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Man and Idea: Complexity and Duality in the Hero of Wagner's "Ring"

Abstract

The character Siegfried, much like the whole of Richard Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung*, is open to interpretation by scholars and critics from a variety of different perspectives. Although these interpretations often reflect the historical, political, and cultural circumstances of their times, they nevertheless claim some legitimacy by appealing to the musical and dramatic texts of the *Ring* for evidence. This thesis examines Wagner's conception of Siegfried and different historical perceptions of the character, discusses ambiguity both in the drama and in the music itself, and suggests a reading of Siegfried as having a dual purpose: that of a concrete, free-willed agent (the Man) and that of an idealized hero serving a necessary role in the larger context of the drama (the Idea). The thesis concludes with a four-part analysis of *Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii that compares four readings of the character, three supporting different historical readings and one grounded in the Man/Idea duality.

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John J. Sheinbaum, Ph.D.

Second Advisor

Gregory Robbins, Ph.D.

Third Advisor

Jonathan Leathwood

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RING

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the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Elizabeth M. Szott

June 2016

Advisor: John Sheinbaum

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Author: Elizabeth M. Szott
Title: MAN AND IDEA: COMPLEXITY AND DUALITY IN THE HERO OF
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Abstract

The character Siegfried, much like the whole of Richard Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung*, is open to interpretation by scholars and critics from a variety of different perspectives. Although these interpretations often reflect the historical, political, and cultural circumstances of their times, they nevertheless claim some legitimacy by appealing to the musical and dramatic texts of the *Ring* for evidence. This thesis examines Wagner's conception of Siegfried and different historical perceptions of the character, discusses ambiguity both in the drama and in the music itself, and suggests a reading of Siegfried as having a dual purpose: that of a concrete, free-willed agent (the Man) and that of an idealized hero serving a necessary role in the larger context of the drama (the Idea). The thesis concludes with a four-part analysis of *Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii that compares four readings of the character, three supporting different historical readings and one grounded in the Man/Idea duality.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	v
Living in the Operatic Realm.....	1
Shifting Perspectives on the Character of Siegfried.....	4
A Shaky Foundation: Wagner's Changing Views.....	4
Siegfried After Wagner: Early Twentieth Century.....	11
Postwar Rhetoric and Anti-Semitic Undertones.....	13
Late 20th and Early 21st Century: Gender.....	17
Reading Siegfried in the Text and Music of the Ring.....	22
Siegfried in the Text.....	23
Siegfried in the Music.....	25
Siegfried Act III, Scene ii: The Encounter with Wotan Read from Four Perspectives.....	54
General Summary of Act III, Scene ii.....	55
Siegfried as a Purposeful Anarchist: Bernard Shaw.....	62
Petulance, Ignorance, and Racial Hierarchy: Adorno and Weiner.....	68
Siegfried as a Non-Hero: Abbate and Baileyshea.....	71
Siegfried as a Duality of Man and Idea.....	75
Power, Hearing, and Control in the Realm of Opera.....	81
References.....	84

List of Figures

Fig. 1: <i>Götterdämmerung</i> Act III, m. 1-10.....	29
Fig. 2: Siegfried's Mature Horn Call, <i>Götterdämmerung</i> Act I, m. 327-329.....	32
Fig. 3: <i>Siegfried</i> Act I, Scene i, m. 874-882.....	33
Fig. 4: <i>Das Rheingold</i> , Scene iv.....	35
Fig. 5: <i>Die Walküre</i> , Act III, Scene i m. 509-534.....	37
Fig. 6: Idea Motive.....	42
Fig. 7: Idea-Hero.....	43
Fig. 8: Idea-Redemption/Destruction.....	44
Fig. 9: Idea-Action.....	44
Fig. 10: <i>Die Walküre</i> Act III, Scene i m. 489-509 (partial reduction).....	47
Fig. 11: <i>Siegfried</i> Act II, Scene ii m. 1161-1165 (reduction).....	48
Fig. 12: <i>Die Walküre</i> Act III, Scene iii m. 1693-1708 (reduction).....	50
Fig. 13: <i>Siegfried</i> Act II, Scene ii m. 961-1003.....	51
Fig. 14: Volsung Sympathy Motive.....	58
Fig. 15: Wotan's Distress Motive.....	59
Fig. 16: Spear Motive.....	59
Fig. 17: Sequence of the Power Motive, <i>Siegfried</i> Act III, Scene ii m. 667-668.....	60
Fig. 18: Conflation of “Spear” and “Distress” motives, <i>Siegfried</i> Act III, Scene ii m. 677-680.....	60
Fig. 19: <i>Siegfried</i> Act I, Scene ii m. 1513-1516 (reduction).....	64
Fig. 20: <i>Siegfried</i> Act I, Scene ii m. 590-596 (partial reduction).....	65
Fig. 21: <i>Siegfried</i> Act III, Scene ii m. 608-621.....	66

Fig. 22: <i>Siegfried</i> Act III, Scene ii m. 715-722 (reduction).....	80
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Living in the Operatic Realm

The world of opera is a dangerous one. Those who populate it would do well to consider a few ground rules in order to avoid some of its worst disasters. Opera characters should avoid seeing ghosts, for example, or else run the risk of going mad. Trusting the word of a bass-baritone, generally speaking, leads to ruin. Much grief might be spared those who know that one must *never* drink anything if one happens to live in an opera. The catch, of course, is that very few denizens of the operatic world know where they are, and therefore do not think to be careful. It is difficult for opera characters to uncover conspiracies or foresee trouble. Such difficulties increase when characters have not only the machinations of their colleagues to consider, but the dramatic commentary of an independent orchestral narrator as well. In Richard Wagner's later operas, particularly in his four-opera cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung*, the prominent role of the orchestra, its direct interaction with the text, and its ability to be both at the service of the singers and narrating independently of them make it a force to be reckoned with. Characters in the *Ring* display varying degrees of awareness of their situation as players in its operatic world. This concept of characters operating on both immediate, physical planes and overarching dramatic planes raises interpretive questions of role, function, and identity.

The *Ring* has stretched its influence across more than a hundred and fifty years, and has acquired in that time an abundance of interpretive tradition. Authors, scholars, journalists, and commentators have sought and continue to search for an understanding of

the *Ring* not only through musical analysis but through literary criticism, examination of historical contexts, and political, social, and cultural perspectives. The complexity of its drama and music seem to invite these myriad readings even as Wagner's combination of myth and sympathetic human interaction have ensured the work its lasting appeal. In a similar way, specific characters and situations lend themselves to diverse interpretations, among them the hero of the work, Siegfried. The wealth of Wagner's musical and dramatic material and the intriguing ambiguity of its meaning allow divergent readings of Siegfried to claim legitimacy by drawing upon the texts of the cycle for evidence; the complexity of both the character and the opera cycle make a single, uncomplicated view of the character challenging to obtain. But the difficulty in establishing Siegfried's identity is not merely a symptom of Wagner's flair for dramatic convolution. It also exemplifies the possibility of exploring identity and power dynamics in the context of opera. Concepts such as the independent orchestral narrator, the ability of opera characters to hear the orchestra, and the possibility that they can take active control of operatic forces play into the multiplicity of possible interpretations for a character of Siegfried's complexity.

The following pages divide an examination of Siegfried's dramatic role and identity into three parts. The first surveys historical perceptions of Siegfried, beginning with Wagner's vacillating conception of the *Ring* generally and its hero specifically, and explores some ways in which these various interpretations draw upon the musical and dramatic texts for support. Issues raised by these diverse readings include anarchy, nationalism, anti-Semitism, and gender roles. The second section examines the

ambiguity of Siegfried's character in both the libretto and the music, with specific focus on four leitmotifs related to his identity, and suggests a reading of Siegfried as having a dual purpose: that of a concrete, physical and free-willed agent (the Man), and that of an idealized hero serving a necessary role in the larger context of the drama (the Idea). The thesis concludes with a four-fold analysis of *Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii, the pivotal encounter between the Siegfried, the heroic boy who knows no fear, and Wotan, the king of the gods disguised as the Wanderer. Each reading takes a different perspective based on the various historical interpretations, one emphasizing Siegfried as anarchist; one finding Siegfried to be a racially charged, dramatically impoverished juvenile; one downplaying Siegfried's heroic identity by comparing him unfavorably with Brünnhilde; and one reflecting the Man/Idea duality I propose.

Shifting Perspectives on the Character of Siegfried

A Shaky Foundation: Wagner's Changing Views

Wagner's conception of Siegfried and the entire *Ring* project underwent significant changes between the seed of his initial idea and its final realization in the complete tetralogy, a span of around twenty-five years beginning in the late 1840s and ending with the completion of the score of *Götterdämmerung* in 1874. The combination of various mythological elements began with Wagner's amalgamation of source material, and it is perhaps not particularly surprising that a character like Siegfried, drawn from a handful of different mythical stories, has a complex identity.

The four parts of the *Ring* evolved from Wagner's interest in both the legend of Germany's historical past and in its myth. At first, Wagner considered writing a work celebrating an historical German leader, the ill-fated Crusade commander Frederick Barbarossa. His essay *The Wibelungen* combines images of Siegfried as a legendary German hero with a portrait of Barbarossa as “the representative of the last racial Ur-Folk-Kingdom.”¹ It is perhaps worth noting that even in his speculative history Wagner could not bring himself to stay away from myth: in spite of the historical fact of his drowning, a mythical-legendary Frederick Barbarossa occupies the final paragraph of the

¹ Richard Wagner, “The Wibelungen: World-History as Told in Saga,” in *Pilgrimage to Beethoven and Other Essays*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (1898; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 292.

essay, seated in state in an other-worldly cave guarding the Nibelung hoard and the sword of the dragon slayer, known and remembered only by the “poor Folk.”² It seems inevitable that as his research progressed Wagner turned from history-as-saga to strict mythology as the essence of the folk spirit.

That shift from legend into the mythical world dismissed Frederick Barbarossa from Wagner's dramatic impulse and at the same time relieved Siegfried of his awkward, quasi-historical role, providing the composer with a more plausible possibility of turning the Siegfried story into a drama.³ In 1848 Wagner produced an essay he called *The Nibelung Myth as Sketch for a Drama*, a combination of German and Scandinavian mythical texts, from which he eventually drew most of the substance of his four-evening cycle, and which lacked any overt efforts to link the Siegfried myth with actual German history or factual German figures.⁴ Most of the *Sketch* covers the ground traveled in *Götterdämmerung*, the finalized version of what was intended to be a single self-contained drama, *Siegfrieds Tod*. The skeleton of the lengthy backstory told by the three preliminary dramas is still present, however, though summarized and understated.

Siegfried's role in the dramatic world of the *Sketch* is clear and unproblematic. According to William Cord's translation, he is even referred to specifically as “he who brings peace through victory.”⁵ The circumstances of Siegfried's betrayal and death remain largely unchanged between this early version and its final form in the *Ring*, but at

2 Wagner, “The Wibelungen,” 298.

3 William O. Cord, *Richard Wagner's Literary Journey to the Ring: An Inquiry into the Nibelung Myth as Sketch for a Drama and Related Matters* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2004), 62.

4 Ibid., 68-9.

5 Ibid., 119.

the close of the *Sketch* Siegfried brings salvation to the gods rather than destruction—indeed, he joins them, along with a reinstated Brünnhilde, in Valhalla.⁶ Presumably, the long and happy reign of the gods continues, free from the curse on the ring and with the guilt of their previous deceitful actions expiated.

It seems clear that, from the beginning at least, Siegfried was at once the reason for the conception of the *Sketch* and the impulse behind the lengthening of the drama into a trilogy with a prelude. Famously, Wagner worked backward from *Siegfrieds Tod* as he expanded the poem into his libretto in order to explain the events of Siegfried's youth, giving birth to the first preliminary drama *Der junge Siegfried*. Feeling concern for “the public's understanding of his work, or rather, what he felt would be a lack of understanding,” Wagner proceeded to expand some of the background material from the *Sketch* into the libretti for two other preliminary dramas, *Die Walküre* and *Das Rheingold*.⁷ The expansion of the single drama into four not only offered space for a more thoughtful retelling of the story, but also opened the door for the well-known revisions of the work's closing. Cord suggests that, in the penning of these initial dramas and especially in *Das Rheingold*, Wagner became aware that the salvation of the gods offered by the *Sketch* no longer agreed with the seriousness of the gods' guilt, and turned to the Norse concept of *ragnarök*, or the downfall of the gods, for a new ending.⁸ This change in dramatic impulse has also been ascribed to Wagner's changing philosophical inclinations. Under the influence of Ludwig Feuerbach, he altered Brünnhilde's final

6 Cord, *Richard Wagner's Literary Journey*, 128.

7 Ibid., 89.

8 Ibid., 91, footnote 73.

speech to reflect a “love conquers all” redemption. This, in turn, he rejected in favor of a redemptive surrender of the will into oblivion inspired by Arthur Schopenhauer.⁹ In the final version, Brünnhilde's solemn utterance “Rest now, you god” consigns Wotan and the gods to their final destruction with something like painful, bittersweet closure.

Indeed, Schopenhauer's effect on Wagner was, by the composer's own account, a profound one. Writing to Liszt in 1854, Wagner spoke of the philosopher's work as “a gift from heaven.” He praised Schopenhauer's notion that salvation results from a renunciation of the will to live, and claimed, “to me, of course, that thought was not new ... but this philosopher was the first to place it clearly before me.”¹⁰ The philosophy of salvific resignation of will resonates with particular clarity in the finalized ending of the *Ring*.

Schopenhauer's philosophical ideas of will and agency seem to apply not only to the conclusion of the cycle, but to much of its action as well. In *The World as Will and Representation* and other writings on the subject of the human will, Schopenhauer relates actions or manifestations of the human will to bodily movement. In this way, Christopher Janaway suggests, Schopenhauer indicates that only bodily actions or conscious decisions that set in motion a bodily action are true acts of the will.¹¹ This emphasis on bodily action also “subsume[s] willing as merely one instance of organic

9 Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 362-3. Citations from this source mainly refer to the text of the libretto, although occasional references may be to its appendices and analytical footnotes. References to the brief analyses presented in the same volume appear under each separate author's name.

10 Richard Wagner to Franz Liszt, 1854, in *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*, trans. Francis Hueffer, rev. William Ashton Ellis, vol. 2, 1854-1861 (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1897), 53.

11 Christopher Janaway, “Will and Nature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Christopher Janaway (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 142.

process at work in nature.”¹² In other words, human action as a manifestation of the will results from these impulses related to the body, and are goal-oriented only in the localized manner of instinct. Furthermore, the human will cannot alter the course of its own willing; Janaway suggests the comparison of the human will to “a stream of water rushing ahead, its course shaped both by contingencies in its path and by tendencies toward movement inherent in its own nature.”¹³ Such conceptions of the instinctive, nature-related essence of the human will are traceable in the character Siegfried, who is named as the hero of the work and specifically granted free will in Wagner's poem, but whose impulsive, immediate actions draw him inevitably toward the conclusion ordained by forces outside of himself.

As a result of the changing philosophical theme of the *Ring*, the cycle itself shifted in emphasis from the boisterous boy-hero to the tragic protagonist found in the character of Wotan, the king of the gods and the character with a fatal flaw and a burden of guilt. In his autobiography *Mein Leben*, Wagner specifically links Wotan with Schopenhauer's philosophy: “On looking afresh into my Nibelungen poem I recognized with surprise that the very things that so embarrassed me theoretically had long been familiar to me in my own poetical conception. Now at last I could understand my Wotan.”¹⁴ Increasingly, Wagner linked himself with Wotan rather than with Siegfried in

12 Janaway, “Will and Nature,” 143.

13 Ibid., 153.

14 Quoted in Elizabeth Barry, “What Wagner Found in Schopenhauer's Philosophy,” *The Musical Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (January 1925): 129. Barry suggests that “in the capacity of elucidator ... Schopenhauer was most valuable to Wagner,” clearly articulating in philosophy what Wagner seemed to intuit in his writings about music and culture.

his correspondence and conversation.¹⁵ Wotan's character, once an insubstantial and peripheral figure, acquired a concrete persona during the completion of the first three parts of the drama, and as a result the god emerged as a protagonist rivaling Siegfried. That rivalry resulted in a massive reworking of some of the material in *Der junge Siegfried* to make it into its final version, *Siegfried*, which as Daniel Coren points out applied mostly if not exclusively to the scenes involving Wotan as the Wanderer.¹⁶ Furthermore, Wagner gives Wotan more than just additional dialogue and more stage time; even his stage directions gained an amount of specificity regarding his movements, expressions, and wielding of his iconic spear.¹⁷

The Wotan-centric ending of the cycle does little to alter Siegfried's actions, but the impact on the trajectory of his character is profound. As Warren Darcy observes, Wagner radically changed his plans without telling his young hero.¹⁸ Siegfried dies having done very little of importance, and he gains no posthumous glory among the vassals of Valhalla. Instead, it is Valhalla's destruction that occupies the last few moments of the cycle. But Wagner continued to claim Siegfried as the hero of the work, even into the 1870s as he finished scoring the cycle. As late as 1873, Wagner asserted

15 Wagner's fixation on the myth of a perfect future is evident not only in his prose writings, such as *The Artwork of the Future*, but also in his relationship with his own son, Siegfried, whom he wished to be as free of his influence "as Siegfried was from Wotan." Cosima Wagner, diary entry, March 20, 1873, in *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, trans. Geoffrey Skelton, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, vol. 1, 1869-1877 (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1978), 612-613.

16 Daniel Coren, "The Texts of Wagner's 'Der junge Siegfried' and 'Siegfried,'" *19th-Century Music* 6, no. 1 (Summer 1982): 28.

17 Ibid., 28.

18 Warren Darcy, "The World Belongs to Alberich!': Wagner's Changing Attitude toward the 'Ring,'" in *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung*, ed. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 51.

that “Siegfried lives entirely in the present, he is the hero, the finest gift of the will.”¹⁹ In his remarks to Cosima, Wagner maintained that in the orchestral depiction of the end of the world, Siegfried was “in command.”²⁰ This may seem peculiar in the face of Siegfried's dramatic inertia following his death and the wash of music belonging not to Siegfried but to Wotan, Brünnhilde, and the Rhinemaidens. In his own mind, however, Wagner apparently believed he had successfully co-opted the enigmatic “Redemption” or “Glorification of Brünnhilde” theme to serve as a “hymn to heroes,”²¹ whether perishing in the flames of the funeral pyre or the inferno of Valhalla (*DW*, 228/1/4ff and *G*, 340/4/1-2).²² Whatever the dramatic import of Wotan, Siegfried's role remained a necessary one. Wagner might easily have revised the character had he felt unsatisfied with Siegfried's performance in that role. That he did not do so might be due to a lack of enthusiasm, as Coren suggests,²³ but might also point to a satisfaction with the character in the basic role of “perfect hero,” perhaps not philosophically fascinating but retaining the capacity to do as the action of the drama requires.

19 Cosima Wagner, March 12, 1873, 466.

20 Ibid., March 8, 1873, 465.

21 Cosima Wagner, July 23, 1873, 515. “I am glad that I kept back Sieglinde's theme of praise for Brunhilde, to become as it were a hymn to heroes.” It is clear that Wagner originally intended the theme to relate specifically to Brünnhilde, but equally clear that he thought he had changed its reference point to Siegfried by the end of the cycle. As Thomas Grey points out in his article “Leitmotive, Temporality and Musical Design in the Ring,” [in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas Grey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 114.] it is difficult to assign an associative meaning to something that in actual experience is heard only twice, and on those occasions more than eight hours of opera apart.

22 Throughout the thesis, musical passages that are not provided as figures in the text are identified in this way: (Opera Abbreviation, page number/system/measure within the system) as found in the early twentieth century G. Schirmer vocal scores.

23 Coren, “The Texts of Wagner's 'Der junge Siegfried' and 'Siegfried,’” 19.

Siegfried After Wagner: Early Twentieth Century

Confronted by such a breadth of philosophical influences and a lengthy genesis that invites ambiguity, analysts and commentators since the premier of the *Ring* have understandably exercised a fair amount of interpretive latitude. Predictably, readings of Siegfried as an agent appear to be influenced by historical and contextual issues surrounding the interpreters themselves. The following paragraphs trace three general categories of interpretation that seem to reflect changing historical and social environments: Siegfried as a positive character with nature-born vitality, Siegfried as a negative character ill-equipped to stand against the social order he is supposed to oppose, and Siegfried as a non-hero, a convenient plot vehicle for the important heroic actions of Brünnhilde.

In 1898, Bernard Shaw penned an allegorical analysis of the *Ring* that interprets the drama in the context of post-industrialized Europe. Himself a socialist, Shaw has no trouble reading anti-capitalist, anti-government, and anti-church themes into Wagner's libretto. Shaw's Wotan is a well-meaning but morally suspect religious and political leader. His Alberich, Wotan's adversary and the dwarf whose theft of the Rhinegold sets the action of the cycle in motion, is an evil capitalist overlord. The Nibelungs, dwarven folk living in the bowels of the earth, and the Giants, who live above ground, are the monetarily and intellectually impoverished laboring classes. From this background, Siegfried emerges as a truly heroic and entirely admirable character. He is the "born anarchist," the neo-Protestant, the free-willed man opposed to the existing order: "an inspiring young forester, a son of the morning, in whom the heroic race has come out

into the sunshine from the clouds of his grandfather's majestic entanglements with law.”²⁴

Siegfried represents the only truly natural man in an unnatural, post-industrial society, and is therefore free from the oppression of Wotan's strictly constructed world and from the gold-grabbing vices of capitalistic Alberich and his ilk.

Shaw's political leanings, including his avowal of socialism, escalate into what amounts to an idealistic longing for anarchy tempered only by a realization of the impracticality of such a system, and this comes sharply to the fore in his description of Siegfried's words and actions as the free hero. Believing that the best thing for society is “a perfectly naïve hero upsetting religion, law and order in all directions, and establishing in their place the unfettered action of Humanity doing exactly what it likes, and producing order thereby because it likes to do what is necessary for the good of the race,” Shaw reads into Siegfried's utter ignorance of social conditions a freedom from their constraints and limitations.²⁵ The boyish aggression with which the character disregards the advice of his elders represents a healthy dislike for the crustiness of entrenched tradition, and Siegfried's eventual smashing of Wotan's spear, the symbol of law and order, is the laudable, necessary, and natural action of a world-saving hero. That the saving of the world must be accomplished through destruction colors the discourse of intellectual anarchy generally and Shaw's remarks specifically, as when he casually remarks that “the majority of men at present in Europe have no business to be alive ... It is necessary to breed a race of men in whom the life-giving impulses predominate.”²⁶

24 Bernard Shaw, *The Perfect Wagnerite: A Commentary on the Nibelung's Ring* (1898; repr., New York: Time Incorporated, 1972), 36.

25 Ibid., 53.

26 Ibid.

Siegfried, the free-thinking child of nature, has these life-giving impulses, and therefore also has the right to renew the world through violent destruction.

Interestingly, Shaw's allegory breaks down with the final opera. In *Götterdämmerung* Siegfried becomes nothing more than a run-of-the-mill opera tenor, dying a protracted death with the name of his beloved on his lips.²⁷ Shaw even expresses a certain amount of dissatisfaction with the music of the final drama, dismissing what many analysts consider a stroke of artistic genius on the part of the composer, the use of the “Redemption” theme during Brünnhilde's immolation, as a piece of “trumpery” used for convenience (*G*, 333/1/2ff).²⁸ His explanation for this unaccountable regression on the part of the composer is a practical one: Wagner penned the poem for the final evening first, and therefore it exemplifies less of the true meaning that Wagner later developed during the writing of the other three.²⁹ In the action of the first three dramas, however, Shaw's reading emphasizes a flawed class system and a crumbling power structure, the solution to which is the free-willed, anarchistic Young Siegfried.

Postwar Rhetoric and Anti-Semitic Undertones

By the middle of the twentieth century, the sting of Nazism and the unhealed scars from World War II provided another, somewhat more painful lens through which interpreters viewed the *Ring* and the character of Siegfried. The ideas of Theodor Adorno stand out as particularly definite and scathing. Like Shaw, Adorno examines

²⁷ Shaw, *The Perfect Wagnerite*, 55.

²⁸ Ibid., 77.

²⁹ Ibid., 55-6.

Siegfried within a social context defined by class. His view, however, is almost certainly colored by his experiences as an exile from his native Germany during the war and his own partially Jewish background. After the catastrophic “racial cleansing” of the Third Reich, ideas like Shaw's about breeding a new and better race of men at the expense of those who “have no business to be alive” took on a chilling reality, all but eliminating the possibility of viewing Siegfried as an unproblematic hero figure.

Adorno argues that even in his construction, Siegfried presents a contradiction and a false identity. As a primordial man, Adorno writes, Siegfried is supposed to represent the pre-industrial state of labor before its division into the assembly line. This puts him in contrast with the useless Mime, the Nibelung smith who is so specialized in his labor that he is unable to make anything of lasting value. Yet the very construction of the music drama that supports Siegfried calls for more division of labor than ever before: division of the production into specialized tasks necessitated by the combination of so many art forms, and even division of the music into small, specialized leitmotifs that have no meaning on their own and must instead be “assembled” into something larger in order to become coherent.³⁰ Even before he opens his mouth, Adorno's Siegfried is playing his lofty ideals of naturalism and freedom false in his connection with such a system.

Adorno's indictment of Siegfried's actual persona is more critical than the analysis of the concept he represents. Dramatically, Siegfried seems to Adorno to be completely brainless, an airhead who learns something important—fear, for instance—only to immediately forget it, and an unwitting accomplice of the social order that rules him in

30 Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Verso, 1991), 108-9.

spite of his supposed exemption from its laws.³¹ The fact of Siegfried's world domination is an “embarrassment” in light of the gullibility that allows him to be taken in by the Gibichungs and manipulated by Wotan.³² Siegfried's personality is not only lackluster but cruel and immature, that of a “bully boy, incorrigible in his naivety, imperialistic in his bearing, equipped at best with the dubious merits of big-bourgeois self-confidence.”³³ From such a perspective, Siegfried's contempt for his elders comes off as juvenile bravado rather than assertive, anarchistic freedom. The symbolic shattering of Wotan's spear represents only a momentary victory that stems from an overarching scheme of manipulation and leads ultimately to Siegfried's downfall, a catastrophe in which Siegfried escapes victimhood only by destroying everything and everyone.³⁴ Traces of heroism and world-redeeming liberty seem to have no place in Adorno's post-war reading of the character.

Furthermore, this already impotent and brainless character retains, in Adorno's analysis, something of the cruelty of self-aggrandizement present in Wagner himself, particularly with respect to his Jewish colleagues. Wagner's behavior toward Hermann Levi, the Jewish conductor of *Parsifal*, demonstrates what Adorno calls a “sadistic desire to humiliate,” a power dynamic reflected in Wagner's refusal to let Levi escape anti-Semitic rhetoric, which occasionally led the composer to purposefully call Levi's

31 Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 122.

32 Ibid., 132.

33 Ibid., 140.

34 Ibid., 133.

attention to such attacks.³⁵ Adorno traces the same trend in the relationship between Siegfried and Mime in the *Ring*, where the “bully boy” hero continually berates his dwarfish foster-father, makes fun of his appearance and mannerisms, and finally professes that he hates him.³⁶ Whether or not Wagner intended Siegfried's words to be more than a natural expression for a naïve child seeking the truth of his identity, Adorno reads the hero's behavior as parallel to the anti-Semitic tendencies of the composer himself.

Following Adorno's lead, scholars in the latter part of the twentieth century continued to parse out underlying anti-Semitic themes in Wagner's works. Marc Weiner examines the subject in depth by considering specific aspects of the body and their manifestation in the dramas, suggesting that the “bodily images” Wagner continually evokes are bits of purposeful cultural commentary that his contemporaries would have understood.³⁷ To Weiner, the bodies of the Nibelungs conform to specifically Jewish characteristics in the perception of the time, while the body of Siegfried is specifically non-Jewish. Siegfried's body is not only free from any kind of deformity or noticeable peculiarity, but handsome and bursting with health and vivacity. It is this juxtaposition of the stereotypically deformed dwarf and the stereotypically perfect Volsung that makes *Siegfried* “the most blatantly anti-Semitic drama in the *Ring*.”³⁸ Siegfried stands tall and

35 Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 18-21. Adorno references a specific instance in which Wagner, having received a letter containing anti-Semitic attacks against the conductor, made sure to show Levi the letter.

36 *Siegfried* I/i (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 200ff).

37 Marc Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 2.

38 *Ibid.*, 84.

looks upon his fellows with blazing eyes while Mime crouches and blinks; Siegfried leaps and strides while Mime shuffles; Siegfried holds his head up where Mime is “weak-kneed and nodding.”³⁹ All these contrasts seem to echo stereotypical perceptions of and racial contempt for the Jew in Wagner's cultural milieu. Seen from the perspective of Weiner and Adorno, the character of Siegfried tumbles from the pedestal of the perfect hero to become a somewhat xenophobic bully whose status as protagonist does his creator no credit.

Late 20th and Early 21st Century: Gender

As Siegfried's star fell, another rose in its place toward the end of the twentieth century to take on the role of hero-protagonist in the *Ring*: the female lead, Brünnhilde. Dramatically, there is a great deal of evidence in favor of such a reading. It is, after all, Brünnhilde who finally achieves the wisdom to cast away the curse-laden ring, and her hand starts the conflagration that brings on the end of the world. With so much stage time and such an important role in so many of the world-shattering decisions that make up the plot of the *Ring*, it is no surprise that Brünnhilde began to attract attention and eventually rose up to offer her bid to the title of hero.

Such a reading often emphasizes Brünnhilde's unique level of perception. Taking a specifically psychological approach, authors Ruth Koheil and Herbert Richardson argue that as the only character in whom a significant psychological progression occurs,

³⁹ *Siegfried I/i* (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 220). The image of Siegfried's eyes bringing light appears often in Brünnhilde's dialogue during *Götterdämmerung*.

Brünnhilde is the only character who can be considered to be the hero of the saga.⁴⁰

Their essay, unequivocally titled “Why Brünnhilde is the True Hero of the Ring Cycle” links Brünnhilde's shift from unity with Wotan's will to the agent of his unconscious desire, symbolized in her defiance of Wotan's command that she abandon Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, with her ability to be attuned to the purposes of other “unconscious” forces of the *Ring's* world such as the earth goddess Erda and the Rhine itself, a perceptive acuity that leads to her final actions as “the conscious agent of the unconscious.”⁴¹ By choosing to tear her will away from Wotan's, Brünnhilde becomes the only character able to make meaningful decisions that move the plot toward its conclusion.

Similarly, Carolyn Abbate approaches the issue of Brünnhilde's heroism as an examination of her perceptiveness, although her argument is more music- and narrative-based than psychological. The analysis of the *Ring* in her book *Unsung Voices* considers the way music is heard and produced by characters on stage, and the effect of such hearing (or conversely, deafness) on their actions and identities. Abbate also considers the orchestra as a separate entity, with the power of acting as a narrator independent from the singers. She offers the end of *Die Walküre* as an example of the orchestra's unique role, arguing that the orchestral appearance of Siegfried's motive immediately after Wotan sings the same music is not just a superfluous repetition of the music that tells the audience once more exactly who is going to pass through the fire and waken Brünnhilde (*DW*, 302/3/2ff). Instead, it is a moment of personalized narration offered by the

40 Ruth Koheil and Herbert Richardson, “Why Brünnhilde is the True Hero of the Ring Cycle,” in *New Studies in Richard Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung*, ed. Herbert Richardson, Studies in the History and Interpretation of Music 20 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991).

41 Ibid., 180.

orchestra, which seems already to know the events of the drama and is acting at that moment as a narrator telling the story in the past tense.⁴² This complex role of the orchestra as narrator directly influences Abbate's analysis of the characters of the *Ring*, among whom she finds varying levels of awareness of that role.

Brünnhilde seems to have the most acute ear of all the *Ring's* inhabitants. Certainly the same can hardly be said of Siegfried, who is largely in dialogue only with the music that he experiences personally or knows instinctively—he does not, after all, recognize the Curse motive in Hagen's greeting to him in Act I of *Götterdämmerung* (G, 61/2/1ff). Abbate considers Brünnhilde the only character who realizes that she is in the world of opera, a world of layered meanings, and consequently the only one who is “aware of its music, able to parse it out.”⁴³ Abbate's Brünnhilde possesses a “unique listening ear” that allows her to understand what is going on in the orchestra, and therefore also to discern with a clearer eye the events of the plot and the statements of those with whom she interacts. Among the most important of these are the Rhinemaidens, whose advice she finally accepts when she destroys the ring, and Wotan, who unwittingly betrays to her his inmost desire *in spite of* the actual words of his narration.⁴⁴ This unique capability also allows her to identify truth and falsehood in the utterances of her fellow characters; Abbate contrasts Brünnhilde with Guttrune, the mortal noblewoman with whom Siegfried becomes entangled in *Götterdämmerung* who “hears

42 Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 169.

43 Ibid., 225.

44 Ibid., 215-216.

nothing, or hears wrongly, and believes almost all she hears.”⁴⁵ It is this special capacity for hearing and understanding that allows Brünnhilde to rise above what might perhaps be the conventional character of a woman scorned and become something greater, more fitted to the role of hero-protagonist. Abbate calls her a “'heroic queen' who ... walks by night, brings no solace, no romantic ending and no feminine or maternal comforts; she offers in the end only laughter itself.”⁴⁶ Brünnhilde thus becomes the real agent of the action and, moreover, the only one who really understands the drama and makes choices based on that knowledge.

Illustrating a similar idea, Matt Baileyshea offers an analysis of the final dialogue in *Die Walküre*, that between Brünnhilde and Wotan in which the disgraced Valkyrie begs the outraged god to temper his punishment. His reading grants Brünnhilde a notable ability to control the orchestra to her advantage. In a way that echoes Abbate's discussion of hearing the orchestra, Baileyshea examines the scene by identifying moments in which characters not only hear but take control of the orchestra, comparable to exercising rhetorical power in order to further his or her own ends. Some of these methods of exerting orchestral control include using or modifying existing leitmotifs, creating a new leitmotif, silencing the orchestra, and changing the key, meter, or tempo.⁴⁷ His analysis of the scene depicts a Brünnhilde making active use of these tactics, and at the end of the scene she ultimately succeeds in convincing Wotan to do as she asks. The Brünnhilde depicted by his study and those mentioned above is a woman of independent will,

⁴⁵ Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 223.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 249.

⁴⁷ Matt Baileyshea, “The Struggle for Orchestral Control: Power, Dialogue, and the Role of the Orchestra in Wagner's *Ring*,” *19th-Century Music*, 31 no. 1 (Summer 2007): 15.

capable not only of hearing the underlying meaning offered by the orchestral narrator but of manipulating that orchestra herself, a woman able to achieve heroic status through the gradual development and strengthening of her character over the course of three operas.

Taking Brünnhilde's perceptive ability, psychological development from willing pawn to willful agent, and achievement of redemptive wisdom as evidence of her identity as the true hero of the *Ring* requires Siegfried to recede into the background as a non-entity. Instead of a free-willed hero, or even an unlikable racial oppressor, Siegfried becomes both brainless and useless, a bit of comic relief turned into a convenient vehicle for furthering the plot.

Reading Siegfried in the Text and Music of the *Ring*

In the face of such a wealth of interpretive background—or perhaps a burden of interpretive baggage—surrounding the question of Siegfried as the hero of the *Ring*, it seems clear that there is no simple answer to Siegfried's identity. The lengthy genesis of the poem and Wagner's own shifting philosophical ideas leave an imprint on the *Ring* that shrouds its meaning instead of illuminating it. One cannot determine the identity of Wagner's Siegfried because, in a sense, multiple Wagners stand behind the creation of the character that appears onstage. As Wagner wrote to August Röckel in 1854, “a true instinct led [him] to guard against an excessive eagerness to make things plain,” an instinct later clarified as artistic caution: “[an artist's] own work of art ... is just as capable of misleading *him* as it is of misleading anyone else.”⁴⁸ This may not be explicit permission from the composer to interpret his works however one might please, but it definitely indicates that the lack of a single meaning or an objective moral in the *Ring* is neither unexpected nor unwelcome. With this in mind, I suggest a reading of Siegfried as a complex hero-protagonist who always operates in duality, both dramatically and musically: Siegfried the Man, a concrete and physical character whose identity is based on his sensory and instinctive perceptions; and Siegfried the Idea, whose identity is given to him by other characters, plays a necessary part in the overall trajectory of the *Ring*, and

⁴⁸ Quoted in Roger Hollinrake, “Epiphany and Apocalypse in the ‘Ring,’” in *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung*, ed. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 47.

of which he is largely unaware. This section traces that duality in both the text of the libretto and the musical score of the cycle.

Siegfried in the Text

Dramatically, Siegfried is a contradiction in that he is both entirely free and yet never quite free. As Adorno observes, it is Siegfried's very unconsciousness of the social order in which he operates that allows him to be manipulated by it.⁴⁹ In the contract-laden, power-hungry, and loveless world of the *Ring*, Siegfried is an anomaly: he does not fit in with the pattern of power dynamics laid down by Alberich and Wotan. As a result, he is also too ignorant to recognize the forces that seek to influence him, whether they emanate from the gods or the Nibelungs, so it simply does not occur to him to try to fight back. Unlike his father Siegmund, who knows enough about the mortal world to purposely defy its customs and enough about the gods' realm to deliberately reject it, Siegfried cannot actively rebel because he knows not what he rebels against. That inability to fight either the machinations of his mortal enemies or the dictates of fate make him particularly vulnerable to their manipulation.

His ignorance is tied to his fearlessness, which together make him free from the effects of Alberich's curse, but only inasmuch as they touch his person directly. As the free hero ignorant of fear, Siegfried is exempt both from coveting the ring and from the paranoia that its possession necessarily involves, according to the terms of the curse: “Doomed to die, may the coward be fettered by fear; as long as he lives, let him pine

⁴⁹ Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 131.

away.”⁵⁰ But his freedom does not prevent others—Alberich's vengeful son Hagen, for instance—from coveting the ring or devising his death in order to get it, since “He who does not [own the ring shall] be ravaged by greed! Each man shall covet its acquisition.”⁵¹ Siegfried, in spite of his freedom, eventually falls victim to the curse.

Nor can Siegfried escape his connection with Wotan, in spite of the symbolic defeat of the father-figure through the smashing of the spear. The god had by that time already willed his own destruction, had not only foreseen but welcomed Siegfried's defiant action. In a way, Wotan is behind Siegfried's death also, even though he does not wield his weapon against the young hero as he raised it against Siegmund. Although Wotan does not appear in *Götterdämmerung*, his ravens do. It is at their cry that Hagen administers Siegfried's death blow, and they are the messengers who eventually call Loge's fire to destroy Valhalla in the final moments of the opera.⁵² All this has nothing to do with Siegfried's freedom of will or his independence from Wotan's influence. He can and does do exactly as he chooses at all times. What he *chooses* to do happens to land him on the funeral pyre at the end of the fourth evening.

Brünnhilde captures this duality in the eulogy with which she marks Siegfried's death: “Never were oaths more nobly sworn; never were treaties kept more truly; never did any man love more loyally; and yet every oath, every treaty, the truest love—no one betrayed as he did.”⁵³ This paradoxical speech highlights the two faces of Siegfried as

50 *Das Rheingold*, Scene iv (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 106).

51 Ibid.

52 *Götterdämmerung* III/iii.

53 Ibid., (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 348-9).

simultaneously the free-willed hero who defies the contractually treacherous landscape of the *Ring* and answers only to himself, and the necessary agent of the downfall of the gods bound by fate to renew the world through his death. Siegfried as a heroic idea never undermines his idealized character, since as far as he knows he kept every bargain to the letter and betrayed no one by his own decision. Siegfried as a physical man, however, clearly and grievously violates his promises and ends up tangled in a web of deception.

The apparent contradictions in Siegfried's character present in the construction of the drama, coupled with an inherent emphasis on binaries such as free/not free, independent/dependent, and faithful/treacherous, invite a dualistic interpretation of his identity. As I have indicated above, I propose a two-sided interpretation of Siegfried as a dramatic character. The first side, Siegfried the Man, is the physical character we see on stage, who creates himself, understands himself, and is the agent of his own actions. The second side, Siegfried the Idea, refers to an identity constructed for Siegfried, first by Brünnhilde and later by Wotan, in order to fulfill an overarching dramatic purpose beyond his understanding: the redemption of the gods. Siegfried's dramatic behavior demonstrates this; so does his musical behavior, to which we now turn.

Siegfried in the Music

As part of his campaign to do away with traditional opera structure, a string of self-contained numbers, Wagner created a system of small musical units tied to different aspects of the drama that serve as a compositional vocabulary. By using these denotative units, later dubbed “leitmotifs” or “leading motives,” Wagner could create coherence in

large dramatic works while at the same time weaving the dramatic action into the orchestral material, supporting the words and actions of the characters on stage with recognizable musical units attached to them. Adorno somewhat derisively dismisses the leitmotif system as redundant and superfluous “particle[s] of congealed meaning” or “miniature pictures,” a mere step away from film music in which “the sole function of the leitmotiv is to announce heroes or situations so as to help the audience to orientate itself more easily.”⁵⁴ Considering film music's explosive popularity, Adorno's criticism sounds more like a compliment than an exposition of the leitmotif's expressive bankruptcy: leitmotifs and leitmotif-like behavior permeate film scores, and their conventions have become firmly entrenched in the ears of twentieth and twenty-first century listeners.⁵⁵ Adorno considers this an artistic flaw in that the specificity with which leitmotifs came to be identified undermines their ability to serve any “metaphysical end ... as the finite sign of allegedly infinite ideas.”⁵⁶ In other words, the very ability of a leitmotif to signify a character or idea through aural association turns it into a caption or a calling card instead of an abstract musical idea capable of transmitting emotion.

More generously, Rose Subotnik interprets Wagner's system of “symbolic motives” as having a literal function, “producing ... the repetitive and overlapping

54 Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 45-6.

55 See, for example, Ruth Hachohen and Naphtali Wagner, “The Communicated Force of Wagner's Leitmotifs: Complementary Relationships between their Connotations and Denotations,” *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14 no. 4 (1997): 445-475. In this psychological study, some of Wagner's leitmotifs were played for listeners who knew nothing of the operas. These listeners assigned the selected leitmotifs to general categories that correspond with their original use in the *Ring*. This is not to say that Wagner tapped into some ur-human pathos, but rather that his conventions resonate with today's listeners because film music reflects them.

56 Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 45.

patterns that characterize (prose) language and thought.”⁵⁷ A listener interprets the musical syntax of recurring leitmotifs as he would interpret a verbal utterance, taking into account not only the musical or linguistic unit but its context as well: just as words evoke various associations in different contexts, leitmotifs gather interpretive complexity through repetition in different key areas, rhythmic constructions, and dramatic situations. In sum, Wagner's system of leitmotifs underscores the action of the drama, adds subtly to its meaning, and allows the audience some insight into the complex interactions of the *Ring* by describing them with recognizable musical motives. The four leitmotifs that deal with Siegfried's identity—the “Horn Call,” “Volsung,” “Sword,” and “Idea” motives—not only underscore the fact of his existence as a character but highlight the subtle distinction between his physical and ideal personae.

The first side of Siegfried's dual identity, Siegfried the Man, is represented by his famous Horn Call. The call is among the least problematic of the leitmotifs in the *Ring*. It pretends to be nothing other than what it is: the boisterous sound of the hunting horn. In Thomas Grey's words, it is literally a piece of property, “a physical leitmotif.”⁵⁸ Its triadic construction is similar to the horn call of the Gibichung clan with whom he interacts in *Götterdämmerung*, and the two function in the same way. The opening of Act III is a perfect aural demonstration of the stage-phenomenon of these horn calls: Siegfried's call opens the act, followed by a trombone blast of Hagen's “Hoi-ho” with its bold enunciation of the power-related half-step motif, after which the triadic hunting call

57 Rose Rosengard Subotnik, “Whose 'Magic Flute?' Intimations of Reality at the Gates of the Enlightenment,” *19th-Century Music* 15 no. 2 (Autumn, 1991): 141.

58 Thomas Grey, “Leitmotif, Temporality, and Musical Design in the *Ring*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas Grey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 95.

of the Gibichungs sounds on the steer-horn. These continue variously until the scene opens on the Rhine, clearly indicating not only what is going on out of the audience's line of sight—namely, a hunting party—but which characters are involved: Siegfried, Hagen, and the Gibichung vassals.⁵⁹ This literal use of the horn calls continues in the transition between Scenes i and ii, where the specific directions in the libretto “Hunting horns can be heard approaching” and “Siegfried starts up from his dreamy rêverie and answers the call with his horn” are clearly spelled out in the music.⁶⁰

The horn call's comparatively stable and static nature also lends itself to this category of onstage phenomena. Usually the horn call sounds in the key of F major, the traditional key of “nature music” in the nineteenth century. In its most exposed and significant appearances it behaves this way tonally, reinforcing the notion that Siegfried is actually sounding the notes on the physical hunting horn he carries with him, as he does in Act II of his namesake opera when seeking to communicate with the animals of the forest. Like the steer-horns of the Gibichungs, Siegfried's horn produces music that can be heard by all on stage rather than only by those who have the unique ability to hear the narrative voice of the orchestra. Very few leitmotifs in the *Ring* operate this way, and the concrete nature of the hunting horn underscores the physical fact of Siegfried's presence. An ungenerous reader might assign the horn call the ignoble status of “calling card,” as authors like Adorno suggest in order to denigrate the basic notion of the

59 *Götterdämmerung* III/i.

60 *Götterdämmerung* III/i (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 337).

leitmotif system,⁶¹ but that observation can hardly be considered a criticism since the very purpose of the horn call is to act as a herald for Siegfried's person.

Figure 1: *Götterdämmerung* Act III, m. 1-10.⁶²

The musical score for *Götterdämmerung* Act III, measures 1-10, is presented in a standard orchestral format. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes parts for Horn in F 1, Trombone, Bass Trombone, Tuba, Off Stage Horn in F 2, Horn in C, Steerhorn, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The 'Siegfried' leitmotif is introduced in the Horn in F 1 part, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The 'Hagen' leitmotif appears in the Trombone and Bass Trombone parts, marked with sf and p dynamics. The 'Gibichungs' leitmotif is in the Horn in C part, marked with f. The string section (Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass) enters in measure 8 with a forte (f) dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern. The score ends in measure 10 with a piano (p) dynamic.

61 Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 46.

62 Measure numbers for score excerpts come from the *Richard Wagner Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Carl Dalhaus and Egon Voss, Vol. 10-13 (Mainz, Germany: Schott, 1981-2014). Translations are from the Spencer and Millington edition of the libretto.

It is the horn call, furthermore, which Siegfried uses to identify himself. Of the motives of identity it is the only one that he fashions by his own will, the only one that he does not inherit from a force outside of his own person. From his remarks we are to understand that the hunting horn is the sound he uses to establish himself as an individual among the creatures of the forest, and to communicate with its inhabitants: “With it I tried to lure boon companions: nothing better than wolf or bear has come to me as yet.”⁶³ After his failure to imitate the forest bird's song in its own timbre, he turns to his hunting horn as the surer means of communication, announcing not only his presence but his character—Shaw's “inspiriting young forester”—with the horn call (*S*, 184/3ff).⁶⁴ For the first two acts of *Siegfried*, the young hero knows almost nothing of his identity beyond the basic fact that he is no relation of the dwarf Mime, and so he creates for himself the signal of the horn call as his claim to individuality.

Once established as the sound corresponding to the physical Siegfried, the horn call becomes the badge by which the other characters of the cycle recognize him. In the prologue to *Götterdämmerung* when Siegfried departs from Brünnhilde's mountain in search of new adventures, she listens for the sound of his horn when she can no longer see him. Sure enough, the call dutifully sounds from below as he “merrily goes on his way” (*G*, 39/1-2).⁶⁵ On his return at the end of the act she hears the horn in the distance, recognizes it as that of Siegfried, and cries “Hither he sends up his call” (*G*, 118/2/2-3).⁶⁶

63 *Siegfried* II/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 239).

64 See Figure 13 below, and the associated discussion of Siegfried's onstage horn call as a catalog of his identity motives.

65 *Götterdämmerung* Prologue (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 288).

66 *Götterdämmerung* I/iii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 306).

As mentioned above, it is the signal Siegfried uses to declare his location to his fellow hunters. Finally, at the beginning of the final scene of Act III when his consort Guttrune restlessly wanders the corridors at night, she strains to hear the sound of Siegfried's horn announcing his return—thinks, in fact, that she has heard it. But she is mistaken, and fittingly enough the boisterous horn call does not sound once the physical breath of its owner is stilled.

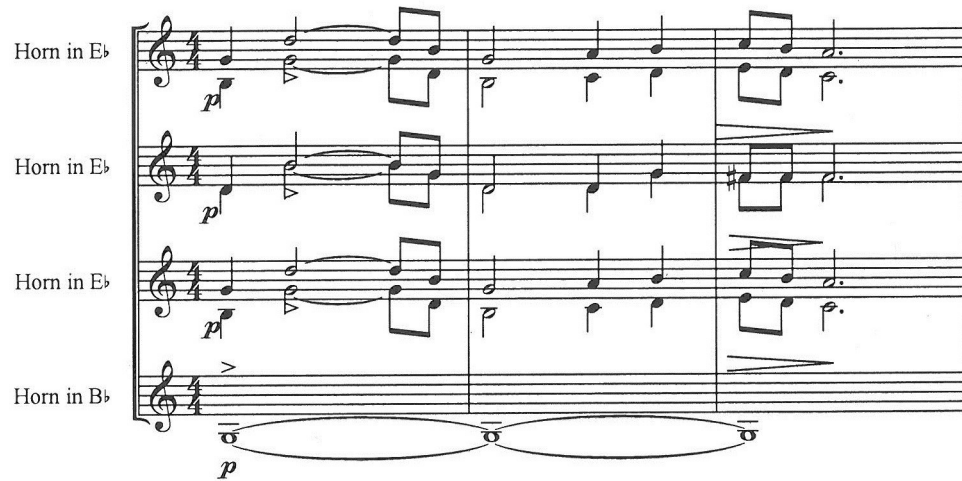
Instead, what sounds during Siegfried's funeral march is a broader, more stately version of the horn call. Grey calls it his mature motive, “broadly and majestically transformed” as a result of his transition from boy to man between the action of *Siegfried* and that of *Götterdämmerung*—even the tonal center has changed, lowered a fifth to B-flat major.⁶⁷ While it is true that Siegfried the Man lacks any knowledge of the context of the events leading up to his birth and his important role in bringing about the redemption of the world, he nevertheless achieves a measure of wisdom and completeness in the short span of his life. His hero's journey may be less of a psychological transfiguration from ignorance to wisdom and more of a coming-of-age, boy-into-man journey, but it cannot be denied that he grows from the ignorant, somewhat petulant lad of *Siegfried*, Act I into a confident, competent, and mature Siegfried thanks to his association with Brünnhilde.

The broad alteration of the horn call represents a definite leitmotivic change, therefore, but one that, like the original, is specifically tied to the character on stage rather

⁶⁷ Grey, “Leitmotif, Temporality, and Musical Design,” 95. Interestingly, the final triumphant appearance of the mature horn call leitmotif during Siegfried's Funeral March is in E-Flat major, perhaps indicating a large-scale dominant-tonic motion of the leitmotif over the course of the opera.

than to the Idea of Siegfried as the solution to Wotan's problems. It is a modification of Siegfried himself, not a change in the trajectory of his destiny, and it signals the

Figure 2: Siegfried's Mature Horn Call, *Götterdämmerung* Act I, m. 327-329



maturation of the physical and psychological Siegfried, not the progression of the Idea toward the culmination of Wotan's plans for the world. Only the horn call behaves this way. The other motives of Siegfried's identity are more complicated, identifying Siegfried in ways he cannot fully comprehend, and tending toward naming him as Wagner's ideal hero beyond the physical actions he performs.

Siegfried inherits his second motive of identity from his parents: that of the Volsungs. It is not so prevalent as his horn call, nor does he create it himself. In Act I of *Siegfried*, while relating to Mime all that he has learned about love and familial relationships in the forest, Siegfried speaks of seeing himself reflected in the stream. At precisely that moment, two of his motives occur in succession: his Idea motive (discussed below), followed immediately by a fragment of the Volsung music.

Figure 3: *Siegfried* Act I, Scene i, m. 874-882

Siegfried: “And then I saw my own likeness, too.”

In a practical sense, the orchestra as independent narrator uses this combination of motives to assure the audience that it ought to be interested in Siegfried as the fulfillment of a musical prophecy from the previous evening, and to tie up the complex interactions of *Die Walküre* by relating them directly to Siegfried.

But it is also logical to assume that Siegfried hears the orchestral narration at this moment, as if sensing the leitmotifs by instinct. He joins the horn in singing his Idea motive, apparently aware that it is in some way connected to him although he can have no way of knowing its full importance. Similarly, he has no knowledge of his lineage, but he deduces from the accident of his non-dwarfish looks that his father and mother must be different from Mime. His instinctive conclusions about his heredity parallel his instinctive perception of the music: without knowing what it is to be Siegfried he hears and sings the Idea as something belonging to him, and without knowing what it is to be a Volsung he hears his parents' theme as something attached to him. It is as different from the stumbling, conniving music of Mime as his face and figure are from those of the dwarf.

The notion of Siegfried's instinctive connection to his parents gains strength in Act II during his ruminations in the forest. His immediate answer to the question “What must my father have looked like?” demonstrates the strength of that instinctive bond: “Of course, like me!”⁶⁸ Admittedly, his ability to picture his mother is not so impressive, but that has more to do with his lack of experience with the female sex than with his confusion about his own identity. The young forester's preoccupation with his parents and identity pervades every scene in the opera: only the mention of his father's death provokes Siegfried into violently smashing Wotan's spear, and perhaps the last psychological obstacle he crosses is the confusion of Brünnhilde with his mother toward the end of Act III. After that, his troubles with identity seem to be over, Brünnhilde's assertion of who and what he is apparently sufficient for him.

In *Götterdämmerung*, therefore, the Volsung motive serves only as a specific musical link between Siegfried and his parents. In Act I it underpins both Hagen's summary of Siegfried's heritage and the hero's own remark that he inherited no wealth from his father. These references to the Volsung motive are literal, echoing the verbal references to Siegmund. A more poignant, and somewhat more abstract, sounding of the Volsung motive happens during Siegfried's funeral music (*G*, 301/4ff). Although the text surrounding the funeral march contains no reference to Siegmund and the Volsung clan, the motive's appearance in the orchestral interlude nevertheless ties Siegfried's death, and the sum of his life, to his parents. Wagner's comments to Cosima make this clear: “[W]hile the scene is being changed, the Siegmund theme will be played, as if the chorus

68 *Siegfried* II/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 238).

In a similar way, Siegfried inherits another of his identity motives from his father when Siegmund has finished with it. This is the Sword motive, the first of the leitmotifs used in a prophetic way. It first appears at the end of *Das Rheingold* to signify Wotan's Grand Idea, his plan for saving the gods.

Tpt. in C

69 Cosima Wagner, September 19, 1871, 418.

35

sword for her son is highlighted musically by this instrumental hand-off, signifying in both the text and the orchestra that the sword and its destiny, originally intended for Siegmund, pass to his son at his death.

For Siegfried, the meaning of the sword is straightforward. It is his inheritance from his father, through which he attains vengeance. During his forging song in Act I of *Siegfried* he sings, “The steel sprang apart in the hands of my dying father; his living son has made it anew.”⁷¹ In Wagner's original sketch, Siegfried uses the sword to kill Hunding as reparation for his father's murder; the composer re-imagined the scene of revenge in the Act III encounter between Siegfried and the disguised Wotan.⁷² There, the fatal clash between sword and spear terminates in the shattering of Wotan's rune-laden symbol of power in a reversal from the parallel clash in Act II of *Die Walküre* when the sword shattered in Siegmund's hands. By his appropriation of the sword Nothung and through his victory over his father's enemies, Siegfried effectively steps into his father's place as the hero of the cycle. More to the point, he wields the sword's motive just as he wields the sword itself.

71 *Siegfried* I/iii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 227).

72 Cord, *Richard Wagner's Literary Journey*, 119.

Figure 5: *Die Walküre*, Act III, Scene i m. 509-534

Sword motive

E Tpt.

Hn. in F

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Viola

Brunnhilde

Cello

Bass

f *dim.* *p*

f *dim.* *p*

f *dim.* *p*

f *dim.* *p*

Ver - wahr ihm die star - ken Schwer - tes-Stük-ken; sei-nes Va - ters Wal - statt ent - führt' ich sie

dim. *p*

dim. *p*

p *f*

p *f*

p *f*

glück-lich: der neu ge - fügt — das Schwert einst schwingt, den Na - men neh'm' er von mir.

p *f*

Tpt.

Hn.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Br.

Cello

Bass

Sword motive

a. 4

f

pizz.

p

arco

p

molto cresc.

f

pizz.

p

arco

p

molto cresc.

f

pizz.

p

arco

p

molto cresc.

f

pizz.

p

arco

p

molto cresc.

f

Sieg - fried - er - freu' - sich des Siegs!

Siegfried' joy in victory!

Brünnhilde: "For him keep safe the sword's stout fragments; from his father's field I haply took them: let him who'll wield the newly forged sword receive his name from me – may 'Siegfried' joy in victory!"

But Siegfried fills his father's shoes in another, more subtle way. As the truly free hero of the piece, Siegfried qualifies as the only character with both the physical and moral power to retrieve the ring from Fafner, which Siegmund was unable to do on account of his close tie to Wotan. That overarching goal, originally intended for the father but passed down to the son, guides Siegfried's actions and dictates his fate without his knowledge. Interestingly, this is also contained dramatically in the connotative meaning of sword's leitmotif, and has been since its very first appearance. Whatever the concrete and apparently obvious connection between Figure 4 and the physical sword, the ascending arpeggio first came into being as Wotan's Grand Idea, and it never loses that underlying meaning. The purpose of the sword, after all, was to give Siegmund an unbreakable weapon with which he could slay Fafner. Wotan, disguised as the

Wanderer, makes it very clear during his conversation with Mime that Nothung's purpose is the same even in the hands of Siegfried: "Which is the sword that Siegfried must wield if Fafner's death is to follow?"⁷³ Mime easily answers this question, because his plans are also centered around the recovery of the ring through Siegfried. What the dwarf cannot answer is the question of who will reforge the broken sword, the one question he thinks himself too clever to ask even when the Wanderer gives him the opportunity to do so. But it is also necessary for the Wanderer that Mime have that question answered, because he too needs the sword made whole and used in battle against Fafner so that Siegfried can retrieve the ring and deliver it to Brünnhilde. Wotan's plans for the world are no less dependent upon the sword than Mime's plans for his own bold kingship. Siegfried, who in effect wields the weapon on behalf of both men, knows nothing of either scheme.

During Siegfried's lifetime, the sword and its motive seem to remain tied to him in a straightforward way, supplementing his inventory of tactile and musical property. Siegfried considers it his most important property, so much greater in comparison to the Nibelung treasure that he forgets about the latter entirely by the time of *Götterdämmerung*. He uses the sword to separate himself from Brünnhilde in the complicated wife-swapping events of the final opera, and calls upon it as witness to his fidelity. These are all functions that any sword might serve, and are less related to the sword's underlying purpose as the agent of Wotan's Grand Idea. Not until the funeral music in Act III of *Götterdämmerung* does the sword's motive revert again to its original referent of Wotan's plan.

⁷³ *Siegfried* I/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 213).

In the recent Metropolitan Opera production of the *Ring*, the Gibichung nobleman Gunther retrieves Nothung from where Siegfried dropped it at his death and raises it aloft during the funeral procession as the sword's motive occurs poignantly in the orchestra.⁷⁴ This is a nice touch, but unnecessary if the original meaning of the motive is considered instead of its concrete association with the actual sword. As the aural signal of Wotan's Grand Idea, the leitmotif occurs during the funeral march in order to signify the closure of that grand idea; that is, Wotan's plan has come full circle and is now almost accomplished. The free-willed hero has served his purpose, and redemption is at hand. Steven Reale argues for this interpretation in his dissertation, that

labeling [the motive's first appearance] 'Wotan's Grand Idea' highlights the fact that this statement has much deeper dramatic meaning than a simple musical label for a sword. Wotan's plans extend far beyond the act of placing the sword in the tree to his entire idea to sire the race of Walsungs to retrieve the ring for him. The statement of the sword motive at the end of *Das Rheingold* is thus a synecdoche for the totality of his idea.⁷⁵

Reale further suggests that the corresponding moment in the funeral music, an emphatic statement of the motive in its home key of C major, “marks the final consequence of the plan Wotan set in motion,” and not only brings Wotan's plan to completion but serves a structural purpose that organizes the dramatic and musical material of the *Ring* into nested ring-like structures.⁷⁶

74 Richard Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, stage production by Robert Lepage (Metropolitan Opera, 2010), 8 DVDs (Deutsche Grammophon, 2012). Wagner at one time added a stage direction in *Das Rheingold* in which Wotan would raise aloft a physical sword at the initial sounding of the sword's motive. That direction did not survive, possibly because of its weakness as a dramatic gesture.

75 Steven M. Reale, “Cyclic Structure and Dramatic Recapitulation in Richard Wagner's 'Der Ring des Nibelungen'” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 84.

76 Reale, “Cyclic Structure,” 85.

Reale de-emphasizes the sword motive's final appearance, which occurs in the last scene of *Götterdämmerung* when Siegfried's lifeless hand raises itself to keep Hagen from stealing the ring. He argues that because the motive is given in D major instead of its primary associative key of C major, and because it does not articulate a cadential dominant-tonic motion, it serves no structural purpose (*G*, 314/4/4-5).⁷⁷ Even though the moment stands outside the circular structure that parallels the sword motive's first sounding with its recapitulation in the Funeral March, however, it nevertheless makes sense as a dramatic reference point. With Siegfried's death, Wotan's plan is completed and the necessary actions related to his Grand Idea are finished. Only one possible contingency could keep the redemption of the gods from becoming a reality: the repossession of the ring of power by the Nibelung bloodline, represented here by Hagen. As Siegfried's hand lifts and prevents Hagen from drawing the ring from his finger, Wotan's plan triumphs over Alberich's, the god's progeny defeats that of the dwarf.⁷⁸ What more appropriate motive than the one denoting Wotan's Grand Idea?

Siegfried's final motive of identity is one closely connected with Siegfried the Idea. It receives no label in Spencer and Millington's thematic guide beyond the numerical [35]; for the sake of clarity it is referred to here simply as Idea. Just as the Volsung and Sword motives occur before Siegfried acquires them, the Idea motive sounds at the end of *Die Walküre* before Siegfried ever appears. Like the Sword motive it is a premonition pointing to an important element in the following opera: a musical gesture whose concrete realization is delayed. Its most emphatic appearances in Act III

⁷⁷ Ibid., 83-84.

⁷⁸ Francis Szott, personal conversation with author, March 14, 2016.

of *Die Walküre* seem to link it undeniably with Siegfried: however ambiguous its meaning, it clearly designates him in some way.

Figure 6: Idea Motive



It is not, however, a piece of personal property like the hunting horn and its music, or the sword and its theme. Nor is it a piece of inherited identity like the Volsung heritage and its music. Grey suggests that it represents Siegfried's identity as the epic hero.⁷⁹ Expanding upon Grey's interpretation, I suggest the Idea motive as referring to a conception of Siegfried that has more to do with his *idealized* identity as the perfect hero than with his stage persona or his physical actions. It involves a certain kind of manipulation from Wotan, it is dependent upon the machinations of the drama outside of Siegfried himself, and it carries implications of which Siegfried is entirely unaware. The Idea motive, therefore, comes to represent an understanding of Siegfried as the perfect hero which, even though his actions bring him to fulfill this role, he has no way of comprehending for himself. This is the second side of his dual identity: that of Siegfried the Idea.

In keeping with the ambiguity of its referent, the Idea motive is itself multifaceted and used in many ways. Often Wagner uses it in partial form, sounding only its first phrase (marked 'a' in Fig. 6) alone or in sequence to accompany some manner of stage action. The Idea, however, has three main complete forms. Wagner's use of these

⁷⁹ Grey, "Leitmotif, Temporality, and Musical Design," 95.

variants has been noticed by some authors of thematic guides, notably Hans von Wolzogen, but not within the context of an idealized identity. Wolzogen, tracing similarities between the segments of the Idea motive and other leitmotifs in the *Ring*, offers the variants as representing Siegfried as Volsung, Siegfried who delivers Brünnhilde from her banishment, and “the fortunate dissolution of [Brünnhilde's] ban, through the victory of Love.”⁸⁰ While Wolzogen's reading notes the possibility for slightly different connotations among the variants of the Idea motive, his suggestions fail to account for Wagner's use of the motive to assert Siegfried's identity outside of his relationship to Brünnhilde and in the context of his ultimate role as the agent of the gods' redemption. Considering the three versions of the Idea through the lens of an idealized identity, their connotative meanings trend toward three different facets of Siegfried's heroic character, labeled below in Figures 7-9.

Figure 7: Idea-Hero



⁸⁰ Hans von Wolzogen, *Guide Through the Music of Richard Wagner's Nibelungen*, trans. Nathan Haskell Dole (1895; repr., New York: G. Schirmer, 1905), 59-60.

Figure 8: Idea-Redemption/Destruction

CM cm A^bM b^bm A^bM (E^bM) E^bM A^bM

Figure 9: Idea-Action

CM cm A^bM E^bM fm GM

As the chordal reductions below each variant show, the three versions of the Idea lead to different harmonic spaces.⁸¹ This allows Wagner to use the Idea as convenient tool for modulation, but it also allows for a slight differentiation in the dramatic goal of each version. The movement of Idea-Hero from a minor tonic to its relative major has two ramifications that contribute to my interpretation of its connotation of heroism. The first is that by moving to flat-III, Idea-Hero takes the troubling minor third of its tonic chord and harmonizes it instead into a major tonic of its own. Secondly, the sense of closure achieved through such a motion is enhanced by the contour of the melody, which rises with a sense of finality through a leading tone to rest on the new (local) tonic area.

⁸¹ The progression is not necessarily exactly the same each time one or another of the variants appears, particularly with regard to the internal harmonies and the initial mode switch. The general harmonic trajectory remains constant, however, unless varied by a deceptive cadence.

This version of the Idea motive, along with the personal label “world's noblest hero” is bestowed upon Siegfried by Brünnhilde in Act III of *Die Walküre*.⁸² Interestingly, Brünnhilde actually sings Idea-Hero rather than simply being accompanied by it in the orchestra, making it clearly a gesture and an idea of her own creation. In this way, Siegfried as an Idea comes into being separate from his physical presence on stage and even before he is given his name. That, too, is given to him by Brünnhilde, and carries its own implications as a name by which he will find “joy in victory” and fulfill his necessary purpose in the world of the drama (*DW*, 227/4/3-6).⁸³ The identity conferred through Brünnhilde's assignment of Idea-Hero to Siegfried is one that conforms to her own idea of his heroism—or perhaps her own premonition of that role, for it must not be forgotten that she is a daughter of Erda and therefore has a certain far-seeing wisdom of her own.

The Idea-Redemption/Destruction variant carries an even greater amount of closure than Idea-Hero. It is also unique among the three versions, since its second segment rises in stepwise motion through a fourth before descending to rest on the minor-mode sixth. It too solves the jarring minor third, this time by reharmonizing it as the dominant of the new key. Both the major-mode cadence and the downward contour give Idea-R/D a strong feeling of conclusiveness.

Idea-R/D appears infrequently and almost always in combination with one of the other versions of the Idea motive. Its first appearance, given in Figure 10 below, demonstrates this. It also offers an interesting field for interpreting the variant as

82 *Die Walküre* III/i (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 177).

83 *Ibid.*, 178.

representative of Siegfried as the bringer of both redemption and destruction: in addition to assigning an identity of Hero to the character, Brünnhilde confers upon him his ultimate purpose, which is the redemption of the gods through his own death and the ensuing conflagration that destroys Valhalla. This particular facet of his identity is embryonic in *Die Walküre*, where the gentle instrumentation of Idea-R/D at its first appearance undermines its somewhat assertive nature. Although this part of Siegfried's idealized identity is with him from the beginning, it cannot come to its full fruition until he has actually fulfilled his purpose. By contrast, a similar combination involving Idea-R/D occurs in the funeral march after Siegfried's death. Unlike in its first appearance in Figure 10, Siegfried's work is done; Idea-R/D sounds emphatically in the brass.

Figure 10: Die Walküre Act III, Scene i m. 489-509 (partial reduction)

Brünnhilde: "The world's noblest hero, o woman, you harbour within your sheltering womb!"

Flute

Oboe

English Horn

Clarinet in Bb

Bassoon 1

Bassoon 2

Horn in F 1

Horn in F 2

Brünnhilde

den hehr - sten Hel - den der Welt hegst du, o Weib, — im schir - men-den Schoss!

Idea-Hero

Fl.

Ob.

E. Hn.

Bb Cl.

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Br.

cresc.

molto cresc.

cresc.

molto cresc.

One notable exception to this trend of combining Idea-R/D with other versions of the Idea motive occurs in Act II of *Siegfried*, as a dying Fafner asks for the identity of his killer. At first glance this may seem anomalous, since slaying the dragon is more of a heroic action than a redemptive one. What Idea-R/D underscores at this moment, however, is that facet of Siegfried's identity that he cannot figure out. Siegfried, admitting to his own ignorance about himself, suggests that the dragon might perhaps guess who he is from his name. He utters it, and Fafner dies with an exclamation, a deep sigh, and a deceptive cadence that obliterates the conclusive nature of Idea-R/D.⁸⁴

Figure 11: *Siegfried* Act II, Scene ii m. 1161-1165 (reduction)

The musical score reduction shows six staves. The top staff is for Horn in F, followed by Tuba, Viola, Siegfried (soprano), Fafner (bass), and Cello. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. Siegfried's vocal line begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes the lyrics: "rat es nach mei - nem Na - men, - - - Sieg - fried bin ich ge - nannt." Fafner's vocal line ends with the exclamation "Sieg - fried!..." The Cello part provides a harmonic foundation with various chords and a final cadence.

Siegfried: "Divine it from my name: Siegfried I am called."

Fafner: "Siegfried!"

It is unclear whether or not the name means anything to Fafner, but Siegfried learns nothing from the exchange: he achieves no closure either. The destruction of the dragon has two immediate results, the meanings of which remain lost to him. First, the action gains him the ring, a necessary component of his redemptive identity. The second

⁸⁴ *Siegfried* II/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 242).

result is much more subtle: by slaying Fafner, Siegfried frees him from the ring's curse, an act of redemption accomplished through destruction that parallels on a small scale the overall dramatic trajectory of the *Ring*.⁸⁵ Both of these consequences of Siegfried's action are tied to that aspect of his character suggested by Idea-R/D, the ideal hero who brings redemption through annihilation.

Idea-Action is the most common variant of the three. Its harmonic implication is not one of closure like those of its fellows. Instead its motion is one of a tonic moving to a dominant, which implies no break in the action—it must *go* somewhere; it cannot leave the listener dangling on the edge of such a precipice. Similarly, the rising melodic contour tends to create a sense of anticipation. One solution to this need for motion would be to simply loop the motive back on itself, but Wagner often uses Idea-Action to move even further. Figure 12 shows the contour of Idea-Action and the combination of its two repetitions at the end of *Die Walküre* by which Wagner moves from a key center of A to the goal key of the act, E Major. Idea-Action's construction indicates that it is certainly “going somewhere,” as Siegfried is very often in the process of “going somewhere,” but such behavior as Figure 12 indicates also a lack of tonal centricity, an ability to move with considerable dexterity among key areas.

Idea-Action's dramatic correlations bear up this interpretation of “going somewhere.” In Figure 12, perhaps its most clearly foregrounded appearance at the end of *Die Walküre*, Wotan adopts it once he has put Brünnhilde into her magic sleep.

⁸⁵ John Sheinbaum, personal conversation with author, April 19, 2016.

Figure 12: *Die Walküre* Act III, Scene iii m. 1693-1708 (reduction)

Wotan: "He who fears my spear-point shall never pass through the fire."

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows the vocal line for Wotan and the piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in A major and 2/4 time. The lyrics are: "Wer mei - nes Spee - res Spit - ze fürch - tet, durch -". The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "schrei - te das Feu - er nie!". The piano accompaniment continues with the same complex rhythmic pattern. The third system shows the final measures of the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "schrei - te das Feu - er nie!". The piano accompaniment continues with the same complex rhythmic pattern. The score includes annotations: "V-I Motion, A Major" above the first system, "EM as V of AM" above the second system, "V-I Motion in E Major" above the third system, and "BM as V of EM" above the final measures of the third system.

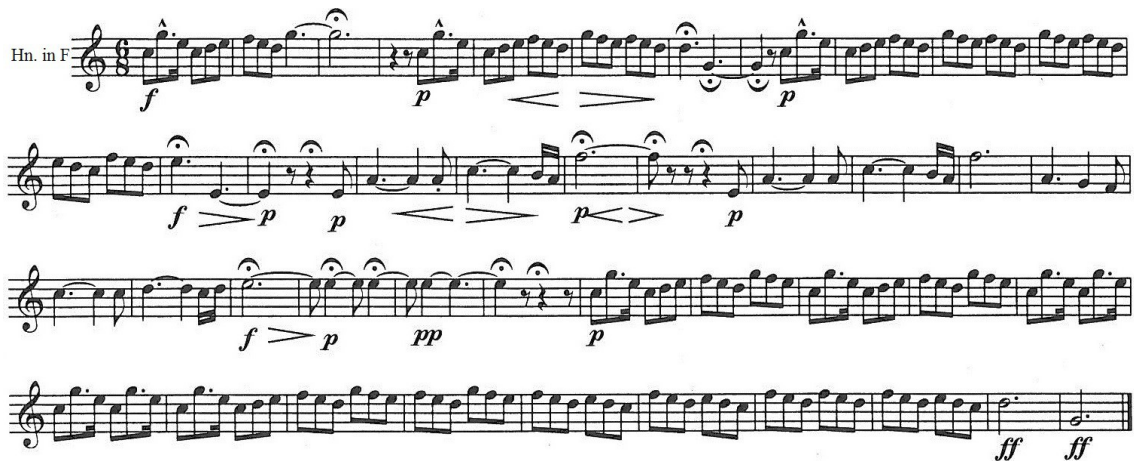
Like Brünnhilde, Wotan sings the motive, implying that he too has an Idea of Siegfried, a specific plan involving the hero. His Idea, however, seems to emphasize Siegfried's actions. At this moment he declares, "He who fears my spear-point shall never pass through the fire."⁸⁶ Rather than identify the referent of the Idea motive as a hero, Wotan identifies the referent as the agent of an action—passing through the fire. That particular action is certainly a necessary aspect of Siegfried's heroism, but not only for his own sake. It is an essential component of Wotan's plan for Siegfried as well: he

⁸⁶ *Die Walküre* III/iii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 191).

must penetrate the fire in order to deliver the ring to Brünnhilde, who alone possesses both the wisdom and the freedom to cast it away.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that Siegfried the Man is definitely aware of the Idea-Action motive. As mentioned above, Siegfried sings Idea-Action when describing his reflection in the stream. In Act II of *Siegfried*, however, he also plays it on his hunting horn when summoning Fafner.

Figure 13: *Siegfried* Act II, Scene ii m. 961-1003



The construction of this musical utterance is curious: a first attempt at sounding the Idea, followed by a clear blast of Idea-Action which Siegfried seems unwilling to let go of. Eventually his repetition of the motive's last tone trails off, and he reverts again to the horn call which he understands better and is able to assert more clearly and at length.

The nuanced meaning of the Idea motive especially traceable in *Götterdämmerung*. Not surprisingly, the Idea becomes complicated as Siegfried ties his love life into Gordian knots. The motive hardly appears between the time Siegfried takes the love potion in Act I and its prominent appearance during the Funeral March before

the last scene of Act III. It is heard in full during Brünnhilde's Act I conversation with Waltraute, in which she relates Siegfried's conquest of her accompanied by a sounding of Idea-Action (*G*, 96/4/5ff). From then on, the motive is partial or distorted as Siegfried, even less aware of himself and his identity than usual, commits a number of fatal errors. Only after his death, when he has reaffirmed his identity and served his dramatic purpose, does the Idea motive return in its complete forms.

One other feature of the Idea motive makes it interpretively interesting: it does not seem to have a home key. Unlike the Valhalla music, which generally appears in D-flat, or the Sword motive, which clings mainly to C, or the Horn Call, which sounds most often in F, the Idea motive not only moves among key areas in its basic construction but has no significant associative key of its own. Either Siegfried's motive is free of musical constraints the same way Siegfried is free of social constraints, or his motive lacks the conviction to draw surrounding music into a key of its own, and is therefore subject to manipulation by orchestral forces the same way Siegfried is subject to manipulation by dramatic forces: other characters, for example, who have different ideas of who Siegfried is and different uses for him.

Siegfried's four identity leitmotifs highlight the dual nature of his role in the *Ring*. Just as in the text of the drama he is at once a perfectly free hero and the pawn of fate, the musical units associated with him separate his character into two parts: an intensely physical presence tied to his actions, and a shifting ideal presence related to the characters whose fulfillment and redemption depends on his heroism. The musical discourse around Siegfried reflects this binary of Man and Idea by providing him with a

physical piece of leitmotivic property in his Horn Call, two inherited motives that link his physical person with a greater idea beyond himself, and an interpretively charged Idea motive.

***Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii: The Encounter with Wotan Read from Four Perspectives**

This final section presents four readings of *Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii, in which the young hero encounters Wotan, disguised as the Wanderer, at the base of the fiery mountain where Brünnhilde lies in her magic sleep. It is not my intention to claim that one or another of these is more correct than the others, nor to suggest that interpretation is subjective to the point that a creative analyzer can find whatever he wants in the musical and dramatic texts. Rather, tracing disparate readings of the same text serves to highlight the interpretive richness of the *Ring* and emphasize its continued cultural relevance. As Subotnik points out in her two-fold analysis of arias in *The Magic Flute*, different readings often reveal more about the reader than about the work.⁸⁷ The multiplicity of readings of the *Ring* serves as a testament to its enduring fascination, a small part of which is demonstrated below. After a general description of the action and music of the scene I offer four different analyses of the pivotal encounter between Wotan and Siegfried. The first supports Bernard Shaw's reading of Siegfried as the young anarchist bursting with life. The second follows Adorno and Weiner in reading Siegfried as a petty, ignorant youngster who represents a problematic assertion of hierarchical racial identity. In the third analysis, a comparison of *Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii and *Die Walküre* Act III, Scene iii juxtaposes Siegfried's lack of self-awareness and inability to

⁸⁷ Subotnik, "Whose 'Magic Flute?'" 150. I am indebted to Subotnik's article for the conception of this third section of the thesis.

understand or control the orchestra against Brünnhilde's rhetorical proficiency, casting her in the heroic light suggested by Abbate and Baileyshea. The final reading supports my own interpretation of Siegfried's Man/Idea duality.

General Summary of Act III, Scene ii

Table 1 summarizes Siegfried's exchange of questions, answers, and finally threats with Wotan that govern the action of Act III, Scene ii. Utterances in the middle column are paraphrased from the libretto text, and the third column identifies leitmotifs foregrounded either during the utterance or directly after it (*S*, 261/2 – 279/2).

Table 1: Summary of Act III, Scene ii

Location in Schirmer vocal score	Speaker	Utterance	Motivic Activity	Tonality/Cadential Arrivals	Notable Instrumentation
First Section					
(263/4/3)	W	Whither does your journey lead?	None (non-motivic banter)	E-flat (some departure in Siegfried's answering figures, but mainly constant)	(strings constant throughout)
(264/1/3)	S	I'm seeking a rock encircled by fire, a woman I mean to wake.	Forest bird		Flute, Oboes, Horns
(264/4/5)	W	Who told you to seek the rock and the woman?	None		Sustained brass
(265/1/5)	S	A forest songbird	Forest bird		Flute, trilling strings
(265/2/4)	W	How could you understand its song?	None		
(265/3/4)	S	I tasted the blood of the dragon I killed.	Dragon (variant of Giant motive)		Bassoons, motive in low strings
(266/1/3)	W	Who told you to kill the dragon?	(banter)		
(266/2/3)	S	Mime, to teach me fear, but the dragon snapped	Horn/Sword combination		Horns, upper woodwinds

		his jaws at me.			
(266/4/2)	W	Who made the sword with which you killed it?	(banter)		Horns, bassoons, clarinets, oboes
(267/1/2)	S	I did, since the smith could not.	Forge, Nibelung smith		Strings, high winds respectively
(267/2/3)	W	Who made the shards from which you forged the sword?	(banter)		Bass trumpet, trombones: no strings
(267/3/2)	S	I don't know, but they were useless until I re-made them.	(banter)	Cadence in F	Strings return, woodwinds and horns
(267/4/3)	W	Ha! That I believe.	Volsung sympathy	F diverted immediately to F#	
Second Section					
(268/1/1)	S	Are you laughing? No more questions, old man. Don't detain me.	Volsung sympathy	B	Motive in low strings, bassoon, oboe, clarinet
(268/3/2)	W	If I'm old, you should show me respect.	(banter)	A-flat	Bass trumpet, trombones
(268/4/1)	S	All my life an old man barred my way until I swept him aside. Take care the same doesn't happen to you.	Siegfried's frustration, echoes of the Forest Bird.		Horns, strings rhythmically active
(269/3/4)		Why such a hat, worn low over your eye?	Volsung sympathy	Movement to C	Motive in oboe, clarinet.
(270/1/2)	W	That's the Wanderer's way.	Wanderer, hints of Valhalla, Valkyrie/ galloping fragment	Movement to G-flat	Brass; Valkyrie in low strings and bassoons.
(270/2/1)	S	You've lost one eye already, probably for standing in someone's way. Be off, or else lose the other also.	Valhalla dissolves into the bantering music		
(270/4/2)	W	I see you know how to get your own way. The eye I am missing is the one with which you are watching me now.	Valhalla	E-flat, sequenceing to strong cadence in C	Horns, low strings Trumpets and trombones join near end of utterance.
(271/3/2)	S	Ha! At least you're	Valhalla	Cadence in F	

		good for a laugh. But tell me what I want or get out of here.	dissolves into banter		
Third Section					
(272/2/4)	W	If you knew me you would not insult me. I have loved your kind, but do not arouse my wrath.	Wotan's Distress Volsung sympathy	F diverted, various	Motive in bass clarinet and viola
(273/3/1)	S	So you won't tell me? Then get out of the way. I must go this way, where the bird led me.	Forest Bird	Movement to A-flat	Oboes and clarinets
(274/1/1)	W	Your bird fled the lord of the ravens. You can't go where it led you.	Power, Spear	Movement to B-flat, then E-flat	High woodwinds, sustained horns, Spear motive in trombones
(274/3/3)	S	Hoho! Who are you, then, to forbid me?	Marching conflation of Spear and Distress motives		Low strings and bassons only
(275/1/2)	W	The guardian of the sleeping maid.	Continuation of Spear/Distress		Addition of bass clarinet
		Fire surrounds her; you will be consumed.	Fire, Valkyrie	Various	Addition of horns, high winds
(277/3/3)	S	Get back, braggart; to Brunnhilde I must go.	Idea (partial), Forest Bird	Sequence in trumpet (B-flat, B, C)	Idea sequences in trumpet
(278/1/1)	W	If you don't fear the fire, then my spear will bar your way. Once before it shattered the sword you carry.	Spear, Distress	In and around C to end of scene.	
(278/4/4)	S	My father's foe! Now is my chance for vengeance; my sword will splinter your spear.	Volsung Sympathy, Sword-Spear clash.	Clash supported by fully-diminished 7 th chord	Sword in trumpet and bass trumpet Spear in trombones and cello/bass
(279/4/2)	W	Go on, I cannot stop you.	Erda, Twilight of the Gods		Strings under sustained brass, joined by woodwinds
(280/1/3ff)	S	He's gone; the path is open!	Various; transition to Scene iii		

During the first part of the exchange, Wotan's questions are largely free of motivic accompaniment. He addresses Siegfried in a bantering tone, apparently willing to join in Siegfried's lighthearted exuberance.⁸⁸ Siegfried's answers contain most of the leitmotifs in this first section, accompanying the narration of his recent adventures. These are mainly literal, relating directly to characters and events of which he speaks.

Once Siegfried takes on the role of questioner in the second section, the leitmotifs become more frequent. His discomfort at Wotan's laughter floats above one of the familial Volsung motives, used earlier to denote the shared angst of the twins.

Figure 14: Volsung Sympathy Motive



His own rushing figure of frustration boils up as he recalls the last time an old man stood in his way, after which he embarks on his half of the question-answer game. Wotan answers Siegfried's impertinent questions about his identity by evoking the leitmotifs connected with himself: the Wanderer and Valhalla music, specifically. These motives dissolve into the bantering figure as Siegfried moves on to his inquiry about Wotan's missing eye. Again Wotan's answer is accompanied by an identity motive, this time clearly and exclusively the Valhalla music. For the second time the Valhalla theme

⁸⁸ Grey, "Leitmotif, Temporality, and Musical Design," 106. Grey divides the dialogue into two segments only, an easygoing conversation about Siegfried's adventures followed by the mounting tension beginning with the entrance of the Distress motive. I prefer the three-part structure, also found in Patrick McCreless' tonal analysis of *Siegfried*, because although Siegfried's questions about the Wanderer's appearance seem to fit more with the good-natured tone of the first section, the role of questioner clearly shifts from Wotan to Siegfried. McCreless' third section begins after Wotan's remark about the lord of the ravens (see McCreless, "Wagner's Siegfried," 347-8). Since my focus is on the activity of the leitmotifs, however, I prefer to make the divide where the Distress motive provides a clear and stark break in the action and the conversation takes a dark turn.

dissipates at Siegfried's laughing utterance, which triggers a shift in the tone of the interaction.

The third section of the scene, a gradual escalation of threats that leads to physical assault, begins with a stark sounding of one of Wotan's darker motives, sometimes associated with “Wotan's Distress.”⁸⁹ The motive accompanies Wotan's entire utterance as he warns Siegfried not to provoke him (*S*, 273/2/4-6). Siegfried ignores the threat, and insists that he must follow after the forest bird. Wotan's physical and musical behavior becomes assertive after this claim, as he “[breaks] out in anger and adopt[s] a domineering stance,” bringing the orchestra to fortissimo through an ascending sequence of the half-step motive generally associated with power (*S*, 274/1-2 and Fig. 17). He warns that Siegfried cannot follow the forest bird, and the Spear motive sounds in forceful octaves in the trombones.

Figure 15: Wotan's Distress Motive



Figure 16: Spear Motive



Siegfried laughs again, unimpressed, and asks Wotan who he is that he makes such an interdiction. Marching beneath this utterance is a conflation of the Spear and Distress motives (Fig. 18). Wotan adopts the same martial variant as he reveals himself to be the guardian of Brünnhilde's mountain, and proceeds to gather orchestral support for his threat by evoking the rushing triplets of the “Fire” motive and fragments of the

⁸⁹ Because leitmotifs are complicated musical units subject to interpretation, assigning them labels is something of a necessary evil. I have supplied simplistic labels to Distress, Power, and Volsung sympathy for convenience based on their general behavior in the drama, but these labels are by no means definitive.

galloping “Valkyrie” motive. Siegfried breaks in almost before Wotan has finished describing the terrors that await him on the mountain, and offers the Idea motive and the chirp of his forest bird as support for his determination to get to Brünnhilde (S, 277/3/3 and 277/4/2-3).

Figure 17: Sequence of the Power Motive, *Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii m. 667-668

Wotan/Wanderer: “[The bird] fled from you to save its life;”

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in Bb

Wanderer

Es floh dir zu sei-nem Heil!

Figure 18: Conflation of “Spear” and “Distress” motives, *Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii m. 677-680

Siegfried: “Hoho! You'd forbid me?”

Combination of Spear and Distress Motives

Vla.

Sieg.

Cello

Bass

Ho ho! Du Ver-bie-ter! Wer bist du den, dass du mir weh- - ren willst?

Wotan plays his final card, and sets his spear against Siegfried's passage. The Spear motive sounds multiple times against a backdrop of the martial transformation heard earlier as Wotan reveals that it was his spear-shaft that destroyed the sword Nothing once before. Siegfried, spurred to action by the discovery that the one barring his way is the same enemy who stood against his father, raises his sword against the spear. The clash of the two weapons appears dutifully in the orchestra and depicts the result of the conflict onstage: the Spear motive fades out and fragments as the spear is shattered. Grey identifies this as an “overtly semiotic” use of the leitmotif, in which even the combination of the upward and downward gestures “convey[s] a meaning beyond the denotative ones invested in them by mechanism of textual-musical alignment.”⁹⁰

Such, in a general sense, is the dramatic and motivic action of *Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii. Different interpretations of the Siegfried character, however, may also yield slightly different readings of the scene in terms of power dynamics and the self-awareness of the young hero. To demonstrate this, I offer four separate analyses of Act III, Scene ii. Each of these emphasizes different aspects of the music and drama to support one of the perspectives outlined in Part I: the jubilantly destructive anarchist of Bernard Shaw; the brainless, racially charged symbol of Adorno and Weiner; a non-heroic pawn contrasted with the heroic Brünnhilde of Abbate and Baileyshea; and the Man/Idea duality of my own interpretation of Siegfried.

90 Grey, “Leitmotive, Temporality, and Design,” 108.

Siegfried as a Purposeful Anarchist: Bernard Shaw

In many respects, a Shavian reading of the scene seems closest to what Wagner might have intended: Shaw's interpretation of the cycle as a whole is closest temporally to Wagner of the perspectives examined here, but Shaw also emphasizes the revolutionary aspects of Siegfried's character that reflect the revolutionary sentiments of the composer around the time of creating the original scenario. For Shaw, Siegfried's encounter with Wotan is a confrontation between the natural, unrestrained exuberance of liberated humanity and the aging, decrepit institutions of law and order. In the dialogue, Siegfried certainly behaves like a “perfectly naïve hero” as Shaw describes. He answers as many of Wotan's questions as he can in straight-forward narrative based on his experiences. Similarly, the motives he sings and evokes in the orchestra are those he knows through his personal experience with them: the Forest Bird with whom he has a unique connection, the Dragon whom he fought, the Horn Call he created himself, the Sword he forged, and the Forging music by which he did so. None of these was taught to him except by nature, nor were they impressed upon him except by active interaction. Musically, therefore, Siegfried's utterances in the first part of the dialogue are free of any outside influences: he, like unfettered humanity, is doing exactly as he likes.⁹¹

As the questioning shifts in the second part of the encounter, Siegfried's behavior demonstrates a more aggressive confrontation of Law and Order's obstacles. When Wotan's questions move beyond what Siegfried considers relevant he does not bother to worry about the answers: “What do I know of that? I know only that the bits were no use

⁹¹ Shaw, *The Perfect Wagnerite*, 53.

unless I re-made the sword,” a more poetic way of expressing “Who cares?”⁹² Wotan's claim that he deserves Siegfried's respect carries no more weight with the young hero than his question about the crumbling past. Elderly, one-eyed Wotan means no more to the youthful Siegfried than the elderly, ineffectual institutions of civilization mean to the bold anarchist: in either case, if it stands in the way of what he needs it is something to be smitten aside. Even Wotan's veiled assertion of shared identity fails to make an impression on the young anarchist. Fed up with questions and answers so far removed from his own vital energy, Siegfried demonstrates his impatience and demands to know the answer to the only question that matters: how to get to Brünnhilde.

His threats of assault tally well with Shaw's suggestion that the new humanity is best achieved through violent renewal. Interestingly, Wagner's own revolutionary sentiments around the time of the 1848-9 uprisings suggest a similar willingness to embrace destruction as redemptive. In a letter to Theodor Uhlig of 1849, Wagner wrote that the only way to lay the groundwork the revolutionary works of art he foresaw as the art of the future was “by destroying and crushing everything that is worth crushing and destroying.”⁹³ Mitchell Cohen points out that Wagner's association with the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin and his obsession with the “purely human” and the “communal need” learned from Feuerbach also date from this revolutionary time. From this ethos of world purification emerged an idea of fire as a purifying, destructive force, which appears both at the conclusion of the early opera *Rienzi* and in the “laughing fire” that engulfs the

92 *Siegfried* III/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 260).

93 Quoted in Mitchell Cohen, “To the Dresden Barricades: the Genesis of Wagner's Political Ideas,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas Grey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 49.

world at the end of the *Ring*.⁹⁴ The ultimate goal of Siegfried as Anarchist, therefore, is a destructive one, and the seeds of that final destruction are present during *Siegfried* as the young hero seeks to affirm his identity.

Similarly, Siegfried's musical behavior in the second part of the encounter does violence to Wotan's utterances. He refuses to accept Wotan's leitmotifs just as surely as he refuses to accept his words. In this way Siegfried is the opposite of Mime, who, in the parallel question-and-answer situation in Act I, makes an effort to use Wotan's Wanderer music, to “play the game” motivically while trying to do so verbally (Fig.19). Siegfried instead wrests the orchestra away from Wotan, to borrow Baileyshea's terminology, by modifying the leitmotivic activity instead of conforming to it.⁹⁵ He dissolves Wotan's first use of the Valhalla motive into the non-motivic bantering figure from earlier in the conversation (Fig. 20). The second time Wotan brings up the Valhalla music in an attempt to create a shared identity with his anarchistic offspring Siegfried does the same thing, this time with derisive laughter (Fig. 21).

Figure 19: *Siegfried* Act I, Scene ii m. 1513-1516 (reduction)

Mime: “Much, Wanderer, I see you know of the broad earth's rugged back:”

B♭ Clarinet

Bassoon

Mime

pp

Viel, Wand - er - er, weisst du mir von der Er - de rau - hem Rück-en.

"Wanderer" Motive

94 Cohen, “To the Dresden Barricades,” 52-3. The phrase “laughing fire” appears during Brünnhilde's address to her horse Grane at the end of her immolation monologue at the end of *Götterdämmerung*; see Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 350.

95 Baileyshea, “The Struggle for Orchestral Control,” 15.

Figure 20: Siegfried Act I, Scene ii m. 590-596 (partial reduction)

Wanderer: "That is the Wanderer's way when he walks against the wind."

Siegfried: "But under it one of your eyes is missing!"

Oboe

B^b Clar.

Bassoon

Hn. in F

Hn. in F

Tpt. in C

Tbn.

Bass Tbn.

Siegfried

Wanderer

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Viola

Partial Valhalla motive

Dissolution of Valhalla motive

Das ist so Wand-rer's Wei-se, wenn dem Wind ent-ge-gen er geht.

Doch dar-un-ter fehlt dir ein Au-ge?

Figure 21: Siegfried Act III, Scene ii m. 608-621

Wanderer: "With the eye which, as my second self, is missing, you yourself can glimpse the one that's left for me to see with."

Siegfried: "At least you're good for a laugh!"

The musical score is for measures 608-621 of Siegfried Act III, Scene ii. It features the following parts and markings:

- Horn in F:** Measures 608-610 are rests. Measure 611 has a half note G4 with a *p* dynamic. Measures 612-613 have whole notes A4 and B4. Measures 614-615 have eighth notes G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F#1, E1, D1, C1, B0, A0, G0, F#0, E0, D0, C0, B-1, A-1, G-1, F#-1, E-1, D-1, C-1, B-2, A-2, G-2, F#-2, E-2, D-2, C-2, B-3, A-3, G-3, F#-3, E-3, D-3, C-3, B-4, A-4, G-4, F#-4, E-4, D-4, C-4, B-5, A-5, G-5, F#-5, E-5, D-5, C-5, B-6, A-6, G-6, F#-6, E-6, D-6, C-6, B-7, A-7, G-7, F#-7, E-7, D-7, C-7, B-8, A-8, G-8, F#-8, E-8, D-8, C-8, B-9, A-9, G-9, F#-9, E-9, D-9, C-9, B-10, A-10, G-10, F#-10, E-10, D-10, C-10, B-11, A-11, G-11, F#-11, E-11, D-11, C-11, B-12, A-12, G-12, F#-12, E-12, D-12, C-12, B-13, A-13, G-13, F#-13, E-13, D-13, C-13, B-14, A-14, G-14, F#-14, E-14, D-14, C-14, B-15, A-15, G-15, F#-15, E-15, D-15, C-15, B-16, A-16, G-16, F#-16, E-16, D-16, C-16, B-17, A-17, G-17, F#-17, E-17, D-17, C-17, B-18, A-18, G-18, F#-18, E-18, D-18, C-18, B-19, A-19, G-19, F#-19, E-19, D-19, C-19, B-20, A-20, G-20, F#-20, E-20, D-20, C-20, B-21, A-21, G-21, F#-21, E-21, D-21, C-21, B-22, A-22, G-22, F#-22, E-22, D-22, C-22, B-23, A-23, G-23, F#-23, E-23, D-23, C-23, B-24, A-24, G-24, F#-24, E-24, D-24, C-24, B-25, A-25, G-25, F#-25, E-25, D-25, C-25, B-26, A-26, G-26, F#-26, E-26, D-26, C-26, B-27, A-27, G-27, F#-27, E-27, D-27, C-27, B-28, A-28, G-28, F#-28, E-28, D-28, C-28, B-29, A-29, G-29, F#-29, E-29, D-29, C-29, B-30, A-30, G-30, F#-30, E-30, D-30, C-30, B-31, A-31, G-31, F#-31, E-31, D-31, C-31, B-32, A-32, G-32, F#-32, E-32, D-32, C-32, B-33, A-33, G-33, F#-33, E-33, D-33, C-33, B-34, A-34, G-34, F#-34, E-34, D-34, C-34, B-35, A-35, G-35, F#-35, E-35, D-35, C-35, B-36, A-36, G-36, F#-36, E-36, D-36, C-36, B-37, A-37, G-37, F#-37, E-37, D-37, C-37, B-38, A-38, G-38, F#-38, E-38, D-38, C-38, B-39, A-39, G-39, F#-39, E-39, D-39, C-39, B-40, A-40, G-40, F#-40, E-40, D-40, C-40, B-41, A-41, G-41, F#-41, E-41, D-41, C-41, B-42, A-42, G-42, F#-42, E-42, D-42, C-42, B-43, A-43, G-43, F#-43, E-43, D-43, C-43, B-44, A-44, G-44, F#-44, E-44, D-44, C-44, B-45, A-45, G-45, F#-45, E-45, D-45, C-45, B-46, A-46, G-46, F#-46, E-46, D-46, C-46, B-47, A-47, G-47, F#-47, E-47, D-47, C-47, B-48, A-48, G-48, F#-48, E-48, D-48, C-48, B-49, A-49, G-49, F#-49, E-49, D-49, C-49, B-50, A-50, G-50, F#-50, E-50, D-50, C-50, B-51, A-51, G-51, F#-51, E-51, D-51, C-51, B-52, A-52, G-52, F#-52, E-52, D-52, C-52, B-53, A-53, G-53, F#-53, E-53, D-53, C-53, B-54, A-54, G-54, F#-54, E-54, D-54, C-54, B-55, A-55, G-55, F#-55, E-55, D-55, C-55, B-56, A-56, G-56, F#-56, E-56, D-56, C-56, B-57, A-57, G-57, F#-57, E-57, D-57, C-57, B-58, A-58, G-58, F#-58, E-58, D-58, C-58, B-59, A-59, G-59, F#-59, E-59, D-59, C-59, B-60, A-60, G-60, F#-60, E-60, D-60, C-60, B-61, A-61, G-61, F#-61, E-61, D-61, C-61, B-62, A-62, G-62, F#-62, E-62, D-62, C-62, B-63, A-63, G-63, F#-63, E-63, D-63, C-63, B-64, A-64, G-64, F#-64, E-64, D-64, C-64, B-65, A-65, G-65, F#-65, E-65, D-65, C-65, B-66, A-66, G-66, F#-66, E-66, D-66, C-66, B-67, A-67, G-67, F#-67, E-67, D-67, C-67, B-68, A-68, G-68, F#-68, E-68, D-68, C-68, B-69, A-69, G-69, F#-69, E-69, D-69, C-69, B-70, A-70, G-70, F#-70, E-70, D-70, C-70, B-71, A-71, G-71, F#-71, E-71, D-71, C-71, B-72, A-72, G-72, F#-72, E-72, D-72, C-72, B-73, A-73, G-73, F#-73, E-73, D-73, C-73, B-74, A-74, G-74, F#-74, E-74, D-74, C-74, B-75, A-75, G-75, F#-75, E-75, D-75, C-75, B-76, A-76, G-76, F#-76, E-76, D-76, C-76, B-77, A-77, G-77, F#-77, E-77, D-77, C-77, B-78, A-78, G-78, F#-78, E-78, D-78, C-78, B-79, A-79, G-79, F#-79, E-79, D-79, C-79, B-80, A-80, G-80, F#-80, E-80, D-80, C-80, B-81, A-81, G-81, F#-81, E-81, D-81, C-81, B-82, A-82, G-82, F#-82, E-82, D-82, C-82, B-83, A-83, G-83, F#-83, E-83, D-83, C-83, B-84, A-84, G-84, F#-84, E-84, D-84, C-84, B-85, A-85, G-85, F#-85, E-85, D-85, C-85, B-86, A-86, G-86, F#-86, E-86, D-86, C-86, B-87, A-87, G-87, F#-87, E-87, D-87, C-87, B-88, A-88, G-88, F#-88, E-88, D-88, C-88, B-89, A-89, G-89, F#-89, E-89, D-89, C-89, B-90, A-90, G-90, F#-90, E-90, D-90, C-90, B-91, A-91, G-91, F#-91, E-91, D-91, C-91, B-92, A-92, G-92, F#-92, E-92, D-92, C-92, B-93, A-93, G-93, F#-93, E-93, D-93, C-93, B-94, A-94, G-94, F#-94, E-94, D-94, C-94, B-95, A-95, G-95, F#-95, E-95, D-95, C-95, B-96, A-96, G-96, F#-96, E-96, D-96, C-96, B-97, A-97, G-97, F#-97, E-97, D-97, C-97, B-98, A-98, G-98, F#-98, E-98, D-98, C-98, B-99, A-99, G-99, F#-99, E-99, D-99, C-99, B-100, A-100, G-100, F#-100, E-100, D-100, C-100, B-101, A-101, G-101, F#-101, E-101, D-101, C-101, B-102, A-102, G-102, F#-102, E-102, D-102, C-102, B-103, A-103, G-103, F#-103, E-103, D-103, C-103, B-104, A-104, G-104, F#-104, E-104, D-104, C-104, B-105, A-105, G-105, F#-105, E-105, D-105, C-105, B-106, A-106, G-106, F#-106, E-106, D-106, C-106, B-107, A-107, G-107, F#-107, E-107, D-107, C-107, B-108, A-108, G-108, F#-108, E-108, D-108, C-108, B-109, A-109, G-109, F#-109, E-109, D-109, C-109, B-110, A-110, G-110, F#-110, E-110, D-110, C-110, B-111, A-111, G-111, F#-111, E-111, D-111, C-111, B-112, A-112, G-112, F#-112, 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E-252, D-252, C-252, B-253, A-253, G-253, F#-253, E-253, D-253, C-253, B-254, A-254, G-254, F#-254, E-254, D-254, C-254, B-255, A-255, G-255, F#-255, E-255, D-255, C-255, B-256, A-256, G-256, F#-256, E-256, D-256, C-256, B-257, A-257, G-257, F#-257, E-257, D-257, C-257, B-258, A-258, G-258, F#-258, E-258, D-258, C-258, B-259, A-259, G-259, F#-259, E-259, D-259, C-259, B-260, A-260, G-260, F#-260, E-260, D-260, C-260, B-261, A-261, G-261, F#-261, E-261, D-261, C-261, B-262, A-262, G-262, F#-262, E-262, D-262, C-262, B-263, A-263, G-263, F#-263, E-263, D-263, C-263, B-264, A-264, G-264, F#-264, E-264, D-264, C-264, B-265, A-265, G-265, F#-265, E-265, D-265, C-265, B-266, A-266, G-266, F#-266, E-266, D-266, C-266, B-267, A-267, G-267, F#-267, E-267, D-267, C-267, B-268, A-268, G-268, F#-268, E-268, D-268, C-268, B-269, A-269, G-269, F#-269, E-269, D-269, C-269, B-270, A-270, G-270, F#-270, E-270, D-270, C-270, B-271, A-271, G-271, F#-271, E-271, D-271, C-271, B-272, A-272, G-272, F#-272, E-272, D-272, C-272, B-273, A-273, G-273, F#-273, E-273, D-273, C-273, B-274, A-274, G-274, F#-274, E-274, D-274, C-274, B-275, A-275, G-275, F#-275, E-275, D-275, C-275, B-276, A-276, G-276, F#-276, E-276, D-276, C-276, B-277, A-277, G-277, F#-277, E-277, D-277, C-277, B-278, A-278, G-278, F#-278, E-278, D-278, C-278, B-279, A-279, G-279, F#-279, E-279, D-279, C-279, B-280, A-280, G-280, F#-280, E-280, D-280, C-280, B-281, A-281, G-281, F#-281, E-281, D-281, C-281, B-282, A-282, G-282, F#-282, E-282, D-282, C-282, B-283, A-283, G-283, F#-283, E-283, D-283, C-283, B-284, A-284, G-284, F#-284, E-284, D-284, C-284, B-285, A-285, G-285, F#-285, E-285, D-285, C-285, B-286, A-286, G-286, F#-286, E-286, D-286, C-286, B-287, A-287, G-287, F#-287, E-287, D-287, C-287, B-288, A-288, G-288, F#-288, E-288, D-288, C-288, B-289, A-289, G-289, F#-289, E-289, D-289, C-289, B-290, A-290, G-290, F#-290, E-290, D-290, C-290, B-291, A-291, G-291, F#-291, E-291, D-291, C-291, B-292, A-292, G-292, F#-292, E-292, D-292, C-292, B-293, A-293, G-293, F#-293, E-293, D-293, C-293, B-294, A-294, G-294

Fig. 21 et'd.

Valhalla motive dissolves

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts and markings:

- Hn. (Horn):** Two staves. A box highlights a passage in the first horn staff with the instruction "Valhalla motive dissolves". Dynamic markings include *f* and *sf*.
- Bsn. (Bassoon):** One staff. Dynamic marking *f*.
- C Tpt. (Cornet):** One staff. Dynamic marking *p*.
- Tbn. (Trumpet):** One staff. Dynamic markings *p dolce* and *p*.
- B. Tbn. (Baritone Trumpet):** One staff. Dynamic marking *p dolce*.
- Vln. I (Violin I):** One staff. Dynamic markings *f*, *sf*, and *p*. Includes the instruction "stacc."
- Vln. II (Violin II):** One staff. Dynamic markings *f*, *sf*, and *p*. Includes the instruction "stacc."
- Vla. (Viola):** One staff. Dynamic markings *f*, *sf*, and *p*. Includes the instruction "stacc."
- Siegfried:** One staff. Includes the instruction "stacc."
- W. (Wagner):** One staff. Includes the instruction "stacc."
- Vc. (Violoncello):** One staff. Dynamic markings *p*, *f*, and *p*. Includes the instruction "stacc."
- D.B. (Double Bass):** One staff. Dynamic markings *p*, *f*, and *f*.

Lyrics for the vocal parts:

je, das mir zum Se - hen ver - blieb.

Ha ha ha - ha! Zum La chen bist du mir lus - tig.

As the dialogue turns more hostile in the third part of the encounter, Wotan marshals more of his leitmotivic arsenal in an attempt to contain Siegfried. The Distress, Power, and Spear motives shore up his “Government Property: Do Not Enter” edict, but still Siegfried refuses to be cowed, and twists them into the forward-moving martial conflation of Spear and Despair over which he asks “Who are you then who would bar my way?”⁹⁶ Similarly, Siegfried's heroic motive, that of the Idea, triumphs over Wotan's threats of fiery destruction and his special knowledge of Nature in the form of the Forest Bird motive triumphs over that of the “Magic Fire,” which Shaw sees as artificial, fictitious brimstone—a clever barrier set up by the ruling class (here, Wotan) to keep a credulous working class in order.⁹⁷

Finally, Siegfried's victory over Wotan as he smites the law-giving spear into pieces represents the shattering of the outdated regime by the vigorous anarchist. As noted above, the clash of leitmotifs highlights and parallels the dramatic action onstage: the Sword motive smashes the Spear motive into fragments. Siegfried rushes on to establish a new world order, while Wotan and old order “[disappear] forever from the eye of man.”⁹⁸

Petulance, Ignorance, and Racial Hierarchy: Adorno and Weiner

Theodor Adorno and Marc Weiner view Siegfried in a different, distinctly negative light. The confrontation between Siegfried and Wotan in Act III showcases not

96 *Siegfried* III/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 263).

97 Shaw, *The Perfect Wagnerite*, 33.

98 *Ibid.*, 46.

the triumph of vibrant anarchy against crusty institution, but instead the temporary success of ignorant, petulant youth against a crafty, manipulative establishment. Weiner adds to this the dimension of racial identity and recognition, present in this scene through the use of the eye as a metaphor for racial similarity.

The tone Siegfried adopts toward Wotan in the first two sections of Act III, Scene ii is neither conciliatory nor openly hostile, but it does little to endear the character to a modern listener. Grey writes, “as usual with Siegfried, Wagner's attempt to portray youthful, naïve self-confidence results in something more like aggressive petulance.”⁹⁹ Reading from Adorno's perspective, Siegfried's dissolution of Wotan's leitmotifs during the second section of the dialogue comes off as a trivialization of the musical remark rather than a purposeful seizure of control. Patrick McCreless calls Siegfried's response to Wotan's first remark about his identity as the Wanderer a “frivolous transformation” of the Valhalla motive, a “laughing response to the Wanderer's perfectly serious observation.”¹⁰⁰ Dramatically speaking, it may be true that Siegfried's complete lack of social experience prevents him from knowing how to interact with other people (by the time he reaches Wotan, Siegfried has killed everyone he has spoken to), but the childishness of his whimsical demands about Wotan's appearance undermines his identity as the glorious hero.

Adorno too assigns a childishness to Siegfried's questions in the second part of the dialogue, comparing his demands about Wotan's hat to Little Red Riding Hood's

⁹⁹ Grey, “Leitmotif, Temporality, and Musical Design,” 105.

¹⁰⁰ Patrick McCreless, “Wagner's 'Siegfried': Its Drama, Its History, and Its Music” (PhD diss., University of Rochester Eastman School of Music, 1981), 353.

interrogation of the wolf in her grandmother's clothes.¹⁰¹ By comparing the encounter to a children's story, Adorno seems to be degrading the conversation to a triviality, far removed from Shaw's world-shattering anarchistic naivete. Furthermore, Adorno asserts, the triumphant smashing of Wotan's spear by the “disrespectful Siegfried” is but an illusion of victory, since “to emerge the winner is also to succumb to the power of the Ring.”¹⁰² From a dramatic perspective this is, to some extent, true. Siegfried triumphs over Wotan in Act III of *Siegfried*, but that same victorious action sets him on course for a bloody destruction of his own in Act III of *Götterdämmerung*. Adorno hears this in the music also, interpreting the sounding of the Twilight of the Gods motive accompanying Wotan's final utterance as heralding not only the downfall of the Valhalla clan, but Siegfried's fated demise as well (*S*, 279/4/3).¹⁰³

Emphasizing Siegfried's racial identity over his childishness, Weiner highlights the importance of vision and the eye as a metaphor for racial recognition, and this too appears in Act III, Scene ii of *Siegfried*. “In Wagner, recognition never serves to segregate the individual from his *own* kind but only to reinforce social bonds: He who recognizes his difference from others also recognizes his ties to those who are *not* different, who are like him.”¹⁰⁴ Thus Wotan uses the imagery of the eye to establish his kinship connection with Siegfried, stating “With the eye which, as my second self, is missing, you yourself can glimpse the one that's left for me to see with,” a roundabout

101 Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 136.

102 Ibid., 137.

103 Ibid.

104 Weiner, *Richard Wagner*, 45.

way of saying “You, my grandson, have my missing eye.”¹⁰⁵ Siegfried, though he laughs off the assertion of kinship as he dissolves Wotan's musical utterance, nevertheless makes no more demands relative to Wotan's physical appearance. It is as though while Mime's conniving “otherness” provided reason enough to “[sweep] him aside,” the physical similarity asserted by Wotan's evocation of the eye metaphor requires Siegfried to find a different source of provocation for doing violence to the older man. As the goddess Fricka, Wotan's wife, points out in Act II of *Die Walküre*, “No nobleman battles with bondsmen; the freeman alone chastises the felon.”¹⁰⁶ Siegfried punished the felonious Mime simply by killing him, but because he stands on equal hereditary ground with Wotan, he must *fight* him rather than just push him out of the way.

Siegfried as a Non-Hero: Abbate and Baileyshea

Because Brünnhilde does not appear in Act III, Scene ii of *Siegfried*, an analysis focusing on her heroic identity seems incongruous. Using the language and analytic perspective of Abbate and Baileyshea with respect to Siegfried's actions during his encounter with Wotan, however, invites a comparison between his behavior and that of Brünnhilde in her own conflict with Wotan at the end of Act III of *Die Walküre*. Such a reading focuses on each character's ability to use both verbal persuasion and orchestral forces as tools for accomplishing a goal.

To begin with, there is an important difference between the circumstances that place Brünnhilde and Siegfried in their separate confrontations with Wotan. In Act III,

105 *Siegfried* III/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 262).

106 *Die Walküre* II/i (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 145).

Scene iii of *Die Walküre*, Brünnhilde faces the dreadful punishment of losing her godhood and succumbing to the power of a mortal husband because of a specific, conscious action on her part: the decision to defend Siegmund in defiance of Wotan's reluctant order that he must die. As Koheil and Richardson suggest, this act severs her from Wotan's will and changes her into an independent agent.¹⁰⁷ Put simply, Brünnhilde's predicament is a direct result of her power to make decisions for herself—in this case, siding with Siegmund on the strength of his love for Sieglinde.¹⁰⁸

Siegfried, in contrast, has no apparent ability to make independent decisions. All of his important actions in the first two acts of *Siegfried* are suggested to him by other characters. At Mime's instigation, the young hero seeks out Fafner and fights him. The dying dragon demands, fairly, “Who goaded the mettlesome child to commit this murderous deed? Your brain did not brood upon what you have done.”¹⁰⁹ Both Siegfried's knowledge of the dragon and his determination to fight it came from Mime rather than from his own reasoning decision. His behavior toward the Forest Bird reflects a similar willingness to be guided by an outside force. At the bird's prompting, Siegfried climbs into Fafner's cave and retrieves the ring and Tarnhelm; otherwise he might well have left them lying there for Alberich to pick up, since he has no knowledge of their use. Furthermore, the Forest Bird's timely advice “let him (Siegfried) not trust the treacherous Mime!”¹¹⁰ clues Siegfried in to Mime's treachery in time to keep from drinking the

¹⁰⁷ Koheil and Richardson, “Why Brünnhilde is the True Hero,” 184.

¹⁰⁸ *Die Walküre* III/iii.

¹⁰⁹ *Siegfried* II/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 241).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

sleeping potion prepared by the clever dwarf. On the advice of his avian counselor, Siegfried decides to seek out Brünnhilde's mountain: "I know the most glorious wife for him!"¹¹¹ It never occurs to Siegfried to wonder why the Forest Bird knows these things or what interest it could possibly have in his actions; he simply follows its lead without question.

The events leading up to Brünnhilde's dialogue with Wotan leave her with a specific goal toward which she must work: persuading Wotan to revoke, or at least to lessen, his punishment. Her position is largely powerless, and therefore her arsenal is a rhetorical one. As Baileyshea points out, she can only get what she wants by "appeal[ing] to characteristics Wotan is not prepared to acknowledge ... guilt, compassion, and love."¹¹² The series of questions with which she begins the dialogue invite reflection: "Was it so shameful what I did wrong? ... Was it so base what I did unto you? ... Was what I did so lacking in honour?"¹¹³ Her intention is not simply to retread events that Wotan remembers, but to offer a different perspective on them, one related more to love and compassion than to power and law. Baileyshea suggests that her use of musical material follows a similar strategy. During the dialogue, Brünnhilde alludes to leitmotifs that Wotan used earlier in the opera, during his lengthy soul-searching monologue in Act II.¹¹⁴ She is not only aware of these abstract, psychological leitmotifs, but able to reference them as a rhetorical device.

111 *Siegfried* II/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 252).

112 Baileyshea, "The Struggle for Orchestral Control," 15.

113 *Die Walküre* III/iii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 184).

114 Baileyshea, "The Struggle for Orchestral Control," 16.

Siegfried does not use any comparable strategy in his discourse with Wotan. His use of leitmotifs in the scene is comparatively restricted, limited to leitmotifs of which he is aware. Since these fall mostly into the category of tangible phenomena—the pounding of the smith's hammer, the Sword motive, the lumbering Dragon theme, and the chirping song of the Forest Bird—they are less likely to produce a persuasive or psychological effect. Interestingly, Wotan's questions to Siegfried, like Brünnhilde's to Wotan, invite reflection on past events. Siegfried, however, takes no time for reflection: he answers the questions he can and angrily brushes past those he cannot. His music, moreover, is as brutal as his dialogue. Siegfried's occasional seizure of the orchestra is not subtle, nor does he attempt to use the orchestra in a rhetorical way. Instead, he simply dissolves Wotan's motivic activity into frenzied banter, questioning the meaning of the leitmotifs he fails to recognize as little as he questions Wotan's cryptic statements about his identity.

Through her use of rhetorical and musical arguments, Brünnhilde accomplishes her goal of persuading Wotan to lessen his punishment: with a tender farewell he surrounds her mountain with fire in order to frighten off all but the bravest of heroes. By contrast, it is Wotan's goal, not Siegfried's, that is accomplished in *Siegfried* Act III, Scene ii. In his guise of the Wanderer, Wotan goads the young hero into the necessary action of breaking the rune-laden spear. Wotan's mastery of the scene is both textual and orchestral, built around a series of escalating questions and threats backed by increasing orchestral energy that together draw Siegfried toward what seems like the inevitable conclusion. In such a reading, Siegfried palpably lacks the insight that allows Brünnhilde to make independent choices, and the perceptive awareness with which she is able to

marshal orchestral forces to her aid. Brünnhilde seems to be the heroic figure, and Siegfried a mere pawn in the hands of the characters who shape the *Ring*'s trajectory.

Siegfried as a Duality of Man and Idea

Considering instead the duality of Siegfried the Man and Siegfried the Idea, suggested by the analysis of the dramatic and musical Siegfried in the second part of this thesis, yet another reading of Act III, Scene ii emerges. This one plays Siegfried's obvious onstage success, the power of action represented by Siegfried the Man, against Wotan's deeper success, the furthering of his plan to deliver Siegfried and the ring to Brünnhilde. In short, the independent actions of Siegfried the Man fall into place with the destiny ordained for Siegfried the Idea at the end of *Die Walküre*.

As I have suggested above, Siegfried only uses leitmotifs associated with objects and actions directly related to his own experience during the first section of the scene's dialogue. This may be a conscious choice on Siegfried's part, but it may also result from his ignorance: put simply, he cannot use leitmotifs that he does not know. Siegfried can easily gather musical support for his narrative up to the limits of his knowledge, but once Wotan seems to be wandering beyond those limits with his questions and remarks, Siegfried becomes upset and defensive. In doing so, he conjures up the leitmotif associated with Volsung sorrow and empathy (Fig. 14).

There might be many interpretive explanations for this appearance of the Volsung motive; in keeping with the two-sided nature of my analysis I offer a two-sided solution. It seems likely that Siegfried hears the motive in the orchestra, since the general affect of

the moment reflects his indignation instead of laughing along with Wotan. Furthermore, Siegfried has already demonstrated an instinctive connection to another of the Volsung motives (Fig. 3). Searching for a connection with a companion like himself but affronted by Wotan's laughter, Siegfried feels the longing for kinship and thereby instinctively senses the motive associated with the sorrow and empathy within that familial bond. He does not, however, recognize Wotan as a relative.

Wotan, however, knows his relationship to the young hero—is, in fact, the patriarch of the clan that sired him. As such, the god is similarly attuned to the distress of the Volsung clan. His utterance at the beginning of the third section of the dialogue indicates this clearly: “Though I've always loved your radiant kind, my furious rage might also cause it dread.”¹¹⁵ He too feels the longing for kinship, but cannot embrace it because Siegfried is entirely outside his influence. The Volsung empathy motive, therefore, touches each character in a slightly different way. It remains present during the remainder of the scene, particularly in the moments leading up to the climactic clash of weapons (*S*, 278/4/3ff, esp. lower stave).

Siegfried's unceremonious trampling on Wotan's identity motives during the second section of the dialogue takes on a slightly different meaning if we consider his ignorance rather than his blithe naivete. His interruptions of the Valhalla motive result from a lack of knowledge about its connotations. To borrow Abbate's language, he simply cannot hear it. If he did, as Wotan suggests, he might behave differently: “If you but knew me, brave-hearted youth, you'd spare me this affront!”¹¹⁶ The bantering

¹¹⁵ *Siegfried* III/ii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 262).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

transformation of the Valhalla motive after Wotan's first answer is not a willful, purposeful destruction of Wotan's identity, nor is it the trivializing laughter of a disrespectful child. It is a fundamental misunderstanding—a mis-hearing, perhaps—of what Wotan is communicating with his utterance. Siegfried admits to Brünnhilde in the following scene that he cannot understand anything that relates to the past,¹¹⁷ and the same is true here both in the words and in the music (see Fig. 20). Considering the musical utterance from a linguistic point of view, Siegfried repeats the first few pitches of the Valhalla motive as one might attempt to mimic the sounds of an unfamiliar language without knowing what those sounds mean. The hero hears the contour but not the import of the music as he hears the words but not the meaning of Wotan's utterance; his only interest in Wotan is whether or not he can point the way to the sleeping woman. He has no reason, and apparently no desire, to hear anything else.

Siegfried's actions, therefore, are free from any trace of Wotan's influence since he has no knowledge of who Wotan is or what he needs. Yet everything the free hero does in Act III, Scene ii is exactly in line with what Wotan desires. Siegfried the Man, independent agent of his own actions, furthers *without his knowledge* the overarching plan centered around Siegfried the Idea. This is certainly the case dramatically. Wagner wrote of this scene in a letter to August Röckel that “[Wotan] will, so to speak, not allow himself to be merely thrust aside; he chooses rather to fall before the conquering might of Siegfried ... in a sudden burst of passion the longing for victory overpowers him, a victory moreover which he admits could only have made him more miserable.”¹¹⁸ Wotan

117 *Siegfried* III/iii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 269).

118 Quoted in Coren, “The Texts of Wagner's 'Der junge Siegfried' and 'Siegfried,’” 24-5.

knew before Siegfried confronted him that his abdication of power was necessary for his redemption: he bequeathed the world he worked so hard to win to Siegfried and Brünnhilde at the end of his conversation with Erda in the previous scene.¹¹⁹ He knew also that all his threats would be useless against Siegfried, who would not fear the point of his spear—this much is evident from his closing words in *Die Walküre*, “He who fears my spear-point shall never pass through the fire!”¹²⁰ Pursuing these implications, Stewart Spencer reads the encounter as a proving ground for Siegfried, engineered by Wotan as a way of confirming the younger man's ability to act as an independent agent.¹²¹ It is as if Wotan were subtly manipulating Siegfried, deliberately testing his heroic mettle with questions and guiding Siegfried's somewhat predictable responses with his threats.

In his tonal analysis of *Siegfried*, Patrick McCreless suggests that Wotan is in control of Act III, Scene ii. According to McCreless, the dominating tonality is the area of C, the same as Wotan's earlier Wanderer scene with Mime.¹²² McCreless associates the key of C with Wotan's plans for the world: it controls not only the two comparable question-and-answer scenes in the opera but is the key that closes the work, an outcome that the god not only desires, but actively encourages.¹²³ It is also the usual key of the Sword motive, which in its broader context refers to Wotan's Grand Idea—the same plan for redemption. Musically, therefore, Wotan controls the terrain over which the

119 *Siegfried* III/i (see Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 258).

120 *Die Walküre* III/iii (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 191).

121 See endnote 125 in Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 369.

122 Patrick McCreless, “Wagner's 'Siegfried,’” 187.

123 *Ibid.*, 189.

conversation ranges. Unlike the physical terrain, however, which he yields up to Siegfried after the clash of sword and spear, Wotan does *not* yield the musical terrain. As Siegfried's free, joyful actions throughout the final scene conform exactly to Wotan's prediction in Act III, Scene i, "Brünnhilde. . . the hero will lovingly waken,"¹²⁴ so too do they lead musically to the conclusion of the opera in the key of Wotan's plan for redemption.

With respect to this idea of associative key areas, the Idea motive performs an interesting maneuver toward the end of the Act III, Scene ii dialogue. It appears partially, as noted in Table 1, as Siegfried begins to be goaded into action. This is nothing new for the Idea motive, which is built to be fragmented and modified as Siegfried the Man behaves in concert with the governing destiny of Siegfried the Idea. In this instance its initial segment (marked 'a' in Figure 6) is given three times in succession, the initial dominant-tonic motion ascending each time by a semitone: B-flat to B-natural to C, the tonality of Wotan's master plan. In this way, the Idea fragment traces in a microcosm what McCreless sees as the trajectory of the whole opera: Siegfried's actions drawing inexorably closer to the completion of Wotan's plan.¹²⁵ In other words, the independent actions of Siegfried the Man align with the destiny of Siegfried the Idea, predicted at the end of *Die Walküre* and brought to fruition at the conclusion of the cycle.

124 *Siegfried* III/i (Spencer and Millington, ed., *Richard Wagner's Ring*, 258).

125 Patrick McCreless, "Wagner's 'Siegfried,'" 187. McCreless observes that Siegfried's utterances at the climax of the encounter occur in the key areas of both B and C, which keys are also juxtaposed at the end of the opera (page 357).

Figure 22: Siegfried Act III, Scene ii m. 715-722 (reduction)

Siegfried: "Get back, you braggart, yourself! There where the flames are burning, to Brünnhilde I must go!"

Wanderer: "If you're not afraid of the fire, my spear will bar your way for you!"

The musical score is a reduction for three parts: Tpt. in C, Sieg., and Wand. It consists of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 715-722, and the second system covers measures 723-724. The Tpt. in C part has dynamics *p*, *sf*, *p*, and *cresc.* The Sieg. part has dynamics *sf*, *mf*, and *f*. The Wand. part has dynamics *sf*, *mf*, and *f*. The lyrics are in German and English.

System 1 (Measures 715-722):

- Tpt. in C:** V-I in B-flat, *p*, *sf*, V-I in B, *p*, *cresc.*
- Sieg.:** *sf*, *mf*, *f*
- Wand.:** *sf*, *mf*, *f*

System 2 (Measures 723-724):

- Tpt. in C:** V-I in C, *sf*, *mf*, *cresc.*, *f*
- Sieg.:** *sf*, *mf*, *f*
- Wand.:** *sf*, *mf*, *f*

Lyrics:

Zu-rück, du Prah-ler, mit dir! Dort, wo die Brün-ste bren-nen, zu Brün-n-hil-de muss ich da-
 Fürch - test das Feu - er du nicht, so sper - re mein Speer dir den Weg!

Power, Hearing, and Control in the Realm of Opera

There is no satisfactory answer to the question “Who and what is Siegfried?”

Indeed, such a question is by its nature insufficient, because so many cultural, historical, temporal, and aesthetic factors play into any interpretation of Siegfried that the identity of the questioner becomes as important as that of the character. Any single reading of Siegfried seems glaringly insufficient: it is too easy simply to accept him as the archetypal glorious hero, but it is equally misleading to dismiss him altogether as a mere dramatic cipher.

Siegfried is not just a hero but also a victim, not only a free-willed agent but the unwitting agent of forces he knows nothing about. Paradox and contradiction in his musical and textual identities make it almost as difficult for the audience to figure him out as it is for Siegfried himself. In analyzing Siegfried as possessing a dual identity of Man and Idea, I suggest a view of his seeming inconsistencies and attempt to reconcile what on the surface might appear to be a disconnect with the dramatic depth of the *Ring*.

An interpretation of Siegfried as a character who always operates in duality emphasizes his interaction with other forces in the drama, which in turn draws upon ideas of self-awareness and shifting power dynamics. In this reading, Siegfried's physical prowess complements his dramatic naïveté, two apparently contradictory facets of his persona that put him in a position in which he claims physical supremacy over other characters while at the same time remaining vulnerable to their manipulation. Such a

duality is evident in the confrontation between Wotan and Siegfried, where the god's subtle ability to hear and control the orchestra indicates that whatever the physical outcome of the battle, his will wins out over the boisterous, orchestral deafness of the hero. This same inability to hear the orchestra underpins Siegfried's freedom from its influence: because he is mostly unaware of its deep network of associative units he behaves without reference to its commentary. A similar concept lies beneath his dramatic freedom in that his lack of knowledge about the loveless, law-laden world of the *Ring* allows him to act according to his own will. Dramatic and musical liberty come at a high price for Siegfried, however, and render him unique in the *Ring* as the only character whose success depends on his ability to succeed in two distinct spheres: as the ignorant hero, free from fear and unhindered by the curses and bargains that fetter his associates, and also as the ideal agent of the gods' redemption, whose actions provide the solution to Wotan's grand idea for the renewal of world.

Complexity in Siegfried's identity contributes to the interpretive richness of his character that allows for multiple readings of interactions like the Act III, Scene ii dialogue. In turn, musical concepts of hearing, recognizing, and controlling the orchestra that inform these varying viewpoints have far-reaching implications that may stretch into the realm of staging and performance. A portrayal of Siegfried's dramatic and musical duality might emphasize his alternate hearing and deafness, for instance, so that the performer visibly reacts to some music but not to all of it. Such a focus on awareness and identity is certainly not restricted to Siegfried, particularly in view of the complex relationships among many of the characters in the *Ring* who are bound up in the

seemingly inevitable trajectory of the plot. Considerations of power, hearing, and control also go well beyond the confines of the *Ring* to influence analysis of characterization, identity, and power dynamics in the operatic world at large.

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