Wagner's 'Emotional Understanding':
A critical appraisal of the concept of *Leitmotiv*

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I. 'Leitmotifs' *vs.* 'melodic moments'

I.1. Introduction

Wagner scholarship has never really made peace with what is considered the chief structural feature of Wagner's musical language, the *Leitmotiv* [leitmotif]. When Hans von Wolzogen published his first *Thematischer Leitfaden* [*Thematic Guide*] in the weeks preceding the inaugural Bayreuth festival he unconsciously launched the most influential method of Wagnerian analysis.[1] It is fair to say that, by the turn of the century, Wolzogen's guide was the most successful musical analysis ever published.[2] One of the peculiarities of his analysis was the fact that for the first time listeners had access to a description of the music before the actual music was heard.[3] The leitmotif compendia in the run-up to the opening of the first Bayreuth Festival in 1876 were acclaimed as an indispensable preparatory tool for the audience. Before attendance at Wagner's music dramas, the typical opera-goer studied the libretto in conjunction with Wolzogen's exemplary guide in order to be able to digest the fourteen-hour cycle. The *Leitfaden* turned into a 'verbal score for non-musicians'.[4]

It is striking that harmonically oriented motivic analyses, as pioneered by Wolzogen's protégé Karl Mayrberger, whom Wagner himself acknowledged as 'the long-awaited theorist for our *Blätter*'—the prime journalistic forum of the Bayreuth

[1] Hans von Wolzogen, *Thematischer Leitfaden durch die Musik zu Rich. Wagner's Festspiel Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Leipzig, 1876).
[2] Christian Thorau, 'Guides for Wagnerites: Leitmotifs and Wagnerian Listening', *Richard Wagner and His World*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Princeton, 2009), 133. There were three editions of the pamphlet published in 1876 alone.
[3] This applies to *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* only, as the other two music dramas of the cycle had already been premiered in Munich.
[4] Christian Thorau, *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit: Studien zu Rezeption und Zeichenstruktur der Leitmotivtechnik Richard Wagners* (Stuttgart, 2003), 137.

circle—did not prevail in the reception of Wagner.[5] Although Mayrberger presented a sophisticated and highly technical analysis that avoids all references to dramatic purpose, he allowed Wolzogen's segmentation to form the basis of his analysis.[6] The *Leitfadenliteratur* [guiding thread literature], the new kind of literature that Wolzogen had inaugurated, turned into a rapidly expanding industry. Contrary to Wolzogen's intentions, the notion of leitmotif served as an easy target for the fierce polemics that constantly surrounded Wagner's works. Eduard Hanslick repeatedly attacked the leitmotifs and described them as 'tourist guides', enabling the uninitiated 'musical tourist' to explore an exotic musical world.[7] Emil Naumann, a composer and influential music critic of the day, dismissed the leitmotifs as superimposed 'slogans' in his 1876 pamphlet: 'The leitmotifs must be regarded the most dubious aspect of Wagner's style since they take us back to the infancy of art when words and labels were placed in the mouths of those persons whom we were not able to characterize from within'.[8] In spite of the severe criticism that it sparked, the hegemony of the leitmotivic approach remained intact. In particular, what one might call the 'popular' Wagner reception continues to recognize the decoding of the leitmotivic network through motif-labelling as the key to understanding Wagner's works. The fact that knowledge of leitmotifs amounts to quantifiable knowledge of Wagner's music dramas still strongly appeals internationally to what the Germans refer to as *Bildungsbürgertum* [educated bourgeoisie].[9]

Wolzogen's primary concern was not so much to provide the most far-reaching analysis but his aim was a more structural one: the desire to defend Wagner against the reproach of 'formlessness' and 'harmonic illogicality', catchwords of the opposition as identified by Carolyn Abbate.[10] Wagner's amanuensis was aware of the risk that spectators would overlook the dramatic and musical variation to which the

[5] Karl Mayrberger, *Die Harmonik Richard Wagner's an den Leitmotiven aus "Tristan und Isolde"* (Bayreuth, 1881).
[6] Ian Bent, 'H. von Wolzogen: "Prelude", "Act I [Scene I]", Parsifal: A Thematic Guide Through the Poetry and the Music (1882)', *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ian Bent, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1994), II, 92.
[7] Eduard Hanslick, *Moderne Oper. Teil 2: Musikalische Stationen* (Berlin, 1885), 233.
[8] Emil Naumann, *Musikdrama oder Oper? Eine Beleuchtung der Bayreuther Bühnenfestspiele* (Berlin, 1876), 18: 'Die Leitmotive müssen überhaupt als die bedenklichste Seite der Wagner'schen Manier angesehen werden, da sie uns zu jenem Kindeszeitalter der Kunst zurückführen, in welchem man Personen, die man noch nicht von innen heraus zu charakterisieren verstand, Wort und Zettel aus dem Munde gehen ließ […]'.
[9] Alexander Rehding, 'Review of Christian Thorau's *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit*', *The Opera Quarterly* 23/2–3 (2007), 348.
[10] Carolyn Abbate/Roger Parker, 'Introduction on Analyzing Opera', *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner*, ed. Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker (Berkeley, 1989), 7.

composer subjected his motifs and introduced a crucial caveat at the beginning of his first *Leitfaden* by pointing out that 'the simple word is incapable of delineating [the motif]'.[11] Nevertheless, as Deryck Cooke has pointed out in his unfinished monograph, Wolzogen's approach created the impression that the score was an intermittent patchwork of a number of recognizable short ideas.[12] Unwittingly, Wolzogen encouraged the process of exclusively describing the motifs in conceptual and pictorial language. Ever since its emergence, several scholarly attempts have been made to replace leitmotivic analysis of Wagner's works but the leitmotifs survived them all.[13] The concept even continues to exert an enormous influence on post-Wagnerian works of art—both musical and non-musical.[14]

In view of the tremendous success of the *Leitfäden* and their initial total association with Wagner, it seems perplexing that the composer disapproved of the segmentation of the score in Wolzogen's fashion. It is surprising that Wagner neither coined nor made use—except for one instance in *Über die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama* [*On the Application of Music to the Drama*] (1879)—of the term '*Leitmotiv*'. According to Cosima Wagner's diaries, Wagner dismissed the practice of motif-labelling. She wrote in 1881 that 'I am playing excerpts from *Götterdämmerung*, arranged for piano duet, with [Lusch]. R. [Richard] says he is pleased with the work. Unfortunately, in this edition there are a lot of markings such as "wanderlust motive", "disaster motive" etc. R. says "And perhaps people will think all this nonsense is done at my request!"'[15] It is even more striking that Wolzogen himself confirms Wagner's rejection of the practice in his 1897 article entitled 'Leitmotive':

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[11] Wolzogen, *Thematischer Leitfaden*, 6: '[…] aber auch nicht durch das einfache Wort lässt er [der Grundbegriff, der seinen adäquaten Ausdruck eben nur in dem poetisches und musikalisches Element verbindenden Motive findet,] sich bezeichnen […]'.

[12] Deryck Cooke, *I Saw the World End: A Study of Wagner's Ring* (Oxford, 1979), 38.

[13] Alfred Lorenz's 'poetic-musical period' or Carl Dahlhaus's formal model, oriented towards the 'symphonic web' may serve as prominent examples.

[14] See, for example, an important literary application as detailed in Laurence Dreyfus, 'Music and Motive in Thomas Mann's *Wälsungenblut*', *Resounding Concerns*, *London German Studies* VIII, ed. Rüdiger Görner (Munich, 2003), 86–113.

[15] Cosima Wagner, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, trans. Geoffrey Skelton, 2 vols. (London, 1978–80) [*CWD*], II, 697; Cosima Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, 2 vols. (Munich, 1976–77) [*CWT*], II, 772 (1.8.1881): 'Ich spiele mit Lusch 4händig aus der Götterdämmerung, R. [Richard] sagt, es freue ihn das Werk. Leider kommen in dieser Ausgabe lauter Andeutungen wie: Wanderlust-Motiv, Unheils-Motiv etc. [vor]. R. sagt, am Ende glauben die Leute, daß solcher Unsinn auf meine Anregung geschieht!'

> In any case, I had the impression that Wagner, as a musician or the musician in Wagner—when assessing the works of his followers, who singled out the "leitmotifs" of his music, and who for the sake of better recognition assigned names to them derived from the poem—considered them as something alien to him […] [Wagner] was unable to recognize in this newly tied network of explanations—formed of hundreds of fixed melodic phrases, of which he never thought—a reflection of *his very own* creation. For him […] the "leitmotifs" were rather the leading [dramatic] motives that had completely turned into *music* as something internal, ineffable, something that cannot be labelled [*Unbezeichenbare*], something nameless.[16]

In this astonishing paragraph written twenty years after the first guide had been published and a few years after Wagner's death, Wolzogen deprives himself of the authority that seems to underlie the mighty edifice of the *Leitfadenliteratur*. Although Wagner was the first composer to be forced constantly into the peculiar and uncomfortable position of having to explain his artistic intentions and conceptions for the benefit of a seemingly uncomprehending public and a rather opposing press, he failed to put an end to the discussion around the leitmotifs when he had the chance to do so. In fact, there is good reason to believe that the impulse to provide the audience with a means to domesticate the new kind of opera came from deep inside the Wagner circle. Wagner seems to have had no choice but to remain ambivalent concerning the notion of leitmotif.[17]

The concept remains a 'source of scholarly discomfort', as Thomas Grey has put it, because of the inflationary use to which the leitmotifs were put.[18] Since the leitmotif is predominantly a creature of the reception of Wagner, it is difficult to

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[16] Hans von Wolzogen, 'Leitmotive', *Bayreuther Blätter* 20 (1897), 314–15: 'Jedenfalls aber habe ich den Eindruck gehabt, als wenn Wagner als Musiker, oder der Musiker in Wagner, vor den Arbeiten seiner Anhänger, welche die "Leitmotive" aus seiner Musik herauslösten und zu besserer Erkennung mit Namen aus der Dichtung belegten, doch eigentlich wie vor etwas ihm persönlich Fremdem gestanden wäre […] ohne in diesem neu geknüpften Erläuterungsgewebe aus hundert begrifflichen Bestimmungen melodischer Phrasen, woran er ja nie gedacht, s. z. s. eine Wiederspiegelung *seiner* eigensten Schöpfung erkennen zu können. Ihm […] waren die "Leitmotive" […] vielmehr die ganz zu *Musik* gewordenen leitenden Motive der Handlung, als durchaus etwas Innerliches, "Unaussprechliches", Unbezeichenbares, Namenloses.'

[17] Rehding, 'Review of *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit*', 348.

[18] Thomas S. Grey, '*…wie ein rother Faden*: On the Origins of "Leitmotif" as Critical Construct and Musical Practice', *Music Theory in the Age of Romanticism*, ed. Ian Bent (Cambridge, 1996), 188.

discern the original parameters of what we still call the Wagnerian leitmotif. The strong controversies that were provoked by Wagner's works from the very beginning prevented a 'grounded' reception of this central concept. To make things even more complicated, Wagner's leitmotivic practice is perceived as having undergone several changes. Consequently, for reasons of strong qualitative leaps within the technique behind the leitmotifs, Carl Dahlhaus denies the status of a coherent concept.[19] For him, 'function and properties of the technique' are subject to considerable changes when applied to *Lohengrin*, the *Ring* or *Tristan*, in turn.[20] Dahlhaus concludes that those more or less fixed 'rules' that claim general validity are in fact confined to the *Ring*.[21] Under the impression of the discursive style of *Oper und Drama* [*Opera and Drama*], Warren Darcy has argued that even within this treatise, written in 1850–5l during the Zürich exile, Wagner's ideas were in a state of flux.[22] It is true to say that there are a number of major discrepancies across Wagner's theoretical output but the extent to which these have affected his leitmotivic language is still in need of investigation. Grey suggests that Wagner's leitmotif technique remained a 'practice in search of a theory' throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and beyond.[23] There would therefore seem to be an inherent risk—when engaging with the concept of *Leitmotiv*—in learning more about the reception of Wagner's works than about the composer's actual understanding of the notion as represented in his working.[24]

The passage in which Wagner's sole use of the word '*Leitmotiv*' occurs, reads as follows:

> I can only cite the efforts of one of my younger friends [Wolzogen] in elucidating the characteristics of what he has called the "leitmotifs" but this more according to their dramatic significance and effect than to their application [*Verwerthung*] within the compositional fabric [*musikalischer*

[19] Carl Dahlhaus, 'Zur Geschichte der Leitmotivtechnik bei Wagner', *Das Drama Richard Wagners als musikalisches Kunstwerk*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus (Regensburg, 1970), 17.
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] *Ibid*.
[22] Warren Darcy, *Wagner's Das Rheingold* (Oxford, 1993), 47.
[23] Grey, '*…wie ein rother Faden*', 187.
[24] Arnold Whittall, 'Leitmotif', *The New Grove Guide to Wagner and His Operas*, ed. Barry Millington (Oxford, 2006), 154.

Satzbau] (since this writer was not versed in the specifics of musical theory [*spezifische Musik*]).[25]

Repeatedly, this passage has been used by scholars to demonstrate that Wagner wished to dissociate his music from leitmotivic analysis. Indeed, the qualification 'what he has called' implies that Wagner intended not to be held responsible for Wolzogen's reading of the *Leitmotive*, a view that swiftly became the predominant approach to Wagner's motifs. What has been downplayed or indeed ignored by the popular reception of Wagner, however, are Wolzogen's own endeavours to caution against seeing the motifs as 'a musical attempt to represent a concept [*Begriffsbezeichnung*]'.[26] In 1879, Wagner nevertheless denies his friend the expertise necessary to provide the link between the extra-musical phenomenon and the actual compositional network. The course that the reception of his works has taken forces him to do so. Wagner declines to divorce the '*melodische Momente*' [melodic moments] from their musico-dramatic context. After the first Bayreuth festival, the composer was less concerned about the accessibility of his works and less reluctant to deprive Wolzogen's guides of their apparent (or indeed existing) legitimacy. However, although the risk of trivialization of his music was something he increasingly watched with vigilance, Wagner could have found much stronger words if he really had wanted to set an end to a particular practice. Wolzogen was a close confidant of the composer. It seems rather unlikely that the publication of the *Leitfaden* three years before *Über die Anwendung* was something Wagner had not encouraged. Wagner's own contribution to the ossification of the term 'leitmotif' remains opaque.

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[25] Richard Wagner, *Über die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen von Richard Wagner*, 2nd edn, 10 vols. (Leipzig, 1887–88) [*GSD*], X [*Über die Anwendung*], 185: '[…] ich habe nur des einen meiner jüngeren Freunde zu gedenken, der das Charakteristische der von ihm sogenannten "Leitmotive" mehr ihrer dramatischen Bedeutsamkeit und Wirksamkeit nach, als (da dem Verfasser die spezifische Musik fern lag) ihre Verwerthung [*sic*] für den musikalischen Satzbau in das Auge fassend, ausführlicher in Betrachtung nahm.' (translation from Grey, '*…wie ein rother Faden*', 195).

[26] Hans von Wolzogen, 'Die Motive in Wagner's Götterdämmerung', *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 8 (1877), 125: '[…] *Leitmotive*, die jedoch […] als *musikalische* Aeusserungsform immer nur den Willensinhalt der Ideen, ihr inneres Wesen als Trieb, Gefühl, Affekt ausdrücken. Niemals ist das Motiv als ein musikalischer Versuch zur *Begriffsbezeichnung*, niemals als tonale *Ausmalung einer Erscheinung* zu fassen.'

I.2. Creations of reception history

Even more than 100 years after its emergence, the all-inclusive definition of the notion of leitmotif is yet to be found.[27] In the English-speaking realm the standard definition of the leitmotif—as published in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*—has been put forward by Arnold Whittall:

> A theme, or other coherent musical idea, clearly defined so as to retain its identity if modified on subsequent appearances, whose purpose is to represent or symbolise a person, object, place, idea, state of mind, supernatural force, or any other ingredient in a dramatic work. The leitmotif may be musically unaltered on its return or altered in rhythm, intervallic structure, harmony, orchestration or accompaniment and may also be combined with other leitmotifs in order to suggest a new dramatic situation. A leitmotif is to be distinguished from a reminiscence motif [*Erinnerungsmotiv*].[28]

The common definition in German musicology that made its way into the encyclopedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* [*The Music in History and the Present*] has been contributed by Joachim Veit who suggests that the leitmotif in its most general terms is 'a musical recurrence that cannot be explained musically and that therefore alludes to extra-musical content'.[29] Whereas Whittall makes sure to exclude the leitmotif's precursor from his otherwise rather broad canon of qualifying musical ideas, most definitions unwittingly embrace the 'reminiscence motif'. The latter merely interpolates the musical structure instead of representing a constitutive element of the musical fabric. Warren Darcy, for instance, defines the leitmotif as 'a recurrent musical idea which has been invested by its composer with semantic

[27] Ulrich Konrad/Egon Voss, *Der "Komponist" Richard Wagner im Blick der aktuellen Musikwissenschaft: Symposion Würzburg 2000* (Wiesbaden, 2003), 81.
[28] Arnold Whittall, 'Leitmotif', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2nd edn, 29 vols. (London, 2001) [*NGDMM 2001*], XIV, 527.
[29] Joachim Veit, 'Leitmotiv', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume and Ludwig Finscher, 2nd edn, 26 vols. (Kassel, 1994–2008) [*MGG*], V, col. 1079: '[…] in seiner allgemeinsten Form als eine musikalische Wiederholung bezeichnen kann, die nicht musikimmanent begründbar ist und die somit über den musikalischen Zusammenhang hinausweist.'

content'.[30] This degree of generalization brings about the confusion of disparate motivic categories.[31] Astonishingly, the word 'Wagner' does not appear in either of these representative definitions, a fact which seems to indicate that the notion of leitmotif has become independent of authorial intentions. In both definitions, there is no trace of the actual process by which Wagner was able to turn a 'coherent musical idea' into a signifier.

The term, as well as the ambivalence that has surrounded the compositional means, derives from musical dilettantism.[32] Grey has reminded us that knowledge of the *Ring* cycle was more a matter of hearsay than of actual experience.[33] Consequently, the *Leitfäden* began to acquire a life of their own and no longer depended on Wagner. Since Wolzogen's guides virtually merged with the music dramas, the compositional tool was gradually confused with a creation of reception history.[34] Christian Thorau's *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit* [*Semantic Sensuality*] (2003), the fullest account of the history of the leitmotif to date, illustrates in great detail how a phenomenon of reception history held sway over audiences and analysts. This impressive monograph refrains from offering deeper insights into what Wagner himself took his motifs to be and strikingly, this absence does not even invalidate Thorau's effort.[35] Thorau is right to argue that the leitmotifs as shaped by their cultural surroundings were independent of the compositional process because Wagner envisaged a non-verbal *Gefühlsverständnis* [emotional understanding] instead of a cognitive understanding.[36] Wagner intended the 'melodic moments' to be 'signposts for the emotions' [*Gefühlswegweiser*] through the labyrinth of the music drama.[37] There is a significant difference between Wagner's reception theory and the practice of later 'Wagnerians'; the conscious verbalized knowledge of the leitmotifs seems to have replaced the transfer of the 'deepest secrets of the poetic intent' via the

[30] Darcy, *Wagner's Rheingold*, 45.
[31] Jörg Riedlbauer suggests that the leitmotif is not independent of earlier categories ('Erinnerungsmotive in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*', *The Musical Quarterly* 74 (1990), 18–30).
[32] The history of the term has been thoroughly accounted for: Grey, '*…wie ein rother Faden*', 187–210; Whittall, 'Leitmotif', *NGDMM 2001*, 527 and Veit, 'Leitmotiv', col. 1079.
[33] Grey, '*…wie ein rother Faden*', 191.
[34] Since I am following Thorau's radical position, I use the word 'leitmotif' when referring to the notion as shaped by reception history as opposed to Wagner's own term, 'melodisches Moment'.
[35] See n. 4. Thorau's article, 'Guides for Wagnerites', is based on his full-length study *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit*.
[36] Thorau, *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit*, 21, n. 22.
[37] Richard Wagner, *Oper und Drama* [*OuD*], *GSD*, IV, 200.

emotions.[38] Thorau concludes that 'a means to motivate emotional understanding becomes a means to rationalize this very process'.[39]

Tobias Janz challenges Thorau's position by arguing that the leitmotifs have already turned into immanent features of Wagner's works.[40] According to Janz, it is impossible to decouple the ways in which Wagner's 'melodic moments' were domesticated and turned into leitmotifs from the composer's original intentions. The reception of the leitmotif, Thorau argues, is paradigmatic of a basic problem faced by reception history in general: it is difficult to assess the interaction between 'effects determined by the work as such, and the work's reception as shaped by the audience'.[41] Although it is problematic to evaluate the effects of a 'work as such', the gist of Thorau's argument points in the right direction. However, similar to Janz, Thomas Grey considers the notion of leitmotif as irreversibly entrenched.[42] Albrecht Wellmer's proposition that the musical artwork not only incorporates the score and the contemporary horizon of understanding but also the history of interpretations further reinforces Janz's critique.[43] Carl Dahlhaus is convinced of the practical value attached to the leitmotifs since the 'idea of wordless, instinctive understanding of musical motives, without the need for mediation through language, is an illusion'.[44] He reasons that the 'practice of giving Wagnerian leitmotive names which fix an identity to them once and for all is as questionable as it is unavoidable'.[45] It is indeed a recurrent feature even of those studies that rebut leitmotivic analysis to make use of the leitmotif names for the sake of convenience. Alfred Lorenz uses some of Wolzogen's leitmotif names in his most famous attempt to overrule the leitmotivic approach.[46] The leitmotif names in themselves, however, represent the epitome of the rationalization process that is alien to Wagner's original ideas about the role of his motifs.[47] Without neglecting the need to challenge the notion of 'authorial intentions',

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[38] *Ibid*.
[39] Thorau, 'Guides for Wagnerites', 139.
[40] Tobias Janz, *Klangdramaturgie: Studien zur theatralen Orchesterkomposition in Wagners "Ring des Nibelungen"* (Würzburg, 2006), 50.
[41] Thorau, 'Guides for Wagnerites', 135.
[42] Grey, '*…wie ein rother Faden*', 188.
[43] Albrecht Wellmer, 'Das musikalische Kunstwerk', *Falsche Gegensätze. Zeitgenössische Positionen zur philosophischen Ästhetik*, ed. Andrea Kern and Ruth Sonderegger (Frankfurt, 2002), 133–75.
[44] Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge, 1979), 61.
[45] *Ibid*.
[46] Stephen McClatchie, *Analyzing Wagner's Operas: Alfred Lorenz and German Nationalist Ideology* (Rochester NY, 1998), 109, n. 67.
[47] Although I aim to avoid references to the leitmotif names, there is a strong incentive to avail myself of them for the sake of easy accessibility.

a strong case can be made for a critical interrogation of Wagner's ideas as expressed in his writings in an attempt to return to a somewhat 'cleansed' approach to the concept behind the leitmotifs.

I.3. '*Leitmotiv*'—a misleading term

The term '*Leitmotiv*' is in fact alien to Wagner's theory. Neither Wagner nor Wolzogen invented the term. According to Thomas Grey, it appears for the first time in the work of the music historian August Wilhelm Ambros.[48] Ambros used the term as early as 1860 in conjunction with motif and transformation techniques in Wagner's operas up to *Lohengrin* and Liszt's symphonic poems without exclusively associating it with Wagner. Instead he wrote that both composers 'seek to preserve the higher unity across the whole by means of *durchgehende Leitmotive* [consistent leitmotifs]'.[49] John Warrack noted the term's presence in the work of Friedrich Wilhelm Jähns who employed it in 1871 with reference to recurring motifs in Weber's operas.[50] It is noteworthy that Jähns saw no need to define the concept in his Weber catalogue.[51] Joachim Veit has pointed out that the Wagner critic Jähns used the term in a polemical sense which also implies that the term must have already entered critical circulation when Wolzogen employed it five years later.[52]

For decades, Wolzogen was seen as the inventor of the term. Ian Bent has highlighted the astonishing fact that the word '*Leitmotiv*' is actually absent from Wolzogen's original guides.[53] Wolzogen simply refers to '*Motiv*' [motif] and describes the notion as the expressive epitome of the *psychologischer oder dramatischer Grundbegriff* [psychological or dramatic basic notion] in which musical and poetic elements are fused together.[54] In his 1897 article, entitled 'Leitmotive', Wolzogen wrote with reference to the genesis of the term *Leitmotiv* that '[h]ow it was

[48] Grey, '*…wie ein rother Faden*', 195.
[49] August Wilhelm Ambros, *Culturhistorische Bilder aus dem Musikleben der Gegenwart*, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1865), 142: 'Beide suchen die höhere Einheit des Ganzen mittelst durchgehender Leitmotive zu wahren.'
[50] John Warrack, 'Leitmotif', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London, 1980) [*NGDMM 1980*], X, 645.
[51] Friedrich Wilhelm Jähns, *Carl Maria von Weber in seinen Werken* (Berlin, 1871), 2.
[52] Veit, 'Leitmotiv', col. 1079.
[53] Bent, 'H. von Wolzogen: "Prelude", "Act I [Scene I]", Parsifal', 91.
[54] Wolzogen, *Thematischer Leitfaden*, 5–6: '[…] seinen adäquaten Ausdruck findet er [Grundbegriff] eben nur in dem poetisches und musikalisches Element verbindenden Motive.'

"invented" seems now beyond recall. Legend has it that I am the guilty party'.[55] However, he subsequently laid claim to authorship by proposing that the term had never been used before his essay *Die Motive in Wagner's Götterdämmerung* [*The Motifs in Wagner's Götterdämmerung*] (1877).[56] Wolzogen's immediate predecessor, Gottlieb Federlein, whose studies of *Rheingold* (1871) and *Walküre* (1872) were serialized in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* [*Weekly Musical Magazine*], refrains from making specific use of the term despite analyzing and labelling recurring motifs and their transformations.[57] What sets Federlein's analyses apart from Wolzogen's guides is their focus on instrumentation. This step towards an emphasis on the musical role of the motifs ['*Verwerthung im musikalischen Satzbau*'] seems to have had more appeal to Wagner. There is evidence that he knew Federlein's analyses, as we know that Cosima encouraged her husband to have Federlein's *Rheingold* essay printed.[58]

The word '*Leitmotiv*' derives from the German verb '*leiten*', to lead, which emphasizes the idea behind this technical term to provide guidance through unchartered territory. It seems peculiar to add the prefix '*Leit-*' to 'motif' as according to many sources the word 'motif' in its musical context already carries such (emotionally) guiding and leading qualities. The use of the term 'motif' in music can be traced back to Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1765) in which the meaning that the word has adopted in Italian is referenced: 'The Italians call *motivo* the first idea of a melody which determines the character of its affect and declamation'.[59] In the sixth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1835), reference is made to musical motifs as 'the melodic phrase, the original [*primitive*] idea, that dominates the whole

[55] Wolzogen, 'Leitmotive', 313.
[56] Wolzogen, 'Motive in Wagner's Götterdämmerung', 125.
[57] Gottlieb Federlein, '*Das Rheingold* von Richard Wagner. Versuch einer musikalischen Interpretation des Vorspiels zum *Ring des Nibelungen*', *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 2 (1871), 210–13, etc.; *id*., '*Die Walküre* von Richard Wagner. Versuch einer musikalischen Interpretation des gleichnamigen Musikdramas', *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 3 (1872), 211–12, etc.
[58] Klaus Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven: Richard Wagner's Reception of Beethoven* (Cambridge, 1991), 218.
[59] Denis Diderot/Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 28 vols. (Geneva, 1754–72), X, 766: 'Les Italiens appellent *motivo* la première pensée d'un air, celle qui constitue le caractere [*sic*] de son chant & sa declamation.'

piece'.[60] For the famous eighteenth-century lexicographer Charles du Fresne du Cange, the Middle Latin noun *motivum* refers to a cause of excitement.[61]

As the English language distinguishes between 'motif' and 'motive', the German word '*Motiv*' is rendered throughout the thesis as 'motif' if reference is made to a musical motif, whereas the translation 'motive' is used to denote dramatic motives. This differentiation is made for enhanced clarity even while the *Oxford English Dictionary* allows for orthographic interchangeability.[62] It is astonishing that Wagner makes no distinction between 'motif' and 'theme' in his prose writings—he even used the term '*thematisches Motiv*' [thematic motif] to describe a musical unit in a crucial passage in *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde* [*A Communication to My Friends*] (1851)—although since Beethoven a motif is regarded as the smallest subdivision of a theme.[63] Wagner also referred to '*Grundthema*' [basic theme], '*Grundmotiv*' [basic motive], '*Hauptmotiv*' [principal motive], '*melodisches Moment*' [melodic moment] or simply '*Motiv*' [motif]. Arnold Whittall and Thomas Grey suggest that Wagner used all of these terms interchangeably in his prose works when discussing thematic elements.[64] However, the way *Hauptmotiv* and *Grundmotiv* are employed in *Opera and Drama* strongly suggests that he reserved these two designations to dramatic motives only. He mentioned '[t]he principal motives [*Hauptmotive*] that have been turned into melodic moments' and explained that '[t]he melodic moments […] will […] correspond to those motives that the poet has identified as the reinforced and condensed basic motives [*Grundmotive*] of the similarly reinforced and condensed action, and that he has chosen as the pillars of his dramatic edifice'.[65]

I claim that the use of the term '*melodisches Moment*' as a synonym for motifs in the music dramas reflects Wagner's preferred taxonomy and embraces references

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[60] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 6th edn, 2 vols. (Paris, 1835), II, 235: 'La phrase de chant, l'idée primitive qui domine dans tout le morceau.'

[61] Charles du Fresne du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1733–36), III, col. 1064; Harry Levin, 'Motif', *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York, 1973–74), 235.

[62] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'motif', 'motive'.

[63] Richard Wagner, *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde*, *GSD*, IV [*Eine Mittheilung*], 322; William Drabkin, 'Motif', *NGDMM 1980*, XVII, 227–28.

[64] Whittall, 'Leitmotif', *NGDMM 2001*, 527; Thomas S. Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose: Texts and Contexts* (Cambridge, 1995), 319.

[65] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 202: 'Die zu […] melodischen Momenten gewordenen Hauptmotive der dramatischen Handlung […]' and *ibid*., 201: 'Die melodischen Momente […] werden […] denjenigen Motiven entsprechen, die der Dichter als zusammengedrängte, verstärkte Grundmotive der ebenso verstärkten und zusammengedrängten Handlung zu den *Säulen* seines dramatischen Gebäudes bestimmte […]'.

to his core ideas more appropriately than '*Leitmotiv*'. First of all, the term 'melodic moment' enjoys the sanction of Wagner's writings as it is used coherently in *Opera and Drama*, the main source of theoretical knowledge about Wagner's motifs. We have seen that Wagner also referred to '*Motive*'. Wagner's use of this term, however, takes prevalence in the 1879 essay.[66] Grey has identified Wagner's tendency to mobilize 'the latent ambiguity of the term *Motiv* to signify various interconnected phenomena' from *Opera and Drama* onwards.[67] However, when discussing '*Motive*' in *Opera and Drama* Wagner very rarely refers to musical motifs. Grey has rightly argued that the term 'leitmotif' in fact 'fills a terminological need' that alleviates the vagaries of Wagner's taxonomy.[68] The use of this hybrid expression continues to deepen the rift between Wagner's original concept and a chimera of reception history. For these compelling reasons, I shall give priority to the term '*melodisches Moment*' throughout the rest of the thesis in order to show that I aim to ground my understanding of the leitmotifs in Wagner's own views as outlined in *Opera and Drama*. Although Wagner preferred the term 'motif' over that of 'melodic moment' in later years, this nomenclature iterates the distinction that needs to be made between Wagner's compositional device and a creature of reception history.

The way in which Wagner seems to have understood the term 'moment' also strongly supports the taxonomy suggested in this thesis. According to the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* [*German Dictionary*] (begun in 1838) by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the German word '*Moment*' also carries a less obvious meaning that is derived directly from the Latin origin 'momentum'. There is one denotation of the word that survived in legal and philosophical texts which is '*die bedeutung des beweggrundes, oder wesentlichen, ausschlag gebenden umstandes*' [the meaning of a cause or motive or an essential, pivotal circumstance].[69] Wagner's use of the term 'moment' in this most decisive concept of his musical language highlights the emphasis he placed on the role of his motifs in the generation of semantic meaning.

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[66] Whittall, 'Leitmotif', *NGDMM 2001*, 527.
[67] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 319.
[68] Thomas S. Grey, 'Leitmotif, Temporality, and Musical Design in the Ring', *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge, 2008), 88.
[69] Jacob Grimm/Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 16 vols. in 32 (Leipzig, 1854–1966), XII, col. 2482–83.

I.4. Leitmotivic analysis through the Lorenzian lens

What seems to have posed the most serious threat to leitmotivic analysis since its emergence—Alfred Lorenz's analytical method as expounded in *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner* [*The Mystery of Form in the Works of Richard Wagner*] (1923–30)—did ultimately not succeed in replacing Wolzogen's approach. In contrast to the analysis in terms of leitmotifs, Lorenz's approach was rooted in an authoritative text. In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner describes the 'dichterisch-musikalische Periode' [poetico-musical period] as the basic structural unit of the ideal music drama.[70] Lorenz devised an entire universe of formalist analysis on the basis of this particular passage. Through the Lorenzian lens, leitmotivic analysis was not powerful enough a tool to remove the stains left on Wagner's music by Hanslick and his like. From its early stages, the reproach of amorphousness was central to Wagner criticism. One representative Hanslickian flourish that stands for many comments of the kind is his evaluation of Wagner's aesthetics as 'formlessness exalted into a principle'.[71] Lorenz, an ardent supporter of National Socialism hoped to provide the Nazi regime with an all-embracing formalist approach that 'cleansed' Wagner's works from the reproach of illogicality.[72]

There are several attempts in Lorenz's publications to dissociate his new form of analysis from the leitmotivic approach. Lorenz was critical of the prevailing tendency of simply tracing the successive appearances of the leitmotifs throughout the work as they relate to the drama. He distanced himself from leitmotivic analysis since he believed that no name, no conceptual tag could ever convey the true essence of a motif. He wrote that '[f]or is the artistry of a beautiful tapestry discerned if one determines that a certain red thread runs through it and another golden one repeats, but does not take into consideration the overall shaping of the model?'[73] Rather, he argued, it would be more fruitful to investigate the role of these motifs in the language of music itself.[74] Hence, he set out to assess what he sees as the purely musical function of the leitmotifs as opposed to evaluating them as dramatic components.

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[70] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 154.
[71] Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revisal of Musical Aesthetics*, trans. Gustav Cohen (New York, 1974), 13.
[72] McClatchie, *Analyzing Wagner's Operas*, ix and 15–25.
[73] Alfred Lorenz, *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner*, 2nd edn, 4 vols. (Tutzing, 1966), III, 6.
[74] McClatchie, *Analyzing Wagner's Operas*, 76.

In fact, Lorenz was the first Wagner analyst to systematize musical procedures beyond the referential web of leitmotifs. In Lorenz's view, the leitmotifs serve a purely structural function as well, behaving analogously to the themes of a symphonic work. In this spirit, Lorenz describes the 'symphonic network' in Wagner, which was informed of Wagner's desire to place his compositional technique closer to symphonic methods.[75] Lorenz saw Wagner's works as mighty edifices of formal architecture, a musical labyrinth of 'forms-within-forms'.[76] The leitmotifs articulate the formal patterns through the principles of thematic correspondence, variation and contrast. For Lorenz, each motif played a crucial part in the articulation of multi-level musical structures. In determining the boundaries of his segments, Lorenz therefore claimed to exclude the drama from consideration.[77]

However, Lorenz unwittingly acknowledged the existence of leitmotifs by making analytical use of them. With the exception of his *Meistersinger* analysis, Lorenz heavily relied on Wolzogen's labels.[78] In his quest for a new form of analysis which promised to overcome the low scholarly esteem attributed to the leitmotifs, Lorenz in fact further deepened the rift between the professional and the popular realm. The segmentation that Lorenz suggested in his study remained heavily disputed in scholarship and the overall complexity of his approach discouraged popular Wagner reception from gaining access to his imposing theoretical edifice.[79] Lorenzian analysis failed, in the end, in supplanting Wolzogen's approach even in the scholarly arena.

I.5. Aims of this study

Leitmotif, the most widely disseminated Wagnerian term still remains in need of a corrective response. Wagner scholarship is fortunate to have access to a host of theoretical writings published by the composer himself. A number of crucial paragraphs in these primary sources set forth Wagner's theoretical take on the link

[75] Lorenz, *Geheimnis der Form*, I, 73.
[76] Darcy, *Wagner's Rheingold*, 49.
[77] Lorenz, *ibid.*, 74.
[78] For want of a thematic guide for *Meistersinger* by Wolzogen, Lorenz exceptionally devised the names for the periods of this opera himself (Lorenz, *Geheimnis der Form*, III, 6).
[79] For example, Thorau recognizes Lorenz's formalist approach as the counterweight to leitmotivic analysis, Grey dismisses it as a great failure: Grey, '…*wie ein rother Faden*', 187.

between motif and drama. However, instead of reading Wagner's theoretical framework into his motivic language, current understanding of the leitmotifs is affected by an emphasis on 'rationalizations' that originated in popular Wagner reception. This peculiarity prevents Wagner's ideas to come to fruition. The fact that modern definitions of the leitmotif concept operate without mentioning authorial intentions further alienates scholarship from Wagner's visions as expressed in his prose works. Through close examination of Wagner's theoretical writings, compositional sketches and letters in conjunction with Cosima's diary entries I aim to contribute to a potentially new and revised understanding of the leitmotif and how Wagner used them.

My contribution to this realignment with Wagner's aesthetic principles aims to elucidate the role that Wagner himself ascribed to the 'melodic moments'. To this end, my study proposes a critical interrogation of the relevant primary source texts (*Opera and Drama*, *On the Application*, *A Communication*, *Beethoven* etc. read together with other original documents) in their German original. Throughout the thesis, it has been taken as read that coherent modern translations of Wagner's prose works needed to be provided, and the majority of the relevant passages have therefore been translated afresh.

A crucial feature of Wagner's prose works is his prime occupation with the comprehensibility of the artwork. Wagner is passionate about the idea that the 'ideal' music is inherently expressive. To the 'melodic moments' Wagner ascribes the most decisive role of acting as *emotional* guides through the mighty edifice of his music dramas. One significant constitutent of my intended contribution to Wagner scholarship, therefore, is the exploration of the role of Wagner's motifs in the process of generating musical meaning. Essentially, the thesis is a reflection on the nature and practice of musical meaning in Wagner's music as the transfer of meaning represents the *raison d'être* of the 'melodic moments'.

Wagner's metaphor of the 'melodic moments' as the 'emotional signposts' through the convoluted structure of the drama can only be understood in light of his vision of *Gefühlsverständnis* [emotional understanding]. The notion of *Gefühlsverständnis*—Wagner's ideal mode of reception—is one of the most pivotal elements of his theory and therefore takes centre stage in the conceptual research involved in this study. This phenomenon is thoroughly scrutinized in order to make its philosophical and psychological backgrounds and contradictions visible. As this

component is bypassed in current understanding of the leitmotifs, my approach promises to illuminate the practical application and elaboration of the *Leitmotiv* concept in a fashion that is in line with Wagner's theoretical explications.

The music dramas' unbroken record of success largely rests on the 'musical quality' of their motifs. In Wagner's music dramas, the 'melodic moments' appear as compact, discrete musical units that by a seemingly miraculous process convey extra-musical meaning. It is arguably Wagner's greatest achievement to encapsulate the emotional residue of a psychological experience on the one hand and the emotional presentiment of future experiences on the other into musical units that the listener is able to comprehend. Little, however, seems to be known about the process through which Wagner achieved the creation of a musical code that enables listeners to become immersed into the hours-long works without feeling 'left in the lurch'. It is open to question how Wagner was able to compose musical structures whose dramatic meaningfulness does not seem to diminish. Therefore, an attempt is made to narrow down those factors relevant to Wagner's motivic structure that recent psychological research considers causal in the process of generating 'emotional' meaning.

For want of an all-embracing conceptualization of the 'melodic moments' in Wagner's theoretical output, the analysis of his compositional process seems to represent an indispensable complementary source for insights regarding the core of the concept. It is my intention to expand the contours of the definition of the concept by relating its theoretical statement to its apparent practical elaboration.
The present study aims to trace Wagner's motivic treatment as represented at its height in *Siegfried*. The reasons why *Siegfried* is considered the paradigm of Wagner's motivic language rest in the unique relationship that this particular music drama enjoys with Wagner's other music dramas on the one hand and his motivic evolution on the other. I concur with those scholars who deem *Siegfried* Wagner's most radical score. The *Kompositionsskizze* [composition sketch] of *Siegfried* is singled out since it amounts to a piano reduction of the music drama in the composer's hand which furnishes unique insights into the role of motifs as building blocks in the generation of meaning.

In a final interpretative step, the so-called '*Welterbschaftsmotiv*' [motif of world inheritance] is scrutinized against the backdrop of Wagner's theory as expounded in *Opera and Drama*. Although Wagner dubbed many of his motifs—a

fact that is still unacknowledged by many Wagner scholars—the analytical investigation in this study deliberately avoids reference to such names in order to iterate the primarily emotional component of the 'melodic moments'. The '*Welterbschaftsmotiv*'—which I call Motif *A*—has been chosen as a representative motif from *Siegfried* in view of its suitable scope for documentary coverage and critical reflection. There is good reason to limit the investigation to one motif from Act III of *Siegfried* only: proving those scholars wrong who reject the applicability of *Opera and Drama* to works from this particular act onwards means that, a fortiori, the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis* is operative in those *Ring* acts that are considered to be in line with *Opera and Drama*. In particular, a selection of different versions of this famous motif is exposed to close critical analysis and interrogation in an attempt to approximate the role of a motif's intervallic structure in Wagner's quest to hone a series of tones in order to facilitate their 'emotional comprehensibility'.

II. The role of motifs in the process of generating meaning

II.1. Aspects of musical meaning in Wagner

The way in which Wagner envisages the role of motifs in the process of generating musical meaning deviates from those leading scholarly accounts that are devoted to a description of the transfer of meaning in Wagner's music dramas. With the exception of Carolyn Abbate's provocative view—the non-polemical core of which I will critically evaluate in due course—there seems to be a consensus at least among scholars that Wagner's musical language tells us something that goes beyond purely musical messages. Generations of opera-goers have fallen for Wagner's lush soundworld which is so powerful that some have compared it with an intoxicant. Charles Baudelaire, to name Wagner's 'first publicity agent in France', described his Wagner experience as follows:

> No other musician excels like Wagner in *painting* spaciousness and depth, in both a physical and spiritual sense. This is a remark that several observers, and among the most probing, have made on several occasions. Wagner knows how to express, by subtle shades, everything that is excessive, enormous, and ambitious in the natural and the spiritual man. It sometimes seems, in listening to this ardent and overpowering music that one finds, painted against a background of darkness, torn by reverie, the vertiginous creations of opium.[80]

Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* has been identified by some scholars as the summit of metaphorical thinking in music.[81] When outlining Wagner's musical language in his seminal 1979 essay, Deryck Cooke admires 'its phenomenal power of compressing

[80] Nicholas Vazsonyi, *Richard Wagner: Self-Promotion or the Making of a Brand* (Cambridge, 2010), 121; Charles Baudelaire/Claude Pichois (ed.), *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1997), II, 758 (translation from Alain Toumayan, '"Je est un autre": Identity, Alterity, and Drug Use in Baudelaire and De Quincey', *Thinking Poetry: Philosophical Approaches to Nineteenth-Century French Poetry*, ed. Joseph Acquisto (Basingstoke, 2013), 73).
[81] Michael Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought* (Chicago, 2004), 315.

into a few bars the most profound emotional and psychological experience'.[82] In his 1924 monograph, the Wagner commentator Paul Bekker describes Wagner's music dramas as 'music with an expressive significance as precise as that presented by the visual concept'.[83] More recently, Adrian Daub and Patrick McCreless have attributed to Wagner 'an uncanny ability to create musical moments rich in meaning and rhetorical power—immediate musical sensations that are instantly memorable'.[84]

Meaning in Wagner's music dramas is predominantly communicated through the referential system of his motivic language. Edward T. Cone concludes that 'specific interpretations […] may differ from commentator to commentator, but the principle of leitmotivic identification is almost universally accepted'.[85] In the wake of the era of European Wagnerism the referential power of the leitmotifs used to be taken for granted. Scholarship remained content with the fact that the *Beziehungszauber* [magic of association], as Thomas Mann has put it, was seen as an untouchable enigma. Dahlhaus still accepted the wealth of leitmotivic signification as a 'system of musical metaphors' without questioning it.[86] He proposed a rather uncomplicated approach by suggesting that in the case of the nexus between the so-called *Ringmotiv* [ring motif] and the *Walhallmotiv* [Valhall motif] 'the "poetic intent"—the driving force behind the motivic network—and the dramatic-allegorical meaning of its applications are immediately comprehensible and straightforward'.[87]

Wagner himself identifies the 'melodic moments' as the prime agents in the meaning-generation process. In a letter to August Röckel, Wagner first of all made clear that 'I have once again realized how much of the work's meaning (given the nature of my poetic intent) is only made clear by the music: I can now no longer bear to look at the poem without music'.[88] The following two statements, in turn, attest to the motifs' key role in Wagner's understanding of the process of generating meaning:

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[82] Deryck Cooke, 'Wagner's Musical Language', *The Wagner Companion*, ed. Peter Burbidge and Richard Sutton (London, 1979), 235.
[83] Paul Bekker, *Richard Wagner: His Life in His Work*, trans. Mildred M. Bozman (London, 1931), 5.
[84] Adrian Daub/Patrick McCreless, 'Der Ring des Nibelungen', *The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia*, ed. Nicholas Vazsonyi (Cambridge, 2013), 498.
[85] Edward T. Cone, *Hearing and Knowing Music: The Unpublished Essays of Edward T. Cone*, ed. Robert P. Morgan (Princeton, 2009), 80.
[86] Carl Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption des musikalischen Dramas* (Regensburg, 1971), 111.
[87] *Ibid*., 75.
[88] Richard Wagner, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, ed. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (London, 1987) [*SL*], 310; Richard Wagner, *Richard Wagner: Sämtliche Briefe*, ed. Gertrud Strobel, Werner Wolf, Werner Breig and Martin Dürrer, 22 vols. (Leipzig, 1967–2012) [*SB*], VI, 71–2 (25./26.1.1854): 'Wie vieles, bei dem ganzen Wesen meiner dichterischen Absicht, erst durch die

> These melodic moments, well-suited for maintaining the feeling at the same level, are turned by the orchestra into emotional signposts [*Gefühlswegweiser*] through the whole convoluted structure of the drama. Through them we become constant confidants of the deepest secrets of the poetic intent's deepest mystery and direct participants in its realization.[89]

Twenty years after this statement, made in *Opera and Drama*, Wagner looked back on the genesis of the *Ring* and emphasized in his *Epilogischer Bericht* [*Epilogue-like Report*] (1871) that:

> With *Rheingold* I immediately struck out on this 'new path', my task being first to find the plastic *Naturmotive* [nature motifs] which, by becoming increasingly individualized, were to serve as the bearers of the emotional subcurrents [*Leidenschafts-Tendenzen*] within the broad-based plot and the moods expressed therein.[90]

In these two paragraphs that were roughly written before and after the composition of the *Ring*, Wagner identifies the 'melodic moments' as the driving force behind the process of guaranteeing the comprehensibility of the artwork. Over the course of chapter III, we will investigate Wagner's emphasis on the sensual power of his motifs as indicated by his use of the distinctive terms '*Gefühlswegweiser*' [emotional signposts] and '*Träger der Leidenschafts-Tendenzen*' [bearers of the emotional subcurrents]. Before interrogating any such proposition in depth, it is sufficient at this

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Musik deutlich wird, das habe ich nun wieder ersehen: ich kann jetzt das musiklose Gedicht gar nicht mehr ansehen.'

[89] Katherine M. Wren, *Retranslating Richard Wagner's Oper und Drama: An Examination of a Modernising Translation and its Effect on the Readability and Accessibility of Wagner's Text*, M.A. diss. Portsmouth University (Portsmouth, 2013) [*RWOuD*], 43; *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 200: 'Diese melodischen Momente, an sich dazu geeignet, das Gefühl immer auf gleicher Höhe zu erhalten, werden uns durch das Orchester gewissermaßen zu Gefühlswegweisern durch den ganzen vielgewundenen Bau des Drama's [*sic*]. An ihnen werden wir zu steten Mitwissern des tiefsten Geheimnisses der dichterischen Absicht, zu unmittelbaren Theilnehmern [*sic*] an dessen Verwirklichung.'

[90] Richard Wagner, *Epilogischer Bericht über die Umstände und Schicksale, welche die Ausführung des Bühnenfestspieles "Der Ring des Nibelungen" bis zur Veröffentlichung der Dichtung desselben begleiteten*, *GSD*, VI, 266: 'Mit dem "Rheingold" beschritt ich sofort die neue Bahn, auf welcher ich zunächst die plastischen Natur-Motive zu finden hatte, welche in immer individuellerer Entwickelung [*sic*] zu den Trägern der Leidenschafts-Tendenzen der weitgegliederten Handlung und der in ihr sich aussprechenden Charaktere sich zu gestalten hatten.' (translation from Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, 1989), 200).

stage to state that Wagner's complicated vision as to how the dramatic content is conveyed to the listener is largely based upon the musical 'quality' of the motifs.

The significance of the term 'plastisch'

Wagner was convinced that a 'melodic moment' is capable of conveying emotional meaning with clear-cut precision. There is one crucial term that Wagner frequently reverts to when describing one of the most fundamental features of his motifs that in fact has been misinterpreted by scholarship. The following two statements are chosen to highlight the continuing weight that Wagner ascribed to the adjective '*plastisch*', whose English translation has entered non-German scholarship with a confusing connotation. It is surprising that this common reading has even been adopted by many German scholars. Referring to *Siegfried*, Wagner wrote in a letter to Uhlig in September 1851 (translation by Peter Palmer):

> I am now starting work on the music […] the musical phrases […] fit in with these verses and periods without any effort on my part […]. The beginning I already have in my head; also a number of plastic [*plastische*] motifs like the Fafner motif.[91]

In 1871, Wagner published his *Epilogischer Bericht* in which he recapitulated the first steps towards his new motivic technique (translation by John Deathridge):

> With "Rheingold" I immediately struck out on this new path, my task being first to find the plastic [*plastische*] *Naturmotive* which, by becoming increasingly individualized, were to serve as the emotional subcurrents within the broad-based plot and the moods expressed therein.[92]

Both statements are again twenty years apart and by the time of the latter, Wagner had already completed the *Ring*.

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[91] Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 160; *SB*, IV, 99 (c. 2.9.1851): 'Ich gehe nun an die Musik […] ich sage Dir, die musikalischen phrasen […] machen sich aus diesen Versen und Perioden ohne daß ich nur Mühe darum zu geben habe […]. Den Anfang hab' ich schon im Kopfe; auch einige plastische Motive, wie den *Fafner*.'

[92] John Deathridge/Carl Dahlhaus, *The New Grove Wagner* (London, 1984), 149; see n. 90.

The common English translation of the pivotal '*plastisch*' is rendered as 'malleable'. Thomas Grey, for instance, describes Wagner's 'fundamental motives' as 'malleable or plastic "nature motives"'.[93] In his exploration of androgenic tendencies in Wagner, Jean-Jacques Nattiez suggests renaming what is commonly known as the 'Redemption motif' 'Androgyny motif', because he argues that 'such is the semantic malleability of Wagner's leitmotifs'.[94] Robert Bailey translates the word '*plastisch*' as 'plastic' in his seminal 1979 essay on Wagner's compositional methods and we know from Bailey's pupil Graham Hunt, that his mentor later also preferred 'malleable' over 'plastic'.[95]

It is true to say that in view of the countless transformations that Wagner's motifs undergo, the adjective 'malleable', in conveying a strong sense of changeability, springs to mind as a potentially accurate translation of '*plastisch*'. However, the English term also carries the idea of instability. An investigation into the meaning that the German term was carrying at the time of Wagner's use, in conjunction with his employment of the word in other contexts, however, proposes quite a different quality. According to the *German Dictionary*, the word '*plastisch*' is primarily understood as '*anschaulich*' which in fact is rendered as 'descriptive' or 'vivid'.[96]

An investigation into the different contexts in which Wagner used the term, reveals that neither the translation 'plastic' nor 'malleable' seem appropriate. In his essay entitled *Beethoven* (1870), Wagner uses the adjective '*plastisch*' in the sense of 'descriptive' when discussing '[t]he relationship between music and the vivid forms [*plastische Formen*] of the phenomenal world'.[97] In *On the Application* (1879), Wagner refers to '*plastisch gewonnene Motive*' [descriptive motifs that have been gained].[98] Wagner even confirms this interpretation of the term when explaining that 'thus enters the musician into contact with the vivid, descriptive world [*anschaulichen*

[93] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 130.
[94] Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne: A Study in Interpretation*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton, 1993), 154.
[95] Graham Hunt, 'Of Refrains, Fairy-Tales and Compositional Hesitation: Act II of Wagner's *Siegfried* Revisited', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 3 (2006), 75, n. 31.
[96] Grimm/Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, XIII, col. 1900.
[97] Richard Wagner, *Beethoven*, *GSD*, IX [*Beethoven*], 77: 'Über das Verhalten der Musik zu den plastischen Formen der Erscheinungswelt […]'.
[98] *Über die Anwendung*, 187: '[…] der "Siegfried" mit einem Tonstück einzuleiten war, welches mit Erinnerung an die in den vorangehenden Dramen plastisch gewonnenen Motive[n], uns […] führt.'

plastischen Welt]'.[99] The right meaning of the word is already prevalent in *Opera and Drama* where Wagner comments on the quantity of dramatic motives as follows:

> [T]he basic motives behind the reinforced and condensed action that have been turned [by the poet] into the *pillars* of his dramatic edifice are, as a basic rule, not used in confusing multiplicity but in a vividly ordered [*plastisch zu ordnender*] and necessarily limited fashion that guarantees easy digest. […] these basic motifs that are not just sentences, but descriptive emotional moments [*plastische Gefühlsmomente*].[100]

The specification '*plastisch zu ordnender*' strongly suggests that Wagner, in his quest to find the appropriate hierarchy of motives, attributes quite specific and stable qualities to the dramatic motives (which are subsequently transformed into musical motifs).

A catchword trying to streamline musical meaning

The field of musical meaning bristles with seemingly intractable problems since the search for objective standards clashes with inherently subjective responses to the artwork. It is right to concede that works of music theatre come 'with an automatic' and 'inextricable semantic component' and that a 'further layer of narrative is encoded in the music'.[101] Yet, even the description of meaning in music theatre is thwarted by the vagaries of subjective responses to music. It is worth noting that the plurality of responses to Wagner's music acted as the principal catalyst for instigating the discussion about musical meaning that emerged in the nineteenth century.[102] Composers delved into questions about music's implicit messages much earlier. According to Anthony Newcomb, it was Wagner's role model, Beethoven, who was

[99] *Beethoven*, 76: '[…] tritt somit der Musiker in eine Berührung mit der anschaulichen plastischen Welt […]'.
[100] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 201: '[…] Grundmotive der ebenso verstärkten und zusammengedrängten Handlung zu den *Säulen* seines dramatischen Gebäudes bestimmte, die er grundsätzlich nicht in verwirrender Vielheit, sondern in plastisch zu ordnender, für leichte Übersicht nothwendig bedingter, geringerer Zahl verwendet. […] Grundmotiven, die eben nicht Sentenzen, sondern plastische Gefühlsmomente sind.'
[101] Nicholas McKay, 'On Topics Today', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie*, 4/1–2 (2007), 159.
[102] The criticism expressed in Eduard Hanslick's influential book *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (Leipzig, 1854) is largely directed against Wagner's music.

the first to force the question of meaning on musicians around 1800 and thereafter.[103] Newcomb arrives at this conclusion on the basis of Beethoven's statement at the top of his sketches for the *Pastorale* where he declares: 'It is left to the listener to recognize the situation'.[104] Even if Beethoven affected Wagner in that respect, Wagner's approach, as we will see, did not allow for this kind of leeway as he had very strong ideas about how to 'channel' listeners' responses.

While Wagner's writings are indicative of his clear-cut understanding of the concept of meaning, the scholarly notion of 'musical meaning' is still in search of an all-embracing conception.[105] Jean-Jacques Nattiez argues that it is impossible to 'reduce any work, whatever it may be, to a single network of meanings'.[106] There is a range of interpretations of the term 'meaning' that can, as Anirrudh D. Patel suggests, be organized along a 'conceptual axis with regard to how specific versus general the term "meaning" is taken to be'.[107] Patel considers Peter Kivy to stand for the notion's most rigid interpretation as the latter argues it ought to be reserved for the linguistic sense of 'reference and predication'.[108] For Patel, Nattiez's view represents the other end of the spectrum. Nattiez assumes that 'any object of any kind takes on meaning for an individual apprehending that object, as soon as that individual places the object in relation to areas of his lived experience—that is, in relation to a collection of other objects that belong to his or her experience of the world'.[109] Patel himself adopts a broader view of 'meaning' by advocating that 'meaning exists when perception of an object/event brings something to mind other than the object/event itself'.[110] Kivy criticizes this view arguing that it has nothing in common with the sense of meaning that anyone had in mind when contemplating musical meaning over the past 200 years.[111] For Kivy, the term leaves no room for the incorporation of scientific findings other than those derived from the linguistic realm.

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[103] Anthony Newcomb, 'Action and Agency in Mahler's Ninth Symhony, Second Movement', *Music and Meaning*, ed. Jenefer Robinson (Ithaca, 1997), 132.
[104] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Ein Skizzenbuch zur Pastoralsymphonie op. 68 und zu den Trios op. 70.1 und 2*, ed. Dagmar Weise (Bonn, 1961), 2, fol. 2^{R}: 'Man überläßt es dem Zuhörer, sich selbst die Situation aufzufinden.'
[105] Aniruddh D. Patel, *Music, Language, and the Brain* (New York, 2008), 304.
[106] Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 275.
[107] Patel, *Music, Language, and the Brain*, 304.
[108] Peter Kivy, *Sounding Off: Eleven Essays in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford, 2012), 169.
[109] Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, 1990), 9.
[110] Patel, *Music, Language, and the Brain*, 304.
[111] Kivy, *Sounding Off*, 188.

However, the labelling of motifs heavily conflicts with one of the most contentious points in the quest to explain music's implicit messages which is the transferability of linguistic parameters to the discourse about meaning. The practice of allocating tags to the principal musical ideas of the music dramas represents the epitome of describing a specific musical unit in verbal terms, as the description is boiled down to one catchword only. Music, as the most expressive of the arts, is difficult to translate into any other medium. Michel Imberty argues that 'the musical signifier refers to a signified that has no exact *verbal* signifier' and 'musical meaning, as soon as it is explained in words, loses itself in verbal meanings, too precise, too literal: they betray it'.[112] This view seems foreshadowed by Dahlhaus who declared that the practice of naming Wagnerian leitmotives is 'questionable, because the translation of musical expression into precise verbal terms is never satisfactory' and 'unavoidable, because the idea of wordless, instinctive understanding of musical motives, without the need for mediation through language, is an illusion'.[113]

Dahlhaus's commentary suggests that the tight spot into which popular Wagner reception has snookered itself even enjoys the sanction of scholarship. The necessity that is felt by Wagnerians to be able to *speak* about what implicit messages they have received from the music dramas turns Wagner's theory on its head. The listener who is in fact guided through the music drama in reliance on the *Beziehungszauber* effectively distrusts the phenomenon simply because it is difficult to translate the inner workings of the associations into words. In chapter III, we will investigate this severely neglected central feature of Wagner's theory which is his firm belief in the instinctive understanding of musical motifs.

The host of authors that have critically evaluated the referential power of Wagner's motifs can be divided into accounts of signification that recognize the universal validity of motivic associations—the motifs also operate as signifiers outside the specific musico-dramatic content—and those that limit the powers of signification to the scope of the work in question. In other words, a distinction can be made between universal and accessory associations. The proponents of universal associations are decidedly in the minority. Those accounts subscribing to accessory

[112] Michel Imberty, 'Perspectives nouvelles de la sémantique musicale expérimentale', *Musique en Jeu* 17 (1975), 90–1 (translation from Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 9).
[113] Dahlhaus, *Wagner's Music Dramas*, 61.

types of signification may be ordered according to the degree of arbitrariness with which Wagner's musical associations are drawn.

Associative accounts of musical meaning in Wagner

Carolyn Abbate's view, as expressed in her much-cited 1989 article, goes a step further than most accessory accounts by denying Wagner's motifs the capacity to maintain or take on referential powers even within the music drama. She argues that Wagner's motifs have 'no referential meaning; they may, and of course do absorb meaning at exceptional and solemn moments, by being used with elaborate calculation as signs, but unless purposely maintained in this artificial state, they shed their specific poetic meaning and revert to their natural state as musical thoughts'.[114] Her comment that 'opera criticism would face a dizzying liberation if the conventional assumption about leitmotif—that the referential meaning is immanent—were turned on its head' implies that her primary purpose was to 'galvanize' Wagner scholarship. Two years later Abbate modified her initial statement by conceding that 'motives *tend* to have specific associations at their first occurrence. But these associations also escape; they cannot be held by the music and become imprecise'.[115] However, she upheld the idea that 'considerable energy is required to keep the motifs suspended against gravity', an imagery that suggests that Wagner's motifs can also exist in some kind of somnambulistic or 'meaningless' state out of which they have to be redeemed.[116] Abbate conjures up the image of motifs that once they have lost their 'artificial' association hover around aimlessly in Wagner's music dramas.

In his motivic theory, however, Wagner makes provision for one category that on its own erodes Abbate's standpoint, which is the *Ahnungsmotiv* [motif of presentiment]. Throughout the music drama the motifs are designed to appear in different guises and perform different roles as prescribed by Wagner. The *Ahnungsmotiv* is responsible for evoking a presentiment of future dramatic events in the audience before the actualization of the dramatic motive in words around which music and gesture are mapped out. Wagner describes the *Ahnung* as 'the unfolding

[114] Carolyn Abbate, 'Wagner, "On Modulation", and *Tristan*', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1/1 (1989), 45.
[115] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1991), 168.
[116] Abbate, 'Wagner, "On Modulation", and *Tristan*', 45.

light, which in falling on the subject [*Gegenstand*] […] makes an apparent truth of its individual colour that is conditioned out of itself'.[117] It is defined by Wagner as 'the manifestation of an unspoken, because—in the sense of our verbal language—still ineffable sensation'.[118] A motif that fails to bear any inherent meaning cannot serve this purpose.

Although Abbate's startling assertion has rightly been unmasked by most scholars as rather polemical, there are many hermeneuticists that believe in the non-existence of inherent expressive meanings of music. Warren Darcy, who considers Abbate's view a 'statement without foundation', explains that although the motifs have no intrinsic referential meaning, Wagner deliberately invested a musical idea with semantic meaning.[119] Stephen Davies suggests that 'ideas and emotions might also be mentioned or described in the text sung when a leitmotif first makes its appearance, but, where the object is abstract and is not referred to', Davies is sceptical that it can be indicated by a 'melodic moment'.[120] Davies contends that 'leitmotifs operate like labels' and 'aim to create an association rather than adopting an association established outside the musical/dramatic content'.[121] Davies believes that a framework needs to be established within the musical work and it must be drawn to the attention of the audience at first hearing. It is striking that these accounts would have to dismiss the totality of Wagner's category of *Ahnungsmotive*.

Those accounts of signification that might accommodate Wagner's *Ahnungsmotive* are those that opt for the accrual of meaning under the condition that there is a modicum of initial meaning. The state of referential 'saturation', as it were, that is reached at the end of this process is a gradual progression. Roger Scruton likens Wagner's motifs to a 'musical magnet, around which meaning slowly accumulates'.[122] A process of referential ossification is taking place as the leitmotifs are repeated over and over again. Scruton argues that the 'leitmotive is not attached by a convention to its subject, as is a code' since he believes that a 'true leitmotive

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[117] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 190: 'Die Ahnung ist das sich ausbreitende Licht, das, indem es auf den Gegenstand fällt, die dem Gegenstande eigenthümliche, von ihm selbst aus bedingte Farbe zu einer ersichtlichen Wahrheit macht.'
[118] *Ibid*., 186: 'Die Ahnung ist die Kundgebung einer unausgesprochenen, weil – im Sinne unserer Wortsprache – noch unaussprechlichen Empfindung.'
[119] Darcy, *Wagner's Rheingold*, 50.
[120] Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca, 1994), 45.
[121] *Ibid*.
[122] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford, 1997), 137.

earns its meaning, from the dramatic contexts in which it appears'.[123] Scruton goes on to claim that if the meaning was 'attached by convention it must inevitably cease to be musically significant'.[124] This view is the result of Scruton's ontological claim that 'music belongs uniquely to the intentional sphere, and not the material realm'.[125] Egon Voss suggests that Wagner's motifs carry meaning not because of fixed semantics attached to them but through the character and affective content of the scene or situation in which they are employed.[126] This latter view seems to reverberate with one statement in what represents Wagner's last musico-theoretical treatise, the essay *On the Application*, in which he refers to 'verständlich geworden[e] Motive' [motifs made comprehensible].[127] At first sight, this expression seems to imply that Wagner himself argued in favour of a gradual accrual of meaning around the motifs. However, this phrasing is unprecedented in Wagner's writings and is linked instead to Wagner's complicated genesis of meaning which will become clear as my paper proceeds.

Abbate's view sides with Theodor W. Adorno's account in that they both position themselves at the far ends of a spectrum. Whereas Abbate rejects all traces of meaning, Adorno is overwhelmed by the abundance of meanings. The tendency to attach fixed verbal meanings to the leitmotifs turned them into static and quantifiable entities. However, the rejection of the fixed musical-semantic tags as proposed by the thematic guides might suggest that in Wagner one finds a fluid, semantically indistinct or labile signification of music. This is precisely what Adorno proposes as for him nothing in Wagner's musical language is unambiguous.[128] Adorno believes that what was once perceived as irritatingly modern and exotic was rooted in exactly this ambiguity of musical meaning.[129] However, Adorno attributes this quality to the fact that 'the inexorable progression [of the music] fails to create any new quality and constantly flows into the already known'.[130] The leitmotifs as the basic 'building blocks' of Wagner's musical language largely contribute to this stasis, as under

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[123] *Ibid*.
[124] *Ibid*.
[125] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetic Understanding: Essays in the Philosophy of Art and Culture* (London, 1983), 86.
[126] Egon Voss, 'Versagt die Musikwissenschaft vor der Musik Richard Wagners?', Konrad/Voss, *Der "Komponist" Richard Wagner*, 21.
[127] *Über die Anwendung*, 187.
[128] Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Trowbridge, 1981), 43.
[129] *Ibid*.
[130] *Ibid*.

Wagner's regime, 'signifier and signified became interchangeable'.[131] Adorno goes on to explain that 'their supposed psychological variations involve only a change of lighting'.[132] For him, the 'miniature pictures' never merged in the minds of the listeners with the referential content they are supposed to stand for.

Adorno's critique is based on a set of assumptions that is imbued with the orthodox notion of the leitmotif as shaped by reception history. In his perception of Wagner's musical language, Adorno deliberately suppresses typical Wagnerian phenomena such as the metamorphosis to which the composer subjects his motifs and their harmonic variation and reinterpretation. Instead, Adorno uses the metaphor of the 'miniature pictures' to describe Wagner's motifs in a way that reminds us of Emil Naumann's 1876 review in which he mocked Wagner's 'melodic moments' as taking us 'back to the infancy of art when words and labels were placed in the mouths [of the characters]'.[133] Although Adorno was undoubtedly aware of the negative influence that reception history exerted on the notion of leitmotif he nevertheless subscribed to a view shaped by the *Leitfäden*.

The concept of leitmotif has attracted a surprisingly small number of studies that seek to shed light on the motifs from a semiotic perspective. Since all hermeneutic studies seem to involve a semiotic ingredient, I am referring in this section to those few specific investigations that focus on the sign quality of Wagner's motifs. In his work on the semantics of leitmotif, Hubert Kolland differentiates between two basic types of motivic signifiers: the 'symbolic' and the 'iconic'.[134] Carolyn Abbate further itemizes these basic categories to include 'isosonorous', 'isomorphous', 'arbitrary' and 'cultural' subcategories.[135] Those motifs that are subsumed under the heading 'symbolic' derive their meaning from simultaneous associations with their signified. The symbolic signification is 'forcibly established and not "conventional" (it exists only within a single piece)'.[136] This definition emphasizes the intrareferential nature of these investigations. More promising is the category of iconic signs (in Peirce's sense) which in Abbate's view are isosonorous as

[131] *Ibid*., 35.
[132] *Ibid*.
[133] Naumann, *Musikdrama oder Oper*, 18 (see n. 8).
[134] Hubert Kolland, 'Zur Semantik der Leitmotive in Richard Wagners 'Der Ring des Nibelungen', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 4/2 (1973), 198.
[135] Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 32–3.
[136] *Ibid*., 33.

the musical signifier refers to something sonic.[137] Kolland also allows for further possibilities as for him 'iconicity' also involves 'visual and spatial (rather than sonic) terms'.[138] These studies refrain from investigating the internal relationships that give rise to the category of iconic signs. Kolland, however, raises the interesting point that Wagner was in need of scenic and textual explications in order to introduce motifs intelligibly because of his distrust in conventional musical means.[139]

The American musicologist Frank E. Kirby published a specialized study on the meaning of Wagner's motifs in which he divides the totality of Wagner's motifs ('two hundred and sixty-seven Wagnerian leitmotivs and reminiscence themes') into the 'iconic', 'analogic' and 'associative'.[140] The 'iconic and analogic themes […] represent sounds of and motion in the physical world' and play a relatively minor role. Kirby subdivides the bulk of 'associative' motifs into further categories: first, conventional musical types, 'other affective types' and 'functional types'; second, literary, aesthetic and moral types; and third, 'types from traditional music'. In his introduction, however, Kirby emphasizes how he plans to arrive at these findings: 'I do not find it necessary to deal in any detail with the philosophical-aesthetic approach to the problem of musical expression', which places the work outside the ambit of the present study.[141]

Christian Thorau's above-mentioned monograph, the most recent and influential of these studies, devises a theory of leitmotivic signification on the basis of Nelson Goodman's work on music as a language.[142] Goodman's theory is chosen by Thorau for its combination of verbal and non-verbal elements which is a departure from purely linguistic parameters.[143] Thorau proposes a reading of the leitmotifs as 'multi-dimensional referential entities' in which a host of different signs are concentrated. He is particularly attracted to Goodman's interleaving of metaphor and exemplification that enables the access to deeper strata of the relationship between signifier and signified. Although Thorau gives due care to Wagner's own ideas as expressed in *Opera and Drama*, however, he focuses on the semiotics of the leitmotif as a cultural construct that he distinguishes from Wagner's notion of the 'melodic

[137] *Ibid*.
[138] Kolland, 'Zur Semantik der Leitmotive', 198.
[139] *Ibid*., 204.
[140] Frank E. Kirby, *Wagner's Themes: A Study in Musical Expression* (Warren, 2004), 31–2.
[141] *Ibid*., 4.
[142] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis, 1968), 8.
[143] Thorau, *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit*, 84.

moments' and their creative intentions as proposed in the composer's theoretical writings. In other words, Thorau's semiotic interpretation is geared towards the product of reception history.

The idea that the referential power is generated by a process of fragmentation and subsequent new organization of these fragments overlooks the inherent referential power of those chosen segments upon which this particular technique in fact depends. Mark Berry argues that it is less the referential power of individual motifs that produces meaning 'than their combination and their foundation for Wagner's musico-dramatic forms'.[144] As Anthony Newcomb points out, the leitmotif charts fail to register the importance of phrase and section.[145] Newcomb contends that 'a leitmotif is a short, distinctive fragment of a phrase—perhaps just its first two measures or even just its first or second measure—which is malleable enough for such ongoing developmental use'.[146] However, the technique of combining distinctive elements of one motif with that of another in order to create psychologically complex commentaries, presupposes the recognizability of these constitutive elements. As these segments travel freely and coalesce with other elements to form new concatenations they must be stable enough to 'survive'. It is true that Wagner reverts to some sort of a modular organization from which he chooses elements but these segments are selected with great care as they need to carry sufficient inherent meaning to come to fruition in the new setting.

Towards Wagner's ideal

The most promising approaches to the core of Wagner's aesthetic creed are made in passing only by a number of scholars. Anthony Newcomb realizes that the expressive core of a motif rests in its emotional content. He suggests that 'few are connected simply or directly to an object, person, or situation, to which one can simply attach a word or phrase; most refer, from the moment of their first appearance, to the complex of emotions in a complex situation'.[147] Adrian Daub and Patrick McCreless contend that 'these *melodische Momente* […] were for [Wagner] not musical *representations*

[144] Mark Berry, *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire: Politics and Religion in Wagner's Ring* (Aldershot, 2006), 3.
[145] Anthony Newcomb, 'Siegfried: The Music', *Siegfried – English National Opera Guide*, ed. Nicholas John (Richmond, 2011), 41.
[146] *Ibid*., 21.
[147] *Ibid*., 23.

of dramatic ideas or psychological states, but rather those ideas or states themselves, condensed into music, so that, at least as he would claim, the feeling actually *is* the music'.[148] They paraphrase the nature of a Wagnerian motif as 'emotional content imparted in musical form'.[149] The account that comes closest to Wagner's vision is the view expressed by Donald J. Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams who argue that 'Wagner held that music in itself was the immediate expression of feeling, but that it could not designate the particular object toward which feeling was directed. Hence, for him the inner action of the drama existed in the music, while the function of word and gesture was to make definite the outer action'.[150] In the following subchapter I will trace the reasons why we need to reconsider our views about Wagner's process of generating meaning from the perspective of his own writings.

II.2. The role of musical meaning in *Opera and Drama*

What represents the core text of Wagner's aesthetics, *Opera and Drama* (1851), is at its most fundamental level a reflection on the nature and practice of musical meaning. The motivic ramifications of Wagner's ideas on musical meaning in *Opera and Drama* still remain largely unexplored by scholarship. In this treatise, Wagner effectively devises a new theoretical model that is designed to facilitate the communication of meaning through music. Wagner's account of the decay of the operatic genre in *Opera and Drama* is essentially a lamentation about the loss of one essential property: the comprehensibility of music. It is remarkable how closely Wagner's ideas about musical meaning are interconnected with his motivic language. Musical meaning for Wagner is synonymous with the comprehensibility of music in terms of the listener sensing meaning predominantly through the force of his motifs. This strongly suggests that a critical investigation of those processes that Wagner envisions for the sake of enhancing the comprehensibility of music promises to shed light on the true nature of Wagner's motifs. By adopting a Dahlhausian approach, I prefer to reconstruct the theoretical core ideas instead of providing a commentary to the relevant passages at this stage as we will engage with most of them in great detail

[148] Daub/McCreless, 'Der Ring des Nibelungen', 498.
[149] *Ibid*.
[150] Donald J. Grout/Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 4th edn (New York, 2003), 453.

over the course of the thesis.[151] The following claims as to how Wagner envisages the conveyance of meaning emerge from my conceptual research into his theoretical output which I will present as this chapter proceeds.

First of all, there is no musical material in Wagner's music dramas that he has devised not to contribute to the dramatic meaning of the work. For Wagner, the 'melodic moments' represent the prime movers in the generation of meaning. In the case of a motif that first occurs in the orchestra, the meaning generation process consists of two phases: the first phase relies on what can be identified as the most fundamental principle of Wagner's theory which is the existence of inherently expressive powers of music. In the second instance, the emotion that is 'inevitably' aroused in the listener by the motif's inbuilt expressivity is in need of a cognitive explanation that complements the overall semantic message. This vindication is provided through the presentation of an action which is *vice versa* made comprehensible through the communication of the underlying motives via the emotional element, i.e. the expressive force of the motif. In the case of a motif being introduced via *Versmelodie*—which Wagner has identified as the standard motivic exposition—the action and its underlying emotional motives are communicated simultaneously.

Before looking into the reasons that substantiate these claims, I shall contextualize Wagner's main treatise. The reasons why the composer embarked on writing *Opera and Drama* potentially contribute to our understanding of how the theory evolved. Wagner remained ambivalent as to whether the theory preceded the practical elaboration. The fact that he was able to present conflicting evidence reinforces the assumption that is underlying the present study, according to which, the theory as expounded in *Opera and Drama* and its practical application in the *Ring* go hand in hand. An investigation into the potential reasons why Wagner decided to put his visions into words before turning them into music at this crucial moment in his career may give a clearer picture as to how Wagner himself saw this overwhelmingly complex disquisition. Wagner began setting the text of the *Ring* to music in August 1850. Sometime after 12 August, Wagner put aside the first sketches for *Siegfrieds Tod* (later to be *Götterdämmerung*) in order to throw himself into writing *Opera and Drama*.

[151] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 103.

Carl Dahlhaus decided to downplay these first compositional *Ring* endeavours. He argued that half a decade elapsed after the completion of *Lohengrin* in 1848 and the start of *Rheingold* in 1853 during which 'Wagner the composer remained silent'.[152] Wagner himself largely contributed to this popular view as he mentions a six-year compositional hiatus following the completion of *Lohengrin* in a letter to Röckel.[153] Dahlhaus argues that the musical sketches that Wagner wrote in the summer of 1850 for *Siegfrieds Tod* (still considering Wagner the composer silent) fail to show sufficient signs of leitmotif technique.[154] For Dahlhaus, this implies that leitmotif existed as an aesthetic concept before Wagner knew how he would apply it to a composition.[155] Bailey, rightly acknowledging the significance of the first *Siegfrieds Tod* sketches of 1850, contends that the treatise is the result of some practical experience in working out a new manner of writing musical drama, rather than purely a presentation of theoretical ideas in advance.[156]

Wagner steered a precarious course by simultaneously adhering to two conflicting principles: the requirements of a systematic approach according to which the theory must precede its practical application run counter to his artistic ethos that precludes reflection and labour. In his autobiographical account *Mein Leben* [*My Life*], Wagner makes sure not to mix the first musical *Ring* sketches with the gestation of *Opera and Drama*. He wrote that 'it did not occur to me to begin the composition of *Siegfrieds Tod* […] it seemed necessary first of all to provide those few acquaintances [*Freunde*] near and far who were seriously interested in my art with a fuller explanation of those problems demanding solution, which were clear enough to me but still scarcely familiar to them'.[157]

In some accounts Wagner concedes the existence of a significant overlap between theoretical and practical experimentation. In *A Communication*, the essay that was conceived during the conception of *Opera and Drama*, Wagner clarifies that

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[152] Carl Dahlhaus/Mary Whittall, 'Wagner's "A Communication to My Friends"', *The Musical Times*, 124/1680 (1983), 90.
[153] *SL*, 301; *SB*, IV, 59–60 (25./26.2.1854): '[…] nach sechsjähriger gänzlicher Unterbrechung! […]'.
[154] Dahlhaus/Whittall, 'Wagner's "A Communication to My Friends"', 91.
[155] *Ibid*.
[156] Robert Bailey, 'Wagner's Musical Sketches for *Siegfrieds Tod*', *Studies in Music History, Essays for Oliver Strunk* (Princeton, 1968), 462.
[157] Richard Wagner, *My Life*, ed. Mary Whittall, trans. Andrew Gray (Cambridge, 1983), 459; Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin, 2 vols. (Munich, 1969), II, 43: 'An die Komposition von "Siegfried's Tod" zu gehen, wollte mir aber nicht zu Sinnen […] hierfür erschien es mir vor allem nötig, den wenigen Freunden, welche sich nah und fern ernstlich mit meiner Kunst befassten, immer deutlicheren Aufschluss über die notwendig zu lösenden, bestimmt mir vorschwebenden, Jenen aber noch kaum nur sich darstellenden Probleme zu geben.'

'practical experience' instead of long-winded reflective processes was the driving force behind *Opera and Drama*.[158] In *Zukunftsmusik* [*Music of the Future*] (1861), Wagner explains that 'the most daring of my theoretical speculations concerning the form of music drama were brewing within me precisely because at that very time I was carrying in my head the plan of my great Nibelung drama […] thus my theories were virtually little more than an abstract expression of the artistic process then at work within me'.[159]

In more intimate text types, such as letters of the time, Wagner gives quite a different impression. To his friend Theodor Uhlig he confided that 'I still owe the world what really matters, namely the work of art which, I may add, had already matured within me before the theory was ever formulated'.[160] After having begun the first musical *Ring* sketches, Wagner looked back on a tormented time in a letter to Liszt:

> Indeed, I owe it to you that soon I shall be able to resume being entirely an artist. I consider this final resumption of my artistic plans to which I now shall turn as one of the most crucial moments in my life. Between the musical execution of my Lohengrin and that of my Siegfried lies for me a stormy, but I know, fruitful world. I had to reconsider the entire life behind me, to bring into full consciousness everything dawning in it, to overcome any rising reflection by complete engagement with it—that is, by the deepest entering into its subject—in order to throw myself once more with clear and cheerful consciousness into the beautiful unconsciousness of artistic production.[161]

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[158] *Eine Mittheilung*, 323: 'dieses Verfahren, das in seiner beziehungsvollen Ausdehnung über das ganze Drama nie zuvor angewandt worden ist, nicht durch Reflexion, sondern einzig durch praktische Erfahrung, und durch die Natur meiner künstlerischen Absicht, hingeleitet worden bin.'

[159] Richard Wagner, *Three Wagner Essays*, trans. Robert L. Jacobs (London, 1979) [*TWE*], 32; *Zukunftsmusik*, 118: 'daß selbst meine kühnsten Schlüsse auf die zu ermöglichende dramatisch-musikalische Form mir dadurch sich aufdrängten, daß ich zu gleicher Zeit den Plan zu meinem großen Nibelungen-Drama […] im Kopfe trug und dort in der Weise ausbildete, daß meine Theorie fast nichts Anderes als ein abstrakter Ausdruck des in mir sich bildenden künstlerisch-produktiven Prozesses war.'

[160] *SL*, 261–62; *SB*, IV, 386 (31.5.1852): '[…] die eigentliche Sache bin ich mit dem kunstwerke, das allerdings schon vor der theorie in mir reif war, schuldig geblieben.'

[161] *SB*, III, 467 (25.11.1850): 'Dir verdanke ich es, daß ich nun bald ganz wieder künstler sein kann. Ich betrachte die endliche aufnahme meiner künstlerischen pläne, zu der ich mich nun wende, als einen der entscheidensten momente in meinem leben: zwischen der musikalischen ausführung meines Lohengrin und der meines Siegfried, liegt für mich eine stürmische, aber – ich weiß – fruchtbare welt. Ich hatte ein ganzes leben hinter mir aufzuräumen, alles dämmernde in ihm mir zum bewußtsein zu bringen, die

Before being able to continue his compositional efforts, Wagner seems to have felt the urge to set forth the theoretical underpinnings of the musical language that came to be his mature style. Wagner goes through a period of reflection that enables him to reach a new level of unconscious production—as it were, an unconscious but 'informed' *Kunstschaffen* [artistic production]—a proposition that we will explore in detail when discussing Wagner's means of expression.

Opera and Drama represents Wagner's prime theoretical forum in which he was able to 'write away' the host of ideas that were dormant within him. Mark Berry suggests that all of Wagner's writings represent 'far more than a "pathology" of which he needed to rid his system prior to composition'.[162] Although I subscribe to the general thrust of this argument, I believe that its scope needs be restricted to *Opera and Drama* only. In comparison to his other publications, Wagner wrote this treatise for himself. This is supported by the difficulties that arise when trying to identify the intended readership of *Opera and Drama*. According to the account in *My Life*, Wagner intended to give 'those few acquaintances [*Freunde*]' a fuller explanation of 'those problems demanding solution, which were clear enough' to him. It is highly doubtful that the problems were 'clear enough to him' as after having finished the work, Wagner himself was overwhelmed by the length of the treatise: 'My essay on the nature of opera […] has assumed greater dimensions than I had first supposed'.[163] The account from *My Life* underscores why Wagner had the title *A Communication to My Friends* in mind, which was subsequently given to the supplement to *Opera and Drama*. The original title was *Drei Operndichtungen nebst einer Mittheilung an meine Freunde als Vorwort* [*Three Opera Poems Along with a Communication to My Friends Intended as a Preface*]. According to Cosima, Wagner conceded as late as 1882 that '"[s]uch things are studies, explorations which one makes for one's own benefit."' [164] Wagner wrote in *Music of the Future* that

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nothwendig mir aufgestiegene reflexion durch sie selbst – durch innigstes eingehen auf ihren gegenstand – zu bewältigen, um mich mit klarem, heiterem bewußtsein wieder in das schöne unbewußtsein des kunstschaffen's zu werfen.' (some of the translation from Patrick McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried: Its Drama, History, and Music* (Ann Arbor, 1982), 57).

[162] Berry, *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire*, 2.

[163] *SB*, III, 467 (25.11.1850): 'Meine arbeit über das wesen der oper […] dehnt sich zu größerem umfange aus, als ich anfangs vermuthete.' (translation from Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 37).

[164] *CWD*, II, 865 (amended); *CWT*, II, 953 (4.6.1882): '[…] "Das sind Studien, Forschungen, die man für sich macht […]"'.

> I cannot but suppose that its minutely detailed exposition of my main thought must have been more interesting to myself than it could ever be to others, either now or in the future. They were intimate meditations which, owing to my uncommonly lively interest in the subject, assumed in part a polemical character.[165]

It seems that after having adopted a more comfortable command of the material in the course of the theory's actual application to several compositions, Wagner realized its true nature as a collection of ideas devoted to introspection.

Wagner's motivic theory as pronounced in Opera and Drama

Before turning to a critical evaluation of Wagner's motivic theory as expounded in *Opera and Drama*, one crucial remark that is in fact taken from *Music of the Future*, illuminates Wagner's general approach to the role of musical means in the ideal artwork. He wrote that

> [m]y primary aim is to compel the public to focus its attention upon the dramatic action so closely that it is never for a moment lost sight of: all the musical elaboration must be perceived simply as the presentation of this action.[166]

Although we will see that the essay *Music of the Future* enjoys a unique relationship with Wagner's other major prose works, this statement cogently sums up Wagner's general plan according to which the music must *appear* as subservient to the communication of dramatic messages. There is no room for any purely musical embellishment in the ideal work of art.

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[165] *TWE*, 22; *Zukunftsmusik*, 101–2: 'da ich nicht anders glauben kann, als daß die darin [in *Oper und Drama*] sehr bis in das feinste Detail gehenden Darlegungen meines Hauptgedankens mehr für mich selbst Interesse haben konnten, als sie jetzt und in Zukunft für Andere haben können. Es waren intime Meditationen, die ich, vom ungemein lebhaften Interesse an dem Gegenstande gestachelt, zum Theil in polemischem Charakter vortrug.'

[166] *TWE*, 44; *Zukunftsmusik*, 136: 'Meine Absicht ist demnach, das Publikum zu allererst an die dramatische Aktion selbst zu fesseln, und zwar in der Weise, daß es diese keinen Augenblick aus dem Auge zu verlieren genöthigt ist, im Gegentheil aller musikalische Schmuck ihm zunächst nur ein Darstellungsmittel dieser Handlung zu sein scheinst.'

The way in which Wagner described the function of *Opera and Drama* drives home my claim that this treatise is devoted to issues of musical meaning. In a letter to Röckel, Wagner sets out the plan for an essay that quickly turned into an extensive book:

> I. Account of the nature of opera through to our own day, concluding that "music is a life-bearing organism (Beethoven practiced it, so to speak, with the aim of giving birth to melody)—in other words, a female organism."—II. Account of the nature of drama from Shakespeare through to our own day. Result: the poetic understanding is a procreative organism; the poetic intent is the fertilizing seed […] III. […] Account of the birth of the poetic intent by perfected music.[167]

Wagner reverts to a strongly sexual metaphor which must have raised eyebrows among the readers of the day. This imagery, however, is not part of a deliberate provocation in its own right. Instead, Wagner uses this metaphor to ensure that the readers of *Opera and Drama* understand his 'genealogical' approach to musical meaning. This is reflected in his emphasis on the 'life-bearing' stimulus of music. The sexual intercourse that is taking place between music as the female element and poetry as the male lover leads to the engenderment of musical meaning. Perfected music is through this genealogical lineage related to the *Urmelodie* [primal melody]—a concept that I will explore in turn—the first musical utterances by humans that were naturally meaningful as they were driven by instincts.

The metaphor of 'giving birth' that is used at various places in *Opera and Drama* is seen as a process of 'ensignification'. There are several examples showing that Wagner often resorts to live-giving metaphors such as *beleben* [enliven] if he wishes to highlight a reinforced need for musical meaning that can actually be grasped by the listener. For instance, the transfer of meaning in Wagner's theory is at its most effective in those moments that fulfil the complex criteria of his notion of 'verse melody'. Wagner describes the 'verse melody' as the 'life-giving epicentre of

[167] *SB*, III, 477 (12.12.1850): 'I. Darstellung des wesens der oper bis auf unsre tage, mit dem resultate, "die musik ist ein gebärender organismus (Beethoven hat ihn gleichsam zum gebären der melodie geübt) – also ein weiblicher". – II. Darstellung des wesens des drama's von Shakespeare bis auf unsre tage: resultat, der dichterische verstand ist ein zeugender organismus, die dichterische absicht der befruchtende same […]. III. […] "Darstellung des gebärungsaktes der dichterischen absicht durch die vollendete Tonsprache […]"' (translation from Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 37).

the dramatic expression' [*der lebengebende Mittelpunkt des dramatischen Ausdruckes*].[168] In the lesser known lecture, *Über die Bestimmung der Oper* [*On the Destiny of Opera*], given in 1871, Wagner explained that '[i]t was […] reserved to the German genius to elevate the musical form through the highest enlivenment [*höchste Belebung*] of each of its smallest fractional parts to the inexhaustible diversity, which now presents itself to the world's astonishment in the music of our *Beethoven*'.[169] Wagner, who admired the 'irresistible poignancy and certainty of Beethoven's motivic world', advocates the revitalization of music by removing 'dead', i.e. meaningless formulaic material, as he regarded conventional opera as 'death represented in meaningless [*inhaltslose*] form'.[170]

Although Wagner's dialectically-conceived structure of *Opera and Drama* and the title of its synthetic third part, *Dichtkunst und Tonkunst im Drama der Zukunft* [*Art of Poetry and Music in the Drama of the Future*], in particular, portend that both art forms are equally weighted, it is crucial to note that Wagner never really shared the compositional genesis of his works, let alone of his motifs, with the wider public. Wagner reflected incessantly on art and many other subjects and the plethora of texts that he published give evidence of his changing aesthetic views to the extent that Ruth Katz believes that he wrote more words than notes.[171] Surprisingly, Wagner's need to 'write away' his 'pathology' was not strong enough to touch one of his most highly-valued principles. Wagner's reluctance to share the processes behind his artistic creations is reflected in an 1853 letter to Louis Köhler in which he explains that

> [b]asically, I am forced increasingly to realize that what is at issue here is something which each of us does best to come to terms with individually: but since there is such a fearful amount of teaching going on, it is only natural for people to feel a desire to contribute to some more sensible method of teaching. In this respect, I have repeatedly drawn Brendel's attention to the fact that he ought to confine himself much more in his

[168] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 190.
[169] Richard Wagner, *Über die Bestimmung der Oper*, *GSD*, IX [*Über die Bestimmung*], 147: 'Dem deutschen Genius […] war es vorbehalten, die musikalische Form durch höchste Belebung jedes ihrer kleinsten Bruchtheile [*sic*] zu der unerschöpflichen Mannigfaltigkeit zu erheben, die zum Staunen der Welt sich jetzt in der Musik unseres *Beethoven* darbietet.'
[170] *Beethoven*, 107: '[…] Beethoven'schen Motivenwelt mit ihrer unabwehrbaren Eindringlichkeit und Bestimmtheit […]' and *OuD*, *GSD*, III, 251: '[…] den Tod in inhaltslosen Formen […]'.
[171] Ruth Katz, *A Language of Its Own: Sense and Meaning in the Making of Western Art Music* (Chicago, 2009), 225, n. 5.

> journal [*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*] to what can actually be learned, in other words *technique*. The content of a work of art is a matter for the individual, and is not a subject for criticism; it is a question here of feeling a sense of liking or disliking for the work under discussion, and that again is a matter for the individual. Technique, however, is the common property of artists of all ages, each inherits it form the next one, every artist adds to it, and forms it as best he can and must. This is something that can be discussed, although only of course among artists: the layman should never find out what is being said.[172]

This paragraph gives us a clearer picture as to why Wagner simply had to withhold further musical, i.e. technical details. Wagner encourages the public discussion of technical details for educational purposes only. The true core of musical knowledge is a sanctuary that is handed down from one artist to the next bypassing the wider public. We will examine further reasons for Wagner's decision not to publish a fully-fledged account of his motivic technique in the chapter devoted to Wagner's vision of 'emotional understanding'.

The 'construction' of meaning according to Opera and Drama

Over the following pages I will outline Wagner's envisaged method of engendering meaning through motifs before critically evaluating two central concepts that are involved in this process: '*Versmelodie*' [verse melody] and '*Gedanke*' [thought or idea]. What is absolutely striking is that, according to *Opera and Drama*, the generation of musical meaning depends on two parallel streams of signification. Wagner trusts in the inherent expressive meaning of music and in the meaning of gesture and verbal communication. The visual component is situated at the interface

[172] *SL*, 287; *SB*, V, 370–71 (24.7.1853): 'Im Grunde muß ich zwar immer mehr inne werden, daß es sich hier um Dinge handelt, die Jeder am klügsten für sich abmacht: da einmal so heillos viel gelehrt wird, so kommt aber wiederum der Wunsch wohl sehr natürlich auf, zu einer vernünftigen Lehrweise beizutragen. Ich habe in diesem Bezug Brendel wiederholt darauf aufmerksam gemacht, daß er in seiner Zeitschrift sich vielmehr an das rein Erlernbare, die *Technik* halten lassen sollte. Der Inhalt eines Kunstwerkes ist Sache des Individuums, und geht keine Kritik an; hier heißt's Neigung oder Abneigung dagegen empfinden, und das ist wiederum Sache des Individuums. Die Technik ist aber das Gesammteigenthum [*sic*] der Künstler aller Zeiten; einer erbt es vom andern, jeder mehrt es und formt es so gut er kann und muß. Hierüber läßt sich sprechen, natürlich aber nur zwischen Künstlern: der Laie soll nie etwas davon erfahren.'

between the factual and emotional realms. For Wagner, the fusion point of these concurrent streams triggers the full comprehension of the musico-dramatic event. An action is incomprehensible unless its underlying emotional motivations are being communicated. What seems to represent Wagner's standard scenario is the coincidence between an action and its underlying emotional motivation. In the form of the musical motif, the emotional residue is carried away and functions as a reminiscent encapsulation of the action's underlying emotion. The musical embodiment of an emotion may anticipate the action that it is supposed to illuminate. In order to be understood, the emotion that has been aroused musically, however, is in need of being complemented by the action that it triggered.

In Part III of *Opera and Drama*—a theoretical manifesto devoted to the drama of the future—Wagner describes the synthesis of poetry and music in a fascinating, albeit complex, way. The sixth chapter of Part III is primarily devoted to the interrelationship between the *dramatische Situation* [dramatic situation], the *Versmelodie* and the orchestra. Wagner here devises the second of his fundamental formal categories of the musical drama: the *dramatische Situation* that exists alongside the *dichterisch-musikalische Periode* [musico-poetic period].[173] In surprisingly few paragraphs he also discusses the motivic network and the role of motifs within the formal structure.

Judging by the degree of detail and diligence that is applied to the description of the constitutive elements of the ideal artwork, one would expect a rigorous analysis of the musical processes. However, one searches in vain for a more detailed account of the procedures behind the genesis of the *Tonkunst* [music] as promised in the title of Part III. Wagner never tires of describing the ideal method of how the poet would conceive the motives of his work but the text remains suspiciously silent on how the composer would arrive at *his* motifs. A significant proportion of those details that are missing in the theoretical outline concerning the 'melodic moments' may be reconstructed via an interrogation of its analogue—Wagner's discussion of the role of motives in poetry. Wagner explains that 'the musician, as translator [*Verwirklicher*] of

[173] Wagner refrains from outlining the precise relationship between these two categories.

the poet's intention, has to arrange these motives, that have been compressed into melodic moments *in complete accordance with the poetic intent*'.[174]

Central to Wagner's theory is another metaphor derived from nature which is rooted in his 'genealogical' approach that we have come across earlier: the phenomenon of '*organisches Werden*' [organic becoming].[175] Wagner draws a clear distinction between music and the visual arts and argues that only music is capable of rendering the process of 'organic becoming'. Wagner argues that '[b]y presenting his artwork to us as something that is continuously and organically "becoming" and thereby turning us into cooperating witnesses of this "becoming", he [the poet] frees his creation from all shackles of his creative work which in case of leaving his traces would simply transport us to feelingless cold amazement'.[176] The drama of the future requires the '*vollkommene Aufgehen der Absicht in das Kunstwerk*' [complete actualization of the intent in the artwork] in order to achieve 'indiscernibleness of intent'.[177]

Wagner imposes a number of limits on the (poet's) artistic freedom by prescribing a catalogue of subject-matters that is excluded from the ideal artwork for the sake of comprehensibility. First of all, it seems futile to search for content signified by 'melodic moments' which steps outside the framework of representing '*Erscheinungen des menschlichen Lebens*' [phenomena of human life]. The 'melodic moments' are positioned at the very end of a method to which phenomena initially chosen by the poet have been subjected. In Wagner's philosophy of art, the 'phenomena of human life' represent the primary source from which the artist draws his motifs.[178] Repeatedly, Wagner refers to the constitutive relationship between ordinary life and poetic production which he describes as follows:

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[174] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 201: '[…] der Musiker, als Verwirklicher der Absicht des Dichters, hat diese zu melodischen Momenten verdichteten Motive, *im vollsten Einverständnisse mit der dichterischen Absicht*, daher leicht so zu ordnen […]'.
[175] *Ibid*., 192.
[176] *Ibid*.: 'Dadurch, daß der Dichter sein Kunstwerk uns im steten organischen Werden vorführt, und uns selbst zu organisch mitwirkenden Zeugen dieses Werdens macht, befreit er seine Schöpfung eben von allen Spuren seines Schaffens, vermöge dessen er, ohne die Vertilgung seiner Spuren, uns nur in das gefühllos kalte Staunen versetzen könnte […]'.
[177] *Ibid*., 78.
[178] *Ibid*., 202.

> He [the poet] therefore first of all has to show us [his characters] in situations recognizably similar to those we have found ourselves in, or those we could have found ourselves in.[179]

On another occasion Wagner describes the eligible action as 'one which is motivated by the truest […] the closest to the human emotions [*den menschlichen Empfindungen naheliegensten*], the simplest relations'.[180] Wagner's remarks convey a sense of purity as well as a tendency towards describing the action in terms of an everyday occurrence. The composer further specifies the source from which the poet may derive his motives which is 'our view of ordinary life, in which we behave as is our wont, according to our predisposition and needs [*Neigung und Bedürfniß*]'.[181] Although Wagner still refers to life as a construct governed by a set of customs, his commentary, by mentioning 'our predisposition and needs', highlights an emphasis on inward-facing aspects of human existence.

At the next level of his exploration Wagner introduces the crucial requirement of the '*Rechtfertigung*' [vindication]. Wagner distinguishes between 'moments of action' [*Handlungsmomente*] and their underlying 'motives'. As has already been mentioned, throughout *Opera and Drama* Wagner predominantly uses the term '*Motiv*' in the sense of *Beweggründe* [reasons or motivations or motives]: 'since in order to understand the principal action one needs to have sympathy for its motivation'.[182] Wagner declares that '[a]n action can therefore only be explained in the drama if it is completely vindicated by the feeling, and the dramatic poet's task is thus not to invent actions, but to make an action comprehensible because the emotional necessity dictates it'.[183] Wagner explains the reason for the need of *Rechtfertigung* as follows:

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[179] *Ibid*., 193: 'Er [der Dichter] hat sie [seine gedichteten Gestalten] daher uns zuerst in Lebenslagen zu zeigen, die eine kenntliche Ähnlichkeit mit denen haben, in denen wir uns selbst befunden oder doch befunden haben können.'
[180] *Ibid*., 80: 'Diese Handlung kann daher nur eine solche sein, die aus den wahrsten […] den menschlichen Empfindungen naheliegendsten, somit einfachsten Beziehungen hervorgeht.'
[181] *Ibid*.: '[…] des gewöhnlichen Lebens, in welchem wir aus Neigung und Bedürfniß gerade so handeln, wie wir es gewohnt sind.'
[182] *Ibid*., 83: '[…] weil es zum Verständniß der Haupthandlung des Mitempfindens der Beweggründe bedarf […]'.
[183] *Ibid*., 78–9: 'Eine Handlung kann daher nur dann im Drama erklärt werden, wenn sie dem Gefühle vollkommen gerechtfertigt wird, und die Aufgabe des dramatischen Dichters ist es somit, nicht Handlungen zu erfinden, sondern eine Handlung aus der Nothwendigkeit des Gefühles der Art zu verständlichen, daß wir der Hülfe des Verstandes zu ihrer Rechtfertigung gänzlich entbehren dürfen.'

> A musical motif can only convey a distinct impression to our mental activity when the feelings expressed in this motif are communicated by a distinct individual with reference to a distinct object and are thus made distinct, that is, precisely conditioned. Apart from these conditions a musical motif can only be presented to our feelings as something indistinct, and something indistinct may be repeated in the same shape as often as you like, it will amount to nothing more than a repercussive indeterminacy [*wiederkehrendes Unbestimmtes*].[184]

This complicated passage might become clearer when read in conjunction with Wagner's remark that he made upon hearing Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*. He described how his initial enthusiasm wavered in view of the missing dramatic motives: 'I realized forthwith that, having lost sight of the musical thread (that is, the constantly perceptible alternation of distinct motifs), I was meant to turn to scenic motives which were not, however, present in my memory and which had not been listed in the form of a programme'.[185] From these quotations the following picture emerges: an action derived from human life only qualifies for the artwork of the future if the spectator would be enabled to grasp its underlying motivation without any form of reflection by taking advantage of some innate laws. The decisive question of whether such inherent laws or 'universals' indeed exist, will be dealt with extensively.

Closely linked to the requirement of 'vindication' is a further category that Wagner introduces to iterate the nexus between an action and its underlying motivation: *Nothwendigkeit* [necessity]. Wagner explains that '[o]nly in this way does he [the poet] actualize his intention to sensualize [*versinnlicht*] the phenomena of life

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[184] *Ibid*., 185: 'Ein musikalisches Motiv kann auf das Gefühl einen bestimmten, zu gedankenhafter Thätigkeit sich gestaltenden Eindruck nur dann hervorbringen, wenn die in dem Motive ausgesprochene Empfindung vor unsren Augen von einem bestimmten Individuum an einem bestimmten Gegenstande, als ebenfalls bestimmte, d. h. wohlbedingte, kundgegeben ward. Der Wegfall dieser Bedingungen stellt ein musikalisches Motiv dem Gefühle als etwas Unbestimmtes hin, und etwas Unbestimmtes kann in derselben Erscheinung noch so oft wiederkehren, es bleibt uns immer ein eben nur wiederkehrendes Unbestimmtes […]' (translation adopted from Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 321).

[185] Richard Wagner, *Über Franz Liszt's Symphonische Dichtungen*, *GSD*, V [*Über Franz Liszt's Symphonische Dichtungen*], 193–94: '[…] die größte Hingerissenheit, in die mich die Entwickelung des Hauptmotives gebracht hatte, verflüchtigte und ernüchterte sich im Verfolge des ganzen Satzes bis zum unläugbaren Misbehagen [*sic*]; ich errieth sogleich, daß, während der musikalische Faden verloren gegangen war (d. h. der konsequent übersichtliche Wechsel bestimmter Motive), ich mich nun an scenische Motive zu halten hatte, die mir nicht gegenwärtig und auch nicht im Programm aufgezeichnet waren.' (translation adopted from Grey, 'On the Origins of Leitmotif', 207).

according to their fullest instinctiveness [*Unwillkür*] before our eyes, indeed, to justify life itself out of necessity: for it is only this necessity that the feeling is able to understand, and with which it communicates'.[186] In a letter to Uhlig, Wagner specified what this criterion meant to him. He wrote '[t]he man, therefore, who satisfies the inner necessity of his being is free, since he feels at one with himself, because everything he does is at one with his nature and his true needs [*Bedürfnisse*]: but the man who follows not his inner but some outer necessity obeys a coercive force,—he is unfree, a slave, unhappy'.[187] Wagner is making reference to man's nature and once again to one's needs. There is an overall sense of a search for the unencumbered and unbiased qualities of pure human existence.

What is absolutely striking in the exposition of Wagner's theory is the precision with which Wagner himself believes to be able to arouse a specific emotion in the listener. Wagner is convinced that

> [t]he dramatic character must speak in this language of music [*Tonsprache*] if we are to understand him with our aroused feeling [*Gefühl*]: he must, however, also speak in such a way that he is able to *determine* the feeling [*Empfindung*] aroused in us, our more generally aroused feeling can only be determined by giving it a fixed point around which it can accrue in the form of human sympathy, our feeling can then identify in communion with this particular person in this particular set of circumstances, influenced by this environment, given life by this particular will and involved in this enterprise.[188]

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[186] *Ibid*., 78: 'Nur dadurch erreicht er seine Absicht, daß er die Erscheinungen des Lebens nach ihrer vollsten Unwillkür vor unseren Augen versinnlicht, also das Leben selbst aus seiner Nothwendigkeit rechtfertigt: denn nur diese Nothwendigkeit vermag das Gefühl zu verstehen, an das er sich mittheilt.'
[187] *SL*, 177; *SB*, III, 125 (16.9.1849): 'Wer daher der inneren nothwendigkeit seines wesens genügt, ist frei, weil er sich bei sich fühlt, weil alles was er thut seiner natur, seinen wirklichen bedürfnissen entspricht: wer aber nicht seiner inneren, sondern einer äußeren nothwendigkeit folgt, gehorcht einem zwange, – er ist unfrei, sclave, unglückselig.'
[188] *RWOuD*, 33, 35 (amended); *OuD, GSD*, IV, 195: 'In dieser Tonsprache muß die dramatische Person sprechen, sollen wir sie mit dem angeregten Gefühle verstehen: sie muß in ihr aber zugleich so sprechen, daß sie die in uns angeregte Empfindung zu *bestimmen* vermag, und unsre allgemeinhin angeregte Empfindung bestimmt sich nur dadurch, daß ihr ein fester Punkt gegeben wird, um welchen sie sich als menschliches Mitgefühl sammeln, und an welchem sie zur besonderen Theilnahme an diesem einen, in dieser bestimmten Lebenslage befindlichen, von dieser Umgebung beeinflußten, von diesem Willen beseelten und in diesem Vorhaben begriffenen Menschen sich verdichten kann.'

Wagner prepares the reader for the central claim of his treatise which is the need for a revolutionary mode of expression that is only found in a particular manipulation of musical means. Thomas Grey has identified this vision as the trope of new semantic determinacy.[189] In order to defend Wagner's innovations against such criticism, the potential contours of the new *Sprachvermögen* [faculty of speech] of the orchestra are explored in the second half of my thesis.

The concept of 'verse melody' and Wagner's idea of the 'thought'

In Wagner's theory, the transfer of meaning is at its most effective during moments of 'verse melody'. As referred to earlier, Wagner describes the 'verse melody' as the 'life-giving epicentre of the dramatic expression'.[190] The process of translating dramatic motives into 'melodic moments' generates different semantic levels. Among these varying degrees of signification, the 'verse melody' is the supreme structural device reserved to those elevated moments of the highest dramatic momentum. Wagner assigns the 'highest emotional expression to the actualization of verse into melody'.[191] The 'verse melody' is 'the binding and mediating link between verbal and musical language'.[192] This nexus operates on two levels within the phenomenon of 'verse melody'. By dint of using *Stabreim* [stave rhyme], the composer initializes the 'emotionalization' of the phrase by translating it into an 'emotionally manipulated language'. At the same time, 'verse melody' represents the ultimate fusion point of the dramatic action in the form of poetry, gesture and emotional commentary which is music. The concept of *Versmelodie* carries a number of problematic issues that we will turn to at various points in this study.

It is essential to note that the actualization of 'melodic moment' through *Versmelodie* turns this motif into a 'motif of reminiscence'. In opposition to a 'motif of presentiment', such an actualized 'melodic moment' carries Wagner's notion of the 'idea' or 'thought' [*Gedanke*] which in the *Opera and Drama* sense is the substratum of a character's past emotion. It is the motif that retains the 'bestowed colour', the

[189] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 322.
[190] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 190.
[191] *Ibid*., 119: '[…] diese Steigerung zu höchster Gefühlsäußerung wäre eben nur im Aufgehen des Verses in die Melodie erreicht worden […]'.
[192] *Ibid*.: '[…] das bindende und verständlichende Band zwischen der Wort- und Tonsprache.'

recollection of this past expression.[193] According to Wagner, the '"*Gedanke*" *des Instrumentalmotives*' [idea of the instrumental motif] is derived from the 'verse melody'.[194] The fact that a 'motif of reminiscence' encapsulates the residue of a previously experienced emotion instead of signifying a rationalized dramatic agent divorces the labels of the *Leitfadenliteratur* from Wagner's theory. Wagner elucidates the complex relationship between a 'thought' and its underlying emotional content as follows:

> As the outpouring of an emotion first imparted to us by the actor and now expressively delivered by the orchestra *at a moment* when the character merely nurses that emotion in his memory, such a melody realizes for us the character's thought. Even where the present speaker appears no longer conscious of that emotion, its characteristic sounding in the orchestra is able to stir within us an emotion which—in filling out a conjecture, in lending greater comprehensibility to a situation by suggesting dramatic motives that could not yet be represented—for us becomes a *thought*, yet is in itself *more* than a thought, for it is the *emotional content* [*Gefühlsinhalt*] of the thought *made present*.[195]

Therefore, in accordance with the last words of this paragraph the essential feature of a motif is the extraction of the purely emotive residue—the emotional simulacrum, as it were—of a previous experience. Thomas Grey argues that the sounding of motifs 'contribute to our fuller understanding of a situation by assisting in the "interpretation of motives that are contained in this situation'" without identifying the key role that Wagner assigns to 'emotional' reflection of a past experience in this interpretative

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[193] *Ibid*., 190.
[194] *Ibid*.: '[…] aus ihr [Versmelodie] leitet sich als *Erinnerung* der "Gedanke" des Instrumentalmotives her.'
[195] *Ibid.*, 184: 'Eine solche Melodie, wie sie als Erguß einer Empfindung uns vom Darsteller mitgetheilt worden ist, verwirklicht uns, wenn sie vom Orchester ausdrucksvoll *da* vorgetragen wird, wo der Darsteller jene Empfindung nur noch in der Erinnerung hegt, den Gedanken dieses Darstellers; ja, selbst da, wo der gegenwärtig sich Mittheilende jener Empfindung sich gar nicht mehr bewußt erscheint, vermag ihr charakteristisches Erklingen im Orchester in uns eine Empfindung anzuregen, die zur Ergänzung eines Zusammenhanges, zur höchsten Verständlichkeit einer Situation durch Deutung von Motiven, die in dieser Situation wohl enthalten sind, in ihren darstellbaren Momenten aber nicht zum hellen Vorschein kommen können, uns zum *Gedanken* wird, an sich aber *mehr* als der Gedanke, nämlich der *vergegenwärtigte Gefühlsinhalt* des Gedankens ist.' (translation adopted from Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E.T.A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg* (Cambridge, 2011), 133).

task.[196] Wagner is not concerned with a recollection in the form of cognitive memories instead his theory is imbued with notions of pre-reflective activity in the form of implicit memories.

Leonard B. Meyer suggested in 1956 that music can evoke mental imageries of 'half-forgotten thoughts of persons, places and experiences'.[197] Jacques Derrida's notion of 'hauntology' addresses the significance of how the remnants of past actions affect our perception of current experience.[198] The American neurophysiologist Joseph E. LeDoux explores how an experience may turn into a stimulus with a specific emotional meaning.[199] LeDoux's most fundamental assumption is that the brain has multiple memory systems. He advocates a difference between declarative or explicit memories that are cognitive recollections as opposed to implicit memories which LeDoux proposes to call 'emotional memories'.[200] Although LeDoux's research is focused on phenomena that are conditioned by fear responses, empirical evidence seems to substantiate Wagner's idea of 'emotional memories'. We will investigate this further when discussing the role of motivic prototypes in the final chapter.

II.3. Motifs as generators of meaning post-*Opera and Drama*

The principal claim advanced in this subchapter is that Wagner never completely renounced the principal tenets of his motivic theory as expounded in *Opera and Drama*. It is common currency to subscribe to the view that the theoretical picture that emerges from the plethora of Wagner's prose works is nothing more, as Dahlhaus has criticized, than an inconclusive 'complex of historically changing ideas'.[201] Taken to extremes, George Bernard Shaw has polemicized that 'Wagner can be quoted against himself almost without limit'.[202] Dieter Borchmeyer suggests that scholarship finally

[196] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 321.
[197] Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago, 1956), 256.
[198] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Bernd Magnus (New York, 2006), 10–5.
[199] Joseph E. LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York, 1996), 181.
[200] *Ibid*., 182.
[201] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 100.
[202] George Bernard Shaw, *The Perfect Wagnerite: A Commentary on the Niblung's Ring* (New York, 1967), 102.

needs to adjust to the peculiarity that these ambiguities are built into Wagner's theory.[203] It is true that Wagner largely contributed to substantiating this reputation. When compiling his writings for publication as the *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* [*Collected Writings and Poems*] in 1871, Wagner conceded that 'I successfully escaped the temptation of assembling my scattered writings in such a way as to create the impression of a real scholarly system'.[204] In *Music of the Future*, written more than ten years earlier, Wagner described his body of publications as a 'labyrinth of theoretical speculation in purely abstract form'.[205] It is striking, however, that later in the same essay Wagner still considered his theoretical explications a 'system' that he 'overrode' in *Tristan*.[206]

We have seen that Wagner remained short on providing his readers with conclusive insights into the parameters that determine his envisaged text-music relationship. As to the general validity of Wagner's theory, there are several lines of argument in the ongoing debate that can be subsumed under the headings of three different authoritative texts: scholars either rely on *Opera and Drama*, *Beethoven* or *Music of the Future*. Carl Dahlhaus argues that *Music of the Future* acts as the true role model for the *Ring* and that *Opera and Drama* is in fact related to a music drama that Wagner never wrote.[207] There are those authors who believe that the *Beethoven* essay with its emphasis on the supremacy of music represents the one and only reliable source for Wagner's theory. The majority of scholars, however, are convinced that the true answers rest in *Opera and Drama*. Jean-Jacques Nattiez has cogently grouped the most influential accounts of Wagner's theoretical world into three families which to some extent form the basis of the following remarks.[208]

I challenge the prevailing view according to which, from Wagner's perspective, *Opera and Drama*—and in particular his motivic theory—loses its validity over the course of his life. Scholarship cannot stop quarrelling about the legitimate status of *Opera and Drama*. Whereas Richard Strauss considered the

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[203] Dieter Borchmeyer, *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Oxford, 1991), 214.
[204] Richard Wagner, *Vorwort zur Gesammtherausgabe* in: *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* (Leipzig, 1871–83), I, V: '[…] ich entging der Versuchung, meine zerstreuten Kunstschriften in der Weise zusammenzustellen, daß sie den Anschein eines wirklichen wissenschaftlichen System's hätten gewinnen können […]'.
[205] *Zukunftsmusik*, 88: '[…] Labyrinth theoretischer Spekulation in rein abstrakter Form.'
[206] *Ibid*., 119: '[…] wie ich mein System weit überflügelte.'
[207] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 103.
[208] Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 99–101.

lengthy treatise the 'book of all books about music', Jack M. Stein contests the view that the work represents Wagner's *magnum opus* in his influential 1960 study.[209] The encounter with Schopenhauer, as is argued by many scholars, marks a significant blow that led to the disintegration of Wagner's theory. The supremacy of music as advocated by Schopenhauer is supposed to have challenged the very basis of *Opera and Drama*. Stein, for instance, professes that 'with his acceptance of Schopenhauer only three years after this theory [*Opera and Drama*], Wagner assumed a philosophic position which contradicted the very basis of *Opera and Drama*'.[210] This view has been anticipated by Nietzsche who wrote that there

> […] exists a complete theoretical contradiction between his earlier and his later aesthetic creed—the former set down, for example, in *Opera and Drama*, the latter in the writings he published from 1870 onwards. Specifically, he ruthlessly altered—and this is perhaps most astonishing—his judgment as to the value and status of *music*.[211]

Consequently, the majority of authors on Wagner have rejected the possibility of applying *Opera and Drama* to works from *Siegfried*, Act III onwards.

Despite these authorities, however, there are a number of authors that have observed a sufficient degree of coherence across Wagner's theoretical output. They acknowledge the existence of changes in Wagner's thinking but consider them as 'passing contradictions that do not impair the unity' of his theory.[212] The musicologist Alfred Einstein, one of the proponents of this view, contends that 'nothing was really changed in this situation by Wagner's demand that in opera the drama must have supremacy over the music' and that 'the effect of his own work gives the lie to his

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[209] Jack M. Stein, *Richard Wagner & the Synthesis of the Arts* (Detroit, 1960), 163; Richard Strauss, *Richard Strauss: Dokumente, Aufsätze, Aufzeichnungen, Vorworte, Reden, Briefe*, ed. Ernst Krause (Leipzig, 1980), 319.
[210] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 6.
[211] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter A. Kaufmann and Robert J. Hollingdale (New York, 1969), 102–3; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, ed. Karl-Maria Guth (Berlin, 2013), 71: '[…] daß sich damit ein vollkommner theoretischer Widerspruch zwischen seinem früheren und seinem späteren ästhetischen Glauben aufriß – ersterer zum Beispiel in "Oper und Drama" ausgedrückt, letzterer in den Schriften, die er von 1870 an herausgab. Insbesondere änderte Wagner, was vielleicht am meisten befremdet, von da an rücksichtslos sein Urteil über Wert und Stellung der *Musik* selbst […]'.
[212] Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 100.

theory, for this effect rests almost entirely on the music'.[213] Einstein goes on to emphasize that 'in the Wagnerian music drama it was not the singer who bore the brunt of the expression, but the symphonically enlivened orchestra'.[214] Nattiez cites Edouard Sans, for whom the Zürich writings prove that 'in spite of a certain number of sensational theoretical remarks, his mind was fully prepared to receive confirmation of his own deepest convictions from the philosopher [Schopenhauer]'.[215]

It is the evaluation of *Opera and Drama* that in turn divides the group of scholars that adopt a unitarian standpoint. Bryan Magee classifies Schopenhauer's effect on Wagner as follows: 'It is true that he was later to change his overall view of opera in important respects, partly under the influence of Schopenhauer, but most of his detailed theories were then carried over and retained, to be realigned within the new framework'.[216] Nattiez argues that these authors cannot but ignore the *Beethoven* essay. Frank W. Glass convincingly criticizes Stein in his study *The Fertilizing Seed: Wagner's Concept of the Poetic Intent* (1981) on grounds of a set of prejudices.[217] Wagner's theory of the music drama, as Glass reasons, is governed by the overarching concept of the 'poetic intent'. For Glass, the decisive factor is the question what the 'poetic intent' demands of music irrespective of considerations of musical supremacy over poetry which changes the light in which *Opera and Drama* is to be seen.[218]

The extent to which these conceptual ambiguities have affected Wagner's motivic language, however, remains unclear. There is good reason to assume that a core of ideas related to his motivic language have survived the different upheavals of Wagner's theoretical trajectory. It is right to say that the principal tenets determining the parameters of Wagner's motivic language originate from and take more or less definite shape in *Opera and Drama*. At first sight, one passage from *Music of the Future* that we have already seen seems to explicitly challenge Wagner's theory in *Opera and Drama* in an unprecedented way. Wagner spoke about 'intimate meditations' which 'assumed in part a polemical character'.[219] Within the same essay, however, Wagner clarifies that his exploration of music's 'technical' possibilities in

[213] Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era* (London, 1947), 25.
[214] *Ibid*.
[215] Edouard Sans, *Richard Wagner et la pensée schopenhauerienne* (Paris, 1969), 263.
[216] Bryan Magee, *Aspects of Wagner* (Oxford, 1988), 3.
[217] Frank W. Glass, *The Fertilizing Seed: Wagner's Concept of the Poetic Intent* (Ann Arbor, 1981).
[218] *Ibid*., 3.
[219] *Zukunftsmusik*, 101–2 (see n. 165).

Part III of *Opera and Drama* still remain valid. Furthermore, Wagner even regrets not being able to recapitulate his entire line of argument as presented in the final part of *Opera and Drama*:

> In the aforementioned third part, I believe to have given […] all the reasons and […] that what may strike you as paradoxical is proven there and given its fullest attention.[220]

In light of this passage, Bailey's dictum according to which *Music of the Future* represents a retraction of *Opera and Drama* does not seem to hold good as Wagner upholds the validity of its third part.[221] Admittedly, during the gestation of *Music of the Future*, a general reluctance to revisit his own aesthetic creed seems to have been prevalent in Wagner. He wrote that 'the great unwillingness that currently prevents me even from just a re-reading of my theoretical writings' seems the reason behind some of the dismissive statements made with reference to *Opera and Drama*.[222] Dahlhaus regarded this unwillingness as a sign of the subliminal nature of the theoretical adjustments that Wagner made in *Music of the Future*.[223]

That *Opera and Drama* not only in scope but also in contentual weight remained the yardstick against which all later scribal adjustments needs to be measured is supported by a number of Wagner's statements from other sources. It is true to say that Wagner felt a general regret at having published *Opera and Drama* in its ultimate version. Even as late as 1882, Cosima refers to the treatise as follows: '[H]is *Opera and Drama* of which he says "Such things are studies, explorations which one makes for one's own benefit, but which ought not to be published."' She adds that in comparison to another prose work '[h]owever, he feels his *Opera and Drama* was more clearly defined'.[224] Although Wagner had second thoughts about having published the treatise, he still sees no need to restrict the validity of its

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[220] *Ibid*., 105: 'In dem genannten dritten Theile glaube ich diese Begründung […] niedergelegt zu haben und […] daß, was Ihnen paradox erscheinen sollte, an jenem Orte wenigstens näher belegt sich vorfindet.'
[221] Bailey, *Genesis of Tristan und Isolde*, 7.
[222] *Zukunftsmusik*, 88: '[…] an der großen Abneigung, die mich gegenwärtig selbst nur von einer Wiederduchlesung meiner theoretischen Schriften abhält […]'.
[223] Dahlhaus, *Wagner's Konzeption*, 100.
[224] *CWD*, II, 865 (amended); *CWT*, II, 953 (4.6.1882): '[…] "Oper und Drama", von welchem er sagt: "Das sind Studien, Forschungen, die man für sich macht, die man aber nicht veröffentlichen sollte". Doch glaubt er, daß er in "Oper und Drama" klarer und bestimmter gewesen ist.'

theoretical content. Rather, he prides himself in the clarity and certainty with which he presented his ideas even after having written the totality of his music dramas. The fact that Wagner regretted the publication of *Opera and Drama* is already made clear in a letter to Uhlig thirty years earlier: 'In all these sorts of issues I did the wrong thing by communicating the theory too early'.[225] Even three days before resumption of work on *Siegfried* in March 1869 Wagner writes to a publisher: 'Of course, the fourth volume, for instance, that contains "Opera and Drama", would be published as the last of them'.[226] Although Wagner is not keen on a swift re-publication of the treatise, he refrains from opting for an omission of this work from his collected writings.

In 1872 Wagner seems to have challenged the very basis of *Opera and Drama* by stating that '[a]t that time [of composing the *Ring*] I didn't dare to say that it was music which produced drama, although inside myself I knew it'.[227] Cosima, however, provides the setting for this somewhat irritating statement by noting on the same day that 'in the evening I read Schopenhauer to him. Of *Opera and Drama*, which he is correcting, he says "I know what Nietzsche didn't like in it—it is the same thing […] which set Schopenhauer against me: what I said about words'.[228] Throughout a number of preceding diary entries, there is evidence of abundant readings from Schopenhauer, which invites speculation about the possibility that Wagner, at the time of the statement, was exposed once again to the force of Schopenhauerian ideas. One year later, at a time when Schopenhauer was less prominent in Cosima's diaries, Wagner confines musical considerations as the driving force to *Tristan*: 'In my other works the motives serve the action; in this [*Tristan*], one might say that the action arises out of the motives'.[229] Even in 1878, Wagner is still content with *Opera and Drama* and cherishes the work. Cosima notes in her diary that '[i]n the afternoon […]

[225] *SB*, IV, 386 (31.5.1852): 'Doch, in allen solchen dingen habe ich nun einmal das unrecht begangen, mich zu früh theoretisch mitgetheilt zu haben […]'.
[226] *Ibid*., XXI, 90 (26.2.1869): 'Natürlich würde z. B. der 4ᵉ Band mit "Oper u. Drama" erst am spätesten zu erscheinen haben.'
[227] *CWD*, I, 457; *CWT*, I, 490 (11.2.1872): '[…] damals wagte ich noch nicht zu sagen, daß die Musik das Drama produziert habe, obgleich ich es in mir wußte.'
[228] *CWD*, I, 457; *CWT*, I, 489–90 (11.2.1872): '[…] abends lese ich ihm in Schopenhauer vor. Von "Oper und Drama", das er korrigiert, sagt er: "Ich weiß, was Nietzsche darin nicht paßte […] und was Schopenhauer gegen mich aufbrachte, was ich über das Wort sagte […]"'.
[229] *CWD*, I, 676; *CWT*, I, 728 (15.9.1873): 'In den anderen Werken dienen die Motive der Handlung, hier [*Tristan*], kann man sagen, entspringt die Handlung aus den Motiven.'

he presents me with the manuscript of *Opera and Drama*'.[230] In 1881, Cosima records that '[i]n the evening he writes his score, though he keeps saying how much he would rather be writing symphonies: "All the time I am putting aside themes for the sake of the drama—I cannot do things as, for example, even Weber did, when he introduced his hermit with a dance tune because it happened to occur to him just at that moment."'[231] Hence, still at the time of composing *Parsifal* Wagner reiterated the paramount importance of the drama when chosing his motifs.

The supremacy of inherent expressivity

It seems that the reason why Wagner never felt the need to alter his stance towards the relationship between poetry and music was his trust in the supremacy of music's expressive powers throughout. Wagner's emphasis on the role of poetry is grounded in his conviction that only music is capable of communicating the emotional motivation for an act. In other words, Wagner was never questioning the supremacy of music. On the contrary, he identified music as the prime agent in making poetry comprehensible. Music's superior qualities come to the aid of the poem. Wagner's search for the ideal motivic response to the artwork of the future is the guiding thread through his theoretical output. This leading thread is in fact his search for the inherent expressive traits of music. I argue that this aspect of Wagner's motivic language did not vary throughout the course of his life.

There may not be a coherent concept that merits the accolade *Leitmotivtechnik* [leitmotif technique] but the considerable changes to which Wagner subjected the technique may instead attest to his constant search for the inherent expressivity of music. We have already mentioned that Dahlhaus vehemently cautions against using the term *Leitmotivtechnik* for reasons of oversimplification.[232] The way in which Wagner treated motifs in the *Ring* differs from how he used them in *Tristan* or *Meistersinger*.[233] Ludwig Finscher avoids the term 'leitmotif' in his *Meistersinger*

[230] *CWD*, II, 181; *CWT*, II, 209 (24.10.1878): 'Am Nachmittag […] schenkt er mir das Manuskript von "Oper und Drama"!'
[231] *CWD*, II, 616; *CWT*, II, 685 (7.2.1881): 'Abends schreibt er an der Partitur, indem er immer wieder sagt, wieviel lieber er Symphonien schreiben würde, "jeden Augenblick des Dramas wegen lege ich Themen weg, ich kann nicht so verfahren, wie z. B. selbst noch Weber, der seinen Eremiten mit einer Tanz-Weise einführt, weil sie ihm gerade einfiel."'
[232] Dahlhaus, 'Zur Geschichte der Leitmotivtechnik bei Wagner', 17.
[233] *Ibid*.

study as it denotes a compositional technique that is applicable to *Rheingold* and *Walküre* but which was largely overridden in *Meistersinger*.[234] Finscher explains that the leitmotifs in *Meistersinger*, in spite of behaving stereotypically in a musical sense, hardly retain the dramatic functions as envisaged in Wagner's theory.[235] This reading has been anticipated by Stein who believed to have found an entirely new orientation towards quasi-improvisatory qualities in Wagner's approach to the motifs in *Meistersinger*. Millington also argues that the deployment of the 'leitmotifs' underwent changes during the composition of the *Ring*. In *Walküre* and the first two acts of *Siegfried*, 'motivic representation is still made according to reasonably strict musico-poetic criteria, but without quite the literal-mindedness of *Rheingold*' and 'in Act III of *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* […] the motifs frequently aspire to an independent life of their own'.[236] Andrew D. McCredie suggests that the leitmotif system of the *Ring* represents some sort of a 'yardstick against which other methods of motivic usage can be measured', thereby suggesting a coherent motivic technique at least within the *Ring*.[237] In *On the Destiny of Opera*, Wagner explains ten years after the publication of *Music of the Future* that 'although there is complete conformity of the older, more detailed [*Opera and Drama*], and the current, more concise version, the latter, in some respects, nevertheless presents new perspectives according to which some aspects may be viewed differently'.[238] It is astonishing to see that Wagner, even after the composition of *Tristan*, continued to defend *Opera and Drama* against all attacks that his own dramatic works may have posed to his theoretical framework.

Wagner's enthusiastic immersion in Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* [*World as Will and Representation*] (1819) during 1854–55 led to the composer's most significant artistic crisis but he saw no need to adjust the theory behind the 'melodic moments' despite this philosophical cataclysm. We have seen in *Music of the Future* that even six years after this encounter with Schopenhauer,

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[234] Ludwig Finscher, 'Über den Kontrapunkt der Meistersinger', *Drama Richard Wagners*, 304.
[235] *Ibid*.
[236] Millington, *New Grove Guide to Wagner*, 32.
[237] Andrew D. McCredie, 'Leitmotive: Wagner's Points of Departure and Their Antecedents', *Miscellanea musicologica* 14 (1985), 1.
[238] *Über die Bestimmung*, 127: '[…] zwischen der älteren, ausführlicheren, und der gegenwärtigen, gedrängteren Fassung zwar eine vollständige Übereinstimmung herrscht, in mancher Beziehung diese letztere dennoch neue Gesichtspunkte darbietet, von welchen aus betrachtet Verschiedenes auch anders sich darstellt […]'.

Wagner still subscribes to music's 'craving for verbal completion'.[239] The title of Wagner's late essay *Über die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama* still confirms this tendency. Dahlhaus has noted the absence of Schopenhauerian metaphysics as set out in §52 of *World as Will and Representation* in Wagner's letters to Liszt and August Röckel, those documents that represent the first signs of a Schopenhauer reception.[240] It is astonishing that Wagner allowed fifteen years before writing the Beethoven *Festschrift*, the essay that constitutes Wagner's principal theoretical incorporation of Schopenhauer's metaphysics of music.

It seems as if Wagner believed he had anticipated many Schopenhauerian ideas. In Cosima's diary, we read that 'I am convinced Sch. [Schopenhauer] would have been annoyed that I discovered this before I knew about his philosophy—I, a political refugee, the indefensibility of whose theories had been proven by his disciple Kossak on the basis of his [Schopenhauer's] philosophy, since my music [was] supposed to have no melody'.[241] In his open letter to Liszt, entitled *Über Franz Liszt's symphonische Dichtungen* [*On Franz Liszt's Symphonic Poems*] (1857), Wagner provides his explanation why he felt he never questioned the supremacy of music. He expounds that

> *in no matter what combination it enters, music can never cease to be the supreme redeeming art*. It is in the nature of music that, through it and in it, what all the other arts merely hint at becomes the most indisputable certainty, the most direct and definite of truths.[242]

Although Schopenhauer explains that 'far from being a mere aid to poetry, music is certainly an independent art', he argues that '[f]rom its own resources, music is certainly able to express every movement of the will, every feeling; but through the addition of the words, we receive also their objects, the motives that give rise to that

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[239] *Zukunftsmusik*, 136; Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford, 1998), 92.
[240] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 116.
[241] *CWD*, II, 52; *CWT*, II, 73 (29.3.1878): '"Ich bin überzeugt, Sch. [Schopenhauer] würde sich geärgert haben, daß ich dies gefunden, bevor ich seine Philosophie gekannt, ich, ein politischer Flüchtling, von dem sein Anhänger Kossak an der Hand seiner Philosophie die Unhaltbarkeit der Theorien bewiesen hatte, der ich keine Melodie hatte."'
[242] *Über Franz Liszt's Symphonische Dichtungen*, 191: '[…] *die Musik kann nie und in keiner Verbindung, die sie angeht, aufhören die höchste, die erlösende Kunst zu sein*. Es ist dieß ihr Wesen, daß, was alle anderen Künste nur andeuten, durch sie und in ihr zur unbezweifeltsten Gewißheit, zur allerunmittelbarst bestimmenden Wahrheit wird.' (translation adopted from Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 136).

feeling'.[243] This account strikingly reads like Wagner's related remarks in *Opera and Drama*. We would indeed accredit this aspect of Wagner's artwork of the future to Schopenhauer were we not certain that Wagner wrote it without the knowledge of the latter. On the one hand, there are those statements in Schopenhauer's *magnum opus* that seem to run counter to Wagner's insistence on a cognitive 'insemination' of music with words, such as Schopenhauer's belief that Rossini's music, when performed on instruments alone, 'retains its full effect'.[244] On the other hand, in *World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer, in passing, 'sanctions' two of Wagner's practices that feature prominently in *Opera and Drama*: Schopenhauer's claim that '[i]f [words] were incorporated in the music, therefore, they must […] adapt themselves completely to it', finds its analogue in Wagner's 'infusion' of speech with melody and Schopenhauer concedes that 'it might perhaps appear more suitable for the text to be written for the music'.[245]

The critical role of 'verse melody'

The extent to which Wagner suspended one of the most significant structural devices of his theory as postulated in *Opera and Drama*—the plan to *vindicate* the 'melodic moments' through 'verse melody'—is affecting the role of motifs in the process of generating meaning. Two parallel streams of signification—inherently expressive motifs are running alongside cognitively processable information communicated via text and gesture—coincide in 'verse melody'. This is the focal point of coalescence which represents the 'moment of actualization' that complements the expressive message of a motif. Wagner again reverts to a sexual image and describes 'verse melody' as the '*verkörpertes Liebesmoment*' [embodied moment of love].[246] It is, however, common currency to neglect the significance of the concept of 'verse melody' in the musical works and to consider it a mere accessory that is ultimately replaced by 'orchestral melody'. Holly Watkins, for instance, argues in her 2014 study on metaphors in German musical thought that Wagner effectively reversed the interplay between 'verse melody' and 'leitmotif' as envisioned in *Opera and Drama*

[243] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, ed. Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman and Christopher Janaway, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2010, 2012), II, 449.
[244] *Ibid*., I, 289.
[245] *Ibid*., II, 448 and 449.
[246] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 187.

as the 'orchestra does not repeat something already sung; instead Siegmund sings a melody previously heard in the orchestra'.[247] Such statements find a solid basis in Dahlhaus's writings. According to him, 'the exposition of a leitmotif as "verse melody" […] is the exception and not the rule in the *Ring*'.[248]

Dahlhaus singles out *Siegfried* as the pivotal work in which the 'orchestral melody' finally takes supremacy over 'verse melody' as from its first act onwards, there is an unbroken '*Kontinuität der Orchestermelodie*' [continuity of orchestral melody].[249] In *Walküre* the 'orchestral melody still served as mere chordal support for the "verse melody"'.[250] It is true that the number of motifs that are actually derived from the vocal line is decreasing over the course of Wagner's musico-dramatic output. Jack Stein has counted that in *Rheingold* only half the motifs originate in the vocal line, whereas in *Walküre* thirteen new motifs emerge in the orchestra and only five in the melodic line.[251] According to Stefan Kunze, this is taken to extremes in *Parsifal* where all but one single 'melodic moment' emerge in the orchestra.[252] Considering this tendency, Dahlhaus finds it impossible to identify the precise relationship between 'verse melody' and 'orchestral melody' and argues in favour of reciprocity between the two phenomena. Ultimately, he refrains from giving a definite answer as he believes that 'an attempt to subsume the relationship under a basic principle would be futile and even violent'.[253] His verdict as to the decreasing significance of 'verse melody' across Wagner's musical *œuvre*, however, remains intact.

Dahlhaus's view of the concept of *Versmelodie* has rightly been challenged by Klaus Kropfinger who argues that Wagner also envisioned in his theory the possibility of deriving motifs from the orchestra. Wagner's theory, Kropfinger suggests, also allows for the exposition of motifs 'which are bound up solely with gesture'.[254] This argument is based on the assumption that the motifs in the

[247] Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 150.
[248] Carl Dahlhaus, 'Wagners Begriff der "dichterisch-musikalischen Periode"', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Musikanschauung im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Walter Salmen (Regensburg, 1965), 184.
[249] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 105.
[250] *Ibid*., 111.
[251] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 95–7 and 110.
[252] Stefan Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners: Voraussetzungen und Folgerungen* (Regensburg, 1983), 112.
[253] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 104.
[254] Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 144.

'orchestral melody' correspond not only to the 'verse melody' but also to visual gestures, for which Kropfinger finds support in the following passage:

> The gestural content which is inexpressible in the auditory language of words can, however, be conveyed to our ears by that orchestral speech which is wholly detached from the aforesaid verbal speech, just as gesture itself displays the inexpressible to our sight.[255]

There are, in other words, motifs that originate in the orchestra in connection with a purely visual vindication of a *Handlungsmoment*. These are '*gänzlich losgelöst*' [wholly detached] from verbal speech and therefore independent of an exposition through 'verse melody'.

In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner even made provision for motifs that, although originating in the orchestra, are nonetheless connected with a corresponding 'verse melody' that occurs after the motivic exposition. Since Dahlhaus's discussion of the notion of *Versmelodie* in his monograph *Wagners Konzeption des musikalischen Dramas* [*Wagner's Conception of Musical Drama*] (1971) still remains unparalleled in depth, I will critically comment on this account in an attempt to further substantiate Wagner's notion and thereby open up the possibility of its ongoing validity.[256] The prevailing view concerning the relationship between orchestra and 'verse melody', which Dahlhaus seems to have given shape to, suffers from a neglect of the panchronic quality of Wagner's motif expositions. Dahlhaus argues that the 'leitmotifs, whose network spans the entire drama, are primarily orchestral motifs'.[257] Although he is right by asserting that the exposition of motifs as 'verse melody' is the exception in the *Ring*, he wrongly dismisses the orchestral motifs as a group that stands outside Wagner's theory. Those motifs first introduced in the orchestral melody are more than 'mere' *Orchestermotive*' as Wagner gives clear recommendations as to how these are imbued with 'poetic intent' from the very beginning. The fact that the motifs are increasingly derived from the orchestra needs to be analyzed against the backdrop of Wagner's category of 'motifs of presentiment'.

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[255] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 176: 'Das somit in der Worttonsprache Unaussprechliche der Gebärde vermag nun aber die, von dieser Wortsprache gänzlich losgelöste Sprache des Orchesters wiederum so an das Gehör mitzutheilen, wie die Gebärde selbst es an das Auge kundgiebt [*sic*].' (translation from Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 143).
[256] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 100–10.
[257] *Ibid*., 103.

It is crucial to note that Dahlhaus fails to acknowledge the inherent expressive qualities of music on which Wagner builds his motivic theory. This is due to the fact that Dahlhaus rejects Wagner's concept of the *Gefühlsverständnis*. Although Dahlhaus mentions the '*musikalische Ahnung*' and the possibility of its subsequent actualization in *Versmelodie*, he denies that this pre-'verse melodic' music acquires motivic status in an *Opera and Drama*-sense.[258] In Dahlhaus's view, a motif that is first presented in the orchestra remains an 'empty shell' which depends on the *immediate* actualization through 'verse melody' in order to turn into something that is expressive: 'an orchestral melody requires a "thought" to become an eloquent and expressive melody' and 'unless the "poetic intent" does "motivate" music, it remains mere noise and does not acquire melodic status'.[259] This reasoning effectively classifies the first occurrence of the motif attributed to the sword in *Rheingold* (Ex. 47)—unquestionably written in accordance with *Opera and Drama*—as '*bloßes Geräusch*' [mere noise] up unto the moment when it is actualized in the first act of *Walküre*.

Since Dahlhaus dismisses the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis*, his line of argument necessarily suffers from an understatement of the role of the 'motifs of presentiment'. As the 'motifs of presentiment' are inextricably linked to Wagner's idea of emotionally-charged music, Dahlhaus cannot but downplay the significance of this motivic category. Its increasing relevance for Wagner's compositional practice, however, exerts a crucial impact on the relationship between *Versmelodie* and *Orchestermelodie*. In a central statement pertaining to main features of 'verse melody', Wagner mentions the '*vorbereitende absolute Orchestermelodie*' [preliminary absolute orchestral melody] in creating a *presentiment* that is preparing an instance of 'verse melody'.[260] It is true that Wagner's reference to 'absolute' when specifying the '*Ahnung*' gives rise to problematic issues as 'absolute' music in the composer's view fails to incorporate *gefühlsverständliches* ['emotionally comprehensible'] motivic material.

Wagner confines the term 'absolute' to musical material that ranges at the verge of meaninglessness; he dismisses those musical ideas presented by the absolute musician as they are devoid of the 'poetic intent'. The latter 'called a [musical] theme

[258] *Ibid*., 102.
[259] *Ibid*., 101–2.
[260] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 190: '[…] auf sie [Versmelodie] bezieht sich als *Ahnung* die absolute vorbereitende Orchestermelodie […]'.

a thought [*Gedanken*], with which however he had associated something that no one else was able to understand, except for the one to whom—in sober words—the thought was explained and who was requested to recall this association in connection with this theme'.[261] At various occasions in *Opera and Drama*, Wagner radically dissociates the ideal artwork from the output of 'absolute' musicians, who erroneously imitated the visual arts by offering something complete—i.e. 'absolute'—instead of something in a state of becoming. Under the influence of Feuerbachian maxims, the predicate 'absolute' acquires a distinctly pejorative connotation when used by Wagner.[262] Dahlhaus reasons that Wagner refers to 'absolute' in order to describe an *Orchestermelodie* that is still unconditioned by its related subject-matter.[263] Watkins contends that Wagner employs the term 'absolute' since orchestral music still lacks a poetic object which creates in the audience a desire to find one in 'verse melody'.[264] Watkins's view is already one step closer to Wagner's account as she rightly mentions an arousal that is created by the music but fails to acknowledge the role of motifs in this process.

However, the actual relationship between the *absolute Orchestermelodie* and the *Ahnungsmotiv* is less straightforward than proposed by these scholars. Wagner emphasizes at many occasions how crucial it is to infuse the '*Ahnung*' with the 'poetic intent'. Before reaching the 'moment of actualization', the orchestra supports the 'drama in preparing its future course out of inner moods as yet unconditioned [*unausgesprochen*]'.[265] This task is performed by the 'motifs of presentiment'. Wagner explains that

> [w]e have already established that the orchestra possesses the ability to arouse presentiments [*Ahnungen*] and reminiscences [*Erinnerungen*]; we have conceived the presentiment as the preparation of the phenomenon

[261] *Ibid*., 184: '[…] der ein Thema einen Gedanken nannte, bei dem er sich allerdings etwas gedacht hatte, was aber Niemand verstand als höchstens Der, dem er Das, was er sich gedacht hatte, in nüchternen Worten bezeichnete, und den er dadurch ersuchte, sich dieß Gedachte nun auch bei dem Thema zu denken.'
[262] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 2–3.
[263] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 102.
[264] Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 133.
[265] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 186: '[…] das Drama aus noch unausgesprochenen inneren Stimmungen heraus sich vorbereitet […]' (translation from Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 133).

> [*Erscheinung*], which manifests itself in gesture and verse melody and the reminiscence as a derivative of it'.[266]

Wagner also makes clear that '*Versmelodie*' results 'from an emotional environment that consists of moments of manifestation of either internal or external emotions that are actually appealing and that have already been perceived or that are going to be perceived'.[267] By mentioning those emotions 'that already have been perceived', Wagner refers to 'motifs of presentiment' as he makes provision for the emotional supplementation of a future *Versmelodie*.

Finally, Wagner postulates that '[w]e ought not to hear these melodic moments of presentiment or those of remembrance [*ahnungs- oder erinnerungsvollen melodischen Momente*] other than in a manner of appearing to us as a supplement of the manifestation as perceived by us of the person that at this moment does not yet want or cannot give the full sensation before our eyes'.[268] This overwhelming evidence shows that in Wagner's hands the 'motifs of presentiment' already carry a modicum of emotional determinacy through their inherent expressivity which rules out 'absolute orchestral melody'. That is not to say that 'absolute' music is completely absent from Wagner's artwork of the future. Another problem that Wagner's presentation of his motivic theory poses, is the question of whether the motif does indeed occur simultaneously with 'verse melody'. In other words, the practical relationship between the 'melodic moments' and the 'verse melody' presents itself as ambiguous. We shall discuss these issues in the final chapter of this thesis.

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[266] *Ibid*., 191: 'Wir haben dem Orchester bereits die Fähigkeit abgewonnen, Ahnungen und Erinnerungen zu erwecken; die Ahnung haben wir als Vorbereitung der Erscheinung, die endlich in Gebärde und Versmelodie sich kundgiebt, – die Erinnerung dagegen als Ableitung von ihr gefaßt […]'.
[267] *Ibid*., 200: '[…] Versmelodie […] wie sie sich aus einer Gefühlsumgebung, bestehend aus den Momenten der Kundgebung sowohl eigener als einwirkender fremder, bereits empfundener oder noch zu empfindender Gefühlsregungen, heraus bedingt.'
[268] *Ibid*.: 'Wir dürfen diese ahnungs- oder erinnerungsvollen melodischen Momente nicht anders vernehmen, als daß sie uns eine von uns empfundene Ergänzung der Kundgebung der Person erscheinen, die jetzt vor unsren Augen ihre volle Empfindung noch nicht äußern will oder kann.'

III. The notion of *Gefühlsverständnis*

III.1. The elements of Wagner's *Gefühlsverständnis*

Wagner's notion of *Gefühlsverständnis* [emotional understanding], outlined in *Opera and Drama* as the spectator's ideal mode of perception in response to the artwork of the future, is less utopian a concept than has been acknowledged in the literature. It has become commonplace to conceive of leitmotifs as *Gefühlswegweiser* [emotional signposts], without critically accounting for the mechanisms by which a musical motif may actually 'beacon the feeling', mechanisms that Wagner addresses directly or indirectly in *Opera and Drama* Wagner chooses the *Gefühlswegweiser* metaphor, as he assigns to the 'melodic moments' the key role of ensuring the listener's 'knowing' immersion into the drama at an emotional level. Wagner even proposes to be able to 'gradually motivate the feeling to a thinking act'.[269] By a seemingly mysterious process the spectator is enabled to acquire knowledge of the drama's deeper strata by way of immediate and—suspiciously—total absorption into the artwork. Wagner stresses that '[t]he poetic intent is not realized until the mind has been able to impart to the feeling'.[270] In *A Communication* (1851), Wagner further emphasizes how completely the transfer of meaning relies on the *Gefühlsverständnis*. He argues that '[t]he artist addresses the feeling and not the mind: if he is being answered with the mind, it means that he has not been properly *understood*'.[271]

Wagner's concept of the '*melodische Momente*' resists further illumination, unless the notion of 'emotional understanding' and its motivic repercussions are critically interrogated. A close critical reading of relevant passages in *Opera and Drama* and in Wagner's other prose works, in conjunction with discussion of recent developments in the fields of music perception and music and emotion, allows a more detailed delineation of the contours of Wagner's reception model and of its repercussions on the motifs. An entire chapter of Part II of *Opera and Drama* is

[269] *Ibid*., III, 67: '[…] das Gefühl nach und nach zum Denken zu bringen.'
[270] *Ibid*., IV, 99: 'Die dichterische Absicht ist nicht eher verwirklicht, als bis sie aus dem Verstande an das Gefühl mitgetheilt ist.'
[271] *Eine Mittheilung*, 232: 'Der Künstler wendet sich an das Gefühl, und nicht an den Verstand: wird ihm mit dem Verstande geantwortet, so wird hiermit gesagt, daß er eben nicht *verstanden* worden ist […]'.

devoted to the duality of *Verstand* [mind] and *Gefühl* [feeling] and their complex interrelationship. Throughout *Opera and Drama*, Wagner makes countless references to the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis*; this idea runs like a golden thread through the whole treatise and, indeed, through Wagner's entire *Kunstschaffen*. Wagner's presentation of this most byzantine element of his aesthetics culminates in his detailed recommendations and guidelines concerning the ideal design of the artwork in order to qualify for his elected mode of perception. Wagner outlines the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis* in the following key paragraph from *Opera and Drama*:

> In order to convey the meaning of its message the poetic mind exclusively relies […] on emotional understanding [*Gefühlsverständniß*]. It [the poetic mind] wants to portray a powerful conjunction of natural phenomena in an image that is swiftly understandable, and this image must therefore be one that responds to the phenomena in such a way that the instinctive feeling receives it without any difficulty and without first being challenged to interpret it.[272]

At first impression, this passage brings the ideal artwork into the child-like and awe-inspiring fascination with which we encounter the sublime, such as natural phenomena or religious wonders. Before discussing the ingredients of this notion in depth, I will contextualize the concept within Wagner's world and give detailed reasons why we need to examine this phenomenon.

It is striking that, although Wagner's theory of art as prescribed in *Opera and Drama* repeatedly came under more or less strict scrutiny throughout his life, the composer upheld the tenet of the *Gefühlsverständnis*. In his little known lecture *On the Destiny of Opera*, written twenty years after *Opera and Drama*, Wagner confirms *en passant* that this maxim still holds good and represents an integral part of his aesthetic views. He wrote that 'music represented the purest form and […] it embodied the highest degree of sensuous perceptibility of this form; in music we encounter the abstract number of arithmetic, the figure of mathematics in a shape that

[272] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 82: 'Dem dichtenden Verstande liegt nun, für den Eindruck seiner Mittheilung […] nur am *Gefühlsverständniß* [*sic*]. Er will einen großen Zusammenhang natürlicher Erscheinungen in einem schnell verständlichen Bilde darstellen, und dieses Bild muß daher ein den Erscheinungen in der Weise entsprechendes sein, daß das unwillkürliche Gefühl es ohne Widerstreben aufnimmt, nicht aber zur Deutung erst aufgefordert wird […]'.

is irrefutably perceivable by the feeling, namely as melody'.[273] In *Religion und Kunst* [*Religion and Art*], which was written as late as 1880, Wagner explained that 'effectively, it [church music] dissolved the words and their ensuing concepts up to the point that their perceptibility vanished, so that their pure emotional content was imparted to the enraptured feeling'.[274]

The current dismissal of the concept

Carl Dahlhaus and, more recently, Christian Thorau have deplored the distortion that the gradual rejection of emotional rather than cognitive responses to Wagner has brought about in the reception of his works. By cognitive segmentation of the music, the *Leitfäden*, in their quest to furnish the listener with motile verbal tags, swiftly and radically replaced the kind of comprehension that Wagner had in mind: an unconscious, or at least pre-reflective, form of perception.[275] Despite acknowledging this dichotomy, however, both scholars, whose views represent the current state of scholarship, continue to dismiss Wagner's concept as quixotic.[276] For Thorau, the boundaries demarcating 'mind' and 'feeling' are too porous and flexible to ensure a sound reconstruction of the listener's approach to the music dramas as envisaged by Wagner.[277] Dahlhaus reverts, as we have seen, to a rather carefree approach by settling for leaving metaphysics out of the picture.[278] This convenient point of view exemplifies the reluctance among Wagner scholars to engage with the underlying psychological processes of Wagner's *Gefühlsverständnis*. With a modicum of appreciation, Dahlhaus challenges the merits of reflective approaches to the concept of *Gefühlsverständnis*, which, in itself, is an endorsement of the notion. A pre-reflective concept usually resists attempts of rationalized types of analysis.

John Deathridge's statement that '[t]here is no need to pay too much attention to Wagner's insistence […] on the exclusive importance of "emotional

[273] *Über die Bestimmung*, 150: '[…] die Musik […] reinste Form, und dabei sinnlichste Wahrnehmbarkeit dieser Form war; die abstrakte Zahl der Arithmetik, die Figur der Mathematik, tritt uns hier als das Gefühl unwiderleglich bestimmende Gestalt, nämlich als Melodie entgegen […]'.
[274] Richard Wagner, *Religion und Kunst, GSD*, X, 221: '[…] in ihrer Wirkung löste sie [die kirchliche Musik] aber diese Worte, wie die durch sie fixierten Begriffe, bis zum Verschwinden ihrer Wahrnehmbarkeit auf, so daß sie hierdurch den reinen Gefühlsgehalt derselben fast einzig der entzückten Empfindung mittheilte.'
[275] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 75; Thorau, *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit*, 30.
[276] *Ibid*. and Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 75.
[277] Thorau, *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit*, 30.
[278] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 75.

understanding" of music' is indicative of the low scholarly esteem attributed to one of Wagner's most important aesthetic axioms.[279] Klaus Kropfinger, although he rightly paraphrases Wagner's intentions as 'the transfer of emotional content into the reality of expression via the poetic intent', also refrains from tackling the issue of how this is achieved.[280] Paul Bekker, in turn, admires the precision with which an expression in Wagner can actually be identified, a proposition that goes beyond even the 'immediate comprehensibility' as described by Dahlhaus. Bekker feels entitled to subscribe to Thomas Mann's catchword '*Beziehungszauber*' [magic of association]—a scholarly unsatisfactory standpoint that still seems to be tolerated today.

Although Deryck Cooke regards *Opera and Drama* as 'essentially a blueprint' of the *Ring*, he opens his famous study with the rather unexpected exclusion of the tetralogy from the canon of those works for which Wagner's 'dicta [with reference to the *Gefühlsverständnis*] do […] hold good'.[281] Cooke argues that, with the remaining music dramas, 'our instinctive understanding of life is enriched' but he points out that 'there has always been puzzlement over the *Ring*', a fact which seems to disturb the pre-conceptual aesthetic perception of the 'magic of association'.[282] Michael Tanner is rightly disconcerted by Cooke's proposition, as it suggests 'that the *Ring* is some kind of failure'.[283] Since Cooke feels the need to justify his enormous project, which essentially aims at removing the 'puzzlement over the *Ring*', he seemingly casts doubt on the success of the *Ring*, in terms of its pre-reflective quality. In fact, Cooke seems to be siding with Wagner on the issue of the need to arouse the emotions, at the expense of a primarily cognitive response to music. Cooke contends that 'it will […] be only by *feeling* the emotion in the music that we can experience it, not by identifying its musical form and giving it a technical name'.[284] His peculiar approach to the *Ring* must be understood against the background of a prevailing view that considers the concept of 'emotional understanding' to be a 'given' that absolutely resists explicability.

Wagner embarks on his hermeneutic discourse with the premiss that the poet is capable of making the 'nature of things […] comprehensible to the feeling' [*im*

[279] Deathridge/Dahlhaus, *New Grove Wagner*, 102.
[280] Richard Wagner, *Oper und Drama*, ed. Klaus Kropfinger (Stuttgart, 1984), 490.
[281] Cooke, *I Saw the World End*, 1.
[282] *Ibid*.
[283] Michael Tanner, *Wagner* (London, 1996), 11.
[284] Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (Oxford, 1959), 206.

Dichterwerke … die Natur der Dinge … dem Gefühle begreiflich macht].[285] In the German original, Wagner emphasized the word '*begreiflich*', in order to iterate the treatise's most important object. This introductory statement is, as we have seen, symptomatic of one of the more peculiar features of *Opera and Drama*: whenever Wagner elucidates the intricacies of the ideal artwork, he is primarily committed to the poet. The gulf between the in-depth discussion of hermeneutical issues in relation to the poet's work and the lack of an equally extensive manual for the musician raises one central issue that turns out to be the flipside of the *Gefühlsverständnis* concept. Any wider disclosure of compositional strategies seems to contravene one of Wagner's most fundamental principles: the concealment of artifice.

Since Wagner's intended mode of perception is an inherently intuitive process, the effortlessness that characterizes the transference of meaning within Wagner's works is easily taken for granted by the audience. Nietzsche, already a contra-Wagnerian at the time, wrote that '[n]ot every kind of music hitherto has been in need of literature […]. Is it perhaps that Wagner's music is too difficult to understand. Or did he fear precisely the reverse—that it was too easy,—that people might *not understand it with sufficient difficulty?*'[286] What Nietzsche is insinuating in this polemical commentary seems to hit the mark. In an attempt to defend his compositional output against the reproach of formlessness, Wagner published extensively in order to convey the impression of scholarly rigour. His ambition to create a coherent philosophy of art in fact represents Wagner's most effective countermeasure. At the same time, Wagner had no choice but to withhold detailed information about the reflective processes underlying the genesis of his motifs, since dissemination of this kind of knowledge would have posed the most serious threat to the spectator's understanding at an emotional level. It must have puzzled Wagner a great deal that, in the form of compendia, others provided the audience with a kind of knowledge about his works that emphasized cognitive processes and that above all embodied a product of pure reflection.

Wagner is worried about the detrimental effect that any traces left by the artist's power of reflection might have on the artwork. He therefore advocates the complete removal of any sign of human effort. In *Über Schauspieler und Sänger* [*On*

[285] *OuD, GSD*, IV, 82.
[286] Friedrich Nietzsche, *I. The Case of Wagner, II. Nietzsche contra Wagner*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (Edinburgh, 1910), 30.

Actors and Singers] (1872), Wagner suggests that '[a]rt, to be precise, ceases to be art, whenever it enters our reflecting consciousness as being art'.[287] This means that, wherever the artwork shows evidence of human interference, the artistic intent becomes visible, which destroys the fragile nexus of the *Gefühlsverständnis.* In order to achieve 'complete imperceptibility of intent' [*Absicht … zur vollsten Unmerklichkeit*], Wagner sums up, the drama of the future requires the 'complete absorption of the intent in the artwork' [*das vollkommene Aufgehen der Absicht in das Kunstwerk*].[288] Christian Thorau links the phrase 'neutralized through complete actualization' [*durch ihre vollständige Verwirklichung aufgehoben*] to the Hegelian concept of 'sublation' or 'supersession' ['*Aufhebung*'], whose philosophical connotations lead Thorau to define '*aufgehoben*' as 'uplifted and preserved by being transformed into another state'.[289] It is remarkable that, in this context, Wagner makes use of the word '*aufheben*' just once. In the phrase that follows shortly after the statement under discussion, Wagner refers to the '*Aufgehen der Absicht*' [actualization or absorption of the intent]. There is, however, no link between the term '*Aufgehen*' and the Hegelian notion of '*Aufhebung*', since the meaning of the former lacks the element of preserving something. It should be noted that Wagner's use of the term '*Aufgehen*' is not a mere carelessness on his part, as it occurs several times. The distinction between '*Aufhebung*' und '*Aufgehen*' is crucial, since, for Wagner, the poetic intent is not conserved in the final product but instead completely absorbed and neutralized.

Wagner strives after nature-like qualities in order to maintain the feeling in a state of receptivity. According to Dahlhaus, 'Wagner's fundamental aesthetic conviction, which he shared with Kant, was that art, in order to be art, must conceal itself and appear in the guise of nature. The means and expedients must not be allowed to be visible, reflection must be turned into spontaneity, immediacy must be recreated and still be immediacy, and every trace of effort must be expunged'.[290] Dahlhaus, in trying to bypass the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis,* seems to have no choice but to omit the reasons behind one of the composer's firmest aesthetic beliefs. We have seen earlier that the 'melodic moments' are 'well-suited for maintaining the

[287] Richard Wagner, *Über Schauspieler und Sänger*, *GSD*, IX, 161: 'Die Kunst hört, genau genommen, von da an Kunst zu sein auf, wo sie als Kunst in unser reflektierendes Bewußtsein tritt.'
[288] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 78.
[289] Thorau, 'Guides for Wagnerites', 149; Howard P. Kainz (ed.), *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Pennsylvania, 1994), xiii.
[290] Dahlhaus, *Wagner's Music Dramas*, 69–70.

feeling at the same level'.[291] Wagner envisions an arousal of emotions that leads to the prescribed state:

> In this way, the tranquility of the observing mind is involuntarily replaced by a mood that is more and more excited and that finally turns into a completely *emotional state*. In this mood *we* unconsciously interact with nature, because our individual human feeling has given us exactly that mood.[292]

This required state of receptivity is associated with Wagner's understanding of nature as '*ewiges Werden*' [eternal becoming] which is mirrored in his demand for 'organic becoming' that we have looked at:

> A fully developed melodic creation […] remained incomprehensible to us since it was arbitrarily interpretable; a fully developed situation must remain as incomprehensible to us as nature remained incomprehensible as long as we saw it as a creation, however, nature is now intelligible to us, since we recognize its being [*das Seiende*], i.e. its eternal becoming.[293]

The fragile nexus between the nature-like qualities of the artwork, the requirement of 'organic becoming' and the ultimate goal of these elements—*Gefühlsverständnis*—becomes obvious in the following quotation: 'The poet […] has to take good care not to take even the slightest step that would tear apart the bond of organic becoming and thus violate our instinctively captivated feeling by virtue of an arbitrary imposition'.[294]

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[291] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 200.
[292] *Ibid*., 86: '[…] so wird die Ruhe der Betrachtung des Verstandes unwillkürlich durch eine höher und höher erregte Stimmung verdrängt, die endlich nur noch *Gefühlsstimmung* bleibt. In dieser Stimmung bezieht der Mensch die Natur unbewußt wiederum auf *sich*, denn sein individuell menschliches Gefühl gab ihm eben die Stimmung.'
[293] *Ibid*., 192: 'Eine fertige, geschaffene Melodie […] blieb uns unverständlich, weil willkürlich deutbar; eine fertige, geschaffene Situation muß uns ebenso unverständlich bleiben, wie die Natur uns unverständlich blieb, so lange wir sie als etwas Erschaffenes ansahen, wogegen sie uns jetzt verständlich ist, wo wir sie als das Seiende, d. h. das ewig Werdende, erkennen.'
[294] *Ibid*.: 'Der Dichter […] hat sich wohl zu hüten, auch nur den kleinsten Schritt zu thun, der das Band des organischen Werdens zerreißen, und somit unser unwillkürlich gefesseltes Gefühl durch willkürliche Zumuthung verletzen könnte […]'.

Wagner's concept of the *Gefühlsverständnis* seems to reverberate in the revelatory phrase '*durch Mitleid wissend*' [knowing through compassion]—first quoted by Amfortas in *Parsifal*—which brings the notion into the purview of an 'understanding through *Mitgefühl* [compassion]'. The 'arousal of compassion' represents one of the prerequisites of 'emotional understanding'. In part II of the treatise, Wagner assigns a crucial role to empathy by explaining that '[t]he apex of an act [*die Spitze einer Handlung*] is in itself a fleeting passing moment, which is completely meaningless as pure fact, if it is not, as soon as it appears, motivated by those sentiments, that by themselves arouse our compassion [*Mitgefühl*]'.[295] Wagner points out that the representation of an act would be deprived of its comprehensibility if it failed to arouse compassion. He argues that

> each phenomenon [in the dramatic artwork] needs to reach a state in which our feeling has come to peace with it for in soothing the feeling, after its highest arousal in sympathy [*Mitgefühl*], lies that very peace which leads us to the instinctive understanding of life. In drama we must attain *knowledge* [*Wissende werden*] through *feeling*.[296]

In the context of the *Gefühlsverständnis*, Wagner frequently employs the term '*sympathetisch*' [sympathetic] with which the modern (German) readership is less familiar. Erroneously, Christoph Martin Wieland believed to have introduced the term into the German language.[297] However, according to the Grimms' *German Dictionary*, the word's primary meaning, 'compassionate', emerged during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, which conflicts with Wieland's authorship.[298] Wagner explains that 'a sympathetic effect is only achieved if the act presents itself to him [the spectator] as justified by the same emotion that he empathizes [*mitfühlt*] as

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[295] *Ibid*., 83: 'Die Spitze einer Handlung ist an sich ein flüchtig vorübergehender Moment, der als reine Thatsache vollkommen bedeutungslos ist, sobald er nicht aus Gesinnungen motiviert erscheint, die an sich unser Mitgefühl in Anspruch nehmen […]'.

[296] *Ibid*., 78: '[…] jede Erscheinung muß in ihm [dem dramatischen Kunstwerke] zu dem Abschlusse kommen, der unser Gefühl über sie beruhigt; denn in der Beruhigung des Gefühles, nach seiner höchsten Erregtheit im Mitgefühl, liegt die Ruhe selbst, die uns unwillkürlich das Verständnis des Lebens zuführt. Im Drama müssen wir *Wissende* werden durch das *Gefühl*.'

[297] Margit Hacker, *Anthropologische und kosmologische Ordnungsutopien: Christoph Martin Wielands "Natur der Dinge"* (Würzburg, 1989), 69. Wieland believed that 'sympathetisch, c'est un mot que j'ai employé le premier parmi les Allemands.'

[298] Grimm/Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, XX, 1398: '[…] im zweiten viertel des 18. jh. tritt die bedeutung "geistig-seelisch mitempfindend, mitfühlend […]" zutage.'

his own in reference to this action and justification'.[299] The *Mitgefühl* aspect is maintained in Wagner's later publications. In *On the Destiny of Opera*, Wagner mentions that 'both affect and motif, merged into one single expression, revealed themselves to them in the noblest of affections. Here is kept silent all desire for detecting a tendency, because the idea itself is materialized in front of them as the irrefutable call to highest compassion'.[300]

Wagner's ideal listener

Wagner's vision of the ideal listener reflects his notion of the *Reinmenschliche* [purely human] as he is convinced that the expressive language from which his 'melodic moments' are derived, is understood by everyone, whether naïve or expert. Although Richard Taruskin contends that no-one is born with 'Wagnerian instincts', it seems as if the composer trusted to a great extent in the abilities of his listeners.[301] One central feature of Wagner's aesthetics, the reversion of the arts to qualities of the *Reinmenschliche*, which effectively means the removal of all conventionality, leads to the climax of comprehensibility that is achieved when art succeeds in communicating through the channel of the emotions. Wagner believes that 'the spectator […] would not be able to comprehend a too profusely distributed action'.[302] In *Music of the Future* (1861), Wagner talks about the impression that melody must make upon the listener: 'Its wealth of details, branching out in infinitely many different directions, should be apparent not only to the expert but also to the naïvest layman once he has attuned himself to listen'.[303]

Thorau, however, criticizes Wagner's approach to his audience as utopian; this the logical consequence of his rejection of the *Gefühlsverständnis*.[304] In a letter to

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[299] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 77: '[…] sympathetische Wirkung bringt es nur hervor, wenn es sich in einer Handlung ihm darstellt, die sich aus demselben Gefühle rechtfertigt, welches er aus dieser Handlung und Rechtfertigung als sein eigenes mitfühlt.'

[300] *Über die Bestimmung*, 138–39: '[…] Affekt und Motiv, zu einem einzigen unmittelbaren Ausdruck verschmolzen, mit edelster Rührung zu ihnen sprachen. Hier schweigt jedes Verlangen nach Erfassung einer Tendenz, denn die Idee selbst verwirklichte sich vor ihnen als unabweislicher Anruf des höchsten Mitgefühles.'

[301] Richard Taruskin, *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, 2009), 83.

[302] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 163: '[…] des Zuschauers […] der eine zu reich gegliederte Handlung nicht übersehen können würde […]'.

[303] *TWE*, 40–1; *Zukunftsmusik*, 131: '[…] Eindruck, den sie hervorbringen muß. Das unendlich reich verzweigte Detail in ihr soll sich keineswegs nur dem Kenner, sondern auch dem naivsten Laien, sobald er nur erst zur gehörigen Sammlung gekommen ist, offenbaren.'

[304] Thorau, *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit*, 258.

Liszt, Wagner argues that '[b]y way of forcing [*einpauken*] artistic intelligence onto the audience we can only render it completely mindless. I said: I expect nothing else from the audience than *sound senses* and a *human heart*. This sounds simple but is so much that in order to achieve it the entire world needs to be turned on its head'.[305] However, in a letter dated 15 April 1859 Wagner wrote

> melodic phrases begin and alternate with each other, they thrill and enchant; one follows this theme, another follows that one; they hear and intuit and if they are able, then they finally grasp the whole thing, the idea itself.[306]

In *A Communication*, Wagner seems to qualify his judgement to embrace all types of listeners by classifying the required feeling as an educated one: 'the artwork which can only be understood with the feeling—but with the educated but not spoiled [*nicht verbildeten*] one'.[307] Wagner's *Kunstprogramm* strives after unmediated human qualities in an attempt to overpower the bias of conventionality.

The transfer of meaning via the 'Gefühlsverständnis'

Despite the strong emphasis that the term '*Gefühlsverständnis*' places on the *Gefühl*, the rational capacity is not completely excluded from this envisaged transfer of meaning. Wagner's assessment of the relationship between *Gefühl* and *Verstand* gives further clues as to how he saw the ideal comprehension of the artwork. Although various statements in *Opera and Drama* imply Wagner's contempt for a cognitive response to his works, he in fact argues that the 'emotionalization' of the mind [*Gefühlswerdung des Verstandes*] follows a trajectory.[308] One reads in *Opera and Drama* that, in the reception of the artwork, 'the mind that is able to synthesize should

[305] *SB*, III, 431–32 (2.10.1850): 'Durch einpauken von kunstintelligenz können wir das publikum nur vollends stupid machen. Ich sagte: nichts weiter fordere ich vom publikum als *gesunde sinne und ein menschliches herz*. Das klingt wenig und ist doch eben soviel, daß die ganze welt erst um und um gedreht werden müßte, um es zu stande zu bringen.'
[306] *Ibid*., XI, 38 (15.4.1859): '[…] da beginnen und wechseln melodische Phrasen, fesseln und reizen; der Eine hält sich an diess [*sic*] Thema, der Andre an jenes; sie hören und ahnen, und können sie, so erfassen sie endlich auch den Gegenstand, die Idee.' (translation adopted from Eva Rieger, *Richard Wagner's Women*, trans. Chris Walton (Woodbridge, 2011), 19).
[307] *Eine Mittheilung*, 232: '[…] des Kunstwerkes, das nur mit dem Gefühle verstanden werden kann – allerdings mit dem gebildeten und dabei nicht verbildeten Gefühle.'
[308] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 78.

have nothing further to do' ['*darf Nichts mehr dem kombinirenden Verstande übrig bleiben*'] and that listeners 'dispense entirely with the help of the mind' ['*der Hilfe des Verstandes … gänzlich entbehren*'].[309] However, these strong statements are mitigated by those passages that concretize the process that is described by the notion. Udo Bermbach suggests that *Gefühl* and *Verstand* interact in a dialectic fashion.[310] Wagner emphasizes that the '[m]ind cannot know anything else than the vindication of the emotion, it is the tranquillity that follows the engendering arousal of the feeling'.[311] In other words, the first impression that is perceived emotionally is followed by a reflective step performed by the mind and rounded off by the feeling. Bermbach argues that this process leads to the triad *Gefühl-Verstand-Gefühl* [feeling-mind-feeling].[312] Wagner explains that

> [a]s the phenomenon is first seized by the outwardly facing instinctive feeling and is brought to the imagination as the first activity of the brain, so the mind, which is nothing else than the imagination as regulated by the actual appearance of the object, anon has to advance that what it has recognized through the imagination to the instinctive feeling.[313]

It is the spectator's imagination [*Phantasie*] that mediates between mind and feeling. The feeling is only able to digest those phenomena 'returned' from the mind that have been filtered through the imagination: 'In order to make this reflection of the phenomena [*Erscheinungen*] comprehensible to the feeling, the mind must imitate the image that was originally supplied to it by the feeling via the imagination'.[314]

Dahlhaus believes that, in order to tackle Wagner's works whilst taking into account the latter's idiosyncratic reception ideal, one must modify the progression as

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[309] *Ibid*., 78–9.
[310] Udo Bermbach, *Der Wahn des Gesamtkunstwerks: Richard Wagners politisch-ästhetische Utopie*, 2nd edn (Stuttgart, 2004), 187.
[311] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 76–7: 'Der Verstand kann nichts Anderes wissen, als die Rechtfertigung des Gefühles, denn er selbst ist nur die Ruhe, die der zeugenden Erregung des Gefühles folgt […]'.
[312] Bermbach, *Wahn des Gesamtkunstwerks*, 187.
[313] *Ibid*., 81: 'Wie die Erscheinung zunächst von dem nach Außen gewendeten unwillkürlichen Gefühle erfaßt, und der Einbildungskraft als erster Thätigkeit des Gehirnes zugeführt wird, so hat der Verstand, der nichts Anderes, als die nach dem wirklichen Maaße der Erscheinung geordnete Einbildungskraft ist, für die Mittheilung des von ihm Erkannten durch die Einbildungskraft wiederum an das unwillkürliche Gefühl vorzuschreiten.'
[314] *Ibid*.: 'Dieses Bild der Erscheinungen, in welchem das Gefühl einzig diese zu begreifen vermag, und welches der Verstand, um sich dem Gefühle verständlich zu machen, demjenigen nachbilden muß, welches ihm ursprünglich durch die Phantasie vom Gefühle zugeführt war […]'.

follows: *Verstand-Gefühl-Verstand-vermitteltes Gefühl* [mind-feeling-mind-mediated feeling]. In an attempt to bridge the gap between Wagner's *Gefühlsverständnis* and what one might call the *Intellektverständnis* [rational understanding] that is promoted by the *Leitfadenliteratur* and that has prevailed in the reception of Wagner, Dahlhaus proposes the concept of 'second immediacy' [*zweite Unmittelbarkeit*] which is an 'informed immediacy', as it is preceded by reflection. Dahlhaus argues that 'the infinite wealth of instinctive understanding at which Wagner aimed does not come into existence at the first impact of immediacy, but—if at all—at the second stage, when immediacy has combined with reflection'.[315] The quasi-Hegelian concept of the 'second immediacy' is 'something spontaneous that benefits from stores of awareness and reflection that have been accumulated previously'.[316] This reading comfortably accommodates the importance of the *Leitfadenliteratur*.

Although Dahlhaus is right to speculate that his interpretation of Wagner's approach is mirrored in the production of the music dramas, there is no indication that Wagner composed his motifs with a view to 'informed immediacy'. It is true to say that Wagner makes use of strategic means in order to conceal artifice. The extent to which reflection is in fact part of the compositional process will be examined at a later stage. At this point, it is crucial to note that we have no evidence to substantiate Dahlhaus's assumption concerning the involvement of reflection in Wagner's reception ideal.

The merits of Wagner's notion

The ease with which Wagner's notion of the *Gefühlsverständnis* is dismissed as phantasmagorical clashes with the tremendous significance that Wagner ascribed to the notion. Nevertheless, scholars seem to navigate a safe course by rejecting the validity of the *Gefühlsverständnis*, since it appears difficult to assess the merits of exploring this complicated concept. Klaus Kropfinger is convinced that the tremendous complexities of a Wagnerian performance rule out the possibility of adhering to the composer's ideal.[317] Dahlhaus, by introducing the concept of the 'second immediacy', hopes to give the unconscious traits of Wagner's notion a

[315] Dahlhaus, *Wagner's Music Dramas*, 61.
[316] *Ibid*., 75.
[317] Wagner, *Oper und Drama*, 498, n. 6.

workable new format but inevitably runs into the roadblock of the latter's detailed explications. Wagner scholarship, in other words, has settled on a comfortable position by turning a blind eye to this aspect of Wagner's aesthetics.

Bearing the 'intentional fallacy' in mind, there must be a difference between those interpretations of Wagner's 'melodic moments' that read one of his most fundamental concepts into them and those that are ignorant of it. A case can be made for interpretations that apply the conventional set of performing rules to Wagner without running the risk of violating his writings. The concept of the autonomous work of art gives us every right simply to proceed with performances of Wagner that are in line with the prevailing segmentation of the music based on the rationalized process of leitmotivic decoding. However, Wagner's insistence on this element of his aesthetics provokes second thoughts: it seems right to consider performers ill-informed when approaching a Wagnerian score without being familiar with the basic contours of his ideal mode of perception. Eugene Narmour rightly argues that the study of music should 'endow performers with the means to discover how different interpretations alter the listener's perception and understanding of living works of art'.[318]

Monroe Beardsley's approach to the work of art as an 'aesthetic object' severs the ties between the external evidence as to the composer's intentions and the internal marks of his will.[319] Beardsley argues that the performer reaches his or her decisions on the basis of 'relations to be found within the music itself'.[320] However, the interpreter takes a work of art in his or her own hands and modifies it 'to fit with his or her own aesthetic beliefs, stylistic experiences, and tradition of learning'.[321] To embrace Wagner's concept of the *Gefühlsverständnis* on the part of the interpreter in performance seems reconcilable with notions of the autonomy of the artwork. Leonard Ratner, the founding father of topic theory in its modern understanding, argues that, 'for performance', the recognition of the expressive qualities 'is essential, since it points to the poetic implications of the music'.[322] Stephen Davies argues that

[318] Eugene Narmour, 'On the Relationship of Analytical Theory to Performance and Interpretation', *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas*, ed. Eugene Narmour and Ruth A. Solie (Stuyvesant, 1988), 317.
[319] Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 2nd edn (Indianapolis, 1981), 44 and 22–3.
[320] *Ibid*., 23.
[321] Narmour, 'On the Relationship', 318.
[322] Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York, 1980), 30.

'a concern with authenticity [of performance] takes its point ultimately from the authority of authorship, from a concern to present accurately (to an audience) what the composer "had to say"'.[323] Narmour goes even further by taking into consideration the spectator as recipient of the work of art. He argues that, for 'performers to discharge their duty faithfully to their artistic responsibilities, they must give considerable attention not only to their understanding of the composer's demands and desires but also to the sensibilities of the audience for whom they make music'.[324] Göran Hermerén contends that 'what sets a limit to the possibilities of interpretation is our knowledge of the composer's intentions'.[325] Eero Tarasti is convinced that the 'the aesthetic experience becomes richer if one is aware of the traditions in play'.[326]

In Heinrich Porges's report from the rehearsals leading to the first Bayreuth festival, the reader comes across numerous instructions by Wagner that emphasize how often he wished the performer to leave the emotion 'out of it'. Wagner suggests with reference to a passage from *Siegfried* that 'only intuitive feeling—the conductor's as well as the singers'—can achieve the desired result'.[327] According to Porges, Wagner also recommended to his performers that 'for all its expressiveness the delivery should not be emotional'.[328] This peculiar request may have to do with Wagner's hope to let the emotions flow naturally without placing an extra emphasis on the emotion that is being communicated.

Any attempt to further illuminate the mechanisms by which Wagner potentially intended to enhance the transfer of meaning at an emotional level is a hazardous endeavour, as the notion is less impenetrable the better it is carried out. Tracing the potential methods by which Wagner aimed to achieve understanding at an emotional level enables scholars as well as interpreters to gain deeper insights into the psychology behind Wagner's motifs. An awareness of the ponderosity that Wagner ascribed to the *Gefühlsverständnis*, in conjunction with knowledge about its

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[323] Stephen Davies, 'Transcription, Authenticity and Performance', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28 (1988), 223.
[324] Narmour, 'On the Relationship', 318.
[325] Göran Hermerén, 'Art Works as Means of Communication', *Art and Its Messages: Meaning, Morality, and Society*, ed. Stephen Davies (University Park PA, 1997), 105.
[326] Eero Tarasti, *Semiotics of Classical Music: How Mozart, Brahms and Wagner Talk to Us* (Berlin, 2012), 6–7.
[327] Heinrich Porges, *Wagner Rehearsing the 'Ring'. An Eye-Witness Account of the Stage Rehearsals of the First Bayreuth Festival*, trans. Robert L. Jacobs (Cambridge, 1983), 114.
[328] *Ibid*., 98.

ramifications, necessarily affects our listening habits and our interpretative efforts. We have seen that Wagner's ideal listener differs from the approaches that Christian Thorau has presented in his thorough reconstruction of the phenomenon of 'leitmotivic listening'.[329] In Wagner's view, there is a strong divide between listeners and '*Ausführenden*' [performers]. When engaging in performance, the interpreter becomes part of the forces that are geared towards facilitating the listener's understanding at an emotional level. Analogous to the processes involved in the production of Wagner's music dramas, this approach will encompass a great deal of calculation and reflection targeted at an intensification of the pre-reflective experience.

III.2. The origins of the notion

What is camouflaged as a sharp critique against religion is in fact an attempt to apply notions derived from the philosophy of religion to aesthetics. Wagner's decision to bring the term '*Gefühlsverständnis*', itself a religio-philosophical concept, into the purview of aesthetics emphasizes that he was determined to close ranks between his theory of art and the most dignified of academic disciplines. Although Wagner's ideal emerged from various currents in nineteenth-century philosophical thinking it is unprecedented in the stringency of its aesthetic application and in its scope. Wagner's contemporary Arnold Ruge, a 'Young Hegelian', remarked that 'the entire world of humanistic ideals, the entire Spirit of our times, must enter the crucible of feeling, out of which it must again come forth as a glowing stream and build a new world'.[330] Wagner's notion of the *Gefühlsverständnis* is imbued with such ideas, reflecting the new emphasis placed by philosophers of the day on the emotions. In the hands of Wagner, however, the principle of the *Gefühlsverständnis* is elevated to a sort of aesthetic creed.

[329] Thorau, 'Guides for Wagnerites', 139–42.
[330] Lawrence Stepelevich (ed.), *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology* (Cambridge, 1983), 251.

Even today, the term '*Gefühlsverständnis*' that Wagner uses only once in *Opera and Drama* is confined to philosophical circles and, if taken out of context, exhibits its ambiguous and even oxymoronic qualities.[331] The word is missing in the *German Dictionary*, which shows that it remained outside the scope of general usage at the time of Wagner.[332] There are two potentially conflicting meanings of this word: it may either refer to the *Verständnis von Gefühlen* [understanding *of* emotions] or the *Verständnis durch das Gefühl* [understanding *through* feeling]. Since in this compound the number of the word *Gefühl* cannot be determined—*das Gefühl* [feeling] *vs. die Gefühle* [emotions]—the English translation already requires a significant choice to be made.

The term is an unusual collocation of the two constituents, the second of which, '*Verständnis*' [understanding], is derived from the word '*Verstand*' [mind, thought, reason or intellect], which is the capacity that Wagner consistently connotes pejoratively and which he seems largely to exclude from his notion of 'emotional understanding'. Given this strong tendency in Wagner's writings, he could have introduced the word '*Gefühlserkenntnis*' [emotional perception] into his writings in order to iterate the unconscious element of his core reception device and although Wagner seemed never shy of neologisms, he preferred a term that had already entered into critical philosophical circulation.

The Feuerbachian roots of Wagner's theory have been acknowledged in a number of scholarly responses.[333] It is Wagner's notion of the '*Reinmenschliche*', which seems to originate in Wagner's admiration of Feuerbach's restoration of human purity that requires special focus. 'Feuerbach ends up', Wagner writes, 'by becoming a human being, and on this point he is so weighty an authority, particularly in relation to absolute philosophy in which the human being is completely subsumed by the philosopher. Nowhere have I found the natural healthy process so clearly and so

[331] Although Wagner uses the noun only once, he frequently refers to terms that are linked to '*Gefühlsverständnis*', such as '*gefühlsverständlich*' [emotionally comprehensible] or '*mit dem unwillkürlichen Gefühl verstehen*' [to understand with the involuntary feeling].
[332] Grimm/Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, V, 2188.
[333] Laurence Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* (Cambridge MA, 2010), 50–1, 62–4, 93–5; Julian Young, *The Philosophies of Richard Wagner* (London, 2014), 10–1, 33–5, 117–18; Ulrike Kienzle, *…daß wissend würde die Welt! Religion und Philosophie in Richard Wagners Musikdramen* (Würzburg, 2005), 30–3.

consciously expressed as by Feuerbach, and I confess that I am greatly indebted to him'.[334] Wagner assigns eternal qualities to the emotions and considers them a pure and unbiased human faculty that has survived largely intact.

Central to Wagner's reception of Feuerbach is the notion of *Sinnlichkeit* [sensuality] which received a voice in the latter's *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* [*Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*] (1843). The philosopher argued that 'only the consciousness of seeing is the reality of seeing or real seeing' and emphasizes that since we 'see, hear and feel something' we are aware of its existence.[335] Although Feuerbach was educated in Hegel's philosophy, in which the intellect took precedence over the senses, there was a strong tendency in Feuerbach's *Weltanschauung* to reinstate the immediacy of the sensory experience. David Trippett explains in his recent exploration of Wagner's melodies how, by 'intellectualizing the experience of sensation, the idealist tradition had severed sensation's roots' and 'made it possible to bestow upon sensation an illusionary, false and merely imagined foundation'.[336] Feuerbach reasons that 'that which is differentiated from thinking' is 'the sensuous' and that 'the reality of the idea is thus sensation and since 'reality is the truth of the idea; thus, sensation is the truth of the idea'.[337] In recognition of Feuerbachian concepts, Wagner's philosophy considers the human being as a sensual entity that primarily absorbs external impressions. According to Wagner, the spectator apprehends the '*artwork* through employment of every faculty of human artistic expression, *the poetic intent* is in drama the most completely carried from the intellect to the emotion, artistically imparted to the emotion's receptive organs, *the senses*'.[338] The senses operate at the interface between the creator and the receptor of the artwork.

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[334] *SL*, 180–81; *SB*, III, 161 (21.11.1849): 'Feuerbach geht endlich doch im Menschen auf, und darin ist er so wichtig, namentlich der absoluten Philosophie gegenüber, bei der der Mensch im Philosophen aufgeht. Ich habe den natürlichen gesunden proceß nirgends so bestimmt und bewußt vollbracht gesehen, als von Feuerbach, und ich bekenne, daß ich ihm viel dank schuldig bin […]'.

[335] Ludwig Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Manfred Vogel (Indianapolis, 1986), 27.

[336] David Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies: Aesthetics and Materialism in German Musical Identity* (Cambridge, 2013), 282.

[337] Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 50.

[338] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 78: '[…] im *Drama*, vermag sich daher die Anschauung des Erfahrenen vollkommen erfolgreich mitzutheilen, und zwar gerade deßwegen, weil in ihm durch die Verwendung aller künstlerischen Ausdrucksfähigkeiten des Menschen *die Absicht* des Dichters am vollständigsten aus dem Verstande an das Gefühl, nämlich künstlerisch an die unmittelbarsten Empfängnißorgane des Gefühles, *die Sinne*, mitgetheilt wird.'

Wagner's maxim, according to which extra-musical meaning is conveyed through components of sensual experience, is a response to a particular aesthetic tradition that goes beyond Feuerbach and in fact arises from Locke and Leibniz. The Leibnizian influence is most distinctly felt in Wagner's segregation of the perceptual process into different phases. Leibniz argued in his *Mediationes de cognitione, veritate et ideis* [*Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas*] (1684) that 'the most perfect knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] is both adequate and intuitive'.[339] He arrived at this highest achievable form of *Erkenntnis* by a method of elimination that passes through several stages. Leibniz distinguishes between 'obscure' and 'clear' knowledge; the latter is divided into 'confused' and 'distinct' *Erkenntnis* and distinct knowledge is in turn subdivided into 'inadequate' and 'adequate' and also into 'symbolic' and 'intuitive' *Erkenntnis*. The first option of each of these pairs leads to a dead end.

Another parallel with Leibniz's epistemology is reflected in Wagner's vision that music is able to illuminate the 'dark' side of the psyche. Wagner declared that 'music speaks to us only by bringing alive, in every imaginable gradation and with most definite clarity, the very general concept of feeling which is in itself dark'.[340] Leibniz introduces the category of '*petites perceptions*' [little perceptions] and explains that '[in what is called] *perception*, the mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives it cannot avoid perceiving'.[341] Leibniz's remark that 'the ideas which are received by sensation are often altered by the judgment of the mind in grown people' reads like a defence of Wagner's concept of the *Reinmenschliche*.[342] Wagner wrote that, '[s]ince the faculty of dreams cannot be stimulated to activity by external influences, to which the brain is now completely closed, this must happen by inner processes sensed by our wakened consciousness as dark imaginings'.[343] The recurrent use of the word 'dark' in this context strongly indicates that Wagner is drawing upon this particular set of ideas. Before Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten seized this set of assumptions to transform it into the

[339] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Meditationes de cognitione, veritate et ideis* (Hanover, 1745), 153.
[340] Richard Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Beethoven (1870): A New Translation*, ed. Roger Allen, (Woodbridge, 2014) [*RWB*], 75; *Beethoven*, 78: 'Die Musik, welche einzig dadurch zu uns spricht, daß sie den allerallgemeinsten Begriff des an sich dunklen Gefühles in den erdenklichsten Abstufungen mit bestimmtester Deutlichkeit uns belebt […]'.
[341] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge, 1996), 134.
[342] *Ibid*.
[343] *RWB*, 53; *Beethoven*, 69: '[…] so muß dies durch Vorgänge im inneren Organismus geschehen, welche unserem wachen Bewußtsein sich nur als dunkle Gefühle andeuten.'

philosophical discipline of aesthetics, Christian Wolff defined the absence of differentiation as the 'darkness of thought' [*Dunkelheit der Gedancken*].[344]

Wagner's notion of the *Gefühl* emanates from an interpretation of the term that is rooted in the eighteenth-century concept of *aisthēsis*. The Leibnizian philosopher Baumgarten introduced this Greek term into German philosophical thinking. Wagner, when making reference to the term '*Gefühl*' importing the singular number, is subscribing to this specific philosophical set of assumptions in which the term denotes the 'sense of feeling'. The term '*Gefühl*' under this regime also embraces a cognitive side of the sensory faculty. In the tradition of Leibniz and Wolff, Baumgarten considers cognition to comprise a lower and a higher layer that are respectively defined as thought and perception. In his *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* [*Reflections on Poetry*] (1735), Baumgarten delineates the contours of a 'sensuous knowledge' or '*cognitio sensitiva*'.[345] He understands this notion as the totality of all human perceptions that range 'below' the standards of clarity and whose components defy segmentation and separate analysis.[346] According to the Grimms' *German Dictionary*, '*Gefühl*' also refers to the 'faculty of sensory perception'.[347]

Friedrich Schleiermacher's 'emotional understanding'

The impact that the ideas advocated by the influential Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher had on Wagner's notion of the *Gefühlsverständnis* remain unexplored by Wagner scholarship. Although no clear proof of Wagner's awareness of Schleiermacherian ideas seems to have survived, the extent to which Wagner's central aesthetic axiom resembles Schleiermacher's theory of understanding religion through feeling rules out mere coincidence. It is, indeed, unlikely that Wagner, himself a Protestant who fervently challenged Christian values, was ignorant of Schleiermacher, who at his death in 1834 was the most distinguished theologian of Protestant

[344] Christian Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott* in: *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Jean École (Hildesheim, 1983), Part 1, II, 455.
[345] Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley, 1954), 103.
[346] Steffen W. Gross, *Cognitio Sensitiva. Ein Versuch über die Ästhetik als Lehre von der Erkenntnis des Menschen* (Würzburg, 2011), 182.
[347] Grimm/Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, XIV, III, 1576.

Germany.[348] Schleiermacher's seminal treatise *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* [*On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*], published in 1799, also placed him among the foremost members of the German Romantic circle.[349]

It is the juxtaposition between Schleiermacher's conveyance of religious truths and Wagner's transfer of meaning in art that reveals salient parallels. Schleiermacher envisages an understanding of religion as rooted in pre-reflective feeling. Schleiermacher's theory is based on a 'personal encounter with truth in the form of immediate intuition and feeling'.[350] In his *Zweite Rede: Über das Wesen der Religion* [*Second Speech: On the Essence of Religion*] Schleiermacher describes the process of 'Anschauen des Universums' [intuiting the universe] as the 'highest and most universal formula of religion'.[351] Wagner works from the point of view that '[t]he thing that is most intelligible to our emotions is our intuition [*Anschauung*] of ordinary life'.[352] According to Schleiermacher, '[i]ntuition is […] something individual, set apart, the immediate perception [*unmittelbare Wahrnehmung*], nothing more'.[353] Although Schleiermacher introduces two notions into his description of man's response to religious insights, '*Anschauung*' and '*Gefühl*', he suggests the interdependence of both to the extent that they collapse into one single idea: 'Intuition without feeling is nothing and can have neither the proper origin nor the proper force; feeling without intuition is also nothing: both are therefore something only when and because they are originally unseparated'.[354]

Schleiermacher's evaluation of our personal encounter with religious truths underlines the experiential nature of his notion, which is based on the primacy of pre-reflective experience. In Wagner's theory, this pre-reflective component is rendered as '*unwillkürlich*' [involuntary]. Over the course of Part II of *Opera and Drama*, Wagner frequently specifies the 'feeling' as '*unwillkürliches Gefühl*' [involuntary or automatic feeling]. In substantiating the role of the instinct, Wagner holds that 'authentically we only act if we arrive at an experience motivated by an involuntary

[348] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, ed. Richard Crouter (Cambridge, 1996), xi.
[349] *Ibid*.
[350] *Ibid*., xxxii.
[351] *Ibid*., 24.
[352] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 193: 'Das Allerfaßlichste ist dem Gefühle unsre Anschauung des gewöhnlichen Lebens […]'.
[353] Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 26.
[354] *Ibid*., 31.

action'.[355] The extent to which Wagner's concept seems to represent a response to Schleiermacher's experiential-expressive stance is further accentuated by the correlation of the processes at the interface between the inner and outer worlds. Schleiermacher explains '[t]hat first mysterious moment that occurs in every sensory perception, before intuition and feeling have separated, where sense and its object have, as it were, flowed into one another and have become one, before both turn back to their original position […]. This moment is the highest flowering of religion. […] This is the natal hour of everything living in religion'.[356] This account almost reads like Wagner's description of the natal hour of understanding in art, as it embraces the key elements of an unfettered first-hand experience that is characteristic of a *reinmenschliche* approach. This search for the 'purely human' permeates both Schleiermacher's and Wagner's *Gefühlsverständnis*. In Schleiermacher's mode of perception, religious insights can only be gained when the feeling is transported into a state of the 'purely human'.[357] Therefore both, religion and art can only be perceived and understood through the 'purely human', which is 'intuition' in Schleiermacher's world and 'instinct' under Wagner's regime.

Schleiermacher's influence is also apparent in Wagner's elucidation of the characteristics of what 'the feeling' is actually able to capture. The following passage can be read as a list of basic requirements that a 'melodic moment' representing an 'emotional signpost' needs to fulfil:

> The feeling captures nothing but the real, the sensually actuated and the perceivable: only the accomplished, the fulfilled can be transmitted to the feeling, it is just entirely what it is, what in this instant it can be. It can only understand that which is one with itself within; what is discordant with itself and what has not arrived at an actual and definite message confuses the feeling and urges it to think and is, indeed, an act of combination that overrides the feeling.[358]

[355] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 75: '[…] wahrhaftig handeln wir aber nur, wenn wir aus unwillkürlichem Handeln selbst zur Erfahrung gelangen […]'.
[356] Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 31–2.
[357] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle (Heidelberg, 1959), 85.
[358] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 69: 'Das Gefühl erfaßt nur das Wirkliche, sinnlich Bethätigte und Wahrnehmbare: an das Gefühl theilt sich nur das Vollendete, Abgeschlossene, Das, was so eben ganz das ist, was es jetzt sein kann, mit. Nur das mit sich Einige ist ihm verständlich; das mit sich Uneinige, noch nicht wirklich und bestimmt sich Kundgebende, verwirrt das Gefühl und nöthigt es zum Denken, also zu einem kombinirenden Akte, der das Gefühl aufhebt.'

The decisive quality that the artist needs to confer to his images in poetry or his 'melodic moments' in music is 'being one with itself', which seems to represent unity [*Einheit*]. Wagner devises a detailed method by which the poet is capable to 'convey the most immeasurable connections in their ultimately comprehensible union'.[359] Schleiermacher defines what the feeling is able to capture as 'the immediate presence of the whole undivided being'.[360]

III.3. Wagner's ideal in the light of psychological research

Wagner argues that the specific musical features from which he intends to derive his motivic language are capable of triggering a subconscious emotional response that operates at the interface between the outer and the inner worlds. In this subchapter, I aim to analyze Wagner's proposition in the light of leading theories on the perception of musical meaning. Wagner's notion of the *Gefühlsverständnis* is also critically evaluated against the backdrop of relevant psychological and physiological research. Bearing in mind Wagner's insistence on an initial emotional response, I will critically interrogate those philosophical accounts of music perception that acknowledge the existence of a diversified reaction to music that involves at least both cognitive and emotional types of processing. In addition to this, some recent developments in the field of music and emotion seem to supply empirical evidence that substantiates Wagner's claim.

The complex study of music and emotion is so vast a field that I will confine my investigation to a number of relevant key concepts. The central issue is the question of the existence of a purely emotional response to music, at least in its first perceptive stage. Although the American philosopher Diana Raffman presents a 'cognitive' approach to musical meaning, she proposes a distinction between different levels of abstraction to which the listener's mind refers the incoming musical signal.[361] According to Raffman, 'it turns out that certain features of the musical

[359] *Ibid*., 84 '[…] die unermeßlichsten Zusammenhänge in allerverständlichster Einheit darzustellen.'
[360] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. Hugh R. Mackintosh and James S. Stewart (Edinburgh, 1989), 7.
[361] Diana Raffman, 'Toward a Cognitive Theory of Musical Ineffability', *Review of Metaphysics* 41 (1988), 690.

signal are likely to be recovered at such shallow processing levels (i.e., so "near" to the peripheral sense organs) that they fail to be mentally categorized in the manner thought necessary for the learning of verbal labels'.[362] This promising account of what Raffman has termed 'nuances' is intended to encourage a 'cognitivist explanation of musical ineffability'.[363] She appeals to subconscious energies in a way similar to what Ernst Kurth presupposes when aiming to approach the linear motions of which the composer is not aware. Wagner believes in the existence of 'stream-of-unconsciousness'-like responses to his artwork. Raffman's class of 'nuances', however, is too fleeting a category to substantiate the constant pre-cognitive processing of the incoming musical signal.

Although Leonard B. Meyer's 'expectation theory' (1956) is devoted to the role of cognition in aesthetic meaning, he acknowledges subconscious or 'affective' reactions to small-scale musical phenomena such as themes or motifs. In arguing the question of value in music, Meyer proposes a number of basic assumptions that seem to provide fruitful stimuli when approaching Wagner's *Gefühlsverständnis*. Meyer suggests that, within the common practice of the motion of a melody, certain implications are created for where and how the melody will move next and where its final point of arrival will be. In his 1967 study on the patterns and predictions in twentieth-century music, Meyer presupposes that a 'good' or 'valuable' piece of music must, in order to merit this accolade, adhere to certain rules, such as the employment of a 'unified system of expectations and probabilities'.[364] In Meyer's view, 'value has something to do with the activation of a musical impulse having tendencies toward a more or less definite goal and with the temporary resistance or inhibition of these tendencies'.[365] Since music that plays with our expectations, that delays the goal or swerves in new directions is likely to evoke certain psychological states, a work, as Meyer concludes, that fails to create such tendencies will be of no value to the listener.[366] In his 1967 study, Meyer makes the general statement that 'a set of basic, encompassing beliefs and attitudes nevertheless underlies and conditions all our thinking and behavior. These beliefs, which are as a rule implicit and

[362] *Ibid*., 688.
[363] Diana Raffman, *Language, Music, and Mind* (Cambridge MA, 1993), 3.
[364] Leonard B. Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Music* (Chicago, 1967), 24.
[365] *Ibid*., 25.
[366] J. Peter Burkholder, 'A Simple Model for Associative Meaning', *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, ed. Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall (Bloomington, 2006), 99.

unconscious, have to do with our most fundamental assumptions about the nature of the universe'.[367]

The non-cognitivist account of musical perception that Jenefer Robinson has presented in her 2005 book *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* seems to overlap significantly with Wagner's theoretical model. Robinson begins her investigation with a defence of the controversial 1890 theory advanced by William James according to which emotional responses are perceptions of changes in the body. James distinguished between physiological reactions and the subsequent arousal of emotions.[368] In conjunction with hypotheses presented by LeDoux, Robinson develops the concept of 'pre-cognitive affective appraisals'. LeDoux put forth the idea that in an episode of emotion the cognitive monitoring is preceded by a non-cognitive evaluation.[369] Wagner anticipated this in 1851. Robinson is siding with Wagner on the issue of recognizing the processual character of an emotion. She argues that 'emotion is not a thing or a response or a state or a disposition; it is a *process*, a sequence of events'.[370] Such a process, according to Robinson, consists of:

> (1) an initial *affective* appraisal of the situation that focuses attention on its significance to the organism and causes (2) physiological responses of various sorts—especially ANS [autonomic nervous system] activity and changes in the facial musculature—and motor responses, which get the organism dealing with the situation as very broadly appraised by the affective appraisal, and which gives way to (3) a further more discriminating *cognitive* appraisal or monitoring of the situation.[371]

Strikingly, Robinson also argues that 'a non-cognitive appraisal typically occurs very fast and beneath conscious awareness'.[372]

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[367] Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas*, 56.
[368] William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York, 1950), 442–85.
[369] LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain*, 69.
[370] Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (Oxford, 2005), 59.
[371] *Ibid*.
[372] *Ibid*., 66.

Gestalt psychology provides stimuli with reference to the partitioning of the auditory signal that seems to corroborate Wagner's segmentation. The Canadian perceptual psychologist Albert S. Bregman has bridged the gap between Gestalt psychology and auditory phenomena, a discipline that came to focus on visual analogies.[373] It should be noted, however, that in the early days of Gestalt psychology the perception of melodic contour took centre stage. Max Wertheimer, the founding father of the discipline and pupil of Carl Stumpf, investigated the question why we are able to recognize melody despite changes in several of its parameters, which, in itself, sounds like an endeavour inspired by Wagner.[374] A highly influential figure for Wertheimer was Christian von Ehrenfels, who argued that the sum of sentiments perceived by a melody is transformed into a new entity by the listener (a so-called 'fundierter Inhalt' [founded content]).[375]

Meyer cautions against reliance on Gestalt terms in building a precise and systematic account of musical perception.[376] Instead, Meyer based his approach on John Dewey's conflict theory of emotions, according to which affect arises from the inhibition of a tendency.[377] Dewey's theory was modified by John T. MacCurdy, who concludes that, 'when instinctive reactions are stimulated that do not gain expression either in conduct, emotional expression, or fantasy, that affect is most intense'.[378] MacCurdy goes on to explain that 'the energy of the organism, activating an instinct process, must be blocked by repression before poignant feeling is excited'.[379] It is worth noting, however, that MacCurdy's understanding of 'instincts' includes learned habit responses.[380]

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[373] Albert S. Bregman, *Auditory Scene Analysis: The Perceptual Organization of Sound* (Cambridge MA, 1990), 2.
[374] Max Wertheimer, 'Gestalt Theory', *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology*, ed. Willis D. Ellis (London, 1938), 4.
[375] Christian von Ehrenfels, 'Über Gestaltqualitäten', *Vierteljahresschrift für Wissenschaftliche Philosophie* 14 (1890), 271.
[376] Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning*, 86.
[377] John Dewey, 'The Theory of Emotion. I: Emotional Attitudes', *Psychological Review* 1 (1894), 553–69 and 'The Theory of Emotion. II: The Significance of Emotions', *Psychological Review* 2 (1895), 13–32.
[378] John T. MacCurdy, *The Psychology of Emotion: Morbid and Normal* (New York, 1999), 475.
[379] *Ibid*.
[380] Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning*, 24.

Stimuli from the psychological study of music and emotion

According to Bryan Magee, 'the essentials of modern psychology seem to be present, uncoordinated, in [Wagner's] writings'.[381] A general agreement among music psychologists has been reached, according to which music does, indeed, induce emotional responses. The psychological study of music and emotion provides a number of hypotheses that seem to support Wagner's claim that our initial response to music is purely emotional. One of the central aims of this empirical field is the detection of mechanisms that intervene 'between reaching a person's ear and an emotion being experienced or detected by that person as a result of hearing that music'.[382] This is precisely the realm that Wagner singled out for his initial emotional reaction. Wagner believes that the ideal music prevents cognitive responses from intervening at this crucial first contact. In this rapidly developing field of study, a number of problems have been identified. In order to approach Wagner's theory, we need to adapt to the fact that within the psychological study of music there are still many unanswered questions. Difficulties in defining the concept of emotions are surpassed by the problems surrounding the issue of how music can induce emotions in the listener.

One of the leading scholars in the field, the Swedish psychologist Patrik N. Juslin has proposed a working definition that seems to have departed with widespread esteem. He suggests that

> [e]motions are relatively brief, intense, and rapidly changing reactions to potentially important events (subjective challenges or opportunities) in the external or internal environment—often of a social nature—which involve a number of subcomponents (cognitive changes, subjective feelings, expressive behaviour, and action tendencies) that are more or less "synchronized" during an emotional episode.[383]

[381] Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, 13.
[382] Patrik N. Juslin/John A. Sloboda, 'At the Interface Between the Inner and Outer World', *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications* (Oxford, 2010), 73.
[383] Patrik N. Juslin, 'Music and Emotion: Seven Questions, Seven Answers', *Music and the Mind: Essays in Honour of John Sloboda* (Oxford, 2011), 114.

Among neuroscientists, there seems to be a consensus that emotion and cognition are two separate but interacting brain systems.[384] In the investigation of emotions, emphasis has predominantly been placed on the cognitive content of emotion.[385] Wagner, however, is interested in the emotional content of cognition. LeDoux rightly criticizes the orthodox view, according to which emotion is just a kind of cognition.[386] He argues that 'the perceptual representation of an object and the evaluation of the significance of an object are separately processed by the brain'.[387]

The cognitive neuroscientist Steven Brown devises a separation of sound as emotive meaning and sound as referential meaning.[388] He argues that there are 'two different modes of perceiving, producing, responding to musical sound patterns' and he distinguishes between 'acoustic' and 'vehicle modes'.[389] The former refers to the 'immediate, on-line, emotive aspect of sound perception and production' and 'deals with the emotive interpretation of musical sound patterns' through two processes that Brown calls 'sound emotion' and 'sentic modulation'.[390] Brown contends that this is an inextricable acoustic mode of operation. The 'vehicle mode' refers to the 'off-line, referential form of sound perception and production'. Brown sees the 'two modes as alternative interpretations of the same acoustic stimulus'.[391] However, he misses the chance to explore the role of the acoustic mode within Wagner's motivic system and explicitly subsumes the leitmotif under the 'vehicle mode' in an attempt to explain devices that lend semanticity to music.[392]

A special problem in Wagner's view is his emphasis on semantic determinacy. Wagner proposes being able to manipulate music so as to trigger a specific emotion with clear-cut precision. Several theories have been proposed to explain the delimitation of one emotional episode from another. According to categorical approaches, these emotional episodes are experienced as '*categories* that are distinct

[384] LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain*, 69.
[385] Robinson, *Deeper Than Reason*, 8.
[386] LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain*, 68.
[387] *Ibid*, 69.
[388] Steven Brown, 'The "Musilanguage" Model of Music', *The Origins of Music* (2000), 294.
[389] *Ibid*.
[390] *Ibid*.
[391] *Ibid*.
[392] *Ibid*., 284.

from each other'.[393] These categories are based on an innate catalogue of limited 'basic emotions' from which all subcategories can be derived.[394]

There is less conformity with reference to the question of whether emotions are actually aroused or merely perceived. Contrary to Wagner's assumptions, the Swedish psychologist Alf Gabrielsson came to the conclusion that the perception of emotion may well proceed without any emotional involvement.[395] According to Juslin and Sloboda, however, 'it is indisputable that the audience feels real emotions rather than simply observing or inferring them'.[396] This view represents the opposite of what Adorno claims for Wagner and which made him suspicious of anything that works like 'emotional contagion' in Wagner.[397]

In recent years, the prevailing theory that ascribes music's ability to induce emotions to the phenomenon of 'cognitive appraisal' has been challenged. According to Klaus R. Scherer's 'component process model', an emotion episode consists of synchronized changes in several major components: cognitive appraisal, psychological arousal, motor expression and subjective feeling.[398] An emotion under this regime is induced if an object or event is cognitively appraised as having an implication for life goals. Music, however, rarely seems to rank that highly in people's lives.[399] Juslin and Västfjäll highlight the facts that, in the past, most studies have focused on how listeners perceive emotions expressed in music and that most theories of music and emotion have focused on the representational features of music that enable listeners to perceive emotions ('causal factors').

In their seminal 2008 article, Juslin and Västfjäll identified the neglect of underlying psychological mechanisms and the need to look beyond appraisal theory.[400] In the quest to unravel the mystery of how music evokes emotion, recent studies in the field of music and emotions have focused on what is called 'induction mechanisms', which hope to describe the psychological processes that underlie the induction of musical emotions. What Juslin and Västfjäll have termed the

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[393] Sloboda/Juslin, 'At the Interface', 76.
[394] *Ibid*.
[395] Alf Gabrielsson, 'Emotion Perceived and Emotion Felt: Same or Different?', *Musicae Scientiae* Special Issue (2001–2), 136.
[396] Sloboda/Juslin, 'At the Interface', 91.
[397] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 35.
[398] Klaus R. Scherer, 'Which Emotions Can Be Induced by Music? What are the Underlying Mechanisms? And How Can We Measure Them?', *Journal of New Music Research* 33/3 (2004), 240.
[399] Juslin, 'Music and Emotion: Seven Questions, Seven Answers', 121.
[400] Patrik N. Juslin/Daniel Västfjäll, 'Emotional Responses to Music: The Need to Consider Underlying Mechanisms', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 31 (2008), 561.

'BRECVEM model' consists of seven mechanisms through which music might induce emotions.[401] These mechanisms are: brain stem reflexes, rhythmic entrainment, evaluative conditioning, contagion, visual imagery, episodic memory and musical expectancy.

The most promising mechanism of the BRECVEM model that strikes me as a perfect candidate for Wagner's transfer of emotional messages is 'emotional contagion'. Juslin and Västfjäll define this psychological mechanism as referring to

> a process whereby an emotion is induced by a piece of music because the listener perceives the emotional expression of the music, and then "mimics" this expression internally, which by means of either peripheral feedback from muscles, or a more direct activation of the relevant emotional representations in the brain, leads to an induction of the same emotion.[402]

Contrary to José Ortega y Gasset's famous assertion, according to which 'art must not proceed by psychic contagion, for psychic contagion is an unconscious phenomenon, and art ought to be full clarity, high noon of the intellect', the mechanism of 'emotional contagion' seems to corroborate Wagner's own views.[403] Wagner mentions the idea of '*Gefühlszwang*' [emotional coercion] and describes this phenomenon as follows: 'The compulsory effect lies in this expression of the inner feeling by stimulation of the corresponding inner feeling of the other person who is the recipient of this expression; and the poet exerts this emotional coercion on others in the same way as he felt it himself'.[404] 'Emotional contagion' is based upon the resemblance of acoustical patterns in the music with features that occur in emotional speech. We will readily recall that Wagner is tracing the point at which the 'verbal language […] turned into melody during a moment of excitation'.[405] A brain module

[401] Patrik N. Juslin/Simon Liljeström/Daniel Västfjäll/Lars-Olov Lundqvist, 'How Does Music Evoke Emotions? Exploring the Underlying Mechanisms', *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, 620.
[402] Juslin/Västfjäll, 'Emotional Responses to Music', 565.
[403] José Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art*, trans. Helene Weyl (New Jersey, 1968), 27.
[404] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 129: 'In dieser Äußerung des inneren Gefühles liegt nun auch der zwingende Grund ihrer Wirkung durch Anregung des entsprechenden inneren Gefühles des anderen Menschen, an den jene Äußerung gelangt; und dieser Gefühlszwang, will ihn der Dichter auf andere so ausüben, wie er ihn selbst empfand […]'.
[405] *Ibid*., 175: 'Der in der Erregung zur Melodie gewordene Wortvers […]'.

might respond quickly to voice-like instruments—presumably 'through some kind of "mirror neuron" system involved in emphatic responses'.[406]

Subconscious processing of the auditory signal

Cooke rightly believed that 'the fundamental musical experience—the transformation of music into emotion—is the result of an entirely *unconscious* process'.[407] Martin Geck praises Wagner for discovering 'a succinct musical expression of symbols and archetypal images which, grounded in our collective unconscious, take on material form in specific colors and highlights'.[408] Geck goes on to identify the language of Wagner's motifs as one that is 'already familiar to listeners as part of a mimetic tradition that has existed for centuries, if not for millennia'.[409] The ontological status of the 'unconscious' is still challenged 'within large sections of human and psychological sciences'.[410] Wagner drew upon a *Zeitgeist* that focused on the 'engagement of all senses and impulses, mysteries, and imaginations, sounds and silences in a virtual project called the uprooting of certainties, the dislocation of shadows and the discovery of darkness as an appropriate illumination of the soul'.[411]

Although being fundamentally suspicious of universal sources of the communicative process in music, David Osmond-Smith lends further credibility to the factual basis of 'subconscious iconicity'. A musical pattern is 'processed for recognition in relation to the innumerable other patterns stored in the brain'. Such an impulse may possess 'certain perceptual pertinent features common to a wide variety of conscious and unconscious experience-patterns' that exacerbate their clear-cut differentiation, to the extent that they are turned into a synthesized 'Urgestalt'.[412]

Some psychological mechanisms operate at lower 'subcortical' levels which means that their processing is largely subconscious, automatic, and independent of other psychological processes (so-called 'modulatory').[413] Other mechanisms operate at higher cortical levels: their processing is more available to consciousness; it can be

[406] Juslin, 'Music and Emotion: Seven Questions, Seven Answers', 123.
[407] Cooke, *The Language of Music*, 206.
[408] Martin Geck, *Richard Wagner: A Life in Music*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Chicago, 2013), 187.
[409] *Ibid*.
[410] Angus Nicholls/Martin Liebscher, *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought* (Cambridge, 2010), 1.
[411] *Ibid*., 139.
[412] David Osmond-Smith, 'The Iconic Process in Musical Communication', *Versus* 3/2 (1972), 40.
[413] Juslin, 'Music and Emotion: Seven Questions, Seven Answers', 121.

influenced by will to some extent; and it is easily 'distracted' by competing stimuli or processing. This means that mechanisms may interact, leading to conflicting outputs which accounts for the occurrence of 'mixed emotions' in response to music.

III.4. Wagner's recommended expressive language

The motivic language of the *Ring* suggests that, within the referential framework that Wagner explored in connection with his '*Themen-Bildung*' [formation of themes], he gave priority to notions of '*Urmusik*' [primal music]. An effort to assess the merits of the *Gefühlsverständnis* concept essentially depends on the extent to which Wagner was able to approach the irreducible core of 'universal' musical features. I claim that, in order to create a motivic language through which (emotional) meaning is conveyed at a subconscious level, Wagner successfully leaped further backwards, as it were, on the timeline of the process of music's gradual '*Kultivierung*' [enculturation] than has previously been acknowledged. Wagner aimed at extracting those inherently expressive features of music that 'predate' this enculturation process. The deeper Wagner was able to penetrate the pre-cultural realm of music, the less utopian is his proposition that there is a mode of expression that allows the 'melodic moments' to operate at an emotional level. Wagner believed in an innate store of references in humans that in fact instigated and channelled the process of *Kultivierung*. In the following pages, I present the potential evidence in support of my claims.

The most recent study that approaches the issue of timeliness in Wagner, Holly Watkins's *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought* (2014), mentions an imaginative time travel that Watkins links to Wagner's discovery of mythology.[414] Her approach focuses on a more general application of Abbate's notion of 'layered time' which Watkins interprets as a 'continuous interaction of past, present, and future'.[415] Watkins considers 'melodic moments' the musical realization of the 'peculiar temporality of Wagner's encounter with myth and legend'.[416] In spite of opening up this promising line of inquiry, an attempt to pin down the musical means by which Wagner appeals to the listener's *Urempfindungsvermögen* [primal sensitive

[414] Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 120.
[415] Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 169–70.
[416] Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 121.

faculty] seems to be outside the purview of her study.[417] In this chapter, it is therefore my primary aim to contextualize Wagner's recommendations as to his ideal expressive language, as expounded in his prose works.

An investigation into Wagner's recommended expressive language is exempt from the risk of committing the intentional fallacy. The argument put forth by William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, that the intentionalist 'derives the standard of criticism from the psychological *causes* of the poem', has been translated into musicology as an attack against the prevailing search for meaning in the composer's intentions.[418] At this point we are not dealing with a specific work of art but with Wagner's explicit theoretical ideas pertaining to issues of musical expressivity as pronounced in his prose works. Furthermore, the approach that Wagner ultimately suggests is, as we will see, effectively based on 'universals' that are identical from the standpoint of production and of reception. Wagner himself offered support for this view when making clear that his claim for universal comprehensibility represents two sides of the same coin. He believed that '[t]he emotion […] manifested in this melody […] is a thing which now belongs as much to us, to whom it has been imparted, as to him who has imparted it'.[419]

The restoration of the 'purely human' is the weightiest constituent of Wagner's programme of aesthetic regeneration of the arts. Wagner proposed to restore a musical language cleansed from all formalism and conventionalism. In *A Communication* (1851), Wagner sums up the essence of his compositional ideals as follows: '[T]he content of what the composer [*Wort-Tondichter*] needs to express is the *purely human that is independent* [*losgelöst*] *of all conventions*'.[420] Mary A. Cicora describes this as a 'circular progression from understanding and rational capacities […] through feeling to some sort of new, second state of innocence'.[421] It is peculiar to see how early critics turned this central regenerative claim on its head by accusing Wagner of 'degeneration' and atavistic tendencies. The physician and author

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[417] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 143.
[418] William K. Wimsatt/Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Affective Fallacy', *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, ed. William K. Wimsatt (Lexington, 1954), 21.
[419] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 183: 'Die in dieser Melodie kundgegebene […] Empfindung […] ist nun eine Erscheinung, die uns, denen sie mitgetheilt wurde, so gut angehört als Dem, der sie uns mittheilte […]' (translation from Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies*, 287).
[420] *Eine Mittheilung*, 318: '[…] der Inhalt Dessen, was der Wort-Tondichter auszusprechen hat: es ist *das von aller Konvention losgelöste Reinmenschliche*.'
[421] Mary A. Cicora, *Mythology as Metaphor: Romantic Irony, Critical Theory, and Wagner's Ring* (Westport, 1998), 66.

Max Nordau concludes in his book *Entartung* [*Degeneration*] (1893) that '[w]hat he [Wagner] takes for evolution is retrogression, and a return to a primeval human—nay, to a pre-human stage'.[422] Nordau's 'biomedical' critique goes further, in describing this retrogression in biological terms as atavism—a reversion to origins that bypasses more recent generations.[423] In Nordau's acrimonious comments against Wagner's theory is reflected a more general intention to discredit this music on grounds of primitivism that held sway over Wagnerian works.[424] Laurence Dreyfus highlights the extent to which Nordau detects the signs of 'an erotically emotional degenerate nature' in Wagner's depictions of love.[425] The rigour with which Wagner was accused of 'degenerate' traits may in fact serve as a strong indication that early audiences actually perceived some of Wagner's desired expressive qualities.

More recently, Thomas Grey has identified Wagner's regenerative trait as a recurring trope, according to which 'the ideals of a lost, golden age will be restored, but necessarily modified by the conditions of a new era'.[426] Grey has persuasively traced the potential origins of what he considers 'the "regressive-utopian" fantasy' of Wagner's restoration of music to a pre-cultural condition in the anthropological mythology expounded by Rousseau and Herder.[427] Yet, despite these authorities, the overall assessment of this crucial ingredient of Wagner's *Kunstprogramm* [arts scheme] as fictional is sustained even in Grey's account. He contends that it is difficult to imagine an 'even remotely "factual" basis' for what he classifies merely as a 'strain' in Wagner's theory.[428] Consequently, Grey leaves unexplored the potential repercussions of Wagner's vision of universal expressive traits on his motivic language. Instead, Grey dismisses Wagner's ideal of arts as tending 'always to regress toward the imagined roots of origins of things, toward a utopia of absolute, unmediated expressivity, even while it remains, in practice, thoroughly committed in so many ways to the techniques and technologies of modern culture'.[429]

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[422] Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln, 1993), 176.
[423] *Ibid*.; Sanna Pederson, 'Romanticism/Anti-Romanticism', *Issues in Musical Aesthetics: Musicological Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Downes (New York, 2014), 184.
[424] Stephen Downes, *Music and Decadence in European Modernism: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, 2010), 298.
[425] Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse*, 163.
[426] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 281.
[427] *Ibid*.
[428] *Ibid*., 265 and 258.
[429] *Ibid*., 257.

The prime focus of Wagner's return to the 'purely human' is his reliance on 'universal' expressive traits in music. In *Music of the Future* (1861), Wagner announces the dawn of an 'entirely new faculty of speech [*Sprachvermögen*]' which is the expressive analogue of the *Gefühlsverständnis* as it 'guides our feeling so as to completely confound and disarm the reasoning mind'.[430] According to Wagner's recommendations in *Opera and Drama,* the 'poet' needs to resort to a specific expressive language that secures understanding at an emotional level:

> [T]he poet's task […] the presentation of his characters' reinforced [*verstärkten*] deeds through communication of their underlying motives, requires an *expression* that occupies the poet inasmuch as *in fact its invention and creation is the only means that allows the presentation of those motives and deeds*.[431]

There is, in other words, no expressive alternative. Since Wagner has identified music [*Tonsprache*] as the only medium that is capable of communicating these underlying dramatic motives, he is, as we have seen, in fact describing the composer's task. Although Wagner refers to the *Erfindung und Herstellung dieses Ausdruckes* [invention and creation of this expression] he goes on to pinpoint '*das urmelodische Ausdrucksvermögen*' [the expressive power of the primal melody] as the one and only role model.[432]

Wagner reverts to his genealogical imagery that describes the 'mütterliche *Urmelodie*' [maternal primal melody] as the primordial source of those melodies that are destined to secure the 'emotional understanding' of the drama.[433] In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner recapitulates that

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[430] *Zukunftsmusik*, 110: '[…] ganz neuen Sprachvermögens […]'; '[…] unser Gefühl mit einer solchen Sicherheit [zu bestimmen], daß die logisirende Vernunft vollkommen dadurch verwirrt und entwaffnet wird.'

[431] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 101: '[…] die Thätigkeit des Dichters […] darin besteht, die Darstellung der verstärkten Handlungen seiner gedichteten Gestalten durch Darlegung ihrer Motive an das Gefühl, und diese wieder durch einen *Ausdruck* zu ermöglichen, der insofern seine Thätigkeit einnimmt, als *die Erfindung und Herstellung dieses Ausdruckes in Wahrheit erst die Vorführung jener Motive und Handlungen möglich macht.*'

[432] *Ibid*.

[433] *Ibid*., 142.

> [w]e have described Beethoven's artistic process in his most important instrumental movements as the "demonstration of the act of giving birth to the melody". […] from the beginning he broke the restricted form—precisely the form, against which the opera composer was struggling in vain—into its constituent parts in order to reconnect it so as to form a new entity by dint of an organic creation, namely by putting the constituents of different melodies into mutual contact with each other in order to reveal the organic affinity between the apparently most divergent of such constituents, thus showing the primal kinship [*Urverwandtschaft*] of these different melodies.[434]

Wagner accredited to Beethoven the rediscovery of the primal source from which 'eternally valid' or rather 'eternally comprehensible' melodies are drawn. He wrote in the *Beethoven* essay that 'through Beethoven melody is freed from the influence of fashion and changing taste and elevated to the model of the eternally valid and purely human'.[435] Therefore, the 'eternal, purely human' melodies are recognizable through their 'family resemblance'. It seems as though the reproach of atavism indeed reflects Wagner's melodic strategies. He wishes to skip generations of operatic melodies written by his immediate predecessors in order to revive 'infinitely' valid melodies that are drawn from the primal origins of melody.

Towards the origins of melody

Wagner believed in the existence of *Urmusik* [primal music] and aimed at singling out those inherently expressive traits that have been preserved in music from the time when it served as the *Ursprache* [primal language] of man. For Wagner, the origins of melody coincide with the need to communicate which in primordial times was

[434] *Ibid.*, III, 315: 'Wir bezeichneten Beethoven's künstlerisches Verfahren in seinen wichtigsten Instrumentalsätzen als "Vorführung des Aktes der Gebärung der Melodie". […] er zerbrach nur von vornherein die enge Form, – eben die Form, gegen die der Opernkomponist vergebens ankämpfte, – er zersprengte sie in ihre Bestandtheile, um diese durch organische Schöpfung zu einem neuen Ganzen zu verbinden, und zwar dadurch, daß er die Bestandtheile verschiedener Melodieen [*sic*] sich in wechselnde Berührung setzen ließ, wie um die organische Verwandtschaft der scheinbar unterschiedensten solcher Bestandtheile, somit die Urverwandtschaft jener verschiedenen Melodieen selbst, darzuthun.'

[435] *RWB*, 137; *Beethoven*, 102: '[…] die Melodie ist durch Beethoven von dem Einflusse der Mode und des wechselnden Geschmackes emanzipirt, zum ewig giltigen, rein menschlichen Typus erhoben worden.'

naturally governed by the expression of emotional states. Grey suggests that Wagner appealed to 'an earlier, broader signification of wherein the musical sense merges with a linguistic one' but dismisses this appeal as 'the mythical-anthropological trope of a prelapsarian poetic *Urmelodie*'.[436] In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner explains that '[t]he most original [*ursprünglichste*] expressive organ of the inner man is the *musical language*, as the most involuntary [*unwillkürlichste*] expression of the inward feeling that has been aroused from without'.[437] 'One does not begin by reasoning, but by feeling' argues Rousseau and explained in 1781 that 'for moving a young heart, or repelling an unjust aggressor, nature dictates accents, cries, lamentations'.[438] Rousseau concluded that 'there we have the invention of the most ancient words; and that is why the first languages were singeable and passionate before they became simple and methodical'.[439] Grey finds enough parallels between Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues* [*On the Origins of Language*] (1781) and *Opera and Drama* to conclude that Wagner was familiar with Rousseau's text.[440] Wagner describes the natal hour of 'melody' as follows:

> [W]e get a picture of the first sensational language of man, in which the excited and heightened sense of feeling certainly could only express itself in a coincidence of sonorous expressive sounds that naturally turned into melody.[441]

In response to the question which medium grew out of which Wagner comes down on the side of the language outgrowth model. Wagner believed that, '[i]nitially, human feelings that derived from an infinitely coalescing emotional faculty gradually ossified into a more and more definite content in order to express themselves in the

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[436] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 278.
[437] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 91: 'Das ursprünglichste Äußerungsorgan des inneren Menschen ist aber die *Tonsprache*, als unwillkürlichster Ausdruck des von Außen angeregten inneren Gefühles.'
[438] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Essay on the Origin of Languages Which Treats of Melody and Musical Imitation', *On the Origin of Language: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Essay on the Origin of Languages; Johann Gottfried Herder, Essay on the Origin of Language*, trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (Chicago, 1966), 12.
[439] *Ibid*.
[440] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 259.
[441] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 92: '[…] erhalten wir ein Bild von der ersten Empfindungssprache der Menschen, in der sich das erregte und gesteigerte Gefühl gewiß nur in einer Fügung tönender Ausdruckslaute mittheilen konnte, die ganz von selbst als Melodie sich darstellen mußte.'

primal melody in a way that through the natural progress it rose up to the formation of the verbal language'.[442]

Wagner's differentiation of music and language as respectively linked to the emotional and the intellectual realm has received some interesting backing from the work of Steven Brown. Although Brown's 'musilanguage' model—it suggests that music and language evolved as 'specializations of a common ancestral stage'—conflicts with Wagner's theory, Brown distinguishes between an emotive language (music) and the verbal language that acts as a referential system of signification.[443] Wagner believed that, 'as from the maternal element, from whose bosom—the expressive power of the primal melody—[…] the word and the verbal language emerged, so did the mind grow out of the feeling'.[444] In Wagner's eyes, the transition from a purely emotional to a cognitive perception of the world is mirrored in the emancipation of the verbal language from music. However, this emancipation is deplorable, as ultimately music is the medium that 'expresses […] what is ineffable by the verbal language'.[445] Wagner claims that 'music is beginning and end of the verbal language', which in fact sets his theory in opposition to Rousseau's.[446]

It is remarkable to see that *Opera and Drama* predates even the first seminal publication that hypothesizes about the pre-cultural realm of music, Herbert Spencer's essay *The Origin and Function of Music* (1857). British positivism sparked a controversy in which Spencer and Darwin were prominent figures, the latter arguing in favour of a strict separation between musical and linguistic roots. Spencer published his account before Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) but already shows a strong tendency to apply the principle of evolution to aesthetic phenomena.[447] Although Spencer ultimately believed that 'music arose from the accents and intonation of human speech', he contended that 'all vocal sounds are produced by the agency of certain muscles' which 'are excited to contraction by

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[442] *Ibid*., 143: 'Aus einem unendlich verfließenden Gefühlsvermögen drängten sich zuerst menschliche Empfindungen zu einem allmählich immer bestimmteren Inhalte zusammen, um sich in jener Urmelodie der Art zu äußern, daß der naturnothwendige Fortschritt in ihr sich endlich bis zur Ausbildung der reinen Wortsprache steigerte.'
[443] Brown, '"Musilanguage" Model of Music', 294, 297.
[444] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 102: '[…] das weibliche Mutterelement, aus dessen Schooße, dem urmelodischen Ausdrucksvermögen – […] das Wort und die Wortsprache so hervorging, wie der Verstand aus dem Gefühle erwuchs […]'.
[445] *Ibid*., 174: '[…] sie spricht […] gerade nur das aus, was der Wortsprache an sich unaussprechlich ist.'
[446] *Ibid*., 91: 'Die Tonsprache ist Anfang und Ende der Wortsprache […]'.
[447] Bojan Bujić, *Music in European Thought 1851-1912* (Cambridge, 1988), 309.

pleasurable and painful feelings'.[448] In Spencer's model, the caller begins to sing at the moment when heightened emotional engagement is involved if the callee fails to appear.[449] Wagner describes this process as the 'verbal language that turned into melody during a moment of excitation'.[450] Spencer concurs with Wagner that all vocal utterances are based on emotional stimuli. Wagner identifies the common ground that is shared between mind and feeling as follows: '[T]hat by which the mind is cognate to the feeling, is the *purely human*'.[451] Although the *Reinmenschliche*—or the 'purely emotional'—represents the primal ground of both phenomena *Gefühl* and *Verstand*, the latter has lost its natural link to the emotional realm. It is less reassuring, however, to read in Spencer's autobiography about a Wagner performance that 'I remember observing of two songs, quite different in the sentiments verbally embodied, that the melodies might just as well have been exchanged', an opinion that implies a general mistrust in the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis*.

Towards the origins of music

Wagner's *Urmusik* ideas prefigure theories about the origins of music that still hold good today. Nietzsche disparagingly observed in 1871 that '*Wagners Musik sei nur eine Imitation der Urmusik*' [Wagner's music simply imitates primal music].[452] Ferruccio Busoni named Bach the composer whose music together with Beethoven came closest to *Urmusik* as the source of music.[453] Evaluating the *Urmusik* concept, Albrecht Riethmüller suggested that '*Tonkunst*' [music] was 'no longer the higher, artistically formed and over-formed music, but, in direct inversion, was to be brought below the highest music as, so to speak, its deficient mode'.[454] The ideal of *Urmusik* permeates Romantic aesthetics as the paragon of authentic and powerful music.[455]

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[448] Herbert Spencer, 'The Origin and Function of Music', *Essays: Scientific, Political, and Speculative*, 3 vols. (London, 1868–74), II, 294, 403.
[449] *Ibid*, 299.
[450] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 175: 'Der in der Erregung zur Melodie gewordene Wortvers […]'.
[451] *Ibid*., 102: '[…] das, wodurch der Verstand dem Gefühle aber verwandt ist, ist das *Reinmenschliche* […]'.
[452] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente Herbst 1869-Ende 1874*, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, rev. edn, 15 vols. (Munich, 1999), VII, 329.
[453] Ferruccio Busoni, *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, ed. Martina Weindel (Wilhelmshaven, 2001), 17: 'Neben Beethoven ist Bach der "Ur-musik" am verwandtesten.'
[454] Albrecht Riethmüller, *Ferruccio Busonis Poetik* (Mainz, 1988), 157 (translation from John Williamson, 'The Musical Artwork and its Materials in the Music and Aesthetics of Busoni', *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention*, ed. Michael Talbot (Liverpool, 2000), 191).
[455] Pederson, 'Romanticism/Anti-Romanticism', 184.

Adolph Bernhard Marx attributed to the notion of *Urmusik* a slightly different meaning, as for him it denotes the '*Spiel der Töne*' [play of tones] that is going on in the composer's head as an 'aimless stream of sounds'.[456]

The controversy about what is paradoxically termed the prehistory of music was taken up by the leading figures of the Berlin school of comparative musicology—Carl Stumpf, Erich von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs—in the early twentieth century.[457] Recently, these studies have attracted renewed interest. The most prominent of these works is the 1911 monograph by the psychologist and comparative musicologist Carl Stumpf, entitled *Die Anfänge der Musik* [*The Origins of Music*], translated and annotated by David Trippett in 2012.[458] Stumpf is aware of the inherently hypothetical nature of any research into the pre-cultural realm of music, as it 'inescapably lacks documentation'.[459] However, Stumpf devises a theory about the beginnings of music that still remains unrebutted and that bears significant resemblance to Wagner's ideas. On the one hand, the possibility that Stumpf was aware of Wagner's prose works might have the potential to challenge these parallels. On the other hand, it seems overanxious to suppose that German studies belonging to the field of *Tonpsychologie* [psychology of tone] or 'music psychology', as Ernst Kurth has termed it, generally suffered from an unsound state of 'Wagneritis'.[460] There is also no reason to believe that Stumpf subliminally intended to substantiate Wagnerian claims.

What promises to be a highly valuable insight is that, as Stumpf contends, music originates with the need to communicate. Following the Darwinian tenet that 'in the beginning there was love', Stumpf argues that, in their quest to please women, those men who were the best singers or wailers survived in accordance with the principle of natural selection.[461] Stumpf believes that speech evolved from acoustic or

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[456] Adolph Bernhard Marx, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Leben und Schaffen*, 2nd edn, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1863), I, 253: 'Das Spiel der Töne ist die *Urmusik*, es war und wird immer der Mutterboden sein, aus dem *Alles*, was in Musik lebt, seine Lebenskraft, sein Dasein zieht.'; Ian Bent, 'A. B. Marx: "[Beethoven:] The Final Symphony" (1859)', Bent, *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, II, 216.
[457] For an overview: Alexander Rehding, 'The Quest for the Origins of Music in Germany Circa 1900', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53/2 (2000), 345–85.
[458] Carl Stumpf, *Die Anfänge der Musik* (Leipzig, 1911).
[459] Rehding, 'Quest for the Origins', 346.
[460] Ernst Kurth, *Musikpsychologie* (Berlin, 1931).
[461] *Ibid*., 34.

musical signalling [*Bedürfnis akustischer Zeichengebung*].[462] Stumpf describes the point at which music came into being as follows:

> If one tries to give someone a vocal signal from a great distance, the voice lingers on a high, fixed pitch at great volume—as produced naturally simply by the greatest tension of the vocal folds—while this decreases at the end with diminishing pulmonary strength, as we see in yelling, when herdsmen call out to each other in the mountains. This lingering on a fixed pitch is, I believe, the first step towards singing; it demarcates the boundary separating it from mere speaking. The second step, the actual creative act for music, is then the need of a fixed and transposable interval to which acoustic signals could lead. Indeed, if the voice of an individual is insufficient, several will call together. Men and boys or men and women will produce sounds of unequal pitch because each only achieves the highest volume within their vocal range. Thus numerous harmonies [*Mehrklänge*] arise accidentally.[463]

In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner recommends the poet to carry out '[a] faithful observation of the expression that we use in ordinary life during moments of heightened emotional excitement'.[464] Wagner explains that 'as part of this heightened expression—through the emotional impact—we tend to stress [*betonen*] by far more than usual and we move the accents closer together, on which we dwell longer with a lively and loud voice to make them more important and in order to impress them on the feeling'.[465]

Stumpf's contentious line of argument is substantiated by recent findings by the Swedish neuroscientist Björn J. Merker who has conducted research into behavioural patterns among chimpanzees. The vocal utterances of chimpanzees, our closest living relatives among the apes, as Nils L. Wallin has argued, are in fact

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[462] Carl Stumpf, *The Origins of Music*, ed. David Trippett (Oxford, 2012), 47; Stumpf, *Die Anfänge der Musik*, 26.
[463] Stumpf, *Origins of Music*, 45–6.
[464] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 119: 'Eine getreue Beobachtung des Ausdruckes, dessen wir uns bei erhöhter Gefühlserregung selbst im gewöhnlichen Leben bedienen […]'.
[465] *Ibid*.: '[…] in diesem gedrängten Ausdrucke betonen wir aber auch – durch die Kraft des Affektes – bei Weitem stärker als gewöhnlich, und zumal rücken wir die Accente näher zusammen, auf denen wir, um sie wichtig und dem Gefühle ebenso eindringlich zu machen, als wir unser Gefühl in ihnen ausgedrückt wissen wollen, mit lebhaft erhobener Stimme verweilen.'

'protomusical'.[466] Merker identifies the crucial role of synchrony in the generation of acoustic signals among chimpanzees as serving 'amplitude summation of signals within groups of cooperating males competing with other groups to attract females'.[467] According to Merker, the importance that chimpanzees ascribe to synchrony underscores the consonance that is reached among the signalling primal humans.

One of the most thought-provoking accounts of the origins of music is Steven Mithen's book *The Singing Neanderthals* (2005). For this study on the prehistoric realm of music the author assembled a vast range of supporting evidence. Mithen has identified music as a means of social cooperation and emotional communication in large groups. His main hypothesis is the absence of 'cognitive fluidity' on the part of the pre-*sapiens* hominids which refers to 'the combination of knowledge and ways of thinking from different mental modules, which enables the use of metaphor and produces creative imagination'. [468] At the same time, as Mithen contends, the Neanderthals lived in vast communities, which required modes of communication. Mithen concludes that the Neanderthals developed a 'music-like communication system' that included 'iconic gestures, dance, onomatopoeia, vocal imitation and sound synaesthesia'.[469] Mithen advances arguments that substantiate Wagner's claim that music arose from emotionally driven behaviours. Mithen considers 'infant-directed speech' (IDS), the way we address prelinguistic infants with 'a higher overall pitch, a wider range of pitch, longer "hyperarticulated" vowels and pauses', as a source of music rather than its derivative.[470] This leads him to assume that musicality has a developmental if not emotional priority over language.

The central feature of Stumpf's theory is the concept of *Tonverschmelzung* [tonal fusion], which suggests that some combinations of these *Mehrklänge* are not perceived separately but as single entities. To the point of confusion one of these combinations conveys by virtue of pitch simultaneity the impression of one single note: the *octave*. It is fascinating to note the reasons and illustrations that Stumpf provides in order to prove his point. Stumpf rightly argues, for instance, that one calls

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[466] Nils L. Wallin, *Biomusicology: Neurophysiological, Neuropsychological, and Evolutionary Perspectives on the Origins and Purposes of Music* (Stuyvesant, 1991), 466.
[467] Björn Merker, 'Synchronous Chorusing and Human Origins', *The Origins of Music*, ed. Nils L. Wallin, Björn Merker and Steven Brown (Cambridge MA, 2000) [*The Origins of Music* (2000)], 318.
[468] Mithen, *Singing Neanderthals*, 4.
[469] *Ibid*., 234.
[470] *Ibid*., 74.

singing together in octaves monophonic although it is a kind of polyphony. Other combinations, such as the fifth and the fourth, possess the same characteristic but to a lesser extent. According to Stumpf, 'even with our church organ the fifth is added to each and every note in certain registers without anyone noticing it'.[471] The concept of tonal fusion is 'not the result of a musical development, rather a phenomenon that is necessarily conditioned by the nature of tones or the brain processes on which they are based', he concluded in 1911.[472] Alexander Rehding highlights the problems resulting from this strong emphasis on fusion, as it is unclear whether fusion is simply an aspect of external reality or in fact psychologically innate.[473]

In a strikingly plausible way, Stumpf even offers reason to believe that fundamental features of Wagner's motivic technique are foreshadowed in man's earliest musical activities. The recognizability and reproduction of a series of pitches seems an innate capacity of man. Stumpf refers to a given '*melodisches Motiv*' [melodic motif] which, if taught to a starling would always be repeated in the same key.[474] The most fundamental capacity of man that Stumpf addresses is the ability to reproduce a series of tones independent of pitch. He argues that 'as far as we know we find this capacity to recognize and to transpose melodies universally among primitive people'.[475] Curt Sachs suggested in 1937 that the 'imitation and the involuntary expression of emotion precede all conscious sound formation'.[476] These assertions place the recognizability of melodic contour at the centre of anthropological bases of music and underscore the significance of recurring 'motifs' in the formation of music. Spencer suggested a prelapsarian parallel between emotional excitement and the direction of intervals. His account even differentiates between intervals, as he argued that 'to make large intervals requires more muscular action than to make small ones. But not only is the *extent* of vocal intervals thus explicable as due to the relation between nervous and muscular excitement, but also in some degree their *direction*, as ascending or descending'.[477] What is striking as an instance of quasi-Wagnerian motivic transformation is Erich Moritz von Hornbostel's hypothesis about the malleability of the intervallic structure of a repeated series of pitches. Hornbostel

[471] Stumpf, *Origins of Music*, 47.
[472] *Ibid*., 46.
[473] Rehding, 'Quest for the Origins', 354.
[474] Stumpf, *Origins of Music*, 35.
[475] *Ibid*.
[476] Curt Sachs, *World History of the Dance*, trans. Bessie Schonberg (New York, 1937), 175.
[477] Spencer, 'The Origin and Function of Music', 49.

concludes that 'primitive singers do not retain in the memory a tone system established once and for all' so 'they can vary the intonation of intervals within the widest limits according to mood and expressive needs'.[478]

The existence of an innate store of references

Wagner was able to approach and identify inherently expressive features that have survived in music and that are part of an innate store of references that is subconsciously accessed by the listener. Although any assertion with reference to an innate store of references or universals in music raises a number of highly controversial issues, there is good reason to approach these phenomena as Wagner strongly believed in their existence. Since we are dealing with questions pertaining to 'universals' in music, there seems no reason to limit this discussion to the horizon of expectation of Wagner's contemporary audiences. It is a matter of the relationship between compositional means and '*ethische Wirkungen*' [ethical effects], as Erich Schenk argued in 1967.[479] Schenk contended that, in order for the composer to communicate with the listener, two conditions must be satisfied: first, a realm of experience and imagination, and thus a store of associations that is available equally to composer and listener and that the composer is willing to address and, second, the presence of objectively valid means of communication, by which these associations can be called up.[480] The most fundamental distinction that can be made with respect to these associations is whether musical features transcend a given work or whether they are accessory and only intelligible within the framework of the piece. There are various conceptual pairs that have been proposed in order to spell out the polarity in question. Agawu termed the difference between 'intrareferential' and 'extrareferential' stylistic symbols as 'introversive' *vs* 'extroversive' semiosis.[481] Nicholas Cook rephrases this differentiation as the division between the 'historically

[478] Stephen Blum, 'European Musical Terminology and the Music of Africa', *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology*, ed. Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago, 1991), 15.
[479] Erich Schenk, *Ausgewählte Aufsätze, Reden und Vorträge* (Graz, 1967), 39.
[480] *Ibid*. (translation from Matthew Pritchard, *Analysis and Melody in Late Beethoven*, Ph.D. diss. Royal Holloway (London, 2009), 67, n. 207).
[481] Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music* (Princeton, 1991), 23.

reconstructed' and the 'hermeneutically constructed'.[482] Stephen Davies suggests the following dichotomies: 'natural or arbitrary, universal or merely cultural'.[483] In a way these pairs map out the trajectory of the ensuing investigation.

There are prominent examples in the *Ring* that substantiate my claim but that seem however, to operate at an overly primary and foreground-oriented level. In his recent Wagner biography (2013), Martin Geck mentions that Wagner drew on pentatonic scales and triads derived from the *Naturtonreihe* [natural harmonic series] and linked these to 'notes that primitive man (and woman) could produce on the simplest of bone flutes'.[484] Jean-Jacques Nattiez uses the pentatonic line of Woglinde's first entry following the prelude in *Rheingold* to show that Wagner employs this technical device specifically to demarcate the realm of primordial music.[485] Nattiez rightly argues that, even in Wagner's days, this melodic contour was associated with the so-called *Naturvölker* [indigenous people], those nations that were deemed to have retained their close relationship to nature. In 1854, Hanslick makes recourse to Ferdinand Hand's *Aesthetik der Tonkunst* [*Aesthetics of Music*] (1837) and explains that 'the *Gaels* in Scotland share with the tribes of India the lack of the fourth and the seventh, so their tonal sequence runs c, d, e, g, a, c'.[486] As further evidence, Nattiez cites the ethnomusicologist Constantin Brăiloiu, who confirmed in a famous article on pentatonicism that 'the five-note scale is the *symbol*, therefore, of the beginnings [of music] and the first stage that human music has passed through in every corner of the globe'.[487] Geck and Nattiez refrain from investigating the musical means that Wagner employed to evoke pre-cultural imageries that go beyond the so-called *Naturmotive*. The 'nature motifs', however, represent, as it were, the 'tip of the iceberg' of Wagner's tools. My claim specifically extends into practices by which Wagner can rely on associations that are received by the audience in a much subtler, and in fact subconscious, way.

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[482] Nicholas Cook, 'Review of Eero Tarasti's *A Theory of Musical Semiotics*', *Music Theory Spectrum* 18/1 (1996), 109.
[483] Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, x.
[484] Geck, *Richard Wagner*, 187.
[485] Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 57.
[486] Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Aesthetik der Tonkunst*, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1858), 99, n. *: '[…] daß die *Galen* in Schottland mit den indischen und chinesischen Völkerstämmen den Mangel der Quart und Septime theilen, die Folge ihrer Töne also *c d e g a c* lautet.' (translation from Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music*, ed. Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis, 1986), 70).
[487] Constantin Brăiloiu, 'Sur une mélodie russe', *Musique Russe*, ed. Pierre Souvtchinsky, 2 vols. (Paris, 1953), II, 313.

Ernst Kurth identifies two groups in Wagner's musico-dramatic language that he associates with primal energies, the '*Urmotive*' [primal motifs] and the '*Entwicklungsmotive*' [developmental motifs]. The characteristic properties of these categories belong to a 'primitive stage of musical formation'.[488] Although Kurth's motivic classes are operating at a 'sub-leitmotivic' level, his emphasis on the 'creating energies of musical undercurrents' approaches the core of my investigation.[489] According to Kurth, the '*Entwicklungsmotive*', themselves subservient to the *Urmotive*, form such a completely natural part of the musical fabric that Wagner was unaware of them.[490] Kurth, therefore, is concerned with subconscious processes that are part of Wagner's compositional practices whereas I aim to approach the ways in which Wagner made conscious use of techniques designed to facilitate the transfer of meaning at a subconscious level.

It seems impossible to decouple Wagner's view of 'universals' in music from the reproach of Western ethnocentrism. One of the initiatives related to Wagner's return to the 'purely human' is his impulse to recapture the musical qualities that language retained from its musical antecedent. It arouses suspicion that Wagner presents German of all languages as the ideal candidate: '[O]f all the modern opera languages it is only German that is qualified as being used in the manner required to secure the enlivenment [*Belebung*] of the artistic expression'.[491] This insistence on German as a 'genuine' language on its own casts doubt on the applicability of Wagner's view of 'universals' to mankind. It is worth noting, however, that this particular idea was shared by Adolph Bernhard Marx who argued in 1841 that '*the German language takes precedence over all the others* not because of its exterior euphony but due to the profoundness of its sound'.[492] Bruno Nettl portrays the history of recognizing music as a nonuniversal language.[493] He suggests that nonuniversality became accepted, despite Chomsky's claim, according to which an ability to learn a

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[488] Ernst Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagners "Tristan"* (Hildesheim, 2005), 465 and 537.
[489] *Ibid*., 537.
[490] *Ibid*., 536. Grey wrongly suggests that Kurth used both terms indiscriminately (Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 281).
[491] *OuD, GSD*, IV, 211: '[…] von allen modernen Opernsprachen ist nur die deutsche befähigt, in der Weise, wie wir es als erforderlich erkannten, zur Belebung des künstlerischen Ausdruckes verwandt zu werden […]'.
[492] Adolph Bernhard Marx, *Allgemeine Musiklehre*, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1841), 138: 'Nicht in äusserm Wohlklang, wohl aber *in tiefsinniger Bedeutsamkeit des Klanges* behauptet *die deutsche Sprache vor allen den Vorzug*.'
[493] Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts*, new edn (Urbana, 2005), 44.

language unifies all humans, and Lévi-Strauss's assertion that all mythologies are basically alike.[494] Ian Cross, however, argues that, on the whole, it is surprising how little consideration ethnomusicologists have given to musical universals.[495] Marx trusted in an aesthetic community that was limited to national boundaries. He believed in the existence of 'relative' universals that enabled the insider to gain access to a collective national identity.[496] This approach is a return to, as Nettl has put it, 'any notion to the effect that the music of a particular society is genetically determined or has biological bases'.[497] By the very nature of this investigation of Wagner's view on expression, we seem to be concerned with an emic approach instead of an etic one, the latter referring to a scientific view of anthropology.

The extent to which Wagner's recommended expressive language borrows from 'folk song' is yet to be assessed. In *A Communication*, Wagner mentions the role of the *Volkslied* [folk song] for his *Themen-Bildung* and explains that, the more he diverged from the orthodox operatic melody, the more he found 'compensation for my melody in the folk song which I approached'.[498] Wagner, however, perceived the primordial genre of the *Volkslied* as embodying the natural fusion of poetry and music and not necessarily encapsulating the remnants of universal traits in music. He explained that '[t]he folk song was the result of a direct, closely interacting, simultaneous combination of poetry and music […] Here the poem and the musical poem are one'.[499] However, Wagner made clear in *A Communication* that, '[w]herever I had to express the feelings of dramatic personalities, as they are being communicated in emotional conversations, I had to desist from engaging with the rhythmic folk melody or rather I was prevented from falling for this mode of expression'.[500]

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[494] Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge MA, 1965), 6; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York, 1963), 208.
[495] Ian Cross, 'The Nature of Music and Its Evolution', *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology*, ed. Susan Hallam, Ian Cross and Michael Thaut (Oxford, 2009), 5.
[496] Marx, *Allgemeine Musiklehre*, 45.
[497] Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, 45.
[498] *Eine Mittheilung*, 324: '[…] entschädigende Nahrung für meine Melodie aus dem Volksliede, dem ich mich hierbei näherte.'
[499] *OuD*, *GSD*, III, 249–50: 'Das Volkslied ging aus einer unmittelbaren, eng unter sich verwachsenen, gleichzeitigen Gemeinwirksamkeit der Dichtkunst und der Tonkunst hervor […]. Hier ist Wort- und Tondichtung eins.'
[500] *Eine Mittheilung*, 325: 'Überall da, wo ich die Empfindungen dramatischer Persönlichkeiten auszudrücken hatte, wie sie von diesem im gefühlvollen Gespräche kundgegeben wurden, mußte ich mich der rhythmischen Volksmelodie durchaus enthalten, oder vielmehr, ich konnte auf diese Ausdrucksweise gar nicht erst verfallen […]'.

Eero Tarasti argues that 'music and mythology are two offshoots of language'.[501] Claude Lévi-Strauss explores the parallel between myth and music in his seminal *Mythologiques* (1964–71), in which he claims 'to show, not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men's mind without their being aware of the fact'.[502] This controversial proposition was taken up by Tarasti in his 1979 monograph, in which he approaches the *Ring* in an intertextual way to show that 'two structurally different worlds of expression' converge.[503] For Tarasti the purpose of the 'leitmotifs' is 'to clarify the mythical structure by musical means'.[504] Tarasti's insistence on intertextuality, however, rules out any commitment to universals.

Intersubjective accounts of musical meaning

Wagner secures the restoration of the 'purely human' to music, the only means by which the ideal expressive language is achieved, by singling out those core expressive elements that trigger a process of signification ideally shared by all individuals alike. The strategy in exploring this question is to look for an account of musical meaning that provides a scholarly satisfactory explanation of expressive signification grounded in universal musical traits. Several theories of musical meaning have been proposed that have the potential to substantiate Wagner's vision. In order to save as much as possible of this seemingly rigid vision of universality, the notion of intersubjectivity is called in aid. The concept of intersubjectivity has been adequately described as the 'sharing of subjective states by more than one individual'.[505] Adolph Bernhard Marx emphasized in 1841 that enjoyment of the arts is about the 'association of one soul with others' through which 'we live a manifold spiritual existence in addition to our own personalities'.[506] Sixty years earlier, Kant took this rather loose connection between subjective states experienced by many individuals one step further, by acknowledging a claim to (intersubjective) universality as an essential factor in the judgement of aesthetic pleasure.[507] Thus, the theory of musical meaning that reflects

[501] Eero Tarasti, *Myth and Music: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music, Especially that of Wagner, Sibelius and Stravinsky* (The Hague, 1979), 30.
[502] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*. Volume 1 of *Mythologiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York, 1969), 12.
[503] Tarasti, *Myth and Music*, 51.
[504] *Ibid*., 188.
[505] Thomas J. Scheff, *Goffman Unbound!: A New Paradigm for Social Science* (London, 2006), 24.
[506] Marx, *Allgemeine Musiklehre*, 339 (translation from Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 61).
[507] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford, 2007), §8, 45.

the highest degree of intersubjectivity is likely to be the most adequate model to accommodate Wagner's ideas.

As has been argued by Osmond-Smith in 1972, it still seems the case today that 'no general system of codification is available for emotive communication in music'.[508] Furthermore, the issue of universals in music is seen by many authors as a realm that defies empirical confirmation.[509] However, the theory of musical meaning that seems to pay the greatest respect to Wagner's musical language is Deryck Cooke's model. Unfortunately, Cooke was prevented from completing his most ambitious contribution to Wagner scholarship, his monograph *I Saw the World End: A Study of Wagner's Ring* (1979), in which he proposed an 'absolutely comprehensive musico-dramatic method of analysis' elucidating through detailed motivic analysis how the music bears the psychological content of the drama.[510] Cooke's article, 'Wagner's Musical Language' (1979), devoted to a number of striking recurrent prototypes in Wagner's motivic language, is a fascinating precursor to his unfinished comprehensive *Ring* study, to whose promising starting point we will turn.

Cooke describes Wagner's musical language as an attempt, via artistic expression, to make the 'repressed instincts' of man accessible.[511] In his controversial monograph *The Language of Music* (1959), Cooke devised the basic terms of a musical vocabulary, according to which specific intervals, scale patterns and movements evoke certain types of emotions. While assembling copious musical examples in support of his theory, Cooke observed that 'Wagner was nearly always there with the most fundamental example'.[512] While Cooke falls short of explaining what he means by 'the most fundamental example', he further delineates Wagner's notion of the '*Reinmenschliche*'. Cooke refers to a statement in Wagner's early novella *Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven* [*A Pilgrimage to Beethoven*] (1840), in which Wagner puts the following phrases into Beethoven's mouth:

> In instruments, the primal organs of creation and nature find their representation […] they but repeat primal feelings as they came forth from the chaos of the first creation, perhaps when there were not even yet any

[508] Osmond-Smith, 'The Iconic Process', 39.
[509] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 265.
[510] Cooke, *I Saw the World End*, 36.
[511] Cooke, 'Wagner's Musical Language', 244.
[512] *Ibid*.

> human beings to take them to their hearts. With the genius of the human voice it is entirely otherwise; this represents the human heart, and its isolated, individual emotion. Hence, its character although limited is precise and explicit. Let these two elements be brought together […]. Let those wild primal emotions that stretch out into the infinite, that are represented by instruments, be contrasted with the clear, definite emotions of the human heart, represented by the human voice.[513]

Substantiated by the end of the quote's first phrase, which seems to prefigure Nordau's 'pre-human' polemics, Cooke equates the '*in das Unendliche hinausschweifende Urgefühle*' [wild primal emotions that stretch out into the infinite] with 'those primordial instincts that have been severely repressed into the unconscious in the interests of civilization: pleasure, sex, aggression, death-wish'.[514] Cooke concludes that 'Beethoven first found a way of making music express some of these repressed instincts' and Wagner 'made his music even more violently expressive of them than Beethoven's'.[515] In other words, Cooke believes in the existence of a set of musical elements that have the potential to trigger an immediate, uniform response on the part of the listener, along the lines of a genetically programmed reaction. This view concurs with Eva Rieger's claim, according to which a set of expressive conventions must exist that possesses a universal character that anyone can understand.[516] Rieger is even convined that 'musical depictions founded on anthropological constants do not experience any shift in meaning and have the same emotional impact on the listener' today as they had in the past.[517]

Cooke describes Wagner's music as 'violently expressive' of 'these repressed instincts', as he believes that Wagner was able to 'penetrate to the roots of musical

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[513] Richard Wagner, *Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven*, *GSD*, I, 110–11: 'In den Instrumenten repräsentiren sich die Urorgane der Schöpfung und der Natur […] sie geben die Urgefühle selbst wieder, wie sie aus dem Chaos der ersten Schöpfung hervorgingen, als es selbst vielleicht noch nicht einmal Menschen gab, die sie in ihr Herz aufnehmen konnten. Ganz anders ist es mit dem Genius der Menschenstimme; diese repräsentirt das menschliche Herz und dessen abgeschlossene, individuelle Empfindung. Ihr Charakter ist somit bestimmt und klar. Man bringe nun diese beiden Elemente zusammen […]. Man stelle den wilden, in das Unendliche hinausschweifenden Urgefühlen, repräsentirt von den Instrumenten, die klare, bestimmte Empfindung des menschlichen Herzens entgegen, repräsentirt von der Menschenstimme.' (translation adopted from Irving Kolodin (ed.), *The Composer as Listener: A Guide to Music* (New York, 1962), 33).
[514] Cooke, 'Wagner's Musical Language', 243.
[515] *Ibid*.
[516] Rieger, *Wagner's Women*, 9.
[517] *Ibid*.

expression, singling out its most expressive elements'.[518] In Cooke's view, Wagner 'possessed Beethoven's ability to conceive short, basic, concentrated thematic ideas, which go to the roots of musical expression; often, simple ideas which had been used by other composers, in passing, but which were now isolated, transformed in some way or other, and forced to express the powerful emotion which had always lain there latent in them'.[519] This gripping summary is strongly reminiscent of Wagner's *Urverwandtschaft* statement that we encountered at the beginning of this subchapter. Before looking into the issue of Wagner's borrowings from his predecessors, we need to follow up the extent to which Cooke was able to trace elements that carry such a 'powerful emotion which had always lain there latent in them'. The promising proposition advanced at the outset of Cooke's article is supported by a fascinating exploration of potential sources of characteristic Wagnerian expressions but it fails to identify the set of assumptions on the basis of which Wagner singled out the 'most fundamental element' that enabled him to reinforce the emotional experience of a motivic cell.

The fundamental question immediately arises whether Cooke was able to shed light on the inherently expressive features of music or whether his theory, in the final analysis, boils down to another model that depends on intertextuality. According to Julia Kristeva, intersubjectivity is replaced by intertextuality when meaning is not communicated directly from the author to the reader but is filtered through references to other texts.[520] The notion of intertextuality proposes a view of texts, not as independent entities or forms of communication, but as responses to other texts, embedded in a perpetual stream of interrelated texts.[521] Translating intertextuality into musicology, Michael Klein argues that 'each musical text is part of a cultural network of texts that codes the ways we make sense of music'.[522] Although Cooke 'tries to pinpoint the inherent emotional characters of the various notes of the major, minor, and chromatic scales, and of the certain basic melodic patterns which have been used persistently throughout our musical history', he ultimately admits to a middle course

[518] Cooke, 'Wagner's Musical Language', 244.
[519] *Ibid*., 235.
[520] Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel', *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford, 1981), 66.
[521] J. Peter Burkholder, 'Intertextuality', *NGDMM 2001*, XII, 499.
[522] Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington, 2005), 22.

that fails to provide the link between his fascinating lexicon of *formulae* and their primeval origins.[523] Cooke asks:

> Is the traditional language of music […] a genuine emotional language, whose terms actually possess the inherent power to awaken certain definite emotions in the listener, or is it a collection of *formulae* attached by habit over a long period to certain verbally explicit emotions in masses, operas, and songs, which produce in the listener a series of conditioned reflexes?[524]

By endorsing none of the alternatives Cooke in some ways betrays the high hopes he raised by discussing the role of instincts. Kofi Agawu, although conceding that Cooke's account still 'remains unchallenged in its essential aspects', reduces the discussion to the nature-nurture dichotomy that linguists have quarrelled about for centuries: the question of whether language is 'natural' (in-born) or 'nurtured' (trained).[525] As Agawu pointedly observes, Cooke's 'occasional references to non-Western cultures are enough to suggest that had he been presented with the nature-nurture dichotomy, he might well have opted for nurture'.[526] In Agawu's eyes, Cooke's claim needs to be rephrased as follows: 'Some composers and listeners invest certain intervals and (mainly diatonic) scale patterns with certain emotions'.[527]

Another groundbreaking theory that seems naturally akin to Wagner's notion of the 'purely human' is Peter Kivy's 'contour' version of his twofold theory of expressiveness (1980). His 'contour' model suggests the congruence of musical 'contours' with aspects and structures of human behaviour.[528] Kivy contends that

> [w]e hear sadness […] in that we hear the musical sounds as appropriate to the expression of sadness. And we hear them as appropriate to the expression of sadness (in part) because we hear them as human utterances,

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[523] Cooke, *The Language of Music*, xii.
[524] *Ibid*., 24.
[525] Kofi Agawu, 'The Challenge of Semiotics', *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford, 2001), 155; Jean Aitchison, 'On Discontinuing the Continuity-Discontinuity Debate', *Approaches to the Evolution of Language: Social and Cognitive Bases*, ed. James R. Hurford, Michael Studdert-Kennedy and Chris Knight (Cambridge, 1998), 18.
[526] Agawu, 'The Challenge of Semiotics', 155.
[527] *Ibid*.
[528] Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression* (Princeton, 1980), 77.

> and perceive the features of these utterances as structurally similar to our own voices when we express our own sadness in speech.[529]

He argues that there are 'emotive icons […] resembling not the vocal expression of sadness but its expression in bodily gestures and posture'.[530] Kivy acknowledges that 'the likeness of some musical lines to the structure of speech will hardly account for all of the instances of expressiveness in music', thereby conceding that the 'resemblance' powers of music go beyond the confines of human utterances.[531] In more recent years, however, Kivy has abandoned his theory, by arguing that 'the expressive properties of music are purely musical properties, to be understood in purely musical terms'.[532] Stephen Davies, the other main originator of the resemblance theory, maintains that 'the expressiveness of music depends mainly on a resemblance we perceive between the dynamic character of music and human movement, gait, bearing, or carriage'.[533] It is this emphasis on anthropological features that raises a number of enticing ideas.

The supposition that musical conventions came into existence by an arbitrary or artificial act is convincing. The other complement of Kivy's theory is the 'convention' model that explains the 'expressiveness of music as a function, simply, of the customary associations of certain musical features with certain emotive ones, quite apart from any structural analogy between them'.[534] What renders Kivy's approach so compelling for our purposes is his assumption that musical conventions have grown out of musical contour through a gradual historical process. The German sociologist Georg Simmel argued in 1908 that the driving force that triggered the process of *Kultivierung* in the process from nature to culture was already somehow latent in its natural structural relations.[535] For Simmel, the encultured product is dependent upon a previously natural or 'uncultured' entity. Each metamorphosis to which this entity is subjected is necessarily linked to this primal state, as each transformation is latent in its structure or inherent impetus.[536] However, Kivy

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[529] *Ibid*., 51.
[530] *Ibid*., 53.
[531] *Ibid*., 52.
[532] Peter Kivy, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Ithaca, 1990), 195.
[533] Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, 229.
[534] Kivy, *The Corded Shell*, 77.
[535] Georg Simmel, 'Vom Wesen der Kultur', *Österreichische Rundschau* 15 (1908), 38.
[536] *Ibid*.

distinguishes between the conventions under the heading of the convention model as derived from the musical sphere and the conventions subsumed under the contour model as 'expressive conventions of which the musical are a special case'.[537] This division implies that conventions that are forged in the musical sphere came into being by virtue of an unnatural or wilful act that breaks the evolutionary continuity. Instead, the structural analogy between the convention and its underlying contour has been lost or submerged in the mists of time. The deconstruction of the natural link between convention and contour reads as an excuse, as we feel unable to bridge the gap between the two interrelated phenomena.

Intertextual accounts of musical meaning

The accounts of signification that seem farthest removed from Wagner's ideal as described in *Opera and Drama* are those according to which extra-musical meaning is constructed by way of an arbitrary instead of a natural association. The meaning of Wagner's motifs, these theories would argue, is discovered only through the dramatic context of their appearance. Wagner's belief in music as an *Ursprache* [primal language] essentially rules out the applicability of associative models, in fact even contradicts the very notion of intertextuality that gained ground in musicology with the emergence of referential models developed to decode musical meaning.

Although Wagner's theory relies on a mode of expression that is stripped of all conventionality, we need to assess the extent to which the composer was nonetheless forced to communicate through the well-established channels of musical conventions in order to uphold the tenet of comprehensibility. It is one passage from his 1870 lecture *On the Destiny of Opera* that prompts evaluation of referential models of signification, as this particular statement seems to conflict with Wagner's assertion that the ideal expressive language is to be found exclusively in the '*urmelodisches Ausdrucksvermögen*'. Wagner wrote that

> [n]o longer the *form* of music, but the *forms of the historically evolved music* would therefore be the first choice when considering the source that promises the highest potential for the design of the mimico-dramatic

[537] Kivy, *The Corded Shell*, 78.

> artwork's facilities […]. As the form of music we have, there is no doubt, to understand *melody*; its particular development pervades the history of our music.[538]

Wagner seems to open up his recommended expressive language to 'encultured' musical formulae in this quote. However, he makes sure to limit the consequences of this passage as his paper proceeds. He emphasizes that the novelty of Beethoven's '*Motivengestaltung*' [motivic creation] is characterized by the 'highest enlivenment [*höchste Belebung*] of each of its smallest fractional parts [*kleinsten Bruchtheile*]' of these historically evolved melodic elements.[539] This passage seems to substantiate Cooke's claim that Wagner took advantage of 'simple ideas which had been used by other composers, in passing, but which were now isolated, transformed in some way or other, and forced to express the powerful emotion which had always lain there latent in them'.[540]

As an inherently broad concept, intertextuality can embrace all sorts of stylistic allusions, from the mere use of conventions up to direct quotation.[541] At one end of the spectrum of intertextuality is the notion of musical borrowing. The concept of musical borrowing has been used to show that there is no such thing as a unified original musical work. To speak of borrowing is to claim that a composer knew of a certain work and took one or more elements from it in fashioning a new one.[542] Christopher A. Reynolds has shown that there are some instances of borrowing in Wagner's works.[543] Ernst Kurth suggests that there are palpable resemblances between some of Wagner's motifs and music by Schütz.[544] Kenneth Hamilton argues that the so-called 'Wanderer' theme in *Siegfried* is closely related to Liszt's *Orpheus*.[545] Wagner, according to Cosima's diaries, admits that he had indeed

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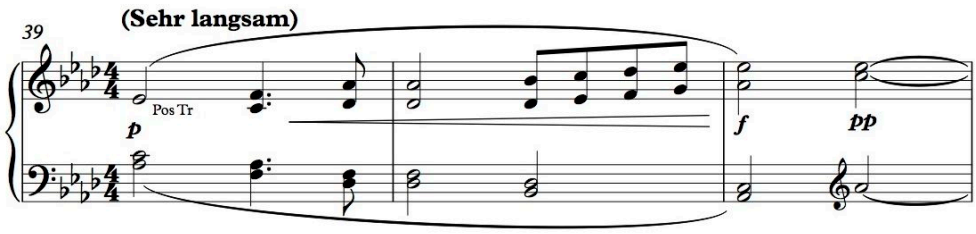
[538] *Über die Bestimmung*, 146: 'Nicht mehr die *Form* der Musik, sondern die *Formen der historisch entwickelten Musik* würden daher zunächst in Erwägung zu ziehen sein, wenn wiederum auf diejenige höchste Möglichkeit in der Ausbildung der Anlagen des mimisch-dramatischen Kunstwerkes geschlossen werden soll […]. Als die Form der Musik haben wir zweifellos die *Melodie* zu verstehen; die besondere Ausbildung dieser erfüllt die Geschichte unserer Musik […]'.
[539] *Ibid*., 147: '[…] die musikalische Form durch höchste Belebung jedes ihrer kleinsten Bruchtheile […]'.
[540] Cooke, 'Wagner's Musical Language', 235.
[541] Burkholder, 'Intertextuality', 499.
[542] *Ibid*.
[543] Christopher A. Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion: Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge MA, 2003), 57–61.
[544] Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik*, 455, n. 1.
[545] Kenneth Hamilton, 'Wagner and Liszt: Elective Affinities', *Richard Wagner and His World*, 32.

'borrowed' themes from Liszt: 'R. still well and working in the best of spirits; at lunch he sings the theme which he jokingly mentioned a few days ago, after hearing the *Dante* [Symphonie], when he said he had stolen much from my father'.[546]

As late as 1880, the quest for the 'perfect' melody continued to be a vital issue for Wagner. Cosima reports his following statement: 'Music has taken a bad turn; these young people have no idea how to write a melody, they just give us shavings, which they dress up to look like a lion's mane and shake at us! It's as if they avoid melodies, for fear of having perhaps stolen them from someone else'.[547] This last sentence makes clear that Wagner did not shrink from using whatever material he deemed worthy of the ideal expression. The theme that is known as the '*Dresden Amen*' (Ex. 1) may well have been an established musical formula within Dresden's churches but the reason why Wagner chose it as a motif for *Parsifal* rests in the emotional qualities that he believed listeners would associate with it. Wagner had no reason to believe that his first audience was familiar with the '*Dresden Amen*': its use was limited to the boundaries of the city and it is doubtful that Wagner even knew of Mendelssohn's citation of the theme in the 'Reformation'-Symphony.



Parsifal, I, 39–41

Ex. 1

[546] *CWD*, II, 140; *CWT*, II, 166 (29.8.1878): 'R. immer wohl und arbeitend, in schönster Stimmung; bei Tisch führt er das Thema durch, welches er vor einigen Tagen nach Anhörung der Dante [-Symphonie] heiter hingeworfen, daß er vieles meinem Vater gestohlen […]'.

[547] *CWD*, II, 492; *CWT*, II, 549 (21.6.1880): '"Die Musik ist auf schlimme Wege geraten; daß diese jungen Leute gar keine Melodie zu schreiben wissen, sondern nur Hobelspäne geben, die sie zu einer Löwenperücke aufputzen und schütteln!" "Es ist, als ob sie einer Melodie auswichen, vor Furcht, sie könnte dem und dem entnommen sein."'

Limits of Topic Theory

There are some musical elements whose significatory powers have been identified as transcending a given piece; the investigation of these features has come to be known as topic theory. The likely limits of topic theory under the impact of nineteenth-century are a useful point of debate in my investigation of Wagner's recommended expressive language. Stravinsky's famous assertion that 'expression has never been an inherent property of music' represents the high water mark of analytical tendencies to disregard expressive intentions encoded in musical patterns.[548] Topic theory, the interpretative reading of music's referential signs, as it stands today still needs to be recalibrated in order to escape from the shackles of overly formalist conceptions of musical analysis. In 1994, Robert S. Hatten noticed that 'music scholarship is just beginning to recover from the repression of expressive discourse fostered by a formalist aesthetics'.[549] In an attempt to expedite this recovery several approaches drawing on the work of earlier theorists, such as Johann Georg Sulzer or Donald Francis Tovey, have been proposed to approximate the 'shared' referential *topoi* that seem to pervade the rhetorical surface of Classical music. According to Nicholas McKay, topic theory remains somewhat of a 'curio of music semiotics' that is still struggling to 'gain full entry into the hegemonic club of musicology'.[550]

The speculative theory of musical meaning that Hatten proposes in his 1994 and 2004 monographs is confined to the masters of the Viennese Classic, though may prove useful in working through issues of leitmotivic signification. Hatten is committed to a semiotic approach, which he construes 'as involving both structuralist and hermeneutic approaches to the relationship between sound and meaning'.[551] The compromise that seems to have been reached is reflected in a dialogue between formalism and 'expressive discourse' incorporating stylistic and structural considerations.[552] The responses to the renewed interest in the 'intertextuality of the classical style' are reflected in the varying balances that are struck between style and

[548] Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography (1903–1934)* (London, 1990), 53.
[549] Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Interpretation, and Correlation* (Bloomington, 1994), 228.
[550] McKay, 'On Topics Today', 161.
[551] Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 2.
[552] Arnold Whittall, 'Review of Robert S. Hatten's *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 121/1 (1996), 116.

syntax.[553] Kofi Agawu provides his interpretation of the dichotomy involved as extroversive and introversive semiosis.[554]

Hatten draws on the concept of topics reconstructed by Leonard Ratner, who devised a repertoire of stylistic references in his seminal book *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (1980). Ratner argues that 'from its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early eighteenth century developed a thesaurus of *characteristic figures*, which formed a rich legacy for Classical composers'.[555] Accordingly, the influential semioticist David Lidov defines topics as richly coded style types which carry features linked to affect, class and social occasion (such as church style, learned styles or dance styles).[556] Hatten probes deeper into the underpinnings of expressivity by arguing that the expressive aspects of music are as inherent as structural ones which brings him closer to intersubjective accounts of musical meaning.[557]

In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner proposes to challenge precisely this lexicon of affections by setting out to restore a musical expression that is purely emotional. Wagner's catalogue of those subject-matters that are excluded from the ideal artwork almost read like Ratner's enumeration. Julian Horton evaluates the 'tension between eighteenth-century and their late-nineteenth-century context' in Bruckner and identifies the 'conflation of classical syntax and post-Wagnerian harmony' which 'both treat historicized conventions as vessels for modern musical and extra-musical content'.[558] Horton concludes that the 'development of a substantial view of nineteenth-century musical style is impossible without acknowledging the central role topics play in its construction'.[559] Agawu emphasizes that there is 'a level of continuity between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century styles that would undermine

[553] Wye J. Allenbrook, 'To Serve the Private Pleasure: Expression and Form in the String Quartets', *Wolfgang Amadé Mozart: Essays on His Life and His Music*, ed. Stanley Sadie (Oxford, 1996), 134.
[554] Agawu, *Playing with Signs*, 23.
[555] Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York, 1980), 9.
[556] David Lidov, Foreword to Hatten's *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, x.
[557] Robert Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington, 2004), 135.
[558] Julian Horton, 'Listening to Topics in the Nineteenth Century', *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (New York, 2014), 659.
[559] *Ibid*., 661.

historical narratives posited on the existence of a categorical distinction between them'.[560]

One fundamental problem pertaining to topical analysis against the backdrop of Wagner's theory is the 'unnatural' link between a topic and the emotions that prompts cognitive processing of these figures. The meaning is created through internal relationships within the music. Agawu addresses these issues by highlighting that one needs 'access to a prior universe made up of commonplaces of style known to composers and their audiences' as 'topics are constructions, not naturally occurring objects'.[561] Wagner's expressive language, however, strives after precisely that 'natural' quality that is independent of prior knowledge.

In the following, I will outline the features of one representative intertextual model of musical meaning in order to highlight the inherent contradictions that exist between Wagner's theory and those referential models. J. Peter Burkholder acknowledges the principle of familiarity as the prime constituent in the process of generating musical meaning.[562] Familiarity is dependent on a gradually increasing enculturation. Following this basic assumption Burkholder suggests that our first reaction to any music is our search for the familiar in that music. To say that a sound exemplifies a specific sound in fact means it reminds us of all our previously encountered sounds of the same kind. Burkholder adds the element of novelty in a way that 'the meaning of music depends *both* on what is familiar in the music, along with the associations the listener carries with those elements, *and* on how those familiar elements are reworked to create something different'.[563] Consequently, Burkholder devises a quinquepartite process by which musical meaning is understood: recognizing familiar elements, recalling other music or schema that make use of those elements, perceiving the associations that follow from the primary associations, noticing what is new and how familiar elements are changed' and the interpretation of these steps.[564] It is noteworthy, that the different stages of this process can occur in random order. Burkholder suggests that these 'steps may occur virtually instantaneous or may follow over a long period'.[565]

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[560] Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (Oxford, 2009), 42.
[561] *Ibid*., 43.
[562] Burkholder, 'A Simple Model for Associative Meaning', 76.
[563] *Ibid*., 78.
[564] *Ibid*.
[565] *Ibid*.

Burkholder argues that music acquires meaning through use.[566] As we have seen, Nattiez opines that any object takes on meaning for an individual as soon as that individual places the object 'in relation to areas of his lived experience'.[567] On the one hand, Nattiez and Burkholder suggest that we are able to make sense of musical meaning only against the background of our empirical faculty that is stored away and continuously built upon and enlarged. Wagner, on the other hand, acknowledged the impact of our experience on the artwork's perception only with reference to the intellectual input. Wagner wrote that '[w]e can only embrace [t]he poetic daringness, which condenses the representations of nature into such an image, *since we are enlightened about the essence of nature through experience*'.[568] It is worth remembering that according to *Opera and Drama* the representations of phenomena from ordinary life are condensed into *Handlungsmomente* which are vindicated by the 'melodic moments'. The significance of experience is therefore only acknowledged with reference to the rational faculty. With regard to music's expressive traits Wagner makes clear that

> [w]e would not be mistaken, were we to find in music man's *a priori* capacity to shape drama. Just as we construe the world of appearances by applying the laws of [space and time] which are formed *a priori* in our brain, in the same way this conscious representation of the idea of the world in drama would be preformed by those inner laws of the music which were just as effective in an unconscious way in the mind of the dramatist as were those laws of causality, unconsciously applied in order to perceive the world of appearances.[569]

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[566] *Ibid*., 102.
[567] Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 9.
[568] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 85: 'Die dichterische Kühnheit, welche die Äußerungen der Natur zu solchem Bilde zusammenfaßt, kann gerade erst uns mit Erfolge zu eigen sein, weil wir eben *durch die Erfahrung über das Wesen der Natur aufgeklärt sind*.'
[569] *RWB*, 145; *Beethoven*, 106: 'Wir dürften somit nicht irren, wenn wir in der Musik die aprioristische Befähigung des Menschen zur Gestaltung des Dramas überhaupt erkennen wollten. Wenn wir die Welt der Erscheinungen uns durch die Anwendung der Gesetze des Raumes und der Zeit konstruiren, welche in unserem Gehirne aprioristisch vorgebildet sind, so würde diese wiederum bewußte Darstellung der Idee der Welt im Drama durch jene inneren Gesetze der Musik vorgebildet sein, welche im Dramatiker ebenso unbewußt sich geltend machten, wie jene ebenfalls unbewußt in Anwendung gebrachten Gesetze der Causalität für die Apperzeption der Welt der Erscheinungen.'

There is even in Burkholder's model a point at which he concedes that 'for composers […] the more useful connotations are those shared by a large number of people'.[570] Wagner sets off to appeal to those connotations that are shared by all people. In the *Beethoven* essay, Wagner iterates this view by making recourse to Schopenhauer according to whom 'music is a language that is immediately comprehensible by everyone, since there is no mediation through concepts [*Begriffe*] required'.[571] I contrast Wagner's universal claim with Burkholder's which suggests that 'as we learn more about music from any time and place, and become more familiar with the music those who lived at that time and at that place would have known, we increase our understanding of what the music meant to them'.[572] Burkholder runs the risk of putting the case for a purely cognitive understanding of music.

Towards universals in music: a psychological perspective

Wagner's concept of *Urmusik* centres on notions of 'universals' in music. As we have seen, several scholars have advanced arguments in favour of the existence of universal musical traits and the psychological study of music seems to contradict Ernst Kurth's 1920 verdict according to which 'the sense of feeling the innermost sources of all melody has been deleted from our consciousness'.[573] John Blacking rightly argued in 1973 that 'the only justification' for Cooke's assumption that 'there has been a continuous musical tradition in which certain musical figures have had corresponding emotional connotations' would be 'that the emotional significance of certain intervals arises from fundamental features of human physiology and psychology'.[574] Blacking concludes that 'if this is so, some relationship between musical intervals and human feelings ought to be universal'. For want of satisfactory evidence, it seems, Blacking subsequently limits his research to the universals in behavioural patterns instead of focussing on inherently expressive musical structures.

[570] Burkholder, 'A Simple Model for Associative Meaning', 102.
[571] *Beethoven*, 66: '[…] daß von der Musik eine Sprache geredet werde, welche ganz unmittelbar von Jedem zu verstehen sei, da es hierzu gar keiner Vermittelung durch Begriffe bedürfe […]'.
[572] Burkholder, 'A Simple Model for Associative Meaning', 103.
[573] Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik*, 487: '[…] der Sinn für diese eigentlichste Quellempfinden aller Melodie dem Bewußtsein verloren gegangen ist.' (translation from Jaroslav Jiránek, 'Intonation as a Specific Form of Musical Semiosis', *Musical Signification: Essays in the Semiotic Theory and Analysis of Music*, ed. Eero Tarasti (Berlin, 1995), 185).
[574] John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle, 1973), 68–9.

Steven Mithen, however, is convinced that 'ongoing research is beginning to demonstrate that such universal relationships do indeed exist'.[575]

Although little is still known about what it is in the music that listeners are responding to, there are some reactions to music that according to John A. Sloboda are 'stereotyped, memorable, distinct from one another, and shared by all humans regardless of cultural vocabulary'.[576] Empirical research carried out by the Norwegian psychologists Hella Oelmann and Bruno Lœng (2003) seems to prove the existence of cross-cultural universal traits in terms of immanent musical structures.[577] Oelmann and Lœng demonstrate a significant degree of agreement between the emotional meanings that probands trained in the Western musical tradition and those trained in Indian music attribute to particular musical intervals. Their conclusion, that the emotional experience attributed to natural intervals is 'rather consistent across cultures and time and thus might be universal', further substantiate Blacking's initial claims.[578]

Gestalt psychology and Eugene Narmour's 'implication-realization model'

It seems that notions of Gestalt psychology represent a source of corroborating evidence for the existence of an innate store of references to which the composer might be able to appeal. Gestalt psychologists believed that to a certain extent the laws of perceptual organization resided in innate faculties of man. Despite this promising point of departure, there is however a dichotomy between learned and innate laws. Hatten suggests a cyclic process of interpretation the starting point of which is provided by 'the *affordance* of uncoded, prestylistic competencies'.[579] Hatten explains that the listener must then go further to 'abduce the *emergent* cognitive organization of a style'.[580] Hatten describes the overriding relationship between innate and learned as follows: 'Cognitive (semiotic) competence, once

[575] Steven J. Mithen, *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind and Body* (London, 2006), 91.
[576] John A. Sloboda, *Exploring the Musical Mind: Cognition, Emotion, Ability, Function* (Oxford, 2005), 39.
[577] Hella Oelmann/Bruno Lœng, 'A Validation of the Emotional Meaning of Single Intervals According to Classical Indian Music Theory', *Proceedings of the 5th Triennial ESCOM Conference* (Hanover, 2003), 393–96.
[578] *Ibid*., 395.
[579] Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 271.
[580] *Ibid*.

learned, then dominates the subsequent processing (interpreting) of associations, overriding gross Gestalt perceptions when the two are in conflict'.[581]

The generative model presented by Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff is drawing on Gestalt theory in engaging with 'universals' of musical grammar which they define as 'principles that are available to all experienced listeners for organizing the musical surface they hear'.[582] Their reductive accounts are informed, however, by the perceptive intuitions that are held in common by competent listeners experienced to Western music. The qualification of the 'experienced listener' that Lerdahl and Jackendoff have introduced into their analytical discourse runs counter to Wagner's emphasis on the perceiver as a natural, i.e. uninformed spectator, as has been discussed under the heading 'Wagner's ideal listener' in the third chapter.

The theory that embraces fundamental principles of Gestalt philosophy in a quasi-Wagnerian fashion and that takes naïve listeners into account seems to be Eugene Narmour's 'implication-realization model for melodic expectancy' of 1990 and 1992. Narmour, first of all, fervently declares that 'cognitive universals that control all manner of human behaviour, including certain significant aspects of the perception, cognition, and learning of all styles of music, *must* exist'.[583] Even in a non-ethnocentristic way Narmour asserts that 'the neutral and perceptual-cognitive mechanisms of each of us are cross-culturally alike in fundamental and unalterable ways' and concludes that 'it has to be the case that every human being on this planet hears music alike in some significant, analytically operational way'.[584] However, Narmour introduces the caveat that 'the general tone system of which an interval is stylistically a part, always influences the inherited constants in our innate cognition of music'.[585]

These explicit verdicts require an unusually high degree of justification, which is reflected in the somewhat convoluted presentation of the theory in Narmour's two books. As major constants of his theory, Narmour identifies three Gestalt principles: similarity, proximity and common direction (common fate) that organize certain kinds of parametric implications that are resistant to learning.[586] One of Narmour's notions,

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[581] *Ibid*.
[582] Fred Lerdahl/Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Cambridge MA, 1983), 278.
[583] Eugene Narmour, *The Analysis and Cognition of Basic Melodic Structures: The Implication-Realization Model* [*ACBMS*] (Chicago, 1990), 66.
[584] *Ibid*.
[585] *Ibid*., 77.
[586] *Ibid*., 64.

'reversal'—which I will explain in due course—lacks a derivation from Gestalt theory but Narmour is positive that 'psychologists will discover reversal to be an inborn cognitive mechanism commensurate with the bottom-up Gestalt laws'.[587] Narmour explains that

> [b]y *bottom-up processing* I mean that the listener subconsciously constructs her musical perception solely out of the individual parametric features presented to her, with no help from the next level above. By *top-down processing* I mean that the listener calls into play all kinds of prior hierarchical experience to aid in mapping out the continuation of the context.[588]

In his 'bottom-up' approach Narmour largely relies on parameters such as 'dynamics, nonreductive, individuated melodic motion that captivates music lovers' as he believes that 'listeners do not attend to music just in order to assimilate the bottom-up foreground to higher-level, top-down relations of voice-leading structure and key'.[589]

In comparison to Meyer's 'expectancy' or 'implication' theory the approach of the 'implication-realization model' is more fundamental. This fundamentality rests in Narmour's basic assumption that there is a subconscious or pre-reflective level of perception, a view that he shares with Wagner. Contrary to the orthodox application of Gestalt laws, Narmour locates the activities of Gestalt psychology at a subconscious level. He relies on computational conceptions of the mental process as expounded by the functionalist philosopher John Fodor. Fodor argues in favour of the existence of the most primitive level of perceptual activity. In accordance with Fodor's primary concern, that 'what perception must do is to represent the world as to make it accessible to thought', strongly reminds us of Wagner's *Gefühlsverständnis*.[590] Fodor describes these lowest levels of perception as 'completely inaccessible for all intents and purposes'.[591] Naomi Cumming criticizes Narmour's reliance on Fodor's lowest level of perception as this approach withdraws

[587] *Ibid*., 150.
[588] *Ibid*., 36.
[589] *Ibid*., 330.
[590] John A. Fodor, *The Modularity of Mind: An Essay on Faculty Psychology* (Cambridge MA, 1983), 40.
[591] *Ibid*., 56.

the model to a '"sub-personal" level of discourse that cannot even in principle be verified by reference to the analyst's intuitions'.[592]

Narmour defines one of the central organisational devices of his theory, 'parametric scales', as 'inborn cognitive matrices that both order the elementary materials of a parameter across a spectrum of similarity and differentiation and also fix them in proximity concerning their inherent perceptual, syntactic, implicative-realizational functions'.[593] In prioritizing the 'listener's cognitive performance (as opposed to his competence)' Narmour focuses on an active element that seems to distance his theory from Wagner's reliance on the '*unwillkürliches Gefühl*' [involuntary feeling].[594] However, Narmour introduces the category of the 'surprise' as an involuntary cognitive response to melodic patterns. Narmour iterates that it 'is surprise not in the sense of astonishment or being startled but rather in the sense of tiny cognitive "jolts" to the neuronal electrical system governing our subconscious cognitive expectations'.[595] 'So minute', Narmour goes on, 'are these "renunciations" that natural-language terms like *surprise* and *denial* (as well as traditional symbols like exclamation marks) seem too strong'. This element bears some resemblance to Wagner's mode of perception. Narmour limits the influence of learned style to a minimum as a means to bring universal or pan-stylistic features to the fore. This exclusion is however porous inasmuch as he accepts 'except clauses'. Nevertheless, the 'inclusion and specification of innate elements' has been praised even by one of his critics as the model's 'most important contribution to the psychology of music'.[596]

Stimmungen [moods]

One overarching concept that exerts a seemingly distinct influence on Wagner's expressive language is the notion of moods. The body of ideas that I am interrogating in this chapter devoted to Wagner's recommended expressive language is in fact a network of restrictions imposed on the freedom of artistic creation. The search for inherent expressive traits of music represents a severe limitation of the composer's

[592] Naomi Cumming, 'Music Analysis and the Perceiver: A Perspective from Functionalist Philosophy', *Current Musicology* 54 (1993), 40.
[593] *ACBMS*, 285.
[594] *Ibid*., x.
[595] *Ibid*., 138.
[596] E. Glenn Schellenberg, 'Simplifying the Implication-Realization Model of Melodic Expectancy', *Music Perception* 14/3 (1997), 295.

freedom to give a motif an arbitrary, or as Wagner might have put it, an 'absolute' shape. Wagner's notion of *Stimmungen* or *Hauptstimmungen* [principal moods] constitutes a further restricting layer to the freedom to assemble motifs of various types in a given musico-dramatic entity. It is a limitation that works on a higher plane, as it were, than the search for the *urmelodisches Ausdrucksvermögen*.

With regard to the love scenes in *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, for instance, one reads in Cosima's diary that '[h]e works and is satisfied; in Brünnhilde's scene with Siegfried in *Götterdämmerung* none of the themes from the love scene reappear, because everything evolves out of the *mood*, not the underlying thought, and the mood here is different from that of the *heroic idyll* of *Siegfried*'.[597] There are several statements in Wagner's letters and prose works that give further clues about the inseparability of a motif and its appropriate mood that seems to have been prevalent in his compositional mind. In an 1852 letter, Wagner described the initial inspiration for the second part of the *Faust-Overture* as follows: '[It] […] would be devoted to Gretchen as was the first to Faust. Immediately I conceived of a theme and a corresponding mood'.[598] It is striking that Wagner accords distinctive musical themes to the principal moods that he wishes to create:

> In accordance with the nature of the subject matter, each of these principal moods needed to gain a specific musical expression [*bestimmten musikalischen Ausdruck*] which would appeal to the sense of hearing [*Gehörempfindung*] in terms of a specific musical theme [*bestimmtes musikalisches Thema*].[599]

Wagner's concept of *Stimmungen* delineates an overarching emotional thread that is intended to govern a scene or a situation.

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[597] *CWD*, I, 171; *CWT*, I, 177 (11.12.1869): 'Er arbeitet und ist zufrieden; in der Scene zwischen Brünnhilde mit Siegfried aus der Götter-Dämmerung kommt kein Thema von der Liebesscene mehr vor, weil alles durch die *Stimmung*, nicht den Gedanken bedingt ist und die Stimmung eine andere ist als im *heroischen Idyll* im Siegfried.' The so-called *Welterbschaftsmotiv* that features prominently in the love duet from *Siegfried* does recur in the love duet from *Götterdämmerung* (Prologue, 491–94).
[598] *SB*, V, 122–23 (27.11.1852): 'Erst der zweite theil […] würde Gretchen so zum Subjekt gehabt haben, wie der erste Satz den Faust. Schon hatte ich thema und Stimmung hierzu […]'.
[599] *Eine Mittheilung*, 322: 'Jede dieser Hauptstimmungen mußte, der Natur des Stoffes gemäß, auch einen bestimmten musikalischen Ausdruck gewinnen, der sich der Gehörempfindung als ein bestimmtes musikalisches Thema herausstellte.'

Apart from two notable exceptions—primarily devoted to the investigation of moods in which the artwork is received—scholarship touches on the notion of *Stimmungen* only in passing.[600] This may have to do with the suspicion that is a result of Wagner's ongoing endeavours to prove the unity of his music dramas in an attempt to minimize the reproach of amorphousness. Another reason for the scholarly neglect is that only little information is given with reference to the set of rules that Wagner is adhering to when allowing or disallowing motifs to enter such an entity. What Wagner seems to have deprecated is, as Daniel Chua has put it, 'the uncontrollable polysemy of the new Italian music that seemingly flitted from one mood to another without rhyme or reason'.[601] Primarily, it seems to serve as an illustration of the process by which Wagner intended to create unity of the music drama by means of a chain of affiliated or emotionally 'related' motifs. He argues that

> in none of the scenes any mood was being struck that failed to keep up to the moods of the remaining scenes, in order to reflect the evolution of one emotion out of another and the constantly felt presence of this development which secured the expressive unity of the drama.[602]

Those motifs that Wagner generated through the technique of motivic transformation represent one of Klaus Kropfinger's types of motivic legacy that Beethoven had left to Wagner.[603] Kropfinger suggests that this practice of linked succession reflects the '*Entwickelung der Stimmungen aus einander*' [development of moods out of each other]. In *A Communication* (1851), Wagner describes the network that his operas are made of by elucidating the '*charakteristische Verbindung und Verzweigung der thematischen Motive*' [characteristic connection and branching of the thematic motifs].[604] Although this sounds as if Wagner was outlining the idea of 'motivic families' as further explored by Deryck Cooke, this passage may in fact refer to

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[600] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford, 2012); Erik Wallrup, *Being Musically Atuned: The Act of Listening to Music* (Farnham, 2015).
[601] Daniel Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge, 1999), 85.
[602] *Eine Mittheilung*, 322: '[…] keine Stimmung durfte in einer dieser Scenen angeschlagen werden, die nicht in einem wichtigen Bezuge zu den Stimmungen der anderen Scenen stand, so die Entwickelung der Stimmungen aus einander, und die überall kenntliche Wahrnehmung dieser Entwickelung, eben die Einheit des Drama's in seinem Ausdrucke herstellten.'
[603] Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 229.
[604] *Eine Mittheilung*, 322.

something like an emotional framework that is created by the interplay of motifs. In any case, it seems as though Wagner very carefully and tactically designed his motifs to represent and fit into recognizable 'principal moods'.

Causal factors

Investigations into the field of music and emotion provide promising steps towards a more detailed mapping of those factors within the musical language that are being held responsible for specific emotional responses. Empirical research begins to assemble something that eventually may turn into a catalogue of 'causal factors'. The subconscious processing of information is indeed triggered if music achieves to appeal to an innate store of references. We have discussed Wagner's ideal mode of reception in the light of recent psychological theories. Although an exploration of the psychological mechanisms that are operative during the music drama's perception gives clues as to whether Wagner's theory is valid, there is still no indication how a series of tones needs to be manipulated in order to trigger such psychological reactions. John Sloboda and Patrik Juslin claim that 'it is indisputable that specific features of music have a causal role' in evoking real emotions in the listener.[605] Although little is still known about what it is in the music that listeners are responding to, there are some reactions to music that according to Sloboda are 'stereotyped, memorable, distinct from one another, and shared by all humans regardless of cultural vocabulary'.[606] The investigation of causal factors in the music as opposed to factors in the individual has resulted in some useful empirical data.

Empirical research begins to provide various stimuli facilitating an investigation into the potential factors that Wagner manipulates to reach our emotions in a specific way. A major problem is again the relationship between evoked and perceived emotion as it is still unclear what the factors are that will lead to induced or experienced emotions rather than their mere perception.[607] It still seems impossible to predict what emotion is caused by what factor. As one would expect, there are difficulties to find objective situation predictors that would invariably affect different

[605] Sloboda/Juslin, 'At the Interface', 91.
[606] Sloboda, *Exploring the Musical Mind*, 39.
[607] Sloboda/Juslin, 'At the Interface', 76.

people in the same way.[608] It is promising that psychological research has however developed caveats that help the delineation of those emotional effects that are lawfully attributable to the musical stimulus.[609]

John Sloboda conducted some empirical research that involved 83 probands describing their most valued emotional experiences of music. It is particularly striking that 'about a third of the participants are able to locate their reaction within a theme or smaller unit'.[610] The data showed that commonly appoggiaturas and melodic/harmonic sequences often led to 'tears' whereas new or unprepared harmonies invited reactions like 'shivers'.[611] Such results seem to substantiate Meyer's or Narmour's reliance on expectancy and implication. However, it should be noted that the respondents in this particular experiment were almost exclusively performers (of the 83 participants there were 34 professional musicians and 33 amateur performing musicians) which would run counter to Wagner's fervent ideas concerning the ideal listener.

Although some progress has been made in mapping the musical factors involved in the arousal of emotions, there is not enough empirical data to sift out the precise musical means that needs to be manipulated in order to trigger a specific emotion. The factor rhythm, however, seems to rank very highly among those factors that promise to allow a clearer empirical delineation in the near future. There seems to be empirical proof that rhythm operates on a level 'above' the pure intervallic structure of a melodic contour. Dina Kirnaskaya lists a number of experiments that substantiate the claim that the sense of rhythm is closest to the pre-cultural phase of human development.[612] According to her, 'the rhythmic image of music is easily remembered, coming second only after the image associations created with the help of the expressive ear'.[613] She proposes that 'aspects of sound are retained by the memory 'by seniority': the oldest image-memories connected with the general tone and character of a musical expression settle into the memory first, immediately followed by the body-motor tracks of music identified by the sense of rhythm'.[614]

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[608] Juslin, 'Music and Emotion: Seven Questions, Seven Answers', 121.
[609] *Ibid*.
[610] John A. Sloboda, 'Music Structure and Emotional Response: Some Empirical Findings', *Psychology of Music* 19 (1991), 113.
[611] Juslin, 'Music and Emotion: Seven Questions, Seven Answers', 120.
[612] Dina Kirnaskaya, *The Natural Musician: On Abilities, Giftedness, and Talent* (Oxford, 2009), 86.
[613] *Ibid*., 87.
[614] *Ibid*.

As Eva Rieger has put it, 'music possesses an expressive ability that we can never 'decode' without continually arguing about how this musical language functions'.[615] Wagner revealed in his prose works a number of guiding principles that we have translated into self-imposed limitations to his artistic freedom. As Wagner's recommended expressive language is intended to 'cleanse' music from emotional arbitrariness, he relied on what he perceived as 'universal' expressive traits in music. Over the course of this chapter, an attempt has thus been made to critically evaluate evidence in favour of the existence of an innate store of references to which music ought to appeal in order to 'work' according to Wagner's ideal. Although we have discussed a number of highly promising developments in research, there still seems to be a lack of all-inclusive answers to the conundrum of which musical parameter may trigger distinctive emotional responses. In order to further approach the ways in which Wagner's ideal of 'emotional comprehensibility' governs his own creative thinking, we therefore need to analyze specific motivic examples from his musical output.

[615] Rieger, *Wagner's Women*, 9.

IV. A case study of motivic phenomena in *Siegfried*

IV.1. Siegfried—Wagner's most radical score

On account of the expressiveness of its motivic material, *Siegfried* represents the epitomic actualization of Wagner's concept of the *Gefühlsverständnis*. I argue that the motivic shapes in *Siegfried* and the ways in which the motifs are employed throughout this music drama prove the viability of the *Gefühlsverständnis* as Wagner's motivic practices are fundamentally in line with *Opera and Drama*. This claim explicitly embraces the new motifs as introduced in Act III of *Siegfried*. In this chapter, I will critically interrogate the role of motifs in the sketching process for *Siegfried* and in the subsequent individual case study I will scrutinize one representative 'melodic moment' from *Siegfried*, Act III—the so-called '*Welterbschaftsmotiv*'—against the background of Wagner's motivic theory.

For a number of reasons, this 'practical' side of the investigation seems required to complement and further substantiate the findings of my conceptual research. In accordance with Wagner's constant endeavours to conceal any kind of artifice, he emphasized that the ultimate corrective response to those aspects of his theoretical framework that he chose not to share with a wider public is preserved in his compositions. In opposition to these respective statements, one may argue that Wagner's theory as set forth in his theoretical explications already provides sufficient insights into his understanding of the role of motifs in the generation of musical meaning. Bryan Magee seems to subscribe to this view by declaring Wagner as 'a great artist theorizing about his art in volume after volume of published prose, and then going on to embody the theories in creative masterpieces'.[616] Magee concludes that 'we should say it was all too self-conscious and synthetic, did not the works themselves refute this'.[617] As we have seen, however, Wagner made sure not to theorize publicly about all the relevant aspects of his motivic language. There are in fact several instances in which Wagner prefers merely to point to his compositional works rather than going on to explicate his theoretical perspectives in further detail. Those phrases that address this issue usually have the air of an 'escape route' and are

[616] Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, 3.
[617] *Ibid*.

used whenever Wagner feels disinclined to reveal any more of his practices. Adorno would in fact read these statements as a further sign of Wagner's amateurism.[618] In *Music of the Future* (1861), for instance, Wagner concludes that 'even in this essay we are approaching the point where only the artwork itself is ultimately capable of giving the full explanation'.[619] We remember from a letter to Uhlig that Wagner is aware of the fact that he still owes the proper artwork.[620] In the preceding year, Wagner concluded his essay *A Communication* with the words: 'I will now give you time and leisure [*Muße*] to think about everything since you will only see me again *in my* [musical] *works*'.[621] Wagner's readers actually 'saw him again' in many other prose works alongside his compositions but for a conclusive theoretical account he continued to substitute his music dramas.

The precise relationship between Wagner's aesthetics as prescribed in his prose works and his own 'case studies', so to speak, his compositions, remains obscured by the fact that there is an insufficient degree of coherence across Wagner's theoretical output—from which, as I argue, his motivic theory is largely excluded. Although Klaus Kropfinger rightly suggests that the compositions are 'not wildly at odds' with the prose works, he contends that 'Wagner's achievements as a composer far exceed what he had achieved as an author'.[622] Kropfinger suggests that the prose writings mediate between the works and 'artistic domains', thereby highlighting the merits of Wagner's essays and treatises as commentaries to more general aspects of the musico-dramatic works.[623] Paul Robinson, at the other end of the spectrum, stresses the 'familiar trap of an excessive reverence for Wagner the theoretician and writer—the figure in intellectual history—and a corresponding neglect of his skills as a dramatist and above all a composer'.[624] Carl Dahlhaus and John Deathridge, in contradistinction to Kropfinger, believe that the musical works are the key to Wagner's writings, not vice versa.[625] This view, however, perpetuates the 'unsound' course that the reception of Wagner has taken by neglecting the body of rules as set

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[618] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 19.
[619] *Zukunftsmusik*, 132: '[…] nahen wir uns selbst in dieser Mittheilung schon dem Punkte, wo schließlich nur das Kunstwerk selbst noch vollen Aufschluß geben kann.'
[620] *SB*, IV, 386 (see n. 160).
[621] *Eine Mittheilung*, 344: 'Nun denn, ich gebe Euch Zeit und Muße, darüber nachzudenken: – denn nur *mit meinem Werke* seht Ihr mich wieder.'
[622] Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 12.
[623] *Ibid*.
[624] Paul Robinson, *Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters* (Chicago, 2002), 147.
[625] Deathridge/Dahlhaus, *New Grove Wagner*, 85.

out in his writings. For Kropfinger, the proposition advanced by Dahlhaus and Deathridge implies that the *Leitfäden*, in spite of 'doing injustice to the connective dimension' of the 'melodic moments', would continue to reign over the reception of Wagner at the expense of theoretically grounded approaches.[626] In the final analysis, even Magee is convinced that the theories derive 'from the operas rather than the other way round'.[627]

Siegfried—the most crisis-ridden of Wagner's works

What turns *Siegfried* into the most representative exponent of Wagner's motivic theory is the fact that it constitutes the artistic result of the most severe compositional crises of his life. *Siegfried* is not the immediate response to these crises but Wagner seems to have deliberately conserved *Siegfried* against the artistic 'upheavals' that these were likely to bring about. McCreless has thoroughly reconstructed the troubled trajectory that the hero had to follow in order to come to life and declared that Wagner never again became so frustrated over a work.[628] This frustration led Wagner to interrupt work on *Siegfried* and put it aside several times in his compositional career. There is one recurring feature that characterizes Wagner's approach to *Siegfried* which is the decision to allow an intervening project to clarify the picture before being able to return to the music drama. At the same time, it is important to note that Wagner shows tendencies to 'protect' *Siegfried* against the initial strong turbulences of each new artistic stage.

The intense musico-dramatic engagement with *Siegfried* and in particular its first musical sketches were the immediate outcome of *Opera and Drama*. I concur with Robert Bailey who has convincingly shown that these earliest sketches for *Der junge Siegfried* have survived as the sketches for the Act I prelude of *Siegfried* as found in its *Kompositionsskizze*.[629] After having finished work on *Opera and Drama* in January 1851, Wagner began sketching the composition of *Jung-Siegfried* [*Young Siegfried*] or *Der junge Siegfried* [*The Young Siegfried*] on 3 May. This original inspiration to compose *Siegfried* was thwarted by compositional problems and

[626] Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 12.
[627] Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, 4.
[628] McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, xi.
[629] Robert Bailey, 'The Structure of the "Ring" and Its Evolution', *19th-Century Music* 1/1 (1977), 53–4.

Wagner abandoned these sketches by 24 May in order to throw himself into finishing the *Siegfried* poem instead. Carl Dahlhaus has argued that the sketches for *Siegfried's Tod* that Wagner experimented with immediately before beginning to work on *Opera and Drama* in 1850 fail to 'reveal the slightest hint of leitmotivic working'.[630] The first 'leitmotivically' conceived *Ring* sketches are therefore devoted to *Siegfried*.

Many publications on Wagner's works fail to recognize the importance of the composer's first occupation with *Siegfried* which even precedes completion of the libretto. Surprisingly, the *Kompositionsskizze* for *Siegfried*, which was begun in 1856, opens with Mime's monologue instead of the prelude. This oddity can be justified by the fact that Wagner relied on sketches that he wrote five years earlier in 1851.[631] What resulted in a period of compositional silence—work on *Walküre* began in summer 1852—was triggered by Wagner's inhibitions to tackle *Siegfried* before being able to steer a more self-confident course. Wagner continued to write words instead of notes and conceived of *A Communication*, which he intended to act as preface to *Opera and Drama*: '*What* I had to say [in *A Communication*] was truly of the greatest importance, since it was absolutely necessary as an appendix [*Ergänzung*] to *Opera and Drama*'.[632] Apparently, Wagner first needed to digest further the theoretical framework for his 'melodic moments' in writing.

The moment when, six years later, Wagner abandons *Siegfried* mid-composition, taking up work on *Tristan* instead constitutes an even greater, in fact *the* most significant artistic crisis of his life.[633] In January 1857 Wagner laments the onset of the most severe irritations that struck the genesis of *Siegfried*:

> I […] have been so low in health again recently that, since I finished the rough draft of the first act of *Siegfried* ten days ago, I have literally been unable to write down another note without being chased away from work by the most agonizing headaches. So every morning I sit down, stare at the paper, and am lucky in the end if I can manage Walter Scott […]. I got on well with *Das Rheingold*, but I had great trouble even with *Die*

[630] Dahlhaus/Whittall, 'Wagner's "A Communication to My Friends"', 91.
[631] Robert Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', *The Wagner* Companion, ed. Peter Burbidge and Richard Sutton (London, 1979), 303.
[632] *SB*, IV, 239–40 (c. 31.12.1851): '*Das* war wirklich das Wichtigste, was ich jetzt von mir geben mußte, denn es war zur Ergänzung von "Oper und Drama" absolut nothwendig.'
[633] Derrick Puffett, 'Siegfried in the Context of Wagner's Operatic Writing', *Siegfried – ENO Guide*, 43.

> *Walküre* and now I am like a pianoforte that is badly out of tune (regarding my nervous system)—and I have got to hammer out *Siegfried* on it. Brilliant! The latter, I think, will rip the strings; that's the end, then'.[634]

By June of the same year—at the height of the agony caused by *Siegfried*—Wagner decides to let the hero rest under the linden tree seemingly forever. He wrote to Liszt that 'I have finally decided to abandon my obstinate attempts to complete my Nibelungs. I have led my young Siegfried into the beautiful forest solitude; there I have left him beneath a linden tree and have said farewell to him with tears of heartfelt sorrow:—he is better there than anywhere else'.[635]

The reasons why Wagner abandoned the hero are still a matter of controversy.[636] According to some passages in his letters of the time, he was increasingly unable to resist the urge to delve into the musical world of *Tristan*. Robert Bailey suggests that 'as musical ideas for *Tristan* began to assert themselves more and more during the spring and summer of 1857, Wagner began to lose control of the new act [Act II of *Siegfried*]'.[637] Derrick Puffett is also convinced that Wagner became 'increasingly obsessed with ideas for *Tristan*' while getting bored with the *Ring*, the project that, without hope of performance, took him more than nine years.[638] Laurence Dreyfus illustrates that the burning interest that Wagner showed in the depiction of sexual love is the reason why he neglected the hero or confused him with Tristan.[639] John Deathridge contends that in addition to economic pressures it gradually began to dawn on Wagner that his belief in the radically 'new' could only

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[634] *SB*, VIII, 247 (27.1.1857): 'Nun bin ich auch einmal wieder mit meiner Gesundheit so herunter, dass ich nun schon seit 10 Tagen, wo ich die Skizze zum ersten Acte des Siegfried beendigte, buchstäblich nicht einen Takt mehr niederschreiben konnte, ohne durch die ängstlichen Kopfschmerzen davon fortgejagt zu werden. So setze ich mich nun jeden Morgen hin, starre das Papier an, – und bin endlich froh wenn ich's zum Walter Scott bringe. […] Mit dem Rheingold ging's unter diesen Verhältnissen noch ganz frisch; die Walküre machte mir schon grossen Schmerz. Nun gleiche ich bereits einem sehr verstimmten Klavier (was mein Nervensystem betrifft) – darauf soll ich nun den Siegfried herausbringen. Schön! Mit dem Letzten endlich, denke ich, werden die Saiten reissen; und dann hat's ein Ende.' (translation adopted from McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, 64).
[635] *SL*, 370; *SB*, VIII, 354 (28.6.1857): '[…] da ich mich nun endlich dazu entschlossen habe, das obstinate Unternehmen der Vollendung meiner Niebelungen [*sic*] aufzugeben. Ich habe meinen jungen Siegfried noch in die schöne Waldeinsamkeit geleitet; dort hab' ich ihn unter der Linde gelassen und mit herzlichen Thränen von ihm Abschied genommen: – er ist dort besser dran als anders wo.'
[636] John Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil* (Berkeley, 2008), 218.
[637] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 327.
[638] Puffett, 'Siegfried in the Context of Wagner's Operatic Writing', 43.
[639] Laurence Dreyfus, 'Siegfried's Masculinity', *The Wagner Journal* 4/3 (2010), 7.

lead into an ever-tightening circle of renewal and meaningless repetition.[640] According to Patrick McCreless, Wagner seems to have felt in 1857 that his dramatic powers, his harmonic idiom and his method of formal organisation that had worked thus far would not be satisfactory for the work's crucial last act.[641] Puffett less convincingly speculates that Wagner 'wanted the later parts of *The Ring* to be more chromatic' which implies purely musical reasons.[642]

The hero worthy of protection

There is evidence, however, that Wagner ceased work on *Siegfried* in 1857 in order to preserve as much as possible of the original conception from his own ardent drive to experiment with an extended musical language. As he writes to Liszt on 28 June 1857,

> while feeling in the best possible mood I had to wrench Siegfried away from my heart and place him under lock and key as though I were burying him alive. I shall leave him there, and no one shall have a glimpse of him as long as [I have to lock him away from myself]. Well, perhaps the rest will do him good, [for his awakening I will not decide anything now] and [no one]—shall be allowed to waken him without my bon plaisir.—It has cost me a hard and bitter struggle to reach this point![643]

According to this statement, Wagner made a deliberate and informed decision to put *Siegfried* on the back burner: he is in the best of spirits [*mitten in der besten Stimmung*] and the hero is locked away alive instead of being put to eternal rest by circumstances beyond Wagner's control. What is highly intriguing about this passage is Wagner's decision to lock the work 'away from himself' [*ihn mir selbst verschliessen muss*]. He seems to have anticipated that the artistic forces which

[640] Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil*, 66.
[641] McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, 53.
[642] Puffett, 'Siegfried in the Context of Wagner's Operatic Writing', 48.
[643] *SL*, 372 (amended); *SB*, VIII, 356 (28.6.1857): '[…] ich habe mitten in der besten Stimmung den Siegfried mir von Herzen gerissen und wie einen lebendig begrabenen unter Schloss u. Riegel gelegt. Dort will ich ihn halten, und keiner soll etwas davon zu sehen bekommen, da ich ihn mir selbst verschliessen muss. Nun, vielleicht bekommt ihm der Schlaf gut, für sein Erwachen bestimme ich aber nichts, und [niemand soll] ihn ohne mein bon plaisir wieder erwecken dürfen. Es hat mich einen harten, bösen Kampf gekostet, ehe ich so weit kam!'

Tristan was about to set free, carried a tremendous potential to do harm to *Siegfried*. Between 16 and 20 August Wagner wrote that

> after some time of interruption, I got out the paper for conceptualizing the Tristan-poem, as suddenly a yearning sorrow about Siegfried got hold of me so that I fetched it and decided to complete at least Act II of it. […] Yet all this has been a great strain on me, for while I was once more working at *Siegfried* I could get no peace from *Tristan*. I actually worked simultaneously at them both, *Tristan* taking more and more definite shape, and I being so passionately occupied with it that in the end the double labour was a perfect torment to me.[644]

Wagner's awareness of the threat that *Tristan* posed to the completion of the *Ring* is also suggested by this dramatic acid test: Wagner cannot resist *Tristan* but at the same time he forces himself to rescue as much as possible from the original *Siegfried* before losing its thread altogether. Wagner managed to ensure completion of the *Kompositionsskizze* of *Siegfried*, Act II on 30 July and finished its *Orchesterskizze* [orchestral draft] on 9 August 1857. This disciplined decision once more indicates that he realized how deeply *Tristan* would distract him from the fearless hero. The fact that he finally takes up *Tristan* instead of *Siegfried* during this most disturbing period of his artistic life appears as him giving in to a passionate and entirely absorbent endeavour before returning to a compositional style that is again closely linked to *Opera and Drama* as a 'safe haven' in 1864. Wagner's other intervening compositional projects, *Meistersinger* and the Paris *Tannhäuser* revisions, were written in the wake of *Tristan*. I argue in the following pages that Wagner restored more of his original *Opera and Drama* concept of the 'melodic moments' when he resumed work on *Siegfried*.

[644] *Ibid*., IX, 37 (before 20.8.1857): '[…] nach einiger Unterbrechung hatte ich mir eines Morgens schon das Papier zum Konzept für die Tristan-Dichtung zurechtgelegt, als mich plötzlich ein solch sehnsüchtiger Jammer um den Siegfried bewältigte, daß ich ihn wieder hervorholte und mindestens die Vollendung des 2. Aktes beschloß. […] Doch hat mich das wieder sehr angegriffen, denn während ich wieder am Siegfried arbeitete, hat mir der Tristan von neuem keine Ruhe gelassen. Ich habe recht eigentlich an beiden zugleich gearbeitet, den Tristan immer bestimmter ausgebildet und so lebhaft mit ihm mich beschäftigt, daß ich von der Doppelarbeit schließlich bis zur größten Pein aufgeregt wurde.' (translation from Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 327).

A tortured genesis

The compositional ideals underlying *Siegfried* were exposed to an unparalleled long-term scrutiny within Wagner's compositional output. The music drama was composed to the unlikeliest and most protracted timetable of all Wagner's works spanning twenty years (1851–71). McCreless has shown that *Siegfried* wrested from Wagner nothing less than six intense periods of creative activity and this enumeration even ignores the significance of the earliest *Siegfried* sketches in 1851.[645] Due to its tortured genesis, as Puffett has contended, the music drama 'enjoys a uniquely rich relationship with Wagner's other works'.[646] It is true to say that Acts I and II of *Siegfried* on the one hand and Act III on the other virtually flank the development of Wagner's motivic technique since, from the vantage point of this music drama, *Tristan*, *Meistersinger*, the Paris *Tannhäuser* revisions, *A Communication, Music of the Future*, *Beethoven* act as grand 'intermezzos' in the completion of *Siegfried*.

It is common currency among Wagner scholars to downplay the importance of Wagner's resumption of work on *Siegfried* in 1864–65 as a mere orchestration exercise, thereby preserving the idea of a twelve-year hiatus during which the music drama was absent from Wagner's compositional mind. Admittedly, the *Kompositionsskizze* for *Siegfried* contributes to this reading as the postscript of Act II—'Ende des 2^{n} Actes RW. 9. Aug. 57' [End of Act II RW. 9 August 1857]—is simply followed by a page that was written twelve years later. It is dated '1 März 69' [1 March 1869] without further ado. In an 1869 letter to King Ludwig II, Wagner himself looks back at a twelve-year gap. He explains that '[o]f course, my great worry was naturally how to pick up where I had left off. An interruption of <u>twelve</u> years in any work is of course unheard of in the history of art'.[647] However, the financial rescue effectuated by the king enabled the composer to return to *Siegfried* halfway through the famous twelve-year gap. According to a letter to Hans von Bülow, written on 30 September 1864, Wagner had the Act III prelude already in mind: 'I am marvellously attuned for the last act of *Siegfried*, particularly for the first scene of

[645] McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, 53.
[646] Puffett, 'Siegfried in the Context of Wagner's Operatic Writing', 43.
[647] *SL*, 739; *SB*, XXI, 75 (23./24.2.1869): 'Gewiss war meine grosse Besorgniss [*sic*] natürlich, mit welcher ich an diese Wiederanknüpfung ging. Eine Unterbrechung von <u>zwölf</u> Jahren bei einem Werke ist gewiss unerhört in der Kunstgeschichte […]'.

Wotan: this is going to be a short prelude—but with accent'.[648] Among the scarce *Einzelskizzen* that have survived for *Siegfried* there is one motif that Wagner composed around 14 November 1864 and that assumed an exceptionally prominent role in Act III of *Siegfried* (Motif *A* or *Welterbschaftsmotiv*). Wagner, therefore, conceived crucial motifs during that period.

Wagner's own verdict

Since Wagner recognized *Siegfried* as his *chef-d'œuvre*, there is good reason to assume that the motivic network as displayed in this music drama is the paragon of his ideals. The hegemonic status that Wagner ascribed to *Siegfried* among his works is another strong incentive to lay the focus of this investigation on the starting and end points of Wagner's motivic evolution rather than concentrating on *Tristan* and *Meistersinger* instead. Evidence of Wagner's unreserved high opinion of *Siegfried* can be found in an 1869 letter to King Ludwig in which Wagner immodestly declared that 'Siegfried is divine. It is my greatest work!'[649]

The fact that *Siegfried*, contrary to Wagner's expectations, turned out to be the least popular music drama of the cycle underlines the rigour with which the new regime is applied to this work. According to a letter of 6 May 1857—even after the compositional crisis made its presence felt—Wagner still was 'convinced that as my most popular work *The Young Siegfried* will have a quick and happy dissemination and will pull along the other pieces, one by one, so that *he* will probably be the founder of a whole Nibelung dynasty'.[650] Back in 1854, Wagner wrote to Liszt that '[f]or the sake of my life's most beautiful dream, the *Young Siegfried*, I feel that I must complete the Nibelung dramas; the *Walküre* had exhausted me so much that I must permit myself this amusement [*Erheiterung*]'.[651] Audiences tend not to perceive recreational aspects in *Siegfried*. Adorno's commentary that '[a]t best, the opera-

[648] *SB*, XVI, 314 (30.9.1864): 'Ich bin für den 3ten Act des Siegfried wunderbar gestimmt: namentlich für die erste Scene des Wotan: das soll ein Vorspiel werden, kurz aber – mit Accent.'
[649] *Ibid*., XXI, 76 (23.2.1869): 'Der Siegfried ist göttlich. Es ist mein grösstes Werk!'
[650] *Ibid*., VIII, 312 (6.5.1857): '[…] habe ich jetzt die Ueberzeugung, dass der junge "Siegfried" als mein populärstes Werk eine sehr schnelle und glückliche Verbreitung gewinnen, und nach einander alle übrigen Stücke nach sich ziehen wird, so dass *er* vermuthlich der Gründer einer ganzen Nibelungen Dynastie werden soll.' (translation from Ulrich Weisstein, 'Educating Siegfried', *Siegfried – ENO Guide*, 19).
[651] *Ibid*., VI, 299 (c. 16.12.1854): 'Dem schönsten meiner Lebensträume, dem jungen Siegfried, zu lieb, muss ich wohl schon noch die Nibelungenstücke fertig machen: die Walküre hat mich zu sehr angegriffen, als dass ich mir diese Erheiterung nicht noch gönnen soll […]'.

going public suffers through it as a cultural monument' seems to still hold strong today.[652] The stark contrast between Wagner's aspirations and the prevailing verdict by music critics became apparent shortly after its world premiere. In Emil Naumann's account of the first Bayreuth festival, one reads:

> There is no doubt that Siegfried is the dreariest of all four music dramas. There were no two opinions about it among the spectators. Wagner's extreme musical language in conjunction with the flaws and the monotony of the style that he has created by means of pure reflection and that he wishes to introduce into the dramatic music never stood out in a more agonizing and tiresome manner.[653]

Naumann identifies *Siegfried*'s musical language as a product of pure reflection which runs counter to Wagner's public endeavours to idealize the act of composing as an inherently intuitive process. Although in a pejorative way, Naumann recognizes that of all music dramas, *Siegfried* is the closest to Wagner's ideal. He perceives Wagner's stylistic means as over-emphasized—'extreme musical language' [*stark ausgebildete musikalische Manier*]—which is further stressed by the most drastic choice of attributes: *peinlich* [agonizing] and *ermüdend* [tiresome]. Naumann, one of Wagner's more influential critics never believed in the originality of Wagner's renewing approach to opera. He argued that Wagner's claim to write 'music of the future' in fact originated with the Florentine Camerata.[654] This group of innovative Renaissance composers and thinkers advanced what they called the *stile rappresentativo*: a monodic recitativo style that facilitates comprehension of the text.[655] What Naumann perceives as *Eintönigkeit* [monotony] in *Siegfried* is to do with the reduction to a few characters at the expense of choruses that are combined

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[652] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Wagner's Relevance for Today', *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard D. Leppert (Berkeley, 2002), 588.
[653] Naumann, *Musikdrama oder Oper*, 35: 'Daß Siegfried die meisten Längen unter den vier Musikdramen […] enthält, ist zweifellos und herrschte hierüber selbst unter der Menge nur eine Stimme. Die stark ausgebildete musikalische Manier Wagner's, sowie die Mängel und Eintönigkeit des von ihm auf dem Wege der Reflexion geschaffenen Styls [*sic*], welchen er in die dramatische Musik einführen möchte, treten nirgends peinlicher und ermüdender auf, als hier.'
[654] *Ibid*., 5–6.
[655] Vazsonyi, *Richard Wagner*, 99.

with what Adorno has described as a 'brittle, facetlike orchestration that can disintegrate and recombine like the fragments of Siegfried's sword'.[656]

John Deathridge, however, identifies these apparently peculiar features as precisely the reasons why many Wagner critics concur in viewing *Siegfried* as Wagner's most advanced score.[657] A prominent declaration of love to *Siegfried* is taken from Shaw's review of an 1892 performance at Covent Garden conducted by Mahler: 'We all breathed that vast orchestral atmosphere of fire, air, earth, and water, with unbounded relief and invigoration'.[658] It is the uncompromising realization of Wagner's theory that led Adorno to praise *Siegfried* for being 'boldly progressive and therefore the farthest removed from convention'.[659] This verdict would have certainly appealed to Wagner in his quest for aesthetic unconventionality.

Siegfried—a stylistically disjunct music drama

The degree of stylistic disruption that characterizes *Siegfried* turns the music drama into the richest and most stimulating source of reference in an attempt to critically appraise Wagner's theory of the 'melodic moments'. Wagner scholarship tends to agree on the existence of palpable stylistic differences that distinguish the first two acts of *Siegfried* from its third. Anthony Newcomb suggests that 'it is more accurate to speak of two *Siegfrieds* than of one *Siegfried*, at least as far as the music is concerned'.[660] He goes on to identify a *Tannhäuser*-like disparity within *Siegfried*.[661] Paul Bekker perceived Act III as essentially a 'one-act piece' or a 'work within a work'.[662] While generally admiring how successfully Wagner was able to work 'himself back into the style of the *Ring*', Jack Stein argues that because of the twelve-year hiatus there are distinct and irreconcilable stylistic differences within the *Ring*.[663] Patrick McCreless explains how the deviance is 'reflected in the score by an increased compositional security and clarity of formal articulation in Act III vis-à-vis Acts I and

[656] Adorno, 'Wagner's Relevance for Today', 594.
[657] Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil*, 218.
[658] Bernard Shaw, *Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism in Three Volumes*, ed. Dan H. Laurence, 3 vols. (London, 1981), II, 648.
[659] Adorno, 'Wagner's Relevance for Today', 588.
[660] Newcomb, 'Siegfried: The Music', 21.
[661] Puffett, 'Siegfried in the Context of Wagner's Operatic Writing', 50.
[662] Bekker, *Richard Wagner*, 389 and 435.
[663] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 189.

II'.[664] As opposed to the first two, the music of the third act displays a degree of density that is unheard of in Wagner's previous works. The juxtaposition of musical events in conjunction with the high level of chromaticism enables the drama, as McCreless has put it, to be 'unfolded at greater speed'.[665] What these scholarly accounts are merely hinting at, however, is the extent to which the motivic language actually differs from Acts I/II to Act III.

Since Wagner, in spite of the intervening years of unprecedented artistic development, saw no need to call into question his initial conception of *Siegfried*, it is not futile to relate the third act of the music drama to *Opera and Drama*. We have already seen how strongly Stein, for instance, cautions against any attempt to analyze *Siegfried*, Act III in terms of *Opera and Drama* since he believes that 'Wagner was unable to turn back the clock completely'.[666] Wagner, after having overcome his initial inhibitions, proudly reported to King Ludwig in 1869 that he was able to uphold the musical coherence of *Siegfried* despite the hiatus. He wrote that

> when it became apparent that this interruption could alter nothing of the freshness of my conception, then I had to consider this really as proof that these conceptions have an eternal life—neither for yesterday nor for tomorrow alone. The recent detailed re-working of the second act has often fascinated and encouraged me in such a way that I was often truly delighted [with it].[667]

Even if one takes away the inebriation with his own creation that appears as a concession to the king, there is indeed a great deal of excitement in this letter that underlines the surprise that Wagner might have felt when looking at the sketches after all those years. One month later Wagner is still content with the constraints of the 'old' compositional regime and states that 'I am working on Siegfried on a daily basis. […] If anything will serve me as confirmation of my destiny then it is this joy with which after all this time I familiarly [*wohlvertraut*] delve again into this well-

[664] McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, xi.
[665] *Ibid*., 187.
[666] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 202.
[667] *SB*, XXI, 75 (23.2.1869): '[…] und wenn es sich nun zeigt, dass diese Unterbrechung nichts an der Frische meiner Conzeption ändern konnte, so darf ich dieses wohl als Beweis dafür anrufen, dass diese Conzeptionen ein ewiges Leben haben, nicht von gestern, und [nicht] für morgen nur sind.' (translation from McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, 73).

known [*alt-heimische*] realm in which I am so completely at home as if I had never departed from it'.[668] Even after the completion of *Tristan*, *Meistersinger* and the *Tannhäuser* revisions, Wagner still wholeheartedly believes in the progressiveness—or better the timelessness—of his *Siegfried* conception that naturally embraces its motivic language as envisaged in *Opera and Drama*.

The extent to which the motivic branch of Wagner's theoretical framework as espoused in *Opera and Drama* is applicable to the works from Act III of *Siegfried* onwards is yet to be determined. The strongest opponent to treating *Siegfried* as a coherent work in terms of its motivic language is Robert Bailey who fervently declares that 'any attempt to deal with *Opera and Drama* in connection with […] any of the operas after *Tristan* is both uninformed and futile'.[669] McCreless explains that the 'new synthesis achieved in Act III of *Siegfried* […] represents a departure from earlier parts of the *Ring*'.[670] Dahlhaus's assertion that the way in which Wagner treated motifs in the *Ring* differs from how he used them in *Tristan* or *Meistersinger*, however, allows viewing the *Ring* as Wagner's motivic trajectory coming full circle after *Tristan* and *Meistersinger*.[671] Jack Stein, who offered his fascinating insights more than fifty years ago, argues that the last portion of the *Ring* shows evidence of a 'three-fold synthesis of his earlier theory, which in *The Mastersingers* he had virtually abandoned'.[672] Although Stein acknowledges a partial return to *Opera and Drama*, he advocates that Wagner's 'efforts to recapture the earlier style inevitably ran into the roadblock of the later influences'.[673]

Stein's study still comprises the most detailed scholarly response to the word-tone relationship in *Siegfried*, Act III to date. It is a riveting description of palpable features of this musical language. The reasons how Wagner achieves these effects through his motifs are however not examined in detail. Stein is convinced that Wagner 'has become quite careless in his use of leitmotif' in Act III of *Siegfried*.[674] This carelessness is the result of either a 'loose thread of connection' or a 'disregard

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[668] *SB*, XXI, 123 (22.3.1869): 'Am dritten Akt wird täglich etwas geschaffen. […] Wenn Etwas mir zur Bestätigung meiner Bestimmung dient, so ist es die Freude, mit der ich mich wohlvertraut nun wieder seit so lange in diese alt-heimische Welt versenke, und so ganz in ihr zu Hause bin, als ob ich nie aus ihr geschieden wäre.'
[669] Robert Bailey, *The Genesis of Tristan und Isolde and a Study of Wagner's Sketches and Drafts for the First Act*, Ph.D. diss. Princeton University (Princeton, 1969), 6.
[670] McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, 187.
[671] Dahlhaus, 'Zur Geschichte der Leitmotivtechnik bei Wagner', 17.
[672] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 189.
[673] *Ibid*., 202.
[674] *Ibid*., 191.

of the connection with its use as a motif of reminiscence had established'.[675] He concedes that there are a number of powerful functional usages in the *Opera and Drama* sense but for him they are decidedly in the minority.[676] What Stein was trying to dismantle in 1960 was the prevailing attitude towards the '*Beziehungszauber*' as a given that resists further explanation. Stein explicitly criticizes Newman who was certain that 'the physiognomies of the leitmotives are familiar to us, and every allusion is instantaneously clear'.[677] Stein's enumeration of gripping examples seems adequate to ignite the discussion about the processes behind the word-tone connection and to challenge what he saw as a 'fiction of functional use of leitmotif in the later works' but sadly lacks an analytical dimension.[678]

The role of improvisation

Even more problematic is Stein's conviction that Wagner entered a new stage of mimetic representation with *Meistersinger*. Stein contends that the 'specific features which gave meaning to the word-tone design of the early *Ring*' are incompatible with the 'comparatively swift-moving mimetic representation' found in *Siegfried*, Act III.[679] On the basis of one passage in *On the Destiny of Opera* Stein develops the theory of an entire stylistic strand within Wagner's *œuvre*. Wagner extended an earlier idea, expressed previously in the Beethoven centenary essay, and defined the ideal drama as a 'mimetic-musical improvisation of consummate poetic value fixed by the finest artistic judgment'.[680] For Stein, this improvisatory quality is the central aesthetic feature of *Meistersinger* and finds its most prominent application in the rapid, life-like dialogue. '*The Mastersinger*'s mimetic technique', as Stein has called it, has left its traces on *Siegfried*, Act III in the form of a compromise between the 'melodic verse of the former *Ring* and the dialog-like vocal line of *The Mastersingers*'.[681] Stein describes an amalgamation of the two styles that is slightly in favour of a 'certain breadth which brings it into closer proximity to the early *Ring*

[675] *Ibid*.
[676] *Ibid*., 192.
[677] Ernest Newman, *Wagner as Man and Artist*, 2nd edn (London, 1969), 241.
[678] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 191.
[679] *Ibid*., 198.
[680] *Über die Bestimmung*, 149: '[…] diese Bezeichnung einer "durch die höchste künstlerische Besonnenheit fixierten mimisch-musikalischen Improvisation von vollendetem dichterischem Werthe" […]' (translation from Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 167).
[681] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 198.

style'.[682] This statement already waters down Stein's 'three-fold synthesis' to a hybrid style made of only two components with some considerable weight placed on Wagner's earlier theoretical ideas.

Stein takes the word 'improvisation' that occurs in the context of the lecture *On the Destiny of Opera* far too literally. Wagner was indeed an ardent admirer of improvising musicians. Cosima reports around the time Wagner wrote this lecture that

> [h]e forces himself to work. At lunch he exclaims: "What is the thing written down as compared with the inspiration? What is notation in comparison with imagination? The former is governed by the specific laws of convention, the latter is free, boundless. That is the tremendous thing in Beethoven, that in his last quartets he was able to remember and record improvisations, which could only be done through art of the highest, highest order. With me it is always the drama which flouts convention and opens up new possibilities."'[683]

Wagner seems to be aware of the difficulties involved in bringing his musical ideas in line with his new form of art. Wagner believed that '"[e]verybody should improvise, every good musician can produce something interesting in his improvisation. But writing it down is a quite different process, then it has to be turned into a sonata, a suite, and so on, and it takes a lot to revitalize a familiar, defined form."'[684]

In fact, Wagner advocates nothing like an improvisatory approach to melody. In *On the Destiny of Opera*, Wagner gives one of the most concise accounts of his view on the degree of precision with which music is able to convey meaning:

> The property of music that completely captivated our great poets was that it represented purest form and that, at the same time, it embodied the

[682] *Ibid*.
[683] *CWD*, I, 302; *CWT*, I, 319 (4.12.1870): 'Er zwingt sich zur Arbeit. Bei Tisch ruft er aus: "Was ist das Geschriebene gegen die Inspiration, was ist gegen das Phantasieren das Notieren; letztres tritt unter bestimmte Gesetze der Konvention, ersteres ist frei, grenzenlos; und das ist das Ungeheure an Beethoven, daß er in seinen letzten Quartetten das Phantasieren festzuhalten gewußt hat, was nur durch höchste höchste [*sic*] Kunst zu erreichen war. Bei mir ist [es] das Drama, das immer die Konvention bricht und neue Möglichkeiten bringt."'
[684] *CWD*, I, 325–26; *CWT*, I, 345 (22.1.1871): '"Improvisieren soll ein jeder, in der Improvisation kann jeder gute Musiker etwas Interessantes leisten; aufschreiben aber ist ein ganz andrer Prozeß, da muß es Sonate werden, Suite etc., und um eine alte bestimme Form beleben zu können, dazu gehört viel."'

> highest degree of sensuous perceptibility of this form; in music we encounter the abstract number of arithmetic, the figure of mathematics in a shape that is irrefutably perceivable by the feeling, namely as melody, which needs to be determined [*ist … zu fixieren*] infallibly for its sensual rendition in contrast to the poetic diction of the written prose which is left to the arbitrariness of the actor's personality. What remained practically impossible for Shakespeare, namely being mime for each of his roles, can be achieved with the greatest degree of certainty by the composer who is speaking directly to us through each of the performing musicians. The metempsychosis [*Seelenwanderung*] from the poet towards the body of the performer proceeds here in accordance with the infallible laws of the safest technique, and the composer who provides the parameters for a technically correct performance of his work becomes […] completely one with the performing musician.[685]

In this astonishing statement, Wagner conjures up an image of the composer who is able to create in quasi-scientific terms a catalyst for an unequivocal emotional response simply by observing the infallible laws of his technique. Contrary to Stein, who traced the nature of improvisatory elements in the music dramas, Wagner specifically states that the melody needs to be irrefutably determined [*fixieren*] in preparation for its sensuous rendition. Since this quotation is saturated with metaphors evoking scientific certainty, Wagner ascertains the existence of a set of rules that enables the composer to hone the emotional qualities of a melody. It is even with mathematical certainty that Wagner professes being able to equip a motif with emotional content. Given the right 'anatomy', melody is able to appeal irrefutably to a specific emotion in the listener. What is equally striking about this statement is that

[685] *Über die Bestimmung*, 150: 'Was unsere großen Dichter an die Musik so nachdenklich fesselte, war, daß sie reinste Form, und dabei sinnlichste Wahrnehmbarkeit dieser Form war; die abstrakte Zahl der Arithmetik, die Figur der Mathematik, tritt uns hier als das Gefühl unwiderleglich bestimmende Gestalt, nämlich als Melodie entgegen, und diese ist eben so untrüglich für die sinnliche Wiedergebung zu fixieren, als dagegen die poetische Diktion der aufgeschriebenen Rede jeder Willkür der Persönlichkeit des Rezitirenden [*sic*] überliefert ist. Was Shakespeare praktisch nicht möglich sein konnte, der Mime jeder seiner Rollen zu sein, dieß gelingt dem Tonsetzer mit größter Bestimmtheit, indem er unmittelbar aus jedem der ausführenden Musiker zu uns spricht. Die Seelenwanderung des Dichters in den Leib des Darstellers geht hier nach unfehlbaren Gesetzen der sichersten Technik vor sich, und der einer technisch korrekten Aufführung seines Werkes den Takt gebende Tonsetzer wird […] vollständig Eines mit dem ausübenden Musiker […]'.

the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis* has lost nothing of its validity for Wagner around 1870.

Wagner is convinced that a melody expressive of humour ranks at the very top of semantic determinacy. In the following statement, he contends being able to understand humour better in Beethoven's motifs than in Shakespeare's plays:

> If we invoke for this purpose the peculiarity of humour, as the fastest comprehensible expression, and realize that, what in the expressions of humour of the Shakespearean characters often appears to us as incomprehensible randomness, in fact represents the very same traits of Beethoven's motivic designs [*Motivgestaltungen*] but here as a natural fact of the highest ideality, namely, as melody that is irresistibly determinable by the soul [*Gemüth*].[686]

In this intricate statement, Wagner makes a startling analogy between two seemingly disparate modes of expression: Beethoven's motifs as expressive of humour are equated with Shakespeare's expressions of humour as conveyed by the characters on stage. What is first of all noteworthy is that Wagner classifies 'humour' as the expression that is the easiest to grasp [*das am schnellsten Faßliche*]. It is significant that Wagner favours a Beethovenian motif that expresses humour over Shakespeare's expression for reasons of determinability. Wagner's reference to the 'soul' [*Gemüth*] as the prime receptor of the content that is carried by the melody is used interchangeably with his notion of the *Gefühl*, as becomes clear over the course of *Opera and Drama*. In *On the Destiny of Opera*, Wagner explains that '[t]he secret lies in the immediacy of the representation, here [in the dramatic arts] through facial expression and gesture, there [in music] via the vivid sound'.[687] It is remarkable that Wagner ascribes some degree of randomness to the dramatic representation as opposed to even quasi-natural qualities to the sonic expression.

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[686] *Ibid*., 148: 'Führen wir hierfür, als das am schnellsten Faßliche, die Eigenthümlichkeit des Humor's an, und erkennen wir, daß, was uns in den Äußerungen des Humor's der Shakespeare'schen Gestalten oft wie unbegreifliche Zufälligkeit erscheint, sich in den ganz gleichen Zügen der Beethoven'schen Motivgestaltungen als eine natürliche Thatsache von höchster Idealität, nämlich als das Gemüth unabweislich bestimmende Melodie darstellt.'

[687] *Ibid*.: 'Das Geheimniß liegt in der Unmittelbarkeit der Darstellung, hier durch Miene und Gebärde, dort durch den lebendigen Ton.'

Stein describes the prelude to Act III as a powerful example of Wagner's new musical language. He observes the improvisational freedom and contrapuntal interweavement with which the nine already familiar motifs are combined as 'bolder, freer and more lavish' than anywhere in the *Ring* before. Here, Stein refers to purely musical means and ignores the dramatic reasons that bring about or that coincide at least with Wagner's emphasis on musical density. Stein argues that the 'motifs come at one in such swift succession, often combined, that it is impossible to associate them, as they were originally intended, with reminiscences of previous scenes'.[688] It is not evident why Stein makes this precariously apodictic statement since a higher degree of density and profusion of motifs only makes it more intricate to process all levels of meaning. The musical density that the listener encounters in *Siegfried,* Act III does not necessarily render the 'musical moments' non-functional in an *Opera and Drama* sense. Stein omits to discuss whether the conveyance of meaning works 'more successfully' under this hybrid style regime or not but in relation to *Götterdämmerung* he detects a 'rather amorphous quality which results from the cross-purposes' of the compromise between *Ring* and *Meistersinger*.[689]

In opposition to Stein and his followers, it makes better sense to argue that Wagner, when resuming work on *Siegfried* after the realization of a number of works that stepped beyond the theoretical boundaries, had actually returned to *Opera and Drama* and refined his synthetic theory of poetry and music. The most evident reason why Wagner simply had to come back in one way or another to his earlier theory is the overarching gigantic project of the *Ring* of which hundreds of pages were written in the wake of *Opera and Drama*. Furthermore, it is especially noteworthy that the text for Act III was conceived in 1851, in accordance with the principles that Wagner had developed immediately in *Opera and Drama* before the first *Siegfried* sketches and completion of its poem. After completion of *Tristan* and *Meistersinger*, which were based upon poems conceived in end rhyme, Wagner returned to a text written in stave rhyme. We have already discussed that *Stabreim* was another of Wagner's tools to secure the 'emotional comprehensibility' of the music drama. Therefore, Wagner's engagement with this particular text is in itself an endorsement of the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis*.

[688] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 190.
[689] *Ibid*., 198.

Another, even more compelling reason was the fact that a myriad of motifs was already inexorably intertwined with *Rheingold*, *Walküre* and *Siegfried* Acts I and II. Ernest Newman counted that at the time when Wagner started work on *Siegfried*, Act III he already had some 140 motifs to work with.[690] Dreyfus highlights the peculiarity that Wagner 'goes to some trouble to compose a Siegfried whose erotic desire is closely observed but whose music—oddly—fails to [sexually] arouse', thereby crafting 'an image of his youthful hero which is still faithful to his original plan'.[691]

The force of Tristan

The discovery that Wagner, during the completion of *Tristan*, became aware 'how far [he] surpassed [his] system', referring to the set of rules he had prescribed in *Opera and Drama*, has frequently been used to denote a final and irrevocable departure from Wagner's earlier theory.[692] Wagner's overused phrase is taken from the notorious *Music of the Future* (1861) in which he clarifies that

> [t]o this work [*Tristan*] I venture to apply the most rigorous standards as derived from my theoretical claims: not because I have modelled it in accordance with my system, since all theory was completely forgotten by me; but because here I finally was able to proceed with the fullest freedom and with the highest degree of ruthlessness against any theoretical concerns so that during the execution I realized how far I surpassed my system.[693]

This quote, arguably not a model of clarity, identifies *Tristan* as a unicum among Wagner's compositional output. Wagner's statement conveys a strong sense of *Tristan* being composed somewhat haphazardly since he addresses the unusual trance-

[690] Ernest Newman, *Wagner Nights* (London, 1949), 611.
[691] Dreyfus, 'Siegfried's Masculinity', 13.
[692] *Zukunftsmusik*, 119: '[…] wie ich mein System weit überflügelte.'
[693] *Ibid*.: 'An dieses Werk nun erlaube ich die strengsten, aus meinen theoretischen Behauptungen fließenden Anforderungen zu stellen: nicht weil ich es nach meinem Systeme geformt hätte, denn alle Theorie war vollständig von mir vergessen; sondern weil ich hier endlich mit vollster Freiheit und mit der gänzlichsten Rücksichtslosigkeit gegen jedes theoretische Bedenken in einer Weise mich bewegte, daß ich während der Ausführung selbst inne ward, wie ich mein System weit überflügelte.'

like state to which he was transported. The phrase 'finally with the fullest freedom' [*endlich mit vollster Freiheit*] has fuelled speculation about Wagner trying to step permanently beyond the boundaries of his own theory. In fact, he seems to describe the release of emotional tension that he felt when giving in to the musical world of *Tristan*. There is no indication that this represents a final departure from the earlier theory. It is remarkable that Wagner opens up his statement with the most determined intention to bring this work in line with his system. The quotation reads almost like a justification why *Tristan* is difficult to reconcile with Wagner's ideas as espoused in *Opera and Drama*. This sense of retrospective scrutiny of *Tristan* against the background of *Opera and Drama* refutes the idea that Wagner had overcome his earlier theory.

Like Bailey, McCreless bases his main arguments against the applicability of *Opera and Drama* beyond Act II of *Siegfried* on the opening phrase of Wagner's statement and misleadingly refers to the following translation: '[o]f this work I have taken the liberty of harboring the loftiest expectations, which follow from my theoretical ideas'.[694] Such a reading of this crucial passage, however, is irreconcilable with the German original, which reads: '*An dieses Werk nun erlaube ich die strengsten, aus meinen theoretischen Behauptungen fließenden Anforderungen zu stellen*' since the term 'Anforderungen' cannot be translated as 'expectations' but rather as 'standards'. It is also noteworthy that neither Bailey nor McCreless are placing special emphasis on the applicability of *Opera and Drama* to motifs in *Siegfried* but are predominantly concerned with changes of formal organization within Wagner's works after *Tristan*.

The special role that *Tristan* plays in Wagner's compositional output is summed up by Cosima in her diary as follows: '[I]n *Tristan* he gave himself up entirely to music; in the other works the drama had imposed a tighter check on the musical flow'.[695] Wagner saw *Tristan* as a work in which he had placed emphasis on musical parameters at the expense of the 'poetic intent'. Wagner even compared writing *Tristan* with conceiving a symphony. According to Cosima, he said that '"I just felt the need to go to the very limit musically, as if I had been writing a

[694] McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, 189.
[695] *CWD*, II, 727; *CWT*, II, 803 (4.10.1881): '[…] in Tristan ununterbrochen der Musik sich hingegeben habe. In den anderen Werken erheische das Drama eine größere Kürze der musikalischen Strömung.'

symphony."'[696] In other statements Wagner reiterates the fact that *Tristan* is indeed unique in being conceived in terms of instrumental music. In Cosima's diaries, we read that '[h]e says once again that he is longing to do some instrumental compositions, adding that it was a similar mood which gave rise to *Tristan*'.[697] The *Ring*, however, compelled Wagner to apply restrictions in musical terms: 'Then *Tristan*, and R. talks again of his need at that time to push himself to the limit musically, since in the *Nibelungen* the requirements of the drama frequently forced him to restrict the musical expression'.[698] As we have already noted, Cosima recorded the following statement about *Tristan*, addressing the issue of motif: '"[O]ne might say that the action arises out of the motifs." When I tell him I should like to die to these strains, he says, "But better to the strains with which Siegfried dies."'[699]

Aspects of unity within Siegfried

In spite of some degree of stylistic disruption, *Siegfried* is a coherent artistic entity. Derrick Puffett argues that *Siegfried* is 'clearly, audibly and demonstrably one work'.[700] First and foremost, as Newcomb points out, unity is achieved by the 'network of musical motifs out of which all three acts are woven'.[701] Joseph Kerman has written that '[b]etween 1857 and 1869 […] his style had of course matured very significantly; but he was stuck with his old leitmotifs. One must indeed admire the skill with which he managed to transform some of them to suit his astonishingly sleek new developmental style'.[702] The sense of unity is further conveyed by tonal coherence. Puffett suggests that tonal links 'operate at a deeper level of the structure than any similarities or differences of style'.[703] It is right to say that the fact that

[696] *CWD*, II, 158; *CWT*, II, 185 (28.9.1878): '"Es war in mir ein Bedürfnis, sich [*sic*] musikalisch auszurasen, wie wenn ich eine Symphonie geschrieben hätte."'
[697] *CWD*, II, 618; *CWT*, II, 687 (9.2.1881): 'Daß er sich sehne, Instrumental-Kompositionen zu machen, sagt er wieder; aus einer ähnlichen Stimmung sei der Tristan entstanden.'
[698] *CWD*, II, 161; *CWT*, II, 188 (1.10.1878): '[…] kommt darauf zurück, wie es ihm Bedürfnis gewesen, sich auszurasen musikalisch, weil er in den Nibelungen durch das Drama gezwungen gewesen war, sehr oft den musikalischen Ausdruck einzuengen.'
[699] *CWD*, I, 676; *CWT*, I, 728 (15.9.1873): '"[…] entspringt die Handlung aus den Motiven." Wie ich ihm sage, ich möchte unter diesen Klängen sterben, sagt er: Doch lieber unter den Klängen, mit welchen Siegfried stirbt.'
[700] Puffett, 'Siegfried in the Context of Wagner's Operatic Writing', 49.
[701] Newcomb, 'Siegfried: The Music', 21.
[702] Joseph Kerman, 'Wagner and Wagnerism', *The New York Review of Books* (22.12.1983), 30.
[703] Puffett, 'Siegfried in the Context of Wagner's Operatic Writing', 49.

Wagner was striving for overall unity is also indicative of his re-engagement with *Opera and Drama*.

It is also noteworthy that the stylistic deviation that exists on several levels does not run counter to the overall sense of unity since the plot requires Act III to convey a different atmosphere than the first two acts of the music drama. Owing to Wagner's designation of *Siegfried* as a comedy the music drama has sometimes been described as the 'scherzo' of the tetralogy, a 'comedy-within-the-tragedy'.[704] For dramatic reasons, however, this description fails to hold good for the third act. Wagner describes resumption of his work on *Siegfried* in a letter to the king as follows: 'If I wanted to tell you more about Siegfried today, I should have to speak of the dark, sublime and awesome dread with which I enter the realm of my third act'.[705] The atmosphere that Wagner is evoking here is removed from qualities of 'enchantment and fairy tale' that are useful terms to describe the general impression of the first two acts.[706] In this respect, the stylistic dichotomy has its own dramatic reason or, as Puffett has put it, 'Siegfried comes of age when he meets Wotan, and so does the music'.[707] Tobias Janz argues that instances of harmonic and instrumental discontinuity are absorbed by the dramatic contrasts that characterize the dichotomy between Acts I/II and Act III.[708] It seems as if emphasis on the epic that characterizes the plot of the third act of *Siegfried* in fact represents the ideal point of departure for Wagner's new musical language in order to successfully work himself back into the *Ring*.

Although many authors seem to perceive qualitative differences between the motifs as introduced in Acts I/II and those that appear for the first time in Act III, they tend to remain short on providing a detailed account of their respective reasons. Stein makes a case for substantial differences in the shapes of Wagner's motifs in Act III vis-à-vis Acts I and II of *Siegfried*. He describes the new style as follows:

> The new motifs, those which first appear in *Siegfried*, Act III on, are of a quite different nature from the earlier *Ring* motifs. They are broader,

[704] *Ibid*., 44.
[705] *SL*, 740; *SB*, XXI, 77 (23./24.2.1869): 'Wollte ich Ihnen heute noch vom Siegfried berichten, so müsste ich von dunklen, erhabenen, furchtbaren Schauern reden, mit denen ich in das [*sic*] Bereich meines dritten Aktes eintrete.'
[706] Puffett, 'Siegfried in the Context of Wagner's Operatic Writing', 44.
[707] *Ibid*., 50.
[708] Janz, *Klangdramaturgie*, 324.

> longer, more independently musical, with less emphasis on characteristic pictorialization than the briefer, more fragmentary, earlier ones.[709]

Kropfinger rightly attacked it as a moot point to see the longer motifs as less suitable for psychological commentary.[710] It is open to question what actual impact these differences have on the process in which semantic meaning is generated, an issue that will be discussed further in the subsequent analyses.

IV.2. The role of 'melodic moments' in the *Siegfried* autographs

The ways in which Wagner employed his 'melodic moments' over the course of sketching *Siegfried* is indicative of how he saw their role in the process of generating semantic meaning. What can be inferred from the procedures that Wagner followed when placing the 'melodic moments' within the gradually growing musical texture yields crucial insights into the psychology behind the motivic network. Despite the existence of several representative transcriptions of Wagner's *Siegfried* sketches the first-hand study of the entirety of these sketches at the Bayreuth archive is still required if an unreserved overall impression of the multitude of circumstances in which Wagner uses the 'melodic moments' throughout *Siegfried* is to be obtained.[711] The issues discussed in this subchapter revolve around the close scrutiny of a number of significant motivic phenomena in their original notational appearance.

The study of Wagner's manuscripts

Although there are a number of influential studies devoted to Wagner's musical manuscripts, aspects of his sketching process that reflect how the motifs came into

[709] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 192.
[710] Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 220.
[711] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 287–334; Curt von Westernhagen, *The Forging of the 'Ring'. Richard Wagner's Composition Sketches for Der Ring des Nibelungen*, trans. Arnold and Mary Whittall (Cambridge, 1976), 128–78; Reinhold Brinkmann, '"Drei der Fragen stell' ich mir frei", Zur Wanderer-Szene im 1. Akt von Wagners '"Siegfried"', *Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung Preußischer Kulturbesitz 1972*, ed. Dagmar Droysen (Berlin, 1973), 120–62 and Werner Breig, *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Wagners "Der Ring des Nibelungen"*, Ph.D. diss. Universität Freiburg (Freiburg, 1973). Patrick McCreless refrains from reproducing relevant sketches in his 1982 *Siegfried* monograph.

being and how they operate to generate musical meaning have received too little or inconclusive attention. The pioneer curator of the *Wahnfried* archive, Otto Strobel, was the first scholar to undertake any detailed work on Wagner's musical manuscripts. Strobel published extensively on these autographs in articles for the *Bayreuther Festspielführer* and other German periodicals.[712] However, he only occasionally elucidates the role of motifs in a given sketch. Even his article devoted to a selection of motifs from *Tristan* fails to explore the connective dimension between musical motifs and their dramatic counterparts.[713] Although, as John Deathridge has put it, Strobel's 'largely uncritical devotion' to Wagner 'limited the intellectual perspective of his writings', scholarship owes Strobel the initial spark towards making these decisive documents accessible.[714]

Curt von Westernhagen's *The Forging of the 'Ring': Richard Wagner's Composition Sketches for Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1976) represents the first systematic investigation into Wagner's *Kompositionsskizzen* that were produced for the music dramas of the *Ring*. Beginning with *Siegfried's Tod*, Westernhagen embarked on sifting the *Ring* sketches in greater detail. Although it tends to turn into a descriptive inventory at times, this study displays a wealth of information. One of the most astonishing findings of Westernhagen's research is the remarkable similarity between the sketches and the final work.[715] At first sight, this seems to limit the potential merits of an investigation of Wagner's sketches. However, rather than experimenting with largely disparate versions of *Siegfried* Wagner actually refines a seemingly pre-conceived set of ideas.

Westernhagen's study has been heavily criticized ever since its first publication in German in 1973.[716] In view of what the title of the book promises, the number of sketch transcriptions with which the monograph is fitted is relatively

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[712] For example: Otto Strobel, 'Die Kompositionsskizzen zum Ring des Nibelungen', *Bayreuther Festspielführer* (Munich, 1930); *id.*, 'Aus Wagners Musikerwerkstatt: Betrachtungen über die Kompositionsskizzen zum "Ring des Nibelungen"', *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* 58 (1931), 463–65, 479–82, 495–98.

[713] *Id.*, '"Geschenke des Himmels": Über die ältesten überlieferten Tristan-Themen und eine andere – unbekannte Melodie Wagners', *Bayreuther Festspielführer* (Bayreuth, 1938), 157–62.

[714] John Deathridge, 'Otto Strobel', *NGDMM 2001*, V, 346. Strobel's main publication is devoted to the manuscripts for the *Ring* poem: *Skizzen und Entwürfe zur Ring-Dichtung. Mit der Dichtung "Der junge Siegfried"* (Munich, 1930).

[715] Westernhagen, *Forging of the 'Ring'*, 132.

[716] Arnold Whittall, 'Review of Warren Darcy's *Wagner's Das Rheingold*', *Music & Letters* 75/4 (1994), 621.

small.[717] Surprisingly, the monograph suggests covering the entirety of the surviving sketches. As Deathridge has pointed out, because of the vast number of autographs no existing study of the *Ring* could possibly provide a complete analysis of the sketches.[718] Wagner left what must be the largest number of sketches and autographs for any single work of art: 3750 pages of music have survived for the tetralogy.[719] Deathridge has unmasked Westernhagen's use of the term 'composition sketches' as being deceptively all-inclusive.[720] Westernhagen employed a terminology that was used by Strobel.[721] *Kompositionsskizze* under this regime refers to the musical outline of a complete work in rough vocal score instead of a more detailed draft in expanded vocal score which Wagner called an *Orchesterskizze*.[722] Deathridge rightly warns against the indiscriminate application of the term 'Orchesterskizze' to all types of intermediate sketch as this word exclusively refers to the more elaborate draft that only exists for the works from *Siegfried* onwards.[723] Several other shortcomings of Westernhagen's study, such as the lack of a list of sources, inadequate discussion of terminology and methods and the failure to transcribe and discuss the remaining musical documents, have been identified by Deathridge.[724] What Westernhagen also left unexplored was the musical-motivic embodiment of dramatic motives, which is the focus of the present study.[725]

The publication of the *Wagner Werk-Verzeichnis* [Wagner Work Catalogue] (WWV) in 1986 changed the ways in which scholarship is approaching Wagner sources.[726] The WWV is not only a complete catalogue of the composer's works but also a comprehensive inventory of Wagner's manuscripts and other related sources.[727] The status of the surviving sketches, drafts, fair copies and documents is now extensively accounted for. For *Siegfried* the WWV lists a small number of

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[717] John Deathridge, 'Wagner's Sketches for the "Ring": Some Recent Studies', *The Musical Times* 118/1611 (1977), 385.
[718] *Ibid*., 383.
[719] *Ibid*.
[720] *Ibid*.
[721] John Deathridge, 'The Nomenclature of Wagner's Sketches', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 101 (1974–75), 77.
[722] Deathridge, 'Wagner's Sketches for the "Ring"', 385.
[723] Deathridge, 'Nomenclature of Wagner's Sketches', 77.
[724] *Ibid*.
[725] Whittall, 'Review of Darcy's *Rheingold*', 621.
[726] John Deathridge/Martin Geck/Egon Voss, *Wagner Werk-Verzeichnis: Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke Richard Wagners und ihrer Quellen* (Mainz, 1986) [*WWV*].
[727] During Wagner's lifetime, several attempts have been made to compile a Wagner-catalogue, none of which prevailed. In fact, Wagner was unenthusiastic about his works' catalogues assembled by Wilhelm Tappert (mid 1870s), Emerich Kastner (1878) and Nikolaus Oesterlein (1882–95).

Einzelskizzen [individual sketches], the *Kompositionsskizze*, the *Orchesterskizze* and the *Partiturerstschrift* [first draft of the score].

As there has been some disagreement concerning the appropriate nomenclature of Wagner's sketches among Wagner scholars I offer the following reasons for my translation of the *Kompositionsskizze* as 'composition sketch' and *Orchesterskizze* as 'orchestral draft'. Deathridge ultimately settles on Strobel's terms 'with an explanatory note pointing out their deficiencies'.[728] Robert Bailey convincingly distinguishes between a fragment ('sketch') and a continuous document ('draft').[729] In his exploration of the *Parsifal* sketches William Kinderman applies 'draft' to both, *Kompositionsskizze* and *Orchesterskizze* as 'they each present a sustained musical continuity, virtually unbroken from the beginning to the end of an act'.[730] However, the *Kompositionsskizze* for *Siegfried* is a collection of 66 unbound leaves and Wagner sometimes breaks the musical continuity. Therefore, a strong case can be made for referring to it as a collection of compositional sketches rather than a complete draft. The *Orchesterskizze*, however, in its velvety cover, more resembles a proper book that is chronologically carried through and that conveys a stronger sense of coherence, which is why the translation 'orchestral draft' seems more adequate.

Although Warren Darcy refrains from providing a detailed exegesis of the dramatic function or the emotional effect of the 'melodic moments,' his integral analysis of *Rheingold*, published in 1993, provides rich stimuli for the investigation of creative processes.[731] Darcy emphasizes the fact that Wagner's sketches display what he calls a 'layering' effect: the *Rheingold* manuscripts show a 'composing-out' of the work from 'background' to 'foreground'.[732] Darcy, however, chose not to elucidate the role of the motifs in this process of 'fleshing-out'. Reinhold Brinkmann investigates tonal progressions in *Siegfried*, Act II, Scene 1 in terms of poetic intent.[733] This emphasis on the 'poetic intent' as the driving force behind Wagner's musical decisions is applicable to the motifs as local musical events as well as their changing appearances. In 2005, William Kinderman provided astonishing insights into the *Entstehungsgeschichte* [genesis] of the prelude to Act III of *Parsifal* by linking the surviving sketches with the detailed record in Cosima's diary entries, an

[728] *Ibid*., 83.
[729] *Ibid*., 82.
[730] William Kinderman, *Wagner's Parsifal* (Oxford, 2013), 81.
[731] Darcy, *Wagner's Rheingold*, 3.
[732] *Ibid*.
[733] Brinkmann, '"Drei der Fragen stell' ich mir frei"', 120–62.

approach he has extended to his full-length study of *Parsifal* that appeared in 2013.[734] This process of reading the sketches in conjunction with other primary sources has been adopted for the present study. Cosima began keeping her diaries in 1869 which coincides with the year of Wagner's resumption of work on *Siegfried*, Act III.

A number of publications on Wagner's sketches have shaped our knowledge of his working methods. According to Bailey, whose essay on Wagner's method of composition in *The Wagner Companion* (1979) is still a work of reference, Wagner, from *Rheingold* onwards, prepared the *Kompositionsskizze* in pencil as his major first step.[735] Bailey explains that there are in fact two distinct musical handwritings at work: a seemingly hasty one used when working on drafts in pencil and a very controlled one when Wagner wrote with ink.[736] Wagner used pencil for reasons of notational speed. Wagner had two approaches to corrections of his sketches. As one would expect, when he was dissatisfied with a passage he simply crossed out the unsatisfactory material and continued on.[737] When he returned to the draft to alter a section at any time afterwards, he either wrote a new version over the earlier one or used a separate work-sheet. In particular, the *Orchesterskizze* for *Siegfried*, shows several *modified* versions simply glued over the original material. The ways in which Wagner dealt with corrections assume great importance in a comparison of different compositional stages.

In spite of these influential publications, however, there still seems to be a striking imbalance between the great number of analyses of Wagner's works and the relatively few examinations of his manuscript sources.[738] In 1993 Jean-Jacques Nattiez addressed the potential threat that the orthodox views on Wagner's theory are facing since scholarship is 'still some distance away from a transcription and detailed analysis of these sketches, a task that will take years of specialized study'.[739] This verdict remains influential today.

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[734] William Kinderman, 'The Third-Act Prelude of Wagner's *Parsifal*: Genesis, Form, and Dramatic Meaning', *19th-Century Music* 29/2 (2005), 162; *id*., *Wagner's Parsifal*, 4 and 87.
[735] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 292.
[736] *Ibid*., 293.
[737] *Ibid*.
[738] John Deathridge, 'Through the "Looking Glass". Some Remarks on the First Complete Draft of Lohengrin', *Analyzing Opera*, 57; Janz, *Klangdramaturgie*, 307.
[739] Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 291–92.

The merits of sketch studies

The *Siegfried* sketches constitute a highly significant resource for the purposes of illuminating the deeper strata of Wagner's motivic creation. In his radical critique of sketch research, Douglas Johnson argues that the creative evolution of a composition 'belongs exclusively in the realm of biography' and is 'irrelevant to analysis'.[740] He is convinced that 'if we have observed relationships in the piece, we hardly need the gratification of observing them in the sketches' and contends 'that any analytical technique is powerless to discover something in the sketches that it cannot discover in the work'.[741] In reply to Johnson, Sieghard Brandenburg, the director of the *Beethoven-Haus*, argues that Johnson is less clear about the precise contours that demarcate his notions of 'analysis' and 'biography'. Brandenburg criticizes Johnson's emphasis on 'internal' relationships as too narrow a concept of musical analysis.[742] Through an interpretation of the position of a given work within the composer's stylistic development, Brandenburg argues, the analysis of internal relationships is saved from being a mere description of the work without providing 'any meaningful evaluation'.[743] William Drabkin rightly finds it hard to imagine an analysis that specifically excludes observations on a composer's 'musical biography' on the grounds that 'they relate only to the general, not to the specific, musicality of the composer'.[744]

With reference to *Siegfried*, McCreless suggests that it is possible to 'develop a consistent, detailed analytical model of the dramatic and musical structure of the opera without explicit reference to Wagner's life or his ideas about his work'.[745] This view is in harmony with Johnson's 'romantically colored concept' of 'absolute music', as Brandenburg has put it, according to which the work, once it has left the composer's desk, is 'treated as an entity with an existence of its own, lifted out of history'.[746] With his discussion of the first complete draft of *Lohengrin*, Deathridge

[740] Douglas Johnson, 'Beethoven Scholars and Beethoven's Sketches', *19th-Century Music* 2/1 (1979), 5.
[741] *Ibid*., 16.
[742] Sieghard Brandenburg, 'On Beethoven Scholars and Beethoven's Sketches', *19th-Century Music* 2/3 (1979), 272.
[743] *Ibid*.
[744] William Drabkin, 'On Beethoven Scholars and Beethoven's Sketches', *19th-Century Music* 2/3 (1979), 274.
[745] *Ibid*., xiii.
[746] Brandenburg, 'On Beethoven Scholars and Beethoven's Sketches', 272.

effectively rejects Johnson's proposition by arguing that a rigorous analysis of the music of *Lohengrin* cannot ignore the 'creative fantasies and often paradoxical relationships between theory and practice that are part' of this work.[747] Given the constraints as postulated by McCreless, the understanding of the score, let alone the sketches of *Siegfried*, cannot go beyond a detailed description and analysis of the musical factors as present in this body of musical documents. However, an investigation into the different procedural strata of a theory's practical application that its creator has left behind is an invaluable authority in an attempt to approximate the driving forces behind Wagner's motivic language.

The decisive factor is the extent to which the sketches merely represent a tentative, improvisatory snapshot of a given work's genesis or whether there is good reason to track down minute changes in what is clearly part of the work from the beginning to the end. William Kinderman believes that it is a highly promising approach to give 'attention to the relationships between successive versions' since these comparisons are likely to 'reveal a network of compositional changes'.[748] In the case of Wagner one can easily subscribe to this view as the investigation of his manuscripts indeed reveals a stream of continuous tightening of largely the same core material. In other words, Wagner continuously hones the musical texture that is made up of a substantial degree of unchanging components. The existence of several sketching layers which gradually build up the music drama invite closer scrutiny of how the connection between the motifs and the drama was tightened.

Inside Wagner's workshop

Wagner was highly concerned about the sanctity and integrity of his composition workshop as represented in his sketches. Robert Bailey, while having published seminal studies on Wagner's sketches, rightly points out that the sketch material that has survived from a composer's workshop is not intended for anyone but the composer himself.[749] Some composers actively prevented posterity from developing voyeuristic tendencies. Brahms, for instance, meticulously destroyed his own

[747] Deathridge, 'Through the "Looking Glass"', 57.
[748] William Kinderman (ed.), *Artaria 195: Beethoven's Sketchbook for the Missa Solemnis and the Piano Sonata in E major, opus 109* (Urbana, 2003), 77.
[749] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 301.

sketches.[750] It is especially the highly typified manner in which Wagner jots down his core ideas that strongly suggests the *Kompositionsskizze* is reserved for his eyes only. On 1 July 1869 he wrote to King Ludwig: 'And now I turn to the most delightful matter: to Siegfried! It has been sketched up to the end. Now I have to transcribe the wild jottings that only I can understand into a more definitive notational language'.[751] There are several factors that render it difficult to read the *Kompositionsskizze*, the most important of which is the fact that Wagner, as we shall see, occasionally breaks the continuity of the music drama in order to make use of all available space.

When proceeding to the next compositional stage Wagner tended to work from a draft in ink. Bailey has argued that the *Ring* sketches have been traced over in ink by someone else's hand.[752] This could indicate that Wagner did not mind a third party gaining long-term access to his sketches. Bailey, however, is convinced that Mathilde Wesendonck spent hours on Wagner's pencilled manuscripts for *Rheingold*, *Walküre* and Acts I and II of *Siegfried* on his behalf. There is evidence that Cosima, who traced over the *Meistersinger* and *Parsifal* sketches, took care of the later *Ring* autographs as well.[753] Cosima reports in her diary on 8 March 1869 that she was tracing over sketches of a score which was probably that of *Siegfried* since Wagner resumed work on Act III of the music drama on 1 March 1869.[754] On 2 March 1869 she notes in her diary that '[h]e goes off to work on the song with which Wotan wakes the Wala, I to the children, my life consists of bringing up and inking in [*Erziehen und Überziehen*]'.[755] Since it becomes clear that this potentially tedious task has exclusively been performed by one of Wagner's closest confidants, the composer's consent to this particular 'intrusion' had no impact on how highly he valued the intimacy of his creative processes.

The peculiarity that a great number of sketches circulated outside Wagner's workshop also does not affect his protective relationship to the *Skizzen*. Wagner is known to have presented friends, admirers and especially benefactors with beautiful

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[750] Christian Martin Schmidt/Wolfram Steinbeck (eds.), *Brahms/Bruckner* (Kassel, 2002), 27–8.
[751] *SB*, XXI, 196: 'Und nun zum Allerheitersten: zu Siegfried! Dieser ist nun bis zu Ende skizziert. Nun habe ich zunächst noch die wilden, nur mir verständlichen Aufzeichnungen in eine solidere Notenschriftsprache zu übertragen […]'.
[752] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 293.
[753] Kinderman, *Wagner's Parsifal*, 108.
[754] *CWT*, I, 68 (8.3.1869): 'Vor- und nachmittags überziehe ich die Partitur-Blätter bei den Kindern.' [In the morning and afternoon I ink in pages of the score in company of the children.] (some of the translation from *CWD*, I, 71).
[755] *CWD*, I, 67; *CWT*, I, 64 (2.3.1869): 'Er geht an Wotan's Weck-Lied der Wala […] mein Leben besteht aus Erziehen und Überziehen.'

and neat autographs of his.[756] However, these manuscripts were in fact calligraphically manipulated in order to reinforce the image of genial invention that required no revision at all. One of the surviving 'individual sketches' for *Siegfried* strongly resembles one of those autographs that were designed to leave the workshop although this particular sketch lacks Wagner's signature:

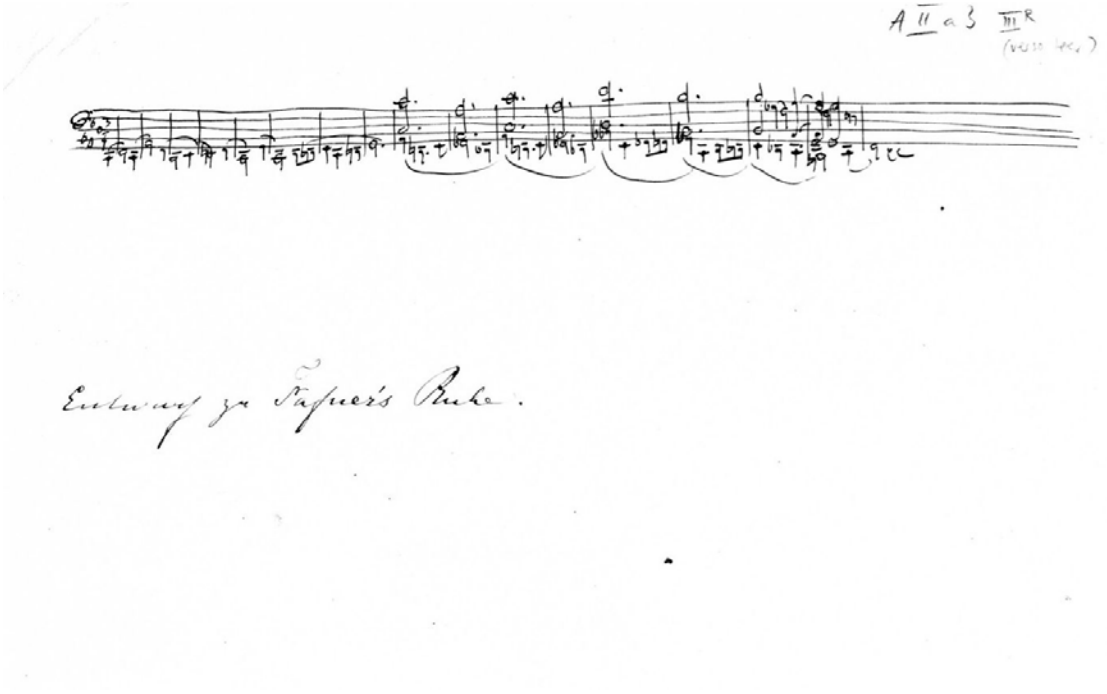


Plate 1[757]

Siegfried, Einzelskizze (NA A II a 3, III^{R})[758]

In this sketch, Wagner presents a motif in conjunction with something akin to a label: '*Entwurf zu Fafner's Ruhe*' [draft of Fafner's rest]. These *Albumblätter*-like gifts show no traces of labour. Instead, they were carefully chosen with their potential veneration and longevity in mind.[759] As planned, these sketches immediately turned into free-travelling agents attesting to Wagner's status as a genius.

It seems right to intrude upon the sanctity of Wagner's sketches as essential aspects of the psychology behind the motivic language have been preserved in these

[756] Deathridge, 'Through the "Looking Glass"', 57.
[757] I refrain from transcribing the plates as I am hoping to reveal phenomena that are linked to the outer appearance of the sketches in question.
[758] This cataloguing system is employed in the *WWV* and conforms to that used by the Wagner Archive. It was devised by Otto Strobel on the basis of Wagner's own cataloguing system for his library (Kinderman, *Wagner's Parsifal*, 82, n. 11).
[759] Ulrich Drüner, 'Memorabilia', *Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia*, 295–96.

manuscripts. Westernhagen and Newman have iterated, that these manuscripts promise to reveal the unconscious processes that might have left their mark.[760] At the outset of his seminal *Siegfried* study, however, McCreless warns that there will always remain a 'lack of understanding of the psychology of artistic creation'.[761] He concludes that the insights one could gain from an analysis of Wagner's sketches 'must be taken as gratuities which may support' how one approaches a particular piece.[762] Wagner brought his own idiosyncrasies to the working process and one needs to be aware of the risks inherent in any attempt to extrapolate universal truths from these sketches in defence of a particular theory. For the sake of doing justice to Wagner's theory, though, the temptation to intrude the privacy of Wagner's artistic creation is again surrendered in this study.

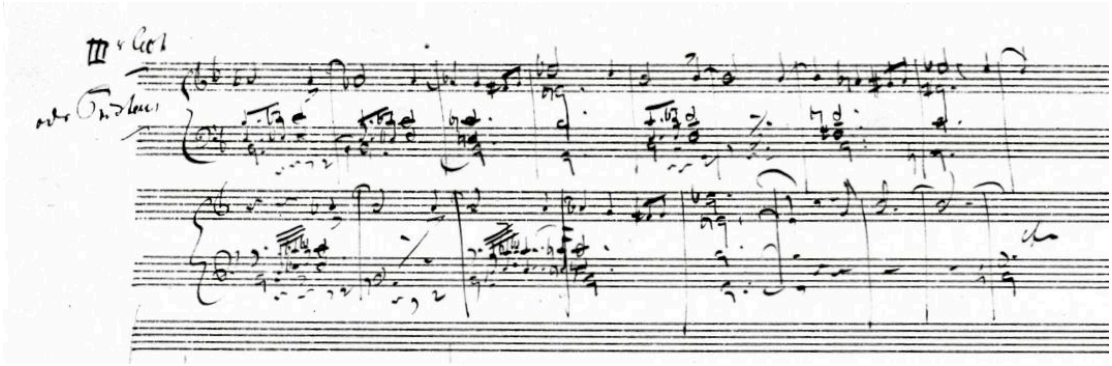
The concealment of labour

Among the *Siegfried* manuscripts there are only a suspiciously limited number of sketches and these only provide scarce insight into the actual genesis of the motifs; this fact alone invites speculation about whether Wagner deliberately tried to conceal this most decisive stage of his compositional process. It is remarkable that only a total of twenty pages make up the body of 'individual sketches' for *Siegfried*.[763] There are for instance more than seventy *Einzelskizzen* for *Parsifal* listed in the WWV and according to Kinderman even this tabulation is not complete.[764] There is the possibility that the 'missing' *Siegfried* sketches have simply been lost in the mists of time. In a letter to King Ludwig dated 9 February 1879, Wagner however explains that '[i]n days gone by I would simply discard anything which might have served as a memento of me. Then one morning I called out all over the house, "I have a son." All of a sudden the whole world looked different! […] From then on, every relic was preserved: letters, manuscripts, books which I once had used, every line I had ever written, were tracked down and collected […]. My son […] shall on reaching maturity, know exactly *who* his father was'.[765] Wagner's willingness to part with all

[760] Westernhagen, *Forging of the 'Ring'*, 1.
[761] McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, xiii.
[762] *Ibid*., xiv.
[763] *WWV*, 380–81.
[764] Kinderman, *Wagner's Parsifal*, 82.
[765] Zdenko von Kraft, 'Wahnfried and the Festival Theatre', *Wagner Companion*, 429; *id*., *Der Sohn: Siegfried Wagners Leben und Umwelt* (Graz, 1969), 9: 'Wie warf ich einst Alles von mir, was irgend

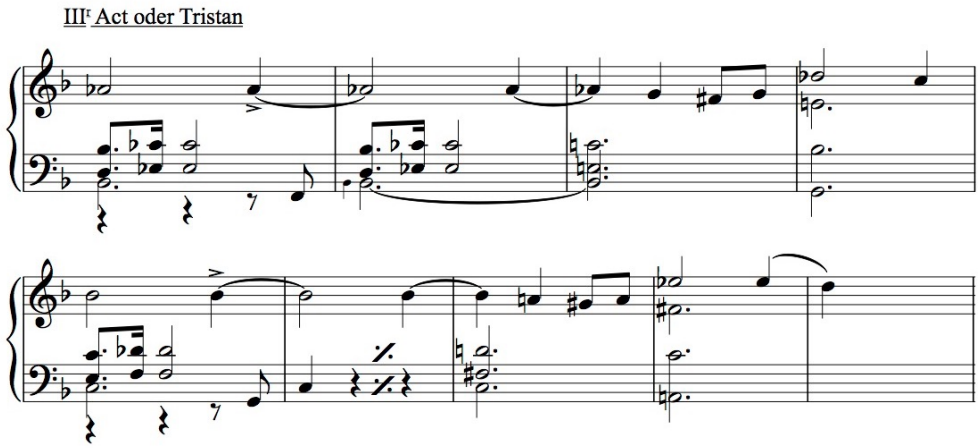
his manuscripts without the slightest hesitation [‘*warf ich einst Alles von mir*’] reads too much like a hypocrisy [‘a memento of me’] for a composer who was increasingly concerned with posterity as reflected in his autobiography and the complete edition of all his writings.[766]

The following *Siegfried Einzelskizze* bears the header ‘III[r] Act oder Tristan’ which proves that Wagner was at times undecided where to use motivic material that he had just conceived.



Siegfried, Einzelskizze (NA A II a 3, VII[R]) (detail)

Transcription by Bailey, ‘The Method of Composition’, 316, ex. 49:



Ex. 2

als Andenken an mich übrig bleiben konnte! […] Nun rief ich eines Morgens: “Ein Sohn ist da!” Wie da mit einem Male die ganze Welt anders aussah! […] Jetzt wurde auch jede Reliquie aufbewahrt: Briefe, Manuscripte, Bücher, die ich einst im Gebrauch hatte, jede Zeile, die ich je geschrieben, wurden aufgesucht und gesammelt […]. Der Sohn […] soll, wann er zu männlicher Reife gelangt ist, genau wissen, *wer* sein Vater war.’

[766] Chris Walton, *Lies and Epiphanies: Composers and Their Inspiration from Wagner to Berg* (Woodbridge, 2014), 29.

Some of Cosima's diary entries attest to the peculiarity that there were many motifs which were conceived outside a given dramaturgical context and that needed to find their ultimate role in his works. She mentioned that '[i]n the evening he plays a marvellous theme for a symphony and says that he has many such themes, they occur to him constantly, but he can't use the good material for *Parsifal*'.[767] During the time when Wagner was composing Act III of *Siegfried*, Cosima notes in her diary that '[b]efore lunch R. plays for me what he has written and is delighted that several themes which date from the "Starnberg days" and which we had jokingly earmarked for quartets and symphonies have now found their destiny [*Bestimmung*] ("*Ewig war ich, ewig bin ich*")'.[768] The motifs from the 'Starnberg days', for instance, must have been stored in one way or another. Wagner's above statement in which he gives the reason why he suddenly changed his attitude towards his manuscripts seems to describe a practice that apparently was long going on before the birth of his son but from this particular morning onwards he came up with a much better excuse for it.

Wagner's highly conscious attitude towards his autographs is further supported by the fact that the remaining body of the *Siegfried* sketches shows signs of meticulous postprocessing which cannot exclusively be attributed to acts of reverence by the Bayreuth circle. The 'orchestral draft' has been bound in green velvet and the title's gold embossing reminds the reader of the venerability of the book at hand. Even the *Kompositionsskizze*, a collection of unbound sheets, has been fitted with a book cover and is titled by Wagner's hand '"*Siegfried*": *Kompositionsskizze – 66 Blätter*' [66 sheets]. As Wagner showed great diligence with regard to preserving these sketches, it is not plausible why he would simply have neglected the sketches that show the earliest stage of the musical work, the genesis of the motifs. Wagner was aware of the studies that Gustav Nottebohm had conducted on Beethoven's sketches and knew Ludwig Nohl's 1874 publication that makes reference to Wagner's sketches.[769] Since the 'melodic moments' have been identified as the prime movers in

[767] *CWD*, I, 986; *CWT*, I, 1075 (8.10.1877): 'Abends spielt er mir ein herrliches Thema zu einer Symphonie und sagt, er habe so viele solcher Themen, jeden Augenblick fiele ihm etwas ein, er könne alles das Wohlige aber nicht für Parsifal gebrauchen.'

[768] *CWD*, I, 97 (amended); *CWT*, I, 96 (19.5.1869): 'Vor Tisch spielt mir R., was er gearbeitet hat und freut sich, daß mehrere Themen, welche in der "Starnberger Zeit" entstanden und die wir scherzend zu Quartetten und Symphonien bestimmt haben, jetzt ihre Bestimmung finden ("Ewig war ich, ewig bin ich").'

[769] Gustav Nottebohm, *Ein Skizzenbuch von Beethoven* (Leipzig, 1865); Ludwig Nohl, *Beethoven, Liszt, Wagner: ein Bild der Kunstbewegung unseres Jahrhunderts* (Wien, 1874).

making the music drama 'emotionally comprehensible', their genesis, under Wagner's own regime, amounts to the pivotal factor in the compositional process.

It is the continuing vehemence with which Wagner postulated the elimination of all traces of artifice that further invites speculation about the systematic removal or reduction of those earliest records of his compositional process. The existence of manuscripts that might display a modicum of reflection, let alone traces of effort during the earliest stage of the compositional process—devoted to the purely emotional realm—would significantly contravene Wagner's ideal of the *Gefühlsverständnis*. As has been discussed earlier, Wagner's perception ideal goes hand in hand with its analogue on the production side. The following letter proves that the complete actualization [*Aufgehen*] of the poetic intent in the artwork, as devised in *Opera and Drama*, continues to be an issue of utmost importance for Wagner in 1864 during his third period of work on the music for *Siegfried*:

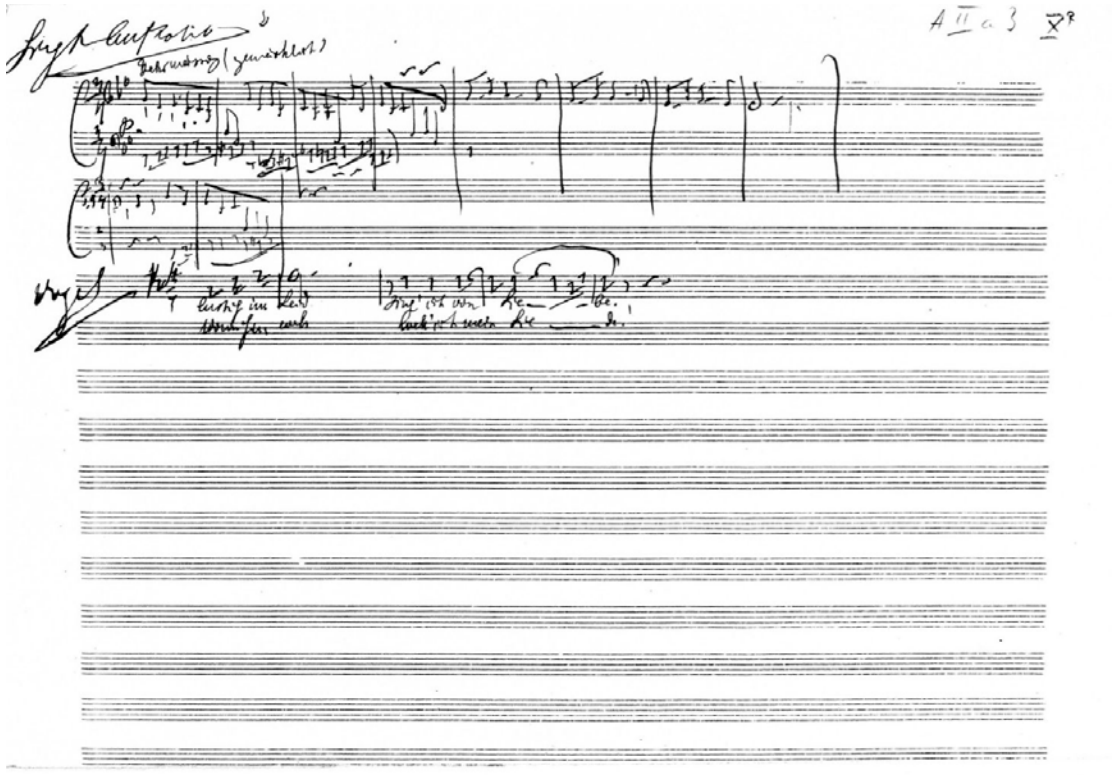
> Wotan lives on in Siegfried as the artist lives on in his work of art: the freer and the more autonomous the latter's spontaneous existence and the less trace it bears of the creative artist—so that through it (the work of art), the artist himself is forgotten,—the more perfectly satisfied does the artist himself feel: and so, in a certain higher sense, his being forgotten, his disappearance, his death is—the life of the work of art.—This is my frame of mind in which I am now turning back once again to the completion of my work: I want to be destroyed by my Siegfried—in order to live forever! O beauteous death![770]

Wagner evokes a strong imagery that relates the artwork to an unworldly phenomenon [*in einem gewissen hohen Sinne*] that requires nothing less than the complete annihilation of everything that he actually has contributed to it. This letter is written with the effusiveness that Wagner reverted to when corresponding with the

[770] *SL*, 627 (amended); *SB*, XVI, 348 (6.11.1864): 'In Siegfried lebt Wotan fort, wie der Künstler in seinem Kunstwerk: je freier und selbstlebender dieses, ganz wie von sich allein besteht, [und je mehr es] keine Spur des bildenden Künstlers mehr an sich trägt, so dass über ihm, dem Kunstwerk, der Künstler selbst vergessen wird, – desto vollkommener findet der Künstler selbst sich befriedigt: So ist, in einem gewissen hohen Sinne, sein Vergessenwerden, sein Verschwinden, sein Tod – das Leben des Kunstwerkes. Diess ist meine Stimmung, in welcher ich mich nun zur Vollendung meines Werkes zurückwende: ich will mich – um ewig zu leben – von meinem Siegfried vernichten lassen! O schöner Tod!'

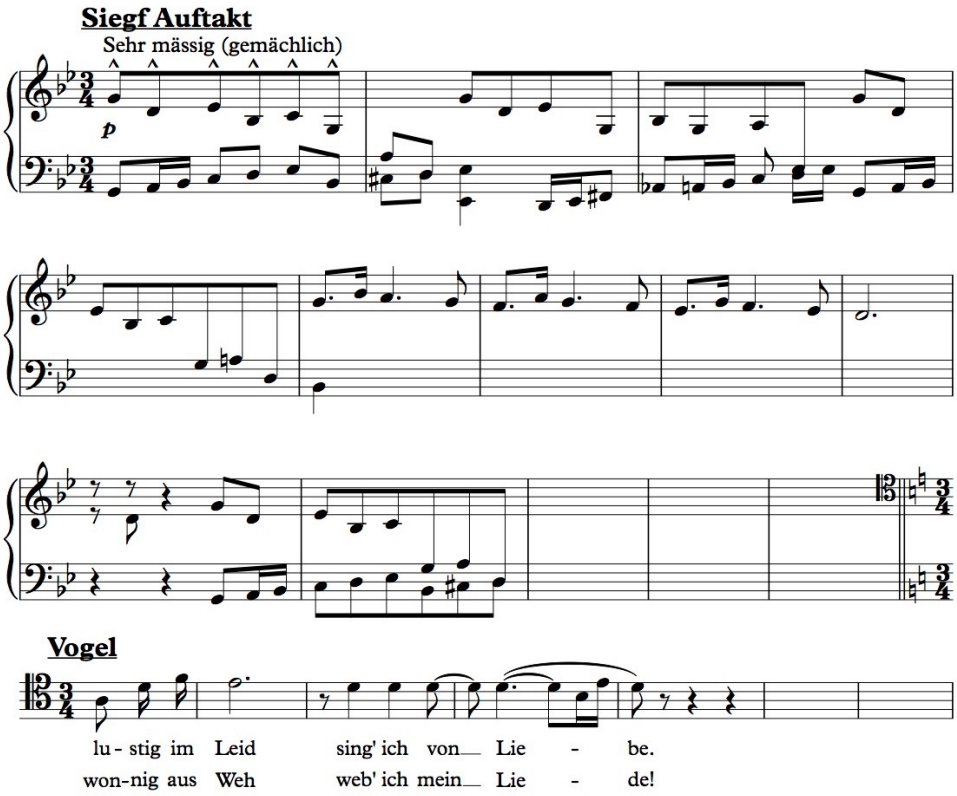
king which might alleviate its volitional content. Nevertheless, the ‘disappearance’ [*Verschwinden*] of the artist is easily translated into the disappearance of all recorded material that would give too much of an impression of the work’s artificial and laboured genesis.

The surviving *Einzelskizzen* show fully developed motifs rather than providing insight into different stages of their genesis. They successfully fight any impression of reflective tendencies in Wagner’s early compositional stages. The following transcription of another representative *Einzelskizze* (Ex. 3) clearly shows that Wagner offers fully-fleshed motifs instead of allowing a glimpse of the labour that possibly went into them:



Siegfried, *Einzelskizze* (NA A II a 3, X^R)

Transcription:



Ex. 3

It seems an undisputed fact that Wagner, although being in the possession of several pianos, preferred to compose at his desk.[771] Grey suggests that Wagner needed access to a piano in order to be able to 'hear his initial ideas once he had set them down'.[772] This implies that these ideas were previously notated. Westernhagen sees in Wagner's approach strong parallels to Beethoven's creative methods which he described as the constant 'weighing and testing of the developmental possibilities inherent in motifs and figures'.[773] These experiments, if not carried out at the piano, will inevitably have resulted in a substantial number of sketches as well. Cosima gives us an idea of the ways in which Wagner recorded his genial inventions: '[Y]esterday evening he

[771] Borchmeyer, *Richard Wagner*, 52.
[772] Thomas S. Grey, 'Wagner's Working Methods', *The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner's Life and Music*, ed. Barry Millington (London, 2001), 102. At Wahnfried, there was a specially designed piano that had an inbuilt writing desk.
[773] Westernhagen, *Forging of the 'Ring'*, 6.

showed me a card in his waistcoat pocket on which he had written a theme'.[774] Bailey argues that Wagner used whatever kind of paper was readily available in order to record a motif.[775] Cosima mentions that '[a]ll the time he is noting things down, a musical or some other idea […]. He tells me that again today a theme came to him with which he can do nothing—his room is full of such scraps'.[776] Consequently, there must have also been a rich array of rough manuscripts for *Siegfried* showing new motivic creations and the experiments that Wagner carried out on them.

Westernhagen, however, has evoked the image of Wagner, the 'open-air composer'.[777] Eva Rieger and Hiltrud Schroeder have assembled various instances in which Wagner conceived motifs during inspirational walks.[778] With a modicum of hypocrisy perhaps, Wagner himself perceived this gift as some sort of an impediment by explaining that 'what distinguishes me from composers nowadays, and gives them an advantage over me, is that I cannot compose without having an "idea"; but they can'.[779] There is no reason to believe that Wagner refrained from using all notational means to fix his ideas and test their potential flexibility especially since he refrained from using the piano at this early stage. On the contrary, Wagner lamented the fact that when returning to a composition he constantly needed to refresh his memory. Cosima records Wagner's following statement in 1878:

> It is incredible what a bungler I am—I can't transpose at all. With me composing is a curious affair; while thinking it up, I have it all in my mind, endless, but then comes the job of writing it down, and the mere physical actions get in the way. It becomes "How did it go?" instead of "How is it?"; not "How is it to be?" but "How was it?"—and then having

[774] *CWD*, I, 988; *CWT*, I, 1077 (15.10.1877): '[…] gestern abends zeigte er mir in seiner Westentasche eine Karte, auf welcher er ein Thema aufgeschrieben.'
[775] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 270.
[776] *CWD*, II, 178; *CWT*, II, 206 (21.10.1878): 'Jeden Augenblick notiere er etwas, einen musikalischen oder anderen Gedanken […]. Heute habe er wiederum ein musikalisches Thema gehabt, womit [er] nichts anfangen konnte; seine Stube sei voll von solchen Schnipseln.'
[777] Westernhagen, *Forging of the 'Ring'*, 7.
[778] Eva Rieger/Hiltrud Schroeder, '"Der Platz für Götter" – Richard Wagners Wanderungen in der Schweiz', *wagnerspectrum* 1/2007, 155–70.
[779] Carl F. Glasenapp, *Das Leben Richard Wagners*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1905), VI, 71: '"Was mich von den jetzigen Komponisten scheidet und sie mir überlegen macht", sagte er "das ist, daß ich nicht komponieren kann, ohne einen "Einfall" zu haben, sie aber können es."'

> to search till one finds it again. Mendelssohn would raise his hands in horror if he ever saw me composing.[780]

This 'compositional hesitation' will no doubt have also applied to the genesis of his motifs. Indeed, Cosima mentions in her diary on 5 August 1879 the 'touching memories of [Clara] Wolfram, how beautifully she sang to him the Siegfried theme, which he had just written down to remind himself'.[781]

The increasing motivic complexity of the *Ring* that must have turned into a strain on Wagner's cognitive performance was further intensified by the fact that he strived after developing each motif out of a stock of *plastische Naturmotive* [vivid nature motifs]. This intended interrelationship of the motivic material adds another severely restricting layer to Wagner's creative freedom. Many scholars have used Wagner's following statement from an 1854 letter to August Röckel that he made with reference to *Rheingold* as evidence for the composer's ambitious plan:

> In time I believe I shall be able to tell you about its composition. For now let me add merely that it has become a close-knit unity: there is scarcely a bar in the orchestra which does not develop out of preceding motifs.[782]

Werner Breig argues that most of 'the motifs of the *Ring* are indeed derived from basic motivic elements'.[783] Deryck Cooke stressed the idea of 'families' of related motifs and variants generated by a smaller repertoire of 'descriptive nature-motifs'.[784] This passage read in conjunction with Wagner's concept of 'verse melody', however, is less apodictic than it appears. Wagner may not be describing the interrelationship

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[780] *CWD*, I, 381 (amended); *CWT*, I, 404 (23.6.1871): 'Was ich für ein Stümper bin, glaubt kein Mensch, ich kann gar nicht transponieren. Das Komponieren ist bei mir auch ein seltsamer Zustand; beim Phantasieren habe ich alles, endlos, nun heißt es fixieren, da kommen einem die physischen Griffe schon in den Weg; wie war es denn, heißt es dann, nicht wie es ist, wie soll es sein, wie war es, und nun suchen, bis man es wiederfindet. Mendelssohn würde die Hände über dem Kopf zusammenschlagen, wenn er mich komponieren sähe.'

[781] *CWD*, II, 349; *CWT*, II, 393: '[…] rührendes Gedenken Claire Wolfram's, wie sie das Thema aus Siegfried ihm so schön wiedergesungen, wie er es eben für sich niedergeschieben.'

[782] *SL*, 310; *SB*, VI, 71–2 (25./26.1.1854): 'Mit der Zeit denke ich Dir auch die Composition [*sic*] mittheilen zu können. Für jetzt nur so viel, daß sie zu einer fest verschlungenen Einheit geworden ist: Das Orchester bringt fast keinen Tact [*sic*], der nicht aus vorangehenden Motiven entwickelt ist.'

[783] Werner Breig, 'The Musical Works', *Wagner Handbook*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Peter Wapnewski, trans. John Deathridge (Cambridge MA, 1992), 448.

[784] Cooke, *I Saw the World End*. Cooke gave the most comprehensive presentation of his 'genealogical' approach to leitmotifs in an audio commentary to Sir Georg Solti's recording of the *Ring*. This commentary appeard on CD in 1995 (EAN: 0028944358124).

between the motifs but the derivation of the orchestral commentary from the motifs. Wagner's motivic inventory is nurtured from a twofold source: the 'motifs of presentiment' are presented in the orchestra but the 'motifs of reminiscence' are derived from the vocal line which has the freedom to introduce motivic germs that are not necessarily interrelated with previous motifs.

This reading is not challenged by the other crucial statement that Wagner made with reference to the alleged interdependence of the motivic stock. In retrospect, Wagner emphasized in his *Epilogischer Bericht* that these *Naturmotive* were his starting point for the 'new path' of *Rheingold*: 'which I had then to evolve in ever more individualized forms to undergird the emotional tendencies of the broadly ramified action and its characters'.[785] There are indeed a number of these derivative connections between some motifs. According to Thomas Grey, the *Ring* as a whole contains some sixty or seventy distinct motifs of this kind.[786] The phenomenon that Wagner seems to address in these pivotal passages, however, is the symphonic development out of immediately preceding motivic material, a fact that is confirmed by the *Siegfried* sketches, as we shall see in due course.

A number of other observations further contribute to the assumption that Wagner has suppressed sketches or has made an effort to conceal the genesis of the motifs. Bailey points out that Wagner was one of the most methodical of musical geniuses and almost always dated his complete musical drafts.[787] Similarly, Deathridge is convinced that Wagner 'punctiliously' dated his sketches with a 'self-conscious eye on posterity'.[788] Most of his *Einzelskizzen*, however, are not datable.[789] Although the *Kompositionsskizze*, the *Orchesterskizze* and the *Partiturerstschrift* of *Siegfried* have carefully been turned into handsome books, no comparable collection has survived from the earliest compositional stage. From the state of the surviving body of sketches for other music dramas, Bailey has concluded that Wagner never kept systematically organized sketchbooks.[790] Wagner's diary, the '*Braune Buch*' [brown book] that he kept from 1865 to 1882 shows some engagement with motivic issues but there are no actual musical examples that would give an idea of how

[785] Wagner, *Epilogischer Bericht*, 266; see n. 90 (translation adopted from Grey, 'Leitmotif, Temporality, and Musical Design in the Ring', 88, n. 8).
[786] Grey, 'Leitmotif, Temporality, and Musical Design in the Ring', 88.
[787] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 270.
[788] Deathridge, 'The Nomenclature of Wagner's Sketches', 79.
[789] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 270.
[790] *Ibid*.

Wagner built his motifs.[791] Even the *Kompositionsskizze*, the second stage in the compositional process, which is carefully mapped out with reference to the number of staves that Wagner intended to use, is a collection of unbound pages which would facilitate the removal of entire pages in the event of sketches that show too many traces of laboured motivic development.

A strategic approach to composing

The conflicting strands of evidence that have survived with reference to Wagner's approach to composing can only be reconciled under the supposition that on the production side Wagner strived after something like an 'informed' automatism. We have already discussed Dahlhaus's interpretation of the *Gefühlsverständnis* as a 'second immediacy' which is in fact an 'informed' spontaneity on the reception side that 'benefits from stores of reflection'. Wagner, who specifically rejected this response to the artwork of the future seems to have allowed this approach on the production side. Wagner, first of all, tried to save the genesis of the motifs from all reflective stains. This is supported by Wagner's statement in a letter to the critic Karl Gaillard, in which the composer paraphrases his creative approach as follows:

> [I]n the first place I am attracted only by those subjects which reveal themselves to me not only as poetically but, at the same time, musically significant. And so, even before I set about writing a single line of the text or drafting a scene, I am already thoroughly immersed in the musical aura of my new creation, I have all the notes [*alle Töne*], all the characteristic moti[fs] in my head so that when the poem is finished and the scenes are arranged in their proper order the actual opera is already completed and its detailed musical treatment is more a question of calm and reflective revision, the moment of actual creativity [*Produziren*] having already passed.[792]

[791] Richard Wagner, *The Diary of Richard Wagner 1865-1882: The Brown Book*, ed. Joachim Bergfeld, trans. George Bird (London, 1980), 75–6.
[792] *SL*, 118; *SB*, II, 358 (30.1.1844): '[…] zunächst kann mich kein Stoff anziehen, als nur ein solcher, der sich mir nicht nur in seiner dichterischen, sondern auch in seiner musikalischen Bedeutung zugleich darstellt. Ehe ich dann daran gehe, einen Vers zu machen, ja eine Scene zu entwerfen, bin ich bereits in dem Dufte meiner neuen Schöpfung berauscht, ich habe alle Töne, alle charakteristischen Motive im Kopfe, so daß, wenn dann die Verse fertig und die Scenen geordnet sind, für mich die

Here, Wagner invokes an image of unfettered genial invention that is however confined to the earliest stages of creative production and he specifically mentions the 'characteristic motifs' as the ultimate results of this genuinely creative process. Wagner explains that all the motifs are simply in his head, an assertion that is less convincing in view of the longwinded procedures that he followed in order to refresh his memory that we had good reason to speculate about. It is especially surprising that this letter dates back to the year 1844, which from a point of view of the development of the 'melodic moments' is a strikingly early example of Wagner's preoccupation with motifs. Astonishingly, Wagner is already associating his musical language ('all the notes') with 'characteristic motifs' although his operas of the time still merely tend to show interpolating motivic practices that largely remain under the influence of the *Erinnerungsmotiv* tradition. Wagner, at the time when he was composing *Tannhäuser*, is already completely captured by the idea of 'characteristic motifs'. Thus, from an early stage in his career, Wagner distinguishes between two phases in his working process whose dividing quality is artistic creation on the basis of intuition.

Wagner's description of a 'calm and reflective revision' [*ruhige und besonnene Nacharbeit*] is an impression that is easily made while studying the *Kompositionsskizze* of *Siegfried*:

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eigentliche Oper schon fertig ist, u. die detaillirte [*sic*] musikalische Behandlung mehr eine ruhige u. besonnene Nacharbeit ist, die dem Moment des eigentlichen Produziren's bereits vorangegangen ist.'

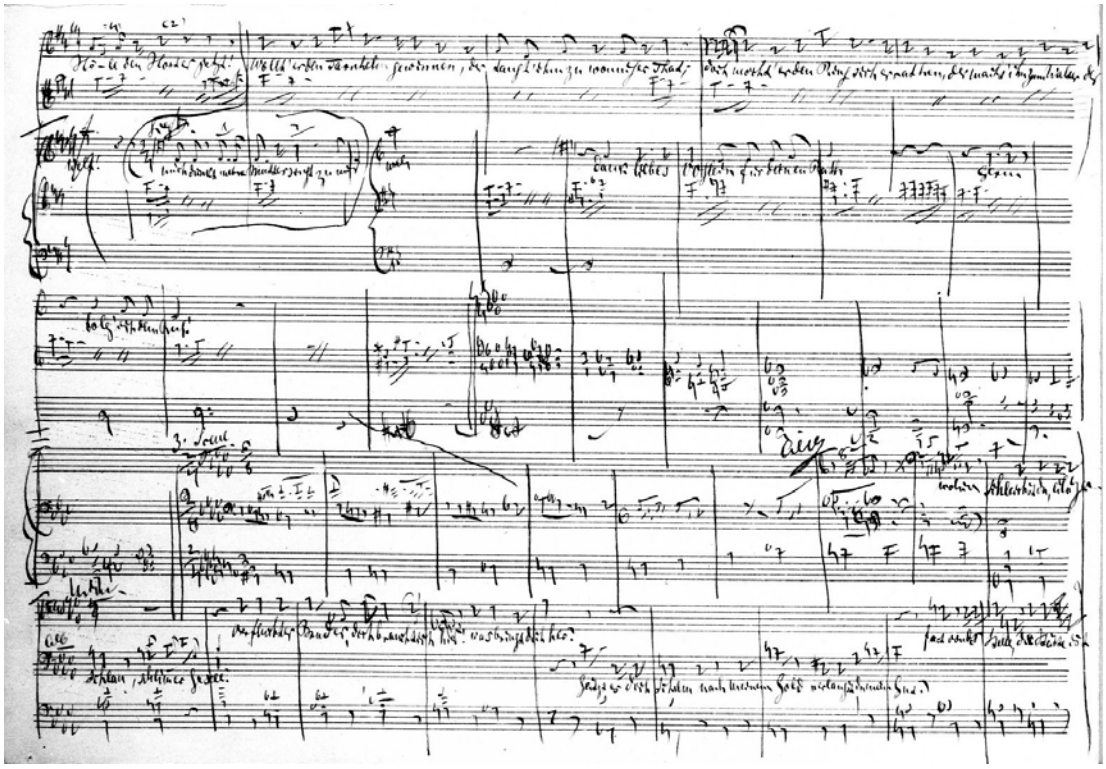

Plate 2

Kompositionsskizze, II, 10^{V}

(*Siegfried*, II, 1201–39)

This reproduction of the verso page of folio 10 of Act II displays the unexpectedly sober and unemotional approach to the composition of *Siegfried*: Wagner is setting the text to music that surrounds Siegfried's descent into Fafner's cave (the onset of Scene 3). There are barely any emendations and the sole 'irregularity' on the page is a neatly written insertion in the top left corner: a transcription is provided in Ex. 6. This neatness is all the more remarkable since Wagner never encountered more difficulties while working on a music drama.

Wagner allowed further inroads into the ideal of the intuitive artist. The fact that Wagner saw himself as a poet-musician also suggests a less intuitive approach to musical creation. In *Opera and Drama*, classifying Mozart's approach to music as utterly intuitive, Wagner explains that

> [t]he truly inspired artist throws himself into his artwork with enthusiastic carelessness, and only once it is achieved, once it presents itself in its reality to him, he wins, from his experience, the real power of reflection that universally protects him against delusions but this power loses him

> completely in the particular case, i.e. when enthusiasm urges him to turn to the artwork again. For *Mozart* […] nothing is more characteristic than the unconcerned randomness with which he set about his works […] that he instead approached the setting to music of each of the commissioned texts with the utmost impartiality, even regardless of whether this text to him, as a pure musician, be rewarding or not. He was so completely and totally a musician, and nothing else but a musician, that we can most convincingly and evidently infer from him the true and correct relationship between the musician and the poet.[793]

Wagner demonstrates that Mozart was the epitome of the non-experimenting type of musician. In Wagner's view, the pure musician is governed by a truly inspirational, in other words, non-strategic approach to musical creation. Admittedly, the wording that Wagner chooses when talking about reflection with reference to Mozart lacks some degree of clarity. One possible interpretation, however, is that composers like Mozart develop from work to work a store of experiences that has an impact on the way in which the inspiration is 'channelled' as the 'error rate'—as it were—is increasingly reduced as a result of an automatism. Wagner reiterates, however, that virtually no quote of reflection is present during the compositional process.

From a poet's point of view, Wagner argues, music—before him—was regarded as being incapable of adhering to a strategic dramatic conception that has been devised beforehand:

> In music, they [the poets] saw an apparently unreasonable art, a half wild and half foolish being that was unmanageable on the basis of true artistic education. And opera [they considered] a petty, incoherent edifice of form without any comprehensible sense of architecture whose arbitrary

[793] *OuD*, *GSD*, III, 246: 'Der naive, wirklich begeisterte Künstler stürzt sich mit enthusiastischer Sorglosigkeit in sein Kunstwerk, und erst wenn dieß fertig, wenn es in seiner Wirklichkeit sich ihm darstellt, gewinnt er, aus seinen Erfahrungen, die ächte [*sic*] Kraft der Reflexion, die ihn allgemeinhin vor Täuschungen bewahrt, im besonderen Falle, also da, wo er durch Begeisterung sich wieder zum Kunstwerke gedrängt fühlt, ihre Macht über ihn dennoch aber vollständig wieder verliert. Von *Mozart* ist […] Nichts charakteristischer, als die unbesorgte Wahllosigkeit, mit der er sich an seine Arbeiten machte […] daß er vielmehr mit größter Unbefangenheit an die Komposition jedes ihm aufgegebenen Operntextes sich machte, sogar unbekümmert darum, ob dieser Text für ihn, als reinen Musiker, dankbar sei oder nicht. […]. Er war so ganz und vollständig Musiker, und Nichts als Musiker, daß wir an ihm am allerersichtlichsten und überzeugendsten die einzig wahre und richtige Stellung des Musikers auch zum Dichter begreifen können.'

> connected individual parts could aim at anything but the consequence of a dramatic plan.[794]

Wagner realized at an early stage that the working out of the poem simultaneously with the music was bound to result in total confusion.[795] Therefore, he focused on conceiving and writing down the poem first. In *A Communication* (1851), Wagner explains that 'I was, however, a poet, who, with regard to the execution of his poems was aware of its potential *musical* expression in advance'.[796] When Wagner reached a point at which the dramatic subject failed to match his musical intentions he used to abandon the project altogether. He left a number of unfinished works behind.[797] In the case of the *Ring*, Werner Breig argues that Wagner reworked the entire poem in accordance with his musical intentions.[798]

The execution of a dramatic plan is another significant limitation to the freedom of musical creativity. In a peculiar way, Wagner denies himself the pleasure of becoming immersed in the composition of *Siegfried*. According to Cosima, the *Ring* compelled Wagner to restrict himself in musical terms: 'Then *Tristan*, and R. talks again of his need at that time to push himself to the limit musically, since in the *Nibelungen* the requirements of the drama frequently forced him to restrict the musical expression'.[799] We will examine some of the instances in the composition sketch of *Siegfried* in which Wagner releases the tension of his inspirational flow in the following chapter. Once more focussing on the issue of transposition, Cosima confirmed the detrimental effect that any kind of reflection had on Wagner's compositional process:

> R. said on the evening of 15 January that he had to redo everything he had done in the morning. He was seeking a tonality, and mechanical

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[794] *Über die Bestimmung*, 139: 'In der Musik lag Ihnen [den Dichtern] eine offenbar unvernünftige Kunst vor, ein halb wildes, halb läppisches Wesen, dem mit wahrhafter Kunstbildung nicht beizukommen war. Dazu in der Oper ein so kleinliches, unzusammenhängendes Formengebäude, ohne jeden erfaßlichen architektonischen Sinn, dessen willkürlich zusammengesetzte einzelne Theile auf Alles, nur nicht auf die Konsequenz eines dramatischen Planes abzielen konnte.'
[795] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 306.
[796] *Eine Mittheilung*, 316: 'Allein ich war ein Dichter, der des *musikalischen* Ausdrucksvermögens für die Ausführung seiner Dichtungen sich im Voraus bewußt war […]'.
[797] For a detailed survey of these works: Bernd Zegowitz, *Richard Wagners unvertonte Opern*, Ph.D. diss. Universität Heidelberg (Frankfurt, 2000); Isolde Vetter/Egon Voss (eds.), *Dokumente und Texte zu unvollendeten Bühnenwerken* (Mainz, 2005).
[798] Breig, 'The Musical Works', 448.
[799] *CWD*, II, 161; *CWT*, II, 188 (see n. 698).

> transposition was impossible for him! "I'm a fine musician", he laughed; only when he could create without reflection [*unreflektiert*] was everything possible for him, but when he calculates [*überlege*] how to bring a theme into another key, he confuses himself![800]

Cosima's entry seems to apply to transposition only which Wagner disliked if it made him leave the spheres of pure sound as he was convinced that 'I am such a dolt that I can't transpose; I always go by the sound and never by abstract knowledge. Perhaps that has sometimes been my salvation, keeping me from writing down something just because, according to this or that relationship, it ought to be so'.[801] Wagner's emphasis on pure inspiration in various statements needs to be contrasted with the following passage from one of his letters to Hanslick:

> Do not underestimate the power of reflection: the unconsciously created [*bewußtlos produzirte*] work of art belongs to periods which lie far away from our own: the artwork of the most advanced period of culture can be produced only by a process of conscious creation [*im Bewußtsein*].[802]

This unequivocal statement, written in 1847, eliminates any measure of 'subconsciousness' from the first compositional process, indeed stresses its absence from all creative processes.

These conflicting statements pertaining to the role of reflection make sense only if read in the light of the peculiarity that Wagner actively acquired more and more knowledge that enabled him to give the 'right' shape to the 'melodic moments'. In other words, Wagner taught himself the skills of musical expression. What applies to the compositions from *Holländer* onwards is that the 'melodic moments',

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[800] *CWD*, II, 18; *CWT*, II, 36 (13.1.1878): 'Am Abend sagt R., er müsse alles umarbeiten, was er am Morgen gemacht. Er habe eine Tonart gesucht, und das mechanische Transponieren sei ihm unmöglich! "Ich bin ein schöner Musiker", lacht er; nur wenn er unreflektiert schaffe, stünde ihm alles zu Gebote, wenn er aber überlege, wie ein Thema in eine andre Tonart zu bringen sei, verwirre er sich!'

[801] *CWD*, II, 36–7; *CWT*, II, 56 (11.3.1878): '[…] ich bin so ein Schafskopf, ich kann nicht transponieren, ich gehe immer nach dem Klang, niemals nach einem abstrakten Wissen. Vielleicht hat mich das vor manchem gehütet, wie nichts niederzuschreiben, weil, da es in diesem und diesem Verhältnis stünde, es doch ging."'

[802] *SB*, II, 538 (1.1.1847): 'Schlagen Sie die Kraft der Reflexion nicht zu gering an; das bewußtlos produzirte [*sic*] Kunstwerk gehört Perioden an, die von der unseren fern ab liegen: das Kunstwerk der höchsten Bildungsperiode kann nicht anders als im Bewußtsein produzirt werden.'

representing the ultimate vehicles of musical expression, have been composed on the basis of a rational, even strategic approach. In *A Communication*, Wagner offers the most insightful description of his own approach to the generation of musical expression. It comes as a surprise that Wagner paraphrases the 'new path' that he was pursuing from *Holländer* onwards as follows: 'First, I had to familiarize [*anzueignen*] myself with the skills of musical expression [*Fähigkeit des musikalischen Ausdruckes*] in the same way as one learns a language'.[803] It is noteworthy that Wagner equates being able to express something musically with a language. Although it has been severely challenged to view music as a language, Wagner seems to start from this proposition.[804]

The process of 'familiarizing' oneself with a technique strongly conflicts with assumptions of viewing the act of composition as an intuitive process. Wagner even felt the need to actively learn to express himself in music and the parallel that he draws with learning a language suggests that he believes in a pre-existing set of rules that governs musical expressivity and above all that it can actually be apprehended. In order to be able to express something that is comprehended by the feeling, Wagner had to familiarize himself with the rules of the corresponding method. Wagner could have pretended to have invented his language of musical expressivity himself but he explicitly refers to something that is naturally grown and stored away and something that needs to be revived and actively used which reiterate his *Urmusik* ideas.

Wagner goes on to stress the strategic approach that he needs to apply when hoping to be understood: 'Who does not yet hold completely a strange and unfamiliar language, must in all that he talks take the peculiarity of this language into account; in order to communicate comprehensively, he must constantly reflect on the expression itself and *what* he wishes to express he must deliberately calculate for himself'.[805] Wagner gradually restores some measure of intuition—a 'second immediacy' on the production side—by stating that the ultimate mastery of this 'language of musical expression' is arrived at when it has turned into an involuntary process that works like a 'mother tongue [*Muttersprache*], in which he [the composer] actually finds the right

[803] *Eine Mittheilung*, 317: 'Zuvor hatte ich die Fähigkeit des musikalischen Ausdruckes mir in der Weise anzueignen gehabt, wie man eine Sprache erlernt.'
[804] E.g. Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, 1.
[805] *Eine Mittheilung*, 317: 'Wer eine fremde, ungewohnte Sprache noch nicht vollkommen inne hat, muß in Allem, was er spricht, auf die Eigenheit dieser Sprache Rücksicht nehmen; um sich verständlich auszudrücken, muß er fortwährend auf diesen Ausdruck selbst bedacht sein, und *was* er sprechen will, absichtlich für ihn berechnen.'

expression involuntarily [*ohne es zu wollen*] and completely unconcerned of the intended expression'.[806] Wagner subsequently stresses that he masters the language of musical expression: 'I came to know it like a mother tongue'.[807] Wagner continued that '[w]ith the gained ability to speak freely in accordance with my involuntariness [*Unwillkür*] in the tonal language, I could, of course, only communicate in the spirit of this language'.[808] For Wagner, the acquired knowledge effectively replaced all other approaches to musical creation.

IV.3. The *Siegfried* sketches

A critical interrogation of the composition sketch of *Siegfried* provides unparalleled insights into the role of motifs as building blocks in the construction of meaning in Wagner's music dramas. Over a period of twenty years, interrupted by long periods dedicated to other projects, Wagner pondered the composition of *Siegfried* and produced sketches for the music drama whose composition tormented him in an unprecedented way. However, at a first glance, the body of surviving *Siegfried* manuscripts gives the overall impression of an unswerving and even fairly straightforward undertaking. The 'first draft of the full score' almost reads like a modern *Siegfried* score, albeit in Wagner's own immaculate handwriting. In the 'orchestral draft', which is in fact a second intermediate draft on at least three staves, Wagner further develops the musical conception that he has devised in the composition sketch by specifying its orchestral texture. To avoid the difficulties Wagner had encountered during the composition of *Walküre*, he decided to introduce this second sketching layer before proceeding to the full score.[809]

The significance of the Kompositionsskizze

Among the *Siegfried* autographs, the composition sketch—Wagner's own piano reduction of the music drama, as it were—sheds unique light on the motivic grid that

[806] *Ibid.*: '[…] Muttersprache, in der er, gänzlich unbekümmert um den Ausdruck, den richtigen Ausdruck ohne es zu wollen von selbst findet.'
[807] *Ibid.*: '[…] ich hatte sie jetzt inne wie eine Muttersprache.'
[808] *Ibid.*, 318: 'Mit der gewonnenen Fähigkeit, in der Tonsprache frei nach meiner Unwillkür zu sprechen, konnte ich natürlich auch nur im Geiste dieser Sprache mich mitzutheilen haben […]'.
[809] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 301.

governs the music drama. Wagner is known to have said that '"[t]he moment of joy is when the nebulous idea transmitted to my pencil suddenly stands before me, clear and plain. Orchestration, by comparison, already belongs too much to the world."'[810] Wagner removes the process of orchestrating his works from the realm of heaven-sent inspirations. As matters of the motifs' orchestration and the refinement of harmonic details are not recorded until the *Orchesterskizze*, Wagner, while sketching the *Kompositionsskizze*, is first of all concerned with the positioning of the motifs within the growing musical texture. It is therefore the aim of this subchapter to trace this process of motivic placement as the reasons why Wagner introduces changes to the positions of motifs illuminates crucial aspects of the psychology behind his motivic language.

In almost every respect, the composition sketch is the nucleus of *Siegfried*. Throughout the genesis of *Siegfried*, the sketch seems to stand in for the music drama in Wagner's mind and it is right to assume that it bundles all of its major constitutive ideas. The stage directions represent the major component of Wagner's dramatic conception missing from this first preliminary sketch.[811] Irrespective of the fact that, starting with *Siegfried*, Wagner also decided to carry the composition of each act through all stages from the composition sketch to the complete full score before moving on to the next, the constitutive role of the *Kompositionsskizze* remains intact.[812] It is right to say that the overall contribution of the 'orchestral draft' and the 'first draft of the score' to the genesis of the motivic network is less significant since, with a few notable exceptions, all major decisions concerning the 'melodic moments' have already been made in the *Kompositionsskizze*.

What is particularly conspicuous with regard to the composition sketch is the notational economy with which it has been drafted. The sparseness of the texture suggests that in this collection of sketches every musical detail is designed to advance the dramatic message of the work. Although Wagner makes use of all available space

[810] *CWD*, I, 319 (amended); *CWT*, I, 338 (7.1.1871): 'Freude machen mir meine Sachen nur bis zu der ersten Tintenausarbeitung, wenn der nebelhafte Bleistiftgedanke plötzlich klar und deutlich vor mir steht. Die Instrumentierung gehört schon zu sehr der Welt an.'

[811] It is fascinating to note that the stage directions are a seemingly natural ingredient of Wagner's sketching process from the *Orchesterskizze* onwards (that is not to say that there are not already stage directions in the poem): e.g. 'Siegfried's Waldvogel flattert dem Vordergrunde zu. Plötzlich hält er in seiner Richtung ein, flattert ängstlich hin u. her und verschwindet hastig dem Hintergrunde zu.' (*Orchesterskizze*, 99) is one of many directions that are carried through to the final version (*Siegfried*, III, 458–59, 463–65).

[812] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 301.

on a given page, the conception is boiled down to the irreducible core, that is to say, those components that Wagner deems absolutely vital in his future music drama. In view of this absolute reduction to the essence of the compositional means, the small number of emendations overall is highly surprising. This is all the more astonishing, since, according to Patrick McCreless, *Siegfried* called for three intense periods of artistic creation that were devoted to the poem's musical realization: the composition of Acts I and II and the first draft of the full score of Act I in 1856–57, the working out of the full score of Act II in 1864–65 and the composition and first draft of the full score of Act III in 1869–7l.[813] McCreless omits the first sketches that date from May 1851 although he acknowledges Bailey's findings with regard to these earliest *Siegfried* sketches.[814] He also reserves the creative period of the years 1864–65 for the completion of Act II, despite the fact that Wagner is known to have conceived crucial motivic ideas for Act III and its prelude during that time as well.[815]

Across the composition sketch there are contrasting appearances of Wagner's handwriting which attest to the significant stylistic discrepancies that scholarship has identified within *Siegfried*. The following reproductions of representative folios from all three acts of *Siegfried* reflect the varying degrees of the 'compositional hesitation', as Graham Hunt has put it, that Wagner experienced throughout a period of nearly two decades.[816]

[813] McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, 53.
[814] *Ibid*., 74.
[815] See n. 648 and the earliest sketch for the so-called '*Welterbschaftsmotiv*' [motif of world inheritance] (Ex. 24).
[816] Hunt, 'Of Refrains, Fairy-Tales, and Compositional Hesitation', 63.

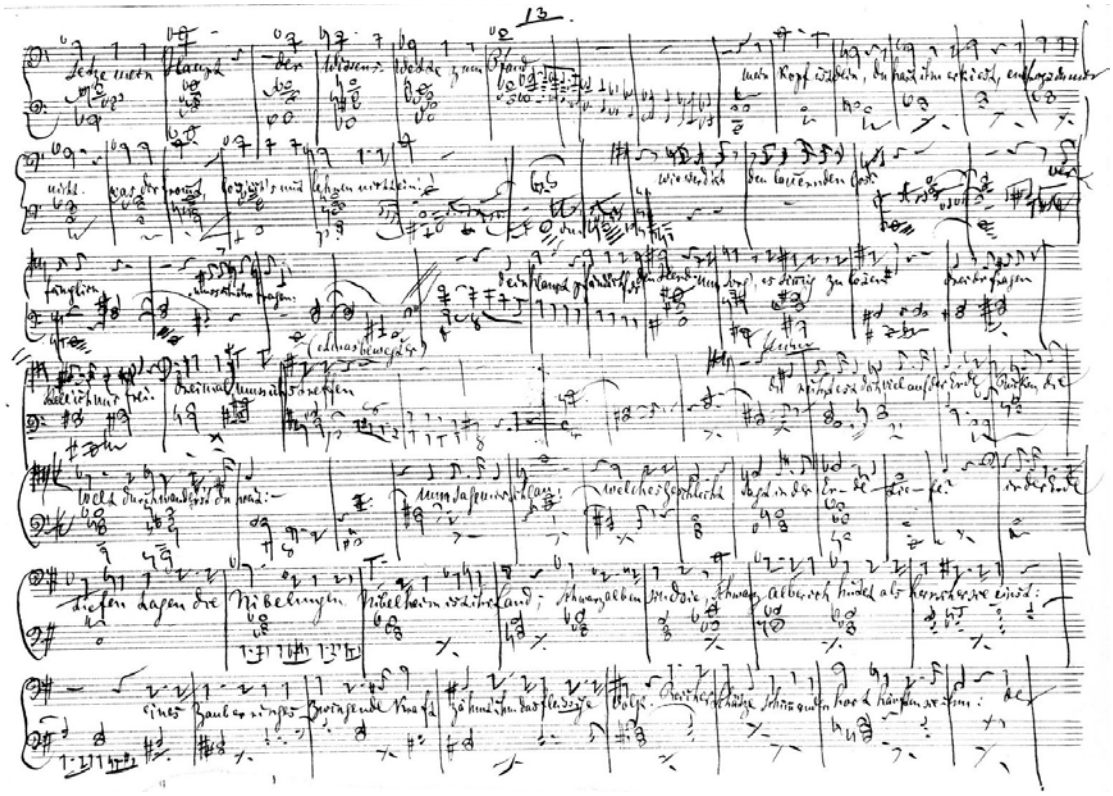


Plate 3

Kompositionsskizze, I, 13^{R}

(*Siegfried*, I, 1375–1453)

Giving in to the temptation of reading directly from notational appearance to affective state or mood, one might argue that Wagner's initial amusement [*Erheiterung*] in composing *Siegfried* manifests itself in the seeming lightheartedness with which the notes are fluently jotted down on this page from Act I (a sketch devoted to the riddle scene between Wanderer and Mime). There is an air of effortlessness about this sketch that appears somewhat unreal. This neatness seems to contribute to my claim that this sketch is preceded by a thorough investigation of the expressive possibilities of the 'melodic moments' involved of which no substantial traces have survived.

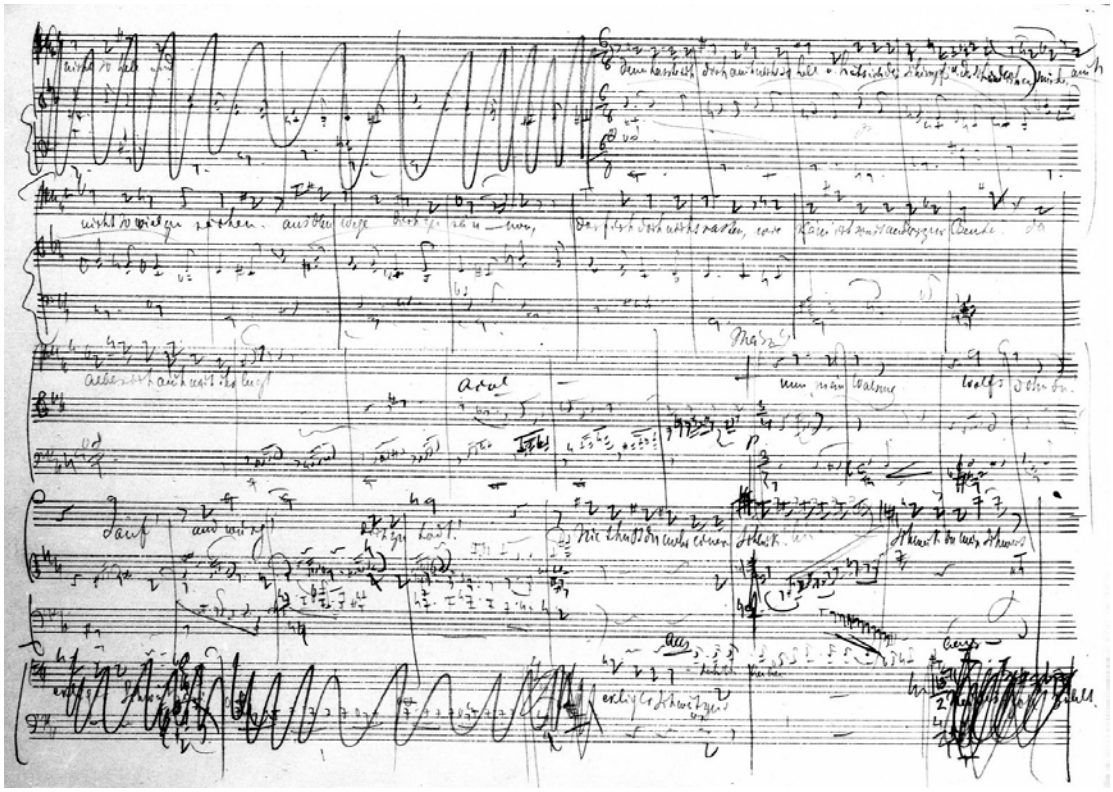
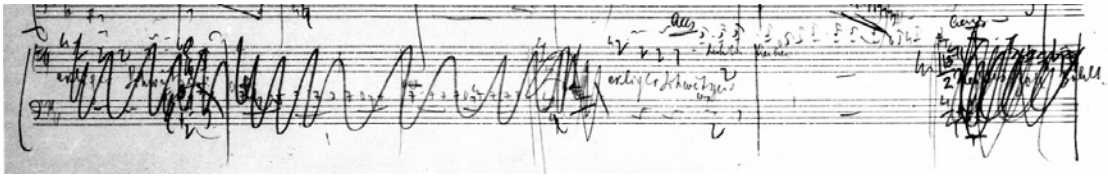


Plate 4

Kompositionsskizze, II, 15^{V}

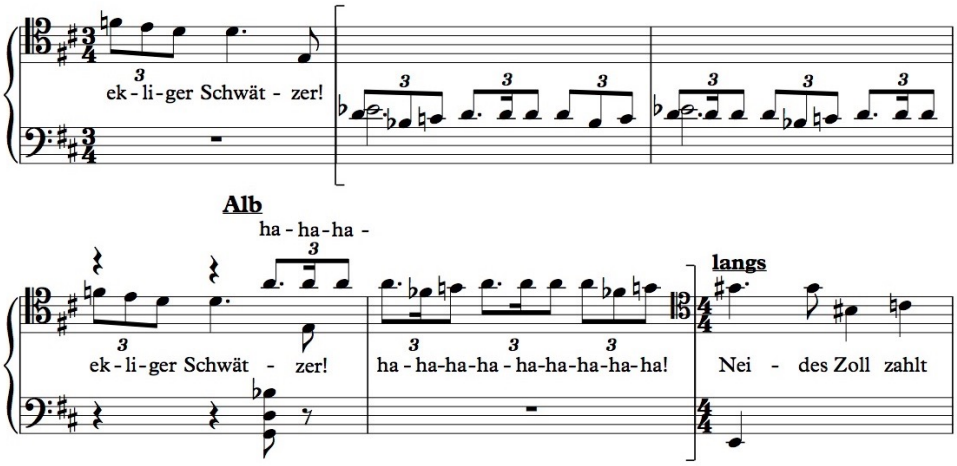
(*Siegfried*, II, 1607–38)

The seemingly carefree approach to the compositional task as seen on Plate 3 is clashing with the highly disorganized appearance of the sketching process towards the end of Act II as displayed on the above sketch (Plate 4). As the bottom system of this folio reveals (see my transcription of this system in Ex. 4), Wagner experiments with the passage in which Mime comes to death by Siegfried's hand. What is remarkable about this moment of 'compositional hesitation'—as it were—is Wagner's decision to reassign to a protagonist the so-called Nibelung rhythm that previously was confined to the orchestra in what seems to be the natal hour of Alberich's uncanny laughter that accompanies Mime's death. This reallocation of a motif to a singer in itself gives us an idea of how Wagner's motivic treatment allowed the tightening of the dramatic density of a given passage.



Kompositionsskizze, II, 15[V] (detail)

Transcription:



Ex. 4

It is striking to note the extent to which folios 12 to 15 of Act II reflect the disintegrative effects caused by Wagner's inner antagonism between two musical worlds, that of *Tristan* and that of *Siegfried*. These sketches enable the reader to recreate the uncanny psychological troubles in which Wagner must have found himself during this most distressed artistic period of his life. This particular segment of the composition sketch remained in pencil although even material that was immediately rejected by Wagner has usually been traced over in ink. Wagner must have instructed Mathilde Wesendonck to skip this selection of sketches in her tracing endeavours for fear of fixing his ideas prematurely, which in itself underlines Wagner's compositional insecurity of the time.

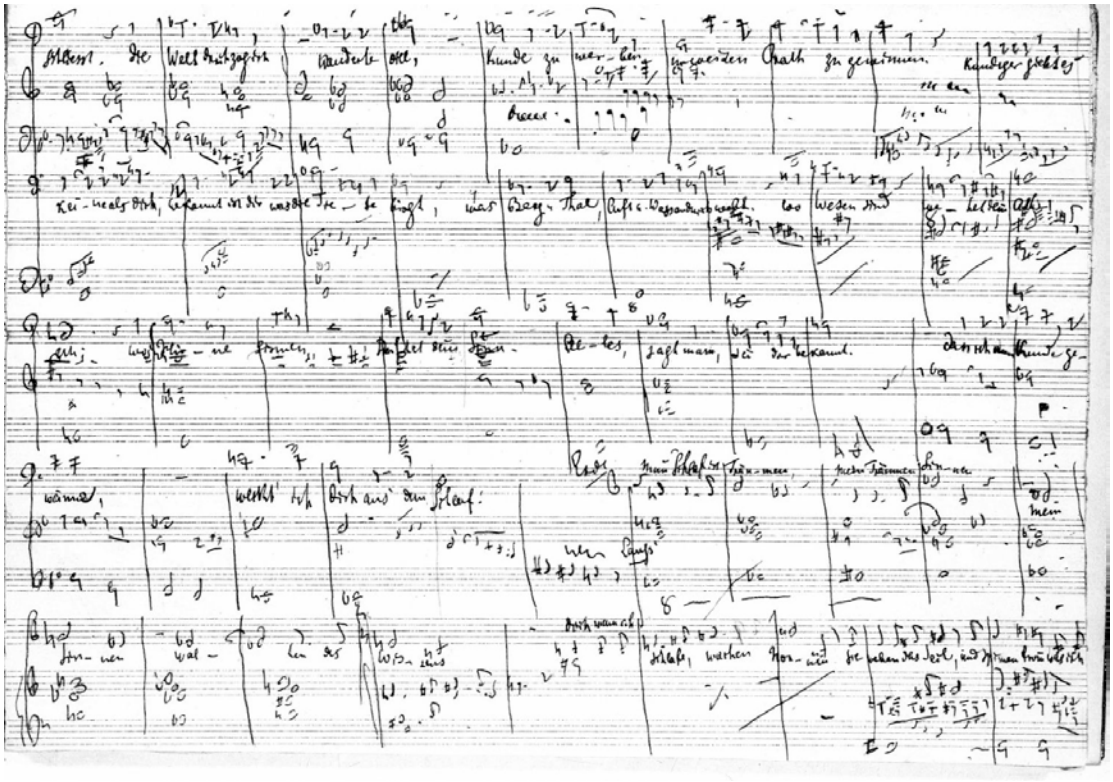
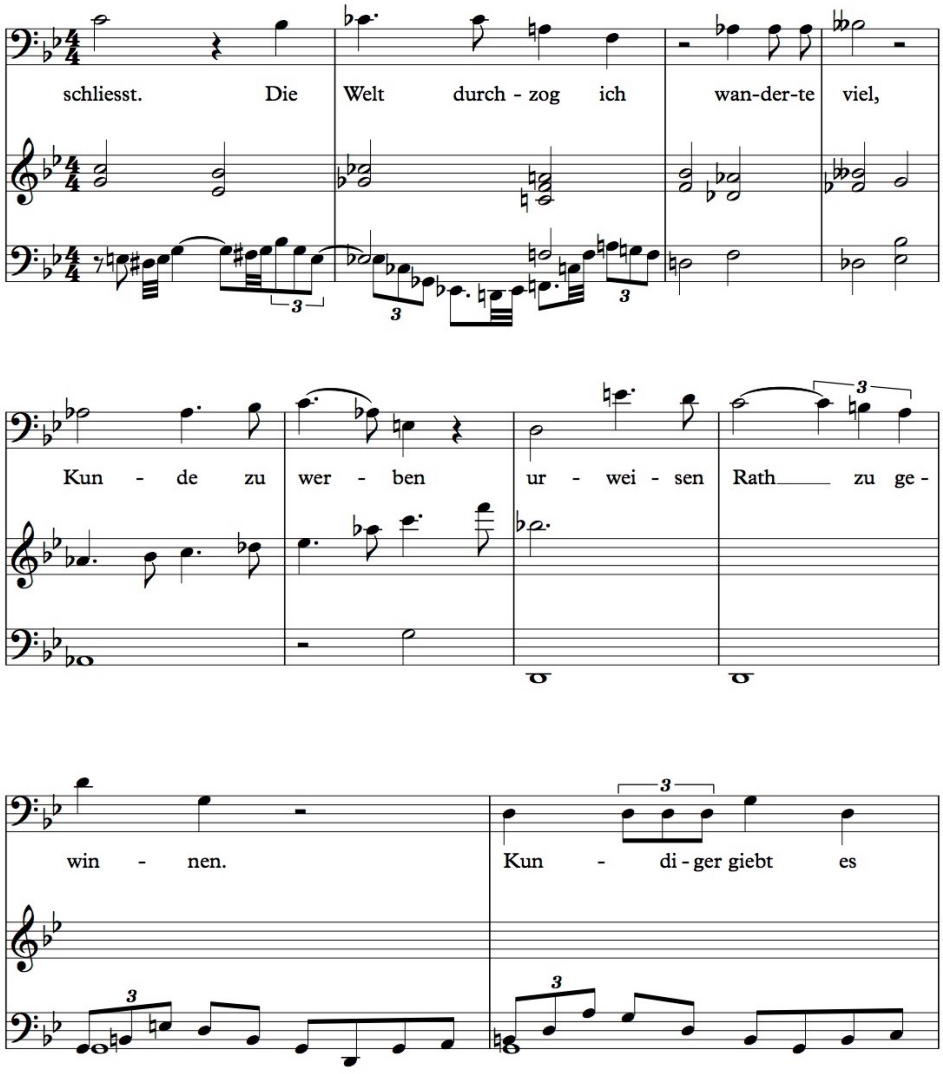


Plate 5

Kompositionsskizze, III, 2^{V}

(*Siegfried*, III, 151–203)

Transcription of the top system:



Ex. 5

This Act III sketch gives an idea of the dichotomy between the highest degree of musical density experienced in the *Ring* so far and the even smaller amount of information on a given sketch, which is characteristic of the sketches begun in 1869. What can also be seen from this particular folio is an even greater command of the strategic forces that make up Wagner's musical language. The comparison of the outer appearance of these three sketches alone reveals that the *Kompositionsskizze* embraces all the different phases of artistic creation which were required for *Siegfried*. In fact, the significant degree of discontinuity that is reflected in this

manuscript turns this oblong booklet into the most diverse record of some of the greater artistic turbulences of Wagner's life.

The three elements providing the notational set-up for a 'melodic moment'

In its crudest terms, the composition sketch of *Siegfried* conveys the impression of an *Arienbuch* [book of arias] that is enriched with 'melodic moments' and which are clustered around the vocal line in specific ways. In visual terms, wherever there is an accumulation of notes—a notational event that attracts the eye—one is dealing with a motif or its related phenomena. The accompanying bass line is provided in the most economic fashion, usually reduced to a small number of harmonically defining notes at the beginning of each bar. Wagner rarely writes full chords, giving the lowest stave an overall impression of a figured bass line.[817] The following folio—Wagner is sketching the Wanderer-Mime encounter in Act I immediately before the riddle scene—is representative of these observations:

[817] Frequently, Wagner makes use of a '*Faulenzer*' [slacker] which indicates the repetition of entire bars or some information thereof (e.g. bar 15, towards the centre of the folio).

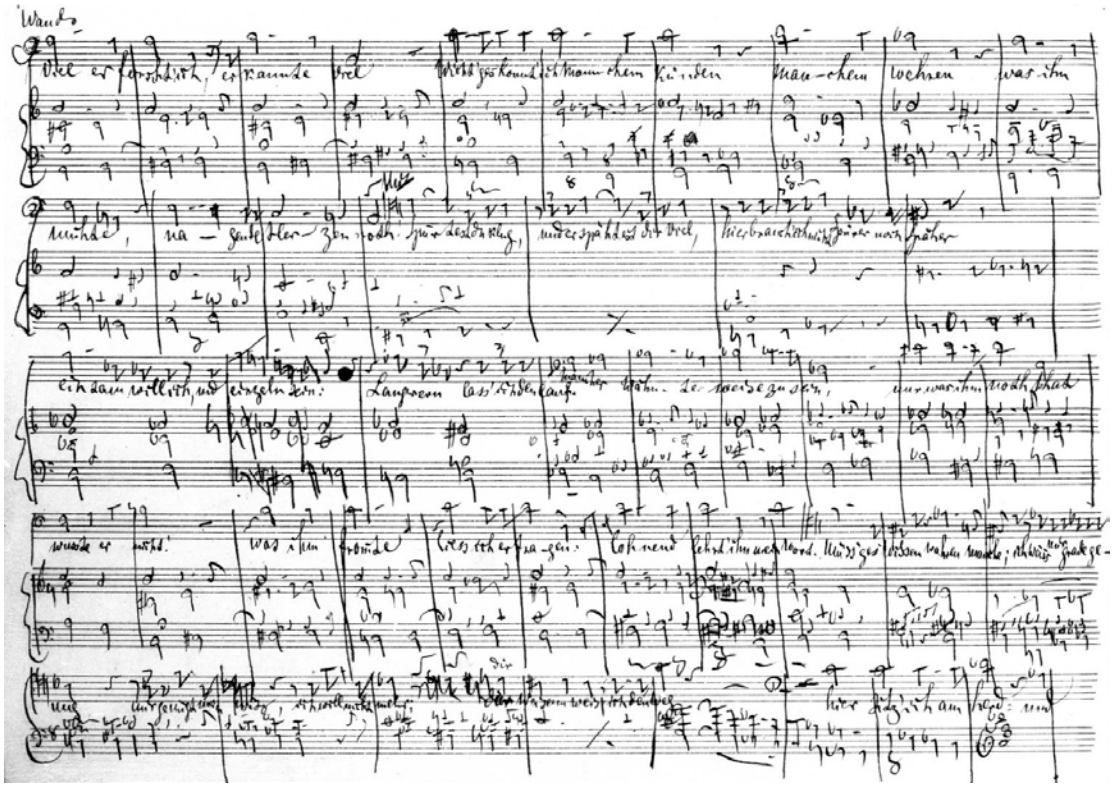


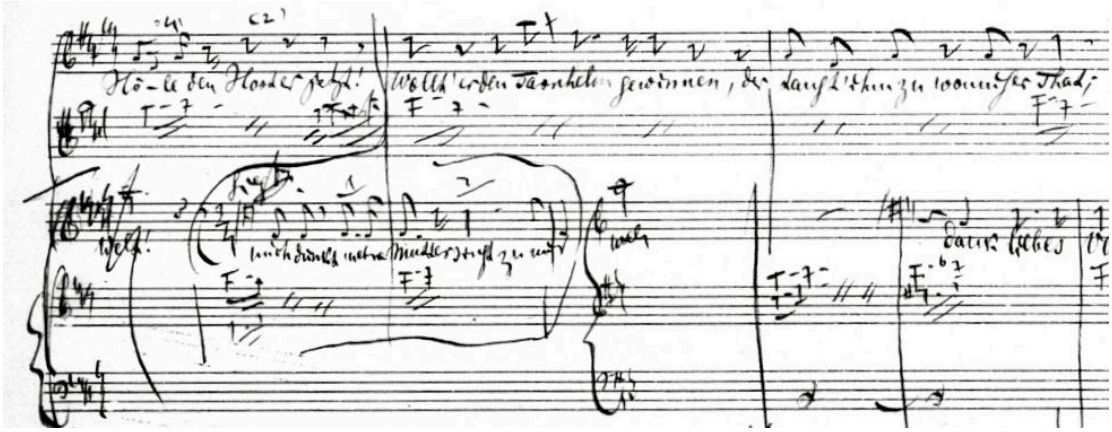
Plate 6

Kompositionsskizze, I, 12[V]

(*Siegfried*, I, 1330–74)

The text represents the element that secures a sense of unbroken continuity in this collection of sketches. Since the notational distance between two bar lines is in general determined by the words that Wagner has written in, one is right to assume that he starts with filling in the text into a given bar as a first step. There are just a few instances in which the words are curtailed to fit the end of a bar. Several insertions conflict with a chronological reading of this manuscript. The most secure way to trace the chronology of the sketch under these circumstances is the continuity provided by the poem. In fact, the text is inscribed into the composition sketch with an unreal naturalness. In general, when starting to set the *Siegfried* poem to music, Wagner adopted the text almost unchanged. The following instance in which Wagner inserts and subsequently rejects a phrase that was part of the prose sketch of *Der junge Siegfried* but was dropped in the verse text of *Siegfried* is exceptional: between the phrases ‘O, fänd’ in der Höhle den Hort er jetzt’ [‘Oh, could he now find the hoard in the cave’] and ‘Wollt’ er den Tarnhelm gewinnen, der taugt’ ihm zu wonniger That’ [‘There is the Tarnhelm, which will serve him for glorious deeds’] (*Siegfried*, II,

1200–3), sung by the Woodbird, Wagner inserts Siegfried's following phrase: 'Mich dünkt meine Mutter singt zu mir' ['It appears as if my mother were singing to me'], complete with the vocal line.[818] Wagner, during the act of composing, seems to have had second thoughts with regard to this omission in the libretto.

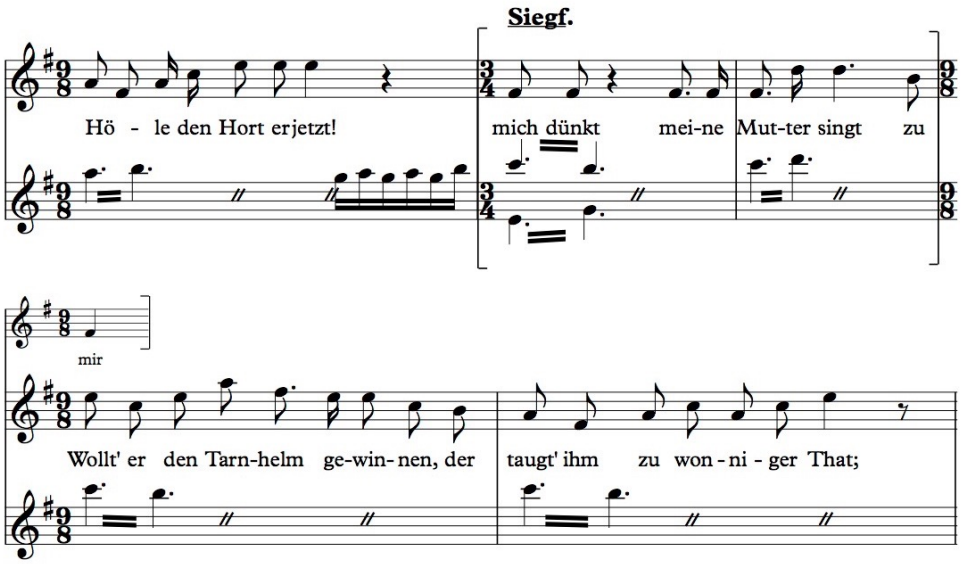


Kompositionsskizze, II, 10^{V} (detail)

(*Siegfried*, II, 1201–3 [subsequently amended])

[818] The information that is provided in brackets relates to the act and the bar numbers in which the passage can be found in the final version. There is only one *Siegfried* edition, volumes 12/I–III of the integral Wagner edition by Schott that gives bar numbers (Richard Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen. Zweiter Tag. Siegfried: WWV 86 c*, ed. Klaus Döge, Annette Oppermann, Egon Voss and Carl Dahlhaus, 3 vols. (Mainz, 2006–14)). The translations of all passages from the *Ring* libretto are taken from Richard Wagner, *The Ring of the Nibelung. German Text with English Translation*, trans. Andrew Porter (London, 1981).

Transcription:



Ex. 6[819]

This textual insertion and its concomitant vocal line are carried over to the 'orchestral draft' but subsequently crossed out without any obvious musical reason. Although Wagner saw the Woodbird, as Westernhagen has identified, as 'Sieglinde's maternal soul', he ultimately rejects this phrase. This deleted passage would have linked Sieglinde to the Woodbird because these particular words were set to the characteristic rhythm found in the motif that is commonly attributed to the Woodbird. Such an instance of a deliberate reduction of the motivic density invites speculation about issues of motivic economy.

Over the course of this investigation one central aspect of the *Gefühlsverständnis* becomes apparent: the set of guidelines subsumed under what I call 'motivic economy'. Wagner makes provision for a balanced distribution of the 'melodic moments' in order not to overstrain the perceptive capacity of the spectator. Wagner was aware of the risk that a motivic overload could pose to the fragile nexus of the *Gefühlsverständnis*. During the composition of *Siegfried*, Act III, Cosima reports that Wagner expressed concerns about having violated considerations of motivic economy as he believed to have 'gone too far in the proliferation of his

[819] I provide my own transcription of this passage as Westernhagen misread the placement of the crotchet in the first bar of the insertion (*The Forging of the 'Ring'*, 156, ex. 29).

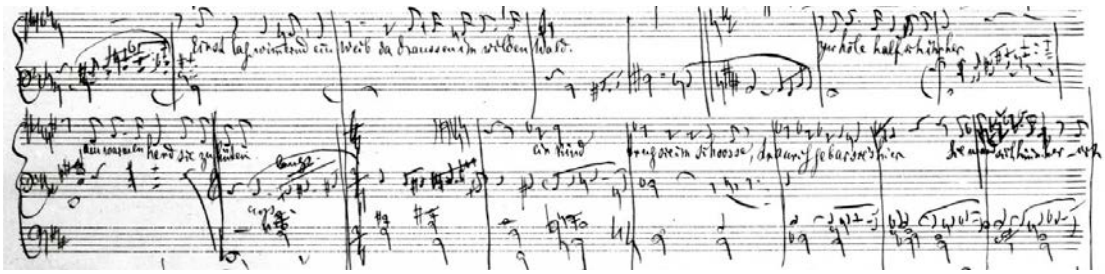
motifs'.[820] What seems to be absent from the *Ring* are technical transmutations of the motifs, such as retrograde or mirrored representations of motifs as they would not be perceivable by the 'feeling'. Flaws in Wagner's polyphonic writing were perceived by Carl Nielsen, for instance, who emphasized that polyphony 'through Wagner […] has flattened out into a characterless quasi-contrapuntalism which expresses nothing other than sultry sentimentality or empty, storming passion'.[821] In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner cautions against 'confusing multiplicity' and recommends the presentation of the motifs 'in a vividly ordered [*plastisch zu ordnender*] and necessarily limited fashion that guarantees easy digest'.[822] Upon hearing Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet* Wagner initially praised 'the constantly lucid [*übersichtliche*] alternation of distinct motifs'.[823] Porges notes that '[i]n Wagner the manifold interweaving of motives of reminiscence or premonition should always be treated as subordinate to the events actually happening'.[824] We also learn from Porges's account that 'the characteristic profile of each motive should be no less sharply etched' despite Wagner expecting a substantial reduction of volume and forte accents in the Wanderer-Erda encounter, for instance.[825] From the study of the *Siegfried Kompositionsskizze* we might be able to assess the factual importance that Wagner ascribed to yet another compositional limitation device.

The vocal line is the second component of Wagner's compositional routine that he is filling in. This first musical step in the realization of the poem is written as if it was conceived in one single outpouring. John Deathridge also observes the amazing fluency with which the text is set in the other *Kompositionsskizzen* for the *Ring*.[826] The decision to allow enough space for the text so as to ensure legibility has an influence on the spacing of the notes of the vocal line. Wagner draws the bar lines without the use of a ruler, which speeds up the notational process. Since those instances in which the motif is sung by the character on stage—potentially instances of 'verse melody'—are decidedly in the minority, three components of the sketches

[820] *CWD*, I, 56 (amended); *CWT*, I, 70 (12.3.1869): '[…] er sei in der Verzweigung der Motive zu weit gegangen.'
[821] Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (Woodbridge, 2010), 198.
[822] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 201: '[…] nicht in verwirrender Vielheit, sondern in plastisch zu ordnender, für leichte Übersicht nothwendig bedingter, geringerer Zahl verwendet.'
[823] *Über Franz Liszt's Symphonische Dichtungen*, 193–94: '[…] (d. h. der konsequent übersichtliche Wechsel bestimmter Motive) […]'.
[824] Porges, *Wagner Rehearsing the 'Ring'*, 102.
[825] *Ibid*.
[826] Deathridge, 'Wagner's Sketches for the "Ring"', 386.

provide the spatial setting for the usual occurrence of 'melodic moments': the vocal line, the bass line and the bar lines. Whereas the vocal line in conjunction with the bass line remains largely unaltered over the course of the different layers of the sketching process, Wagner's motivic network passes through several stages of scrutiny, especially with regard to the placement of the motifs (the barline, so to speak). Since Wagner revisits many decisions that he has made with reference to the motifs, we are able to speculate about the possible reasons as inscribed into these changes.

There are also significant decisions with reference to the 'melodic moments' that Wagner needs to make before being able to write down the vocal line. What is surprising in the *Siegfried Kompositionsskizze* is Wagner's decision to limit the lion's share of this sketch to just two-stave systems. Despite the musical intricacies of the Siegfried-Fafner encounter, for instance, Wagner contents himself with only two staves for its conception. This is a highly important ex-ante decision as Wagner very rarely adds a further stave to an already begun two-stave system. It seems as if Wagner exclusively switches to a three-stave system when he anticipates a musical event that is generated by motivic material. Tarasti argues in his semiotic account of Wagner's leitmotivic signification that the composer, when working on the early parts of the *Ring* used to sketch the melodic line with the text in its entirety before going on to place the notes of the supporting harmonies on another stave.[827] This observation does not seem to be valid for *Siegfried*, as Wagner inserts occasional three-stave systems 'on the go' as is shown in the following detail:

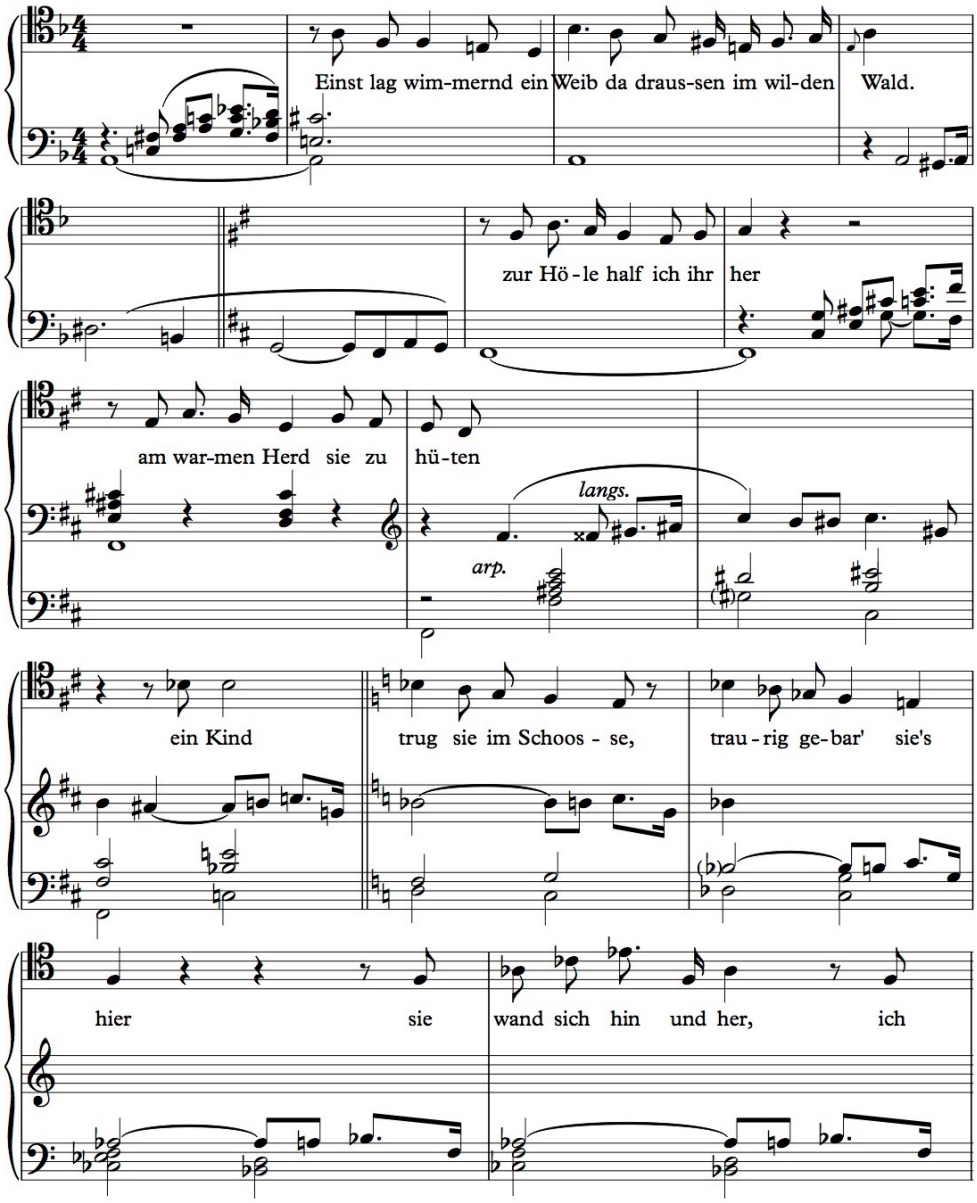


Kompositionsskizze, I, 8^{V} (detail)

(*Siegfried*, I, 973–88)

[827] Tarasti, *Semiotics of Classical Music*, 236.

Transcription:



Ex. 7

In the sketch below (Plate 7) Wagner introduces a third stave after a series of four two-stave systems to accommodate the motivic material that is sounded at the end of the phrase ‘hast du das Fürchten gelernt’ [‘tell me if fear has been learned’] (*Siegfried*, II, 1427–28) (transcription in Ex. 8). This instance shows that Wagner very

carefully plans ahead which dramatic moment merits a more elaborate, i.e. motivically enriched, conception:

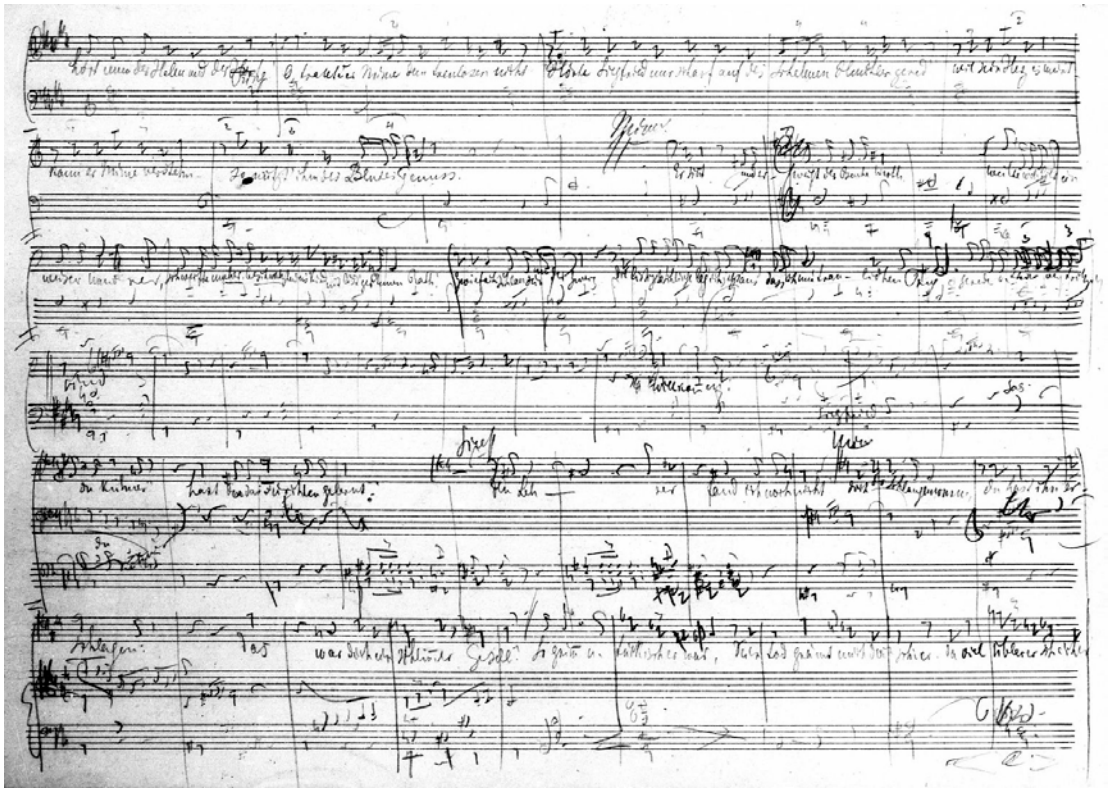
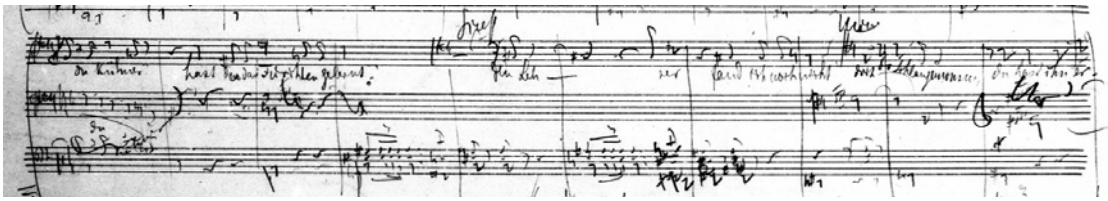


Plate 7

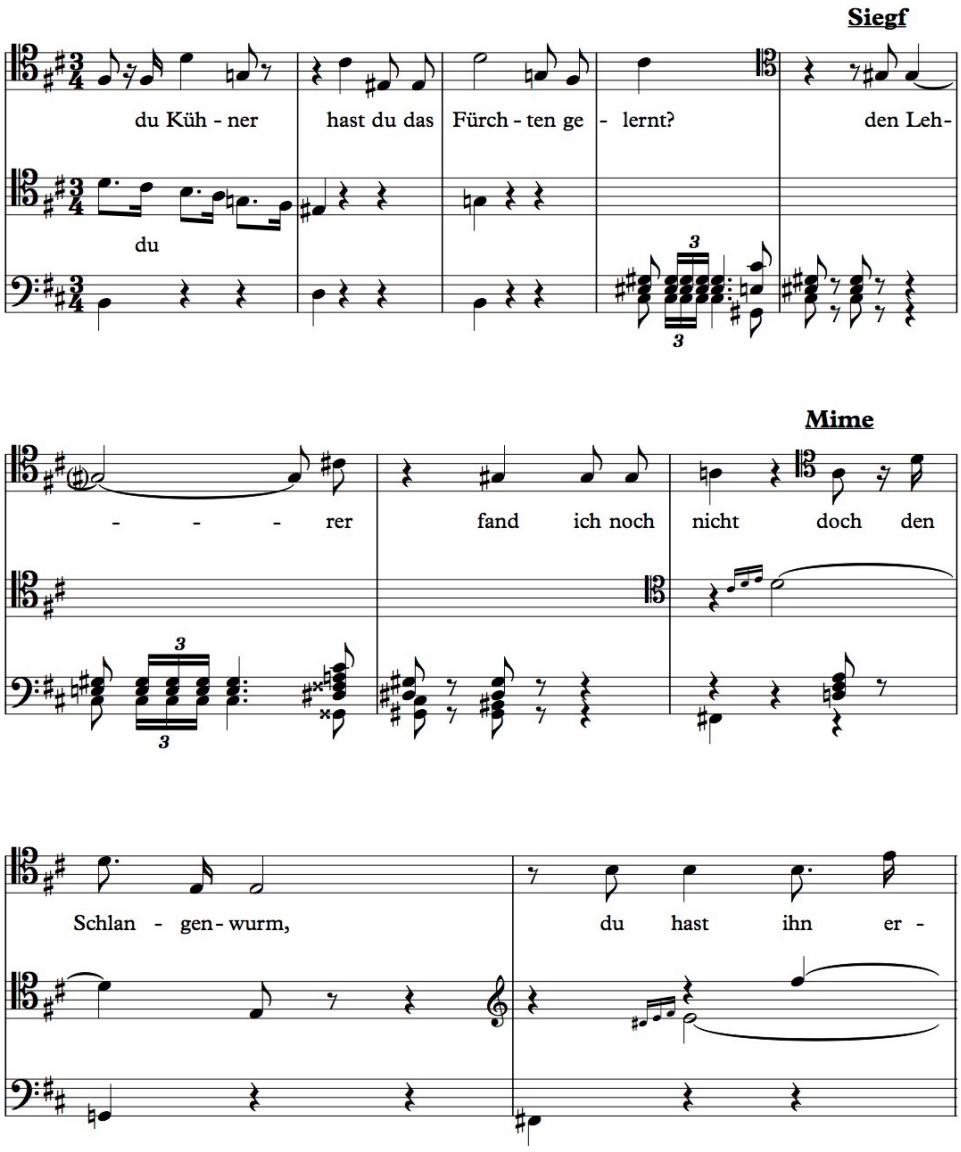
Kompositionsskizze, II, 12^{V}

(*Siegfried*, II, 1387–1442)



Kompositionsskizze, II, 12^{V} (detail)

Transcription:



Ex. 8

The archetypes of motivic commentary

The most astonishing fact that is revealed by the *Siegfried* composition sketch is Wagner's differentiation between several archetypes of motivic commentary. After having established the notational set-up for the occurrence of a motif, I will now turn to the polarity between motivic and non-motivic material. Wagner's compositional fabric, as can be clearly seen from the *Kompositionsskizze* of *Siegfried*, is made of

three principal musical components that in different constellations serve to knit a web of semantic meaning: the vocal line, the motivic inventory and the non-motivic material. As mentioned above, Wagner declared in 1854 that 'there is scarcely a bar in the orchestra which does not develop out of preceding motifs'. The compositional practice, however, shows that Wagner also relies on non-motivic material. Although the semantic web is further corroborated over the course of subsequent compositional stages, a number of commentary types remain intact and operative throughout. Motifs can circulate freely on all auditory planes: in Wagner's musico-dramatic language motivic and non-motivic material is not confined to either the vocal line or the orchestra. From this it follows that it seems even right to boil down Wagner's musical style to the interaction of motivic and non-motivic segments. This dichotomy is blurred by the peculiarity that Wagner does not seem to recognize a motif in the vocal line as a 'melodic moment' proper, as we shall see in the next subchapter.

In Wagner's theory, different nuances of meaning are conveyed depending on the occurrence of either of the two building blocks in the vocal line or across the orchestral texture. It is the interplay of these three elements that is characterized by what could be described as competition for importance, which engenders different gradations of semantic meaning. This polarity yields four possible combinations in Wagner's music dramas which operate on distinctly different semantic levels:

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Vocal line:	motivic	motivic	non-motivic	non-motivic
Orchestra:	non-motivic	motivic	motivic	non-motivic

Table 1

As Wagner seems to ascribe a hierarchy to these four scenarios, I aim to order them in accordance with Wagner's theoretical explications. Wagner avoids constellation (b) as conflicting motivic statements that occur at the same time in the vocal line and in the orchestra contravene considerations of motivic economy. This is not to say that different motifs cannot overlap in the orchestra—numerous instances in *Siegfried,* Act III bear witness to such motivic layering and density.

The semantic significance of the absence of motifs: constellation (d)

At first sight, it may seem odd to discuss Wagner's prime semantic device, the concept of *Versmelodie*, under the heading of absent motifs. However, Wagner's understanding of the role of motifs during 'verse melody' appears ambiguous. There are two statements in *Opera and Drama* which give rise to concerns about the motifs' status during '*Versmelodie*'. Wagner explains that '[i]n-between [*zwischen*] them [the melodic moments], as presentiment and reminiscence, stands the verse melody' and '[t]hese referential moments, which fill out the emotional expression [*Momente beziehungsvoller Ergänzung des Gefühlsausdruckes*], withdraw [*treten zurück*] into the background as soon as the individual is at one with itself within and thus advances to the fullest expression of the verse melody'.[828] These passages strikingly suggest the absence of motifs during a 'verse-melodic' episode. The 'melodic moment' is designed either to prepare the occurrence of *Versmelodie*—in terms of a 'motif of presentiment'—or it is the derivative of this contact point—a 'motif of reminiscence'—but Wagner seems to deny the concurrent motifs, irrespective of their occurrence in the vocal line or the orchestra, the status of a 'melodic moment' during this contact.

The first possible answer to this conundrum is that Wagner chooses not to recognize the occurrence of what we understand as a 'melodic moment' in the vocal line as a motivic statement proper. Indeed, Wagner seems to look upon this event in an unexpected way. There is evidence of this in *Opera and Drama*, in which Wagner categorically distinguishes between the voice and the orchestra. He explains that 'the instrumental orchestra is not only in its ability to express, but certainly also in its *timbre* something that is quite distinctive and different from the body of vocal notes [*Vokaltonmasse*]'.[829] He dismisses the melodies of 'absolute' musicians since '[t]he listener felt this disparity quite involuntarily: he did not understand the [absolute]

[828] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 200: 'Zwischen ihnen, als Ahnung und Erinnerung, steht die Versmelodie […]' and 'Diese Momente beziehungsvoller Ergänzung des Gefühlsaudruckes treten zurück, sobald das mit sich ganz einige handelnde Individuum zum vollsten Ausdrucke der Versmelodie selbst schreitet […]' (translation of the second quotation from Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 134).
[829] *Ibid*., 168: '[…] das Instrumentalorchester nicht nur in seinem Ausdrucksvermögen, sondern ganz bestimmt auch in seiner *Klangfarbe* ein von der Vokaltonmasse durchaus Unterschiedenes, Anderes ist.'

melody of the singer until […] he heard it performed by instruments only'.[830] Such reasoning goes hand in hand with Wagner's assertion that in conventional opera the singing voice was wrongly considered a peculiar instrument of the orchestra.[831] In Wagner's hands, the vocal line is turned into an independent entity as it is made 'emotionally comprehensible' in its own right. Wagner makes clear that 'we have to consider the orchestra as an independent element that is in itself distinct from verse melody'.[832] A motivic occurrence in the vocal line is therefore treated as separate from one occurring in the orchestra.

During the *Versmelodie*, there is in any case a motif to be found in the orchestra during a 'verse-melodic' passage. It seems difficult to reconcile this datum with Wagner's statements that suggest the absence of motifs. Wagner, however, points out that during an episode of *Versmelodie,* 'the orchestra merely supports it [*dann trägt das Orchester diese nur noch*] in accordance with its elucidating abilities, in order to—whenever the coloured expression of verse melody descends again to mere sounding verbal phrase [*zur nur tönenden Wortphrase herabsenkt*]—supplement afresh the general emotional expression by presentimental reminiscences'.[833] This passage clearly suggests that no motif is required during *Versmelodie* as the 'emotional comprehensibility' of this passage is already secured by other means. Since Wagner made provision for the emotionalization of the thought that is being expressed by the mechanisms that turn the verbal language into melody—i.e. *Versmelodie*—there is no need for motivic support as the conditions enabling the *Gefühlsverständnis* are catered for in the vocal line. This means that Wagner sees no reason to consider the mere orchestral doubling of the vocal line a motivic statement.

Thus, in a technical sense the motifs are not present during the heightened expression as conveyed through *Versmelodie*. Wagner is indeed envisioning the motifs as *flanking* the 'verse melody'. These instances must therefore be subsumed under (d)—which denotes the absence of motifs in the vocal and orchestral lines. There is no question that in Wagner's order of priority the 'verse melody' represents

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[830] *Ibid*., 169: 'Der Zuhörer empfand dieses Misverhältnis [*sic*] ganz unwillkürlich: er verstand die [absolute] Melodie des Sängers nicht eher, als bis er sie […] nur noch von Instrumenten vorgetragen zu Gehör bekam.'
[831] *Ibid*., 168.
[832] *Ibid*., 173: '[…] das Orchester als ein selbständiges, an sich von jener Versmelodie unterschiedenes Element zu betrachten.'
[833] *Ibid*., 200: '[…] dann trägt das Orchester diese nur noch nach seinem verdeutlichenden Vermögen, um, wenn der farbige Ausdruck der Versmelodie sich wieder zur nur tönenden Wortphrase herabsenkt, von neuem durch ahnungsvolle Erinnerungen den allgemeinen Gefühlsausdruck zu ergänzen […]'.

the prime semantic device as Wagner clarifies that the 'verse melody' is '[m]ore significant and ranks higher than the absolute melody of music'.[834] It is Wagner's foremost structural tool in which all required components of the drama are present. It is all the more surprising, that the motifs do not form part of this amalgamation in his view.

At the other end of the spectrum are those passages in which no motivic material—not even a quasi-motif as just discussed—is being heard. These instances appear as moments of absolute music which also qualify as an instance of combination (d). Since Wagner appears to have nothing but contempt for the practices of 'absolute' musicians for reasons of insufficient significatory powers, we need to assess the role of those passages in which neither motif nor *Versmelodie* is present. It seems as though the 'absolute' orchestral melody is not entirely eliminated from Wagner's artwork of the future. In *Wagners Konzeption*, Dahlhaus advances arguments in favour of an alternation between *Orchestermelodie* and *Versmelodie* and their fusion to culminate in a *Gesamtmelodie* [total melody].[835] He is persuaded that in Wagner there is either 'declamation that is elevated into melody and made expressive through the instrumental motifs' or alternatively 'the network of motifs is turned by way of declamation and gesture from a symphonic into a symphonic dramatic musical texture'.[836]

The term '*Gesamtmelodie*' used by Dahlhaus is absent from both *Opera and Drama* (1851) and *Music of the Future* (1861). By emphasizing the intended fusion of 'verse melody' and 'orchestral melody' into an amalgamation that bears resemblance to the notion of '*unendliche Melodie*' [infinite melody], Dahlhaus aims to give further reasons why he believes that Wagner's musical practice is effectively based on *Music of the Future* instead of *Opera and Drama*.[837] Wagner's approach as expounded in *Music of the Future* is governed by the idea of a seamless flow of dramatic information that is set in motion. According to this essay, Wagner's 'primary aim is to compel the public to focus its attention upon the dramatic action so closely that it is never for a moment lost sight of: all the musical elaboration must be perceived simply

[834] *Ibid*., 189: 'Zugleich ist sie aber auch mehr und steht höher als […] die absolute Melodie der Musik.'
[835] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 105.
[836] *Ibid*.
[837] *Ibid*., 100.

as the presentation of this action'.[838] This seamless quality is also emphasized in *Opera and Drama* where Wagner illustrates that '[t]he mere absolute musical embellishments of lowered [*gesenkter*] or preparatory situations […] annihilates the unity of expression, and leads the focus of the ear on the manifestation of music as something expressed instead of expression in itself'.[839] However, Wagner also makes provision for musical material that breaks Dahlhaus's proposed alternation, as it is indeed music that is still waiting for its 'insemination' through the 'poetic intent'. Wagner explains that 'where gesture remains inactive and the actor's melodic speech is entirely silent,—at a point at which the drama [is] preparing its future course out of inner moods as yet unconditioned [*unausgesprochen*]', the orchestra is preparing an '*Ahnung*' that is still distinct from 'motifs of presentiment'.[840] There is no doubt that this highest degree of *Unbestimmtheit* [indeterminacy] ranks at the very bottom of Wagner's semantic hierarchy.

The character's awareness of a motif: combination (a)

The role of the *Gefühlswegweiser* remains predominantly that of a commentary irrespective of the fact that the dramatic characters occasionally sing 'melodic moments'. The occurrence of a motif in the vocal line—combination (a) [Table 1]—also raises a number of problematic issues. The question arises how an extra-diegetic phenomenon, to use a cinematic term, is allowed to transcend into the vocal line that seems reserved for the mimetic realm of the music drama. Those motifs that occur within the vocal line need to be evaluated against the background of Wagner's notion of *Versmelodie*. We have just seen that the fact that a character sings a motif fails to represent a proper motivic statement. We have also addressed the complex issue that Wagner considers the motifs as operating in between instances of 'verse melody'.

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[838] *TWE*, 44; *Zukunftsmusik*, 136: 'Meine Absicht ist demnach, das Publikum zu allererst an die dramatische Aktion selbst zu fesseln, und zwar in der Weise, daß es diese keinen Augenblick aus dem Auge zu verlieren genöthigt ist, im Gegentheil aller musikalische Schmuck ihm zunächst nur ein Darstellungsmittel dieser Handlung zu sein scheinst.'

[839] *OuD, GSD*, IV, 200: 'Die bloße absolute musikalische Ausschmückung gesenkter oder vorbereitender Situationen […] hebt die Einheit des Ausdruckes vollständig auf, und wirft die Theilnahme des Gehöres auf die Kundgebung der Musik – nicht mehr als Ausdruck, sondern gewissermaßen als Ausgedrücktes.'

[840] *Ibid*., 186: '[…] wo die Gebärde nämlich vollkommen ruht, und die melodische Rede des Darstellers gänzlich schweigt, – also da, wo das Drama aus noch unausgesprochenen inneren Stimmungen heraus sich vorbereitet […]' (some of the translation from Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 133).

Therefore, under this regime the content of a motif is not disclosed to the character on stage. The protagonist, although she is 'one with [her]self within' and realizes the full import of the situation, is not assigned the motif as an 'emotional supplement' to a thought. Instead, during *Versmelodie* the motif is actualized and 'loses' those qualities that render it a 'melodic moment' outside this 'conditioning' moment.

Siegfried's horn call (Ex. 15) or the song of the *Waldvogel* [Woodbird], however, is irreconcilable with the idea of *Versmelodie*. This question has most succinctly been addressed by Edward Cone in his posthumously published essay entitled *Siegfried at the Dragon's Cave: The Motivic Language of the Ring* (2009).[841] In the light of Wagner's motivic practice, Cone feels compelled to revise some of the earlier claims made in his seminal *The Composer's Voice* (1974). The fact that Siegfried plays his own motif in front of *Neidhöhle* [Greed's cave] seems to prove that Siegfried has come to an awareness of the motif attributed to him. Cone realizes that what he calls 'know-nothing views', according to which the 'orchestral commentary has no role to play in the dramatic world of the characters'—a view that Wagner seems to have shared—are difficult to reconcile with such instances of a character's apparent motivic comprehension. Ignoring for once Ockham's razor, Cone proposes a number of possible explanations to get to grips with this conundrum.

Without acknowledging Wagner's theory, in *The Composer's Voice* Cone started out from the correct premiss that 'a musical idea may often be taken as representing the subconscious component of a vocal character's thought'.[842] This led him to argue in favour of a clear-cut division between the verbal and vocal aspects of opera by stating that 'we conceive the contrast between the verbal and the vocal as the symbolic parallel to the contrast between the conscious and subconscious components of the personality'.[843] Siegfried's 'defiant blast' at *Neidhöhle*, however, places 'the realistic motif embodying the horn-call and the symbolic motif representing Siegfried himself on the same footing' to the effect that 'all lies exposed on the surface of the music'.[844] Cone waters down his previously held view by explaining that operatic characters 'naturally express themselves in song—song of which, in the peculiar operatic world they inhabit they are fully aware' because 'musically communicable

[841] Cone, *Hearing and Knowing Music*, 80–105.
[842] Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley, 1974), 112.
[843] *Ibid*., 33.
[844] Cone, *Hearing and Knowing Music*, 85.

aspects of their personalities have been brought to full consciousness'.[845] On the basis of this claim, Cone settles in the 2009 essay on seeing Wagner's motivic system as a quasi-language with which the 'characters are familiar, and of which they consciously avail themselves as a means of musico-dramatic expression'.[846]

Although Cone comes close to Wagner's ideal when ascribing to the orchestra the 'power to penetrate the minds of all', his account still suffers from a disregard for the claim to universality that is central to the *Gefühlsverständnis*. In his description of the role of Wagner's orchestra, Cone opts for what he calls 'orchestral accessibility', a hypothesis according to which each motif, wherever it originates from, enters the consciousness of the 'orchestral persona' (a term introduced in *The Composer's Voice*).[847] The dramatic characters are free to discover or rediscover the motifs and thus participate in the 'pervasive and perpetual flow of an orchestra' that they do not control.[848] Thus, an increasing collection of musical archetypes becomes available to those dramatic characters that are 'aware of their orchestral environment'.[849] Although Cone refers to something like the 'universal memory', his store of expressive archetypes is accessory as its 'universality' is not genuine but shaped by the work at hand and limited to its realm.

The referential significance of the 'overlap': gradations of meaning within (c)

With regard to those motivic statements that occur 'outside' the vocal line—scenario (c) of Table 1—Wagner makes one fundamental distinction: he decides whether a 'melodic moment' coincides with the vocal line or whether a motif stands in between phrases of the text. It is noteworthy that the following considerations involve a further change of perspective as I am no longer concerned with motivic occurrences in the vocal line but with questions of 'overlap' between a motivic statement and the entry of a singer. The *Siegfried Kompositionsskizze* invites speculation about Wagner's approach to the alternation of vocal line and orchestral melody that go beyond concerns of balance and audibility. According to Cosima's diaries, Wagner was highly conscious of the minute differences that this kind of division entailed: 'Over

[845] Edward T. Cone, 'The World of Opera and Its Inhabitants', *Music: A View from Delft*, ed. Robert P. Morgan (Chicago, 1989), 133.
[846] Cone, *Hearing and Knowing Music*, 86.
[847] Cone, 'The World of Opera and Its Inhabitants', 137.
[848] Cone, *Hearing and Knowing Music*, 96.
[849] *Ibid*., 97.

coffee, while I am saying something or other, he exclaims, "That's it—it must be shifted half a bar, held back half a bar [*einen halben Takt Verschiebung*]."'[850] In *Opera and Drama* Wagner distinguishes between '*guten und schlechten Takten oder Takthälften*' [good or bad bars or segments thereof], which underlines that he clearly discriminated between more suitable and less suitable points of entry when placing a musical event.[851] It is tempting to subsume this qualitative hierarchization of different points of entry under the heading of the *Gefühlsverständnis*.

Wagner strictly differentiates between the sensual qualities of voice and orchestra which further underlines the division into commentary archetypes that I am proposing in this chapter. In a complex passage from *Opera and Drama*, Wagner explains that 'our sense of hearing instinctively perceives the human voice *separately* [from the instruments] because of the great disparity of its sensual timbre vis-à-vis that of the instruments'.[852] Wagner gives the example of an accompanied song in which the notes of the vocal line are missing in the orchestra. The ear, according to Wagner, is incapable of merging the harmonic information of the vocal line with that of the remaining body of harmonies. The result of such a scenario is that 'two separate moments—a melody that is harmonically unjustified and an incomplete harmonic accompaniment, are rendered'.[853]

Before looking into the evidence in detail that seems to illuminate how carefully Wagner planned the occurrence of each motivic statement, as well as into the potential reasons why Wagner was differentiating between various levels of commentary, we first need to establish the parameters of the subcategories of (c) that emerge from the sketch study. It should be borne in mind that the following categories require the absence of motifs in the vocal line:

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[850] *CWD*, II, 178; *CWT*, II, 206 (21.10.1878): 'Beim Kaffee, wie ich irgend etwas sage, ruft er aus: "So ist es, es muß um einen halben Takt verrückt werden, einen halben Takt Verschiebung."'

[851] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 122.

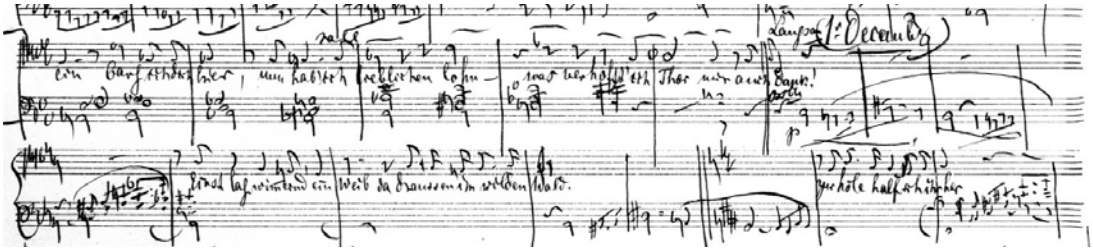
[852] *Ibid*., 168: '[…] weil unser Gehör die menschliche Stimme, in ihrer großen Unterschiedenheit von der sinnlichen Klangfarbe der Instrumente, unwillkürlich von diesen *getrennt* wahrnimmt […]'.

[853] *Ibid*.: '[…] und somit nur zwei verschiedene Momente, eine harmonisch unvollständig gerechtfertigte Melodie und eine lückenhafte harmonische Begleitung, zugeführt erhält.'

type 1
motivic statement occurs ‘outside’ the vocal line
type 2
motif coincides with the vocal line
type 3
quasi-symphonic development of motifs ‘outside’ the vocal line

Table 2

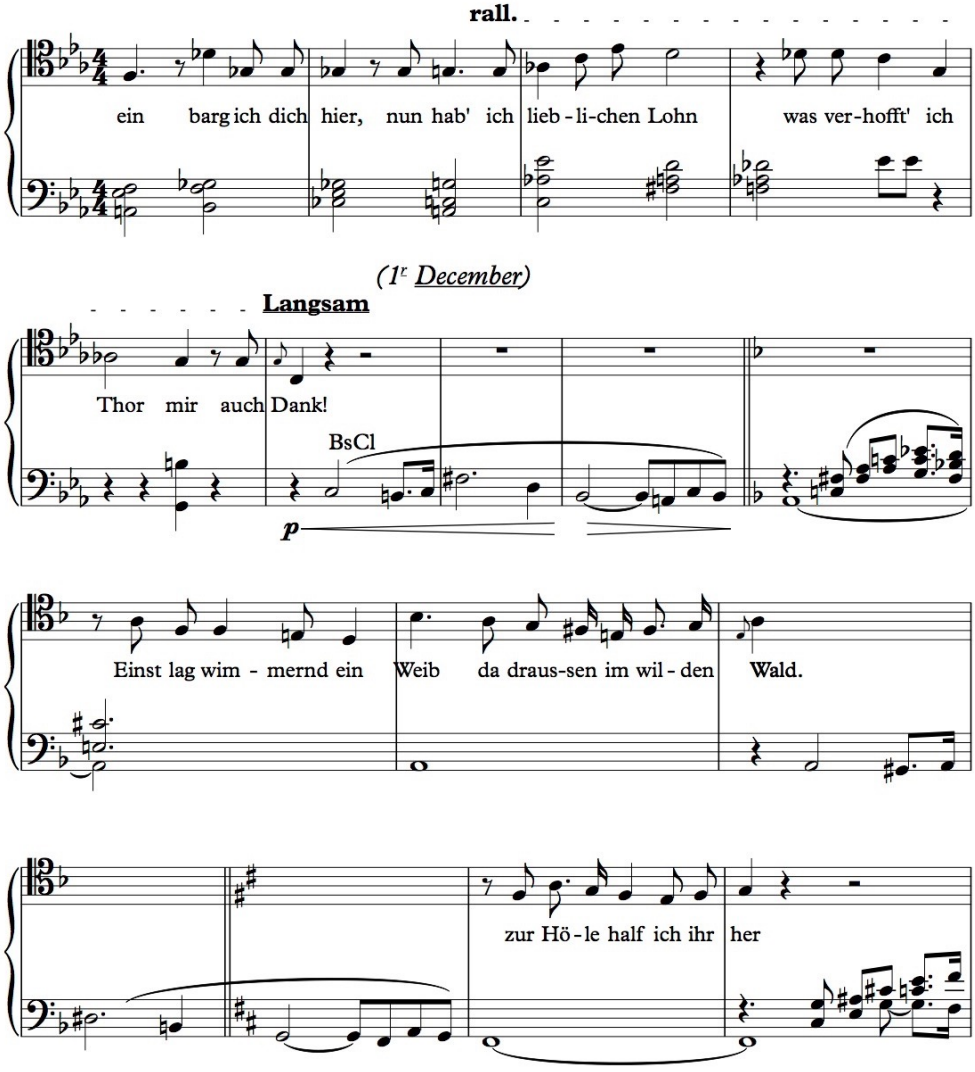
The first type of commentary—what I call type 1—consists of those motivic occurrences that operate between the phrases of the vocal line. Their prime function lies in establishing an ‘emotionally comprehensible’ nexus or bridge between two adjoining textual phrases. Throughout the composition sketch of *Siegfried* the motivic occurrences of the first type come in superior numbers and it is particularly noteworthy that they are not reserved for the exposition of new motifs, i.e. instances in which the absence of textual interference might naturally be expected. The phenomenon that the end of a textual phrase demarcates the beginning of a motivic statement is of such abundance that type 1 might even be considered the ‘root position’ of motivic occurrences. Although there is strictly speaking some degree of overlap—a point of landing coincides with a point of departure—between the vocal line and the motivic material in those instances, these motivic statements nevertheless stand ‘outside the vocal line’ since Wagner seems to allow this smallest point of contact only for reasons of maintaining a seamless quality in his works. The general rule that can be deduced from the skeleton-like reduction of the compositional fabric in the *Kompositionsskizze* is that once the textual flow is interrupted, the listener can expect a motif that provides him with a framing ‘emotional’ commentary. Wagner uses these connecting motivic occurrences as an immediate commentary that sets into ‘emotional’ perspective the phrase that has either just been presented or that is immediately going to follow. Wagner’s distinction between ‘motifs of reminiscence’ and ‘motifs of presentiment’ is therefore also operating at this more local and immediate level. One of the most effective examples of type 1 motifs is shown in the sketch below:



Kompositionsskizze, I, 8[V] (detail)

(*Siegfried*, I, 965–80)

Transcription:



Ex. 9

The ‘melodic moment’ that begins at the ‘Langsam’ (‘1r December’) section in this sketch still remains completely unaccompanied in the final version. It looks as if one

of Wagner's 'motif cards from his waistcoat' has simply been copied into this sketch.[854] What makes this motivic statement so special is Wagner's decision to let it sound after the vocal line has come to a complete halt. In other words, there is not even a point of contact between the vocal line and this motivic occurrence whatsoever. Wagner uses a motif that stands alone and another ascending motif (material that seems to sound like a 'caring hand') in order to attune the listener's feeling to the phrases to follow: 'Einst lag wimmernd ein Weib da draussen im wilden Wald' ['I found once in the wood a woman who lay and wept'] and 'zur Höhle half ich ihr her' ['I helped her here to my cave'] (*Siegfried*, I, 970–79), thereby anticipating Sieglinde's solitude and exposure in the forest which is being ended by Mime. This is framed by a second statement of the unaccompanied motif again without the input of the vocal line.

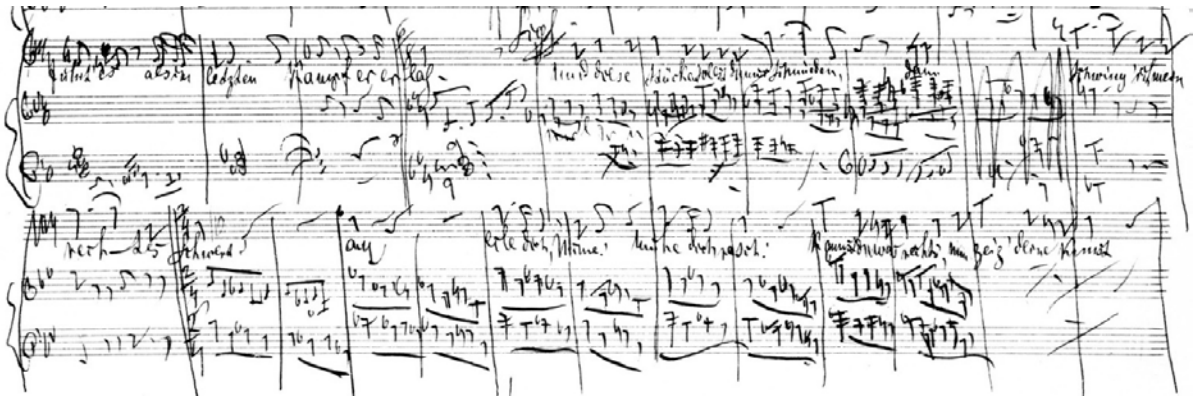
This most basic form of commentary seems to be used whenever Wagner feels the need to allow motifs to be heard without textual interference. At the same time this example shows that the 'melodic moments' operate as free agents that have the power to interrupt the singer whenever the 'emotional' comprehensibility is Wagner's primary concern. Wagner distinguishes between passages in which the vocal line is balanced in its expression to the extent that no motif is required to substantiate the emotive content. This constellation enables the orchestra to revert to non-motivic material. As we have seen, Wagner specifies the flexibility of the 'melodic moments' by explaining that '[t]hese referential moments […] withdraw into the background as soon as the individual […] advances to the fullest expression of the verse melody'.[855] In the absence of *Versmelodie*, a type 1 occurrence reflects a phrase that is emotionally stable enough so as to prevent the dramatic representation from tearing 'apart the bond of organic becoming and thus violat[ing] our instinctively captivated feeling by virtue of an arbitrary imposition'.[856] There is no need for an emotional commentary whenever the vocal line itself is saturated with emotional content.

[854] See n. 774.
[855] *Ibid*., 200 (see n. 829).
[856] *Ibid*., 192: 'Der Dichter […] hat sich wohl zu hüten, auch nur den kleinsten Schritt zu thun, der das Band des organischen Werdens zerreißen, und somit unser unwillkürlich gefesseltes Gefühl durch willkürliche Zumuthung verletzen könnte […]'.

Type 2 commentaries

A second level of motivic commentary (type 2) [Table 2] is composed of those motifs that coincide with the vocal line. These instances are engendered by an instable transference of meaning via the vocal line. With regard to the vocal line Wagner distinguishes between *Versmelodie* and the mere '*tönende Wortphrase*' [sounding textual phrase], a distinction that seems to exert an influence on type 2 occurrences. Those passages that Wagner describes as '*tönende Wortphrase*' lack substantial properties of an emotionally 'complete' phrase. The degree of indeterminacy that is typical of the 'sounding verbal phrase' requires Wagner to back up the information emotionally during its presentation. The musical pictorialization cannot wait until the end of a textual phrase in order to frame what is being communicated. Wagner decides to prematurely call into play a *Gefühlswegweiser* that must come to the aid of the listener.

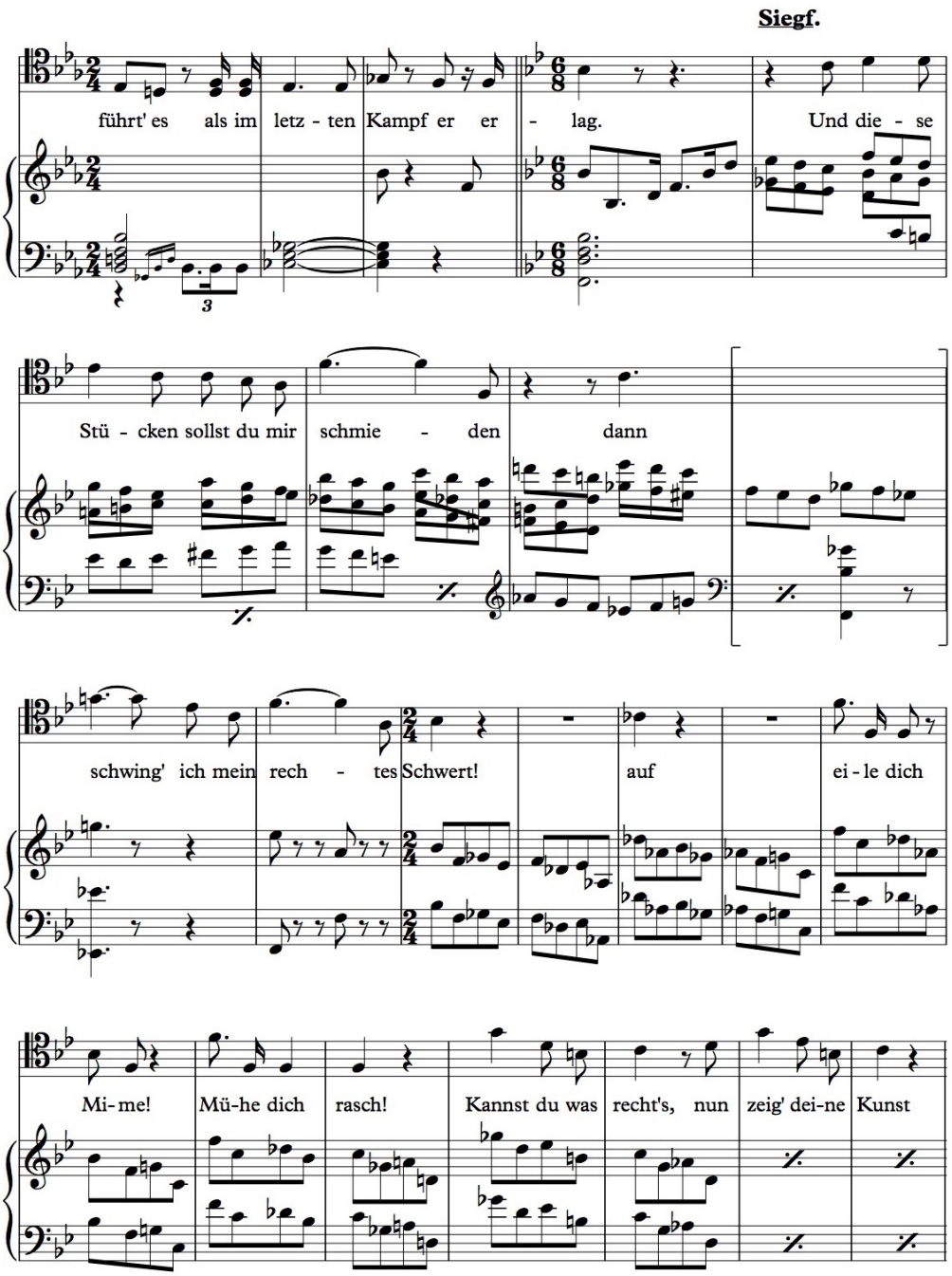
Wagner's decision to insert a motif that coincides with the vocal line is not a mere byproduct of purely musical considerations. The following extract of an Act I folio shows two examples of type 2 motivic occurrences that because of their perpetual musical nature invite speculation about the extent to which purely musical reasons interfere with Wagner's choice to let certain motivic statements interact directly with the vocal line.



Kompositionsskizze, I, 10^{R} (detail)

(*Siegfried*, I, 1122–43)

Transcription:

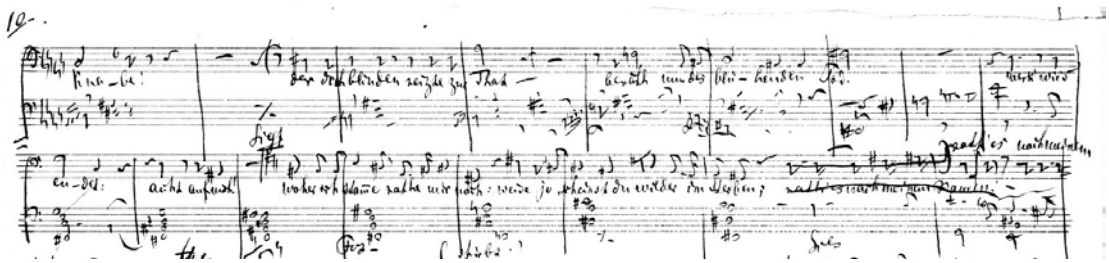


Ex. 10

The ‘cascading’ motion inherent in the motivic material that coincides with the vocal line [from bar 12 onwards] lends itself easily as an ‘accompaniment’ to the singer. However, it is noteworthy that the vocal line in Wagner’s theory—apart from *Versmelodie*—is not subject to any musical restrictions. Therefore, Wagner would be able to incorporate virtually any ‘melodic moment’—in accordance with his rules—to

be sounded simultaneously with the singer, since the motif could effectively govern the musical contours of the vocal line. Therefore, there is no need for Wagner to limit this type of commentary to musically suitable motifs only.

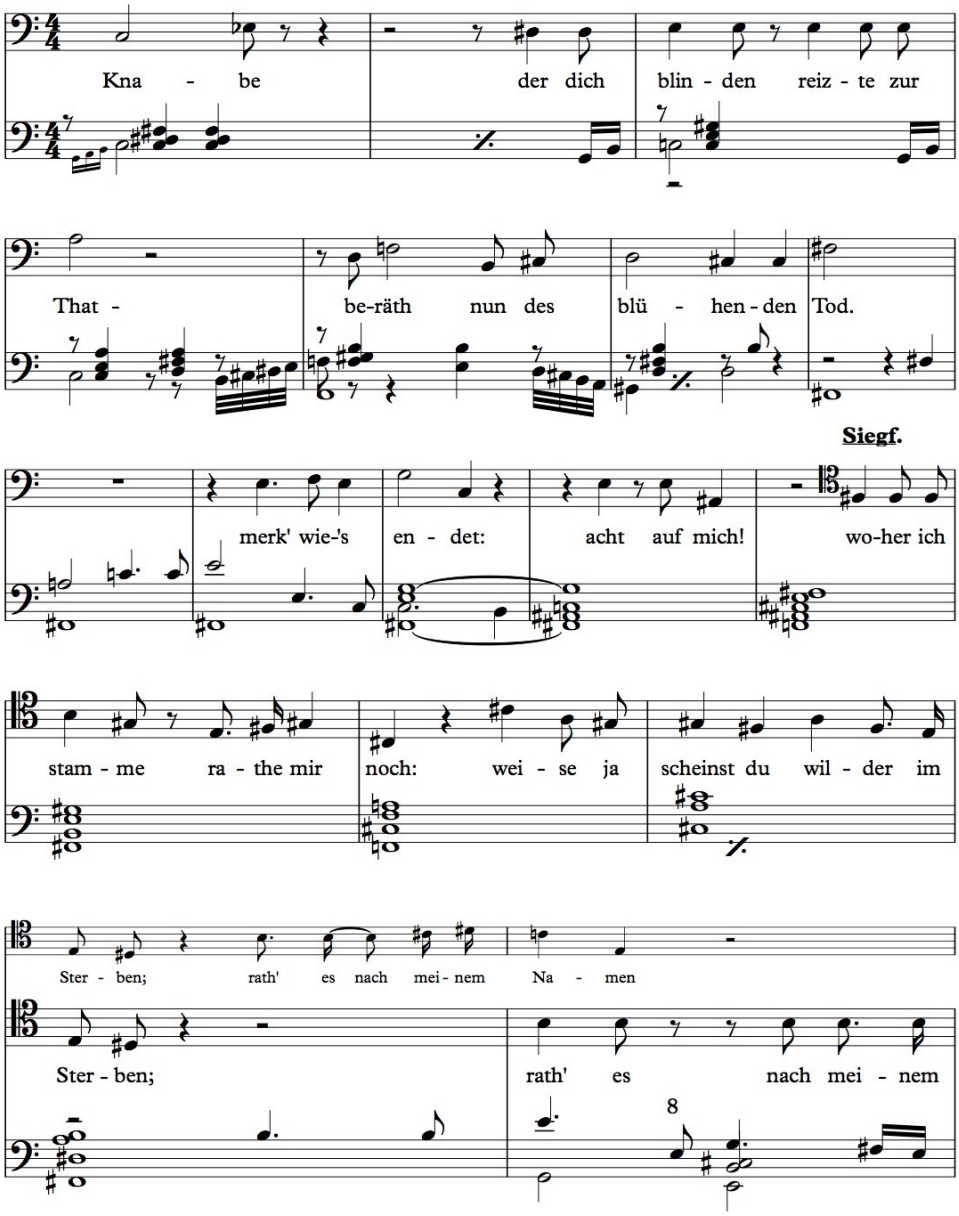
The difference between motivic occurrences of the first and second types represents a conscious choice since Wagner makes a number of striking alterations that reverse previously made allocations. The *Kompositionsskizze* gives evidence of several revisions that show the precision with which Wagner distinguished between the overlapping of vocal line and motivic material on the one hand and the 'emancipation' of the motif on the other. A crossed-out section on the following page is one of those telling instances:



Kompositionsskizze, II, 10^{R} (detail)

(*Siegfried*, II, 1146–62)

Transcription:



Ex. 11

The phrases ‘Woher ich stamme, rathe mir noch; weise ja scheinst du Wilder im Sterben’ [‘Who was my father, tell me; wisdom inspires you now you are dying’] and ‘rath’ es nach meinem Namen, Siegfried bin ich genannt’ [‘maybe my name will tell you: Siegfried is my name’] (*Siegfried*, II, 1157–61) used to be adjacent to one another. Wagner moves the two phrases apart to make room for the entrance of a motif.

The delay of motivic material in Wagner's musical language contributes to the determinacy of semantic meaning in its own way. In his quest for creating the '*unendliche Melodie*', Wagner expressed concerns about merely bridging or filling material. Cosima records in her diary that '[i]n the evening R. sings a theme from a Mozart quartet which he finds uniquely graceful and beautiful, but unfortunately it soon gives way to banality: "That is what we owe to Beethoven, that he did away with the bridging passages, in him everything is part of the melody."'[857] In *Music of the Future*, the essay in which Wagner devises the idea of '*unendliche Melodie*', he wrote that '[i]n Beethoven's predecessors, even in symphonic movements, one still finds awkward spaces between principal melodic [motifs] […] which have the character of background music providing an attractive noise to accompany conversations between attractive melodies'.[858] The *tönende Wortphrase* represents such an instance of filling material that needs to be supported by 'melodic moments'.

The word-tone synthesis in Wagner's works is not a question of competition. Instead, the involved media—sound, words and sight—are respectively complementing each other by appealing in various degrees to the ideal of the *Gefühlsverständnis*. In his interpretation of Wagner's word-tone synthesis, Nicholas Cook gives voice to notions of complementation when describing the relationship between the two media. He rightly suggests that Wagner is the *locus classicus* for the logic of complementarity.[859] Cook effectively rejects Carolyn Abbate's observation that the vocal line and the motivic commentary interact with each other in a warfare-like fashion.[860] For Cook, the type of 'layered, non-competitive relationship' that he has termed 'complementation' is operating in the music drama, as the word is identified as denotation and the music as connotation.[861] Wagner's manipulation of words in order to qualify for *Versmelodie*, however, lends a connotative dimension to words.

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[857] *CWD*, II, 54; *CWT*, II, 75 (31.3.1878): 'Abends singt R. das Thema eines Quartettes von Mozart, das er einzig anmutig schön findet, leider kommt bald die Banalität darauf, "das ist Beethoven's Verdienst gewesen, die Zwischenspiele aufzuheben, bei ihm gehört alles zur Melodie."'

[858] *TWE*, 37–8 (amended); *Zukunftsmusik*, 126: 'Noch bei den Vorgängern Beethoven's sehen wir diese bedenklichen Leeren zwischen den melodischen Hauptmotiven selbst in symphonischen Sätzen sich ausbreiten […] nämlich einer Musik, welche zwischen dem Vortrage anziehender Melodieen auch anziehendes Geräusch für die Konversation bietet.'

[859] Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 118.

[860] Carolyn Abbate, 'Opera as Symphony, a Wagnerian Myth', *Analyzing Opera*, 95.

[861] Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 119.

The manipulation of the poem via 'emotional understanding'

The principles underlying Wagner phrasing of the dramatic poem have a profound influence on the relationship between the arrangement of the text in its vocal presentation and the placement of the motifs within this setting. We have seen earlier that Wagner's partial revision of *Opera and Drama* in his essay *Music of the Future* failed to have an impact on the crucial third part of the earlier treatise. Instead, Wagner uses *Music of the Future* to sum up important tenets of his theory. In particular, he revisits the applicability of symphonic principles to the dramatic poem as propounded in *Opera and Drama*. In *Music of the Future*, Wagner argues that 'the possibility remained open to create a dramatic poem that is itself a dramatic counterpart to the symphonic form [*poetisches Gegenstück zur symphonischen Form*], that is obedient to the fundamental canons of drama, while at the same time completely matching the richness and complexity of symphonic form'.[862] We have seen that the vocal line in the composition sketch of *Siegfried* is set in a distinctly regular and fluent way. There are virtually no repetitions and the phrases are almost entirely rendered intact instead of being spaced out across longer musical units. Wagner refers to the treatment of the text in Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* and explains that

> [i]n his Great Mass, Beethoven treated chorus and orchestra almost as he had in symphonies: this symphonic treatment was possible to him because he found in the universally familiar sacred texts—with their now almost wholly symbolic meaning—a form that akin to the dance melody he could break apart and reassemble by dividing it up, repeating and reordering it etc. A reasonably sensible musician could not possibly deal in such a fashion with the text of a dramatic poem, since in this case the words no

[862] *Zukunftsmusik*, 127–28: '[…] dagegen mußte die Möglichkeit offen bleiben, in der dramatischen Dichtung selbst ein poetisches Gegenstück zur symphonischen Form zu erhalten, welches, indem es diese reiche Form vollkommen erfüllte, zugleich den innersten Gesetzen der dramatischen Form am besten entsprach.' (translation from Abbate, 'Opera as Symphony', 101).

> longer have a merely symbolic meaning, but, rather, must follow a specific and logical sequence.[863]

In fact, Wagner suggests that the 'symphonic treatment' of the vocal line of a dramatic poem runs counter to fundamental considerations of comprehensibility. Unlike the sacred texts, the dramatic poem is far from being 'universally familiar'. We therefore need to investigate the ways in which Wagner understood a 'specific and logical sequence' of the dramatic poem. Several interpretations of Wagner's idea of the '*poetisches Gegenstück zur symphonischen Form*' have been offered. Carolyn Abbate detects patterns of phonetic and semantic repetition that are built into the logically proceeding poem. These recurrences are introduced as 'constructed verbal opportunities for musical repetition and transformation'.[864] This view is in line with Dahlhaus's, according to which Wagner restored epic traits out of musical necessity: what Wagner the theorist planned to banish from drama, the composer reinstated in order to generate motifs from these epic elements of the *Ring*.[865] Kropfinger links Wagner's statement to *Tristan*, the music drama that was written shortly before *Music of the Future* and contends that 'the "web of word and lines" already prefigures the "whole layout of the melody."'[866] Wagner himself implies that from *Tristan* onwards the 'melody is already founded [*konstituirt*] on the poem'.[867]

The most fundamental principle in this context is Wagner's idea of extending the vision of the *Gefühlsverständnis* onto the prose text itself. This introduction of a further communicative layer is intended to enhance the 'emotional comprehensibility' of the drama by manipulating the text itself. There is an astonishing parallel between the features that Wagner considers a *sine qua non* of the motifs which he also prescribes for the phrases of the poem. Wagner recommends ways 'to liberate the prose phrase in a way as to turn its inherent accents [*Accente*] into a representation

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[863] *Ibid*., 127: 'Beethoven hat in seiner großen Messe Chor und Orchester fast ganz wieder wie in der Symphonie verwendet: es war ihm diese symphonische Behandlung möglich, weil in den kirchlichen, allgemein bekannten, fast nur noch symbolisch bedeutungsvollen Textworten ihm, wie in der Tanzmelodie selbst, eine Form gegeben war, die er durch Trennung, Wiederholung, neue Anreihung u. s. w. fast ähnlich wie jene zerlegen und neu verbinden konnte. Unmöglich konnte ein sinnvoller Musiker aber ebenso mit den Textworten einer dramatischen Dichtung verfahren wollen, weil diese nicht mehr nur symbolische Bedeutung, sondern eine bestimmte logische Konsequenz enthalten sollen.' (some of the translation from Abbate, 'Opera as Symphony', 101).
[864] Abbate, 'Opera as Symphony', 102.
[865] Dahlhaus, *Wagner's Music Dramas*, 86–7.
[866] Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 104.
[867] *Zukunftsmusik*, 123: '[…] die Melodie dichterisch bereits konstituirt.'

that is swiftly understandable [*schnell wahrnehmbare Kundgebung*]'.[868] Wagner even uses unmistakably similar wording to highlight the parallel to the exposition of the *Gefühlsverständnis* concept. The German musicologist Martin Knust argues that as a general rule the term '*Accent*' [accent] refers to 'speech melody' or 'intonation' in Wagner's texts unless it is specified as '*Versaccent*' [verse accent] or '*Verstandes-Accent*' [cognitive accent].[869] However, in *Opera and Drama* Wagner explains that

> [d]epending on the nature of the intended emotion, the poet—who will sympathetically get into its spirit—will determine the sequence of words in accordance with the number of accents being governed by the breath and by the content that either calls for the entire phrase or significant segments thereof.[870]

Since Wagner explicitly speaks of 'numbers of accents' [*Zahl der Accente*] we are right to assume that for him the word '*Accent*' embraces the meaning of rhythmic or metric accentuation. One of the parameters that govern Wagner's poetic phrases is the length of one breath and the number of accents that are distributed across its outflow. It is striking that the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis* also permeates this remote level as Wagner explains that '[i]n sincere emotions, where we abandon all conventionality and all those considerations, that are conditioned by the expanded modern phrasing, we are always looking to express ourselves as far as briefly and succinctly as possible in one breath'.[871]

Wagner goes on to explain the extent to which the distribution of the accents matches the emotional state in which the character finds himself:

> The number of these accents that during the outflow of one breath will involuntarily form a phrase or a segment thereof will always reflect the

[868] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 119: '[…] die Prosaphrase […] so zu befreien, daß die in ihr liegenden Accente zu einer schnell wahrnehmbaren Kundgebung zusammengedrängt werden.'
[869] Martin Knust, *Sprachvertonung und Gestik in den Werken Richard Wagners: Einflüsse zeitgenössischer Rezitations- und Deklamationspraxis* (Berlin, 2007), 31.
[870] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 120: 'Je nach der Art des kundzugebenden Affektes, in den sich der Dichter sympathetisch zu versetzen weiß, wird dieser daher die Zahl der Accente einer, durch den Athem sich bestimmenden, durch den Inhalt des Ausdruckes entweder zur vollen Phrase oder zum wesentlichen Phrasenabschnitte sich gestaltenden, Wortreihe feststellen […]'.
[871] *Ibid*., 119: 'Im aufrichtigen Affekte, wo wir alle konventionellen, die gedehnte moderne Phrase bedingenden Rücksichten fahren lassen, suchen wir uns immer *in einem Athem* kurz und bündig so bestimmt wie möglich auszudrücken […]'.

> degree of agitation involved, e.g. an angry, *more excited* affection will be reflected in a larger number of accents in one breath, whereas however a deep and *painful suffering* affect will consume the entire breath in fewer, more sonorous accents.[872]

These considerations remind us of Carl Stumpf's account of the origins of music which the psychologist linked to the primordial man's need to communicate over long distances. According to the rehearsals for *Parsifal*, Wagner suggested singing a particular phrase 'as calmly as possible, smoothly, smiling and in one breath'.[873] Since Wagner was primarily a vocal composer these statements may appear less surprising in view of balancing issues that arose from the unprecedented size of the *Ring* orchestra. However, the relationship of vocal line and 'orchestral melody' seems informed by considerations of 'emotional understanding'. Porges reports that Wagner was at pains to iterate that

> [s]ingers […] should try all the harder to bring out the flexible melodic and thematic contours as concisely as possible, by means of a clear-cut phrasing and precise metric and rhythmic accents. This style of performance is absolutely necessary since it is only thus that the combination of the different forms of speech-melody and orchestral melody can be grasped simultaneously.[874]

Porges mentions Wagner's cautionary measures that the latter has devised in order to secure the simultaneous processing of *Versmelodie* and *Orchestermelodie* (type 2 motivic occurrences). Porges describes one fundamental aspect of Wagner's new art as

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[872] *Ibid*., 120: 'Die Zahl dieser Accente, die unwillkürlich während der Ausströmung eines Athems sich zu einer Phrase, oder zu einem Hauptabschnitte der Phrase abschließen, wird stets im genauen Verhältnisse zum Charakter der Erregtheit stehen, so daß z. B. ein zürnender, *thätiger* Affekt auf einem Athem eine größere Zahl von Accenten ausströmen lassen wird, während dagegen ein tief und schmerzlich *leidender* in wenigeren, länger tönenden Accenten die ganze Athemkraft verzehren muß.'
[873] Martin Geck/Egon Voss/Carl Dahlhaus (eds.), *Dokumente zur Entstehung und ersten Aufführung des Bühnenweihfestspiels Parsifal* (Mainz, 1970), 217: 'So ruhig wie möglich, weich, mit lächelnder Miene, in einem Athem zu singen.'
[874] Porges, *Wagner Rehearsing the 'Ring'*, 13.

> free counterpoint of voice and orchestra treated as equals. Two melodies, each in principle different from the other, cannot be taken in if the ear is being overwhelmed by sensuous sound. The aural sense functions as a bridge to the mind and law of psychology dictate that the mind can act freely only when it is stimulated, not when it is overwhelmed, by sensuous impressions.[875]

No wonder that these statements underline the enormous importance that the vocal composer in Wagner ascribed to phrasing and to the issue of breathing with respect to vocal projection. But Wagner the dramatic composer was also devoted to a finely calibrated network of two media—vocal line and 'melodic moment'—that complement each other along the lines of the notion of *primus inter pares*.

Of course, there is the possibility that Wagner distinguishes between the two types of motivic interplay, since he wishes to let certain motivic statements come through more effectively than others. Cosima describes a situation that occurred when Wagner was composing *Parsifal*: 'He then plays the prelude to me and shows me the many pages of his preliminary sketches, among them the song for Titurel's funeral. […] Here he has succeeded wonderfully in making his theme stand out against a background of elemental sorrow, and one feels completely at home. Noticing my emotion, R. says, "So it is good—I am glad."'[876] However, Wagner might have been more concerned about the delivery of the text. In the essay *Über das Opern-Dichten und Komponiren im Besonderen* [*On Opera Poetry and Composition in Particular*] (1879), Wagner explains that '[a]s stencilled as the compositional style of the Italian opera may appear, I always thought that even here a more appropriate effect can be achieved if the text is understandable […] since it is knowledge of the plot and of the emotional states involved that is able to fight the monotony of the musical expression'.[877] Wagner lamented the fact that 'the poetic thought' in choral music 'is not even articulated comprehensibly [*verständlich artikulirt*]'.[878]

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[875] *Ibid*.

[876] *CWD*, II, 184; *CWT*, II, 212 (28.10.1878): 'Er spielt mir das Vorspiel! Und zeigt mir die vielen Blätter, die er dafür entworfen, worunter auch der Gesang für Titurel's Bestattung […] Hier ist ihm auch wunderbar gelungen, auf einer ganz elementaren trüben Stimmung die Themen sich abheben zu lassen, und man sich ganz heimisch fühlt. R., wie er meine Ergriffenheit bemerkt, sagt: "Also ist es gut, das freut mich."'

[877] Richard Wagner, *Über das Opern-Dichten und Komponiren im Besonderen*, *GSD*, X [*Über das Opern-Dichten*], 153: 'So schablonenartig die italienische Opernkompositions-Manier erscheint, habe ich doch immer noch gefunden, daß Alles auch hier eine richtigere Wirkung macht, wenn der Text

There is however some conflicting evidence according to which Wagner's first concern was not so much the delivery of the text. In Cosima's diaries, there are two statements suggesting that he placed more emphasis on dramatic action than on the clear comprehensibility of the words: '"I am no poet, and I don't care at all if people reproach me for my choice of words, in my works the action is everything. To a certain extent it is a matter of indifference to me if people understand my verses, since they will certainly understand my dramatic action."'[879] The following statement even underscores the insouciance with which Wagner seems to have viewed the issue of delivery of the text. Cosima records that '[i]n the morning he plays the scene between Alberich and Hagen […]. "It will have the effect of two strange animals conversing together—one understands nothing of it, but it is all interesting."'[880] These pieces of evidence are difficult to reconcile with the passionate theorizing on phrasing and diction in *Opera and Drama* and *Music of the Future*.

Since the removal of all operatic conventions stands precisely at the core of Wagner's theory, the approach to his works was imbued with the conviction that he had found the compositional means to fight musical monotony. In Wagner's thinking, the comprehensibility of the text does not seem to rank higher than the appropriate exposure of motivic material. Wagner's ideal of 'emotional understanding' would secure the comprehensibility of the entire drama in any case.

Type 3 commentaries

The third, most emancipated level of commentary—type 3—that Wagner uses in *Siegfried* is the presentation of several bars of motivic development without text. Strictly speaking these motifs are a subcategory of type 1 motifs as they occur 'outside' the vocal line. Their semantic message is, however, significantly different from type 1 motifs. What distinguishes type 3 from the remaining commentaries is the

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verstanden wird […] da gerade die Kenntniß des Vorganges und der Seelenzustände der Wirkung der Monotonie des musikalischen Ausdruckes vortheilhaft zu wehren vermag.'

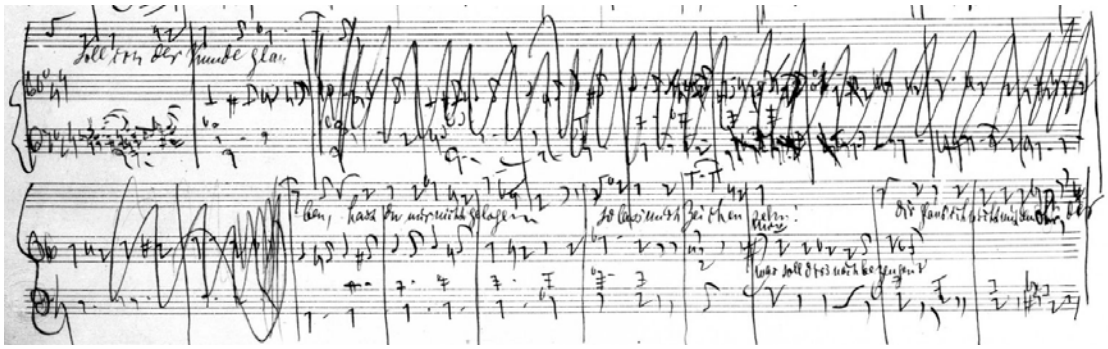
[878] *RWB*, 139; *Beethoven*, 103: '[…] der poetische Gedanke, den man namentlich bei Chorgesängen nicht einmal verständlich artikulirt vernimmt […]'.

[879] *CWD*, I, 325; *CWT*, I, 344–45 (22.1.1871): '"[…] ich bin kein Dichter, und es ist mir ganz gleich, ob man meiner Diktion Vorwürfe macht, bei mir ist alles Aktion; es ist mir bis zu einem gewissen Grad gleichgültig, ob man die Verse versteht, meine Handlung wird man schon begreifen."'

[880] *CWD*, I, 715; *CWT*, I, 770 (27.12.1873): 'Vormittags spielt er die Szene zwischen Alberich und Hagen […] "das wird wirken, wie wenn zwei seltsame Tiere miteinander sprechen, man versteht nichts und alles ist interessant."'

absence of the vocal line that spans longer than the duration of one motivic statement and that these interludes usually involve more than one motif. These passages appear as if they were effectively detached from the vocal line. The dramatic event that sparks instances of such elaborate commentaries invites further scrutiny as Wagner reserves these commentaries for a few dramatic junctures in the poem only. This highest degree of motivic independence is achieved whenever Wagner allows the orchestra to take over the action as a driving force that seemingly goes beyond the commentary function. These are the instances in which the orchestra completely takes over the emotional narration by stepping beyond the framework of 'emotional supplementation'.

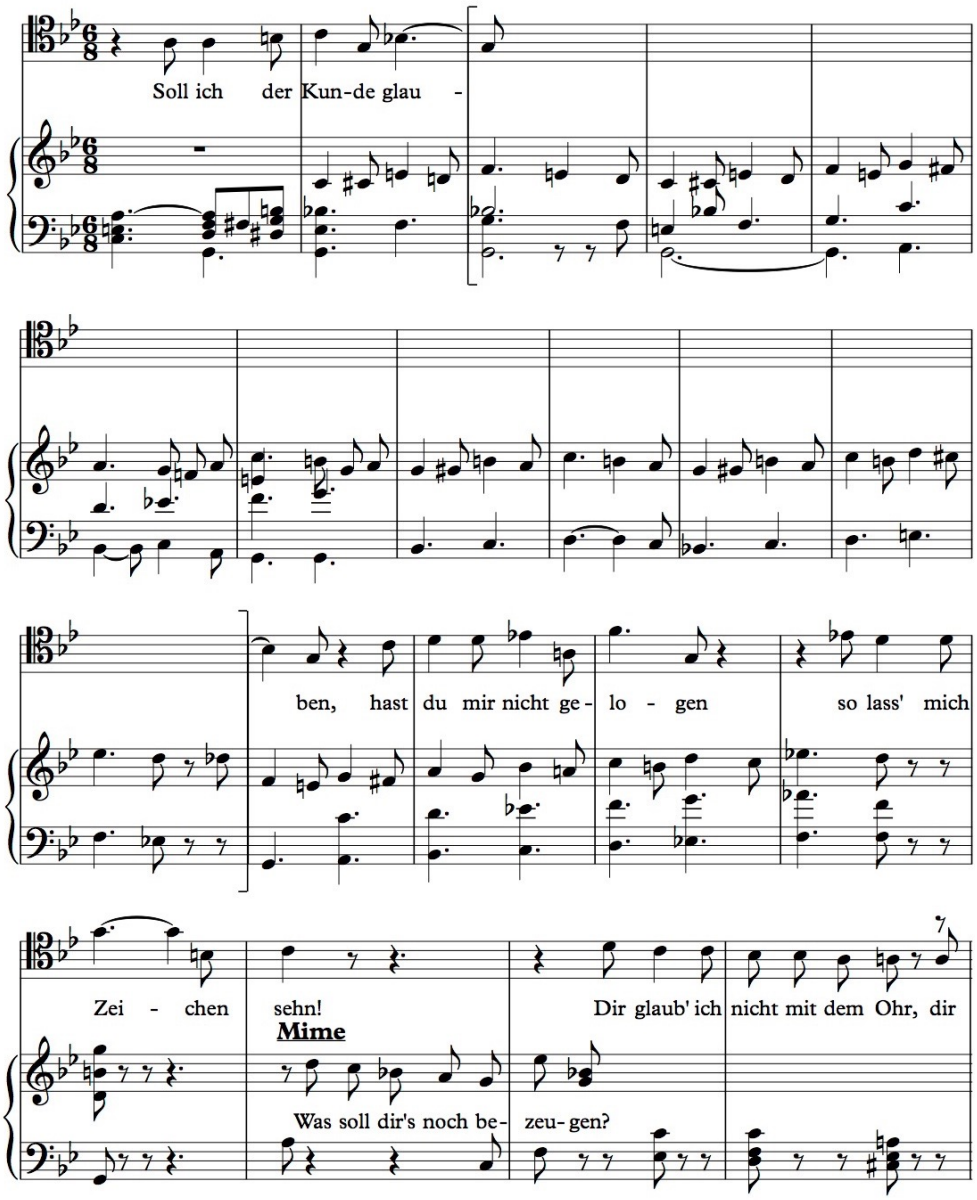
The observation that the vocal line is the prime element in Wagner's sketching process is bizarrely challenged by these passages as it appears as if purely emotional stimuli take matters into their own hands. These unusual sections give evidence of the fact that Wagner at times, driven by inspirational outbursts, got carried away musically at the expense of composing the vocal line first. It is important to note that the passages in question show traces of symphonic development on the basis of at least one motif that he was using immediately prior to the onset of such 'interludes'.



Kompositionsskizze, I, 9^{V} (detail)

(*Siegfried*, I, 1081–90)

Transcription:



Ex. 12[881]

After 'Soll ich der Kunde glauben' ['If I am to trust your story'] (*Siegfried*, I, 687–97) Wagner spins out the stepwise ascending motion and improvises over the length of ten bars before returning to a 'controlled' setting of text to music. Even Wagner's handwriting at this instance shows signs of his growing restlessness. He seems unable

[881] I provide my own transcription of this passage as Westernhagen fails to render all the notes (*The Forging of the 'Ring'*, 137–38, ex. 8*a* and 8*b*).

to restrain himself; he is even unable to finish jotting down the text, so pressing is his desire to '*sich auszurasen musikalisch*' [to push himself to the limit musically]. Cosima reports that Wagner said in 1878, '"[t]o improvise like that, get inspirations—that is not difficult—my difficulty always lies in restraining myself."'[882]

Surprisingly, the bars in which Wagner develops a purely musical thought are usually rejected in turn. Oddly, even these subsequently crossed-out bars usually have been traced over in ink as if Wagner wished to reconsider them properly at some later stage. This particular 'interlude' as such did not find its way into the final version of *Siegfried*. Wagner converts this motivic statement back into instances of the type 2 as it subsequently glosses the vocal line instead (*Siegfried*, I, 1083–87).

The infrequence with which these sections without text occur attests to the otherwise 'disciplined' execution of the 'composition sketch'. They also underline that Wagner's ideal of the musico-dramatic synthesis is tending towards a swift succession of textual information. Wagner confirms in a letter to the Princess zu Sayn Wittgenstein that writing pure music was exceptional for him: '… [I] wanted to work on the composition of *Siegfried* today and unexpectedly fell into *Tristan*. For the time being, music without text. There is a lot for which I would rather write music than poetry, however'.[883] Six months earlier Wagner was still in the complete opposite mood when explaining that 'I would really rather write poetry now than compose; such perseverance on one thing takes an enormous amount of obstinacy. I have two more marvellous subjects which I must carry out some day—*Tristan und Isolde* […] and then *Der Sieg*—the holiest, the highest redemption'.[884] Wagner finally gave in to *Tristan* and reports in the same letter to the Princess that '[t]he Nibelungs turn into quite a bore […] … Today *Tristan* interfered in the shape of a melodic thread, which though I fain would have quitted it, kept on spinning itself, so that I could have spent

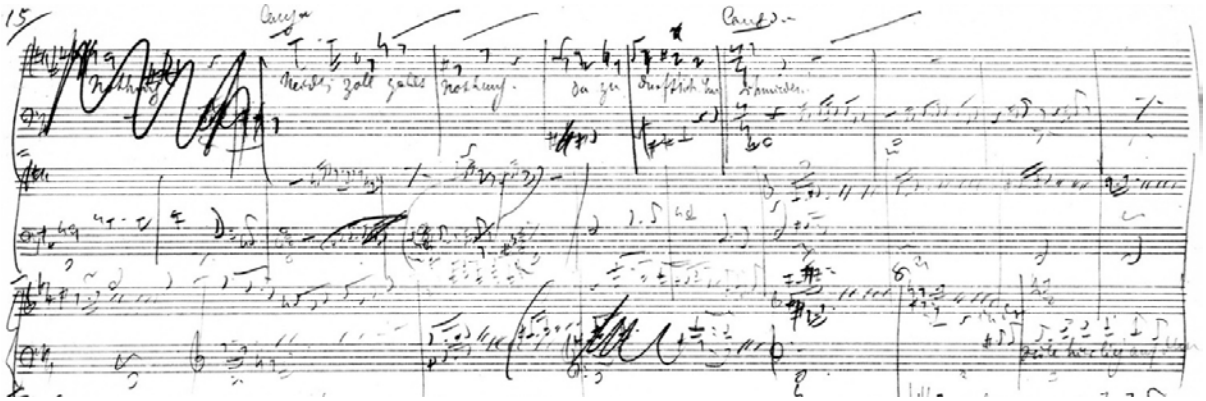
[882] *CWD*, II, 184; *CWT*, II, 212 (28.10.1878): '"So zu phantasieren, Einfälle zu haben, das ist nicht schwer, meine Schwierigkeit ist immer die Beschränkung." Hier ist ihm auch wunderbar gelungen, auf einer ganz elementaren trüben Stimmung die Themen sich abheben zu lassen, und man sich ganz heimisch fühlt.'

[883] *SB*, VIII, 230 (19.12.1856): '… heute am Siegfried komponieren wollte und unversehens in den Tristan kam. Vorläufig Musik ohne Worte. Zu manchem werde ich aber wohl auch eher die Musik als die Verse machen.' (translation from Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 308).

[884] *Ibid*., 75 (12.6.1856): 'Eigentlich möchte ich jetzt lieber dichten als componiren: es gehört eine ungeheure Hartnäckigkeit dazu, so bei der Stange zu bleiben. Ich habe wieder zwei wundervolle Stoffe, die ich noch einmal ausführen muss: Tristan u. Isolde […] dann aber – Der Sieg – das Heiligste, die vollständigste Erlösung […]' (translation adopted from McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried*, 64).

the whole day developing it'.[885] Both statements further substantiate the claim made earlier according to which *Tristan* assumes a unique role among Wagner's works as they reiterate two procedural inconsistencies that Wagner allowed during its compositional execution. We have also seen that composing for Wagner was 'a curious affair; while thinking it up, I have it all in my mind, endless'.[886] The controlled approach to his composition must have placed a great burden on Wagner at various points. This is aggravated in the case of *Siegfried*, since the great intervals between the working periods required Wagner to overcome even greater internal reservations.

Indeed, some instances of type 3 commentaries have survived. The following example gives us an idea about how Wagner scrutinized the emotional message conveyed by such interludes as we can trace Wagner's decision to remove one motif in favour of another. The twelve-bar interlude following Siegfried's phrase 'Neides Zoll zahlt Nothung: dazu durft' ich ihn schmieden' ['Hatred's paid my Nothung: that's why I needed to forge it'] (Siegfried, II, 1648–60) serves as a tremendously powerful commentary on Siegfried's killing of Mime. Before the final version of this passage was achieved, however, Wagner carried out an unusually high number of alterations:



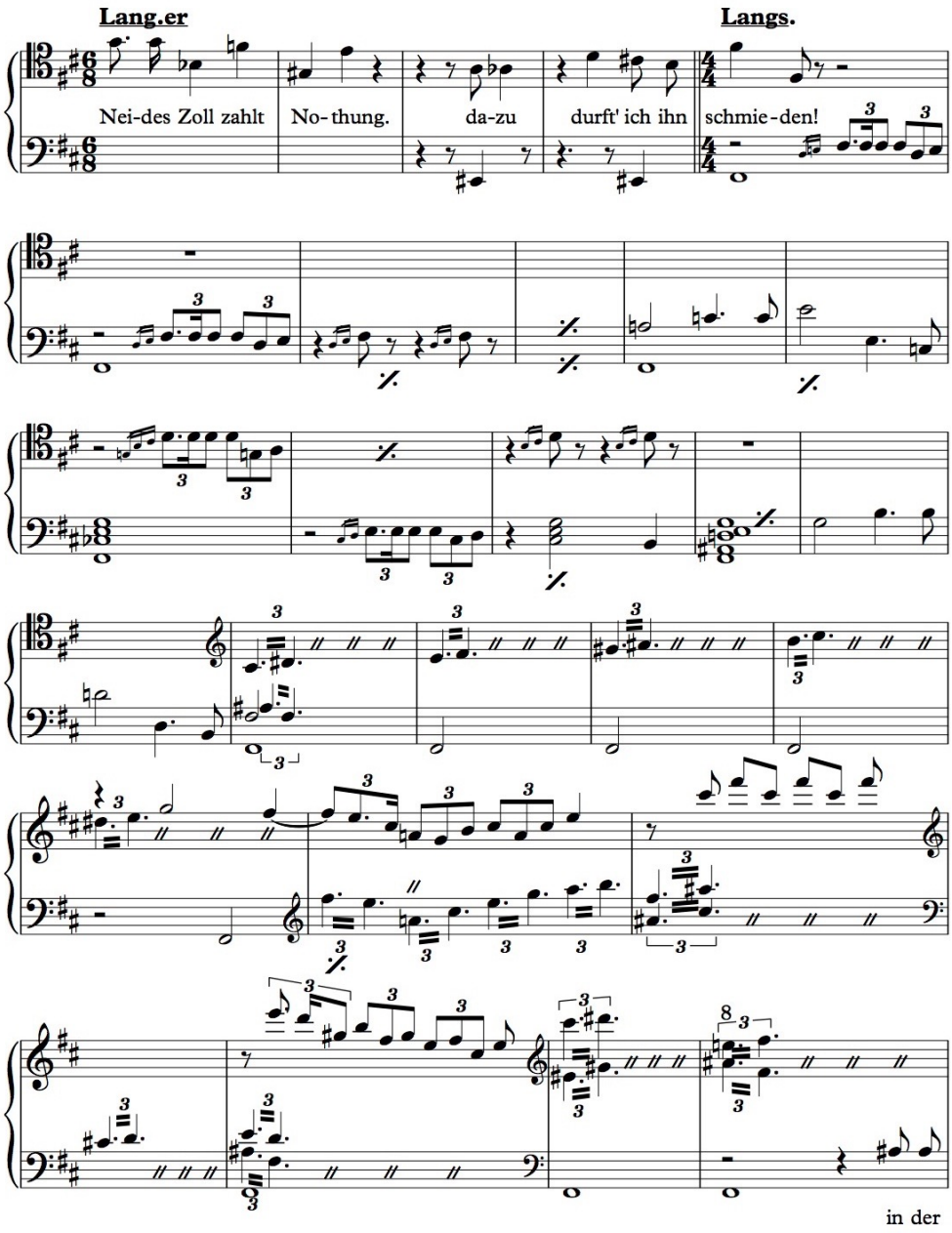
Kompositionsskizze, II, 15[R] (detail)

(*Siegfried*, II, 1644–68 [subsequently amended])

[885] *Ibid*., 230: 'Die Nibelungen werden mir recht langweilig […]. … Aber heute ist mir […] der Tristan dazwischen gekommen mit einem melodischen Faden, der sich als ich's lassen wollte, immer wieder von neuem ansponn, so daß ich den ganzen Tag hätte dran fortspinnen können […]'.

[886] *CWD*, I, 381 (amended); *CWT*, I, 404 (23.6.1871): '[…] ein seltsamer Zustand; beim Phantasieren habe ich alles, endlos […]'.

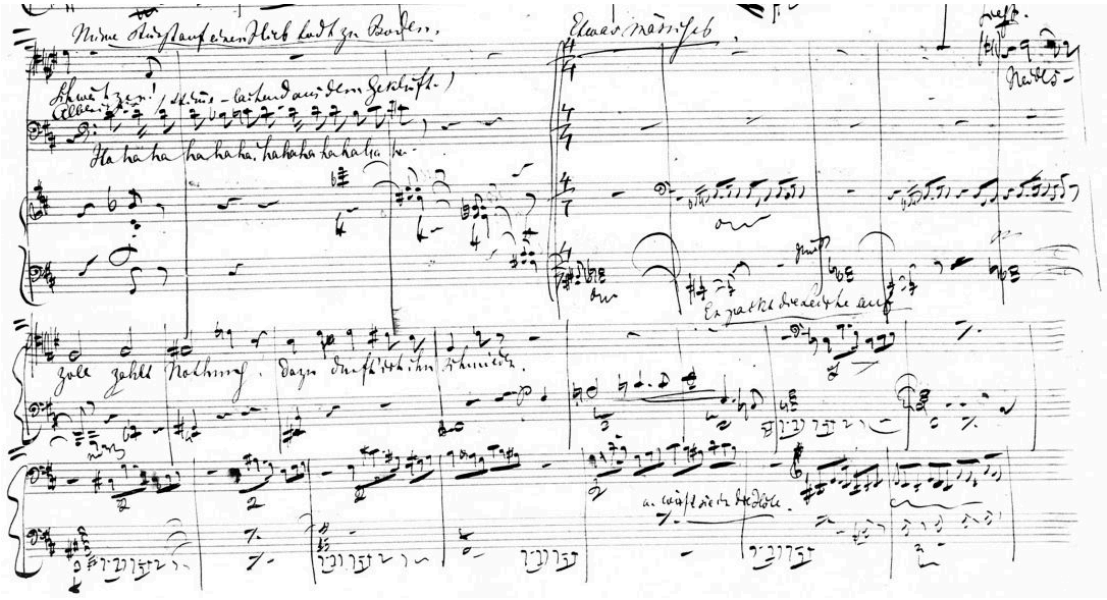
Transcription:



Ex. 13

The final version of the passage that is displayed in *statu nascendi* on the recto page of folio 15 is a symphonic development of fragments taken from Siegfried's so-called horn call combined with a shortened version of the so-called Nibelung rhythm. It is the occurrence of the 'melodic moment' that came to be known as the 'curse motif' which completes Wagner's uncanny commentary. From the twelfth bar onwards this passage in the *Kompositionsskizze* is made up of the characteristic semibreve tremoli

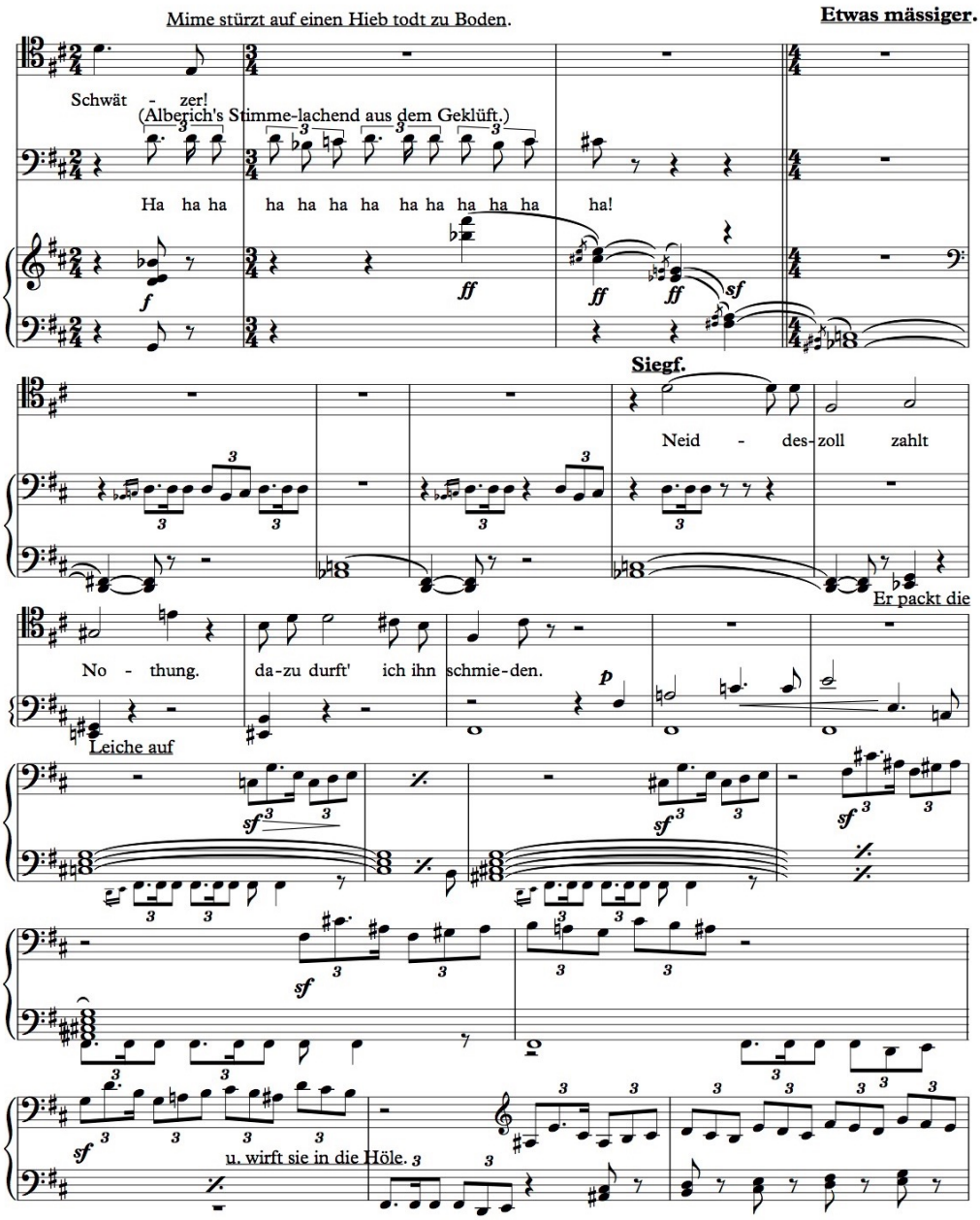
that remind us of the *Waldweben* in conjunction with material associated with the *Waldvogel*. The so-called 'curse motif' simply precedes this material and is stated twice as an interpolation. The most striking observation, however, is the absence of the fraction of Siegfried's horn call that comes to govern the passage in its finished version. A comparison with the respective passage in the 'orchestral draft' reveals that the Woodbird is removed from the interweaving of the motifs in preference to the material derived from the so-called 'horn call'. On page 83 of the *Orchesterskizze* (Ex. 14) Wagner moves the orchestral tremoli and inserts two entire bars to make room for the so-called 'curse motif'. The combination of the horn call fragment with the Nibelung rhythm first occurs in the *Orchesterskizze*:



Orchesterskizze, 83 (detail)

(*Siegfried*, II, 1637–59)

Transcription:



Ex. 14

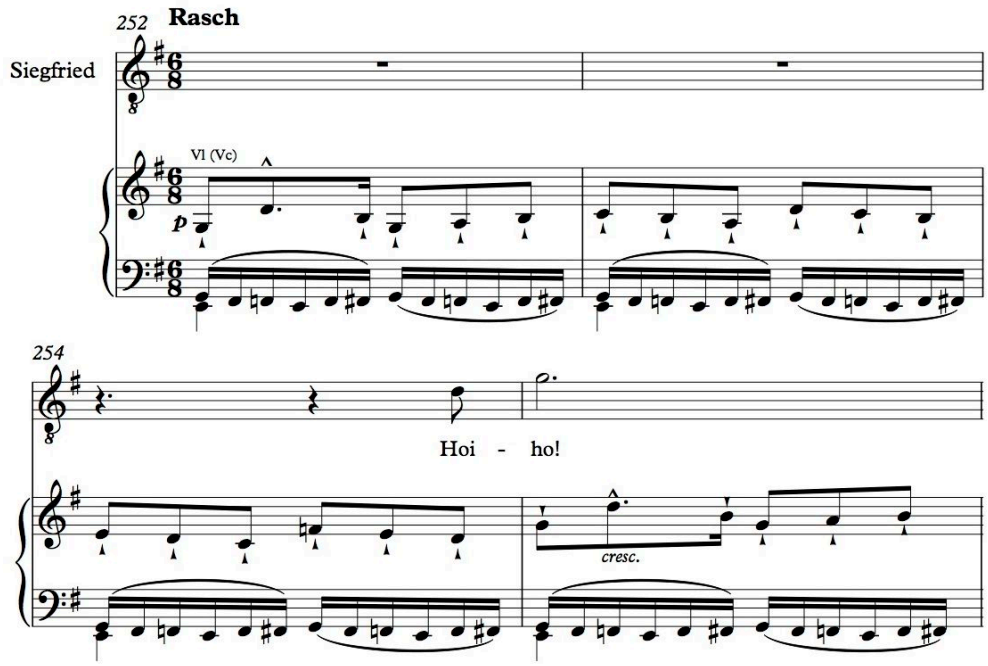
Towards the unity of the motivic language across Siegfried

The stylistic dichotomy between the second and third acts of *Siegfried* that makes its presence felt on several musical levels does have less of an impact on the motivic language than has previously been proposed in scholarship. As mentioned earlier, Jack Stein claimed in 1960 that the new motifs in Act III are 'broader, longer, more

independently musical, with less emphasis on characteristic pictorialization than the briefer, more fragmentary, earlier ones'.[887] Similarly, Barry Millington argues that the motifs of Acts I and II are of a 'predominantly short, pithy quality' and that the motifs as introduced in the third act 'acquire a more expansive, melodic character'.[888] Millington notices a decline in the referential functions of the motifs and thus concurs with Stein's verdict according to which Wagner 'has become quite careless with his use of motifs' in Act III.[889] Ernest Newman, however, opines that the texture of Act III 'results from the incessant interweaving of short, pregnant motifs'.[890]

Wagner explains in *A Communication* (1851) that he 'always had more a tendency towards the broad, drawn-out melody instead of the short, torn and contrapuntally formed melismas of the instrumental chamber music'.[891] This statement is difficult to reconcile with Wagner's penchant for Beethovenian motivic construction in which 'a dance-melody [is] split into its tiniest fragments […] it may amount to two notes only'.[892] Some prominent examples taken from all three acts of *Siegfried* highlight the futility in differentiating the motivic language of acts I and II vis-à-vis act III on the basis of overarching criteria such as a tendency towards longer or shorter motifs. Siegfried's so-called 'horn call', introduced in the first act by the first violins can hardly be considered a 'short or pithy' motivic idea:

[887] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 192.
[888] Barry Millington, 'The Music', *Wagner Compendium*, 295.
[889] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 192.
[890] Ernest Newman, *The Life of Richard Wagner*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1976), III, 271–72.
[891] *Eine Mittheilung*, 324: 'Immer hatte ich aber mehr Neigung zur breiten, lang sich hindehnenden Melodie als zu dem kurzen, zerrissenen und kontrapunktisch gefügten Melismus der eigentlichen Kammerinstrumentalmusik […]'.
[892] *Zukunftsmusik*, 127: '[…] die eigentliche Tanzmelodie bis in ihre kleinsten Bestandtheile zerlegt […] oft sogar nur aus zwei Tönen bestehend […]'.

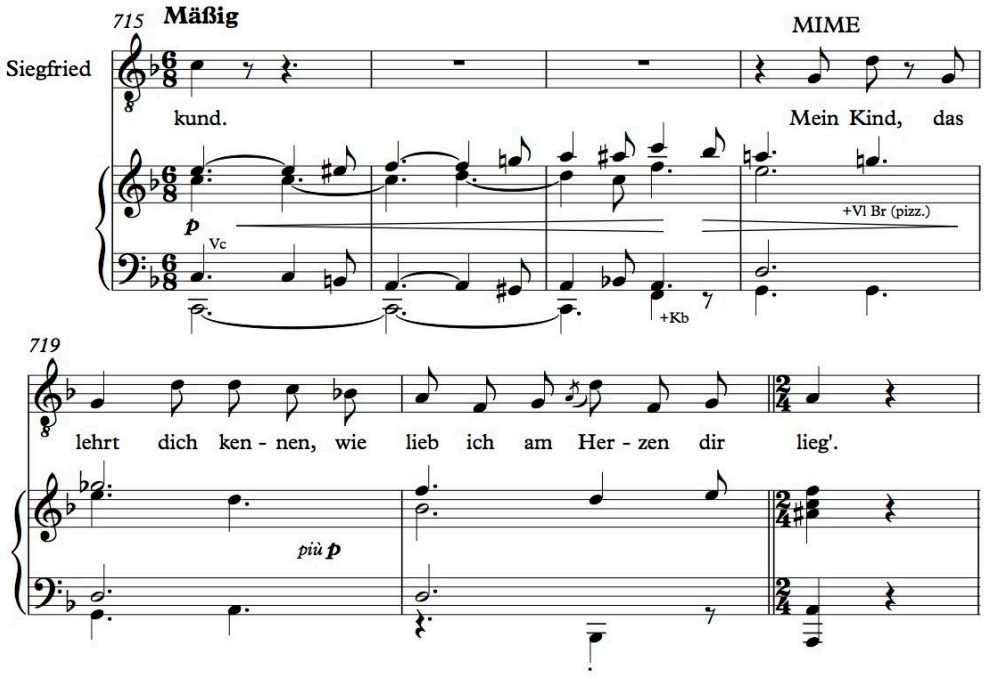


Siegfried, I, 252–55 (‘*Siegfrieds Hornruf*’ [Siegfried’s horn call])

Ex. 15

Similarly, the new motif that Laurence Dreyfus has linked to the ‘*Kosen*’ [caress] that Siegfried has noted among birds (*Siegfried*, I, 786–88)—associated by Dreyfus with Siegfried’s Wälsung parents’ love—comprises a number of bars and is of a predominantly ‘expansive and melodic’ character (Ex. 16).[893] This could equally be said of the chords that prepare the entry of the Wanderer (Ex. 17):

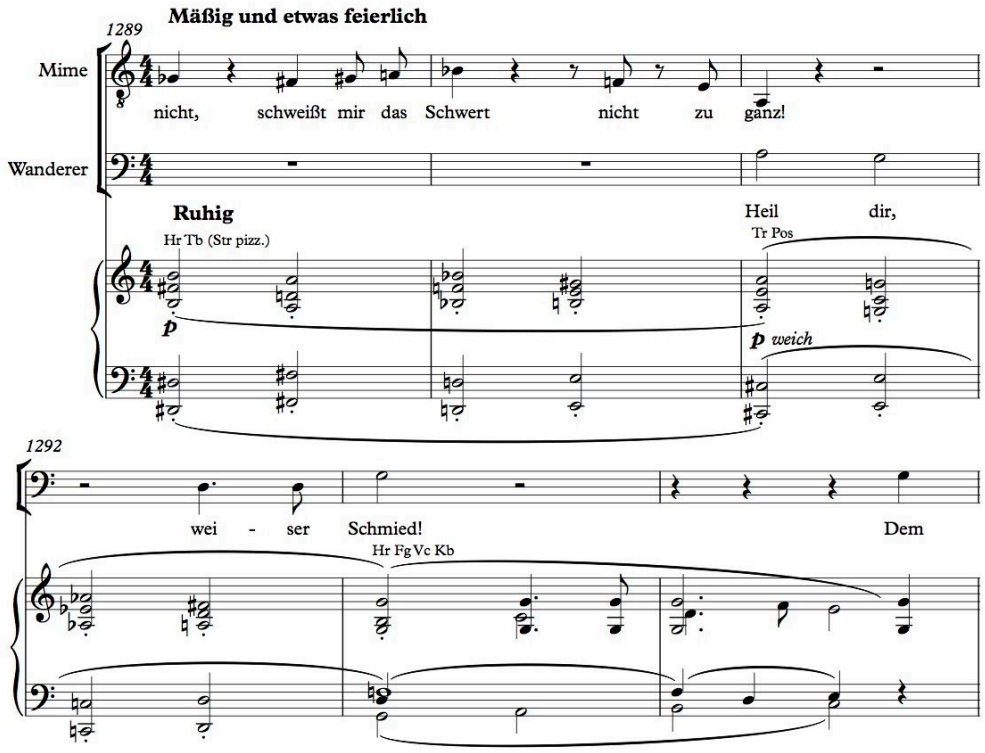
[893] Dreyfus, ‘Siegfried’s Masculinity’, 12–3.



Siegfried, I, 715–21 (Motif of Wälsung parents' love)[894]

Ex. 16

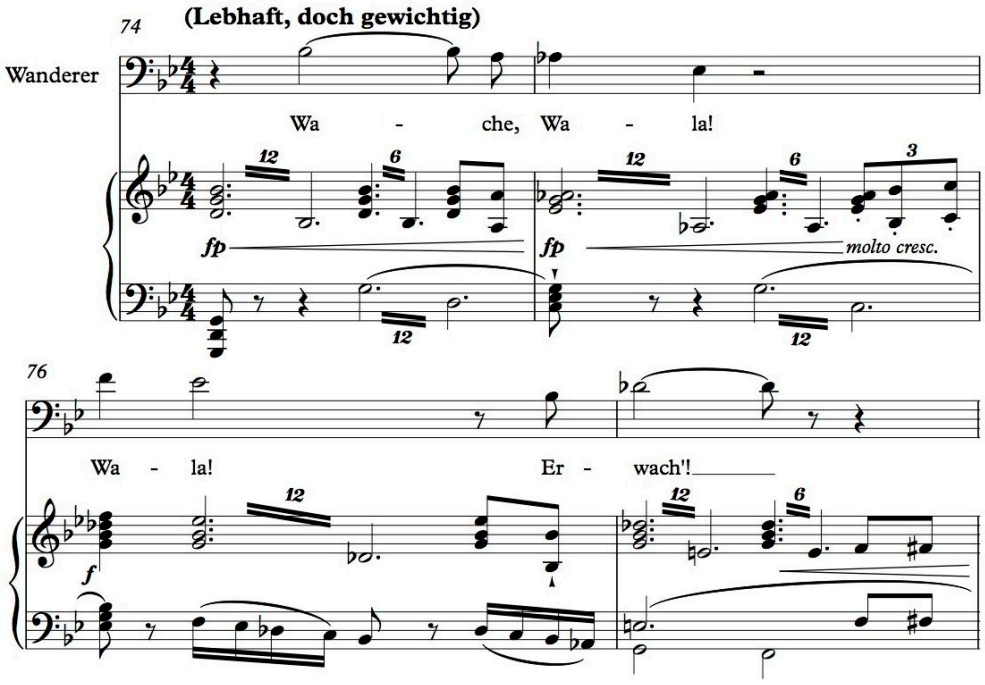
[894] Westernhagen refers to this motif as 'Siegfried's love of nature' (*The Forging of the 'Ring'*, 135).



Siegfried, I, 1289–93 (‘*Wanderer-Motiv*’ [Wanderer motif])

Ex. 17

The first new motivic material that the listener encounters in Act III during the Erda-Wanderer scene is introduced by the Wanderer to the words ‘Wache, Wala! Wala! Erwach’!’ [‘Waken, Wala! Wala! Awake!’] and may be perceived as a ‘predominantly short, pithy’ melody:



Siegfried, III, 74–7

Ex. 18

This series of contrasting examples shows that the claims advanced by these representative Wagner commentators tend to push towards generalizations under the orthodox banner of palpable stylistic differences.

The basic features of Wagner's motivic language in *Siegfried*, Act III adhere to the same set of principles that underlie the motifs of Acts I and II. The ensuing presentation of evidence from the Act III sketches suggests that the conceptual framework that I have established with reference to the types of motivic occurrences is applicable to these sketches without limitation. Before presenting several examples that substantiate this claim, I will give something of a general picture of the sketches for Act III. In particular, the first sketches for Act III reflect traces of Wagner's possible averseness against the 'melodic moments' that stem from the earlier *Ring* parts and that he is bound to work with in order to finish the tetralogy. It is a peculiar feature of the Act III sketches that Wagner spends less time on filling in motivic contours. The 'old' motifs are written with a great deal of speed or even reluctance as though Wagner was indeed fed up with them. This peculiarity is reflected in a further reduction to mere motivic silhouettes instead of series of notes:

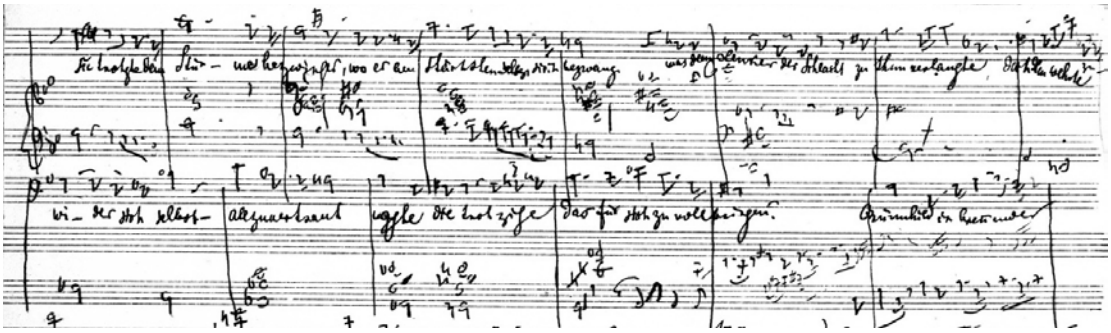


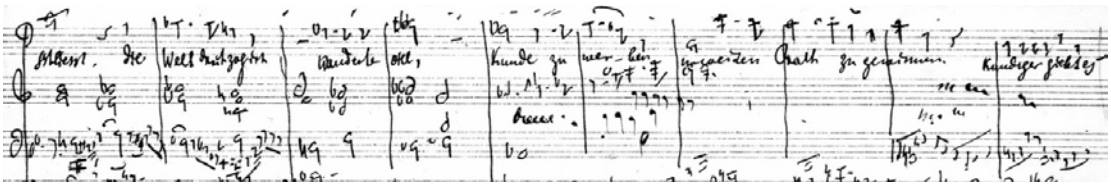
Plate 8

Kompositionsskizze, III, 3^{V} (detail)

(*Siegfried*, III, 250–63)

Wagner reduces the time spent on motivic statements to the bare minimum in a seemingly hectic manner. At the end of this excerpt from another Act III folio, the recurrence of the dotted rhythm commonly associated with the Valkyries is carelessly jotted down. The motivic statement seems deprived of all notational contour. What was reserved to grace notes in the sketches for Acts I and II has turned into the standard notational appearance of familiar motifs in Act III.

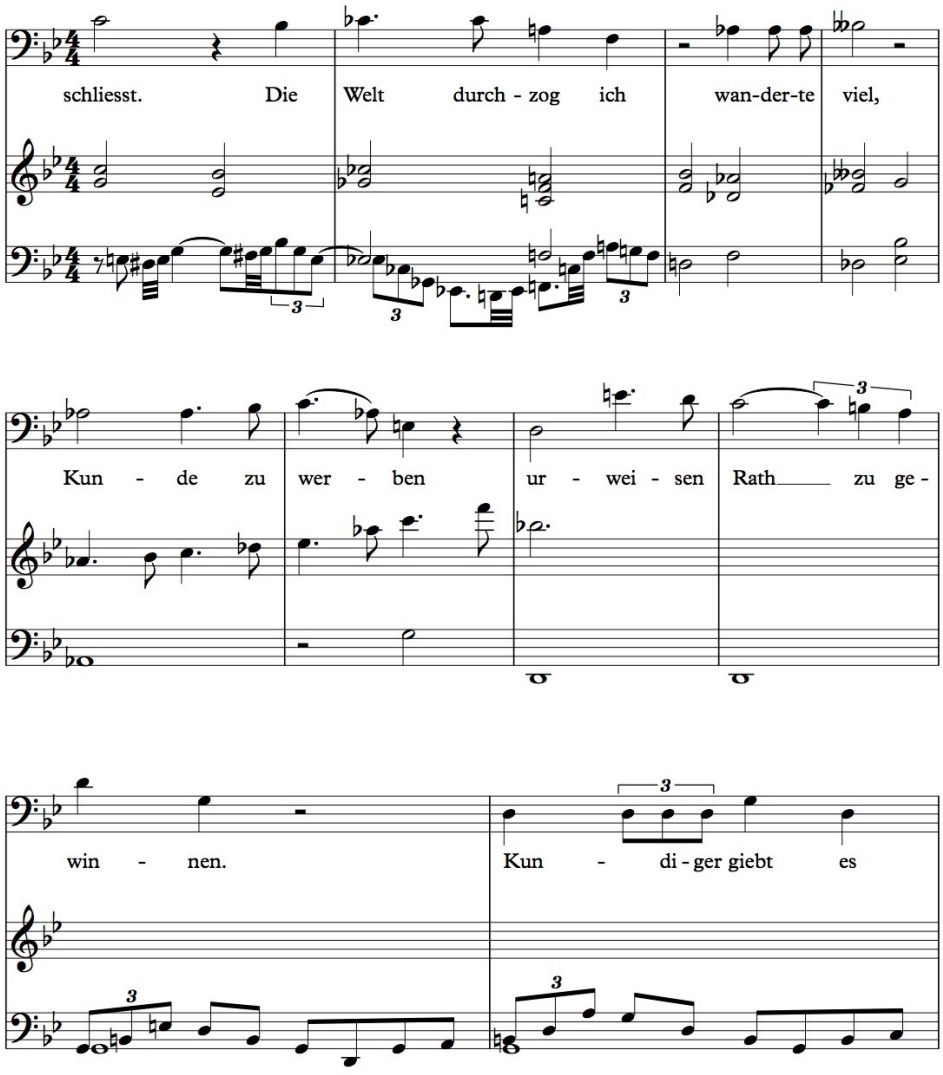
The highest degree of density as displayed in the *Ring* up to this point is far from having an analogue in an increased notational accuracy. On the contrary, the compositional process seems expedited considerably as the handwriting is hasty and Wagner's indications are seemingly reduced to less than the absolute minimum. Although there is only little information given on the pages of the third act sketches, Wagner prefers three-stave systems throughout (four staves are required for the love duet). The vocal line, as one would expect, continues to be fully realized, which reiterates the fact that Wagner places highest emphasis on this component. The following transcription shows evidence of the increased motivic density that holds sway over the course of the third act:



Kompositionsskizze, III, 2^{V} (detail)

(*Siegfried*, III, 151–60)

Transcription:



Ex. 19 [=Ex. 5]

The recurrence of the material that has first been heard in connection with the entry of the Wanderer in *Siegfried*, Act I—inserted into this sketch in complete naturalness—is accompanied by intricate 'meandering' figures that give a further 'emotional' layer to the imagery associated with the Wanderer.

The quality that Wagner is emphasizing in Act III is a tendency towards longer elaborations of motivic material of the third kind. Stein draws a parallel to the *Meistersinger* orchestra which is 'not so much concerned with the intricate

interweaving of themes as with free symphonic variation of one or two motifs'.[895] It is the absence of the vocal line over longer distances that characterizes an increasing number of sketches:

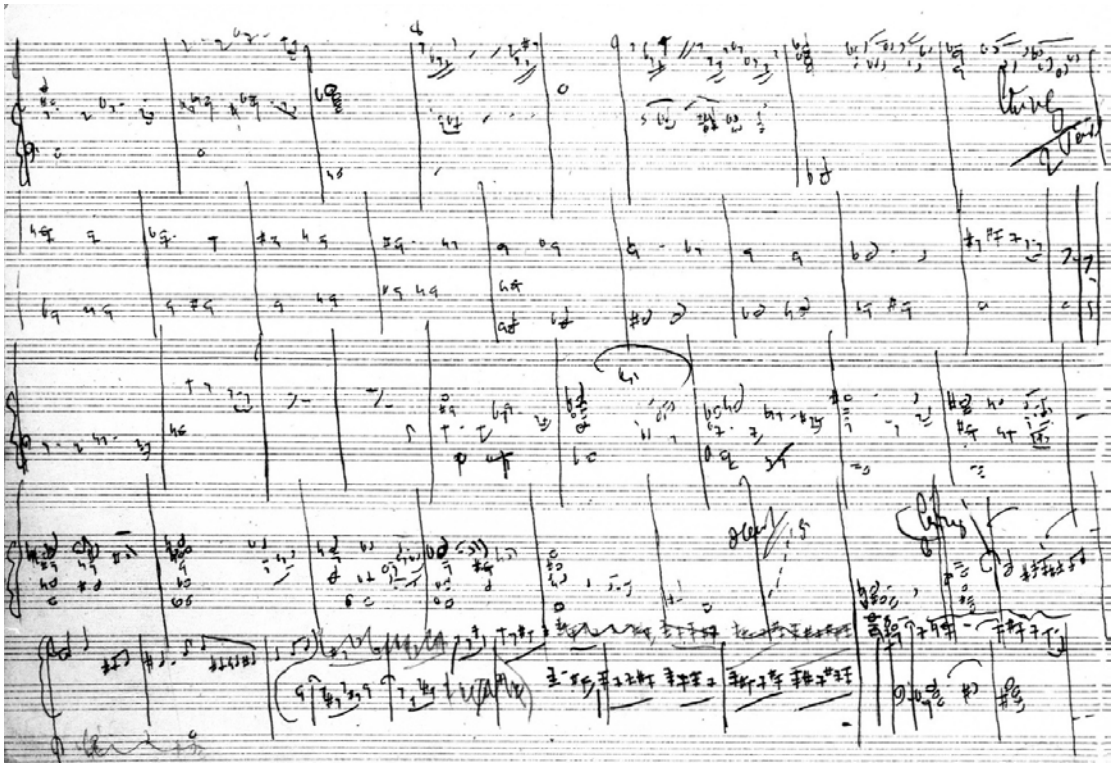


Plate 9

Kompositionsskizze, III, 10^{V}

(*Siegfried*, III, 298 [subsequently amended]–346)

Apart from the bottom system, this folio—Wagner is sketching here Brünnhilde's awakening—conveys the impression of being a mere assembly of chords. The motifs in Wagner's head have turned into fixed agents that he does not have to write down any longer. In comparison with the first two acts, these pages seem less worked over as so much space is left blank.

[895] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 190.

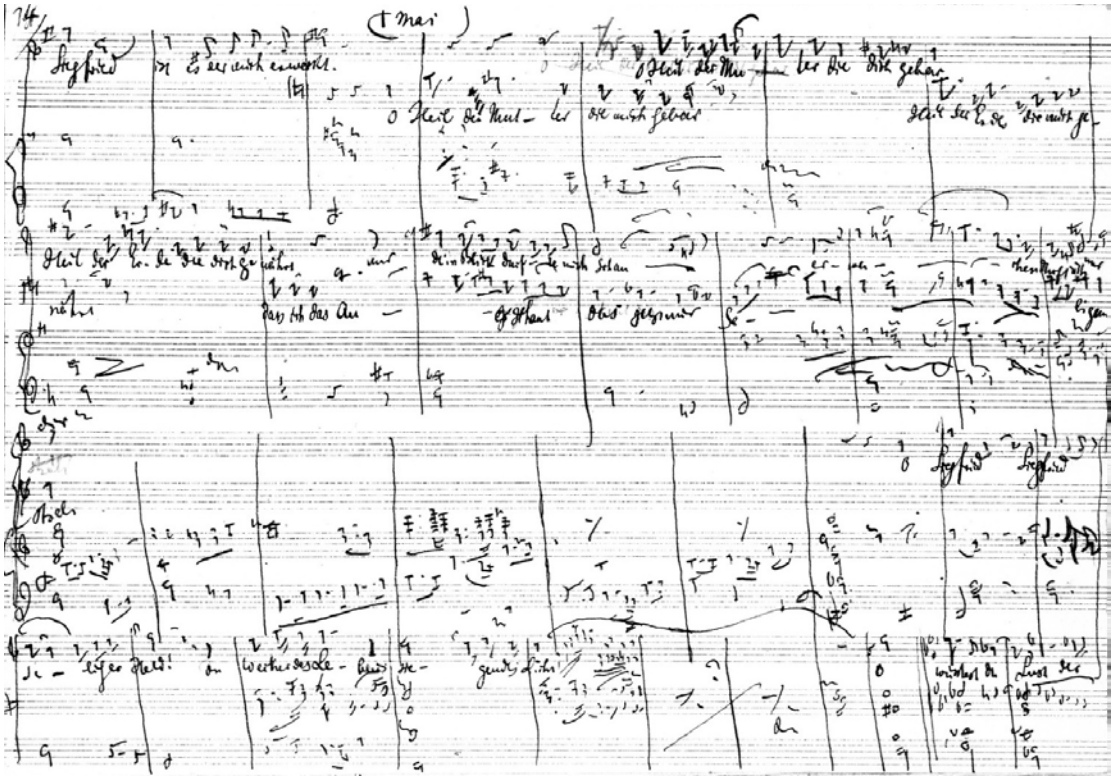


Plate 10

Kompositionsskizze, III, 14[R]

(*Siegfried*, III, 1129–63)

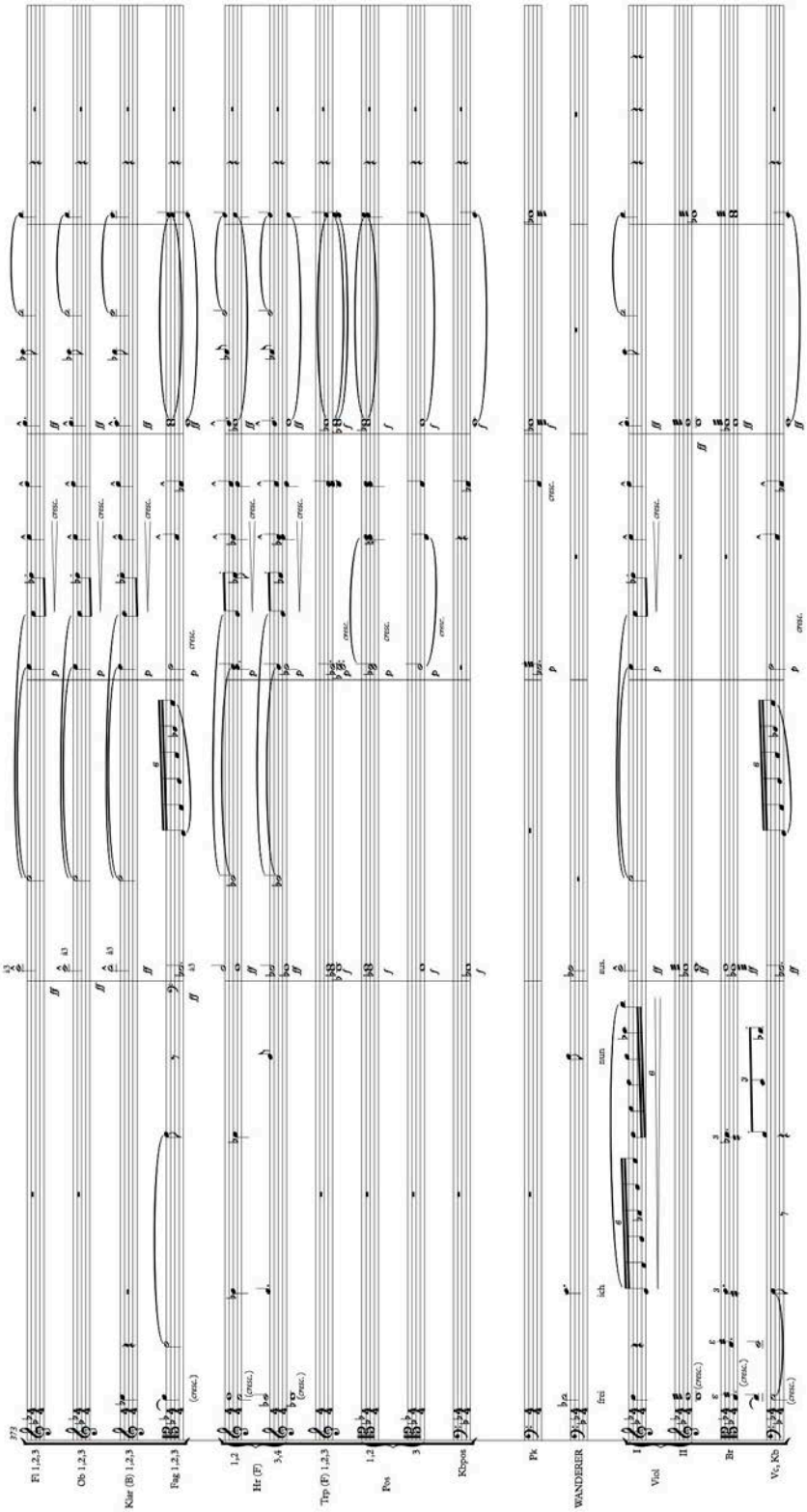
The gaps between the textual phrases have become longer. As opposed to Acts I and II, the music in Act III seems to have taken over the drama. This role that was primarily assigned to the vocal line in the previous acts has shifted towards the motifs. The motifs, formerly bridging commentary elements, have matured into more independent entities to the extent that the vocal line itself is turned into a cognitive commentator that constantly helps the listener to vindicate the emotions that are aroused through the music. The 'free' musical development seems linked to the motifs to a lesser degree. Closer inspection, however, militates against this impression as Wagner is able to uphold the maxim of deriving the orchestral texture from the motifs.

IV.4. Different appearances of one motif from *Siegfried*

The following case study of one representative motif from *Siegfried* drives home my claim that Wagner's continued reliance on the validity of his notion of the

Gefühlsverständnis permeates and thus gives shape to his motivic cells. After having established the preeminent role of *Siegfried* within Wagner's compositional output, I aim to shed light on how Wagner effectively manipulated the intervallic sequence of his motifs in accordance with his own set of rules. The selected motif which is taken from Act III of *Siegfried* also supports my corollary claim that Wagner's concept of the *Gefühlsverständnis* is unreservedly at work in Act III of the music drama although the applicability of *Opera and Drama* has been severely contested by a number of influential scholars.

The motif in question has been carefully chosen in view of its suitable scope for documentary coverage. For the sake of convenience, the motif is introduced by referring to its conventional label, '*Welterbschaftsmotiv*' [motif of world inheritance], a designation that unlike many others does not seem to originate with Wagner himself. I have argued earlier that these seemingly authoritative motif names were never intended to leave the compositional workshop. Also, the knowledge that we have about Wagner's use of his own motif labels reveals that they were not necessarily fixed. For the purposes of this study, therefore, I have chosen to refer to the *Welterbschaftsmotiv* as Motif *A*. The following reproduction shows the final version of the exposition of Motif *A* in *Siegfried*:



Ex. 20

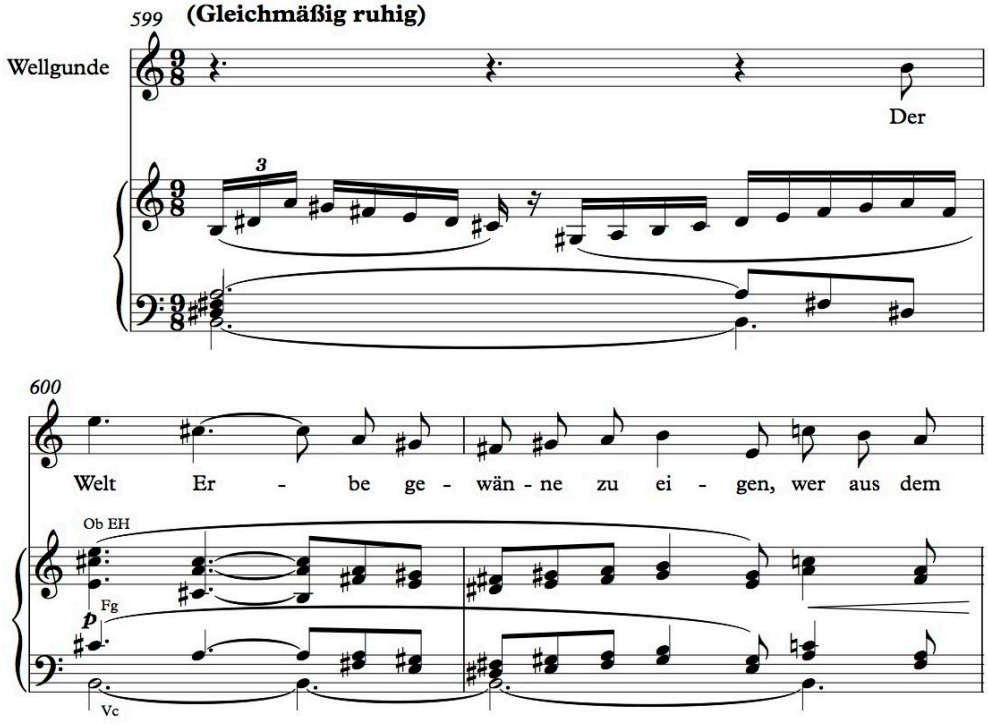
Motif *A* [*Welterbschaftsmotiv*] upon its first appearance in *Siegfried*, III, 373–78

The inadequacy of the label

The conventional label of '*Welterbschaftsmotiv*' that the *Leitfadenliteratur* came to attach to Motif *A* serves as a strong example of how misleading the verbal markers are and of how they interfere with a reception in accordance with Wagner's ideal. Stein, for instance, argues that this particular motivic occurrence is intended to work out a purely musical instead of a poetic-musical unit, as 'there is no functional reason for the appearance of the motif', functional meaning in the *Opera and Drama* sense.[896] There is nothing in Stein's account to substantiate the reasons why this passage is supposed to be mere musical decoration. Stein is expressly referring to Wolzogen's erroneous cognomen '*Welterbschaftsmotiv*' and there is good reason to assume that Stein is prevented from rightly assessing the meaning as expressed in this passage as he is misguided by the existence of a label.

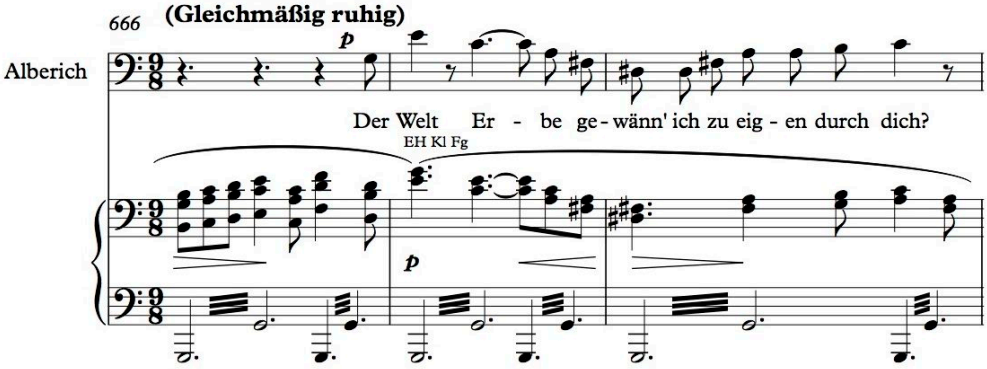
Even if one would accept the occurrence of a catchword—as Dahlhaus has argued—as triggering a motivic statement, the link between *A* and this particular label remains obscure. The prose line containing the catchword '*Welt Erbe*' [world inheritance] that gave rise to this nomenclature is in fact associated with different musical material. The orchestra's comment following Wotan's phrase: 'Weih't ich in wütendem Ekel des Niblungen Neid schon die Welt; dem herrlichsten Wälsung weis' ich mein Erbe nun an' ['Once I declared in my loathing the Niblung might claim all the world; today to the Wälsung I have bequeathed my realm'] (*Siegfried*, III, 385–87) centres on a motif that Wagner has associated with Valhalla, a derivative of the *Ringmotiv*.[897] Although the phrase in question is flanked by Motif *A* and the *Walhallmotiv*, there are two earlier instances in which Wagner specifically refers to the *Ringmotiv* when mentioning the '*Welt Erbe*' in the *Ring* (*Rheingold*, 599–603 and 666–68):

[896] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 200.
[897] *Über die Anwendung*, 244: '[…] dann aber zur Erscheinung der im Morgenroth erdämmernden Götterburg "Walhall" das nicht minder einfache Motiv [musical example] vernommen worden […]'. ('but then the not less simple motif [musical example] is being heard in connection with the god's castle "Valhalla" that is glowing at dawn').



Ex. 21

Rheingold, 599–601

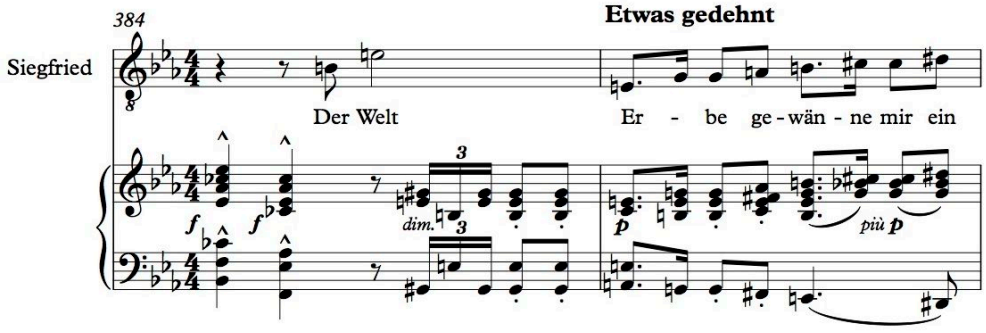


Ex. 22

Rheingold, 666–68

The catchword recurs in *Götterdämmerung* and this time Wagner attaches a derivation of the *Walhallmotiv* to it.[898]

[898] Wagner has described the kinship of these motivic transformations in *Über die Anwendung*, 243–44.



Ex. 23

Götterdämmerung, III, 384–85

These examples show that Motif *A* is in fact not related to the '*Welt Erbe*'. This divergence may be the reason why this motif has been renamed '*Siegfriedliebemotiv*' [motif of Siegfried's love] in most of the guides.[899] Nevertheless, the designation '*Welterbschaftsmotiv*' strangely persists in both professional and popular circles.[900]

As an attempt to overcome the verbal label attached to Motif *A*, I aim to explore the ways in which this particular motif still adheres to Wagner's principles as expressed in *Opera and Drama*. To this end, a selection of different versions of Motif *A* together with considerations pertaining to the motif's placement and role within Act III are exposed to close critical analysis and interrogation. Since Wagner's tenet of the *urmelodisches Ausdrucksvermögen* is intrinsically linked with a motif's intervallic structure, it seems legitimate to confine the investigation to the role of this specific sonorous parameter in Wagner's quest to enhance the motifs' capacity to be 'comprehended' emotionally. Before aiming to approximate the potential 'music-emotion relationship' instead of the conventional 'word-tone relationship'—so to speak—of Motif *A* over the following pages, two crucial preliminary questions need to be raised in order to identify whether one could argue in favour of a hierarchy between the different motivic statements: is there a prototype of a given motif and what is the significance of a motif's first occurrence.

[899] Lothar Windsperger (ed.), *Das Buch der Motive: Aus Opern und Musikdramen Richard Wagners*, 2 vols. (Mainz, 1920), II, 34.
[900] Dieter Borchmeyer, '"… sehnsüchtig blicke ich oft nach dem Land Nirwana …" Richard Wagners buddhistisches Christentum', *wagnerspectrum* 2/2007, 24.

The prototype of a motif

Before starting his *Kompositionsskizzen*, Wagner determines an *Urform* [primary version] of each motif. We have heard that Wagner's compositional workshop was 'full of such scraps', sheets on which a motif was noted.[901] This study's central interpretative task would ideally be performed in relation to what represents the primary version of Motif *A*. Such an *Urtyp* [prototype] would serve as a fixed reference point in an investigation of the various transmutations of Motif *A*. The search for a motif's primary version in Wagner, however, is impeded by the often innumerable transformations to which he subjects his motifs over the course of the work. Scholarship, for that reason, seems to agree that, as Eero Tarasti has put it, there is nothing like a 'definitive' form of a 'leitmotif'.[902] Hans-Joachim Bauer also denies the existence of an 'ideal type' of a leitmotif but settles for a compromise by presenting a number of variants for each of his discussed motifs.[903] In order to be able to assess the totality of all statements of Motif *A* in their finished appearance, I have assembled all of its occurrences across the *Ring* in Annexe 1.

Wagner's accentuation of the '*Vorführung des Aktes der Gebärung der Melodie*' [demonstration of the act of giving birth to melody] in *Opera and Drama*, however, suggests that the ideal melody is striving after a definitive form which is finally reached 'at its birth'. Wagner explains that 'although the complete melody is gradually disclosed over the *course* of the piece of music the artist embraces this melody *from the very beginning*'.[904] This approach seems to account for the existence of several independent and self-contained motivic statements on a number of *Einzelskizzen* (Ex. 24–6). Hence, Westernhagen gets away with insouciantly mentioning that Wagner wrote a 'recognizable prototype' of a particular motif.[905] In fact, it is a peculiarity of the leitmotif compendia to rely on the existence of such prototypes as the tables present what the respective authors have identified as definitive versions of each motif. The leitmotivic listener is encouraged to 'learn' this catalogue of prototypes, a theory—as we have seen—that Wagner came to reject.

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[901] See n. 776.
[902] Tarasti, *Semiotics of Classical Music*, 217.
[903] Hans-Joachim Bauer, *Wagners "Parsifal": Kriterien der Kompositionstechnik* (Munich, 1977), 8.
[904] *OuD*, *GSD*, III, 315: '[…] uns wohl erst im *Verlaufe* des Tonstückes die volle Melodie als fertig hinstellt, diese Melodie dennoch beim Künstler *von Anfang herein* schon als fertig vorauszusetzen ist […]'.
[905] Westernhagen, *Forging of the 'Ring'*, 242.

There is good reason to argue that the prototype of a motif is reached at the moment of complete saturation with extra-musical meaning that we have identified as the phenomenon of 'verse melody'. Wagner emphasizes that '[t]he verse melody of the poet actualizes now—as it were—before our eyes, the thought [*Gedanken*], i.e. the remembered sensation that is nonpresent into a present, actually perceptible sensation'.[906] *Versmelodie* is therefore the catalyst that turns an unconditioned emotion into an actualized one. 'Commonsensical intuition', to use a phrase by Kofi Agawu, suggests that the *Urform* of a motif coincides with the moment in which the 'feelings expressed in [a] motif are communicated by a distinct individual with reference to a distinct object and are thus made distinct, that is, precisely conditioned'.[907] The existence of several *Einzelskizzen* for Motif *A* indicates that Wagner searches for its most 'stable' or 'complete' version that in accordance with his theory—if still applicable—would be reserved for the motif's presentation in terms of 'verse melody'. Those motivic statements not presented via *Versmelodie* represent the 'emotional supplement' to an incomplete manifestation of the character's emotion since outside this 'fusion point' the character is prevented from exposing the full sensation of his feelings to the audience.[908] Hence, the motif has not yet reached or has left already its most 'balanced' or prototypical version.

It seems plausible to contend that the prototype of a motif is reached whenever there is something that merits the description of the 'firmest' instrumental characterization of a given motif. Cone suggests that the 'melodic moments' represent mental images and that 'the closer a character comes to a conscious realization of the full import' of such an image, 'the firmer its instrumental characterization becomes'.[909] There is good reason to argue that the firmest instrumental characterization of Motif *A* coincides with the first statement of the motif (Ex. 20) as this motivic occurrence seems unsurpassed in grandeur and force substantiated by way of some kind of orchestral tutti. There are, however, motifs whose very nature

[906] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 183: 'Die Versmelodie des Dichters verwirklicht nun, gewissermaßen vor unseren Augen, den Gedanken, d. h. die aus dem Gedenken dargestellte ungegenwärtige Empfindung, zu einer gegenwärtigen, wirklich wahrnehmbaren Empfindung.'
[907] Kofi Agawu, 'Does Music Theory Need Musicology', *Current Musicology* 53 (1993), 90; *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 185: '[…] wenn die in dem Motive ausgesprochene Empfindung vor unsren Augen von einem bestimmten Individuum an einem bestimmten Gegenstande, als ebenfalls bestimmte, d. h. wohlbedingte, kundgegeben ward.' (translation adopted from Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 321).
[908] *Ibid*., 200: 'Wir dürfen diese ahnungs- oder erinnerungsvollen melodischen Momente nicht anders vernehmen, als daß sie uns eine von uns empfundene Ergänzung der Kundgebung der Person erscheinen, die jetzt vor unsren Augen ihre volle Empfindung noch nicht äußern will oder kann.'
[909] Cone, *Composer's Voice*, 113.

requires a delicate or fragile instrumentation, especially when approaching their prototype (see for instance Ex. 27). This shows that different degrees of firmness not necessarily follow from different types of instrumental characterization.

The compositional workshop provides sufficient evidence that Wagner gave names to his motifs which is indicative of the existence of primary versions. In the recently published *Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia* (2013), Christian Thorau still contends, however, that 'there is no evidence in his compositional sketches that Wagner named his musical ideas'.[910] Westernhagen showed forty years earlier that Wagner has actually done some labelling himself in his sketches.[911] Jörg Riedlbauer successfully sifted through the *Ring* sketches to look for motifs that are given together with the names of their referents.[912] James Merrill Knapp refers to an example in the *Kompositionsskizze* of *Rheingold* where Wagner has written in a sprawling hand 'Freia' under bars which have no text.[913] One *Siegfried Einzelskizze* that has been reproduced in the present study (Plate 1) displays the label '*Fafner's Ruhe*' [Fafner's rest] by Wagner's hand complete with the concomitant motivic material. There is good reason to believe that whenever Wagner wrote such a label he gave his personal 'imprimatur' to the musical quality of the motif in question.

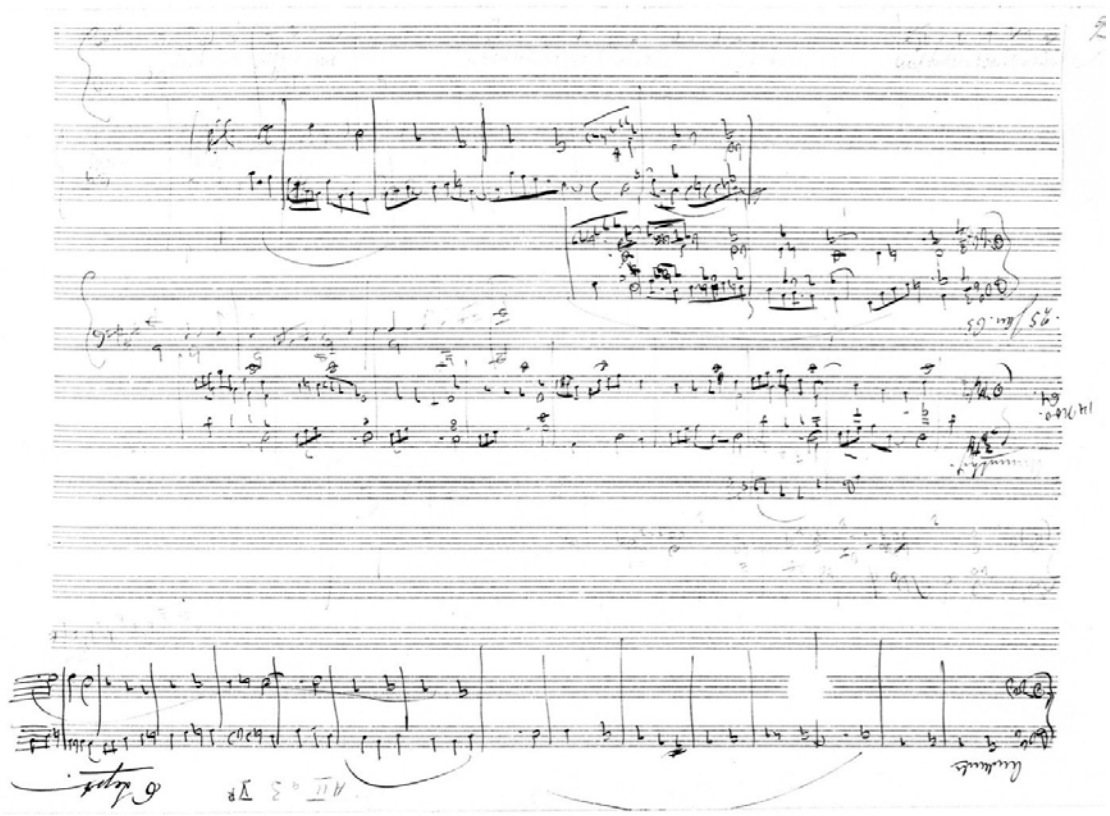
There is also evidence that Wagner did have a particular version of each motif in mind when conversing about them. According to Cosima's diaries, the couple used to refer to short motif names and supposedly their corresponding motivic prototypes. In 1873, she notes that 'to our great astonishment R. comes to meet us, announcing himself from afar with the Siegfried motif'.[914] On 18 November 1879 Cosima mentions that 'he […] played the Siegmund theme' and one day before Wagner's death, Cosima reports that '[h]e goes to the piano, plays the mournful theme "*Rheingold*, *Rheingold*", continues with "False and base all those who dwell up

[910] Christian Thorau, 'Leitmotive Guides', *Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia*, 250.
[911] Westernhagen, *Forging of the 'Ring'*, 29.
[912] Jörg Riedlbauer, 'Wagners "Leitmotive" im "Ring des Nibelungen" und ihre operndramaturgische Tradition', *Österreichische Musikzeitung* 41 (1986), 629–34.
[913] James Merrill Knapp, 'The Instrumentation Draft of Wagner's *Das Rheingold*', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 30 (1977), 292.
[914] *CWD*, I, 656 (amended); *CWT*, I, 706 (11.7.1873): '[…] zu unsrer größten Überraschung, sich durch Siegfried-Motiv in der Ferne anmeldend, kommt uns R. entgegen.'

above." "Extraordinary that I saw this so clearly at that time!"'[915] In all these cases, Wagner will have resorted to an easily recognizable version of the respective motifs.

Although this strong evidence suggests the existence of a motif's *Urform* in Wagner's compositional process, there remain factors that prevent us from identifying this prototype with absolute certainty. From early on, Wagner maintained a strong division between the genetical approach to his works on the one hand and their reception on the other, which was primarily designed to prevent the outer world from acquiring knowledge that belonged to the realm of production. In particular, knowledge of authoritative 'nicknames' or 'labels' conflicts with Wagner's ideal of the *Gefühlsverständnis*. As mentioned earlier, Wagner was determined that 'the layman should never find out what is being said'.[916] As we have limited access to the compositional workshop, it seems natural to look for the prototype of a 'melodic moment' in the surviving *Einzelskizzen* where Wagner's motifs are preserved in their *statu nascendi*. However, one finds that even this body of manuscripts fails to show a motif's primary version beyond reasonable doubt. In the case of Motif *A*, this is exemplified by the existence of several *Einzelskizzen* showing three different versions of this motif:

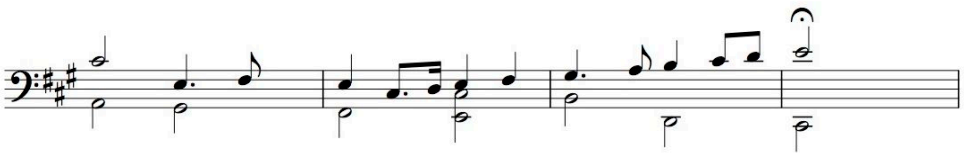
[915] *CWD*, II, 399; *CWT*, II, 446: '[…] er […] das Thema von Siegmund spielt […]'; *CWD*, II, 1009; *CWT*, II, 1113 (12.2.1883): 'Er geht an das Klavier, spielt das Klage-Thema "Rheingold, Rheingold", fügt hinzu: "Falsch und feig ist, was oben sich freut" "Daß ich das damals so bestimmt gewusst habe."'
[916] *SL*, 287; *SB*, V, 370–71 (24.7.1853): '[…] der Laie soll nie etwas davon erfahren.'



NA (A II a 3, V r) [deliberately turned upside down]

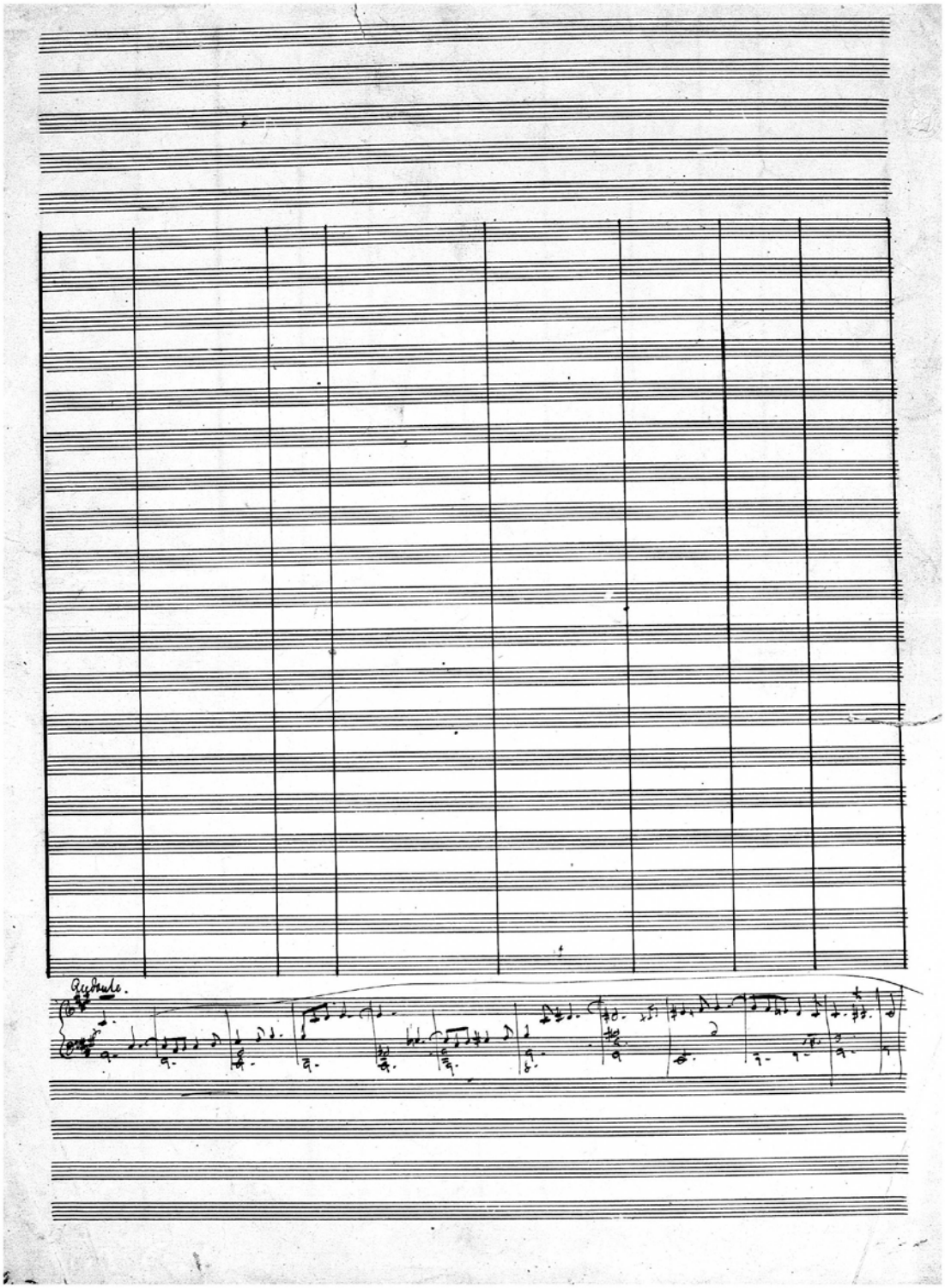
Motif *A* on the seventh stave

Transcription by Bailey, ‘The Method of Composition’, 333, ex. 61:



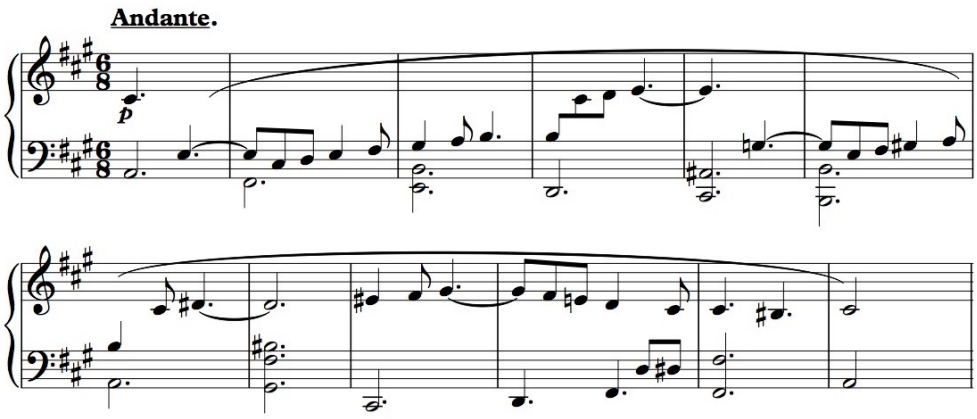
Motif *A*—probably written around 14 November 1864

Ex. 24



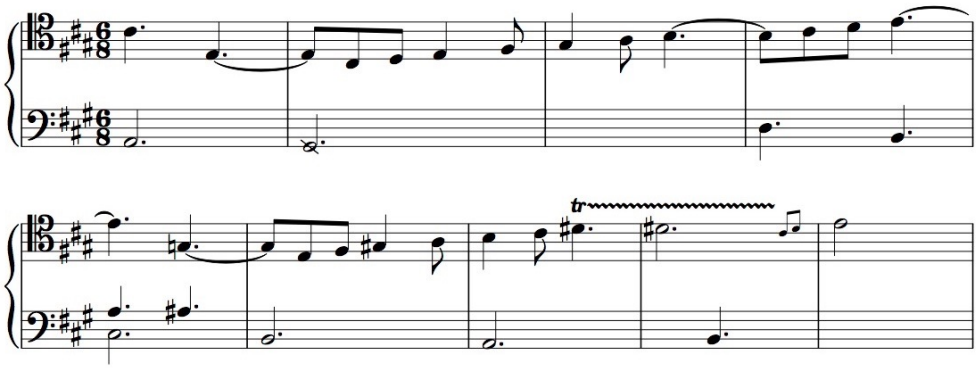
RWG (Hs 120 F)

Transcription:



Motif *A* in a version on the verso page of a *Meistersinger* sketch

Ex. 25



Motif *A* on a different *Meistersinger* sketch, not written before Summer 1866[917]

(transcription by Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 334, ex. 62)

Ex. 26

A comparison of these three transcriptions showing Motif *A* on different *Einzelskizzen* reveals that there can be significant differences between the potential prototypes of one and the same motif as written down by Wagner before inserting them into the *Kompositionsskizze*. According to Glasenapp, Wagner conceived the original motif in

[917] *WWV*, 381.

1856.[918] However, scholarship seems now to agree that the 1864 version shown in Ex. 24 is considered the earliest.[919] The picture that arises from this evidence is that over a period of circa 18 months Wagner writes down several versions of Motif *A*, some of which have survived. The possibility that he is merely testing the motif's potential versatility is negligible as there are distinct differences and it seems implausible that Wagner would have restricted himself to writing down one neat statement at a time during such an experimenting phase. These different statements also show that Wagner, instead of relying on a vague or sketchy motivic shape as stored in his memory, preferred to write down what he seems to have considered 'definitive' versions of Motif *A* at a given time.

Wagner is actively honing the prototype of Motif *A* as he is looking for something like its definite version. In the light of *Opera and Drama*, Wagner is testing whether the motif qualifies as an instance of *urmelodisches Ausdrucksvermögen* which from his point of view would secure its 'emotional comprehensibility'. As we have seen, Wagner firmly believed that a 'melodic moment' must be made 'good enough' to convey an emotion with quasi-scientific precision. The difference between these variants of Motif *A* as preserved in the *Einzelskizzen* and those in the finished version consists of significant changes, predominantly pertaining to the intervallic structure.

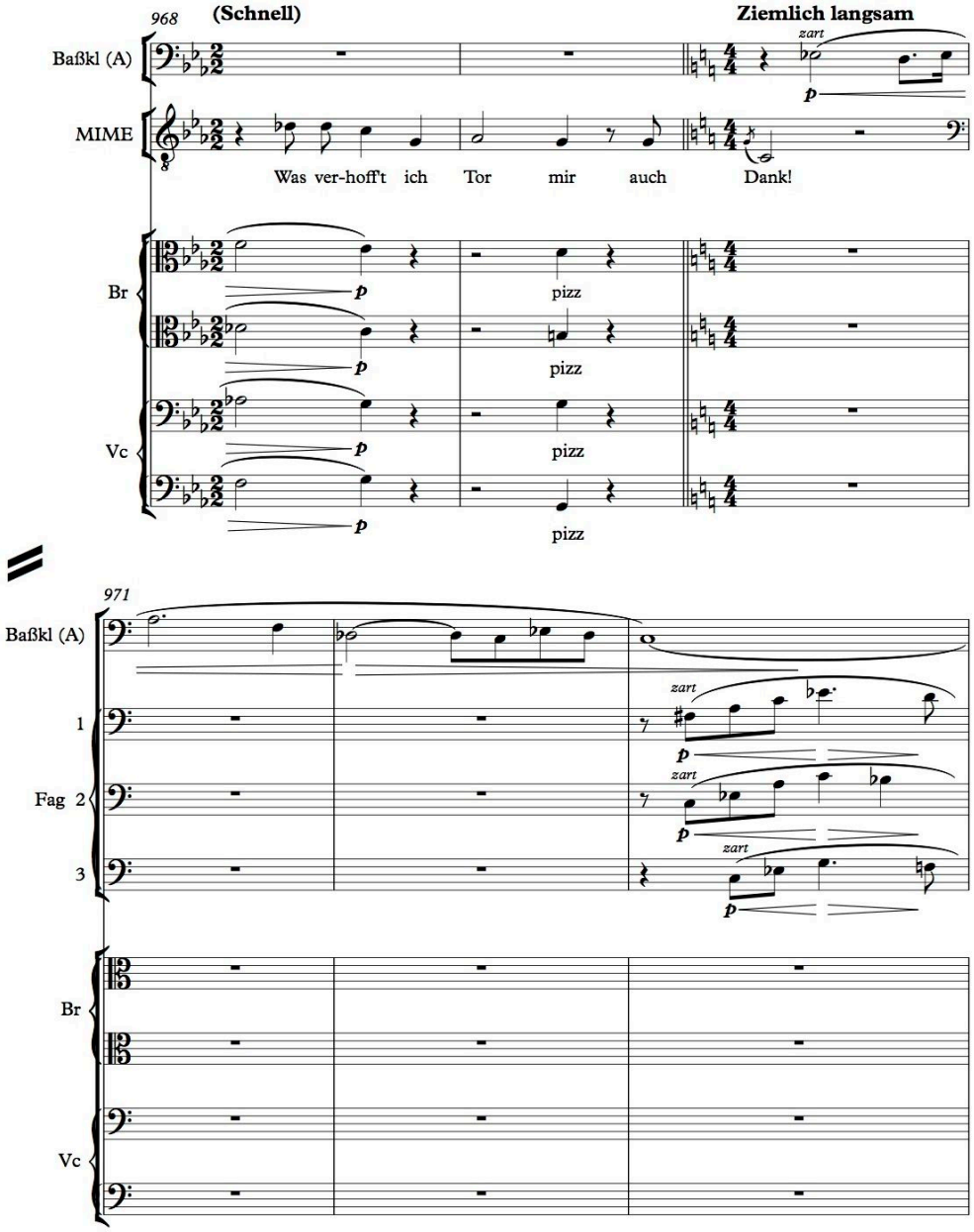
The significance of a motif's first occurrence

There is a spectrum of degrees of assertiveness that Wagner applies to the motivic expositions in order to direct the emotional receptivity of the listener towards a particular effect. Although the exposition of a motif does not necessarily represent its prototype, a motif's first statement constitutes a pivotal moment in the 'life' of each motif. This is the moment when the motif enters the stage and begins its trajectory through the music drama. Wagner's decision to introduce a motif as a type 1 exposition (i.e. no overlap with the vocal line) would spring to mind as a general rule. However, 'motifs of presentiment' may 'creep' into the motivic network and thereby gradually assert their significance. An investigation into different styles of motivic

[918] Glasenapp, *Leben Richard Wagners*, III, 119.
[919] *WWV*, 426.

expositions—even if taken from *Siegfried,* Act III—reflects a number of crucial theoretical ideas from *Opera and Drama*.

The stronger the emotional impact exerted by a motif's first statement, the closer this exposition approaches the motif's prototype or its strongest reference point from a listener's perspective—which in fact seems to be the same. When comparing various first entries of motifs, it becomes apparent that Wagner employs significantly different techniques to establish a new motif. In comparison to the exposition of Motif *A* (Ex. 20), the first statement of another new motif from *Siegfried* seems designed to appeal to different faculties of our emotional receptivity:

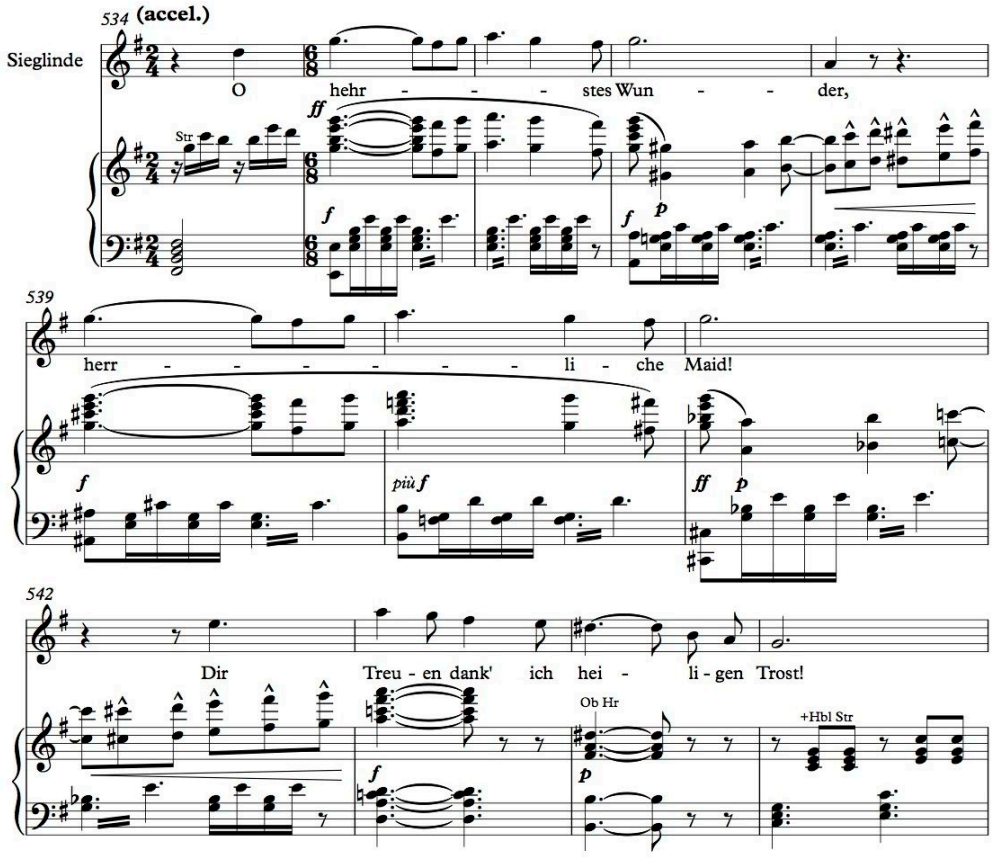


Ex. 27

Siegfried, I, 968–73 (‘*Wälsungenleid-Motiv*’ [‘Wälsung Sorrow’])

The texture is phased down to a single instrument presenting a fragile new musical idea. This goes hand in hand with a new tempo, new tonality and new metrical relationships. From our investigations into Wagner’s sketching process of this passage (Ex. 9), we also know that Wagner subsequently decided to turn this exposition into a type 1 motivic occurrence which can still be inferred from the unusual grace note attached to the word ‘Dank’ [gratitude].

Eero Tarasti's contention that 'no motif is a leitmotif upon its first appearance, but only when it is repeated' effectively denies the importance of a motif's exposition.[920] Donald Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams are also vulnerable to criticism when they say that Wagner 'repeats and spins out the phrase so as to impress it on the memory'.[921] There are motifs that Wagner simply interpolates without immediate (quasi-symphonic) development. The 'melodic moment' that is sung by Sieglinde to the text 'O hehrstes Wunder, herrliche Maid' ['Oh, most magnificent wonder, oh beautiful maiden!'] (*Walküre*, III, 534–41) just occurs once in *Walküre*, albeit in a double statement:



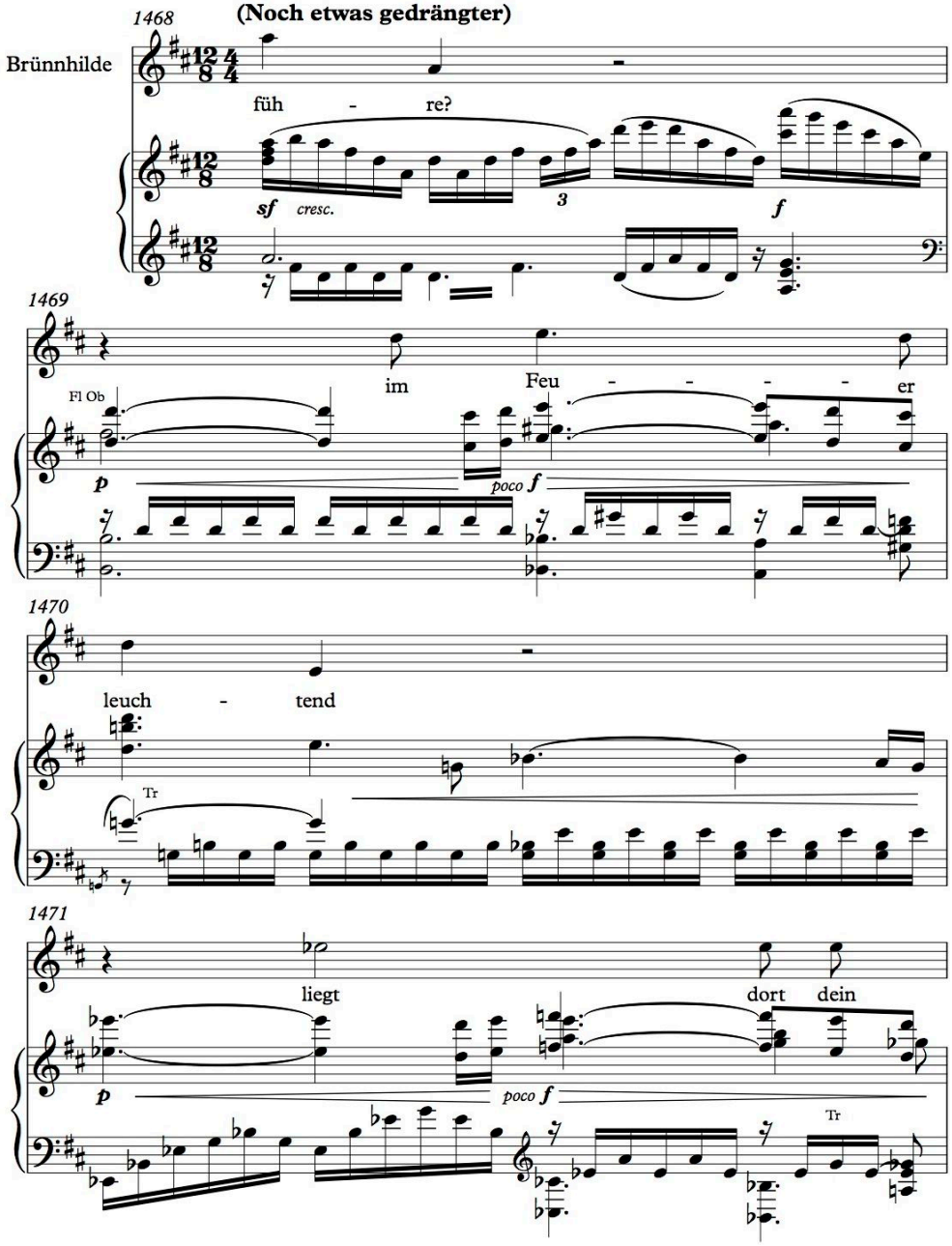
Ex. 28

Walküre, III, 534–45 ('*Verherrlichung Brünnhilden's*' ['Glorification of Brünnhilde'])

The motif is absent from the remainder of *Walküre* and the whole of *Siegfried*. Nevertheless, this 'melodic moment' is chosen to play an integral role in the

[920] Tarasti, *Semiotics of Classical Music*, 217.
[921] Grout/Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 456.

Immolation Scene many hours—even days—after its first appearance as it is held back until *Götterdämmerung*, III, 1469:



Ex. 29

Götterdämmerung, III, 1468–71 (‘Glorification of Brünnhilde’)

It is striking how much Wagner relies on the listener’s ability to identify a new motif and immediately to add a previously unheard ‘melodic moment’ to the inventory of

motifs.[922] Wagner's decision to leave this motif unrepeated for such a long time and then to ascribe to this material the crucial role of bringing the cycle to its close, suggests that he absolutely trusted in the effectiveness of this specific motivic exposition. According to an unpublished letter by Cosima's hand, dated 9 September 1875, Wagner was absolutely aware of this unparalleled motivic 'absence' over long periods of the drama as he said that 'the motif sung by Sieglinde to Brünnhilde is the glorification of Brünnhilde, which at the end of the work will be taken up by the whole'.[923] Three years earlier, Wagner declared that 'I am glad that I kept back Sieglinde's theme of praise for Brünnhilde, to become as it were a hymn to the heroine'.[924] This evidence suggests that Wagner accorded a tremendously high degree of 'emotional comprehensibility' to this particular motif.

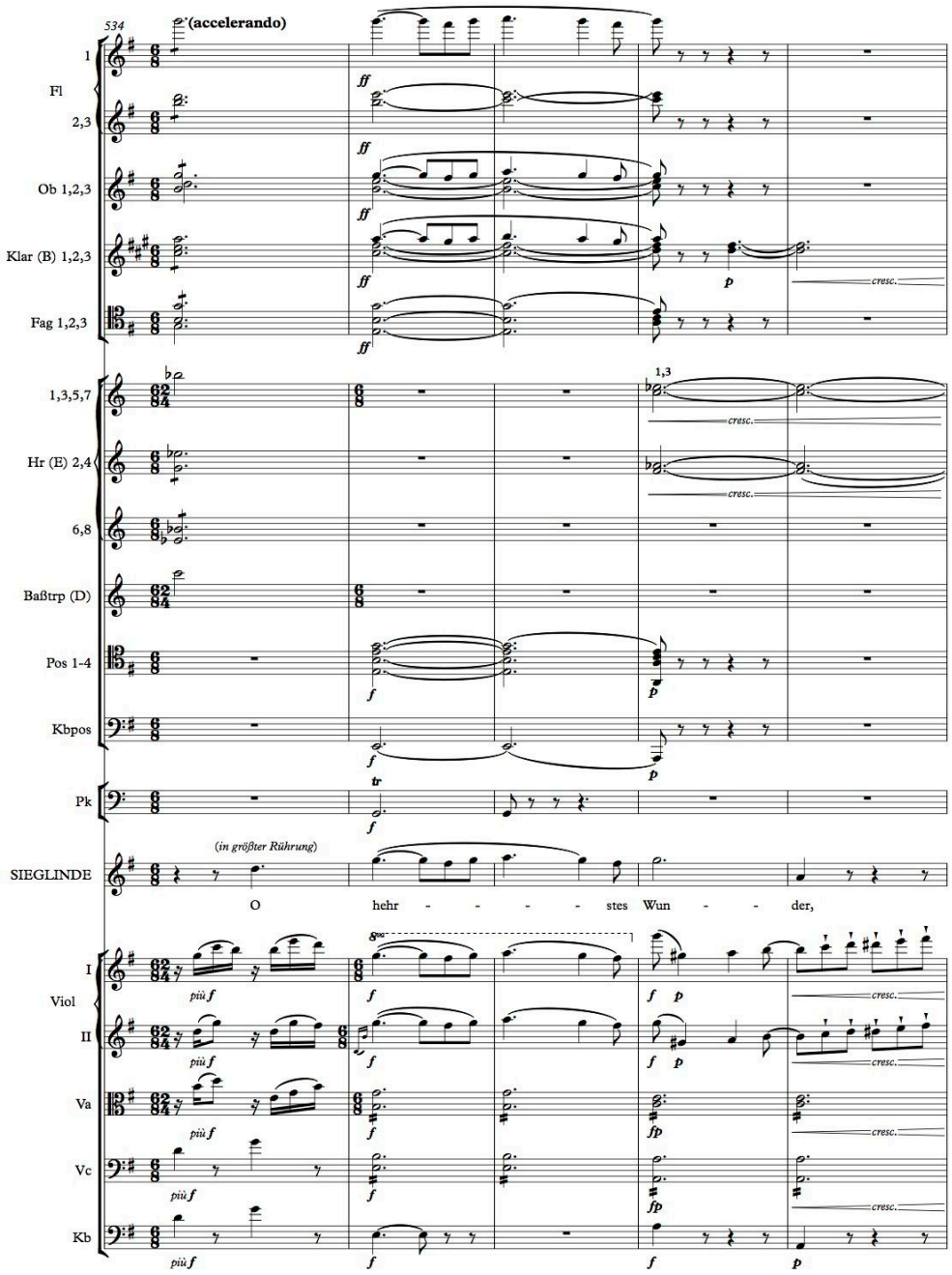
The exposition of a motif needs to stand out against other concurrent motifs that already have an impact on the listener. From an 1859 letter we get the impression that Wagner was after a more or less friendly co-existence with the various motivic statements. Wagner wrote that in his works 'melodic phrases begin and alternate with each other, they thrill and enchant; one follows this theme, another follows that one; they hear and intuit'.[925] The passage suggests that Wagner provides an element of flexibility by offering an 'emotional framework' from which the listener is able to choose different degrees of intensity to suit his emotional understanding. However, there is one major component that seems to affect Wagner's motivic expositions which is the issue of 'motivic economy' that we have discussed previously. There is evidence that Wagner expressly wished recurring motivic statements that demarcate reminiscences to keep to the sidelines. It is worth reiterating that the seeming concurrence between motivic statements is in fact a 'controlled' competition for importance. Porges reports Wagner's following remarks from the first *Ring* rehearsals: 'When the [Valhall] motive is depicting an actual event it should be delivered in a grand style, slowly and broadly, but when serving as a reminiscence—

[922] Tarasti, *Semiotics of Classical Music*, 216–17.
[923] John Deathridge, 'Review of Recent Wagner Literature', *19th-Century Music* 5 (1981), 84: 'Das Motiv welches Sieglinde der Brünnhilde zusingt, [ist] die Verherrlichung Brünnhilden's, welche am Schluss des Werkes gleichsam von der Gesammtheit aufgenommen wird.' (translation from Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 206).
[924] *CWD*, I, 515 (amended); *CWT*, I, 374 (23.7.1872): 'Ich bin froh, daß ich Sieglinden's Lob Thema auf Brünnhilde mir reserviert habe, gleichsam als Chorgesang auf die Held[i]n.'
[925] *SB*, XI, 38 (15.4.1859): '[…] da beginnen und wechseln melodische Phrasen, fesseln und reizen; der Eine hält sich an diess [*sic*] Thema, der Andre an jenes; sie hören und ahnen […]' (translation from Rieger, *Wagner's Women*, 19).

as for example in Sieglinde's narration—it should be slightly faster and with accents less pointed—as it were, in the throwaway style of an experienced actor delivering an interpolated sentence'.[926] This recommendation underlines how Wagner operates a hierarchy to show the different degrees of foregroundedness of motivic statements.

As we have observed how Wagner refrains from repeating the motif sung to the text 'O hehrstes Wunder' over a tremendously long period, this motif's exposition must rank at the very top of Wagner's spectrum:

[926] Porges, *Wagner Rehearsing the 'Ring'*, 12.


534
(accelerando)
1
Fl
2,3
Ob 1,2,3
Klar (B) 1,2,3
Fag 1,2,3
1,3,5,7
Hr (E) 2,4
6,8
Baßtrp (D)
Pos 1-4
Kbpos
Pk
(in größter Rührung)
SIEGLINDE
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I
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Vc
Kb
cresc.
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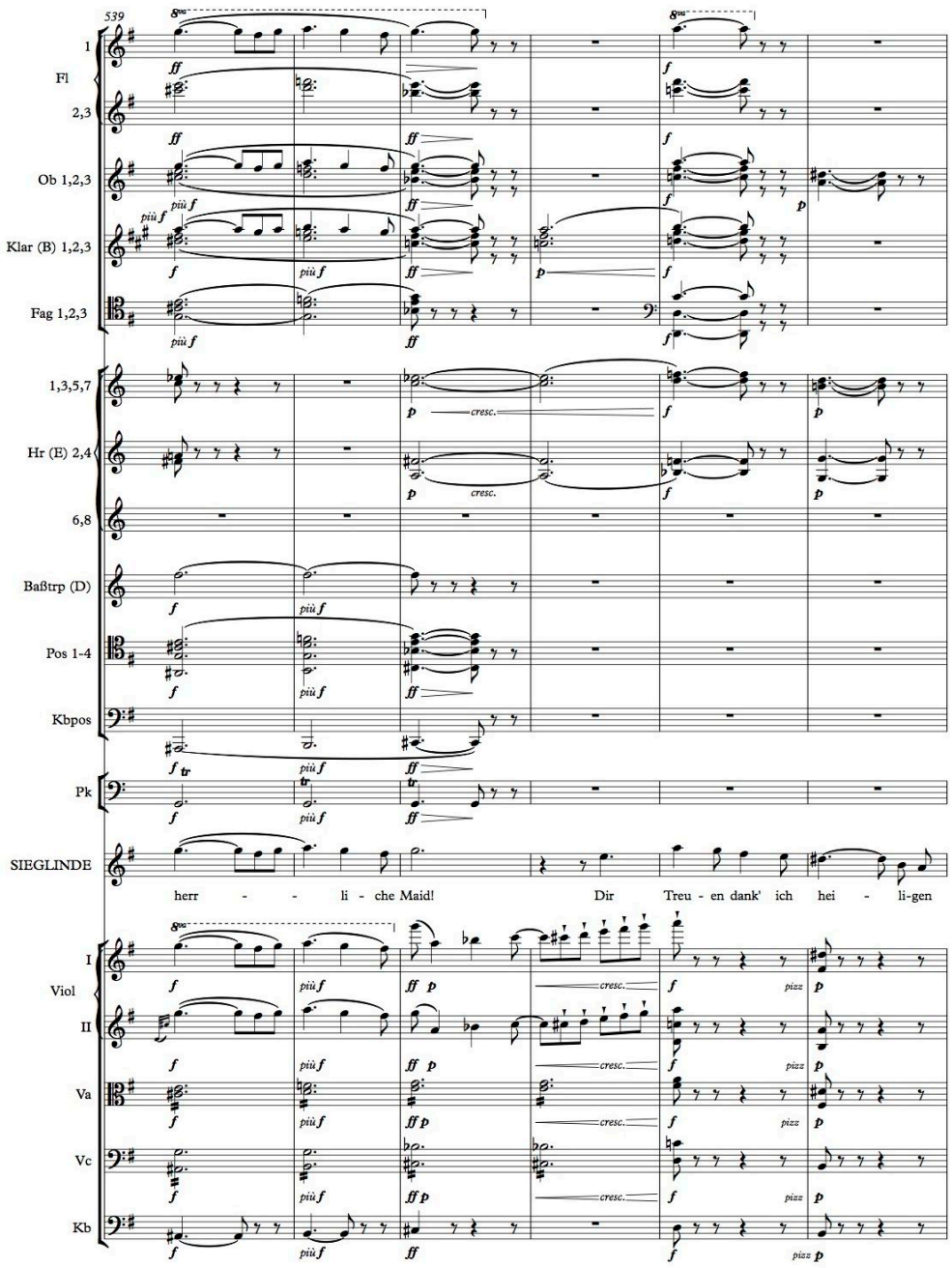
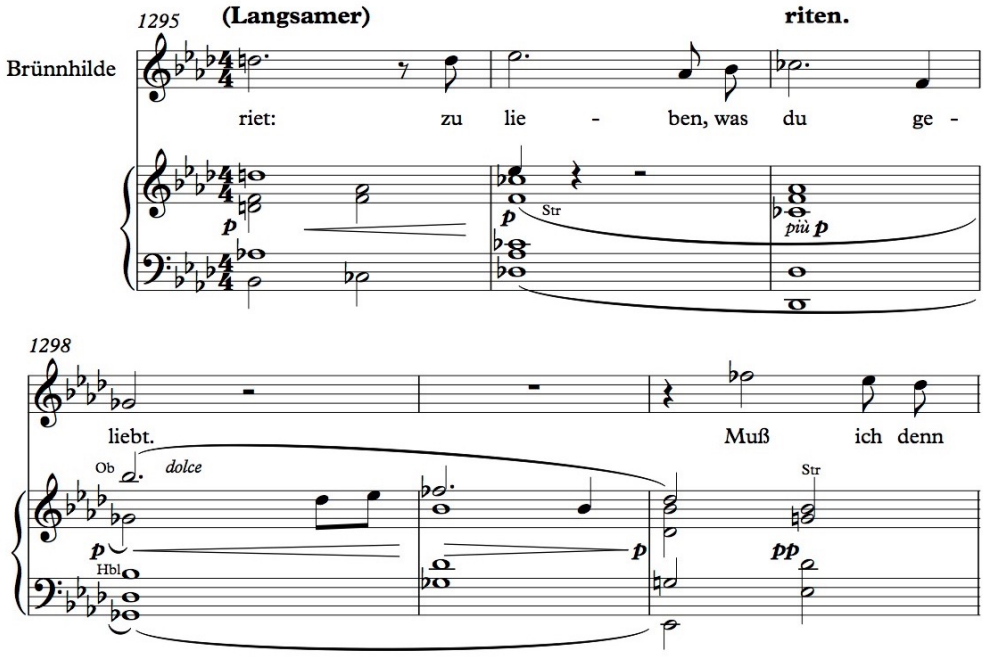


Ex. 30

Walküre, III, 534–44 (‘Glorification of Brünnhilde’)

Rather than relating each motivic occurrence to its preceding statement, the listener compares each new appearance of a motif with the version that had the greatest emotional impact on him. Dahlhaus proposes a ‘relativist’ understanding of Wagner’s motifs and argues that ‘it is seldom wise to take the earliest form in which a theme or motif appears as necessarily its primary form from which all subsequent

forms derive as secondary variations'.[927] For him, a motif's first occurrence is but one of equal applications of the same material. Derrick Puffett challenges Dahlhaus's view by highlighting that the listener encounters the motifs in chronological order which means that each statement is experienced in relation to its previous version.[928] Tarasti, following Dahlhaus's line of argument, however, is convinced that the order in which the motifs appear is immaterial.[929] Such a reading runs counter to at least two of Wagner's principal rules: the introduction of motifs of presentiment and the idea of 'giving birth' to a motif as expounded in *Opera and Drama*. Motifs that have been 'inseminated' with their cognitively processable information must be regarded differently since the musically aroused emotion has been conditioned. The listener becomes aware why a particular emotional 'chord' has been struck. There is good reason to argue that Motif *A* is in fact foreshadowed in *Walküre*, III, 1298–1300 in terms of a motif that is presented along the lines of a 'demonstration of the act of giving birth to the melody':



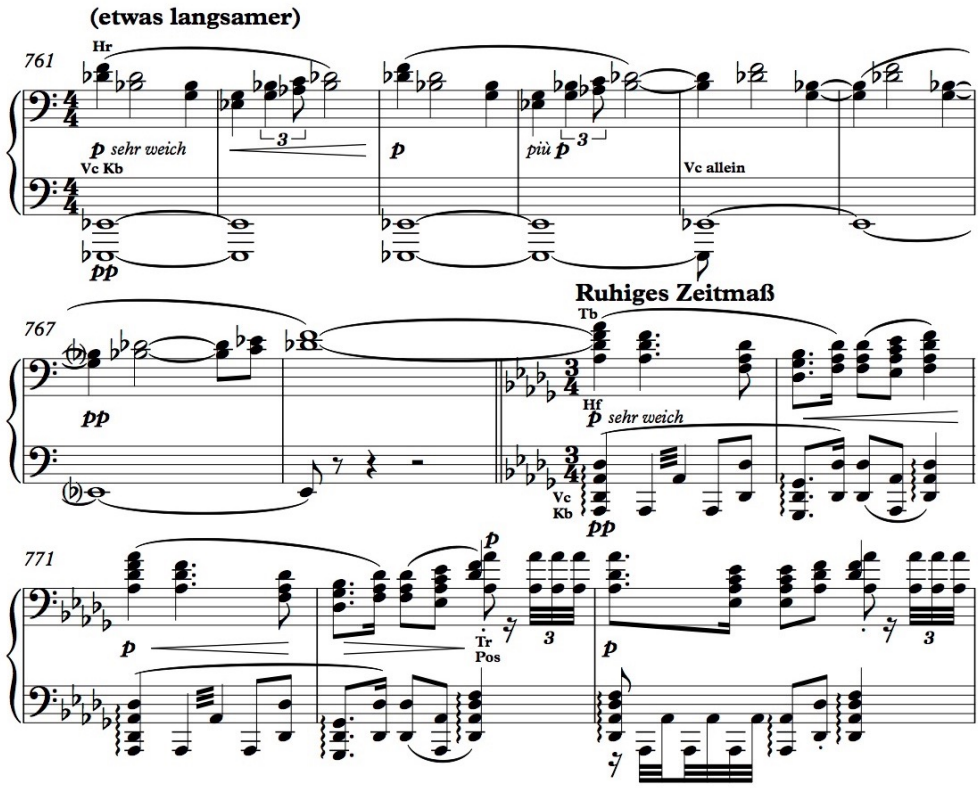
Ex. 31

Walküre, III, 1295–1300

[927] Deathridge/Dahlhaus, *New Grove Wagner*, 112.
[928] Derrick Puffett, *Richard Strauss: Salome* (Cambridge, 1989), 76.
[929] Tarasti, *Semiotics of Classical Music*, 217.

There is of course the possible objection to this interpretation that Wagner had already completed *Walküre* at the time of conceiving new motifs for Act III of *Siegfried*. However, as we have seen, Glasenapp argues that Motif *A* was conceived as early as 1856 which opens up the possibility of a certain overlap between precursors of Motif *A* and *Walküre*. In any case, neglecting for once harmony, voice-leading and function of this particular motivic statement, the intervallic shape of this interpolation from *Walküre* bears significant resemblances to intervallic features of motif *A*. The long note is followed by a downward leaping sixth and there is the characteristic change of direction performed by two quavers. According to Wagner's theory, it would be impossible for such a motivic statement in *statu nascendi* to occur *after* its moment of extra-musical saturation. Therefore, the order of motivic occurrences is far from being immaterial.

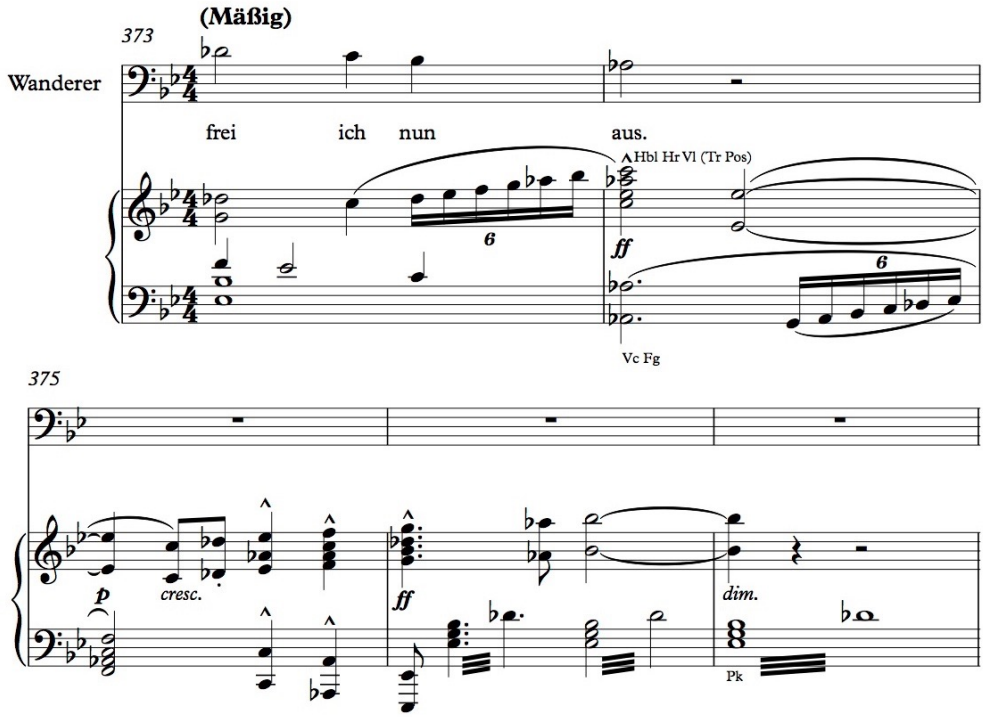
It is worthwhile to compare several types of motivic expositions in an attempt to highlight the significance of preparatory measures. One motivic exposition that is used by many Wagner commentators as an awe-inspiring exposition is the first presentation of the motivic material that Wagner associated with Valhall (*Rheingold*, 769–70):



Ex. 32

Rheingold, 761–73 (‘*Walhall-Motiv*’ [Valhall Motif])

Even in this vocal score reproduction, there is no question about the onset of the new motif: a tempo change goes hand in hand with a change of key and time signatures. Wagner transforms the so-called *Ringmotiv* into the so-called *Walhallmotiv* right ‘in front’ of our ears. The way this new motivic idea is introduced, comfortably fits into Wagner’s notion of the ‘demonstration of the act of giving birth to melody’. The listener is bystander to the organic segmentation and rearrangement of the material. In opposition to this example with its carefully prepared introductory bars, the exposition of Motif *A* is called to mind:



Ex. 33

Siegfried, III, 373–77

The exposition of Motif *A* is one of the most powerful motivic expositions in the whole of the *Ring*. It seems to support my claim that the most prominent statement (in this case it also coincides with its exposition) of a given motif works as a *genus proximum* for all following occurrences of this 'melodic moment'. Motif *A* is introduced in a way that reminds us of the interpolatory statements that characterize the works of the *Erinnerungsmotiv* tradition. The rigour with which it cuts through the musical fabric by skipping almost all preparatory measures (apart from some ascending scales in the upper and lower strings) (Ex. 20) acts as if it was completely taking over the musical as well as the dramatic progression. In Porges's account, reference is made to Motif *A* as the 'Redemption theme'. He explains that

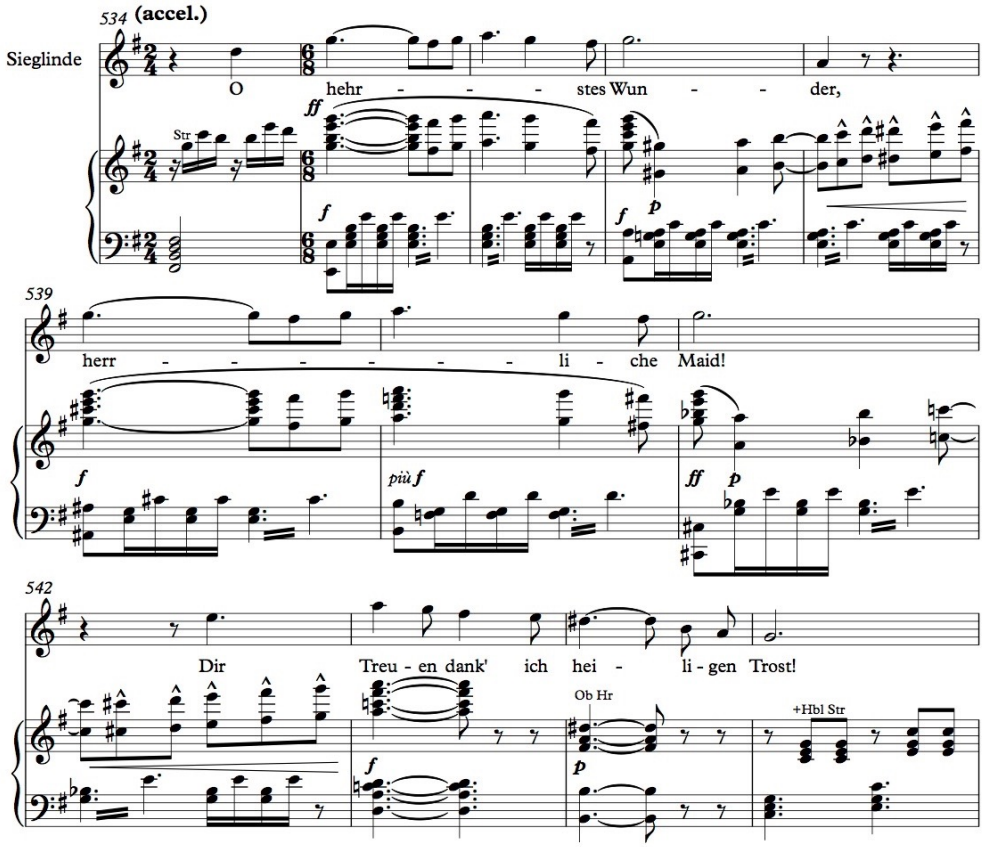
> Wagner expressly demanded that the Redemption theme [*Erlösungsthema*] […] should be taken "slightly faster" than the preceding bars and that it should be 'very brought out (*sehr heraus*)', as he tersely put it. He once characterized the spiritual significance of this theme

(whilst going through the work at the piano) by the statement: "It must sound like the proclamation of a new religion".[930]

Wagner's characterization of this motif's exposition as the 'proclamation of a new religion' could not be stronger. The remnants of the 'old' are swept away by a change in tempo ('slightly faster'), texture and tonality and by an overall accentuation of the passage ('very brought out').

Since Wagner cannot afford the listener to miss this 'proclamatory' statement, this exposition must also range at the very top end of Wagner's spectrum of motivic entries. At the other end are those motifs that gradually emerge in a process that Wagner has described as 'giving birth to melody'. Such an example might be the gradual onset of the 'Valhall' motif that we have seen above (Ex. 32). By their very nature, those motifs that are gradually introduced are 'motifs of presentiment' since there is an inherent sense of accumulative tendencies with regard to their cognitive meaning. That is not to say that a 'motif of presentiment' requires to be introduced by degrees as Motif *A* is a 'motif of presentiment' as well. Those instances in which a motif is introduced through the medium of *Versmelodie* seems to navigate a middle course between the two extremes:

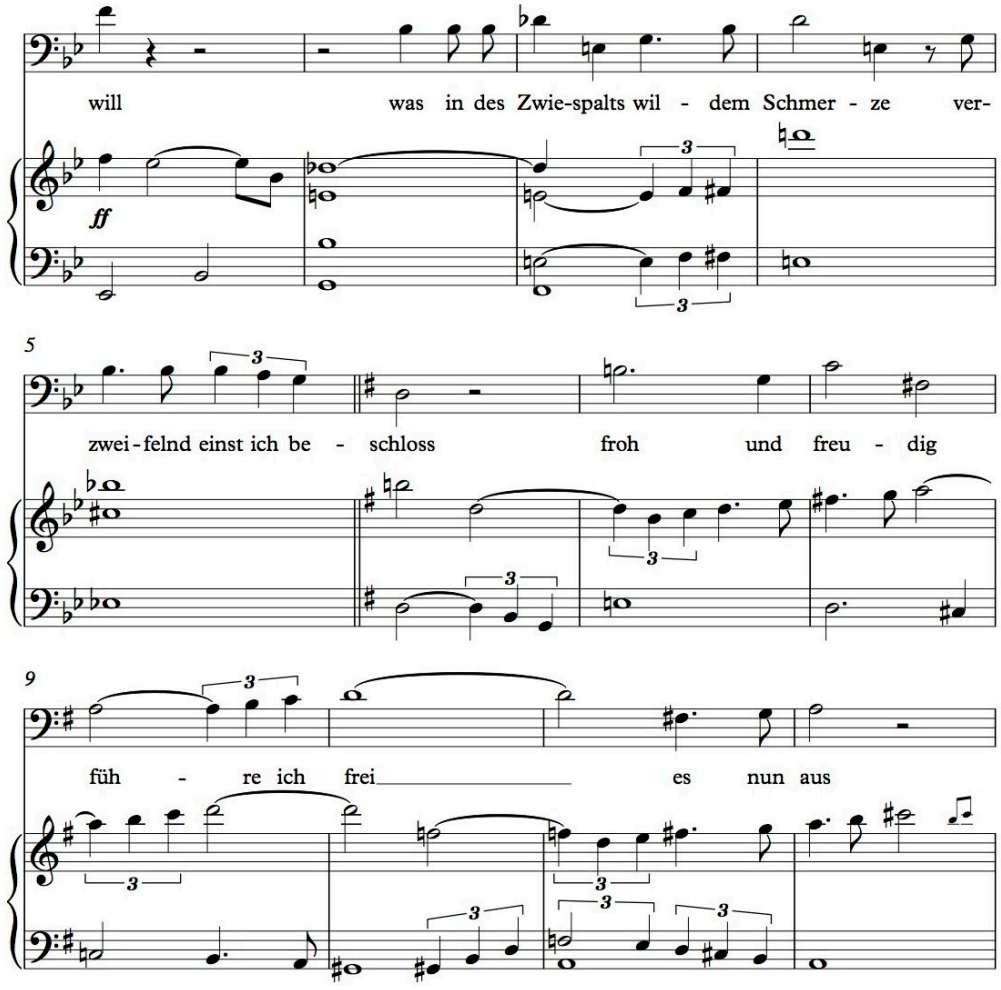
[930] Porges, *Wagner Rehearsing the 'Ring'*, 103.



Ex. 34 [=Ex 28]

Walküre, III, 534–45

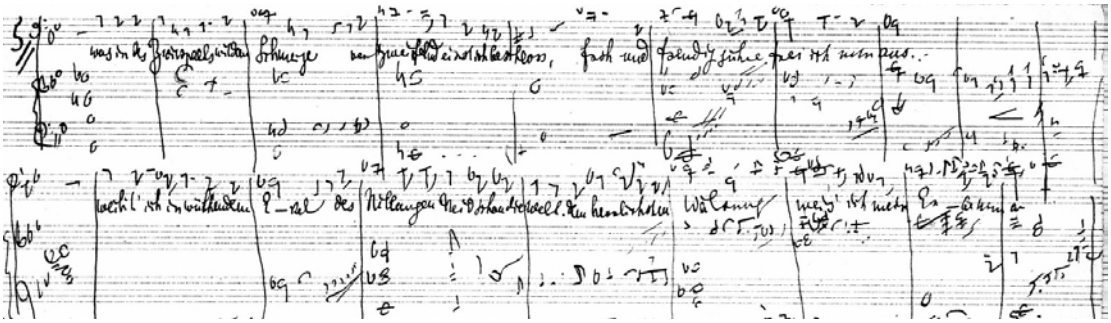
Although such a motivic exposition is designed as one coherent and unified *gefühlsverständliches* event, its segmentation is required in order to narrow down the different parameters involved in Wagner's *Themen-Bildung*. Motif *A* is an ideal candidate for investigations into the potential factors that Wagner may have held responsible for a strengthening of a motif in terms of an 'emotionally comprehensible' representation. There are not only the three different *Einzelskizzen* that have survived but also different versions of the ultimate placement of the motif within the musical texture. Robert Bailey has given the following transcription of the first occurrence of Motif *A* in the *Kompositionsskizze*, which turns out to be a precursor of the ultimate version:



(Transcription by Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 334, ex. 63)

Ex. 35

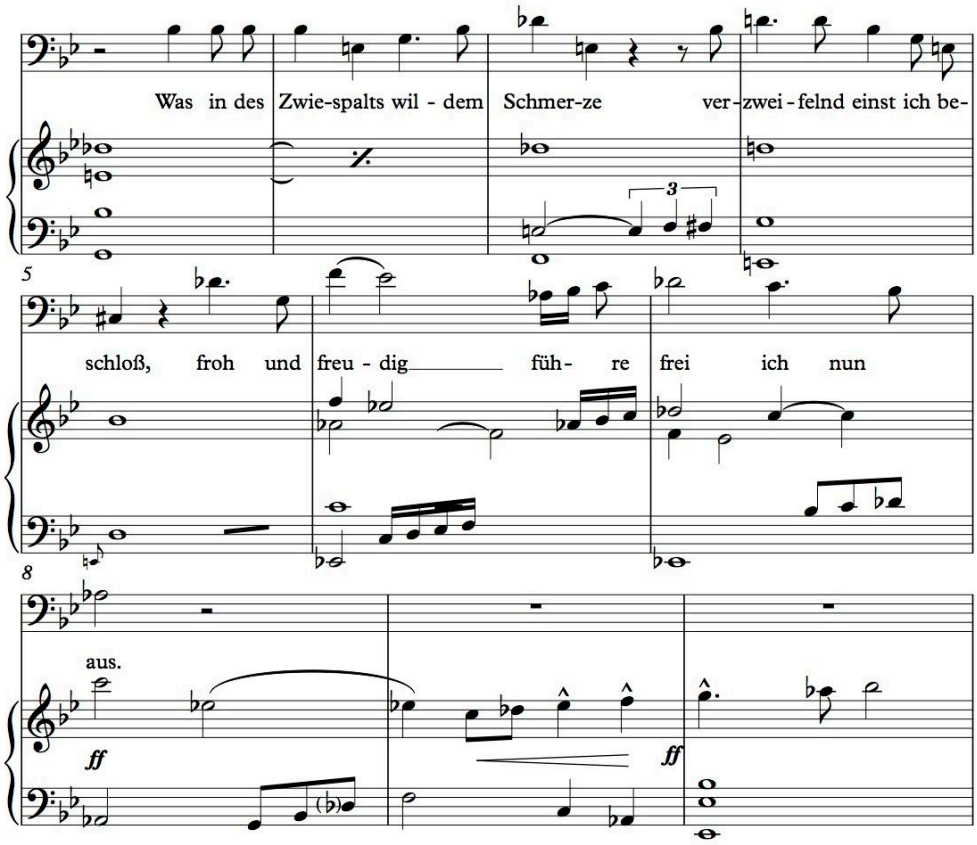
In comparison to this version, I provide my own transcription of the ultimate passage in the *Kompositionsskizze* below:



Kompositionsskizze, III, 5[R] (detail)

(*Siegfried*, III, 367–85)

Transcription:



Ex. 36

Bailey has already highlighted a number of changes that Wagner made before proceeding with the *Kompositionsskizze*.[931] Wagner rewrote the textual phrase and changed the passage 'froh und freudig führe ich frei es nun aus' into 'froh und freudig führe frei ich nun aus' ['freely and gladly I shall now bring to pass']. The version of the rhythm of Motif *A* as it appears on the recto side of a *Meistersinger* sketch—complete with the tempo marking *Andante* (Ex. 25) has been preserved in the first version of its setting in the *Kompositionsskizze*. Wagner subsequently removes the triplets and thereby considerably changes the metrical structure of the motif. The earlier version containing triplets will not recur over the course of the finished version of the *Ring*.

As has been argued in the previous chapter, the absence of the vocal line in the finished version turns a motivic occurrence into a purely emotional signifier, thereby

[931] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 335.

relieving the motif from its previous role as accompaniment. By turning this statement into a type 1 motivic exposition, Wagner 'upgrades' the function of Motif *A* in this context. The fact that no other motif is cited simultaneously gives Motif *A* 'emotional' control over the passage. From the state of the surviving sketches we know that it took several years for Motif *A* to come to maturity in Wagner's mind before finding its applications in Act III of *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. These factors in conjunction with a promising documentary coverage, which will be looked at in more detail, turn Motif *A* into a representative candidate in an attempt to trace the different stages of Wagner's recommended creative trajectory through which a 'melodic moment' is generated. The investigation will necessarily proceed in reverse order, as it were, from the final product back to its possible dramatic origins.

Towards the musical components of the 'magic of association'

Since investigations into the psychological processes behind the transfer of meaning suggest that an effortless primary perception at a subconscious level is possible, an attempt is made to narrow down aspects of the potential mechanisms by which a series of notes can be manipulated in a way that triggers these responses. As there is no scope here to engage with several parameters of a motivic occurrence, the ensuing discussion is shaped by the findings of my conceptual research. Wagner's overarching ideal of *Urmelodie*, as we have seen, is by its very nature derived from homophonic entities to the effect that the evaluation of the motif's intervallic structure seems an appropriate point of departure. An exploration of Wagner's stance towards the intervallic structure of his motifs, however, is not straightforward. It requires some further verification of some of his crucial ideas as to the origins of his motivic language.

If further evidence were needed, the following diary entry by Cosima's hand attests to the great care with which Wagner planned and honed the shape of his motifs:

> Over coffee R. tells me that he has found something, only a few bars, but they contain a lot […]. He writes it down and plays it, I recognize the lance theme, and with it the sinister figure of Klingsor and Parsifal's motive, though in some way impeded. One feels and in one's mind sees

> him entangled in the labyrinth, holding the spear on high. R. says one good thing about it is that the lance theme ends chromatically, full of melancholy, whereas P'.s motive is fresh and bold; he praises contrapuntal form, which provides so many possibilities.[932]

It is important to note that the couple are actually conversing about technical details that help to refine a given musical motif and we even get a hint of a possible link between chromaticism and melancholy that Wagner may have perceived.

In *Über das Opern-Dichten und Komponiren im Besonderen*, written in 1879, Wagner specifies the generic source from which the absolute musician derived his motifs:

> The poor, inaccurate, verse, often consisting of mere meaningless phrases, whose sole feature allied to music, the rhyme, even distorted the ultimate meaning of the words and thereby, at best, rendered the musician entirely unnecessary and useless—this verse compelled the composer to derive [*entnehmen*] the formation and elaboration of characteristic melodic motifs from a field of music, which had developed itself as a freelance language of the instruments [*freie Sprache der Instrumente*] in the orchestral accompaniment.[933]

This statement reiterates the fundamental difference that Wagner made between the vocal and orchestral musical languages. He made clear that the vocal line of conventional opera was affected by instrumental musical writing in an unsound way. What is striking, however, is the fact that even in 1879, Wagner still subscribes to the ideal that the musical motifs ought to be derived from verse that has turned into

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[932] *CWD*, II, 179; *CWT*, II, 207 (22.10.1878): 'Beim Kaffee sagte mir R.: Er habe etwas gefunden, ein paar Takte nur, aber die enthielten viel […]. Er schreibt es und spielt es, ich erkenne das Thema von der Lanze, dazu die unheimliche Figur von Klingsor und Parsifal's Motiv, aber wie gehemmt. Man empfindet und sieht im Geiste, wie er den Speer hoch gerade trägt und wie die Irre ihn umschlängelt. R. sagt, das Gute sei auch daran, daß das Lanzen-Thema chromatisch abschließt, wehmutsvoll, während das Motiv von P. frisch und keck [ist]; er preist die kontrapunktische Form, welche so viel ermöglicht.'

[933] *Über das Opern-Dichten*, 161: 'Der dürftige, fehlerhafte, oft aus bloßen nichtssagenden Phrasen bestehende Vers, dessen einziges der Musik verwandte Merkmal, der Reim, den letzten Sinn der Worte sogar entstellte und hierdurch im besten Falle dem Musiker sich ganz entbehrlich und unnütz machte, – dieser Vers nöthigte den Tonsetzer, die Bildung und Ausarbeitung charakteristischer melodischer Motive einem Gebiete der Musik zu entnehmen, welches sich bisher in der Orchesterbegleitung als freie Sprache der Instrumente ausgebildet hatte.'

melody. He continues to stress the kinship between the ideal melody and verse by complaining that composers 'never realized that even the verse of our exquisite poets fails to be a genuine, melody forming verse [*Melodie bildender Vers*]'.[934] Wagner explains in *Opera and Drama* that

> the instrumental music had gained the ability to form, by breaking down the harmonic dance and song tunes into smaller and smallest parts, through new and highly diverse combinations and the stretching and shortening of these parts, a particular language, that remained arbitrary in the higher artistic sense and incapable of expressing the purely human, as long as the desire for a clear and understandable reproduction of certain individual human sensations was not known to it as the only decisive justification for the design of these melodic voice parts [*melodische Sprachtheile*].[935]

This statement reiterates Wagner's adoption of Beethovenian principles. However, Wagner is again at pains to stress that in order to avoid referential arbitrariness, the 'poetic intent' is required to give an 'emotionally' comprehensible shape to the *melodische Sprachtheile*. In *Music of the Future*, Wagner highlights the role of rhythm and harmony in the process of this 'enlivenment' of the 'tiniest fractional parts of music' with reference to Beethoven:

> What we see is a dance-melody split into its tiniest fragments, each one of which—it may amount to no more than a couple of notes—is made interesting and expressive by either placing emphasis on a pervasive rhythm or a significant harmony.[936]

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[934] *Ibid*., 209: '[…] dennoch verfielen sie bisher noch nie darauf, daß selbst der Vers unserer vorzüglichen Dichter, kein wirklicher, Melodie bildender Vers […]'.

[935] *OuD*, *GSD*, III, 277: '[…] hatte die Instrumentalmusik sich das Vermögen gewonnen, die harmonische Tanz- und Liedweise durch Zerlegung in kleinere und kleinste Theile, durch neues und mannigfaltig verschiedenartiges Aneinanderfügen, Ausdehnen oder Verkürzen dieser Theile, zu einer besonderen Sprache auszubilden, die so lange im höheren künstlerischen Sinne willkürlich und für das Reinmenschliche ausdrucksunfähig war, als in ihr das Verlangen nach klarem und verständlichem Wiedergeben bestimmter, individueller menschlicher Empfindungen sich nicht als einzig maaßgebende Nothwendigkeit für die Gestaltung jener melodischen Sprachtheile kundthat.'

[936] *TWE*, 38 (amended); *Zukunftsmusik*, 127: 'Hier sehen wir die eigentliche Tanzmelodie bis in ihre kleinsten Bestandtheile zerlegt, deren jeder, oft sogar nur aus zwei Tönen bestehend, durch bald vorherrschend rhythmische, bald harmonische Bedeutung interessant und ausdrucksvoll erscheint.'

Wagner singles out rhythm and harmony as main factors that may turn a 'couple of notes' into an '*interessant und ausdrucksvoll*' [interesting and expressive] entity.

Although Wagner addresses the fundamentals of harmony and rhythm when approaching issues of emotional signification of motifs, the following reasons allow me to put the parameters of Wagner's motivic language in a different order of priority. The exclusion of the vital factor of harmony from my investigation is justified by Wagner's own views according to which harmony cannot be analyzed adequately without paying attention to the *Klangfarbe* [timbre] of the instruments. Frits Noske's claim that 'every sonorous parameter will be made subservient to the drama, including that of instrumental timbre' especially holds good in the case of Wagner.[937] For Wagner, the factor of 'timbre' takes on functional roles in harmonic cells. As mentioned earlier, Wagner used to converse with his friend Theodor Uhlig about crucial aspects of *Themen-Bildung* and one crucial letter written at the end of May 1852 has already been cited in which Wagner claimed that

> [t]he person who, in judging my music, divorces the harmony from the instrumentation does me as great an injustice as the one who divorces my music from my poem, my vocal line from the words.[938]

Wagner goes on to reason that the symbolic dimension ascribed to the independent characters of the tonalities is especially intertwined with issues of timbre. In the same letter to Uhlig, Wagner's remarks on his reflections on *Tonart* [tonality] in Part III of *Opera and Drama* read as follows:

> In the IIIrd volume of "Opera & Drama" I demonstrated that harmony becomes something *real* (rather than purely imaginary) only in the polyphonic symphony, i.e. in the orchestra, so that the purely imaginary individuality of tonalities […] must merge into the reality of the individuality of the different instruments, their manifold colouring and, finally, their style of execution. By clinging to the "individuality" of

[937] Frits Noske, *The Signifier and the Signified: Studies in the Operas of Mozart and Verdi* (Oxford, 1990), 121.
[938] *SL*, 261; *SB*, IV, 386 (31.5.1852): 'Wer in einem urtheil über meine Musik die harmonie von der Instrumentation trennt, thut mir eben so großes unrecht, wie der, der meine Musik von meiner Dichtung, meinen gesang vom worte trennt.'

> tonalities, people were clinging to a chimera which, it must be said, had earlier become just as much of a dogma with us as the Dear Lord above. On the contrary, it is the instruments themselves and, ultimately, the human voice *when singing words* which give a particular character to the tonality and to notes in general; thus, for ex., the characteristic individuality of a key such as E major or E flat major emerges most distinctively when played on a violin or a wind instrument, and so it would be a case of doing things by halves if I were to use a key for its own sake and thereby ignore the instrument, or conversely, to use the instrument for its own sake alone.[939]

Both statements effectively dismiss analyses that ignore the respective *Klangfarben* of the voice and instruments to which a particular harmony is assigned. Wagner acknowledges distinct differences that present themselves when the same harmonies are played on various instruments. If these two passages lend enough credence to Wagner's convictions, purely harmonic analyses of Wagner turn out to be in need of thorough back-up. For the purposes of my study, this evidence provided by Wagner's own hand casts enough doubt on purely harmonic explorations as it invites the inclusion of aspects of timbre to an extent that would go beyond the limited scope of this thesis.

Alongside the significance of harmony, Wagner recognizes the rhythmic structure of a given motif as the other essential parameter that is involved in the generation of 'emotional' meaning. Although Wagner had clear views on the role of the element of rhythm in his *Themen-Bildung*, there is still an ongoing neglect of this crucial element in critical investigations of Wagner's music. In the preface to his recent *Beethoven* translation (2014), Roger Allen rightly addresses the need for

[939] *SL*, 261–62; *SB*, IV, 385–86 (31.5.1852): 'Im III[ten] bande von "Oper u. Drama" habe ich nachgewiesen, daß die harmonie etwas *wirkliches* (nicht bloß gedachtes) erst in der polyphonischen Symphonie, d. i. im orchester wird, daß somit auch die nur gedachte Individualität der tonarten […] überzugehen hat in die wirklichkeit der individualität der Instrumente, ihrer mannigfaltigen färbung und endlich des vortrages. Hing man sich also an die "individualität" der tonarten, so hing man sich an eine chimäre, die allerdings früher bei uns eben so gut zum dogma geworden war, wie der liebe Gott. Dagegen werden an den Instrumenten, und endlich an der menschlichen stimme *mit dem worte*, die tonarten, wie die töne überhaupt, erst charakteristisch; so tritt z. B. die charakteristische Individualität einer tonart (E-dur oder Es-dur) bei der Geige oder dem blaßinstrument sehr entschieden hervor, und es ist daher eine kritiklose halbheit, wenn ich die tonart für sich und das instrument wohl gar nicht, oder wiederum für sich nehme.'

further investigations into the factor of rhythm in Wagner.[940] How very significant is Wagner's remark in *Beethoven*, 'that the music would not be comprehensible [*wahrnehmbar*] to us without the rhythm'.[941] In *Music of the Future*, Wagner explains that '[t]he loss of rhythmic vitality obviously deprived the melody of its distinctive expressive function'.[942] Both statements underpin the strong link between a motif's rhythm and its emotional meaning. Wagner also illustrates that '[a] melody imprints itself only on the ear in a comprehensible way, if it contains the recurrence of certain melodic moments in a particular rhythm'.[943]

In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner relates the generation of 'emotional' meaning to the process of deriving rhythmic gestures from dance melodies. He points out that '[w]e have already seen that our absolute instrumental music had to distil the sensual moments of its expression from the dance rhythm which is familiar to our ear [*unserem Ohr anvertrauten*]'.[944] In the *Beethoven* essay, written nearly twenty years later, Wagner explains that

> [w]hile the *harmony* of tones, which is something that belongs to neither space nor time, continues to be music's most essential element, the creative musician will use the *rhythmic* temporal sequence of his utterances to come to an agreement with the waking world of appearances […]. By organizing his tones *rhythmically*, the musician thus comes into contact with the visual [*anschaulich*], plastic world, namely by dint of the similarity to the laws according to which the movement of visible bodies is communicated intelligibly to our intuition [*Anschauung*].[945]

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[940] *RWB*, 18.
[941] *Beethoven*, 76: '[…] daß ohne den Rhythmus uns die Musik nicht wahrnehmbar sein würde.'
[942] *TWE*, 25; *Zukunftsmusik*, 99: 'Offenbar war mit der Entziehung der rhythmischen Beweglichkeit dieser Melodie aber das ihr eigenthümliche Motiv des Ausdruckes geraubt […]'.
[943] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 114: 'Eine Melodie prägt sich aber nur dadurch dem Gehöre faßlich ein, daß sie eine Wiederkehr bestimmter melodischer Momente in einem bestimmten Rhythmos [*sic*] enthält […]'.
[944] *Ibid*., 187: 'Wir sahen bereits, daß unsere absolute Instrumentalmusik die sinnlichen Momente für ihren Ausdruck aus einer, unserem Ohre anvertrauten Tanzrhythmik […] entnehmen mußte.'
[945] *Beethoven*, 76: 'Während die, weder dem Raume noch der Zeit angehörige Harmonie der Töne das eigentlichste Element der Musik verbleibt, reicht der nun bildende Musiker der wachenden Erscheinungswelt durch die *rhythmische* Zeitfolge seiner Kundgebungen gleichsam die Hand zur Verständigung […]. Durch die *rhythmische* Anordnung seiner Töne tritt somit der Musiker in eine Berührung mit der anschaulichen plastischen Welt, nämlich vermöge der Ähnlichkeit der Gesetze, nach welchen die Bewegung sichtbarer Körper unserer Anschauung verständlich sich kundgiebt.' (some of the translation from Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven*, 133).

In this passage we encounter a number of key words that are strongly reminiscent of the process of generating musical meaning according to *Opera and Drama*. Wagner quite vividly invokes the imagery of real bodily movement that for him is the driving force behind rhythm. Wagner's mention of 'coming in contact with the visual, plastic world' indicates that for him rhythm indeed operates at the interface between the inner and the outer world. Over the course of the *Beethoven* essay, Wagner becomes more specific when proposing that:

> Let us now envision once again a piece of dance music, or a movement from an orchestral symphony based on dance motifs, or finally a proper opera pièce, we find our imagination immediately captivated by a regular array of recurring rhythmic periods, by which, first, the intensity [*Eindringlichkeit*] of the melody is determined by virtue of its given vividness [*Plastizität*].[946]

The recurrence of a term that is akin to the word '*plastisch*', whose right translation in the Wagnerian context we have identified as 'descriptive' or 'vivid', underlines Wagner's strategy to introduce rhythmic features for the sake of comprehensibility. Wagner understands the process of giving rhythm to a series of tones as another level of 'life-giving' measures—'life-giving' in the sense that rhythm directly contributes to the emotional intensity of a given 'melodic moment'. Wagner also chooses the rhythmic component in order to clarify the stark contrast between the epitome of non-emotional melodies and his new melodic formation. He dismisses the amorphous quality of the chorale and contends that '[t]he melody of this type of song remains completely indecisive in rhythmic terms: step by step it moves along in entirely equal cycle lengths in order to linger only at the end of the breath and for the purpose of new respiration'.[947]

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[946] *RWB*, 81; *Beethoven*, 80: 'Vergegenwärtigen wir uns jetzt hierwider [*sic*] ein Tanzmusikstück, oder einen dem Tanzmotive nachgebildeten Orchestersymphoniesatz, oder endlich eine eigentliche Opernpièce, so finden wir unsere Phantasie sogleich durch eine regelmäßige Anordnung in der Wiederkehr rhythmischer Perioden gefesselt, durch welche sich zunächst die Eindringlichkeit der Melodie, vermöge der ihr gegebenen Plastizität, bestimmt.'

[947] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 108: 'Die Melodie dieses Gesanges [kirchlicher Choralgesang] bleibt rhythmisch gänzlich unentschieden: sie bewegt sich Schritt für Schritt in vollkommen gleichen Taktlängen vor sich, um nur am Ende des Athems, und zum neuen Athemholen zu verweilen.'

Thanks to the findings of empirical research into the issue of causal factors, we have already identified rhythm as the musical parameter that works much more closely with the contact point between the subconscious and the conscious realms. This seems to imply that the pure intervallic structure of a motif is in the first instance related much more to the realm of subconscious perceptibility. Wagner suggests that rhythm structures the intervallic content in order to refine the meaning that is conveyed. Such a reading of rhythm in Wagner's motivic language leads to a parametric scale that distinguishes between levels of 'meaning-enhancing' measures applied by the composer to the motif. It seems that the more 'layers of meaning' are actualized, the greater the distance from the low-level or 'bottom-up' processing of the *urmelodischen Ausdrucks*.

As we lack written evidence by Wagner's hand as to the issue of intervallic structure, we need to revert to a related set of ideas in an attempt to approach his views on the matter. Wagner strongly promoted the idea of developing melodies out of verse. This is an idea inherently intertwined with the distance between two pitches. Rousseau, however, contends that 'the different inflexions which we give to the voice in speaking, form intervals which are not at all harmonic, which form no parts of the system in our music, and which consequently not being expressed in notes, are not properly a tune for us'.[948] Wagner thought otherwise. He advocated the translation of prose into intervals as he closely followed the accents of our verbal speech in moments of excitation; as mentioned earlier, a process that Wagner understands as the 'verbal language that turned into melody during a moment of excitation'.[949] We shall examine the reasons why Motif *A* is derived from 'verse melody', although being introduced in *Siegfried*, Act III.

There is no question that Wagner was in some way or another exposed to a whole body of literature pertaining to issues of *Intervalllehre* [theory of the intervals] and *Affektenlehre* [theory of the 'affect']. The tension between two pitches has triggered an entire vocabulary of affects under these headings. During pre-Wagnerian times, composers were able to rely on specific expressive properties firmly attached to the different intervals. Daniel P. Walker argues in his investigation of the expressive value of intervals at the turn of the sixteenth to the seventeenth century that a great

[948] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *A Complete Dicitionary of Music*, trans. William Waring, 2nd edn (London, 1779), 451.
[949] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 175: 'Der in der Erregung zur Melodie gewordene Wortvers […]'.

deal of musical theorists discussed the issue of 'what intervals are suitable for expressing what emotion'.[950] The seventeenth-century French writer on music, Marin Mersenne, gave clear recommendations along the lines of different degrees of 'sweetness' inherent in the different major intervals and argued that e.g. the major imperfect consonances are 'very suitable for joy, and for expressing virile and courageous actions'.[951]

However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which Wagner relied on this strong tradition. From Cosima's diary we know that Wagner felt an inhibition to make use of the minor seventh throughout *Parsifal*:

> When we withdraw upstairs, he talks about his *Parsifal*, saying it has not been possible to avoid a certain restriction of feeling; this does not mean that it is churchlike in tone, he says, indeed there is even a divine wildness in it, but such affecting emotions as in *Tristan* or even the *Nibelungen* would be entirely out of place. "You will see—minor sevenths were just not possible!"[952]

Apart from this mere hint at Wagner's perception of one particular interval, we are still a long way from being able to map the composer's use of intervals onto specific emotional expressions. Eva Rieger, for instance, argues in her exemplary catalogue of affections that she has assembled on the basis of her research into the field of *Affektenlehre* that the leap of a falling sixth points to resignation or despair.[953] Wagner, however, uses the falling sixth as the opening interval of Motif *A* that according to him must sound like the 'proclamation of a new religion'. Rieger rightly concludes that 'there will never be a means of translating the meaning of affects in

[950] Daniel P. Walter, *Studies in Musical Science in the Late Renaissance* (London, 1978), 63.
[951] Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle contenant la theorie et la pratique de la musique*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1636–37), II, 188: '[…] fort propre pour la joie, & pour exprimer les actions masles & courageuses.' (translation from Peter Vergo, *That Divine Order: Music and the Visual Arts from Antiqutiy to the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2005), 184).
[952] *CWD*, II, 233 (amended), *CWT*, I, 333 (17.4.1879): 'Wie wir uns zurückziehen, spricht er oben von seinem Parsifal, da sei nichts möglich gewesen von einer gewissen Sentimentalität; es sei zwar nicht kirchlich, habe auch eine göttliche Wildheit, aber das effektvoll Sensitive des Tristan und auch der Nibelungen ging gar nicht. "Du wirst sehen, die kleine Septime war nicht möglich!"'
[953] Rieger, *Wagner's Women*, 11.

music that has general validity, though this is not to say that we cannot understand their musical import intuitively'.[954]

Selecting the motif's intervallic structure as a representative parameter is exposed to the risk of one-dimensionality. Paul Bekker has discussed Motif *A* in his 1924 monograph and describes the exposition of the *Welterbschaftsmotiv* as follows:

> This is no new motif or theme, but rather the gospel of a new method of melodic formation. Its clear-cut contours lack expressive character as hitherto understood. There is no modulatory tendency in the four-bar melodic line. It keeps within the key and takes its character from energetic rhythm and the vigorous movement of the intervals. The new principle of melodic stylisation consists, in essence, in substitution of the interest of structural character for the emotional appeal of relations between intervals. A resemblance to the thematisation of *The Mastersingers* may be traced in the stress laid on formal movement rather than on expressionist sensibility.[955]

Bekker goes on to iterate that Motif *A* is 'a melody of the Will of form, whose diatonic clarity and simple plastic rhythm indicate its derivation from a non-emotional sphere'.[956] Astonishingly, Bekker is convinced that this motivic exposition epitomizes structural considerations that are at work at the expense of the concept of *Gefühlsverständnis*. Bekker argues that Wagner's introduction of Motif *A* shows his changing attitude towards the factors previously held responsible for the conveyance of emotional meaning, indeed a departure from the ideal. What is central to this quotation is Bekker's perception of the intervallic progression which he singles out as the chief element giving evidence of this changing tendency. Bekker contends that 'the vigorous movement of intervals' has replaced the focus on the 'emotional appeal of relations between intervals'. In an attempt to trace this new trend in Wagner's compositional output, Bekker goes on to link Motif *A* to the motif that is attributed to the mastersingers:

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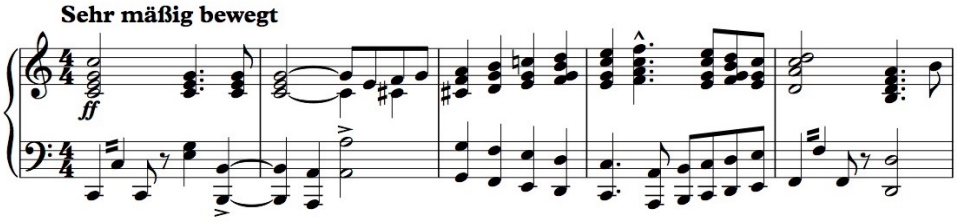
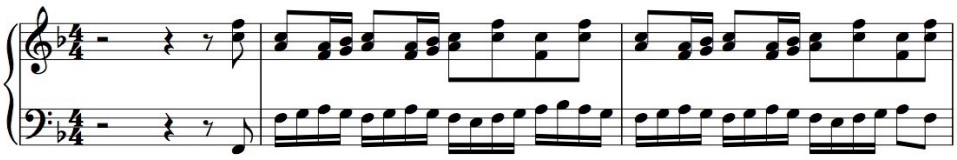
[954] *Ibid*., 10.
[955] Bekker, *Richard Wagner*, 396–97.
[956] *Ibid*., 397.



Ex. 37

Meistersinger, Prelude, beginning (‘*Meistersinger-Motiv*’ [Mastersingers Motif])

However, some of the intervallic progression of the motif commonly associated with the mastersingers also bears striking resemblance to the opening of Bach’s *Brandenburg Concerto* no. 2:



Ex. 38

Johann Sebastian Bach, *Brandenburg Concerto* no. 4, beginning

Although these two musical themes turn out to share fundamental characteristics pertaining to their intervallic content, the emotional meaning that these themes convey do in fact differ considerably. This example casts doubt on the merits of an investigation of the intervallic contents of motivic statements. It even suggests that an analysis of the intervallic structure on its own fails to reveal sufficient discriminability.

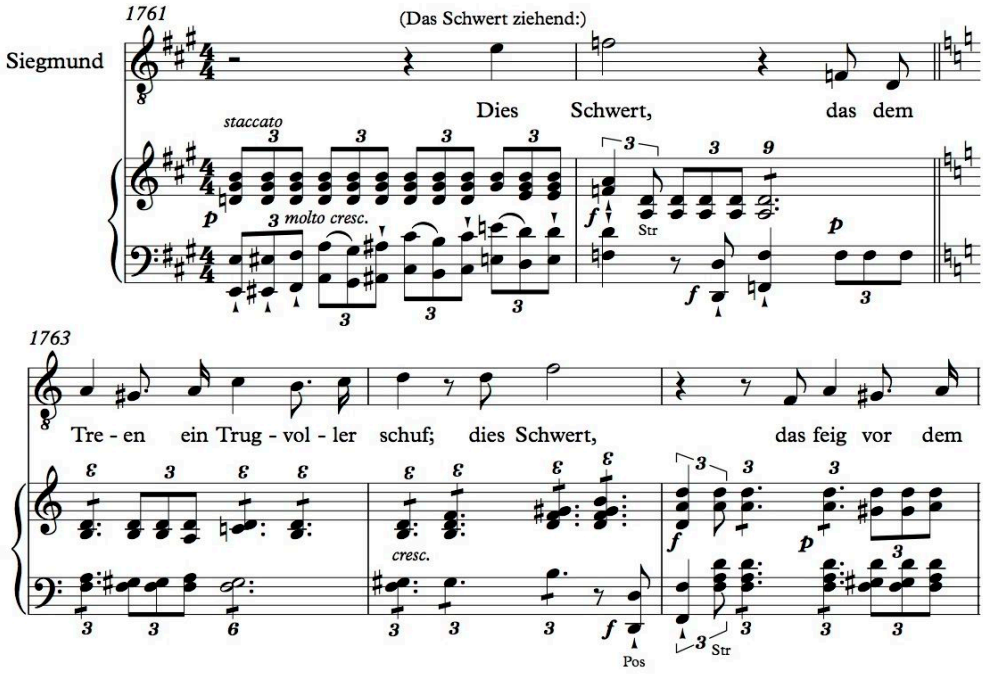
At the end of the previous chapter we have identified Narmour’s ‘implication-realization model’ as the analytical tool that shows the greatest affinity to Wagner’s theory: the model is grounded in music psychology and Narmour’s principal assumptions show significant parallels to Wagner’s views. The degree of overlap between these two approaches, makes Narmour’s model the prime device which

facilitates the discussion of issues of musical signification and therefore invites its application to Wagner.

Although we have seen that Wagner refrains from singling out the intervallic content of a motif in his writings as the most prominent factor, I aim to defend an application of Narmour's theory to occurrences of Motif *A* in an attempt to differentiate the possible dramatic reasons for Wagner's intervallic choices. Narmour's understanding of melody seems to reverberate in Wagner's views. The 'implication-realization model' approaches melody as a 'note-to-note phenomenon, as a continuity of melodic relations'.[957] The following commentaries by Wagner illustrate the compatibility of the Narmourian understanding of melody with Wagner's endeavours to locate subtle gradations of emotional utterance even in the tension between two pitches. According to the above-mentioned statement in *Music of the Future*, Wagner admired how Beethoven was able to derive motifs from the fragmentation of dance-melodies into their tiniest fragments resulting in musical ideas that amounted to 'two notes only'.[958] That Wagner not only studied Beethoven's practice but also valued and exploited the narrative powers of entities as small as the distance between two pitches is further substantiated by the motivic material that is assigned to Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*: a two-note motif forming a tritone.

In the following example we can see how much Wagner trusts in the ability of the listener to identify the motif associated with the sword—the exposition of which has been reproduced as Ex. 47—on the basis of a version reduced to two notes:

[957] Eugene Narmour, *The Analysis and Cognition of Melodic Complexity: The Implication-Realization Model* [*ACMC*] (Chicago, 1992), 330.
[958] *Zukunftsmusik*, 127 (see n. 937).



Ex. 39

Walküre, II, 1761–65 (‘*Schwert-Motiv*’ [‘Sword Motif’])

The so-called ‘sword motif’ is reduced to an interval that is not even the motif’s characteristic opening interval. In this particular instance, the instrumentation of these insertions seems however largely to contribute to the ‘emotional’ comprehensibility of the passage.

What makes Narmour’s analytical approach so compelling is his reliance on the listener’s innate ability to predict or ‘expect’ a certain continuation on the basis of pairs of notes. Narmour sets out ‘to comprehend the entire world of melody by constructing tokens, internal representations that capture melodic structure accurately, reliably and efficiently’ with the ultimate goal of offering an ‘explication of the “genetic code” of melody’.[959] First of all, the model divides a given melody into structural units.[960] In its crudest terms, the theory segments a given melody’s intervallic structure into pairs of notes and describes the inherent implications of these units that result from the evaluation of a limited set of parameters. My presentation of statements of Motif *A* (Ex. 45) which presents them in a manner stripped of all

[959] *ACBMS*, xiv.
[960] The model presupposes that the second pitch of each pair becomes the first of the consecutive pair.

information pertaining to the motif's setting, is due to the fact that, theoretically, Narmour treats melody or melodic contour as independent of other parameters.[961] In a 1984 article, Narmour put forth a radical take on melody by describing it as 'bald pitch successions with no reference to rhythm, scale step, tonic, dominant, diatonicism, voice leading, or any of the other trappings of tonal style'.[962] This original, disconcertingly radical concept of melody which although it is not repeated in Narmour's *The Analysis and Cognition of Basic Melodic Structures: The Implication-Realization Model* (1993) has in fact survived in Narmour's generally isochronous approach to melody. It should be noted, however, that, Narmour allows changes to the length of his structural units that reflect rhythmic or harmonic factors.

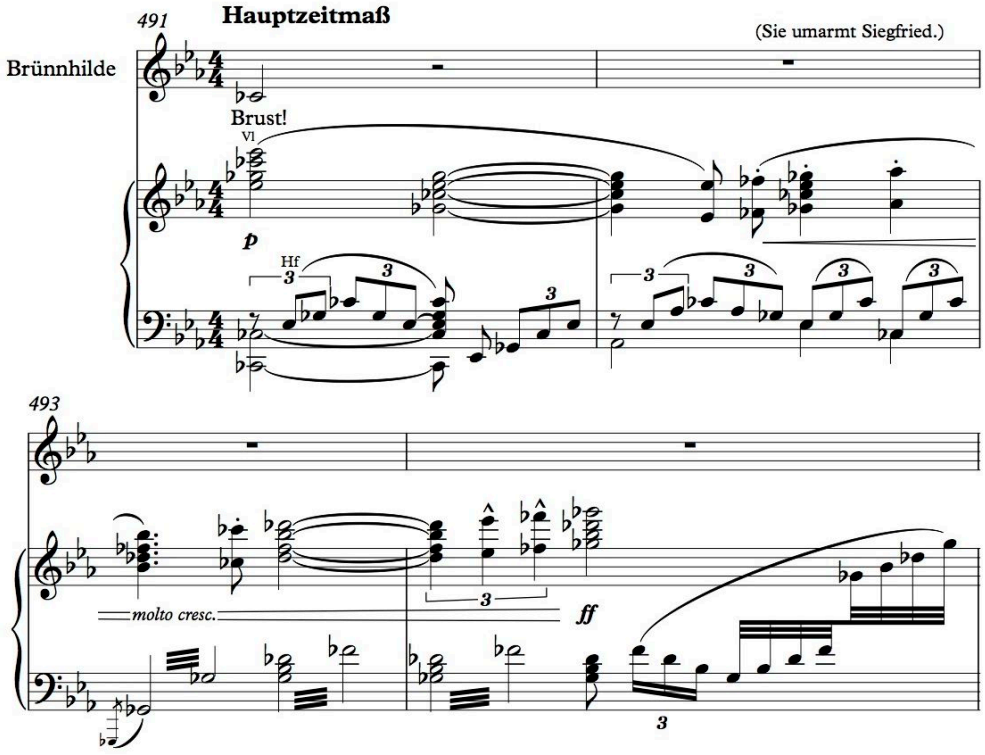
Lawrence Zbikowski rightly raises the point that Narmour's view on melody fails to discriminate between 'truly' melodic features and mere arpeggios or other harmonic structures.[963] Zbikowski also brings Langacker's 'exclusionary fallacy' into play, the gist of which is that 'one analysis, motivation, categorization, cause, function, or explanation for a linguistic phenomenon necessarily precludes another'.[964] Langacker concludes that 'from a broad, pre-theoretical perspective, this assumption is gratuitous and in fact rather dubious, in view of what we know about the multiplicity of interacting synchronic and diachronic factors that determine the shape and import of linguistic expressions'.[965] This critique translated into musicology—in addition to the issue that Narmour relies on cognition as an analytical reading which is in fact learned rather than innate—further underscores the futility of investigations devoted to purely intervallic phenomena.

The instability of a motif's ending

The following observations further corroborate the inadequacy of an application of Narmour's model to motif *A*. One characteristic that is shared by many—if not

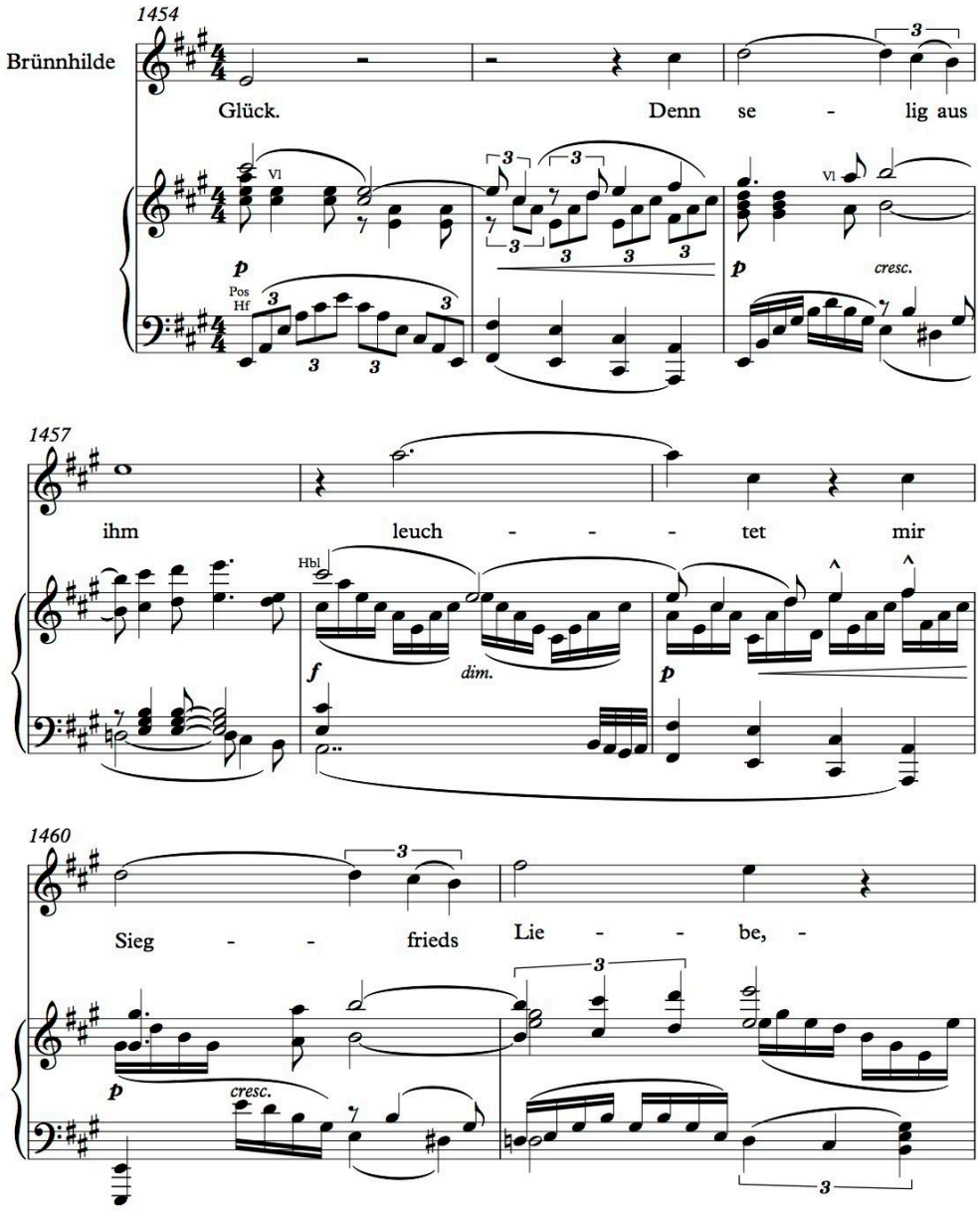
[961] Kevin E. Korsyn, *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research* (Oxford, 2003), 10–1.
[962] Eugene Narmour, 'Toward an Analytical Symbology: The Melodic, Harmonic, and Durational Functions of Implication and Realization', *Musical Grammars and Computer Analysis*, ed. Mario Baroni and Laura Callegari Hill (Florence, 1984), 84, n. 3.
[963] Lawrence Zbikowski, 'Review of Eugene Narmour's *The Analysis and Cognition of Basic Melodic Structures*', *Journal of Music Theory* 37/1 (1993), 179.
[964] Ronald W. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Vol. 1: Theoretical Prerequisites* (Stanford, 1987), 28.
[965] *Ibid*.

most—'melodic moments' is Wagner's reliance on a core of intervallic features. We have already seen that the so-called 'sword motif' is reduced to one interval only. Motif *A*, however, retains a series of intervals in the majority of its statements. There is potentially a total of twenty-one statements of Motif *A* across *Siegfried*, in five of these instances one statement immediately follows another and three of these motivic statements may not be 'felt' as Motif *A* at all (see Appendix). In *Götterdämmerung*, the motif returns five further times, two of which are adjoining statements:



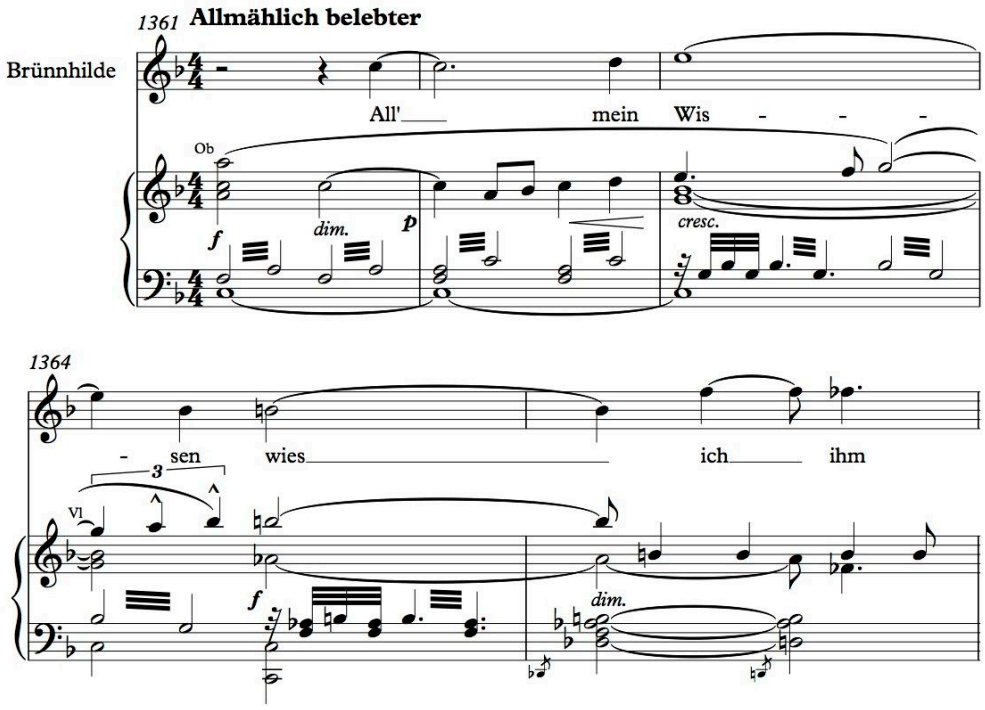
Ex. 40

Götterdämmerung, Prologue, 491–94



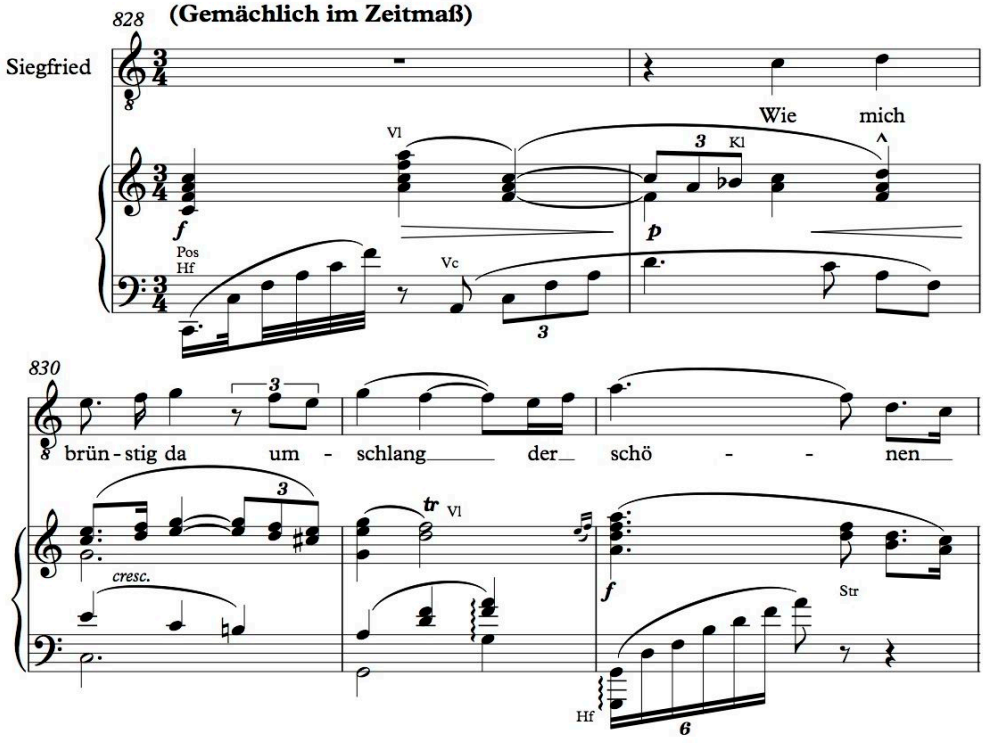
Ex. 41

Götterdämmerung, I, 1454–61



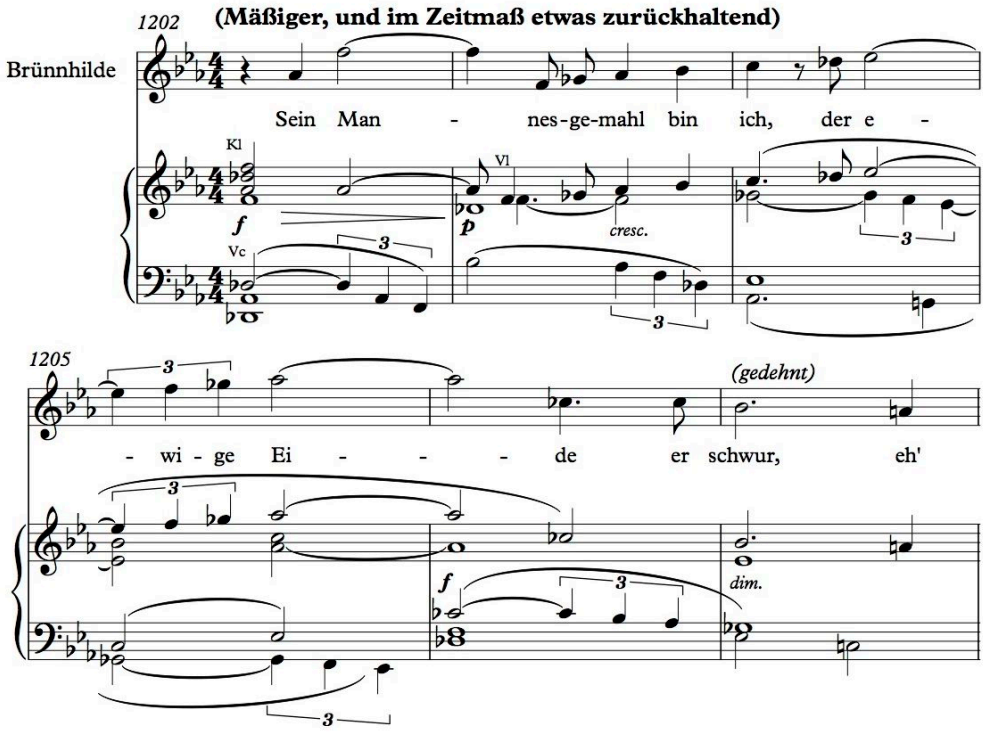
Ex. 42

Götterdämmerung, II, 1361–65



Ex. 43

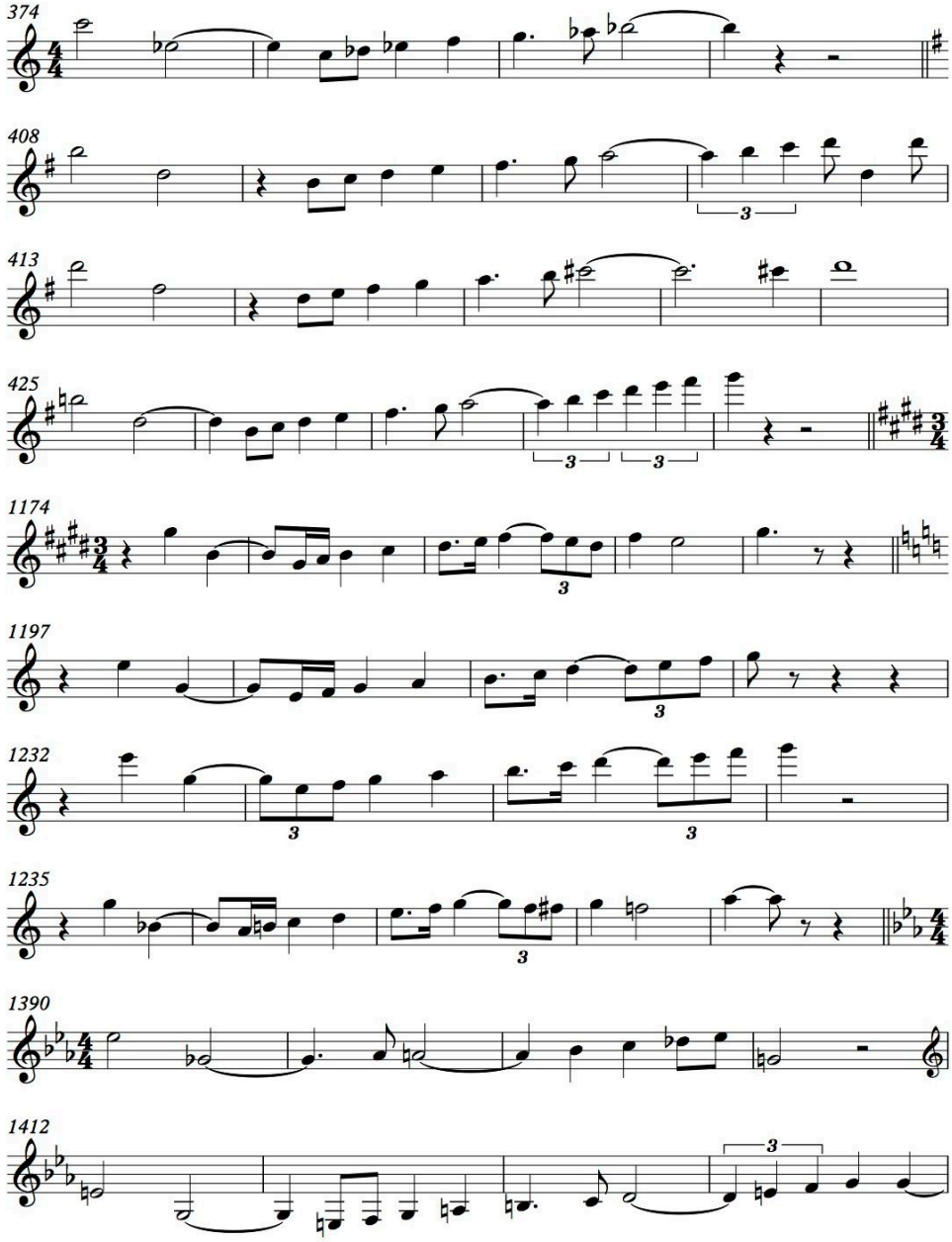
Götterdämmerung, III, 828–32

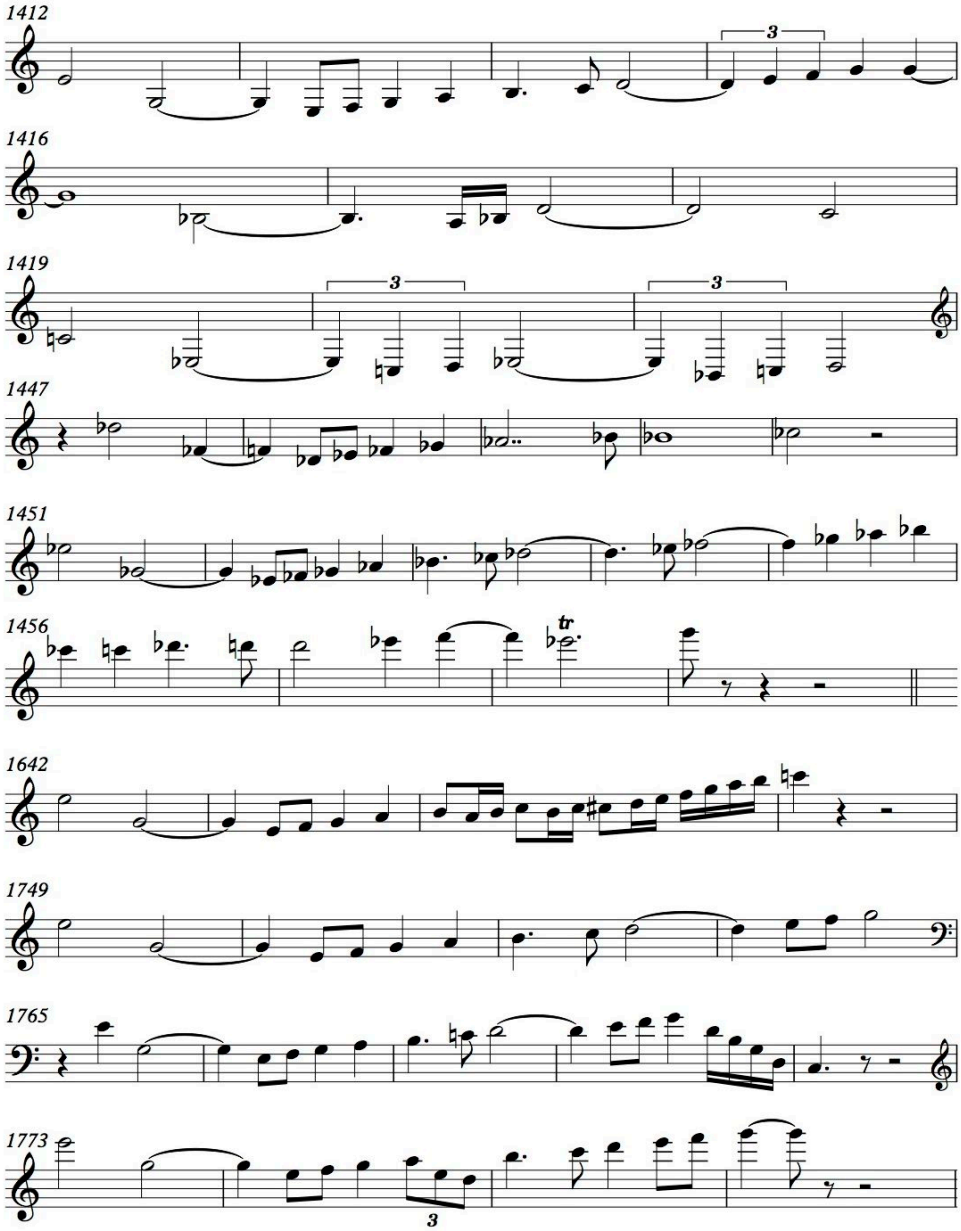


Ex. 44

Götterdämmerung, III, 1202–7

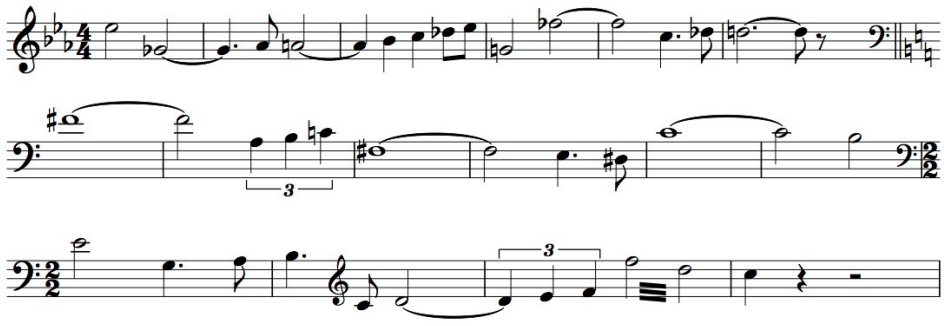
The following chart gives an overview of the intervallic structures of the unambiguous statements of Motif *A* across *Siegfried* in chronological order:


374
408
413
425
1174
1197
1232
1235
1390
1412



Ex. 45

Collection of intervallic structures of Motif *A* across *Siegfried*



Ex. 46

Deviant instances of Motif *A*

(*Siegfried*, III, 1390–95, 1472–77, 1786–89)

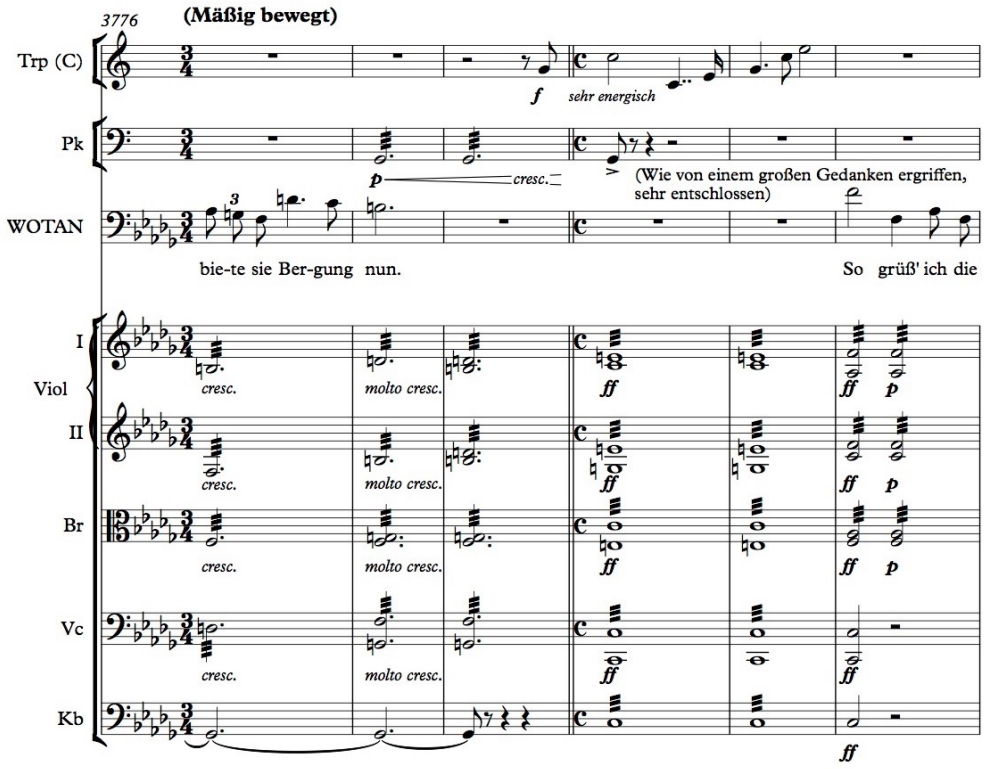
There seems to be good reason to identify the interval of the falling major sixth at the onset of Motif *A* as the motif's most recognizable property. Variants of the falling sixth lead to the peculiarity that three ambiguous instances cannot be excluded from the list of appearances of Motif *A* altogether. Apart from those three potentially deviant statements taken apart, there is a tremendous degree of uniformity with regard to the shape of the first nine notes that constitute Motif *A*. With one exception only (bar 1236 of Act III, see Ex. 45), Motif *A* appears in *Siegfried* in a form that is composed of the characteristic falling major sixth, followed by a descending minor third from which the motif climbs upwards in scale steps. It is notable that out of a total of 26 statements there are 22 statements of the motif in the *Ring* that consist of the first same eight characteristic intervals, the first part of the motif that I will call *S1*. This observation shows that the end of motif *A*, i.e. from the ninth interval onwards, is the more detachable element. It is highly exposed to the risk of being subjected to changes.

The continual recurrence of *S1* seems to substantiate the claim that Wagner has a 'root position' of each motif in his head or, as has been argued earlier in this study, that he notated the different motifs in a default position in his vanished motif books. Presumably, this 'primal' anatomy of a 'melodic moment' consisted of a few core parameters, confined to the intervallic and rhythmic structure, possibly complete with bass notes. To echo Wagner's words, this irreducible core of a motif, securing its recognizability over the music drama, might have looked like 'no more than a couple of notes […] made interesting and expressive by either placing emphasis on a

pervasive rhythm or a significant harmony.[966] The existence of *S1* also seems to indicate that Wagner thinks this sequence of notes is some irreducible core necessary to trigger the emotional response that Motif *A* is designed to achieve.

Wagner, however, is not generally reluctant to present only a fraction of a given motif. The motif that seems designed to substantiate the symbol of the sword is introduced in *Rheingold* although the words '*Schwert*' [sword] or '*Nothung*' are absent from the libretto of this music drama. This example also shows that Dahlhaus is rather hasty when assuring that a motif's recurrence is triggered whenever the appropriate catchword is somewhere near instead of the motif referring to a textual phrase.[967] The motif is introduced as a prime example of a 'motif of presentiment': its exposition functions like an intervening cause explaining the 'emotional' dimension of a rescue in the eleventh hour in the same way as the sword is provided for Siegmund outside Hunding's house. Wagner expects the listener to retain this emotional content which is emphasized by a C major tonality amidst a passage of D flat major:

[966] Supra n. 923.
[967] Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption*, 103.



Ex. 47

Rheingold, 3776–81 (‘Sword Motif’)

The applicability of Wagner’s theory of ‘Versmelodie’ to motif A

A strong case in favour of the continuing validity of the *Gefühlsverständnis* could be made if we were successful in tracing those implements in *Siegfried,* Act III that Wagner devises in *Opera and Drama* as his prime agents in the construction of meaning. We have seen that the exposition of a motif as ‘verse melody’ is an event that occurs less and less frequently in the *Ring*. However, this seeming peculiarity simply shifts the practical emphasis away from ‘verse-melodic’ expositions to a more abundant use of ‘motifs of presentiment’ without disqualifying the concept of *Versmelodie*. We have also seen the ways in which Wagner approaches his own mastery of the ‘musical language of the future’ which he ultimately compared with a ‘mother tongue’ that, however, in the first instance required a process of familiarization. It seems right to argue that the increase in ‘non-verse-melodic’

expositions of motifs reflects Wagner's growing confidence in his own skills to give shapes to the motifs that allowed for increasing degrees of semantic determinacy.

Therefore, the question of whether Wagner continued to trust in the concept of the *Gefühlsverständnis* beyond Act II of *Siegfried* depends on the localization of 'moments of actualization' through *Versmelodie* of those motifs that have been introduced in the orchestra alone. It is worth recapitulating that, according to Wagner's notion of the *Gefühlsverständnis*, there is a difference between 'specific' meaning that leads to conceptual understanding (conscious) and 'emotional' meaning that in fact lacks nothing in terms of specificity and by which the audience is enabled to (subconsciously) apprehend the emotions that are involved in the *Handlungsmomente* in the form of their underlying motives [*Beweggründe*]. The 'moment of actualization' provides the cognitive justification of an aroused emotion and since Wagner identifies the notion of *Versmelodie* as his prime expressive device, there is good reason to assume that the moment in which this 'actualization' occurs, is reached when the singer communicates through this particular medium. Wagner explains that in 'verse melody', 'not only language merges with music but also that which is nonpresent coincides with the present, the thought with the emotion'.[968] Wagner further specifies that '[t]he present in [verse melody] is the involuntary sensation that necessarily turns into the expression of musical melody; the nonpresent is the abstract thought, as it is being held in the verbal phrase as a reflected, arbitrary moment'.[969]

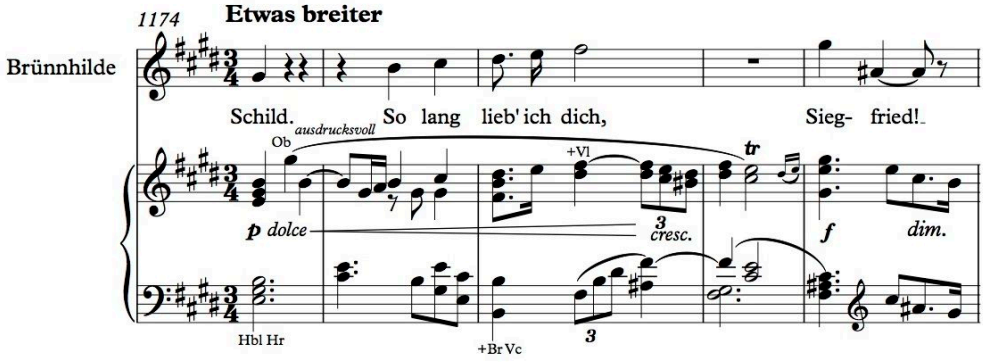
We have established the fact that from Wagner's point of view, the 'motifs of presentiment', before reaching their referential 'combustion point', so to speak, carry inherent expressive meanings. This expressivity appeals to the emotions in the first instance irrespective of the information that is intended for cognitive processing. Wagner, to reiterate this point, believes that a musical motif is able to convey emotional stimuli and messages with clear-cut precision. Why a specific emotion is aroused, however, needs to be 'justified' or, in other words, explained cognitively. In

[968] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 181: 'In der Versmelodie verbindet sich nicht nur die Wortsprache mit der Tonsprache, sondern auch […] das Ungegenwärtige mit dem Gegenwärtigen, der Gedanke mit der Empfindung.'
[969] *Ibid*.: 'Das Gegenwärtige in ihr ist die unwillkürliche Empfindung, wie sie sich nothwendig in den Ausdruck der musikalischen Melodie ergießt; das Ungegenwärtige ist der abstrakte Gedanke, wie er in der Wortphrase als reflektirtes, willkürliches Moment festgehalten wird.'

the absence of this cognitive vindication, the 'musician would have to apologize for a pointlessly aroused emotion'.[970]

Therefore, the crucial question arises whether the theory behind the concept of *Versmelodie* is still applicable to a 'melodic moment' that first occurs in Act III of *Siegfried*. For this reason, we need to assess whether there is evidence that a 'moment of actualization' of a motif that is introduced in Act III still shows characteristics of 'verse melody'. The localization of this central junction of any motif's trajectory through the music drama should enable us to determine the *Handlungsmoment* whose underlying (emotional) motivation is encapsulated in Motif *A*.

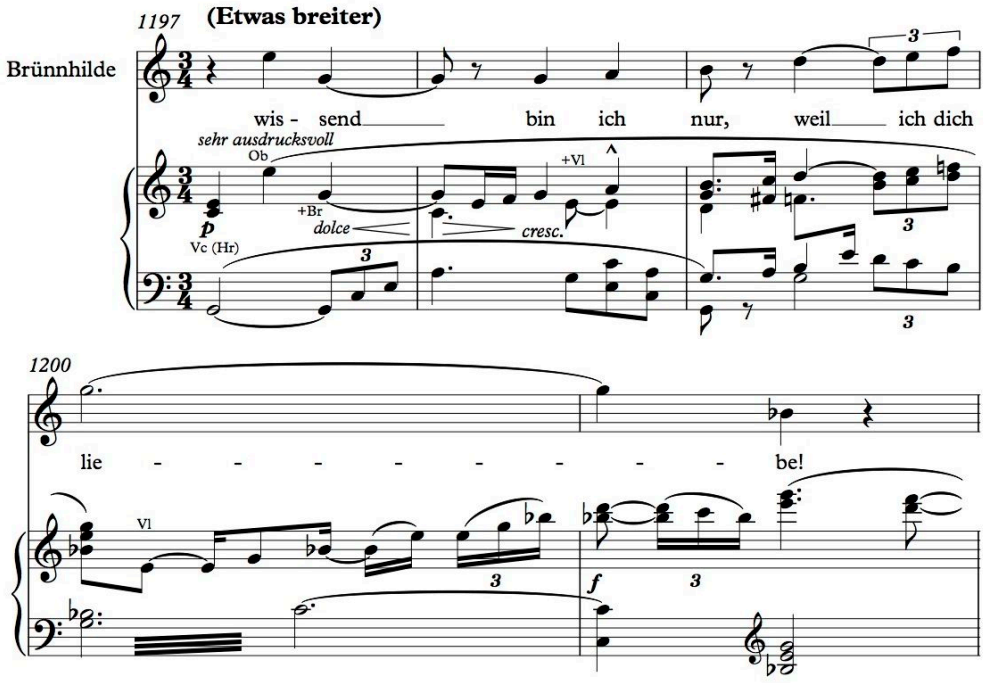
There are several motivic occurrences of *A* in the vocal line that qualify as instances of 'verse melody'. We need to assess whether any of these motivic statements indeed fulfils the criteria of the concept. Listed in chronological order, variants or segments of the motif are sung to the following phrases in *Siegfried*: (1) 'So lang lieb' ich dich' ['So long I have loved, Siegfried'], (2) 'wissend bin ich nur, weil ich dich liebe' ['wisdom fills my soul, now that I love you'], (3) 'Sangst du mir nicht, dein Wissen sei das Leuchten der Liebe zu mir?' ['You said that all your wisdom came by the light of your love for me'], (4) 'Dann bist du mir, was bang du mir warst und wirst' ['Then I shall know that Brünnhilde's mine'] and (5) 'Mir strahlt zur Stunde Siegfrieds Stern' ['I live by the light of Siegfried's bright star']:[971]



Ex. 48

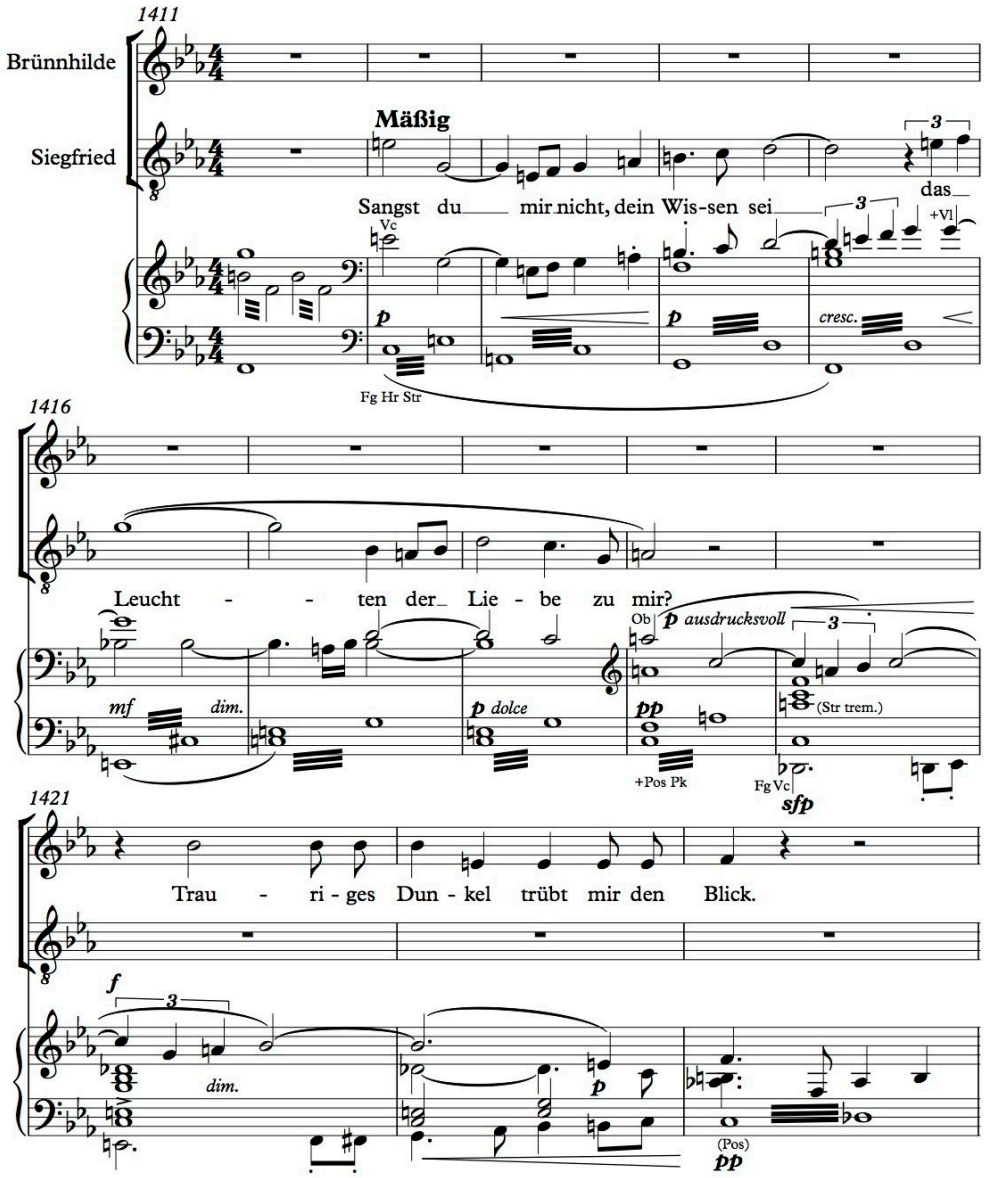
Siegfried, III, 1174–78

[970] *Ibid*., 199: '[…] um vor einem zwecklos erregten Gefühle sich zu entschuldigen.'
[971] We have seen that Wagner refrained from recognizing motivic statements in the vocal line as 'melodie moments' proper.



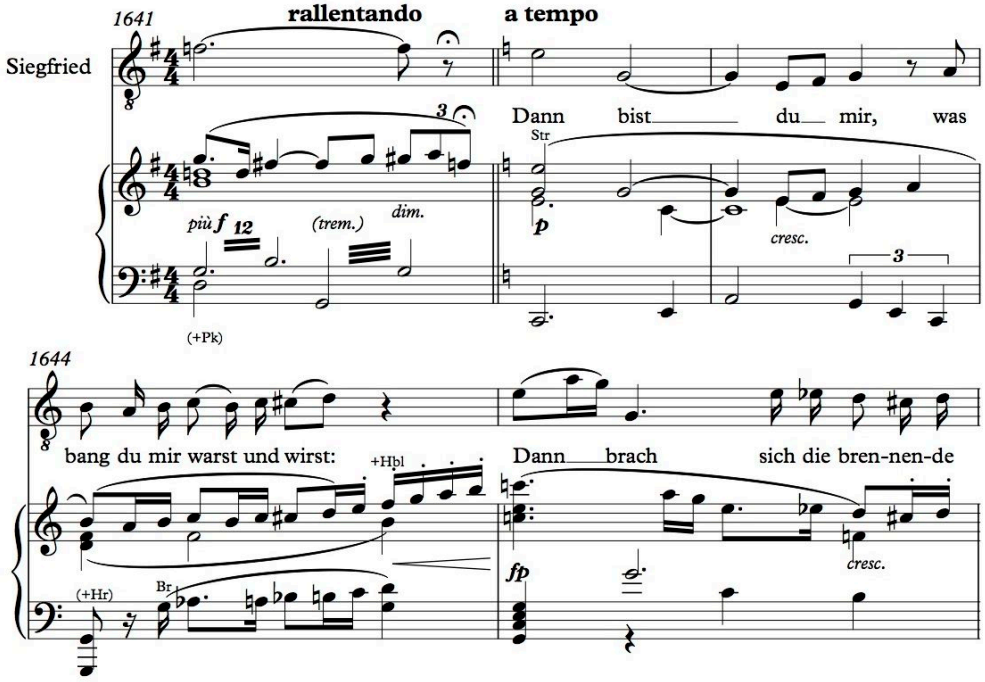
Ex. 49

Siegfried, III, 1197–1201



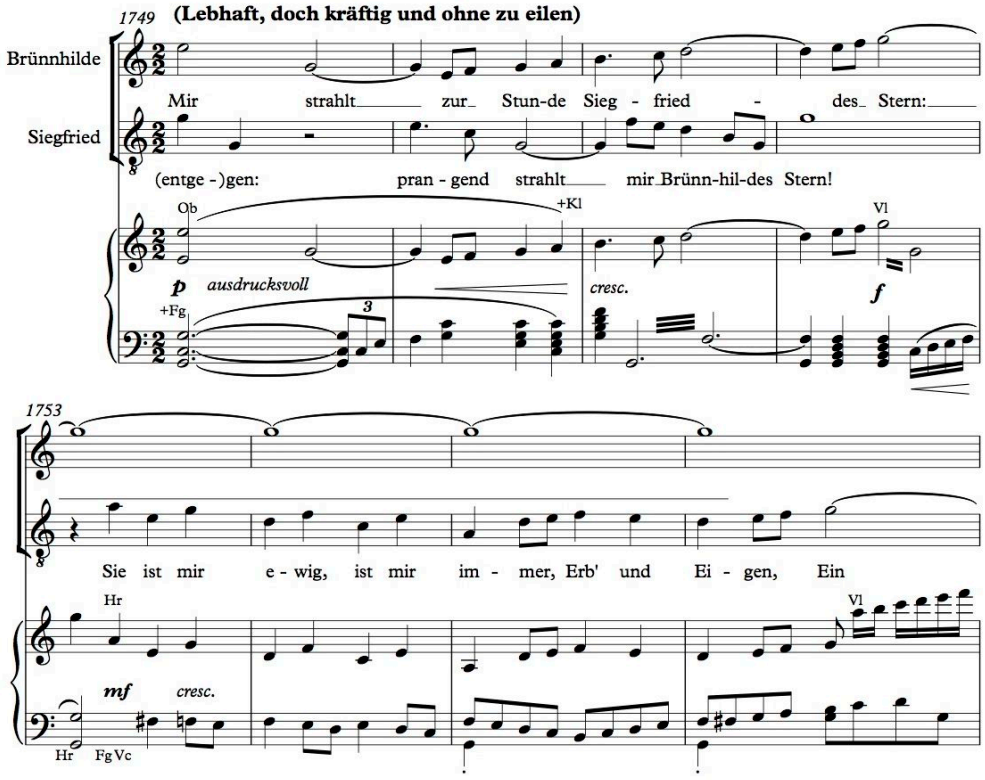
Ex. 50

Siegfried, III, 1411–23



Ex. 51

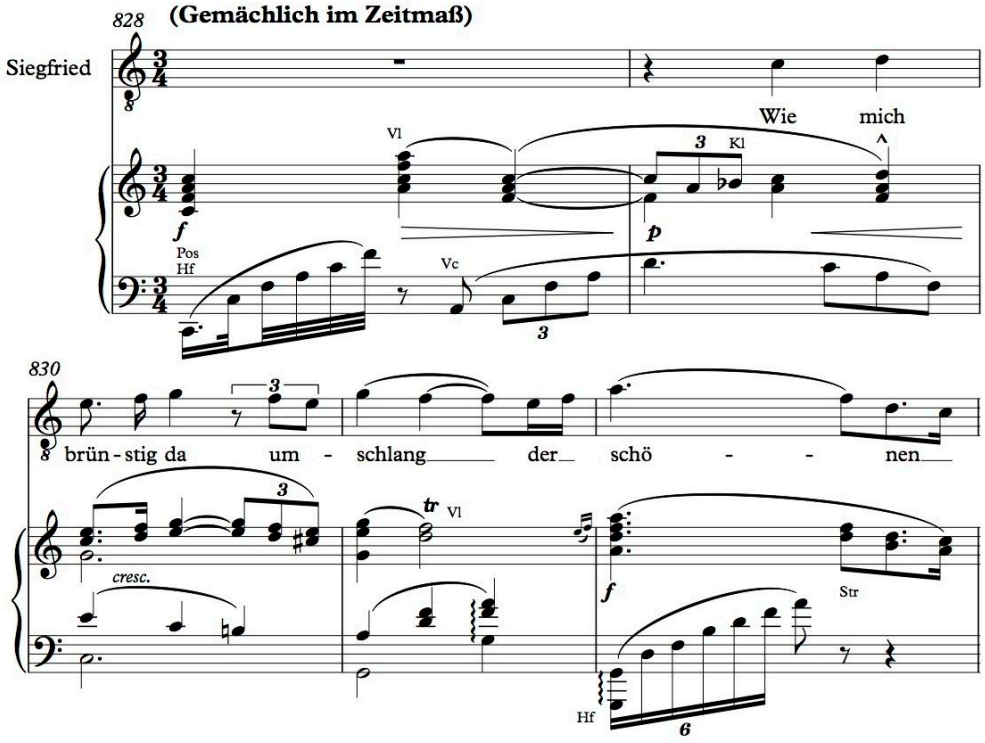
Siegfried, III, 1641–45 (Motif *A* and so-called ‘Motif of Love’s Passion’)



Ex. 52

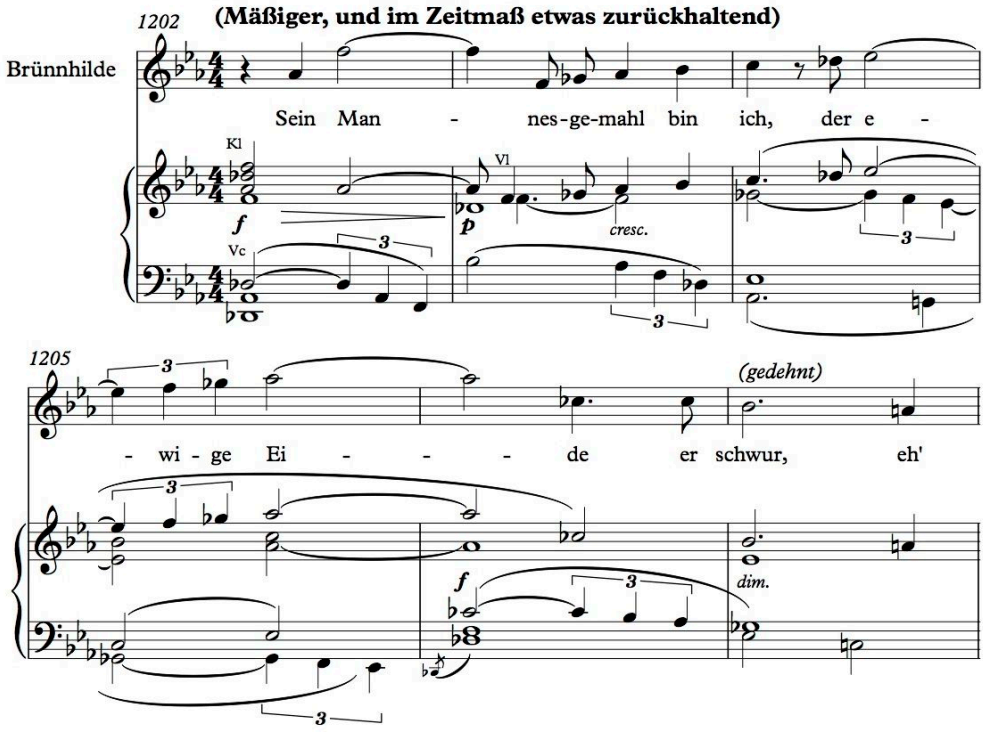
Siegfried, III, 1749–56 (Motif *A* and '*Liebesbund-Motiv*' ['Bond of Love'])

There are the following further instances in *Götterdämmerung*: (6) 'Oh! Wie mich brünstig da umschlang der schönen Brünnhilde Arm!' ['Oh, then like burning fire I was held by lovely Brünnhilde's arms!'], (7) 'Sein Mannesgemahl bin ich, der ewige Eide er schwur, eh Siegfried je dich ersah' ['But I was his own true wife; eternal devotion he'd sworn, and Siegfried and Brünnhilde were one!']:



Ex. 53

Götterdämmerung, III, 828–32



Ex. 54

Götterdämmerung, III, 1202–7

We have seen that scholarship tends to understate the significance of *Versmelodie* in Wagner's later works. Stein, forced by his decision to preclude *Opera and Drama* from *Siegfried*, Act III, rejects the applicability of the 'verse melody' concept and argues that the vocal line of Act III is prominently enriched by 'nonfunctional musical decoration by […] use of the leitmotif figures' instead.[972] Such a reading reduces the motivic statements of *A* in the vocal lines of *Siegfried*, Act III and *Götterdämmerung* to mere arbitrary coincidences that are devoid of dramatic functions. Against the backdrop of Wagner's insistence on dramatic reasons behind all of his artistic decisions, however, it seems superficial to argue that within the *Ring* those instances of the singer's melody that are being shaped by motivic material occur without some degree of meaning.

Although our purely 'emotional' response to these examples will have told us which instance is the 'moment of actualization', we need to go through them on the basis of objective judgements. The qualifying statements of *A* from *Götterdämmerung*

[972] Stein, *Richard Wagner*, 199.

(Ex. 43 and 44) occur in the closing act of the whole cycle. There is very good reason to assume that at this culminating stage of the tetralogy these two motivic statements work as 'reminiscence motifs' only which would allow us to eliminate the instances from *Götterdämmerung* from our list of qualifying statements. It is worth comparing these late statements of Motif *A* with the so-called 'Glorification of Brünnhilde' that we examined earlier (Ex. 30) and that, for lack of repetition, seemed not to materialize until the very end of the *Ring*. However, this motif, first sung to the words 'O hehrstes Wunder, herrliche Maid', is in fact introduced as 'verse melody' which turns all later occurrences into 'reminiscence motifs'.

It is notable that the second of the examples from *Siegfried* (Ex. 49) differs from the remaining instances in that Wagner chooses only to assign an incomplete phrase to the motif which is not even a half sentence. Wagner recommends mapping the ideal verses onto 'the number of […] accents that during the outflow of one breath will involuntarily form a phrase or a segment thereof'.[973] However, the first notes of the singer fail to coincide with the motif. The motivic statement shown in Ex. 52 also seems to rule out 'verse melody' as there is a second, in fact contrapuntal vocal line coinciding with this occurrence. Since this motivic statement is immediately followed by new motivic material, there is good reason to argue that Wagner would have exposed the listener too much to the risk of believing that another 'melodic moment' is extracted from this particular text. A comparison of the remaining instances from *Siegfried* (Ex. 48 and 51) suggests that the complete phrase will take priority over two statements that cover half sentences only.

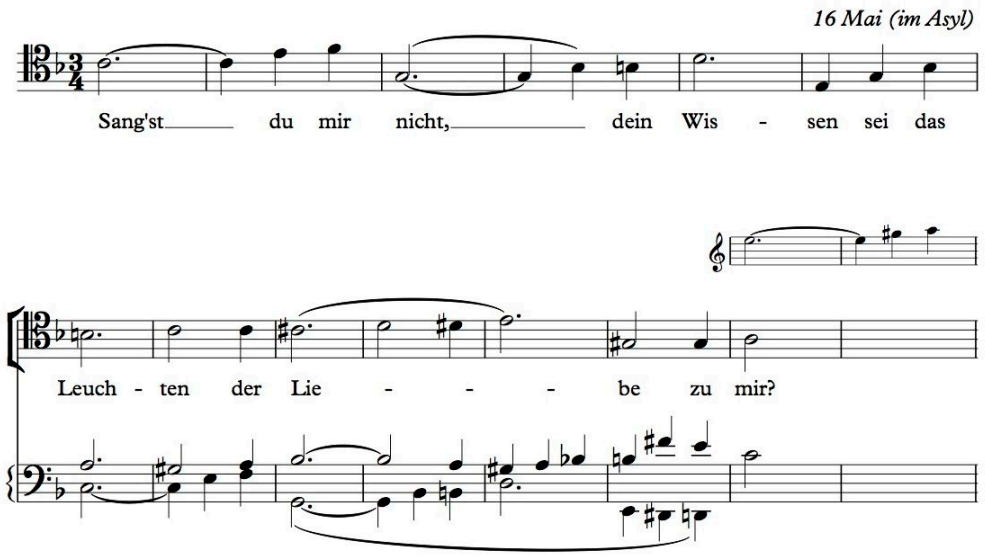
What seems therefore to represent the most prominent vocal occurrence of Motif *A* is set to the text 'Sangst du mir nicht, dein Wissen sei das Leuchten der Liebe zu mir?' (Ex. 50) which gives rise to a number of intriguing issues. This is the longest of the seven vocal motivic statements in that it embraces more intervals than the others. There is evidence that Wagner chose this particular passage as the 'moment of actualization' of motif *A*. In Cosima's diary, the motif is referred to when she mentions the phrase 'Sangst du mir nicht' in conjunction with another new motif from *Siegfried*, Act III. On 12 April 1869 she notes: 'Woke up early from a nice dream, in

[973] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 120: 'Die Zahl dieser Accente, die unwillkürlich während der Ausströmung eines Athems sich zu einer Phrase, oder zu einem Hauptabschnitte der Phrase abschließen, wird stets im genauen Verhältnisse zum Charakter der Erregtheit stehen, so daß z. B. ein zürnender, *thätiger* Affekt auf einem Athem eine größere Zahl von Accenten ausströmen lassen wird, während dagegen ein tief und schmerzlich *leidender* in wenigeren, länger tönenden Accenten die ganze Athemkraft verzehren muß.'

which R. sang to me the theme he recently played for me, "*Sangst du mir*", and asked me to sing with it the second theme from the love scene between Siegfried and Brünnhilde ("*Sie ist mir ein und eigen*" ["*Sie ist mir ewig, ist mir immer Erb' und Eigen*"]), which I did'.[974] Cosima is likely to describe the juxtaposition of the two motifs that has entered the finished version of *Siegfried* in bars 1749–56 (Ex. 52). What is most astonishing about this diary entry is the fact that the couple is not conversing about the motifs in terms of catchwords but they are referring to textual markers instead. This also suggests that the concept of deriving motifs from vocalizations (i.e. *Versmelodie*) is still very much at work during the compositional process of *Siegfried,* Act III.

At first sight, the complicated prehistory of this particular motivic occurrence which Laurence Dreyfus has recently reconstructed, seems to run counter to a categorization of this passage as an instance of *Versmelodie*.[975] Bailey has transcribed the following sketch that is captioned '*16 Mai (im Asyl)*' which is in fact a gloss in Wagner's copy of the *Siegfried* poem. It shows Wagner's initial plan to set the text of 'Sangst du mir nicht' to music that in an altered version ultimately found its place in *Tristan*.[976]

[974] *CWD*, I, 85; *CWT*, I, 84 (12.4.1869): 'Früh aufgewacht aus einem hübschen Traume: R. sang mir das Thema, welches er mir vor kurzem mitteilte: "Sangst du mir", und forderte mich auf, das zweite Thema aus der Liebesscene Siegfried's und Brünnhilde's ("sie ist mir ein und eigen") dazu zu singen, was ich tat.'
[975] Dreyfus, 'Siegfried's Masculinity', 16–8.
[976] Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 318–20.



Ex. 55

Transcription by Bailey, 'The Method of Composition', 319, ex. 52

The fact that Wagner subsequently decides to assign Motif *A* to this particular text instead (Ex. 50) seems to rule out the applicability of 'verse melody' as we have evidence that Wagner sees the music that is 'encrypted' in this particular phrase in two completely different ways. This seeming arbitrariness appears to underscore Stein's view according to which these statements have turned into mere decoration in *Siegfried*. However, as Dreyfus has shown, this particular passage is based upon music which 'first occurred to him without knowing which words it would set'.[977] Ultimately, Wagner reached a decision by choosing Motif *A* which tells us that he was convinced that the 'emotional comprehensibility' of Motif *A* ranks higher than that of the *Tristan* material in support of this particular verse.

'Motifs of presentiment' differ from their reminiscent analogues in that they carry some ambiguity in case there is a competing *Handlungsmoment* to which they appear to provide an 'emotional' commentary before the arrival of *Versmelodie*. Dreyfus argues that the link between the text that precedes the exposition of Motif *A* ('Was in des Zwiespalt's wildem Schmerze, verzweifelnd einst ich beschloß, froh und freudig führe frei ich nun aus'. ['What in an hour of fiercest anguish despairing once I resolved freely and gladly I shall now bring to pass']) and the melody that Wagner ultimately assigned to 'Sangst du mir nicht' (i.e. motif *A*) is 'not immediately

[977] Dreyfus, 'Siegfried's Masculinity', 16.

obvious, but, in one of Wagner's more subtle leitmotivic connections, he attaches Wotan's acquiescence of the future to Siegfried—in the sense of a joyful renunciation—to Brünnhilde, who, as Erda's 'wissendes Kind' [knowing child], with Siegfried's love, will achieve an 'erlösende Weltenthat' [world-redeeming deed] through an equally joyful renunciation'.[978] This emphasis on *Entsagung* [renunciation] is shared by Dieter Borchmeyer who naturally assigns the motif as 'apparently central motif of renunciation' to Wotan.[979]

There is evidence that Wagner indeed associated Motif *A* with prophetic qualities. We know from Porges's account that Wagner wished this motif to sound like the 'proclamation of a new religion'.[980] Friedrich Glasenapp reports to have heard 'this quite literal origin of the solemnly sublime theme of joyful resignation […] from the master's own lips'.[981] However, the motivic statements of *A* as assembled in the Appendix show that the emotional qualities involved in the majority of cases place quite a strong emphasis on love. According to Cosima's diaries, Motif *A* was originally intended for the Buddha in *Die Sieger*. She wrote that 'when I was looking through some papers with him yesterday, I came upon the original theme for "Sangst du nicht, dein Wissen"; I tell R. that the present one (meant for Buddha) pleases me far more'.[982] Dreyfus reveals that the motif was designed to support a moment in which Buddha 'gains a new insight into the stilling of sensual desire'.[983] Taking this knowledge into account, Dreyfus reveals the dichotomy attached to this material between the renunciation and sexual desires since 'the music is tied in its diatonic purity to Romantic idealization rather than erotic stimulation'.[984] Against this background, Dreyfus rightly argues that the 'motif makes far better sense as a grand statement of supreme Buddhist enlightenment than as a seductive inducement'.[985]

In an 1869 letter to King Ludwig, Wagner mentions two motifs that were designed for *Siegfried*. Although the dramatic actualization must unequivocally be

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[978] *Ibid*.
[979] Borchmeyer, '"… sehnsüchtig blicke ich oft nach dem Land Nirwana …"', 24.
[980] See n. 931.
[981] Glasenapp, *Leben Richard Wagners*, III, 119: 'Diese ganz buchstäblich zu nehmende Herkunft des feierlich erhabenen Themas einer freudigen Entsagung hat der Verfasser aus des Meisters eigenem Munde.' (translation taken from Dreyfus, 'Siegfried's Masculinity', 18).
[982] *CWD*, I, 117; *CWT*, II, 142 (20.7.1878): 'Wie ich gestern mit ihm noch Papiere durchsah, fand ich das erste Thema zu "Sangst du mir nicht, dein Wissen"; ich sage zu R. daß das jetzige (zuerst für Buddha gedacht) mir bei weitem besser gefiel […]'.
[983] Dreyfus, 'Siegfried's Masculinity', 18.
[984] *Ibid*.
[985] *Ibid*.

identifiable in the final work without the need of such supporting evidence, the following quotation may substantiate one opinion over another as to where the 'moment of dramatic actualization' of Motif *A* is to be found. Wagner wrote:

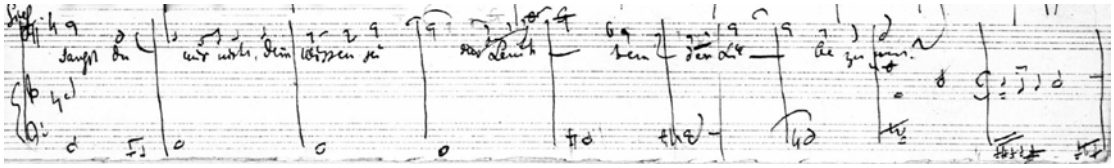
> Since that time, when I had to raise […] anxious questions about our destiny, there came to me and now haunts me this theme which greets us right at this act's beginning to announce to us the decision, the last question, the last will of the worldly god. So far a shudder kept me away from recording what often hit me like lightning during lonely walks in storms and bad weather. But also the proud exultation of the lovers destined for death found in those times its music [*Töne*]: they are like the rejoicing of the hero's chest, which exclaims its victory-love-joy into the high Alps, to leave it to eternity through its infinite echo.[986]

The exposition of the first motif that Wagner is mentioning—'which greets us right at this act's beginning'—is sung to the text 'Wache, Wala! Wala! Erwach'!' (Ex. 18). What is less clear is whether Wagner refers to Motif *A* when describing the '*Sieges-Liebes-Freude*' [victory-love-joy] as this 'melodic moment' may easily be 'emotionally' understood as carrying qualities underscoring the 'proud exultation of the lovers'. However, the emphasis on an '*unendlichen Widerhall*' [infinite echo] seems to indicate that Wagner is in fact outlining the motif that first is heard to the words 'Sie ist mir ewig, ist mir immer Erb' und Eigen' ['She's mine forever, she is my joy, me wealth, my world'] (Ex. 52). The stepwise motion that is characteristic of this motif adheres much more to the idea of an 'infinite echo'.

After having given something of an 'informed' background of the genesis of motif *A*—that in fact has taken us a long way from a 'pre-reflective' perception of the 'melodic moment'—the final interpretative task of this study is focused on possible reasons why the passage 'Sangst du mir nicht' seems indeed designed as an instance

[986] *SB*, XXI, 77 (24.2.1869): 'Seit jener Zeit, wo ich […] bange Fragen über Unser Schicksal aufzuwerfen hatte, entstand mir, und verfolgt mich nun das Thema, das Uns sogleich beim Beginne dieses Aktes zu begrüssen hat, und Uns die Entscheidung, die letzte Frage, den letzten Willen des Weltengottes ankündigen soll. Ein Schauder hielt mich bisher ab, aufzuzeichnen, was oft auf einsamen Wanderungen bei Sturm und Wetter licht wie Blitzesleuchten in mir aufschlug. Doch auch der stolze Jubel des für den Tod vereinigten Paares fand in diesen Zeiten seine Töne: sie gleichen dem Jauchzen der Heldenbrust, die ihre Sieges-Liebes-Freude in die hohen Alpen ruft, um durch den unendlichen Widerhall sie der Ewigkeit zu überlassen.'

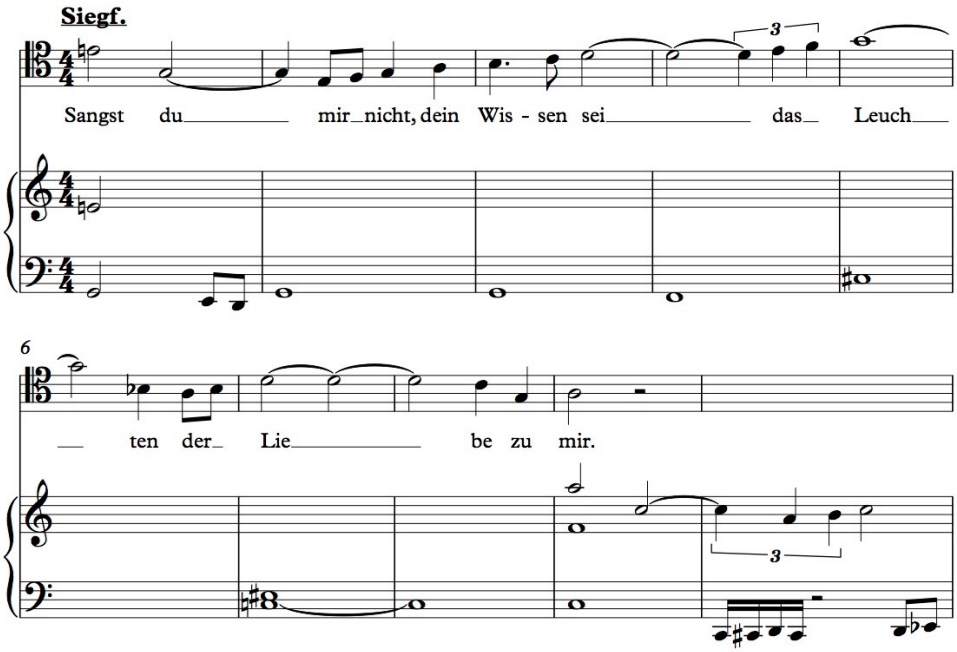
of *Versmelodie*. What seems to be a clear sign, though not a prerequisite of *Versmelodie*, is the immediate extraction of motivic segments or *indeed* 'melodic moments' from the vocal line. This strongly reminds us of a core passage in *Opera and Drama* in which Wagner explains that the '"*Gedanke*" *des Instrumentalmotives*' [idea of the instrumental motif] is derived [*leitet … sich … her*] from the 'verse melody'.[987]



Kompositionsskizze, III, 17R (detail)

(*Siegfried*, III, 1412–20)

Transcription:

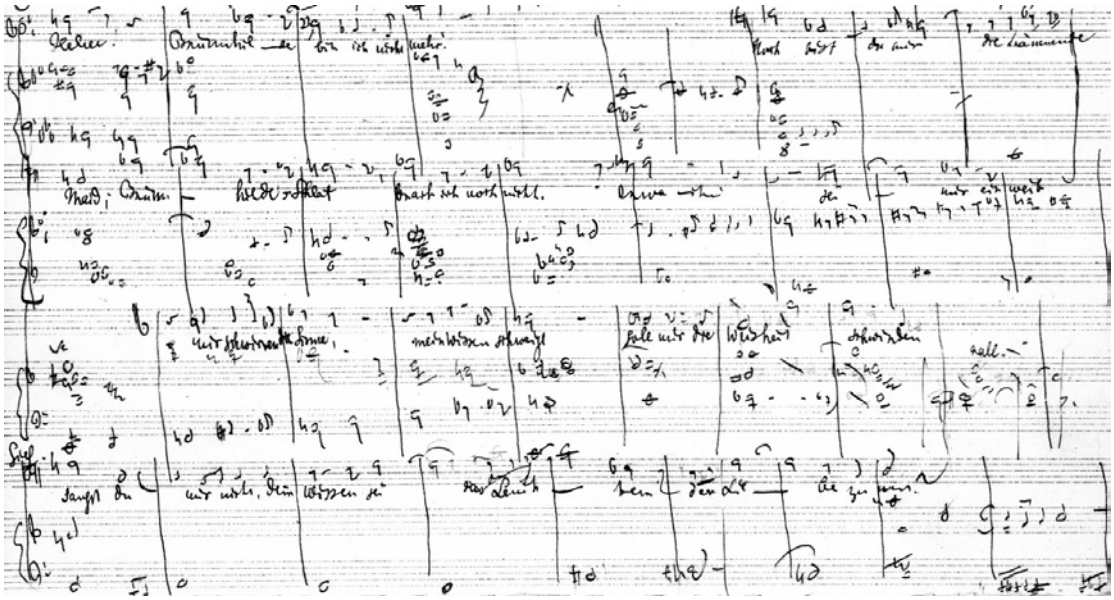


Ex. 56

Indeed, the last two bars of this excerpt from folio 17th show the immediate derivation of segments from the singer's melody.

The following transcription of another excerpt of the same folio gives an overall impression of the material that precedes the section 'Sangst du mir nicht':

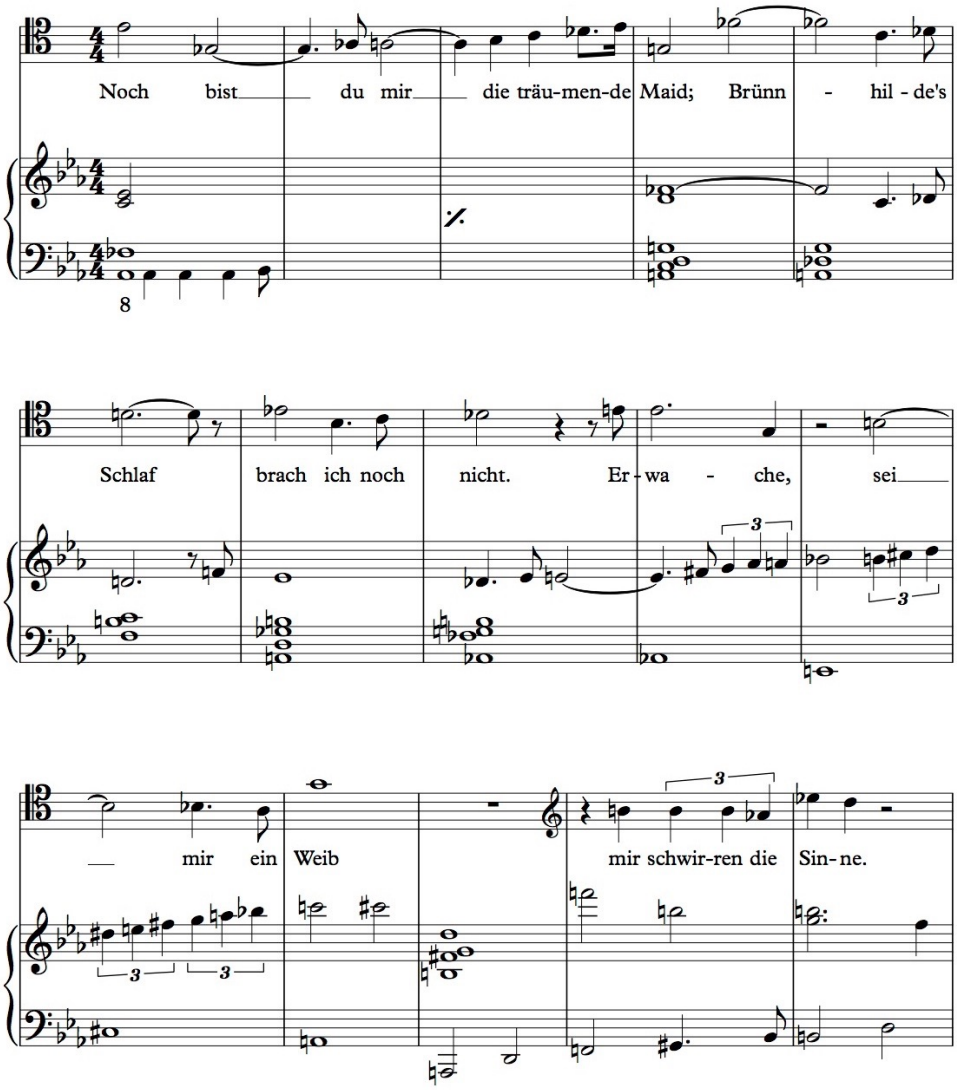
[987] *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 190 (see n. 190).



Kompositionsskizze, III, 17^{R} (detail)

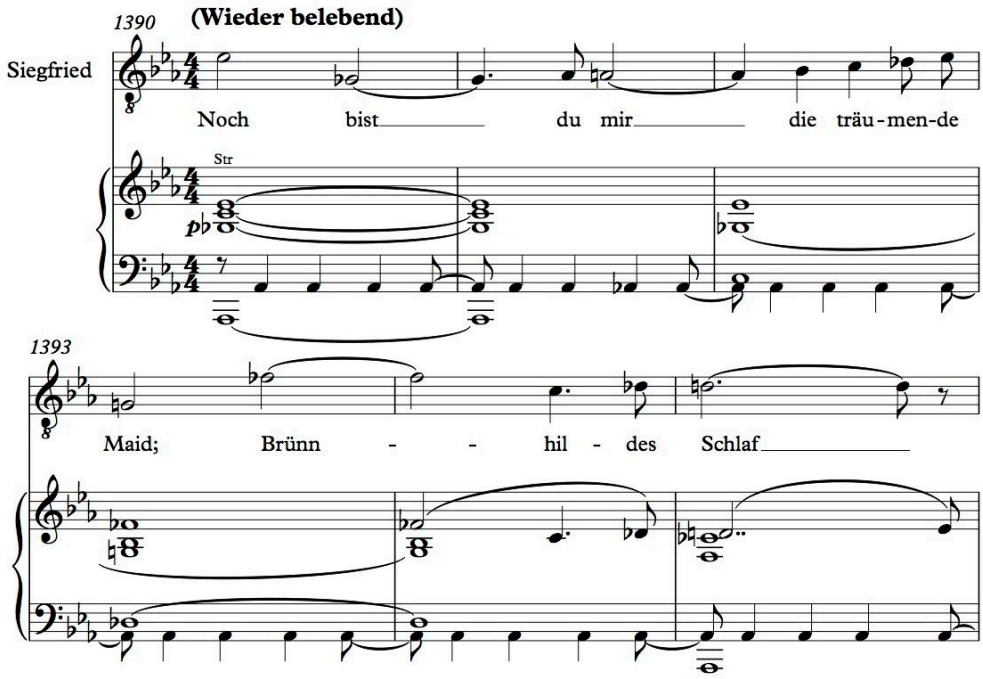
(*Siegfried*, III, 1383–1420)

Transcription (from the eigth bar onwards):



Ex. 57

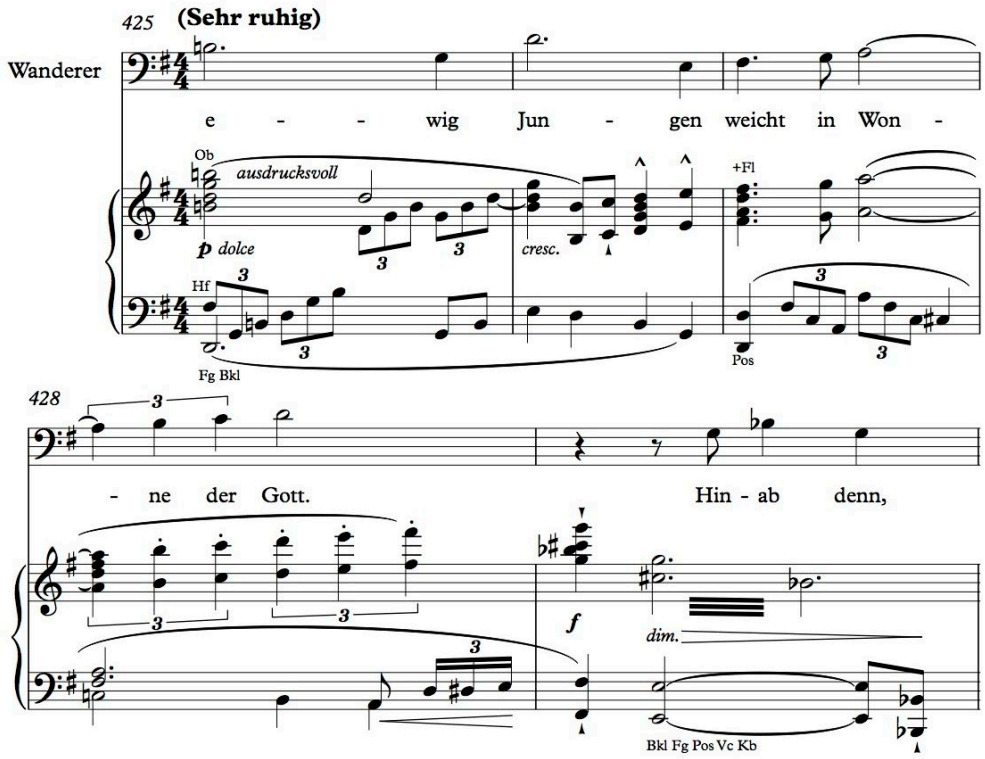
Thanks to this skeleton-like reduction by the composer's hand, we are able to observe how carefully Wagner brings about a disintegration of Motif *A*, before presenting the potential 'verse-melodic' culmination of *A* in the bottom system of the page. When we had second thoughts to include the third of the deviant instances of Motif *A* (Ex. 46) ('Noch bist du mir die träumende Maid') (*Siegfried*, III, 1390–95) in our catalogue of motivic statements of *A*, we now seem to be able to see through the dream-like veil that Wagner has placed upon *A* by small changes to the intervallic structure and to be able to see the striking kinship to *A*:



Ex. 58

Siegfried, III, 1390–95

The somewhat ‘distorted’ statement of *A*, from bar 1390 onwards, shows the following characteristics of *A* without ‘collapsing’ into a statement proper: there is the characteristic falling sixth which is followed by a stepwise ascending motion. The detail that is missing from this structure is the characteristic ‘turn’ of a minor third. Also, the upward motion is interrupted in bar 1394 by a leap ‘backwards’ to regain new strength, so to speak. However, the way in which the stepwise ascent skyrockets in the final four bars of this passage is an absolutely striking reminiscence of *A* (that still is treated as a ‘motif of presentiment’). This type of ascent has been associated with *A* on several occasions prior to this instance (e.g. Ex. 59)—indeed it is the segment that we have distinguished from *S1* as the more detachable element—but in this particular instance it has grown into unprecedented proportions.



Ex. 59

Siegfried, III, 425–29

The preparatory measures that I have just discussed even invite speculation about a possible refinement of the concept of *Versmelodie* to include 'pre-verse-melodic' gradations that further intensify the 'emotional' effect of the actual event. In accordance with *Opera and Drama*, there is a spectrum of different levels that operate in between the '*tönende Wortphrase*'—as the expression that ranges in closest proximity to the 'phenomena of ordinary life'—and 'verse melody'. Wagner makes provision for a gradual emotional arousal by declaring that '[a]t the same time, the *expression* of the actors and protagonists must necessarily emerge from something still recognizable to us as ordinary life, by means of an even-tempered [*wohlbedingter*] intensification, to something akin to the elevated expression that we described in the musical verse melody'.[988] Admittedly, what we have just seen in the bars leading up to the phrase 'Sangst du mir nicht dein Wissen' is definitely not the

[988] *RWOuD*, 31 (amended); *OuD*, *GSD*, IV, 192: '[…] so hat nothwendig aud der *Ausdruck* der Handelnden und Leidenden sich aus einem, dem gewöhnlichen Leben noch kenntlichen, nur mit wohlbedingter Steigerung zu einem solchen zu erheben, wie wir ihn in der musikalischen Versmelodie als einen über den gewöhnlichen Ausdruch erhöhten bezeichneten.'

type of measured intensification that Wagner seems to have recommended. Instead, what Wagner seems to be after is having an air of trance-like disintegration of *A*. Following these emotional upheavals, Wagner appeases the listener by presenting Motif *A* in terms of a balanced appearance as the intervallic tensions have been resolved into a ‘verse-melodic’ statement along the lines of *S1*.

V. Conclusion

Over the course of this study, I sought to provide the reader with a disproportionately lengthy and detailed gloss on Wagner's motivic theory as proposed in *Opera and Drama*. Wagner's motivic 'system' is governed by a greater sense of coherence than leitmotivic reception and the problematic accessibility of the prose writings might have us believe. Although Wagner's aesthetic manifesto came under more or less strict scrutiny throughout his artistic career, he never renounced the principal ideas as established in Part III of *Opera and Drama*. In fact, the applicability of the body of rules devoted to the 'melodic moments' as derived from Wagner's theoretical *magnum opus* can be traced beyond *Siegfried*, Act II. A strong case can therefore be made for the continued validity of these principles throughout the *Ring*. One particular realignment with Wagner's theory that prompted a great number of new perspectives on the motivic network arose from the reappraisal of the 'motifs of presentiment' which suffer from a considerable neglect in the literature.

The overarching element that infuses Wagner's motivic theory with this reinforced sense of unity is his constant quest for 'emotional comprehensibility'. Wagner's unreserved and unbroken insistence on the notion of *Gefühlsverständnis* seems unprecedented in the history of art. We have seen how deeply the different strata of Wagner's artistic programme are imbued with this arguably most intricate of the composer's maxims. It is right to say that this notion runs through his artistic *Weltanschauung* like a golden thread.

The notion of 'emotional understanding' also permeates Wagner's compositional approaches. Through an exploration of motivic phenomena in *Siegfried* we were able to assess the extent to which Wagner's compositional methods are affected by his constant endeavours to write expressive music that—from his point of view—is universally understood. Wagner proposed a genealogical approach to melody by arguing that melodies which carry these universal traits are necessarily linked to a primal melody that is derived from *Urmusik* as the first language of man. In view of the inherently hypothetical nature of the exploration of primal music, the potential of an innate store of references was investigated. *Siegfried* presented itself as the ideal candidate as this music drama enjoys a unique relationship with Wagner's other works and no other musical creation wrested from Wagner a greater artistic

struggle than this comedy. Furthermore, the motivic network in this music drama was exposed to an unparalleled long-term scrutiny by the composer.

Wagner's artistic visions are intertwined with a great concern for musical meaning. I sought to trace the various layers of Wagner's compositional practices devoted to the construction of meaning in an attempt to identify the different roles that he assigned the 'melodic moments'. The analysis of the *Siegfried Kompositionsskizze* revealed that Wagner applied great care when placing the motifs in the growing musical texture. Alongside a hierarchy of semantic determinacy depending on the absence or presence of motifs, we were able to discern three archetypes of motivic configuration that enabled the composer to distinguish between different levels of emotional commentary.

The concept of the *Gefühlsverständnis* it built upon the foundations of a strong aesthetic tradition that has lost a great deal of its former attraction. This is all the more surprising in view of how significantly Wagner's notion reverberates in multidisciplinary findings. We have successfully traced the notion of 'emotional understanding' in a variety of primary source texts and approached the concept from a number of historical and musicological perspectives with a particular emphasis on empirical research. My approach was characterized by a cross-fertilization of musical analysis and close readings of Wagner's prose texts in new ways. This may be summarized as an attempt to give Wagner a voice in a scholarly more accessible manner.

Scholarship is offered a revised understanding of the ways in which Wagner himself saw his works and how clearly he envisaged the drama to be received. For too long, the professional realm has surrendered to the supremacy of rationalization over intuition. The outlook presented in this study is designed to open up new channels into exploring the 'music-emotion relationship' away from the orthodox 'word-tone relationship'. It turned out that the application of Narmour's 'implication-realization model' runs into the roadblock of Wagner's skills to present motifs as multi-layered phenomena that transcend one of its constituents, such as their intervallic progression. The neglect of voice-leading, harmony, timbre or function of a given motivic statement seems too one-dimensional as to enable us to securely link motivic occurrences to the arousal of specific emotions.

Wagner accorded unequivocal qualities to the emotional messages that musical motifs are able to transmit. We are able to describe these messages but we

still must give in to the inexplicability of the reasons or causal factors involved. Whenever we aim to approach the emotional information encapsulated in a motif, the number of words necessary for such descriptions far exceeds the number of notes that Wagner needed to write. This is precisely the reason why Wagner argues in favour of music instead of language. There is every reason to expect that the psychological study of music will provide further insights that allow us solve further conundrums surrounding Wagner's ideal.

One final comparison is intended to sum up Wagner's strategy: As opposed to hymns in church music—static melodies that accommodate flexible texts—Wagner creates flexible melodies that retain a modicum of recognizability. By way of constant repetition, the congregation acquires increasing familiarity of the hymns to the extent that ultimately the text is no longer required to convey its messages. With respect to the chorale, there is a strong tendency towards emotional indifference owing to the fact that divergent verses are set to the same music. Wagner, however, aims to write melodies that immediately convey emotional messages with the result that no process of familiarization is required. The text turns out to be a mere bonus that opens up the possibility of 'complete' comprehension, i.e. emotional understanding is reinforced with cognitive understanding. Wagner was aware, that in opposition to the constant recurrence of hymns in services over the course of the ecclesiastical year, the spectator at one of his music dramas was likely to be exposed to this work of art only once. Therefore, Wagner's melodies needed to 'work' instantaneously.

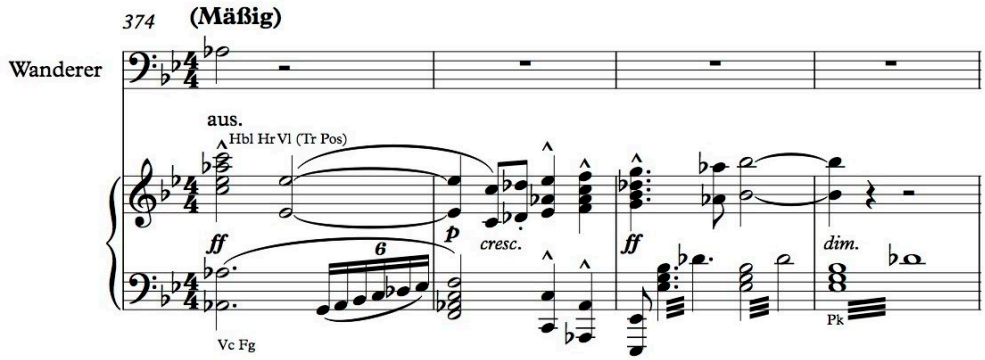
Ultimately, the revision of our understanding of Wagner's hermeneutic visions may lead to new listening approaches to his works. Wagner's emphasis on the 'purely human' encourages us to rely on what makes us special: our emotions. Whatever the extent to which we consider Wagner's concept utopian we cannot afford not to read his ideal mode of perception into our views about him and into our interpretations of his works. It is true that Wagner's ideal mode of perception demands a lot from us. To say the least, it is based on the expectation of sustained attention on the music drama's unfolding. Further research seems required to provide answers as to how the listener may be able to prepare himself for a 'purely human' reception of the *Ring*.

Wagner thought us capable of perceiving his works virtually unprepared and in particular without the support of a *Leitfaden*. Wagner places a great deal of faith in us. There is no good reason to replace our deeply personal Wagner experience with a preformed motivic shape that we have learned from others and that we have

cognitively internalized beforehand. It does not seem justified that in the face of a potentially transcendental experience—attendance at one of Wagner's music dramas—we decide to forearm us with an overtly rational armory of memorized and one-dimensional motivic shapes.

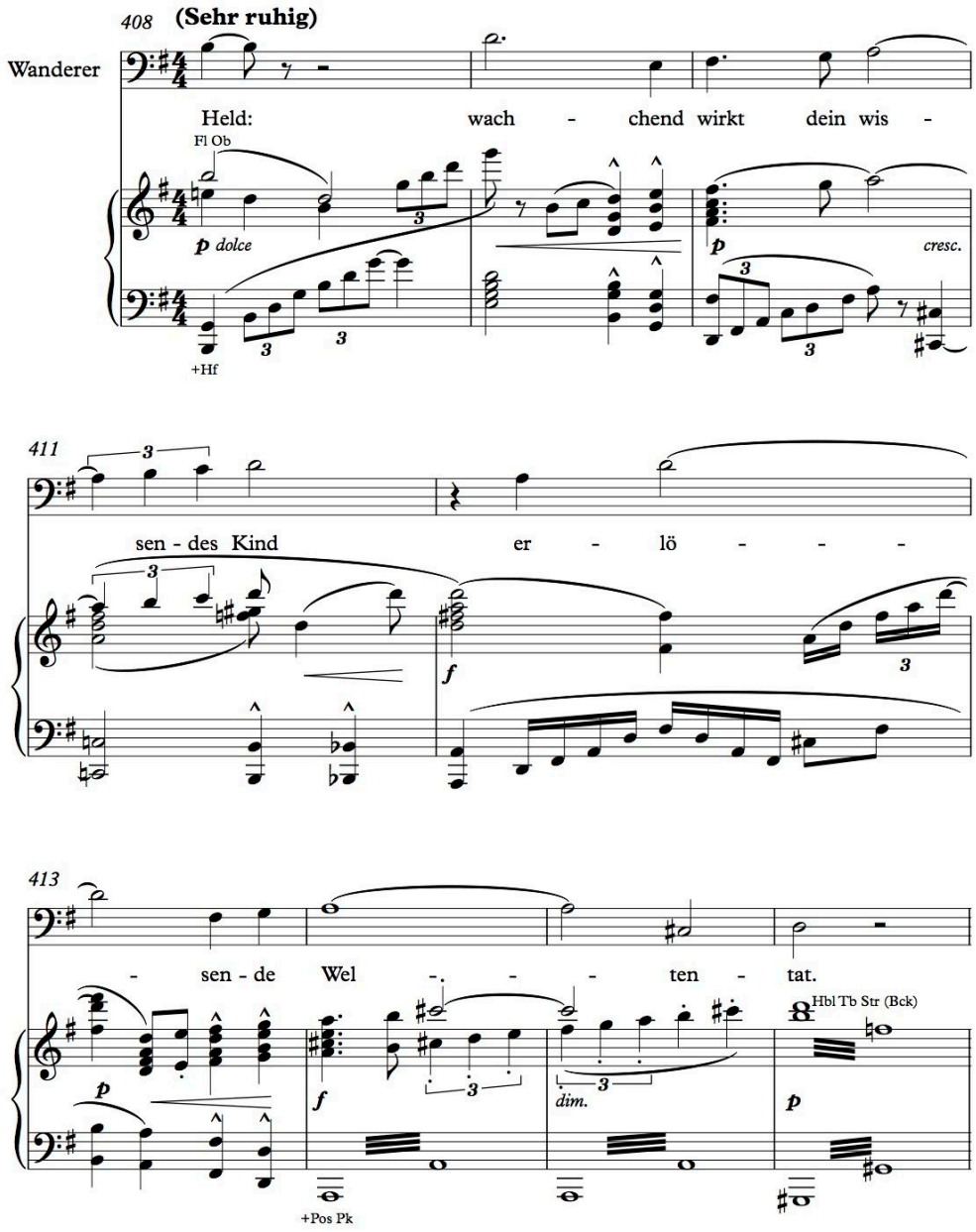
Appendix

Examples of occurrences of Motif *A* from *Siegfried* with their associated texts



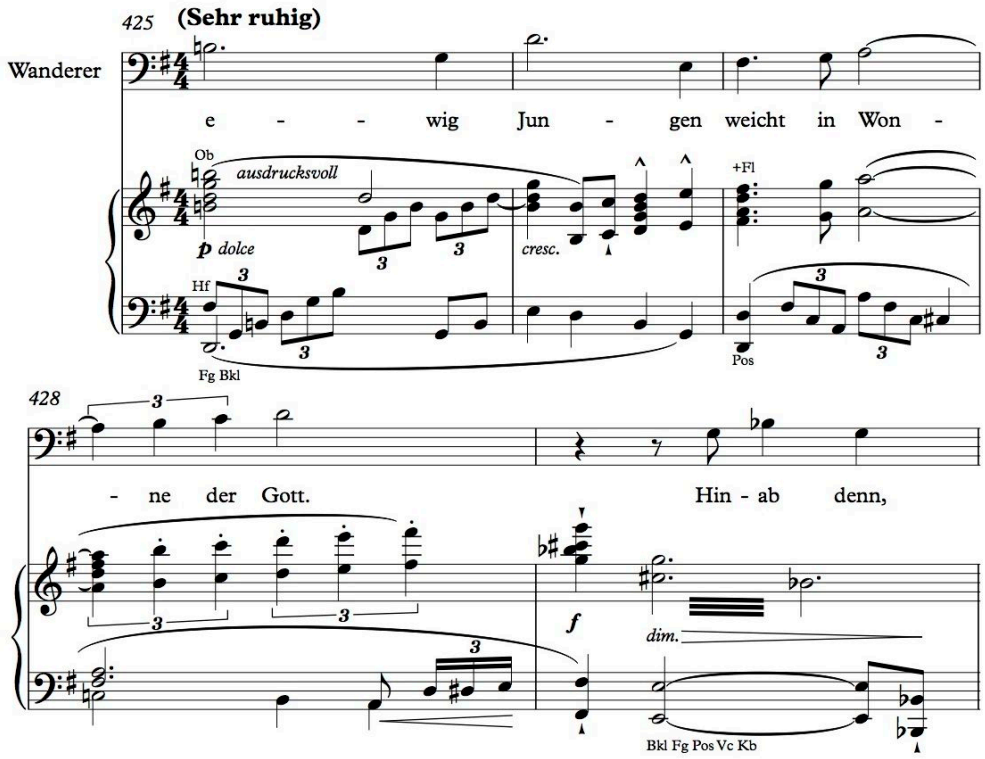
Siegfried, III, 374–7

Was in des Zwiespalt wildem	What in an hour of fiercest
Schmerze	anguish
verzweifelnd einst ich beschloß,	despairing once I resolved
froh und freudig	freely and gladly
führe frei ich nun aus.	I shall now bring to pass.
Weiht’ ich in wütendem Ekel	Once I declared in my loathing
des Niblungen Neid schon die Welt;	the Niblung might claim all the world;
dem herrlichsten Wälsung weis’ ich	today to the Wälsung
mein Erbe nun an.	I have bequeathed my realm.



Siegfried, III, 408–16

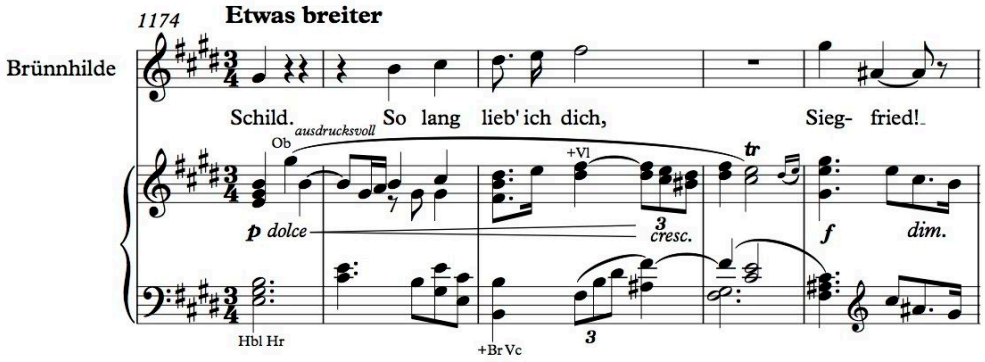
Die du mir gebarst,	She whom you once bore,
Brünnhild’,	Brünnhild,
weckt sich hold der Held:	wakes to that hero’s kiss.
wachend wirkt	then your wisdom’s
dein wissendes Kind	child will achieve
erlösende Weltentat.	that deed that will free our world.



Siegfried, III, 425–9

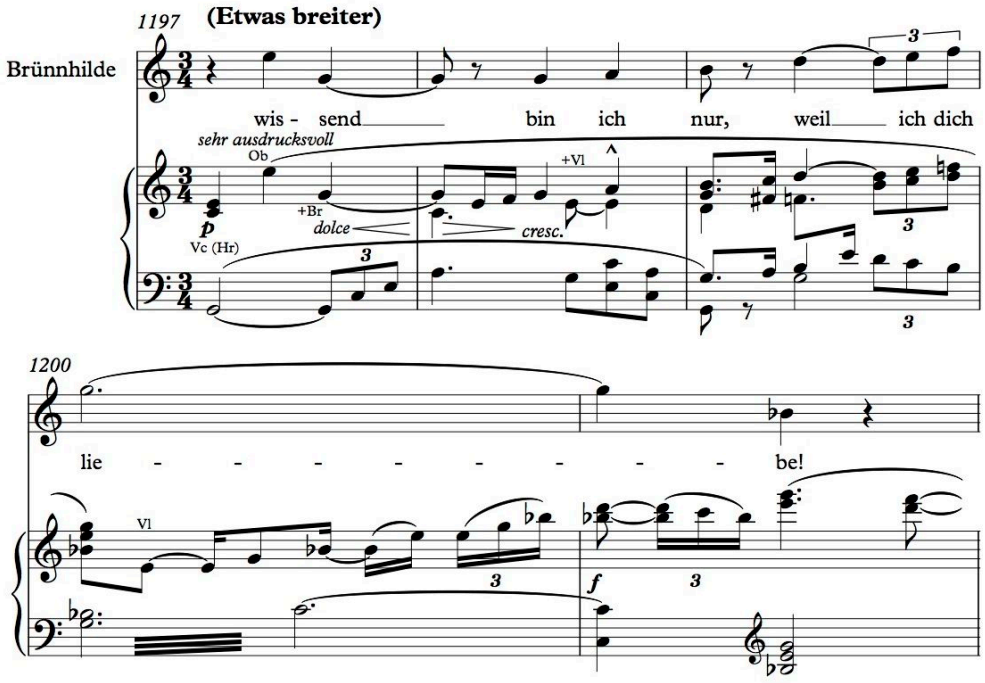
Was Jene auch wirken,
dem ewig Jungen
weicht in Wonne der Gott.

Whatever may happen
the god will gladly
yield his rule to the young.



Siegfried, III, 1174–8

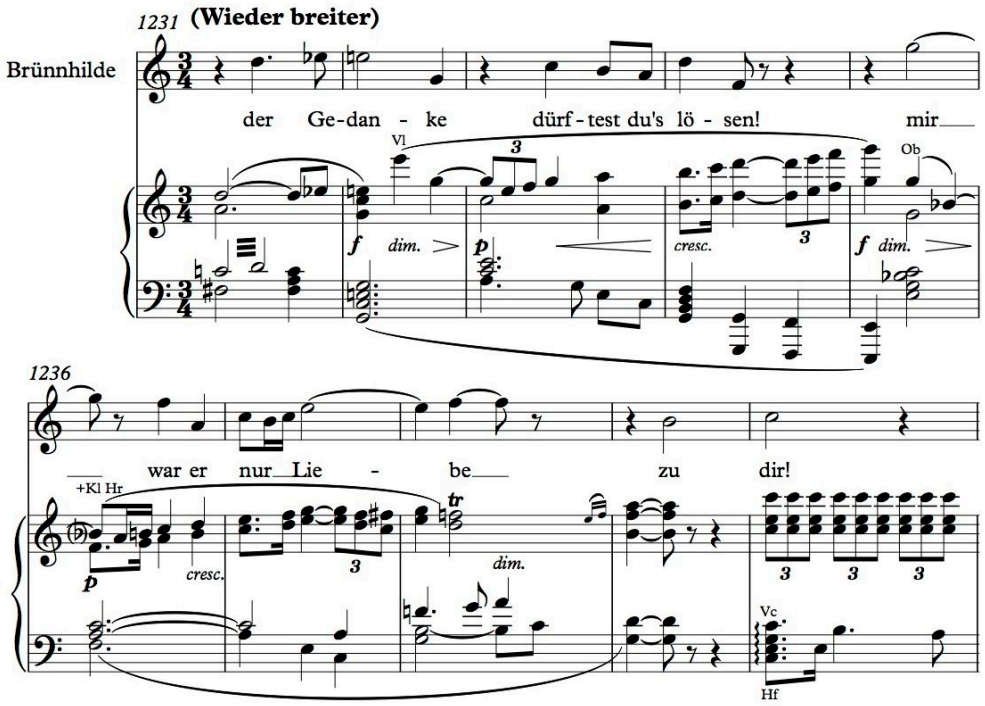
Dich Zarten nährt’ ich,	Your life I sheltered,
noch eh du gezeugt;	in Sieglinde’s womb;
noch eh du geboren,	before she had borne you,
barg dich mein Schild:	I was your shield.
so lang lieb ich dich, Siegfried!	So long I have loved, Siegfried!



Siegfried, III, 1197–1201

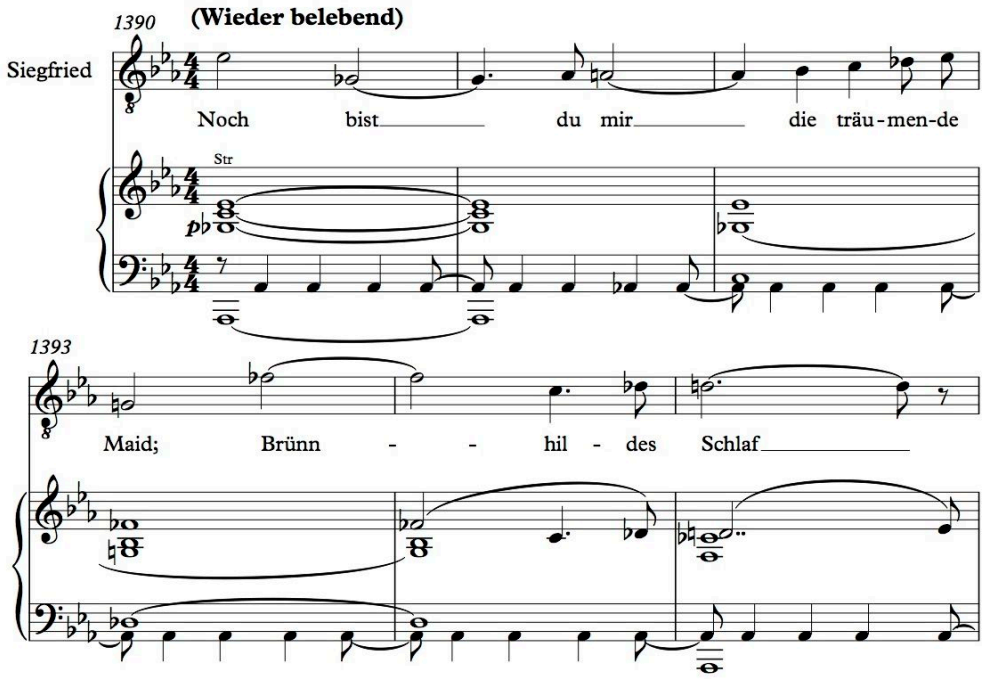
Was du nicht weißt,
weiß ich für dich;
doch wissend bin ich
nur–weil ich dich liebe!

What you would learn,
learn it from me,
for wisdom fills my soul,
now that I love you!



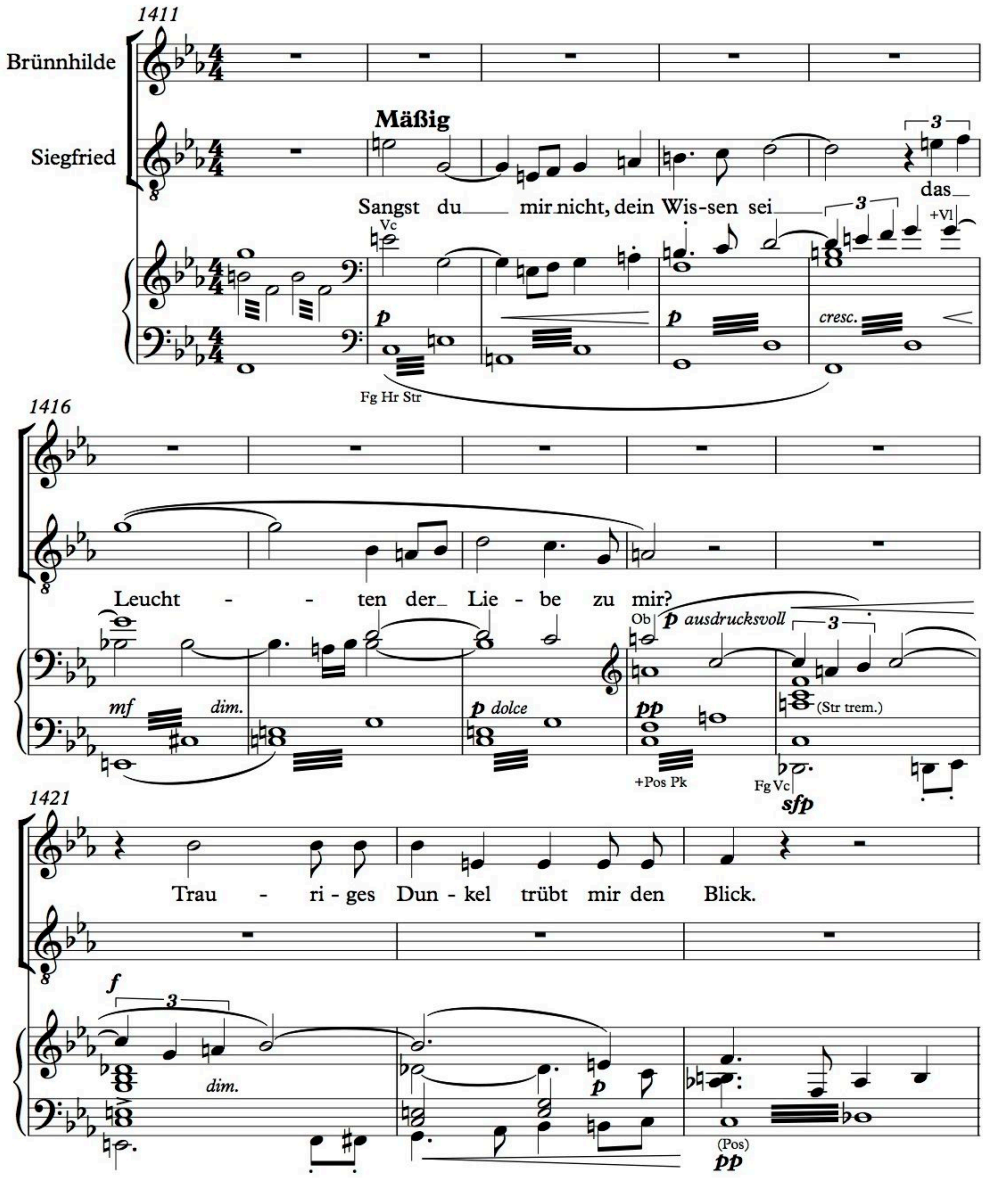
Siegfried, III, 1231–40

Der Gedanke, den ich nie	I guessed the secret thought
nennen durfte,	I dared not even whisper;
den ich nicht dachte,	I did not shape it,
sondern nur fühlte;	rather I felt it;
für den ich focht,	and so I fought,
kämpfte und stritt,	urged by that deed,
für den ich trotzte	when I defied the god,
dem, der ihn dachte;	who conceived it;
für den ich büßte,	and then I suffered,
Strafe mich band,	slept on this rock,
weil ich nicht ihn dachte,	for that thought still secret,
und nur empfand,–	that thought I felt!
Denn,– der Gedanke–	Know what that thought was;
dürftest du’s lösen!–	ah, you can guess it!
mir war er nur Liebe zu dir!	That thought was my love for you!



Siegfried, III, 1390–5

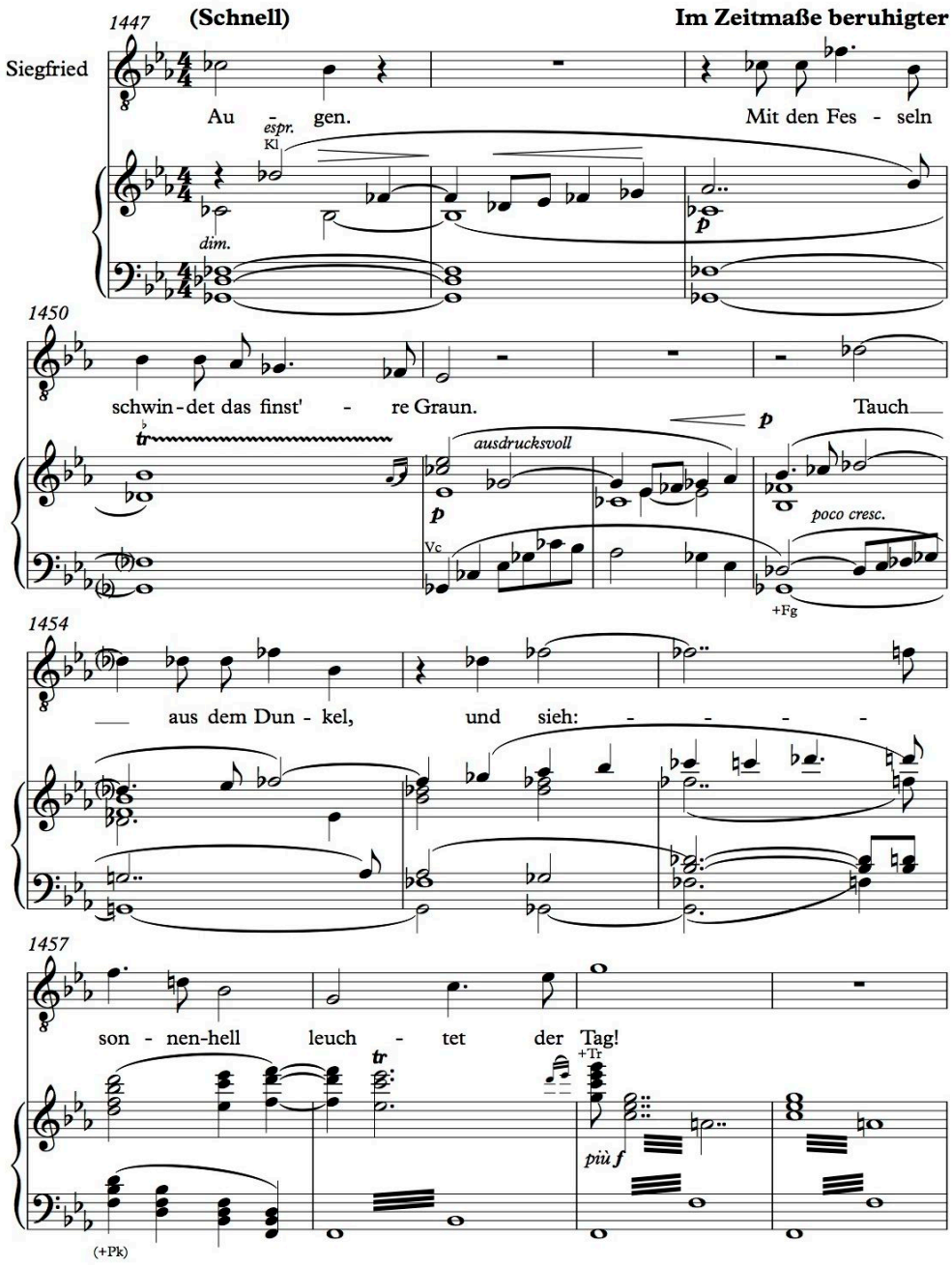
Noch bist du mir	You are still to me
die träumende Maid:	that slumbering maid;
Brünnhildes Schlaf	Brünnhilde’s sleep
brach ich noch nicht.	still binds her fast.



Siegfried, III, 1411–23

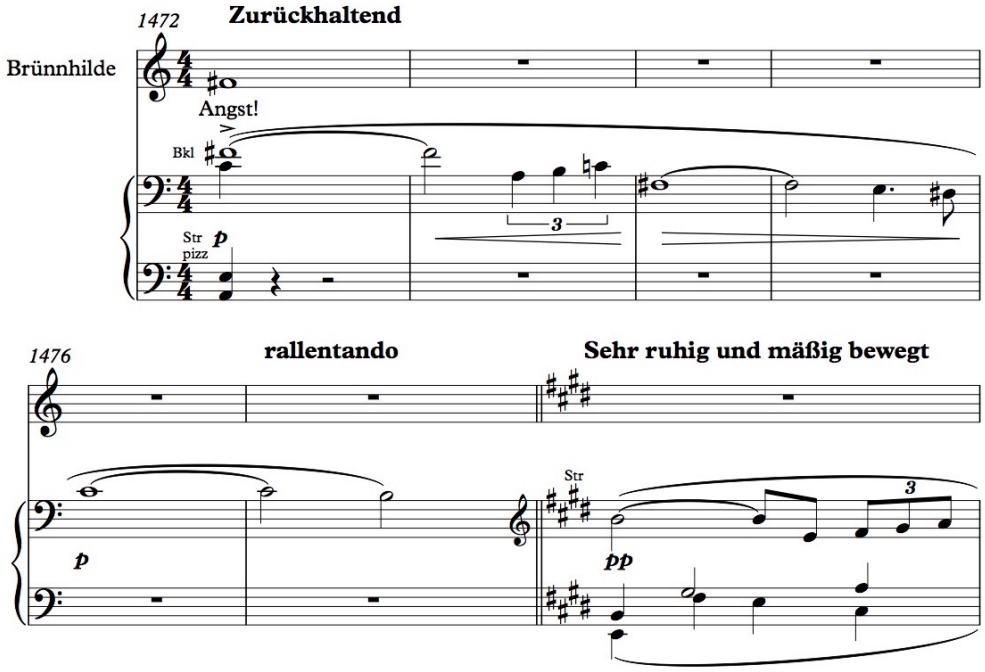
Sangst du mir nicht,
dein Wissen sei
das Leuchten der Liebe zu mir?
[Trauriges Dunkel
trübt mir den Blick.]

You said
that all your wisdom came
by the light of your love for me.
[Shadows of darkness
close on me now.]



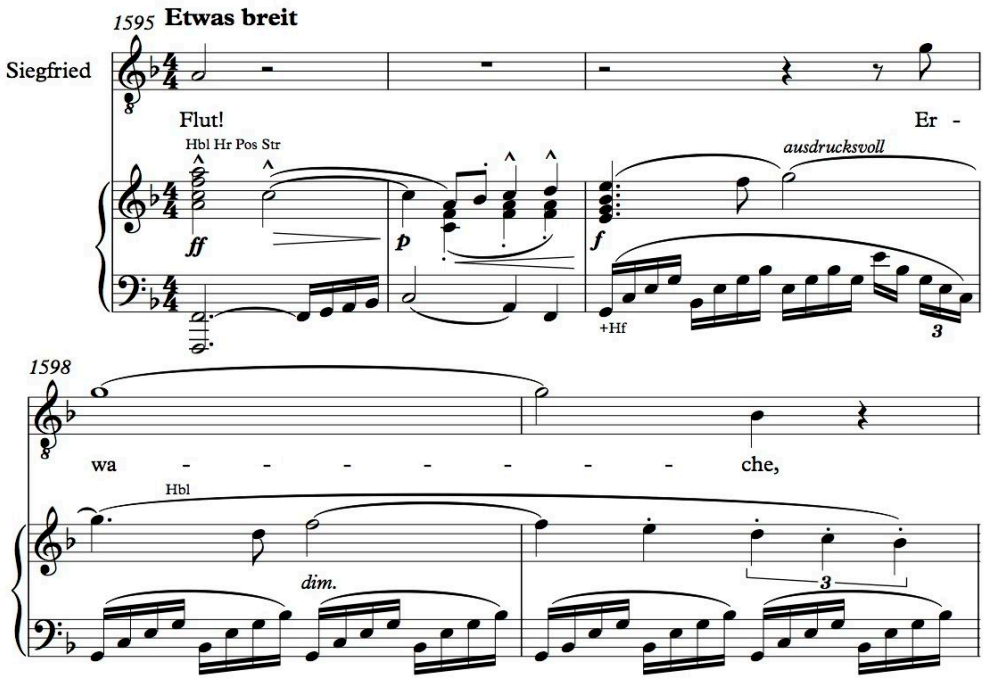
Siegfried, III, 1447–60

Nacht umfängt	Night enfolds
gebund'ne Augen.	those eyes you have hidden.
Mit den Fesseln schwindet	When I free them
das finst're Grau'n.	all gloomy fears depart.
Tauch aus dem Dunkel und sieh:	Rise from the darkness, and see:
sonnenhell leuchtet der Tag!	bright as the sun, here shines the day!



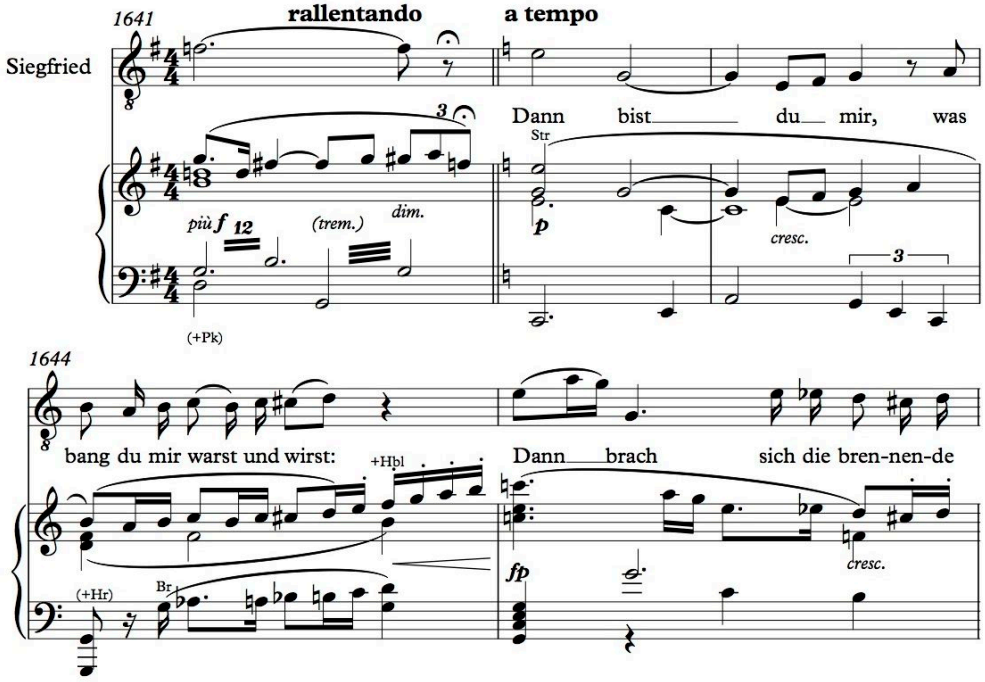
Siegfried, III, 1472–8

Sonnenhell	Bright as the sun
leuchtet der Tag meiner Schmach! –	shines but the day of my shame!
O Siegfried! Siegfried!	O Siegfried! Siegfried!
Sieh meine Angst!	See my dismay!



Siegfried, III, 1595–9

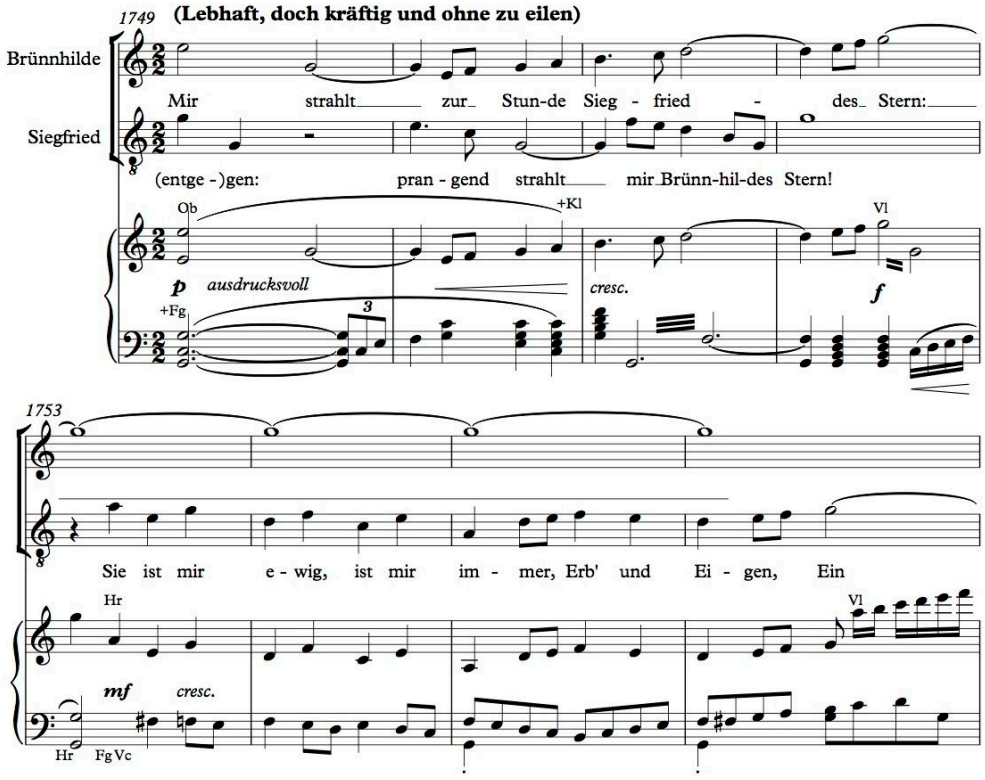
Brach sich mein Bild,	Though in the deep
so brenn ich nun selbst,	I may not see my face,
sengende Glut	burning, I long
in der Flut zu kühlen;	for those cooling waters;
ich selbst, wie ich bin,	and now, as I am,
spring in den Bach:	leap in the stream–
o daß seine Wogen	if only those waves
mich selig verschlängen,	could engulf me forever,
mein Sehnen schwänd’ in der Flut!	my yearning would fade in the flood!
Erwache, Brünnhilde	Awaken, Brünnhilde.



Siegfried, III, 1641–5

Faßt dich mein Arm,
umschling ich dich fest;
schlägt meine Brust
brünstig die deine:
zünden die Blicke
zehren die Atem sich;
Aug' in Auge,
Mund an Mund:
dann bist du mir,
was bang du mir warst und wirst!

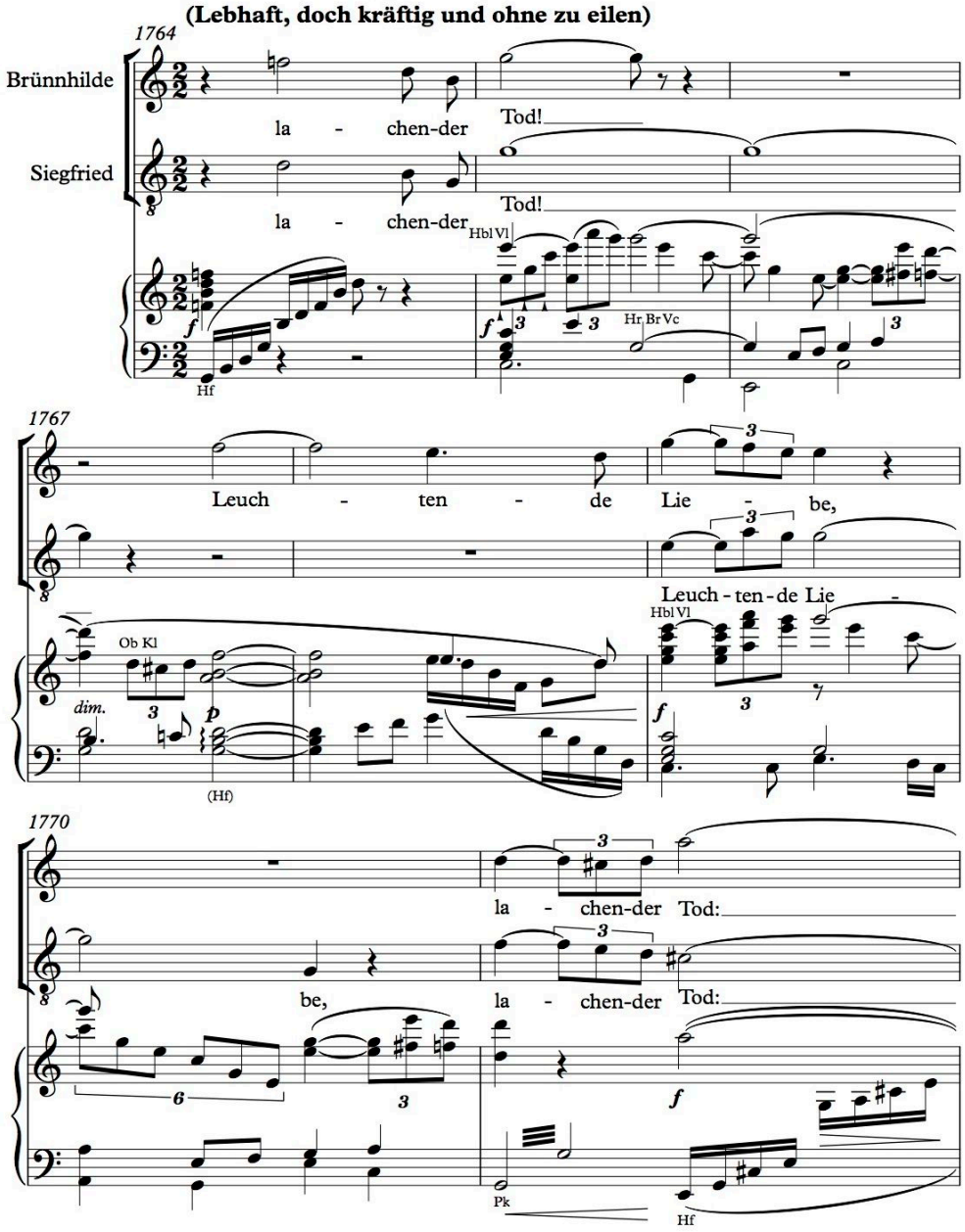
When in my arms
I hold you embraced,
feeling your heart
beating beside me,
joining our glances
sharing one single breath,
eyes together,
mouth to mouth:
then I shall know
that Brünnhilde's truly mine!



Siegfried, III, 1749–56

[Mir strahlt zur Stunde
Siegfrieds Stern;]
[Prangend strahlt
mir Brünnhildes Stern!]

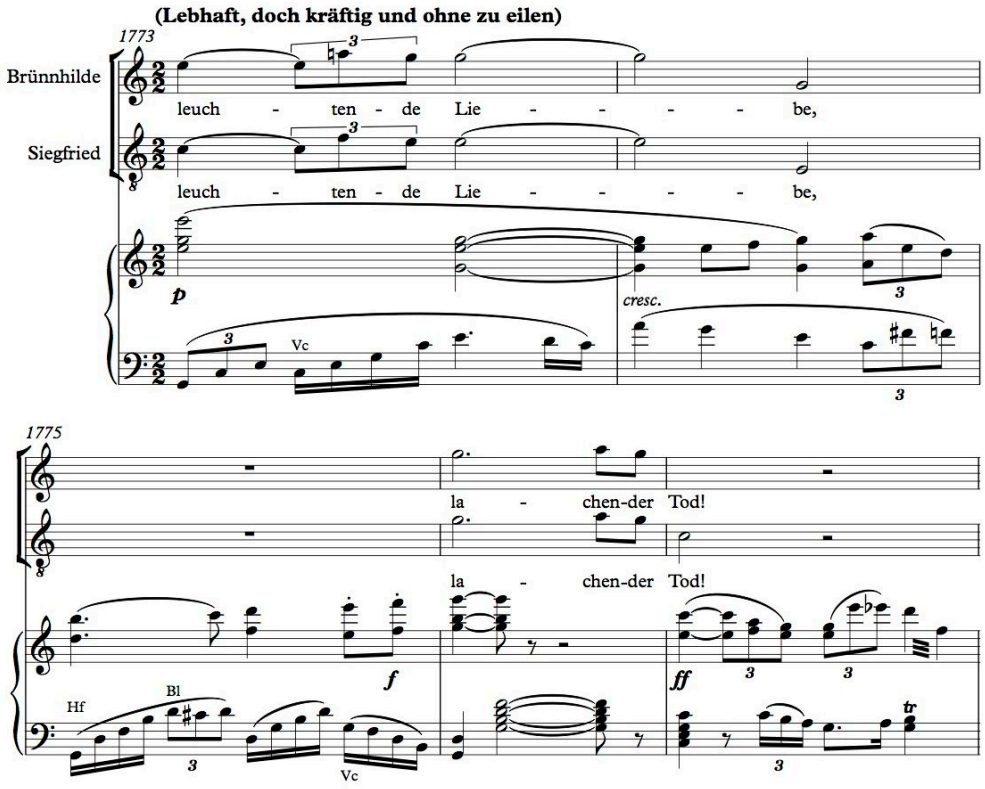
[I live by the light
of Siegfried’s bright star!]
[All my light
is Brünnhilde’s star]



Siegfried, III, 1764–71

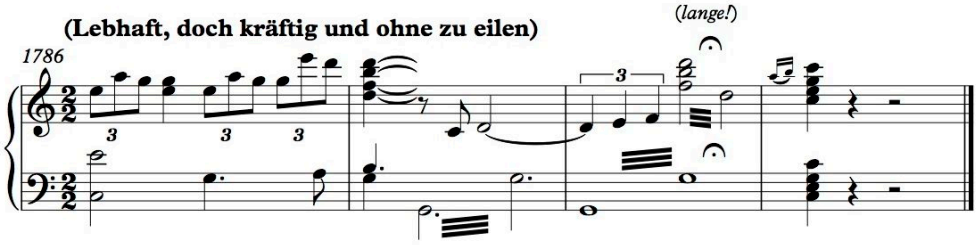
leuchtende Liebe,
lachender Tod!

Light of our loving,
laughter in death!



Siegfried, III, 1773–7

leuchtende Liebe,	Light of our loving,
lachender Tod!	laughter in death!



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