Only lately has Wagner been discussed in terms of gender. This is surprising, given that his characters not only reflect the historical situation in which he lived, but also mirror his personal relationship to women, and are thus a fascinating and revealing mixture. In 19th century opera it was quite common to portray women and men using different musical means. Contrary to most other composers, however, Wagner works with such subtle methods that one is hardly aware of them, as selected examples will show. Important to an understanding of Wagner’s characterization of the sexes is his interpretation of “love”: for the male protagonist it means having a woman at his side who lives for him and otherwise has no identity; for the female it means sacrificing her whole life to the aims and objectives of her male lover. In spite of her inferior status and restricted scope, the woman is often elevated by her singing, which shows greatness and strength. Yet the patterns of sexist domination remain.