Eva Rieger. 2011. *Richard Wagner's Women*. Translated by Chris Walton. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press.

Laurence Dreyfus. 2010. *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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The anniversary commemoration of great artistic figures would be incomplete without a survey of the scholarly landscape. So in the year of Richard Wagner's bicentenary, the publication of new books shows no sign of abating, and nor should it, when there is still so much to be said about this most controversial of composers. But many of the literary products that pass for Wagner scholarship are still beset by popular assumption, blind deference, and trite dismissal, imposing a dead weight that threatens to smother the critical spark that alone can do Wagner justice and demonstrate his startling relevance. It is in this spirit that the present article will individually review two recent publications on gender and sexuality in Wagner, and finally compare them and reflect on wider scholarly trends and possibilities.

In *Richard Wagner's Women*, an English translation by Chris Walton of *"Leuchtende Liebe, lachender Tod": Richard Wagners Bild der Frau im Spiegel seiner Musik* (2009), Eva Rieger offers one of the first "feminist" studies of Wagner's life and work. Specifically, Rieger assesses the dramatic function and characterization of both women and, to a lesser extent, "feminized" men in Wagner's operas, from *Das Liebesverbot* to *Parsifal*. The original German–language publication was warmly praised in a review, "Role Play," by Walton (2010), who evidently valued the study highly enough to bring it to a wider readership.

Rieger's main contribution is to show, as few have done before, that Wagner portrayed women as sacrificial victims on the altar of men's salvation. As if to justify this terrible fate, Rieger argues, women are depicted as negative stereotypes (i.e., inferior to men, merely decorative, and so on), above all in musical representation. *Richard Wagner's Women* interweaves biography and creative output, but it is the stage works primarily that plot the course of the book, which proceeds through Wagner's oeuvre in chronological order according to the date of first performance. Chapter 1 provides an exposition of the book's methodology of musical semantics based on *Affektenlehre* as well as theories of instrumentation and tonal symbolism—techniques that (Rieger claims) influenced Wagner's own innovative "musical language"; Chapter 2 ("From *Rienzi* to *Der fliegende Holländer*") discusses *Liebesverbot*

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as well as the two aforementioned operas; and thereafter at least one chapter is allotted to each of his subsequent stage works.

Wagner's relationship with women, Rieger recognizes, is ambiguous in a certain sense: he loved women, surrounded himself with them, and even depended on them to serve as muse to his creative genius or to sympathize with his struggles and ambitions as an artist; yet his artistic depiction of women appears to demonize the sex and to call for not just female sympathy with the flawed hero but also fidelity unto death and mortal sacrifice. Rieger does not state this doubling so explicitly, but is certainly one of the first to examine such ideas in Wagner from some kind of feminist perspective. Whether the book can account convincingly for such an apparently contradictory situation remains to be seen.

At first glance, the object of Rieger's study is virtually identical to that of Danish scholar Nila Parly's still more recent work, *Vocal Victories: Wagner's Female Characters from Senta to Kundry*, which "presents systematic analyses of and comparison between the leading female characters in Richard Wagner's operas, from Senta to Kundry" (2011: 9). While I do not intend to review Parly's book here, there is at least one salient distinction: Parly views Wagner's portrayal of women as essentially positive, on the grounds that "the singing voice bears considerably greater import in Wagner's operas than has traditionally been credited" (2011: 10). After Carolyn Abbate (1991; 2001) and—though he is not cited—Paul Robinson (2002), Parly sets greater store by the musical authority that Wagner's women wield, namely in the arena of vocal performativity. The music these women sing ultimately triumphs over the violent social reality it supposedly conceals, by virtue of an interpretation of Wagnerian aesthetics that takes into account bodies and the "physicality" of music (2011: 9). Whatever one makes of the argument, the very notion of music's ideological function in its potential to either condone or resist the woman's death is one that Rieger avoids confronting.

But given the unusually antagonistic stance of Rieger's study, it may be surprising to note that her thesis is predicated on the belief that "[t]he truly great Wagnerian theme is love, the mysteries of erotic and maternal fascination. In short: woman" (2). From the start, it is Rieger, not Wagner, who essentializes woman by equating her with "love." Accordingly, the only Wagnerian women that really interest Rieger are those that figure in the composer's love life. In Rieger's introduction ("Prelude"), she raises the question: "How did women experience Wagner?," intimating important ideas of esthetics and consumption (6–7). But the discussion is not pursued beyond these few pages, while details of Wagner reception or social history are thin on the ground.[1] The reader who expects to be informed about the role of female relatives, sponsors, or singers in Wagner's life and career will be disappointed.

So much for the "positive" acceptance of women in Wagner's life. Conversely, one should also ask what the themes of female sacrifice that so exercised Wagner's imagination really meant to him, a question Rieger somewhat sidesteps. High death rate among women is hardly exclusive to his operas and music dramas, for the demise of the leading lady has long been a ubiquitous feature of opera in general, as Catherine Clément demonstrated in *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (1988). Nonetheless, this idea entertained a special significance for Wagner that far exceeded the conventions of French and Italian opera of the early nineteenth century. The death of a woman in Wagner tends to take the form of self–sacrifice as an ethical act rather than as the tragic outcome of external circumstances. Furthermore, this moment should be understood dialectically: if a woman is a sacrificial victim, she is also a revolutionary agent. It is the damaged, bourgeois, male individual that stands in need of redemption by the supposedly unalienated, pure woman. Hence female sacrifice is only the second term in a Hegelian equation of double negatives, which begins with the man's own negativity and the rotten patriarchy that he represents. I am thinking here particularly of the Dutchman, Tristan, and Wotan.[2] In short, Rieger gives scant attention to both the heritage of female sacrifice in traditional opera and Wagner's novel reinterpretation of it.

The special significance Wagner attached to female sacrifice is not confined to his original works, for it also informs his 1847 arrangement of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*. It was this aspect, indeed, that attracted Wagner to the opera in the first place: Iphigenia is sacrificed by her father Agamemnon to appease the offended Artemis, who is withholding the winds that would let the Greeks' ships sail to Troy.[3] But Wagner still went out of his way to restore the elements of ritual sacrifice and collective interest according to Euripides's original drama, elements supposedly lost in Racine's tragedy upon which Du Roullet based his libretto for the 1774 opera. In particular, one of Wagner's most striking modifications to both the words and the music concerned Iphigenia's final aria "Leb' wohl!," from no. 26, in which she bids farewell to Achilles: Iphigenia attempts to console Achilles not with pathetic avowals of their eternal love in death, as in Gluck's original opera—part of what Wagner in *Mein Leben* called the "French taste that turned Achilles' relationship to Iphigenia into a sentimental love affair [*zu einer süßlichen Liebschaft*]" (Wagner 1987: 337, translation modified; Wagner 1923: 461)—but with the reminder that her death is a sacrifice for the greater good of the Greek army and ultimately for its victory in the Trojan war, and that he should welcome it for that reason. Thus, the roles Wagner gave to women were informed not just by operatic spectacle, but also by pre–modern ritual drama, which in turn tapped into his already pronounced Left–Hegelian leanings.

Of this notion of the woman as symbol of radical utopian purity, one particular aspect concerns the gendered indexing of nineteenth–century nationalist discourse. While Rieger asserts that the styles of French and Italian opera "seemed feminized to him [Wagner]" (141) compared with the masculine connotations of Germanness (101), the more intriguing notion that Wagner identified woman with German *Heimat* remains unexplored. This we see especially in the form of Senta—described by Wagner as a "very solid Nordic girl" (translated from Wagner 1911: 168)—and repeatedly in his correspondence with Minna, for instance in his letter sent from Zürich, dated May 29, 1849:

> You know, although I love freedom and boundlessness above all, traveling around the wide world simply does not suit me in the least: I must always know my home [*Heimat*]—and you alone, my dear wife, are this home to me. Wherever my love is, there is my home (translated from Wagner 1975: 63).

This is not just a metaphor of the woman as "home" *qua* interior bourgeois domesticity. As a political refugee with a price on his head, writing home to Dresden from Switzerland and preparing to leave for Paris the very next day, Wagner represented the wandering man (the wandering Jew) as opposed to the rooted woman. But like Germany in the aftermath of the failed uprising in Dresden of May 1849, the Ideal woman was merely that: an illusory object of desire and bitter nostalgia.

Perhaps the closest Wagner came to experiencing the Ideal woman was Mathilde Wesendonck, whose affair with the composer has long been the subject of sensationalist mythmaking. Alas one cannot fairly say that Rieger supplies any new critical insights in this area. For a start, Rieger repeats part of her discussion of Mathilde in the chapters on *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Walküre*, perhaps a hazardous by–product of the book's work–oriented structure. The real problem, however, lies in Rieger's claim that "the desire for [the consummation of their relationship] existed on both sides" (68) and that "Mathilde returned [Wagner's] love, despite all the difficulties involved" (70), which seriously overstates Mathilde's feelings for him. While Mathilde seems to have reciprocated with genuine affection, her role in the composition of *Tristan* was essentially that of the passive female muse—"not the generator of the lightening," as Ernest Newman once observed, "but merely the conductor of it" (1976: 524). Rieger positively obscures the facts with fanciful speculation: "It was surely not easy for her to deny him: Richard's mighty powers of persuasion had become almost compulsive, and she must have been barely able to resist him" (71).

Throughout her book Rieger takes pains—and with good reason—to stress the contribution of women in Wagner's life to the female characters he created. But nowhere does she challenge the ideology of the female muse; indeed, she appears to consider it a badge of feminist honor. Seemingly, the idea that "the creation of this great work [was] prompted by one woman alone" has been "too banal" for scholars to accept (71); in fact, the financial motivation for the conception of *Tristan* as a simple, easy–to–produce work in contrast to *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is a more banal explanation than Rieger's. And if in *Mein Leben* Wagner subsequently "play[ed] down the measure of his love for Mathilde" as a factor in the composition of *Tristan* (71), was it not simply to avoid arousing jealousy on the part of his wife and amanuensis Cosima, rather than to give the "false" impression that Wagner owed Mathilde less than everything for the existence of his best works?

Despite these possible limitations, the scope of Rieger's book is broader than the title (when read literally) suggests: the author considers musico–dramatic constructions of masculinity as well, and not just because constructions of femininity tend to be negatively determined, i.e., defined against the male as norm.[4] Some of her most valuable insights concern the portrayal of "feminized" men in Wagner's operas, namely Erik, Siegmund, Mime, Klingsor, and the dovetailing of misogynist and anti–Semitic stereotypes (137, 196, 215). But rather than see these figures as representative of a more complex construction of masculinity, she explains away their characterization as always already feminine while, conversely, examples of "strong" women such as Brünnhilde's Valkyrie persona are deemed inherently masculine. By assuming essentialism on the part of the object of study, Rieger may be constrained by the very misogyny she rejects. Although the greater portion of the book is devoted to women, one is tempted to suggest that a title such as *Richard Wagner's Men and Women* would have been both more accurate and more provocative.

While Rieger identifies in Wagner's stage works both positive and negative (though predominantly negative) characterizations of women, what remains unclear is Wagner's own commentary upon those characterizations, which may be either earnest or ironic (i.e., ideological or critical). As far as Rieger is concerned, any negative portrayal of women in Wagner's operas could only ever be a simple–minded affirmation of "this is the way it is," rather than "this is only the existing order of things which may be negated." Wagner's critique of the commodification of female sexuality in *Holländer* and in the *Ring* (think of Freia in *Das Rheingold* or Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung*), for example, is a point Rieger scarcely acknowledges, and then only grudgingly (40, 118).[5] Nor does Rieger contemplate the uglier flip–side: in the last scene of *Walküre*, Wotan, ostensibly in an act of mercy,

places Brünnhilde on a rock surrounded by phantasmagoric "magic fire," as if in a shop window for ready consumption, in effect introducing her into "the sphere of circulation that is reserved for women" (Harper–Scott 2011: 60–61). Furthermore, women in Wagner's stage works themselves prove to be detractors of the existing system that submits women to the logic of capitalist exchange. Rieger describes Fricka predictably as Wotan's hectoring bourgeois wife (125); but this prudish "guardian of marriage" also functions as the humane critic of Wotan's false consciousness, reminding him of the contradictions on which Valhalla was built and the human cost of his enterprise to create a free hero. Wagner's women assume a more radical function than Rieger gives them credit for.

It would be remiss of me not to draw attention to a few basic factual errors. Rieger probably meant 1848, not 1846, as the year in which Wagner "began his comprehensive study of mythology and of the sagas of the Germanic gods and heroes," after having "turned to several historical topics that seemed to him particularly suitable for operatic treatment" (105); in any case, Wagner continued to develop historical projects alongside mythological ones well after his self–styled rejection of history in favor of myth. The motif conventionally known as "world–inheritance" (*Welterbschaft*)[6]—though in rehearsal Wagner himself referred to it variously as a "redemption" theme, adding that it should sound like "the proclamation of a new religion" (Porges 1983: 103)—is re–christened "Siegfried love" without explanation (155). Moreover, a lack of attention to documentary evidence breeds platitudes, if not quite "factual" untruths. Rieger's passing remark that Wagner, especially in *Walküre*, "dr[e]w the music from the nature of the text itself" is a cliché of Wagnerian esthetics belied by instances in his actual working method (8).[7]

Finally, a few words about the translation. Walton has wisely avoided a literal rendering of the unwieldy German title with its quotation of the final words of Siegfried and Brünnhilde in the third act of *Siegfried*.[8] In other respects, however, his English translation is marred by numerous errors and infelicities which do not make Rieger's prose any more readable. There is the non–sentence—"The hunting chorus that really appealed to him."—which I can only assume to be an editorial lapse (21); the designation of *Siegfrieds Tod* as *große heroische Oper* should read "grand heroic opera," not "great heroic opera" (134); the translation of *geißelt* as "criticizes" is confusing in context of the sentence "Wagner criticizes [*geißelt*] those who engage with his work by means of their 'critical faculties' [*mit dem ‚kritischen Verstand'*]," whereas "lambasts" would have been a better alternative (2009: 41; 2011: 30); the titles of Wagner's prose works are presented inconsistently, with "Opera and Drama" and "On the Application of Music in Drama" (2011: 8), *Communication to My Friends* (30), and "Kunstwerk der Zukunft" ("Artwork

of the future") (33); and every so often there is the unconsciously humorous choice of word, e.g., "His feminine ideal straddled [*lag in der Mitte, zwischen*] the sinful and the pure woman" (2009: 75; 2011: 57).

Laurence Dreyfus's *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* is a well–produced, meticulously researched, and highly readable book, which argues that Wagner "more than anyone else in the nineteenth century made plain his relentless fixation on sexual desire" (1) and "was the first to develop a detailed musical language that succeeded in extended representations of erotic stimulation, passionate ecstasy, and the torment of love" (2). Wagner's obvious though hardly straightforward preoccupation with sex has elicited myriad responses over the years. The sheer quantity of historical witnesses to Wagner's erotics does not daunt Dreyfus but is a specific point of departure, for the originality of the study lies, he writes, in his interest "in linking the reception of Wagner both to his musical representations and his own unusual sexuality" (243, n.1). Yet the reception history that constitutes Chapter 1 ("Echoes") is left behind in Chapters 2 and 3 in favor of "Intentions" and "Harmonies" respectively, while Chapters 4 ("Pathologies") and 5 ("Homoerotics") situate Wagner within late nineteenth–century discourses of degeneracy, forging an inverse relation with the composer's anti–Semitism.

If I have less to say about Dreyfus's book than Rieger's, it is because some of my criticisms have already been well expressed in previous reviews of the former publication, the most pertinent of which are J. P. E. Harper–Scott's "Wagner, Sex and Capitalism" (2011) and David Trippett's "Wagner Studies and the Parallactic Drift" (2011). Harper–Scott rightly censures the study for under–theorizing the erotic, and in response outlines an approach to the topic that takes into account some of the capitalist underpinnings of desire. With equal validity, Trippett points out that for Wagner the word *Sinnlichkeit*, which Dreyfus translates perhaps narrowly as "sensuality" (250–51), has important Left–Hegelian connotations of empirical material sensation. Whatever the ideological inscription of Wagner's erotics, it may be misleading to place the "erotic impulse" at the center of Wagner's project, given that his impulse was precisely toward the *mortification* of the sexual instinct, toward its negation. Tristan and Isolde strive to purge all sexual desire, which at the close of the opera will lift from their bodies like a curse, through the pursuit of its own fulfillment.[9] The dialectical relation in Wagner between the voluptuous and the ascetic presents a more complex aspect of Wagnerian sexuality that only hovers in the background of Dreyfus's book.

For all his sensitivity to the music, there may also be an occasional failure of critical nerve in Dreyfus's analyses. A reader not already familiar with the works in question would gain negligible insight into the qualitative differ-

ences between, say, *Tannhäuser* and *Tristan*, in terms of the musical means whereby eroticism is depicted. That "Eros is elevated to a central concern" in *Tannhäuser* (1) I do not dispute, only how successfully that "concern" is dramatized, given that Wagner's musical realization arguably pales before the sheer poetic ambition of his complex conception. Instead should one not understand Wagner's erotics more as a stylized literary conceit than as any concrete esthetic quality? Not only is the erotic in *Tannhäuser* conveyed more successfully in the poetic text than in the actual music, but the whole erotological discourse surrounding Wagner's works and their reception throughout his career—both the adulation and the outrage—may belie a peculiar absence of the erotic in the works themselves.

So too with Wagner's notorious "homoerotic" correspondence with Ludwig II, which Dreyfus describes gleefully as a "burgeoning love affair" (202): a more sober explanation would be that their relationship existed solely in the theatrical language of their letters as a literary pose, which even disguised resentment and opportunism on both sides.[10] Like the emperor's new clothes, the Wagnerian erotic may be in part a fantasy perpetuated by self–promotion and media hype without necessarily enjoying any corresponding musical reality. In view of this, music proves to be an empty space, the Lacanian Real, onto which the listener projects his or her own fantasies—a notion Dreyfus himself hints at: "The talent inherent in everyone to play a variety of imaginary roles helps here, as do doses of selective amnesia that filter out unsavoury literary details hindering an attraction or hampering the success of a fantasy. In fact, the fewer details supplied, the wider the potential sensual reach, which is why lyric poetry, the literary form that feels closest to music, so readily captures an erotic mood" (8).

By the same token, the palpable erotic force of so many of Wagner's stage works spills over the footlights with implications that are no less unsettling. Just as Edward Cone asked to what extent we can "construe the characters as being aware of the denotative significance—nay, of the very existence—of the motifs they employ" (2009: 81), so one is tempted to wonder whether Wagner's sensual music serves as both an expression of erotic desire and a stimulus for it. In this scenario, the music that represents the characters' erotic subjectivity supplies the means by which those very feelings are aroused in the listener in the real time of performance. The centrifugal pull toward total identity between esthetic subject and object confirms what Adorno recognized more broadly in Wagner's authoritarian social character whereby the audience's reactions are dictated through their incorporation into the work itself (Adorno 1974: 33).

In general, Dreyfus places the accent on pleasure, both esthetic and sexual, both Wagner's and his own as a self–proclaimed devotee. Indeed,

the author luxuriates in the subject matter to the point of fetishizing it. It may be enough that he is up–front about this on the first page: "I give relatively short shrift to twentieth–century ideologies and politics" (ix). Yet in a telling remark elsewhere, Dreyfus reproaches Nietzsche for effectively denying—"because of his obsession with health"—that "sharing the fruits of [Wagner's] success with a public might provide pleasure and edification without the torments attached to the composer's agitated personal life" (134). Bearing in mind the totalizing medium of his stage works and his disconsolate view of erotic love, the image of Wagner as a sexual liberator for our time, a kind of high priest of late capitalist enjoyment, begins to look decidedly questionable.

In certain respects Dreyfus's and Rieger's books represent complementary critical approaches to gender and sexuality, where each contains some of the strengths and weaknesses the other lacks. The theme of female subjugation in Wagner's works and writings represents a conspicuous omission in Dreyfus's study, one that may betray something of a bad conscience. The glowing celebration of erotic love in Wagner is at odds with Rieger's more defiant—though still theoretically deficient—approach to the composer's relationship with women. Conversely, Rieger's rose–tinted image of "love" as a central theme in Wagner's works lacks the material specificity of the "sensual" implied by Dreyfus, while at the same time Dreyfus shows more willingness than Rieger to discuss the influence on Wagner of his professional relationships with women, such as singers including Wilhelmine Schröder–Devrient.

These books also have much in common besides the obvious overlaps in subject matter. Both authors may be commended for placing Wagner's music center stage, in what is perhaps a welcome corrective against the tendency in Wagner studies toward fashioning Wagner as a fundamentally literary figure contrary to his own claims to be a musician first and foremost. Yet music serves distinct methodological purposes for Rieger and Dreyfus. While Rieger seeks to decipher musical signs in which gender constructions are encrypted, Dreyfus goes beyond this: music does not merely supply the technical means by which the erotic is depicted, but as an esthetic experience positively simulates (if not stimulates) sexual arousal in the listener. It is striking that *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* and *Richard Wagner's Women* appeared within a year of each other; another related book is Barry Emslie's (2010) *Richard Wagner and the Centrality of Love*.[11] Any simultaneous publication inevitably misses the opportunity for collaboration or cross–fertilization, yet the release of these books in anticipation of the bicentenary would seem to suggest that love, in Wagner studies at least, is

in the air: Emslie's claim for the "centrality of love" in Wagner—however vaguely defined—is one that might unite Dreyfus and Rieger in agreement.

At the close of his review of three starkly contrasting books in Wagner studies (among them *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse*), the aforementioned Trippett suggests: "On the basis of ongoing empiricism in the *Sämtliche Werke* and *Sämtliche Briefe*, a new plurality has decentred the literary Wagner tradition created by apologists and polemicists" (2011: 255). Yet it was precisely in the absence of critical materialist scholarship that a plurality of Wagners could thrive unchecked. Admittedly, what we are witnessing may be consensus for the wrong reasons, but convergence of critical opinion in itself is nothing to be sniffed at. Nor do I share Trippett's optimism at the prospect that "the parallactic drift in Wagner studies looks set to continue" (2011: 255). According to this theory, which refers to Slavoj Žižek's *The Parallax View*, the points of the perceived object shift according to both the viewer's perspective and the material reality incurred in the act of viewing, namely the projection of the subject's blind spot (Žižek 2006: 17). This may be another way of saying that the fragmented, contradictory images of Wagner that good scholarship offers can be sublated in the paradoxical personality of the composer himself. But, more paradoxically still—and to my dismay—Trippett may also be insinuating darkly that the more scholars bring to bear on Wagner in terms of a critical evaluation of source material, the more elusive the object of study becomes.

Perhaps, then, the situation in Wagner studies is less one of "parallactic drift" than a dialectical constellation, a cluster of stars that illuminate each other even as they stand in uncertain relation or opposition. If these books tell us anything, it is that Wagner's complex ideas of gender and sex still fascinate us, as they did from the start, and indeed are part of what makes the best of his works so unusually modern and provocative today. But only by combining a sophisticated reading of theory with rigorous source criticism can scholarship hope to convey their precise significance.

Notes

1. For historical evidence of bourgeois female etiquette in the nineteenth century, Rieger shares an anecdote about her grandmother (83, 229 n. 35).

2. Tannhäuser and Parsifal are rather more complex cases, inasmuch as it is precisely love's torment, i.e., woman, that taints the eponymous male figure in the first place.

3. The parallels with *Die Walküre* have not gone unnoticed (Jost 2010: ix, 433).

4. See *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History, and New Musicology* (Purvis 2013), in particular Peter Franklin's chapter "More Cases of Wagner," 121–43. This topic was also addressed in the one–day conference, "Operatic Masculinities," September 11, 2012, organized by Oxford Brookes University opera research unit (OBERTO).

5. The first sustained musical allusion to female sexuality in *Rheingold*, namely Loge's Narration, is already ironic (mm. 1338–1375), while the piling up of the Nibelung hoard in front of Freia's body to measure an "equivalent" remuneration for the Giants is a brutally literalistic representation of (proto–)Marxian exchange–value. Incidentally, Marx's example for the equation between man and capital—"I *am* ugly, but I can buy the *most beautiful* woman" (1975: 377)—could aptly describe either Alberich or the Giants as they behave in *Rheingold*.

6. Originally *Welterbschaft* was the name Wagner gave to what we know as the "ring" motif, and only acquired its current designation thanks to Hans von Wolzogen.

7. To cite just one counterexample, in the composition of Siegmund's "aria" from the first act of *Walküre*, "Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond," Wagner developed the melody independently from the text, which subsequently had to be altered to fit the new vocal line, the interaction between words and music being less straightforward than we are given to believe.

8. Rieger's is not the first publication, incidentally, to use this line as a title. In *"Leuchtende Liebe, lachender Tod": Zum Tochter–Mythos Brünnhilde* (1984) Sabine Zurmühl gives a personal interrogation of the father–daughter relationship of Wotan and Brünnhilde in light of twentieth–century politics. This study of Wagner even claims to be "feminist," though what the titular quotation has to do with feminism specifically is anyone's guess.

9. The Schopenhauerian conception of sexual desire as a mere illusion maintained by the phenomenal world that cancels itself out (one that undeniably influenced Wagner) comes surreally close to Lacan's theory of desire as phantasmatic in its very narcissism.

10. As John Deathridge pointed out, the sheer volume of the published correspondence between Wagner and Ludwig is proof that they rarely met (1984: 48).

11. Regrettably, space does not permit me to include a full review of Emslie's book in the present article. I refer the reader instead to Mark Berry's (2010) review.

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