wewelsburg Castle was commented on in the press. The *Büren Zeitung*, no. 256 (7 November 1933), reported: "In the selection of a suitable site for the Reich Leadership School, Wewelsburg Castle will occupy a prominent position." Statements that Himmler's choice had to do with the legend of the Battle at the Birch Tree cannot be proven by credible sources. They are based solely on the memoirs of Karl Wolff, the chief of the *Reichsführer*-SS Personal Staff; see Hüser (1987), p. 6; Schulte (2009a), p. 8; Moors (2013), p. 56; and D. Siepe's detailed essay, "The 'Grail Castle' of the SS?," in this volume.
- 23 As a subordinate organization of the NSDAP, the SS lacked autonomous legal capacity. On the difficulties of the lease negotiations, see Hüser (1987), pp. 17–21. Lease from 27 July 1934, KA PB B 400.
- 24 Report in the *Büren Zeitung*, no. 19 (24 January 1934).
- 25 On this topic, see also Moors (2013), p. 170.
- 26 Construction plans for Wewelsburg Castle from 16 December 1933, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Pläne Nr. 81, 82, and 84.
- 27 Moors (2009b).
- 28 On the library, see Moors (2009b).
- 29 For in-depth information on Wilhelm Jordan, see Herring (2009), Huismann (2009).
- 30 Moors, (2009c).
- 31 Otto S. Reuter was closely connected with the Ahnenerbe Association and attempted to prove the existence of a highly developed, specifically Germanic astronomy with his work *Germanische Himmelskunde (Skylore of the North)*. Letter from the Wewelsburg SS Reich Leadership School to Otto Sigfrid Reuter on 14 October 1935, BAB NS 32 III/I.
- 32 Ariosophy is a radically racist teaching containing mystical and occult ideas.
- 33 Siepe (2002), pp. 279–83. Here it is also mentioned that although Wiligut was highly regarded by Himmler and Knobelsdorff, other members of the castle staff thought his ideas were nonsense. After his expulsion the SS continued to provide for his livelihood, and he remained in close contact with Himmler.
- 34 Brebeck (2011), pp. 164–65, Hüser (1987), pp. 200–203; on Wiligut, see also Lange (2010).
- 35 Rahn's letter to the ideological training supervisor at Wewelsburg SS School from 8 June 1936, KA PB, AS 100 Allg. Slg. Wewelsburg, reprinted in Hüser (1987), p. 205; further documents in Lange (1999), pp. 177ff. On Otto Rahn, see Lange (1999); Siepe (2002), pp. 277–78; Friedrich (2008); and Sünner (2009), pp. 92–97. In 1935 Rahn joined the SS, which then financed his expeditions. After internal conflicts Rahn was forced to perform guard duty at concentration camps. He died in 1939 in the Alps, probably taking his own life because of his alcoholism and psychological pressure resulting from his homosexuality. On the link between Grail mythology and Wewelsburg Castle, see also D. Siepe's essay, "The 'Grail Castle' of the SS?," in this volume. There is no evidence Rahn influenced the design of Wewelsburg Castle, especially regarding the northern tower.

- 36 As of 1939 the Special Assignment H department was placed under the control of the RSHA, Amt II, and as of 1941 of Amt VII (Ideological Research and Evaluation). The research findings were stored on 33,000 cards referred to as the *Hexenkartothek* (witch card file). In 1939 the Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*, SD,) discovered the case of a woman named Margreth Himbler, who had been persecuted and executed as a witch, and established a connection to Himmler's kin. On Himmler's witch card file, see Lorenz (2000); on Hans-Peter des Coudres in particular, see Rudolf (2000), p. 68.
- 37 Quote from a speech at the dedication of the National Socialist community center in Wewelsburg on 8 May 1937. A copy of the document is in the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg archival collection.
- 38 Here it can be assumed he left things at the official planning stage in order to obtain government funding and have the possibility of using the RAD for his purposes; see Moors (2009a), p. 166.
- 39 Moors (2013), p. 66.
- 40 *Völkischer Beobachter*, issue A, no. 270 (27 September 1934), facsimile, 1987, p. 192.
- 41 Order from 6 November 1935; see Brebeck (2005), p. 68.
- 42 SS order, BAB NS 19, SS Befehle 1.
- 43 I would like to thank Bettina Oesl, who discovered this connection during her research on Adolf Wamper; see the Wamper biography in Oesl (2013). Adolf Wamper, born 1901 in Grevenberg, was a sought-after sculptor during the National Socialist period. He exhibited four times at the Great German Art Exhibition, stood on the "blessed by God list" of the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda as of 1944, and was denazified as "exonerated." After the war he was appointed to the Folkwangschule as head of the work group Sculpture: Art in Public Space. His art remained representational and comprised primarily figurative sculptures.
- 44 Kreismuseum Wewelsburg photo archive.
- 45 The SS supported the Deutsche Heimatwerk, an association consisting of regional crafts enterprises; see Ständecke (2004).
- 46 Brebeck (2005), p. 68; see also Fasse (1997), pp. 331–38. Manfred von Knobelsdorff noted in his journal on 7 March 1938 about the large dining room (courtroom): "It is the most successful room in the entire castle. The beamed ceiling with its rectangular fields – the carved figures representing the wall bearers; the room entirely lined with wood; the fireplace with the wording about the history of Wewelsburg Castle composed by myself and SS-*Unterstuf.* Frank; the large table with the beautiful yellow leather chairs – the sconces with the bronze fittings and ornaments; the *Gruppenführer* coats of arms on the east side; this all merges into a harmonious scene."
- 47 Brebeck (2005), p. 69.
- 48 According to a villager, all of the guest rooms contained copies of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*.
- 49 Orders for interior furnishings were placed with various crafts companies, including wall hangings from Hohenhagen handwoven textiles; see Holtmann (2011).
- 50 Brebeck (2005), p. 68, as well as D. Siepe's essay, "The 'Grail Castle' of the SS?," in this volume.
- 51 Entry by Manfred von Knobelsdorff in journal preserved in the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, estate of E. v. Knobelsdorff.
- 52 Hüser (1987), p. 37.
- 53 Wolff (1961), p. 25.
- 54 Journal entry by M. von Knobelsdorff; the date is indistinct, probably 13 March 1938.

- 55 Journal entry by M. von Knobelsdorff from 14 March 1938.
- 56 Himmler's fondness for Henry I (876–936) is undisputed. This also moved him to have Quedlinburg Abbey expanded into a cult site. The theory posited by Frank Helzel, among others, that Himmler had planned to make Wewelsburg Castle a "Henry's castle" cannot be substantiated in written records; see Helzel (1999), Helzel (2003).
- 57 Letter from Ilse v. Knobelsdorff to Richard W. Darré, (BAB Nachlass Darré II, Nr. 54) reprinted in Hüser (1987), pp. 196–97.
- 58 Brebeck (2011), p. 195.
- 59 Hüser (1987), p. 28.
- 60 Bylaws of the "Society" from 1 February 1936, copy preserved, BAB 36 I, 501/49.
- 61 Brebeck (2011), pp. 46–48.
- 62 Ackermann (1970), pp. 105–6.
- 63 Letter from Diebitsch and other documents on the "coats-of-arms initiative," BAB NS 19/201.
- 64 Moors (2009a), pp. 172–73.
- 65 In the early phase, Himmler commissioned artists such as Robert Kämmerer-Röhrig, Karl Arthur Held, and painter Ernst Rötteken from Lippe to produce paintings of Wewelsburg Castle and other sites supervised by the Gesellschaft zur Förderung und Pflege deutscher Kulturdenkmäler e. V. (Society for the Promotion and Care of German Cultural Monuments), including the Externsteine, the Sachsenhain (Saxon Grove), and Quedlinburg Abbey, see John-Stucke (2012A), pp. 161–67; and Van Faassen (2009), pp. 242–69.
- 66 Minutes of the meeting, BAB NS 19/1446; in this regard, see Brebeck (2011), p. 200. A study for the *Gerichtsesche* (Ash of Justice, on loan), two studies for the triptych, and remnants of the carpet are in the Kreismuseum collection. The third study for the triptych is reproduced in Nicola Doll, *Mäzenatentum und Kunstförderung in Nationalsozialismus. Werner Peiner und Hermann Göring* (Weimar, 2009), p. 383.
- 67 On the artists, see Van Faassen (2009), pp. 254–60.
- 68 Pesch (2012), pp. 78–79.
- 69 Brebeck (2005), pp. 69–71. It is not known whether the studies were ever implemented.
- 70 On the conflicts with the village population, see Hüser (1987), pp. 41ff. Knobelsdorff returned to the RuSHA with a promotion to *SS-Obersturmbannführer*, and was placed in charge of the Reichsnährstand (Reich Nutritional Estate) publishing house in Goslar.
- 71 Journal entry by M. von Knobelsdorff, 22 May 1938.
- 72 On Himmler's ideas about creating a three-part ideological education center in Lippe und Westphalia with locations in Wewelsburg, at the Externsteine, and on Hiddeser Berg in Detmold, see Moors (2009b), pp. 189–92 and Moors (2013), pp. 70–72. With the outbreak of war, more scholars left the castle.
- 73 As late as 1938, Taubert was promoted to *SS-Gruppenführer*. Moors (2009b), p. 188, Moors (2013), p. 71.
- 74 Longerich (2008), p. 305. Among the participants were Sepp Dietrich, Theodor Eicke, Karl Wolff, Kurt Daluege, Werner Lorenz, August Heißmeyer, Reinhard Heydrich, Walter Schmitt, and Oswald Pohl. Nothing is known about the proceedings or discussions.
- 75 Peterson & Smith (1974), pp. 25–26, 43.
- 76 Speech reprinted in Peterson & Smith (1974), p. 79; see also Moors (2009a), p. 176. On the significance of the death's head ring, see Ackermann (1970), p. 72. This idea was confirmed in an SS report of 1 January 1945: "The rings of fallen and deceased SS members will be kept in an honorable place at Wewelsburg Castle as a reminder to future generations by

the respective *Reichsführer-SS*, while the rings of those who left the SS under other circumstances will be melted down,” NA Washington F 175, roll 191.

77 For records of Himmler’s remarks during his visit in Wewelsburg from 15 to 18 January 1939, see Ackermann (1970), p. 105, note 47.

78 See Moors (2013), p. 69.

79 Among the artists with an ideological orientation were Wolfgang Willrich (*Hüterin der Art*, Guardian of the Race), Karl Diebitsch, and Willy ter Hell. On the origin and whereabouts of the art treasures, see Van Faassen (2009), pp. 254–69.

80 Brebeck (2005), p. 72.

81 Huisman (2009). Due to the size of the collection, the museum established by Jordon was expanded to include rooms in the SS guard building.

82 The names *crypt*, *Obergruppenführer Hall*, and *Gruppenführer Hall* do not appear in the plans, but they do in the “Society’s” monthly and annual reports, which describe in detail the status of the construction project; see, among others, the 1941 annual report, LAV NRW Abtl. Ostwestfalen D 70 Nr. 160.

83 Notwithstanding the lack of approval by the State Conservator of Prussian Monuments, Bartels had long since begun construction work in 1940. The plan from December 1939 shows a cross-section through the northern tower, the roof of which was still to be topped with a battlement at this phase in the planning, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Plan Nr. 197.

84 On the history of the concentration camp in Wewelsburg, see John[-Stucke] (2001), John-Stucke (2009), pp. 337–54.

85 See the overview of the work detachments in the village. Among other things, the architect had his own private residence (Führerhaus I) built by the prisoners; Brebeck (2011), p. 304.

86 Construction management’s building plans for “Wewelsburg SS-School” from 1 October 1941, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Pläne Nr. 129 and 130.

87 The middle window opening was probably bricked up after the war for structural reasons.

88 Floor plan showing the expansion of the basement and ground floor in the northern tower, as of December 1939, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Plan Nr. 131. The columns, niches, and staircase are clearly visible, as is a spiral staircase, which was planned at the time, but not constructed. Today’s spiral staircase was not built until 2010, to connect the basement with the ground floor.

89 Brebeck (2005), p. 76; see D. Siepe’s essay, “The ‘Grail Castle’ of the SS?,” in this volume.

90 Brebeck (2005), pp. 76–77; Siepe (2008), p. 93. The fibula, or brooch, belongs to a group of decorative fibulae that incorporate sun symbols, including the swastika. It is assumed the forms appearing as of late antiquity had a religious significance in Middle Eastern light and sun cultures, before they were adopted by the Alamanni, who became Christianized in the seventh century. See the illustrations of the Alamannic fibula in plate 4 in Renner (1970). See also the correspondence of former museum director Wulff Brebeck with the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz from 1995; Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, archival collection. I am grateful to Karl Banghard for drawing my attention to another discovery of this motif in a Christian context; he verified its existence on a horse harness rein guide from ca. AD 600 found in Bisingen (Banghard, 2009, pp. 87–88).

91 A badge made of brown, perforated plastic shows a great similarity; reproduced in Rosenberg (1982), fig. 352, p. 109. The time of origin (AD 600, Allemanic) and place of discovery (Sirmau, Württemberg) of the original are indicated on the reverse side. An older instance of the sun wheel motif from 1925 is located on a desk from the possessions of

- Hermann Burte, now in the holdings of the Deutsches Historisches Museum, and reproduced in an exhibition catalogue (Thamer & Erpel, 2010, p. 183).
- 92 Führer directive on construction measures in the surroundings of Wewelsburg Castle, *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1940, part I, no. 127 (16 July 1940); see Hüser (1987), pp. 62, 274–75. See also the application of 23 July 1940 by the SS Main Economic and Administrative Office to the Paderborn Labor Office for an exemption from the wartime building ban for SS construction projects in Wewelsburg: “Very little labor will be taken from the construction market, because concentration-camp prisoners, who otherwise are unemployed, will be used,” as well as the reply: “No objections.” KA PB Bauamt Büren B 5 40/53/1/WI–IV.
- 93 List of work detachments from 31 August 1941, SH R 214 M 55, Sonderarchiv, Befehl Nr. 388 in the *Verordnungsblatt* of the *Waffen-SS* (15 October 1941). There were 480 prisoners in the subcamp in Wewelsburg at the time it was designated an independent main camp, with that number increasing in the following years to 1,500, including German, Polish, Western European, and Soviet prisoners; see John-Stucke (2012B), pp. 467–80.
- 94 John[-Stucke] (2001), pp. 99–106.
- 95 White print of the Wewelsburg cadastral plan, overlaid with a hand-colored plan drawing in ink and pencil, 5 August 1940, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, estate of Wettin Müller, Inv. Nr. 15545. The village residents were to be housed in a model village in the vicinity, although subsequent plans no longer included any space for them, leading to rumors they were to be resettled as “soldier-peasants” in the occupied eastern territories (Brebeck, 2011, pp. 266–71).
- 96 Plan drawing from 1939, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Plan Nr. 163. Karl Hüser (1987), p. 51, coined here the description of a “palace complex modeled on medieval royal palaces.”
- 97 Development plan “Wewelsburg Castle and Village” from 23 April 1941, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Plan Nr. 198.
- 98 A contemporary term used by architects Draak, Knickenberg, and Waltert, who were working in Wewelsburg at the time: see Hüser (1987), p. 59.
- 99 Landesamt für Agrarordnung (State Agricultural Agency), Arch. Nr. 302, Aufsichtsakte Bl. 58, reproduced in Hüser (1987), pp. 62–63.
- 100 In spring 1943 even Bartels could no longer hinder a work stoppage. Just before the defeat in Stalingrad, all “construction work irrelevant to the war” was discontinued on the basis of the directive of 13 January 1943. The Niederhagen Concentration Camp was officially disbanded on 30 April 1943. The prisoners were transferred to other camps. Forty-two Jehovah Witnesses and political prisoners remained as an external work detachment under the control of Buchenwald Concentration Camp until their liberation on 2 April 1945 in Wewelsburg (John-Stucke, 2009).
- 101 Development plan of the SS castle complex and surroundings, showing village properties, February 1944, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Inv. Nr. 1697, design for the SS’s Wewelsburg castle, with the village, from June 1944, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Plan Nr. 153. See Ravenscroft (1972) and Herbert (1978); see Hüser (1987), p. 163.
- 102 See Moors (2013), pp. 57–59.
- 103 Letter from Himmler to Taubert on 26 February 1944, BAB NS 19/201.
- 104 Heinrich Himmler’s pocket calendar. 1940, Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Inv. Nr. 16287. Albert Speer, architect and general building inspector for Berlin; as of 1942, Reich armaments minister.
- 105 Moors (2013), p. 74. The guests included Sepp Dietrich, Fritz Weitzel, Paul Hausser, Theodor Eicke, and Karl Pfeffer-Wildenbruch.

- ¹⁰⁷ Schulte (2009a), pp. 10–20. This meeting attended by Heinrich Himmler included Kurt Daluege, Werner Lorenz, Friedrich Jeckeln, Oswald Pohl, Reinhard Heydrich, Karl Wolff, Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, Hans-Adolf Prützmann, Siegfried Taubert, Johannes Johst, and Hans Albin Rauter.
- ¹⁰⁸ In Himmler's service calendar, the entry for 12 June 1941 ends with "We sat around the fireplace." BAB NS 19/2957, Bl. 88.
- ¹⁰⁹ On 2 April 1945 at 1:35 p.m., American soldiers of the 16th US Infantry Regiment arrived at the concentration camp grounds in Wewelsburg and freed the prisoners. Secret G-2 Journal, Headquarters 1st US INF DIV, APC 1, U.S. Army, 2 April 1945, National Archives Washington 301-2.2.
- ¹¹⁰ Brebeck (2011), pp. 371–74.

The “Grail Castle” of the SS?

The Creation of Legends about Wewelsburg Castle in Scholarly and Popular-Science Literature

Daniela Siepe

In June 2012 *P.M. History*, a monthly popular-science magazine, “set out along Percival’s trail,”¹ exploring legendary locations where, according to the publication, the “Grail saga comes alive again.”² *P.M. Magazine* considered the “two German ‘Grail castles’”³ to be Wildenberg Castle in the Odenwald region and, of course, Wewelsburg Castle, the “National Socialist Grail castle near Büren in the district of Paderborn.”⁴ Had this been the “site of a National Socialist Grail?”⁵ inquired the magazine in reference to a photograph of the “crypt” in the East Westphalian castle’s northern tower.⁶

Some six years earlier, in April 2006, the news magazine *Focus* had taken the plagiarism trial concerning Dan Brown’s well-known Grail thriller *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) as an opportunity to look at pertinent legends surrounding the Grail as well as bestsellers on the subject up to the present day.⁷ *Focus* also quite naturally assumed that Heinrich Himmler “had the Westphalian Wewelsburg Castle converted into a Grail site,”⁸ with the crypt being a “pseudoreligious cult center”⁹ – as an accompanying atmospheric photograph appears to impressively show.

Wewelsburg Castle seems to be known to a broader public primarily as an SS “Grail castle” and “cult site.”¹⁰ This is astonishing on closer inspection, for there is simply no evidence that Grail mythology played a large, let alone paramount role in the SS’s development of Wewelsburg Castle. The legend’s influence is only evident in the naming of two of the castle’s rooms that bore the names *King Arthur* and *Grail*. The latter contained a thematically fitting piece of quartz or rock crystal, and its furnishing, as with some other rooms, was a topic of dispute between the castle administrator and the architect. However, the rooms with Arthurian associations were only two among many, with the others bearing names with quite different thematic origins.¹¹

How then, did the East Westphalian castle come to be transformed into a “SS Grail castle” and “cult site” in the literature as of the 1950s? This chapter delves into that question and presents the legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle. It illustrates how a set of recurring notions and stories was adopted,

varied, and embellished in the historical literature, resulting in an image of Wewelsburg Castle with only a very limited basis in verifiable facts.¹²

The chapter draws on literature with different emphases and intended messages and of varying quality.¹³ Distinguishing between scholarly and popular-science literature has proven helpful. Scholarly literature refers to titles that essentially, although not necessarily exclusively, address a specialist audience and must, therefore, follow historical scholarship's well-defined rules. This approach entails the critical handling of sources and secondary literature, as well as the use of a transparent system of citation. The scholarly method also involves a presentation that is committed to considering the facts in their complexity and clearly distinguishes for the reader between verifiable facts, justified conjecture, and completely indemonstrable assertions on the basis of the current state of research.¹⁴

Popular-science literature, which includes journalistic texts such as the one cited at the beginning of this essay, is aimed at a broader interested public. Strictly speaking, this style of literature must also follow scholarly criteria when developing and presenting a topic if it wants to be taken seriously and appeal to informed readers. However, the intention to reach a broader readership in the form of a non-professional audience understandably requires that complex issues be simplified to a greater or lesser extent for reasons of readability. Moreover, when depicting events, contexts, and biographies, the popular-science author has more freedom to embellish things linguistically or narratively than the scholarly writer.¹⁵ Furthermore, the absence of citations or their sparse use is not sanctioned by a lay audience to the same extent as by a professional one. It is precisely these characteristics of popular-science literature – simplification, a frequent use of suggestive description, and a common lack of verifiability – that have fostered the creation of legends.

The Headquarters of the SS Order and an SS Cloister? Motifs in the Legends Created during the 1950s and 1960s

Willi Frischauer, Himmler: The Evil Genius of the Third Reich (1953)

Near Paderborn, it appeared, there were the ruined foundations of what must have been a medieval burgh – exactly at the spot which the old prophecy seemed to indicate. Himmler abruptly left his aides, boarded a plane to inspect the locality. He was solemn, as if in prayer, as he stood by the thick forest where, in his mind's eye, he could already see his burgh rising majestically from the ruins.¹⁶

This passage, describing Himmler's first arrival in Wewelsburg as a solemn moment, stems from journalist Willi Fischauer's 1953 biography, *Himmler: The Evil Genius of the Third Reich*.¹⁷ Frischauer's monograph (see Figure 2.1) marks the inception of the enduring legend of Himmler's selection of Wewelsburg Castle as the "spiritual headquarters of the SS order"¹⁸ in Westphalia. The scene depicted is characteristic of the style of the entire publication: Alleged dialogues, references to nameless witnesses, and ostensibly exact reproductions of Himmler's thoughts as in the cited example¹⁹ pretend authenticity where it cannot exist. Wewelsburg Castle was not a complete ruin in the 1930s, Himmler did not have to rebuild it, and so he never stood solemnly before the remnants of its ancient walls. The scene is purely fictitious. Citations that would make Fischauer's claims verifiable are missing entirely; the Austrian journalist's Himmler biography instead has the features of a novel with an omniscient narrator that has the story of Wewelsburg Castle embedded substantively and narratively in its plot.

Frischauer's Himmler is a literary construct, a figure who, as in the aforementioned scene, shares only limited similarity with the original. He is depicted as a markedly eccentric, softish man, whose soldierly bearing is merely feigned; as an inconspicuous, dull individual; a short-sighted spectacle wearer with a mouse-gray mustache, whose bulging, watery eyes, according to Frischauer, blink through his thick glasses.²⁰ When speaking, Himmler tries to straighten his sloping shoulders and narrow torso to give himself a semblance of importance.²¹ In keeping with this appearance, Frischauer portrays *Reichsführer-SS* (Reich leader of the SS) Himmler as a hesitant, uncertain, even internally torn man, whose manner astonished even the worst sadists in the SS. The journalist paints a picture of a powerless man and compares Himmler with "a length of electric wire whose electric current was supplied from outside – that current being Hitler. He himself could not supply any current."²² Within the SS Himmler was "in many ways the weakest and most insignificant in his own circle of highest S.S. leaders."²³ His forte, however, was taking responsibility for the crimes.²⁴ In Frischauer's biography, the *Reichsführer-SS* appears as a foreign body within his own organization, a man whose position is a burden he cannot live up to; he has trouble making decisions and is inhibited in his dealings with people. Frischauer's Himmler is lonely and "has no real friends."²⁵

Frischauer bases this deconstruction of Himmler as the undisputed head of the SS on his appearance. Accordingly, the journalist builds a subordinate of Himmler's into his adversary, calling him with fascination a "blonde beast."²⁶ The reference is to Reinhard Heydrich (1904–1942), who as head of the Reich Security Main Office was instrumental in organizing the murder of the European Jews. A tall, blond, and athletic man, Heydrich corresponded to

the racial ideal of the SS far more than his boss. In Frischauer's book, he appears as the more capable SS leader, as an outstanding personality and talented organizer.²⁷ Heydrich, according to Frischauer, succeeded in exploiting Himmler's loneliness, dispelling his suspicion and insecurity, and winning his heart, thus gaining enormous influence over him as a way to expand his own position of power:

It was the old, old story of the mediocrity who, by diligence, patience and subservience, has plodded his [Himmler's] way to a position beyond his real capacity, leaning heavily on the type of friend and assistant who seems always available to exploit such a situation. ... The association of Himmler and Heydrich had not lasted many months before Himmler's voice was saying what Heydrich thought.²⁸

Historian Ruth Bettina Birn has noted a general tendency in the early literature on the SS to underestimate Himmler's importance and overestimate Reinhard Heydrich's, with this often being based on appearances.²⁹ This inclination has had consequences for the way SS ideology is portrayed and its importance evaluated. Stereotypes are employed for both Himmler and Heydrich that do not suit either man. In Frischauer's publication Heydrich appears as the true doer, who keeps the SS functioning and expands its position of power with his ideology-free, technocratic mentality.³⁰ Himmler, on the other hand, is portrayed as an odd, solitary man who hinders rather than promotes action, a monkey wrench in the SS's works. Frischauer's Himmler has a tendency to flee from harsh reality into the world of a distant past, a character trait the journalist regards as having been created in Himmler's early childhood, when his father read him stories from Germany's past and the Middle Ages.³¹ Frischauer views Himmler's interest as pathological, speaking of "a morbid inclination to look into the past and draw from it a picture of the future."³² The *Reichsführer-SS's* ideological instrumentalization of German history is thus tied to autobiographical disposition and character weakness and reduced to the neurosis of a man with low self-esteem. As examples Frischauer names Himmler's alleged belief that he was the reincarnation of the German king Henry I and an apparent personal obsession with the Teutonic Knights. Himmler wanted to resurrect this order in the form of the SS and to have himself chosen as the order's high master.³³ "Never a deep thinker,"³⁴ he repeatedly succumbs to the influence of others and allows himself to be swayed in the desired political direction through suggestions stemming from an astrologer and his masseur.³⁵ Consequently, SS ideology in this biography is not a product of Himmler's

intellectual achievements. Rather, he puts into practice the thoughts of others, for example, Alfred Rosenberg and Richard Walther Darré.³⁶

Frischauer's portrayal of the cranky historical romantic Himmler forms the basis for a narrative thread that unwaveringly culminates in the SS leader's search for a castle for the SS and the discovery of Wewelsburg Castle. The SS must be expanded, Heydrich tells Himmler, urging him to enlist new recruits, introduce new weapons and better training methods, and expand the power of the SS within the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party). Heydrich is bursting with ideas, but Himmler is indecisive, unwilling to deal with pressing issues, and evasive. This passivity leads to his isolation within the party. Himmler is overwhelmed and takes refuge in his historical studies:

Himmler became lonelier than he had ever been. And when even Heydrich's tender calls to action became unbearable he [Himmler] withdrew completely and took refuge in the study of history. Heydrich left him alone for a while in the hope that he would emerge at long last with decisions. He emerged with a plan which, members of his entourage told me, really made Heydrich weep. Money? Weapons? New branches? Better experts? No! Himmler had decided to buy – a burgh!³⁷

In the following scene the reader witnesses Frischauer's Himmler explaining to his listeners that the SS, as a holy order in the tradition of the Teutonic Knights, needs a form of Marienburg Castle, a headquarters far removed from the political atmosphere of Berlin, where the highest SS leadership can gather, deliberate, and calmly meditate.³⁸ He recites long passages and finally comes to the legend of the battle "at the Birkenwald [*sic*] in Westphalia."³⁹ This Westphalian legend, according to which an army from the East was once defeated by an army from the West in a great Battle at the Birch Tree in Westphalia, triggers Himmler's interest in Westphalia in Frischauer's narrative. The plan, however, is not to look for an existing castle, but to build a new one. Himmler arranges for the necessary funds and commissions the architect Bartels to produce the plans. Himmler, however, is completely unavailable during this period to anyone not involved with the project; the day-to-day issues of the SS, even the most urgent ones, do not interest him.⁴⁰ Frischauer again uses the motif of the *Reichsführer-SS* taking refuge in his fantasy world, which prevents him from functioning as the head of the SS. A suitable place in Westphalia is finally found and that moment captured in the picturesque scene cited earlier.

The naming of architect Bartels is the only tangible information the passage contains. The rest is a mixture of few facts and much fiction. For example, the

Viennese journalist reports that building the new Wewelsburg Castle took one year – a fantastically short time that should actually have seemed improbable to him. He speaks correctly, however, about the construction project's triangular layout. Also mentioned is the rich interior decoration that actually existed in Wewelsburg Castle and its historically styled rooms, although the names of the rooms Frischauer lists – Henry the Lion, Frederick the Great, Blood and Soil, Vehmic Court, and Henry I – correspond, with the exception of Blood and Soil, to those previously known.⁴¹ Frischauer's remark that the Henry I room was Himmler's quarters does not agree with the facts, but fits nicely into the story being told.

Of greater significance for subsequent historiography was Frischauer's assertion that Himmler and the highest SS leaders met three or four times a year at Wewelsburg Castle to discuss SS policy in its "hallowed atmosphere."⁴² Frischauer also drew on that claim in founding the castle's reputation as "the intellectual and spiritual headquarters of the SS order."⁴³ The passage about the castle rooms is given an amusing twist in the process, with Himmler's historical obsession once again being juxtaposed with the remaining SS leadership's indifference about such matters. At each meeting the SS leaders were assigned a different room, which they were to retire to after the conferences to inform themselves about the figure behind the room's name and his epoch in books and old documents. The men would thus have to gradually learn about all the significant periods in history. Himmler's adjutant Karl Wolff was the only one allowed to always reside in the same room, because it was assumed he was very knowledgeable.⁴⁴ The other SS men, however,

were led on a permanent merry-go-round until their S.S. education was completed. Many of them, as time went on, saturated and bored with all this historic nonsense, brought detective novels and love stories to read of an evening, hoping that the *Reichsführer* next morning would not involve them in a conversation about the subject of the room in which they had spent the night.⁴⁵

At this point the question of this author's sources arises. The lack of citations and a very short list of references, which obviously does not include all the titles used,⁴⁶ make it almost impossible to understand the background for Frischauer's statements. Evidently the journalist interviewed contemporary witnesses, including Himmler's brother Gebhardt, and visited the SS leader's widow Marga in Bielefeld in 1951. Frischauer does not seem to have taken the opportunity to visit nearby Wewelsburg.⁴⁷

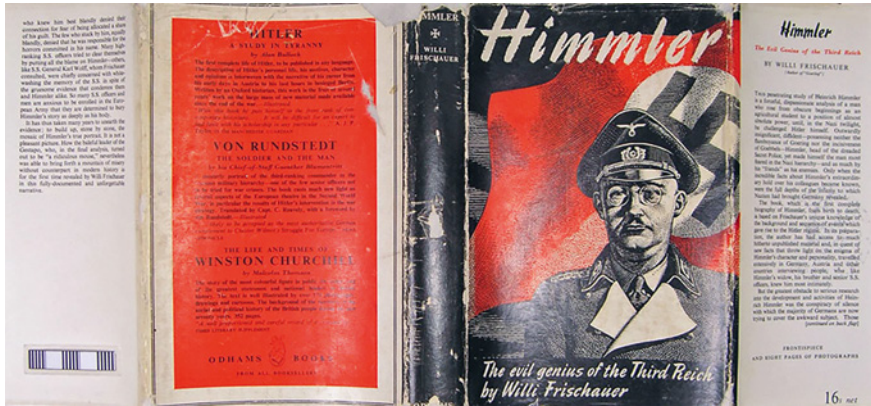


Figure 2.1 Willi Frischauer, *Himmler: The Evil Genius of the Third Reich* (1953).

In the section about Wewelsburg Castle, it appears he relies mainly on statements by Karl Wolff, Himmler's adjutant, who was probably responsible for supplying the name of architect Bartels, as well as the designations of the castle rooms, the reference to the Battle at the Birch Tree, and the compilation of construction costs. However, Himmler's adjutant was certainly not a reliable source. As will be shown, Wolff subsequently embellished his story more and more. Wolff will not have commented on the concentration camp in Wewelsburg, because Frischauer locates Niederhagen Concentration Camp in the Ruhr region.⁴⁸

In retrospect, however, it is no longer possible to determine in detail what Wolff told Frischauer and at which points the journalist further embellished Wolff's vague statements. In a later magazine interview, Himmler's adjutant also stated that the SS leaders had changed rooms each time they attended a meeting in order to familiarize themselves with the particular historical topic. However, he explicitly spoke about future meetings.⁴⁹ It can no longer be established whether this was a misunderstanding on Frischauer's part or Wolff was pulling the wool over the interviewer's eyes with this anecdote, in which he supposedly played a role.

Frischauer's image of Himmler was also shaped by the literature published in the late 1940s and early 1950s, whose portrayal of Himmler was determined in large part by contemporary witnesses and former National Socialists. These all had an interest in distancing themselves from Himmler, and they did so by particularly emphasizing his bizarre qualities. Worthy of mention here is the early edition of the memoirs of Himmler's masseur Felix Kersten,⁵⁰ to be discussed later, but also the autobiography of Wilhelm Höttl,⁵¹ a former employee

of the SS Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*, SD), as well as the treatise by British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler*,⁵² which is based on the information of another SD man, on a report prepared for the British Secret Service, and on the interrogations of Walter Schellenberg.⁵³ In their postwar accounts both former SD men attempted to dismantle Himmler's image as the central and decisive authority in the SS and to enhance the importance of Reinhard Heydrich, their immediate superior. To this end they highlighted Himmler's seemingly abstruse character traits, his fascination with Germanicism, his apparent belief in reincarnation, and his reputed dependence on occult matters.⁵⁴ Especially Walter Schellenberg's memoirs, published in the mid-1950s, became a second important source for the creation of legends about Wewelsburg Castle.

Walter Schellenberg's Memoirs (English 1956, French 1957, German, 1959)

Walter Schellenberg was the chief of the foreign intelligence service in the Reich Security Main Office of the SS. In what was known as the Ministries Trial, which followed the Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1947–49, Schellenberg was sentenced to six years in prison for aiding and abetting the murder of Soviet prisoners of war as part of Operation Zeppelin.⁵⁵ By the time of his trial, Schellenberg was already suffering from severe liver disease, leading to his release from prison on medical grounds in 1950. He spent some time in German hospitals, then went to Switzerland, and finally to Italy, where he died in Turin in March 1952 at the age of forty-two.⁵⁶ A contact on Schellenberg's part with Willi Frischauer is unlikely.⁵⁷

Walter Schellenberg's memoirs (see Figure 2.2) were published posthumously and translated into English and French. Part of the poorly legible, handwritten manuscript is preserved at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich. It was clearly considerably edited for the publications. The various published versions of the memoirs also differ from one another.⁵⁸ The informational value of these memoirs must be viewed critically. There is the obvious suspicion that Schellenberg wanted to use them to bolster his defense in court and therefore exaggerated his influence on Himmler in the last phase of the war, implying he wanted to use his sway to persuade his boss to conclude a special peace with the Western Allies.⁵⁹ Moreover, parts of Schellenberg's memoirs seem made for the book market. They contain, as George C. Browder

once described it, many accounts "of intrigue, adventure, and espionage techniques in the style of James Bond,"⁶⁰ in which fantasy and fact can hardly be distinguished.

After the war Schellenberg attempted to present himself as a sober, largely non-ideological intelligence expert.⁶¹ In his memoirs he pursues this purpose by, for example, exposing Himmler to ridicule in various ways in order to distance himself from him. Thus, the former head of the Security Service's foreign intelligence unit pokes fun at Himmler's schoolmasterly appearance and demeanor⁶² while weaving a few comical scenes into his memoirs that are so banal as to seem unworthy of being handed down for posterity. For instance, Schellenberg emphasizes the slapstick aspect of Himmler stumbling while deboarding his train carriage, with his "eye glasses, uniform hat, and gloves flying in all directions,"⁶³ while he and Wolff had to have a hearty laugh. Then he describes vividly how Himmler bites into a moldy loaf of bread, becoming "very green in the face"⁶⁴ and finally having to drink a cognac.⁶⁵ In these scenes Himmler does not cut a particularly elegant figure, but they offer the memoirist an opportunity to stylize himself as the amused rouse who observes things while shaking his head and as someone who does not seem to take his most senior superior very seriously.

Similar to Frischauer, Schellenberg portrays Himmler as a quirky fantasist, who out of hatred for an overly strict Catholic father "took refuge in an uncontrollable romanticism,"⁶⁶ surrounded himself with "an idealized imaginary world of old German heroism ... as well as the chivalrous Middle Ages,"⁶⁷ and developed an antipathy toward the Catholic Church.⁶⁸ As with Frischauer, elements of SS ideology are reduced to Himmler's neurotic traits.⁶⁹ In Schellenberg's case, this results in an image of the *Reichsführer-SS* as a man caught between his "mystical inclination"⁷⁰ and the objective intelligence experts. The latter is then represented by Reinhard Heydrich, who, according to Schellenberg's account, always "quickly purged Himmler's ideas of all fantasy and translated them into the sober practice of the intelligence service."⁷¹

Unlike Frischauer, however, Schellenberg does not focus on the image of Himmler as an unworldly historical romantic in his autobiography, but rather emphasizes the SS leader's alleged penchant for occult practices. Schellenberg links this to, among other things, Himmler's interest in horoscopes and in events surrounding "Operation Hess." When Rudolf Hess, "the Führer's deputy," flew to England on 10 May 1941, it threw the National Socialist leadership into an uproar. In an official announcement, Hess's state of mind was questioned and his relationship with clairvoyants and astrologers was cited as proof of his mental instability. In a large-scale operation, the Gestapo arrested numerous

astrologers, clairvoyants, magnetopaths, and dowers in June 1941, with these groups' institutions also being banned.⁷² According to Schellenberg, Himmler, "who also flirted with mystical prophecies,"⁷³ is said to have regarded this roundup with "inner aversion."⁷⁴ Elsewhere Schellenberg writes that Heydrich occasionally complained to him "that Himmler was once again hesitating in this or that case because he had looked too deeply into his horoscope,"⁷⁵ and the author himself is said to have tried to manipulate Himmler during the last phase of the war by having him shown falsified horoscopes.⁷⁶

Only two aspects of Schellenberg's account have been substantiated. First, Himmler had indeed been open to occult ideas since his youth. His reading list shows that in the early 1920s, for example, he was preoccupied with literature on astrology and spiritualism, and that during World War II he had astrological reports prepared.⁷⁷ Second, Operation Hess actually took place. For some of Himmler's protégés, for instance, proponents of the World Ice Doctrine, it was not entirely without repercussions, which is why the head of the SS may have viewed the Gestapo operation with concern.⁷⁸ Other statements alleging Himmler was truly dependent on horoscopes are merely Schellenberg's assertions.⁷⁹

It is through this narrative about the *Reichsführer-SS* practicing his "occult whims"⁸⁰ that the role of Wewelsburg Castle ultimately finds its way into Schellenberg's work. Two passages precede the paragraph about Wewelsburg Castle in the published versions of his memoirs. Schellenberg first reports about having witnessed a strange meeting in January 1938. The background of the episode was that Colonel General Werner Freiherr von Fritsch, commander-in-chief of the German army, had been accused of homosexuality in early 1938, a time, therefore, when it was a criminal offense. The affair led to his dismissal on 3 February 1938, although Fritsch's innocence was proven a short time later and he was acquitted by the Reich Military Tribunal. The colonel general had been mistaken for a cavalry captain with a similar name, and the alleged key witness had lied.⁸¹ During these proceedings, according to Schellenberg, he "happened to witness one of Himmler's occult whims."⁸² "During the trial of Fritsch," according to Schellenberg, Himmler had

ordered some twelve of his most trusted SS officers into a room near the interrogation room and commanded them to exert a suggestive influence on the accused colonel general by concentrating their wills. Himmler was convinced the accused would have to speak the truth under this effect and admit whether or not it was only a confusion of names. I [i.e., Schellenberg] accidentally entered the scene of this strange spiritual

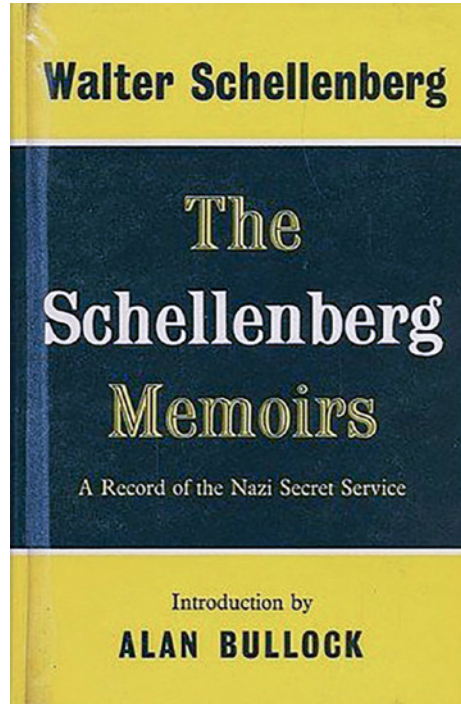


Figure 2.2
The Schellenberg Memoirs, edited and translated by Louis Hagen (1956).

exercise at that time and was more than a little astonished by the sight of the SS leadership sitting in a circle, absorbed in deep meditation.⁸³

Schellenberg cites no exact place, time, or names – nothing that would make his statements verifiable in any way.⁸⁴ Within the narrative strand of the memoir, however, this scene has a clear function: It is meant to prove – through Schellenberg’s personal testimony – that Himmler engaged in occult practices and serves as ostensible evidence of “the mystical side of Himmler’s character.”⁸⁵

Schellenberg elaborates on this in a next step, now mentioning Himmler’s supposed passion for the Jesuit Order. Himmler possessed “the best and largest library about the Jesuit Order”⁸⁶ and had studied “the extensive literature for years in nightly hours.”⁸⁷ With this remark, Schellenberg on the one hand makes reference to the fact that the Security Service had indeed gathered material on the “Jesuit enemy” as part of its research on ideological enemies.⁸⁸ On the other, he reinterprets the existence of this material as a sign of Himmler’s personal fanatical obsession by emphasizing the latter’s nocturnal studies.⁸⁹

This is followed abruptly by the assertion that the SS was “built up according to the principles of the Jesuit Order,”⁹⁰ with “the service statutes and spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola”⁹¹ having served Himmler as a basis. Schellenberg perceives parallels in the service structure on the grounds of very superficial similarities, in the vow of obedience and in the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church as a whole.⁹² Schellenberg leaves the ritualistic similarities between the spiritual exercises of the Jesuit Order and the SS to the imagination of the reader, who, after reading the Fritsch scene, should no longer have any problems associating an organization such as the SS with spiritual exercises. Both passages of the memoirs refer to and mutually corroborate each other. After such preparation, Wewelsburg Castle is now introduced in a third step.⁹³ The passage reads:

Near Paderborn in Westphalia, he [Himmler] had a medieval castle, the so-called Wewelsburg [*sic*], modified; it was the great “SS monastery,” where the general of the order [i.e., Himmler] convened the secret consistory once a year. Here all those who belonged to the highest leadership of the order were to hold spiritual retreats and concentration exercises. In the large meeting hall, each member had their own chair with an engraved silver name plate.⁹⁴

If the reader has accepted up to this point that the SS can be regarded as a new version of the Jesuit Order, it is natural to compare Wewelsburg Castle accordingly with an “SS monastery.” Neither the existence of a secret consistory nor the fact that concentration exercises were held at the castle should now surprise the reader, because these assertions arise logically from the preceding passages.

Whereas in Frischauer’s account the plot continues to build until the comic episode involving the SS leaders secretly reading detective stories, it comes down to the depiction of an alleged secret consistory at Wewelsburg Castle in Schellenberg’s case, with the existence of the assembly actually being his invention. It remains completely unclear who its members were supposed to have been. In the internal rationality of Schellenberg’s memoirs, it is obvious to equate the participants with the dozen or so most trusted SS leaders mentioned in the Fritsch passage, but this is not obligatory, and their identities remain unclear.⁹⁵ The readers are encouraged to fill Schellenberg’s dark intimations with their own imagination and speculations. Although a hall and leather-covered chairs did exist at Wewelsburg Castle,⁹⁶ there is just as little

evidence of personal dedications as there is of a consistory. However, since the publication of Schellenberg's memoirs, the leather chairs with the silver nameplates have become classics among the Wewelsburg Castle legends, like the alleged secret consistory and spiritual exercises.

The unpublished manuscript of the Schellenberg memoirs lacks the convincing context established in the published versions of the memoirs. Mention of Wewelsburg Castle as a "monastery' of this order," where "the secret consistory" with "spiritual retreats" and "concentration exercises"⁹⁷ took place annually, is preceded by general remarks characterizing Hitler and Himmler and discussing the exemplary function of the Catholic Church and the Jesuits for the Party and SS.⁹⁸ Himmler's library on the Jesuit Order is referred to only in a subsequent passage.⁹⁹ The armchairs with the silver nameplates do not appear in connection with the cited mention of the consistory. Here it would certainly be interesting to investigate how the publisher intervened in the revision of the memoirs or what changes Schellenberg still envisaged.¹⁰⁰ However, it is only the published memoirs that have come to play a significant role in the reception of Wewelsburg Castle.

In summary, the following legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle can be noted at the end of the 1950s: The historical romantic Himmler wanted to model the SS on the Teutonic Knights and sought a new Marienburg Castle for this purpose – a spiritual locus – which he found in Wewelsburg Castle. The SS leadership met there several times a year. During these meetings the castle's historically themed rooms were used for history study, with the room named Henry I said to have been Himmler's. For his part, Himmler, a practicing occultist, formed the SS along the lines of the Jesuit Order and adopted – in whatever form – its spiritual exercises. A secret consistory met at Wewelsburg Castle in its role as an SS monastery to conduct these practices there. This took place in a large hall where there were armchairs with silver nameplates. In Frischauer's version of the story, Himmler also has Wewelsburg Castle newly constructed, which takes a year and costs eleven million Reichsmarks.

Willi Frischauer's story first found expression in Gerald Reitlinger's early study of the SS (English 1956, German 1957), in which he referred to Wewelsburg Castle as a "castle of the SS order of knighthood"¹⁰¹ and adopted Frischauer's statement about the new construction of the building.¹⁰² Reitlinger was familiar with Schellenberg's memoirs. However, he was just as critical of them and of the entire testimony of former National Socialists as he was of the assumption that the Jesuit Order served as a role model for the SS.¹⁰³

Karl Wolff's Portrayal of Events in the *Neue Illustrierte Magazine* (1961)

It was Himmler's personal adjutant Karl Wolff (1900–1984) who finally added another aspect to the legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle. Wolff was chief of the *Reichsführer-SS* Personal Staff as of 1936 and also Himmler's liaison officer to Hitler as of 1939. He was the man who, in addition to Himmler, knew the most about SS affairs and the Wewelsburg project. This was true at least for the period until 1943, when Wolff was transferred to Italy as Higher SS and Police Leader. After the end of the war, he repeatedly stated he had not known about the murder of the Jews, which in view of his senior position was a purely self-serving claim. In 1948 Wolff was convicted by a German *Spruchkammergericht* (civilian denazification court) for membership in the SS, in other words, in a "criminal organization," and sentenced to five years in prison, with this then reduced to four, which he had already served with his pre-trial detention. After his release from prison, Wolff worked in the advertising industry. He was tried again in 1962 and 1964 and sentenced to fifteen years in prison for aiding and abetting genocide, but released in 1969 because of ill health. He subsequently worked together with journalists as a contemporary witness and sold National Socialist memorabilia.¹⁰⁴

The impetus for Wolff to speak out in the tabloid *Neue Illustrierte* in 1961 was the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. Himmler's former adjutant used the interview to present himself as a "key witness"¹⁰⁵ about Himmler and at the same time to clearly distance himself from his former superior (see Figure 2.3). He had so far kept silent "full of shame that [he] had served Heinrich Himmler for so long."¹⁰⁶ He had known nothing about the order given to Eichmann and had only learned about the systematic murder of the Jews in Poland during the negotiations with the Allies in the spring of 1945.¹⁰⁷ Himmler had been "an obsessed fanatic, a cranky dreamer and ... a spineless tool in Hitler's hands,"¹⁰⁸ Wolff explained. As a high-ranking SS member Wolff had his son Thorisman, born in 1936, named after the Germanic god Thor. In January 1937, Ariosophist and SS member Karl-Maria "Weisthor" Wiligut celebrated the pagan naming ceremony for the child, with Himmler, Wiligut, SS artist Karl Diebitsch, and Reinhard Heydrich as *Namensgoden* (godfathers).¹⁰⁹ In the 1961 magazine article, Wolff now explained that even though Himmler had uttered "grand words full of pathos" about constituting the SS "according to the tradition of the old German knightly orders ... [we] did not take them any more seriously than his other speeches about the need to revive Germanic ideals."¹¹⁰

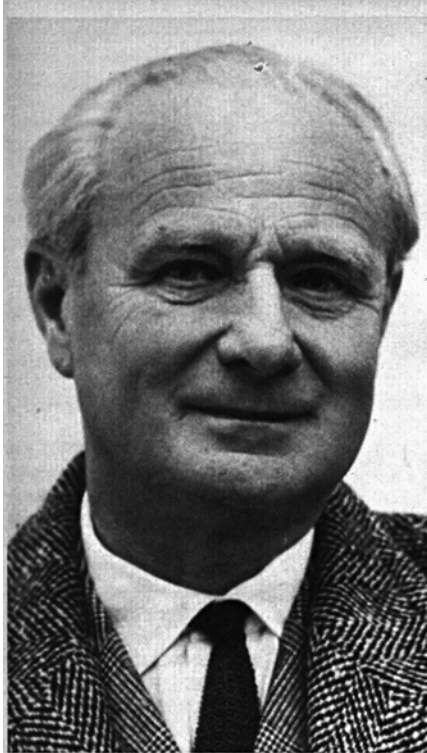
The following scene in which Wolff describes Himmler's search for a castle is intended to emphasize precisely this ideological distancing from the head of

the SS. Wolff tells how he had gone to Himmler's office one day to obtain some signatures and found him sitting at a table stacked high with thick, old books. Across from Himmler he noticed a "little roundish man,"¹¹¹ meaning Wiligut, who had his head buried in one of the books and eventually announced he had found "the prophecy of the great decisive battle"¹¹² rendered in Middle High German. It had to do with the great battle between East and West, as Himmler explained to Wolff, that is, with the legend of the Battle at the Birch Tree, whose name, however, was not mentioned as such. The conversation between Wiligut and Himmler, together with the latter's subsequent remarks, had left an odd impression on Wolff, which he emphasizes in the article by describing his reaction. He writes about observing a "strange scene"¹¹³ and comments, "I was beginning to feel uncomfortable. For me, the old Teutons were dead, and I found it rather superfluous, in this time shortly after our seizure of power, to be occupying ourselves so intensively with them and their prophecies."¹¹⁴

According to Wolff, Himmler told him the SS had been "looking for an 'order castle' for a long time,"¹¹⁵ and he now wanted to search for a suitable place in Westphalia. Wolff departed, leaving the SS leader "alone with his folios and Germanic prophecies."¹¹⁶ A few weeks later Himmler is said to have declared: "I have found the suitable castle ruin from Germanic times in Westphalia: Wewelsburg Castle, which means *Weiberburg* [women's castle]. It is located near Paderborn. We will have a look at it as soon as possible."¹¹⁷

Like Frischauer, Wolff describes Himmler's excitement at the first sight of the structure, but in contrast he mentions its triangular shape, and there is no discussion of it first having to be built. Wolff mentions conference halls, a courtroom, and the building's sumptuous interior and correctly locates Himmler's room in a tower. According to Wolff, Himmler had wanted to reside there "not as *Reichsführer-SS*, but as the order's grand master according to ancient precedent."¹¹⁸ Himmler's former adjutant also mentions the named castle rooms¹¹⁹ and remarks that the SS leaders were supposed to occupy a different room during each visit in order to successively study each accommodation's historical subject matter. He speaks, however, of "the planned future meetings."¹²⁰

Wolff's account thus contains some tangible information about Wewelsburg Castle, but also statements promoting its stylization as a form of monastery castle. Himmler, according to Wolff, said the site was where SS leaders in the future would "shut themselves off from the outside world like monks" and "make decisions for the destiny of our people that will be of unprecedented importance."¹²¹ Especially significant as a motif in the formation of legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle was the emphasis on the legend of the Battle at the Birch Tree, which was an aspect Karl Wolff introduced into the



„Ich sage die volle Wahrheit über Himmler“, erklärt Wolff, der heute in der Nähe von München lebt. „Seit Kriegsende habe ich geschwiegen... voller Scham darüber, daß ich so lange Heinrich Himmler gedient habe.“



Ich, Karl Wolff, SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS u. D., melde mich hiermit zu Wort. Mein Gewissen zwingt mich dazu.

In Israel steht jetzt Adolf Eichmann vor seinen Richtern. Er wird ihnen und damit der ganzen Welt Unfaßbares berichten über den größten Massenmord aller Zeiten.

Er wird sich dabei immer wieder darauf beziehen, daß er nur auf Befehl gehandelt hat. Auf Befehl des Reichsführers SS Heinrich Himmler, der sein oberster Chef war.

Dieser Himmler muß ein Teufel in Menschengestalt gewesen sein. Ein Wahnsinniger, schlimmer als Nero. Das wird die Welt sagen.

Und sie wird fragen: Wie viele Mittäter hat Eichmann gehabt? Wie viele Deutsche haben von seinen Schreckenstaten gewußt?

Das Gespenst der deutschen Kollektivschuld wird wieder durch die Welt geistert.

Ich habe Himmler sehr gut gekannt. Zehn Jahre lang war ich bei ihm als SS-Adjutant und später als Chef seines persönlichen Stabes. Vom 15. Mai 1933 bis zum 18. Februar 1942. Dann habe ich mich im Streit von ihm getrennt. Ich wurde nach Italien versetzt.

Ich wußte, daß Himmler zwei Gesichter besaß.

Er konnte ein zärtlicher Familienvater, ein korrekter Vorgesetzter und ein kameradschaftlicher Mann sein.

Gleichzeitig aber war er ein besessener Fanatiker, ein verschrobener Träumer und... ein willenloses Werkzeug in den Händen Hitlers, dem er in einer immer stärker werdenden Hälftelbe verbunden war.

Von dem Mordbefehl, den er Adolf Eichmann gegeben hatte, wußte ich nichts.

Über die systematische Ausrottung von Millionen Juden in Polen erfuhr ich zum erstmaligen etwas, als ich Mitte März 1945 mit den Alliierten in der Schweiz verhandelte. Sie berichteten mir über das Vernichtungslager Lublin, das von den Russen während der Winteroffensive erobert worden war.

Von diesem Augenblick an habe ich mich geschämt. Sechzehn Jahre lang war ich voller Scham darüber, daß ich diesem Mann so lange gedient hatte. Und ich habe über vieles geschwiegen, was ich von ihm wußte.

Jetzt will ich sprechen. Ich halte es für meine Pflicht, jetzt alles zu sagen, was ich über Heinrich Himmler weiß.

Die Öffentlichkeit soll sich ein Bild von diesem Heinrich Himmler machen können, über dessen ungeheure Schuld die Welt in den nächsten Wochen aus dem Munde Adolf Eichmanns entsetzliche Einzelheiten hören wird...

Es war Ende August 1943. Die Gläser von Himmlers Zwicker blitzten in der hellen Sonne. Von sei-

Des Teufels Polizeichef gratuliert

Zu Hitlers Geburtstag im Jahre 1938 überreichte Heinrich Himmler in der Reichskanzlei seinem Führer ein Gemüde.

nen Augen dahinter war nichts zu erkennen.

Aber ich wußte, daß sie mich feindselig beobachteten.

Himmler saß hinter seinem Schreibtisch in seiner Feldkommandostelle „Hochwald“; 32 Kilometer entfernt von Hitlers Hauptquartier „Wolfsschanze“ in Ostpreußen. Vor ihm auf der Tischplatte türmte sich ein Stapel Akten. Sie waren peinlich genau aufeinander geschichtet. Daneben lagen drei Grüntische, scharf gespitzt und ebenfalls exakt ausgerichtet.

Mit einem vierten Grüntisch pochte Himmler auf die Tischplatte. Ein Zeichen seiner starken inneren Erregung.

Vor wenigen Minuten hatte ich sein Dienstzimmer betreten, um mich zu meiner neuen Dienststelle in Italien abzumelden. Ich stand vor seinem Schreibtisch in dienstlicher Haltung, die Mütze in der linken Hand.

Er ließ mich einfach stehen und starrte mich an.

Ich wußte, daß gestern noch ein Besuchseresse in seinem Zimmer gestanden hatte. Jetzt war er verschwunden. Mir war klar: Himmler hatte ihn vor meinem Besuch hinausgeschaffen lassen, damit er mir keinen Platz anzubieten brauchte.

Solche winzige Schikanen liebte er.

Wer von seinen Mitarbeitern aus irgendeinem Grunde bei ihm in Ungnade gefallen war, den verfolgte er systematisch mit solchen Nadelstichschikanen. So lange, bis der andere es geradezu als Erlösung empfand, irgendwohin versetzt zu werden.

Ich war auf seine Abschußliste gekommen, weil ich mich gegen seinen Willen hatte scheiden lassen.

Aber ich war nicht nur wegen der sofort einsetzenden Schikanen froh, aus seiner Nähe verschwinden zu können, ich hatte noch zahlreiche andere Gründe dafür, meine Vernetzung für die günstigste Lösung zu halten.

Über diese Gründe wird noch zu sprechen sein.

Jetzt stand ich vor ihm, starrte seinen blitzenden Zwicker an und verschluckte zu Sekunde wuchs mein Zorn über Himmlers neueste Schikane.

Mühsam versuchte ich, mich trotzdem zusammenzureißen. Mit einer Handbewegung zu der Stelle, wo sonst der Besucherstuhl stand, sagte ich: „Reichsführer, Sie haben eigentlich nicht den geringsten Grund, mich derzeit zu behandeln. Ich habe bisher...“

Mit einer herrischen Geste unterbrach er mich. Das Blitzen in den Gläsern seines Zwickers verschwand, und ich sah seine kalten blauen Augen. Gleichzeitig begann der Grüntisch schneller zu hämmern.

„Halten Sie den Mund“, sagte er. „Ich bin Ihnen keine Rechenschaft für meine Gründe schuldig.“

Ich merkte, wie es in mir überkochte. „Ich bin kein Schuljunge“, stieß ich hervor.

„Trotzdem halte ich es für richtig, Sie so zu behandeln“, zischte er.

Da verließ mich die Beherrschung. Ich warf meine Mütze auf den Schreibtisch. Nahezu besinnungslos vor Wut sprang ich vorwärts, an der Schmalseite des Schreibtisches vorbei, sprang mit geballten Händen auf ihn los. Ich sah nur noch rot.

Himmler schnellte hoch und... lief weg. Drei Schritte zum Fenster hin.

Dort blieb er stehen und hob abweichend die Hände.

Als ich gegen seinen Sessel prallte, kam ich wieder zu mir. „Wolff, sind Sie wahninnig geworden? Wenn ich Sie gekränkt habe, können wir doch darüber reden. Wir beide... als alte Kameraden.“

Ich holte tief Luft und sagte nichts.

Figure 2.3 Karl Wolff: "I tell the whole truth about Himmler," *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 17 (23 April 1961).

historiography of the East Westphalian castle and for whose role he seems to be the only source. Wolff's account, compared to Frischauer's and Schellenberg's versions, was rarely taken up subsequently. It took twenty years for the interview under discussion to enter the literature in a heavily revised form. By this time, however, Wolff had already expanded his story, as will be shown.

Tendencies in the Reception of Wewelsburg Castle in the 1960s

In the mid-1960s two tendencies could be identified in the reception of Wewelsburg Castle. On the one hand, Frischauer's and Schellenberg's legends were being perpetuated and embellished, building on the usual stereotypes of Himmler; on the other, solid facts were being presented but not joined into an overall picture.

In 1963 Joachim C. Fest, a contemporary historian and subsequent co-editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, published a collection of essays entitled *Das Gesicht des Dritten Reiches* (The Face of the Third Reich), which has since been reprinted numerous times. In the volume's essay on Himmler, Fest refers to "the cultic rites Himmler had staged with somber ostentation at Wewelsburg [*sic*] Castle and other sites associated with his convictions,"¹²² and speaks of the "ordination character of these ceremonial hours."¹²³ Fest thus stands in the tradition of the Schellenberg memoirs.¹²⁴

In 1965 Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel published another biography of Himmler, for which they researched in archives and interviewed contemporary witnesses.¹²⁵ The authors uncovered interesting information about Himmler's genealogical research at Wewelsburg Castle and also found out that the heraldic insignia of SS leaders were to be displayed there. However, they fail to locate these activities within an SS worldview, reducing the coat-of-arms initiative to "Himmler's Teutonic snobbery"¹²⁶ and the research into his ancestors to his alleged concern about not looking sufficiently Aryan.¹²⁷ Furthermore, they weave Schellenberg's and Frischauer's narratives about Wewelsburg Castle into yet another version: "The Jesuitical ideal in Himmler's mind merged with his medieval vision of the Teutonic Knights, whose combination of religious observance and brutalized chivalry inspired him to found a similar S.S. Order of Knights with a Germanic castle of their own."¹²⁸ Frischauer's and Schellenberg's other assertions are blended in a like manner – from the new construction of Wewelsburg Castle (within a year for eleven million Reichsmarks) according to Frischauer to its monastery-like management, the secret chapter's alleged retreats, and the armchairs with silver nameplates

according to Schellenberg and the historically themed rooms in which the SS leaders had to “submit to ... historical charades in order to please Himmler,”¹²⁹ as described by Frischauer.

Existing elements in the creation of legends were further expanded and embellished during this period. For example, a popular-science title that augments Schellenberg’s motif of the SS monastery and picks up on Wolff’s catchword of the *Weiberburg* claims SS leaders had to devote themselves to their historical studies at Wewelsburg Castle in total chastity. In the case of this lesser-known author, not only do the leaders of the order meet for meditations at Wewelsburg Castle, but secret documents for the dissemination of an unspecified National Socialist faith are also allegedly kept there. The historical rooms are now furnished with marble statues of Henry I, Henry the Lion, and Albrecht of Brandenburg allegedly made by prisoners from Buchenwald Concentration Camp.¹³⁰ No evidence of these works has been found.

Enno Georg addressed the matter of Wewelsburg Castle more objectively, although only briefly, when he dealt in 1963 with the SS’s economic enterprises in the publication series *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, a quarterly journal published by the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich.¹³¹ He provides information about the financing of the construction work on Wewelsburg Castle by the SS’s own Gesellschaft zur Förderung und Pflege Deutscher Kulturdenkmäler e. V. (Society for the Promotion and Care of German Cultural Monuments) and about the use of concentration camp prisoners, names personnel, and identifies the purpose of the castle as a future “SS school, as a meeting place and cult site of the SS leadership.”¹³² He does not elaborate on the term *cult site*, but ultimately stands in the Schellenberg–Frischauer tradition regarding this topic. Journalist Heiner Lichtenstein, who in 1965 produced a radio broadcast about Wewelsburg Castle for West German Broadcasting Cologne and eventually published an essay on the topic, also strove for sobriety and clarification.¹³³ Lichtenstein presents some fundamental facts for the first time, points out the role of the Büren district in the SS’s leasing of the castle, and turns up details about the castle staff, the furnishing of the castle, and the relationship between the SS and the village population. He addresses the work carried out by the concentration camp inmates and outlines the planned resettlement of the entire village as well as the SS’s extensive expansion plans in Wewelsburg.¹³⁴ Lichtenstein also mentions the two surviving rooms in Wewelsburg Castle’s northern tower and its received designation as the “center of the world.”¹³⁵ The author does not go into the usual legends surrounding the castle, stating instead that its role for the SS is unresolved.¹³⁶ Last but not least, he refers to the whereabouts of the former architect Hermann Bartels

and the large amount of material stored in archives,¹³⁷ while warning about the rumors circulating in Wewelsburg: "What the tour guides tell about the years from 1933 to 1945 is, however, a mixture of poetry and historical truth, with poetry predominating."¹³⁸

In principle Lichtenstein's research could have become the basis for a comprehensive reappraisal of the history of Wewelsburg Castle under National Socialism as early as the mid-1960s, even though his essay includes no citations whatsoever. His information, however, initially remained untapped, with the future image of the castle in the literature being shaped by another journalist, who understood how to spin fiction and fact into a dense web.

**"Himmler's Grail Castle" and "Valhalla":
Heinz Höhne's Monograph *The Order of the Death's Head* (1967)**

Heinz Höhne (1926–2010) was a journalist and editor at the Hamburg news magazine *Der Spiegel*. He wrote a series of articles in that publication (see Figure 2.4),¹³⁹ subsequently releasing them in book form in 1967 under the title *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf: Die Geschichte der SS (The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS, 1969)*. This weighty monograph on the SS has appeared in numerous editions. It was translated into Dutch and Swedish as early as 1967, French and Italian in 1968, and English and Spanish in 1969.¹⁴⁰ There are also versions in Polish, Russian, and Japanese, for example.¹⁴¹ The book was last published in Germany in 2008, and a Czech translation appeared as recently as 2012.¹⁴² *The Order of the Death's Head* is probably one of the best-known and most influential publications on the SS. The book goes beyond a purely specialist audience to also address a broader readership. Its enormous popularity is certainly due in part to Höhne's language, to his manner of depicting scenes and ideas and occasionally transforming factual accounts into a novel or detective story. In the historiography of the SS, the book was a milestone because it showed that the SS was not a self-contained, monolithic state within a state. Decades after the publication of *The Order of the Death's Head*, many of its statements are outdated.¹⁴³

In his monograph Höhne breaks with some of the ideas prevailing in the 1960s about the SS as an institution, although the picture he paints of Himmler as a "mystic"¹⁴⁴ and "historical romantic"¹⁴⁵ is entirely in the tradition of older literature. Höhne gives a new vividness to the conventional notions of the quirky head of the SS through his flowery remarks about "the zealot Himmler, who dwells more in the past than in the present,"¹⁴⁶ who talks to King Henry

while half asleep and ultimately believes himself to be his reincarnation."¹⁴⁷ The *Spiegel* journalist does not simply pick up on Schellenberg's terse reference to the organizational model of the Jesuit Order, but embellishes on it in a highly evocative manner in a passage spanning several pages. He outlines apparent institutional, career, ideational, and ceremonial parallels between the Christian order and the National Socialist institution, such as autonomous jurisdiction, strict hierarchy, and the demand for obedience, not to mention oath-taking ceremonies and the bestowal of insignia.¹⁴⁸ Höhne also underscores the stylization of the SS as the "black counter-lodge"¹⁴⁹ to the Jesuit Order with atmospheric metaphors that speak of the "stations of the SS's own novitiate,"¹⁵⁰ of "the order's priesthood and high priesthood,"¹⁵¹ and of "the lay brothers"¹⁵² in the SS. Höhne, however, does not provide any evidence of the model character of the Jesuit Order for the SS that is independent of Schellenberg's statements.

In dealing with the memoirs of the former Security Service member, Höhne not only proves to be relatively uncritical, but even enriches Schellenberg's story of the occultist SS chief with another element: the Round Table of the legendary King Arthur. This is the story into which Höhne embeds Wewelsburg Castle:

The King Arthur legend must have impressed Himmler, because he always tolerated only twelve guests at his table. And as once Arthur had chosen the bravest twelve, so now King Heinrich appointed the twelve best *Obergruppenführer* as upper hierarchs of his order. ... In Wewelsburg Castle the SS chief found a Valhalla where he could set up his Arthurian Round Table and provide a worthy backdrop for his knights' coats of arms. In Himmler's Grail castle, the chosen ones sat in a 35 by 15 meter dining room, around the *Reichsführer's* oaken table, each in a pigskin wingback chair with a silver plate bearing the name of the respective SS knight. They met regularly for meditations and conferences that differed little from spiritualist gatherings. Each of the elect had his own chamber in the castle, with each furnished in a particular historical style and dedicated to a historical personality.¹⁵³

The reference to the castle rooms assigned to the SS leaders has its origin, as is well known, in Frischauer's biography of Himmler. Höhne falls back on the motifs of the Schellenberg memoirs with the props of wingback chairs, name plates, and the reputed spirituality meetings of the unnamed "twelve best" *Obergruppenführer*. For Himmler's Round Table he now uses another source, namely the memoirs of the masseur Felix Kersten.



Figure 2.4
Der Spiegel (October 1966) containing the first article in Heinz Höhne's series about the SS.

Estonian-born Finn Felix Kersten was Himmler's personal masseur as of March 1939 and claimed to have had numerous conversations with the *Reichsführer-SS*. After the war he published these in his memoirs, which appeared in various languages and editions, each differing from the other. In some Kersten dated the conversations he had with Himmler during his treatments. However, following the discovery in the 1990s of Himmler's service calendar for the years 1941–42, it became apparent that Kersten's dates did not always match the treatment dates recorded there.¹⁵⁴ Even if some of Kersten's conversations with Himmler may actually have taken place in such a manner, the memoirs as a whole are a problematic source, and the statements in them attributed to the SS leader cannot be regarded as authentic. Their questionable nature, however, could not have been fully known to Höhne. The passage in the German edition of the memoirs referred to by Höhne is: "Symbols influenced him [Himmler] deeply. His large, round table in Berlin at which he entertained was renowned. Twelve was the maximum number of guests allowed, as with the legendary King Arthur."¹⁵⁵

This remark is nothing more than an assertion by Kersten that raises more questions than it answers.¹⁵⁶ What Höhne makes of it is clear from the quote reproduced above. He extrapolates the alleged number of people at Himmler's Berlin table to the number of persons at Himmler's *table* in general. Against the background of the Schellenberg memoirs known to him,¹⁵⁷ Höhne then

infers from the dozen guests at a dinner table the supposed existence of the “twelve best *Obergruppenführer*” and their position as “hierarchs” of the order. In the end he simply situates their “Arthurian table” in Wewelsburg Castle, thus transforming it into a “Grail castle.” Höhne constructs his own context from a remark by Kersten that is in ample need of explanation.

Höhne further states that under the said dining hall at Wewelsburg Castle there was a “cellar vault of colored natural stone,”¹⁵⁸ harboring “the holy of holies of the Order – the realm of the dead.”¹⁵⁹ With this he refers to the crypt in the northern tower of Wewelsburg Castle, with the recess in the middle of its floor and its pedestals. The *Spiegel* journalist claims “the coats of arms of dead *Obergruppenführer* were to be burned in a basin there, with urns containing the ashes being placed on one of the pedestals.”¹⁶⁰ Höhne interprets the holes under the ceiling of the cellar room as vents and explains they are arranged in such a way “that the smoke ascended in a column during the cremation ceremony.”¹⁶¹

Here, the localization of the crypt under the rectangular dining hall is initially surprising. As is generally known, the crypt lies in the northern tower under the circular *Obergruppenführer* Hall, and the dining hall in the southern wing of the building. Höhne, who carried out research while visiting Wewelsburg Castle in May 1966, also knew this.¹⁶² The incorrect localization of the SS’s supposed “inner sanctum” was simply an error that crept in during the monograph’s production and had not been present in the original *Spiegel* article.¹⁶³ Since then, however, this information has permeated the literature and is an eloquent example of the influence this monograph about the SS had on the creation of legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle.

The burning of the coats of arms propagated by Höhne was, in turn, based on his adoption of local rumors, whereas he ignored the words of former Wewelsburg pastor Tusch, who had relegated the alleged cremations to the realm of legend.¹⁶⁴ In claiming there had been special accommodations for Adolf Hitler in Wewelsburg Castle, the author adapted another product of village gossip. However, he distanced himself from hearsay that Hitler would one day be buried in Wewelsburg.¹⁶⁵

Höhne claims to have learned some of the information central to his account of Wewelsburg Castle from *Burgwart* Rupprecht,¹⁶⁶ referring to Max Rupprecht, a custodian at Wewelsburg Castle in the 1960s. His official duties included guided tours through the district local history museum. Rupprecht was not a witness from the National Socialist era, having first arrived in Wewelsburg in 1950 as a displaced person.¹⁶⁷ In the 1960s there was still no one in the Büren district dealing with the castle’s National Socialist past,¹⁶⁸ so Max Rupprecht was on his own when questions arose about the National Socialist period and

likely out of his depth. This probably explains why he also passed on rumors and half-truths.¹⁶⁹ In retrospect, however, it is no longer possible to distinguish between what the custodian actually told Höhne and which information from Rupprecht the journalist adopted and embellished in his own imaginative way.¹⁷⁰ That which Höhne attributes to castle custodian Rupprecht, however, can for the most part be clearly traced back to Schellenberg and Frischauer, for in the passages in question Höhne goes into the "wingback chairs" with the name shields, the spiritualist meetings, and the castle rooms assigned to SS leaders. Any Wewelsburg resident could have told him about the alleged cremation ceremonies in the crypt that Höhne attributes to Rupprecht.¹⁷¹

Höhne's linking of the Schellenberg story with the cycle of legends surrounding King Arthur had a lasting effect on the subsequent literature. Certain elements of the account, such as the Round Table at Wewelsburg Castle, the dining hall measuring 15 by 35 meters,¹⁷² the localization of the crypt under this dining hall, the alleged burning of coats of arms in the crypt, and the placement of urns on their pedestals, point repeatedly to an adoption of Höhne.¹⁷³ In the process, aspects of his text are also incorporated that were not central to Höhne's narrative. For example, Höhne explained the name of Wewelsburg Castle through its alleged former owner, the robber knight Wewel von Büren, thus drawing on the meanwhile outdated literature about the castle's history. This was taken up by later authors, as was his misleading reference to Wewelsburg Castle's origins as a Saxon hillfort from the Hun period.¹⁷⁴

After Höhne: The Creation of Legends about Wewelsburg Castle in the Literature until the Early 1980s

Höhne's account of the Wewelsburg significantly influenced the scholarly literature that succeeded him. In his 1968 publication containing letters to and from Himmler, Helmut Heiber reprints a letter documenting the SS's search for family heraldic insignia for Wewelsburg Castle and accompanies it – echoing Höhne – with a commentary on the ceremonial burning of the coats of arms of dead SS *Gruppenführer*.¹⁷⁵ In his 1970 study of Himmler as ideologue, Josef Ackermann, on the other hand, draws on his own archival research and cites Himmler's 1937 speech, in which he announced that the coats of arms of deceased *Gruppenführer* were to decorate a hall in Wewelsburg Castle.¹⁷⁶ However, even Ackermann stands in Höhne's tradition. He presents, for instance, a document from January 1939, according to which Himmler, in a conversation with castle administrator Siegfried Taubert, prohibited tours of Wewelsburg Castle as well as any coverage about it in the press. Reflecting

Kersten's reference to Himmler's supposed Round Table in Berlin, Ackermann therefore interprets Wewelsburg Castle as "a kind of Grail castle ... that was to remain as mysterious to the public as the Grail castle of the legend."¹⁷⁷ He thus draws on a document that initially has no connection whatsoever with Grail mythology, in order to animate the image of Wewelsburg Castle as a Grail castle. In the 1970s there were already indications of a phenomenon that can still be observed today, in which attempts are made to confirm the image of the Grail castle by continually constructing new contexts.

The 1974 edition of Himmler's secret speeches by Bradley F. Smith and Agnes F. Peterson includes in turn a photograph of Wewelsburg Castle and another of the crypt in the northern tower. Drawing on Höhne, the authors refer to the alleged burning of coats of arms in the underground room, although in this variant the urns to be placed on the pedestals are not to contain the ashes of the coats of arms but of the SS leaders themselves. Smith and Peterson assume as well that Wewelsburg Castle had a central religious function.¹⁷⁸ Referring to "a kind of Grail castle,"¹⁷⁹ Wolfgang Wippermann also picks up Höhne's stylization in his 1979 study on "Das Bild des Deutschen Ordens in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung und Publizistik" (The Image of the Teutonic Order in German Historiography and Journalism), although the latter's characterization of Wewelsburg Castle as a new Marienburg is more significant for his analysis. Wippermann takes a critical view of Schellenberg's assertion that the Jesuit Order served as a role model for the SS.¹⁸⁰

In the 1970s, however, contributions to scholarly research appeared that diverged from the Höhne tradition and examined older motifs of legend formation, varying them or adding others. An essay by John M. Steiner, written in 1975 for a symposium hosted by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, draws on the motifs of the SS monastery, the secret consistory, occult practices, and seating according to Schellenberg, although the author mentions chairs bearing not only silver name plates but also rank insignia.¹⁸¹ In the process, Steiner cites fantasy and conspiracy-theory literature. He is an early example of this type of literature's seepage into the scholarly as well as popular-science discourse.¹⁸²

Previously unknown variants of legends appeared in 1979 in Joe J. Heydecker and Johannes Leeb's new edition of documents relating to the Nuremberg Trials. This documentation is very well known and has been republished time and again, most recently in 2003.¹⁸³ In the section "The Center of the World: Himmler's Valhall,"¹⁸⁴ the authors refer to the crypt of the northern tower when they speak of a "vault" hewn out of the rock, into which "a broad marble staircase led" and which was called "Valhall."¹⁸⁵ According to Heydecker and Leeb, "colossal statues of the 'twelve greatest heroes of the Third Reich'"¹⁸⁶ were to

be erected on the pedestals there after the war. In their midst Himmler had "a marble basin installed, with some steps leading down to it. Here the 'chosen ones' were to be ordained in a kind of initiation as order masters of the SS."¹⁸⁷ In this depiction of Wewelsburg Castle, various elements of literary as well as local legend formation seem to have been mixed. The absence of citations makes it impossible to reconstruct this in detail. Heydecker and Leeb first take up the colloquial designation of the crypt as "Valhalla"¹⁸⁸ that is common in Wewelsburg, before turning to the motif of the statues, which could already be detected in the 1960s regarding the castle rooms. As with Hühne there is talk of a basin, which here, however, is not intended to be used for a ceremony of cremation, but of initiation. Heydecker and Leeb are familiar with the locality, because they correctly situate the room of the former castle chapel above the crypt and mention the sun wheel embedded in its floor "whose axis was formed by a round plate of pure gold symbolizing the center of the castle and therefore of the 'Germanic world empire' as well."¹⁸⁹ This gold plate is based just as much on a Wewelsburg rumor¹⁹⁰ as the purported rooms mentioned by Heydecker and Leeb that were intended for "chosen women."¹⁹¹ According to Heydecker and Leeb, these were to be women who were to undergo special training after the war and then marry a man selected by the SS. The children from these unions were not to remain with their parents, but be brought up in special homes run by the SS.¹⁹² This coincides with another local legend, according to which the SS intended to establish a "castle girls' home" in a planned building complex, a home run by Lebensborn, an SS association that is repeatedly rumored to have brought together "racially valuable" men and women on a large scale in order for them to reproduce.¹⁹³

Motifs from Hühne's Grail castle history are also evident in a whole series of popular-science accounts of the SS that were not widely read by scholars but presumably by a broader public and readers interested in militaria. These publications are sometimes richly illustrated, although most lack citations.¹⁹⁴

Common legend motifs include the Round Table of the supposed twelve highest-ranking *Obergruppenführer* assembling in the dining hall at Wewelsburg Castle,¹⁹⁵ in an unspecified hall,¹⁹⁶ or in a fireside room.¹⁹⁷ Another motif is the chairs with their silver nameplates, although these may also be attached to the Round Table's top.¹⁹⁸ There is mention of SS leaders engaging in meditations or even séances,¹⁹⁹ as well as of their staying in the castle's rooms appointed with historically themed furnishings.²⁰⁰ Additional names of the castle rooms are produced without any supporting evidence,²⁰¹ and the older literature's reference to purported statues in these rooms is taken up and expanded.²⁰² Following the Frischauer tradition, Himmler's quarters are associated with the King Henry I room; an unoccupied, supposedly always locked room with the

name Friedrich Barbarossa is attributed to Hitler, following Höhne's motif on the subject. The village gossip passed on by Höhne that Hitler was to be buried in Wewelsburg Castle becomes a rumor started by Himmler himself out of disappointment that Hitler never visited the castle. According to this hearsay, Hitler's alleged room was therefore searched for his body at the end of the war.²⁰³

The authors follow the Höhne tradition with its burning of the *Obergruppenführer* heraldic insignia and the resulting column of smoke. In different versions, however, the bodies of the *Obergruppenführer* are cremated or the urns containing their ashes set on the pedestals.²⁰⁴ The localization of the underground room with twelve pedestals beneath the dining hall²⁰⁵ and its designation as "the holy of holies" also point to Höhne.²⁰⁶ In one version there is another room below that room. The coats of arms of the dead SS leaders are burned there, with their bodies lying in the upper room.²⁰⁷ Here motifs from fantasy literature are incorporated, as will be discussed later.

Höhne's lasting influence on popular-science literature is obvious.²⁰⁸ It seems that his version of events dominated the field of legend formation after 1967. However, the Fraenkel–Manvell variant of Frischauer's and Schellenberg's accounts is also found, according to which Himmler merged his Jesuit and Teutonic Knight ideals, constructed Wewelsburg Castle anew, and had SS leaders conduct retreats there.²⁰⁹ This particular tradition among the legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle can also be expanded: Himmler is said to have "obsequiously obtained" Hitler's approval for the construction of Wewelsburg Castle "in a charade,"²¹⁰ during which he appeared in the "white mantle of Grand Master"²¹¹ of the Teutonic Knights.

Cult and Terror Site of the SS: Karl Hüser's Seminal Documentation (1982)

Karl Hüser's 1982 monograph *Wewelsburg 1933–1945: Kult- und Terrorstätte der SS: Eine Dokumentation* (Wewelsburg Castle, 1933–1945: Cult and Terror Site of the SS: A Documentation)²¹² was the first comprehensive study on the history of Wewelsburg Castle under National Socialism that not only interviewed surviving contemporary witnesses but also evaluated a broad range of archival sources. Until the appearance of Hüser's publication (see Figure 2.5), Wewelsburg Castle was simply regarded as an SS "cult site" in the literature. Hüser shows that the project was subject to development phases and that it is impossible to speak of a consistent purpose with respect to Wewelsburg Castle.²¹³ He illuminates the history of the Niederhagen Concentration Camp



Figure 2.5
Karl Hüser's impressive work on the history
of Wewelsburg.

as well as the activities of the academic staff at the castle. Whereas Wewelsburg Castle appeared in the previous literature almost as Himmler's one-man project, it became apparent through Hüser that the SS leader was the determining, but not exclusive creative force behind the development of Wewelsburg Castle. Architect Walter Franzius and archaeologist Wilhelm Jordan, for example, were responsible for naming the castle rooms. Hüser now received some of the rooms' names firsthand from Jordan: King Arthur, Grail, Widukind, King Henry, Henry the Lion, and Christopher Columbus. Details about the rooms' furnishings became known, for example, that there had been a globe in the Columbus room and a rock crystal in the one named Grail. Hüser reveals that the "study rooms," as he also refers to them, were never used as such.²¹⁴

The Paderborn historian also makes clear that there was neither a Round Table nor any form of ritual celebrations at Wewelsburg Castle. Nevertheless, the death's head rings of fallen SS men were to be kept there, and Himmler planned to have newly promoted *Gruppenführer* take their oaths at the castle.²¹⁵ Hüser's study includes interior and exterior photographs of Wewelsburg Castle taken during the National Socialist period as well as floor plans indicating that the much-cited underground room was located in the northern tower and the dining hall in the southern wing.²¹⁶ Hüser relegates the alleged burning of coats of arms to the realm of legend and instead provides evidence that the coats of arms of the deceased were to be hung in a "hall of the *Gruppenführer*."²¹⁷ He scrutinizes the legends in the literature and local rumors and stresses that there was never a Lebensborn home in Wewelsburg.²¹⁸ Hüser

is unable to resolve some questions. It remains unclear, for example, why former architects referred to the northern tower as the “center of the world,”²¹⁹ and the function of the rooms in this tower – the crypt in the basement and the *Obergruppenführer* Hall on the ground floor – cannot be determined unequivocally. Hüser deduces their possible purpose from his architectural observations and the rooms’ surviving designations, for instance as a chamber for the commemoration of the dead and a hall for some sort of use by the *Obergruppenführer*.²²⁰ He is unable to explain the significance of the number twelve, which informs the design of both spaces and is reflected in the twelve pedestals of the crypt as well as in the twelve columns of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and the twelve spokes of a sun wheel embedded in its floor. Here Hüser can only state that the interior construction was never completed.²²¹

In one point Hüser adopts, in a modified form, the opinion of Karl Wolff, whom he also interviewed during his research. As explained previously, Wolff claimed that Wiligut-Weisthor’s reference to the legend of the Battle at the Birch Tree had triggered Himmler’s search for a castle in Westphalia. Hüser does not share this view, but assumes Wiligut’s interpretation of the old legend was the impetus for the castle’s expanded development into a future cult site as of the mid-1930s.²²² Hüser thus also lends enormous weight to the figure of Wiligut regarding the history of Wewelsburg Castle under National Socialism. However, his account concerning this point is ultimately based solely on the testimony of former SS member Wolff. The notion that Wewelsburg Castle was actually to be developed into a cult site is also only an assumption, which Hüser does not further substantiate. More recent research has become more cautious in its use of the term *cult site*.²²³ Hüser traces the beginning of this phase to an SS order issued by Himmler in November 1935 forbidding all visits to Wewelsburg Castle. Hüser interprets this as indicating “a pseudo-religious glorification of the Wewelsburg project,”²²⁴ in this point picking up on legends existing since the 1950s about an SS monastery and an SS spiritual locus that he had criticized. With reference to the “Grail castle,” he writes: “Himmler’s still unclear ideas about its further development into an ‘arcanum,’ a mysterious sanctum of the SS order, become noticeable.”²²⁵ As Eva Kingsepp has more recently noted, the image of Wewelsburg Castle as an SS cult site thus remains, albeit modified into Himmler’s plans for the future.²²⁶

At the time Hüser not only had to deal with the Grail castle legends in the scholarly and popular-science literature but was also confronted with the imaginative stories about Wewelsburg Castle in novels and fantasy literature. These circulated a rumor that Himmler had initiated a search for the Holy Grail for his Round Table there and another claiming he brought a copy of the Holy Lance of the Imperial Regalia to Wewelsburg or used it as a model for

the planned expansion of the Wewelsburg complex.²²⁷ Hüser clearly expresses his opinion about the Holy Lance, mentioning the statement by the project's former architects in which they deny having modeled their plans on the lance's form.²²⁸ In two cases, however, Hüser's study may have unintentionally offered further points of departure for the formation of legends. In the context of his reflections on the northern tower's numerical symbolism, the Paderborn historian poses a cautious question: "Does the strict implementation of the number twelve indicate Himmler wanted to assemble twelve specially selected, high-ranking SS leaders around himself as 'Knights of the Round Table,' following the example of King Arthur? Does it refer to the number of SS Main Offices?"²²⁹

Subsequent authors have taken the tower's numeric symbolism as an opportunity to move Schellenberg's secret consistory or Höhne's Round Table into one of the northern tower's rooms, as will be shown in the following. In the document section of his study, Hüser also reprints a letter from the young researcher Otto Rahn to Wiligut-Weisthor and one written to Wewelsburg Castle staff concerning Rahn. In this context Hüser erroneously names Rahn as "Himmler's advisor for ideological questions pertaining to the SS's applied research at Wewelsburg Castle."²³⁰ Otto Rahn (1904–1939) wrote the book *Kreuzzug gegen den Gral* (1933, *Crusade Against the Grail*, 2006), in which he regarded the Grail as a relic of an ancient religion and the Cathars as its guardians. In 1936 he became a member of the SS. In fantasy literature, it is sometimes claimed Rahn was supposed to seek the Grail for Wewelsburg Castle.²³¹ Hüser's terse account may have been seen by some authors as an affirmation of this connection. In fact, Rahn was entrusted with historical and archaeological research within the SS and only assisted the staff at Wewelsburg Castle with Himmler's genealogical research.²³²

The Adoption of Hüser's Findings in the 1990s

It is not surprising that Hüser's study could not find its way into American historian Robert Lewis Koehl's comprehensive account of the SS, which was published almost simultaneously in 1983.²³³ However, it was not until the 1990s that Hüser's research findings began to shape the image of Wewelsburg Castle in scholarly literature, which until then had been dominated by the old legends' motifs and Höhne's version, in particular.

During this period there appeared accounts of the National Socialist regime's politics and propaganda and historical studies from the perspectives of scholarship and ideology that regularly show Höhne's influence. The cellar vault in Wewelsburg Castle's northern tower is referred to as "the holy of

holies”²³⁴ or “the realm of the dead”²³⁵ and situated below the purported dining hall.²³⁶ There is mention of the burning of the heraldic insignia or more generally of a cremation ceremony with a column of smoke.²³⁷ In a variation on Höhne’s original, the underground room is now considered to be the “burial place of the Order’s elect,”²³⁸ where the urns of the *Obergruppenführer* stood.²³⁹ Furthermore, in addition to the assertion that a basin in the middle of this room had “presumably [been where] the coats of arms of deceased SS leaders”²⁴⁰ were burned, there was the version alleging that the sound of the fire in the basin was supposed to aid Himmler and his twelve selected SS leaders in their meditative contemplation, once again invoking the image of King Arthur’s Round Table.²⁴¹ This shows that Höhne’s Round Table and the cremation ceremony have been preserved as stock settings, although the motif of the urns containing the heraldic insignia ashes repeatedly yields to the motif of the urns holding the ashes of the *Obergruppenführer*, because this probably seems more plausible to the authors. The round of meditating SS leaders is now moved from Schellenberg’s assembly hall and Höhne’s dining hall to a “cult room,”²⁴² by which the crypt is meant.

Elements of the Schellenberg memoirs also remained in use in the 1980s, including the “SS monastery,” the reputed secret consistories, the armchairs with the owners’ names, the hall, and the occult meditations.²⁴³

The preponderance of motifs from the old legends can be seen even at the beginning of the 1990s in two weighty studies on Heinrich Himmler. Peter Padfield’s biography of Himmler, first published in 1990, conveys above all the old, distorted images regarding both Himmler as a person and Wewelsburg Castle. He uses the outdated stereotype of the realist Heydrich and the dreamer Himmler²⁴⁴ and characterizes the reconstruction of Wewelsburg Castle according to that tradition as a “bizarre and extravagant ... folly.”²⁴⁵ Although Padfield is aware Himmler leased Wewelsburg Castle and initially considered the construction of an SS school, he interprets these facts in consideration of Himmler’s alleged Camelot plans:

Perhaps that [the conversion of Wewelsburg Castle into an SS school] is what he [Himmler] intended; more probably it was a cover to turn away ridicule and preserve secrecy, for as the plans developed the castle became – in his eyes – what Camelot had been to King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, Montsalvat to Perceval and the Knights of the Holy Grail, a mystical seat hidden from the gaze of the uninitiated, the towered sanctum of the higher orders of SS chivalry.²⁴⁶

Padfield was inspired by Frischauer and Höhne.²⁴⁷ His statements about the SS leaders having been assigned rooms in a historical style and Himmler's room being dedicated to Henry I point to Frischauer.²⁴⁸ Padfield, however, seems to have taken the bulk of his remarks from Höhne. This is evident in his description of a large dining hall containing a table in the style of the Arthurian legend for the twelve most senior *Gruppenführer*,²⁴⁹ and his locating of a circular basement room known as the "realm of the dead" below this dining room²⁵⁰ in which the coats of arms are to be burned.²⁵¹ There is no mention of occult meditations, however, but Padfield correctly cites the meeting of senior SS leaders in 1941 as the only substantiated major meeting at Wewelsburg Castle.²⁵²

Höhne's influence is still even evident in American historian Richard Breitman's 1991 monograph on Himmler as *The Architect of the Final Solution*. Breitman, too, writes of "top-secret SS gatherings"²⁵³ at Wewelsburg Castle and, with a reference to Höhne, situates "a crypt for the SS elite"²⁵⁴ under the castle's dining hall. Breitman does not adopt the burning of coats of arms, while correctly stating that the coats of arms were to be hung up in Wewelsburg Castle.²⁵⁵

One of the first to refer to Karl Hüser's research findings was Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, who in 1985 published a study on the history of Ariosophy in Germany and Austria that was based on his dissertation.²⁵⁶ In his chapter on Karl-Maria Wiligut, Goodrick-Clarke discusses at length Wewelsburg Castle, Wiligut's activities there, and the friendship linking Wiligut and the first castle administrator Manfred von Knobelsdorff. Relying on Hüser's account, the English scholar emphasizes the importance of Wiligut and his interpretation of the legend of the Battle at the Birch Tree for the conceptual changes of the project in the mid-1930s. Hüser's new assessment of Wiligut is sustained here, as is the image of Wewelsburg Castle as a future religious cult site for the SS.²⁵⁷ As part of his dissertation on the symbolism of the German Right, Karlheinz Weißmann devotes a section to the SS's efforts to create its own heraldic insignia, contrasting the presentation of the SS coats of arms at Wewelsburg Castle with the burning of coats of arms claimed by Höhne. Referring to Hüser on the one hand, Weißmann assumes on the other that the crypt was the planned *Gruppenführer* Hall, where the coats of arms were to be displayed. He also supposes Himmler wanted to emulate the model of the Round Table²⁵⁸ and follows the tradition going back to Wolff, according to which Wiligut induced Himmler to choose Wewelsburg Castle.²⁵⁹

Hüser's treatise seems to have established itself by the second half of the 1990s, increasingly being cited in scholarly literature as the standard work on

the history of Wewelsburg Castle under National Socialism. In her dissertation on the National Socialist cult of heroes, for example, Sabine Behrenbeck bases her account of Wewelsburg Castle on Hüser and addresses the error *Höhne* made in locating the crypt.²⁶⁰ During this period the relevant literature, not least a publication by the German Federal Archives and an article in the well-known *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus* (Encyclopedia of National Socialism), repeatedly referred to the Paderborn historian.²⁶¹

The years 1998 and 1999 saw the release of Frank-Lothar Kroll's study on Himmler as an ideologue as well as publication of a useful new source in the form of Heinrich Himmler's annotated service calendar for the years 1941–42.²⁶² Both titles refer to Hüser as a standard work on the history of Wewelsburg Castle under National Socialism.²⁶³ The old legends no longer play a role here, and the changed view of Wewelsburg Castle reveals the tendency of more recent research to no longer dismiss Himmler's worldview as eccentricity, instead taking it seriously as an intellectual construct and examining it systematically.²⁶⁴

Wewelsburg Castle has accordingly ceased being seen as a quirk of Himmler's historical romanticism and is now viewed as a component of his efforts to establish a new tradition promoting the cohesion of the SS. The storage of the death's head rings at the castle and the gathering of coats of arms for display there served this purpose. This context also includes the SS's reference to historical role models, such as the Teutonic Knights, Henry I, and Frederick the Great, not to mention the introduction of SS's own customs.²⁶⁵ This new view of SS ideology, in contrast to the older literature, emphasizes, among other things, the organization's hostility to history and notes that ideology for Himmler was instrumental in character – even if not exclusively.²⁶⁶ It appears that this sober perspective on the SS's worldview also goes hand in hand with an increasingly objective and fact-oriented view of Wewelsburg Castle, among other things, in the scholarly literature.

Wewelsburg Castle in Popular-Science Literature until the Late 1990s

A development such as the one scholarly literature underwent in the two decades following publication of Hüser's documentation cannot be observed in popular-science literature during the same period, even if the titles discussed in the following differ considerably from one another concerning their critical treatment of the subject and their quality.

The Wiligut biography by *völkisch* esoteric Rudolf Mund (1920–1985), one of Wiligut's proponents,²⁶⁷ appeared almost simultaneously with Hüser's documentation in 1982, with scholarly and popular-science literature continuing to cite the text to this day.²⁶⁸ In accordance with the title of his biography, *Der Rasputin Himmlers* (Himmler's Rasputin), Mund emphasizes Wiligut's strong influence on the *Reichsführer-SS* and peddles the idea that it was Wiligut who persuaded Himmler to select²⁶⁹ Wewelsburg Castle near Paderborn as the center of the SS's worldview.²⁷⁰ As evidence Mund cites the passage already discussed from Karl Wolff's account in the 1961 *Neue Illustrierte*, in which Wolff described how Wiligut found the text containing the prophecy of the Battle at the Birch Tree and called Himmler's attention to it. Significantly, however, Mund omits all of Karl Wolff's critical and distancing remarks.²⁷¹ Wolff's odd anecdote thus becomes a kind of homage to the "seer" Weisthor.

Wolff's account from the *Neue Illustrierte*, shortened by Mund, was adopted in 1989 by Stuart Russell and Jost W. Schneider in an illustrated book from the genre of militaria literature with the title *Heinrich Himmlers Burg: Das weltanschauliche Zentrum der SS* (Heinrich Himmler's Castle: The Ideological Center of the SS).²⁷² The book (see Figure 2.6), which presents additional, previously unpublished material about Wewelsburg Castle, is occasionally cited in the literature.²⁷³ Russell also served as a consultant on "individual aspects"²⁷⁴ of "Himmlers Wahn" (Himmler's Delusion), an episode in the ZDF public television series "Die SS – Eine Warnung der Geschichte" (The SS – A Warning from History), which was broadcast in 2002.

Russell and Schneider understand their publication as a kind of counter-Hüser. On the one hand they offer justified food for thought, for example, on the question of whether Hüser had not overestimated Himmler's ban on visits in 1935.²⁷⁵ On the other they reveal a disconcertingly caring attitude toward the guards at Niederhagen Concentration Camp and seek to show that they treated the prisoners much more amicably than in Hüser's portrayal.²⁷⁶ They confront the previous literature about Wewelsburg Castle in the posture of enlighteners, declaring it a "mixture of legends, half-truths, and lies," with – as the authors grimly suggest – this "condition ... still being fostered today for historicopolitical reasons."²⁷⁷ The Schellenberg memoirs are rejected as an unreliable source,²⁷⁸ although other assertions are disseminated uncritically, including the aforementioned significance of Wiligut in discovering Wewelsburg Castle as per Karl Wolff. The alleged modeling of the Wewelsburg building plans on the shape of a spear is also presented as if it were a certainty.²⁷⁹

An enjoyment of unusual stories motivated Hans-Jürgen Lange to write biographies of Otto Rahn and Karl-Maria Wiligut-Weisthor in the 1990s.

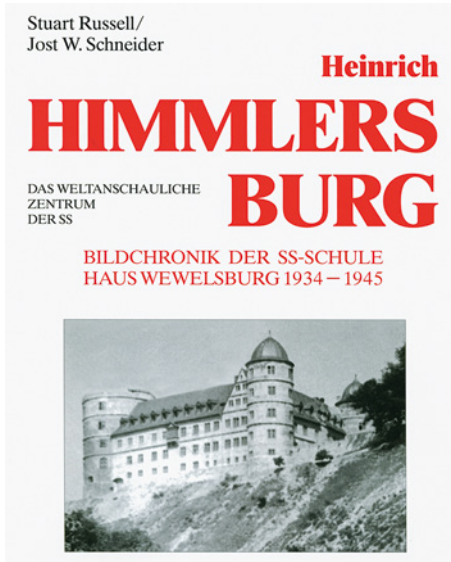


Figure 2.6
The illustrated book about Himmler's castle by Stuart Russell and Jost W. Schneider (1989).

These books approach their subject critically and with a wealth of material.²⁸⁰ However, their use of references is very sparing, making scholarly work with them difficult. Nevertheless, they are increasingly cited by scholarly literature.²⁸¹ In a chapter on Wewelsburg Castle, Lange relies explicitly on the research of Hüser and Höhne. Accordingly, he rejects the role of Wiligut in the discovery of the castle, as rumored by Wolff, while assuming his advisory influence regarding the conversion of the castle, in line with Hüser.²⁸² In determining the function of the northern tower's crypt, a topic Hüser is obliged to pass on, Lange draws on his own on-site observations and acoustic experiments, which in his eyes lend increased credence to the Schellenberg memoirs. He quotes these at length, from the Fritsch scene to the supposed retreats in Wewelsburg Castle. The crypt becomes the place of these retreats for Lange, with its twelve stone pedestals replacing the usual chairs with name plates. Picking up on Hüser's interpretation of the gas pipe in the crypt as an indication of a possibly intended "eternal flame," Lange assumes it was where "the powerful of the new empire were to meditate, were to sit around the eternal flame, listening to its reverberant roar."²⁸³

In the 1990s other authors explored possible lines of connection between *völkisch* Ariosophy, National Socialism, and modern esoteric phenomena or dealt with the topic of right-wing extremism, in the process touching superficially on the subject of Wewelsburg. Common to all these publications is their

assumption of some kind of occult rituals in Wewelsburg Castle, although at least a number of the authors are familiar with Hüser.²⁸⁴ Schellenberg is on the one hand directly quoted as an authority on the retreats at Wewelsburg Castle,²⁸⁵ while his story is further embellished on the other, with "the 'SS knights' now supposedly having been initiated by means of the Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita, Buddha's speeches, and the *Edda*."²⁸⁶

Of all the publications dealing with National Socialism and right-wing esotericism, Rüdiger Sünner's *Schwarze Sonne, Entfesselung und Missbrauch der Mythen in Nationalsozialismus und rechter Esoterik* (Black Sun: The Unleashing and Abuse of Myths in National Socialism and Right-Wing Esotericism) is probably the best known in Germany. It appeared in 1999, two years after a film by the same name was broadcast on the ARTE and WDR public television networks.²⁸⁷ In the book (see Figure 2.7) and film, Sünner reflects on the misuse of myths in right-wing contexts while seeking to sensitize people to the epistemological value of these myths and warning against their demonization.²⁸⁸ His methodology, however, is highly tenuous.²⁸⁹

Sünner approaches the subject of Wewelsburg less from a historically reconstructive perspective and more from an observational and associatively deductive one. He assumes the presence of a ritual space in the subterranean crypt because of the acoustics. The *Obergruppenführer* Hall's form and numeric symbolism evoke multiple images for him, not only that of the Round Table, but also of the Teutonic Knights convent consisting of twelve senior monks, of the twelve gods sitting in judgment in the *Edda*, and of the zodiac, for example. He links the phrase "center of the world" with the Germanic world ash tree, which reaches from the underworld (crypt) to the paradise of the gods,²⁹⁰ "in order to vividly demonstrate to the Wewelsburg adepts the dignity of their own mythology."²⁹¹

Sünner also sees the influence of the Grail mythology, evidenced for him in the naming of the King Arthur and Grail rooms, while the northern tower's *Obergruppenführer* Hall reminds the author of the Grail temple in the Bayreuth premiere of Richard Wagner's opera *Parsifal* in 1882.²⁹² Such architectural observations are certainly legitimate. Yet such a method based primarily on associations is problematic, especially in light of the long and questionable tradition of stylizing Wewelsburg Castle as Himmler's Grail castle.²⁹³ This is also evident when Sünner moves abruptly from describing Otto Rahn's "Grail research" to claiming Grail mythology played a role in the conversion of Wewelsburg Castle, thereby establishing a connection between Rahn's research and Wewelsburg Castle for which there is no evidence.²⁹⁴



Figure 2.7
Rüdiger Sünner: *Schwarze Sonne* (1999).

In one case Sünner has simply continued the creation of legends about Wewelsburg Castle in the tradition of Frischauer. Sünner, too, assumes that Himmler seems to have been looking in 1933 for a monastery-like location for contemplation, which the author describes as follows while citing Felix Kersten's memoirs:

Himmler “also wanted ... to create his own neopagan center of faith and had therefore been looking for a suitable site since 1933: ‘I admire the world of the Indian religious founders, who required their kings and highest dignitaries to retire to a monastery for two to three months each year for meditation,’ he informed Felix Kersten, ‘We will also create such facilities later.’ Wewelsburg Castle near Paderborn turned out to be ideal for such purposes, and it was ceremoniously handed over to Himmler on 22 September 1934 and developed over the next few years into a SS cult and training site.”²⁹⁵

The Kersten quotation mentioned by Sünner, who treats it as a programmatic statement by Himmler in the lead-up to leasing Wewelsburg Castle, is found in Kersten's memoirs under the date of 17 October 1942.²⁹⁶ The quotation refers to a future project of Himmler's, and is for this reason alone inadmissible in the context described by Sünner.²⁹⁷ The source quotation has lost its evidential character and now only serves as an arbitrary means to illustrate one's own ideas.

Rüdiger Sünner aims to make people think. Militaria literature probably just wants to print a few dubious photographs and to this end needs a fitting atmospheric commentary, for which the legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle offer plenty of material. Illustrated militaria books continued to mention Himmler's Round Table at the castle in the 1990s. These texts offer descriptions of the premises – from the dining hall's dimensions and the chairs with name plates to the realm of the dead beneath this hall – in the Höhne tradition.²⁹⁸ Yet Höhne's motif of the burning of the coats of arms did not catch on. It simply seems more plausible that the bodies of the SS leaders were to be cremated and urns with their ashes placed on the pedestals.²⁹⁹ Höhne's story is enriched by the alleged marble statues in the crypt, which found their way into the literature earlier, as well as by the statement that sections of the building had been dedicated to Henry I, which indicates a modification of the Frischauer tradition.³⁰⁰ Himmler's supposed intensive preoccupation with the Arthurian legend, as claimed by Höhne, can be replaced by the similarly unsubstantiated assertion that he adopted the idea for this Round Table from Richard Wagner.³⁰¹

The game with set pieces from the Arthurian legend is ultimately pursued in detail by Stuart Russell and Stephen Cook in their 1999 illustrated book *Heinrich Himmler's Camelot*³⁰² (see Figure 2.8): Wiligut becomes a kind of Merlin and Heydrich the first knight Lancelot,³⁰³ with a very romanticizing vocabulary generally being used.³⁰⁴ In the middle section of the book, the interested reader can now also see for the first time an alleged picture of "Himmler's Round Table." It shows the men who headed the SS Main Offices in 1944, when there were twelve of them. They are gathered around an image showing the sun wheel embedded in the floor of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall.³⁰⁵ Himmler's "twelve or so ... most trusted SS leaders"³⁰⁶ from the Fritsch scene in the Schellenberg memoirs thus become "the twelve best *Obergruppenführer*"³⁰⁷ for his Round Table in Höhne's monograph, who now are arbitrarily equated with the SS Main Office chiefs from 1944 and picturesquely staged by Cook and Russell.

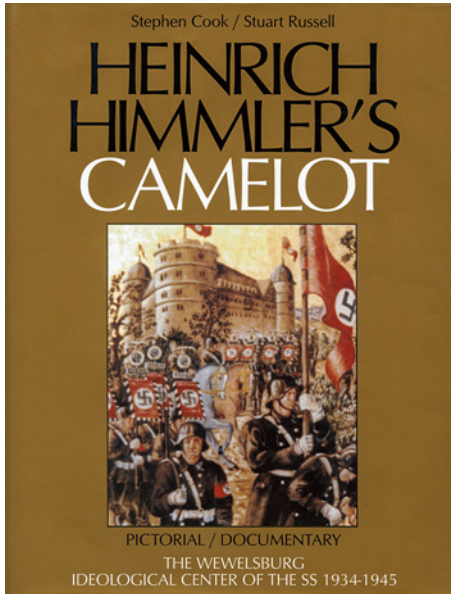


Figure 2.8
Stephen Cook and Stuart Russell:
Heinrich Himmler's Camelot (1999).

Russell thus followed up on his 1998 film about Wewelsburg Castle, which included an interview with Karl Wolff from 1978.³⁰⁸ Given all the persistent appeal the Arthurian legend has lent Wewelsburg Castle since the 1960s, it is not surprising that Wolff eventually also discovered Höhne's version of the story for himself. And so the viewer of the film hears the voice of Karl Wolff commenting on the crypt:

That was part of the myth they wanted to introduce there, and here are twelve pedestals, made in imitation of the kinds of mystically muddled things Himmler liked to dally in from King Arthur's Round Table. In fact we were twelve Main Office chiefs, who represented their departments, shoulder to shoulder, on an equal footing under Himmler, because he didn't have the courage to appoint a deputy *Reichsführer-SS* or deputy chief of the German police.³⁰⁹

As can be seen in the examples of recent popular-science literature, the old legends endure on the one hand, while knowledge of the location does not automatically lead to their scrutiny on the other. Instead the legends are transferred to the existing local conditions, to the rooms in the northern tower, which are the only ones remaining. The authors' own imaginative, associative approach to the subject prevails over a source-critical one demanding evidence. This is

also demonstrated by the repeated claim that the Lance of Longinus or Holy Lance of the Imperial Insignia served as the source for the shape seen in the Wewelsburg Castle building plans, an assertion that remains unsubstantiated. This motif stemming from fantasy literature seems to have been bolstered by publication of the building plans. Given that a lance is part of the Grail mythology, an apparent connection between Wewelsburg Castle and the legends surrounding the Grail can be reestablished via the SS construction projects.³¹⁰

Wewelsburg Castle in the Scholarly Literature of Recent Years: Differentiation in the Research

A number of studies have appeared since the end of the 1990s that build on and augment Hüser's research findings, resulting in an increasingly nuanced picture of Wewelsburg Castle during National Socialism. For example, it has been determined that Wewelsburg scholars assisted the SS Security Service in compiling a directory of witch trials in Germany,³¹¹ and that the SS Ahnenerbe research association sought the collaboration of Wewelsburg archaeologist Wilhelm Jordan in studying the Externsteine, which is also located in East Westphalia.³¹² Research into the SS's Main Economic and Administrative Office complement Hüser's investigations into the financing of the Wewelsburg project and reconstruct the history of the castle on the basis of his documentation.³¹³ Himmler's appointment calendar from 1937 was discovered and revealed another of his visits to Wewelsburg Castle.³¹⁴ The publication of Himmler's service calendar for the years 1941 and 1942 made it possible in turn to precisely date the meeting of high-ranking SS officials at Wewelsburg Castle in 1941 and again raised the question of the function of the castle for the SS.³¹⁵ Source materials on Wewelsburg Castle were supplemented once again by the release of an annotated edition of Himmler's pocket diary for the year 1940.³¹⁶

Last but not least, the research initiated by the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg on the history of Wewelsburg Castle during National Socialism produced additional knowledge about SS personnel at the site, the building's furnishings, and the history of Niederhagen Concentration Camp. These findings were published in two edited volumes, with the first one having the character of a preliminary research report³¹⁷ and documenting the difficulties of abandoning conventional thought patterns defining the perception of Wewelsburg Castle.³¹⁸ The second volume appeared in 2009 and brought together the most current research on the history of the SS and Wewelsburg Castle (see Figure 2.9).³¹⁹ This research is characterized by a cautious approach to previous literature, traditional assertions, and speculations. It points out how problematic

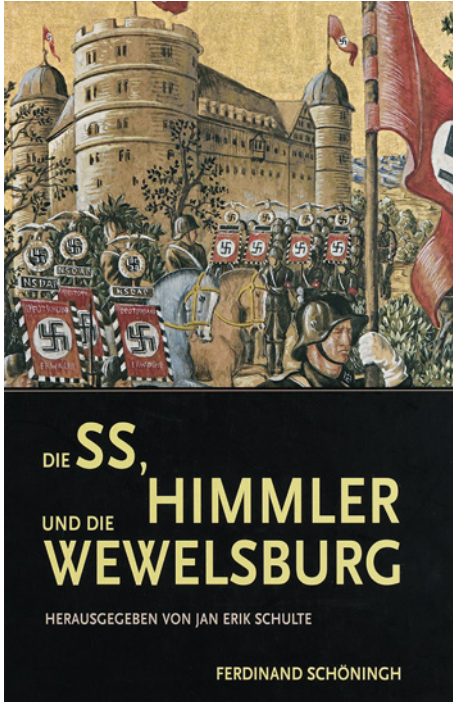


Figure 2.9
The edited volume by Jan Erik Schulte
about the SS, Himmler, and Wewelsburg
Castle (2009).

it is that the alleged significance of the legend of the Battle at the Birch Tree is based solely on statements by Karl Wolff.³²⁰ It discusses the conventional designation of the historically styled castle rooms as study rooms and questions whether this is a term originating in the period under discussion.³²¹ It also addresses conjecture surrounding architectural observations seeking to provide more insight into the possible function of the northern tower's rooms but which remain wanting for lack of evidence.³²²

This literature, however, has above all become cautious about specifying what the SS had planned for Wewelsburg Castle. It no longer speaks of a “cult site” but rather of a “central meeting place for the SS’s top leadership,”³²³ the *Gruppenführer*, and points to the numerous unanswered questions concerning the castle.³²⁴ This literature also increasingly focuses on the narrative structures and ideological backgrounds of existing legends.³²⁵

In addition to the specific historical studies on the SS, there are different strands of research in the humanities: one that builds on Sünder’s publication and seeks to tie Himmler’s alleged interest in Grail mythology vaguely to his support for Otto Rahn’s research³²⁶ and another that deliberately engages in

speculation to locate Wewelsburg Castle in the historical tradition of *völkisch* Grail castles. Such an attempt was undertaken by Sandra Franz in her dissertation in 2009.³²⁷ She establishes the influence of Grail mythology on the basis of the King Arthur and Grail study rooms, the similarities between the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and the Bayreuth temple in the *Parsifal* premiere, the symbolism of the number twelve in connection with this hall, and Felix Kersten's alleged reference to the number of guests allowed at Himmler's table in Berlin.³²⁸ Her characterization is therefore largely based on assumptions and speculation, as well as on the use of a questionable source. Franz justifies the fact that Wewelsburg Castle appears relevant at all within the context of her study of the reception of the Grail myth in National Socialism with the fact that "even the serious literature"³²⁹ has referred to Wewelsburg Castle "as Himmler's Grail Castle"³³⁰ and cites Ackermann and Höhne,³³¹ whose significance for the course of research on the topic has already been highlighted in this essay. Thus, even today there are also scholarly authors who attempt to underpin Höhne's construct of the SS's Grail castle with supporting evidence.³³²

The Grail legend does not play a role in the narrower research on Himmler and the SS. Rather, there has been a tendency in recent years to question Himmler's alleged guiding principles, which count among the established patterns of explanation in the literature. These include the controversial model of the Jesuit Order³³³ and Himmler's supposed belief that he was the reincarnation of Henry I.³³⁴

Accordingly, Peter Longerich's biography of Himmler from 2008 paints a sober picture of the man. The ideologue Himmler, who in his younger years was fascinated by Germanic heroes and interested in esoteric subjects, was at the same time "a highly flexible and adaptable politician."³³⁵ His goal was to expand the power of the SS within the National Socialist state and to strengthen its internal cohesion. This intention was served by the designation of the SS as an order, which built on the concept of Christian orders and was meant to illustrate the idea of people being mutually committed to a higher goal. And this objective was also to be furthered by the cultivation of the SS's own customs,³³⁶ including the establishment of culturally significant sites, one of which was Wewelsburg Castle. This is where the East Westphalian castle has its place in the history of the SS, even if its function in the SS's future plans cannot be precisely determined.³³⁷ The latest contemporary historical research has thus moved miles away from a historiography in the tradition of Frischauer, Schellenberg, and Höhne, while also subjecting both the image of Himmler and that of Wewelsburg Castle to a thorough revision over time.³³⁸

Old and New Legends in the Popular-Science Literature

In contrast to the dynamism seen in scholarly literature, there is at best stagnation observable in the popular-science literature of recent years.³³⁹ New releases repeat the old convictions, including those by authors who can be considered reputable.³⁴⁰ In more recent publications one still finds the depictions of Himmler's Grail castle and Round Table; of a secret circle's retreats that sometimes take place in one, sometimes in another of the northern tower's rooms; of the urns of the highest SS leaders that allegedly were to be placed on pedestals in the crypt;³⁴¹ and of the supposedly once golden sun wheel that was embedded in the floor of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and stood for Himmler's "center of the world."³⁴² In one version it is actually the crypt's walls that were supposedly decorated with the coats of arms of the most senior SS leaders.³⁴³ Even the rumor that there was a Lebensborn home in Wewelsburg still survives.³⁴⁴

For some authors the focus now seems to be simply on telling a good story, with a basis in historical fact becoming optional. It is therefore not surprising that new motifs are added to the old ones of legend creation. In a variation of Frischauer's and Wolff's accounts, it is claimed, for example, that the sight of Wewelsburg Castle in 1933 reminded Himmler of the Spear of Destiny and thus sparked his interest in the structure.³⁴⁵ The Spear of Destiny, however, is an invention of fantasy literature, whose stories seem to be very enticing to the authors of popular-science literature.³⁴⁶ A vivid example of this is the article from the magazine *P.M. History* of 2012 cited at the beginning of this essay. According to author Jörg Seewald's theory, a vessel recovered from the Bavarian Chiemsee in 2001 that was reminiscent of a Celtic caldron could once have stood in the crypt at Wewelsburg Castle. Seewald theorizes that this could have been a Grail produced for the National Socialists, a gold cauldron, which according to an alleged transport list was removed from Wewelsburg shortly before the end of World War II.³⁴⁷ The author thus imagines the following scenario possibly unfolding in the crypt with its twelve pedestals: "Twelve seats set about three meters apart are arranged around a large recess in the floor. Does it provide space for a substantial vessel, a cauldron – or the Grail? The arrangement of the twelve seats for the SS grandees could have alluded to the Twelve Apostles or the twelve knights of the Grail."³⁴⁸

To establish a connection between Wewelsburg Castle in East Westphalia and the sacred vessel, Seewald invokes the research of Otto Rahn, who, however, failed to track down the genuine Grail.³⁴⁹ Whereas Seewald thus ostensibly remains on terra firma, other authors have already moved into other realms

and report about an expedition to recover the Holy Grail for Wewelsburg Castle on behalf of Heinrich Himmler.³⁵⁰ This locates them in the world of fantasy literature, of conspiracy-theoretical cryptohistory, whose treatment of Wewelsburg Castle is dealt with in another essay in this volume.

Notes

- 1 The article by Jörg Seewald (2012) was titled "Auf den Spuren von Parzival" (On Percival's Trail) p. 59.
- 2 Seewald (2012), p. 59.
- 3 Seewald (2012), p. 60.
- 4 Seewald (2012), p. 60.
- 5 Seewald (2012), p. 64.
- 6 The author theorizes that a vessel recovered in 2001 from the Bavarian Chiemsee that was reminiscent of a Celtic cauldron may once have stood here. Since being salvaged the object has been propagated in some circles as the "Nazi Grail." (Seewald, 2012, p. 64). This matter will be discussed later. For fundamental information, see Linse (2012).
- 7 See Thiede (2006).
- 8 Thiede (2006), p. 113.
- 9 Thiede (2006), p. 120.
- 10 *P.M. History* is Europe's "largest monthly history magazine" according to its subtitle. Market analysis by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach indicates each issue of the magazine reaches 450,000 readers. *Focus* magazine reaches 3.93 million readers per issue. See www.ifd-allensbach.de/awa/medien/printmedien (accessed 7 December 2013).
- 11 See Siepe (2002), pp. 277–78; Gujer (2002), p. 224. See also Kirsten John-Stucke's essay "Himmler's Plans and Activities in Wewelsburg" in this volume.
- 12 In other words, what is of interest here is the discourse that has constructed the history of Wewelsburg Castle as "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events." Burr (1995), p. 48.
- 13 An attempt was made to incorporate and evaluate as many titles as possible on the basis of Ruck (2000), the "Bibliographie für Zeitgeschichte" (Bibliography of Contemporary History) as of 2000, and through the references in the examined literature. Literature systematically collected by the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg was also drawn on. Titles available only as "books on demand," gray literature, and so forth were not considered.
- 14 Regarding some of the criteria used, see, for instance, Jordanova (2010), pp. 88–104, 154–60.
- 15 See Hardtwig (2005), pp. 11–32.
- 16 Frischauer (1953), pp. 67–68.
- 17 *Himmler: The Evil Genius of the Third Reich*. Willi Frischauer, a journalist, was born in 1906 in Vienna and immigrated to England in 1938. On Frischauer, see Hüser (1987), p. 6 and note 15.
- 18 Frischauer (1953), p. 247. See Hüser (1987), p. 6.
- 19 See also, for instance, Frischauer (1953), pp. 28, 67–68. Mention of a nameless contemporary witness can be found, for example, in a verbatim quote reproduced below.

- 20 See Frischauer (1953), p. 13.
- 21 See Frischauer (1953), p. 13.
- 22 See Frischauer (1953), p. 13.
- 23 See Frischauer (1953), p. 13.
- 24 See Frischauer (1953), p. 13.
- 25 Frischauer (1953), p. 37, as well as pp. 36–37: “The commanding position in which he found himself in his own organization, the reverence and blind submission of his S.S. men, though implicit in their oath, was a matter of constant secret surprise to him. It was also a burden which forced on him decisions which he was not always ready to make and invested him with an authority to which he found it difficult to live up.”
- 26 Frischauer (1953), p. 35: chapter heading.
- 27 See Frischauer (1953), p. 39.
- 28 Frischauer (1953), p. 38, as well as pp. 37–39.
- 29 See Birn (1986), p. 5, as well as note 2.
- 30 See Frischauer (1953), p. 40: “Ideological principles did not bother him.” To portray Heydrich as a technocrat free of ideology does not do him justice. He also had the effect of building ideology. In 1935, for example, he published a series of articles in the SS’s *Schwarze Korps* newspaper titled “Wandlungen unseres Kampfes” (Transformations of Our Struggle), in which Heydrich defined the ideological opponents to be combated and conceived of his work as ideological struggle. See Wildt (2002), pp. 230–39.
- 31 See Frischauer (1953), pp. 15–17, 44.
- 32 Frischauer (1953), p. 17.
- 33 See Frischauer (1953), pp. 28, 40–42, 86–88.
- 34 Frischauer (1953), p. 27.
- 35 See Frischauer (1953), pp. 197, 202, 220.
- 36 See Frischauer (1953), pp. 27–28.
- 37 Frischauer (1953), p. 67, as well as pp. 66–67.
- 38 See Frischauer (1953), p. 67: “Himmler explained to his staff that the conception of the S.S. as a Holy Order was not completely implemented as long as there was not a centre, a burgh such as, for instance, the Marienburg from which the Teutonic Knights had drawn their inspiration and had set out on their missions of colonization. There would have to be a headquarters, far removed from the materialistic, political atmosphere of Berlin, from which the S.S., spiritually and physically, could sally forth on its historic mission. It was to be a burgh for the highest S.S. leadership, a venue of assembly, a refuge for secret consultation and quiet meditation in the right atmosphere.”
- 39 Frischauer (1953), p. 67.
- 40 See Frischauer (1953), p. 67.
- 41 See Frischauer (1953), p. 68.
- 42 See Frischauer (1953), p. 68: “Eventually the Reichsfuehrer arranged for the highest S.S. leaders to meet three or four times a year at the Wewelsburg, here in the hallowed atmosphere, to deliberate and discuss the policy of the S.S.”
- 43 Hüser (1987), p. 6.
- 44 See Frischauer (1953), pp. 68–69.
- 45 Frischauer (1953), pp. 68–69.
- 46 See Frischauer (1953), pp. 259–60.
- 47 See Frischauer (1953), pp. 14, 25. See also the occasional references to contemporary witnesses, for example, pp. 35 and 86.
- 48 On Wolff’s presumed statements to Frischauer, see also Hüser (1987), pp. 6–7, 29. Wolff was very reserved regarding the SS crimes connected with Wewelsburg. He rejected as

- false a statement by Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski that Himmler in 1941 in Wewelsburg had named the decimation of thirty million Slavs as one purpose of the Russian campaign. Frischauer saw this as a self-serving claim to protect his own skin. See Frischauer 1953, p. 149.
- 49 See below.
- 50 See Frischauer (1953), p. 122, note 1; p. 259; Kersten (1947a and 1947b).
- 51 See Frischauer (1953), pp. 215–16. Although the title of the publication is not named, the reference is to the book published under a pseudonym: Hagen (1950).
- 52 See Frischauer (1953), p. 260.
- 53 See Trevor-Roper (1947), p. 266, and as a reference to information from Schellenberg, see p. 24, note 1; pp. 93–94.
- 54 See Hagen (1950), pp. 86, 88. Hagen claims Himmler became important “through his connection with Reinhard Heydrich” and was “basically only Heydrich’s stooge.” For disparaging comments on Himmler’s mental state and his dependence on occult things, see Hagen (1950), pp. 91–93, 97.
- 55 In this project Soviet prisoners of war and deserters were deployed for sabotage and espionage behind Russian lines. Some of the men were liquidated after or during the operation. See Mallmann (2003).
- 56 See Browder (2000); Doerries (2003), pp. 1–55; Doerries (2009), pp. 271–87.
- 57 Frischauer assumes Schellenberg was in the war crimes prison in Landsberg at the time of his research. See Frischauer (1953), p. 128. However, as Reinhard Doerries has proven, Schellenberg was never imprisoned in Landsberg due to his poor health. See Doerries (2009), pp. 272–73.
- 58 See Browder (2000), p. 429; Doerries (2003), pp. xiv–xv. Editions: Schellenberg (1956a & 1956b), Schellenberg (1957); Schellenberg (1959). See ED 90 Walter Schellenberg, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich. For the history of transmission, see Doerries (2009), pp. 287–88.
- 59 See Longerich (2010), p. 745, note 132.
- 60 Browder (2000), p. 428. Schellenberg’s description of his office at the Security Service’s Foreign Intelligence Department sounds adventurous. He claims his desk had “two machine guns” built into it that could “spray the room with bullets” and aimed “automatically at anyone entering the room.” Schellenberg (1959), p. 182.
- 61 See Browder (2000), pp. 419–20, 426–28. Schellenberg claims to have adopted only parts of the National Socialist worldview, excluding, in particular, its anti-Semitic ideas. However, after joining the NSDAP and SS, he gave ideological training lectures in which he advocated the usual ideas of the “Volksgemeinschaft” (racially based people’s community) and anticlericalism.
- 62 See Schellenberg (1959), pp. 71–73.
- 63 Schellenberg (1959), p. 72.
- 64 Schellenberg (1959), p. 74.
- 65 Schellenberg (1959), pp. 72–74. Another time Schellenberg claims to have saved Himmler from falling out of a plane. Here again we see Schellenberg in the pose of the cool thinker who keeps his head. See Schellenberg (1959), p. 52.
- 66 Schellenberg (1959), p. 40.
- 67 Schellenberg (1959), p. 40.
- 68 See Schellenberg (1959), p. 277.
- 69 This is a deliberate pathologization. Himmler’s relationship with his father was never disrupted. The Himmler family was an average Bavarian one. See Smith (1971); Himmler (2005).

- 70 Schellenberg (1959), p. 40.
- 71 Schellenberg (1959), p. 73.
- 72 See Schmidt (1997), pp. 198–201.
- 73 Schellenberg (1959), p. 160.
- 74 Schellenberg (1959), p. 160.
- 75 Schellenberg (1959), p. 160.
- 76 See Schellenberg (1959), p. 313.
- 77 See Longerich (2010), pp. 84, 290, 295.
- 78 See Schmidt (1997), pp. 200–201; Longerich (2010), pp. 537–38.
- 79 In 1943, after the coup against Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, who was kidnapped and hidden by his opponents, Himmler is said by Schellenberg to have taken a number of the occultists imprisoned in 1941 to a villa at Wannsee Lake in Berlin, where they were to locate Mussolini's whereabouts, which a dowser succeeded in doing. See Schellenberg (1959), p. 301. Astrologer Wilhelm Wulff, who worked for Himmler, also published his memoirs. Wulff's recollections are certainly just as subjective as Schellenberg's and could also have been influenced by the Schellenberg memoirs, which were published much earlier. Wulff's account does not fundamentally contradict Schellenberg's, but the astrologer presents the story of the search for Mussolini differently: He claims to have been commissioned by Arthur Nebe, chief of the criminal police, to calculate Mussolini's whereabouts using Indian astrology. See Wulff (1968), p. 129. Frischauer's remarks that Schellenberg wanted Himmler influenced by Wulff's horoscopes can be traced back to Schellenberg via Trevor-Roper's and Höttl's books. See Frischauer (1953), p. 197. Höttl and Schellenberg were also in contact after World War II and sporadically had the intention of publishing something collaboratively. On Himmler and astrology, as well as Mussolini's liberation, see Hagen (1950), pp. 97–98, 403. On contact between Hagen, Höttl, and Schellenberg, see Doerries (2009), p. 276.
- 80 Schellenberg (1959), pp. 39, 301.
- 81 See Janßen & Tobias (1994), pp. 83–194.
- 82 Schellenberg (1959), p. 39.
- 83 Schellenberg (1959), p. 39; on the period of January 1938, see p. 38.
- 84 If Schellenberg is referring to the interrogation by the Gestapo at its headquarters on Berlin's Prinz Albrecht Strasse on 27 January 1938, his reference to the question of a possible name mix-up makes no sense. At the time of the interrogation, the Gestapo did not even have this suspicion, with the cause for Fritsch's presence being an apparently credible incriminating witness whom he was to be confronted with. In the English and French-language editions of the memoirs, the reference to the name confusion is therefore also missing. It is only mentioned that Fritsch was supposed to tell the truth. See Schellenberg (1956A), p. 32; Schellenberg (1957), p. 23. On the events, see Janßen & Tobias (1994), pp. 109–116 and note 1.
- 85 Schellenberg (1959), p. 39.
- 86 Schellenberg (1959), p. 39.
- 87 Schellenberg (1959), p. 39.
- 88 See Dierker (2002), pp. 146–47, 223–25.
- 89 In the English and French-language editions of the memoirs these remarks are missing. Here, without transition, it is mentioned that Himmler structured the SS using the Jesuits as a model. See Schellenberg (1956A), p. 32; Schellenberg (1957), p. 23.
- 90 Schellenberg (1959), p. 39.
- 91 Schellenberg (1959), p. 39.

- ⁹² See Schellenberg (1959), p. 39. One of Himmler's staff expressed to Frischauer as well that the head of the SS had looked to the Jesuits as a model when structuring his holy order. Frischauer, however, did not expand on this reference. See Frischauer (1953), p. 45. Unlike in the case of the Teutonic Knights, Himmler never referred to the Jesuits as the official role model for the SS. In the literature it is disputed to what extent the Jesuits can be considered an "unofficial" role model of the SS. See Wegner (1999), pp. 38–41, and, critically, Dierker (2002), pp. 223–24. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to examine the sources on which this "role model" is based and to scrutinize the role of the Schellenberg memoirs. A statement by Hitler in 1942 that Himmler was the "*völkisch* Ignatius von Loyola in a good sense" refers to the latter's ability to organize an effective "ideological force." It cannot, however, be taken as evidence of a concrete organizational model. Hitler quotation in Jochmann (1980), p. 169. Only one statement by Himmler in which he clearly differentiates himself from the Jesuits is documented: "That is why we will never become Jesuits; because we despise that." Speech by Himmler at Austrian SS official Kaltenbrunner's appointment ceremony, 30 January 1943. Breitman & Aronson (1990), p. 347. On that topic see also Dierker (2002), p. 540.
- ⁹³ In the German-language edition it is *Wevelsburg*, in the English *Webelsburg*, and in the French *Webelsbourg*. See Schellenberg (1959), p. 39; Schellenberg (1956a), p. 33; Schellenberg (1957), p. 23.
- ⁹⁴ Schellenberg (1959), pp. 39–40. In the English and French-language memoirs an assembly hall is not mentioned, only the chairs with the name shields. See Schellenberg (1956a), p. 33; Schellenberg (1957), p. 24. Both editions also lack Schellenberg's subsequent comments about Himmler's ambivalent relationship with the Catholic Church.
- ⁹⁵ They cannot be identical with the highest ranking SS leaders, the *Obergruppenführer*, because in 1938 there were already sixteen. See the Seniority List of the NSDAP (SS), as per 1 December 1938, with revision booklet: as per 15 June 1939, unaltered reprint of the 1938 and 1939 editions of the lists for Berlin published by Brün Meyer, Osnabrück (1996), pp. 8–9. The listed SS *Obergruppenführer* had attained this rank prior to January 1938.
- ⁹⁶ There were leather chairs in the room known as the large courtroom. See Hüser (1987), p. 199.
- ⁹⁷ All quotations: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Walter Schellenberg, ED 90/3, p. 35.
- ⁹⁸ See Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Walter Schellenberg, ED 90/3, p. 34.
- ⁹⁹ See Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Walter Schellenberg, ED 90/3, p. 37.
- ¹⁰⁰ Schellenberg's text contains numerous indications suggesting that additions can be found elsewhere in the manuscript. However, only part of the manuscript is at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte.
- ¹⁰¹ Reitlinger (1956), p. 90.
- ¹⁰² See Reitlinger (1956), p. 161. He, too, refers to Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski's testimony before the International Military Court, according to which Himmler declared at Wewelsburg Castle that the decimation of the Slav population was the purpose of the Russian campaign. Frischauer is not cited in either case, but appears in the reference list. See Reitlinger (1956), p. 457, and for a critical view of Frischauer's publication, p. 15.
- ¹⁰³ See Reitlinger (1956), pp. 15, 19–20.
- ¹⁰⁴ On Wolff, see Lang (1985); Lingen (2010), pp. 24–31, 159–77, 188–220; Simms (2000).
- ¹⁰⁵ *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 17 (23 April 1961), p. 19. On the series of articles, see "Eichmanns Chef Heinrich Himmler, Ein Porträt" (Eichmann's Boss Heinrich Himmler: A Portrait) by Karl Wolff, *Waffen-SS* general, retired, edited by Heinz Weibel-Altmeier, in *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 17 (23 April 1961), pp. 18–25; and no. 18 (30 April 1961), pp. 18–25, with its mention of

- Wewelsburg Castle, pp. 24–25. The interview brought forth letters to the editor. See “Herr Wolff und die Wahrheit” (Mr. Wolff and the Truth), in *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 19 (7 May 1961), p. 36; and “SS-General Wolff im Kreuzfeuer (Mr. Wolff under Cross Examination), in *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 21 (21 May 1961), p. 43. In nos. 20 (14 May 1961) to 22 (28 May 1961), the series continued with articles about Sigmund Rascher, Adolf Eichmann, Johannes Popitz, and Karl Langbehn.
- 106 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 17 (23 April 1961), p. 20 (Signature under photograph of Wolff as well as text).
- 107 See *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 17 (23 April 1961), p. 20.
- 108 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 17 (23 April 1961), p. 20.
- 109 See Lang (1985), pp. 42–45.
- 110 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 20.
- 111 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 24.
- 112 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 24.
- 113 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 24.
- 114 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 25. The exchange of words between Wolff and Himmler takes a similar direction, with Wolff claiming to have replied to Himmler’s question about his request: “Just a few signatures ... Probably not nearly as interesting to you as the problem with the decisive battle that your visitor just discovered.”
- 115 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 25.
- 116 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 25.
- 117 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 25.
- 118 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 25.
- 119 Wolff mentions the names New Nobility, Marienburg, Blood and Soil, Racial Issues, Henry the Lion, Widukind, and Frederick the Great, and indicates there were additional rooms. See *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 25. Wolff also speaks about an “imposing residence” for Walter Darré, which cannot be verified. *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 25.
- 120 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 25.
- 121 *Neue Illustrierte*, no. 18 (30 April 1961), p. 25.
- 122 Fest (1997, orig. 1963), p. 159. On the essay, see pp. 156–74.
- 123 Fest (1997, orig. 1963), p. 159.
- 124 From Schellenberg Fest also adopts the scene with the alleged “concentration exercises” in connection with the trial of Fritsch, referring to them very generally as a habit Himmler “occasionally” engaged in. See Fest (1997) p. 158. On the Schellenberg memoirs, see note 7.
- 125 See Manvell & Fraenkel (1965), pp. xvi–xvii.
- 126 Manvell & Fraenkel (1965), p. 49, note 11 (text on p. 259).
- 127 See Manvell & Fraenkel (1965), p. 58.
- 128 Manvell & Fraenkel (1965), p. 48.
- 129 Manvell & Fraenkel (1965), p. 49. On Wewelsburg Castle, see p. 49. Here, too, the room with the name Henry I is naturally regarded as Himmler’s. Schellenberg is mentioned in that context, while Frischauer is not. Citations are provided, but sparsely.
- 130 See Calic (1969, orig. 1965), pp. 231–36. From Frischauer, Calic adopts Himmler’s search for a headquarters, the connection with the struggle against the East, the castle’s reconstruction, and the motif of historical studies (which he supplements with economic studies). From Schellenberg, he adopts the regular gatherings for meditation. The reference list includes Fraenkel & Manvell, Frischauer, Schellenberg, and Karl Wolff’s account in the *Neue Illustrierte*; few citations are used. See pp. 673–82. Calic was imprisoned at

- Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp and claims to have received firsthand information. See p. 231.
- 131 See Georg (1963).
- 132 Georg (1963), p. 22. On Wewelsburg Castle, see pp. 21–22.
- 133 See Lichtenstein (1965). On Lichtenstein, see Hüser (1987), p. 6 and note 16.
- 134 See Lichtenstein (1965), pp. 115–28.
- 135 See Lichtenstein (1965), pp. 122, 128.
- 136 See Lichtenstein (1965), p. 116.
- 137 See Lichtenstein (1965), p. 117.
- 138 Lichtenstein (1965), pp. 116, 128.
- 139 The series began with issue 42 of *Der Spiegel* on 10 October 1966 and ended with issue 11 on 6 March 1967.
- 140 Heinz Höhne, *Het zwarte korps onder de doodskop: De geschiedenis van de SS* (Baarn, 1967); *Hitlers SS och Gestapo* (Malmö, 1967); *L'Ordre noir, histoire de la SS* (Paris, 1968); *L'ordine nero: La storia delle SS* (Milan, 1968); *The Order of the Death's Head: The story of Hitler's S.S.* (London, 1969); *La orden de la calavera: Historia de las SS* (Barcelona, 1969).
- 141 Catalogue inquiry at the German National Library, www.dnb.de, 30 December 2013; among others, Heinz Höhne, *Dokuro no kessha SS no rekishi* (Tokyo, 1981).
- 142 Heinz Höhne, *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf: Die Geschichte der SS* (Munich, Bassermann, 2008); Heinz Höhne, *SS: Elita ve stínu smrti* (Prague, 2012).
- 143 Compare Höhne's discussion with the research of the time. Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), pp. 10–18. In this regard see also Smelser & Syring (2000), p. 23.
- 144 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 141.
- 145 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 141.
- 146 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 143.
- 147 See Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 145.
- 148 See Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), pp. 135–41.
- 149 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 141. The reference to Schellenberg is on p. 135.
- 150 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 138.
- 151 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 141.
- 152 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 141.
- 153 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 142.
- 154 On the memoirs, see the source criticism by De Jong (1974), pp. 77–142. On the biography, see pp. 79–80, note 1. On the discrepancy between Kersten's dating and Himmler's service calendar, see Longerich (2010), p. 972. The considerable discrepancies between the various editions of the memoirs can be seen, for example, in Himmler's alleged belief in reincarnation. In the 1947 English-language version of his memoirs, Kersten claims Himmler believed himself to be the reincarnation of Henry I. See Kersten (1947B), p. 12. In the subsequent German version, Kersten maintains on the other hand that Himmler's secretary Rudolf Brandt told him Himmler believed himself to be the reincarnation of the Guelph duke Henry the Lion. In this context Henry I appears only dimly as Himmler's silent advisor. See Kersten (1952), pp. 190, 392.
- 155 Kersten (1952), p. 392. Höhne does not refer directly to Kersten, instead citing a biography of Kersten that approximates this passage, although quite near to the text. See Besgen (1960), p. 75: In Berlin he [Himmler] had a large, round table. The maximum number of guests allowed was twelve – just as with the legendary King Arthur." Reference to Besgen: Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 142, note 107. Höhne's references are not easy to follow at this point. Note 108 is actually the first to reference Höhne's remarks on Himmler's alleged

- Round Table. Höhne refers in it to Edgar Erwin Knoebel, "Racial Illusion and Military Necessity: A Study of SS Political and Manpower Objectives in Occupied Belgium," Ph.D. dissertation (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1965), p. 30. However, no connection to Höhne's depiction can be ascertained.
- 156 An example: Is Himmler supposed to have explained the symbolism of his table to Kersten, or did Kersten interpret the number of guests at Himmler's table as such?
- 157 It brings to mind the "dozen or so of his most trusted SS leaders" mentioned in the Fritsch scene in the Schellenberg memoirs. Schellenberg (1959), p. 39.
- 158 Höhne 1998 (orig. 1967), p. 142.
- 159 Höhne 1998 (orig. 1967), p. 142. Höhne (1969), p. 152: "the holy of holies of the Order – the realm of the dead."
- 160 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 142.
- 161 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 142. Taken strictly, Höhne does not speak here unambiguously about the actual burning of the SS coats of arms because he uses the modal verb *should*. Subsequent literature, however, usually reads it as being unequivocal. This seems to be in line with Höhne's intention, especially because a caption in the *Spiegel* series states as fact: "[Where] the Coats of Arms Were Burned: The SS-Valhalla Wewelsburg." See *Der Spiegel*, no. 46 (7 November 1966), pp. 94–107, here p. 103.
- 162 See the reference to Höhne's report about a visit to Wewelsburg Castle from 3 to 4 May 1966 in Hüser (1987), p. 61, note 93. A few pages later Höhne correctly locates Wewelsburg Castle's dining hall in its southern wing. See Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 144. On the castle layout, see Hüser (1987), pp. 156, 199.
- 163 The *Spiegel* article states: "Under the northern of the three fortress towers was a cellar vault of colored natural stone that was separated from the outside world by walls 1.80 meters (approx. 6 ft.) thick. Concealed there was the order's holy of holies: the cult site, the realm of the dead. Heinz Höhne: "Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf: Die Geschichte der SS," 4th installment, *Der Spiegel*, no. 46 (7 November 1966), pp. 94–107, here p. 103.
- 164 See Hüser (1987), p. 61.
- 165 See Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 144.
- 166 Notes 112, 113, 115, and 116 on p. 142 refer to "verbal communication from castle administrator Rupprecht." (Höhne, 1998, orig. 1967).
- 167 See Hüser (1987), p. 6, note 17 and "Instructions for the Wewelsburg Castle Custodian," in Max Rupprecht's personnel file, Kreisarchiv Paderborn.
- 168 See Brebeck (2005), pp. 84–90.
- 169 In this regard see the above-cited assessment by Heiner Lichtenstein of the quality of information dispersed by the guides at Wewelsburg Castle in the 1960s. On statements by castle administrator Wilhelm Kemper in 1978 as another example of the local rumors, see Brebeck et al. (2011), p. 284.
- 170 Höhne's report about his visit to Wewelsburg Castle from 3 to 4 May 1966 (see Hüser, 1987, p. 61, note 93.) could not be found at the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg or in Heinz Höhne's papers. See Gartred Alfeis (SPIEGEL-Verlag, Leser-Service) to Wulff E. Brebeck, 6 September 2006.
- 171 See Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 142; notes 112, 113, 115, and 116 name Rupprecht. The notes in the sections about Wewelsburg Castle do not cite Schellenberg at all and Frischauer only once in connection with the Battle at the Birch Tree. Yet it is obvious Höhne drew on these two authors. See Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), pp 142–44, notes 107–26. Höhne's account was essentially inspired by Schellenberg's memoirs. Apart from the castle rooms, the journalist tapped Frischauer's stylization of Wewelsburg Castle as a kind of Marienburg and the SS as a new edition of the Teutonic Knights. The *Spiegel* journalist rejects Frischauer's

- evaluation of the legend of the Battle at the Birch Tree as the catalyst for the search for Wewelsburg Castle, in this case following Lichtenstein's more differentiated account. See Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), pp. 142–43 and note 119.
- 172 In the English-language edition of Höhne's book it is "100-foot by 145-foot." See Höhne (1969), p. 152.
- 173 On this topic, see below. Examples are also found in Siepe (2009), pp. 495–96.
- 174 See Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 143. On the historical background, see Brebeck (2005), pp. 8–10.
- 175 See Heiber (1968), pp. 63–64, note on document 45: "Westphalian castle near Paderborn acquired by Himmler in 1934, which was to become the spiritual center of his SS order and a place of consultation for his most senior leaders. The coats of arms of deceased SS *Gruppenführer* were to be burned in a solemn ritual in a cellar vault, with urns containing the ashes being displayed there." Höhne is mentioned in the reference list. See p. 318.
- 176 See Ackermann (1970) pp. 105–6. Ackermann refers to Höhne in note 48 about the quoted speech.
- 177 Ackermann (1970), p. 105 and note 47.
- 178 See Smith & Peterson (1974), photographs between pages 128 and 129: "Wewelsburg Castle near Paderborn was designated as the center of this National Socialist cultivation of faith. When highest-ranking SS leaders had died, their coats of arms were to be burned in its sanctum and their urns placed there." Höhne is mentioned in the reference list. See p. 313.
- 179 Wippermann (1979), p. 260.
- 180 See Wippermann (1979), pp. 259–60. On Höhne, see p. 260, note 268.
- 181 See Steiner (1983, orig. 1975), p. 210. Steiner's essay was reprinted in 1983 in a renowned anthology on National Socialism edited by Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke, and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen. Reference to Schellenberg: note 23.
- 182 He refers to Detlef Bronder, Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, and Trevor Ravenscroft. See, for example, Steiner (1983, orig. 1975), pp. 209–10, notes 20, 22, 23, 24. On this literature, see also the relevant chapter in this volume.
- 183 See Heydecker & Leeb (1979, orig. 1958, most recently 2003). When Heydecker and Leeb speak of it, the motif of the Grail castle suggests Himmler wanted to "transform his SS into an order of blue-eyed Grail knights believing in the blood myth." See Heydecker & Leeb (1979), p. 523.
- 184 See Heydecker & Leeb (1979), pp. 525–26. The section is part of the chapter "Wenn Hitler den Krieg gewonnen hätte" (If Hitler Had Won the War), which was added to the 1979 edition. See information from the publisher Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 29 Oktober 2012, for which I thank the responsible editor Vera Feyerabend. In the 2003 edition the chapter is still part of the documentation. See 2003 edition, pp. 526–27.
- 185 Verbatim quotations: Heydecker & Leeb (1979), p. 525.
- 186 Heydecker & Leeb (1979), p. 525.
- 187 Heydecker & Leeb (1979), p. 526.
- 188 See Hüser (1987), p. 60.
- 189 Heydecker & Leeb (1979), p. 526.
- 190 On the alleged gold plate as part of the "oral tradition," see Hüser (1987), p. 61.
- 191 Heydecker & Leeb (1979), p. 525.
- 192 See Heydecker & Leeb (1979), p. 523–24. Felix Kersten wrote of these "chosen women" (Kersten, 1952, pp. 92–104).
- 193 On the local rumors, see Hüser (1987), p. 64; on the Lebensborn association and the ideas of "managed procreation" associated with it, see Lilienthal (2003, orig. 1985). By assigning additional rooms to Himmler, Hitler, Göring, and upper echelon SS leaders,

- Heydecker and Leeb stand again in the tradition of rumors that had been common until then. See Heydecker & Leeb (1979), p. 525. Johannes Leeb can no longer remember where he obtained the information for the chapter. He does not think he visited Wewelsburg. I would like to thank Johannes Leeb for his kind information by telephone on 3 February 2013.
- 194 See Grunberger (1970, numerous figures, no references); Graber (1978, no references); Reider (1981, no references); Infield (1982, various figures and a short reference list), pp. 257–63).
- 195 See Grunberger (1970), p. 33; Graber (1978), p. 87. (The dimensions of the dining hall follow Höhne. In the English-language version of Höhne's book, its size is given as 100 × 145 feet. See Höhne [1969], p. 152.)
- 196 See Infield (1982), p. 135.
- 197 See Reider (1981), p. 135.
- 198 See Graber (1978), p. 87. (Nameplates on the pigskin-upholstered chairs); Reider (1981), p. 135 (“While a fire crackled in the monumental chimney, the Black Knights sat down with the *Reichsführer* in huge high-backed leather armchairs around a heavy oak table. Beside each of them was a silver plate engraved with his name on the gilded wood.”)
- 199 See Graber (1978), p. 87 (“hours of contemplation and meditation”); Infield (1982), p. 135 (“He [Himmler] never permitted more than twelve guests to sit at the huge table in the hall, basing this restriction on the practice of King Arthur’s Knights of the Round Table. Himmler’s table wasn’t round but he still abided by the advice he supposedly received during his séances.”); Reider (1981), p. 135 (“Wewelsburg was the spiritual retreat, where the leaders of the S.S. went to meditate, far from the noise of the world outside.”).
- 200 See Grunberger (1970), p. 33; Graber (1978), p. 87 (Here there is only a general mention of the quarters for the SS leaders.); Reider (1981), p. 135 (rooms in a medieval style).
- 201 See Infield 1982, p. 135 (“There were also rooms named for Otto the Great, Philip of Swabia, Henry the Lion, Conrad IV, and Friederich Hohenstauffen, to name a few.”).
- 202 See Reider (1981), p. 134. Reider mentions statues of Henry I, Henry the Lion, Albrecht the Bear, Frederick I (Barbarossa), Frederick II (von Hohenstaufen). He refers to André Brissaud’s book *Hitler and the Black Order* (French original: *Hitler et l’Ordre Noir*), which contains fantasy elements. In this regard see the corresponding chapter in this volume.
- 203 See Infield (1982), pp. 134–35.
- 204 See Grunberger (1970), p. 33 (Burning of the coats of arms, column of smoke, and “plinths for the Obergruppenführers cremation urns”); Graber (1978), p. 87: “If an Obergruppenführer were to die, an urn containing his ashes was placed on the appropriate pedestal. The smoke was directed upward into the vents in the ceiling so that those assembled could watch the spirit ascend into a type of Valhalla.”
- 205 See Graber (1978), p. 87.
- 206 “Holy of holies,” Grunberger (1970), p. 33. See in this regard Höhne (1969), p. 152.
- 207 See Reider (1981), pp. 135–36: “Sometimes, in silence, the Black Knights followed the Reichsführer into the sanctum of the Order. They had to go down marble steps towards an underground room with ogive arches. The stone walls gave off an impressive chill. In the middle of the room, on a sort of black marble altar, shone out the two white runes of the S.S. At the foot of the altar was another staircase with granite slabs, down which the initiated slowly descended. The Reichsführer lit resin torches, one by one. Then a crypt appeared with, at the bottom, a sort of silver cast structure. There, the coats of arms of the leaders of the Black Order were to be incinerated; the bodies would lie above, in the ogive chamber.” Here, too, André Brissaud’s book may have been the inspiration.

- 208 Details such as Höhne's reference to "Wewel von Büren" are also adopted. See Graber (1978), p. 87; Reider (1981), p. 134; Infield (1982), p. 133.
- 209 Wykes (1972, various figures, no references), pp. 104, 108. The text contains references to Schellenberg as well as to Manvell & Fraenkel.
- 210 Wykes (1972), p. 104.
- 211 Wykes (1972), p. 104.
- 212 See Hüser (1987, orig. 1982).
- 213 On the phases, see Hüser (1987), pp. 13–17, 30–32.
- 214 See Hüser (1987), pp. 36–37. For a critical view on this, see Moors (2013), pp. 62–63.
- 215 See Hüser (1987), pp. 68–72.
- 216 See Hüser (1987), pp. 156–57, 243, 286, 290–91.
- 217 See Hüser (1987), pp. 60–61, 69.
- 218 Hüser (1987), p. 64. In this regard see also the discussion by Gladbach (1982).
- 219 See Hüser (1987), p. 59.
- 220 See Hüser (1987), pp. 60–61.
- 221 See Hüser (1987), pp. 61, 72.
- 222 See Hüser (1987), pp. 28–29 and notes 84, 87, 88, and 89.
- 223 See Moors (2009a), p. 179.
- 224 See Hüser (1987), p. 32, which also discusses the SS order from 6 November 1935.
- 225 Hüser (1987), p. 32. See also Hüser's commentary on Fest: "Fest rightly speaks of the 'ordination character' of the celebrations planned for Wewelsburg Castle." See Hüser (1987), pp. 71–72.
- 226 "Thus, the cult theme remains, although changed into an intention." Kingsepp (2012).
- 227 On this literature, see Hüser (1987), pp. 5–6, and the corresponding chapter in this volume.
- 228 See Hüser (1987), p. 63.
- 229 Hüser (1987), p. 61. Hüser refers at this point to the assertion in the Kersten memoirs about Himmler's alleged Round Table in Berlin. See Hüser (1987), p. 61, note 95.
- 230 Hüser (1987), pp. 200, 204–5.
- 231 On Rahn, see Lange (1995); Lange (1999); Lange (2000); Franz (2009), pp. 492–538. On fantasy literature, see the corresponding chapter in this volume.
- 232 On this subject see Lange (1999), pp. 61–64; Siepe (2002), p. 278. I wrote the essay relatively early on in my examination of the legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle. The text also contains formulations that promote the creation of legends about Rahn. Documentation exists of Rahn's religious studies and excursions he took, but not of a search for the Grail as an object.
- 233 See Koehl (1983). Koehl only mentions the meeting that happened at Wewelsburg Castle in the run-up to the attack on the Soviet Union. See Koehl (1983), p. 180. Referring to Ackermann, Koehl speaks of an advisory body Himmler wanted to establish after the war and calls this an "Arthurian Round Table." Wewelsburg Castle is not mentioned in this context. See Koehl (1983), p. 220.
- 234 Thamer (1986), p. 374. The essay about Wewelsburg Castle includes no references, although Höhne is obviously a source.
- 235 Reichel (1991), p. 226.
- 236 See Thamer (1986), p. 374 and Reichel (1991), p. 226.
- 237 On the burning of the coats of arms, see Hunger (1984), p. 151. Hunger refers to Höhne and the illustration in the Smith & Peterson (1974) edition of the *Geheimreden* (Secret Speeches); see also p. 151, note 77; Greve (1990), p. 111. Non-specific burning ceremony with column of smoke: Thamer (1986), p. 374.

- 238 Thamer (1986), p. 374.
- 239 Urns: Reichel (1991), p. 226; pedestals intended for the urns: Greve (1990), p. 111.
- 240 Greve (1990), p. 111.
- 241 See Kratzer (1998), pp. 139–40. Kratzer's formulations indicate he is referring to Himmler's plans. He names a radio program from the Austrian ORF public service broadcaster as the source of his remarks. See also Reichel (1991), p. 226: "Himmlers Gralsritter" (Himmler's Grail Knights).
- 242 Kratzer (1998), pp. 139–40. In addition to the mentioned radio broadcast, Kratzer refers to Giordano (1989), p. 286, who took his information from Heydecker & Leeb. In the passage in question, it is partially unclear whom Kratzer is citing. See Kratzer (1998), p. 139, note 202.
- 243 Wewelsburg Castle as part of a planned "series of SS monasteries," occult meditations by SS leaders: Hermand (1988), p. 290, and note 11. Although Hermand, a literary scholar and cultural historian, refers to Karl Hüser's publication, among others, he bases his account on John M. Steiner's previously mentioned 1975 essay "Das Glaubensbekenntnis der SS" (The Creed of the SS), which in turn refers to Schellenberg and to fantasy literature. Wewelsburg Castle as an order castle, assembly hall, armchairs with engraved name plates, secret consistories, meditations: Greve (1990), pp. 110–11. Greve also adopts this information from Steiner (1975). A motif from fantasy literature even creeps in with Greve, namely that Himmler is supposed to have kept a copy of the Holy Lance at Wewelsburg Castle. See Greve (1990), p. 111.
- 244 See Padfield (2001, orig. 1990), p. 139: "Heydrich lived exclusively in the 'real world' of the National Socialist revolution; Himmler lived in the same world and simultaneously in his own world." On criticism of Padfield, see *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941–1942* (1999), p. 19.
- 245 Padfield (2001, orig. 1990), p. 248.
- 246 Padfield (2001, orig. 1990), p. 139.
- 247 The authors are not referred to in the notes on the passages concerning Wewelsburg Castle. They are, however, named in the reference list, just as Schellenberg is, whereas Hüser is not. See Padfield (2001, orig. 1990), pp. 638–39.
- 248 See Padfield (2001, orig. 1990), pp. 248–49. Padfield doubts, however, that Himmler believed in reincarnation in the traditional sense.
- 249 See Padfield (2001, orig. 1990), p. 248.
- 250 Padfield (2001, orig. 1990), p. 248. This is also Höhne's formulation: see Höhne (1969), p. 152.
- 251 See Padfield (2001, orig. 1990), p. 248.
- 252 See Padfield (2001, orig. 1990), p. 324.
- 253 Breitman (1991, German 2000), p. 5. See also p. 35.
- 254 Breitman (1991, German 2000), p. 35.
- 255 See Breitman (2000, orig. 1991), p. 58.
- 256 See Goodrick-Clarke (2004, German 1997).
- 257 See Goodrick-Clarke (2004, German 1997), pp. 177–91, here 186–88. In his book Goodrick-Clarke also draws on the Wilgüt biography by *völkisch* esoteric Rudolf Mund (1982). On this point see the section below. However, he refers to Hüser in his statements about Wewelsburg Castle. He even speaks of a future "SS vatican on an enormous scale." Goodrick-Clarke (2004, German 1997), p. 188. As an early example of the adoption of Hüser, see also Merker (1983), pp. 234–36. Merker was primarily interested in the castle's structural design and interior furnishings.

- 258 See Weißmann (1991), pp. 216–17, and note 159.
- 259 See Weißmann (1991), p. 216, and note 159. Weißmann also refers to Mund (1982).
- 260 See Behrenbeck (1996), pp. 504–6; on Höhne, see p. 506 and note 249. Behrenbeck's claim that a swearing-in ceremony occurred at a meeting of SS functionaries in Wewelsburg in June 1941 (p. 506) has, however, not been substantiated.
- 261 Hüser was also referred to in the mid-1990s: Mathieu (1997), p. 271 and notes 49–51. Mathieu, however, reiterates the still unsubstantiated claim, already noted in Heydecker & Leeb, that the sun wheel embedded in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall floor had a gold plate at its center, an assertion Hüser characterized as "oral tradition." For a brief mention of Hüser, see Mommsen (1997), p. 179, as well as note 21 there. See the German Federal Archive's publication: Naasner (1998), p. 194, note 242 and the article in the *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*: Brebeck (1997), p. 806. See also the essay by a former staff member at the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg: Schäferjohann-Bursian (1998), pp. 361–79. Schäferjohann-Bursian seems to find the connection between the northern tower's symbolic use of the number twelve and the King Arthur's Round Table entirely plausible in the speculative context.
- 262 See Kroll (1999, orig. 1998), pp. 209–55; *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941–1942* (1999).
- 263 As references to Hüser, see Kroll (1999, orig. 1998), p. 253, note 208 and *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941–1942* (1999), p. 171, note 19; p. 172, note 21; p. 462, note 45.
- 264 Frank-Lothar Kroll, for instance, subjects Himmler's world view to a systematic examination (Kroll, 1999, orig. 1998, pp. 209–55). As an example of criticism of older research and its treatment of Himmler's worldview, see *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941–1942* (1999), pp. 19–20.
- 265 On Wewelsburg Castle, see Kroll (1999, orig. 1998), pp. 252–53.
- 266 See Kroll (1999, orig. 1998), pp. 230–31.
- 267 See Mund (1982). Mund was the head of the Ordo Novi Templi in Vienna, meaning he was a follower of Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels. On Mund, see Heller & Maegerle (1998), p. 29, Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 128–50. Mund's book contains no references. Höhne is mentioned in the reference list, although his account is not adopted. See Mund (1982), p. 295.
- 268 See, for example, Goodrick-Clarke (2004, German 1997), pp. 177–91, note 3; and critically Longerich (2010), pp. 293–94.
- 269 Mund (1982), p. 9.
- 270 Mund (1982), p. 9.
- 271 See Mund (1982), p. 12. The following shows the passage according to Mund, with the relevant omissions from the interview with Wolff added in square brackets. Mund also shortened the original text somewhat in other respects: "Excerpt from the newspaper report by the SS *Obergruppenführer* and *Waffen-SS* general, Karl Wolff, personal adjutant of *Reichsführer-SS*, Heinrich Himmler, in the *Neue Illustrierte*—Germany, from April/May 1961, in which he discusses SS *Brigadeführer* Weisthor, head of the Department of Pre- and Early History in the SS High Command (*Reichsführung-SS*):
- "... as I stepped closer I spotted a short, roundish man sitting across the table from Himmler. He had his head buried in a book. [Himmler gave me a hint to remain quietly in the background. I discreetly took a seat and continued observing the strange scene.] At last the little man raised his head. I noticed he had a high narrow forehead. His white hair was cut short and he was probably in his mid-sixties.
- 'I've found it Herr Reichsführer,' he said now. 'Here is the prophecy of the great decisive battle we have been talking about, even documented in writing. Should I read it to you?'"

The text is written in Middle High German.' The old man's eyes flashed with joy and satisfaction at his discovery.

'Thank you, my dear Mr. Weisthor,' said Himmler, 'if you could just leave me the books ... He took old Weisthor to the door of his office in the Munich High Command and bid him a hearty farewell. [He then returned to me, beaming, 'Well, what else needs attention, Wölffchen?'

'Just a few signatures,' I said, 'Probably not nearly as interesting to you as the problem with the decisive battle that your visitor just discovered.'] 'Now my old friend Weisthor ...' Here Karl Wolff leaves everything else in his report open, but comments "The longer I knew Heinrich Himmler, the more certain I became that he really believed everything he heard about the old lore."

[... "I was beginning to feel uncomfortable. For me the old Teutons were dead, and I found it rather superfluous, at this time shortly after our seizure of power, to concern oneself so intensively with them and their prophecies."] 'We have been looking for an order castle for our SS for a long time,' the *Reichsführer* continued. 'The best thing would be to look for it in Westphalia. I have found a suitable castle ruin from Germanic prehistory in Westphalia. Wewelsburg Castle, which means *Weiberburg*. It is located near Paderborn."

272 See Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), p. 7. On Mund, see note 1.

273 See, for example, Rudolph (1999), p. 58, note 59 (Reference to Hüser and Russell); Diehl (2005), p. 100, note 6 (reference to Hüser and Russell).

274 Annette von der Heyde, ZDF public service television broadcaster, editorial board, contemporary history portfolio, to the author, 14 September 2006.

275 See Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), p. 11.

276 See Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), pp. 205–7.

277 See Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), p. 11.

278 See Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), p. 156.

279 See Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), pp. 46–47, 49. Whether Himmler actually wanted to be buried in the Wewelsburg Castle crypt, as Wilhelm Jordan stated to Russell and Schneider, is open to debate. See Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), p. 156.

280 See Lange (1995), Lange (1998), Lange (1999), Lange (2000). Lange was the creative director of an advertising agency at the time and now runs a mail-order second-hand bookshop. Reading Trevor Ravenscroft's book *The Spear of Destiny* drew his attention to Wewelsburg Castle and Wiligut-Weisthor and prompted his research on the subject. See Lange (1998), pp. 9–10. Lange has collected documents that substantiate Rahn's contribution to the genealogical research at Wewelsburg Castle and shown, for example, that Otto Rahn was friends with a scholar at the castle. See Lange (1995), pp. 27–28, 55–56.

281 See, for instance, Longerich (2010), p. 250, note. 172; and p. 293, note 153.

282 See Lange (1998), pp. 276–86, here pp. 276–77.

283 Lange (1998), p. 281. See also pp. 280–82, 285, and 290. Lange refers to an experiment conducted in the crypt with a concert singer to study the effect of sound on the human body. The author assumes the sound of the fire burning in the floor recess was supposed to be amplified. He also counted the number of stone slabs in the floor and concluded they follow a design based on the number four. Lange's observations were taken up in esoteric circles. In this regard see the corresponding chapter in this volume. Lange has publicized his statements numerous times. See also, for example, Lange (2000), pp. xv–xvi.

284 See Freund (1995), p. 96, notes 58–60. Freund's reference list does not mention Hüser, while Schellenberg and Höhne are cited. Grandt & Grandt (1998) refers to Hüser (Grandt & Grandt, 1998, p. 113, note 55). René Freund is a writer and has published several non-fiction books. Guido and Michael Grandt are journalists who publish on the topics of

- esotericism and Satanism. For a critical view of Freund and other authors, see Strube (2013), p. 142, note 85.
- 285 See Freund (1995), p. 97. Freud deals critically with the legends of fantasy literature. See also pp. 86–88.
- 286 Grandt & Grandt (1998), p. 132. Grandt and Grandt refer to an article in *Handbuch Rechtsextremismus* (Handbook on Right-Wing Extremism), which is where they found this assertion. See Grandt & Grandt (1998), note 78; Speit (1996), p. 717. Such stories apparently spread according to the snowball effect. Referring to Rudolf Mund, the authors also state that Wiligit made Himmler aware of Wewelsburg Castle. See Grandt & Grandt (1998), p. 111 and note 42.
- 287 See Sünner (1999).
- 288 See Sünner (1999), pp. 212–28. Sünner studied musicology, German language and literature, and philosophy, obtaining his doctorate with a dissertation on Adorno's and Nietzsche's philosophy of art. See www.ruedigersuenner.de/bio (accessed 4 January 2014).
- 289 For a critical view of Sünner's film, see Sösemann (2009); on Sünner in general, see Linse (2012), p. 547.
- 290 See Sünner (1999), pp. 106–8. In connection with the crypt, Sünner refers to National-Socialist-era researchers studying the Germanic peoples (*Germanenforscher*) and their writings on subterranean shrines. It is clear from Sünner's formulations that he is knowingly engaging in speculation and association.
- 291 Sünner (1999), p. 108.
- 292 See Sünner (1999), p. 97. In Sandra Franz's view, Sünner adopted this interpretation from Köhler (1997), p. 413. See Franz (2009), p. 541, note 320. Köhler is not mentioned in a corresponding footnote by Sünner, although he appears in the reference list. See Sünner (1999), p. 254. Köhler's entire approach in his study *Wagners Hitler* (Wagner's Hitler), however, is questionable because of its monocausality. Köhler views the murder of the European Jews as an expression of Hitler's veneration of the anti-Semite Wagner. He recognizes the Grail temple scene from the *Parsifal* production in each of the National Socialist regime stagings of the "cathedrals of light," which used floodlights to create spectacular visual effects. By the same token he discerns it not only in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall but throughout Wewelsburg Castle's northern tower with its crypt, *Obergruppenführer* Hall, and planned *Gruppenführer* Hall. See Köhler (1997), pp. 319, 415–16.
- 293 There are other possible models for the design of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall, with the earlier prince-bishop's chapel also having contained twelve columns. See Brebeck (2005), p. 76.
- 294 See Sünner (1999), p. 97. For a critical perspective, see Linse (2012), p. 547. Linse points to a parallel between the book and Sünner's film, which Bernd Sösemann concludes lacks "concrete evidence for the existence and intensity of most of the reception processes mentioned by Sünner." Sösemann (2009), p. 348.
- 295 Sünner (1999), pp. 104–5. In Kersten (1952, p. 197) the wording is: "I admire the wisdom of those founders of Indian religions."
- 296 See Kersten (1952), p. 194–197, here p. 197.
- 297 This aside, it is questionable whether it is an authentic statement by Himmler. According to Kersten, the conversation took place in Rome before Himmler left for a meeting with the Italian foreign minister. The cited utterance is firmly embedded in this substantive context. See Kersten (1952), p. 197: Here Himmler interrupts a conversation with Kersten about the Catholic Church because he has to leave for a meeting with the Italian foreign minister Ciano. This is repugnant to Himmler, who states he will only let himself be addressed about important matters once victory has been won "and otherwise only

- reflect and make decisions." This is followed by the statement about the "wisdom of the founders of Indian religions" and their meditation facilities for the highest dignitaries. According to his service calendar, Himmler was no longer in Italy at this time. See *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941–1942* (1999), p. 589. For 16 and 17 October there are no appointment pages, but on 15 October 1942 Himmler was already back in Munich to travel on to Gmund.
- 298 See Lumsden (1997), p. 119. The local rumors recounted by Lumsden and the reference to "Wewel von Büren" stem from Höhne, as do the reference to the guest accommodations for Hitler and the local rumors that he was to be buried in Wewelsburg (Lumsden, 1997, pp. 118–19).
- 299 See Lumsden (1997), p. 119. See also the corresponding examples in the literature cited previously.
- 300 See Lumsden (1997), pp. 119–20.
- 301 See Williamson (1994, German 1998), p. 31. Williamson does not elaborate on the premises.
- 302 See Russell & Cook (1999). Even apart from the Arthurian romanticism, this illustrated book does convey some legends. It refers to fantasy literature's Spear of Destiny as the model for the Wewelsburg construction plans and even speculates about whether secret files belonging to Heydrich had been at Wewelsburg Castle. See Russell & Cook (1999), pp. 28–29, 213 and note 25. The authors, however, consider Schellenberg to be untrustworthy. See pp. 174–75.
- 303 See Russell & Cook (1999), pp. 166, 182.
- 304 For example, the effect of the SS's conversion is described quite rapturously, with Wewelsburg Castle "seem[ing] to receive new life and emit a magical personality as it emerged to fulfill its destiny." See Russell & Cook (1999), p. 45.
- 305 See Russell & Cook (1999), illustration section after p. 185: "The Round Table' in 1944." This sun wheel is a component of the more recent legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle and has become known as the Black Sun. On this topic see the other essays in this volume.
- 306 Schellenberg (1959), p. 39.
- 307 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 142.
- 308 *Heinrich Himmlers Burg: Die Wewelsburg – Das weltanschauliche Zentrum der SS* (Heinrich Himmler's Castle: Wewelsburg Castle – The Ideological Locus of the SS), POLAR Film und Medien GmbH, Dortmund, 1998.
- 309 I am following the text displayed in the film. It stems from an interview of Karl Wolff by the former *Stern* magazine reporter Gerd Heidemann on 16 August 1978. I extend my thanks to Gerd Heidemann for permission to use the interview transcript. In this interview Wolff refers, as previously, to the legend of the onslaught that would come from the East, in other words, the Battle at the Birch Tree (transcript, p. 28). However, he now also claims that the coats of arms of high-ranking SS leaders were burned upon their death (transcript, p. 38); a room was reserved for Hitler (transcript, p. 46); there had been twelve SS Main Offices because "the aim was to match the mystical number twelve from King Arthur's Round Table with the chiefs of the Main Offices" (transcript, p. 47); and "the urns of the twelve Main Office chiefs from the founding period were to be placed" in the crypt (transcript, p. 49). On the quotation from the film, see page 49 of the transcript. All statements point to Höhne as the source.
- 310 For instance, in Lange (2000), pp. xii–xiv. Similarly as well in Lange (1998), pp. 285–86. Russell & Cook (1999), p. 28, even speak of fantasy literature's Spear of Destiny, which may be better known in the English-speaking world as the Lance of Longinus or the Imperial Lance. Sünner (1999), p. 109, asks a bit more cautiously whether the spearhead form, with the tower indicating north, alludes to the original homeland of the Aryans.

- 311 See Rudolph (1999), pp. 53, 62–63, 67–69, 86. With regard to the history of Wewelsburg Castle, Rudolf refers to Hüser and Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), p. 58, note 59.
- 312 See Halle (2002), p. 463. In addition, Jordan served as an informer for the Security Service (p. 446). On Willigut-Weisthor's influence on research about the Externsteine, see p. 62.
- 313 On this topic see extensive coverage in Kaienburg (2003), pp. 139–48, and numerous text passages in which reference is made to Wewelsburg Castle and Hüser. See also Schulte (2001), pp. 81, 97.
- 314 See Wildt (2004), p. 689; on Hüser see notes 82–84.
- 315 See Thamer (2003). Thamer relies here on Hüser's research. As another example of Hüser being adopted, see Diehl (2005), p. 100, note 6.
- 316 See Moors & Pfeiffer (2013).
- 317 See Kerzel (2002), pp. 195–290.
- 318 On this point, see my essay (Siepe, 2002) "Wewelsburg und 'Okkultismus'" (Wewelsburg and Occultism), in which, for example, Hüser's interpretation of the legend of the Battle at the Birch Tree is not questioned regarding its significance for the Wewelsburg project. On criticism of Jan Erik Schulte's formulation of "occultism practiced in Wewelsburg," (Schulte, 2002, p. 217), see Kingsepp (2012).
- 319 See Schulte (2009b).
- 320 See Schulte (2009a), p. 8.
- 321 See Moors (2009a), p. 170; Moors (2013) pp. 62–63.
- 322 On Sünner's comparison of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall with the Grail temple in *Parsifal*, see Siepe (2002), p. 277; Brebeck (2005), p. 76. On the issue of early medieval ornamental discs as possible models for the sun wheel embedded in the floor of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall, see Brebeck (2005), pp. 76–78. Siepe (2009), pp. 489–90.
- 323 Schulte (2009a), p. 9. See also Moors (2009a), p. 179; Moors (2013).
- 324 See, for example, Siepe (2009), p. 490.
- 325 See Goodrick-Clarke (2002); Siepe (2009); Linse (2012); Kingsepp (2012); Strube (2013). With his view of Wewelsburg Castle as a future SS cult site and SS vatican, Goodrick-Clarke remains in his later publications indebted to Hüser's original. See Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 125–26.
- 326 See Rissmann (2001), p. 160. On Sünner, see Rissmann (2001), p. 160, note 684. Rissmann cites Wewelsburg Castle as an example of the implementation of Himmler's "occultisms" but does not elaborate. He refers to Hüser, p. 159 and note 676. A published master's thesis even attributes Himmler's interest in Grail mythology to the simple fact that he "used terms such as *Grail* and *Grail bearer*." Reinicke (2003), p. 97. On Wewelsburg Castle, see pp. 93–97. Reinicke (p. 97, note 431) refers to Himmler's speech at Ernst Kaltenbrunner's appointment ceremony. In his speech Himmler uses the term *Grail bearers* to ironically mock the elite attitude of the Security Police and Security Service: "But if you do report something, please never do it with a sobbing voice and bowed head. Something terrible has happened; the world is more or less broken; National Socialism has been destroyed and lies in shards on the ground; we are the only enlightened Grail bearers; we still have the Grail of the National Socialist worldview in our pure hands, but all the others are by and large pigs." See Breitman & Aronson (1990), p. 346. Reinicke refers to Hüser, but also to other authors, such as Lumsden, Kratzer, Padfield, and Höhne, who have contributed to the creation of legends. Reinicke assumes the actual existence of a wooden table at Wewelsburg Castle, but questions whether it was modeled on King Arthur's Round Table.
- 327 See Franz (2009), pp. 538–52. In contrast, Frank Helzel's dissertation *Ein König, ein Reichsführer und der Wilde Osten* (2004, A King, a Reich Leader, and the Wild East) is neither substantively nor methodically convincing. The author proceeds from Höhne's

- assertion that Himmler had believed himself to be the reincarnation of Henry I and consequently had stylized Wewelsburg Castle into a “Henry castle.” See, for example, pp. 9, 14, 159–73. In his examination of Hüser, Helzel does not differentiate between fact and speculation and uncritically adopts fantasy literature’s legend about Himmler having had a copy of the Holy Lance made for Wewelsburg Castle (pp. 160, 168, 171).
- 328 See Franz (2009), pp. 540–42. With regard to Himmler’s interest in Grail mysticism, she draws on Rissmann. See Franz (2009), pp. 547 and note 359.
- 329 Franz (2009), p. 538.
- 330 Franz (2009), p. 538.
- 331 See Franz (2009), p. 538, note 308.
- 332 As another example, see Claus & Hauer (2010), pp. 197–99, who seek to get to the bottom of the *P.M. History* article about the alleged Nazi Grail cited at the beginning of this essay. In doing so they apparently assume that Russell and Hüser constitute a joint publication. See Claus & Hauer (2010), pp. 197, 205. They quote from Gerd Heidemann’s previously mentioned interview of Karl Wolff, in which Wolff discusses the symbolism of the number twelve in the crypt. See pp. 198–99.
- 333 See Dierker (2002), p. 224. Dierker examines the claim that the Jesuit Order served as a role-model for the SS. Alleged similarities could apply to many organizations. Elsewhere he quotes from Himmler’s speech at Ernst Kaltenbrunner’s appointment ceremony on 30 January 1943. See p. 540: “That is why we will never become Jesuits – because we despise that.” On this subject see also Breitman & Aronson (1990), p. 347.
- 334 See Longerich (2010, orig. 2008), p. 282, note 81. Longerich shows that Himmler’s speech at the 1936 commemoration marking the 1000th anniversary of Henry I’s death focused on drawing parallels between Henry and Hitler, portraying both as founders of a powerful empire based on a free peasantry. Longerich therefore concludes: “The claim that Himmler saw himself as the reincarnation of the emperor seems absurd in light of this longstanding historical interpretation of the medieval emperor.” (Longerich, 2010, orig. 2008, p. 282, note 81).
- 335 Longerich (2010, orig. 2008), p. 274.
- 336 Longerich (2010, orig. 2008), p. 266.
- 337 Longerich (2010, orig. 2008), pp. 304–6.
- 338 As another recent example referencing Hüser and Longerich, see the habilitation thesis by Bastian Hein (2012), *Elite für Volk und Führer?: Die Allgemeine SS und ihre Mitglieder 1925–1945*, p. 242.
- 339 An exception is Pontolillo (2013), who presents the subject matter of Wewelsburg Castle, Himmler, and occultism meticulously and with a wealth of material, even if the details are not always correct. Pontolillo, however, has primarily compiled excerpts, which he does not analyze.
- 340 For example, a new edition of Heydecker & Leeb (1979) published in 2003 contained an account of Wewelsburg Castle that had already been adopted by Giordano (1989, pp. 286–87). Rüdiger Sünner has revised and expanded his monograph. The passage criticized above in endnote 295, in which Sünner refers to Kesten, is now worded in a manner making clear that it concerns a later statement by Himmler. Kersten’s value as a source, however, is not scrutinized. Sünner fundamentally maintains his view of Wewelsburg Castle as a Grail castle and combines this with criticism of the “positivist scientific method” (Sünner, 2009, p. 188), which does not do justice to the emotional side of myths. See, for example, Sünner (2009), pp. 74, 79–82, 166, 188–89, 192. Hans-Jürgen Lange has also revised his Wiligut biography, augmenting it with further documents and

considerably expanding his references, while, however, retaining his view of the crypt. See Lange (2010), pp. 291–96.

- 341 See Trimondi & Trimondi (2002), pp. 25–26 (a type of Grail castle, Round Table, retreats and concentration exercises according to Schellenberg, meditations alleged to have taken place in the crypt, assignment of the historically furnished rooms); Hale (2003), pp. 75–77 (retreats according to Schellenberg that reportedly took place in the northern tower's *Obergruppenführer* Hall, which is called the *Gruppenführer* Hall in accordance with Russell & Cook; reference is made in the notes to Höhne and Russell & Cook, but also to Hüser; see notes 6 and 7); Thiede (2006), p. 120. See also Neumayr (2006), pp. 87–88, 262 (localization of the crypt below the dining hall, burial site for SS leaders or repository for cremation urns). Neumayr includes Hüser in the reference list.

As an example of militaria literature, see Mansson (2001), p. 110 (comparison of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall with the Round Table, urns of the highest SS leaders were to be set on the crypt's pedestals). An exception within the militaria literature is, for example, Klaus D. Patzwall's treatise on the death's head rings, which Hüser took note of. See Patzwall (2002), pp. 45–46 and note 35. However, Patzwall also propagates Wiligut's involvement in the selection of the castle.

The characterization of Wewelsburg Castle as a "future cult center" and "a kind of SS Vatican" is also found in Knopp (2003, orig. 2002, e-book in 2013), p. 102. With chapters such as "Himmlers Wahn" (Himmler's Delusion) and "Heydrichs Herrschaft" (Heydrich's Reign), Knopp picks up on the image of Himmler circulated in the older literature. The remarks about the Jesuit Order allegedly having been a role model and the Fritsch scene are cited from the Schellenberg memoirs. See Knopp (2003, orig. 2002, 2013), pp. 77, 95, 100, 137.

- 342 See Hale (2003), p. 76: "Embedded in the marble floor is a twelve-spoke *Sonnenrad*, a sun wheel which was once lined with gold and represented for Himmler the 'Centre of the New World.'" This description involves a variation of the oral tradition in Wewelsburg that claims knowledge of the sun wheel having a golden center plate, and is also found in Russell & Cook (1999), in the illustration section following p. 183, in the caption accompanying photograph of the sun wheel.

- 343 See Hale (2003), p. 76: "This was a place of the dead, a Valhalla where 'knights' of the SS were ceremonially honoured after death. The walls were once lined with the heraldic emblems of senior SS officers and decorated with runes, but today they are bare."

- 344 See Schröm & Röpke (2001), p. 194. Schröm & Röpke examine right-wing extremist networks, with Wewelsburg Castle not being their actual topic.

- 345 See Hale (2003), p. 75.

- 346 Ulrich Linse observed this in regard to popular-science magazines. See Linse (2012), p. 547.

- 347 See Seewald (2012), p. 65. On the gamut of legends surrounding the vessel from Chiemsee Lake, see Linse (2012).

- 348 Seewald (2012), p. 65.

- 349 See Seewald (2012), p. 60.

- 350 See, for example, Diedrich (2007). On this topic see Linse (2012), pp. 544–45.

Wewelsburg Castle in Fantasy Literature

Daniela Siepe

In the 1960s a variety of fantasy literature emerged in which it was claimed that the true history of National Socialism, previously hidden from historical scholarship, could only be explained by the activities of secret societies in the background of official politics. Furthermore, the National Socialists had been black magicians or had contact with supernatural powers. These publications actually claim to present facts and can be characterized as conspiracy theories.¹

An important source for this literature is Hermann Rauschning's *Hitler Speaks: A Series of Political Conversations with Adolf Hitler on His Real Aims* (English and original French 1939; German 1940). In this book the former president of the Danzig Senate asserts, for instance, in the chapter "Magic, Black and White," that "Hitler was abandoning himself to forces which were carrying him away – forces of dark and destructive violence. He imagined that he still had the freedom of choice, but he had long been in bondage to a magic which might well have been described, not only in metaphor but in literal fact, as that of evil spirits."² In the chapter section "The Esoteric Doctrine," Rauschning, on the other hand, reports alleged plans by the National Socialists to found an actual "order" with various levels of initiation.³ For some time the conversations in *Hitler Speaks* were accorded a certain source value, but meanwhile are considered to be purely fictional – and hardly original at that, for several publications demonizing Hitler and National Socialism in a similar way had appeared in the 1930s and 1940s, in the French-speaking world in particular.⁴

Fantasy literature's claims exist in several versions. The guiding force of the Third Reich is usually identified as the Thule Society, whose historical counterpart was founded in 1918 to fight the Munich Soviet Republic and involved leading National Socialists. The Thule Society lost its importance after the suppression of council rule.⁵ Depending on the author, Hitler was either the puppet or initiate of this covert group. Historical facts are distorted in this literature and mixed with fabrications. It is well known that Hitler sought to establish Germany as a world power and regarded the selective racial breeding of the German people as a prerequisite for this goal.

Fantasy literature turns this into a magical project, with the National Socialist leadership searching in Central Asian Tibet for survivors of the lost continent of Atlantis. The residents of that legendary island were aristocratic

people with magical abilities. The Nazi's aim had been to persuade them "to enlist their ... powers in the furtherance of the Nazi cause and in the projected mutation which would herald the new race of Supermen."⁶ In Tibet, the story continues, the Nazis ultimately succeeded in establishing contact with the Atlanteans, who under the names *Agartha* and *Shamballah* had dedicated themselves to the worship of evil. The Agartha group is then supposed to have collaborated with the National Socialists and initiated Himmler into their secret doctrine. Subsequently he founded a "school of occultism" in Berlin and ordered "many of the leading ranks of the Totenkopf SS, the *Sicherheitsdienst* and the Gestapo ... to attend courses in meditation, transcendentalism and magic." Lastly, Himmler launched "Ahnenerbe, the Nazi Occult Bureau,"⁷ which ultimately absorbed the entire membership of the Thule Society. An SS is also constructed according to the same scheme, representing the prototype of the "superhuman" and the vanguard of the magical-pagan age, functioning "not as a police force" but rather "as a real religious order with a regular hierarchy ranging from the lay brothers to the Father Superior."⁸ It is a demonic, even satanic order dedicated to evil, whose true character, however, was kept secret from the outside world.⁹

Fantasy and cryptohistorical literature encompasses authors who approach the topic in a variety of ways. Some treat it quite sensationally, while others attempt to appear scholarly, using many footnotes and expressing their skepticism about the other authors, although they, too, ultimately convey the customary claims.¹⁰ Among the influential classics in this vein of literature are Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier's *The Morning of the Magicians* (*Le Matin des magiciens*, French 1960, German 1962, English 1963) and Trevor Ravenscroft's *Spear of Destiny* (1972).¹¹ Nigel Pennick's theories are also likely to be more widely disseminated. He claims the National Socialists strategically utilized the earth's energy lines to increase their power – a hypothesis that has found its way into esoteric travel guides.¹²

Wewelsburg Castle: Its Location and Function

It is especially the SS's religiously imbued self-designation as an order that seems to have opened the floodgates for the creation of legends concerning that organization and Wewelsburg Castle. Walter Schellenberg, former head of the foreign intelligence service within the Reich Security Main Office, wrote in his memoirs, published posthumously in 1956, that Himmler had established the SS according to the organizational principles of the Jesuit Order. He also

claimed that Wewelsburg Castle had been a “kind of SS monastery,” where a “secret chapter of the order” met annually for “spiritual exercises aimed mainly at mental concentration.”¹³ In a large assembly hall “each member had his own armchair with an engraved silver name plate.”¹⁴ Although such assertions lacked any foundation, they were taken up by popular-science authors and described in garish tones. Especially Heinz Höhne’s widely distributed journalistic treatise *The Order of the Death’s Head: The Story of Hitler’s SS* (1969, German 1967), in which he stylizes the SS as a “black counter-lodge”¹⁵ of the Jesuit Order, contributed to the popularization of such myths. Höhne writes about a 15 x 35 meter (approx. 50 x 115 ft.) dining hall at Wewelsburg Castle where Himmler supposedly installed his “Round Table” and held spiritualist-like meetings with twelve of his chosen men.¹⁶ The armchairs mentioned by Schellenberg have mutated into “pig skin chairs,¹⁷ each with a small silver plate bearing the “name of the respective knight.”¹⁸ Höhne erroneously locates the northern tower’s crypt below this hall,¹⁹ describing it as the “holy of holies of the Order – the realm of the dead.”²⁰ It is where the coats of arms of deceased *Gruppenführer* were to be ceremonially burned, with urns containing the ashes being placed on the surrounding pedestals.²¹ If Höhne is to be believed, Wewelsburg Castle was akin to “Himmler’s Grail castle.”²²

In fantasy literature Wewelsburg Castle represents the secret initiation center for SS rituals, where the senior initiates meet in the manner of the Arthurian knights.²³ It is variously called “Himmler’s occult Camelot,”²⁴ “Black Camelot,”²⁵ or the “Nazi Grail castle.”²⁶ Wewelsburg Castle is here represented as the “magical spiritual center of the order, the magical center of the new Thule [society],”²⁷ the “nerve center of the Black Order, where its most sacred and secret rites were performed by its greatest initiates,”²⁸ and a laboratory out of which the corps of Germanic god-men was to arise.²⁹ In Pennick’s version of the story, Himmler established the center of his order at Wewelsburg Castle because he attributed magical powers to the site. Geomancers (from the field of geomancy, which believes the earth is covered with energy meridians) from the SS’s Ahnenerbe Association had selected the location, with Wewelsburg Castle’s triangular shape also being considered geomantically significant. According to Pennick, Himmler believed he could psychically influence all of Germany from the location.³⁰

As for the SS rituals and the premises, many authors seem to have been influenced by Schellenberg and Höhne, who sometimes are quoted. The standard repertoire includes the pigskin armchairs or chairs allegedly with nameplates (see Figure 3.1),³¹ the usually rectangular (dining) hall as the site of meditations or similar activities,³² the localization of the crypt beneath this



Figure 3.1 In Francis King and Angus Hall's *Great Mysteries: Mysteries of Prediction* (1975), this painting by Gino d'Achille depicts Himmler and other SS men in the hall at Wewelsburg Castle (pp. 184–85).

hall,³³ and a ritual cremation ceremony in that underground space.³⁴ The various authors render these aspects as fact, rumor, or conjecture about Himmler's plans.³⁵

The appearance of the crypt is left up to the writer's imagination. It is described, for example, as a kind of chapel, with its chancel located on a black marble tribune incised with two white marble SS runes. Emblazoned above the chancel is the death's head symbol of the SS. At the foot of the tribune, two staircases lead into a torch-lit room where the heraldic insignia are to be burned.³⁶ According to this literature, it is not only urns containing the ashes of the heraldic insignia that are placed on the pedestals in the crypt but in some author's portrayals also urns with ashes of the SS men themselves.³⁷ In another variant, not only are the coats of arms to be cremated but the bodies of the dead are to be interred under the crypt's imaginary chancel.³⁸

Secret rituals are invented, with mention made of magical rune mediations,³⁹ of "inner gymnastics common in occultism and magic,"⁴⁰ and of meditative exercises whose purpose was "to become more closely identified

with the Aryan ‘race soul.’”⁴¹ Sometimes a Hyperborean demon is supposed to have been summoned, sometimes the spirit of the Irminsul.⁴² In a particularly bloodthirsty variant of these alleged rituals, SS men are said to have been decapitated in order to use their heads to communicate with secret masters in the Caucasus.⁴³

Baker (2000), on the other hand, speaks of attempts “to influence the mind of a person in the next room through the concentration of will-power,”⁴⁴ obviously referring to a scene circulated by Walter Schellenberg, in which Himmler and twelve SS officers allegedly wanted to use willpower to influence the commander-in-chief of the army, General Werner Freiherr von Fritsch, during his interrogation by the Gestapo. Without naming names, Baker relocates this unsubstantiated scene to Wewelsburg Castle.⁴⁵

Another title describes somewhat more elegantly how the “black knights” initially gather in the rectangular hall lined with black and silver velvet. They meditate to strengthen their magical powers, rhythmically reciting pagan prayers. The thirteen men then descend to the crypt, where they take part in the order’s highest initiations. It is there that some of the men first realize the ceremony will be led by Himmler himself.⁴⁶

The familiar motifs, however, can also provide the basis for an entire story: Men had to undergo a trial of courage in order to be accepted into the circle of knights, with the candidate being left alone in an area of the Black Forest inhabited by wild boar. There he fasted for two days and nights. On the third day he armed himself with nothing more than a spear, a leather shield, and a dagger to face the wild boar in a fight to the death. If the man prevailed, he skinned the boar and had its hide tanned. He then returned to Wewelsburg Castle to tell about his hunt at the Round Table. On the evening of that day, his nameplate was ceremoniously mounted on his chair, which was upholstered with the slain boar’s hide a few weeks later. This marked the candidate’s acceptance into the knights’ round. If, however, he perished in the confrontation, his coat of arms would be burned in the crypt and the ashes placed in an urn on one of the pedestals. Yet, according to the author, the crypt was only used once for this purpose – to burn Reinhard Heydrich’s heraldic insignia.⁴⁷

Such and similar fantasy stories vary from author to author. What they share is a lack of almost any bearing in the real history of the SS in Wewelsburg⁴⁸ and their complete ignorance of the locality.⁴⁹ Viewed differently, a certain literary convention involving standard elements seems to have established itself in the depiction of Wewelsburg Castle in fantasy literature. These are implemented in ever different ways and can be deliberately played with, as the story of the wild boar hunt illustrates.⁵⁰

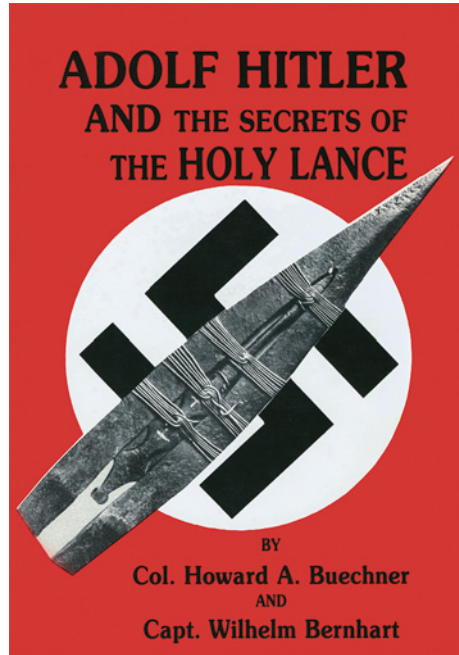
The older legend motifs dating from the 1950s and 1960s do not seem to have become any less prolific. The more recent publications considered here have meanwhile seized on the *Obergruppenführer* Hall's sun wheel inlay, known since the 1990s as the Back Sun, but not as consistently or intensively as the older motifs. FitzGerald (2013) uses the emblem as a decorative border in his book, although he erroneously locates the symbol on the crypt's ceiling in his text.⁵¹ For Hite (2013), the sun wheel (including a golden center plate alleged to have existed earlier) marks the "mystical center point of the Third Reich."⁵² He believes it was designed by Karl-Maria Wiligit⁵³ and also associates it with alchemy's *sol niger*, as well as with stories about the Third Reich's supposed wonder weapons.⁵⁴

The Spear of Destiny

The Spear of Destiny refers to the Holy Lance, which is part of the Holy Roman Empire Imperial Regalia kept at the Vienna Hofburg. According to legend, it contains a piece of a nail from Christ's cross or is equated with the lance with which the Roman legionary Longinus pierced the side of Jesus. In his 1972 publication, *The Spear of Destiny*, British journalist Trevor Ravenscroft also claimed the lance gave its owner unlimited power for good or evil. This explains why Hitler seized the Imperial Regalia and Spear of Destiny after the annexation of Austria and brought them to Nuremberg.⁵⁵ The story is well known, with Hollywood appropriating it in films such as *The Librarian: Quest for the Spear* (2004), in which an evil brotherhood steals a section of the spear from a secret storage site.⁵⁶ In *Constantine* (2005), a comic-book film adaptation with Keanu Reeves, Satan's son even seeks to reincarnate himself with the help of the Spear of Destiny. At the beginning of the film, the lance is found in the sand of the Mexican desert – wrapped in a swastika flag.⁵⁷

According to Ravenscroft, Himmler's fascination with the spear and its history led him to have a replica of the spear made in the early 1930s that he kept as a talisman in "an ancient-looking leather case"⁵⁸ on his desk at Wewelsburg Castle.⁵⁹ Ravenscroft likewise credits Himmler's interest in the spear with decisively influencing the choice of themes and furnishings in the castle rooms, each of which was dedicated to a former owner of the Holy Lance.⁶⁰ In his 1953 Himmler biography, Willi Frischauer claimed the SS leaders were assigned a different historically themed room at each of their purported meetings at Wewelsburg Castle so that they would gradually learn about history's important eras. Ravenscroft has these SS leaders changing rooms in order to study the history of the ancient spear.⁶¹

Figure 3.2
 Howard A. Buechner & Wilhelm Bernhart,
*Adolf Hitler and the Secrets of the Holy
 Lance* (1989). This book, first published
 in 1988, is one of many that mention
 Wewelsburg Castle as the repository of the
 Holy Lance.



In other versions of the story, Himmler keeps the replica of the Spear of Destiny next to his bed in Wewelsburg Castle, for example,⁶² or a perfect copy of the lance lies in a glass case in the middle of his Round Table, to be used in rituals (see Figure 3.2).⁶³

Construction plans from 1940 show Wewelsburg Castle as the center of a large complex. In a birds-eye view the alignment of the new buildings with the isosceles triangle of the castle creates the impression of a spearhead terminating in the northern tower. Rumors suggesting this is a deliberate reference to the Holy Lance or even the Spear of Destiny have persisted stubbornly for decades. Although the involved architects rejected this interpretation and Ravenscroft's influence is unmistakable, it is precisely this idea that has found its way into popular-science literature on the subject and prompted further speculation.⁶⁴

The Holy Grail

How Wewelsburg Castle gradually came to be the supposed repository of the Holy Grail in fantasy literature has been made comprehensible in the works of Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke and Ulrich Linse.⁶⁵

A central role in this story is played by Otto Rahn (1904–1939), the author of the book *Kreuzzug gegen den Gral* (1933, *Crusade against the Grail*, 2006), in which he regarded the Grail as a relic of an ancient religion and the Cathars as guardians of this symbol. The Cathars were a southern French heretical movement who suffered persecution and eventual annihilation. Their last refuge was the mountain fortress of Montségur in the Pyrenees, which was seized by a Crusader army in 1244. Rahn linked the story of the heretics with Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* epic and its depiction of the Grail as a stone possessing miraculous powers. According to Rahn, the Cathars possessed this Grail stone, which he compared with a Buddhist *Mani*, or prayer, stone. In the early 1930s Rahn lived and undertook research for a period in southern France, where he went bankrupt with a hotel enterprise before being expelled from France in 1932. According to Hans-Jürgen Lange's research, Rahn was subsequently banned from entering the country and never returned to France. Rahn's book became his ticket into the SS, which he joined in 1936. For the SS he researched heretical movements in Germany and Europe, among other things, and helped prepare Himmler's genealogy. Rahn's second book, *Luzifers Hofgesind* (*Lucifer's Court*), published in 1937, was a form of decidedly ideological travel journal about sites of heretic persecution. Rahn committed suicide in 1939, probably to escape repression because of his homosexuality.⁶⁶

The history of the National Socialists' alleged search for the Grail begins with Pauwels and Bergier, who mention it incidentally while explaining the activities of the Forschungs- und Lehrgemeinschaft Das Ahnenerbe (Ancestral Heritage Research and Teaching Association). "Negotiations were entered into with Skorzeny with a view to stealing the Holy Grail."⁶⁷ The reference is to Otto Skorzeny, who was responsible within the SS for special missions and became famous for liberating Italian dictator Benito Mussolini from imprisonment in 1943. He was presumably therefore the person Pauwels and Bergier thought most capable of carrying out an assignment such as stealing the Grail. However, in a postwar interview with Christian Bernadac, a rather questionable Otto Rahn biographer, Skorzeny stated unequivocally he had neither heard of Otto Rahn nor had anything to do with the Grail.⁶⁸

At the end of the 1960s, former *Waffen-SS* soldier Marc Jean Pierre Augier, alias Saint-Loup, published the novel *Nouveaux Cathares pour Montségur* (New Cathars for Montségur). Whereas the Grail is a vessel or container in Pauwels and Bergier's text, Saint-Loup understands it to be something like an Aryan counterpart to the Mosaic Ten Commandments, conceiving of it as ancient stone tablets inscribed with the Aryan race's law of life in a kind of runic or even pre-runic script: "The Grail is probably the last message sent by

the Hyperboreans prior to their disappearance.”⁶⁹ In Saint-Loup’s novel Rahn searches for the tablets in the mid-1930s on behalf of Alfred Rosenberg and Heinrich Himmler, with the aim of having them brought secretly to Germany and translated.⁷⁰ After Rahn’s death, an SS search party is again sent out and even finds the Grail, which it brings to Hitler’s domicile in the Alps. At the end of the war, the Grail was hidden in a glacier in the Zillertal Alps along the Austrian–Italian border.⁷¹

Hitler et la tradition cathare was a 1971 monograph published under the pseudonym Jean-Michel Angebert that became a bestseller after being translated into English in 1974 as *The Occult and the Third Reich: The Mystical Origins of Nazism and the Search for the Holy Grail*.⁷² From the stone tablets to the discovery of the Grail in the 1940s and its concealment at the end of the war, Angebert adopted essential elements of Saint-Loup’s story, although he also claimed that Himmler expected Rahn would bring the Grail to Germany as early as 1937. The SS leader had prepared for the Grail to be received upon its arrival with full honors and chosen Wewelsburg Castle as its new sanctum. In the castle’s “holy of holies,” the room beneath the large assembly hall, it was to rest on a black marble altar ornamented with two silver SS runes.⁷³

Although Angebert had only a vague conception of Wewelsburg Castle, he obviously influenced subsequent authors and filmmakers. For many it seems self-evident that Himmler had the Grail searched for as the perfect showpiece for his “Grail castle,” where he planned to venerate it (see Figure 3.4). The film *Hitler, Himmler und der schwarze Orden der SS* (1996, Hitler, Himmler, and the Black Order of the SS),⁷⁴ contains, for example, a sequence showing the northern tower’s crypt enlivened by an eternal flame. The narrator comments: “What was to be worshipped here has never been determined, but Himmler gave Otto Rahn a clear order: ‘Seek the Grail for Wewelsburg Castle!’”⁷⁵ Whether the SS sought a stone or a chalice becomes entirely arbitrary,⁷⁶ with it being only a matter of time before Angebert’s version was altered, for example by Nigel Pennick, who describes Rahn actually sending a Grail chalice to Wewelsburg in 1937, and it being placed on a marble pedestal in the “room under the great hall.”⁷⁷ Howard Buechner, who seems motivated by the pure pleasure of fabrication, even creates a scenario bringing not only the precious Grail chalice to Wewelsburg in the 1940s, but many other items as well, including the entire Old Testament treasure of King Solomon,⁷⁸ which is then buried “deep beneath the castle wall,”⁷⁹ presumably just for reasons of narrative effect. The Grail chalice, on the other hand, according to Buechner’s account of alleged rumors, was deposited in a safe and occasionally presented ceremonially to the SS Round Table: “The Cup is believed to have been exhibited to Himmler’s innermost

circle of senior Knights of the Holy Lance on several occasions. Between these rare ceremonies the Emerald Cup and Himmler's duplicate Holy Lance were kept in a large safe which was imbedded deep within the castle's thick walls."⁸⁰

This story blossomed anew after a cauldron bearing Celtic imagery turned up in Bavaria in 2001, having allegedly been recovered from Lake Chiemsee. This piece's provenance remains a matter of dispute, but speculation arose interpreting the cauldron as a Grail replica or forgery stemming from National Socialist property, with all of the previously mentioned standard elements being brought to bear.⁸¹ After the war Hitler and Himmler wanted to present the Grail at Wewelsburg Castle for propaganda purposes, probably in the center of the crypt, where the floor recess can still be seen.

That, in brief, is the claim of the authors in question. Whether it was the real Grail or a forged relic was irrelevant.⁸² Named as the "creator"⁸³ of the counterfeit Grail cauldron is Otto Rahn, of all people, for whom the Grail, as mentioned previously, was not a chalice but a stone. "For Rahn and most other Grail researchers," according to Michael Seewald in the popular-science magazine *P.M. History* (see Figure 3.3), "it was obvious that if a Grail really existed, it had to be a Celtic vessel. However, if the genuine Grail could not be found, then a forgery had to be made!"⁸⁴ Here it becomes apparent how authors fiddle with the facts in order to, as Ulrich Linse has aptly observed, "spice up their



Figure 3.3
P.M. History Special, no. 2 (2009),
including a report on the "Gral der Nazis"
(The Nazi Grail).

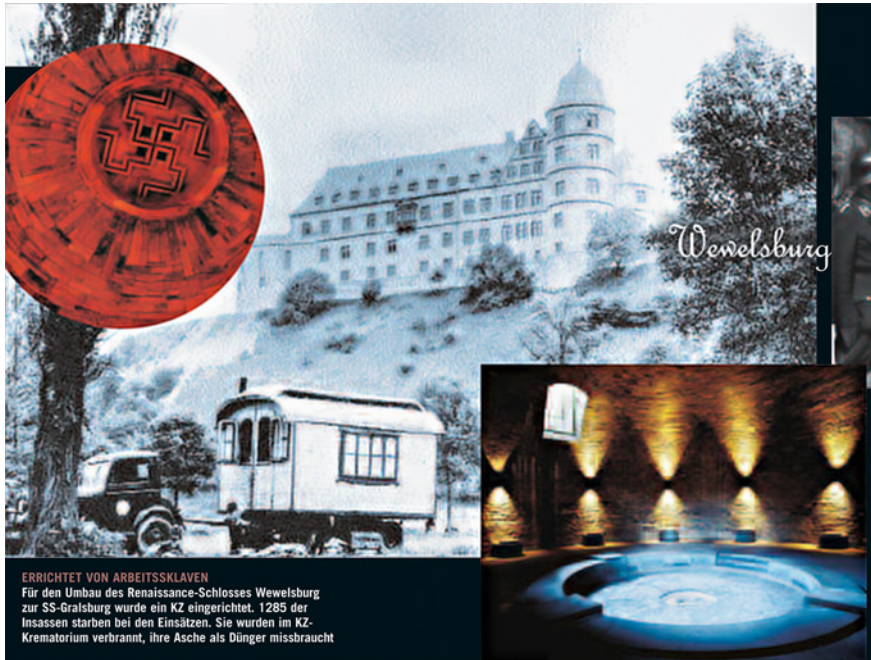


Figure 3.4 Image from *Welt der Wunder* (2007, *World of Wonders*) segment on “Hitler’s Search for the Holy Grail”.

harmless story.”⁸⁵ The transition between popular-science and fantasy literature is fluid.

The fairy tale of Nazis with occult tendencies seeking the Grail for their dark purposes became known to a wider audience in the 1980s through Steven Spielberg’s *Indiana Jones* films. In *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), the search is for the Israelite Ark of the Covenant; in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1988), everyone is hunting for the Holy Grail.⁸⁶ These films have in turn reflected back onto fantasy literature, for example, in chapter titles such as “Otto Skorzeny and the Last Crusade”⁸⁷ or pictorial representations and stories that appear to have been inspired by the films.⁸⁸ The last adventure of Spielberg’s archaeologist was released in 2008 with the title *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. And so it hardly came as a surprising coincidence when the Swiss magazine *mysteries: Geheimnisse, Wunder, Phänomene* (mysteries: Secrets, Miracles, Phenomena) presented a rock crystal skull in 2011 as the latest sensational Nazi find – allegedly from Otto Rahn’s possessions. The article’s title image shows the skull against a background of Wewelsburg Castle⁸⁹ (see Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5 *mysterios* (2/2011): “Is This the Thirteenth Crystal Skull?”

Notes

- 1 This literature is referred to as *cryptohistory*. See Goodrick-Clarke (1985), p. 218; Rissmann (2001), p. 139 and note 585.
- 2 Rauschnig (1939), p. 213. The original German edition did not include the chapter “Hitler privat” (“Hitler Himself”, pp. 250–61), which describes Hitler behaving like a man possessed. In this regard, see Rissmann (2001), pp. 163–64.
- 3 See Rauschnig, (1939), pp. 243–44.
- 4 See Rissmann, (2001), pp. 164–66; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 108–10; Hahl, “Nationalsozialismus und Okkultismus,” in Goodrick-Clarke (1997), 194–217. [The Hahl essay is only in the German edition.]
- 5 On the Thule Society in reality and fiction, see Goodrick-Clarke (1985), pp. 135–52; and Hahl, in Goodrick-Clarke (1997), pp. 200–201.
- 6 Ravenscroft (1972), p. 256. Regarding this literature, see Rissmann (2001), pp. 138–72; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 107–28, also Strube (2013). On the Atlantis myth and its treatment, see Berger (1958), cols. 2109–18, here cols. 2116–18; Goodrick-Clarke (1985), pp. 18–19, 218; also Godwin (2011).
- 7 All quotes from Ravenscroft (1972), pp. 256–57.
- 8 Pauwels & Bergier (1971), pp. 288–92, here p. 288.
- 9 See, for example, Pauwels & Bergier (1971), pp. 288–89; Ravenscroft (1972), pp. 258–59. See also Frère (1974), pp. 228–29. Frère explains the double sig-rune as the emblem of the SS. A single sig-rune stands for good, a double one for evil. See also Pennick (1981), pp. 136–37.

- Pennick sees the murder of the Jews and the eradication of their religion and culture as a magical act intended to enable the rise of the demonic powers behind the Third Reich. On the SS in fantasy literature, see also Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 122–23.
- 10 See Kingsepp (2012).
- 11 See Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 108–9, 118; Kingsepp (2012).
- 12 See in this regard the article “Esoteric Perspectives on Wewelsburg Castle” in this volume.
- 13 All quotes: Schellenberg (1958), p. 32. On the Jesuit Order, see Schellenberg (1956b). On the creation of legends about Wewelsburg Castle in academic and popular-science literature, see the article “The Grail Castle of the SS?” in this volume.
- 14 Schellenberg (1958), p. 32.
- 15 Höhne (1998), p. 141, and more generally pp. 169–71. The extent to which the Jesuit Order can be characterized as an unofficial model for the SS is a matter of debate among researchers. However, the question of whether the SS engaged in “spiritual exercises,” is not being discussed here. See Wegner (1999), pp. 38–41; and for a critical view, Dierker (2002), pp. 223–24.
- 16 See Höhne (1998), p. 142.
- 17 Höhne (1998), p. 142.
- 18 Höhne (1998), p. 142.
- 19 Höhne carried out research on site in Wewelsburg in 1966, so he had some knowledge of the locality. The incorrect information about the rooms in Wewelsburg Castle was not included in the original article in the news magazine *Der Spiegel* from 10 October 1966, but somehow made its way into the book during the publication process. On this topic see the essay “The ‘Grail Castle’ of the SS?” in this volume, on the formation of legends about Wewelsburg Castle in scholarly and popular-science literature.
- 20 Höhne (1998), p. 142.
- 21 Höhne (1998), p. 142.
- 22 Höhne (1998), p. 142.
- 23 See, for example, Frère (1974), p. 239: “En Westphalie, le Reichsführer-S.S. avait fait restaurer un château médiéval, formidable et inquiétant, le Wervelsberg [*sic*]; là se retrouvaient les plus grands initiés de la S.S.: Himmler et douze Obergruppenführer. Ils étaient sensés reprendre les rôles des douze chevaliers du roi Arthur.” (In Westphalia, the *Reichsführer*-S.S. had restored a formidable and disturbing medieval castle, the Wervelsberg [*sic*], where the highest initiates of the S.S. were to be found: Himmler and twelve *Obergruppenführer*. They were to assume the roles of the twelve knights of King Arthur.) See also, for instance, Angebert (1974, French orig. 1971; English 1974), p. 46; Sklar (1977), p. 99; Buechner (1989, orig. 1988), pp. 81–100. For another version, see King (1976), p. 176. King surmises Himmler’s rounds of twelve could have been a blasphemous parody on the Last Supper or a symbol for the astrological zodiac, with Himmler as the sun. See also King & Hall (1978), p. 185. Similarly, Roland (2012), p. 325.
- 24 Hite (2013), p. 23.
- 25 Yenne (2010), p. 110; Hite (2013), p. 24. FitzGerald (2013), p. 105, states that “Black Camelot” was the nickname for Wewelsburg Castle among NSDAP party members.
- 26 FitzGerald (2013), pp. 93, 52: “Nazi Camelot”; Baker (2000), p. 293: “his sick joke of a Grail castle.”
- 27 Carmin (2002, orig. 1994), p. 138.
- 28 Suster (1996, orig. 1981), p. 180. For a similar discussion, see Moon (2003), p. 68, (Wewelsburg Castle depicted as the “most sacred temple of the SS”); FitzGerald (2013), p. 105 (“venue for many of the more secretive rituals and bizarre ceremonies of Himmler

- and the SS"; "the cathedral where the senior 'priests' of Himmler's dark religion came to engage in their worship and be indoctrinated more deeply into the mythological universe he inhabited"); Levenda (2002), p. 224 ("his secret cult headquarters at Wewelsburg"); Yenne (2010), pp. 108, 114 ("SS Valhalla"; "the sacred castle of the SS Order").
- 29 See Frère (1974), p. 240.
- 30 See Pennick (1981), p. 158. The placement of Wewelsburg Castle on a confluence of energy lines is also mentioned in, for example: FitzGerald (2013), p. 104; Roland (2012), p. 324, and similarly, Carmin (2002), p. 164. In yet another variant, it is the seventeenth century witch trials that have charged Wewelsburg Castle with "occult energies." See Hite (2013), p. 24.
- 31 See Bronder (1964), p. 252; Buechner (1989), pp. 93, 95; Carmin (2002), p. 137; King (1976), pp. 175–76; King & Hall (1978), p. 185; Pennick (1981), p. 159; Sklar (1977), p. 99; Suster (1996), p. 180. According to Brissaud (1969), p. 279, the silver nameplates were mounted on the large table in the hall. See also FitzGerald (2013), p. 102; Roland (2012), pp. 324–25; Levenda (2002), p. 175; Yenne (2010), p. 113.
- 32 See Angebert (1974), p. 46; Brissaud (1969), p. 279; Carmin (2002), p. 137; Frère (1974), p. 239; King (1976), pp. 175–76; Pennick (1981), p. 159; Sklar (1977), p. 99; Suster (1996), p. 180. In the English edition of Höhne's book, the dining hall has dimensions of 100 by 145 feet; see Höhne (1969), p. 152. These measurements are sometimes found in the English-language literature. Buechner (1989), p. 93, correctly speaks of a circular hall, although this is not the case in Buechner (1991), p. 113. See also FitzGerald (2013), p. 102; Roland (2012), pp. 324–25; Yenne (2010), p. 113. Hite (2013), p. 24, seems to situate the "round table" in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall, but also speaks of a medieval dining hall. According to FitzGerald (2013), p. 104, the "round table" was located in the crypt.
- 33 See Angebert (1974), p. 46; Brissaud (1969), p. 280; Buechner (1991), p. 170; Carmin (2002), p. 137; King (1976), p. 176; Pennick (1981), p. 159; Suster (1996), p. 180; Levenda (2002), pp. 175–76; Roland (2012), p. 325; Baker (2000), p. 155, quotes Peter Padfield's Himmler biography.
- 34 Baker (2000) p. 155; Brissaud (1969), p. 280; Buechner (1989), p. 96; Carmin (2002), p. 137–38; King (1976), p. 176; Levenda (2002), p. 176; Pennick (1981), p. 159; Sklar (1977), p. 99; Suster (1996), p. 180. According to Roland (2012), p. 325, the SS men's coats of arms were to be burned if their bodies could not be recovered from the battlefield, with the ashes being placed in porcelain urns.
- 35 See the linguistic observations in Kingsepp (2012).
- 36 See Brissaud (1969), p. 280. See also Angebert (1974), p. 46. Angebert speaks of a black marble altar with two silver SS runes. This is similar to Moon (2003), p. 68, who writes vaguely about a room below the castle, in which there was supposed to have been "an altar of black marble with two silver runes inscribed upon it signifying 'SS.'" Similar claims are made by FitzGerald (2013), p. 104.
- 37 See, Sklar (1977), p. 99. According to Hite (2013), p. 23, urns or other relics were kept in the niches above the pedestals. According to FitzGerald (2013), p. 105, the crypt's intended uses included housing the SS men's ashes and their heraldic insignia.
- 38 See Brissaud (1969), p. 280. According to Pennick (1981), p. 160, Hitler was also to be interred in the crypt.
- 39 See, Pennick (1981), p. 42.
- 40 Carmin (2002), p. 138. See also Brissaud (1969), pp. 279–80.
- 41 King & Hall (1978), p. 185. Meditations are also mentioned in Moon (2003), p. 68.
- 42 See Hite (2013), p. 23; FitzGerald (2013), p. 105. FitzGerald also speaks of meditations on "honor, the power of race and the imminent arrival of the 'New Man'" (FitzGerald, 2013,

- p. 104). He mentions as well “the ceremony of the stifling air,” so named because of the charged atmosphere in which it took place. See FitzGerald (2013), p. 102. The basis for this was probably the book by Pauwels & Bergier (1971, p. 291), in which they speak of an identically named initiation ceremony taking place in an “atmosphere of extraordinary tension” in castles. They do not mention Wewelsburg Castle. In the Church of Satan there is also a rite referred to as “Lair Epais – The Ceremony of the Stifling Air,” which is probably associated with Pauwels and Bergier, especially because Anton LaVey, the founder of the Church of Satan and inventor of diverse ceremonies, studied their book intensively. See LaVey (1972), pp. 54–75 and the article “Esoteric Perspectives on Wewelsburg Castle” in this volume. Baker (2000), p. 155 mentions alleged attempts by SS men to communicate with dead “Teutons.”
- 43 See Sklar (1977), pp. 99–100, and Yenne (2010), p. 115. Yenne refers to Sklar, although he expands on her description. In Yenne’s depiction, the SS men’s blood is drunk.
- 44 Baker (2000), p. 155.
- 45 On Schellenberg, see the essay “The Grail Castle of the SS?” in this volume, about the creation of legends surrounding Wewelsburg Castle in the scholarly and popular-science literature. Levenda (2002), p. 176, also associates Himmler’s “round table” with the twelve SS leaders from the Fritsch interrogation scene. Roland (2012), pp. 325–26, too, depicts Schellenberg as an insider who observed a magic rite.
- 46 See Frère (1974), pp. 239–40.
- 47 See Buechner (1989), pp. 95–96.
- 48 Fantasy literature is primarily interested in a fantasy entity it calls “Wewelsburg Castle” and the supposed activities there. If the concentration camp in Wewelsburg is mentioned, it is apparently done to emphasize the gruesome character of the place, for instance, by claiming the ashes of concentration camp prisoners were used to fertilize the concentration camp garden. See, for instance, FitzGerald (2013), p. 104. Yenne (2010), p. 204, evokes the image of SS men gathered in their meetings, with the sounds of the concentration camp prisoners’ work audible in the background. Levenda (2002), p. 202, cites the concentration camp prisoners’ song. Ravenscroft (1972, p. 309) described how the heavy construction work on Wewelsburg Castle was done by “slave workers from a nearby concentration camp under the whips of their SS guards.” It is only Buechner (1989), p. 113, who in contrast states that the prisoners “seem to have enjoyed fairly good living conditions in terms of food, clothing, housing, and general privileges,” probably just repeating what he was told during a visit in Wewelsburg in 1988 by Stuart Russell, an author whose books include *Heinrich Himmlers Burg* (1989, Heinrich Himmler’s Castle). On Russell, see Buechner (1991), p. 9 (acknowledgment of Russell, “the foremost authority on Wewelsburg Castle in the world”) and the essay “The ‘Grail Castle’ of the SS?” in this volume, about the creation of legends in scholarly and popular-science literature. On Buechner’s visit in Wewelsburg, see Buechner (1989), pp. 80, 119. In general it would be interesting to investigate the context in which the concentration camp in Wewelsburg is mentioned in popular-science and fantasy literature, and which “information” is communicated to the reader.
- 49 This applies not only to older literature published when little was known about Wewelsburg Castle, but even to current publications containing numerous images from Wewelsburg, as in Yenne (2010), pp. 110–14, 296–97. Apart from the aforementioned statements in Yenne tracing back to Höhne, this author thinks the crypt is identical with the *Obergruppenführer* Hall. See Yenne (2010), pp. 115, 296–97.

- 50 Buechner, whose publication is the source of the story, visited Wewelsburg in 1988. See Buechner (1989), pp. 80, 119. In an initial publication (Buechner, 1989, p. 93), he speaks correctly in a reference to the *Obergruppenführer* Hall about a circular hall, in which he situates the alleged round table. In a subsequent publication he adopts the usual incorrect information about the purported dining hall, below which the crypt is located, and cites the aforementioned Angebert. See Buechner (1991), pp. 170–71.
- 51 See FitzGerald (2013), p. 104, as well as the decorative border on the right side.
- 52 Hite (2013), p. 24, also shows a photograph of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall with the symbol. The author speaks of the northern tower as “a center for occult study.”
- 53 On Karl-Maria Wiligut (known as Weisthor), see the essay by Kirsten John-Stucke in this volume.
- 54 Hite (2013, pp. 68–74) also mentions in passing the similarity with early medieval ornamental discs. According to Moon (2003), p. 154, the abbreviation “SS” stands for *Schwarze Sonne* (Black Sun), a secret sub-department of the Thule Society. He refers to Jan van Helsing. On such conspiracy theorists, see the essay by Frank Huisman “Of Flying Disks and Secret Societies,” in this volume. Moon does not address the emblem in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall.
- 55 On Ravenscroft’s story, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 118–21.
- 56 See www.imdb.com/title/tt0412915/ (accessed 27 July 2014).
- 57 The film is based on the comic *Hellblazer*. See www.imdb.com/title/tt0360486/ (accessed 27 July 2014).
- 58 Ravenscroft (1972), p. 311.
- 59 According to Ravenscroft, Himmler laid claim to the original spear after the annexation of Austria, but in vain. Ravenscroft took his information about Wewelsburg Castle from Willi Frischauer’s Himmler biography, which he also refers to. Following this source, the British author assumes Himmler had Wewelsburg Castle built on the ruins of an unnamed, ancient castle. As a reason for the selection of the site, Ravenscroft names the legend of the Battle at the Birch Tree, which depicts how an onslaught from the East is halted. The Spear of Destiny therefore resides in Himmler’s room, which is considered to be the “Henry I” room because of its commemoration of the Saxon king, who had already once repelled the incursion of an eastern people. See Ravenscroft (1972), pp. 310–13.
- 60 See Ravenscroft (1972), p. 310.
- 61 See Ravenscroft (1972), p. 313. On Frischauer, see the essay “The ‘Grail Castle’ of the SS?” in this volume, about the creation of legends in scholarly and popular-science literature. Ravenscroft’s characterization of Himmler as a *Doppelgänger* and *Anti-Mensch*, a misanthrope lacking an ego of his own, is also strongly influenced by Frischauer’s image of Himmler. See Ravenscroft (1972), pp. 290–314.
- 62 See FitzGerald (2013), p. 104.
- 63 See Buechner (1989), pp. 90–94. Buechner accordingly names the elite group “The Circle of the Thirteen Knights of the Blood of the SS” and “The Circle of the Knights of the Holy Lance.”
- 64 On the rumors, see Hüser (1987), p. 63; Siepe (2009), p. 490. Yenne (2010, pp. 120–21) also cites these rumors as such. See also Seewald (2009), p. 104; Seewald (2012), p. 65; and the essay “The ‘Grail Castle’ of the SS?” in this volume, about the creation of legends in scholarly and popular-science literature.
- 65 For a basic discussion (without an emphasis on Wewelsburg Castle), see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 121–23. As significant publications, Goodrick-Clarke names Pauwels & Bergier (1971, French orig. 1960; German 1962), Saint-Loup, *Nouveaux Cathares pour Montségur*

- (1969), Angebert (1974, French orig. 1971), and finally Buechner (1991). For a focus on Wewelsburg Castle and scrutiny of individual assertions, see Linse (2012), pp. 543–51.
- 66 This was the context in which Rahn contributed to the ancestral heritage research undertaken at Wewelsburg Castle. He was also friends with Hans-Peter des Coudres, the librarian at Wewelsburg Castle, and undertook a study trip with him to Iceland, among other things. However, this marks the extent of Rahn's contact with Wewelsburg Castle. Contrary to Hüser (1987, p. 200), Rahn was definitely not an "ideological advisor" to the castle administrator. On Rahn's biography and work, see Lange (1999); Franz (2009), pp. 492–538. On his contact to Wewelsburg Castle, see Lange (1999), pp. 61–64, 177–79, 182–83.
- 67 Pauwels & Bergier (1971, French orig. 1960; German 1962), p. 294. Himmler is supposed to have outfitted an expedition in the middle of the war. See pp. 209–10. In this regard see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 122.
- 68 On the interview, see Linse (2012), p. 551.
- 69 "Le Graal est probablement le dernier message envoyé par les Hyperboréens avant leur disparition!" Saint-Loup (1969), p. 43. See also pp. 30–32, 42–43, 336. See Pauwels & Bergier (1979), p. 288.
- 70 See Saint-Loup (1969), pp. 42–43.
- 71 See Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 122; on Saint-Loup, see pp. 122–23.
- 72 On the publication and its assessment as a bestseller, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 122–23. Journalists Michel Bertrand and Jean Angelini published under the joint pseudonym Jean-Michel Angebert.
- 73 Angebert (1974), p. 46: "As a passionate admirer of Arthurian legend and as an intensely interested observer of Rahn's 1937 expedition to Languedoc, Himmler made elaborate preparations for receiving the Grail with all the honor due it and for assuring it a more noble sanctuary than the miserable cavern of the Sabarthez which had been its refuge for seven centuries. It appears that his choice fell on the castle of Wewelsburg near Paderborn, in Westphalia. ... Located under the vast meeting room was the Holy of Holies, with its vaulting ogives, where the sacred Grail was to repose on an altar of black marble struck with the two SS runes in silver." However, in Angebert, as with Saint-Loop, the Grail was not found until 1944, therefore not by Rahn. See Angebert (1974), p. 48.
- 74 See Aernecke & Görden (2001). The film likewise claims that the planned Wewelsburg complex was intended to "pay homage to the Spear of Destiny."
- 75 Aernecke & Görden (2001). On this topic see also Linse (2012), p. 547.
- 76 See Levenda (2002), p. 224: "As it is, history records no such discovery of the Grail by the Nazis, or by anyone else. ... Yet, Himmler had enlisted the talents of a young Grail scholar in a search for the perfect centerpiece for his secret cult headquarters at Wewelsburg ... Whether Cathar or Templar, sacred stone or golden cup, finding the Holy Grail was certainly a dream of Himmler's; his Wewelsburg center was beyond any doubt a reverent shrine to the legend of the Round Table."
- 77 See Pennick (1981), p. 164: "In 1937, Rahn sent a consignment of his 'finds' from Montségur to Germany. The recipient of this package was Heinrich Himmler. In his book ... Jean-Michel Angebert claims that this package contained nothing less than the Holy Grail, or at least something Rahn believed was the True Grail. Angebert reports that the vessel was taken to Schloss Wewelsburg where it was placed on a marble pedestal in the Realm of the Dead beneath the Great Hall." See also Moon (2003), p. 66, where he conveys as a rumor the idea that "the Holy Grail itself, or at least a replica" was located "beneath the castle" on an "alter of black marble with two silver runes."

- 78 See Buechner (1991), pp. 12–16, 68–77, 172–73, 202–6.
- 79 Buechner (1991), p. 205.
- 80 Buechner (1991), p. 205.
- 81 On the discovery and all speculations, see Linse (2012).
- 82 See Diedrich (2007), pp. 52–53; Seewald (2009), pp. 101, 104; Seewald (2012), pp. 64–65. In 2012 Seewald spoke of a “theory”; in 2009 he presented the alleged project much more firmly as fact. Diedrich gives the impression that the intention to continue expanding Wewelsburg Castle must have meant the Nazis were convinced they would find the Grail. See Diedrich (2007), p. 51. This is interesting insofar as the usual chain of events (search for the Grail for the “Grail castle”) is thus reversed (construction of the “Grail castle” for the Grail).
- 83 Seewald (2009), p. 107. Seewald also sets the term in quotation marks.
- 84 Seewald (2009), p. 104, and also p. 103; Seewald (2012), p. 60.
- 85 Linse (2012), p. 547. See also Linse’s comments there on the susceptibility of popular-science magazines to occult myths.
- 86 On the films, see the essay by Eva Kingsepp in this volume, “Wewelsburg Castle, Nazi-inspired Occulture, and the Commodification of Evil.”
- 87 Buechner (1991), p. 183.
- 88 See the illustration on p. 13 in Hite (2013) and the accompanying text on p. 12: SS men are shown confiscating a library in Prague in 1942 and dying a bizarre death when opening a book. This is reminiscent of a scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, in which the Nazis open the Ark of the Covenant.
- 89 See Bürgin (2011). Bürgin himself points out the parallel to the Indiana Jones film on p. 13. The skull is said to have come from a Bavarian woman’s estate. Images of documents are presented that the article claims date from the National Socialist period and allegedly also mention the cauldron out of the Chiemsee in connection with Wewelsburg Castle. For a critical analysis of the story, see Linse (2012), p. 566, endnote 257.

Wewelsburg Castle in Thrillers and Comics

Daniela Siepe

Since the 1970s authors have been discovering Wewelsburg Castle and the legends surrounding it as material for exciting and fantastical stories. The number of such titles has swelled greatly since the turn of the millennium. The professionalism and popularity of these publications vary widely. Best-selling authors whose thrillers were initially published in English have seen them become so successful that they have eventually been translated into other languages, including German.¹ The castle also features in fan-fiction stories on the Internet written by enthusiasts of well-known films, series, or computer games, such as the science fiction television series *Stargate SG-1*. The *Indiana Jones* movies and computer games such as *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* have contributed to the popularization of alleged Nazi occultism and the associated notion of an “old Nazi SS castle” and have thus promoted the growing interest in Wewelsburg Castle.² In addition, books that take up the Wewelsburg theme appear on platforms such as Amazon’s CreateSpace, Books on Demand, and Memoirs Publishing, which enable any willing author to publish his or her novel independently.³ Selecting from the abundance of these publications, I have examined fourteen thrillers and two superhero comics.⁴ This essay explores the questions of why and how these works treat National Socialism, the SS, and Wewelsburg Castle.

Topics

Thrillers fall into the literary genre of detective novels. Unlike the analytical detective novel, which focuses on investigation of a crime and conviction of the perpetrator, the thriller offers entertainment, with one or more heroes becoming enmeshed in an action-packed plot. Chases, fights, and parries of threats add to the thriller’s suspense, with “the good guys” and “the bad guys” facing off in a bipolar world of characters. The heroes risk their lives with bravery, determination, courage, gladiatorial qualities of all sorts, and common sense. They represent figures with whom the reader can identify, and they embody the social values of the target audience. The counterparts of the heroes act in

morally reprehensible ways and are responsible for crimes that imperil society and its values. They personalize the reader's fears, correspond to common enemy images or clichés, stoke aggression, and must be combatted.⁵

In popular culture the National Socialists symbolize evil par excellence.⁶ The "evil Nazi" often wears the black uniform and the skull-and-crossbones (death's head) symbol of the SS. He is set apart from the German soldier in the field gray of the Wehrmacht (the regular army), who is brave, dutiful, and capable of suffering, as idealized by the German people in their self-image as victims.⁷ Since World War II, the SS has stood for the crimes of National Socialist Germany overall. The organization comprised the entire German police force, all concentration camps, and a multinational branch of the military that was both responsible for the settlement and Germanization policy in Eastern Europe and instrumental in the murder of the European Jews. As stated in the title of Gerald Reitlinger's 1956 monograph, the SS has become the "alibi of a nation."⁸ The manifold activities – some of them criminal, some exotic – and the fearsome image of this institution at the center of power of the National Socialist state offer authors of fictional literature fertile material from which to concoct ever newer plots, menacing scenarios, and arcs of suspense.

Against the All-Powerful State

Only two of the thrillers in this sample are set exclusively at the time of National Socialism. In that context the Gestapo, omniscient and omnipresent according to the myths that have been created around it,⁹ stands for the supremacy of the National Socialist state, in whose webs of intrigue the heroes of the novels become entangled. In Duncan Kyle's thriller *Black Camelot* (1978)¹⁰ the disillusioned war hero Franz Rasch, elite soldier and member of the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler,¹¹ is driven to betrayal by a devious scheme during the final months of the conflict. Tired of war and thinking of revenge, Rasch sides with the Allies and, in exchange for money, a new identity, and immunity, agrees to retrieve from Germany material that would incriminate them politically. In this narrative a large British-American firm has been investing in German industry during the war. It has ties to government circles, and the German factories involved were apparently spared from bombing. The material that Rasch is supposed to obtain is part of a legendary cache of information that Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Reich Security Main Administration, is said to have gathered during his lifetime, documents that, in this thriller, are now housed in Wewelsburg Castle. Rasch penetrates the place with a small group of desperados.¹²

In the second volume of Philip Kerr's Berlin trilogy (*The Pale Criminal*),¹³ private detective Bernhard Gunther is forced by Heydrich to return to serve in the criminal police. Gunther investigates a set of serial murders of particularly Aryan-looking girls who had been members of the League of German Girls. The circumstantial evidence points to Jewish ritual murders. Gunther turns up two crooked SS men, Otto Rahn and Karl-Maria Wiligut. However, these two characters are under the protection of the head of the SS, who attends their purported séances. In trying to solve the murders and prevent a pogrom, detective superintendent Gunther must therefore be especially careful until the thriller's showdown at Wewelsburg Castle.

Against the Breeders of Humans

Except for occasional flashbacks, other thrillers in this sample are set in the post-1945 era, in which organizations formerly allied with the National Socialists or their successors are continuing their projects in a renewed bid for power.¹⁴ A strikingly high number of authors draw on the human experiments in the concentration and extermination camps for their plots, on Josef Mengele's experiments with twins at Auschwitz, and on Sigmund Rascher's experiments with negative pressure and hypothermia at Dachau. These authors invent new experiments and research projects and link them to stories about alleged secret technologies of the Nazis.¹⁵ The SS's claim to represent a racial elite plays a major role. Popular, too, is the inclusion of the SS's Lebensborn Association, in whose maternity homes both single and married women could go for childbirth if they met the SS's racial criteria. The association was also involved in the abduction of children during World War II. Legends surrounding Lebensborn flourished in the entertainment industry after the war, holding that women and men had been brought together on a large scale by the SS to produce Aryan offspring.¹⁶ Such research and schemes of human breeding continue to play a role in thrillers beyond 1945. The hubris of the SS scientists interfering with the very existence of human beings carries the plot, in which the encroachment on the world order must be stopped and the victims brought to safety.

One of Wolfgang Hohlbein's novels has the telling title *Nemesis* (2004, see Figure 4.1), referring to the Greek goddess of retribution, who punishes human hubris. The fictitious castle in Hohlbein's book is set in the Eifel village of Crailsfelden, but the photographic motifs of the book's cover associate it with Wewelsburg Castle.¹⁷ In the story, SS scientists at the Eifel castle are engaged in



Figure 4.1

One of the novels by Wolfgang Hohlbein with a photograph of the ceiling of the “crypt” of Wewelsburg Castle’s northern tower. The photograph is rotated to make the keystone in the ceiling, a swastika meander pattern, look like the floor.

activities called the Prometheus project, which entailed breeding pure Aryans with telepathic abilities. A side effect, however, is that lethal brain tumors form in these purebreds. The protagonists of the novel are the survivors of the project. Unable to remember anything, they are lured on a pretext to Crailsfelden to be killed and dissected.

In James Rollins’s *Black Order: A Sigma Force Novel* (2006), two Nazi groups have escaped abroad at the end of the war, one to South Africa, the other to the Himalayas, which SS chief Heinrich Himmler had believed to be the birthplace of the Aryan race. However, the secret technology used there for high breeding, the “bell,” causes degeneration and disease in the test subjects. An agent of the American special unit called Sigma Force falls ill from the effects of the bell, leading the former Nazis from the Asian highlands and the Americans to join forces in a fight for survival against the equally dangerous and fanatical Nazi successor organization in South Africa.

By contrast, the protagonist in Birgit Fiolka’s novel *12 Sonnen* (Twelve Suns, 2013) flees from a secret Order that emerged from the former SS and that has already ruthlessly abused her mother and grandmother for its Lebensborn

program. In Wolfgang Westphal's medical thriller *Das Fleisch Gottes: Ein Medizinthriller* (The Flesh of God: A Medical Thriller, 2014), an organization that takes itself to be the successor to the SS seeks to interfere with people's personalities by using a hallucinogenic Aztec mushroom (hence the book's title) so as to divest them of their free will.¹⁸

Against the Practitioners of Black Magic

By casting the National Socialists as dangerous practitioners of black magic, authors of thrillers have appropriated an aspect of fantasy literature that is convertible into various creepy or exotic plot lines. Allies of the National Socialists include the cryptohistorical Thule Society, which succeeded the Third Reich, or ancient powers that have always intervened in the fate of humans.¹⁹ Whether it is about reviving Himmler, bringing back an ancient race, summoning legions of dead SS men, or ushering in the diffuse dawn of a new era,²⁰ the preferred place of magic rituals is the "crypt" under the northern tower of Wewelsburg Castle. Among other themes, these books are often about the end of the existing order, and some are explicitly about the establishment of a Fourth Reich,²¹ which the protagonists want to prevent. The rituals and the inclusion of the Wewelsburg site in the plot are discussed below.

In the Race for Nazi Relics

Other authors build action and suspense by portraying their protagonists and other groups in a frenetic hunt for Nazi relics. These objects are often valuable and legendary things, such as the Amber Room or art treasures (including the Spear of Destiny, also known as the Holy Lance).²² The thrillers of James Twining and Warwick Woodhouse lure readers with their subtitles: *The Black Sun: Legendary Treasure or Legacy of Evil? The Hunt is on ...* (Twining, 2006) and *The Verglas File: A Thrilling Story of Lost Nazi Treasures, Betrayal and Cold-blooded Murder* (Woodhouse, 2012).²³ For his novel *Alpendohle* (2013), Swen Ennullat was inspired by SS research on witches.²⁴ He links it to an old secret female Order that supplied women to high-ranking politicians in the Third Reich so as to gain political influence. Himmler possessed documents proving this motive, and the Order threatens and kidnaps the protagonists to find and obtain the incriminating material after 1945. The thriller *Teufel* (Devil) by Gerd Schilddorfer and David Weiss (2011) concerns nothing less than the mortal

remains of Jesus Christ and a missing secret archive of the Vatican, which would prove that it knew about the earthly death of the Son of God. According to the novel's plot, Himmler's anticlerical politics once set him onto the trail of this scandal, which he would have liked to exploit for propaganda purposes. Understandably, the protagonists searching for the body and the documents are pursued not by the Nazis but rather by assassins in the papal secret service.

Moving Plot, Diverse Settings

The constantly moving action of the genre is matched by a variety of changing settings that are meant to create a special atmosphere as a backdrop.²⁵ Most of the characters in the novels sweep across several continents or across Europe.²⁶ The places to be associated with the SS serve to reinforce the exotic and mysterious, an aspect that may be quite entertaining for the thematically interested reader.²⁷ These places include the Central Asian highlands, which, in the tradition of fantasy literature, become a place of refuge for postwar Nazis, especially spiritually inclined ones.²⁸ In John Braun's novel *The Wewelsburg Covenant* (2011) the heroes even find the Grail and Otto Rahn's corpse in Nepal, although the Grail is immediately taken from them by the new National Socialists.²⁹ The protagonists in *Teufel*³⁰ visit one church after another in their search for Christ's body, including Quedlinburg Abbey, where they speculate about the real reasons for the SS excavations and remodeling.³¹ The action in Swen Ennullat's *Alpendohle* (2013) stretches across an entire series of places in an attempt to solve the mystery of the whereabouts of the documents on witches. Ennullat's heroes travel to the Sachsenhain and the Externsteine, places that were styled as cult sites by the SS, as well as to Questenberg, the Walhalla near Regensburg, the Deutsches Ordensmuseum (Museum of the Teutonic Order) in Bad Mergentheim, and Dammsmühle Castle north of Berlin. Eventually, of course, the protagonists of all the thrillers examined in this essay arrive at Wewelsburg Castle or its faithful replica, which is sometimes located in Devonshire, the land of Arthurian legend, and sometimes in the middle of the Himalayas.³²

The Superhero Comics

The dichotomous structure of "good" versus "evil," combined with a threat to the customary order of values or society, is a feature that superhero comics

have in common with thrillers. However, the comics play with fantastical laws unique to their universe, a characteristic that sets them apart from thrillers that have fantasy elements. The superhero with extraordinary or supernatural abilities is juxtaposed with the corresponding supervillain. It is not uncommon in such comics that such antiheroes bring the National Socialists to mind through uniforms and symbolism, reinforcing their charisma as villains.³³ In the superhero comics treated in this essay, however, the villains do not simply allude to the National Socialists; they *are* National Socialists, albeit in a largely dehistoricized fantasy variant whose ideological profile can be reduced to the traits of being power-mad, violent, and racist.

For example, Tom Strong is a superhero with great physical and mental strength. He lives with his wife and daughter, both of whom also have special qualities. He is also assisted by a robot and a gorilla with human features. Tom has an illegitimate Nazi son, Albrecht, the product of a sperm theft that took place when Tom was unconscious. In *Tom Strong and the Robots of Doom* (2011),³⁴ the villainous Albrecht travels back in time and changes the course of events. He meets the Dero, monstrous robots with whose help he intervenes in World War II and defeats the Soviet Union. They are huge and black, bear the death's head symbol and the double sig-rune of the SS, and convey the image of the SS perpetrator – transposed into the universe of comics – as one who carries out every order without emotion or conscience (see Figure 4.2).³⁵ Albrecht rises within the Nazi hierarchy, becomes a member of the innermost elite of the SS, prevails over competitors like Himmler, and finally becomes Hitler's successor. Tom Strong must now reverse this intervention in the timeline.

The Green Lanterns are a group of superheroes dedicated to fighting for good: "In brightest day, in blackest night, no evil shall escape our sight. Let those who worship evil's might beware of our power ... the Green Lantern's light!" In *Green Lantern – Ring of Evil*,³⁶ Himmler has created a magic ring in Wewelsburg Castle and has conquered an empire with its help. In the plot's present, National Socialism has become a huge movement, International Socialism. It is headed by the sorceress Karelia, who brought Himmler under her spell one day. Karelia cannot get hold of the ring; a loyalist of Himmler has murdered him and taken it. When the Green Lanterns have been largely crushed by the Nazis, Karelia uses them as victims to create a second magic ring, but there is still one last Green Lantern who can fight on.

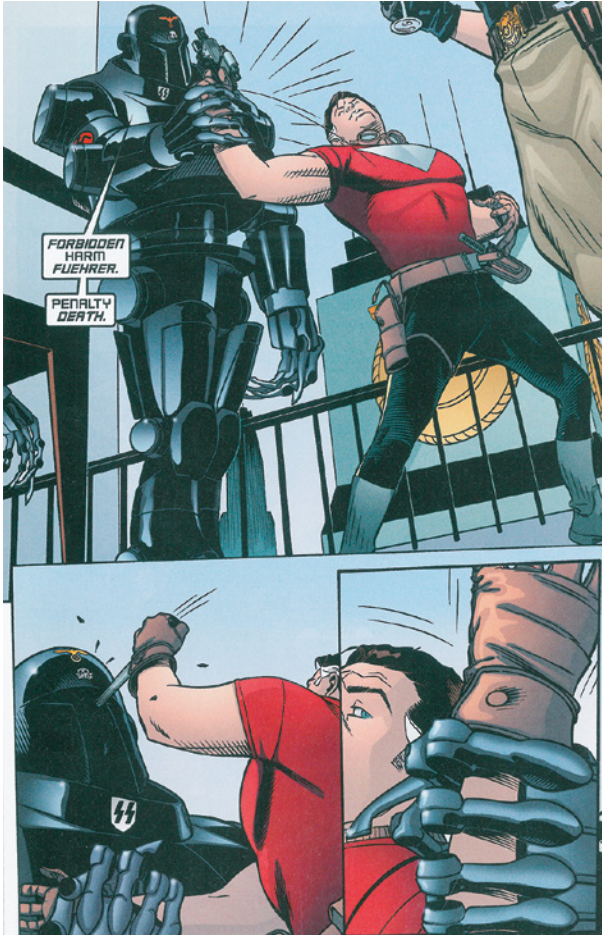


Figure 4.2 A frame from *Tom Strong and the Robots of Doom*, by Peter Hogan, Chris Sprouse, & Karl Story (DC Comics, 2011).

Wewelsburg Castle

The authors of some of the titles discussed in this essay probably have no idea what Wewelsburg Castle actually looks like, but others definitely have researched the site or studied literature on the subject.³⁷ It is actually not all that important whether an author has intimate knowledge of the site and its history. Fictional literature is not intended to depict the real Wewelsburg Castle and its history; they are merely templates adapted to the needs of the plot. The

same applies to the typical motifs that shape the creation of legends surrounding the castle. The plots of thrillers incorporate or simply mention variants of them, such as Himmler's alleged "Round Table" at the castle and the chairs bearing silver nameplates,³⁸ the phrase "center of the world,"³⁹ the burning of coats of arms in the crypt of the northern tower,⁴⁰ and the placing of urns containing the ashes of departed SS leaders on the pedestals in the crypt.⁴¹ The popular idea of Wewelsburg Castle as a cult site for the SS is manifested in the repeated description of rituals, just as the story about the Grail and the Spear of Destiny is also incorporated into the thrillers.

Wewelsburg Castle Staged as a Place of Horror and the Mystical

In the Gothic novels of the Romantic period, it was common practice from the eighteenth century onward to present the places of action in an atmospherically charged manner, to make them appear mysterious or terrifying. The protagonists' fear or unease is then communicated through the portrayal of the place, with aspects of the action being particularly dramatized.⁴² The detailing of such a place of terror is a fixed literary topos. Its stock elements include "the desolate, abandoned place (castle, dungeons, crypts, graveyard)"⁴³ and phenomena that underscore its atmosphere, such as storms, moonlight, flickering candles, murky silhouettes, fog, the cries of nocturnal birds, and unnatural silence.⁴⁴

Using secret chambers, tunnels, dungeons, shafts, and staircases that lead into the depths, the authors of the publications in the focus of this essay draw on the entire arsenal of the Gothic novel, including the mysterious castle or palace.⁴⁵ In some novels Wewelsburg Castle is presented as something that could have originated in a Gothic novel. It is certainly not by chance that a good number of the protagonists reach the East Westphalian castle at night, arrive in poor weather, or see the castle at dusk. Accordingly, the perception of the building is shaped by the night sky, moonlight, long shadows,⁴⁶ a "silence"⁴⁷ perceived as "eerily quiet,"⁴⁸ or by mist,⁴⁹ approaching clouds, rain, thunder, and lightning, which, for example, momentarily illuminates a hall in the castle, with the lights flickering and failing.⁵⁰ Weather, time of day, and season determine that no visitors are on site and that the building is comparatively desolate.⁵¹ Seen against the backdrop of clouds or the night sky, the structure also appears "sinister"⁵² or "threatening and cold" to the observer.⁵³ The authors highlight how the northern tower "loomed portentously above them, blocking out the night sky,"⁵⁴ and that the place had "rather more of a horror film about it than was entirely comfortable a proposition for the intendant trespasser."⁵⁵

Schilddorfer and Weiss, for example, repeatedly mention the castle's appearance at twilight, elsewhere relating the impression it makes in darkness. First the building lies "majestically in the glow of the low sun,"⁵⁶ then "Dusk painted the shadows purple and bathed the castle in a mystical light."⁵⁷ Later they tell how the castle "glowed gray-white in the encroaching darkness."⁵⁸ As night falls, the building, which mostly looked impressive and mystical at first, is transformed, seeming to "grow in the darkness"⁵⁹ and become "forbidding and unapproachable."⁶⁰

The eeriness of the nocturnal situation is reinforced in Kerr's work by the church bell striking midnight when Gunther arrives at Wewelsburg Castle. As he walks through the area, the runes and other characters he saw on the houses earlier make him think of "witches and wizards."⁶¹ The inspector asks for directions from a woman whose black teeth, gruff and suspicious manner, and face disfigured by a cancerous growth could come from a horror story.⁶²

There is something haunting about Wewelsburg Castle itself in the thrillers when it suddenly emerges time and again – at first obscured by darkness, clouds, or trees – before the protagonists of various authors. In Twining it appears "to loom out from behind the skeletal vault of interlocking branches that had previously masked it."⁶³ Kerr writes of how "[f]or a moment the storm lit up the entire sky and [Gunther] had a spectral black-and-white view of the whole of the castle."⁶⁴ The building at times seems to be stricken or assailed by a spell like a living being. Fiolka's protagonist is literally drawn to it,⁶⁵ and in the mind of Twining's character the castle's windows glinted "like animals' eyes in the yellow sweep of ... headlights."⁶⁶ The protagonists in Rollins's thriller are told that the dead of the witch trials and the concentration camp weigh on the castle like bloodguilt. It is a "cursed place. Should really be torn down."⁶⁷ Given a gloomy castle in a small village, it is not surprising that some protagonists think of Dracula or similar figures when they see this fortification in Wewelsburg, with Himmler, too, as a kind of Dracula.⁶⁸

This staging of Wewelsburg Castle with many elements of the Gothic novel is beautifully rendered in the comic strip *Green Lantern – Ring of Evil* (see Figure 4.3). Its frames presenting a fortified structure with four towers and a drawbridge is obviously supposed to represent Wewelsburg Castle in a village of half-timbered houses with high mountains in the background. The scene could just as well be set in Transylvania, Dracula's homeland. At night, in the pouring rain, and during a violent thunderstorm whose bolts of lightning seem to be striking right over Wewelsburg Castle, Himmler and his "Knights of the Round Table" enter the castle. A staircase darkened by a long black shadow leads deep down into the crypt.

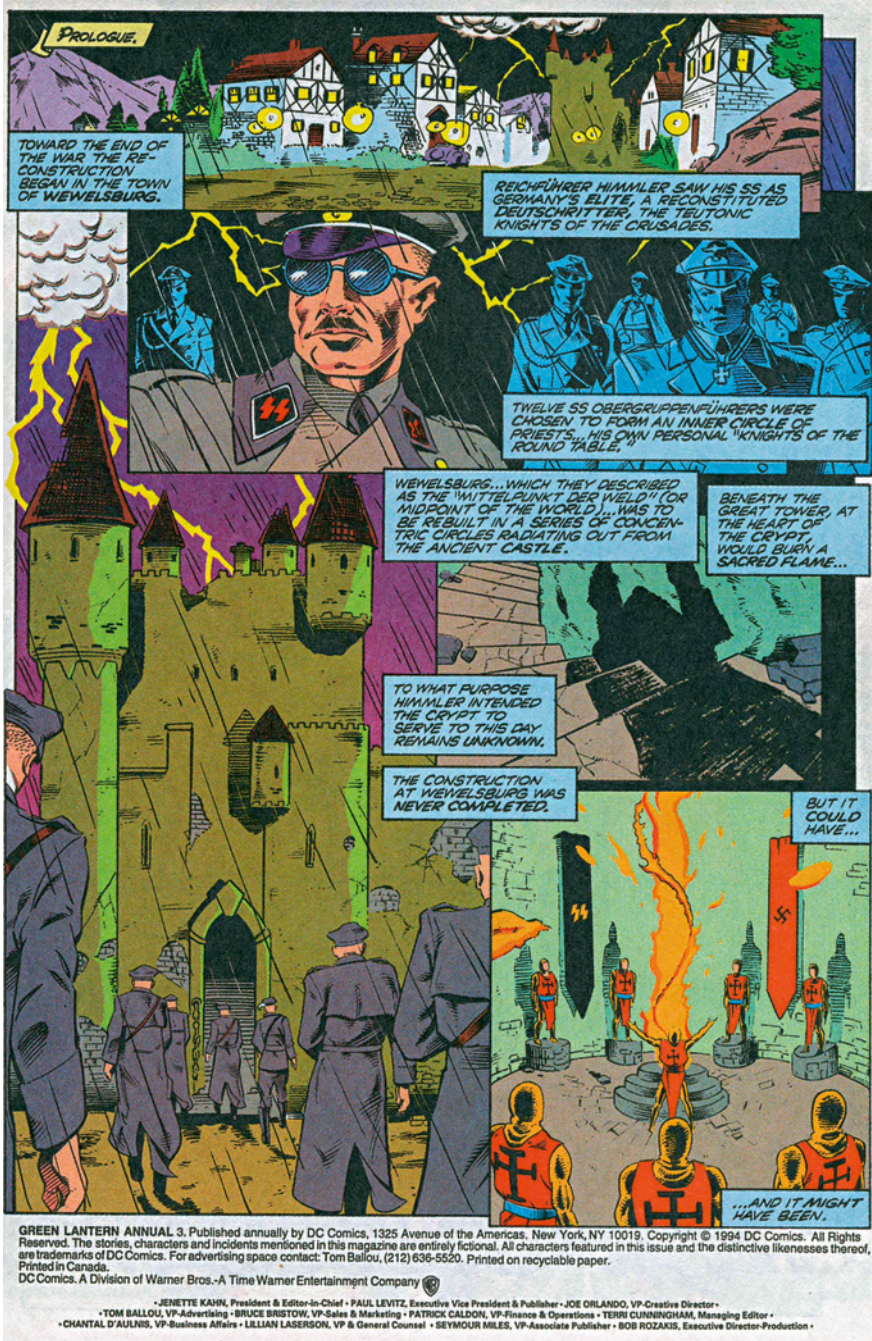


Figure 4.3 Wewelsburg Castle in the *Green Lantern* comic book by David de Vries, Dean Zachary, & Andrew Pepoy (1994), Prologue, *Green Lantern Annual 3: Ring of Evil* (New York).

Several thriller authors play with this lack of knowledge about the exact location and appearance of the castle, the function of the rooms of the northern tower, and their number symbolism.⁶⁹ The mysteriousness of the place only heightens its appeal and builds suspense for the reader by suggesting that knowledge is concealed only from the public. Strange things have taken place or will take place there in secret.

Rituals in the Northern Tower

Key elements of the rituals that are said in the literature to have taken place in the crypt are its twelve pedestals and the center of this subterranean room. The lighting also becomes significant, and the crypt is sometimes represented as having no windows. In *Green Lantern – Ring of Evil*, for example, the stone walls are decorated only with banners. Himmler's *Obergruppenführer*, the twelve most senior SS leaders, who are selected as Knights of the Round Table, stand on the twelve pedestals placed against the outer wall of the room. In the center, also unlike reality, there is no recess but a stair-like elevation culminating in a column of fire.⁷⁰ Himmler, recognizable by his distinctive glasses, and his inner circle wear the costume of the Teutonic Knights during the ceremony. As Himmler summons a ghastly being, the members of his Round Table pledge their lives to create a magic ring that receives their souls (see Figure 4.4).⁷¹ In *The Wewelsburg Covenant*⁷² the twelve knights of the new secret SS Order are in a trance-like state, with bloodshot eyes. Ritually chanting, they place the urns containing the ashes of fallen Aryan warriors on the pedestals in the crypt. In the center stands their new Führer, who moistens the Grail Stone with the blood of a Jewish girl, whereupon strange green figures, skulls, and runes swirl around the walls of the room. These become transparent, and legions of dead SS soldiers come to life. "He was standing at the center of the Aryan universe, and he'd opened a portal to hell,"⁷³ thinks the main female character upon seeing this spectacle, varying the received phrase "center of the world."

The ritual scene in *Die schwarze Sonne von Tashi Lhunpo* (The Black Sun of Tashi Lhunpo), a thriller that exploits the usual black-and-white scenario of its genre differently than the other novels, has a much more meditative effect. Representatives of an ancient Atlantean civilization, at least some of them former SS men, stand on eleven pedestals of the crypt. They are in a trance, with a twelfth man intent on performing a ritual with the Spear of Destiny, which is



Figure 4.4 Ritual at Wewelsburg Castle, depicted in the comic *Green Lantern Annual 3: Ring of Evil*.

respectfully placed in the center of the room. Every few years, according to the thriller, when the winter solstice coincides with the full moon, the moonlight falls exactly on the center of the crypt, and only at this moment can the ritual take place.⁷⁴

The center of the crypt thus has a special significance. It is also the place where Tom Strong's Nazi son, Albrecht, is dubbed the Knight of the Black Sun by Hitler himself.⁷⁵ In the comic the symbol of the Black Sun is visible on the floor of the underground room, with the pedestals in the background seeming to harbor indistinctly recognizable light sources (see Figure 4.5).⁷⁶

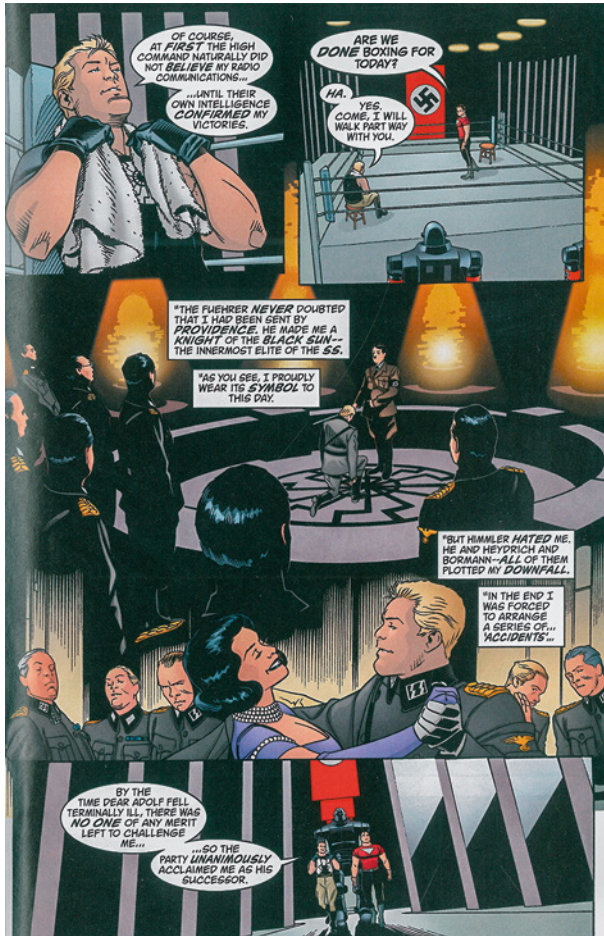


Figure 4.5 The castle crypt in *Tom Strong and the Robots of Doom*.

Secrets, Clues, and Dangers Hidden in the Northern Tower

The northern tower holds a secret, and every thriller gives a different answer to the question of what it is. In *Teufel* it is the symbolism of the number twelve and the disposition of the rooms in the northern tower – with the crypt under the castle’s former chapel – that puts the heroes on the right track. This physical planning and number symbolism precisely match those found in the churches that periodically housed the body of Jesus Christ, suggesting that it was to be kept in the crypt after the war and that the room’s twelve pedestals

were intended for guardian types.⁷⁷ Ennullat's protagonists find references to Wewelsburg Castle in a mural and in Dammsmühle Castle. There they discover an old photograph of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall, which leads them to the next stop on their scavenger hunt.⁷⁸ The male protagonist in *The Verglas File*, Jack Cunningham, tracks the enigmatic clue of a crypt and the face of a clock to Wewelsburg Castle. The building is undergoing remodeling and is closed, so Cunningham breaks into it and finds the twelve chairs of the SS's round table in the crypt. He associates them with the numbers on the dial, and in one of the chairs he comes across the missing part of a list of art treasures he has been looking for.⁷⁹ Twining's main characters, for their part, discover a secret room beneath the crypt and find that it contains not only the Round Table complete with silver tablets bearing coats of arms and family names of the SS knights but also the skeletons of the members of this circle, called *Totenkopforden* (the Order of the Death's Head). The next clue lies concealed in the table.⁸⁰

In two cases, however, the crypt of the northern tower turns out to be a dangerous trap. Unsuspecting agents of the Sigma Force special unit have the museum director open the crypt, which is windowless in this narrative. There, a glass door closes and gas is introduced, sedating the agents, who are then shipped off to South Africa.⁸¹ In a replica of Wewelsburg Castle in Devonshire, private detective Steadman narrowly escapes death at the hands of the malevolent Thule Society during a ritual at which a medium possessed by Heinrich Himmler's spirit is supposed to stab him with the Spear of Destiny.⁸² As Steadman pursues one of his adversaries, he enters the underground room with the pedestals, an eerie place where he feels his energy leaving him. At the center of the room, elaborated in rich detail and intended to arouse disgust, is the decaying corpse of Heinrich Himmler, which comes to life before Steadman's eyes and pursues the detective, drawing him back into the crypt.⁸³

Other Ways of Incorporating the Location into the Plot

In the tradition of the Gothic novel, it is equally common for authors of thrillers to include the "witch cellar" – the dungeon of Wewelsburg Castle – in their plot or to incorporate other, sometimes fictional, parts of the building, such as a secret passage or a cellar that is in danger of collapsing.⁸⁴ The witches' cellar of the thrillers is where victims are held captive, as in the case of a man on whom experiments are conducted in Wewelsburg Castle for the Lebensborn program at the time of National Socialism.⁸⁵ In Wolfgang Westphal's *Das Fleisch Gottes* (The Flesh of God), a new National Socialist movement has rented Wewelsburg Castle on the pretext of wanting to establish a hotel there.

The hero and heroine of the novel are held in the witches' cellar, but they find a secret passage through which they can escape. The unscrupulous new head of the SS pursues them, instructing his underling to throw down his magnesium torch. This move, however, winds up lighting a fuse left over from the attempted demolition of Wewelsburg Castle in 1945. The fuse leads to a charge of dynamite beneath the northern tower, where the candidates for the election of the new twelve *Obergruppenführer*⁸⁶ have assembled in the crypt. There they are to witness a blood sacrifice in which the twin brother of the new Reichsführer of the SS is to be placed in a sarcophagus and stabbed to death. The election itself is then to take place in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall. Westphal thereby assigns a function to the room in his novel's plot, reinterpreting that space's traditional designation.⁸⁷

In Duncan Kyle's spy thriller *Black Camelot*, Wewelsburg Castle is not a scary place but rather a kind of hilltop fortress that is difficult to capture unnoticed. This novel draws suspense and action not from creepy elements but from intrigue, tactical considerations, a certain masculine posturing, and combat.⁸⁸ For the showdown Kyle has chosen the moment when the castle is blown up in 1945. The structural and topographical circumstances add to the drama, for when Franz Rasch has acquired the documents he is looking for, his way back through the building is cut off by Heinz Macher's demolition squad and the spreading fire. He therefore decides to swing from the western wing of the building to the roof of the northern tower. When he does not succeed and his death is foreseeable, he lets himself plunge into the depths without making another sound.⁸⁹

In Kerr's novel *The Pale Criminal*, the SS Court of Honor convenes at Wewelsburg Castle, mixing historical facts and elements of legend. The court, which in fact was never convened there, meets in the "courtroom" on the ground floor of the western wing, at a long oak table, of which there are photos as well as of the hall itself. The silver nameplates that Inspector Bernhard Gunther observes on the chairs, which he assumes identify the SS officers authorized to participate in the court, are as much a part of the common legend motifs as "all the ritualistic ceremony that attended the commencement of the court proceedings," during which Gunther feels "it was like spying on a meeting of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons."⁹⁰ Kerr's recourse to the alleged silver nameplates and ceremonies at Wewelsburg Castle is meant to illustrate to the reader the high, exclusive circle that Bernhard Gunther penetrates in order to convey his unpleasant truth to Himmler. This intention is underscored by the fact that a password is required to gain admittance to the castle during the Court of Honor proceedings.⁹¹ This kind of presentation is plainly aimed at increasing

the tension. To this end Kerr also has Reinhard Heydrich declare shortly before the meeting: “We have to be careful how we handle this. Himmler is a fool, but he’s a dangerous fool. We have to expose Weisthor unequivocally, and in front of as many witnesses as possible.”⁹² In Kerr’s novel Heydrich is a kind of cool-headed foil to Himmler, and he has no use for Himmler’s fantasizing. Kerr communicates this assessment, for example, by calling attention to the castle’s rooms, which bore historical names. On the night before the Court of Honor, Heydrich, who has one of the rooms that refer to Grail mythology, laughs, “Madness, ... I’m in the King Author and the Grail Room. But who knows? Perhaps today I shall at least defeat Morgana le Fay.”⁹³

The Secret Sign: The Black Sun

Since the early 1990s, the sun wheel embedded in the floor of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall in Wewelsburg Castle has become increasingly known as the Black Sun.⁹⁴ It first appeared in fictional literature in Russell McCloud’s political thriller entitled *Die schwarze Sonne von Tashi Lhunpo* (1991, see Figure 4.6).⁹⁵ In that story set in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the



Figure 4.6
Russell McCloud, *Die schwarze Sonne von Tashi Lhunpo* (Engerda, 1991).

European Union has largely replaced the jurisdiction of individual states and constitutes the actual government of Europe. Journalist Hans Weigert, the novel's protagonist, investigates a series of murders of prominent figures in world finance and politics. The element connecting the murders is a twelve-spoked sun wheel branded into the corpses. The journalist finds the same motif in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall of Wewelsburg Castle. He calls it a "black sun."⁹⁶ It is the sign of the Agarthi, an ancient group of survivors of the Atlantis catastrophe or of the mythical island of Thule. Agarthi cooperated with the SS during the Nazi period, and SS members were members of that group. This aspect of the thriller's narrative diverges from the usual good-versus-evil scenario of other thrillers. By no means do the men of Agarthi play the part of the morally downright reprehensible actors in the novel. For instance, the former SS man Karl Steiner, whom Weigert meets in Tibet, seems decidedly calm, wise, and gentle. He lives as a Buddhist in the Tibetan highlands and spends his time meditating.⁹⁷ The men of Agarthi execute only their counterparts, the Schamballah, who take on a clearly negative role. They, too, are survivors of Atlantis and are Freemasons who secretly rule the world. They speak of humanity and tolerance, but they murder indiscriminately and sacrifice innocent people for the sake of maintaining their own power.⁹⁸ Weigert, who is mercilessly defamed and hunted by the Schamballah, sides with neither group, however, ensuring a stalemate. The Agarthi men had once been initiated in the "temple of Wewelsburg."⁹⁹ In the novel's narrative present they want to use the crypt to perform a ritual with the Spear of Destiny to usher in the dawn of a new time.¹⁰⁰ But Weigert interrupts the ceremony and seizes the relic.

In popular culture, including movies,¹⁰¹ Wewelsburg Castle's sun wheel has come to be widely used. It adorns the covers of several thrillers (see Figures 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, and 4.11). Rollins uses the Black Sun as the symbol and new name for the Chronos project, the aim of which is to breed people of superior intelligence. They are called "Sun-Kings."¹⁰² Breeding a human being is also the goal of the secret Order within the SS in Fiolka's *12 Suns*.¹⁰³ In Twining's novel the secret Order within the SS, the *Totenkopforden*, also has the Wewelsburg sun wheel as its symbol.¹⁰⁴ In Braun's work the box with which nuclear weapons are to be launched against Israel bears not only the SS's death's head symbol but also the Black Sun.¹⁰⁵ In *Tom Strong and the Robots of Doom*, the symbol can also often be seen – on the wall, on UFOs, on clothing – and a member of the inner circle of the SS is called Knight of the Black Sun.¹⁰⁶

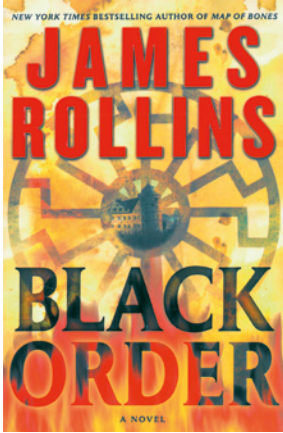


Figure 4.7 (left) James Rollins, *Black Order*, A Sigma Force Novel (New York, 2006).



Figure 4.8 (middle) James Twining, *The Black Sun*, *Legendary Treasure or Legacy of Evil, The Hunt is on ...* (London, 2006).

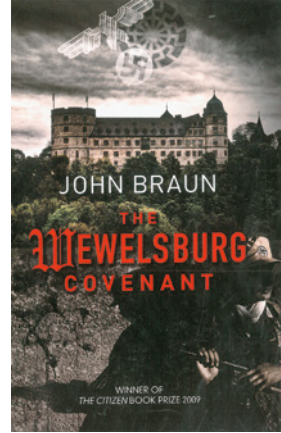


Figure 4.9 (right) John Braun, *The Wewelsburg Covenant* (n.p., 2011).



Figure 4.10 (left) The Black Sun as a symbol in *Tom Strong and the Robots of Doom*.

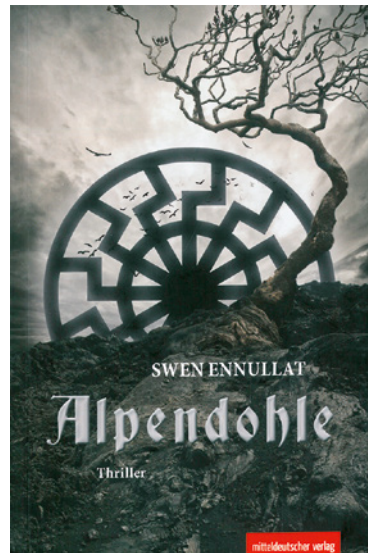


Figure 4.11 (right) Cover of Swen Ennullat's *Alpendohle* (Halle an der Saale, 2013).

The Museum and Its Staff as Part of the Plot

Ultimately, the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg (Wewelsburg District Museum) and its staff have also found their way into the literature. It is the fictional director of the museum who repeatedly “enlightens” the thriller’s main characters about the history of the place. The way that history is presented, however, strays from the museum’s official version and is essentially as fictional as the rest of the thriller.¹⁰⁷ It also falls to the fictional museum director to pointedly remind the protagonists, and thus the reader, that salient questions about the site remain unresolved.¹⁰⁸ His function is to inform; his narrative task, to heighten suspense.¹⁰⁹

In *The Wewelsburg Covenant* the new Nazis return to Wewelsburg in an alternative historical trajectory and ambush the museum director in front of the former guardhouse. He is obliged to send his staff on vacation early, and a new commander takes over the building, placing snipers on the roofs and providing military security for the youth hostel. “We are finally home!”¹¹⁰ the head of the new Nazis proclaims in a speech. In another case the head of the museum is in league with the villains and leads the heroes into a trap. In Ennullat’s book, it is the museum’s secretary who informs the League of Sorceresses about the on-site research.¹¹¹ Even one of the museum’s exhibits, a teapot with a sun swirl on it, advances to the status of a prop for a thriller. In Rollins’s *Black Order* it catches the eye of a member of the Sigma Force unit during a visit to the museum, and he later utilizes the mark on the teapot in an attempt to deceive the South African Nazi leader.¹¹²

No member of the District Museum, however, has been portrayed as enigmatically as Max Rupprecht, a janitor at Wewelsburg Castle in the 1960s. Heinz Höhne’s well-known 1967 monograph entitled *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf* (The Order of the Death’s Head: The Story of Hitler’s SS) stylized him as a key witness for the history of Wewelsburg Castle under National Socialism, although he had not come to Wewelsburg until the 1950s.¹¹³ Max Rupprecht became known as *Burgwart* Rupprecht¹¹⁴ (Rupprecht, the castle warden¹¹⁵). Duncan Kyle immortalized him in an utterly amusing way in the novel *Black Camelot*. The thriller is set at the time of National Socialism, and in it Rupprecht is the custodian of the castle as well as a fanatical Nazi who zealously keeps the “sanctuary” of the SS Order in good shape:

Rupprecht believed every word Himmler had ever spoken; he walked endlessly round the SS shrine, velvet cloth in hand, to ensure that the artifacts of Aryan culture were never contaminated by dust. Rupprecht would defend the cathedral of the SS Order to his last drop of blood.¹¹⁶

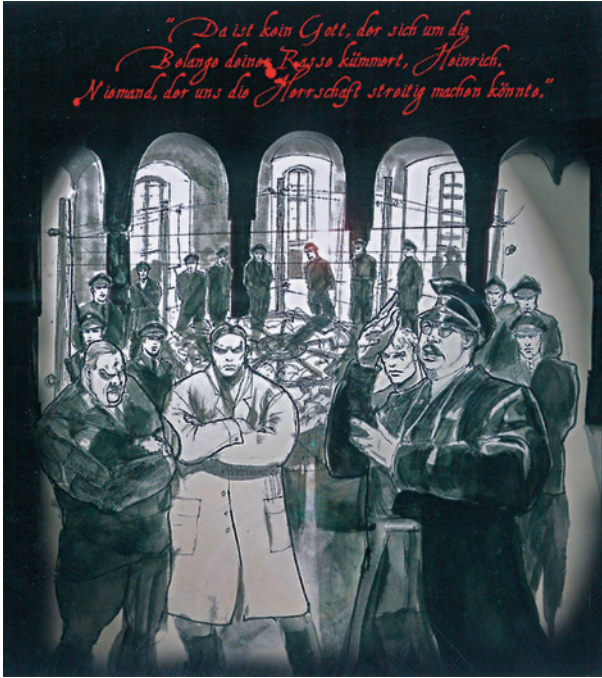


Figure 4.12 Men in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall of Wewelsburg Castle. The picture appears in the booklet to the radio play *Die Schwarze Sonne* (The Black Sun) by Günter Merlau.

In the 1950s journalist Willi Frischauer published a story that SS men had been assigned certain quarters as study rooms during their stay in Wewelsburg Castle. The SS men were supposed to be working on the subject of the respective room but in fact secretly read detective stories.¹¹⁷ In *Black Camelot* it is Rupprecht who guards the recalcitrant SS men with a wary eye and in individual cases also denounces their doings:

Even some of the *Obergruppenführer* had been nervous of him. He had always had the *Reichsführer's* permission to search the rooms and report on their contents, and once had brought down Himmler's furious reproof upon the head of *Obergruppenführer* Maximilian von Herff, head of the SS Personnel Department, in whose baggage he had discovered a copy of *Gone with The Wind*.¹¹⁸

Rupprecht resists Heinz Macher's demolition squad with all his might, but in vain.¹¹⁹ Standing in the northern tower, he finally sees his world go up in

flames – and at this point Duncan Kyle once again plays with the traditional motifs of the legend behind Himmler’s Round Table and the silver nameplates:

He [Rupprecht] stood for a moment looking at the great circular table, so carefully specified and so lovingly crafted, at the twelve pillars with their coats of arms, the twelve chairs, each with its occupant’s name on its silver plate. Everything that could gleam was gleaming. The chamber had not been used for many months, but had been always ready. The thought of its desecration by fire made Rupprecht want to vomit and he crossed the chamber quickly, thrusting the thought from his mind, towards the door that led from the chamber to the moat on the eastern side.¹²⁰

Kyle writes in his notes to the novel, that “Warden Rupprecht”¹²¹ survived the 1945 conflagration to recount his story to historians.¹²² The author thereby cleverly connects the fictional and the real Rupprecht, for the fact that the latter told his story to historians surfaces in Höhne’s *The Order of the Death’s Head: The Story of Hitler’s SS*. Höhne’s and Kyle’s Rupprecht character illustrates what one generally finds as the representation of the history of Wewelsburg Castle in different kinds of texts and media: Certain themes, characters (some of them clichéd), and legend motifs constantly reappear across fictional literature, nonfiction, and documentary films,¹²³ suggesting a kind of pseudohistorical, apparent authenticity to this image of the place. By drawing on this canon, thrillers both meet the expectations of their readership, benefiting the credibility of their plot, and consolidate the popular image of Wewelsburg Castle.

Notes

- 1 See Herbert (1978), Kerr (1989), Rollins (2006), and Twining (2006).
- 2 On the computer games and Indiana Jones films, see the two essays by Eva Kingsepp in this volume: “Wewelsburg Castle, Nazi-Inspired Occulture, and the Commodification of Evil” and “Factual Nazisploitation: Nazi Occult Documentary Films.” A sketch on the fan-fiction story “Raiders of the Lost Gate” refers to the computer game and the motion pictures. See www.gateworld.net/fanfic/archive/7/raidersof.html (accessed 20 April 2014). At the same site see also “Caduceus und Home, Sweet Home”: www.gateworld.net/fanfic/archive/7/caduceus.html; www.gateworld.net/fanfic/archive/1/homesweet.html (accessed 20 April 2014). See also the following examples: “The Journal of James Bunt and the Schloss Wewelsburg Incident” [Fan fiction for RSU]: <http://forums.deepworldgame.com/discussion/8678/the-journal-of-james-bunt-and-the-schloss-wewelsburg-incident-fanfic-for-rsu> (accessed 20 April 2014); “The Troubles of Time”: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/4366466/21/The-Troubles-of-Time> (accessed 20 April 2014); “Under the Sign of the Black Sun”: <http://www.fanfiktion.de/s/4f638d890002486aoc901b58/1/>

under-the-sign-of-the-black-sun (accessed 20 April 2014); “The Wiligut Project”: <http://mobil.animexx.de/fanfiction/300602/944353/default> (accessed 20 April 2014).

3 For example, CreateSpace: Braun (2011), Fiolka (2013); Books on Demand: Ross (2009); Memoirs Publishing: Woodhouse (2012).

4 Thrillers: Herbert (1978), Kyle (1978), Hohlbein (2004), Kerr (1989), Rollins (2006), Twining (2006), Braun (2011), Woodhouse (2012), Fiolka (2013), Ennullat (2013), Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), and Westphal (2014); mystery audiobooks: Merlau (2006–10). Comics: de Vries, Zachary, & Pepoy (1994) and Hogan, Sprouse, & Story (2011).

5 For more detail see Nusser (2009), pp. 50–66.

6 See, for example, the essays in Buttsworth & Abbenhuis (2010).

7 See Reichel (2004), pp. 16–44, 51–60, 100, and 138–44, for example. See also the numerous images of SS uniforms and symbols in Stiglegger (2011).

8 G. Reitlinger, *The SS: Alibi of a Nation, 1922–1945* (London: William Heinemann, 1956). Tellingly, the German edition was entitled *Die SS, Tragödie einer deutschen Epoche* (The SS, Tragedy of a German Era). On the history of research on perpetrators, see Paul (2003), pp. 13–90.

9 See Gellately (2003).

10 Kyle (1978).

11 As a member of the *Waffen-SS*, Rasch embodies the SS member less than he does the elite soldier and ice-cold, dangerous warrior. To characterize the protagonist, the thriller instrumentalizes both the SS’s claim to represent an elite and the organization’s postwar propaganda that members had been soldiers like anyone else. On the self-images of SS members, see, for instance, Wegner (1999); Wilke (2011), pp. 123–28, 149.

12 They include former SS men henceforth fighting only for themselves in accordance with a variation of the SS motto “Our honor is called loyalty”: “My loyalty ... is to myself. Not to anybody else. Not for the rest of my life” (Kyle, 1978), p. 176.

13 Kerr (1989).

14 Interestingly, the authors repeatedly establish continuities by having descendants of Himmler (Rollins, 2006) or Hitler (Braun, 2011; Ennullat, 2013) play a role. In Herbert (1978), Himmler survives the war, goes to England, and dies of cancer there. The plot of the mystery radio play by Merlau (2006–10) takes place at different time levels in any case. The human experiments by the Nazis are common material of the entertainment industry, from computer games and Nazi zombie movies to pornographic films. See the essays by Eva Kingsepp in this volume; Kingsepp (2010); and Rapaport (2010).

16 On Lebensborn see Lilienthal (2003); on the human experiments see Mitscherlich & Mielke (2009).

17 The Eifel castle’s modification by forced laborers and the narrative link with the Lebensborn Association likewise point to the real history of Wewelsburg (the use of forced labor) and to the seeding of myths about it (Lebensborn rumors).

18 Braun (2011), for example, invents an underground Nazi city in South America that has nothing but cloned soldiers and a “Mengele Medical Research Center” (pp. 123–24, 150–51). In the audiobook *Black Sun* (Merlau, 2006–10, Part IV, *Vril*), the SS also conducts human experiments.

19 See Herbert (1978), pp. 131–61. Braun (2011), p. 267, also draws on the connection of the new Nazis to the Thule Society and black magic associated with it. For more information on Nazis allied with ancient evil forces, see also Merlau (2006–10). McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 149–68, differs. In his work, the ancient civilization of the Agarthi, survivors of Atlantis, stands behind the Thule Society and the Third Reich, but the Agarthi do not embody a clearly evil group in the thriller.

- 20 See Herbert (1978), pp. 234–41, 255–59, 277–78, for the revival of Himmler; Merlau (2006–10, vol. 4: *Viril*), for the reawakening of an ancient race; Braun (2011), pp. 248–50, 271–78, for the revival of SS legions; and McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 283, 287–93, for the resort to magic, though it is not clear what the moral implications of its use are as a way of ushering in a new age. McCloud, who partially defies standard thriller clichés, is discussed below.
- 21 In Herbert (1978), pp. 183–94: *Neues Reich/neue Herrschaft* (New Empire/New Rule); Braun (2011), p. 274. In Westphal (2014), p. 293, the nature of the ceremony is not magical but symbolic, a prelude to the expansion of power in the state. See also p. 209.
- 22 The Amber Room was a large high-ceiling chamber with walls adorned by amber panels, gold leaf, and mirrors. During World War II it was taken from the Catherine Palace, an imperial residence near St. Petersburg, and brought to Germany, where it eventually disappeared as the Soviet army advanced in 1945. The Amber Room remains missing to this day, its survival uncertain. The piece of iron known as the Spear of Destiny, or Holy Lance, is said to have pierced the side of Christ at the Crucifixion. According to legend, it was discovered during the First Crusade in the late eleventh century. Its authenticity is disputed.
- 23 The motif of the treasure hunt is found in other thrillers as well. See, for example, Braun (2011), pp. 243–46, in which the protagonists find King Solomon's treasure and the Holy Grail in Nepal. The latter object, however, is taken from them by the new National Socialists.
- 24 The SS Security Service created a card index in which witch trials were recorded. See Lorenz, Bauer, Behringer, & Schmidt (1999).
- 25 See Nusser (2009), pp. 67–68.
- 26 Movement of this kind is not necessarily the case. In Hohlbein (2004), the plot centers on the town of Crailsfelden and ultimately narrows to the sequestered castle, which becomes a seemingly inescapable trap. These circumstances are what generate the novel's tension. On such a scenario in the detective novel, see Becker (1975), pp. 70–71.
- 27 On the historical background of the actual Nazi projects in general, see Longerich (2010) and the additional references there.
- 28 Rollins (2006), Braun (2011), McCloud (1999, orig. 1991).
- 29 See Braun (2011), pp. 243–46.
- 30 Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011).
- 31 See, for example, Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), pp. 430–34, 440–46 (Himmler in Quedlinburg), and 456–68.
- 32 Herbert (1978), p. 234, places the new building in Devonshire, where much of the action takes place. In Rollins (2006), p. 186, there is a replica in the Himalayas, but it does not figure largely in the plot.
- 33 See Ditschke & Anhut (2009); Dittmar (2001), p. 176.
- 34 Hogan, Sprouse, & Story (2011).
- 35 See the indicative title of the article by Gilbert (1963): “The Mentality of SS Murderous Robots.” This image of the perpetrator became significant in the 1960s through the trial of Adolf Eichmann and the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial. See Paul (2003), pp. 20–24. Such images of perpetrators, which have given way to more discerning ones in historical scholarship, live on in popular culture.
- 36 De Vries, Zachary, & Pepoy (1994).
- 37 Herbert (1978), pp. 220 and 251, situates the Wewelsburg castle crypt under a large hall (which in Herbert's book has a gallery and a stone staircase), largely following the

erroneous information from Heinz Höhne. By contrast, Kyle (1978) – another early publication – shows good knowledge of the northern tower and the building (see p. 181, for example). The illustration in the *Green Lantern* comic strip by de Vries, Zachary, & Pepoy (1994) does not resemble the real Wewelsburg Castle at all. Kerr (telephone information, 17 June 2003), Fiolka (epilogue in Fiolka, 2013, p. 186), and Westphal (2014), for instance, have researched on site, with Westphal misunderstanding the passage leading from the guard building to the castle's moat as a secret passage or escape tunnel of Himmler's (see Westphal, 2014, p. 375; correspondence with the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, 8 April 2014). German-language authors in general seem to have delved deeply into the history of the site. Exceptions are Merlau (2006–10) and Hohlbein (2004). Merlau refers only vaguely to Wewelsburg Castle and speaks of its “throne room.” Hohlbein describes what is basically a completely different building but alludes to Wewelsburg Castle.

- 38 Round Table: See Herbert (1978), pp. 220–21: round table, wooden chairs with high backs as well as “inscribed silver plate” situated in a large hall – occupants are the members of the Thule Society; meditations of twelve selected SS men in Wewelsburg Castle; Kyle (1978), pp. 180–81: round table, chairs with nameplates situated on the ground floor of the northern tower; Rollins (2006), pp. 308–10: round oak table mentioned in the explanation that the “museum director” gives of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall, assembly of the twelve highest ranking SS officers for consultations and rituals; de Vries, Zachary, & Pepoy (1994), n.p.: *Obergruppenführer* (the twelve highest ranking SS officers): “an inner circle of priests ... his [Himmler's] own personal ‘knights of the round table’”; Kerr (1989), p. 511: long oak table, high-backed leather chairs, each bearing an engraved silver nameplate presumably identifying the SS officers, mention of “ritualistic ceremony” at the beginning of the meeting of the preeminent SS leaders, the number 12 playing no role, the interweaving of real objects (long oak table and leather chairs that actually did exist in the “courtroom” of Wewelsburg Castle [see Hüser, 1987, p. 199; and Russell & Schneider, 1998, pp. 57–59]) with legend motifs (nameplates, rituals), meeting situated in the courtroom in the castle's western wing; Twining (2006), pp. 130, 238: secret Order of twelve selected men in the SS, oak chairs and “silver plaque engraved with a coat of arms and a family name” located in a room below the crypt where the bodies of deceased SS leaders lie; Braun (2011), pp. 64, 273: conversation of protagonists about Wewelsburg Castle mentions Himmler's group of twelve knights in the manner of Arthur's Round Table, rumors of meetings in the crypt, and unsubstantiated rituals; in the plot, twelve “knights” later perform a ritual in the crypt; Woodhouse (2012), pp. 57, 180–81: twelve seats in the crypt in reference to Arthur's Round Table, Main Offices of the SS; seats grouped around a pit in the crypt, engraved SS runes, one seat with a back higher and more ornately carved than the others; Merlau (2006–10) speaks of a round table of the Order in the castle's “throne room”; Ennullat (2013), p. 81: explanation of the museum director (Round Table, among other things, as possible background for the symbolism of the number 12 in the northern tower); Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), p. 470: Arthur and Round Table mentioned by the museum director as one of many attempts to explain the symbolism of the number 12 in the northern tower; indirectly, McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 289, 293: twelve men in a ritual in the crypt, eleven standing on the pedestals. The motif of Himmler's Round Table at Wewelsburg Castle harks back to Heinz Höhne; the chairs with the silver nameplates are first mentioned in Walter Schellenberg's memoirs, then also in Höhne's work.
- 39 Center of the world: Rollins (2006), p. 310: the northern tower as “the spiritual and geographical center of the new Aryan world”; de Vries, Zachary, & Pepoy (1994); Twining (2006), p. 236: “presumably a final resting place at the centre of the Universe for the

- spirits of the Order when they pass away;” “centre of the world,” “centre of their world”; Woodhouse (2012), pp. 8, 57: “the New Jerusalem and the centre of Germany; he even called it the ‘Centre of the World,’” as in “The North Tower marked the veritable centre of the SS world”; Merlau (2006–10); Himmler speaks of Wewelsburg as the center of the new world, the old order has had its day; Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), pp. 469, 470: “center of the new SS world,” northern tower as the “center of the planned huge complex and later also of the world”; Fiolka (2013), p. 113: center of the world “after the final victory of the Nazis.” In an exchange with Karl Hüser, the former architects of the Wewelsburg Castle project referred to the northern tower as the “center of the world” but did not elaborate. See Hüser (1987), p. 59.
- 40 Burning of coats of arms: See Kyle (1978), p. 181; Rollins (2006), p. 314. The legend of the burning of coats of arms goes back to local rumors in Wewelsburg and was popularized by Heinz Höhne.
- 41 Ashes and pedestals: See Herbert (1978), p. 276 (pedestals of the subterranean room as the places for ashes of the dead of the new Order of the Teutonic Knights); Twining (2006), p. 236, and Woodhouse (2012), p. 57: the crypt’s pedestals bearing urns containing the ashes of senior SS leaders; Braun (2011), p. 273: ritual in which urns containing ashes of Aryan warriors are placed on the pedestals by the knights. The motif of the ashes of SS leaders or the urns with the ashes goes back to Heinz Höhne. However, he spoke of the urns as containing the ashes of the coats of arms of SS leaders.
- 42 See Becker (1975), pp. 62–68.
- 43 Becker (1975), p. 63.
- 44 See Becker (1975), pp. 62–68. He calls this topos *locus horridus*, borrowing from the classical *locus amoenus*, lovely place, whose standard attributes, such as the gentle breeze, sunshine, and sweet birdsong, become their opposites in the *locus horridus* (pp. 62–63).
- 45 On the thriller’s recourse to the stock features of the Gothic novel, see Nusser (2009), p. 67. Elements of the Gothic novel are updated through such borrowing, examples being underground garages, factory ruins, and subterranean bunkers. The cinematic staging of Wewelsburg Castle also draws on elements of Gothic novels and horror films, as pointed out in Eva Kingsepp’s essay entitled “Wewelsburg Castle, Nazi-inspired Occulture, and the Commodification of Evil,” in this volume.
- 46 Sky, moonlight, long shadows: see Twining (2006), pp. 232–33.
- 47 Twining (2006), p. 233.
- 48 Twining (2006), p. 234.
- 49 See Braun (2011), p. 270: “A fine mist had rolled in over the plain and in the distance, Wewelsburg Castle was impressive. The north tower poked through the mist ominously.”
- 50 See Rollins (2006), pp. 257–59, 309, 312. The appearance of a bat would fit the storm-lit hall in the castle, and one of Rollins’s protagonists suppresses the thought of one, which he finds frightening. In Hohlbein’s work, bats actually attack a protagonist and prevent him from leaving the castle. See Hohlbein (2004), vol. 2, pp. 123–26.
- 51 Emphasized by Rollins (2006), p. 269; Twining (2006), p. 233. See also Woodhouse (2012), who describes Wewelsburg Castle as a partial ruin not normally open to the public. His protagonists, however, are not impressed by the sight of the building: “You drag me to this shitty ruin, it’s raining, Paderborn is a gastronomic desert and you haven’t even tried to shag me. What a disaster!” (p. 62).
- 52 Rollins (2006), p. 279.
- 53 Fiolka (2013), p. 104.

- 54 Twining (2006), p. 234. In vol. 1 of Hohlbein (2004), p. 73, the nocturnal view of the building, of which “little more than a silhouette” is discernible, gives the first-person narrator “a cold shiver down his spine.”
- 55 Kerr (1989), p. 506.
- 56 Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), p. 447.
- 57 Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), p. 450.
- 58 Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), p. 451.
- 59 Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), p. 468.
- 60 Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), p. 468. In the daylight the building still seemed benign (*freundlich*) to the protagonist. The northern tower appears grim again on p. 469.
- 61 Kerr (1989), p. 505.
- 62 See Kerr (1989), pp. 505–7.
- 63 Twining (2006), p. 232.
- 64 Kerr (1989), p. 506. Other passages, too, exemplify this characteristic. See Rollins (2006), p. 268, for example: “A crackle of lightning lit the conservatory. Johann pointed upward. Gray craned. In the fading light, veiled in rain, rose the massive castle.”
- 65 See Fiolka (2013), p. 104. These passages, too, have the castle constantly reappearing between the trees.
- 66 Twining (2006), p. 232.
- 67 Rollins (2006), p. 269.
- 68 See Kerr (1989), p. 506 (“Dracula, Frankenstein, Orlac and a whole forestful of Wolfmen”); Hohlbein (2004), vol. 1, p. 73 (“Mordor, the black fortress of the evil wizard Sauron from *The Lord of the Rings*); Rollins (2006), p. 257 (comparing Wewelsburg with castles on the Rhine, noting that it has “a fairy-tale quality to it, a place of enchanted princesses and knights on white stallions. ... ‘If Dracula had been gay’, ... ‘that would so be his castle.’”); and p. 269 (after mentioning Himmler: “So it *was* Dracula’s castle.”).
- 69 For example, see Braun (2011), p. 64 (“Some believe that dark ceremonies were performed in the crypt, but there is little evidence.”); McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 67, 74–75 (the number 12 unexplained, speculation about cult activities, crypt accessible only to a small group after modification); Fiolka (2013), p. 107 (the meaning of the sun wheel in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall being unclear, documents about Wewelsburg Castle having been destroyed or burned during demolition); Ennullat (2013), p. 81 (exact purpose of the rooms of the northern tower being unclear, speculations due to the symbolism of the number 12, not proven that Himmler wanted to create a new race with the Holy Lance in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall); Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), pp. 470–471 (function of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and crypt being unclear, as is the meaning of the symbolism of the number 12 and the twelve pedestals; crypt as Himmler’s possible final resting place or as a place at whose center something was to be erected after the war).
- 70 The fire is reminiscent of Heinz Höhne’s motif of the column of smoke that is said to have been generated during the purported burning of the coat of arms.
- 71 The pedestals appearing in the comic book are decorated by fictitious sig-runes and swastikas.
- 72 The title refers to Himmler’s inner circle, which, according to the thriller, held a secret meeting at Wewelsburg Castle near the end of the war to perpetuate commitment to the Nazi cause in the postwar period. This circle was called the “Organization SS for Operation Wewelsburg” (Braun, 2011), p. 66.
- 73 Braun (2011), p. 277. See also pp. 274–77. Earlier, also at the center of the crypt, a mechanism was activated that was to launch nuclear weapons against Israel.

- 74 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 76–77, 283, 289, 293.
- 75 Hogan, Sprouse, & Story (2011), n.p.
- 76 Hogan, Sprouse, & Story (2011) do not mention Wewelsburg Castle by name. Merlau (2006–10), *IV: Vril*, also stages a ritual in which the Spear of Destiny is to be sunk into the “plasma of life.” The location of the ritual remains unclear, however; the booklet pictures a gathering in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall.
- 77 If Himmler had found the body, it would have been inspected further at Wewelsburg Castle. The Vatican documents on this case are said to have been at the castle and to have been removed from there at the end of the war. See Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), pp. 352–353, 469–471, 503–6, 518.
- 78 The painting renders Wewelsburg Castle, and in the Dammsmühle Castle they find the symbol of the Black Sun, among other things. See Ennullat (2013), pp. 70–71, 93, 176–77.
- 79 See Woodhouse (2012), pp. 171–72, 177–83.
- 80 The members of the *Totenkopforden* committed collective suicide. See Twining (2006), pp. 237–38, 244–50.
- 81 See Rollins (2006), pp. 313–14, 327–30, 349–55.
- 82 The ritual was to be performed in the great hall under which the crypt is located. The site of the new Wewelsburg Castle was chosen because of its connection to Arthurian legend, with characters from Richard Wagner’s opera *Parsifal* playing a role in the plot of the thriller. See Herbert (1978), pp. 221–22, 234, 237–41, 255–59.
- 83 See Herbert (1978), pp. 263–65, 268–78, 283–90.
- 84 On the cellar, see Ennullat (2013), pp. 84–89. Searching for Himmler’s safe, the protagonist explores the decrepit cellar, access to which is actually forbidden.
- 85 See Fiolka (2013), pp. 120–23.
- 86 Westphal (2014), p. 42.
- 87 In Westphal (2014) see the corresponding chapters subsumed under the title “Wewelsburg, Verlies.” The founding congress of the NNSD (New National Collection of Germany) is to take place at Wewelsburg Castle. This organization has appointed a new administrator for Wewelsburg Castle. The new Reichsführer of the SS and the elected *Obergruppenführer* are to drink wine mixed with the blood of the victim as part of the ceremony. See Westphal (2014), pp. 35, 41–42, 177, 266, 293, 309, 325–26, 357–67.
- 88 See Kyle (1978), pp. 182–84, on the protagonists’ thoughts about how best to get into the building. Kyle gives an initial impression of the building on pp. 205–6: “The fortress looked now as it must have looked for centuries; gray and strong and impregnable. ... He [Rasch] could see that ... they found the old fortress daunting. It was one thing to look at plans, to draw lines on paper, to theorize about the best means of assault; quite another to face the vast granite fortress on its high rock.”
- 89 See Kyle (1978), pp. 231–34, 238–40.
- 90 Kerr (1989), p. 511. On the hall and the table, see Hüser (1987), p. 199; Russell & Schneider (1998), pp. 57–59.
- 91 See Kerr (1989), p. 507.
- 92 Kerr (1989), p. 510.
- 93 Kerr (1978), p. 511. This contrast between Heydrich and Himmler corresponds to the clichéd portrayal of the two men in older literature and memoirs. See the article on the creation of legends in scholarly and popular-science literature in this volume. Duncan Kyle’s *Waffen*-SS hero, Franz Rasch, makes similarly derisive remarks about King Arthur’s Round Table as a model for the SS and about Wewelsburg Castle as Himmler’s Camelot, with a round table and chairs bearing the silver nameplates of the *Obergruppenführer*. See

- Kyle (1978), pp. 180–81: “Do you know ... that he is obsessed by the romantic history of a British king and knights of chivalry? ... It is on such nonsense that the Order of the SS was founded. ... Heydrich, of course, believed in nothing.”
- 94 On the transfer of the term *Black Sun* to the sun wheel, see Daniela Siepe's essay entitled “The Sun Wheel as a ‘Black Sun’ in Wewelsburg Castle's *Obergruppenführer* Hall,” in this volume.
- 95 McCloud (1999). The name Russell McCloud is a pseudonym.
- 96 See McCloud (1999), p. 41. For the rest of the novel's plot, see Siepe (2008), pp. 107–109.
- 97 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 145–72. In the thriller's finale Steiner does not try to keep Weigert from taking the Spear of Destiny with him and thereby foiling the Agarthi ritual. See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), p. 293.
- 98 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 256, 53, 96–100, 184–86.
- 99 Karl Steiner's words in McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), p. 167.
- 100 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), p. 283.
- 101 See the essays by Eva Kingsepp in this volume.
- 102 See Rollins (2006), pp. 202, 227–36, 311, 418, 475–76.
- 103 Fiolka (2013), p. 133.
- 104 Twining (2006), pp. 104, 129, 137–38.
- 105 See Braun (2011), p. 274.
- 106 Hogan, Sprouse, & Story (2011), n.p.
- 107 See Rollins (2006), pp. 299–303, 308–14. In that publication, for example, the museum director explains that he must, of course, be especially knowledgeable in the field of runes, expertise necessary for the plot. He also tells that Himmler's round oak table had stood in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and that the coats of arms of SS officers had been burned in the crypt. See also Ennullat (2013), pp. 76–85; Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), pp. 468–71, 480–84.
- 108 See Ennullat (2013), p. 81; Schilddorfer & Weiss (2011), pp. 470–71.
- 109 In McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), it is not the museum director who helps the journalist at the center of the thriller by giving him information and identifying existing gaps in his knowledge. That role goes instead to a certain “Pierre Martin,” the author of the book *Himmler's Fortress*, who resides in Wewelsburg and who, in the mind of the former SS man living in the Tibetan highlands, has a reputation for his “unbiased approach to this time [the period of National Socialism]” (p. 169); see also pp. 67–77. The model for Pierre Martin was Stuart Russell, a coauthor of the 1989 book entitled *Heinrich Himmler's Burg. Das weltanschauliche Zentrum der SS 1934–1945* (a 1999 English translation of which appeared as *Heinrich Himmler's Camelot: The Wewelsburg: Ideological Center of the SS, 1934–1945*). On Russell see the present volume's article on the creation of legends in scholarly and popular-science literature.
- 110 Braun (2011), p. 274, see also pp. 262–64.
- 111 See Rollins (2006), pp. 313–14, 327–330; Ennullat (2013), p. 89.
- 112 See Rollins (2007), pp. 300, 363. See the depiction of the teapot in Hüser (1987), p. 311; and in the essay entitled “Himmler's Plans and Activities in Wewelsburg,” by Kirsten John-Stucke in this volume.
- 113 See this volume's essay on the creation of legends in scholarly and popular-science literature.
- 114 Höhne (1998), p. 142, notes 112, 113, 115, 116.
- 115 Höhne (1969, German orig. 1967), p. 152, note 112.
- 116 Kyle (1978), p. 200.

- ¹¹⁷ See the present volume's essay on the creation of legends in the scholarly and popular-science literature; Frischauer (1953), pp. 68–69.
- ¹¹⁸ Kyle (1978), p. 200–201.
- ¹¹⁹ See, for instance, Kyle (1978), pp. 230.
- ¹²⁰ Kyle (1978), p. 250.
- ¹²¹ Kyle (1978), p. 250.
- ¹²² Kyle (1978), p. 250.
- ¹²³ On the films see this volume's essay entitled "Factual Nazisploitation': Nazi Occult Documentary Films," by Eva Kingsepp.

The Sun Wheel as a “Black Sun” in Wewelsburg Castle’s *Obergruppenführer* Hall

Daniela Siepe

The former SS *Obergruppenführer* Hall is located on the ground floor of Wewelsburg Castle. Twelve columns joined by an arched arcade surround the circular hall’s interior space and set it off from a vaulted ambulatory around its perimeter. A large sun wheel ornament with twelve stepped spokes is embedded in the center of the hall’s marble floor.¹



Figure 5.1 The sun wheel located in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall in Wewelsburg Castle’s northern tower.

This sun wheel has become widespread under the name *Black Sun* in very different contexts, including right-wing extremism, certain music scenes, feature films, computer games, novels, and comics. It is an ambiguous symbol that can stand for a number of things, including the pride “in one’s own people” and the fight against the democratic parliamentary system; an invisible counter-sun and a pagan tradition’s secret knowledge revived by the SS; as well as bizarre Nazi technology. All interpretations have one thing in common: They stem exclusively from the recent past and have been applied retrospectively to the sun wheel. There are no known sources from the National Socialist period that provide information about the meaning of the symbol intended at that time or about its name. In a conversation with Eva Kingsepp, Bernhard Frank (1913–2011), former SS folklorist at Wewelsburg Castle, firmly rejected the authenticity of the term *Black Sun*:

To my knowledge the designation Black Sun was first used after the war. I would like to say in conclusion that I never heard the term Black Sun during peacetime, that is, during my scholarly activity at Wewelsburg Castle, and also not during my wartime leaves. Is the label perhaps an invention – a malicious one I might suggest – of the post-war period?²

In addition, the Wewelsburg Castle sun wheel is not made out of a uniformly black stone, but out of a dark green marble with white and black inclusions. Scholars at the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg assume the ornament was modeled on ornamental discs from the Merovingian period (5th–8th centuries), which were certainly not meant to symbolize an invisible sun, but rather the visible one. Graves from the early Middle Ages have yielded several variants of such ornamental discs, which were especially common in different regions of Central Europe, with their decoration ranging from equal-armed crosses to geometric and figurative elements. Artifacts found in excavated graves provide evidence that the discs belonged to Merovingian women’s traditional dress and were attached to the belt with leather or cloth straps. Researchers tend to consider them not as mere pieces of jewelry but as amulets, each with its own significance. In some cases it is difficult to assign them clearly to the pagan or Christian spheres of faith, which overlapped in the seventh century. However, with ecclesiastical organization tightening in the eighth century, the custom of ornamental discs disappeared. It is therefore probable that it had a more pagan character. Ornamental discs with stepped spokes like the ones in the Wewelsburg sun wheel symbolized the rolling sun wheel and were perhaps expression of a nature-based religious cult centered on the sun.³ A symbol with this meaning would fit well into the SS’s supposedly Germanic customs,

which combined nature-based religious ideas with a racist ancestor cult and celebrated the summer and winter solstices. However, such a connection has yet to be confirmed through reliable sources.

The Term *Black Sun*

As a symbol and idea the Black Sun – or nocturnal sun, dark star, black fire, etc. – has a long tradition in intellectual history (see Figure 5.2). In alchemy the term *sol niger* describes a meditative sinking into oneself as well as the process of blackening that metal undergoes during its transformation into gold.⁴ In nineteenth-century literature the Black Sun symbolizes melancholy, sadness, loss, despair, and destruction; in C.G. Jung's depth psychology, depression, trauma, and the integration of the shadow, among other things. Music, painting, and performance art have repeatedly invoked the image of a black sun.⁵

In the 1950s a small circle of former National Socialists in Vienna took refuge in the idea that certain esoteric groupings within the SS had continued to exist beyond the loss of the war and founded secret empires at the earth's poles. Their symbols are a yellow sun and a black sun.⁶ These ideas only later achieved a more widespread influence within right-wing extremist circles through Wilhelm Landig's novels, which will be discussed subsequently. The idea of the Black Sun appeared as early as the 1960s in fantasy literature, a genre that seeks to explain National Socialism through sorcery. In that literature Wewelsburg Castle serves as a secret SS initiation center but is not associated with the concept of the Black Sun.⁷ The symbol and concept turn up, for example, in the remarks of Robert Charroux (1909–1978), a bestselling French author of pseudoscientific books on ufology and archaeology in the manner of Erich von Däniken. In his publication *Le livre des secrets trahis* (1965, The Book

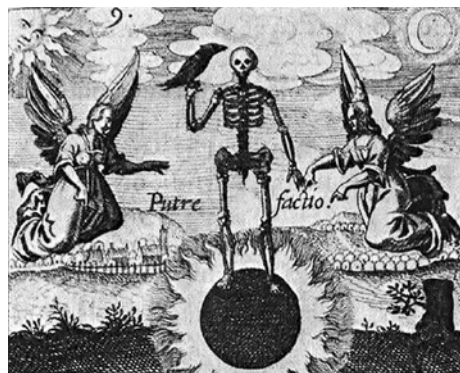


Figure 5.2
The Black Sun (*Sol Niger*), engraved
by Balthazar Schwan and published by
Johannes Daniel Mylius. *Philosophia
Reformata* (1622).

of Betrayed Secrets; German 1967) he draws a bold arc from prehistoric civilizations to the twentieth century. In the process he discusses the Hohenstaufen emperor Frederick II (1194–1250) and describes his purported plans to found a world religion under the banner of tolerance and establish his domination of the world. Charroux assigns the name *Golden Sun* to the quest for a tolerant universal religion in the tradition of Frederick.⁸ In contrast he connects “the Black Sun, whose fundamental concept may have initially occurred to the emperor at Castel del Monte,”⁹ with the “thirst for power ... in the service of an increasingly decaying truth” that followed Frederick’s reign, allegedly at the instigation of the knightly orders.¹⁰ The French author remarks that “the occupation with the Black Sun continues as a dangerous aberration among German folklore groups, whose tradition-conscious adherents are firmly convinced that it is the mission of the Germanic race to save white culture,”¹¹ thus linking the term Black Sun with National Socialism’s racial and ethnic policies. He describes in detail the activities of the Thule Society, for which Hitler had been the medium, as well as the occult trainings at the “order castles,” mentioning Wewelsburg Castle as one of these in passing.¹² Charroux ultimately depicts the two suns as opposing poles in the metaphorical Grail quest: “the Golden Sun and the chivalric search for knowledge versus the Black Sun and the Thule Society’s ambition for political domination.”¹³ André Brissaud presumably adopted this interpretation and negative valuation in his *Hitler et l’Ordre Noir* (1969, Hitler and the Black Order) from Charroux. He equates the Black Sun with the National Socialist, clockwise-turning swastika, which symbolizes the pursuit of political hegemony.¹⁴ Charroux’s nebulous remark about the Hohenstaufen ruler has apparently continued to evolve, with a title published somewhat later claiming that Frederick II and Hitler had invoked the Black Sun.¹⁵ This story found expression in popular culture as early as the 1980s, in a comic strip showing Hitler being initiated at a young age into “an occultist group called the Cult of the Black Sun.”¹⁶

The assignment of the term Black Sun to the Wewelsburg sun wheel was certainly given a lasting boost by right-wing extremist Austrian writer and publisher Wilhelm Landig (1909–1997), as well as by literature from the fields of conspiracy theory and ufology.¹⁷ Landig, a political activist, was involved in the illegal Austrian branch of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) as early as 1933 and took part in the National Socialist coup attempt in 1934. His political activities resulted in his having to leave Austria for Germany, where he worked at the German Labor Front’s Labor Science Institute. Landig is said to have engaged in anti-partisan warfare in the Balkans as a member of the *Waffen-SS* in the 1940s, until being ordered to Vienna in 1944 to join in the development of new military technologies – as he cryptically

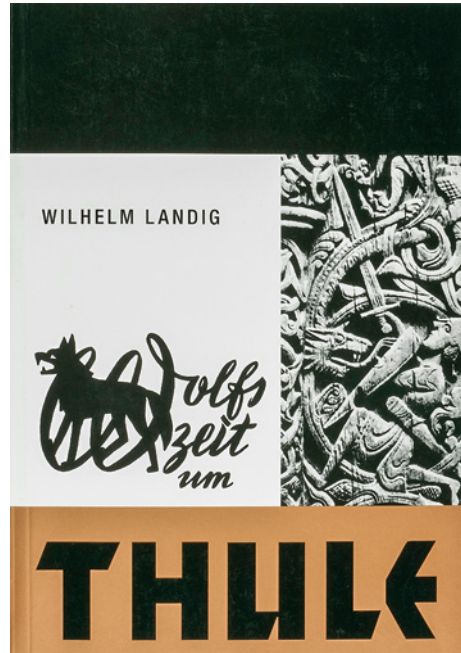


Figure 5.3
Wilhelm Landig, *Wolfszeit um Thule* (1980).

implied after 1945. Following World War II Landig was active in various far-right groups at the national and international level, including the Federation of Independents, a forerunner of the Austrian Freedom Party, and the European Social Movement, which had a strong anti-communist and anti-American thrust and sought rapprochement with the Arab League states. Landig also became a member of the World Anti-Communist League and founded the journal *Europa-Korrespondenz*. He was well-known in the circles he moved in and also highly respected in the heyday of his political networking activities.¹⁸

From 1971 to 1991, Wilhelm Landig published three novels: *Götzen gegen Thule* (1971, *Idols Against Thule*), *Wolfszeit um Thule* (1980, see Figure 5.3, *Time of the Wolf Around Thule*), and *Rebellen für Thule* (1991, *Rebels for Thule*). He began work on the first volume's manuscript as early as the 1950s, with the second and third volumes being released by Volkstum-Verlag, a publishing house he founded.¹⁹ Landig's books achieved veritable cult status in the right-wing scene and are still available as reprints. The trilogy's first two volumes deal with a covert circle within the SS that has established a base in the Arctic during the final phase of World War II. Hitler and Himmler are aware of the group but not among its initiates. German weapons are salvaged to Arctic Point 103, among them flying discs, in other words, UFOs, which are called V-7s in a reference to the German V-weapons (V for *Vergeltung*, or vengeance). The troop

insignia under which these men continue to fight after Germany's surrender is the "black roundel,"²⁰ or dot, whose color is actually a very deep purple. The emblem is referred to as the Black Sun and is the symbol of the "secret autonomous empire."²¹ Point 103 must be evacuated toward the end of the war, its personnel and material transferred to Antarctica and the South American Andes. The struggle continues from those locations, with the men developing contacts worldwide.²²

The fact that the SS's secret center is initially established near the North Pole is no coincidence. The choice of titles for the trilogy of novels refers programmatically to the legendary island of Thule in the far north. In *völkisch* mythology this is the ancestral homeland of the Aryan-Nordic race, which is considered superior to all other races and the only one capable of creating culture. Climate deterioration forced the race to leave its Nordic homeland and move south, where it established culturally advanced empires, which went into decline when the Nordic people mixed with lower races and degenerated. Here the island of Thule is associated with the legendary Hyperborean people, who also lived in the far north, and with Plato's tale of the sunken island of Atlantis, to give the mix of myths a racist slant.²³

According to Landig, remnants of the Atlantean-Nordic civilization still survive clandestinely at the North Pole, near the mysterious Midnight Mountain. They have magical powers, and whoever wins their favor can prevail in the political struggle to shape the world.²⁴ Thus, if the SS men succeed in uniting with forces from Midnight Mountain, "salvation and light"²⁵ will once again come from the North, "just as all cultural enrichment until now."²⁶ The Black Sun will then be replaced by the silver-white sun, "the color symbol of transformation."²⁷ The Black Sun is thus not solely a military symbol but also an esoteric one, which Landig has adopted from alchemy.²⁸

Landig describes the period following the defeat of National Socialist Germany as oppressive and dark. He calls it the "time of the wolf" (*Wolfszeit*) in an allusion to the *Edda's* depiction of the end of the world.²⁹ As Landig expounds at length, the victorious powers, directed by the Jews, conspired against Germany. During the war their battle was only ostensibly against the National Socialist government, but they were actually fighting the German "Volk,"³⁰ or people. In the anti-Semitic conspiracy scenario sketched out by Landig, the Jews have created a powerful organization in the form of the United Nations (UN), which one day is to constitute the world government. Behind the UN stands a worldwide brotherhood of Freemasons, whose head sits in Chicago and whose members have included Roosevelt and Churchill. The fact that the UN flag shows a map of the world centered on the North Pole

is proof for Landig that the Jews also want to tap into the secret center's powers.³¹ The war's victors, however, had "discredited everything Germanic with the catchword Nazism"³² to weaken any resistance to their own plans for world domination. The "equality propaganda"³³ spread by liberalist and communist systems is just a weapon to end the influence of the white elite. The Marshall Plan is meant to transform Germany into a sated and materialistic country that abandons its higher ideals.³⁴ Landig traces the struggle between the followers of Thule and the Jews back to ancient times, deeming it a struggle of good against evil. "With the overthrow of the Reich," as one of Landig's protagonists puts it, "all of the forces directed against the North triumphed, as did evil over good, which had been betrayed from the onset. It was in us and around us, and we all plunged into the maw of the Fenrir wolf – the guilty and the innocent."³⁵

As becomes clear in the course of the novel, Thule is for Landig "no longer purely a geographical term,"³⁶ but the expression of a mindset that remains true to a faith in the "people" and fights for that conviction:

Thule is the light and the power, the bridge from a superior race, ... with a culture-bringing mandate and mission awareness of a bloodstream that has not yet run dry. In this blood, which still flows in the veins of our living Nordic kin, there survives the clandestine singing around Thule, around the law of Midnight Mountain, around the assembly point in the North; where the last ones have gathered, in order to be the first again tomorrow or the day after!³⁷

In the novel the Black Sun stands for this worldview; it is "a secret sign for Thule"³⁸ and a battle symbol that is counterposed to the Jewish Star of David.³⁹ It represents the unbroken belief in the power of the Aryan race, the invisible fire, "of which a small glimmer still glows during the Time of the Wolf around Thule, awaiting reignition."⁴⁰ It stands for the supranational and supratemporal idea of the Reich: "It illuminates in the truest sense of the word a Reich in which this sun can never set!"⁴¹

This is the message Landig seeks to convey with his science fiction novels. In the third part of his trilogy, he states quite openly that he wants his stories to "help the Germans regain an awareness of their blood and history" so that they can "resist the decay and disintegration of the German national body."⁴² Landig illustrates how he envisions this in *Rebellen für Thule*, using as an example a school class that turns away from its leftist history teacher in disgust. The students choose instead to attend a series of private lectures that are to "enlighten" them about the myths of Thule and the Black Sun, the Nordic race's

creation of culture, and the background of the Jewish world conspiracy. This leads them to develop a sense of mission, and the novel ends with them proclaiming, “We are the rebels of Thule!”⁴³

Wewelsburg Castle plays no role in Landig’s novels, but he was obviously familiar with titles from the fantasy literature genre.⁴⁴ Landig’s circle of acquaintances also included authors who lent their own particular spin to the myth of the Black Sun, which they associated with Wewelsburg Castle, although not with its sun wheel ornament. The Chilean Hitler adherent Miguel Serrano (1917–2009) reports in his books, like Landig, about the struggle of a “mythic SS”⁴⁵ and counts Wewelsburg Castle among its “centers of initiation.”⁴⁶ In Serrano’s writing, however, the Black Sun is a star located behind the visible sun, close to the planet from which the Aryan race once came to earth.⁴⁷ Furthermore, in 1982 Landig’s Volkstum-Verlag published the first biography of Karl-Maria Wiligut (alias Weisthor), the rune expert and “ancestral seer” within the SS.⁴⁸ It was written by *völkisch* esoteric Rudolf Mund (1920–1985),⁴⁹ who presents Wiligut as a man who had a good influence on Himmler but was mistreated by the SS. Mund also propagates the story that Himmler chose Wewelsburg Castle on the advice of Weisthor, whom the author seems to view as a major influence on the project.⁵⁰ Mund traces Landig’s Black Sun, that is, the symbol of the black dot, back to Wiligut’s esoteric teachings, according to which a second sun had been visible in the sky thousands of years before our time, a star that had once shone down on the North Pole’s Hyperboreans and fostered their spiritual development. This sun is now dark and cold, but continues to radiate energy.⁵¹ Mund briefly mentions – although rather skeptically – Robert Charroux’s remarks about the Black Sun in connection with racist ethnic policy and the supposed link to Frederick II and Castel del Monte. Mund considered Charroux to be “by all accounts a high ranking Freemason.”⁵²

Wewelsburg Castle’s Sun Wheel Inlay as a Black Sun

It is difficult to reconstruct exactly how and when the term Black Sun came to be applied to the Wewelsburg sun wheel. The limited material available for research on the subject includes privately produced fanzines or other small-run magazines that reflect a particular world view. Such publications are not systematically collected or catalogued anywhere, so much depends on chance discoveries. At present, however, the transfer of the Black Sun concept to the sun wheel can be summed up as follows.

Wolfszeit (1990)

An early depiction of the Wewelsburg sun wheel under the designation Black Sun exists from 1990 and demonstrates that Landig's legend had been transferred to the Wewelsburg inlay by that time. The right-wing extremist, neopagan magazine *Wolfszeit*, which was renamed *Lebensborn* shortly after its appearance, used the symbol as its emblem. The magazine's title and its graphic design indicate Landig's influence. Corresponding to the cover of his novel *Wolfszeit um Thule*, the magazine's *Wolfszeit* logo incorporates an image of the Fenrir wolf, with a representation of the Wewelsburg sun wheel adjacent to it (see Figure 5.4).⁵³ *Wolfszeit*'s articles declare that the "blood" and "race" must be kept pure and call for a return to the "common law" of the "ancestors." Items offered for sale in an advertisement include an SS death's head ring.⁵⁴ The magazine was a non-commercial, black-and-white, donation-financed publication that was to appear irregularly depending on its economic situation.⁵⁵ It is unlikely that it was widely distributed.

An advertisement inside the magazine promotes the *Freundeskreis Wulf Sörensen* (Friends of Wulf Sörensen), whose contact person is named as the magazine's secretary.⁵⁶ This group also uses the Wewelsburg sun wheel as its emblem. In its information material it avows the "reintroduction and exercise of our native and species-appropriate worldview."⁵⁷ The Friends of Wulf Sörensen sees itself as the defender of the German people and race in a fight for survival: "As long as we can disseminate our benign ideas in the world, our KIND and RACE will not perish. Under the symbol of the Black Sun, we bring together the necessary energies that seem essential for our struggle."⁵⁸ The group was initially concerned first and foremost with the spiritual struggle. One of its brochures, "Cultivating the Reich," outlines the notion of an ideal empire based on the protection of the German people and nature; a "Reichs-Schutz-Staffel,"⁵⁹ or protective squadron, is to be responsible for internal security.

Why the group at *Wolfszeit* magazine chose to use the Wewelsburg sun wheel in conjunction with the term Black Sun is not explained, so the connection remains enigmatic. This adoption was probably fostered by two publications on the history of Wewelsburg Castle that appeared in the 1980s and included black-and-white photographs of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and the sun wheel.⁶⁰ The many books representing Wewelsburg Castle as a secret SS initiation site will also have contributed to the association of Landig's esoteric SS with the locality.



Figure 5.4 Wolfszeit: Messenger of the New Era, issue 1 (1990).

Allerseelen (1991)

Around 1990 the Wewelsburg sun wheel seems to have been known under the name Black Sun, at least in isolated cases. In 1991 the term was used in the *Aorta* series of texts by the controversial Austrian industrial musician Kadmon (aka Gerhard Petak), who headed the music group Allerseelen (All Souls' Day). The band also used the sun wheel emblem as its logo for several years.⁶¹

In his series of essays Patek has dealt with a broad range of topics that he has read up on – from ancient cults to modern writers.⁶² He has also shown a pronounced interest in National Socialism, although he considers it less a political movement with a racist ideology than a sorcerous, mystical phenomenon, a “nexus of power and sorcery, of politics and mythology.”⁶³ He is obviously

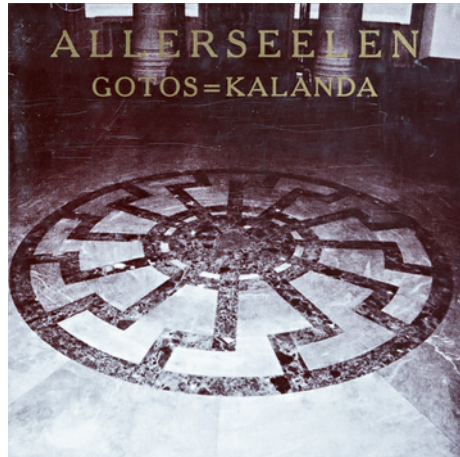


Figure 5.5
The cover of the *Gothos=Kalanda* CD by Allerseelen, showing the floor ornament in Wewelsburg Castle.

familiar with titles from the realm of fantasy literature and the legends surrounding a secret National Socialist base in Antarctica.⁶⁴

In 1991 Petak dedicated issue 6 of his *Aorta* series to the runic specialist Karl Maria Wiligut, who had come to his attention through Rudolf Mund's biography of the man. Mund's remarks about the Black Sun symbol and its connection to Wiligut's esoteric teachings had aroused Petak's interest, as had Wiligut's alleged influence behind the scenes in the SS.⁶⁵ The magazine contains a picture of the Wewelsburg sun wheel in the former SS *Obergruppenführer* Hall, taken from the illustrated book by Stuart Russell and Jost W. Schneider.⁶⁶ In the text Petak speaks quite matter-of-factly of finding the "symbol for the Black Sun⁶⁷ in Wewelsburg Castle's marble hall ... in the form of a marble ornament embedded in the center of the floor." He presumes the inlay can be traced to Wiligut's influence.

How Petak came to identify the symbol and term remains unclear, and he himself cannot recollect exactly how it happened.⁶⁸ He was already familiar with the term through his interest in alchemy and through the English music group Coil. The band's 1984 album *Scatology* features its symbol, the "Coil star," a star-shaped Black Sun with five straight rays and five curved ones. Its design alludes to the *sol niger* of alchemy as well as the human anus, thus combining mystical and sexual motifs. The subsequent CD release of *Scatology* showed not only the Coil star but also a naked buttocks.⁶⁹ Moreover, Petak was familiar with Rudolf Mund's book, Wilhelm Landig's *Götzen gegen Thule*, and Miguel Serrano's classic *The Golden Thread*.⁷⁰ Whether Mund's publication made him aware of Wewelsburg Castle is uncertain. However, it most definitely led

him to Castel del Monte in Apulia, Italy. Captivated by the old castle's atmosphere, Patek recited Wiligut's calendar cycle of poems *Gotos Kalanda* there and resolved to set them to music.⁷¹ The CD was then released in 1995 with a photograph of the Wewelsburg sun wheel on its cover (see Figure 5.5). This, in turn, shows how associative and emotional Petak's approach to the idea of the Black Sun is, with the connection to the Wewelsburg sun wheel being only one aspect of the matter.⁷²

Die Schwarze Sonne von Tashi Lhunpo (1991)

The political thriller *Die Schwarze Sonne von Tashi Lhunpo* (The Black Sun of Tashi Lhunpo) was also published in 1991. The novel was written under the pseudonym Russell McCloud, a journalist whose biography is otherwise unknown. His choice of words, however, indicates he must be Austrian.⁷³ The thriller was McCloud's first book, for which he had already produced outlines in 1987–88. He was introduced in an interview as a "specialist on esoteric secret societies and their influence in history and politics."⁷⁴

The novel's plot is set in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The European Union has supplanted the authority of the individual states in many areas and now constitutes the true government of Europe. The UN has become a powerful institution whose secret service intervenes in national jurisdictions. As becomes clear in the course of the novel, a conspiratorial brotherhood of international Freemasons stands behind both organizations. Its members control politics, business, and media; cover up murders as they please; and can silence anyone who thwarts their plans.⁷⁵ McCloud is obviously resorting here to a vintage conspiracy theory, one also adopted by Landig and others. Unlike Landig, however, he does not openly identify the Freemasons with the Jews.

The world public is shaken by a series of murders of prominent personalities from international finance and politics. Journalist Hans Weigert makes it his task to solve these crimes and ends up getting caught up in the turbulent course of events. The connecting element between the murders is a twelve-spoked sun wheel, which is branded onto the corpses and whose counterpart the journalist discovers in Wewelsburg Castle's *Obergruppenführer* Hall. During his visit there, however, he is only able to find out that no one knows exactly "why the emblem is in the hall."⁷⁶ The black sun,⁷⁷ as Weigert calls the sun wheel, ultimately turns out to be the sign of a secret society by the name of *Agarathi*. Weigert's search leads him to the Tibetan highlands, where, not far from the Tashi Lhunpo monastery, he meets the 91-year-old SS man Karl Steiner, who fills him in on the backstory.⁷⁸

Here the journalist learns in the novel's key passage that he only has a superficial understanding of the SS and that the true mission of the "black order" differs from the one presented in history books. The demise of Thule 12,000 years ago marked the end of an empire of a highly developed race. Its survivors spread around the world and split into two factions. The Agarthi group hoped humanity would evolve and partake in the divine, whereas the Schamballahs wanted to withhold their knowledge and be worshipped as gods.⁷⁹ A power struggle between these groups has shaped world history ever since. Members of the Agarthi, however, cooperated with the SS during the Third Reich. Steiner had been initiated into the Agarthi faith shortly after birth and received his last initiation at the "temple of Wewelsburg Castle"⁸⁰ before going to Tibet with the mission of preserving the secret knowledge beyond the loss of the war.⁸¹

The novel's storyline encourages a certain sympathy for the Agarthi men, even if the reader is not compelled to identify with them. They execute only their opponents, the Schamballahs.⁸² These, in turn, are identified with the Freemasons, who rule the world and are always ready to sacrifice innocent people to maintain their grip on power.⁸³ Steiner attempts to convince Weigert of his worldview but cannot dispel the journalist's skepticism.⁸⁴ The journalist, however, also resists the Schamballah representatives' efforts to win him over. They, in contrast to Steiner, exert enormous pressure on Weigert, offering him the alternative of joining the brotherhood and enjoying power or going to prison for two murders he did not commit.⁸⁵ The thriller thus ends in a stalemate. The Agarthi men have stolen the Spear of Destiny, known also as the Holy Lance of the Imperial Insignia, from the Vienna Hofburg, to use it in a ritual in the Wewelsburg Castle crypt. Their aim is to change the course of history: "The Spear of Destiny would cause procreation and death at the same time. Its power would breathe life into the Black Sun and awaken a new age. And at that very moment its tip would bore deep into the body of the old era and deal it a death blow."⁸⁶ Weigert interrupts the ritual, snatches the spear, and discards it in a lake.⁸⁷

The novel combines the elements of an exciting thriller with the legends of fantasy literature.⁸⁸ It enhances these with the symbol of the Black Sun and the new world order conspiracy theory concerning the UN, both of which point to Landig's novels as a source of inspiration. The authors of the three publications discussed presumably carried out their identification of symbol and concept relatively independently of each other. Petak claims to have neither met Russell McCloud nor read the *Tashi Lhunpo* novel at the time of his *Aorta* issue on Wiligut.⁸⁹ *Wolfszeit* magazine tended to have a low level of circulation. Petak's *Aorta* periodical was able to reach an international audience because

it was published in German and English.⁹⁰ McCloud's novel was only available in German.⁹¹ Despite presumably having been aimed at a broader readership, it was especially successful in right-wing circles. In April 1992 the magazine *Nation und Europa* named it Book of the Month, positively highlighting that the political thriller encouraged people to question the official account of history.⁹² In 1995 the Arun Verlag published a screenplay for the novel.⁹³ To market the book, it also launched a "Thule watch" that same year, a wristwatch whose dial showed Wewelsburg Castle's sun wheel inlay, in other words, the sign of Agartha. A "rat pad," a mouse pad with a Black Sun emblem, came out a year later but was not as successful as the watch. According to publisher Stefan Ulbrich's recollection, these were the first products of their kind,⁹⁴ with many more following from other sources. The publishing house has meanwhile stopped distributing the book as well as associated marketing products and fundamentally changed its entire publishing program.⁹⁵

Notes

- 1 See Hüser (1987), p. 61. This article is based on Siepe (2008). I would like to thank Dominik Ghonghadze for his assistance in updating and supplementing this text.
- 2 Bernhard Frank in conversation with Eva Kingsepp, n.d. [December 2008]. I have corrected spelling and grammar slightly and thank Eva Kingsepp for permission to quote from her interview notes.
- 3 The early medieval custom of wearing ornamental discs can be documented as of the end of the sixth century (Renner, 1970). On ornamental discs with stepped spokes, see p. 72. Wulff E. Brebeck, the then director of the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, investigated the possible connection between the sun wheel in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and Merovingian ornamental discs as early as 1995 and corresponded on the topic with the Römisch–Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz (see correspondence in the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg archive). Shortly thereafter, his research findings were presented at the museum on a display panel. His observations were first published in 1998, by a former museum staff member (Schäferjohann-Bursian, 1998, p. 367), then by Rüdiger Sünner in 1999, and finally by Wulff E. Brebeck in 2005, in a brochure released by the Deutscher Kunstverlag. See Sünner (orig. 1999), p. 148; (in greater detail in 2009, pp. 192–194); Brebeck (2005), pp. 76–78.
- 4 Examples can be found in a copiously illustrated book about alchemy compiled and with a commentary by artist Alexander Roob (2002, Taschen).
- 5 A compilation of excerpts can be found in Pontolillo (2013), although the author does not analyze or contextualize them. Eva Kingsepp is working on an essay on the topic. I thank her for a preview of her preliminary manuscript.
- 6 Writings from this group were published in the journal *Mensch und Schicksal* (Man and Fate). See, for instance, Schweikhart (1952), Breitenegger (1953), Schweikhart (1954). On the Vienna group and the journal, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 128–131; Strube (2013), pp. 144–150; and the essay by Frank Huismann, "Of Flying Disks and Secret Societies," in this volume.

- 7 On fantasy literature, see the essay by Daniela Siepe, “Wewelsburg Castle in Fantasy Literature,” in this volume. Excerpts on the authors discussed in the following can be found in Pontolillo (2013).
- 8 Charroux (1987, French orig. 1965, German 1967), p. 233. On Charroux, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 117–18.
- 9 Charroux (1987, French orig. 1965, German 1967), p. 233. Charroux sees the connection with the Apulian castle Castel del Monte on account of its particular numeric symbolism, with its architecture being characterized by the number eight. See Charroux (1987, French orig. 1965, German 1967), pp. 228–30.
- 10 Charroux (1987, French orig. 1965, German 1967), p. 233.
- 11 Charroux (1987, French orig. 1965, German 1967), p. 234.
- 12 See Charroux (1987, French orig. 1965, German 1967), pp. 235–60. Wewelsburg Castle is mentioned on p. 256.
- 13 Charroux (1987, French orig. 1965, German 1967), p. 251.
- 14 See Brissaud (1969), pp. 23–24. He refers to the counterclockwise-turning swastika as a golden sun, as the wheel of life, of fertility, of the chivalrous pursuit of knowledge, etc. The latter recalls Charroux, who is mentioned in the list of references. See Brissaud (1969), p. 466.
- 15 See Angebert (1971), *Les Mystiques du Soleil*, in Pontolillo (2013), pp. 450–58, here p. 454. On Angebert, see also the essay by Daniela Siepe, “Wewelsburg Castle in Fantasy Literature,” in this volume.
- 16 Morrison & Yeowell (2001, orig. 1988), n.p.
- 17 On Wilhelm Landig, the “Vienna group,” and the literature inspired by Landig, see also the essay by Frank Huismann, “Of Flying Disks and Secret Societies,” in this volume.
- 18 On Landig, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 129, 137; and Heller & Maegerle (2007), pp. 108–118. Heller and Maegerle interviewed Landig for their book.
- 19 Landig (1971), Landig (1980), Landig (1991). See Heller & Maegerle (2007), p. 111; and Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 128–30, 137–38.
- 20 Landig (1971), p. 136.
- 21 Landig (1971), p. 251. See, for example, also pp. 134–38, 141, 160, 171, 185, 485. See Landig (1980), pp. 30–31, 184, 230, 354–55, 470. On Hitler and Himmler, see Landig (1971), pp. 141, 177; and Landig (1980), pp. 31, 172, 230–32, 469–70.
- 22 For a summary of the Landig novels, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 137–47.
- 23 See Godwin (1993), pp. 63–69.
- 24 See, for instance, Landig (1971), pp. 52, 138–42, 170–71.
- 25 Landig (1971), p. 131.
- 26 Landig (1971), p. 52.
- 27 Landig (1971), p. 261. See also Landig (1980), p. 65.
- 28 For a reference to alchemy, see Landig (1971), p. 137; Landig (1980), p. 354.
- 29 See Landig (1980), pp. 475–76. In Eddic mythology the world is destroyed at the time of Ragnarok (Old Norse: “the final destiny of the gods”) and the gods are largely annihilated. The Fenrir wolf breaks free of its powerful bonds, devours the sun, and kills Odin in battle. However, the destruction of the world is not final, and a new age begins and a purified world rises from the sea. See Simek (1995), pp. 96–97; 330–32.
- 30 See Landig (1971), p. 128. For a summary, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), 137–47.
- 31 See Landig (1971), pp. 166–71, 471–73, 516. For a summary, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), 137–47.
- 32 Landig (1980), p. 201.
- 33 Landig (1980), p. 202.

- 34 See Landig (1980), pp. 197–219.
- 35 Landig (1980), p. 476. See also Landig (1971), pp. 169–70.
- 36 Landig (1980), p. 134.
- 37 Landig (1980), pp. 134–35. See also pp. 134, 232; and Landig (1971), p. 747.
- 38 Landig (1980), p. 354.
- 39 Vgl. Landig (1980), pp. 352–55.
- 40 Landig (1980), p. 355.
- 41 Landig (1980), p. 355.
- 42 Landig (1991), p. 7.
- 43 Landig (1991), p. 582.
- 44 The publications of Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier and of Trevor Ravenscroft are considered classics of fantasy literature. On this topic see the essay by Daniela Siepe, “Wewelsburg Castle in Fantasy Literature,” in this volume. On elements Landig borrowed from Pauwels and Bergier, who do not mention Wewelsburg Castle, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 141–42. In Landig’s *Wolfszeit um Thule*, the protagonists take an excursion to the Vienna Hofburg, where the Holy Lance is on display. Landig’s statements about the “spear of power and destiny” and its significance for Hitler indicate an adoption of Ravenscroft, among other things. See Landig (1980), pp. 453–55, 460–73; quoted material p. 463.
- 45 Serrano (1987, Spanish orig. 1978), p. 248. Serrano was the Chilean ambassador to Austria from 1964 to 1970 and had contact with Landig in Vienna. See Heller & Maegerle (2007), p. 127; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 189–90. On Serrano, see the essay by Frank Huismann, “Of Flying Disks and Secret Societies,” in this volume.
- 46 Serrano (1987, Spanish orig. 1978), p. 171.
- 47 See, for example, Serrano (1987, Spanish orig. 1978), pp. 37, 69, 93. On Serrano’s theories and publications, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 173–92.
- 48 On Karl-Maria Wiligut, see the essay by Kirsten John-Stucke, “Himmler’s Plans and Activities in Wewelsburg,” in this volume.
- 49 In 1958 Mund became a member of the *völkisch* Ordo Novi Templi (Order of the New Templars), founded by Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels in Vienna in 1900, and its head in 1979. He knew Landig as early as the 1950s. See Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 129, 134–35.
- 50 See Mund (1982), pp. 9, 12, 55, 115–16, 290.
- 51 Strictly speaking, there is mention of three suns: “the visible or active sun *Sol*, the invisible or passive counter-sun *Sun*, and the earlier, now cold, dark sun *Santur*” (Mund, 1982, pp. 153–54). *Santur* is then the “dark, black sun” (Mund, 1982, p. 154). See Mund (1982), pp. 153–63, and Mund (1981).
- 52 Mund (1982), p. 155.
- 53 *Wolfszeit: Bote des neuen Zeitalters*, issue 1 (November 1990), p. 1; and *Lebensborn: Bote des neuen Zeitalters*, issue 1 (November 1990), p. 1. Both first issues are identical except for the design of their titles. The Wewelsburg sun wheel is used in both issues, with another symbol in the title being changed. There is no explicit connection to Wewelsburg Castle, and it is noticeable that the design of the stepped spokes differs from the Wewelsburg original. Such deviations, however, also appear in subsequent stylized representations of the Wewelsburg sun wheel. Another source is unlikely. The SS and its symbolism were certainly known among the group involved in the magazine. On this topic see below. Landig’s book *Wolfszeit um Thule* is cited in the magazine at least twice. One example is an anti-Semitic passage in T. Gerhard Pätzold, “Licht im Rachen der Schlange” (Light in the Snake’s Throat), in *Lebensborn*, issue 4 (November 1991), pp. 2–5, here pp. 3–4; another

- is a passage criticizing the democratic principle in “Herr Heinrich, Heiden und ‘Politik” (Mr. Heinrich, Pagans and “Politics”), in *Lebensborn*, issue 5, February 1992, pp. 13–17, here p. 16.
- 54 See *Lebensborn*, issue 1, (November 1990), p. 6. The ring is offered together with an illustrated history of the death head’s ring that was first published in 1982 by militaria dealer Klaus D. Patzwall. In it the author also discusses the connection of the ring to Wewelsburg Castle. For a more recent edition, see Patzwall (2002). On the first edition, see *Lebensborn*, issue 1, (November 1990), p. 5.
- 55 See the magazine masthead in *Lebensborn*, issue 1 (November 1990), p. 2, and, on the first issue, p. 3. The Kreismuseum Wewelsburg archive has only six issues from the years 1990 to 1992.
- 56 See the magazine masthead in *Lebensborn*, issue 1 (November 1990, p. 2, and the advertisement for the Freundeskreis Wulf Sörensen on p. 8. The magazine’s secretary was also a member of the right-wing Arbeitsgemeinschaft Naturreligiöser Stammesverbände Europas (ANSE, Association of Natural-Religious Tribes of Europe) and the *völkisch* Armanen Order, and had contact with the Nationalistische Front (National Front). See Siepe (2008), p. 102, note 68; Mecklenburg (1996), pp. 367–69. On the connection between the Armanen Order and the magazine, see also Schnurbein (1992), pp. 66–67; on the categorization of the ANSE, see also Gründer (2008), pp. 92–99. Wulf Sörensen is the author of *Die Stimme der Ahnen: Eine Dichtung* (The Voice of the Ancestors: A Poem), Düsseldorf, 1933.
- 57 Freundeskreis Wulf Sörensen, registration sheet. Members of the group received *Lebensborn* as a newsletter. See *Lebensborn*, issue 1 (November 1990).
- 58 Information material: “Völker befreit man nicht durch Nichtstun, sondern durch Opfer” (Peoples are not liberated by inaction, but by sacrifice), 1990.
- 59 “Reichskultivierung, Für Natur, Volk und Heimatland (Cultivating the Reich: For Nature, Our People, and Homeland), April, 1990, 1st printing, p. 13.
- 60 See Hüser (1987, orig. 1982), pp. 290, 298; and Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), pp. 81, 82.
- 61 See *Aorta*, no. 6 (1991): *Karl Maria Wiligut*. In 2009 a compilation of all issues of *Aorta* was released in English by an American publisher. Petak was using the alias of Gerhard Hallstatt at the time of the book’s release and has continued to do. See Hallstatt (2009).
- 62 See the examples in Siepe (2008), pp. 104–5.
- 63 *Aorta*, no. 6 (1991): *Karl Maria Wiligut*, n.p. Work on the magazine concluded on 20 May 1991. See the last page.
- 64 In his *Aorta* magazines Petak repeatedly discusses, for example, Jean-Michel Angebert, a classic in the field of fantasy literature. See, for instance, *Aorta*, no. 7 (1991): *Katharsis: Auf den Spuren von Otto Rahn* (Catharsis: In search of Otto Rahn), and no. 8 (1991): *Castel del Monte*. See also Diesel & Gerten (2005), pp. 238–239.
- 65 See *Aorta*, no. 6 (1991): *Karl Maria Wiligut*, n.p. “In a bookstore I came across a book called *Der Rasputin Himmlers* (Himmmler’s Rasputin) about a little known and yet very influential figure behind the scenes in the Third Reich, which had fascinated me for some time as a nexus of power and sorcery, of politics and mythology.” “*Der Rasputin Himmlers* contains some promising passages on the symbol of the Black Sun, an emblem essential to Wiligut.”
- 66 See Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989), p. 82.
- 67 *Aorta*, no. 6 (1991): *Karl Maria Wiligut*. The magazine also contains a self-drawn illustration of the Wewelsburg sun wheel.

- 68 See email to Dominik Ghonghadze, 12 August 2013.
- 69 The title "Scatology" emphasizes the sexual and mystical motifs. Scatology refers to the scientific study of feces or the preference for using expressions to do with excrement and excretory functions. It played a role in ancient and medieval medicine, Tantrism, and alchemy. On this topic see Kadmon (2000), pp. 417–24. See also Maria Nicoli's review of the CD, *Coil (remixed by Black Sun – Plastic Spider Thing)*, www.ikonemmagazin.de/rezension/coil.htm (accessed January 2015); Diesel & Gerten (2005), pp. 156–57.
- 70 Through Coil Petak became aware of Miguel Serrano's writings. See Siepe (2008), p. 105 and note 83. In *Aorta*, no. 8 (1991): *Castel del Monte*, Serrano, *Das Goldene Band* (1987, *The Golden Thread*), appears in the list of references. On Landig see an e-mail from Gerhard Petak to Dominik Ghonghadze from 12 August 2013. Petak owns issues of the magazine *Wolfszeit* but says he obtained them later.
- 71 See *Aorta*, no. 8, 1991: *Castel del Monte*.
- 72 In *Aorta*, no. 8 (1991): *Castel del Monte*, Petak elaborates on the various places he encountered the symbol of the Black Sun: "In my search [originally in capital letters] I kept encountering the Black Sun; I found it in Egyptian and Aztec cosmology; I found it in the Book of Revelation; I found it in Gnosticism; I found it in medieval alchemy; I found it in *The Songs of Maldoror* by Lautréamont; I found it in Antonin Artaud's writings about the Tarahumaras; I found it in the allegory of the black hole; I found it on Coil's records; I found it as an emblem for chaos magic; I found it as a marble inlay at Wewelsburg Castle; I found it in a manuscript about the Austrian poet and rune specialist Karl Maria Wiligut. These and other encounters perpetuated the Black Sun in my soul, in my skin. The Black Sun led me to Castel del Monte, which I came across in a book about this Karl Maria Wiligut."
- 73 Russell McCloud is an allusion to Stuart Russell, who published an illustrated book on the history of Wewelsburg Castle in 1989. See Russell & Schneider (1998, orig. 1989). In the novel Stuart Russell turns up in the guise of Pierre Martin, author of *Himmlers Festung* (Himmler's Fortress). See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), p. 67. According to Goodrick-Clarke (2002, p. 121), Russell McCloud is a pseudonym for "a team of authors led by German science journalist Stephan Mögle-Stadel." Mögle-Stadel's press office, Globe, also states on its homepage that it implemented the book project on behalf of the Arun-Verlag publishing house: "The main author preferred not to be named in connection with this novel about the return of the SS order in the fight with the fictitious UN secret service. The author's name was chosen "to cloud something with a ruse." See www.pressebuero-globe.de/page_1134385285733.html (accessed 21 August 2014). According to the owner of the Arun publishing house, Stefan Ulbrich, in an email to Daniela Siepe (11 June 2013): "Stephan Mögle-Stadel is definitely not Russell McCloud." On McCloud, see also the interview with the novel's publisher in *Sigill* 11 (1996): "Stefan Ulbrich, oder warum ein Kulturguerilla Birkenstockschuhe trägt" (Stefan Ulbrich, or Why a Cultural Guerrilla Wears Birkenstocks).
- 74 See Holzmann (1994) for further information.
- 75 See, for example, McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 23, 49–54, 63, 87–88, 94, 111–13, 140, 179, 184–85, 202–4.
- 76 McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), p. 73.
- 77 McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), p. 41.
- 78 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 37–38, 41, 67–68, 73, 93, 105–6, 143–72.
- 79 The novel resorts here to a myth of two hidden underground cities, Agarthi and Schamballah, where secrets are taught. In some theories Schamballah is merely a synonym

for Agarthi; in others the two locations stand for different and feuding principles. The myth has become known in many Western European esoteric teachings. On that topic see Godwin (1993), pp. 79–93. According to Strube (2013, pp. 136ff), the story of Agarthi goes back to the Frenchman Jaccoliot, with it then being advanced by French and British individuals. Shamballah, on the other hand, actually stems from Tibetan Buddhism (but in that context obviously means something entirely different) and became known in Europe mainly through the theosophy of Helen Blavatsky.

80 McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), p. 167.

81 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 149–72. McCloud draws here on stories from fantasy literature about the National Socialists having an occult connection with Tibet. By inventing an SS expedition that Steiner supposedly accompanied to Tibet, McCloud alludes to a well-known SS expedition to Tibet in 1938–39 that visited the Tashilhunpo monastery, among other places. Led by zoologist and botanist Ernst Schäfer, the expedition participants conducted botanical, zoological, anthropological, and ethnological research. Given that Himmler's interest in Tibet was definitely influenced by pseudoscientific notions about Central Asia as a refuge for the Atlantean-Aryan race, this expedition is often cited in fantasy literature as “evidence” of a supposed occult connection to the secret Atlantean civilization. On this topic see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), 123–24, and Greve (1995), pp. 168–76; for an overview of sources and the state of research, see Mierau (2006), pp. 27–34, and on Schäfer's expedition, pp. 311–63.

82 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 168–70.

83 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 53, 96–100, 113.

84 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 143–74, 179–81, 199–200.

85 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 191–93, 244–60.

86 McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), p. 283.

87 See McCloud (1999, orig. 1991), pp. 293–300.

88 Perhaps with the added intention of promoting the book, publisher Stefan Ulbrich brought out an essay on the subject in 1992. In it he describes fantasy literature's conventional legends and cites Rauschnig, Carmin, Ravenscroft, and Buechner as authors of that genre. See Ulbrich (1992). The Black Sun as a symbol of Agharti has a possible interesting inspiration in Brissaud (1969), pp. 58–59. He ascribes the Golden Sun to Agarthi, “lieu de contemplation, cité cachée du Bien, temple de la non-violence et de la non-participation au monde” (a place of contemplation, a hidden city of Good, a temple of non-violence and non-participation in the world), and the Black Sun to Schamballah, “lieu de la violence, cité de la Puissance dont les forces commandent aux éléments, aux masses humaines” (a place of violence, a city of Power, whose forces command the elements and the human masses). As does Frère (1974, p. 120), who cites Brissaud in the list of references (p. 287).

89 See Gerhard Petak to Dominik Ghonghadze on 12 August 2013. Petak visited Wewelsburg Castle in 1990 with his musician colleague Michael Moynihan (Blood Axis). The unpaginated illustration section in Hallstatt (2009) includes a photograph of Michael Moynihan posing on the sun wheel inlay.

90 In independent music scenes there is usually a well-functioning international distribution and publicity system. For example, an American fanzine drew attention to the Wiligut text as early as January 1992. See *The Fifth Path*, no. 2, p. 40.

91 A “thought leader” of the intellectual right, Karlheinz Weißmann (2006, p. 149), curiously refers to an English edition of the novel with a publishing location of London, although no such English edition exists.

- ⁹² See *Nation und Europa*, 42/1992, issue 4, pp. 66–67. On the reception of the book in right-wing rock, see Thomas Pfeiffer's essay, "The Realm of the Black Sun," in this volume. The novel was also enthusiastically received in the circle around the Dresden neofolk fanzine *Sigill*. People from that scene later also collaborated with the Arun publisher.
- ⁹³ See Hess (1995).
- ⁹⁴ See Stefan Ulbrich to Daniela Siepe (15 January 2003); see also the publisher's brochure: Arun Verlag: Neue Wege – Neues Denken (New Paths – New Thinking), 1995; Ulbrich (1996).
- ⁹⁵ In the early 1990s Arun Verlag was still overtly political and *völkisch* in its self-image. It published edited volumes such as *Gedanken zu Großdeutschland* (1990, Thoughts on Greater Germany) and *Multikultopia* (1992) that featured well-known right-wing authors. Both volumes were edited by Stefan Ulbrich, the owner of Arun Verlag. At the time Ulbrich was also an editor at the national conservative newspaper *Junge Freiheit* (Young Freedom). On the publishing house and its evolution, see Gründer (2008), pp. 55–58. See also the publisher's position statement: "Stefan Ulbrich, publisher: Es ist leichter Atome zu spalten als Vorurteile ... (It is easier to split atoms than prejudices.)" www.arun-verlag.de/arun/selbstportraet/antwort_wenger.html (accessed 7 March 2002); Recent: About Stefan Ulbrich: www.arun-verlag.de/index.php/news-details/items/zur-person-stefan-ulbrich.html (accessed 26 August 2014). On Ulbrich see also the various references in Jäger (1994).

“The Realm of the Black Sun”

Wewelsburg Castle and Its Emblem in Right-Wing Extremist Worlds of Symbol and Myth

Thomas Pfeiffer

Outwardly, right-wing extremism in Germany has undergone profound change. Fluid structures and loose information networks have largely replaced rigid organizations. Today, the aesthetics, symbolism, and imagery of right-wing extremist parties, organizations, and cliques seldom directly suggest National Socialism. This shift has been all the more apparent ever since right-wing extremists began adapting stylistic elements from a wide variety of contemporary youth cultures. In these times of flux and modernization, one sign has remained fairly constant: the sun wheel with twelve spokes, borrowed more or less faithfully from the *Obergruppenführer* Hall of Wewelsburg Castle. Since the early 1990s, right-wing extremists have regarded it as an emblem of the legendary Black Sun, granting the image a stellar place in their symbolism. The sun wheel appears today not only in various strains of German right-wing extremism but also on a wide range of products and in all forms of media. In this context Wewelsburg Castle’s appeal to right-wing extremists has grown as well. What do right-wing extremists associate with the Wewelsburg sun wheel? How do they perceive it – what do they imagine it to be? What place do the castle and its symbol occupy among right-wing extremist symbols, images, and myths, and what strategic functions can the Black Sun fulfill?

Functions of Symbolism in Right-Wing Extremism as a Movement, Milieu, and Experiential World

Hans-Gerd Jaschke summed up the processes of change in German right-wing extremism in 1992. He took right-wing extremism as it was at that time to be a new social movement. As suggested, for example, by the network-like character of that scene and its activities in the prepolitical sphere, it was structurally, though not politically, comparable to the new social movements such as the predominantly left-wing student, peace, and ecology movements that had

emerged through new forms of action since the late 1960s. Initially a matter of great controversy, the movement-like nature of right-wing extremism is now rarely disputed.¹

Social movements are not monolithic apparatuses but fluid and heterogeneous entities held together by more or less vague common goals, joint mobilization, and a certain sense of shared community.² A necessary and precarious resource for integration is symbols – the cement of movements consisting of groups and organizations with different ideological and strategic profiles as well as factions agitating at different levels of intensity. For example, signs, clothing, and key concepts can promote this symbolic integration. Thus, symbols that strengthen cohesion at least in parts of the movement are essential. The Wewelsburg sun wheel could contribute to this end. Few, if any, symbols within the right-wing extremist movement are presumed to have a wider reach than the Black Sun, a conjecture explored further in the third section of this essay. However, the Black Sun is not suited to integrating those subsections of right-wing extremism that engage in xenophobic agitation but have no affinity to National Socialism. The latter case applies, for example, to groupings of the New Right such as the Identitarian movement, whose key characteristic is Islamophobia.

The contemporary right-wing extremist movement is supported primarily by adolescents and young adults. Although some of them are also members of parties such as the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) or neo-Nazi organizations, the milieu – or scene – is the predominant form of building a sense of community among right-wing extremist youth.³ An independent scene has now developed, particularly in the context of right-wing rock.⁴ According to Ronald Hitzler and Arne Niederbacher, scenes are “thematically focused social networks.” What connects them is often not political, but it certainly can be. Central elements for scenes are common signs, symbols, emblems, rituals, and behaviors. Through them, belonging is “staged and constantly (re)produced.”⁵

The appeal and attraction of right-wing extremism, especially to young people, is not usually determined by a political program but rather by opportunities associated with specific communities, action, and recognition. Right-wing extremists are aware of this and address their most important target group through leisure activities and media oriented to youth. This combination of leisure and entertainment value with political content that revolves around a xenophobic core, usually also around the glorification or at least the trivialization of National Socialism, has become the hallmark of contemporary right-wing extremism. It can be described as the “experiential world of right-wing extremism.”⁶

Symbolism contributes to the experience of right-wing extremism. It welds one's own group together and separates it from the environment. It conveys key political messages: images of the enemy, guiding principles, and points of reference. Symbols serve partly to display one's own patterns to the outside world and thereby demonstrate presence and power in the public sphere. Symbols are partly an element of insider communication, which is not meant to be understood by outsiders and which turns those belonging to the group into insiders. Last but not least, symbolism in the form of products serves the commercial interests of purveyors of right-wing extremist devotional objects. Several kinds of right-wing extremist symbolism are frequently encountered.

- The symbols of National Socialist organizations, such as the swastika, the sig-rune, the Hitler salute, and the Gau insignia of the NSDAP. Under German law none of these symbols may be used publicly. Right-wing extremist groups sometimes adopt elements of Nazi symbolism that are not punishable as such.
- Codes and ciphers such as 18 and 88 for "Adolf Hitler" and "Heil Hitler" or 28 for the neo-Nazi organization "Blood & Honour," which is banned in Germany (*Blut und Ehre* having been the motto of the Hitler Youth).
- Elements of Nordic mythology, such as symbolic references to Germanic peoples, Vikings, Celts, and corresponding mythology that randomly appear in right-wing extremism. These groups are construed as the ancestors of the "White race." Norse mythology is narrowed down to the "glorification of struggle and violent enforcement of the law of the strongest." Above all, it is positioned against Christianity ("Odin instead of Jesus"), which right-wing extremists usually regard as a "religion of weakness inappropriate to the species."⁷
- Color and flag symbolism, such as the combination of black, white, and red, which refers to predemocratic Germany and the Reich. These three colors are also used in the swastika flag. Black flags are widespread in neo-Nazi circles, and an emblem adapted from anti-fascist groups appears in particular among Autonomous Nationalists⁸: the black and red flag with the words *Nationale Sozialisten – Bundesweite Aktion* (National Socialists – Nationwide Action).
- Clothing brands. Obligatory dress codes persist only in a few groups. Nevertheless, affiliation can be signified by brands of clothing, including right-wing extremist labels such as Consdaple as well as brands that do not originate clearly, if at all, in this scene but that are very popular there. One example is Thor Steinar.
- The merchandising of right-wing extremist bands. This marketing creates opportunities to identify with the scene through corresponding logos. The

practice is especially true of cult bands such as Skrewdriver (the shibboleth of which is a curved *S* in the Skrewdriver logo) and Landser or Lunikoff⁹ (which use an *L* set in Gothic print).¹⁰

**Criminal Law and Measures for the Protection
of Minors from Harmful Media – The Black
Sun as a Surrogate for Actionable
Identifying Symbols**

The Black Sun can be used by right-wing extremist organizations as a substitute symbol for the swastika and other banned symbols because it is not covered by section 86a of the German Criminal Code (Use of symbols of unconstitutional organizations). That provision regulates which symbols may not be disseminated or used in public. The ban includes the symbols of the NSDAP and other Nazi organizations as well as those of parties and organizations that have been legally banned since 1945. The law defines symbols as, in particular, flags, insignia, uniforms and their parts, slogans and forms of greeting, that is, “all distinctive signs that are typical of a particular party or association.”¹¹ The scope of this formulation clearly encompasses the swastika as a symbol of the NSDAP and the double sig-rune as a symbol of the SS. It does not apply to the Wewelsburg sun wheel, which was uncharacteristic of the SS and even largely meaningless beyond that site.

Paragraph 2 of section 86a stipulates that the ban also applies to all symbols that are so similar to those of unconstitutional organizations as to be mistaken for those symbols. This wording covers, for example, swastikas in mirror image or rounded form and the Kühnen salute¹² substituting for the Hitler salute. But the Black Sun is not proscribed by this passage, either. The Black Sun contains swastikas as well as twelve sig-runes in mirror image, which, taken individually, would in principle be punishable. Nonetheless, the courts are probably right in assuming that the casual observer will not confuse the Black Sun with a swastika or a sig-rune.

The strategic function of the symbol is explicitly addressed, for example, by the Gummersbach district court: “Today, the ‘Black Sun’ is an important symbol of surrogacy and recognition of the right-wing esoteric to right-wing extremist scene.”¹³ The court saw the National Socialist content of the symbol but, for the reasons mentioned above, did not assume that criminal liability was involved. Some police authorities have attempted at least to prevent its use at neo-Nazi demonstrations. They have attached conditions prohibiting

the use of flags with symbols considered substitutes for National Socialist symbols or of identification insignia used by the right-wing extremist milieu and have specifically mentioned Black Sun flags, among other things. On several occasions such stipulations have been declared to be unlawful. Courts have justifiably pointed out that the Black Sun is not a criminally relevant symbol and that there is no indication that the use of the symbol would be likely to cause evident disturbance of public safety and order.¹⁴

By contrast, the ban on a neo-Nazi demonstration that was to take place in Wewelsburg in January 2002 under the slogan "Glory and Honor of the Waffen-SS" in conjunction with a concert was deemed legal. The event was announced on the website of an "Initiative of the White Species." The Federal Constitutional Court and the lower courts also based their decisions on the criminal offense known as incitement of the people (Section 130 of the German Criminal Code¹⁵) and assumed that the ban was permissible in view of the motto and the direct connection to Wewelsburg Castle.¹⁶

Measures taken against right-wing extremist publications to protect minors in the media have gained importance, particularly in cases involving the Internet. Germany's Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien (BPjM, Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Minors) can declare media content to be harmful to young persons even if it does not violate criminal law but does endanger their socioethical orientation. Media that are officially indexed (prohibited) – that is, included on the List of Media Harmful to Young Persons – are not permitted to be made accessible to minors, advertised, or sold by mail order.¹⁷ The Black Sun is not very relevant to such indexing decisions, either. The BPjM does recognize that the Black Sun is "one of the leading symbols of right-wing extremist groups,"¹⁸ finding that the symbol "is deciphered by the recipient as a commitment to National Socialism" especially if other right-wing extremist phrases or symbols appear in the context.¹⁹ In no case, however, has the Black Sun been a factor bearing directly on indexing-related decisions. It serves instead as an interpretative means for categorizing the ideological space in which a medium operates and, in particular, for clearly pointing out relations with National Socialism. Essentially, the same criteria apply to references to Wewelsburg Castle.²⁰

As a result, the public use of the Black Sun remains legally inconsequential for the most part. It is an element of strategies that right-wing extremist groups pursue to evade legal restrictions and sanctions. These groups seek to express right-wing extremist, usually National Socialist, ideological content, but they aim to avoid legal attacks. The chain of associations that the Black Sun should, and does, trigger in the observer who associates with this milieu is obvious:

from the symbol to Wewelsburg Castle, to National Socialism, to the SS. In this respect it is well suited as a legal means of allusion, as a surrogate symbol. It is questionable whether efforts to amend the law to address this issue would lead anywhere.

Receptions of the Black Sun and Wewelsburg Castle in Right-Wing Extremism

Although the connection between the Wewelsburg sun wheel and the myth of the Black Sun was not drawn until the early 1990s, the reception is older. By the 1980s Wewelsburg Castle itself had been discovered as a neuralgic location by old and new National Socialists. In March 1988, for instance, the Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (FAP, Liberal German Workers' Party), which was banned in 1995, rented Ottens Hof, a restaurant in Wewelsburg, on false claims and held its regional meeting there with Michael Kühnen. The veteran National Socialist Otto Ernst Remer also focused on Wewelsburg Castle. Remer took part in suppressing the 20 July uprising in 1944 and, after the war, joined others in founding the Socialist Reich Party, which was banned in 1952. In 1989 he invited people in Uelzen to an afternoon lecture entitled "The Personality and Ideas of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler." According to the invitation, it was also to be about the *SS-Schule Haus Wewelsburg* (the training center that Himmler had planned for the ideological education of SS officers). The speaker was Florrie (Florentine) Rost van Tonningen, the widow of one of the "most influential Dutch collaborators during the German occupation."²¹ Rost van Tonningen was active in international right-wing extremism until her old age. She mentioned Wewelsburg Castle in her autobiography as well. The castle was also the subject of *Recht und Wahrheit* (Law and Truth), a periodical created by Remer's Deutscher Freiheitsbewegung (German Liberation Movement).²²

Moreover, the myth of the Black Sun was anchored in parts of right-wing extremism preceding the 1990s. The main activists were those whom Julian Strube categorizes under the term *esoteric neo-Nazism*. To them the Black Sun has become one of the traditional motifs. Strube sees the Landig group as the nucleus of esoteric neo-Nazism. This circle, which formed in 1950, included two former SS men – Wilhelm Landig and Rudolf Mund – and Erich Halik. In their fantasy novels the Black Sun appeared, among other things, as an emblem of esoteric circles within the SS, which continued the struggle after the defeat of the Third Reich. The Black Sun does not correspond to the Wewelsburg sun wheel, however. The "esoteric SS" is said to operate, not least with the help of

unidentified flying objects, from secret bases located in various places, such as under the North Pole. Strube considers a series of novels by Wilhelm Landig, the Thule Trilogy, to be a standard work of esoteric neo-Nazism, in which the legendary spiritual center Thule is a linchpin.²³ In today's right-wing extremism, too, the Thule myth is frequently related to the Black Sun. It is not entirely obvious from which sources the authors of the Landig group drew the motif.²⁴ For Strube, the line of tradition leading to *völkisch* (ethnonationalist) esoteric Ariosophy, especially that of Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, is evident.²⁵ Motifs from the mythical worlds of the Landig group influenced a wide range of right-wing extremist esoteric writings in the subsequent decades.²⁶ (For a detailed discussion of the Black Sun in fantastic as well as fantasy and science-fiction literature, see the essays by Daniela Siepe and Frank Huisman in this volume.)

Sporadic writings that brought together the sun wheel, the myth, and concept of the Black Sun first appeared around 1990.²⁷ Their identification with the Wewelsburg sun wheel was spurred decisively by the 1991 novel *Die Schwarze Sonne von Tashi Lhunpo* (The Black Sun of Tashi Lhunpo) by the pseudonymous author Russell McCloud (see the essay on thrillers and comics by Daniela Siepe in this volume).²⁸ A veritable Black Sun boom followed in right-wing extremist circles, henceforth with a clear connection between the emblem and Wewelsburg Castle. As I show in the following sections of this essay, Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun figure in fragments of legends from esoteric neo-Nazism and partly also from non-right-wing extremist fantasy literature. These fragments are frequently known outside esoteric circles as well, presumably often among people who have never read the works in question. Certain mythical motifs such as the tale of the Spear of Destiny (the Holy Lance), which had allegedly been kept at Wewelsburg,²⁹ obviously circulate within segments of right-wing extremism, contributing to the aura of the castle and its symbol. Strube rightly assumes that the floor ornament has great power in these circles to generate a sense of identity, power that "goes beyond a mere function as a surrogate for a swastika."³⁰

Since the publication of McCloud's *Die Schwarze Sonne von Tashi Lhunpo*, three basic, ideal-type receptions and uses of the Black Sun symbol are discernible in German right-wing extremism:

- A purportedly ancient magical and mythical sign that is more or less vaguely linked to esoteric neo-Nazism.
- A design element characterizing a wide range of products, without explicit reference to Wewelsburg Castle. The sign's reference point is assumed to be known. The symbol refers to National Socialism, with more precise interpretation being left up to the viewer.

- An explicit reference to Wewelsburg Castle, in many cases to the SS as well, without mythical contexts becoming all-too pronounced. In that sense the castle and its emblem stand for the direct, traditional political line to National Socialism.

The NPD and the Neo-Nazi Milieu

The NPD and the neo-Nazi scene are sometimes categorized – especially by the authorities responsible for protecting Germany’s federal constitution – as separate types of right-wing extremism: “parliament-oriented” (NPD) and “action-oriented” (neo-Nazis). This differentiation has little meaning in the following paragraphs, for the actors and their receptions of Wewelsburg and the Black Sun overlap too much. For these groups, which often unite under the term *national resistance*, Wewelsburg Castle is a symbol of National Socialism and serves as an essential reference point in their political thinking and actions. At the center of the castle’s reception is the seemingly heroic site of the perpetrators, which is mythically charged to varying degrees. Participants in these circles have also correctly noted that many questions about the castle’s Nazi history remain unanswered. However, that statement is often made with the undertone that many spectacular secrets could still be awaiting disclosure. Alluding to inconclusive investigation of what could well be the rather minor significance that the castle may have had for the SS contributes less to dispelling its aura than to intensifying the mystery surrounding it. The Black Sun is considered the imaginary core of Wewelsburg Castle, the actual reason for its attraction. The fact that the castle and Niederhagen Concentration Camp were also sites of sacrifice has been largely obscured.

The NPD depicts Wewelsburg Castle and its sun wheel in detail in a small color brochure entitled *Das Reich der Schwarzen Sonne*,³¹ which was published in 2010 as a supplement to the party newspaper, *Deutsche Stimme*.³² Essentially, it advertised items of a mail-order organization, Deutsche Stimme Versand, and was accompanied by texts about the castle and the symbol. The brochure offered topical publications (some of them right-wing esoteric), posters of the sun wheel, pins, watches, and mugs.³³ The accompanying texts were written in a seemingly neutral style and implicitly claimed to represent the state of knowledge about Wewelsburg Castle and unanswered questions. In fact, they strongly pushed mythicization primarily intended to feed the incentive to buy. The promotional slogan read: “Be carried away, and plunge into the mysterious realm of the Black Sun.” There was mention of a “legendary symbol,” of a “cult symbol,” and of Wewelsburg Castle as a future training site for Himmler’s

"Black Order." The connection with National Socialism came through less explicitly in the brochure than through the fact that the castle's Nazi history was told exclusively from the perspective of the perpetrators. Niederhagen Concentration Camp was mentioned only in passing – in a derisive commentary on historical memory in Wewelsburg. Landig and Himmler were quoted extensively, and one page of the brochure was devoted to Karl Maria Wiligit (see Daniela Siepe's essay entitled "The 'Grail Castle' of the SS?" in this volume). The publication also mentioned Wewelsburg Castle as a tip for an excursion but referred to the site's rules and regulations, which prohibit right-wing extremist symbolism. In this respect the visit called for "some preparation and 'inconspicuousness.'"

The author of a text on the DVD *Jugend in Bewegung ... Schüler-CD des Nationalen Widerstands* (Youth on the Move ... Student CD of the National Resistance), which was also offered as a CD-ROM for download on the Internet, delves much deeper into the esoteric neo-Nazi box of myths.³⁴ According to this text, the Black Sun has an "ancient history" and is "seen and recognized as 'your' sign by self-determining people." Like Landig's publication, the text associates the symbol with "divine light." It takes motifs with an auspicious ring, such as the "Midnight Mountain," the "Age of Aquarius," and various prophecies, and combines them into a crude esoteric smorgasbord. The viewer of the DVD and the CD also encounters the sign in the picture gallery, where the Black Sun shines above an undulating landscape in the evening. In addition to the DVD and CD, the provider concurrently offered the board game *FSN* for download. The abbreviation stands for "frei – sozial – national" (free – social – national), a rallying cry popular in the German neo-Nazi scene. The idea of the rather elaborately designed game is based on *Monopoly*, with the tokens being "cadres" and "activists" who build up "bases" and collect "action points." Wewelsburg Castle appears on the board roughly where the Reading Railroad is located on the traditional *Monopoly* board; another place on the board is labeled as the military cemetery in Halbe, Brandenburg, where neo-Nazi demonstrations regularly took place at times. Yet another spot is labeled as the Marienburg, the castle on whose grounds one of the NSDAP's four centers for training the SS elite (*Ordensburgen*) was to be built. Still other squares on the board bear the names of innocuous buildings like the Semperoper (Dresden's Semper opera house) and the Kölner Dom (Cologne Cathedral).

For certain neo-Nazi groups in whose logos the Black Sun appears, the symbol either has or had special significance for forging group identity. For example, the symbol was part of the logo of the organization with the exotic name of Alternative Nationale Strausberger Dart Piercing und Tattoo Offensive (ANSDAPO), which was banned by the Brandenburg Minister of the Interior

on 4 July 2005.³⁵ It is thus illegal to use the symbol to refer directly to the ANSDAPO. The symbol was also part of the logo of the Mädelring Thüringen (MRT; Thuringian Girls' Association), which was active between 2003 and 2006. Its logo consisted of the Midgard Serpent winding through the Black Sun and the letters MRT. The symbol also appears as a distinctive feature on the black bomber jackets that are like a uniform of the neo-Nazi organization Heidnischer Sturm Pforzheim (HSP).³⁶ It constituted the logo of an Internet domain that emerged in 1996 from the neo-Nazi mailbox network known as Thule-Netz (see Figure 6.1), one of the first Internet platforms of German right-wing extremism.³⁷

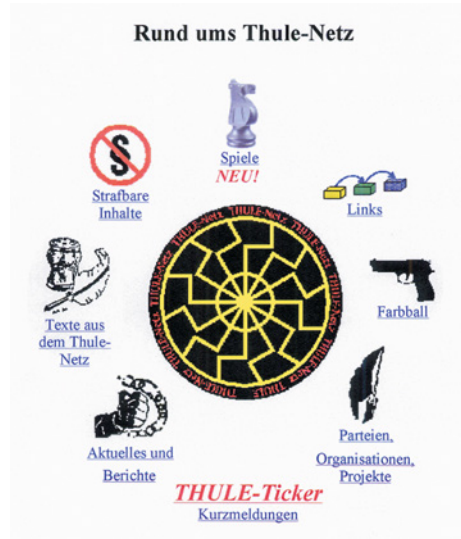
The Wewelsburg sun wheel repeatedly appears as tattoos as well. Tattoos generally suggest a very intense personal and emotional bond, inherently conveying the aspiration to eternal fealty. Tattoos were on display on 3 August 2013 in Bad Nenndorf at the eighth neo-Nazi demonstration under the slogan "Imprisoned – Tortured – Murdered! Then as now: Occupiers out!" Tying into discourses of revisionist history,³⁸ these neo-Nazi marches take the presence of a former British interrogation camp as an opportunity to attack historical "edifices of lies" and a "guilt complex bred since the end of the war." The web portal recherche-nord, which is directed against right-wing extremism, has published photos of the demonstrators on the Internet, clearly showing Black Sun tattoos on the forearm and nearly the entire shaved head of a demonstrator. The sign is also visible as a T-shirt motif.³⁹

People in NPD or neo-Nazi circles take excursions to Wewelsburg Castle with some regularity. Occasionally, some of these visitors prove to be well acquainted with the castle and undertake their own guided tours for their group. Such outings sometimes also include the Externsteine and Hermann Monument, which are not far away. Accounts on the website of the Freie Netz Saalfeld (Saalfeld Free Net) in Thuringia depict two visits in 2010 and 2011. Presumably representative of many right-wing extremist visitors, one author complains that the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and the crypt have meanwhile been "desecrated" by degenerate art hung on the walls of the crypt, and decries that the hall has been abused with beanbags as an "antifascist education room" for groups of schoolchildren.⁴⁰ The religious wording is striking, as is the direct reference to Nazi jargon.⁴¹ The right-wing extremist video blogger Nikolai Nerling, alias Der Volkslehrer (The People's Teacher), is also upset about the redesign of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and voiced his displeasure on the Internet in an account of a visit to Wewelsburg Castle in January 2020.⁴²

There are remarkable statements by two right-wing extremists, including the then-district chairman of the NPD in Bremen, whom journalist Michael Weisfeld accompanied on trips to the Auschwitz Concentration Camp

Figure 6.1

The Thule Network's former website, which went online in 1996 under the sign of the Black Sun. From 1998 onward, it contained an area for content punishable under German law. Clockwise from the top: *What's Where in the Thule Network*; Games New!; Links; Paintball; Parties, Organizations, Projects; THULE-Ticker (News Flashes); Current News and Reports; Texts from the Thule Net; Criminal Content.



Memorial, the Hermann Monument, and Wewelsburg Castle. The sound bites exemplify two strategies for dodging critical examination of the crimes perpetrated by the National Socialist regime, specifically the SS, and for reconciling them with an explicitly National Socialist self-image. First, the two speakers deny or doubt the crimes, making sarcastic statements about the victims and confrontation with the past.⁴³ Even though the persons involved are strikingly open in front of the journalist's microphone, they most probably have the boundaries of criminal law in mind. For example, one of the right-wing extremists imitates an interview with the other, asking shortly before arriving at Wewelsburg Castle: "You're about to go to Wewelsburg Castle. What do you feel? A mystical orgasm?" / "Something is already moving me inside. Yes." / "What do you think when you come into a room where Heinrich Himmler planned his acts of terror?" / "You have to understand that Himmler was at the castle only three or four times, so I hardly believe that he planned his acts of terror there, if he planned any at all."⁴⁴ In the second strategy the SS represented by Heinrich Himmler and discredited by murders is distinguished from a "real" or "true" SS, for which Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun stand. Himmler is thereby set in contrast to his Rasputin, Karl Maria Wiligut (Weisthor). The two right-wing extremists in the interview ponder:

If the SS were built up more like Weisthor would present it, then it would have more the character that we imagine it having, why we worship the SS. ... But Himmler is wacky. He was simply the wrong man. The guy

shouldn't have been, then a lot of things wouldn't have happened." / "Not in that position." / "Not in that position. And then maybe people couldn't have generalized like that. ... Himmler is a man who embodies the image of the Auschwitz-murdering Nazi, and Weisthor, in my opinion, does not. Himmler was simply inhuman. The guy simply should have been shot in '33."⁴⁵

Online Merchandising

In 2020 there were 69 right-wing extremist online outlets in Germany offering audio media and other propaganda materials.⁴⁶ Distributors based in Germany that are active in the milieu generally offer products that are permitted under the German Criminal Code.⁴⁷ Online distributors whose names have a particularly close association with Wewelsburg Castle are Schwarze Sonne Versand in Rain, Bavaria; and Wewelsburg Records in Leer, Lower Saxony. The latter organization, in addition to its online mail-order business, has an eponymous CD label, whose website used to show the northern tower of Wewelsburg Castle as an eye-catcher. Occasionally, the Black Sun also appeared in the logo of the Wikingerversand in Geiselhöring, Bavaria, which is considered one of the largest right-wing extremist online distributors in Germany. At that time the logo was a coat of arms with a Viking head from which twelve spokes emanated in the style of the castle's floor ornament. The websites almost never give further detail about the castle and the emblem, their nimbus being effective even without precise reference.

These right-wing extremist distributors and others offer the Black Sun as a design element on nearly anything that can be printed. The vast majority of right-wing extremist online stores carry merchandise with the symbol. An overview compiled from several right-wing extremist stores includes the following items:

- Posters, flags, stickers, buttons, and other common media for making political statements
- T- or muscle shirts, shirts (including those imprinted with slogans such as "Light of the North – Wellspring of Power" or "The Victory of Light"), hoodies, militia caps, belt buckles, underpants (boxer shorts and girlie underwear, see Figure 6.2), and other apparel
- Pins, rings, pendants (silver, bronze, wood, stone, plastic, or cattle bone), earrings, and other jewelry
- CDs, videos, books, and other media
- Flower columns and other furnishings
- Watches, cigarette lighters, car seat pads, stamps, and other things



Figure 6.2 Two of many devotional items bearing the Wewelsburg sun wheel and available through various mail-order companies. Left: Crocheted doily; right: panties (Kreismuseum Wewelsburg).

Right-Wing Rock

Right-wing rock – music with right-wing extremist lyrics and references – is not a distinct musical style and is not stylistically uniform. The genre was long dominated by musical variants harking back to the youth culture of skinheads and, hence, indirectly to punk. Right-wing rock, too, has become differentiated since the early 1990s, with stylistic variations of gothic or dark-wave culture, Black Metal, and rap in particular having emerged or gained in importance.⁴⁸ A total of 157 bands were active in this scene nationwide in 2020, and the number of right-wing extremist songwriters and solo artists was about 60.⁴⁹ The Black Sun is encountered especially in classic right-wing rock, in a right-wing extremist current on the fringes of the gothic scene, and in Black Metal.

The following overview is not exhaustive. It is based on approximately forty CDs that refer textually or pictorially to Wewelsburg Castle or the Black Sun. A few of the bands mentioned are no longer active. These motifs are frequently used on CD covers and in booklets, somewhat less frequently in song lyrics.⁵⁰ Their function as a surrogate symbol is particularly clear on the covers of the CDs *Irgendwann einmal*, *Kaiserreichstreue* (2002, Someday, Fealty to the Empire) and *Deutschlands Zukunft* (2005, Germany’s Future) by the Düsseldorf band Reichswehr (Imperial Army). All three covers show the NSDAP’s Reich eagle with an oak wreath enclosing the Wewelsburg sun wheel instead of the swastika. Eagle, wreath, and sun wheel hover above the plenary hall of the Bundestag on the cover of the CD *Irgendwann einmal*. The symbols shine brightly, virtually portraying the coming Day X, when National Socialists take power outright as a hope of redemption (see Figure 6.3).⁵¹ Religious motifs

are also found on the cover of the CD *Auftrag Deutsches Reich* (2003, Mission: German Reich) by the band Stahlgewitter (Steel Storm) from Meppen, Lower Saxony. It shows the figure of an angel in combat, an image obviously based on the myth of Germania. Surrounding her head, like a halo, is the Black Sun (see Figure 6.4).

Wewelsburg symbolism pervades the CD *Stimme des Blutes* (2005, Voice of Blood) by the Baden-Württemberg band Race War. The cover has an image of the northern tower; part of the sun wheel appears in the upper right corner; and the back cover shows the *Obergruppenführer* Hall, the same photo printed on the CD. Pictures of SS men fill the intervening spaces. In the booklet they are also depicted as guards of a concentration camp. This veneration does not follow patterns of myth; it focuses instead on the SS as a power apparatus and obviously alludes to the band's fantasies of omnipotence (see Figure 6.5). An expansive view of Wewelsburg Castle also features on the cover and in the booklet of the CD *Eisener Wille und stolzes Herz* (Iron Will and Proud Heart) by the band Odessa (Leipzig, 2002) and on the CD *Wir folgen* (We Followers) by the band Gipfelstürmer (Summiteers), whose music oscillates between classic right-wing rock and Black Metal.

The lyrics connect Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun with conspiracy myths, openly racist patterns, and/or the glorification of the SS. The track "Mitten unter uns" (Right in Our Midst) on the 1988 CD *Widerstand* (Resistance) by the band Staatsfeind (Public Enemy) was obviously inspired by the plot of the fantasy thriller *The Schwarze Sonne von Tashi Lhunpo*. The song tells of the fight between the forces of the Agarathi and the Shamballah and a decisive nighttime battle for the Spear of Destiny at Wewelsburg Castle. The song sides with the Agarathi, who in the novel also stand for National Socialism, and intones: "Ihr Schläfer von Agarthie / bald seid ihr wieder da / zerstört das Dreiecksauge / vernichtet Schamballah." (You sleepers of Agarathi / Soon you will be back / Destroy the triangular eye / Destroy Shamballah.) As in the novel, the counterpart is identified with Freemasonry.

The band Gigi & Die Braunen Stadtmusikanten (Gigi & The Brown Town Musicians), from Meppen, Lower Saxony, performs its lyrics in music styles suitable for parties (frequently also in cover versions). The group (whose name alludes to the Town Musicians of Bremen, one of the folk- and fairy tales collected and published by the Brothers Grimm in the nineteenth century) treats the Black Sun as a leitmotif of the "White race."⁵² In the song "Über Gräber vorwärts" (Forward over Graves) on the CD *Adolf Hitler lebt* (Adolf Hitler Lives, 2010), the listener hears,

Über uns die Schwarze Sonne in einer weißen Welt
Über Gräber vorwärts, auch wenn alles hier zerfällt ...

Stirbt die Schwarze Sonne, stirbt die weiße Welt
Dauert es nicht lange, bis auch eure gänzlich fällt

Mit den bloßen Händen kratzt ihr sie aus dem Sarg
Der Tod der weißen Welt wird nämlich euer eigenes Grab

[Above us the Black Sun in a White world
Forward over graves, though all that's here is crumbling ...

If the Black Sun dies, the White world dies
It won't be long 'til yours caves in completely, too,

With bare hands you'll scrape it from the coffin
The White world's death will be your own grave]

Notions of a Day X play a role in these lines, too. Elsewhere in the lyrics there are also visions of a Germany extending over Central and Eastern Europe. With similar motifs of old and new, decline and revival, the band Gipfelstürmer invokes Wewelsburg Castle, which, like the Black Sun, stands for what is new, what is rising from the ashes. As the song "Über dem Tale" (Above the Valley) proclaims,

Über dem Tale der Alme steht unsre Wewelsburg
Geschändet und verunstaltet von Niederen heute verwaltet
Zum Schandfleck heute verkommen, sie wartet doch auf ihre Schlacht
Das letzte Bollwerk wird kommen, wenn nur das Reich neu erwacht.

[Above the valley of the Alme stands our Wewelsburg
Desecrated and defaced, run by lowlies now
Today degen'rate and disgraced, awaiting battle after all
The final siege will come if only the Reich awakes again.]

The fact that Wewelsburg Castle is more than a place, that it is a principle and a source of power, clearly comes across in the song "Schwarze Schar" (Black Horde) by the right-wing extremist musician Michael Müller, who died in 2009. The song invokes the "spirit of Wewelsburg Castle" to take up an existential

struggle for *Nordland* (the homeland in Nordic myth), *die Art* (species), *das reine Blut* (pure blood), and against their enemies:

Keine Zeit für Schwäche, keine Zeit für Reue, die Rettung steckt in
 Dir selbst
 Du schlägst den Teufel aus der Hölle, wenn du den Geist Nordlands
 in Dir weckst
 Holt die Schwarze Schar – nordische Hünen, Runenringe, der Geist
 der Wewelsburg ist nah
 Holt die Schwarze Schar – Ehre und Treue sind der Glaube, gestählter
 Wille in der Gefahr

[No time for weakness, no time for remorse, salvation resides in you
 yourself
 You blast the devil out of hell upon awakening your Nordland spirit
 Rally the Black Horde – Nordic giants, runic rings, the spirit of Wewelsburg
 Castle is near
 Rally the Black Horde – Honor, fealty are the creed, a will now steeled in
 danger.]

Stylizing the victimization of one's own group in the manner heard in this song is prevalent in right-wing extremist circles. On the one hand, the group is portrayed as a protective force against threats and danger. On the other hand, the song casts it in the tradition of the SS – as the Black Horde is maybe to be understood – and contains clear racist motifs. Whereas this message is pushed by hard, driving rock, the song “Wewelsburg” by the Bautzen band Asatru on an eponymous CD (2004) with very similar content corresponds more to a rock ballad: “in der Wewelsburg verbirgt sich unsere Macht” (our might lies hidden in Wewelsburg Castle) and “das Symbol wird zum Urquell unserer Kraft” (the symbol is the source of our strength).⁵³ Asatru, meaning “faith [or belief] in the Æsir” (the Germanic gods), is a reference to a pre-Christian Nordic religion and its modern revival.

Until recently, Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun have been constant visual and textual motifs in the right-wing extremist music landscape. This prominence is reflected in decisions by the Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien (BPjM, Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Minors) as well. In November 2016, for example, the board indexed the CD *Agonie d'une Nation* (Agony of a Nation) by the French Black Metal band Vermine (Vermin, Scum). The CD's booklet and cover display a surfeit of right-wing extremist codes and symbols, including the Black Sun in the booklet. Another band of the



Figure 6.3
The Black Sun as a surrogate symbol substituting for the swastika in the oak wreath on the cover of a CD by the band Reichswehr (Imperial Army). The cover prophesies the day when National Socialists will take power "at some point."



Figure 6.4
Germania with a Black Sun halo: Religious motifs on the cover of the CD by the band Stahlgewitter (Steel Storm).

Figure 6.5
Wewelsburg Castle, the Black Sun, and SS men appear on the cover of a CD by the band Race War, venerating the SS power apparatus.



Black Metal genre is the British group Adalruna, whose CD *The Secret King and the Black Sun* was likewise indexed in December 2019. Hessel 311, a band rooted in original right-wing rock, has a demo CD (indexed in April 2019) featuring a Black Sun on the cover. The booklet that the band Schlachtruf Germania (Battle Cry Germania) published with its CD *Weihe spruch* (Consecration, indexed in February 2020) depicts Wewelsburg Castle. Lyrics by the band Heiliger Krieg (Holy War) contain a similar reference (“The Black Sun is the symbol of power / which gives us strength even in the darkest hours”). The band’s CD *Treue um Treue, Blut um Blut* (Fealty by Fealty, Blood by Blood) was indexed in January 2019. In June 2017 the BPjM classified the Reichszeugmeisterei online shop as harmful to minors for offering lollipops bearing the image of the Black Sun.⁵⁴

Right-Wing Current of the Gothic Milieu

Within the right-wing rock scene, players on the periphery of the gothic scene⁵⁵ are a special type, especially when it comes to their references to Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun. No other German-speaking gothic musician is better known for right-wing extremist symbols and statements than Josef Maria Klumb. Under the stage name Josef K., he was involved in bands such as Forthcoming Fire and Weissglut (White Heat) and later appeared as the frontman of the band Von Thronstahl. In 2011 he announced that they had split up.⁵⁶

Klumb’s public statements are diffuse and riddled with right-wing extremist references. In interviews he has called himself an independent fascist [*Individualfascist*] not tied to any organization but also not a lone warrior; has referred to Benito Mussolini and the British fascist leader Oswald Mosley; has espoused conspiracy myths, some of them anti-Semitic, and fragments of ethnopluralist⁵⁷ ideology tying in with the intellectual New Right; and has resolutely opposed the principle of human equality.⁵⁸ His key symbol and trademark is the Black Sun (see Figure 6.6). It is ubiquitous in song lyrics,⁵⁹ on CD covers, and in the stage performances of the bands. In his opinion the sign presumably harks back “umpteenth thousand years.”⁶⁰

Substantively, it vaguely represents the roots of the homeland and the antithesis of modernity. To Klumb, the symbol is chiefly a means by which to shape his public image: It is a countersymbol to the mainstream and an instrument for celebrating the breaking of taboos. It is a unique selling point that guarantees attention both within the scene and in the wider public – it is provocative and yet legal. As Klumb put it in an interview with journalist Michael Weisfeld:

Figure 6.6
The Black Sun as a trademark and an element of a "fascistoid," "anti-modernist" aesthetic: image on the former website of the band Von Thronstahl.



In recent years we have stylized the Black Sun as a symbol. Not just me, but others, too, independently of each other. We wanted to use a symbol that was considered untouchable but not yet banned. The Black Sun shines more than ever nowadays and has a magical allure. I wanted to bring a symbol into the public sphere, perhaps as a counterpart to the peace sign, a counter-symbol. ... We hang the Black Sun in the firmament and simply let it shine.⁶¹

As much as the statements by Klumb are saturated with Nazi apologetics, his relationship to National Socialism is marked by ambivalence. The Third Reich appears neither altogether good nor bad. In his interview statements National Socialism and the SS are separated from their aesthetics, which fascinate him intensely. In the whole world, says Klumb, there is "no uniform more attractive" than that of the SS: "[T]hat is just sexy." The double sig-rune and other Nazi symbols, he asserts, are "magical signs," the "whole Nazi aesthetic is just perfect," "it's absolute magic," "but sometimes also black magic."⁶² A "fascistoid" and "antimodernist" aesthetic is the way "we rebel against this modern world,"⁶³ says Klumb with a presumably conscious nod to Julius Evola.

A distinct reference to the Black Sun is also apparent in the gothic milieu of the Viennese musician Gerhard Petak ("Kadmon") and his project "Allerseelen" (All Souls). Overall, the symbol is not characteristic of the gothic scene. Now and then, however, it is used uncritically. In 2009, for example, tickets to the annual Wave Gotik Treffen (WGT) in Leipzig – with an attendance of 20,000 to 30,000 people making it one of the largest festivals of this youth culture – featured an eye with a shimmering Black Sun. The tickets triggered very controversial discussions within the scene.⁶⁴ There were also fierce disputes about the performance by Von Thronstahl at the WGT 2000. The city of Leipzig had barred Klumb's performance. The members of the band, without their

frontman, took the stage anyway and posed while a recording of their own music played, with their flag flying the obligatory Black Sun.⁶⁵

Intellectual New Right

The affinity between gothic culture's periphery and right-wing extremism stems primarily from interrelationships with the actors and ideas of the intellectual New Right.⁶⁶ To the extent that gothic culture takes note of Wewelsburg Castle, in particular the Black Sun, the reception reflects the nebulous understanding of the aforementioned actors. Among certain groups of the New Right, it scarcely occurs at all, for they shun the positive reference to National Socialism because they either actually do disassociate themselves from it or do not want to identify with it for tactical discursive reasons. In other segments of the New Right, the elitist self-concept combines with a turn to mythical, esoteric, even pagan patterns, which according to this view inform the essence of an "Indo-European" culture or race.

The latter orientation is particularly true of the Thule-Seminar, founded in Kassel, Germany, in 1980 and modeled on the French *Nouvelle Droite*. The Thule-Seminar is a neopagan association against pluralism and is intent on actively promoting for the rebirth of Europe under the protection of "original European genetic material." At times the organization has indeed spurred the intellectualization of German right-wing extremism, but today its importance amounts to little more than that of a right-wing extremist sect. The ideologue, or ideological element, at the center of the Thule-Seminar's conceptual edifice is ethnopluralism. The Thule-Seminar is mainly concerned with a European culture rather than with a German culture whose homogeneity is to be preserved. Unlike many exponents of the New Right, it explicitly propagates "race" and in the past has disseminated the idiosyncratic slogan "Rasse ist Klasse" (Race is Great) on stickers.⁶⁷ In the 1990s the Thule-Seminar was one of the first right-wing extremist organizations in Germany to focus its symbolism on the Wewelsburg sun wheel, which it uses as a logo to this day (see Figure 6.7). However, the Thule-Seminar has not given a detailed explanation of what it considers this sign to mean.

Another example is the website called *Esclarmondes Heimatseite*, which was online around 2003.⁶⁸ It greeted its users with a photo of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and a view of the Black Sun. This site, too, pursued the intellectual aspiration and "metapolitical" approach typical of the New Right: the goal of first gaining status as the opinion leader and trend-setter in elite discourses in order to prepare far-reaching political change. As the operator



Figure 6.7
 Black Sun and interlocking runes:
 Emblem of the Thule-Seminar on website
http://www.thule-seminar.org/inhalt_referenz.htm.

polemically stressed: "Our weapon is the word and nothing but the word / Our battle is discourse and nothing but discourse / Our sword is the spirit / Our shield is truth." This self-concept is hardly consistent with the symbolism of Wewelsburg Castle.

Summary and Conclusion

The symbolic and figurative language of German right-wing extremism has become more differentiated and modernized and has lost none of its significance. Especially in times when right-wing extremists are organizing themselves in fluid structures – as a movement, youth scene, and experiential world – their cohesion depends on symbolic integration. At the same time, there is a tendency to use surrogate symbolism instead of actionable symbols. Wewelsburg Castle and its sun wheel are significant in both respects: In German right-wing extremism the Black Sun is one of the most prevalent myths; the Wewelsburg sun wheel, one of the key symbols. They refer to National Socialism, specifically to the SS, but their use has practically no legal consequences.

The Black Sun symbol is more than a tactical instrument, not in every case but in all the spectrums of right-wing extremism studied: parties such as the NPD, nonparty neonazism, online commerce, the right-wing rock scene, and parts of the New Right. It is highly mythically charged, going as far as bizarre esoteric receptions and the perception that behind Wewelsburg castle there is a "true" SS distinguishable from the criminal organization known to history. Stock elements of myth are often associated with the castle and the Black Sun

emblem, albeit to varying degrees, imbuing both of them with grandeur, mystery, and fascination. The fact that the Black Sun and Wewelsburg Castle are regularly interpreted as a source of strength and power, as the embodiment of one's community – *Volk* (people, nation), *Art* (species), *Rasse* (race) – and its roots, shows the importance attached to these myths and comparable ones. They offer imaginary tradition, apparent legitimation, and evidently also an emotional incentive to act, giving those who take action the sense of being involved in something significant, profound, far beyond themselves. Such symbols and myths are likely to enhance the appeal of right-wing extremism significantly, above all among adolescents and young adults who are in search of answers.

Myths and symbols such as the Black Sun and Wewelsburg Castle also offer points at which to begin looking behind the façade of right-wing extremism, exposing its experiential worlds, and thereby increasing clarification. Behind Wewelsburg Castle's fog of myth one finds walls, many question marks, few sensations, concentration camp prisoners who had to create the floor ornament, the SS, and SS terror. Confronting these myths necessitates a double perspective: that of remembering the historical victims of National Socialism and that of maintaining vigilance against contemporary forms of right-wing extremism. Both views are too often divorced, but they articulate two sides of the same insight: "The realm of the Black Sun" is one thing not on the wish list of anyone seeking to preserve human dignity and rights to liberty.

Notes

- 1 On this discussion see Rucht (2002) and Pfeiffer (2000), for example.
- 2 According to Joachim Raschke (1988, p. 77), a social movement is "a mobilizing collective actor that, through variable forms of organization and action and with a certain degree of continuity, pursues the goal of bringing about, preventing, or reversing fundamental social change on the basis of high symbolic integration and low role specification."
- 3 Ronald Hitzler and Arne Niederbacher (2010, p. 15) define a *scene* as "a form of loose network; a network in which unspecified numbers of participating persons and groups of people gather and build a sense of community."
- 4 Langebach & Raabe (2013), p. 53.
- 5 Hitzler & Niederbacher (2010), p. 19; see also p. 29.
- 6 The term *experiential world of right-wing extremism* subsumes "all the ways in which right-wing extremists specifically target young people: ... The core of this experiential world is the link consisting of political agitation, leisure activity, and sundry means of entertainment" (Pfeiffer, 2017), p. 42.
- 7 Schuppener (2009), p. 329.
- 8 Autonomous Nationalists link neo-Nazi ideas with symbols, terms, and habitus borrowed from their political opponents: left-wing autonomists; see Bundesministerium des Innern (2014), pp. 73–74; Schedler & Häusler (2011).

- 9 The former singer of the band Landser (Ordinary Soldiers, GIs) performs today under the
 10 nickname Lunikoff and under the band name The Lunikoff Conspiracy.
 11 On symbolism in right-wing extremism, see Agentur für soziale Perspektiven (2017);
 12 Ministerium für Inneres und Kommunales NRW (2012); Fahr (2005).
 13 Von Nahmen (2017), p. 89.
 14 This gesture of greeting or acknowledgment was invented by the neo-Nazi Michael
 15 Kühnen. The right arm is straightened and raised to eye level or higher with the palm
 16 down, but not with the hand's fingers extended and held together, as in the Hitler salute,
 17 but rather with the outstretched thumb, forefinger, and middle finger spread and the
 18 ringfinger and little finger touching the palm.
 19 Judgment by the Gummersbach District Court, 14 September 2009, Ref: 82 Ls-121
 20 Js 539/08-1/09.
 21 See the judgment by the Augsburg Administrative Court, 4 April 2007, Ref: Au 4 K 06.1058;
 22 in a similar vein, the ruling by the Würzburg Administrative Court, 24 April 2013, Ref:
 23 W 5 S 13.347; the ruling by the Giessen Administrative Court, 16 April 2010, Ref:
 24 9 L 867/10.GI.
 25 In addition to section 86a of the German Criminal Code, section 130 (Incitement of the
 26 People) is particularly relevant in matters of right-wing extremism. It generally criminal-
 27 izes hate speech against certain segments of the population. Paragraph 3 of section 130
 prohibits the denial, approval, or trivialization of the Holocaust. Paragraph 4 criminalizes
 anyone who approves of, glorifies, or justifies National Socialist rule of violence and arbi-
 trariness. See von Nahmen (2017), pp. 94ff. The positive reference to Wewelsburg Castle
 as a site of National Socialist perpetration of injustices is therefore not punishable out-
 right as incitement of the people. Culpability can be establishable especially if doubts are
 expressed about SS crimes or if Nazi leaders such as Himmler are glorified.
 See decision by the Federal German Constitutional Court, 14 January 2002, Ref: 1 BvQ 1/02.
 See also Siepe (2009), p. 505.
 See Bundesprüfstelle (2014), p. 4; Pfeiffer (2016), p. 262.
 BPjM Decision no. 5671, 1 October 2009, Ref: Pr. 629/09, p. 12. In that case the CD
Morgen siegen wir by the group Vėtaris was indexed (List Part A). A similar example is
 BPjM Decision no. 8089 (V), 5 March 2008, Ref: Pr. 1003/07, p. 7. In that case the CD
Vaterlandstreue by the group Wintergewitter (Winter Storm) was indexed (List Part A).
 See also BPjM Decision no. 5597, 6 November 2008, Ref: Pr. 908/08, p. 9, which did not
 index the CD *Wir bleiben deutsch* (We're Remaining German) by the group Jungsturm
 (Young Storm). Wewelsburg Castle is depicted on the cover and in the booklet of the CD.
 BPjM Decision no. 10003 (V), 12 September 2011, Ref: Pr. 1077/11, p. 12. In that case the CD
Rachezeit (Pay-back Time) by the group Teja was indexed (List Part B).
 See BPjM Decision no. 7260 (V), 1 September 2006, Ref. no. Pr. 378/06. In that case the
 CD *Eiserner Wille und stolzes Herz* (Iron Will and Proud Heart) by the group Odessa was
 indexed (List Part A).
 Siepe (2009), p. 507.
 See Siepe (2009), in which the invitation is reproduced as a facsimile.
 See Strube (2012), pp. 228, 233.
 See Strube (2012), p. 238.
 See Strube (2012), p. 236. On Lanz von Liebenfels see also Goodrick-Clarke (2005),
 pp. 106–123; Heller & Maegerle (1998), pp. 21–26.
 Strube (2012), pp. 236 and 243, for example.
 See Siepe (2008), pp. 102ff. See also Daniela Siepe's essay entitled "The Sun Wheel as a
 "Black Sun" in Wewelsburg Castle's *Obergruppenführer* Hall," in this volume.

- 28 As merchandising for the novel, the publisher launched a number of products printed with the Wewelsburg sun wheel, including a wristwatch and a mouse pad for personal computers. The publisher may well have rightly assumed that they were the first products of this kind and has since discontinued distribution of the articles as well as of the book. See Siepe (2008), p. 109; Siepe (2009), pp. 509–10.
- 29 See, for example, Heller & Maegerle (1998), pp. 157–62.
- 30 Strube (2012), p. 263.
- 31 Deutsche Stimme Verlag (2010).
- 32 See also Schlegelmilch & Raabe (2015).
- 33 A few items from Deutsche Stimme Versand are pictured and described in more detail in Brebeck et al. (2011), pp. 424–25.
- 34 For details on this product, see Pfeiffer (2017), pp. 48–52. The same text on the Black Sun was also available on the Nationale Sozialisten Mainz Bingen Kreuznach website, www.naso-mzbi.de (last accessed 24 March 2014).
- 35 See Brandenburgische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung (2013).
- 36 See Lorch-Gerstenmaier (2013).
- 37 See Pfeiffer (2000), pp. 319ff.
- 38 Aufruf (2013).
- 39 See recherche-nord (2013).
- 40 F[reies] N[etz] Saalfeld (2010).
- 41 The Duisburg NPD, too, gives an account of a group excursion to Wewelsburg and the Hermann Monument in January 2014, referring to the sun wheel and the crypt, which purportedly served “to honor deceased SS leaders.” It says little about either site, however. See NPD Kreisverband Duisburg (2014). Another article reports that New Society Chemnitz, a soccer ultragroup known as the NS Boys within the right-wing extremist scene, linked a trip to a match in Dortmund in December 2012 with a visit to Wewelsburg Castle. The group is said to have had overlaps with the Nationale Sozialisten Chemnitz (Chemnitz National Socialists), an organization that was banned by Saxony’s Minister of the Interior on 28 March 2014. See Resener (2014).
- 42 See Der Volkslehrer (2020).
- 43 See especially the statements made on the trip to the Auschwitz memorial, comments that cannot be explored in greater detail in this essay.
- 44 As quoted in Weisfeld (2000), p. 24.
- 45 As quoted in Weisfeld (2000), p. 28.
- 46 Information from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, 6 May 2021.
- 47 In some cases, completely different legal situations exist outside Germany and are clearly reflected in the inventories of the distributors. Flags with swastikas or SS runes, incendiary CDs such as *12 Doitsche Stimmungshits* (Twelve German Mood Favorites) by the group Zillertaler Türkenjäger appear in the mail-order business abroad. The deliberate misspelling in the CD’s title—*oi* instead of *eu*—is a play on words alluding to the subgenre of punk rock known as Oi! (a British interjection meaning *hey* or *hey there!*), which was a defiant, working-class type of sound that originated in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s and has since bridged the punk rock and skinhead scenes alike. The broad political and ideological range of its fans has encompassed nonpolitical, left-wing, and antiracist as well as White nationalist and far-right positions. Oi! tends today to be associated with a subculture of politicized skinhead identity. The perfidious name Zillertaler Türkenjäger (Zillertal Turk Hunters) plays on the name of a well-liked Austrian folk, pop, and rock band formerly called the Zillertaler Schürzenjäger (Zillertal Skirt-Chasers).
- 48 See, for example, Langebach & Raabe (2013); Dornbusch & Raabe (2002).

- 49 Information from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, 6 May 2021.
- 50 For some of the list's entries, I have CDs; for others, booklets; and for still others, the lyrics.
- 51 On hopes for redemption in esoteric neo-Nazism, see Strube (2012), p. 261.
- 52 The Black Sun also appears as a symbol on the front cover of the CD *Braun ist Trumpf* (Brown Is Trumpf).
- 53 In the booklet the song lyrics are accompanied by a photo of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall; the lancehead mounted at the bottom right is evidently that of the Spear of Destiny, the Holy Lance. On the same CD the Black Sun motif also figures in the song "Nazis," which deals with the events that took place in the city of Sebnitz, Saxony, in 1997. The media at the time regularly referred to them as the "Joseph case," in which a six-year-old boy died in a swimming pool in June, with neo-Nazis later being wrongly assumed to have killed him. The song takes the accusations as an allegedly typical prejudgment of right-wing forces. The situation surrounding the affair is introduced by the line "Achtundachtzig Grad und Schwarze Sonne satt" (Eighty-eight degrees and Black Sun blazing).
- 54 See BPjM Decisions no. 12666 (V), 9 November 2016, Az: Pr. 323/16, p. 10; no. 14251 (V), 3 December 2019, Az: Pr. 0366/2019, pp. 6–7; no. 13829 (V), 16 April 2019, Az: 0490/2018, p. 6; no. 14321 (V), 4 February 2020, Az: Pr. 237/2019, p. 8; no. 13674, 8 January 2019, Az: Pr. 884/2017, p. 11; and no. 13000 (V), 21 June 2017, Az: Pr. 1240/16, p. 4. References to Wewelsburg castle or the emblem were not a factor bearing on the BPjM's decision to index the material in any of these cases, either.
- 55 The youth culture of gothic or dark wave is enigmatic. For the most part, it sees itself as apolitical. Style is defined by everything black – especially black clothing and hair that has been dyed black. Key topics are questions about the meaning of life, its origin, and death. In addition to belief in reincarnation, many goths are attracted to thought based on pagan ideas and nature religions. The orientation to self-determination and egocentricity, which is lived out in diverse forms of self-dramatization, is pronounced. The penchant for premodern times overlaps in some ways with right-wing extremist ideas. However, there is a risk of prematurely interpreting certain poses and attitudes in gothic culture as being political, right-wing, or right-wing extremist.
- 56 Von Thronstahl (2011).
- 57 Ethnopluralism is an ideological concept that originated in the New Right and is now widespread in right-wing extremism. Essentially, it encompasses any exclusionary nationalism linked to xenophobic, sometimes explicitly racist, thinking. Espousers of ethnopluralism claim they do not assume a superiority or inferiority of ethnic groups. Instead, they call for ethnically homogeneous unities and claim that contact between and mixing of ethnic groups threaten the quality and existence of the polity. Such actors deny that they hold xenophobic attitudes and assert that their motives are humanitarian, arguing that individuals find real identity only in an ethnically homogeneous environment.
- 58 See Pfeiffer (2000), pp. 272–80. The assessments arrived at stem primarily from an interview with Josef Klumb on 12 February 2000.
- 59 For example, on the CDs *Weissglut* (1998) and *etwas kommt in deine welt* (1998), the song "Nicht von dieser Welt" (Not of this World) has the refrain "Du musst brennen Schwarze Sonne / Diese Nacht ist endlos lang / Du musst brennen Schwarze Sonne / Diese Welt kennt kein Erbarmen" (You must burn, Black Sun / This night is everlasting / You must burn, Black Sun / This world knows no mercy). See also the following songs: "Schwarz wird die Sonne" (The Sun Is Blackening), by the band Preussak & Skuld, and "Germania Incognita" by the band Forthcoming Fire, (schwarze Sonne – remix) (both: Riefenstahl tribute compilation, 1996); and "Der Unbesiegte Sonnengott" (The Unvanquished Sun God) by Forthcoming Fire (CD *Je Suis*, New release, 1997).

- ⁶⁰ Quoted from Pfeiffer (2000), p. 277.
- ⁶¹ Quoted from Weisfeld (2001), p. 17.
- ⁶² Quoted from Weisfeld (2001), p. 16.
- ⁶³ Quoted from Weisfeld (2001), p. 2. Maik, an occasional Von Thronstahl guitarist who, according to Weisfeld, has a tattoo of the Black Sun on his shoulder, is also unsuccessful at formulating a rigorous, cognitive approach to this symbol. It is, as he puts it, “the symbol of a feeling,” it gives “strength” and “pride,” and he nebulously associates it with the mythical Midnight Mountain “high in the north” and with his “own roots” (quoted from Weisfeld, 2001, p. 18).
- ⁶⁴ See Fuchs (2010).
- ⁶⁵ See Grufties gegen Rechts (2000).
- ⁶⁶ The Office for the Protection of the Constitution of North Rhine-Westphalia uses the following definition: “The New Right is an intellectual current within right-wing extremism and refers in particular to antidemocratic theorists of the Weimar Republic (Conservative Revolution). It seeks to roll back the pluralism of an ‘open society’, to place notions of homogeneity and ethnic-national collectives at the center of politics, and to exert influence on public opinion” (Gessenharter & Pfeiffer, 2004, p. 52). For a different definition of the New Right, see Gessenharter (1994), pp. 426–27.
- ⁶⁷ See Gessenharter & Pfeiffer (2004), p. 56.
- ⁶⁸ The site is offline. The name probably goes back to Esclarmonde de Foix, who championed the cause of the Cathars in thirteenth-century Occitania (in the south of modern-day France). The character was popularized by Jules Massenet’s 1889 fairy tale opera, *Esclarmonde*.

Of Flying Disks and Secret Societies

Wewelsburg and the “Black Sun” in Esoteric Writings of Conspiracy Theory

Frank Huismann

Conspiracy theories are currently quite the thing. In literature and film some of them are real bestsellers, perhaps the most familiar examples being the books by Dan Brown. *The Da Vinci Code*, published in 2003, has reportedly sold over 40 million copies.¹ The volume preceding it, *Angels & Demons*, which appeared in 2000, made the Illuminati Order known worldwide and became a synonym for menacing communities operating in the background. Dan Brown’s stories feature a cast of successive secret societies and undercover couriers, including alleged descendants of the Merovingians or Templars, Illuminati, and Freemasons.² As is typical for conspiracy theorists, Brown’s approach to historical facts is not particularly exacting. The Illuminati Order existed only from 1776 to 1785 and only in Bavaria. It did not have notable influence.³ But the simple suspense of the adventure novel and the “dark romanticism”⁴ of such stories have elevated these kinds of conspiracy theories to the popular mainstream. No wonder Wewelsburg Castle and the “Black Sun” also have their place in modern conspiracy theories.⁵ Most of them, however, are far less innocuous than Dan Brown’s books, which could at most be reproached for expressing a certain anticlericalism.

“Evil” is the starting point of all conspiracy theories. The idea of evil in the Christian Occident is heavily influenced by the cultural history of the devil and his infernal helpers, which is why many secret societies resemble demonic convocations.⁶ In any case, however, such organizations are mighty, threatening, and relentless in their quest for power.⁷ Obviously, that endeavor nearly always involves a world conspiracy, for those driven by insatiable lust for power will hardly be content with anything less than world domination. Adolf Hitler is often apt to be portrayed as either a maniac or an initiate of some secret society.⁸ In modern variants such striving for power is usually equated with the rule of money.⁹ The esoteric treatment of the subject complements all these basic facts by connecting them to special supernatural powers that the conspirators can invoke or seek to acquire. Magic artifacts, particularly the Holy

Lance (or Holy Spear) and the Holy Grail, play an important role because it was their mythical power that enabled the Nazis to rule almost the whole world, or so it is claimed.¹⁰

There is also reference to the supposedly elemental force called *vril*, whose use in esoteric texts has been detailed by Julian Strube.¹¹ The origin of such energies is explained in various ways. For example, cosmic influences and visits of extraterrestrial life forms are often ascribed to them. Of course, there are “good” and “evil” species among them as well. Knowledge, especially the secret knowledge, of mythical forces was passed down in a number of communities, which commonly include inhabitants of legendary places (such as Atlantis and Hyperborea) as well as Babylonians, Cathars, Templars, and Freemasons.¹²

In addition, rightist esoteric conspiracy theories usually refer to a Vril Society¹³ and especially to the Thule Society¹⁴ – an organization founded in 1918 by Rudolf von Sebottendorff (Rudolf Glauer, 1875–1945), the goal of which was to combat leftist revolutionary forces after World War I had been lost. By 1925 the organization (from which Sebottendorff himself withdrew as early as 1919) had been dissolved. Some of its members, however, were among the founding fathers of the German Workers’ Party (DAP), the forerunner of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP), a link that subsequently helped the Thule Society achieve supraregional name recognition. The organization had no other discernible significance, though. Much of the activity attributed to it was fabricated by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier in their book *Le matin des magiciens* (1960), which appeared in German in 1962 under the title *Aufbruch ins dritte Jahrtausend* and then in English in 1963 as *The Dawn of Magic* and in 1964 as *The Morning of the Magicians* (see Figure 7.1).¹⁵

Conspiracy theories relating to communities imbued with positive connotations are especially popular in the area of esoteric neo-Nazism.¹⁶ They seem to reveal “National Socialism’s true history, which has remained hidden from historiography.”¹⁷ They are always also about allaying guilt, about exonerating historical National Socialism, and frequently about disseminating anti-Semitic propaganda.¹⁸ It goes without saying that the SS, as the apparently occult core of the entire National Socialist movement, has a prominent part in these theories.¹⁹ The Forschungs- und Lehrgemeinschaft Das Ahnenerbe (Ancestral Heritage Research and Teaching Association) operated by the SS is often quite wrongly described as an organization whose members joined in magic, occult practices in the SS.²⁰ Publications on conspiracy theory generally agree that the SS sought contact with survivors of the lost Atlantis, who lived (or still live) largely undetected in Tibet.²¹ These tracts take notions of conspiracy and combine them with classical esotericism and its preference for actual or contrived

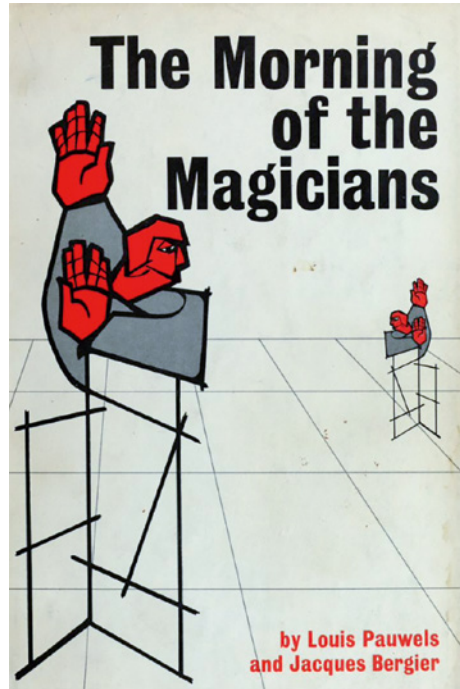


Figure 7.1
The Morning of the Magicians, by Louis Pauwels und Jacques Bergier (first published in French in 1960) was one of the first books of conspiracy theory. The authors presented the Thule Society as a supposedly ultrasignificant secret organization.

Asian legends, such as those of Agartha and Shamballah.²² The belief in miracle weapons is prevalent, too,²³ which in esoteric neo-Nazism is also an integral part of the stories. All these facets are relatable to Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun as the supposed magic, occult hub of the SS.²⁴ But although this tie seems evident to us today, it was not always compelling. What became known as the Landig group was central to the popularization of the Black Sun and Wewelsburg Castle in writings rooted in conspiracy theory.

The Landig Group

Immediately after World War II, three disillusioned National Socialists came together in Vienna: the two Austrians Wilhelm Landig (1909–1997) and Rudolf Mund (1920–1985) and the Swiss Erich Halik. With the officially proclaimed Nazi worldview having lost credibility even among declared supporters of National Socialism because of defeat in the war, the three men searched for new ideological underpinnings. They were occupied with classical esoteric teachings, especially the theosophy of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891)²⁵

and the racist Ariosophy of Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (1874–1954) and Guido List (1848–1919).²⁶ In addition, they were influenced above all by those authors who had published their own racist esoteric ideas under the Third Reich but who had had only brief, if any, significance in official Nazi Germany. These authors included Hermann Wirth (1885–1981), an amateur historian of ancient religions who was briefly a leading figure in the Ahnenerbe Association but who was later put on ice because of conspicuous mistakes, and the Grail researcher Otto Rahn (1904–1939), who was also associated with Wewelsburg Castle and whose difficulties drove him to suicide.²⁷ Special attention was paid to the writings of Julius Evola (1898–1974), an Italian who revered German National Socialism and who drafted his own fascist doctrine in which he praised the purity of the Germanic people and advocated a racist, elitist caste system. Evola, too, set forth a rationale for the alleged superiority of the ancient Germanic people and, thus, of the Germans, drawing on a “genealogy” known from esoteric publications, which led back through Atlantis and the Hyperboreans to a “Blue Island” of bliss.²⁸ As a fascist with aristocratic airs, Evola’s affection for Germany remained completely unrequited during the Third Reich. Nevertheless, he lived in Vienna from 1943 to 1948 and became one of the best-known “new” thinkers of the neo-Nazi scene thanks to his reception in the Landig group.²⁹ This circumstance may explain why in the early 2000s a connection was construed between Evola and Wewelsburg Castle, which he had reportedly visited during the war. No reliable sources documenting such a visit exist, however. Mark Sedgwick, who is usually quoted in this context, himself writes, “And indeed it is possible that he never even visited Wewelsburg – the visit is my reconstruction.”³⁰

Against this background, the members of the Landig group began their work on a new, in their view convincing, ideological foundation of National Socialism on an esoteric basis. Conspiracy theories had a major role from the very outset. The first one to surface was by Erich Halik, who in the late 1940s was keenly interested in the then widespread press coverage about sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFOs). Halik developed a theory according to which it was not extraterrestrial spaceships but secret terrestrial missiles. Using the fictive elemental force vril, they flew at unprecedented altitudes at unimaginable speeds. They were piloted by esoterics, former National Socialists who possessed the knowledge of the Tibetans, Cathars, the inhabitants of Atlantis, and so forth. The theory was compatible with reports about German superweapons that would have been tested toward the end of the war. The prevalent belief in the Nazis’ “vengeance weapons” persisted in this context, soon bringing forth the *Reichsflugscheibe*, Germany’s flying disk (to become

known in the English-speaking world as flying saucers), which in right-wing enumeration became Vengeance Weapon 7 (the V-7).³¹ According to Halik, the special detachment of Nazi men had taken the flying disks with them when they withdrew to underground bases at the earth's poles. Halik first mentioned a *sol niger*, a Black Sun whose power could supposedly be used, in the context of such a polar kingdom in 1954.³² He thereby connected esotericism, which was already classical by that time, and the phenomenon of the day, flying saucers, a link that was well received in esoterically interested circles.³³

Shortly thereafter, Rudolf Mund emerged as the theorist of the Landig group. According to his own statements, he wanted to rescue historical "facts for a truer time."³⁴ Above all, he engaged with Ariosophic thought. In 1958 he joined the Ordo Novi Templi (O.N.T.) – the Order of the New Temple founded in 1900 by Lanz von Liebenfels – even becoming its prior in 1979, although it had almost ceased to exist by then.³⁵ Mund, a former SS man himself, regarded parts of the SS in particular as the model for a renewed, improved National Socialism. He did note a certain "failure" on Himmler's part but believed that there had been other leaders in the SS who had had real secret knowledge. In addition to Otto Rahn, Karl Maria Wiligut (1866–1946) became his hero, about whom he wrote several essays (see Figure 7.2).³⁶ Wiligut and Rahn established a clear connection to Wewelsburg Castle, with Wiligut being especially involved in the castle's selection for the SS, according to Mund.³⁷ In Mund's thinking, the castle therefore inevitably had to become an ideological center, and the main objective of the Allies in World War II had indeed been to take it.³⁸ Mund thereby became, above all, the propagandist of a different, "honorable" and "knowing" SS with heroes like Wiligut who are not primarily associated with National Socialist crimes.

The Landig group had thus laid the foundations of esoteric Nazism. These foundations were then popularized by Wilhelm Landig, also a former SS man and a writer somewhat more talented than his friends. Landig amalgamated the boilerplate of racist "genealogy," Mund's veneration of certain parts of the SS, and Halik's approaches rooted in conspiracy theory, all of which he poured into the Thule trilogy (vol. 1: 1971; vol. 2, 1980; vol. 3, 1991).³⁹ A larger audience thereby simultaneously became aware of both the link with Wewelsburg Castle and the concept of the Black Sun, with Landig introducing the Black Sun as an insignia exhibited on the flying disks and other things. In later writings Mund tied into Landig's popularization. As stated by Daniele Siepe, Mund traces Landig's Black Sun, the symbol of the black dot, back to Wiligut's esoteric teaching, according to which a second sun could be seen in the sky thousands of years before our era, a star that once shone down on the Hyperboreans of

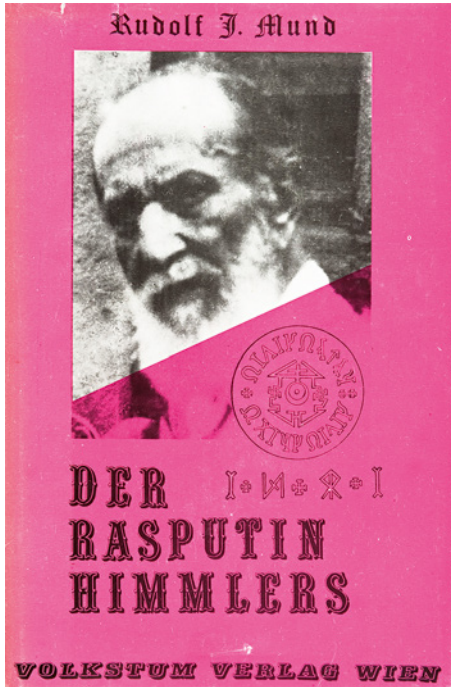


Figure 7.2
Rudolf Mund was the theorist of the Landig group. He claimed that the SS had had esoteric leaders. He presented their worldview as exemplary, singling out Karl Maria Wiligut.

the North Pole and promoted their spiritual development. This sun is now dark and cold but still radiates energy.⁴⁰

Landig's Thule trilogy became a standard work of esoteric Nazism.⁴¹ The first volume in particular combines rudiments of a typical adventure story with pronounced racism and anti-Semitism. The whole narrative rests on a conspiracy theory (see Figure 7.3). In the second volume of the trilogy, Landig spins the thread further, having the SS men transfer their base from the North Pole to the South Pole. The fascination of Antarctica can presumably be explained by the fact that it is perhaps the last place of the world that is completely inaccessible to normal people. The idea of an SS base at the South Pole, from which the flying disks now take off, has therefore found many imitators.

With the third volume of the trilogy, Landig brought the story up to his present day. It is no longer adult warriors but rather schoolchildren who are at the center of the action. The "didactic" approach behind it is unmistakable. The Thule trilogy successfully appeals to young people in particular, whose reading material is also characterized by stories of roaming adventurers.⁴²



Figure 7.3
 Wilhelm Landig's Thule trilogy is the classic of the Landig group. Pictured here is the first part, *Götzen gegen Thule* (Idols against Thule) (1971).

Aliens as Bearers of Hope

Another author according to whom some of the National Socialists survived and planned a new Reich was the Chilean diplomat Miguel Serrano (1917–2009).⁴³ He invented “Esoteric Hitlerism” and claimed that Hitler did not die but would return as the final avatar (as the final rebirth) of the god Vishnu.

For nearly forty years I have been repeating that the Führer did not die in the bunker of Berlin. The secret leaders of “Esoteric Hitlerism” set out with him in the direction of the polar sanctuaries of the White Gods, just as the unknown leaders of the Templars, the invisible guides of the authentic Rosicrucians, the Vikings, the Visigoths, the Trojans, and the Hyperborean Siddhas had done before them.⁴⁴

Serrano tries to build up an entire worldview around his Hitlerism, but in doing so he resorts mainly to well-known esoteric models, naming Lanz von Liebenfels and Otto Rahn as key witnesses.⁴⁵ But the first volume of Landig's Thule trilogy was also obviously known to Serrano early on. Goodrick-Clarke depicts “conspiracy and war”⁴⁶ as Serrano's leitmotifs, not least because, in

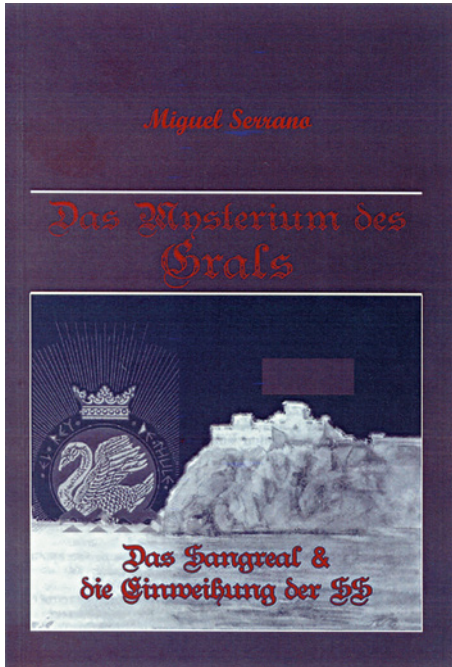


Figure 7.4
One of Miguel Serrano's books about the SS. This edition did not appear in Germany until 2009, the year of Serrano's death.

Serrano's opinion, some of the SS are still waging a mythical battle today. Wewelsburg Castle was (and still is?) one of their centers of initiation (see Figure 7.4).⁴⁷ He mistakenly included it among the castles of the order, proving how little he knew about the organization of the former SS.⁴⁸ The Black Sun, on the other hand, is to him an existing – but invisible – star behind the normal sun, from which an unutterably great power emanates.⁴⁹

The surviving former SS men live underground in Antarctica, as does Adolf Hitler. They will return with Hitler, so the defeat of the German Reich in 1945 is only temporary.⁵⁰ These SS men are “men of knowledge” who are privy to secret mysteries, not regular SS men of war. According to Serrano, their blood still carries memories of their Aryan forefathers, who came from a foreign star.⁵¹ Of course, these men also possess flying disks, which are of this world but could only be built because of the “extraterrestrial” giftedness of the “supermen” insiders.⁵²

Serrano's depiction of the flying disks, just like that of Wewelsburg Castle, patently reflects the ideas of Landig and his group. Indeed, Serrano visited the castle, too, and gave a detailed account of this experience. In addition, he purportedly performed a brief oral ritual in the “crypt.” Nonetheless, Serrano did not yet know about the transfer of the term *Black Sun* to the floor mosaic

in the castle's *Obergruppenführer* Hall.⁵³ On this occasion he may well have also visited the Externsteine, a myth-enshrouded sandstone outcrop in the Teutoburg Forest, and probably felt confirmed in his esoteric views by that stone formation.⁵⁴

Miguel Serrano steadfastly tried to upgrade the status of National Socialism and its followers who remained after 1945.⁵⁵ He clung to the indisputability of Hitler's leadership, but new heroes had to exude the confidence that had otherwise been lost through the defeat of the Third Reich.

There is a photograph of Wewelsburg that gives us visible proof of what I have always said: Above the highest known leaders, even above Himmler himself, there existed other unknown guides who did not wear uniforms, who never let themselves be seen and made no public appearance by name, not even at official ceremonies of the Black Order. They stood above all the others, taking part only in the most secret ceremonies that took place in the underground vault or at the Round Table, where they appeared, enshrouded, without revealing their faces. Not even Himmler knew them.⁵⁶

According to Serrano, the Allies had defeated only an insignificant part of the Nazi movement in 1945.

The thoughts of Serrano and the Landig group were taken up by a group that became known as the Tempelhof Society. The two main protagonists were Norbert Jürgen-Ratthofer and Ralf Ettl, who published *Das Vrill-Projekt* (The Vrill Project) in 1992 (see Figure 7.5).⁵⁷ Through further writings as well as films, they built up a clearly extremist right-wing mental framework in which belief in UFOs is one of the central components.

However, the two authors not only drew on theories from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but also continued developing the "rightist ufology" that Erich Halik had introduced in the 1950s. The general popularity of UFO authors such as Robert Charroux and Erich von Däniken helped this politically nefarious variant of ufology thrive to a remarkable degree.⁵⁸

In *The Vrill Project* the authors describe, among other things, the construction of flying saucers (referred to as Vrill-7 instead of V-7) by a clandestine organization, the Vrill Society. The construction plans were claimed to have been sent to a medium by aliens from the planet Aldebaran.



Figure 7.5
Bilder zum Vril-Projekt (Pictures Relating to the Vril Project, 1992). CD distributed by Norbert Jürgen-Ratthofer and Ralf Ettl. The image juxtaposes the purported *Reichsflugscheibe* – or flying disk (flying saucer) – and the Black Sun.

In that scenario vril becomes an intercosmic religion.⁵⁹ “According to Jürgen-Ratthofer and Ettl, the Thule Society ‘increasingly helped determine the political course of the coming Third Reich’ and rooted the ‘Black Sun’ as an inner circle in the SS, while the Vril Society devoted itself to esoteric research.”⁶⁰ The usual struggle between good and evil ostensibly lay behind this activity. The secret knowledge that circulated in the Vril and Thule Societies was said to have been passed down over centuries through various secret societies. In 1917, as Jürgen-Ratthofer and Ettl tell it, this knowledge passed from a brotherhood called Herren vom Schwarzen Stein (HvSS), or Lords of the Black Stone, founded in 1221, to Rudolf von Sebottendorff of the historical Thule Society. In turn, the HvSS brotherhood guarded the secrets of the “Jesse Revelation,” which had been entrusted to it personally by the goddess Jesse, who had traveled to

Earth from Aldebaran. Therefore, the Lords of the Black Stone, whose abbreviation is, of course, an allusion to the historical SS, have an extraterrestrial deity that guarantees the superiority of the initiates. Jürgen-Ratthofer and Ettl thereby packaged the ideas of the Landig group into a kind of religion, borrowing directly from Lanz von Liebenfels and Guido List as well as from Hermann Wirth.⁶¹ Of course, they took “racial segregation” to be a divine given on Aldebaran. All the problems of the universe seemed traceable to “mutations” from which “inferior races”⁶² emerged.

They also claimed that a fleet of spaceships would soon come from Aldebaran to decide the battle on Earth in favor of the “good guys.” The good guys, however, are members of an esoteric SS:

Ultimately, this leads to various hopes of redemption. The notion of clandestine, technically far superior German armed forces that are still operating; the arrival of the Aldebaran space fleet; the impending establishment of a “New Reich,” the talk of a “National Socialism on a theocratic basis”: All this not only obscures the factual defeat of Germany but also bears clear millenarian features and promises the return or arrival of a Golden Age under the sign of Aquarius.⁶³

Alleged Secret Societies Everywhere

Many conspiracy theorists have a tendency to embrace ever newer and vaster conspiracies. In German-speaking countries this inclination is especially true of Jan Udo Holey, who usually publishes under the pseudonym Jan van Helsing. His main works consist of two volumes entitled *Geheimgesellschaften und ihre Macht im 20. Jahrhundert oder Wie man die Welt regiert* (1993, *Secret Societies and Their Power in the 20th Century*) (see Figure 7.6) and *Geheimgesellschaften 2* (1995, *Secret Societies 2*). Soon after the latter book there appeared a volume on the thoughts of Ettl and Jürgen-Ratthofer: *Unternehmen Aldebaran. Kontakte mit Menschen aus einem anderen Sonnensystem* (1997, *Operation Aldebaran: Contacts with People from Another Solar System*).⁶⁴ Holey, whom Goodrick-Clarke considers to be the leading German conspiracy theorist,⁶⁵ sold over 100,000 volumes of *Secret Societies* before the Mannheim District Court banned the work for hate speech,⁶⁶ a ruling overturned in 2001, however.

He uses just about any conspiracy theory and absorbs influences from the Anglo-Saxon world as well.⁶⁷ Holey offers nothing new but reinforces the racist, anti-Semitic style of the right-wing esoteric conspiracy theories.⁶⁸ In

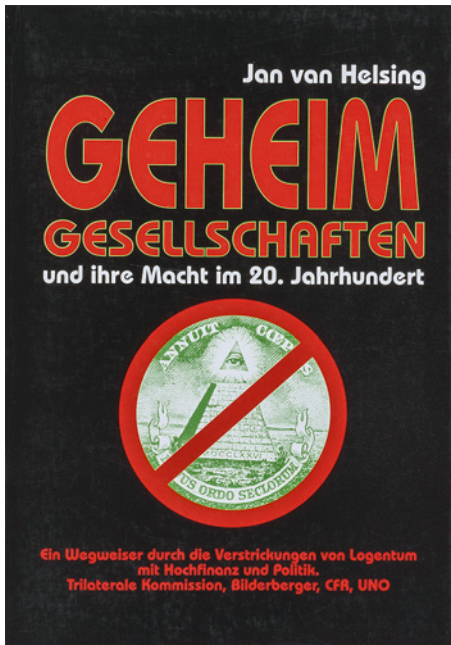


Figure 7.6

Writing under the pseudonym Jan van Helsing, Jan Udo Holey published two volumes on secret societies (here vol. 1, 1993), which are among the most successful publications of conspiracy theory in Germany. Holey's books are clearly radical right-wing tracts, but that characteristic has not kept them from spreading.

Operation Aldebaran he claims that three million Germans are living together today in an underground city with some smuggled Aldebarans and are in action with their flying discs worldwide. The flying disks are also the subject of his 1998 book, *Die innere Welt: Das Geheimnis der Schwarzen Sonne* (The Inner World: The Secret of the Black Sun; see Figure 7.7).⁶⁹ These Vrill Germans were said to have a standing army ready for immediate action. The term *Black Sun* refers to the core of the esoteric SS, just as Holey's role models do. In Holey's works these Germans, descendants of the divine Aldebarans, are pitted against inferior people created by an abject mixture of races led by Illuminati. The latter are also supposed to have caused World War II, in which the German Reich is claimed to have become embroiled against its will.⁷⁰ This assertion blatantly exculpates the National Socialist regime, offering neo-Nazis hopes for redemption.

It is not surprising that the Black Sun also occupies an important place in Holey's work. The term is now one of those that is obviously expected by a certain audience, just like the word *Illuminati* has been obligatory in conspiracy theory books in recent years. Wewelsburg Castle, by contrast, plays no part of its own in Holey's works. His books are well received by his public precisely because he mixes together just about everything there is on the market in

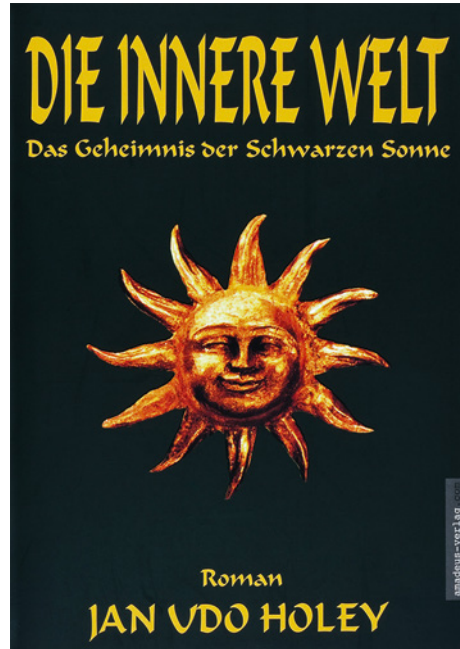


Figure 7.7

Of course, the Black Sun has a special meaning for Jan Udo Holey. For him it captures the very essence of the esoteric SS.

terms of conspiracy theories. In the last few years Holey has published a host of additional books, forever varying his “secret societies” anew. It is difficult to tell whether the majority of readers have been aware of the decidedly right-wing extremist and anti-Semitic orientation of Holey’s books or whether they were interested only in the thrill of conspiracies when they bought them. What is certain is that the books have been particularly successful in the New Age milieu, where conspiracy theories are spreading in general.⁷¹

Besides Holey, a number of other authors more or less clearly draw on the books by Landig, Serrano, Jürgen-Ratthofer, and Ettl and blend them with ideas from conspiracy theory, most of which hark back to the work of the American writer Gary Allen. His book *None Dare Call It Conspiracy* “has influenced the thinking of conspiracists worldwide as no other work has.”⁷² The global evil that Allen describes in this book is localized in wealthy Jews, among others. Another author accompanying Holey along this path is Jo Conrad, whose book *Entwirrungen: Über kosmische Gesetzmäßigkeiten und warum sie uns vorenthalten werden* (Reducing Confusion: Cosmic Laws and Why We Are Being Denied Them) has appeared in several editions. According to Conrad, a great many malevolent secret organizations exist, foremost among them being Illuminati, Bilderberg participants, the Vatican, Zionists, the CIA, the

Rothschilds, the NSA, and the Trilateral Commission, but Jews are ultimately always behind them. Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun do not figure greatly here, but Conrad explicitly refers to Holey's writings.⁷³

Armin Risi's *Machtwechsel auf der Erde: Die Pläne der Mächtigen, globale Entscheidungen und die Wendezeit* (Change of Power on Earth: The Plans of the Powerful, Global Decisions, and the Transition Period) focuses more squarely on the alleged technological wonders of the former German Reich.⁷⁴ In addition to the many secret societies, the UFO question and a German research group with the characteristic name Vril Society resurface. But Risi also writes of ultramodern German submarines that still battle Allied troops today.⁷⁵ This enthusiasm for technology in conjunction with the Third Reich is also familiar from other literary genres and appears in many Anglo-Saxon works. It is not uncommon for the SS to be portrayed as spearheading this, which makes Wewelsburg Castle a possible site for the action. An example of Anglo-Saxon inspiration is Joseph P. Farrell, who tells of ultrasecret technology of the Third Reich in his book *The SS Brotherhood of the Bell* (2006).⁷⁶ Wilfried Augustin refers to him in an article for the esoteric online series *EFODON – Synesis-Magazin*, in which he writes, "Flying disks of German design seem to have existed, but it is utterly unclear with which technical characteristics and with which design. The depictions range from simple disguised helicopters, to disks with superior properties but conventional drives, to antigravitational disks fit for space flight."⁷⁷ In 2013 an article by the same author in the same periodical took up the Untersberg legend, relating Wewelsburg Castle with "time experiments" that are allegedly also part of the high-tech projects: "The castle was the spiritual center of the SS. The castle and crypt were specially designed and geomantically modified. There are rumors about time experiments at the castle that have to do with the floor mosaic, the so-called Black Sun, in the hall above the crypt."⁷⁸

In the current conspiracy-theory literature, one eventually always comes across a number of similar references that lead from allegedly evil and extremely secret organizations to their "good" adversaries who are trying to save the world. Certain places and certain groups of people have all become stock elements of the narrative. Although the literature in this essay presents Wewelsburg Castle by and large as an esoteric place, the term *Black Sun* is so tightly entwined with the SS as an organization that it is difficult to divorce the former from this bounded reference. It shows up mostly in right-wing texts. In extreme cases such works of conspiracy theory from that political fringe can generate the atmosphere of a pogrom.⁷⁹ Some readers apparently regard this literature as a response to an insufficiently self-determined life that seems

to be “remote-controlled.”⁸⁰ Many of them may simply enjoy the suspense of the stories. It is worrisome, however, that the high circulation figures for some books of this genre suggest that such works have found their way into mainstream society through the increased interest in conspiracy theories and debates about them.⁸¹

Notes

- 1 Arnú (2010).
- 2 See Wippermann (2007), pp. 143ff, on this entire context.
- 3 Füssel (2014).
- 4 Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 208.
- 5 Siepe (2009), p. 491.
- 6 Wippermann (2007), pp. 7–8. On the construction of conspiracy theories, see also Lehmhöfer (2004), pp. 21ff.
- 7 On this point see Strube (2013), p. 9; and Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), pp. 217ff. For general background see also Lehmhöfer (2004) and Jaworski (2004).
- 8 Strube (2013), pp. 128ff.
- 9 Wippermann (2007), pp. 67ff.
- 10 See, for example, Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 118ff; Baker (2000), pp. 124ff.
- 11 Strube (2013).
- 12 See Strube (2013), p. 9; and Baker (2000), pp. 62ff.
- 13 Strube (2013), pp. 10ff, 130ff.
- 14 On the Thule Society see Siepe (2009), p. 493; Strube (2013), pp. 134ff; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 114–117; and Baker (2000), pp. 53ff.
- 15 Pauwels & Bergier (1971, French orig. 1960).
- 16 On this point see Strube (2013), pp. 142ff; Strube (2012); Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 3; Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), p. 217.
- 17 Siepe (2009), p. 493.
- 18 See Graml (1990), p. 66; and Benz (1990), p. 31. In the process, perpetrators are often apt to be turned into victims. From a psychological perspective see also Müller-Hohagen (1993), pp. 41ff.
- 19 Strube (2013), pp. 126ff, 139ff.
- 20 Siepe (2009), p. 494; Baker (2000), pp. 152ff.
- 21 Siepe (2009), p. 493; Baker (2000), pp. 105ff.
- 22 See Daniela Siepe’s essay entitled “Wewelsburg Castle in Thrillers and Comics,” in this volume. See also Strube (2013), pp. 136ff; Siepe (2009), p. 494; Baker (2000), pp. 114ff.
- 23 See Farrell (2004), for example.
- 24 Siepe (2009), p. 494.
- 25 For more information see Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), pp. 153ff; Baker (2000), pp. 27ff; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 79–81; Strube (2013), pp. 65ff. On the Landig group and its motives in general, see Strube (2013), pp. 144ff; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 111–13, 136–38; Strube (2012), pp. 228ff.
- 26 See Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), pp. 169ff; Baker (2000), pp. 38ff.
- 27 See Strube (2013), pp. 144–45; and Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 129–30, 134–35.

- 28 Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 4, 58–59, 129–131; Strube (2013), p. 144.
- 29 For details on Evola's stay in Vienna, see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 66–67.
- 30 Sedgwick (2004), p. 109, also p. 106 and footnote 70 there.
- 31 Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 128, 151ff; Strube (2013), pp. 145ff; Baker (2000), pp. 204ff.
- 32 Erich Halik, "Das Phänomen der Fliegenden Untertassen" [The Phenomenon of the Flying Saucers], *Mensch und Schicksal*, 5/19 (December 1951). A second part under the same title appeared in the January issue of 1952 (5/20). In August 1952 Halik followed up, again in *Mensch und Schicksal*, with "Um Krone und Gipfel der Welt" [About Crown and the Summit of the World] and in 1954 with "Keine Invasion aus dem Weltraum" [No Invasion from Outer Space] and "Die Verkündigung des Polreiches" [Proclamation of the Polar Empire].
- 33 See Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 162.
- 34 Mund (1985, German orig. 1982), p. 9.
- 35 Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 135; Strube (2013), p. 151.
- 36 Especially Mund (2004) with older texts; Mund (1985, German orig. 1982).
- 37 See the chapter entitled "The 'Grail Castle' of the SS? The Creation of Legends about Wewelsburg Castle in Scholarly and Popular-Science Literature," by Daniela Siepe in this volume. See also Strube (2013), p. 151; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 135–36; and Baker (2000), pp. 143ff.
- 38 The assertion is Mund's (2004). The information ostensibly comes from Dwight D. Eisenhower personally, but the relevant document is, naturally, being kept classified by the Americans.
- 39 See Daniela Siepe's chapter entitled "The Sun Wheel as a 'Black Sun' in Wewelsburg Castle's *Obergruppenführer* Hall" in this volume.
- 40 Siepe (2008), p. 102.
- 41 Strube (2013), p. 150. On the trilogy in general, see Siepe (2008), pp. 98ff; Strube (2013), pp. 150ff; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 158, 161–62; Baker (2000), pp. 263ff; Strube (2012), pp. 234ff.
- 42 On this entire context see also Strube (2013), pp. 153–54; Strube (2012), p. 236; and Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 147–48.
- 43 On Serrano in general see Strube (2013), pp. 156ff; and Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 173ff.
- 44 Serrano (1984). See p. 487 in the book's German translation (n.d.), which is circulating as copies without place or year of publication.
- 45 Serrano (1987, Spanish orig. 1978), pp. 35–36 (referring to Lanz von Liebenfels), and p. 51 (referring to Otto Rahn). Serrano also repeatedly cites Savitri Devi (alias Maximine Portaz, 1905–1982), an esoteric Hitler admirer. See Serrano (1984), p. 504 in the German translation (n.d.).
- 46 Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 188.
- 47 Siepe (2008), p. 101; Serrano (1987, Spanish orig. 1978), p. 248.
- 48 Serrano (1987, Spanish orig. 1978), p. 117.
- 49 Serrano (1987, Spanish orig. 1978), p. 93 and *passim*. See also Siepe (2008), p. 101.
- 50 For more detail see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 189.
- 51 Strube (2013), p. 156; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 4, 180.
- 52 On the flying disks (or flying saucers) see Serrano (1987, Spanish orig. 1978), p. 34 and *passim*. See also Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 188.
- 53 On Serrano's visit and the ritual see Serrano (1984), pp. 498ff in the German translation (n.d.). Overall, see Strube (2013), p. 158.
- 54 Serrano (1984), pp. 493ff. in the German translation (n.d.).

- 55 See, for instance, Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 4, 173, 176ff.
- 56 Serrano (1984), in the German translation, p. 502.
- 57 On both men in general, see Strube (2013), pp. 161ff; Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 164ff; Strube (2012), pp. 239ff.
- 58 Strube (2012), p. 247.
- 59 For details see Strube (2013), pp. 167ff.
- 60 Strube (2013), p. 169.
- 61 On this point Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 165–69; Strube (2013), pp. 170–71; Strube (2012), pp. 245ff.
- 62 Jürgen-Ratthofer & Ettl (1992), p. 80.
- 63 Strube (2012), p. 261.
- 64 Van Helsing (1993, 1995, 2000).
- 65 Goodrick-Clarke (2002), p. 169.
- 66 Strube (2013), p. 175. See also Wippermann (2007), p. 147.
- 67 See especially Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), pp. 217ff; Wippermann (2007), p. 149; Strube (2012), p. 263.
- 68 For more detail see Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 293–94; Wippermann (2007), p. 148; Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), pp. 217–18. See also Lehmhöfer (2004), pp. 23ff.
- 69 Holey (1998).
- 70 Van Helsing (1995), p. 89; On this point see Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), p. 217.
- 71 Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 299–300.
- 72 Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), p. 219.
- 73 Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), p. 222.
- 74 Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), pp. 223ff.
- 75 Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), p. 225.
- 76 Farrell (2006).
- 77 Augustin (2008), p. 47.
- 78 Augustin (2013), p. 45.
- 79 Lehmhöfer (2004), p. 31.
- 80 For more detail see Jaworski (2004), pp. 43–44.
- 81 Christiansen, Fromm, & Zinser (2006), p. 235: “The fact that anti-Semitism, racism, and a romanticization of National Socialism are flying off the shelves again as best-sellers of conspiracy theory at German bookstores trading in esoteric material documents once more that right-wing extremism has long since left its ghetto existence and found its way into mainstream society.” [Dass Antisemitismus, Rassismus und eine Verklärung des Nationalsozialismus über verschwörungstheoretische Bände wieder als Bestseller über die Ladentheken des deutschen Esoterikbuchhandels gehen, dokumentiert einmal mehr, dass Rechtsextremismus längst sein Ghettodasein verlassen hat, und Brückenköpfe in die gesellschaftliche Mitte gefunden hat.]

Esoteric Perspectives on Wewelsburg Castle

Reception in “Satanist” Circles

Daniela Siepe

The numerous legends about Wewelsburg Castle¹ and its supposed occult meaning for the SS continually attract esoterically interested people in whose worldview supernatural phenomena are nothing unusual.² Esoteric travel guides inform a broad, interested public that the National Socialists sited important buildings like Wewelsburg Castle at energetically special places so as to exert magical influence on whole areas.³ Such travel guides merely export into another type of text an assertion that underlies fantasy literature, in particular that by Nigel Pennick.⁴

The more interesting phenomenon to examine is the appearance of groups or individuals who have performed a documented and thus explicable ritual act in the “crypt” of Wewelsburg Castle or who have made the castle part of their esoteric worldview. Such approaches to the site can be regarded as specific attempts to understand the significance that the building had for the SS; to make out the function of the rooms of the northern tower, especially the crypt; and thereby to assess existing explanations. The particularly relevant discourses⁵ in this context are those in academic publications, popular science, and fantasy literature. My intent is to parse that source material’s array of selected elements to see how they are treated and interpreted through the worldview of the participating actors so that their own picture of Wewelsburg Castle emerges.⁶ The individuals and groups considered in this essay necessarily represent only a subset of all those involved and come broadly from the milieu of Satanism, which has been the subject of detailed research for some years, especially by Scandinavian religious scholars. The word *Satanism* is controversial because it is value-laden, not neutral and analytical, and partly contradicts the way the groups characterize themselves. Instead, the self-designation *Left-Hand Path* is proposed as a discussable, albeit not unproblematic, scholarly term encompassing different esoteric currents that focus, to a greater or lesser degree, on the following aspects of their thinking: (a) the ideology of individualism, which places the individual dead center in his or her existence, (b) the goal of self-deification, which is interpreted in different ways but always implies that the individual takes absolute control over his or her own existence; and (c) an antinomian mindset, in which the individual

questions and breaks social, cultural, and religious taboos in the quest for self-liberation.⁷

**Anton Szandor LaVey (Church of Satan):
Die elektrischen Vorspiele (The Electrical Preludes)**

To orient the reader it is helpful to begin with a man whose path has intersected with that of all the persons discussed in this essay even though he cannot be directly linked to Wewelsburg Castle itself. In 1966 Anton Szandor LaVey (1930–1997) established the Church of Satan and founded modern Satanism. In LaVey's concept Satan does not stand for biblical evil; he symbolizes the antithesis of Christianity with its orientation to the hereafter and its aversion to pleasure, which LaVey perceives as an instrument of oppression. In this sense Satanism is a philosophy centered on radical individualism, a focus on the here and now, and a hedonistic approach to life. LaVey emphasizes the animalistic nature of human beings, whose natural needs are seen as legitimate. According to LaVey, consciously and self-responsibly living out these needs increases the quality of life; self-deception and moral conformity are reprehensible. According to this philosophy, every human being has the right – understood in a thoroughly social Darwinian way – to assert his or her own interests, and human coexistence is regulated on the basis of cooperation for mutual benefit.⁸ LaVey himself was an extremely enigmatic figure. He had largely invented his sonorous name and his life story to legitimize his views. For example, he claimed to have gained deep insights into human nature as a musician in strip joints and as a police photographer.⁹ He painted his San Francisco house in eccentric colors; built secret doors and hidden rooms into it; and furnished it with musical instruments, diabolical paintings, masks, and torture instruments of the Inquisition, to name just a few examples.¹⁰ He had a taste for the bizarre, morbid, and politically incorrect, which also promoted his initially intense public relations work.¹¹ A swastika flag hung above his desk, along with a Confederate flag from the American Civil War.¹²

The founder of the Church of Satan was fascinated by Hitler's regime; by its self-staging through dramaturgy, lighting, music, and dress; and by Hitler's purported grasp of the people's needs, which he knew how to use for his own purposes.¹³ Aesthetics and psychology were LaVey's interests, not National Socialist ideology.¹⁴ Neo-Nazis with whom he had contact in the 1970s were, for him, manipulable weaklings who had not understood essential aspects of National Socialism and whose boogeymen were interchangeable.¹⁵ Ultimately, however, the Third Reich also harbored great potential for LaVey's deliberate

taboo-breaking and his own posturing, which was thoroughly disrespectful of National Socialism itself.¹⁶ LaVey had acquired his knowledge of National Socialism's ostensible occult background from Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier's classic book of fantasy literature, *The Morning of the Magicians*.¹⁷

In 1972 LaVey published one of his major works, *The Satanic Rituals: Companion to the Satanic Bible*. It contained a ritual that the author called "The Law of the Trapezoid – Die elektrischen Vorspiele," which he attributed to a "Black Order" consisting partly of "Vril, Thule, Freunde von Lucifer [Friends of Lucifer], Germania, and Ahnenerbe."¹⁸ According to LaVey's commentary on the alleged historical context, Die elektrischen Vorspiele were said to have been performed in the 1930s by the intellectuals of the SS security service, using symbols and music of the time. The goal of this ritual was "to alter an existing social climate and establish far-reaching change."¹⁹ The ritual, for which LaVey drew on various templates, is highly elaborate and involves sound and light effects, electrical charges, and geometric figures such as the trapezoid. The accompanying text uses various expressive images presenting the dawn of a new, satanic age and the demise of all the Christian and occult ideas that LaVey rejected.²⁰ Nazi Germany is evoked by a Dietrich Eckart quotation that is taken out of context and used as a motto, by the swastika pose that the celebrant assumes during the ritual, and by the written passages in broken German that alternate with the assumed English translation.²¹ This ritual targets the emotions and imagination of the participants, and the contrived historical background is part of the scenario without being central to its content.²²

Michael A. Aquino and the Temple of Set

Under the leadership of Michael A. Aquino (1946–2019), the Temple of Set split off from the Church of Satan in 1975. Since then, the Temple has no longer called itself Satanist and refers to the ancient Egyptian religion and the god Set rather than to Christian mythology (see Figure 8.1). Unlike the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set does not espouse a materialistic view of the human being; it does not reduce humans to a purely animal existence whose needs must simply be accepted. Instead, it understands them as beings with a soul, a unique self,²³ which elevates them above animal nature and opens corresponding spiritual possibilities for development. This concept of "unlimited development of the self beyond physical death"²⁴ is at the center of the Temple's philosophy and is referred to by the ancient Egyptian term *xeper*, "becoming."²⁵ Set is thereby the highest developed being, a nonnatural intelligence and the origin of the human consciousness of its self.²⁶



Figure 8.1 Screenshot from the Temple of Set homepage. (Used with permission from the Temple of Set).

The further development of the self on the way to a divine state of being is called an act of Black Magic. The term is not associated with evil in the conventional sense but rather is distinguished from White Magic, which subsumes all religious concepts that seek the extinction of the self or rest on the idea of the soul's redemption by a creator god. Such concepts are rejected by the Temple of Set. A distinction is made between Lesser Black Magic (psychological manipulation techniques intended to force one's will on others) and Greater Black Magic (which serves the development of one's consciousness and can have an impact on one's behavior and environment).²⁷ The Temple of Set has ranks of initiation that reflect the developmental levels of its members and their skill at magic. Organizational structures include various suborders, each specializing in particular subject areas.²⁸

One of the themes that Temple members can explore consists in aspects of National Socialism that are relevant for their work in magic, which is why Aquino and the Temple of Set have repeatedly been reproached for right-wing extremism, but this misses their motives.²⁹ An internal publication by the Temple specifies that "[i]nterest in this phenomenon is entirely theoretical and structural – and Magical – and has nothing whatsoever to do with racial dogmas of the Nazis."³⁰ National Socialist celebrations that served to influence and control the masses meet the Temple of Set's definition of Lesser Black Magic and therefore appear worthy of study.³¹ They also afford illustrative material

for such features as the aesthetic ritual use of space, movement within that space, sound, the spoken word, and times of day.³²

According to Aquino, Greater Black Magic was practiced especially in the SS. He stated that the practice replaced the value system of Christianity with the preoccupation with pagan mythology; the Christian ideal of man's humility toward God, with the principle of the deification of the human being – albeit as part of the racially defined people. By sacrificing his life to this people, the individual SS man strengthens the superior entity and thus contributes to his own immortality.³³ The seasonal rituals of the SS themselves, though, did not interest Aquino in the least; he found them “primitive and simplistic.”³⁴ Places like the crypt of Wewelsburg Castle, which leave room for one's own interpretation, are obviously more appealing. The preoccupation with aspects of National Socialism should offer stimuli for one's own magical work. Asked by Eva Kingsepp how important historical accuracy is to him in his preoccupation with National Socialism, Aquino replied:

Absolutely important from the standpoint of the historical record. However, this does not mean that present/future development of and experimentation with such principles need to be locked to the Nazis' 1930s–40s knowledge and future ambitions or expectations. We should take interesting and stimulating ideas and go forward with them, not backward.³⁵

This practical interest is also reflected in the reading list of the Temple of Set, which is available for 2003. It contains scientific and fantasy literature as well as sources from the time of National Socialism.³⁶ The preface gives the following instructions to the reader of the document:

When using this reading list, keep in mind that the Temple is not a book club, but rather a religious institution in which Initiates are expected to be practicing magicians. These books are recommended not merely to entertain ..., but more importantly to impart principles which may be applied and to provide facts which are helpful or essential to an understanding of these principles. ... The inclusion of a book in it should not be taken to mean that all or even most of its premises and conclusions are endorsed by the Temple of Set. Most have been written by very wise people. A few have been written by cranks who just happened to blunder into something that we want to know about. Hence your own discernment is critical. Bear in mind that few if any books are written for

disinterested transmission of facts. Every author necessarily writes with a motive [besides the profit one] and from a point of personal perspective and/or bias.³⁷

Characteristics of this reading list are its practical relevance, the basic assumption that all literature must be viewed critically, and a deep skepticism about the value of scientifically established knowledge and evaluations in general, which are suspected of depending primarily on a current epistemological interest of society,³⁸ a skepticism that applies just as much to books about the Nazi era as to documents from it.³⁹ There are obviously different reasons for interest in a book of fantasy literature, which can be gleaned from comments on individual publications. For instance, one book is said to deal with phenomena that nonoccultists simply cannot explain. Another tome is or was for a long time the only English-language literature available on the subject. The author of a third book offers an overview of occult speculations or interesting information on individual aspects that also seem to be researched. A fourth book offers intellectual stimulation, still another is entertaining.⁴⁰ In this context it becomes apparent that books in the reading list can be praised as well as criticized in a particular discussion.⁴¹ There will probably be controversial views on some publications within the Temple, but the discussion of fantasy literature, or even of supposed sources such as Hermann Rauschnig, is a dynamic one, and readers may revise their earlier assessments.⁴² For the subject area as a whole, however, the determining attitude seems to be that the reception of literature and sources on National Socialism is obviously important for a Temple of Set magician dealing with that subject but that the decisive factor is one's own awareness and intuitive interpretation of the situation, even if that interpretation differs from others.⁴³

Aquino's Interpretation of the Crypt and the Wewelsburg Working

Michael A. Aquino held a doctorate in political science and was a professor at Golden Gate University in San Francisco from 1980 to 1986. Until 1994 he worked as a political advisor in the U.S. Army's Military Intelligence Service and held the active-duty rank of lieutenant colonel.⁴⁴ In October 1982 he visited a number of NATO facilities in England, Belgium, and Germany on business. After completing his tour, he took the opportunity to visit Wewelsburg, which he characterized in a letter to the priesthood of the Temple of Set as a "long-awaited personal quest."⁴⁵ (see Figure 8.2). He had been studying the

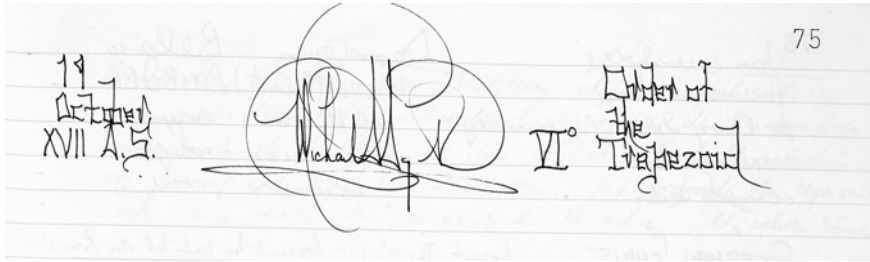


Figure 8.2
Michael A. Aquino's entry in the sign-in book for visitors to the contemporary historical exhibition at Wewelsburg Castle, *Besucherbuch der zeitgeschichtlichen Dokumentation*, no. 1, 5 June 1982–18 May 1983, p. 75.

legends surrounding the SS and Wewelsburg Castle for some time, and in April 1972 he published an article on the subject, entitled “That Other Black Order” in the internal journal of the Church of Satan.⁴⁶ Aquino arrived in Wewelsburg shortly after the castle's contemporary historical exhibition had opened and just after publication of Hüser's research results. Aquino's knowledge of the castle was thus based on the fantasy books and popular scientific literature available to him at the time, in which the place is portrayed as a kind of metaphysical center of the SS.⁴⁷ Even some time after he visited the castle, Aquino assumed that it was under the purview of the SS's Ahnenerbe Association, which in fantasy literature is considered an occult organization within the SS. This portrayal roughly corresponded to Aquino's view of the Ahnenerbe in the early 1980s.⁴⁸ He did not look into the matter further until the 1980s.⁴⁹

Prior to visiting Wewelsburg Castle in October 1982, Aquino had read about a large dining room in the building where Himmler and his followers were said to have met for group meditations, about the chairs with the silver nameplates, and about a crypt – allegedly located under this dining room – in which the coats of arms of the elect were claimed to have been burned. It occurred to Aquino that a certain canon of assertions was constantly being repeated but that the authors usually did not seem to know Wewelsburg Castle itself. On his way to East Westphalia, Aquino was not even sure whether the building and the rooms in question still existed at all. On site he visited the castle and the newly opened contemporary historical exhibition, convinced himself of the baselessness of the legends that had circulated, and detailed these views in the letter to his priesthood, indicating that the established facts were important to him.⁵⁰

Because Aquino was able to identify himself as an officer in the U.S. Army and as a member of a university, a museum employee offered to show him the rooms of the northern tower.⁵¹ During the tour Aquino came to his own conclusions as to what kind of use the subterranean room might have been intended for, namely, a kind of meditation, as he himself finally conducted spontaneously in the crypt in the afternoon, when he was allowed to stay there alone for an hour and a half.⁵² To explain what he called Wewelsburg Working, Aquino first cites the energy of the building, which he thought he felt during his visit:

By the time I visited it, ... I had a tremendous appreciation of the Wewelsburg's significance, and could sense the same power radiating from it, and particularly the North Tower, that I think Himmler did. Perhaps this is only partly the "memory" of the castle itself, and partly its location in terms of Ley lines [energetic power lines that cover the world according to the view of geomancy] and other geophysical influences. ... Essentially it was the castle itself, and its Walhalla, that "created" the Working. I merely perceived and responded to it.⁵³

For Aquino, the crypt is the energetic gateway of the "center of the world," as he explains in reference to the northern tower's designation handed down by the former architects, a special place, but not the only gate left behind by the National Socialists and other cultures alike.⁵⁴ Moreover, during his visit he was particularly impressed by the acoustics and lighting in the underground space, which are especially evident at its center (see Figure 8.3). They led Aquino to reject all views based on the assumption that a fire was intended to burn at the



Figure 8.3
Michael A. Aquino in the crypt of
Wewelsburg Castle, 1982 (photo: Michael A.
Aquino).

center of the room – whether as one of the legendary cremation ceremonies or as an “eternal flame” (the official line).

The central pit is not designed for bonfires. Its purpose became clear to me as soon as I descended into it; it places an individual at the acoustic focus of the chamber, as well as at the converging focus of the light channeled from the four 5-foot window passages. The effect is devastating. One shimmers with light from the Sun, Moon, or stars in an otherwise shadowed and darkened chamber; and one’s voice whether lowered to a whisper or raised to a shout is magnified and multiplied and mirrored back to the focus.⁵⁵

In Aquino’s view the crypt had nothing to do with commemoration of the dead, so he found the name passed down in the sources inappropriate. To him it was a chamber built by Himmler for another purpose, a “sensory magnifier and concentrator, for extreme meditation and/or vocalization,”⁵⁶ and that was how he used it.

The Wewelsburg Working was a kind of meditation of the Greater Black Magic outlined above, which was barely discernible from the outside and

which included only a slowly and softly spoken invocation of a higher level of consciousness and a spontaneous verbalization of emerging thoughts. During the meditation, Aquino stood in the center of the crypt and raised his arms slightly up in the air to form the ancient Egyptian sign for the *ka*, one of the human souls.⁵⁷ The place, time, introductory invocation, goals, and results of the Working are well documented in a report so that the content can be elucidated.

Aquino explained one goal of the Working: "As the Wewelsburg was conceived by Heinrich Himmler to be the 'Mittelpunkt der Welt' [center of the world], and as the focus of the Hall of the Dead⁵⁸ was to be the Gate of that Center, to summon the Powers of Darkness at their most powerful locus."⁵⁹ It is the imagery of this phrase that may have been misunderstood in the literature.⁶⁰ By calling on the Powers of Darkness, Aquino sought not invoke evil powers (or even Himmler himself) but rather the principles that he linked with Set: the "Prince of Darkness" and the source of human consciousness.⁶¹ Another goal of the Wewelsburg Workings is "to energize the advent of the Working Year XVIII."⁶² This objective relates to LaVey's idea that history can be divided into certain periods of time, the smallest unit of which is a "Working." It is a period of eighteen years of magical work, the beginning of which in this case coincides with the founding of the Church of Satan in 1966. The first year and final year of such a period are called Working Year and have a special position: "The initial Working Year sees the generation of the Working, while the last one is witness to its ultimate product."⁶³ Aquino's ritual was thus intended as preparation for the final Working Year, coinciding with 1983. The third goal of the Wewelsburg Working was probably the most significant for Aquino personally: "To obtain a full Understanding of the significance of the crisis that befell the Temple of Set in June–July XVII [1982]."⁶⁴

When Aquino came to Wewelsburg in the fall of 1982, he found himself in a predicament. Only a short time before, senior initiates of the Temple of Set had attempted to take over the organization and exert more control over junior grades. This move resulted in a severe internal crisis in which the then acting High Priest and numerous members left or were expelled from the Temple of Set. Aquino took over the leadership of the organization again, which he had relinquished in 1979, and now confronted the task of rebuilding the Temple.⁶⁵ The text of the Wewelsburg Workings reflects on the causes of this crisis and deals with the question of how it could be that the Temple of Set, which by its very self-understanding strives for the liberation and strengthening of the self, could unleash such destructive character traits.

Looking back on the experiences of the past years since the founding of the Church of Satan, Aquino came to the conclusion that both sides of the human

personality, the self and the baser instincts, are inevitably connected and that there is no solution to this problem: “Strengthen, exalt, and encourage the willful self, and you cannot avoid strengthening the natural instincts as well.”⁶⁶ To illustrate this thought, Aquino pointed to Nazi Germany, where, in his view, the SS’s total identification with Adolf Hitler’s goals and the SS’s embrace of pre-Christian religious ideas did liberate the individual SS man from hitherto socially prescribed moral constraints and imbued his self with tremendous dynamism but thereby also liberated baser instincts, which escalated in cruel crimes.⁶⁷ The aspired self-deification of man therefore led to monstrosity in National Socialism. As Aquino emphasized in the report he wrote to his priesthood about his Working:

This, I understood in the Wewelsburg, was the “magical epitaph” of Nazi Germany: That, in fighting against certain features of the mind, it had seemed at first to succeed but then had thus unleashed other, even less desirable features of that same mind which had previously remained in some rough degree of socially-controlled equilibrium before this ultimately disastrous experiment in “conscious evolution” was attempted.⁶⁸

For Aquino this message was driven home by the crypt, which had been built by inmates of Niederhagen Concentration Camp.⁶⁹ In the text’s metaphorical language, the room, which is perceived with mixed feelings, becomes a stone monument to the unresolvable problem of every spiritual further development:

The chamber in which I stood, I now realized, was nothing less than an SS laboratory for experiments in ‘conscious evolution’ – a sort of ‘Krell machine’⁷⁰ without computerized, science fiction accoutrements. It was not designed to teach or educate, rather to mirror and enhance thoughts and impulses already in existence. Hence its effect on the consciousness could be devastating for better or for worse.⁷¹

The Wewelsburg Working culminates in Aquino visualizing the emblem of the Order of the Trapezoid and creating this order as a suborder of the Temple of Set. The Order traces its tradition back to the Church of Satan, and, in Aquino’s view, its self-image has always taken into account the dilemma outlined above. Its members are appointed by invitation within the Temple of Set. They deal with the Northern European magical tradition, which subsumes aspects of Nazism, but also with various topics such as electromagnetism or the origin of the universe.⁷² In the Temple of Set, the Order of the Trapezoid is the oldest order, “a creature of both the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set”⁷³ and the

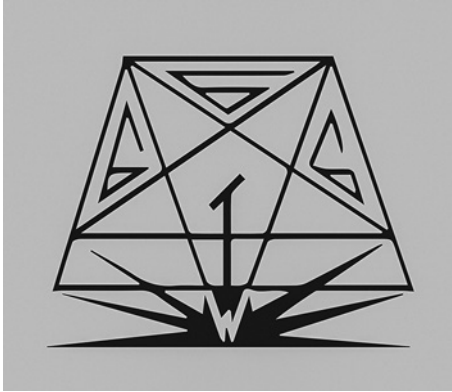


Figure 8.4
The emblem of the Order of the Trapezoid.
Besides the letter W, the pentagram and
three sixes are also visible.

product of the 1983 Working Year. The emblem of the order shows a trapezoid, which is connected with further symbols (see Figure 8.4). The letter *W* stands, among other things, for *Walhalla* (the hall of the fallen warriors in Germanic mythology and the colloquial name of the Wewelsburg Castle's crypt) and *Walhalla* as “the central state of becoming within the Order,”⁷⁴ a variant of the *xeper* principle.⁷⁵

The Wewelsburg Working has become known far beyond the Temple of Set in occult and journalistic circles.⁷⁶ It has had great significance for the history of the Temple itself. For example, the organization's homepage features a small photograph of the northern tower (see Figure 8.1), and Setians as well as Aquino himself repeatedly refer in their texts to the content of the Wewelsburg Working.⁷⁷ Some Setians have visited Wewelsburg Castle, but their presence is recorded, if at all, at most by the term *xeper* in the visitors' book.⁷⁸ On a visit to Wewelsburg in 1998, German Setians used the occasion to found the so-called Pergamon Pylon there, a German-based subgroup of the Temple of Set. Unlike the Order of the Trapezoid, however, the Pergamon Pylon did not attach any particular importance to the castle. Instead, they referred to Berlin's exhibit of the Pergamon Altar, also a gate to be used for magical work. This group no longer exists.⁷⁹

Aquino's View of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall: The “Grail Hall”⁸⁰

When Aquino came to Wewelsburg in 1982, the enormous hype about the old castle and the purported Black Sun had not yet started. Nonetheless, he also visited the *Obergruppenführer* Hall and published his thoughts about it in the

internal journal of the Order of the Trapezoid. That text, however, did not gain the same traction as his writing about the Wewelsburg Working. Aquino's views on the Wewelsburg Castle's sun wheel changed over time. In 1982 he suspected a solar meaning behind the *Obergruppenführer* Hall's symbolism based on the number 12; the legend of Himmler's Round Table did not seem altogether credible to him.⁸¹ Writing in the journal of the Order of the Trapezoid a year later, he regarded the sun wheel as an emblem of the Westphalian Fehme, a protovigilante tribunal system in the latter part of medieval times.⁸² Later, he deemed it pure decoration for which there are all kinds of strange explanations.⁸³ What did not change through all those years, however, was Aquino's understanding of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall as a hall of the Grail, a shrine to it.⁸⁴ This interpretation was related to the role of Grail mythology in Aquino's mind and to his personal experience of Wewelsburg Castle during his visit.

Although Aquino, like many others, assumed that Heinrich Himmler may have been particularly interested in the Grail at one time, it was not the legends about the SS in fantasy literature that defined the theme for Aquino. It was the thoughts and figures in Richard Wagner's opera *Parsifal*⁸⁵ that offered him stimulating ideas and images. For Aquino the Grail was a symbol of "the self, soul, or *psyche* made perfect through conscious refinement and exercise of the will"⁸⁶ or also a symbol of "the truth in its purest and most sublime form,"⁸⁷ which remains closed to the uninitiated. The search for the Grail corresponds to Aquino's concept of *xeper*, the central concern of the Temple: "The Grail Quest represents authentic initiation, and the goal of initiation is to raise one's consciousness from that of a material beast-being to that of an immortal divine being."⁸⁸ It is precisely this Grail quest to which the Order of the Trapezoid, which sees itself as a chivalric order with chivalric virtues, has dedicated itself.⁸⁹ Accordingly, an aspirant of the Temple who follows the path of spiritual development is comparable to Parsifal,⁹⁰ Wagner's figure who matures inwardly and develops from a fool to a new Grail King. Wagner's evil sorcerer Klingsor embodies the negative counterpart: "Klingsor represents attempts to seize the Grail by means other than personal purification and enlightenment. ... He also seeks it for ulterior motives of power over others, not for the initiation of humanity."⁹¹ Thus, the two figures represent the two sides of human personality and the possibilities of human development that Aquino focused on in his Wewelsburg Working.⁹²

When Aquino wrote in his 1982 letter to his priesthood that his visit to Wewelsburg had been a "long-awaited personal quest,"⁹³ he did indeed mean a really intense search that reminded him of Parsifal's search for the Grail Castle. The letter records in detail how he pursued the clues to the castle, reached Wewelsburg, and discovered the building itself only at the last moment.⁹⁴

This experience of the building was reinforced by his perception of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall in the northern tower. The bright atmosphere of the room, which he found to be a complete contrast to the dark, massive crypt, reminded him, as it did other viewers at times, of the “Grail Hall” in the Bayreuth premiere of *Parsifal*.⁹⁵ He associated the *Obergruppenführer* Hall, or Grail Hall as he called it, with Parsifal; the crypt of the northern tower, with Klingsor. To Aquino, the crypt was the foundation on which the Grail Hall must stand: “the necessary earthly foundation upon which a true Grail Hall must rest: a temple to humanity’s dark, lonely alienation from the natural world around him. To become Parsifal, initiated man must first experience, understand, and overcome the desperation and agony of Klingsor.”⁹⁶ In Aquino’s mind, not only the crypt but the entire northern tower became a mirror image of his ideations.

Nikolas and Zeena Schreck

Nikolas and Zeena Schreck are artists, musicians, and authors. As an author and filmmaker, Nikolas has examined Charles Manson and his reception. A book project entitled “The Dallas Book of the Dead” is a black comedy about the assassination of John F. Kennedy and intelligence experiments with psychedelic drugs during the Cold War. Musically, Nikolas is part of the Kingdom of Heaven project. Zeena is a graphic artist and a photographer and was featured in New York’s 2013 Performa 13 Biennial with a sound-and-voice collage. Both are active as religious and spiritual teachers. Zeena heads the Sethian Liberation Movement.⁹⁷

In 1984 Nikolas founded the Deathrock music project Radio Werewolf. He met Zeena in 1988, and they then continued Radio Werewolf together until 1993. Zeena is Anton LaVey’s daughter and was high priestess of the Church of Satan from 1985 to 1990.⁹⁸ This was the time of the “Satanic Panic” in the United States, where the groups known as “satanic” were accused, among other things, of infiltrating American society and of ritual child abuse. The allegations of this media frenzy, which started in the evangelical milieu of the United States, have since been debunked as urban legends.⁹⁹ During this period, LaVey’s tone hardened and his biologicistic views became more extreme, abstruse, and antisocial. He advocated elitist satanic stratification, the introduction of a legal system based on simple retributive justice, eugenic solutions to social problems, and sovereign separatist satanic territories under their own jurisdiction.¹⁰⁰ As spokespersons for the Church of Satan, Zeena and Nikolas represented the positions of the Church in interviews,¹⁰¹ but as artists they went one step further. They saw themselves as “cultural terrorists”¹⁰² and their concerts



Figure 8.5
Zeena and Nikolas Schreck (photo: Gisela
Getty, copyright: Z. and N. Schreck).

as a “well-considered confrontation with sociocultural conditioning.”¹⁰³ They intended to challenge the public’s perception and to trigger discomfort to the point that an artist would be criminalized in a kind of defensive reaction by society (see Figure 8.5).¹⁰⁴ Black humor, sarcasm and irony, the crossing of boundaries through mockery and inappropriate behavior, and self-parody of one’s image played a key role.¹⁰⁵ Zeena and Nikolas were part of a movement that formed around the publisher Feral House and positioned figures such as LaVey or Charles Manson as its icons. The movement was dubbed the “apocalypse culture”¹⁰⁶ after a central book it published.

Radio Werewolf itself stated that the Deathrock music project was nothing other than “the sonic propaganda unit”¹⁰⁷ of the black magic Werewolf Order, which, under Nikolas and Zeena Schreck’s leadership, was striving for a psychic dictatorship over the masses and a coming occult world order. Although the Order’s own propaganda sometimes claimed it had over a thousand members, it is likely that the project existed more in the minds of just a few people.¹⁰⁸ One flyer shows a drawing ostensibly of a Werewolf Order meeting in which the members are depicted as small males clad in black and wearing cowls in the style of the Ku Klux Klan. The caption reads, “The Werewolf Order is the front-line of the Demonic Revolution,”¹⁰⁹ underscoring the project’s black-humored and provocative aspect. La Vey’s notion of the brute nature of human beings is accentuated in predatory depictions of the wolf, whose pack will descend upon the Judeo-Christian sheep,¹¹⁰ or “sleepwalking zombie hordes.”¹¹¹

Thus, one “sacred cow” of the Western value system is slaughtered after another, certainly – and probably deliberately – alienating the viewer of some interviews. Homosexuality and human miscegenation seem to be completely unacceptable,¹¹² references to Nazi Germany are both playful and provocative. A few examples serve to illustrate their approach. The artist name Nikolas Schreck is a double allusion to the silent film star Max Schreck and to Julius

Schreck, the founder of the SS.¹¹³ The band name Radio Werewolf refers to the National Socialist propaganda radio station Werewolf, which was intended to drive all Germans to fight to the point of self-annihilation in the final days of World War II.¹¹⁴ On the one hand, the name alludes to an apocalyptic battle; on the other hand, the (were-)wolf is ambiguous as a symbol and should not be thought of solely in the Nazi context. It stands for the Fenrir wolf, which in Norse mythology is unleashed at the end of time; for a new human being freed from moral guilt; and for creativity and artistic changeability. The Fenrir wolf also has a sexual component.¹¹⁵ Most infamously, the so-called 8-8-88 rally, a hybrid of a concert and a performance, involved Nikolas Schreck of Radio Werewolf, industrial musician Boyd Rice, Zeena for the Church of Satan, and publisher Adam Parfrey of Feral House. On the anniversary of the 1969 murder of actress Sharon Tate by members of the Manson Family, a film about Charles Manson was shown. It celebrated the death of 1960s ideas as a rejection of compassion for the vulnerable, of peace, and of pacifism. Participants in the performance then had their photographs taken with their hands raised in a Hitler salute and were interviewed in front of an altar with a skull and crossbones, a satanic Baphomet symbol (the emblem of the Church of Satan), and a swastika flag.¹¹⁶ On this occasion, Nikolas sympathized with the idea that much of humanity would be wiped out. Moreover, he praised Nazism as a time when the full potential of humanity had been unleashed, the predatory instinct and the beast in man.¹¹⁷

These and similar acts and gestures have led to Nikolas and Zeena Schreck, as well as other artists, being seen completely as right-wing extremists, so some of their concerts have had to be organized conspiratorially.¹¹⁸ In fact, this was an artistic strategy that did not focus on attractive but rather on particularly frightening aspects of National Socialism, presumably with the intention of frightening the rest of humanity.¹¹⁹ It is admittedly difficult for the observer to distinguish between what was ironic and what was actually serious in the sometimes unbridled statements, especially since the protagonists did not shy away from associating with the far right of the political spectrum. Later texts and statements by Nikolas and Zeena Schreck, however, do not show any euphoric or illusory attitude with regard to National Socialism, no racist thinking, and no homophobia.¹²⁰

In 1990 Zeena broke with her father. She and Nikolas left the Church of Satan, also turning their backs on its Social Darwinist philosophy and publicly exposing the legends surrounding LaVey's person.¹²¹ The two reached out to the Temple of Set, which they joined in 1995 and rose quite quickly within its ranks. For a few weeks in 2002, Zeena was acting high priestess of the Temple of Set, which she left in the same year partly because of theological differences.¹²²

Today, Zeena is head of the Sethian Liberation Movement, which worships the Egyptian god Seth in a form that is taken to be more authentic. Nikolas and Zeena are now exceedingly hostile to hierarchically organized occult groups, especially the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set. They also see themselves as Tantric Buddhists. As such, they represent a religious conception to which the idea of an all-embracing compassion is important and which does not place the ego in the center but rather wants to extinguish it in order to achieve union with the divine. On the way to Buddhism, they also studied Hindu Tantra, in which the woman, the feminine, and the ritualized sexual union have an important function. This understanding brings them to the Tantric roots of the term *Left-Hand Path*, which has been received in modern occultism by way of theosophy and greatly reinterpreted in the process.¹²³ Nikolas and Zeena Schreck now live in Berlin.

Nikolas Schreck has been to Wewelsburg several times over the years. Even as a child he was interested in esoteric traditions and their influence on secular history. In books on the Third Reich, he found “scattered contradictory reports”¹²⁴ about Wewelsburg Castle:

My intense interest in the Arthurian mythos, especially the search for the Grail and my love of Wagner and medievalism, inspired me to look deeper into the rumors of Himmler’s search for the Grail and his supposed conception of Wewelsburg as a new Camelot/Montsalvat. Politics was of no interest to me then or now; the mystical-religious implications of Himmler’s activities was my only concern.¹²⁵

The American-born author’s interest in National Socialism certainly has its origins in his view of the United States, whose “American-style capitalist materialism”¹²⁶ he considers just as critically as its cultural influence on Europe. He sees a countermovement to this materialism and its values in the American movement of the 1960s and in the Germany of the 1930s:

They were both concerned with changing humanity at the root, making a new world, a sharp break with politics as usual, and they were both greatly focused on pioneering radical ecology and getting back to nature and the soil. And more importantly, they were both informed by magical, pagan, and spiritual ideals that few other political movements have ever been concerned with. What interested me about the history of the Third Reich wasn’t the political aspects, but the fact that several National Socialist leaders planned to bring about a new religion in Europe once the war was won.¹²⁷



Figure 8.6
Cover of the 1989 LP *The Fiery Summons*,
bearing the image of a wolf (photo: Zeena
and Nikolas Schreck).

Schreck dealt with these aspects in the early 1980s and wrote a book manuscript entitled “From Atlantis to Auschwitz: Inside Nazi Occultism,” which he did not publish. As part of this research, he visited Wewelsburg for the first time in 1983.¹²⁸ At that time, Schreck was thinking about leaving Ronald Reagan’s United States and was of a mood in which the end of the world seemed imminent to him.¹²⁹ He visited Egypt and Europe on a spiritual quest for the secrets of life.¹³⁰ In the crypt of Wewelsburg Castle, he took some time to meditate and sing. As he remembers it, he had a vision there of the end-time Fenrir wolf of Norse mythology, which in the following year was to become the symbol of Radio Werewolf (see Figure 8.6).

His experiments with the acoustics of the crypt also stimulated his work on this musical project. As Schreck put it, they “inspired my work with public sonic magic rituals as a method of changing consciousness which manifested shortly thereafter in Radio Werewolf’s performances and recordings.”¹³¹ Schreck did not come to any definitive conclusions then about Himmler’s vision for Wewelsburg Castle. Nor has he today. He concurs with Stuart Russell’s view, which in this case conforms to the official one that there had been no definite plans by Himmler. Nevertheless, Schreck intuitively concluded that the crypt must have been conceived as a ritual chamber:

At the time, there was no reliable first-hand historical information on Himmler’s actual spiritual conception of the Wewelsburg. So I could make no firm conclusion other than a practicing magician’s intuitive sense that the Walhalla was almost certainly intended as some sort of ritual chamber or shrine.¹³²

Nikolas's musical interest in the legend of the Grail as a stone that fell from Lucifer's crown found expression in the instrumental piece "Lucifer's Court," which appeared on the 1989 extended play record (EP) *Bring Me the Head of Geraldo Rivera*. The title of the track evidently alludes to Otto Rahn's book *Lucifers Hofgesind* (Lucifer's Court: A Heretic's Journey in Search of the Light Bringers) but is otherwise ambiguous and can also be thought of as a self-reference. At that time, the Schrecks still represented the Satanism of the Church of Satan, in which Zeena was the high priestess and spokeswoman.¹³³

After breaking with the Church of Satan, Zeena and Nikolas Schreck moved to Europe in 1990. The East German communist system had just collapsed, and they hoped "that European culture would regain its former supremacy over the USA and USSR world domination during the Cold War."¹³⁴ It did not come about for them. All her life Zeena had been attracted to legends, fairy tales, and myths. Now they researched the Ariosophical protagonists of occultism, such as Guido von List, Otto Rahn, Karl Maria Wiligut, Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, and Rudolf von Sebottendorf, all of whom had dealt with such myths, and in 1992 the Schrecks traveled to the places that had had significance for these figures.¹³⁵ Through this venture they gained the impression that the ideas of these writers were simply reactionary, misogynistic, subjective, historically flawed, politically corrupted, and lacking in something.¹³⁶ They filmed this journey for the Werewolf Order film *Germania: The Theory of Ruins*, which is meant to be understood as visual poetry rather than as a documentary.¹³⁷ In this context they visited Wewelsburg Castle, where, in an unobserved moment in the crypt, Zeena conducted the so-called Grail Ritual, which was influenced by her involvement with tantra. The aim of this ritual was to clarify the question, "What is the Grail?" Zeena called this purpose to mind before the ritual, and then attended only to her perceptions during it. She stood at the center of the crypt and assumed with her body the form of a grail chalice, a position of empathic magic (see Figure 8.7). It is also a Tantric position intended to foster steady breathing and an unobstructed flow of energy through all the chakras. In this pose, Zeena explains, the body is like a kind of tuning fork and is more sensitive to a wider range of vibrations, an effect that she achieved by humming with her mouth open. At that moment, she said, she became aware that the Grail was not an object that could be touched but rather a potential of primal wisdom that everyone bears within them without always being able to tap into it. That is why, according to Zeena, the Grail legend always entails a quest.¹³⁸ They also recorded a ritual piece of music in the building.¹³⁹

In November 1998 Nikolas Schreck visited Wewelsburg a third time (see Figure 8.8), on that occasion as priest of the Temple of Set, of which he was



Figure 8.7
Zeena Schreck in the crypt, from the Werewolf Order film *Germania: The Theory of Ruins* (copyright: Z. Schreck). Today the crypt is under camera surveillance, meaning that rituals are prohibited by the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg.

a member until 2002, and as sponsor of the Pergamon Pylon, which had been founded by a second-degree Setian.¹⁴⁰ The group visited Wewelsburg Castle because a member had organized the meeting in his home town of Paderborn. A guided tour was used as an opportunity to perform two brief ceremonies in which the group's members gathered in the middle of the crypt, partly to recognize a Setian for advancing to the second degree.¹⁴¹ The crypt's acoustics had been studied carefully in advance. Schreck felt the space was

a dramatic and powerful location suitable to the event. There was no political symbolism involved, though I understand that most socially indoctrinated Germans find it almost impossible to look at any ritual held at a Third Reich location without suspecting some hidden right-wing agenda. The rite was focused on the Grail aspect of the Wewelsburg legend, not the mundane political or racial goals of the SS. Nor would the very pro-female nature of the Working I conducted there have met Herr Himmler's approval. The female initiate I recognized as an Adept of the T[emple] o[f] S[et] stood in the center of the Walhalla, symbolically "the axis mundi[,]" and represented the Left-Hand Path feminine power of the Grail.¹⁴²

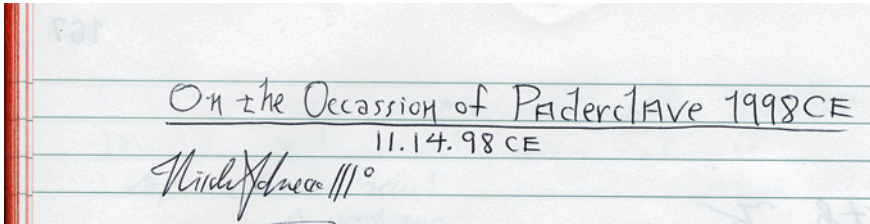


Figure 8.8 Excerpt bearing Nikolas Schreck's signature in the sign-in book for visitors to the contemporary historical exhibition at Wewelsburg Castle, 14 November 1998.

Nikolas and Zeena Schreck left the Temple of Set together with other members in 2002. In a paper that settled accounts with the Temple of Set, they accused the Order of the Trapezoid of a naïve and historically incorrect handling of Himmler's racial mysticism and of an excessive orientation to the Arthurian legend. They made it clear that the worldview and value system of National Socialism and the SS were utterly unreconcilable with their Tantric self-concept of the Left-Hand Path.¹⁴³ Looking at the hype about the Black Sun in the first several years of the new millennium, Nikolas Schreck stated in 2013,

It goes without saying, I would hope, that neither Zeena nor I ever believed that black magic or Satanism had any place in the Third Reich, and that we reject the entire "Black Sun-Shamballa-Vril" nonsense in its entirety. That was true when we were Satanists and we have not changed our mind after over a decade as Tantric Buddhists.¹⁴⁴

For him, the Wewelsburg structure remained a romantic castle in the air like Neuschwanstein. It was a mystery, however, he no longer wanted to solve in 2013.¹⁴⁵

The Black Order of Lucifer

In 1995/1996 a German subgroup called the Totenkopf Grotto existed as part of the Church of Satan for a short time. It is said to have been founded in Wewelsburg and to have held a ritual in the crypt, but this information stems only from former members.¹⁴⁶ Two very different groups emerged from it: the Swiss Black Order of Lucifer and the Ruhr-based Circle of Hagalaz.¹⁴⁷

In the following pages, I first discuss the Black Order of Lucifer, which was founded in 1999 and which has fallen silent.¹⁴⁸ Unlike the other groups

and individuals discussed here, the Black Order of Lucifer advocates a diffuse *völkisch* (ethnonational) worldview. A state is seen as an organic unit, so there is talk of the “organism we call Nation”¹⁴⁹ and of the “cultural soul of the *völkisch* meta-individual.”¹⁵⁰ Whereas LaVey focuses on the liberation of man from the ethical constraints imposed on him, and whereas Aquino emphasized man’s spiritual possibilities of development, the Black Order of Lucifer stresses the genetic conditionality and evolution of man. According to the philosophy of the Order, however, a people is not homogeneous; there are people distinguished by an innate “elitist-heroic nature.”¹⁵¹ If many people strive for divinity according to this nature, this aspiration has repercussions on the superordinate organism.¹⁵² Satorius, the head of the Black Order, distinctly disassociates himself from the libertine and capitalistic manifestations of the Church of Satan, denouncing “hedonism and ... immorality,”¹⁵³ “naked women (or men!)”¹⁵⁴ on the altars of the Church of Satan as well as the sale of priestly degrees and the lack of belief in the actual existence of Satan.¹⁵⁵ “Discipline and obedience”¹⁵⁶ are virtues of the Swiss Order, and its degree system is an expression of such a hierarchy of obedience.¹⁵⁷ The Order seems to be driven by a sense of mission and by conspiracy theories. It sees itself in constant struggle for its persuasions, a conviction that is emphasized with declamatory phrases, some borrowed from Christianity.¹⁵⁸

The Ariosophical doctrine of Karl Maria Wiligut is central to the worldview of the Black Order.¹⁵⁹ Wiligut represented a Germanized, Aryanized *Kristentum* (Christianity), which he called the *Irminenglauben* (Irminist faith). He saw himself as its bearer of tradition and referred to his “ancestral memory,” a knowledge of his forebears’ history allegedly encoded in his genetic makeup. In his texts he spoke of a *Got(os)* and the prehistoric crucifixion of a *Baldur-Krestos* in Goslar. In his conception of the cosmos, he saw the functioning of power currents, which he called spirit, energy, matter, and whose different rotation he represented, for example, as a cross, an Irmin-cross, or as a triangle, the *Drehaug* (rotating eye). Among Wiligut’s surviving texts are the so-called Halgarita Charms, mantra-like sayings, which in their linguistic mixture of modern German, Middle High German, Old Norse, and other inputs are all but incomprehensible and therefore depend on interpretation. It is said that ancestral memory can be activated with them. Part of the Wiligutian tradition was also an Ariosophical history of human evolution. It shows how present-day mankind developed within several epochs introduced by catastrophes, including the interbreeding of earthlings with light beings that had fallen from heaven to earth during a celestial impact. Further developmental stages of mankind are still to come.¹⁶⁰

The Black Order now identifies Wiligut's light beings fallen from heaven with the biblical morning star Lucifer fallen from heaven and sees Wiligut's *Kristentum* as a satanic religion in which Wiligut's Got is equated with Satan and Lucifer.¹⁶¹ The Halgarita Charms are considered to be ancient black magic incantations equivalent to the Enochian invocations, formulations used, for example, in the rituals of the Church of Satan. The Order holds that the Halgarita Charms act like a drug and activate the genetically anchored ancestral memory in humans.¹⁶² The Black Order of Lucifer has adopted Wiligut's term *Aryan* in particular, understanding it to mean higher "ethereal spirit beings"¹⁶³ that descended to earth thousands of years ago. Accordingly, the term *German* denotes those humans who are cosmically linked in particular with these higher beings and among themselves and who have a foreordained task in life.¹⁶⁴ Satorius and the members of his Order take themselves to be such "Aryans" and "Got = humans";¹⁶⁵ the rest of mankind is attested a decadent development.¹⁶⁶ If one takes the documents of the Order seriously, its ambitious goal is to promote the evolution of a new, superior human species through selection. This species is called *Übermensch*¹⁶⁷ (superman) or *Homo Galacticus*.¹⁶⁸ The latter term indicates (among other things) that the Black Order apparently draws its philosophy also from politically militant right-wing and racist Satanists such as the British Order of the Nine Angles. That Order combines the vision of a new man with that of a galactic empire and the fundamental change of existing social conditions.¹⁶⁹ The Black Order itself seems to envision a society in which a small intellectual elite determines fates, but it appears to be resigned to the existing democratic social order, at least outwardly.¹⁷⁰ This points to the fundamental problem that these Order documents pose as a source: They give the strong impression that they were always written with a public in mind and that their external impact was taken into account from the outset. Phrases such as "Nordic men and women"¹⁷¹ or catchwords such as *Aryan* are borrowed from the context of the *völkisch* movement and National Socialism but are always kept vague. Amidst the Order's invocations, the SS's *Treuelied* (hymn of allegiance) is also printed, although it dates back to Max von Schenkendorf in 1814. No further explanation of its content is given.¹⁷²

The Black Order views Heinrich Himmler to have been a devotee of Wiligut and black magic. The latter is exemplified in the documents of the Order by an extensive quotation from Walter Schellenberg's memoirs, which includes his remarks on everything from the Fritsch scene to Wewelsburg as an "SS monastery" to Himmler's love-hate relationship with the Catholic Church.¹⁷³ Karl Wolff is brought as a key witness to attest to Wiligut's influence in the selection of Wewelsburg Castle as an SS *Ordensburg* (elite school for the new leadership

of the SS). His interview with the *Neue Illustrierte* is quoted in the abridged form found in Rudolf Mund's biography of Wiligut, and it reverently highlights Wiligut as the person who discovered Wewelsburg Castle.¹⁷⁴ Elsewhere, Wolff's statement in Stuart Russell's documentary is also reproduced as testimony that the myth of King Arthur's Round Table played a role in determining the twelve chiefs of the SS Main Offices and the design of the twelve pedestals of the castle crypt.¹⁷⁵ The fact that Wolff is considered a dubious witness seems to be regarded by the Black Order as outright confirmation of his credibility, for it believes that attempts are still afoot to erase Wiligut's secret knowledge.¹⁷⁶

Satorius sees the Wewelsburg edifice as a "Grail castle and an Irminian cult site, as a locus of covert black-magic cult activity engaged in by a small and top secret circle within the SS."¹⁷⁷ In his mind Wiligut's influence surfaces in the design of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall's sun wheel, which Satorius calls the "Black Sun"¹⁷⁸ and uses as a symbol.¹⁷⁹ Satorius associates the ornament with Wiligut's explanations of the *Tyr-Kreiszeichen*¹⁸⁰ (zodiac signs) and constellations and sees it as symbolizing "the beginning of a new time, the age of Aquarius."¹⁸¹ Wilhelm Landig's view of the Black Sun as "the sign and symbol of a secret, but influential, magic circle within the SS"¹⁸² also appeals to him. In addition, Satorius devotes a fair amount of attention to texts by a student of Wiligut, Emil Rüdiger. Rüdiger, too, speaks of a Black Sun, a countersun called Santur, whose energy, according to him, had a positive influence on human evolution and whose "effects of high intelligence"¹⁸³ are still usable today, according to the Black Order of Lucifer.¹⁸⁴

For Satorius the entire northern tower represents Wiligut's "Irminian worldview."¹⁸⁵ It was "indisputably designed as an Irminian temple to serve various initiatory and ceremonial purposes."¹⁸⁶ Adopting the phrase "center of the world," Satorius sees the northern tower as a symbol of the Germanic world tree *Yggdrasil*, at the foot of which lies "the Kingdom of Hel, the kingdom of death and of life in death."¹⁸⁷ His phrase refers to the crypt, obviously recasting Heinz Höhne's appellation for it: the "Realm of the Dead."¹⁸⁸ At the center of the world of Germanic mythology one also finds the "place of judgment of the gods,"¹⁸⁹ that is, the "SS seat of judgment."¹⁹⁰ It is the "courtroom" of Wewelsburg Castle, which Satorius's imagination readily transfers to the *Obergruppenführer* Hall, the place containing what was claimed to be Himmler's Round Table.¹⁹¹

Satorius is equally selective in the way he perceives and interprets the Wewelsburg Castle's crypt. On the one hand, he sees Wiligut's signature again in the crypt's number symbolism, for the twelve pedestals remind him of Wiligut's zodiac, with the thirty-six stone slabs of the floor's two outer rings

picking up on Wiligut's "number of the Grail."¹⁹² On the other hand, Satorius seems to imagine the crypt having had a variety of possible uses, which he presents to the reader partly as fact, partly as conjecture or rumor. One gets the impression that Satorius is more interested in the plethora of possibilities than in a consistent narrative. The official account of the crypt is, of course, suspect to him. He seems certain that "a small circle of insiders from the Waffen-SS practiced their magic rituals"¹⁹³ in the crypt. "Under Himmler as grand master of this knighthood," as presumed by the prior of the Black Order, even Lucifer, Satan, and Set were said to have been called upon.¹⁹⁴ Satorius also treats as factual the alleged funeral ceremonies for fallen SS men in the crypt, during which the "coats of arms of the SS knights"¹⁹⁵ were placed on the twelve pedestals. He assumes that the coats of arms of the deceased were burned in a stone basin in the center, the smoke standing in the room like a column during the ceremony.¹⁹⁶ In other words Satorius opts for Heinz Höhne's version of the story. He thereby dismisses as an attempted cover-up the results of the study on the building's architectural history, according to which no smoke vents are present. Satorius has obviously not even taken note of the sources on the subject.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, he derives another function of the crypt from its special acoustics, which make the room "virtually predestined for every kind of incantation."¹⁹⁸ If the Halgarita sayings were intoned there, it would activate the ancestral memory in man, and Satorius wonders "whether the crypt was created solely for this purpose!"¹⁹⁹ But this rumination does not prevent him from simultaneously conjecturing the performance of a much better known ritual in the room – Anton LaVey's *Elektrische Vorspiele*. Satorius, however, describes them as an authentic "ritual text from the 1930s"²⁰⁰ and attributes them, it goes without saying, to Wiligut. As already pointed out at the end of this essay's section on *Die elektrischen Vorspiele*, those texts alternate between English and German sections, with LaVey leading his readers to believe that the passages written in thoroughly broken German were the original, authentic text. They contain the following statements, which Satorius quotes in his Order's documents: "Der Tag des Kreuzes und des Dreiecks ist geschaffen. Ein großes Rad mit Winkeln in unerkannten Ausmassen [sic], gerettet für die Kinder des Set, füllt die Leere und wird zur Sonne am Firmament der Verachtung."²⁰¹ (The day of the cross and the triangle is done. A great wheel with angles of unidentified dimensions, salvaged for the children of Set, fills the void and becomes the sun in the firmament of scorn.) The first sentence is more understandable in the published version of *The Satanic Rituals*, where it reads, "The day of the cross and the trinity is done."²⁰² This stance would be deemed a clear rejection of Christianity. An earlier, unpublished version of the rituals reads differently: "The

day of the Cross and the Triangle is done!”²⁰³ This statement would be a rejection of Christianity and traditional occultism.²⁰⁴ The second part of the quotation chosen by Satorius probably alludes vaguely to the Wheel of Life.²⁰⁵ Yet he takes note only of the German text of *Die elektrischen Vorspiele* and is thereby intent on recognizing Wiligut’s Irmin-cross and the rotating eye as well as the zodiac with the Black Sun.²⁰⁶ He deals similarly with a skull, which, recumbent on a red pillow, is used in the Church of Satan’s ritual. LaVey describes it as a “vault of wisdom,”²⁰⁷ or, as Satorius puts it, a “crypt of wisdom.”²⁰⁸ It symbolizes both the carnal material of which the human deity consists and the origin of human ideas and creativity.²⁰⁹ To Satorius, however, the term *crypt* is a reference to the crypt of Wewelsburg Castle,²¹⁰ and he changes LaVey’s words in a way that gives them a new meaning that comes much closer to Satorius’s worldview and to the role of Wewelsburg Castle in it. Whereas LaVey speaks of the “temple of invention, both material and ‘spiritual’” with the skull in mind,²¹¹ Satorius turns it into the “temple of ‘material’ and ‘spiritual’ evolution”²¹² and associates it with the crypt of Wewelsburg Castle, which thereby becomes the site for consecrating a plan to elevate humanity in Wiligut’s sense.

LaVey’s ritual is evidently so significant for Satorius and his Order that they seem to identify themselves with the “Schwartzte Orden” (the Black Order)²¹³ mentioned by LaVey, to which *Die elektrischen Vorspiele* are attributed. The same typographical error (inclusion of a *t*) that LaVey made in the name of the Order is also found in its original self-designation and was explained as “correct medieval spelling” on the group’s former home page.²¹⁴ Ultimately, the Order’s inner circle, to which a maximum of twelve members are admitted,²¹⁵ even sees itself as successor to Himmler’s supposed Round Table, which explains why the title page of the Order’s documents at least temporarily bore an image of Wewelsburg Castle with a superimposed image of the satanic Baphomet figure (see Figure 8.9). A text entitled “Kultraum im Nordturm der Burg” (Cult Room in the Northern Tower of the Castle), which is printed in the Order documents together with ritual texts and invocations, reads:

Aus dem Norden kommen die Horden
 Aus Helvetien kommen wir
 Ritter des Schwarzen [*sic*] Ordens
 Söhne und Töchter der Mächtigen
 Alle versammelt in einem Schwarzen Kreis
 Zwölf Got=Menschen und ihr Weiskunig
 Hier im großen Saal der Wewelsburg
 Ein Eid wurde geschworen
 Ein Eid der Ehre und Treue!



Figure 8.9
Title page of the documents of the Black Order of Lucifer: Skull Grimoire (book of magic) with Baphomet and Wewelsburg Castle.

[From the north come the hordes
From Helvetia we come
Knights of the Black Order
Sons and daughters of the mighty
All gathered in a black circle
Twelve Gods=men and their wise king
Here in the great hall of Wewelsburg Castle
An oath was sworn
An oath of honor and fealty!]²¹⁶

Frater Eremor (Circle of Hagalaz; Current of Set)

Frater Eremor was a member of the former Totenkopf Grotto²¹⁷ and is the coordinator of the Circle of Hagalaz, one of the organizations that succeeded this grotto. He also founded the Current of Set. The Circle of Hagalaz and the Current of Set are both working groups without the structures of an Order and are based in Germany's Ruhr District. Eremor's understanding of Satanism is

influenced by Aquino's principle of *xeper*, the eternal becoming, but he does not profess to have developed his own regular doctrine for the Current of Set. He is concerned with the human being's own individual spiritual development, with power over oneself. He sees the discipline of the Order, the political dimension of the Black Order of Lucifer, just as critically as the social Darwinist statements in LaVey's *Satanic Bible*. The groups to which he belongs do not hold a unified political view.²¹⁸ He finds extreme right-wing Satanists like the former New Zealand Black Order "stupid, they suck" (*dumm und ätzend*).²¹⁹

Frater Eremor's book *In the Power Current of the Satanic Set* contains a brief treatment of the history of occultism, which includes a section about Himmler and Wewelsburg Castle. It repeats the usual legends – from the alleged "inner circle of the SS Order,"²²⁰ Wewelsburg Castle as the "center of the world," and Himmler's Round Table in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall to the placement of the SS coats of arms on the pedestals of the crypt.²²¹ The text is written in a critical tone ridiculing Himmler.²²² Asked why this topic belongs in such a historical overview, Eremor vaguely cites the "Templars and Grail lore"²²³ to which various occult groups, including National Socialist ones, are said to have referred. He ultimately admits, however that "the lapses regarding Wewelsburg and 'occult Nazis' in my book are rather moderately supported by facts. In that respect some of the research was a bit poor, as I ... have meanwhile come to realize."²²⁴ Yet the corresponding passage remained unchanged in a later edition of the same book, indicating that these facts are not taken to be particularly important.²²⁵ The primary reason for Eremor's interest in National Socialism is quite different. He states that it is "the task of a Satanist to enter so-called 'forbidden zones', to think forgotten thoughts, to confront the small and large indecencies of life."²²⁶ In addition, he criticizes, "It is definitely not a healthy way of dealing with one's own past when all of the Third-Reich-era carvings on balustrades and wooden benches in Ottens Hof restaurant in the little village of Wewelsburg are festooned with pretty floral wreaths."²²⁷ On the one hand, Eremor views it as dangerous to avoid tainted symbols or places in order to avoid being associated with them politically. In his view such contaminated topics develop an uncontrollable momentum of their own.²²⁸ On the other hand, he explains that it is precisely this taboo-laden, subject-related fascination whose energy a magician can exploit irrespective of his or her political opinions. Eremor explains how an "egregor" works, which he characterizes as "a thought structure generated by a single person or a collective. The stronger the current of energy directed at the object, the stronger the egregors are."²²⁹ Such egregors – emotionalized collective ideas – can be generated intentionally or unintentionally, at soccer games, during media hype about the television show *Pop Idol*, and with an eye to Nazi Germany.²³⁰ With this background

in mind, Frater Eremor finds the Wewelsburg Castle's particular attraction for magicians at least partly explicable:

A lot of energy is stored there, not despite the absence of proven magical practices by those old Nazis but rather because there is a manifest "destination for pilgrims" which leaves a lot of room for ... speculation. Not everyone who performs a ritual in the "crypt" is a Nazi. It is, in magical terms, possible to work with the egregors around Adolf Hitler, Castro, Bush ... without identifying with their ideas.²³¹

Closing Observations

A few general observations can be made about the individuals and groups discussed in this essay, though I do not contend that these comments are representative. First, Himmler's interest in the Holy Grail and the Round Table figures persistently in how Wewelsburg Castle has been received. However, the assertions made in the fantasy or popular-science literature are not simply repeated. They serve instead as stimuli that lead elements of the Grail story to be incorporated into a philosophical train of thought (Aquino) or to an intuitive as well as artistic examination of that story (Nikolas and Zeena Schreck). Yet they also lead to a crude blend of myriad stories (Satorius), an amalgam inspired by conspiracy theory. The unexplained, auratic phrase "the center of the world" is accentuated in completely different ways. In Aquino's mind, the crypt becomes the energetic gate of the center of the world; in Schreck's, the woman becomes the female "axis mundi." For Satorius, the northern tower becomes the ash tree, Yggdrasil, the world tree. Eremor does not comment on the phrase. Interest centers primarily on the crypt, not the *Obergruppenführer* Hall or the Black Sun. With the exception of Satorius, this popular nomenclature for the castle's sun wheel has not been adopted by any of these writers and has even been critically dismissed.

Overall, much of the attraction of the place, as Eremor describes it, really seems to lie in the unexplained gaps that leave room for one's own speculations and interpretations. The allure of the crypt obviously consists in its acoustics, which come to bear especially at the center of the room, as well as in the overall drama of the setting. Meditations or rituals experienced there are repeatedly associated with personally significant insights and actions (the founding of the Order of the Trapezoid, the vision of the symbol of Radio Werewolf, the founding of the Totenkopf Grotto). Obviously, what is interesting about the SS is not simply its political power in the Nazi state but its turn to pre-Christian

religious ideas and the potential that is presumed to lie behind it. All the writers seem to be aware of the explosive nature of the topic and the location, with all of them plainly claiming to be particularly critical and intellectually independent, unlike mainstream society, so as to devote attention neutrally to such a subject.²³² In my opinion this aspect is linked with the antinomian mindset – the deliberate turn to socially negative topics – noted at the end of this essay’s introduction. This phenomenon can certainly be addressed more precisely by scholars specializing in the study of religions.²³³ However, each case involves a completely different world view.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Michael A. Aquino, Lars Dickhoff, Eremor, Dominik Ghonghadze, Peter-Robert König, Hans-Jürgen Lange, Martin Langebach, Nikolas and Zeena Schreck, and Georg Schmid for giving interviews, answering numerous questions, and providing references and material.
- 2 I take esoteric thinking to mean a certain way of perceiving the world as a complex entity having different levels of reality, whereby it is assumed that higher knowledge about their interrelationships emerges only under certain conditions. It can encompass completely different subject matters. See Stuckrad (2006) for a more precise view grounded in the scholarly study of religion.
- 3 This intent derives from the geomantic idea that energy lines cover the earth. Someone who occupies a strategically favorable point in this system of lines can sway certain areas. On the role of Wewelsburg Castle in that grid, see Luczyn (2001), pp. 31–33; Pieper (1986), p. 49. The influence of geomantic considerations is only implied or mentioned in Brönnle (1994), pp. 199–201; and Terburg (2009), pp. 19–20. In this context both Pieper and Brönnle also use the topos “Grail Castle.”
- 4 Not only has Nigel Pennick written fantasy literature, he also ranks as a leading proponent of geomancy. See Luczyn (2001), p. 31.
- 5 I use the term *discourse* in the constructivist sense of “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events” (Burr, 1995, p. 48).
- 6 In two cases groups presumably left objects at the site after a ritual. White cloths with runic signs were found on the pedestals of the crypt after a forced entry in December 1992; and bread, water, floral decorations, a candle, and other items suggesting a seasonal ritual of a religious nature were discovered in front of the locked grille in March 1999. See Brebeck et al. (2011), pp. 422–23; Siepe (2009), p. 504. Lacking further details, these cases do not lend themselves to further investigation.
- 7 In this context I am paraphrasing the definition by Granholm (2013), p. 213; see also pp. 212–14.
- 8 See Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), pp. 325–33; Petersen (2011), pp. 118, 123–26, 129–30, 159–67; Schmidt (2008; orig. 1992), pp. 139–50. Flowers is a high-ranking member of the Temple of Set and Grand Master Emeritus of the Order of the Trapezoid, discussed later in this essay.
- 9 Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), pp. 307–9; Schreck & Schreck (1998).
- 10 See Aquino (2013), pp. 1515–19; Schreck & Schreck (1998); Wolfe (1974), pp. 65–67.

- 11 See LaVey on the “law of the forbidden” and the attraction of “sex, sentiment and wonder” in Baddeley (1999), p. 76. In the early days of the Church of Satan, photographs in men’s magazines staged LaVey as a kind of Mephisto surrounded by attractive naked women. See Barton (1990) for an example.
- 12 See Aquino (2013), pp. 115–16.
- 13 See LaVey’s remarks in Baddeley (1999), pp. 76, 149; Moynihan & Soderlind (1998), pp. 236–37. See also LaVey (1969), p. 82; Mathews (2009), p. 147. Authors such as Mathews (2009) equate satanism and fascism. For a critical view, see Petersen (2011), pp. 31–32, 164, note 12.
- 14 See LaVey’s statements mentioned above. In writing his magnum opus, *The Satanic Bible* (1969), LaVey drew on Ragnar Redbeard’s *Might is Right* (1896), adapting its Darwinian ideas and reinforcing its anti-Christian bias but eliminating Redbeard’s misogyny and anti-Semitism from the adopted passages. On LaVey’s Darwinian and eugenic views and their development in connection with his situation in life, see Petersen (2011), pp. 163–64, note 12; p. 257; and later passages in the present essay.
- 15 See Aquino (2013), pp. 585–604, especially 592–99.
- 16 See the assessment by Schmidt (2008, orig. 1992), p. 149. See also Petersen (2011), p. 257; Petersen (2013), pp. 176–77.
- 17 See Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), p. 301; Petersen (2011), p. 168; and LaVey’s comment in Aquino (2014a), p. 427.
- 18 LaVey (1972), p. 106.
- 19 LaVey claims to have found indications of such secret rituals in German horror films that were shown to him in Berlin in 1945, but LaVey was never in Germany. See biographies from his circle: Wolfe (1974), pp. 27–29; Barton (1990), p. 23. For a critical view, see Schreck & Schreck (1998).
- 20 See LaVey (1972), pp. 115–30. LaVey’s templates were later revealed as such. The ritual was influenced by the German expressionist cinema of the 1920s, drew on the story *The Hounds of Tindalos* by Frank Belknap Long and on the *Eighth Emerald Tablet of Thoth* by the Brotherhood of the White Temple. The latter is also mentioned as a source in LaVey’s explanations of the ritual. See LaVey (1972), pp. 110–11, 117–27; Aquino (2013), pp. 382–85. Frank Belknap Long stands as an author in the tradition of H.P. Lovecraft’s novels.
- 21 LaVey (1972), pp. 117–30. The introductory quotation from Dietrich Eckart’s “Sturmlied” [<https://archive.org/details/sturmlied>] underlines this powerful mood of departure but breaks off before the distinct political reference to Germany. See LaVey (1972), p. 106: “Sturm, Sturm, Sturm, Sturm, Sturm, Sturm! Lätet die Glocken von Turm zu Turm! Lätet, dass Funken zu sprühen beginnen ...” (Storm, storm, storm, storm, storm, storm! Ring the bells from tower to tower! Ring so that sparks begin to fly ...)” See also Dvorak (2000, pp. 105–6), who, however, interprets the use of the quotation politically.
- 22 On the functioning of LaVey’s rituals and *Die elektrischen Vorspiele*, see Aquino (2013), pp. 169, 375–92. *Die elektrischen Vorspiele* are one of the rituals performed by the Order of the Trapezoid of the Temple of Set (Aquino to the author, 1 January 2007; Aquino, 2014a, p. 436. See also the Temple of Set’s reading list for annotation on the significance of *Die elektrischen Vorspiele*: The ritual “demonstrates that the laws of consciousness evolve through time and culture” (Aquino, 2014a, p. 436). For the institutions and the reading list, see below.
- 23 Terms such as *soul*, *psyche*, and *self* are used synonymously in the Temple of Set. See Aquino (2014a), pp. 146–47, 154–60.
- 24 Schmidt (2008, orig. 1992), p. 165.
- 25 Schmidt (2008, orig. 1992), p. 165.
- 26 On the history, image of the human being, and concept of the Temple of Set, see Schmidt (2008, orig. 1992), pp. 157–70; Granholm (2013), pp. 218–19.

- 27 See Aquino (2014a), pp. 193–217; Schmidt (2008, orig. 1992), pp. 160–68. Granholm exemplifies Lesser Black Magic by comparing it to a job interview, which is about convincing the interviewer(s) that you are the right person for a job. Granholm illustrates the functioning of Greater Black Magic by referring to the Temple of Set's Arkte Order, whose members have changed their attitudes toward animals. Some of the members have adopted a vegetarian lifestyle or have engaged in volunteer work at animal shelters, influencing the opinions of others as well as the world around them. See Granholm (2013), p. 219.
- 28 See Granholm (2013), pp. 219–23.
- 29 For examples of such accusations, see Burns (2005); Siepe (2009), p. 501.
- 30 Flowers (1995), p. 18. Since the 1970s, Aquino's statements have survived in which he has distanced himself from the politics and ideology of National Socialism and clarified his own views. See, for example, Aquino (2013), pp. 593–98; Drury (1987), p. 114 (interview with Aquino for the documentary film *The Occult Experience*, 1985; see Drury, 2011, p. 210, note 23). See also Siepe (2009), p. 501; Introvigne (1997), p. 304.
- 31 Aquino to the author, 22 June 2003; Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), pp. 222–31.
- 32 Flowers (1987), pp. 58–64.
- 33 Aquino to the author, 15 April 2003, 22 June 2003; Aquino (2014a), pp. 204–5.
- 34 Aquino to the author, 12 February 2007; Aquino to the author, 5 March 2013: "I am not interested in modern attempts to imitate 'Odinist ceremonies' any more than to imitate 'Druid ceremonies'.... I think that H[einrich] H[immler]'s original effort was to tear Germany, or at least the SS, free from the addiction to Christianity, and pageantry around the 'old Germanic gods' seemed like a step in the right direction.... I think that the SS would quickly have outgrown the old paganisms in favor of something more futuristic and sophisticated."
- 35 Aquino quoted after Kingsepp (2013).
- 36 Temple of Set Reading List (1976–2003), in Aquino (2014a), pp. 404–514; here, Category 14 "Fascism, Totalitarianism, and Magic," pp. 467–74.
- 37 Aquino (2014a), pp. 404–5.
- 38 See the comments in Aquino (2014a), pp. 469–70 (on 14N), 471 (on 14S), 473 (on 14AC), and 474 (on F14E and F14G).
- 39 See the comment on *Mein Kampf* in Aquino (2014a), p. 468 (14F); and Aquino's comments on the "Ahnenerben-Dokumenten" (documents of the Ancestral Heritage Association) in a paper of the Order of the Trapezoid: Aquino (2014a), pp. 94–95. In this respect the accusation that the reading list is apologetic (for example, Mathews 2009, pp. 86–87) is a very one-sided view.
- 40 See comments in Aquino (2014a, p. 427 (on 4B: Pauwels & Bergier, pp. 467–72; especially on 14B see Angebert; 14D, Ravenscroft; 14M, Pennick; 14R, Suster; and 14Y, Buechner & Bernhart). Pennick (1981) is highlighted as one of the first studies to address the Ancestral Heritage Association (*Ahnenerbe*) in more detail. Alternatively, the reader may turn to Michael H. Kater's scientific, albeit German-language, publication on the *Ahnenerbe*.
- 41 This is the case with Pennick, for example. Critique in Aquino (1983–1984).
- 42 For positive references to Rauschnig, see Kingsepp (2012); For critical views see Flowers & Moynihan (2007), pp. 24–25; Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), pp. 456–57, endnote 9. See also the revision of the literature references in Aquino (1972). On this matter see Kingsepp (2012).
- 43 See Aquino (2014a), p. 172: "The Temple agrees with Pythagoras and Plato that truth is an absolute Form or **first principle**, which may be apprehended in specific instances through a combination of intellectual effort and enlightened intuition.... Thus it is important to educate oneself in what is **known**, as well as to develop one's analytical and critical abilities, before attempting to apprehend the **unknown**. **Intuition** – the power or faculty

- of knowing things without conscious reasoning – is an essential attribute of the initiate. Neither reasoning nor intuition alone will suffice; each must be used in conjunction with the other. Intuition alone can easily become mere fantasy and mysticism, while inductive reasoning can produce ‘logical’ conclusions which are nevertheless wrong.” (Boldface by Aquino)
- 44 See Aquino (2014a), p. 791; Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), pp. 379–89; Aquino to the author, 26 December 2006.
- 45 Aquino (1982a), p. 85.
- 46 Aquino (1972).
- 47 Siepe (2009), p. 500.
- 48 See Aquino (1983–1984), p. 647: “Ahnenerbe (the secret magical organization within the infamous SS).” In addition, Aquino to the author, 5 March 2013. On the Ahnenerbe in fantasy literature, see Siepe (2009), p. 494; and Daniela Siepe’s essay entitled “Wewelsburg Castle in Fantasy Literature,” in this volume. Aquino’s understanding of the Ahnenerbe follows Drury (1987), p. 116. Drury (2011), p. 211, has a photograph by Aquino showing Theodor Wisch’s SS dagger. Aquino acquired the weapon in the early 1980s because its container bore a life rune, which at that time Aquino held to be the emblem of the Ahnenerbe. He references Reider (1981), p. 185, where one finds a picture of a patch displaying such a rune. Reider, in turn, bases his description of the Ahnenerbe on Pauwels & Bergier (1960). The photograph comes from *The Occult Experience*, a documentary film for which Drury interviewed Aquino in 1984. See Drury (2011), p. 210, note 23.
- 49 See Aquino (2014a), pp. 95–96. He conducted literature and archive research.
- 50 Aquino mentions Richard Grunberger’s *Hitler’s SS* (1970) and Francis King’s *Satan and Swastika: The Occult and the Nazi Party* (1976). See Aquino (1972); Aquino (1982a), pp. 85–87.
- 51 See Aquino (1982a), pp. 85–86; Aquino to the author, 26 December 2006.
- 52 On 19 October 1982 Aquino was alone in the crypt from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. See Aquino (1982a), p. 87; Aquino (1982b), p. 87; Siepe (2009), p. 499. The Wewelsburg Working is documented by a letter to the priests dated 8 November 1982 and by a report that appeared in the internal publication *Scroll of Set* in February 1983.
- 53 Aquino to the author, 22 June 2003; see Siepe (2009), p. 500.
- 54 See Aquino (1982b), p. 87; Aquino to the author, 22 June 2003; Siepe (2009), p. 500. Flowers (1987), p. 64, mentions a “Hall of the Slain” as an example of “magical gateways” of the National Socialists and the SS. He is probably referring to the crypt of Wewelsburg Castle. A gateway from another culture is, for example, the Pergamon Altar, which has been on exhibit in the Berlin Pergamon Museum since 1930 (see the end of this section). Explaining the term in a further publication of the Temple of Set – *When the Stars Come Right Again* – Patricia Hardy states, “Gates link consensus reality and other realms of time and space.” www.trapezoid.org/thought/when (accessed 24 July 2013).
- 55 Aquino (1982a), p. 86.
- 56 Aquino to the author, 27 December 2006. He compares it to John Lilly’s chambers for sensory deprivation from the 1960s. See Aquino (2014a), p. 92: “In the Valhalla ... which Heinrich Himmler had reconstructed for his own Workings in the Black Art.”
- 57 Aquino to the author, 15 April 2003, 22 June 2007, and 23 June 2007; Aquino (1982b), p. 87. As conceived by the ancient Egyptians, the Ka is one of the souls of man, which leaves the body of the dead to work as a double. At a Working a magician creates such a Ka in his “subjective universe” in a kind of astral projection. See Aquino (2014a), pp. 145, 217.
- 58 The term *Hall of the Dead* is probably a variant of Höhne’s “realm of the dead.” Aquino also used “sanctum sanctorum” as a variant of Höhne’s “holy of holies.” Höhne is not mentioned in the reading list of the Temple of Set. However, he did coin titles of fantasy literature, such as Francis King’s *Satan and Swastika*, which Aquino cites in his letter

- accompanying the Wewelsburg Working. See Aquino (1982a, p. 86; 1982b, p. 89). See also Kingsepp (2013); Höhne (1998, first published 1967), p. 142; Höhne (1969), p. 152.
- 59 Aquino (1982b), p. 87.
- 60 See Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 215–216, for instance. An example is found in Siepe (2009), p. 499.
- 61 On Set, see Granholm (2009), pp. 93–96; Granholm (2013), p. 226.
- 62 Aquino (1982b), p. 87.
- 63 Aquino (2014a), p. 277. The term *Working* is thus ambiguous and refers to both a ritual and a period of time.
- 64 Aquino (1982b), p. 87. This goal is stated first in the Working report.
- 65 See Aquino to the author, 22 March 2006; and, more specifically, Aquino (2014a), pp. 70–77; Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), p. 386; Introvigne (1997), pp. 305–6.
- 66 Aquino (1982b), p. 88; Introvigne (1997), pp. 305–6.
- 67 Aquino to the author, 15 April 2003; 22 June 2003.
- 68 Aquino (1982b), p. 88.
- 69 Aquino (1982b), p. 89. “The reality of this chamber rushed in upon me. This was no Hollywood set, no ordinary room painted and decorated to titillate the senses. 1,285 inmates of the Niederhagen concentration camp died during the reconstruction of the Wewelsburg for the SS. If the Marble Hall [the *Obergruppenführer* Hall] and the Walhalla were memorials to a certain unique quality in mankind, they also serve as grisly reminders of the penalty which mankind pays for that quality.”
- 70 The term *Krell machine* refers to the 1956 film *Forbidden Planet*, in which the Krell are a lost advanced culture on a distant planet. A scientist exploring the planet tests one of the Krell machines, which increases his intelligence enormously. At the same time, however, his unconscious, baser instincts are strengthened and an invisible monster is created, which murdered the apparent opponents of the scientist. When he realizes the monster’s origin, he wipes it out and is mortally wounded himself. See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049223> (accessed 17 February 2021) and Aquino (2013), pp. 156–57.
- 71 Aquino (1982b), p. 88.
- 72 See Aquino (1982b), pp. 89–90; (2014a), pp. 90–97; Aquino to the author, 15 April 2003.
- 73 Aquino (2014a), p. 277. See also Granholm (2013), p. 222. LaVey called the governing body of the Church of Satan the Order of the Trapezoid, a name that was adopted by the Temple of Set. For more detail, see Aquino (2014a), pp. 92–93; Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), pp. 319, 386, 404.
- 74 “The Mysteries,” at www.trapezoid.org/mission/mysteries (accessed 24 July 2013).
- 75 Aquino designed the Order’s new emblem on site in Wewelsburg. See “The Mysteries,” at www.trapezoid.org/mission/mysteries (accessed 24 July 2013); Michael A. Aquino: Evolution of the Order of the Trapezoid Insignia, at www.trapezoid.org/thought/evolution (accessed 24 July 2013); Aquino (2014a), pp. 90–93.
- 76 The reception of this Working in occult and journalistic circles would be the subject of a separate investigation, as would the associated fantasies about Wewelsburg Castle.
- 77 See <https://xeper.info/> (accessed 18 February 2021); Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), pp. 404, 414–15; Aquino (2014a), pp. 277, 313, 727, 748.
- 78 See Burns (2005), p. 7. As an example, see also an entry for 10 September 1991 in the sign-in book for visitors to the contemporary historical exhibition at Wewelsburg Castle, *Besucherbuch der zeitgeschichtlichen Dokumentation*, no. 8, 27 November 1990 to 17 November 1991, p. 180. The term *xeper* is also used as a greeting. See Granholm (2013), p. 218. The visitors’ sign-in books kept by the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg (District Museum) are closed to general inspection for reasons of data protection and may be used only for scientific purposes and under certain conditions.

- 79 See the entry for 14 November 1998, “On the Occasion of Paderclave,” in the sign-in book for visitors to the contemporary historical exhibition at Wewelsburg Castle, *Besucherbuch der zeitgeschichtlichen Dokumentation*, no. 17, 26 March 1998 to 22 December 1998, p. 168; Aquino to the author, 22 June 2003. In 2005 Stephen Flowers, a former Grand Master of the Order of the Trapezoid and the head of the Rune Guild, asked at the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg if he could say a few words in the crypt as part of a magical act. When this request was denied, he published his displeasure about it and maintained that he had performed his ceremony secretly. He called it “My Wewelsburg Working.” See Flowers (2008), pp. 11–12. On Flowers, see <http://www.trapezoid.org/thought/thought> (accessed 7 August 2013).
- 80 Aquino (2014a), pp. 788, 789.
- 81 See Aquino (1982a), p. 86.
- 82 See Aquino (1983–1984), pp. 647, 649. At that time the emblem led Aquino to presume that the *Obergruppenführer* Hall had been intended to serve, among other things, as a “formal court for the deliberations of the SS’ most esoteric affairs” (p. 647). His reflections on the Fehme were not rooted in historical scholarship. They were meant to portray the Fehme and its attributed value consciousness as a forerunner of the Order of the Trapezoid (see p. 650).
- 83 Aquino according to Kingssepp (2012, subheading “The Temple of Set/The Order of the Trapezoid,” par. 10): “He also says that the Black Sun symbol ‘has been rather over-sensationalized’ and is of no special magical importance as compared to other National Socialist/SS designs.” See also Aquino to the author, 5 March 2013: “the design on the floor does not seem to be anything more than an artistic abstract design which ... went on to give rise to all sorts of crazy ‘explanations.’”
- 84 See Aquino (1983–1984), p. 647; Aquino (2014a), pp. 788–89.
- 85 See Aquino to the author, 28 December 2006. Aquino refers primarily to Franz E. Winkler’s study entitled *For Freedom Destined: Mysteries of Man’s Evolution in the Mythology of Wagner’s Ring Operas and Parsifal*, in which Winkler offers philosophical reflections on the nature and evolution of the human soul, basing his thoughts on Wagner’s operas. See Winkler (1974); Aquino (2014a), p. 471 (annotation on Winkler in the reading list).
- 86 Aquino (2014a), p. 93.
- 87 Aquino (2014a), p. 216. The chalice used in a Working is likewise described as a “grail.”
- 88 Aquino to the author, 5 March 2013. The search for the Grail, however, is not the only story that illustrates the path of initiation for Aquino. He also refers to such literature as the Egyptian story of Her-Bak, Jules Verne’s 20,000 *Leagues Under the Sea*, and John Fowles’s *The Magus*. See also Aquino (2014a), p. 171.
- 89 See *The Mysteries* at <https://www.trapezoid.org/mission/mysteries.html> (accessed 19 February 2021); Aquino (2014a), p. 93; Granholm (2013), p. 222; Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), p. 404.
- 90 See Aquino (2014a), p. 171.
- 91 Aquino to the author, 5 March 2013.
- 92 Aquino also addressed this problem in a story entitled “Grail Mission,” in which the protagonists find the Grail at the end. It is a futuristic object that has an effect on the human psyche and – like the Wewelsburg crypt in the text on the Wewelsburg Working – reinforces positive as well as destructive qualities in the human being. At the end of their search, Aquino’s protagonists finally hide the Grail again. See Aquino (2009), pp. 86–87. “Grail Mission” is a kind of “fan fiction” for the well-known *Indiana Jones* films. For more on the films, see Eva Kingssepp’s essay entitled “Wewelsburg Castle, Nazi-Inspired Occulture, and the Commodification of Evil,” in this volume.
- 93 Aquino (1982a), p. 85. The present essay’s subsequent references to Parsival (also known as Percival in English, Perceval in the late twelfth-century French Arthurian romance by

- Chrétien de Troyes, and Parzival in the epic written by the German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach in the early thirteenth century) follows the name's spelling received through Richard Wagner's eponymous 1882 opera cited elsewhere in the text.
- 94 See Aquino (1982a), p. 85; Aquino to the author, 22 June 2007.
- 95 See Aquino (1983–1984), p. 647. See also Aquino to the author, 5 March (2013): “What I call the ‘Grail Hall’ above the Gruft is an enlightening, ennobling, environment: very much Parsifal’s Grail Castle. I think it is silly to call it the ‘Generals’ Hall’, since there is nothing in or about it that suggests that generals would use it for meetings or conferences. The Gruft or ‘Walhalla’ is very much the opposite. It is dark, massively closed-in, a cave, a tomb, a set from *Der Golem* or *Caligari*. It doesn’t invite the universe in; it keeps it out. Where the human mind is concerned, it isolates that mind against all externality, expanding and exploding it to its own limits. In this it is somewhat similar to the isolation tanks some psychologists experimented with in the 1960s–70s.”
- 96 Aquino to the author, 22 Juni 2007.
- 97 See the information on the home pages: www.nikolasschreck.world and www.zeenaschreck.com, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolas_Schreck, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeena_Schreck (accessed 4 September 2021); and Breslauer (2013).
- 98 See the interviews in Breslauer (2013); Lachaud (2011).
- 99 See Petersen (2011), p. 240, for further references. For an example of similar reporting in Germany, see the TV documentary by Wieskerstrauch, *Hell’s Life* (2001). For a discerning discussion, see Huettl & König (2006). From the perspective of those affected, see now Aquino (2014b) as well.
- 100 LaVey’s demands, being both authoritarian and anarchist, were thus inherently contradictory as regards the function of the state. See Anton LaVey, “Pentagonal Revisionism: A Five-Point Program” (1988), in Barton (1990), pp. 259–60; Baddeley (1999), pp. 149–50; Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), pp. 369–70; Mathews (2009), pp. 94–95; Petersen (2011), pp. 163–64. For a text critical of Mathews, see above. Today, these abstruse Darwinist views are common practice in the Church of Satan. See Gilmore (2013, orig. 1992).
- 101 See the 1989 interview with Bob Larson, “The First Family of Satanism,” at www.nikolasschreck.world (4 September 2021).
- 102 Nikolas Schreck, cited according to Tischleder (2002), p. 95.
- 103 Nikolas Schreck, cited according to Tischleder (2002), p. 95.
- 104 “All truly powerful art is a crime against consensus reality, breaking accepted laws of perceiving and representing. When the forces of control deem that the artist has gone too far in this transgression, it only takes a simple adjustment of the legal code, or a demonstration of legal precedent, to literally transform the artist into a criminal.” (Schreck in Petros, 2010, p. 167)
- 105 See the comments by Nikolas Schreck in Lachaud (2011).
- 106 See Parfrey (1990), which contains texts with the hallmarks of a manifesto, such as Parfrey’s essay on aesthetic terrorism (pp. 48–53). On apocalypse culture, see Petersen (2013), pp. 177–78, and Petros’s 2010 retrospective bearing the significant subtitle, *A Panoramic Portrait of Aesthetic Terrorism, 1984–2000*.
- 107 Sennitt (2010), pp. 46–50, here p. 46.
- 108 See Radio Werewolf, in Sennitt (2010), pp. 46–50, here p. 48; Tischleder (2002), p. 94. Elsewhere it is also written that the Werewolf Order is not an organization and that one cannot join it. See “Are you a Werewolf?” in Sennitt (2010), pp. 39–42, here p. 39. The combination of music project and Order is not unusual. A well-known example is the band Psychic TV and its Temple ov Psychick Youth (TOPY). See Partridge (2013), pp. 124–33.
- 109 Flyer by the Werewolf Order, illustration by Nikolas Schreck, 1986, in Petros (2010), p. 168.

- 110 See the flyer by the Werewolf Order, illustration by Nikolas Schreck, 1986, in Petros (2010), p. 168; Radio Werewolf, in Sennitt (2010), pp. 46–50. On the radicalization of LaVey's cultural critique, see Petersen (2013), p. 178.
- 111 Us vs. Them, in Sennitt (2010), pp. 43–44, here p. 44.
- 112 Nikolas Schreck himself uses the term *sacred cows*. See Petros (2010), p. 167. See also Radio Werewolf, in Sennitt (2010), pp. 46–50, here pp. 44–47. On Nikolas Schreck's appearance on the TV program *Race and Reason* by Tom Metzger, a far-right American advocate of white supremacy, see Sennitt (2010), pp. 44–47, and Petersen (2013), p. 178.
- 113 See Tischleder (2002), p. 94. Max Schreck plays Dracula in Fritz Murnau's 1922 classic horror film *Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (*Nosferatu – A Symphony of Horror*). It can be assumed that Schreck, who later published serious historical work on films, was particularly fascinated by this role.
- 114 Radio Werewolf, in Sennitt (2010), pp. 46–50, here pp. 44–45; Weiß (1997).
- 115 See *Are You a Werewolf?* Sennitt (2010), pp. 39–42; Radio Werewolf, in Sennitt (2010), pp. 46–50, here p. 47; Nikolas Schreck in Lachaud (2011). The link between lycanthropy and sadomasochism with LaVey is addressed in Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), pp. 352–54; and two original texts – LaVey, *How to Become a Werewolf: The Fundamentals of Lycanthropic Metamorphosis, The Principles and their Application*, in Barton (1990), pp. 253–58; and Parfrey, *Latter-Day Lycanthropy: Battling for the Feral Soul of Man*, in Parfrey (1990), pp. 16–27.
- 116 See Baddeley (1999), pp. 148ff.
- 117 On this performance and its setting, see Baddeley (1999), pp. 148–53. As far as the evaluation of Nikolaus and Zeena Schreck is concerned, Baddeley should be taken cautiously. He is a member of the Church of Satan, with which the artist couple broke in 1990. See also Petros (2010), pp. 214–15, and the film recordings on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1ZfbeyFRg> (accessed 4 September 2021): Nikolas Schreck on the extinction of humanity (as of about minute 40:00) and on National Socialism (as of about minute 44:30).
- 118 On the concerts, see Nikolas Schreck in Lachaud (2011).
- 119 See corresponding thoughts by Adam Parfrey and Boyd Rice in Petros (2010): “We were flogging this idea of a cult – to see if people got upset and anxious if they heard there was this occult-Fascist think-tank. There was no such thing!” (p. 175); see also p. 215. In Lachaud (2011) Zeena comments similarly on the song “These Boots Were Made for Walking”: “I was working with the energy that comes from mixing extreme hypereroticism with humor and fear.” See also Petersen (2013), p. 178.
- 120 See, for example, Nikolaus Schreck's essay on Hitler's suicide (Schreck, 2003). See also Tischleder (2002), p. 96. Nikolas and Zeena Schreck have written a book on sexual magic, in which they address homosexual readers as well. Schreck & Schreck (2002), pp. 319–25. Schreck (2005), pp. 1–2, speaks of “Heinrich Himmler's cranky SS race-mysticism” (p. 1), among other things, in order to distinguish it from the xenophobia and racism of National Socialism.
- 121 Zeena in Lachaud (2011); Schreck & Schreck (1998); Aquino (2013), p. 681.
- 122 See Baddeley (1999), p. 214; Flowers (2012, orig. 1997), p. 390; Schreck (2005).
- 123 See interviews: Lachaud (2011); Breslauer (2013); Lamothe-Ramos (2013), Schreck (2005); and Schreck & Schreck (2002).
- 124 Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013.
- 125 Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013.
- 126 Nikolas Schreck in Breslauer (2013), n.p.
- 127 Nikolas Schreck in Breslauer (2013), n.p.

- 128 Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013; Nikolas Schreck in Breslauer (2013), n.p.
- 129 Nikolas Schreck speaks of recurring dreams of nuclear destruction and refers to the general mood in the counterculture of the early 1980s, recalling as an example the song “Final Day” by the Young Marble Giants, and the film *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), which he had seen just before embarking on his journey. Nikolas Schreck to the author, 27 October 2013.
- 130 Interview with Nikolas and Zeena Schreck, Berlin, 1 June 2013. On the trip to Egypt and his spiritual experiences, see Schreck in Tischleder (2002), p. 94; Lorenz (2008); Baddeley (1999), p. 150; Radio Werewolf in Sennitt (2010), pp. 46–50, here p. 48. “Heinrich Himmler’s SS castle in Paderborn” is mentioned there as one of “various occult power points” but is not explained further.
- 131 Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013. On sonic magic (*Schallmagie*), see Tischleder (2002), p. 94. The issue is the influence that music frequencies have on the human psyche. Radio Werewolf’s propaganda draws a connection between this magic and the reference to the Werewolf Nazi broadcasting station and asserts that the magic is practiced mainly at night to influence the sleeping masses. See Radio Werewolf in Sennitt (2010), pp. 44–48. In the interview on the 8-8-88 rally, Schreck also describes this sonic magic as an alternative to “backward-masking” the satanic backmasking or backward messaging in music pieces. Film footage on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1ZfbeycFRg> (accessed 4 September 2021). Nikolas Schreck on backward-masking begins at about 41:00. See also Schweer (2000), p. 89.
- 132 Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013.
- 133 See www.nikolasschreck.world, Heading: *discography/radio-werewolf-1988-1993/* (accessed 4 September 2021); Zeena Schreck to the author, 23 July 2013; Nikolas Schreck in Lorenz (2008): “The flip side was an improvisational piece Zeena and I recorded in the spirit of Otto Rahn and the Grail Quest.” The reference to Rahn’s book is not made explicit; the instrumental piece does not establish a contextual reference. See Rahn (1937).
- 134 Nikolas Schreck in Breslauer (2013), n.p.
- 135 Zeena Schreck to the author, 23 July 2013. She emphasizes that she was concerned with the myths, with “the same eternal phenomena which those people also explored,” not with the Ariosophical representatives themselves.
- 136 Zeena Schreck to the author, 23 July 2013: “It wasn’t long into our research of these 19th century European occult figures (Rahn, von List, Sebottendorf, Weistor/Wiligit, von Liebenfels etc.) that I found the same reactionary, misogynistic and fundamentally subjective fantasy role-playing (albeit on a more intellectual level) as was with the occult world of satanism I’d just left. So, metaphorically speaking, if a house of cards is built on a weak foundation of sand, how valid can one regard the entire philosophies of such people? It was clear that, despite their interest in ancient legends, they were missing a big piece of the puzzle in their mystical portrayals and projections.” See also Schreck in Breslauer (2013), n.p.
- 137 Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013; interview with Nikolas and Zeena Schreck, Berlin, 1 June 2013. Other places the Schrecks visited included the Barbarossa Monument, the Bruchhauser Steine, the Externsteine, and the Brocken (the highest elevation in the Harz mountain range).
- 138 Zeena Schreck to the author, 23 July 2013; interview with Nikolas and Zeena Schreck, Berlin, 1 June 2013.
- 139 See Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013; interview with Nikolas and Zeena Schreck, Berlin, 1 June 2013. On this occasion they also visited Stuart Russell. See also Lange (2010), p. 294.
- 140 Entry for 14 November 1998 in the sign-in book for visitors to the contemporary historical exhibition at Wewelsburg Castle, *Besucherbuch der zeitgeschichtlichen Dokumentation*;

- Aquino to the author, 22 June 2003. Pylons established by members of the second degree require a “sponsor” from the priesthood. See Granholm (2013), p. 222.
- 141 Scroll of Set December 1998, pp. 7–9. The experiments with the acoustics are described, and the group’s perceptions are captured: “Priest Schreck started his own soundcheck, which continued into a short little ceremony” (p. 8). Afterward, the Setians moved freely around the room again, only to gather a second time and conduct the “recognition” ceremony, about which the Setian in question was herself surprised. Meanwhile, there were several tourists in the crypt who noticed nothing or seemed confused.
- 142 Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013. He uses the term *Left-Hand Path* in the Tantric sense, which differs from that in the Temple of Set.
- 143 See Schreck (2005).
- 144 Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013.
- 145 Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013.
- 146 See Satorius (2001), pp. 15, 68; Schweer (2000), p. 77.
- 147 See Siepe (2007), p. 504.
- 148 The Black Order of Lucifer has always alternated between active and seemingly inactive phases, so in 2013 it was impossible to assess whether it may have dissolved. (Information from Georg Schmid www.relinfo.ch on 18 November 2013.) The Order traces its origins to the Black Order of the Trapezoid, founded in 1994, which at that time saw itself as a European alternative to the Order of the Trapezoid of the Church of Satan. In 1996 it merged with the Totenkopf Grotto for a short time. It became the Black Order of Lucifer in 1999. See Satorius (2001), pp. 15–16, 105–8.
- 149 Zorn (2001), p. 132.
- 150 Zorn (2001), p. 132.
- 151 Zorn (2001), p. 122. On the importance of heredity, see Zorn (2001), pp. 120–34.
- 152 See Zorn (2001), p. 132: “We must call to mind that the implemented personal culture is a part of the cultural identity of one’s own people and that the greater the number of those who strive for divinity, the closer the cultural soul of the *völkisch* metaindividual and its essential value is to the highest of being.”
- 153 Satorius (2001), p. 30.
- 154 Satorius (2001), p. 30.
- 155 Satorius (2001), pp. 27, 29–31. Satorius also distances himself from the Temple of Set, but in a rather generalized way. See Satorius (2001), p. 18.
- 156 Satorius (2001), p. 30.
- 157 Satorius (2001), p. 25.
- 158 For instance, there is repeated mention of “sin” or of sinning against nature (Satorius, 2001, pp. 28–29). On p. 28, for example, a passage reads, “So go out confidently, you Satanic Knights, and pursue the enemies of the pentagram of Satan with a pure heart. Know that neither death nor life can separate you from the love of Baphomet, which is in our Lord Satan and lurks in every danger! ... What a blessing to die for Satan!” A clause on p. 33 reads, “you, my [Satan’s, Lucifer’s, or Got’s] priesthood, who were persecuted for my name’s sake.” For the accusations related to conspiracy theory, see below.
- 159 Satorius (2001), p. 11.
- 160 See Flowers & Moynihan (2007), pp. 42–65, 70–71, 131; Goodrick-Clarke (1997), pp. 155–66; Lange (2010).
- 161 See Satorius (2001), pp. 33–34, 47, 53, 62–65. The message in which Lucifer/Satan reveals himself as identical with Wiligut’s “Got” is said to have been received by Priest Widar, a member of the Black Order, in Wewelsburg Castle. See Priest Widar, “Die Botschaft Gots zu Samhain XXXV,” in Satorius & Zorn (2001), pp. 33–34.
- 162 See Satorius (2001), pp. 47–48, 53–55. The Halgarita Charms and the Enochian invocations are written in an artificial language and are supposed to be very old. The Enochian

- invocations go back to John Dee, the court magician of Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century. They are said to have been transmitted to him by angels. They became part of occult rituals by way of Aleister Crowley. A counterpart in the Temple of Set is the “Word of Set.” See Aquino (2011), pp. 181–86; Dvorak (2000), pp. 31–36.
- 163 Satorius (2001), p. 37, also p. 100. “Aryans” are not equated with a specific people.
- 164 See Satorius (2001), pp. 37–39.
- 165 Satorius (2001), p. 28. See also pp. 11 and 39: “Are you an Aryan? Do you want to join the ‘succession of serving brothers?’”
- 166 Satorius (2001), p. 100.
- 167 As in Zorn (2001), p. 111, for example.
- 168 As in Zorn (2001), pp. 112, 130. See also pp. 126–29.
- 169 The Order of the Nine Angles also included the now defunct New Zealand Black Order, which also referred to Wewelsburg in its publications and used the Wewelsburg sun wheel as a symbol. On these Satanists, see Senholt (2013) and Goodrick-Clarke (2002), pp. 213–31. Further vocabulary of the Black Order of Lucifer such as *aeons*, *sinister tradition*, and the emphasis on the Order’s own Indo-European tradition as opposed to the Judeo-Christian tradition also indicates a reception of the Order of the Nine Angles. See Zorn (2001), pp. 11, 113, 116–19, 131, and Senholt (2013), pp. 252–53. Eugenic ideas, the notion of a satanic race, and the call for meritocratic stratification favoring a societal upper crust are found in LaVey and his successor Peter H. Gilmore. However, this has nothing to do with ethnic racial thinking but rather with the idea that affiliation with the elite or “satanic race” is demonstrated by personal success in life. These people should be encouraged to procreate. Satorius lauds such eugenic ideas, which Gilmore (2013, orig. 1992), taking up LaVey’s ideas, sets forth in his text *Satanism: The Feared Religion*. However, Satorius (2001, pp. 30, 100) rejects more bizarre and playful ideas of the same text – the production of artificial sexual partners and the introduction of satanic territories.
- 170 See Satorius (2001), p. 11; Zorn (2001), pp. 112, 130–34.
- 171 Satorius (2001), p. 12.
- 172 See Satorius (2001), p. 140. On this musical composition, see Wilke (2009), p. 444, note 62.
- 173 See Satorius (2001), pp. 88–91, the Schellenberg quotation appears on p. 91. On Schellenberg’s portrayal of Himmler and Wewelsburg Castle, see Daniela Siepe’s essay entitled “The ‘Grail Castle’ of the SS? The Creation of Legends about Wewelsburg Castle in Scholarly and Popular-Science Literature,” in this volume. Kater’s 1973 study on the *Ahnenerbe*, in which he speaks of the “horoscope-loving and magic-obsessed Himmler” who believed that the Aryans had come down from heaven like gods, is also cited as evidence of Himmler’s belief in magic. See Kater (1997, orig. 1973), p. 50; Satorius (2001), p. 91, reproduces the text somewhat differently. Satorius connects the Holocaust with Himmler’s reception of Wiligut’s history of mankind. See Satorius (2001), pp. 97–100.
- 174 See Satorius (2001), p. 73. On Wolff’s portrayal of Wiligut in the *Neue Illustrierte* interview and on Rudolf Mund’s abridgment of his statement, see Daniela Siepe’s essay entitled “The ‘Grail Castle’ of the SS? The Creation of Legends about Wewelsburg Castle in Scholarly and Popular-Science Literature,” in this volume. To underscore Wiligut’s influence, Satorius also stresses Manfred von Knobelsdorff’s enthusiasm for things Irminian. See Satorius (2001), p. 43. Satorius’s main sources on Wiligut’s life and the history of Wewelsburg Castle are the biographies by Rudolf Mund (1982) and Hans-Jürgen Lange (1998). Both authors are repeatedly referred to. See Satorius (2001), pp. 44–45, 52, 61, 73–74, 76, and 99. For a critique of Satorius and his sources, see Lange (2010), pp. 326–27. Satorius purchased Wiligut documents from Lange in 2000.
- 175 See Satorius (2001), p. 43. On Stuart Russell, see Daniela Siepe’s essay entitled “The ‘Grail Castle’ of the SS? The Creation of Legends about Wewelsburg Castle in Scholarly and Popular-Science Literature,” in this volume.

- 176 See Satorius (2001), pp. 55, 73.
- 177 Satorius (2001), p. 73.
- 178 Satorius (2001), p. 66, for example.
- 179 See Satorius (2001), p. 67. A photograph in the Swiss news magazine *Facts* shows Satorius wearing a Black Sun pendant around his neck. See Riedl (2001), p. 46.
- 180 Satorius (2001), p. 66. *Tyr-Kreiszeichen* is a play on words mimicking the sound of *Tierkreiszeichen*, the actual German term for the zodiac. By changing the spelling of the compound's first syllable from "Tier" (animal) to *Tyr*, Wiligut made the word appear to be more "Nordic" and ancient and simultaneously invoked the name of a Nordic god of war, Týr, son of Odin.
- 181 Satorius (2001), p. 67; see also p. 66. On Wilhelm Landig, see Frank Huismann's essay entitled "Of Flying Disks and Secret Societies," in this volume.
- 182 Landig, quoted after Satorius (2001), p. 66.
- 183 Satorius (2001), p. 70; Zorn (2001), p. 115. Emil Rüdiger is quoted here.
- 184 See Satorius (2001), p. 70; Zorn (2001), p. 115.
- 185 Satorius (2001), p. 82.
- 186 Satorius (2001), p. 74. See also p. 55.
- 187 Satorius (2001), p. 74.
- 188 Höhne (1998, orig. 1967), p. 142. Höhne's phrase "das Allerheiligste des Ordens" (the holy of holies, p. 142) is both adopted by Satorius literally and varied as "das Allerheiligtum der Wewelsburg" (the sanctum sanctorum of Wewelsburg Castle). See Satorius (2001), p. 74. The *Spiegel* journalist is not identified by name.
- 189 Satorius (2001), p. 82.
- 190 Satorius (2001), p. 82.
- 191 See Satorius (2001), pp. 74, 82. The so-called courtroom was located on the ground floor of the west wing. See Hüser (1987), p. 199. Himmler's 1935 ban on visiting Wewelsburg Castle prompts Satorius to question whether only one *Obergruppenführer* meeting actually took place or "countless" ones, at which, however, "the participants preferred to remain silent." See Satorius (2001), p. 81.
- 192 Satorius (2001), p. 75; see also pp. 73–76. Satorius refers here to Hans-Jürgen Lange's observations on the number and arrangement of the floor slabs (Lange, 1998, p. 285). The connection between Grail mythology and Wewelsburg Castle remains somewhat tenuous in the documents of the Order and is not developed consistently. In addition to the already mentioned number symbolism and Himmler's alleged Round Table, some sections are dedicated to Otto Rahn's research, whereby it is assumed that rumors about Himmler having been in possession of the Grail "might be true after all" (Satorius, 2001, pp. 83–87, quotation on p. 83). Furthermore, it is mentioned that the triangular ground plan of Wewelsburg Castle symbolizes the Holy Lance (see p. 72). Elsewhere, however, it is said that Wewelsburg Castle is a trapezoid (see p. 75).
- 193 Satorius (2001), p. 74.
- 194 Satorius (2001), p. 74.
- 195 Satorius (2001), p. 74.
- 196 See Satorius (2001), p. 74.
- 197 See Satorius (2001), p. 74.
- 198 Satorius (2001), p. 76. He refers to a concert singer's acoustic observations described in Lange (1998), pp. 282–83. Satorius is a black metal musician.
- 199 Satorius (2001), p. 76.
- 200 Satorius (2001), p. 71. See also p. 75.
- 201 Satorius (2001), p. 71, discretely correcting LaVey (1972), pp. 126–27, whose text reads, "Kinder der Set."
- 202 LaVey (1972), p. 127.

- 203 The original 1970 wording appears in Aquino (2013), p. 737.
- 204 Aquino to the author, 23 July 2013: "So in the original ... version, the word is indeed 'triangle' and not 'trinity'. While Anton did not explain either ... , the triangle probably referred to the Egyptian 'Eye of Horus' triangle associated with Crowley and Rosicrucianism. ... In effect Anton was denouncing both mainstream Christianity and 'white light' occultism."
- 205 Aquino to the author, 20 July 2013. Referring to the song "The Great Mandala (The Wheel of Life)," Aquino wrote, "The rest of it sounds vaguely Buddhist. Peter, Paul & Mary, you know: very 1960s chic."
- 206 Satorius (2001), p. 71.
- 207 LaVey (1972), p. 109.
- 208 Satorius (2001), p. 71.
- 209 LaVey (1972), p. 109: "It [the skull] also represents the vault of wisdom from whence all human ideas and developments emerge, the temple of invention, both material and 'spiritual.'"
- 210 Satorius (2001), p. 71.
- 211 LaVey (1972), p. 109.
- 212 Satorius (1972), p. 71.
- 213 LaVey (1972), p. 106.
- 214 Schwartze Order of Lucifer, F.A.Q.: Frequently asked questions: "What is the meaning of the 't' in 'Schwartz'?" The site www.schwartzeorden.org/faq (accessed on 6 September 2001) originally had this question, but the page no longer exists.
- 215 See Satorius (2001), p. 19.
- 216 Satorius (2001), p. 140.
- 217 The Totenkopf Grotto emerged from a circle of friends and was later recognized by the Church of Satan as a suborganization. Eremor was a relatively early member of the Grotto and served as its second chairman, but he was not a member of the Church of Satan. See the interview with Eremor in Lückewerth (2001), pp. 38, 40.
- 218 See Siepe (2009), p. 504. The information on Frater Eremor is found in the section "Autoren" at the Bohmeier Verlag site: www.magick-pur.de (accessed 4 September 2021); <https://ez.religio.de/Religiowlexikon/C/Circle-of-Hagadaz-Totenkopf-Grotto> (accessed 4 September 2021); <https://currentofset.de> (accessed 4 September 2021); Eremor to the author, 9 June 2003. Parts of the interview with the author and excerpts from other interviews are reprinted in Eremor (2001), pp. 15–18, 39–42, 53–57; Eremor (2006), pp. 166–89; Lückewerth (2001), pp. 38–41.
- 219 Eremor (2001), p. 31.
- 220 Eremor (2001), p. 29.
- 221 See Eremor (2001), pp. 29–30. He does not adopt the legend of the Black Sun. To him the sun wheel intarsia of the *Obergruppenführer* Hall is merely a "twelve-armed swastika" (p. 30). The study on the building's architectural history also leads him to assume an "eternal fire" in the crypt (p. 30).
- 222 See Eremor (2001), pp. 29–30. Eremor reports that Himmler recalled officers from the front to recommend that they hypnotize their enemies, which Eremor obviously considers ludicrous. On p. 30 he disparages Himmler's *Tafelrunde* (Round Table) as a *Schwafelrunde* (bunch of blather).
- 223 Eremor to the author, 9 Juni 2006; Eremor (2006), p. 172.
- 224 Eremor to the author, 19 May 2003.
- 225 See Eremor (2009), p. 23.
- 226 Eremor to the author, 9 June 2003; Eremor (2009), p. 17.
- 227 Eremor to the author, 9 June 2003; Eremor (2009), p. 17.
- 228 See Eremor (2001), pp. 30–31; Eremor to the author, 9 June 2003; Eremor (2009), pp. 172–74.
- 229 Eremor to the author, 1 August 2003.

230 Eremor to the author, 1 August 2003.

231 Eremor to the author, 1 August 2003.

232 See in general the annotations in the reading list provided by the Temple of Set; see also Eremor's commentary on the forbidden zones. On Satorius's view that Satanists have no subjects that are taboo, see Satorius (2001), pp. 37 and 88. Nikolas Schreck, too, maintains that he has a particularly neutral stance. Nikolas Schreck to the author, 24 March 2013, and the quotation above.

233 Interesting in this context is Flowers (1995), pp. 17–18.

Wewelsburg Castle, Nazi-Inspired Occulture, and the Commodification of Evil

Eva Kingsepp

The notion that Adolf Hitler was an Anti-Christ, or at least that he practiced black magic, surfaced in anti-Nazi tracts written even at the time of the Third Reich.¹ Today it seems to have become a “fact” – especially in popular culture and cryptohistory but also in scholarly writing² – that leading Nazis were practicing occultists. This idea, too, is evolving, in many cases transferring the focus from Hitler as the main Dark Lord to Reichsführer-SS, Heinrich Himmler. Although the popular idea of Wewelsburg Castle as Himmler’s “SS monastery,” “SS Vatican,” “Dark Camelot,” and similar descriptions has been around ever since the 1950s,³ the interplay between popular history and fiction has firmly established the place as a site of Nazi, or specifically SS, occult practices. The so-called Black Sun floor mosaic of the castle’s northern tower plays a significant part in this lore, partly as it currently seems to be an object of semiotic struggle. The symbol was used early in a postwar right-wing context to symbolize certain ideological values, particularly in German-speaking areas, but remained quite obscure in mainstream culture for decades. However, following Western popular culture’s increasing preoccupation with so-called Nazi occultism – not least regarding the introduction of the Black Sun symbol in an English language context⁴ – it has also become established as a general symbol of Nazi occultism in recent decades. This relatively new trend is consistent with a more general one, for there is strong evidence of an “occultural turn” having taken place in Western society since the 1960s. As Christopher Partridge puts it, occulture is

a resource on which people draw, a reservoir of ideas, beliefs, practices, and symbols. Consumers of occulture may be witting or unwitting; they may engage with it at a relatively superficial level or they may have strong religious commitments; they may themselves contribute to the pool of occultural knowledge or they may simply drink from it. Occulture is the spiritual *bricoleur*’s Internet from which to download whatever appeals or inspires; ... it is the cluttered warehouse frequently plundered by producers of popular culture searching for ideas, images and symbols.⁵

Partridge also stresses the importance of *coolness*. Occulture is perceived as *cool*, which is why it is attractive especially to young people; and Nazi occultism, symbolized by Wewelsburg Castle and its Black Sun, seems to fit that context perfectly. From having basically been a sign encountered only in a limited number of TV documentaries, popular history magazines, and small music subcultures such as Neofolk and National Socialist Black Metal, the Black Sun is now popping up almost everywhere: in feature films, on book covers, as a graphic element of layouts (including the web), and in digital games. It even seems to be subject to an interesting coalescence: In many cases it is not just a sign of Nazi occultism but of weird Nazi occult science.

In this essay I discuss the role of Wewelsburg Castle, the SS, and the Black Sun symbol in present-day popular films and digital games in which Nazi occultism and weird Nazi occult science have a key role. I deal largely with a figure that has been dwelling in the most obscure parts of popular culture but that has appeared with increasing frequency over the last fifteen years, particularly in games: the undead, or zombie, Nazi soldier.⁶ This bizarre monster, through its carnivalesque appearance, offers valuable clues to how parts of popular culture are addressing the historical memory of the Nazi era, including the Holocaust.

The Fear of Returning Nazis

The idea of Nazis coming back to haunt the Western world is quite understandable in view of real-life events since World War II. In the first decades after that conflict, public interest centered largely on tracking down National Socialist perpetrators in their hiding places in more or less remote locations. It was a theme related not only to the discourse on justice but also to a mix of real fears and popular conspiracy theories about Hitler and other leading Nazis having survived the war and possibly preparing a Fourth Reich.⁷ In today's popular culture this threat is reflected mostly in two topoi, both based on weird Nazi science: Nazis from space and undead Nazis, usually in the form of zombies. Both categories are alien to the normal, everyday world until the frightful day when they suddenly show up. The notion that space Nazis have spent all the postwar years far away from our planet explains why Nazi hunters have not been able to locate them, and the yarn that undead Nazis would physically rise from the grave as an army of zombie soldiers clearly contradicts all reason. But now they are here, and humanity once again faces extinction.

Space Nazis typically belong to the genre of science fiction, with highly advanced technology, space travel, and outlying galaxies being eminent

features. The legacy of real Nazi German secret superweapons during World War II is as obvious as that of expatriate German rocket scientists like Wernher von Braun, who cooperated with Walt Disney in the making of popular 1950s TV series such as *Man in Space* and thereby established the stereotype of himself as a pop-culture icon.⁸ Nazi zombies – or, more correctly, zombie Nazis – are usually found in the horror and splatter genres.⁹ However, a close reading of the narratives in feature films and digital games indicates that such beings usually have their origin in the merging of weird Nazi science and occult practices. There are allegorical links to real atrocities such as the T 4 euthanasia project, highly unethical medical experiments on concentration camp prisoners, “scientific” collections of preserved human body parts, and the like. One main distinction, though, is that the Nazis usually seem to be using their *own* people, not imprisoned “others,” to create the zombies. Although the Nazi zombies are, in a way, also victims of their insane regime, their victimhood is generally not of the kind that deserves empathy. Whether alive or undead, Nazis are – in stereotypical representation – mindless fanatics, a description that explains why their scientists are doing these wicked things to their own people and why their subjects willingly submit. The allegorical qualities are quite apparent and point to the fundamental enigma in mainstream popular culture’s relation to the Nazi era: It is essentially a closed circuit, with no connections to the outside world. Nevertheless, there are some magical wormholes, gateways through which the Nazi scourge may pass from the dimension of myth to our ordinary world, instilling both terror and a considerable dose of re-enchantment.¹⁰

Iron Sky: Nazis on the Dark Side of the Moon

Both space Nazis and Nazi zombies have become firmly established in popular culture over the last two decades.¹¹ It is true that Nazis in or from space are the somewhat more familiar category, having surfaced in all kinds of media texts since the end of the war, including novels, *Star Trek* episodes, and digital games. The theme has enjoyed something of a boost through the Finnish sci-fi comedy *Iron Sky* (Timo Vuorensola, 2012) and its digital game expansion *Iron Sky: Invasion* (TopWare Interactive, 2012).¹² Notably, the project was initially launched through the Internet and built a web-based fan community that participated in the production through ideas, marketing, and financial support. In short, the main story is that parts of the secret Nazi space program escaped destruction in 1945 through relocation to a colony on the dark side of the moon. The subsequent seventy years were spent on developing their flying



Figure 9.1 Scene from *Iron Sky* (2012). The large black boxes beneath the spaceship all bear the Black Sun symbol (Splendid Film). The scene comes shortly before the Nazi moon base's flying disk takes off for Earth about half an hour into the film.

saucer technology into an armada of war spaceships, including the gigantic *Götterdämmerung*, “[d]warfing even the gigantic Siegfried class battleships” and “the primary space dreadnought of the Fourth Reich.”¹³ In 2018 they are ready for an attack on Earth. *Iron Sky* is literally packed with verbal, visual, and auditory references to pop culture’s image of Nazi Germany, mixed with fashionable steampunk aesthetics¹⁴ and *Star Wars*-like space sequences. It should come as no surprise that their moon base is called The Black Sun (although it has a traditional swastika shape), and that Wewelsburg Castle’s Black Sun pops up, mainly as a decorative emblem (see Figure 9.1). That this phenomenon is very much about fan, or nerd, pop culture is further accentuated through the soundtrack by the Slovenian band Laibach, well known for its use of totalitarian aesthetics, including Nazi uniforms.

Although some might find the idea of Nazis from space tasteless, it is chiefly a variation on the familiar theme of menacing extraterrestrials. In fact, when it first became possible to shoot humanoid enemies in digital games, these were all monsters, space aliens – or Nazis.¹⁵ As with other monsters, there is not even a slight moral problem in killing Nazis, for they do not belong to the category of humans. Therefore, the player is obliged to exterminate them, just like all other dangers to humanity.¹⁶ When combined with the concept of Nazi flying saucers as secret superweapons of the Third Reich, SS figures have a central role; it is often they who are said to be developing this arsenal in their hidden, top-secret facilities set up in distant, desolate areas.¹⁷ Although there seems to be a moral issue at least potentially associated with the killing of Wehrmacht soldiers in ordinary World War II games, such problems do not

really arise when the SS (or space Nazis, or Nazi zombies) are the targets.¹⁸ This moral code wholly accords with the popular association of the SS with the quintessentially evil Nazi *Übermensch*, an abominable category of its own that basically embodies Naziness in all of its horrific guises.

Nazi Zombies: Defeating the Army of the Undead

Nazi zombies might sound like another extreme, distasteful product of what has been called post- or late-modern society's apocalypse culture.¹⁹ However, the concept appears as early as the American B-movie *Revenge of the Zombies* (Steve Sekely, 1943), in which expatriate German scientist Dr. von Altermann collaborates with a local Louisiana voodoo priest to create undead soldiers for the Third Reich. The zombie got its major breakthrough as a pop-culture phenomenon with George Romero's 1968 *Night of the Living Dead*, and today the concept of zombie apocalypse has become widely familiar. However, there are not only major distinctions between "ordinary" zombies and the Nazi variety but also narrative differences between the two kinds of apocalypses, especially as the first is usually already taking place, whereas the second mostly remains a threat. Moreover, ordinary zombies turn up on a massive scale and ultimately anywhere, such as streets, supermarkets, and people's houses. By contrast, the emergence of the Nazi variety of zombie is normally very limited and confined to a few key places, all very far off and secluded (almost as though they materialized through that magic wormhole or from a UFO).

The location of Nazi zombies has shifted in a way that seems to reflect the discourse in real-life society. In B-movies of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, Nazi zombie soldiers rise from the bottom of the ocean (*Shock Waves*, Ken Wiederhorn, 1976); they haunt the Sahara desert (*Oasis of the Zombies*, Jesús Franco, 1982), lurk in bleak parts of the Alps (*Night of the Zombies*, Joel M. Reed, 1979), and prowl a small French rural village in whose proximity they inhabit a cursed lake (*Le lac des morts vivants*, Jean Rollin, 1981). Although these settings mirror the real-life narratives of escaped Nazis, especially those hiding in Latin America, they are discernibly similar to traditional ghost stories as well, as are the psychoanalytical aspects of having Nazi monsters enter the present world from deep waters, or other inscrutable places.²⁰ By contrast, the haunting aspect has become largely downplayed (although it has not entirely disappeared, as shown by the 2009 splatter comedy *Dead Snow* by Tommy Wirkola; see Figure 9.2). Instead, the explanations are to be found in Nazi weird science and occultism.



Figure 9.2 A scene from the splatter comedy *Dead Snow* (2009), with classical Nazi monsters.

Nazi Zombies and Wewelsburg Castle

It is most probably through the impact of digital games that the undead Nazis began to grow in popularity. Hitler's ghost turned up in the now classic *Wolfenstein 3D* (id Software, 1992), but the real breakthrough of the SS as creators of zombie soldiers (albeit more of a cyborg type) came in the immensely popular *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* (*RtCW*) (id Software, 2001). It features Nazi doctors laboring in blood-stained laboratories, with scattered limbs on the floor and human bodies in varying condition on autopsy tables, the result being monsters immensely more horrible than the unfortunate creature once made by Dr. Frankenstein. *RtCW* is a first-person shooter adventure of the fantastic kind, in which the SS occult headquarters at the ancient Chateau Schufstaffel, located in the village of Paderborn [*sic*], provides the scene for the last parts of the narrative, in which SS High Priestess Marianna Blavatsky summons the mighty Prince Heinrich from the grave on Himmler's orders. There are several obvious historical and pseudohistorical associations to be made, not least for those who have consumed a good deal of popular history and cryptohistory, and it is little wonder that the fictional castle is quickly identified as the one in Wewelsburg. There is no visual resemblance and no Black Sun symbol, however. Nor are there any "normal" undead Nazi soldiers in *RtCW*; the aggressive, swashbuckling skeletons encountered in the castle's underground vaults attack everyone, including scared Nazis.



Figure 9.3 Nazi zombies in the computer game *Call of Duty – World at War*.

RtCW's undead Nazi soldier-concept has inspired a number of spin-offs, most notably the Nazi zombie maps of the otherwise nonoccult *Call of Duty* games *World at War* (Treyarch, 2008), *Black Ops* (Treyarch, 2010), and *Black Ops 2* (Treyarch, 2012). They are all about the massacre of staggering and moaning Nazis, as many and as quickly as possible (see Figure 9.3). By contrast, the sequel to *RtCW*, simply called *Wolfenstein* (Raven Software/id Software, 2009), is filled with references to both “ordinary” occultism and the Nazi variety. The latter features, for example, a magic talisman called the Thule Medallion, which becomes empowered by *Nachtsonne* (night sun) crystals and enables the user to enter The Veil, which separates this world from a dimension called The Black Sun. The main objective is to destroy the portal through which the Nazis would gain access to the Vril-like Black Sun energy.²¹ Of course, the operation includes fighting evil SS officers such as one of the characters from *RtCW*, Oberführer Wilhelm “Deathshead” Strasse, head of the SS Special Projects Division. Strasse returned in a major role in the sequel, *Wolfenstein: The New Order* (MachineGames, 2014).²² Nazi occultism was also exploited in the shooter game *Sniper Elite: Nazi Zombie Army* and its sequel (*Rebellion Oxford*, both released in 2013), where the Black Sun glyph itself features prominently, either in its more original form or with the addition of a swastika in its center (see Figure 9.4). A gaming site aptly describes the sequel as “*Sniper Elite: Nazi Zombie Army 2* is *Left 4 Dead* [a popular “normal” zombie-shooter game] meets *Indiana Jones*,”²³ which points to the importance of intertextuality and transmediality regarding Nazi-inspired occulture.



Figure 9.4 *Sniper Elite: Nazi Zombie Army* (Rebellion Oxford, 2013), a computer game that makes especially blatant and frequent use of the Black Sun symbol.

The Indiana Jones Legacy

An early forerunner to the games mentioned above is *Medal of Honor: Underground*, first released in 2000 for PlayStation. One mission explicitly takes place at Wewelsburg Castle. The game has scenes showing a visual re-creation of the entrance, of parts of the molding, and, albeit in slightly redesigned form, of the crypt. The gamer's mission is to find and retrieve the Knife of Abraham, seize the contents of Himmler's safe and then blow it up, and locate Himmler's secret Valhalla. Among the most terrible enemies in the castle are vicious undead medieval Teutonic knights wearing full plate armor, although they are more ghosts than zombies. The *Medal of Honor* series, which had its heyday during the first part of the 2000s, when World War II was still one of the major digital-game genres, is created and produced by Steven Spielberg's company DreamWorks. The close connection between the games and Spielberg's feature films is manifest, so it is to be expected that the adventure-style narrative and atmosphere of *Underground* is closely akin to the immensely popular Indiana Jones films of the 1980s. Although cryptohistorical books such as Trevor Ravenscroft's *The Spear of Destiny* (1973) already had a certain following, it was Spielberg's blockbuster *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) that finally brought the underground concept of Nazi occultism to a large mainstream audience. The theme gained traction in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), where the audience also encountered the now familiar stereotype of the black-uniformed SS officer who collects ancient magical artifacts and medieval armor and of the secret SS headquarters located in an old castle, complete with



Figure 9.5 The castle in Hohenwerfen, Austria, from the film *Where Eagles Dare* (1968).

cast-iron chandeliers and lavish antique furniture. Although the associations probably extended to the Nazi castle in *Where Eagles Dare* (Brian G. Hutton, 1968; see Figure 9.5) rather than to the then still largely obscure castle in Wewelsburg, there is a brief sequence showing the distinctive triangular shape of the latter, drawn in the notebook that Indy's father kept on the topic of Nazi secrets.

Secret Plans, Secluded Locations 1: The Nazi Castle

Old, eerie castles have provided the settings for gothic fiction narratives ever since the eighteenth century. Together with gloomy bunkers and similar labyrinthine complexes, they are almost obligatory today in many, if not most, digital games relating to Nazi Germany, World War II, or both. The legacy of fantastic, gothic, and horror fiction merges with the use of fantastic imagery in popular history communicated by TV documentary films, books, and magazines. This fusion becomes especially evident with Wewelsburg Castle because filmmakers generally indulge in creating a spectacular, ghostly atmosphere, using both visual and auditory effects. Indisputably, popular history, especially as presented on TV channels such as Discovery and the History Channel, is largely responsible for this castle's reputation as the sinister center of SS occult practices. Although that role might not be verbally explicit in all films, the message is conveyed in the representation of the castle through modes of fantastic fiction and horror, such as deep shadows and weird perspectives and

camera angles. Sometimes, as in *Himmler's Madness* (*Himmlers Wahn*, ZDF/Story House Productions, 2002), the scenes from the *Obergruppenführer* Hall could be taken straight out of a horror movie, with a ghostly blue mist floating ominously over the visually accentuated Black Sun symbol.

This excessive manner of spooky representation is actually more common in the factual documentary genre than in fiction, where the concept of a Nazi-inhabited castle is otherwise well established. However, the fusion of fact and fiction, contributing to what film scholar Vivian Sobchack calls a “palimpsest of historical consciousness,”²⁴ is not new at all. In the first decades after World War II, the connections to historical reality were most probably found in the personal experiences and stories of Western Allied soldiers, especially when these accounts were used in popular media texts. One such iconic location is Colditz Castle and its high-security Oflag IVC camp, famous for the legendary escapes made by Allied prisoners of war and dramatized in feature films such as *The Colditz Story* (Guy Hamilton, 1955), based on the 1953 novel by ex-Colditz British POW Pat Reid. Followed by variations on the theme, including *Where Eagles Dare* (based on Alistair McLean's 1967 novel) and the now classic *Wolfenstein* digital games, the high-security Nazi Castle from which an Allied protagonist escapes or successfully rescues others has meanwhile become a stereotypical space for heroic adventures in Nazi Germany. Although the stereotype concept is normally associated with one-dimensional representations of human beings, it is useful in this context, given the affiliation with fantastic, gothic, and horror fiction, where the haunted house often incorporates the spiritual presence of its former inhabitants.²⁵ In many ways the Nazi Castle stands in a classical gothic tradition of architecture, interior design, the personal character of the inhabitants, and the narratives for which it provides a location. As already established in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic novels and in early films such as *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922) and *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931), the owner of the castle or old manor is often a rather strange, but usually uncannily elegant, figure such as a tyrannical feudal lord, a degenerate nobleman, a weird alchemist, or a vampire. Today he is a Nazi – or, more precisely an SS officer – who is likely to collect medieval weapons and ancient artifacts of religious and/or magical significance. The castle not only reflects its owner's tastes and interests but also corresponds to the idea of the disciplined male warrior's body as symbolic armor. Not surprisingly, this image also accords with that of the SS (Diehl, 2005).

Examination of the Nazi Castle's function in popular culture over the years makes an important change apparent. Having provided a gothic, labyrinthine location for an adventurous escape, having created a familiar backdrop whose real-world location is not vital to the narrative, the stereotypical Nazi castle

today has become almost synonymous with Wewelsburg Castle as the secret center of Nazi occult practices and weird scientific research. What does this association signify? Whereas the castle still functions as a place for adventure and escape, not the least in digital games, it has also acquired inherent symbolic value as the main site of SS cult and terror, as expressed in the title of Karl Hüser's influential 1987 book. However, the rather limited amount of academic research on this topic has been far less influential than popular history and cryptohistory, whose impact has been further amplified by the dissolution of media's (imagined) boundaries between fact and fiction. The phenomenon is especially visible in late twentieth and early twenty-first century visual popular culture and the almost ritualistic repetition of imagery from the castle's northern tower, including the Wewelsburg Black Sun floor mosaic.

Secret Plans, Secluded Locations 2: The Bunker

With the old castle traditionally being suitable for occult practices, it might today, especially in digital games, also house a laboratory for conducting weird experiments, a place like a medieval torture chamber where Nazi hi-tech know-how is combined with SS black magic. Another apt setting for such endeavors seems to be a damp concrete bunker, preferably with a vast system of interconnected rooms and corridors. The theme was suggested in a World War II ghost story feature film, *The Bunker* (Rob Green, 2001), although there are neither zombies nor weird Nazi scientists. (The emphasis is on either the ghosts of the dead or one's own bad conscience taking revenge on the German soldiers in the film.) Later cinematic productions such as *Outpost* (Steve Barker, 2008) and *Outpost: Black Sun* (Steve Barker, 2012, see Figure 9.6) established the abandoned Nazi bunker somewhere far away in Eastern Europe (again, note the remoteness) as the location of their zombie experiments. As the title of the sequel indicates, the Wewelsburg Black Sun glyph is the trademark of the morbid project, and as in *Iron Sky* the audience also gets to glimpse it stamped onto the fateful machine that has to be destroyed by the good protagonists in order to save the world.

Like the old castle, the bunker draws on earlier traditions, especially those in gothic fiction, where the labyrinth experience is prevalent. There are also other intertextual parallels, such as the scene in *Outpost: Black Sun* when the mysterious, deadly pale, lethargic man whom the protagonists come across in the bunker has been set on a chair in a room with a large Nazi flag on the wall. The secluded space is like a newly discovered tomb with a sinister curse hovering over it. As in Karl Freund's classic *The Mummy* (1932), with Boris Karloff



Figure 9.6 The DVD of the film *Outpost: Black Sun* (2008, Splendid Film).

as the awakening ancient Egyptian high priest, the body of what proves to be one of the leading SS officers suddenly starts to move in a highly eerie way. Its return to life, or rather its new status as undead, denotes the forbidden violation of the boundary between life and death. The location in which this transformation takes place must be of a liminoid character, that is, a secluded space in the borderlands separating the normal, rational, and structured from the abnormal, irrational, deviant, and chaotic. Deep forests, wild mountains, deserts, the polar regions, the moon, and – in the mindset of Western popular culture – the dreary, poor, backward parts of Eastern Europe are perfect and logical for these kinds of happenings.²⁶

The Wewelsburg Black Sun: Gateway to Re-enchantment?

Considering the many recent popular representations of Wewelsburg Castle and their focus on the Black Sun glyph and the crypt as the Realm of the Dead, the castle's northern tower can be regarded as having become occulturally established as a local branch of the liminoid space just described. Through the fantastic narratives presented, and even more through the spectacular visual distortion of the chambers, the northern tower is symbolically transformed into a gateway to mythical time and space, to an era, albeit Nazi, when the real

world was in fact enchanted, full of magic and mystery. This metamorphosis is further enhanced by the centrality of the Black Sun glyph, which to those who dare is presented almost as the physical entrance to the irrational, occult, and ultimately forbidden realms of the imagined SS mysteries, in which death and necromantic ritual play a key part. As a consequence, the Wewelsburg Black Sun has become familiar as an occult symbol along with others, such as the pentacle. Following the logic of contemporary occulture, it has been taken up by commercial mass culture and turned into a pop-culture commodity. Accordingly, its relevance is no longer solely political, as shown by the following text on the *Iron Sky* wiki site:

The term **Black Sun** (German **Schwarze Sonne**), also referred to as the **Sonnenrad** (the German for “Sun Wheel”), is a symbol of esoteric or occult significance. Its design [is based] on a sun wheel incorporated in a floor of Wewelsburg Castle during the Nazi era. Today, it may also be used in occult currents of Germanic neopaganism, and in Irminenschaft or Armanenschaft-inspired esotericism – but not necessarily in a racial or neo-Nazi context.²⁷

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Films

- Dead Snow* (Tommy Wirkola, 2009)
Dracula (Tod Browning, 1931)
Himmler's Madness (Himmlers Wahn, ZDF/Story House Productions, 2002)
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (Steven Spielberg, 1989)
Iron Sky (Timo Vuorensola, 2012)
Iron Sky II: The Coming Race (Timo Vuorensola, 2019)
Le lac des morts vivants (Jean Rollin, 1981)
Night of the Living Dead (George Romero, 1968)
Night of the Zombies (Joel M. Reed, 1979)
Nosferatu (F.W. Murnau, 1922)
Oasis of the Zombies (Jesús Franco, 1982)
Outpost (Steve Barker, 2008)
Outpost: Black Sun (Steve Barker, 2012)
Outpost: Rise of the Spetznaz (Kieran Parker, 2013)
Raiders of the Lost Ark (Steven Spielberg, 1981)
Revenge of the Zombies (Steve Sekely, 1943)
Shock Waves (Ken Wiederhorn, 1976)

The Bunker (Rob Green, 2001)
The Colditz Story (Guy Hamilton, 1955)
The Mummy (Karl Freund, 1932)
Where Eagles Dare (Brian G. Hutton, 1968)

Digital Games

Call of Duty: World at War (Treyarch, 2008)
Call of Duty: Black Ops (Treyarch, 2010)
Call of Duty: Black Ops 2 (Treyarch, 2012)
Iron Sky: Invasion (TopWare Interactive, 2012)
Medal of Honor: Underground (DreamWorks, 2000)
Sniper Elite: Nazi Zombie Army (Rebellion Oxford, 2013)
Sniper Elite: Nazi Zombie Army 2 (Rebellion Oxford, 2013)
Return to Castle Wolfenstein (id Software, 2001)
Wolfenstein (Raven Software/id Software, 2009)
Wolfenstein 3D (id Software, 1992)
Wolfenstein: The New Order (MachineGames, 2014)

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Heiden (1944) and Rauschnig (1939).
- 2 Two examples of this shift are Sickinger (2000) and Kurlander (2017). For a critical reading of Sickinger, see Kingsepp (2012); of Kurlander, see Kingsepp (2019).
- 3 See Daniela Siepe's essay entitled "The 'Grail Castle' of the SS? The Creation of Legends about Wewelsburg Castle in Scholarly and Popular-Science Literature," in this volume.
- 4 A major influence has probably been historian Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's book *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*, first published in 2002.
- 5 Partridge (2004), pp. 84–85.
- 6 This part has largely been based on the author's keynote lecture "Space Nazis, Nazi Zombies, and the Banalisation of Evil," EUPOP 2013 conference, Turku, Finland, 31 July–2 August 2013.
- 7 See Kellerhoff (2003).
- 8 Wright (2013). https://www.nasa.gov/centers/marshall/history/vonbraun/disney_article.html (accessed 27 July 2021).
- 9 See Kingsepp (2013) for details on this topic.
- 10 The idea of re-enchantment is not undisputed. The modern world might in fact not have become disenchanted in the first place, a possibility that would call into question one of Max Weber's (1948) main theoretical concepts – the connection between Enlightenment, modernity, and secularization.
- 11 In this article I focus on Western popular culture, but interesting perspectives are also found in the Japanese phenomenon of *manga*, *anime*, and *cosplay*. See an example in Kirsten John-Stucke's essay entitled "Current Tendencies Concerning the Myths of Wewelsburg Castle – In Place of a Conclusion," in this volume.
- 12 A sequel, *Iron Sky II: The Coming Race*, premiered in January 2019.

- 13 *Iron Sky* wiki site, “Das offizielle Mondreichswiki.” In English: https://ironsky.fandom.com/wiki/Iron_Sky_Wiki.
- 14 *Steampunk*, in short, is originally a subgenre of science fiction that has morphed into a current subcultural trend that projects contemporary ideas about Western nineteenth-century society, with its industrialization, aesthetics, and steam engines as pivotal motifs, onto artwork and fashion. Alternative history and postapocalyptic scenarios also provide important sources of inspiration.
- 15 Kushner (2003), pp. 114–15.
- 16 This phenomenon is further elaborated upon in Kingsepp (2006).
- 17 Until recently there were no substantial connections between Anglo-American pop culture’s conception of Nazi spaceships and the more specific SS and UFO narratives by Miguel Serrano and German-language novels such as Wilhelm Landig’s Thule trilogy. This relationship is beginning to change, though, with Anglo-American pop culture more widely importing and further exploiting what used to be marginally known concepts such as a secret SS base in Antarctica and, significantly, the Black Sun.
- 18 Kingsepp (2011).
- 19 Gardell (2003), pp. 295–306.
- 20 This theme is also present in literary fiction, such as Shea & Wilson (1975).
- 21 On the Vril concept see Strube (2013).
- 22 Strasse even has his own “fan page”; see [https://wolfenstein.fandom.com/wiki/Wilhelm_Strasse_\(MachineGames\)](https://wolfenstein.fandom.com/wiki/Wilhelm_Strasse_(MachineGames)) (accessed 3 September 2021).
- 23 <http://bloody-disgusting.com/news/3264234/sniper-elite-nazi-zombie-army-2-review-lock-and-reload/> (accessed 26 December 2013).
- 24 Vivian Sobchack (1997), “The Insistent Fringe: Moving Images and the Palimpsest of Historical Consciousness,” *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, vol. 36, no. 4, 4–20.
- 25 See Barry Curtis (2008), *Dark Places: The Haunted House in Film*. London.
- 26 The third film in the series, *Outpost: Rise of the Spetznaz* (2013), also introduces Soviet Red Army soldiers into the narrative.
- 27 http://ironsky.wikia.com/wiki/Schwarze_Sonne_%28symbol%29 (accessed 30 April 2021).

“Factual Nazisploitation”

Nazi Occult Documentary Films

Eva Kingsepp

How are we to interpret the current popular image of Wewelsburg Castle as the heart of Nazi occultism, and what are we to make of the so-called Black Sun ornament as its main symbol? Why do both seem so persistent? One important factor is popular history, a genre often believed to be a more accessible, but still reliable, version of serious scholarly history. However, these characteristics are far from always the case. In this essay I identify ways in which many TV documentaries are in fact perpetuating an image of the SS at Wewelsburg Castle more related to fiction than to historical reality and how this representation contributes to a popular idea of Nazi Germany as the home of weird pseudoreligious, or outwardly occult, even satanic practices. In popular culture the term *Nazi occultism* has come to encompass all kinds of imagined or, to a lesser extent, actual esoteric practices of Nazis during the Third Reich. In the following pages I use the expression *Nazi occult documentary film* to mean a specific subgenre of “Nazisploitation” that has been evolving mainly in the United States and Western Europe since the 1990s. Today, with almost unlimited access to a wide range of films through the web, there are more titles than ever available to those interested in the topic. The films also work together with other media texts¹ of different sorts, including blogs and chat rooms on the web, which means that the discourse is not limited to one form of media. Instead, they all blend together, they inspire and influence each other, and in the end they all contribute to shaping people’s ideas about this part of history, our cultural memory (see Erll & Rigney, 2009).

It is often said that history has taken over the function of traditional myths; hence the familiar (and sometimes disputed) concept that we should “learn from history.” TV documentaries often present historical events in a simplistic, mythical form, with fantastic imagery and suggestive music conceived to catch the audience’s attention. The term “infotainment” is very appropriate in that context, although the entertainment aspect often dominates. Myths do enable us to learn important things about the world. But there is also a negative side, which is connected to the way myths are presented by the media. The audience is neither stupid nor ignorant, and although much popular fiction on

Nazi Germany and World War II is often appreciated by its audience because of its mythical character, TV documentaries and popular history writing are critically evaluated according to their *lack* of such rhetoric. When factual texts are characterized by an explicitly mythical mode of discourse, they may well be dismissed as “fake history,” especially because a genre such as the documentary is still assumed (erroneously) to provide objective, reliable information. The critical viewer can even regard such documentaries on Nazi Germany and/or World War II as evidence of the existence of an official memory culture, politically governed and based on ideological preferences, as opposed to what is considered an authentic, folk memory culture presumably based on “what really happened.” On the other hand, less critical viewers – often the young – tend to believe that something shown in a documentary is accurate and that one can learn from it.² Obviously less credible (so-called) documentaries dealing with the topic are often ridiculed, one example being the *Ancient Aliens* episode entitled “Aliens and the Third Reich,” in which advanced flying-saucer technology is said to have been handed down to the Nazis by extraterrestrials (a theme also found in esoteric Nazism). Nevertheless, even such fanciful content is being disseminated in the popular discourse on Nazi Germany and is contributing in its own way to contemporary memory culture.

Factual Nazisploitation in TV Documentaries

How does this mythical mode of communication work? The answer lies partly in popular culture itself, as one genre or topic always shares at least some common elements with others. Themes, tropes, stereotypes, visual imagery, and, not least, sound effects and music are parts of media texts that work together in different ways. They send viewers and readers cues about what kind of material they have before them, what to expect from it, and, often, what the underlying moral significance is in terms of, say, what is good or bad. The more fantastic and spectacular a documentary film becomes through the use of images and other elements familiar from fiction genres such as horror, gothic, and the fantastic, the more it involves the viewer emotionally rather than intellectually, signaling entertainment, not information.³ One way to assess the content of a media text is to examine the story it is intended to tell, its narrative, and how it is conveyed. What is it about? What smaller parts does the narrative consist of, and how are they put together? In the case of films, more questions arise. Images, sound, and music are especially important, as their impact is mostly on an emotional, even unconscious level.



Figure 10.1 Two classic TV documentaries on the Third Reich.

A narrative in the traditional sense consists of a beginning, an interconnected chain of events, and an end. Taken together, it is meaningful and explanatory, telling us – the receivers – something about the world. However, storytelling need not always proceed in this linear form; the mind automatically arranges sequences into a coherent whole, filling in gaps according to what is known as a cognitive scheme. This skill is culturally acquired. We do not need to be told every detail, for we have learned what certain chains of events normally look like and what they mean. By far the largest number of TV documentaries on Nazi Germany deal with history topics of rather general interest, usually in the narrative form associated with the genre. However, when it comes to Himmler, the SS, Wewelsburg Castle, and – especially – Nazi occultism, it seems that the temptation of the fantastic is hard to resist. In many Nazi occult documentaries a distinct storyline is hard to come by, a lack suggesting the unimportance of the cognitive function (see Figure 10.1).

Of the thirteen films in the following case study, twelve have either Nazi occultism, the SS, or Heinrich Himmler as their main topic (see the list at the end of this essay).⁴ The majority are U.K., U.S., or German productions; one is Italian. For comparison I have added a sequence from the BBC's *The Nazis: A Warning from History* (1997), one of the more qualitative documentary series

dealing with Nazi Germany more generally.⁵ To begin with the overall mode of communication, it is clear that the films cover the gamut, ranging from what film scholar Bill Nichols calls a “discourse of sobriety”⁶ to sensationalistic spectacle. The sample can be divided into three main groups with three, seven, and three films, respectively. The first group can easily be classified as representative of the factual mode traditionally associated with documentary film. The most objective and informative films in the sample are *Nazis: A Warning from History* and, despite their somewhat startling titles, *Hitler’s Search for the Holy Grail* (1999; see Figure 10.2) and *Heinrich Himmler: Anatomy of a Mass Murderer* (2008; see Figure 10.3).

The second group, the largest, is more complex and mixes elements of factual discourse and fantastic speculation, much as crypto- or pseudohistory literature does, with the addition of visual and auditory material bringing new dimensions to their cognitive content. The “classical” series *The Occult History of the Third Reich* (1991; see Figure 10.1), *Nazis Teil 1 – Die okkulte Verschwörung* (1998, *Nazis, Part I: The Occult Conspiracy*; see Figure 10.4), *Himmlers Burg, die Wewelsburg: das weltanschauliche Zentrum der SS* (*Himmler’s Castle, Wewelsburg: The Ideological Center of the SS*, 2005; see Figure 10.1), and *Hitler’s Henchmen: Himmler* (1996) all give an impression of factual discourse, but closer examination reveals that much of what they say and show becomes rather dubious. A typical device is to take brief interviews with one or two renowned scholars and intersperse them among interviews with authors of popular Nazi cryptohistory books, creating an impression that the whole film, including the weird claims and outright false statements of the latter, is serious and trustworthy. The same strategy is a standard procedure in the books, where authors such as Trevor Ravenscroft – who is often also quoted in the films – shroud their speculations in a pseudoacademic cloak.⁷

The three films in the final group are *The History of Nazism* (year unknown), *Himmler’s Madness* (2002), and *The Nazi Gospels* (2012). All three stand out both verbally and visually for their quite exceptional use of spectacle and imagination. Although *Himmler’s Madness* is less bizarre and outrageous in its narrative content than the two others are, it is still more closely related to them than to the films in groups 1 and 2 because of its extensive use of emotionally value-laden tropes and suggestive imagery. In *The Nazi Gospels* (2012) some of the claims include the statement that human sacrifice to the ancient Norse gods was a fundamental part of Nazi ideology. Benevolently, one could say that everyone has a right to one’s interpretations, even if they have no substance whatsoever and are not based on empirical evidence. However, especially

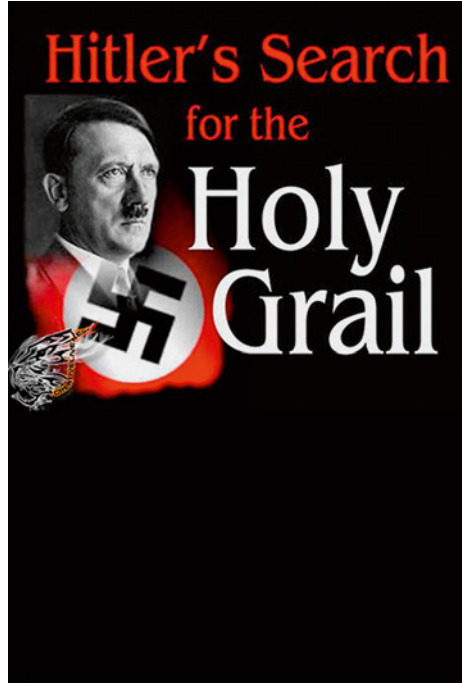


Figure 10.2
Hitler's Search for the Holy Grail (1999). The title suggests a mission involving allegedly occult intrigues, but this documentary film is serious and rather traditional.

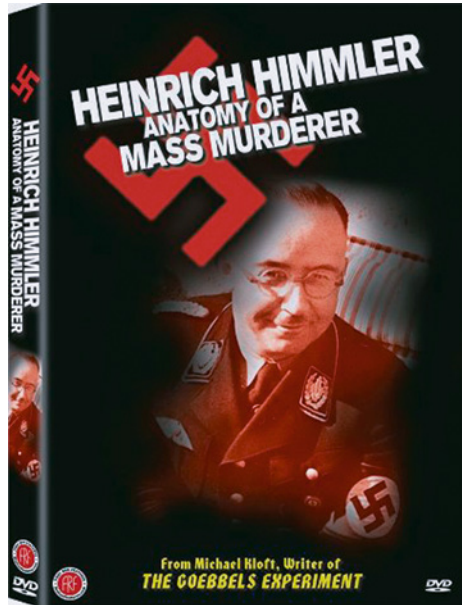


Figure 10.3
Heinrich Himmler: Anatomy of a Mass Murderer (2008), is one of the exceedingly rare titles to break with the conventional visual depiction of Wewelsburg Castle in films.



Figure 10.4 *Nazis Teil 1 – Die okkulte Verschwörung* (Nazis, Part I: The Occult Conspiracy, 1998). Film series such as this one blend elements of classical documentary with dubious pseudoscientific statements.

when combined with false statements about otherwise well-documented facts concerning the Holocaust, such an allegation becomes quite questionable. In principle it is hard to see a difference between this kind of revisionist “history” and that of Holocaust deniers, apart from the fact that there is no denial in the film. On the contrary, Nazi crimes, horror, and genocide are central elements in documentaries of this kind, for without them the shocking speculations about blood sacrifice and sinister rites would lose much of their impact. In addition, accounts of the Holocaust and Nazi terror almost automatically trigger a deep emotional audience response, which is essential to the attraction – and commercial success – of these kinds of speculative media texts that I have chosen to call factual Nazisploitation. Notably, there are differences when compared to the Nazisploitation genre in general, particularly due to the absence of overtly sexual content. However, there are also common basic traits that deserve to be acknowledged:

In these films that conflate the history of World War II and the Holocaust or that invent new and fantastic histories altogether, Nazis are more caricature than character. In the logic of the Nazisploitation film, all Germans are Nazis, all Nazis are members of the SS, and all members of the SS

are war criminals, medical experimenters and sexual sadists. (Magilow, Vander Lugt, & Bridges, 2012, p. 2)

Importantly, this view establishes intertextual connections between lowbrow "junk" cinema and pulp fiction on the one hand and cryptohistory and documentary film on the other.

Fantastic Time and Space

A comparison of the films shows that the narrative before 1933 usually followed the traditional form of chronicle: first this happened, then that, which led to that. Two of their most common characteristics were a rising interest in occultism and Darwinism in the West and a focus on racist mystics in Germany forming antisemitic, *völkisch* sects, with the Thule Society as the main example.⁸ These elements exist in most of the films, a commonality that creates a basic, joint narrative analyzable as a fairly coherent account of this part of history. But Hitler's rise to power not only signifies a change of politics and society, it constitutes an interesting demarcation of space and distortion of time. As if the gates of Hell had opened overnight, there is suddenly a veritable flood of Nazis, parades, *Sieg Heil* gestures and shouting, Hitler ranting, nightly ceremonies around crackling fires, black-clad SS marching ominously or posing in a "superhuman" way, and so forth. As though overcome by a magic spell, Germany turns into a secluded territory in the heart of Europe where everything familiar, stable, and normal has been replaced by the strange, chaotic, and, if not outright paranormal, at least fantastic. This mode is characteristic of fiction (often of the gothic, horror, and science-fiction genres) in which the familiar world is abruptly pervaded by things strange and freakish related to Freud's *uncanny*.⁹

There is also a significant change regarding the main actors. In the pre-1933, structured part of the period, Hitler often figures as the main character, going from being nobody to the leader of the Nazi party. In the chaotic part the focus is on Himmler. But comparison of the films shows the inscrutability of what Himmler does, when he does it, and what the object of his actions is. The following common narrative elements are basic:

- The SS is Himmler's elite order of knights (or sometimes Hitler's, or both of theirs).
- The SS provides the material for the new, Aryan superman, who is to be bred in the Lebensborn project.
- Wiligut (alias Weisthor) is or becomes an important person in the SS.

- Himmler creates or has plans for an ideological center for the SS, for an SS Vatican.
- Himmler and twelve selected SS men perform mystical ceremonies there.
- Himmler creates or has established a research or educational center for occultism and the like.
- “The Nazis” (Hitler, Himmler, the SS, or the Ahnenerbe Association) send research expeditions to Tibet.
- The SS (sometimes more precisely the SD [security service], *Einsatzgruppen* [task forces], the Gestapo, or medical doctors) terrorize and murder civilians, usually Jews.
- World War II (breaks out, or just suddenly turns up in some image, or is mentioned, or has implicitly been somewhere in the background).

Obviously, there is no coherent storyline at all, and its absence indicates that the main thing is not to convey real knowledge about the events or try to explain them. Instead, references to, and iconic photos of, people like Guido von List, Mme. Blavatsky, and Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, and the abundance of suggestive imagery such as runes, SS daggers, the Black Sun, Wagnerian Vikings, and the Externsteine function simply as signs of occult Nazi-ness,¹⁰ as something that belongs to the popular idea of Nazi occultism. This mode of representation is also characteristic for much factual programming more generally, much as the focus on “star-quality” personalities is an established way of attracting audience interest.¹¹ It is significant that the Holocaust and World War II, usually considered to be among the most important facets of Nazi Germany’s history, are reduced in the films to something quite diffuse somewhere on the periphery. What the viewer gets instead is basically a trip through a fantastic Nazi amusement park, a House of Horrors where the *really* frightening aspects have been put aside. The films offer up spectacular sensations and personalities in gothic Nazi settings, using occult symbols and imagery as props.

The “Magic Spell” of the Northern Tower

When the documentaries turn to Wewelsburg Castle, it seems that influences of the fantastic can easily sneak into even the most rational discourse. An example is the otherwise highly distinguished BBC documentary series *The Nazis: A Warning from History*, which contains a short sequence showing the crypt in the castle’s northern tower. Usually, the main segment presenting Wewelsburg Castle in documentaries is about the crypt, the *Obergruppenführer* Hall above it, or both. The filmmakers almost always choose to depict the

crypt, but sometimes also the hall, as dark and ominous.¹² (Newer films largely do the same, despite the crypt's having been refurnished with sizable paintings and an audiovisual installation.) Many Nazi occult documentaries introduce Wewelsburg Castle by using imagery and sound effects otherwise associated with horror films. (In *The Nazi Gospels* it is even said that it is a "creepy" place and would be perfect as "Dracula's castle.") By contrast, the BBC filmmakers have chosen a nice, postcard-style, aerial summer view accompanied by a voice-over that somewhat mockingly includes Himmler's oft-ridiculed background as a not entirely successful poultry farmer. Then the camera enters the eerie crypt, a sequence completely conforming to the established conventions. However, the rhetoric of the voice-over is not very spectacular. The narrator soberly informs the audience that "Himmler fantasized that the leaders of the SS would meet in this room like the Knights of the Round Table. Here they would plan the rule over their own empire."

If this intention actually had been Himmler's personal fantasy, why would the SS leaders prefer having their meetings in a cold, damp cellar when all of the castle, including the hall just one floor up, was at their disposal. My ambition has not been to compare media representations with factual history, as I am primarily interested in historical consciousness and how history is used to create meaning in contemporary society. But it is worth pointing out this kind of peculiar statement because it fits well into the mainstream image of the SS and its leaders as something else, as belonging to a fantastic reality rather than the ordinary one. It provides a good example of how influences of the fantastic enter otherwise serious factual contexts.¹³

New films, books, and digital games on the topic of Nazi occultism are constantly appearing, and it seems that the popular memory of the Nazi era is becoming increasingly more fantastic with the ever-growing temporal distance to the actual events and with ever fewer people who can still bear witness to them. Why? Invoking associations to bizarre cults and religious fanaticism becomes not only a way of explaining away Nazi evil but also an attractive niche for outright Nazi exploitation, where fetishism, wild fantasies, and conspiracy theories amalgamate into a best-selling commodity. Moreover, in some cases it is nothing other than revisionism in its negative sense, with its purveyors overlooking and/or distorting well-documented historical facts in order to promote fantasies for economic profit. Although there is no ordinary Holocaust denial in these works – on the contrary, genocide is an important element in the creation of shock value – Nazi crimes are being banalized and even ridiculed as they are transformed into the evil deeds of crazy occultists.

It is often said that popular history is not about the past: It is about the present, about ourselves, and how we would like the past to have been. In the light

of the persistent trend of Nazi occultism, this thought becomes scarier than any monster movie.

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- Secret History: Hitler's Search for the Holy Grail* (Maya Vision/Channel Four, 1999).
- Unsolved Mysteries of the Second World War: Himmler's Castle* (Aitken & Flitton, 2005).
- The History of Nazism (Storia e segreti del nazismo; Il centro storico, Italy, n.d.)*.
- Hitler's Henchmen: Himmler (Hitlers Helfer, ZDF/Story House Productions, 1996)*.
- The Nazi Gospels* (Paul Copeland, 2012).
- The Nazis: A Warning from History* (BBC, 1997).
- The SS: Himmler's Madness (Himmlers Wahn, ZDF/Story House Productions, 2002)*.
- Heinrich Himmler: Anatomy of a Mass Murderer (Heinrich Himmler – Aus dem Leben eines Massenmörders, Spiegel TV, 2008)*.

Other Films

- Ancient Aliens*, season two, episode 11: Aliens and the Third Reich (Prometheus Entertainment, 2010).
- Blood Sacrifice: Occult Secrets of Adolf Hitler* (Cutting Edge Films & UFOTV, 2013).
- The Secret Glory* (Richard Stanley, 2001).
- UFO – The Third Reich Strikes Back (Das Dritte Reich schlägt zurück, Norbert Jürgen Ratthofer, Ralf Ettl, 1989)*.

Notes

- 1 *Media text* is a scholarly term for wide range of media material – such as films, comics, digital games, and web pages – that can be interpreted like a written text.
- 2 Kingsepp (2008, 2010). See also Hall (1973), Hill (2007).
- 3 Hill (2007); Kingsepp (2008, 2010).
- 4 The original case study was part of the author's doctoral dissertation (Kingsepp, 2008; for a summary in English, see Kingsepp, 2010). It has been updated and expanded for this essay.
- 5 At the time of this study, all of the films were available on DVD through major vendors such as Amazon.com or had been shown on major TV channels – two of the criteria for

selection. Those standards excluded rather underground films such as *The Secret Glory* (2001), *UFO – Das Dritte Reich schlägt zurück* (1989), and *Blood Sacrifice: Occult Secrets of Adolf Hitler* (2013) as arguably being of marginal importance. Their availability on YouTube, however, has enabled them, too, to contribute to the discourse.

6 Nichols (2001), p. 39.

7 See Daniela Siepe's essay entitled "The 'Grail Castle' of the SS? The Creation of Legends about Wewelsburg Castle in Scholarly and Popular-Science Literature," in this volume.

8 In *Blood Sacrifice: Occult Secrets of Adolf Hitler* (2013), the Darwin–Nazi connection is distorted, highlighted, and turned into an argument supporting Creationism.

9 Jackson (1988).

10 See Kingsepp (2006), p. 66.

11 Hill (2007).

12 In this study the only two films that break with this visual convention are *Hitler's Search for the Holy Grail* and *Heinrich Himmler: Anatomy of a Mass Murderer*.

13 See also Kingsepp (2012).

Symbolic Bridges Across Countries and Continents

The “Black Sun” and Wewelsburg Castle in International Right-Wing Extremism

Thomas Pfeiffer

In May 2018 the ninth issue of *N.S. Heute* (National Socialism Today), a bimonthly published in Dortmund, Germany, carried the “Myths of Wewelsburg Castle” as its feature article. The magazine’s editor, Sascha Krolzig, is also one of two federal chairmen of the neo-Nazi party Die Rechte (The Right), which attracts activists of banned organizations as well. In his editorial Krolzig repeated three times, nearly verbatim, that the significance of the Wewelsburg Castle myths to him and like-minded people reaches far beyond Germany. Unsurprisingly, he sees the northern tower, where the “Black Sun” floor ornament is found in the *Obergruppenführer* Hall, as the “main attraction for National Socialists, who visit Wewelsburg from all over Europe.”¹ The European scope of the May publication was evident in a report on the demonstration that had taken place a month earlier in Dortmund with the slogan “Europe awake! – Our Europe is not your Union!” It unmistakably alluded to the punishable Nazi slogan “*Deutschland erwache!*” (Germany awake!). According to the report, right-wing extremists from Bulgaria, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Hungary, and the French-speaking part of Belgium (Wallonia) also took part. The demonstration had been preceded by both a “Europe Congress” of Die Rechte held in Schwerte in the eastern part of the Ruhr District in November 2017 and a Europe-themed issue of *N.S. Heute* in January 2018, accompanied by the distribution of a T-shirt² bearing “Europe awake” in twenty-three languages. These publications, events, and activities indicate that right-wing extremists are expanding and deepening their international relations. The Black Sun, too, is shining with increasing intensity across national borders, especially in recent times. Indeed, the motif is now prevalent in racist and anti-Semitic scenes, many of which are violent and some of which are terrorist, even outside Europe.

An early example from the United States comes from the right-wing rock scene in 1998, when the band No Alibi from Buffalo referred to the Wewelsburg Castle myths in an interview with the Polish right-wing extremist fanzine *RAC* (Rock Against Communism). One of the topics was the song entitled

“Ritter der Runde” (Knights of the Round³), which focuses on Wewelsburg Castle. According to the interview, the piece was recorded with support from celebrities in the scene, including, as a singer, Ed Wolbank of the U.S. band Bound for Glory, one of the cult bands in international right-wing extremism. The unnamed band member giving the interview reverentially referred to Wewelsburg Castle as “the Vatican City of SS Germany.” The song was recorded in German and English, whereby the English version was merely a sideline:

We did one version in English just because all the skins in America want to understand our words and most of the world knows English so they can relate to this amazing story! This is the only reason for the English version on the CD. The German version was simply out of respect to the German folk, it speaks directly to Deutschland! It is their castle for the world to behold! Hopefully one day we reclaim the true spear of destiny! And take over the world!⁴

One of the latest references to the Black Sun in the international spectrum presumably also comes from the United States: the computer game *Swastika Strike*, which was last updated in January 2021. The game is primitive in every respect, with a look reminiscent of the aesthetics of first-generation video games. The objective is to pilot a spaceship and shoot, for example, figures of Jews (“everyday evils”) circulating in space (“turn them into dead good members of society”⁵). The projectiles are SS signs, swastikas, and the Black Sun, which corresponds to the sun wheel from Wewelsburg Castle.

The following essay focuses on the dissemination and reception of Wewelsburg Castle and Black Sun myths in international right-wing extremism. The scope of their use is illustrated through seven contexts either coming from European and non-European countries other than Germany or originating within Germany and having international links. Drawing on the Black Sun and Wewelsburg Castle as examples, the essay also addresses the question of the extent to which signs and myths function as symbolic bridges for international right-wing extremism, strengthening a sense of community and possibly a transnational framing in these milieus.⁶

Internationalization in Right-Wing Extremism

Right-wing extremism has long been an international phenomenon, and it is even more so in the age of the Internet. At present the links are particularly manifest in the right-wing rock scene and right-wing extremist martial arts, for

example. The New Right, too, has international connections, originally mainly German-French, but they have meanwhile broadened to include Austria as well. When the Identitarian Movement (IM) calls itself “Europe’s fastest-growing patriotic youth movement,” the assertion is partly self-dramatization intended to lend it stature, significance, and dynamism, but the IM does have a presence in several states, especially France, Germany, and Austria. The American Identitarian Movement (formerly, Identity Evropa) in the United States also looks to the European “Identitarians.”⁷ The IM avoids association with National Socialism. The symbol under which the IM unites is the Greek lambda, which in that context stands for defense against an alleged invasion by “aliens,” especially Muslims.⁸ In neo-Nazi circles, by contrast, there are many symbols and codes – in addition to the Black Sun – that can act as symbolic bridges to National Socialism. Among these codes are the Fourteen Words, indicated by the numeral 14 and representing a kind of oath: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” Originating from North American right-wing extremism, the acronym ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government) is commonly applied by right-wing extremist groups as a paraphrase of anti-Semitic world conspiracy myths. Another internationally exploited symbol is the stylized Celtic cross, which a 2008 ruling by Germany’s Federal Supreme Court banned from public display in Germany.⁹

The kinds of presentation typical of the Internet and equally popular in its worldwide communities can have a bridging function. Examples are memes, usually whimsical, sometimes political collages of images, symbols, and text, often with image elements that are picked up from the Internet and given a new context. Some right-wing extremists call the use of memes for their political struggle “memetic warfare.” The image elements of right-wing extremist memes are generally not new, but their combination and international compatibility are. Sometimes “slogans and symbols borrowed from national contexts are taken up and turned into a global political phenomenon through memes.”¹⁰ This practice is not about striving for substantive consistency but rather about visualizing certain leitmotifs, including “the sense of belonging to a group, the urgency of defense and struggle, and the desire to fulfill a fateful, heroic mission.”¹¹ Nick Nestler, in his work on right-wing extremist memes, analyzes a depiction that combines three elements: a landscape of ancient Greek buildings (Temple of Aphaia in Aegina) seen from today’s perspective (that is, as ruins), a shining white sun shaped like the Wewelsburg sun wheel and rising in the background, and the slogan “Make Europe great again.” The pictorial reference to antiquity, Nazi symbolism, and the take-off on Donald Trump’s campaign slogan seem to meld seamlessly. In this case antiquity stands for the “origin of a postulated European cultural community” conceived

of as ethnically homogeneous; the white Black Sun, for a “‘new start’ or ‘beginning’ in the context of Europe’s politically strengthening right-wing forces”;¹² and the Trump quotation, for a transatlantic bridge. The meme emerged during Trump’s presidency and can also be understood as giving impetus to the idea that gaining real power, as in the United States, is also possible in Europe. Nestler points out that the Black Sun is a recurring visual in the memes he has studied.

Ideology has changed less than optics have in international right-wing extremism. The greatest consistency exists in those subsections that espouse overt racism and anti-Semitism, often explicitly in the tradition of National Socialism. Certain shifts have made ideology more compatible transnationally in this regard as well. Among them is a changed racial myth. Political scientist Thomas Grumke speaks of a “pan-Aryan worldview” that “ – no longer Slavophobic like Hitler’s Nazi ideology – explicitly includes Eastern Europe and Russia as part of the ‘white world.’”¹³ International compatibility also characterizes discourses that hark back, for example, to David Lane, the right-wing terrorist and progenitor of the 14 words, and to David Duke, a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. They tend to avoid emphasizing the superiority of the “White race” and instead pursue a discourse on victimization that focuses on alleged discrimination against “Whites.” According to this view, their genetic and cultural heritage is being destroyed by ethnic mixing and systematic settlement of immigrants. The mantra is the “genocide of the White race.”¹⁴ The discourse on ethnopluralism, which has become the dominant concept of nationalism in right-wing extremism, is also internationally compatible. Moreover, it mitigates potential for conflict between right-wing extremist groups in different parts of the world. Ethnopluralism does not explicitly hold that one national people is superior to others but rather that the quality and existence of the polity is endangered when ethnic groups mix. The credo is the fiction of ethnic homogeneity within a space. This homogeneity can also be thought of transnationally as being expressed in the notion of “European ethnocultural identity,” a key notion of the IM. In this context, concepts of Europe, culture, and identity are the basis of exclusionary myths directed against “non-European” people, a blanket expression essentially meaning Muslims. To that extent ethnopluralism absorbs the exclusionary function of racial myth, usually with other vocabulary,¹⁵ and is overlain by a conspiracy myth – the narrative of the “Great Exchange” (also known as The Great Replacement, *Le Grand Remplacement*), a secret plan by the rulers to replace natives with immigrant “foreigners.” The term and the narrative trace back to the French philosopher Renaud Camus, who became an important source of ideas for the New Right.¹⁶ These roots intensify an already potent and

internationally compatible image of the enemy: the left-wing or liberal elites, the (“left-wing green-smear”) establishment, including the “system” or “lying press.” In certain conspiracy myths it is also the “deep state,” which directs and controls things behind the scenes.

International right-wing extremism is a heterogeneous network that is by no means shaped solely by commonalities and a shared sense of community. Although this spectrum is tightly networked through communication, it is also marked by competition and demarcation; in fact, networking and demarcation occasionally occur simultaneously. Some network members accuse others of pandering to “the system” and of thereby betraying “the movement” and “the cause.” In turn, the others attack them because their aggressive and provocative behavior stands in the way of reaching the mainstream, that is, of achieving real change. As pointedly formulated by Cas Mudde, a political scientist who researches and teaches in the United States and Norway: “Many far-right groups spend more time denouncing their far-right “competitors” than their “real” enemies within the political establishment.”¹⁷

Mudde, among other observers, has provided conceptual and typological proposals to help sort out the confusing field of international right-wing extremism. Examining the spectrum beyond “the so-called ‘mainstream right’, such as conservatives and liberals/libertarians,” he uses the collective term *far right* to refer to “those on the right who are ‘anti-system,’ defined here as hostile to liberal democracy.”¹⁸ He divides the far right into an “extreme” and a “radical” right and characterizes them as follows. The former, he writes, fundamentally rejects the standards of democracy such as popular sovereignty and majority rule, is often oriented to fascism, and sees itself as a revolutionary force. The latter accepts certain democratic principles but opposes the specific elements of liberal democracy, especially minority rights, and thereby resists a fundamental element of Germany’s Basic Law – the inviolability of human dignity. In Europe the clearest examples of extreme right-wing parties in Mudde’s typology are the NPD in Germany and Golden Dawn in Greece. His list of radical right-wing parties includes the Rassemblement National (known as the Front National until 2018) in France, Fidesz and Jobbik in Hungary, the PiS in Poland, the FPÖ in Austria, Geert Wilders’s Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, and the AfD in Germany. However, he notes that the boundaries are porous both between the mainstream right and the far right as well as between radical and extremist right-wing forces.

Whereas Mudde chiefly has political parties in mind, the British contemporary historian Roger Griffin focuses on the significance of small groups, which he calls *groupuscules*, a term borrowed from French and, collectively, the “groupuscular right.” It is precisely from these small and often underestimated

cell-like, network-like, actionist groupings, which have responded in highly flexible ways to state repression, that dangers to democracy have arisen. Griffin's conceptualization¹⁹ suggests subdividing international right-wing extremism into political parties, movement organizations (such as "Blood & Honour" and the "Identitarian Movement"), and groupuscules.²⁰

References to Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun are not particularly likely in political parties, whose efforts to project a serious image would be undermined if they made openly Nazi overtures. When such references are made, they emanate from those parties that Mudde associates with the extreme right. (On the NPD, see the essay entitled "The Realm of the Black Sun," in this volume.) The focus in this text will therefore be less on the political parties than on the neo-Nazi movement's organizations and groupuscules. With regard to Wewelsburg and the Black Sun, it is also worthwhile to distinguish the German-speaking, especially German-Austrian, realm from the non-German-speaking area. The range of the Black Sun's use in Austria largely corresponds to that in Germany. The symbol figures somewhat more in the Austrian public sphere, where it is regularly mentioned in criminal proceedings. The Austrian legal situation is not identical to the German one. Public use of the Black Sun in the context of other symbols and actions can have a bearing on criminal liability under the Austrian Prohibition Act,²¹ which is intended to prevent National Socialist re-enactment. In Germany, use of the Black Sun is not relevant under criminal law (see the essay "The Realm of the Black Sun," in this volume).

Two examples illustrate the range of uses in Austria. On one hand, Austria has an active neo-Nazi scene intertwined with the German one in numerous ways. There is an association called Objekt 21, which was banned in early 2011 and has an eponymous meeting place near Desselbrunn in Upper Austria. Photos²² from Objekt 21 show not only the Black Sun as a tattoo and wall decoration but also a T-shirt cynically lettered "University of Auschwitz"/"Est. 1941"/"Humanity, Genetics, Ethnogeny, Final Solution." Objekt 21 also hosted the singer of the German band Sturmwehr for a recital of ballads at its venue. At the same time, the Identitarian Movement of Austria (IMA) is one of the most active branches of the IM internationally. There is a noteworthy photo²³ of the IMA demonstration "Defend Europe – For a free and strong Europe of the future!" on 11 June 2016 in Vienna. According to press reports, right-wing extremists from several European countries participated, including a person with a Hungarian coat of arms on his chest and a Black Sun tattoo on his forearm. Contact between different groups at events also means that their symbolic worlds mix.

Attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, 15 March 2019

The most prominent appearance of the Wewelsburg sun wheel in international right-wing extremism in recent years occurred in connection with the March 2019 attacks on the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Center in Christchurch, New Zealand, violence in which fifty-one people lost their lives. The perpetrator, Australian Brenton Tarrant, was sentenced to life in prison on 27 August 2020.

Three days before the crime, Tarrant had posted a photo²⁴ on Twitter exhibiting the bulletproof vest and other protective gear that he later wore in the attack. Symbols and writing were visible on it. The vest had a patch with the Black Sun; hanging above it were two necklaces, one with the Black Sun, the other with a stylized Celtic cross. During the crime, the terrorist filmed himself and transmitted the footage as a livestream on the Internet, where a 74-page paper also circulated in which he ideologically legitimized the attacks and exalted them in heroic terms. The paper's title page (see Figure 11.1) featured the Black Sun as the hub of a wheel whose spokes formed eight white panels, each containing an illustration and a label summarizing a different political goal. Altogether, the title page constituted a ground plan for the future of "Anti-Imperialism," "Environmentalism," "Responsible Markets," "Addiction-Free Community," "Law & Order," "Ethnic Autonomy," "Protection of Heritage & Culture," and "Worker's Rights." The main heading named the threat scenario and juxtaposed it with the vision: The Great Replacement. The symbol of the Black Sun reappeared in a collage of images on the final page of the paper.

The paper does not treat the symbol of the Black Sun in the text; the sign and its meaning of identification are obviously assumed to be known. In the document, the Black Sun is detached from Wewelsburg Castle and can be understood as a supposed symbol of "European culture" and "race" as well as their origins. The mental association with European fascism may also be intentional. The text does not mention historical National Socialism. Nor does the author accept the designation "Nazi" or "neo-Nazi," but he does accept the designation "fascist." He refers several times to the leader of the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s, Oswald Mosley, as in the statement "Sir Oswald Mosley is the person from history closest to my own beliefs."²⁵

Substantively, the text only hints at Mosley. The central terms used synonymously with *white* in the paper are *Europe* and *European*. Mosley used a similar technique, as when elaborated his vision of "Europe a Nation" in his 1956 text "European Socialism."²⁶ Its translation as "Nation Europe" served for many years as the title of an important right-wing extremist ideological monthly in

The Great Replacement

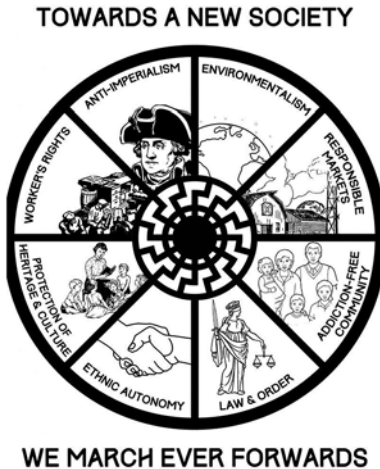


Figure 11.1
Black sun and conspiracy myth: the paper
by Christchurch attacker Brenton Tarrant.

Coburg, Germany. It was in that periodical that “European Socialism” was first published. However, Mosley’s idea of a European state with a central government that would stand alongside and against the United States and the Soviet Union as a third superpower²⁷ does not appear in Tarrant’s paper. It would contradict the ethnopluralist rhetoric Tarrant serves up about the worthiness of protecting the diversity of people.²⁸ Mosley called for a European–African economic area. Although he remained hazy on this point, the colonies of the European states at the time were apparently to be suppliers of raw materials. This intention is hardly compatible with the goal of “anti-imperialism” to which Tarrant ascribes but does not elaborate. Mosley sought to integrate trade unionism and free enterprise into a new economic model. Elements of the welfare state and the planned economy were to be included, especially worker ownership of factories. Tarrant briefly and vaguely touches on “Worker ownership of the means of production” and higher minimum wages,²⁹ topics dealt with as part of the paper’s largely vacuous goal of “Worker’s Rights.”

The killer’s text ties in much more closely with the myth of the Great Exchange planned by elites and with the discourse on the genocide of the

White race. The starting point for a scenario of existential threat that must be averted by all means is the higher birth rate of the “non-white” population, which, along with immigration, has led to “ethnic,” “cultural,” and “racial replacement.” The leitmotif is the call for armed struggle against all those who are declared enemies (including “immigrants”/“invaders,” “globalists,” “economic elites,” “egalitarians,” and “traitors”) and explicitly against children (“Children of invaders do not stay children, they become adults and reproduce, creating more invaders to replace your people”³⁰).

Groups such as the Identitarian Movement, which refer to the narrative of the Great Exchange, do not openly call for violence. Their demand for “remigration” is understood by Julia Ebner and Jacob Davey (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, London) as “forced repatriation of migrant communities, or a form of non-violent ethnic cleansing of Europe.”³¹ Tarrant’s paper has also been correctly understood as evidence that discourses on ethnopluralism and the Great Exchange have a close logical link with coercion and violence. The latter two aspects are predominantly ignored by their supporters, or at least they are not addressed in their presentation to the outside world. However, perpetrators of violence like Tarrant can claim to draw the necessary consequences from the described scenarios – courageously, resolutely, and uncompromisingly.³² In this respect the space for the narrative of the Great Exchange to resonate is vast and ranges from the extreme right wing of the AfD in Germany to right-wing terrorism.

Attack in Halle an der Saale, Germany, 9 October 2019

The acts in Christchurch became a blueprint for an attack in Germany. In October 2019 a heavily armed man, Stephan Balliet, tried to break into a synagogue in Halle an der Saale in Saxony-Anhalt, where more than fifty people had gathered on the day of the Jewish Yom Kippur festival. After failing to gain entry, he killed a passerby and a person in a nearby snack bar. The Higher Regional Court in Naumburg sentenced the perpetrator to life imprisonment with subsequent preventive detention on 21 December 2020.

As in the Christchurch case, the killer filmed himself during the attack and transmitted the recording as a livestream on the Internet. Music played a neuralgic role in the staging of both acts. In the Christchurch case one of the songs heard is “Remove Kebab,” which, according to media scientist Gabriele Cosentino, is “also known as ‘Serbia strong’, an Islamophobic and Serbian nationalist song of the turbo-folk genre.” The lines reputedly celebrate Radovan Karadžić, who was convicted of genocide against Bosnian Muslims in

Srebrenica. On the Internet the song is said to be widely known among gamers and right-wing extremists on platforms such as 4chan and 8chan.³³ The livestream of the killing spree in Halle an der Saale also followed a musical choreography. The perpetrator had compiled a playlist with twelve tracks. In the rental car used for the attack, he had placed a Notebook with an external speaker over which the music was played.³⁴ The song relevant to the present essay was the very first one, which was heard after Balliet turned on the music during his drive to the synagogue. The words of the piece, with the title “Power Level,” come from the right-wing extremist musician who, under the pseudonym “Mr. Bond,” recorded cover versions of pop and rap songs for many years with new English-language lyrics and posted them on the Internet. Many of these lyrics far exceed the threshold of criminal liability.

“Power Level” uses the music of the song “Mask Off” (2017) by the U.S. rapper Future. The lyrics on the cover are a mosaic of stock pieces drawn from esoteric neo-Nazism (see the article “The Realm of the Black Sun,” in this volume), more current right-wing extremist conspiracy myths, and the jargon of the social web’s gaming and imageboard platforms. In that context the Black Sun serves as a symbol of power and strength. According to the text, it is the source of the legendary “Vril force / from the Black Sun.” Julian Strube, a scholar in the field of religious studies, traces the word *vril* back to nineteenth-century English novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who coined it in his book entitled *The Coming Race*, a satire on Victorian society. According to Strube, the motif made the rounds and was picked up by various authors, including those of esoteric neo-Nazism. They perpetuated the narrative of a “fictitious” occultist order, the “Vril Society,” which allegedly worked behind the scenes in National Socialism. In these mythical worlds the UFO-like National Socialist flying disc, or flying saucer, the “Vril-7,” was then also created.³⁵ In the song lyrics the Black Sun is linked to the legendary realms of Atlantis, Thule, and Hyperborea – which in right-wing extremism are associated with creation myths of the “Aryan race.” Explicitly political lines, such as “hyperborea / I’m the livin’ proof / master race / antithesis to the jew,” also appear in this context. Elsewhere the text chants, “rep the fash / gotta rep the fash,” probably meaning represent fascism; there is also a reference to the Ahnenerbe, the SS Ancestral Heritage Association. The lines “dropping red-pills / on the normal fags” take up a metaphor widespread in imageboards that go back to the film *Matrix*, in which the “red pill” stands for the – occasionally uncomfortable – recognition of the truth; the “blue pill,” for the easy way to close one’s eyes to these insights. In right-wing extremist conspiracy myths the red pill refers to one’s own group, which exposes, with all attendant consequences, the actual conditions, including what are claimed to be the systematically veiled realities.³⁶



Figure 11.2 Self-staging with Black Sun and Hitler image: from a music video by “Mr. Bond.”

The Black Sun also appears frequently in the self-dramatization of “Mr. Bond” in online videos (see Figure 11.2). In the video portal *BitChute* they were partly posted on the Black Sun Archives channel. On 21 January 2021 Austrian security authorities in Vienna arrested a man accused of being the person behind “Mr. Bond.” He is alleged to have been publishing songs under this pseudonym on the Internet and CDs since at least 2016.³⁷

Atomwaffen Division

Wewelsburg Castle itself, not the Black Sun, is the focal point of a video that went online on the platform called *BitChute* in June 2018. The approximately one-minute clip entitled “AWD Deutschland: The knives are already sharpened!” presented the grouping called Atomwaffen Division Deutschland (AWD) – meaning Nuclear Weapons Division Germany – and announced its creation as the German offshoot of the right-wing extremist Atomwaffen Division from the United States.³⁸ Members of the American organization are responsible for several murders.³⁹ How close the links actually are between the U.S. neo-Nazi group and the actors appearing as AWD cannot be gauged conclusively. Ideologically, the AWD looks to the American right-wing extremist James Mason and his book *Siege*, one of several tracts in U.S. right-wing extremism that attest to a coming “race war” and explicitly call for armed



Figure 11.3 Wewelsburg Castle as the backdrop for the Atomwaffen Division Deutschland, final sequence of the online video.

struggle. This conflict would have to be waged as guerrilla warfare by independently operating cells (combat units).⁴⁰

In the final sequence of the video, the camera, accompanied by swelling dramatic music, first zooms in on Wewelsburg Castle, then narrows further to a hooded man in a field, with the castle visible in the background (see Figure 11.3). The man is holding a black flag with a radiation warning sign in a laurel wreath with green and yellow stripes radiating from the corners to the center – the emblem of the AWD in the United States. Before this sequence, there are images of street fighting and of a hooded person releasing the safety on a pistol. The text is spoken first in German, then in English. In the German part, the speaker glorifies National Socialism (which, as he contends, “lives despite a whole world that wants to destroy it, and that clearly shows us its deep unshakable strength”), calls on “German freedom fighters” to follow the Atomwaffen Division, and invokes “the last long fight” – “The knives are already sharpened!” The English part greets the “true comrades” of the AWD in the United States and ends with *Sieg heil!*⁴¹ As reported in issue 46 (2019) of the German weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel*, the AWD had first referred to Wewelsburg Castle the year before. It noted that an AWD supporter had traveled from the United States to Germany in late 2017, bragging in chats about having been at the castle, a visit documented by a photo.⁴²

The appearance of the video was followed by inflammatory racist flyers by authors who called themselves the Atomwaffen Division. The material appeared at Humboldt University in Berlin (“German students! Do not abuse your spirit any longer in the service of the enemies of the people! ... Students, prepare yourselves for civil war.”⁴³), at Goethe University in Frankfurt am

Main,⁴⁴ and in the vicinity of Keupstrasse in Cologne. The Cologne flyer issued death threats against Muslims: “You are the compliant tool of the Jews to destroy Germany and Europe. Each and every one of you is therefore a legitimate target. Muslims! Leave Germany! Targeted attacks on you will start soon.”⁴⁵ Corresponding threats by e-mail were also received by Cem Özdemir and Claudia Roth, both members of Germany’s Bundestag. It is unclear whether these threats in the name of the Atomwaffen Division originated from the same group of people as the video.⁴⁶

Demonstration and Attack in Charlottesville, Virginia, 12 August 2017

The Black Sun was unmistakably also present at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017 and in the context of the right-wing extremist attack on the same day. The perpetrator, James Alex Fields, Jr., deliberately steered his car into a group of people protesting the rally. He killed one woman and injured nineteen other people. The killer was sentenced to life in prison on 28 June 2019.⁴⁷

Unite the Right in Charlottesville is considered to have been the largest right-wing extremist rally in the United States in decades. The occasion was the city administration’s planned removal of a monument to Robert E. Lee, General of the Southern Army in the American Civil War. The rally was marked by a variety of right-wing extremist groups along with a wide range of symbols on display. They encompassed the Alt Right spectrum,⁴⁸ the Ku Klux Klan, Identity Evropa, skinheads, and neo-Nazis, including violence-prone forces. The perpetrator of the car attack is visible in a photo⁴⁹ taken shortly before the crime. It pictures him in circles of the neo-Nazi organization known as Vanguard America. The logo consists of two crossed axes (fasces), like the ones used as a symbol by Italian fascism. Fields is wearing a sign with the Vanguard America logo in the photo. (The organization later denied that he was one of its members.) In the same row a few meters from him, a man is carrying a red sign with the Black Sun. Vanguard America Texas, which took part in the rally, unfurled an image of the Black Sun with the star of the state flag at its center and red and white stripes in the background (see Figure 11.4).⁵⁰ These examples illustrate not only the use of the Black Sun emblem but also its integration into the organization’s own symbolic language.



Figure 11.4 Integration of the Black Sun into the neo-Nazi symbolic language of the United States: emblem of Vanguard America Texas.

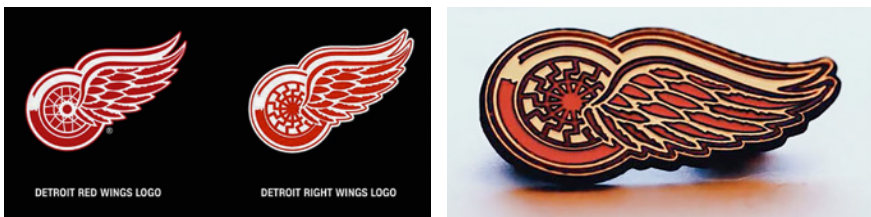


Figure 11.5 Minimal change with major symbolic consequences: The right-wing extremist group Detroit Right Wings combines the logo of the local ice hockey club with the Black Sun.

The Detroit Red Wings ice hockey team objected to one of the rally's other displayed variants of the Black Sun, a case in which the Detroit Right Wings had altered the hockey club's logo by replacing the wheel at its center with the symbol from Wewelsburg Castle⁵¹ (see Figure 11.5).

It became clear in Charlottesville that the Black Sun symbol is used by numerous U.S. right-wing extremist groups with neo-Nazi or *völkisch* orientations.⁵² Its ubiquity is also apparent in photos⁵³ from relevant U.S. Internet portals, where the symbol can be seen as a tattoo. Sometimes it stands alone, sometimes it is combined with other symbols such as Thor's hammer; Sig or Odal runes; the *Wolfsangel* (wolf trap or wolf hook); or the black, white, and red Reich flag. After the storming of the Capitol on 6 January 2021, self-declared shaman Jacob Chansley (aka Jake Angeli, often referred to as the Horns Man),

who is frequently seen in media coverage, was often described as wearing a tattoo of the Black Sun on his left shoulder. The claim is erroneous, however.⁵⁴

Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn), Greece

In Greece the Black Sun appears primarily in the context of the party Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn; Greek initials, XA). Cas Mudde places the party on the extreme right and points out its relationship to violence: “There are a few far-right parties for which political violence is an integral part of their action repertoire. The Greek neo-Nazi party XA has been linked to a string of violent attacks on immigrants and political opponents.”⁵⁵ This assessment was succinctly confirmed by court rulings issued on 7 and 14 October 2020: After a trial that had commenced on April 2015, an Athens court classified the party as a criminal association and imposed long prison terms on its leaders, sentencing party chief Nikolaos Michaloliakos and five other party officials to thirteen years each.⁵⁶ Chrysi Avgi and its leading representatives were charged with joint responsibility for the murder of rapper Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013 and for other murders.

The party’s symbol consists of a meandros (meander) pattern, a common Greek ornament, set in black with a white outline against a red background, resembling the swastika flag. A variant that combines the party logo with the Black Sun, both of which are in gold on a black background, was posted on Twitter by a Chrysi Avgi member of parliament, Artemis Matthaiopoulos. It is found in a collage of images that, in addition to the symbol, depicts Matthaiopoulos as a speaker.⁵⁷ He was among those members of the party leadership who were later convicted as ranking participants in a criminal association. He received a prison sentence.

The Black Sun is likewise seen on a banner held up by Chrysi Avgi supporters at the Olympic Stadium in Athens during the match between the national soccer teams of Greece and Estonia in the UEFA Nations League on 18 November 2018 (see Figure 11.6). According to a press report, the group also waved a party flag, burned a Turkish flag, and chanted Greek nationalist songs directed mainly against Serbs and Albanians.⁵⁸

Beyond these party contexts the Black Sun appears on the cover of a collection of Savitri Devi’s texts on offer through the publishing house Logxi (Lance) in Athens (see Figure 11.7). In the foreground is the author’s portrait; rising behind it is the Black Sun, which, like the corona of a solar eclipse, is ringed by fire and light. The English translation is entitled *Daughter of the Sun*. An earlier



Figure 11.6 Black Sun and Golden Dawn: Supporters with flag at the international soccer match between Greece and Estonia, November 2018.

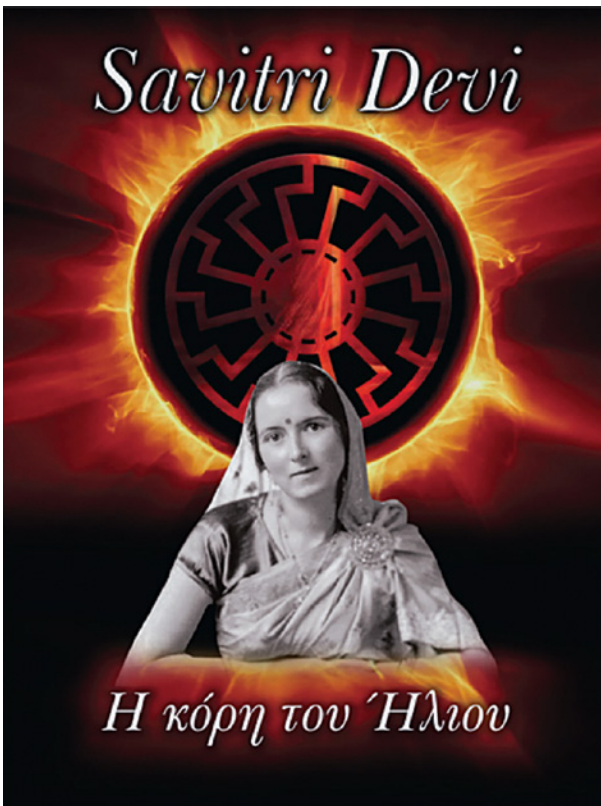


Figure 11.7 *The Daughter of the Sun* (2013), volume published in Athens with texts by Savitri Devi.

Logxi publication of the same book had a different cover design in which the Black Sun shimmered silvery like the moon and contained a swastika at its center.⁵⁹

In this image the sign is integrated into a mythical-religious interpretation of National Socialism, for which Savitri Devi (actually Maximiani Portas, 1905–1982) stands. Her biographer, the English historian Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, sees her as a cult figure of international right-wing extremism. Born in Lyon into a Greek-English family, she toured Greece as a teenager and took Greek citizenship, becoming a supporter of Nazism in the late 1920s and later earning a doctorate in philosophy. She lived mainly in India from the 1930s onward, and Goodrick-Clarke describes her works as an “extraordinary synthesis of Hindu religion and Nordic racial ideology.”⁶⁰ In her worlds of thought, ideas of the superiority of the “Aryan race” and anti-Semitism are combined with animal rights. A biocentric view in which humans enjoy no prerogatives over other living beings encounters Social Darwinist categories and contempt for “non-Aryan” or “weak” human life. She did not judge the person of Hitler by the standard of responsibility for crimes against humanity. Instead, she removed him from the spheres of morality and saw in him a divine being who had to fulfill a mission in the transition to the new, golden age.

According to Goodrick-Clarke, nature was the fulcrum of Devi’s writings, and it was precisely through nature that she built bridges between neo-Nazism and New Age motifs. This view was shared by the German-Canadian publisher Ernst Zündel, through whom Devi gained additional attention in the right-wing extremist realm in the late 1970s. He was evidently also interested in attracting new readers for his Samisdat Verlag, with a focus on Holocaust denial and a selection of esoteric-Nazi science fiction literature. Savitri Devi, however, had been present and closely networked on the international right-wing extremist stage at least since her stay in Europe after World War II, through which she established contacts with protagonists of National Socialism, and later within the framework of the World Union of National Socialists.⁶¹

Azov Regiment, Ukraine

Ukraine’s Azov Regiment was formed in May 2014 under the emblem of the Black Sun. Originally serving as one of the volunteer militias fighting pro-Russian forces on Ukraine’s eastern border, Azov has been under the Ukrainian government since 2015 and is part of the National Guard. A definite right-wing extremist imprint is indicated by Nazi symbolism and aesthetics as well as anti-Semitic and antidemocratic statements from its leadership circles.⁶² In

Azov's first coat of arms, the Black Sun was set in white under the regiment's name, and above it in black was a *Wolfsangel*, a symbol also used in National Socialist organizations.⁶³ Azov has since introduced a new logo, which is essentially blue on yellow containing the *Wolfsangel*. However, the regiment has not consistently divorced itself from Wewelsburg Castle's sun wheel. In the formation's profile on the platform of VK (a Russia-based social network), one quickly comes across the original logo serving as the background to several portrait photos of members killed in action.⁶⁴

The Azov regiment, named after its troop headquarters on the Sea of Azov, is embedded in a network of groups that provide political and financial support. This setting is sometimes referred to as the Azov movement.⁶⁵ The National Corps, which was founded in October 2016 and acts as a party, is considered the Azov regiment's political arm. The network also includes a grouping called the Misanthropic Division (MD), a "unit of legionnaires from all over Europe and the United States that operates as a mercenary force" for the Azov regiment.⁶⁶ The MD also appears in social networks as a support group. In Germany it is said to have about thirty supporters who acquire funds "by selling clothes and devotional objects from Ukraine with motifs of the Azov movement, the MD, and other right-wing extremist symbols."⁶⁷ In this respect the regiment and the "movement" maintain contacts in the international arena, some of which are close, especially in Germany, with the neo-Nazi party called Der III. Weg (The Third Path). Azov has also been present at events organized by the NPD youth organization (Young Nationalists), by the Identitarian Movement, and with the participation of the party Die Rechte.⁶⁸ Through the National Corps, Azov is also linked to Kraftquell (Power Source), a Ukrainian-German-Norwegian project based in Pirna, Saxony. Kraftquell arranges accommodation for Azov fighters and their families taking recreational vacations in Germany and Norway.⁶⁹

When activists of the California-based militant right-wing extremist Rise Above Movement (RAM) visited the Ukraine in April 2018, the state-funded American broadcast station Radio Free Europe carried the story. According to the article, the host was a National Corps representative who presents herself as its international secretary and coordinates contacts abroad. RAM activists reportedly also made stops in Italy and – for Adolf Hitler's birthday on 20 April – in Germany. Participation in martial arts events was a prime reason for the trip to the Ukraine,⁷⁰ which has a particularly diverse right-wing extremist martial arts scene. The Azov movement is also closely networked in that area.⁷¹

Martial Arts

Martial arts have been gaining importance in the right-wing extremist scene in Germany over the course of the past decade. The development is dynamic and characterized by internationalization and professionalization. A “network of extreme right-wing martial artists, events and fashion labels ... has emerged, which presents itself as the elite of a pan-European movement.”⁷² The conceptual ground is seeded with racism, homophobia, and ideas of masculinity, toughness, discipline, and fortitude, but it is fertilized primarily by commercial interests: “It’s a professional business with violence.”⁷³ Martial arts connect the heterogeneous field of right-wing extremism in Europe, and the organizers use international events “always also as a platform for networking, recruiting, and cultivating contacts.”⁷⁴

The links are particularly close to the hooligan and right-wing rock scenes, with the focus being on modern variants of martial arts, such as mixed martial arts, which are not organized in the classical structures of clubs and associations. Mixed martial arts and similar types of sports are by no means all connected to right-wing extremism. But this extremist subsector is not an isolated niche patently distinguishable from mainstream commercial fight nights. The right-wing extremist martial arts scene in Germany crystallizes at events such as the Kampf der Nibelungen (Battle of the Nibelungs), live gatherings for which, however, have been banned by the state since 2019. (In December 2020 individual fights were organized clandestinely and presented as an online stream.)

A key individual in the international right-wing extremist martial arts scene is the Russian citizen Denis Kapustin, alias Denis Nikitin, who was instrumental in the Kampf der Nibelungen as well for a time. Kapustin emigrated to Germany in 2001 and subsequently lived in Cologne. He led martial arts training sessions for various right-wing extremist groups in Germany and other European countries. After a temporary stay in Ukraine, though, he was not allowed to return to the Schengen area, and an entry ban was issued against him in 2019 because of his diverse neo-Nazi activities.⁷⁵ Operating from Kiev, he has continued his martial arts activities. Kapustin is the founder of the clothing brand White Rex – Violent Athletics. The logo is based on the Black Sun. It has a Viking head and an eight-spoked wheel, which closely resembles the ornament in Wewelsburg Castle. White Rex sponsors martial arts events, so the Black Sun regularly appears at them through that channel, too.

The Black Sun has meanwhile become one of the most omnipresent symbols in the right-wing extremist martial arts scene. Collaborating with other

authors in 2020, Robert Claus, who studies sports, fan cultures, and violence, took a comprehensive look at the networks and the ideological and strategic backgrounds of the right-wing extremist martial arts scene. He names quite a few players who have a Black Sun tattoo – such as a fighter whose knee displays the Wewelsburg sun wheel and whose chest is inscribed with the cipher 2Yt4U (too white for you), which is established in the right-wing extremist martial arts scene.⁷⁶ This code serves additionally as the name and web address of a major French mail-order company for right-wing extremist martial artists. The operator has also launched the Pride France fashion label for the right-wing extremist martial arts market. Pride France regularly hosts or sponsors martial arts events in Europe. One of them was to take place on 6 June 2020 in conjunction with a right-wing rock concert in Switzerland, but it was postponed to 2021 because of the Corona-virus pandemic. Advertisements portrayed a young woman clad in a Black Sun T-shirt.⁷⁷

Summary and Conclusion

The Black Sun has served as a guidepost in international right-wing extremism, a path that has led across three continents and down numerous rabbit holes of right-wing extremist networks. It forges international ties particularly in recesses of right-wing extremism that are violence related, partly terrorist, openly racist, and often closely aligned with National Socialism. Its reception tends to remain undefined, with the symbol being given a different, specifically charged meaning from one spectrum to the next. In the paper by the Christchurch killer, for example, the Black Sun is enmeshed in the discourses on ethnopluralism and the Great Exchange and tacitly stands for a homogeneously conceived “European” or “White” ethnic group that corresponds to the myth of race. In the characteristic style of ethnopluralism, the sign is emblematic of a European cultural community. In martial arts it is closely linked to heroic poses conveying masculinity, notions of militancy, and militant readiness for action. In the song by “Mr. Bond” that the Halle killer used in staging his violent act, the Black Sun is interwoven with the motifs of esoteric neo-Nazism, increasing the affinity it has for worlds of fantasy and myth in which image boards are set. In its own way, the Black Sun on the cover of a book by Savitri Devi is tied to mythical-religious worlds of thought that deify National Socialism and Hitler himself.

The direct reference to Wewelsburg Castle, and thus also the explicit connection to National Socialism’s apparatus of power and terror, is rare. From that perspective the Black Sun has the advantage of avoiding obvious identification

with the Nazi regime and increasing the flexibility of interpreting the emblem as desired. However, its potential as a symbolic bridge to create a sense of community and to strengthen the shared framing is thereby diminished. For world-views, especially for existential scenarios of threat that urge action, indeed even violence, the link with conspiracy myths is necessary. As internationally compatible and prevalent myths of this sort, the narratives of the Great Exchange and the genocide of the White race fit the bill best.

Because the National Socialist background of the symbol of the Black Sun is not necessarily recognizable at first glance, it is important to offer information about it, as many civil-rights organizations and media do in the international arena as well. Even sources whose reliability is beyond doubt, however, contain conspicuous distortions about the exact role of Wewelsburg Castle and the origin of its symbol. They can unwittingly contribute to myth-building. This edifice of the Westphalian Renaissance is sometimes said to have been the headquarters of the SS, and the Black Sun symbol is sometimes declared to be an ancient Nordic, Germanic, or Celtic sign. It therefore makes sense to reexamine and question communication that mythicizes Wewelsburg Castle and to share the findings transparently with audiences around the world. If right-wing extremism is an international phenomenon, if symbols and narratives are increasingly drifting across national borders, then critically grappling with these questions remains an international challenge.

Notes

¹ Krolzig (2018), p. 47.

² In my possession.

³ According to the English text version I have, narratives about Wewelsburg Castle, the sun wheel, the SS, and numerous mythical elements are interwoven. It is not entirely clear whether the *we* that weaves through the song includes the band and its followers or corresponds to a narrative *we*. In either case there is no doubt about the glorification of the SS in the sense of a belligerent, mythical organization (“we are the killing order,” “we are the knightly order,” “the true spear of destiny,” “bound by blood to serve to the death”). Wewelsburg Castle is not explicitly named in the lyrics but rather paraphrased as the “higher order of SS chivalry” and located “high above the Westphalian countryside.” The twelve-spoked sun wheel surfaces in the text without being called a Black Sun. In this case it is regarded as a link to ancestors and a source of power for the Aryan race (“mosaic sun wheel of 12 lightning flashes / to enter into prayer with spirits past / bringing forth new found power of the ‘Aryan race soul’ / the ancient Germanic folk reclaim their past”).

⁴ Rock Against Communism (n.d.).

⁵ Swastika-Strike (2021). The crossed-out word appears as such in the original.

⁶ I thank the organizations and individuals who supported this essay: jugendschutz.net for putting me in touch with the International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH); the Anti-Defamation League for giving advice and providing materials; the Documentation

- Archive of Austrian Resistance; Dimitris Psarras; Robert Claus; and those who provided translations.
- 7 Mudde (2019, pp. 94–96) points out ideological differences between Identity Evropa and the European Identitarians. Undercover research by journalist Samuel Argyle at Identity Evropa shows that open racism and anti-Semitism are rife in that U.S. movement. See Samuel Argyle, My Weekend With White Nationalists, <https://theoutline.com/post/4907/my-weekend-with-white-nationalists-convention-identity-evropa> (as of 12 June 2018; accessed 22 February 2021).
- 8 See Pfeiffer (2019), pp. 128ff.
- 9 See decision of the Bundesgerichtshof (German Federal Supreme Court), 1 October 2008, ref. no. 3 StR 164/08.
- 10 Nestler (2019), p. 35.
- 11 Nestler (2019), p. 54.
- 12 Nestler (2019), p. 34.
- 13 Grumke (2006), p. 131.
- 14 See Cosentino (2020), p. 75. Also noteworthy is the biography of the American dropout Derek Black, godson of David Duke. Black stated that he was deeply involved in taking neo-Nazi discourses and recasting them into more broadly effective variants, such as the narrative purporting the genocide of the White race, especially in association with Duke and his father, Don Black. In this respect Derek Black was considered a beacon of hope for the scene. See Saslow (2019).
- 15 Pfeiffer (2018), p. 52.
- 16 See Davey & Ebner (2019), p. 8.
- 17 Mudde (2019), p. 31.
- 18 Mudde (2019), p. 7.
- 19 See Griffin (2003), who defines groupuscules as “intrinsically small political (frequently meta-political, but never primarily party-political) entities formed to pursue palingenetic (i.e. revolutionary) ideological, organizational or activist ends with an ultimate goal of overcoming the decadence of the existing liberal-democratic system” (p. 4) at www.researchgate.net/publication/228608268_From_Slime_Mould_to_Rhizome_An_Introduction_to_the_Groupuscular_Right.
- 20 See, for example, Grumke & Klärner (2006), p. 175.
- 21 See Antidiskriminierungsstelle Steiermark (2019), p. 36. For example, the following press reports cover criminal trials in Austria in which the Black Sun surfaced as a topic: “Mit Nazi-Code bei Befragung” (With Nazi code during questioning), *Kronen Zeitung* (Salzburg), 31 January 2020, p. 36; Seff Dünser (2019), “Anklage: Foto von Bikini mit Hakenkreuz” (Prosecution: Photo of bikini with swastika), *Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung*, 8 March, <https://epaper.neue.at/lokal/2019/03/07/anklage-foto-vonbikini-mit-hakenkreuz.neue> (accessed 4 February 2021); Antonio Lovric (2019), “Ein verbotener Gipfel-Gruß” (A banned summit greeting), *Kronen Zeitung* (13 November); Brigitte Steinbock (2018), “Hitler-Relief im Garten” (Relief of Hitler in the garden), *Niederösterreichische Nachrichten* (Wiener Neustadt ed.), 11 September; Hannes Fehringer (2017), “Nazi-Tätowierungen am ganzen Körper: 38-Jähriger vor Gericht” (Full body Nazi tattoos: 38-year-old in court), *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 17 January, www.nachrichten.at/oberoesterreich/steyr/Nazi-Taetowierungen-am-ganzen-Koerper-38-Jaehriger-vor-Gericht;art68,2457076 (accessed 4 February 2021).
- 22 Documented in Heribert Schiedel (2014), Das Objekt 21, www.antifainfoblatt.de/artikel/das-objekt-21 (as of 28 November 2014; accessed 10 February 2021).
- 23 In my possession.
- 24 Documented, for example, in Gillian Brockell (2019), “The accused New Zealand shooter and an all-white Europe that never existed,” *The Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com.

- com/history/2019/03/16/accused-new-zealand-shooter-an-all-white-europe-that-never-existed (accessed 8 February 2021).
- 25 “The Great Replacement,” p. 35.
- 26 See Mosley (1951/1956).
- 27 See Mosley (1951/1956); Mosley (1949).
- 28 See, for example, “The Great Replacement,” p. 32.
- 29 “The Great Replacement,” pp. 36, 99.
- 30 “The Great Replacement,” p. 47.
- 31 Davey & Ebner (2019), p. 9.
- 32 See Pfeiffer (2018), p. 52; Davey & Ebner (2019), p. 5.
- 33 See Cosentino (2020), pp. 73–74.
- 34 See Jäger (2020).
- 35 See Strube (2013), pp. 240–41; Heller & Maegerle (1998), p. 149.
- 36 See, for example, Davey & Ebner (2019), p. 6.
- 37 See Bundesministerium für Inneres (2021).
- 38 See Ministerium des Innern Nordrhein-Westfalen (2019), p. 6.
- 39 See Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2020a), p. 3.
- 40 See Mason (2017), p. 510, for example.
- 41 Cited by Atomwaffen Division (2018). The text is documented there, and the original video is embedded in the post.
- 42 Baumgärtner et al. (2019), p. 33.
- 43 Flyer documented in Atomwaffen Division (2018).
- 44 See Baumgärtner et al. (2019), p. 33.
- 45 Quoted from Ministerium des Innern Nordrhein-Westfalen (2019), p. 3.
- 46 See Baumgärtner et al. (2019), pp. 31–32.
- 47 See Ministerium des Innern Nordrhein-Westfalen (2019), p. 6.
- 48 Alt-Right, short for Alternative Right, is a term originally attributed to the right-wing extremist Richard Spencer. It refers to an ideologically heterogeneous right-wing U.S. spectrum that disassociates itself from established conservatism and whose sphere of action and resonance is mostly the social web.
- 49 Documented in “Ex-teacher: Charlottesville crash suspect had interest in Nazism,” <https://wset.com/news/local/ex-teacher-crash-suspect-had-interest-in-nazism> (as of 14 August 2017, accessed 12 February 2021).
- 50 See Southern Poverty Law Center (2017).
- 51 See Murphy (2017). Statement from the Detroit Red Wings at www.facebook.com/DETROITREDWINGS/posts/10155108394379139 (as of 12 August 2017; accessed 26 February 2021).
- 52 See Southern Poverty Law Center (2017); Anti-Defamation League (n.d.).
- 53 Sixteen corresponding illustrations from the years 2004 to 2010 are available to me as examples. They also document that the sign has been anchored in U.S. scenes for quite some time.
- 54 The statement, which has been adopted by several media, stems from a post in the Facebook group “North Atlantic Archaeology” on 7 January 2021. When asked on 13 February 2021, the author of the post confirmed that the circular symbols on Chansley’s left and right shoulders were not the sun wheel of Wewelsburg Castle. The assumption had been prompted by the first Internet photos of the storming of the Capitol. The symbol had been partially covered in the images.
- 55 Mudde (2019), p. 89.
- 56 Schmid (2020). Accordingly, Greek law does not provide for proceedings to ban a political party; only the criminal prosecution of individuals is possible.

- 57 Documented in Dimitris Psarras, Οι “Ελληνες” της Βέρμαχτ, <https://jailgoldendawn.com> (as of 7 June 2020; accessed 16 February 2021).
- 58 See Nicolaides (2018).
- 59 The book cover seen here is Περιγραφή, website logxi, <http://logxi.com/product/i-kori-toy-ilioy> (as of an unknown date; accessed 17 February 2021). The second cover is available to me as a photo of the publisher's advertisement.
- 60 Goodrick-Clarke (1998), p. 4.
- 61 Goodrick-Clarke (1998), pp. 3–6.
- 62 See Auswärtiges Amt (2014), p. 4; Miller (2018); Claus (2021), p. 39.
- 63 Logo documented in Jeglinski (2014).
- 64 <https://vk.com/batalion.azov> (accessed 16 February 2021).
- 65 See Claus (2021), pp. 39ff; Miller (2018).
- 66 Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2020b), p. 18.
- 67 Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2021), p. 7.
- 68 Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2020b), p. 19.
- 69 Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2020b), p. 18.
- 70 See Miller (2018).
- 71 See Claus (2021), p. 40.
- 72 Claus (2021), p. 18.
- 73 Claus (2021), p. 9.
- 74 Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2021), p. 11.
- 75 See Ministerium des Innern Nordrhein-Westfalen (2020), pp. 131–32.
- 76 See Claus (2021), p. 29.
- 77 Image documented in Twitter account of Antifa Bern, postdated 5 June 2020, https://twitter.com/antifa_bern/status/1268895456073048072 (accessed 16 February 2021).

Current Tendencies Concerning the Myths of Wewelsburg Castle

In Place of a Conclusion

Kirsten John-Stucke

Awareness of the Black Sun motif has grown considerably in popular culture and the entertainment field in recent years. Whereas the symbol was initially better known on the sociocultural fringes and in youth subcultures, it has meanwhile become much more popular in less peripheral contexts. This is evident in the fact that the use of the Black Sun as an identifying sign of right-wing extremist convictions is no longer limited to zombie films or Finnish satires.¹ For some time now it has also been employed to that end in German-language television productions, including the widely watched crime series *Tatort* (Crime Scene), a joint production of the German, Austrian, and Swiss public service broadcasters ARD, ORF, and SRF, respectively.

This crime show, the German-speaking region's longest-running and an institution luring some 8 million viewers to their TV sets every Sunday evening, has already used Wewelsburg Castle's circular floor ornament several times. In "Hydra" (2015), an episode set in Dortmund, the team led by detectives Bönisch and Faber searches for clues deep in the brown swamp of that city's neo-Nazi scene. At a rally by a far-right group, a tablecloth bearing a slightly modified Black Sun symbol can be seen,² signifying right-wing extremist attitudes. The sun wheel symbol functions here as a substitute for the swastika. In "Sonnenwende" (Solstice), a *Tatort* from 2018 set in the Black Forest, two police detectives from Freiburg in southwest Germany delve into the *völkisch*-Germanic milieu.³ The segment draws on a real case involving the racially exclusionary Germanic Faith Community, which views itself as "leading a life appropriate to its nature." At the end of the film, the murderer – a police informant – is standing in the farm's wood shop, where a number of carved objects are visible, including various right-wing symbols such as the Black Sun (see Figure 12.1). Here the sun wheel emblem functions less as a sign of political right-wing extremism than as part of a setting denoting *völkisch* sentiment. It is basically assumed that the meaning of the sun wheel is already known to a wider audience.



Figure 12.1 A scene from the *Tatort* episode “Sonnenwende” (2018, Solstice). The Black Sun motif is clearly visible.

The trend of having a Black Sun tattooed on various parts of the body continues unabated, with it presumably tending to grow – in the same way that tattoos are becoming generally accepted and adapted in the mainstream. Numerous images attesting to this can be found on current social media channels. Although many bodybuilders and martial arts athletes with close ties to the right-wing milieu knowingly crown their body cult with a Black Sun tattoo without suffering social or political repercussions, the symbol cannot be interpreted within the political environment divorced from its SS origins and associated right-wing extremist use. When it became publicly known in December 2019 that Christian Democratic Union (CDU) politician Robert Möriz from the German state of Saxony-Anhalt had a Black Sun tattoo on his elbow, a coalition crisis erupted in the state parliament. Although the CDU initially stood by Moritz, it ultimately demanded that he come clean about his political past. Proof also emerged of his involvement in various activities within right-wing extremist circles. Robert Moritz claimed he had cut his connections with the right-wing scene, but these assertions lacked credibility. Faced with his imminent expulsion from the party, Moritz preemptively resigned to avert additional damage.⁴

Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun motif are enjoying growing popularity in the genres of thrillers and comics. One example of this worth highlighting



Figure 12.2 View of Wewelsburg Castle as an SS order castle in the Japanese manga *NeuN* (2017).

is *NeuN*, a Japanese manga series by writer and illustrator Tsutomu Takahashi that has appeared in the *Weekly Young Magazine* since 2017 (see Figure 12.2). The story begins in the Wewelsburg Castle crypt, where Heinrich Himmler is swearing in his senior SS leaders for a secret mission. The comic then takes up the story of NeuN, the ninth of ten test-tube children born with Hitler's DNA. Franz NeuN has to flee across all of Europe under the protection of Theo Baker to escape from the murderous SS. Initially published as a one-shot (single-episode) manga in early 2017, *NeuN* was subsequently continued as a series.⁵ The manga taps into the legend of Wewelsburg Castle as a secret and magical location for the SS's "Black Order" in order to introduce Heinrich Himmler and his SS as a merciless criminal organization undertaking a clandestine operation. The manga's narrative is carried by the concept underpinning right-wing conspiracy theories. Wewelsburg Castle's true historical context is gradually lost in the process, as is so often the case with mythmaking. The manga series has enjoyed worldwide success and been translated into numerous languages.

An entirely new development has been apparent for several years in the realm of pop music. The Black Sun symbol can now also be found in this context without evidence of a connection to National Socialism or the SS and detached from its function as a mark of identification with right-wing extremist

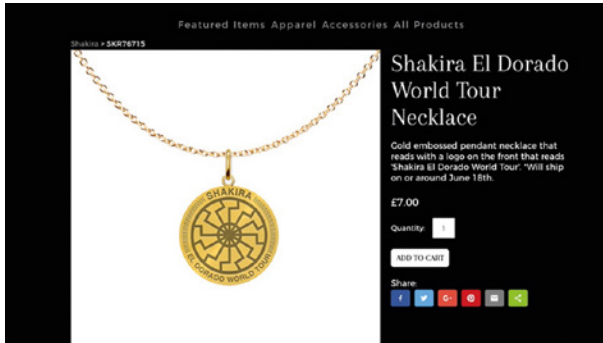


Figure 12.3 The amulet chain from Shakira's fan shop, as shown at the Gala.de website and elsewhere.

beliefs. The Colombian pop singer Shakira had to suffer the consequences of this probably rather careless use of the symbol during her *El Dorado World Tour 2018*. The concert organizer Live Nation had placed an amulet necklace with the Black Sun motif in the pop star's fan store. When historians and fans contacted the singer to point out the symbol's questionable meaning, the chain was immediately removed from the store. The concert organizer stated that the necklace design had been inspired by pre-Columbian motifs and a perceived proximity to neo-Nazi symbols had been unintentional. Although the damage to Shakira's image could still be rectified, the incident caused a stir in the tabloid press and social media channels, where an image of the necklace can still be found as a screenshot of the fan store (see Figure 12.3). The significance of the Black Sun symbol for the far-right scene was thus brought to the attention of a broader public.⁶

Russian singer Ekaterina Antipova from St. Petersburg, who performs under the stage name Катя Мяу (Katya Meow) at feminist raves and other events,⁷ had the symbol of the sun wheel ornament from Wewelsburg Castle tattooed in rainbow colors on her décolletage. In a YouTube video,⁸ she sings about the effects of the drug mescaline while wearing a red vinyl coat and revealing the rainbow-colored sun wheel tattoo. Neither the song lyrics nor her appearance suggest sympathy for right-wing extremism (see Figure 12.4). Upon inquiry, she explained her motives for getting the tattoo.⁹ She follows the teachings of the German–Russian esoteric and occultist Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891), who founded the Theosophical Society with Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) in 1875. In her principal work, *The Secret Doctrine*, published in 1888, which laid the foundations for modern Theosophy, Blavatsky refers to various wisdom traditions, including Buddhism and Hinduism, and seeks to explain the development of human individuality through reincarnation and karma.¹⁰ According



Figure 12.4 A still from the YouTube video *Mescaline* by Katya Meow (2020).

to Katya Meow's understanding, Blavatsky interprets the twelve-spoked sun wheel motif as the center of the universe, from which all life emanates. Moreover, the sun wheel symbol was already popular among Slavic peoples. Initially used exclusively by their priests as a secret sign, the symbol was ultimately granted to all the peoples to enhance their spirituality as well. It is in this sense that Katya Meow understands the sun wheel as an empowering, energy-laden symbol capable of improving people's lives. She, for example, has herself experienced positive changes in her life since she has had the sun wheel tattoo.¹¹ Although Katya Meow does notice that the symbol's reputation has been tarnished by the National Socialist era, with some older Russians "misunderstanding" her and her tattoo, she was previously unaware of the origin of the sun wheel and its use as a floor ornament at Wewelsburg Castle.¹² The selection of the sun wheel symbol within the context of the occult and theological teachings of Madame Blavatsky, combined with its purported healing power in earlier Slavic religions, opens another vein of possible interpretations. Disconnected from its representation in Wewelsburg Castle's northern tower, the Black Sun becomes an element of pop art.

Over the next few years, it will be necessary to observe how the symbol's contexts of meaning and adoption evolve – driven by international conspiracy theories and right-wing extremist images of violence on the one hand or dissociated from past legends as a pop icon on the other. In any case, the myths of Wewelsburg Castle and the Black Sun symbol appear to be continuing to spread dynamically.

Notes

- 1 See the introduction and essay by Eva Kingsepp on “Wewelsburg Castle, Nazi-Inspired Occulture, and the Commodification of Evil” in this volume.
- 2 *Tatort, Hydra* from Dortmund, 2015, an ARD production; <https://www.daserste.de/unterhaltung/krimi/tatort/sendung/hydra-176.html> (accessed 30 January 2021).
- 3 *Tatort, Sonnenwende* from Freiburg, 2018, an ARD production; <https://www.daserste.de/unterhaltung/krimi/tatort/sendung/sonnenwende-100.html> (accessed 30 January 2021).
- 4 <https://lsa-rechtsaussen.net/robert-moeritz-ein-neonazi-in-der-cdu/> (accessed 30 January 2021); <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/sachsen-anhalt-ex-neonazi-in-der-cdu-das-sagt-ein-ausstiegsberater-a-1301727.html> (accessed 30 January 2021); see also <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/16/far-right-links-of-cdu-politician-rob-ert-moritz-cast-shadow-over-german-coalition> (accessed 3 March 2021).
- 5 Tsutomu Takahashi, *NeuN*, originally published on as a one-shot manga in *Weekly Young Magazine* (16 January 2017, Kodansha Ltd.) and serialized in mid-2017.
- 6 https://www.t-online.de/unterhaltung/stars/id_83969406/skandal-um-shakira-saengerin-verkauft-schmuck-mit-nazi-symbol.html (accessed 11 April 2021); <https://www.gala.de/stars/news/shakira--mit-dieser-fan-kette-loest-sie-einen-skandal-aus-21758928.html> (accessed 6 April 2021); <https://www.rollingstone.de/shakira-ahnungslos-saengerin-verkauft-schmuck-mit-nazi-emblem-1517661/> (accessed 9 April 2021).
- 7 We thank Enrico Heitzer from the Sachsenhausen Memorial for the tip.
- 8 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhtpyeJsQ8U> (accessed 1 March 2021).
- 9 Instagram message from Katya Meow to Jörg Piron (26 March 2021).
- 10 Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Helena Blavatsky* (2004), p. 16.
- 11 Instagram message from Katya Meow.
- 12 Instagram message from Katya Meow.

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