

## *An Analytical Study of the Sketches and Drafts*

Wagner's method of composing the music for *Tristan* included three separate successive stages:

1. A hasty *Preliminary Draft* in pencil on small individual oblong sheets;
2. A much more carefully written and fully elaborated *Developed Draft* in ink on full-sized upright pages grouped in gatherings;
3. A final definitive *Full Score*.<sup>1</sup>

These three documents embodied compositional tasks sufficiently distinct and so well defined in Wagner's mind that he could shift from one to another at will, or concentrate for an extended period of time on any one of them.

In his Preliminary Draft, his primary tasks were setting his text to music and working out the essence of the purely instrumental passages. Wagner's approach to text setting involved the conception of a vocal part in conjunction with a structural bass line, and he therefore used at least two and sometimes three staves—one always reserved for the vocal part, the remainder for the bass line plus any preliminary notations of additional orchestral elaboration. Similarly, he always used at least two staves for the instrumental passages—one for the uppermost melodic line and another for the bass line—and he sometimes expanded to three staves if necessary. In passages with chorus or with two characters singing simultaneously, Wagner usually wrote out only the uppermost vocal part.

Wagner based this complete draft to some extent on earlier musical sketches, which varied considerably from one another in length and degree of elaboration, and he naturally made additional sketches as his work progressed. The few surviving examples of sketches for *Tristan* are found in the little pocket diaries he carried about with him, in the

1. A summary of the dates on which Wagner began and finished each act in the two complete drafts and Full Score appears on pp. 8–9. Wagner actually made a first draft of the Full Score in pencil and then a fair copy in ink—but only for the *Prelude*. He gave up the idea, presumably because of the pressure he felt to send off the score to the publisher. The rest of the Full Score is thus actually a first draft in ink. All these documents are now in the Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung, Bayreuth.

two manuscripts of the poem (Wagner's own, plus the copy made by Mathilde Wesendonk that he used to make the Preliminary Draft), but above all on occasional individual worksheets.<sup>2</sup> In any case, Wagner's tasks when making his Preliminary Draft are best summarized as primarily "invention"—particularly as regards the specific details of text setting—and also as "elaboration" (usually in the sense of mere extension), insofar as he based the musical fabric of this draft on earlier sketches. The degree to which Wagner elaborated the accompaniment at this stage varies considerably from one passage to another.

Wagner used this Preliminary Draft as the basis for the next stage in his procedure—a Developed Draft, in which he worked out the remaining details of the choral sections and the second vocal part for duet sections. His primary task here, however, was "elaboration" of the contrapuntal variety, for he now built up the full texture of the accompaniment from the two structural voices and whatever else the earlier draft contained. Thus, in addition to a separate staff for the vocal part, he now required at least two, and sometimes even three or more, staves for a uniformly complete presentation of the entire orchestral texture, which he worked out to the point of including the specific details of registral disposition and frequently even the instrumental doublings. The creative gap between these two complete drafts is often considerable, particularly for those passages where Wagner discarded his initial version, and in such situations, he undoubtedly resorted to intermediate sketches, of which only very few survive.

Wagner's goal in his Developed Draft was to write out the music so completely and definitively that once he had finished the document (or any passage within it), he could consider the act of original composition over and done with. From this point on, he made very few compositional changes, and in all cases he wrote them into his Developed Draft, usually in pencil to distinguish them readily from what was already there in ink. Thus, when he later used this draft as the basis for his final Full Score, he was able for the most part to ignore purely

2. The Editor has followed the line of least resistance and differentiated the two diaries connected with *Tristan* by their bindings: black-and-gold leather in one case, brown leather in the other. These diaries, both manuscripts of the poem, and all save one of the known work-sheets are now in the Nationalarchiv der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung, Bayreuth. The remaining worksheet is now in the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library. The generosity and kindness of the late Winifred Wagner made it possible for the Editor to study Wagner's manuscripts, and his transcriptions appear in this volume with her gracious permission.

compositional questions and to concentrate on the special problems of orchestration.

On the other hand, Wagner frequently made compositional changes or reworked entire passages within the Preliminary Draft itself, and also between the completed Preliminary Draft and the Developed Draft. The Preliminary Draft, together with the surviving early and intermediate sketches, constitutes the only practical basis for studying some of the problems Wagner confronted while composing the music for *Tristan*. If we propose to do more than merely describe those problems—whether they be the tonal, harmonic, and motivic problems in the Prelude, or the problems of text setting and formal design in the Transfiguration—we must have some perspective from which to evaluate them. We can develop that perspective only through an analytical understanding of the work itself. Studying the sketches and drafts thus serves to direct our attention to particular points that merit analytical attention in the final version of the opera, and the understanding we gain through analysis in turn helps us to interpret Wagner's solutions to his compositional problems.

Meanwhile, owing to the unique historical position of *Tristan*—a single piece that marks a major turning point in the history of music—its Prelude has often served as a focus for discussions of later nineteenth-century tonal practice and harmonic vocabulary. In order to illuminate the new elements that surface in the musical language of *Tristan*, a brief review of some of the basic nineteenth-century modifications and extensions of harmony and tonality will be necessary, even though this may be surveying an already familiar terrain. Older principles remained with the system, of course, but the accretion of new ones inevitably wrought some variation in them. New ideas often resulted from the attribution of large-scale structural significance to relationships which were already implicit within the system and had served as mere foreground decoration. Much of our musical vocabulary has developed from analysis of tonal music before *Tristan*, and when we apply it to later compositions, we must be aware of the critical distinction between a term's *descriptive* meaning and its *functional* implications. For example, the word "dominant" on one level merely *describes* the fifth scale degree and, by extension, the triad or tonality based on that scale degree. In music which turns on a central axis of tonic and dominant, the *functional* implications of the word *dominant* become far-reaching indeed. Many terms are extremely problematic in the context of later tonal music

precisely because of those *functional* implications, though we have no choice but to continue using most of them for basic description.

An immediately apparent principle of later nineteenth-century German tonal construction is modal mixture, the use of both the major and minor inflections of a given key. Schoenberg recognized the "transition from twelve major and twelve minor keys to twelve chromatic keys" and claimed that "this transition is fully accomplished in the music of Wagner, the harmonic significance of which has not yet by any means been theoretically formulated."<sup>3</sup> The terms *major* and *minor* remain useful, of course, but only for the purpose of identifying the qualities of particular triads. When we want to identify the tonality of large sections, or that of whole pieces or movements, it is best simply to refer to the key by itself and to avoid specifying mode, precisely because the "chromatic" or mixed major-minor mode is so often utilized.<sup>4</sup> By extension, the sense that a passage from a piece, or an entire movement, is in the major mode or in the minor mode is usually no more than an illusion, created by restricting the particular inflection of the *tonic triad* during the passage or movement in question to its major or minor form. Otherwise, the major and minor modes have by this point become equivalent and interchangeable, so that either one can substitute for the other. Where both forms appear in alternation, local voice leading, in terms of the specific voice or voices carrying the third of any triad, is the mechanism which controls the triad's actual mode.

It seems strange nowadays that the tonality of the *Tristan* Prelude can ever have been seriously disputed. When Hans von Bülow constructed his own ending for the excerpt, he clearly never considered any alternative to A, and his letter about it to Wagner shows that he was also aware that the Prelude "seems to shift between major and minor."<sup>5</sup> Wagner's concert ending concludes in A, with the major form of the tonic triad. In 1924, Lorenz declared that the Prelude was unequivocally in A minor,<sup>6</sup> and he summarily dismissed Guido Adler's earlier and much more suggestive idea that the introduction had not a single tonic, but that instead it fluctuated between A minor and C major/

3. Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley, 1978), p. 389.

4. Many early twentieth-century theorists—Hugo Riemann, Alfred Lorenz, and even Ernst Kurth, for example—continue to insist upon the independence of major and minor keys, and that insistence occasionally lands them in considerable difficulty.

5. The complete passage from Bülow's letter appears above, p. 14.

6. See below, p. 214, n. 21.

minor.<sup>7</sup> Curiously, neither Lorenz nor Adler took A *major* into account, even though the first root-position A triads are all major ones (mm. 22, 24, and 44), and even though Wagner changed the signature to A major at m. 43.

Alongside the older diatonic principle of voice leading arises the new principle of semitone voice leading, which may very well be the logical outgrowth of the single semitone difference between the major and minor forms of a triad. Except at moments of harmonic stability, which always—but not exclusively—occur at points of structural articulation, *linear* considerations (with either diatonic or semitone voice leading, or both in alternation) more and more take precedence over *harmonic* ones. This principle of semitone voice leading—if a given voice moves or “resolves” at all, it moves by semitone—underlies the new possibilities for resolution of the V<sup>7</sup> sonority, all of which assume equivalent significance in this period:

Example 1



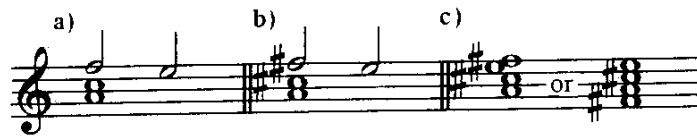
The first of these progressions is the most familiar and characteristic cadential progression in tonal music. Semitone voice leading governs all the others. 1b is of particular interest because with semitone voice leading, either the major or minor form of the triad can appear. Enharmonic respellings of the V<sup>7</sup> sonority in progressions like 1b and 1c permitted its description as an augmented-6th chord (or German 6th), a functional differentiation that maintained the much greater importance of dominant function in resolution 1a. In music before *Tristan*, these progressions usually had only “decorative” significance at best—mere foreground progressions with no larger harmonic or tonal significance. Later on, however, music often turns on these equally valid “meanings” or resolutions for the one sonority. This change reflects the typical historical process of evolution in musical language: a phenomenon originates as a merely decorative addition to the prevailing idiom and is gradually elevated to the level of structural import. As a harmonic entity with a linear source, the V<sup>7</sup> sonority itself is a striking case in point. It seems to have begun life with the addition of a merely decorative

7. Guido Adler, *Richard Wagner: Vorlesungen gehalten an der Universität zu Wien* (Munich, 1904), p. 274; 2nd ed. (Munich, 1923), p. 282.

passing tone to a triad in the sixteenth century. With the rise of the tonal system during the seventeenth, however, it attained significance as a harmonic dissonance which, together with its resolution, reflected the larger tonal polarity of dominant and tonic.

As simple chordal juxtapositions, these semitone paradigms can work as progressions in either direction, and the 7th does not necessarily need to be present in the initial sonority. Progression 1b, for example, can also take the form shown in 2a, which concludes with the minor triad:

Example 2



2b is the equivalent form which concludes with a *major* triad, and 2c shows a possible harmonic representation of the same thing. In progression 2b, the moving voice actually proceeds by whole tone rather than by semitone and can thus be regarded as the “diatonic” equivalent of 2a.

The two triads in progression 2a differ from each other by only a semitone, the same difference that exists between the major and minor forms of a single triad. Just as the major and minor forms of any triad can substitute for each other, so also can either of the two triads in 2a substitute for each other in local situations, even including internal cadences like that of m. 17 of the *Tristan* Prelude, where an F-major triad substitutes for the A-minor one. The immediate local progression thus moves *upward* by semitone, E<sup>7</sup>–F, analogous (in the opposite direction) to progression 1c. The name *deceptive cadence* for such a progression emanates from a time when it was merely decorative. Progressions of this type are central hallmarks of the new system and work in an absolutely consistent and logical way with semitone voice leading, and it is therefore misleading to continue using the term *deceptive cadence* with its implicit suggestion of temporary departure from “normal” harmonic progression.

This brings us to the question of cadences in general. The V–I progression in Example 1a remained a viable cadential progression throughout the nineteenth century, particularly for internal cadences involving secondary keys. Meanwhile, however, another cadential pattern became increasingly prominent—that of *minor* IV–*major* I as shown in Example 3a. Like progressions 2a and 2b, 3a juxtaposes two triads of opposite mode and at the same time preserves semitone voice leading.

## Example 3



3b illustrates the possibility of using both modes of the subdominant triad, while 3c shows a characteristic melodic feature—the ascent of the uppermost voice to the 3rd of the tonic triad—in combination with progression 3a. 3d presents another common variation, which begins with the tonic triad itself, adds the 7th, which converts the tonic locally to  $V^7$  of IV, changes the mode of IV (in accordance with 3b), and finally resolves back to I. The typical plagal progression in 3e—*major* IV—*major* I—is the “diatonic” variant of 3a, since one voice moves by whole tone rather than by semitone. Finally, the V–I cadential progression in 3e simply reverses the order of 3a, still reflecting the principle of semitone voice leading, since the cadential tonic is in the minor mode.

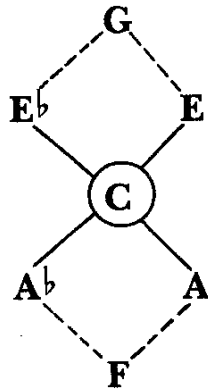
3a and 3e taken together, and also 3d, demonstrate a principle of reciprocal function characteristic of the musical idiom of the later nineteenth century. In much the same way that the progressions in Examples 1 and 2 can move in either direction, so any two elements brought into harmonic or tonal juxtaposition have not one but rather two possible relationships. If we take the simple case of C and G, for example, G can function (and usually does function) in relation to C as its dominant, but on the other hand, it is also possible for C to function as G’s subdominant:

$$\begin{array}{cc} \text{C} & \text{G} \\ \text{I} \leftarrow & \text{V} \\ \text{or IV} \rightarrow & \text{I} \end{array}$$

Earlier music tended to subordinate the subdominant, particularly on the large scale, to the crucial dominant–tonic projection. In later nineteenth-century music, however, if either one of the two possible relationships between C and G appears at all, the other interpretation of the relationship between them will eventually be exploited as well, at a different point in the piece, perhaps, or even on another level of the structure. Accordingly, progression 3d is often played out on a large scale without the defining tonic pedal point, particularly in codas, and by the end of the century, it is almost a cliché of the style. The final measures of many eighteenth-century pieces use progression 3d on a much smaller scale, retaining that defining pedal point, and this is another excellent example of how an element already implicit within

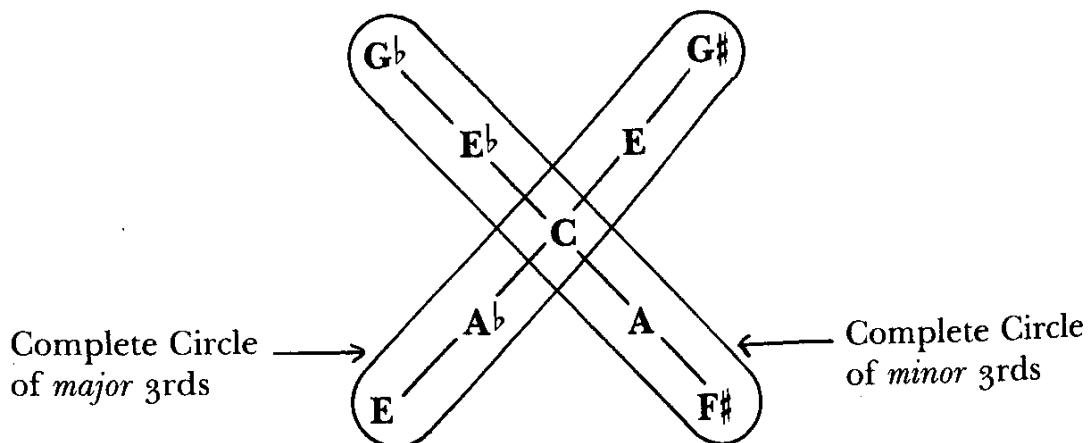
the system is modified and expanded in the later period.

The elevation of additional resolutions of the  $V^7$  sonority to structural equivalence with the  $V^7-I$  resolution is a major factor in eroding the strength of the dominant *function*. At the same time, the dominant has come to be so closely associated with the tonic itself—often to the point of being a mere linear extension of I, or even a substitute for it—that its value for providing effective tonal *contrast* is seriously undermined. The older structural polarity of tonic and dominant thus gradually gave way to a new system with polarities based on the interval of a 3rd. For any given tonic, there are four possible thirds—the minor and major 3rds above, and the minor and major 3rds below. Extension beyond these particular 3rds in either direction can be accomplished in two different ways. The first possibility is to progress on to V (in the upward direction) or to IV (in the lower direction):



In this case, the tonality based on V frequently *functions* not as the dominant but rather as the III of III. Similarly, the tonality based on IV often *functions* not as the subdominant but rather as the VI of VI.

The alternative is to work along an axis of 3rds of the same quality (major or minor), perhaps even to the point of making a complete circle of major or minor 3rds:





The tonic notes of the circle of minor 3rds form a diminished-7th chord, while those of the circle of major 3rds form an augmented triad. These two sonorities are still further examples of how decorative phenomena from the earlier system later achieved some semblance of structural significance.

Wagner did not invent the features we have reviewed, nor is *Tristan* the first work in which they appear. From this perspective, Wagner's historical position is that of synthesizer rather than inventor, and his essential contribution consists in the application of these principles on a larger scale than had been previously attempted. *Tristan* is his first work to present these new relationships systematically. The role of Liszt's influence on Wagner's "harmonic" thinking during the 1850s undoubtedly had the practical effect of increasing his awareness of the possibilities inherent in the principle of semitone voice leading.<sup>8</sup> Certainly that principle seems to dominate the first 17 measures of the *Tristan* Prelude, where the only other interval Wagner uses is the 3rd (and its complementary 6th). In addition, however, *Tristan* takes a major step beyond what we have examined so far, and we can now turn to its innovations.

Analyses of the Prelude customarily accept it as a separate self-contained work, even though Wagner gave it the special label *Einleitung* in his full score—the only opera in which he used this designation for the orchestral preface to a first act.<sup>9</sup> Presumably he wanted us to regard it not as an overture to the whole opera, nor as a "ritornello" for the music of its opening scene, but rather as a "slow introduction" to the large symphonic design that follows. Some background about the tonal structure which that Prelude prepares is therefore in order.

The new feature in *Tristan* with the most far-reaching consequences for large-scale organization is the pairing together of two tonalities a minor 3rd apart in such a way as to form a "double-tonic complex." The pairing of A and C for the whole of Act I may well have grown out of the traditional close relationship between A minor and C major, but the double-tonic idea goes well beyond merely beginning in a minor key and concluding in its relative major, as in Chopin's Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, and his F-minor Fantaisie, Op. 49. In some ways,

8. See above, pp. 21–22.

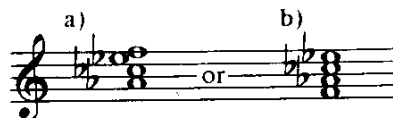
9. Wagner had used the term just once before—for the orchestral introduction to the third act of *Lohengrin*—and he used it only once again—for the opening of Act II of *Tristan* itself.

the new concept plays upon that very closeness, but we are now dealing with the "chromatic" mode of A and the "chromatic" mode of C. The two elements are linked together in such a way that either triad can serve as the local representative of the tonic complex. Within that complex itself, however, one of the two elements is at any moment in the primary position while the other remains subordinate to it. The Prelude establishes the close duality between A and C, and this complex serves as the controlling tonic for the entire first act, which both begins (in the Prelude) and ends with the A/C complex. While A is the primary member within the complex through most of the Prelude, Wagner prepares the eventual shift of emphasis to C in the final section of the Prelude itself, which in turn prepares C as the central tonic (paired with E $\flat$ ) for the opening dialogue between Isolde and Brangäne. C attains the primary position within the tonic complex in the concluding sections of the act, and at the end Wagner deliberately sets Tristan's final speech apart from its context so that it forms a cadence in A, and then juxtaposes that cadence in A directly against the final orchestral cadence in C.

The harmonic embodiment of this double-tonic complex is a chord like 2c, but transposed up a minor 3rd so that it combines the notes of the A minor and C major triads (see Example 7 below). Wagner reserves this sonority until shortly before the end of the act, where he lets it appear for the first time at the conclusion of the short love duet that follows the drinking of the potion. The function of this major triad with added 6th should not be confused with the function of the added-6th chord in twentieth-century popular music, which acts simply as a decorated triad (a triad with an extra nontriadic note). The actual notes of the two chords are the same, but this double-triadic sonority functions here as the harmonic representative of the double-tonic complex at work throughout the structure.

Once the major triad with added 6th attains an important position in tonal vocabulary, the principle of modal mixture suggests a corresponding form in the minor mode:

#### Example 4



This is the so-called *Tristan* chord, and 4b is the spacing used as the basis for its familiar description as a half-diminished 7th chord. A more

appropriate description is “minor triad with added 6th,” because it maintains the analogy with the *major* triad with added 6th, because the word *triad* is actually part of the description, and finally because it relates most easily to the actual sound of the chord. This description also seems justified by the ways Wagner treats the chord in its original form and by the ways he alters it. We can describe the *Tristan* chords in the first two phrases of the Prelude, then, as an A<sup>b</sup> (G<sup>#</sup>)-minor triad with added 6th and a B-minor triad with added 6th. At the beginning of the love duet near the end of Act I when these phrases return, Wagner expands them into symmetrical units of seven measures each and actually replaces the earlier *Tristan* chords with the straightforward A<sup>b</sup> and B triads, changing their mode to major:

### Example 5

Phrase I from Prelude

Phrase II from Prelude

A<sup>b</sup> triad

B triad

7mm. phrase in (A)

7mm. phrase in (C)

At the beginning of Act III, Wagner presents the spacing of 4a, intensified by the violins' open G string for the added 6th:

### Example 6

Violins I

However he spaces the *Tristan* chord, Wagner consistently treats it as a local dissonance, which usually resolves with semitone voice leading. The chord is to some extent referential, and therefore it serves to focus

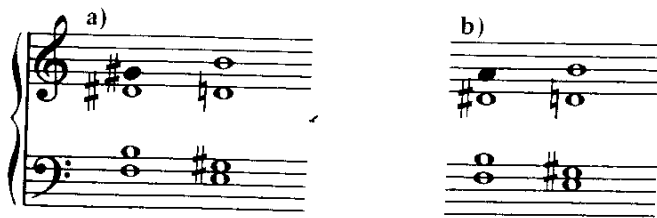
at least one level of large-scale dissonance, which we might regard as “resolving” to the *major* triad with added 6th as a local consonance in the cadence to the love duet—with the same symmetrical spacing as that of the first two *Tristan* chords from the Prelude:

Example 7



Most commentators regard the *Tristan* chord in the first phrase of the Prelude as a somehow significant phenomenon—worthy, at any rate, of its long-familiar label—but then proceed to regard its G# as resolving to A. They thereby interpret A as the actual chord note and reduce the *Tristan* chord to a mere passing foreground event. Wagner, on the other hand, seems to have taken considerable pains to make the listener perceive G# as the chord note, if only by holding it a full five times longer than the A which follows it, and by treating that A as a passing tone on the way to B. From this point of view, then, the fundamental progression is that of 8a rather than 8b:

Example 8



We could also argue that an inherent beauty of music is that it can in fact do two things at the same time, and this may well be so in the present instance. Thus, we have a striking example of two different but equally appropriate interpretations: 8b deals with the situation as a purely local event, while 8a takes into account the chord's large-scale structural implications. We shall see that the very move from G# to A, responsible for the two different interpretations, constitutes an essential motivic idea underlying this piece. As an aside, we might note that progression 8a is consistent with the principle of semitone voice leading,

since the two voices that move by minor 3rd engage in simple voice exchange of the two common tones.

Another innovation in the musical language of *Tristan* is the treatment of the V<sup>7</sup> chord as a temporary local consonance, as shown in either progression of Example 8.<sup>10</sup> Elaborate periphrasis on the nature of consonance and dissonance lies outside the scope of this study, and we shall content ourselves with the practical but admittedly circular definition of dissonance as something that requires resolution, and consonance as anything that can be used to resolve a dissonance. There are of course varying degrees of consonance in earlier music, where only the triad provides resolution, though the root-position triad is a stronger consonance than either of its inversions, and ultimately only the *tonic* root-position triad is strong enough to provide the final cadence for a composition. As far as *final* cadences are concerned, the latter principle prevails through the later nineteenth century as well, but there are now two new sonorities that can function in certain local situations with varying degrees of secondary consonance: 1) the major triad with added 6th, which as we have seen actually appears in an internal cadence; and 2) the V<sup>7</sup> chord. With these two examples at hand, we may well believe that the later nineteenth century ought to be looked upon as a period which expanded the concept of *consonance*, rather than as a period which expanded the treatment of dissonance.

Still another innovation in *Tristan* is what we might call the *indirect* method of exposition, wherein certain fundamental tonal and motivic elements first appear by implication rather than by explicit statement. If we return once more to the set of harmonic paradigms in Example 1, we note that the V<sup>7</sup> sonority acts as a dissonance in each one. The operative principle there was that the V<sup>7</sup> sonority, when treated as a dissonance, is just as apt to resolve with semitone voice leading as it is to resolve to a triad whose root is a perfect 5th below that of the original V<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, when the V<sup>7</sup> sonority functions as a local consonance, it does so by way of *implying* (but not actually stating) resolution 1a. The dominant is in fact so intimately bound up with its tonic that it can suggest or present it by implication and thereby substitute for it.

The concluding V<sup>7</sup> sonorities in the first two phrases of the Prelude thus imply the triads (and, by extension, the tonalities) of A and C,

10. Kurth approaches this idea with a somewhat different perspective. See below, p. 190.

which act as the double-tonic complex governing the structure of the whole of Act I. The double-tonic complex of this act, in other words, is presented at the outset, but *indirectly*—by implication, rather than by direct successive (or simultaneous) statement of the two triads. The third phrase continues to the  $V^7$  of E, thus completing an outline, *by implication*, of triads based on the three notes (A–C–E) of the primary member of the tonic complex, the A-minor triad.<sup>11</sup>

When Bülow exclaimed to Draeseke that the *Tristan* Prelude had “not a single pure triad,”<sup>12</sup> he was clearly exaggerating, but insofar as he was referring to *tonic* triads, he had a real point, since the density of tonic triads is far lower in the *Tristan* Prelude than in most earlier compositions. Schoenberg expressed the point more precisely when he noted that “A minor, although it is to be inferred from every passage, is scarcely ever sounded in the whole piece. It is always expressed in circuitous ways; it is constantly avoided by means of deceptive cadences.”<sup>13</sup>

The indirect method of exposition also applies to at least one of the most significant motivic underpinnings of the opera—the semitone between  $A^b(G\#)$  and  $A^{\natural}$ . The first three notes in the cellos (A–F–E) constitute another main motive of Act I (Motive  $x$ ), but the initial presentation with its leap of a *minor* 6th is not the primary form. The initial  $A^{\natural}$ –F–E never returns at its original pitch level again throughout the remainder of Act I, but recurs instead in the form  $A^b$ –F–E.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the Prelude begins with a chromatically altered form of this motive, and the primary form with its leap of a *major* 6th first appears in Phrase II (See Example 9 on facing page). The motivic “tension” between  $A^b(G\#)$  and  $A^{\natural}$  is thus implicit in the very opening note, though we naturally do not perceive it as such until later on, when the  $A^b$  in this motivic context has been established. At the climax of the Prelude (mm. 80–83), the cellos (doubled here by horns) recall this motive, not once but three times in succession, with  $A^b$  rather than  $A^{\natural}$ . Isolde

11. This point is also discussed by Edward T. Cone in his article “Sound and Syntax: An Introduction to Schoenberg’s Harmony,” in *Perspectives of New Music* 13/1 (Fall–Winter 1974): 23–24.

12. The complete passage from Bülow’s letter appears above, p. 13.

13. Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, p. 384. In this passage, Schoenberg blurs the critical distinction between the key and its tonic triad. What he evidently means is that the *key* of A minor is to be inferred from every passage even though its *tonic triad* is scarcely ever sounded, and that while the *key* is expressed in circuitous ways, the *tonic triad* is constantly avoided.

14. In fact, the only time the  $A^{\natural}$ –F–E form ever appears in the opera is near the end of Act II, at the conclusion of King Marke’s monologue.

## Example 9

## THE OPENING UNIT

PHRASE I                      PHRASE II                      PHRASE III

Motive x      Motive y      Motive x      Motive y      Motive x      Motive y

[V<sup>7</sup> of] A                      [V<sup>7</sup> of] C

INTERRUPTION

Ww.      Vlns.      Ww.

## CADENCE

Vlns. = Completion of the octave

(1 Hn. + 2 Ob.)

(1 Hn.)      Vc.

actually sings the motive, also with  $A^b$ , just before she drinks the Potion ("Ich trink' sie dir"). One rationale for this semitone alteration of Motive  $x$  on its first appearance is that it melodically outlines progression 2a and thus prepares the cadence of the opening unit in m. 17, where the F-major triad substitutes for an A triad.

Wagner scored Motive  $x$  for cellos, whereas he could perfectly well have given it to the first violins. This unusual scoring draws attention

to the register of the motive and assists in playing out the tension between G $\sharp$  and A $\flat$ , which occurs when the initial cello A is transferred up to the oboe's initial G $\sharp$  at the beginning of Motive  $y$ . In the new register, this G $\sharp$  in turn moves to A. In Phrase II, the primary form of Motive  $x$  uses B as its first note, which shifts up a full octave to B in the answering clarinet (Motive  $y$ ), so that in spite of the clarinet's immediate move from B to C, the semitone tension between B and C is not so strong as that between G $\sharp$  and A. As for Phrase I, there is some evidence that Wagner may have intensified this tension between the A of Motive  $x$  and the G $\sharp$  of Motive  $y$  by using the cellos' open A string.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the cellos' descending semitone, F–E, in Motive  $x$  returns an octave lower as the bass line for Motive  $y$ . In strict parallel with this, Phrase II duplicates the G $\sharp$ –G $\flat$  semitone in Motive  $x$  an octave lower as the bass line for Motive  $y$ .

The cellos initiate Phrase II with the *major* 6th, B–G $\sharp$ , and this interval complements the minor 3rd (G $\sharp$ –B) chromatically linearized by the oboe in Phrase I, Motive  $y$ . At the same time, these two notes are part of the V<sup>7</sup> of A with which Phrase I concluded—an important device for maintaining continuity in this opening unit. Except for the difference between the major and minor 6ths of Motive  $x$ , then, the Prelude begins with two symmetrical phrases, and the first implies A while the second implies C. The double-tonic complex is thus presented *by implication* in two symmetrical phrases.

Phrase III also begins with a major 6th, in parallel with Phrase II, but otherwise the exact symmetry of Phrases I and II now breaks down. Motive  $x$  and Motive  $y$  each have an extra note, the *Tristan* chord appears in a new spacing, and the bass line for Motive  $y$  does not duplicate any portion of Motive  $x$ . With the addition of these extra notes, Wagner has also upset the rhythmic parallel he established between Phrases I and II. Motive  $x$  does not even begin in the same part of the measure, and the sophisticated treatment of rhythm evident here successfully obscures

15. The witness is Emmanuel Chabrier, who, at a performance of the opera in Munich, is said to have "burst into sobs of despair before even the first note of the Prelude. To his friends who enquired whether he was ill he could only reply, 'Oh that open A on the cello! Fifteen years I've been waiting to hear it!'" (Quoted in Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, Vol. 1 [London, 1962], p. 95, n. 1.) We can but hope that poor Chabrier was not disappointed.

The Editor is grateful to Jenny Kallick for the suggestion that once cellos typically had a metal A string (the others being gut), playing the first note of the Prelude on the open string would have been quite logical.



any sense of regular recurrent metrical pattern. This treatment of rhythm became more and more pervasive in Wagner's later style, and this very short example seems to represent its actual beginning, for there is nothing quite comparable in the second act of *Siegfried* or earlier.

If we examine Phrase III more closely, we see that the extra note in Motive *x* creates a retrograde duplication of the melodic notes from Phrase I/Motive *y*:

### Example 10

The image shows two musical phrases, PHRASE I and PHRASE III, on a grand staff. PHRASE I is written in the treble clef and consists of a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. PHRASE III is written in the alto clef and also consists of a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. An arrow labeled 'retrograde' points from the end of PHRASE III back to the end of PHRASE I. Another arrow labeled 'duplication' points from the notes G# and A in PHRASE III to the notes G# and A in PHRASE I.

After Motive *x* arrives at G $\sharp$  and becomes the alto voice of Motive *y*, it does not descend a semitone in parallel with Phrases I and II, but instead *ascends* to A and is thus consistent with the G $\sharp$ –A motivic idea. In addition, the tenor voice of Motive *y* duplicates the three descending notes, F–E–D $\sharp$ , from Phrase I, Motive *x*.

The extra note in the melodic line of Motive *y* brings Phrase III to a termination on F $\sharp$  rather than F $\flat$  (E $\sharp$ ). So far, then, the melodic line of Motive *y* has ascended chromatically from G $\sharp$  to B in Phrase I, from B to D in Phrase II, and now from D to F $\sharp$  in Phrase III. This melodic ascent constitutes nothing other than a chromatic linearization of the *Tristan* chord from Phrase II,<sup>16</sup> where it resolved to (the V<sup>7</sup> of) C.

Phrase I's transfer of the A in Motive *x* to the G $\sharp$ –A of Motive *y* prepares the comparable but *linear* octave transfer that takes place over the course of the first 16 measures. An interruption of this process occurs in mm. 12–15, which nonetheless serve to intensify the approaching change of register in other ways. First, Wagner repeats Motive *y* from Phrase III an octave higher, then returns to the original register and stresses the extra note in Motive *y* by stating just the last two notes

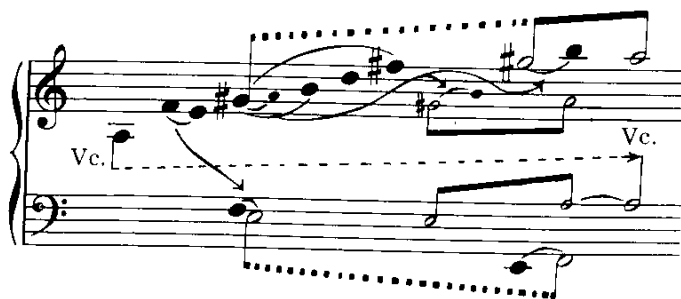
16. Milton Babbitt also noticed this point. See below, p. 290.

of that motive (E#–F#) in the violins, doubled at the lower octave. He then shifts back to the winds, which repeat those same two notes an octave higher, also with octave doubling.

The cadence of the opening unit begins with the same E#–F# back in the original register in the violins, now harmonized within the V<sup>7</sup> of A. The violins complete the process of chromatic ascent up to G#, an octave above the G# with which the oboe began in Phrase I. The process of octave transfer is now complete, and after the arrival at G#, the line leaps a minor 3rd up to B, repeating once more that very interval chromatically linearized in Phrase I, Motive *y* and again in retrograde in Phrase III, Motive *x*. From this B, the line resolves down to A. Thus, the initial G# is transferred up an octave, where it finally resolves to A, after linearizing the *Tristan* chord from Phrase II along the way. We have noted that the harmonic presentation of this particular *Tristan* chord in Phrase II resolved to (the V<sup>7</sup> of) C, whereas the linear presentation of the same chord resolves to A. This distinction between linear and harmonic presentations is frequently at work in later nineteenth-century music, but the process is rarely arbitrary: the difference here reflects the two members of the double-tonic complex, A and C.

Meanwhile, the bass line of the cadence (E–F) reverses the semitone progression of the bass line from Phrase I, Motive *y* (F–E), which in turn was prepared an octave higher in Motive *x*. Thus, the sense of upward octave transfer is duplicated in the opposite direction in the bass line.

### Example 11



Two horns, the first doubled by oboes, are added to the scoring for the cadence, and these two new parts together create a V–I cadence in A. The first horn line prefigures the melodic termination of the cadence by leaping from G# to B just before the violins complete their chromatic octave ascent. This voice arrives at A (in the same register as the A from which the chromatic ascent began) simultaneously with the leap

to B in the violins. The lower horn part moves directly from E to A, even though the actual harmonic progression involved is E<sup>7</sup>-F, the F-major triad “substituting,” (as we have noted) for an A triad (see Example 2a). At the moment when the violins fall back to A, the A in the lower horn part is taken over by the cellos—the same A with which they initiated this opening unit.

Wagner’s first complete sketch for the opening seventeen-measure unit survives on a worksheet now in the New York Public Library:

Example 12

Adagio

The musical score for Example 12, titled "Adagio," is presented in three systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 7. The second system contains measures 8 through 13. The third system contains measures 14 through 18. The score is written for a cello (Vc.) in 6/8 time. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, *f*, and *ff*. The music features a cello part with various dynamics and articulations, including a sixteenth-note pick-up in measure 16.

Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of this sketch is its very first note—not A, nor even A<sup>b</sup>(G<sup>#</sup>), but rather B. In fact, Motive *x* in each of the first two phrases begins with a tritone rather than a 6th. In addition, the first measure of the cadence (m. 16 in the score) occupies two measures in this sketch rather than just one, and it also has a sixteenth-note pick-up which Wagner later eliminated, perhaps in order to strengthen the dissonant effect of the E<sup>#</sup> against the E<sup>7</sup> harmony. When Wagner made this sketch, he was actually expanding an earlier sketch in his Black-and-Gold Diary:

## Example 13

PHRASE II  
Final version

The second measure of this fragment corresponds in essential outline to Phrase II, Motive  $\gamma$ , while the first measure begins with the tonic C itself. Leaving aside that initial C, the melodic idea in the first measure contains the essence of Motive  $x$  as developed at the beginning of the New York sketch: the diminished 4th of the earlier sketch became a diminished 5th in the later one, while a descending semitone follows in both versions.

Wagner thus began with Phrase II, the phrase in C, and extrapolated from it a parallel phrase in A for the beginning of the New York sketch. When he in turn elaborated that sketch into a complete version of the Prelude in his Preliminary Draft, he incorporated there the changes he had decided upon, and the opening seventeen-measure unit assumed its final form *in abstracto*.

Wagner obviously did not begin work on the Prelude with the final form of Motive  $x$  already defined, and in the New York sketch, the interval of a 6th first appears in Phrase III. The motive evolved gradually, and Wagner eventually transferred it back to the first two phrases. When he expanded the diary sketch, he clearly had two ends in view: 1) two phrases exactly parallel—one in A, the other in C; and 2) in each phrase, a transfer of the first two notes of Motive  $x$  to the two lower voices of the ensuing *Tristan* chord. The latter point would seem to negate Mitchell's assertion that in Phrase I "the diminished 5th outlines an obvious supertonic chord,"<sup>17</sup> first of all because no referential tonic has yet been established or even suggested as the basis for such an interpretation, and secondly because the two notes of that interval in fact become the lower two notes of the *Tristan* chord that follows. The tritone beginning for Phrase II (D–A $\flat$ ), on the other hand, serves

17. William J. Mitchell, "The Tristan Prelude: Techniques and Structure," in *The Music Forum* 1 (1967): 178.

two of the same purposes as the eventual major 6th (B–G $\sharp$ ): either interval picks up two notes from the V<sup>7</sup> chord of the preceding phrase, and either interval duplicates two notes in the *Tristan* chord that follows. The tritone beginning for Phrase II does not complement the chromatically linearized minor 3rd from Phrase I, Motive  $\gamma$ , however, and this feature emerges in the New York sketch only in Phrase III, where the major 6th (D–B) finally appears.

Wagner did not alter the initial B in Phrase I to A $\flat$  (G $\sharp$ ), which would have presented the primary form of Motive  $x$  at the very outset and would also have retained the absolute parallel of the first two phrases. Instead, he decided on A $\natural$ , which evidently has something to do with the cadence of the unit (m. 17), where an F major triad substitutes for the A minor one. All essential details of this cadence are present in the New York sketch, except for the condensation of its first two measures into one. The upper horn counterpoint appears, but its resolution to A is delayed and occurs simultaneously with the analogous melodic resolution to A in the violins.

The final version of the opening is thus dependent not simply upon the minor 6th (A–F), but on the whole of Motive  $x$  (A–F–E), which, as we have seen, outlines progression 2a. Wagner's changes came about not only as an attempt to derive a central motive, but also, in the case of Phrase I, as an attempt to reinforce the implication of A as tonic and to prepare the opening unit's cadence. At the same time, he established another large-scale means of maintaining the tension between the A $\natural$  of the very beginning and the A $\flat$  (G $\sharp$ ) of the same motive on its reappearance at the climax of the Prelude (mm. 80–82). Mitchell observed the "vital motion of a in the final version, as it moves to its successor, g $\sharp$ <sup>1</sup>, in [the *Tristan* chord],"<sup>18</sup> and Wagner did not exploit a parallel tension in either Phrase II or Phrase III, though he might easily have done so, and this seems convincing evidence that he did indeed wish to place special emphasis on the specific pitches A and G $\sharp$ .

If we saw the New York sketch in isolation, we might wonder why Wagner broke off the way he did, with just the first three notes of the melody for the next unit. As we might suspect, he had already jotted down that melody in its complete form in his Brown Diary (see Example 14 on p. 134). The New York sketch shows, however, that Wagner has already decided to reverse the strong and weak accents by beginning this melody in the middle of the measure.

18. Ibid.

## Example 14



Whereas the first unit's uppermost line presented a *chromatic* linearization of a *minor* triad with added 6th, the second unit now presents a *diatonic* linearization of a *major* triad with added 6th, A–C–E–G, precisely the chord which represents the double-tonic complex. The ascent from A to C is clear enough, though the C on the downbeat of m. 18 is dissonant with the harmony. The ensuing D, which provides the local resolution for C, is dropped down to the D below so that it is not an integral part of the ascending line. The same thing happens at the beginning of m. 19 where the E is harmonically dissonant, and the resolving D is once again descended to, so that it also stands outside the upward movement of the line. Meanwhile, the C in the middle of m. 18 is harmonized with a C-major triad in second inversion, and the arrival at G in m. 20 coincides with a second C-major triad, this time in *first* inversion. The first two triads from the double-tonic complex in the Prelude are thus C-major triads, but neither one is in root position. The diatonic scalar ascent by 3rds is broken once G is reached, though in the purely intervallic sense the ascent continues one step further to B $\flat$ . From B $\flat$ , the line descends and arrives at the first *root-position* triad from the tonic complex on the downbeat of m. 22—an *A-major* triad, however, not a C triad. Once Wagner presents tonic triads, he clarifies their relative position—A as primary, C as secondary—within the complex by presenting the C triads first, but not in root position, and then proceeding to a *root-position* A triad. The remainder of this second unit of the Prelude continues on to still another root-position A-major triad in the second half of m. 24.

Wagner's Preliminary Draft for this second unit shows some odd variants from the final version. The sketch from the Brown Diary (Example 14) has G in the bass at the beginning of the second measure, and the C-major triad is clearly implied. In the Preliminary Draft, however, the bass in the middle of m. 18 has a G $\sharp$  instead of the G $\natural$ , so that the harmony is an augmented triad rather than the C-major triad. In the second half of m. 24, Wagner seems first to have preferred the A-major triad in second inversion and evidently wondered about whether

to present the root in the bass at all. Finally, his instrumental abbreviations in the Preliminary Draft in mm. 17–18 show that he intended to begin the second unit with the cellos, just as he had done in the first unit, but the violas (*Br*) were to continue the new melody halfway through m. 18, and against their melody he supplied the beginning of a counterpoint with which the cellos were to continue. This phrase assumed its final form in the Developed Draft, where Wagner rewrote the lower parts in accordance with the familiar version and gave the entire main melody to the cellos.

Another problematic passage in the Preliminary Draft begins at m. 70, a passage not yet worked out in its final form. Mm. 70–73 of the Prelude actually extend to six measures in the Draft, since Wagner attempted to weave in the entire material of Phrases II and III from the beginning. He had begun with Motive *y* from Phrase I in mm. 68–69, since the harmony of the end of mm. 67–68 would not permit the use of Motive *x*. When he later revised the ensuing passage, he cut Motive *x* out of Phrases II and III as well, and this enabled him to eliminate a full measure in each case.

Wagner had already decided not to include the interruption (mm. 12–15) in this recall, but instead to elide from m. 11 into the second half of m. 16. This compression of material as a climax approaches is characteristic of Wagner. He realized in this instance that a recall of both Phrases II and III, even in combination with the new motive of this passage, would be psychologically static, an effect inherent in the very nature of a complete literal recall. He thus withheld complete recapitulation of the opening unit until the final section, where it could effectively support the process of transition to a lower level of musical intensity. Since Wagner wrote out the Prelude from beginning to end in the Preliminary Draft, he may not have foreseen, when he reached this passage (mm. 70–73), precisely how he would accomplish that later transition. Once he had worked out the conclusion, however, he could look back and see that a complete recall of the first three phrases in mm. 68–73 not only undermined the effect of the climax, but also that the final pages of the Prelude devoted altogether too much space to literal repetitions.

For the passage beginning at m. 74, the Preliminary Draft contains the same three basic elements as the final version: the cello melody in the middle of the texture with a new continuation, plus chromatically descending and ascending counterpoints above and below. Wagner's original idea was to begin the cello melody in the middle of the measure,

as in m. 17, and he wrote it out in that position. But the contrapuntal combination did not work out, and his solution to the problem lay in shifting the entire melody back half a measure and making a few adjustments in the counterpoints to accommodate the shift. Wagner indicated to himself what he had to do by drawing new barlines for the cello melody. This additional act of compression served to intensify the approach to the climax even further, since the entrance to the cello melody now anticipates the melodic resolution of the preceding phrase (B–A). The cello melody itself continues differently after reaching B<sup>b</sup>, and Wagner later condensed this new continuation by eliminating the two half-measures bracketed in the transcription. In both versions, the melody's original conclusion with A-major triads does not appear. Wagner begins the process of harmonic transition to C in this passage, first by reinforcing the texture of mm. 74–76 with a timpani roll on C, and then by phasing out that portion of the cello melody most unequivocally associated with A.

This new continuation culminates in an expanded return of the opening unit in mm. 82–94. In the Preliminary Draft, Wagner planned to begin this return with Phrase I, Motive *y* and to omit the first appearance of Motive *x*, just as he had done in the comparable recall he originally drafted for the passage just before m. 74. When he revised this later recall in his Developed Draft, he first expanded it by anticipating Phrase I, Motive *y* with two rhythmically and melodically altered statements of it in the trumpet (mm. 81–82). Later on, Wagner realized the full implication of what he had done there and added to the Developed Draft in pencil an additional counterpoint for the cellos (now doubled by horns) in the form of three statements of Motive *x* from Phrase I (A<sup>b</sup> replacing A<sup>♯</sup>).

In this recall, Wagner extended both Phrase I and Phrase II with a literal retrograde of its own Motive *x*. The retrograde version had already become an important motive in its own right in the bass beginning at m. 28, but it now assumes the rhythm as well as the melodic contour of the first segment of the cello melody (see Example 15).

The cello melody itself returns once more in mm. 94–100, but Wagner now reharmonizes it and varies it with still another continuation which initiates the final phase of the transition to C. In mm. 101–6, Phrase I and Phrase II make their last appearance before the curtain opens, and a timpani roll on G is added to Motive *x* in both phrases. In addition, the bass line of Phrase I, Motive *y* does not move to E, so that the concluding harmony of Phrase I, accompanied by G in the timpani,



## Example 15

The musical score for Example 15 is presented in two systems. The first system shows a retrograde of a phrase in the upper voice, with the label "Retrograde of:" above it. Below this, the piano accompaniment is shown in two staves (treble and bass clef). The second system shows the "Cello melody" in the bass clef, which is an arpeggiated version of the Tristan chord. Brackets below the piano accompaniment in both systems indicate "Extension of Phrase I (mm. 84-85)" and "Extension of Phrase II (mm. 87-88)".

is now altered to the  $V^9$  of C. In his Preliminary Draft, Wagner has two versions of the phrase in mm. 100–3, the second written on top of the first. The transition to C had been accomplished by this point, and his first thought was simply to present two statements of Phrase II, one in the original register and then another an octave lower. Wagner realized only later on that he could rework the final chord of Phrase I in such a way as to present the V of C, rather than the V of A.

Wagner conceived the concluding melody for cellos and basses in notes of equal value, except for the prolonged final  $A^b$  and G. This melody features an arpeggiation of the notes from the *Tristan* chord in Phrase I, and in his Developed Draft, Wagner grafted onto this arpeggiation the rhythm of Motive x:

## Example 16

The musical score for Example 16 consists of two staves. The upper staff, in bass clef, shows the "Tristan chord from Phrase I (mm. 107-09)" as an arpeggiated sequence of notes. The lower staff, in treble clef, shows the "Rhythm of Motive x" as a sequence of notes with specific rhythmic values. Vertical dashed lines connect the notes in the two staves to show their alignment.

The arpeggiated version resolves to G (= V of C), whereas the chordal version at the beginning of the Prelude had resolved to the  $V^7$  of A. It



The bass line for this phrase corresponds exactly to the bass line of Wagner's initial sketch (see Example 13). It is also the primary form of Motive *x*; the two segments explicitly contrast A and C, but while a complete root-position triad amplifies A, C is still only implied by its  $V^7$ . This  $V^7$  chord is approached directly from the same *Tristan* chord that had preceded it in Phrase II of the Prelude. By this means, Wagner supports the primary position of A within the tonic complex.

Lorenz regarded this phrase as the "resolution" of the *conclusion* of the Prelude<sup>19</sup> and consequently used it to mark the end of the first "period" (structural unit) in Act I, ignoring altogether the complete cadence in C some 50 measures further along. When Wagner actually begins to tip the tonic balance in favor of C later on in Act I, he does use this phrase as a cadence just before the transition to Scene 5. Now, however, he actually spells out C rather than merely implying it:

## Example 19

*Isolde*

gab sie den To-des - trank. Der Tod nun sag' ihr Dank!

Meanwhile, the A triad in the first segment is approached from another complete triad on  $A^b$ . Wagner thus makes explicit the motivic significance of  $A^b-A^{\natural}$  and defines the local importance of  $A^{\natural}$  by presenting that triad in root position, while the  $A^b$  triad is in first inversion. With this first segment, then, the  $A^b-A^{\natural}$  motive is elevated to the level of *harmonic* amplification, and at the midpoint of Act II, Wagner carries the process a step further. Here, it operates on the level of large-scale *tonal* contrast, for Wagner juxtaposes a large section in  $A^{\natural}$  with another in  $A^b$ . Once  $A^b$  is established and Tristan begins to sing, his vocal line picks up with another arpeggiation of the *Tristan*

19. Alfred Lorenz, *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner*, Vol. 2: *Der musikalische Aufbau von Richard Wagners "Tristan und Isolde,"* 2nd unaltered ed. (Tutzing, 1966), pp. 29-30.

chord from Phrase I of the Prelude, which Kurth was evidently the first to point out.<sup>20</sup> In addition, however, the arpeggiated *minor* triad with added 6th is supported in one measure by a harmonic presentation of the corresponding *major* triad with added 6th:

## Example 20

Tristan chord from Phrase I of Prelude  
=  $A^b$  minor triad with added 6th

Tristan

O sink' her - nie - der Nacht der Lie - be

(String figuration omitted)

$A^b$        $A^b$        $A^b$  major triad with added 6th

The Transfiguration is primarily a recapitulation of two passages from the concluding portion of the love scene in Act II. Wagner begins by recalling the first of two parallel strophes which precede Brangäne's second interruption. The later recapitulation of just *one* of two or more parallel strophes is a noteworthy technique, since it also became a common procedure with later nineteenth-century symphonic composers. The strophe from Act II begins with a characteristic four-note motive harmonized with an  $A^b_4^6$  triad and arrives at a  $B_4^6$  triad in its penultimate measure. The second passage Wagner recalls—the last 100 measures of Act II, Scene 2—*begins* with a  $B_4^6$  triad (and the same four-note motive), and Wagner was thus able to unite the two passages by eliding the two  $B_4^6$  triads. After this second recall, Wagner continues with new material in the form of an extended cadence culminating in one final appearance of Motive  $\gamma$  from Phrase I of the Prelude, whose new extension concludes the opera with what Richard Strauss called “the most beautifully scored

20. Ernst Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagners "Tristan,"* 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1923), pp. 86–87.

final chord in the history of music."<sup>21</sup>

Wagner made several revisions in his original text<sup>22</sup> for the Transfiguration, and except for a single couplet, the text assumed its final form in his setting in the Preliminary Draft. The structure of this revised text, plus the tonal references Wagner wrote as reminders in Mathilde Wesendonk's manuscript copy of the poem,<sup>23</sup> appear in outline in the left-hand column of the chart on page 142. As far as the musical setting is concerned, Wagner treated it as if constructed in four parts. He organized Parts I and II on the principal of a recurrent couplet functioning as a verbal refrain and expanded its third appearance at the end of Part II. On the other hand, Parts III and IV (12 lines, plus 22 reduced from the original 24) are continuous and more rhapsodic in character.

When Wagner set this text in his Preliminary Draft, he altered his compositional procedure with regard to the foundational role he customarily assigned to the vocal part (in conjunction with bass line). Because this section involves a substantial musical recall, Wagner's task here was to adapt a new text to music already composed. For most of Parts I through III, he simply adapted the new words to the already existing vocal line or chief instrumental melody—hence his statement after the change to the B-major signature, "Here even children can make themselves an accompaniment!!" In Part IV, on the other hand, he constructed a new vocal part as an additional counterpoint to the earlier orchestral texture and also to his new continuation.

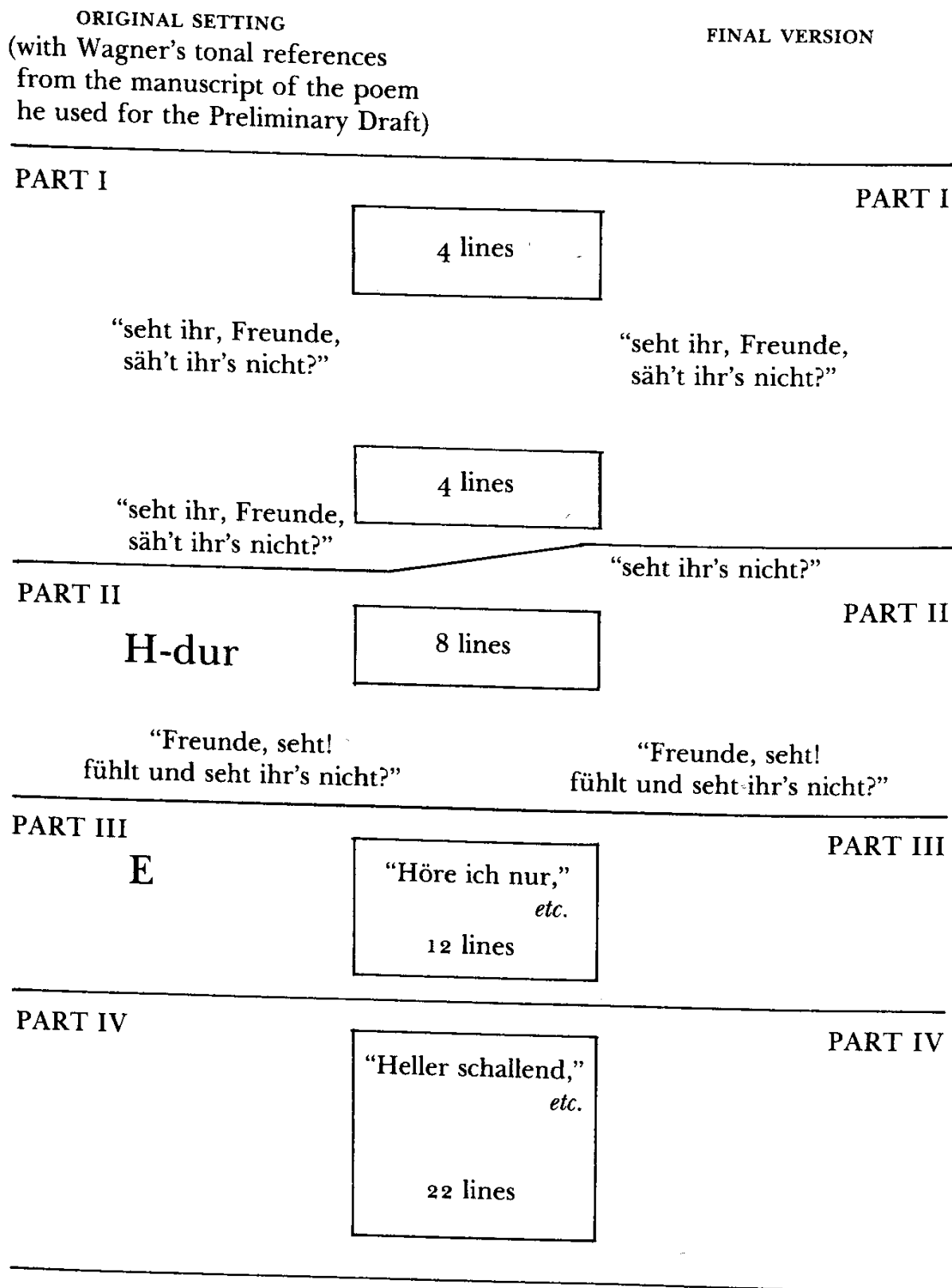
In the Preliminary Draft, Wagner gave the three refrains different vocal settings, and for the first and third, he also composed an entirely new accompaniment which duplicates nothing whatever from Act II. Wagner thus decided to let the first and third refrains remain outside the scheme of recapitulations he had devised for the bulk of the monologue. For the second refrain, however, he transferred the original Act II vocal line to the orchestral texture he was recalling and gave Isolde a new vocal line instead—the one instance in Parts I through III

21. In his essay of 1933, "Zeitgemässe Glossen für Erziehung zur Musik," in Willi Schuh, ed., *Richard Strauss: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*, 2nd ed. (Zurich, 1957), p. 124.

22. The original version of Wagner's text for this passage appears in his *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, Vol. 7, 4th ed. (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 79–81.

23. These "tonal indications" were merely Wagner's reminders of the passages he would recall from Act II and do not reflect an attempt to lay out an abstract tonal design in advance. Similarly, verbal indications of keys in the Preliminary Draft either substitute for an actual signature or serve as reminders of where to reposition a new signature in the Developed Draft.

## FORMAL PLAN OF THE TEXT



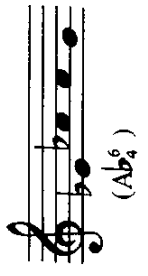
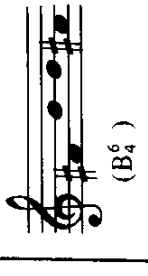
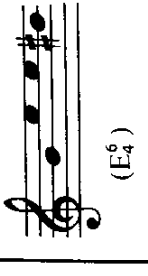
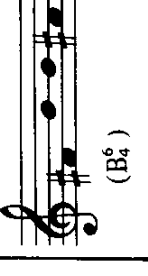
where he composed the vocal line as a new counterpoint to the music drawn from Act II.

The chart on page 144 presents an outline of the two passages recalled from Act II and compares Wagner's basic formal design for the earlier setting with that for the final version (which emerged in his Developed Draft). He adapted Part I—two groups of 4 lines, each followed by the refrain—to Tristan's strophe preceding Brangäne's second interruption, and he retained its 6/8 metrical arrangement. After adapting the first 4 lines to Tristan's vocal part, Wagner inserted two new measures (bracketed in the transcription) for the first refrain, then picked up where he had left off with the Act II strophe and continued adapting his new text to the earlier vocal part until he reached the refrain once again. This is the point where Wagner shifted the earlier vocal part to the accompaniment and wrote an entirely new vocal line as counterpoint to the thus modified texture. The two appearances of the refrain divide the original strophe into two separate sections, and except for the two newly composed measures for the first refrain, the musical fabric of Part I is exactly the same in the Preliminary Draft as in the final version.

Part II, in both versions, begins at the change to a B-major signature, and Wagner's first setting becomes much more problematic. In Act II, the final B-major portion of the duet contains two passages that begin with the main motive harmonized with B<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>. In the final version, Part II begins with the *first* of these two passages and continues straight through to the end of the scene, but the Preliminary Draft picks up from the *second*. Wagner proceeded with the same method he had followed in Part I and adapted the 8 lines of Part II to one or the other of the original Act II vocal parts or primary instrumental melody. He also eliminated some of the internal repetitions conditioned in Act II by the presence of both Tristan and Isolde. He then composed five entirely new measures (bracketed in the transcription) for the third (expanded) refrain.

For Part III, Wagner returned to the music from Act II and backtracked to the spot he had indicated in Mathilde's manuscript of the poem, which begins with the same 4-note motive on E<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>. Once again, he set the first 10 lines to whichever of the Act II vocal parts best suited the new words. For the last 2 lines, he composed three new measures (bracketed in the transcription) and elided the last word of Part III (*klingt*) onto the beginning of the music for Part IV, thereby obscuring the formal division between Parts III and IV.

(References for the music from Act II are to the study score published by C. F. Peters and reprinted by Broude Brothers and Dover. 387/1 = measure 1 on p. 387. For the final version of the Transfiguration, measure numbers correspond to those in the Score in this volume.)

<b>Act II</b>	<b>387/1-388/5</b>  <b>6</b>	<b>410/2-411/8</b>  <b>2</b>	<b>411/9-415/5</b>  <b>2</b>	<b>415/6-421/2</b>  <b>2</b>	<b>421/3-427/5</b>
	<b>First Setting (Preliminary Draft)</b>	<b>PART I</b> <b>6</b>	<b>PART II</b>	<b>PART III</b>	<b>PART II</b>
<b>Transfiguration</b>	<b>PART I</b> <b>4</b> <b>4</b>	<b>PART II</b>	<b>PART III</b>	<b>PART IV</b>	<b>PART IV</b>
<b>Final Version</b>	<b>PART I</b> <b>4</b> <b>4</b>	mm. 1632-1648	mm. 1649-1663	mm. 1664-1680	mm. 1621-1631
<b>Transfiguration</b>					



After the first few measures of Part IV, Wagner changed the method he had been following so far and for the most part ignored the Act II vocal parts altogether. Instead of simply adapting the new text to an earlier vocal line or instrumental counterpoint, he copied out the melody and bass line of the orchestral texture from the final portion of Act II, Scene 2 and added the new continuation along those same lines. In turn, he constructed an essentially new vocal part as a counterpoint to what he had written out. The Preliminary Draft for Part IV corresponds exactly to the final version up to Isolde's last note, except that Wagner duplicated the 2/2 meter from Act II. Ultimately he changed the whole monologue to 4/4 meter—scarcely surprising in the case of the 6/8 strophe for Part I, since the Preliminary Draft shows one passage where he seems to have slipped unawares into duple meter *in the vocal part* for four measures.

When Wagner revised Parts I through III, he also removed the new music he had composed for the first and third refrains. He retained the *text* of the first refrain intact, however, and his readaptation of it to music from the original strophe shifted the remainder of the text for Part I ahead by two lines. Thus, the Act II strophe now concludes with the second group of 4 lines, and Wagner repositioned the second refrain at the beginning of the music for Part II. In assigning this new structural position to the second refrain, he eliminated its exact parallel with the first refrain by shortening it to one line—the only change he made in the version his text had assumed in the Preliminary Draft. He also adapted the third refrain to music from Act II, but he retained its position at the conclusion of Part II, which thus both begins and ends with modified refrains, now so different from each other. In the final version, then, Wagner abandoned the original symmetrical refrain structure he had built into the text for Parts I and II in favor of the purely musical principle of recapitulation. We have noted that when Wagner began the new setting of Part II with the *first* B-major passage from Act II, he continued from that point straight through to the end of the scene, but he retained the excisions of internal repetitions he had made in the earlier setting of Part II. The music Wagner had used in the Preliminary Draft for the 8 lines of Part II now appears as the setting for the first 7 lines of Part III.

Wagner's new continuation following the end of the second recall begins at m. 1681 and provides a final resolution of the major triad with added 6th in the harmonic context of a cadential IV–I progression:

## Example 21

The diagram shows two musical examples. The left example, labeled 'IV', shows a major triad with an added 6th (B, D#, F#, G) in the treble clef and a major triad (B, D#, F#) in the bass clef. An arrow points from the 'major triad with added 6th' box to the 'pure triad' box. The right example, labeled 'I', shows a major triad with an added 6th (B, D, F, G) in the treble clef and a major triad (B, D, F) in the bass clef. An arrow points from the 'major triad with added 6th' box to the 'pure triad' box.

The added 6th is now treated as a long-sustained appoggiatura to the 5th of the triad. He then reinforces the cadential character of the passage by converting IV to the minor mode in mm. 1688–89. Isolde's last note remained D# even in the Developed Draft, and as a much later afterthought, Wagner took a pencil and entered the change to the high F#, so that the conclusion of the vocal line foreshadows the terminal high F# for the violins. The Preliminary Draft already includes the violin ascent to the high F#, but Wagner approached it chromatically from the E# below. His change to a diatonic ascent through the first five notes of the B-major scale was conditioned in part by his eventual decision to add one last recall of Motive *y* from the opening phrase of the Prelude. In revising this progression for its new context, Wagner added a B pedal point to the whole motive and replaced the E<sup>7</sup> of the earlier progression with an E-minor triad, which now initiates a characteristic minor IV–major I cadence in B. In this extension, the melodic line continues its ascending pattern, but now diatonically from B to D#. Wagner decided to include this recall of Motive *y* before he reached this passage in his Developed Draft. His sketch for the new version, in its final form, stands alone on the otherwise blank *verso* of the last sheet from his Preliminary Draft for the opera:

## Example 22

The musical notation shows a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The key signature is B major. The melodic line starts on B and ascends diatonically to D#. The bass line starts on B and remains on B throughout the passage.