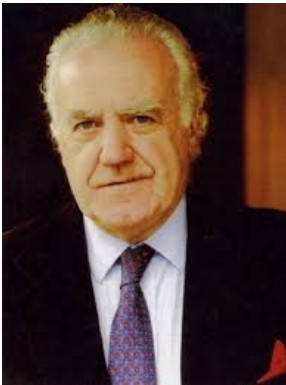
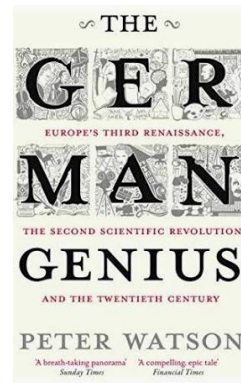


Peter Watson: *The German Genius: Europe's Third Renaissance, The Second Scientific Revolution and the Twentieth Century*, p/b, London, Simon & Schuster, 2011, 964 pages.



Peter Watson's extraordinary account of German history is a massive and important achievement and remarkably very readable. Covering 250 years of the life of Germany as a nation state in Europe, Watson has managed to involve the reader at the highest level. Watson includes the early years of the formation of Austria and Germany, the world contribution of an exceptional number of German individuals, the close involvement with Belgium, the horrors of two major world wars, and an account of just about everything that matters about Germany.



To name particular individuals in a book this large is ridiculous but as a consumer of many of the writers, musicians and

dancers involved in this massive story I have taken the liberty of noting the individuals that particularly interested me. These include Theodore Adorno, Hannah Arendt, W H Auden, Johann Sebastian Bach, Bertolt Brecht, Martin Buber, Rudolf Bultmann, Thomas Carlyle, Martin Dibelius, T S Eliot, Albert Einstein, Goethe, Ludwig Feuerbach, Sigmund Freud, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Günter Grass, Walter Gropius, Jürgen Habermas, Handel, Georg Hegel, Martin Heidegger, Herder, Heinrich Heine, Carl Jung, Kant, Arthur Koestler, Thomas Kuhn, Hans Kung, Gotthold Lessing, Franz Liszt, Martin Luther, Gustav Mahler, Thomas Mann, Herbert Marcuse, Gregor Mendel, Reinhold Niebuhr, Martin Niemöller, Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Planck, Michael Polanyi, Karl Popper, Joseph Ratzinger, Rainer Maria Rilke, George Santayana, Edward Schillebeeckx, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Robert Schumann, Albert Schweitzer, Baruch Spinoza, Johann Strauss 11, Paul Tillich, Otto Wagner, Ludwig Wittgenstein...just to name a few!

A significant section of the book and often forgotten (pp797-802) is entitled *The Dimensions of German Suffering*. Here there is a breed of angry writers denouncing their own country as “a vile place,” and elsewhere “*a sump of immorality*” that had never addressed its past. On the other side other writers commented on *the firestorm unleashed by the Allies over Hamburg in 1943, in particular the 80 000 who died in two night raids on Hamburg and Dresden, in which there were more deaths from bombing than in the entire United Kingdom during the whole war.*

There is so much that is brilliant and life changing in the story of Germany but the horror of two world wars and the seemingly ongoing trauma of the hatred of Jewish civilians which is rising again in Germany today, keeps the reader in a condition of mixed emotions. In spite of the size of this book I believe it is a must read. 5 stars.