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Author(s): Daniel Coren
Source: *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Summer, 1982), pp. 17-30
Published by: University of California Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/746228
Accessed: 08-11-2017 01:27 UTC

The Texts of Wagner's *Der junge Siegfried* and *Siegfried*

DANIEL COREN

On 10 May 1851 Wagner wrote in a letter to his friend Theodor Uhlig:

I have been plagued by an idea all winter, and have been so strongly inspired by it that I am now going to realize it [as a drama]. The idea concerns the lad who sets out to learn fear, but who is so dumb that he is not able to succeed. Imagine my astonishment when I suddenly realized that lad is none other than—the young Siegfried, who won the hoard and awakened Brünnhilde![1]

On the impetus of this insight, Wagner composed a new dramatic poem, *Der junge Siegfried,* intending it as an introduction to *Siegfrieds Tod,* the original version of *Götterdämmerung,* which he had written in 1848 and 1849. With his fresh vision of Siegfried before him, he was able to work with remarkable speed. He wrote some fragmentary prose sketches for the new drama early in May, an extended version by the end of the month, and had completed the entire poem by June 24th.[2]

Der junge Siegfried can in some respects be viewed as an expansion of *Der Nibelungen-Mythus als Entwurf zu einem Drama,* the orig-

[1] "Da hat mich nun . . . den ganzen Winter eine Idee geplagt, die mich kürzlich . . . als Eingebung so vollständig unterjocht hat, dass ich sie jetzt realisiren werde . . . . Es war dies der Bursche, der auszieht, 'um das Fürchten zu lernen,' und so dumm ist, es nie lernen zu wollen. Denke Dir meinen Schreck, als ich plötzlich erkenne, dass dieser Bursche niemand Anders ist, als—der junge Siegfried, der den Hort gewinnt und Brünnhilde erweckt!" Otto Strobel, *Richard Wagner: Skizzen und Entwurfe zur Ring-Dichtung* (Munich, 1930), p. 65.

[2] Ibid., pp. 63–69.

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inal prose scenario which had preceded *Siegfrieds Tod* in 1848. Siegfried's life in the forest with Mime, his forging of Nothung, his slaying of Fafner, his understanding of the Forest-Bird, and his winning of Brünnhilde—in short, all of Siegfried's mythological accomplishments—are contained in that brief scenario. On the simplest level, *Der junge Siegfried* makes explicit the impressive but unspecified dossier of heroic acts that Siegfried brings with him on his journey down the Rhine in *Siegfrieds Tod,* and the two poems together conform to Wagner's original idea of a grand opera centering around Siegfried.

In *Der junge Siegfried,* however, a new layer has been added to the mythological attributes that Wagner had ascribed to Siegfried in *Siegfrieds Tod.* In the new drama, Siegfried's concern with fear furnishes his heroism with a psychological depth it had not possessed before, and, as Wagner's letter to Uhlig indicates, Siegfried's deeds in themselves are now not as important as his motivation in performing them. *Der junge Siegfried*—like, eventually, *Siegfried* itself—is concerned with the development of the hero's psyche through his pursuit of the unknown. Ultimately this pursuit allowed Wagner to reveal his own perception of the intimate connection that exists between fear and sexual experience.

But *Der junge Siegfried* is not about Siegfried alone. Wotan, in his guise as the Wanderer, also appears in this poem—although there had been no mention of his presence in the portion of the *Nibelungen-Entwurf* concerning Siegfried. Compared with the noble and austere figure with whom we are familiar in *Siegfried,* the Wanderer in *Der junge Siegfried* is only tentatively sketched. However, his mere juxtaposition with Siegfried shows that in 1851 Wagner was already on his way to recasting some of his basic thought about the Nibelung material. In fact, immediately upon the completion of *Der junge Siegfried,* he felt the necessity of writing the poems for *Die Walküre* and *Das Rheingold,* and had completed them by the middle of 1852.

Walküre and *Rheingold* involved further penetration into the first few pages of the *Nibelungen-Entwurf,* or, from the point of view of a hypothetical audience for *Der junge Siegfried,* the unravelling of an obscure mass of mythological material that would have been presented only through narrative or oblique references. But in writing *Walküre* and *Rheingold,* Wagner did considerably more than expand what had been plot exposition into actual dramatic action. As he worked backwards through the cycle, he inevitably found that he had to create a more and more detailed mythological world. These details, in turn, furnished ideas that had not even occurred to him in writing *Der junge Siegfried,* but that became some of the most important features of the finished *Ring.*

After the *Walküre* and *Rheingold* poems had been written, *Der junge Siegfried* was necessarily subjected to extensive revision. Brünnhilde, Mime, Alberich, and Fafner had now acquired detailed past histories, and their roles had to be adjusted accordingly. But most important of all, by this time the central focus of the *Ring* had shifted from Siegfried to Wotan: from 1852 on, Wagner saw the world he was creating more and more in terms of the god. When *Der junge Siegfried* was revised, Siegfried himself hardly changed, but the Wanderer became a far more complex character, and his scenes were changed much more radically than other portions of the drama. In *Der junge Siegfried,* the Wanderer is merely resigned, in a vague sort of way; this resignation is largely responsible for the unsubstantial impression he makes. But in *Siegfried,* after we have seen him in the two previous dramas, his quiet exterior covers tensions that must at last come to the surface. In the third act of *Siegfried,* Wotan becomes a paradoxical and powerful figure. His former passivity becomes an ecstatic willingness to abandon his powers, yet, despite this willingness, he allows himself to be drawn into combat with Siegfried.

Siegfried's words and actions are transposed directly from *Der junge Siegfried* with virtually no significant changes. One might at first be led to believe that there was simply no need for Wagner to alter the character who had crystallized in his mind so suddenly in May 1851. Wagner himself surely wanted to create this impression when, in 1854, while he was composing the music for *Rheingold,* he described Siegfried as "my ideal of the perfect human being, whose highest consciousness . . . can find expression only in the most actual living . . . of

the present."[3] But the subsequent history of Wagner's work on the *Ring* indicates that Siegfried may have remained as he had been in *Der junge Siegfried* not because he was entirely satisfactory, but because Wagner had begun to lose touch with him. It should be stressed that after 1851, Wagner devoted relatively little mental energy to the contents of the dramas in the *Ring* that concern Siegfried. By the time he had finished the music for *Walküre* in 1856, his work for the past four years had been almost exclusively devoted to the first half of the cycle. The composition of the music for *Rheingold* and *Walküre* had, after a start was made, been quite easy for him, and his musical language had operated with remarkable consistency over more than seven hours of music-drama. But the composition of the music for *Siegfried* proved to be a far more difficult task and when at length he reached the *Waldweben* scene in Act II, scene ii—the first scene in which Siegfried is alone on stage—Wagner's first impulse was to abandon the score.[4] In 1851, the Wanderer had been a shadowy figure in Siegfried's world. By 1857, it is Siegfried who is an intruder in a universe that clearly belongs to Wotan.

The circumstances surrounding the composition of Act II of *Siegfried* suggest that Wagner simply did not wish to deal with his hero as he circled back upon him with the new philosophical outlook and the new artistic powers he had acquired since 1851. The suspicion arises, in fact, that it was Wagner's inability to write even merely satisfactory music for his "perfect human being" that finally drove him to leave the *Ring* for Tristan. *Der junge Siegfried,* then, represents a critical and unstable stage in the development of the *Ring.* To compare it with the finished product, *Siegfried,* in the context of the entire cycle, is to see a significant portion of Wagner's intellectual development between 1851 and 1853.

[3]"Im Siegfried habe ich vielmehr den mir begreiflichen vollkommensten Menschen darzustellen gesucht, dessen höchstes Bewusstsein darin sich äussert, dass alles Bewusstsein immer nur in gegenwärtigstem Leben und Handeln sich kundgiebt." *Briefe an August Röckel von Richard Wagner* (Leipzig, 1894), p. 39. The English translation is from Ernest Newman's *The Life of Richard Wagner,* vol. II (New York, 1937), p. 349.

II

In examining the revisions of *Der junge Siegfried,* it will be useful to designate two broad categories of material. First, there are the revisions that Wagner might well have made even if he had not decided to expand the cycle from two to four poems; second, there are those made necessary by *Rheingold* and *Walküre.*

The first category involves, for the most part, manipulation of detail. While these manipulations at times become quite involved, they do not reflect the more profound philosophical changes that characterize the revision resulting from the growth of the *Ring* cycle beyond *Der junge Siegfried.* It should also be made clear at the outset that substantial portions of *Der junge Siegfried* remain unchanged in *Siegfried*—in general, scenes involving Siegfried himself. For example, two extremely important scenes, the *Waldweben* sequence in Act II, scene ii, and almost all of the love-scene after Brünnhilde's awakening in Act III, scene iii, were not rewritten.

The passage shown on page 20, the opening of Act III, scene i, the Wotan–Erda scene, illustrates revision of the first type. The differences between the two poems are italicized for the reader's convenience.

In both versions, the structure of the poetry and its meaning are essentially the same. Revisions like this occur often enough throughout the two poems, though Wagner rarely dwelt on poetic details in as finicky a way as he did here. However, it makes sense that he should have taken special care with this particular passage. It is the opening of a scene which Wagner had come to see as crucial for the total drama—a scene whose continuation he had to modify in a much more radical fashion, as we shall see.

The changes in Act I concerning the subject of fear present a more complex example of our first category of revision. In his *Life of Richard Wagner* and *The Wagner Operas,* Ernest Newman incorrectly gives the impression that these revisions are the most extensive ones in the entire reworking process.[5] Newman does

[4]Curt von Westernhagen, *The Forging of the "Ring,"* trans. Arnold and Mary Whittall (London, 1976), p. 152.
[5]Newman, II, pp. 330–42.

Der junge Siegfried	*Siegfried*
Wache! *Wache!*	Wache! Wache! (score: "Wache, Wala")
Wala, erwache!	Wala, erwach'!
aus langem schlafe	Aus langem Schlaf
weck' ich dich schlummernde *wach!*	weck' ich dich Schlummernde *auf.*
Ich rufe dich auf,	Ich rufe dich auf:
herauf! herauf!	Herauf! Herauf!
aus *bereifter* gruft	Aus *nebliger* Gruft,
aus *nächtlichem* grunde herauf!	Aus *nächtigem* Grunde herauf!
Wala! Wala!	*Erda! Erda!*
weisestes weib!	*Ewiges* Weib!
aus heimischer tiefe	Aus heimischer Tiefe
hebe dich auf!	*tauche zur Höh'!*
dein wecklied sing'ich *hier,*	Dein Wecklied sing' ich,
dass *aus dem schlaf* du erwach'st!	dass du *erwachest;*
Urweltweise, (Strobel has "Unweltweise")	
mutter des wissen's!	
aus sinnendem schlafe	aus sinnendem Schlafe
sing' ich dich wach.	*weck' ich dich auf.*
Allwissende!	Allwissende!
Mutterweise!	*Urweltweise!*
weihliches weib!	*Erda! Erda!*
Wache! *Wache!*	*Ewiges* weib!
Wala! Wala! erwache! (p. 168).[6]	*Wache, du* Wala, erwache!

not seem to have understood from the letter to Uhlig cited above that Siegfried's inability to learn fear was already at the heart of Wagner's conception of *Der junge Siegfried*—that this, in fact, is what moved him to write the drama in the first place. However, Wagner did have difficulty in deciding just where and how the idea should be introduced.

As it stands today, the first act is one great gesture toward the final forging scene, scene iii. In *Der junge Siegfried,* on the other hand, much of this impetus is lost because of the treatment of fear. Siegfried's ignorance of this emotion and the question of making him a suitable weapon are treated as two independent ideas, so that much of the discussion of whether or not Siegfried knows fear seems irrelevant. But by 1852, Wagner understood what was needed to bring the act into focus. In the middle of *Siegfried,* Act I, the Wanderer announces—as he had not done in *Der junge Siegfried*—that "only he who knows no fear" may reforge Nothung. Thus the entire act in the final version is built around Siegfried's central mythological quality: he forges Nothung *because* he has never been afraid, and he goes on to pass through the fire around Brünnhilde's rock for the same reason.

Here are the details of the revision. The first scene of the drama in both versions explores the relationship between Mime and Siegfried. We are to gather that what is seen on the stage represents a perpetual situation; Siegfried, who is fun-loving, honest, and brave, has all his life endured Mime, who is hypocritical, cowardly, and repulsive. But on this particular occasion Siegfried achieves a major breakthrough: he forces Mime, first through embarrassing questions and then through threats of physical vio-

[6]At the same time that he wrote *Der junge Siegfried,* Wagner affected the mannerism of not capitalizing German nouns. *Der junge Siegfried* is contained, in its entirety, in Strobel's *Skizzen und Entwurfe zur Ring-Dichtung,* a study that is an essential tool for anyone who wishes to study the history of the *Ring* in detail. (Page references from *Der junge Siegfried* in this article are to this book.) Strobel reconstructs the growth of the text of the cycle from the *Nibelungen-Entwurf* to its first printing in 1853; the facts of the process are presented clearly and in great detail. Strobel makes no attempt at critical analysis of his material, but without his admirable edition of *Der junge Siegfried,* such analysis would not be possible today.

lence, to do something he has never done before—to divulge some information about Siegfried's parentage. Along with this information, Siegfried is also shown the fragments of Nothung, which up to now have been Mime's private despair. Overjoyed at discovering that Mime is not his father, Siegfried resolves to flee the forest forever. Again, we may infer that Siegfried's plans to run away are a regular part of his and Mime's routine, as are his repeated involuntary returns to the cave. But this time, his threat carries more power than it has in the past, for the knowledge that Siegfried has just acquired gives psychological impetus to his hopes for freedom.

It is only at this point that the two versions of the poem diverge. In *Der junge Siegfried,* Mime suddenly senses that Siegfried might really be serious about leaving, and grasps for a device to keep his ward under his control. He arrests Siegfried's flight with the promise of more information about his mother, and tells him that his mother had instructed that

> Wenn einst mein kind erwächst,
> hüte den kühnen im wald!
> Die welt ist tückisch und falsch,
> dem thör'gen stellt sie fallen:
> nur wer das fürchten gelernt,
> mag dort sich leidlich behüten (p. 113).

Predictably, this only strengthens Siegfried's resolve. He is determined to learn about *das Fürchten,* and will venture into the world in any case. As he leaves, he demands that Mime repair the sword fragments for him. In this context, Siegfried's demand seems to be basically a practical one; if he is going out into the world, he will do well to heed his mother's posthumous advice and acquire a weapon. At last, after this by-play, he runs into the forest, leaving Mime to indulge in a long, self-pitying monologue about his difficulties with Siegfried.[7]

In *Siegfried,* the hero makes his exit on the first attempt. He now charges Mime with the task of forging Nothung only once, immediately after he is shown its fragments, saying *"dann schwing' ich mein rechtes Schwert!"* In demanding the sword, he is acting more consistently with his heroic role than he had in *Der junge Siegfried.* Whereas in the earlier poem he needed the sword at least in part because of his ignorance, now he simply deems it fitting to wield the weapon that had been carried earlier by his father. Mime's succeeding monologue is now considerably shortened; he is no longer allowed to dominate the end of the scene. Fear has not even been mentioned.

For *Siegfried,* the introduction of the idea of fear has been put off to a more suitable point in the act, to the climactic moment of the riddle-game that the Wanderer plays with Mime in the following scene, Act I, scene ii. It is the Wanderer, and not Mime, who introduces the subject. When Mime cannot answer the crucial question as to who is capable of forging the sword, the Wanderer replies with a prophecy: "Nur wer das Fürchten / nie erfuhr, / schmiedet Nothung neu." At the parallel place in *Der junge Siegfried,* the Wanderer had not mentioned fear at all, and had spoken more directly: "nur Siegfried selbst / schmiedet sein schwert" (p. 127). After the prophecy in *Siegfried,* there is a clear connection between Siegfried's innate bravery and his ability to forge the sword. Furthermore, at the point where fear is first mentioned in *Der junge Siegfried,* the audience, like Siegfried, would probably be growing quite eager for the long scene to end; now fear is mentioned at what is clearly a dramatic climax. It is also far more satisfying to have the idea come from the character most detached from the action in the drama, Wotan, than from the narrow, self-centered viewpoint of Mime.[8]

In *Der junge Siegfried,* when Siegfried returns to oversee Mime's work on Nothung, Mime, "having learned from the Wanderer that it is Siegfried who will forge the sword, . . . sees

[7]Strobel, pp. 116–17.

[8]In fact, Wotan first introduces the idea with his closing words in *Walküre* (written in 1852): "Wer meines Speeres / Spitze fürchtet, /Durchschreite das Feuer nie!" At this point, the workings of Wagner's mind become hard to follow. Strobel notes that Wodan's prophecy in *Der junge Siegfried* still appeared in the private printing of the *Ring* poem of 1853, and was not corrected to its final form in the first public edition of 1863. This was probably a simple oversight on Wagner's part, for Mime's attitude during the remainder of the act in *Siegfried* depends on Wotan's words in their final form.

clearly and delightedly what now remains for him to do."[9] He suggests the educational value of a trip to Fafner's cave; Siegfried, still eager to learn about fear, readily agrees. Mime now tells him what he has learned from the Wanderer—that Siegfried must forge his own sword—and the boy sets to work. Mime, already planning how to dispose of Siegfried after the dragon is slain, gloats over his own cleverness.

The corresponding scene in *Siegfried* has the same outcome, but is psychologically much more convincing. Now that Mime has learned that his head will be forfeit to the fulfiller of Wotan's prophecy, Siegfried's acquaintance with fear—something he had never thought about before, in this version of the drama—suddenly becomes a matter of life or death for him. He immediately brings the subject up when Siegfried returns, and describes fear in the hope that Siegfried may prove to be familiar with the experience. Of course Siegfried is not; but the emotion that Mime describes is so exciting that Siegfried cannot wait to have a taste of it himself:

Sonderlich seltsam
muss das sein!. . .
gern begehr' ich das Bangen,
sehnend verlangt mich's der Lust!

When Mime had described fear in *Der junge Siegfried* before the Wanderer scene, Siegfried had simply admitted it was outside his experience;[10] he was prepared to learn about it because Mime told him that it was a necessary part of his education. In *Siegfried,* again acting more like a hero than he had in *Der junge Siegfried,* he avidly desires fear because the experience itself sounds so inviting.

Mime promises that Siegfried can satisfy his curiosity at Fafner's cave, but he still despairs of forging the sword; whereupon Siegfried, now without any prompting from Mime, eagerly takes on the task himself. Seeing that Siegfried will succeed, Mime is at first terrified, as he has good reason to be, but then reassures himself with the hastily formulated plan to dispose of Siegfried. It is the same plan that Mime had developed in *Der junge Siegfried,* but here it is conceived as a desperate rationalization, whereas in the earlier poem it had been part of a carefully (and rather artificially) prepared scheme.

Both the subject of fear and Mime's character are treated more convincingly in *Siegfried,* then—Ernest Newman to the contrary notwithstanding. "All this hangs together with perfect consistency in *Young Siegfried.* In *Siegfried,* however, it becomes less clear," says Newman; when Wagner shortened Siegfried's and Mime's dialogue at the end of scene i, "we thus lose the vital explanation of *why* Mime had brought Siegfried up in ignorance of fear—so that he might be the more capable of killing Fafner."[11] This betrays a lack of understanding both of Wagner's grasp of Mime's character and, indeed, of human psychology in general. Newman wants us to believe that Siegfried is ignorant of fear because Mime had consciously chosen *not* to teach it to him. But in the final version, it is made clear that Siegfried's ignorance is an innate quality; Mime is deluding himself when he thinks that he might have been able to instill cowardice in Siegfried if only he had thought of it before the Wanderer's visit.[12] In his rewriting of the poem Wagner showed an intuitive understanding of what has since become explicitly stated psychological theory: that an individual, especially one who lives in Mime's sort of psychic isolation, may very well be unaware of the most basic features of his own personality. Mime's behavior throughout the first scenes makes it obvious that his entire existence is based on fear. His natural reaction to Siegfried's presence is uneasiness, and his initial reaction to the Wanderer verges on paranoia. It is psychologically very just, then, that Mime should not think of fear in abstract terms until the Wanderer suggests the concept to him.

[9]Newman, II, p. 339.
[10]Strobel, p. 114.

[11]Newman, II, p. 333.
[12]In *Siegfried,* Mime says:
Doch das liess ich dem Kinde zu lehren;
Ich dummer vergass
was einzig gut.
Liebe zu mir
sollt' er lernen,
das gelang nun leider faul!
Wie bring' ich das Fürchten ihm bei?

In both versions of Act I, Mime tries to use fear as a way of holding Siegfried, as a way of sustaining the status quo of their relationship. But in *Der junge Siegfried* it is not used as anything more than a trick, a stopgap to preserve a deteriorating situation. Nor is Mime's life at stake; the only threat to him is that if he loses Siegfried, he also loses a chance at the hoard. In *Siegfried,* Mime must draw Siegfried into his own fear-ridden world and thus maintain their relationship, or he must lose his life. When he cannot succeed, he withdraws into the fantasy of his plan to murder Siegfried, a plan which the audience sees to be as obviously impossible as his hope to possess the ring.

III

Revisions of the second category, those that bear a direct relationship to *Rheingold* and *Walküre,* also vary in complexity. Sometimes they involve the simple removal of material that had become redundant; at other times they involve ideas which Wagner had barely thought of in 1851, and which now had to be worked into the context of *Siegfried,* often changing the essential character of crucial scenes. These changes are often deceptively simple, involving less intricate rearranging of detail than the revisions we have just examined. A stage direction is reworded, a few new sentences are added. But it is in examining these revisions that we encounter evidence of the remarkable metamorphosis in Wagner's thoughts about the *Ring* between 1851 and 1853.

An example that is at once striking and simple involves the excision of a long passage from *Der junge Siegfried* in Act III, scene iii, shortly after Siegfried has awakened Brünnhilde. Siegfried wonders if Brünnhilde is his mother, and in both versions of the text, Brünnhilde responds with a long explanation, the point of which is that she had read Wotan's thoughts all along, and knew intuitively that in defying him she was obeying his innermost desires.

In *Siegfried,* her meaning is quite clear against the background of *Walküre,* but in *Der junge Siegfried* it is obscure, even though in the previous scene with Erda, Wotan had briefly alluded to Brünnhilde's disobedience and punishment. So in *Der junge Siegfried,* Siegfried would have been speaking for the audience as well as for himself when, puzzled, he asks for a continuation: "O rede, singe! / . . .sag' mir du, hehre, / wie ich noch nie gehört!" (p. 185).

Brünnhilde obliges with a long narrative, even longer than Waltraute's tale in *Götterdämmerung.*[13] It presents the material of *Walküre* in a compressed yet remarkably thorough and lucid fashion. To anyone who knows the scene as it now exists, such a narrative might well seem a dramatic disaster, but one should not be too hasty in judging what its effect might have been in *Der junge Siegfried.* Here, Brünnhilde is as much a stranger to us as she is to Siegfried; we know that she has been punished by Wotan and imprisoned in the fire, but she conspicuously lacks the richly developed character she was later to acquire in *Walküre;* something more is demanded of her than that she simply wake up and plunge into the final love-scene. Apparently Wagner's aim was to intensify this moment by illuminating its mythological background with the greatest brightness and clarity it had enjoyed so far in *Der junge Siegfried.* Characteristically, he believed that the intrinsic interest of his mythological material alone could add depth to any situation. And in making Siegfried respond, "Nie vernahm mein ohr / solch edlen schall," Wagner indicates that he was also counting on his musical powers to be at their very best here.

In the revision, Wagner apparently decided that Brünnhilde's narration, no matter how exalted its mythological content, would fatally dilute the intensity of Siegfried and Brünnhilde's confrontation. Anyhow, the audience now knew the material. Filling in the hole where the narration had stood was a simple task: Wagner compressed Siegfried's words before and after the narration into a single statement. In *Der junge Siegfried,* the hero responded to the long story that was to become *Walküre* with confused interest:

[13]Ibid., p. 185–88. As Robert Bailey points out, Waltraute's narration did not exist in 1851. "In the original versions of *Siegfrieds Tod,* he had planned to have all the Valkyries come to Brünnhilde in the third scene of Act I to plead with her to give up the ring. . . ." "Wagner's Musical Sketches for *Siegfrieds Tod,*" in *Studies in Music History: Essays for Oliver Strunk,* ed. H. S. Powers (Princeton, 1968), p. 464.

Hast du mir träume gemeldet?
ich träume, da ich dich höre!
deines auges leuchten
seh' ich licht—
deines athem's wehen
fühl' ich warm—
deiner stimme singen
hör' ich süss—
doch was mir dein sang vertraut
das—träume ich nur (p. 188).

But in *Siegfried,* he neither understands nor cares about anything Brünnhilde may have to say, no matter how astonishing it may be to him. After her speech beginning "O Siegfried! Siegfried! Siegendes Licht!," the hero cuts her off with three rather abrupt lines: "Wie Wunder tönt / was wonnig du sing'st; / doch dunkel dünkt mich der Sinn," and then continues with a close paraphrase of the text just cited above, though with a new addition: "Nicht kann ich das Ferne / sinnig erfassen, / wenn alle Sinnen / dich nur sehen und fühlen." From here on, there are virtually no changes between *Der junge Siegfried* and *Siegfried.* The added four lines are not insignificant, however; they underline the single-minded sexual obsession that characterizes Siegfried for the remainder of the drama.

IV

There remain to be discussed the four scenes involving Wotan. These scenes involve far deeper changes between *Der junge Siegfried* and *Siegfried* than any of those already examined. While Wagner's ideas about Mime, Alberich, Brünnhilde, and Siegfried did not change significantly between the two poems, Wotan's character, as already mentioned, underwent a major transformation during the creation of the first two poems of the *Ring.*

Near the beginning of Act II in both *Der junge Siegfried* and *Siegfried,* Wotan says to Alberich: "Zu schauen kam ich, / nicht zu schaffen" (p. 139). And in the earlier poem, though not of course in the later one, he remains true to his word throughout the action.

Now, in the absence of *Rheingold* and *Walküre,* Wotan's withdrawal is a mythological axiom, like Siegfried's ignorance of fear. Wotan passes calmly through the world, never having to exert any effort to restrain himself from decisive action. This aspect of his character was still important to Wagner after the *Ring* poem had been complete for two years; on January 25th, 1854, in a letter to August Röckel, he wrote of Wotan: "After his farewell to Brünnhilde, Wotan is in all truth a departed spirit; true to his high resolve, he must now leave things alone, and renouncing all power over them, let them go as they will." There follows what is probably Wagner's best-known statement about Wotan:

For this reason, he is now only the "Wanderer." Look well at him, for in every point he resembles us. He represents the actual sum of the Intelligence of the Present, whereas Siegfried is the man greatly desired and longed for by us of the Future.[14]

But the Wotan of *Siegfried* is a great deal more complex than Wagner's original character. We have seen the force of the ring and the evil it breeds paralyze his world, and through his relationship with Brünnhilde we have experienced the pain of Wotan's personal involvement with universal problems. With his vast range of knowledge and experience, Wotan has a clarity of vision surpassing the insights of any other character in the drama; his knowledge is now even greater than that of the symbol of Knowing itself, Erda. This knowledge, this great store of unusable potential, makes Wotan into a figure of conflict, conflict that grows until it inevitably manifests itself in the final confrontation with Siegfried. As Wagner wrote in the same letter to Röckel:

Look at him in his juxtaposition to Siegfried in the third act. In presence of his impending destruction, the god has at last become so completely human that—contrary to his high resolve—there is once more a stirring of his ancient pride, brought about by his jealousy for Brünnhilde—his vulnerable point, as

[14] *Richard Wagner's Letters to August Roeckel,* trans. Eleanor C. Sellar, (London, 1897), p. 100. "Wodan ist nach dem Abschied von Brünnhilde in Wahrheit nur noch ein abgeschiedener Geist: seiner höchsten Absicht nach kann er nur noch gewähren lassen, es gehen lassen wie es geht, nirgends aber mehr bestimmt eingreifen: deswegen ist er nun auch 'Wanderer' geworden: sieh Dir ihn recht an! Er gleicht uns auf's Haar; er ist die Summe der Intelligenz der Gegenwart, wogegen Siegfried der von uns gewünschte, gewollte Mensch der Zukunft ist." *Briefe an August Röckel,* p. 38.

it has now become. He will, so to speak, not allow himself to be merely thrust aside; he chooses rather to fall before the conquering might of Siegfried. But this part is so little premeditated and intentional, that 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.[15]

In the present version of the drama, then, it is absolutely necessary that Siegfried defeat Wotan in combat; only in this way can Siegfried finally prove his mettle as the true hero. It is extraordinary that in *Der junge Siegfried,* when Wotan meets Siegfried at the base of Brünnhilde's rock, he uses nothing but words in attempting to sway Siegfried's course. Nowhere else in the drama is Wotan's passivity so manifest.

The beginning of the scene is the same in both versions. Wotan opens the conversation in a light tone, asking obvious questions about Siegfried's presence half in jest, and is amused by the boy's simplicity. But in *Der junge Siegfried,* Siegfried does not treat his grandfather with the rudeness that rouses Wotan in *Siegfried,* nor does Wotan lose his self-control when Siegfried becomes impatient to continue on his way. Siegfried is even instinctively attracted to the old man, and would in other circumstances have been glad to stay and chat with him:

Du bist mir zum lachen
ein lust'ger gesell!
Viel mehr als Mime
gefällst du mir auch! . . .

Freu' dich, liebe
und schwatze nach lust!
doch alles ein andermal!
jetzt ist mir nichts davon nütz'! (pp. 177–78).

When Siegfried is predictably unshaken by Wotan's description of the fire, the Wanderer cedes to him and simply fades away—literally:

Jetzt lerne das fürchten,
oder lerne es nie!
Hinein in das feuer,
wenn dir's gefällt!
Zieh' hin! ich halte dich nicht!
(Feuerwolken haben sich aus der höhe des hintergrundes mit wachsender helle herabgesenkt: . . . Des Wandrer's gestalt ist unsichtbar geworden.) (P. 180).

The later Wotan attempts to bar Siegfried's way with his spear; indeed it is difficult to imagine Wotan today without thinking of the massive weapon always in his grasp. Yet in 1851 the spear was of virtually no importance. In *Der junge Siegfried,* Wotan is described as carrying it with him into Mime's cave in Act I, but Wagner never refers to it again in the stage directions, nor does Wotan so much as mention its powers. As Wagner wrote the *Walküre* and *Rheingold* poems, the spear became an extremely powerful symbol. As Fasolt painstakingly recounts in *Rheingold,* Wotan's powers depend on treaties, and these treaties are contained in the runes etched on the spear's shaft. When Wotan brandishes it as a token of great decision,[16] he produces one of the most memorable (and blatant) musical ideas of the entire *Ring.* The spear is simultaneously a symbol of restraint embodied in law, and a literal weapon. In the finished *Ring,* it is an omnipresent reminder of Wotan's basic condition, a condition that combines irresistible strength and final impotence.

In one way or another, all the scenes involving Wotan can be seen to have been revised in terms of the spear. These scenes in their final form must be read with an especially vivid mental picture of the action on the stage, for although at first they seem similar to their counterparts in *Der junge Siegfried,* their character and their basic dramatic organization are often altered significantly by the presence of this object and the way Wotan handles it.

[15] *Letters to Roeckel,* pp. 101–02. "Sieh, wie er dem Siegfried im dritten Acte gegenüber steht! Er ist hier vor seinem Untergange so unwillkürlicher Mensch endlich, dass sich—gegen seine höchste Absicht—noch einmal der alte Stolz rührt, und zwar (wohlgemerkt!) aufgereizt durch—Eifersucht um Brünhilde; denn diese ist sein empfindlichster Fleck geworden. Er will sich gleichsam nicht nur so bei Seite schieben lassen, sondern fallen—besiegt werden: aber auch diess ist ihm so wenig absichtliches Spiel, dass er in schnell entflammter Leidenschaft sogar auf Sieg ausgeht, auf einen Sieg, der—wie er sagt—ihn nur noch elender machen müsste." *Briefe an August Röckel,* pp. 38–39.

[16] In *Rheingold,* scene iv, "After thinking deeply, Wotan rouses himself, seizes his spear and brandishes it as the sign of a bold decision."

The effects of the spear are strikingly evident in the Mime–Wotan scene, Act I, scene ii. In this scene, Wotan is greeted by Mime with extreme suspicion and hostility, but he nevertheless forces the dwarf into a test of knowledge. The game proceeds smoothly until Mime cannot tell Wotan who is to forge the fragments of Nothung, whereupon Wotan (as discussed above) pronounces his prophecy and departs.

Except for some minor editing, Mime's questions and Wotan's responses correspond in both versions up to Mime's third question, "welches geschlecht / wohnt auf wolkigen höh'n?" (p. 122). At this point we see the sort of intellectual recasting made necessary by the expansion of the cycle. In *Der junge Siegfried,* Wotan gives as an answer a rather mystic, abstract vision of Godhead:

Auf wolkigen höhen
wohnen hehr die götter,
Walhall heisst ihr saal.
der erde hirn
hat sie gezeugt,
licht und luft sie geboren.
Lichtalben
nennt man die leuchtenden;
Lichtalberich,
Wodan walthet der schaar.
Von ihm sprossen die helden
sein hauch ist geist
sein herz ihr muth.
Die nebelzwerge fing er
in ihrem eigenen netz:
die rauhen riesen zähmt' er
durch ihren eigenen neid:
aber die helden nährt er
mit ihrem eigenen muth.
So viel athem haucht er
aus seiner brust,
als die helden ihn selbst noch nicht athmen:
so viel geist giesst er
aus seinem hirn,
als die helden ihn noch nicht ergiessen:
nur ein auge
leuchtet an seinem haupt
weil am himmel das andre
als sonne den helden schon glänzt . . .
(pp. 122–23).

Already in *Der junge Siegfried,* Wotan is dependent upon military power in the form of a standing army of heroes. But the symbol that represents this sort of dependence—the spear—had not yet matured in Wagner's mind. In *Siegfried,* Wagner forgoes the detailed explanation of Wotan's characteristics. Instead, after compressing the first ten lines of the speech into six, he devotes the rest of his answer to the spear:

Aus der Welt-Esche
weihlichstem Aste
schuf er sich einen Schaft;
dorrt der Stamm,
nie verdirbt doch der Speer;
mit seiner Spitze
sperrt Wotan die Welt.
Heil'ger Verträge
Treuerunen
schnitt in den Schaft er ein.
Den Haft der Welt
hält in der Hand,
wer den Speer führt,
den Wotans Faust umspannt.
Ihm neigte sich
der Niblungen Heer;
der Riesen Gezücht
zähmte sein Rat:
ewig gehorchen sie alle
des Speeres starkem Heern.

By expressing what was abstract in *Der junge Siegfried* in terms of a concrete object in *Siegfried,* Wagner is able to articulate the riddlegame with a stage gesture: at the end of his answer, Wotan, "as if involuntarily, strikes the ground with his spear; a slight thunder is heard, which terrifies Mime." In a flash, the heart of the dramatic situation—Wotan's knowledge and apparent power against Mime's helpless fear—is captured in a visual tableau. Needless to say, this moment is also reinforced by the music.

The first scene of Act II again involves the spear; it also illustrates further the interaction between *Der junge Siegfried* and one of the subsequently written poems of the cycle, in this case *Rheingold.* Here Alberich confronts Wotan in the predawn darkness outside Fafner's lair. The essential feature of the scene—the contrast of Alberich's hate and obsession with Wotan's noble aloofness—was part of Wagner's conception from the beginning. Already in the extended prose sketch for *Der junge Siegfried,* Wagner described Alberich's state of mind alone outside the cave as the act opens:

Alberich—stretched out on the rock face—in gloomy thought. He nowhere finds peace. He feels himself bound as though by a spell to the vicinity of the powerful, sovereign ring, which the dragon now guards beneath his belly. Ha, this ring, which he once forged, this ring, which could regain for him the Nibelungs' minds and might—this obsesses his thoughts.[17]

The mood of this description is carried very successfully into Alberich's text in the opening of the scene, which is virtually identical in *Der junge Siegfried* and *Siegfried.* Against Alberich's monstrous desires, Wotan's stature as a neutral figure becomes greater than it had been in the scene with Mime in the previous act.

Until Wotan's significant words "Zu schauen kam ich, / nicht zu schaffen: / thue frei, wie's dir frommt!" (p. 139), the two poems run parallel. In *Der junge Siegfried,* Alberich responds by reminding Wotan of past events in a lengthy speech which summarizes much of the action of *Rheingold.* And indeed, part of Wotan's subsequent rejoinder was transposed bodily into that drama.[18] As it stands, the dialogue is effective in communicating the mood of the two characters, but it contains too much information in too short a time; the hypothetical audience for *Der junge Siegfried* would have been able to gather only that Alberich and Wotan were once involved in some sort of dispute about gold and a ring. There is a two-line reference to the Tarnhelm ("erst stahlst den tarnhelm, / dass täuschend ich nicht euch entschwänd' " (p. 140) which could not have been understood at all, since that object is not mentioned earlier in *Der junge Siegfried.*

Whereas Wagner could simply discard Brünnhilde's narration in Act III, scene iii, here he had to substitute new material for Alberich's speech, since it was necessary for the pacing of the scene that Wotan and Alberich talk at some length. Although Alberich repeats some information already known to the audience, he now uses it to reflect his knowledge of Wotan's present condition; he shows himself to be more perceptive than he had been in *Der junge Siegfried*:

Hab' Acht! Deine Kunst
kenne ich wohl;
doch wo du schwach bist,
blieb mir auch nicht verschwiegen.
Mit meinen Schätzen
zahltest du Schulden;
mein Ring lohnte
der Riesen Müh',
die deine Burg dir gebaut.
Was mit den Trotz'gen
einst du vertragen
des' Runen wahrt noch heut'
deines Speeres herrischer Schaft.
Nicht du darfst
was als Zoll du gezahlt,
dein Riesen wieder entreissen:
du selbst zerspelltest
deines Speeres Schaft:
in deiner Hand
der herrische Stab,
der starke zerstiebte wie Spreu!

Wotan replies with an entirely new statement:

Durch Vertrages Treue-Runen
band er dich
Bösen mir nicht:
dich beugt er mir durch seine Kraft;
zum Krieg drum wahr' ich ihn wohl.

Once again, new ideas are expressed in terms of the spear and its runes.

Wagner is at the very top of his poetic form here. The verse is dense, and its meaning comes forth in an indirect yet peculiarly forceful way. Note how the word "nicht," which is the focus of the passage because it is the transition between the idea of the spear as Law and

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[17]Strobel, pp. 77–78. "Alberich, an der felswand darnieder gestreckt, in düstrem sinnen. Nirgends findet er ruhe; hieher fühlt er sich gebannt, in die nähe des mächtigen herrscherreifes, den ein riesenwurm unter seinem bauche jetzt als sein eigen behütet. Ha, dieser ring, den er einst geschmiedet, dieser ring, der Nibelungen seele und macht, ihn wieder zu gewinnen,—das ist alles was er sinnen und trachten kann!"

[18]Wotan's answer in *Der junge Siegfried*:

Den ring nennst du
dein eigenstes eigen:
rasest du, schwarzer Albe?
nüchtern sag',
wem entnahmst du das gold,
daraus du den schimmernden schufst?
war's dein eigen
was du arger
der wassertiefe entwandtest?
bei des Rheines töchtern
hole dir rath,
ob sie ihr gold
dir zu eigen gaben
das du zum ring dir geraubt!

the spear as pure force, catches Alberich's thought and thrusts it back at him. This efficient mode of poetry is typical of the entire Wotan-Alberich scene, the remainder of which is very much as it was in *Der junge Siegfried.* It is one of the very few places in the *Ring,* perhaps, where the words themselves can stand alone as self-sufficient drama.[19]

IV

The Wotan–Erda scene which opens Act III contains what Wagner felt to be Wotan's finest moment in the cycle, for here the god reveals to Erda something that even she does not already know: that the end of their universe is at hand, and that he, Wotan, is willingly responsible for its downfall. At the climax of the scene, he relinquishes control over the future course of events with one ecstatic gesture. Only in rewriting *Der junge Siegfried* did Wagner make Wotan's renunciation the unequivocal focus of this dialogue.

Even before the scene really gets under way, the impression that Wotan makes in *Siegfried* is much stronger than it had been in the earlier poem. Once again it is the spear that is instrumental in effecting the change. Since the spear was not on Wagner's mind when he began the third act of *Der junge Siegfried,* his opening stage direction does not even specify that Wotan is still carrying it: "Vor einen grüftahnlichen höleneingange (sic) steht der Wanderer" (p. 168)—he stands before a cavernous mouth of a cave. In *Siegfried* he "strides resolutely to a vault-like cavernous opening in a rock in the foreground and stands there, leaning on his spear, while he calls the following towards the mouth of the cave." Not only does the Wanderer now carry his spear, he "strides resolutely" into the scene—which Wagner now imagines with photographic clarity of detail—-and plants the weapon on the ground with what has become an idiosyncratic gesture. (As one would expect, the presence of the spear has important musical effects here and elsewhere in the scene.)

The first half of the scene is essentially the same in both versions of the poem. Wotan summons Erda—we have already seen the two slightly different versions of his ritualistic invocation—and ceremoniously describes her powers. Erda recommends first the Norns, and then Brünnhilde as better sources of information, all the while showing greater and greater distress at being forced rudely from her eternal sleep. When she learns of Brünnhilde's punishment—something she had not known in her supposedly all-encompassing dreams—she experiences a wave of cosmic horror and attempts to sink back to her natural state with the cry "*schlaf verschliesse mein wissen*!"

So far the few revisions in the scene are minor ones, but from this point on Wagner made extensive changes. In *Siegfried,* the point of the scene is that Wotan all along intends to undermine Erda's supreme wisdom. But in *Der junge Siegfried,* Wodan speaks in a desperate tone completely uncharacteristic of the god as we now know him:

> Urmutter!
> Weises weib!
> Lass mich erst hören,
> welch ein loos
> den waltenden göttern du weisst?
> diess zu rathen rief ich dich wach! (p. 171)

Wodan seems genuinely to expect aid from Erda, and to the extent that his hope is geniune, his heroic resignation is diminished in stature. Erda, on her part, is diminished because her indignation continues unabated throughout a long interchange with Wodan which Wagner omitted later. In *Siegfried,* one feels that once she has been deprived of her knowledge, which is her primary mythological quality, her very being begins to dissolve. But in *Der junge Siegfried,* her continued anger makes her seem more like a rather ordinary woman caught off

[19]Wagner did make one sacrifice in rewriting the scene. In *Der junge Siegfried,* the dialogue contains one of the most vivid descriptions of the effects of the ring that Wagner ever wrote:

> Ewig und rein
> waren wir alle,
> ehe glühendes
> gold erglänzte,
> geschmiedet von schmähliger gier!
> was jedem taugte
> thaten alle:
> was andren schadet
> schafft nun jeder,
> würgend wüthet das gold! (pp. 141–42).

guard than a sort of Jungian symbol for the feminine side of being:

Irr sind die götter,
arg und taub,
thörig gesinnt
gegen sich selbst!
Sie rächen die schuld,
und in schuld geriethen sie alle!
sie schützen treue
und Untreue schirmt sie allein!—
was die götter wollen?—
was sie *nicht* wollen,
das müssen sie wollen,
das will ihre noth!
vergeh'n seh' ich die götter,
ihr ende dämmert mir auf!—
bist du berlehrt,
so lass' mich hinab! (pp. 171–72)

Note especially that here it is Erda who presents the idea of the gods willing their own destruction. The scene in *Siegfried* is built upon this being Wotan's own decision.

Most important of all in the omitted dialogue is Wodan's laborious explanation of the reasons for the gods' impending demise:

Um der seligen ende
sorgen die götter
seit der erfreuende sank
der im frieden siege schuf.
Was jeder wusste
das war sein wollen,
als strenge streitesnoth
mit macht noch den willen
zum müssen nicht zwang!—
doch da nun kampfnoth
kam in die welt,
seit nur Sieg
frieden noch schafft,
seit nun die sorge
sehrend erwuchs,
siegeszagen
die götter zehrt:
kannst du, weise, mir künden,
was – Wodan – will,
während andre willenlos sorgen? (p. 172).

This passage exemplifies Wagner's poetry at its most obscure. Even when deciphered, it makes no sense in the context of the finished *Ring* poem. Who is "*der erfreuende*" in line 3, and why did he die? The short answer is: Balder, another figure from the Eddas, "more or less analogous to Apollo in Greek mythology. In contrast to the symbol of evil, Loge, Balder is the god from whom all goodness springs. . . . The death of Balder is the foreshadowing of the end of the gods, and the dissolution of the universe."[20] Wagner mercifully chose to exclude Balder when he expanded the cycle to its final form; it would have entailed the inclusion of too much detail, even for him, and perhaps he felt it would only have weakened the poem to include a figure comparable to Wotan, even if he were mentioned only indirectly. However, the essential idea of this omitted material—the power of Wotan's will—is, in the end, the single concept that runs through the entire Wotan-Erda scene.

The concept is obviously the central one in the final version of the scene partly because of the way Wagner revised it, and also because of the new context it has in *Siegfried.* In *Der junge Siegfried,* the scene, at least on the simplest level, serves a functional purpose: Wodan's passive behavior and his mere presence in the drama need some sort of explanation. By the last act of *Siegfried,* however, Wotan's need for self-expression goes far deeper. In both poems, Wotan exists in a state of psychic isolation, though in *Der junge Siegfried,* the isolation would not be sensed by the audience, since there is no previous knowledge of Wotan's former doings. In *Siegfried,* one remembers that after Fricka had made him acknowledge the futility of his machinations in *Walküre,* he had been afforded the solace of baring his soul to Brünnhilde. After her betrayal, he is cut off from intellectual fulfillment as well as from the human relationship he had had with his favorite daughter.

Watching Wotan in the first two acts of *Siegfried,* one sees that he certainly cannot explain his position to Alberich, Mime, Fafner, or Siegfried—characters not in the least interested in philosophical discussion. His stature now demands that he be allowed a formal, public abdication. With Siegfried approaching, promising to satisfy his deepest desires through

[20]W. J. Henderson, *Richard Wagner, His Life and His Dramas* (New York, 1923), pp. 387–88. See also Deryck Cooke, *I Saw the World End* (London, 1979), pp. 239 and 241, for a succinct account of Balder's life.

none other than Brünnhilde, Wotan's acceptance of what is to come constitutes his own heroic deed.

This is the way Wagner saw the scene after the poem was completed. In the same important letter to Röckel that has been cited above, Wagner writes of the scene:

> The development of the whole poem sets forth the necessity of recognizing and yielding to the change, the many-sidedness, the multiplicity, the eternal renewing of reality and life. Wotan rises to the tragic height of *willing* his own destruction. This is the lesson that we have to learn from the history of mankind: to will what necessity imposes, and ourselves to bring it about.[21]

Wotan's willing of the inevitable produced what is surely the most important revision of this scene. It is perhaps the most significant single revision in all of the Siegfried poems. In writing the final version, Wagner added words to Wotan's closing speech in Act III, scene i, that had not existed in *Der junge Siegfried*:

Was in des Zwiespalts wildem Schmerze
verzweifelnd einst ich beschloss,
  froh und freudig
führe frei ich nun aus.

What in an hour of fiercest anguish
despairing once I resolved
  freely and gladly
I shall now bring to pass.

V

When Wagner made this revision, he was still sixteen years away from writing the music for Act III of *Siegfried*. Yet it is clear from his letter to Röckel that his thoughts about this particular passage had crystallized by the mid-1850s. One naturally wonders how clearly Wagner foresaw the crucial musical articulation that today marks this highly alliterative text—an articulation discussed with insight by Anthony Newcomb in a recent issue of this journal.[22] Indeed, one wonders how systematically connections can be drawn between the revisions of *Der junge Siegfried* and the musical material of *Siegfried*. This is a topic beyond the scope of the present discussion. However, this writer has attempted to demonstrate elsewhere that for the most part we can do little more than make educated guesses about Wagner's musical vision of the *Ring* in the early 1850s.[23] The musical history of the cycle is far more haphazard and problematical than its literary history.

[21] *Letters to Roeckel*, p. 97. "Der Fortgang des ganzen Gedichtes zeigt demnach die Nothwendigkeit, den Wechsel, die Mannigfaltigkeit, die Vielheit, die ewige Neuheit der Wirklichkeit und des Lebens anzuerkennen und ihr zu weichen. Wodan schwingt sich bis zu der tragischen Höhe, seinen Untergang—zu *wollen*. Dies ist Alles, was wir aus der Geschichte der Menschheit zu lernen haben: das Nothwendige zu wollen und selbst zu vollbringen." *Briefe an Röckel*, p. 36.

This statement sounds very much as if it were influenced by the writings of Schopenhauer, but Wagner wrote this letter nine months before he encountered the philosopher's works in September 1854.

[22] Anthony Newcomb, "The Birth of Music out of the Spirit of Drama," this journal 5 (1981), 38–66.

[23] Daniel Coren, "Inspiration and Calculation in the Genesis of Wagner's *Siegfried*," in *Studies in Musicology in Honor of Otto E. Albrecht*, ed. John W. Hill (Kassel, 1980), pp. 266–87.