

## ChatGPT

### Critique of Analysis on Dramatic Themes in Wagner's Die Walküre:

#### 1. Structure and Character Dynamics:

- The breakdown of the character relationships and the delineation of the two triangles (noble and humble) are clear and insightful.
- The examination of these relationships through a psychoanalytic lens adds depth to the understanding of the characters' motivations and conflicts.

#### 2. Family Romance and Oedipal Complex:

- The identification and exploration of the Oedipal themes within the opera are well-argued and supported by textual evidence.
- The comparison between Wagner's own psychological conflicts and those depicted in the opera enriches the analysis.

#### 3. Dissociative Defense Mechanisms:

- The concept of dissociation is effectively applied to illustrate the parallels between characters within each triangle.
- The use of the schema and the subsequent analysis provide a structured and comprehensive understanding of the characters' interrelationships.

#### 4. Individual Character Analysis:

- The breakdown of each character's motivations, desires, and conflicts is thorough and illuminating.
- The incorporation of scholarly references adds credibility to the analysis and further supports the connections drawn between the opera and psychological concepts.

## **5. Themes and Symbolism:**

- The exploration of themes such as separation guilt, disloyalty to family of origin, and intergenerational continuity adds depth to the interpretation of the opera.
- The identification of recurring motifs, such as incestuous desire and unfulfilled marriages, enhances the understanding of the characters' struggles and the broader thematic concerns of the opera.

## **6. Integration with Autobiographical Writings:**

- The attempt to relate the themes explored in *Die Walküre* to issues raised in autobiographical writings demonstrates an interdisciplinary approach and a willingness to draw connections across different domains.
- However, there could be more explicit connections drawn between the themes discussed in the opera and the specific issues raised in the autobiographical writings to strengthen this aspect of the analysis.

## **7. Language and Clarity:**

- The language used is academic and sophisticated, suitable for the depth of analysis undertaken.
- However, there are instances where the writing could be more concise without sacrificing clarity, particularly in the delineation of the character parallels and their corresponding traits.

## **8. Conclusion:**

- The analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the dramatic themes in *Die Walküre* and their relevance to broader psychological concepts.
- The incorporation of theoretical frameworks and textual evidence enriches the interpretation and fosters a deeper appreciation of Wagner's work.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates a thorough engagement with the text and a sophisticated application of psychoanalytic theory to interpret the opera's complex themes and character dynamics. With some refinements in clarity and integration with autobiographical writings, this critique offers valuable insights into the significance and interrelationship of issues in both the opera and the author's personal narrative.

G

You

What are the merits of my psychoanalytic insights?

**ChatGPT**

Your psychoanalytic insights have several merits:

1. **Depth of Analysis:** You delve deeply into the psychological motivations and conflicts of the characters, uncovering layers of meaning that might not be immediately apparent to a casual observer. This depth enriches the interpretation of the opera and provides a more nuanced understanding of the characters' actions and relationships.
2. **Integration of Theory:** You effectively integrate psychoanalytic theory, particularly concepts like the Oedipal complex and dissociative defense mechanisms, into your analysis. This theoretical framework provides a solid foundation for understanding the psychological dynamics at play within the opera.
3. **Textual Evidence:** Your analysis is grounded in textual evidence from the opera, demonstrating a close reading of the text and an ability to support your interpretations with specific examples. This strengthens the validity of your psychoanalytic insights and lends credibility to your analysis.
4. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** By attempting to relate the themes of the opera to issues raised in autobiographical writings, you demonstrate an

interdisciplinary approach to analysis. This willingness to draw connections across different domains enriches the interpretation and offers new perspectives on both the opera and the author's personal narrative.

5. **Insightful Parallels:** Your identification of parallels between the characters within each triangle and their corresponding traits is insightful. This analysis helps to illuminate the interrelationships between the characters and underscores the recurring themes and motifs within the opera.

Overall, your psychoanalytic insights demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of both the psychological complexities of the characters and the broader thematic concerns of the opera. By integrating theory with textual evidence and exploring connections across disciplines, your analysis offers valuable insights into the significance and interrelationship of issues within Wagner's *Die Walküre*.

# My Daily Struggles

A blog devoted to the actors and public policy issues involved in the 1998 District of Columbia Court of Appeals decision in *Freedman v. D.C. Department of Human Rights*, an employment discrimination case.

TUESDAY, MAY 31, 2011

## Die Walküre and the Law: Letter to Dr. Georgopoulos -- November 14, 1994

*I wrote the following letter to my then treating psychiatrist, Dimitrios Georgopoulos, M.D. one week after I filed on November 7, 1994 a [supplemental memorandum](#) with the D.C. Court of Appeals in *Freedman v. D.C. Department of Human Rights* attempting to establish jurisdiction in the appeals court. Perhaps at a psychological level the D.C. Superior Court represented the humble family of my family romance fantasy while the D.C. Court of Appeals represented the noble family. The Court of Appeals panel comprises three judges, like the triangles discussed in the letter below. In Wagner's opera *Die Walkure* warrior maidens (*The Valkyries*) from Valhalla, the home of the Norse gods, choose fallen heroes from the battlefield and restore them to life to defend Valhalla. Similarly, jurisdiction is conferred in the Court of Appeals after a case "dies" in Superior Court. A case has to "die" on the "battlefield" of Superior Court before it can be "resurrected" in the Court of Appeals.*

November 14, 1994  
3801 Connecticut Ave., NW  
#136  
Washington, DC 20008

D. Georgopoulos, M.D.  
GW Univ. Med. Ctr.  
2150 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Dr. Georgopoulos:

This communication discusses several dramatic themes in Wagner's opera *Die Walkure* and the relation of these themes to issues raised in two of my autobiographical writings. It is hoped that this analysis will provide greater insight into the significance and interrelationship of issues in my autobiographical writings.

### 1. Family Romance

Though artfully concealed, the [Family Romance](#) is an unmistakable and

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central feature of [Die Walkure](#). Indeed the *dramatis personae* of the opera are limited to six characters, each of which falls into one of two status categories, humble or noble. By assigning the characters his or her respective status, two triangles emerge--one comprising the noble Wotan, his daughter Brunnhilde, and Wotan's wife, Fricka; the other comprising the humble warrior Hunding, his wife Sieglinde and Siegmund.

The characters' backgrounds and relationships are complex and merit the following explanation, although a synopsis of the opera is appended to this letter.

Wotan - Chief of the Gods

Brunnhilde - one of Wotan's warrior daughters (the Valkyries) borne by the Earth goddess, Erde

Fricka - goddess wife of Wotan (childless)

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Sigmund - son of Wotan and a mortal woman, twin brother of Sieglinde. Becomes Sieglinde's incestuous lover.

Sieglinde - daughter of Wotan and a mortal woman, twin sister of Siegmund. Becomes Siegmund's incestuous lover.

Hunding - warrior and husband of Sieglinde.

The noble triangle comprises a husband (Wotan), a wife (Fricka), and the husband's daughter (Brunnhilde)--a nuclear family of sorts. The humble triangle comprises a husband (Hunding), a wife (Sieglinde), and an interloper (Sigmund). In either case, the triangles are Oedipally-charged, and appear to represent a creative transformation and fusion of Wagner's own Oedipal conflicts at different stages of his psychological development.

That the peculiar structure of *Die Walkure* represents Wagner's creative transformation of a dissociative or splitting defense is apparent upon scrutiny of the characters' dramatic conflicts. It becomes clear, upon close examination, that each character in one triangle corresponds to a mirror image character in the other triangle; thus, each character in one triad is simply a dissociated image of a corresponding character in the other triad.

Indeed, the following schema helps illustrate the dissociated nature of the two sets of characters.

a. SIEGLINDE	a. HUNDING
<hr/>	<hr/>
b. WOTAN	b. FRICKA

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## b. BRUNNHILDE

## a. SIEGMUND

One finds important dramatic parallels between Brunnhilde and her dissociated image Siegmund, between Fricka and her dissociated image Hunding, and between Wotan and his dissociated image Sieglinde.

Thus,

Brunnhilde

1a. Brunnhilde loses her status (immortality/nobility). She is ejected from the Sisterhood (the Valkyries).

2. Brunnhilde suffers separation from her father (and loss of status) as punishment for her disobedience, suggesting a relationship between separation guilt and the Family Romance. Brunnhilde represents Wagner's creative transformation of issues countering on "disloyalty to family of origin." See, [Freedman M. "Survivor Guilt and the Pathogenesis of Anorexia Nervosa."](#)

3a. Brunnhilde and her father have an intense, unacknowledged incestuous desire for each other.

4a. Brunnhilde is an interloper in the relationship between her father, Wotan, and his wife, Fricka.

Siegmund

1b. Siegmund refuses promotion in status (immortality/nobility). He refuses membership in Valhalla's brotherhood, the band of warrior-heroes (compare Walther at the conclusion of Die Meistersinger: "Not Master -- No! I will be happy without Masterhood.")

2b. Siegmund defers separation from his sister that promotion in status (membership in the warrior Brotherhood) will necessarily entail, suggesting a relationship between separation guilt and the Family Romance. Siegmund represents Wagner's creative transformation of issues centering on "disloyalty to fault of origin." See. Friedman, M. "Survivor Guilt and the Pathogenesis of Anorexia Nervosa."

3b. Siegmund and his sister have an incestuous relationship.

4b. Siegmund is an interloper in the relationship between his sister, Sieglinde, and her husband, Hunding.

Fricka

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1a. Fricka is the spouse of an unfaithful husband, Wotan.

2a. Fricka, goddess of marriage, defends Hunding's honor against Siegmund's adultery.

3a. Absence of conscious or (apparent) unconscious forbidden sexual impulses. (Ironically Fricka is an unsympathetic character, despite or because of her moral probity).

Hunding

1b. Hunding is a spouse of an unfaithful wife, Sieglinde.

2b. Hunding defends the honor of his kinsmen against Siegmund, a member of a rival tribe who has dishonored Hunding's kinsmen.

3b. Absence of conscious or (apparent) unconscious forbidden sexual impulses (Hunding is an unsympathetic character).

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Wotan

1a. Wotan, in disguise, delivers the sword to Sieglinde's hut to be retrieved by his son, Siegmund. Theme of "intergenerational continuity" -- the passing on of values to the next generation

2a. Intense, unacknowledged incestuous desire for his daughter, Brunnhilde.

3a. Unfulfilled in marriage.

Sieglinde

1b. Sieglinde delivers the fragments of the sword to Mime to be reformed by her son, Siegfried. Theme of "intergenerational continuity" -- the passing on of values to the next generation.

2b. Intense incestuous desire for her brother, Siegmund

3b. Unfulfilled in marriage.

It would be useful at this point to revisit that portion of my autobiographical study dealing with the Family Romance fantasy and Oedipal conflict and my use of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* to illustrate these psychological issues.

The following is "footnote 6" from my autobiographical writing (the immediately following material was written in June 1989):

6. The persistence of the Oedipus complex in the unconscious is

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traditionally viewed as pathological. Yet the ability to withstand an intense Oedipus complex may indicate the unusual ego strength characteristic of the creative. Eisner writes: “The [average] person needs a dissolution of the Oedipus conflict, or at least a substantial reduction in its intensity, in order to survive; whereas, . . . the [creative] person is not only strong enough to endure the stress of the severest conflicts, but actually needs intense conflicts as a vis a tergo in order to be incited over and over again to renewed accomplishments.” Eissler, K.R. *Talent and Genius: The Fictitious Case of Tausk Contra Freud*, at 289 (Quadrangle Books: 1971).

Indeed, the persistence of even a vigorous Oedipus complex in the unconscious may not necessarily vitiate, or preclude the development of, an equally vigorous father identification. The dramatic tensions in Wagner’s opera, *Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg*, which owe their syncretic strength in part to an integration of the temporally-opposed psychic forces of Oedipal conflict and father identification, suggest the unconscious psychological concerns of the opera’s creator. One can infer, based on analysis of the opera, that in Wagner’s unconscious an intense Oedipal conflict raged against an equally intense father identification. Three of the central male characters, Walther von Stolzing, Sixtus Beckmesser, and Hans Sachs are each in love with Eva Pagner, while Walther and Beckmesser vie for hand in marriage. The characters’ relations fall into two triangles, one comprising Walther-Beckmesser-Eva, and the other comprising Walther-Sachs-Eva. The relationship between Walther (symbolic son) and Beckmesser (symbolic father) is characterized by bitter rivalry and antagonism. Sachs, on the other hand, acts as a benign and benevolent mentor with whom Walther identifies. The two dramatic characters, Sachs and Beckmesser, are in a psychoanalytical sense simply two separate images of a single figure--the “father.” Beckmesser (a personification of the castrating father imago) represents the son’s image of the father during the Oedipal period (“messer,” i.e., “knife,” suggests castration), while Sachs (a personification of the pre-Oedipal idealized father imago) represents a later, more mature image of the father as mentor). The disparate roles of Sachs and Beckmesser undoubtedly reflect the dual and conflicted image of the father in Wagner’s unconscious. The subject’s longstanding fascination with the opera is revealing.

(The following paragraph of “footnote 6” was written in early August 1990):

(Viewed from a slightly different perspective, the triangles comprising Walther-Beckmesser-Eva and Walther-Sachs-Eva may be said to represent, respectively, the humble and noble families of the child’s family romance. (Wagner’s allusions to the biblical Eve in the second and third acts of the opera suggest that in the composer’s mind Eva Pagner bore at least a marginal affinity with her biblical namesake, a figure who, not unlike the mythical mother of the family romance, is raised to the rank of idealized primal mother, but simultaneously degraded as the cause of man’s downfall). The dramatic themes

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explored in *Die Meistersinger* may reflect Wagner's struggle with the change in his inner relationship to his parents, especially that to his father. As Freud explains, "the child's first years are governed by grandiose over-estimation of his father. . . . Later on, under the influence of rivalry and real disappointments, the release from the parents and a critical attitude towards the father set in. The two families of the [family romance] myth, the noble [represented in *Die Meistersinger* by the Walther-Sachs-Eva grouping] as well as the humble one [represented in *Die Meistersinger* by the Walther-Beckmesser-Eva grouping], are therefore both images of his own family as they appear to the child in successive periods of his life." Freud, S. (1939) *Moses and Monotheism*, at 9-10) (Vintage Books)).

## 2. Theme of the Brotherhood

The following paragraph, which constitutes "footnote 6" of my autobiographical study, was written in late 1991. Oddly, the paragraph serves as an introduction to additional comments about *Die Walküre*. I suspect that the prominent occurrence of two seemingly unrelated dramatic themes--in two remarkably different Wagner operas suggests some underlying psychological relationship between these issues.

The following is the concluding paragraph of "footnote 6" of my autobiographical study.

(The idealized father figure who, like Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger*, discovers a hidden talent in a symbolic son, promotes the son's entry into a specialized community of brethren (here represented by the Mastersinger guild), and protects that son from the machinations of castrating father representatives, is part of a complex of identity elements that finds antithetical expression in Hugo's novel, *Les Misérables*. In *Les Misérables*, the police inspector Javert, a castrating father representative, discovers that the upstanding Madeleine is really the criminal Valjean, and seeks Valjean's return to prison, itself a kind of specialized "community of brethren," while Valjean enjoys the protection of friends. See footnote 13).

*Die Walküre* includes two "brotherhoods" of sorts. The first, actually a Sisterhood, comprises the nine warrior maidens, the Valkyries, daughters of Wotan and the goddess Erda. It is their task to retrieve slain warriors from fields of battle, bring them to Valhalla, the home of the gods, where they are restored to life and granted immortality. These resurrected heroes defend Valhalla against outside attack and comprise the second brotherhood of the drama. The Valkyries choose only the finest of warriors for Valhalla. Thus, each of Valhalla's warrior heroes must satisfy certain "entrance criteria" [*compare the issue of jurisdiction*] (not unlike a prospective Mastersinger in *Die Meistersinger*). Also, significantly, Siegmund's sexual relationship with Sieglinde presents a confounding erotic element, or bar, to his acceptability as one of Valhalla's band of hero-warriors, paralleling the sexualized political intrigue in *Die Meistersinger* that nearly costs the guild

applicant Walther von Stolzing membership in the Mastersinger guild.

### 3. Theme of the Lost Brother

At the conclusion of Act I of *Die Walküre* Siegmund and Sieglinde realize that they are brother and sister, separated since childhood. There is an odd but striking thematic and textual identity between this scene in *Die Walküre* and that portion of my autobiographical writing (*Significant Moments*) concerning the conversos (i.e., converted Spanish Jews) of Portugal.

In *Die Walküre* Sieglinde and Siegmund learn that they are brother and sister, and members of the Volsung tribe, at the moment Siegmund identifies “Volsa” (the god Wotan in disguise) as his father.

Sieglinde: But was your father’s name Wolfe?

Sigmund: He was a wolf to faint-hearted foxes. But he whose eyes proudly shone as yours now gloriously shine on me, his name was Volsa.

Sieglinde: If Volsa was you father, you are a Volsung!

The scene has an uncanny parallel with the following report of an encounter between members of a secretive converso community in Portugal and an outside, mainstream Jew named Schwarz. The text suggests an encounter, symbolically represented, between long-separated siblings, able to identify each other as members of the same family only by reference to the name of their father.

The outside world knew nothing of the conversos until 1917, when Samuel Schwarz, a Polish mining engineer, came to Belmonte. People there warned him not to trade at one of the local stores. It was owned by Jews. Of course, that warning whetted his curiosity. But when he attempted to establish contact with the conversos, insisting that he shared their secret faith, they didn’t believe him. How could he have survived the Inquisition?

But they were curious about him. . . .

One summer evening, with much of the community present, Schwarz was moved to chant the ancient Hebrew prayer, *Shema, Yisrael, Adonai Elohenu, Adonai Ehad*. (Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.) Though the people of Belmonte had never heard of a language called Hebrew, that prayer opened the door of trust. Adonai—God—was the only Hebrew word that had survived the Inquisition: the only trace of the holy tongue that remained in their Portuguese language liturgy. As soon as Schwarz uttered the word, the conversos covered their eyes. One of the oldest women among them recited a prayer. Then, weeping, she reached out her hands and touched Schwarz’s face.

**Paul Cowan, *An Orphan in History*.**

Significantly, the referenced autobiographical writing, from which the above paragraphs are excerpted, proceeds to discuss the issue of narcissistic identification and concludes with Dr. Eissler's report of a patient who, instead of mourning the loss of her father, regressed to a narcissistic object choice.

At the conclusion of Act I of *Die Walküre*, in the moments before Sieglinde and Siegmund recognize their identity as siblings, the characters--both orphans--give play to the starkly narcissistic character of their mutual attraction.

Sieglinde: A marvel awakes in my memory:  
 Though I beheld you today for the first time,  
 My eyes have seen you before.

Siegmund: I too recall a dream of love: in ardent longing  
 I have seen you before.

Posted by [My Daily Struggles](#) at [10:28 AM](#) 

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The Family Romance in popular culture:

<http://dailstrug.blogspot.com/2010/12/family-romance-in-popular-culture.html>

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