

'Everything That Is, Ends!': The Genesis and Meaning of the Erda Episode in 'Das Rheingold'

Author(s): Warren Darcy

Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 129, No. 1747 (Sep., 1988), pp. 443-447

Published by: Musical Times Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/965662>

Accessed: 08-11-2017 00:37 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*Musical Times Publications Ltd.* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times*

# ‘Everything that is, ends!’

*The genesis and meaning of the Erda episode in ‘Das Rheingold’*

Warren Darcy

‘Mark well my new poem – it contains the beginning and the end of the world!’ (‘Beachte wohl meine neue Dichtung – sie enthält der Welt Anfang und Untergang!’). Thus wrote Wagner to Liszt in February 1853, shortly after completing the text of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Within such a framework – the birth, progressive deterioration and ultimate dissolution of a mythic world – Erda’s appearance in scene iv of *Das Rheingold* assumes pivotal significance. Musically, this episode recalls the *creatio ex nihilo* of the cycle’s opening, while both textually and musically it forecasts the concluding scene of cosmic destruction; reaching out in both directions across the temporal continuum, it simultaneously embraces the beginning and end of the entire drama. Yet many critics have found this crucial passage a source of great perplexity, a gross exemplification of the sort of dramatic inconsistency in which the *Ring* allegedly abounds. Why, they ask, do the gods ultimately perish even though Wotan heeds Erda’s warning and relinquishes the ring? If the gods are ineluctably doomed from the outset, what sense does her warning make at all? Robert Gutman goes so far as to claim that the Erda scene ‘is left over from an earlier draft and has no relationship to the revised *Ring*’, a judgment which, if true, would certainly cast doubt on Wagner’s ability as a dramatist.<sup>1</sup>

Admittedly, Wagner tinkered with this passage many times during the various stages of textual and musical composition, adding one key line – Erda’s *Weltuntergang* prophecy ‘Alles was ist, endet!’ (‘Everything that is, ends!’) – only while setting the text to music. The availability of his sketches and drafts in the Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung in Bayreuth allows us to analyse these alterations in more detail than was formerly possible. This essay traces the gradual evolution of the Erda scene through Wagner’s various prose and verse drafts and uses these findings as a basis for analysing the final version. Although a multi-layered work like the *Ring* is unlikely to yield to any single interpretation, a careful consideration of the documentary sources can at least suggest limits within which a convincing analysis might fall.

To say that Wagner conceived the text of the *Ring* ‘backwards’ is to over-simplify and distort an extremely complex process. The *Ring* poem evolved through several clearly demarcated stages, the first comprising the writing

of *Siegfried’s Tod*<sup>2</sup> (late 1848). Wagner’s usual procedure for constructing an opera libretto involved four distinct steps: a brief, succinct prose sketch (*Prosaskizze*); a more elaborate prose draft (*Prosaentwurf*); a verse draft (*Erstschrift des Textbuches*); and one or more fair copies of the poem (*Reinschriften des Textbuches*).<sup>3</sup> In the case of *Siegfried’s Tod*, the customary prose sketch was replaced by a lengthy ‘scenario’ (October 1848), in which Wagner outlined his entire reconstruction of the Nibelung myth; the verse draft and first fair copy followed in rapid succession. An early revision of *Siegfried’s Tod* necessitated a second fair copy; the hope of publication called forth yet a third. In August 1850 Wagner finally began setting the text to music, but broke off in the Prologue during the Siegfried – Brünnhilde scene; he then threw his energies into writing the long theoretical treatise *Oper und Drama*.

The creation of *Der junge Siegfried* (spring 1851) followed the usual four-step procedure, including an extra fair copy for Liszt. This second stage in the evolution of the *Ring* text terminated, like the first, in an abortive attempt at composing the music, followed by yet another lengthy essay, *Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde*. Although William Ashton Ellis hypothesized a second reworking of *Siegfried’s Tod* during summer 1851, the autographs contain no evidence of such a revision.

The remaining two dramas were conceived more or less simultaneously, the prose sketch and prose draft of *Das Rheingold* preceding their respective counterparts for *Die Walküre* (1851–2). The fourth and final stage involved revisions of *Der junge Siegfried* and *Siegfried’s Tod*, as well as the making of fair copies (late 1852). Wagner had 50 copies of the *Ring* poem printed at his own expense in February 1853; he used this printing while setting the text to music, making various changes during the process of composition. Because not all these textual changes were incorporated into the 1872 *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* imprint, the latter inhabits a rather nebulous ‘no man’s land’ somewhere between the 1853 printing and the version found in the musical score.

<sup>2</sup>Although Wagner dropped the apostrophe from the title in preparing the 1871 *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* version, it appears in all the textual MSS as well as the 1853 private imprint; I have therefore retained Wagner’s original spelling.

<sup>3</sup>The German terminology used to describe the MSS is that used by the *Wagner Werk-Verzeichnis (WWV): Verzeichnis der Musikalischen Werke Richard Wagners und ihrer Quellen*, ed. John Deathridge, Martin Geck and Egon Voss (Mainz, 1986); I have used English equivalents (not literal translations) of these terms.

<sup>1</sup>Richard Wagner: *the Man, his Mind, and his Music* (New York and London, 1968), 157

The draft of the 1848 ‘scenario’, entitled *Die Nibelungensage* (*Mythus*) (completed 4 October), begins with several dense paragraphs detailing the prehistory of *Siegfried’s Tod*. In the first paragraph, which Wagner ultimately expanded into *Das Rheingold*, we read that Wotan wished to withhold Alberich’s ring from the giants, but that ‘Wotan yields on the advice of the three women of fate (Norns), who warn him of the downfall of the gods themselves’ (‘Wodan weicht auf den Rath der drei Schicksalsfrauen (Nornen) die ihn vor dem Untergange der Götter selbst warnen’). This phrase – the origin of the Erda episode in *Das Rheingold* – is preceded by a sentence describing how Alberich cursed his ring, that ‘it should be the ruin of all who possess it’ (‘er soll das Verderben aller sein die ihn besitzen’). A causal connection is thus implied: if Wotan keeps the ring, the gods are doomed, but if he gives it up, they may somehow be saved.

The Norns’ warning to Wotan was, of course, not meant to be staged; the audience for *Siegfried’s Tod* would learn of it through Alberich’s narration to Hagen at the beginning of Act 2. However, it did find its scenic counterpart in an event intended for the third act: three mermaids with swans’ wings (the first version of the Rhinedaughters) warn Siegfried of the curse and implore him to cast away the ring. Here the causal connection is explicit: if Siegfried does not relinquish the ring, he will die this very day. Wagner thus establishes a dramatic parallelism between the three Norns (‘drei Schicksalsfrauen’) and the three Rhinedaughters (referred to in the scenario as ‘drei Meerfrauen’, ‘weissagende Töchter’), a parallelism that successive drafts are to emphasize and that will later have important musical consequences. Siegfried refuses, playing out his original role as the gods’ redeemer; his necessary defiance of the immortals reaches a climax with these words: ‘I know three women wiser than you, they know [the place] where one day the gods will do battle in anxious fear: it is to the gods’ advantage if they take care that I fight with them’ (‘Drei weisere Frauen, als ihr kenne ich, die wissen wo die Götter einst in banger Sorge streiten werden: zu der Götter Frommen ist es, wenn sie sorgen, dass ich dann mit ihnen kämpfe’).<sup>4</sup> The ‘three wiser women’ are clearly the Norns, and the place ‘where one day the gods will do battle in anxious fear’ is the plain of Wigrid where, according to Norse mythology, the final cosmic conflict of Ragnarök will one day be fought. How Siegfried happens to know of such matters is not altogether clear, but presumably they formed part of his lessons with Brünnhilde.

Both the *Poetic* and the *Prose Edda* contain vivid descriptions of the beginning and end of the world. Ragnarök was the final battle between the Norse gods and the powers of evil; it terminated in the annihilation of all combatants and the destruction of the world by fire and water, during

which the flames reached up to heaven. In the German translations available to Wagner, the term ‘Ragnarök’ was rendered as ‘Götterdämmerung’, the dusk or twilight of the gods. Although Wagner did not plan to dramatize this apocalypse, his early drafts for the *Ring* continually refer to it as a predestined future event. For example, in the prose draft of *Siegfried’s Tod* (completed 20 October 1848) Siegfried begins his defiance of the gods with the words: ‘Dämmert einst der Tag, wo auf jener Heide in Sorge sie die Helden schaaren’ (‘When the day dawns on which [the gods] anxiously assemble the heroes upon that plain’); here the reference to the Götterdämmerung is even more explicit, both in the wording – ‘Dämmert einst der Tag’<sup>5</sup> – and the reference to ‘jener Heide’ (‘that plain’, or Wigrid). Now, however, we learn that the gods are assembling heroes for the conflict, and that the Norns, wise though they may be, cannot predict its outcome; rather, Siegfried himself will determine the victory. Apparently, then, Wotan did avert the gods’ downfall by relinquishing the ring, for he set in motion a chain of events whereby the fearless, independent Siegfried first purges their guilt, then ascends after death to Valhalla, ready to lead Wotan’s heroes to victory in the battle of Ragnarök.

This interpretation is strengthened by Brünnhilde’s final apostrophe to Wotan. In the 1848 scenario, she first announces the liberation of the Nibelungs – as well as Alberich himself – from their bondage to the ring, then proclaims: ‘Nur Einer herrsche, Allvater! Herrlicher! Du!’ (‘One alone shall rule, All-father! Glorious one! Thou!’). The next line gave Wagner a bit of trouble: after first trying ‘dir führ’ ich heute’, then ‘dir führ’ ich zu’, and then ‘dir führ’ ich die ewige Stütze zu’, he finally hit upon the wording ‘dass ewig deine Macht sei, führ’ ich dir diesen zu’ (‘that thy power may be eternal, I bring this man to thee’). In both the prose and verse drafts of this passage, Brünnhilde refers to Siegfried as the ‘Bürge deiner ewigen Macht’ (‘guarantee of thy eternal might’) – presumably because of the decisive role he is destined to play in the battle of Ragnarök.

However, the 1848 scenario contains another line which appears at first to belie this triumphant conclusion. In the second paragraph, we read that the gods, seeing in mankind the capability for free will, seek to implant their divinity in men, and that ‘their goal would be achieved if they annihilated themselves in this human creation, that is, if they were forced to relinquish their immediate influence to the freedom of human consciousness’ (‘ihre Absicht würde erreicht sein, wenn sie in dieser Menschenschöpfung sich selbst vernichteten, nämlich in der Freiheit des menschlichen Bewusstseins ihres unmittelbaren Einflusses sich selbst begeben müssten’). The notion of ‘self-annihilation’ is here to be taken in a purely figurative sense and does not really conflict with Brünnhilde’s closing apostrophe, as Gutman and Carl Dahlhaus claim: although

<sup>4</sup>In the MS, Wagner originally followed ‘streiten werden:’ with the words ‘mit ihnen zu kämpfen ist mir beschieden, denn es ist’; he then crossed out this line, continuing with ‘zu der Götter Frommen...’.

<sup>5</sup>Wagner originally wrote ‘Naht einst der Tag’.

Paul Hermon's costume design for Erda for the new Royal Opera production of 'Das Rheingold'

the gods continue to rule nominally, humanity itself has attained complete selfconsciousness. The entire 1848 scenario thus recounts the transition from a primitive, repressive society to a free, morally conscious one; the prime mover in this process is Siegfried, who functions as a sort of Hegelian world-historical figure. Nevertheless, the scenario does introduce two thematic motifs – the gods' final battle and the gods' self-annihilation – which will reappear, in various guises, throughout successive drafts.

After revising *Siegfried's Tod* (presumably in December 1848) and making a second fair copy (*Drittschrift*), Wagner began tinkering with its triumphant ending. Crossing out Brünnhilde's final apostrophe to Wotan ('Nur Einer herrsche' etc), he made two marginal entries.<sup>6</sup> In the first, Brünnhilde proclaims 'blessed atonement' ('selige Sühnung') for the eternal gods and urges them to welcome Siegfried into their midst; Wagner here attempted to restore the notion of Siegfried as the gods' redeemer, a concept crucial to the 1848 scenario but somehow missing from both the prose draft and poem of *Siegfried's Tod*. In the second entry, added later, Brünnhilde announces that, because Siegfried has purged the gods' guilt, they will be spared 'the fearful battle for your ending might' ('der bange Kampf um eure endende Macht') – in other words, Ragnarök has been averted; but she also admonishes the gods to 'depart powerless' ('machtlos scheidet'), and 'fade away in bliss' ('erbleichet in Wonne') before Siegfried's deed; and she concludes by foretelling their 'blessed redemption in death' ('selige Todeserlösung') from their anxious fear. These marginal jottings show Wagner moving towards one of his favourite themes, that of spiritual redemption in the face of physical destruction. Even though the gods are fated to pass away, they may do so peacefully now that their human progeny Siegfried has expunged their guilt.

The condition of the third fair copy (*Vierterschrift*) of *Siegfried's Tod* (August 1850) makes it impossible to ascertain whether Wagner actually incorporated any of the new verses into Brünnhilde's final speech; because this manuscript was used for the 1852 revision, its final pages were replaced and are now missing. However, the notion of the gods' demise reappears in the first prose sketches for Act



3 of *Der junge Siegfried* (spring 1851). Here Wagner introduces, for the first time in the *Ring* drafts, the Wala or primordial wise woman.

For Act 3 scene i, Wagner drew on a poem in the *Poetic Edda* entitled *Vegtamskvida* or *Baldurs draumar*, in which Odin awakens a *volva* (German: *Wala*) and questions her about the fate of his favourite son Baldur. The prophetess predicts Baldur's murder and concludes, in Simrock's German translation, with the words 'Und der Götter Dämmerung verderbend einbricht' – in other words, Baldur's death will herald the end of the gods. The first prose sketch for *Der junge Siegfried* speaks of the 'end of the gods' ('götterende') and 'Wotan's decision' ('Wodan's entschluss'), a later one of the 'guilt of the gods' ('schuld der götter'), their 'necessary downfall' ('nothwendiger untergang') and 'self-annihilation' ('selbstvernichtung').<sup>7</sup> The notion that the gods will annihilate themselves, first alluded to in the 1848 scenario, is here resurfacing.

The prose draft (24 May – 1 June, 1851) of the encounter between Wotan and the Wala contains many features sub-

<sup>6</sup>This second fair copy is in a private collection, but a facsimile of the final page is in Otto Strobel: *Richard Wagner: Skizzen und Entwürfe zur Ring-Dichtung. Mit der Dichtung 'Der junge Siegfried'* (Munich, 1930), facing p. 58. Strobel assigned this MS to early 1849; however, because it is written in German script, it probably predates 18 December 1848, the day Wagner began to use Latin script (see letter to Eduard Devrient of that date). The verses in the right margin are usually assigned a much earlier date than those in the left, which some scholars (e.g. Carl Dahlhaus) have attempted to link with the conception of *Der junge Siegfried*. However, because both sets are written in German script, both might predate 18 December 1848 and were perhaps meant to be complementary, not mutually exclusive. In any case, the left-hand set represents only a provisional attempt at new verses, not their final form.

<sup>7</sup>At the same time Wagner began to use Latin script, he also started his practice of not capitalizing substantives.

sequently incorporated into the Erda episode of *Das Rheingold*: the goddess's eerie appearance, rising from the earth amid a darkening atmosphere, illuminated only by a blueish light; her proclamation of wisdom 'ich weiss wie alles war, ich weiss wie alles ist, wie alles sein wird, weiss ich auch' ('I know how everything was, I know how everything is, how everything shall be I also know'), words later transposed almost literally to *Das Rheingold* scene iv; and finally her mention of the Norns, whose parentage she does not yet claim. When the Wala foretells the end of the gods, Wotan himself links their downfall with the death of Baldur, as in the *Vegtamskvida*; Wagner later eliminated this motif, as most of Baldur's mythic qualities had been absorbed into the character of Siegfried, whose death in *Götterdämmerung* does indeed herald the destruction of the gods. The scene culminates in Wotan's announcement that he now wills the end of the gods and yields to the new generation: 'Vergehe das alte, das neue erblühe!' ('Let the old pass away, let the new flourish!'). However, it must be remembered that at this stage in the evolution of the *Ring*, Wotan has as yet no intention of burning down Valhalla; in the following scene, he genially yields place to Siegfried without a struggle. In a passage later excised from Act 3 scene iii, Brünnhilde tells Siegfried about Wotan's preparations for Ragnarök: the task of assembling heroes for the conflict has been assigned to the Valkyries.

In autumn 1851 Wagner wrote out brief prose sketches

for *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*. The first states that Wotan is 'warned' ('gewarnt') by an unnamed person to relinquish the ring. The second contains the statement that Wotan overpowered the Wala and begot Brünnhilde with her ('er habe die Wala bewältigt, und mit ihr eben diese Brünnhilde gezeugt'). A supplementary prose sketch jotted down later in a notebook (presumably early 1852) reveals that the Wala – not the Norns – warned Wotan; a second jotting for the first time gives her name as Erda (a rubric postulated by Jacob Grimm as the name of the ancient German earth goddess) and makes the conception of Brünnhilde follow as a direct result of this warning.

In the prose draft of *Das Rheingold* (23–31 March 1852) the outline of the Erda episode appropriates several elements from Act 3 scene i of *Der junge Siegfried*: the darkening of the stage, the blueish light, Erda's rising from the earth, her words 'was war, weiss ich, was sein wird weiss ich', and her reference to the Norns, who are now 'drei Töchter, urerschaffene' ('three daughters, primally-created'), a relationship hinted at in the *Poetic Edda*. But we also hear echoes of Siegfried's encounter with the Rhinedaughters: Erda's 'weiche, Wodan, weiche!' ('Yield, Wodan, yield!') recalls their 'Weich' aus! Weich' aus dem Fluche!' ('Avoid it! Avoid the curse!') while her 'Lass fahren den reif: . . . er weicht dich dem Verderben!' ('Give up the ring! . . . it dooms you to destruction!') reminds us of their 'Zu deinem Verderben/Wahrst du den Ring!' ('to your destruction you keep the ring!'). This parallelism is only one of many which Wagner deliberately created between *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried's Tod*.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Erda warns that the gods' end is slowly approaching ('langsam naht euch ein ende'), but that it will occur immediately if he does not give up the ring ('doch in jähem sturz ist es da, lässt du den ring nicht los!'). Apparently, Wotan can no longer prevent, but only forestall, the end of the gods.

In the prose draft for *Die Walküre* (17–26 May 1852), Wagner began to equate Alberich's threatened assault upon Valhalla (an attack that never occurs) with the dreaded battle of Ragnarök (an event Siegfried averts). Yet in a marginal note which was never versified, Wotan expresses his wish to annihilate all godhood by compressing it into a seed out of which might spring a free human being ('O könnte ich alles götterthum in einen samentropfen drängen, aus dem ein freier mensch entsprosse! so möchte ich das götterthum vernichten'); this picks up the theme of self-annihilation found in both the 1848 scenario and *Der junge Siegfried*. In his versification of *Die Walküre* (1 June–1 July 1852), Wagner pulled together some of these threads: in Act 2, Wotan explains to Brünnhilde that, after Erda warned him of the end, he sought more knowledge and learnt that if Alberich were to regain the ring, the dwarf would mount a victorious assault on Valhalla; he therefore begot the Valkyries,

<sup>8</sup>A discussion of these parallelisms may be found in my article 'The Pessimism of the Ring', *Opera Quarterly*, iv/2 (1986), 24–48.

## WAGNER VOCAL SCORES

*In German and in English*

Lohengrin	£15.00
Das Rheingold	£13.00
Siegfried	£15.00
Der Fliegende Holländer	£13.50

*From the catalogue of Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig*

1112

**FENTONE MUSIC LTD**

Fleming Road, Earlstrees, Corby

Northants NN17 2SN

Telephone: (0536) 60981 Fax No: (0536) 401075

whose task was to assemble heroes for this conflict. Wagner transferred the notion of self-annihilation to the conclusion of Wotan's monologue where, in a fit of self-disgust at his inability to create a free hero, the god longs for oblivion and abandons his world to Hagen – a dark counterpart of that moment in *Der junge Siegfried* when Wotan wills the end of the gods and bequeathes his world to Brünnhilde and Siegfried.

The verse draft of *Das Rheingold* (15 September – 3 November 1852) contains some interesting changes vis-à-vis the prose draft.<sup>9</sup> In the prose draft, Erda presumably appeared to all the gods ('Erda . . . steigt herauf'); she now appears only – or at least primarily – to Wotan ('von ihm beleuchtet wird Wodan plötzlich Erda sichtbar'). The *Verderben* which threatens Wotan is now described as 'rettungslos dunklem verderben' ('irretrievable dark perdition') and Erda herself as 'der ew'gen welt/Ur-Wala' ('the eternal world's primordial Wala'). Her three primally-conceived daughters communicate Erda's knowledge by night; the line 'was ich sehe,/sagen sie' ('what I see, they tell') was later changed to 'was ich sehe,/sagen dir nächtlich die Nornen' ('what I see, they tell you at night'). A passage urging Wotan to heed the Norns' advice was revised in the verse draft, then eliminated altogether in the fair copy, perhaps for reasons of dramatic economy. Erda's threefold exhortation 'höre!' ('Listen!') leads to and highlights her following lines, the climax of the entire episode. This crucial passage originally read: 'a gloomy day dawns for the gods: but your noble race will end in shame if you do not give up the ring!' ('Ein düstrer tag/dämmert den göttern:/in schmach doch endet/dein edles geschlecht,/lässt du den Reif nicht los!'). While setting the episode to music in January 1854, Wagner substituted these words: 'Everything that is, ends! A gloomy day dawns for the gods: I advise you, shun the ring!' ('Alles was ist, endet!/Ein düstrer Tag/dämmert den Göttern:/dir rath' ich, meide den Ring!'). In neither case can Wotan save himself or the other gods from destruction, only rescue them from a shameful end, from 'irretrievable dark perdition'. Erda's 'Alles was ist, endet!' now predicts not only a *Götteruntergang*, but an all-inclusive *Weltuntergang*.

After completing the verse draft of *Das Rheingold*, Wagner decided to destroy his mythic world in a final fiery holocaust. He entered as a marginal addition the last speech of Loge (originally spelt 'Loke'), wherein the trickster contemplates turning back into flame and consuming the gods; previously the poem contained precious little to connect this character with fire.<sup>10</sup> Wagner's revision of *Der junge Siegfried* (November – December 1852) drastically altered

the climax of the Wotan – Siegfried confrontation: Siegfried now destroys the god's power by shattering his spear. The new Norns scene for *Siegfried's Tod* (December 1852) describes how Wotan plans to torch Valhalla and immolate the gods; the persistent theme of self-annihilation here reaches its apotheosis. In the newly-written Waltraute scene, Brünnhilde's sister describes the gods gloomily awaiting an Armageddon that will never come. Clearly, Wagner conceptually divided the Norse Ragnarök into two separable components: the final cosmic battle (Alberich's assault upon Valhalla), which does not occur; and the destruction of earth by fire and water (during which the flames reach heaven) which now forms the drama's conclusion.

Having traced the textual genesis of the Erda episode, we are perhaps in a better position to understand its dramatic significance. Rising up unbidden like a voice from Wotan's subconscious, Erda apprises the god of his own mortality: he, along with everything that lives, is fated to pass away. With only a limited time at his disposal – not all eternity, as he had formerly thought – Wotan can save himself from 'irretrievable dark perdition' – from everlasting damnation – only by relinquishing the ring of power and atoning for his past behaviour. This will not spare him physical destruction – which he learns to accept and ultimately to embrace – but it will afford him spiritual salvation. The process is completed by Brünnhilde who, at the end of the revised tetralogy, has replaced Siegfried as the gods' redeemer: her self-sacrifice finally releases them from the burden of Alberich's curse. Wotan's words 'gäbe den Ring/sie wieder zurück,/von des Fluches Last/erlöst wär' Gott und Welt' ('if she gave the ring back [to the Rhinedaughters], god and world would be released from the burden of the curse') do not contradict the ending, as Gutman naively claims: Wotan and the gods are redeemed – are purged of their guilt and fear – even as Valhalla goes up in flames.

A consideration of Wagner's musical setting of the Erda episode lies beyond the scope of this article. However, it is hoped that the foregoing study has demonstrated the potential of Wagner's sketches and drafts as an aid to analysis and interpretation.

*This essay is based on research carried out at the Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung in Bayreuth (NA) from November 1986 to February 1987, supported by a grant from Oberlin College, USA; it forms part of a large-scale analytical study of 'Das Rheingold', currently in preparation. All textual citations are based on autographs in the NA. I am grateful to Dr Manfred Eger and Günter Fischer for allowing me to examine these MSS. An expanded version of this article, containing a discussion of the musical MSS and a transcription of the complete draft ('Gesamtentwurf') version of the Erda episode, appeared in the 1988 Bayreuth Festspielheft for 'Das Rheingold'.*

*The Royal Opera begins its new 'Ring' cycle with 'Das Rheingold', produced by Yuri Lyubimov and conducted by Bernard Haitink, at Covent Garden on 29 September.*

<sup>9</sup>A transcription of the verse draft version of the Erda episode may be found in the expanded version of this article published in the 1988 Bayreuth *Programmheft* for *Das Rheingold*.

<sup>10</sup>The passage towards the close of *Die Walküre* in which Wotan commands Loge to blaze up around Brünnhilde's rock was also an afterthought, as an examination of the final page of the verse draft reveals; perhaps this passage was added at the same time as the *Rheingold* insert.