



Wagner through Tolkien or, Tolkien through Wagner (pace Tom Shippey!)

Formerly: The Importance of being Tolkien and/or Wagner
or, Tolkien: Copyist or Commentator?

Timothy Fisher
*Political Science Specialist,
University of Hobbiton—Bag End Campus*

Abstract:

I intend to indicate briefly some of the pitfalls of Tolkien and Wagner commentary. Then I will present first the circumstantial contextual evidence for their relationship to be followed by evidence internal to the works from *The Lord of the Rings* (and other Tolkien works) and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (and other Wagner works).

Of course, as here presented, a much wider context is provided in order to ascertain the less obvious results of comparing the two mythmakers.

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Wagner through Tolkien or, Tolkien through Wagner

This talk was mission impossible: to try to deal adequately and compress into half an hour two of the most complex and longest works of the 19th and 20th centuries, if not the most complex of any! And then on top of that to relate them to each other! Wagner's *Ring* with 4 operas performed over 4 nights totaling about some 15 hrs – not including intermissions and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* with 1200 pages – not including *The Hobbit*. Therefore, at Mythmoot on January 10th I read no written out paper with long, elegant periods, but a "chat" which hoped (in the words of *Sigurd and Gudrun*) to shine a lightning like flash on some peaks in order to spark interest leaving the drawing of conclusions to those present. The subject deserves a semester+ of discussion and a goodly thick book! Since I was not able in the time allotted to cover what was necessary, this written paper will be an "expanded edition" of my talk. But hopefully it will spark an interest by Tolkienites in Wagner and it will at least raise some, I think, fascinating questions which may or may not be resolvable.

We will be dealing primarily with J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*) because of all their works they have the most direct parallels to compare and contrast. But actually all of Tolkien (published and unpublished) and all of Wagner's works in the standard repertoire (there are 10 operas) are relevant in a major way to how the two relate. But those two works will be our major focus.

As Tolkien wrote in his theoretical essay *On Fairy Stories*:

Anyone inheriting the *fantastic* [!] device of human language can say *the green sun*. Many can then imagine or picture it. But that is not enough.... To make a Secondary World inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft. Few attempt such difficult task. But when they are attempted and in any degree accomplished then we have a rare achievement in Art: indeed in narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode. Tolkien - *On Fairy Stories*, Flieger & Anderson ed., 2008, p. 61.

In other words, "green suns" need a credible world, a context that makes them possible and thus believable.

Tolkien notes that a true fairy story should not use a frame narrative like a "real world" dream or other apparatus. One should never leave the plane of the story. Wagner using apparently opposite means also seeks to achieve full involvement of the audience in his music dramas. In his specially constructed theater dedicated to only his works the entire auditorium is designed to create the illusion of reality to the stage picture. False proscenia, stadium seating, a totally darkened theater, an invisible orchestra hidden from the audience all contribute to this effect. They are both using a kind of "total immersion" technique to commit their audiences to care about their characters. The fantastic nature of some of the elements in their stories and dramas demands extra assurances of their reality.

Most apparent within the dramas or story is that both Wagner's *Ring* and Tolkien's *LotR* rely on extensive visual natural realism to make the stories more readily believable. Tolkien in the form of detailed descriptions of the natural environment the characters pass through, and Wagner with specific stage directions describing in detail the action and the settings in wild nature.

In Middle-earth a sense of temporal depth is created in the reader in large part by the reference to a vast back-history, by the Elvish and other languages, by the Valar pantheon, and beyond it all, by Tolkien's creation myth. We see not only a present foreground, but an ever receding background history which provides stories for those in its present.

Wagner's *Ring Cycle* text was itself actually written largely in reverse: He began with the dramatic poem of the story of *Siegfried's Tod* (*Siegfried's Death*), then to explain that he wrote *Junge Siegfried* (*The Young Siegfried*), then he wrote *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* (*The Rhinegold* and *The Valkyrie*) to give us the whole backstory of the three main characters (Wotan the head god, Brünnhilde the Valkyrie, Siegfried the ostensive hero of the entire cycle).

But there is a further and subtler means that Wagner uses to achieve a sense of the reality of the events and the characters and to thus involve his audience. This vast story (see Appendix I for a bare bones plot summary) spanning several generations, widely dispersed geographic areas and finally various levels of scene of action (the sky realm of the gods, the earthly and tribal human, the subterranean dwarvish) is held together not just by the chain of events of causation, but also by the musical device known popularly as *leitmotifs* (leading motives) which Wagner termed "moments of musical feeling". They describe the import and significance of a character, object or event. There are about 100 of them that are anticipated or recalled and develop interactions that transform them in subtle musical ways over the course of the Cycle. Thus he builds a sense of shared experience in the listener achieved by the foreshadowing/reminiscence structure of the leitmotifs' technique – like refrains that develop musically – their thematic and temporal associations.

When one attends a full performance over the 4 nights with ample intermissions a remarkable effect is achieved by the recalling of earlier leitmotifs and by the anticipation of their future appearances. One relives those moments as if one had been a participant in them. The result is a sense of reality like human memory itself, as if we are recalling our own previous experiences.

One need not elaborate on Tolkien's repeated efforts to create a similar sense of remembered past in his drafts and in his *LotR*. His use of generations of descendants also in, for example, *The Book of Lost Tales*.

But there is another dimension in which the two masterpieces parallel. Many commentators have noted that Tolkien uses the hobbits in *LotR* and *The Hobbit* as mediators between the exalted heroic world of the Valar, Elves and Dúnedain and the mundane modern reader. In Wagner the same bridge and means of involving the audience in an exalted heroic world is achieved by the evocative impact of the music itself: the leitmotifs, the melodic vividness, the orchestration, the naturalness of the sung line. Wagner takes the dramatic symphonic style of a Beethoven and applies it to a synthesis of Shakespearean and Greek tragic drama. With this tradition of Western classical and

romantic music he both expresses the characters inner emotions and as well a degree of commentary on what is taking place.

Both of these mythmakers also created new genres in their preferred spheres of art. Tolkien writes an epic romance narrative fantasy which has been so often later imitated, with questionable results. And Wagner composes what has been called the "music drama" (as distinct from "opera"), in which the plot and characters are not expressed in the conventional operatic set pieces. Thus there are no divisions into operatic "numbers" with introductions, developments and codas, but all proceeds as one unbroken whole. Rather the symphonic web of the orchestral writing incorporates the vocal line as part of the orchestration as it were. He dispenses with the fragmented structure of conventional opera (aria, recitative, ensemble and chorus – there is only one short chorus in the entire 14+ hours of the Ring Cycle!) and replaces it with continuous seemingly spontaneous dramatic dialogue enhanced by an intense orchestra milieu that rather than using the sonata form of aba allows endless variety and interest as one or more leitmotiv follows in an unending stream of musical metaphors. Again, others have attempted to imitate Wagner's use of leitmotivs and unbroken musical drama, but again the results have been questionable.

But let us proceed now to examine *The Ring Cycle* and *LotR* more closely as to their relationship. We will do this in two aspects, first the external and internal evidence primarily concerning a possible influence on Tolkien by Wagner, but then we will go on to examine what I think is more significant, their internal thematic parallels to be compared or contrasted.

There have been numerous short magazine articles making the comparison between them but thus far only two full scale examinations of the relationship. One by Christopher MacLachlan, *Tolkien and Wagner: The Ring and Der Ring* (2012), focuses primarily on the political and social significance of Wagner's *Ring*, which is the conventional wisdom these days, but which thus misses much of the deeper ethical and psychological, even spiritual, import of the work. He does focus on the parallels between Wotan the central protagonist in Wagner's *Ring* and Gandalf, who performs the same function in Tolkien. But because he relies on an earlier study of *Wagner: Finding an Ending, Reflections on Wagner's Ring*, by Philip Kitcher and Richard Schacht, he like them reduces these works to political tracts on authority, in the process losing the mythic and more timeless resonances. It should be emphasized that Wagner's Wotan, with all his frustrated machinations in attempting to create a hero for his purposes, in fact is demonstrating the futility and superficiality of politics. But the all too common tradition of reducing *Der Ring* to socialism started with George B. Shaw's "The Perfect Wagnerite" written in 1898. And despite the obvious fact that his allegorical interpretation (which kind of thing Wagner in his letters was at pains to steer people away from as much as Tolkien, although not in so many words) breaks down in the third act of *Siegfried* and for all of *Götterdämmerung*, this kind of either rightist or leftist agenda ridden deconstruction of *Der Ring* has remained the lazy producer's and commentator's way of dealing with the subtleties and complexities of Wagner by reducing them to clichés. Wagner in writing *Der Ring* consciously rejected a previous historical, political potential artistic project and chose to pursue myth for the rest of his career in a search for what he termed "the purely human" or one might say, the eternally human, the universal. But agenda driven producers and commentators in their narcissism are notoriously impervious to facts.

The other book, René Vinck's *Wagner and Tolkien: Mythmakers*, is the other recent (2012) full scale treatment of the two Ring works. This one is far more successful in its treatment and I recommend it as an introduction to the subject. First she provides a thorough survey of the previous treatments in periodicals of the comparisons of two mythmakers and her summaries of their articles are excellent, dividing them into two camps: those who say there was no influence of Wagner's *Ring* on Tolkien, and those who do. Of those who do, she maintains they are asserting that Tolkien's Ring epic is a deliberate challenge to Wagner's. She then goes on to consider the common literary techniques of Tolkien and Wagner. But because she limits herself to primarily the most obvious of possible parallels (see Appendix II, for a listing of them – to examine each in detail as to what she is referring to you will have to read her book as there is not room to include the 22 pages numbering 36 similarities most of which she discusses.), she fails to probe deeper into the more meaningful relationship between Wagner and Tolkien. Thus I would add a third alternative to her "those who do" category. Rather than limiting things to those who feel Tolkien is challenging Wagner, I think it is more valuable to see him as complementing Wagner when the two are taken on the whole. For, even if there was some mistrust of Wagner by Tolkien due to the political and military era of the 30s and 40s, as Verlyn Flieger has recently written in her "Tolkien's French Connection" article: **"But dislike does not preclude influence – indeed it can sometimes foster it – and an author is not always the most reliable authority on his work."** (Eden, p. 70.)

One thing that Vinck does do brilliantly is lay to rest a canard of Tolkien vs Wagner commentators: the famous "Both Rings are round and there the resemblance ceases" quote found in his letters (*Letters*, p. 306). By examining thoroughly the context of that quote from Tolkien she points out that he is not referring to his *LotR* and Wagner's *Ring* at all, but the rather hack-job summary of the ancient sources of Wagner and Wagner's Ring by a Swedish translator of Tolkien, one Ake Ohlmark. (And as the Swedish Tobias Olofsson presenter at Mythmoot 3 added, Ohlmark is rather notorious for being rather unreliable in his dealings with Tolkien.)

Let me begin by invoking some phrases that I think are main themes in all of Tolkien and all of Wagner. The resemblance is remarkable.

First we have the following from *LotR*, then Wagner:

... And all the host laughed and wept, and in the midst of their merriment and tears the clear voice of the minstrel rose like silver and gold, and all men were hushed. And he sang to them, now in the elven-tongue, now in the speech of the West, until their hearts, wounded with sweet words, overflowed, and their joy was like swords, and they passed in thought out to regions where **pain and delight** flow together and tears are the very wine of blessedness....

LotR – Bk 6, Ch. 4, The Field of Cormallen, p. 954
(50th & 60th Anniversary Editions)

Die Walküre: Act 2; Sc 4 – Siegmund to Brünnhilde:

Wo Sieglinde lebt
in **Lust und Leid**,
da will Siegmund auch säumen:
noch machte dein Blick
nicht mich erbleichen:
vom Bleiben zwingt er mich nie!

Where Sieglinde lives
in **delight and suffering**,
there, too, shall Siegmund tarry:
your gaze has yet
to make me blench:
it will never force me from staying!

Tristan und Isolde: Act 2, Sc.1 Isolde to Brangäne

Leben und Tod
sind untertan ihr*,
die sie webt aus **Lust und Leid**,

in Liebe wandelnd den Neid.

Love and Death
are subject to her*,
she weaves them from **delight and suffering**,

transmuting envy into love.

*ihr/her refers to the personification of love: Frau Minne.

Wagner struggled to put a summation ending onto his *Ring Cycle*, and eventually decided the music did it better than a didactic verbal "moral" to the story. One of the earliest of these attempts is named for the philosopher it relies upon, the so-called "Feuerbach" Ending:

...nicht Gut, nicht Geld
noch göttliche Pracht;
... selig in **Lust und Leid**
lässt – die Liebe nur sein....

...Not wealth, not gold,
nor godly pomp,
...blessed in **joy and sorrow**
let love alone live....

Writing about how to combine words and music in a paradoxical statement Wagner writes in his major theoretical work:

Die Liebe bringt **Lust und Leid** doch in ihr Weh auch webt sie Wonnen.
Love brings **joy and pain** but in her woe she yet weaves rapture.

"Opera and Drama" pp. 291-294
(*Wagner on Music and Drama*,
Goldman and Sprinchorn, pp. 210-212)

This paradoxical dialectic of opposites was perhaps first noted by Humphrey Carpenter in his *Tolkien: A Biography*. Where he noted Tolkien was "a man of antitheses" (p. 95). As a recent article in *Tolkien Studies XI* noted quoting a letter of Tolkien's "You have to understand the good

things, to detect the real evil." (*Letters* 55). Quoted by Flieger in "But What Did He Really Mean?" (*Tolkien Studies* XI, p. 163)

There is perhaps no more antithetical and paradoxical composer dramatist than Wagner who demonstrated this time and again in the yearning beauty of his most melancholy musical passages.

Another major theme Tolkien and Wagner share is their awareness of mortality and how it heightens the appreciation of life (or of Being itself as one of the Mythmoot 3 presenters, Tobias Olafsson, on Phenomenology and on Heidegger noted):

Tolkien says in a 1968 BBC interview entitled "Tolkien in Oxford":

"If you really come down to any large story that interests people, holding their attention for a considerable time, or make them... the stories are practically always a human story, it's practically always about one thing, aren't they? Death. The inevitability of death."

He then mentions he has a quote that he read in the paper "the other day" in an article about a composer of whom he is "extremely fond" who died at 39 of tuberculosis, "an untimely death", Carl Maria von Weber. (By the way, Weber was also one of Wagner's favorite predecessors.)

The quote is from French existentialist, feminist and Marxist Simone de Beauvoir's autobiographical *A Very Easy Death* (1965):

On ne meurt pas d'être né, ni d'avoir vécu, ni de vieillesse. On meurt de quelque chose....
Il n'y a pas de mort naturelle: rien de ce qui arrive à l'homme n'est jamais naturel puisque sa présence met le monde entier en question. Tous les hommes sont mortels: mais pour chaque homme sa mort est un accident et, même s'il la connaît et y consent, une violence induite.

Une mort très douce

"People do not die of being born or of having lived, or old age. People die of something....

"There is no natural death: nothing that happens to man is ever natural, since his presence puts the world in question. All men are mortal: but for every man his death is an accident*, even if he knows and agrees, an improper violence.

"We do not die of having been born, nor from having lived, nor of old age. We die of something... all men are mortal: but for each man his death is an accident, and even if he knows and consents, a violence inflicted."

*meant in the sense contrasted with "essence", see Scholastic philosophy. Not in the sense of "happenstance".

One of the most interesting quotes from Wagner comes from a magnificent letter he wrote to his friend August Röckel in 1856 after completing the poem of *Der Ring* and being in the midst of composing the first three dramas in it. In it he discusses the meaning of the Cycle, and emphasizes two things among others:

"...Only what changes is real: to be real, to live – what this means is to be created, to grow, to bloom, to wither, and to die; without the necessity of death, there is no possibility of life...Therefore, to be consumed by truth is to abandon oneself as a sentient human being to total reality:...to experience birth, growth, boom – withering and decay, to apprehend them unreservedly, in joy and in sorrow, and to choose to live – and die – a life of happiness and of suffering." (*Selected Letters*, pp. 302-303)

And later in the same letter he notes: "We must learn to die, and to die in the fullest sense of the word: fear of the end is the source of all lovelessness, and this fear is generated only when love itself is already beginning to wane." (pp. 306-07)

Need one underline how this echoes Tolkien's comments on the immortality of the Elves and their desire to keep things from changing, the curse of their longevity as they lose to mortality all the things they love, yet they remain?

Or need one refer to the profound epilogue to *On Fairy Stories* where Tolkien delves into the relationship between eucatastrophe and the Gospel's central theme of Resurrection?

And when we turn to Wagner with eucatastrophe in mind we find that each of the *Ring* dramas ends with a eucatastrophic resolution. (See Appendix I for the details of the story.) In fact all but one of Wagner's ten music dramas in the standard repertoire end with soaringly magnificent eucatastrophes. (Howard Shore in the final bars closing the score of *The Return of the King* film even creates a consciously Wagnerian style finish!) (Adams, p. 354.)

Despite the world catastrophic threat of the Ring and of its curser Alberich to all that exists and the warning of Erda against keeping the Ring and her announcement of the inevitable end of all things, *Rheingold* finishes with the gods triumphantly entering Valhalls, but in a very Tolkienian twist we hear an emotional counterpoint to the triumph in the melancholy lament of the Rhine Daughters for their lost beautiful innocent Gold.

In *Walküre* despite the tragic end of the twins, the disastrous outcome of Wotan's plan, and his subsequent fury at Brünnhilde in which he threatens her with total humiliation, he relents and promises her the protection of the greatest of heroes, Siegfried with their reconciliation of sublime serenity.

In *Siegfried*, despite the mortal threat by Mime to our hero, his disastrous encounter with Wotan and the terrors of Brünnhilde whom he reassures, the two of them resolve all in a gloriously ecstatic pledge of love that transcends even death.

It is in *Götterdämmerung* that we see perhaps the most drastic eucatastrophic reversal emerge out of the natural course of the plot of any Wagner drama. Despite the unwitting betrayal of Brünnhilde by Siegfried and her involvement in the plot to murder him, and his subsequent death, all within the context of the resignation of Wotan to his inevitable downfall, she and Siegfried are spiritually reconciled and she joins him in a hero's funeral pyre with the sole purpose of returning the Ring finally to the Rhine Daughters as Valhalla is swept away by fire. But out of the flooded Rhine we see the Rhine Daughters rejoicing in their Ring and a serene leitmotiv spreading its

eucatastrophic wings over the music tells us that the future will provide an even greater resolution to both human (and "divine") frailty.

For a brief survey of the other Wagner dramas in regards to their eucatastrophic endings see Appendix IV.

So – with all this evidence, the question remains, just how much of it is due to Wagner influencing Tolkien, and how much is not?

To even begin to answer this interesting question we first have to establish whether Tolkien actually knew Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. This is not hard to do. Unfortunately, as indicated above with the issue of "the two Rings being round and there the resemblance ceases" quote, there has been an assumption that Wagner was despised by Tolkien. However, to quote Verlyn Flieger again, she points out in an article "Tolkien's French Connection": "But [even] dislike does not preclude influence – indeed it can sometimes foster it – and an author is not always the most reliable authority on his work." (Eden, p. 70).

It is true, Wagner was not a professional academic philologist as was Tolkien. And the state of philological research in his day was not on a par with that achieved by the time Tolkien flourished. But Wagner had available in the original or in German translation all the Eddic, Norse, Germanic sagas and poetry that we have today, and he was well aware of the academic studies of the 19th c. giants in the field like the Grimm Brothers. Several of his initially devoted followers were indeed professional philologists, none less than Friedrich Nietzsche, soon to become a philosopher and culture critic. Tolkien may have primarily and initially known the Sigurd/Siegfried story through Andrew Lang's *Red Fairy Book* or William Morris' retelling of the Völsungasaga, but like Wagner he soon immersed himself in the originals.

We do know, so far (and who knows what Tolkien's diaries will reveal in the future?) that

... when Tolkien and Lewis] decided to spend an evening reading aloud the libretto of Wagner's *Die Walküre*, Warnie asked to join them even though he knew no German and could only take part using an English translation. They began after tea,... 'Arising from the perplexities of Wotan we had a long and interesting discussion on religion which lasted until about half past eleven'¹

¹ Priscilla Tolkien recalls that her father and Lewis also attended a performance of the *Ring* operas at Covent Garden, where they found themselves to be almost the only members of the audience in their part of the theatre not in evening dress. (*The Inklings*, Carpenter, p. 56.)

But a quick glance at Appendix III which lists all the *Ring* performances at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, London, during Tolkien's lifetime should indicate he had ample opportunity to attend one or more performances.

It is also important to note that what Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* is to the popular mind today, Wagner's *Ring* was to the late Victorian and Edwardian and later inter-war generations. One does not need to do more than say the word "hobbit" on any tv program on any network and there is

instant recognition universally, whether people have read the books or even seen the films or not! While opera was always an upper crust night out, at the time of Tolkien's heyday Oxford was the certain preserve of the English upper classes. The talk about Wagner and his *Ring* must have been virtually constant among the students.

And as the listing of other performances indicates, the *Ring* spread quickly not only in Germany but throughout Europe and world-wide!

And if that were not enough: if there is anything we all know about Tolkienites and Wagnerites, it is that they find it very difficult to keep their enthusiasm to themselves. And who was one of the biggest Wagner mavens but C S Lewis, the lead Inkling. One can imagine their fellow Inklings saying something akin to what Tolkien heard from Hugo Dyson, "Not those f----g elves again!" directed at CSL: "Not that f-----g *Ring* again!"

As a youngster C.S. Lewis stumbled upon these Arthur Rackham paintings for Richard Wagner's, *Der Ring Des Nibelungen* in the two volume edition of 1910-11 translated by Margaret Armour. Lewis writes in *Surprised by Joy* (published in 1955) how the pictures inspired a mythical sensation of "Northernness" in his young mind. Northernness being shorthand for the category of heroic resolution in the face of insurmountable odds. (See Appendix VI for samples of Rackham's work for the *Ring*.)

Pure "Northernness" engulfed me: a vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of Northern summer, remoteness, severity.... And with that plunge back into my own past there arose at once, almost like heartbreak, the memory of Joy itself, the knowledge that I had once had what I had lacked for years, I was returning at last from exile and desert lands to my own country; and the distance of the Twilight of the Gods and the distance of my own past Joy, both unattainable, flowed together into a single, unendurable sense of desire and loss...

One of my father's many presents to us bow had been a gramophone. Thus at the moment when my eyes fell on the words *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods*,.... A magazine called *The Soundbox* was doing synopses of great operas week by week, and now it did the whole *Ring*. ...

From that moment Wagnerian records (principally from the *Ring*....) became the chief drain on my pocket money and the presents I invariably asked for....

There, on [my cousin's] drawing room table I found the very book... which I had never dared to hope I should see. *Siegfried and The Twilight of the Gods* illustrated by Arthur Rackham. His pictures which seemed to me then [aged 13] to be the very music made visible, plunged me a few fathoms deeper into my delight. I have seldom coveted anything as I coveted that book; and when I heard there was a cheaper edition at 15 shillings... I knew could never rest until it was mine.

(CSL, *Surprised by Joy*, pp. 72-76)

One has merely to open these elegant editions to appreciate the Arthur Rackham the gold embossed covers, the 61 full colour tipped in plates, the special end papers and numerous headings and chapter ending line drawings by Rackham throughout the two volumes. While the translation leaves much to be desired, the overall impact of the graphics is totally involving and thus the reaction of CS Lewis is fully understandable. That he would not communicate that Wagnerian insight into Northernness which he shared with Tolkien with his colleague is more than highly unlikely.

So the question is not how likely was Tolkien to have opportunity, motive and means to engage Wagner's *Ring*, but how could he have avoided it!?

Tom Shippey in his fascinating essay "The Problem of the Rings: Tolkien and Wagner" (*Roots and Branches*, pp. 97-114), notes one of the major problems in 19th century comparative philology: *der Königsproblem*. That concerns how all the five texts of the Sigurd/Siegfried story relate to each other and what the original story might have been, since all the texts differ and that the oldest, the Codex Regius of the Elder or Poetic Edda is missing eight leaves which are the narrative of the central events of the story. Of course, as we now know Tolkien composed his own "recovery" version of what we are missing in *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun*. But so did Wagner!

But what Wagner did was pull off a typical Tolkien: he went beyond the obvious remnants of the story and imaginatively added something, a something that makes sense of the whole story, that deepens the significance of the original implications of it. And the very mention of it will indicate that Tolkien knew Wagner's *Ring* far more intimately than many are willing to admit. Wagner added to the story of a dragon slayer who gains a treasure hoard, finds a warrior maiden, but betrays her for a prestigious sister of a chieftain and hands her over to the chieftain to marry, what exposes the whole intrigue – a ring that gets exchanged, but not just any ring, nor even a cursed Ring. So far, the ancient tale, which Tolkien did not alter. But Wagner did. He made the notorious Ring into a Ring of world-domination. This role for it does not exist in the ancient sources. It is unique to Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. And it is what ties the whole work together and is the nexus of the interaction of the gods with the humans. It colours every event in the *Ring Cycle*. Just as in the same way, the One Ring colours every event in *The Lord of the Rings*. In both Ring works it is the very central focus of the plot. This is the smoking "ring" as it were, the "ring" in the Tolkien room. Tolkien could not have gotten what transforms *The Hobbit* and first chapter drafts of *LotR* into the epic tale that it is from the bedtime fairy tale it was, anywhere but from Wagner's *Ring Cycle*.

If Tolkien had any "problems" with Wagner, it might be that Wagner had already succeeded in doing with this tale what Tolkien most liked to do: rationalize into coherence the plot and characters... What Tolkien was doing was what usually motivated him with regard to earlier sources: he was filling in the gaps. Wagner had solved the *Königsproblem* (the gap in the sources wherein the plot turning point is narrated) by making the crucial Ring into the One Ring of Power. Tolkien could not do here what he did with the Kullervo story by making it into the Turin Turambar, the Children of Hurin story and improve the logic of the tale. It had already been done.

This is not a matter of one to one correspondences and borrowings and of "influence" of Wagner on Tolkien. Rather I am proposing to open for inquiry, to ask you to question, and to assert something far more dangerous and radical, and therefore far more interesting potentially.

Before we begin to follow out this analysis there is one more element of parallel between Wagner's *Ring* and Tolkien's epic that we need to note. And it is a major divergence.

If we look at the schematics of the theory of The Hero's Journey as presented by Joseph Campbell (see Appendix V). One of the most important figures a hero meets are his mentors. But in both Tolkien and Wagner they are more than just casual or minor adjuncts to the hero. They are themselves major protagonists, initiators of the central action: the quest to neutralize their Rings by returning them to their sources. They are, of course, Wotan and Gandalf. They are even garbed remarkably similarly. But their roles in the action of the stories are vastly different. Wotan is an ethically *compromised* mentor. He strives mightily to guide events and wants to advise his heroes. But because of his conflicted status he cannot. He is a frustrated and ineffectual mentor. Not so Gandalf. He is not conflicted by any moral compromises. He is restricted to advising and to inspiring. He cannot dominate or coerce. But that in no way really inhibits his activities because his is a moral mentorship and he maintains his moral authority. Thus we have in one case a problematic mentor and in the other a successful mentor. And in this lies the major distinction between Tolkien's *LotR* and Wagner's *Ring* with significant consequences for the entire arc of the story.

In Wagner we have a cosmic tragedy rescued from total disaster only by the complete self-sacrifice of the grieving Brünnhilde. In Tolkien we have a cosmic comedy where every effort by evil is turned against it towards the ultimate success of the quest. This is not a refutation or repudiation of the stark insights into human frailty that Wagner portrays, but rather a complementary alternate universe to it. This is a universe where a benevolent Providence reigns but does not oppress. Wagner's *Ring* universe is darker, seemingly more fated and caught in an inexorable web of a downward spiral. But Wagner is not finished yet.

And this is what so many of Wagner's commentators and interpreters of his *Ring Cycle* on and off stage fail to take into account. His *Ring* is not ultimately to be viewed in isolation from the overall context of his other works, prior and succeeding. And even more interesting it to make the attempt to project that trajectory further based on its arc as we know it.

To understand how his *Ring* fits into that context one has to understand the main themes demonstrated by the vividness of his other dramas. I will only give here, for the sake of keeping the continuity of the argument, a brief summary of what is found in bare outline form in Appendix VII. That is, that what we see emerging from the welter of detail that make the Wagnerian music dramas so impressive as involving works of dramatic art is a pattern of a vast logic.

The three operas prior to *The Ring Cycle* lay out before us, in mythic resonance and engrossing characters and situations, a fundamental problem of human existence: the need for profound inner change in the human soul. What the *Ring Cycle* then does is give us an analysis in drama and music worthy of Shakespeare or Aeschylus and Beethoven of the cause of the inability to effect that transformation. But Wagner is not done. Having raised the problem and found the

psychological and social ethical roots of the problem he then proceeds in the following three dramas to provide us with a Thesian thread out of the minotaur's labyrinth. This he does by ascending through the personal, the cultural and finally the religious levels of human existence to delineate the cure, the solution to the debacle presented in his *Ring Cycle*. This is what really is happening within his *Tristan*, his *Meistersinger* and his *Parsifal*.

What he thus does is lead us from a worldview of humanistic agnosticism to theodicy. He leads us through his own personal experience of this arc, expressed in his music dramas, to the threshold of Providence – to the threshold of the Tolkienian understanding of mortality, free will and responsibility responding to situations of ethical crisis presented by a benevolent Providence. His *Ring* is a kind of *Silmarillion* and his final three masterpieces named above are his *Lord of the Rings*. That is, his *Ring* dramatically presents the downfall of humanity, and his final three the restoration of humanity.

So what is Tolkien doing? He is in fact (perhaps without knowing it) furthering the Wagnerian project. To see this we have to begin recovering the missing links within the Wagnerian arc. The gaps, the transitions from one Wagner work to another. That in turn may help us to better understand Tolkien's achievement, and perhaps even why it ran aground. The transitions among his works from fairy story Romantic operas (*Fliegender Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*) to the epic narrative drama of *The Ring*, to the final metaphysical and transcendental works of *Tristan*, *Meistersinger*, and *Parsifal*... What Tolkien achieves in his *Lord of the Rings* is a synthesis of the entire corpus of Wagnerian drama. Thus he starts with a fairy story *The Hobbit* then by the alchemy of retcon (retroactive reconstruction) turns its merely magic Ring into The One Ring of Power (the focus of a whole world of realities) which becomes the culmination of his own *Silmarillion* World of the Three Jewels (metaphysical works on mortality and immortality) combining them with the Mentor counterpart (of Gandalf to Wotan) reflecting the two transitions from the problematic Romantic period of Wagner to the ethically fallen world of *The Ring Cycle* to the ethically ascending worlds of Wagner's Final Trilogy. In this manner, to paraphrase Tom Shippey (from a review of Tolkien's *Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*), Tolkien has out Wagnered Wagner, even as Wagner out Tolkiened Tolkien with his *Ring Cycle*.

Now, this is entirely *not* an assertion that Tolkien intended this, or was actually even conscious of this overall pattern or "derivation" (his *LotR* not an imitation of Wagner's *Ring*), for this is only apparent in retrospect as we set the two mythologizers side by side. Rather what we might see here is a Providential pattern of inevitable coincidence (a theme in Pasternak's *Zhivago*). Wagner and Tolkien are working through the same problems but from two opposite starting points converging on the truth. They illuminate each other, but more, they combine together to reach towards a greater illumination of a higher reality. And only by placing them in juxtaposition can we as it were gain the parallax perspective needed to see them in 3D, as it were – in their relationship to each other they illuminate a unified reality between them.

This is a dialectic reaching for a synthesis that is a matter of careful and intriguingly meticulous correspondences that open for us a speculative yet inevitable conclusion.

In sum then, another way of clarifying all this is to pick up on two sets of terms that were discussed by the other two participants in our "Peeling the Onion" segment of the papers presented at

Mythmoot 3. Tobias Oloffsson – "Tolkien and Phenomenology" – on the concepts of recovery and epoché and Mike Therway – "In the Mood for Doom" on the relationship between the words "doom" and "judgment".

Doom/Judgement – Wagner has created some of the most complex ethical situations in *The Ring*: are Wotan, Siegfried & Brünnhilde guilty or not... They acted out of the highest ethical motives and consciousness, yet they produced some of the most terrible ethical results... Are they fated or are they acting out of free will? You have to decide as viewer/listener (or as actor and director) several crucial points: what are Wotan's motives in his actions in making the Spear from the World Ash which then withers? What about Siegfried when he takes back the Ring from Brünnhilde: is he acting out of some repressed desire for the Ring as power, or is he acting out of some supreme concern to keep Brünnhilde from the evil of the Ring... Is she acting out of love or vindictiveness? These ambivalences make *The Ring Cycle* interactive... Wagner does not fill in these answers. The music tells us something wonderful is taking place (at times), yet the poem/plot seems to indicate something else. The music of *Götterdämmerung* is particularly ambivalent in regard to Siegfried and Brünnhilde but exculpatory of Wotan.

But Wagner will go on to create in the characters of Tristan, Sachs and Parsifal – the heroes and central figures of his other music dramas that emerge out of the nexus of his *Ring* analysis of the core problems of the human condition – heroes and mentors of immense ethical purity and stature. No matter how momentarily crazed or deluded by the passions of pride, ambition, ego they seem, they actually act in ways that are thoroughly selfless and noble. Unlike the heroes in *The Ring* they seem to be driven, or inspired, by the highest motives of self-sacrifice...

Recovery/Epoché – And in *The Ring* Wagner by making the Ring a tempting instrument of absolute power he has gone back and recovered the missing portion of the ancient story in a way that the original tellers would never have been able to. And further, in making the impulses of love shaded with lust for power, he has created ethical questions for us to ponder that in fact put the originally pre-Christian *Ring* figures into a deeply Christian context... thus making the relevant to the modern man, his audience. He has recreated the story of Wotan, Siegfried and Brünnhilde into one that explores and challenges our ethical sensibilities. He has transformed them and their story into one such that we must try to answer the above question of their ethical motives. This makes the retelling of their story by Wagner or by Tolkien in ethical terms of empathy and compassion one that the original listeners and tellers would not understand in their pagan subjection to fate, to whims of gods in a pre-Christian ethical world of only ferocious warrior strength and determination against insuperable odds. The Wagnerian Brünnhilde or the Tolkienian Éowyn after the Houses of Healing or Arwen in that world of a warrior culture – to consider human compassion higher than warrior loyalty or ferocity – are not possible. But in our world with its Christian (or even post-Christian) ideals of gentility and fellow feeling they are obligatory.

Thus we must go even deeper, even further. Not only must we put the *Ring* and *LotR* into the context of their authors' other works, but we must even more importantly put them into the frame of reference of the cultural context not only of their times, but the context of the original myths: the period when the West lost contact with the civilization of the ancient world through the *Völkerwanderung*, the fall of Rome to the barbarian Teutonic tribes, the fall of the Western Empire to the forces of a political hegemony wherein the spiritual became the merely cultural.

This all in a very significant sense leads right into Tolkien's issues of mortality and ethics raised in *The Silmarillion* and the *Hobbit-LotR* sequence. In other words, the great goal of the project of Lewis and Tolkien was to counteract the descent into materialism, into positivism, into atheism and nihilism that Western culture had reached in the 20th century of two culturally destructive world wars. The loss of transcendence, the reduction of truth to empiricism Wagner with his mythmaking using the myths of this crucial transition period of Western European cultural history by rendering them timeless had covertly demonstrated began not with the Enlightenment of the 18th, but at the very roots, the very inception of the Western European rise back to social order in the 9th and 10th. The rise of Charlemagne and later the assimilation of the last of the barbarian invaders, the Vikings, had not been a restoration of high culture in fact, but its degradation, its diversion into *realpolitik*. What Wagner had sought with the "purely human" (*das reinmenschliche*) they realized was not purely in the sense of "solely" or "merely" but the everlastingly, the eternally human.

In other words, both Wagner and Tolkien have given us images and figures to which our ethical sensibilities can respond to and cannot help but react positively – heroes who are truly heroic in a Christian ethical sense – but they have done this within the worlds of the advent of the so-called Dark Age cultures.

And further, these are figures and worlds not of a moralistic, legalistic tendentiousness and obviousness... they are figures who transform themselves and even us in a profoundly ontological way: they make us aware of the transformative potential of human nature itself when it is enlightened and empowered by the Divine... This is something that Western religious culture has not seen in 1000 years, or, in other words, since the Dark Ages ended and the Medieval Christian Scholastic epoch began... which in its substitution of rationalism for lost ascetic mysticism thus created the increasing credibility gap that feeds the modern epoch of skepticism towards that Medieval Christian epoch. (For a more, but still inadequate, survey of the background needed to understand this see Appendix VIII.) The only purely Christian ethos the West now remembers. We are in Tolkien and Wagner on the threshold of recovering a kind of heroic Christianity, a blend of ancient heroism with Christian ethics – not a victim-Christianity – where salvation is not mechanistic, not legalistic, nor passive, not instantaneous or substitutionary, but where Divine Providence and human free will must and can interact and cooperate in the purely eternal ontological transformation of our fallen, crippled, ailing nature into its restored original self. Where we are not in total Calvinistic depravity of fatalistic, universal, inherited, Augustinian doubly predestined original guilt, but where something unheard in the West for 1000 years is being presented as an alternative to its conventional religious and anti-religious cultures. This is, in a word, not the pathological Christianities (what I call "Christianism") of Roman Catholicism, nor Protestantism (its child) nor of materialistic humanism (its grandchild), but something new and astounding to the West... New and astounding because it lost and forgot it over the past 1200 years and Wagner and Tolkien have recovered, reminded us all of it.

It is a synthesis of the thesis of seemingly "pagan" ascetically empathetic but joyously liberating holy heroism of an authentic *ontologically* transformative loving Christianity that in its synthesis of the immanent human with an empowering divinization refutes the modern disparagement of religion: the Nietzschean critique of envy and eternal recurrence and the Marxist adoption of

opinions based on spiritually nihilistic materialism. The final last fruits of the long decline of the West. That synthesis is the core reality of the Trinitarian and Christological controversies happening in the East at the very era the West in its Dark Age was losing touch with soteriology of the Apostolic and Patristic Golden Age.

Thus we have finally arrived at the point where Tolkien and Wagner hold out for us to taste and see an eucatastrophic restoration of a culture, of the long "discarded image" (far earlier than Lewis imagined), of Christianity that fulfills the ideals of the Inklings and those vows Tolkien made to his classmates a century ago just before the beginning of the most culturally devastating war of modern times.

APPENDIX I

Wagner's *Ring Cycle* – The Ring of the Nibelung – Myth as ethical drama

Plot Summary

Das Rheingold – The Nibelung Dwarf Alberich rebuffed by the luscious Rhine Daughters steals the magic Gold they guard and turns it into a Ring of Power and Vengeance by cursing love itself.

Wotan the leader of the Gods in order to establish a decent social order of Contracts (rather than the law of the jungle) based on the runes carved on his Spear, has built for himself a Fortress Valhalla.

He pays off the two giants who built it with the Gold and the Ring which he now takes from Alberich who curses it: everyone craves its power, but can't safely keep it as a result of rapacious rivals.

Wotan surrenders the Ring after being warned by Erda the earth goddess that all things end (doom/judgment), so he has to choose: either a legacy of honour or hegemony with the Ring. He chooses the former and gives the Ring away. One giant immediately kills the other over the Ring and departs for wilderness to turn into a Dragon to sleep on his Gold.

Wotan now has a **Dilemma**: how to retrieve the perilous Ring without breaking his Contract with the Giant Dragon and thus undermining his own authority which rests on such contracts?

Answer: He sires a hero who will do it for him. To ensure Wotan is not connected with the hero, he abandons him and puts obstacles in his way, thus teaching him to dismiss the gods' laws.

Die Walküre – **BUT** the hero encounters his twin sister and commits adultery and incest with her as part of his legacy of not heeding the laws of the gods. He also through meeting her finds the Sword (needed to kill the Dragon) promised him by their father Wotan in disguise.

Of course, this whole contrivance of Wotan's proxy hero is exposed by the goddess of honorable marriage. So Wotan after explaining his dilemma to his Valkyrie daughter orders her to announce death to his son the hero for adultery and incest.

However, so moved is she by his heroic fidelity to his sister-wife unto death and by her weakened respect for Wotan that she sides with him against Wotan. She fails because Wotan intervenes and executes his own hero, breaking the Sword.

As a result she is deprived of her divinity and put to sleep in a ring of fire. But so eloquent is her plea that Wotan reduces her sentence and promises the greatest hero will be the one to awaken her: Siegfried, the son of the above hero.

Siegfried – He reforges his father's Sword broken in the fight with Wotan, kills the Dragon (in a futile attempt to learn fear which he associates with feelings of love!) and wins the Ring. He dispatches his treacherously murderous pseudo-mentor, the brother of Alberich, whose sole aim was the Ring and in pure envy and dread raised Siegfried to kill the Dragon.

At this point there is another Wotan-Erda encounter of mutual recriminations for the situation, but he releases her with a foretelling of a hoped for restoration of the Ring to the Rhine by the Valkyrie. He is disabused of his hope upon meeting the blithe Siegfried. But when Siegfried encounters Wotan, he breaks the Spear of Contracts that embodies Wotan's authority. This proves he is not Wotan's proxy. He then proceeds to waken the Valkyrie.

Götterdämmerung – **BUT** this hope proves a vain one, for instead of Siegfried now taking the Ring *at her behest* back to the Rhine Daughters and ending its threat as Wotan explained to her, she is silent and he gives it to her as token of his fidelity. But she also fails to restore the Ring when subsequently appealed to by another Valkyrie on Wotan's behalf.

So Siegfried departs for errantry adventures, but meets the son of Alberich who is half-brother to another set of human brother-sister twins. They drug him to forget the Valkyrie and want to marry the sister. But her full brother wants to marry the Valkyrie. So they send Siegfried off disguised as the brother to fetch the Valkyrie by force. He succeeds chastely but the plot is exposed when the Ring is seen on his finger by the Valkyrie after he took it back from her in the abduction.

The three (Valkyrie & brother & sister) all then plot an honour-killing of Siegfried either out of betrayed love in her case or to save the twins' reputations. They succeed but only by undoing his amnesia thus seeming to justify their deed when he recalls the prior encounter with the Valkyrie which seems to substantiate her claim.

The Rhine Daughters tell the Valkyrie what has really happened, and she reclaims the Ring and returns it to them proclaiming the innocence of her hero and the moral compromise of the gods. All is swept away in the funeral pyre of the two of them.

APPENDIX II

A List of Similarities between Wagner's *Ring Cycle* and Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

Source: *Wagner and Tolkien: Mythmakers*, Renée Vink, Walking Tree, 2012, pp. 15-29

[Those in square brackets are added by TF]

For details see Vink's listing.

1. A dragon guarding a treasure, slain by a hero.
- 2. A magical Ring of gold that bestows power upon the bearer, but carries a curse.**
3. Two relatives quarreling about the Ring, one kills the other.
4. Power of invisibility associated with the Ring.
5. A broken Sword reforged.
6. Ring acquired by stealing it.
7. One owner of Ring hides in a cave, doing nothing with it.
8. Two characters play a riddle game.
9. The Ring betrays its wearer.
10. A hero learns information from a talking bird.
11. Motif of wish for prolongation of life.
 - 11a. Mortality and death must be accepted.
 - 11b. Mortal woman becomes immortal.
12. Loss of primeval innocence and restoration of harmony in the end.
13. Nature is defiled and theft of primeval source light plunges world into darkness.
 - 13a. Symbolical tree is dying or dead.
14. Characters who are spirits of nature sing "nonsense" verses and are untrustworthy guardians of the Gold/OneRing.
 - 14a. Tolkien and Wagner had similar, conservative ideas about the relation of sound & sense in language.
 - 14b. Tolkien character who uses primal language is married to a River Daughter – Wagner's primal language users are daughters of the Rhine.
- 15. Mysterious bearded figure goes about in cloak and broad-brimmed hat [and carrying a staff/spear of power.]**
16. To end evil maker of Ring from regaining it, it must be returned to its elemental source.
17. A central character gives the Ring away of his own free will.
18. Self-immolation on a pyre by a character.
19. War-like young woman ceases to be a shieldmaiden.
20. An evil character tries to seize the Ring but perishes in the cataclysmic event by the same element whence the Ring came.
21. The Ring destroyed: corrupted power is overthrown.
22. The Light Elves disappear from the world; Men are left to make a fresh start.
23. The world is engendered from music, and history from disharmony.
 - 23a. Role of music in their artistic works: Tolkien language, Wagner score
 - [23b. The use of leitmotive recollections in Wagner = the use of older tales in Tolkien]**
24. A hero loses his family, wanders among enemies, before finding his soul-mate and a new worse enemy.
25. A fight between a wolf and a hound.
26. A brother and sister in an incestuous relationship.
27. A dwarf called Mimé/Mim.
28. Dwarves are greedy and evil.
- [29. Alberich + Mimé = Stinker & Slinker = Gollum/Sméagol.]

APPENDIX III

Performances of Wagner's *Ring* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, London (during Tolkien's Lifetime: 1892-1973)

Source: *An Illustrated History of Wagner's Ring at the Royal Opera House* by John Snelson, Oberon Books, London, 2006, Appendix I – Performances and Casting of *The Ring* – pp. 164-176.

Virtual annual performances throughout this period except for the two World Wars.

In German unless noted:	1930 – 2 Cycles
1892 – Sf & 1 Cycle (First performances at	1931 – 2 Cycles & Valk
Covent Garden)	1932 – 2 Cycles
1893 – Walk & Sf	1933 – 2 Cycles
1895 – Walk	1934 – 2 Cycles
1896 – Walk	1935 – 2 Cycles
1897 – Walk & Sf 1898 – Walk & 3 Cycles	1936 – 2 Cycles
1899 – Walk	1937 – 2 Cycles
1900 – Walk & Sf & 2 Cycles	1938 – 2 Cycles
1901 – Sf	1939 – 1 Cycle
1902 – Walk & Sf	Total of 31 complete Cycles!!
1903 – 3 Cycles & Walk	1948 – Valk & Sf (Eng) & Valk
1905 – 2 Cycles	1949 – 2 Cycles
1906 – 2 Cycles & Walk	1950 – 2 Cycles
1907 – Walk & 2 Cycles & Walk	1951 – 2 Cycles & Walk (64 Cycles before LotR)
1908 – 2 Cycles (Eng) & Walk & Göttdd	1953 – Walk & Sf
1909 – 3 Cycles (Eng) & Walk	1954 – 2 Cycles
1910 – 2 Cycles	1955 – 2 Cycles
1911 – 3 Cycles	1956 – 2 Cycles
1912 – 2 Cycles	1957 – 2 Cycles & Göttdd & Walk
1913 – 3 Cycles	1958 – 2 Cycles
1914 – Walk & 2 Cycles	1959 – 2 Cycles
Total of 27 complete Cycles!!	1960 – 2 Cycles
1921 – Valk, Rhg, Sf (Eng)	1961 – Walk
1922 – 2 Cycles (Eng) & Valk, Sf	1962 – Sf & Walk
1923 – 1 Cycle (Eng) & Valk & Sf (Eng)	1963 – Göttdd
1924 – 2 Cycles & Sf (Act 3 Sc 2) & Göttdd	1964 – 2 Cycles
& Valk	1965 – 2 Cycles & Rhg & Walk & Sf
1925 – Walk	1966 – 2 Cycles
1926 – 1 Cycle & Walk & Göttdd	1967 – 2 Cycles
1927 – 2 Cycles	1968 – 2 Cycles
1928 – 2 Cycles	1970 – 2 Cycles
1929 – 2 Cycles	1971 – 2 Cycles
	Total of 34 complete Cycles!!



Das Rheingold first performances around the world in major cities:

Source: <http://opera.stanford.edu/Wagner/Rheingold/history.html>

- Austria: 24 Jan 1878, **Vienna**
- **United Kingdom: 5 May 1882, London** (Her Majesty's) [as part of the *Ring*]
- Poland: Sep 1882, **Wroclaw** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Netherlands: 2 Jan 1883, **Amsterdam** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Belgium: 23 Jan 1883, **Brussels** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Switzerland: 26 Mar 1883, **Basle** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Italy: 14 Apr 1883, **Venice** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Hungary: 23 May 1883, **Budapest** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Czech Republic: 19 Dec 1885, **Prague**
- United States: 4 Jan 1889, **New York** (Met)
- Russia: 11 Mar 1889, **St. Petersburg** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Latvia: 26 Oct 1890, **Riga**
- Sweden: 26 Oct 1901, **Stockholm**
- France: 19 Mar 1902, **Nice** [concert 13 Jan 1901, Paris]
- Belarus: 13 Feb 1908, **Lvov**
- Denmark: 2 May 1908, **Copenhagen**
- Monaco: 26 Jan 1909, **Monte Carlo** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Portugal: 1909, **Lisbon** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Scotland: 28 Feb 1910, **Edinburgh** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Spain: Mar 1910, **Madrid**
- Argentina: 11 Aug 1910, **Buenos Aires**
- South Africa: 1913, **Johannesburg**
- Brazil: Sep 1922, **Rio de Janeiro**
- Finland: 13 Mar 1930, **Helsinki**
- Croatia: 11 Mar 1935, **Zagreb**
- Romania: 27 Apr 1938, **Bucharest** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Bulgaria: 10 Nov 1938, **Sofia** [as part of the *Ring*]
- Greece: 26 Nov 1938, **Athens** [as part of the *Ring*]



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***Ring* performances the first years after the world premiere (1876) in Bayreuth, Bavaria:**

1878 München

1879 Wien

1880 Hamburg

1881 Berlin (Angelo Neumann's travelling Wagner-Theatre with guest performances in Berliner Viktoria-Theater)

1882-1883 (Angelo Neumann's travelling Wagner-Theatre on tour: **London (Her Majesty's Theatre), Breslau, Königsberg, Danzig, Hannover, Bremen, Barmen, Dresden, Amsterdam, Brüssel, Aachen, Düsseldorf, Mainz, Darmstadt, Karlsruhe, Strasburg, Stuttgart, Basel, Venice, Bologna, Rome, Torino, Triest, Budapest, Graz** –

totaling 135 performances of *The Ring*!

APPENDIX IV

The Essential Wagner – or Eucatastrophic Wagner:

The Flying Dutchman – The ship's captain is condemned to everlasting voyages by the devil who hears his oath to sail round the Horn if it takes him forever. But he is promised release if he finds true love unto death. He finds it in Senta, a sincere village maid; he then renounces his redemption in response to her vow, **thus he is redeemed when her vow fulfilled.**

Tannhäuser – A sensuous passionate troubadour Tannhäuser finds redemption in the self-sacrificing Christian love of his one true love Elizabeth when he responds to her sacrifice (of dying for him of a broken heart) and renounces the pagan sensuous delights of the Venusberg after **not finding absolution from the Church, but from God through her.**

Lohengrin – Falsely accused, a princess Elsa is defended by her dream knight Lohengrin who tests her by forbidding her to question his nature and identity – out of love for him she asks and they lose each other – a catastrophic ending unique in Wagner (somewhat tempered by a literal deus ex machina ending of the return of the lost heir to the throne) as they must part forever. There is a eucatastrophic ending for the political situation, but **Elsa and her knight Lohengrin are parted forever. This is perhaps the only Wagner drama with such a catastrophic ending.**

For the eucatastrophic endings of the Ring dramas see the main text.

Tristan and Isolde – Act One – A Hero Tristan kills the fiancée of a princess Isolde and then returns later to take her to his king for a bride. Earlier in that duel with the fiancée he had been wounded yet healed incognito by princess at which point they fell in love. They repress their mutual love. On shipboard to the king they have a verbal duel and implicitly agree to a suicide pact. Her servant substitutes a love potion for poison. Their repressed love is thus exposed to themselves but hidden from others.

Act Two – They secretly meet and sing of the intense nature of love and death and the transcending of each by means of the other. They are however discovered by king and court, but he pledges to go ahead of her into death if she will follow. He challenges the courtier who exposed them and is mortally wounded.

Act Three – He lives to be carried to his ancestral home. Wounded he accepts his own responsibility for it all. He has a vision of her coming to heal him and intentionally exacerbates his wound fatally. **She appears, only for him to die in her arms and after an exoneration by king dies with him in a triumphantly ecstatic reunion on a spiritual plane their love fulfilled in transcendent death.**

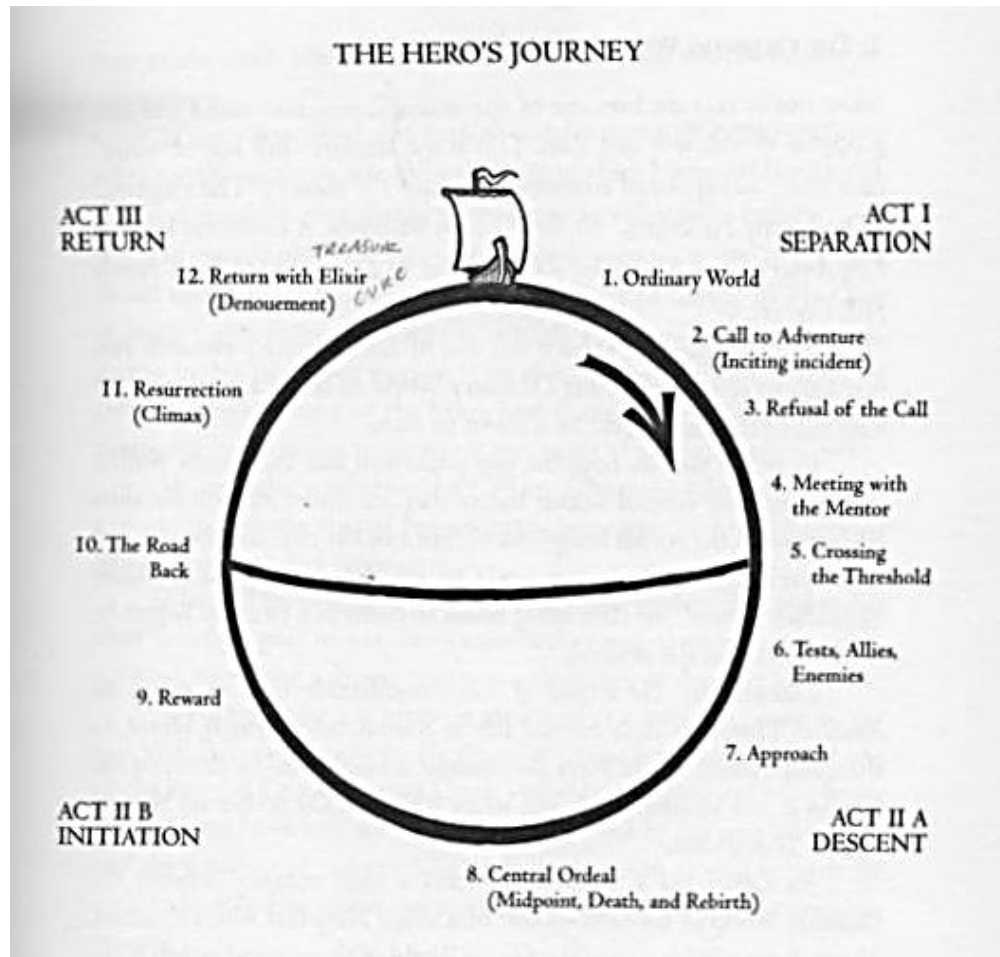
Die Meistersinger (pl.) – Act One – A Hero in love with a merchant's Daughter must win a song contest to be held by the poets' guild to gain her. He is taught the rules and is given a try-out, but his reckless song is rejected at the instigation of a pedantic Clerk-wannabe poet, a rival for her hand and judge of the try-out. A kindly Shoemaker-poet understands the situation. Act Two – The Clerk-poet comes to try out his song that evening and is corrected noisily by the Shoemaker

who prevents the elopement of the Hero and merchant's Daughter. But the racket the two of them make causes a night-riot by neighbors. Act Three – Next morning the Shoemaker-poet teaches the Hero how to write mature poetry and he uses his dream of love as muse and mother of mankind as content. All the immediate friends join in when he finishes the draft of the song. The town meets for mid-summer celebrations and the song contest. The Clerk-poet tries out some notes of the draft song that he pilfered but fails to the ridicule of all. He accuses the poet-Shoemaker. **But the Hero gives a wonderful rendition of the true song and exonerates the Shoemaker and wins his true love and becomes a mastersinger. And the town ends in harmony and peace.**

Parsifal – Act One – In the realm of the Holy Grail its guardian knight-King has lost the other sacred relic, the Spear of Longinus to a sorcerer. He is wounded incurably during the event. But is promised a guileless hero will come to cure him. Parsifal appears and seems to be the one but is mocked by a woman who is in secret a pagan agent under the power of the sorcerer. He is taken to behold the display of the Grail in a ceremony which accomplishes a regular renewal of the Grail knighthood. He fails to grasp its import for the wounded King. He is dismissed. Act Two – He comes after much time to the realm of the enemy of the Grail who stole the Spear and wounded the King. He is tempted by Flower Maidens and dismisses them. Then he is tempted by their irresistible sorceress leader (who effected the fall of the Grail guardian so the Spear could be stolen). She appeals to his longing for his mother with love's first kiss. Suddenly he understands the suffering of the Grail guardian, repels her and making the sign of the Cross with the Spear destroys the enemy stronghold. Act Three – He eventually wanders back after many hardships into the Grail realm, **is recognized carrying the long lost Spear by a hermit and is consecrated to his kingship. They return to the Grail hall and he heals the guardian, releases the pagan woman from a curse of endless life (and suffering for having mocked Christ) and assumes the kingship of the Grail.**

APPENDIX V

The Campbell HERO CYCLE Structures in Wagner's Ring – separation / initiation / return



(Vogler, Christopher, *The Writer's Journey*, p. 9)

Three heroes of the Ring Cycle: Wotan, Brünnhilde, Siegfried = a 3-fold *bildungsroman* (novel of formation, or education) edification of personality). The micro examples are classic Hero Cycle: acquisition of a talisman, while the macro examples are more acquisition of ethical consciousness than of a talisman.

Each have an actual **micro** journey (within one drama) of acquisition of a talisman typical of the Campbell cycle and a **macro** consciousness expanding experience (over the expanse of the whole Ring Cycle)

Micro: Wotan descends to the subterranean dwarf realm of Nibelheim to retrieve the Rhinegold and the Ring: he has mentors in Mime (hostile) and Loge (friendly), retrieves the talisman (Ring and Tarnhelm and the Gold summoned by Alberich himself), saves Valhalla (for the moment) using his Spear as wand of control.

Macro – Wotan's encounter with Brünnhilde teaches him the worthlessness of power and his encounter with and observation of the fate of Siegfried teaches him the resignation to his doom (judgment) his situation is his mentor.

His descent is into dealing on the earthly level with the twins and Brünnhilde and his ascent is his rising (which begins below Brünnhilde's heights in his encounters with Erda and Siegfried) to a resignation of his hegemony as he awaits his end in Valhalla.

Macro A – Brünnhilde announces to Siegmund his death but is so moved by his fidelity unto death she tries to alter his sentence – Siegmund is her mentor as is Wotan's dilemma with the Ring as revealer of the plot. She retrieves the broken sword as talisman that Siegfried will later reforge.

Macro B – Brünnhilde's encounter with Siegfried, first as liberator, then as betrayer, then as victim of fickleness mentors her the difference between infatuation and love, between human love and divine love. Her encounter with Wotan also mentors her on the difference between authentic, uncompromised authority and that which is compromised and rendered ineffective. The intersection of these two vectors teaches her the resignation necessary to return the Ring.

In other words, Brünnhilde's descent is into the world of human mortality, her return is her heroic if not almost godlike restoration in her final moments.

Micro – Brünnhilde goes down to the Rhine after Siegfried's death and is mentored by the Rhine Daughters as to the truth about Siegfried's betrayal and death and then retrieves the Ring from his hand and restores it to them.

Micro – Siegfried encounters Fafner with Mime as mentor and retrieves the Ring and Tarnhelm after reforging the broken Sword. He then goes on mentored by the Woodbird to find, awaken and pledge fidelity to Brünnhilde.

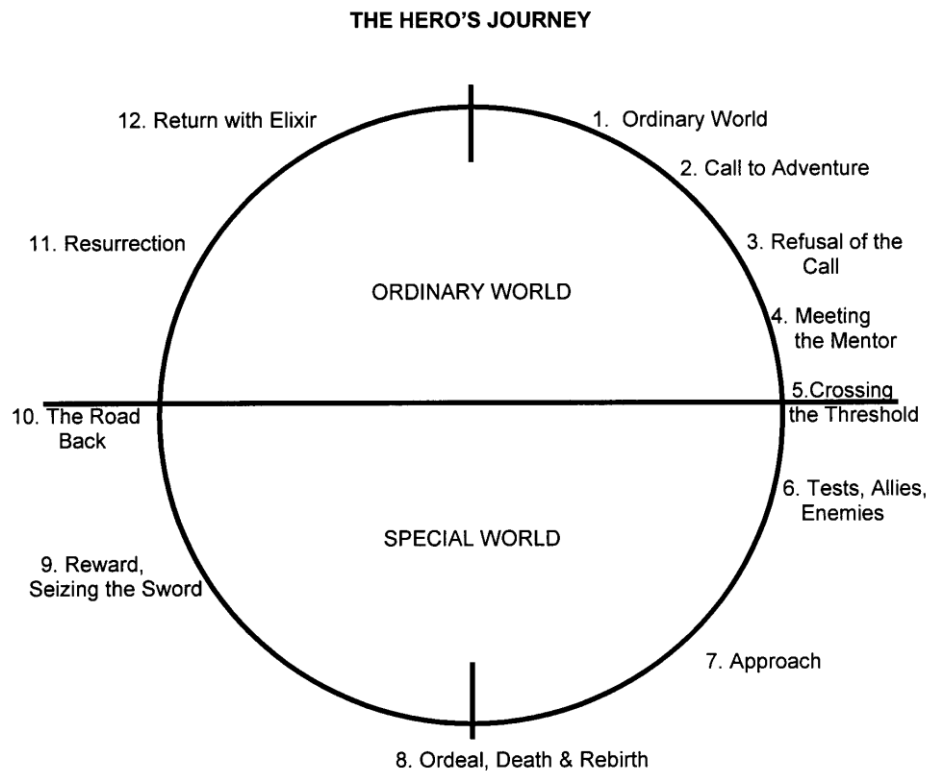
His descent is into the dragon's cave and his return is his ascent up to Brünnhilde's heights. In a sense, his is a constant rise from the depths of Mime's cave which he descended into as a newborn long before this drama begins.

Macro – Siegfried encounters Brünnhilde learns love, then descends to lust with Gutrune and regains his heroic stature in death through resignation.

His descent here is into the human world of intrigue and deceptions, his ascent is his restoration of devotion to Brünnhilde in his final moments.

Joseph Campbell "Hero of a Thousand Faces"

THE STANDARD PATH of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation* — *initiation* — *return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.



<https://chrisvogler.wordpress.com/>

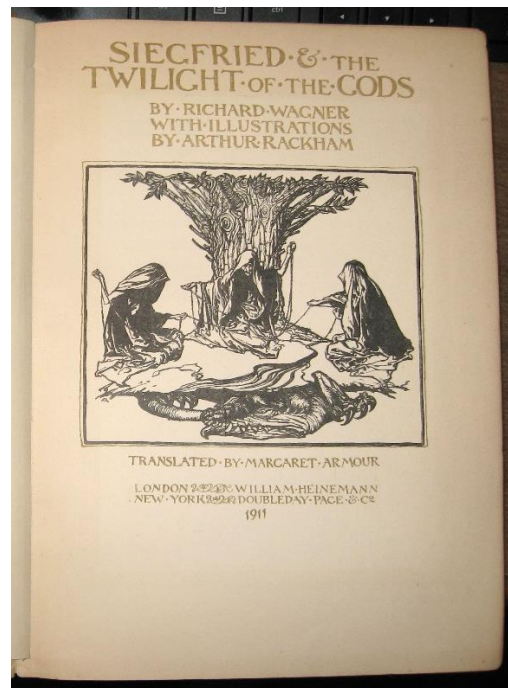
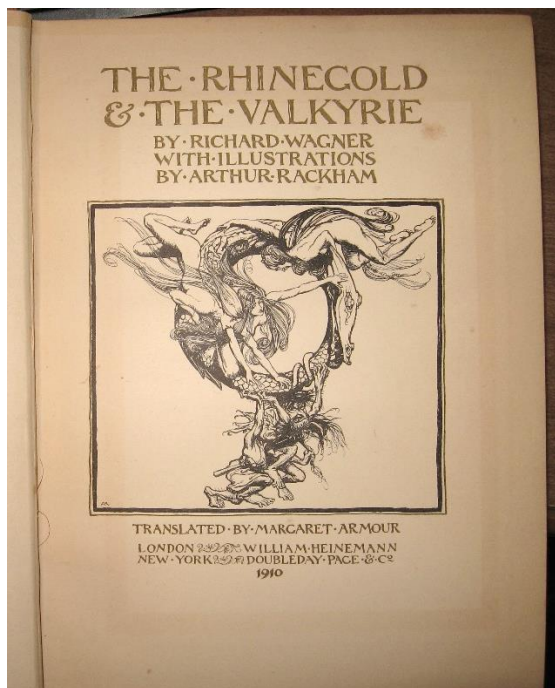
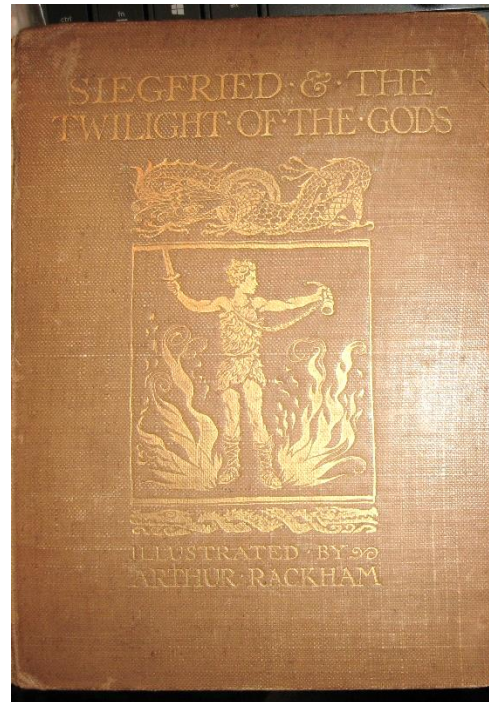
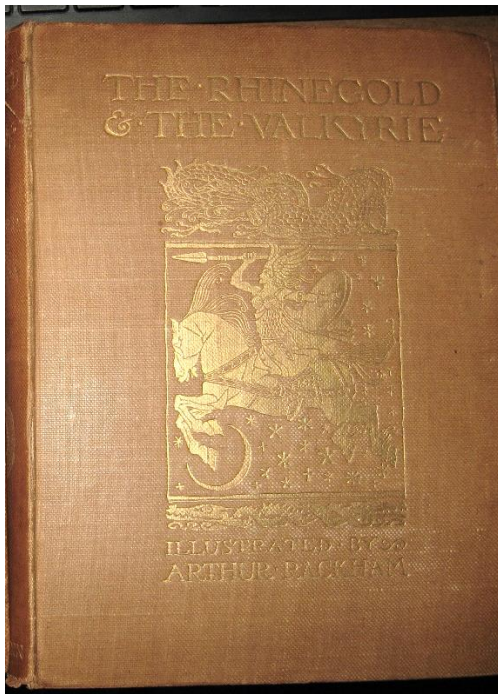
A hero issues forth from the ordinary world of common day into a region of special supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won (8): the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (12). Among the most important of the allies are the Mentor Figures, who school and advise the hero.

APPENDIX VI

Sample Arthur Rackham's 64 illustrations of Wagner's *Ring*

Wm. Heinemann editions 1910-1911, translation by Margaret Armour

"...Pure "Northernness" engulfed me: a vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of Northern summer, remoteness, severity...."



The covers and title pages



Siegmund pulls Notung from the tree
Die Walküre – Act I



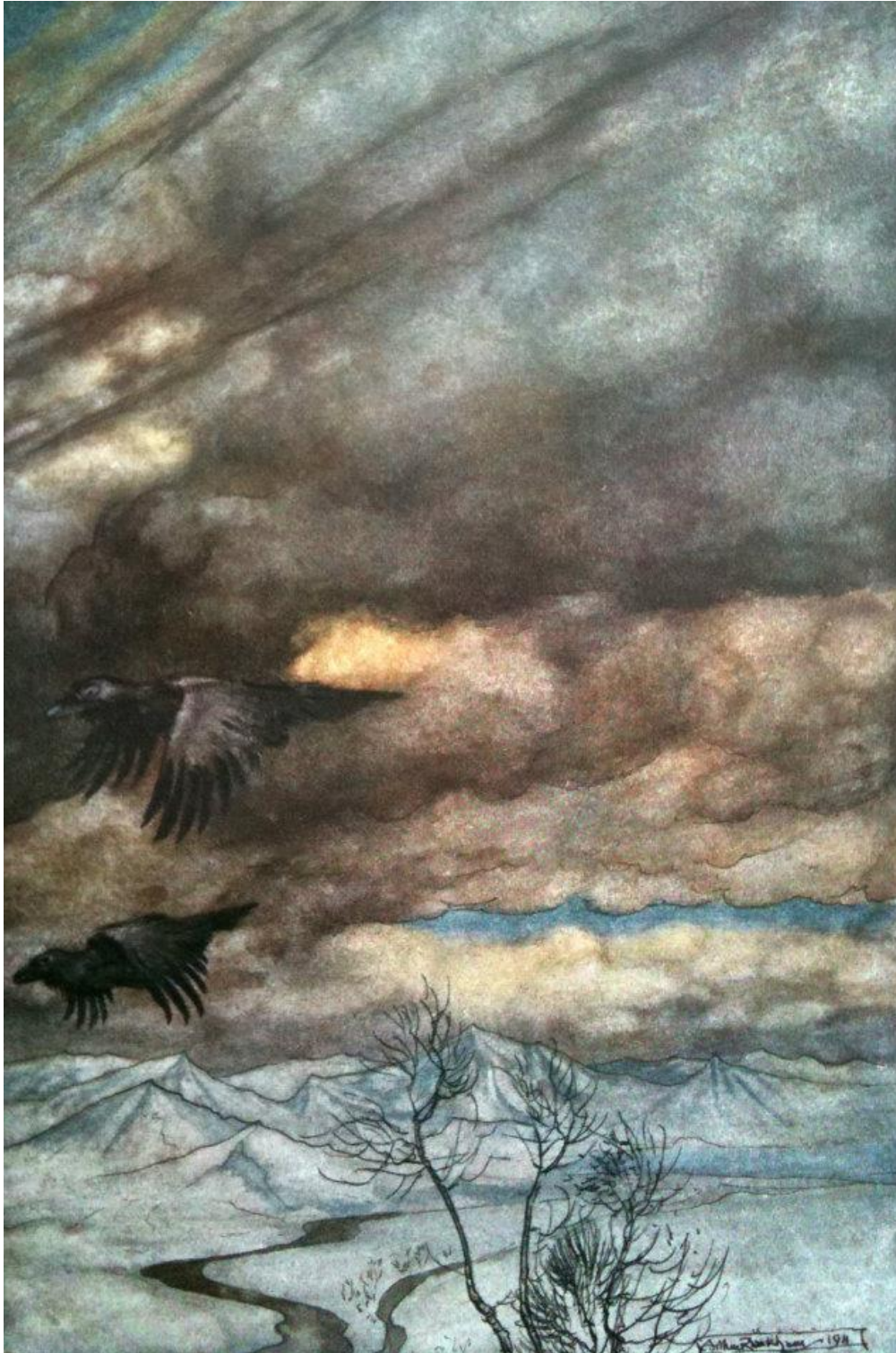
Brünnhilde Warrior Maid
Die Walküre – Act II



The Ride of the Valkyries
Die Walküre – Act III



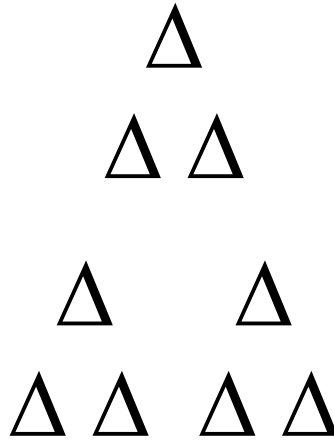
Siegfried kills the Dragon Fafner
Siegfried – Act II



Wotan's Ravens ("bearing fearsome, longed for tidings")
Götterdämmerung – Act III

APPENDIX VII

The Dialectical Tripartite Architectural Structure of Wagner's Works



Introductory – the STRUCTURE

Each drama has 3 Acts –
 each Act has 3 principle Scenes –
 and the dramas form 3 Trilogies which then form
 a macro Total Trilogy

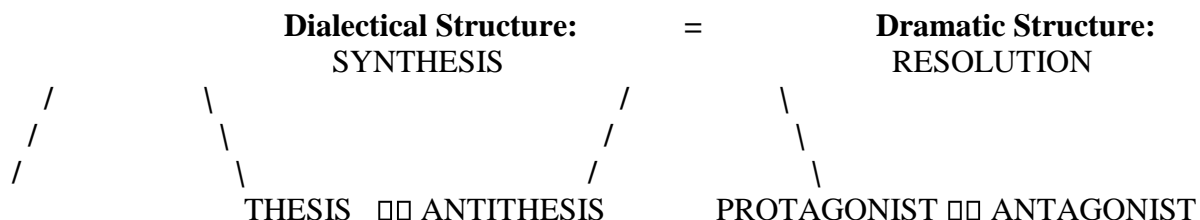
The Scenic divisions are actually designated and labeled as such by Wagner in all the dramas except for *Parsifal*, so they had significance for him.

- a principle scene is one in which it is comprised primarily of a dramatic (conflicted) dialogue between two characters which is resolved either positively (a synthesis) or negatively (a complication) and advances the main theme of transcendental experience
- a secondary scene is one in which the mechanics of the plot (NOT the advancement of the ethical theme {a transcendental experience} of the work) is worked out.

First Trilogy – *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhauser*, *Lohengrin*

Second Trilogy – *The Ring Cycle* (Three Days with a Fore-evening) – (*Das Rheingold* is in 3 scenes with a prelude scene in the Rhine – *Götterdämmerung* is in 3 Acts with a Prologue)

Third Trilogy – *Tristan und Isolde*, *Meistersinger*, *Parsifal*



The essence of drama is conflict, internal or external. The point of the drama is to resolve the conflict. This is simply another form of the dynamic of the dialectic, but which is the paradigm, logic and ideas or history and drama is an open question.

The result of the dialectic depends on whether the two contrasting elements are complementary or irreconcilable opposites.

A positive result is usually the consequence of complementaries finding a higher resolution – a transcendent higher denominator.

A negative result is usually the consequence of irreconcilable opposites resulting in a stalemate – which produces a lowest common denominator thus a deterioration.

Hegel only considered the positive alternative, hence his optimistic view of cultural history. Reality however shows negative results are more the rule and stalemate and deterioration the result.

(For a very brief rundown on this famous concept of Hegel's see the entry by that name in the *Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia*. The entry makes the salient point that for Hegel the opposition that sparks the dialectic was internal rather than external, but that only makes it all the more relevant to Wagner's main characters and their internal conflicts, like Sieglinde, Wotan, Brünnhilde, or Tristan, Sachs or Parsifal, to name but a few. However, in the Wagner dramas these internal conflicts are often catalyzed by other characters.)

Another article in the *Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia* about "Wagner as Essayist" notes this:

"Most notably "Aufhebung" remains important to his thinking. A famous/notorious three-way German pun, it is often translated into English as "synthesis" (or in some academic texts "sublation"). In the philosophical context it indicates an enhanced state which comes about from the merger of the best aspects of the two conflicting states that precede it. This process is driven by something called a dialectic, whereby each state is bent on producing its negation or opposite. As such it is a crucial component in Wagner's metaphysical thinking and is prominent in the essays." (p. 641)

The key to understanding the Aufhebung concept is that it is *both* a transcendental and an immanent reality in drama and history and ideas.

First Trilogy – THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In our Western European modern culture:

- the **need for redemption (transformation)** of human nature/consciousness from ego to empathetic love achieved by a transcendental experience
- unachieved by **the failed Hero**

Fliegende Holländer: – Senta vs. the Townsfolk, crew of the *Dutchman* vs the Townsfolk, Vanderdecken vs. the elements, then versus the curse, then versus himself –

The reversing eucatastrophe: (Vanderdecken's experience of Senta's willingness to self-sacrifice leads to his own renunciation of his redemption, which is in fact his redemption!)

Tannhäuser: the failure of institutional religion (the pope) or art (the Tournament of Song) and the success of transcendental personal experience in achieving this transformation of consciousness: The eucatastrophe of Tannhäuser's being forgiven in response to Elizabeth's fidelity unto death. *Lohengrin*: the failure of Romantic ecstasy (Elsa) and of rarified abstraction (Lohengrin) to achieve this transcendental consciousness transformation experience – **NO reversal/NO eucatastrophe**

In every case **the hero fails** to achieve his **own** redemption: it (and he) depend on another achieving it for him. Wagner is calling into question the basic hero concept of European culture.

This failure then requires further probing into the nature and ground of Western culture to find the reasons for this failure. So Wagner turns from legend to epic.

The turn of Wagner from legend (romanticism) to epic (narrative philosophical drama) also requires the romantic opera style of the first three works to become epic dramatic opera with a narrative style. The narrative style in music requires the development of the leitmotivic style to achieve unity musically. It also reflects the use of the kenning (in Norse and Anglo-Saxon poetics) or the tagline epithet in Homer. Wagner however takes the idea of a musical motive association to new heights and complexity by increasing the number and then developing and interacting his leitmotifs in a symphonic web. This replaces the old sonata form (ABA or ABbaA) of musical development as well as the separate number (aria, ensemble) structure.

Second Trilogy – THE ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM – the nature of love (physical vs. psychological) and **the nature of power** (dominational/coercive vs. empathetic experiential) as **refracted through the nature of the failed Hero who fails due to lack of the noble Mentor**

Das Rheingold sets up the situation wherein Wotan recognizes the need for redemption (from the Ring of Power) –

Sc. 1 – Alberich vs. the Rhine Daughters → the theft of the Gold

Sc. 2 – Wotan vs. the Giants + Loge → the descent into Nibelheim to retrieve the Gold (Ring)

Sc. 3 – Wotan + Loge vs. Alberich → the possession of the Ring

Sc. 4 – Wotan vs. the Giants + Erda → the surrender of the Ring to them

Alberich has been stopped for now, but Valhalla remains endangered while the Ring is at large (i.e., Wotan vs. his own Spear → the concept of a free hero to repossess the Ring)

Die Walküre – Wotan and Brünnhilde learn (she from Siegmund, and he from her) to surrender to the consequences of their choices = their doom/judgment – they achieve their transcendental experiences

Act I – Siegmund and Sieglinde vs. Hunding → their falling in love and escape

Act II – Fricka vs. Wotan turns into one of Brünnhilde vs Wotan and becomes absolute divisive (not synthetic)

Act III – These dialectics are all resolved in the synthesis of Wotan + Brünnhilde via the promise of Siegfried: the hero to repossess the Ring

Siegfried – Siegfried learns to become a hero

Act I – Siegfried vs. Mime → the Sword reforged

Act II – Siegfried vs. Fafner the Dragon → he gains the Ring and Tarnhelm → Siegfried vs. Mime → the execution of the latter. Then Siegfried + a Forest Bird → the path to Brünnhilde

Act III – Wotan vs. Erda → the anticipation of Brünnhilde restoring the Ring

Wotan vs. Siegfried → his insolence demonstrates his lack of transcendental consciousness = his unworthiness of Brünnhilde and ∴ the potential failure to realize the anticipated

Siegfried vs. Brünnhilde → his empathy with her fears (he has just learned fear from her asleep!) → their triumphant pledge of love unto death

Götterdämmerung – resolution of the nature of the love and power needed to create a hero

Prologue – Norns vs. history of the Ring → fate or freedom?

Siegfried + Brünnhilde → pledge of fidelity & surrender of the Ring to her

Act I – Gunther vs. Hagen → the plot

The Gibichungs vs. Sf → the potion & blood brotherhood → the expedition to Brünnhilde

Brünnhilde vs. Waltraute → refusal to return the Ring to the Rhine Daughters

Siegfried vs. Brünnhilde → she is coerced into surrender to Gunther and he repossesses the Ring

Act II – Alberich vs. Hagen → vow to gain the Ring

Brünnhilde vs. the Gibichungs (+ Siegfried) → his Ring exposes the plot → oath on Hagen's Spear → the Vengeance trio

Act III – Siegfried vs. the Rhine Daughter → his heroic challenge to death

Hagen vs. Siegfried → his death

Siegfried + Brünnhilde (vision) → his entrusting the Ring to her

Brünnhilde + Siegfried + Wotan (their self-sacrifices) → the Return of the Ring

The inability of Wotan to mentor Brünnhilde or Siegfried leads to their catastrophe: it is a breakdown of communication due to ethical compromise

To achieve the transcendent musical experience of an actualized potential solution to the discovery of the reasons for the hero-mentor failure, Wagner then further develops the narrative leitmotivic style of distinct contrastive leitmotives into a genuinely integral symphonic style of similar and subtly graded leitmotifs more descriptive of inner states than of dramatic narrative elements for the third trilogy. This transition begins actually with *Siegfried* Act 3, and *Götterdämmerung* since it is in the interim between them and the earlier *Ring* bits that he composes *Tristan* and *Meistersinger*.

The Third Trilogy – THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM-- the creation of the successful Hero requires the noble Mentor

Tristan und Isolde – the need for transcendence consciousness in the Hero – Hero as self-Mentor

Act I – Isolde vs. Tristan → the "potion" → their recognition of their need for each other

Act II – Tristan + Isolde → their recognition of their inseparability even in death

Tristan + Isolde vs Mark → their recognition of the need for and surrender to death

Act III – Tristan vs. himself → his acknowledgement of his responsibility for the situation

Tristan + Isolde → their final transfiguration/transcendence

Meistersinger – the nature and exercise of the benevolent Mentor figure

Act I – Walter vs. the Masters → the need for inspiration

Act II – Sachs vs. Beckmesser → the need for art (not artifice)

Act III – (Sachs + history → wisdom)

Sachs + Walter → inspiration structured into art

Sachs + Beckmesser → artifice misled by itself

Sachs + Walter + Eva → culmination of inspiration + art

Sachs + Townsfolk → art as vision of dawn (the future)

Beckmesser vs. himself → exposé of artifice

Walter + Eva → art triumphant

Parsifal – the realization of heroic consciousness (of himself and his mission) when benevolent mentorship fails but hostile mentorship succeeds in spite of itself.

Act I

(Gurnemanz + Pages → the backstory)

Gurnemanz vs. Parsifal → the pure fool?

Amfortas vs. Titirel → the Grail reveal

Parsifal vs. the Grail reveal → his non-response

Act II

Klingsor vs. Kundry → his coercion of her

Parsifal vs. the Flower Maidens → his disinterest

Parsifal vs. Kundry → the transcendental experience of Amfortas suffering

Act III

Gurnemanz + Parsifal → his consecration to his mission

Amfortas vs. the Grail Brotherhood → Amfortas' refusal

Parsifal + the Grail → the restoration of the Brotherhood

APPENDIX VIII

What Happened to Western Christianity

In this era of pluralism, multi-culturalism, ecumenism the following may seem judgmental and harsh. But once it is understood it explains the present situation culturally and spiritually in the West, and by extension, as Western culture has become the paradigm for other continents, the modern world as a whole. The West has undergone a crisis of faith for the past 250 years, but the roots of the problem lie much further back in its history.

To truly understand and accept this spiritual history it is helpful that one has experience within the Western Christian church (Roman Catholic and then Protestant) as well as within the Orthodox Church. This enables one to perceive the contrast between them, not as abstract theory, but as immediate experience of their two conflicting and mutually exclusive realities. For their conceptions, based on their most profound experiences, of what Christianity is are very different indeed, such that the 500 year old disputes between the Roman Papacy and the Protestant Reformers seems slight indeed compared with gulf between them both and the "Eastern" Orthodox Church.

First, a bit of history. The *völkerwanderung* (the barbarian invasions) from 400-1000 AD did more than just destroy the social and cultural hegemony of the ancient world's civilization, they also destroyed the crucial link between the Eastern and Western Roman empires with the result that the patriarchy of the Western church in Rome ceased to have the identity it had as a result of its links with the other four patriarchies of the East. The consequences of this for theology and ecclesiology were disastrous, and consequently for the very nature of its Christian spirituality. The restoration of a Western Roman Empire by Charlemagne at the beginning of the 9th century did not help matters because it arose as an intended rival, not as an ally or partner and colleague of the Eastern Roman Empire (commonly called the Byzantine Empire by Western scholarship). This culminated in the Great Schism of 1054 and reached a point of actual invasion and conquest by the West of the Eastern Church in the infamous Fourth Crusade of 1204 and has continued in the most unfortunate attempts of the Western churches to assert their hegemony over the Orthodox Churches in Greece and Russia with militant missionary efforts by the Jesuits and Protestants as evidenced by the Uniates (and later, Fatima) and the Russian Baptists to this day.

But behind that history lies its real cause: the lack of understanding of the theology and ecclesiology and liturgical experience of the Orthodox Church by the West which is due not to merely political or social difference, but the underlying deviations from the original theological /ecclesial/liturgical unity of the five Orthodox patriarchates (Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome, Antioch and Alexandria). This real cause is apparent if one understands the fundamental principle of human society: that the identity of a cultural ethos arises from its spiritual/ethical principles: it's understanding of what reality is, its mindset, if you will. When that understanding changes, the entire character of the culture changes. And this is what happened in the West.

Let us give a very inadequate sketch or survey of just what those differences between the two churches, Western and Orthodox are. They concern the very conceptions of what Grace, salvation, redemption, the church itself are which in turn rest upon the Trinitarian and Christological realities that were defined and understood by the great Seven Ecumenical Councils and were further revealed in subsequent smaller councils and statements by the four Eastern Patriarchates (to which were added the national patriarchates of Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, etc.).

In contrast to the theological experiences of the East as embodied in those councils, the West has relied on the theological theories of Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas among many others, but they can be taken as representative and foundational for not only the Roman Papacy, but basically the Protestant Reformers as well. These theological speculations (and innovations) are to be contrasted with the theological and ecclesiological perceptions of the Orthodox Fathers too numerous to mention but can be represented by the Cappadocian Patristic consensus maintained and continued in an unbroken tradition by St. Isaac the Syrian, St. John Climacus, St. John of Damascus, St. Gregory Palamas and the later hesychastic spiritual fathers of Russia and Greece. They are evidence not only of different theological results, but of an entirely different theological/spiritual methodology, epistemology: a heuristic not of rationalistic logic learned from philosophical literature, even spiritual literature, but of life-long ascetic experience learned by spiritual purification from an authorized monastic elder. The result of these two divergent means of learning about reality has been two entirely different, contrasting and mutually exclusive conceptions of Christianity itself.

The Western methodology begins with Augustine who until very recently (the last century or less) remained unknown to the Orthodox, but became the paradigm and bedrock foundation of Western theologizing ever since he was discovered and promoted by the theologians around Charlemagne in his attempt to create a rival or native Western intellectual school to give his imperial ambitions cachet in order to re-establish the Roman Empire in the West. The problem with this Augustinian project lies deep in the bishop of Hippo's individualistic and rationalistic approach to theologizing. He philosophized too easily on his own, rather than participating in the community of understanding and experience that the Orthodox Patristic tradition was developing. He relied too heavily on the Platonic and Neo-platonic principles as Aquinas would on Aristotelian principles later. Unlike the Orthodox Greek Fathers who could cope with those giants of pre-Christian thought and culture, who were not intimidated or awed by them, the Latin West was unable to maintain a judicious distance and so without fundamental reservations adopted their categories and methods wholesale. The Orthodox and Greek speaking East, however, balanced the pre-Christian terminology with the liturgical and ascetic experience of the guiding great Desert Fathers within which they lived and developed and thus they could inform it with new and purely Christian content and meaning.

The result of this Augustinian paradigm was that the West adopted his theological errors and speculations without reservation or even awareness of their problematic nature. For example, it is from him that the West learns the concept that would become known as the Filioque wherein the ontological monarchy of the Father is mistakenly thought to be shared with the Son. It is from him that concepts tainted with pagan determinism, fatalism are introduced in the form of the West's misconception known as "Original Sin" or "Predestination." These are symptoms of the methodological syndrome or spiritual/cultural "disease" that produced Scholasticism, the Anselmian/Aquinian attempts to prove by logic the existence of God, the introduction of the innovation of "created" grace, the Anselmian definitions of redemption as "vicarious satisfaction" or substitutionary atonement (which is an amalgam of Roman legalism with Teutonic weregild). A definition or understanding or experience of redemption which relied on conceiving of God the Father as a stern judge of unremitting, unrelenting rectitude victimizing His Son with extreme crucifixional tortures as payment for mankind's depravity or inherited insult to the Divine honour, rather than a benevolent Trinitarian accord or unanimity to rescue mankind in toto or in particular from his mistaken or misguided delusions about happiness. In other words a crucifixional deal about salvation came to dominate and then replace an ontologically resurrectional reality. Grace

became favour rather than transformational and transcending. Juridicism replaced ontology. A rationalistic ontics about "a supreme being" replaced the Apostolic, Patristic experience of the divinization of human nature by uncreated Grace, of what were called the Energies of God. In other words, to take a hint from Heidegger, Western Christian theology followed the same path that pre-Christian philosophizing had done in the fourth century BC.

The sum total of these Western deviations and distortions of the nature of Christianity (what I would rather call "Christianism"), is that the great achievement of the golden age of Orthodox Patristics (300-800 AD) was lost. That achievement was the maintaining and clarification of the genuine ontological experience of salvation gained through the Mysteries (Sacraments) of the Church perceived through the ascetically, not intellectually, purified eyes of the great Saints of the height of the Imperial period. What was lost was the immediate transcendent experience of Grace itself as an empowerment, a *liberation* from the slavery to the passions or vices (which is what the Greek word for redemption (λύτρωσις) means literally) which the West (the whole West: Roman or Protestant!) following Anselm lost touch with and replaced with a payment, a buying off sort of ersatz. The most drastic consequence of this whole process was that instead of a mystical (liturgical/ascetic) experience of the empowering of human deification accomplished by the transmission of the Christological union of the two ontological realities, human and Divine being, through the Church, there was substituted a rationalistic, intellectual, abstract theoretical mode of "experience", of mere speculation.

This process did not occur overnight nor universally. It happened gradually but inexorably as the Roman hegemony spread over the West and with it the retreat of those pockets and islands of Greek (pre-schism Western) spiritual experience. One of the last to fall was Anglo-Saxon England to the papist invasion of the Normans in 1066. What remained of the spiritual ethos of the whole Church (rather than the Papal fragment) we can see in the scraps of manuscript we find as represented by the *Beowulf* poem, the *Dream of the Rood*, and others. The heroic (that is ascetic and spiritually optimistic rather than spiritually victimized) ethos of these pieces reflects the ontological transformation potential that identifies Orthodox Christianity from the Anselmian passive Christian spirituality we see in Medieval iconography, we hear in Gregorian plainchant or perceive in Western theology subservient to logic and philosophical methods, and the relentless predominance of worldly political/social considerations and axiology in the Western churches. We see this in the papal institutionalization of their church into a monolithic uniformity or its Protestant variant of papal individual infallibility in private interpretations of multifarious sects and denominations. The ultimate consequence of these centuries of decline is a massive credibility gap concerning the claims of Western Christianity and the rise of secularism, atheism and ultimately nihilism.

(See the final section of Works Cited for sources that provide detailed and scholarly substantiation of the historical and doctrinal analysis in this Appendix.)

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- _____, *The Ancestral Sin*, Zehyr, Ridgewood, NJ, 2002
(Contrasting the Apostolic and Patristic understanding with what Augustine and the West have termed "original sin")
- Sherrard, Philip, *Church, Papacy and Schism – A Theological Enquiry*, SPCK, London, 1978
- Snelson, John, *The Ring – An Illustrated History of Wagner's Ring at the Royal Opera House*, Oberon Books, London, 2006.
- Shippey, Tom, *Roots and Branches, Selected Papers on Tolkien*, Walking Tree, Zurich, 2007

Spencer, Stewart & Millington, Barry, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, WW Norton, NY, 1988.

-----, *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung*, Thames & Hudson, NY, 1993

This subtitled as "The Full German Text with a New Translation and commentaries." However the full German stage settings and directions are not included, but their translations are. Also included is a numerical listing of most of the leitmotivs with the numbers indicating most of their appearances in the text.

Tolkien, J R R, *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 2009

-----, *The Letters of JRR Tolkien*, Humphrey Carpenter ed., Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 2000.

-----, *The Lord of the Rings*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 2004 & 2014.

Vink, René, *Wagner and Tolkien: Mythmakers*, Walking Tree, Zurich, 2012.

Vogler, Christopher, *The Writer's Journey – Mythic Structure for Writers*, 3rd Ed., M. Wiese Productions, Studio City, CA, 2007

See also: <https://chrisvogler.wordpress.com/>
<http://www.christophervogler.com/>

To elucidate the background understanding of the theologically and spiritually divergent paths of the Western church(es) from that of original unified Apostolic and Patristic Church of East and West sundered by the Dark Ages see:

Florovsky, Georges, *Collected Works*, Nordland Publishing, Belmont MA.

Haugh, Richard, *Photius and the Carolingians – The Trinitarian Controversy*, Nordland Publishing, Belmont MA, 1975.

Romanides, John S, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine – An Interplay between Theology and Society*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981.

(see also http://www.romanity.org/htm/rom.03.en.franks_romans_feudalism_and_doctrine.01.htm)

_____, *The Ancestral Sin*, Zephyr, Ridgewood, NJ, 2002.

(Contrasting the Apostolic and Patristic understanding with what Augustine and the West ever since have termed "original sin".)

Sherrard, Philip, *Church, Papacy and Schism – A Theological Enquiry*, SPCK, London, 1978.

WAGNER RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature comprising Wagner studies is immense. His controversiality has only increased over the decades and with that the bibliography. There are numerous studies on his life, his prose works, his compositions, his poetry, the influences on him from literature, music and philosophy, his family dynasty, his theater at Bayreuth, his impact on European arts, psychology and politics, both positive and negative.

Be very wary of some (especially older) translations of Wagner's prose works. During the 1890's a series of eight volumes were done by a William Ashton Ellis. Wagner was a typically 19th c. Teutonic prose writer, dense, difficult and digressive, but immensely fascinating. Ashton Ellis manages to make it even worse with his obfuscatory Victorian period translations. He has even been accused of sabotaging Wagner intentionally! Here is proof of the problem:

<http://thinkclassical.blogspot.com/2012/02/appalling-state-of-english-translation.html>

Fortunately there are recent translations of some of his essays, but by no means of all nor of the most important.

Although not cited in my paper, these are three of the best **introductory surveys** on Wagner and his works:

Millington, Barry, *The Wagner Compendium, A Guide to Wagner's Life and Music*, Schirmer Books, Macmillan, NY, 1992

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Wagner-Compendium-Guide-Wagners-Music/dp/0028713591/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&sr=&qid=

Müller, Ulrich & Wapnewski, Peter, *The Wagner Handbook*, Harvard Univ. Pr., Cambridge, MA, 1992

http://www.amazon.com/Wagner-Handbook-John-Deathridge/dp/0674945301/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1421792213&sr=1-1&keywords=Wagner+Handbook&pebp=1421792211876&peasin=674945301

Vazsonyi, Nicholas, *The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia*, Cambridge Univ. Pr., 2013

http://www.amazon.com/Cambridge-Wagner-Encyclopedia-Nicholas-Vazsonyi/dp/110700425X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1422376836&sr=1-1&keywords=Wagner&pebp=1422376835563&peasin=110700425X

What will emerge from perusing these surveys, particularly the last, is just how reductionist most of the current Wagner scholarship is. He is reduced to parroting his antecedent intellectual readings and his creativity is confined to his musical techniques. This would be like reducing Tolkien to MacDonald or Haggard or Morris or Lang. The result is that Wagner becomes a socialist, racist, freudian aesthete – in other words his hijacking by the first half of the 20th c. ideologues has now swung to the utterly opposite extreme on both stages: the theatrical and the academic. That these mutually exclusive extremes of interpretation have both been deemed possible should serve as a caution against either being remotely acceptable.

The following two books are recent examples of the kind of the **random selected essay genre** on Wagner.

Thomas S. Grey, *Richard Wagner and His World*, Princeton Univ. Pr., 2009

http://www.amazon.com/Richard-Wagner-World-Music-Festival/dp/0691143668/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1422376537&sr=1-2&keywords=Wagner

Thomas S. Grey, *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, Cambridge Univ. Pr., 2008

http://www.amazon.com/Cambridge-Companion-Wagner-Companions-Music/dp/0521644399/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1422376502&sr=1-1&keywords=Wagner&pebp=1422376501487&peasin=521644399

Of course, there were requests for my options for the **best recordings** of *The Ring Cycle*;

The **best overall cd version** is that conducted by Sir Georg Solti and produced by John Culshaw from 1958-1964 available as a 14 set from Decca (London) Records in hifi and stereo now remastered for digital. With the Vienna Philharmonic and the superb cast then available it remains a milestone. The *Götterdämmerung* is perhaps the most disturbing performance on records. Its *Rheingold* became a test for everyone's sound system at the time and helped popularize stereo.

For the sake of the cast there is the excellent Erich Leinsdorf recording of *Die Walküre* also on London Records 4 cds from 1962. The Wotan in the Solti is the matchless Hans Hotter who gives full tragic stature to his character, but he was asthmatic and his voice was past its prime by the time they recorded this work, so this recording with George London is next best.

The **best overall video version** is the one from the Metropolitan Opera from 1990, with James Levine and an adequate cast on Deutsche Grammophon DVD. It gives the closest approximation to a staging that Wagner would have wanted, so it is visually not only the best but sadly unique in the modern era for its faithfulness to Wagner's intentions. He sought a veritable Tolkienian naturalistic verisimilitude on stage. As usual with the Met, however, the ensemble work of the cast is lacking and some major singers had colds at the time, so the dramatic and vocal impact is not what it should be.

There is a stunning monster coffee table book of the Met production: Ellison, Nancy, *Wagner's Eternal Ring: The Complete Production at the Metropolitan Opera*, Rizzoli, NY, 2010. The photos focus mostly on close ups of the characters, so much of the atmospheric staging is missed here.

But the best way to start absorbing *The Ring* is to listen day by day, with ample intermissions (all as Wagner intended) to a cd version. Let your imagination create this Faërian Drama. He designed his matchless and unique Bayreuth, Bavaria, theater in 1876 so that there were no distractions: the orchestra is seated partly under the stage and concealed by a curved wood cowl there is stadium seating with not aisles, a totally darkened theater and false proscenium – all designed to immerse you in the *Ring* world. But he said of the first premiere performances: "I have invented

the invisible orchestra, now I need the invisible theater." Culshaw's *Ring* gave him that 85 years later.

One of the best introductions to the system of leitmotifs is also on London cds, a 2 cd talk by Deryck Cooke: *An Introduction to Der Ring des Nibelungen*, using the Solti recording for its examples. Unfortunately even at this date a thorough and in depth musicological study of Wagner's leitmotifs, let alone the whole musical structure of *Der Ring* (not to mention of his other masterworks) has yet to be done. But this is a good beginning.

And if you want a graphic novel version (yes, it exists!) there is P. Craig Russell's *Richard Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung*, from Dark Horse Books, Milwaukee, OR. 2014.

We all await the definitive naturalistic realism of a fantasy film version (not a video of a stage version) without the interference of a one-sided premise-ridden interpretation/commentary now conventional in stage productions... As Wagner said in 1863 when at the nadir of his fortunes: Where is the prince who will save me? Well, in true eucatastrophic fairy tale style: in 1864 King Ludwig of Bavaria ascended the throne and Wagner's financial woes were largely over and Bayreuth and the completion of his *Ring* and three mature masterpieces was the result. So we today ask: Where is the benefactor who will have the courage to finance the full 15 hours of the *Ring Cycle* as a mythic film.
