

On the Controversies over German Narratives of Romantic Opera in the Twentieth Century

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Abstract

The historiography of the German Romantic opera is a largely ignored topic today. However, its elucidation of the multifold intellectual debates on the relationships between German music and German national identity among international academicians makes it worthy of investigation. The discourse of German Romantic opera within the German-speaking community reveals how those debates are shaped and addressed. In this essay, the author analyzes the writings of pre- and post-World War II works by Siegfried Goslich (1937, 1975), Carl Dahlhaus (1983, 1984), Sabine Henze-Döhring and Sieghart Döhring (1997), which are representative not only of their individual narrative methods but also of their sequential “problem-solution” exposition. Through the lens of these German-speaking musicologists, this paper explicates how the conceptions of German Romantic opera narratives break through a nationalistic framework by veering toward the “history of ideas” in composition technique, and then achieve a historiography of transnational fluidity and connectivity over the course of the twentieth century.

Keywords: German Romantic opera, nationalism, history of ideas, narrative in music historiography, transnational

關於二十世紀的浪漫歌劇 德語敘事爭議

沈雕龍

摘 要

本論文探討一個近來較被忽略的音樂史書寫面相：德語浪漫歌劇的歷史書寫。這個議題的價值在於讓我們認識到，從二次大戰之後，德國音樂和其國族身份認同如何在國際知識圈中引發了一波波激烈的爭議；而本文呈現這些爭議如何被指認出來，又如何在德語音樂學圈中的德語浪漫歌劇歷史書寫變化裡被逐步化解。我分析了二戰前和二戰後，勾斯利希（Siegfried Goslich, 1937, 1975）、達爾豪斯（Carl Dahlhaus, 1983, 1984）、亨策－德林和德林（Sabine Henze-Döhring and Sieghart Döhring, 1997）等人的相關作品；這些歷史書寫作品各自採用的敘事方法，不僅對於本文要指出的爭議具有代表性，更重要的是，這些書寫之間呈現出一種連續性的「問題與解決」關係。從這些橫貫二十世紀的歷史書寫中可以看出，德語圈音樂學家對德語浪漫歌劇的敘事手法從國族主義的框架，變遷到作曲技巧的「觀念史」，最後轉向跨國性的流動和連結。

關鍵詞：德語浪漫歌劇、國族主義、觀念史、音樂史書寫敘事法、跨國性

Paradigms can continue to exert influence even after they have fallen from power. They do this by serving in our historical memory as the traditional standards against which we measure our new paradigms and constantly assert their difference.

— Lydia Goehr¹

In recent decades, German music, its relationship to German national identity, and the German language have become a welcome catalyst for intellectual debates.² In their 2002 volume, *Music and German National Identity*, editors Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter trace a developmental genealogy that links music to German national consciousness stretching from the early eighteenth century to the second half of the twentieth century. They claim, “By 1945, in the rest of the world as in Germany, German music of the past had acquired certain nationalist associations.”³ The most sensitive and complicated part of this past is the reciprocal relationship between music, musicology, and the totalitarian regime during the National Socialists’ (hereafter Nazi) rise to power.

¹ Lydia Goehr, “Writing Music History,” *History and Theory* 31, no. 2 (May 1992): 182.

² To fathom the sensitivity and creativity from the recent reflections on this issue in Anglophone literature, please refer to, among others, James Garratt, “Review: *Music and German National Identity* edited by Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter; *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera* by Stephen C. Meyer,” *Music & Letters* 85, no. 2 (May 2004): 285-295; Celia Applegate, “How German Is It? Nationalism and the Idea of Serious Music in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *19th-Century Music* 21, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 274-296; Philip V. Bohlman, “Ontologies of Music,” in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 25-26; Neil Gregor and Thomas Irvine, Introduction to *Dreams of Germany: Musical Imaginaries from the Concert Hall to the Dance Floor*, ed. Neil Gregor and Thomas Irvine (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 1-29.

³ Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, “Germans as the ‘People of Music’: Genealogy of an Identity,” in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3-30.

As Potter notes, German musicology “was born in an atmosphere of campaigning for unification and promoting the idea of a German nation that persisted to the end of the Second World War.”⁴ In his 1994 monograph, *Music in the Third Reich*, Erik Levi also points out the inherent contradictions experienced by German music writers and scholars in the Nazi era, when “musical scholarship was harnessed to furnish the ideological preoccupations of the regime.”⁵ Levi indicates that the “changing political climate [...] forced many writers, who had previously offered a ‘liberal’ interpretation of musical history, to modify their opinions.”⁶ Ironically, “pioneering monographs on previously under-researched areas of German music history” were also supported and published by state institutes during that era.⁷

As a “good example” of state-sponsored scholarship, Levi pinpoints *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen romantischen Oper zwischen Spohrs “Faust” und Wagners “Lohengrin”* (hereafter *Beiträge zur Geschichte*) written by Siegfried Goslich (1911-1990) in 1937.⁸ More specifically, this work was based on Goslich’s 1936 dissertation, which was selected to be published for the “Schriftenreihe des Staatlichen Instituts für Deutsche Musikforschung” the following year.⁹ It is important to note that four decades later *Beiträge zur Geschichte* was revised and published under the title *Die deutsche romantische*

⁴ Pamela M. Potter, “Musicology under Hitler: New Sources in Context,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 70-113. For the related report, please see: Christoph Wolff, “Die Hand eines Handlangers: ‘Musikwissenschaft’ im Dritten Reich,” in *Entartete Musik: Zur Düsseldorfer Ausstellung von 1938. Eine kommentierte Rekonstruktion*, ed. Albrecht Dümling and Peter Girth (Düsseldorf: Der Kleine Verlag, 1988), 93-94.

⁵ Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), 220.

⁶ Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 224.

⁷ Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 241.

⁸ Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 241; Siegfried Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen romantischen Oper zwischen Spohrs “Faust” und Wagners “Lohengrin”* (Leipzig: Kistner and Siegel, 1937).

⁹ For more about Goslich’s life and musicological career under the NAZI administration, please see Rainer Sieb, “Der Zugriff der NSDAP auf die Musik: Zum Aufbau von Organisationsstrukturen für die Musikarbeit in den Gliederungen der Partei” (PhD diss., Osnabrück University, 2007), 93. Also, Potter, “Musicology Under Hitler,” 77.

Oper in 1975.¹⁰ This more concise and non-restrictive title indicates confidence in the author's expertise on the topic. Moreover, it seemingly establishes the impression and conception of an authoritative and well-defined opera-sub-genre. Nevertheless, the 1975 book received harsh criticisms for its German-centric and nationalistic scholarship (see below), which can be traced back to its 1937 predecessor. In the following decades, both of Goslich's works became the epicenters of intense intellectual debates regarding German Romantic opera.

Dreams of Germany: Musical Imaginaries from the Concert Hall to the Dance Floor, edited by Neil Gregor and Thomas Irvine and published in 2019, provides a more direct leitmotif for this study. In response to the trend of globalization since 1989, Gregor and Irvine point out the counter-reaction against the resurgence of nationalistic thinking in various countries in the West and Asia during the 2010s.¹¹ This contradictory and complex political reality lead them to dissect the "conceptual 'centrism'" once embedded in the historiography of German music.¹² While acknowledging the absurdity of the notion by asking, "Can there be any kind of German history that dispenses with Germanness?" they raise one of their target questions: "What could a study of German music history free of 'conceptual Germanocentrism' look like?"¹³ They suggest that transcending the "conceptual Germanocentrism in music(al) history" means overcoming "the dead weight of received narrative structures" as well as "resisting the attraction of teleological metanarratives."¹⁴

In this light, I revisit Goslich's works on the German Romantic opera; and more significantly, a series of correctional reconstructions by post-war German music scholars, who have offered a set of paradigmatic cases that renews our understanding of decentering the nationalism-caused Germanocentrism in

¹⁰ Siegfried Goslich, *Die deutsche romantische Oper* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1975).

¹¹ Gregor and Irvine, Introduction to *Dreams of Germany*, 17.

¹² Gregor and Irvine, Introduction to *Dreams of Germany*, 17.

¹³ Gregor and Irvine, Introduction to *Dreams of Germany*, 17.

¹⁴ Gregor and Irvine, Introduction to *Dreams of Germany*, 19.

German music history. To take seriously the scholar's duty to "do the work,"¹⁵ I explore how Romanticism, German national identity, and other related concepts function together to frame a specific narrative about German Romantic opera in works that were intended to be read as canons within the historical context of their production. In addition to Goslich's works, I examine emblematic works by Carl Dahlhaus (1928-1989), Sabine Henze-Döhring (b. 1953), and Sieghart Döhring (b. 1939). These works distinguish themselves from their predecessors in that they are representative of their respective methods and their sequential problem-solution relationships over generations. It is important to note that this study's primary task is neither to answer questions such as "What makes an entity fundamentally 'German,' or 'Romantic,' or 'national'?" nor is it to interrogate how such elemental concepts and references were formed or invented in the past. Instead, I discuss a recently ignored and understated aspect: the historiography of the German Romantic opera itself. These narratives shape the German-speaking musicological community's memories of its shared past while demonstrating its critical interventions in this controversial issue. As the selected works were published in 1937, 1975, the 1980s, and 1997 respectively, they allow this paper to elucidate how the narrative paradigms of the German Romantic opera have been challenged and reinvented to formulate a historiography with transnational fluidity and connectivity over the course of the twentieth century.¹⁶

¹⁵ Toward studies that attempt to relate German national identity to music, Applegate shows examples that "have in common a desire to harness to some other interpretive enterprise the additional force of the nationalist explanation without doing the work it takes to make such an explanation plausible." See Applegate, "How German Is It?" 277.

¹⁶ Other research articles that consciously reflected or touched upon this controversial and unsolved issue, but spared an ambitious alternative narrative include, to name just a few: Aubrey S. Garlington, Jr., "German Romantic Opera and the Problem of Origins," *The Musical Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (April 1977): 247-263; Michael Fend, "'Es versteht sich von selbst, daß ich von der Oper spreche, die der Deutsche und Franzose will ...': Zum Verhältnis von Opéra comique und deutscher romantischer Oper," in *Die Opéra comique und ihr Einfluß auf das europäische Musiktheater im 19. Jahrhundert: Bericht über den Internationalen Kongreß Frankfurt 1994*, ed. Herbert Schneider and Nicole Wild (Hildesheim: Olms, 1997), 299-322; Joachim Reiber, "Wie romantisch ist die romantische Oper? Literaturgeschichtliche Überlegungen zu einem Problem der deutschen Opern-

1. Siegfried Goslich in 1937: From German Nationalistic Self-Consciousness to Self-Consciousness in Romantic Operas

Despite the time frame implied by the title, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen romantischen Oper zwischen Spohrs "Faust" und Wagners "Lohengrin"* (the named works premiered in 1816 and 1850 respectively), Goslich considers a much larger time scale in his book published in 1937. He traces the general historical conditions in the nineteenth century Europe back to the French Revolution. From his position in the twentieth century, he attributes the struggles in various European countries from 1789 to 1848 to the French Revolution and its influence.¹⁷ For Goslich, German-speaking countries attained new achievements under the guiding spirits of "freedom," "individual and social independence," and "national concentration" that shaped nineteenth-century worldviews.¹⁸ Throughout the book, Goslich documents the gradual realization of those achievements; he sees new imperial ambitions emerging during the French occupation of German-speaking areas in the early nineteenth century and characterizes 1870, the year when the Franco-Prussian War broke out, as "the decisive year of German self-determination," and a "psychological moment"¹⁹ for the establishment of a "new German empire" (*neues Deutsches Reich*).²⁰

This view of the predictable goals of a nation in the inevitable course of its history — beginning with the struggle to become a united nation-state and then

geschichte," in *Leitmotive: Kulturgeschichtliche Studien zur Traditionsbildung. Festschrift für Dietz-Rüdiger Moser*, ed. Marianne Sammer (Kallmünz: Laßleben, 1999), 307-319; Thomas Betzwieser, *Sprechen und Singen: Ästhetik und Erscheinungsformen der Dialogoper* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2002), 76-86.

¹⁷ Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 1-2.

¹⁸ Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 3.

¹⁹ Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 3.

²⁰ Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 3 and 42. All translations from German into English are by the author, with the assistance of Dr. Rachel Adelstein, unless otherwise noted. I also attach the German original to longer citations and to short translations that are less well-known albeit significant, or that would be difficult to understand otherwise.

fulfilling the ambition for imperial power — becomes Goslich’s basic foundation when sketching the development of German opera in the nineteenth century. He pinpoints the “thoughts of the Fatherland” generated by the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon’s empire between 1813 and 1815, because they inspired “poets, thinkers, enthusiasts, and fanatics” to express their “opinions of open support for Germany” and to advocate these ideas in their literature and art.²¹ Opera is considered an art form that can reflect reality. Goslich borrows the German writer Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl’s (1823-1897) viewpoint that opera is the “theater of war in modern cultural life,” in which Western European countries play a unique role: “Italy is its birthland, and France is the source of fire in Europe,” while Germany is “the empire of music and the real breeding ground of Romanticism.”²² Philip V. Bohlman considers the difference between “national music” and “nationalistic music,” saying “nationalistic music serves a nation-state in its competition with other nation-states, and in this fundamental way it differs from national music.”²³ According to Bohlman’s criteria, Goslich’s *Beiträge zur Geschichte* conveys an unequivocal nationalistic tone.

Another of Goslich’s operatic battlefields is to decide which country’s opera themes demonstrate “true Romanticism” (wahrhaft romantisch). In choosing an opera’s subject matter, he claims that “truly romantic, the poetic subject matter in librettos found its home in Germany and spread triumphantly from here to foreign countries.”²⁴ In comparing the differences between French, Italian, and German librettos, Goslich asserts: “The French are graceful, spirited, unrestrained, but effective; the Italian appears to be fiery, passionate, and

²¹ Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 3.

²² “Der ‘Kriegsschauplatz’ des modernen Kulturlebens — ist in Italien als ihrem Ursprungslande, in Frankreich als dem Brandherde Europas und in Deutschland, dem Reiche der Music und echten Nährboden der Romantik unmittelbar diesem Komplex verhaftet.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 3.

²³ Philip V. Bohlman, *Focus: Music Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 86.

²⁴ “Der wahrhaft romantisch-poetische Stoff in der Operndichtung ist in Deutschland zu Hause und dringt von hier aus siegriech ins Ausland vor.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 54.

superficial, but pleasing.”²⁵ The Germans show a different kind of sober “deep contemplation,” which the French and Italians do not appreciate but mock as “Germanic philosophy.”²⁶

For example, Goslich argues that the plot of François-Adrien Boieldieu’s (1775-1834) French opéra comique, *La Dame Blanche* (1825), has Romantic elements, such as “folk legends” and “haunted castles,” but these elements are only used as “decorative props for the plot” in order to create a superficial representation of “true Romanticism.”²⁷ Conversely, Goslich views Mozart as a composer who mastered the “Romantic zeitgeist” (romantische Zeitgeist). He plays a pivotal role because: “For Germany, the Romanticization of musical drama starts to become visible with Mozart.”²⁸ By linking Romanticism back to Mozart’s eighteenth-century opera *Die Zauberflöte* (1791), Goslich takes an inclusive stance by indicating that, although *Zauberflöte* appealed to the audience with its “primitive visual curiosity” (primitive Schaulust) through devices such as “machine farce,” “magical Singspiel,” “fairy play,” and “a plot set in exotic, faraway lands,” these elements were eventually “elevated to the higher sphere of the Romantic opera that tends toward a Gesamtkunstwerk” by Mozart.²⁹

While the connection between “Gesamtkunstwerk” and Mozart’s *Zauberflöte* may seem somewhat obscure, Goslich explains it using Wagner as an example:

The introduction of the dramatic problem using only instrumental symbolism, the weaving of the entire orchestral melody through the overture and drama, contributes to replacing the previous sequential logic with a logic of psychological-dramatic symbols. The resulting

²⁵ “Der Franzose ist anmutig und beschwingt, skrupellos, aber effektiv, der Italiener scheint uns feurig oder schmachend, oberflächlich, aber bestechend.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 54-55.

²⁶ Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 55.

²⁷ Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 50.

²⁸ “Mit Mozart setzt für Deutschland die romantisierende Musikdramatik sichtbar ein.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 47.

²⁹ “[...] in die höhere Sphäre der zum Gesamtkunstwerk tendierenden romantischen Oper erhoben.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 47.

formal unity of the opera as a Gesamtkunstwerk that is originally conceived in thought is particularly evident in the meaningful relationship of motifs and keys between the overtures of *Lohengrin* and *Meistersinger* and the finales of the works.³⁰

Goslich considers Gesamtkunstwerk a highly coherent opera that integrates its dramatic symbolism and musical forms by comprehensively incorporating the orchestral forces and tonality to its multi-layered plot. To trace back further, this orchestral technique can be found in Beethoven's symphonies and is recognized as one of his greatest contributions to the art of the symphony, Goslich asserts:

The breakthrough of the orchestral symphony, which Beethoven raised to the highest level of expressive power, into the stage music of Weber and Marschner paved the way for Wagner to find his word-sound language, in which the results of our classical art epoch are saturated with the fiery spirit of German Romanticism and come together to influence the future.³¹

Goslich also conveys a sense of national pride when discussing this symphonic orchestral technique. In assessing the Viennese Masters — Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven — he declares: “The main focus in the creation of German musical classicism lies in its attainment of refinement and the expressive force of the instrumental music.”³² By this, Goslich means that symphonic

³⁰ “Die Vorstellung der dramatischen Problematik mit reinen Mitteln der Instrumentalsymbolik, die Verspinnung des Gesamtorchestermelos in Ouvertüre und Drama trägt dazu bei, an die Stelle der bisherigen Logik der Stufenfolge eine solche der psychologisch-dramatischen Symbole zu setzen. Die auf diesem Wege sich ergebende, also ursprünglich gedanklich gezeugte formale Geschlossenheit der Oper als Gesamtkunstwerk wird besonders ersichtlich in der sinnfälligen Motiv- und Tonartenbeziehung der ‘Lohengrin’- und ‘Meistersinger’-Vorspiele zu den Abschlüssen (letzen Finales) der Werke.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 240.

³¹ “Der Einbruch der durch Beethoven zur höchsten Ausdrucksgewalt erhobenen Orchester-symphonik in das bühnenmusikalische Schaffen bei Weber und Marschner bahnt Wagner den Weg zur Auffindung seiner Wort-Ton-Sprache, in der die Ergebnisse unserer klassischen Kunstepoche mit dem Feuergeist der deutschen Romantik durchtränkt in großartiger Zusammenfassung zukunftwirkend werden.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 12.

³² Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 12.

music, defined by German musical classicism, is a technique for realizing German Romanticism in the opera. Hence, Goslich can justify the connection he draws between Mozart and the “Romantic zeitgeist” (see above). As Mozart is one of the Viennese Masters, his operas are, by definition, Romantic or have the potential to be romanticized.

Mozart’s legitimacy in this Romantic narrative also stems from what Goslich regards as an “organic developmental process” (organischer Entwicklungsprozess) that can be identified by E. T. A. Hoffmann’s (1776-1822) and Louis Spohr’s (1784-1859) “conscious link” (bewußte Anknüpfung) to Mozart, and Wagner’s unreserved admiration for Beethoven.³³ Indeed, Hoffmann and Wagner translated their Beethoven- and Mozart-interpretation into their opera discourses. For example, in his 1810 review on Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, Hoffmann praised instrumental music as “the most Romantic of all arts,” possessing pure and genuine Romanticism.³⁴ After emphasizing the internal connection between theme and motif in Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, Hoffmann again pointed out that the work manifests the Romanticism of music to a high degree.³⁵ On top of these treatises, Hoffmann also elaborated on his idea of Romantic opera with the “ineffable effect of the instrumental music”³⁶ in 1813. However, in 1821, he also said that Mozart had combined Italian singing and German instrumental music into an “organic [...] totality” (organisches [...] Ganzes), where Mozart “broke the path and became the inimitable creator of Romantic opera.”³⁷ In 1850, Wagner similarly lauded Beethoven as one who

³³ Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 11.

³⁴ “[...] die romantischste aller Künste.” E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Schriften zur Musik: Aufsätze und Rezensionen* (Munich: Winkler, 1978), 34.

³⁵ Hoffmann, *Schriften zur Musik*, 50.

³⁶ “[...] unnennbare Wirkung der Instrumentalmusik.” E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Die Serapions-Brüder* (Munich: Winkler, 1978), 83.

³⁷ Hoffmann, *Schriften zur Musik*, 363. Hoffmann explained little regarding how he came to that conclusion. For a more detailed discussion, please also refer to Diau-Long Shen, “Composer-Critic and ‘Inimitable Creator’: E. T. A. Hoffmann, W. A. Mozart, and the Genesis of German Romantic Opera,” in *Nineteenth-Century Music Criticism*, ed. Teresa Cascudo (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 403-419.

“opened up the immeasurable capability of instrumental music for expressing overpowering urges and yearning,” while Mozart “breathed the wistful breath of the human voice into his instruments.”³⁸ For Wagner, Beethoven’s Ninth symphony with human voices was “the redemption of music from its own elements and a move toward the universal art.”³⁹ Goslich unveils the “conscious links” in those German composers’ reception of Mozart and Beethoven.

In his book, Goslich takes these “conscious links” as a starting point to conduct his musical analysis. For example, he highlights “the repetition of short, chromatic or narrow intervallic motifs and melodic gestures in the orchestra and the human voice” in Heinrich Marschner’s (1795-1861) opera *Hans Heiling* (1833) and concludes that “this technique grows out of Beethovenian symphonics.”⁴⁰ Goslich’s assertion from his musical analysis adds to the idea of a philologically supportable “conscious link” that underpins the narrative coherence in German Romantic operas. Paradoxically, while the thematic concern of Goslich’s book focuses on German Romantic opera, he continually reminds his readers of its transitional character:

The German Romantic opera obtains its special historical significance because in it alone, as the Gesamtkunstwerk desired by Hoffman and Weber alike, a basic longing of the Romantic essence could and should be fulfilled and realized [...].⁴¹

With words, such as “desire” and “longing” for the future and a sense of a pre-destined achievement, Goslich plays the role of the all-knowing narrator — pronouncing a prophecy and its fulfillment and constructing a metanarrative of

³⁸ “Die unermeßliche Fähigkeit der Instrumentalmusik zum Ausdrucke urgewaltigen Drängens und Verlangens erschloß sich Beethoven.” Richard Wagner, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1850), 85.

³⁹ “[...] die Erlösung der Musik aus ihrem eigensten Elemente heraus zur allgemeinen Kunst.” Wagner, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, 94.

⁴⁰ Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 174.

⁴¹ “Die deutsche romantische Oper erhält ihre besondere historische Bedeutung dadurch, daß in ihr allein als dem von Hoffmann wie von Weber gleichermaßen ersehnten Gesamtkunstwerk ein Grundverlangen des romantischen Wesens Erfüllung und Verwirklichung finden konnte und finden sollte [...]” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 8.

Romantic opera that involves composers on German-speaking lands from the second half of the eighteenth century into the second half of the nineteenth century. Within this Romanticism framework centered around German composers, Romantic self-consciousness in opera and German self-consciousness in nationhood inevitably become one. A 1938 anonymous reviewer (E. B.) identified two significant problems with Goslich's *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, namely that it tends to anticipate "prophecies of the future of musical drama [predicting Wagner]" and to ignore "non-German sources" to the extent that the reviewer considers Goslich "very patriotic."⁴² These tendencies were significantly redressed in the 1975 edition even though they can still be identified with careful reading.

2. The 1975 Revision: Toning Down the Nationalism

In 1975, Goslich added more names, works, and musical analyses to *Die deutsche romantische Oper*. This plethora of information renders some parts of the book encyclopedic. Goslich retains the previous edition's narrative rhetoric, although he tones down the German-centric, metahistorical, and prophetic language. The aforementioned "organic developmental process" is changed to the less specific "fluid transition" (*fließender Übergang*), and "conscious links" are revised to simply "links" (*Anknüpfung*).⁴³ Words in the 1937 version that stitched individual composers together under a pre-ordained historical destiny, such as "desire," "long for," "fulfillment," and "realization," disappeared entirely from the 1975 version. Similarly, in 1975, Goslich deleted the sentence he wrote in 1937 that identified Wagner as the savior of German opera: "In general, people expected a Messiah of the German opera and expressed undisguised hope for his

⁴² E. B., "Review: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen romantischen Oper zwischen Spohrs 'Faust' und Wagners 'Lohengrin'* by Siegfried Goslich," *Music & Letters* 19, no. 3 (July 1938): 355.

⁴³ Goslich, *Die deutsche romantische Oper*, 11 and 27.

coming.”⁴⁴ In his analysis on how opera appropriates Beethovenian symphony technique, Goslich retains “breakthrough,” “pathbreaking,” “future influence,” and other words that claim that “German Romantic opera” operates at an instrumental music technique level, therefore continuing to suggest a clear direction and destination. At the outset of the 1975 edition, the author brings our attention to the newly added “Vorwort” with the statement “The meaning-laden orchestra, musical declamation, and the fabric of motives swept the old number-opera components away and contributed to a structural change.”⁴⁵ The teleological narrative toward Wagner in this 1975 version remains self-evident.

Another notable change in Goslich’s narrative framework between the two editions is the deletion of words highlighting German national superiority and imperial associations. Descriptions from 1937, such as “the Germanic north is the natural homeland of Romanticism,”⁴⁶ disappeared in the 1975 edition. Some minor but lofty descriptions are also revised. For example, in the 1937 edition, he writes: “Truly romantic, the poetic subject matter in librettos found its home in Germany and spread triumphantly from here to foreign countries” (see above) but he deletes descriptors such as, “truly” (*wahrhaft*), “poetic” (*poetisch*), and “triumphantly” (*siegreich*) in the 1975 version.⁴⁷ Phrases, including “empire of music” and “breeding ground of Romanticism” (see above) that described Germany in the 1937 edition were changed to “heartland of Romanticism” (*Kernland der Romantik*) in 1975.⁴⁸ This de-imperialized attempt is especially evident when comparing the two versions’ discussions on Wagner’s relevance and significance to the Bayreuth theater.

⁴⁴ “Allgemein erwartete man den Messias der deutschen Oper und gab der Hoffnung auf sein Kommen unverhohlenen Ausdruck.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 41.

⁴⁵ “Das aussagekräftig gewordene Orchester, die musikalische Deklamation und das Gewebe der Motive überfluteten die alten Nummernbestandteile und führten eine Strukturwandel herbei.” Goslich, *Die deutsche romantische Oper*, 9.

⁴⁶ “Ihre ureigenste Heimat hat die Romantik im germanischen Norden.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 7.

⁴⁷ Goslich, *Die deutsche romantische Oper*, 143.

⁴⁸ Goslich, *Die deutsche romantische Oper*, 16.

1937 version (crossed-out passages are deleted in the 1975 version):

When Wagner celebrated one of his most enormous successes shortly before the mid-century with *Lohengrin*, the most complete work of real German operatic Romanticism, a new era of musical drama in Germany began internally and externally. [...] ~~What an epoch longs for, it finds fulfilled in the spirit of its leadership.~~ The German court and city theaters remained as they had been: art institutions and edification venues for the state and people. But, ~~soon after the erection of the new German Empire, the pilgrimage place of a united German folk~~ created after the proud model of Greek antiquity ~~by the most superior spirit of the German Romanticism~~ came the cultural and intellectual center of a German National Theater, the Bayreuth Festival Theater.⁴⁹

1975 version (underlined passages are newly added in the 1975 version):

A new era began when Wagner accomplished one of his successes around the mid-century. In view of the characteristic of his works, some respectable composers laid aside their pens. [...] The German court and city theaters remained as they had been: art institutions and edification venues for the state and people. But Wagner, who presented the plan for the organization of the German National Theater for the Kingdom of Saxony in 1848, later created the Bayreuth Festival Theater for himself after the model of Greek antiquity.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ “Als Wagner kurz vor der Mitte des Jahrhunderts seine ersten gewaltigen Erfolge vor allem mit ‘Lohengrin’, dem vollendeten Werke der eigentlichen deutschen Opernromantik, feierte, brach innerlich und äußerlich eine neue Ära des musikalischen Dramas in Deutschland. [...] ~~Was eine Epoche ersehnt hatte, fand Erfüllungen im Werk eines Führergeistes.~~ Die deutschen Hof- und Stadtbühnen blieben, was sie gewesen waren: Kunstanstalten und Erbauungsorte für Staat und Gemeinde. ~~Wallfahrtsort eines geeinten deutschen Volkes~~ aber wurde — ~~bald nach der Errichtung des neuen Deutschen Reichs~~ — das nach dem ~~stolzen~~ Vorbild der griechischen Antike ~~von überlegensten Geiste der deutschen Romantik~~ geschaffene Kultur- und Gedankenzentrum eines deutschen Nationaltheaters, das Festspielhaus zu Bayreuth.” Goslich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 41-42.

⁵⁰ “Als Wagner um die Mitte des Jahrhunderts seine ersten Erfolge erzielte, brach eine neue Ära an. Angesichts der Eigenart seiner Werke legte mancher achtbare Komponist die Feder aus der Hand. [...] Die deutschen Hof- und Stadttheater blieben, was sie gewesen waren: Kunstanstalten und Erbauungsorte für Staat und Gemeinde. Wagner aber, der im

Despite these recantations, international music scholars heavily criticized the 1975 *Die deutsche romantische Oper* after its publication. For instance, Jürgen Maehder is critical of Goslich's ideological nationalistic consciousness, which leads to his evaluation of the German opera sector as a "friend-enemy category," and remarks that Goslich clung to the pre-1945 view of opera history in German musicology, which took "Wagner's work as the goal of a teleological process and as the crowning blend of absolute music and dramatic truth."⁵¹ Aubrey S. Garlington denounces Goslich's study for lacking references to other countries' literature, "making the field of investigation provincial," and asks rhetorically if the issue of German Romantic opera is an area "so ethnocentric, so indigenous, and nationalistic that there is no valid means the outsider can use to investigate this field?"⁵² Gaynor G. Jones also points out that Goslich ignores non-German sources, which makes the book "chauvinistic."⁵³ Despite these criticisms, Goslich holds his ground and defends his approach. With his own proposition under fire from fellow musicologists, in 1980, he harshly criticized the English anthology, *The Rise of Romantic Opera* (published in 1976 as a commemoration of opera historian Edward J. Dent, 1876-1957), dismissing it as "one-sidedness" and refuting Dent's view that German Romantic opera should be traced back to Italian and French comic operas. When other musicologists disapprove of Goslich's work for omitting non-German-language sources, he disparages Dent's research for overlooking the works of many German-speaking

Jahre 1848 den „Entwurf zur Organisation eines deutschen Nationaltheaters für das Königreich Sachsen“ verfolgte, schuf sich später nach dem Vorbild der griechischen Antike das Festspielhaus in Bayreuth." Goslich, *Die deutsche romantische Oper*, 126.

⁵¹ Jürgen Maehder, "Review: Siegfried Goslich, *Die deutsche romantische Oper*," in *Aurora: Jahrbuch der Eichendorff-Gesellschaft*, vol. 38, ed. Wolfgang Frühwald, Franz Heiduk, and Helmut Koopmann (Würzburg: Eichendorff-Gesellschaft, 1978), 195.

⁵² Aubrey S. Garlington, Jr., "Review: *Die deutsche romantische Oper* by Siegfried Goslich," *The Musical Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (October 1976): 606.

⁵³ Gaynor G. Jones, "Review: *Die deutsche romantische Oper* by Siegfried Goslich," *Notes* 33, no. 1 (September 1976): 63-65.

composers.⁵⁴ Admittedly, Goslich's book contains a wealth of material regarding both individual composers and works that few have surpassed. In the review published in 1982, Sieghart Döhring acknowledges that Goslich's book provides an "abundant and reliable information source;" however, Döhring also bluntly criticizes the 1975 revision because it is still based on the "premises of music history already problematic from 40 years ago."⁵⁵ In addition to rejecting Goslich's nationalistic view as asserted by other reviewers, Döhring also indicates that Goslich's muddled conceptions "led to his mistaken linear description of German opera and his ignorance of contemporaneous Italian and French opera."⁵⁶

In his two-page "Vorwort," which opens the 1975 edition, Goslich presents at least three seemingly similar concepts, namely "German Romantic opera" (deutsche romantische Oper), "operatic Romanticism" (Opernromantik), and "Romantic German opera-type" (romantischer deutscher Operntypus),⁵⁷ which could lead to vastly distinctive fields for discussion. It is likely that Goslich consciously invokes these amorphous concepts to rationalize and accommodate whatever he had collected about German composers and their operas, which adopted ideas derived from different streams of Romanticism and various levels of national aspirations. Consequently, the clear-cut image in the 1975 edition, with its complex implications of German Romantic opera, poses an open-ended question for German musicologists, which is constantly re-visited and re-constructed from a wide array of systematic methods and perspectives.

⁵⁴ Siegfried Goslich, "Review: Edward J. Dent, *The Rise of Romantic Opera*, edited by Winton Dean," *Die Musikforschung* 33, no. 1 (January-March 1980): 77.

⁵⁵ Sieghart Döhring, "Review: Siegfried Goslich, *Die deutsche romantische Oper*," *Die Musikforschung* 35, no. 2 (April-June 1982): 191.

⁵⁶ Döhring, "Review: *Die deutsche romantische Oper*," 192.

⁵⁷ Goslich, *Die deutsche romantische Oper*, 9-10.

3. Romantic Opera as the “History of Ideas” Based on Composition Technique

Carl Dahlhaus published three consecutive papers between 1983 and 1984,⁵⁸ challenging the German Romantic opera as a self-evident musical genre, ranging from Hoffmann’s *Undine* (1816) to Spohr’s *Faust* through Wagner’s *Lohengrin* in the conventional historiography.⁵⁹ By acknowledging this, Dahlhaus responds to the controversies aroused by Goslich’s 1937 and 1975 works without citing his name throughout the trilogy. As the views Dahlhaus expresses in these three articles have been repeated, supplemented, or extended, I summarize the main points of Dahlhaus’s opposition to German Romantic opera as a fixed musical genre and examine how he re-construes Romantic opera from the perspective of what he calls a “history of ideas” (Ideengeschichtlich, see below).

Regarding musical genres, Dahlhaus observes that the German “Romantic operas” in the first half of the nineteenth century differed greatly in their musical structures. Some have spoken dialogue; others are through-composed opera, following traditions from German Singspiel, French Opéra comique, and Grand opéra.⁶⁰ From the perspective of musical genre, Dahlhaus emphatically considers “Romantic opera” an illegitimate independent genre for opera and

⁵⁸ The trilogy of articles is: Carl Dahlhaus, “Webers *Freischütz* und die Idee der romantischen Oper,” in *Carl Dahlhaus Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, *19. Jahrhundert IV*, ed. Hermann Danuser (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2004), 612-620, first published in *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 38, no. 7-8 (July 1983): 381-388; Carl Dahlhaus, “Romantische Oper und symphonischer Stil,” in *Carl Dahlhaus Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, *19. Jahrhundert IV*, ed. Hermann Danuser (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2004), 621-636, first published in *Deutsche Oper Berlin: Spielzeit 1983/84. Beiträge zum Musiktheater III* (Berlin: Deutsche Oper Berlin, 1983), 89-100; Carl Dahlhaus, “Die romantische Oper als Idee und als Gattung,” in *Jahrbuch der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, 1984* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 52-64.

⁵⁹ This question was raised at the first paragraph of the article that first appeared in this trilogy. Dahlhaus, “Webers *Freischütz*,” 612.

⁶⁰ Dahlhaus, “Symphonischer Stil,” 621; also “Webers *Freischütz*,” 612.

concludes that “whatever Romantic opera might be — in any event, despite appearances, a genre it is not.”⁶¹

Along with his contention that Romantic opera is not a genre but an idea, Dahlhaus provides a thorough analysis of how this idea becomes entangled with different applications and interpretations of Romanticism. From the perspective of literary theory, Dahlhaus believes that from the turn of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Romanticism appealed to those with an elevated, solemn, and even metaphysical imagination. However, Romantic opera, which emerged in the early nineteenth century, features elements of the marvelous — magic and fairy tales — and exotic subject matter in its libretto, which is categorized as popular and exciting “trivial literature” (Trivialliteratur) that entertains the audience with spectacular special effects. Hence, a substantial aesthetic hiatus exists between the “stylistic elevation” (Stilhöhe) assumed in Romantic literary theory and the “trivial” Romantic opera librettos in circulation.⁶²

Dahlhaus is convinced that if Romantic opera ever attained the lofty heights of Friedrich Schlegel’s (1772-1829) “ennobled romantic concept” (nobilitierter Romantik-Begriff), it did not reach the goal through its librettos, but the merits of its music.⁶³ Dahlhaus infers the procedural transfer of aesthetic paradigm from literary Romanticism to musical Romanticism as follows: the Romantic musical aesthetic, praised by the Romantic poets Wilhelm Wackenroder (1773-1798) and Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), was advocated and became prevalent through Hoffmann’s 1810 review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony,⁶⁴ in which Hoffmann crowned instrumental music as “the most romantic art” (romantischste aller Künste). Dahlhaus further postulates that when Hoffmann advanced the ideal of

⁶¹ “Was immer die romantische Oper sein mag — eine Gattung ist sie, wie es scheint, jedenfalls nicht.” Dahlhaus, “Die romantische Oper,” 56.

⁶² Dahlhaus, “Webers *Freischütz*,” 613; “Symphonischer Stil,” 621; “Die romantische Oper,” 53-54.

⁶³ Dahlhaus, “Symphonischer Stil,” 621.

⁶⁴ Dahlhaus, “Symphonischer Stil,” 622.

Romantic opera in his 1813 essay *Der Dichter und der Komponist*, the music he envisaged, most likely, was that era's "modern instrumental music," namely, the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, and especially of Beethoven.⁶⁵ However, this sublime archetype of the "metaphysics of the symphony" (Metaphysik der Symphonie) is inherently incompatible with the earthly human emotional conflicts depicted in conventional opera librettos; this incongruity was not resolved until Wagner conceived of musical drama as "symphonic opera" (symphonische Oper).⁶⁶

It might be useful to summarize Dahlhaus's reasoning. First, whereas Romantic opera is not a fixed musical genre in music history, it can still be regarded as a historically popular explanation for opera's gradual transformation through the introduction of symphonic music in the nineteenth century. Hence, he proposes approaching Romantic opera from the perspective of the "history of ideas" to establish a thread of continuity but at the same time keep in mind its possible fallacy:

It is unproven and not philologically reconstructable with any sufficient certainty whether Wagner was directly influenced by E. T. A. Hoffmann or if he recognized the internal link between the idea of the Romantic opera and the conception of a musical drama made in the spirit of a symphony. But, even if an empirical connection is unavailable, one can speak of a development of the history of ideas that exists even if it appears over the heads of the actors. And inviting the suspicion that one is being metaphysical is something that must be endured.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Dahlhaus, "Die romantische Oper," 58.

⁶⁶ Dahlhaus, "Die romantische Oper," 59.

⁶⁷ "Ob Wagner von E. T. A. Hoffmann unmittelbar beeinflusst wurde, als er den inneren Zusammenhang erkannte, der zwischen der Idee der romantischen Oper und der Konzeption eines musikalischen Dramas aus dem Geiste des symphonischen Stils besteht, ist ungewiß und philologisch nicht mit genügender Sicherheit rekonstruierbar. Auch dort aber, wo ein empirischer Konnex nicht greifbar ist, darf man von einer ideengeschichtlichen Entwicklung sprechen, die sich gleichsam über die Köpfe der Akteure hinweg vollzieht. Und den Metaphysikverdacht, dem man sich dadurch aussetzt, muß man ertragen." Dahlhaus, "Symphonischer Stil," 631.

Dahlhaus's proposal to rethink Romantic opera sounds all too familiar because he shared Goslich's emphasis on the Beethovenian symphonic technique and his concept of a "conscious link" (1937) or "link" (1975). However, Dahlhaus inherited these two aspects in a methodologically justifiable fashion by introducing the "history of ideas" approach, allowing him to concede that there might be an "unconscious" — philologically unprovable — link. For Dahlhaus, to build the Romantic opera's "internal link" or "development of the history of ideas" is to identify how symphonic style infiltrates the apprehension of opera composers and penetrates into their works.

This process is best summarized in Dahlhaus' article "Romantische Oper und symphonischer Stil."⁶⁸ He argues that Hoffmann applied his understanding of the "inner structure" (innere Struktur)⁶⁹ of Beethoven's symphony to his own opera, *Undine*, as a "sub-motivic deep structure" (sub-motivische Tiefenstruktur) that conveyed a "vague allusion" (vage Anspielungen) and "hidden connections" (verborgene Zusammenhänge).⁷⁰ By comparison, Carl Maria von Weber's (1786-1826) motif in *Der Freischütz* (1821), reminiscent of French opera at the end of the eighteenth century, was a "perceptible means" (handgreifliches Mittel) for sustaining formal coherence that could accommodate Romantic "aesthetics of being characterful" (Ästhetik des Charakteristischen).⁷¹ Dahlhaus then interprets Wagner's leitmotif as culminating the "balance in history" (historisch als Ausgleich) between Hoffmann's "vague" and Weber's "perceptible" associations.⁷² That is to say, Wagner's leitmotif was a compositional technique that realized the "symphonic coherence in the Romantic opera" and elevated the reminiscent motif to a "developing level" at which "the recurring motifs are

⁶⁸ The following presents an epitomized summary. For a more complete understanding of Dahlhaus' elaboration, please see Dahlhaus, "Symphonischer Stil," 631-636.

⁶⁹ Dahlhaus, "Symphonischer Stil," 633.

⁷⁰ Dahlhaus, "Symphonischer Stil," 632.

⁷¹ Dahlhaus, "Symphonischer Stil," 633.

⁷² Dahlhaus, "Symphonischer Stil," 633.

nothing but dramaturgically justified interpolations.”⁷³ Dahlhaus invokes Wagner’s 1879 assertion regarding the “coherence of symphonic texture” (Einheit des Symphoniesatzes), which is needed to render “dramatic music [...] a musical artwork.”⁷⁴ In Wagner’s demand for symphonic unity in Romantic operas and music drama, Dahlhaus sees an “affinity” that Hoffmann had already “recognized and foreseen in the early nineteenth century.”⁷⁵

Even though there is a strong leaning toward Wagner in this teleological narrative, Dahlhaus constructively shifts his discursive locus from the musical “genre” to the micro and internal level of “composition techniques” (i.e., the “symphonic style”). In a more theoretical sense of writing music history, this “history of ideas” for Romantic opera can be regarded as an example that demonstrates Dahlhaus’ method to “reconcile the autonomy aesthetic with a sense of history” and “do justice” to both “the historical and the aesthetic dimensions of musical works without sacrificing either coherence of presentation or the strong concept of art.”⁷⁶ For Dahlhaus, “art history receives its vindication only to the extent that the historian has read the historical nature of works from their internal constitution (innere Zusammensetzung).”⁷⁷ What once seemed to Dahlhaus “practically insoluble: how to reach agreement on a permissible amount of abstraction that will keep a music history from suffocating in details without being so far removed from individual works as to obliterate all sense of the particular”⁷⁸ is ironically solved in his attempt to explain the controversies of German Romantic opera.

⁷³ “Die wiederkehrenden Motive nichts anderes als dramaturgisch begründete Interpolationen.” Dahlhaus, “Symphonischer Stil,” 634.

⁷⁴ Dahlhaus, “Symphonischer Stil,” 634.

⁷⁵ Dahlhaus, “Symphonischer Stil,” 636.

⁷⁶ Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 28. For the original, please refer to *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte* (Cologne: Hans Gerig, 1977), 49.

⁷⁷ Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, 29.

⁷⁸ Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, 29.

4. De-constructing German Romantic Opera in the Transnational Flow and Connectivity

In their 1997 book *Oper und Musiktheater im 19. Jahrhundert*, Sieghart Döhring and Sabine Henze-Döhring situate Romantic opera in a broader context than that of Dahlhaus. In “Einleitung” Henze-Döhring first acknowledges that Goslich’s works formed a public opinion of Romantic opera as a German national operatic genre and then recounts Dahlhaus’ questioning of this historiographical construct.⁷⁹ Their approach to the research on the history of opera genres takes into consideration the “spectrum of all the factors from which a history can be read.”⁸⁰ In so doing, they de-construct the idea of a coherent genre, linear and teleological composition technique development, and German nationality — the traits attached to the previous narratives for German Romantic opera in order to demonstrate how coeval operas in other European languages share the veins of Romanticism.

Henze-Döhring’s de-construction strategy indicates that, fundamentally, German opera in the first half of the nineteenth century was still a “cultural import” from Italian and French operas and had an “epigonic character.”⁸¹ Given its interspersed spoken dialogue, the German eighteenth-century Singspiel tradition was a counterpart to the French Opéra comique. For example, in 1817, when Weber was in Dresden and had the opportunity to establish a German department for its court theater, the first opera performed was *Jacob und seine Söhne*, a German translation of Étienne Méhul’s (1763-1817) Opéra comique *Joseph en Égypte* (1807).⁸² Although German composers, such as Spohr, publicly declared in 1822 that the time had come for an independent German

⁷⁹ Sabine Henze-Döhring, “Einleitung,” in Sieghart Döhring and Sabine Henze-Döhring, *Oper und Musikdrama im 19. Jahrhundert* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1997), 8.

⁸⁰ Henze-Döhring, “Einleitung,” 3.

⁸¹ Henze-Döhring, “Einleitung,” 5.

⁸² Sabine Henze-Döhring, “Ein Singspiel aus dem Geist der Restauration: Beethovens *Fidelio*,” in Döhring and Henze-Döhring, *Oper und Musikdrama*, 91.

recitative opera, these through-composed German “grand operas” were not yet widely accepted.⁸³ As for Wagner’s more successful through-composed “Romantic operas” *Der fliegende Holländer* (1843), *Tannhäuser* (1845), and *Lohengrin*, Henze-Döhring sees them as imitations of the Parisian Grand opéra, quoting an 1843 newspaper review on *Holländer*: “despite its being called a Romantic opera, [...] this work hardly lets itself be attributed to one of any opera genres performed until now.”⁸⁴ In line with these observations, Henze-Döhring emphasizes the discontinuity between Wagner’s “Romantic opera” and the Romantic works of his predecessors, such as those by Weber and Spohr.⁸⁵ She concludes that from the through-composed German grand operas *Jessonda* (Spohr 1822) and *Euryanthe* (Weber 1823) to *Lohengrin*, it is difficult to observe any “development of an independent genre.”⁸⁶ Winding back to earlier Singspiel Romantic operas with spoken dialogue by Hoffmann, Spohr, and Weber, it is hard to defend the claim of an established and coherent musical genre tradition in German opera in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Henze-Döhring also challenges the attempt to cluster Hoffmann, Spohr, Weber, Marschner, and Wagner into a “genealogy” based on reminiscent motifs. She also points out two fallacies in identifying reminiscent motifs as uniquely and “genuinely German” in the past: first, it is a denial of their French origins, and second, it lacks a different terminology for reminiscent motifs and leitmotifs.”⁸⁷ In contrast to Dahlhaus, who adheres to Hoffmann’s Romantic interpretation of Beethoven’s symphonies (as seen in the “vague” sub-motivic structure of Hoffman’s opera, *Undine*), Henze-Döhring considers Hoffman’s

⁸³ Sabine Henze-Döhring, “Die Großen Opern Wagners,” in Döhring and Henze-Döhring, *Oper und Musikdrama*, 164.

⁸⁴ “[...] nennt ihn [*den Fliegenden Holländer*] zwar eine romantische Oper, aber seiner ganzen Art und Wesenheit nach läßt sich dieses Werk kaum einer der bis jetzt vorhandenen Operngattungen zuzuteilen.” Henze-Döhring, “Die Großen Opern Wagners,” 165.

⁸⁵ Henze-Döhring, “Die Großen Opern Wagners,” 176.

⁸⁶ Henze-Döhring, “Die Großen Opern Wagners,” 178.

⁸⁷ Sabine Henze-Döhring, “Das Singspiel und die Idee des ‘Romantischen’,” in Döhring and Henze-Döhring, *Oper und Musikdrama*, 99.

compositional style to be “retrospective,” drawn from the opera tradition of Mozart and Gluck.⁸⁸ She further notes that, although Hoffmann proposed a “Romantic aesthetic in the opera,” it is still difficult to develop a musical genre from this.⁸⁹ In the course of this analysis, Henze-Döhring tones down any implication of a “conscious link” or “history of ideas,” and by doing so, separates German composers’ opera creation from their alleged desire for or idealization of Beethovenian symphonic style.

In discussing the role Wagner played in developing the motivic technique in opera, Döhring warns that we should not merely rely on Wagner’s own construction of history; instead we should keep in mind that Wagner himself always avoided using the term *leitmotiv*. Even more important, we must remember that French operas had already experimented with the motivic technique and its combination with semantics before Wagner wrote his first opera.⁹⁰ As for Wagner’s reception of Beethoven, Döhring notes that, like Beethoven, Wagner also understood that form is not enclosed in a static state but a “process,” and therefore considered the opportunity for musical development to be a pre-condition for its value as drama.⁹¹ Through this analysis, Döhring differentiates the aesthetic principle of “coherence” (which has conventionally been viewed as Hoffmann’s core Romantic interpretation of Beethoven’s symphony) from that of “process” with Wagner, and further severs the “conscious link” (Goslich) or philologically unprovable “unconscious link” in the “history of ideas” (Dahlhaus).

Henze-Döhring recognizes the Romanticism in operas from the first half of the nineteenth century but claims it is not the composition technique that connects them but the subject matter expressed through librettos.⁹² Considering

⁸⁸ Henze-Döhring, “Das Singspiel,” 100.

⁸⁹ Henze-Döhring, “Das Singspiel,” 97.

⁹⁰ Sieghart Döhring, “Musikdrama: Entstehung und Konzeption von Wagners *Ring des Nibelungen*,” in Döhring and Henze-Döhring, *Oper und Musikdrama*, 271-272.

⁹¹ Döhring, “Musikdrama,” 272.

⁹² Henze-Döhring, “Das Singspiel,” 101.

works whose plots relate the fall and redemption of a protagonist's soul or life, she acknowledges that there is a "traditional connection" (Traditionszusammenhang) of the "pure subject matter" (rein stoffgeschichtlich) in Weber's *Der Freischütz*, Marschner's *Der Vampyr* (1828) and *Hans Heiling* (1833), Wagner's *Holländer*, and Giacomo Meyerbeer's (1791-1864) *Robert le diable* (1831).⁹³ Henze-Döhring suggests that it was precisely the connections in plot that led some observers to construct a history of German opera from Weber to Wagner — a history that "de facto does not exist."⁹⁴

In her discussion on librettos, Henze-Döhring does not distinguish between "true" and implied "untrue" (Goslich) Romanticism or between "elevated" and "trivial" (Dahlhaus) Romanticism; rather, she expands the dimension of Romanticism beyond German opera. In the chapter "Transformation der Gattung im Spiegel des 'romantismo'," she stresses Hoffmann's librettistic definition of a Romantic plot as one where "reality is broken into by mystical forces" and then applies it to identify the Romantic moments in Italian operas. Henze-Döhring uses Vincenzo Bellini's (1801-1835) *Il pirata* (1827) to illustrate that the highly intense conflict in the plot leads to the madness, suicide, or death sentence of the protagonists. "It was this degree of passion, and the extreme smashing of boundaries, that endowed the post-Rossini melodrama with the epithet 'Romantic'."⁹⁵ She further suggests that this type of plot created the necessary conditions for the melodic peculiarities in Bellini, whose "long melody," combined with other elements, such as rhythm, harmony, text, and

⁹³ Henze-Döhring, "Das Singspiel," 106-107. For another Romantic connection in librettos between Mozart, Hoffmann, and Meyerbeer and the similarity between the main character in Mozart's 1787 *Don Giovanni* and the satanic character Bertram in Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable*, please also see Sieghart Döhring, "Giacomo Meyerbeer: Grand opéra als Ideendrama," *lendemains* 31/32 (1983), 11-22.

⁹⁴ Henze-Döhring, "Das Singspiel," 107.

⁹⁵ "Es war dieser Grad an Leidenschaftlichkeit, das Außerordentliche und das Grenzüberschreitende der Affekte, die dem Melodramma in der nachrossinischen Epoche das Epitheton 'romantisch' eintrug." Sabine Henze-Döhring, "Transformation der Gattung im Spiegel des 'romantismo': Bellini – Donizetti – Mercadante," in Döhring and Henze-Döhring, *Oper und Musikdrama*, 29-30.

instrumentation, fostered the “quality and impression of transcendence.”⁹⁶ Henze-Döhring thus concludes that an operatic plot with a Romantic tendency, whether supernatural or not, and whether labeled “Romantic” or not, is not limited to German-language operas or the single criterion of symphonic technique but is a common cultural phenomenon in coeval European operas.

5. Conclusion: A Controversy that Never Ends

This paper demonstrates how the original nationalistic and “Germano-centric” narratives attached to German Romantic opera in pre-World War II German historiography metamorphosized into a historical perspective with transnational connectivity that flowered within the German musicological community near the end of the twentieth century. I conduct a comparative analysis on works by Siegfried Goslich (1937, 1975), Carl Dahlhaus (1983, 1984), and Sabine Henze-Döhring and Sieghart Döhring (1997) by juxtaposing their theoretical framework. Goslich’s 1937 work is characterized by a strong nationalistic approach that he partially retained in his 1975 edition, while toning down the German-centric and metahistorical, destiny-oriented language. Also investigated is how Dahlhaus argued against German Romantic opera as a fixed musical genre and reconstrued Romantic opera from the perspective of what he calls a “history of ideas.” Finally, how Sabine Henze-Döhring and Sieghart Döhring dismantled the established teleological narrative and reframed the development of the nineteenth-century Romantic opera within a transnational reciprocal fluidity in Europe is examined. As Jürgen Osterhammel explicated in his recent study on the global history of the nineteenth century regarding the dissemination of European operas to Asia and the Americas,⁹⁷ the study of opera

⁹⁶ Henze-Döhring, “Transformation der Gattung,” 30-31.

⁹⁷ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 5-7.

and Romanticism in the context of reciprocal transnationality beyond Europe deserves further and more comprehensive exploration.

Another facet overlooked in previous critical studies emerges in my examination of German narratives of Romantic opera, that is the “Beethoven paradigm.” While in the works of Goslich and Dahlhaus, Beethovenian symphonic technique represents the mainstream of musical Romanticism and so is seen as an omnipresent motivating and orienting factor, the same factor is completely absent from Henze-Döhring and Döhring’s work. The omission of the Beethoven factor reminds us of Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht’s study on the history of the reception of Beethoven. He indicates a constant “typical cluster” (typischer Komplex) of concepts that have long been used to understand Beethoven: “suffering” (Leiden), “overcoming” (Überwinden), and “utopia” (Utopie).⁹⁸ As such, later generations viewed Beethoven as an archetype characterized most saliently as having overcome difficulties in life, and thus experienced his “art” as music that similarly overcomes or triumphs over suffering.⁹⁹ Such a Beethoven paradigm is visible in the narratives of Goslich and Dahlhaus. For Goslich, “German Romantic opera” sparked the establishment of a “German national theater” and the adoption of Beethovenian symphonic technique in opera through a process passing through initial hardship and suffering to eventual triumph. For Dahlhaus, Romantic operas are cases representing the “compositional history” of the processual practice of Beethovenian symphonic technique in opera, as if “German composers” were obliged to suffer difficulties and unfulfillment before they achieved mastery of the symphonic style in opera. How and when the reception of Beethoven, or the “Beethoven paradigm,” entered and became entangled with the practice of the historiography of Western art music also requires further studies.

A few questions must be re-asked and rethought at this final juncture. Regarding the question raised in 2019: “Can there be any kind of German history

⁹⁸ Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, *Zur Geschichte der Beethoven-Rezeption* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1994), 35.

⁹⁹ Eggebrecht, *Zur Geschichte der Beethoven-Rezeption*, 34.

that dispenses with Germanness?” It is doubtful that any German history could dispense with Germanness. Even considering the damage and infliction caused by Nazi Germany in World War II, I wonder whether Germanness is still an imperative problem today. In light of the current critical issue of increasing global right-wing nationalism, leading to breakdowns in international diplomacy and outright war, it does not make sense to rehash the previous case of German nationalism unless the writers wish to defend a conciliatory “transcendent” position by criticizing the status quo. The “transcendent” position, however, would perpetuate and essentialize our understanding of the German model or of German music at a timeless conceptual level. Naoki Sakai highlights the power relations involved in the “West and the Rest” framework, according to which “the West is supposed to assume the positions of universal activity by assigning to the Rest of the world the positionality of particular passivity.”¹⁰⁰ In light of this observation, the issue of how the dynamics of “Self and Other” as well as “Center and Periphery” have worked within the “West itself” may open up further questions for scholars to consider.

¹⁰⁰ Naoki Sakai, “Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of *Humanitas* and *Anthropos*,” *Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 4 (2010): 450.

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